





# ***The Perspective Warrior***

**Story by: Avery Benson, Student  
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*When I think back to 2018, I recall how passionate, encouraged, and empowered I felt when starting my first year of college. I was an older sister, daughter, first-generation, African American woman, and a college student! I started to feel more firmly the responsibility to cut off the ropes of struggle and inequity tethered to the stories of my ancestors. I was defying odds and inspiring others, so of course I had hope that the world would open itself up to me. No dream of mine would be faltered. My mind swirled with naive thoughts of 'control over every situation', and never accepting words like 'fail'. I felt strength. I was confident. Empowered by the sense of freedom dwindling at my fingertips.*

*Then the beginning of 2021, twenty-two years young and most days my eyes would flutter open already wondering what the purpose was to wake up in the first place. Aside from assignments and the daily news updates blaring from the TV upstairs (because yes, I moved back home to sleep in my parents' basement for all of quarantine), it felt as if there was no reason to do anything. The world—my world—was upheaval. There was a sense of chaos, not only from the constant bombardment of TV and social media streams that permeated every area of life, but the self-confrontation that came with loss of control and the whispers of hopelessness that began to torment me and the tangibility of my dreams. I became depressed. The indestructible me, the confident me, the me that was whole had been jabbed by the strain of isolation, loneliness, and loss of motivation until all of a sudden, I felt as if I had completely lost myself. I had dreams, attainable dreams it once felt like, all of which required connection and communication. I fantasized about exploring networking events, new fashion styles, performing poetry, visiting jazz clubs, traveling to visit my significant other in his country, meeting my inspirations in person, and well, the list could go on. I yearned to feel places, smell places, to be in community. I had a dream to live, but most days it just felt like I was surviving, as I'm sure it did for most of us.*

*With 2022 approaching, I begin to reflect. Perspective has grown to be my closest friend and accountability partner. Perspective has taught me that the world can be turned upside down, but it's still possible to go on. I find myself considering others' circumstances more frequently because we've all been faced with some kind of affliction. Some of us even face the rising weights of injustice. So now it's a must—I have to look deeper. The pandemic was hard—is hard—for all of us, but I have hope that this hardship will create a strength in us that is unimaginable. We are powerful people. Though we've been tattered, confused, and hurt, we've also been prompted to acknowledge the importance of human connection. The value that comes from seeing people for who they are, not for who we assume them to be. COVID-19 catapulted me into a time where my dreams were forced to meet reality. Though, in ways that almost seem unnatural, I have become grateful for how my body is now distinctly carved by perseverance and compassion. Because yes, I have been tired, I have been overwhelmed, and I have been hopeless, but I will not drown in the tides of unfamiliarity. I am a warrior. We are warriors.*

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**Artist:**

**Jordan Witzel, Student  
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