



OUR VOICES

GONZAGA'S
JOURNAL ON
CULTURE AND
DIVERSITY

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OUR VOICES

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

DEAR READER,

DURING MY TIME HERE AT GONZAGA, I HAVE LEARNED THAT STORYTELLING IS PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL FORMS OF EXPRESSION WE HAVE. IT IS FOR THIS PRECISE REASON THAT I'M WRITING TO YOU NOW. WHEN I CAME INTO THIS POSITION, I WROTE A MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE JOURNAL. I'LL SHARE IT WITH YOU HERE:

“MY AIM FOR THE 2016-17 EDITION OF OUR VOICES IS FOR IT TO BE A JOURNAL DEMONSTRATIVE OF THE BEAUTY AND DIVERSITY OF OUR STUDENT BODY. OUR VOICES WILL BE A SAFE SPACE AND A WRITTEN OUTLET FOR STUDENTS WILLING TO SHARE THEIR VOICES, EXPERIENCES, AND LIVES WITH THE GONZAGA COMMUNITY. IT WILL BE A JOURNAL BOTH RECOGNIZING AND RESPECTING THE DIFFERENCES IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES AND ALSO A PLACE TO CELEBRATE THOSE VERY DIFFERENCES.

THERE IS BEAUTY IN DICHOTOMY AND OUR COMMUNITY IS IN NEED OF A PLACE TO JOIN TOGETHER, STAND TOGETHER, AND SHINE TOGETHER—THIS IS WHAT OUR VOICES WILL PROVIDE. I HOPE NOT ONLY TO CREATE A JOURNAL THAT FOSTERS A SENSE OF CREATIVITY AND ORIGINALITY, BUT ONE THAT MIGHT ALSO BRING PRIDE AND CONFIDENCE TO EACH AND EVERY PERSON WHO CHOOSES TO SHARE THEIR BRILLIANCE WITH OUR COMMUNITY.”

THE FIRST TIME I SHARED MY STORY WAS THE FIRST TIME I TRULY BEGAN TO FEEL ALIVE. IT GIVES YOU AN INDESCRIBABLE POWER—ONE YOU SIMPLY MUST EXPERIENCE ON YOUR OWN.

EVERY STORY, POEM, IMAGE, AND EXPRESSION INCLUDED IN THIS JOURNAL IS A PEEK INTO THE BEAUTIFUL LIVES OF OUR

VERY OWN. READ DILIGENTLY, READ RESPECTFULLY, AND READ OPENLY. SHARING YOUR STORY TAKES BRAVERY AND VULNERABILITY. PERHAPS THIS MIGHT MOTIVATE YOU TO DO THE SAME ONE DAY.

TAKE THESE STORIES WITH YOU. CARRY THEM IN YOUR HEAD. CARRY THEM IN YOUR HEART. SYMPATHIZE. EMPATHIZE. ALLOW THEM TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR OWN VOICE. MY WISH FOR ANY OF YOU WHO STILL HAVE PRECIOUS TIME LEFT HERE IS FOR YOU TO USE THAT TIME AND TELL YOUR STORY. WHETHER THAT'S THROUGH WRITING, OR SINGING, ART, OR PHOTOGRAPHY—I URGE YOU TO TELL IT IN SOME WAY.

WHETHER THE STORIES IN THIS JOURNAL TOUCH YOU, OR THEY'RE JUST LIGHT READING TO PASS THE TIME, REMEMBER ONE THING ABOVE ALL: LISTEN. HEAR OUR VOICES.

I WILL LEAVE YOU WITH A QUOTE.

“IN DIVERSITY, THERE IS BEAUTY AND THERE IS STRENGTH.”
MAYA ANGELOU

BEST REGARDS,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kailee Haong', enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval.

KAILEE HAONG, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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WHO I AM

Kenji Booye

Who I Am
is someone very few people
have met.

I am a lie, a contradiction,
and a beautiful truth.

I am a man of habit and
superstition
who is habitually changing
his mind and is suspicious of
spirituality.

Who I Am
is a man
I am loving and loved
I am authentic and truthful
But I am authentically
afraid of my own power and
truthfully unhappy

Who I Am
on paper is a history major
I am a student with a below
average grade point average.
I am intelligent and diverse
in experience and life
But history tells me my
intellect won't over shine my
diverse skin

Who I Am
in heart and mind is a
longhaired vagabond
I am full of a dangerous
wanderlust
I am a poet
who is poetically wandering
accidentally.

Who I Am
is human

I am a brother and a son
I am the 3rd of 4
raised by my favorite
example of love

Who I Am
is someone very few people
have met
I am a man
on paper a history major
in heart and mind a
longhaired vagabond
I am human
I am to be determined

I am a tormented soul who
has been tossed from here to
there
I am a socially medicated
self-induced case of
schizophrenia
with perhaps a mild case of
hypochondria (which I think
means I'm dying)
I am a daydream and a long
bong rip
who is still perusing the
American dream
even if the rest of the world
couldn't give a rip

Because I am
Ferguson, Selma and Belfast
I am a slave, a kamikaze
pilot, and a tribal chieftain
I am oppressed in binary
"liberation"
I am murdered at the
intersectionality of my own
people

I am a brown crayon in a box
of "nude" colors

But I am so much more

I am Kenji Martin Linane-
Booey
blood and bones of my
mother and father
namesake of my grandfather
marked in ink
scarred in blood

Who I Am
is a liar
When I'm stressed I chew
tobacco
and yes my grandparents
died of cancer
I am not as strong as you
think I am

Who I Am
is strong
I lost my grandmother to
cancer
and yes, she is forever on my
ribs
I am an artist

Who I Am
is art
I use poetry as my outlet
but only write when I "need"
it
I am scared

Who I Am
is scared
of a life I could live
but don't know if I should

Who I Am
is a liar
Who I Am

is strong
Who I Am
is art
Who I Am
is scared

Today Who I am is self-
conscious
endlessly worried about my
weight
fighting to forget the fat kid
I was

Today Who I am is self-
motivated
endlessly pushing myself
fighting to give myself a
better tomorrow

Today Who I am is self-aware
endlessly evaluating my social
position
fighting to be included

Today Who I am is self-
deprecating
Endlessly critiquing every
single thing I do
Fighting to love myself half as
much as she loves me

Today I am self-conscious
self-motivated
self-aware
And self-deprecating

Who I Am
is someone very few people
have met
I am a man
on paper a history major
in heart and mind a
longhaired vagabond
I am human
I am to be determined

Because I am
Ferguson, Selma and Belfast
I am a slave, a kamikaze pilot,
and a tribal chieftain
I am oppressed in binary
“liberation”
I am murdered at the
intersectionality of my own
people
I am a brown crayon in a box
of “nude” colors
Today I am self-conscious
Self-motivated
Self-aware
And self-deprecating

Who Am I?

A lot more than this

Just not yet.



Spokane, Washington

Libby Kamrowski

ZAKAR(רוֹפֵּן)—TO REMEMBER

Lindsey Hand

“We must not see any person as an abstraction. Instead, we must see in every person a universe with its own secrets, with its own treasures, with its own sources of anguish, and with some measure of triumph.”

—Elie Wiesel, *The Nazi Doctor and the Nuremberg Code*

ONE

I opened NPR as I do most mornings to skim headlines. One catches my eye.

Bombing in Nigeria. Association with Boko Haram. Muslim jihad extremist. Following Al-Quaida. Igbo people. Christians. Evacuations.

My mind instantaneously recalls old and new associations.

Biafran-Nigerian War. 1967-1970. One million dead. Starvation. Kwashiorkor. Muslim Nigerians killing Igbo Nigerians.

256 school girls stolen by Boko Haram. #BringOurGirlsBack

As if Twitter or Facebook could save the world. As if a post would distinguish us as people who cared, people who tried. As if passive awareness ever solved anything.

Fifty years since the war in Nigeria, but I still read about blood, bombings, and starvation; about loss of life and loss of voice; about humans we have chosen to forget to see.

TWO

I held the aged and frail hand of a bony woman. We called her little great grandma to her face and a diva to her back. At 95, when she had forgotten the names of her family and the script of her past, she still remembered that she liked the color bright pink to wear in Dillard’s pant suits; the way earrings looked in her drooping ears; the red lipstick that was pitifully and unevenly drawn on quiet and confused lips.

I remember my young self looking at her and wondering how this same person ran through fields to deliver soap to soldiers during the war (what war was it anyway? I’ve never been great at history), how scarcity and danger seemed foreign to this woman who lived in luxury as she was dying.

THREE

I borrowed words from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half*

of a Yellow Sun. My own words felt like thieves and imposters of the sacred.

The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died

For the epilogue, he writes a poem, modeled after one of Okeoma's poems. He calls it:

“WERE YOU SILENT WHEN WE DIED?”

Did you see photos in sixty-eight
Of children with their hair becoming rust:
Sickly patches nestled on those small heads,
Then falling off, like rotten leaves on dust?

Imagine children with arms like toothpicks,
With footballs for bellies and skin stretched thin.
It was kwashiorkor—difficult word,
A word that was not quite ugly enough, a sin.

You needn't imagine. There were photos
Displayed in gloss-filled pages of your Life.
Did you see? Did you feel sorry briefly,
Then turn round to hold your lover or wife?

Their skin had turned the tawny of weak tea
And showed cobwebs of vein and brittle bone:
Naked children laughing, as if the man
Would not take photos and then leave, alone.

FOUR

My grandparents always fight when the time comes to drive us to the intricate anthill airport of LAX. I wonder if God looks at us in big cities the way we look at ants: fixated individuals swerving and moving to do their job, heads down; intricate yet numbing. My grandpa insists the drive from Northridge to LAX will take 60-90 minutes on I-405, assuming no accidents occur on the 6-lane-in-one-direction highway. My grandma says it will be 45 minutes. She is right. We pull into the first floor of a three or four story parking garage—I can't quite remember—to kill the extra time of an early arrival a few minutes away from the airport.

“Mom, I meant to ask you...” My mother asks my grandma a question. “One of the girls had asked about great grandma, and I didn't know.”

In the mostly empty parking lot my grandma tells us again about her mom and my grandfather's mom leaving Eastern

Europe during World War II: how she left, when she left, who never made it out with her, how she got here, when this place became her home. This time my grandma leaves out the part about the soap—the odd fact that floats with little context. To whom did she sell? Did she give? Why the youngest daughter? Was it dangerous? Was she scared?

I tell myself to write it down so I won't forget. Pieces were already slipping away like dropping leaves in the river. I drop it knowing its ridged edges are out of reach the moment I let it slip from my hand as it drifts to the rushing water's surface. My grandparents were the children of the eyewitness accounts of these stories. Their minds aren't resistant to the softening and hazy-ing of aging.

I didn't write it down.

FIVE

This morning I cried. Cried and read. Read and cried.

I cried at the first picture that comes up when you look up kwashiorkor online. I cried at the child whose arms were no thicker than two of my fingers and whose stomach was inflated to twice the size of his or her head—the gender of the child indistinguishable from the contortions that claim a starving body.

I cried because this is what Baby—Odenigbo's daughter from *Half of a Yellow Sun*—looked like. I knew her, spent 500 pages with them, went to civil war with them, and cried and cried and cried.

SIX

I used to feel secret pride and toughness when I said I never cried. Years have softened me, this last year more than the rest. Now I take pride in saying I am soft and strong, moved to tears when the world demands that kind of emotion. I do not believe we cry enough, or maybe we simply are not seeing enough to know that we need to be crying.

SEVEN

My mother left Judaism the day she left for college. Out of rebellion, frustration, apathy, or novelty, I do not know. Judaism was the story that encircled my mom's world growing up, but it was not a story she wanted for herself or a story that she had much intention of sharing with her kids.

A story can only be known when it is voiced. She gave that story nearly no voice for me. I no longer know how to claim it even with vain efforts of taking classes and reading books.

EIGHT

The first time is the most painful. I know whenever I go to the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, with one of the more famous Holocaust exhibits in the West, that the remainder of the day will be characterized by heaviness and silence—loss of words. Are there words big enough for that?

Half way through the exhibit, two nearly identical stone tunnels stood in poor lighting, the only difference being the sign above the arches were different: “able-bodied men” and “women and children.”

This was the first time I felt Jewish.

I know it well enough from 22 years of repetition: indistinct mumblings that slip off my tongue when I’m singing a blessing over the wine, bread, and candles during Shabbat dinner with my grandparents or extended family. It never meant much to me, never made me feel like I was part of something, never felt like mine to claim. I didn’t want to claim it for a long time, and then when I finally did, it felt too late.

After the Holocaust exhibit ends, we move into a hallway-like room with screens for walls. News articles and bright red CNN headlines in bold flash everywhere. Darfur, Rwanda, genocides, persecution, mass killings, suicide bombers, political upheaval, Syrian refugee camps. How little I knew about what was actually going on. What did I actually know about Darfur? The chaos is overwhelming. Soberly in black and white—the only simple part of the room—a sign reads: “Will we let it happen again?”

NINE

My brother spit into a tube, paid \$100, and had ancestry.com tell him what he was.

45% European Jewish.

My grandparents would tell me and my siblings growing up that whether we liked it or not, we are Jewish because my mother is Jewish. It’s funny to me that “Jewish” was the ethnicity assigned to nearly half of my DNA when the rest of my DNA was neatly labeled German, Russian, Irish.

Why was it European Jewish rather than the European country in which my Jewish ancestors lived? That’s where my Jewish family originated from anyways. How did my blood know?

TEN

I opened my computer and revisited this page. Only a day has passed, and I no longer feel. I dig deeply inside myself and want

to recreate the anger, rage, devastation, passion I felt yesterday.
One. Damn. Day.
Is that all it takes to forget?

ELEVEN

His name is Richard—a foreigner from Britain who fell in love with an Igbo woman while studying Igbo-Ukwu art in Nigeria. He writes about Biafra and their struggle for independence during a devastating civil war. His title would be “The World Was Silent When We Died.” She laughed and asked, “We?” It was not his story to tell.

How can the dead tell their story?

How can the living remember how to speak—rather is it courage, not memory?

How do we tell a story that is not fully ours to tell?

Should we even try?

TWELVE

I joked that I was “out of commission” on Monday and Tuesday of this week, but even my jokes felt heavy. I felt stupid because everyone else was still functioning—why couldn’t I? I felt oversensitive—a painful word that has been hurled at my feelings in the past. I felt like a fraud—with all my privilege, how could I feel fear when so many people will face the consequences more directly and painfully than me? The ones who knew the injustice were hiding in fear, hoping to make it out alive.

It felt like throwing a funeral for someone who was not quite dead yet. I wore all black Thursday and called it my funeral outfit. I would never dare to go as far as to say that our country is headed towards a civil war like Nigeria or that we will begin the ruthless killing of a whole ethnic and religious group like the Nazis. I would never reduce the stories, struggles, and unique experiences of others to the U.S. right now. But I can’t help noticing trends of divisiveness, corruption, mistrust, exploitation, and dehumanization.

How can I not think about my soon to be students in central Washington, 97% of whom are Hispanic, a handful undocumented? How can I tell the bright 2nd grader with tears in her eyes that she will be okay?

How can I not think about my own brother with Down Syndrome and the battle my mom fought to get him the best education in a system that deemed him less able and worthy of investment? What about the kids with special needs that don’t have a fiery mother like mine that advocated for Cody?

How can I not think about the refugee who has lived in exile—homeless, uprooted, unwanted—for years that only hopes for the same human desires I have: safety, love, life, a chance?

How can I not think about the new fight of the LGBTQ couples that have already spent years fighting to love and be loved—the heartbeat of being human—in a world that is bitterly against them?

How can I not think about the women whose bodies have been desecrated by greedy men who feel entitled to another human's body?

How can I not think about my Jewish family who left their favorite couch, their home, their lives to flee the atrocities of the Holocaust—a time when they were so othered they ceased being viewed as human?

I hold some of these identities and can only imagine others.

THIRTEEN

Chielozone Eze—“Survival Kit”

One of few who found a voice to speak for all those who could never speak.

It is love that made me speak for you.
Forgive me if, in reading you,
I thunder rather than whisper.

This is not a protest, dear.
I remember you
to keep myself alive.

FIFTEEN

Inside my head lives a world—it is beautiful and painful and full. I have kept that world hidden more often than not. I've deprived my world of a voice from the trauma, from the fear, from the powerlessness, from the shame. This is my quivering attempt to speak, to name, to voice.

So here is my small voice from a big world that is striving and hoping and crying to be heard. Can this one world being heard open the door for a million more worlds to live?

THE LIGHT WAS NOT A BLOOD RELATIVE

Daniel Hodge

When they taught me my name,
they taught me my space.

My territory is black,
sleek but not slick.
I am Africa;

they said my continent is dark,
too dark to be explored,
they stole my home and
brought it into the light;

light is the sterilization of black;
black is the sterilization of me.

What does it mean to feel?
A vase filled with nothing.

Dark is dangerous, they said.
Can you see anything in the dark?

I am afraid.

We believed them.
Their horrors of dark, internalized.



Tangier, Morocco

Kailee Haong

HY-PHEN

Gladys Suarez & Art Por Diaz

My identity—a *wrecked margin, framing my existence—one that traps and liberates*
An open wound, Tenacious and rooted.

my identity
a hyphen that isn't a bridge
but a wall keeping the two separated
a perpendicular perpetuation
denoting the disconnected
dissonance of two cultures

Mexicana, Chicana, Mestiza, Morena.
I am two faces split, two souls.
I am one.

American.
nuestros rostros es la miel de los cielos
color de la tierra porque en nosotros crece las frutas de nuestros antepasados

Sangre derramada, querida y amada,
I carry the blood of the colonizer and the colonized
Indigena and European—A blend of too many sources
I am the unknown.
My body—a dangerous terrain, too much mixture, mescla, a mass of land colliding with love

yo soy gente de las americas
y por eso soy americano
no conoces a mexico

pero me conoces a mi
la sangre en mis venas corre
al lago de texcoco

Tengo tanto corazon que se me sale de la boca,
I hold my heart in my mouth;
lengua amarrada, atrapada—
tied to the rim of the border
When I speak, tiny brown people try to escape the hot hopeless Sonoran desert

I realized my first language
now gives my tongue whiplash
the accent slashes at the walls
of my cheek as I speak

Tiny brown women and men
walk across my tongue, sinking
into the endless waves of heat

putting a noose around my tongue
and hanging the native sound
that rang out

I speak with too much Sazon
and not enough emphasis
acentos como relampagos
fantasmas manifestando
fractions in words divided by words
líneas dividiendo el mundo

Attempting to appropriately
annunciate, pero me sale medio mocho
I am, oops I spoke Spanish.
Fuck, wait espera. Yo amo a mi

tierra.

the evolution of language from
child and mother
mother and father
palabras divorciadas
even within the family no se
entienden

*Generaciones de asimilación
Como una plaga*

I forgot who I was
when I left Mexico
my grandparents
stared at the plane
like a shooting star
their wish taking off
mijo ya no nos hablas
a phone can't shrink the 2,582
miles between us
te acuerdas de nosotros?
a heart tattooed with hope

*Hoping you don't forget who you
are.
A letter to my unborn Daughter
Querida Hija,*

*I want you to know the taste of
sweet and creamy Horchata.
Your skin es como la miel del sol,
Kissed by Honey-dew, Loved by
sweet molasses.
The sun rejoices in your depth of
melanin.*

10 things I want to say to my
grandparents
one. I am so happy you made
me into a kite
two. from up here I can't tell
you apart from the soil you toil
which is why our skin colors
are so distinct now

yours looks like the conquered
mine the conqueror
which is fitting since I was
sent to reap rewards from a
new land

*Mija, You are your own kind of
beautiful
So when you see thin women in
a magazine,
White-skin and blonde hair.
Recognize that is their
beautiful, not yours.
Your soul rests upon a tan
canvas, chocolate hues of eyes
and hair, you are, vast and
complex like the stories that
built you*

three. I was proud that you
showed me the milpa
but then you saw concrete
discretely within me
and apologized at how
unnatural your work appeared
beside me
you must have thought that I
am no longer moved by what a
rancher's hands can do

*You are full like the Rio Grande
Your voice will echo like
Mariachi singing Amor Eterno
You will dance: your body will
rejoice in the passions of your
people
Eres querida, hija mia
Your heart fragile like an
avocado, but tenacious like its
core*

four. I am so happy you finally
have toilets
five. apparently no one has
forgotten I fell into my own

shit the last time I was there
six. holding your hands I felt
history

*Daughter, When you look in
the mirror,
Know that you are more than
your reflection
And even then, the mirror will
show you who you are
You come from a line of strong
stubborn women
You have your grandmother's
laughter, the reason for my joy
You will never be too thick for
skinny
Or too dark for American
Cesar Chavez once said,
"You are never strong enough
that you don't need help"
So if you are ever feel trapped
in two places, simply dangling—
remember your golden tones
came from my golden kisses.*

seven. there is heaven in my
grandmother's eyes
God is present in her masa
covered fingertips
faith smells like the smoke
from her stove that clings to
her
like a guardian angel
eight. learning that love is my
grandfather yelling "vieja"
just to hear my grandmother
say "que quieres"
so he can say "te quiero a ti"
nine. when my dream of
shaving with my father was no
longer possible
gracias abuelo for asking me
on a random day to join you
then promptly making fun of
me for using shaving cream

ten. thank you for loving me
more than the love i show you
our distance has made my
affection appear afraid of
crossing borders

*You come from people of dignity
and pride, the pain of the
border shaped you, and don't
you dare forget where you came
from
Recognize that you are endlessly
loved.
Rasgos infinitos, your smile will
shatter cosmos
Tu eres producto de
inmigrantes,
The World is your pallet
Y tu eres su artista.
La Mexicana, Chicana,
Mestiza,*

I am
chicana
aware that my hue
is not a discoloration
and my families adoration for
this nation
does not mean one culture
oppresses the other.
that my border
our border
does as much to keep us apart
as it does to keep us in
I stand on one side
looking across
wondering if someone is on
the other side
a reflection
of me

*I see a man, who knows his
worth,
You see you were born in a
Mango—*

*You are art, and yes your name
is Art. But I mean art
You are not to be defined, not to
be determined—
You are the horizon where sky
meets land
And courage meets man
You create your own
parameters, speak with
intention
And always break silence with a
smile
Big-hearted and selfless
Art you are an American. From
the Americas.*

*In you, I see myself, a reflection
of love.*

she is sun dyed, shines bright
una naranja dulce, limón
partido
sus brazos fuertes pinta el país
sin barreras
she serenades the best in us all

su belleza hasta las flores se
ponen celosas
her mind reverberates her
ribcage
if you listen you can hear the
wind chimes while she speaks
tiene un aire que hace bailar
las nubes a dentro de nosotros

she is sun shy, so she needs to
warm up to you
un sol escondido y con sonrisa
aparece
tiene un mar adentro y aveces
el barco que carga su corazón
la marea
she is like a thunderstorm.
striking.

WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT

Olivia Bridston

I

You think that your silence is nothing sinister
You simply don't want to offend anybody
You know you'll speak when the time is right
Silence can be louder than a thousand voices
Silence is nothing more than a passive form of acceptance
Silence breathes life into oppression and evil

II

You think your indecision is nothing noteworthy
You just don't have enough information to decide
You'll make a choice when the time is right
Indecision can be the most costly choice to make
Indecision is nothing more than refusing to protect reason and justice
Indecision provides a platform for persecution

III

You think your inaction has benign origins
You wish you could help, you really do
You know you'll act when the time is right
Inaction can be the boldest action taken
Inaction is nothing more than a declaration of indifference
Inaction gives credence and power to tyranny

IV

You can choose not to speak
As innocent voices are silenced
You can choose not to take sides
As corruption begins to spread
You can choose not to act
As the rights of others are stripped away
You are confident that someone else will

V

Or will they?



Spokane, Washington

Libby Kamrowski

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO FALL

Tally Ellis

You tell yourself that it's nothing. You're fifteen when you pull her well-worn sweatshirt over your head and take in her scent that lingers behind—floral and slightly ashy. You wear it for days on end—she forgot she ever left it at your house and you feel something small, something deep in the corners of your ribs that you push away. You ride with her to school and you listen to Clairvoyant on repeat because you know she loves it so much—and because her name, Clara, fits. You push the screen out from the window, leaping onto the plush grass and finding your way to a new neighborhood, collapsing onto someone's dewy lawn, lying out and watching the sun rise, your skin still tingling from the Malibu you mixed with coke. You follow her to graveyards and parties, weaving through crowds or cold headstones. She introduces you to Warped Tour and you make your way to the barricade, jumping with the music that makes you feel somehow understood and comparing the bruises after. She teaches you how to smoke: *breath in deeply, don't cough, dot your skin with orange peels after so your mom doesn't notice the smell.* You're weirdly jealous when she kisses a guy she met at a concert and tells you about it. You don't like him; you don't see why she thinks he's so cute. You feel hurt and almost angry, then guilty for it. She cuts people off, and you fear you're next. You always feel one step behind her and like a puppy she can't quite kick away. Her parents take her to the coast for her birthday, and she drags you along. Neither of you want to swim, so you pretend you forgot your suits. It's because your cuts are still healing, and they're bandaged lightly underneath your clothing—self-inflicted wounds sting worse than papercuts. She seems to cry for help but retaliates when you offer support. You find yourself wanting to protect her. You hold your breath and stupidly think you could fix her. You find yourself wanting to reach for her hand, but you keep your hands in your lap.

You tell yourself that it's nothing. It's September. Your eyes immediately glance at her freckles, dotted across her face, her shoulders, and her blue eyes meet yours. She introduces herself

as Emma. She's spunky and energetic, and she drags you to diners, the beach, her house, and to movies. You don't like action movies, but you go because she brings you cookies from her girl scout troop and leans on you during parts she deems scary. You feel like you're a child again- you see who can jump higher on the trampoline and laugh when your ice cream cone melts onto your hands. She cuddles with you during sleepovers with friends, your cheeks burning but your heart fluttering. Your community college is small, and you wait for her in the middle, nervously tucking your hair behind your ear and adjusting your skirt. She holds your hand one morning before class, and just like that you're falling. You're falling because of the way she puts you first, the naivety and innocence that encapsulates her and because she never seems to judge what you do. Her laugh fills a part of you, and you suddenly can't think of your life without her. It's a lazy spring morning as you're cuddling under the quilts—and before you know it, you kiss her so softly, you question if your lips even touched hers. She kisses you back, and you sit on the front steps of her house, your heart racing and your head between shaky knees. Your hands meet hers under the blankets or in the car, and you try your best to hide your infatuation but your parents' stares burn through your sweater. She tells you she loves you on your seventeenth birthday, and you cry because you know she means it. She brings you to Christmas, then Easter, then graduation parties and family reunions. Her aunts and cousins hug you tight and consider you one of their own while Emma's father scoffs over a beer about how you're turning her gay. You fall in love as quickly as you fall out. Your breakup will rip you apart- mornings will greet you with the feeling of having wind knocked out of you, you'll give her clothes back and pretend to erase her existence while still clutching her handwritten letters close. You'll hook up and promise it's the last time, only to feel the brutal distance wash over you once again as you turn away and pull the covers over your head. You're not sure how to let her go.

You tell yourself that it is something. Your friends text you to wish you luck, and you take a deep breath before pushing open the heavy doors to meet her inside. She buys your ticket and then coffee after—no girl has ever done that. She looks at your hands as you watch glass being blown in the museum, the warmth of being next to her radiating your entire body. You make way to the festival only a few blocks up the street, the countdown underway and the streets filled with food trucks, sparklers, and steaming mugs of cider. The skyline is glittering,

fogs of smoke from the industrial district circle into the deep plum sky, dusted with a few stars. She's sitting in the passenger side of your car, and then her lips meet yours. Falling in love with her began slow, and you were infatuated. You can't stop writing about her kisses that make your entire body tingle, her hands, her laugh, her ability to read just as fast as you. You travel together—road trips to the city, the coast, small towns. She always takes one hand off the wheel to hold yours. She takes you to brunch and around her campus in late Spring, and you ask each other questions until you run out of things to say. She knows you love parks, and you'll spend hours in the grassy shade eating macarons and tying green clovers into crowns. You tell her you're falling in love in a small college apartment, underneath warm sheets, your legs entangled. She kisses your skin and holds you close, telling you she loves you too. Her fingers dance across a keyboard as she plays for you, her voice melodic and sweet. You always tear up and slowly, she teaches you your favorite songs. Months later, you're unpacking your dorm. You place photo strips of you two on your board and her letters by your bed. You hang some of her sweatshirts up and look around. Your memory flashes like a reel of film—it's been a year and you can feel that she's the one in the corner of your ribs. You can't explain what it feels like. You see your future in flickering moments—blue cap and gown, skyscraper buildings, studio apartments, dinner parties, bubbling toasts, flourishing markets, maybe an adopted cat or two, linens the color of lilacs, racks of soft white dresses, fuzzy haired babies—and she is in all of them. You wake up on a Sunday, her favorite day, and rub your eyes until the world is less fuzzy. You feel her warm skin touching yours and roll over to meet her deep brown eyes, hair strewn across the pillow, and a book in her hand. Kissing you softly on the temple, she holds you close, and you don't feel so afraid of falling anymore.



Berlin, Germany

Marie Nisco

BROTHER

Chelsey Hand

It is like looking so long.
But the words still don't form.
It's like a fog, not that it is not all there—for we feel it; we know
it in the concrete part of our hearts,
which really measure out to be soul in the end (that un-tattered
stuff),
that it's all truly there—but we can't pull back whatever particles
make up the fog
enough to allow others to see.
We just ask, maybe with our soul words more than real ones, that
they accept the reality of its existence...even when it is an unruly
fog that covers us.
Trapped under that bed of ice over a deep, deep lake.
You can't see from above those cold particles
that refuse to be warmed enough to allow the body on top to
break through and fall into the water
along side you.
It's like thinking all the words, all the thoughts, but not having a
pencil... like never having a pencil quick enough, smart enough,
to hear your soul pant...
to join the other side of the ice.
But, I promise, in my deep part, too, I can hear you breathing.
The deep kind of breathing that a father does onto his child's
hands because she cries that the world would allow her naïve
fingers to become so cold.
And even though I hear it, I know the ice...it does not warm ever
to be broken.
My soul part cries with your soul part.
And it tells you—I tell you—to not suffocate
down there, under that ice,
in the depth of yourself.
I can't break it for you.
I can't change it for you.
I can't write those words for you in a pen that's not even mine.
I'm not sure why I try.
My words don't warm you,
don't comfort you the way my cold hand pressed against yours
through the glass ice does.

And yours warms me the way our dad's breath did.
Even though it's not enough to ever break the ice.
I feel your pulse through it,
and it warms me as I warm you.
Because my hand stays long, because it knows without words you
are there.
And I won't let go.
For it's so warm, like the tears you cry that break my heart—if
not the ice—when you wished you were normal.
But what is normal if all we all are
are lakes that don't quite connect... forever frozen, detached,
from one another in depth?
But you are deep.
As I am deep.
And I see your depth.
As I see your down syndrome.
Yes, the same way those boys who made fun of you in high school
saw it,
but it's just a part of you.
I wish I could dive into the lake,
understand you exactly the way you want to be understood—in
ways you can't get your words to form so everyone can hear.
Understand you with clarity—the way you wished you could
understand the world,
without the fog that slows you down.
I'm so so sorry you can't break that ice.
I'm so so sorry I can't either.
But you understand in ways I never can, with more wisdom than
I ever could.
Understand you are loved.
Are loving. Are loved.
Understand the warmth of our hug matters far more, far deeper,
far longer than the coolness of the ice that could ever keep us
apart.
You wished you could understand as I understand,
But the funny thing of fog is that it works both ways.
I wish I could understand as you understand,
that the worth of three dimes and three dollars isn't simple, isn't
easy to access, or that time on a clock isn't (or shouldn't be) com-
mon knowledge,
for you know a far more supreme truth: that the time and money
don't matter nearly as much as your hand in mine, your hugs,
our laughter,
that the education system who deemed you less "able" because
you couldn't count their coins or read their clocks, will never be

capable of understanding.

And although it is my handwriting, and not yours, now,
you understand the truth more than I do behind my words that
“Brother, I love your extra chromosome as much as all the other
ones” because you understand love in a much deeper, perhaps
less audible, but much more tangible way than I ever could.

As we hold each other, your tears all over my clothes,
my soul just asks that
you teach me.

Teach me as I taught you, when we were little on our kitchen
table, how to do math.

I know we are both “bad” at math now,
with patience and the love that maybe only you and little me re-
ally knew.

Knew, as we failed calculation on those sheets of paper, to keep
on trying when it was tough and we thought we could never
learn—not because math is a thing worth fighting for,
but because proof that your soul was so much bigger than those
math problems is... a thing worth fighting for.

That math drowns in the depth of the lake that is your being.

You may never fully get math.

I may never fully get you.

You may never fully get me.

But you have taught us to love all the same.

And your love, my love,
love,
it lasts.

Your soul part has spoken to mine, in the most concrete abstract
words ever known,
that this love lasts longer than anything else about us.
Never dies.



Plaza de la Constitución, México

Kailee Haong

GUIDE TO HEALING

Lindsey Hand

(incomplete and in progress)
guide to healing:

1. walk into your darkness,
even if you know it will shat-
ter you,
even if you know it is hell,
even if you think it may kill
you.

it's better to go and not come
out than it is to live
with darkness haunting you,
leaving you lifeless for hours,
days, years, life.

2. learn how to whisper "i
need you."
the right person will hear
you.

3. name everything:
depression
abuse
trauma
death
loss of voice
loss of faith
loneliness.
naming is knowing,
and knowing is the begin-
ning of
freedom.

4. breathe. keep breathing. it
gets easier.
harder then easier, harder
then easier.
easier.

5. discover the small deep
thing you possess
within yourself that you are
in love with.
hold it tightly.
slowly and carefully
fall in love with yourself.
return to this infant state.

6. give grace, grace, grace.
most of it to yourself.

7. build.
remind your hands
that you have the ability
to create life.
you do not just destroy and
devastate and wound.

8. dare to believe that some-
one sees you
the way your whole soul
aches to be seen.
dare to believe the whispered
words
that you are
as strong and
as brave and
as important and
as loved and
as good as she says you are.

9. find your voice.



Okinawa, Japan

Marie Nisco

DIVERSITY MONOLOGUES PRESENTS...





STILL LOVE
YOU
CALL ME

where is the love?
(re)building community
through the power of love

LOVE IS LOVE

Lauren Weiser

Love is love is love is love. I am so tired of that being the slogan of my community, my community which cannot even agree on who belongs, which some days seems to have only been put together to keep us apart. When we throw around the phrase 'love is love' it makes people think that the queer community has won, that our battle is over and we can move on. As if marriage equality isn't being contested in every state, in every city, in some way or another. As if cis gays being able to marry would magically fix the hundreds of years of torture and discrimination we have been pushed through. Where is the love when hundreds of transgender people of color are being murdered each year? Where is the love when you can still get fired, get kicked out of your house, your apartment, your life, just for expressing your gender or sexuality? When was the last time a straight, cisgender person got fired for talking about their romantic partners? Whenever I ask people at Gonzaga what they think campus is like for LGBT people they always launch into a monologue about how their one gay friend seems pretty happy, so it must be alright. They seem to think that not yelling slurs in someone's face makes them a good ally, that it's okay to make gay jokes because they have that one token friend. Where was your allyship when a transwoman was beat up and ignored by cops in downtown Spokane? Where was your allyship when it benefited anything other than your self-image?

And if you think you're tired of my bitterness, let me tell you, I am pretty goddamned tired of waking up angry every day, of having to know that I go to school with people who don't believe that I deserve basic human rights. I am beyond tired of having literal nightmares of people trying to kill me just because of my religious beliefs, my distant ethnic background. Where was the so-called amazing Gonzaga community when our tangerine president declared war on all immigrants, documented or not? Where was the love when the racism and Islamophobia that all the minorities have always known existed became an acceptable public opinion?

I'm supposed to be telling some meaningful life story, but I don't know what to say. Do you want to hear about how not

every family with gay parents is a JC Penney ad? How all the bad things that happen to other families happen to us, too, but worse? Do you want to hear about being bullied in grade school because my family was both queer and poor? Though I might gain notoriety for letters I write to the Bulletin and things I post on facebook, I am more than an angry liberal. I am Jewish and Israeli and Syrian and European and I play rugby and I have chronic back problems and my favorite place in the world is the beach fifteen blocks from my house, and each of those things and a thousand more make up my identity. I don't exist as a poem you can listen to, clap for, then forget about. I am real and so are the millions of disabled, black, asian, Muslim, latino, immigrant transgender queer folks who you like to pretend are special snowflakes. I am here and I will not let you forget it.

NIHATHOU NICS

CJ Werk

Some of you will hate me
And some of you will debate me
All I ask is that you understand me
 Listen, reflect, and forgive me for the truth I'm about to
create
Nihathou nics
 Nihathou means white man
 Nics means water
So sweet to the lips, yet so sour to the generational kicks
Don't get me wrong, I've tried it
No more than a bottle and a half and that's just that cider shit
1 bong, 1 blunt, and 2 of them bowls
4 times I have counted and 4 more than I should have
Rooted as recreation, I see it as colonization
So many family members affected,
their hopes, their dreams, their soul
while the children are those you get the brunt of it all
misunderstood as innocence is lost
 they realize it as just knowing it all
from the tall boy to the cold pack
 I've known these words as if they were my name
with the wiff of them all my mouth begins to water
is it because I'm supposed to like it? Or
my father's past becoming the future of my own addiction
not so long ago he quit, which I applaud but yet
 his timing was inadequate
a mother who never did such acts because she was one of them
all knowing
 knowing the terrible and the sad
 knowing the ugly and the bad
lucky enough she shielded it, well most of it
seen as the only fun they have
from parents who justify as "kids being kids"
no
it's futures being lost
addictions in the making
misunderstanding that only one can be had
whole generations lost as thinking is instead drinking
 drinking that is fleeing

fleeing that is hurt
hurt that is pain
and pain that is only them seeking
seeking to fill the hole left by so many blessings of a fist
by the un-acknowledgment of existence
a pain of yesterday, tomorrow, today – Generational
so ya, as you see where is the love?
A question still unanswered
Is it at the bottom of a bottle
At the light of a blunt
Struggling myself, I have not found it
I look up
I look down
I look
But still not found, only close I come when
I need no explanation
I come to tears from laughing
I feel as whole
Ya this comes from family, friends but most of all those
who have felt less
who are always smiling through
Who always need to explain
Within the pain we find the love
We find each other

A MANLY TYPE OF LOVE

Jacob Wilson

It's hard to write about love when it is such a broad and subjective topic. But, if you step back, look, and really reflect on what love is. How it plays a part in your life, you will find love in places and people that you didn't see before. It was not until recently that I realized this.

Dear Lucas,

I wanted to tell you in person, but I never got the chance. This was the next best thing. Even if I could tell you in person, I wouldn't even know where to start. So please excuse my contractions, and pardon my punctuation, as I try to explain this thing called love.

Love is a verb. It is something you do. I know you know that. But you once told me that I will know it when I feel it. Well, I feel the love, bub. You showed me how to love again.

Growing up, no one ever told me I had to love my friends. I was told to be strong. Tough, like a man is supposed to be. Don't cry. Hide your feelings. Men aren't supposed to be sad. Men aren't supposed to be depressed. You have to perceive. You have to come out on top. That's what being a man is all about right?

Over the course of that year, we lost three friends. Three teammates. Three brothers.

You were the fourth.

I told you that I had never missed them before they were gone. I never expected to lose my friends that young. I could always picture us ten, fifteen years down the road; I would see them again, and we'd be reflecting back on our high school shenanigans over a couple beers around a campfire. Talks of trucks, girls, and fishing.

I'd never see that day. God had a different plan in mind.

When our friends died. When you died. I lost sight of where I was headed in life. Questions and questions and overthinking about overthinking drove me into a deep depression. How can I be a strong man, if I am stuck in a hole I can't climb out of? How can I be a strong man when I am stuck in this void of darkness, consumed by my own negative thoughts, chained down by my own troubled conscious? How can I be a strong man?

When I heard of your death, I was here. I was hanging with Ben. We were about to play some lacrosse as we waited

by McCarthy for a Zags game later that night. It was a cold February afternoon.

I didn't cry when I heard you had drowned.

I was shocked

You died doing something you loved.

I didn't process your death till after your celebration of life. Maybe you call it being a man or a stoic nature. All I knew is you were my fourth friend to die in the past eight months. I should be used to this by now, right. This feeling of loss. The questions of mortality. The loss of faith in a God who decided take four of my friends before they could even experience life.

Lucas, I will always remember you.

You were the same age as my younger brother; and the toughest son of a bitch I have ever known. Athletic, talented, and no lack of quality in character. We played lacrosse together for four years. You played with an intensity that the other teams were told to look out for. You were passionate and loved your family over everything. Your skills as a long-stick middy were ruthless. But man you were a goofball. I'm hard of hearing and I could still hear your ass across the field from wherever you stood. Battle cries, maniacal laughs, and high-pitched squeals were just a few of the noises you made while we tore it up on the field.

God, I loved that guy.

When you passed away, I had to make my third trip home that year for a celebration of life service. How ironic, that the last time I would see you, would be at another celebration of life for one of our other teammates. I never thought you would be next. I reluctantly made that third flight home, to attend another depressing congregation of our community. When I attended the celebration of your life, the entire Klahowya gym was full. As I sat in those bleachers with fighting tears streaming down my face one by one, Coach Hawley, made it a point to take notice of your love Lucas. Whenever you scored a goal, at the end of every game, win or lose, you would point up to the stands where your parents and sister sat.

You'd say I Love you. I Love you. I Love you.

Lucas, your love was felt that night. That is when I started to realize that community is built by this messy thing we call love. I never understood that before. We are all connected by the love we share with one another. We create this special web of relationships called a community. I didn't know half the people who were in the gym that night but we all shared love for a kid who I know is popping wheelies with Jesus in heaven.

When faced with loss and death you begin to question your

own mortality. Following your death, Lucas, I began to feel the love again. I went home and hugged my mom. Like really hugged my mom. From that night on, I was going to start living life the way you did. Love lives inside every one of us. When you love someone, you build a relationship that does not follow the rules of mortality. You touched the hearts of everyone around you. You touched my heart. That might not be the manliest thing to say; but you have shown me that having love and caring unconditionally for the people in your life is what being a man is all about. Your love will continue living with everyone you touched.

What I am trying to tell you is that, I love you. I always will love you. I cannot tell you where I would be if you didn't come into my life but I can tell you that I have learned so much about myself thanks to you.

I guess the best way for me to close this letter is to tell you this. Thank you. For teaching me to love deeply, to be passionate in my actions and for showing me a love so contagious and strong that I feel grounded again.

Love, your Teammate and your Friend,
Jacob.

COFFEE

Abigail Altamirano

He was complicated but sweet, much like my favorite coffee.
CAN I GET UHHHH... venti light ice marble mocha macchiato
coconut milk no whip with an extra pump of caramel

He was different, off the menu, suited for me.
Not everyone liked him, but people with good sense did.
He was my caffeine.

He encompassed my whole being.
He excited me, he motivated me, and he gave me a rush.
He made every part of me feel.

I was his creamer, I made him less bitter and
He brought out a new side in me.

We were two juxtaposing items that worked together
I felt too plain without him but at times too different with him

But I didn't know myself without that splash of coffee
There were days when my sweetness was taken over by his
bitterness

When the mix of us didn't flow like coffee poured from a pot.
The problem with caffeine is there's always a crash.
He ran his course, he engulfed me then threw me aside like an
old coffee cup.

I was useful at one point but of no interest anymore.
He ground me up like the coffee beans we used to crush on
Sunday mornings

His aftertaste lingered in me
Without my caffeine, I stayed in bed, nothing in my head but my
thoughts, unproductive and tired.
His crash hurt harder than most.

His caffeine was addictive.
I went back for more just to be left with crashes at the end of the
day.

The thing about coffee is it's easy to remember its benefits and
forgets its downfalls.

He drained me from the inside out.
I gave up cold turkey, withdrawals and almost texts spun in my
head,

I refused to give in.
He slowly left my system, memories left in me, but no longer
controlling who I am.

He faded out.
I tried other coffees but we never mixed well.
Every other flavor was not good enough
Once mixed with him, there was only so much I could do to
prevent
His pieces staying within me
I am no longer just plain
He will always be a little part of me
I learned that his caffeine and his bitterness will always have
places within me
But now they no longer control me
There are times when I miss his rush, his complexity, and his off
the wall way about life
But I have learned to look at the benefits and cons to his
addictive self
I have it engrained in me, like I once did with my favorite
coffee,
For I am not me when with him.
I moved on...
Then one day I met a tea guy
Refreshing, new to my taste buds, and good for me
Subtle, the caffeine factor I needed without the crash.
No control just made you feel good.
For he wasn't addictive just wanted
And he wasn't overpowering but complimentary
The rush without the caffeine
The highs without the crashes
He replenished my being but also so did I.
I was me with or without him
For we are not one but two separate good things in this world

CINCO DÓLARES

Lucía Gocobachi

Over the summer I worked the night shift
At a Puerto Rican restaurant
...And I'd always get asked if we had tacos.

My shift usually ended once we wiped down all the tables
After kicking out the last drunk couple who just had to take
their sweet time
Finishing their fries.
Usually this was around 1:30 a.m.

During that half hour drive home,
That was my time to think about pretty much anything:
The blackness of the sky,
The stars dimmed due to late night fog
(Or would it be early morning?
Who can tell the difference?)

Driving down the broken street,
Cracks and potholes aplenty,
A song, many songs, frankly
Any song just to keep me up
And at it

For the next day's work.

And then I'd wonder why the hell I'm even doing this.
Yeah, to make some extra money for school,
But if I'm being honest, I didn't really like that job anyways
And I kept thinking that maybe I should just quit.

Then when I hit that stone wall
Thinking that I've had enough,
I clasp this Ring sitting on my neck

Wrought
With knots covering one another,
Almost like they're running
Constantly running

And trying to catch up with each other.
A strength unlike any other:
Light as a feather,
Tough as a mother.

How I got this Ring,
Not an extraordinary tale,
But it definitely changed me.

Perdón? A rap and a scratch on the ground.
12:08 says my watch.

I'd like to say that my first thought when this man
Walked up to me and asked for money was to immediately
Give it to him because that was the right thing to do.

And perhaps it might've been
If I hadn't immediately thought of
What language I should pretend to speak.

I'm hoping it's a good sign that as soon as I had that thought
I pushed it aside.

Que pasa señor? A panicked glance
at the bus station a block away.
No tienes dinero para el bus? Es el último
Que va correr esta noche y no tengo mi carro.
A look to the brights of a passing cab blinds me
And then I glance up at the moon.

This man reminded me so much of my own family.
In his callused hands I saw my own uncles,
Hardened from handling sheetrock and climbing ladders
And faces blackened from wiping off a mixture of sweat and car
oil.

In his legs I saw promises of a new life so far from home.
And in his eyes?

I saw the dreams of my parents,
Wishing for their children to have so much more
And willing to cut off their own arms
Just to make me happy.

Gracias! Gracias! No sabes lo que vale!
And it's true, I didn't
(Maybe I still don't).

Before circumstance would have us parted,
He gave me this ring:

Wrought
Of something precious
He said.

And before I could say a word,
The wind whisked him away and onto
The laden and loaded bus.

I bet that man is a father:
Maybe he has
A child who calls him papi, her voice
Light and sweet like a café con leche en la mañana,
And a wife, arms strong and back bent
From scrubbing what they wouldn't dare touch;
Both of them wondering why he wasn't home.

Maybe he lost his keys to the carro?
No mija, aquí está su camion. No sirve, remember.
But then how is he gonna give me un beso before I go to sleep?

Wrestling on the worn out Disney Princess pajamas
And tucking her under the sheets,
Being as difficult as her knotted tresses,
The woman with a face like the moon
Looks up at her sister.

Too frightened to cry,
She looks down and witnesses
A shadowed figure walking up
Yawning cement steps.

Too joyous to shout,
She runs out the papery door.

Cómo llegaste?

Con cinco dólares.

I can't say with any certainty that this is his story,
Or if he's had the fortune to continue writing it
(I hope he has),
But he forever has a featured spot in mine.

Whoever he is, wherever he is now,
Thank you.

Sin ti,
Without you,
I wouldn't stop to think
"What more can I do?" instead of
"What can I possibly do? I am just one person."

All because I gave him five dollars.

UNTITLED

Nodia Rogers

One of the biggest misfortunes amongst students of color is that they are taught to live within a fairytale where they are already masked as the villain.

We are constantly fed a lie and just like bread to the body, it feeds.

We are told stories like superman, told that we will be batman and not robin,

Told we will be Cinderella and prince charming, even when already cast as the step sisters.

We tell our young women of color they too can be snow white, but fail to mention the apple.

And tell our young men of color that they can be superman, while leaving out the kryptonite.

You can be anything you want to be,

This is the lie they fed me

At seven years old, I was so young

I did not understand why I could not swallow

See the cat was out of the bag,

But this country had my tongue

In the 2nd grade we wrote stories,

Who will you be when your older

And growing up three streets away from they called the hood, slapped the end on the book, before they had ever read the title.

So, I wrote what I thought was realistic.

But, to my white substitute teacher, I had filled three pages with once upon a time and a slipper that would never fit.

To her my future did not exist.

In her mind, pipe dreams were a pipeline, and school was a prison waiting.

In her mind, this world wanted only what lied between my thighs, and nothing that between my ears.

To her, brown children were not lawyers or doctors.

Brown children did not go off to college.

Brown children were just dreams, not differed but invisible.

But you can be anything you want to be

This mass sat on my tongue and began to rot.
I was so young I didn't understand why I could not swallow,
See the cat was out of the bag, but this country had my tongue.

You can be anything you want to be.
I know understand the ellipses at the end of the sentence.
It was not for dramatic effect, for I have come to know there is
nothing theatrical about death.
No matter how elegantly they draw chalk around the body.
No matter how scripted the Al Sharpton the mother's tears.
No matter how poetic the head line, and no matter how artistic
the pool of blood looks as it sits in the street, as if it is canvas
ready.
I still remember the satire in my brother's headline.
How they made his whole life seem casket sharp, and his exist-
ence bullet ready.

A constant reminder of why I tried so hard to not be brown in
brown skin.
I was twelve when I started relaxing my hair,
Thirteen when I traded laid edges for headbands,
Fourteen when traditional headscarves went M.I.A,
And Fifteen when I traded my family's history, for one my an-
cestors would not find aesthetically pleasing.

You can be anything you want to be.
These words like lye on my tongue.
I was young I did not understand why I could not swallow
See the cat was out of the bag
But these cops were holding guns.

And you see I've grown tired of being sick, and sick of being
tired.
So I guess I am just sick and tired.
Sitting behind four walls of toxic,
A room full of gas.
They somehow see a glass half full,
While I just see the glass.
My people sculpted from sand, and referred to as dirt.
Built by hands they treated like tools.
Yesterday I realized I am still working through lies they told us
in school.
Sit up straight ,
Speak when spoken to,
Have our right answer or no answer at all.

Assimilation rolls off the tongue like a river, but does not tell you about the sharp rocks that sit at the bottom.
My curls a reminder of the waves that boats made when my people were ripped from their homelands.
My edges a reminder that when you create a wound you do not get to control where the blood flows.
My head scarves a reminder that the culture they tried to erase was written in pen.
My brown skin a reminder of February, as if school children needed another set of dates to remember.
My melanin a reminder to them that I'll never have to tan, that I'll always look good in white.
My blackness a reminder of their privilege, their guilt, and their blame filters.

And somehow in all the time of telling me I could be anything I wanted to be, they never once asked me where I came from. They always seemed more focused on the fact that I talk to white to be Black, too dark to have Puerto Rican roots, too educated to have come from Tacoma, too boyish to be women, too outspoken to not be black, and too street smart to be book smart. But this is where I got my start:
My ancestors swept floors and worked in plantations.
Took care of other people's home's and children only to be told that they were neglecting their own.
Another lie to add to my tongue, another punch thrown , leaving red stripes across brown skin.
But I am both,
Educated and from Tacoma,
Both strength and women,
Both street and book smart ,
I am a walking contradiction,
The hole in their tradition
The crack you notice in the glass right before it shatters,
I am the several great grand daughter of a slave they will never have to name.
I am the birth of not one but two nations,
The ink filling in the gap,
The most beautiful gift ever given from pain,
A beautiful brown skin stain
A reminder that brown hands build white walls and comfort zones, while their bodies remain a conflict zone.
I am the un expected, because I have come to realize that when tree falls twenty-five miles away in the forest,
Just because you cannot hear it , doesn't mean that it did not fall.

It just means someone muffled its scream,
Stripped its voice,
Beat its vocal cords,
And ripped its skin while still expecting it to bear fruit.
In these four walls of toxic,
They will always see the glass half full
As long as our culture is thee for them to appropriate ,
Our skin there to cast the shadows,
Our clothes there for them to claim,
And our bodies there for them to...

You can be anything you want to be .

COLORED POETS' PAIN

Jordan Cotton & Amayrani Chavez

There's this feeling in my chest like electricity that
moves through the gray of my heart and it is heat -
heat that smolders the embers of my soul
I was so cold but now hate has consumed me
and in that shock, that pulse that has stricken
my ribs to tickle, my voice to crack and my eyes
to fill like brown lakes,
I am paralyzed into action.

I grab the only red leather and black canvas cover that I know
can take the blow
and flip to a blank caramelized page, a dry land
and as the static creeps down my forearm
and stuns every hair to my wrist
I grab the pen and spark life into existence
A flame of consciousness.

What good is fire to the poet.
For even though it brings light some say it destroys.

There's innocence in that paper.
Before my spirit is emptied by shaky hand,
before it bleeds the eternal black I brand,
Black man brown woman put down that pen!

There's innocence in that paper.
Before my mestiza mind talks about the colonized
so that everyone can finally realize that--
Black man brown woman put down that pen!
I won't tell you again!

There's innocence in that paper.
Before the invisible become seen
and the narratives are allowed to be broken free
for all to see
Black man brown woman put down that pen!

It has all already been written for you.
And we know you storm inside.

But that's the point.
But you are missing the point.

Can we ask where is the love?
When may our words become our own?
When will you hand over the chapters of lies
and the book, that puts us on a shelf.
Gives us dust.

Please hand over your pen and feel our words.
Let the libraries of our mind give you a lesson.

Because trust me I long, for the feeling in my chest like rays
that melts my every fear and that is warmth -
warmth that blooms a flower in my chest
I was so cold but now love lifts me
and in my rise, the liberation that bares
white teeth, and sparkles in my eyes
still brown lakes,
I am paralyzed into action.

I grab the only leather and black canvas cover that I know
can take the blow,
and flip the caramelized page, a meadow
and as serenity runs through my veins
stuns every hair to my wrist
I grab a pen and spark life into existence.

Where white cop greets black boy
Where brown family drinks holy water
Where dirt stained hands are kissed
Where my nieces are told that their brown skin is beautiful
Where walls are open doors to new opportunities
Where black boy joy is the mantra

What good is fire to a poet.
For it bring light, and it sustains.

A sonnet
For the brown woman.
For the black man.

I know the world has tried to beat you down.
But if you back into history, it's because they don't know que eres
virtuosa

From Dolores to Gloria to your own mami, they've seen it all so
brown woman you don't gotta frown;
You are eternal y eres poderosa.

I know the weight of life bruises your back.
And though your mind can not remove the scars your life is
proof
From waves that carried gold from mothers coast, we've survived
on land
That's not our own;
Your very being is power.

I know you're probably getting tired of hearing your chains
rattle
But brown woman they're just trying to keep you from your
passion
That's why they tie you down with their words and their shackles
Cause I bet you no one will ever have that same compassion

And I know you wake up loathing in your skin
But black man don't forget all that's within and the blood that
pumps
triumph in our veins; they won't forget -
When the chains have lifted from cold ankles and our voice
shouts from
The mountain top

Brown woman, your laugh is our symbol para la resistencia
Y que no te dejas porque tu mami te dijo que la lucha es esencial
Liberation is a light that is carried in your soul
And it's what will anchor you home

Cause I bet you no one will ever have that same compassion

Black man your smile is a symbol of resistance
And this struggle that your lineage has carried was essential

Brown Woman.
Black Man.

I am proud of you and I love you.
Your existence is resistance.
Your words are your words
That no one else can tell.

UNTITLED

Ximena Hernandez

The other day, I went home and scavenged through a small, wooden box I had made years ago in woodshop class to treasure old memories. Artifacts from my childhood like old movie tickets, stickers, small souvenirs and pictures of elementary school friends gave me a shock of nostalgia.

Worry-free days were long gone.

I dug deeper into the box to feel my fingertips pick up a ripped-up photograph that was mended by scotch tape what of looked like a picture of my youthful mother holding infant, chubby cheeked, little me.

Although the picture wasn't perfect, the tape did a good job at holding together the pieces to depict the detail as clear as the crystal blue beaches of Acapulco.

Looking back at this picture of 18 years ago I see my young healthy mother with bushy, glossy hair. So much lively abundance like the warmth in her heart. So smooth her complexion, like that of wave tides moisturizing her body... not even a wrinkle made a mark on her face. A soft smile curved her lips. Nothing in that moment seemed more important than being with her baby.

Why is this depiction of my mother so beautiful but yet sad?

I flip the picture around to see the date.

March 1999.

The month both my parents had immigrated here with me. I guess she was excited to give her little one a better life. This land gave her a reason to smile.

She traded red, white, and green for red, white, and blue.

She wanted stars and not a bird.

18 years later

They want her to take it back. They tell her to abandon stars, stripes, the red, white, and blue.

She is not welcomed here.

I let the photograph slip through my fingers, I stood up and looked at the mirror behind and all I see is

Me

18 years later, that child is me.

I am a woman, but not as fully brave, courageous and fierce like

mother.

I am young. She is older and worn out like rag that's still sweeps away life's daily messes. Dark bags under her eyes from staying up late calling her brothers and sisters down south of the border...their voices heard on a mobile device, bless technology, yet they are thousands of miles far away.

Away and long gone did the smoothness of her skin depart to then leave her with bruises and burns

And her hair isn't as thick as her English accent. It's thinned out like the desire to continue living this kind of life.

For 18 years She use to carry a basket of white roses on her back. Serenity, peace, purity walked with her onto all paths

Now the roses have dried out. They are dead and the only thing left is their stem with sharp thorns prickling her back.

Thorns punctuate holes in my mother and blood drips on her back. She resists slapping a band aid to stop the bleeding because she knows the thorns will stab her right back.

My blood boils furiously because I cannot help her

I am too far away to protect her

Why doesn't anyone run to aid her?

She is someone's mother!

Don't they know she is my mother!

Don't they see it could have been their mother?

Nobody has to empty the basket, nor carry it for her.

She's tired of depending on others

You don't have to pull her or carry it off her shoulders

Remember, the blood already made a stain

to remind her of the pain

Just tell her she'll be okay. Let her cry.

Let her yell out the anguish, frustration, fear or nothing at all.

Walk with her even if the path is rocky and she sprains her ankles

Let her tears roll down her cheek and don't ask her why

Tell her you don't understand because you'll never know know what it feels like

but assure her that you will walk with her, Put your arms around her when others won't.

And if she gets bombarded with more thorns, hold her close, shield her, and feel how the pricks make her feel.

Aside from thorns, her biggest fear is ICE

so hold her hand tightly, and don't let her slip. grip her to assure

her that the ICE will never forcefully slide her through wall that will border her out from the soil she weaved half her life in.

Bring her to me. And let her fall. Let her fall to my feet, so I can pick her up. So I can recreate that photograph of 18 years ago, though it is now I, who holds her and will look down at her I will look at her and tell her I love her. I will tell you I love you. I don't know you, but I love you because you saw that love is more than beautiful painting; or a bouquet of white roses, or nor may it look like serene image of joy. Her eye bags, patched skin, she is worn out, but she is love to me.

What you did was more than an act of help.

It was an act of love.

You saw her stumble through cracks of injustice and you walked with her. that is "love" to her

And that my dear stranger is what many working-class mothers, who scrap dirt for their giving their children the best need now more than ever.

OUR VOICES STAFF

Kailee Haong, Editor-in-Chief

Lindsey Hand, Assistant Editor

Kayliana Prioleau, Assistant Editor

Teresa Yandl, Copy Editor

Shreya Shukla, Editing Intern

Special thanks to our advisors:

Michele Pajer

and

Maria Morales

