



Meraki

the soul, creativity or love put into something; the essence of yourself that is put into your work

Issue III

November 18, 2020

WELCOME TO MERAKEI

Meraki (pronunciation | mA-'rak-E), now in its third year of publication, is a journal of collected written works from all Johns Hopkins Community Physicians (JHCP) employees. Literally translated from Greek as “labor of love,” *Meraki*’s goal is to provide a stage for JHCP employees to share their passions through the written word. This year, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, employees were invited to submit artwork of any kind: from sketches to music files.

Meraki celebrates the passions of all of us; perhaps the following essays, poems and works of art will encourage you to take stock of your own creative pursuits and inspire you to develop and hone them.

Meraki

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Editor - Alice Lee, M.D.

The views and opinions expressed in Meraki are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Johns Hopkins Community Physicians.



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INTRODUCTION



by: steven kravet, m.d., m.b.a.

This year, Johns Hopkins Community Physicians providers and staff filled the pages of our third edition of *Meraki* with creative and artistic pursuits of all mediums. From poetry to sketches, music to short stories, and everything in between, this edition of *Meraki* speaks to the personal journey we have all been on throughout the past year.

COVID-19 changed our world in so many ways, and as I write this, we are still in the thick of this pandemic. Our JHCP team responded to this immense challenge with dedication, selflessness and flexibility, but that does not come without a toll. As you will read in the bios of many of this year's contributors, art and writing soothed the anxieties of so many. Perhaps you can relate.

In the following pages, you will read personal poems, study museum-worthy artwork and be carried away by beautiful melodies. In the process, I hope that you remember who these submissions came from: the men and women on the front lines and administrative headquarters of our practices and hospitals – our very own health care heroes.

My thanks go to Dr. Alice Lee, internal and family medicine at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in White Marsh and *Meraki*'s project champion and editor, and to all who submitted pieces for this year's journal. And my thanks also go out to each and every one of you for taking care of yourselves and supporting each other through the many ways we express ourselves.

Keep creating and sharing your meraki.

All my best,

Steven Kravet, M.D., M.B.A., F.A.C.P.
President
Johns Hopkins Community Physicians

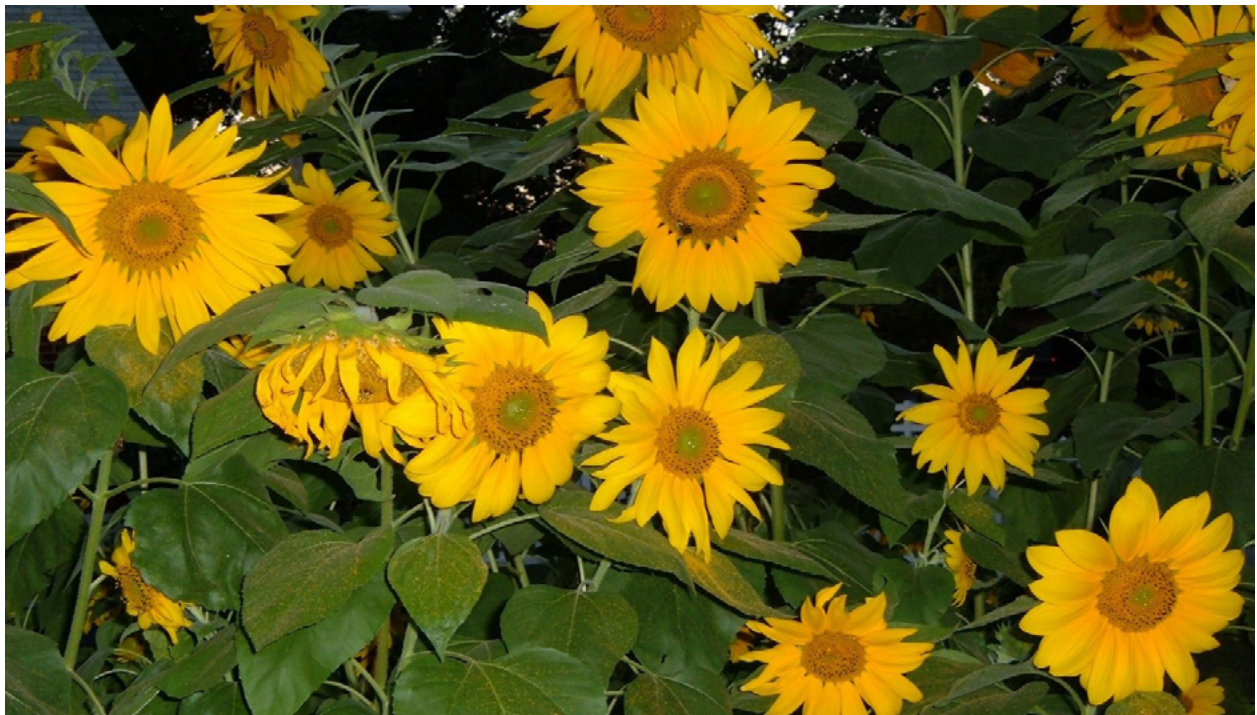


FULLNESS

photo & poem by: erica collins



Gratitude swirls around me
Like feathers blowing joyfully in the wind
My heart beats wildly
Love flowing freely
Wanting to embrace all.
Feelings of peace
Soothing my worn out soul.
Gladness pours from me
Washing away all sadness
Filling my being with light.



LINUS

painting by: **claire wood, r.n.**



Linus, acrylic on 16x20 canvas

MOODS AROUND MARYLAND



photographs **by:** harry crosland





WE CAN DO IT!

poster & digital paintings by: norman dy, m.d.



WE Can *DO IT!*



TOGETHER, We Can Beat COVID-19!



BREATH (2015)

by: jasmine thomas



Breath hits me now like a reminder of something
I'm trying hard to forget.
Breath has become an unpaid debt to me.
Breathing is a game of Russian roulette to me.
This feeling...
It's a prerequisite to being Black and surviving in my
Black skin, you see? Breath?
But I digress...

Breath at the start was like a favorite cousin.
The one you always talked to. No repercussions.
At the family reunion?
You know...
Your own silent revolution
Your Black parents couldn't ruin with threat of:
"You better get on over there and hug your cousin.
Go! Get!"
You were already there. You wanted to chat.
You know? Like that?

I breathed then because I wanted to;
It was something I'd never forget.
Breath.
But years later,
After that...


CONTINUED

As I got older
 Breath quickly graduated, it became
 colder.
 A passing hello over the shoulder
 In a churchyard you only visit
 When someone's life is over.
 You know?
 The talking to yourself.
 To a rock that's a placeholder
 For a person you used to love to talk to.
 The, "I meant to hug you at the last
 reunion, but then I forgot to. Ain't been
 the same, and it's a real shame that those
 cops done shot you."
 Breath.

Now that's when breath became a credit
 card.
 Each breath feeling like a charge
 For an item I'm buying with no price
 regard.
 Facebook pages, sharing memes.
 "I should've known you better"
 Digital letters, memories together.
 "We'd thought you last forever, man! ...I'll
 visit the family when I can..."

In the meantime
 This profile picture of Black fists should
 suffice.
 And I'll record a rant, taking a stand,
 condemning cops.
 "You're the sacrifice!"
 The Movement.
 And that's when the riots began

Receipts of strangers sharing hashtags,
 Complete disregard for the person.
 Just the version that they know from the
 news

The "face" for the abused or the accused.
 The same one you used to talk to
 In the kitchen...
 At the reunion down in Michigan.
 It's a sickness!
 And the thickness
 Of this debt is sitting heavy on my chest.
 Thinking, "I know I meant to say 'I love you.'
 But somehow I learned to forget."
 Breath.
 Reading the news feed hailing decrees of the
 black disease.
 "The Cop just did as he was trained!"
 You know, the usual expertise.
 Tell us to ignore our oppression, trade it in
 for armor.
 While society pawns Black bodies in the
 name of honor?
 Like Eric Garner, odds stacked against us.
 We yell, "I can't breathe!"
 And the debt of my black breath becomes
 another slaughter's reprise!?

Now...
 Breath today, reminds us of when they shot
 Freddie Gray
 Or the day we took a stand
 Against the stolen life of a woman named
 Sandra Bland
 Breath today, will suffice as a memory to
 Tamir Rice.
 Or when we tore up the town that shot
 down Michael Brown
 Breath today, is the start of the march
 against the department
 Focused solely on purging parts of us like
 Trayvon Martin.
 Breath today, is the day the Earth stood still.
 Because we remember the tragic night they
 murdered our brother Emmett Till.



CONTINUED

Breath is the debt we must carry
In a time where Black life is deemed
revolutionary
And until Black laughter, black reunions and
black chatter
Become an equal part in how much others'
may matter,
Breath is an unpaid debt.
And we must cherish each breath
So that we may never forget... ■



VARIATIONS



artwork (pencil) by: amina watson, m.d.

featuring "Dream Variations" by Langston Hughes



TO FLING MY ARMS WIDE IN SOME PLACE OF THE SUN,
TO WHIRL AND DANCE TILL THE WHITE DAY IS DONE.
THEN REST AT COOL EVENING BENEATH A TALL TREE
WHILE NIGHT COMES ON GENTLY, DARK LIKE ME
THAT IS MY DREAM!

TO FLING MY ARMS WIDE IN THE FACE OF THE SUN,
DANCE! WHIRL! WHIRL! TILL THE QUICK DAY IS DONE.
REST AT PALE EVENING.... A TALL, SLIM TREE...
NIGHT COMING TENDERLY BLACK LIKE ME.

THE RETURN OF HOUSE CALLS



by: sajida chaudry, m.d.

When I was a child, “Little Miss” and “Mr. Men” books were very popular. Mr. Topsy-turvy and Mr. Messy were my favorites. Today, “messy” and “topsy-turvy” describe my daily life. A planner by nature, I’ve gotten used to going with the flow during this pandemic, implementing plans with limited preparation, changing plans, upending plans, and not planning. It feels very messy to me, but I’m going with it and trying to learn some lessons along the way.

A holistic understanding of our patients’ lives

A bright side of the pandemic is having the most wonderful and intimate conversations with patients via telemedicine. My colleagues say they’re able to get a more holistic understanding of their patients’ lives. Sometimes, a patient’s entire family might join the visit. Other times, we learn that no one is there to help at home.

We get to see a bigger picture of our patients’ lives when we see their home, and they get to share in ours. My children’s LEGO bricks and my basement treadmill are visible in the background, as are their family pictures, pieces of art, crosses on the wall, travel mementos, and coffee mugs. Patients are more relaxed at home and want to open up their homes to us. Sometimes we see a child in the background or a bounding pet. The virtual house call is a silver lining of the pandemic and helps us connect despite this messy and topsy-turvy world. ■

This piece originally appeared on [closler.org](https://www.closler.org) on July 9, 2020.

CLOSLER is a free and open access medical education website with the mission of stimulating clinicians to reflect on giving excellent patient care. You can follow them on Twitter and Instagram @closler.



THE UNKNOWN CLINICIAN SINGS 'A MILLION DREAMS'



by: anonymous



Anonymous
['A Million Dreams'](#)



Click or tap the play button above to open the music file link. Alternatively, [click here](#).

THE DEATH STARE

by: amina watson, m.d.



We have all seen it. That vast emptiness in the eyes of those who are close to passing away. The light and life that once occupied the colorful windows to the soul now stills... and slowly fades away.

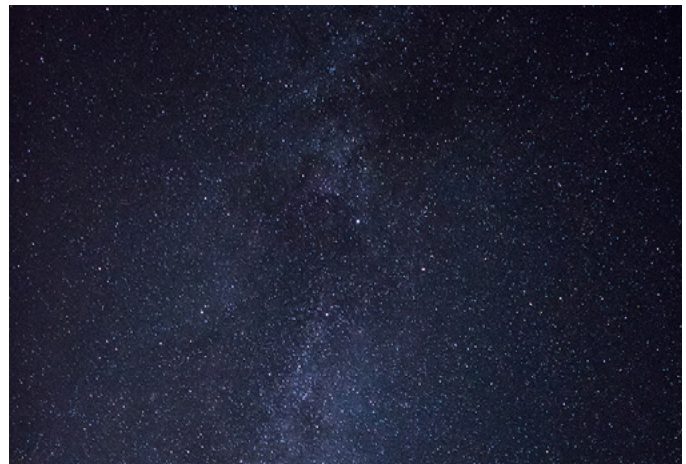
It makes you wonder how much is truly still happening in their minds, in the brain itself, and what type of imaging pattern this distant stare towards death might show.

As a Pediatrician, I have not seen this often. More than once is more than enough though, especially when it is a child.

Harder still when it is a loved one, because their recognition of you, them seeing you, is often part of what has made you know who you are in this world. In the film "Avatar," the Na'Vi people greet each other with the phrase, "I see you." To be seen is one of our deepest needs, and it helps move us to great heights when we feel seen, and can also drive us into the depths when we feel unseen.

Most days, I am grateful to look into the eyes of babies and children that are full of life and recognition, even if they recognize that I am not their parent, and they see me with caution and reserve until I prove myself trustworthy of the random hug and smiles that my patients so often graciously give. I chose the specialty I love, and I am privileged to observe developing lives, their growth, and their march towards independence.

I respect my colleagues who care for adults



I am grateful for those of us who have the steeliness within themselves to withstand a more constant loss of life among their patients. All of us have had to adopt the ability to remain strong and constant, as wearers of the white coat. Like a superhero's cape, it shields us from the expectation that we may weep or break in the face of death and decay like most ordinary humans.

I have had to adopt a steeliness of my own, in my personal life, without the shielding of the white coat. Although I am not sure how tough I really am, because I have certainly felt broken and wept in the face of the decline and death of my own loved ones.

My father was a strong man, an athlete whose ability to play football earned him a college education. He played the game so he could reach his goal of earning a college degree and eventually earning a doctorate in education by the age of 26. He fought his entire life for a better education for the



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inner-city children who attended the schools he was the principal of, and even took to the national stage fighting for the existence of an all-male academy for African American males. He wanted his Malcolm X Academy in Detroit to be a refuge, a place where little African American boys knew they were seen, loved and valued.

He often strolled the perimeter of the first location of his school, the Malcolm X Academy, which was in a known racist suburban area, in full view of people who had made threats upon the life of his students. He was intimidating to most people, but the children loved and respected him because they knew that everything he did was for them. I adored him because he was just my dad, and the person who believed in me and encouraged me the most.

When he phoned me one day and told me that he had fainted – and the doctor told him he was anemic, I sensed the fear and uncertainty in his voice, which was unfamiliar and unsettling to me. I didn't think he was scared of anything. Later, when he tried to downplay his ongoing abdominal troubles and the lump the doctor had felt in his stomach, I played along, hoping for nothing too serious and encouraging him to start to eat better. However, I was already in medical training, and I knew better. I wept for hours at the thought that my father would die. Anemia, a mass, a fainting episode – in a man who had never been sick or hospitalized – I knew it could be cancer. I prayed that I was wrong,

I longed for blissful ignorance, but I wasn't wrong. I transferred to another residency program at home when the cancer diagnosis was official – I needed to be close to my dad. He received treatment at the same hospital I worked in. I was able to check on him, go to some of his appointments, and be at his bedside when I was on call.

His decline took the form of little things at first. He let me drive his car, I needed to tie his shoes for him. His weight loss took away the stocky muscular frame of a former athlete, and he became drawn and thin. His final hospitalization lasted for weeks. He was weak, too weak to talk and care for himself. I kept working my 80-hour weeks at first, and I was still there, in my white coat at his bedside, when the chemo rounding team came one morning, and I endured the sympathetic stares of the other white-coated ones who knew my father was dying.



When awake, my dad would just stare sometimes, he would look at me, and I was unsure of what he was thinking. There was an emptiness in this stare, despite my longing to see some meaning or familiarity in it. I wasn't sure if he really saw me anymore.

In the final days of his life, his attending doctor asked him who I was – he said gruffly, but weakly, “of course—that’s Amina, Amina Watson.” That was the last time he was aware. Soon after that, his kidneys failed and he was no longer conscious, and he quickly declined. I was there with him, without my protective white coat on – as I had taken a leave from my duties. I was there at his side, my hand on his chest, as his last breaths were taken. Unshielded, I was no superhero, I wept, and broke.

Years later, as an official, for real doctor – not just an overworked resident, I thought I was pretty practiced at my superhero steeliness. I have been cushioned for years in the life of a happy bread and butter Pediatrician, having vowed to never work in a hospital again. Life marches forward, however, and I have unfortunately seen the stare of death again, up close and deeply personal.

I was not as close to my mother, she did her best, and she successfully raised three children, mostly on her own. She was a teen mother and twice divorced. It took her ten years to get her college degree because she had to work full time and raise children, and fit school in wherever she could. She was smart, stubborn, and tough.

At first she was in denial of forgetting things, making the rest of us think we were wrong. Then she started writing notes to herself, sticky notes, scattered around the house with information that should have been deeply ingrained. She stopped talking as much because she was embarrassed that she could no longer find the words. She would have times when she was unusually nicer than normal, and times she was more difficult than normal. Her mild OCD became amplified, and she hoarded paper, and all kinds of junk everywhere in her home. I could no longer leave my kids with her during holiday visits because of the chaotic atmosphere. She was only in her sixties when this started. Too early, we thought, but early onset Alzheimer's is real. She had otherwise been fairly healthy, and she still retains the perfect skin and beautiful face that she was blessed with. I am not there every day, to watch her decline. I am not sure if I could be. I am shielded by distance – attending to my white coat duties hours away in another state.

My last visit was one I will not forget, because she had the stare. The vast emptiness – no recognition that I, or my children, were there. I would like to think in times before when I called her mom and hugged her that she kind of knew me, and I took comfort in that. She was still getting around the house some, hoarding her pieces of paper, not really talking much, but even dancing around a bit when she heard an old tune. But in recent weeks she stopped. She no longer walks around, she cannot care for herself. It has

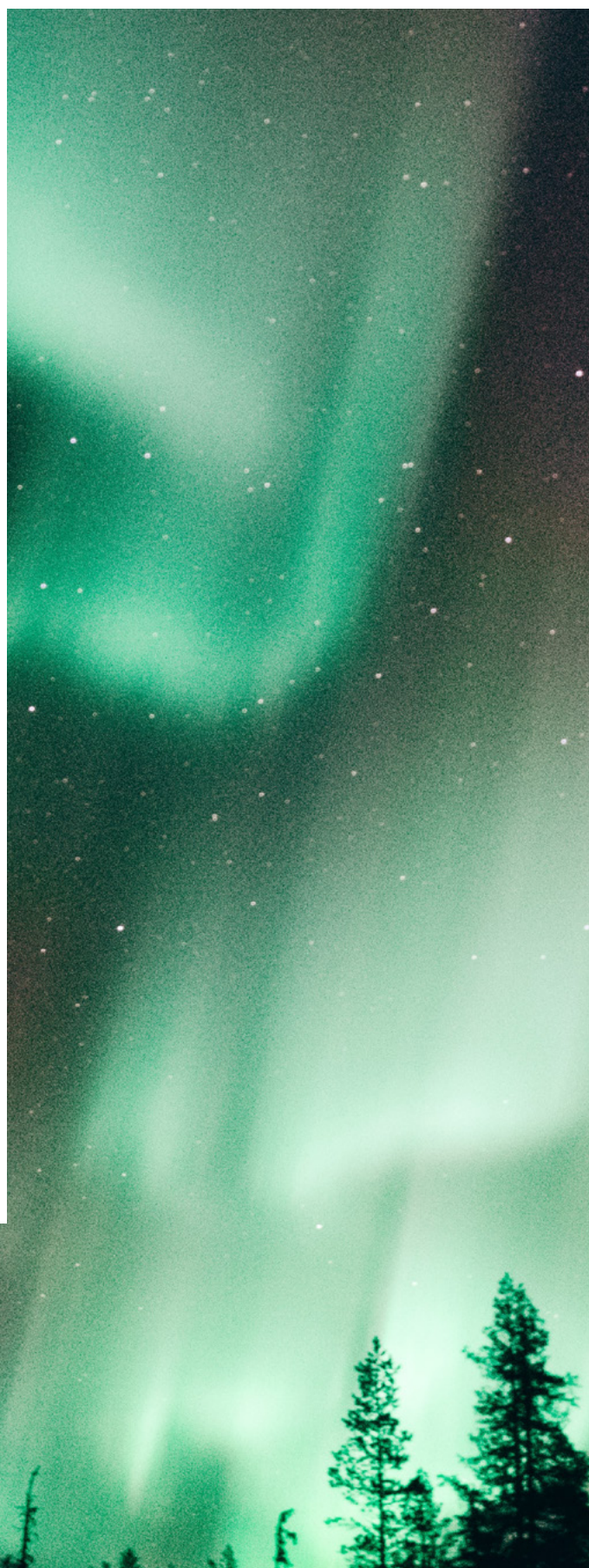


been years since I could phone her and just say hello, but I always knew I could visit, and look into her eyes, and there would be some hint of recognition.

Now, that was gone. Only the stare was there.

I knew my kids did not know what that meant, but I did. I didn't cry or break because I didn't want to upset them. They are old enough to not question much, they know she has been sick. They have already known too much loss – an uncle to cancer, their paternal grandfather, and, unexpectedly, in this time of COVID, my stepfather, their Pawpaw. They were not yet born when my father passed away.

The reverberation of death can be as gentle as a ripple in a pond, or as strong as a quake that brings down a steely structure. It is not easy in any way that it shows up, and it changes the life landscape of those who remain. Despite what I do, I am still very human, and I am completely unsettled when death stares me in the face. I know what it is coming for – someone who is mine on some level – my father, my mother. And although no one truly belongs to us, the heart still aches when the ones we love march toward the inevitable end of this journey. ■



STATE FAIR & PORTLAND HEAD LIGHT



photographs **by: mark phillips, m.d.**

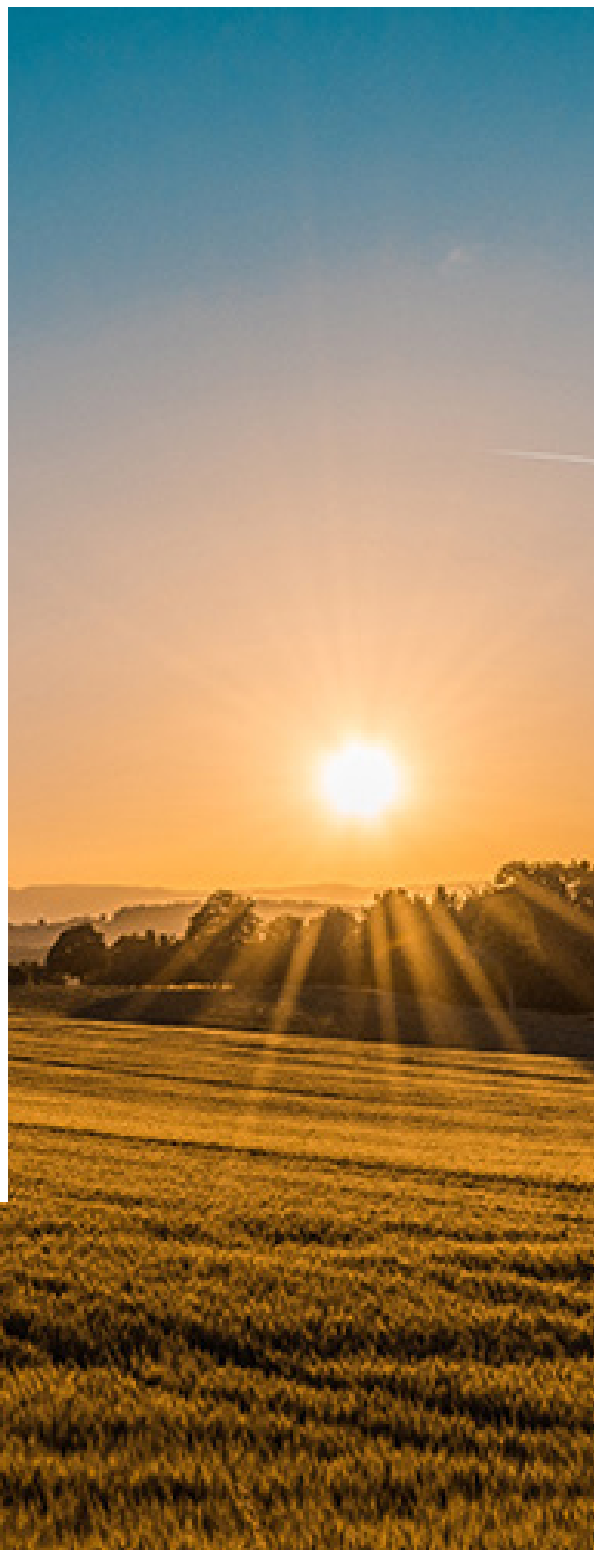



NOT SO LONG AGO

by: tammie wendell



I remember a time not long ago,
A day that changed the world
A world I knew, that was not perfect,
But whose people held steady and true
And on that awful day we cried,
And mourned our fellow man
For evil touched us on that day,
But together, we would stand
We all volunteered, and we all cheered,
The heroes that were shown
Our flags were flown, our arms were linked,
And our hearts began to grow
We all stood tall, and came to the call,
Of anyone in need
This awful act, caused us to face the facts,
But had planted this beautiful seed
We called each other brother then,
And meant it respectfully
Knowing no one could ever break this chain,
Of our newfound family.





But as the years went by, our tears all dried,
And our bond began to waiver
And now we see, within you and me,
Some really bad behavior
Brothers no more, seems we've shut that door,
And the chain has rusted with it
We don't seem to care, and we do not dare
Stand up for each other, admit it
Our patience is nil, and some are willing to kill,
For ideals that differ from ours
And the violence we see, against the heroes we need,
Will topple us like those towers
So, challenge me yes, but do not cancel me,
For my thoughts matter too
You are you and I am I,
And yes, you matter, too
We can do better, we've done it before,
And we were the strongest nation
So, let's come together, my brethren forever,
And revel in God's creation. ■

CROCHET PROJECTS

crochet **by:** maire wray, c.r.n.p.

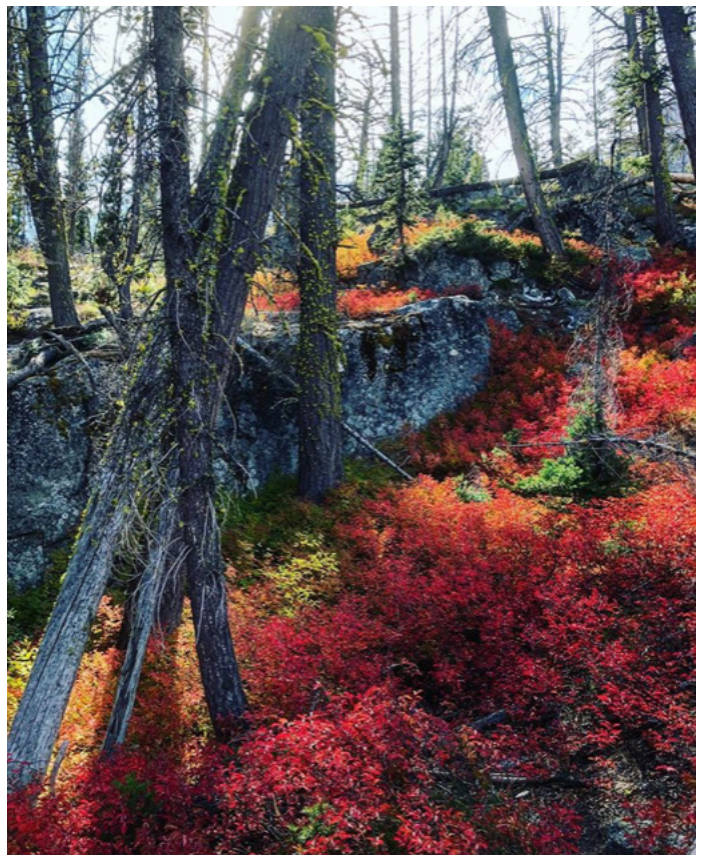


"I started crocheting three years ago, primarily as a way to unwind and occupy my hands with something other than my phone – this is even more true today as I try to avoid 'doom scrolling.' My initial projects were for my then newborn son and I still mostly make hats and blankets for the little ones – nieces and nephews and friends' babies. My mom also crochets so it is fun to share projects with her. Lately I have noticed that when I crochet around my son, he is more motivated to play independently – a win-win!"

HIKING THROUGH IDAHO



photograph **by: neha handa**



OBSERVING & ACKNOWLEDGING FAMILY DYNAMICS



by: kimberly zeren, c.r.n.p.

One of the most wonderful things about being a nurse practitioner in family medicine is observing and learning how the dynamics and health of the entire family affects the healing process of the patient. Another important learning is how the little things we do for patients often make the most impact in patient care. Things like giving a smile or offering a drink of water and a chair for a family member connects us as humans.

It is a privilege to create connections with patients and their families during the most vulnerable times in a patient's life. Often a key to forging this connection is finding the divine spark in each person we meet.

One family stands out for me concerning connecting deeply with a patient and their family. I was seeing a one month old for a well-child visit. Both parents accompanied the child. I immediately felt that the mother was in emotional distress. I asked her how she was adjusting to life as a new mom, and she immediately burst into tears. She divulged that she was struggling with breastfeeding and felt guilty about not wanting to continue breastfeeding when she returned to work full-time in two weeks. We discussed how many formulas can provide great nutrition for babies and how she needed to care for herself in order to give excellent care to her newborn. We developed a weaning plan and then I made sure to tell her what a great job she was doing with her infant. She left

beaming with confidence and a guilt-free plan that was individualized for her and her child. This infant is now a beautifully healthy 12-year-old young woman, with a six-year-old brother. To this day, every time I see this mother at well-child visits, she gives me a big hug, tears up, and tells me how much of a difference that first visit made to her family.

During your next patient encounter, observe the family dynamics and don't be afraid to ask the difficult questions. Families need you to notice any tension, acknowledge it, and inquire. This makes a difference in our sacred mission of healing. ■

This piece originally appeared on [closler.org](https://www.closer.org) on March 10, 2020.

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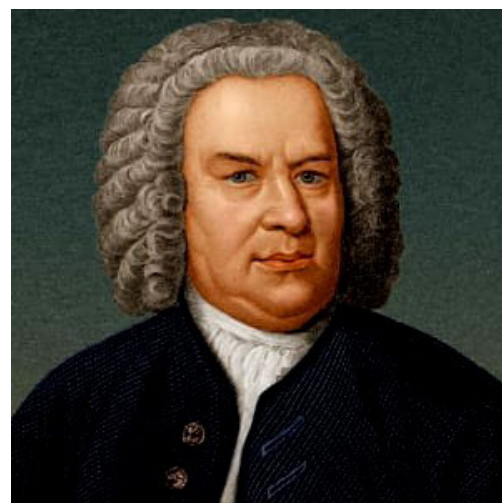
REFLECTIONS AT THE PIANO



performances and commentary **by: bill convey**

Bach

I love starting with Bach—the most prodigious musical genius in my world. Inspired by his deeply held spiritual beliefs, he would often compose one new and great composition every day. In so much of his music, one can perceive the smooth whirring of the gears of the celestial machinery. A dedicated parent and teacher, he fathered 20 children, of whom more than a few became famous musicians. Bach possessed an energetic and strong personality; once when insulted by a bassoonist, he told the offending musician that he played like “a nanny-goat”—and had to be restrained from attacking him! Unlike the bright clockwork of the [Prelude in A Minor](#), the [Prelude in E Minor](#) will always have a more profound and darker meaning for me, as I learned its somber and then agitated strains during the time when I lost my father.



Click or tap the play buttons
to open the music file link.
Alternatively, use the links above.



Johann Sebastian Bach
[Prelude in A Minor](#)



Johann Sebastian Bach
[Prelude in E Minor](#)

Chopin

Whereas Beethoven stormed the heavens with his music—reportedly raising himself up and shaking his fist at a thunderclap on his deathbed, and Brahms created glorious towering celestial edifices where he waltzes with the stars (listen to his Symphony #3), Chopin raised human emotions to a level of nobility and exultation revelatory of our spiritual nature.

Chopin's Etudes ("works") are technical studies of the highest artistic achievement. The [Opus 25, No. 1 in A Flat Major](#) is a refined but subtly passionate song sung almost entirely by the fifth finger of the right hand, with only a few guest appearances by other fleeting voices in the right or left hand. Years ago, I noticed that the pulse of this melody emotionally locks onto our heartbeat—which the composer skillfully slows and accelerates to bring us to a climax marked *appassionato*, followed by the sweetest echo on a high F, and the luxury of some closing reverberations that our impatient subsequent centuries would have disallowed.

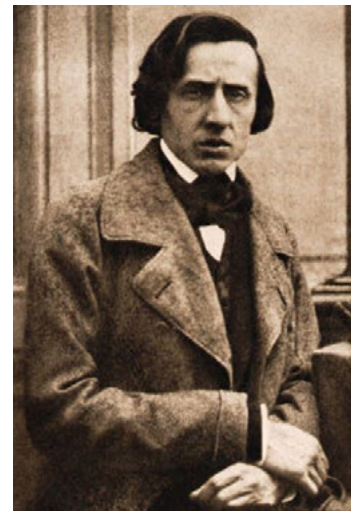
Chopin's Etude [Opus 25, No. 12 in C Minor](#) is the last of this magnificent series. For much of Chopin's adult life, the body was trying to die from tuberculosis and only remained animated through great effort of the spirit—Chopin was often weak to the point of having to be carried and would experience active hemoptysis on the keyboard. This Etude, titled "The Ocean" because of its undulating wavelike structure by his eccentric novelist girlfriend, George Sand, leaves behind the agitation and defiance of many

of its predecessors, and instead embodies a transcendent spiritual resignation filled with a powerful, magisterial peace—evocative of a magnificent ocean at night. As with the gift of much great music, it reassures us as to the presence of an incomprehensible beauty found even in the overwhelming sadness of life—in a manner that far transcends the grosser constraints of words and intellect.



Frédéric Chopin

[Opus 25, No. 1 in A Flat Major](#)



Frédéric Chopin

[Opus 25, No. 12 in C Minor](#)

José White

[La Bella Cubana](#) (“The Beautiful Cuban”), is based on a traditional folk song from the Antilles, the Caribbean archipelago. José White Lafitte was a violinist and composer who studied in the early 20th Century at the Paris Conservatory. Reflecting his richly multicultural Cuban heritage, the composer captured this haunting melody in minor key—a quality that often lends a more sultry characteristic to much of the music of Latin America. The spell is lifted by a brighter modulation to major for a brief contradanza (“country dance”), but then we return again to the enchantress as she passes like a mysterious apparition of the tropical evening—veiled in her black lace mantilla on the Malecón, the oceanside promenade of La Habana. Memorably great music is rarely just sweet, but more often bittersweet—corresponding to the reality of our lives. ■



José White
[La Bella Cubana](#)



TRAVELS TO THE WEST

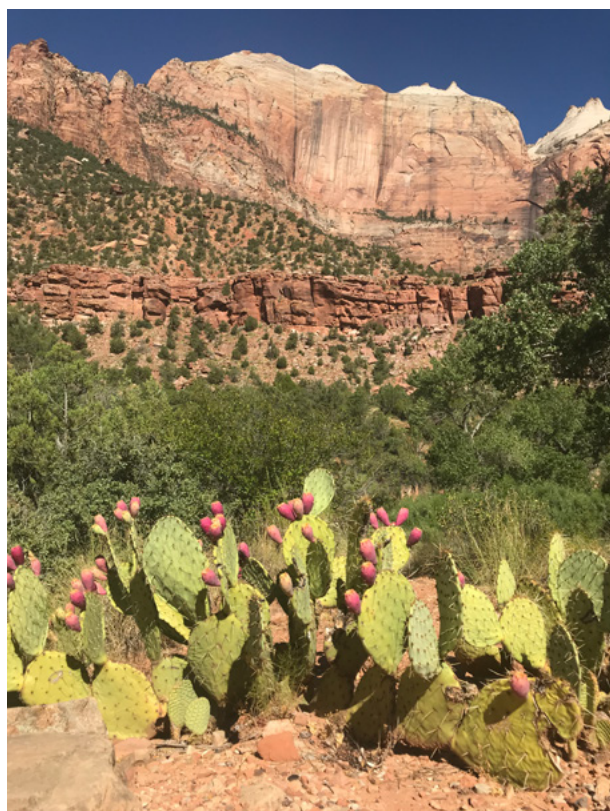


photographs **by: kelly koay, m.d.**

Top right:
Grand Canyon

Bottom left:
Zion Canyon

Bottom right:
Antelope Canyon



TODAY

by: lauren wiafe-ababio, m.d.



There's something about this journey that tends to force a sense of unrest.

We achieve so much and yet it's never quite enough.

Somehow, we find new ways to forego celebration through an obsession with 'the next step,'

Always self-critiquing,

Never fully being in the present,

Overshadowing the gratitude that is due for what has already come to fruition.

How easily we forget that this very moment was the desired destination of our former aspirations.

But amidst this cognitive dissonance, today,

After dedicating greater than a decade of my life to the pursuit of a dream,

I've arrived at a relative moment of triumph,

of clarity,

of peace,

of rest.

Though the seasoned doctor may warn that this is 'just the beginning,'

Today, I choose to remind myself of the truths I live by;

Realizing that these same beliefs that carried me through the checkpoints that are now in my rearview will inevitably guide me onward;

I am a force.

I am blessed.

Grace & mercy follow me.

Favor precedes my every step.

Any negative feeling is temporary.

I will always be okay.

... today is no exception.



TRANSFORMED

artwork (pencil) by: amina watson, m.d.



COULD BE WORSE

by: robert kass, m.d.



**I cried
because
it was raining
and I had
no umbrella.**

**Then
I met
a man
who had
no head.**

MEDICINE, MUSIC AND MINISTRY



by: kimberly turner, m.d.

When my 16-year-old daughter, Jessica, met Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, president of University of Maryland Baltimore County, she proudly shared with him her passion for math and music. For me the triumvirate of medicine, music and ministry sum up my passions.

The 16-year-old Kimberly Moran would have readily shared her dream to be a classical pianist playing with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Almost 40 years later, I share the love of music with my daughter, the love of medicine with my patients and colleagues, and the love of ministry with my husband and six prayer partners.

Chopin, Beethoven and Joplin

My dad used to say that he could tell what type of day I had by what music I chose to practice after school. On any given day, Chopin gave me peace, Beethoven summoned passion, and Scott Joplin's ragtime pieces wove their intricate rhythms through my busy mind. When you have a passion, it remains with you through the various seasons of life whether those seasons are calm or tumultuous.

Uncertainty and struggle

2018 was certainly one of those obstreperous years. In fact, it was one of my most challenging years as an adult. While at the peak of my career, I was juggling being

a pastor's wife, caring for aging parents and managing all of the stress that comes with guiding two teenagers into young adulthood. I felt overwhelmed, stressed and uncertain about my decisions. Peace was available, but I just had to learn where to find it.

During this year of uncertainty and struggle, I learned much about the ministry of presence, prayer, and peace. Harnessing positivity through daily prayer and the unwavering support of my six "cluster" sisters helped me to refine my mindset and reignite my resilience. Being married to a pastor, I'd always heard about the "power of positivity" and that "tests become testimonies." I now know that having a great attitude can positively influence how you view what you're going through. It can literally save your life. That's why my new mantra is, "Work as if you are doing it for the Lord and not the people," because if you get busy doing God's business, He will help you through your business, no matter how challenging it may be.

Why I care for patients

Through all that I have gone through personally and professionally, one life lesson I have learned is that medicine is my calling. Caring for patients is not only something I do, it flows out of who I am. In order to experience longevity as an Ob/Gyn, I

often reflect on why I am doing this work. The answer comes from within which allows me to manage the pressures of this profession.

Having a passion outside of medicine

All physicians deal with sacrifice with varying levels of success. I have sacrificed nights, weekends, and holiday time with family and friends on a consistent basis. Because of this sacrifice, having a passion outside of medicine is critical.

Practicing the ministry of self-care

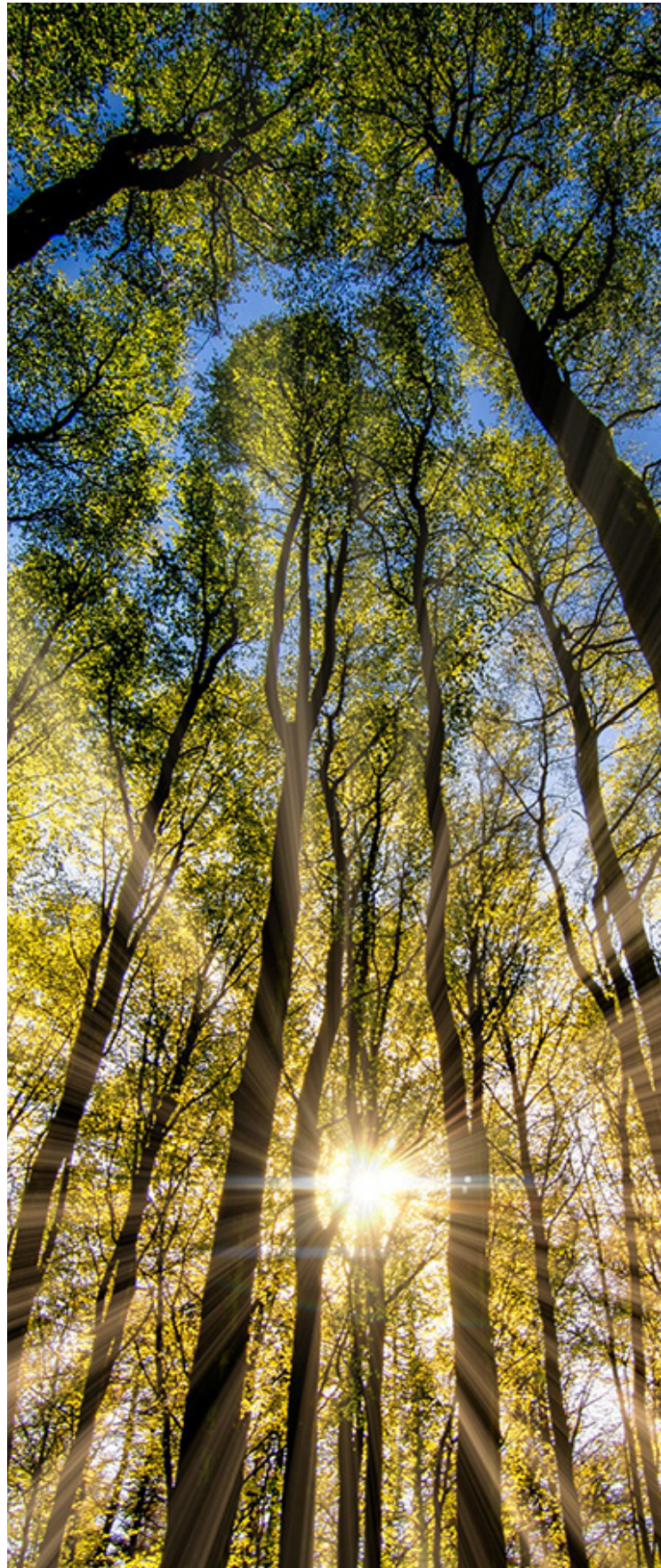
With all the demands of health care, it is essential that one practice the ministry of self-care. Remember to nurture your passion for something you love, something you do, and something that's bigger than you. This will help you to experience achievement and fulfillment, as well as to find success and significance. Hanging on to the things that we love outside of medicine keep us happy and whole, and help us to endure the rigorous and stressful careers we have chosen.

Harness your passions outside of work

I hear repeatedly from my younger colleagues that they don't know "how I do it." Sometimes, I wonder the same thing myself. My advice, however, is simple. Recognize your calling, harness your passions outside of work, and be grateful every day that you are chosen to work for a higher power while caring for yourself and others. ■

This piece originally appeared on [closler.org](https://www.closler.org) on November 14, 2019.

CLOSLER is a free and open access medical education website with the mission of stimulating clinicians to reflect on giving excellent patient care. You can follow them on Twitter and Instagram @closler.



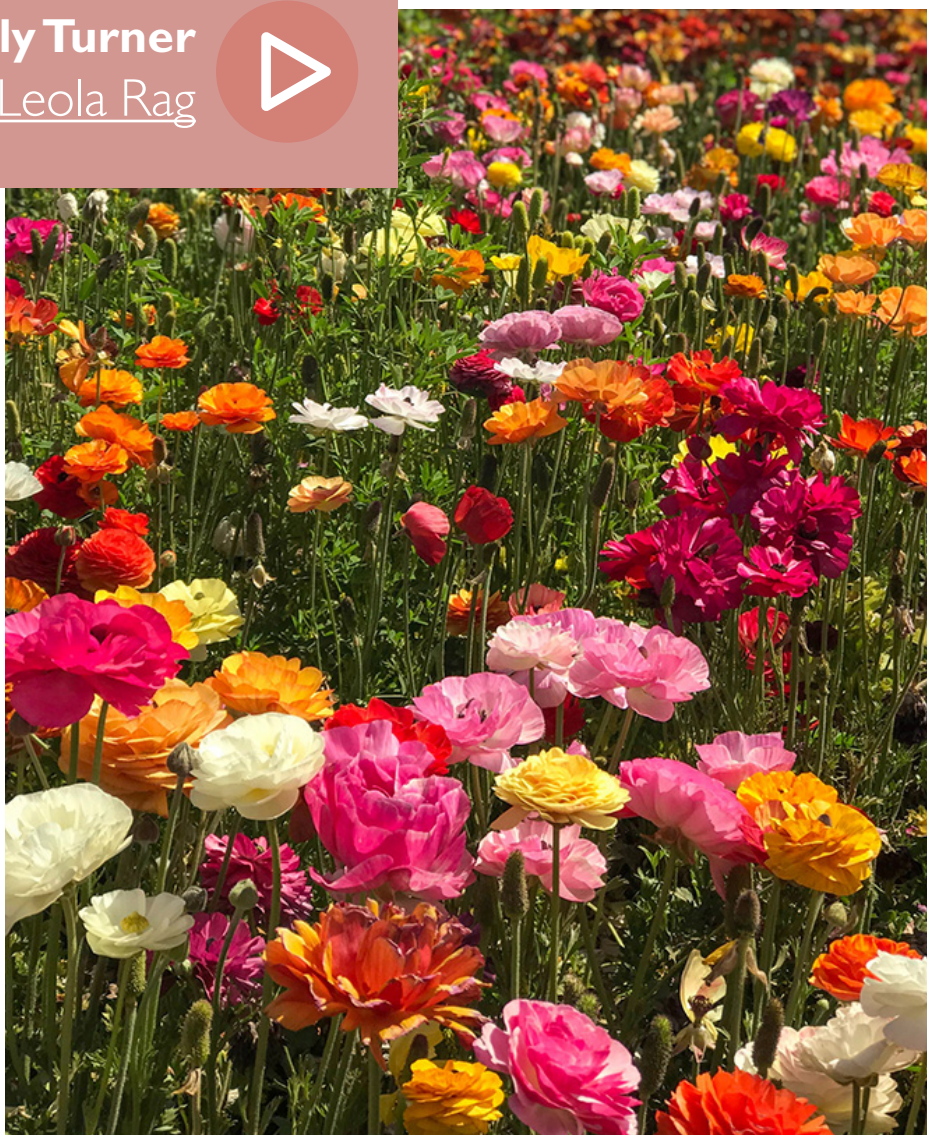
LEOLA RAG BY SCOTT JOPLIN



performed **by: kimberly turner, m.d.**



Kimberly Turner
Scott Joplin's Leola Rag



Click or tap the play button above to open the music file link. Alternatively, [click here](#).

FEATURE WALL

created by: **lenora jones**



loversound

by: amina watson, m.d.

from the book Life Pieces by Mina Miller (Dr. Amina Watson)



your voice is familiar to me
as if I have heard it in another space
it sounds like the inside of my heart
it is in the deepest crevice of my remembrance
inside this space I am nurtured, loved and filled
I close my eyes and expand my hearing beyond this moment
I imagine being everyone who hears you
I imagine hearing your voice through my womb
I imagine the wonder in her infant gaze when she finally sees your face
I want to be inside your mouth, inside your throat
and nestle in the crevice of your adam's apple
so I can be closer to your voice vibration
closer to your vibration
close
whisper
breath
forever.



AMERICAN SOLDIERS

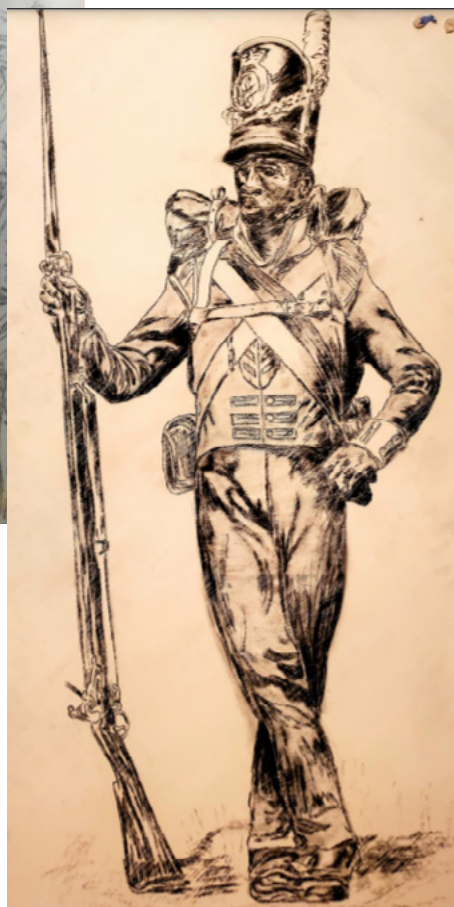


oil on canvas & charcoal on white board

by: leonard richardson, m.d.



Top left:
American Revolutionary War
Minuteman



Middle:
5th West Indian Regiment
at the Battle of West Bank,
American Revolutionary War



Far right:
Earl of Dunmore's Royal
Ethiopian Regiment, a British
colonial military unit, American
Revolutionary War

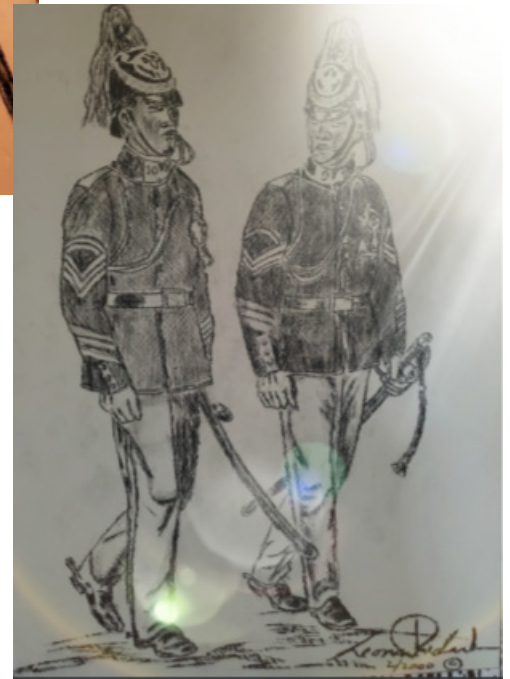


Top left:
Chasseurs-Volontaires de Saint-Domingue, Siege of Savannah 1779 with the Franco-American Army

Top right:
Major Martin Robinson Delany, Physician & highest ranking African American during the American Civil War

Bottom right:
Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper, former slave & first African American Graduate from West Point





Top left:
Robert Smalls, commandeered a heavily armed confederate ship and later becomes a Union Navy captain

Top middle:
Robert Brown Elliott, Commanding General of South Carolina National Guard and Congressman during the period of reconstruction

Top right:
Hannibal Zouaves; they would later become Company A of the 16th Battalion, Illinois National Guard

Bottom right:
Buffalo Soldiers; served during the Indian Wars, Spanish American War and WWI

Top right:

Eugene Jacques Bullard, First African American military Fighter pilot. Served in WWI

Bottom right:

Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., First African American General in the United States Military (Army)

Bottom left:

General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. Commander of the WWII Tuskegee Airmen

Top left:

Red Tail P-51 Mustang flown by the Tuskegee Airmen of the 332nd Fighter Group in WWII





Top left:

Brigadier General Hazel Winifred Johnson-Brown, Nurse & First African American Female General in US Military (Army)

Middle:

General Roscoe Robinson Jr. Served in the Korean & Vietnam Wars. First African American 4-star Army General

Right:

General Daniel "Chappie" James. Trainer of Tuskegee Airmen in WWII. Advanced to the flying F-4 Phantom in the Vietnam War and later became the first African American 4-star General in the United States Air Force



Left:

**General Lloyd W. (Fig) Newton,
Command Pilot F-15, F-16, F-117 Stealth
Fighter. First African American United
States Air Force Thunderbird**

Middle:

**General Bernard P. Randolph, B2 pilot
& 2nd African American 4-star General
United States Air Force**

Right:

**General Colin Luther Powell, First African
American Joint Chief of Staff. Served from
the Vietnam War to the Gulf War**

IN THE PALE MOONLIGHT



by: anonymous

In the pale moonlight,
Our shadows dance,
Casting movement on the walls,

In the pale moonlight,
I gasp for breath,
And the muscles of my heart stall.

The midnight hour strikes,
Your silhouette appears,
Performing its one man show,

The midnight hour strikes,
My thoughts break free,
To bask in the pale moon's glow.

In the pale moonlight,
My soul is thrown,
Familiar fears again feel new,

In the pale moonlight,
Reason retreats,
A slave to uncertain truths.

But when the dawn breaks,
Our shadows hide,
Demons tiptoe out the door,

For when the dawn breaks,
The curtains close,
And the chaos is still once more.

In the soft sunlight,
I live and breathe,
A radiant, beautiful life,

In the soft sunlight,
My mind forgets,
The terror endured each night.



WHY THE MEDICAL FIELD?



by: courtney swanson

As children, we all think of what we want to be when we grow up. Funny story, I wanted to be the first female baseball player for the Orioles, that was the 10-year-old me dreaming. I also wanted to play softball in college and I wanted to attend the University of North Carolina. I had dreams, but that's all that they were. I graduated high school, and it took me eight years after that to realize what I wanted to be, and it all started with my dad's diagnosis.

My dad stood 6'4" and about 250 pounds. He was a force to be reckoned with. He was healthy and strong, and then out of nowhere, my world came crumbling down. About six years ago, he was diagnosed with head, neck and throat cancer – Squamous Cell Carcinoma. Radiation and chemotherapy destroyed the first tumor and the second. The third and fourth required major surgery requiring skin grafts, a tracheotomy and feeding tubes, and he was unable to speak for some time.

He lost so much weight, he didn't even look like the same person. When he came home from the hospital after one of his surgeries and was able to try semi-solid foods, he choked and we (my mom and I) didn't know how to help him. We know the Heimlich, but he has a trach and a feeding tube, is this okay?

I'll never forget one time he coughed and his trach actually fell out. Luckily, my best friend is a registered nurse and she actually came to my parents' home and gave them some information on what to do when things like that happen. I thought that was so amazing and I wanted to be able



A blue arrow pointing to the right, above the word "CONTINUED" in blue capital letters.

to do that for someone else. Time went on and my dad got better. His trach and feeding tube were removed, he started gaining weight back, started eating solid foods, and he went back to work and the gym. He was a rock-star! Fast-forward to the summer of 2018 when we were told that my dad's cancer was back and more aggressive than ever. We were told it had spread throughout the upper part of his body and he had a large tumor on his carotid artery. Surgery couldn't be done because of the location of the tumor and, if not treated aggressively, it could erode the carotid artery. My dad was given 6-12 months to live.

This was one of those times that instead of letting a diagnosis cripple me, I decided I wanted to be on the other side of it! I didn't want to be afraid of my dad's diagnosis, I wanted to learn about it. My dad's oncologist was unstoppable and I wanted to be a part of something like that! I started my courses to become a certified clinical medical assistant in December 2018 and became a medical assistant in August 2019. I was hired at the same oncology office that my dad was seen at in September 2019. My dad was just recently told that he is cancer free and has been for over a year now. Who doesn't want to work with the kinds of people that save lives like that? I chose to be a part of the inspiration that will motivate people to see the potential light in their lives.

I currently work for Johns Hopkins Community Physicians, I'm in school for my nursing prerequisites, and I will apply for a nursing program next year. My goal is to become an oncology nurse. My dad was my inspiration and my rock-star and he still is today. He made me believe that anything is possible. His positivity was fierce. To be told that your dad will not live to see the next six months to a year and then to have the miracle that you're in complete remission and **CANCER FREE**; that is something I want to be a part of every day. That's why I chose the medical field; and that's why I chose to go into nursing; and that's why I get up and do what I do, every single day. ■



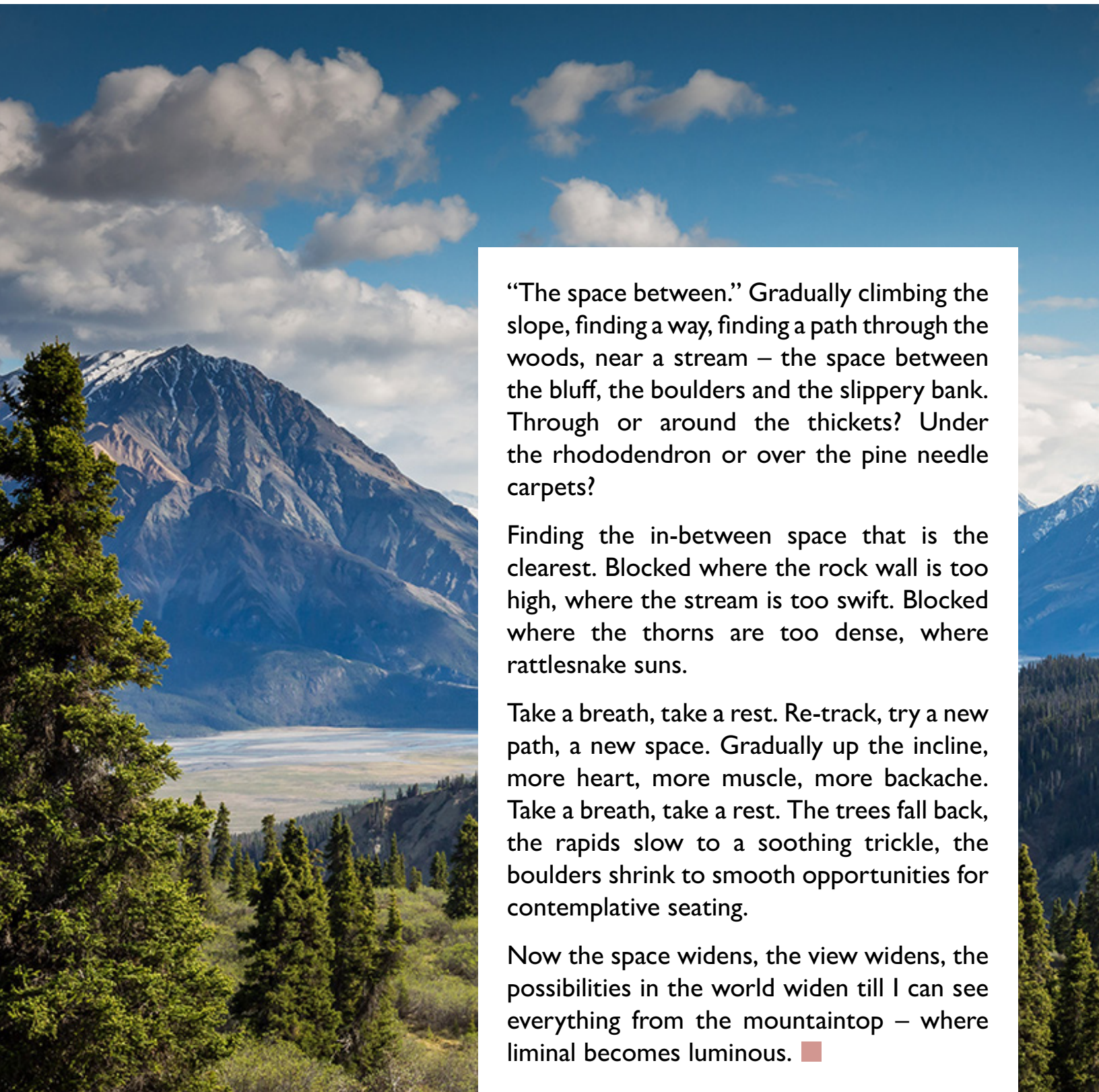
HIPPOCAMPUS

ink on paper by: raena hariharan, m.d.



LIMINAL LIFE

by: loretta sutphin stenzel, m.d.



“The space between.” Gradually climbing the slope, finding a way, finding a path through the woods, near a stream – the space between the bluff, the boulders and the slippery bank. Through or around the thickets? Under the rhododendron or over the pine needle carpets?

Finding the in-between space that is the clearest. Blocked where the rock wall is too high, where the stream is too swift. Blocked where the thorns are too dense, where rattlesnake suns.

Take a breath, take a rest. Re-track, try a new path, a new space. Gradually up the incline, more heart, more muscle, more backache. Take a breath, take a rest. The trees fall back, the rapids slow to a soothing trickle, the boulders shrink to smooth opportunities for contemplative seating.

Now the space widens, the view widens, the possibilities in the world widen till I can see everything from the mountaintop – where liminal becomes luminous. ■

SUNFLOWERS AT SUNSET



photograph by: jennifer walsh



Sunflower field in Jarrettsville, Maryland

SHINE: A MOTHER'S LOVE

by: amina watson, m.d.

from the book Life Pieces by Mina Miller (Dr. Amina Watson)



The first gaze is love.
A spirit who shared and found nourishment in the deepest
crevice of my body
now looks back at me and grows.

As you grow
my heart bursts at the seams
expanding beyond my own comprehension.

Your touch, your smile, fill me.

Yet at times I find this love crippling
It brings me to my knees
In prayer, in praise.

I find strength in this love
I find myself in this love
I find power in this love
It is a mutual worship.

In this loves lies the divine.
And though you are not mine
I hold on
practicing letting go
So that you can shine.

LESSONS FROM THE AIDS EPIDEMIC



by: mindy kantsiper, m.d.

Newark, New Jersey, 1996

We were on our medicine clerkships, learning auscultation, phlebotomy, and CPR on H-blue, the unit devoted to AIDS. There was room after room of patients, many with only sporadic human contact from staff, who were gowned, gloved, and masked. There were few visitors, either because their loved ones were afraid, didn't know they were sick, or worst of all, they didn't have any loved ones.

AIDS, a novel disease, was cutting a large swath through the poor, the sick, and those struggling with addiction, but it was also striking down the young and healthy. We looked to our residents and attendings for guidance during this frightening time. We imitated their kind, calm and scientific approach. We learned from them how to smile under our masks, so that the patients could see it in our eyes. In hindsight, I realize that when the HIV epidemic escalated and hospitals developed their first AIDS units, some of those attendings must have gone home after shifts, showered obsessively, and had tense conversations with worried spouses. They watched



their sleeping children, perhaps considered walking away from medicine, and then remembered their calling and their mortgage.

Where did they get their cool from? Maybe they remembered their own student days, before widespread childhood vaccines, and they in turn were taught by attendings who remembered the time before antibiotics. Many of my attendings had trained in undeveloped places, and they taught us how to function when the resources and safety net were thin. A family friend of mine, still living at age 103, is a pulmonologist. I grew up hearing his stories of working in New York City's tuberculosis wards. TB still stalks our patients and our nightmares. And pestilence has always been the clinician's enemy.



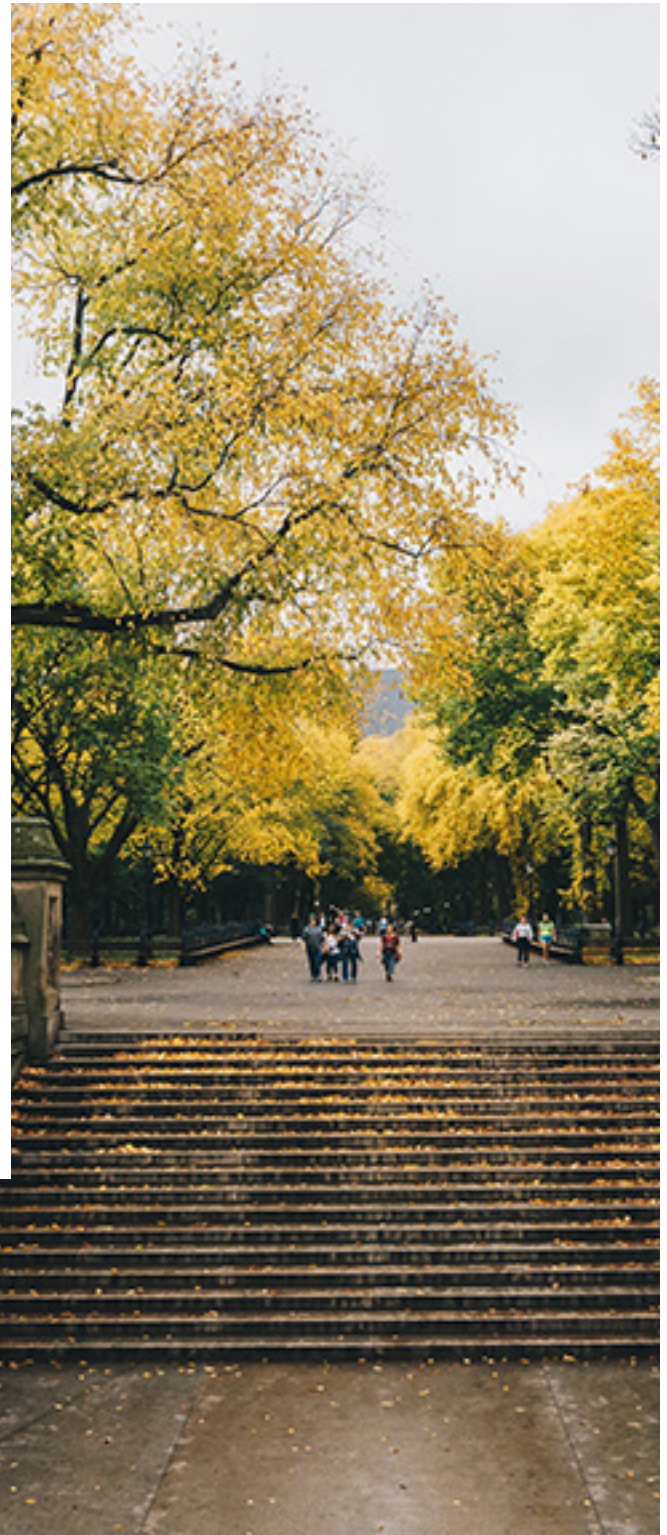
CONTINUED

I remember the relentless, slow tide of research, innovation and policy that pushed back against AIDS. There wasn't a magic bullet that appeared overnight to save us. Just people who showed up to work in hospitals, labs, industry and government day after day, year after year.

Stories sustain us in times of pestilence. So, I will remember my teachers, tell my stories, thank my colleagues, smile at my patients, remember my calling (and my mortgage), and show up. And I know that coronavirus, and our response to it, will be the story that today's young clinicians will pass on to our sleeping children when they report for their clerkships. ■

This piece originally appeared on [closler.org](https://www.closer.org) on June 29, 2020.

CLOSLER is a free and open access medical education website with the mission of stimulating clinicians to reflect on giving excellent patient care. You can follow them on Twitter and Instagram @closler.



MAHALO KE AKUA



“THANKS BE TO GOD”

photograph **by:** mizumi graham-jones



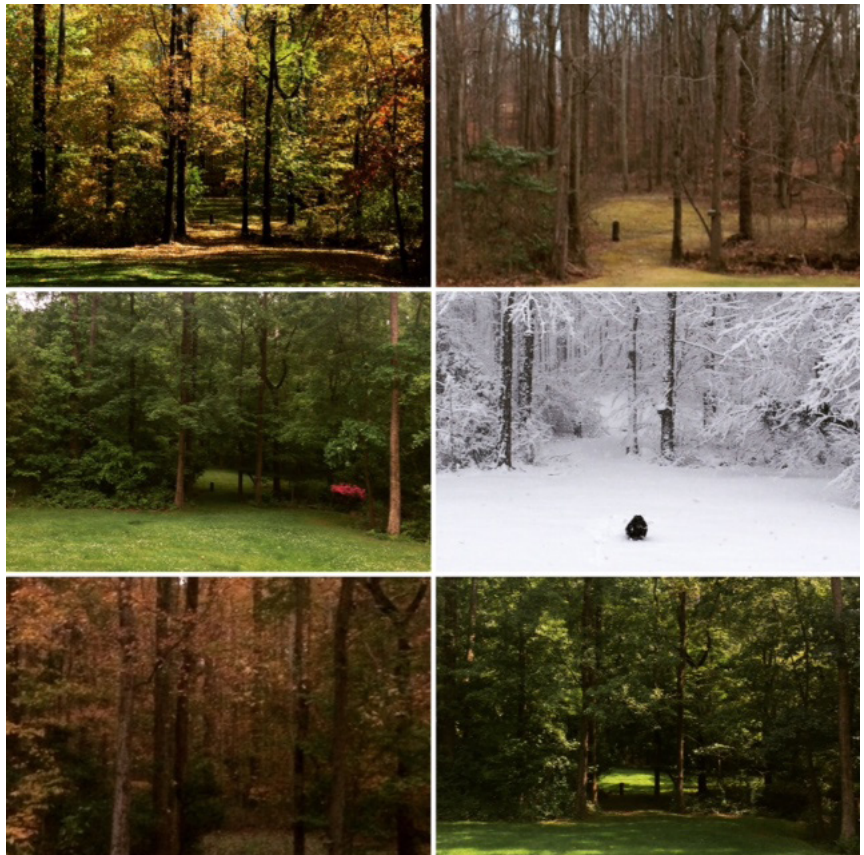
Kauai, Hawaii

SEASONS

poem & photographs by: deborah brazil



As I reflect on the seasons,
Autumn with its colors and warmth,
Summer with its flowers and fruits,
Spring with its seeds, and new beginnings,
Oh Winter, how the bare boughs with snow,
Seasons are a wonderful celebration to adore.
Always contain the worth of the current season as you exist.
Change is awesome, as we transpire to something new.



CHILD OF MINE

by: vicki kline, l.c.s.w.-c.



Child of mine:

When they ask you who you are,
tell them you are the great, great grandchild
of Aztec warriors, or maybe the descendant
of Nahuatl peasants.

Somewhere in you resides the hard truth of Spanish plunderers;
Tell them you have conqueror and conquest in your bones.

Tell them of your ancestors who labored in factories,
under war-torn and oppressive Polish regimes;
Speak of Irish farmworkers who toiled barren land to fill
their children's bellies.

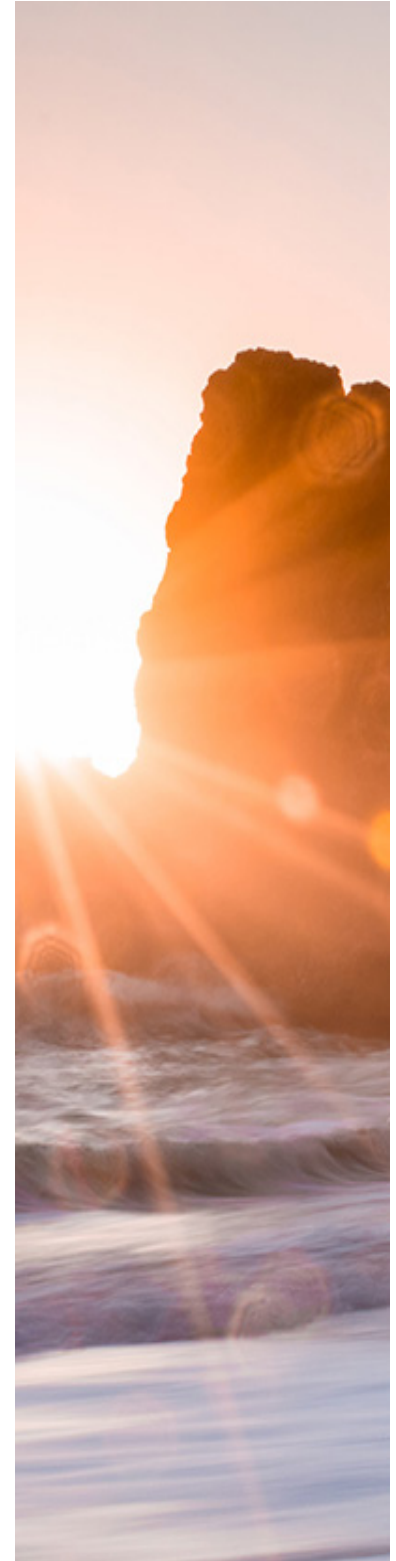
Tell them you come from the callused
hands of shipbuilders and stone masons.

Speak proudly of a man
who walked across the desert
to build the dream of your birth.

Tell them you were born of a long line
of working women who stood solidly on wide hips,
who served and fed and made warm homes.

Tell them you are the vision of poets
and the prayers of the faithful.

Tell them you are the mixed blood of a thousand dreamers,
the future of a borderless world,
transcendence itself.



JAR OF STARS

by: alice lee, m.d.



Over the last 15 years, I have kept a jar of stars. When a patient dies I fold a star to say goodbye and remember them. As a primary care physician, we rarely “save” people’s lives, but we build a long relationship built on trust and love. What I do is share, educate, teach and advocate. The greatest privilege in being a doctor is to be allowed into the lives of others, and my stars help me to honor and remember their lives. The dark stars represent those who have died.

This week I have asked our staff to add to the jar their hopes and dreams. These are represented by pastel colored stars. I would hope that over the coming years this jar would be filled with brightness and happiness.



CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES



Deborah Brazil

Deborah Brazil is the credentialing manager at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians. She has worked with Johns Hopkins Medicine for 33 in many different roles, from billing, to provider enrollment, to credentialing. In her poem, [“Seasons”](#) (p. 55), Deb says that she wanted to “focus on the change [of the seasons] and find the beauty in it.” The accompanying photos were taken in her own backyard, from the same spot at different times in the year. “Writing this poem, I focused on change. This year played a big part in change for everyone. We can adapt and move forward if we choose to.”

Sajida Chaudry, M.D.

Sajida Chaudry, M.D., M.P.H., practices family medicine at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Odenton, where she also serves as office medical director. She received her medical degree from King Edward Medical University, and completed her residency in family practice at New York Medical Colleges Health Institutions. Dr. Chaudry is board-certified in family practice and public health & general preventive medicine. She is also a member of the JHCP Academy of Clinical Excellence. Her piece, [“The Return of House Calls”](#) (p. 14), originally appeared on [closler.org](#).



Erica L. Collins

Erica Collins is a patient access specialist for Central Scheduling & Intake (CSI) at Keswick. She joined Johns Hopkins Community Physicians about a year and a half ago. Her poem and photo, [“Fullness”](#) (p. 6), is her first submission to *Meraki*. Outside of work, Erica says her favorite things are to chill with her son, write, read and play with her dog.



Bill Convey

Dr. Convey prefers to let [his music](#) do the talking.



Harold Crosland

Harry Crosland is a medical office assistant at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Howard County/Columbia. His collection of photography, [“Moods Around Maryland”](#) (p. 8), is his first submission to Meraki. Photos include The Pink Wheel (left), a long exposure, and photos of downtown Baltimore and the Billings Administration Building at The Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Norman Dy, M.D.

Norman Dy, M.D., is the office medical director for Johns Hopkins Community Physicians’ Direct Primary Care (DPC) service. Dr. Dy’s inspirations for his piece, [“We Can Do It!”](#) (p. 9), were his DPC coworkers. “They work very hard, and do it in a friendly, professional and patient-centered way,” he says. The poster features staff from the DPC suite, and from Howard County General Surgery. Dr. Dy says that art helps to keep him out of trouble. Besides caring for his patients, his passions include music (improvisational jazz, recording, mixing, producing), digital art (Corel Painter, especially), writing, and HIIT training.



Mizumi Graham-Jones

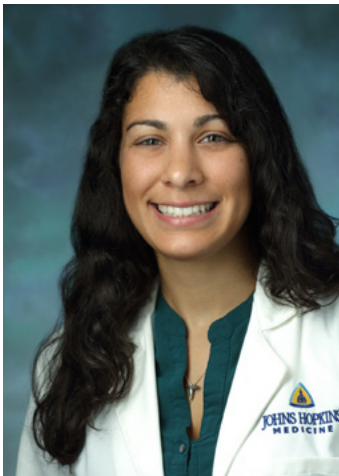
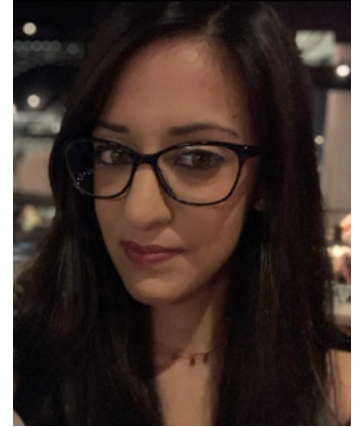
Mizumi Graham-Jones is a medical office assistant at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Charles County – she has been with JHCP for almost 9 years. Her photo, [“Mahalo ke Akua ‘Thanks be to God’”](#) (p.54), was taken in Kauai, Hawaii. “Hawaiians have a profound gratitude to God for his creations, his mercy and his kindness.,” she says. “To express gratitude for all that I have, even in my challenges, my mind is enlightened, I am content and I have more peace. Now, more than ever, I find the need to simplify life and live the words Mahalo ke Akua.” Mizumi says that art allows her to “connect and share with authenticity and transparency.” Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her family, especially her daughter.





Neha Handa

Neha Handa is a quality improvement data analyst on Johns Hopkins Community Physicians' quality and transformation team. She joined JHCP about five months ago and her favorite thing about her role is that she knows that the work she does has a direct impact on our patients' well-being. Neha was inspired to take [her photo \(p. 25\)](#) of the beautiful and vibrant colors found throughout the Idaho mountains. She says that art "provides an outlet for creativity and serves as a coping mechanism through stress and uncertainty." Outside of work, she enjoys cooking, traveling and relaxing at home.



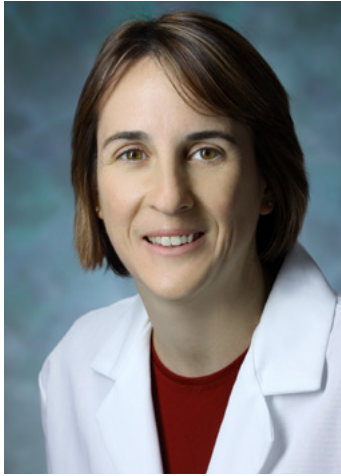
Raena Hariharan, M.D.

Raena Hariharan, M.D., is a physician at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians' Bayview Internal Medicine location, where she serves as a member of the Multidisciplinary Empowerment for Sustainable Health (MESH) team. She has been with JHCP for more than two years. Dr. Hariharan's submission, [Hippocampus \(p. 48\)](#), is her first submission to *Meraki*.

Lenora Jones

Lenora Jones serves as director of operations for Ob/Gyn and has been with Johns Hopkins Community Physicians for ten years. Her favorite part of her job is getting to work as a team – if the team works well, it has a direct impact on the patient, she says. Lenora created her [feature wall \(p. 37\)](#) with wooden boards, paint, a miter saw and a nail gun. She says that the ability to create "gives [her] outlets to create something beautiful. It makes [her] feel proud to know that [she] created the beauty!" Outside of work, Lenora enjoys "eating, walking (because [she] likes to eat), spending time with family and friends, and finding projects to create around the house.



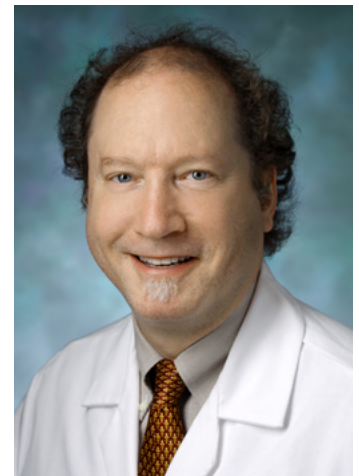


Mindy Kantsiper, M.D.

Mindy Kantsiper, M.D., is the chief medical officer at the Baltimore Convention Center Field Hospital. She has been with Johns Hopkins Community Physicians for ten years, and cites the COVID-19 pandemic as her inspiration for her piece, [“Lessons From the AIDS Epidemic”](#) (p. 52), originally appearing on [closler.org](#). Dr. Kantsiper is also a member of the JHCP Academy of Clinical Excellence. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her husband and children, especially playing board games or getting outdoors. “Although,” she says, “they have tried to lure [her] into playing video games with them, the latest being *Among Us*.” Dr. Kantsiper also loves to cook, and has recently taken up Tai Chi.

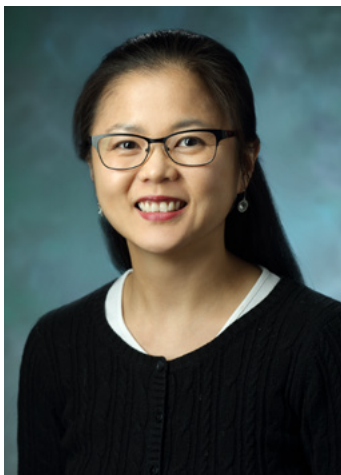
Robert Kass, M.D.

Robert Kass, M.D., practices family medicine at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Westminster and has been with JHCP for 30 years. His submission, [“Could be Worse”](#) (p. 33), is his first submission to *Meraki*. He describes it as “poke” – a poem-joke. Dr. Kass received his medical degree from New York University School of Medicine, and completed his residency at MedStar Franklin Square Hospital Center.



Kelly Koay, M.D.

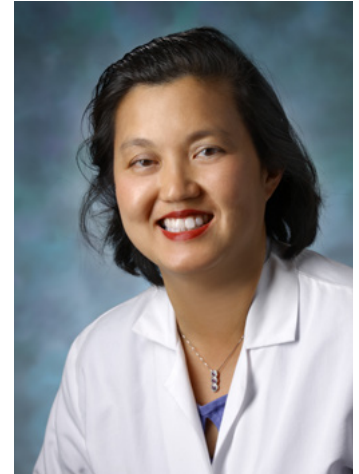
Kelly Koay, M.D., practices pediatrics and internal medicine at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in White Marsh. She is in her third year with JHCP. The photos in her series, [“Travels to the West”](#) (p. 30), were taken during a trip last year. “Unfortunately,” she says, “all of our travel plans this summer got canceled due to the pandemic, so I’m enjoying my memories and photos from our trip and hoping for a better summer next year.” Dr. Koay is dedicated to service work, and spent her summer reading books about Black history and empowerment to children in an East Baltimore neighborhood. Besides health care and service work, Dr. Koay enjoys knitting, reading, biking, and watching TV (a new favorite is a Chinese Kung Fu series, she says).





Alice Lee, M.D.

Alice Lee, M.D., practices internal medicine and pediatrics at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in White Marsh. Outside of her medical career, Dr. Lee is passionate about all things creative: music, poetry, writing, painting and photography. This passion for the arts is what inspired her to champion this project, *Meraki*, now in its second year of publication, for which she serves as editor. In her third submission for the journal, [“Jar of Stars”](#) (p. 57), she shares a personal project that she started to remember her patients who have passed, and to bring them new life.



Mark Phillips, M.D., Ph.D.

Mark Phillips, M.D., practices family medicine at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in White Marsh. He also serves as the chair of the JHCP Credentialing Committee and a co-chair of the JHCP Research and Projects Committee. Dr. Phillips' submissions, [“State Fair”](#) and [“Portland Head Light”](#) (p.21), are his first submissions to *Meraki*. Dr. Phillips received his medical degree from University of Maryland School of Medicine, and completed his residency in family medicine at University of Maryland Medical Center.



Leonard Richardson, M.D.

Leonard Richardson, M.D., is a hospitalist and “Covidist” at The Johns Hopkins Hospital, hired at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to work at the Field Medical Center at the Baltimore Convention Center. He says that “the absence of visual representation of soldiers of African descent in history books prompted him” to create his series of portraits, [“American Soldiers”](#) (p. 39). They are “historically accurate pieces from bits of information obtained from the written narrative and old photographs when they became available.” While Dr. Richardson has no formal art training, he says his art “has served as both a calming force and an escape during this chaotic, uncertain and extremely stressful period of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter.” Outside of work, Dr. Richardson most enjoys spending time with his family – his inspiration.





Loretta Sutphin Stenzel, M.D.

Loretta Sutphin Stenzel, M.D., is a family medicine float provider for Johns Hopkins Community Physicians. Dr. Stenzel has been with JHCP for nearly two years, and loves adding value to her patients' lives. Her second submission to *Meraki*, "[Liminal Life](#)" (p. 49), served as part of a healing process – "I often think in metaphor as a way to see positive outcomes," she says. Art, specifically writing, helps her work through life's issues. "For pure enjoyment and coping with COVID-19, I like all sorts of creative processes – music, art, crafting," she says. "I have quite the mask factory going on top of my new dining room table (which I cannot currently use for those dinner parties I was planning!)"



Courtney Swanson

Courtney Swanson has been a medical assistant at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in White Marsh since the beginning of 2020. Her inspiration for her first submission to *Meraki*, "[Why the Medical Field?](#)" (p. 46), is her father's battle with cancer. His story is the reason she went into the medical field – so that she can help patients and families just like her own. Courtney's favorite thing about her job is "making people feel that they are in a safe place and that even when they are down or not feeling well, they can still count on a smile and a positive attitude from [her] when they come in to see their provider." Besides being a positive, supportive voice for patients, Courtney loves spending time with family, playing with her dogs, enjoying the outdoors and grocery shopping.



Jasmine Thomas

Jasmine Thomas is a medical office assistant at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians at Canton Crossing. She will celebrate her five-year Johns Hopkins anniversary in March 2021, and says the best part about her job is the comradery with coworkers, which she has never felt at previous jobs. Jasmine wrote her submission, "[Breath \(2015\)](#)" (p. 11), after the Freddie Gray riots in 2015, and thought "the subject of the piece was (sadly) still relevant today." Art has always played an important role in her life. "I started writing when I was 10 years old and I am actually in the process of writing a novel that I've been writing since 2015, as well." She says she leaped at the chance to submit her piece to *Meraki*. Other than writing, outside of work, Jasmine can be found crafting with her husband (they have a DIY YouTube channel!), interior design, playing *The Sims* and practicing spiritual arts.





Kimberly Turner, M.D.

Kimberly Turner, M.D., practices obstetrics and gynecology at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Fulton, Howard County and Odenton. She has served these communities for more than 25 years. This is Dr. Turner's second year submitting to *Meraki*, with two pieces: "[Medicine, Music and Ministry](#)" (p. 34), which originally appeared on [closler.org](#), and a piano performance of "[Leola Rag](#)" by Scott Joplin (p.36). Dr. Turner received her medical degree from Duke University School of Medicine in Durham, North Carolina. She completed residences in internal medicine and obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Maryland Medical System in Baltimore.



Jennifer Walsh



Jennifer Walsh is a medical office assistant at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians at Water's Edge, and has been with JHCP for more than four years. Her first submission to *Meraki*, "[Sunflowers at Sunset](#)" (p. 50), was taken in Jarrettsville, Maryland. She says she waited for sunset to take the photo so that she could capture all of the bright hues in the background. Art plays a large role in Jennifer's life: "drawing, painting, photography and music – all forms of art fill my soul and bring positivity," she says. Outside of work, where she loves helping patients, Jennifer enjoys hiking with her camera in hand. "I also enjoy creating 'kindness rocks,'" she explains, "painting images on rocks and leaving them for others to find to bring happiness and smiles to their day."

Amina Watson, M.D.

Amina Watson, M.D., is a pediatrician at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Bowie. During her ten years with JHCP, her favorite part of her job is building relationships with families and serving children. Writing is one of Dr. Watson's greatest passions; she has even published a book of poetry, "Life Pieces." She submitted five pieces to this year's publication of *Meraki*: "[Variations](#)" (p. 14), "[The Death Stare](#)" (p. 17), "[Transformed](#)" (p. 32), "[loversound](#)" (p. 38), and "[Shine: A Mother's Love](#)" (p. 51). "The Death Stare" was especially cathartic and helped her to process loss, she says. "Being more still during this time [of COVID-19] and also kind of being forced to look more inward gave me the space to reflect on how death and loss has affected me." Outside of work, Dr. Watson enjoys writing, drawing, fitness and yoga.





Tammie Wendell

Tammie Wendell is an executive assistant in at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians' Mt.Washington administrative office, where she has worked for five years. Her favorite thing about her job is her coworkers and being part of a team. Tammie's inspiration for her poem, "[Not So Long Ago](#)" (p. 22), is the current state of today's society. Art has acted as a release for her during the COVID-19 pandemic – she enjoys writing, woodworking, jewelry making and adult coloring books. Beyond creative her pursuits, Tammie enjoys fishing and boating in her free time.

Lauren Wiafe-Ababio, M.D.

Lauren Wiafe-Ababio, M.D., practices family medicine at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Glen Burnie. New to JHCP, just starting in October 2020, Dr.Wiafe-Ababio says her favorite thing about her job is her interactions with patients of all ages. She wrote her piece, "[Today](#)" (p. 31), because "it's sometimes very hard to just take a moment to realize how blessed you are – especially in a career field with such high liability that tends to always emphasize 'the next thing,'" she says. "I've learned that I'm my best self when I prioritize gratitude and acknowledge what already is without worrying so much about what I have left to accomplish." Outside of work, Dr.Wiafe-Ababio enjoys doing anything that makes her laugh.



Claire Wood, R.N.

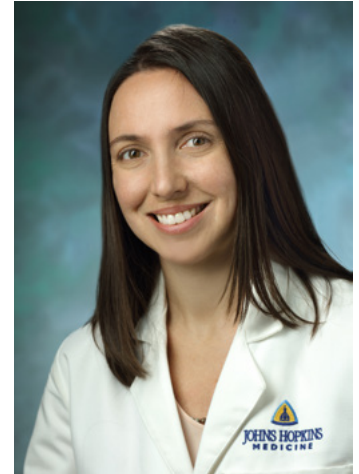
Claire Wood works as a registered nurse at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians in Remington and has been with JHCP for five years. One of her favorite things about her job is specific to Remington – the paintings that adorn exam rooms, painted by students at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). She painted her first submission to *Meraki*, "[Linus](#)" (p. 7), as a gift for her sister-in-law (a portrait of her pet named...you guessed it... Linus!). Art plays a large role in Claire's life – she says that, "creating something out of nothing gives me a sense of accomplishment, but without the stress of having to do something a certain way or by a certain time." During COVID-19, while many hobbies or activities have been halted, she says, "making art is always available to me." Outside of work, she enjoys reading, drawing and anything that allows her to lounge around without feeling too guilty about it.





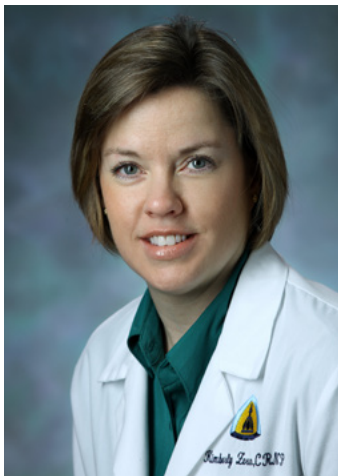
Maire Wray, C.R.N.P.

Maire Wray, C.R.N.P., has been a nurse practitioner at East Baltimore Medical Center for two years. Her favorite part of her job is creating successful care plans with her patients and witnessing their ingenuity and creativity. The [crochet projects \(p. 24\)](#) that she submitted were made for her newborn. You can read more about her history with crocheting using the link above. Outside of work, N.P.Wray enjoys spending time with family, swimming, reading, and cooking – in particular making use of leftovers and random pantry and local Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) items.



Kimberly Zeren, C.R.N.P.

Kimberly Zeren, C.R.N.P., is the director of operations for Johns Hopkins Community Physicians' National Capital Region, and she also serves as a float nurse practitioner in that region. Her article, [“Observing and Acknowledging Family Dynamics” \(p. 26\)](#), originally appeared on [closler.org](#), and is her first submission to *Meraki*. N.P. Zeren earned her advanced degree from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. In 2017, she also became the first nurse practitioner to be inducted into the JHCP Academy of Clinical Excellence (ACE).



Vicki Kline, L.C.S.W.-C.

Vicki Kline, L.C.S.W.-C., is a social worker at Johns Hopkins Community Physicians' East Baltimore Medical Center, where she has worked for nearly five years. Vicki is honored to accompany her patients on their wellness journeys. Outside of work, she has a passion for gardening, cooking and taking walks through her neighborhood. She is also an adjunct professor of social work at Widener University. Vicki's poem, [“Child of Mine” \(p. 56\)](#), is her second submission for *Meraki*.





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