

telling it



Arts-based interventions
for change

**YPSILANTI COMMUNITY
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Stories and Poems by the Children of Telling It



SPRING 2018



WELCOME TO THE SPRING 2018 TELLING IT AT YPSILANTI COMMUNITY MIDDLE SCHOOL ANTHOLOGY! WE HAVE HAD A WONDERFUL YEAR WITH THE 6TH GRADE STUDENTS THAT PARTICIPATE IN THE TELLING IT AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM EVERY THURSDAY.

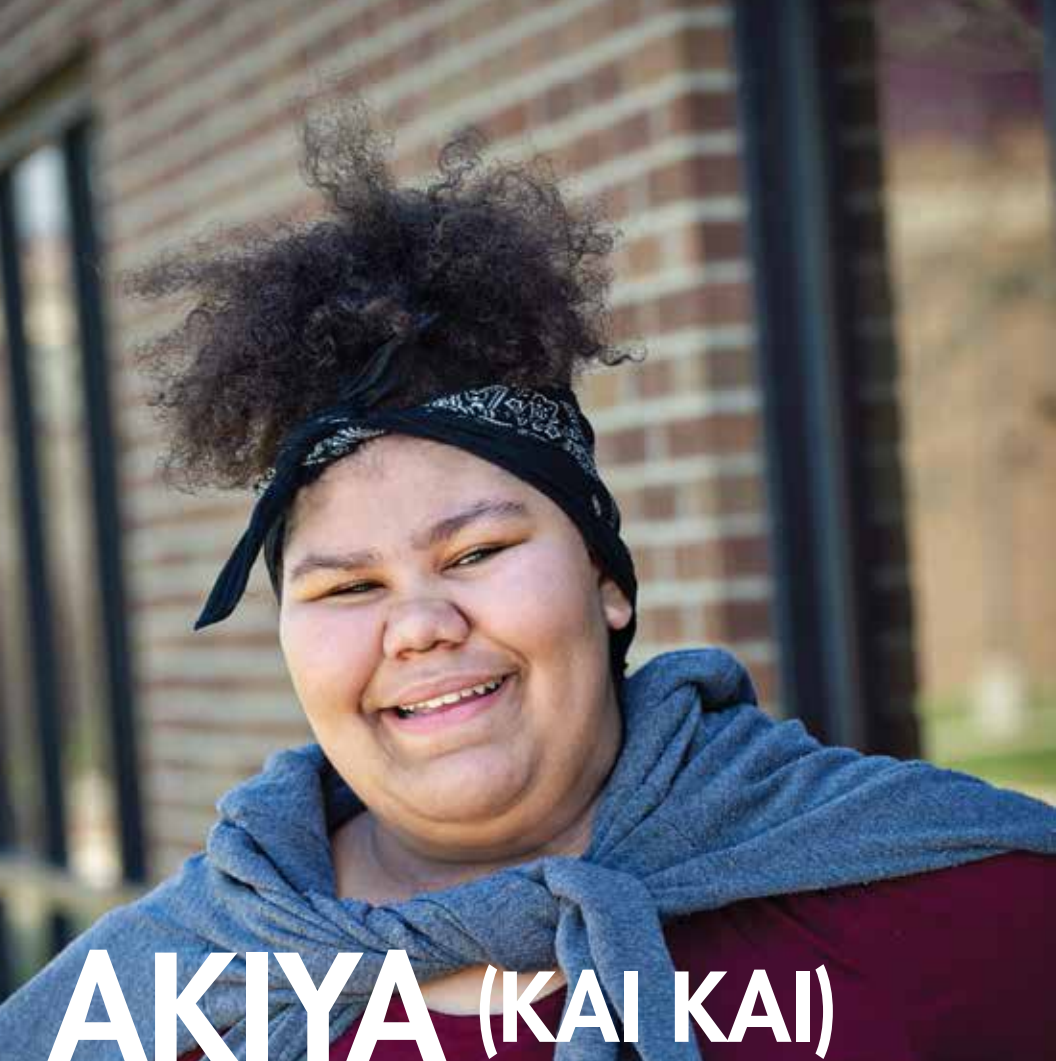
This collection of writing reflects the themes of identity, safety, belonging, self-regulation and powering forward with a positive vision for the future that were explored by the youth and the Telling It team. In one unforgettable session, a group of university students and their faculty from Brazil, South America, led the group in a series of theatre exercises.

The mission of Telling It is to support the healing and learning needs of school-age youth using best practices from social work and education filtered through the expressive arts so they can lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. The program is youth driven, trauma-informed and designed to meet the needs of school-age youth so they can reach their full potential as engaged community members.

I hope you enjoy this collection of writings. It was truly a pleasure to get to know the 6th graders and to hear their stories.

With all good wishes,

Deb Gordon-Gurfinkel
Telling It Founder and Director



AKIYA (KAI KAI)

QUESTIONS ABOUT LOVE

- Is love...
- A good thing?
- A bad thing?
- Something for everyone?
- Between you and a person, something you want to have?
- Between you and something?
- Can love be for everybody?
- Friendship?
- In music?
- Going out with someone?
- Having a crush?
- Flirting with your crush?
- *Messing with your crush?*
- Kissing your boyfriend?
- All around you?

SAPPHIRE FRIENDS *Inspired by the color blue*

One day I was extremely excited that I could sing the blues.
 I was wearing a blue sapphire
 And I was extremely calm and cool.
 Then I saw the endless sky
 And it was awesome!
 I went and got some Gatorade
 Then I passed a blue jay.
 I was thinking of the oceans and seas.
 My friend was aquamarine.
 My other friend was amazing.
 She was getting bullied behind a blue house.
 She was feeling extremely sad.
 I went to help her out.
 And then she was happy again.
 And her name was Goddess.
 Then we started feeling excited
 And we got some blue hair.

GETTING AWAY FROM THE WOLVES

I'm running trying to find my way, trying to find my friends, trying to get away from the wolves again, trying not get bat poop on my back. I'm thinking why I was sent here and why was the guy drinking beer? I'm thinking where do I go and how to get home, even if I'm alone? I like to be alone a lot though, especially when I was at home. It's a different type of loneliness, but I'll find my way through. I see trees, bees and bat poop around me. I climb up a tree to make a home, all by myself and all alone. I put leaves, parts of trees and a blanket in my new home. I lay on a tree branch and try and keep nice and warm, even though here comes a storm. I really, really miss my home with my family thinking of me when I'm in my bed sound asleep.

MY ANIMALS

I am a shark
 Because I'm mean
 And because I always have an attitude.

I am also a cat
 Because I'm lazy
 And because I like to lay around and not do nothin'.

I am also a snake
 Because I sneak things
 And because I sneak my phone and
 The computer.

I am also a cow
 Because I'm sad.

I am also a fox
 Because I have style and
 Because I'm beautiful.



ALIANA (LA LA)

QUESTIONS ABOUT LOVE

- Do you love boys?
- Do you have a wife?
- Do you kiss a boy if you're a boy?
- Do you support your love?
- Why are boys so mean?
- Does everybody have love?
- Can you feel love?
- Why does your mom love you?
- Why is love so sad?
- Do you lie?
- What is love?
- How do you spell love?
- How many kids do you want?
- How do you make love?

MY ANIMALS

I am a cheetah
 Because I always have an attitude and
 I can move my feet fast.

I am also a fox
 Because I know that I'm beautiful and plus
 My boo told me the same and
 I am very smart.

IN THE WOODS

After being dropped off in the woods, the man, Jason, took everything I loved and owned, so I ran. I ran as far as I could, far, far, far away. But he was chasing me. So then I jumped in a rabbit hole and a weird rabbit buried me in a hole because the rabbit knew what I was going through. I stayed protected for a whole day in this hole, and the rabbit brought me carrots, berries, tasty leaves and this weird leaf that smelled like tasty seasoning. He had a bunch of weird stuff in this hole. My hole was a few feet away from his hole –and his hole was CRAZY. It had water and a table and some bones (because it was Halloween time). He let me explore the place and said, "Hello, my name is Michael and this is my home and this is where you will be sleeping for the next two months." I thought, this is weird ... how does he know how long I'm staying? I didn't leave because I trusted him –somehow I felt like I knew Michael. I met his forest family –they were all types of animals. A couple of days after I met his family, I heard a voice that sounded like a man's, so I peeked into the room nearest me –AND IT WAS A MAN IN A BUNNY SUIT!

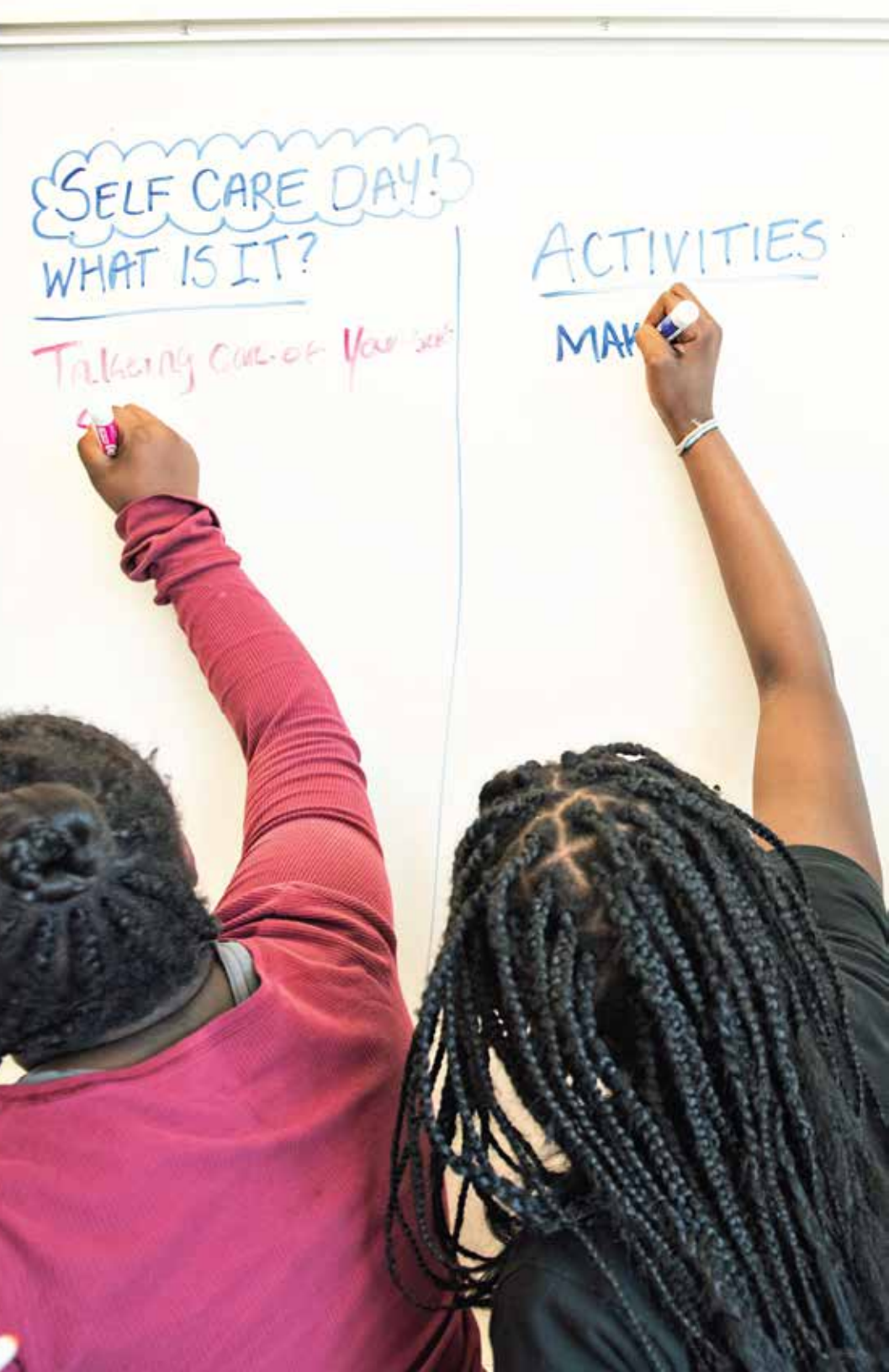
YELLOW DAY *Inspired by the color yellow*

One sunny morning, my mom and me whipped up some eggs, mangoes and bananas for breakfast. We chewed juicy fruit afterwards. Then, my mom asked me if I wanted my toenails and fingernails painted today? When I turned on the lights, I saw rainbow nail polish. When my dad came home in his new yellow car, I went outside and saw the dandelions, sunflowers and yellow leaves. When my dad came inside he asked me why I wasn't in my yellow clothes for my tennis game? My mom said, "Go get me a marker so I can write your name on your tennis racquet." My outfit reminded me of Big Bird, so I threw on some earrings and my yellow shoes. My mom reminded me to feed my fish with a note on the refrigerator. My sister highlighted all the places she could be in the neighborhood. My mom said I could grab squash or a piece of Laffy Taffy candy before I left. Dad said, "Don't forget your Capri Sun!" I said, "The straw is missing." We got in the car and dad said, "Oo, there's lots of sunshine today." We stopped at a Yield sign. We made it to the game in no time and I won. My mom celebrated me winning the game with some yellow cupcakes for the whole team.

I AM A BEAUTIFUL BLACK GIRL

I am a beautiful black little girl. I can do everything as long as I put my mind to it.
 This one is for the beautiful black girls.
 Don't be afraid to do anything you want to.
 You can do anything that you set your mind to.
 I'm going to be a wonderful doctor.
 Help as many kids as I possible can.
 Take care of my little brother, Minion.
 Make sure he doesn't do anything stupid. I believe in you, Minion.
 You can do anything if you think hard enough.
 This song is related to my whole family.
 Keeps us all together when we're getting ready.
 Lifts us up as we're getting groovy.
 This is why I believe in us.
 And I believe in myself.





SELF CARE DAY!
WHAT IS IT?

Talking out of your seat

ACTIVITIES

MAK

ANTANIA (TANIA)

THIS ROSE CAN GROW IN CONCRETE

Inspired by Rose That Grew From Concrete by Tupac Shakur

This rose is beautiful, brave. She can stick up for herself. She can be what she wants to be. She wants to be a gymnast. She helps other people. She cares for people. She loves herself. She can do anything. She rises every time she helps someone. Right now she's as tall as this building.

This rose is like Tupac.

MY ANIMALS

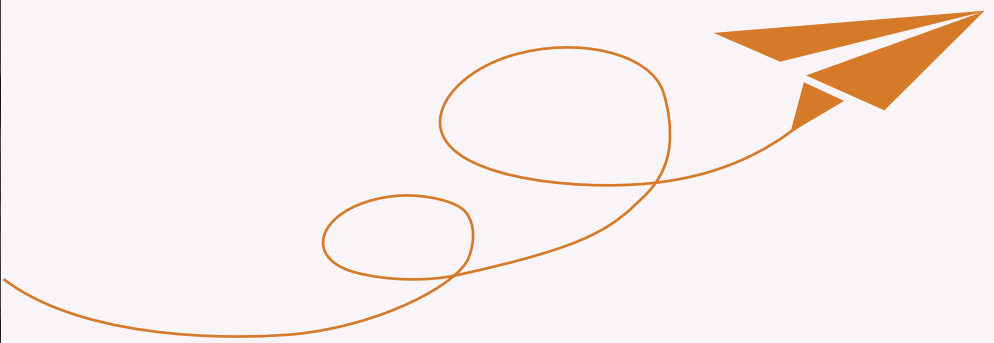
I am a monkey
Because I make jokes and I'm fun and
Because I like jumping on tables and gymnastics and dancing.

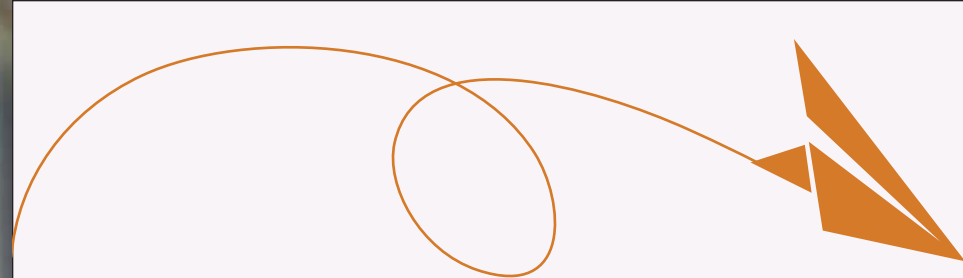
I am also a cheetah
Because I give people attitude Sometimes I'm fierce.

I am a snake
Because I'm sneaky.
I have pretty skin.

I am a fox
Because I'm beautiful.

I am a shark
Because I'm sometimes mean and give a lot of attitude.





ANIYAH

THIS ROSE CAN GROW IN CONCRETE

Inspired by Rose That Grew From Concrete by Tupac Shakur

How my rose grew.

This rose is about the first time I tried gymnastics. I couldn't do a cartwheel or any of the moves a gymnast could.

But my rose grew by my family teaching and helping me how to do a cartwheel.

One day I got off the concrete by doing a cartwheel down a hill. I felt good and happy.

After I was done, my sisters and brothers fought over who taught me. My parents said I'll be the new Gabby Douglas.

After that my rose kept growing bigger and bigger.

MY ANIMALS

I am a shark

Because if I don't like somebody I'll be mean to them and

Because if someone stares at me or gives me a def stare, I will be mean.

I am also a monkey

Because I'm silly and

Because I'm funny and play around a lot.

I am also a cheetah

Because I give attitude a lot and

Because if they don't do what I want them to do I'll have an attitude.

I am also a dolphin

Because I like to dance and I like to do gymnastics and

Because I'm very chill sometimes.



TIARA (TEE TEE)

ONCE UPON A TIME

When we got separated, I had to be in the woods for days and had to find my own food.

BUT THEN

I found a cell phone. One of the girls dropped their phone in the woods.

IT WAS LOCKED

I tried to reset it but I couldn't. I called 911 but I couldn't tell them where I was. They sent a helicopter but they couldn't find me below the trees.

Finally, I was rescued and the search for the other girls begins. We found the girls and right away we got to tracking down those girls who hurt us. We gave descriptions to the police.

Told them what happened and soon enough they were found and sent to juvie. Me and the girls decided to form a neighborhood watch to make sure no girls were taken again. We met at court, hoping the girls got life in prison.

THEY GOT 40 YEARS.

THEY GOT 40 YEARS.

Time passes and I forget what had happened. I'm in the nursing home and all of a sudden I see the girl who hurt me. I sat by her and asked, "Do you know who I am?" She didn't remember at first but I knew she would eventually. I left the home to live somewhere else and to my surprise, she was there with flowers and an apology.

I DIDN'T FORGIVE HER.

BECAUSE I'M HAPPY *Inspired by the song "I'm Happy" by Pharrell Williams*

The girl who made this song is showing people, no matter what people say, you're still beautiful. Because I'm happy, I feel happy and everyone is unique. These are my favorite lyrics. It makes me feel happy and I like the hand movement and the beat. It makes everyone beautiful in their own way. It makes me want to do things. People feel confident. If I am sad and I need to change things to be brave and have strong words. It brightens peoples' day. They can be brave and confident not scared. It changes the mood. It makes people smile.

HAPPY SONG: REMIX *Lyrics by Tee Tee and team members*

Because we're pretty

Clap along if you feel that we're pretty and unique.

Clap along if you feel like you're fresh out the boutique.

Clap along if you feel like you're brave enough to sing.

Clap along if you feel like we're the queens of rapping.

First things first

What you don't know about me

I'm a boss queen

Straight up from the 313

The only thing on my mind is getting rich.

I go hard on people and things

Like run me my money

Because I'm pretty ...

CLAP ALONG!

I AM SIX SENSES

I am a pretty puppy.

I see my owner, my mom as she walks in.

I feel fur on myself.

I smell cats that I'm going to get.

I hear my tail wagging on the couch.

I taste like grass because I'm very playful and I was outside.

I feel playful because I'm playful.

MY ANIMALS

I am a cheetah

Because I'm fast and

Because I have attitude.

I am also a shark

Because if you talk back I will talk right back

Because I'm that person who is rude but only rude if you are to me.

I am also a fox

Because I'm that beautiful dark-skinned queen.

I am also a dolphin

Because I'm a chill person and dancing calms me down.

I'm also a monkey

Because I like to play around a lot and

Because I'm very goofy.

You just haven't seen it yet.

QUESTIONS ABOUT LOVE

Do you know what love is?

Do you love your hair?

Do you love waking up and going to work?

Do you love the people you walk with?

Do you have a boyfriend?

Do you plan on getting married?

Do you have kids?

Do you have any books about love?

Do you know how animals show love?

Do you show love?



TELLING IT TEAM

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Kelly Kundrat *Social Worker Trainee*
Emily Moore-Marshall *Program Coordinator*

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Jewel Johnson *Musician*
Leisa Thompson *Photographer*
Karly Schafer *Graphic Design*

YPSILANTI COMMUNITY MIDDLE SCHOOL STAFF

Principal Petty
Assistant Principal White
Ms. Dodson *Lead Sixth Grade Teacher*

FUNDING & SUPPORT

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Victory Automotive Group
Washtenaw Co. Sheriff's Office -
Jerry L. Clayton, Sheriff
Ypsilanti Community Middle School
Zingerman's Community of Businesses

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