

# PHOENIX UNDERGROUND

## CONTENTS

4	Mariah Alamdar // Charcoal // West Campus HELP ME UNDERSTAND LOOK INTO MY EYES SIMPLE MAN ALWAYS LISTENING	19	Somotochukwu Nwadike // Nonfiction // West Campus ERRANDS	32	Blake B. Gama // Fiction // West Campus THE MORNING STAR'S BIRTH
5	Crowd-Sourced Poem // West Campus WHERE I'M FROM	20	Jade Jemision // Nonfiction // West Campus I'M NOT AFRAID OF WATER	34	Elise Chandler // Digital // West Campus PAINT THE RAINBOW + LGBTQ INFOGRAPHIC
6	Ashley Ball // Digital // West Campus FADE INTO THE PAST	22	Blaze Mitteff // Poetry // Osceola Campus THE BLAME	36	Lynda Kavan // Digital // West Campus BRING IT IN BRO
7	Diamond Chinnery // Poetry // Osceola Campus ALL HE HAD ON HIM WAS A CELLPHONE...	23	Julie Creus // Digital // West Campus TALK TO EACH OTHER	37	Sasha Lopez // Poetry // Osceola Campus ADVISOR
8	Karissa Gloro // Digital // West Campus HUMANITY (SPANISH + ENGLISH )	24	Megan Killion // Poetry // Winter Park Campus FOR RILEY	38	Jennifer Sansing // Poetry // West Campus SURFACE
10	Susana Swearingen // Mixed Media // West Campus FOREVER	25	B'younce Watson // Poetry // West Campus V.	39	Arianna Fusco // Poetry // West Campus UNLEARNING ALMOST LOVE
11	Keanna Vogt // Fiction // West Campus ON THE COAST OF ZUWARA	26	Kenneth Walker Jr. // Digital // West Campus MAKE PEACE PRESENT	40	Blake B. Gama // Poetry // West Campus MY PERSONAL SHADE OF MAGIC
12	Mariah Alamdar // Photography // West Campus PAIN OF SIMILARITY	27	Kayla Gutierrez // Poetry // Lake Nona Campus IN THE CAPITOL: CROWNS HANG HEAVY	41	Samantha Lora // Digital // West Campus SELF LOVER
13	Thomas Allyn Kessler // Fiction // Winter Park Campus GONE	28	Crowd-Sourced Haikus // Poetry // West Campus I'M FROM... Christopher Lopez Leo Beardsmore Daniel Fernandez Grace Milewski Dachena Gerve Kenia Jean Gilles Monica Zabala Lauren Miller Arvind Bharathidasan Jordan Stump Sarah Lockard Beatriz Cavalcanti	42	Ron King // Digital // West Campus POTATO TOMATO
14	Blaze Schoembs // Fiction // West Campus THE ECCENTRIC ENIGMA			43	Carissa Barton // Poetry // West Campus LETTER TO MY FIRST LOVE
15	Danny Bryant // Mixed Media // West Campus DEATH SPECTACLE			44	Luz Triana // Poetry // East Campus I'M NOT OKAY
16	Izzy Martinez // Digital // West Campus PROGRESS			45	Carissa Barton // Poetry // West Campus WINDOWS
17	Cassidy Warren // Fiction // West Campus CEASELESS	30	Susana Swearingen // Mixed Media // West Campus UNIVERSAL SMILE	46	Brianna Cohen // Poetry // West Campus SYMBOLS OF LIFE
18	Mirna Pierre // Digital // West Campus WE WANT JETPACKS	31	Blake B. Gama // Poetry // West Campus CLOUDS IN A SUMMER SKY	46	Amya Simmons // Poetry // West Campus SOFT
				47	Arlene M. González // Digital // West Campus POWER IN UNITY

# A MESSAGE FROM THE UNDERGROUND

*Phoenix: Underground* (issue 22) draws inspiration from *Vedem Underground*, a secret publication created by teen boys during their imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. The boys collaborated in every facet of their publication, and we honor the idea of collaboration with our art, literature, and crowd-sourced poems from Valencia College students.

The word *Vedem* translates to "In the Lead" in Czech—which can be interpreted in many ways. "In the lead" may have meant that the boys stayed ahead of the Nazi regime through hope and tenacity. That these boys would never allow tyrants to trample over and defeat them, and that they would always fight back.

One way the boys fought back was through creative expression. Even though they were imprisoned physically, the Nazi party could never stop their creative thoughts. In a way, the boys were making their own freedom. They were making art and expressing themselves in ways that would continue even if they were to perish.

We pay homage to the idea of defeating hatred through art with our winners of the "Make Hate History" poster contest, where students use their creativity to keep kindness and equity in the lead. Whether it's digital or written word all art is powerful, unifying, expressive, and even encouraging, regardless of its medium. At *Phoenix* magazine we believe everyone has the power to create art, no matter who we are or where we come from.

The Phoenix Team

For a deeper look...

visit the *Vedem* Foundation:

<https://www.vedemunderground.com/>

visit the Holocaust Memorial Center: <https://www.holocaustedu.org/>

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## COLOPHON

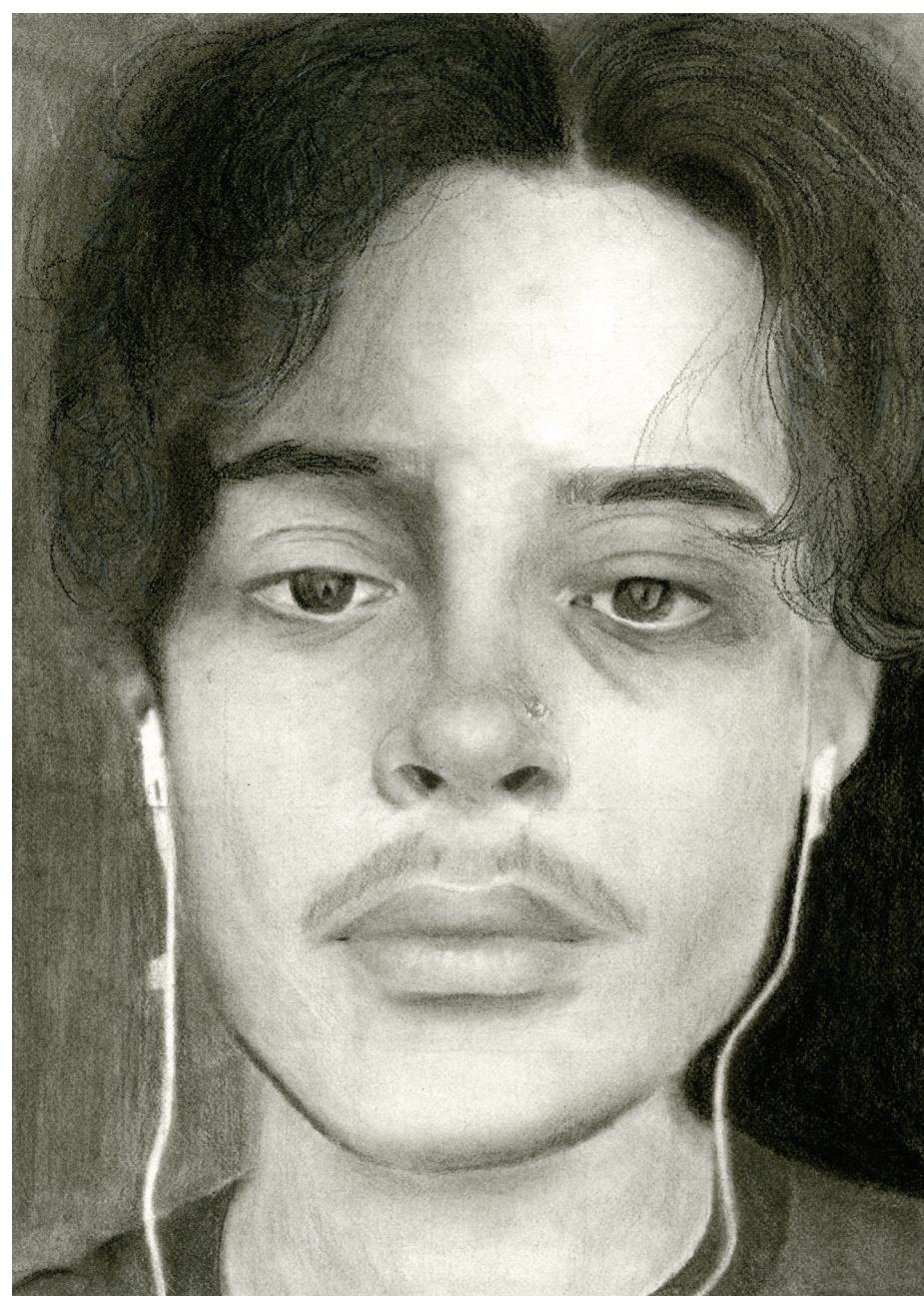
The twenty-second edition of the PHOENIX art and literary magazine, was designed using an Apple Mac Pro computer. The software used in the production was Adobe InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop, Creative Cloud 2019. five-thousand copies were printed by MakeMyNewspaper.com, located in Tucson, Arizona. This issue's unique format involved printing our magazine in a newspaper format to reference our inspiration, Veedem Underground. This edition has been printed through Impact Printing digital technology, utilizing four-color process inks. The finished size of the cover when opened is 11x22in. This edition's story and artwork titles were set using Acumin Pro Extra Condensed Ultra Black font designed by Robert Slimbach at Adobe Fonts. The body copy throughout this issue was set at 9 points using the Nimbus Mono slab-serif font family, originally designed by URW Studio. The newspaper masthead font is Boxout Variable Black designed by Jake Fleming. All content within and the book itself, were created by, and for Valencia College students. We would like to thank Valencia College's, West Campus Student Development for making the printing and distribution of this issue possible.

All submissions are created by students; Valencia College bears no responsibility for the use of copyrighted material.

**Mariah Alamdar**  
CHARCOAL // WEST CAMPUS



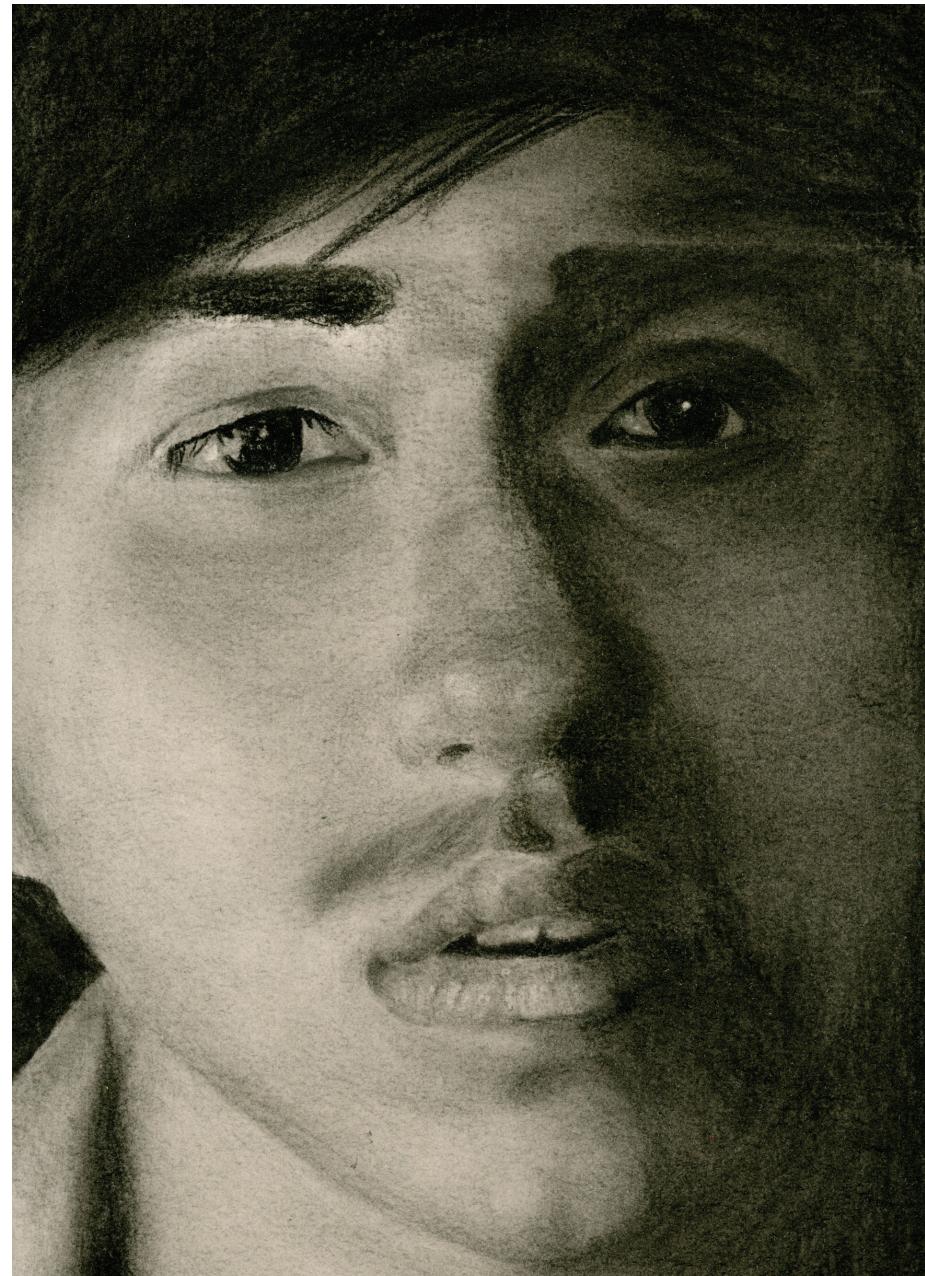
**LOOK INTO MY EYES**



**ALWAYS LISTEN**



**SIMPLE MAN**



**HELP ME UNDERSTAND**

# WHERE I'M FROM

**A Crowd-Sourced Poem Created By Valencia College West Campus Students During Peace Week - Fall 2019**

I am from angel wings on shoulder blades  
from a tree tattoo with fall leaves  
from the woods I caught on fire (twice)  
from fresh, hot cornbread during Sunday brunch.

I am from Dawn dish soap on the Slip 'n Slide  
bruised knees and elbows  
from Fruity Pebbles in a white bowl  
and citrus tea when I'm sick.

Where I'm from Gran nags me (in Czech) to smile in the photos  
cake smells like heaven  
Grandfather calls me Bag Lady  
mental illness is shunned.

I'm from Katy Perry and the Disney Channel  
from warm stir-fry with yum-yum sauce on the back porch  
from hiding in a giant tire.

I come from the record player under the stairs  
Jimi Hendrix blasting in my ears  
from Reggae and dancehall, family fun and rum  
buttered popcorn in the afternoon.

I come from back alleys that REEK of garbage and alcohol  
from red and blue lights dancing on my windows  
I'm from a blood-stained wristwatch  
and endless rain-cold mist kisses that sting the skin.

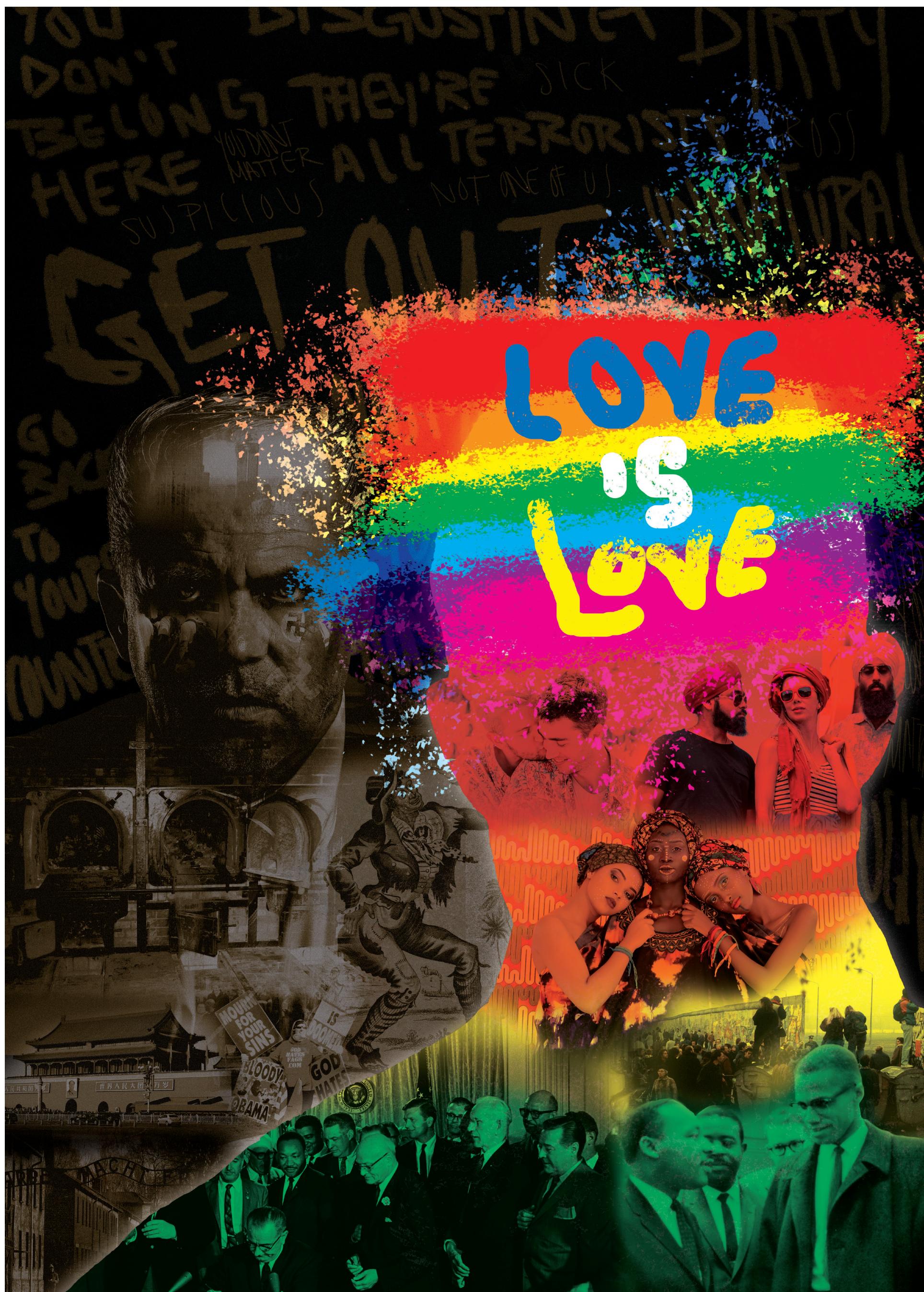
I'm from bike rides and piraguas, car horns and laughter  
from cast iron skillets and handmade brooms  
from plantains and pork on a paper plate,  
from chicken and rice every night, by myself

Where I'm from it's mango lassi and Kheer  
Twistee Treat and dripping ice cream  
hot jambalaya in wooden bowls  
and "you're too skinny; eat more!"

I'm from a small blue sports car  
mispronounced names and coucous  
from corn cakes on the hot plate at the blue motel  
from beets in the wrinkled napkin in my shoe.

I come from R&B music carrying me down the stairs  
from "Boogie Down Bronx"  
from the scent of grease on heated steel  
ripping pieces of freshly-made pupusa and burning my fingers.

I'm from edging the grass with a butter knife  
from hot rainy days  
Sugarfoot and banana oil  
from a giant pistachio dream.



**Ashley Ball**  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

# FADE INTO THE PAST

# ALL HE HAD ON HIM WAS A CELLPHONE...

One day  
I will watch on video another Black man

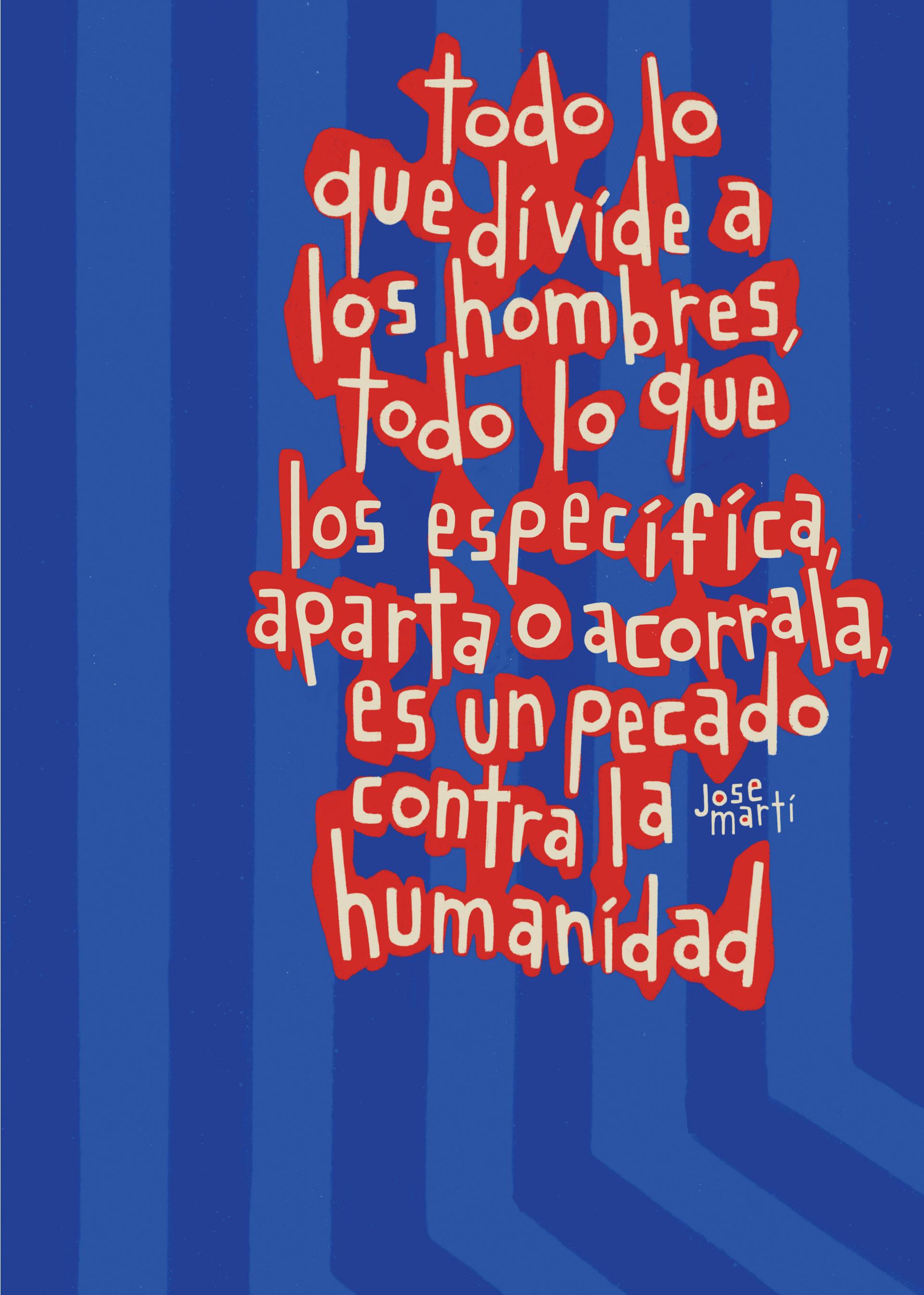
whistle through the hole  
shot through his head  
but I will not spout bullets of tears from my eyes  
for I have spent too many nights  
with my head buried in sands of sorrow  
ostracized by discrimination

One day  
I will see a Black man with  
cuffed hands purging from his mouth  
trying to grasp something  
unreachable  
until he takes his last breath  
but my paranoia  
will not paint another mural in my imagination  
for I have spent too many nightmares  
seeing my own lifeless body  
bleeding 13 red stripes from my head

One day  
Another Black woman's legs  
will be pulled apart like seven o'clock  
and raped in a cell for hours  
while a C.O watches  
but I will not let my heart be snatched  
by the hands of time  
for I have spent too many years  
waiting for the alarm to go off  
in the brains of the people

America  
I feel a knot in my throat  
yet my rope has not been pulled  
You can hang  
your shackles on our wrists  
the chains will only connect us

we will not wait  
in this metallic embrace  
for the world to decide  
when the last match is lit  
my heart will be warm  
for the glowing ember in my chest  
will be fanned for the last time  
and the fire that has risen  
will dance all over the world



todo lo que divide a los hombres, todo lo que los especifica, aparta o acorrala, es un pecado contra la humanidad

José Martí

Karissa Gloro  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

# HUMANITY

everything  
that divides  
men, everything  
that separates  
or herds men  
together in  
categories,  
is a sin  
against  
humanity

— José Martí

OUR FREEDOM ENDS WHERE THE FREEDOM OF ANOTHER LIVING BEING BEGINS 



**Susana Swearingen**

MIXED MEDIA // WEST CAMPUS

# FOREVER

**Keanna Vogt**

**FICTION // WEST CAMPUS**

# ON THE COAST OF ZUWARA

*In August of 2015, a boat carrying more than 400 Libyan migrants capsized off the coast of Zuwara, Libya. The death toll was 183 people, with many more reported missing.*

*In November of 2017, CNN reporters detailed the continuing plight of Africans fleeing their countries for the coast of Libya. Seeking refuge in Europe, migrants paid hefty fines to board small boats and travel the perilous waters of the Mediterranean. On the coast, however, smugglers often capture, kidnap, and sell migrants into slavery. This crisis is ongoing.*

There is turmoil in the freedom we seek, life in the deathly waters of this artery of Earth. Here, resonances of human life are drowned by the deafening crashes of the sea. The remnants of hope are scattered along the shoreline of this gateway to refuge. Nothing is still, hundreds of brown bodies fight tirelessly for that distant horizon, that unforeseeable land of hope. The vessel is rocking incessantly, and I am reminded of the sea of bereavement beneath me, the many empty shells of men these waves carry. The vessel is packed with wayward souls, men shouting, children crying. Though my breath continues to escape my lips, Almawt lingers for miles below and smiles at me from the approaching shores.

A chaffed elbow scuffs the back of my head, another jabs at my ribcage. The salt air is cruel, a harbinger of fear that constricts my chest, tightens my airways. With each breath that fear draws nearer, and I am reminded of Almawt, waiting on the sandy shores ahead.

I cast my leg over the side of the boat, the cold, wet metal raises my skin. My foot is left bare and calloused when my slipper falls, swallowed by the abyss. A man much older than I collides with my shoulder; I quickly grab hold of the rusty edge of the boat. The wind blows sharply, bites at my nose and the tips of my ears. I glance, frightfully into the crowd, searching for the face of the unknown man but he is gone, lost in another kind of sea.

"Shab," a voice calls gravely from behind me. It is the old man. I do not know how, but I know him. I recognize the deep, wrinkled lines, which stretch tightly around his eyes as he glares at me. I recall the familiar yellowing of his eyes, the way his mouth lengthens when he frowns deeply at me.

"You ought not to cast yourself off the boat so carelessly. There are too many people on this boat. You will have not been the first to fall in, you know. You mock Allah with your foolishness," he scolds me.

Casting my eyes downwards, I apologize for my carelessness. I swing my leg back over the side of the boat; my bare foot meets the floor of the vessel.

The old man laughs, "I see you've lost your shoe, Shab. What happened to it?"

"It fell," I say softly, "into the ocean."

This amuses him. He holds his stomach, and throws his head back in a cough-like guffaw. "It must have seen what lies ahead and fled while it had the chance."

I smile.

The old man takes two steps towards me, shuffling past a shivering woman and a young couple. He rests his weathered hand on my shoulder, groans loudly as he reaches down and retrieves a pair of brown sandals not much younger than he is from his hairy, blistered feet. He gathers them in one hand and shoves them into my aching chest.

"Is there something wrong with your feet sir?" I ask him.

"Not at all, Shab. They are yours."

He is kind, too kind, but I could not deprive an old man of his only shoes. "Amo, no. I could not take them."

"They have been mine for quite some time," he fiercely interjects.

"It is about time they had a new friend don't you think?"

"Amo," I say, gently pushing his hands away from my chest.

"Take them, Shab. Do not say no to me," he scolds, again.

I look at the slippers. Though they are battered and torn, they would be quite useful during the journey ahead.

"Thank you," I mutter shyly.

"You are welcome," I hear the old man say. I look up and he is gone, swallowed by the wayward sea of travelers.

I did not expect kindness here. I expected only treacherous waters and the grotesque smile of al mawt, staring down at me. I smile to myself, knowing that here, on the precipice of all that is bad, light still seeps through the cracks of our never-ending darkness.

There is noise, much louder than the cries of the small, wet children shivering in fear. A fight has broken out only inches from me. The brown sea parts, and I can see two men wrestling over a tattered cloth bag on the wet floor of the vessel. They punch and claw at one other, their altercation dangerously rocking the boat.

Panicked, I cross to the other side of the boat, but I am pushed back by the blockade of people who have already moved as far away from the fighters as possible. I look around frantically for an escape, eyes darting between blue and brown seas. The vessel rocks violently, and I stumble, chest-first into its metal side.

The fighters aren't the only ones screaming now. Men are falling overboard into the icy waters below. I look toward the sound of the screams, but I am met by a horde of passengers, rushing away from the tilted edge of the boat. My naked chest meets metal again; old friends meet briefly. The boat tilts again, and I am cast into ice-cold infinity. I drop the shoes.

Frantically, I reach up, searching for metal, for skin, for safety. When my hands clasp around the nothingness of the sea and I know that I am sinking. I swim, dear Allah, I swim and swim until I am out of breath.

I pause. The boat is but a dot in the distance now, upturned. Far away, I hear the cries of lives lost, of loves lost. My arms give out and I am sinking again, into that icy abyss. I close my eyes when the water passes over my head. It rushes into my nose, fills me. There is no floor beneath me. I sink into the abyss.

I do not know what waits for me in the depths of this never-ending blue; I do not know what waits for me beyond the still horizon of life. On the coast of Zuwara, the line that separates life and death blurs and fades.



**Mariah Alamdar**  
PHOTOGRAPHY // WEST CAMPUS

# PAIN OF SIMILARITY

# GONE

It is December 7, 2003. The SpongeBob Squarepants movie is inside the DVD player blasting irritable cartoon laughs for

all to hear. My brothers and I are across the street at the neighbors' house while Mom and Dad are at the doctor's office, but they'll be back by the end of the movie.

7:19 pm rolls around and my father's van pulls in at our house across the street. My brothers and I bolt to the door to go home only to be stopped by our neighbor's mother saying, "Sit down boys, your dad needs to talk to me." So my two brothers and I go back inside, waiting to go home and tell our parents about the movie. We watch from the window.

And that's when it happens. My father falls to his knees.

Never have I seen a six-foot tall man collapse to the ground.

Without even looking for cars, we tear out the front door and bolt across the street to see if our father is okay. He isn't.

Tears fall down the face of a man I thought to be invulnerable.

He mutters in the scratchiest of voices, "She's gone boys, your mom's not coming home." He is broken. A man as strong as Superman is split in half by the loss of his Lois Lane. It feels like a baseball bat has been swung right at my heart, making it shatter into a million pieces.

A few days pass. We enter the funeral home. We all sit down in rows, as if we are gathering for Sunday church. I sit in the back as a thunderstorm of sobbing sweeps over the room. The storm turns into a silent whisper of tears. We all bow our heads, listening to others speak kind words of a woman who once was. Faces I have never seen before tell me they're going to look after me and my brothers, saying, "It'll be okay, she's in a better place now."

But that's not the way I see it.

As the service concludes, we all say our goodbyes. But I don't want to leave that room. I want to stay. The reality finally hits me, and I am not prepared for it. I stand there gazing over the lifeless corpse of my mother. I see a woman who was once filled with life lying there motionless and pale.

My father pulls me tightly against him, sobbing, "She's gone."

I no longer feel safe in the world. I still have my father, but he is not the same. Not one of us is.

# THE ECCENTRIC ENIGMA

Dear Vivian,

Many people move to New York City for the nightlife, the hopes of performing on Broadway, or the endless opportunities. While all of this may seem like a dazzling dream filled with blinding lights, canary yellow taxis, and skyscrapers that eat the sky, I moved here to conceal my dark secret.

I come from a world of 10PM closing times, of Chinese takeout as "ethnic cuisine," of taking only book trips to civilization, and of swimming in the nearest creek with clouds of mosquitoes surrounding me. I grew up in a small town called Clanton, Alabama. At 21, I moved to the beloved "Big Apple". After occupying a brick apartment at the end of the block for more than twenty years, I felt obligated to make friends with neighbors to conform to social normality, which wasn't too hard despite enduring the show-and-tell sport of sharing family pictures and tasteless conversations about little nothings.

Fortunately, I befriended a charming lady—you—who lived on my same block. You were different from the other residents. I admired your work, shared your politics, and liked seeing your face whenever it came towards me. You were the only person that I'd seen on the street, and we'd share a big smile, a warm embrace, kisses on both cheeks, and carefree chatter. You were different from the typical locals who scoffed and rolled their eyes with disgust. Still, I could never reveal my dark side to you. I'd have to remain an enigma, allowing you to get close but to never quite reach me. You wanted to spend time with me, so of course, I'd play along, saying, "Call me," when in reality, I would rather have a playdate with symphony of antidepressants and martinis. So you'd call later that evening. As I jiggled the gin and dry vermouth in the shaker, I'd gaze over at the dimly lit touch screen while the standard "marimba" ringtone engulfed the room.

A couple of days later, after hiding out in my guarded apartment, I would have to vacate in search of groceries, thus, running into you while waiting for a taxi in front of the Fresh Start Marketplace. Once again we greeted each other with our big smiles, great hugs, kisses on both cheeks, and said not a word about the ignored phone calls. We continued like this for many years. I wanted to keep you at a distance, along with your eagerness to infiltrate my fiercely private life.

One day I was sitting on my chic couch, trying to wring my brain for new ideas for my next novel. Hoping to stir up some inspiration, I decided to turn my television. "BREAKING NEWS" popped up on the screen. A prisoner had decided to reveal the bodies of several victims he'd murdered and hidden. I'm sure you saw it. Little did you know, my friend, this wasn't just any prisoner, he was my former accomplice, Luke Cooper. At age fifteen, I was approached by Luke, the heartthrob senior of Abbeville High School, who suggested we take off on a trip across the country in search of a simple dream—visiting locals to ultimately end up in Argentina, to live our lives peacefully on a farm. However, the two of us ended up on a killing spree where Luke took charge and murdered several people. To protect myself and escape jail-time, I decided I needed to testify against Luke and pleaded guilty to being an accomplice. I was then placed into a juvenile detention center for six years before being released into a halfway house, where everything was going well. I accused one of my counselors of abusing me sexually. Little action or punishment was taken out on him, which ignited me into taking things into my own hands. A couple of weeks later, he unexpectedly dropped dead of rat poisoning.

After this, I moved to "The City that Never Sleeps" to escape my series of events and recognizable name. One night, I felt a shiver down my spine just as my phone rang.

"Our normal spot. Be there."

I walked down a dark alley to discover a version of me—well the carnival mirror of me—raggedy hair, skinny as a rail body, ripped up clothes. It was my twin sister, Hannah.

"What do you want?" I mumbled.

"I need money."

I huffed, "No, not again, I can't keep doing this. I'm trying to have a normal life." She smirked,

"Well, we wouldn't want everyone in New York City to find out about that counselor or your relation to Mr. Luke."

I shook my head. "Meet me at my apartment at 9:00PM; don't let anyone see you."

"That's what I thought." She winked and fell into the crowd of moving people.

I decided I couldn't deal with this constant baggage, I had to do something. So, when my twin sister came to my apartment, I made some melt-in-your-mouth chicken and plump dumplings, just like our grandma made, is having a special ingredient... aconite, found in my flowers that filled my windowsill.

I packed a few necessities and now head out the door to begin another new life. If you ever miss me, Vivian, look to my apartment window, and you may still see a glimpse of blond hair, a shadow of a thin-pinstripe suit. And remember, everyone's got a dark side; some are just better at hiding it.

Sincerely, The Eccentric Enigma



**Danny Bryant**  
MIXED MEDIA // WEST CAMPUS

# DEATH SPECTACLE



**Izzy Martinez**  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

# PROGRESS

# CEASELESS

Stairs. So many stairs, never-ending, in a path toward the stars. I remember thinking that I must find him, the love of my life. I will find him at the top, I am sure of it. As the stairs keep coming, I continue to climb. The stairs seem to go on forever, making my love seem even more tempting, a diamond in a glass case that I can't quite grasp. Frustrated, I proceed.

As I climb, memories flood back all at once. I remember all the good times I had with him, my love. A charming fall day, breezy and whimsical, was the start of our budding romance. A beautiful day, one worth celebrating. We walked through the patch of pumpkins, deciding which one would be the luckiest of the bunch. We finally settled on the smallest one in the patch. We both smiled and laughed, for we had picked it at the same time. We took that pumpkin home and painted it together, splattering the paint on its unsuspecting surface. I smile. Such a fond memory. Step by step, I continue up the stairway. That memory was a time of peace before the walls to our perfect castle came crumbling down.

Over a few months, I witnessed my love change into someone abnormal. It often seemed like he had no time for me. He didn't have the same glimmer in his eyes that he once did. Instead, they were filled with a type of hatred I couldn't describe. I would approach him lovingly but get pricked by the frozen thorns of his words. I start to cry, remembering his cruelty, even as I continue my path towards him. When I get to him, will he come to me with open arms? Or will he shun me?

Each step drowns me in my own sorrow, for all I can think of is how everything turned for the worse. I had fallen into a deep depression towards the end of our relationship. I wanted him to comfort me, to support me and tell me that everything was going to be fine. But it seems life wanted to tear us apart just as badly. We were both angry. Angry at each other and the world. Rage fueled us and our every move. Our fights become frequent. I breathe and move faster up the stairs. Tears blurring my vision, I slip, falling down the stairs I worked so hard to climb.

Just when I thought all was lost, two shadowy figures catch me halfway to the bottom. I look up, surprised. I thought I was the only one trying to reach the top of the stairs. The two lean over me, and I recognize them immediately. My two best friends smile at me while helping me back on my feet, but they don't look real; they look like phantoms, ghost-like. Never speaking a word, my ghost friends grab my hands and guide me back up the stairs. I knew I could count on them. They were always there for me throughout all my heartbreak and anger. We used to have sleepovers and tell the craziest of stories or watch the sappiest movies. They gave me shoulders to cry on and the strength to move forward. I feel more confident with my steps now.

Then I see it. The top of the stairs looms closer. As I get to the last step, I am blinded at first by the light that consumes the whole room. An empty room. My love was never here to begin with. I look behind me at all the steps that I had taken to get here. The trail of tears, anger, and heartbreak remain on the steps below. I see him clearly now, at the bottom of the stairs, looking up. I smile at him, because for the first time I realize that I can finally put our hatred in the past. I forgive him for all the hardships he put me through. My hatred and anger dissipates. All that remains is the love, my ceaseless love.

DAILY NEWS

HATE IN 2020?  
WE THOUGHT  
THE AGE TO BE  
~~JETPACKS!~~



Mirna Pierre  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

**WE WANT  
JETPACKS**

**Somtochukwu Nwadike**

**NONFICTION // WEST CAMPUS**

# ERRANDS

We lived in a bungalow, in an estate that was almost always too quiet, save for the constant hum of generators. Signs and announcements for residents were posted on the gates of the streets. I liked my street. It was named Purple. My best friend lived on Red, and the girl who had told everyone about my crush on Tomiwa lived on Brown. It was fitting. Brown was a horrible color, like her.

After school, we had a routine to follow. We came home, showered, ate, washed our uniforms and helped with the chores. If I was lucky and there was electricity, I would enjoy a bit of peaceful TV before everyone came home. The living room had the best TV in the house and the home theatre, so it was always sought after. When my aunts came back, we would make dinner and then eat together. Our dining table was wooden and had been since my brother Collins and I had broken the last two glass ones. It had six chairs and the rest of us sat on the couches in the parlor. Usually, this was when we talked—other than dinner, we mostly argued. We usually asked Mummy about her day and vice-versa.

Mummy wasn't home that day. She had gone on a work trip to Abuja and was coming home later that night. Dinner wasn't the same, and we got back to arguing. It started when Uncle Emeka asked, "So, Collins how was your tennis match?"

"I didn't have a tennis match," Collins replied.

"Ahan, wasn't it in this house that someone was crying because no one was sure they would have time to come see him play?"

"That's table-tennis, not tennis, Uncle."

And then I was grilled on my French test. I didn't pass the test and I didn't want anyone to know, so instead, I asked when Mummy's flight was landing. I was especially excited about this because I hoped she had gotten me what I asked for. We always asked for things, but we didn't always get them. This time I had asked for pizza. I loved pizza, I loved what I saw on television and what I read in books. It seemed like a "slice of heaven"—I read that somewhere. My friends talked about how amazing pizza was and the girl who told everyone about my crush had made a huge deal of her father getting her one from a popular shop in a different city. I had wanted that pizza even more after that, so I had ganged up with Collins, the baby of the house, and succeeded in guilt-tripping Mummy—I hoped—into getting it for us.

Uncle Emeka left after dinner, and a few more arguments ensued over what channel to watch and Aunty Chidinma's jobless ex-boyfriend showing up earlier in the day.

After a few hours, while we are all in the living room, Uncle Emeka calls. I don't hear what he says but everyone starts to pray right after. Junior tells Collins and me to go to bed, and Aunty Chidinma starts looking for the deed to the house. The news comes on and everyone is so focused on it that Collins and I are forgotten. They're all holding hands and whispering prayers, even crying. But Collins and I are left out. Do we not

matter? We understand soon enough, though. A plane has crashed. "Do we have enough fuel to leave the generator on overnight?" Aunty Nneka asks.

"We do, but with the scarcity, we'd better not risk it," Uncle Ugo answers.

Minutes later, the news reporters mention the confirmed crash of Dana Air flight 992 that was en route to Lagos from Abuja. The olive walls jeer. I see Junior standing so very still staring at a picture of Daddy on the wall above the TV. I want to ask him what is going on; he always has the answers. Always. But I can't find my voice, or my lungs. It's my nightmare all over again. Aunty Chidinma shouts "Chim o E gbuo m!" My God, they have killed me!

"It might be a mistake," Uncle Ugo says, and then Junior finally speaks, in a voice void of everything that is my brother: "What happens from now on?"

I remember staring at the tiled floor and thinking of nothing, but lost in thought. Everyone was some variation of angry, sad, scared, devastated, hopeful, hopeless and empty. When Collins points to a plane in the sky and asks if Mummy might be there, it's easy for me to lie and say, "Not yet" immediately. I take Collins to bed and try to fall asleep because I know I'll ask God why, even though I'm not supposed to.

At about 3am, Uncle Emeka comes home and even though I know there will be a meeting, I don't come out because I want to be hopeful for longer. When I hear screaming, my hope shatters, thinking they've already found the body. I force myself even harder to sleep.

In my nightmare the most horrible thing happens. I hear Mummy's voice and her laugh and the same nickname she always called me when she woke me up the middle of the night for my anointing oil, but this time she's telling me to come eat pizza. I don't want stupid pizza. I want my mummy. I want the woman who told me I was beautiful, who laughed at my nightmares, who said I was better than Tomiwa, who cried when I fell from the tree in the house and then beat me for falling. Why must life always rub salt on fresh wounds?

Aunty Nneka shouts from somewhere, "Somto, your mother is here! Wake up and join us in thanks before I slap you!" So I do wake up, and it is her, in the same clothes as when she left and not a speck of dust on her. She had a box of pizza in her hand.

I had thought of pizza for a long time. It always looked so nice on television and in the books I read. The one we had that morning looked like an alternative to vegetable regurgitation; I ate it anyway, with my runny nose, swollen eyes, hiccups and Collins's tears spilling into it.

So I hate and love pizza now. Mummy had missed her flight because she was getting the stupid thing. We've never spoken of this story, of how we rejoiced while others mourned. I am eternally grateful to stupid pizza and to God. We all are.

# I'M NOT AFRAID OF WATER

"I'm not afraid of water," I whisper to myself and bend my knees. There aren't any bugs or leaves in the water, that I can see, and yet I search and search. Procrastinating, as usual. I'm afraid, even though I know that The Sky's the Limit summer camp is one of the safest places for me to be. I know that no one will hurt me here.

They, the caseworkers, always came too late anyway. They always showed up after I'd already been hit, or kicked, or burned. They always wanted a status update after someone had already pushed me or pulled a knife or held me in a grip so tight I couldn't breathe. You might feel like my anger is misplaced. They could save me. They could use their pen as a weapon and fire it in my defense. I'd be able to leave the wandering hands, and the wandering eyes, and I would be safe.

But they don't. It's been so long since I have trusted anyone, if I ever could, and I know I would rather they be as far away as possible than to have them near with their false promises. Even I, at twelve years old, know what weight someone's word carries. There, standing at the edge of the pool, I wonder why no one ever gives their word to me and keeps it.



As the boat pulls us through the water, I stare up at clouds shaped like animals and flowers. The sun winks at me from behind them and I smile in return. Even at six, I know the sun brings happiness, healing and warmth to the soul. I close my eyes and let the warmth roll over my skin.

The wind is heavy, here in the back of the boat, and I wish a bigger gust would just take me away. I think maybe if I step up on the small boat seat, its plastic rocking beneath my tiny feet, the wind might hear my thoughts and whip me up into its arms, taking me away from Them.

"Hey," His voice exclaims behind me, as if He read my thoughts. She yanks me away from the edge and my eyes fly open. The hardness in Her eyes, devoid of love, makes me flinch and shrivel into the small life jacket strapped too tightly around my tiny waist.

"Do you want to go back?" She spat the words out through tight lips. I stare up at her, imagining fangs emerging from behind them. Venom dripping from their tips as She bares Her teeth at me. She gives me a hard shake. "Do you?" I move my chin slightly and She nods. "Good, now sit down and stay there until I say you can get up."

I scramble across the boat on unsteady legs and climb into my plastic chair, one of those seats that caps a storage area beneath it for valuables or things that need to stay dry. Wallets and the like. It's supposed to lock in place, but He'd messed it up somehow and it never closes quite right.

I peek a glance at my brother and his face is turned from me. I see from the set of his shoulders that he is angry at me. That I almost ruined our day. Either that or he is desperately trying not to look at me in case he gets roped into my disobedience and They make him sit down and shut up, too.

I stay there, in the chair, using my peripherals to look at the lake around us. I know I can turn my head and look, but I'm afraid. I'm a heathen, They say. An animal unable to resist my instincts, and I know it's true. Sometimes I get so angry I slam my hands down on my thighs until they sting. Sometimes, I'm so mad, I scratch at them until they bleed.

So, I know if I turn my head to look, I won't be able to help myself. I'll get up, wishing the water of the lake would take me up and drown me—not really but my imagination is vast, and I see it: the water filling my mouth and pulling me down, down, down into its dark arms. I know She'll just stop me again, grabbing me tight until her nails dig deep, breaking the skin. Little beads of blood would appear at the punctured skin. It wouldn't be because She loves me. She would stop me because my death would be hard to explain away as "You know foster kids, they're just so reckless."

# RAID



I'm standing in front of the pool again, having moved closer to the shallow end, taking a deep breath in and expelling it out through my open mouth. "I'm not afraid of water," I whisper again. Duh, I've gone camping. "But that doesn't mean I can swim, stupid." I know it's dumb, pretending I can talk to myself, but it comforts me. I am, after all, the only one who cares what I have to say.

"Just get...in," the last word is yelled as I'm picked up and I feel tight arms wrap around my waist. I see it drawing near, the deep end. Ten feet of deep blue water. I shake my head and thrash, elbows and knees bending and jerking spastically. I'm small, although I'm twelve, and my brother is so much bigger than I. Long lanky arms and long lanky legs to match, he's pretty enough to be a model, everyone says so. I don't care about that, I just want him to put me down.

My head whips so fast as he catapults me into the air. My legs pull in tight, not into a cannonball, into fear. I hit the surface of the water, but I do not see the pool. I see the lake.



They've released the anchor and the boat is rocking in place. I want to get up from my seat, to lean over the edge and feel the water on my fingertips, but She hasn't said so yet.

He, She, and my brother are getting the fishing poles ready. A small white bucket of squirming worms sits at my feet. Hooking the bait is my job, my punishment, but what they don't know is that I love fishing. I like to see that worm fly in the air and bring me back a nice little fishy. I like to see the pulse of the gills as they suck in air instead of water. I just don't realize how morbid it all is.

One after another I'm handed the poles until I receive mine. I don't put a worm on the hook, just tap, tap, tap at the sharp edge with a fingertip.

"You can get up, just stand there for a bit, let us get going first," He says, His voice quiet as to not disturb the fish.

I hide my excitement and turn to the water. Lifting my pole, I pretend to fish, whipping it back and forth with my hands. It was made specifically for a small child. It's tiny pink reel and lever fit perfectly in my hand. The pole's long rod is pink with extended silver eyelets that hold the line in place. I swing it back and forth with gusto but this time it snags. I yank it forward without thinking.

A howl fills the air, and I turn around so fast the pole almost smacks against the lip of the boat. My brother is doubled over, grasping at the fleshy space between his neck and shoulder. My eyes fill with tears when I see the blood on his fingers. I look quickly to the line hanging from the end of my pole. There, just at the tip of the large hook is a small piece of bloody flesh.

Everyone seems to move at once. She goes to my brother, snatching up a towel on Her way. The man comes to me, hatred in His eyes. He speaks, but I do not hear what He says. I can only feel the fear building in my chest, freezing me in place. With one hand, He snatches the pole, with its fleshing prize, from my hands. With the other He grabs me under one shoulder. His meaty fingers dig into my underarm, His thumb presses against my clavicle, and I'm off my feet. He tosses me, like a rag doll, into the air and my jaw snaps shut.

For a moment I wonder if the wind has finally granted my wish, if I'll float away on pillows of clouds. Then I'm falling down, down, down until the water breaks my descent.

I go under, as you initially do, the life jacket unable to win the battle against gravity. My arms and legs flap, helplessly trying to right myself. The emptiness beneath me threatens to

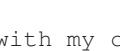
pull me under. I feel something, a fallen branch maybe, scratch against my leg and I panic, kicking at it, at anything. The life jacket finally does its job and my head is propelled above water. I sputter, expelling murky lake water, my eyes burning from the strain to stay open and alert underneath it.



I open my eyes under the pool water, the chlorine stinging. I try to stay calm. I've been here before, but I thrash a bit, unable to control my limbs. Remembering what I'd seen the other campers do, I make like a frog. Kicking my legs out and bending at the knee. With my arms, I push the water down, down, down hoping the momentum will keep my head above water. It does.

I take a deep breath and dive my head under. I move like I'd seen swimmers do in the movies, pushing my arms in front of me and then back to my hips, kicking my legs up and down. I feel the air on my heels as I kick, though I am sure all of me is supposed to be under water. My chest burns as I try to hold the air in. Finally, there it is, the side of the pool. I grasp it like a lifeline and pull myself up.

My brother's there, whooping and hollering, excited he taught me to swim, I'm sure. "You did it!" he yells. I'm angry. How had he forgotten? How could he forget? I will never, ever, ever forget the lake.



I sit, bent at the waist, with my chest touching my knees. Taking in small breaths so as not to bend further, I pray to the sun: Bring back the warmth. My teeth chatter so hard I think I might grind them to dust.

After reaching in and effortlessly yanking me from the water, the man throws open the plastic seat. He reveals the small storage space beneath it and points. "In there. Now," He growls, his barely contained wrath seething just beneath the surface. Small for my age, at six, I am able to fold myself down. My heels brush the bottom of the boat, the seat of the plastic chair digs into the back of my head. The metal top of the storage box digs grooves into my lower back, causing bruises that will one day save me, us. He throws something on top of the seat. I can't see what it is but it's heavy. With every rock of the boat, as we speed to the dock, the plastic seat digging deeper and deeper into my back.

The ride back to Their home I spend alone, in the wild of the wind, at the mercy of the highway. Once we stop, I know we have reached Their house, a small off-white building with red borders. They get out of the truck and escape without me.

My brother comes to get me sometime later. I hear him clambering into the boat with his bony limbs. He lifts the seat from the clutches of my back, and I look up at him.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," I whisper, and he nods. I can't tell if there is pity there, or anger, or frustration. I take in a full breath for the first time in what feels like days and flinch. It hurts to breathe, hurts to move, hurts to think. The marks on my legs hurt; I can't see them, but I feel them burn as I unfold myself.

"I'm sorry," I say as my eyes tear up. We carefully climb down from the boat. He nods again but doesn't turn back to look at me. He leads the way to the house, and I trail behind him on fawn's legs.

I wonder if I've received my full punishment or if the other side of the door holds more pain. I wonder if the bruises will ever heal or if I will have permanent marks. I wonder if Rosa, our caseworker, will come to save us this time.

I look at the back of my brother's head. I wonder if this is when he starts hating me, because I know he will, just like everyone else.

# THE BLAME

My friend tells me, "The old are deranged.  
When they die off, we can make a change."

I wonder if he knows  
Some young will grow old  
And screw us over in their father's name.  
They told me, "Recycle. Save the earth.  
It's your job now. Keep this from getting worse.  
Turn off the light, sit in the dark,  
And don't you dare use a straw."  
The power plants and factories undisturbed  
I drove to the mall to buy this shirt  
A child made, paid twelve cents for her work.  
On Twitter, they are raging.  
The slogan is cultural appropriation.  
The store next door slings from the same source.  
My friend tells me, "The youth are deranged.  
They'd rather play with phones than vote for change."  
I wonder if she knows  
Attention is bought and sold.  
Everyone is searching for a way to pass the blame.



Julie Creus  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

**TALK TO  
EACH OTHER**

**Megan Killion**  
POETRY // WINTER PARK CAMPUS

# FOR RILEY

Sweet perfection in a coo,  
the gentle whispering of your name,  
as your temperament emerges,  
frankly fresh and knitted new.

I inspect the tiny features,  
God so carefully put in place.  
Your flawless elfin details,  
a testament to His Grace.

Gold-laden are your smiles,  
ambrosial is your scent.  
your aroma so darling,  
it brings complacence and content.

Tiny hands with tiny fingers,  
little feet and little toes,  
fleeting forehead, eager eyes.  
modest mouth and narrow nose

More precious than any sunrise,  
more beautiful than any sunset,  
the delight that I have found in you  
eternity could not compel me to forget.

I've found a reason to continue.  
Nay, the reason I began,  
To live and love and laugh with you  
As you grow into a man.

Such pride I find in your creation,  
though I barely played a part,  
merely vessel and sustainer,  
for your impressive start.

A renewal of my faith is found,  
which formerly I suppressed.  
Denial: inconceivable,  
for you are clearly blessed.

You give me reason to believe, dear boy,  
as I explore your face,  
any inkling of regret once felt,  
annulled without a trace.

My life was rain before you,  
now you've shot across my sky,  
an everlasting rainbow,  
my eternal reason why.



You're were a creator.  
A creator of something small, that would later become big.  
You promised comfort, shelter, life, and joy.  
You told yourself this was your job when you presented a new life.  
That I would become your life.  
That nothing else mattered but what you carried in your arms in that hospital room.  
  
I, like you, like everyone, was born with nothing and nobody with me.  
Now we both have someone with us, for us.  
Here's to the lifelong trips, just us two.  
The rides to school, just us two.  
Trips to the mall, just us two.  
Dinners at the restaurant by our apartment, just us two.  
Stay-in days, and outdoor days, with just us two.  
These days would turn into memories, and memories that were priceless.

The years went by, and I became bigger each day, along with each new word and step.  
You wrote every day to recount each moment  
For something we could look back on.  
Though sometimes, I remembered the tiny moments of your staring off into space.

I was too young to figure out what it meant.  
It didn't occur to me that you felt empty sometimes.  
It also didn't occur for you to act on that emptiness.

To fill it until it became too much to sit through.

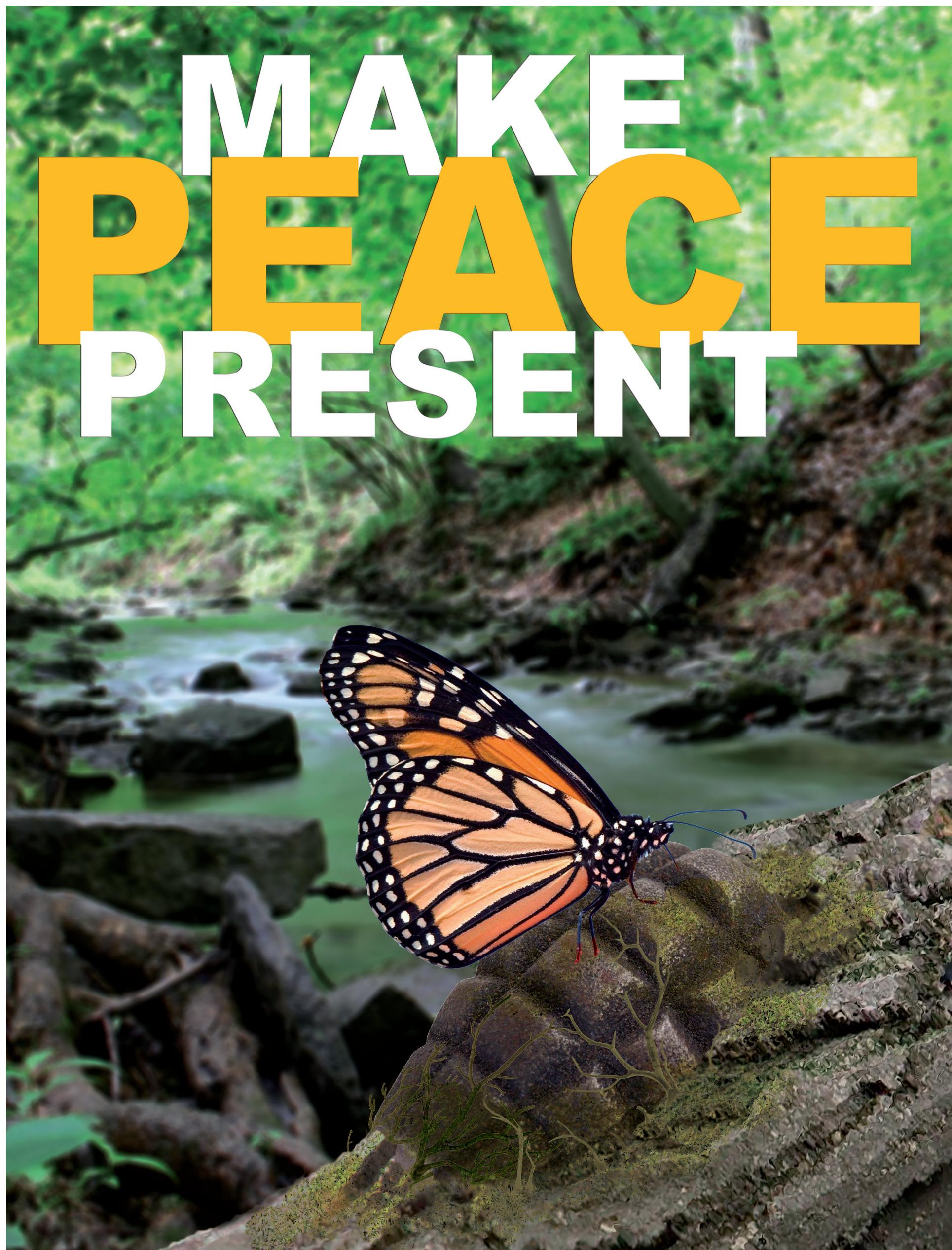
More years, and our lives seemed unclear.  
We began to change.  
Now, it seemed as though I didn't want you to hold my hand.  
I didn't need help speaking to others.  
I didn't need you to send me a ride to school  
I had friends to keep me company.  
You had other priorities as well  
That meant no more late-night dinners and early trips to the mall.  
You seemed uninterested with it now.  
You kept busy with files and business trips around the world, without me.  
Your everyday writing stopped.

We both began to wander, and I began to think.  
And the more I thought, the more upset I became.  
  
Ma, you never told me you didn't want kids.  
I didn't know your future plans didn't include me.  
You had your whole life ahead of you, and you were only 16.  
I came without warning and interrupted everything.  
I didn't know your promises to me were not only untrue but said out of expectation.

Finishing off my teen years, I can finally be on my own now.  
You weren't around to see the start of my adult years,  
as you were busy trying to make up for those you lost.

It seems as though you can't stand to see me live the life you wanted.  
A life with few setbacks, no children, and no weight to carry along with you.

However, I hope you find what you were hungry for.  
I pray that you can fill up the holes that you didn't have the chance to fill.  
To pick up a pen and write to the lyrics to your own song.  
We all deserve this chance.  
You deserve a chance.  
And this time, I won't stop you.



**Kenneth Walker Jr.**  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

**MAKE PEACE  
PRESENT**

# IN THE CAPITOL: CROWNS HANG HEAVY

Smoke filled air

Faces obscured

Lies drip from the painted smile of the woman at the front

You are loved

Chairs strewn about

People crouched

Safety ripped

Lies drip from the painted smile of the woman at the front

Arms raised high

She closes her eyes

Bless you all, my people

A cough sounds

Jewels drip from the long neck of the woman at the front

We are dying

We are crying

We are waiting for help

A blank face greets the people living in hell

Smog filled air

Sounds of gunfire

A cough sounds

Ballots float from the woman at the front

She checks her nails

Raises her voice

Bless you all, my people

ote for me

We are all equal!

# I'M FROM

Crowd-Sourced Haikus Created By Valencia College West Campus Students During Peace Week - Fall 2019

Key around my neck  
an old coin in my pocket  
creative mind whwindas.

Lauren Miller

Grandma's sleepovers,  
Sambas, Soccer, chocolate  
more picanha, please.

Beatrix Cavalcanti

In the woods behind  
the German Kindergarten,  
secret club meetings

Sarah Lockard

It is lit, said I  
while my dog played Fortnite  
on my x-Box

Arvid Bharathidasan

Big quesadillas  
soft outside and gooey inside  
this has been my life

Jordan Stump

I'm from the Island  
hot dogs and warm sand,  
hammock swings and dog Kisses

**Christoper Lopez**

Warm rosemary bread,  
my hands still white from flour  
Soothing aroma

**Leo Beardsmore**

Rice and Jesus Christ,  
coffee served with a swift belt,  
warmth and bitterness

**Daniel Fernandez**

My mom's warm embrace  
protecting me from the world,  
Sweet words like Band-Aids

**Grace Milewski**

A tree near the house,  
running around being free  
mac and cheese weekends

**Dachena Gerve**

Ice cream for dinner  
late night TV binge-watching  
real conversations

**Kenia Jean Gilles**

Two hearts on a chain,  
the house with the red bean smell,  
the vows of love we made.

**Monica Zabala**



**Susana Swearingen**  
8" x 10" MIXED MEDIA // WEST CAMPUS

# UNIVERSAL SMILE

# CLOUDS IN A SUMMER SKY

Hey, Phoebus, why do I still doubt  
when you are so sure and bright

and all trees and living beings go about  
steadily, merrily basking in your light

without a tremor in their hearts, without a chill running down  
their spine.

I won't whine for long, these bones have grown strong; this storm  
is not as dark, not as loud, as it was in the old rhyme,  
but from time to time a shadow covers my sun, gripping the world

in a forlorn

stillness, and the birds won't sing, and the colors wash out,  
they fade

as the world holds its breath and the ground quakes- it was a  
trick well played.

The looming shadow is gone, and I sit here in the cold breeze,  
I can breathe and bask in your light again, relieved, at ease.

And to me He said nothing but gestured to the colorful stripes  
shimmering

Across the sky, "Would you have these without a little rain?"

# THE MORNING STAR'S BIRTH

He opened his eyes. Darkness glared back at him, unmoving and silent. He sat down slowly, looking around. Black fog at His left, black fog at His right. The darkness pulsed with energy. Where was He? Wait. What was He? It was certain – He was not the same as this darkness and yet, was He part of it? His head hurt.

A name. He needed a name to distinguish Himself from this nameless void. With a name, an identity would surely come. He cleared His throat.

"Alright, I –" and as He said those words, He moved his hand, and His fingers brushed the dark fog. His fingers became numb, a current of energy ran through His body, and He gasped, recoiling. Pictures He did not understand and flashes of color struck His mind, and a name unfolded on His lips, *Prima Materia*.

That's what it was – everything. Everything that could ever be. And He was alone with it.

He spoke again, confidence coloring His voice, "Henceforth, I shall be named Yahweh, and all other things after me shall know me as such. They'll call me by the honorific Lord, for they'll hail me as the firstborn creature in existence, and creator of all others."

After His great statement He paused, half hoping, half fearing, that the *Prima Materia* would react, that some other being would emerge and challenge His assertion. When silence remained, and the *Prima Materia* kept apathetically pulsing, Yahweh smiled. He reached for the *Prima Materia*, His fingers tingling as they touched the dark fog; He felt it reacting to His touch, curving around His fingers, and He knew He could shape it into whatever He desired. What should He, the Lord Creator, create first?

He looked around. It was dark and quiet and still.

"Let there be light," Yahweh said in His most magisterial voice, moving and shaping the *Prima Materia*.

The everything-ness surrounding Him exploded in a piercing white light. Yahweh yelped in surprise and then in pain. Light was hot, and waves of heat crushed Him, burning His essence, clouding His thoughts. Stupid. He had made everything into light and heat. That was not what He intended.

"Stop! Light be gone."

And everything grew dark and still again, only Himself and the *Prima Materia* in its original all-encompassing fog. Yahweh took some deep breaths to steady himself. He now had a clearer picture of what He wanted; He reached for the *Prima Materia* again and shaped it into something different.

"Let there be some light, and let darkness be on its own."

All around Him, dots of light blossomed into existence, illuminating the space. Yahweh nodded to himself. He was getting the hang of it. He was the Lord Creator, after all.

What about now? What should He create next? Yahweh looked down at his body, floating amidst the *Prima Materia*. That's it. He'd create a place where He could stand and walk, and admire the... what would He call them, His first creations...? The stars, yes, there was a good ring to it.

Next, He created things to beautify the place on which he now stood – grass to cover the brown earth, flowers to color the green grass, streams to cut through the earth and hills to break the monotony. Yahweh created a throne for Himself, and a star, brighter than all others, rose to the skies as to assert His sovereignty.

Yet, even after creating and creating, Yahweh wasn't satisfied... but why... oh, of course! He nodded to himself. He couldn't be a proper Lord Creator

without other beings to call him such. They would adore Him, no doubt, what wasn't there to love about a being who created such wonderful things? Yahweh reached for the Prima Materia, and paused, the Prima Materia pulsing in between His fingers. What kind of beings should He create?

Yahweh looked over the sunbathed fields he had created. The beings had to be something different from everything He had previously done. These beings had to be like Him, conscious, but with identities of their own... otherwise, how would they appreciate what He had done? Yahweh looked at the Prima Materia once again, hesitating. But, the new beings had to understand that He came first and respect Him as such, because if they didn't... then what would become of Him?

He shook His head, took a deep breath, and started molding the Prima Materia. He wanted her to be bright, to have a mind of a scholar, so she could understand precisely what He had done, and appreciate him even more for his cleverness in molding the Prima Materia exactly the way he had. She would have the heart of an artist, so she could also feel the beauty of His creation and, when regarding it, always feel awe. Yahweh connected everything together.

A burst of golden light engulfed the Prima Materia. Yahweh squinted, His eyes stinging from the brightness – then the light was gone, and in its place stood a being as tall as him, but with a pair of silky wings carrying all warm colors, yellow, orange and red at the tips. She looked at Him, cocking her head, and Yahweh noticed that light curved into a half-circle around her head. Shivers ran down Yahweh's back. He looked at her and saw how everything in her presence, everything surrounding her, became dim and pale, and his voice shook when he called her name.

"Phosphorus?"

She looked at Him and folded her wings. "No."

"What?"

"No, that's not my name. Call me Lucifer."

She looked over her shoulder. Yahweh followed her gaze. A celestial body, orange in color, rose to rest at the side of his star, when the light of the sun touched it, the planet shone as brightly as Lucifer.

"What is this?" Yahweh asked.

"It's my place... It's called Venus, the morning star," Lucifer said, still observing her planet.

Yahweh stared at her. Has she..? No, she couldn't. She couldn't have created it, could she? Her hands were at her side, she hadn't moved to touch the Prima Materia, he had not heard the dull ring he hears every time the Prima Materia is bent.

"You created me, have you not?" Lucifer said, bringing Yahweh's focus back to her. "You created me and everything else out of the Prima Materia. What about the others?"

"Others?" Yahweh echoed. He hated how dumbfounded He sounded.

"If I was the first conscious being you created, I presumed you would not stop at just one. Shall you create others?"

Yahweh nodded, regaining His composure. Ah, yes, she wanted to witness the power of the Lord Creator firsthand. If Phosphorus-

Lucifer was intellect, now Yahweh wanted someone who would contemplate his creation, seeing all the details and spreading the news far and wide. That should be good. Yahweh gathered Prima Materia into His hands-

"You can bend it by making broader, circular movements."

Yahweh turned to Lucifer, "How can you know anything about creating?"

Lucifer frowned, "I just... know."

Yahweh would never admit it, but as soon as He tried what Lucifer suggested, He felt a stronger flow of energy. He expected his second being to appear, like Phosphorus, in an explosion of light, but Mercury just appeared. One second there was nothing, and, in the next, there he was, looking around with his pale-yellow wings expanded.

"Mercury–"

"What name would you like to call yourself?" Lucifer asked the new creation.

Mercury looked at her, "Hm... I guess Gabriel will do," he said, and looked around again. "Don't you two think this place is too quiet? I think I should do something about it..."

Gabriel's voice was loud, yet so melodic and harmonious, it distracted Yahweh from Lucifer's impudence.

"Here," said Lucifer "Try this."

And Yahweh had no time to react as He saw Lucifer guiding Gabriel's hand to the Prima Materia; He had no time to react as He heard the dull ring. High-pitched sounds sprung from the silent little birds Yahweh had previously made, an annoying buzz came now from the insects, the wind whistled as it passed them. Oh no.

"Ahhh thanks. So much better. It's Lucifer, isn't it?" Gabriel said nonchalantly, as if he had not just done something he was supposed to have been incapable of doing.

So when Gabriel's planet rose to the sky, Yahweh didn't pay attention to it, for he was busy creating two other beings. Michael, as he called himself, came into being in an explosion of fire and heat. His wings were carmine, and even his planet had a reddish hue. Yahweh had created him to protect His creation from whatever threats may appear– even if, at the time, Yahweh couldn't quite name those threats, He felt the need to create someone to guard it.

Raphael was the last one Yahweh created. He didn't talk much, but he listened intently to everything Lucifer was saying, barely sparing his Lord Creator a look.

Observing the four archangels meddle in his creation, in his Prima Materia, Yahweh should've known. He should've realized it in the way all three of them orbited around Lucifer, hearing only what she had to say, drinking her light, like flowers in the sun. He should've known what was to come when He heard her claiming to be the Light-bringer when He was the one to bring light to this world.

But, after creating so much, Yahweh was tired. He went to sleep, and would wake to see His creation irrevocably changed. One thing was clear in His mind: Lucifer was too bright. If He let her shine, she would outshine Him. He could never let this happen.



PHONENIX MAGAZINE | TWENTY TWENTY

MAKE HATE HISTORY

**Elise Chandler**  
DIGITAL & ACRYLIC // WEST CAMPUS

# PAINT THE RAINBOW

*A brief look into the*

## LGBTQ COMMUNITY



**1-866-488-7386**

*The Trevor Project hotline*



### 26% OF LGBTQ YOUTH

SAY THEIR FAMILY IS  
NON-ACCEPTING



### 93% OF LGBTQ ADULTS

SAY SOCIETY HAS  
BECOME MORE  
ACCEPTING IN THE  
PAST DECADE



### 56% OF LGBTQ YOUTH

ARE OUT TO THEIR  
IMMEDIATE FAMILY



### LGBTQ -

AN ACRONYM FOR  
LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL,  
TRANSGENDER AND  
QUEER OR QUESTIONING.  
THESE TERMS ARE USED  
TO DESCRIBE A PERSON'S  
SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR  
GENDER IDENTITY.

LIFE

HEALING

SUNLIGHT

NATURE

HARMONY

SPIRIT

You are amazing • You are loved • You are strong • You are tantastic • You are  
LOVE • ENCOURAGE • CHERISH • INSPIRE • DREAM • TRUST • LAUGH • HOP  
We are blessed • We are patient • We are genuine • We are creative • We are  
LESS • SOOTHE • REJUVINATE • FORGIVE • EMBOLDEN • CONNECT • DISC  
You are inspiring • You are loving • You are cherished • You are unique • You are  
ELIABLE • SENSITIVE • ACCEPT • DESIGN • CONSIDERATE • BF  
We are forgiving • We are bold • We are wise • We are cherised • We are  
CREATE • GIVE • REASSURE • COMFORT • REFRESH • ALL  
You are hope • You are excited • You are creative • You are wise  
'ONDER • SHAPE • MOLD • REBIRTH • POSITIVITY  
We are sensitive • We are thoughtful • You are comforted • We are  
CONFIDENCE • TRIUMPH • D  
You are intelligent • You are wonderful • You are considerate  
JCESS • FLEXIBILITY • IN  
We are accepting • We are receptive • You are delightful • We are determined  
ELIGHT • GROW • THINK • S  
You are motivating • You are unique • You are beautiful  
EAUTY • HEAL • HONESTY  
We are triumphant • We are great  
ATISFACTION • HAPPINESS  
You are successful • You are positive  
'ARMTH • HONOR • ADO  
We are amazing • We are loved  
LOVE • ENCOURAGE • CHERISH  
You are blessed • You are patient  
LESS • SOOTHE • REJUVINATE  
We are inspiring • We are loving  
ELIABLE • SENSITIVE • ACCEPT  
You are forgiving • You are being  
CREATE • GIVE • REASSURE  
We are hope • We are thoughtful • You are creative • You are wise  
'ONDER • SHAPE • MOLD • REBIRTH • POSITIVITY  
You are sensitive • You are thoughtful • You are comforted • You are  
CONFIDENCE • TRIUMPH • D  
We are intelligent • We are great  
JCESS • FLEXIBILITY • IN  
We are accepting • You are receptive • You are delightful • You are determined  
ELIGHT • GROW • THINK • S  
We are motivating • We are refreshing • You are unique • You are beautiful  
EAUTY • HEAL • HONESTY • SMILE • GRATITUDE • RESPECT • COMPANION  
We are triumphant • You are great • You are wise • You are positive • You are  
ATISFACTION • HAPPINESS • DEEP • DIVINE • LEAD • UNITE • LISTEN • HO  
We are successful • We are ambitious • We are grateful • We are a companion



**Lynda Kavan**  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

**BRING IT  
IN BRO**

# ADVISOR

If I didn't know any better  
I would say the woman before me was sent from somewhere sacred

to send a message to my hopelessness

a stranger to me

coaxing my worries with words of promise

she tells me to never doubt the path I'm on

I'm exactly where I need to be in life right now

what's meant for me will be for me

I just can't give up

I have barely uttered two sentences before she tells me all of this

I can't meet her eyes

her words squeeze my lungs

comfortably uncomfortable

so I cower

drinking a tall glass of orange juice

so cold it burns

I drink and drink

long

slow

sips

drowning my mouth

so I won't scream

so I won't cry

so I don't tell her

all the anguish

all the fears

she has put to peace

**Jennifer Sansing**  
POETRY // WEST CAMPUS

# SURFACE

Let's swap secrets  
at the bottom  
of the pool.

Pour desires into tea cups  
pass them 'round proper. Or

If you'd rather,  
let them spill  
on the way down.  
A congealed, purple-black  
mat we can sit upon.

Staining our legs  
crossed, nonetheless.  
As we furiously scream truths  
at all the tilted china. And

When we surface,  
gasping for air,  
we will all giggle  
at the tea parties held  
down on the floor.

# UNLEARNING ALMOST LOVE

Familiar hands spelled love down my spine  
And with a whisper of his lips on my skin

I found myself leaning lopsided into love  
Hunting refuge in the home of tattered reason  
Seeking solace in the shape of my name when it left your lips  
It rang like a symphony  
An encore for my subjection  
Beckoning my apprehension quiet  
Silence weighty on my tongue like a top-heavy secret

I didn't always mind  
Lounging on the surface of your amber-honey eyes  
Your love made me relax  
Sometimes  
So much so that I didn't always notice when you'd  
Lean your woes on my misguided adoration  
Malice tucked in the dimples of your cheek

I always hated hide and seek you know  
Never good at hiding my heart under my sleeve  
Palms spread open  
auction block

Offering up the naïveté you sought  
Sold - to the first bidder  
The first man  
who made me feel seen  
The first man  
who made me believe

Briefly  
In love  
In fate  
Who could unearth my deeply rooted boundaries  
Who could shake me to my core and leave me convinced

That this pleasant confusion  
Is what I've been missing  
That this lovely illusion  
Is what compassion looks like

That "I'm not sure"  
Can mean maybe  
Can mean yes

If you ask just right -

Standing in a pool of what used to be  
On the brink of what could have been  
I skip a stone across the skin  
I'd learned to hate without your residence  
My reflection ripples  
then stills  
and I dive in.

# MY PERSONAL SHADE OF MAGIC

Come, come closer,  
step on my boundaries,  
stumble on my realm  
lean on my spell.

You took away my wand

but my sorcery runs deeper.

Come, come now,  
follow my voice,  
fall down the rabbit hole,  
you're not in Kansas anymore.

Come, come now, approach  
see the helium smoke rings in my breath,  
the Mariana Trenches in my eyes—  
here comes the Siren's song.

Yes, yes  
Come closer, closer still  
and let my plastic afternoon smile  
distract you, a flick of my wrist  
misdirection and coup de grâce  
there's no white rabbit in my top hat—  
the night is just getting started.

Come, come all,  
moths to a flame,  
Sit in the front row and put on your opera glasses—  
I'm about to perform the greatest magic trick of all!  
I will make you disappear  
from my life.

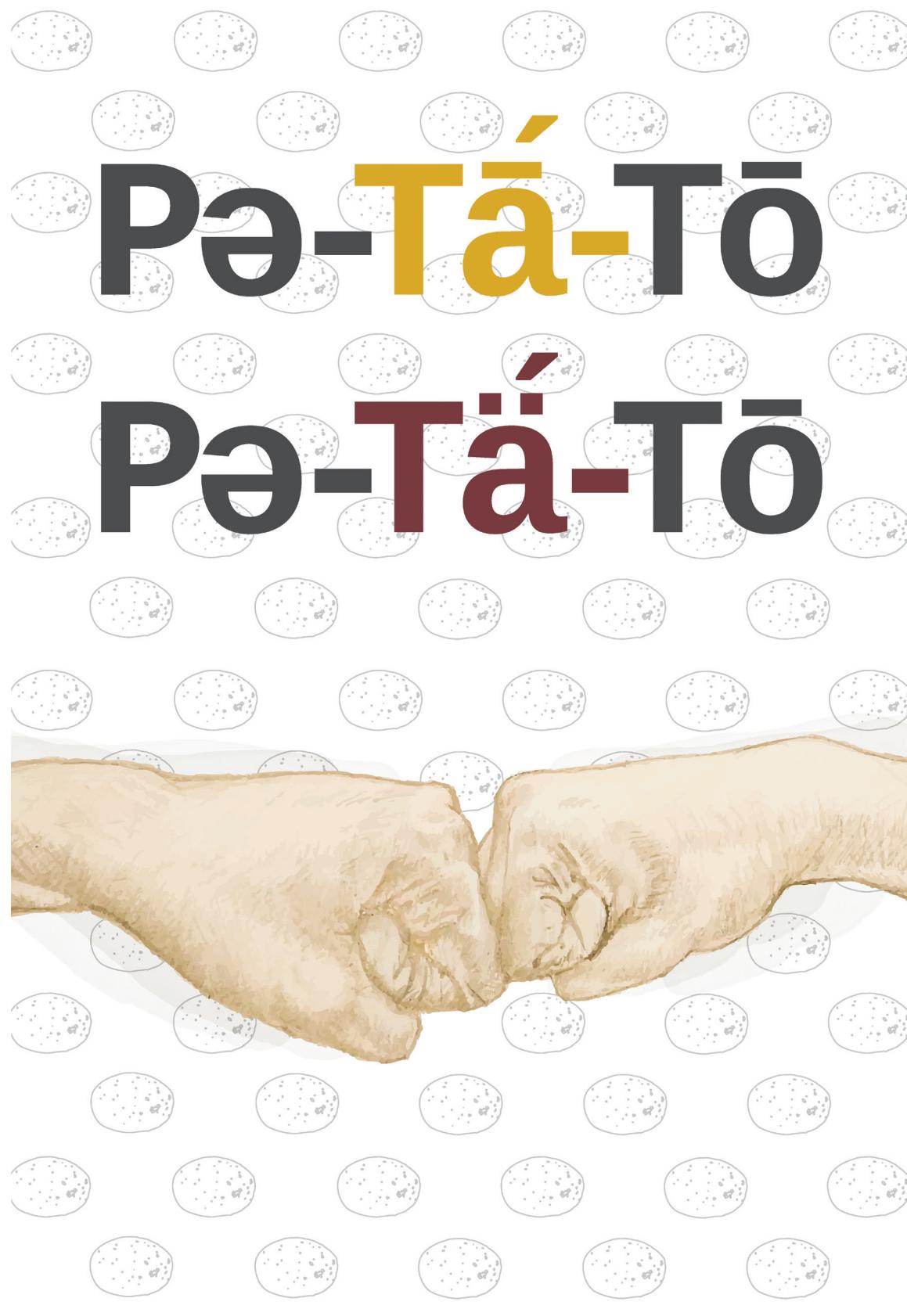
Look, and look closer,  
do not let the spotlight  
dazzle you—  
Look, look closer,

Now you see me,  
(mute, in your shade,  
opaque, head bowed)  
Now you don't.



**Samantha Lora**  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

# SELF LOVER



# LETTER TO MY FIRST LOVE

Dear God,  
When I first found love  
outstretched on the fingertips

of a Forgiver,  
You pulled me in.  
Not like a light switch  
More like a sunrise -  
Everything was gradually  
drenched in the light of being loved  
and the choice made  
long before I was ever lost  
claimed me found.

I experienced  
the gravitation of grace  
that grasped and tugged  
tears from my desert eyes.

I was undone:  
my existence like a  
wholehearted hallelujah,  
song spilled from my soul  
and my heartbeat became a prayer  
in which my pulse read peace -  
I didn't have to see you,  
feel you, hear you  
to know you were there.

You were the fight in me.

Remind me what great love I leave,  
Forgive my unfaithfulness,  
Drench my awareness  
with a Divine love,  
Unlock your heart -  
Reveal it please  
Once again  
Undo me.  
Love,  
C.

# I'M NOT OKAY

But how can I tell you every time I see you  
It's like my heart shatters more  
That when I see you with him  
It's like dust scattered in the wind  
And I can't tell you because you wouldn't care

I no longer matter to you  
But I still keep you around  
Because you still matter so much to me  
I want you to be happy  
But I can no longer see happiness  
without you in my life

I'm shattered inside  
I can't fix it  
And it's killing me  
But you'll never know  
Because to you ... I'm okay

**Carissa Barton**  
**POETRY // WEST CAMPUS**

# WINDOWS

Drive me home in my car:

The road is not raddled on the highway,

and we don't have to rely on the radio

My blend of music -

Strange but proudly mine

Tickles our ears,

so I turn it up.

The moon dances -

I dare say -

I guess it by the soft illumination

on my dashboard.

She dazzles and drums with no sound.

I know the drill -

I put my hand on the gearshift

And wait for yours to rest over it.

You build a white palace in my heart

Where the peonies outside are periwinkle

And inside -

The walls are almost entirely windows.

# SYMBOLS OF LIFE

I'm an open book with nine chapters  
A peacock, a principled house,  
A glass jar striving not to be closed.  
Opaqued by the truths of before!  
This tower's grand with its cement bonded  
Mirrors are broken in this new version of life.  
I'm a vessel, a boa, a magical place  
I've opened myself up to the world  
Boarded the next chapter of my life.

# SOFT

I have been-  
Carefully given a soft green dream.  
A multitude of sorrows escaping  
Through the mere image of my self-reflected despair

Promises of loyalty everscaping fragmented tears.

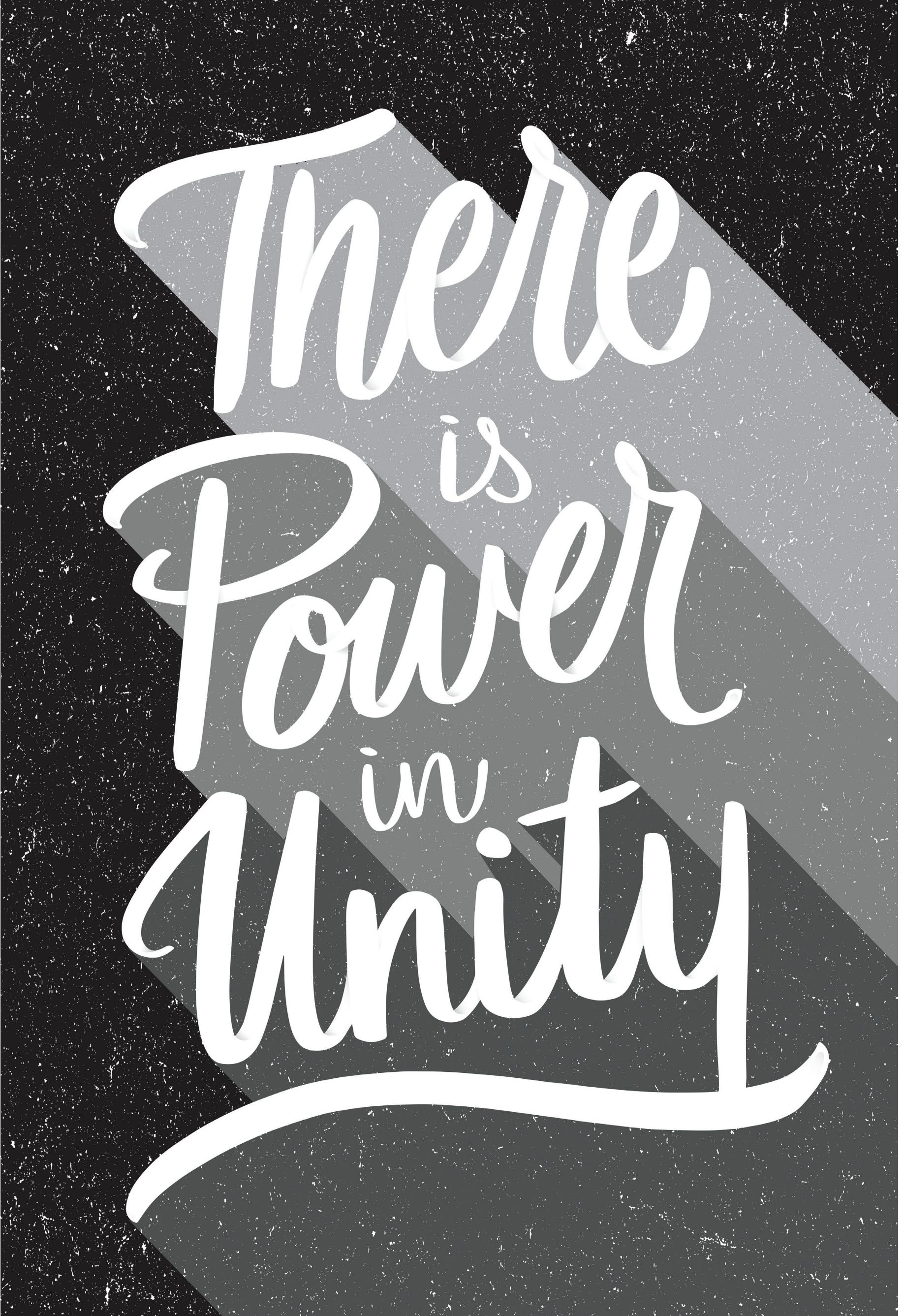
If you leave early, I won't cry

We can try again,  
Paint passionate love across all that is damned  
Make it rightfully ours.  
Reorder the disdained.  
Rebirth what has been forgotten

We are new.  
Alive and unseen from our fears  
Rendering possibilities of the unknown  
For we ourselves are unknown.

So I will give my life to dream,  
of passionate sorrows remaining in the past

A permanent freedom from guilt.  
A blissful life at last.



*There  
is  
Power  
in  
Unity*

Arlene M. González  
DIGITAL // WEST CAMPUS

**POWER  
IN UNITY**

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[vedemunderground.com](http://vedemunderground.com)