

LABYRINTH



Labyrinth
Alexandria City High School's Literary and Creative Arts Magazine
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Dear Reader,

This is the first issue of Labyrinth of the 2022 - 2023 school year. In this magazine, we not only want to showcase the creative work of students at Alexandria City High School, but provide a platform for students to share their personal thoughts and identities through creativity. We chose the theme of “culture” to reflect the diversity of those thoughts and identities here at our school. We encouraged students to submit work that reflected their own culture, whatever it means to them, and the entries we received blew us away with their originality and talent. Visit our website to see a magazine staff directory, an archive of past issues, and more; follow us on Instagram (@labyrinthmagazine) and on Twitter (@achslabyrinth) to stay updated; and email labyrinthmagazine@gmail.com to contact us. Enjoy this issue and be on the lookout for our upcoming projects.

—Neya Alper, co-editor

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WHO AM I?

I am a death-staring girl half the time
The other half of me is lively like the streets of New Orleans during Mardi Gras
I struggle to find a place in the complex society we live in
I love to learn about my family heritage and where I came from
I have found a place in my heart for photography and literature
I fill my room with mementos and beautiful reminders of why I am who I am
I haven't quit gymnastics since I started when I was 4 because I get too attached
The same way I've never quit choir

This is who I am

Sarah Braun used to eat butter and sugar sandwiches in the place I now write little melodies on the piano
Papa Denis hadn't seen snow until he moved to America to go to college
Mom was the first in her family to go to college
Dad was a D1 athlete at an Ivy League school

This is who I am

I like to read and write to immerse myself in the knowledge we all hold
I baked brownies yesterday to keep myself from falling into the flawed sleep schedule that has me in a chokehold

Tulips are my favorite flowers

I adore the songwriting of Taylor Swift

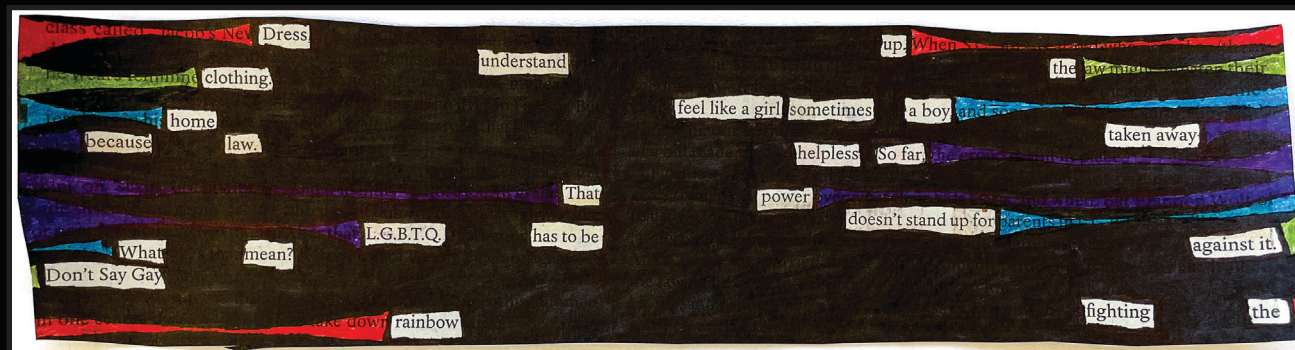
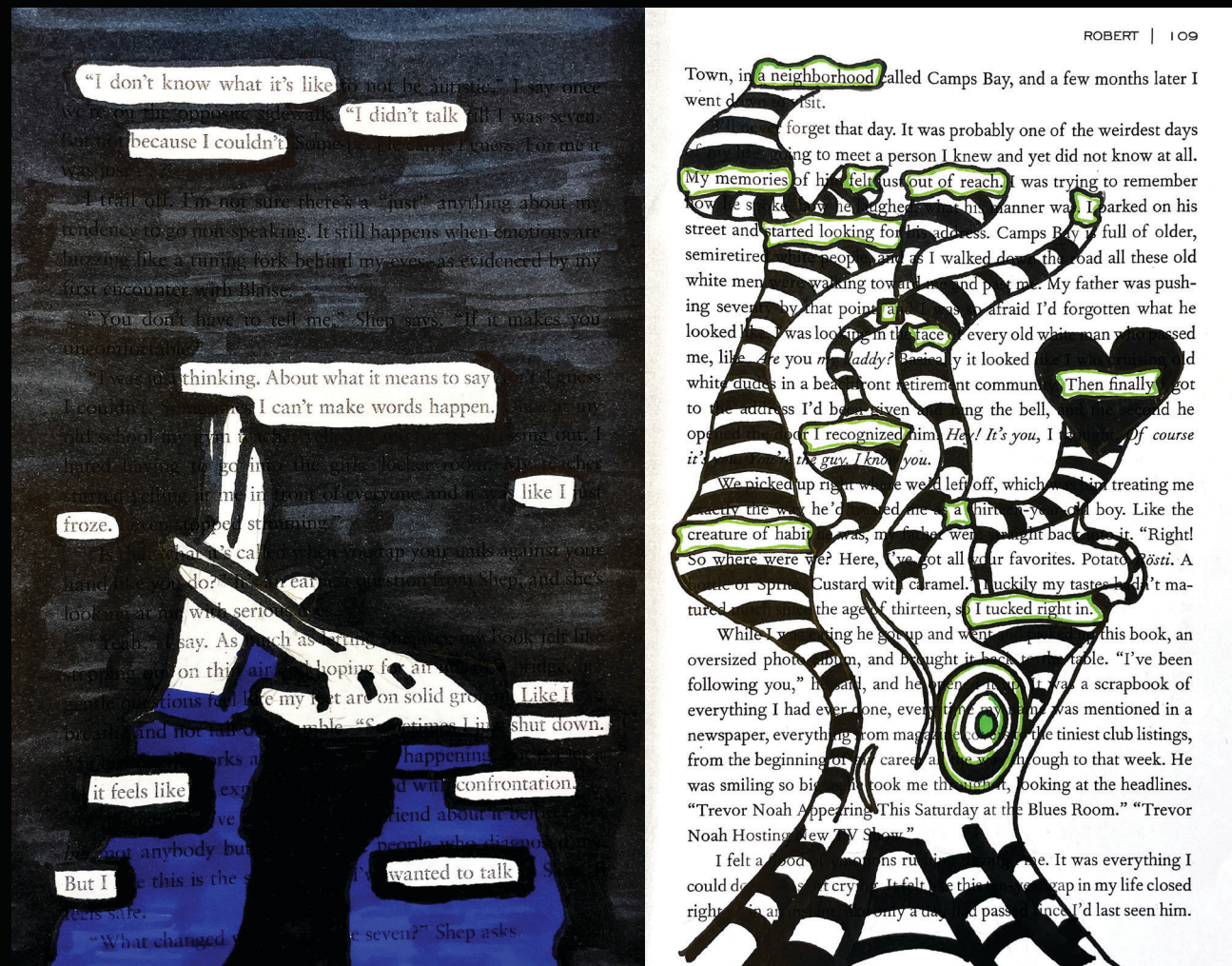
I can fall asleep to Kanye West screaming in my ear
Yet I dance to Tchaikovsky

This is who I am.

WHERE I'M FROM

i'm from summer in overgrown backwoods and pulpy blackberry guts, winter in backstreets and
blacktop gouges. from boiling bathwater on the stove, watching shaking hands cut landjäger
and stale bread loaves. from hand-me-downs and hidey-holes, roadkill chili and rivers running
red from iron ores. i'm from behind broken concrete i've only ever seen behind museum glass,
from whispers slipping from behind closed doors, from cultural inheritance of beer splash and
whiplash from gunfire and warfare, from occupation and displacement and immigration. from
miene lieblich, miene mädchen, moje kochanie to brat, wimp, baby.

i hear culture and think of lab dishes and agar, cultivation to teach a lesson i've forgotten the
purpose of. but what i learned was that you need the right fuel to feed the fire. and that some
fires never stop burning. and that culture's created through care and calm and good living. and
that can't happen when there's a fire burning through it all.



OTHELLO'S BIRD - A CULTURAL APPROPRIATION POEM

A bird gets plucked for its colorful feathers
By prying Vultures who hide at daytime and take when it's not looking
They compared Othello to a horse
Only for them to steal and copy his bird
Taking only the feathers they desired and giving the rest to Othello
Its blood created by a two backed beast only for them to pilfer and drench in it
And the tree branches it lived on started to grow
As Othello and his bird's existence became ephemeral



HER AND I

I'm from the containers that hold tortillas,
carried from door to door,
calling out to be sold
for needed money.

I'm from Clorox and Fabuloso.
Chemicals that fill your nostrils
enough to burn then,
and prick your eyes with tears.

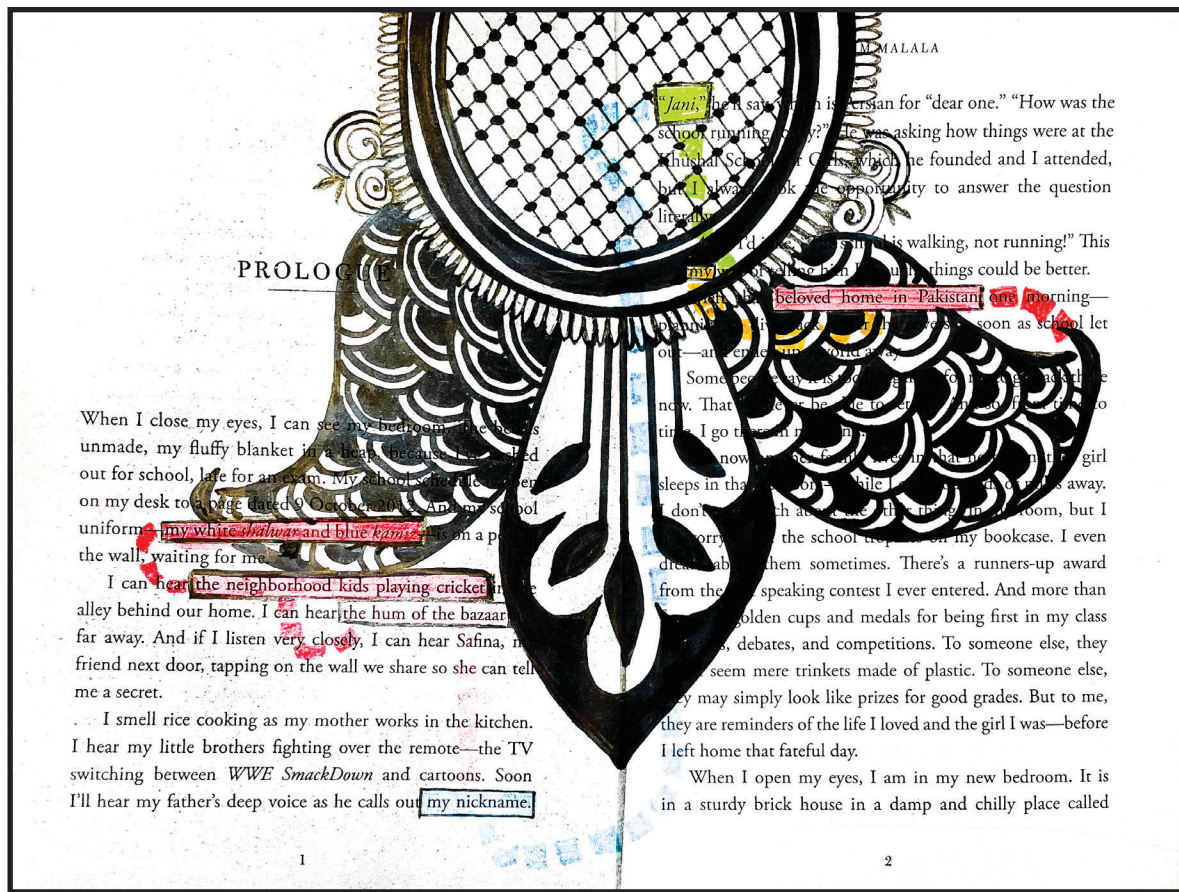
I'm from the rugged,
the dry,
the peeling hands

that she has held my hands with,
always leaving a tickling feeling behind.

I'm from pan dulce
eaten in the morning for breakfast.
The sweet sugar that satisfies
and lingers dry
until quenched with coffee or milk.

I'm from the future she dreamed of,
where she saw,
with a glint of longing in her eyes,
opportunities she never had.





Wars are always fought,
 But never truly won.
 Books and words are constantly bought.
 But never cease to hit us,
 like a gun.
 The cries and stricken faces,
 Oh how they've been forgot.
 I wish more could see, but clearly
 They cannot.
 For darkness covers these lands from which they run.
 But do they not know,
 That there might be no Sun?
 It's hard to imagine a cloud erupting.
 A spark that is changing and obstructing.
 But here it is, as plain as day.
 And it will always be this way.
 But now all I see is rain.
 So maybe,
 Light will come again.

CULTURE

I am from the glorious heart of South-Central Asia, Afghanistan, the star shining.
 From the watery fountains, with the juicy red pomegranates, delicious tasting
 I am from the wind that blows in green, peaceful mountains every morning
 From the high-trees, scenic nature, and the bird chirps so heart calming
 From a warm smile of my grandma, with her wise sayings and old-fashioned dressing
 I am from the place where I hear my siblings making hilarious jokes and laughing
 I am from the moments when oppressive regimes silenced the birds singing
 From the place where the dark history keeps women from educating and growing
 I am from the scenery where children are weeping from the bombs exploding
 I am from a diamond that is tarnished, yet shining
 I was and am from the nights of Kabul's lakes when Mubara was writing
 From her heart that after every darkness, a ray of sunshine will be rising



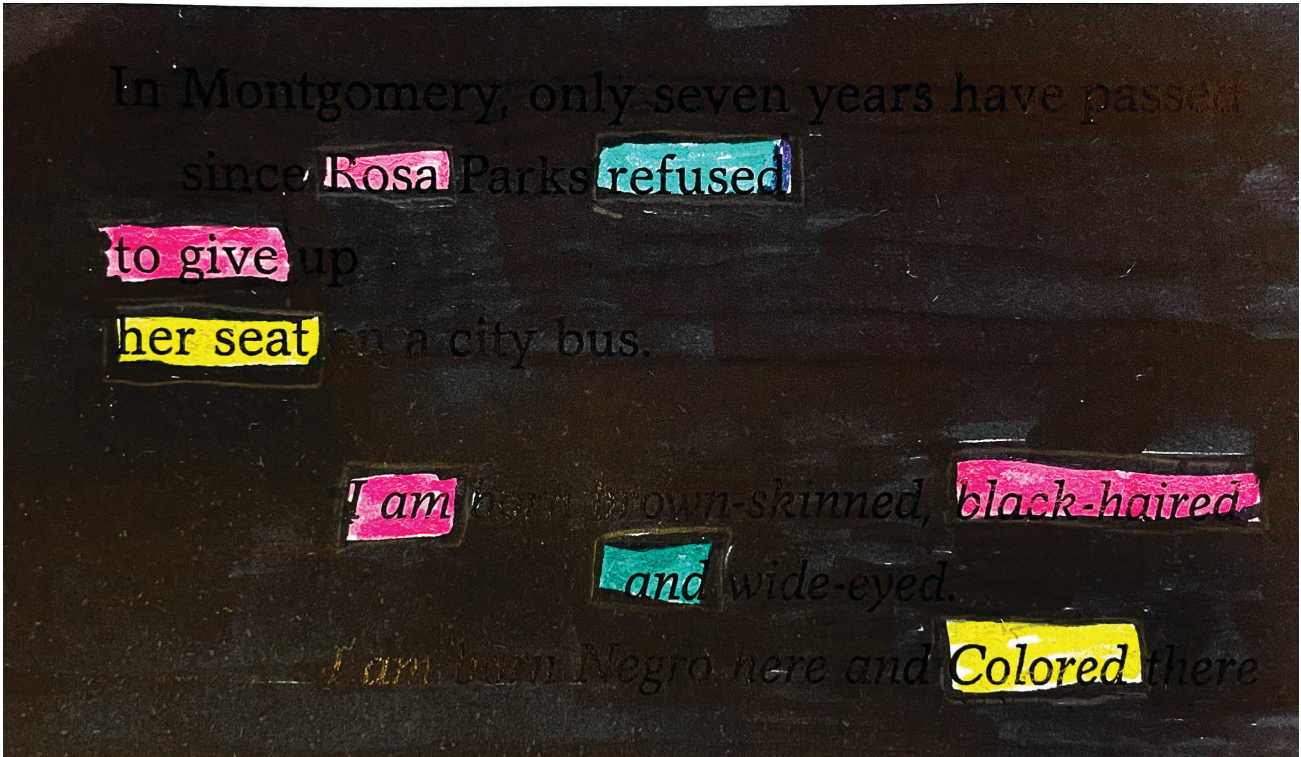
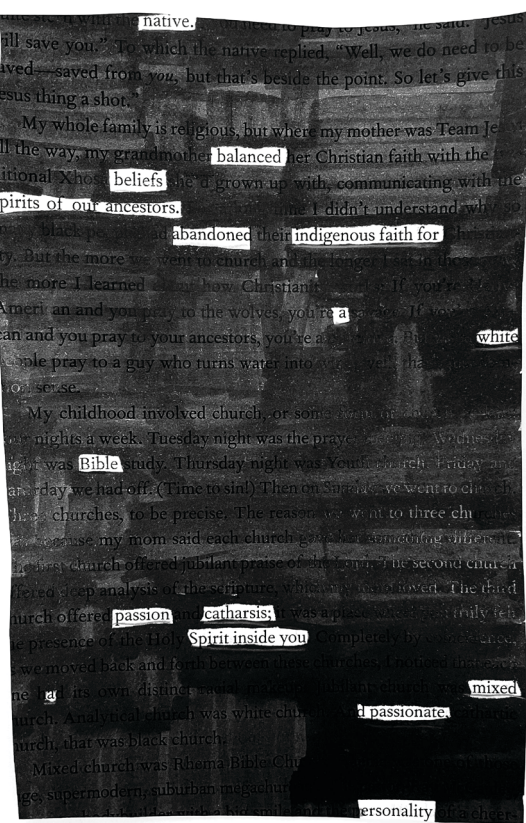
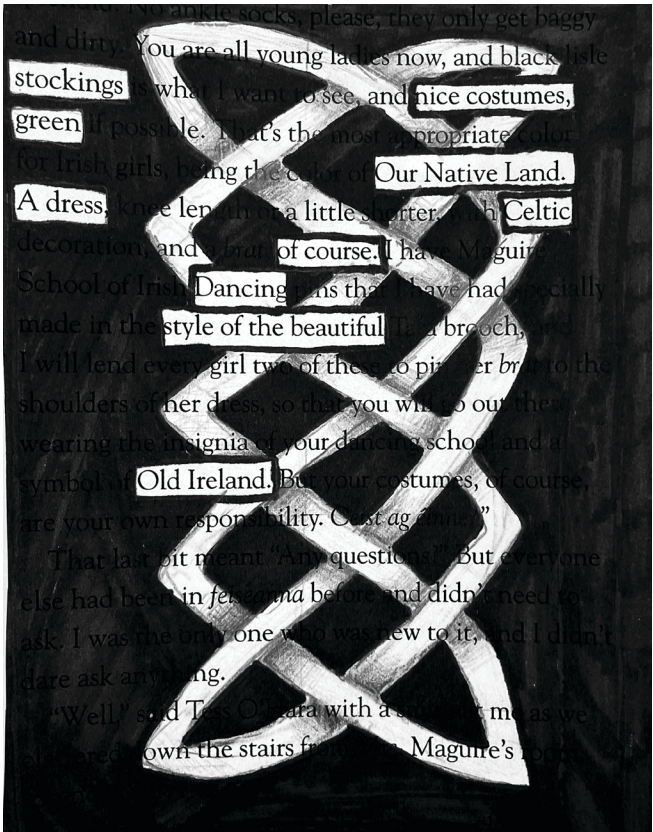
WHEN ALL IS LEFT

I am from a name of love,
or at least from what's it's worth
and a clink of two glasses sung in July
a smell of poison
and freshly-cut grass
to the bloom of the elderflower that gave joy.
I am from Alexandria,
but they joke i'm from Maryland
from a far rustic hospital
because my parents took their time
and again with shared laughs and fond smiles,
I always had to push time.
My brother was the opposite
he hated time,
but ran slow
he's impatient even so.
I am from Thailand,
a time hard to find
but the pleasant foods like the mangos and sticky rice
or the pad thai my mother cooks at home in Alexandria
now on the long streets of Bangkok
shared on summers with my family
when sweat sticks to your clothes,
but my mom's family of many aunts and cousins
always spend the journey.
I am from a culture never passed down
with words I can't remember
and a staircase to a temple I remember vaguely
oh, how long those stairs were
there's a simple
"sawasdee ka" and "khob khun ka" too
but also the insult kwai
which my mother told to never call a stranger,
though those who share the memory still smile.
Faces of the other branches grow thinner

I am from what they call a memory like a goldfish
but remove the goldfish with the faces of others
and maybe leave an empty bowl behind,
despite that, I still want to learn what I can't grasp.
I am from a time that escapes me,
like moths to a flame
they gather close,
but tempting closer to light
similar to that tale of boy who dare the same
despite worries,



the moth's wings are still lit a blaze,
and my memory shatters the rest.
Sometimes I wish life was stored in a jar,
akin to a butterfly
and though it's not alive
the memory of its corpse won't fade
trapped in ethyl alcohol
a beautiful liquid
the color of those times
drenched in a honeysuckle yellow
a smell dripping of sweet sickly saccharine,
but a dizzy spell to the brain
with an after-smell clearly not meant to be,
how I wish I was from those times.
and though the wings grow discolored,
the smell worsens,
dust only gathers,
as do colors once pristine are stored,
you can only hope that
I am from a time where the memory is still fresh.





I AM FROM

I am from nature, from tall mountains
 I am from the blue sky, from clamorous fountains
 Murmuring of wind caresses my ears
 Hiking in the mountains blows away my fears
 All I hear are birds chirping
 I can see my sorrows sinking
 Experiencing the taste of being alive
 Bringing back my memories from the archive

