

A POET IN PRISON

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So Zach writes it out. He's been writing for two years. Writing poetry helps him stay the course. And the universe may well be saying "Yes!" His work, "Angelic Smile" won an honorable mention in a recent poetry contest and was published in Creative Connections. It's now a hard-bound book.

There are a lot of kids out there with a desire to publish juvenile poetry. Zach's writing may be more than that. But he's modest about the recognition, though clearly proud.

"It was good. It was awesome," Zach says, showing more emotion than usual.

Almost every day Zach sits down and writes. He's prolific, he says, writing his poetry on school-style lined paper, often with crumpled corners. The poetry soothes him, even though its themes are dark — often macabre. Most adults don't like his work, he says as he begins reading "The Rainbow's Children" aloud, sans any emotion or inflexion in his voice.

In your disgusting society of hate, We were outcasts, We were the unwanted, The abused, The hated. No more are we those things. We are the children of the rainbow. We stand tall. No more hiding who we are. No more hiding who we love. We are stronger for the abuse your society puts on us. We are wiser than our so-called parents. We are more open-minded than our "peers". We are no longer going to sit in fear of your abusiveness. We are going to turn our backs to "society" and tell them: "We are done with you and your hatefulness." We will not be abused. We will not become our abusers. We will live in peace. Now is our Time to break free. To build our own society, separate from the hateful societies of the earth.

The writing reflects Zach's life, if not just his inner and mostly unknown life. He's depressed. No doubt about it. Zach says so. He is bored in prison. He is sleeping too much. The staff doesn't like it. He can't control his anger. He says so. He's sad.

A BETTER LIFE

Coming out at 14 resulted with more drama in his life. He lost friends and some family couldn't deal, he says.

"It's no fun to be an outcast," Zach says.

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