



Ashley S., age 18

Dum Spiro Spero

Ashley has studied photography at Venice Arts since 2012. This photo book was produced in our Advanced Photography workshop, in which students explored the theme of identity. Through photography and text, Ashley documented her relationship with her mother, siblings, and herself, as she overcame the difficulties of coming out.

In Ashley's own words:

"I found out about Venice Arts in 10th grade. I found myself at Venice Arts taking a Photography class, and I became passionate about photography. I would carry my camera with me everywhere and get ideas while walking the streets. Looking into a camera, I see things in a different way. Before, I didn't look at lighting or composition in my day-to-day life. Now, when I'm in the moment or simply see something, I automatically think this could be a good photo if this and this was changed. I see my life in photos because of photography."



*I've always been okay with not being girly; it has never felt right to me.
Of course that was one of the many arguments I had with my mom.
She would say, "Wear dresses, wear skirts, use make-up!"
I just cannot do that; it is the most uncomfortable feeling ever.*



*Some may understand me on this one.
Looking in the mirror and seeing something you hate, something you wish could just go away.
Always hoping that one day you'll look in the mirror and see everything you wished for.*

I've struggled with my weight for as long as I can remember, but it didn't start to bother me until I was around 14 or when my mom started to use it to hurt me. Maybe she didn't mean it, but it sure didn't help my self-esteem





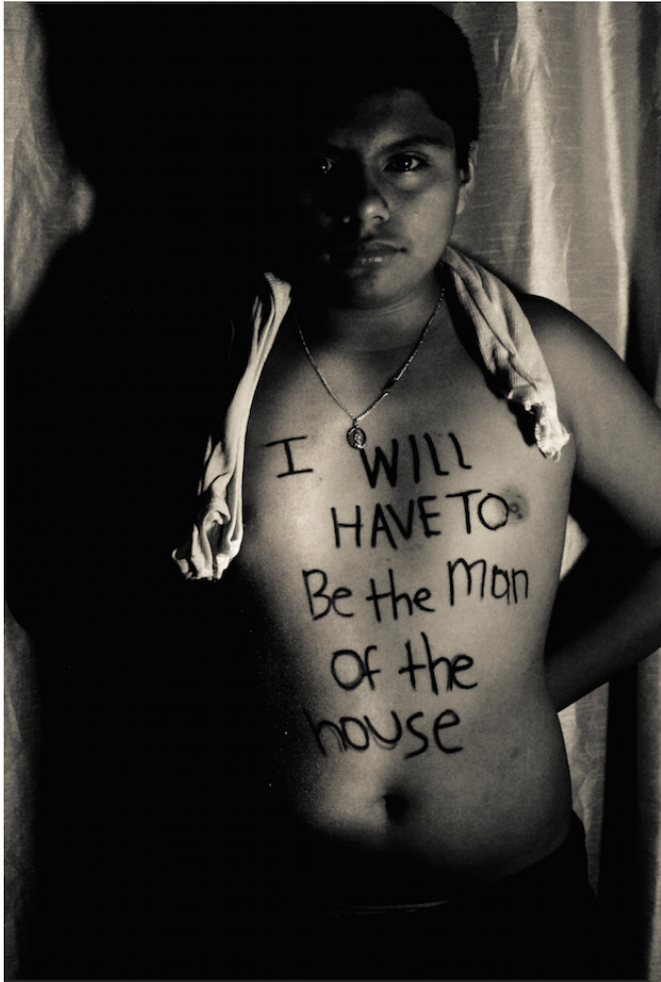
*I believe everyone goes through a period of time where they just don't know anything.
That's where I am now. So much has changed and is continuously changing.*

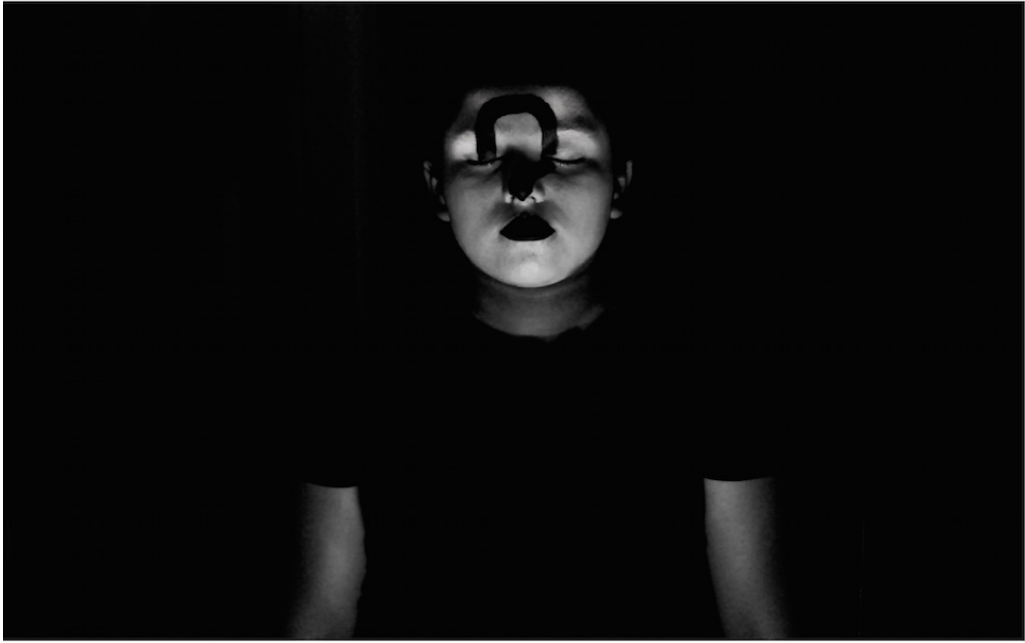
A lot of the times I feel like I let the dark thoughts in my head get the best of me.





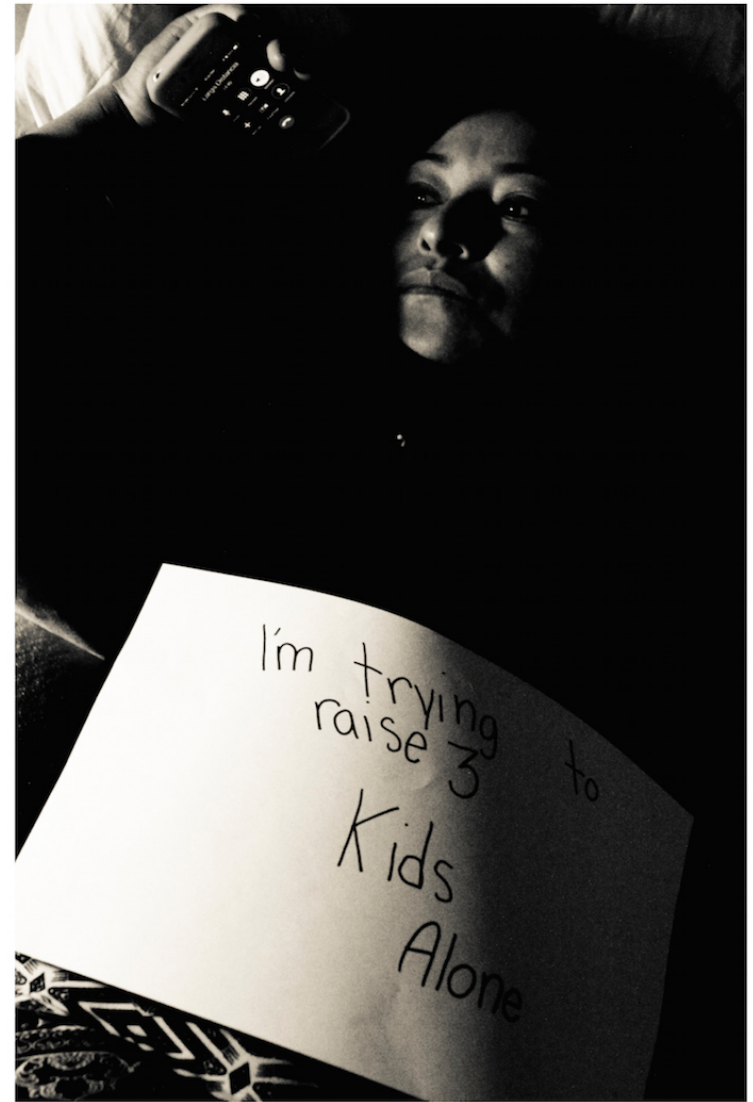
My biggest fear is that my siblings will end up feeling like I do. Not only because they are my brother and sister but because, to me, my siblings are my world. I want them to feel like they have support and love. I'm learning that no matter how much I try to protect them from feeling sadness and depression, I can't stop it. They have to experience just as much of the bad in life as the good.







*I will never forget the look my mom gave me that day.
The day my siblings and I got taken into foster care.
That look will forever stay engraved in my mind.*



I'm trying
to raise 3
Kids
Alone





*Recently, I've moved out of my mother's house.
Every other time that this has happened, I've felt fear,
a sense of loss. This time around I feel ready, like this
is what needs to be done, and I am prepared this time.
Truth be told, I am still a little scared, but not so scared
that I don't know what to do. This time I feel like I'm
ready to take on and explore myself and my life.*

