

The Equality Arizona Podcast, Episode 2

SPEAKERS

Julian Delacruz, tanner menard

tanner menard 00:16

Hello, everybody, this is Tanner Menard. My pronouns are they them and theirs. I'm a member of the Atakapa-Ishak Nation and I'm an organizer with Equality Arizona. This is the Equality Arizona Podcast Queer Cultural Hub, an extension of the Queer Poetry Salon, and today our guest is Julian Delacruz, who has also been my co-host for some time with the Queer Poetry Salon. I'm so excited to talk to him today, we're going to talk about the work that we've done with the Queer Poetry Salon, we're going to kind of get this particular podcast going, and we're going to hear a couple of poems by queer poets and some poetry by Julian. So I'm very excited. Hello, Julian, how are you?

Julian Delacruz 01:11

Good! How are you doing?

tanner menard 01:13

I'm doing good. It's been an interesting week. And I think that I'm just excited to talk to you about the Queer Poetry Salon and the work we've done, and maybe just get started by asking you, you know, what has the Queer Poetry Salon meant to you? And how are you feeling about us moving to this podcast format?

Julian Delacruz 01:41

Well, I would say that, like, it's been such a beautiful experience to hear so many different voices. And like, I don't think that being on Zoom has detracted for me like that experience in any way. Yeah, I think, I think it's just I don't know — yeah. It's exciting. It's always exciting. And I'm always looking forward to it. And what was your second question? Sorry, I forgot.

tanner menard 02:19

Well, I was just, I was just curious if you could tell me about, like your experience with the Queer Poetry Salon, because we started it pretty much, you were one of the people who's really helped me from the very beginning. You know, we started it in August of 2019. And it was at, we just kind of started it at me and Ramona's place. And then we had those readings in your backyard, and then we moved to Palabras, and then the quarantine happened. And we, you know, we've had some amazing outreach online on Zoom. But I'm just curious if you could talk about like, what it's meant for you as a queer person in Arizona to have an exclusively queer space for poetry.

Julian Delacruz 03:14

I mean, I really do miss it being in person. Um, just because like, I don't know, there's an ambience in person that like, you just can't recreate over the screen. But at the same time, like I really have valued so much the opportunity to connect with poets across the country. And to see that like, queer poetry is really thriving, and also to connect with like, some of my heroes. Like the CAConrad reading was so

special, and CA's work means so much to me, and I was just honestly so blown away by like, all their wisdom and the power of their poetry. And you know, like, I always think back to that reading when I first saw CA and just — yeah, so it's been really amazing connecting with, you know, people that I've known peripherally through this, but also, like, you know, people that I've looked up to for like, a really long time. And, yeah, I'm just really thankful that I get to do this.

tanner menard 04:24

Thanks for being with us. You're an MFA student at ASU. Tell us a little bit more about yourself and your work and also, maybe like, why you feel that it's important to contribute to something like this? To the Queer Poetry Salon and now to this Queer Cultural Hub. And then I'll speak as to why I'm doing this work.

Julian Delacruz 04:52

Okay, yeah, totally. Um, okay, so I am in the MFA program at Arizona State University and this is my second year, and a lot of my work revolves around like the intersection of empire and desire. So I'm thinking a lot about like, white supremacy and how that shapes desire and, you know, how that shapes who we think of as a person. So yeah, I have been exploring that topic rather heavily lately considering everything going on. And I would say, you know, the MFA really changed my work. Because before this, you know, I didn't really know that I was so interested in like, race. And I also didn't know like, how to talk about it, so the conversations that I had last year, and everything I was becoming aware of, like, really, yeah, it just really started coming to the fore in my writing. And I think that it's super important to do this kind of work. You know, the Queer Poetry Salon. Because, like, you know, there's more out there that people need to know about, you know, like: white male heterosexual poetry isn't all that there is, there are other perspectives, you know. And, yeah, that's why I think it's important, we just need alternative perspectives. And there are, there's a lot of beautiful work coming out of the queer community all the time. I think it deserves to be heard.

tanner menard 06:37

I agree. And I think that, you know, the reason that I wanted to start the Queer Poetry Salon, and now this, like Queer Cultural Hub, so that we can move beyond just poetry, we can talk to queer artists of all types, is that, as you mentioned, you know, I feel like our voices are marginalized in the greater community, like, they're not always heard, they're not usually heard, and there's not usually a spotlight on them. A lot of times, you know, I feel like it's hard to avoid queer people in the arts, because so many of us are in the arts. But it's not always made explicit. It's usually not made explicit. And it's usually sort of like, an untold secret about what's happening in a space. And so I feel like by putting a spotlight on queer poets, and now on queer artists of all types, it gives the opportunity to build resiliency for our community, because sometimes we just need to know that we exist. Sometimes we just need to know we exist. And by showing our existence to the community, we're also able to ask the community to get together and do important things. Like for instance, you know, Equality Arizona, through mechanisms like the Queer Poetry Salon, and the amazing amount of volunteers that we've been able to get together, were able to reach 2 million voters in the 2020 election, and as you know, that sort of outreach led to a blue shift on the federal level in Arizona.

Julian Delacruz 08:38

Yeah, your voting guide blew my mind, like I was super into, like, how much research you all did to like vet, you know, the judges who would be in favor of LGBTQIA issues. And yeah, I would have been lost without that guide. Really, truly.

tanner menard 08:57

That's good to know. I mean, I personally did, you know, like a lot of work with the endorsement process. And I think that that's the sort of thing that queer people need to be doing nowadays, is that, if you're an artist, that means that you have a voice that people listen to. And in my thought, it also means that you have a responsibility to use that voice to help guide your community towards voting in its best interest, and also taking action when needed in the interest of your community, and I personally feel that, you know, in 2021, even though there is a Democrat in the White House now, and there is seemingly a move towards more equity, in rhetoric and hopefully in policy, there's still going to be a lot of work for our community to do in terms of mobilizing, you know, calling representatives. And that's the way that I think that queer arts, queer poetry, and politics intersect is that we're able to kind of do this work together. And that, in my opinion, has been one of the successes of the Queer Poetry Salon, is that not only has it created a space for queer poets in Arizona, to, to have a space to feel vulnerable and have the space to feel good about the work that they're doing, but it's also been a space where they can find out like, hey, this is, you know, this is an opportunity to volunteer, this is an opportunity to call your representative, this is an opportunity to get out the vote.

Julian Delacruz 10:48

That's really brilliant, because like, when does entertainment ever get mixed up with activism? You know, I just feel like it's a, it's a, it's an interesting formulation. And, you know, yeah, we've seen that it works. So maybe other organizations can learn from that approach also.

tanner menard 11:05

I hope so. I mean, I feel like, and I want to just thank you for being there from the beginning, to help out with it and all the heart that you've put into the Queer Poetry Salon. And you've just, you're a very precious friend to me, and a very precious friend to Equality Arizona. And I've, I just want to let you know how impactful the work that you've done with Equality Arizona and with queer poets in Arizona has been, because I feel like we're shifting the — we're shifting the culture. And I think that that is where I'm interested in, in just kind of having a little dialogue with you is like, how do you feel like, like, queer artists, I mean, we can obviously just make whatever kind of art we want. And we've obviously been making art for a long time. I'm curious what you feel like at this particular moment in time with all of the, you know, the upheaval that's happening, and also the change of administration, and just where we are as a society, what do you feel that queer people can contribute to the arts? And what do you feel that, like, how do you feel that contribution should be grounded in responsibility to the community?

Julian Delacruz 12:36

Well, I would say that probably like an overwhelming number of us feel like we have to like, write about these topics and these moments, and I think the urgency has never felt stronger than it does now. Because like, you know, we need to advocate for ourselves, we need to advocate for ourselves 24/7, and like, no one is gonna do that for us. Like, we have to keep educating, through our — like, I think that's a really huge responsibility that we have to take on, you know, because like, you know, there are fascists educating people. But like, maybe our art can reach people, you know, at a stronger, better rate. You know, I think that we do have a responsibility. Like, for this moment, you know? Yeah, I don't know if that answers your question.

tanner menard 13:42

No, I think it does. And I think you hit on a really good point, which was that nobody is going to do it for us. And I'll just give you an example of that, like I moved to Arizona about four years ago. And I was fortunate because I'm indigenous. And so I happen to know some indigenous poets in Arizona who kind of got me started in the poetry scene here. But as a queer poet, who's also indigenous, I didn't really necessarily see a place for that. And when I looked around what was going on in Arizona, I didn't see like a queer space for poetry. And I always kind of felt a little weird about going places, or I don't know exactly how to explain it, but I knew that there was not exactly a place for me. There were people like Jake Skeets, who at the time had his Pollentongue reading series up in the Navajo reservation, but like in Phoenix, there was no space that I felt like 'this is my space.' And so I was grateful for the opportunity with Equality Arizona to just like make that space, right? And then like everybody that needed this, that space also joined in and contributed, like, I'm just thinking about all those readings we had with the MFA students. We needed that space, and it was like us taking responsibility for creating what we needed. And I'm hoping that this podcast will inspire more queer artists in Arizona to create explicitly queer spaces where not only queer arts can flourish and be seen, but where grassroots activism can also take place. Because, you know, one of the things that — you know, it's really great that Arizona went blue on the federal level, but on the state level, we have a lot to be concerned about. We have a whole lot to be concerned about. And so we're gonna, we're gonna have to, we're going to have to stand up for our community over the next couple of years. And we're going to have to make sure that in 2022, that we get out the vote on the local level, so that we can actually shift Arizona in a more progressive way, and in a way that, in a way that like actually supports our community. So I want to, you know, one of the things we're going to be doing in this podcast, when we talk to queer poets, queer writers, queer artists of whatever type, is asking them to read two pieces of writing, by queer writers, queer poets, maybe sharing music, whatever they're gonna decide to do, that in some way, helped shape them as queer artists. And so I'm just curious what you brought along today, and whether you'd like to like talk about it a little bit, or maybe read some of it.

Julian Delacruz 17:22

Sure, yeah. Let me just pull this up here. So I brought in a poem that I'm just so in love with. It's called "Things Haunt," by the trans poet Joshua Jennifer Espinoza. And I think I'm just going to read it and then talk about it a little. [For the text of the poem, visit <https://poets.org/poem/things-haunt>]

tanner menard 19:00

Wow.

Julian Delacruz 19:02

Yeah, that is a doozy of a poem. But I think like what it speaks to is like, the sense of resiliency, you know, and also like that, that deep spirituality that all queer people have. And like, you know, I think that's our message for the world is, you know, love, you know, like, I think, you know, being queer puts you in kind of like a, an interstitial space, right? where, like, you know, maybe some people are seeing in black and color, but because you're having such a different experience socially, you know, you can see more colors, right? And I don't know, I know, also, from Queer Studies that like a lot of like, shamans or like, spiritual people have been like, queer. This is like, historically documented. And yeah, I don't know, I just feel that spirituality from this poem, you know?

tanner menard 20:00

That's really interesting that you bring that particular point up. And I'm curious, you know, when you said that, you used the word interstitial, and I'm wondering if you could explain to the audience what that

word means. And then explain a little bit more about, like, why a queer person would see more colors because of where they are in society.

Julian Delacruz 20:29

Yeah, so like an interstitial space is, is just the space between things. So like, if you look inside of your body, it can be the space between like, two different organs. So like, it's just like, the space in which like, that connects different things, right? And interstitial spaces? Um, I don't know. I mean, I know, like, when I was growing up, I felt like, I could be attuned to like, what both men and women were thinking, like, I was just sensitive enough to, like, be able to, like, extend empathy, you know, in both directions. And I don't know, I think it's a part of that, like otherness, right? where, like, you're not, you're not necessarily totally accepted by like, one or the other, you know?

tanner menard 21:28

Yeah, I think that that's right. You know, personally, I know that I'm a very spiritual person, it's always been a very important part of my life and also my identity. And I think that that's a beautiful thing that we have to offer, and I feel like as poets and as artists, we're creating a kind of spirituality through our work, in that we call people to gaze towards the truth. Like, we might be told that we don't exist. Or our society might be shaped such that we don't exist. And it's like, you were saying that you felt like you could relate both to men on women. And, you know, as an indigenous person, you know, what little teachings I have about being two-spirit, that I feel like it's very similar for me as well, that I can relate to both to both men and women and, and also am a testament to the fact that there are kind of like liminal genders, and liminal, just sort of meaning, the same thing that you mentioned earlier, sort of like an in-between sort of space. And I think that that's, like, really, really potent. And one of the things that I loved about this poem is just like, "hear me, hear me, hear me, hear me, hear me, bear the weight of my voice and don't forget — things haunt." It's like, I think that that's one of the things that we've been able to do through the work that we're doing, is to give that opportunity for people just to be heard.

Julian Delacruz 23:25

Yes, absolutely.

tanner menard 23:27

And also, like, you know, we could be heard. Like I was saying earlier, we could be heard in any setting. But when we create this setting ourselves, it like, in my opinion, it amplifies the voice. And one of the things that I'm kind of like interested in doing as an organizer, but also as a human being is, there's so much, there's so much negativity out there in the world, and I'm really interested in amplifying the beauty of who we are as queer people. And helping us to focus on the on like, what's beautiful about who we are as people. So Julian, I asked for you to bring two pieces that influenced you as a queer poet. What is the second piece and why did you, you know, maybe you want to read it and then tell us why you brought it or however you'd like to do it?

24:31

Yeah, I'll read it. "Glitter in My Wounds," by CAConrad. [For the text of the poem, visit <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/148106/glitter-in-my-wounds>]

tanner menard 26:17

We love Conrad, don't we?

Julian Delacruz 26:24

Yeah, I just, I'm looking for the word. The, the feeling of like, rebelling against, you know, all of the stereotypes that are like laid on top of you. Right? Like, but then also, like, you know, it's that same thing I was talking about earlier, where we need to advocate for ourselves, right? Like, Conrad says, "dream our missing friends forward, burn their reflections into empty chairs," like, you know, that has that tinge of like, you know, ACT UP and the AIDS epidemic, you know, which they were like, deeply, deeply, like, scarred and influenced by in their work. And yeah, I'm just really drawn to like, how powerful this piece is when it comes to like advocating for oneself.

tanner menard 27:30

For sure, and I think I mean, the other part that I really like about this poem is when they talk about Oscar Wilde, just being busy trying not to get killed, you know, the way that queer people have had to exist for so long. And the way that it the way that it shaped who we are today, as people that we've lived through like centuries and centuries of oppression, basically, where, you know, if you didn't hide your true identity, then you could literally be killed. And things have obviously gotten a little bit better, but at the same time, like that reality continues to exist for some people. And I'm, yeah, and I mean, like, you know, one of the things that I know Equality Arizona's pushing for is a conversion therapy ban in Arizona. And just the idea, yeah, just, you know, the idea that a little someone's parents could just decide that they hate the fact that you're queer, so much, that they could send you to a conversion camp that, you know, is proven to be harmful, that, you know, might potentially use electroshock therapy on kids. And so I, I feel like that's why we have to, we have to continue doing the work that we're doing and why artists' and poets' voices are so important is because people, people, a lot of people are not even aware that this is taking place. You know what I mean? And they don't necessarily, people might see us, and they might have their own idea about who we are. But when they hear us, in our own context, describing who we are, I feel like it opens a portal for empathy and understanding.

Julian Delacruz 29:37

Yes, absolutely.

tanner menard 29:39

And not only that, but I think that like you know, there are people who, like already hate us for who we are and they may continue to hate us, but there's a lot of people who, who might just misunderstand, but be willing to be open to those things. And I think like a poet like Conrad is really doing that work in that sort of mystical context that you were talking about. So I really appreciate you bringing their work. And it's really awesome that you chose two trans poets to bring in, because we, we work with so many trans poets, you know, with the Queer Poetry Salon. And, you know, one thing that we could maybe talk about is like, I know that you and I have put our heads together a lot to try to make sure that we have run one of the most diverse poetry reading series probably in the country, in my opinion. I mean, I feel like we'd be hard pressed to find one that's been as diverse as what we've done in the last year and a half. And I was just wondering if you could talk about how you think about that, and how you think diversity should look in like a reading series or in you know, a gallery installation series or whatever?

Julian Delacruz 31:13

Well, how are you thinking about it? And then maybe that'll stir some thoughts for me?

tanner menard 31:20

Well, one of the things that I noticed early on, when I started programming for the Queer Poetry Salon was that it was a lot easier to get — Like, it was easy to get white queer and trans poets to sign up. And I feel that like, just historically, in the United States, white people are used to taking the stage. And so they're happy to they're happy to take it, and that's fine, but I feel like poets of color, are not as used to having that kind of agency. And we're like, we're learning how to take our place. So it was, I guess my point is, is that I made sure that any time a white poet signed up, I made sure to try to look for two poets of color.

Julian Delacruz 32:25

Yeah, do you feel like there's a drought of people to try to find because like, you know, at the same time, like, you know, there aren't — like MFA programs are still like, over-represented by like, the white population. Right? And I know, like, for me, like, when I was helping you to cobble up together, like people that I knew, like, working poets of color, that, like I knew. You know, it's, it's a lot less than, like, all the white poets that I know. You know, so I'm wondering also like, if you, if like it's hard to find, right, like. Is it hard to find people?

tanner menard 33:13

No, I definitely don't, I definitely don't. I think that it's, I think that it's actually like, there are so many poets of color that really not only need but want a space to read and to be represented. And so I don't think that it was hard to find, I think that it was, what I guess what I'm saying is, is that — and it was like, my experience was is that when I opened up this space and said, 'here, here's a space.' That was not as many poets of color that just jumped into the spot. Whereas more white poets were just like, happy to fill up space there. And so it took a little bit of extra effort to make sure that it was balanced. And that poets of color were actually centered in the reading series. And like, for instance, we're in Arizona, I'm indigenous. And so it's like, we've had two all indigenous poetry readings,

Julian Delacruz 34:29

Which were both amazing, amazing.

tanner menard 34:32

Thank you. And I mean, totally. And I think that it's like it just takes it takes effort on people's part to say, 'Hey, we need to center certain communities like we need to have, we need to make sure that black trans poets get represented, we need to make sure that black women poets get represented, we need to make sure that we reach out to nonbinary Latinx people.' You know what I mean? Because it's like, if you don't if you don't go, 'we need to reach out to this community' sometimes it doesn't happen.

Julian Delacruz 35:05

Yeah.

tanner menard 35:06

And I think that that's endemic of a lot of reading series across the country. It's just like, 'Oh, this poet has a lot of fame, and so we need to reach out to them, and that's gonna bring—' But sometimes the way to make things wonderful and to make things powerful and make things magical, is to reach out to people who don't historically get reached out to and to say, 'Hey, we think you're doing something amazing. Please share it with our community.' And we've been able to reach out to all of those groups of people, like I was really so excited about the book launch we did with féi hernandez.

Julian Delacruz 35:48

Yeah, that was really great.

tanner menard 35:50

And then, you know, like, like I mentioned, do you remember the second poetry salon that we had at Ramona's house? Just, so powerful.

Julian Delacruz 36:06

Yeah, that was amazing. To see so many black poets reading in like one place, I was just like, oh my god, what is ever gonna happen again? I need this. And then it happens pretty consistently, so. Like in our salon, so.

tanner menard 36:23

Yeah. Julian, did you bring any of your own work to share with us?

Julian Delacruz 36:29

Yes, I did. I brought a poem, a poem that thinks about colorism. This poem is called Grave Digger. [Text of poem not included in transcript.]W

tanner menard 39:05

Wow. Thank you for sharing that with us. I love that last line.

Julian Delacruz 39:11

Thanks.

tanner menard 39:14

Do you want to tell us a little bit about this poem or?

Julian Delacruz 39:18

Yeah, I started this poem actually a couple years ago, based on an experience that I had with someone, where I was staying at a friend's place and I was taking care of her chinchillas while she was gone. And you know, I met someone virtually. And he was really attractive and he was a grave digger. Yeah, but like I felt this like really odd pressure to like be someone who I wasn't. So yeah, I don't know. I just have some hangups about like my skin color and like whether like I'm valued, based on my skin tone. And so that was just like coming up for me and I kind of like, was just like, 'yeah, this is my apartment,' to like, yeah, get acceptance from this person. And yeah, I don't know, this poem was kind of like born from that experience and reflecting on it.

tanner menard 40:31

Thank you, that's —

Julian Delacruz 40:33

I don't know if that's TMI, that might be TMI, but —

tanner menard 40:38

No, and I think it kind of like really speaks to what we were just talking about, about, like diversity, about like, you know, and representation and how, like the, you know, you just described that you don't feel

valued because of your skin tone. And that like, makes me feel really sad, because I love you, like, you know what I mean, like, as a friend, and as a poet, I value you so much, personally, you know, and so that — I really am glad that you felt comfortable enough to read this poem, to us and to share it with us and to be that vulnerable in it. I am glad that we together have created a space where poets feel okay to speak vulnerably like this. And I'm curious if you could just talk to us about how it is that you became a poet and like, what made you — like, as a queer person, why did you decide to become a poet?

Julian Delacruz 41:53

Yeah, um, so I knew I always wanted to be a poet since the age of 12. And I had had this moment in English class, in the seventh grade, where I happened upon a poem in a textbook, and it was "Mushrooms" by Sylvia Plath. And, you know, before then I'd only read things like Robert Frost, and like other rhyme poetry, and I don't know, like experiencing that poem. And like, apprehending that, it just, it wasn't about mushrooms, like it was about, you know, someone struggling through depression, and I was just like, 'Oh my God,' like, I felt seen by that poem, at that time in my life. And yeah, it just, it just really changed my consciousness about like, what art and literature can do, and I felt less alone. And I wanted to do that for someone else. You know, like I — yeah, I want to leave something behind for someone, who like maybe is struggling or like, has been sharing in my experience.

tanner menard 43:12

I can so relate to that. I was, as you were speaking, I was thinking about, I started out as a composer. And it was not really until my 30s that I kind of really, like seriously got involved with poetry. And I remember when I first encountered Conrad's poetry, I listened to like a YouTube video or whatever. And I was just like, there were so many parts of me as a queer person that, where it was just like, 'oh my god, that is, that is what I went through.' And I never knew how to say it. And that person just said it, you know, like with lightning bolts, you know, and I was just like getting shocked by, you know what I mean?

Julian Delacruz 44:00

Yeah I know exactly what you mean, yeah.

tanner menard 44:05

And the other one, the other poet who I'm like, so excited was on our series is Tommy Pico. And it's just like, as a queer indigenous poet, I remember reading their article that came out in the New Yorker right before IRL was released. And I just remember thinking, like, if that person can do it, I can do it too. Like, I can say these things. I can talk about these unique struggles that I go through, and also the unique beauty that I have. And so thank you, I mean, I know that your work is going to touch a lot of people, you know, as more and more people read your work, you know, whenever your first book comes out, and I know, I know that it will. But then also, I know that you already have touched so many people through the work you've done with this reading series. And I'm so, I'm grateful to you for — I'm grateful to you for the friendship that we've developed through this reading series. And, to me, I think that's one of the beautiful things that like queer artists uniting does, is that it builds friendships. And it builds community. And I feel like our society is created in such a way that dissuades us from building strong relationships with one another.

Julian Delacruz 45:52

Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

tanner menard 45:57

I feel like a lot of us feel isolated. You know, and I know the quarantine kind of might be exacerbating that. But at the same time, like, we have a right to build strong and beautiful communities, where we're able to show our beautiful hearts and our beautiful spirits to one another. And I really want to thank you for sharing your beautiful heart and your beautiful spirit with us. I'm not like a super smiley person or whatever, you know what I mean. So like, it's been so meaningful to me to have your presence at the Queer Poetry Salon, because you're always smiling, and you're always like, revealing that like, really radiant part of yourself, to people.

Julian Delacruz 46:50

So you hired me just to smile.

tanner menard 46:53

Yes, haha, but you know what I mean? Like, that's how we like help each other out. Like we've been, we've been able to really kind of like balance one another's energy with this. And I really, I just want to thank you, Julian, thank you for what you've done for Equality Arizona, and for me as a person, and for what you've done for queer poetry in Arizona. Is there any thing that you'd like to close off with, any final thing that you'd like to say?

Julian Delacruz 47:34

Um, just that this has been such a beautiful experience. And it means so much to me. And I think that, you know, this is giving people like the space and the permission to do the things that they actually want to do. And that's always a beautiful thing. Yeah, I really love the Queer Poetry Salon and Equality Arizona, and thank you all so much for like having me on board with this. This has been really, really great.

tanner menard 48:01

Awesome. Well, we're looking forward to doing more of these podcasts. Going forward, Julian will be the co-host. I wanted to have a conversation with him today just to honor his poetry and honor his contribution to this series. I felt like it would be a beautiful way for us to kick off this podcast. And we look forward to interviewing many more queer poets; hopefully we're gonna get to interview some people who've already read on our series and give them a little bit more opportunity to just tell us who they are and to share their beautiful hearts and spirits with us.