

# **STAFF**

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#### TO THE READER,

Thank you for picking up our latest and greatest edition of *Stuck in the Library*. Our unity magazine is like no other magazine we have produced in the past; what started as an effort to connect with students looking to get their voices heard resulted in a tremendous initiative amongst 17 other clubs on campus. In a time of immense difficulty, CUNY students both on and off campus have all worked toward one common goal: showcasing their love and admiration for one another by uniting with each other. There are moments where we may feel distant from the community we have established, or moments where we may feel as if there's no community at all. This magazine serves as a reminder that our uncertainties are only perceptions and symptoms of turbulent times; our coming-together shows those uncertainties will pass just as those turbulent times must.

To us, unity is all about acceptance, passion, and perseverance. It's about accepting our hardships while not letting them define us. Identifying with the perseverance but not with the problems themselves. We are not just our struggles, we are our thoughts, experiences, and takeaways. We are the future, and as long as we stand together, there is hope that our futures are bright.

So to you, the reader—know that you're a catalyst of change. Open yourself up to the unknown, and seek discomfort in new discoveries. We hope you enjoy this magazine and make the most of this upcoming journey.

Respectfully,

Mary Halabani

President of Stuck in the Library

Aaron Guyette

Vice President of Stuck in the Library

# IN COLLABORATION WITH











Rotaract:





















#### WE WOULD LIKE TO DEDICATE THIS MAGAZINE TO...

...communities who have already been affected by the climate crisis, particularly indigenous peoples.

...the victims of the many mass shootings that have occurred, including the Chabad of Poway shooting.

...the refugees and immigrants in America who are affected by the current administration, as well as refugees across the world, particularly the Rohingya refugees in Myanmar.

...journalists detained or killed for informing the public. We are indebted to you and to the information you selflessly share at the expense of your safety.

...Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Stormé DeLarverie, Keith Haring, Harvey Milk, and all those who fought and all those who continue to fight for equality and acceptance.

...trans women, specifically our sisters of color. To those who are being killed because of hate, whose rates of homelessness are rising, and whose lives are ignored by mass media. We see you. You are a part of this community and will not be forgotten.

... "The Gift of Life International" which provides lifesaving congenital heart surgeries to children around the world in need and is a global initiative.

...the victims of the Christchurch Massacre, who entered their mosques for Friday prayers in unity, but did not return. May you now pray peacefully in Paradise. To the families who bid farewell to their loved ones that morning and now live with grief. May the sorrow in your hearts quell as you remember that the lives of those you hold dear will never be forgotten.

...those who struggle from mental health issues. Many choose not to speak up because they fear being judged for their battles. You are not alone.

...the fight against deforestation.

...the President of NYFTSA, Fatima Velasquez, who is currently taking a leave of absence to care for her son who was severely injured in an accident. We hope he is granted a speedy recovery.

...not only our young people, who will carry our future, but also to our educators who work tirelessly to ensure that their students have the knowledge to access resources leading to more positive health outcomes. Social stigma, and lack of awareness/ access are among a few of the many barriers young people face in making informed decisions about their physical and mental health.

...first generation students. We see the many obstacles you are presented with, and we admire your hard work and are proud of your success.

...anyone who's doing their best to persevere through adversity in their life. We applaud your strength and we admire your courage.

#### **NEW YORK EPISODE**

Hripsime Tumanyan

I flirt

With

My own

Town,

As a hopeless

City romantic.

Rooftop buildings.

Island is epic, shores of Atlantic.

Museum dates & galleries modern/antic.

First Kiss on the Wonder Wheel.

Don't forget a blanket for

Movies under the stars.

Chinatown welcome flower lights, hot summer nights,

Insufficient fare Metro-Cards.

Birthday at Bryant park.

Cocktails—couple of hundreds and some dimes.

Brooklyn Bridge during golden hour.

Extravagance in cold colors of SOHO.

Plus, DUMBO.

After work, outdoors, coffee shop, laptop

ON.

Brighton or new Soviet Union.

Gave up trying to have an Empire State of

mind.

á la mode,

New York Episode.

### UNITY

#### Shionodo

Look around at the sea of faces

At the collected mass of beings

Fighting anonymously beside you

We are one

One species

One community

The enemies of our enemies are our friends

We stand united

Stronger together

Fists raised in the air

Voices filling up the square

Stand with us

Fight with us

In our community

No one gets left behind

We are unity

## **BEACON**

Kali Norris

I fold a piece of home from a little square of wrapping paper from my mother ten thousand miles away.

This is how we endure.

We burn the bridges,
and resurrect ourselves from the ashes.

The city smolders.

I remember only golden lights.

#### **FROM WITHIN**

Zainab Nathani

The divide is inside us
Seething and growing
From the contradiction and hypocrisy we feed it
Words say one thing and actions another
And the divide laughs while it spreads
As we hold hands with others when we cannot even confidently hold our own

Then comes the one whose divide neither seethes nor grows
Inching and stretching Together
From the sincerity and transparency that feeds it
Words say and actions follow through
And the divide struggles to breathe as it is choked
By the one that holds hands with others
Tightly, firmly, compassionately, loudly,
While confidently holding hands with one's own self

How brightly our unity shines when it unfolds from the unity within

### **SMOKE**

#### Anastasia Mourzakhanova

The smoke
The feeling
The drag
It's a kind of sad unity

None of us encourage it yet We do it in groups Offer it to our friends Happily give it away if asked

We cough and clear our throats
"Do you have a mint?"
"Do you have some perfume?"
My boss can't know, I can't share this

I feel myself slipping Breathing is harder My cardio is shot My body doesn't work well

Will my birth control still work? The pills say they won't if I smoke enough My mom can't take any kind of birth control Why? Because cigarettes ruined her

So why do so many of us smoke? It's an odd club, small, yet so full We stand in our semi-circle of shit Taking a 5 min smoke break

### **NOSOTROS**

#### Melissa Morales

My poem will dance A song of faces and bodies Palettes of browns and blacks and beiges Curves and angles around each of the edges

My poem will dance A song of colors Speaking in different tongues "I love you" articulated in 25 languages

My poem will dance A song of beauty From the green lush trees to the Pond filled with eccentric fish And lazy turtles basking in the sun At the heart of this campus

My poem with dance A song of unity Of different people Different lives Different stories

Mi poema bailará Un canción de esto: De verdad De amor De nosotros

## **DISCRIMINATION**

Melagras Mirzakandova

Discrimination, why must you exist?
Do the people of the world not deserve to coexist?
The Earth should be in coalition
Rather than in never-ending demolition.

If slavery ended in 1865, Why are some blacks not given the chance to thrive? Many employers throw impeccable resumes away Because they would rather see Gregory than Treyvon on a Monday.

Marijuana use is equal among blacks and whites Yet blacks are four times more likely to get arrested during the nights. Many black drivers are also pulled over While a myriad of white drivers are behind the wheel with a hangover.

I find it absurd that Michael Brown is dead While his killer Darren Wilson gets to walk ahead. What a fucked-up world it truly is when twelve-year old Tamir Rice Cannot even play with his black toy gun without getting shot at twice.

Although racism impacts blacks the most Innumerable women also feel like parasitic hosts. Sexism is a continuous issue in today's society With many rapists and pedophiles following Trump's impropriety.

Brock Turner raped an innocent girl behind a garbage can But Judge Persky decided six months in jail as a plan Corey Batey raped a woman just like Brock But he is spending fifteen years under lock.

One unjust judge thinks raping a woman is a trivial matter, And that a white male does not deserve for his life to shatter. The other judge sees the significance of the crime And sends the rapist to do his time.

Many women cannot even take a walk in the street Without a man catcalling and looking at them like a treat. I cannot believe that we now have a president who has groped many Giving indirect permission to plenty.

Men's needs are constantly placed above the needs of a female And people continuously assume that women are dumb and frail. I am tired of constantly being told I do not need to listen, I am bold. We live in a disgusting nation one of unjustness and aberration. "The greatest country on Earth," they say I found that statement false even before election day.

Donald Trump opened a door, He invited the already existing racists and sexists to cause an uproar. This country has come a really long way But for a long time now, half the nation is in constant dismay.



Photo by Marwa

#### UNITY

Anna Matskin

The faces shine here
The smiles wink

The clouds part to
Give a soft ray
For this college.
We're all on our own ways.
And better days will come,
As we pray for peace.

## WHEN I LOOK AROUND

#### Basimah Zahid

When I look around, I am not the only one
I see diversity from all over the world captured in a college campus
When I look around, I am not the only one wearing a hijab
Different representations of modesty are walking side by side
When I look around, I see a unique expression of individuality
Some through their clothing, and some through religious head coverings
When I look around, expression is limitless
I feel at ease because I have the privilege of self-expression
When I look around, I feel at home
I take a sigh of relief knowing my hijab is not the center of attention
When I look around, I see diversity
Diversity is a puzzle whose pieces are assembled into unity
When I look around, we are one



by Kelsey Lopez

#### HALVES AND HOLES

Rae Lilly Mizrachi

I reveal myself to you
the clay needs the sculptor
and when it sits on the wheel
he presses the pedal
rip the flesh of the earth
that you blended in your mixing bowl
that you piously tear the excess
and throw now upon the rack
Beneath the lashings and the etchings
hieroglyphs crafted
by these communal hands
these impressions make the body
voids are meant to be filled with
something outside, no?

I feel the moving strangely bright the pulse of another sun like a stepping stone skipping between my eyelashes across the lakes and brushes growing, the foster children of my marbles stomach terraformed by the kisses of undone garments torn in passion torn in disdain

torn away to see failure painted across the mountain face only legible to me.

Take the land and purify: this is your clearing, this is your forest to pillage. It is easier when others take.

This body the mishap numbness caused by the arms of Stupor, clutching me in boundless fists.

This body a misshapen dream it's malady blowing between blades of lofty grass singing a sweet song that only this flat earth can sing. New holes will be made for you, vivisections are welcome here, cessation of loneliness break waves up my throat out my nostrils comes all this drivel tiles fall into the wet cement, the mosaic sitting in my stomach makes the potter's field the dirt without the sky.

I am the sky sucked into the ether with meek suns penetrating the micrometers between the clay
I have made myself the Milky Way splatter is gray matter 60 million light years and pulse new reeds in this universe fall asleep and feel a part.
I am whole now.
I am the hole.

### LILY POND

Emilia Jerez

Generations of students
And their children
Have come here
To ponder and gaze.
Where we come to eat lunch,
Find peace and serenity
In this scenic environment.

Where the teen-aged turtles
Sunbathe in the afternoon,
And remind us of the mutants
Fathered by the New York City Martial Rat.
And the children come to
Rub their shells,
Photographers take their stills,
And children in adult bodies pick them up

Where lovers come to gaze
At the Giant fish
Size of toddlers.
Where your friend came
To drop off their goldfish
And the egret visited us last spring
To eat it

Lily Pond,
Its water Infamous
During biology class project time.
For an easy A task
On water quality testing and comparison
Where the music academy can sing acapella
And the strings quartet played in the spring
Concert

As students and staff gather politely Even for a moment in their afternoon rush

Where the film academy students
Come to shoot their best scenes
The romantic ones or heart breaks.
Where the photographers of campus come
To find a new perspective.
Where the Amateur model goes for the
Best shot on campus.

Lily Pond,
Time travels differently here.
Everyone can meet in this space
Regardless of time and age.

Lily Pond,
Unites all members of the campus community,
Including our visitors
From the natural world.

#### **RESONANCE**

Priyanka Algu

The flickering of fairy lights beat in time to the tinkling of your soft laughter, Harmonizing with the crackling of a small candle.

When all is left in a corner, long forgotten—

Dear, tiny flame, how is it that you still burn?

Tongues of orange desperately dance with reds, In a race against the depleting wax, as it drips from the moon. Oh, small blaze, who supports you when the waning crescent has become new?

I know not the darkness, I hear not the silence, I feel not the desolation,

So please, let me gather the fire of my stars to help you stay aglow. With the company of the galaxy, forevermore may you—
Resonate with me.

#### WE ARE FOR EACH OTHER

Oriya Abed

with one,

there are only sparks of an idea.

with many,

there is change, there is difference, there is progression.

what have we if not each other?

where would we be if not for one another?

no more shall our differences be used to separate us, no more.

for we are a whole—the human whole—with sprouting variations that unite us.

our differences.

they allow for conversation, for education, for unification.

and thus, with many, our world will be in constant progression,

in which we will know we have one other.

#### I FEEL UNITY...

Gina Rivieccio

When I walk from Whitehead to the library I see people Of all shapes and sizes Colors and religious affiliations Sexualities and gender presentations

> I see these people Laughing together Walking together Protesting together

When I walk from the pond to my class in Boylan I see people Of all different majors And hobbies And interests

I see these people Huddled together at the pond Spread out on the quad Laid back in offices and lounges

When I walk around campus
I feel unity
In the community
We have created
Here at Brooklyn College

#### THE PARTS OF US THEY DREAM TO DESTROY

Ouentin Felton

Don't they know our body explodes when they kiss it? Lips stick smeared on decapitated limbs: head, shoulders, knees & toes tip-toed atop train doors, bring up as advertisement. Our organs each themselves teething at Loinner, growing into the trainel's midnight melodrama by Myrtle-Willoughby. You leave somewhere in-between, cologne still clouding the car's cradle, along with your goodbye's & your call-when-you-get-in's & your exit stage left out of sight in minutes. & of course, there are pieces of us that wish you'd stay, like the mouth swimming to the sound of bone detached, or the hip racing round the train's silver poles, peddling to pass the time. It's flumy how comfortable we've become with alone time, since three itself is yet another construct of whitewess brought to a boil, then stirred with timy tiny toxins of temporality, as if we're ever where we're supposed to be this is a church avenue-bound g teath, the next stop is: classon.

stand clear	the closing
10073	before
automated	bings blast
into a	пеагру
drum, past	t h e
headphones	meant to
keep us	company
We snatch a	couple
fingers from	the window-
seat &	clumsily
place thumb	next to ring
like a child	unfamiliar
w t t h	creation. /

know my body's fragile, know it's made from clay-shaped-chitter, know the heart rolling onto the corner of an eye is covered in the city's soot, its tumbleweed a body jumbled to litter, a boy mistaken for boytsh, dawn ma, lookin good, where you goin tonight? His hands pull one thigh over the other & rips a tongue from the overhead sailing, assuming our lack of one prevented him from a response. It didn't. It never does. We sit wondering how long until he realizes we're one of the boys, one of those boys constantly filled by others, torn by others, availanced by others, showly what's good? you can't speak or somethin? As arms cross, songs switch to switch-blades: showly, howey, sweetle, swear that wasn't what my monima gave me. Soon, he gifts us a chest, stabs his palm against nipples & plains. It lingers; his face drips to stone, you tryna fool me nigga, you tryna fool me, i'll fuch you the fack up you fackin faggot trotting to the opposite end of the car, keys edging the insides of my knackles. smear the queer is what we called it.

#### **IMMIGRANT**

Zhrah Aziz

stop asking me where I belong because I cannot exist in two places at once.

explain to me

how do I carve half the sun out of my skin

or how do I split half the moon from my chest

or how do I rip the seams and pull out half a tongue

without the other half bleeding

there is an ocean placed between my two worlds. too foreign for both but complete in halves.



Photo by Hazem Hassan

## **BREAK UP FIRST AID**

Toni Coleman

it hurts to cut yourself, but it must be done. to let out all the poison controlling your brain pretty stupidly, you must hold your sternum to the flame & breathe out all the rotting wants. patch up your heartache with sticky saliva & latenight talks with mcdonald's. when you wake up a different person, remember the word love. it's always for something like that.



Photo by Khilola Khusanova

#### **POETRY LOVE**

Helen Dang

Poetry connects us In our hearts, souls, and minds Listening to the sounds of music The language of art Flowing through us

Unspeakable language Too powerful to comprehend It lifts us up

Healing us Our invisible scars Secret flaws

Making us Feel free Expressing ourselves Our most hidden Vulnerable selves

Making life a little bit more brighter for us Poets Artists We thank you For the voice and power it gives us Uniting us with this one love Our passion for poetry

### ...AND I DON'T WANT TO BE DINNER.

#### Miles Mercer

When I was young, and my mother, bulletproof, We'd go to the park and swing high enough to inhale the clouds, Losing our breaths in the atmosphere.

The other parents would gawk and wonder where my mother was. How could a real mother have the maid take her marshmallow to the park? My mother, with her cinnamon skin, Could never have a child so pale, the moon was a rolling blackout beside me.

Being different from my own mother would get me teased during recess.

Still, she told me to take pride in what makes me different.

But I am a chameleon fading into the background of my basic white skin,

Letting people write my story based on my visual mundanity.

I am whatever I need to be to survive,

To not be the protagonist of yet another hate crime, shooting, or headline.

My contrasts place me in the crosshairs.

Being gay is having a tattoo on my shoulder and never wearing a tank top. If my sleeve slips a bit too high,

If I find myself in a place that's not in 2019,

My pulse could be spread across the floor.

Being Jewish is having my people's transgenerational trauma on my back, Sinking my heels in the dirt, inch by inch,

And if I don't keep moving, I'll drown.

It's knowing that when I step into a Jewish building,

A gunman could follow me through the doors,

Towards the people I love,

And I'd watch them fall to their knees as a bullet kisses their brains.

We each have something that belongs to another.

We can't sit in our corners and watch the world handle itself.

Because if we can't lean on you,

And you can't lean on us,

Then we'll both fall.

And those who feed off chaos will shovel our ashes onto their dinner plates.

## THE "WE"

Naveera Arif

We are divided.
Unrelenting, working to shut out the other
But who is the other?
Is the other not ourselves?

We have become machines of hate and threat, Letting our fears of difference Take precedence and priority, Forgetting who we are and what we can be.

And the "we" will always be there, To sing, and pray, and cry Over the unnecessary loss of lives, Over the tragedies of our world, Over the rise of hatred, Over the loss of faith and love.

The "we" has always existed. It's time we open our eyes and see. It's time we realize what we are,

And what we can be.



Photo by Sebastien Dagist

## KO YIHYEH ZARECHA: FOR WE ARE A STAR-STUDDED GLORY

Mic Braun

If one could count the stars, we wouldn't be here any longer The galaxy would shrivel up and swallow us into the night If all the triangles stopped embracing, diamonds would chip And the hyaline pieces would sprinkle over us like fine dust

If we could collect the dust
Drink it, go down to our gut, and chip
Away at all the bigotry, life would be sweet and simple
And humanity would maybe be on the mend

If we could then fix all the hurt and mend
Our souls to unite as one simple
Shape, we would be no longer a vast puzzle in the night
Nor see ourselves in the stars any longer.

But if we would eat the stars, maybe our insides would emit good energy into the world.

#### ONE FOR ALL

Tommy Huang

All for One and One for All

Together we rise and never fall

Believe in people who you trust Build friendships that never rust

Be understanding, kind, and strong
To have a place where you belong

It's good to have people who see

The real you and who you'll be

When you see someone down and low

Cheer them up and help them grow

Life is not what you take

It's what you give that takes the cake

Live a long full life with those you love

One for all we rise above

#### "MY PRAYER TO YOU"

Nolan Patrick Frontera

Purchase my soul as the fleet flies abroad, with the prevailing wind cutting through my wings.

My soul benevolently shines with all-powerful dynamics, while the rays of wrath pierce though me, onto the many blades of the emerald grass.

> For the sky, Lo' the sky!

O' mighty sapphire dimension of the almighty universe, and the partition between us and the nirvana,

> Empower the doves, Oh, the doves!

Have them disperse and Enlighten the disciples to soar for the emancipation of mankind, and to have us endeavor in becoming charitable descendants of the Great Architect.

For the roses, yes, the roses!

As we gaze in euphoria at the ruby essence of your glorious beauty, let the thorns admonish us of the horrors of deceptive evil.

We must Stand, yes, stand!

Side by side, brother by brother, sister by sister, neighbor by neighbor against all who endeavor in the decimation of our ethical truth and morality.

To my creator,

This is my prayer to you.

## **FORGOTTEN**

I. Ash

Nowadays everyone seems to lack unity they say I am not like you so I cannot like you A narrative of us versus them Trapped in this narrow dichotomy where everyone's seeking conformity

A widespread rhetoric of hate and paranoia has us all passing through life with a blindfold over our eyes failing to realize what we all share is so much more beautiful that we are a part of a bigger community

And how our unity comes from our humanity

when we remember again that the condition of being human is a condition we all share—

a condition we can all help each other through

And respect each other for

we will remember that we don't need to hate or live our lives trying to eradicate the differences that make us who we are the things that make us uniquely our own and the imperfections are what make us human make us a part of the human family where we share love and responsibility of our impact on ourselves and our environment

unity is in people like us and not like us unity is no more us versus them unity is us versus the oppressors unity is no one is free until we are all free unity is remembering we are not alone

unity is dignity for humanity

the world is bleeding today because

we have lost our unity

Let it no longer be

Forgotten

#### **ALPHABET**

Mariam Esa

Did you ever stop to consider the alphabet? A series of random phonemes, of sounds with no meaning you wonder, Why do they exist at all? And yet, When placed in a certain sequence,

When arranged in just the right way,
This series of randomness suddenly makes sense
It is given meaning and it is given power
To educate, to inform,

to revolutionize, to inspire, to entertain,

This mixture of meaningless sounds, when viewed and utilized correctly,

when arranged ever so intentionally and accidently, yields unimaginative capacity—the likes of which has never been seen before.

Is beautiful and I wonder,

if others can see its beauty too and if not, then it is truly disheartening because there is beauty in unity,

The contrasting of these sounds and of the differences of these beings

just as there is strength in diversity and only sorrow comes from being blind to this underlying truth.

Did you ever stop to consider the alphabet?

Because I did

and

it just makes sense.

In the spirit of unity, Stuck in the Library looks to past editions, to past authors that have written on the topic of solidarity.



#### **MARTA**

#### Angelika Garcia

A chill in the tropics

Having reaped the fruits of bold immigrants

It was time for a pilgrimage to the motherland

As the matriarch entered her rest

A compilation of generations

Cousins littered the room like confetti

All family, all strangers

But my feet headed straight for her

The living mirror

Rich black curls and skin like old leather

Frown lines and almond eyes both gentle and firm

Like seeing my grandmother, my mother, myself

My Tia Marta

The aroma of cinnamon and salt grew stronger

As the long brown arms poured out her black tank top

And gave me a hug for everyone left back home

Language, culture, generation

All barriers broken

Seeing her once felt like seeing her a thousand times

We are of the same heart

#### **#THISISAMERICA**

Alyna Valderrama

Rest In Peace I find myself saying again

After another school shooting.

It physically hurts to see the crying of children on TV

Like they were the story the news just had to have.

It's tormenting to see that nothing has changed

After all these protests from Parkland's shooting,

After all these protests from Sandy Hook,

After all these protests from so many kids with no reward to come from it.

That's because this is America.

Where Mother's Day and Father's Day are spent

Picking up the calls of your child who could've died,

Mourning the loss of the children who did die,

Panicked forever because school is just another word for a possible shooting range

Because, again, this is America.

Here is where the guns get better privilege than white privilege,

Where our generations and future generations are being picked off one by one

Where the stories of royal weddings and viral trends are more talked about

Than the real news of the death of everyone else,

It's funny to see how everyone deals with grief

Especially after doing little to nothing with gun laws

He says

"My administration is determined to do everything in our power

To protect our students

And to keep weapons out of the hands of those

Who pose a threat to themselves and to others."

Because the funny thing is you didn't do anything to fix this before,

Nor has any government administration before,

So how can we trust anyone to mean what they say,

Actions speak louder then words

But I never knew something like the three-fifths compromise

Could be the protesting and ever losing Americans vs

The inaudible, lifeless and yet life taking, cookie-plattered guns.

Our generations shouldn't be

Dodgeball where we instead dodge the bullets

In schools

From the police

Who only seem to shoot the innocents

The colored innocents, like Trayvon Martin and Stephon Clark

Who are now not only black or brown

But are stained in red

Uno where we have to count our blessings if we are left standing

Chess where we are the easily reap-able pawns

The skip-it's that just got jumped over

The hot potato that got too hot to touch

Like the slight burns left from bullet wounds -

Do you think this is a game America?!

Because I'm tired of it.

America isn't what it used to be back in 1791

We are ever changing and so should the mind set.

It's not the America that many think can help better your future anymore.

To those who still come to America for a better life I can only say:

Quédese en casa

o usted y sus ninos serán el próximo objectivo.

Stay home or you and your children will be the next target.

The American dream is dead citizens.

The land of the free and home of the brave

Only stand for the citizens who have stayed long enough

To continually bear the pain America has brought to the survivors

Or the prisoners left behind,

Because this is America.

Where things won't seem to ever change

Even after the constant begging

The constant prayers

The constant protests

What will be the last straw for America?

Because honestly I'm tired of it already.

Rest In Peace Americans

Because you may be next.

And although officials may say it through plastered lips

I'm saying it

As my last human to human connection

To all.



## THE UNAMERICAN CARD

Mila P.H.

Daunted by the law,

We were tricked and cheated.

Depleted by the lawless.

"Here is your card," the lawyer said.

"Carry it with you all the time,
This card identifies you."

Designed in red, white, and blue

With the Star Spangled Banner and Jefferson Memorial Imprinted behind my picture.

The most unamerican American card.

And they said to me, "This is the land of liberty!"

But as you'll see,

you'll too agree, this is the land of the phony and unfree.

> And you cannot go And if you do,

don't plan on coming back.

You'll lose what you know,

your family, your home

And then you'll be faced

With the counterattack.

My picture is faded. It's black and white, but boldly and bright like a corner-deli sign, it proudly says United States of America. This card, it says to me, "You are not from here." It spits and hisses, "You are an illegal immigrant. No, you are an illegal alien."

Not even human.

"You are not from here."

This card, they said it will protect me.

So, I keep it close

even when it spits and spews

and bruises me.

The days, the months and years go by

and those with the American card all yell and cry,

"Go back to your own country!"

and they, the people like me, are grabbed and thrown across the border, all alone and left to start over.

This Unamerican card,
with a life expectancy of two years,
this time, has been approved.
And I swear, each time,
I always pay my due.
Until one day they say:
"No more,"
and I will expire too.

## **IMMIGRATUITY**

#### Raisa Alexis Santos

Naïve	newhorn	hahe	there's	so mucl	in life	that sh	o will	wholehear	tedly crave.
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She doesn't know there's an invisible weight that's placed on her shoulders, a translucent shadow that follows her at every turn. She's just the first-born daughter of immigrants, with so much to gain and everything to lose.

Her parents once had dreams that disappeared when they flew across the sea. They believe in achieving this 'so-called' American dream, so when she is born, their dreams become hers.

So they dote on her and love her; they give her swimming lessons and the latest toys. She's none the wiser – how can the girl say no to becoming a doctor when she has it all?

She parrots back "doctor" when teachers ask her about her dreams and the shadow that follows her assumes corporeality.

Ignorant, innocent girl, soon enough her desires for something greater seek to unfurl.

But the pen and paper call out to her, like sailors lost out at sea. While books envelope her in their pages, that allow her, for once, to dream different dreams.

She reads about wizards and princesses but writes about time travel and spelling bees. Strange as it sounds, the girl appears to be happy. Her shadow agrees, and is nowhere to be seen.

Recalcitrant, rebellious teen, she'll come to understand what her parents mean.

If her parents brought her the world, her friends helped her explore it. She discovers the beauty of the humanities – history and its intricacies, and foreign languages that are filled with cacophonous melodies.
She takes a step into English, the world of creative writing, and her mind doesn't want to leave.
But her parents have done so much for her that her body tries to depart this dream.
She's left at a crossroad that widens with each passing year. On one side, the shadow is fully formed, grinning maniacally. The other is lighthearted and fills her with peace.
Her parents only ask for one thing in return, for their love, their labor, just one small gratuity.
They hope that their perfect, eldest daughter's hands will one day have a medical degree.
When she makes her choice, her shadow may threaten to engulf her whole.
The woman will reap what she sows; for medicine is what ultimately knows.

## A POEM FOR MR. HUGHES

Marie Pruitt

The professor said,
Go home and write a page tonight
Write something like Mr. Hughes—
Then, it will be true.

But what makes writing true?

I am twenty-one and as white as they come.
Born in Westchester, grew up there, too.

Now I live in Brooklyn, about two blocks away from school.

I take the back exit of Boylan that never actually sets off the alarm,
And then across Campus Road, I'm on my way home.

I pass the Residence Hall, where I spent my first year,
I'm so glad that I don't still live there.
I sit at my desk, where I will write this page,
Waiting for the fog on this window to fade.

I love Brooklyn, but I've never felt part of it.
I spent so much of my life in one place,
I now long to move from space to space
I want Germany, Mexico, Prague, and Peru,
Moscow and Dublin and that's only a few.

I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.

I hate to work, idle, or pretend.

I love collecting records, though I have far too many,
Billy and Elton and Ella and Freddie.

I don't have to think about race, but I try to.
Sexuality, though— I think of that often.
I like boys and girls and everything in between.
There's a word for what I am,
But it never helps as much as it can.

Queer is my culture,
Don't like it or do.
Not Irish nor Scottish nor German,
Though I am those things, too.
I don't go to protests and I've only once paraded
I'm kind of a bad gay,
And I won't be persuaded.

But in my defense, my culture kind of sucks. You can be gay or trans or any way you are, but pan? "Oh sweetie, you're just confused" It's just one step too far.

So how's this poem going, professor?

Did I tell you more than you wanted to know?

You wanted the truth

and that's what is here,

Like the window beside me,

I'm evermore clear

# "I AM NOT RUSSIAN, BUT I AM FROM RUSSIA."

Leysan Nigmatova

I am not Russian, but I am from Russia. I do not know Chinese, but Americans think I do. I do not know Kazakh, either Uzbek or Kyrgyz, But people from these countries think I do.

I do know Bashkir, but people do not know what it is Every time I try to explain it, they do not get it.

I do not know Bashkir well, but it is within me I do speak and write in Bashkir, but do not understand Bashkir's literature.

I do not know Arabic, but I am an ethnic Muslim. I do not understand prayers in the Quran, but I believe in prayers in any language.

I do know Russian, but I am not Russian. I do speak in Russian, but I still don't understand their culture sometimes. I do know how to read or write in Russian, but I still can make mistakes in grammar.

I do not know Ukrainian or Belarussian languages, But these people are my friends.

I do not know well enough English, But I am willing to learn. I do not get always jokes in English, But I do know how to laugh. I do not understand American culture yet, But I always smile at the others.

I am not Russian, but I am from Russia. I am Bashkir, born in Russia, but live across the Ocean. I am not Russian, yet from Russia. I am not American, yet New Yorker.

#### **2020 VISION**

Lucy Curran

Something sinister is peeking through picket fences
Its glowing eyes stark against the buzzcut lawns and American flags
Smiling in the wind,

The stripes curl into rows of straight white teeth

The crooked are not welcome here,
Where we bash in the sidewalks to build them up better—
First impressions based on pink flamingos and political signs
Planted just for the sake of proving that yes, life can be this easy

And how privileged one must be to bask in the light of Lady Liberty;
To tan in the suburban safety sunshine of the American Dream—
What a beast with a beautiful face!
The routine and shiny blue cars that march home at 5 pm
Like tiny toy soldiers approaching battle
For an unjust cause on unsanctified ground

Because I know what's behind all those pretty white doors
Pretty white teeth
Wide open mouths of hypocrite fathers and silent mothers

They all fall silent, eventually
Give in to 24 karat sunsets and cricket-sung lullabies
At the cost of overlooking the bloodstains on their children's white shirts
It's that easy, and after all—
Wouldn't you like to feel golden too?

Originally published in our Fall 2019 Poetry Magazine



Photo by Kelsey Lopez



Photo by Kelsey Lopez

# **MAMA**

#### Natoya Hutson

I heard this poem once

It started like this

"If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?"

#### It ended like this

"If a black body falls at the hands of a white cop does it make a difference Does it really matter, does it make a sound?"

When we were little

We clothed our bodies in white coats

Telling ourselves "I'll be a doctor"

"Mama I'll be a lawyer"

"Mama I'll be a teacher

I'll be a preacher or matta a fact mama I can be anything I want to be" (Laugh)

But it ain't so easy, mama

You see people like us, people like me with my pigment People with melanin coursing through their veins at every inch of their body, mama People who don't speak American as their first language But all get called Mexican Just cuz you speak Spanish you're Mexican?

Mama, it ain't so easy for us

To them we're still sitting at the back of that damn bus

We can't be doctors, we can't be president

We can't be nothing but gangbangers in the streets or a maid folding the white peoples

#### sheets

OH! Well, do we got them fooled.

Young black men graduating
With the highest awards, go valedictorian
Young black women too, can't forget about them
Go black man go be president, beautiful black woman
Go be president
Let your curls, twists, and bantu knots wrap around this nation, lift it up
And discard all the evil and abomination
Don't let them knock you down...
But
You wanna hear the truth?

They don't want to see you succeed,
They throw obstacles in our way to disrupt our speed
To disrupt our black owned businesses and
Latino owned offices
To stop the minority families from
Economically, physically, and mentally growing,
Probably even beyond them.

Mama, this is hard
I thought we came here for better opportunities
I thought we came here for
"Indivisible, with liberty and justice for all"
We came for "Land of the free, Home of the brave" but where is it

More like land of the Native Americans that we stand on every day, Home of the white and affluent who look down on us from day to day

"Speak American" they say
"He had a gun" they say
"A moment of silence" they say

"We've had enough" we say

Mama, I'm gonna prove them wrong, I'm gonna have their eyes wide open As I shower myself with my Bachelor degree, my masters and my PhD Let them come to me so I can diagnose them and flex my medical degree Cuz it's not gonna be like this for too long

We're making our way up mama, and yes I can be what I wanna be But thank god it's not just handed down to me Time to change and work hard to become a better me.

## **TIGNON HAIR TIES**

Quameisha Moreno

You say it is ghetto to wear my hair tied up? But, was it ghetto when you made me?

You see When the slaves were freed We continued to walk in royalty Afro Poppin Melanin Slayed

My hair stood tall Like a sunflower

This Crown on my head Twinkled from the beams of the sun rays

They say that Beauty is in the eye of the beholder Beholding is what the white man did

He checked out the sway of my hips And the curve of my lips



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