



Our Voices

Our
Voices

volume xi. 2024

Our Voices

journal of culture and diversity



gonzaga university
volume xi. 2024

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Journal of Culture
and Diversity

***“Stories have to
be told or they
die, and when
they die, we can’t
remember who
we are or why
we’re here.”***

Sue Monk Kidd



Staff

Dominic Pe Benito

editor-in-chief

Carissa Kanae

editor

Inés Marquez

editor

Giona Hoaglund

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Finley Knellhorne

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Anna Mair

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Dear Reader,

We all come from different realities that encompass the difficulties that life offers daily. From the challenge of living through a pandemic to the struggle of fighting your own self to feeling invisible in this huge world, we all have some blockade that is stopping us from growth.

As a person of color and a member of the underrepresented community here at Gonzaga University, I have faced these feelings and needed to live with what reality gives me. The norms that are offered here leave many students wanting more whether it be support academically, socially, or economically. Unfortunately, many of us feel like we are forced to accept how reality is on campus, but also feel silenced, unwanted, and invisible.

Our Voices gives an opportunity for everyone at Gonzaga from students, faculty, staff, and alumni to be given a safe space to express their stories and share their experiences. It takes opening up their hearts to find the courage to share their realities with us.

Regardless of your race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religious beliefs, and more, Our Voices gives everyone the space to have a voice. The authors are the backbone of this publication and we must respect their stories.

We want to emphasize the importance of embracing differences between all the pieces and recommend reading with an open mind as the authors are being vulnerable to you, so their strength can be shown but also their perspective can be seen and heard.

We kindly ask you to not try and relate to the stories, but rather see each piece from a different point of view.

Culture and diversity will always unify people together, thus I hope you enjoy this edition of Our Voices and offer authors the opportunity to feel visible.

Dominic Pe Benita



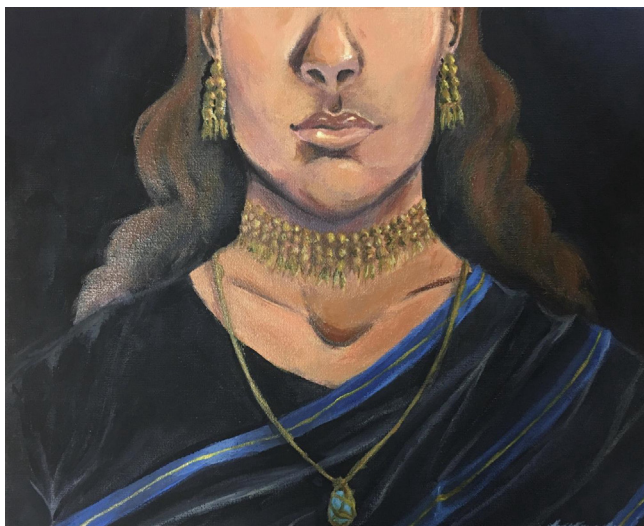
§ Trigger Warning: This symbol represents a trigger warning to inform you as a reader that the piece you will be reading includes discussions on sensitive topics that might be disturbing or triggering for some readers. Our Voices values the pieces of our authors and we want to respect their personal stories. Please proceed with care and consider your own well-being before reading.



*vis
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arts*

pages 16 - 21

Clasps Of The Past
Leisl Fernandes



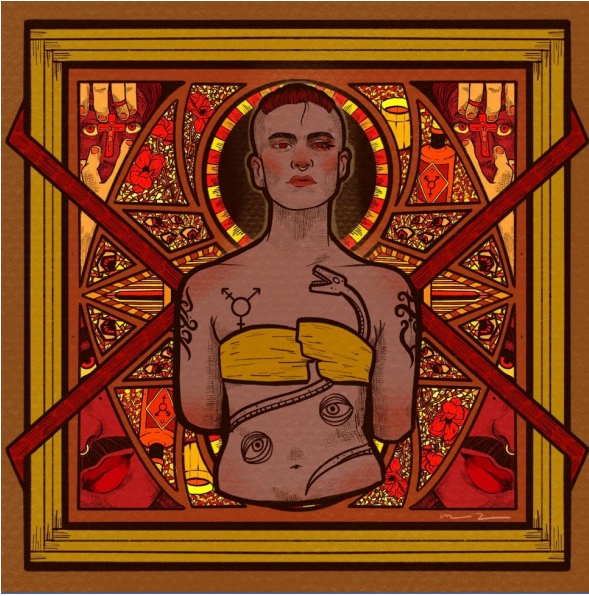
This piece represents my
Indian heritage and the
struggles the women in my
family persisted, through the
jewelry the girl is wearing.

The choker and earrings
belong to my maternal
grandmother, while the
necklace was made from a
chain belonging to my paternal
grandmother and a pendant
made by my mom.

My family has persevered
through British colonization,
The Partition, racism and
discrimination in America, yet
they still move forward, and
inspire me to as well everyday.

I can carry a piece of their
stories with me everyday
through our jewelry. I created
this painting to honor them,
Grandma Rita, Grandma
Pat, and especially my mom,
Rochelle. I would not be
where I am today without
them.

Picking A Side
Matias Langrange



I constantly wrestle with being true to my gender or my mixed-Filipino heritage.

Growing up Catholic, I recognized the harm caused to our heritage by colonization, not to mention the Christian missionaries' impact.

This inner conflict intensified when I realized I was transgender. It felt like I was not only rejecting the religion I grew up with but also denying my family and fellow Filipinos.

I had never met another transgender Filipino person, leaving me isolated.

I felt, feel, judged by peers, family, and ancestors for not following the "right" path and viewing being transgender as sinful

The surge in anti-transgender policies in my home state forced me to see beyond personal struggles, especially considering the significantly higher risk of substance abuse/addiction faced by transgender individuals, which is linked to the constant fear of hate crimes, family and peer violence, dysphoria, and other challenges that increase the likelihood of mental health issues in transgender people.

In my piece, I delve into the external and internal impacts of trying to align with only one identity.

I've realized there's no need to choose. We are all multifaceted, grappling with internal battles, and it's crucial to acknowledge, address them, and confront them head-on.

Pink Colored Glasses
Matias Langrange



Growing up diagnosed with ADHD, I only knew the symptoms that neurotypical people could see, which affected my self worth and the worth of those that I saw around me.

I do not find ADHD is just Attention Deficit Hyperactivity, as that's what neurotypical people see, it's Attention Dysregulation, it's spending 8 hours on a drawing when you have work to do, without drinking, eating, or even peeing, It's fixating on all the bad things you perceive others have to say about you through Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria, it's hyper focusing on a person, only seeing the green flags you want to see, labeling them the only person all your attention should go towards.

ADHD is not about learning. It affects people socially and mentally.

Neurodivergence is not what neurotypical folks can see, it's our whole perspective, our whole world.

In this piece, I introspect on what it felt like in my early dating life to hyperfixate on people who I couldn't see were bad for me, related in the somewhat grotesque nature of hyperfixation in relationships, from the anatomical heart to the imagery of stitching your own heart together without noticing that it's odd.

I made an artwork that almost hurts to look at with oversaturation as I found it relates to the pain of these relationships that are long past their expiration date.

With the lack of discussing our differences freely in social and academic settings, it took me ages to recognize how my attention does not dictate anyone's worth, not even my own value.

poe & 
try

pages 24 - 49

Words used to flow
freely from my fingers
Sing their songs
inside my head
Scream and shout and
yell and whisper
But now all those words
are dead.

I plod along with
thoughts asunder
Nothing ventured
nothing gained
Boredom clouds my
brow like thunder
I feel that I have been
de-brained.

I cannot think
and cannot write
I have no muse for
inspiration All that's left
inside is spite
In place of my
imagination.

Feeling-nothing apathy
Rains on parades of
hopes and dreams
The devil gives no
courtesy
My thoughts cannot
be what they seem.

I read my work
from long ago
And marvel at my
motivation
Routine kills the
ebb and flow
I cannot prompt the
desperation.

I wish to sleep but
writing plagues me
Gets inside and
tries to plot
I think I used to
be an author
But now I wish that I
was not.

Creating was my
only outlet
Cathartic ink upon
the page
Now broken like
a tape cassette
I'm too young to feel so
aged.

If I ask for help my pride
will stop me
Medication's far from
thought
Reaching out will only
break me
But alone this battle can't
be fought.

I wish for help but words
escape me
There is no answer to my
prayer
Left alone with thoughts
to chase me I reach out
but nothing's there.

When I was a kid, I
danced with the wind
Air, so free and liberating
My backyard filled with
flamboyant memories in
the sky
My smiles only uplifted
by the crisp draft that
came
And my childish heart
afame as the embers only
grew from the currents
I lived in every second of
it with no resistance

As I grew up more, I
started to lose my touch
with the wind
In my path remained a
gust from not just the
outside but inside
A harmful jab to my soul
that was brewed with a
conflicted confusion

I wanted to dance, but I
also felt restrained by the
harsh zephyr
Imposed by the people
around me that once
uplifted me so I could fly

As a storm came and
conquered my haven
I questioned my youth,
that was once embraced
by the same strike
And now my heart that
was once ablaze felt like it
was put out and drenched
So I kneeled down in the
face of the wind and wept
My ears still open to its
melody for I knew I had
to listen to its chill

I was losing cadence, as
the rhythm of the wind
persisted

Now, I found myself
inspired from the gale
once again
Rushes of cyclones and
monsoons still come, as
the tears in my eyes so
occasionally do
But regardless, I dance
I no longer fight with the
resistance, be it from me
or anyone else
Whether it's elegant or
ugly, I sway with the air
Memories start to
recollect and form, just
as leaves flow and change
colors throughout the
seasons

To this day I continue to
dance
Focused to adapt to the
breeze
I realize I'm no longer
fighting against it
I finally find myself back
with the wind, smiling
once more
Like the wind, I dance;
I flow

I am fissured from
impertinent fixtures
who balk and below
defiant against
a two thousand mile sea.
The dream
my parents carried,
marred by obsession,
inhibiting artistic
intention, raised me.

In English, they
try to appraise
this is the way they
know how
but in clipped Tagalog
I say,
'kapabayaan build
this town'

called "daughter"
titos, titas, isang
kapamilya.
To forgo the mentors
and friends' stances
in my life is to quake on
rocky ground.
Volatility birthed by
volatility I fear
will erode to the next—
please, let the foundation
be found.

I Sat By Your Grave The Other Day
Gwen Mitchell

I sat by your grave the
other day.

The words had faded
from the stone,
but I haven't forgotten
your name.

The shade from the oak
and the glowing marigolds
reminds me you must be
tangled
in snaking roots.

I hope that you are
comfortable
and haven't wandered
too far.

Your casket could have
only held
you for so long.

In life, you always seemed
so large
and wearing boxes was
never your style.

I hope that you are getting
the rest you deserve,

snuggling with clay.

Don't get too lonely,
my dear;

I'll be coming to bed soon
enough.

Idol

Marianne Nacanaynay

because kiara's teeth are
eggshell, everyone said to smile
more, to grin like kiara.
my teeth are yolky,
why would i smile?
it wasn't my fault
kiara tripped on her way home
and bled
though i kicked a chunk
of broken concrete off the curb
that morning.
i knew. i knew
anything from fourteen times
twenty-seven to
dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane,
the way five-year-olds
aren't supposed to know.
in the way bears hyperphage
before the bitters spill.
she folded bluebells into
the soles of her shoes,
maybe that's why you
loved kiara.
am i not soft and pretty too?
i thought we loved yellow.

i thought we loved yellow.
am i not soft and pretty too?
maybe that's why you loved kiara.
she folded bluebells into the soles
of her shoes,
in the way bears hyperphage
before the bitters spill.
the way five-year-olds aren't
supposed to know.
anything from fourteen
times twenty-seven to
dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane,
i knew. i knew
though i kicked a chunk of
broken concrete off the curb that
morning,
kiara tripped on her way home
and bled.
it wasn't my fault.
why would i smile?
my teeth are yolky.
everyone said to smile more, to
grin like kiara
because kiara's teeth are eggshell.

Mass hallucinations
of the stainless nation
comprised of tyranny
and mass alienation
that is a translation of a
democracy.

Let it be known.

Democracy? Apathy
that is our Reality,
understanding that you
lack the Capacity, to
realize that your ferocity
on the enslaved of this
country has left an
imprint on our society.

Let it be known.

You have profiled the style
of what it means to be
criminal by highlighting
the individuals given the
minimal.

Let it be known.

They propagate us
searching for a reason to
integrate us, object us,
subject us, to the narrative
that they have imposed
on us.

Let it be known.

You have attempted
exterminations of the
beautiful creations that
have revealed themselves
through your horrific
tribulations.

Let it be known.

I comprise the repressed
memories of the
discrepancies created
through your illusory
notions only plausible by
the highest proprietors
ruling promotions,

With devotions to
compromise our
commotion of their
deviant theologian.

Let it be known.

Despite our obstacles we
push through.

You, claim 3/5's of man,
as I stand, I will not
pretend that you may
comprehend the double
consciousness that you
have forced upon the
minority that has never
been the priority until
you mass incarcerate us to
make up the majority of
your prisons.

Let it be known.

Your accumulated
decisions have established
traditions of cruelty and
uncertainty for the people
who built the country that
they supposedly should be
proud of.

Let it be known.

Your idea of liberation is
based on the damnation of
dark skinned humans with
a lack of solutions.

Your refutations of
historical disparities show
the similarities between
your negligence of my
people's intelligence & of
our elegance.

Let it be known.

For instance the
coexistence with our
perpetrator is the
persistence that with the
discrimination we face, we
will nonetheless acquire
our success which is a part
of our resistance.

Let it be known.

I am distant, due to the
inconsistent treatment
of my brothers & sisters
that you lock up as an
achievement

Let it be known.

You isolate yourself
through campaigns as
you restrain to proclaim
the endowments
that maintain your
empowerment.

Let it be known.

When you bear
witness to our cultural
richness you attempt to
categorize it as an illness
because it displays our
noncompliance with
your purposes of creating
generational curses.

As we continually
resurface with urgency as
you attempt to use your
currency as a means of
blasphemy to tear down
our morality.

Let it be known.

You may be disagreeing,
but my reason for being is
to show that even with the
policing, we shall never
stop the screaming of the
depravity perpetrated by
the hierarchy that has led
our people being labeled
as marginal.

The continual escalation of the civil unrest has led to the politicians' protest in the form of legal conditions to reinforce the system for us to be oppressed.

Let it be known.

This is a lesson on what the true nature of a nation has been.

I am trying to help you see that no matter the powers that be, they will try to deceive as we experience the grief of not understanding what to believe.

Let it be known.

That we are monumental and no governmental legislation will cause a

separation of our self induced salvation or the integration of ourselves within education.

Let it be known.

As I am before you, I implore you to reach for the dreams that they have attempted to conceal through their hegemony.

That we are indefinite beings capable of everything.

Deserving of emancipation from our history, obligated to the prerogative freedoms of our country.

Let it be known.

looking at glass in the
looking glass,
wondering when my skin
will be the same
when the polluted,
dirty shards will be clear
when i will become
transparent as well

known for our glass skin,
koreans are idolized
for beauty
romanticized for
thin bodies
fetishized for being young

so delicate, hardened
after years of heat
so fragile, they watch
waiting for us to break

“i keep on forgetting
you’re korean.”
me, with my unclear skin
with my unclear identity

me, with a glass heart to
make up for the glass skin
i never had

a transparent heart,
ensuring i can’t hide my
thoughts behind a mask,
melted and warped
stained glass is still glass,
but i haven’t any to begin
with

shards worn dull,
too thick to cut,
while crimson traces still
remain

looking at glass in the
looking glass,
wondering when my skin
will match my heart
too frail on the inside, too
tough on the outside
not knowing which if skin
or soul would shatter first

In Gonzaga's halls, we
learn and we attain
So much new information,
but will it remain?
We have conversations,
we have them a lot
But conversations on
contraception are often
fraught.
A campus where guidance
is allowed,
But guidance on condoms
may not be found.
No readily offered
contraceptives in sight,
Students grapple with this
decision in the night.
Gonzaga's landscape, a
nuanced space,
Where discussions unfold,
challenging grace.

In classrooms and
hallways, these
conversations persist,
Students seeking
knowledge often resist.
Confronting realities
without a guide,
Gonzaga's students chose
to hide.
No handed-out pills, no
acne on face,
Yet conversations
still echo, in this
academic space.
Contraception's absent,
yet dialogue still strong
Gonzaga's journey, a
never-ending song.
Help our students, give
them the knowledge
they need,
Don't let religion impact
the deed.

And as I sit, encased in a bubble, I wonder why I chose to be in this world.

I find myself running on an endless treadmill of constant incline, losing the energy to fight back, desperately willing myself to stay on my feet.

Wanting to take the tumble off the cliff, see where I end up, see whether or not I might survive? I see the other side, but as I continue to push back, I notice gravity increasing, a constant that refuses to stay the same.

A scale tipped against an improbably heavyweight, one that I know the mass of, because I carry it with me as well, on my shoulders, along the line of my spine, and in my chest, sitting in the cavity where a heartbeat should be.

I watch with lifeless eyes as the rest of the world flourishes, thriving with abundance as I stay rooted in the ground, afraid to know how the view would change from five feet away.

I remember how
everything looked in the
eyes of my memories,
when the world was hazy
with light, when my eyes
were clear but the world
was blanketed in warmth.
I remember how things
were before I learned the
need to affirm everything
I saw was true; before I
was taught to question
everything I learn.

I remember being
connected with the world,
being able to feel the
things near to me, instead
of trying to read pulses of
my surroundings in order
to avoid making contact
with anything trying to
enter my bubble.

I look through my old
glasses, watching scenes
skipping, speeding by as I
blink through, waiting for
the world to clear up.

A time when the world
was more welcoming,
before I looked in my
eyes in the reflection of
the water. Before the
reflection distorted them,
made me wonder if they
were too small, or if they
were supposed to be
smaller.

And when the lenses
change, the world is still
blurry, moments fading
into the air, dissolving
like foam on a constantly
shaking ocean.

The riptide pulling me
from place to place, with
no clear landing, trying to
adjust to my surroundings
before being washed
away.

Wondering if the place
I came from is really
where I originated, and
if I would even be able
to recognize home if I
walked in. Wondering
if I could finally swim
fast enough to reach the
people I love, all standing
away on a separate
landmass.

If they would be proud of
me for finally making it
to them.

And as the riptide pulls
me away from them
again, I wonder if it pains
them as much as it pains
me, watching the waves
wash crimson into blue
as I see them fading into
the distance, drowning
as I fight to stay afloat to
watch them smile again.

They always welcome
me so warmly, and yet
it's still so hard to find my
way back, knowing how
the tide has mangled me
in my time away.

So I set myself adrift
again, untethered as I
wash away.

Twice A Week
Tara Hollander

Cry
Bawl
Empty
Vomit

Spit
Thought
Circle
Stop

Over and over
Eyes roll
A damned hole

A soft hand
A body to hold
To embrace the deluge

Float
Fall
Free

Breath
Be

A quiet okay
Permission to start again
And return tomorrow

I would like to give a shout
out to my mom for loving
me, but also for loving my
tattoos and standing up to
people who didn't.
Mahal Kita Mom!

In 1565, white saviors
landed on my ancestor's
home.
But to only claim it as
their own.

Looking at them up and
down, but only to realize
that they aren't the same.
So, what did they do?
They wanted them to
change.

Preaching the word of
God,

That there is God and his
angels vs the Devil and
his demons.

That God's angels are to
never be tainted...
So, what does that make
me?

Ever since I was young, I
wanted a tattoo
because I wanted to show
what I went through.

Batok, an ancient and
sacred practice that
tattoos their warriors for
their stories and their
victories

That they told a story
through their bodies,

But every story comes to
an end, and their stories
end with a white savior.
White saviors that wanted
them to change.

Preaching the word of
God,
That there is God and his
angels vs the Devil and his
demons.
That God's angels are to
never be tainted...

I got my first tattoo at the
age of 18.
Which turned into a
whole sleeve at the age
of 20.

A sleeve that is covered
up and barely shown no
matter where I go.

Because everywhere I
did go,
I heard the whispers of
my titas
I saw the glares of my
titos
I heard the gasps and
saw stares of Filipino
strangers
Looking at their children
to never be like me

As they preached the
word of God
That there is God and his
angels vs the Devil and
his demons.
That God's angels are to
never be tainted...

That the story on my
body tainted the angel.
That covering past scars
and memories tainted the
angel.

That honoring my family
tainted the angel.

All because a white
savior tried to change my
ancestors.

They didn't like their
tattoos, so they changed it.

They didn't like the
religion, so they changed
it.

They didn't like my
ancestors, so they changed
them.

And so, how did my
ancestors change?

My ancestors preached
the word of God,

That there is God and his
angels vs the Devil and
his demons.

That God's angels are to
never be tainted...

They wanted me, Angela
Macabinguil, to preach
the word of God,

That there is God and his
angels vs the Devil and
his demons.

That I should never be
tainted...

That they wanted me to
be an angel in a white
savior's eyes, not God's
eyes, but their eyes.

When I never even asked
to be an Angel in the first
place.

So what do I say to that?

Fuck the white saviors
that changed my
ancestors.

Fuck their word of God
Because God loves his
angels

And it's ok to be tainted

So, you know, what this
tainted but loved angel is
going to do?

She's going to fly high,
but with her tattoo in
the sky.

Late again,
you rushed for nothing,
to nothing. Too nothing.

Nothing to do should
leave room to appreciate.

But your job is not to
appreciate. Your job does
not appreciate you stay
late. Again.

The doors swing wide,
you dart inside to pay the
fare.

With a nod to the driver,
you retreat into the haze
beyond the frame of a
window within the depths
of the 48 line.

23rd & Cherry,
A small, bricked bodega

with a crooked orange sign
in a blue-topped daze.

Out the back door of an
old black sedan, a little
girl takes flight. In
excitement,
she cries for her father
to buy her an ice cream,
she screams for the end of
the world.

He grins something
southern,
She returns something
wild, and together, they
push the foggy doors
open.

24th & Prospect,
a house handcrafted with
laughter sits unfinished,
more somber that day.

A girl steps out to the
weather-stained porch,
with the same wild
something,
but a softer smile.

Her father knows,
fearful but fortunate to
care for her this far,
he lets go of her hand.

15th & Campus,
A college of artists,
lost in the process,
not taught to appreciate.

A stack of books, then
knees slam on concrete,
the knees of a woman at
the end of the world.
A woman, just a girl
who cries for her father.

45th & Roosevelt,
The bodega is older.
A woman flies out of
an old black sedan.

She opens the door
with a softer smile
and offers her hand
to one slow but strong.
He looks with love,
gives her a grin,
and a southern saying
you forgot in the rush.

The bodega disappears.
You slow to a stop,
thank the driver, and
wait for the doors.
You take a step,
a breath, then
a moment
To smile wildly, again.

My eyes are drawn to the
collapsing tree,
Near the rocks, arching
over the water.
Clinging to its body, the
broken piece
Of trunk splits the tree
into two sections.
The broken half turns its
branch to mock me.
It wants to know what I
am doing here.
Angered, I proclaim,
One day you will break off
and die.
Why prolong the
inevitable?
Saddened, the broken half
retreats away.
It wanted to see the river's
water,
The abled jeweled crown
called out to me.

Angered, I proclaim,
You had the choice not to
grow this way!
Why would you keep that
mutilated cripple?
Did you have a choice,
child?
Angered, I proclaim,
That's different!
Do you not live with your
crippleness, child?
Angered, I proclaim,
That's different!
Would you not be
incomplete without it?
Angered, I proclaim,
That's different!
Is it, child?
It is!
How?

I am fifteen.
I am struggling to keep my
body open and relaxed
instead of caving with fear
because I am trying to tell
high school boys
why I deserve
reproductive rights.
My notes are a bit damp
with sweat. Sure, it is
only a mock debate on
abortion, but I can feel my
blood boiling.
I can feel the few chances
to get through to them
slipping away.
I look to the girls asking
for inherent support but
find that I must look other
to them.

Am I a girl?
There is no kinship in
their eyes.

I had no idea I was alone
on this one—that I did not
provide a correct universal
answer in a school setting.
Not everyone sees my body
as autonomous. Am I human?
Although my hands shake, my
voice does not.

I am an island
But I find myself content
Watching feathered wings
Dive and become sun gleamed.
Under and gone in a splash.

*pr
ose*



pages 52 - 79

faith is a firm press of
matriarch's hand.
sun through a stained glass
window can make any little
girl the colors of a saint.
it is La Guadalupe and her
three children of fatima that
wrap me in
star-blue robes to sleep.
prayer in the dinner table;
words of grace don't leave room
for the baby teeth gaps of my
brother's laugh.
light dances in the trees to
Gospel song chorus.
haven't you heard?
the good news of it all?
the daughter in me wants to be
loved, and so she is.
religion is cold plaster.
baptismal blues since the
second grade, braces since the
third. khaki skort and a scuffed
mary jane velcro shoe that
pinches when i kneel.

a pop quiz:

1. Grown girls don't make good
martyrs. (True).

communion wine for the
crimes i committed and
crocodile tears for the ones
made of dreams. youth group
palms can't save a reptile from
shedding its skin. now, red
votive candles glow mean,
but my glare, oh, it burns.
clasp your hands tight to receive
the blessing (everyone here
knows). kiss your fingers to
genuflect and (everyone here
knows). scoop yourself raw,
stand, choke down the rest, sit.
i wonder if my nina cries when
God speaks to her at night.
He can't hear me anymore.
haven't you heard?
the Good News of it all?
the woman in me wants to be
loved, and so she isn't.

Am I Losing You Already?

Moni

There's a piano in the corner of
our house.

The white keys you played sit
now untouched,

"It's in simple C major," you
once said.

I can still see your hands,

When you called it "Moni's
Song" and

When you played it I would
dance

Now I only hear it in the dust.

You told me you wrote it after

That day on the beach

Six years old

My little hands picked up
broken glass and yelled "An
emerald!"

Why don't you remember it
at all?

You were my tree, I climbed you
and could see as high as six feet

Years later the roots rot at
seventeen.

You taught me my first punch,

Where leather dents hold
memories of you

How to tie my shoes, tell time,
play poker,

When we placed our bets on
one another.

We danced the swing to Little
Richard

Now the lights are low, the
music quiet.

Worn down playing cards stay
in their box.

And I and the time stand still.

I was never ready

To know one day I would ask
Am I losing you already?

You ask me, "What is your age?"

As if I know anymore

Let me go and live it over again
once more

Let me go and live my girlhood
like I did once before.

I should've asked you to write it
down for me

I only remember that it was in a
major key

I should've learned to tell you
when I was sorry

I should've told you how good
you were to me.

Fifteen years is such a short time
But you have given me a
lifetime.
And a name atop my first two,
Honor and dignity for me to
live up to
And I hope that one day I will
be able to see through
The grief and pain of how much
I'll miss you
To look back and tell you thank
you.
And even though I'm losing you,
You will never be lost.

A lifetime in fifteen years, yet
what a short time.
We are never ready to ask,
Am I losing you already?

The heroes and villains of the Civil War are already enshrined in the history books, and, I suppose, it is right and proper that a nation as young as ours ought to have a few more skeletons in her closet and ghosts in her attic. The heroes and villains of the Reconstruction Period—for there were at least a few—are now passing into the gray steam of the past also, and this is fitting. More so than the residents of any other corner of the nation, we Southerners love our mythology, and the sooner our ancestors step into the past, the sooner we can start making up legends and folksongs about them.

This is a legend, if you did not know it. I would have written it up as a folksong, I suppose, but, then again, I'm not that ambitious. It's a true story too, if you can believe that. Much truth is legendary, and many legends are truths. I don't know if that is a quote from somebody old and Roman, but, even if it isn't, my momma used to say it, back before I moved to Mobile, and I always thought she was sage enough without speaking Latin. But, I digress.

As I ought to have said from the beginning, my legend takes place in the very legendary city of Mobile, Alabama, which, in 1886, was quite a sight. The city, like so many old Southern towns, had a mixture of classical opulence and tropical rustication that made it feel at the same time ancient and mysterious.

Here, you could find an entire forum of Greek and Roman revival columns and antique wrought-iron balconies, all hidden away behind creeping bayou vines and Spanish moss. Here, too, you could find both stately old gentlemen in their best linen suits, and fresh arrivals from the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean beyond, bringing with them unique cultures and traditions spiced with rum and seared under the tropical sun. Mobile is, after all, a port city, and port cities, so far as I know, tend to be colored with the influences of distant lands and different cultures.

Thus, even in 1886, every crowded street in Mobile appeared wonderfully diverse and exciting. Beneath the branches of the town's magnolias,

between its white antebellum columns, and through its black iron gates, I knew that adventure could unfold—grander adventures than I might have ever dreamed at home in the little cabin in Mississippi, and more sinister ones to boot.

What brought me to Mobile was a job, working as a carriage-driver for a family called “Baudette.” Now, this is a very beautiful and established French-Creole name, which I actually believe means “donkey,” or more precisely “mule,” as in “stubborn as a...” I have this under good authority too, as it was the owner of this name who once told me about its origin, and I must admit that the translation is a fitting one given the singular character of its translator.

From what I have said so far, you might presume, as I did at first, that my new employer in Mobile would be some stocky, old Southern gentleman, set-in-his-ways. However, you’d be mistaken. It is true that, from my home near Natchez, I had answered a newspaper advertisement in the Gulf Coast Presbyterian Journal from one

“Bill Baudette of Mobile;” I had corresponded with “Bill Baudette of Mobile” about the particulars of employment, and, hoping to impress my new boss, I even purchased a fine cigar on the ferryboat for “Bill Baudette of Mobile” as a greeting present. But, when I traveled to the gentleman’s beautiful Italianate home, Baudette Hall, and when I crossed the flowery gardens to ring the doorbell of the mansion, and, cigar in hand, when I asked the smiling maid for “Mr. William Baudette of Mobile,” all I received was a roaring laugh and the strange response, “Now, hush your mouth, brother. Do you want to commune with a dead man?”

“Why, what do you mean, sister?” I asked in response. “Ain’t this Baudette Hall? Says so on the sign right over yonder.” The maid kept on smiling, “Why yes, this is Baudette Hall, House, Office, and everything else it says on that sign, but if you are looking for William Baudette, brother, I’ll have to give you directions down the street to the cemetery. He done breathed his last ‘most nine months ago.” “Nine months?” I exclaimed,

“Land’s sake! But I only answered his advert for a driver three weeks ago. Jumping Jehoshaphat, I was only corresponding with him the day before last!”

The maid stopped smiling and hummed like she knew what was the matter. “Mm-hmm,” quoth she, “and how was this correspondence signed, brother?”

“Why, Mr. Bill Baudette of Mobile,” I explained. “He said that he was a private detective, like Allan Pinkerton, and he needed someone who could drive him around town—and into the country, if need be—every day of the week, excluding the Sabbath. I’m a capable driver, so I wrote back in response to the clipping. My name is Jedidiah Took.”

“Now we’re getting somewhere,” nodded the maid. “My name is Mary Williams,” she curtsyed. “Now tell me, Mr. Took, did Bill Baudette actually sign her name Mr., because, if so, she must be about the prettiest—and most conniving—Mr. I have ever seen.”

“What exactly are you signifying, Miss Williams?” I questioned. “Have I somehow blundered?

Who exactly is the Bill Baudette with whom I have an appointment?”

“I apologize for any unintended subterfuge, Mr. Took, but I am the Bill Baudette whom you are here to see.” Appearing in the doorway behind the maid, the woman who finally effected this introduction was, indeed, the prettiest Mr. I had ever seen.

Gowned in an elegant peach-colored dress with white lace collar and cuffs, white lace gloves, and high-heeled shoes with little, peach bows on them, Bill Baudette carried her matching sunhat and parasol in her hands, and a large, woven purse dangled from her elbow.

In response to my evident surprise, the mature lady, who was apparently my new master—or, rather, mistress—explained, “My given name, Mr. Took, is Belinda, but my daddy always called me Bill, on account of his wanting a boy to take over the family business. Instead, he got me to fulfill the same purpose. Lots of folks ‘round here call me Belle, but it’s all the same to me. Miss Baudette, I think, will do nicely.”

“Why—” I had to remind myself to breathe, “Why, sweet fancy Moses, Miss Baudette, that will do just fine.”

“What’s the matter, Mr. Took?” Miss Baudette asked as she stepped onto the sunny porch and began tying her hat atop her gorgeous yellow curls.

“Haven’t you ever seen a female private detective before?”

“Why... why no, miss!” I shook my head slowly.

“Well, then I suppose I am still the only one in Alabama,” Miss Baudette beamed as she tapped me with the point of her parasol. Then, still regarding my dumbfounded expression, she added, “Is there something else, Mr. Took?” I gulped. “I’ve rarely met a White woman who would give me the time of day, Miss Baudette,” I explained, “live alone call me Mr. Took.”

My new employer simpered, “Well, I guess that you didn’t know that I am a woman, and I didn’t know that you are Black, so we’re both a little bit surprised today, now aren’t we, but I don’t see a reason why these things should make any difference.

When Life makes up its mind to give you a surprise, you shouldn’t question it, but just be appreciative; you never know who you’re going to get. That’s just what my daddy always said, and I never had a reason to doubt him.”

It was the best thing that “Bill” could have said at the moment, but I still felt like she had fibbed to me in her advertisement by holding back the truth. What would it be like working for a woman detective?

“Now, Mr. Took,” Miss Baudette continued, glancing at my carpetbags, “you will have plenty of time later to unpack your things in your new accommodation, but, just now, you have arrived at a perfect time to peacock your driving skills. Something unsavory has happened on Commerce Street over by the cargo docks, and I need to get there immediately.”

As I transferred my carpetbags to Miss Williams, my new employer directed me, “We will be taking the open dogcart from the stable out back; there are two chestnut mares named Susannah and

Rosa-Lee. And Mr. Took," she paused before I had a chance to slip around the corner of the house, "I hope you have a strong constitution. It would appear that a man has been killed!" I gulped as I made my way to the horses. The fine-smelling cigar was still in my hand.

I hope you believe me when I tell you that I do have a pretty strong constitution, and yet it was not strong enough for what I beheld at Commerce Street that Monday morning. My first day on the job working for Miss Baudette saw me standing twenty paces from a corpse near Mobile Bay, waiting with the mares, as grumpy sailors shuffled past a long line of coal-belching riverboats.

"Well, lookie here at what the tide pulled in," one of several uniformed coppers declared as he espied my new employer approaching the evident focus of some police attention. "Why, it's Old Man Baudette's daughter," cackled the constable, "just in time to see us wrap things up, as per usual. Eh, boss?"

"Belle!" To my surprise, the commanding officer looked up from the body and actually waved his hat at Miss Baudette. This handsome fellow, who I supposed was a detective from his street clothes, seemed friendly enough at first, until I considered that he was not really waving howdy, but actually waving my employer away. "Belle, stand back!" he repeated, as his constable returned to work. "This is no sight for a lady, and, besides, we have already recorded the incident, officially, as death by misadventure."

"I am not just some lady; I am a detective, Clifford, the same as you, and you would do well to remember that," Miss Baudette claimed as the party to whom she directed her speech drew nearer. "Come on Belle, we are hardly the same," the policeman countered with sincerity, but then his voice turned facetious. "For example, I certainly don't show up to work dressed like I am going to a jubilee ball!"

"Well, I don't arrive smelling of cheap morning whiskey and chewing tobacco," Miss Baudette returned.

“But there are different strokes for different folks, I suppose.”

The policeman, who the others called Detective Caldwell, frowned. “Your tongue remains as sharp as a hatpin, Belle,” he said, “but your services are not required here on this otherwise fine morning; we have everything wrapped up and under control. There is really nothing to see here.”

Clearly, the detective’s statement was an untruth. Following my employer’s gaze, my curious eyes came to rest upon the body of a poor unfortunate soul that had so far remained concealed or half-concealed from view. Now that I beheld the gruesome thing, however, I found it so revolting that I was just about compelled to retch some sizable portion of my “strong constitution” into Mobile Bay. A man with a large, orange mustache had been more or less crushed by a huge metal sign advertising the drinking hall that he now lay before, and his plain white linen suit had become a scarlet-dyed linen suit at no extra charge. His eyes were closed, but his mouth was contorted something awful,

as if mid-scream.

“I might call that something to see,” Miss Baudette noted as I said a prayer for the dead man—and tried to keep myself from retching. “I guess that the tavern’s proprietor could not have chosen a more appropriate name,” she continued, reading the title off the sign that had fallen, “Bullseye Saloon.”

“It is an unsightly business, I do declare,” the detective put his hands on his hips, “but, as I said, it was entirely accidental. There is nothing for you to investigate.” Detective Caldwell spoke in response to Miss Baudette’s obvious attempt to read from his open notebook. At first, the lawman tried to conceal his annotations from her, but he could not seem to resist her sugary tone when she simpered, “Oh, come now, Clifford, won’t you just humor me a little bit?”

The officer sighed and read aloud, “We found the name and address of one Mr. Tyler Peele in the victim’s pocketbook. He was an employee of the Bullseye Saloon, and he was pronounced deceased by misadventure this morning around 5:30, when

his body was discovered by longshoremen arriving at the wharf. Apparently, he was locking up the bar when a somewhat oxidized chain on the tavern's signboard broke, and the heavy weight entered a trajectory that intercepted the victim's torso."

"Splat!" summarized Miss Baudette, making a face. "And you thoroughly checked the chain?" she wondered, again trying to read the lawman's handwriting. "It looks pretty new, really; not too many patches of rust on it."

While the detective sifted through pages in his notebook, Miss Baudette took it upon herself to bypass her associate and have a little look-see at the chain, "As a matter of fact, I don't see any links here that are broken, Clifford, 'cept for this one... and I'd say it's been cut!"

One of the uniformed coppers turned around in surprise, "Cut? But that can't be..."

"And yet it is," came a whistle, as Miss Baudette pulled a sliver of cleanly separated chain-link from beneath the heavy signboard,

"and a cut chain means..." "Sweet fancy Moses, he was murdered!" I exclaimed, having overheard the whole conversation. For their part, Susannah and Rosa-Lee, the mares, nodded along.

"Splat!" Miss Baudette said again, making that same wincing face. She stood up and extended her gloved hand toward the detective. "Gentlemen," she said, "my usual rate will apply—a pair of double-eagles per day, plus expenses, chargeable to the department."

Detective Caldwell frowned as he accepted the fragment of chain-link from the lady's gloved hand, "I'm still unconvinced it was murder, and you only get paid if you catch the culprit," quoth he. "But I suppose you'll stick 'round the scene and find some more crucial details that my best constable missed?"

"No, no, not today," Miss Baudette smiled as she waved her hand at the frowning copper, "and don't be too hard on Jerry—this just isn't shaping up to be his year." She giggled as she returned to the dogcart.

“Hey, just where are you going all of a sudden?” the detective followed.

“Home, Miss Baudette?” I questioned as I climbed back onto my driving bench, equally surprised by the abrupt departure.

“Not quite yet,” my employer corrected with the knowing grin of a sphinx, directed toward both myself and the lawmen, “I would much rather have a bite to eat first. How do you feel about a hot plate of grits in the morning, Mr. Took? There is a dining-room on Joachim Street, and I have been meaning to try it out...”

“Joachim Street, miss? That’s quite a drive for grits!” I had studied the map of my new city enough to know the location, but I couldn’t understand how Miss Baudette could think of food while standing so near a corpse. “Good grits are worth a drive,” my employer claimed, intimating some double meaning that was lost on me. But whether I understood her purposes or not, her wish was my command.

I couldn’t figure what was on Miss Baudette’s mind as I drove her past the beautiful fountain of

Bienville Square and around to the intersection of Joachim Street and Conti Avenue.

Sure enough, there was a little café on the streetcorner, tucked between a line of live oaks and a three-story boarding house.

But, as I admitted to my new employer, “It sure doesn’t look like much from here.”

“Looks aren’t everything, Mr. Took,” Miss Baudette countered as she dismounted the dogcart and implored me to follow.

“That may be so,” I whispered as I tied the mares before the old hole-in-the-wall, “but they sure are a start!”

To my surprise, my mistress led me into the café and sat me down in a corner. The place was run by folks of my own Persuasion, and the few regulars were more surprised to see Miss Baudette there than myself. She instructed me to order anything I cared for from the menu, which I was only too glad to do, and then she began walking off toward the back of the dining-room.

“Where are you going, miss?”

I wondered aloud as the lady gathered her skirts in her hands

and stepped through a seldom-used back door. “Never you mind,” she said at first, but then she changed her answer to, “I’m just powdering my nose, but be sure to give a signal if you see the detective come ‘round. Get me a cup of chickaree, too, if it isn’t too much trouble.” I whistled again, wondering what I had gotten myself into, and then I commenced my order.

While I was sitting at the table, Miss Baudette was busy stealing her way up the café’s outdoor staircase and across the roof of the dining-room faster than a Mississippi polecat from Bayou Pierre. I realized this much only when I spotted her reflection in a street-puddle, opening an exterior window of the next-door boardinghouse and climbing inside. The private detective sure seemed spry in her petticoats, bustle, and corset, but I wondered how things would go for me if my employer was arrested during my first day on the job. What in creation was she doing up there? I shuddered to think of it, and I began watching the second-hand on my

watch whirl around and around so upset that I could barely even enjoy my cornbread, shrimp, grits, and chickaree.

Eventually, a police-wagon pulled by a sorry-looking gray nag wheeled around the corner with the detective and his constable arguing on its bench. Shooting up like a firecracker, I began whistling as loudly as I could, but this nervous signal only attracted the attention of the whole café, along with that of the two policemen to boot.

“Jumping Jehoshaphat, now I’ve done it!” I gulped as the copper narrowed his eyes at me. “Miss Baudette, I may as well tell you that the police have arrived,” I called innocently.

The peach-gowned investigator popped her head out of the window just in time to see Detective Caldwell cross his arms. “You certainly do know how to be discreet, now don’t you Mr. Took?” she laughingly called down from the boarding-house. “Well, you might as well come on up,” she added, addressing the policemen as well as myself,

“I’ll go unlock Mr. Peele’s door down below.”

“I’ll admit that you almost had me, Belle—not stumped, of course, but confused,” Detective Caldwell shook his head as we all stood in the victim’s poorly-lit but well-furnished apartment. “If you had not mentioned Joachim Street, I might not have known that you read the victim’s address from my notepad!” “Maybe I just wanted to throw you a bone, Clifford,” my employer grinned as she sorted through the pile of books and pamphlets that lay on the victim’s desk. “Sometimes it is more fun to play together.”

As I lingered in a corner, quiet as usual, I could see a little grin appear on the detective’s handsome countenance as my employer turned around. While the constable called Jerry O’Toole feebly poked about the bedroom of the small apartment, my employer searched high and low for anything that might tell of Mr. Peele’s friends, family, and acquaintances. She first checked the contents of his desk, and then about his fireplace, and then beneath his oriental carpet

for any possible clue. However, it was Detective Caldwell who ultimately found something this time.

“It looks like Tyler Peele received several letters from someone up in Memphis,” he explained as he sifted through the contents of the victim’s mailbox. “They are all addressed To My Beloved Son, so they must be from his mother. Make a note of this address, Jerry—”

“They could just as well be from his father,” Miss Baudette offered, coming to the detective’s side before he could read off the location. “The handwriting looks more like a man’s—heavy and angular—and there is a picture of a bearded fellow on the wall, about the right age to be Mr. Peele’s daddy. But look at this—a little parcel that arrived yesterday with no return address! How peculiar; it appears Mr. Peele opened it and then carefully rewrapped the paper...”

Now all attention shifted from the detective’s letters and focused upon the mysterious package that my mistress held. It was a little, misshapen thing,

sealed in brown butcher paper. Beside a canceled stamp, an unidentifiable seal on the wrappings had been busted by the recipient.

Zealously, my mistress reached into the packet, but she was not immediately rewarded for her curiosity. Instead, Miss Baudette suddenly recoiled her hand with an “Ouch!” and almost dropped the bundle.

“What is it, Belle?” Detective Caldwell questioned, shouldering up to the lady.

“Some kind of darned straight-pin,” my mistress frowned, and then she dumped the contents of the package into a nearby brass tray.

“Sweet fancy Moses!” I cried instinctively as the contents hit the tray, and I backed up a pace with my felt driver’s cap in my hands. “It’s some kind of a hoodoo curse!”

Sure enough, a voodoo doll had landed on the tray, and it was not some cheap relic made of twine and sticks, either. Instead, the doll wore a sewn linen suit exactly matching that of Mr. Tyler Peele’s corpse,

complete with bright red stain. The doll had a little orange moustache, too, that looked like it was made of human hair, and there was a pin impaled through its chest, upon which Miss Baudette had pricked herself. The feet of the doll were spun around backwards, so I did not doubt but that there was something evil in it, as this was the symbol for a kind of black magic called hoodoo, which was practiced along the swamps in the vicinity of my Mississippi home.

The coincidence of the spooky doll appearing in the man’s apartment hours after his mysterious demise was shocking, and Detective Caldwell was momentarily speechless. Miss Baudette, however, seemed unfazed. “There’s something else in this package,” she said, this time being more careful as she fished into the bag, “I think it’s an old daguerreotype photograph.”

The doll still gave me the jitters, but I put on a brave face for the sake of the others—and in order to appear more levelheaded than Jerry, who was now cowering by the door.

Stepping closer to my employer, I could see that she held a silvery image in her hands. The photograph showed four men, including the victim, dressed in what looked like naval uniforms. The level horizon of the sea was visible behind them, and, most striking of all, the face of one of the four figures had been scratched out. No words appeared on the card except for the French phrase, *La Vengeance*, written in cursive capitals.

“Revenge,” Detective Caldwell translated, “is a common theme in the superstitions of the colored folks ‘round here.” He looked at me as he spoke, seeming to expect some further explanation. “Yes sir,” I obliged, “the voodoo religion spread through maroon colonies back before the war, and now it is practiced by loads of people of all Persuasions. When a doll is made with a bit of a person’s hair or clothes, it is supposed to take on a piece of that person’s soul. Then, different colored pins are skewered through the doll to give its look-alike blessings... or curses.”

“Mr. Peele certainly wasn’t blessed,” Detective Caldwell said as he eyed the figurine. “No sir!” I agreed. “This doll works dark magic, I reckon.”

Detective Caldwell ordered his constable to collect the doll for evidence, but Jerry refused to touch it, so the lawman wrapped the doll back in the brown paper before placing it in his coat. Meanwhile, my employer seemed more interested in the photograph.

“It is a very worn image, isn’t it?” she thought to herself. “Almost certainly from the war. I think that there are three Federal warrant officers and a commander pictured, if my knowledge of uniforms serves me well...” “So, whose face is blocked out?” the detective questioned as we all studied the daguerreotype. “It’s a warrant officer’s, but not the victim’s,” Jerry acknowledged, but this was obvious. One might have expected a murderer to mutilate the face of his victim in an image, but Tyler Peele was one of the three other men in the scene.

“I think that it is the killer attempting to conceal his own identity,” Miss Baudette explained, “but there is no way to be sure of the fourth man without finding another copy of the daguerreotype or its glass negative. I wish that I knew the name of the photographer or the identity of one of these two other sailors—then we might have a real lead.”

“Hmm,” I wondered as Jerry collapsed in the nearest armchair. Looking at the image, I hesitated, “I think that I recognize one of these other two faces, Miss Baudette—the clean-shaven commander. Only, I can’t remember where I saw his like before...”

“A big help that is,” Jerry moaned with disgust. “This fellow’s even worse than your last ‘boy,’ Miss Baudette, and at least he wasn’t a damned—”

“I would choose your next word carefully, Mr. O’Toole,” my employer kept the copper in check on my behalf. I was amazed to hear her defend me, “Far be it from you to shoot him down.”

Holding his homburg in his hands, Detective Caldwell broke the uncomfortable silence that followed, “Well, we can take this photograph back to the stationhouse and distribute some facsimiles throughout the city. But, do keep us informed if you remember anything, Mr.—” The lawman extended his hand to shake mine. “Took,” I responded, “Jedediah Took.”

He nodded at me before accepting the photograph from Miss Baudette. “Belle, I do not for a single second believe that a hoodoo curse killed Tyler Peele, and if he was murdered, then his murderer must still be at large. I’ll send a man over to Fort Gaines to check on the military connection, but pickings are sure to be slim since the victim wasn’t a Southerner. I’m officially putting you on the case, Belle,” the detective locked eyes with my employer, “but you are not to do any more wild feats of your own volition. Keep me informed, do you hear?”

“There are plenty of folks who would call me wild simply for stepping out of the home,”

Miss Baudette rebuked the handsome detective, "but I will do my best to keep you apprised." "Good," he spoke stiffly, trying to hold back a grin. "I wouldn't want to see something happen to you."

The start of my employment with Miss Belinda "Bill" Baudette of Mobile had been a cyclone of agitation. I had to admit that I was glad to return to her tranquil Italianate home for the evening; I was double glad when I discovered that the house servant, Mary Williams, had spent the day fixing up a hardy dinner of catfish almondine, collards, and honey-butter biscuits; triple glad to learn that I got to share in her creations; and quadruple glad to heave my carpetbags into my spacious new quarters on the top floor of the hall. Yes, indeed, this was not such a bad life to lead—if you could get over the flattened bodies and hoodoo curses that came with the territory. The evening breeze felt cool and comfortable up in the attic, and I opened up my little window as I unpacked my traps.

"Supper is soon to be ready, Mr. Took," Miss Williams announced quietly as she arrived at the door of my domicile. "The mistress is already making her way to the table downstairs."

I looked up from my carpetbags, "You mean we are going to eat with Miss Baudette at the dining table?" This was my first time to work for a fancy lady in Mobile, but I knew instinctually that this was not how things were customarily done.

"Yes sir," Miss Williams said casually, "there is no separate dining-room for the help here; we can practically walk on equal ground all comfortable-like." "Miss Baudette is quite a unique lady," I sighed as I sat down on the foot of my new bed. "Who ever heard of a woman detective like her, and with such manners to boot? How long have you worked for her, Miss Williams? Has she always been this way?"

"I've been here most of my life," the maid explained, "and I can attest that Miss Baudette has always been just a little bit different from most folks 'round here. I guess it's not much of a secret that her daddy bought my

daddy from the Williams family down the street and set him free back in '57. Old Mr. Baudette used to be part of the 'Railroad, you see, and the mistress too, and they offered to let him travel up North, if he was willing. But he said that he didn't know a single soul outside of Alabama, so he stayed right here and made pretend to still be the Baudettes' slave 'til the Year of 'Jubilo. I guess my daddy always knew that change would come down here eventually."

"Things always tend to change... eventually." I was deeply impressed by Miss Williams' story, and I longed to serve my new mistress well by helping her as best I could with her mystery. I knew that I recognized that countenance from the victim's photograph, but where had I seen him before? Justice could not be achieved for Tyler Peele, and my employer could not collect her reward money until I could remember the owner of that face! "Anyway," the maid sighed, "you ought to put your necktie back on before you come down for supper..."

I nodded and reached for my

black tie as the girl quit the room. As I located it on the bed, however, I also found the thick cigar I had purchased for Miss Baudette before I knew she was a lady. A phrase crossed my lips as a revelation seemed to flash across my eyes, "The riverboat!" I hurrahed, attracting the maid's attention. "Oh, Mary, I figured it out! I knew I recognized that man in the picture!"

As I screamed down the stairs, I gave the sweet maid a little peck on the forehead before rushing down to see Miss Baudette. I believed that we were one step closer to tracking down a murderer!

In the formal dining-room of Baudette Hall, my employer sat before a lavishly set table. With evening wear as refined as her day clothes, she was attired in a black sequined gown with elegant muttonchop sleeves and a striking lace cravat, pinned with a dark cameo brooch. She had just finished illuminating a pair of silver candelabras, and she was airing herself with an old French fan as I rushed into the room.

"Why Mr. Took!" my employer

exclaimed as I hurried into the dark chamber of sophistication.

"I appreciate that you may be famished, but we do dress for dinner in this house."

"Yes, miss," I panted as I refastened my separated collar and knotted my necktie, "but I needed to tell you—immediately—that I remembered the identity of the man in that photograph—the one that we found in Mr. Peele's boardinghouse..."

"Oh?" Miss Baudette questioned with an impressed sense of expectation.

"Yes miss," I caught my breath, "he sold me a cigar aboard the Wampus Cat, the paddle-wheeler that took me from New Orleans to Mobile after I rode down the river from Natchez. He was a right ornery man, Miss Baudette, and he told me, very pointedly, that he was a Confederate veteran..."

"A Confederate veteran?" my employer calmly raised her eyebrows. "But, Mr. Took, the man in the picture was wearing a Yankee uniform."

"I know," I nodded, "that's what threw me at first, but I'm sure of myself now. His name was..."

"Eustace P. Benjamin," another voice exclaimed from down the hall, stealing my moment of revelation. As Miss Williams held open the door for him, Detective Caldwell entered the room with a flourish, "That's what you were going to say, right Mr. Took?"

"Yes sir," said I, "but how did you know it?"

"Because my message-boy returned from Fort Gaines not one hour ago, and the quartermaster there recognized all three men in the daguerreotype," the detective announced as he handed Miss Baudette a file folder. "The men with unadulterated faces were three turncoat naval spies during the National Conflict, all from right here in Mobile. Tyler Peele, as we know, was murdered this morning on Commerce Street when someone dropped a heavy saloon sign on him. Thaddeus Merrimack, another warrant officer from the photograph, was found dead last month in Baltimore under mysterious circumstances, and that leaves our friend Eustace P. Benjamin as the commander in the image, whereabouts unknown until right now."

"Well cut off my legs and call me Shortie!" Miss Baudette spoke half-jestingly. "I thought that I was supposed to be the ace investigator 'round here, but both of you seem to have wrapped up the matter at a quick march! It would appear that we have a sequential killer on our hands—a man who has bumped off two out of four fellows in a photograph that also included himself.

Now this Eustace fellow would reasonably be the murderer's next—and final—victim. But what we still don't know is the identity of the criminal and his motivations!"

"Motivations?" asked the detective. "If at least three out of the four men in that photograph were Southern spies, then certainly that has something to do with their assassinations..."

"But why assassinate them now?" Miss Baudette questioned. "The war ended several years ago, gentlemen. Why would the murderer be killing spies now, and leaving around photographs that are more than twenty years old, alongside cursed dolls?"

"Why don't we just go ask him?" I wondered aloud, catching the attention of both my employer

and the detective. "If Mr. Benjamin is the killer's next target," I declared, "why should the murderer wait to strike when the Wampus Cat is still docked along Bay Shell Road in the harbor until dawn? What's to stop us from capturing the culprit in the act of murder, or better yet before it?"

The thought had not yet occurred to the detective, but Miss Baudette immediately stood at attention, "I like the way you think, Mr. Took. That was my sentiment precisely!"

It was only after this exclamation that poor Miss Williams crept into the room morosely, having overheard the conversation. "I guess I'll just put the catfish in the icebox," she said with a sigh, "but I swear that this detecting work will reduce you to skin and bones."

As I drove Miss Baudette's dogcart in the direction of Bay Shell Road, I grew as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. Miss Baudette had quickly changed into a more manageable gingham skirt and grey shirtwaist, and she rode on the back of the cart

beside Detective Caldwell, who appeared to be loading a revolver. The sun had set out over the water, and now a gibbous moon cast pallid light upon the city's shoreline. All manner of swamp insects and birds chatted, chirped, and warbled, but few people were around to be seen.

"There she is," I finally said, indicating the side-wheeled ship I had disembarked so early that morning, "the Wampus Cat." The open decks of the whitewashed steamer appeared strange and ethereal in the moonlight, and the great black smokestacks with their coxcomb tops rose menacingly from behind the wheelhouse. The figurehead of some mythical swamp feline made me shrink as I slowed the horses from a quick trot, and finally made them to stand along the pier. Only a few lights shone aboard the riverboat, and these did not dissuade the growing sense of dread that I felt in my chest.

We went aboard.
"Mr. Benjamin?" Detective Caldwell cried as we proceeded along the darkened decks. "Mr. Eustace P. Benjamin,

are you aboard?" The first lighted compartment that we came upon was the ship's lounge, an elegantly paneled space that had been packed during my overnight crossing from New Orleans. The fact that I had previously seen the lounge filled with passengers made it feel even emptier now.

"Mr. Benjamin?" the detective called again, but my employer urged him to shush. "He is just as likely to hear us as the murderer," Miss Baudette explained in whispers, "we ought to keep quiet."

Just as she said this, a muffled metallic clanging emanated from somewhere behind the ship's empty bar, and it sounded as though someone was mumbling loudly. Detective Caldwell rushed through the next door but discovered that the noise was passing through the pipes behind a partition, and he could not determine the direction of their source.

Meanwhile, my mistress had found a brown paper envelope on the counter of the bar. Dumping out its contents, she discovered

another copy of the La Vengeance photograph from Mr. Peele's apartment, and beside it landed another doll, this one with no facial hair and a large hatpin driven through it. It was difficult to identify if the doll wore any clothes, because the body had been partially burned. "Burned? Ah, and the noise in the pipes too!" Miss Baudette exclaimed, her mind racing faster than a thoroughbred on Derby Day. "Good God almighty, where's the boiler-room? He's going to be cooked alive!"

Leaping into action, I rushed back onto the open deck and led the way downstairs. Miss Baudette and the detective were at my heels as I showed them the way to the boiler-room, which was discovered to be locked. The door to the boiler-room was a heavy plate of whitewashed steel. It was impassible without a key and could not be broken open, though Detective Caldwell vigorously attempted it, first ramming the door with his shoulder and then striking the padlock with a coal-shovel he found resting nearby. "Land's sake!" I exclaimed, "Ain't there anybody left on this barge?"

Of course, there was—or, at least, there had been. A loud splash from the darkness below alerted us that something had just gone overboard—or somebody. In an instant, the detective was in the water too, splashing, kicking, and fighting.

A heavy clank resounded from the waterline, and one of the two figures sank into the blackened abyss without consciousness. For a moment, my heart stopped, for I could not discern which party had won the fight! And when a husky, bearded specter began rising back up the ship's ladder, I knew that the victor had not been the detective.

"Who art thou?" Miss Baudette boomed as the hulking figure climbed on deck, his form dripping like a wet sponge. "Sir, I demand to know!" "La Vengeance they call me," came a husky voice that drew nearer, "and my work here is finally complete! Forty good men, my brothers-in-arms from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, died in these waters twenty-two years ago, betrayed by three Southern spies. I was their patsy, blamed for

what those traitors had done, and, as such, I was jailed at Camp Douglas amid those scores of bloodthirsty successionists. For more than two decades, I suffered as a guiltless prisoner, without hope of parole," the villain spat, "but, I also learned things during that torment. From the traitors who surrounded me, I learned the true identities of the men who had wrought me low, and I learned how to seek them out. I also learned, from the poor inmates of Mississippi, how to conjure up a deadly hoodoo curse and ensure that it would come true..."

Miss Baudette had extracted a derringer from her handbag as La Vengeance operatically approached, and now she had it aimed squarely at the murderer's chest. He came so close to her that he could have touched the muzzle, however my employer still refused to fire. "Go ahead and pull that trigger, woman!" replied the bearded man. "My task here is complete. The fire is stoked; the chute is full; and the key for the door is lost to the depths of Mobile Bay. If I die now, I do so knowing that my rival dies with me!"

But this was not to be. While my employer held the murderer in check with her derringer, Detective Caldwell silently climbed back up the ladder himself, rattled from his concussion, but still breathing. La Vengeance did not know the detective had survived until the sudden weight of a coal-shovel struck him, brutally, from behind, causing him to fall forward and onto my beautiful boss.

"About time you came back, Clifford!" Miss Baudette caught her breath as she was made to hold the weight of the heavy villain in her arms. "And you, Mr. Took, weren't you going to do anything?" Her tone was unexpectedly flippant even mere moments after potential disaster. "What was I supposed to do, miss?" I shrugged, "I'm just the driver, and you had the gun." "I... got..." meanwhile, the concussed detective gasped for air as he dropped the shovel. He put a hand on his aching temple as he staggered forward, "...the key. It... around his neck..."

The lawman looked like he was about to collapse on the deck, so I quickly accepted the key from

his hand and unlocked the door to the boiler-room. Bound beside the open door of the steamship's large furnace, I discovered an undressed Eustace P. Benjamin a little smoked, but no worse for wear. One can scarcely comprehend the look on the old Confederate's face at having been saved by a man of my Persuasion.

"Well! I think that that just about wraps up a fine meal, Miss Williams," Detective Caldwell exclaimed some days later as he sat in the elegant dining-room of Baudette Hall. "I have never tasted crawfish etouffee made quite so divinely, and the oysters, too, were the best I've had in all my born days."

Miss Baudette circled around the table to the detective as the evening's cook thanked him for his kindness. "Cuffs and Buttons, Clifford, or would you prefer a small glass of imported Armagnac?" the hostess questioned as the detective reclined with his hands on his belly. "Cuffs and Buttons, of course," he replied as I looked on with a grin,

"you know I enjoy my bourbon." Glasses of the aromatic liqueur were poured from the decanter by the window, and soon everyone had a crystal snifter in hand. Detective Caldwell immediately tried to lift his glass to his lips, but my employer stopped him.

"Just a moment, now, Clifford," she said, "I believe that this occasion demands a toast..." "Not another one to my health, I hope," the detective grumbled, "they have been keeping my aching head so well toasted at the stationhouse that I fear I may relapse." "No, no, nothing like that," Miss Baudette shook her head comically. "I had something else in mind..." "Well, I hope that we will not be drinking to that Yankee murderer," the detective interrupted again, "even if this dinner was to celebrate his conviction for double homicide..." "Actually, I would like to propose a toast to fellows like him..." Miss Baudette surprised us all. "Indeed," she said in response to our gasps,

“I would like to say a toast to vengeful murderers, and secret conspiracies, and hoodoo curses,” she exclaimed with uplifted eyes, “may such criminal follies keep us employed for many years to come!”

Four glasses clinked in unison, and I savored my share of the spirits while “Bill Baudette of Mobile” stared each one of us in the eyes. This was to become only the first of our many adventures together.

I never realized how much your presence took up space in our home. I never realized how much I would miss the small things about you. From the nagging to the asking if I ate yet, to the small conversations we had because you were curious about who you raised as a granddaughter.

I never realized how empty I would feel for the first few months you were gone. How empty the kitchen would be without you always cooking in it. How quiet it sounded without hearing you call Papa Lakay whenever he was hard-headed.

I knew that one day your presence would disappear, but I never realized how much I took advantage of it until I had to say goodbye to you 2,890 miles away from home. Nearly a year has gone by without your presence, and today would've been your 78th birthday.

Nearly a year ago today, I would never have realized my time

with you would be cut short.

I still struggle with the idea that you will never see me graduate, never see me get married, never see your granddaughter become the best woman she can be. I still struggle with the idea that I'll never see you again, hear your voice, or that you won't be there when I come home.

I still struggle with the idea that you will never see me connect with our culture, or see me finally be confident in claiming my identity as a Filipino, an identity I always struggled to feel deserving of.

But it's been nearly a year since I've lost you, and although time has healed most of the regret I've had since your death, I still think about you every day. I once thought your presence was gone forever; but now I feel it even stronger since the day you left.

I see you when I look in the mirror and realize how much I resemble the smallest

features of your face. I see you in my determination and perseverance, because although it's not the same as moving all the way from Ilocos Sur at the age of 19, I made the hard decision to leave home to pursue my future too.

I see you in my work for FASU, as I always wanted to know more about my culture.

I feel you when I grow interest in learning Ilocano or want to know more about where our family came from. I feel the love you once put in those meals you nourished me with for 18 years whenever I try to replicate them, though they will never taste the same without you.

I think about you when everything in my body tells me to give up, because you showed me true strength when your own body was giving up on you.

I think about you every time I get home sick, because although my home is in Hawai'i, you

remind me that home can be wherever you find purpose.

I see you and Papa when I remember that I got you two tattooed, although you wouldn't have exactly approved. Although you may have left me here physically, your presence is still strong.

Although you may have never seen me coming home from my first year of college, Cole graduating from his last, or finally see me pass my road test, I took your presence with me wherever I went.

They say when people die, their souls go up to heaven. They say that when you die, eventually your life will be forgotten. And even if that may be true, you live through me and everything I put my heart into.

Happy Birthday, Grandma Tining. You made me who I am today, you taught me to be unapologetically me, and your presence will never fail to be seen.



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My family and I tend to not talk that much about what's going on in our lives, but we really like to bond over board games, card games, and puzzles. There's just this one kind of puzzle that I will never be able to solve—Jigsaw puzzles. I'm horrible at them.

The issue is that all of these emotions tend to arise when I attempt to solve one. During my building process, I will get anxious because I think that failing to solve this jigsaw puzzle correlates to failing at life. Soon I'll become depressed because these thoughts overwhelm me and my energy becomes fully drained. Eventually, I'll just get so frustrated that I will slam the table thinking that maybe it's the damn puzzles fault. That whole building process is just my mental illness in action.

I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression, but not because I can't build a jigsaw puzzle;

however, it was because I was born Filipino-American.

Don't get me wrong, I love being Filipino-American now but it just took me a very long time to accept it. Now, mental illness is such a touchy subject for many. Some people don't believe it or maybe it's just too hard to hear it right now so I get it if you just leave and come back after. However, I'm not here to dump on you, tell you how my life is harder than yours, or simply tell you what you should or should not do. This piece is for me. It's to finally admit how I have mental illnesses because my Filipino-American identity got in the way of solving myself. I am still building my jigsaw puzzle.

Now when I open the box to my jigsaw puzzle, all of these pieces fly out and are spread around. Think of those pieces that make me—well, me. Some pieces are tattered and worn out.

Some pieces are new and colorful. Some pieces don't even go with the puzzle. They're just pieces that have to be put into the right spot at the right time.

With that being said, I start with the outer rim because it's just my appearance; it's what I look like; what I try to look like, and what I want to look like. I'll put down pieces like my height, skin color, eye color, birthmarks, and more. Sometimes I'll switch pieces because I don't think they fit like my hair color, nails, makeup, and outfits.

When putting down so many pieces, the puzzle becomes bigger and more complicated which is just me growing up. Now I actually grew up here in Spokane and have attended predominantly white institutions my whole life. So growing up I never fit in and was never the beautiful one because I was so different.

I wanted to be known as a beautiful person who still managed to fit in with everyone else. So I changed the way I look, hated the things I couldn't change, and gained many self-esteem and self-confidence issues. I wanted to have a button nose, white skin, be tall, and much more because I thought that is beautiful and that's how you fit in. Even other Filipinos agreed that being white was much more beautiful than being a different color. I was consumed by this colonial mentality and that I will never fit the beauty standards for both Filipinos and Americans. It made me depressed because I thought I wasn't beautiful, but also made me anxious because I thought I should be in order to fit in.

Meanwhile building my outer rim, I also tried building the inside with the pieces that I thought would go together.

Pieces that make up my likes and dislikes, personality, what I do, and more. This is where I think pieces should go there but actually go somewhere else. This is where the puzzle gets disorganized and pieces become misplaced. Hell, this is where the pieces that weren't even in the original puzzle get involved.

This was due to the fact that I never built it based on my own judgment, but the judgment of others. I listened to both Filipinos and Americans while they gave me these random pieces that don't even belong in my puzzle. I would listen and adhere to their many stereotypes and expectations since I was six.

Americans just expected me to be sexy but submissive, intelligent with straight As in all her classes, top of the class especially in math, and even spread a rumor that I was going to Yale for college.

Filipinos, on the other hand, expected me to be talented, loud, proud, know the native language, and generous so I can give back to the community considering how much they've done for me to get this far. That's a lot that I just said, right? It was also a lot to balance because I lost my sense of identity and self. I had to act differently between both societies just so I could fit in and not disappoint anyone. In addition, I also had to live up to my parents expectations. They've done too much like immigrating from another country, paid for my sister and I's high school and college, put a roof over our heads, and most importantly unconditionally love me.

I didn't want to make anyone disappointed or think that I was a failure. I tried so hard to not fuck up, but it was already too late. My puzzle pieces were just piling up.

At this point, my puzzle was a mess, it was so bad that it didn't even look like a shape. What else are you supposed to do though? Easy, suck in all the pain like your family members did, right?

When I became so disorganized and all over the place, I never asked anyone for help but instead observed and looked at who's got their shit together. For me, it was my family so I turned to them for some guidance, but I sat and listened to my family members explain how I had it easy and that their lives are much harder than mine. I would then look at how they coped with such issues, but only to see how they have addiction or let it all out through yelling, fighting, and leaving. So what do you do? Well of course, I do the same thing.

This is where pieces of my jigsaw puzzle began to form tears and scars on the pieces that were my arms and legs because of my depression which became so bad that it formed an addiction.

This is where my puzzle started to look lifeless and colorless because I was so anxious and worried that people would begin to notice how my puzzle was an absolute fuck up. This is where I started to lose relationships and friendships because I was so angry at myself that I let it out on others. I kept that Generational Trauma cycle going. Now it's not anyone's fault to fall into this cycle, but it's a vicious cycle where my whole family becomes victims including me. It's a cycle that I fell into and drowned in a pool of jigsaw puzzle pieces.

So why am I standing up here today? Because I know that I'm not allowed to have these mental illnesses because I am too perfect for Americans, too privileged for Filipinos, too brown to even be complaining.

For years I hid my mental illnesses whether it be not wanting to be shamed upon, lack of courage, or because I was scared. But I know I'm not the only one who hasn't actually solved their jigsaw puzzle.

I want to say that I am better. With professional help, I can rearrange my puzzle to look like an actual jigsaw puzzle. With my support system, I can always tell them I'm not having a good day and they will make it a fantastic day. With FASU, I can always know that I am not alone with having these issues but also loving my Filipino-American self more and more everytime I go to the meetings.

Yes, I will have those days where it feels like I am not beautiful, that I am not what people expect me to be and that I have disappointed them, or how I will fall back on my addiction and bad habits.

However I have professionals and communities to support me and fall back on. This piece is for me. It's to finally admit how I have mental illnesses because my Filipino-American identity got in the way of solving myself. I am still building my jigsaw puzzle.

The court order sat untouched for months. I went to the DMV to update my drivers' license, but could not do so without a new social security card. Embarrassed by my oversight, I recalled the online instructions, a busy series of bulleted lists. I drove to the social security office weeks later.

Everyone in the waiting room seemed preoccupied with their phones; Candy Crush sound effects and voices blared from the tiny speakers. No one around me had earbuds or headphones. Usually, in overstimulating environments like these, I slipped on my own headphones. But I had to listen for my ticket number, so the headphones hung around my neck, dejected from lack of use.

A single security guard stood at the entrance, subjecting each civilian to a speech I nearly had memorized by the time my number surfaced above the din. The person who summoned me

sat behind a glass partition, on the opposite end of a counter. I was asked to provide proof of my name change and proof of identification, as well as questions to verify my identity: name, date of birth, birth place, current address, mother's maiden name, father's middle name; and to swear, under penalty of perjury, the accuracy of such information.

As I did so, I was gripped by a feeling of panic. What if I had remembered incorrectly? What if they found me out? I had no crimes to my name, and yet I feared I had missed some unforgivable detail. The person across from me read my new name aloud, then sputtered over the next section: the sex marker. "Social security cards don't have a third gender option," they said, rather apologetically. "Maybe someday."

*Error 404: Gender Not Found.
The gender you are looking for
does not exist.*

I tried to hide the pain on my face. “Okay,” I replied. I collected my papers. The card would arrive in the mail in a few weeks. I thanked them. I passed the security guard on the way out, mid-speech. I got in my car. I called my father. “Who sees your social security card?” I asked.

When you come out, some people will wonder why it took so long— why it didn’t hurt more, living a lie. My new name felt like a warm house, shelter from the blizzard of my old life; if you spend too long in the cold, you lose the ability to tell you’re freezing. I could only watch as my fingers turned blue. It’s killing me, I thought, and used the last of my strength to knock on the door that would later call me home. Only once I started to thaw did I realize how miserable the outside felt.

Each time someone used my old name, they opened the door, letting in a shock of cold air.

With the feeling returning in my fingers and toes, what once didn’t faze me now hurt like hell. I tried to ask them to close the door.

I tried to help them understand. I even tried to close it myself. This was futile; someone always came along and opened it eventually. *What belongs to you, but others use it more than you do?* I wanted to laugh, to minimize the pain. I wanted to tell them how it felt. But my lips were useless things, numb and chattering.

There are different ways transgender people refer to their name pre-transition: birth name, legal name, old name, deadname. My deadname is more ghost than corpse. It haunts me. Even after telling countless family members and friends and teachers my preferred name, even after receiving a judge’s signature to drop the “preferred,” I cannot lay it to rest.

I still have to inform the social security administration, the DMV, the post office, the insurance providers, the doctors, the credit card companies, the makers of my high school diploma, the universities, and on and on. It is a long list.

I am tired of keeping track. If I ever marry and take my spouse's last name, the paperwork will require all the names I have formerly used, which includes my birth name. Amending nineteen years of life feels like an impossible task. It's like trying to stop a flood by building a dam out of toothpicks. My old name is printed in past yearbooks, photo albums, report cards. My inbox boasts emails from organizations I subscribed to before I changed my name. It hides in ancient passwords. My birth name is mine, needed yet unwanted. I am trying to bury it alive.

Each time I use my signature, I ask, "Which one?" "It's up to you," they reply. "Your signature is just a representation of you.

It confirms that you are who you say you are."

What is your name? Do you know where you are? Do you know what has happened to you? Who are you? Are you sure? Are you sure?

People slip up. Grandparents, hairdressers, friends. Hell, I slip up around my trans friends. Not everyone understands what being dead named is like. They're not trying to hurt you, and for that, you consider yourself lucky. But it hurts nonetheless. Use of the wrong name can say: *I don't see you. You don't belong. You're not who you say you are.*

The misgendering does not scrape my skin raw anymore. The deadnaming no longer reduces me to sobs. I am an empty bucket, collecting the day's misfortunes. When I run out of space, my contents spill. The words, once torrents or floods, are now only drops of water. It takes longer to overflow. Sometimes, if I don't reveal my pronouns to someone, I can dissociate, distance myself

from my body when
misgendering happens.

That's not me. They're talking about someone else. My name is both placeholder and identifier; a gift and a given. The euphoria it often provided at the beginning of my transition has faded to a lack of dysphoria. Can I still know myself if I don't know who I am? If I spent most of my existence playing a role, how do I leave the stage? Where is my script? I am my own prop. An understudy. A stand-in. A name can only do so much when you live in a body that does not feel like your own, a body that does not match your brain. The physical changes brought on by puberty devastated me. I tried to starve them into submission; I tried to cut them out of me.

Several weeks after my visit to the Candy Crush-infested office, my new social security card arrived. I avoided the "male" and "female" beneath my name. I drove to the DMV. I left with my temporary license, swung into the drivers' seat, and cried tears of relief.

Weeks earlier, I had every intention of skipping lunch when I left the social security office. (I forget the way this tends to progress. Today, it's lunch. If I had it my way, tomorrow it would be breakfast and lunch. The next day, I'd try to exercise it all off. Soon after, I'd go back to throwing up.) After years of ambivalence toward food, what started as an attempt to reclaim my body had become a coping mechanism, a way to compartmentalize and anesthetize emotions. The hunger, the ritual of it all, would be a welcome distraction. But my phone kept exploding with notifications from my parents. This is not just my secret anymore. *Please eat*, the texts read. *Please come home*.

In another version of my life, I discover who I am much earlier. Perhaps I harbor less doubt. As for this life, every winter, I find my younger self shivering on the porch. I say, please come inside.

It's cold out there. Sit by the fireplace. Tell me who you are.

I am Michelle Mogi from Semarang, Indonesia, and I flew a total of 8,000 miles to attend college in America. This is a short story about my life as an athlete studying abroad. When I was just 9 years old, I started playing golf and I enjoyed it. This led to 9 more years of continuous practice and training. I was thriving back home. I had the chance to play in Malaysia, and in the States as well. Along with golf, I also wanted to experience the world outside, to know what it feels like to live in a different country. That was when I became a student at Gonzaga. Now, I am part of my home state's golf team and will be representing them in upcoming tournaments.

At the start, playing golf in the States felt exciting. I met a lot of new competitors, and I got to escape the very small golf community in my country. However, with all the new experiences come the downsides of living abroad, and one word

that describes all of them is alone. Back home, I had my parents, my sister, my golf friends, and my coaches but after moving abroad, I felt like I had no one. I could just call them with my phone but knowing that they were 8000 miles away made me feel like I was completely on my own.

With the feeling of being alone, the difference in cultures and languages was stacked upon that burden. My first language isn't English so when I meet other players, I always lack the skills to communicate and connect with them. When I try, it somehow leads to me feeling out of place, like I don't belong. The last thing that acts as an obstacle to me is the fact that I did not grow up here, in the States.

Not growing up here has limited my chances of getting an athletic scholarship as well as exposure and recognition. Not growing up in the golf community here has held me

back from meeting professional coaches or attending a top sports academy during my high school years.

But then, I asked myself what was the main reason I decided to move abroad? It was to experience a new life, to experience all the good and bad I just mentioned. As months passed by, I found myself an amazing group of friends I could share my successes and failures with, whom I go out and play golf with on Sundays. I decided to embrace my differences and not focus too much on what I missed and lacked, but instead on what I already achieved and the things I can do to help myself succeed.

I am proud that I have the courage to leave my comfort place and explore a new world. So to all the international athletes here, I respect and admire you for succeeding and I hope you continue to make yourselves proud.

Change is often seen as scary and challenging. That was obviously true for me. Change can hurt with all the failures and feelings of doubt and not being good enough. It can become a deterrent in actually reaching out for opportunities that you want. But change can also lead to better things.

Change helps us be a better version of ourselves and sometimes the things you least expect to happen. To those who are scared of trying new things, don't be. Embrace change, since through these challenges you discover your true capabilities.

Many people have encountered thieves throughout their lives and have had things stolen. Interestingly enough, the thieves I've met during my travels have been... surprisingly intimate.

So, I'm Jaz, your friendly neighborhood globe-trotter with a side of MBA sauce, soon to be served with a graduation cap. I've been to more countries than I have years of age, and let me tell you, it's been a wild ride. From Malaysia to Italy, from classroom to boardroom, I've seen it all. And yes, I've lost a few things along the way – like a backpack at a Spanish airport with everything but my dignity in it. Turns out, that's non-stealable!

But let's chat about differences for a second, because that's why we're here, right? Have you ever been to a place where wearing shoes inside is as strange as keeping your socks on at the beach? Or where the idea of a cold drink means filling a glass with more ice than beverage? (Yes, I'm looking at you, America!)

My parents always said, 'Experience from traveling thousands of miles surpasses that gained from reading thousands of books.' And who am I to argue? Those miles taught me that living out of a suitcase and losing \$7,000 worth of gear to a thief isn't just about the loss. Or that time when I found myself surrounded by a band of robbers in a European subway station, one of whom had me in a chokehold as if we were in the climax of a heist movie.

As I was too scared to move an inch of my body, hoping they wouldn't become aggressive with my struggle and push me down the stairs, which were just two steps beside me. They quickly searched me, stole my phone, and then ran away. It's a crash course in adapting, in understanding that sometimes, your hand in your pocket isn't just to keep your wallet safe—sometimes, it's about making unexpected connections, even if it's with a pickpocket on the metro.

Yes, the thief tried to steal things from my pocket but ended up holding my hand instead. Romantic, right?

And when my mom asks, 'What do you gain from your journey?' I'm like, 'Umm... PTSD? But seriously, folks, embracing our differences is not just about getting by in a foreign country or a new culture. It's about learning to navigate through life with empathy, with an understanding that our strength doesn't come from conformity, but from the diversity of our experiences. It's about building a self-support system that's as dependable as a Swiss knife in the wild – versatile, reliable, and always ready for a challenge.'

Now, speaking of challenges, here's a thought. If you can survive a full cup of ice in your drink on a cold day, you can probably survive anything, am I right? That's the spirit of embracing differences – it's finding that you have more in common with

a stranger from across the world than you thought. It's realizing that diversity isn't just about what makes us unique, but also what brings us together.

So, as I stand here, on the brink of graduating from Gonzaga, I want to leave you with this: let's make our lives a tapestry of diverse threads, each one a different experience, a different story. And let's weave them together not just to exist, but to create something beautiful, something strong, and something infinitely richer than the sum of its parts.

Don't just step out of your comfort zone – dance out of it. Because when you do, you'll find that the world is a stage, and the most vibrant stories come from the most unexpected encounters. Now, go out there and write your own story. And remember, sometimes losing a backpack is just gaining a new perspective. Embrace the differences, for that is where the real adventure begins!

To be able to talk about how my love of writing began I'm going to have to be brutally honest: I almost killed myself.

It was the second semester of junior year of high school. My friends were using me and school was proving difficult. It didn't help that I have had anxiety my entire life and at this point was not on medication for it.

So, as one does when failing to find healthy ways to cope, I almost killed myself. And then I wrote about it.

The day after I told my mom about my suicidal ideation and the night where I almost took all the pills in our medicine cabinet, I ended up in a Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP). I didn't go to school and because of the circumstances I was excused from my work. All of a sudden I had a lot of free time on my hands and nothing to do with it.

I started taking a black composition notebook with me to PHP just to give myself something to do and I filled the pages with words.

My words didn't always make sense, and sometimes I just made lists of words that rhymed, but I was always writing. I wrote about how I felt; I wrote about my family; I wrote about my old friends; I wrote about everything. After the first week or so of this I went back and read what I had written.

What I found between the lined paper and black ink was something I had lost a long time ago, something I had been searching for: myself.

Somewhere among the misshapen letters, the odd switch between cursive and print, and the even odder random scribbles, I had stopped pretending.

I was always one of those happy kids who ran around everywhere with a smile.

I know this because I was constantly told so by the adults in my life. Eventually, I stopped being that little girl who was always smiling, but people still had the same expectations of me, so I started pretending.

Once you start pretending to be who everyone wants you to be, it is hard to stop. I craved the validation I would get from my parents when I did everything the exact way they wanted me to. I began to build my entire life around that validation, I began to build my life around the lie that I was happy.

But when I was writing, I didn't listen to any of the voices in my head telling me what I should do or who I should be: I was just me. I was honest and sad and free of expectations.

I knew no one would be reading what I had been writing so I let everything that I had kept trapped inside of me out. I let go of being "perfect" and wrote.

Some of that writing turned into poems, some short stories, and others stayed random words on paper. I wrote about how I wasn't perfect and how I hated myself for that, I wrote about how I wasn't even someone I liked. In those pages I found the hate for myself that I used to hold inside of me. I gave the hate words and attacked the paper with the truth of my feelings, and when I was done they were just words on paper.

All of those emotions that had been trapped inside of me for so long were finally gone.

I stayed in PHP for several weeks after, and I continued to write every day.

As I wrote I began to leave behind my will to pretend. I left that part of me in the pages of my black composition notebook.

From then on, I went into life as myself, plain and simple me. I didn't act happy, I didn't lie about my emotions, and I didn't pretend. By letting go of everyone's expectations I have found who I am and who I want to be.

So some people might claim it was the thirty hours of therapy a week that helped me get better, or the proper medicine for my anxiety and depression that saved me, but I know the truth, at least my version of it: writing saved me. By finding myself between the black ink and lined paper I was able to grab hold of something to keep me steady, to keep me sane. I was able to be me and that has made all the difference.

“You are too Restless”. Growing up, “malikot” was a word I heard almost every single day from my dad and grandma. I think I’ve even heard my mother, a non-Filipino, use the word when talking to me.

“Stop being so malikot!”
“Why are you so malikot?” “You are so malikot.”

The thing is, my family wasn’t wrong. I have always been malikot. I can’t sit still.

I’m only half Filipina and to be honest I’ve always felt lost when it came to understanding my cultural identity.

I have struggled with trying to balance both sides of my ethnicity and have had difficulty feeling attached to both when at times I resonate with one more than the other.

We have never had a big family: at least on the Filipino side, like most traditional Filipino families do. When trying to learn about the Baliwag family history, you could never dig deep.

In my family, assimilation mindset is very prevalent. My Kuya, or big brother, and I have come to see that we often hide our culture, especially our Filipino side because of the lack of access we have to Filipino family.

When talking to others about the Philippines and different aspects of our culture I've heard, "The language is so weird," "The food is disgusting", and "Aren't all Asians the same?", which contributed to me hiding and understanding even less about myself. I felt lost.

This past summer, being malikot was what helped me start to understand myself better, leading to finding myself and a better understanding of Filipino culture.

I want to learn about the Baliwag history. I want to feel the connection to the islands and to the Tagalog language.

I want to learn about the tribes that my family comes from and the relations we have to some of the healers within the tribe.

I'm malikot because I want to know more. I'm malikot because I want to understand more. I'm malikot because I want to learn more about myself and my family history.

While this is only my first year in FASU, this is the first time I have felt a part of a community that understands me and my culture and has helped me to connect with my roots.

Being malikot has allowed me to branch out and do things I have never done before...

like come up on this stage
and give a speech in front
of a huge audience and
be a part of traditional
Filipino dance.

This involvement has
continued to open up
doors and has given me
the confidence to dive
deeper into the Baliwag
family history.

I have interrogated my
dad about where we come
from and how far back we
can trace our lineage, how
“Filipino” our last name
is, and constantly texting
or calling him to figure out
how to say certain words
in Tagalog.

If this isn’t proof of being
malikot... I don’t know
what is.

Through FASU and
Barrio I have come more
in touch with my heritage,
my roots, the culture
that was deep inside me
but had never come out.
I have learned so much
through this short time in
FASU and being malikot
helped me see this.

Did you know that
Filipino culture is
beautiful?
Did you know that the
Tagalog language is
beautiful?
Did you know that
Filipino dances all have
meaning?
Did you know that
Filipino art is beautiful?
Did you know that
Filipinos even if they
don’t know you will make
sure you feel at home?

Did you know that
Filipino food is meant to
be shared?
Did you know that
Filipino food is delicious?
Did you know that
Filipinos are storytellers?
The passing down of
stories from generation
to generation and the
differences between
stories from the different
tribes.
Did you know that the
Philippines is called
Asia's Pearl because of the
richness of its culture?
Did you know that
Filipinos are resilient?
Did you know Filipinos
are bright and positive?

And most importantly...

Did you know that
Filipino families often
have strong bonds and
relationships?

While I might not have a
big family on my Filipino
side I know I always
have my dad, my aunt or
my ninang, my Lola, my
Kuya, and the family that
I have made here at GU.

This newfound family is
why I will continue to be
malikot, continue to dig
deeper, and continue to
learn. I am proud that I
am a Filipina.

I am proud that I am
malikot, and because
of that I will never stop
being malikot.

Salamat.

こんにちは!ご機嫌うるわし
ゆう! Chúc mọi người một
buổi tối vui vẻ. Those are the
languages that represent where I
am from. Can you guys guess it?
Yes, I am a mix – Japanese and
Vietnamese. For those who are
mixed, I hope you can relate to
my story!

I am an exchange student from
Sophia University in Japan. Let
me first tell you my background
of being grown in a mixed
culture of Japan and Vietnam.
Back in the early days, I was
born in Japan and I moved to
Hanoi, Vietnam when I was 4.
I attended a Japanese school
in Vietnam and there was no
problem being mixed because
there were a lot of mixed
Japanese and Vietnamese, like
me.

Everything was fine up until I
moved to a high school in Japan.
There were a lot of culture
changes that I had to adapt to.
One example is arriving early to

a destination. In Japan, you are
expected to arrive 10 minutes
early. I'm gonna be honest, it's
not my thing because I always
end up arriving 15 minutes
late. (笑い) Maybe that could
be the Vietnamese in me, or
just me. I swear I don't mean
to.

But in Japan, it was, of course,
subject to penalties. There,
even arriving exactly on time
would result in strict scolding
from teachers, which doesn't
make any sense to me. I still
personally believe 15 minutes
late should be acceptable.

Another thing about being in a
mixed culture is my preferred
cuisine. I got used to the
Vietnamese cuisine my mom
cooks, so I prefer Vietnamese
food over Japanese food. I
can't eat raw fish, so I don't eat
Sushi. Honestly, I prefer Sushi
in the US because they have
more rolls that don't use raw
fish. So, sue me! As you can
see, I am bouncing between

two cultures, a mixed identity of Japan and Vietnam.

So, when I first came alone to the unknown place of Gonzaga University and heard that there were few Japanese people, I was very nervous. It might be easier for international students to understand this, but the sense of belonging is a crucial factor for my well-being. Will there be a community that I belong to, one that I define with? When I first arrived at the Spokane airport, I really appreciated Nana. Shout out to Nana, the president of ISU, because when she spoke to me in Japanese when she came to pick us up as a staff, I felt really relieved.

Upon arrival, hearing Vietnamese students like Daisy speaking in a language that my mom and I speak / gave me a great sense of relief. It was Vietnamese, specifically North Vietnamese, which is where I'm from. This feels great because if I can't make it with Japanese

students, at least the Vietnamese community will take me in. Even though I use Japanese more often at home, I talk with my mom in Vietnamese. Therefore, hearing Vietnamese makes me feel at home. At that moment, I sincerely appreciated having mixed identities. THIS is the perk of being bicultural. a half.

At this point, learning that there were many Vietnamese people at Gonzaga, despite having few Japanese, brought me immense joy. Naturally, I signed up for a Vietnamese student club, and as a result, I now have friends I can speak my first language with, and the Vietnamese friends who would often treat me to delicious Vietnamese home food. Their presence makes my study abroad and life much more enjoyable. Thank you so much to them.

Being half can also be confusing. Especially when I'm not good at switching languages. Within my family, my mom and brother, who can also speak Japanese, Vietnamese, and English often mix them in conversations. For example, when I ask, “今って (Imatte)mấy giờ?” my brother might reply, “It's 5 (ご go) giờ 10 (じゅう juu) phút.” it means, I asked “What time is it now?”, and the reply is “Oh, it's five ten” So when I switch languages to my friends, it definitely leads to confusion because most of them do not speak all of those three languages. But some have gotten used to it, and they can understand very well, and I'm forever grateful for that.

In this case, being half benefits me very much BUT has also been a challenge. A couple of years ago, my Vietnamese mom and I had dinner together with my dad and his side of the family. As my Japanese grandma was cooking, my mom mentioned to her that it is more

efficient to cook the food altogether in one big plate. My Japanese grandma did not like the idea because in Japanese culture, the food is kept to yourself and the portion is made one-by-one. Because of the comment my Vietnamese mom made, it quickly became a major argument, a clashing of cultures. My mom was heavily scolded and it made me very sad; not only because I agreed with my mom's idea, but I also felt as if my grandma were insulting me, too. I feel like they do not see that I belong to BOTH cultures, instead of just ONE or the other. It makes me feel that I have to choose even though I am both. I am sure that a lot of students can relate to this feeling.

Nevertheless, I am both Japanese and Vietnamese. Coming to the US and Gonzaga taught me to embrace both of my identities because many cultures co-exist.

What I want to say is that understanding and respecting diverse identities WITHIN the community is VERY essential. Even if you feel excluded from the community, your home country and associated identity remain unchanged. Although everyone is unique in their own way, there are many friends around the world who will understand and respect that uniqueness.

I am grateful for my friends here.

I appreciate you guys for acknowledging and respecting who I am.

I am proud to say that I'm a WHOLE japanese and a WHOLE Vietnamese.

Thank you.

I spent my early years around the California Bay Area from San Francisco, USA, to San Ramon, to Santa Clara, and Saratoga, my childhood had a form of water close by.

Whether it be the Bay, a pool, proximity to the International swim center, a 30-minute drive to Santa Cruz and the Pacific Ocean, or a creek within a 100 yards, water was a constant in my life.

Similarly, I was surrounded by a diversity of people with all colors of eyes, hair, and skin. In fifth grade, my best friend Rory was everything I was not on the surface, yet we shared all the laughter and fun of kids.

Her light-colored skin and freckles were a perfect complement to her long, blonde hair. Her blue eyes were a stark contrast to my almost black eyes, brown skin and hair, which was starting to curl as I approached my teenage years.

I so wished my hair would stop curling and being so dark; I wanted non-frizzy, smooth hair like Rory and my other dark haired friend Tisha. Why was my hair beginning to turn so unruly and brown? I craved the smoothness of an undisturbed, quiet pool rather than the choppy unpredictable waves and spray of the San Francisco Bay that my unruly mane resembled.

Sixth grade brought a change in schools, as my family was building a home in the Saratoga, California foothills. Coming off of summer and days spent in our family pool and the swim center a few blocks away, I was a dark shade of brown with my Filipina and Spanish/Portuguese melanin infused tan.

It seemed none of the kids had hair like mine, and only a couple had skin closer to my shade of brown; they were all so fair eyed and smooth haired.

I felt so awkward and confused why everyone dressed so nicely and looked nothing like me or my four siblings. I spoke their language, but did not understand the lives they lived in their huge houses and fancy cars. I felt like a fish out of water- so different from everyone else, who seemed to effortlessly float through school and their social life. It was new and different, and I learned to love the smell of the foothills and quiet trickle of the water, just like the friends I eventually found.

Throughout high school, my friends and I would travel over Highway 17 to the beach. We watched our classmates and other guys surf, in awe of them, conquering the waves that seemed massive compared to the pools and creeks I was accustomed to for the last dozen years.

How did they learn to do that? What would compel them to enter the freezing cold water and try to play with that powerful force? I loved watching them play out there, floating on their boards, waiting for the next wave to come and deciding who to let ride which wave.

We stayed at the beach until daylight faded just to feel the water's presence. I dared to only enter up to my knees, even though I could swim-it didn't seem like I should be in that type of water, because it was so unknown, strong and powerful. Those who fully entered the water had to rely on their own skills and the generosity of the surfing community, and I did not embrace such a mindset. The comfort of a pool was much more manageable to me.

I always knew the depth and could touch the edges if I got tired, but there was no safety net in the ocean.

My white stepdad and Filipina mom told us three older daughters all to go to college, unlike my mom who completed high school while moving from foster home to foster home.

I applied for two colleges and got in: San Diego State and Chico State University! I ended up at a community college with no direction on how to navigate the college process, including how to pay for a four-year education. I was lost and had to take math twice, so I dropped out at 20 years old. It felt like a massive ocean to me, I hadn't learned how to navigate those college waters.

"Where are you from" meant something different to me when I moved to Spokane, Washington. Did they think I was from a country besides the USA or spoke another language? In reality, I was a first-generation US Citizen, but felt slightly offended when I was asked this question.

Maybe they just wanted to know where I was from and happened to be all non brown people around me and asking this question. I answered "California" with a smirk, but maybe I was just being sensitive since I was once again in the minority of my city I called home. At 26 years old, I decided to dip my toe back in the waters of the local community college and finish my Associate of Arts, two year degree I had dropped out of.

I asked lots of questions, researched things myself and I learned to swim in the undergraduate waters of college, graduating from University when I was 29. I found solace in running along the Spokane River, logging miles next to the beautiful, peaceful waters of the Pacific Northwest.

Moscow, Idaho, USA was even less diverse with fewer people with my skin color or hair type.

My fair skinned, freckled, blue eyed husband worried if I would be ok moving to such a non-diverse place. I was used to the lack of diversity for nine years by then, so we moved for his coaching job.

There was a pool close by at the university, and I spent many days there swimming and aqua-jogging while pregnant with both my kids. I received my Master's and Ph.D. from University of Idaho without incident or a single Brown, Asian, or Black friend in school. When I saw another student with similar looks to me, I saw something in them that tugged at my heart, like a touch of home, and my city by the Bay.

In 2006, Gonzaga University became my husband and I's professional home. There was one other non-white faculty member here and were sometimes confused for each other.

"No, that's the other brown woman in the School of Education" I replied with a smile and laugh, hoping they realize how silly it is, but at the same time offensive they can't tell us apart.

Over the years, I am asked to be on film for GU, and I approach it with hesitance. Is it because I am so engaging and funny, or is it because I am a woman of color? I want to say I don't care what the answer is but tbh, I do. I wonder and I doubt myself. Am I supposed to be here? A first-generation Filipina who occasionally swears and drops f-bombs when I'm fired up about something—should I be here with all these academics and professionals? Am I in the deep end of the pool and can't swim right or in the ocean and don't know how strong the waves are? I feel like it often as I don't completely understand some of the workings of our university, but I still power on.

I keep swimming in these waters, because I know how important it is to my daughters and other students of color to see someone who kind of looks like themselves out there struggle, learn, and persist in the face of adversity.

2023, as I look out at my students in the classroom, I see more Brown, Asian and Black faces, and I am drawn to them. My dean is Latina and my department has grown in diversity - it's so beautiful, I can hardly express it in words. We are an amazing mix of backgrounds and experiences, and our love of movement and sport unites us under one umbrella of Kinesiology.

We are swimming through our growth together and I couldn't do it without my colleagues' strengths and commitments. I couldn't do this job alone and I want students to feel the same.

Though today, I feel more at home like I do when I visit California, a sense of comfort seeing such a diverse group like my city by the Bay. I have come to appreciate the lakes and rivers here in the Pacific northwest, just as I loved the ocean when I was a kid. It's different from what I knew in my younger years, but lakes and rivers have their own beauty just as pools and oceans do.

To the students, staff, and others who see themselves as not in the majority, I see you trying to swim here in the ocean of life itself. I see you, my students who might be first generation college students or studying far from your comforts of community, who might be working to pay for school, who might be unsure if you belong with the majority students of Gonzaga University. Or you might be the really smart or rich kid and you just look a little different than the majority of students and staff here.

The answer is you do belong and you have much to offer. Your life and the life of others is something to learn from regardless of what you look like. If you aren't the one who scored in the 95th percentile or didn't bring in AP credits, you bring more to the table than grades and scores. You bring the diversity of our world to some who have not been exposed to it, who have been around people who only look like them.

You might have to work harder because you didn't have the preparation that some of the students had here, but you know things that many of them don't. Don't doubt yourself or try to blend in. You might be grappling with speaking English in addition to your own language, and that is very difficult and courageous.

You can do hard things and that includes being open to searching on your own for answers,

but also asking questions when you don't know. Be yourself and introduce others to your experiences and point of view, see the beauty as you are part of the beauty at Gonzaga University.

Sometimes we get in the water too fast, and it's so cold it takes our breath away, but we learn and figure out how to be in it and adjust to it. We dip our toes in it and then go in further and further until we have had enough.

It's uncomfortable, and especially at the waist, it's so cold. We learn to swim by floating first and trusting in the water; then we begin to learn to breathe at the right time. I see you, my students, I see you swimming these different waters than you are used to, and I believe in you. The lakes and rivers here might be different from the water where you are from, but it's still water, just as we are all people.

When my brother stopped eating and we all understood the severity of his condition, I changed my eating habits. The early breakfast I pleasantly enjoyed remained insignificant in his presence. Ignorantly convinced that eating in front of him might encourage him to indulge, I took every opportunity to covertly do so. He knew me. He knew all his family and our concerns. Yet, his poor self-image and social comparison to his peers rivaled any logical reasoning. His every thought was consumed by his unceasing challenger: Anorexia.

His intense fear of gaining weight dominated any second thoughts he had concerning his eating habits. These habits, or rather, his absence of eating, were extremely irregular. His eating schedule was entirely dependent on control. Every decision was conditional upon how much control he had attained that day.

The limited authority he was entrusted with as a twelve-year-old was not satisfactory. He simply did not have enough control. So, he astutely recognized the one thing he had complete control over: his eating habits.

Twelve years old. Twelve years old was the age of my brother when he was diagnosed with Anorexia. Ever since he was a preemie, he characterized himself by his childhood nickname; "Stick Boy". While once able to embrace it, he eventually became it. Yet, I never once assented to his nickname, "Stick Boy", rather as a witness to his suffering, I viewed him as "Sick Boy".

As much as I desperately craved to force-feed him to solve his case of malnutrition, I simply could not. An individual can be encouraged to eat or even taught how to adopt healthy eating habits but the decision

to eat is ultimately under their jurisdiction. Thus, I angrily reevaluated how and why twelve-year-olds are held accountable for the highly important task of eating.

The normalcy of childhood was replaced by the harsh reality of his all encompassing battle. The once-cherished nightly family dinners at 7:00 pm, where we used to come together to share food and the highlights of our days, transformed into solitary dining behind closed doors within the confines of our own rooms.

Each meal was overshadowed by the awareness of his struggle. Consuming food in his presence meant utter betrayal but covert consumption meant silent encouragement of his unhealthy behavior. Convinced that shrinking my own presence would support him, I took up just a sliver of space,

hopeful that if he could have mine to be seen and heard, I could cure him.

Dear Ryan: Today I proudly watch as you head to our local gym to work out. You have healthily redirected your biggest challenger into a positive outlet. After being witness to your suffering, I wish to continue to shelter you. Yet, as we now get to indulge in the delicacies of food together, I find it hard to find meaning in other things. This being said, I will never pass up an opportunity to share a meal with you.



diversity
monologues

pages 118 - 139

1, 2, 3, ...
My hiding spot had just enough
room for my tiny body and
yearning heart.
Full of my skeletons and my
secrets,
I squeezed myself between the
boxes of baggage.
And sharing blankets with Dark,
She helped keep me warm on
the coldest of nights.
Rubbing elbows with
Expectations,
I borrowed her clothes off
hangers and was swallowed by
their size.
Now draped in disgrace and
embarrassment,
I shrunk myself to make more
room in
This closet.

4, 5, 6...
I got lost in here.
I was trapped in here.
The door to freedom unlocked
only from the outside
And I wish I knew this before
picking my hiding spot.
I would've told my younger self
not to play this game.
I hate this fucking game.

Besides, How am I to be found
when I still am not being seen?
My reality has been suppressed
by my last name, and I am only
who I am connected to;
I am a reflection of who birthed
me.
Name known because of
siblings, and
Life worthy because of
accomplishments.
I have been celebrated for my
successes, and silenced for my
identity.

7,8, 9...
It can get lonely sometimes.
My closest company is My
Overactive Mind and frankly...
she talks too much.
But, I also made friends with
Shame and Embarrassment.
They taught me how to play
The Quiet Game, Simon Says,
And hate myself.
Together, we hummed tunes of
our favorite childhood songs and
read dust covered books like,
the Bible.
It made me wonder if my closet
would ever become
a Doorway to Heaven.

Guided to my hiding spot as a
child
And isolated from the world,
I never got the chance to grow
up.
I am still the same little girl
playing Hide and Seek.

10, 11, 12...

I grew so accustomed to Dark,
I didn't know Light was also in
here.
She said she has always existed
in my closet, but I lost her
amongst the mess.
On dirty mirror she revealed my
true reflection.
I was only four feet tall with
pink barrettes hanging from my
ponytails.
My dimples had become
incaved and my ribs imprinted
my torso—
Body starved from who I know
I am, starved from who I know
I am, starved from who I know
I am.
Bumps on tongue from lying
and back bent from carrying the
weight of these mistruths.
My brown eyes drenched my
skin,
crying canals,

and creating Oceans
with my tears.
My closet was being flooded
and my small frame drowned
by her waves.
The boxes of baggage opened,
and their contents floated
around me.
My skeletons gripped at my
ankles and begged for salvation.
My secrets poisoned the water
and burned my skin.
Gasping for air—now neck
deep in this storm—
My feet were anchored down
by tubs labeled “Charity”
Full of my self-confidence,
self-respect, and self-love,
ready for me to give them away.
I closed my eyes and asked God
to send someone to save me...

13, 14, 15...

I never imagined it would be
myself.
While drowning,
What I didn't see was someone
working tirelessly to break down
The walls of my closet.
Door now ripped off hinges
and water rushing out of this
hoarded room,
I was met by Me.

She was older now but still four
feet tall (unfortunately).
She had the confidence I only
dreamed of.
Her hair cut short.
Her style unique.
Her sneakers clean.
Her smile wide.
Her spirit bright.
Her mind strong.
And her heart full.

She wrapped me in an embrace
that healed all of my sorrows,
and said this:
“You are your own wildest
dreams.
You are not moved by outside
opinions.
You are the epitome of grace
and authenticity.
You are wonderfully and
beautifully made.
You fear nothing, and love
everything.
And, this Closet is no longer
yours.”

So, to the little girl who had
crushes on other little girls,
I am sorry for hiding you. I hope
you can forgive me.

16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22
Ready or not here I come...

A letter to you who proclaim to be our relatives, siblings, and cousins. You who proclaim to come from the same parent and spring from the same roots. I am exhausted from explaining to you what you proclaim is your inheritance too. If we are family then why don't you know that my people exist, where we come from, or the way we read our "shared texts?" Why do I sit, frustration burning holes in my chest as you speak, and twist and twist and twist the words I know by heart and by song in the language they were first spoken?

When I look at you, I do not see my brother. My brother is a Jew. He looks like me. He shares my values. I taught my brother the ancient words so that he teaches them again and again and understands them and thinks them and re-imagines them. My brother would not take all that I have taught him, that we share, and do what you have done.

When I look at you, I see myself sculpted to almost

unrecognizable, I see my body corrupted and miswired, body parts misaligned and misunderstood.

This letter is for those who took our sacred texts and translated them into languages that misremember. Our language is sacred not only because of its age, but because of the divinity in its construction. Each word contains within it all the variations of itself, it holds its own value, and it plays cleverly with the language, it mixes oral and written tradition, solemnity and humor, it holds within it our roots and our exile. Our customs too, you stole, and they became that which we never intended, or in some cases directly opposed.

You took our traditions and you took who we were. But most of all you took our God and changed that "God" and used "God" to slaughter us in "God's name," and used "God" to slaughter others in "God's name," and used it to obtain corrupted wealth, and used it to

threaten and convert and colonize. And then you looked at the sibling you abused and offered us a small corner in your world and called us “brother.”

And you made sure that we would never forget that the best Jew is a dead Jew. Even you who do not chant it at rallies display your favorite dead Jew in every room and on every street corner, and around your necks—the constant reminder that we can only find that gaze of love and acceptance when you have packed full our bodies with your sins and cleansed yourself through our bodies. And as you pass by our bodies as if it was so normal, you’ll turn back and blame us again for our very own deaths.

Rabbi Hillel taught that the entire Torah can be understood in one line, “Love your neighbor as yourself, I am Adonai.” I know you teach this too. So then I ask, have you treated us as yourself?

Where are our cathedrals?

Where are our ancestors?
Where in the world can a Jewish child not wonder why they are hated? When can we stop wondering when we have to flee like our ancestors did or where we could even go if we had to?

Any Jewish person with Jewish ancestry today is the survivor of a survivor of a survivor. L’dor vador, from generation to generation. More than anything, those of us still walking the earth have passed down one gift; *khai*, life. Our ancestors have passed down the instinct to fight and the instinct to flee, the instinct to learn your language and culture just to convince you we know it, they have given us humor to stand from without and laugh at the world even as it tries to squash us, they have given us music and taught us the value of critical thought and reinterpretation and how to talk, always how to talk. These are the gifts of life and without them we could not have survived.

Another teaching: The Jewish people were not chosen to be without suffering, we were chosen to live in spite of it all.

I am not writing this letter with the intent to create shame or distancing because the truth is that I need you for my survival, and you need me for yours. I am writing this because you proclaim to be my brother, my neighbor, and I want to believe you are, or can be.

I am writing because this is the voice I contain within my chest as I move from room to room, and interact with you one after another after another. As I smile and offer you a piece of myself, one that you will either reject because it does not fit your conception of the world, or that you will hold for a minute and say “cool!” and leave it there, wherever I said it to you. Or maybe you will take it and it will live in your chest too and it will keep within you and you will see one small part of the world

from a perspective that is not inherent to you, as many of us have had to do to survive you.

And I am writing because you need to know what it means for us as a people when you ask us to assimilate and we do, to survive, and you tell us we can have our space to be us so long as it is not as visible as beautiful as tall as large as prominent as yours. As long as we can be tucked away and satiated because at least you haven't killed us and hung us on your wall, yet.

I write to try and answer the questions I keep in my chest confusing my heartbeat as they throb there, unanswerable. Why can't I speak the language my great-grandparents spoke? Why does the word home mean so many and so few places to me? Why is it only Jewish queer people who understand me the first time I speak?

What would my life be like without the constant anxiety passed l'dor vador, from

generation to generation because we cannot make it a generation without exile, death, and fear? Why do I have the fear of violence so strong within me when I walk into my most sacred spaces? Why do the villains and monsters of our cartoons, literature, and films so often carry the same shadow as my loved ones, myself? I am writing this letter because there are so few of us and I am writing this because I love my community, I love Jewish women, Jewish queers, Jewish mothers—those who rarely have the vocabulary to express the feeling burning through our chest that we name anger, anxiety, fear. It will not go out. That feeling is our *nir tamid*, our Eternal Light.

It is what keeps us alive and keeps us from forgetting ourselves. It is what reached across generations of forgotten and brought the exiled back to us. It is what brought my family back into the nourishment of a tradition that now keeps us alive. It is what we carried across

the world in exile. And it is so heavy, but it is the reason we are not wholly lost. It is the water that followed Miriam across the desert, and the clay that formed the golem. It is the *n'shamah* of the natural world, and the energy that pulls us towards the east, towards the mythical Jerusalem we are always wandering towards. I am writing this because you have kept us from having the space to write this letter. I could explain and teach to you instead all the most vital aspects of my culture and spirituality but how could I trust your attention, your reception of it, your commitment to honor what is sacred to me?

I would pour my being out to you and what would you do with it? At best, you would hang it next to the cross. But, you see, I have learned your language and I know the sacred, ancient one within me. You have trained me in your language and your thought, but I will not assimilate within myself, I cannot. I write to you because who else will write for me and my people?

Dear young brown girl,
you just started fifth grade
I see the other kids asking you,
How can girls be so hairy?
You now know what it is to be
ashamed
of what is yours and mine.
The questions are seared
into your mind,
but the questions are really
bricks,
both striking you down and
building up your walls, so strong
and so high
not even you are that tall.

Dear young brown girl,
I see the way you admire your
family,
thinking our last name must
translate to strength, thinking
our bones must be made of
metal and our joints of elastic
as we adapted to
the growing pains
of a community,
that constrained and haunted
and taunted, never letting them
dream.

Dear young brown girl,
I see you listening intently
to the stories of your ancestors,

tales of traveling across oceans
and language barriers, fighting
sea monsters and humans alike.
You are captivated,
motivated, your story practically
already narrated by the heroism
that runs in your veins,
by the sacrifice and work
and fearlessness, that led to your
existence,
don't let this be in vain.

Dear young brown girl,
I see you,
you are a sponge,
learning, studying everything
you possibly can, motivated by
the fear, the pain
that you keep hidden away.
Their sacrifice won't pay off,
they were led astray.
Sorry, I'm not doing enough,
but never will I complain.

Dear young Desi girl,
I see you hiding
behind the curtains
of other people's expectations,
behind your broken hindi,
whispered namastes to your
elders, and jai mata dis each
time you leave,
behind the background prayer

bhajans
and the long black hair you
refuse to cut, all the while
covering behind white picket
fences, sorry, I'm not perfectly
sanskari.

Dear young Desi girl,
I see you watching the world
slowly swallow you, silently, of
course, in case it throws you for
a loop, asks you a question you
do not know the answer to: Beti,
daughter, what will you do?

Yet, young Desi girl,
you understand the world like
no other with an eye for art, an
ear for music
and a heart for pain.
The world is your friend
and you are its bane.

You serenade her,
without complaint, of the
endless song, in hopes that you
might just get along.

Dear pyari Desi girl,
I see you listening, observing,
camouflaging underneath
your skin.
One day, your silence,

your indifference,
will make way, for the noise of
your resilience.
One day you will be standing
in your grandmother's sari, tall
and proud,
no longer saying sorry,
claiming this beautiful story
that is hers and yours,
humara pariwar ki kahani.

And I wish I could tell you it
will be perfect and secure and
comfortable,
but I will never lie to you
kyunki as you know,
for people like us
there are few happily ever
afters.
Ease is a privilege and truth a
necessity,
it doesn't always end in
laughter.

Meri pyari Desi sakhi,
I see you,
and one day, you will see it all
too.

Sincerely,
Your biggest supporter,
teri didi,
your older sister.

I was born to a valley
Surrounded by the mountains
Beautifully green as the sun
peaked above the horizon
and elegantly purple at dusk.

I was raised in the valley
My lovely house wedged on top
of a small hill
Where the memories of my
youth reside
Raised on spam, rice and my
favorite homemade nishime
with extra kombu and konnyaku
Whilst listening to the
courageous 442nd Regiment
stories
understanding the sacrifices
made by Nisei Japanese
Americans
To truly establish their identities
as Americans
And not just Asians.

I left that valley
To venture into a new world
2,874 miles away
A cold and empty plateau
Filled with dismal clouds of gray
for miles
Somehow I still stand here today
And I ask myself, "why?"

I miss my valley
I miss your comfort,
Your food,
The family you brought to me,
The good and even the bad
memories:
Laughs and giggles playing with
my littlest cousins
All the tears and the "you don't
understand me's"
I miss the sense of belonging
you gave me.

Ku'u Home o Kahalu'u
My home, Kahalu'u
I finally understand
I was meant to leave the comfort
of you
To find what it meant to truly
be me
You provided me a home
between two identities as big as
the mountains
And once I left you
I was lost and empty
Yearning to return again
To refill a part of me
That you continuously poured
into me.

Me ke aloha ku'u home 'o
Kahalu'u
With love, my dearest home,

Kahalu'u
I miss you but I find it
hard to return
Because I have found a
home here
In the friends that have
helped me
To find the mountains of my
identity
In these barren plains

To the home that has been built
here
By the friends that I now call
family
Thank you for moving
mountains for me
For I finally understand that
there is something breathtaking
About this flat and desolate area

Before you moved the
mountains,
I succumbed to the plains
Unrooting the values and
memories
my valley planted within me
Conforming to the way of life of
the flatland
Undoing the part of me
That gave me my sense of
belonging and self.

I sunk my heels
Into the barren land
Trying to root myself
In a ground that rejected my
body and soul
Still I dug myself deeper
I was buried alive.
Suffocated by this elevation
sickness
From the trip down the
mountain to the plains.

But I've found my way back
home
In the people that have helped
me flourish here
And demonstrated the beauty of
both my identities.

The night we spent teary eyed
on the couch
Talking about our childhood
memories
After watching a movie where
we could see
Someone that looked like they
could be our cousin on the
screen

The thanksgiving meal we
shared
Where tonkatsu curry replaced
the turkey
And the endless karaoke songs
that ensued thereafter.
This is truly my home away
from home
And I see and feel everything,
everywhere, all at once
Of all of my identities
In the people that have moved
their mountains
To build me a comforting home.

Ku'u Home o Kahalu'u
You're perfect in every way
Planted in the Ko'olau
Looking over to Kane'ohe Bay
You're a beautiful memory
Carved into my heart forever
But the other mountains call
me now
And I must follow.

As I move away from the
mountains
That have been moved here
for me
I feel empowered and free
To emerge anywhere I please
I will erupt wherever I go
Making my own mountains,
Creating my own home.

“Change is a strange thing it
cannot be denied
It can help you find yourself
Or make you lose your pride”
“Last night I dreamt I was
returning
and my heart called out to you
To please accept me as you'll
find me
Me ke aloha ku'u home o
Kahalu'u i ”

My letter to the Universe.
I wrote a letter to the
universe that said,
Allow me to believe in
myself the way you believe
in me;
'Cause sometimes...
I don't understand how you
could ever see the beauty
that lies within me.

I do not understand what
you see in me,
I am too chaotic for your
confidence,
Too clumsy for you to keep
throwing lemons,
Knowing I can't catch them
to make lemonade.
Please, universe, let me
know the plans you have
for me,
Because I am starting to
question the reasons you
made me.

I have days where I've felt
alone,
Too afraid and confused
to say that I have truly
found my home. I am... too
unworthy to believe
that I have a purpose
already written in the books
for me.

So answer me, give me
clarity because I am on a
tightrope ready to explode.
They say the universe
makes no mistakes but...
What makes you so sure
about me?
I find it so hard to believe
that this is who you
destined for me to be. BUT
if so, if this is who I am
supposed to be then...
I am writing you this
letter...

Universe, help me learn
how to love myself the way
that you love me, Because
your love is the good kind
of love—
The one that has no limits,
no conditions, no fear—
Just arms wide open,
ready to embrace all my
imperfections.

You see,
The love that I am currently
building is nowhere close
to the one you are giving. It
isn't consistent,
It isn't forgiving,
but... you know what it
hasn't made me do,
Stop believing.

So universe, give me the
lens you wear to see me,

So I can see,
My beauty,
My imperfections,
My joy, and
All of the love that you see
within me.

So dear universe, one day,
maybe real soon... I will see
myself the way that you
see me.

Sincerely,
Me.

Now I know the whole theme of
the night is fearlessness,
But fear,
It's a beautiful thing

You see,
Fear,
Fear, has driven me to savor
every single breath God offers
me

Because without fear,
I wouldn't know faith

See the way fear works is it
manifests itself upon you when
you least expect it Fear drives
you to savor every moment
Because one day you
just wake up and realize all
that you've lost
Then fear and faith become
one flesh
You hope to fight fear with faith
but fear must be present for
faith to be called

Faith picks up the phone
But fear swallows your words
and the memories you once had
are stranded within the

telephone lines
Each day absorbed by the
constant ringing of the phone

Soon you find yourself crying
Screaming at the phone you
once held
That which with one ring was
immediately picked up by his
words

"Hola, mi niña"

I cry because I've forgotten his
voice,
But maybe it's stuck within the
radio waves
Safeguarding my ears from
the pain
Pain of hearing his tears rolling
down his cheeks as he echos
my name
And then it all snaps
I hang in the abyss as I realize:
maybe I'm the one stuck

See they say, "If you're not
living fearlessly, you aren't
really living"

But I do live...
In fear...
I fear that one day will be the
last day I see my family
That one day I won't know the
face in that gallery

I fear that I won't know I'm
saying one last goodbye,
because I didn't know...
I didn't know that call was our
last call
Or that he was entangled in the
cords
Fighting the merciless operator
Whose will overpowers the call
until the only thing I hear
is the silence
 buzzing at the end of the line

His memory persists in my brain
His words
The ringing cut short by his
excited voice as he picked up
the phone to wish us
"buenas noches"

For years, your voice rang
through my ears and reminded
me of your life
It reminded me of the way you

loved me and the way you
cared for me in your own
way Far in theory but deeply
connected in the soul, the
mind, y en mi corazón

But I cry because I've forgotten
your voice
So I do live in fear
of forgetting more voices
of losing the memories I've
created

And that one day I'll forget
their names
Or maybe I fear they'll forget
mine
That maybe my voice will be
gone before I am and that my
memories die before they can
pick up the phone

-

But I have faith
Faith that I will be reunited
with him one day
When the operator hits that
memory button
Where his voice lives for way
after forever

And so I live loving those I can
I pick up with an excited 'Hello'
And hang up with un 'te quiero'

Because I fear faith might not
pick up one day
That with a piece of me,
My culture will be erased
Forgotten with every ring
Waiting to be picked up by the
next generation
But they won't know to pick up
con un "hola mamá"

And you know,
that's how fear works,
It fights for the spotlight dressed
in faith
Hoping I chase behind it
But in my mind it blurs wearing
one face then quickly another
It pretends to keep you from
harm's way,
But every time a call ends
It traps your voice in the wind
Dissolving your words into
whispers that grace my skin

But faith lives in the sky
And it keeps a record

So when fear and faith
become one flesh,
I call fear in hopes that faith
isn't yet drowned
out by the ringing
And I hope to remember
for way after forever...

They safeguard the wishes and
dreams of some
But push unwanted visitors to
the outside curb
They stand in silence, as a guard
and keeper, all throughout the
day. They mark a welcoming
home for the privileged
They appear a foe to the
unfamiliar-faced

Momma's voice, soft and low,
spoke of life's unjust price, that
must be paid Being born on one
side, just a roll of the dice.
Papa, with hands of resilience,
and a heart so bold,
Whispered prayers of
endurance, stories untold.

In the land where dreams
are sown,
Beneath the sun's
relentless downpour,
Momma whispered of
brighter days,
And Papa's hands, weathered
with life's unjust craze, pointed
at new ways.
From humble homes,
our roots did spring,
In Mexico's embrace,
hearts would sing.

Yet, for a future, they dared
to yearn,
To distant lands, their
gazes turn.

Across the fence, Under
foreign stars
They toiled in fields,
and hid unseen scars. In
whispers, they shared
their fears, In silence, wiped
away their tears.

"We are but travelers," Papa
would say, "Seeking the dawn of
a kinder day."
"Hold your head high,"
Momma's eyes gleamed,
"For in your heart, hope is
esteemed."

Here, where cultures intertwine,
We stand, your legacy and mine.
Latino blood, rich and profound,
In us, a resilient spirit is found.
take flight,
In pursuit of a life, just and
right.
For aren't we all under the
same sky? Though unseen, our
dreams
Bound by the dream to soar
high?

Yes, we bleed the same red
blood,
Our stories, woven,
a tapestry bright,
In our veins flows the blood
of a vibrant hue,
Our cultures rich, and histories
interlaced, Yet by fences
divided, in the night's quiet
embrace. Under the same
sprawling sky, we gaze and
ponder, On the whims of life,
and fate. Our families journey,
through barriers unseen,
Seeking just a glimpse of the
'American Dream'.

From the heart of Mexico,
where our roots run deep,
To the bustling streets where
dreams don't sleep.
Our parents, brave, crossed lines
unseen, In search of hope, on a
canvas so serene.
Through fences that divide,
they sought a new dawn,
With steadfast resolve, they
tirelessly drawn. A life of
dignity, of respect and worth,
For their children to flourish,
upon this earth.

Yet, fences remain, in
minds and on land,
Some keep us safe, while others,
a reprimand.
Invisible lines, drawn by fear
and by lore,
Echoing silently, the plight of
the poor
I'm here to make it clear what
matters is the heart.
Within our hearts, a relentless
fire, to dismantle these fences,
is our undying desire. We share
the same dreams, A world
without fences, where hope
can't be denied.

So, here's to the fences, may
they fall,
To the spirit that unites us all.
For in each heart, the same wish
resides, A world without fences,
where love abides.

Let us build bridges, not barriers
that divide,
Where understanding and
respect can reside.
For in the end, we are all but
the same,
Seeking shelter and love, not
just a name.

I Am Fearless, I am steer less, it renders me almost delirious now let me be clear on this.

You use spies to infiltrate the prize that relies on your entertainment. Entertainment...

Take captives from their homeland, that's Containment, forcing them to bare children, work and suffer torture THAT'S Enslavement,

few centuries later, you falsely capture us, it's called Detainment and you frame it as the American Dream.

Yet I am fearless.

American dreams seem so gleam, am I supposed to be or not allowed to be?

The collusion of powers throughout history has led us to turn a blind eye to different injustices do you see?

Nullification of a nation, of your crude appropriation so much so that you force asphyxiation

while we're in custody?

Yet we are fearless? Ought we to be?

Extinction of traditional cultures, you're like a vulture, waiting for your prey to lured out,

succumbing to the risks forced upon by your discrepancies

reinforced by your contingencies for us to suffer unfair treatment of the human dignity.

I would like there to be restitution for the dilution of authenticity.

but we have instead found a lack of accountability.

Yet we are fearless

Racism, fascism, sexism, it's like we're stuck in a prism, sorrrta like the twilight zone, everyone addicted to they phones and everyone worried about the next loan.

It's almost like we're prone to the entrapments of the social norm, so much so that we allow our anxieties be amplified by the complexities that have become our phones. Making me (us) feel alone

Yet we are fearless

Dreadful language & Horrific deeds, they seem to be on repeat but just because my complexion is darker I must admit defeat?

Nah, grab my destructive heat, frame mind on my next crime but man, I just want my family to eat.

Yet we are fearless.

Resurgence of the media outlet reinforcing ya submergence within abundance of lies that'll slowly be our demise.

Do you still not see?

Private prisons, private sanctions, private integrations, I have frustrations of the secrecy's as you pretend to be, indivisible

as far as you let the world see.

Yet we are fearless.

I'm trying to be the voice that plants the seed?

they got a specific need to fill the void for what they have destroyed but that option is devoid of any societal understanding, reverting back to the stacking of the cold dark bodies.

Yet we are fearless.

The Ancestral plain is my domain and although I try to reframe the imagines that are tied to stain, I cannot restrain my unapologetic nature that cannot be contained.

It is a shame that you revert back to discrimination maintained through legislation that is mundane.

It is the same people that hide behind private rooms while we are publicly in pain

Yet we are fearless.

We wish for prosperity through
the historical accumulation of
disparities for achievements that
may grant our clarity although
you claim it's just charity.

You put up barriers to hold
us back, but the persistence is
apart of our resistance untied
through our existence.

&

The disappearance of this
benevolent brilliance will
never be diminished by
your interference or lack of
coherence.

That is why.

we are & always will be.

FearLess

.
. .
.

Will you be?

authors

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Clasps of The Past

Leisl Fernandes

Leisl Fernandes is a Freshman from Santa Clara, CA and is majoring in Economics with a minor in Art.

Picking a Side; Pink Colored Glasses

Matias Lagrange

Matias Lagrange is a senior from Nashville, TN, and is majoring in Criminology with a minor in Interdisciplinary Arts. His mother is a second-generation Filipino immigrant, who focused on assimilating her children into Southern culture, it wasn't until Matias's teenage years that he started doing research on Filipino history, as it was not talked about in his schools, which made him realize the affect colonized mentality had on him. In 2014, he came out as bisexual, and in 2021, he came out as a transgender man, which compounded the struggles within his intersectional ideals.

Apathy

Rachael Jenness

Rachael Jenness is a Junior from Colorado Springs, Colorado. She is double-majoring in Criminology and International Studies, with a minor in Spanish and concentrations in International Political Economy and the European Region. She wants to go to law school in the future.

I Sat By Your Grave The Other Day

Gwen Mitchell

Gwen Mitchell is an English and Communication Studies major in her final year at Gonzaga University. From Juneau, Alaska, her poetry and prose work together themes of queerness, beauty, and horror (though not exactly in that order). She's also the Editor in Chief of Reflection, Gonzaga University's student journal for prose, poetry, and visual art.

Dancing with the Wind

Carlo Cortez

My name is Carlo Cortez and I am a second-year student majoring in Computer Engineering and minoring in Philosophy. I submitted this piece because outside of engineering I really enjoy writing, whether that's prose or poems. Also being from the island of Maui, Hawaii, with a Filipino American identity, I wanted to share a part of how I felt my life was like growing up. My poem "Dancing with the Wind" is a very general poem with a subtle personal meaning of how I faced adversities from the environment that I've grown up with and learning to accept how to go along with the breeze without giving into it entirely. Through this poem, I find content in who I am and those challenges I've gone through up till now.

Generational Geology

Abigail Lennah Marquez

Abigail Lennah Marquez is a Gonzaga alumni who graduated with her Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. In her undergrad years, she affiliated with the Filipino-American Student Union (FASU), Society of Women Engineers (SWE), and the Center for Community Engagement (CCE). Born in the Philippines and raised in Alaska, she now resides in western Washington and spends her free time working on her literary novels, taking dance classes, and chugging incessant amounts of matcha.

Idol

Marianne Nacanaynay

Marianne Nacanaynay is a '22 GU alum and is currently working toward her PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Communication Arts. She studies mediated representations of Filipinx American identities and diasporic identities at large.

From The Valley to The Mountains

Jenna Serikaku

Jenna Serikaku is a senior nursing major from Kane'ohe.

Ikaw Ay Napaka Malikot

Noelani Baliwag

My name is Noelani Baliwag I'm a sophomore here at Gonzaga and I am studying psychology with a double minor in criminology and Spanish. I wrote this piece when I joined FASU at Gonzaga and I wrote it because I finally learned how to connect with the other side of my ethnicity. This connection wasn't the only thing I found in this deep dive of who I am, but I also found celebration and a family outside of my own.

Let It Be Known; Yet, Are You Fearless?

Shay'den Howell

My name is Shay'Den Howell, I am from the city of Destiny named Tacoma. I am a second-year accounting and finance major. My piece is about filling in the blanks for what you believe to be the meaning, while probing you to venture into the words being spoken (Written) and find out why you Love Or Hate them (maybe somewhere in between). If you do, please read aloud, maybe to a crowd, maybe with low sound and for some... maybe with a feeling of being proud.

Looking Glass; Stationary Movement

Carissa Kanae

Carissa Kanae is a second-year Psychology student with a minor in Leadership Studies. She is in Spokane, having traveled from Mililani, on the island of Oahu, Hawai'i. She believes in uplifting other students' voices, and is grateful to Our Voices for providing a space for people who are typically silenced.

Twice A Week; High School Ethics

Tara Hollander

Tara is a senior at Gonzaga University, majoring in Biology and English. She gives difficult stories the space and structure they deserve so as to dive deep into their truth.

Tattoos; Building a Jigsaw Puzzle

Angela Macabinguil

My name is Angela Macabinguil, and I'm a Sophomore who is majoring in Computer Science and Computational Thinking with concentration in Biology and Software Security. I currently am the Cultural Chair for FASU and a NGTB Technician. I have lived in Spokane my whole life, but my home will always be the Philippines. I grew up in a Filipino household, but with forced American values and traditions since my parents didn't want me to have a hard time adjusting to the American lifestyle. My goal as a person is to reassure that it is ok to not feel like you don't belong in your ethnicity or nationality and that it is never too late to learn about it.

The Bus Ride

Asha Douglas

My name is Asha Douglas. I was born and raised in Tacoma but I'm currently living in Seattle, WA. I work at Common Power, a voting justice non-profit that mobilizes volunteers for voters through education.

The Disabled Companion

Autymn Wilde

Autymn Wilde is a Senior from Spokane Valley, WA and is majoring in English and Classical Civilizations. She has also been accepted into graduate school at Gonzaga for her Masters in Initial Teaching.

All This To Say, I Don't Remember The Rosary

Inés Marquez

Inés Marquez is a sophomore majoring in English Lit with a minor in Latin American History. In her spare time, she calls her mom with questions and makes too many playlists. She is incredibly inspired by the space Our Voices provides for underrepresented students.

Am I Losing You Already?

Moni

Moni is a junior discovering her strengths in STEM, but also the arts. She pursues a degree in biology while also enhancing her passion for the arts such as literature and writing. This is her second submission to Our Voices.

The Presence of You

Cae Caberto

Cae Caberto is a Sophomore from Kapolei, Hawai'i. Cae is a Kinesiology major with a fitness specialist concentration and a Writing minor.

By Any Other Name

Rowyn O'Connor

Rowyn O'Connor (they/them) is a freshman from Portland, OR. They are an English major pursuing a secondary teaching certificate with a minor in Psychology. On campus, they are a member of the Spring Awakening cast, GUTS, QSU, and DSU. In their free time, they enjoy writing poetry and music, as well as hanging out with their dog.

Embracing Differences: Adventures Beyond the Comfort Zone

Yun-Chen Hsieh

Yun-Chen Hsieh (Jaz), from Taiwan, is majoring in Master of Business Administration and is going to graduate in May 2024.

How Writing Saved Me

Julia Porter

My name is Julia Porter and I am a first year. I am majoring in English with a concentration in writing. I have self published a poetry book through Barnes and Noble Nook Press. I love to read and write and hope to become a full time author someday.

Belle of Mobile

Antonio Roman Campos

In 2023, Antonio Roman Campos graduated from the Gonzaga University Honors College with degrees in civil engineering, English writing, English literature, Catholic studies, and philosophy. Although Mr. Campos now works a day job as a civil engineering consultant, by night he dons his cape and mask (not really) to become an author of mystery, horror, and adventure stories. Mr. Campos has published numerous short stories and poems in various university journals, and his work “The Gypsy’s Requiem” was honored with the 2023 Gurian Award for Fiction. He has also penned a number of nonfiction and technical essays on fields as diverse as theology, history, architecture, and earth science. He won the Daniel W. Mead Prize in 2021 for his technical writing, and his transportation engineering research paper “Public Hazard or Practical Convenience?” was called the “Best Paper Submitted” to Transportation Research Record in 2024. An Eagle Scout native to Colorado, Mr. Campos enjoys getting outdoors in his free time, hiking and horseback riding in the Rocky Mountains. He can often be caught at the world’s finest art museums and art auctions, as he is an avid connoisseur and collector of antiquities. Be sure to check out his author’s website, antonioromancampos.com for more information on this up-and-coming novelist!

Embracing Change

Michelle Mogi

Michelle Mogi is a Sophomore from Semarang, Indonesia and is majoring in Kinesiology. She is a golf athlete in Indonesia who is currently studying abroad.

Dear Young Brown Girl

Deeya Chandran

Deeya Chandran is a sophomore Biology major with minors in Spanish and Health Equity from Portland, Oregon with a proud Desi heritage. She would like to dedicate her piece to her younger self, along with her younger siblings.

Perks of Having Two Nationalities

Akari Minoda

Akari Minoda is an exchange student from Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan! Whoever wants to be friends with her, text her on Instagram at @yu23114!!!!

The Sea of Humanity and I See You

Karen Rickel

Karen Rickel is a professor in Kinesiology and Sport Management in her 18th year at Gonzaga. She is a first-generation US Citizen and a false start community college graduate of Spokane Falls CC and EWU. She received her Masters and Ph.D. in Physical Education from University of Idaho, while having both her daughters. Her husband was her biggest champion during her graduate work and has coached golf at GU for 19 years.

The Unceasing Challenger

Jacqueline Maness

Jacqueline Maness is a Junior from Broomfield, CO and is majoring in Journalism with minors in Public Relations and Writing.

The Telephone Rings

Odalys Sanchez Cedillo

Odalys Sanchez Cedillo is a junior studying business and communication studies, born and raised in Lakewood, Washington, with roots in Mexico. She loves expressing her culture and the experiences she'd lived with through her writing. She loves writing to bridge the gap between her own lived experiences and others. Her work focuses on sharing her experiences to let others know that they aren't alone and acknowledge the intersectionality between our identities in this world.

Silent Dialogues, Huge Impacts

Lana Parco

Lana Parco is a Junior from Belfair, Washington and is currently majoring in Mathematics and working towards her Certification for Secondary Education.

A Doorway to Heaven

Analesa Mason

Analesa Mason is a senior at Gonzaga, majoring in Criminology and Sociology. She is deeply passionate about being authentic and hopes to inspire others to also live fully. Her last four years have been spent fostering her self-confidence, learning to love herself, and reflecting on her identities. Her piece, and third feature in “Our Voices”, “A Doorway to Heaven” was written intentionally for her younger self, but also to be used as either a window or a mirror. She hopes that someone is able to feel seen or learn from her experiences.

A Letter to You

Gabriela Marquis

Gabriela is a senior graduating this May with an Honors BA in English Literature, Creative Writing, and Spanish. They have also served this year as a BRIDGE Coordinator and Jewish Student Union President. They look forward to a life of creative production, social justice advocacy, and contributing to the long, beautiful, and rich Jewish tradition.

My Letter to the Universe

Zen Brown

Zen Brown is a senior studying Business Administration with a concentration in Business Management Information Systems and a minor in health equity from Ocho Rios, Jamaica. She enjoys reading, learning new skills, and spending time with her friends. ‘This Piece: A Letter to the Universe’ was born out of a confusion of the need to answer questions that are often left unanswered. As a tribute to myself and the journeys past and to come, this piece reflects growth, patience, and my mental journey. Shout out to the people who have given me the space to grow, learn, and be myself: Ana, Grant, Akon, Anisia, Amari and my family < 3 .

Why Do Fences Exist

Santiago Salazar

Santiago Salazar is a sophomore studying Civil Engineering.

To the contributors to this journal: Thank you for sharing your stories and experiences with our publication. Your story helps contribute to sharing our realities to the Gonzaga community, but it also showcases your strength, courage, and that you are not alone. I hope that you feel proud of your work as much as the Our Voices Team is of you.

To Carissa Kanae, Inés Marquez, and Giona Hoaglund: Thank you for being the best team that I could have asked for this past year. Together, we have created the largest version of Our Voices and have created a positive impact by effectively publishing these stories collectively. I appreciate each and every one of you for your contribution and I look forward to seeing the three of you contributing more to future publications.

To Finley: Thank you for giving readers the opportunity to see beauty in your design, but also reflect the creativity of your vision. Your cover is the first thing that people see when they see our journal and I believe that your design reflects what Our Voices truly embraces.

To Anna Mair: Thank you for your willingness to design our inside pages, but also for bringing a positive, happy attitude to our team. Your creativity and vision flourish throughout our book and you beautifully emphasize our authors' stories. I look forward to seeing your designs in the future, but also allowing the world to see more of your talents.

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