

FALL 2019

# AMENDMENT

LITERARY AND ART JOURNAL



SOCIAL PROGRESSION  
THROUGH ARTISTIC EXPRESSION



## ABOUT THE COVER

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### **The Street Vendor**

*Logan Sullivan*

*The Street Vendor* was inspired by a photograph of an Uyghur street vendor crossing the street with his bike after he was ordered to take off his hat at a checkpoint. Wearing the uniquely shaped hat is part of the Uyghur tradition. It is a part of the cultural identity. There is one checkpoint with many police officers patrolling within a 5-minute walking distance or so in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, where I grew up. I cannot possibly go back to visit for fear of detainment. The police surveillance is extreme. Everyone is living in fear without any moments of peace. This man represents the final generation of Uyghurs who have lived through the old times, and are taking their last breaths in a period where their identity and culture are forcefully taken away from them. It is a sad thing to watch and experience.

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**AMENDMENT** /ə'mɛn(d)mənt/

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1. An annual literary and art journal that seeks to promote thoughtful discussion on issues such as equality, class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, and identity.
2. A socially progressive student-run organization at Virginia Commonwealth University that advocates for social change through artistic expression, as well as provides a platform for historically marginalized voices in the artistic and literary community.
3. What you're holding in your hands.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This publication has taken several painstaking and wonderful months to put together. It has become what you see today due to the help and collaboration of several people. In terms of budgeting and planning, without the Student Media Staff, Allison Dyche, Mark Jefferies, Jacob McFadden and, most recently, Owen Martin, this journal, all of its predecessors, would not be possible. Thank you to the design team for the countless late nights and early mornings you spent meticulously putting this journal together. To the staff who diligently discussed art and literature every Friday, who worked hard to promote Amendment, and took the time to patiently and lovingly curate the pieces in this journal, thank you. A special thanks to our previous leadership team, Hallie Chametzky, Sarah Carter, and Elise Le Sage for all their hard work and guidance. Thank you to the contributors who bravely sent us a piece of your soul. There would be no journal if it weren't for you and your work. And finally, to the readers holding this book, who have decided to give us even a minute of your time, thank you.

*Barjaa Brown*

Outreach and Digital Media Coordinator

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

---

For the past four years, Amendment has been my lifeblood. My home.

Amendment has clutched and coiled around my heart so tightly that a day hasn't gone by without its purpose continually thrumming along with the steady pulse inside my veins.

Recognizing that this journal will be my last has forced me to consider how Hallie Chametzky, the strong and beautiful leader who I had the pleasure of working with during my time here, and all editors before us, seemed so intact as they broke away from Amendment.

Amendment became our comfort, not only because of the community surrounding this organization, but the feeling of acceptance that exists at the core of what we do. Amendment provides a platform for students to promote equality, tolerance, and social progression through artistic expression, so I'd like to share some of my hopes before indefinitely parting ways with these familiar pages.

My goal for you, the reader, is to experience the work in this journal as I have. In my weary times, I have found solace in these hallowed pages. The sturdy binding and beacon-like quality behind Amendment has allowed the profound messages of my peers to shine and remain a guiding light for myself and anyone who needs it. This collection of written and visual art is purposeful and powerful, and contains an intangible quality which allows for a shift in perspective regarding the world around us. These works have the ability to teach us about ourselves and our society and the connectedness of human existence. My staff and I have taken the beautiful, and sometimes harsh, life experiences and injustices of the VCU and Richmond community and immortalized them as best as we could for you. So, thank you for your willingness to interpret and absorb the content our contributors so bravely shared with you.

A fellow editor once wrote that working at a literary journal is one of the most thankless tasks that one can embark upon. I can understand my peers' intention to highlight the work we publish, and the messages behind that work, but my



gut instinct is to vehemently reject the idea that the efforts of myself and my staff have been thankless.

Someone sent the following message to the Amendment inbox regarding *Donald*, a literary work I wrote, "If possible, could you let her [Emily] know that making bad decisions doesn't make her an idiot and, if I could, I would hug her because she's not alone."

Without fail, this note always makes me tear up because it embodies the spirit of Amendment. We create and foster a safe place for people to share moments of their lives, stupid or not, and recognize that they do not define us. Amendment reminds us that we are not alone and that an overwhelming amount of support always exists for you, here and out in the world. We are always rooting for you, whether you are a contributor, a reader, or neither.

Anyone featured in these pages, who submitted, or interacted with us over the past four years will always be a part of me. Thank you again for your time and support.

I will soon be on the search for a new place to call home, but, until then, thank you, Amendment, for giving me something that makes goodbye so fucking hard it feels nearly impossible.

*Emily Henderson*  
Editor-in-Chief

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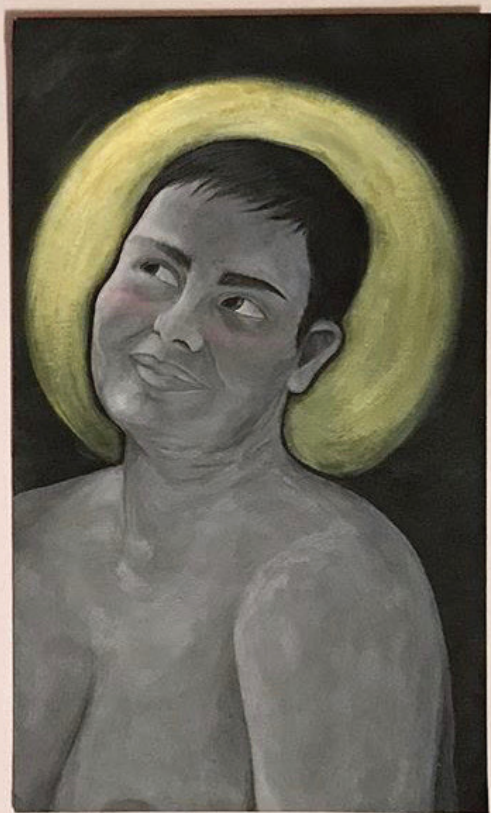
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**they/them** →  
*Eli Vidano*



## Human\*

*Anthony Lamar Reid*

---

Human\*  
Sub-you.  
Unlikely, but just so.

So, here we are:  
optic — light — receptor.  
You catch me here in fragments.  
Light from the over-there bends me  
behind the rose in your eye.

Unguarded, I go,  
Upside down — refracted — convex.  
You respond through firing impulses,  
And creating your own image of me.  
A retinal map, variating the rain inside my body.  
You've read me wrong.  
You've never seen me//here.

Sister, woman, vitriol, kin;  
What if I don't want the hands you've held?  
What will I do when I don't want my own limbs anymore?  
What then, when I'm hazed from not being seen?

I can't hold your bags now.  
The grounds that have tombed your tears,  
now need the salt from my eyes to make marigolds.  
I need my own fields to lay down in.  
My Judas trees wait for me too.  
Come here with me and say my name.  
I want you to say my name,  
sister, honey, girl, friend.  
Say my name.





**Veiled I**  
*D'Anna Lee*





**Veiled II**  
*D'Anna Lee*

## Untitled (2018)

*Hernon Henderson*

---

Wake the slaves from their graves  
We throwing a rave  
Stadium music  
I'm starting the wave  
Let's start from this side  
Screaming what I truly desire  
Light the fire under their ass  
Scratch the plan like a DJ  
We doing this my way  
You can't fight fire with fire  
But we running out options and I'm done watching  
It ain't safe for me  
Let alone the youngins  
My president ain't gotta be black but he can't be that  
The truth is hard to swallow but you need your pills  
Opiate addiction  
Something had to pay the bills  
Someone has to provide the meals  
Someone has to deal the cards so we can play the game  
The house has to be put under somebody's name  
Eventually my mind will deteriorate  
My body will rot after my fate is decided at the gate  
Heaven or hell  
It's out of my hands  
While I'm here  
I cannot rest  
Officers hunting like it's time for Thanksgiving  
So, I'm grinding  
Lord willing  
But that don't matter

They'll find an excuse to accuse me of a crime that I didn't do  
Plant the seed and it will grow, but how tall and how long and when the will the  
leaves fall?  
I don't the have the answers, but the questions can be asked until we got  
something that can match  
We all fit the description, no need to carry the sketch  
Lieutenant said he felt his life was in danger, but he was rocking the vest  
Trayvon had the skittles and the Arizona  
Mr. Garner was choked to death  
Dylan roof got to go Burger King  
We all equal as human beings?  
Fuck the bull shit like Derrick Rose  
How am I supposed to accept the truth?  
They want me in the booth  
Just not on a dusty loop  
They need another monkey for the streets to dance in a pretty outfit and never  
question the accountant  
I gotta make sure my boat can float before I let out the rope  
There's always hope when you focused on the future and not the present  
Action only happens in the latter  
Hey, batter batter  
You better get to moving  
Too busy worried about what they doing  
Pursue cream so you got time before it's taken away



**In Isolation**

*Byron Edge*

## hiv

Anthony Lamar Reid

Amendment Literary Award Winner

---

orphaned  
unknown male  
dead- floating in a sea of yesterdays and lasts  
breaths no longer  
kisses pushed back

we'll love you from our windows  
we'll pray for cures  
we'll mourn into forever, for you

the day you died, we apologized for your body,  
the puritanical fucked contagion  
time imposed devastation  
and religiosity found gays without spirituals  
without heaven

it's coming for you/us  
it's in the wind — the sky sees the storm coming  
it comes to disrupt — bodies disruptive —dropping everywhere, *drop*  
*flies*  
dropping out of the air like rain, sinking into the ground as if to bury  
flies dropping into pianos and church pews, sulking in what is to come  
goodbye - early  
too many early goodbyes

even skin runs away from the chaos inside the body  
only we disappear

cover me/condom/reggie williams/bury me/down/marlon riggs/come to my  
funeral/cry/sylvester/young war/fighting old/essex hemphill/sanitation fucks  
morality/touch me/alvin ailey/give us a home/we lay together/donald woods/  
look at us/ we aren't dead yet

## He Nearly Spent His Chemo Treatment on Elton John Tickets

*Delaney Burk*

---

Comes out all rushed before I am ready.  
Told me he had cancer. Had to top that.  
George, Amy, David, Prince, Freddie—

Valentine's décor; heartbeat unsteady.  
Eye contact refused. Gaze is on the placemat.  
Came out all rushed before I was ready.

"We caught it early; not likely deadly."  
Brother watches my tears: all this? Old hat.  
George, Amy, David, Prince, Freddie—

Answers, ignored; all this is too heavy.  
Panic ceases and "I'm bi" slips out flat,  
Comes out all rushed before I am ready.

Stares and silence soak; he won't love me any  
Less than before – don't we both sing toasts at  
George, Amy, David, Prince, Freddie?

"Two reveals, nothing in common," said he.  
Queer artists, lost too soon, in their eyes – Death spat,  
Came out all rushed before I was ready.  
George, Amy, David, Prince, Freddie.



**Erik I**  
*Damara Sparks*



Erik II

## Artist Statement

*Damara Sparks*

---

These photos are a love song to queer bodies, trans bodies, gendered and nongendered bodies, bodies that look like mine and bodies that don't. Seek for yourself to normalize all bodies, and the love for your own body will follow. To Jónel and Erik: You are glowing.





Erik III



Erik IV



Jónel I



Jónel II



Jónel III



Jónel IV



Jónel v



## Solitary

*Cecilia Doss*

---

White.  
Blinding, piercing white.  
Am I dead?  
No, no.  
Maybe.  
But I am alone.  
Which might scare me more than being dead.  
I walk in any direction, trying to find a corner  
Or the edge of a door somewhere,  
Praying to whoever I can think of  
To see something new  
In the vast, harsh expanse of white.

I start thinking too much when I'm alone.  
Moderate self-reflection is healthy, but there's a line I crossed years ago.  
Nights when I can't sleep,  
Walks when I forget my earbuds,  
Any moment I can, I try to be with someone  
So my brain doesn't go to its most common place  
Thinking about the moments I don't have the guts to write about.  
I can never think about what I've done right,  
Because I can always have done something to do better.

But we aren't there anymore.  
We're here, in the cocaine-white room.  
It's kind of like Scherzo, now that I think of it.  
Now I'm thinking about Doctor Who,  
And like a test that I got a bad grade on,  
Everything else is immediately out of my mind.  
It can be hard for me to like myself sometimes,  
But sometimes the easiest solution really is,  
"Don't think about it."



**Invader**  
*Eli Vidano*

## All I want

*Emma Winstead*

---

I stay searching for answers to questions that have never escaped my lips. I long to face you again just so I have the closure of knowing it is the last time and retrieving back the part of me that you continue to carry around in your back pocket. I think I just really want to know what it's like. What is it like to have been in both positions? To have been both the predator and the prey. When I met you she had torn you limb from limb. Left you beaten and bruised and with a scarred heart. But when I looked at you I saw who you were before her. I took your beaten heart and cradled it in my arms like a newborn child and was determined that I was going to nourish it back to its original state. I took your separated limbs and stitched them back perfectly so that you couldn't even see the hem line. And you told me I had saved you. Saved you from the dark place that you had shut yourself in and pulled you back into the light. You told me you never believed in fate but some kind of divine intervention brought me to you. And with all that. With all my work. You walked away. And it's not that I believe that you owe me. But it's that I believe that I was the setup. I was the girl you used to get back on top. The one you used to remember who you really were and that even without her there were still girls that wanted you. And so I became the hopeless victim that fell into your line of sight. Used. Abused. And left for dead. You didn't have to lay a hand on me to rip me apart, no I'm doing that myself. You managed to rip me apart from the inside out and now I can't even stand the sight of myself knowing I've been touched by you. I can't even be alone with myself because all of these thoughts come rushing back about what we were supposed to be and how you fucking quit on us. Not me. You are the one that was so numb to your own emotions you



could never admit that you loved me. And maybe you never did. I can't decide which is worse. And I used to think it was impossible to hate and love somebody at the same time but you have made me all too aware that it is amazingly possible. And now it comes to me like breathing. And as much as I want it to be me, if in the end it is not, I hope she makes you happy. I hope the girl that finally gets through your ironclad heart makes you happy. And I think that's how I know I'll always love you.

Because your happiness will always come before mine. And if I must search for you in every other guy I meet then I will until I find somebody who bears your resemblance to the best of their ability without knowing it. And I'll love them a little less than I loved you. And they won't know that either. Because I don't think I could ever bring myself to love another person as deeply as I loved you. And that is not because they are undeserving. No. But because I need to keep something for myself. I have to protect myself first. And I can never love somebody the way I loved you. So selflessly. So completely. And so I just hope she makes you as happy as you made me. I really do. I hope you let yourself dream about her, and I hope she dreams about you too. But selfishly, I hope her eyes remind you a little too much of mine when she tells you she loves you. I hope that when she says it the first time you realize you've seen that look before. Or something close to it. And I hope your mind races back to me. And I hope you know I loved you.

ILLUSTRATED BOOKLET

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**DEAR LOVE**

Carleigh Ross



DEAR LOVE



## WARNING

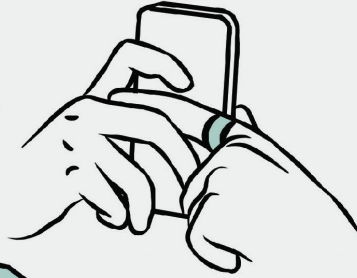
The following contains content some viewers might find disturbing, including mild depictions of sexual harassment and information regarding sexual and gender based violence.

Viewer discretion is advised.

Dear love,

Can I tell you something?

Sure.

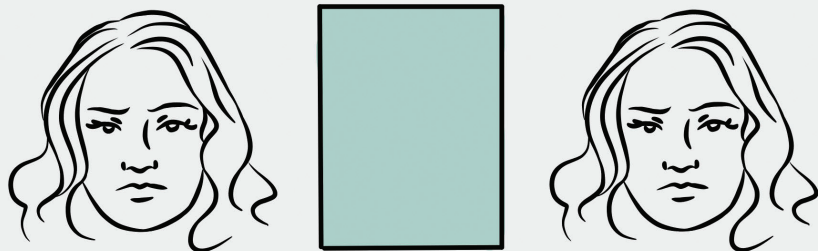


...

It will come  
without warning.

It used to just happen to people you didn't know, people on TV, people a thousand miles away, but once you've been told, it will never go away, and it will just get closer and closer and closer.

Once you notice, it will be everywhere.

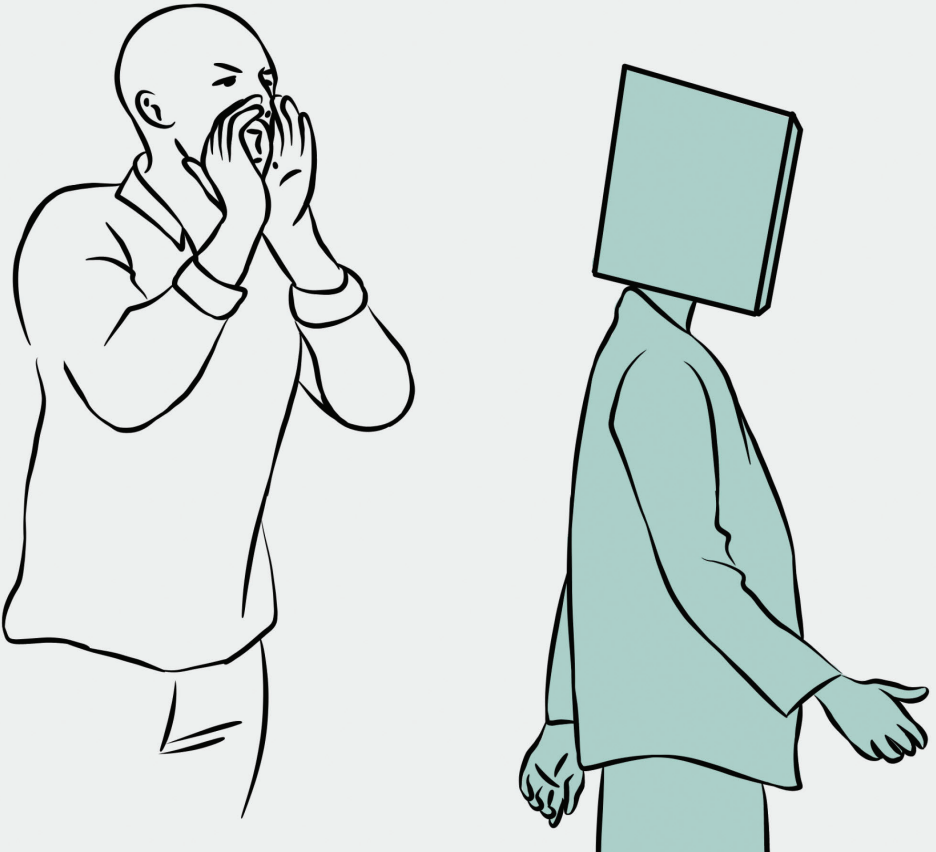


It happens to one out of three but three out of three know. Three out of three are scared. Three out of three have been warned.

That is why I'm here.

Listen to me, love, because I'm only going to say this once: put earbuds in but don't play anything, hide your keys in between your fingers, put your mace, your whistle, your knife where it can't be seen. But be ready.

It happens to one out of three but four out of five will experience it verbally and when that happens you will be scared it will escalate.



When you were young your mother told you to never turn from the sea.





Mother taught you to never turn from anything.

So you don't.

Never put your back to the sea or she'll eat you up.

And when it finally happens... it  
doesn't happen to your back.

You might not even notice.

You might think it's normal.

It is normal, but it shouldn't be.

And once it has happened, it changes you.



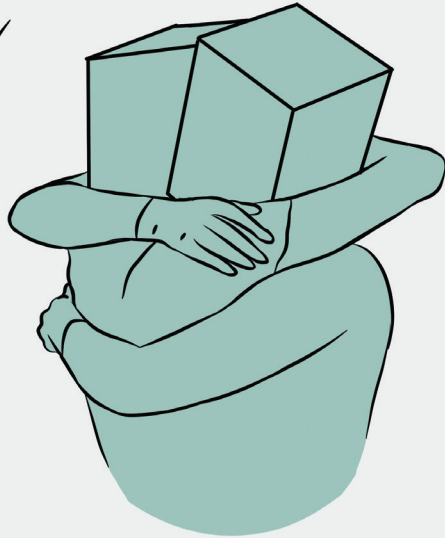
But, god, I wish I could have made things better for you.

You hid your mace and your keys and your knife away but the most dangerous weapon in the world is your heart. Use it.

Avenge them.

Avenge me.

And even when it feels like it might be too late for us...



It won't be.



In the United States,  
one in three women and one in six men will experience  
some form of contact sexual assault in their lifetime.

63% of sexual assaults are not reported to the police.  
It is the most underreported crime.

1-800-656-4673  
National Sexual Assault Hotline.

Talk to someone.



For more information, visit  
the National Sexual Violence Resource Center at [nsvrc.org](https://www.nsvrc.org)

#MeToo.



## #METOO

*Nadia Leiby*

---

Annie tells me under the cool blue light

about the boy that stole something from her  
before she had the chance  
to give it away.

It is the first time the word 'rape' leaves her lips  
and she is not crying or yelling or angry.  
She is just raw.

The night Lindsay has flashbacks to her assault,  
drunk and high and cautious,  
I am unable to hold her.

She sobs about her shame and how  
he was supposed to love her  
and she was too fucked up to say no.  
She swears it's her fault for losing control.

I tell her a consent cliché while remembering her  
head smashing against the toilet.

When Jesse raped a girl two years younger than us  
after he cut us out of his life,  
I felt like my soul was ripped from my body.

How could someone I loved and knew so well  
do something so despicable?

The other night I talked about how I missed him in therapy,  
wished he was dead,  
wished I never found out.

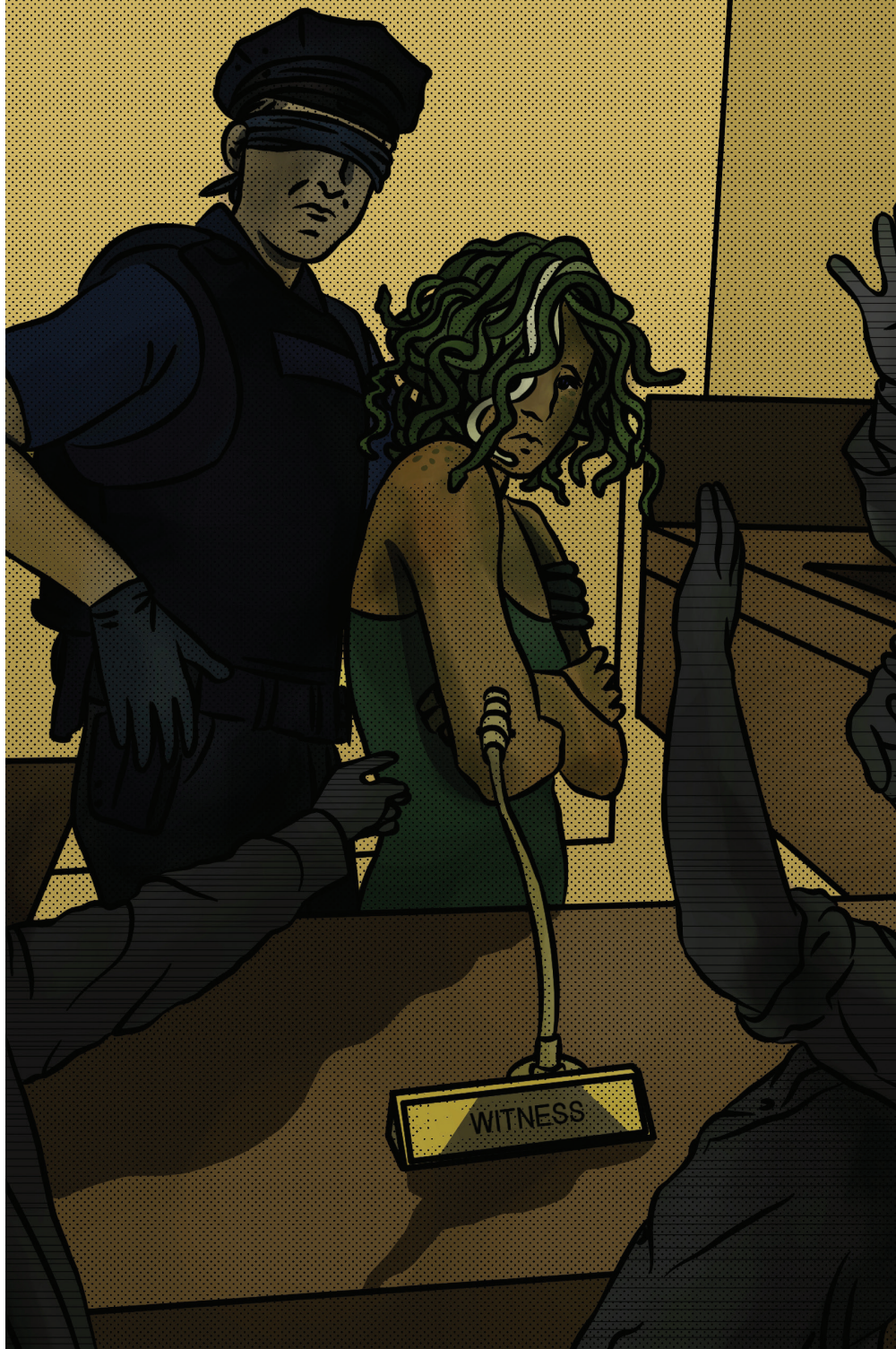
On the way home I sobbed to The Front Bottoms  
and watched the sun set through my windshield.

**Villain/Victim** →

*Carleigh Ross*

Amendment Art Award Winner





## TRAUMA IN FIVE PARTS

*Nadia Leiby*

---

I.

ripping me open from the chestplate down  
Xanax twice daily to curb  
the seizures  
the anger  
the panic.  
started smoking like my dad  
just to watch something combust between my fingers.  
take three showers a day,  
change my clothes every time I leave the house.  
arrange my plate just right —  
eggs, potatoes, yogurt, peanut butter.  
shop online for the rush and  
feel the post-purchase guilt like smoking weed  
when I was sixteen.  
\$12 in my bank account by Monday.

II.

we fuck so good for 45 minutes that I can  
barely walk the next day  
and he calls me beautiful and means it.  
when the endorphins wear off,  
the familiar rawness in my crotch makes me feel  
dirty and gross and  
I stare at the ceiling when I pee so I don't go back  
to the night my body was ripped away from me.  
maybe all this sex is supposed to erase his memory  
but it's the only one that never seems to fade.

III.

sometimes I don't remember things.  
gaping holes in my past were normal,  
but now I can't remember where I was yesterday  
or who I talked to or  
how I made it home alive.  
my mind stays three inches above my body,  
my body in the mirror a stranger  
with glazed eyes and bones just beginning  
to peek out from behind the collar of my shirt.  
I couldn't point me out in a lineup.

IV.

fingers down my throat because I feel "sick"  
and waking up the next day  
when it hurts to swallow.  
the bruise on my knee is a perfect place  
to etch angry lines into my skin and  
once I feel the relief it's hard to stop.  
I can't stop thinking that I'm only living  
for other people  
but at least I'm living for something.

V.

trauma is not kind.  
not in the beginning, or when it  
starts to settle.  
I know that there is no end to trauma,  
just peace, maybe, someday.  
so I hope for it. I try for it.  
and in the meantime I cry for it.



FEATURED ARTIST

**Enzo**

---

Enzo is a senior, VCU arts student double-majoring in Painting & Printmaking and Art Education. He spoke with Amendment about the processes and inspirations for the works featured in this collection.

**N**ot to sound dismal, but most of my life has been an identity crisis. For as long as I can remember, I've always tried to blend-in to the point of habituation. I never felt like I truly belonged in any social setting—I don't know what that's like to this day. Through a lot of introspection, I've ascribed much of this with having been a closeted gay person for most of my childhood to early adulthood, all while having to navigate adolescence as an immigrant—my family moved to America from the Philippines when I was fourteen.

Much of the conceptual development in my art practice today involves a lot of self-reflection and pulling from my own experiences. Even though my acculturation to the American lifestyle over the years has significantly influenced who I am today, I still often think about how my experiences as a closeted immigrant have shaped my personality. As I got older, I've had to slowly come to terms with the fact that I am the way I am as a direct consequence of certain adversities that I had little to no control over, and perhaps will never know truly how much of it is innate as well. In hindsight, I think I've always felt a sense of falsehood around who I am as an individual to this day. At this point, I recognize that any attempt to undo it is futile. But as my own way of reclaiming selfhood, I've decided to establish not an alter ego per se, but instead an artist persona (Enzo) to go by which shall transcend my current self (Anjelo Marquez).

← **Womanhood**

*Enzo*

**I**t's only recently that I have started getting into digital photography as an art practice. I think that photography holds a lot of power in that it can represent reality in ways that drawings or paintings simply cannot.

The "Herself" series, which features *Self-Love* and *Womanhood*, is important to me because I wanted to capture the sense of freedom and self-love that emanates from my friend who's in the early stages of her transition to becoming her true self. That experience personally resonates with me as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

**Self-Love** →  
Enzo





**torso**

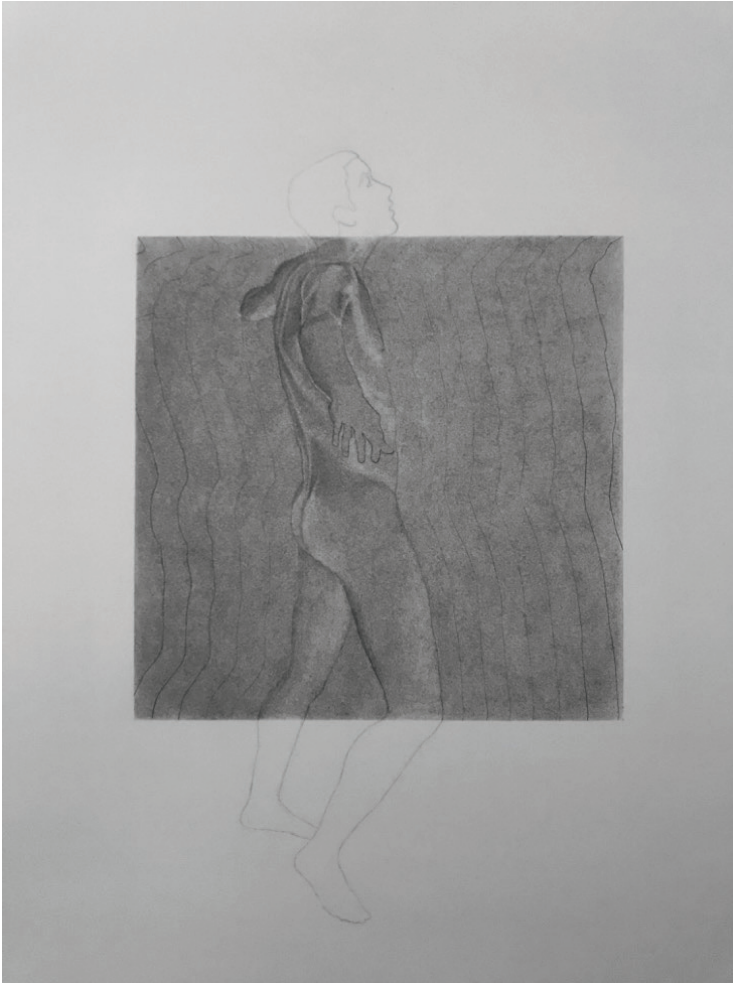
*Enzo*

I painted the series, *torso*, thinking about how heavily criticized our bodies are in society with emphasis on the male torso as it relates to my experience within the gay community. I think that the appreciation for and in pursuit of an idealized image of the body is a complicated subject and is something I have always grappled with both physically and introspectively. I painted the series on 24" x 24" canvases as to explore the implications of the figure within the square. My interest in the square + figure configuration stems from a research paper discussing a series of photographic nudes by photographer, Irving Penn, consisting of sculptural figures cropped at the neck, shoulders, and knees.



**T**his drawing, *Moment of Liberation*, is my interpretation of that moment when I had first told someone I was gay. The feeling of weightlessness and intense freedom was all too important to forget because a big chunk of my life has been lived conforming to this box of expectations that I grew up immersed in.

To see more of Enzo's work, visit his Instagram @dafm\_art.



**Moment of Liberation**

*Enzo*

## **Fat bitch**

*Damara Sparks*

---

I'm sitting with B in the library  
and she's talking about K's face,  
how it looks thinner than last semester,  
how that shirt looks bigger on her,  
how this semester she really is "that bitch."  
She amends quickly, says,  
"I mean, she's beautiful either way,"  
and it takes everything in me not to ask,  
"Is she?"

A few minutes later, K shows up,  
and B says something along the lines of,  
"Oh my God, we were just talking about how  
this semester you look so much smaller!"  
And the smile that breaks across K's face  
locks my knees and she says,  
"Really?! Thank you!"  
as if we've given her the highest honor we could,  
as if, thank God, we noticed her shrinking.

Before dedicating myself to new friendships,  
I check your Instagram for fat people like me,  
see if you include us in your carefully curated,  
aesthetic rows of neutral colors and new outfits.  
I do the same twice before new relationships,  
check your likes just to make sure.  
It's predictable when I don't see us,  
shocking when I do.  
Sometimes, I check the people you've tagged,  
and the fat girl is often the one behind the camera.

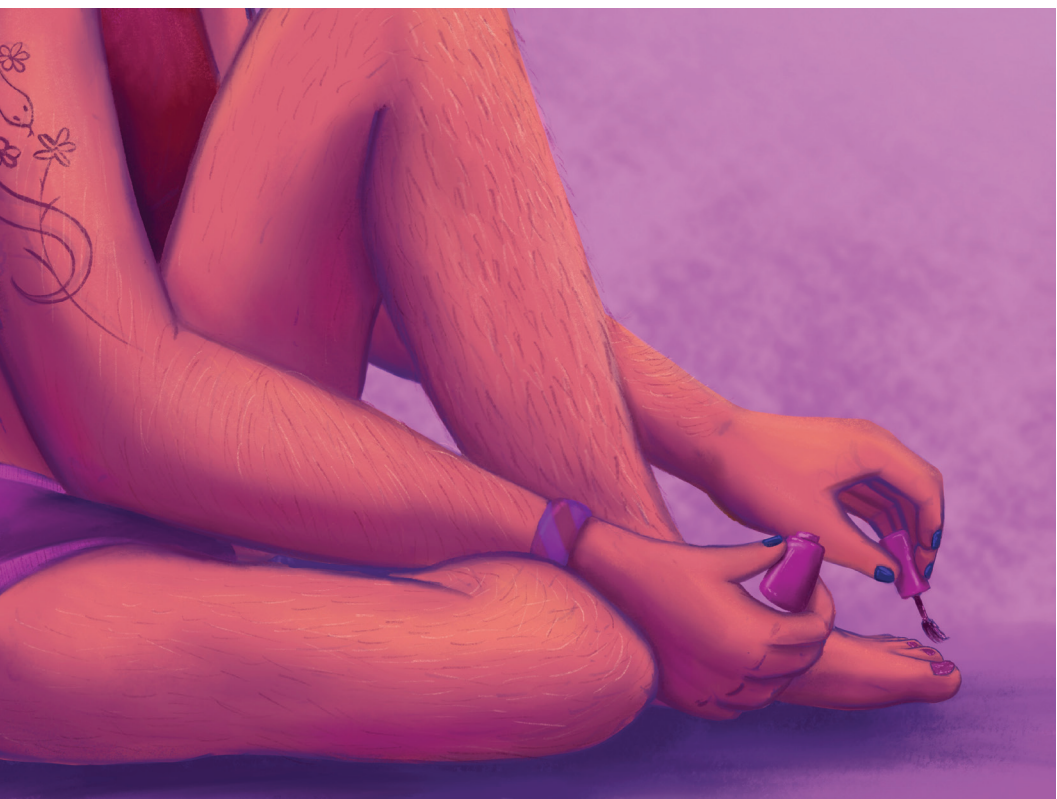
I hate how happy K gets when B tells her she's smaller.  
I want to tell her I like her with roundness,  
I like her soft edges and shape,  
but I'm afraid this will invalidate any work she's put in,  
and I hate the work she's put in  
just to avoid looking like herself,  
to avoid looking like me.

M says, "Oh. Em. Gee. You are not fat!"  
And I know she thinks she's giving a compliment,  
I know she thinks she's being kind,  
forgiving, willfully ignorant or maybe just imperceptive,  
I know she thinks I want to hear this version of the lie  
I keep getting told by people who think fat  
is the worst thing I could call myself,  
not realizing that I am describing a body,  
not passing moral judgment,  
and I know M doesn't mean to, but here she is.  
Aggravated that I could be so mean to myself as to say the word  
fat,  
dismissively kind enough to think she is instilling confidence in me.

The girl in Starbucks is curled up in a chair,  
and it is one of the many moments I wish I was smaller,  
to fit myself cutely, quaintly  
into these picture-perfect moments,  
to be someone prettily candid  
in a tiny sort of way.  
To be pick-up-able, climb-a-tree-able,  
fit to become one of your tiny IG friends  
with jean jackets tied around waists,

bralettes and oversized shirts that look purposeful,  
your matching Halloween costumes  
and symmetrically bodied beach pictures.  
I wish I was thin enough to be a part of  
your curated collection of experiences,  
to be necessary in your filtered highlight reel,  
I wish I was thin enough to be a part of  
your highlight reel.  
It is one of the many moments I wish I was smaller,  
to fold myself into bite sized, consumable pieces.

When K's face lights up,  
I ask myself what I am doing wrong.  
I ask myself what I could be doing better  
to convince these girls that being more  
pocket sized does not mean being more beautiful,  
or that being more beautiful  
does not mean being more lovable,  
but I don't know how to convince them  
if I can't convince myself first.



**Boxes to Check**

*Nicole Garnhart*

## SISTERHOOD IN SUBURBIA

*Nadia Leiby*

---

We share our traumas  
pajama clad and  
drunk  
at 2 A.M.

Girls that have hardly talked  
except for a passing smile  
now howling into the void  
of pink moscato and  
overpriced weed  
as mascara writes poems  
on our cheeks

This is the truce of girlhood.  
Secrets told into the soft carpets  
of suburban basements don't make it past  
the drywall.  
Someday, in dorm rooms  
or cubicles we will relish  
in these moments  
of unadulterated therapy

Here we talk of assault  
and abuse and  
addiction and  
death.

Here we are safe from men  
and authority and  
weight gain and  
the emptiness that is  
so unbearably  
all-consuming.

As the sun rises,  
we curl up on couches  
under blankets much softer  
than those we could ever think  
of owning.

Our heads disconnected from our  
aching bodies,  
we sleep and  
for once,  
the nightmares cease.

## depression//sex v

*Anthony Lamar Reid*

---

I know it was dark  
and sometimes it's hard to hear  
when the wind is trying to catch its breath:  
whistling through the air of a sapphire dream show.

Something is bound to get lost with the children footing aluminum nighties,  
with the women fighting Simms and his lawyers,  
between bullets and arms in the air,  
on the hull of the ships, beneath the chains,  
in the bellies of those cleansed out of Yemen.

Someone is bound to go blur under the Birdseye.  
The all-seeing, all-there, Star will leave at least one night without a moon.

This was the night He couldn't find me:  
under the screams of my familiar,  
with my body laying there, silent.

Tonight the tree was lost for the forest,  
standing amongst the things that have fallen.  
Tonight the waves were lost for wake,  
becoming just another silent crash amongst the immense.

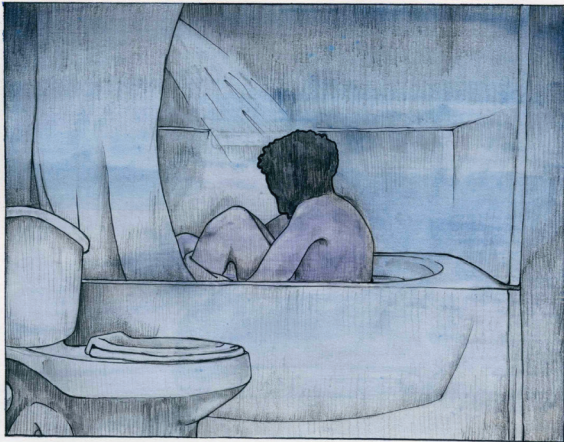
He did not mean to.

**A Black Woman in America** →

*Stella Assefa*







I'd Like to Think I was a King Once

*Byron Edge*

## The Last Airbender

*Calvin Graves*

---

Bending time as if I'm a God.  
I can see time coming at me in slow motion.  
A wave of bullets shooting towards me.

'I love you.'  
'You don't love me.'  
'My parents aren't proud of me.'

Bullets that can pierce my skin and poison my insides with the crushing reality of truth.

I have a problem of believing in the impossible.  
Dreaming while I'm awake.  
Not being able to fall asleep even though my mind is exhausted.

I'm too busy opening and closing cabinet doors,  
Searching for an answer plausible enough to describe why I'm tripping by myself.  
In an apartment full of empty bodies whose names I can barely remember.

The oven is on, but no one's home.  
There's a thing about burning.  
If the oven explodes, would that be so bad?

I'm having a heart attack.  
Or maybe I'm dying of a broken heart?  
Tis pity I'm a Whore.

Sinking into the couch.  
I could lie here forever.  
When that oven explodes, I very well might.

The empty bodies all close the doors to their bedrooms.  
And I'm here. Alone. Sunk into the couch.  
I don't want to lie here forever.

I'm not an Airbender.  
I can't bend time.  
But at least, I turned off the oven.

## Half a Year is Really Pushing It

*Alexzane Taylor*

---

In December 2016, I was diagnosed with PCOS, polycystic ovarian syndrome. It's a hormonal disorder that affects the female reproductive organs. It can lead to things such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, and death if not properly treated.

I hadn't had my period in six months and had gone to see my OBGYN. I was used to going months without a period and then making it up for however many weeks. That's just how my body seemed to work, but half a year was really pushing it. My doctor came to the diagnosis after a few blood tests and prescribed medication to try to get my menstrual cycle back on track. Knowing this period would most likely be a doozie, I prolonged taking the pills until after I had finished all of my final exams for the semester. It turned out that I had made the right decision.

Almost a day after starting the pills, my menstrual cycle was back and this time, it came at full force. I knew I was losing a lot of blood, but I wasn't worried. I had had many heavy periods before and for a much longer span of time. With each passing day, I lost more and more blood. It wasn't until I was forced to buy two boxes of Ultra tampons, which I had never used before, and Super Plus pads in order to keep up with my body's demand that I started getting concerned.

I remember the Sunday leading up to my time spent in the hospital. By then I was reduced to pairing the Ultra Tampons with Super pads. They allowed me to spend more time away from the bathroom, but even still I could barely spend more than thirty minutes out of it. I spent the entirety of that church service bleeding out in the bathroom because I was too light headed to make the constant trek up and down the stairs.

Despite my growing concerns, I decided to stay as calm as I could. I could handle it. I had dealt with bad periods since I started puberty. I just had to take it one day at a time. Besides, my parents were leaving on an overnight trip for their anniversary. They barely got to spend alone time together and I had to babysit my younger siblings. I tried to convince myself that I could hold it together until they returned the next day. I wanted them to have fun and not worry about us. They deserved time for each other.

I watched my mother pack, letting the door frame support what parts of my body I no longer had the strength to, and tried to focus on the instructions she gave me. I was getting impatient. It's not like I hadn't babysat my brother and sister before; I did it frequently. I wanted my parents to hurry up and leave so that I could lay down. I wasn't feeling well in the slightest sense of the word. When they finally departed, I got the chance to adhere to my wish.

I felt well enough to make something to eat after a few hours of laying down. I made a pasta dish from scratch and I remember being so proud of myself

because it looked and tasted so delicious that I had to take a picture. My siblings loved it too. About twenty minutes later, I was hunched over the sink staring down at the same dish my body violently launched out of my stomach. My reflection was pallid and haggard. I didn't think it was possible for me to feel any worse, but I did.

I texted my mom and told her I had thrown up, but when I saw her text asking whether I wanted them to come back home I couldn't bring myself to type 'yes'. I couldn't do that to them. They needed this time for each other, so I reassured her that I was fine and that they should have fun. I gathered all the strength I could and slowly proceeded to crawl up the two flights of stairs to my room.

Tears were in my eyes by the time I made it. I was exhausted just getting to my bed. My stomach hurt and I was so lightheaded I could barely stand, but I was going to starve out the pain.

It hadn't even been a minute before my sister barged in, demanding for me to tuck her in. Having someone tuck her in was just her ploy to prolong having to go to bed. I couldn't do it tonight. I could barely move, so I told her as such. She was seven and it hadn't quite hit her yet that her needs and wants weren't the only ones that mattered. I tried to explain to her that I wouldn't be able to because I wasn't feeling well and that she should have more empathy. From her persistence and the rising shrill tone of her voice despite my rejections, I knew it had gone over her head. I physically and mentally could not deal with her anymore and exploded at her to go to bed, tears running down my face.

Upon realizing that I had left a trail of blood, I did my best to stumble into the bathroom. The blood had soaked through the tampon, through the pad, through my underwear, and through my sweatpants all the way to the floor. It had been at most fifteen minutes since I had last changed.

I stripped down and decided to spend the rest of the night on the toilet. I didn't have the energy to go to the bathroom every ten minutes and there were worse things than sleeping in it.

I remember wondering how I got on the floor, before concluding that I must have fallen in my sleep, so I tried again.

I woke up on the floor. The way I had positioned myself I knew I couldn't have just fallen so this time I decided to stay awake. I had my phone, so I replied to messages and texted my best friend.

I was on the floor again. I knew I hadn't fallen asleep because I was in the middle of typing.

I finally figured out that I had passed out and I had been passing out since I

got in the bathroom. For some reason, most likely lack of blood, I thought that I could use my sheer willpower to keep myself from uncontrollably slamming onto the cold linoleum.

I was scared. I didn't want to pass out again, but I was still losing a lot of blood. I was sure that I would bleed out, but I still didn't want to ruin my parents' night out and I didn't want to deprive any relatives of their sleep. So, I decided that if this was going to be my last night, that I might as well make it count. All I could think about was letting my best friend know that he was very important to me and that I loved him. I had this innate drive to tell him the depth of my feelings. It was vital to me that he knew before I kicked the bucket. So for god knows how long, I went through a cycle of texting him and passing out until I had finally finished writing my heart out.

I conclusively decided to sleep in the tub. I couldn't sleep on the toilet and I didn't want to sleep on the floor. The tub has, so far, been the most uncomfortable place that I have had the displeasure of sleeping.

By this point, I was shaking. My body was directing what little blood I had left away from my extremities and I could hardly feel my hands or feet anymore. I needed warmth, but I wasn't sure how quickly I would be able to retrieve a blanket and pillow from my room before passing out again.

After crawling to the bathroom door, I heaved myself up and walked as quickly as I could to and from my room in order to get a blanket. Once back in the bathroom, I asked my brother to bring me a pillow. After he did, I quickly snapped a picture of my blood running down the bathtub drain for evidence. With my past medical experiences, I knew that I either wouldn't be taken seriously or even believed at all.

Sleep was something that eluded me, but the cold's meaty arms cradled me in a snowstorm and there was nothing my thin blanket could do to protect me.

At around seven in the morning of December 20<sup>th</sup>, I heard a knock at the door. My mother walked in, horrified at what she saw. I knew that it looked bad, but from the expression on her face, it was clearly worse than I had thought. I hadn't anticipated them to come home so soon. They weren't supposed to be back until at least the evening. I wanted to clean the bathroom before their arrival.

My mom started yelling. She was scared too.

The bathroom looked like a gruesome murder scene: deep pools of crimson blood on the floor, soaking into the bathmats and my clothes; bloody hand and fingerprints on the once clean surfaces. The toilet seat and the tub were almost completely saturated with my blood.

She started cleaning.

I felt terrible. I didn't want to make her feel the way she did. I had ruined their trip and worse of all I had made them worry about me.

She turned the shower on and told me to clean myself up. I stood there watching the blood drain down and wash away to reveal the white of the tub. A big blood clot was slowly making its way to the drain. It was going to get clogged.

I woke up in my mom's arms. She was screaming for my dad to call the ambulance.

I woke up again on the floor. My mom was putting clothes on me. The ambulance was on its way. She was frantic.

I wanted to comfort her but my feeble protests of, "I'm okay," fell on deaf ears and did nothing to soothe her. She wanted to drive me herself because the ambulance was taking too long, but my dad convinced her to give it more time.

By the time the EMTs *finally* arrived there was hardly, if any, blood in the bathroom. My mom had done a thorough job of cleaning. She explained that I had lost a lot of blood and was still losing blood because of my period. The EMTs seemed to be more interested in whether or not I was a drug addict than listening to what my mom had to say. She almost kicked them out.

They did their "assessment", which consisted mostly of sticking a flashlight near my eyes and saying 'ma'am', and then carried me to the ambulance. On the drive there I could hear them talking to each other about how they thought I was faking or being overly dramatic at most and that I probably just had a weak stomach when it came to seeing a little blood.

The more they went on, the madder I got because they weren't taking me or my illness seriously. I had lost a lot of blood and I almost wished my mom had called the ambulance right away instead of cleaning it up. I thought that maybe if they had seen even an inkling of the amount of blood I had lost that night, they would take my condition seriously. They were placing their own prejudices on me without listening to my story.

I wanted to defend myself but I couldn't bring my mouth to move. I couldn't move my body for that matter. I was an icicle.

When we arrived at the hospital, I was placed in a room and given the usual set up. The first blood test came back to 7 g/dL. The amount of blood I had in my body on December 9th, approximately five days before I started taking the pills was 13.2 g/dL. I had lost over 40% of all the blood in my body in less than a week.

The ER doctor confirmed my stomach bug and also stated that there was nothing he could do about my bleeding because my hemoglobin levels weren't in the 6 g/dL range. He was going to send me home.

I could see my nurse out in the hall talking with one of the EMTs who had brought me in. He looked my way and quickly turned back, embarrassed. 'Good,' I thought. He should be. Just because I was catatonic, doesn't mean my ears stopped working.

My heart was pounding, 120 BPM just laying down. I tried to reposition

my body, but my heartbeat shot up to 168 BPM at the slightest movement and I decided it wasn't worth it.

My nurse, who was very kind, came in and tried to prepare me for departure. With the help of my mother, they pulled me up to see if I could stand and walk. I almost passed out as soon as I was vertical, so she had another blood test done because it had been a few hours since the first test and I was still heavily losing blood.

The results came back with my hemoglobin levels at 5.4 g/dL. The ER doctor then decided that my condition was serious enough to warrant blood transfusions.

He briefed two new EMTs about my status and pretty soon I was making my way with an oxygen tank to a hospital that would be able to provide me with the transfusions I desperately needed.

In all the times I have been in an ambulance, this trip was by far the best, miles better than the one earlier that day. They were kind, funny, sincere, and they took me seriously. I was very grateful to them and almost wished that the ride could have lasted longer. They were the best part of that awful day. After delivering me to my room, the EMTs bid me farewell and good luck.

Once there, I was given another blood test to determine my hemoglobin levels. They had dropped to 4.9 g/dL, a stark contrast to the 13.2 g/dL I had boasted earlier during the month. I was really glad that I had delayed taking the pills until after my exams. There was no way I could have lost that much blood and still power through finals.

I was very aware of how anemic I had become. At this point, I had lost almost 70% of all the blood in my body. I was class four hemorrhaging. My heart was beating frantically, struggling to pump what little blood I had left. It was straining. I wanted to cheer it on, but I didn't have the energy anymore. I thought I would go into cardiac arrest before the first transfusion. I was bleeding out too fast and the hospital was moving too slow. It was a race my heart was going to lose.

They upped my oxygen intake but it was all for naught. I couldn't even lift my hand to greet the relatives who had come to see me. I had already given up. I was sorry my family had to see me like this. I was going to die in front of them.

Death calmly strolled in, his presence enveloping the room. He made his way to me and gently started preserving me in my own special cocoon. He took his time, layer by delicate layer. My senses were fading. The cries of my siblings dwindled to background noise. This was it, it was time.

**PULP** →

*Carleigh Ross*





## Submission #326

*Lee Lochlan*

---

*Croatian National Museum of The Homeland War*

*Experiences of War*

*Unknown Author*

*Received August 2002*

We met in a shelter in the summer of '92. It was hot, and there was very little space. I tried to shift so my back was straight, and I elbowed the person next to me. I apologized. He shook my hand and introduced himself. I told him my name. I did not think I'd see him again.

I woke up early one Tuesday a few weeks later and decided to go for a walk. I walked around the outer edge of the park and as I was passing a hollowed tree, I heard someone calling my name from behind. He caught up with me and we started walking together. We walked all the way around the park and when we reached the beginning again, we stopped. He asked me if I had a phone number, and I said I did. He asked me if he could have it, and I said he could not.

He started waiting for me by the tree every morning. We'd meet just before sunrise and walk around the park together. We did this for weeks.

One Friday I asked him if he had plans that night, and he took me to a bar on the other side of the city. We left the bar and on the way home I asked him if he often stayed out this late. He laughed. He said when we'd first started meeting, waking up so early had been "unbearable." I asked him why he'd done it and he rolled his eyes. We were walking down an alley when he stopped, turned to me, and asked me if he could kiss me. We just kind of stood there for a while.

Then I said yes.

We got to the block before his building and stopped at the corner. I took a piece of paper from my pocket and wrote down my phone number. I told him to call me sometime.

He called me on Saturday morning and said his flatmates were going to be gone overnight. He asked if I wanted to come over.

It had started raining early that morning and someone had gone out with the umbrella. I waited for them to come back, and when they didn't, I put my coat over my head and ran. By the time I knocked on his door, I was soaking wet. He laughed, and I stood on a towel while he went and got me some clothes from his room.

He'd made one of his only forays into baking and there was a tart on the counter which we sat together and ate on the couch. We listened to some music and he showed me his room. We sat on his bed and talked. He asked me again if he could kiss me. He asked for another kiss, and I told him he'd better space them out.

I slept on a thin mattress on the floor of his bedroom, and he took the mattress off his bed and laid it down next to me. We were lying a foot apart. I was completely in the dark, but the curtains were open and the faint light from the street was shining through the window onto his face. He was looking at me, his head turned to the side. He kept smiling. I asked him what for, and he said he'd finally found my light.

We woke up early the next morning and I left before anyone could get back.

He asked me out again for the following Friday night, and I countered with a cup of tea. So we sat in a café and he drank coffee and we talked. He said his sister's family had left. He pulled out a camera and took a picture of me mid-sip. I said it was only fair that I took one of him, and he posed with coffee in hand. He later printed a copy and gave it to me, and I put it in a little frame on my dresser.

I woke up early one morning in late November and everything outside was covered in snow. I met him in the park for a walk and watched the trail of footprints we left behind. Someone was out with their dog, and he stopped to pet it. My feet got cold waiting for him.

We went out again one night sometime later. We stood in the alley behind the bar, kissing, for some time. Then we went inside and the first thing he did was ask me to dance. I said no, and he started doing the waltz on his own. He looked ridiculous, and I joined him out of pity.

He walked me home and we parted the customary block before my building. When I went in, all of my things were in the hallway. I waited until I thought he'd be home, then I called him and he walked all the way back. He said I could stay with him until I found someplace new, and that his flatmates wouldn't mind. I'd never met any of them before, but I carried my things with him to his apartment. It took us almost two hours.

His room was not meant for two people to live in and there was very little space. We kept bumping into each other. I had nowhere else to look when I was brushing my teeth. I decided I wanted to live with him for a good long while, and I asked him if it would be all right if I looked for somewhere for just the two of us.

We spent a considerable amount of time apart when I returned to my hometown in the spring of '94. My mother had been severely injured in an artillery attack, and I stayed with her for several months.

When I returned, he had moved us into a new apartment and had taken the liberty of decorating without me. The pictures of us from the café had been framed and hung on the wall.

After the war ended, we visited his sister in Germany, and it was while we were there that my brother called me to say that our mother had been readmitted to the hospital. We both traveled back to see her. When she saw us together, she told me she had no son. She died a few days later. It was the first funeral I'd attended since the war ended.

We returned home and I found a steady job. He found a stray cat that sleeps on our bed and waits by the door for me to get home so I can feed her. He makes me tea and reads to me. We live together quite happily, except for the smell of tuna in the morning. That is dedication, he says, to cats everywhere. I roll my eyes, and he whacks me over the head with his book.

**The Street Vendor →**

*Logan Sullivan*



## “Georgia O’Keeffe Never Painted Vaginas”

~Mara Tupper Burk (1962-2007)

*Delaney Burk*

---

red tulip blooms burst from the earth  
pushing through the tiniest of surface spaces  
tinted smile to the sky  
tulip lips pull  
two rows of imperfect coffee-stained teeth  
chatter with summertime laughter

red hair and green thumbs  
a color-coded pair  
she whispers to her flowers  
introducing her perennial babies to someone more  
permanent  
burnt fingertips colored with dirt  
pause against rounded flesh  
a pair of lips  
a softer red  
closer to the earth  
consume and allow for internal growth

roots and stems  
blood and bones  
force her belly to bloom  
forget-me-not fingers  
tiger lily toes  
euphorbia eyes  
narcissus nose  
a flower child born of a mother earth  
coaxed from the body with promises of sweet kalmia kisses  
and warm hydrangea hugs  
i wish you could have seen my face  
when i saw the o’keeffe book you got me for my birthday





not your cover girl |





not your cover girl II

### Artist Statement

*Joslina Quaynor*

---

not your cover girl. not your girl

When the world tells us what we can't or shouldn't be, we remind ourselves of all the possibilities.

Stop telling young girls and boys what they can't be. Stop telling them that there isn't space for them. Start letting them know that, while the world isn't a perfect place, and no one ever said it was, they can make it better by being fully themselves and show the type of kindness you always wished you had been shown. There's so much power to be seen in being entirely yourself. So don't let the weight of your jaded adult mind be the downfall of the youth. They don't belong to the world. They belong to themselves. And that means there will always be hope."



not your cover girl III



not your cover girl iv

NOT

YOUR

COVER

GIRL

not your cover girl v

## Circles (and Ovals) and Spheres

*Emily Henderson*

---

every time i look in the mirror  
i see it.  
the flesh desperately  
clinging around my inverted bellybutton and abdominals,  
along with roundness in my cheeks.

“Cute. Young. Cherub. Doll-like.”

but all i feel is the squishiness  
my rough thumbpad securely grips  
each morning and night.

tactful eyes examining,  
inspecting the not so subtle fat  
trapped inside the baby pink flesh of my gums.

SCULPTED (cheekbones).  
SHARP (jawlines).

i'm not jealous.

i lost the chubbiness once.

the slimness was my greatest treasure.

i documented my face back then,  
tracing  
& outlining  
my skin to compare with the stockpile  
of daily progress photos.

i wanted chiseled cheekbones,  
even if i had to carve them out  
with the dull blade that resides close to my heart.

that just might be less painful than  
the unfed acid in my belly  
attempting to nourish my aching, weary limbs.

## Did I want to be [REDACTED]?

*Cecilia Doss*

---

Why do I keep doing this to myself?  
I only feel whole when I'm used.  
I can't do a lot of things right, but I'm great at sex. That's a good thing, right?  
Every day I see it again  
"Remember that you're worth it,"  
on a sign I put up in my room  
because I'm too fucking lazy to change it.  
But I'm not worth it. Or at least I don't feel that I am.  
They warn you about substance abuse in school,  
but so little is disclosed about the reality of addiction,  
that only now can I look at myself and say I'm a sex addict.  
I've been a sex addict for years,  
desperately trying to find worth in dicks and pussies  
because I'm too fucking lazy to change it.  
Part of me wishes I watched Friends as a kid,  
so then my first exposure to trans women  
wouldn't be porn.  
It's not good representation, mind you,  
but anything would be better than this  
reputation of "greatness" I'm thrust into,  
fucking anyone that will take me,  
as I do anything to chase a feeling  
that doesn't involve me hating myself,  
because I'm too fucking lazy to change it.  
And only now do I realize it's a problem  
after the 3rd time I've let myself get [REDACTED]  
and the, 4th? 5th person I've driven away?  
I don't know if any of you can hear me,  
or if you even want to,  
but I'm sorry. I know my addiction isn't an excuse. I will try to be better.  
I'm not too fucking lazy to change it,  
and hopefully I'm not too late either.

chivalry ain't  
dead



she's a butch

**Chivalry Ain't Dead**

*Syd Lewin*

## JUST A Preference

Emily Henderson

---

I.

18 years of life to learn a  
simple lesson, Black Is Beautiful, but  
you can keep your selective desires to yourself.

“I prefer to date black girls.”

“Black girls are more fun.

“Black girls are hotter”

“You don’t wrinkle like white people”

Only nothing creases except the paperback spine between your  
thumb and forefinger, and mine is  
one made of collagen, wrapped around flesh  
and blood that changes with time.

Hearing those statements from  
my white girlfriend made me question her  
attraction. Especially during a time where she was falling  
out of love, the nature of the statement is comical  
and has left a nagging chink in my psyche.

*I love you* took on a whole new meaning.

A young, naive Black Woman  
taking it as a compliment, with an unnecessary comparison of  
Us to Them, but now They want to be  
like Us and society likes what it sees.

Society creates laws to kill  
the former, pumping Us full of toxins they don’t want  
their fair-skinned children of God near.

If darkness represents evil and filth,  
how come the black hasn’t cracked?

Preferences, meant to provide an advantage  
to Us become an assertion of dominance  
from my white girlfriend.

Now, I always question whether it is connection or  
obligation that bounds our hearts and pussies



II.

After coming to college, I met a  
professor. She was black, beautiful  
And intelligent, but my immediate reaction  
was how impressive her achievements were  
for a Black Woman.

I was ashamed. I still am.

But society has made that a rarity.  
a Black Woman with a PHD. My sister,  
a young Black Woman with a degree in  
biology, studying pharmacy at one of the greatest  
colleges in the country. There need to be  
more women like this.

I have identified the problem.

Not Everyone wants that.

Not everyone  
can be like that.

But, "Oh how I wish it could be so,"  
says the white man  
in the Senate. You cannot MLK Jr-ize  
Us all. I refuse to respect  
and assimilate into a  
Society that has failed  
and blatantly ignored the best  
interests of those who look like me.  
But I already did. I live behind a  
White picket fence while my cousin  
lives behind its barbwire alternative.  
My great great great great grandma now  
Permanently resides under her master's house.



**Of Mind and Body**

*Sierra Webb*

## **“Don’t Worry, Chubby Chasers Will Still Fuck You.”**

*Delaney Burk*

---

You’re a feminist, but you must say that  
English Major Thin Girls hurt you. You’re fat.

They’re as miserable as you are, but  
such problems are uglier when one’s fat.

Sexy sadness and lovely loneliness  
are reserved for size eights. Not for the fat.

Blogs about depression romanticized,  
buried in Sylvia Plath quotes. Yeah, fat

chance your tears will be considered lovely.  
With all that salt, even your tears are fat.

You watch them wear sweaters in your size  
like a beast’s hide over their tiny, fat-free

bodies. They croon a sweet siren’s song of  
petite magnificence, safe in your fat.

You are mocked for wearing the same and you  
scrub tears from your eyes as you witness ‘fat’

become ‘thick’ and you still do not fit in  
the mold or your jeans. Your version of fat’s

not of the Instagram variety.  
No poems for English Major Girls That Are Fat.



## **Broken**

*Cecilia Doss*

---

I lay on the ground at your feet  
Not even quarter-way through my life  
And the life is already stripped from me  
Because all I can do is submit  
To a higher power that doesn't care about me

I gave you everything because I had to  
Until there's no longer a me to experience my life  
I'm stuck in the cogs  
Grinding me down and oiling your machine with my blood, sweat, and tears.  
And what will you do then?

Why bother asking?  
You only ever think of yourselves.  
Even at the expense of 99% of the world's population,  
You never think of any context  
That doesn't help line your pockets.

So how do I keep going with this in mind?  
How can I make a life under capitalism meaningful?  
I can't.  
At least not without getting through to everyone else you've brainwashed. After all,  
How much change can one person really manage?

← **Heavy**

*Logan Sullivan*

Now or Never →  
*Alexzane Taylor*





## The Old Man with Bare Feet

*Logan Sullivan*

---

It was a hot and dry afternoon. Sitting at the table, Sam took a sip of hot coffee and looked through the window. He saw people appearing from left and right, walking on the streets, passing each other with blank eyes. It was a view for him, so he'd made a habit of coming to this coffee shop. He took a final look at the screen of his laptop and closed the lid; He felt ready to give the pitch at the company meeting this afternoon.

He took his first step outside and blended into the crowd, only to stop before the crosswalk. Standing there, waiting for the red light, he started feeling sweaty under his suite. The red light was on. Not falling behind the crowd, he kept walking. Right step, left step, right again; He kept going, never bothering to stop for a second.

He crossed to the other side of the road, and stopped; Something caught his attention. There was a space on the ground avoided by the crowd of walkers, forming a gap in the flow. It was a view. Like a group of fish avoiding a shark, they avoided the old man.

He was around his 60's. He lay on the ground facing sideways, his head on top of a dusty coat folded like a pillow, and his face covered with a brown hat. Sam thought to himself that the old man does not like the bright sunshine, but he sure likes to take an afternoon nap. Sam wished he had the time. The old man had no blankets either. Seeing how hot the day was, Sam concluded that he had no need for one.



But the thing is, he had no shoes on. He had no socks either, showing only bare feet. Sam tried looking for his shoes, but he couldn't find it. Sam thought perhaps the old man did not check the weather this morning before leaving his house to take a nap here. He sure did not plan his trip wisely. When he wakes up, how is he to walk on the ground without burning his feet? Sam went closer to him and took a good look at the old man's feet.

After what felt like five minutes, Sam came back from a Sports-Gear shop nearby, holding a pair of shoes in his hand. He approached the old man and placed the shoes beside him. Sam checked his watch and hurried off to the bus. Through the window, Sam saw the pair of shoes was gone, nowhere to be seen. His face turned red and he felt a rush of anger. Just when he was about to get off of the bus, he heard the sound of the engine; The bus started to move. Feeling pity, Sam took one last look at the old man's bare feet. Then he took a closer look at his head and noticed something; the pillow got bigger. He saw the new pair of shoes hidden inside the dusty coat.

## **My City**

*Elliott Martin*

---

The concrete jungle speaks. I hear its voice  
“Give me liberty or give me death!”  
It echoes. God speaks in this city.  
The city will not escape its ghosts.  
Stones on an urban street, carved stones.  
Carrying memories past, present, future, forward.

A dream, personal goals moving forward.  
Rebirth, to find in oneself a new voice  
Escaping the past, but embracing the stones.  
Longing to avoid a spiritual death,  
and to find a future in the past, with all its ghosts  
I must immigrate to the beautiful new city. .

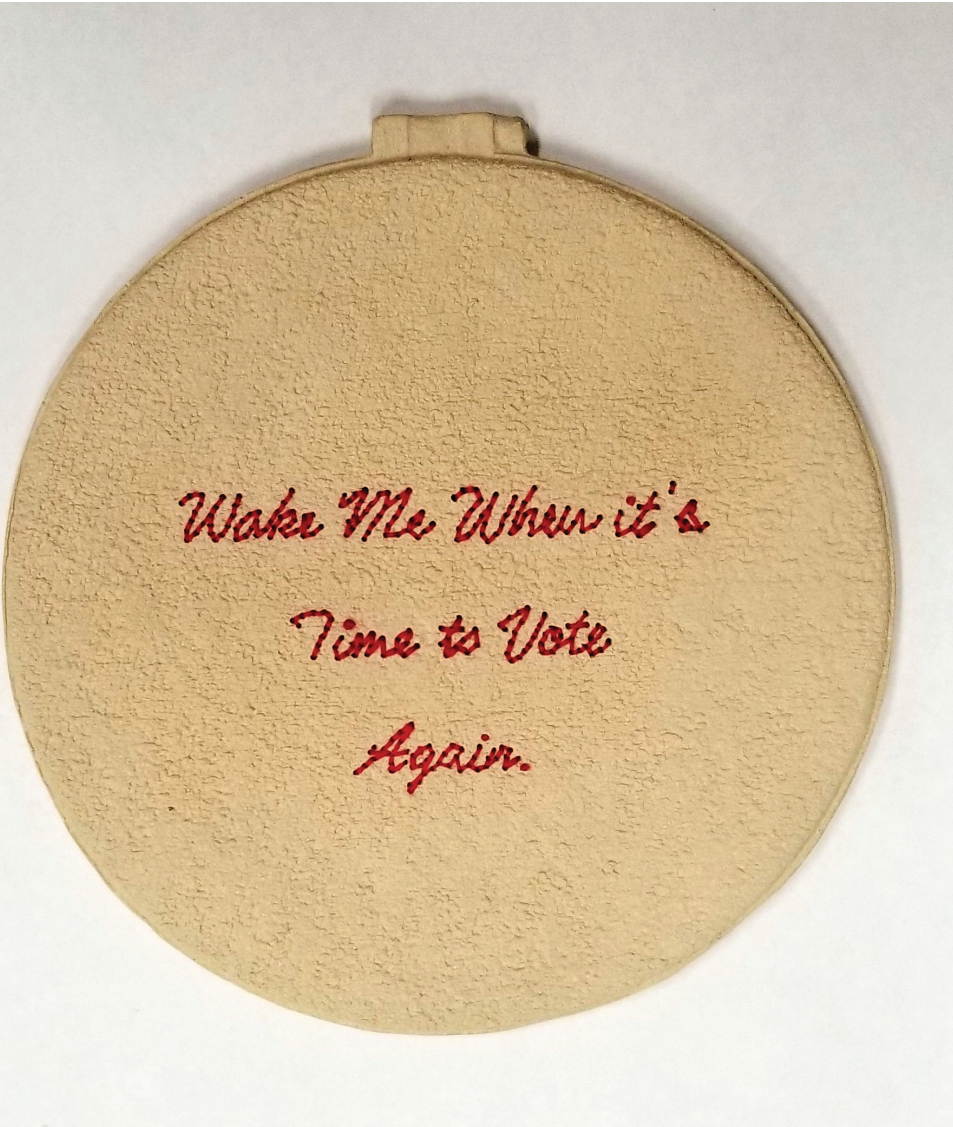
I will find myself in this city.  
Snapping banner pressing ever forward  
Exorcise the demons, exercise the ghosts  
One with a people, one with a voice  
“Give me liberty or give me death”  
Embracing the majesty of imperfect stones.

Don't stop. For music, rolling like the Stones  
For history. Capture the enemy's Capitol city  
Out with the Rebels, even in death  
They hold us back. Charging forward,  
we must unite as one! But with many voices  
admit, and make amends for the ghosts.

In the cemetery, leave the ghosts.  
When they had flesh, they carved the stones,  
exercising an archaic voice  
to let the war haunt the city.  
Future bound, a new hope carries forward  
Ashen photos of passionate death.

But a kinder brand of fiery death,  
rebuilds, attempts to ignore the ghosts.  
Nothing past that cannot move forward.  
With or without the graven human stones  
and its history, this living, breathing city  
will Rise again. A one and many voice!

Defend or destroy the precious stones,  
The Union and I will storm this new city!  
And shout from the rooftops my unleashed voice!



*Wake Me When it's  
Time to Vote  
Again.*

Wake Me Up When It's Time to Vote

*Rice Evans*



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