



# tellus

issue 003

ZINE LIFE IS CHANGE



cover art:

*I Do It Because I Want To*, 2021 | Katherine Donaghy | 21 years old | Cincinnati, OH



# tellus

## ZINE

Tellus Zine is a youth-led digital and print publication, showcasing art and creative writing by young adults from across Greater Cincinnati. Its mission is to provide a platform for young people to express themselves bravely and creatively as a part of our diverse community.

The name Tellus comes from the Latin word meaning "Earth" and also can be broken down into the invitation: "Tell us!". The editorial board selected this name for our publication because of this double meaning.

The Tellus Editorial Board consists of 8 diverse, high school students, selected from applicants located across Greater Cincinnati. The board meets weekly throughout the school year to develop the zine, review submissions, and plan events. Board members also engage in regular critical dialogs about issues that matter to each member personally, and they learn about editorial skills and different art forms through guest talks, field trips to artist studios, and to zine and art book fairs.

Tellus Zine is a program of Kennedy Heights Arts Center, developed as an off-shoot of the Arts Center's Teen Artists for Change program. Tellus is facilitated by Bethany Pelle and made possible by support from the Charles H. Dater Foundation and ArtsWave.

## 2021-2022 editorial board

EL-AYANNA	Crawford	age: 16	CINCINNATI, OH
DESMOND	Distel	age: 14	CINCINNATI, OH
TAMYAH	Eberhart	age: 17	CINCINNATI, OH
NAINA	Purushothaman	age: 17	CINCINNATI, OH
ADRIAN	Smith	age: 17	FAIRFIELD, OH
MARGARET	Sprigg-Dudley	age: 17	LOVELAND, OH
CELINE	Tan	age: 15	LEBANON, OH
TANISHA	Wasan	age: 16	MONTGOMERY, OH



## editorial statement

Change is universal and perpetually shifting. For our third annual issue, the Tellus editorial board wanted to acknowledge the tumultuous nature of our present era and urge our peers to mindfully consider **the only constant in life—change**.

In selecting the theme, *Life is Change*, we invited open interpretation, visualization, and **diverse** responses—exploring change on levels from the microscopic to the cosmic, the individual to the metaphysical, the personal to the political.

Our community responded with creative submissions of all kinds, including: poetry, short stories, essays, collage, drawing, painting, photography, video, animation, and more! Submissions were reviewed and selected by the **Tellus Zine Editorial Board**, based on alignment with the theme, *Life is Change*. The featured selections are inspired by and address life's continual change.

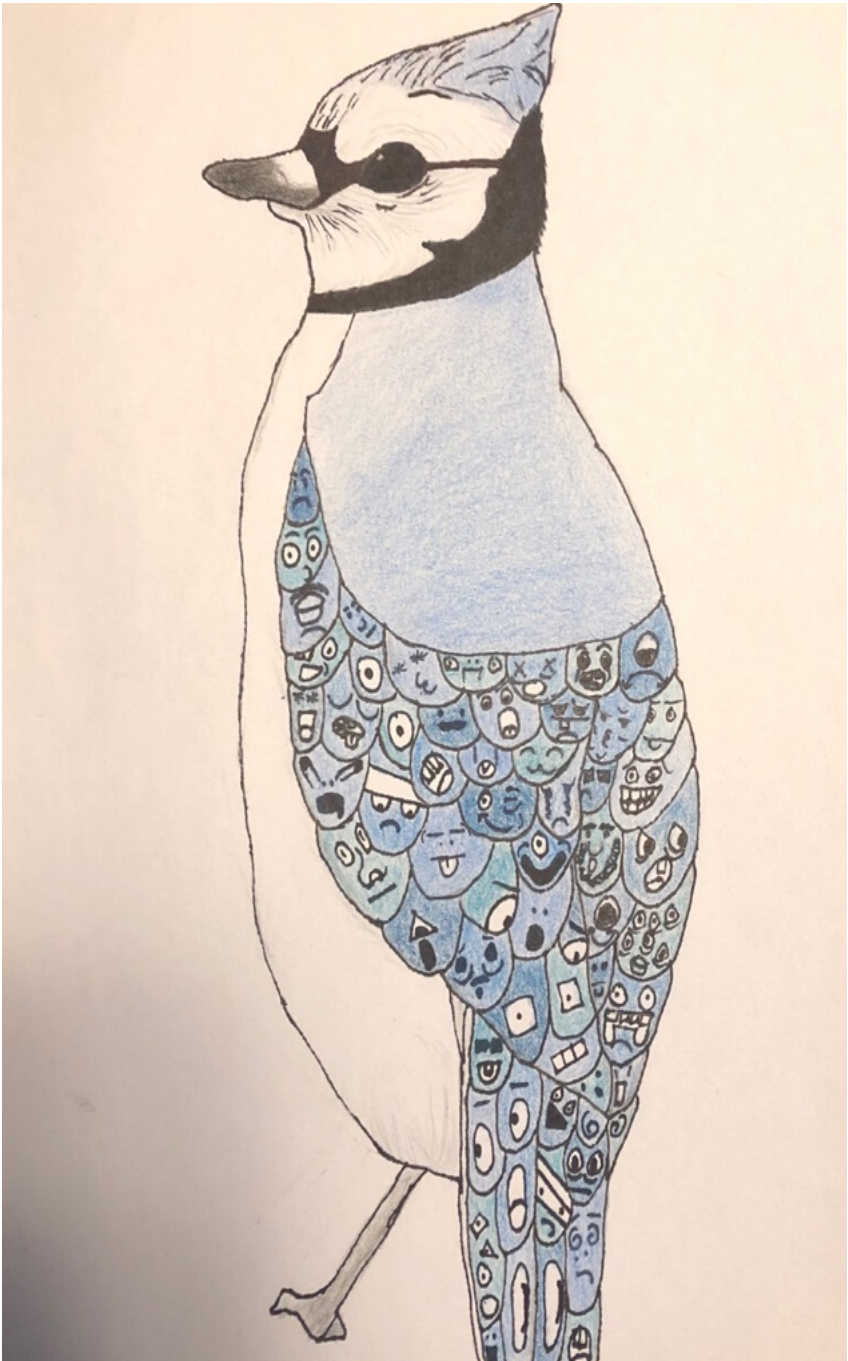
Issue 03, *Life is Change* and the concurrent outdoor exhibition at Kennedy Heights Arts Center exemplify Tellus Zine's mission to provide **a platform for the youth** to express themselves bravely and creatively as a part of our diverse community. The work in our Zine speaks for Tellus and its purpose.

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***The Beginning***, 2020 | Alexis Wood | 16 years old | Coldwater, MI



***Feathers of Thoughts***, 2021 | Fritz Ebbeler | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH

## Storybook

Enter the storybook:

Once upon a time there was a princess in a tower.

Or, in reality, a woman with the glittering,

Innocent,

Not-experienced-anything-worth-experiencing,

Facade.

However, her hair wasn't long.

It was choppy,

Short,

Like the string of her patience.

She cut it off in a rage when she was young.

Her Highness escaped her tower one day.

Don't ask her how. It happened in a blur of time and memory.

But she never thought to herself: What if I needed the tower?

Because she did,

More than the tower needed her.

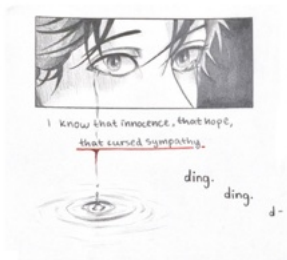
Because if the princess had just turned, she would have seen the edges of a wooden target Molded to her back.

**Storybook**, 2021 | Naina Purushothaman | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH





**little thoughts**, 2022 | Addie Distel | 16 years old | Austin, TX



what happened...?

**Someone Different**, 2021-2022 | Celine Tan | 16 years old | Lebanon, OH

## **i stand outside my body**

i stand outside my body—  
silent lake and frozen.

feet hover over the touch—  
what water might drown me if  
i did not stand outside my body?

all is dark and moored—  
depths of shadows dance on messy  
shattered truths and

what is left?  
but mirrored sighs  
to sigh myself to sleep.

i stand outside my body—  
silent lake and frozen.

eyes hover over the glass—  
old and empty, used map  
in need of new ink for purpose.

i am seeing myself as i stand outside my body—  
i am seeing death,  
candle flicker choked in the absence of air.

***i stand outside my body***, 2021 | Maya Martinez | 18 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***March of 2021, 2021*** | Cate Hummel | 20 years old | Cincinnati, OH

# Deck of Cards

I've been promoted to the Joker of the deck.  
Here are the positions that were taken,  
Long before I was invited: The Queen of Hearts,  
Seven of spades (the lucky number of course),  
And the Ace of diamonds (always shining,  
always demanding the reflection of others' lights).  
We have no king,  
We do not recognize the patriarchy, after all...  
Except when the Deck of Cards is feeling low,  
And then that's all we speak about.

Do the Jokers ever get to play any of the games?  
I haven't so far.  
Remember me?  
The one 17 will also find in June?  
I'm here, waiting, wondering  
What more must I prove?  
Is responding to your summons every day at midnight and noon not enough for you?

I'm drying my tears with scraps of shredded playing cards.  
After years of ditching weight, this is what awaits my fate?  
Blowing out someone else's candles on my birthday,  
Waiting for someone to ask, when 17 will deign to greet me at last?

I've begun to make up fantasies to feel vindicated.  
Because it's a myth,  
That the Jokers get to have all the fun.  
But aren't I supposed to have fun?  
I'm part of the Deck of Cards, after all.  
One of the lucky 52.

But be honest,  
If there were only 51,  
Would the Deck feel any less complete?

*Deck of Cards*, 2021 | Naina Purushothaman | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***Carrigan***, 2020 | Rory Torstensson | 19 years old | Marblehead, MA

# If I Were Gone

If I were to leave permanently  
It would be curious to see how you fare  
And whether if those unreachable stars that have been tapping your back  
Would still be there.

If I were to retreat deep within me  
Would you be there to pull me out?  
Or would you leave me to my own destruction  
Until I am nearly shriveled and dead  
And then come to me when there is something that you just don't get.

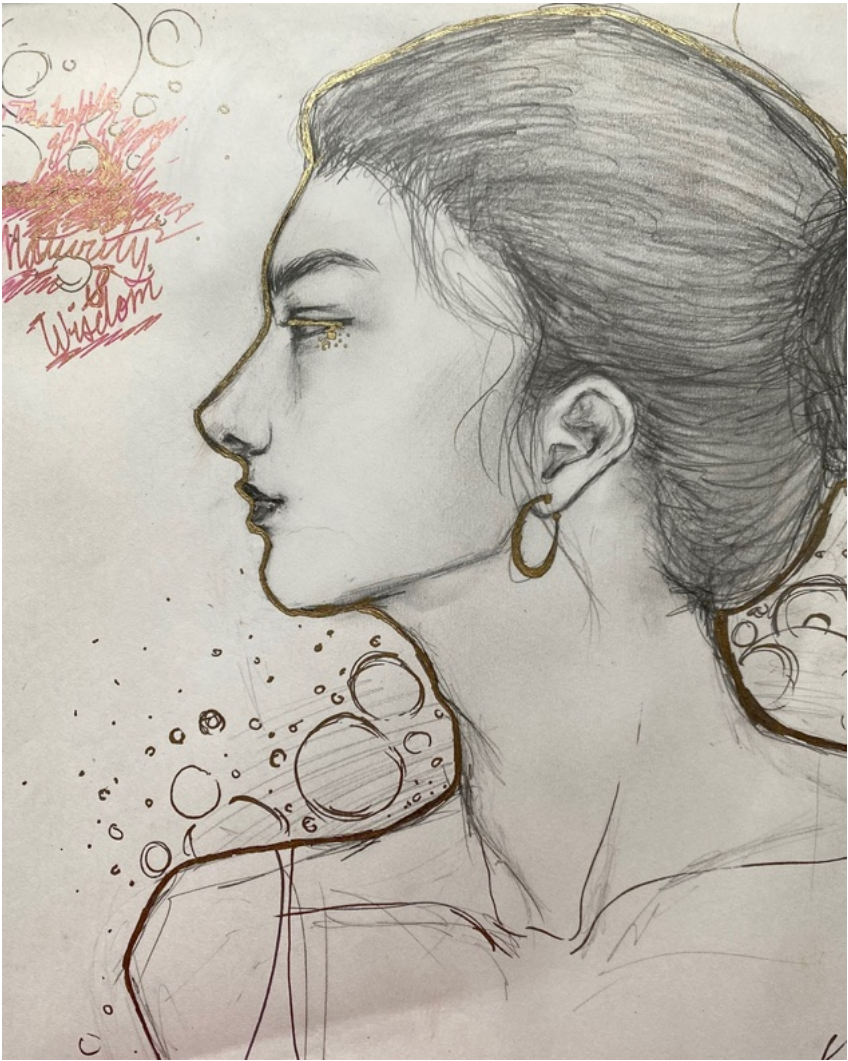
If the scars on my back were not invisible  
Would you care how they got there?  
Would you care who scratched them into my very flesh with poison  
Who left them to rot in the thinning air?

But I can't ask you these questions  
Because I would get anger in return  
Voices which I used to love calling me a hypocrite  
A liar  
A fraud.

But I will never stop asking them  
Even when we are old and dying  
My last thoughts on that death bed would be if my whole life would have been different  
Happier  
Freer  
If I had left permanently  
And left you to the stars without my blood, sweat, and tears supporting your feet.

Baby I know you are trying everything  
I see that you are struggling  
But would it be too much to ask  
To leave me to my own cliff  
And I to yours  
And decide ourselves whether to let the water pull us under  
I to hell and you to heaven  
Or to fight those dreaded sharks and swim ashore

*If I Were Gone*, 2021 | Naina Purushothaman | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***Bubbles of Maturity & Wisdom, 2022***  
Eleanor Prues | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH



## **a loss and a change**

why hate the body your soul chose  
when we can never change the original  
why hate the way we change  
when loss is the next big step  
and loss is at its peak  
a loss of true self  
truth  
and dignity  
led to a loss of words  
and loss of chance

***A Loss and A Change***, 2021 | Jada Keith | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***All of Me: Past, Present, and Future, 2020***  
Cate Hummel | 20 years old | Cincinnati, OH

# Roadblocks

the fall  
they say  
it will get better someday  
the sadness will wash away  
growing up is tough  
there will be rainy days.  
don't remember feeling this way  
turn around  
hit a  
roadblock  
it seems like  
they're everywhere these days.  
i tried to get back up  
oh i tried  
they say  
*be brave*  
i can't  
i'm sorry  
i never realized that my life  
is my life.  
no one should stand in my way  
i'm scared  
i used to say.  
the fear grips and yanks me  
with its blazing hot fingers.  
the lasting effect  
still  
l i n g e r s.  
i was being pushed by fear  
of things that only live inside my insecure mind that haunted my dreams at night.  
anger  
frustration  
sadness  
were the only things in my sight.  
i told myself:  
but what can you do  
that can be so bad  
that you lose faith  
in yourself?

**getting up**

the dark is an illusion  
dreams will come true &  
everything will  
be alright.

a powerful, a strong feeling *hope*.  
i feel the light hit my face like a million

spotlights saying  
*this is your time*.

light

how brilliantly it  
illuminates a room

and

how beautifully it  
casts shadows

on beautiful, flawed things

i'm glass

fragile,

an open book

yet i am

beautifully

iridescent

i know

the darkness still exists like the very occasional rainy, bleak days

turn

around

hit a

roadblock.

i'm going to

push it away.

**Roadblocks**, 2020 | Aditi Purushothaman | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH



**INGROWN**, 2021 | Cierra Fogle | 20 years old | Cincinnati, OH

# **vacaros**

You cry, no sound. Wipe the tears without me. There for you every day./ Someone left you, all you can do is cry but I

/But I will be there even if you don't want me, even if you don't want me. You're going down to the darkness, down to the darkness now. Vacaros is killing you, he's killing you like Gabe did to me. He will never change. Never change/

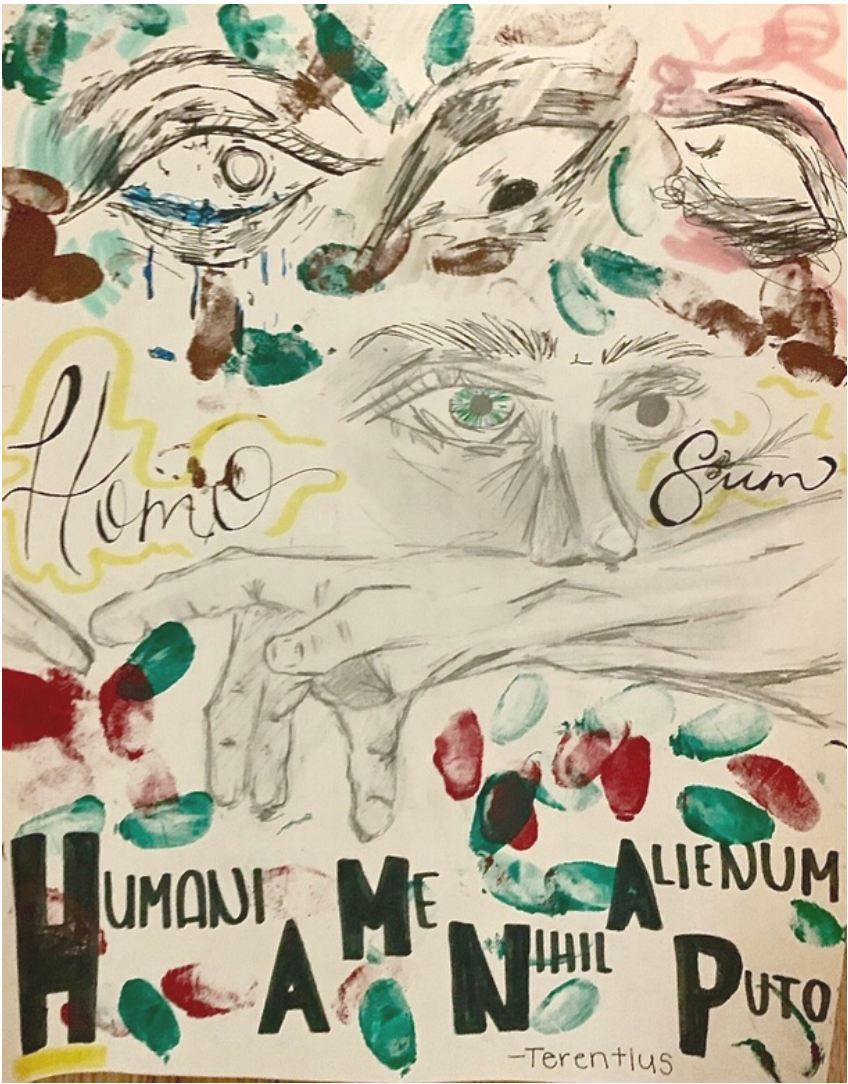
Seeing what you've become such a wonderful guy who I try to care about. A friend that I need to be ok

//

If you are okay, I'll have you tell them yourselves. If you are ok, I'll make you play by yourself... To see...How good...you are... at your life.

I try so hard to part my heart in the dark. On the middle mark, I part it and see a spark in the dark. Now my heart is broken but I broke it. There's 'blood on the floor, is the blood mine or yours? Don't wanna do this anymore!'. You need to confront him and let him know that you've had enough. You are tough and loved. Don't contemplate suicide, just stay by my side. I've been through this, before you, and it's true that you are going to be okay....

**vacaros**, 2022 | Gabriel Brooks | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***Humely Alien or An Alien-like Human?***, 2022  
Gabby Baptist | 16 years old | Cincinnati, OH



**Lost Memories**, 2021 | Addie Distel | 16 years old | Austin, TX



# Who's left?

Who's left?  
Is that why I'm searching for you?  
For upstate New York?  
For a perfect fantasy that would complete me,  
In a world where completion itself is the fantasy?  
Interesting,  
What our minds can conjure up for us  
When we need it the most.

My tears are sensitive to light again,  
So that's why I keep them off.  
They burn,  
But I suppose that's what tears are meant to do:  
To remind you that sadness burns.  
To keep you from numbing the pain,  
Because pain is good,  
Feeling is good,  
Even if you have no one to feel for.  
Feel to...  
At least that's what I'm telling myself.

The cards weren't always stacked against me,  
Against us,  
Weren't they?  
Remind me of a time when we had hope.  
When I didn't need the hope of you to continue.  
Interesting,  
What life used to be like  
Before wanting something other than excellence became a hard pill to swallow.

**Who's Left**, 2021 | Naina Purushothaman | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH



love is subtle

*love is subtle*, 2021 | Cate Hummel | 20 years old | Cincinnati, OH

# New Friendships

Running on rocks  
Saying the scenery is pretty  
And the pain in my feet is a small price to pay  
Avoid the cliff  
Afraid of what is at the bottom  
Running until I can avoid it no longer  
Pushed over the edge  
Falling and falling  
Where will I land?  
The unknown comes closer  
closer  
Until I fall  
It hurts at first  
And the top of the cliff is too far away  
Yet after a while  
I can see  
How lovely it is down here  
And my feet  
Have stopped feeling sore  
And I look up the cliff  
Grateful  
That I am away from the fear  
The pain  
And it is so warm down here  
I wonder why I was afraid in the first place

***New Friendships***, 2022 | Violet Underhill | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH



**Questions, 2021 | Rory Torstensson | 19 years old | Marblehead, MA**

## a moth in the Eastwestfalian Fire Clipper's Blaze

Never a spark caught in the dark.  
Candles were barely lit but blew them out.  
Never a trace of smoke or ash.  
Watch!  
As the page burns  
it turns black.  
Wish my fire burned  
high  
mighty  
strong  
with choking fumes  
that you consume to illuminate the world around you.

But alas

my fire burns underground.  
But like the moth i am  
barely a flame to be shown.  
Just a breath  
a whisper could take me out.

As the sun never sets  
the moon never reaches its apex.  
Trying to find myself in the crowd  
but the sound only made me drown.  
Trying to fly  
Trying to fly  
Higher than i ever could

**but i don't know if i can fly as high as Her**

Now

i wonder how *She* glows?  
A Butterfly  
so bright and uncontrolled.

Behold Her Fire.

i desire to be the center of the show.

But alas

my wings are clipped.

Why can't i be the light that everyone holds so dearly as the lifeline saving all lifetimes!

But alas

why can't i?

**but will i ever fly as high as Her**

i now see how Her Fire grows.

Feeding off others' energy

Traveling through touch

like a flame growing stronger by lighting the other ones. i see how it works

but i doubt how it goes.

i wish to create a spark of my own.

***a moth in the Eastwestfalian Fire Clipper's Blaze, 2022***

Gabby Baptist | 16 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***Untitled***, 2021 | Rory Torstensson | 19 years old | Marblehead, MA

# Wanderlust

You can level with thunderclouds  
Perhaps fly away  
From this town of monotony  
With feathers speckled grey  
Sling a bag over shoulder  
Green fabric and lighter  
pin against my back  
With soil-held hiking boots  
And the distant squall of train tracks  
Slouched shoulders  
An easy sprawl  
Against the one who holds home  
Behind their ribs and nestled into heart  
The rest hidden across a web of bone  
The cracks in our palms  
Heartlines and lifelines  
Guitar strings and paint markers  
Impressions words can't define  
These tears a blip on a radar  
It is not so significant  
For an instant it was enormous  
But we are magnificent  
Old habits don't go easy  
This flutter of my pulse  
and jackrabbit of a heart  
With the snap of a branch  
pass a "No Trespassing" sign  
A sharp grin  
we've got a head start  
Resolve is tireless  
Like starving moths under lamplight  
A dazed spin around a bulb  
Far into the hours of ebony  
Wanderlust has no remedy.

**Wanderlust**, 2022 | Maeve Clancy | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH





***Choosing My Path***, 2022 | Tori Beck Borden | 14 years old | Cincinnati, OH

## Running

You can't run from people  
Or their problems  
But you can walk back in your tracks  
And try again  
Because we all want to be the same  
Cause we're humans  
Who can't think  
Or remember  
That you can't always run home  
Because we went back to the start  
So we can run from everyone  
Again

**Running**, 2021 | Desi Distel | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***Joining Together***, 2021 | Fritz Ebbeler | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH

# Paris

Dancing on a terrace in Paris  
With no reputation to uphold  
Forgetting about the one back home living the life  
I dream about.  
Roses in a bathtub and fire in the water  
The song we had sung is forever among the Parisian breeze.

Constantly walking the line between faith and denial  
We swam in the Seine instead of punching a wall.  
Here  
Conversations were a chess game  
Our words fighting a battle of their own.  
My tears making my eyes sensitive to anything but candlelight.  
We slept until noon because it's hard to regret  
While dreaming.

We painted the illusion of heaven despite us knowing we were far from the angels.  
Our ghosts chased us across the world and found us  
Drowning in denial and bathed in righteousness.  
Even throwing away our futures couldn't disguise  
How little freedom we had.

I need to be in control  
So, affairs with the heart will never again be in my future.  
My mind reminding me I was dreaming of an unwanted love  
But every night I was amazed  
How easily you managed to disappear with the dawn.

There are some dreams I wish I could forget.  
I used to believe in the romantic idea of fate  
But now I know love isn't paradise.  
And so here I am  
Lit by a dim light in my own little Paris.

*Paris*, 2021 | Naina Purushothaman | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***Shining In The Dark***, 2021 | Desi Distel | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH

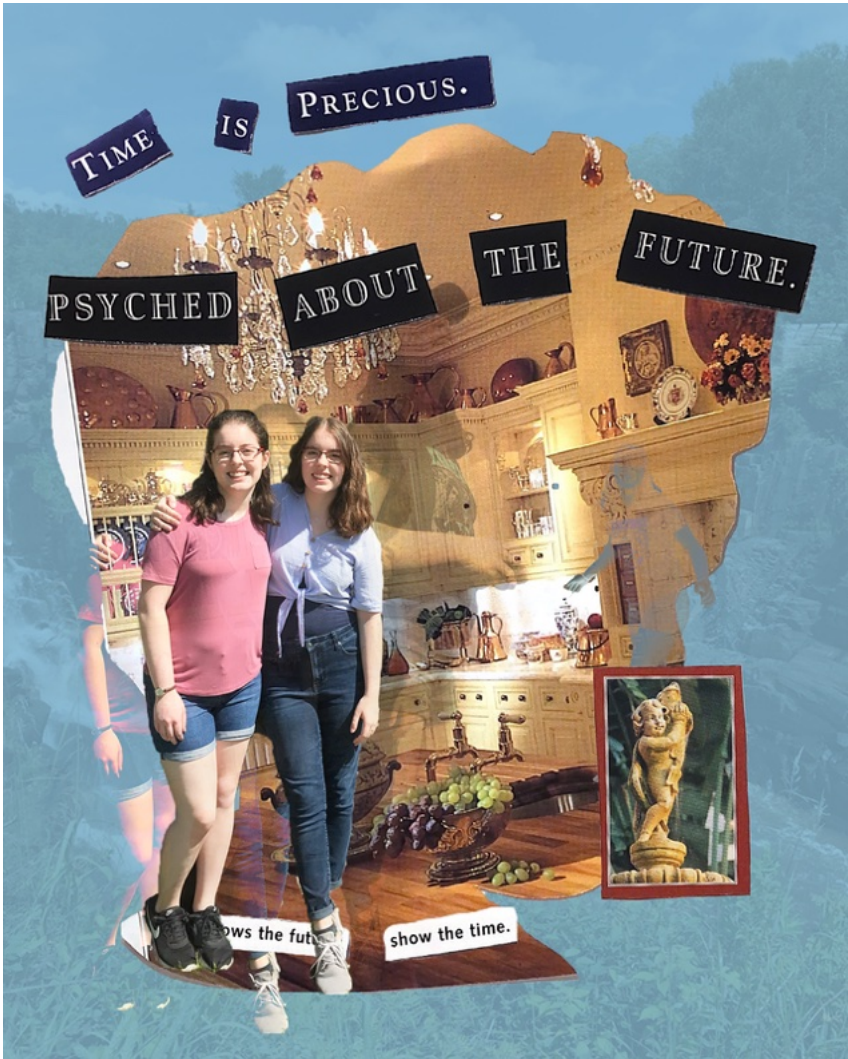
## recycled

my body my life and i  
i as myself  
my body as mine  
life as me  
changes  
grows  
develops  
and cycles  
a 360  
never ending circle  
recycled  
and  
remade

**recycled**, 2022 | Jada Keith | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH



**Canvas Home**, 2022 | Cierra Fogle | 20 years old | Cincinnati, OH

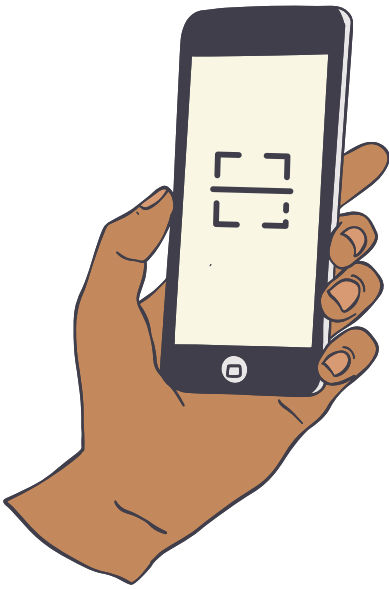


**Time is Precious**, 2020 | Katherine Donaghy | 21 years old | Cincinnati, OH

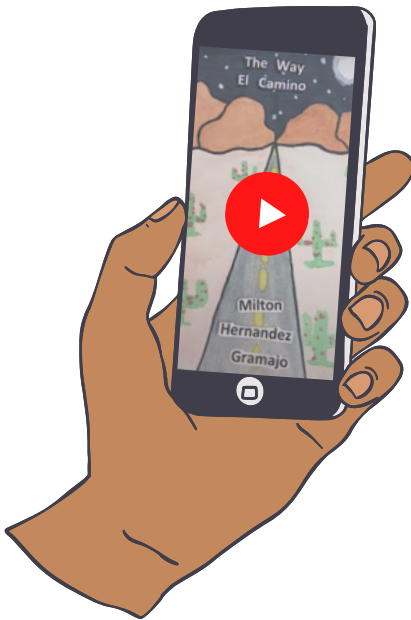




**tiny turtle, 2022 | Addie Distel | 16 years old | Austin, TX**



Scan QR code above to access *The Way - El Camino* video from your phone





*The Way - El Camino*, 2021 | Milton Hernandez Gramajo | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH



**sanctuary**, 2021 | Celine Tan | 16 years old | Lebanon, OH

# A Prayer To My People

Send a prayer to my people  
do not play the missionary  
peddling crumbs  
for the steep price  
of Christianity  
or demand half-hearted invocations.

Send a prayer to Cameroon,  
the home that I bleed for,  
hope for,  
long for.  
The home plagued with the blight of religious intolerance  
and radical Boko Haram,  
My home, a dictatorship  
dressed in democracy,  
since my Mother's first,  
tentative steps.

Send a prayer to my people  
A prayer on hands and knees  
against barren, broken earth  
'till they bleed crucifixion red

A prayer to Grandma  
to hope that she will come back home  
safe and unscathed.  
A prayer of sleepless nights  
and Malaria mosquito nets,  
A prayer of no water or light on fickle days.

A prayer not of words  
and saccharine sweet-nothings  
but of referendums and proclamations  
of manifestos and manifestation  
of blood and sweat and tears and  
screams

Send a prayer to my people,  
to my country,  
Mea Matria:\*  
a one-winged  
broken-hearted  
teary-eyed decree

\*Latin, translated as "My Motherland"

**A Prayer To My People**, 2021 | Gabrielle Walker | 16 years old | West Chester, OH



***I Do It Because I Want To***, 2021 | Katherine Donaghy | 21 years old | Cincinnati, OH

# Flower Crown Kings

## FOR UKRAINE

The flower crown kings have sprouted  
under clouded  
Shrouded  
undoubted skies

Dreary winter has left with its soft steps  
and muddy footprints  
an immediate effect  
to a rather complex bunch

A simple change, really  
with the "unprecedented's"  
"contended's"  
and "impended's"  
of recent passage  
A welcomed respite  
to a spectacularly difficult present

Imagined borders  
expected to prevent a decades-old argument  
with diplomacy and pleasant words  
A disease expected to die without vigilance  
to protect innocence and  
difference  
without a bit of effort

Listening to the terrifying comments  
a disregard for life laughed just next to your ear  
acting as if the message is in any way unclear  
as if we don't have a problem

Every man and woman  
that becomes  
just another name on the news  
in a country that can accuse  
abuse  
and refuse  
half of their own people  
on any normal day

The flower buds are rising from the loam  
along the confines of our home  
one day from the marrow of my bones

Winter's dress has glided away

the kings of spring leave blooms astray  
and at the end of the day  
who's to say  
what we'll be

Maybe Creators  
Mediators  
Dictators  
or Educators

Maybe Scientists  
Biologists  
Doctors  
and Archeologists

"Potential"  
and heavy expectations  
looming in every mention  
a damnation  
to be stuck  
trapped  
like ropes around wrists  
wrapped  
and inept in a situation  
or a place with passion  
left untapped

Pressure on a weary mind  
to seek a purpose  
that can be defined  
to bind  
and confine  
one that will hopefully be kind  
to those who just aren't sure yet

The long-dead flowers  
that were threaded into hair  
experiences that we share  
and tired hearts  
that still do care  
for better or worse.

But the seasons change  
once again  
and that is something we  
can  
comprehend.

***Flower Crown Kings***, 2022 | Maeve Clancy | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH





**Michael**, 2020 | Rory Torstensson  
19 years old | Marblehead, MA



**Tony**, 2020 | Rory Torstensson  
19 years old | Marblehead, MA



***Teacup***, 2022 | Elliott Norris | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH

## a Tribute to Ma Joad

and there it is—  
a grieving within me.

our life  
packed and put away  
left out—  
trinkets for the sun to claim.

our life  
stripped to bare  
bones—  
and mine must still stay steady, stay  
tender and gentle and controlled.

and there it is—  
that grieving within me  
and this box  
the final judge.

    tell me to stay—  
and my lips part, i am begging,  
but the words are stuck, my mouth dry,  
the dust outside swept up and into me and  
the words are stuck.  
    tell me to stay—

but the box stares back at me,  
seems to sigh underneath my fingertips,  
and though i feel our life just there—  
heartbeats. twelve.  
    beating from the box.  
    beating from the house.  
    beating from the land.  
another sigh.

but the box stares back at me,  
and it doesn't say a word  
and it doesn't tell me to say.

and there it is—  
the decision.

*a Tribute to Ma Joad*, 2022 | Maya Martinez | 18 years old | Cincinnati, OH



**The Family Pot**, 2022 | Desi Distel | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH



***The Beginning***, 2020 | Cate Hummel | 20 years old | Cincinnati, OH



*the clock will keep ticking*, 2022 | Olive Scheidler | 14 years old | Staunton, VA

# Change

Change takes his time,  
walking across forgotten, decrepit tombs  
shining like silver dimes  
amassing in fractured homes.

Change often finds anger,  
here before one can say their adieus,  
as fatal as a creeping cancer—  
the slyness of a clandestine coup.

Just yet partial,  
Change seizes children from mothers  
and governs the world's beaming marvels,  
His vigilance seen by all others.

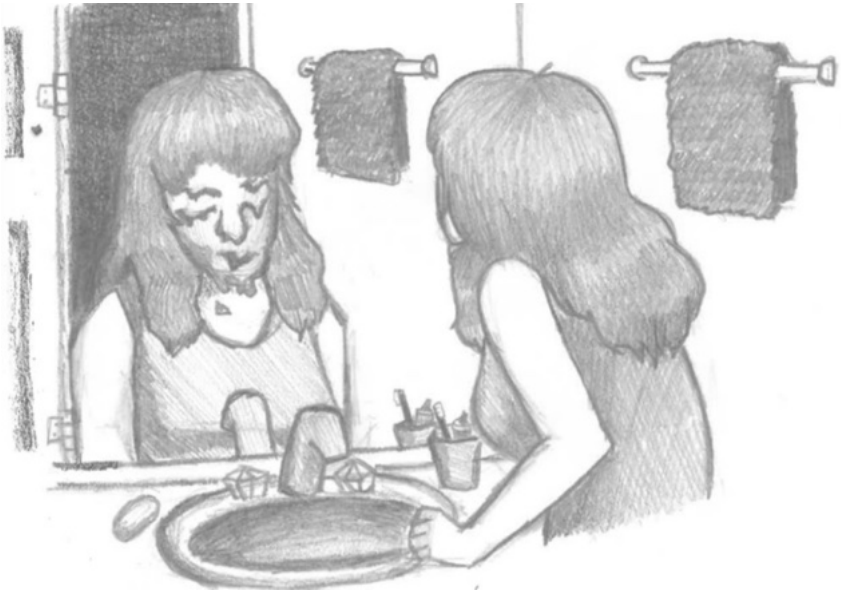
Reflecting on actions that cannot be undone,  
His solemn face shines with fiery passion— for change waits for no one.

**Change**, 2020 | Gabrielle Walker | 16 years old | West Chester, OH



***Growing Away***, 2022 | Desi Distel | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH





**Metamorphosis Series: 1**, 2021 | Emma Thomas | 18 years old | Cincinnati, OH

## therapy

change happens everywhere

everywhere inside me

in my heart

my spirit

my mind

and in my body

i'm femininely changing

emotionally changing

and reminding myself that change is perfectly okay

well

i'm trying to

although

emotionally changing is so emotionally draining and my mind is waiting for an answer

an answer to all my questions and maybe some therapy sessions

i can't help but wonder but change never truly changes

**therapy**, 2022 | Jada Keith | 17 years old | Cincinnati, OH

## self acceptance begets self creation

and why should i wait for someone else to validate my existence,  
when i am the swelling, aching embodiment of life—

i am birthing myself and it's red and raw and soft and fierce;  
i am birthing myself and it's a dance of messy crawling and skipping and tripping.

and why should i wait for someone else for speak my truths,  
when i am loud mouthed and angry, passion heating me up until i am hot hot hot—

i am growing myself and it's infinite, expanding acceptance and star flavored love;  
i am growing myself and it's 18 rhythms and no rhymes, an expression that  
stands and falls, lives and dies.

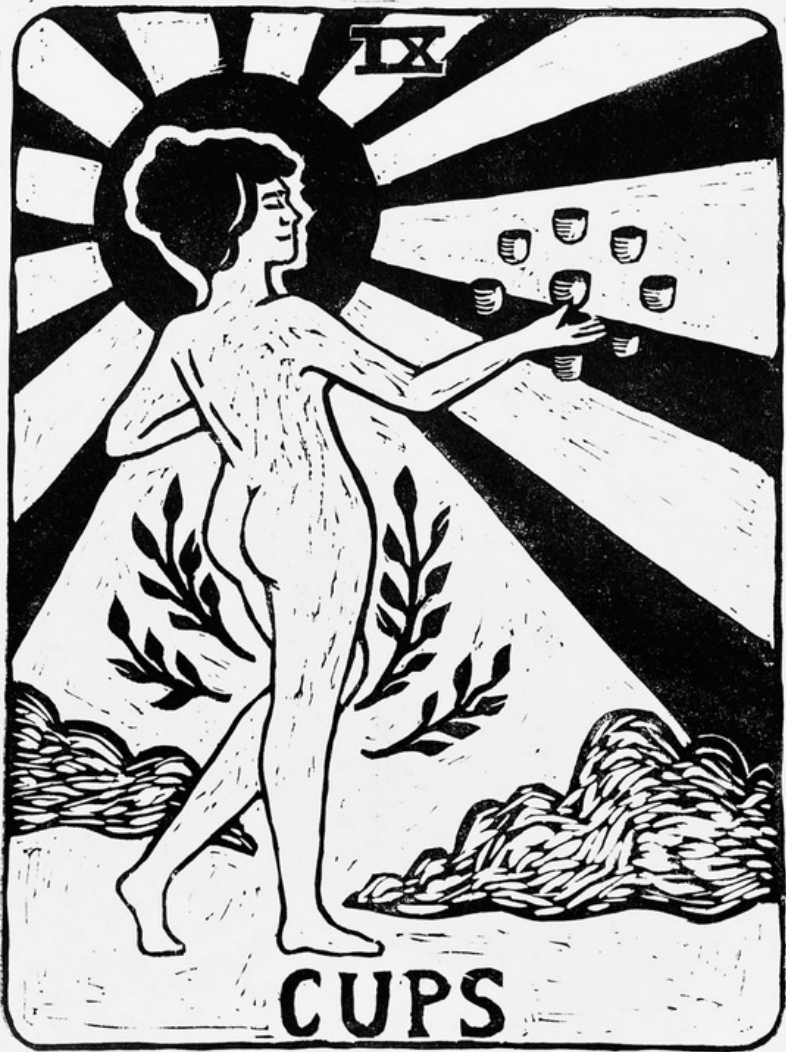
and why should i wait for someone else to love my ugly,  
when i am proud and unashamed of the displeasures i cause—

i am curling, fraying hair, fried from bleach—  
i am sweaty, scared anxiety, mistrustful of trust—  
i am an imperfect, ungraceful body dancing with fire—  
i am bruised flowers and rude language, poem maker and middle finger thrower—  
i am crumbling, rebuilding, breaking, put back together again—

tell me: why should i wait for someone else to validate my existence,  
when i am a fucking goddess,  
when i am happy as the sheer possibility  
—the sheer contradiction—  
of simply being myself?

***self acceptance begets self creation***, 2022

Maya Martinez | 18 years old | Cincinnati, OH



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"Nine of Cups"

*Katherine Donagh*

**Nine of Cups, 2021 | Katherine Donagh | 21 years old | Cincinnati, OH**



***Layers of Perseverance***, 2021 | Fritz Ebbeler | 15 years old | Cincinnati, OH

## Looking Back

I let my mind wander,  
Back over memories of the year.  
Old friends, new adventures,  
Nights spent awake, staring out of the window. Some times were better than others,  
Some I'd rather not think about.  
But what has happened happened. I can't change the past, or predict the future. All  
I can do is live through it.

***Looking Back***, 2022 | Olive Scheidler | 14 years old | Staunton, VA

## acknowledgements

Tellus extends special thanks to our supporters and to all of the artists who contributed to Issue 03: *Life is Change*.

**Tellus Zine is supported by the Charles H. Dater Foundation, ArtsWave, and Kennedy Heights Arts Center.**

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