

Preface

Abuse is pervasive in our time, as it has been in every time, yet humans possess a unique capacity for imagination, which can help us transcend traumatic experiences. Through artistic creativity, long-held emotional and physical responses to trauma can be accessed, expressed, and released.

SafeArt's programming creates a safe environment for this expression, in middle schools, high schools, colleges, in women's groups, retreats, and other venues. This body of work was selected from *SafeArt's* archives of pieces written during our first decade. They were chosen for the breadth of their content, and the authenticity of their forms. In *SafeArt* we have a saying, "Content rules!" We know that these works are not polished to a slick finish, and we have purposefully presented them in the form in which they were conceived, to allow the voice of the author to be heard, and felt.

Sharing the experience of abuse brings survivors together and embraces those who are isolated in their trauma. Publishing these pieces extends this sharing and educates those for whom abuse is something that happens to 'other' people, highlighting specific patterns of abusive behavior and traumatized responses.

Recently, we saw a man in his thirties, with his wife and two young sons. They are a beautiful family, loving, hard working and responsible. This man was among the first performers in *SafeArt's* early days. We first met 8 years ago, when he was referred to us by our local domestic violence agency. It was clear that he needed to heal. His mother had been murdered by her boyfriend, and this murderer was soon to be released from jail, on 'good behavior.' It was almost too much to bear, but bear it he did, and with encouragement, wrote his story. As he shared it with teens and adults in *SafeArt* audiences, his voice cracked,