

Love Letters

- Young Adult Creative Magazine -



- Issue #08: Relief -



Save the Children



- Editor's Note -

i

Dear Readers,

This issue #8 is a "special" of sorts....

Along with being a co-founder and co-runner of Love Letters Magazine, I have been an ambassador for Save the Children and its advocacy-based Action Network for about 4 years. The month of May was met with intensity - the continuing Russian-Ukrainian War, Afghanistan Crisis, Somali Civil War, advocating for Abortion Rights, and countless other equally important issues around the world. Not to mention, the individual battles each of us may face regardless of our current environments, age, gender, etc. May is also Mental Health Awareness Month, and despite the irony given these global atrocities, it lends the perfect opportunity to bridge Save the Children and the Love Letters Magazine. While this issue aims to raise awareness for the Save the Children Mind's Act Campaign (read more on the next page!) concerned with finding relief for children directly affected by these global crises, it also incorporates other stories of mental health journeys and relief that young people around the world experience.

I truly hope you enjoy this special edition and as the Love Letters Team, we would specifically like to thank those that submitted their work to this issue as it takes bravery to share the art relating to your personal mental health.

Lastly, if you feel inclined to donate to Save the Children or learn more about getting involved as a volunteer or in the Student Ambassador program, all links are at the end of this issue.

Take care,

Jaya Valji, co-founder & co-runner of Love Letters Magazine





Jaya Valji (she/her)

New Co-Runner

hey! my name is jaya valji and i'm an indo-canadian living in seattle, washington. i attend the jackson school of international studies at the university of washington as well as Science Po university in Paris for a year beginning in August 2022. i love connecting with others around the world through our magazine!



Ash Reynolds (they/them)

New Co-runner

hi! my name is ash reynolds and i'm a new co-runner of this magazine! i've always loved writing and have been doing it since i was a little kid, as well as other forms of art like drawing, photography and music! i'm super excited to be part of this team and help with such a cool project!



Farewell to Shira Zur

Founder of Love Letters

Thank you so much to Shira Zur for founding this magazine and putting in all the hard work to get it up and running. The team will miss you so much and we can't wait to see what you do next!





- Save The Children - iii

Love Letters is proud to be partnering with



Save the Children

To show support for mental health awareness month and the Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings (MINDS) Act, we have partnered with the human rights organization, Save The Children. The goal of this issue is to reach a larger audience - including it being sent to our senators urging their support for this bipartisan piece of legislation! Join us and be part of the change! More information about the MINDS act can be found on the next page and on the Save The Children website.

[savethechildren.org](https://www.savethechildren.org)

More information at the end of the issue!



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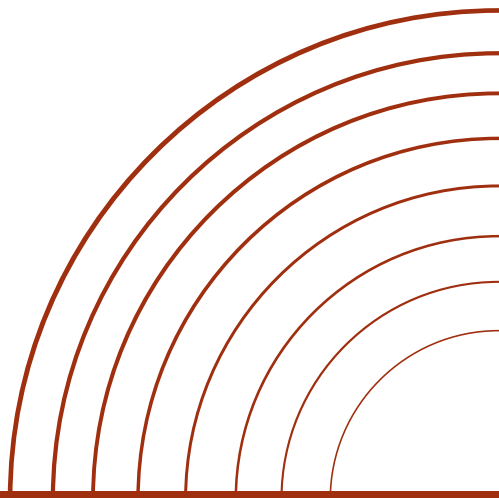


- *On Contortionism* -

1

Austin J. Remington

i was not blessed with the ability
to shape myself into phrases.
when my mother pointed to the word *daughter*
which often took the shape of the word *girl*,
my arms
(oh, broken bleeding wings)
dangled awkwardly out the sides.
i learned eventually to fit into *pink*,
into *quiet*, into *sister*,
into *good girls*
(my head hits the bathroom floor)
always brush their hair.
alone i was *wild*,
(oh, transformation)
i was *dirty*,
(creaking, cracking skin)
i was *bare-chested brother*
(scraped clawing hands)
sprinting barefoot towards the sun.



About the Poet:

Austin J. Remington (he/it) is a disabled poet, artist, and musician located in Natchitoches, LA. He is currently studying Creative Writing at Northwestern State University of Louisiana, where his poems "elegy for the dead bird on your porch" and "in which i am a bird" were published in the 2022 issue of NSULA's literary magazine Argus

Artist's Statement:

"on contortionism" is a poem about catharsis, and about the suppression of the self giving way to wild expression. I like to think that is a form of relief."

-Austin J. Remington



– *Promises* –

2

Yu Xin Paw

Your back is more tired than your mother's.

The masseur's Mandarin imprints something deeper than my skin.

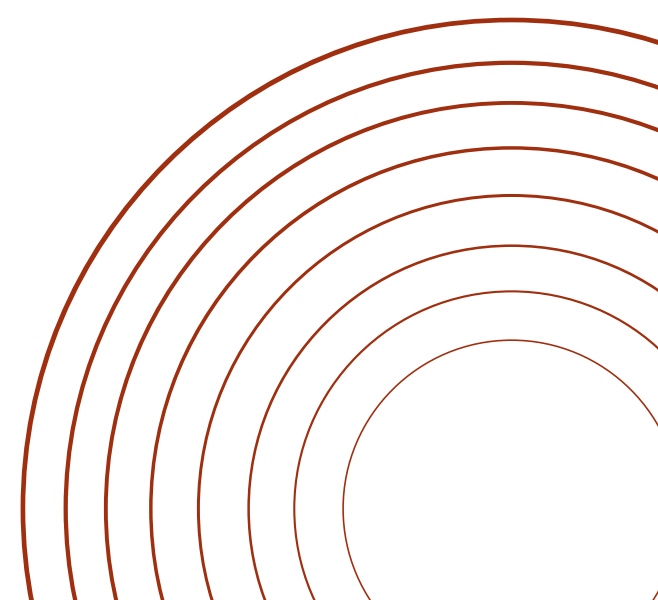
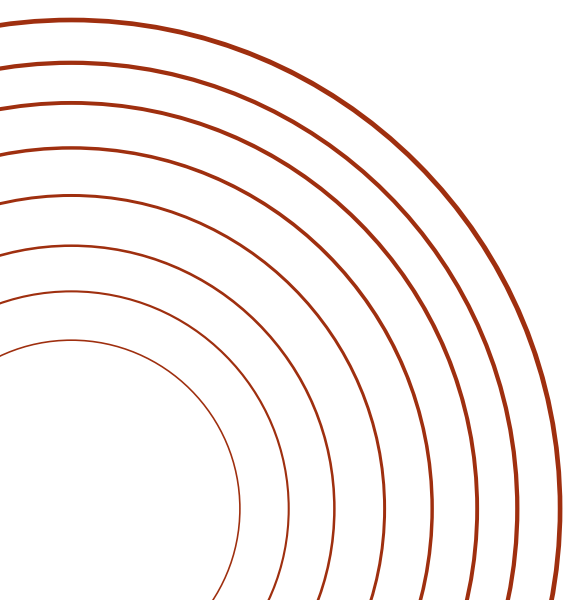
I am easier with eucalyptus, more supple than
a typical heatmap. Through the recess I watch her dark apparitions,
great ordinary reflexes to my snares. It is today
my muscles shall warm up to a stranger than myself. While mass

escapes from my totality, my reason is equally painstaking. I sieve through
lost time, lost scenes, for all the methods
by which we promise. The most primal and pious: pinkies encircling, little
bones yoking their masters to momentary
paradigms. Then, we grow into boring shapes, or, what we fall short of
proving. When had my nerves modeled

such curving and committing, when had they begun to promise multiply,
conscientiously, unrecognisable from knots.

So I descend, unlearn, let her knead away the vestigial. Leaving
the windchimes later, my breaths will be
less like heaves: such is the smallness of rebirth. I wish my body knew that

it was always my lover,
though not in that kind of way.





- *Promises* -

3

Yu Xin Paw

This piece was originally published in the online magazine: *The Ice Lolly Review* (www.icelollyreview.com).

About the Poet:

Paw Yu Xin is a student in Singapore who likes stir fried tomato eggs. *Promises* was first published in the Ice Lolly Review and her other poems can be found in the *borderline* and *Filter Coffee Zine*.

Artist's Statement:

"This is a confessional poem, in response to a traditional Chinese medicine massage I had recently, in which I realised it wasn't normal to live with a tense back! On a literal level, my body feels relief, but this poem is also an expedition of my relationship with my body, and how I am grateful towards it for sustaining me."

-Yu Xin Paw





What are some of your favorite pieces of 'comfort media'?



Ratatouille
(2007)



The Dist. Life of Saiki K.
(2016-2019)



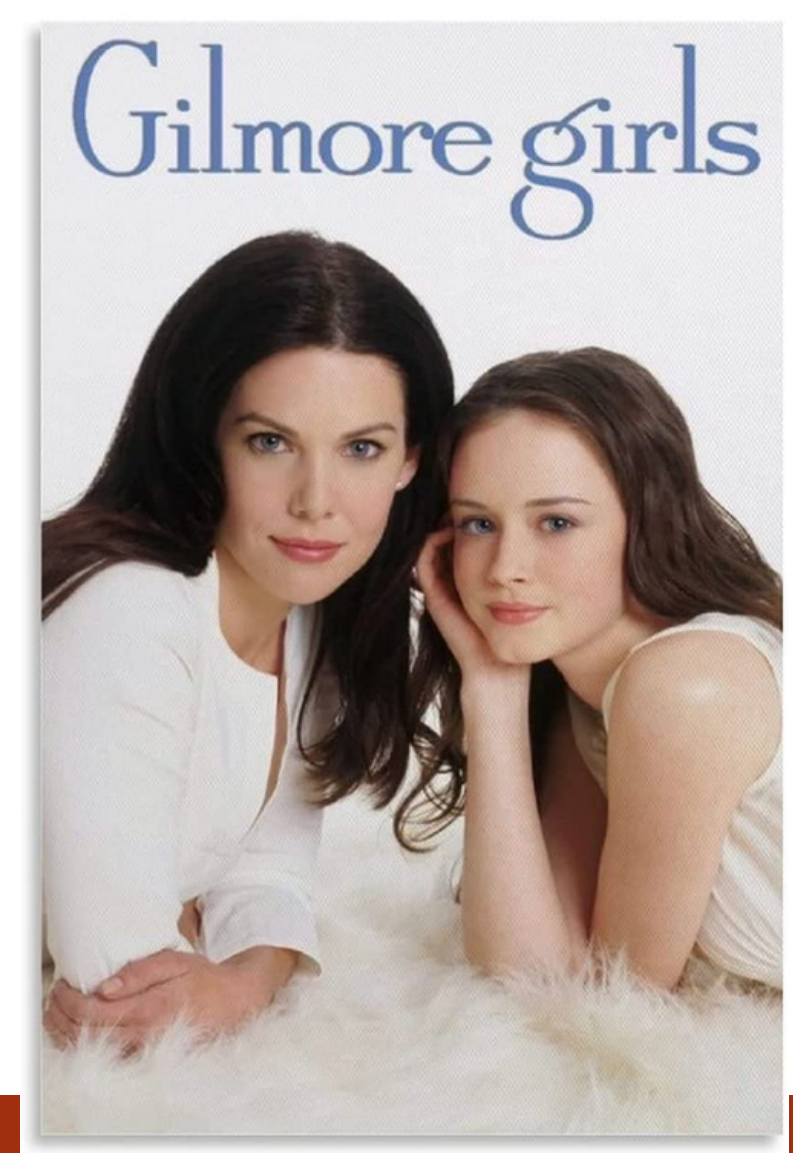
My Neighbor Totoro
(1988)



hush, hush
Becca Fitzpatrick



Knives Out
(2019)



Gilmore Girls
(2000-2007)



- *Shattering Backwards* - 5

E.O. Galvez

May 28th, 2021

You know, people exaggerate when talking about breakups. All I've done since breaking up with him two days ago was take pictures of myself in a pool. Okay, and think about him, but just a little bit. It's not like I've cried really.

June 9th, 2021

People definitely exaggerate.

June 12th, 2021

Okay, so I think. I think a lot. Whenever boys or dating or love or relationships or anyone with his name is brought up I think of him. I think of him when I see someone with dark fluffy hair walk by. I think of him when friends talk about exes or boyfriends. I think of him when I think. But that's it. He might consume my mind, but he doesn't consume me or my emotions. I guess I'm just lucky to have a healthy breakup.

July 24th, 2021

It's so easy. If I were to give someone advice, it's just to busy yourself. I've been super busy! I mean, at sleepaway camp I thought about him a lot, I guess because us girls would always talk about boyfriends. My only serious experience is from him, though, so I guess it's not weird that I'd talk about him a lot. I'm still doing perfectly fine though—it doesn't really matter that I think about him daily because at some point I'll think about him practically never! Right?

July 28th, 2021

I'm beginning to think I think too much. I guess I just had a lot going on before, but... Now it's summer break. Of course now I have more free time. Free time that ends up being devoted to him. Every picture I take, every thought I have... I want to tell him about it. I want to send him that picture and talk about what I was doing. I want to tell him about that thought and talk about why I had it and just talk. Just talk to him. However, I have my friends! They're supporting me. That's nice. I really appreciate them.

July 30th, 2021

I'm going to admit—music is the saddest. More than memories, more than overthinking, songs that he told me about, songs that he sent me as messages, songs that he dedicated to me, songs that I listened to and sang with him hurt the very most. Thankfully, I'm living a good life here. Traveling with family is fun, especially when there's a pool at the Air Bnb and the beach is near. I'll have many pictures from this summer to cover up the pictures of him that are deleted from my camera roll.

 – *Shattering Backwards* – 6

E.O. Galvez

August 24th, 2021

Life is good. I'm good. I think about him, but not crazy often. Not that much, really. There's friends, more traveling, more memories to be made. I might end this journal sooner than I thought I would. See what I said? People exaggerate. It might feel horribly sad at the moment, but you come out stronger! I'm completely, 100% over him. Thriving. I'm going to close this journal now :)

September 3rd, 2021

Don't do it. Don't do it. Shit.

September 4th, 2021

If I was a drunk, I think this is what people would call a rebound. I'm not thriving. If I had been "completely over him," I wouldn't have texted him. Wouldn't have asked him about him and his girlfriend. Wouldn't have continued the conversation. Wouldn't have told him that I was sitting on the floor of my hotel bathroom at midnight crying quietly so that my sister didn't hear. I wouldn't. Have told him. Anything. I'm not over him.

September 5th, 2021

I never understood why people would call it "heart broken" until now. It definitely isn't an exaggeration to say that my heart broke. Shattered. Hopefully I don't hurt myself with all the little shards.

September 20th, 2021

Healing is catching my breath. Healing is walking through water. Healing is solemn thoughts staring at a window. Healing is eyebags in photos. Healing is being forced to grow while assuming you had already grown.

October 2nd, 2021

I've been busy again. School started again. Friends, boys, work. There's not much room for an ex anymore. It's in the same places I find him invading my thoughts again. The songs, the name, the hair. Though sometimes it's not reminders. Sometimes it's just him. I'd like to say I'm over him, but I wouldn't be so adventurous. His birthday is in just a couple days, too. Thankfully, my best friend's birthday is two days after. Maybe it'll distract me.

October 8th, 2021

I have a boyfriend now!



- *Shattering Backwards* - 7

E.O. Galvez

October 21st, 2021

Honestly I can't believe I ever dated that guy. He was rude, and dumb, and annoying. Not even that attractive. I definitely didn't mean "I love you" the same way I said it to him him. This guy doesn't even count as a him. Pfft.

December 24th, 2021

School break. Traveling again! I think I'm doing fine. Really. I'm working out, I'm at a super cool resort, I'll look amazing this New Years in my new dress... Totally a breakup-glowup from both that guy and him.

February 20th, 2022

New year, new goals, new me. Way too busy to care to think about him. I'm going to a Billie Eilish concert with my mom, for crying out loud! I'm over him. Completely and fully.

March 11th, 2022

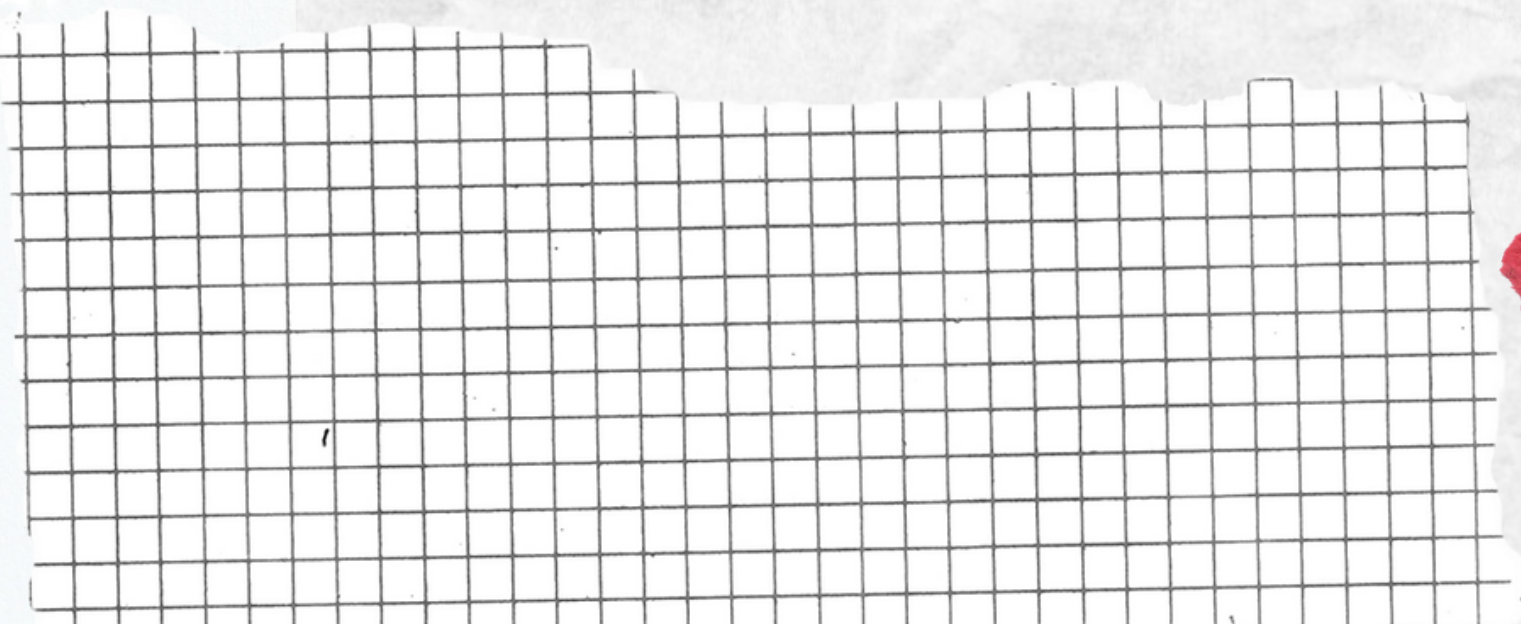
Today, I was reminded of him because I was thinking of the things I never knew. At school, we protested a law against LGBTQ+ in Texas. He's from Texas. Would he have been "on my side"? Or would he have supported the law? That's odd. I wonder if he was a Trump supporter. Not that it really mattered, honestly. He treated me well and I'm just so grateful I had such a good boyfriend. Compared to the latest guy, wow. So grateful.

April 7th, 2022

My birthday is pretty soon. At midnight of my last birthday, I was texting him. I was thinking of him. I was breathing him on every word, every beat of my heart. A year ago, he was all of me. He was who I said I was, who I thought I was. Obviously, my thoughts weren't true, since a year later he isn't who I said I was. He isn't a part of me... Maybe that really is okay.

April 24th, 2022

I'm a year older as of 4 days ago. Did I think of him once? Nope. Whatever I said before was a lie. I'm over him now. From this moment on, he isn't a sad memory. He isn't an ex my friends tell me to not talk about or I'll become upset. He isn't who I said I was, he isn't a fracture in my heart, he isn't a passing thought day-to-day. All he is is an effect of a reminder. This journal now has no use to me.





- *Shattering Backwards* - 8

E.O. Galvez

June 4th, 2022

Writing this was, at first, very simple. I'm happy to say I've now moved on. I've now come to terms with the decision I made, what happened in the end, what could've happened if we were different people in a different universe. I've been perfectly fine without him in my life for many months now. Toward the end of writing, though, it got a little scary. A part of me, a very big part, was seriously thinking about re-adding him on social media just to send this to him. To share with him writing about how it felt from my side, what I did and how I felt and how I broke and how I healed. But now, it makes me think—the whole point is that you came out of that breakup stronger than you were when you first started dating him. The point is that you don't need him in your life. So why does he need to know how it felt for you? Why does he need to know what you did, what you felt, how you broke and healed? He doesn't need to know, because he belongs in one part of you and one part only.

MEMORIES.



About the Author:

E. O. Galvez (she/her) is a teen female writer. She's been writing stories since she was physically able to, and "reading" books since preschool. She is soon to have her oldest project be professionally printed, and continues writing whenever possible. Her favorite genres are fantasy and romance, and this is her first online publication piece!

Artist's Statement:

"My story's format is written in multiple journal entries about how I felt after the breakup with my first love. This submission fits into the theme of "relief" because, as it shows the stages I went through (evidently, backwards), it shows the relief felt after the stages have ended."

-E. O. Galvez



– *White On Rice* –

9

Jada Leung

You used to hate this part.

Remember?

You always made me do it.

And once the vegetables were sliced, hesitant and uneven, you'd tell me, "See, érzi? Things take work to be good. They break to become better."

When I first stepped to the stove, you criticized me over rinsing rice, over pouring soy sauce and frying garlic until it was dark as contempt. And with a fire fueled by shouts, by ugly crying and burnt dinners, I learned.

Now I live alone, and all that's left of you is memory, but you still make the best fried rice.

About the Poet:

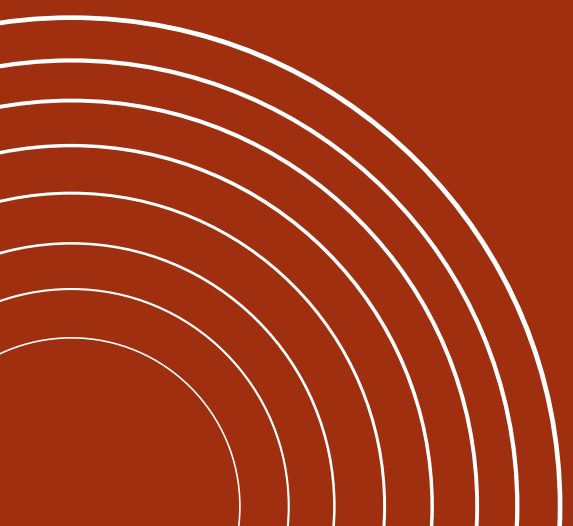
Jada Leung (she/her), 16, has been writing since she was ten. She is from California and now currently resides exclusively in her own head. She has mostly written for online forums and social media, and is honored to have been published in multiple community anthologies, although she is usually less professional than she sounds.



Artist's Statement

"I wanted to challenge myself and figure out if I could portray tough love in less than 100 words. I think this feeling is familiar to a lot of people, sort of the way that there are some relationships that feel almost like hatred and contempt but are actually looked back upon fondly in the future. That kind of belonging and "relief" can feel painful in the present but looking back you just see family and two people looking out for each other, and I think that's beautiful."

-Jada Leung



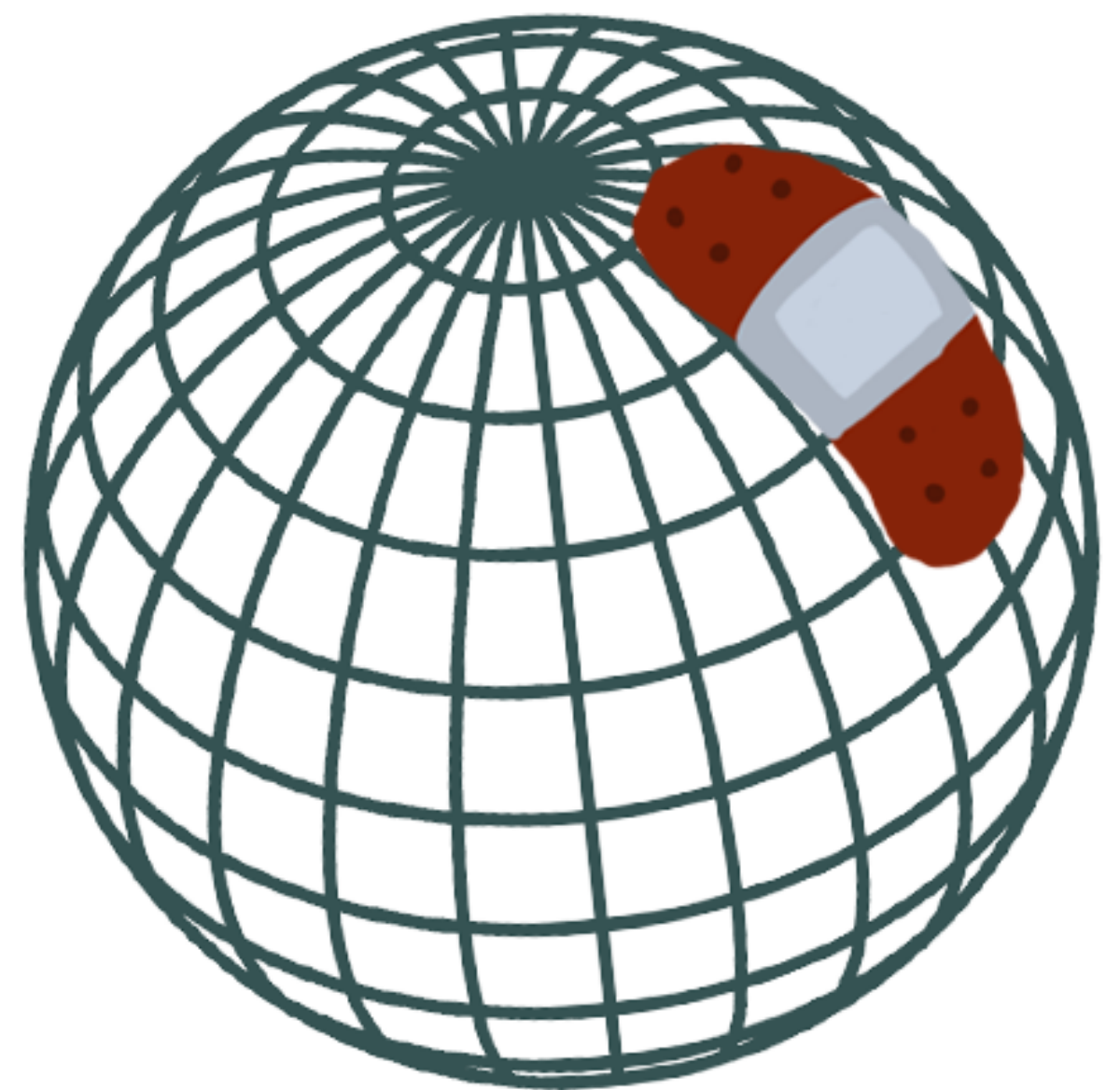


- *Mental Health In The World We Live In* - 10

Martha Hammond

Mental Health encompasses emotional, psychological and social well-being, influencing cognition, perception and behavior for all humans. So why is it treated so differently around the world?...

Is it just down to countries' income or is it also an internalized stigma towards not only mental well-being but also mental illness? There is a difference between the two which is often confused, mental well-being is having both an awareness of your emotions in addition to the ability to manage and express those feelings in a healthy way; having both good mental and physical health, high life satisfaction, and a sense of meaning. Whereas mental illnesses are specific diagnosable health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking, or behavior (or a combination of the three) - often associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work, or family activities. They are medical diagnoses that have behavioral components like any medical condition such as heart disease or diabetes. Mental illnesses include Depression, Anxiety, and Eating disorders. Everyone has different symptoms but some may experience things like fatigue, tight feeling in chest, headaches, sweating etc. This is where the divide between high and low income countries comes in, not all have the resources or funds to provide basic medical care. So how does such a necessity like how you feel and manage your emotions get dealt with across the globe?



Richer countries have higher levels of anxiety than lower countries and it was also found that this anxiety interfered more with daily life in high income countries than low income countries. For example, according to STAT news, Australia and New Zealand, both identified as high-income countries, had the highest lifetime prevalence rates — 8 percent and 7.9 percent, respectively. Nigeria (0.1 percent) and Shenzhen, China (0.2 percent), had the lowest rates reported; both were categorized as low-income areas. So although higher income countries may have better access, is this because some may feel there is a greater demand here? Low income countries simply cannot afford to buy resources that won't be used. Or... is it something more, that citizens of low income countries feel there is so much stigma they feel they cannot even discuss how they feel.



Martha Hammond

In contrast, it is perceived that high income countries could have more stigma around mental health and illness. This is because of the belief that there is “no reason to feel that way” - if you have shelter, food and water, what could you possibly feel anxious about?

Predominantly older generations simply cannot fathom how taxing daily life can be to someone with mental illness.

Statistically, there is a significant amount less people who suffer from mental illnesses in low income countries, but this may just be because there is so little education surrounding the topic that no one really knows how to broach the subject. So surely the main issue is not money to buy resources but also reducing stigma so people feel comfortable within their rights to reach out for help. This could be achieved through educating children in their primary years or even providing safe spaces for all, especially adults to talk. If adults feel there is a safe space to ask questions where they will not be criticized by peers for “not knowing enough”, regardless of where they come from, America or Africa, New York or Lagos.

Overall, mental illness is prevalent throughout society regardless of where you live.

It is just the way it is dealt with which influences how in the future mental health resources are developed and distributed wherever you come from.

About the Author:

Hey! My name is Martha Hammond and I'm 15. I've always loved reading and writing, especially about topics which interest me such as history, politics, and film. I also enjoy spending time with my dog and horses as well as going out with friends.



**Read more of
Martha's work on
our blog!**

<https://www.thelovelettersmag.com/blog>



- A Veranda's Distance -

12

Anushka Srivastava

If Nana had stayed, Nani might have taken the light blue saree he had brought out of the second drawer for her 80th birthday...

She is too specific about her choices now. She thinks if she won't choose wisely, her life would be a waste because when she last saw him, Nana had said he was sorry and for a moment, she had felt he meant that. Years have passed since then. 40 long years. Now every time I ask her about that one afternoon, she smiles lazily and continues to think of the past. She says she should have said what she had to.

I have been feeling the urgency quite lately to figure out why the silence, that years lay upon years, is painless enough to make it through life, yet too recurrent, too persistent and permanent for anyone to forget it. No, Nani does not brood over a lost love or a lost husband. Her grief is only for the fact that she couldn't tell him that he didn't feel the right person for her after all. She has thought about him on most days year after year and yet, he wasn't it.

Sometimes when I sit on the wooden sofa next to her that Nana had received in dowry, I look at her cuddled in a bed right next to it. The sight feels like a white noise, too loud with stories I never felt the need to listen till the intensity faded. I now watch her talk to me about people, strangers mostly about whom I have no knowledge. She says something about Kaaka, sometimes about my mother because she thinks *that* would interest me... that she was shy, maa, but not quite often about her elder daughter, who passed away in the haze of a medical emergency. She thinks about her own mother, or about Ziyana Dai, who braided her hair. The other day, it was quarter to one when Nani looked at me and said,

"Masterjee came to bed on our wedding night, posed his head on the side of his person, stealing away any contact only to utter, marriage does not interest me Sheetla". Fair enough? Nani asked him to explain why not and he didn't answer. Nani took her blanket and went to sleep happily saying,

"Then our marriage would work just alright, Masterjee".



- *A Veranda's Distance* -

13

Anushka Srivastava

Nana did not agree to make peace with Nani's mediated acceptance as it was. She tells me about his frustration as if the absurdity of that night is a joke she has held on to, 60, perhaps more than 60 years later. She is still angry at the way he came home all drunk one spring afternoon. Nani didn't allow him to enter home. He stayed out at the street and the next morning, they fought but Nani said,

"My point was made after that night." 20 days passed and both of them didn't speak to each other. On the 21st day, my mother found him lying motionless in one of the rooms upstairs. "This dilapidated home will one day be a Haveli", Nana said.

Maa is no more the shy girl Nani had raised, none of us go to the two rooms upstairs. Our entire life is centered around a single bed. My Nani's blue saree lies rejected and locked in a cupboard, perhaps because it reminds her of old times. She picks up the peacock green one that Maa had recently bought. His 'soon-to-be-Haveli' is a home Nani wishes only to be whitewashed, every year, Maa saving her income for the one grand event Nani looks forward to. Right adjacent to the veranda is the place where Nana had last called Nani for a glass of water. From where Nani lies, his room is no longer visible.

Nani tells me about Kaaka, Ziyana Dai and sometimes, her mother.

About the Author:

Anushka is a postgraduate student of English Literature from Delhi University, India, Anushka navigates imposed clutter through an erratic spill of her protesting ink.

Artist's Statement

"[This] is a short story peeking into the life of an old lady in her 80s.... Relief is often found in the complete ownership of the self, one that is determined to live a fulfilled life even when societal expectations of a happy life is withdrawn. The granddaughter must see it but slowly, as it comes."

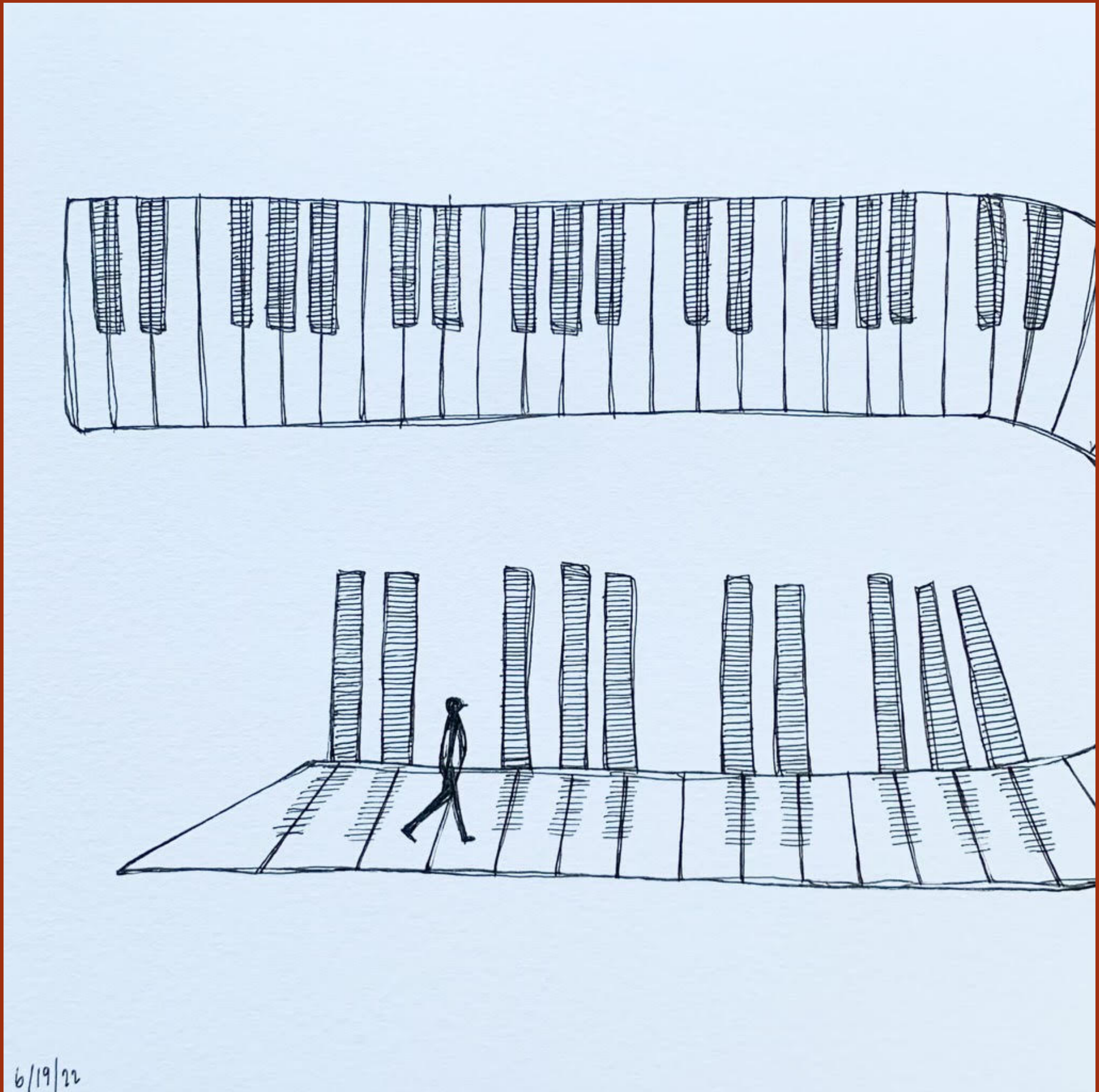
-Anushka Srivastava



- *Music as Relief* -

Naomi Leites

14



**Check out more of Naomi's work on Instagram:
[@naomillustrations](https://www.instagram.com/naomillustrations)**



- Additional Resources -

15

Love Letters Mag x Save The Children



Save the Children

Save the Children Action Network (SCAN) Is the Political Voice for Kids

Save the Children Action Network (SCAN) was created in 2014 as the political advocacy arm of Save the Children, to be the political voice for kids. We work to ensure that the issues critical to children's lives and futures are given top priority by our elected leaders, building bipartisan support to make sure every child has a strong start in life.

One of the most important issues Save The Children is tackling right now is ensuring access to mental health resources for children in crisis zones.

The MINDS act (more info on next page) is one of the most important ways we can achieve this goal. Take action to support the MINDS act at the link below:

<https://tinyurl.com/takeactionMINDSact>

Are you struggling?

Don't be afraid to reach out for some relief.

Find U.S.A. national/state hotline resources:

<https://www.apa.org/topics/crisis-hotlines>

Find your country's hotline resources:

<https://findahelpline.com>



SOME BASICS ON MENTAL HEALTH, PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS) AND THE MINDS ACT



The Problem:

Despite the fact that millions of children desperately need treatment and support, less than 1 percent of funding on global health goes to address their mental health and well-being. While the US government does finance MHPSS in its foreign assistance, there is no official government commitment or approach, no reporting on how the U.S. is addressing mental

health and psychosocial needs and no inter-agency coordination process. With an estimated 452 million children living in conflict zones, it is essential for mental health and psychosocial support to be adequately financed, mainstreamed and prioritized to respond to the spectrum of children's needs.

Why It Matters:

Mental health is crucial to a child's physical and intellectual growth and development. Strong mental health and psychosocial supports at a young age lay a vital foundation for their education and ability to cope with challenges later in life.

By investing in children's mental health and psychosocial well-being, we are investing in the global community - its brighter future and long-term success.

The Solution:

We need improved humanitarian policies and funding to support the mental health and psychosocial well-being of children impacted by conflict. That's why the MINDS Act is so important - it puts mental health at the forefront of the discussion, and sheds light on mental illness affects millions of children worldwide.

The Mental Health in International Development and Humanitarian Settings (MINDS) Act is the first-ever piece of legislation that would promote mental health and psychosocial support as a key component of U.S. foreign assistance. It will support best practices in the

field of mental health, lay the groundwork for a global mental health strategy and emphasize the needs of at-risk populations such as children, women and girls.

The MINDS Act is bipartisan, and has been introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. In the House, it's been introduced by Representatives Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Joe Wilson (R-SC). In the Senate, it's been introduced by Senator Bob Casey (D-PA).

Thanks for Reading!

Looking for some more relief in these trying times?

Check out our website for more!

www.thelovelettersmag.com



Check us out on social media:

Instagram: @lovelettersmag

Twitter: @loveletters_mag

Cover art by co-runner Ash Reynolds

Love Letters Chronology

#07: Wanderlust

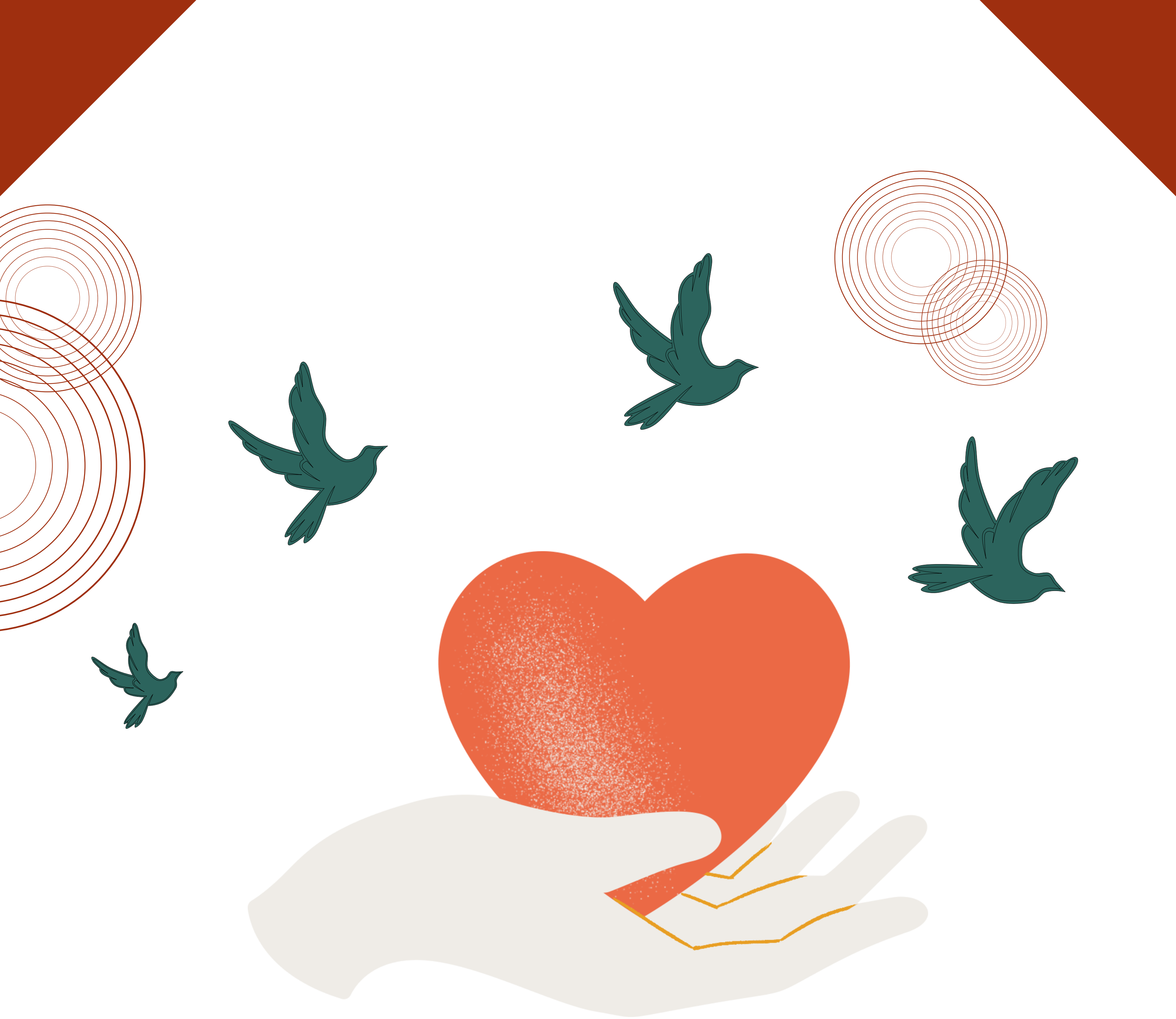


#08: Relief

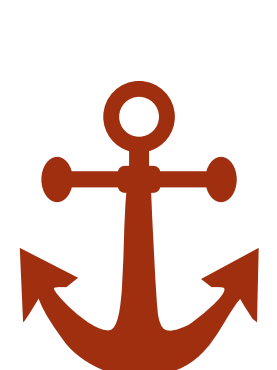


#09: ???





Love Letters Magazine



Save the Children

