INSPIRED BY THE ARTWORK OF
Lorraine García-Nakata
and José Lozano

THE ART OF
WHO I AM

NARRATIVES ON LIFE BY
the Soquel High students in English I Sheltered
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Inspired by the artwork of Lorraine García-Nakata and José Lozano
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Santa Cruz Writes
Museo Eduardo Carrillo
Santa Cruz County Office of Education
We dedicate this book to our parents, our teachers, and our friends.
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As an online museum, Museo Eduardo Carrillo brings the arts to a wide and diverse audience. We have the benefit of being light and nimble—the exhibitions are as close as your laptop. But as an educational institution, we need partners to actualize our hopes and goals.

When I read about the Young Writers Program in Santa Cruz, I realized there was tremendous potential in partnering with this local agency to provide visibility on a broad scale for their participants. The fact that the Young Writers Program had a history of collaboration and was a grassroots initiative to enhance the writing skills and confidence of students in grades 4-12 encouraged me to reach out to them.

And it was a bonus for me that I knew Julia Chiapella and her terrific capacity as the Director of this program and as a fine writer herself.

When we met, we instantly knew that bringing contemporary art to the students as a launching pad to generate ideas and personal narratives had potential.

Museo Eduardo Carrillo has been curating online exhibitions for about a year and a half. The program marries the art of a mid career artist with a writer, in the hope that the exhibition will be used by professors in their classes.

The visual arts can inspire many things in the viewer and I thought that the work of artists Lorraine García-Nakata and José Lozano would prove a terrific fit for the Young Writers Program. The imagery of these Museo exhibiting artists seemed like a fit for the students, too. The work had an almost Studs Turkel approachability, displaying relevant and real people and experiences to which the students could relate. José Lozano and Lorraine García-Nakata have years of experience in their art practice, probably over 50 combined! We selected them.

At that point master teacher Robyn Miranda came on board.

Robyn knew her students were a good match for this project. Hailing from Mexico, the Philippines and Thailand, her English I Sheltered class would have the rare and significant opportunity to use the artwork of professional artists to spark their thinking. The topics they chose were as dear as family and as repugnant as racism. And all were within everyone’s life experience.

When I read the writing it took my breath away. Candid, raw and real, it honors each writer and the artists who opened the doors. It is with thanks to all that I hold and cherish this book.

Betsy Andersen
Executive Director, Museo Eduardo Carrillo
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THE WRITING IN THIS BOOK wasn’t easy but the volunteers helped us a lot. A lot of times we fooled around: we socialized; we got off task. We laughed a lot. Some of us had a more serious group which was okay. We finished things faster that way.

We used the work of José Lozano and Lorraine García-Nakata to inspire our writing. At the beginning, all the artwork was laid around the classroom and we had to pick the three we liked most. Some of us didn’t get our first choice and felt like we weren’t going to be able to write a story.

Once we knew what to write about it got easier, but there were still challenges.

Some of us felt nervous when we first heard about the project. Some of us had trouble taking out the lame verbs and putting in more creative ones. Since English is our second language, writing can take forever and sometimes we feel foolish. And then there’s the part about our emotions: it’s pretty hard to describe them.

The Writing Project Assistants really helped. They showed us that yes, writing is hard and challenging at times, but when you’re done and you see what you’ve accomplished and you’re happy with your writing, that’s when you know that the time you spent on it was worth all the hard work. They helped us organize our thoughts. They helped us come up with new ideas. For a lot of us, the writing assistants changed our ideas about writing. We learned that writing about something that happened to you can help get your mind right.

This project surprised us, too. We found out that we can actually write a lot if we focus. And we learned about ourselves: like how some of us forget things and it’s a big problem because when you have a lot of things in your head, you forget them when you’re typing.

We accomplished so much with these stories. When we saw our final stories, we realized how good they were. With these stories, we painted pictures using only words.

SOQUEL HIGH STUDENTS
of Robyn Miranda’s English 1 Sheltered class
Narratives
This photograph reminds me of my grandmother, because she looks like she is a forgiving person and my grandmother is not.

Forgiveness is something hard for me to feel because sometimes I want to forgive the people who hurt me, but then I do not. There are some people who have hurt me and I get emotional about it, but I act like I do not care. People say to forgive but not to forget, but I would rather not forgive a friend who messes up. Then, if they continue to mess up, we do not talk anymore. I keep a lot of stuff inside; maybe that is why I am such an angry person.

I had a friend in middle school I would hang out with a lot. We talked about everything. It was a great friendship, but then in high school she started separating from our friendship to be with her boyfriend. As I started getting to know her boyfriend, she thought I liked him, but I only saw him as a friend. My friend got aggressive towards me, both verbally and physically; she even tried to fight me. I thought it was a stupid thing to fight about. Since then, I have lost my respect for her.

Whenever I see her, I look straight ahead without looking at her, as if I never knew her. I can keep a grudge for so long that if I ever saw someone beating her up, I would do nothing.

There are people who say it hurts when losing a close relationship with a friend. In my perspective, I think it is harder to lose a close relationship with a family member. I know this because I have lost the friendship of my best friend, my cousin. I used to trust my cousin; we texted each other every day and told each other everything. She knows what I have gone through; she has gone through many difficulties with me.

One day I got into an argument with my cousin and her parents. We have not spoken to each other since. It sucks to not talk to or text my best friend to let her know how I feel about things or what I am up to. My grudge and anger do not feel good but the feelings are so strong that I cannot forgive her for the misunderstanding that happened between us, even if it hurts. I should probably change my attitude; after all, she is family.
THE ART OF WHO I AM
In life, my mom has always showed me that I have to be brave. She once told me, “You never know what is coming; you might have to spend a year in the lonely, dry desert all by yourself.”

I have had courage since I was little. At a young age, I saw things kids should not see. It has become hard for me to trust people, even my own family.

One day at the age of five or six—when we were living in Mexico—I saw my dad beat up my mom with a stick that had a nail attached to it. I woke up at two a.m. to screams of my mother yelling my sister’s name and mine. We were sleeping in our parents’ room, on our mattress on the floor; our parents were in the living room. My sister and I started yelling for my mom, and she rushed to the room. She told us to go back to sleep and that everything was going to be okay. I thought she was really brave for saying that while she was crying.

My dad aggressively walked into the room, grabbed the stick, and hit her. I could tell by his face that he had been drinking. His eyes were red and his breath smelled like alcohol. He grabbed her by the shoulder and yanked her into the living room. The next morning when I woke up, the house felt empty; I realized my mom was not at home. I asked my dad where she was but he ignored me.

That day, my father turned me into a brick wall. Ever since, I have been distant with him. My dad and I used to be really close, but after the day he took my trust, I could not see him the same way as before. We used to say that we were “almas jemelas,” which means soul mates, because we had so much in common. We would go places together. I attended his soccer games and cheered for him. We wrestled every Sunday morning.

A week later my mom arrived home. She said she had gone to stay with her brother. She acted like nothing had happened. She looked at my dad as a totally different person, as if she was asking herself, “Who did I marry?” After a while my mom told my dad that we were going to visit our family in California for a few weeks, but she knew we were not returning. I was confused because she did not say anything to my sisters and me. We were only supposed to stay here for a month but so far we have been here for seven years. Although I miss my father once in a while, we are better off without him.
I am 15 and I am pretty adventurous, but I cannot imagine doing what my dad did when he was my age.

Like the man in the picture, my dad is a responsible man who has been working all his life. Even as a kid, he worked on a farm in Mexico to help his family. On the farm, my dad sprayed fertilizer with a bucket on the corn crops and cut weeds with a machete at the age of seven.

When my dad became a teen, he crossed the border through the hot deadly desert to come to the U.S. so he could work to support his mom, dad, and four siblings in Mexico. Since my dad was young when he crossed the border, he said it was more like a game to him. He traveled from Tijuana to San Isidro by walking at night through the desert for seven hours with the paid coyote leading my dad and others who wanted to cross. He reached a garage and rested until the coyote’s partner arrived in a car and drove him the rest of the way. After a day in San Isidro, the same man drove him to San Diego. On the way from San Diego to Los Angeles, my dad had to crawl for three hours through a disgusting old water pipe with thirty people to avoid a checkpoint. Then he flew in a plane to San Francisco. When he landed, he was driven to Salinas where he arrived at his uncle’s house at two in the morning and started working at six on the same morning. My dad said that the trip was tiring but he knew it was for a better life.

In the United States my dad started off as a strawberry picker in Salinas and ended up being the fastest one. He worked there for two years from six a.m. to six p.m. every day. Later he moved to Santa Cruz where he worked in concrete. Now he works at Tom Ralston with decorative concrete. That company has paid my dad to travel around the world to work. My dad has traveled to Aruba and Panama and now the company is planning to send him to Japan.

I admire my dad for all he has done and for showing me that there are no obstacles in life that cannot be faced. I also believe that every man and woman can get a good-paying job no matter where he or she comes from.
I was born in Washington State. My dad and mom took me (at age nine months) to Mexico to stay with my grandma for a while. When my dad and mom wanted to come back to the USA, they could not bring me with them because they are illegal, so they had to talk to “El Coyote.” I am sure every Latino(a) knows this name or has heard of it. People give this guy money so he can bring them into the United States illegally. My mom and dad came back without me. They left me with my grandma so she could take care of me for “a while.” That “while” turned out to be almost 13 years.

When I turned 13, my dad finally decided to bring me to the USA. The first day I got here I felt happy to see my dad for the first time in my life. I felt really excited to know more about him and his life so we could finally become a family.

At the time, he was struggling to get a job and did not have enough money to take care of me or buy things I needed for school. In addition, it had been hard for him to be by himself with no money, not knowing anyone, not having a place to live. Two weeks after I arrived, my dad enrolled me at Shoreline Middle School.

On my first day, I did not know how to speak any English; I did not know anyone, just like my dad. The first day felt horrible. Some kids did not like me. They made fun of me because I did not understand English. The kids used to call me names like “beaner”; even my own race made fun of me because of the way I dressed. I did not have enough money to buy nice clothes. I went through a lot of racism during school.

One day my dad told me he was going to apply for a job at Honda, a place where they sell and fix cars. My dad sounded really excited for that job. Later he told me he did not get the job because a white guy who was better dressed got the job instead, even though my dad had more experience in fixing cars. He had learned how to be an engineer in Mexico.

It is very sad to see people being judged by the way they look: what race they are, if they are poor or rich, or the way they talk. Eleanor Roosevelt said, “Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.” I am not a great mind, but I know being racist is very disrespectful and an immature thing to do. My family and I experienced a lot of racism, and it was really hard for us to overcome it in this country. Mexicans are not the only ones going through this; there are many different races that are being judged every day, physically and emotionally.

In my opinion, we should do something about it and not just stay quiet. It is time to speak up.
My story connects to this picture painted by Lorraine García-Nakata because the girl looks like she is preparing for a quinceañera, but does not want one. My family wants to throw me a quinceañera, which is a special party for a girl when she turns fifteen. I do not want them to, but at the same time, I do. Let me tell you why.

I do not want a quinceañera because my parents are separated. My mom left my dad when I was five. She left him because he used to drink a lot. I was upset with my mom’s decision, but I understood because my dad did not help us with paying the rent, bills, and other expenses. One day when my dad was out drinking, my mom moved us to one of my aunt’s houses while my brother and I were at school. When we got out of school, she picked us up and told us everything.

The next day my dad looked for all of us at my aunt’s house. My aunt told him we were not there. My dad kept looking for us even when he was drunk. When my mom told him why she had left him, my dad asked for one last chance. He said he was going to change. My mom said no. I still saw him after that, but not often and only for two hours at a time.

When I was six, he took me to a party with his family. I was playing with one of my cousins when I heard someone fall. They would not tell me what happened. One of my uncles took me home. I wondered why I could not say goodbye to my dad.

When I was twelve my mom finally told me the truth. My dad was the one who had fallen, and he was in a coma because he drank so much. When he finally woke up, he promised he was not going to drink anymore. He has not, but my parents are still separated.

Another reason I do not want a quinceañera is because my grandpa and my Aunt Irene will not be celebrating with me. My grandpa passed away a year after I was born. With all the stories my mom and grandma tell me about him, I feel like I know him and I really want him to be there with me on my big day. My Aunt Irene passed away a year ago from cancer. I was really close to her; she was my best friend. We lived far from each other so we barely saw each other, but when we were together, we had the best time.

But I do want a quinceañera because it is once in a lifetime that I will turn 15. I will wear a big puffy dress that whole day. I will have the father-daughter dance. All of my friends from school will be there celebrating with me. I also like that I will be the center of attention for a whole day. Nobody ever pays attention to someone for one entire day. Although I do not want to celebrate my quinceañera without my grandpa and my aunt, I am still going to have it because they always will be with me in my heart, which is enough for me.
It was a warm, foggy Tuesday. The sun was bright orange, like when the actors run off into the sunset in the movies. I was doing my homework. Then my dad surprised me with some of his paintings that he had created at our old oak-wood table.

The one I remember was a sunset on the famous Venice Beach. I could almost feel I was there because of the bright and beautiful orange, pink, blue, and green. It looked like some of Picasso’s art. I was as surprised as a little kid having a bad day at his birthday and then he sees the birthday cake and jumps up and down with joy.

My dad showed me how to paint like him. I thought the paint was going to slip off the cheap metal plate. I asked, “Why didn’t the paint slip off the plate?”

He explained, “Because I cleaned the plate with rubbing alcohol.”

My dad showed me how to mix colors without getting dull colors, like brown, black or sad colors. All of my dad’s paintings are happy and beautiful. He would rather paint about happy things because he has been through a lot of struggles, and he does not want to remember the past.

My dad is self-taught. He would get inspired by going to church and looking up at the ceiling. He was amazed at how they painted on the ceilings in the Mexican churches. The ceilings had beautiful white clouds and angels helping people going to heaven. My dad created a painting for my mom of a beautiful blue night in the forest. The bright turquoise water and the white moon reflecting on the river looked so real. I could almost feel my feet in the slow, cold water, and I could hear the crickets and the frogs croaking.

My dad’s work inspires me to experiment with new projects. One of the things I see is building a dark wood desk. It will have a high gloss finish. When people walk in my room, they will notice right away that this is a serious desk because it took a lot of time and skill to accomplish.

I connect with José Lozano because I also try my hardest to be detailed in my work. I see amazing details in the sweater, like the shading that creates the folds. I respect the time and dedication he spent creating the painting. I also value the work of my father because his paintings helped him survive by getting food on the table for his younger brother and sisters. Hopefully, people will respect my work in the future and be inspired to be creative.
Friendship is special and it is a really hard thing to find. Not many people have a special friendship. To me friendship means I can trust a person and be myself with that person. Friendship is a complicated thing to maintain because rumors can go around. For example, a friend can hear lies about me and might believe them. I would feel sad if one of my friends believed a lie that someone told her. I would resolve the problem by talking it out with her.

My best friend is Karla; I can trust her and be myself, knowing that she will not judge me. I do not really act like myself around people I do not know. I am very quiet, I am nice, and I can sometimes be wired. People have to earn my trust in order for me to be myself. To earn my trust, I need to feel comfortable around them and spend more time with them. Karla and I have known each other for about five years now, but it feels like I have known her my whole life. I do a lot of things with Karla. We go out to places together and talk about life. We enjoy spending time together and we cherish all the memories we have created together. Karla mostly visits my house; we talk about life and sometimes about boys. It feels like Karla and I are together 24/7: either we are at school together, or she is at my house. We love going to the movies together because we both like the same movies, and we can talk about them afterwards. We like watching scary movies together; when we get scared, I always grab her arm and she grabs mine.

I have many friends but the one I trust the most is Karla. I trust only Karla because I know she will not tell people my secrets. We tell each other everything that happens in our lives. She knows my deepest secrets and my not-so-deepest secrets. Karla is like my sister; she knows my family and I know hers. The reason I trust her so much is because we connect so easily.

As Hubert Humphrey (the 38th vice president) once said, “The greatest thing in life is friendship, and I have received it.” I am really lucky to have Karla in my life.
TO ME THIS PICTURE DESCRIBES A GIRL who has been hurt and lonely. I relate to her because when my brother used drugs he became really aggressive and hurt me, my mom, and my sisters.

My mom always waited up for him to arrive home. Sometimes my mom did not sleep at all, waiting up and worrying until my brother arrived. She always worried about my brother more than anybody else, because since childhood he caused trouble by cutting school, no matter what school he attended. My parents tried switching him to different schools, but no matter what they did, he cut class.

It is difficult writing about my brother since I have not heard from him in a while, but there is so much to say about him when we lived together in Santa Cruz. The night I lost my trust in people was when my brother arrived home on drugs. I was young like the girl in the picture. I used to love my brother, but he always hurt us when he came home. I always broke into tears when I heard my mom crying and saw my brother screaming that he was going to kill himself. I remember my mom sitting in her chair; I was standing beside her while my brother was on his knees, sobbing, with a kitchen knife in his hands, telling my mom he was going to kill himself. I was really scared and I did not know what to do.

I always saw my mom in tears so I started crying, too. I cannot trust anyone anymore, because once I put my trust in someone, they let me down. I do not want to go through again what I have already been through with my older brother; however, the time came when I did notice that my brother’s attitude changed from a stupid addict to a responsible man after he had his daughter, my niece. I know when I have a kid of my own, it will cure my cruel attitude against people.

I admit I have problems, too. I am not going to say I am the perfect daughter and my brother is the worst son. I try to make my parents proud of me and try to make them happy. I admit I am a cruel person if you do not treat me right, but I have a sweet side that can be nice to others when I see they are nice to me.

And I have a dark side that I do not show others; I keep it to myself and let it all out at night when I have those sleepless nights. Not even my mom knows that I get really depressed at night; she only sees me as a really fun, nice, sweet and happy girl…something I am really not anymore, but hope to be again soon.
Imagine growing up with an incomplete family. My father raised me in my birthplace, the Philippines. My mom lived in the United States, but three years ago she returned and brought my sister and me to California. My dad stayed in the Philippines.

Since childhood, my dad and I got along, like the picture of the girl sitting on a man’s lap. I imagine the man as my father and the girl as me. They look so close, which reminds me of how close my dad and I are. Every day when I lived in the Philippines, I would borrow my sister’s phone to text him, asking him what time he was going to arrive at home. Sometimes I asked him to buy me some school supplies on his way home, and he always did. He is tall and I wish I had his height because I am only 4’8”. I looked up to my dad both literally and metaphorically. He always helped me with my homework, and he worked very hard for my sister and me.

We own a radiator shop that my dad’s parents owned, but when my grandfather passed away, my dad took over the responsibility. My dad still has the same job, and lives in our radiator shop in the Philippines. I have not seen him for three years. Like I said, the picture reminds me of how close we are. I remember sitting on my dad’s lap like that.

When I still lived in the Philippines, my dad, sister, and I bonded as we ate dinner at the mall or at a barbeque place across from our radiator shop. After we ate dinner, we walked for a little bit and grabbed some snacks. After that, he brought us home. I miss living with my dad in the same house. I miss brewing coffee for him in the morning. Sometimes he visited us if he had extra time. Almost every time I saw him at the shop, he was working. As a child I enjoyed helping my dad clean a machine in his shop, but he hardly let me do it because he did not want me to ruin it or get messy.

Based on my experience, I believe that growing up with an incomplete family is difficult. However, my dad and I are still close even though we are far away from each other. On holidays we talk through Skype. Even though we hardly talk, I still feel close to him… like in the picture where the man and the girl will forever be close—like my dad and me.
I n the picture, at the front of the crowd, there is a guy with dark eyes wearing a red shirt, black sweater, and black pants. He reminds me of my dad, but the only thing that is similar to my dad are those dark evil eyes. All I know about my dad’s appearance is that he has my name tattooed on his neck with old English writing. Despite this show of commitment, he has never been in my life. What I know about him personally is that he was not around for me, which means he did not care about his daughter. I do not even know what my dad’s name is. It takes a lot for me to trust people because my own dad let me down…. He was only with me when I was little and now he lives in Mexico with his other family.

My mom, on the other hand, really showed that I can trust her because she did not leave me. She raised me all by herself. I don’t know what my dad looks like because I only saw him when I was younger. I do not know what he would look like now; I would not be able to recognize him in a crowd. He basically violated my trust because I thought parents were supposed to be there for their children. My dad is nothing to me anymore. When I asked for my dad, my mom just told me he was in Oregon with my uncle. She lied to me because she wanted me to have a better picture of him in my mind than just a man with evil eyes and tattoos, like the guy in the picture.

I do not think I can ever forgive my dad for not being there for me. As I get older I understand more, and I know I cannot have a normal relationship with him because he really did not care about me when I was smaller and now he does. He calls my sister and me even though we have told him we don’t want to talk to him or want anything to do with him. We hope that he doesn’t do to his other daughters what he did to us: leave them without a father. I think all kids should have both parents. Although I never really needed him, it would be nice if I did have a dad, I guess….

Honestly, I don’t actually care if I did or not because I’m doing well by myself. At the same time, I feel bad for those children who don’t have both of their parents, but everything happens for a reason. I am just glad I have my mom with me.
Everyone has ways of letting go of their feelings. Since I was a baby, my mother has told me about the important feelings of finding something in life I would love to do. The hope of my mother would lead me to my passion in life…through those little important moments with my mom in the park, at home, or even on the bus.

My mother once took me on a bus ride. With me sitting on her lap, she told a story of how she loves spending time with me and also giving me good advice on my future. She held me tight, and I lay down my head on her chest, hearing her heart with joy and pride. My mother was young when she had me but one thing I will never forget was what she once told me: “I made a mistake getting pregnant at a young age, but I will never regret having you.”

I never thought I would fall in love with the idea of art but now it has been four years since I had a big experience in my life. One day I was sitting outside my house; I was bored, with nothing to do. I was holding a paper and pencil that my little sister gave me. As I looked out into my front yard, I was amazed by a big tree. It did not look like any other tree I had seen before; this tree had something different.

I noticed it had pictures on every branch. For example, in one branch I saw a face, which was really interesting because it looked like a sad face, and a leaf hanging from it looked like a tear. At the other side of the tree, a branch looked like a standing man doing nothing. After I looked at the tree, I grabbed my pencil and wondered if I should draw the realistic tree or draw it how I imagined it. When I started drawing, I felt my emotions pour down on the pencil and rain down onto the paper like a storm washing away those sad and lonely trapped feelings. Once I finished drawing my picture of the tree, I felt like the sun coming out. I felt calm and free.

The drawing at the end was not how I had seen the tree before I started. At first the tree looked beautiful and natural, with amazing colors shining around my yard. But at that moment I was going through a hard time, so when I drew the tree, it was sad. The tree that was on my paper was dark with no leaves and no color…it was just dead. When I draw I feel like I can run into my drawings and be there and escape the difficulties of my life.

The hope my mom had for me to become a role model in life is getting clearer for me day by day. I will go visit all around the world looking for art, and in the future I see myself becoming an art teacher at a high school. Every day my mother holds me in her arms having those feelings: love, pride, responsibility, and most of all, her hope of me becoming an artist.
I am one of those people who respects others, one who would give my seat on the bus for another. I will respect the other person and treat that person right as if I knew him or her. I try to live my life by “never judge a book by its cover.” What that means is that just because one person knows some things about other people, it does not mean he or she knows all about their life experiences.

I was good at helping my uncle clean his garage. One day he called me in the morning and asked if I could help him with some work: cleaning his garage. I said yes because I did not want to be a bad nephew, and he is the one who taught me how to be nice to other people. The next day, I woke up early and got ready to go to his house and work right away. I walked in and saw him eating breakfast; when he finished, we went right to the garage to work. He opened the door of the garage and all I saw was a big filthy mess; it looked like it had not been cleaned in years. The first thing we threw away was a big couch that had holes all over it; it looked like a mouse house. It took us over three hours just to clean a small place in the garage. In the driveway, we piled shoes, bags of clothes, boxes of toys, and electronics that he had only used for a while. By the end of the day, we had cleaned the entire garage. We were exhausted and very thirsty, and we were happy we had lemonade to drink.

My uncle was going to pay me $150.00 dollars to help him clean his garage. I thought about it; should I accept the money, or just tell him that it was no problem helping him because he is part of the family? Money is never the answer with family as long as we are good to each other.

The next week he visited my family. I walked with my little cousin to my room and watched a movie with him, and then I heard my uncle call my name from downstairs. I jumped up really quick to see what was wrong because the call was really loud. They never scream my name that loud, especially when it is quiet. That is when my uncle brought me the $150. But I only accepted $100; I gave him back $50. He told me to take every penny but I said, “No, the $50 is for the gas when you dropped me home and for the hamburger you bought me. I helped you because you asked me nicely; most people do not even ask in the way you did. If you ever need more help, just call me or come by, and you don’t have to pay me.”

Being good to others makes me feel proud. I can help others cross the sidewalk, help them with their grocery stuff, and never say no if someone is asking me nicely. At the end of the day, being good is always a good thing to do. We never know when we are about to do something good for someone.
EL MÚSICIAN
Music creates powerful feelings. Sometimes music is my everything; I could not live without it. I feel alive with music and I believe in my dream of becoming a sound engineer or music producer.

When I was in the fourth grade, my English teacher introduced us to music; it inspired me a lot and has ever since. I never expected my passion for music would take me this far. Sometimes, I have thought this passion would be over soon; I should get real with my life and stop dreaming about the thing that might never happen. I have really tried to get over music because I have been afraid I might never get a job in music.

Indeed, I intensely like music in a way I have never liked anything before. Unfortunately, I do not really have an opportunity to compose the kind of music I want. I want to learn about computer-generated music, but the instruments and computers I want to work with are more expensive than my family can afford. If I cannot work in the music industry, I might end up in a job I do not feel comfortable with, but that does not mean I will stop believing in music. Like the man in the picture, I can feel the unpredictability of life that is lived in abstract dreams...each man or woman attempting to reach a dream, with courage. The reward of destiny will reflect the truth in my life.

Hope is the only thing that pushes me to pursue my dream of music, the place where I can express myself and feel free. When I write, I can also express my feelings; it is as if I grab a hoe and dig through whatever experiences I have had. Sometimes bad memories spring up or good memories pass like a flash of lighting. Sometimes, music and writing have a common process; both need an imagination and organization to build beautiful sentences or sounds. For me, writing is filled with difficult decisions and it is complex—so many thoughts all at once.

Expressing feelings and thoughts through music keeps distracting me from a disappointing reality, but that does not mean living in a daydream. For me, living in a music world means living in a world of imagination, of freedom, of creativity and challenges. Writing is more real, although frustrating, because I have to think so hard to do it. At least the benefits of writing can help make me more literate.
ALEJANDRA CASILLAS was born in Santa Cruz, California and is 15 years old. She has one brother, and three sisters named Servand, Nayely, and America. She is excited to have her story appear in a Young Writers Program publication.

ALEJANDRA MARQUEZ is 14 years old and loves Phora more than anything in the world. Her favorite things to do are listen to hip-hop artist Phora, go on adventures, and enjoy life.

ANTHONY RUIZ SALINAS is 15 years old and loves adventure more than anything in the world. His favorite things to do are party, play video games, and hang out with the hood. He hopes the readers of this book enjoy his story.

EDGAR CUEVAS is 16 years old and loves to play soccer and write more than anything in the world. His favorite things to do are play sports, eat, sleep, and travel around the world. He hopes the readers of this book enjoy his writing.

EMILY CAZARES is 16 years old and loves her family more than anything in the world. Her favorite things to do are play soccer, hang out with her friends, and go to Mexico. She hopes the readers of this book like her story.

[CONTINUED NEXT PAGE]
Biographies

**FREDI GARCIA** was born in Santa Cruz, California and is 15 years old. He has one brother and one sister and a dog named Lucky. Fredi is excited to have people read his writing.

**HEIDI CHAVEZ** loves writing and is happy to have her story appear in this book. Her favorite thing to write about is friendship. She lives in Santa Cruz, California with her family and is 15 years old.

**MARIA CHAVEZ** loves writing and is happy to have her story appear in this book. Her favorite things to write about are life and positive things. She is 15 years old and lives in Santa Cruz, California with her family.

**MARI RIZELLE COLEEN BEDUYA** was born in the Philippines and is 15 years old. She has one sister. She’s excited to have her story appear in a Young Writers Program publication.

**NATALIE CRUZ CASILLAS** was born in Santa Cruz, California on November 17, 1999 and is 15 years old. She has three sisters and no brothers. She is excited to have her story appear in a Young Writers Program publication.

**SAYURI HERNANDEZ** loves writing and is happy to have her story appear in this book. Her favorite things to write about are herself and love. She lives in Santa Cruz, California with her family and is 15 years old.

**VICTOR VICTORIA** was born in Mexico and is 18 years old. He has one stepbrother, one stepsister, one sister, and a cat. He is sort of excited to have his story appear in a Young Writers Program publication.

**ZAENA C. SHERRELL** is 17 years old and loves to create music more than anything in the world. Her favorite things to do are listen to music, skateboard, and hang out with friends.
**LORRAINE GARCÍA-NAKATA** is an artist navigating between visual art, music, and writing. She is also recognized as an arts/culture specialist with extensive experience in arts and cultural policy, non-profit administration across disciplines, philanthropy, program development, the creative process, community development, and new directions in arts education. García-Nakata’s visual artwork tends to be large scale and has been exhibited on a local, regional, national, and international level. She enjoys drawing, painting, mixed media, printmaking, installation work, and sculpture. For many years she has been drawn to sing, write lyrics, and play the guitar. She is working to complete a book on her experiences as a third generation descendant whose grandparents came to the United States in 1914 during the Mexican Revolution. Since 1974, she has been a member of the world-renowned Chicano artist collective, Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF), and in 2003, the California Arts Council awarded her a Visual Arts Fellowship. She has been appointed to the San Francisco Arts Commission to explore the creation of a National Museum of the American Latino, and is currently Advisor to the San Francisco Latino Historical Society.
José Lozano was born in Los Angeles. He spent his childhood in Juarez, Mexico and his adolescence in Fullerton, California. He received an M.F.A from CSUF. As a visual artist, Lozano has exhibited extensively in Los Angeles and other venues in this country and abroad. An educator, he has published two children’s books: Once Around The Block and Little Chanclas. Lozano also did the artwork—Metro Loteria—for the Metro Expo Line at the Exposition and La Brea station in L.A. His father is a talented saxophone player and his mother was his biggest influence. “She had an artistry in everything she did,” he says.
Artwork Credits

Los Angeles Metro Series on pages 2, 6, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 24, and 26 by José Lozano.

For more on the artist please visit joselozano.net

Works on Paper by Lorraine García-Nakata
Page 4: “What, No Quinceañera?” 7’ x 4’ 2” Charcoal On Paper, 2008 © Lorraine Garcia-Nakata all rights reserved

Page 8: “Friends, No Matter What” 7’ x 4’ 2” Charcoal/Pastel On Paper, 2008 © Lorraine Garcia-Nakata all rights reserved

Page 10: “The Alchemist” 29” x 30” Pastel On Paper, 2005 © Lorraine Garcia-Nakata all rights reserved

Page 16: “1960’s Self-Portrait” 7’ x 4’2” Charcoal on Paper, 2008 © Lorraine Garcia-Nakata all rights reserved

For more on the artist please visit lorrainegn.com

The artists retain all copyrights to the artworks.
Acknowledgments

This book—the Young Writers Program’s first, full-color venture—is a testament to the belief not only in writing and its benefits but to the power of artwork to spark our thinking, to take us places we had no idea we could go.

Museo Eduardo Carrillo Executive Director Betsy Andersen brought the flame to begin that fire. Her idea of marrying the work of the artists featured on her organization’s website, http://www.museoeduardocarrillo.org, with the words of students in Robyn Miranda’s English I Sheltered class at Soquel High School initially challenged us…in a good way. How would students respond to the artwork? How would they use it to inspire their writing? What kind of scaffolding would they need to do the writing we were asking of them?

Robyn Miranda, like so many of our teachers, works extraordinarily hard for her students. While she initially approached the Young Writers Program with a different project in mind, when the possibility of the artwork-inspired student writing was presented to her, she was open and flexible…though not entirely convinced. To her credit, she gamely decided the opportunities outweighed the hazards.

And it paid off, as calculated risks sometimes do.

Enter the WPAs. Our Writing Project Assistants for this project—Joan Maro, Bonnie Ott, Sylvia Patience, Shawnee Rogers, and Diane Smith—gave these students not only their time and expertise, but their respect and affection. They are a collective marvel.

Sara Wilbourne poured over the students’ stories with her careful eye, marveling at their honesty and, sometimes, their situations. Justin Carder, our wonder worker, gave the book its look and feel, coming up with not only the cover design but the page layout. Justin continues to be the go-to guy for the look of the Young Writers Program publications.

But the true tale to be told is that the students were willing to open their eyes, hearts, and minds to the demands of the project. Their words tell simple and true stories. It is with great appreciation that we include them in this book.

Julia Chiapella
Director, Young Writers Program
About the Young Writers Program

The Young Writers Program is dedicated to supporting Santa Cruz County students in grades 4-12 and assisting their teachers in building students’ writing skills and confidence.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The Young Writers Program is grassroots! And we’re passionate about writing! Begun in the fall of 2012, the program is co-sponsored by Santa Cruz Writes and the Santa Cruz County Office of Education. Community volunteers work as writing assistants in grade 4-12 public school classrooms to work on teacher-initiated writing projects and then we publish the results. The program’s free trainings support volunteers in providing writing guidance during the course of a project. It’s a win/win/win situation for teachers, community members, and students. With an emphasis on student engagement, writing projects are designed to appeal to students and their world, encouraging participation and the hard work of revision, made worthwhile by the final publication. Last year’s publications included Places in the Heart (personal narratives) from Gault Elementary; Voices from the Inside (poetry) from the Hartman School at Juvenile Hall; Through Our Eyes: Ideas That Can Change the World (persuasive) from Mission Hill Middle School; Shattered, Reflections on Bias, Prejudice, and Stereotype (poetry, essay, and fiction) from Branciforte Middle School; and The Choice of a Lifetime: Important Decisions (personal narrative) from Soquel High among others.
BECOME A WRITING PROJECT ASSISTANT
Our Writing Project Assistants are the backbone of the Young Writers Program! Working with small groups of students, WPAs focus on the elements of good writing, encouraging the writer’s voice to flourish. Working as a Writing Project Assistant is a rewarding opportunity to encourage students to define their thinking through writing.

Here are the essential bits about Writing Project Assistants (WPAs) and projects:
• Writing Project Assistants work in the classroom on projects directed by the teacher.
• Projects generally run from four to eight weeks.
• WPAs are fingerprinted and trained prior to being in the classroom.
• Training sessions are held throughout the year and provide strategies and skills for many aspects of writing, student behaviors, and skills.
• We ask for a commitment of at least 2 hours a week for the duration of a classroom project. Establishing trust and consistency with students is important to their success!

OTHER WAYS TO VOLUNTEER
But being in the classroom isn’t the only way you can volunteer. If you have any of the following skills or interests, we’d love your help with the program.
• EDITING
• GRAPHIC DESIGN
• FUNDRAISING
• EVENT PLANNING

VISIT youngwritersprogram.santacruzwrites.org FOR MORE INFORMATION
We accomplished so much with these stories. When we saw our final stories, we realized how good they were. With these stories, we painted pictures using only words.

—Sequel High Students of English 1 Shelters

When I read the writing it took my breath away. Candid, raw and real, it honors each writer and the artists who opened the doors. It is with thanks to all that I hold and cherish this book. —Betsy Andersen, Executive Director, Museo Eduardo Carrillo

A JOINT PROJECT OF THE Young Writers Program and Museo Eduardo Carrillo