



LITERATURE & VISUAL ARTS JOURNAL



VOLUME XVII • 2024



Cover Art

“Take My Hand”

by Kate Brickner

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

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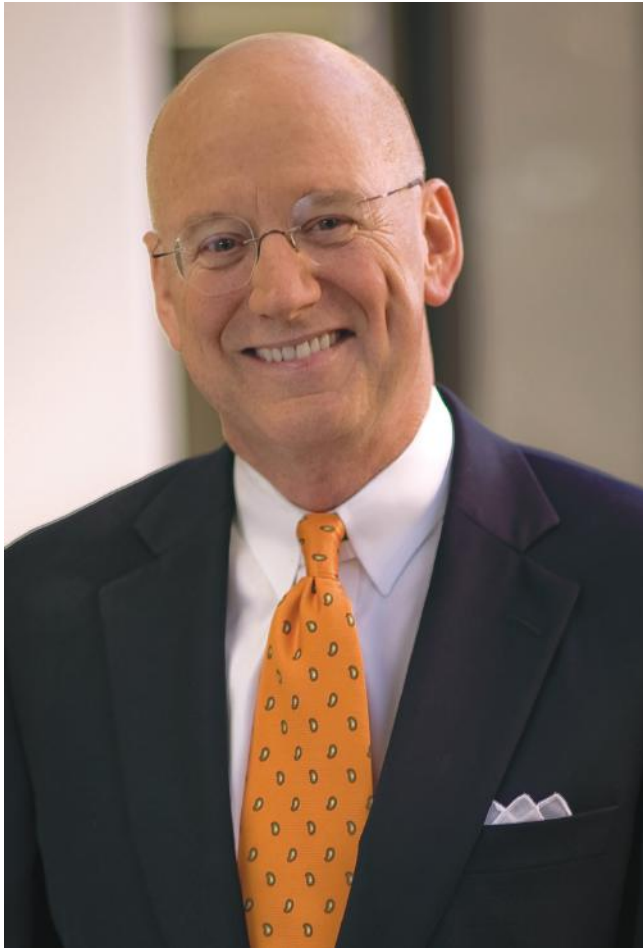
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IN MEMORIAM - WILLIAM HENRICH



August 7th, 1946, was a beautiful day in our world as William Lloyd Henrich, who we all knew as Bill, was born in Detroit, Michigan. His mother was Margaret William, a former mezzo-soprano, and his father Thomas Lloyd Henrich worked in the movie industry. Texas' Lone Star shined brighter when the Henrich family moved to Richardson, Texas, when Bill was five years old. Bill was nurtured in an environment of love, surrounded by music, literature, and compassion amplified by both the performing and visual arts. These elements instilled in Bill a genuine compassion, an innovative curiosity, and an ability to listen to all people including our vulnerable patients and their families. He became a great physician-scientist and educator, as well as a master of language and oration whose visionary leadership ushered The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) into one of its greatest periods of growth and success. As important as these successes were to Bill, his greatest success was being a wonderful husband to Mary Lorene Dennis and a father to John and Emily.

I first met Bill in 2005, when I was recruiting a Dean for our School of Medicine. The first thing I noticed was his radiant smile and a sincerity of purpose in his vision to lead our Medical School in its mission of education, service, and research. For me, it was an instant connection. We shared the same values and mission to treat every individual with respect, provide our citizens

with exemplary health care, ensure the greatest education possible for our medical students and residents, and foster discoveries that would make lives better for all. Bill was both anchored and elevated by the love of his wife Mary, his children, and his family. I did not hesitate to offer Bill the position of Dean of our Medical School as I knew his moral compass was unwavering to our mission. My decision was only reinforced when I met Mary. Bill and I established a beautiful professional bond and friendship that helped us inspire our faculty and staff towards a new momentum of excellence. Together, we overcame challenges including our quest to retain our National Cancer Institute Designation and provide outstanding cancer care to the region we serve. A professional relationship or even friendship is tested when challenges are confronted, and in our case, both relationships were only strengthened as we navigated both opportunities and challenges.

In 2009, I resigned as President of UTHSCSA and became Chancellor of the University of Texas System. I was overjoyed when the Board of Regents appointed Bill as President of our health science center. They embraced his vision for our comprehensive academic health center. Bill's tenure as President will be remembered as a period of unprecedented growth for our university linked with compassion, humanism, and a quest for excellence which resonated with our community, Texas, and our nation.

On August 7th, 1946, Bill's parents whispered into his ear to make our world a better place and to improve the health of all people. It is not a surprise to anyone of us that Bill exceeded his parents' expectations! As for me, I have lost a "chosen" brother, but my life will forever be enhanced by everything I have learned from Bill, my memories of treasured moments, our laughter and tears, and a friendship that will never be forgotten. Bill indeed made our world a better place!

Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D.
Professor of Surgery
Director, Alvarez Transplant Center

IN MEMORIAM - DR. LEONARD LAWRENCE



Dr. Leonard E. Lawrence lived a life filled with distinction as a physician, a community leader, and as a devoted family man. He was a vital bridge and the voice of "truth to power" in many important conversations in San Antonio. At his core he believed in the powerful effects of service, leadership, and compassion.

The recognition for his work has produced awards and reward. As a mentor to countless students, an endowed scholarship was established by five of Dr. Lawrence's students in recognition of his commitment to promoting diversity and for encouraging support systems for those who are historically underrepresented. The scholarship will be awarded to a medical student who is a member of The Student National Medical Association (UT Health San Antonio Chapter).

Dr. Lawrence received his B.A. degree in pre-medicine in 1959 from Indiana-University Bloomington, and his M.D. degree in 1962 from Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis. He completed his residency and fellowship in child psychiatry and his chief residency in general psychiatry in 1969 at Indiana University School of Medicine. He was board certified in psychiatry in 1970 and child psychiatry in 1971. He joined the faculty of the Medical School of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) where he also served as Dean for Student Affairs from 1981 until retirement in 2005. The University of Texas Board of Regents bestowed upon him the title of Professor Emeritus in 2005.

In 1993 he was elected as the 93rd President of the National Medical Association (NMA). Dr. Lawrence was the first African American to serve as chairman of the Board of the United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County, the San Antonio Area Foundation and KLRN. He served a gubernatorial appointment to the Texas Youth Commission. He participated annually with the selection committee for the Frank Bryant Lecture sponsored by the UTHSCSA Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics.

Dr. Lawrence and his wife, Dr. Barbara Lawrence, have three children, Courtney Nicole Lawrence, MD, Leonard Michael Lawrence, MD, and David Wellington Lawrence, MPA. They also have five grandchildren, Olivia, Maya, Collin, Patrick, and Alexander. Dr. Lawrence has one sister, Lynda "Sue" Browne. " 'Lenny' leaves a legacy built on the love and the memories of the family and friends who will always remember him," said David Lawrence.

By Aaronetta Pierce
Longtime Family Friend
Former Board Member, CMHE

IN MEMORIAM - KAYE EVAN WILKINS, DVM, MD

September 22, 1934-October 25, 2023



We remember with gratitude and admiration the remarkable life of Dr. Kaye Wilkins, dear friend and former advisor to the Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics. A revered educator and pediatric orthopedic surgeon who served our faculty for 44 years, Dr. Wilkins believed in compassionate and equitable health care for people all over the world. He served our country in the United States Air Force in Greece before completing his orthopedic training at UT Southwestern and the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Nationally, he is remembered for co-founding the Pediatric Orthopedic Study Group, and then helping to unify this group with POSNA (Pediatric Orthopedic Society of North America), which he led as president from 1987-88. Globally, he is remembered for 22 years of service as the Chairman of the Committee on Orthopedics in Underdeveloped Regions, which organized pediatric orthopedic outreach education courses across the world. In addition, he co-edited the classic textbook Rockwood and Wilkins' "Fractures in Children" (1994), lectured in 58 different countries, and received countless awards, including the Lifetime Achievement in Global Education Award from the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, and the Icon of our Time Award from the Pediatric Orthopedic Society of India. He married his wife Sidney Howell Wilkins in 1957 and is survived by her as well as his three sons, numerous grandchildren, and a great-grandchild.

My personal experience with Dr. Wilkins came well after most of these achievements, as I had the privilege of meeting him in 2008 when I invited him to join our Center's Advisory Council. He was a wonderful teacher and a warm, compassionate human being. In 2010 I witnessed Dr. Wilkins in action. We were in post-earthquake Port-au-Prince, Haiti, at St. Vincent's School for the Handicapped. In the middle of the dusty rubble, adjusting and removing corrective casts from tiny legs, he was caring for children in the non-surgical club foot correction program that he had established there in Haiti. He was accompanied by a pregnant pediatric orthopedic resident, who was attentively soaking up all the wisdom Dr. Wilkins could share. And he would not stop, neither to eat nor drink, until all his little patients had been cared for. He lectured many times in our global health course on the principle of "Leaving Skills, not Scars" — a philosophy he lived by in training many Haitian surgeons through his years of service there.

I remember too, in the aftermath of Haiti's earthquake, how he wrestled with the decision to fly over as a volunteer. Would his effort be of any utility, without functional surgical suites in which to operate? What would be the downstream consequences of an influx of outside orthopedists? In the short term, he found his way to Haiti, catalyzing the evacuation and limb-preserving surgeries for two little girls that he found in Haitian hospitals. Those girls are now grown women. Thanks to Dr. Wilkins' advocacy, they are now pursuing careers, each on their own two feet.

In the longer term, Dr. Wilkins' concerns about incompletely considered acts of altruism were prescient. For years, well-meaning orthopedists flew to Haiti, provided unlimited free surgeries, and left Haitian orthopedists without income. Unsurprisingly, many of these highly trained Haitian professionals departed. As the influx of foreign do-gooders dwindled, the population was left with a weakened healthcare infrastructure. The wisdom of Dr. Wilkins' deeply held values, his legacy, and his teaching about "leaving skills, not scars" resonates profoundly in the ethos of our Center today.

By Ruth Berggren, MD, MCAP

Professor of Medicine

Director, The Charles E. Cheever Jr. Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics

LETTER FROM FACULTY

Welcome to the 2024 edition of *Connective Tissue*, the literary and arts journal of UT Health San Antonio and the Cheever Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics. This year's journal, on the theme of "Bodies and Being," features writers and artists from our students, faculty and staff — as well as alumnae — exploring what it means to be a human.

As health care workers, we are always involved in the lives of others — and in their bodies. Medical student poets Adam Brantley and Dhruv Patel describe profound sensory experiences: performing CPR, and holding the brain of a donor's body. Meanwhile, poet Daphne Nguyen considers the body of a child, once seen and cared for, reduced after death to an Epic alert: "You are entering the medical chart of a deceased patient. Are you sure you want to proceed?" In every case, these writers go beyond describing the body itself into considering its ephemera: the memories, marks and lessons that our own bodies and minds carry after we have been so deeply involved in the life of another.

How lucky we are to be welcomed into the lives of our patients, and into the world itself as human beings. There are so many joys in this edition. In her work "fruits" medical student poet Beverly Hu writes about her grandmother in a taut poem that exquisitely explores devotion across generations and through illness. Faculty photographers Richard Usatine and Jose Cavazos call our attention to the beauty of the natural world. Lia Quesada's vivid acrylic-on-canvas iguanas leap off the page. In a piece that invokes Yeats's classic poem "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," medical student poet Mary Rose Foster links the healing power of nature to our own work in healing.

As ever, I warmly hope that you find beauty, solace, community, and indeed healing in this edition of *Connective Tissue*, which has been expertly curated by medical student editors Michaela Lee and Becky Wang.



Rachel Pearson
Director for Humanities
The Charles E. Cheever Jr. Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics

EDITOR'S NOTES

Dear Reader,

As our medical school journey draws to an end, we can't help but reflect on the transformation that occurred within our lives and the world in just four short years. We began our journeys as student doctors in July 2020, in the midst of a global pandemic. This beginning was marked by thinking of bodies, of those afflicted by the virus, and ways to keep bodies safe during a public health crisis. As we navigated through clinical spaces and broader society over these four years, we continued to encounter questions and challenges related to understanding and regulating the bodies of others.

With Volume XVII of *Connective Tissue*, we wanted to bring this conversation to the greater UT Health San Antonio Community. We posed this question to writers, artists, and photographers with this year's theme of "Bodies and Being": What does it mean to have a body? How do we experience life through these bodies, and how do we identify ourselves and where our values and beliefs lie?

As you thumb through the pages of this year's issue, you will find a collection of stories that represent what "Bodies and Being" means. We start at the very beginning of life itself with a portrait of the sun by Lacy Lichtenhan called "Body of Light." You will find stories of various bodies moving through time and space and learn about the vast experiences of being: what it means to be a healthcare professional, a student, a trainee, a community member, and more. We end the journal with reflections on the loss of life, culminating with "Linens of Life" by Rachael Pham, a tapestry that represents the circle of life. By sharing these stories, we hope to provoke these thoughts and questions about *being* within your own life.

We thank the Charles E. Cheever Jr. Center for Medical Ethics and Humanities for their long-standing support of *Connective Tissue*. We thank faculty and staff including Dr. Rachel Pearson, Dr. Kristy Kosub, Timothy Wallace, Susan Bolden, and Jennifer Bittle for their endless guidance, our contributors for sharing their creativity with us, and lastly we want to thank you, our readers, for supporting this journal year after year.

Becky and Michaela
Co-Editors-in-Chief
Long School of Medicine, Class of 2024

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Body of Light

Acrylic and oil on canvas, 14" by 14"

Lacy Lichtenhan

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027



Vitas Entropas

LC Driver, MD

Alumni

Living persons – biological systems: illogically logical
admixtures of hetero-homogeneity
defined by complexity/chaos in contextual reality,
bodies trending towards homeostasis but foiled by
entropy,
beings dysconfined by relentless time.

Populations evolve while Individuals devolve,
organism organization crescendos towards forte
then entropy prevails no matter the added E
until oblivion intervenes and trumps all.

Carbon-based molecular dynamics sparked by
electro-physico-chemical interactions and reactions
driving life
along genomic pathways gelled by epigenetic
nature-nurture –
A cell is the universe is a cell.

Macro-systems of micro-cells of nano-frameworks
molded by
strong-weak-electrostatic electromagnetic forces and
Higgs bosons –
the big bang punctuated by dust-to-dust and dark
matter –
space-particles-atoms-molecules-cells-tissues-
organs-systems-organisms.

Infinity-conception-birth-life-“personhood”-entropy-
death-infinity:
a continuum of personal punctuated equilibrium,
existential reality of the conscious-subconscious-
unconscious mind.
Vita est Magnus! Vivimus, adhuc infinity et
entropy vincere omnia!
(Life is great! We live, yet infinity and entropy
conquer all!)

LC Driver

HONORABLE MENTION, LITERATURE

The Nature of a Person

Mary Rose Foster

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

When I want to be reminded of what
is good about this world
I go outside.

My eyes are drawn to trees
Green, almost biliary
Making any landscape
More digestible in my field of view.

I'm carried to a place where water flows freely
A busy road of marine life, undeterred
Laminar and unobstructed
Under the bridge.

At night, I breathe in the sweet aroma
of a friendly bonfire, crackling
Before my frosty hands,
A smell that certainly doesn't rub
My pleura the wrong way.

At other times, I find solace on my grandfather's farm
Signs of animals all around — bird beaks
sitting atop the steeple, and an apple core
Degrading into a pile of leaflets
Showing me the beats of a life lived simply.

Somewhere a Starry Sky illuminates familiar opaque water
Like ground glass, rippling beneath my bobber, you and I

Hope Auer rods and reels catch a massive pink puffer
Before the night is Ghon.
Each being silent, each clinging to life
A battle that stands the test of time
And we are so brave as to name that which is within us
After the beauty all around.

We bustle about, coats as white as the summit we climb
Faces scarlet with the toil of battling against our very nature
Trying to cease the withering of our world
From the inside out.

You could gaze upon every river that
slices through a canyon
Or velvet tongues of lava, leaving molten metaplasia
You could study a cluster of bees, their militant uniformity
Making sugar each day from their honeycombed dwellings
You could observe until your eyes begin to see rose
spots — Yet still diagnose them all a mystery.

This is why we continue our struggle
Against what is petrified, calcified, classified
This is why we give a semantic salute
To the anatomy we see every day.
It's wonderful, it's complicated, it's
tortuous, it's convoluted,

But that's just the nature of a person.

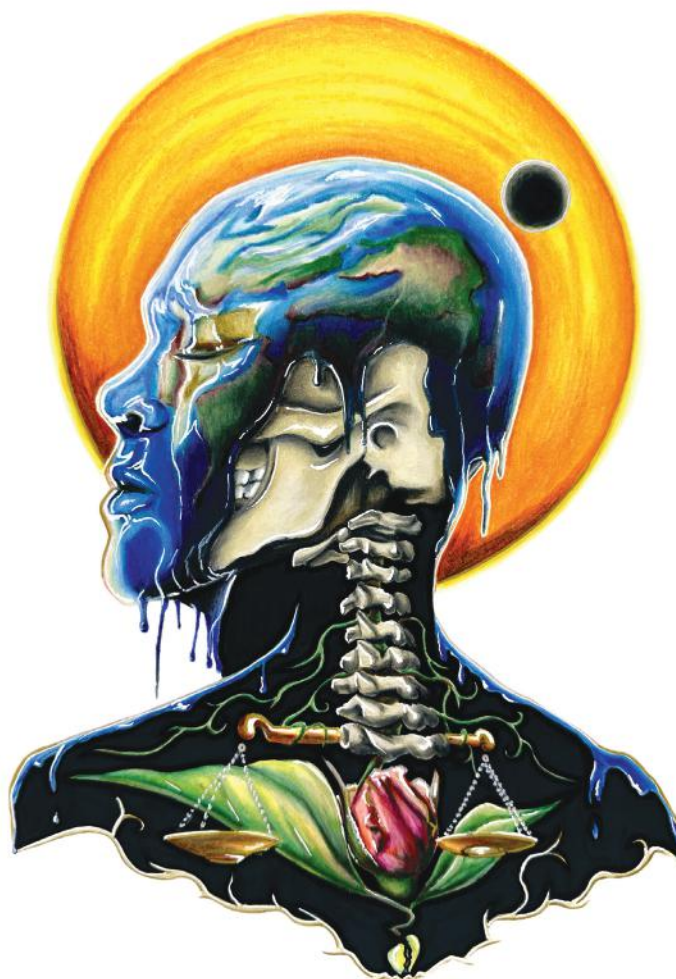
WINNER, VISUAL ARTS

As Above, So Below

Markers, pens, and colored pencils on Bristol smooth paper

Patrick Joseph Joven, BSN, RN

Alumni



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

We are like a seed growing within the bodies we've been given while simultaneously experiencing the world around us; thus, becoming the product of both the inside and out, ultimately influencing who we truly are.

Bronchial Tree Pollination

Bisque fired clay, plastic bags, paper, polyester stuffing, PVC pipe, plaster, surgical mask

Stephanie Batch

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Ambient air pollution and microplastics have sometimes hidden yet exacerbating effects on nature and on the human body, especially various respiratory diseases, such as pulmonary fibrosis, pneumoconioses, and lung cancers. This sculpture gave me a chance to experiment with mixed media, from ceramics to unconventional material such as plastic grocery bags.

When we are born

Erin An

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025

We are born,
Raw and naked
We cry out
And then
open our eyes

As young babes,
We reach out
First,
Not by sight
But by
Our cries,
Our touch

What if we,
Did the same,
All grown up,
To touch,
To cry out
To each other

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

In medicine, we need to remember the basics for good patient care. What if we need to do the same in making human connections with others? Babies cry out for their mother's touch and what if we did the same, with each other?

Maternal Bond

Markers, pens, and colored pencils on Bristol smooth paper

Patrick Joseph Joven, BSN, RN

Alumni



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

A mother makes a connection with her child and influences the child's life, growth, and experiences with the external environment.

55-WORD STORIES

grace

Daphne Nguyen

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025

she was so small. lying in a clear box with a million lines attached, too weak to move. her skin was translucent, dull grey in the bili lights.

months later, i returned to her chart, holding my breath.

“You are entering the medical chart of a deceased patient. Are you sure you want to proceed?”

NOTE from the Sometimes patients stick with us, and we come back to their charts to see how they’re doing ... or for closure. This 23 weeker was my first and only patient during the NICU rotation on my pediatrics clerkship. I had a short week with her, nervously watching as she clung to life. She passed shortly after I completed the clerkship.

AUTHOR

Reaching Out

Drawn on iPad

Rajeev K Pathapati

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



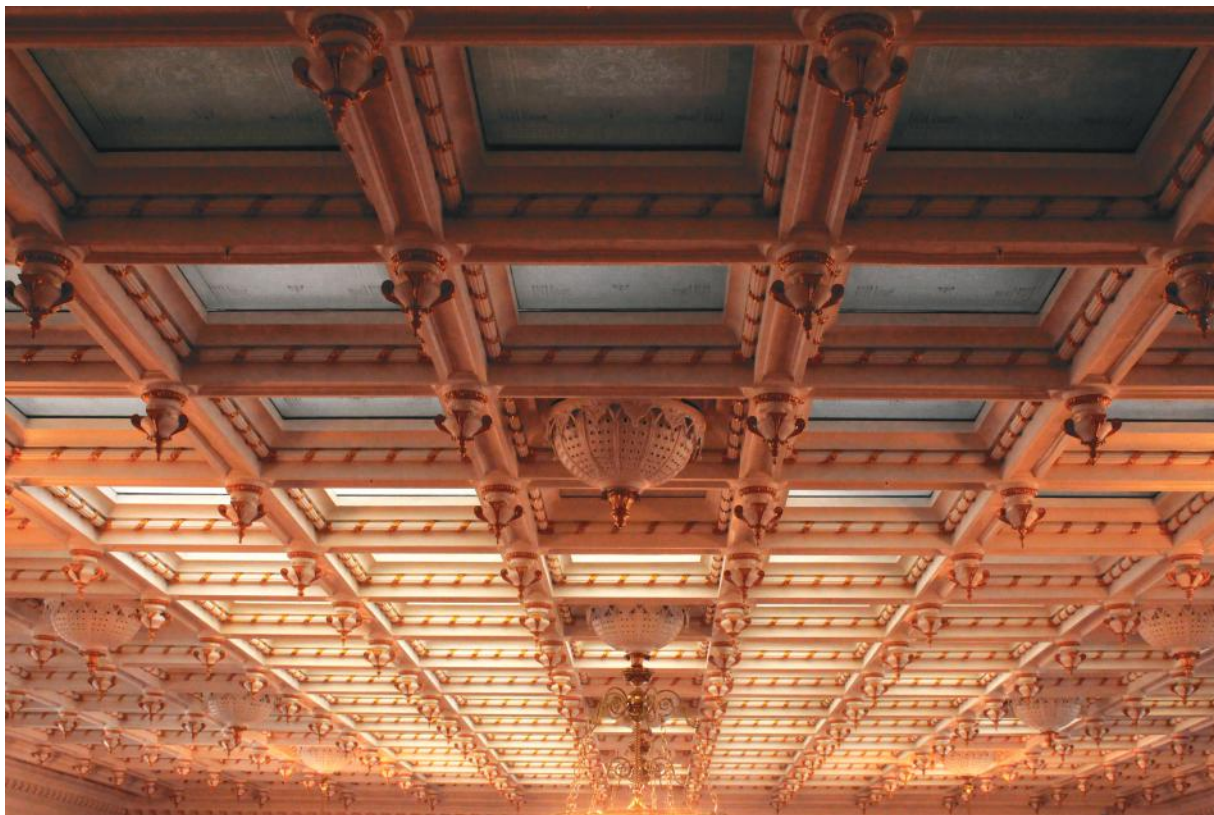
NOTE from the This artwork was inspired by the story and struggles of a single mother trying to care for her young child. It attempts to capture the mother's love and self-sacrifice, always putting her child first.

ARTIST

Above All

Sammy Russell

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2023



Tik Tok

Maria Smereka-Hladio

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027

Tik...tok... tik...tok.

She absentmindedly scrolls
through her feed.

Anything to forget the pain.

Her thumb stops on a post.

A baby shower.

Laughter, balloons, an overjoyed

mother cradling her baby bump.

She pauses,

Exhales,

Her breath carrying her to a memory

When she first found out

she was pregnant.

The warmth and happiness she felt.

She imagined holding her baby's hand,

Whose tiny fingers could barely
wrap around one of hers.

When she first received her diagnosis,

Reality froze.

She was in shock,

Disbelief,

Denial.

No matter how desperately
she tried to hold on,

Those tiny fingers slipped away.

A death sentence stamped on them.

Leaving her to carry the
weight of their loss.

She looks at the photos,

As tears well up in her eyes,

Feeling sick to her stomach.

She slams her phone down on the bed

Unable to look anymore.

Tick-tock. Tick-tock.

Was the clock speeding up?

It could be minutes, hours, days.

The giggles of her two children

Bubble in from the other room.

She imagines the pain of

leaving them behind.

How would she tell them?

Their brother or sister would

be playing with the angels.

She might be too.

It didn't matter.

She couldn't do anything.

She begged them to understand,

But their message was loud and clear –

Until your last breath.

Her healer's wrists are chained

By the laws of the land

And the hands that enforce them.

99 years in prison,

\$100,000 in fines;

the stakes are high.

One mistake,

One misinterpretation,

And game over.

Tick-tock tick-tock tick-tock.

She is running out of time.

She flees for help.

Some healers fled too, understandably.

But those left behind could not,

Or would not,

For this is the only place

they know as home.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

This poem is based on the case of Kate Cox, but serves to represent the voices of all patients who have been denied access to reproductive care in Texas due to recent legislation, as well as physicians who face obstacles in treating them.

Mom, can I hitch a ride?

Jose E. Cavazos, MD, PhD

Faculty, Department of Neurology, Biggs Institute, Long School of Medicine, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences



NOTE *from the* A sea otter is carrying her pup while swimming in the bay. I took this photograph in the Kenai Fjords National Park near Seward on September 8, 2023.

ARTIST

WINNER, 55-WORD STORIES

Nuoc/Water

Andrew Ta

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

There's a saying in Vietnamese: uong nuoc nho nguon.

When drinking water, remember its source.

Thanks to you, our water is different –
it is no longer a torrent fighting for survival in a new region.
Instead, it is calm and healing.

But when my patients drink,
I hope they can still see you in me.

NOTE *from the* For immigrant parents whose children embody their dreams.

AUTHOR

Peace

Graphite pencil

Anu Singh

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

This graphite drawing is based off of a picture of a young boy on a boat in Vietnam. To me, different bodies house people with unique experiences and cultures that should be respected, both in medical practice and in daily life.

War Through a Child's Eyes

Mixed media

Tooba Ikram

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

I was inspired to make this painting after seeing the devastating effects of war and violence on young children this past year.

55-WORD STORIES

What Happens in Dilley

Alexander Kelly

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

It's your fault she's here again,
Wearing another woman's clothes.

It's your fault she's here again,
Abandoned, burnt, scarred all over.

It's your fault I'm here,
photographing what you
believed couldn't happen.

It's your fault if she never comes back,
Fed to wolves who killed
her once before.

It's your fault what happens in Dilley.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

Every day, thousands of individuals fleeing persecution have no option but to be detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the southern border to enter asylum proceedings. Nearly 95% of these asylum cases are rejected, sending these people back to the dangers they tried to escape. This is the story of a forensic medical evaluation I performed for a woman at the South Texas Family Residential Center who had been detained a second time following a rejected asylum petition and subsequent assault in her home country.

In The Middle

Sammy Russell

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

I took this in the middle of a ride, right after I passed another patch of flowers. I had about two seconds to get my phone out and get the shot before the moment was over. It turned out just as I hoped.

Little Amal takes a moment to play

F. Alex Carrizales

Staff, Psychiatry and Behavioral Health



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Little Amal, a symbol of the plight and hope of refugees around the world, took a moment to play a parachute game with kids during an October 2023 visit to San Antonio. With Texas at the epicenter of the migrant crisis in the United States and ongoing wars and civilian flight in Gaza and Ukraine, Little Amal's journey on behalf of refugees and children continues.

Grasping Grass

Coryann Thornock BS, SLP-A

Graduate Student, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

A child's wonder. She grasps the cold-to-the-touch grass, smelling the crisp air, hearing the chilling wind, seeing the perfect imperfections of the ground we walk on and maybe even thinking about taking a taste.

We are the Books

Jasmine De Mange, MS

Research Associate, Sam and Ann Barshop Institute for Longevity and Aging Studies

The world is a library, and
we are the books.
Our bodies, like books, come
in all shapes and sizes,
Large, medium, and small,
Endless different guises.
Our skin, the cover, that
catches your eye,
Simple, bold, and patterned,
There's no short supply.

The world is a library, and
we are the books.
Our muscles, the backing,
either soft or toned.
Spines bound in flesh,
Made of connective tissue and bone.
Each breath, a page, our
blood is the ink,
Our brain writes the plot,
The heart beats in sync.

The world is a library, and
we are the books.
Any of our five senses can
paint pictures on a page.
Memories are chapters,
Plot twists with age.
Tales of love and loss, and comedy gold,
Stories of horror and bravery,
and secrets untold.

The world is a library, and
we are the books.
Billions of stories exist, with
more in the making,
But the books are piling up
And the shelves are breaking.
So how do we choose,
what books we keep?
We are running out of room
There are books in the sink.

The world is a library, and
we are the books.
People, like books, have been
banned and burned,
Tossed aside for merely existing,
as the world silently turned.
Uniqueness was a crime,
to be loud was a sin.
Your story didn't matter
What mattered was fitting in.

The world is a library, and
we are the books.
So, to address the question
of how do we choose,
The answer is simple,
We have nothing to lose.
We encourage new stories
and ideas to flow,
We don't edit the collection,

But inspire a space for
which it can grow.

The world is a library, and
we are the books.
Like a well-loved book, our
bodies become worn
Covers are battered,
and pages are torn.
We decrease in value, some might say,
But scars build character;
Proof that we lived that day.

In this grand narrative, let
acceptance reign,
No need for conformity,
Let individuality gain.
Each person is different, one of a kind
A special edition,
A rare find.

The world is a library, and
we are the books.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

Our foundations are built on the stories of those who came before us. The books represent us as beings, and the library represents the world where our stories play out.

WINNER, PHOTOGRAPHY

Tapestry of Cultural Revelation

Matthew Le

Student, School of Dentistry, Class of 2026



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

In the rhythmic dance of customs and creativity, cultural expression becomes a vibrant tapestry, weaving stories and traditions into the rich fabric of identity. Each gesture and creation echoes the diverse voices harmonizing in the symphony of shared heritage and individual artistry.

sweet tamarind

Oil on canvas

Sammar Ghannam MD,MPH

Resident/Fellow, Radiology



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Depicted is a street vendor that sells tamarind juice, commonly during the month of Ramadan, carrying rich history and tradition.

fruits

Beverly Hu

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

she does not say much,
for her language is

- mandarins: ten plump crescents,
fingertips sticky with juice, pith underneath her nails
- persimmons: pared with finesse,
a spiral of orange skin left behind on the counter
- Hami melon: the sweetest wedges, always,
are meant for us; she settles for the rind.

three months after the diagnosis:
July, nectarine season! but
her cuts are slow and quiet,
and the knife stutters in her grasp.

“here,” I say,
“let me help.”

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

For many children and grandchildren of immigrants, expressions of love were received as actions, not words, and cut fruit is a common medium. This poem describes the difficulty communicating with her hands that my grandmother experienced after she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Iguana Queen

Acrylic on canvas

Lia Quesada

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025

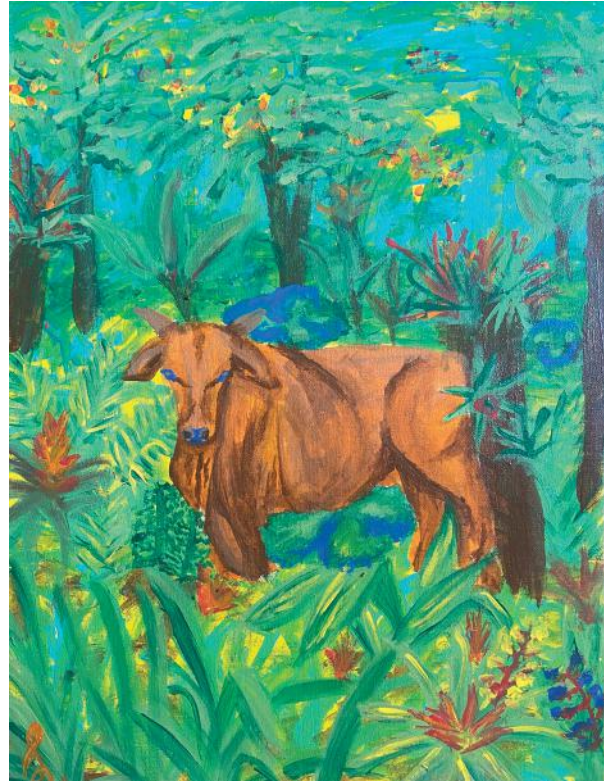


Abuelito's Cow

Acrylic on canvas

Lia Quesada

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Two parts of a series inspired by my Costa Rican heritage that reflect on the unique culture that unifies the people and the land. The iguanas were painted after a recent visit to my family where iguanas kept stealing our papayas. The cow is based off the cow my abuelito had in his backyard when I was young, his backyard being one with the rainforest. In our country, cows roam grassy fields, but in Costa Rica they roam mountainous rainforests and sandy beaches. Both paintings based off seemingly random events show aspects of a regular life where nature is part of every home.

Sharp Memories

Jonathan Mathews

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

I met her in the islands, in a jungle, far away
With all the other little children running
up and down our street.
And like the other little children, she
had nothing on her feet
Except the mud and scrapes and
bruises of an unrelenting day.

But they were such a lively group and
sometimes called to me to play
And I enjoyed to join them often
though I'm almost half as fleet.
For age and language little hinder
simple joys like hide-and-seek
And all was right until her foot found
metal hidden in the clay.

I cleaned it, bound it, sent her off to
rest it, waiting for repair.
When after days of never seeing her, I saw, I wondered how
Close human skin can look to gardens
newly broken by a plow
But she resisted aid for many days
though pain grew in her stare.

It would not heal — she was not still,
or fed, or clean, and had no care
Her limp increased, her visits ceased. I
don't know why. I don't know now
If when I left I left her dying, but
would God somehow allow
That she can walk and play or even
be alive beyond my prayer.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

This poem reminds me to wear shoes each time I walk down memory lane, as the pavement is deceptively sharp. It is the story of my first patient, who was lost to follow-up, and who I cannot help but feel I failed. However, she likely recovered eventually because most of the children there were clothed with similar scars.

Because I Can't See

Emma Tao

Staff, Department of Medicine

My body is vulnerable. It falls victim to strangers' remarks, passing observations, and harsh judgments. My flesh winces at my vanity. I peer into the mirror, discomfort rattling my bones, knowing that my reflection will never be as intimate a view of myself as the one offered to eyes not my own. *Don't look at me*, I whisper. How did we get here?

The value of my body falls on a metric outside of my control. Some nebulous, misty list of rules floats in my head. It was made by other people. I do not know them, but the people I do know follow these rules too. Sometimes I try to subvert my arbitrary rules. You have too. We listen to our bodies, inhaling chips and cheese, claiming that that'll make us happy. We ignore the sting of pitying glances and disgusted faces. *Look at me*, I taunt. Who cares about the rules? We do. Sometimes I crumble under their weight. I once ate four eggs a day, with nothing but berries and lettuce to stave off the inevitable hunger. The gym I frequented became a dizzying whirl of lightheaded workouts and showers that I had to sit in, folding over to breathe. Staring down the barrel, I saw it was loaded with a lifetime of inadequacy.

When did all of us agree to these rules? I cannot remember. Our parents instill rule-following in us; did someone make them agree? I've asked, and my parents do not remember an agreement either. But there was an agreement made for our laws. This is recorded in history books across the globe. In 1776, we declared independence and fought for the right to make our own laws. We cried, *Give me liberty or give me*

death! and *No taxation without representation!* Our own laws were drafted and argued over and finally agreed upon at several conventions. Was there a convention for our rules? Certainly not one I have heard of.

Our rules are rather more like a social contract. So long as we exist within our society, the rules are everywhere we turn. A wordless, mindless agreement was made. I doubt anyone was conscious of it. We give obedience; we receive protection. I trim excess fat, polish my nails, bleach my hair, and paint my eyelids. The people who see me quiver with approval. *Look at me*, I preen. There is a shield around me, but I know it is not impervious. Every day I wake up in anticipation of its fallibility. My gym attendance is motivated by fear. As I run in place for hours, I smirk at the people around me. I am following the rules so much better, so much faster than you all. We are all going nowhere.

Our bodies are still each others' to look at; none of us can hide our flesh away. It would be of no use, anyway. We all have to trust each other. I say I love what you're doing! You take my word for it. My worth is only as much as you say it amounts to. I'll take your word for it, so I must then lay bare for examination. They knew food could not feed the soul. The rules closed an iron fist over self worth. It is the essence of dignity, but mine lies bruised and chained to a body that I starve and gluttonize and cover and paint just to finally strip naked.

LOOK AT ME, I scream.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

I began this piece with body image struggles in mind, specifically, but it applies to any feeling of being held to a standard outside of our control. Governance gives protection, which is certainly important, but the price we pay is certain freedoms. And to not have control over how we feel about ourselves can be exhausting.

Roseate Spoonbill

Dawson Tan

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the* This Roseate Spoonbill was relaxing in the water at Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center in Port Aransas, TX. Photograph is from August 2023.

ARTIST

55-WORD STORIES

When it hurts, she laughs

Akash Sharma

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2024

Her body her worst enemy, a cruel comedy. A fate written in her genes but never justified. Blistering the skin, disfiguring the nails, a pain unbearable. A syndrome of fragile skin not of fragile soul. Each day she chose smile over cynicism, laughter over languish. When it hurts, she laughs when she laughs, she lives.

Happy accidents

F. Alex Carrizales

Staff, Psychiatry and Behavioral Health



NOTE *from the* Sometimes accidents prove to be fortuitous. In this image, an accidental double exposure of cactus and flowers on expired film resulted in one of my favorite images of 2023.

ARTIST

Quick Water Run

Jared J. Tuttle

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026



One Sugar Water, Please

Jared J. Tuttle

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026



NOTE *from the* Clutching a 1-Cedi coin, this two year old child snuck away from her mother to purchase a sugar water from a vendor across a large dirt field.

ARTIST

Entre Colores

Ricardo Sosa Silva

Student, School of Dentistry, Class of 2026



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

The Rainbow Mountain is one of many beautiful sites in Peru. At 5,200 meters above sea level, the journey was difficult but worth it for this amazing view.

Savior complex

Digital

Yasir Syed

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027

When the sunlight doesn't reach, the wind strips your heat into entropic nothing, and there is a cold so fierce you can feel it in your marrow, your flesh will freeze. The body gates off the vessels in the extremities, quarantining the cold blood so it can't return to crystallize your soft insides. So your body lets your ends and bits turn black and die to save the whole. In the face of this risk, I chose to scale the mountain.

Wind howled, snapping frozen jaws around my neck and wrists, slipping into the narrow spaces between each layer of clothing. I might have laughed at its challenge if inhaling didn't feel like sucking in glass. At my elevation, one breath was worth hardly half of one on the ground.

The sun had left me then, ending its course on the opposite rock face, somewhere in the blistering snow. A baleful shadow stretched through the swirling blizzard haze where the steps to heaven touched the summit. I found the affair romantic in the Jack London sense, the contraindication between solitude and nature.

I looked down and nearly tumbled my way back home as a snowball. The clouds below looked the same as above. I closed my eyes and regained my posture then resumed trudging up.

The forecast before the climb had been charitable. This was weather that drained the life out of a man, ticking his temperature down until his internal reactor could no longer provide the heat he needed. Why climb at all then? I would have been far more comfortable at home. People are exceptional in the way we fight our biology. So many hours of climbing, and the wind howled even louder, blotting out the elevation trail markers. I continued nonetheless. I was prepared and at least smart enough to tell if I had reached the peak.

Midstep, after hours of iterative, monotonous snow-crunching step-steps, I slipped on an anomalous feature — something traffic-cone orange on the pristine white. I threw my bag aside and dug with gloved hands. It was a puffer jacket, thrown not long ago judging by the light dusting. Further ahead lay a fleece windbreaker. And a shirt, and softshell pants. I followed the trail of clothing to a mound of blushed flesh peeking above a snow burrow.

Adrenaline broke my frozen posture, and I leapt onto my hands and knees to claw fistfuls of compact snow off the man's body. My fingers throbbed, and I swear I could feel my vessels tighten. I was afraid that if I risked a glance under my gloves, I'd be met with mulberry purple necrosis. The pain would be earned if I could save him.

I uncovered the back, the shoulder, and then I hooked my shivering arms under his waist and dragged him out. He wore nothing but underwear and skin so tight and raw he could have been blanched. I set him on his back. His eyes lolled in his head. I stifled a scream and ran through a hundred possible scenarios and plans.

No breathing or movement. No cell reception. I laced my right hand into my left and pressed my whole weight into his chest. One, two – his arm flew up and swatted me away.

He moaned, unable to focus on my eyes.

“What happened?” I shouted.

He seemed to mumble something but the wind carried it past my ears. I sat him up and unzipped my overcoat. I held his swollen, frostbitten wrist and slid it through the sleeve. He let me. Next, I put my second thermal pants on him. Same purple mottling from his feet up. They would probably amputate these unless he got to a hospital very, very quickly. Still no reception.

I set my bag down and pulled out the essentials. “I’m going to take you back!”

He mumbled again, this time saying, “Summit.” His stiff arm pointed up to the top.

“No chance. I’m taking you to the base. It’ll be there all the same after you recover.”

He tried to crawl uphill, using his limbs like clubs to wiggle and push through the snow. The cold seeped through my layers. I grabbed the man’s wrists and sat him up again. He tried to break away, but I held fast.

“You’ll die in minutes; grab on!”

I squatted and hiked the nameless man onto my back.

Searing cold from him pulled the warmth out of my back. Shallow breaths puffed by my neck. Hardly warmer than the unyielding wind that then propelled us downhill. With tailwind and gravity, I would make it to a base camp and the stranger would be sipping hot cocoa before midnight.

The wind picked up and shifted so subtly as to slam into our front, like the mountain was trying to maintain its claim on the sorry man. It made him confused, made him strip down to his underwear and burrow in the snow. I wasn't going to let him go. I gripped his wrists and crossed them over my sternum.

But the snow stretched on forever. My thighs and shins burned, at the end of their wicks. My back was about to give out. It was all I could do to press on, watching my boots stamp the snow. One-two, one-two. My lips froze together, crusted in frost, but I found myself muttering inside my mouth, "I'll save you, I'll save you."

It must have been hours. Maybe days at this point. Had I been going down at all? I turned and half expected my bag to be lying there mere feet from where we started. It wasn't. White, faceless snow in every direction.

The man bucked then, pushing his heels into my hips, and wrenched himself free. I fell forward. Snow shuffled away from me. My face burned red with anger and from unutterable cold.

"Just let me help you!" I screamed, tearing my lips apart.

The man said nothing. He clawed and clawed away from me like I was trying to hurt him.

I beat at my quads, begging them to wake up. "I know better; why can't you understand that?"

I crawled after him the same, knees sinking in snow. He mumbled but not a word reached me. My hand found his swollen ankle, and I pulled. He slid back, unmoving.

"No no no no..."

I crawled forward and dug my fingers under him like I'd done so far up the mountain. On his back, his jaw hung open. Eyes rolled back. I ripped off my gloves and pressed my fingers to his carotid.

"I have to save you," I cried. Really cried. Tears turned to ice, clinking together before they hit the ground.

Weak pulse. Or was my heart forcing hot blood to my exposed fingers in an effort to curb the bite? I pressed deeper. His neck was so damn cold. I laced my hands together and pressed into his chest.

When I was younger and newly infected with the travel bug, I backpacked solo through urban India. I rode motorcycles in wheel-to-wheel traffic, tapping the end of my shoe on heels until my toes popped out. Soon enough I learned to take trains through the countryside. Three to a seat, rubbing elbows with the passenger next to me. Pushing through crowds to get inside.

I'd stayed in Bengaluru for a week, and it was high time to move on to Hyderabad. Like everywhere else I'd been, the train station filled past capacity, and vying for a seat would require persistence and some initiative. I weaseled my way to the front, all the way up to the yellow safety line. It was then that a strange premonitive feeling tickled my insides. It was like nausea, rising inside me like I'd ingested battery acid.

The man beside me crossed the yellow line. He hovered for a moment. I watched him. Then he leapt into the path of the oncoming train. I continued to watch. The image, unlike the thousands of footprints I'd left on the mountainside, unlike the mess that had been cleaned in thirty minutes post arrival, seared itself into the gyri, nesting in a rotten crevasse in the back of my brain. That split second between life and death intersected by a painted line could have been decided by me. I was right next to him. So close I could reach out in my waking nightmares and grab his collar.

The stranger in my arms could have been the same stranger from Bengaluru. In fact he must have been. Delivered unto me like a sick joke. Like I'd been made to watch this poor man die.

And there I was, somewhere on the mountainside; this time, fate had me holding him in my arms as he passed. Compressions ended. Another push and I'd collapse right next to him.

"Then who can I save?" I asked him, on the verge of laughter. My own voice sounded foreign.

Stark, sudden lucidity returned to his frozen eyes. "Save yourself," he whispered, and despite the howling wind, it was clear as sun.

I shuddered. Living meant leaving him. Sensation returned to my limbs, all screaming, throbbing. Any longer and the stasis would have halted my convulsive shivering and invited the cold to bite off my fingers. I rose to my feet. Picked up my gloves. And I ran down the mountain.

NOTE *from the* It's cold on the way up the mountain. When you find yourself alone, sometimes you'll need to help yourself first.

AUTHOR

Point of Takeoff

Richard Usatine, MD

Faculty, Department of Medicine



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Three Avocet birds flying at the point of takeoff. This magnificent trio was photographed in San Antonio at the Mitchell Lake Audubon Center using a Nikon Z9 and a 500 mm lens. The American Avocet faces numerous environmental challenges and is protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Cut Out

Andrew Burton

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

Sometimes I feel like a craft project
A collage of pictures
Cut out of time and glued somewhere else.

There's a photo of me in first grade
Singing in the stands at our Christmas recital
Pasted next to a bachelor's degree
And a diagram of cerebral blood flow.

Trying to remember the words to the song
And the first line treatment of gas gangrene
But the new sweater my mom bought for me is all wrinkled
And I think this white coat is much too big on me.

I often wonder if I'm cut out for this
But I'm the one holding the scissors and the glue.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

This piece depicts my struggle with Imposter Syndrome, which I believe many students in health professions struggle with. The ending reminds me that I am here because of the work I've done — not by accident, but by choice.

Like a Kidney Stone

Digital

Aamerah Haque

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

I drew this piece on my way back home after successfully remediating a class I had failed as a first-year medical student. I learned a lot in the process — how to study, how to ask for help, and how to be kinder to myself.

Hospital Humanity

Charlotte Clark

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

A beaming couple watches in awe,
As their newborn takes his first breath.
A cancer patient receives her weekly infusion,
Wondering how much time she has left.

A teenage boy smiles,
The doctor declares, "You're all set to leave!"
An elderly man says goodbye to his wife,
Unprepared to grieve.

A weary resident sighs,
Enters her final note of the shift.
Estranged siblings visit their mother,
Healing a deep-seated rift.

A young girl weeps,
She's never known this kind of pain.
Her father silently asks,
"How will I manage this financial strain?"

A wide-eyed medical student,
I walk through the trauma bay.
What immense privilege and responsibility,
Caring for these delicate lives today.

HONORABLE MENTION, VISUAL ARTS

the masks we wear

Watercolor and colored pencils

Catherine Xie

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026



Blue Bottle Service

Rodolfo Villarreal-Calderon, MD, MS

Faculty, Department of Medicine, Hospital Medicine and Primary Care

She had been
A bartender
Served customers a drink
And herself two.

It paid for school,
She told me.
Schedule was flexible.
School days
Work nights
Study evenings
Sleep for few hours
Drinks for days.

She stated 'days'
With her lips tugged
Towards the angles
of her mandibles
Her skin sallow,
Sagged,
Formed wrinkles
At the corners
Of her mouth
Far sooner than her youth
Should have allowed.

I saw all this
At the rims of my pupils
At their center
I could only see
Hers.

They were shocking
Electric blue irises
Flashing vibrantly
And drowned
In pools
Someone had highlighted
Canary yellow.

Behind the bar
They had been tender
Clear,
Quiet
Despite the music
Dry
Despite the sadness
Behind them.

I stood behind
Her bedside table
Drew up data
From the medical menu
Where I had
ordered her labs
Thought of her liver
Stiff
And scarred.
She looked
Stiff
And scared.

Let her know
Time was limited
Long days
Restless nights
Confused evenings
Sleep for few hours
Lactulose for days.

Her yellow pool basin
Filled with
Clear tears
Lids shut down
Shut off the bright
blue beneath
And this draught spilled
Onto pained cheeks
Painted ochre
Tinted her tears
The same.

It was my last day on service
One week on
Next week off
My schedule was flexible.
I arrived to paws jumping
On my chest
Painting my cheeks
With slobber
From eyes brown
In furry pools
Happy
To see
Me.

I reached for their bowls
Topped them off
From on tap
Clear
Cool
And refreshing.

Then reached for a cup
About to
Serve myself too
Hand caught by the air
Mid-breath
Mid-reach
Mid
Between

Bottle

And

Tap.

HONORABLE MENTION, PHOTOGRAPHY

Phagocytosis

Sammy Russell

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the* This Parisian pedestrian did not expect her day to go like this.

ARTIST

In the Name of God

Sana Suhail

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Every time I walk into a patient room, I ask for guidance and clarify my intentions to heal those I have the honor of taking care of. Every time I walk into a patient room, I say: "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."

The Great Physician

Deven Niraj Patel

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025

In the halls of medicine,
where stories unfold,
A tale of Mr. R, a narrative to be told.
Hemoptysis brought him, his spirit frail,
In the dance of life,
an intricate, fragile tale.
Language barriers stood, a large divide,
A UHS translator mediated,
with technology as a guide.
Verbal chaos reigned,
incoherence profound,
Alcohol's grip, a tumultuous
battleground.
Days passed by, a struggle untold,
In the labyrinth of symptoms,
a mystery to behold.
A smile turned to rambling,
in the twilight's haze,
Hallucinations danced, in
bewildering maze.
Giant cockroaches, a delusion grand,
CT tales woven, illusions in the sand.
Tests conducted, a thorough
exploration,
Yet answers eluded, a
frustrating aberration.
Attending physicians came,
and chief residents passed,

Days turned to weeks,
time slipping fast.
In the depths of confusion,
a mind's disarray,
Desperation lingered, in
the patient's dismay.
MRI awaited, a diagnostic key,
But the wheels of transport,
moved slowly.
Staffing shortages, a relentless plight,
Time slipped away, like
whispers in the night.
God's call for me to act, a
decision profound,
To transport Mr. R, a
solution was found.
Self-sacrifice echoed, a
prayer on the way,
In the corridor of faith,
where hope holds sway.
To the MRI suite, a journey with care,
Delirium and stench, an aura in the air.
A plea for stillness, in the face of despair,
Sedation attempted, a silent prayer.
My hand on his shoulder,
a connection divine,
A plea for calm, for a limited time.
Minutes ticking, in a sacred space,

Faith intertwined, a humble embrace.
Back to his room, a sigh and a prayer,
Deflated, yet grateful, for
the effort to bear.
Chart-checking done, a
decision made clear,
To release Mr. R, no longer in fear.
Morning arrived, a surprising twist,
The intern's report, a plot now kissed.
Mr. R transformed, no longer confined,
Back to his senses, a miraculous find!!
Hallucinations banished,
rants laid to rest,
A discharge embraced, a
patient now blessed.
In the echoes of healing, a hug so tight,
"Dios los bendiga, hermano," in
Spanish, a statement of might.
The Earth is the Lord's, as
the Psalm does say,
In the realm of powerlessness,
hope finds its way.
Jesus, The Great Physician,
with His merciful might,
Healed Mr. R, in the
depths of the night.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

In my medicine rotation, I experienced a transformative moment witnessing God's healing power. Faced with a patient's 13 days of unexplained delirium, I was advised to switch to a different case for better learning opportunities. After two weeks of searching for explanations, my final recourse was a prayer for the patient's well-being.

On Being a Doctor - Take My Time

Maria "Nena" Fierro

Resident/Fellow, Internal Medicine

Take my time, take my energy, take my patience
I've been doing this for what feels like forever
Wake up before the sun rises, go home after it sets
I never see the light
Take my health, take my joy, take my passion
You say I don't do enough
Trust me I know
I can't fix your pain, your grief, your relationships
I can't fix my own
Take my mom, take my dog, take my life
I am a shell of myself – where did I go?
Can't get out of bed, can't sleep without nightmares
I see my loss in you
And see how you've been through so much more
I gave you my time, my energy, my patience
You said thank you, you saved me, you helped me
I see the light

In the tears of relief in your family's eyes
I found my health, found my joy, found my passion
In that deep dark hole, I was given help
So I extend my hand, I try to lift you out of yours
I want to fix your pain, your grief, your relationships
But understand, as I now do
Sometimes these things cannot be fixed, only lived through
I hope you find solace, as I did
In the knowledge that you are not alone
We have felt loss, felt sorrow, felt pain
We can survive it all
Together
So take my time, take my energy, take my patience
This is my joy, this is my passion
I have so much more
To give

Seen Scenes

Perna Das

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the*
ARTIST

This piece reflects on how our bodies move through time and space over the course of our lifetimes. Life is a scenic route and can be appreciated when we simply observe what we are walking through, regardless of the weather.

The Basal Ganglia

Devin Lukachik

Student, School of Health Professions, Class of 2025

Extending from the neural depths
A nexus does reside
Where motion's meticulously managed
Tempering what betides
Intricately integrating
With muscles, contralateral
Rapid latent regulation
Each maneuver masterful
Volitional and voluntary
Skill, grace, autonomy
Emotional modulation
Procedural memory
Learning, growing, starting, stopping,
Human functions quintessential
One mustn't take for granted
The extrapyramidal potential

NOTE *from the* Part of the author's upcoming book, Poetry on the Brain

AUTHOR

Preparing for Hibernation

Jose E. Cavazos, MD, PhD

Faculty, Department of Neurology, Biggs Institute, Long School of Medicine, Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences



NOTE *from the*
ARTIST

This is Chunk 32, the runner-up for the 2023 Fat Bear Week annual competition. He was working hard to prepare for hibernation. I took this photo on Sept. 4 at Brooks Falls, Katmai, AK.

Frozen

Kate Brickner

Student, School of Nursing, Class of 2026

I stand in front of the coffee machine and listen to the satisfying pour of my first dose of caffeine for the day. I catch a glimpse of the snow through the window. And I pause, a bit taken aback. It has been snowing intermittently for the past week, creating a pleasant backdrop for online learning. But when I look at the snow now, I freeze, and time seems to freeze, too.

The tiny snowflakes are not solely falling straight down, down to the ground, as I would have expected after those two semesters of physics. Instead, they appear to be drifting in all directions. A few curiously float upwards. Others dance around parallel to the ground, back and forth, side-to-side. Some even appear to be standing still, presumably looking back at my perplexed expression through the window and wondering if I am okay.

The snowflakes remind me of kids running wild at recess during their break from the school day. Before exposure to the need for structure in life, children do not feel the need to organize their play into games with

rules and regulations. Instead, if you let them loose, they tend to merely run around in random patterns, screaming and giggling, free at last from the watchful eyes of their teachers. But, occasionally, a child will stop in their tracks, appearing to hit an invisible wall, while the rest of the group continues to zig-zag around the newly formed obstacle. The child may be distracted by something they see or perhaps needs to catch their breath for a moment - like a snowflake pausing when the other snowflakes are busy releasing energy into the world.

The noise from the coffee machine comes to a halt, and I turn around to grab the newly full mug. As I spin back to the window to resume my moment with the snow, it now falls straight down, down to the ground along its expected path. I guess the snowflakes had to head back to their school day, just as I should commence studying for the day.

But it was nice to refresh for a moment and catch my breath.

Early Morning Foggy River

Richard Usatine, MD

Faculty, Department of Medicine



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Two ducks in the early morning fog on the San Antonio River on the first day of 2023. The fog gave the colored trees and river an Impressionistic appearance. The scene was photographed south of Mission Concepción with a Nikon Z7ii.

55-WORD STORIES

Cardiac Massage

Druv Patel

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025

The gurney swerved into the bay,
but unlike the others, this one was quiet.

Within a blink — the sounds of crunching ribs.
By the second — a desperate exploration of his chest.
And by the third, was a man's heart, resting between my hands.

I pumped and pumped and pumped,
but a bullet had won today.

HONORABLE MENTION, 55-WORD STORIES

The Words Unsaid

Lynnlee Poe

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

Are you sure it hurts?
I wouldn't say anything if it didn't.
It's almost over.
These minutes feel like an eternity.
Just relax.
Can't you see I'm trying my best?
Would it be too much to return control of my body for a moment?
It's done. Have a nice day. See you in six months.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

Receiving medical care can make anyone feel vulnerable. Listening to our patients and anticipating what they might not be saying makes a major difference in the quality of our care.

Why do you collect?

Acrylic on canvas

Lia Quesada

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2025



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Based on a hoarding patient with known heart problems, and limited ability to access healthcare, who had health community partners reach out to no avail. This piece is dedicated to this patient I never got to meet but had the chance to learn his story.

The Witness Marks of the Body

Polymer clay

Marc Justin Calamlam

Student, School of Dentistry, Class of 2027



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

Witness marks in clocks are scars and notches in the inner workings of the clock that tell a story of how they operated. Through my experience learning anatomy, I was able to see the lives our donors lived through their deaths, and I gained invaluable knowledge on the inner workings of the human body.

I love this dish!

Emma Tao

Staff, Department of Medicine

We say because you are so cute
I could eat you like a brute
Consumption is akin to love
So men send chocolates of dove
You feel it when they tear
When they make you worse for wear
Eyes are glassy, bones visible in your thigh
Not enough for a steak, you begin to cry
Needles pierce and tape rips
Days slip by grasping fingertips
Marrow replaced and organs removed
Glances flicker at your gaping wound
Filet mignon is best cooked medium rare
Add garnish with an artistic flare
They take more and more of you
This sickness is a pain undue
But recovery is nigh, color returns
There is not much left, but it no longer hurts
It is revealed to you now
This was only for good, they vow
So take my body and take my blood
I'll pair nicely with your wine flood
If I am alive or I am dead
Grind my bones to make your bread

NOTE *from the* This captures the snapshot of pain during recovery as a patient.

AUTHOR

Morning on the Provo River

Jacob Luddington

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026



55-WORD STORIES

Timor interitus

Emma Tao

Staff, Department of Medicine

They grow weary
Of creaking with time
Each year erodes their hips
Words drop away from their ears
Down the carrying wind
Cruelty pervades this process
It is hopeful but fruitless
To wish to believe in samsara
Return as the woodland fox
Be less than a fiber familiar
Of the person they know no longer

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

It's about facing the end of your life, feeling your body wither, and thinking about reincarnation or do-overs or second chances. It's about knowing the futility of that. It's about knowing your body holds the conditions that made you who you were, and that love of eternal return is necessity in the face of death.

55-WORD STORIES

Long Day

Kristopher Meadows

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

The door creaks open as I let down my bag from my aching shoulders, my knees bellow of soreness each step up the well worn stairs, when I stoop down to unfurl the covers my back hisses discontent, as I reach across to embrace my love our bodies melt into one and rejoice in bliss.

NOTE *from the*

AUTHOR

This year's prompt made me reflect on how we push our bodies to points of pain and discomfort. It also made me think about how, when reaching moments of joy — such as the embrace of a loved one after a long day — our body, if but for a brief moment, forgets its complaints and becomes completely soothed.

Dusk at the Bedside

Kawika Dipko

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026

Breathe in, breathe out. Again.
Programmed functions continue as energy slowly wanes.
Unconscious, still present.
Vibrant cloud of adventures, tears, and laughter clings to his frame.
Eyes flicker open! "Ease the pain?"
Gentle refusal. Lifetime of toughing it out; tonight remains the same.
Final handshake. What can I say?
Souls speak without words in a firm grasp and a steady gaze.
Eyes close. Continue care.
Seems especially tonight, duty and purpose are one and the same.
Task complete. Success attained.
Breathe out. Now still. Sleep deep till Dawn's light comes again to reclaim.

NOTE *from the*

A reflection on the final hours spent caring for a particularly wonderful patient.

AUTHOR

Beyond the Surface

White pencil on black paper

Phuongthy Tran

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027



AUSCULTATIONS

My Patient, My Teacher

Yasir Syed

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027

In another life, I taught high school chemistry. I'd set up experiments and watch how my students interacted with them, taking agency of their own exploration. If you stood beside me, it would seem like magic, like you could see the neurons reaching out and forming new synapses. The practice comes from mountains and mountains of evidence that exploration and action are the best teachers. Stick a fork in the socket and you'll learn very quickly what electricity does to your body. Watch someone eat something and get sick, and you learn to avoid it. Sometimes we watch someone get sick and want to work in medicine.

The preamble and lectures before the first lab had repeated the sentiment that our donor would be our best teacher, our first patient. Sure, that made sense, but a person gave themselves up with an echoing altruism. Felt almost sacrilegious to dissect.

Then we were there, face to face with the man who donated his treasure so we could do right and multiply his generosity. From there it would be much worse to deny his gift and not partake in the learning experience. I then expected more resistance. Both inside me and from our donor. Would my body yield so easily? I thought my youth was synonymous with immortality. Still, I cut, picking fat from flesh, opening layers of fascia like so many curtains. I almost wanted to feel more reservations about cadaver dissection. It's programmed into us, ingrained in human culture to fear the body of the dead. Where I expected fear or repulsion, I more often found gratitude.

My donors have been the best source of anatomical knowledge. I found myself frustrated at times with the success of my dissections. So intricate is the body. When a mere tug severs a nerve but inches of visceral fat guard the secret cord, I close my eyes and place my hands inside the cavity. I feel

with my fingers, see with my mind. Their bony features like mountains and caverns, their organs flowering from archaic embryonic buds and grooves.

“Here, here,” they seem to tell me. My body donors scaffold me like I have done with so many students who have passed through my classrooms. They tell me, “Try this. Try that. See how these connect? Follow the trail. How does this piece fit in the whole of me? Here, here.”

And it opens up and all my neurons fire in symphony, in learning. So, “Thank you, thank you,” I whisper to them.

When we are finished exploring every cubic inch that we can glean knowledge from, they will cremate the men. Fire will take their physical forms, but they do remain as monuments in my mind and as my guiding hands in practice. No doubt I will need my knowledge of anatomy for patients. And when that happens I will close my eyes and remember the way my hands memorized their designs and like magic, or a profound telepathic sense, I may palpate a patient’s body or listen for a sound or sign and hear their voices telling me, “Here, here.”

When I left my school to pursue my medical education, I received a basket full of cards from former students thanking me for guiding them through tough material. I go back and read those cards when I want to remember the impact of education and my stake in it. (I’m prospecting to fill another several baskets throughout my life of medical service.) And I might not be able to send a card to my donor but when that magical moment sparks in the OR or the exam room, I will think of my first anatomy teachers and whisper, “Thank you, thank you.”

NOTE *from the*
AUTHOR

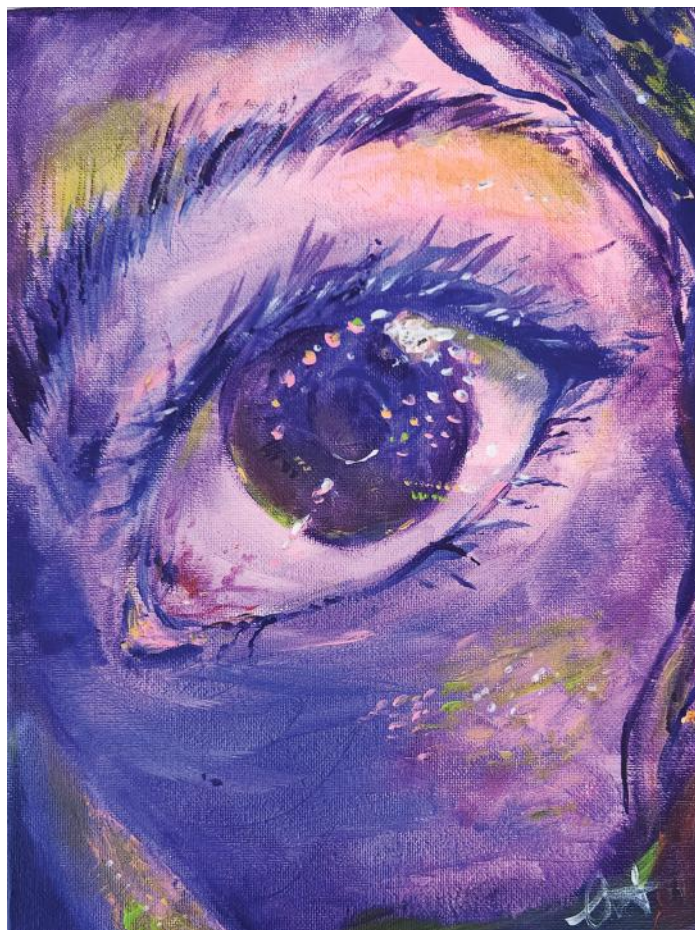
My letter of thanks to the body donors that have taught me everything I know about anatomy. As well as an implicit thanks to the Long School of Medicine and the directors, faculty, and student teachers who assisted us in our journey inside the bodily machine.

In the Eye of the Beholder

Acrylic on canvas

Aamerah Haque

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2026



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

I painted this piece during an incredibly stressful period as a reminder to myself to look for beauty and joy in the things around me.

Grief Shrouded

Mixed media: charcoal, paint, graphite

Leo Crockett

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

The hand depicted in my piece was referenced from my father's. I wanted to create a work that captured the emotions I was experiencing during anatomy lab, the grief I was enduring, and the connections I was making between the donor's body and the body of my father.

hold that thought!

Adam Brantley

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2024

“hold that thought!”
the lab assistant laughed,
and handed me a **brain**. heavy, slimy,
walnutine. cold white **matter** swollen.
fluorescent bright oblivion. and as i held that
thought, it **caught** ... when **i am not** ... who will
hold **MY** thought? will ... my ... **matter**?
no matter ... what? ... sometimes, floating
soft before the sleep, **warm** and
dreamy dark, one wonders
whether or **not**
one **wants**
to
hold
the
...

The Abyss

Anna Wedler

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2024



WINNER, LITERATURE

Becoming Death

Sarah Traynor Poor

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027

Death. It has lingered over my shoulder, just as it has for us all, for all my life. For some brief, unforgettable instances, it has emerged from the corner of my eye, and I have seen a better view of its figure. Once, when my parents sat my siblings and me down and told us all that my aunt was going to be on hospice care, and what that meant. Again, as I saw my grandma lose her identity and eventually her life to Alzheimer's. Recently, I saw death again, staring at another aunt, lost too soon. In life, she was cheerful, tall, beautiful, and graceful. She looked impossibly small, impossibly dull, lying there in her casket. We all milled around the room at the viewing. We were all there to see her, I suppose. But then why were we all trying so desperately not to see her?

My incidental experiences with death did little to prepare me for the experience of seeing a cadaver face-to-face when I first walked into the anatomy lab. Here was death, right before my eyes, in my hands. And yet, if I forgot, or if I pretended for just a moment, I could almost make myself believe that she was not so dead after all. Maybe she was merely petrified by formaldehyde, waiting for a magic spell to wake her from her sleep. The first cut of the scalpel, deep and long and uncertain through her untouched back, felt like we inflicted the final blow on this woman. While she may have been dead before, there was no coming back from it now.

In my first weeks in the anatomy lab, I struggled with recurring thoughts of death. I realized that dissection may not be the most accurate word to describe what we were doing. It felt more like dismantling. As we clumsily pulled away pieces of her back muscles and tore out a section of her spine, I felt that we were erasing her distinctiveness, the scoliosis that once ran down her spine like a signature of a name we never knew. In that room where

formaldehyde froze bodies in near-life, we tore her body down faster and more brutally than nature ever would. Not only did I see death, but I felt I had become her, or at least her executor.

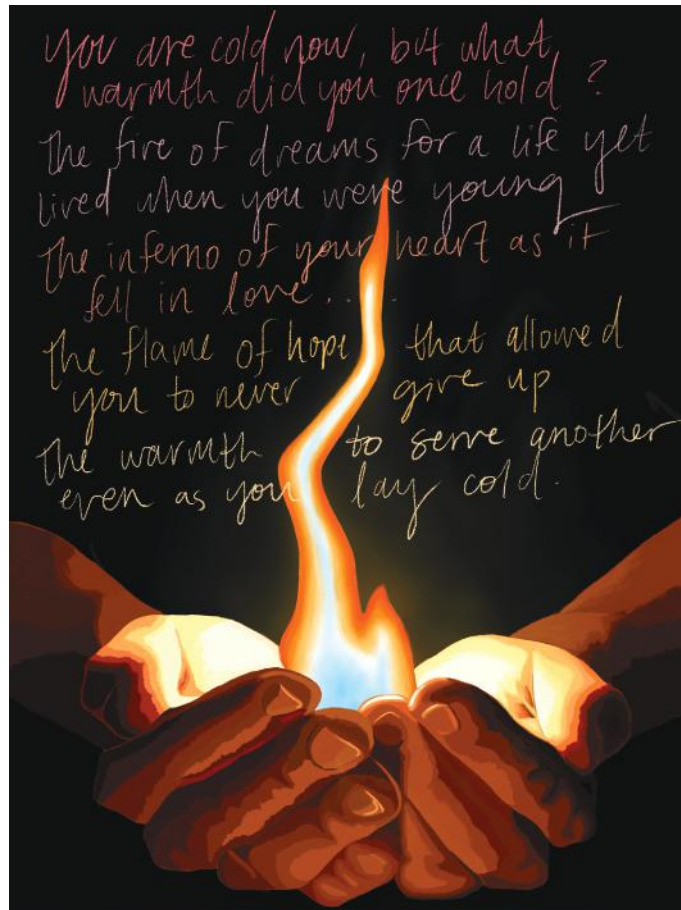
About a month later, we peeled the skin off of the lovely old woman's face and dug around, looking for nerves and vessels. My classmate steadied her head as I braced against the table and made a sagittal cut, savagely splitting her delicate lips with a scalpel to allow my coarse, flesh-flecked saw to cut down through her mandible. Her head lay in two halves, connected by little roots of neck. She still had skin around her eyes, lips, and nose. She still seemed to be real, or like a doll. I found myself periodically trying to reunite the two sides of her face that I had torn apart. Death had separated her from her body, but I had destroyed that body. I had picked apart the face someone once loved. I had sawed through her once-beating heart, torn her organs from her body. The wrinkles she worked so hard to furrow were gone with a stroke of the knife. I destroyed the evidence of the life she built, reduced her to a pile of ragged muscle and nerve that I couldn't distinguish from my own. Surely, I thought, there must be a better alternative to this. Surely it would be better to let your body slowly decay naturally, without all the savagery and destruction. But she wanted to do more. She wanted to use it to the fullest, to do more than fade quietly. She dreamed of finding life again in death. In students crowding over a metal table, first exchanging names, then discussing recent tests, then planning for their futures. In the flock of people around the teacher, in rapt attention as he expertly dives through tissue planes. In their laughter at each other's jokes. In tears and stress and pain. In memories that I waded through forever, pools of anxiety, joy, trouble, and triumph. As she lay there on the cold, shiny metal, her death became life again.

Reflection on a life once lived

Digital painting

Lacy Lichtenhan

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

As a first year medical student in cadaver dissection, I routinely found myself thinking about the person who lay before us. About the life they once lived, and the courage it must have taken to donate their body. This piece is a simple combination of prose and digital art, reflecting on the many emotions I felt while in anatomy lab. What a privilege it was! Although I never knew your name, thank you.

Linens of Life

Plaster, joint compound, linen

Rachael Pham

Student, Long School of Medicine, Class of 2027



NOTE *from the*

ARTIST

"Linens of Life" is a reflective tapestry of the patient's circle of life, starting with newborns swathed in blankets to the draped cadavers. The rolling fabric mimics how patients must navigate the complexities of healthcare, mirroring the twists and turns, highs and lows, within medical and financial landscapes. The white palette is the sterile walls of hospitals, underscoring the institutional challenges imposed on the people, and the fragile plaster represents the emotional and physical toll caused by the very systems meant to provide care.

Through creative expression and reflection,
we nurture our collective humanity and
cultivate meaningful connections among
students, faculty, staff, patients and friends
of UT Health San Antonio.

We are *connective tissue*.

