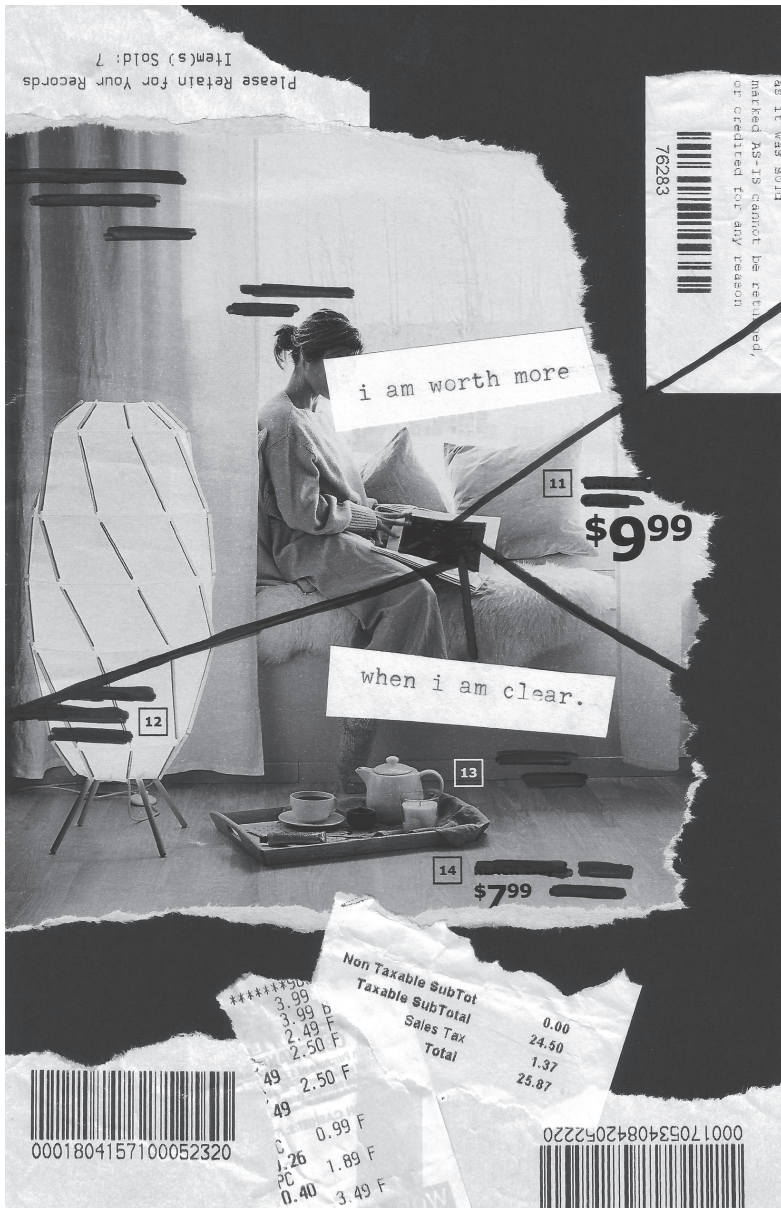


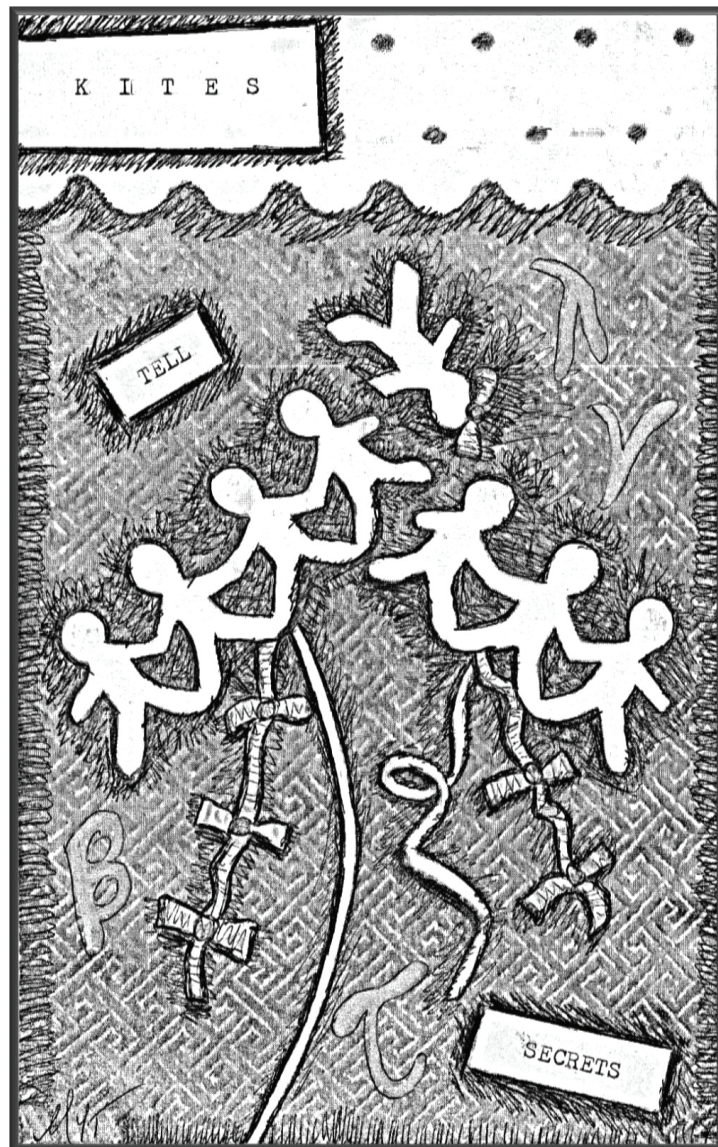


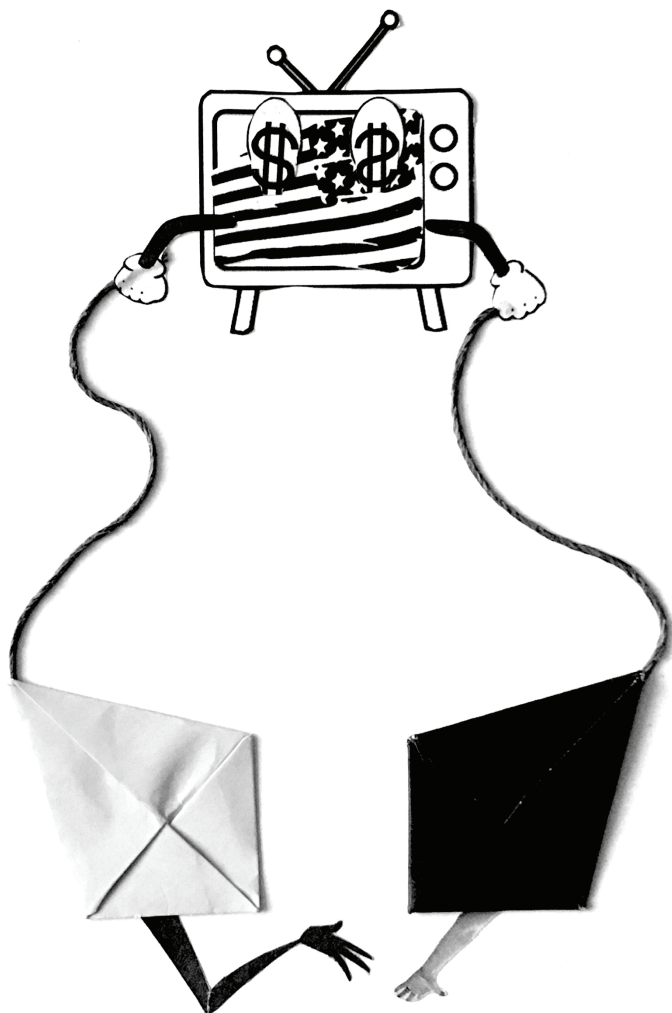
REFELCTIONS



A community response zine to Stephanie Burt's *Advice from the Lights: Poems*. MKE x The NEA Big Read







1.

The sun is merciless, we sweat at the thought of going outside.
Eight years old,
And summer is something to be reckoned with.
We jump through the spray of a sprinkler,
A brief respite that comes in waves,
Mom shouts out the back door,
Reminding me about last summer,
When I caught my foot on a sprinkler and got stitches.
So we go inside, to play Dungeons and Dragons;
Mom just points at the door,
Telling us how nice it is outside,
While she sits inside . . . with the air-conditioning and cigarettes.
We sit on the patio with our D&D stuff,
The wind makes our game more chase than either dungeons or dragons.
We toss the game inside and sit and sulk.
There's not a thing to do,
That we haven't already done three hundred times this summer.

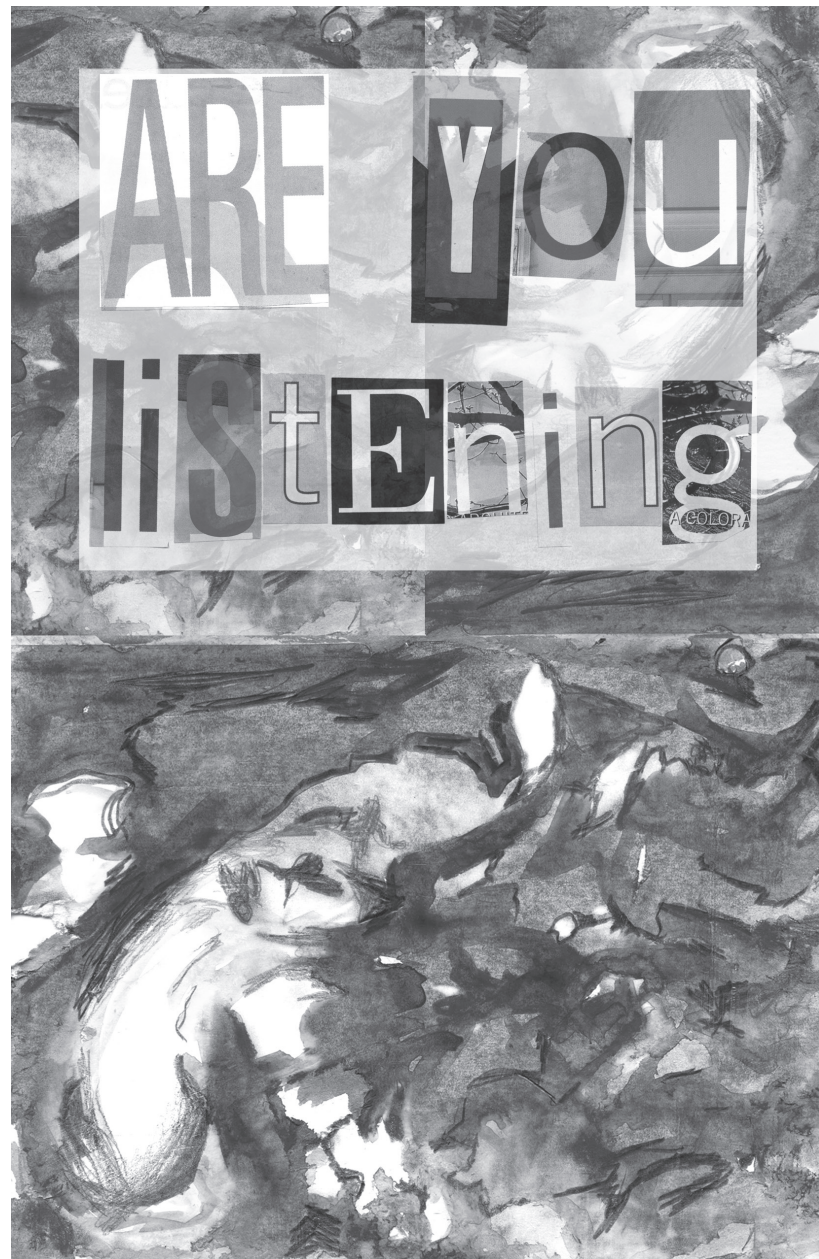
2.

My older brother is halfheartedly doing yardwork.
We don't even bother getting near him.
If the evil glares weren't bad enough,
There was the threat of being chased and sat on.
So we decide (yet again) to play superheroes,
But we both want to be Batman and end up taking turns.
Even that gets boring and we sit in my sandbox sifting for lost toys.
My older sister comes to us, this time with the succor of an idea,
Instead of her typical razor slashes at our throats.
She suggests that we make a Kool-aid stand.
We can beat the heat and make money except,
Since it was her idea, she gets all the money.

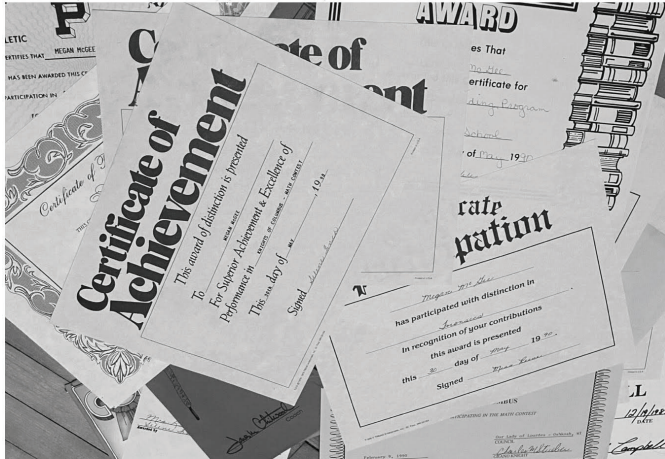
3.

We dedicate our lives as we know them,
Into making signs on white paper stolen from Dad's desk.
Using stubby crayons and dried markers,
We manage a few signs that pass sister's inspection.
She's the better artist but couldn't be bothered.
Mom's not thrilled with the idea,
Not only did she have to make the Kool-aid,
But she also had to find a table.
We sit at the end of my driveway.
My friend and I doing all the work,
While my sister sunbathes.
We can see at least three other Kool-aid stands.
At least one is also in the court with us.
We spend the afternoon trading a half-dozen nickels,
Sampling each other's wares.

John Klima

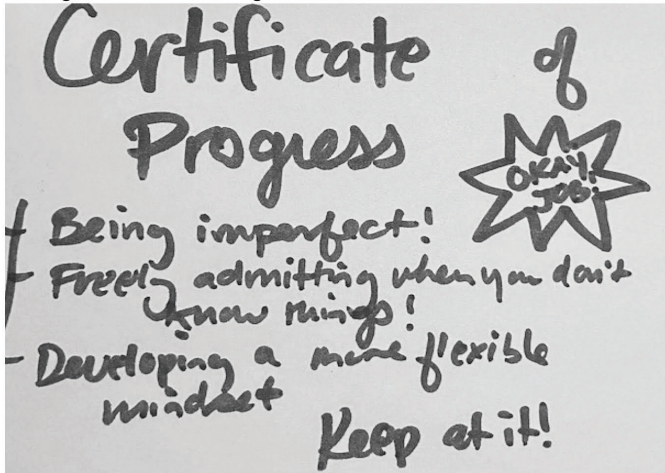


The search for middle school mementos led me to a small plastic tub with a blue lid, packed with baby pictures, my first communion veil, and these.

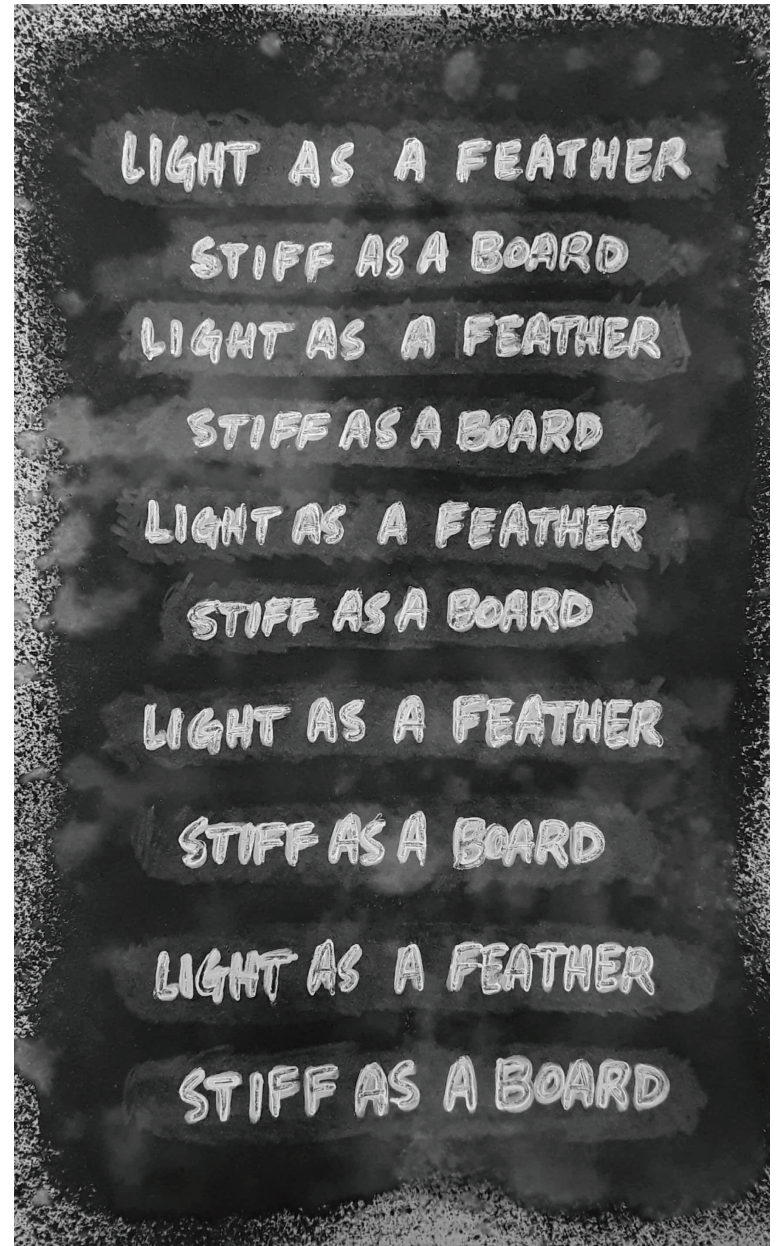


Success was measurable - contests, grades, ribbons - and I was WINNING. I knew so much and yet so little.

Isn't it great that we can change?



P.S. I still know both a lot and very little.





1986 flashing
Terimarie Degree

i was about 5 when a little girl and i
were in my parents' bedroom watching
of all things a concert on TV

her name's long seeped from the bucket
with a slow leak
that carries my memories

but her words
they still linger

she said, "Lift up your shirt and scream like me."
ignorant of televised performance etiquette
i had no reason to question the suggestion
and so followed her directions

our mothers a hall and some rooms away
discussing Mary-Kay or Tupperware or
how husbands and housework
are plows that till fields
which never get planted
dreams unsown seed
not forgotten
abandoned

while we
wee innocent beings
not abandoned but tended to carelessly
unknowingly an obscene scene
shouted and bore unformed breasts
towards a box screen broadcasting
a long dead Elvis Presley



Adults were always asking about my boyfriends,
so I roped the neighbor boy into my prayers—

"Dear God, if I score this basket,
make Derek fall in love with me."

I'd shoot and miss, and Derek never
fell in love with me, which was fine,

because Derek was an idiot, what boy wasn't?
Sometimes, we'd play house, and I'd make him

be the dad, I'd be the mom, and I'd smash
my body against his while listening to Beach Boys

in his basement. That's where I first heard "Kokomo,"
while sliding a dress onto Barbie, Ken lying

on the cement floor in underwear etched
onto his plastic pelvis. The sultry *Archa Jamaica*,

ooh I want to take ya everywhere I went that year.
Riding home with my parents from dinner, I prayed

the cute boy from the restaurant was following us,
because he needed to tell me he loved me.

So wild and holy were my beliefs about love,
that they included a boy convincing his parents
to follow an eight-year-old girl home
after he saw her once in public. What did I think

would happen when we got home? Katie and I
played Heart-throb and Girl Talk, setting the games up

on her dad's pool table, the Old Style light swinging
on chains above us. I'd wake in my sleeping bag

on her mauve carpet, waiting for her to wake up,
her untouchable porcelain dolls staring at the mauve

wall above her daybed. My bedroom walls
were gray, divided in half by a white border with pink

and turquoise paint splatters. My carpet
was turquoise. I had no toys I couldn't play with,

but learned to long for what I couldn't touch
just the same.

by: Angie Voras • Hills

POEM FOR WATER STRIDERS

ellipse eclipses ellipse

From the yellow birches to the cattails we had been reading the story of a bog backward. Now, as we stood, where our eyes could go farther though our feet could not, we began to consider the story of a bog chronologically. This story, from open water to forest, is the story of undrained depressions.

...

At the edge of this third stage we turned back, for lack of footing. This stage had its start long ago when, somewhere along the margin of the water, some chance surface offered an adequate though shallow seed bed for pioneer plants. This group of floating pioneers soon offered a seedbed for others. Each time some root or rhizome or runner or arching branch, rooting at the tip, added a slight bit of substance to this thin mat, there was more support for more roots and rhizomes and arching branches. The mat was thickening. Bulrushes rode its wobbly surface, and cattails, and sphagnum moss, and swamp-loosestrife, with its habit of arching and rooting from the nodes of the stem, and reed, and water speedwell, and water purslane, and forget-me-not. We, however, could not ride that fragile surface.

...

In two old excavations, water stood and the wild iris grew.

ellipses eclipse ellipses

ellipse eclipses ellipse



Burden's Release

Six percent decrease per each telling.
17 outlets necessary
to achieve a full whole.

Even with no friend
with whom to share,
Private journals for those, like me,
solitaire.

Dancing alone, too, lightens
the air.

The Divine listens and does it count if,
in front of the mirror, I sing in rhyme?
(Feel the deep blare of burden;
drown in it for a brief time.)

(17 seconds) for freedom
to be fully declared,
and for me to be, finally, spared.



i have three little boxes from childhood tucked away in my room
a mini wooden chest with seashells painted on the top
a repurposed blue wet wipe container plastered with stickers
a metal box with a biblical scene on top & ornate relief pattern all over
it's a mystery when or where the boxes or their contents are from

arrow heads stones coins
a bell keychains prayer cards
clip-on earrings a die plastic figurines
more tiny treasures

i don't know what it all means
but i can't make myself get rid of any of it
at least by means of trash or strangers
i'd love to find a child to pass on my treasures to
or maybe they're meant to stay with me
a reminder of that little witch girl that collector
of vulnerability / emotion / softness / humor / attitude / no inhibitions
an appreciation for the smallest of details
her powers i never want to lose

an altar to my youth

**"What you can't hear
may be deafening someone else.**

**What's almost too small
to see may just be far away.**

**Be your own means
of magnification or microscopy**

**Become your own
indignity"**

Not too small, too far away. Well yes. OR inside of you — like — you can't see your lungs in the mirror! They're not far away, but you can't see them without equipment. Equipment will show you, via the effects on someone else. Those, you can see.

and noises. Deafening noises. Inside, the funny rowing sound of a virus pulling you in a cell. Snip, snip, tinker, as it chooses and arranges strips of DNA. Who hears it?

Listen.

Look.

Extend your range with whatever's at your disposal.

And certainly, make a study of indignity.

May 31, 2020

What will survive us
has already begun



4. Kelly Wallschlaeger,
@look.kelly.design,
Ice for the Ice Trade

5. Logan Glembin, *Hermit Crab*

6. Ally, *Princess Stephanie*

7. Monica Thomas,
FB @milwaukee.type
IG @imperfect_rhyme, *Kites*,
"Kites Tell Secrets"

8. LKNJ, *Kites*

9. John Klima, @johnklima, *My 1981*

10. Darius Agard, @dagarddomain,
Inside Outside Stephanie

11. Rachel Hausmann Schall,
@hoorachel rhausmannschall.com,
Cloud Studies, "Are You Listening?"

12. Megan McGee, *My 1983*

13. Jessica Bauman, *Mean Girls*,
"Light As a Feather, Stiff As A Board"

14. Kath R Leverenz, @kathcreates,
Fairy Story Stephanie,
"Nobody Like Me"

15. Lily Solheim, @_star67_
lilysolheim.com, *My 1986*

16. Angela Voras-Hills,
@vorashillspoet, *My 1986*

17. Terimarie Degree, @litrockstar
FB @writerterimariadegree, *My 1986*,
"1986 flashing"

18. Chuck Stebelton,
IG @chuckstebelton
TW @chippingsparrow,
Water Strider,
"Poem for Water Striders"

19. Claire Zimmerman, @clunky_art,
Cicadas, "Brood of 2020"

20. Belinda Ricco, *After Callimachus*
(*Why Do I Write?*),
"Burden's Release"

21. Sheri Roloff, @sherirolloff
sherirolloff.com, *Spoken for A Pair of*
Ferrets, "Inner World"

22. melissa k mursch,
@melissakmursch, *After Callimachus*

23. Sue Blaustein, sueblaustein.com,
Advice for Holding Together

24. Warren Enström, sbassoon.com,
Advice from Rock Creek Park

THANK YOU

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