

2026 | Vol 1.

The **Savanna**

A Leander High School Publication





Aquarium Monument

A Cat's Sunny Afternoon

Photos by Melanie Arias



I am a self-taught photographer and I've been improving my skills for a while. I tend to go for warm, nostalgic, grainy effects on my pictures to imbue them with comfort.

I typically shoot scenery, but also like to shoot people and pets. I gravitate toward nature or any landscaping because I appreciate its natural beauty.

Escaping the Debris Curve

A Multi-Disciplinary Framework for Sustainable Orbital Recovery

An essay by Dhairya Patel

I was nine when I watched a man die. I didn't look away, not even when his eyes stopped moving. The weapon wasn't a gun or a knife; it was a piece of trash the size of a coin. I was sealed in a darkened fourth grade classroom that was trying its best to be a movie theater. Black butcher paper smothered the windows so completely that only hairline cracks of Texas sunlight leaked in, like light trying to escape a locked coffin. The overheads were off. A single projector beam carved a pale tunnel through the dusty air, where specks of it drifted like tiny, indifferent planets. Desks creaked, sneakers squealed against the tile, and then quickly stilled as the movie "Gravity" bloomed across the wall.

At first, space in the movie looked exactly the way my textbooks had promised. Earth floated below like a glass ornament you'd often be afraid to drop: clouds whipped into white spirals, oceans a velvet blue that looked almost soft. The astronauts drifted with slow, underwater grace, their tethers curling and uncurling like lazy jellyfish tentacles, fixing parts of the space station. Their white suits glowed against the ink of space, thin chalk marks on an endless blackboard. It felt calm, almost gentle: a lullaby sung in orbit. Then, suddenly, a single word bent the entire mood: debris.

On a screen inside the movie's space station, red dots began to bloom around Earth: a spreading rash. Voices sharpened, the music pulled into a high, wire-thin note and my stomach dropped as if an invisible elevator cable had snapped. The debris didn't glide in like dust; it attacked. Gray streaks knifed across the black: splintered panels, twisted metal, stray bolts moving not like objects, but like a horizontal hailstorm. Each impact landed with a brutal "thud" that shook the speakers. Solar arrays snapped like dry bones; beams wrenched free and spun away like severed limbs. The tidy, controlled station tore apart in seconds, becoming a tumbling skeleton.

Then came the moment that rewired how I saw the sky.



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<https://lhsroar.com/the-savanna/escaping-the-debris/>



Elena's Jewelry

Created by Elena Slaton

At first, my jewelry was simply and solely created as gifts to friends and family. Soon enough the repetition of giving them to others got to me; it made me want to make pieces for myself. Before long, I found myself adding unique charms and making colored sets to wear. To create a piece, I begin with its length, cutting the chain and adding a clasp. Then, I move on to adding in my centerpiece, the middle, the star of the show. After I add the star, I move on to the sides, usually using symmetry and smaller beads to draw the eye further to the center focus. For all my pieces I employ the same process

Disposable Kitchenware

A poem by Osiris Rodriguez Escobedo

My grandmother still washes the disposable kitchenware each time she visits

The stream of the sink's tap water rolls down into the pipes
soaked plastic spoons lie down, drying
Overhead a speaker blares euphonious Latin tunes,
accompanied by the quiet harmonies of her hums,
they cover the sound of her unnecessary habit

The flower-painted plates sit behind the glass cabinet,
catching dust, only shown but never worn down
My mother's collection has only grown with the past twenty years
all our relatives in Mexico do the same,
the nonsensical habits are just inherited;
like the smile lines brought out through earsplitting laughter,
the annual birthday cake shove,
And the unreliable flexibility to being on time.

Still, my grandmother will continue washing the disposable
kitchenware

Each time she visits
whether it's a method of preservation or a
fear of returning back to old positions
the sink's tap water will drip off of the spoons,
And the flower-painted plates will sit behind the cabinet



Snippets

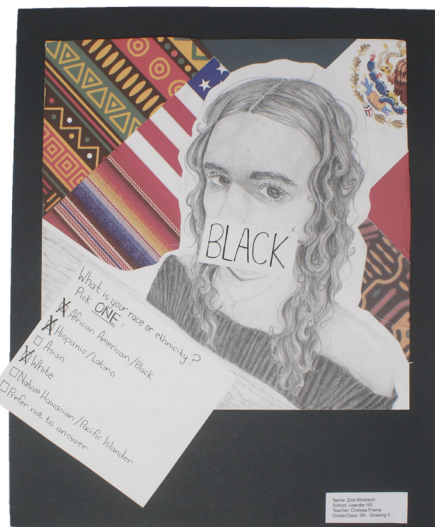
Photos by Thienn Peterson

This is a collection of photos taken on a disposable film camera – no settings, no edits, no retakes. I didn't take these pictures because the scene was set or even exceedingly pretty. I took these photos at random points in the day just when I felt called to capture them, little snips of my life taken on a cheap disposable camera. I couldn't even look back at the pictures to see if they were good – but they didn't have to be good, they just had to be raw and honest. When I picked up my photos from Walgreens, they really showed me the beauty of simplicity – of purity and ordinariness. Life is passing instantaneously – only snippets can remind us of the allure that is “everyday.”

Identity

Art by Zoie Kenzie McLeland

I chose the subject of identity because it's something personal to me as it's something I've struggled with for years now. The symbolism behind this piece is less about how I perceive myself and more about how others do. Throughout my entire life, I have always been seen as just a black girl, not mixed. The paper hanging off the edge asks the question: "What is your race or ethnicity?" I remember being really young and having to answer these kinds of questions on the same little piece of paper and not knowing which one to pick, because I was only allowed to pick one, even though I identify with more than one racial background. Many people I'm



around don't believe me when I tell them that I'm more than just my appearance, or they downright tell me I'm wrong just because I don't look a certain way or fit their stereotypes. All the boxes are checked off and the flags in the background represent everything I am. Checking off more than one box, even when instructed to check only one, demonstrates how I grew up to no longer want to suffocate myself with one label.

I Am a Concoction

A poem by Cody White

I am a concoction of everyone I've ever known
Bits and pieces float and bubble up inside
A blend of relationships and stories
Bitter flavors of broken trust and lies
Melt within the sweet taste of comfort and familiarity
A sour smell of regret scours the air
New ingredients added daily after every conversation
But what have I added?
Is there any part that is me?
Am I only those that I have known?
What have I added to their concoctions?
What is my flavor?
Am I sweet? Or salty?
Sour or spicy?
Bitter or bold or a mix?
Have I anything left of myself to add?
How much more can I add before I overflow?



Art by Marilyn Rutschman

Colonial Clock Tower Under A Clear Blue Sky



Streets of Mexico



Photos by Jennifer Luis-Julian

Colonial Clock Tower: This photograph captures a quiet moment where culture and everyday life intersect. The towering church painted in warm red and creamy tones and the blue sky create a sense of calmness with the presence of the building. I took this photo to try and show how spaces of cultural significance feel. I was drawn to it of how the church stood out against the blue sky. This photo reflects how I see places like this, as spaces that hold memories and culture.

Face the Yellow Sky

A story by Charlotte Sills

Monitors surrounded Lin’s head, making it hard to see past her endless stacks of papers and unnecessary amount of staplers. She let out a sigh, scrunching her forehead and feeling the wrinkles with her fingertip. The beeps and squeals of the machinery in the office had worn on her ears to the point she barely heard them anymore.

“Ms. Roberts,” a deeper voice called. Lin turned around, spinning her old chair slowly.

“Yes?”

“Your theory on developing our radio signals, we ran it through the SUSR bots,” replied a man with a stout figure and a poorly-done comb-over. His suit was a loud yellow and his face reminded one of a happy blobfish.

“Oh. I gave that to the team months ago,” Lin responded, not trying to sound annoyed.

“I don’t recall that. Anyhow, they want to see you and ask how to put it into programming. Come along.”

Lin stood up, pushing her chair into the desk and making sure it was tidy enough to resume work when she returned. She followed the man, who she eventually recognized to be Mr. Aichz from the robotics department.

They left her office. The building was built like a maze, each hallway having a seemingly infinite amount of rooms filled to the brim with tired employees. Getting lost wasn’t just easy, it was a guarantee - no matter how long you worked there.

Lately, given global warming and the altered air, space travel had become less a curiosity and more a necessity. Humans resided on the moon, Mars, and several dwarf planets, yet Earth still remained overpopulated and miserable.

That’s why I’m here, Lin thought to herself as she followed Mr. Aichz’s every step. *They may not acknowledge me much, but I am making a difference. These new radios I designed could change space travel forever...*



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Photo by Marilyn Rutschman



I Miss the Fireflies

A poem by Nataly Nguyen

I'm not sure
If I ever knew you
But you flicker
brightly in my memories

I might not ever
get to see
Another summer
with you

But I'll pretend
You're in every field

I'll imagine
Basking
in your color
Being embraced
by your glow

Wild Flowers

A poem by Amanda Gamboa

A field of golden wildflowers,
Down the street from my house
Nature's most beautiful creation
Raises with the golden rays of spring
To fall with the breeze of winter.
How my day blooms with a single glance.
From the mountains of green,
Mother Nature's kisses of love,
imprinted upon the ground.
Ignorant it was not here to stay.
A few years later, down the street from my house.
The once golden-green hills,
Now grey with dirt, rising with the breeze.
The spring has no power with the flowers
For they are gone.
No signs of recovery from their wild golden form.



Photo by Marilyn Rutschman



Photo by Addison Petrini

Wildflower

A poem by Jacqueline King

How free you are
Your roots, directions unaltered
How raw of emotion you are
Your stem, picked on hands and knees
How sewn, yet balagan you are
Your ears, hear of natural and human
How mundane you feel, sterling you are
Your eyes like bells singing, lassitude can't quiet
How free you are
Wildflower
How free, you
Occhiolism to my old definition

Bottled Eyes

A poem by William Crasi-crow

Hold my hand
So we can stand where we want
Where I dream
Where it seems all too far from real
Is this where we break steel
Or will the tree never grow
So I may leave these empty fields
To see something more than the sky
As I stay here shy
Could we stand alone together
To see what we can make
Do you miss your mother like me?
Is there something missing in you?
Or do you just remind me of her?
The way you eat
The way you look
The way you beg
Are you another crook,
Who looks so pretty?
So beautiful
I see so much we can make
Beyond the steel
That we may never scratch
Beyond the lifeless tree
That lays there in the ground
Wondering when it will see the sky that
we can go beyond
So wave your magic wand
Bring back the endless sky mother
showed me

Show me my friendless life
Make the trees sparkle
Cut the steel that hides what's outside
With those eyes
Bring them back
And hold my hand
As these lights flash
Along your beautiful face
And sparkle along your eyelashes
Cut my hand
And let it burn with no space
No space for me to remember you
It's scary to see the one I love
The memories of them
Be replaced
Replaced by the one I hate
Don't bring me back
Back to that sky
Keep me away from the swing
I don't want to look up
Just hold my hand
And keep my head down
Keep me on the floor
And let the lights flash on us
As we put our heads together
And we kiss forever to keep
Please...
Don't bring those memories...
Please...
Won't you keep me safe...?

I Think I'm the Sword

Art by Elisabeth Coplin

In this piece, you can see my character Sylas kneeling, holding his sword which shines brilliantly. "I Think I'm the Sword" refers to the fact that, he is an angel. Specifically, he is a Power, who are meant to be the defenders. So he struggles with identity, he has mixed feelings about people and somewhat admires, yet hates them. He wonders, "should I be human? Or, am I the sword?"



To Think and Feel

Art by Elisabeth Coplin

In this piece, my character, Esther, is holding a sheep as their skirt turns to puffy clouds, mimicking the ones behind them. The piece is named "To Think and Feel" because she grapples with the idea of temperance - the emotional piece of it, anyway. She questions whether to bottle it all in, or to indulge in emotion. The answer is a balance and she knows how to enjoy herself now, to feel.





Reflections 7th place WILCO Youth Fair (2023)

Photo by William Westmoreland

Pictured is the serene beauty of Kyoto's Myoshin-ji Temple on a cloudy spring day. The temple's majestic architecture reflects gracefully on the still lake, harmonizing with the meticulously pruned trees and the expressive clouds. I took this photo because the architecture really stuck out to me, it was just such an amazing view that I had to capture it from almost every angle. I took numerous photos of the area surrounding the temple because of how beautiful it was.



Enhanced 1st place and Reserve Grand Champion WILCO Youth Fair (2023)

Photo by William Westmoreland

Experience the grandeur of the Todaiji Buddhist Temple in Nara, Japan, framed by intense storm clouds that appear like formidable gates. Enhanced to accentuate the foreboding atmosphere, the highlights lengthen the walkway and intensify the sense of awe and anticipation, inviting one on a profound journey toward this monumental and sacred site.

Rain Boots

A poem by Elizabeth Hui

I want rain boots,
I like the look of them,
Covered in polka dot memories,
Of splashes,
and dancing with our wingspans stretched,
Echoing laughs and white noise,
Squeaking rubber when we cross the threshold of our home,
Mud prints,
we haven't cleaned off our childhood yet,
I want rain boots,
But it doesn't rain here much,
Not many polka dot memories to make,
Not much dancing,
Less echoing laughs,
and much more white noise,
Dry squeaks that give dry headaches,
But someday I'll go somewhere far,
Where the rain comes down pouring,
And the laughter splashes,
And the polka dots will cover my feet,
Rehydrating my polka dot memories,
That have drifted so far.



Photo by Alexandra Lervaag

The Intertwined Pathways of Fate

A sonnet by Dhairya Patel

Is Karma the same as creed Destiny?
Karma, the mystic tenet we hold dear,
Impossible to define ornately,
Oaths that every deed alters one's frontier.
Destiny, some daisy that's lucid white;
Vows a path that's drawn in stars before birth.
While Destiny might bedazzle at night,
Karma's buff thwack still shifts Destiny's hearth.
Yet prophecies entwined, but showed no sign;
While Chiron died with this secret untold,
That both eternal disks hold the same spine;
Alas, humans blind, can't see the true gold.
Though in this vast realm, they share one true goal,
To grant the pure a fate that's truly whole.

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In creating this magazine, we hoped to find an oasis of sorts – a place where creatives could find reprieve from the beating sun of our four years in high school. Through our brainstorming, we stumbled upon “The Savanna,” a name that evokes a waystation of sweeping grass and clear blue skies; the lion motif fit as a byproduct. We hope all readers enjoyed their hike through this accumulation of creativity and implore everyone to submit pieces for the next edition.