

INSIGHT

2020

In remembrance

Co-Editors: Mollie Altucher, Julie Geller, Bridget Goldberg,
Cassie Laifer

Art Editor: Anneke Chan

Literary Magazine Staff:

Sam Bates

Jill Cox

Anastasia Coope

Shea DeCaro

Curtis Huber

Aurora McKee

Ziaire Mickell

Andrew Nachamkin

Zoe Silverman

Athena Stebe-Glorious

Damian Vladimiroff

Lucas Vladimiroff

Seren Yiacoup

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Richter



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Coronavirus Memoriam + Dedication



We are proud to dedicate this year's magazine to everyone on the front lines, for their valiant and life-saving efforts.

We would like to thank those working at grocery stores, as janitors, nurses, doctors, restaurant workers, agricultural workers, transportation workers, and sanitation workers for all that they have done.

We would like to thank the Haldane Janitorial Staff for their continued dedication to keeping the entire Haldane community safe.

We want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your service and dedication to help others.

We also want to recognize those in our community who have lost loved ones and who have been affected by this pandemic in countless other ways.

This is Not a Poem About the Coronavirus

Aurora McKee

Page 10

I Forgot

Julie Geller

Page 11-12

Drawing

Anneke Chan

Page 13

New Land

Seren Yiacoup

Page 14-17

Home Soil

Zoe Silverman

Page 18

Amish On A Bus

Zoe Silverman

Page 19-21

Painting

Anneke Chan

Page 22

A Literary Childhood

Anneke Chan

Page 23

Girl On A Train

Mollie Altucher

Page 24

American Girl

Mollie Altucher

Page 25

Star Girl

Mollie Altucher

Page 26

Drawing

Cassandra Laifer

Page 27

Verisimilitude

Anneke Chan

Page 28

Mother Hen

Shea DeCaro

Page 29-30

Weight, Just Stop

Julie Geller

Page 31-33

The Girl With The White Dress

Maya Gelber

Page 34

Digital Art

Erika Bauer

Page 35

My Lady

Joia McKelvey

Page 36

Rain

Ziaire Mickell

Page 37

The Wooden Boat People

Joia McKelvey

Page 38

Drawing

Bridget Goldberg

Page 39

Avalanche

Shea DeCaro

Page 40

Nighttime Bickering

Shea DeCaro

Page 41

Solona

Aurora McKee

Page 42

Life On The Spectrum

Aurora McKee

Page 43-46

Photograph

Anna Brief

Page 47

Mirrors

Ziaire Mickell

Page 48

Painting

Anneke Chan

Page 49

Nora and David

Mollie Altucher

Page 50-57

Dear Pinecone

Sophie Sabin

Page 58

Photograph

Anna Brief
Page 59

Haiku

Ryan Merritt
Page 60

Haiku

Felix Schmidt
Page 60

Haiku

William Etta
Page 60

Photograph

Elliott Goldberg
Page 61

Where Mountains Come From

Joia McKelvey
Page 62

Photograph

Anna Brief
Page 63

Memories

Aidan Sullivan-Hoch
Page 64

America: Embracing The Past

Maya Gelber
Page 65-69

Photograph

Elliott Goldberg
Page 70

The Stationer

Conrad White

Page 71

Illusions at Dusk

Bridget Goldberg

Page 72

Matt

Aurora McKee

Page 73

Photograph

By Anna Brief

Page 73

The Power of Us

Maya Gelber

Page 74-75

The Brightest of Days

David Burke

Page 76

The Eulogy for Death

Lucas Vladimiroff

Page 77

The Lives of Lonely Ones In Thousands

Lucas Vladimiroff

Page 78

Summary of Our Conscience

Lucas Vladimiroff

Page 79

Phantoms

Joia McKelvey

Page 80

Dog-Go

Julie Geller

Page 81

Dead Man Firing

Conrad White

Page 82

Leaker

Ziaire Mickell

Page 83

Scars

Ziaire Mickell

Page 84

The Fight

Ziaire Mickell

Page 85

This Is Not A Poem About the Coronavirus

By Aurora McKee

This is a poem about
My parents, talking on their phones like an in-home command center to the disturbed
patients who keep our lights on.
This is a poem about
My core, which has suffered lately because I no longer have school chairs to force me
upright.
This is a poem about
My dog, who picked a global medical catastrophe as the perfect time to start slowly going
blind
This a poem about
Me, subconsciously cursing the fact that the library is shut down and issues of *Doctor
Aphra* do not fall from the sky
This is a poem about
My aunt, from whom I have probably not contracted That Deadly Illness after rashly
hugging her when she got back from Texas, although I guess you can't be sure yet
This is a poem about
My teachers, as they navigate the glorious new world of electronic learning with various
levels of desperation and dexterity
This a poem about
My bed, which has grown more familiar than me than ever before, even though I promise
I'm still finding good reasons to leave it
This is a poem about
My country, with over four thousand dead citizens whose loss I cannot think too hard
about in the interest of my own mental health

This is a poem about
My grandparents, loving each through the glass doors of the retirement home
This is a poem about
Grief, which I think has been following the disease like remoras on a shark, or whatever
the little parasites call themselves, nipping at eight thousand or twelve or however great the
number is of those who have lost, and are losing.
This is a poem about
The world, which I should probably describe in some comforting or heroic terms,
although considering the way things are going in some countries it's just a relief that there are
too many of us to fully wipe out
This is a poem about
People, who are admittable being pretty good about the whole "kill the economy to save
the populace" plan, as my mother pointed out, so there's that
This is not a poem about the coronavirus.
This is a poem about
What happens next.

I forgot

By Julie Geller

Just for a moment I forgot
I forgot about the gloves, and the masks, and the entirety of the pandemic
It doesn't happen often,
The slip and blip in my thoughts
I hardly ever find peace these days.

It happened only for a split second,
I was walking my dogs,
Up and down the block,
I heard the sounds of their collar jingling
Like a Christmas Song melody

It only happened for a split second
Where I forgot to wear a mask
The air tasted cleaner, and the flowers smelt a little more fragrant

Just for a moment, I forgot about the chaos
The fact that I can't hug the ones I miss the most
The fact that senior year is over.
The fact that there is no expiration date

I hardly ever find peace these days
My thoughts
Unwavering in the worries
In the what ifs
In the what could have beens

I hardly ever forget
The madness,
The anger,
The frustration,
The angst

But...
Just for a second I did.
Just for a second everything was normal again

Everything was fine

I felt the wind on my face where the mask used to lie
I felt the leash in my hands where the gloves used to lay
I felt the comfort and calm in my heart where the worry used to dominate
I felt the peace where the angst used to take over

I forgot for a moment
It was just a second
Not even a second,
But it will never happen again.



By Anneke Chan

New Land

By Seren Yiacoup

It's summertime. Ivy walks home from work, counting her tips from today. It'll add well to the rest of her stash. She makes it to her miserable home which is also a car repair shop. The uneven yard is littered in car parts. The house itself is about to fall apart. It's kept together like a car with a cardboard window instead of a glass window. The miserable mistreated dog barks at her and tries to go up to her, but is unable to due to it being chained up to the side of the house.

After waving hello to the most pure creature in her household, she steps inside and is greeted with the heavy scent of beer and cigarettes. Two of her brothers lounge on the dusty couches, sharing a beer and watching television. A wave of exhaustion runs through Ivy as her eyes meet the long staircase. She is reluctant to take the first step of her journey to her bedroom. She is stopped by her father, who is coming back inside from the backyard and making his way to the couch to lounge with his sons. His first form of communication with his daughter is, "Can you get us some ice cream from the freezer?" Ivy's immediate response is an irked sigh and the rolling of her eyes. She hesitates before spitting out, "Get it yourself." Her heart drops as her father quickly stands up from the couch, as if he is about to pounce on her. His large hands ball up into tight fists. He takes a few seconds to cool down, loosening up his hands, but keeping them fisted. "Boys," he starts, "never ask Ivy to do something for you ever again. God forbid she does anything." Ivy's body begins to twitch out of stress. Her own hands ball up into fists, slowly tightening. She responds in a fake overly sweet tone, "I've been working all morning and all afternoon. I have finally arrived home and would like to relax. Is that a problem?" Maybe it is

the irritation visible on her expressionless face or maybe it is her tone, but her father is definitely bothered by her. He lets out a small laugh as he exhales then shakes his head. He spits, “You know, you shouldn’t wonder why people don’t want to be your friend. You’re miserable and always give attitude for no reason.” His words punch Ivy’s chest. Even after the years of degradation that accompanied her throughout her life, her father’s words still hurt her. Ivy’s blood is boiling. Her eyes are flooding. If she opens her mouth, fire will come out of it. She’s a ticking time bomb. Time ran out.

She lets a strong high pitched scream escape her lips. It fills the entire house. She storms up the stairs and into her bedroom with tears streaming down her face. She throws her meaningless belongings against the wall as she continues to scream. Her father starts to make his way up the stairs. His footsteps get louder and angrier. Ivy is still screaming, crying, cursing, throwing, breaking, and ripping everything in her room. “Suddenly you have energy, huh?” He says in a harsh and heavy tone, crossing his arms as he leans against her door frame. She stops what she is doing for a moment. “Why is everything my fault?! What did I do????!” Her two brothers can hear her yell from downstairs, snickering and rolling their eyes. “All I did was ask for something! We are a family and that’s what a family does: things for each other!” Ivy rolls her teared up eyes. *Oh, now we’re a family*, she thinks to herself, but instead replies with, “Why couldn’t you ask your other family? The ones who didn’t work an eight hour shift. The ones who sat on the couch all day doing absolutely nothing!!!” She says, getting in his face. “What’s your problem? All you had to do was get the ice cream for us. Instead, you created another fight for absolutely no reason. You are very problematic,” he says. Ivy balls up her fists again and exhales deeply. “You are the worst dad ever, and you wonder why Jacob doesn’t like you!” She yells in

his face, referring to her third brother who left years ago and never came back. This comment triggers Ivy's father.

The mention of his son overflows him with rage and aggression. He grabs Ivy's wrist tightly and starts to drag her down the stairs. She screams in protest, demanding to be let go as they get to the first floor where her two brothers spectate the incident. "Go to hell!" He yells at her and lets her go, by roughly pushing her to the dirty dusty floor. Her eyes look down, but then start to look up as her own father pulls her hair so she faces him. His big strong hand makes contact with her cheek, hard and fast in a swift motion. He lets go of her hair. Her eyes look back down at the dirty floor. Even her two brothers stand up to see what happened. Her father steps back from his only daughter and makes his way to the kitchen to retrieve the cause of the altercation. Ivy runs upstairs to her bedroom and slams the door behind her, locking it in fear that her father will come back to take his anger out on her some more.

She sits on the floor, leaning against her bed and stays quiet, focusing on the birds chirping outside, in the free world, instead of sitting in the miserable house with a stinging red face. Her phone chimes once. It is in her pocket. It stayed by her side through all of the chaos. She checks her phone and sees that it's him. He is the summer of her life, rescuing her from the winter that is her life. He had texted her asking if she wanted to hang out. She responds with, "Let's run away, like we talked about before." It takes him a few moments to respond to her. When he does, he says, "Okay, I'm on my way now." Ivy's body warms up with butterflies as she reads his words. She dries the tears left on her cheeks then stands up, her eyes examining the room. She finds her pink backpack on the floor and picks it up and starts to walk around her

room to see what she can take with her on the journey of the rest of her life. She packs hair ties, peach lipgloss, her ID, a sweater, and her stash.

Ivy's eyes look out her window. After about twenty minutes, she finally sees the red pickup truck pull up on the side of the road across from her house. A smile takes over her sad face. She wears her backpack and runs downstairs. She is on a mission with no time to waste. Freedom is just a few steps away. Before making those steps, she snatches bottles of water for her backpack. Her father and brothers don't even notice her since they are hypnotized by the television screen. The world is working in her favor. She zips up her backpack and makes the final steps.

She's gone. She's out. She's free. She looks at the dog laying in the dirt under the hot sun next to her and bites the inside of her cheek. Ivy walks up to the dog and unchains it, freeing it from its misery as well. She holds onto his chain and runs to the pickup truck with him. The pickup truck has four doors so the dog is able to jump in the backseat. She climbs into the passenger seat and puts her seatbelt on quickly, as if she's being chased while he, her savior, is petting the dog. He starts to drive fast and away from her house. After getting out of her neighborhood, he glances at her a few times before asking, "So, where do you want to go now?" His smile makes her feel warmer than the summer sun. Ivy leans back against her seat and contently closes her eyes for a moment before replying, "Just drive on and don't ever stop. Take me to a new land."

Home Soil

By Zoe Silverman

I curl the dirt into where my foot and toes connect
I never knew I liked the earth within my grasp
I am flattened into the dirt
I watch structures interact with the earth
An inch worm glides across a glade of grass
My mom mom tells me our home used to be different
"It was ugly"
I have seen:
Ditches
Poison Ivy
Swales
Sewage tanks
Rotten trees
Bees
Floods
Mud
Weeds
Snakes
Thorn bushes
Bamboo
Bats
Mice
Gravel
Plywood
On the other hand, I have always loved my home
This is my soil
My roots have grown deep and strong
I am afraid of being uprooted
I will dry up and wither away

Amish on a Bus

By Zoe Silverman

The yellow wheat field was plastered to the grayish blue sky which blended with the dirty cotton clouds as I stared at the window. The bus sped down the dirt path. The bus was loud and growly; the bus was white and shiny; the bus was new; everything was new. I sat alone in a two seat row facing the window, observing the changes spring had brung. As I sat staring out the window I drifted deep into thought: *Am I going to be late...what will I say if I am late... hello... how has it been.... what was it going to feel like... to sin. I have sinned before but in the confines of my community... now there are no restrictions, no rules ... well, there are still rules... I can't believe I'm leaving my community... alone... for the first time... What if I find a husband... what if I never come back... don't think that... I will come back.*

As per my community tradition, I began Rumspringa at sixteen. Rumspringa is a period when Amish youth can choose to experience the English lifestyle. They are no longer under the control of their parents on weekends and, because they are not baptized, they are not yet under the authority of the church. During this time, many Amish youth avoid traditional Amish behavior. They can participate in English societal experiences such as: buying a car, going to the movies, wearing non-Amish clothes, buying a television and partying. Or moving away from their community.

Before I left I read alot about English culture and studied their music and clothes. I chose to leave so that I could immerse myself into the English lifestyle. I did not plan on leaving my community forever, I just wanted a change. I would be practicing Rumspringa for about six months. I am heading to an apartment complex where I will meet three others from my community, who started their Rumspringa two weeks before me. Hopefully they will have

obtained enough information about English society to teach me how to behave as if I were English. After I assimilate to English culture and live freely for six months, I have to decide if I will be baptized, otherwise I will have to leave my community... my home... for the rest of my life and never return; I will return and become baptized... I would never leave my family.

As I regained cognizance of my surroundings I noticed we had stopped at the first stop. Not my stop. Several people got off and several got on. Although I received a few timid smiles, I did not return the favor. My face was too tight to create a response. I observed all of them: blue jeans, zipper sweaters, short skirts. All were staples of the English clothing. I imagined myself wearing these clothes, while standing in my new apartment, with a view of the city streets below. A shiver ran up my spine.

What if I find a partner... my grandparents would be very proud... would I finally start a family... birth children... have a house... have a home. Amish elders often believe that Rumspringa is a time for Amish to find a mate. My second to eldest sister, Ann, found her husband during Rumspringa. *Could that be me?* I pictured my square wooden house... next to my parents. I have five well behaved children. My parents are proud that I have found a suitable husband. He is respectful to me and to others.

As the bus approached the city border the population density increased. Along the main roads there were small colonial style houses and on the small streets of the wealthy neighborhoods there were high Victorian gothic style houses. The intricacies, sharp edges, and angular shapes of these houses were unfamiliar to me, I already felt far away from home. As we entered the city there were buildings that touched the sky. The streets became crowded with both people and cars. I watched the English interacting with each other on the street. It was like I was

watching a different species. Their sloped posture and unstructured pleasantries baffled me. No one made eye contact; most of them did not acknowledge each other's existence... *Did they not care about the people in their communities?* They walked fast and pointedly, as if they knew exactly where they were going. It seemed as if their whole lives depended on that exact moment of walking towards... wherever they were going. I didn't understand it. It wasn't like home. The warmth; the family, friends, neighbors, teachers... everyone; it wasn't there anymore. I had left my bubble and entered another. I was isolated and alone.

The bus stopped again and there were waves of people coming and going. At one stop I looked out the window and saw a large clock clinging to the side of a "Community Center". It was half past noon. I had been on the bus for two hours. I was one stop away from my stop. Throughout the bus ride my body had been stiff. This fact only posed a problem when I was about to leave. I pictured myself standing up and collecting my items to go. On the other hand, my muscles would not move. How would I be able to leave the bus? I was a statue. *What if I just ride the bus forever... watch the English forever... but never interact... but never go back.* Suddenly it was my stop. As if by instinct I stood up... grabbed my bags from the shelves above me... and I stepped off the bus.



By Anneke Chan

a literary childhood

By Anneke Chan

her milkweed-sticky cocoon of books
has been cultivated since she was a seedling,
looking to fall into wells with the little boy,
slide down coconut trees,
walk in navy lines of two,
or better yet float and bob as a tiny red smudge in the snow.

she only ever wanted to sell chocolate chip cookies
to neighborhood boys with bows in their hair and girls with scraped knees,
perched in the window of her little yellow house from 1964,
with its dulled cardboard edges and dainty gingerbread looks.

this handsome dream will turn rancid, just as it did for
the white bunny rabbit who could not find his mama rabbit in the tall green grass.
she will foolishly leave her spy journal unattended on a park bench,
for its pages to be disheveled
and its invisible ink undone.

slowly, she finds herself drowned by
the shadows of grey brutalist buildings,
unforgiving and totally rude,
unable to sneak away with a fishbone in the night
to spite the old woman with the bouffant hair and gaudy rouge.

Girl on a train.

By Mollie Altucher

We are side by side on a train.
cutting through the earth beneath a dark sky

We hand each other our guts
and tighten our matching studded belts.
securing oversized pants
painting them on to delicate rib cages

And I share my horrors in a new light
because you know my truths all too well

And it's the first time
it clicks
and we match so perfectly.
our own disturbed puzzle

We read the words
knives off each others lips
whispers hissing
Above the sounds of the moving car

Gushing over sinister stories
sharing our secret obsession
our battles with the mind and the mirror.

American Girl.

By Mollie Altucher

Tripping on uneven cobble stones
one final time
We fill the night with dizzy laughter
only found by teenage girls sneaking out

We creep through each floor
climbing up old English steps
unable to handle loud American footsteps

And you're a little scared
but I remind you it's okay
because tonight is the last night
because no one wants to catch us

And I bring pistachios up to your room
so as we snack
we can spill about the messiness of life back
home
attempt to mend the damage
others have left us with

And we're too sad to leave
to forget potato waffle breakfasts
to forget immaculate courtyards too pristine to be walked on
to forget navigating through the city while running thirty minutes late to a lecture

I leave you my pistachios.
maybe you can finish them
crunch loudly

And think of noisy American girls
In stern British hallways.

Star Girl.

By Mollie Altucher

My star girl
made two weeks my eternity
she pulled me into her spaced out orbit
and suddenly
I didn't take life so seriously

Star girls can see beyond
the timid eyes
instantaneously warping me into her galaxy
as we danced in her room on the first night

My star girl taught me to eat a pie
in the center of an ancient Roman street
She gazed at strangers
dipping greasy pub chips into thick gravy
with ease

I shared secrets with my star girl
deep enough to clog my throat with shame
but her clear constellation eyes looked back
and understood
Unfazed

My star girl brought out this audacious
decadent me
she had us flirt with the earthlings
who chased at her feet

I got pierced with my star girl
and when she felt afraid we locked hands
letting the blue black ink swirl into purple
seeping into matching studs
let it keep her from forgetting how she once
resided down on this planet with us



By Cassandra Laifer

Verisimilitude

By Anneke Chan

I am crafting myself
into sloped shoulders
and a bound chest,
compressed into a body
worthy of a photograph.

When your image
of alluring s-curves
and an exposed clavicle
is printed,
what I saw upside down
rights itself.
It's your agency
to mold your persona
that I most admire.

My father showed me cameras he shot on,
only to look,
for precious things must be saved
for someone more knowledgeable,
careful and patient.
I can only sit, straight-backed
on a wicker chair
and await my silvering.

I have been out of print for years,
neglected to collect dust
alongside books of Gauguin
and stacks of negatives.
This idea of himself
has been discarded as well,
but his past of rotten figs
and dimming lights won't be
how I step onto a blank canvas,
insinuating myself in its threads.

mother hen

By Shea DeCaro

I don't understand if I'm being completely honest.
I don't understand myself, that is.
I can look at a pen and feel the cold metal in my hands,
But look at a pair of lips and not feel anything at all.
Is it strange that the feeling of skin is alien,
That when I look at my mother's arms I can't imagine the weight on my shoulders.
When I watch a movie and people are kissing in the rain,
I can only feel the water.
When there's a sex scene,
I can only think about the cotton sheets.
I wish to know how it feels just so I can undergo what others do.
Just so I have a small pit of understanding when people want one another.

How come whenever I see a couple holding hands,
I just wish to understand why they are smiling?
It's so frustrating and at times I hate myself for not feeling infatuated with others.
I know innocence doesn't exist when people think about certain ages,
But is that what I should even call it?

Sometimes when the rain is falling,
And I can feel rather than imagine,
I just want to know how it would be with something next to me.
A friend,
A cat,
A mother,
A rabbit,
Anything really.
When I listen to music I just want to know if they feel the same as I do when listening.
Do they want to cry?
Or maybe I'm reading signals wrong.
Maybe.

But, when I see a child crying,
And everyone wishes it to stop,
I want it to keep going so I can ride the wave with them.
A child was having a tantrum on the sidewalk and called for its mother, just as a bird does.
But the mother kept walking, and the bird brought back food.

We say the death penalty is inhumane,
Or maybe some say abortion is,
Or some that say that isn't so.

I find myself inhumane.
It's as if they forgot ingredients in the mixture,
That the cement takes years to harden.

I want to become cement so bad that my tears make me wet again.
I hope I get there soon.

Weight, Just Stop

By Julie Geller

In a world of Instagram models, with perfect boobs and peach shaped butts,
A place where a Brandy Melville is a body that fits all,
In a world where average became plus size,
And anorexic became normal,
How could I love myself for me?

I miss my childish brain,
My innocent thoughts,
My unwavering self admiration.
I wish I could go back,
Rewind time, and preserve my belief that my body was a vessel,
A vessel that gave me courage,
Strength,
Life
Happiness.

I remember the day I began to hate my arms,
My once muscular arms which gave me strength, were plagued with stretch marks and chicken skin,
They had scars,
battle wounds,
Imperfections.

My legs that once allowed me to run,
To be free,
To be independent,
Now were chains that held me back,
Weights that were always a little too large,
And a little too wide.
I never had a thigh gap,
My legs chaffed, and rubbed, and even sweat a little too much.

Don't even start me on my stomach,
A organ that once allowed me to eat delicious foods,
Became a target for my hatred,
No abs,
Muffin Top,
Rolls
Were all sources of my anger.

Take Me Back To Childhood
where my
Body was a vessel
A place that allowed my kind, and beautiful soul to shine,
A place that allowed me to feel the silkiness of my dogs,
Their kisses, and hugs goodnight,
The feeling of my friends hugs,
My mom's warm embrace,
To hear the sound of my dad's jokes,
To feel the love of my family,

Weight, Just Stop,

Stop

Weight, Just Stop,
Just look and see that
Your body is a vessel,
Each body is a vessel,
It gives you strength.

After time,
patience,
and reflection...
I have weighted,
I have stopped,
I have thought,

My body may have chicken skin, stretch marks, and red patches,
I might not have the perfect Instagram body,
I might not have the Instagram butt,

But it is my body,
The one body I will have,
The one body I will get.
It is my vessel.

I wish I could say I loved every inch of my body
But for now, I'll say I'm Getting There

The Girl with the White Dress

By Maya Gelber

As cliché as it sounds,
Her smiles follow me.
Her gaze is constantly fixated on my back,
My eyes.
Her dress, beautifully draped with layers of silk and lace,
Float in and out of my dreams.
She carries an expression of longing satisfaction,
Of pain never felt,
Of love always lost.

Wary as I might be,
I feel at home with her.
The comforting tingle in my lower back
Informs me of her presence,
And lets me be at peace with her.
And so she floats.
In and out of my consciousness.
Watching, stalking, and protecting.



By Erika Bauer

My Lady

By Joia McKelvey

My Lady leads our ship
Over troubled waters
She leads us to hope

In her small wooden boat
She carries us overseas

And though they shout and jeer
My lady never fears

As she leads our wooden boat
Across the water

RAIN

By Ziaire Mickell

Up in the sky storming and rolling with the cumulonimbus cloud, three thousand feet in the air that's pretty high, reaching the ground diffusing on all the surfaces.

My parent Mother Nature can give you an equanimity of her beautiful features, that we have to be felicitous because she will evoke a devastation that we don't want.

When I was in foster care I felt like it was time to extricate myself, my body couldn't be there I was missing so much I felt isolated like jack in the box, some people have a futile vibe, fortitude is a really helpful characteristic

Soaking your emotions in like a sponge, hurting other people because you don't know how to control your tongue, but there is no excuse except you are immature and young

Exhaling is a sign of you getting older, I'm not going to be forlorn person like an ogre, you won't make it anywhere with your apathy of colorful and unique people

I'm not going to berate you because what good would that do, I would have blighted your soul but then I forgot your live your life as a troll, I'm not giving you nothing except for some sharp pieces of cantankerous coal, I'm going to circumscribe you from associating myself from you

I'm not going to let this go by like a bird ready to fly, I hope you sit in your house and reflect on your derogatory heart you know what you're like an earthquake spreading this country apart

The Wooden Boat People

By Joia McKelvey

A small boat sails across an endless sea. In the boat, people young and old trying desperately not to get devoured by the waves. Yet never losing hope, they keep rowing. Bringing those they find in the green-grey abyss into their vessel.

Many figures can be seen on the boat. They share their stories. A woman with her newly born child. Her friend gathers round, blessing the babe. A woman maybe 40 years of age sits at the bow. Surrounded by children, She mouths soft words to them, saying,

"everything will be ok, this will all pass and soon we will be back on dry land."

Leading the procession, one stilettoed foot on starboard, She holds her feather up to the sky. Bare chested, fueled by pride and a sense of duty.

There are many other figures whose stories can be seen on the boat. Activists, and EMS workers, children and community leaders, hard hats and heathens, all working together, sailing on towards a better future.



By Bridget Goldberg

avalanche

By Shea DeCaro

The rain is the only thing keeping me here.
The graceful rolling boil on the gutters,
And routine stomping on the roof overhead
I could lay here for hours,
Listening.
The soft whispers coax me to stay,
To sink deeper into these dark pits.
These fluffy caves.
At times like these I feel myself getting lost in the nooks and crannies of cotton.
The sound of the rain becomes distant,
But the hushed suffixes and vowels bang in my ears,
Ringing like a storm warning on TV.
Everything becomes darker,
Darker,
Darker.
The rain has become a mere murmur,
Like the fuzzy corners of vision.
It's hard to leave warmth once you've found it.
As each day goes by, I try to convince myself that I must get out.
But, I can't.
I am a slave to these endless whispers;
It's like they have eyes.
My lids droop and my bags sag.
Will I wake up?
I am no longer being cradled by these cavernous walls,
I am being rocked on the rough splintering plywood;
The water is no longer murmuring,
It is SCREAMING.
It hurls itself over my head and drags under my feet.
Pulling me overboard until I'm choking on the salt.
My lips pucker,
My tongue buckles,
The covers are ripped from under me
And I'm torn out of bed.
I seem to be reminded now
Why only the rain can keep me here.

Nighttime bickering.

By Shea DeCaro

There is something so quiet about the night.

When my arms are glued to my sheets,

And the juice in my batteries is low,

And I can no longer feel.

I am left with myself.

All alone.

There is no one to hold me and whisper sweet nothings into my ears.

Well, there has never been.

Being somebody without the stagnant tension in the air,

The yearning for another,

Has left me more empty and light-headed than those whose head and shoulders are dragged down by the thoughts of others.

To stand out in silence without anybody to know you stand out has become a movie for whoever is watching on the other side.

How cliché.

Maybe I will receive my Oscar upon arrival.

I'll accept it quietly,

As I have learned to accept most things in life.

If you enjoy the sun you are a simple flower,

But if you enjoy the dark, a pessimist.

Pessimism seems to be the key to society.

For innocence cannot be believed.

As it is unbelievable that I have never had an incessant feeling to be kissed.

There is something so quiet about the night.

Or maybe it's always been me.

Solana

By Aurora McKee

In the beginning there was a division.
We grow together, limbs and guts interwoven
A transformation from plants to fish
Released by sharp knives on a sweet summer's day

Our first night outside, you hid in the ICU
A minute younger, a breath smaller, your heart a few beats off
You grew up calm and bright, hair just a little straighter
Dancing and singing with every free breath

How come strangers can't tell us apart?
The girls in the mirror don't look that alike
You ask me about my day, and I forget to respond
But I secretly love to be your pillow, anyway

We talk, hug, and ignore each other for hours
It's unorthodox, but it keeps the fighting down
I watch you waltz the dog across the kitchen floor
Your beloved records crooning smooth jazz

Yesterday you sat in my room and called it "original,"
Awed by the trash and roses that adorn my walls
You gave me a hug and declared your love
I hope you heard me do the same

Life On The Spectrum

By Aurora McKee

In the middle of my sixteenth summer, my parents sat me down by the side of our pool and informed me that I was on the spectrum. I spent the entire conversations with my knees pulled to my chin, peering up at them and wondering when I would be allowed to get back to my book. My mother later told me that my sister showed more surprise at the news than I did.

Looking back, one of the main reasons I didn't show much surprise is because "being on the spectrum" seemed different than "autistic." I knew then, as I know now, that this isn't the case; that's just how I felt. Autistic kids smeared their saliva onto computer screens and didn't like to be touched. They flapped their hands in the air or communicated in sentence fragments. That wasn't me at all.

But even if my case is less extreme than others, I am still autistic. I fixate on things, primarily books, to the point that they hold my attention in a death lock until I'm finished. Sometimes I'll finish a book and then squeeze it to my chest, rocking back and forth, in an attempt to show...someone...how much I loved it. I like books because they manage to be interesting, like people, without all the additional demands of human interaction.

Even when I'm not reading, I still have trouble focusing on the rest of the world. There are times when I'll simply stop moving; I stare blankly into space and think about the books I want to read or the meaning of life. I think of this activity as "going catatonic." It has happened at different parts of the day, but it usually strikes when I'm getting ready for school in the

morning. I'll be sitting in front of one of my bookshelves, unwilling to move and unaware that I've stopped moving. Luckily, it never lasts for long, or I'd be late for school much more often.

Unlike other kids on the spectrum, I'm pretty comfortable with conversation. I enjoy hanging out with my family, and I can compliment total strangers on their attire. However, my social skills could use a little work. My mother is always reminding me of the importance of maintaining eye contact and staying mindful of my surroundings. I have a marginal interest in friendship, although there are some people at school who I like.

I feel safest in the company of my parents. They're familiar ground, providing entertainment without asking much in return. Lucky for me, they're both psychologists, so they can handle my emotional turbulence with ease. The only time I really get upset at them is when they bring up college, which has been happening a lot lately. I know that college is important, but the truth is that I don't really want to go.

My problem is that I'm not that good with change. That's why I have such trouble consuming new foods, even pizza or ketchup. The idea of building a new life for myself in some distant county (God forbid I have to go out of state) intimidates me. I'm afraid that college will demand more work and social interaction from me than ever before, until I will be pushed past my breaking point. The adult world is even more alarming. I know that there's a lot of good things about growing up, but all I can think about are the bad parts--bureaucracy, heartbreak, finances, driving. I see the flaws in adulthood, and I worry that other adults will see the flaws in me.

Then, of course, there's my irrational anger. I don't know for sure if it's a symptom of being on the spectrum, but it's definitely a symptom of being me. The sight of my sister with her

hair in a bun bothers me (I have absolutely no idea why), as does the sound of her singing to herself, although I imagine the latter complaints stems from suppressed jealousy. My schoolmates appear to spend their entire lives acting out idiotic scenarios from the Internet or giggling over the obscene trash on their phones, and sometimes I really hate them for that. It's an effort not to go up to them and say all the horrible things inside my head.

Everybody's emotionally fraught as a teenager, of course. However, not everyone throws their backpack across the floor in a crowded classroom or tries to express their rage at other students by hitting their computer. I want to solve my problems as fast as possible or just attack the source. I remember screaming at a particularly annoying boy in Spanish class. Another time, I calmly told a kid sitting behind me in math class that I would kill him if he didn't shut up. A few minutes later, I said that I didn't mean it, and I think that he believed me. Usually, however, my physical misbehavior (which does NOT include hitting people, by the way) is inspired by rage.

I don't always yell, however; sometimes I sob. I am a self-professed crybaby who's started weeping in multiple public places, including the college where I've participated in summer writing programs. I cry because I'm tired, because I'm confused, because I feel like I'm not doing enough. I am especially vulnerable to movies and plays, which my mother says is a sign of my impressive emotional sensitivity. I wept at *Rwanda*, *Cyrano De Bergerac*, and a three-minute-long trailer for a movie whose name I can't even remember. One particularly noisy incident was the time I watched *Gattaca* in Biology class. Growing up has helped a little of course, and experience has taught me to cope with or avoid some problems that would have

broken me before. However, I'm still at a greater risk of breaking down in public than most of my peers. The adult world does not take such infractions with the kindness of childhood.

Of course, it's not all doom and gloom. I don't mind my lack of social interactions, even if it bothers my parents. I like being able to vanish into my own world, one populated by all the stories I've read or hope to discover. I think my Zoloft helps a little, even if I have trouble remembering whether I've taken it. I've also decided to start bringing headphones to school, so I can block out my classmates at least some of the time. At the end of the day, the spectrum is part of me, and I am part of the spectrum. All I can do is accept it.



By Anna Brief

MIRRORS

By Ziaire Mickell

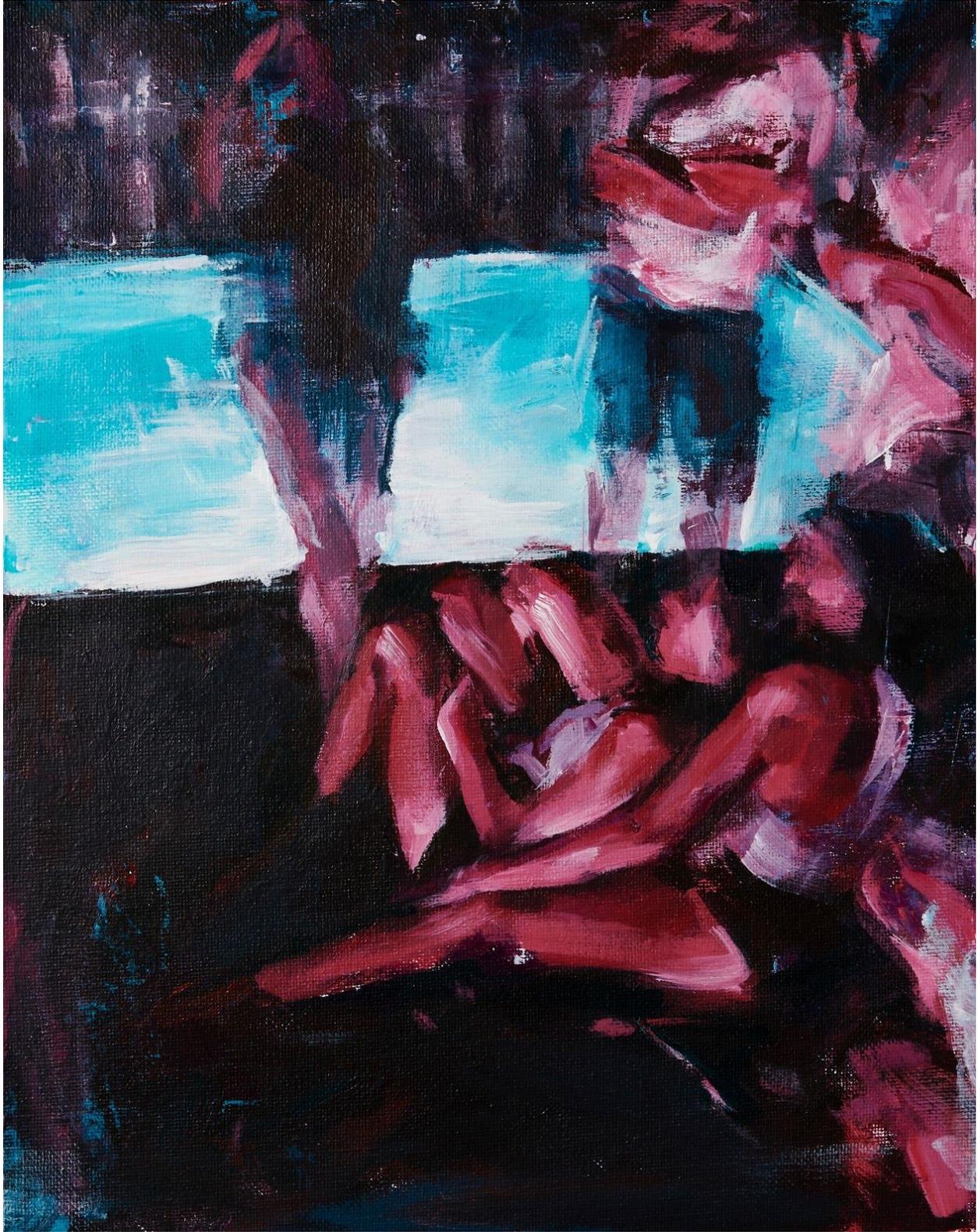
Looking back at yourself trying to figure out what happened,
Not being in the right mindset is going to be bad for the brain,
Especially in a stupor.

Things may look the same when you see your reflection but that's false because you're growing
at a constant rate,
If you don't believe me your hair will vouch for me,
It gets lighter but you don't notice it unless you snap out of the reverie.

The glass looks back at you to remind yourself who you are,
We can act like we don't notice it but the reflector is watching you like a camera.

You might get scared it's ok,
The mirror reminds you to look at yourself and tells your eye that you have something the soul
Needs to change.

The mirrors speaks the veracity of your life and your body,
Some mirrors evoke people to avarice,
Some to be humble,
Some to be kind.



By Anneke Chan

Nora and David

By Mollie Altucher

Nora was punched in the face repeatedly every day. Finally she learned how to punch back. She was in Gleason's gym with boxing gloves and headgear on. This is how she trained to win the female Golden Gloves title.

But she didn't want a broken nose. Or a detached retina. So she quit boxing and joined HBO. This is where she met him.

In 1997 David was so bad at his job at HBO they had to send him to remedial computer classes. This, despite his computer science degree at an Ivy League school.

He hated his job. So he proposed a new job. He would do his own show. He would interview people at 3 in the morning in New York City.

"What are you up to?" he would ask drug dealers, pimps, prostitutes, and all of their customers, all night long. He was shy but over time he learned to get anyone to talk to him.

This was his favorite kind of job. Creating something new instead of sitting in his cubicle. Much more fun than his IT job, where his main entertainment was hacking into other people's emails and anonymously making them public.

David noticed Nora at a meeting where he was in trouble. Maybe, HBO thought, his 3AM ideas were a bit too scandalous. He noticed her because she had to make the decision about his job. But then he noticed her because...her.

Nora always claimed she was “Not a bombshell.” She would explain, “Bombshells are curvaceous women with big pouty lips.” But you couldn't deny she was strikingly pretty. Her petite frame had a certain amount of elegant muscle, and her velvety brown hair framed a set of wonderfully intense eyes and extra long lashes.

David was a few years younger, but he was still taken by her. David was generally fearful of most situations. Yet he liked to conquer them anyway. He asked her out. Plain and simple, out to dinner.

At first Nora rejected him. Nora had been working in Manhattan for a bit of time and she had already grown quite sick of the men. She was more focused on enjoying city life on her own. Taking long walks from Harlem to the East Village, going out to off Broadway shows with her old friends from grad school.

But then she realized just how refreshing David asking her out on a date really was. Men usually asked her if she wanted to hang with a group of friends or usually inquired about her plans in some vague form or another. She was tired of it. So after David asked one more time, Nora agreed. She wanted to see if he was different.

Nora and David hit it off. Both of them had grown up outside New York City and the two just wanted to succeed, create, survive, and thrive in their new home. He was charming and funny. She was sarcastic and witty.

After they had been dating for a few weeks, Nora decided to have David over for dinner, and she went all out. Nora was Italian. To Nora, food was love. You were supposed to pour yourself into everything you made, like sharing a little piece of yourself with a loved one. The main dish was pork medallions with charred asparagus and shaved parmesan, with roasted

rosemary potatoes on the side. There was a decadent chocolate cheesecake cake covered in mixed nuts.

David was Jewish and hated nuts, cheese and chocolate.

The perfectionist in Nora was mortified by her poor menu choice, but it was all okay with David. As much as he would grow to adore her cooking over the years, David could easily be pleased with a large bowl of plain pasta and Oreos for dessert.

David and Nora were two very different people, but in the beginning their relationship managed to function smoothly. Their opposite personalities collaborated and merged instead of crashing into one another at full speed. Although Nora was hot-headed and high strung, she was loving and passionate. And even though David could be cold and inconsistent, he was generous and endearing.

The one issue that stood out on a larger scale after a few months of dating was that Nora wanted kids. As a woman in her early thirties, Nora realized the next few years were her last chance. She had spent her twenties thinking she would always be the fun aunt and stay spunky and single, but soon after turning thirty, it had dawned on her. First a small nag in the back of her mind, but it quickly spurred into taking over her thoughts on a daily basis. She wanted a child.

David was in his late twenties and never pictured having kids as a part of his plan. None of his friends had kids. They all went out for poker at midnight and went on spontaneous trips without ever having to worry about hiring a nanny or changing a diaper.

This proved to be a significant problem. After dating for about six months, they were forced to break up or take a break so they could think over the matter. It was only a matter of a

time before David came back to Nora and told her he would be willing to have kids in the future. “Why not give that a try?” he thought.

David didn’t like to waste anybody’s time. After they had been together for a year, he wanted to move in with Nora. She was dominantly Catholic and refused to have him move in until they were married.

He would show her countless apartment listings in New York but nothing really appealed to Nora since she hadn’t walked down the aisle. One day they were sipping coffee at Nora’s counter in Hell’s Kitchen and David pulled out a newspaper with a particularly nice place to show her.

“Not until we’re married,” Nora repeated.

David pulled out a ring box and slapped it on the table.

“Then here. Why don’t you just marry me?” He asked. David was twenty-eight, on the edge of his seat, and ready to spend the rest of his life with this woman.

The humor of the proposal shocked Nora. She said yes, and although it was a very charming, a very David proposal, she always secretly wished it had been a bit more romantic. Maybe that he’d gone down on one knee.

David never did anything the way others wanted.

But... at least David knew how to pick a ring. It was a wonderfully exquisite diamond. He always had great taste in jewelry which Nora will admit to this day. He spoiled her with countless necklaces, bracelets, and other dazzling pieces from the start.

It didn’t take much to plan their wedding. David wanted a small wedding and Nora was content with that. It ended up being a ceremony with only immediate family, close friends and a

dinner at one of Nora's favorite spots in the West Village. Nora bought a simple white dress from her favorite store in the East Village run by an old couple.

Nora wanted to get married at the church where she sang in the choir. After moving to Manhattan on her own the priest had been like a father figure to her ever since she first joined the church.

But this was not an option for David's Jewish family. They were not particularly religious, but could not support the idea of their only son getting married in a church. They stated firmly they would simply not be in attendance at the wedding should it take place in a church. Nora was heartbroken, but willing to compromise.

After their marriage, Nora left her apartment and David left the Chelsea Hotel where he had been staying for years. They found their own place together. David was no longer just an IT guy. He was able to build up and successfully his own start up, a business that designed websites.

It didn't take long for Nora to get pregnant and the two lived in a loft in Tribeca with their small curly haired, rosy cheeked daughter. Both Nora and David loved her, but their marriage began to suffer once this sweet child was born. After their housewarming party at the ridiculously expensive loft, David panicked and took off for a few months. Despite extensive efforts Nora was unable to reach him.

She understood sometimes it was just too much for him. The stress of the house, his intensifying job, and the baby. But her bitterness started to grow when she was left by herself with the baby without any contact from her husband. His mother would call her up and ask,

“Where's David?”

“I don’t know,” was the only thing Nora could say. An empty feeling began to grow in her stomach.

Nevertheless, David returned and worked tirelessly on another business that would make them millions. In the heat of his success, they had another child. Another little girl. The glow of their wealth wouldn’t last long.

It didn’t take much time until the business fell apart and David lost everything. He was shattered and scared with two daughters, a wife, and a loft in Tribeca that he would certainly lose money on after just recently purchasing it for ten million. Nora tried to comfort him.

“Let me show you a nice, small town upstate,” Nora said softly. She had often liked to escape the City and visit this place when she was single.

They sold their loft and rented a tidy house right off of Main Street in the center of a small town. Nora took care of the infant and their toddler in the house all day, while David would walk up and down Main Street talking with business partners on long phone calls or sometimes commuting down to Manhattan.

Nothing was the same. David lived in his own world of sadness. He dwelled on what he had lost for his family and for himself, and Nora felt the burden of raising a family on her own. Even when her partner was right there.

Once David was starting to get back on his feet again, Nora fell in love with an old Victorian farmhouse in a neighboring town. “Let’s buy it,” she told him. She wanted her kids to grow up in a beautiful home, with a big, beautiful yard that her grandchildren could visit in later years.

After the experience with the loft, David didn't want to buy anymore homes. But he couldn't fight the urge to demonstrate that they were once again okay. He bought the house to show her that he could buy the house.

Nora and David fell in love in Manhattan, and they fell out of love in this house, about a two hour commute up the Hudson River.

There were too many fights. Nora became too confrontational and her temper was too much for David. Nora felt ignored and neglected by David. David spent too many nights at local hotels or in the city. Their kids spent too many nights with ears up against the door, wondering what mommy and daddy were yelling about.

First they separated. They remained separated for almost a year. David moved back to the City into a simple, elegant building on Wall Street. The kids got used to weekends at Dad's apartment. Playing monopoly, ice skating at Chelsea Piers, and eating take out chicken fingers and fries on the floor because he hadn't bothered to buy furniture.

"Are you and daddy going to live together again?" their youngest, six-year- old daughter asked Nora. They were in the kitchen cleaning the produce they had just picked from the garden that Nora tended to meticulously.

"No," Nora said looking out the window with misty eyes.

They got a divorce and for a short amount of time Nora lived in her beloved Victorian house and David stayed in Wall Street. But the two continued to move around individually, trying to find the best places that suited their needs and fit their budgets.

Over the years, David and Nora found love again, time after time. Experiencing countless pockets of grief and loss along the way.

Over the years, they still cared for one another deeply, managing to become awkward yet polite friends for the sake of their children. David was inconsistent but generous. Nora was high strung, but witty.

Nora could take a punch. And David refused to fight.

And over the years their children would wonder how it possibly could have been that their parents were once in love.

Dear Pinecone

By Sophie Sabin

Dear Pinecone

A lot has happened since we first met when you were red and vibrant and smelled of northern California

When I first met you I was sad and lost

I didn't know how it could possibly get better

But guess what pinecone, it did

I got out of middle school

Isn't that crazy?

But Pinecone,

Now things aren't looking too bright

I mean we are all locked up in our homes

Everyone's alone

I feel like it would do everybody some good going back to your woods, breathing in the cool air and healing

But not everyone lives in California

Pinecone,

I know it's kind of hard to believe but my family got worse

I didn't think it could but it did.

But my sweet pinecone, we're better now

everyone's happier now

I kind of wanted your magic to work right away,

fix everything on the spot,

but I guess four years later is okay too

Dear Pinecone,

I've grown up

while you've been on the desk collecting dust

I've been growing and learning

I'm nowhere close to done Pinecone

But I'm definitely getting somewhere.



By Anna Brief

Haiku

By Ryan Merritt

The fields great and vast
The hills endless and rolling
The ocean deep and blue

Haiku

By Felix Schmidt

A bubbling stream
Runs through a valley where sheep,
Are grazing the grass.

Haiku

By William Etta

The beautiful sky
With no clouds full of color
The bright yellow sun.



By Elliott Goldberg

Where Mountains Come From

By Joia McKelvey

I believe

Humans were giants

Back when the atmosphere was filled with oxygen
And we could grow as tall as our bones would let us

We were infinite
Our arms reached towards the sky
And our toes crushed the trees
beneath our feet
It didn't hurt
The pine trees were like grass to us

The lions and tigers were ants
we stepped on them without notice or care
We domesticated the sauropods
They were our dogs and cats

But it was tiring
dragging along those long ancient limbs
We were tired we wanted to rest
So we lay down

First came the grass to cover us
Then bramble and pines
Then oak
Till we were no longer recognizably human

This is where mountains come from



By Anna Brief

Memories

By Aidan Sullivan-Hoch

I'm in a bus, bright and yellow,
The colors of the BVG.
Sunlight shines through the windows,
But it is trapped and now can't get out.
It reeks of beer and sweat,
The scent of Berlin.
Then we come to a stop and many people get off,
Beer and sweat being replaced by the smell of the sidewalk:
Somewhat damp but otherwise harmless.
A woman pushes her baby on the stroller off the bus
But is caught by the closing doors.
I remember the baby's face when the doors closed,
A look of terror and misery.
The mom's face was no different.

America: Embracing the Past

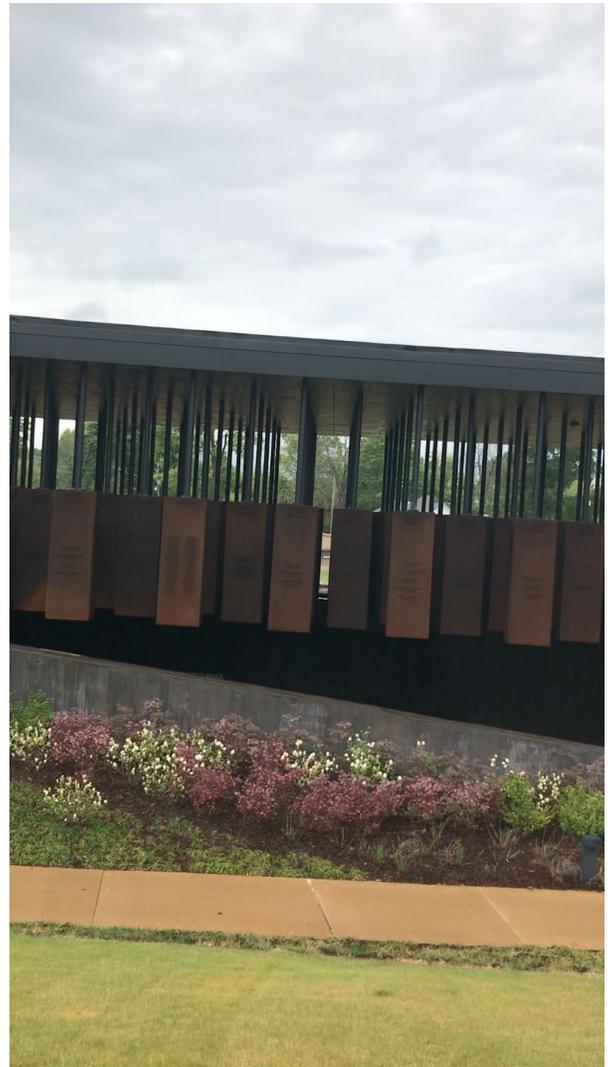
By Maya Gelber

The rain pitter-pattered on the windshield of the dark rental car as I stepped out into the grey, autumn Alabama air. My father and I had ventured all the way down to Montgomery to meet family friends and visit Bryan Stevenson’s Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Museum and Lynching Memorial. My dad had previously worked with Mr. Stevenson when Walter McMillian, an African American man from Monroeville, Alabama, was wrongly accused of the murder of a young white girl and sentenced to death after a short, day-long trial. My dad, who was working at 60 Minutes at the time, was contacted by Mr. Stevenson to make an episode about the accusation of Mr. McMillian. Mr. McMillian was released from death row in 1993, not long after the episode of 60 Minutes that my father produced had aired. After graduating from Harvard many years prior, Mr. Stevenson could’ve gotten a job at almost any law firm in America. Instead, he went to Alabama to defend those wrongly condemned, and he eventually created the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), located in Montgomery. The EJI is “committed to ending mass incarceration and excessive punishment in the United States, to challenging racial and economic injustice, and to protecting basic human rights for the most vulnerable people in American society,” (from the EJI website). It has grown over the years, and it helped open a Legacy Museum and a Lynching Memorial (The National Memorial for Peace and Justice). A movie starring Michael B. Jordan is coming out in December 2019 about Bryan Stevenson’s stories.

It was our second and final day in Montgomery, the previous one consisting of a captivating trip to the EJI's Legacy Museum, brunch with Mr. Stevenson, and enough fried foods for one to go into cardiac arrest. The Legacy Museum is located in a former warehouse where black people were enslaved. It left me speechless with its compelling visuals and messages, connecting slavery and the Jim Crow South with racial prejudice and mass incarceration in the 2000s. Our busy schedule left little time for an emotional reaction to these horrifying things we were learning, and for most of the time I tried to stay quiet and absorb as much information as possible. The tiring day left our eyelids heavy and our hotel beds more comfortable than ever as we prepared ourselves for what the next day held.

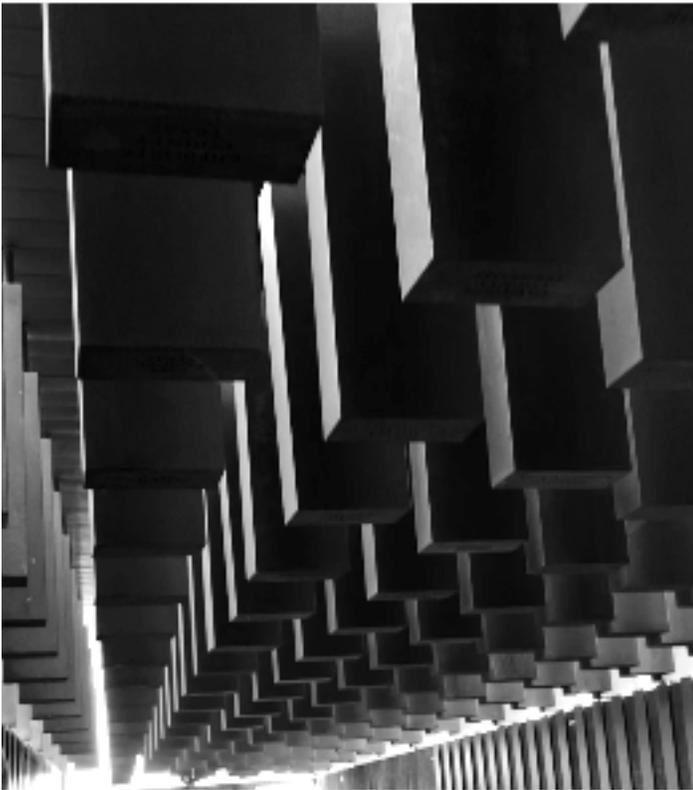
The rough cement passed under my feet faster and faster as I approached the entrance to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. After passing through brief security measures, my pace slowed as I tried to soak everything in. On our left, we were greeted with a vibrant green lawn, the color a stark contrast to the sculptures that rested upon it. I was faced with metal statues, their faces screwed tight in eternal agony, and their skin mirroring the color of the grey, looming clouds above us. Around their necks, ankles, and wrists were long chains, rusted a brick red, binding them all together. They were slaves, frozen in positions of captivity and pain. Bryan Stevenson often refers to racial prejudice with presumption of guilt as the "evolution of slavery". He says that since people still have the mindset that white people are superior to African Americans, it's almost as if they are the statues, forever stuck in the position of the slave. This is an extremely devastating and powerful message, and it shook me to the point where I felt an overwhelming sense of frustration, both in the fact that the "evolution of slavery" is real, and in the fact that this message isn't taught in schools.

Continuing down the path, a cement streak in a sea of shamrock green grass, we approached the memorial itself. There was a grey ceiling, with no walls, and what looked like hundreds of rusted, brown metal boxes hanging from it. The ceiling forms an outline of a square, and we began to walk along one of the sides. When you first enter the memorial, the boxes touch the ground, almost like pillars. As I zig-zagged between them, I realized there were words on them. Each hanging box represented a town in America, and underneath the town listed one or more names with dates. These names were people who were lynched in the town, and the date was the day it happened. The towns were then organized by state, and the states were organized alphabetically. Mr. Stevenson had done something truly incredible. He made sure there was a place where a huge part of forgotten American history was remembered. My heart sank, reading name after name after name, all victims of white supremacy. As we'd learned at the Legacy Museum the day before, many (if not all) of these people were tortured and killed for reasons including flirting with white people, making a rude comment towards a white person, and talking back to a white person.



As we continued through the memorial, the floor seemed to be becoming lower and lower, until we were completely underneath the boxes. The air underneath was thick and foggy,

the appropriate weather for a trip to this memorial, as it didn't take away from the profoundness with blistering heat or pounding rain. It set the mood- quiet, observant, and reflective. As I walked through the memorial, I tried to remember each name I read, attempting to preserve their legacies. While craning my neck to read the names on the boxes, I had a realization. These metal rectangles I thought were only there to show people names, imitated the lynchings in a visual way. They hung, mid-air, unmoving. A statistic, a result of human hatred. But most of all,



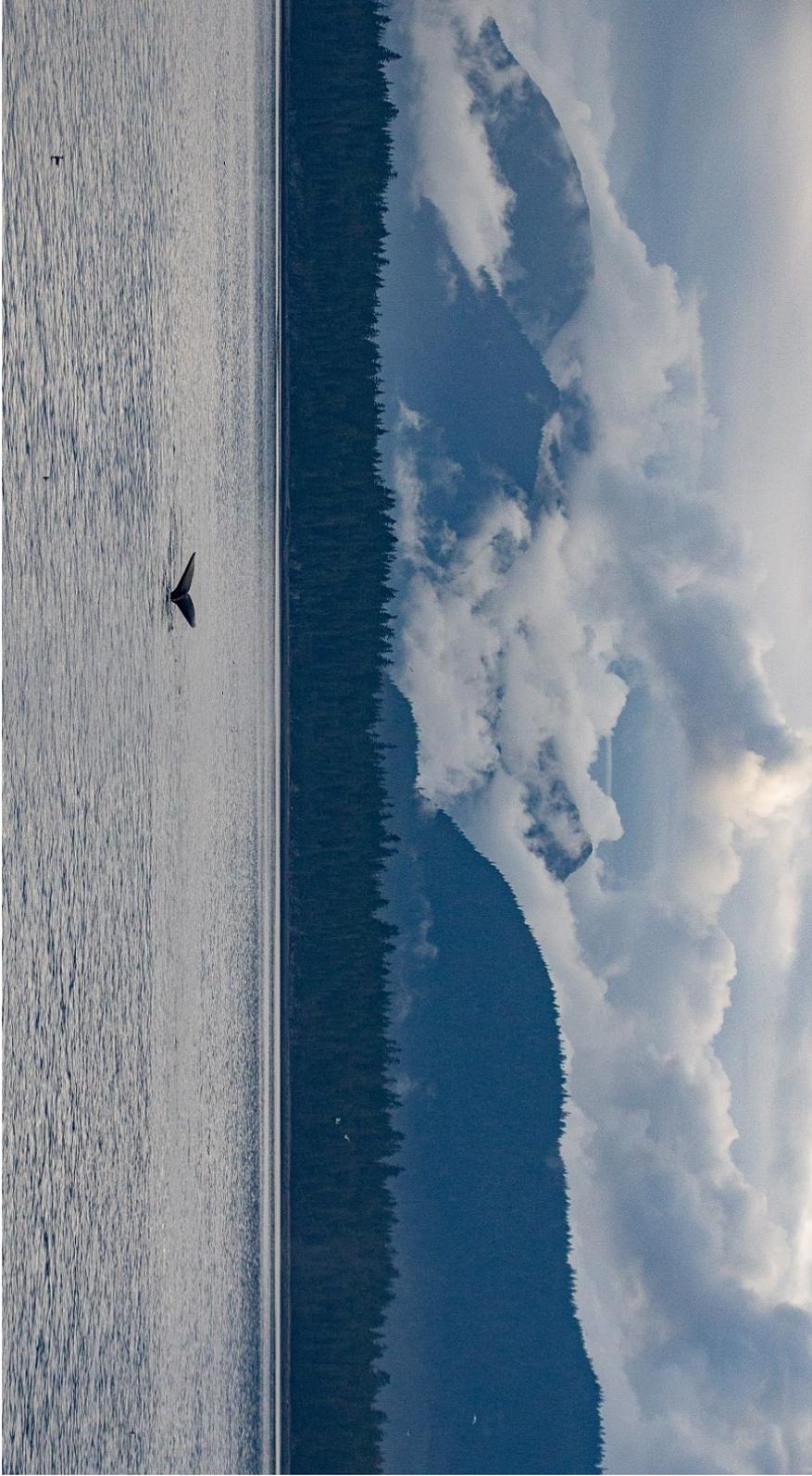
conveying the message that change needs to happen. Change that won't come easily, but will put an end to this ever-evolving monster called slavery and racism.

The taste of bad airplane breath already began to pile up in the depths of my throat, as the horrid-smelling rental car drove away from the memorial, destined for the airport. As we drove down the main street where slaves had been sold off for years, I recalled a part of our talk with

Mr. Stevenson. He'd told us that his museum was very controversial for Montgomery, as many people didn't want to talk about anything bad ever happening historically there. We're taught in schools that slavery was abolished legally, so now it's gone. Problem solved. The issue with this mentality is that it blinds us to the reality that Mr. Stevenson has shared with many, that white supremacy is simply a version of slavery and Jim Crow laws. But, everyone tries to disassociate

themselves from the bad parts of the past. In the hotel I was staying in, which was located right on the street where slaves were sold, there was a bar/restaurant attached called “The Exchange”. Two marble hallways down from The Exchange were huge paintings depicting Montgomery while slavery was still legal. Everyone in the painting was smiling, dancing, and having a great time. If a town can’t even face their past wrongdoings, how are we supposed to move forward and progress to a better mindset as a country?

After we left the memorial itself, we saw more boxes with towns and names, laid out in rows on the grass. A sign indicated that the EJI was pushing for towns across America to hang the boxes right in the place where the innocent person had been lynched, to embrace the hateful parts of our history together, to move forward into a future unlike the past.



By Elliott Goldberg

The Stationer

By Conrad White

Hawks

Each one diverse in their own feather and prowess

Glide from all directions toward one point

An axis of fear

And static

It's the sound that hits you first

But the birds succumb to his voice the fastest

They say that once it echoes through your body

It passes through your mind like a air through your lungs

It makes sense

then

for your mind to be the first to go

to The Stationer

He leaves you with two notes

The one in your hand

And the one that wont leave your head

Unless you leave it first

He walks along the roads you stop by for split seconds

The one you once stared at for minutes that felt like years

Because you thought you saw the very essence

Of darkness

Shroud itself behind a street light

He stands there, waiting to be seen

Have you seen him?

You would know to be perfectly honest

I would describe him to you

But fear is such a precious thing, isn't it

The second that fear has a pinned objective

Thought

Or body

It loses its power

Now we wouldn't want that

would we?

Illusions at Dusk

By Bridget Goldberg

Yesterday, at the time when limpid blue fades to deep navy in the sky,
And the world's vibrant colors shift to varying shades of gray,
I saw your shoes standing in the street.

I'll admit, I was surprised, and did not expect you there.
And so, I looked up, to where your legs would be,
Your pants, and then the hem of your coat,
And then your chin, your toothy smile, your eyes, hard to make out in the fading light.

But I saw only more pavement, wet with old rain, stretching out and away.
Now, it was your absence that surprised me.
And, when I looked back down for your shoes,
I found them gone.

The wet stones in the pavement glinted back at me,
Where your shoes had been,
Where, for a moment,
You had stood.

Matt

By Aurora McKee

This poem is inspired by the murder of Matthew Shepard of Laramie, Wymong by Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, as seen in our 2019 production of *The Laramie Project*

They ripped out their hearts and stuck them on the fence
The beating and the buzzing a scream in my ears
So I tear myself off the sharp, bloody wire
Leave dead flesh to rot and quiver in the breeze
Creep through the woods on unshod feet

I walk to that town, like a jewel in the night
Laramie, Laramie, marked red on the screen
She danced on my grave with tears in her eyes
The preacher laughs and the barman cries
While ghosts of lost children gather before the courthouse.

They built me a shrine of paper and film
A hundred voices couldn't fill the void left by one
So I track poisoned blood down neat streets
Paint rainbows on the forehead of McKinney's boy
Wait at the ungrammatical sign for the actors to return...

You need not let me in, for I never left.



Photo by Anna Brief

The Power of Us

By Maya Gelber

There we stood,
Our chests tight
As the aching stench of heartbreak
We could not comprehend hung in the air.
Each man was a stranger,
An unknown corpse.
Yet still familiar.
We were brothers
Related only by hate.

There we stood,
Joined together as one.
Powered by strength,
Pain,
Animosity.

There we stood,
A sea of faces,
An ocean of fear.
We were puzzle pieces,
Small waves to make up
A vast expanse of water.

There we stood,
Our swastikas worn proudly on our sleeves.
The iconic symbol of us,
Seen everywhere but never truly understood.
These eight rigid lines could evoke so much
Emotion.

There we stood,
Not speaking,
Not moving.
Never thinking.

There we stood,
Oblivious to the history we were creating.
The history we were.
The burning of the books
Mirrored the fires surrounding us
Protecting the innocent children inside.

When we stood together,
Our legs tired.
Our eyes grew weary.
But nothing could hurt
As much as those who were different.
The ones who didn't fit
Into the sea of identical faces.
The ones who dared challenge
The power of us.



This is a picture taken of a group of boys in the Hitler Youth during WWII. In this picture, members listen to a speech by Adolf Hitler at a Nazi "party day" rally. Nuremberg, Germany, September 11, 1935.

The Brightest of Days

By David Burke

The brightest of days they wither
To the ever darkness of night
And the demons they come hither
To torture me with all their might
The sickening shriek of the ghoul
Will bring most hearts to a stop
Be wary be wary my friend and do not be a fool
For the demons ever cunningness will always come out on top!

The Eulogy for Death

By Lucas Vladimiroff

I see hundreds waiting in funeral lines.
They used to line up at movie theaters,
Waiting in pairs for the screening to start—
How they couldn't bear to be apart.

Inside the floor is cold.
Sandy walls and sandy light,
Act as screens around the sight

The line flows out the door and around the corner.
Around to the shops—
The shops they'd line up for at their openings,
The people selling broken things.

Funerals are no new business,
They get orders just after the coroner.
The line never stops,
The door opens and the bell rings...

The day death dies he'll get no funeral.
No friend or mutual
To invite to the coffin.
He won't even get a tin...

And the line will end with that hooded figure,
With the name "Human" to write on the grave.
Death dies with everything else,
And there's nothing left to save.

Summary of Our Conscience

Lucas Vladmiroff

To hear, to feel, to see with eyes.
This all I know, I should surmise;
Reflections show our mind, its ties
But hearts inside are small in size.

Phantoms

By Joia McKelvey

Have you ever seen a ghost? Not necessarily a ghost in the traditional sense. Pale and menacing, hovering just above the ground, but a ghost from the past. A sudden flashback to a childhood memory while walking past the playground. That day you and your best friend lied in an empty field trying to find shapes in the trees shadows; slowly freezing to death, and now every time you pass by that pasture you can't help but return to that night. Sometimes you can even see your former selves still lying there. A phantom of the past.

There are pieces of me littered across the globe. Bits of DNA. My hair's been falling out. I don't know if it's from stress or just general damage. (Probably a bit of both) but it gets left everywhere, and wherever I go it has traveled with me, only to stay behind. It's funny to think that in some ways I am now part of these places. A piece of me has been left there, and I will never get it back. I guess It's the same with memories. Pieces of me have been scattered across the globe and a part of me will always be there.

Dog-go

By Julie Geller

Perked up tail, bushy brows, three shades of love,
The center of affection, with your nose
Black like night sky with sparkles from above.
Gift from God, and who follows as one goes.
With a heart of gold and a nose of steel,
Could find a hidden treat in sealed up bags,
And ate chocolate like his own gourmet meal,
Would shred fresh scented towels into rags,
Your warm spot, now cold, you were just a pup
Sometimes life does not seem totally fair,
Your once perked up tail, now lays not but up,
Our once covered couch with all of your hair,
Swept away, the feeling of being kissed,
I hope you will know how much you are missed.

Dead Man Firing

By Conrad White

Today, I saw no sky
I waited, pondered why it wouldn't cast its face
Of course, in the moment i was blind
For no sky beckoned to me through the clouds
Or was it the ashen blood covering my lids
His hand was on my shoulder
I saw it then, why the sky wasn't visible
As much as we wanted to see it
The divine canvas we loved was ashamed
Another bang to my right
My right leg fell asleep as it stuck to the mud
He's yelling over my shoulder
What time is it?
They keep firing
I like its white noise
Why does he keep shouting?
Nathan is still lying there, welcomed by the mice and the snakes
His hand rests on my shoulder
His voice echoes through the horror
The arkham
Jesus, what time is it?
That's not him, is it
Keep firing
They're out
Jump damn it, jump up
Stop laughing at me
We joked he was boney before, but now
Nathan truly is the harlequin of rot
I guess they had more ammo than I thought

LEAKER

By Ziaire Mickell

The pain is seeping through,
I'm trying to face it head on but it's rising over me,
I keep trying to stay up like a highway lamp,
Skipping across the field but the flowers are now dead,
No life hasn't inhabited here since 100 years ago.

I feel like the soul is cracked and it has let in some evil spirits,
My mind is cursed with trauma,
I want to be in the play but I don't need any drama,
My heart blames itself for everything,
I wish the technology would've broken because I can't answer the ring.

I'm scared like a baby that saw a demon in it's dreams but It can't cry,
Running in my sleep trying to wake up from this nightmare,
Eyes open tricking my brain that I was awake but in reality I wasn't aware,
My insides are hurting worse than a stomach ache,
I know that I shouldn't have eaten that poisoned cake.

I don't know if you would call me clever,
But my machine is not working,
I forgot to push the lever,
I feel like a low battery bar that is charging but no progress has been made,
I'm in the woods with bad creatures,
I just sent someone for your aid.

SCARS

By Ziaire Mickell

Life will bring you scars especially when you did something dumb and you're locked up behind bars, Now you're feel like your trillions and miles away like the planet Mars

Scars tell a story, physically, mentally,
it's the way your brain interprets them and reacts to the actions that happen to you

Small cuts will heal fast,
But a wound will get deeper if you don't take care of them right away,
Bleeding out trying to patch it with a bandage won't fix it,
You need strong stitches that will hold the penetrating skin together like a tight hug from
someone you love

The scar that you have on your body somewhere
will never forget how much pain it received,
Your flesh will take a long time to recover that's why there's a switch in the soft nervous tissue
with a structure that is ready to be in a state of mind of grief, like when a mother loses her child
in a traumatic dream

THE FIGHT

By Ziaire Mickell

Promise me you will obey the law,
Because you know our race is seen as a flaw.

You know it's scary being african american and out there alone with my skin pigment,
Even if you have lots of witnesses you still end up with a longer sentence.

We can't hide we're too noticeable,
We've come a long way but like literally thousands of miles away from our home country.

They try to berate us,
Circumscribe us from things,
Since the first step of Dr. King's words that had an effect on the world because we were trying
to coalesce.

We're like a target if you get one of us it's like a bullseye and we're on the news like they won a
prize,
Every time we inch out into society is scary,
But we can't live in fear.
We try to debunk the horrible mindset of the people,
Because in the end all of us want to be equal.

It's supposed to be the land of the free,
Yet we're trapped under this dome following this spell that is difficult to get rid of,
Minorities especially us blacks at times feel lonelier than a cone on the side of the highway that
keeps getting squashed and flattened to the ground.