

70 Proof: A Sabbatical Report

Suzanne Nielsen

For Spring Semester, 2023

Submitted in hard copy to Dean Michael Anderson on September, 2023

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Brief Overview

This report details my semester sabbatical activities and progress during spring semester, 2023.

I included my initial sabbatical proposal, followed by a revised version. The one constant in both versions was to complete a drafted collection of poetry, which is my end result.

The purpose of the sabbatical leave is to enhance professional development related to my field of study, creative writing, and to meet the research priorities of the university. I hope I've demonstrated a good use of my time in so doing.

Thank you for the opportunity to experience this valued time.

Suzanne

Faculty Sabbatical Application (First Application)

Section One: Faculty Information

Date: September 17, 2021

Name: Suzanne Nielsen

Academic Rank: Associate Professor

College: College of Liberal Arts

Department: Fine Arts

Date of initial resident faculty appointment: 8-19

Date of previous sabbatical leave (if any): NA

Year and academic term(s) of proposed sabbatical leave: 2023, Spring

Section Two: Sabbatical Proposal

- 1) Purpose of proposed sabbatical leave including appropriateness to current or anticipated university responsibilities and anticipated benefits to the university, community, or profession: (be specific, attach additional materials as needed):

Benefit to your department/other departments

Mother to Son

by Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:

Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

It's had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

I'se been a-climbin' on,

And reachin' landin's,

And turnin' corners,

And sometimes goin' in the dark

Where there ain't been no light.

So boy, don't you turn back.

Don't you set down on the steps

'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.

Don't you fall now—

For I'se still goin', honey,

I'se still climbin',

And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

I have some thoughts on what disciplinary/teaching research I would like to pursue over the 15-week semester. Whittling is defined as “an addictive hobby that is practiced by millions of people across the globe.” On March 16, 2021, my son called me from Florida and asked me what I was doing. I told him I was currently whittling a comfort bird. “Stop talking crazy,” my son said. After several exchanges, to include texting photos, we found out that we both took up the hobby of whittling on the same day in March. He’s making wizards while I’m making a connection to a poetry project I want to explore with a working title, *Whittling*.

I have always admired the poem by Langston Hughes titled *Mother and Son* for several reasons. Major themes in Hughes’ poem address hardship, hope, and courage. This is a poem that saw me through the fears of time spent as a single parent. My sons were one and six when I decided to return to college as a struggling single parent new in recovery. This poem gave me hope in times when hope was clouded by despair.

Today my sons are 29 and 34. They both live where hurricanes manifest, where the political climate is, perhaps, the resistor to a global vaccine; one son is an army major, West Point graduate; one son works construction, resists the war, and lives in rural Florida. I raised them under the same roof. They each have their own stories to tell.

2) Previous accomplishments related to the proposed sabbatical project, if any:

I have a poetry collection due for publication in March, 2022, titled *Face Up: Poems for Outlaws*. I started this project in January, 2021. It initially started out to be a re-issue of my last poetry book published by So'ham books, 2006, titled, *I Thought You Should Know*. As the project morphed over time, I found some of the poems from the original collection to be pathways into new poems; hence to say this re-issue consists of a collection of 40 newly drafted and edited works that I added to 20 re-issued selections.

As usual I allow my project(s) to take on a life of its own; in this case I challenged myself to explore more deeply the themes of aging, and a broken society, with the will and desire to carry on; themes our creative writing students step into with a brevity that solidifies their unique voices by mirroring the world we live in. I admire their truths and as a result I write for them and because of them. Exploring a collection of poetry with the working title, *Whittling* intends to focus on family, society, compulsions, obsessions, fears and mortality. These are all the themes that connect us as one world and, at the same time, make our contributions unique.

There's no crystal staircase awaiting us, for we intend to build for ourselves.

3) Plan of action (be specific):

I want to explore through point of view some of the same themes expressed in *Mother to Son*, such as hardship, hope, and courage. I want this collection accessible to many audiences, and I think one way to achieve this is through exploring themes from various points of view. My goal is to break this collection into three narratives, weaving in and out of a mother and two sons. The struggles with divorced parents, West Point, and delinquencies, the supervised visitations that never happened, and other themes that share the truths among three perspectives.

4) Anticipated results:

I would like to travel to Florida for four weeks, spending two week's time with each of my sons. One lives near Tampa; the other lives in Key West. For the remaining weeks I intend to draft, revise, revisit narratives, and work on authenticating each distinct voice represented. I will draft and revise a collection of 60 poems, weaving the narrative throughout. I intend for this collection to be ready for publication in May, 2023.

5) Advisee reassignment plan: (TBA)

[Click here to enter text.](#)

Section Three: Authorization

I understand that I am expected to follow my sabbatical plan and return to the university after the conclusion of the sabbatical and provide twelve (12) credits of instruction or an equivalent amount of non-credit generating faculty work for each semester of sabbatical leave taken. If I fail to do so I am obligated to refund to the university all university funds awarded during the sabbatical period. In addition, I acknowledge that I am required to submit a written report of my sabbatical activities to my Dean by the date specified in the *Faculty Personnel Matters* document.

Requester's Signature: Suzanne Nielsen. Date: September 17, 2021

Sabbatical Update: Revised Proposal and Rational (Overview)

When I offered to write a poem for a friend regarding the summer solstice (2022), it took a path I hadn't intended. The first line of the first stanza begins:

In June of 1973, just months after abortion became legal...

As the piece progresses we have the tilt of the sun as the solstice of time while anxiously awaiting the potential overturn of *roe v wade*. So... I revised my original sabbatical plan to include a collection of poetry with the working title, Hanging by a Wire. I've finalized the collection title to read 70 Proof. Below is a brief outline of what my revision would encompass.

70 poems

4 Sections:

Born in the fifties/Before 1973/1973

Legislation

Battle at Meadowbrook

Now

Abort73.com

Minnesota Historical Society

Uniforms

Wire hangers

Meadowbrook

The abortion counselor has 4 functions: 1) to provide accurate and well-documented information; 2) to provide support for a vulnerable patient; 3) to assess and draw out the women's feelings and facilitate her understanding and processing of the abortion experience; and 4) to recognize her own limitations and refer patients with peripheral problems to an appropriate agency. There has been some discussion of the relative merits of group and/or individual counseling. Most agree that certain patients need individual counseling -- those who are very young, those with a history of psychiatric illness, those exhibiting extreme ambivalence, and those with language or communication problems. At the Meadowbrook Women's Clinic in St. Louis Park, Minnesota there are discussion areas which are usually explored in any counseling session. The counselor begins with an exploration of the feelings experienced by the patient when she 1st discovered she was pregnant, and her attitude toward pregnancy in general. The next step is consideration of the patient's attitude towards abortion, her account of the decision-making process, and her feelings about pregnancy continuation. The most difficult patient to reach in the area of contraception is the adolescent.

Unwanted pregnancy usually is the result of birth control error or failure and lack of use of contraception. The counselor in the abortion clinic needs to be supportive, nonjudgmental, to help a woman make her own decision, to reinforce that decision, and to help her carry out the decision.

**Metropolitan State University
Faculty Sabbatical Application**

Section One: Faculty Information

Date: July 14, 2022 (adaptation from September 17, 2021)

Name: Suzanne Nielsen

Academic Rank: Associate Professor

College: College of Liberal Arts

Department: Fine Arts

Date of initial resident faculty appointment: 8-19

Date of previous sabbatical leave (if any): NA

Year and academic term(s) of proposed sabbatical leave: 2023, Spring

Section Two: Sabbatical Proposal

6) Purpose of proposed sabbatical leave including appropriateness to current or anticipated university responsibilities and anticipated benefits to the university, community, or profession: (be specific, attach additional materials as needed):

Tuesdays and Thursdays During Solstice

In June of 1973, just months after abortion became legal, Dean told the public that Nixon had prior knowledge of payments for silencing the Watergate investigation.

In June of 2022, Barr told the public that Trump's election fraud false claims were groundless, just six weeks prior to Politico's leak of the assault on *roe v wade* so I try to make sense of this juxtaposition by reaching for it, the Sun that is, by closing my eyes and trusting its strength, its refusal to move.

Stand still is my internal command until this nonsense, on the longest day of 2022, tilts toward sanity.

The title is inspired by Thursday: June 21, 1973 and Tuesday: June 21 2022

The beginning of summer, 2022, I offered to write this poem for a friend honoring the summer solstice. It took a path I hadn't intended; the first line of the first stanza surprised me by connecting the legalization of abortion to the solstice, but given the climate, and now the overturn of *Row V Wade*, it does not sincerely surprise me. The leak sent fear; the overturn sends outrage; outrage for those of us who remember before 1973, the last time abortion was illegal and coat hangers were an alternative.

Yesterday's *Guardian* news headline reads, *Man charged with rape of 10-year-old who had abortion after rightwing media called story 'not true'*; this just days after abortion rights for women were overturned. This headline previews what's to follow.

As a result of this assault on women I find myself deeply invested in re-exploring the theme of my poetry project during my sabbatical. Initially I was planning on drafting/revising a collection of 60 poems about mothers and sons with subthemes such as hardship, hope, and courage. Because I would like to switch my thematic

focus to Roe V Wade, women's reproductive rights, and abortion I am drafting this amended sabbatical application for your approval.

I have some thoughts on how this collection will impact my teaching. My subthemes will remain the same focusing on hardship, hope and courage, but how this affects an overturn in law. These are themes that writers of various genres explore through point of view, voice and narrative. The narratives I intend to explore within this new theme will take risks through providing a voice worth following.

The working title for this project is *Hanging by a Wire*. This 70 poem collection will contain four sections to include:

Born in the fifties/Before 1973/1973; Legislation; Meadowbrook; 2022

Some sources/images I've started perusing include: Abort73.com; Minnesota Historical Society; uniforms; wire hangers; Meadowbrook

7) Previous accomplishments related to the proposed sabbatical project, if any:

I have a poetry collection titled *Face Up: Poems for Outlaws*, currently available on Amazon, however our publication date was delayed by two months, and my actual face-to-face book launch is scheduled for September 6, 2022. This is a project I started January, 2021, I started this project in January, 2021. It initially started out to be a re-issue of my last poetry book published by So'ham books, 2006, titled, *I Thought You Should Know*. As the project morphed over time, I found some of the poems from the original collection to be pathways into new poems; hence to say this re-issue consists of a collection of 40 newly drafted and edited works that I added to 20 re-issued selections.

As usual I allow my project(s) to take on a life of its own; in this case I challenged myself to explore more deeply the themes of aging, and a broken society, with the will and desire to carry on; themes our creative writing students step into with a brevity that solidifies their unique voices by mirroring the world we live in. These themes connect us as one world, a beautifully flawed planet.

8) Plan of action (be specific):

I will draft a collection of 70 poems with the working title of *Hanging by a Wire*, in response to the change of events our country is experiencing regarding Roe V Wade. I have started outlining plans for the collection, and I have also started drafting some pieces. I believe my drafting process will consume several weeks leading up to, and including my sabbatical weeks. For the remaining weeks I intend to draft, revise, revisit narratives, and work on authenticating each distinct voice represented. I will revise this collection of 70 poems, weaving the narrative by exploring such subthemes such as hardship, hope, and courage. I want this collection accessible to many audiences, and I think one way to achieve this is through exploring themes from various points of view.

9) Anticipated results:

I intend for this collection to be ready for publication in June, 2023.

10) Advisee reassignment plan:

TBD

Section Three: Authorization

I understand that I am expected to follow my sabbatical plan and return to the university after the conclusion of the sabbatical and provide twelve (12) credits of instruction or an equivalent amount of non-credit generating faculty work for each semester of sabbatical leave taken. If I fail to do so I am obligated to refund to the university all university funds awarded during the sabbatical period. In addition, I acknowledge that I am required to submit a written report of my sabbatical activities to my Dean by the date specified in the *Faculty Personnel Matters*

document.

Requester's Signature: Suzanne Nielsen Date: July 14, 2022

Project Progress

Memberships:

All Above All: Catalysts for Abortion Justice

American Civil Liberties Union

Liberate Abortion

National Abortion Federation

NARAL Pro-Choice America

Our Justice

Planned Parenthood

Pro-Choice Minnesota

RiseUP4AbortionRights.org

The Brigid Alliance

During my sabbatical I had the opportunity to communicate with Marge Piercy, a poet and women's advocate, a mentor of mine. What an incredible opportunity. Below is some of her work she permissioned me to include in this project update.

Marge Piercy: Right To Life

A woman is not a basket you place
your buns in to keep them warm. Not a brood
hen you can slip duck eggs under.
Not the purse holding the coins of your
descendants till you spend them in wars.
Not a bank where your genes gather interest
and interesting mutations in the tainted
rain, any more than you are.

You plant corn and you harvest
it to eat or sell. You put the lamb
in the pasture to fatten and haul it in to
butcher for chops. You slice the mountain
in two for a road and gouge the high plains
for coal and the waters run muddy for
miles and years. Fish die but you do not
call them yours unless you wished to eat them.

Now you legislate mineral rights in a woman.
You lay claim to her pastures for grazing,
fields for growing babies like iceberg
lettuce. You value children so dearly
that none ever go hungry, none weep
with no one to tend them when mothers

work, none lack fresh fruit,
none chew lead or cough to death and your
orphanages are empty. Every noon the best
restaurants serve poor children steaks.
At this moment at nine o'clock a partera
is performing a table top abortion on an
unwed mother in Texas who can't get
Medicaid any longer. In five days she will die
of tetanus and her little daughter will cry
and be taken away. Next door a husband
and wife are sticking pins in the son
they did not want. They will explain
for hours how wicked he is,
how he wants discipline.

We are all born of woman, in the rose
of the womb we suckled our mother's blood
and every baby born has a right to love
like a seedling to sun. Every baby born
unloved, unwanted, is a bill that will come
due in twenty years with interest, an anger
that must find a target, a pain that will
beget pain. A decade downstream a child
screams, a woman falls, a synagogue is torched,
a firing squad is summoned, a button
is pushed and the world burns.

I will choose what enters me, what becomes
of my flesh. Without choice, no politics,
no ethics lives. I am not your cornfield,
not your uranium mine, not your calf
for fattening, not your cow for milking.
You may not use me as your factory.
Priests and legislators do not hold shares
in my womb or my mind.
This is my body. If I give it to you
I want it back. My life
is a non-negotiable demand.

Marge Piercy's poem "Right to Life," remains painfully relevant, touching on themes of reproductive justice and women's bodily autonomy. This poem was written in 1980; it matters even more today than it did forty-one years ago.

Also by Marge Piercy:

A woman is not a basket you place your buns in to keep them warm. Not a brood hen you can slip duck eggs under. Not the purse holding the coins of your descendants till you spend them in wars. Not a bank where your genes gather interest and interesting mutations in the tainted rain, any more than you are. You plant corn and you harvest it to eat or sell. You put the lamb in the pasture to fatten and haul it in to butcher for chops. You slice the mountain

in two for a road and gouge the high plains for coal and the waters run muddy for miles and years. Fish die but you do not call them yours unless you wished to eat them. Now you legislate mineral rights in a woman. You lay claim to her pastures for grazing, fields for growing babies like iceberg lettuce. You value children so dearly that none ever go hungry, none weep with no one to tend them when mothers work, none lack fresh fruit, none chew lead or cough to death and your orphanages are empty. Every noon the best restaurants serve poor children steaks. At this moment at nine o'clock a partera is performing a table top abortion on an unwed mother in Texas who can't get Medicaid any longer. In five days she will die of tetanus and her little daughter will cry and be taken away. Next door a husband and wife are sticking pins in the son they did not want. They will explain for hours how wicked he is, how he wants discipline. We are all born of woman, in the rose of the womb we suckled our mother's blood and every baby born has a right to love like a seedling to sun. Every baby born unloved, unwanted, is a bill that will come due in twenty years with interest, an anger that must find a target, a pain that will beget pain. A decade downstream a child screams, a woman falls, a synagogue is torched, a firing squad is summoned, a button is pushed and the world burns. I will choose what enters me, what becomes of my flesh. Without choice, no politics, no ethics lives. I am not your cornfield, not your uranium mine, not your calf for fattening, not your cow for milking. You may not use me as your factory. Priests and legislators do not hold shares in my womb or my mind. This is my body. If I give it to you I want it back. My life is a non-negotiable demand.

Sabbatical Diary

Jan. 1st I started the process of drafting a poem a day for 70 days. My routine included drafting a poem each morning between 6:00-7:00 a.m. while sipping coffee. Each poem is assigned a working title. I wanted to focus this collection on the theme of abortion. My sabbatical amended plan focuses on drafting a collection of poetry titled *Hanging by a Wire* that focuses on abortion in general terms.

In order to bring about this challenge while still thinking in terms of teaching, I opened up this challenge for my creative writing majors to participate in 70 poems in 70 days. I have five student poets that have accepted this challenge and this makes me smile. I am a teacher that needs to teach even during sabbatical. (please see attached a sample of our checklist)

January 1st brought me initially to my computer at a loss of expression, leaving me to draft a poem with a question: *Anyone Home?* Part journalism, part narrative, this springboards me into A few eclectic poems until I settle in and find the rhythm with the theme: abortion.

This developed after joining and volunteering with the following groups/organizations who send me daily updates on legislation:

All Above All: Catalysts for Abortion Justice

American Civil Liberties Union

Liberate Abortion

National Abortion Federation

NARAL Pro-Choice America

Our Justice

Planned Parenthood

Pro-Choice Minnesota

RiseUP4AbortionRights.org

The Brigid Alliance

Below is a 10-week journey into the drafting process, to include a summary of this challenge. Thank you for reading.

January 8: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

1. Anyone Home?
2. The Man on the Steps
3. The J Word
4. With a Witten Prescription
5. Not One More
6. The Dangerous Chemical Called Hern
7. Thank You, Justice Beatty
- 8. A Threadbare Net**

What an exciting week this has been for me. I awake at 6:00 every morning and drink my coffee while drafting a poem until 7:00. I initially search for a headline world-wide with the theme of abortion. This week a lot happened just in our state alone. We have made it available for women to now obtain the abortion pill, prescribed in two doses, at our local Walgreens/CVSs. This is huge, and marks progress, but as with all things connected to democracy we will see these rights taken away from us if we do not pay attention. Look at the fuck show this week in the House of Representatives. I'd say it was a clown show, but that would be disrespectful to the clown community. Fuck show is the only way to describe this

Reality TV show, mature audiences only. I am excited to meet with Get Lit this evening as I will be sharing one of the eight poems I've drafted thus far. I seem to be drafting information and not completely invested in emotion in many of these drafts.

January 15: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

9. An Offense to Protest
10. Rest in Peace
11. The Price of Living in Prinsburg
12. Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights
13. Crisp Syllables
14. Payphone on Arcade
- 15. Mr. Maestro**

Busy week writing and reading all the government updates regarding abortion and reproductive rights. This will be a battle for Desantis; women matter, and their voices matter. My poem this morning included a woman who lost it before the procedure began. The performing doctor left the room telling us to get the patient dressed and under control.

The doctors at Meadowbrook were distant from us, the counselors, for whom most of the responsibility fell. If a woman lost control before the procedure began the counselors were to

blame. The doctors told us we did not do our job if they entered the room and the patient was beyond anxious. Writing *Shut off the Noise* this morning (poem #17) brought back those shaming comments we as counselors became numb to. The process continues.

January 22: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

- 16. Remember not to Breathe
- 17. Shut off the Noise
- 18. Needles in Place
- 19. The Way of the Wind
- 20. A Womb is Just a Womb
- 21. Empty of Hope
- 22. Who's Calling?**

Starting to realize how difficult this theme is, and there are times that I feel stagnant. And quiet. It's been a quiet process this week. Lots of thinking, lots of reading, lots of pain.

January 29: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

- 23. How to Hold a Firearm
- 24. Double Knots
- Jan. 24th, Tuesday, Meet on zoom to discuss the process (1/3 done). We can set up a time for this. It will be a good check in.**
- 25. A Painless Way to Retaliate
- 26. Let us Pray
- 27. Re-org
- 28. Stoned
- 29. The Glove**

The poems this week continue to explore the current climate with political agendas regarding abortion. Again, some of these drafts feel prose heavy, and need editing, however I do think with each poem I drafted this week I allowed the words to build upon one another with very little rhyme or reason. For instance, today's poem, *The Glove*, has nothing to do with abortion, unless you think in metaphorical terms. The impetus for the poem was looking out my window before daylight this morning and seeing a stray glove lying under the streetlamp. How I found this glove as perhaps belonging to Thing is just where my mind went. Metaphorically, the glove represents the helping hand. I know, it's a stretch, but then again, this is my reflection.

February 5: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

- 30. Vs on Their Faces
- 31. What's Love got to do with it
- 32. DDT
- 33. YOU YOU YOU
- 34. Guilty Rabbits
- 35. Down Comfort
- 36. Slaghoople Sue**

This week has been interesting. My poems have taken a turn and this week the focus has been on bullying. It started with Vs on their Faces. I remembered how frightened I was as a child of

the St. Paul Winter Carnival Vulcans. Then I remembered Debi L. in jr. high school and how so many of us participated in her humiliation. Then the pollution of Desantes appeared as DDT, then public humiliation with YOU YOU YOU, and so on. Writing about abortion for 29 days straight takes more energy than I'd anticipated, so this natural switch to bullies seems to be where my energy is at currently. Again, I'm so grateful to be doing this. Writing a piece a day keeps me present even though I'm visiting memories from the past, if that makes any sense.

I hope you all have an exciting week of writing. I also hope to see some of you this evening at Get Lit. Write from the mountain tops, from lighthouses, your bathroom visits. Write until you think you've said everything there is to say. For g-ds sake, I'm writing about Pearl Slaghoople.

February 12: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

- 37. Side Effects
- 38. The Pie Shop
- 39. Ice Queen
- 40. Lights Off
- 41. A Bullet List
- 42. Axolotls
- 43. Moon Around**

This week I've let my writing go where it will without the theme of abortion, or even a direct connection to bullying, and I've written some things that I might keep from society for your benefit. Poems can go off searching for whatever door will let them in. Axolotls came from a dream, and Moon Around came from a memory of my dear friend during a manic episode. This has been an interesting week of writing. I think my process is in need of room, defining bullying, abortion, addiction etc over and over again with stanza breaks leaves me too alone in my thoughts. Best to let the creativity take the lead right now.

February 19: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

I hope you are enjoying mid-February. This morning was poem # 50 of 70. This week has been difficult to get the words out and to have them make som sense.

I mentioned that we could meet on zoom to talk about our work. Does this evening work for you? I am open to time suggestions. I'm thinking somewhere in the vicinity of 5-7 pm? What are some thoughts on this? Would folks like to meet at 5:00 on zoom? Let me know and I will send a link. Here are my week's titles. Looking forward to connecting soon. Suzanne

44. Do You Know Your News Anchors' Blood Type?

45. Happy Valentine's Day

46. Until That Morning

47. Africa

48. No Regrets

49. Down in the Dumps

50. Quiet Steps

February 19th, Sunday, meet on zoom to discuss the first 50 drafted poems. Are there recurring themes? What are you noticing?

February 26: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

It looks like we are up against two more weeks of daily poetry writing.

It was great meeting with Bryant last week and for some reason it resonated with me to be a bit more surrealistic with my poems this week starting with Sawdust People.

This is an area I rarely venture into, but I've been having a great time and I want to thank Bryant for our exchange last week as it inspired me to go down this road.

Below are the titles for this week. I hope you are all doing well, and have survived our polar conditions. Let's think about our meeting in two weeks. Do we want to meet in person somewhere or on zoom? I vote for face to face.

Enjoy your upcoming week, and happy writing.

51. Sawdust People

52. A Blue Eye

53. Failing Hearts

54. The Innuendo

55. I Forgot to Tell You

56. Rooftops

57. Today I Became Little

March 5: List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

Another week has flown by and below are the titles of my weekly poems:

57. Today I Became Little

58. Poop Shack

59. My Nighttime Visitant

60. A Filtered Sky

61. Fist Full of Leather

62. Treading Water

63. The Mifepristone Shuffle

We have seven poems to go, and according to the messages received regarding our end of 70/70 meeting, the 18th looks like a possibility. I want to throw this out. I would like to invite all of you to my house on the 18th for pizza and sharing of our top three poems. Maybe our top five. and sharing our process. I'm thinking 6:00? Does this work for folks? I live in St. Paul close to highland high school.

Let me know if you think this would work.

As far as my weekly process, I can tell I am completing a goal I've set for myself. This weeks poems are reflections of daily observations. For example, I recently had a colonoscopy, hence the Poop Shack. The Mifepristone Shuffle captures the protest at Walgreens I ran into driving home from afternoon errands.

Last night I watched Trump on CPAC rally his followers with hate. No need to fact check. Again, this is a reminder that what's going on around us infects us on some level. Our

resilience is needed. Our voices are essential right now, and I am so proud to know all of you and your courage to tell your truths.

I hope to see you all at Get Lit this evening on zoom. We can discuss our upcoming celebration then. Enjoy your Sunday.

MARCH 5: I sent this email this morning to Rosalind Brewer, the CEO of walgreens:
I visit walgreens at least three times a week. Never again. Have you no shame? You are letting MAGA make decisions for you without taking into consideration the minds and bodies of women. This is an atrocity to ban mifepristone. You will be out of business within nine months. Suzanne Nielsen, St. Paul, MN

March 6: today I received a call from my publisher and friend, Belo Cipriani, and he informed me that CLA was willing to sponsor a book launch for *Face Up*. This is exciting, and at the same time I feel some concerns about faculty reactions. I hate that I have to think in those terms, but people judge others when they feel overlooked, and that's part of the climate at Metro. I want to feel gratitude, and I do. I feel tremendous gratitude toward Belo, Shirin, and all the colleagues that support me, but there are faculty that will say negative things about the attention I'm receiving. I hate that. So...Belo and I talked and he suggested having a few students read with me.

This is brilliant. I have four students that have done the 70/70 challenge, and I would love to have those four students with me at the launch. I sent them this email this morning, March 7th:

I have a favor to ask of you four. On April 11th Tuesday at 4:30 I will be doing a book launch for my poetry collection, *Face Up*. Part of what I want to happen at this reading is to introduce the four poets (all of you), who have been participating in this 70/70 challenge, and have you read two pieces each at the launch.

This will take place at Metro, most likely in the fireside room in the student center. There will be mics set up and I am going to ask Miguel if he could play guitar for a while quietly while we read.

I would plan on five minutes for each of you. What I'd also like to do if you are willing, is to have us discuss with the audience members your process during the 70/70 challenge. I'm thinking the one hour event will look like this:

4:30-4:45: Suzanne reads

4:45-4:50: Robin reads

4:50-4:55: Ryan reads

4:55-5:00: Ari reads

5:00-5:05: Bryant reads

5:05-5:30: panel discussing process (all of us)

We still have a few more days of writing poems. I encourage you to write a poem about a time you faced up to something. This will give us a threaded theme.

Please let me know your thoughts on this. I am hugely grateful to my publisher and friend, Belo Cipriani, for scheduling this event. This is going to be a beautiful event because of you.

Let me know your thoughts soon so we can get the arrangements made. Enjoy your Tuesday.

Cheers,
Suzanne
March 7:

[Sign the petition to demand Walgreens and other pharmacies provide abortion care to all customers who need it.](#)

Dear MoveOn member,

Millions of us are shaking our heads in rage and disbelief.

Walgreens has said that its pharmacies will not dispense or mail abortion prescriptions in states where Republican attorneys general have threatened lawsuits—outrageously, including states where abortion is legal such as Kansas.¹

That's right: Walgreens is refusing to distribute legal, safe, effective medication because it's bowing to threats by right-wing extremists seeking to take away our bodily autonomy.

Tell the Walgreens CEO and the executives of other pharmacies to reject the GOP's sexism and fascism. [Sign the petition demanding that pharmacies defend their customers and not Republican politicians and that they fulfill their duty to support our health!](#)

Tell U.S. pharmacies to not give in to GOP bullying and fascism and to protect their customers' right to abortion care!

March 18th, Saturday, meet face-to-face @ 5:00. Where do we go from here? CELEBRATION!

March 12: End Summary List of weekly poem titles & process notes:

Lip Service in Tennessee

65. The Prankster

66. Poetry Month

67. A Pound of Cherubs

68. Poor Rosalind

69. When the Cult of Christianity Wins the Lottery

70. What a Ride

Wow, here we are, 70 days later after taking on the challenge of writing 70 poems in 70 days. How do you feel?

I love a challenge, and I take on challenge with regularity. This challenge was no different. I have a collection of many poems. And maybe 6-8 of them are really solid. However that's not the point for me. For me it's honoring a writing process, a commitment, and a challenge.

I want to say Mazel tov to all of you: Ari, Bryant, Robin and Ryan. It was helpful knowing other poets were doing this as well. Honestly, I'd think about all of you each day I drafted a poem. Being able to reflect on you and your participation encouraged me many times I didn't feel like writing. Thank you.

I am so emotionally moved by your commitment. I hope one thing this challenge taught you is how essential it is to write daily. You are all talented writers with heart. This combination is worth the moon and all its constellations.

I am honored to work with you all on April 11th for our reading and dialogue. I am honored to host our celebration on Saturday, the 18th at my house in St. Paul. Again, mazel tov, bravo, YAY, hooray, Suzanne

My address is 59 Hilltop Lane, St. Paul, MN. 55116. My cell number is 612 850 8814. You can park in front of the house, but not across the street.

It's snowing again in St. Paul. I just looked out the window. No comment.

Cheers,
Suzanne

PS see attached flyer

FYI:
Hey Suzanne!

This poem reminded me of one you had shared in class. For the life of me, I can't remember the name of the poem you shared (googled for it—nada), but the formatting of this poem and something tonal reminded me of it. (The poem you shared concerned an old farmer who shoots himself in the end, there was also a dog in the beginning somewhere.) I hope you enjoy this, and if you would like to share your thoughts on it as well, feel free to shoot me back an email! (I could share mine as well, because I really enjoyed this piece (but I am totally biased to things with dogs in it).

BTW, I hope you are doing well with your sabbatical and also wanted to let you know that you are missed very much (by both me and Bryant, but I know many others as well)! 😊

Link: <https://www.rattle.com/tralee-ireland-days-ago-by-brendan-constantine/>

Sexauer, Susan M





Suzanne's Poem Titles:

1. Anyone Home?
2. The Man on the Steps
3. The J Word
4. With a Witten Prescription
5. Not One More
6. The Dangerous Chemical Called Hern
7. Thank You, Justice Beatty
- 8. A Threadbare Net**
9. An Offense to Protest
10. Rest in Peace
11. The Price of Living in Prinsburg
12. Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights
13. Crisp Syllables
14. Payphone on Arcade
- 15. Mr. Maestro**
16. Remember not to Breathe
17. Shut off the Noise
18. Needles in Place
19. The Way of the Wind
20. A Womb is Just a Womb
21. Empty of Hope
- 22. Who's Calling?**
23. How to Hold a Firearm
24. Double Knots
25. A Painless Way to Retaliate

Jan. 24th, Tuesday, Meet on zoom to discuss the process (1/3 done). We can set up a time for this. It will be a good check in.

26. Let us Pray
27. Re-org
28. Stoned
- 29. The Glove**
30. Vs on Their Faces
31. What's Love got to do with it
32. DDT
33. YOU YOU YOU
34. Guilty Rabbits
35. Down Comfort

- 36. Slaghoople Sue
- 37. Side Effects
- 38. The Pie Shop
- 39. Ice Queen
- 40. Lights Off
- 41. A Bullet List
- 42. Axolotls
- 43. Moon Around**
- 44. Do You Know Your News Anchors' Blood Type?
- 45. Happy Valentine's Day
- 46. Until That Morning
- 47. Africa
- 48. No Regrets
- 49. Down in the Dumps
- 50. Quiet Steps**

February 19th, Sunday, meet on zoom to discuss the first 50 drafted poems. Are there recurring themes? What are you noticing?

- 51. Sawdust People
- 52. A Blue Eye
- 53. Failing Hearts
- 54. The Innuendo
- 55. I Forgot to Tell You
- 56. The Summit
- 57. Today I Became Little**
- 58. Poop Shack
- 59. My Nighttime Visitant
- 60. A Filtered Sky
- 61. Fist Full of Leather
- 62. Treading Water
- 63. The Mifepristone Shuffle
- 64. Lip Service in Tennessee
- 65. The Prankster
- 66. Poetry Month
- 67. A Pound of Cherubs
- 68. Poor Rosalind
- 69. When the Cult of Christianity Wins the Lottery
- 70. What a Ride

March 18th, Saturday, meet face-to-face. Where do we go from here? CELEBRATION!

Thoughts and Reflections

THE POEMS:

A Blue Eye

I kicked a marble for over a ten-mile stretch always on paved ground, a reminder of the city's limits. We rolled up Snelling's labrynth ignoring the street signs, the honking, the homeless begging for recognition, and sadly I'm unable to deliver so I focused on that sphere of glass with its navy catseye gaining speed until it decided it didn't need any boost from me. Sadly a truck's tire crushed its spirit and tiny shards began to cry.

A Bullet List

She said the inability to communicate was sad, or it made her sad. I sat with this for 26 hours and I've decided sadness is mostly useless. I've come to this conclusion through a bullet list of pros and cons that marriage counselors push like pills.

Pro	Con
People sympathize	People glaze over
Excuse to eat shit (comfort food)	Shit too much
Excuse to hibernate	Miss a Madonna concert
Excessive weed use	Inappropriate laughter
Time alone	Time alone

Watch the body language; sunset eyelids, bolded worry lines
Notice the setting; faded gray walls, a confetti of candy wrappers
Notice the mood

A Filtered Sky

Last night the doorbell rang. First it was a Joni Mitchell tune, *Blue*, and then it was full out *Stairway to Heaven*. I opened the door to a filtered dark sky. In the distance I saw it start to unfold. The rungs were ringing and unfolding by the hundreds.

You can do it, I said to myself. Go ahead, mount the stairs and find out what's waiting For you.

So I did. I climbed and climbed, then climbed some more. The only obstruction I encountered was myself.

A Painless Way to Retaliate

Hypocrites will argue in a language that only makes sense to them. They yearn to carry grenades, change election results, stop women from taking charge of their reproductive rights, ban African American studies in K-12 teaching, along with Changing the meaning of supreme.

The best way to retaliate, the painless way to retaliate is to watch the movie without an intermission.

A Pound of Cherubs

Last night I dreamt that Aldi's had a sale on cherubs. Choose between chubby cherubs, unfortunate waif cherubs, red-headed cherubs and those going through kemo.

Warriors they are, nestled close are their arrows of defense along with their ability to persevere. I'll take a pound of the bald cherubs to bring home to incubate.

Abortion Rights Bill Fast-Tracked in Minnesota to Become Law

By STEVE KARNOWSKI January 5, 2023

A Threadbare Net

It's 2023, and Minnesota digs in for abortion rights. We've spoken: we want our choice protected, democracy defended.

While the House of Representatives highlights its new term we prepare for lies sharpened, shoved down our throats to cut out our tongues swinging a trapeze of tyranny with a threadbare net we must prepare for a litany of lies shoved down our throats as they attempt to cut out our tongues.

They don't understand that their children's children will find a way to speak, they will find their tongues, to swing the trapeze, catch each other, even without a net.

January 19, 2023 7:28 PM

House passes bill to enshrine abortion rights in state law

By Tessa Pieper



Supporters of reproductive freedom crowded next to abortion opponents in front of the House Chamber Jan. 19 as members inside debated HF1, legislation that would codify the right to an abortion in Minnesota. (Photo by Andrew VonBank)

The DFL's top priority hit the House Floor Thursday.

And after a little less than four hours of debate, [HF1](#), was passed 69-65 and is headed to the Senate.

Referred to as the "Protect Reproductive Options Act," the bill would further establish in state law the fundamental right for an individual to make decisions on their own reproductive health.

A Womb is Just a Womb

The leak was their inevitable *fuck you*; the crooks waited behind closed doors to bind our wombs while we watched, mouths duct-taped, wrists bound, the ball and chain of history unfolding in barbaric terms.

But

we've caught our breath, we're back, standing in the way of every sneaky step you grease with vulva jelly to infact have the last word.

Africa

A friend of mine phoned last night to tell me of her upcoming trip to Africa, a place I've never been. I start backwards with the alphabet; zebra, yellow mongoose, xerus, wildebeest are just the tail end.

Aardvarks, baboons, cheetahs, desert warthogs
are there to greet you as you step onto native land
and into the zoo of many languages that are unfamiliar
to your native tongue. And then there's the rivers,
glittering with diamond shards. If you look closely
you might find a mirror image of your past, present,
and future as your tears blend with the subtle tide
that awakens in your soul.

Supreme Court [Northern Ireland] says bill to ban anti-abortion protests at clinics is lawful

An Offense to Protest

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission rang in the new year honoring a court-ruled bill making it an offense to protest against abortion on the premises of a clinic providing such services.

This bill directly confronts petitioners who harass those visiting the clinic along with providing protection for the staff working at such clinics from derogatory comments, spit balls, continued threats and further forms of abuse in any way.

This bill rubs against a predominately Catholic society, one that for now puts reproductive rights before judgment, before any threat to our voice in society.

August Fifth

He talks of his mother's impulses and inconsistencies,
like her recent phone message announcing she's attending
a silent retreat for the month of August on the third of the month,
or her confession of banning sugar while twirling cotton candy
between her thumb and pointer.

He laughs as though he's alone, throwing his head back
in despair. He refocuses on his right hand, fingers moving
like a pianist, or a nervous rodent. For the life of me I can't
surmise why he has come to visit me, his aunt through marriage,
the inheritor of the underground.

I can't decode this visit, even though he's up and gone two days

ago now, making it the fifth of August, National Underwear Day. I read between the lines to recognize he's been away for almost three years, and things change. I lick my finger and hold it up to see which way the wind is blowing.

Axolotls

I watched a documentary on mermaids last evening and it got me thinking about all the women standing upright, uncomfortable and untamed, feet bound until they morph into flippers, ears ringing as they learn to breathe like land creatures trapped in silence.

Crisp Syllables

The PRO Act demonstration at the state capital this morning was a woman standing stoic to my right, same height, comparable weight, quiet as a church mouse.

I obsessed before asking her if she was a full-blooded Minnesotan, born and raised. Without making eye contact she spoke to me in crisp syllables, familiar to my ear as her message echoed inside me.

Is this the woman who gave me up for adoption six decades earlier, too alone, too afraid to tell those close to her that she wasn't ready, that she was not prepared to take on the responsibility of another life when she could barely brush her teeth on a routine basis.

DDT

The PRO act has been signed by our Minnesota governor on the same day that Desantis announces a derelict imposition to academic freedom in state universities.

Derelict Desantis' tentacles are known to be persistent
In the environment, will accumulate in fatty tissues and
will travel extended distances polluting air quality, revising
history as an ameba.

Blood Type

You know what's scary? AI news anchors working 24/7 with Disney's deftness ready to haul you into unreal reality TV built on a promise.

Beyond the pale

I think back to 1964, New York World's Fair,
Our vision of the future, Gatsby's valley of ashes
introducing touch-tone phones, flying gondolas,
and Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln.

Copacetic

But back to what's scary. Not 1964, or flying gondolas, but Jesus ads that allude to being woke while robots read us the news.

Double Knots

San Francisco on a Monday morning stood still
amidst the garbage truck's beepbeepbeep warping
the news she told me the night before.

I don't know who the father is the steady
Beepbeepbeeping I hear repeatedly in my ears
pounding pounding pounds of doubt.

Doesn't she know life is about tying your shoes in double knots to avoid double talk?

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Down Comfort

I remember when Shelly McInerny wore a wig to class in seventh grade. Tommy Cirelli pulled it off in the lunchroom. Shelly had baby down hair almost invisible but I wanted to touch it. I wanted to feel its survival and tell her blonds don't always have more fun.

Elders Say

I enter the Center for Lost Objects hoping to find at least one memory, however faded the details, so I meander through turbulence of lives left behind.

In the corner an oversized rocking chair is keeping time to Boy George's *Karma Chameleon*. I dust off a stool, and follow the chair's perfect rhythm.

Elders say the closest thing to perfection is right in front of you, appearing within arm's reach, glittering and grinning, urging you to bite.

I bite. I yearn to sit in that chair when suddenly it stops. A cold reaction initially, until I see it's found acceptance.

Empty of Hope

Last night I couldn't stay asleep for more than 12-minute intervals partly because I watched the news repeatedly echo the mouths of the republicans slam dunk their agenda. Keep women empty of hope eternally shamed for society's mistakes and insist they write left-handed or remain silent and in contempt.

Failing Hearts

Your mother would have a heart attack is what my father whispered a million times already. When I got a tattoo times eight he whispered a little louder, when I pierced my nose he whispered again, clearing his throat twice and when I told him about the abortion he couldn't even whisper. He died of a heart attack before her.

Fist Full of Leather

Something I'm obsessing about is why Trump
wore gloves the day of the indictment.
Black. Leather. Gloves.
Makes me think back to the Simpson murder case.
Dark. Brown. Bloody. Gloves.
Something about those gloves on January 6th leave
me squirmy.
Very. Squirmy.
No ear muffs, no stocking cap, just black leather
gloves. Perhaps he sleeps with them, a shield
of protection. No fingerprints welcome.

Guilty Rabbits

She was one of three waiting to be picked for prison dodge ball
In sixth grade. Don't pick her; she runs sideways and smells
like sour milk; her mom wears high heels to the grocery store;
her dad burns rubbish in their backyard while their German
Shepherd rips apart rabbits guilty of stealing their produce
that sinks the budget

so heels tap frantically on the worn tile of Foodtown, shoes so
shiny her tension blinds her while her daughter stands waiting
to be picked on.

Happy Valentine's Day

I'm tired and I'm tired of saying I'm tired. Too
tired to eat too tired to bathe too tired to retrieve
the paper thrown repeatedly on my roof because
Paperman's too tired to do the right thing.

Tomorrow I might roof climb and rest among
the daily news. I might blow bubbles that
invisible dogs will chase and trace orion on
the shingles in time for Valentine's Day.

Then again I'm really too tired to talk about it.

I Forgot to Tell You

Last night I got a text from someone that's
been dead for decade; I remember the funeral,
sad as a melted banana split dripping sweetness
down the isle so no one could move and there we
were stuck stiff, just like the corpse inside the closed

mahogany box lying horizontal with a sunbeam light
years away.

Ice Queen

We need more state of the union addresses like last night's where
Biden bulletts the accomplishments while the snow leopard shouts
LIAR LIAR, PANTS ON FIRE but she's no Judge Judy.

Call them out on stealing away social security; call them out on their
slick trick to reverse abortion; call them out on one big lie that pollutes
the air we breathe while the leopard never changes her spots.

It's a Doll, Boys

Pink worlds are like cotton candy: sweet and airy,
traveling in a safe and surreal cloud that remains
inconsequential amidst permanently blue skies
where all girls grow into warranted women and
supreme court justices reign in the pink with Roe
v Wade.

Sounds flippant and fantastical, yet the summer
block-buster has conservatives peeing their pants
In public while holding Barbie Burns, claiming Barbie
“neglects to address any notion of faith or family.”
It's a doll they're hyped up about. A movie about
a doll representing a positive role model for girls,
women, Jane, Henry, humanity.

Let us Pray

Sunday mornings were for screaming, slaps and silence. I sat
in the pew holding down the vomit from last night's inebriation
when a woman directly in front of me stands up and points her
finger at the clergy, “admit your wrong-doing,” she screams
like a minor.

She bumps the row of knees belonging to folded hands as she
makes her way to the isle, big stomach bouncing in plain sight.
I'm wide-eyed, waiting for scene two as I hear her click click
click in her high heels through the exit of the mega church,
a place my mother feels a lack of threat.

On the drive home I'm writing scenarios in the back seat. I'm
laughing at the hypocrisy and my father is enjoying the irony.
“Maybe she'll come visit you at Meadowbrook after all,” my

Father announces. My face turns deadpan. My vomit is
Turning sommersaults in my stomach, how did this become
about me?

Lights Off

Forty days ago I set out to write a poem a day intending
to be a better person, a more accomplished human being
who radiates love and hunger not necessarily at the same
time, and all I've found is hunger. Love is still only found
in the balcony with all the lights off.

Lip Service in Tennessee

Today America handed out uniforms in three colors to
its citizens. Red for gun carriers; white for democrats,
and blue for women. If you happen to be both female
and democrat, you're spared a uniform. Instead you're
shot, one bullet through the forehead.

Days later I rummage through the bodies left abandoned
In the streets. No birds, but flies layer each corpse
dropping larvae in eye sockets. When I find myself
I'm melded together with other women, unknown
To me yet now we are one.

Moon Around

She is dancing with the wolf moon in her back yard
with perfect pirouettes, tiny translucent feet tap the
earth's frigid platform ending with a plie in the glow.
She howls at the owls, she laughs at wind and waits
near the lamp post for her partner, a quick reverse
turn, a nod to the moon until she finds what she
is looking for.

**Republican Doug
Mastriano once said
women should be charged**

with murder for violating proposed abortion ban

Republicans across the US have backed away from hardline abortion stances

[John Bowden](#)

Washington DC

Tuesday 27 September 2022 23:01

[4 Comments](#)

Mr. Maestro

Read his biography and contemplate where things went wrong.

Highly educated, welcoming smile, strong forehead, yet I beat my head against the wall trying to pound sense in the mind of a man who otherwise would stand on the sidelines and pray.

My Nighttime Visitant

When I wake up it's still dark as I watch the shadow leave my bed, I'm wide-eyed stuck to sleeping dogs twitching over the moving contours drifting across the walls, down the halls, through the door

shut.

My visitor does not speak, or have poodles at his heels, For that matter I am not certain of its pronouns. It's the dent In the mattress, the tiptoeing of movement left behind that matters, it's all I need to know so I'm often not as alone as I feel.

Needles in Place

She waits in the lobby too cold to flinch. Captain and Tennille play a static version of a merry-go-round tune that gets caught in her dizzying desire to be scorned and torched and sent riding naked atop wild horses that refuse taming.

Like a needle glistening in the hay she hesitates like a female porcupine walking backwards eyes closed when they call her

name.

No Regrets

Everyone's falling, and there's no remedy for it,
ice upon ice, cars coming to emergency stops while
the neighbor crawls to her house on all fours with
two stray dogs coming to engage in community.

Stay inside, stay sure-footed, and then you'll
have no regrets.

Death of pregnant woman ignites debate about abortion ban in Poland

Story by Reuters

Published 4:35 AM EST, Sun November 7, 2021

Not One More

Poor Izabela, only 30 years of age, dies as Poland wipes the blood off their hands insisting God's plan is to embrace defects, even if it means lights out.

Sure enough, sepsis sets in while waiting for the fetus to die, tragically, as they perform an emergency cesarean leaving Izabela's heart to stop right there despite resuscitation efforts.

When a country does not allow a medical procedure knowing a fetus is severely damaged do they then step up for a photo op before incinerating both lifeless bodies? And what's the caption?

January 12, 2023 3:13 PM

Second abortion rights bill gains House committee approval

By Tessa Pieper

The DFL's second bill aimed at reproductive rights received its first approval.

On an 11-8 party-line vote, the House Health Finance and Policy Committee approved the bill Thursday and referred it to the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee.

The bill would repeal requirements involving:

- parental notification for minors seeking an abortion;
- women receiving state-mandated information at least 24 hours prior to an abortion;
- performance of abortions only by physicians;
- regulation of abortion facilities by the Department of Health;
- abortion reporting; and
- treatment of “infants born alive” after an attempted abortion.

Payphone on Arcade

I called her late from the pay phone on Arcade Street, told her Planned Parenthood in St. Paul confirmed I was nine weeks pregnant. I rode the bus with her every morning from East Seventh Street to Fillmore Avenue to Vomella Factory where I stripped decals of Plymouth Road Runners for gear heads.

Why are you calling me she asked, and without hesitation, perhaps standing in the dark October mist was giving me cold feet, I answered her and said I wanted to die. I couldn't do this. I'm barely 18, and it only takes one time. If having a baby hurt even half as much as doing it did she knew she could not conceive of this plan.

Tell your mother, maybe she can go with you to take care of it, she said with a yawn.

Where do I go? If I tell my mother she'll kill me. My father will silently watch as she swings For my face, my head, the pounding is excruciating, as I can feel it now. And if I go back to Planned Parenthood alone do I identify myself as a stripper?

Anyone Home?

The neighbor's bathroom light is shouting at the sky to lighten up, shovel to the side last night's coating of confetti, string along resos for the new year while lighting up, no offense to the patch, it's a swell idea in theory, but inhaling still keeps the dog quiet and, by god, the neighbor has turned out the light.

Poetry Month

Poetry month is right around the corner. Makes me Think of all the dead poets that I hang out with on a Regular basis.

We converse, argue, laugh, cry, and most of all we Exchange words of comfort, resilience, and strength.

We are all part of the dead poets society.

Poop Shack

The most miserable intrusion in life is a colonoscopy. Call the pope; call the midwife; call the coroner.

Strip the sheets, anoint the arse, hug the throne, lie atop

the tile to cool your burning cheeks, vomit from both ends
a double-dose,

Repeat.

Fast in slow motion for 48 hours, down 130 ounces of
electrolytes with polyethylene glycol that looks like Florida
Snow, but looks are deceiving.

Repeat.

Don a hospital gown, lie on a table in unheated sterility and
take a sentimental journey to a smorgasbord, have your
cousin translate the doctor's comments, get dressed, go eat.

Repeat in two years.

Poor Rosalind

Sixty-eight times I spoke up about the inequities of women
just in the last week. Poor Rosalind at Walgreens, too weary
to answer even one of my phone calls, too conflicted to address
the hallow whine of a pregnant belly so instead there's a special
on Colace, a twofer on multiple vitamins, a woman pocketing a tube
of lipstick talking to herself in a stalled stutter, the residuals of a broken
system.

Quiet Steps

Today I saw him after all these years. He walked into the
reading alone, his usual slow pace, one narrow foot directly
in front of the other, so silent it hurt my ears. We made eye
contact, shook hands and I recalled our last encounter; his
wife cornering me in a public bathroom about the affair,
saying he felt coerced, cornered himself.

Funny, I have no recollection of our love making. I have only
this feeling of regret, not to her, but to myself.

Later that night I looked him up on facebook and I see that
he has posted his darling wife had recently died. His feet
are so quiet, so small, so lost.

Re-Org

Academics and Administration operates like the current house of representatives. Nothing gets done. Faculty want to make admin decisions admin want to make faculty decisions.

Clusterfuck

So tired of the line what's best for our students
So tired of the egomania among ranked professors
So tired of poachers making side deals
All under the pretense that this is what serves our students the best.
Tired of the rhetoric, the theatrics, the conciliates, the dividers, the soldiers that keep marching on.

Remember not to Breathe

Her mouth spews hot venom, her seething eye tells me to breathe through my nose; *that's right, close your mouth, and breathe through your nose*. She cuffs my right arm raising the ante before removing the IV from my left. Blood hits her cheek, she blinks, applies more pressure before reminding me *breathe through your nose*. The color dissipates from my cheeks as a voice thin as her lips insists breathing isn't all it's cracked up to be.

Man suspected of torching Tennessee Planned Parenthood clinic and shooting federal building died months ago, officials say

OCTOBER 31, 2022 / 10:24 PM / AP

Rest in Peace

It is unclear as to the actual date of death of Mark Thomas Reno. Some say it was August 16th, some say the 15th, yet on Hallow's Eve it appears a headline seals the deal.

Reno is noted as a family man who loved fishing and his daughter, married to a Scalise, perhaps no relation.

Reno is also remembered as the person aiming a shotgun at Planned Parenthood's clinic doors before setting the clinic ablaze in December, 2021, causing the building to undergo over two million dollars in renovation.

Reno also was present and participated in the insurrection At the US Capitol riot in January, 2021. And what was the response of the republican governor of Tennessee?

Silence is golden?

What's Love Got to do with it?

I Remember Debi Laurentzen, dancing across the concrete gymnasium floor, stomping to the steady drum with a smile that stretched across the playground and landed in your alphabet cereal.

So free, so intent on the beat, it bothered her none that the school laughed at her movements, her clumsy raggedy ann weightless soul skimming across the concrete because today she is Tina Turner.

Sawdust People

My neighbor has no clue what happens when he closes his eyes at night and the sawdust people appear, quiet and unprotected, ready to dance and twirl their weightless particles throughout his barren land throwing tulips high into the starless sky waking every living organism left to defend itself in a world where sawdust's diamonds burn holes in the earth and bury their trinkets under the glitter's protection.

Shut off the Noise

When he let the air in she started to cry, cry without tears, that's when he knew to shut off the noise, halt the procedure and leave the room in all its sterile contents as the crying without tears continued, growing louder, becoming audible words now

stuck on the K like a impediment.

Kkill me, she chants, kill me for my sins.

Side Effects

Last evening, in the middle of the news the anchor asked me why I don't smile. *Every morning on into evening you sit with the same expression, lips like goal posts, pupils like bullets, shoulders like boulders waiting for the world to knock on your door and ask you to donate your wisdom. Snap out of it*, he says, and we go into another commercial for depression.

Slaghoople Sue

Last night I dreamt that Danny Kaye was my father and Wilma Flinstone was my mother and Pearl Slaghoople was my grandmother. That's a mouthful, but think of the limerick this would inspire in multiple voices over a party line. Too much hoopla over nothing more than a dream is what I hear myself say into the receiver, but no one is listening so I hang up and go back home.

Stoned

I can't honestly say I invited this, the stones inching their way past my ankles up into my thighs digging deeper into my chest. Tomorrow they will embrace my throat and then I will have nothing more to say.

South Carolina supreme court rules six-week abortion ban unconstitutional

Thank You, Justice Beatty

What are the three Ps? Planned Parenthood Persistence; once again litigation lead by Planned Parenthood delivers a victory for the State of South Carolina from a six week ban to 22 weeks. As the act violates our constitution's prohibition against unreasonable invasions of privacy.

Thank you, Justice Beatty.

The Dangerous Chemical Called Hern

Round nine welcomes Kevin Hern, nominated for speaker of the house

by non-other than the honorable Lauren Boebert extending the monkey business taking place in the House of Representatives.

Kevin Hern introduced Protecting Life from Chemical Abortions Act; now look that one up while eating a happy meal.

The Glove

This morning, like most mornings, I wake before dark turns a murky grey; over night the streets invite a coat of fresh snow. Under the street lamp I see a stray glove, lying in desperation searching for Thing.

I snap my fingers, ignoring my shabby cuticles, and notice I've made a connection. The glove shakes off the snow as it sniffs its direction, waddling out of the intersection climbing my front stairs, ringing my doorbell, but I don't know sign language.

I answer the door and usher the glove in while I go to grind coffee beans. Make yourself comfortable, I charade as I make my way to the kitchen.

I think of Lurch, Wednesday, Pugsly. I think of the house as a museum. I think of why this glove has made its escape. I grab a pad of paper and a pen and set them next to Glove. There's a hesitation and then I realize, I've only assumed They're right-handed.

The Innuendo

Her thoughts are as straight as her hair missing every innuendo, any implication when talking about regret as a noun, not a verb, followed by *I live to regret nothing*.

See what I mean about straight as her hair?

So I listen to the LP she lip syncs ignoring the skips, scratches, speed of delivery; 45, 33, 45, to get to the end, flip to side two with her repeating her epitaph: I live to regret nothing.

Dec. 28, 2022, 10:45 AM CST

By [Aria Bendifx](#)

Restricted access to abortions may have increased the risk of suicide among women of reproductive age for more than four decades, new research from the University of Pennsylvania suggests.

Though suicide deaths are rare, they are the second leading cause of death among women ages 20-24 in the U.S. and the third leading cause among women ages 25-34.

The J Word

When choice is removed from the menu we scurry for cover knowing that their breathing techniques will make them a force to induce labor leaving those affected more vulnerable, helpless, and ready to close their eyes and surrender under circumstances imposed by justice. I ask you where's the justice in any of this?

The Man on the Steps

There he sat, smug, anointed, and oblivious to the cold yet a coat of dampness clung to his ruddy skin while he muttered and spit into the silent snow watching it sink deep into the contours of whiteness as he tied his shoes in double knots, preparing to continue his journey into the wee hours of darkness.

Inside sat a woman, watching and waiting for the shadows to depart, frozen in her silence knowing one kick, just one tough kick with shoes tied tightly would break down the door and leave her trembling in her worn cotton robe.

Anyone who had a heart held tight to its rapid, steady beating as he steadied himself, made no introduction and turned to leave. She watched him take slow, steady steps with the streetlight now At his back.

The Mifepristone Shuffle

Traffic came to a stop on Randolph and Snelling mid-afternoon on a Saturday with cars honking, heads rolling, fingers flying. All this to-do blocking our neighborhood Walgreens puts a smile on my face.

I look closer, recognize the shapes of women from the past back for another round, loaded with ammunition, the pulse of their voices echoing in unison as I exit my car to join my sisters.

We are yelling, crying, laughing, joining hands and for the next 40 minutes I am reunited with my purpose in life: I am woman, hear me roar.

The Pie Shop

They said she was born with a tail, coiled tightly yet flat as a pancake not giving an inkling of the unusual as she walks with elegance; what a stride, and if, in fact, a tail wags under all her frocks of frosting I want a slice of that pie.

The Prankster

I remember the first time I broke the silence in the room by challenging the adults to arm wrestle. Uncle Ed, Uncle Alf, both Uncle Arts. Don't let me win, I'd scream as my mother slaps my arm to act lady like.

For years I tried an array of antics to break the silence in the room. That was my job, to act as the jester for the pranks they held inside until one day, during adult life, banter became benign, then mundane. The uncles died; Mother long gone. I am in that room now alone, as far as I can tell, trying to be lady like.

Small Minnesota Town Considers Law That Would Allow Residents to Sue Abortion Providers

The small town of Prinsburg, Minn., is considering a law that would allow residents to sue medical providers that assist in abortions.

The Price of Living in Prinsburg

Once upon a time in a tiny Minnesota western prairie lived a father of seven children. He served his town of 500 people as their state representative for eight years, but did not seek reelection in order to focus as an abortion activist.

Miller states, "This is not just an impulse...This is in God's timing to penalizing the animals who tell a woman it's okay."

Miller want to prey on the women of Prinsburg, prey on the women of Minnesota, and when will the preying cease? When they ask can we pray for you don't misconstrue their intent. Time for adding abortion protections into state law to prevent such legal initiatives.

The Summit

I'm walking on an icy roof, a slippery steeple slope
that has no railings and my feet are bare, sure-footed
as a snake, but I'm having cold feet; too high, so I slink
and slither to the peak so I can overcome my fear.

Is there such a thing?

Three and a Half Minutes

I wake to the sound of the microwave's ding.
Did I say I live alone? Did I say I'm known to
Sleep like a log? Did I say it's 2:58 a.m.?

I turn on the bedside lamp, swing out of bed to check
on the microwave only to find a stranger barefoot next
to the sink drinking from the faucet. Situations like this
comfort me in some uneasy way so I grab a glass, politely
ask him to get out of the way. He shrugs, opens the micro
wave to retrieve his shoes and he's out the door.

No thank you, no need for introductions. And all this
only took three and a half minutes.

Today I Became Little

My 26-year old dog, Yogi, has shrunk to
seven inches, the height of five toothpicks
in a row, or two credit cards placed lengthwise
so I became little. So little toothpicks resembled
Joshua tree forests, so little that a visa card is the
size of the Mojave Desert and I am the size of
nothingness.

Treading Water

What do you do downstairs all day? I
hesitate to ask because I don't want

to intrude, but the basement is getting
smaller, the paths narrower, the walls
darker, ashtray pyramids. How can
I help!?

What do you do downstairs in the evening? I
hesitate to ask because I don't want to intrude,
but the basement is getting quieter, the echoes
fewer, the music off. Do you want me to help?

What do you do downstairs seven days a week,
24 hours a day, minus the coffee refills, the bathroom
breaks? Today I'm asking, and I'm ready for your response.

Vs on Their Faces

Aunt Lil told me to push the Vulcans away, don't let them smear
you with their dirty coal. I stood, knees shaking, face frost-bitten
watching the Vulcans shove through the crowd of winter carnival
parade patrons grabbing women and rubbing their Vs on their faces.

They pushed their way to the front of the crowd, pushed their
way past King Boreas, past Princess Kay of the Milky Way, to
petrify women, mark them and take them as savages.

Aunt lil was right. This was my first imprint at conquer and divide.

What a Ride

70 poems in 70 days is a commitment
that even the most prolific of writers
don't necessarily complete. 70 tones,
70 perspectives, times that by 4.5 for
A collection of emotion in motion.

What a ride.

When the Cult of Christianity Wins the Lottery

It's bound to happen, I can't stop it from crawling
into my refrigerator marinating my tofu with arsenic.
It will speak with a southern drawl, like Pawlenty when
he visited Iowa many years ago. It will lay its slimy body
until it rots my kitchen, and free paper towels for all Americans

Abortion Pills Can Now Be Offered at Retail Pharmacies, F.D.A. Says

Jan. 3, 2023; Pam Belluck New York Times

With a Written Prescription

With a written prescription retail pharmacies in your neighborhood will ring in the new year by distributing Mifepristone, the first of two drugs providing safe, at home abortions, in two-doses.

CVS, Walgreens, and other local pharmacies recognize abortion pills allow for more than half of all aborted pregnancies in the US.

That's right, US against THEM, once again, in the fight for the deed to our own BODIES.

Take that Clarice Thomas; take that one and swallow hard.

YOU YOU YOU

When someone sends you an email and mentions your impulsivity three times in four paragraphs it's hard to not interpret that as a means of editing your thoughts. And you say this leads to unpredictability? Since when do we retreat to silencing ourselves like the children who have been taught to be seen but never heard?

Three favorite poems:

Catching Up

My father says he'll drive me to work on a Wednesday, short notice, after realizing my car was stolen early that morning. He asks if I've accrued any sick time before journeying across town, pensive, making a mental checklist for insurance purposes while my stomach tightens, my neck stiffens, my mind rummages for small talk to fill the twenty-minute ride.

It is 1986, thirteen years since Roe V Wade; I'm working at Methodist Hospital's Meadowbrook Women's Clinic, four-hour shifts, five days a week with a staff of four doctors and seven other counselors, performing abortions five days a week. My father does not know the specifics of my job, just that I counsel women in an aseptic setting.

I start a conversation about insurance claims regarding my stolen car. My father takes over, building a step-by-step approach for USAA. His practical outline seems

pedantic but he's on a roll, Danish S's so pronounced I listen closely, so closely to this precision that I am reminded of his need to be needed. Twenty minutes pass before I blink.

The blinker tic-tocs turn right where we enter another world. We limit our speed to 10 mph for the half-mile private drive packed with protesters holding gruesome signs with photos of dead babies, screaming "Devil's Baby Killers, Heathens, Burn in Hell!" My father is shaking; he's never broken the law, he's never uttered an unkind word to anyone that I know of. He's a World War II vet with a silver star, a bronze star, and a purple heart. He cries only when he cuts onions.

"Do you drive through this every morning?" he asks, looking in the rearview mirror. I tell him it's like this every morning, every afternoon, holidays, even on days closed, but they know they can't touch me. He asks where I park. I tell him another half-mile beyond the entrance; the clinic provides shuttle buses. "What do you do here?" He is almost looking at me. I tell him I am an abortion counselor. I tell him it is not an easy job, but I've promised myself and my supervisor I won't call in sick unless I'm unconscious.

I cannot look him in the eye. For a moment the noise outside our windows tapers to a single screech, and I hear my blood surging through my head like an echo waiting to pounce. I know we both ache for a real conversation, but we gulp it back. I think of his time in Normandy, daily attacks, comrades wounded, limbs turning to stumps, guts spilling out. I grab my backpack, clear my throat, and blow a kiss to my father.

"Car rides are for catching up," I say. He salutes me, staring straight ahead, as I step out of the car.

A Threadbare Net

It's 2023, and Minnesota digs in for abortion rights.

We've spoken: we want our choice protected, democracy defended.

The House of Representatives highlights its new term as we prepare for lies sharpened, shoved down our throats, tongues ripped out of our mouths as they swing a trapeze of tyranny with a threadbare net we must prepare for a litany of lies shoved down our throats as they attempt to cut out our tongues.

They don't understand that their children's children will find a way to speak, they will find their tongues.

Payphone on Arcade

I called her late from the pay phone on Arcade Street, told her Planned Parenthood

in St. Paul confirmed I was nine weeks pregnant. I rode the bus with her every morning from East Seventh Street to Fillmore Avenue to Vomella Factory where I stripped decals of Plymouth Road Runners for gear heads.

Why are you calling me she asked, and without hesitation, perhaps standing in the dark October mist was giving me cold feet, I answered her and said I wanted to die. I couldn't do this. I'm barely 18, and it only takes one time. If having a baby hurt even half as much as doing it did she knew she could not conceive of this plan.

Tell your mother, maybe she can go with you to take care of it, she said with a yawn.

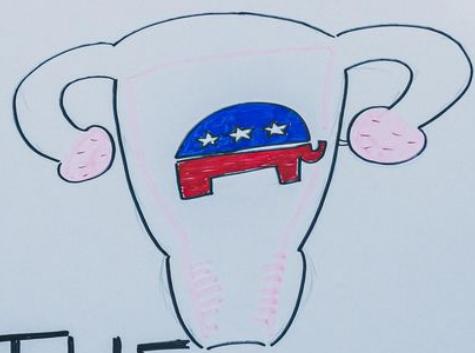
Where do I go? If I tell my mother she'll kill me. My father will silently watch as she swings For my face, my head, the pounding is excruciating, as I can feel it now. And if I go back to Planned Parenthood alone do I identify myself as a stripper?

IMAGES





WE NEED
TO TALK
ABOUT



THE
ELEPHANT
IN THE
WOMB







History in Brief: Timeline: 30 years of abortion rights history

08/24/2019

1250

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pulled from the archived pages of Minnesota Women's Press

1973

Roe vs. Wade is decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Abortion is now legal under the 14th Amendment. In Minnesota, 20 doctors generate state guidelines on abortion. Welfare is authorized to pay for abortions.

1975

Minnesota congressmen Rick Nolan and Jim Oberstar seek pro-life amendment. Anti-abortion groups utilize fasting as a protest tactic.

1978

The Minnesota welfare department stops funding elective abortions. Congress passes the Hyde Amendment, which bans the use of federal funds for abortion, allowing exceptions only for pregnancies that endanger the life of the woman, or that result from rape or incest.

1980

U.S. Supreme Court determines that the Minnesota Medicaid program must pay for abortions.

1981

Minnesota senate approves parental notification bill and judge stays it.

1987

Fetus burial or cremation ordinance passes in Minnesota. It requires hospitals, clinics, and medical facilities to provide a “dignified and sanitary disposition” of fetal remains from abortion or miscarriage by cremation or burial.

1989

108 Minnesota lawmakers petition the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn Roe vs. Wade. The petition was circulated by Sen. Florian Chmielewski (DFL-Sturgeon Lake) and Rep. Steve Wenzel (DFL-Little Falls), saying life begins at conception and right-to-life protection needs to be given to preborn babies.

1990

The Choice Campaign Corps is introduced in the 1990 election to bring pro-life issues to voters in order to change Minnesota voting patterns. Only two out of ten Minnesota Congressmen vote in favor of pro-choice policies despite the fact that a survey deemed the state is majority pro-choice.

1991

Rust vs. Sullivan Supreme Court decision prohibits employees in federally funded clinics from counseling patients seeking abortion.

1992

By a 5-4 ruling the U.S. Supreme Court refined and limited Roe vs. Wade in Planned Parenthood vs. Casey decision. The court let stand four Pennsylvania laws designed to curb abortion rights: Informed consent, reporting requirements, parental consent, and 24-hour waiting period. They ruled against spousal notification as an undue burden because of potential abuse by husbands.

1995

Minnesota Senate adds 24-hour abortion waiting period to a welfare bill that offers to subsidize child care costs for low-income families so they can return to work. Planned Parenthood moves its Minneapolis location to Uptown (as of 2018, the clinic was seeing 13,000 patients). Hennepin County court allows medical assistance benefits for abortions.

1998

A Minnesota bill passes that requires providers to collect detailed information about abortion patients. This information is used to produce a public Minnesota Department of Health report.

2003

Minnesota requires a mandatory scripted counseling session, before a mandatory 24-hour waiting period, in a law designed to discourage abortion.

Company Information for Consumers

These companies claim to support abortion rights. They are backing anti-abortion Republicans

An analysis of major companies' donations, including Meta and Amazon, reveals donations to candidates calling for banning the procedure



Pro-choice protesters take part in a Women's March outside the White House on 9 July. Photograph: Will Oliver/EPA

Stephanie Kirchgaessner in Washington and Lauren Aratani in New York

Sun 6 Nov 2022 02.00 EST

•

The pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly was one of the most vocal opponents of a sweeping anti-abortion law that passed in its home state of Indiana, last August, saying that the measure would make it hard to attract talent and would force it to look outside the state for growth. But in the weeks and months that followed, Lilly continued to financially support Republican candidates and politicians who support bans on abortion across the country, including many who celebrated the reversal of *Roe v Wade*.



Frontline abortion workers in the US west are fatigued. Midterm results may make things worse

[Read more](#)

It was not alone.

A Guardian analysis of other major US companies' political donations shows that those who suggested they would help female employees skirt statewide abortion bans, by offering to pay for out-of-state medical costs for those seeking abortions in states where the option was illegal, continued to financially back candidates who have called for abortion bans. They include Meta, the company that owns Facebook, Comcast, Citigroup, AT&T and Amazon.

The analysis suggests that while some of America's largest employers want to be seen as supporting reproductive health for their female workers and their families, the abortion issue has not affected their financial support for Republican candidates who have promised to further erode those workers' reproductive rights.

Lilly made financial contributions to Texas state senators anti-choice Republicans Charles Schwertner and Charles Perry, and Texas state speaker Dade Phelan, who has said he does not see any need to change Texas's current law, which forces women who have been raped to carry their pregnancies to term.

Since Roe was overturned, Lilly has also given financial donations to US senators Rand Paul, Oklahoma's James Lankford, and Mike Crapo, among others who supported overturning abortion rights. The company did not respond to a request for comment.

Amazon, the second-largest private employer in the US, said it would cover out-of-state abortion travel for employees on its healthcare plan, but not contractors who make up most of its workforce.



Planned Parenthood forced to turn patients away due to overwhelming demand post-Roe

[Read more](#)

But even as it vowed to help some of its female workers get access to abortion care, it continued to support Republican candidates like Bruce Westerman of Arkansas, who wrote in an [op-ed](#) for the Arkansas Democrat Gazette that the fight against abortion was “really just beginning”.

“We will always stand for the rights of the unborn until abortion is not only illegal in all 50 states, but unconscionable,” he wrote.

Amazon's political action committee also gave donations to David Valadao, a California Republican who co-sponsored a “life at conception” act, which states that it would guarantee a right to life at the “moment of fertilization”,

and Tony Gonzales, who has an A+ rating from anti-choice group Susan B Anthony List. Amazon did not respond to a request for comment.

AT&T, the US telecommunications company, has said it would cover the cost of travel for medical procedures within 100 miles of an employee's home address because it values the health of its employees to make sure they can access "a full range of health care benefits when they need them".



Abortion vote: here are the US states voting on a woman's right to choose
[Read more](#)

But the company has also supported dozens of Republican candidates since the 24 June decision to overrule Roe, including Texas's Jodey Arrington, who has called abortion "a moral stain on the fabric of America" and supports a federal ban on abortion. It has also donated to Greg Steube, a Florida Republican who has said that, with Roe overturned "no misguided judicial decision can block states from applying murder and assault statutes to protect the unborn from abortion". In Georgia, it supported Republican Andrew Clyde, who has said abortion should be "abolished entirely" except if the mother's life is at risk, and Barry Loudermilk, who has tweeted the work of the pro-life community was "just beginning" after the Dobbs decision that overturned a federal right to abortion. In Maryland, AT&T supported Republican congressman Andy Harris, who said Dobbs had not created a

crisis in healthcare, and Jack Bergman of Michigan who supports a federal ban on abortion.

An AT&T spokesperson said the company's political action committee has "never based contribution decisions on a legislator's position on abortion".

The spokesperson added: "Our employee Pacs contribute to candidates in both parties and focus on policies and regulations that are important to investing in broadband networks and hiring, developing and retaining a skilled workforce with competitive wages and benefits. It is inaccurate to assert that contributions to elected officials equate to supporting all of their policy positions."

In the aftermath of Dobbs, Mark Zuckerberg's [Meta](#) said it would reimburse travel expenses "to the extent permitted by law" for those who need to access out-of-state healthcare and reproductive services. But it also supported – among others – candidates like Don Bacon of Nebraska and Bob Latta of Ohio who co-sponsored a bill to ban abortions federally. A Meta spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.



The pilots flying passengers across US state lines for abortions

[Read more](#)

Citibank has said post-Dobbs that it would provide travel benefits to employees who need “access to adequate resources” but continued to support Republican candidates who support a national ban on abortion, like John Hoeven of North Dakota. It also donated to Jerry Moran of Kansas, who has said life begins at conception and “supports legislation protecting life at its earliest stages and in all conditions”.

Kara Findlay, head of corporate communications at Citi, declined to comment.

Comcast, the parent company of NBC Universal, has said it would support thousands of dollars of medically necessary travel expenses after Roe was overturned, but continued to make political donations to Republicans who support abortion bans, like Benjamin Cline of Virginia, who once proposed legislation that would mark the anniversary of the Roe v Wade decision as the “Day of Tears”, which would commemorate “59 million lives lost” due to abortion services being protected.

The company did not respond to a request for comment.

Are you an employee at one of these companies and have a tip? Please contact: Stephanie.Kirchgaessner@theguardian.com

The year is 2033. Elon Musk is no longer one of the richest people in the world, having haemorrhaged away his fortune trying to make Twitter profitable. Which, alas, hasn’t worked out too well: only 420 people are left on the platform. Everyone else was banned for not laughing at Musk’s increasingly desperate jokes.

In other news, Pete Davidson is now dating Martha Stewart. Donald Trump is still threatening to run for president. And British tabloids are still churning out 100 articles a day about whether Meghan Markle eating lunch is an outrageous snub to the royal family.

Obviously I have no idea what the world is going to look like in a decade. But here’s one prediction I feel very confident making: without a free and fearless press the future will be bleak. Without independent journalism, democracy is doomed. Without journalists who hold power to account, the future will be entirely shaped by the whims and wants of the 1%.

A lot of the 1% are not big fans of the Guardian, by the way. Donald Trump once praised a Montana congressman who body-slammed a Guardian reporter. Musk, meanwhile, has described the Guardian, as “the most insufferable newspaper on planet Earth.” I’m not sure there is any greater compliment.

I am proud to write for the Guardian. But ethics can be expensive. Not having a paywall means that the Guardian has to regularly ask our readers to chip

in. **If you are able, please do consider supporting us.** Only with your help can we continue to get on Elon Musk's nerves.

Arwa Mahdawi

Columnist, Guardian US

Closing Comments

This experience was important for my journey into a themed narrative within the genre of poetry. Working steadily with students during this process was an experience that taught me so much not just about collaboration and persistence, but about delving into a theme so controversial and political that even persistence insists on taking a break from the intensity.

Are any of these poems publishable? Perhaps with re-vision, and yet again persistence. Working along with student poets is a memory I will cherish for eternity. Below are a few email exchanges I had with students along the way. Toward the end you will find some brief comments from the students directly involved with this challenge.

Thank you for this experience, and thank you for reading this process.

Suzanne

Nielsen, Suzanne R

Sat 12/31/2022 1:59 PM

Hello poets! ARE YOU READY FOR OUR CHALLENGE? Starting tomorrow we will be drafting a poem a day for **70** days, leaving our last poem to be due March 11. I am thrilled that you all have accepted this challenge, and I am really excited about us starting. What do you think of this? Does it make sense to email each other before midnight to introduce the working title of each poem drafted? Or is that excessive? Would you rather send seven titles at the end of each seven days? Then we need to figure out when we want to meet on zoom for a boost? Let me know. I'm looking forward to getting the wheels in gear starting tomorrow.

Happy New Year to you all!

Mazel tov, Suzanne

Ochocki, Miya R

Sat 12/31/2022 2:16 PM

Hello all,

I'm ready for this challenge! I think it would be helpful to check in at the end of the week with the seven titles. I'm also able to send every evening, if that's what others would like. So excited to start, and I can't wait to see the creativity that comes from this! Perhaps we can read a favorite poem every 2 or 3 weeks?

Thanks,

Miya

Nielsen, Suzanne R

3/7/2023 2:40 PM

IN HONOR OF NATIONAL POETRY MONTH.docx

194 KB

?

April is National Poetry Month, and my publisher is sponsoring an event (please see flier attached).

I am asking the four of you to participate in this event. Many of you have written 70 poems in 70 days. I'd like the four of you to find two poems, with the theme loosely connected to a time you faced up. I think if you review your collection now you most likely have several that speak to this. If not, we still have six more poems to write until our finish line approaches.

If each poet read for five minutes, I'm thinking two poems, and if each poet would then participate in a panel discussion for 20-30 minutes after, I think that would be fabulous.

Please let me know as soon as you can if you feel comfortable committing to this event. We are in the process of promoting this.

Enjoy your break,
Suzanne

Student Closing Comments:

Participants comments:

"The 70 poems 70 days challenge felt a bit like wading slowly into the icy depths of my own creativity. The further I went, the harder it felt to come up with ideas for poems to write, but the more I discovered." Robin Brown

"The 70 days poem challenge was brutal for me because it ground me down beneath the surface of who I thought I was, an incapable writer and a failure of a human being. I spent my whole life feeling like I would never measure up to anything, but this self-limiting belief began to expire when I went through this challenge. If I could write just one poem a day, what else could I do? And I did that for 70 days. On days when I couldn't get out of bed, on days when my insides hung on the outside of me, on days when I was attached to the ceiling and barely felt any will to keep going, I was able to write. It was just one poem. I would tell myself; I could write just one poem. I managed to do that one day then would repeat that the next, taking each day one at a time. As I continued the challenge, something beautifully painful happened. The raw innards of my very being came forth in spouts and it painted everything thing I felt deep within me with colors of truth that I wasn't a failure. I was still alive and breathing and writing each day. I was

doing something that felt impossible when I was attached to these lies that held me captive. When I completed this, I felt relief, like the kind of reassurance that confirms you are really alive, and you are doing something that makes living worth it. The satisfaction was surreal, hazy like a dream at first then explosive. I did it. I completed this challenge, so what next? What else could I do? What other lies were holding me back from the kind of writer I was meant to be, from the kind of person I truly was within the depths of me? If we don't push ourselves, if we don't arise to the challenges life presents, then do we remain in the darkness, sheltered by our lies and self-limiting beliefs that hold us back from who we were meant to be? " Ari Mormel