



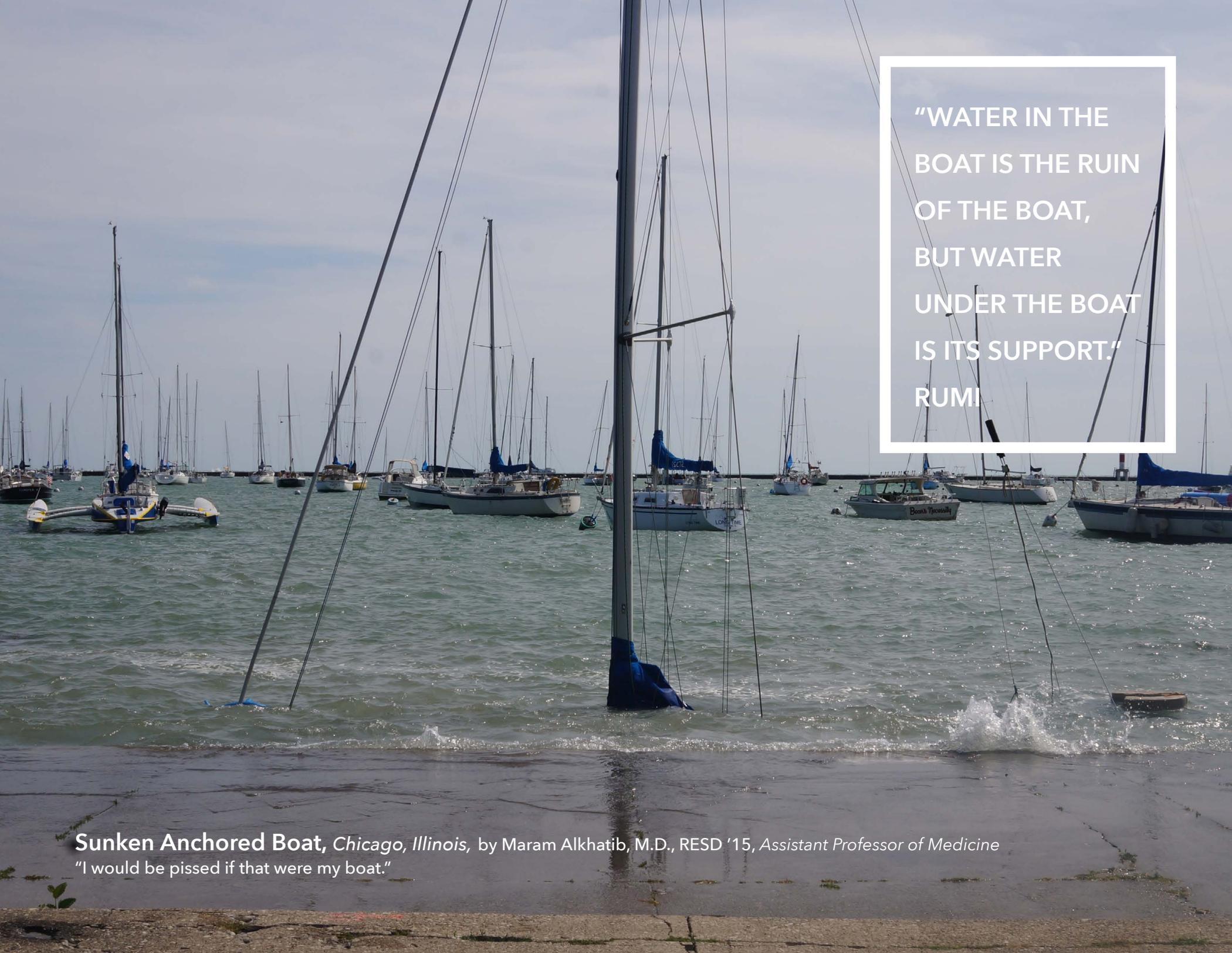
10th Anniversary

# CUENTOS

A COLLECTION OF ART FROM THE INTERNAL  
MEDICINE RESIDENTS AND ATTENDING AT GW

2018



A photograph of a harbor filled with numerous sailboats. In the foreground, a tall, dark mast of a sailboat is prominent, with its rigging extending across the frame. The water is a mix of green and blue, with small waves and white foam from the boats. The sky is overcast and grey. In the background, a dark pier or breakwater is visible. The overall scene is a busy harbor with many boats anchored.

“WATER IN THE  
BOAT IS THE RUIN  
OF THE BOAT,  
BUT WATER  
UNDER THE BOAT  
IS ITS SUPPORT.”  
RUMI

**Sunken Anchored Boat, Chicago, Illinois,** by Maram Alkhatib, M.D., RESD '15, *Assistant Professor of Medicine*  
“I would be pissed if that were my boat.”

# Letter from the Editors

We are proud to present the 2018 edition of *Cuentos*.

Ten years ago, three Internal Medicine residents – Dr. Homan Wai, Dr. Mary Reyes and Dr. Maryanne Ally – had the idea to publish a humanities magazine by the doctors of the George Washington University Medical Faculty Associates' Division of General Internal Medicine. When the first edition of *Cuentos* came out in August of 2008, it was quite thin with only a couple hundred copies printed. From those humble beginnings, *Cuentos* has flourished.

Although this year's *Cuentos* looks quite different from that first edition, we remain faithful to the original mission: to show that medicine is more than an occupation. Medicine can be found in every part of our lives, from how we think about ourselves to how we interact with our patients, peers, and families.

We hope you enjoy as we take you through our daily lives with each turn of the page. Come with us to the patient's bedside, into our homes, and on our travels.

Yours Sincerely,

Lauren Choi, *M.D. PGY3*  
Talia Bernal, *M.D. PGY3*  
Esosa Imasuen, *M.D. PGY1*  
Danielle Engskow, *M.D. PGY1*  
Maram Alkhatib, *M.D.*  
Katalin Roth, *M.D., J.D.*

## On the Cover



### Cascades

*By Homan Wai, M.D., RESD '09*

"I have always been fascinated by the juxtaposition of motion and stillness. This photo was part of a wonderful solo visit to the Great Falls where I was able to capture the beauty of moving water with time lapse photography."

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*Homan Wai*

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## Letter from the Chair



**Alan G. Wasserman, M.D., M.A.C.P.**  
*Eugene Meyer Professor and Chair  
Department of Medicine  
The George Washington University  
School of Medicine and Health Sciences*

Cuentos started in 2008 with a slightly different format and a different title (Suenos). It didn't begin to flourish in the form it is now until the 2011 edition. But as most of us like anniversaries, let's just call this the 10<sup>th</sup> edition.

Ten years is a long time and a big commitment. Ten years is one hundred and twenty months, five hundred and twenty-two weeks, three thousand six hundred and fifty-two days and eighty-seven thousand six hundred and forty-eight hours. Put this way highlights the enormous commitment that is made for this publication. All I ever asked, when the request came in to support this venture, was to make it sustainable. And that has been accomplished. Cuentos has become as much a staple to this Department as anything we do or produce.

The traditional 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary gift is tin or aluminum. It is said that you will bring good luck if you give a gift made of either tin or aluminum for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But because, as of this writing, there will be a tariff on aluminum, a gift of tin will suffice.

The best gift I can think of would be the "tin of sin" a creation of Chef Patrick O'Connor from the Inn at Little Washington. A small tin containing sweet crab and cucumber topped with a layer of royal osetra caviar.

Now that is a work of art! Bet you were wondering where I was going with this. Art comes in different forms and in this case flavors. So for ten years, I have been fortunate to support a showing of a collection of art from the internal medicine residents and attendings at GW. Everything from drawings to paintings to photographs to poems to essays to stories have been published. It is wonderful to see another side to people we work with every day.

What is apparent is that we have a talented group here at the Department of Medicine as well as a dedicated group that has continued to produce a high quality product. Ideally you would be reading this edition of Cuentos while sampling the "tin of sin" with a glass of champagne. Let's dream large but make sure you give a toast to another 10 years.

Salute!

A close-up photograph of a vibrant green grasshopper perched on a piece of rough, textured tree bark. The grasshopper's body is perfectly camouflaged against the brown and grey tones of the bark. Its long, thin antennae extend forward, and its large, leaf-like wings are spread out. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blur of natural colors.

# REFLECTIONS

## Grasshopper

By Homan Wai, M.D., RESD '09

*Hospitalist and Clerkship Director, INOVA Fairfax Hospital*

During an impromptu walk around the neighborhood with the kids, I noticed the green creature perching perfectly still against the tree bark. I love the details in his camouflaged body. I bet he must have thought that it worked very well when he came out of our encounter unscathed.

## Life Cycle

By Tahira I. Lodhi, M.D.

*Assistant Professor of Medicine*

An old oak tree  
Stood tall and proud  
In the fading, weak fall afternoon sun  
With leaves of varied color  
Ready to glide off their nascent tree  
Tuning in to a happy dance  
Hand in hand  
In step with the easterly wind  
Unknowingly, unwittingly  
Oblivious to destiny, yet following its path  
To meet Mother Earth  
And cover her face  
And become part of her  
While  
The old oak tree  
Stood tall and proud  
And smiled...  
Ready to welcome  
A new and fresh stock  
adorning it next spring!



## **A Christmas Reflection**

By Karolyn Teufel, M.D.

*Assistant Professor of Medicine*



## Exploring DC At The Zoo

By Esosa Imasuen, M.D.

*1<sup>st</sup> Year Resident*

There is something about water that is quite refreshing.

How does water invite you to feel?

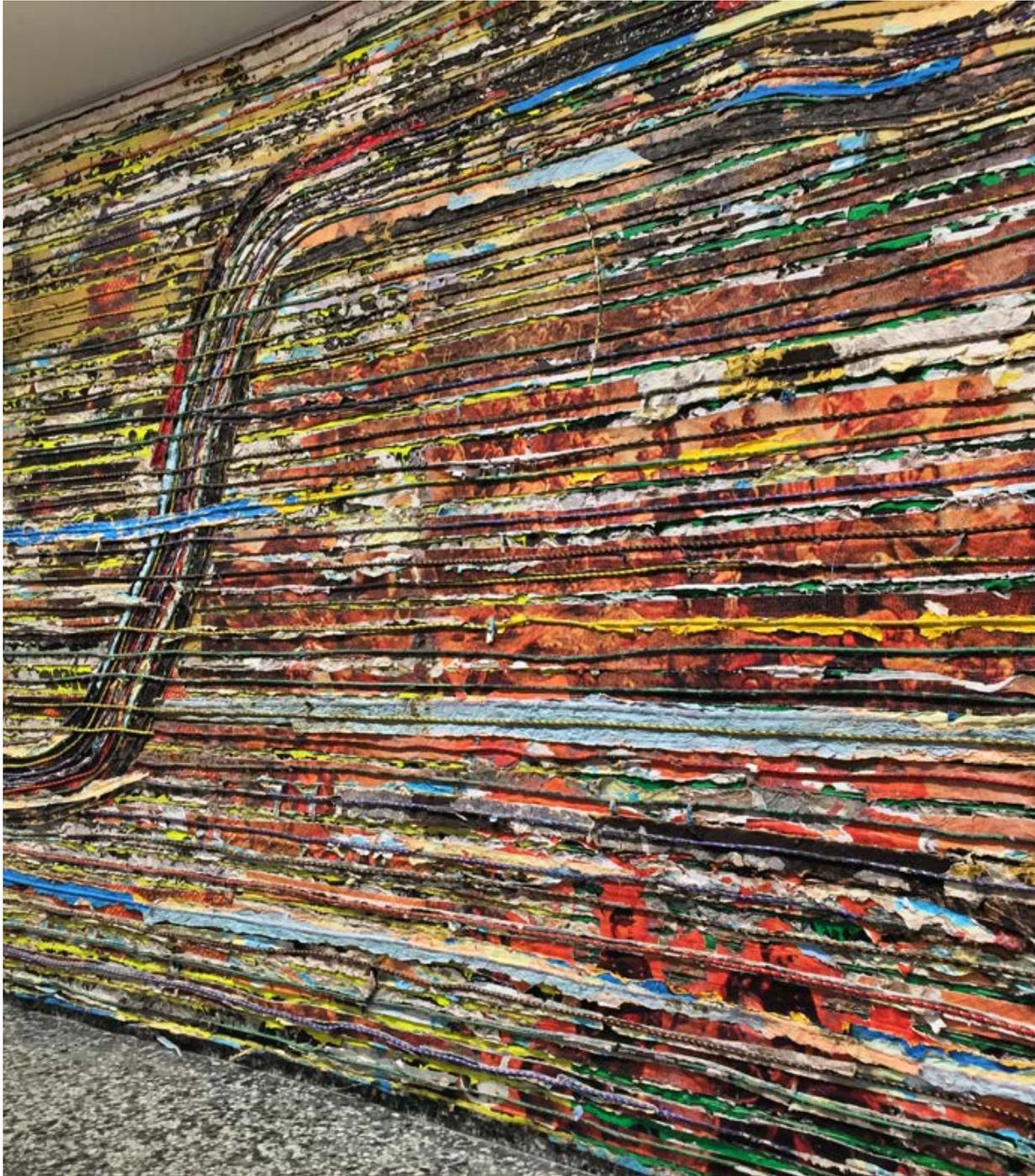
## Exploring DC At Night

By Esosa Imasuen, M.D.

*1<sup>st</sup> Year Resident*

I took this picture at Navy Yard in Southeast, DC. It reminds me of a reassuring Bible verse;  
*"When darkness overtakes the godly, light will come bursting in"*  
- Psalm 112 v 4





## Exploring DC Museums

By Esosa Imasuen, M.D.

*1<sup>st</sup> Year Resident*

The textures and rich hues drew me to capture this large Mark Bradford exhibit at the Hirshhorn museum. It reminds me of a poem I wrote:

Loving a woman like me is a choice you make  
To embrace all the colors you've heard of  
But have never tasted or seen.

So, when you try to squeeze all of me into a box  
You limit your view to one hue of my existence.  
But honey, I'm a rainbow!  
And a proud one at that,  
Watch me glow!

## At the Party (*Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*)

By Sharon Barataz, M.D.

*Assistant Professor of Medicine*

Hope is not gone yet

Possibility is still here

    Around the corner

        Could be

Happiness

    But not

        if you don't

            Get up

                And take a walk

## Gazing at the Sunrise Illuminating Washington DC

By Christina Puchalski, M.D. '94, RESD '97

*Professor of Medicine and Health Sciences in the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, and Director of The George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health (GWISH)*

Enjoying a view of the Washington Monument.



## What I Learned in Home Ec

By Jillian Catalanotti, M.D., M.P.H.

*Associate Professor of Medicine*

*Director of Internal Medicine*

*Residency Program*

We spent the second-half of eighth grade forced to take “Home Economics.” Every day, when we got up from our desks to move to the kitchen or sewing machines, John would take advantage of this opportune time to grab our asses. At the time, it seemed indiscriminate, any girl’s ass was fair game, but on reflection it was probably only about a quarter of them. We weren’t friends with John, but we had friends who were friends with him.

To be clear, John was an overzealous 14-year-old boy, and we had some small backsides, so sometimes these would really more correctly be labeled ass-vulva grabs. But it’s not really about anatomy.

We swatted his hand away. We asked him to stop. We yelled at him to stop. We told him to leave us the f^@% alone. None of these approaches were effective, so the daily ass grabbings continued.

On the day after end-of-the-year awards night, students were to wear their award pins to school. Suffice it to say, I looked like a well-decorated war hero. I heard John approaching me from behind, so I turned to face him and move my bottom out of reach.

“What are those?”

I told him.

“Wait, you’re smart?”

“Uh...yeah. Why did you think we don’t have any classes together besides this one?”

“I thought you were in Basics.”

I guffawed. “No. We don’t have any classes together because I’m smarter than you. Like, waaaaaay smarter than you.”

John half-smiled sheepishly and slunk away, never to grab my ass again. It made me realize all that ass grabbing wasn’t about flirting, or sex, or being an adolescent, or locker room talk. All that ass grabbing was about dominance.■

## Crocheted Snowflake

By Caitlin Willemann, M.D.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident*



## What Happened to Summer?

By Benjamin "Jim" Blatt, M.D.

*Professor, General Internal medicine*

June is stolen,  
But by whom?  
What sort of creature would presume?  
With unabandoned appetite  
A crow slurped up the endless light,  
Famished in a crowish way,  
She dined upon the longest day,  
Transforming her into the hostess  
Of the sacred summer solstice.  
So if you're blinded by a crow  
With an "endless summer" glow,  
Then you'll know the "but by whom"  
Who had the guts to pilfer June.

## How to Make Lemonade and Fight Despair

By Marijane Hynes, M.D.

*Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine*

This has been a real year for lemons. You must admit, from the White House to Hollywood, it has been a long year.

When I lean near despair, I think about how many of my friends and coworkers turn lemons into lemonade, and it brings sweetness to my life.

My neighbor, Jeannie, started Neighbors Rising, which helps teens newly arrived from Central America with buying books and soccer balls.

My friend, Joelle, helped a local synagogue adopt a family from Syria. She bought bathing suits for them and took them to the beach.

Around GW, Jehan el Bayoumi, in her work with the Rodham Institute, reaches the disadvantaged who wish to attend college and pursue careers in medicine or any health or science fields.

My colleague Katalin Roth (she hired me!) has been a volunteer physician for the Physicians for Human Rights Asylum Network; her son works with Indivisible.

Willie Dunn, our division secretary, is an active member of the the 5k "Walk to End HIV" to raise money for Whitman Walker Health, and he helps GW enter a team every October.

Christina took the lead on the Capital Area food drive this year. The council also organizes a food drive at Thanksgiving, volunteers with Bridge to Care Clinic (formerly Healing Clinic), makes Christmas cards for the elderly, and volunteers at Miriam's Kitchen.

Jillian Catalanotti teaches a summer program to help high school students from diverse backgrounds find an interest in the healthcare fields.

April Barbour spends some vacation time going to Honduras on a medical mission every year.

How lucky are we to work in such a great place!!!!

Keep buying those lemons!

I like Dan Rather's advice: "Every day, do one nice thing for one other person, and the world will be a better place." ■



## Paint Night

By Pooja Satya, M.D.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident*

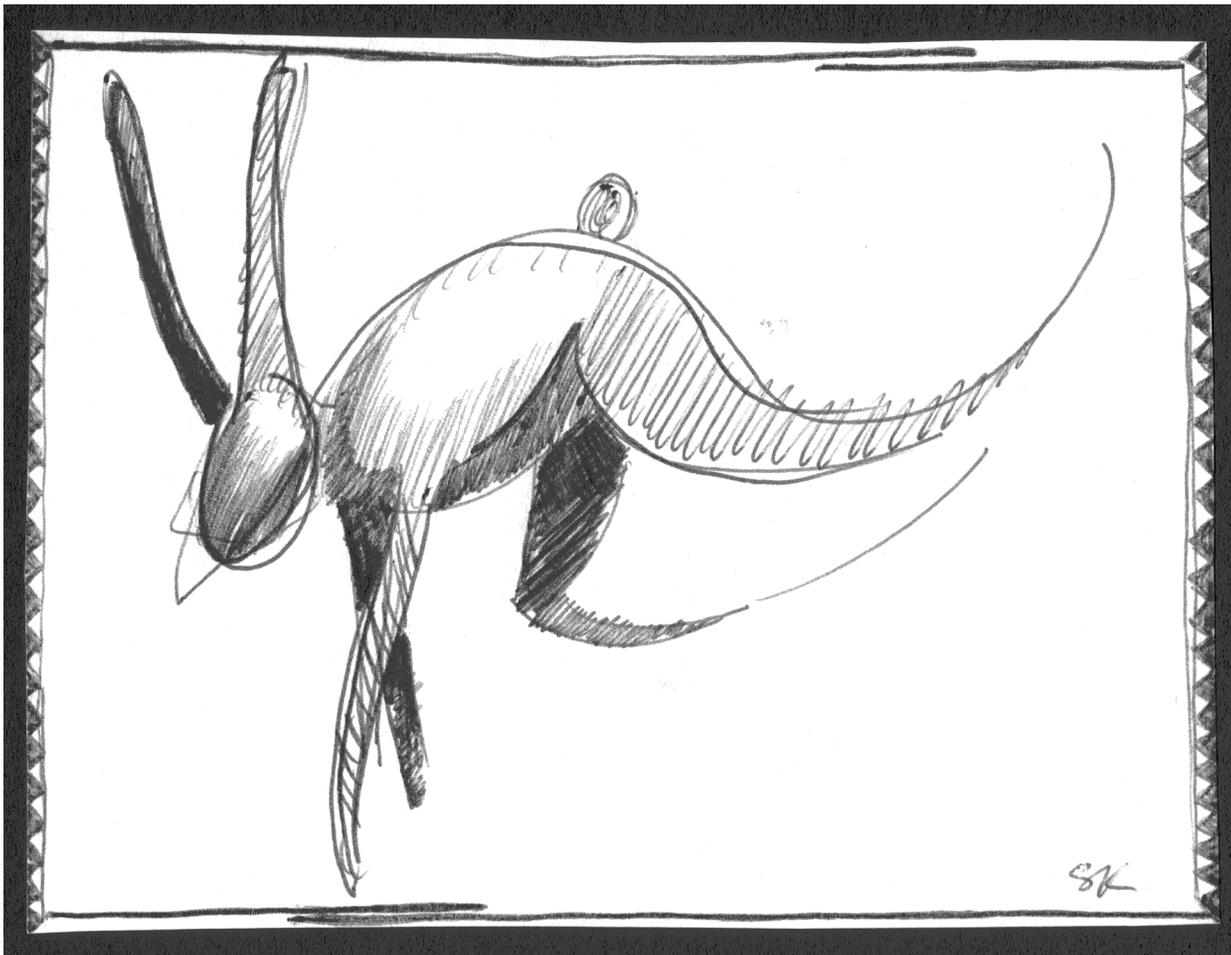
Taking a break from residency to rediscover our creative sides with paintbrushes and good company.



**Summer Waves**, *Acrylic on Canvas*, By Tanuka Datta, M.D., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident



**The Beginnings of Fall**, *Acrylic on Canvas*, By Tanuka Datta, M.D., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident



## On The Move

By Sonia Silinsky Krupnikova, M.D.

*1<sup>st</sup> Year Resident*

Pencil and ink drawing inspired by the Deco Japan exhibition at the Hillwood Estate 2016.

## Deer

By Vani Pyda, M.D., RESD '17, CHIEF '18

I left the hospital late. So late that for the tenth night in a row, I had missed the day's sunlight completely. My walk from the hospital was short, and the wind had no mercy. Sharp needles pierced my face until I stepped indoors. I reached my car and as soon as I started the engine, I let out a large sigh. I pulled out of the parking lot.

Nothing was going well. My family was upset with me because I wasn't paying them enough attention. I'd stood up a friend for dinner because I slept through our plans. And I wasn't performing my best at the work that had become my life. I could get through the work day without falling apart, but when I sat in the comfort of my own car, I let go. I started down the winding road towards home, and my cheeks became wet.

Once I started, I couldn't stop. I turned up the radio to drown out the ugly noise coming from my mouth. I could barely see because the tears were leaving water stains on my glasses. Then, a flash of brown, an eye, and a loud thump.

I slammed my foot on the brake and came to a halting stop. I turned my head to the right and watched a deer hop off into nearby bushes. She was gone as suddenly as she had appeared. I sat in my car in the middle of the road and felt my heart pounding, my haggard breathing causing white mist to form in the cold air. I stopped crying.

I stared at the bushes where I'd last seen her for a minute, thinking only of what would have happened had I stopped the car a few moments too late. Eventually, I continued the drive back home. I made it all the way upstairs to my apartment before I remembered the burden I'd been carrying before. But somehow, it felt just a little bit lighter.

I thought of her often: when I lost a patient unexpectedly, when I missed a good friend's wedding for work, when I felt physically exhausted and still had laundry to do. I'd see her face and for a moment, forget my worries.

"I'm sorry," I'd tell her in a re-living of the scene.

She'd shake her head at me and raise her brows, reminding me how my problems were so small to her. "Buck up, and don't run me over!"

A year later, I drove the same winding path home. I could see the tiniest bit of sun as He said goodnight, lighting the sky all sorts of red and orange. It hadn't been a particularly hard or easy day at work.

I veered right when the roads split and then I saw him—a young buck waiting on the side of the road. He started to take a step forward, and I slowed my car to a stop. He bowed his head to me, as if to say thank you, and trotted across the road. He moved his body gracefully while holding his short antlers high. And I swear, he looked me straight in the eye when he reached the other side.

I let out a breath I didn't know I was holding and pedaled the gas. When I checked the rear-view mirror, he was already gone. Looking back, I wish I'd said thank you. ■

## **It's a Magical World** *Opposite Page >*

By Shivangi Vachhani (formerly Pandya),  
M.D., RESD '14

*Endocrinologist, Leesburg, Virginia*

My husband Rahul has always been a very big fan of Calvin and Hobbes comics. It is amazing how the author, Bill Watterson, captured the essence of a child's mind through Calvin's adventures. On one brisk fall morning, we went for a stroll in the Wolf Trap National Park. Our son started gazing over the fence when I clicked this picture. This picture reminds me of something that Calvin said, which also happens to be the last sentence of the comic series: "It's a Magical world, Hobbes, let's go exploring."

A young child with dark hair, wearing a bright yellow quilted vest over a blue and white striped long-sleeved shirt and grey cargo pants, stands with their back to the camera. They are leaning their hands on a rustic, dark wooden fence that runs across the middle of the frame. The child is looking out over a vast, hazy landscape of rolling hills covered in trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, red, and yellow. In the foreground, there is a grassy field with scattered fallen leaves. A large tree with colorful leaves is visible in the upper left corner. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

HEART  
AND  
HOME

## **It So Happened**

By Paul Silver, M.D.

*Associate Professor of Medicine*

“You are taking me to visit Mom tomorrow, right?”, asked Dad.

We were sitting at dinner on the eve of the Jewish holiday of Purim and I felt myself tighten.

“No, Pop. I told you that I am going to be busy all morning and then have to teach in the afternoon. You were supposed to call Metro Access for a ride.”

He looked stricken as he reached for his phone to call Metro Access knowing, in his heart, that it was too late to arrange transportation for the next day. If he wanted to visit my mother in the nursing home 10 miles away, he would have to take a cab back and forth.

Two years ago, my frail mother in her late 80's started having frequent falls. Despite months of intensive rehabilitation, she was unable to regain enough stamina and stability to return to my parents' condominium in Ventnor, New Jersey. At the same time, it was becoming clear that the days of my then 91 year old father being able to safely live alone were numbered.

After considering several nursing homes in

our area, we settled on the Hebrew Home. Though it was further away than some of the others, several members of our community visited there on a regular basis and could drop in on Mom. Also, my son's brother-in-law was the kosher supervisor and was there daily. Finally, there was a full time medical staff, so physicians were always readily available. Mom was transferred there in

## ***My father had to adapt to a new home and trying to fit a lifetime of possessions into a modest bedroom.***

late October and, about three weeks later, my father moved in with us. Over the next several weeks, we all adjusted to our new situations. It took Mom a while to acclimate to the more rigorous regimen of the Hebrew Home where residents were encouraged to be as active as possible. My father had to adapt to a new home and trying to fit a lifetime of possessions into a modest

bedroom. Each possession he had to give up felt to him like he was disposing of a body part. He also had to adjust to living in an Orthodox, kosher home. He enjoyed watching television and found it particularly difficult to forego electric appliances on Sabbath. However, he was delighted with the cohesiveness of the Orthodox community and quickly developed a wide circle of new friends. He particularly loved the fact that we frequently had guests for the Sabbath meals or were invited out to other homes. For Shelly and me, after being empty nesters for eight years, having someone else in the house was a bit unsettling.

Nonetheless, we all soon developed our routines. Dad would visit Mom a few times a week, either taking a cab or Metro Access. Shelly or I would take him home after visiting Mom on our way home from work. It was particularly convenient that Shelly worked a few blocks from the Home and could get over there quickly if there was a problem or if Mom needed something. Mom remained fairly stable medically over the next year and a half. She would get out of bed and get dressed every day, take her meals in the dining room and go to various activities.

Then, one evening in the beginning of Mom's second February there, I came to visit and she was in bed in her nightgown. She had not been out of bed that day. I asked the nurses what was going on and

they said she had told them she did not feel well enough to get up. She only got out of bed once more, but then just sat slumped over in her wheelchair. I huddled with her doctor and nurse practitioner. Her fatty liver had progressed to cirrhosis and it was thought that this deterioration signified a progression to end stage liver disease. It was possible that she had developed a liver tumor. After giving it considerable thought, it was decided that further testing would not reveal any condition for which we could do anything given her age and overall state. In the subsequent weeks, she stopped eating and became less responsive. By the time Purim arrived six weeks later, she was asleep most of the time and had not spoken for several days.

Purim is a busy holiday. The morning service is longer than usual and it is the custom to give gifts of food to friends and family. In the afternoon there is a large, festive meal. Children and many adults don costumes and some drinking is expected. I usually take any opportunity to sleep late but this year I went to services early so that I could run downtown to teach a class between the morning activities and the late afternoon meal. My food package deliveries went faster than expected and I was done by 10:30. I realized I could take my father to the Home after all.

When we arrived at my mother's room, she

was lying motionless on her side. Until I saw her chest rise and fall and noted that she occasionally swallowed, I was not sure she was still with us. My father and I sat down. As is common among religious Jews at the bedside of the ill, I began reading from the Book of Psalms, occasionally looking up at mom. After about half an hour, her breathing stopped.

## ***Because of these seeming coincidences, I was able to be with my mother when she passed.***

The holiday of Purim celebrates the events described in the Book of Esther, which is unique in that it is the only book in the entire Bible where there is no mention of God. During the Persian exile, an enemy, Haman, threatens the existence of the Jewish community and his plot is foiled through a series of seemingly coincidental occurrences. The Jewish community is

saved and to this day Jews celebrate the holiday of Purim.

One of the main lessons in the Book of Esther is to see God's interventions even when they are not evident. The events of Purim seem coincidental. Indeed the name Esther is derived from the phrase "Hester Panim", which means hidden face.

So this was my own Purim story. I was not supposed to visit my mother that day, but I "happened" to decide to go to the early service, "happened" to finish my deliveries early and my father "happened" to forget to arrange transportation. Because of these seeming coincidences, I was able to be with my mother when she passed. And I could be with my father to help comfort him as he said goodbye to his beloved wife of almost 67 years.

Now, each year, Purim will mark my mother's Yartzzeit, the anniversary of her death. Purim will no longer be the day of unbridled joy and celebration which it had been for me in the past. However, I will have a much deeper appreciation of the "Hester Panim" which saved my people thousands of years ago and which allowed me to be with Mom as her soul left this world.■



## **My Two Rivers**

By Chavon Onumah, M.D.  
*Assistant Professor of Medicine*

On a rainy day  
Two rivers flowing with bliss  
Renewing their source



## Smile!

By John Tiu, M.D.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident*

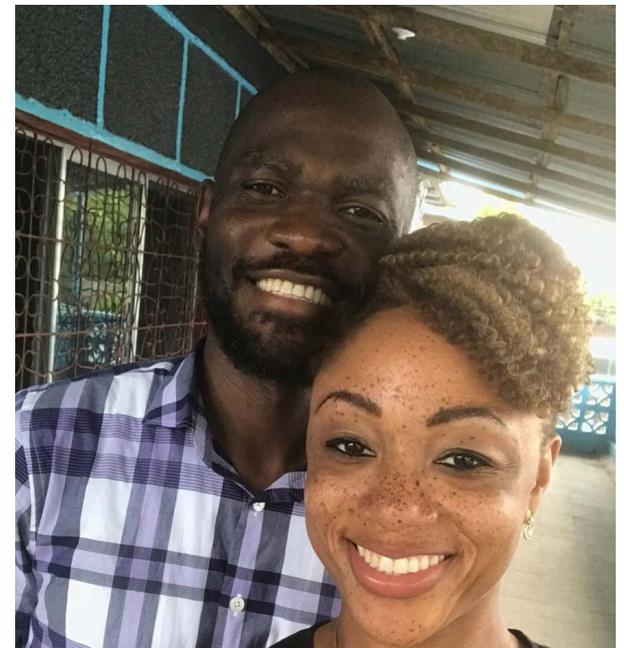
Hand painting by Julianne Alexisse Tiu at 6 months of age.



## Full Circle

By Sylvia Gonsahn-Bollie, M.D. '10,  
RESID '13, CHIEF '14  
*Primary Care/ Obesity Medicine*

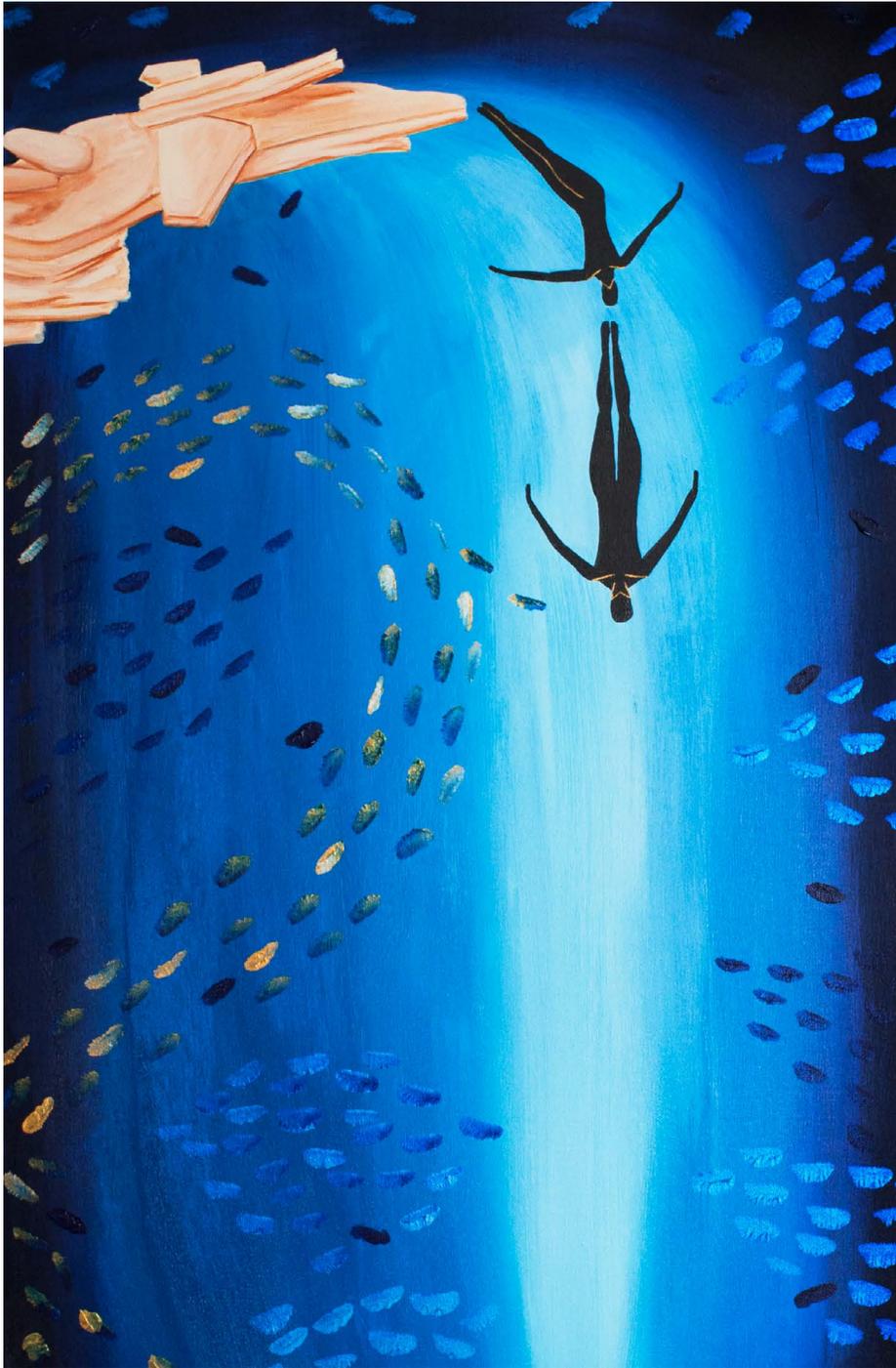
It's hard to believe it has been ten years since I last visited Liberia, West Africa. When I went to Liberia in 2007, I was assessing the deleterious effects of the Liberian Civil War on undergraduate science education at University of Liberia. Since then, so much has changed in my life. I am now a wife, a doctor, and a mother. This past year, I went back to Liberia with my husband and a team of talented University of Liberia graduates. Together, we are working to improve STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education for Liberian high school students through our nonprofit STEM lab facility, Institute of Basic Technology. The mission of IBT is to bridge the gap in Liberian STEM education through interactive laboratory experiences and innovative curriculum development.



In those same ten years, Liberia has also changed. It can be difficult for locals to appreciate the cumulative impact of small changes over time. However, as a visitor looking in, I noticed many progressive changes. In 2007, Liberia had no electricity without a generator and there were still shell casings from the recently ended civil war all around. There was caution in the air. Today, there is illumination from the Liberian Electricity Corporation throughout Monrovia, Liberia. There are also many modern businesses throughout the city. Despite the uncertainty of the recent presidential election, people still seem more at ease than they did in 2007.

When reflecting on these two trips to Liberia, a decade apart, I truly feel as if my life has come full circle. I am grateful to be blessed to be part of the positive changes in Liberia, the US and beyond. I feel hopeful for the future of Liberia and her people. ■





## **The Jump** *Left*

By Aileen Chang, M.D.

*Assistant Professor of Medicine*

In the last year, I got married and this painting is about the experience of embarking upon life with my husband.

## **Divorce Court**

By Connell Knight, M.D.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Year Resident*

I keep imagining snow in a sulfur streetlight  
static swimming in a yellow halo  
flakes twisting their wayward trajectory—  
crisp friction in the winter air  
spiraling its way through evanescent spicules—  
haze crowned in darkness,  
planetary.

Meanwhile I hear gears turning  
rocking back our apartment's deadbolt.  
You stutter-step aside, the swinging door,  
the shutters sway.  
My yellow planet dances through space  
in the slats flickering.

I always loved when you filled the doorway.

The snow lingered late this year.  
Even as we were walking to the courthouse  
the rain became snow at dusk  
spiraling onto the shoulders of our suit-coats—  
our crisp friction in the winter air—  
as I watched the lampposts gathering stardust.



INTE  
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**Untitled,**

by Homan Wai, M.D., RESD '09

*Hospitalist and Clerkship Director, INOVA Fairfax Hospital*

## Confessions of a Doctor

By Jehan (Gigi) El-Bayoumi, M.D., RESD '88

*Professor of Medicine, Founding Director, Rodham Institute*

Yes, the headlines are true. Being a doctor is hard work with long hours, unending paperwork and personal sacrifice. There is growing, and rightfully so, concern about doctor depression, burnout and sadly, suicide.

But, I'd like to share the other side of that coin. The side that keeps me going and brings daily joy to my life and the long-lasting fulfillment that makes me proud to be part of this honorable and noble service profession.

I get a daily lesson from my patients: lessons big and small.

What books to read:

*How to Bake a Pi* (about math) by Eugenia Cheng

*Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates

*Genghis Khan and The Quest for God* by Jack Weatherford

*FDR* by Jean Edward Smith (recommended by a patient who went to Princeton with the author)

*Flawless Extra-Ordinary Super Heroes* by Dr. Chauncey Chandler

What countries to visit: Scotland, China, Fiji, Chile, Ecuador, Tanzania, Tunisia, South Africa, New Zealand, Sudan.

What shows to see and which theaters to go to: Hamilton, An American in Paris, The Roundhouse, Arena Stage, Howard Theater, Kennedy Center.

What museums to visit: The Sackler, The Phillips, The Textile Museum.

Which clubs to go to for excellent live music: Bethesda Jazz, Blues Supper Club, Blues Alley.

I get to see pictures of kids, grandkids and ever-growing and expanding families.

But I'm also taught about heartache. Losing the love of your life before they're actually gone to Alzheimer's. Dealing with pain that is so unrelenting that death seems to be an option that is quickly dismissed. The torment of losing a child. The agony of living with a secret shame from a horrible childhood trauma.

I also get to see grace up close and personal. The 90 something year old being wheeled in by her family whose hair is combed, clothes neat and skin smooth from daily eucerin creme massages.

I see pain transformed to purpose when a patient advocates, volunteers or cares for others.

I also receive a lot of love and care. "Are you taking care of yourself?", "When is your next vacation, you look tired", "Did you gain a little weight? You know you have to eat right and exercise", "How is your family?"

I'm getting my life's education from the best teachers: my patients.■

## Rising from Vulnerability

*(Excerpt from Phoenix Zones: Where Strength Is Born and Resilience Lives)*

By Hope Ferdowsian, M.D., M.P.H., RESD '06

Brené Brown is a researcher-storyteller who studies vulnerability. She speaks of its power, drawing from thousands of stories she's collected over time or, as she calls them, "data with a soul." Brown shows how the courage to be vulnerable can be the birthplace of strength and resilience.

Over time, I've collected another dataset on vulnerability and resilience—from human survivors I've met and cared for over the years, the animals I've come to know, and the Phoenix Zones they've risen in. Through survivors, I've learned where strength is born and resilience lives. We're all vulnerable beings. We fear. We feel pain. We break. And we suffer. We can never know or do enough to be perfectly safe. Though we rarely take the time to acknowledge it, we live in a fragile world. Merely being alive leaves us with wounds and scars. But we are also strong.

Resilience isn't solely or forever determined by our genetics, our childhoods, or the best or worst of our lives. It isn't fixed. Resilience, like vulnerability, is a biological phenomenon influenced by the life, laws, and love in us and around us. This is the basis for the Phoenix Effect, which hinges on whether our

vulnerabilities are nourished, as in Phoenix Zones, or exploited. The same is true for animals. As with vulnerability, much of our capacity for resilience stems from the fact that we are animals.

***We're all  
vulnerable beings.  
We fear. We feel  
pain. We break.  
And we suffer.***

Our brains are phenomenally plastic. We learn. We develop. We regress. We grow. Although form and function are guided by genetic factors, our experiences help shape the way we adapt and cope. Just as our minds react to negative experiences, we're also shaped by positive experiences. If there is a biological foundation for psychological suffering, there must be a biological basis for recovery—similar to how physical wounds can heal after a painful

physical injury. Though we're susceptible to physical and psychological suffering, we're also resilient beings searching for opportunities to build strength.

Take a moment to imagine a global society focused on well-being and resilience rather than violence—on creating sanctuary, particularly for the most vulnerable in society. We still have a long way to go before the world becomes a sanctuary for all, but in the meantime we are left with a central question: How can we each cultivate resilience in our own communities—even within a tumultuous, uncertain world?■

*From Phoenix Zones: Where Strength Is Born and Resilience Lives. Copyright 2018 Hope Ferdowsian. Published by the University of Chicago Press. All rights reserved.*

## Delirio de ICU

By Anonymous

Last thing I knew was falling...  
Not true.  
Last that fell from my lips was you.  
And before that love,  
All of that feeling was new.  
Belly up to the jawline,  
And crash.  
Shackled to a bed in a cell,  
Bound by ankles to rails,  
Mouth chained by wires in loops.  
Sedated but restless,  
Hands muted by cuffs,  
Arms fixed by metals and screws.  
Every flex, every move,  
With an attempt to get loose,  
Pursued by a jolt to the spine.  
"Lie supine, it's okay, you'll be fine".  
There are no bars on my window,  
Under the veil of a beige curtain,  
Over the bay window.  
Is this what happens?

Is this how it ends?  
Who'd have thought it-  
The eyes on which I'd valued so,  
My only glimpse of this reality I know,  
The tunnel I see through,  
Which never shows you.  
*Rather than your smile,  
My whole world,  
Contained in that one ceiling tile.  
Counting the dots ad infinitum,  
Over and over.  
Mounting the ledge to your room,  
Give it to me in increments,  
Fine,  
Out of the corner of my eye,  
The mourning dew.  
Is it day again already?  
Time...  
As I sigh through my nose,  
To start the torment anew.*

## Little Hamster

By Anonymous

I'm a little hamster on my little wheel  
I go round and round until I keel  
I give and give until I can't deal

I'm a little hamster in my little cage  
Missing her life in every stage  
You think she will understand with age?

I'm a little hamster who has to do tricks  
Learning that honesty is no quick fix  
It really just builds a wall of bricks

I'm a little hamster who wants to run free  
To skip and jump from tree to tree  
To be the only one in control of her destiny



WAN  
DER  
LUST

[swoon] *Lake McDonald, Glacier National Park, by Samantha Ober, M.D., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident*



# Kilimanjaro

By Mihir Patel, M.D., M.S.

Assistant Professor of Medicine

This past summer my brother, my parents and myself climbed Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa. Our original reason for the trip was simply to visit Tanzania - my father had spent half of his childhood there and had not been back in almost 50 years. Even though we visited where my dad grew up, it was the climb up and down the mountain that was the most memorable experience of the trip. While I deeply missed my wife and kids, there was something relaxing, rejuvenating and mind clearing about not having any cell phone, internet, or TV access for 9 days.

It was a group of 16, doing this climb together. To do this, though, we needed a group of 64 people supporting us - a combination of guides and porters. The porters are the people that stick in my

mind the most. They would carry most of our gear, tents, food, and supplies up the mountain for us. Additionally, they left camp after us, and arrived at the next camp hours before us, having set up our tents and already prepared lunch. The most incredible thing that they would do is a song and dance for us every morning to lift up our spirits, give us energy and motivate us for that day's trek.

This is one of the songs they sang to us (you can find clips of it on youtube as well).

## *Kilimanjaro, Kilimanjaro*

*Kilimanjaro, mlima mrefu sana (Kilimanjaro, long mountain journey)*

*Na Mawenzi, na Mawenzi (And Mawenzi, and Mawenzi)*

*Na Mawenzi, mlima mrefu sana (And Mawenzi, long mountain journey)*

*Ewe nyoka, ewe nyoka (As a snake, as a snake)*

*Ewe nyoka, mbona wanizingukaa (As a snake, it winds all around)*

*Jambo, jambo Bwana (Hello, hello Sir)*

*Habari gani (How are you?)*

*Mzuri sana (Very fine)*

*Wageni, mwakaribishwa (Foreigners, you're welcome)*

*Kilimanjaro, hakuna matata (Kilimanjaro, there is no problem)*

*Tembea pole pole, hakuna matata (Walk slowly, slowly, no problem)*

*Utafika salama, hakuna matata (You'll get there safe, no problem)*

*Kunywa maji mengi, hakuna matata (Drink plenty of water, no problem)*

This song often reminds me to simplify life when it gets stressful and complicated as well as to take things in stride as much as possible. ■





## **Magnesium Spring**

*Bedford Township, Virginia*

By Natasha Ang, M.D., RESD '14

*Assistant Professor of Medicine*

An old remedy for stomach ailments was to drink from this spring for its medicinal properties. These days, we use various forms of magnesium to treat constipation or heartburn.

Sometimes, we discover what the elders knew all along.



## **Blue Lagoon**

*Grindavik, Iceland*

By Natalie Mufarrij, B.S.

*Registered Dietitian Department of Internal Medicine*

This is the Blue Lagoon in Grindavik, Iceland. Throughout our trip, I felt like we were on another planet, but this really sealed the deal for me. The clear, bright blue water next to the dark, volcanic rock; add in the steam from the hot water in the otherwise freezing weather, and you have something out of this world.



## **Nuschwanstein Castle in Schwangau**

*Bavaria, Germany*

By Kathryn Humes, M.D.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Year Resident*

The castle built by 'Crazy' King Ludwig who was called 'crazy' because he nearly bankrupted the state of Bavaria. He was found dead in a lake at a young age, and it is still unknown how exactly he died.

## You Don't Have to go Far to See Beauty

*Comus, Maryland*

By Marijane Hynes, M.D.

*Associate Clinical Professor, General  
Internal Medicine, Director, Weight  
Management Program*



## Where the Mississippi Meets the Gulf

Highway 23, Louisiana

By Adam Possner, M.D.

General Internist, Rockville



*A Sign of Desolation*

If you ask folks what defines an ideal vacation spot, I'm guessing that most would not use adjectives like "desolate" or "dilapidated." But that's just how I like my getaways, with ghost towns and abandoned factories ranking high on the list. I can't explain it, but visiting such places reminds me of how insignificant we humans are in the grand scheme of things -- of how entropy always prevails -- and, somehow, that rejuvenates me. These photos are from along highway 23 in Louisiana, not far from where the Mississippi River empties into the Gulf of Mexico, an area that still bears the scars of Hurricane Katrina.



*Empty*



## **Beautiful But Dangerous**

*Sonoran Desert, Tucson, Arizona*

By Brad Moore, M.D.

*Associate Professor of Medicine*

## Witnessing Beauty, Life and Grace

### *South Africa*

By Christina Puchalski, M.D. '94, RESD '97  
*Professor of Medicine and Health Sciences  
in the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative  
Medicine, and Director of The George  
Washington Institute for Spirituality and  
Health (GWISH)*

While on a trip to South Africa, we all quickly  
let go of expectations to see the wild animals  
and just learned to be present to the gifts of  
each moment.





## Silver Sanctuary

Chiang Mai, Thailand

By Kristen Whitaker, M.D., RESD '15

Hematology Oncology Fellow

Wat Sri Suphan Temple in Chiang Mai, Thailand is a Buddhist temple completely covered with silver.



**First Sunset of 2017**

*Coronado, California*

By Linda Yue, M.D.

*1<sup>st</sup> Year Resident*

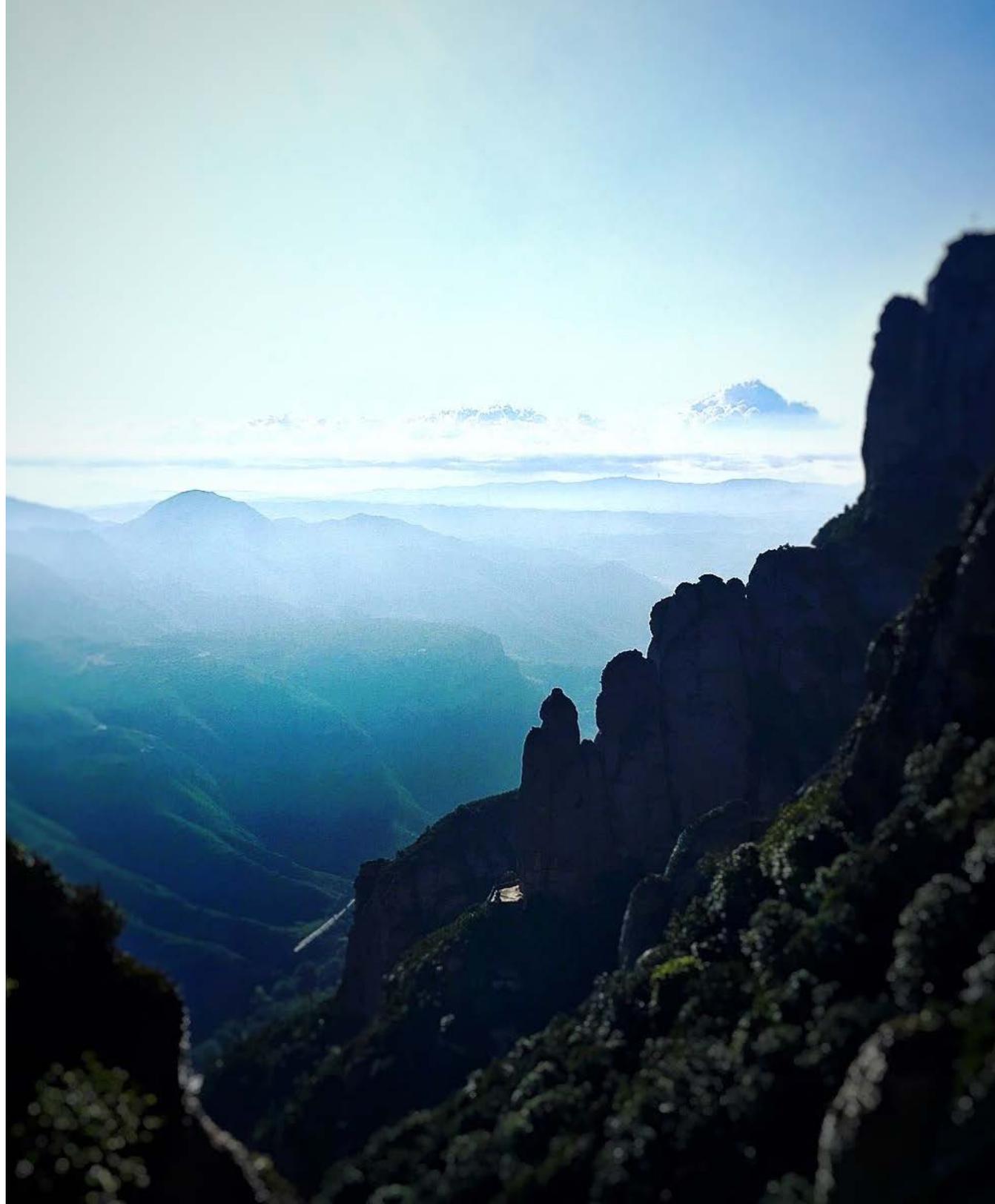
## **View from Montserrat**

*Barcelona, Spain*

By Kathryn Humes, M.D.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Year Resident*

The Montserrat is a Benedictine monastery outside Barcelona, Spain. It houses many well known relics, including the 'Black Virgin', or 'La Moreneta'. She is famous for carrying an orb, which is said to give luck to anyone who rubs it. The monastery is also home to 'L'Escolania' boys choir, which is one of the oldest boys choirs in Europe.



## Rialto Bridge

By Jennifer Schwenk, M.D.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident*

I love creating paintings of places that I have visited. It serves as a great reminder of the trip and can hang on the wall instead of hidden in digital form where most of our travel memories are these days.



## Another World *Opposite Page >* *Great Barrier Reef, Australia*

By Talia Bernal, M.D.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident*

Scuba diving was never something I imagined myself doing, but at the urging of my husband and after an underwater panic attack, I became certified shortly before starting medical school. Despite it being such a big mental hurdle, scuba diving is an exhilarating and therapeutic experience all at once. I took this picture just before a shark feeding dive near the Great Barrier Reef. Here, the water was at peace and the divers seemed engaged in a graceful dance with the sharks around them. Not long after this, the scene was one of chaos for its true residents, with the human visitors sitting on the edge of the action, careful not to impose.



# Thank You for Your Support



## 2018 Cuentos Editorial Team

*From left:* Danielle Engskow M.D., 1<sup>st</sup> Year Resident; Esosa Imasuen M.D., 1<sup>st</sup> Year Resident; Maram Alkhatib M.D., Faculty Co-Advisor, Katalin Roth M.D., Faculty Co-Advisor; Lauren Choi M.D., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident; Talia Bernal M.D., 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Resident.

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**CUENTOS**

A COLLECTION OF ART FROM THE INTERNAL  
MEDICINE RESIDENTS AND ATTENDING AT GW