

H E A L

Humanism Evolving through Arts and Literature

ANGELS LANDING
Cameron Gerhold
Class of 2025

Fall



2023



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

PROSE

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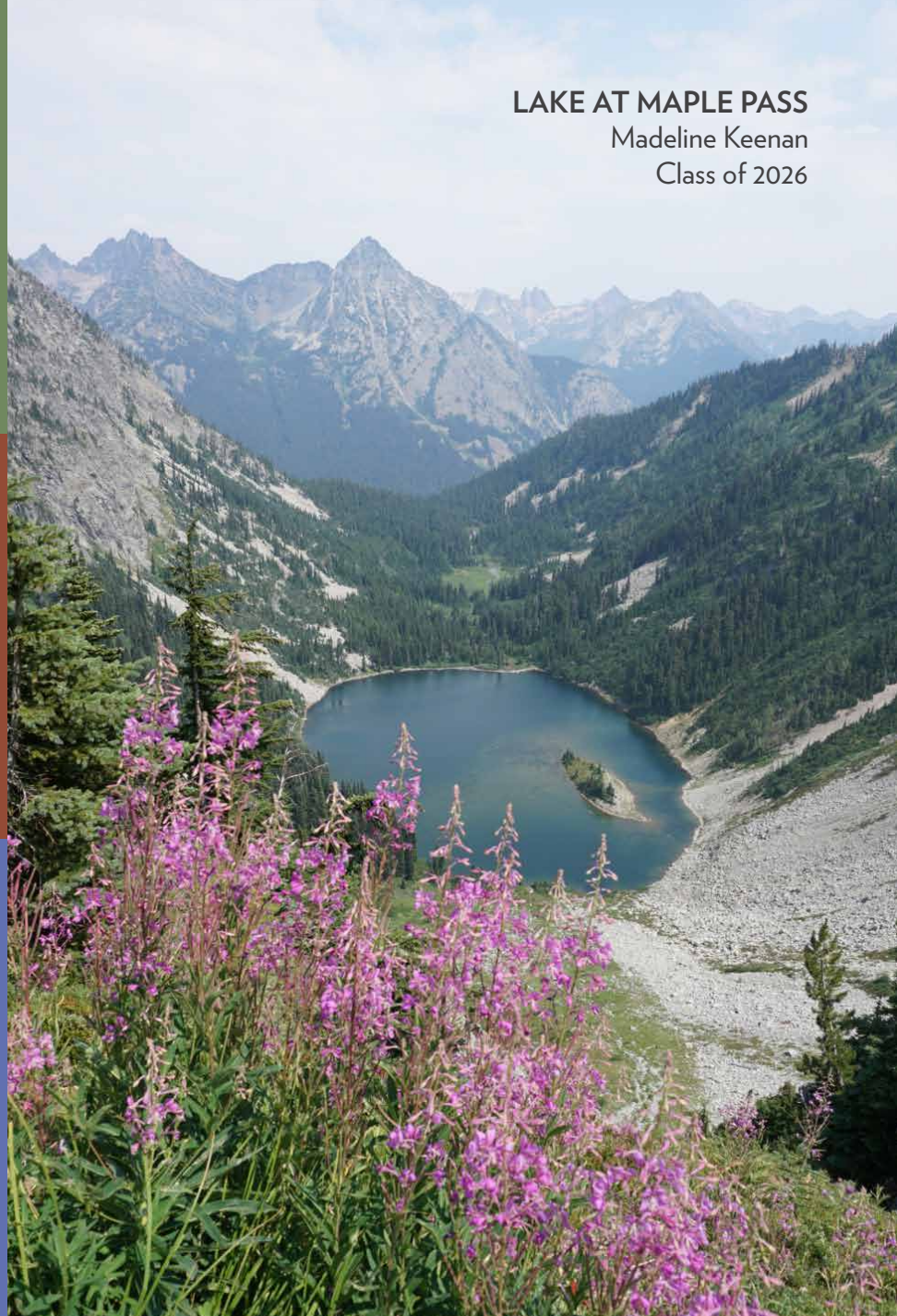
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Trauma Nights

Hanna Lateef, Class of 2024

An urgent message is transmitted
in between the static:

“Gun shot wound to the head.
Trauma bay, five minutes.”

We don our gowns and circle the bed.
I hold my breath until
the stretcher rolls in.
I wonder how he’s breathing still.

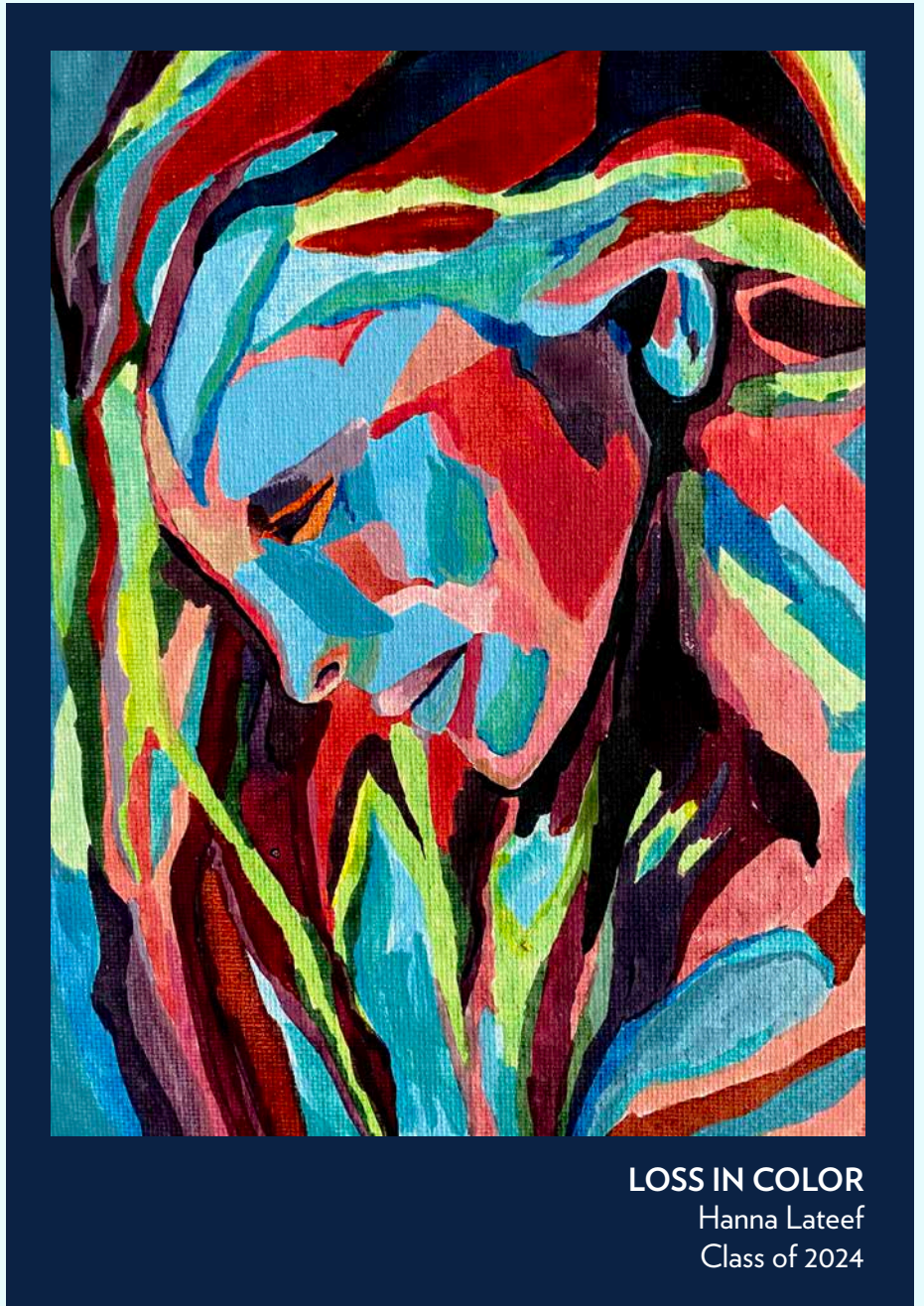
Our movements are choreographed
and highly standardized, despite
how rarely we see someone in his state
look so alive.

With renewed hope
I perform a prescribed role
but suddenly the formation breaks
and I find myself closer to his face.

He looks my age
maybe younger
can’t tell
his eyes are swollen shut
covered with
Wait! I saw his mouth stir
maybe not
was it a reflex?
his leg twitched
did he say something?
was it someone
telling me to
move?

When the dust settles
we return to our stations,
defeated.
But I’m stopped and
given one more task.

I approach with dread
the side of his head
that I hadn’t surveyed as yet
and I find parts of him
that used to think and feel
revealed to the world.
So with needle and thread
I make him look whole enough
for the people he loved.



LOSS IN COLOR
Hanna Lateef
Class of 2024

My back was turned but
I still heard his dad’s voice shake
when he spoke his name.
The radio buzzes again.

There are some lows I can’t escape,
but nights are long
so I can’t break
secretly, I wait for dawn
to wash away my ache.

VIEWS IN SAINT JOHNS

Lauren Frankle
Class of 2026



STILL HERE: My Experience Repeating a Year of Medical School

Marthana Phan
Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine
Florida International University

On a hot and humid July afternoon, the white coat ceremony for the class of 2025 at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine was in full swing. Not even the threat of a giant thunderstorm, which happened often during the summer in Miami, could dampen the excitement of 150 aspiring physicians and their families. As I walked onstage, slipped into my brand-new white coat, and accepted the coveted “medical student” title I had spent years working for, I thought about why I was embarking on this journey: my family of Vietnam War refugees, my brother who has autism, and my father who suddenly passed away five years ago after dedicating his entire

adult life to securing his family’s safety and happiness. I was excited but also aware that medical school is not for the faint at heart. However, I still felt ready for the challenge because after all, I had made it this far. What could possibly go wrong?

Within the first week, the excitement I felt at my white coat ceremony quickly faded as I became overwhelmed and fell behind. Even with seemingly endless hours of studying, I was still doing poorly. I was exhausted every day and neglecting my well-being. For the first time in my life, my hard work was not paying off. On top of that, I lived at home with my brother who was prone to sudden behavioral outbursts consisting of screaming, spitting,

and self-injury. My mother and I often had to drop everything we were doing to come to his aid. However, I hesitated to seek help because I had never struggled so much in school before, and it seemed like all my classmates were doing well. I started to believe that I was not smart enough and did not deserve to be in medical school. I barely passed my first two classes and kept pushing with the hope that things would improve overtime, but unfortunately, I failed my first class at the end of the first semester. I had never failed anything up to that point, especially a class in school. I spent my entire winter break studying for the remediation exam, which I did not pass by only one question. Consequently, I was called to the promotions committee to explain everything that had led to these failures. I was permitted to stay with my class and eventually reached the first block of second year.

Finally, it seemed like things were improving. I was not only doing better academically, but also fully immersing myself in student life by participating in simulations, presenting at conferences, and even performing with the school band at our annual med prom. But underneath the surface, history was repeating itself as I began to fall behind once again, which culminated in a panic attack during a simulation session where it seemed like everyone in my group except me knew everything. I ultimately failed the block by just 1%.

After being notified of this course failure, I continued going to school as if everything were normal while trying to convince the promotions committee to let me continue with my cohort

for a second time. I then contracted COVID and had to recover at home while also waiting for a decision and studying for an upcoming midterm. However, the day before I was scheduled to return to school, I was given the devastating news that I would have to start medical school over from the very beginning. I took a leave of absence for the rest of the semester and within hours of receiving the decision, I was no longer an actively enrolled medical student.

After being told that I would have to repeat first year, I felt ashamed, alone, and like I had let everyone in my life down. I was angry at myself for allowing myself to hit rock bottom. I repeatedly questioned why I was even on this grueling journey. I learned who my real friends were as word and speculation spread about my sudden vanishment. Not only did I start to believe that I would never become a doctor, but I did not know what the future held for me or even who I was anymore. At times, I wanted to simply disappear.

With time, support from my loved ones and upperclassmen who had gone through the same or similar experiences, therapy, and reflection on all my mistakes and whether medicine was still the right path for me, I accepted my fate and started to prepare for my return to medical school. I self-studied for the upcoming block and researched how other medical students who repeated a year overcame their challenges and achieved success in their programs. Before I knew it, summer break was over, and it was time for me to join the class of 2026.

When I first returned to medical school, I was afraid of judgment from both my old and new classmates. Fortunately, I had a few friends in the same situation which helped me feel less alone, and most of my peers were ultimately very accepting and supportive. I created a consistent study plan that allowed me to master the material, prioritized my well-being, and adopted a growth mindset. I also learned how to set clear boundaries with my mother about when I needed to step away from being a daughter and caregiver to study for my classes.

Within a few weeks, I was consistently doing well on quizzes and exams, and by the end of the year, I not only passed, but excelled in all my classes!

Remediating first year, albeit daunting, allowed me to regain confidence in my ability to succeed in medical school, build a stronger knowledge foundation, enjoy more of what I am learning, and rediscover my love for medicine and why I am on this journey. I now feel like I am thriving instead of just surviving, and that I do belong here after all.

I have also realized that in the class of 2025, I was settling. I thought that I was only capable of barely passing my classes and that I did not have to try to excel in medical school, but rather just get through it. As a result, I was not properly learning the material nor living up to my full potential. Now in the class of 2026, I am no longer just scraping by – I have rediscovered that I am truly capable of being great.

Although my medical school journey has been tumultuous, I wholeheartedly believe that everything transpired the way it did for a reason. Today, I am more confident, resilient, compassionate, and prepared to face any additional challenges that may arise throughout my career. I am also committed to sharing my story so that I can help other medical students going through the same experience and reduce the stigma surrounding academic failure in medical education. More than ever, I am sure that I will achieve my dream of becoming Dr. Phan.

Whenever I have a moment of doubt, I remind myself that:

- I am strong.
- I am going to be okay.
- I am making my loved ones proud.
- I am going to be a great physician.
- But most importantly, I am still here.

Marthena Phan is a second-year medical student at Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine in Miami pursuing a career in pediatric neurology. In her spare time, Marthena enjoys writing, swimming, rollerblading, biking, performing in a band as a singer and guitarist, spending time with family and friends, and exploring Miami. This essay previously appeared on KevinMD.

MOOD I
Chaitali Hambire, MDS



MOOD III
Chaitali Hambire, MDS

Occupational Therapy

Kristin LaFollette, PhD

Occupational therapy taught me to see myself in others—

When the man with the cast on his left arm came for an appointment, a familiar pain tenderized my bones. At fourteen, my left wrist caught in some railing on a playground and the epiphyseal plates separated like an open mouth. We were on a fieldtrip and while we waited for the bus, my science teacher told me to plunge my arm into a blue cooler of soft drinks. On the ride home, a friend said, *If you have to get a cast, you should choose pink.*

Three years after the left arm, my right arm was in a cast
and I understood how animal-like we are. How human.

Like my father, the man with the cast had a fractured neck, his head held in place by a vast apparatus. In the hospital following my father's accident, the doctor said

broken
and
cervical

and we pictured a ripe fig, split
after falling from a tree.

The man with the cast told me about his own accident in the snow:
How his neck had compressed with the force of his body moving head-first
against an unmoving object.
How his brain had risen with traumatic injury.

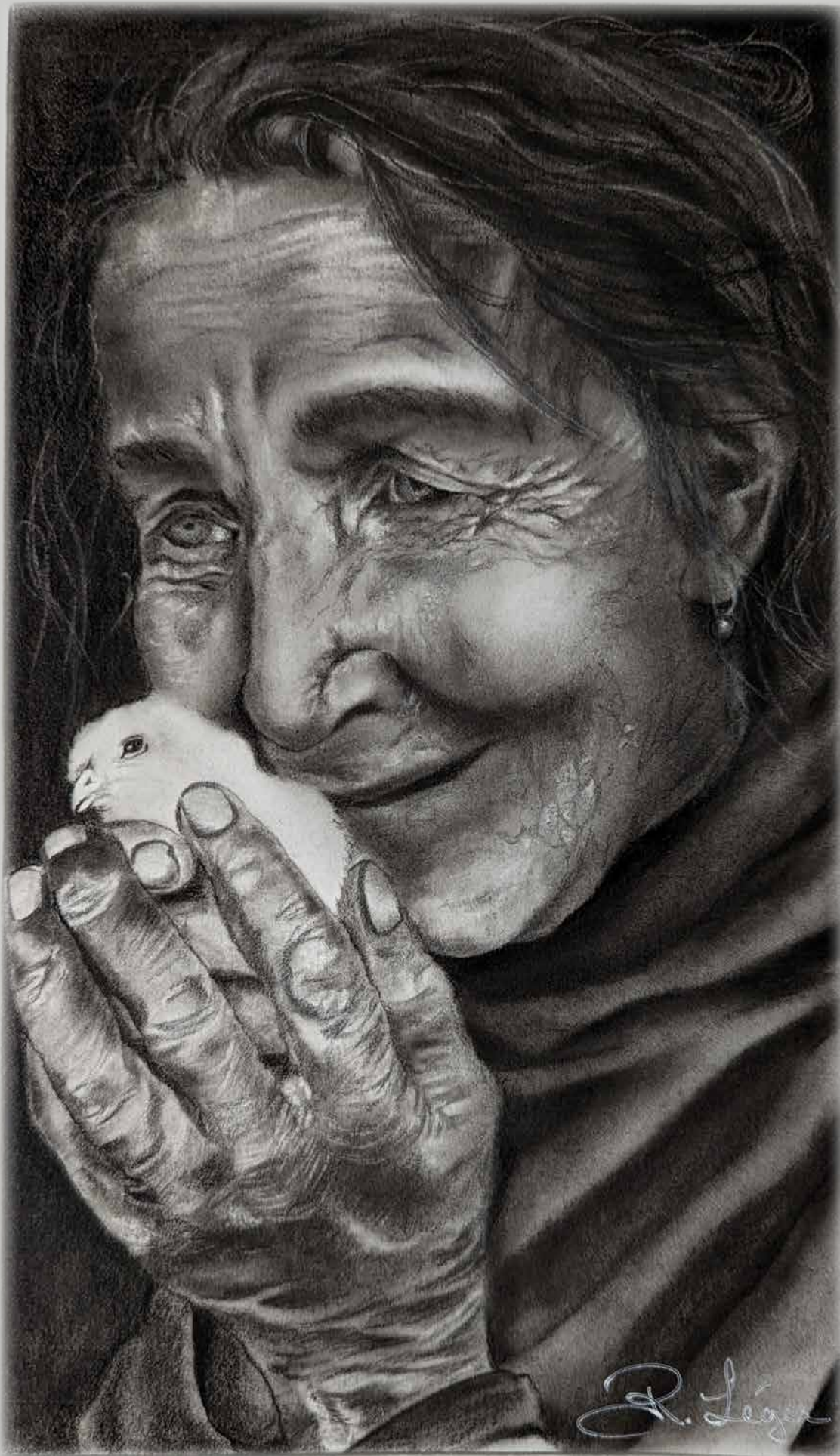
Because of my father, I knew the depth of these wounds, a calculus in the lowest parts of the body that can't be reached or scraped away. I knew these lingering wounds so well that I could have pointed them out on x-rays or scans,

but only if I could have willed myself to look at them—

Kristin LaFollette is the author of Hematology (winner of the 2021 Harbor Editions Laureate Prize) and Body Parts (winner of the 2017 GFT Press Chapbook Prize). She received her Ph.D. from Bowling Green State University and is a professor at the University of Southern Indiana. Learn more about her work at kristinlafollette.com. This poem previously appeared in the literary journal Tendon.

SPRING IN ASHEVILLE
Emily Gansert
Class of 2024





HOPE FOR UKRAINE

Rosanne Leger, MD

Dr. Leger graduated from Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN, and did her Family Medicine residency at Halifax Health Medical Center in Daytona Beach, FL. Dr. Leger works as a hospitalist and in her free time enjoys exercising, drawing, painting, and spending time with her family.

Approximately five years ago, my primary care physician retired. He was the best doc ever! He was the type of person who was very attentive to my needs and listened to me as long as I needed to talk, regardless of time. When I was diagnosed with bladder cancer, working together with my oncologist, he was my greatest advocate and source of support.

When he diagnosed me with type-2 diabetes, I was really angry and depressed. I'll never forget what he told me. He said, "Chester, look at it this way, for 65 years you were not a diabetic. Think about all those years. And realize you were the only child, your father was diabetic, and it ran in his family, so genetics were not on your side. But you held it at bay for 65 years. Isn't that wonderful?"

When I thought about what he said, I began to feel better. My anger dissipated and my tears went away. His response to me was brilliant!

When I was discharged from the hospital after my cancer surgery, he was the first person to call me at home to see how I was doing. To me that was the mark of an exceptional doctor. I think one reason we got along so well is because we were the same age.

As he approached his retirement, he told me his plans about a year before his retirement date to give me time to prepare for that day. He intuitively knew I'd need that much time to be ready for his departure. When he retired, I sent a glowing letter to the hospital administrator praising him and I also sent a personal thank you letter to him.

After he left the medical complex, my oncologist retired too! For a period of time, I had temporary doctors every six months because the hospital couldn't find permanent replacements. It was a very difficult time for me.

Over the past three years, I finally settled in with a new doctor. He was a young man who had just completed his residency. I felt good about him because I believed a young doctor would have been exposed to the latest medical advancements. And the fact that he specialized in diabetes also made him the perfect choice as primary care physician. Additionally, I felt a connection with him because he is Egyptian. I've always been fascinated by ancient Egyptian history and archeological discoveries and couldn't wait to talk with him about that. We hit it off right away. He worked with me to get my A1C down and collaborated with my oncologist to support me.

Recently, I went in for my yearly physical and at the end of the exam, he told me he would be leaving. My first response

was, "Oh, no!" When I asked him why he was leaving, he said he was moving to be closer to his family. I told him I could certainly understand that. Tears welled up in my eyes, but I held them back. I thanked him for helping me and wished him well. He extended his hand to me and said, "Chester, it has been my honor to be your doctor." I held onto his hand for a few moments and then we said goodbye.

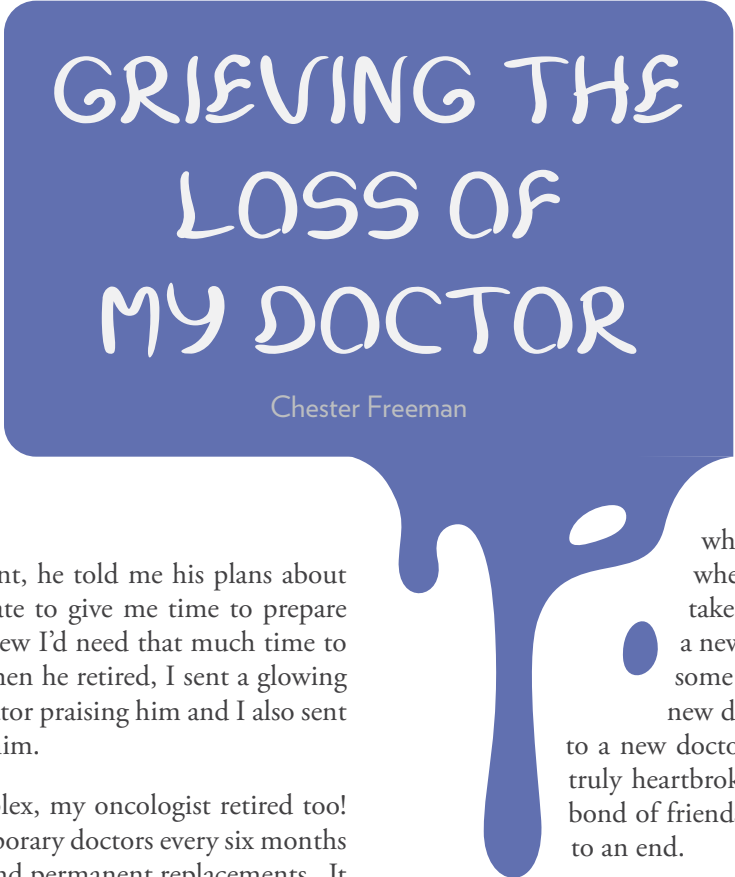
When I got to my car in the parking lot, the flood gate of tears broke open. I couldn't contain myself. I felt as if I had lost my best friend. I was in shock. I felt tired when I got home, like I'd been hit by a ton of bricks, and after dinner I went to bed early. When I woke up the next morning, I realized

I was grieving the loss of my doctor. Tears were still streaming down my cheeks.

This loss was emotional for me. I don't know if the medical staff is aware of what happens to a patient like me when a doctor leaves their practice. I felt a deep sadness and frustration because now I had to start the process of looking for a doctor all over again. That process is exhausting!

It takes time to find a doctor who is accepting new patients when many doctors are not. It takes time to feel comfortable with a new doctor, and that always causes some anxiety. It takes time to trust a new doctor. It takes time to open up to a new doctor. None of this is easy. I was truly heartbroken because I had established a bond of friendship and trust that was coming to an end.

Before I left the office, I made an appointment to follow up on my medical care. I've been temporarily passed on to another doctor and oncologist and will meet them in six months. At least, this gives me time to grieve the loss of my former doctors and prepare myself for meeting new healthcare providers. Hopefully, in time, everything will sort itself out. I'm confident it will. I know I must remain positive in all things because that's the only way to process the loss and get through this grief.



Chester Freeman is a retired college and hospital chaplain (Amherst College and Hartford Hospital), a freelance writer, and the author of a children's book, Runaway Bear (Pelican Publishing, 1993).

Journey of that Black Doctor

Romario Gibson

In the midst of poverty and strife,
a young black boy dreamed of a better life.
He dreamed of saving lives, making a change,
of being a doctor helping his community at a wider range.

He had no role models, no one to show him the way,
or help him find a place for his head to lay.
Yet still he persisted and he resisted
determined to make his dream what he insisted.

He worked hard and studied late,
pushing through challenges and forcing himself through a closed gate.
And as the days grew longer, he grew stronger,
more resilient and so magnanimous the nay-sayers could never be unanimous.

And then one day, he became a doctor,
a healer, a savior, a shining light. My god, he was so bright.
He worked tirelessly to save black lives,
to build up his community, inspiring others, in multiples and hives.

And through all the trials and tribulations,
he never lost sight of his dreams.
He knew he had a purpose, a mission, a calling
so that he could never allow himself to stumble or be kept stalling.

And as he became well known and respected,
he knew that his journey was not in vain.
For he had inspired a generation, and given hope to those in pain
much like his past self, screaming angrily in the rain.

So here's to the black medical student, now black doctor
who dreamed of doing good, saving folks and having a better life.
Now that he's a doctor, please I beg, may he deal with no more strife.
And may his spirit inspire us all, forcing us up and over a wall,
bcuz his legends, have now become so tall.

Romario Gibson, a 4th-year medical student at SUNY Upstate, is passionate about increasing diversity in medicine. Hailing from Jamaica and raised in New York, he's dedicated to promoting inclusivity in healthcare.

Purpose

Salma Elsheikh
Class of 2025

“I just don’t feel well. I have no energy or mental focus. I’ve been to so many doctors and no one can figure out what’s wrong with me. Every test that comes back normal makes it feel less likely that I’ll ever find an answer.” As a 3rd-year medical student, this was one of the scariest things a patient could say to me. If all those other doctors with many years of experience can’t figure it out, how can I? Was I just going to be another name on the long list of people that couldn’t help this patient?

I was doing my rotation at an endocrinology outpatient clinic when I came across Mr. B. He had gone to every doctor he could think of and ended up at our clinic due to a family history of a sibling with hyperparathyroidism. But after all the bloodwork and scans came back normal, we had to come up with something else. Being a med student, I usually go in first to gather a history and present it to my preceptor before we go in together, but this time was different. I was with another patient while my preceptor went in to talk to Mr. B, but when I came out to present my patient, my preceptor asked me if I’d be interested in talking to him. “No one has been able to give him an answer as to what’s wrong with him so far and he was curious if you had any ideas. Just go talk to him, no pressure, and see if you can come up with anything,” my preceptor said as she gave me a pat on the back. “Me? Why would the patient want to talk to me? If my preceptor couldn’t give him an answer, what could I possibly contribute?” I thought as I walked towards the room.

Up until that moment, I’d been really struggling, and only a few people in my life were aware of what I was going through. My third year had not been going as planned and most days I was questioning my purpose in life, something I was once so sure of. “Am I smart enough? Am I capable enough? Am I strong enough to keep going and finally get through this rough patch to reach my goal?” These were only some of the questions constantly running through my mind almost every waking moment, except when I was with patients. Despite all of my struggles, shortcomings, and self-doubt, my patients and preceptor saw something in me that I failed to see in myself. Over the year, many of the patients I’d seen felt compelled to tell my preceptor how good of a job I did, they had worked with other med students before and I was one of the finest, and best of all, my preceptor wouldn’t skip a beat on agreeing. I just couldn’t understand what they saw in me, but I wish I could tell them how much those kind words meant to me, how on the days I feel the most worthless, their words are what get me out of bed, knowing I did something right and made the slightest difference in this world.

I took a deep breath and walked in. I introduced myself to Mr. B as I took a seat. “My preceptor gave me a quick summary, but I want to hear it from you, so just start at the beginning and tell me what’s going on,” I said. He was my last patient of the day and my preceptor felt that I’d seen enough thyroid and diabetes cases; she told us to take our time, and so we did. He told me about all the different doctors he went to, all the tests they’ve done so far, everything they thought it was but ended up not being, and after 3-4 years of going through this, he feels like he may never find an answer. He told me that he’s a retired pharmacist and has been doing his own research, looking for anything he thinks might help to mention to a doctor. So of course, I asked, “Do you have any ideas?” and he did. It took us two tries to reach a very plausible cause, he had brought it up to his PCP before but there were more plausible causes, so it was further down on the differential list at

the time. I was doing research as we were speaking, trying to figure out a diagnosis only to find the perfect fit, symptomology, timeline, cause, etc. “I’m a med student, Mr. B, so I can’t formally diagnose you, but I will talk to my preceptor, and print out some information to take to your PCP to see if she agrees. Don't lose hope just yet,” I said with a smile as I left the room. When I came back to the room with my preceptor, I could see that Mr. B looked just the slightest bit more relieved and relaxed. We hadn’t given him a final answer, but we gave him hope for one, a validation of what he’s been through—what he felt was real and we were not going to give up on him just yet.

There’s so much to learn in medicine, and in so little time, that some things may not seem as important, but interactions like these are what remind us of their value. We may be the experts on medicine, but patients are the experts on their own bodies and if we don’t include and value their opinions and reasons for seeking care just as much as our own we may end up doing more harm than good. Patients are in an extremely vulnerable position when seeking our help, it may not be life-threatening, or be anything at all to us, but if a patient made their way to you it is because they felt it was important enough to seek help. Sometimes validation and/or reassurance can make a world of a difference. If someone who has more experience than you can't figure out the answer to a question, it doesn't mean you won't be able to either. Quality healthcare requires teamwork because each member, including the patient, will provide a different perspective that helps us reach the final answer. Lastly, people who believe in you do so for a reason.

My struggles are far from over, and some days it will still be hard to get myself out of bed, but Mr. B reminded me of my purpose that day and I am forever grateful to him for giving me a chance to make a difference in his life.



A GLOOMY WINTER DAY – DUPONT STATE FOREST, NC

Joshua Davis
Class of 2025

Grey Matter

Elizabeth Ruelke, Class of 2026

Am I losing my mind
Something undefined
Words are ghosts
Unwilling hosts
Forgotten people
No longer equal

Am I losing my mind
Last will signed
Rage and tears
Future of fears
Broken body
Thoughts are boggy

Am I losing my mind
Past enshrined
This damn temper
Goes with the tremor
Involuntary possession
Fast forward regression

Am I losing my mind
So poorly timed
So much life to live
Unwilling captive
Another medication
With reservation

Am I losing my mind
Focus on being kind
To those I love
Time: a flighty dove
Enjoy my time
Before I join the offline

*Written for a loved one with
Parkinson's Disease*



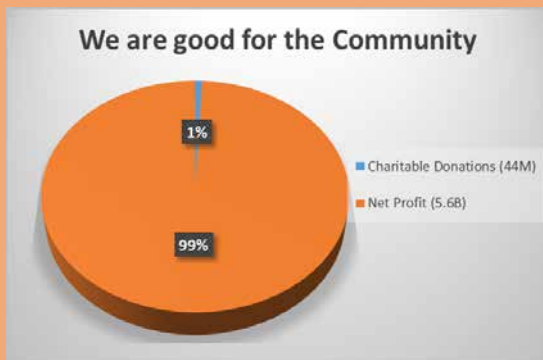
THE BUNION



PROFIT SAVES PEOPLE



WE CATER TO YOUR NEEDS!



WE DONATED 44 MILLION TO CHARITY!



WE PAY A COMPETITIVE PHYSICIAN SALARY!

WHEN WE, THE BOARD OF EXECUTIVES, MAKE DECISIONS, WE ONLY CONSIDER THE LIVES OF OUR PATIENTS. BY INCREASING EFFICIENCY, EARMARKING PATIENT SAFETY, AND EXPANDING SERVICES OFFERED WE ENHANCE THE LIVES OF THOSE AROUND US. WE THINK NOT OF THE SHAREHOLDERS, MONEY BACKERS, AND INVESTMENT ENTITIES. WE THINK ONLY OF SAVING THE DRUNK DRIVING VICTIM, THE HOMELESS, AND THE CHILDREN SUFFERING FROM LEUKEMIA. TO THE LEFT ARE SOME CHARTS WE'VE PUT TOGETHER TO EXEMPLIFY HOW COMMITTED WE ARE TO OUR PATIENTS AND THE PUBLIC.

WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT YOU CAN SEE THE BENEFIT WE BRING TO THE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM.

WE WANT TO CARE FOR YOUR LOVED ONES AND BE THERE FOR YOU IN YOUR TIME OF NEED.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO ENRICHING OUR COMMUNITY. WE HOPE THAT YOU'LL SEND US YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT AND FUTURE SERVICES YOU'D LIKE TO SEE FROM US.

WE WILL LISTEN AND WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY.

SINCERELY,
BENJAMIN RICHARD WELLINGTON III, CEO
YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD HOSPITAL

Write for the Bunion: It's not scary *The Bunion* is a place for satirical medical news and humor related to experiences with which medical students, faculty, and clinicians are all familiar. Such experiences can involve the FSU College of Medicine, the medical school experience, or healthcare in general. Content is not intended to offend or humiliate anyone. All names are factitious and any resemblance to actual people would be merely coincidental. Submit to *The Bunion* through the HEAL submission site: <https://journals.fcla.edu/heal>