“Yes, I will be a writer and make all of you live again in my words.”

[Carlos Bulosan]

American Is in the Heart:
A Personal History
OUR VOICES
in collaboration with

13th annual DIVERSITY MONOLOGUES
Dear Reader,

Every person faces a challenge each day. Whether it be the struggles of being a person of color to the everyday brawl of fighting your own fears to so much more. We all fight different battles and it is a matter of how we choose to encounter these barriers that mean the most.

Every person’s struggles are a part of their story and journey. Our Voices offers an opportunity for students, faculty, and staff to share their pieces and give us the chance to view things in their perspective.

As a member of the underrepresented community at Gonzaga University, I wanted to ensure that we were providing a platform for people to be heard and be seen by our community. Throughout time, many of us have been seen as invisible and the minority, but I hope you see that through this journal, we are proving that we are as much a part of this community as the “majority”.

We want to emphasize the importance of embracing the differences between every piece and recommend that you view all of these stories with an open-mind that we are being vulnerable to you, so we can show our strength and be heard within the community.

We ask that you do not judge us for how we are, but find ways to relate to us or see things in a different perspective.

Culture and diversity are the two things that will always unite all people together, thus we hope that this edition of Our Voices can make a positive impact on you.

Sincerely,

Dominic Pe Benito
[STAFF]

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all the great writers swear
on killing your darlings,

so I looked at what I held dear,
my eyes dragging the room,
and in my clean sweep I
watched

as you went around the party
telling everyone how pretty you
are!
sunlight melting your teeth,
bones figuring your outline
while I tried to figure you out.

I pulled my arrow back
and shot it forward with a hung
breath,
to hear you gasp and point and
scream
at the soft brown girl in the
corner,
blood seeping out from under
her skirt.

I stared her down into fractured
glass
and sighed in content at my
broken reflection.

is this what you meant?
when you schemed her
execution?
she was my breath of fresh air,
stolen in blinks,
my sense of self—

I loved her,
so I killed her;
marooned in the final banality of
homogenous peace.

[Marianne Nacanaynay]
They say a closed mouth doesn’t get fed.  
So I starved myself.  
And sometimes I regret it.  
As I was truly hungry for your love.

It didn’t take me long to realize  
That my love was deeply rooted  
And my mind heavily polluted

Because if the silence wasn’t enough to kill me  
My illusions definitely would  
I wasn’t ready to feed myself a reality without you

My heart sang in a tune you never knew

[Amari Troutt]

Broken Heart Syndrome
Colored

I walk around like a traitor in the midst
knowing they won’t understand how I exist.
Unintentionally segregated house,
thinking I’d be a quiet timid mouse.

I’m sick of running through the dark,
praying you’ll miss your mark.
Curled up in a ball on the floor,
praying one day I’ll be more.

The anger bubbles up inside,
a constant anger I have to hide.
Spitting, boiling, burning,
while inside I’m just hurting.

I bite back the rage, keeping a level gaze,
yet everyday, there’s more red haze.
I know I’m going to burst.
Let’s see if it’s you or me first.

I’m tired of being tired,
I’m tired of being wired.
wired for fight or flight.
tired of the constant night.

I’m sitting in my little red haze,
letting the anger fill up my gaze.
Yet sleepiness fills my bones,
wishing I could be alone.

I don’t have the energy to fight this war.
Because it happens from shore to shore,
I’m ready to lay down my arms
Because my words will just bring harm.

I’ll keep my head down in the light,
walking with timid fright.
I can’t spark this match today,
Cause the match will burn the world away.

What a beautiful fire it will be!
Sadly I won’t get to see,
because the whiteness will
overwhelm
my vision at the helm.

Now it’s getting hard to breathe,
as all of us begin to seethe.
I wish I could go back to living
in a box,
unaware of being a white faux.

But my skin has always been
yellow,
and I can’t allow myself to be
mellow.
So I’ll just sit here in this segre-
gated house,
acting the part of a timid mouse.
Someone help;
I can’t—
My body is incoherent;
a mind of its own,
yet again out of my control;
a jittery carcass
possessed by Something
frenzied, rabid—
but innocent,
only seeking to escape
my corporeal form;
Dismember me gently, please;
Take off my skin and
peel away this desperation;
Cut off my fingers,
Unscrew my wrists,
Unstitch my ankles
Unfasten my joints
Crack open my skull and
pluck the delicate fruit from
its chamber;
Exhausted;
My body a beautiful wreckage;
Finally, relief, from the violent
disagreement
between my body and brain;

Finally, Something exorcized,
Something rid;
Finally—stillness.
I rebel in flesh,
In sight,
In mind.
My bones and skin
Contort around and against you.
Blushed, highlighted, foundational.
Black eyes made to be seen.
My chin disgusts,
My stomach revolts.
My hair, my feet, my hands,
All lumped together
In strange
Unassuming patterns.
But those with black eyes enchant.
A power dances on my
Lipstick-lined mustache.
Reviled, my image commands
Your mind,
Your sight,
Your flesh.
My name lies forever on your lips.
You boil our similarities away
And return to gawk

At the mystical
Otherworldly
Freakish
Miracle.

[Fomorian]
His Name

I coo Death’s name like a love poem,  
A sweet tender voice for no one.  
His listens with attentive ears,  
hearing all my fears.

I wish another’s name fit better,  
but the way it rolls off my tongue,  
his name is second to none,  
and our love could never turn bitter.

I whisper his name into the dark.  
He always leaves such a brilliant mark,  
a star that shines too bright,  
a star that always brings me light.

Somedays I scream his name,  
such a beautiful name, it’s almost a shame  
that only he hears my cries,  
while you all hear lies.

I don’t know if another can replace him.  
Maybe in a different eon,  
but for now I coo Deaths name,  
for it’s never in vain.

He runs to my bed,  
a constant thought in my head,  
Yet he remains just out of reach for me, but he’s all I can see.  
I can barely breathe.

Yet sweet air fills my lungs,  
and I clutch to the bottoms rungs.  
Death won’t take my hand today,  
but with me he will lay.
I am brown and I’m a woman

I am outspoken and “over the top”

I’m too opinionated and I need to calm down

but I am so much more than what you see and perceive

I am outspoken because I’m underrepresented

I am over the top because you won’t notice me if I’m not

I’m opinionated because my voice is drowned out and invalidated

I need to calm down because the frustrations of my reality make you feel “uncomfortable”

I am a minority woman within our white male dominated society

and I am here to take up space, and here to be heard, acknowledged, and respected

I am someone with worth and I deserve to be valued the same as any other

So yes, I’ll be loud, I’ll be frustrated, and outspoken.

But most importantly I’ll be ME and represent us because they won’t let us be”

[Sydney Abrahamson-Fernandez]

Let Us Be
I’m from an archipelago of islands
Of scorching sand, sparkling like shiny diamonds
Vast, vivacious verdure and vegetation
The ultimate vacation destination.

Milky coconuts the size of bowling balls
Streets lit with color and music that enthralls
Tasteful art clings to the jipneys and buildings
As fast tricycles, with their bells, release “dings.”

Growing a strong sense of the Commandments Ten
Remembering with patriotic pride when
Manny Pacquiao swung with another kapow
And Miss Universe’s win ushered a wow.

Plucking saccharine strawberries in a field,
Riding sturdy, valiant steeds, stopping to yield
To Mindanao’s purple, majestic mountains
And sightseeing gardens of fruits and fountains

Of sunset sailing through spraying salty mist
To the sizzling Sun, that leaves surfers sun-kissed.
Softly, silks and satins sway, swish, swash, and swoosh
To the beat of the shore’s thrusting waves’ whoosh.
We stood on the soil that our ancestors stood on
We sang in the tongues that our ancestors sang in
We chanted words with more power than we were ever taught to understand
We danced, unafraid and free...

The union of these Native girls shook the Earth
So moving, the sky cried
Eternally bonded together
Sisters, like our ancestors

- Syvana Arwood
You love me so different
You don’t love me the same
The way you love me is like
You love me for what I am
Not what I am
Or rather who

I love when you see the little
parts of me
My little nooks and crannies
But you boiled me down so little
That is is generalized
And something that is not me

What is representative as me as
a whole
As “Asian”
You think noodles, anime, kpop
Chopsticks, vacation, fetishization

Your love is not kind
You love the idea of me
And cannot comprehend that I

am more than what I am
I am a what, not a who

And it is not me
Who states they are so cultured
and diverse
Who loves all things “non-American”
That is so fun with new sayings
to rehearse

It is not me who grew up on the
receiving end of your hatred
Of your teasing and your
pushing
With now love that seems all
too belated

You are a supporter, an
advocate, an ally
You say so proudly
But you do not love me
Like the way I wish to be loved.
Some think the frontier days
have passed away,
That the wild West is dead and
gone.
But, if this is true, it must be
asked,
Was it lost or was it won?

The lovely mountain majesties,
So fair, pristine, and old,
Became to foreign prospectors,
The sources of mere pocketfuls
of gold.

The vast frontiers and endless
prairies,
Once an Eden yet untamed,
Are crisscrossed now with rail-
roads and map-lines,
For which we all should feel
ashamed!

A land as rich as Canaan,
Generously filled with spoils,

Has succumbed at last to human
hands,
To our modern, bloody, and
sweaty toils.

Sometimes fortune is our mis-
fortune.
Sometimes our ends are not our
goals.
Why should we demand the
world,
When it costs our very souls?

Western Progress

[Antonio Campos]
I’ve never been one to go “out” on The weekend. No pub crawls or Clubs or other words that connote Violence, by substance or otherwise, But my uncle got married last summer. The joint late night bachelor party was In Toronto, during Pride Month, in a Gay bar, surrounded by all the people Who cared for them most – a celebration Of love and identity for all, despite Every overhanging despite. The night Was as joyous as you can get in days As bleak as these ones. But it’s after Moments like this one that I start going Back there: The gay bar. My family. The Fun that got so big it made me feel small. It’s after moments like this one I start Wishing we could have celebrated the Wedding in a place made secure and Secret and utterly unreachable like Fort Knox or a bird’s empty nest or the face Of the moon so that when I remember The crowded dance floors and open doors My skin won’t crawl and I’ll stop waiting For new catastrophe to come shooting
Down the doors a year after the wedding
happened. It’s after moments like this
(guns and guns and guns and blood
Spilling lavender and lime across strobe
Lit floors in places once safe now called
Crime scenes) that I realize my body is
Home to an obituary waiting to happen –
And now it’s night again, much like that
One, but I’m not in Toronto at Pride Month
With people who love me because I’m
Outside and exposed like a livewire and
I’m not in a club but I can hear people

Party ing merrily as I’m walking back to
My car alone and clutching keys between
Each finger like a shaking Wolverine as I
Weigh the odds if I’d die faster out here
Or in the belly of a bar. On most nights
Like this I wonder if this street is the right
One to walk down, or if I’m going to end up
Like one of the others like me who was
Carved up like carrion and got left to rot.
And I have to wonder if I’ll ever be brave
Enough to step foot in a bar without recalling
Kindergarten lockdown drills and knowing,
Even then, in the case of a shooting there’d
Be nothing I could do. I have to wonder if
The carnation pinned to my lapels was left
Like a kiss from Dorothy or like a cross to
Bear. I have to wonder if I’m target
Practice – If They can smell it on me, if
They can see who I am. I have to wonder what the worth of pride is
When all I keep seeing is people like me
Landing six feet below. Please, all I want right now is a witness: I’m living
In silence so no one can hear me; like
Schrodinger’s cat, so no one can see if

I’m in or I’m out so I stay a moving target.
So I won’t have someone follow me home
(On nights like this) and end up on the
Mourning news as the latest struck
Down in her prime because I love so much
Someone tore a hole through my heart and
Left me to bleed. If I am a secret, then
I’m still at least living, if only a half-slip of
A shadow of what they all say youth should
Be, but then most of Them don’t keep
Running tallies of who is safe
and who
Knows what and how much and who has

cont. What I Can’t Say Aloud
Been hinted to and who might kill them
If ships escape bottles and lips drink down
what’s left. I can’t go to bars and I can’t go to churches and I can’t go to school but I’m Doing it right, is what I keep telling myself,
If only so that my parents won’t find out
I’m gone from another stock email that gets sent to junk. I know there is joy in the truth, and love and acceptance;
Pride if I Only just say it, and I have when it’s quiet but I want to say it and not be afraid. I want to. So badly it hurts. But then I remember the

Bodies left bleeding on the dancefloor.
After moments like these and nights like
This I have to wonder if the only choice We’ve been given is to live free and die or Linger with survivor’s guilt and tell the only Stories left to tell to an audience of no one.
I withered away in bed, steaming in a 10x10 room, letting my anger boil me alive as I thought about scraping the skin away from their foreheads so I could scream into their skulls, my fingers crossed behind their ears, hoping my hot breath browns their skin into empathy.

but they turn to me and smile, cheshire, glossy in tooth and eye—

as I read over it, I see they did none of it for me—with me—

and I wonder if they ever will.

What I Did This Summer

in a handy-dandy bulleted list:

- that they used
- to contour
- their resumes.

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and I wonder if they ever will.
i thought I’ve been keeping it
sane
thought I could see my own
reflection
in the rain
my lights been dim
in this life of sins
speeding with a blindfold on
while she explores my limbs

my skin has been stripped
while my mind runs on a script

what we built was bigger
than the sum of two
I had to go and count on
my own
I must find my purpose alone
Worship

Luna
Tu cara preciosa sees me
Peeking oculta from behind shades
Hovering on your sea of silk
Perfectamente free from guilt
Your unwinking gaze me llena
Con la ansiedad that I will
Never feel close to your Essence

Must I drown my mind,
Drag Psyche deep into el mar
And let Cupid’s wings fill
My lungs con un viento
De euforia pura?
Must I blind myself
And allow mis sensaciones propias
A guiar me a la verdad
Que me prometiste
Con tus palabras dulces
Y tus besos suaves?

Pero perhaps you lie.
Maybe tus palabras dulces
Y tus besos suaves
Y tus miradas sensibles

Are your snares.
You drive them through my heart
And pull my yearnings closer.
While I await el paraíso
You said would come,
You pull me closer and closer
To the frozen lake
That you call your home.

O tal vez este es solo
La racionalización
De mi comunidad
De mi familia
De mi escuela
De mi universidad
Tal vez what I need
Es bucear a tu raíz
Y buscar por tus secretos.

Las dudas have pulled the
Nerveless passion from me.
Clouds cover your face
As the sky darkens
And el mundo spins away
From your promises once more.
PROSE.
“Bless me, father, for I have sinned. It has been... about eleven years... since my last confession.” I could not see the face of the time-worn priest through the dark wicker of the screen, but I distinctly heard an inhalation of air in response to the lengthy duration of time. It was the only sound in the vast, empty vaults of St. Louis Cathedral that shadowy night in July. Neither man nor beast seemed to stir beneath the oppressive humidity of the old French Quarter of New Orleans.

“At last, what has brought you back to the fold, my son?” The priest seemed to whisper, his voice friendly, but distant in the murky moonlight. “What urgent confession has brought you here at such an hour?”

“I... I do not know if I really require a confession,” I panicked, my mind feeling jumbled and irrational. “But I had hoped that we might just talk. I... I am very scared, father, and very confused. I am sorry for waking you up like this...”

“It is all right, my son,” the priest assured with a yawn. “I was quite the night owl... in my youth at least. Now, what is it you would like to talk about?”

I hesitated, “Father... do you believe that spirits—that people, I mean—can truly rise from the dead?” The air in the room suddenly felt more still and more torturously hot. “I mean, I know about Jesus and Lazarus coming back from the dead, but they were both holy men. What about the bad ones, father? What about those unfortunate,
tortured souls? What about...”

“Did you pull me out of bed to tell me that you have been conversing with some kind of evil spirit? A zombie, perhaps, or a vampire?” The priest seemed dismayed and slightly irritated. It was true that I had hammered upon the rectory door in the middle of the night. “Perhaps, my son,” he yawned again, “you have been having a bit too much libation on Bourbon Street. Maybe things would seem clearer in the morning...”

“No, father,” I hesitated, “I mean, I don’t know. I don’t drink, father, or use hard drugs. Perhaps you would understand things better if I started at the beginning...”

I could hear the priest adjusting his seat in the darkness, “Yes, perhaps that would be best, my son.” His voice was calm, but I could sense growing impatience. “Father,” I sighed, at last coming to the point, “it all started about one year ago, when I returned home from the army. I had just completed a second tour in Afghanistan, and I finally came back to New Orleans to live permanently. I had inherited my great aunt’s home out by Lake Pontchartrain—an old, white, clapboard “shotgun” house with antebellum columns at the front. I loved my great aunt, father, and I used to stay with her as a boy, but she had been ailing for several years before she passed, and I was very grateful to receive her home. I thought that it would be the perfect place to start a family...”
“You are married?” The priest questioned, thinking it pertinent.

“No father,” I began, “at least, not yet. Actually, father, I wonder if that was part of the problem. The house was so immense, you see, for a solitary person. It had that one long line of rooms, stretching from the front of the house to the back door, and you could peer all the way down the length of the home when the doors were open. It was eerie to have such a large space to oneself, and yet the place never seemed quite empty...”

If the priest noticed that I kept to the past tense when discussing the old shotgun property, he did not comment on the fact.

“As I have said, father, the house was quite aged—it was built at the end of the nineteenth century, when all of the land around it was cotton fields and swamplands. The place was in bad need of repairs, and an old, black oak tree, dripping with Spanish moss, threatened to crash through the front room at any time. The tree was half-dead, father, and a disease of some kind was rotting away at its core. Naturally, it needed to be removed...”

“Naturally,” whispered the priest in agreement, proving his attentiveness.

“I called out a contractor, who marked the tree for cutting,” I hesitated, “but, that evening I received a little note on my doorstep—it was neither signed nor addressed; it was not even in...”
an envelope. The note warned me not to remove the tree; in fact, it said that the tree was cursed. I thought that it was just some conservationist busybody with a green thumb, or maybe someone from the historical society. I didn’t care. It was my tree on my property now, and it had to go. The contractor came the next morning to chop down the old oak tree, and I saved some money by digging out the stump myself.

The priest had a touch of asthma, and I could hear him breathing in the still, heavy air. I could not decide if his raspy breaths were comforting or discomforting in the wavering glow of the moonlight.

“Beneath the stump, father, jumbled in the roots of the old, dead tree, I found it,” I shivered, “a small, black box with a cast-iron lid, rusted and cracked by the elements. I was surprised by the discovery, obviously, and I hoped that it might contain something valuable, so I took the box into my house and used a knife to pry it open. The box had been sealed tight, and when I finally broke the seal, the contents of the box spewed all over my front room and dissipated throughout the house—ashes, father, were what the box contained—and charred, black fragments of bone. I did my best to clean everything up, father, and I threw out the remains; I didn’t want to have anything to do with them, and I didn’t want to hassle with the historical society about the old chest. Only later did I realize I had disturbed some kind of cast-iron coffin—I had thought that all of the bodies
around here were buried above ground...”

The priest’s breathing grew raspier, but he did not utter a word.

“That was when the dreams started, father, or at least I thought that they were dreams. Night after night, I began to hear noises—to see things. I told you that I could see everything in my house all at once, and I started to believe that I could witness a dark figure in the nighttime, moving in my direction. I cannot say ‘walking,’ father, because it did not seem to walk—it trudged, it slunk, it crawled. It would begin at the front door, nearest to the spot where the oak tree had stood, and then it would move toward me, room after room and doorway after doorway, toward my bed in the rear of the house. And then, the figure would suddenly combust! It would burst into flames and be gone!”

The priest was startled, and he coughed loudly at my exclamation. He seemed to be having trouble breathing; the air, indeed, was very heavy in the old cathedral, and thick with some faint odor.

“This happened to me several times, father,” I explained, “and I was growing more and more scared. I even thought about going to a friend’s house, but what reason could I give? I am a veteran, father, and I have seen strange and terrible things before! And this, this thing, it was nonsense. It was disgusting and absurd. And then, one night, it was no longer a dream. I woke up around midnight, and I
smelled real smoke. My kitchen, my bedroom, my entire house was on fire, and I could feel the flames all around me, burning everything. Everything! And, I could hear the fire engine arriving outside, and the calls of the paramedics and firefighters! But nearer at hand, among the flames, I could see him—a old, black man, clothed in rags, unbothered by the smoke and fire. There was a noose about his neck, father, and cuts on his hands and face. I had never seen him before in my life, but he stared at me with some mixture of disinterest and menace. I know it is hard to believe, father, and the paramedics thought that I had been hallucinating when they rescued me, and I related the story. But there were rope marks on my wrists and neck—in addition to my burns—and I could not otherwise account for them. My aunt’s old house was totally ruined, father, and the firemen said that it had been the hottest inferno they had ever witnessed in a domestic blaze. Actually, the police had to question me if I had any illegal accelerants stored inside. Of course, I did not.”

Yet again, the priest did not answer me, and I really began to question if he was still alert. I was too focused on my story to notice that the air had grown yet heavier in the church, and the odor was growing stronger—somebody must have been barbequing meat in a nearby restaurant on Jackson Square.

“An insurance adjuster came by my house to review the damages, father, and he asked me if I knew about the history of the property,” I fanned myself with
a copy of the missal that lay inside the confessional; I barely noticed how it was becoming more and more stuffy. “He told me that something horrible had happened at the house almost a hundred years ago, around the time my great aunt was born. A poor vagabond—a black man—had been caught trying to break into the home. Rather than calling the police, the neighbors decided to ‘try’ the man themselves, and, finding him guilty, they lynched him. They hanged him father, my ancestors and their neighbors; they lacerated his hands and face when he tried to fight back, and then they burned the body so that nobody could know.” I began to cough now, but I was too agitated to know why, “They hanged the poor man on that live oak tree, and then the buried his burned remains among its roots. His name,” I coughed, “was Balthasar Jones.”

No sooner had I said the name than a bright light suddenly illuminated the darkness of the church, causing me to flinch. The fire that had spontaneously ignited allowed me to see the billows of smoke that had strangely filled the church, boiling and swirling like water in a cauldron. I swept aside the partition to see that the elderly priest was slumped against the wall of the confessional, gasping for air and clutching at his heart. A dark figure could be seen now, emerging from the flames at the center of the revered cathedral. The tortured man had great gashes on his hands and on his face; the swinging noose strangled about his neck. His skin was not a natural shade but blackened
like charcoal and smoldering embers.

Invigorated by the strange and terrible apparition, the priest convulsed in his confessional and widened his eyes, “Cursed...” he sputtered, suggesting some line of scripture, “...unto the third and fourth generations... we are all doomed to become but ashes and dust, yet there is still time yet... for forgiveness...”

The fire was spreading throughout the cathedral now, as a cloud of smoke blotted out the moonlight, yet, like the burning bush of old, nothing seemed to be consumed by the flames. I could feel their oppressive heat upon my skin; taste the burning flesh in my mouth. No, the fires could not harm the holy church, but the inferno could certainly consume me!

“Balthasar Jones!” I exclaimed as I fell to me knees, and the burned husk of a man contorted his hollow eyes to view me. “Balthasar, I know that it was my family—my ancestors who did this to you. Please! Please forgive them,” I begged, collapsing toward the flames.

“Balthasar, forgive me!”
Let me tell you about The Demon. The Demon appeared to me on a clear, sunny day. “Howdy!” she said with a smile. “How would you rate your body?” “About average,” I said reflexively. “No, no,” she retorted. “Don’t worry, I’m not going to kill you for answering incorrectly. All I want to know is if there’s a body part of yours you wouldn’t mind giving me. Not something you want, of course. I would feel bad taking something from you that brings you even an ounce of joy.” Her words dripped sarcasm, but I could tell by her tone that she was serious.

I thought it over. “Well,” I said, “It seems you’re out of luck. I like every part of me just the way it is.” “Is that so? Every part brings you joy?” I nodded.

“Well then. If I can find but a single part of you that brings you no joy at all, you consent for me to take it? I would of course replace said part with another of your choosing.” I nodded my assent. Besides, I was confident that she wouldn’t find what she was looking for. After all, the only body part that had ever actively tried to kill me had been urgently suppressed and removed after failing to detonate in time, and even if I still had it, I would have handed it over to her without question. That left me with the question of what The Demon would do with a swollen appendix.
All that to say, I was pretty confident in my satisfaction with the body parts I had left.

The Demon began pacing around me, prodding and poking me. Her hands first landed in my hair, cut their way through my curls, and placed their fingertips on my scalp.

“Your brain,” she inquired. “You don’t need that, do you? I mean, don’t you want to enjoy a fireworks show with your family at a Fourth of July party, or to sink your teeth into a juicy, fresh tomato, as if it were an apple or a mango? Wouldn’t you like a brain that didn’t tell your face to make expressions that scared other people?”

Easy. “What about Versace, Holst, Masuda, or Fox?” I challenged. “How could I watch Shingeki no Kyojin without singing along to a Linked Horizon opening, or chant along to a Sabaton track while playing Europa Universalis IV?” I shook her fingers loose from my hair. “If you took my brain, I couldn’t throw myself into a composition with the same vigor, enjoying an all-consuming concentration realer than driving a car. No, I wouldn’t love music the same way, and music alone has been the single greatest source of joy in my life.”

The Demon began pacing again. This time, her hands rested on my chest. “Now these!” She said. “If these were different, life would be easier for you, wouldn’t it? For starters, you could use the bathroom of your choice without question. People wouldn’t look at you as if you
were trying to rob them. You wouldn’t have to ask someone if they were attracted to your gender, because you could comfortably assume that they were!”

This one was a little trickier. “I’ve spent years trying to accept my body,” I told her. I was actually getting angry. “What is the saying about the eye of the beholder? And you’re really gonna dictate to me that I dislike my shape so much that I’d ask you to change it?”

“As you said, I’ve spent a long time learning to accept my body. I’ve reached that point. If I removed even one part, the whole thing would be out of balance. Besides, my chest is the one part of my body that’s the perfect size. The rest of me is completely out of proportion.”

“. . . In everyone else’s eyes, you mean. Not out of proportion in yours, surely?” It took me a moment to realize my mistake.

“I was worried you had me,” she said, before I could recover, “but you’ve given me hope. Thank you!”

For a third time, The Demon paced around me. Again, her hands found my chest, but this time, they seemed to reach deeper.
“Now this,” she said, jabbing my heart with a finger. “You’ve spent many days crying over this. I mean, your appendix almost killed you, but this made you want to kill yourself!” She placed her palm across my chest, my heartbeat bouncing between her hand and my soul. Her voice dropped to a whisper. “I could pluck it from you as easily as plucking fruit from a bush, and with it, I could take all those years of self-doubt and loathing; prayers in vain to spiteful God who refused to make you like everyone else; all the names of those you loved but who you knew would never — could never — love you back, who in learning of your love would chase you away with sticks, stones, and words. Shall I recite some of them? Perhaps after a reminder you might be more willing to part with your heart. Who shall we start with? Oh, I know! How about C—”

“ENOUGH!” I screamed pushing her back. In tales like this, I knew she could have eaten me then, but I didn’t care. “There were moments, brief moments where my heart brought me joy. The Charter Bus, the Concert Hall, I wouldn’t give those moments back for anything. You’re right, I almost plucked out my own heart myself, but because of those moments, I knew my heart was capable of bringing me joy. And unlike my appendix, my heart never poisoned my body, never threatened to explode in my chest, though it’s caused me no end of pain over the years.”

The Demon was in shock. “I . . underestimated you,” she said. “For that I am sorry. You passed.
I can see you truly love every part of you.” She began to leave. I had slid in my headphones and was about to hit “play” when The Demon turned back to me. She spoke in a small, doubtful voice.
“This is a longshot, I know. But you wouldn’t, perhaps. . . would you be willing to part with your skin?”
I sighed. “Do you want it hand-washed, machine-tumbled, or dry-cleaned?”
¡Sevilla! Ah, noble Sevilla, that wonderful Spanish city in the heart of Andalucía, resplendent with its chronicles of long-forgotten lore, its mysterious oriental charms, and its lovely occidental mysteries. Behold the Real Alcázar, the royal palace, with its Moorish archways, its merlon-studded walls, and its roaring lion atop the ancient portcullis. Behold the magnificence of La Giralda, one of the tallest belltowers in all Christendom, the twin of the great minaret of distant Marrakech, yet now adorned with signs and symbols of the Catholic Kings and the weathervane of the great navigatrix. At last, behold the Torre del Oro, the Golden Tower of the ancient Almohad caliphate, with its sturdy octagonal walls watching every corridor of the city, observing every entrance and exit along the River Guadalquivir with panopticon-like charm.

Ah, Seville, that city of stories! That city of Carmen, and Don Juan, and the famous Barber—that legendary factotum who bears the metropolis’s very toponym. That city of Moors and Christians, of Saharan gold and Toledo steel, of wealthy champions and cynical philosophers. Ah, beauteous, generous, quixotic Seville! Ah, mysterious, shadowy, strange Seville! ¡Sevilla, la Perla de Andalucía!

El Gitano—The Gypsy

Manfri, the gypsy, knew the stories of his city well. He knew the stories that he
was supposed to know—the histories that had been shared in the time of his grandfather, and even in the time of his grandfather’s grandfather. He knew the stories that he was not supposed to know—the trysts and assignations between young lovers in the night; the heated fights of noblemen that occurred behind closed doors; the innermost thoughts of struggling artists as they threatened to defenestrate themselves into the cobbled streets below. But Manfri also knew other stories. He knew the tales that nobody understood save himself—the tales sung upon the strings of violins by candlelight; the stories told by the birds as they chirped atop the belltower; the legends squeaked by the weathervanes as they twisted in the wind, or whistled by the flames of torches spluttering.

Manfri was an old gypsy, born of an ancient Bohemian line. His age could not be counted in years—for he, himself, did not know how many revolutions he had made about the sun. However, the lines of his creased forehead and the wispy white hairs hanging upon his shoulders spoke volumes of his long and turbulent life. The gentle gleam of his yellowed teeth told others that they had nothing to fear, and yet his eyes nevertheless contained the slightest shade, not of menace, but of singular slyness and otherworldly guile.

Some of Seville’s younger residents believed that Manfri was a clairvoyant capable of reading the thoughts of the dead. Some of the city’s older inhabitants claimed that he was immortal, for the passage...
of decades appeared to have no effect upon him. Indeed, even the city’s most autumnal denizens could recall Manfri, the gypsy, just as he was today, in the distant annals of their youths.

Manfri would wait upon the street corner where Calle de Segovia crossed the Alley of Don Remondo, positioned halfway between the Roman ruins of Calle Mármoles and the tomb of Christopher Columbus at the heart of the Seville Cathedral. Then, as the sun descended into the distant hills and the shadows crept across the faces of the Roman marbles, he would establish himself upon a three-legged stool at the corner, his face as stony and as shadowy as the visages of the ancient gods. From the fringed and torn tendrils of an antique shroud, he would unwrap his prized violin, and from the back of his sturdy leather boot, he would retrieve his musical bow. Then, with a heavy sigh, Manfri would put the instrument to his shoulder and begin to play long, slow, sonorous, nocturnal melodies, that augmented the tropical warmth and enriched the black shadows of the night.

He would sit thus, in intense melodic contemplation, for countless hours as the spirits of the notes swirled about him, and the harps of the ancients whispered down the alleyways. Manfri’s eyes would wink in sleepiness and water with emotion as the archaic chords of his Bohemian ancestry faded into the night, as soft and as tender as the bosom of a newlywed.
The street about Manfri was never quiet. Rather, the sacrosanct atmosphere of the old gypsy’s music would be interrupted and overwhelmed by the profane words of passersby and the discordant rows of drunks in the night. On evening strolls, ladies and gentlemen would pass by the old gypsy without a word, a sigh, or a glance, and yet their shuffling steps were sufficient to spoil the old man’s sanctuary. Boisterous knaves and genteel aristocrats alike were attracted to the numerous tapas bars that lined the Calle de Segovia, and their raucous shouts would disturb the very melodies that their parsimonious coins prolonged.

Indeed, for all his wealth of wisdom, Manfri was a poor and solitary man, supported only through the generosity of others. He could be destroyed, too, by others’ neglect.

For all of the varnish of his pristine violin, Manfri’s toes shown through the tips of his boots, and his aged head was bared to the elements. His lips had not known the taste of fine wine or bread in many days, save for a few parsimonious drops of the Sacrament, and his stomach growled with hunger for less ecclesiastical sustenance. Yet, for all this, Manfri, the poor gypsy, knew the sound of beauty, and he knew how to create it. Manfri, the old gypsy, knew the value of charity, and he survived—or rather subsisted—upon it.

For the world, this night was not so very different. The gypsy played his violin on his happy street corner in Seville. The
nighttime pedestrians walked along the road, racing from bar to bar, from scene to scene, and from friend to friend. The walls and parapets of La Giralda stood guard over the magnificent city, obscured by the night and yet prominent in the mind.

Yet, for Manfri, this night was like no other.

It had a sublimity and a profundity uniquely its own.

Indeed, this was the night that Manfri was to die, not from malice nor from violence of any kind, but merely from extreme old age. The apathy and callousness of others in this matter may astound you, Estimable Reader, and yet there is no reason that they should. After all, we are each dead men or women, only awaiting the precise moments of our personal demises. We treat ourselves and others as if we are eternal, and yet nothing could be further from the truth. We do not respect that which should be respected, and we fail to praise that which should be praised. We act as though the ancient amongst us are distant, and therefore we consider them forgotten, yet it must not be so. Are we, too, to be forgotten? A few years from now, are we going to be so very distant from the minds of those we leave behind?

But hush. This is no time for such obvious philosophy.

Manfri, the soon-to-be-deceased, has just uplifted his bow.

Today, he shall play his own requiem mass as he remembers
himself and his long, long life. Let us hope that others remember him, and all those like him, in their solitary moments of memorial.

We salute you, ancient gypsy, and we listen to you with patience and contemplation.

_El Artista—The Artist_

Ambrosio Rocos, the artist, was a young man when first he arrived in Seville at the beginning of the Francoist Dictatorship and the National Regime.

He was as penniless as a beggar, and yet he had a tremendous wealth of that golden substance called ambition.

He promised to become the greatest painter Spain had ever seen.

He had studied the works of the old master Diego Velázquez...

and the realist marvel Francisco de Goya...

and the exiled Pablo Picasso...

and the pious Dominikos Theotokopoulos, who they called El Greco, The Greek.

The artist did not have a criminalistic disposition.

That is to say, he did not look like a criminal from the outside.

But, he always dreamed of being arrested.

The whistles of the social brigade as they chased him through the laneways...

The intensity of the courtroom scene...
The drama of being hauled away to prison just like a revolutionary or a martyr...

These things, he thought, appealed to him.

“An artist must stir up some trouble!” he would say, although he did not know what he meant by it.

“An artist must break the rules!” he would claim, although he could not guess which ones were worth breaking, and which ones ought to remain intact.

“Above all, an artist must envision the future, and paint it upon the canvas!”

Ambrosio failed to uphold this maxim as well.

For as much as the young revolutionary adored the philosophy of progress, he could not help but love old things as well.

He loved the old buildings of the gothic quarter as the shadows crept across their pointed features.

He loved the old paintings in the galleries, with their smooth and realistic lines carefully trained with equal parts art and science.

He loved the old people—the ancient residents and the cryptic denizens—of Seville.

The aged gentlemen in their shabby, patched suits...

The older ladies in their Sunday frocks...

Now just a little tattered or a
trifle stained with the memories of forgotten dances, and the thin veneer of respectability...

These were the characters whom most he admired.

They were the ones who remembered, the ones who reflected, the ones who cared.

But, as an artist, Ambrosio had to stir up trouble somehow; he could not sink into the complacency of older generations or admit that he loved the simple, the steadfast, and the sacred.

So, he painted with bold strokes in garish colors.

He reveled in quick, staccato slaps of the brush against the canvas.

There were no kings or emperors to be found in his pieces; there were no smooth countenances to be seen on his Cupids or his Venuses or his Adonises.

Here was the delivery boy running in the street, painted with the same terrific colors of any Goya.

Here was the heavyset grandmother in the window, no longer portrayed with smooth features, but with Picasso’s errant angles.

Here, at last, was the old gypsy on the street corner, his violin reduced to a maddened dash of umber, flashing against a background of enclosing greys and blacks.

The gypsy’s face was downcast.
in pensive concentration; the melody of his music wallowed in smears of paint and escaped through a tear in the cheap canvas.

The Roman marbles of the background disappeared into a menagerie of pencil-marks, as the street remained unfinished.

The artist yearned to complete the work; he wanted to fill in the missing details.

But no!

Certainly not!

An artist must break the rules after all; he must abandon the masterpiece before its expected telos.

And so, Ambrosio threw the sketch to the ground, half-colored, and cursed himself for his lapse into mundanity.

An artist must envision the future, he reprimanded himself, and this old gypsy is merely stuck in the past.

Las Amantes—The Lovers

La familia Gutiérrez, the Gutierrez family, represented a wealthy and respectable echelon of Spanish aristocracy. Once upon a time, their ancestral patriarch, Don Francisco Gutiérrez de Cuerna de Vaca y Bexar, had owned more land in Perú than King Carlos IV of Spain; he had commanded more forces at sea than Doge Ludovico Manin of Venice; and he had fielded a greater army than General Francesco Sforza of Milan. However, time had not been kind to la familia Gutiérrez,
and the fate of the once-powerful dynasty now rested in the hands of an overbearing, yet incapable, buffoon and his two youthful daughters.

These girls—Victoria and Gloria—had been born to wealth and raised in its loving embrace. However, for all the leatherbound books in their family library and all the tireless hours of their tutors, they knew but little of the world beyond their villa, and they could never guess the true dangers of beautiful Seville. These young ladies, in the greenness of their youths, were also hopelessly quixotic and romantic individuals. Much like Queen Isabella II of Spain—La Reina de los Tristes Destinos—this forgivable innocence was destined to lead them to times of sad misfortune.

One evening in the happy month of May, Victoria Gutierrez stumbled across a crisp, wax-sealed envelope, tucked between the leaves of her favorite book of poetry. At first, she was alarmed to think that some person—some stranger—had infiltrated her secluded bedroom and disturbed her most prized book of verse. However, any such infraction into her privacy was quickly forgiven when she opened the envelope and discovered its contents—the careful drawings and tender writings of some secret and wonderful lover. For Victoria, a young maiden barely upon the threshold of adulthood and carefully raised in a cloistered and old-fashioned household, this gran amor, this great love, was incredible and fantastical! The thought of such
a surreptitious and mysterious admirer brought rosy blushes to her cheeks and throbs to her heart; the consideration of so secretive a lover was almost too much to endure!

And yet, the pungency of this amor insólito, this unusual and unexpected love, was yet enhanced for Victoria when she decided—against her nature—to keep this feeling a secret to the world. Thus, Victoria did not tell her overbearing father, her trustworthy maid, or even her twin sister about her wonderful letter, and she never inquired as to how the package came to be within her guarded boudoir.

The drawings and poems of the mysterious stranger were gorgeous and romantic. The words of each poem seemed sincere and intense, like the praises and yearnings of some deeply pining gentleman. The images perfectly portrayed the lush foliage and lovely fountains of the Jardines Alcázares and the glorious architectures of the Plaza de España. One image even showed Victoria herself, as seen through her bedroom window in the quiet of the evening while she sat at her desk working at her studies.

Who could be the young woman’s furtive admirer Some dashing nobleman she had met at court? Some aspiring servant from the hall? Some adoring peasant from the farms surrounding Seville? Victoria could not guess the identity of this distant lover, and yet this made her emotions seem so much more visceral and extreme. What fine sort of a man might adore her so intensely, and yet
remain at such great distance? Who was this charming stranger who loved her from afar?

Little did Victoria know, in all of this, that her sister, Gloria, had received an almost identical parcel of letters, tucked beneath the pillow of her bed at the Gutierrez villa. With equal sighing and pining and romantic imagination, Gloria likewise received her parcel of floral paintings and loving letters. Gloria, too, found a lovely watercolor of the Alcazar Gardens, an unstretched canvas of the Spanish Plaza and a quick charcoal of herself, as seen through the window. Gloria, too, kept these quixotic drawings a secret from the world, and Gloria, too, bided her time to discover her secret lover. As the weeks passed and the beauty of the springtime melted into the hotness of the summer, both gullible heiresses continued to receive their loving notes, and they both continued to secret them away from the world, each ignorant to the actions of the other. Here was a note especially for Victoria hidden on a shelf in the library; here was one for Gloria stashed beneath her vanity. Here was one rolled into Victoria’s equestrian boot, and here was one concealed in Gloria’s dainty jewelry box.

Any other individual might have questioned the letters and worried about the intent of their sender. Any other heiress might have been concerned regarding how some stranger accessed her room or trifled with her belongings. Yet, there could not be any harm in this secret romantic’s actions, could there? He had not stolen anything
after all—even when accessing the treasures in the jewelry box. He had not made any improper demands of the girls, or written any scandalous content, or portrayed any undignified art. He could not mean to harm them, could he? He could not mean to hurt them, correct?

Finally, a separate note came for each yearning heiress, asking to meet, secretly, behind the Roman marbles that stood near the corner of the Calle Mármoles and the Calle de Segovia.

So, each young woman made her excuses to the other, claiming that an important social visit or a trinket forgotten in the city compelled her return to Seville. Victoria asked the chauffeur to drive her into town, and she implored the loyal servant not to tell her father or her sister of her actions. At the same time, Gloria concealed herself in a neighbor’s haycart as the estate farmers brought their produce to market. Thus, one young lady carefully made her way to Seville, and thence to the Calle de Segovia, in the back of an expensive coach, as her twin made the same journey upon a peasant’s cart. One heiress wore the black satin gloves, gossamer gown, and shadow lace veil of an older generation, while her sister wore the bright circle skirt and bonnet of a country belle. Both girls were sweetly beautiful, and both were imbued with that characteristic naïveté of their class, which at best is seen as elegance and at worst as foolhardiness. Both yearned for unexpected romance, and both courageously abandoned their comfortable villa with a sensation of determination and
independence.

But neither knew whom she would meet, or what trick fate might have in store.

When Victoria and Gloria separately arrived at the Calle de Segovia, an old gypsy played his tender violin upon the corner, his eyes closed in concentration and his head slumped towards the instrument in mortal exhaustion. Victoria arrived some seconds before her sister, and she rushed behind the Roman marbles with enthusiastic skips. Then, when Gloria arrived, she too disappeared behind the statues, quite ready for some secret rendezvous.

How sad each young aristocrat was when she discovered no secret lover! How perplexed each was when she came across the other!

And, all the while, Manfri played his quiet requiem upon the corner, celebrating life’s follies and remembering youth’s disappointments.

And, all the while, Ambrosio Rocos, that deceitful young artist, worked on his sketches of the gypsy as he commended himself for the trick he had played upon the overly romantic and overly covetous aristocrats, each miserly enough to conceal her secrets from the other until it was too late. The artist smirked at the success of his deception, and he chuckled at the trouble he had caused for two young, innocent lovers. They had been compensated for their troubles with small pieces of artwork and poetry,
and he had thoroughly enjoyed his little farse from afar, easily bribing the girls’ servants to deposit their packages, and easily watching their changing moods through the villa’s open windows.

Ambrosio thought that his work had been a harmless jest. He considered that he had done his artistic duty by causing trouble, and he figured that the girls would soon enough forget their disappointments.

However, Manfri, the ancient and omnipotent violinist, patiently waited for the girls to return to the street, and he studied their ashamed countenances carefully. He knew that the artist’s jest was unforgivable, and he knew that it was wrong to play so casually with weighty matters like love, longing, innocence, and passion. As sweat beaded upon the old gypsy’s brow, he lugubriously played sonorous, largo chords upon his violin in memory of the girls’ fabricated romance, and, when Victoria and Gloria had departed, he played a dissonant minuet to reprimand the vile artist who had so casually joked with their hearts.

Indeed, the mercurial artist did not deserve Victory and Glory, but only derision for the callous trick he had played.

El Matador—The Killer

The afternoon wore into evening, and the evening descended into night. The artist, throwing his unfinished drawing into the street, disappeared into the nearest bar for a drink. The lovers, only now comparing
their secret letters, and only now bonding over their mutual heartache, returned to their estate on foot, each a bit wiser of the world and thus a bit more disappointed by its realities.

Meanwhile, with slow, sonorous notes and grand chords, the gypsy’s requiem neared its completion, and the wizened, old Manfri prepared to die. Out of order, and yet nevertheless recognizable, the venerable man had seen the thrills and excesses of youth, displayed in two quixotic girls; he had viewed the end of youth in the guise of a callous trickster, who claimed to create as an artist, and yet only ever aimed to destroy as a deceiver. Now, Manfri only needed to view a killer in order to end this daily reenactment of life. He needed to see a personification of old age—a literal manifestation of Death himself.

Don Humberto Penáguilas was such a man.

The leading matador of the Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza de Caballería de Sevilla, Don Humberto was no stranger to murder. The gallant, grey-haired gentleman, now in the declining years of his life, spent each day in the bullring with those famous tools of his trade—the scarlet cape and the estoque sword—in his hands. Every day, when the whirling toreros cast open the gate to the ring, he watched six bulls charge through la Puerta Grande to the tune of España Cañi.

Each and every bull rushed into the ring, eyes filled with frantic frenzy, as it was led in running
circles by the dancing toreros.
Every bull flinched and groaned
as it received the sharp point of
the picador’s lance in its back.
Every one roared in agony and
jumped in anger at the stick
of the banderilleros’ barbs,
and every one leaked vibrant
blood onto the sand as it bolted
around the ring, lowing and
growling with fury. Every bull
dripped mucus from its nose and
saliva from its mouth as it ran
in circles, its eyes crazed like
those of a rabid dog. Every bull
stomped and tramped on the
ground, shifting its gaze from
the merry brass band to the
grotesquely enthralled crowd to
the yellow and pink capes of the
toreros.

Yes, every bull in the ring was
similar, but no two were ever
exactly the same.

When Don Humberto leapt
into the sand and stared the
quaking creature in the eyes,
he never knew if this would be
simply another bull to fight, his
last beast to attack, or the very
mechanism of his demise. He
never knew which one of them
was truly el matador—the killer;
would this be the bull’s final
hour upon the Earth, or would
this be Don Humberto’s?

When the experienced don at
last called for his sword and
his blood red cape, the moment
was just as philosophical—as
transcendental—as it was
gruesome. This moment
was man’s timeless struggle
with and against nature,
reduced to a single moment,
a single heartbeat. Here
was civilization—here was
humanity—garbed in his rich
suit of gold, his necktie, his collar, his cap, his cloak, and there—right there—were fifteen hundred pounds of barbarous hate, pawing at the ground and preparing to charge.

Here was the dance of death, the swirl of the matador with the beast in his sights as the crowd chanted “¡Olé!” The flash of the sword through the bull’s heart; the stab of the dagger through the brain. The bull was dead, but Don Humberto lived to fight another day.

The crowd called for one ear... two ears... the tail.

Don Humberto received them all. It was a triumphant moment in the ring at the bull was pulled away by horses, but the weary don was simply content to have survived it all once again.

Raised as an upstanding aristocrat on a toro bravo ranch on the high plains of Andalucía, Don Humberto Penáguilas was a man who had seen it all. He had seen gentility and stateliness on full display in the Royal Court of Madrid prior to the beginning of Franco’s dictatorship, but he had also seen the brutal fighting in the streets during the Spanish Civil War. Yes, the hesitant matador could be accused of some cruelty and destruction in the ring, but he always recalled a far greater evil than bullfighting—man’s more sincere and personal inhumanity to man.

Following his daily triumph at the Plaza de Toros, Don Humberto was paraded through
the streets in the company of his adoring fans. Hats came off for the matador, and flower petals bestrew his path as he toured the Calle de Segovia, enroute to his favorite tapas bar and an aged bottle of tinto de toro wine he had been saving just for the occasion.

Yet, even in his moment of triumph, Don Humberto cared enough to cast his eyes down upon Manfri, the old and reliable gypsy, who quietly lay beside the Roman marbles at the end of the street. Cheers rose from the don’s eager fans as they celebrated their hero of the day, but the curious don requested that the cheers be silent as he listened for the final strains of the gypsy’s requiem. However, the notes had already passed away, and without the fans’ interrupting cheers, the laneway grew mysteriously silent.

There was a proper time for applauding and for booming salutes, Don Humberto understood, and there was also an appointed hour for victory and conquest. There was an age for romantic wiles and the silliness of youth; there was a meaningful moment for revolt against the order of things, and a careful critique of authority; there were even minutes set aside in life for artwork, for beauty, for jealousy, and, indeed, for madness.

But, the matador, who knew death as well as he knew life, glimpsed the profound emotion in Manfri’s expiring eyes, and he realized that this was not the moment for any of these things. This was only the
time for quietude and peaceful tranquility.

Great loves, and brutal sports, and vile treacheries had all occurred this day in Seville, showcasing the culmination of long-standing patterns, and unforeseen connections, and outré cross purposes. Affections had been promised, and loves had been lost; minute revolts had been concocted against the organization of the world, and change had been effected on a variety of tiny scales; cheers had been made for daring achievements, and lives had been lost both needfully and needlessly. But all through this, at the margin of the story, the stalwart gypsy had occupied his place and played his violin. This was his day to celebrate and be celebrated. This was his day to remember and be remembered.

Nevertheless, the gypsy was forgotten, just as so many are forgotten, and his gentle requiem had largely gone unheard. Manfri’s work had always provided the background to the affairs and lives of others; for so many years it had added to the ambience and the collective memory of old Seville. Don Humberto remembered the gypsy’s violin from his youth, but, like so many, he never thought about the music until it had faded away, leaving an empty vacuum in his memory more poignant and more noticeable than the thing that had originally occupied its place.

The gypsy had died.

He had been dead for some time, and yet nobody had cared to notice the fact.
They all had their own lives, and their own deaths to prepare for as well. Who cared about the man on the street? The one who was not an artist or a revolutionary, the one who was neither an aristocrat nor a celebrity. Manfri was simply a street person; a busker; a gypsy. Who needed him?

And yet, without him, we would have no story, no emotion, no meaning, for any of these things without background is worthless. Yes, Seville was our setting, Estimable Reader, but without Manfri, the city became silent; its passion disappeared.

Don Humberto had the profundity to recognize this, even if we did not. He had the humanity to care about the violinist, even if the gypsy’s shoes were worn through and his hat was empty of coin.

There was a man who had lived in the margins; a man who had lived in them and now died in them. There was a man who had reminded Don Humberto—a man who reminded us—to remember to remember.

Those in the margins, and in the background, allow us to enjoy the pride of the foreground and even the spotlight. Those who are simple and unassuming still matter; it is better to remember others here and now, before they are gone and forgotten.

“I know this man,” Don Humberto cautiously claimed, even though he could not recall the gypsy by name. “He has played his violin on this street corner since the days of
my youth—since the days of
the Romans who built these
marbles, most likely! Now,
what shall we do for him? A
proper burial, at least, seems
appropriate. But what else
should we have done when we
had the chance?"
Dear Ancestors,
I know you fought hard to bring us here. You fought against poverty, against your culture, against exclusion to give us a better life. You fought valiantly to place our family here in the land of opportunities and promise. You bled and toiled. You worked so so hard to give me a life of privilege.

Pò po, Gōng gong, Grandma, Grandpa: I hope you’re proud. I’ve attended college. I’ve been educated without war in my home. I’ve never gone without a meal or a roof over my head. You achieved what you dreamed. Thank you for everything.

Yet now, I look at the world you brought me to. I see the hatred in my neighbors’ eyes when they notice the color of my skin and shape of my eyes. The soft yellow you graced me with, the Phoenix eyes you said would bring me luck. They’re a reminder of what I am. I know you ran from your wolves, beating them back and escaping into the night. Yet, you threw me to the wolves in sheep’s clothing. The gentle growl that’s lost in the crowd that I hide in.

I’m so sorry that my goal is to leave. I want to flee back to the land you escaped from. To find a place. To find a purpose. Will it be perfect? No. It won’t. But maybe I won’t have to live every day fearing the racist remarks. I won’t have to worry that people will see me as other.

You worked so hard to come here and I’m working so hard to leave. The country you were promised was great, but not good. I have opportunities here.
But at what cost? I’m strangled a little more every day from the rope around my neck. The whips still hit my back although I’m not working the railroads. They still tug at my hair as they try to scalp away my pride. I can’t breathe here anymore. I love you all. I appreciate you all. You did the best you possible could and now I’m doing the same. Thank you for your hard work. Thank you for your courage. Thank you for coming to a land where you didn’t know the language.

Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. I am eternally grateful.

I’m sorry if my leaving doesn’t make you proud. I tried to make it work. I toiled. I bled. I worked to create a life here. But that doesn’t mean my life is good.

You gave me so much. I hope I make you proud. I love you. I’m sorry. My life wouldn’t exist if you hadn’t made that leap of faith. Now it’s my turn. My turn to ensure a better life for my children. My turn to toil and work hard in another country.

I will be brave because I have your bravery. I will be kind because I have your kindness. I will be strong because I have your strength. Thank you for everything. I love you.

Sincerely,
Your Descendant
To whom it may concern,

To those who have skin as white as snow or whose tan is idealized rather than demonized. To whom feels safe walking into a room at our school. To whom will see the color of my skin and react with disgust or pretend they are color blind. To those who will never learn my history without their white savior complex or my language without fetishization. To whom I sit next to in class. To those who never know the struggles I face.

I’ve kept quiet all my life. Learning that rocking the boat means I will drown and you will survive. But I’m going to drown either way, might as well go out with a splash. I don’t mean to offend you, but maybe I do. Directly. Rudely. Fearlessly. A punishment for the cowardly indirect remarks and actions I’ve faced my whole life. The subtle snubs about the darkness of my skin, the shape of my eyes, the parts of my body that identify me as other.

I went to this school knowing my peers would be white. I would remain the colored face, the diversity statistic. The exotic. The one teachers will pointedly look at when they mention POC because I am obviously one. The one assigned to speak on diversity. The one who has to speak up to be heard. The one who had to explain the difference in my American culture vs your American culture.

Have you ever been asked “Where are you from? No, no, where are you really from?” As you reiterate the same answer
again and again. Have you ever been asked what you are? Not who, but what. Have you ever faced a microaggression in class that focuses on your heritage being the point of your life? No? I thought not.

Have you ever walked down the street and heard the slur shouted from a passing window? Have you ever froze seeing a cop car drive by, because what if it’s your turn? Have you ever felt the fear of walking into a restaurant of your people and thought what if a shooter comes? No? I thought not.

After the Atlanta, Georgia shooting where my people were shamelessly shot because the shooter “had a bad day,” I was terrified to walk a short distance to Kim’s Korean. I was terrified to sit down and eat because what if I’m next? What if someone else has a bad day? What if my name is forgotten? Or worse, what if the only reason it’s remembered is because it’s American? I remember crying that day. Crying because talking wouldn’t help. Crying because I was surrounded by people who didn’t give a damn. I was asked by one white person if I was alright. I froze when they did because it was a relief but a terror to try to explain how I felt. To explain how it felt to hear your people die because of racist motivations rather than pure animalistic rage.

I remember the night of the vigil so vividly. Sitting in an audience of white people trying to show their support to the minority group they infantilize, eroticize, try to save. I remember a white man speaking. My
sadness turned to rage because he wanted to pretend this wasn’t about race. Like it was a bad word and that this tragedy could’ve happened to anyone. No, it couldn’t. It happened to us. No, it wasn’t random. It was racist. NO, IT’S NOT OKAY. WE’RE NOT OKAY. We are drowning, fighting, struggling but all you preach is color blindness. We don’t want color blindness, we want EQUALITY. Stop acting like they’re the same.

That evening I cried in my car. I cried while driving to get Chinese food because I needed comfort. I cried into my chow mein on the floor of my room. The only person who cared was an Asian like me. Another Asian who cried into her fried rice. Another Asian who bawled in my car. Another Asian who could feel what I feel. It was a relief and a burden. A relief to talk and cry with someone who could understand. A burden because once we left the room that understanding would shatter in the presence of our white roommates. Our apartment was as much a sanctuary for our race as a prison.

I’m scared to even bring it up. To point out what seems so obvious to me. To point out that in our friend group of 10 the darker our skin is the more we serve, darker skin inherently placing us lower. It’s so obvious to us. Something we’re conditioned to see and not speak about. That only with the other POC do we evenly divide the work. It’s impossible to explain what we see and how we feel because they don’t
understand the struggle. They can’t understand the difference. It’s just how their life works. We can’t talk about feminism with them because our feminism sits on our ethnicity. We can’t discuss beauty standards because our heritage affects us as much as the US culture. We can’t discuss beauty because by their standards we are never beautiful. Only exotic.

I didn’t know where to begin this letter, and now I don’t know where to end. There are too many words, too many instances, too many memories to write in one letter. I hope this scratches the surface, but it doesn’t. I hope it makes you change. But it won’t. Well maybe a little. Maybe it’ll spark a change. Maybe you’ll throw a buoy into the water to keep us from drowning. Maybe you’ll finally listen when you hear us scream. I hope you do. I hope this changes you.

With Love,
Your Colored Friend
“Anji, tráiga me un plato!”
Spittle flies from above,
the paddle lands on her soft skin.
Just as hard Abulita’s (chuchishnam) accusations of disrespect hit mama (isinchuch)
As ma makes tortillas, I see each clap cup the soft dough each beaten between her dried-out palms.
Those hands soak in saltwater gloves,
gripping the handle of a worn, muddied clam rake.
Raindrops surround her, rustling gently against her hair, the wind carries the spices off of the roasting carne asada.
Ma places each tortilla on the propane stove, a practice she does regardless of the shifting pacific-northwest weather, Cooking every meal outside— is from her childhood, a means of survival from the rural lands of Huehuetenango, Guatemala.
Not the only practice that has grown into a habit.
Mama sacrificed her youth to feed her large family of ten. Every morning, she takes her basket of maize to the local grinder, scattering feed amongst the cattle and chickens. A girl conditioned to bathe and drink out of the same river the livestock do rather than strive for an education past the third grade. Numbly the siblings fade away, emptying bottles to fill empty stomachs. The harsh conditions allow for the illogical and criminal.
My twelve years old cousin ran away,
skipped into the arms of her thirty-eight year old predator
to start a family.

Ma has nightmares.
Loved ones who tended to the homeland are watching over,
these memories are passed down to her.
Rezando por la familia, her visions instead protect.
I see the cruelty of growing up without healthy parenting
when she collapses to her knees,
Slowly shrinking in front of la Virgen de Guadalupe,
curling into herself— Ma chants:
Dios te salve María, llena eres de gracia
bendita tú eres entre todas las mujeres,
y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre, Jesus.

Santa María, Madre de Dios,
ruega por nosotros, pecadores,
ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte.
Sobs rack through her tiny figure.

His story is different from ma’s,
pero no conocemos la tristeza de Michoacán, his Mexican childhood,
unless he’s had a ton of beers.

Desde el amanecer hasta el anochecer, como un esclavo de la industria de Pacific Northwest Non-Timber resources, Papi muele sus porros.

Construyendo una colección de worn-out headlamps, holey calcetines y guantes, shredded trajes
y zapatos, and a busted tan Toyota Tundra. Repeatedly repaired for the past nineteen
years. The seasonal work in Eastern Washington, Idaho, Montana, etc. is his only way of making money because a long long time ago, not having a green card he could keep his job shellfish harvesting.

Now the price of your labor is retailed at $50 per pound but you are being paid $5 per pound. The number of bunches, the pounds of mushrooms or huckleberries you make by sunset is your income. To walk-through thick forestry picking salal or other floral greens under the bi-polar Pacific Northwest weather fills my childhood. But I was carefree with my siblings, playing with our dog Chewy. This shadow industry is an easy target for the U.S. immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Often, if one camp is raided or the migrants are alerted that ICE is in the area, everyone scatters and moves to a new location. 243 days a year we hold our breath. I know. My uncle was caught and deported.

With the relief of Papi’s arrival home comes his warnings to do better at school. It’s even harder to have him communicate, to differentiate his emotions. “En esta casa, yo soy el papa. I don’t have to explain myself” Machismo culture is impossible to reason with.

I have three older siblings that are a decade older than me and my two younger siblings. That’s six children.
My oldest sister is seventeen years older than me but twenty years older than Dani, my youngest brother. In the rural lands of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, at seventeen, mom gave birth to our oldest sister. Mom had two more sons after settling in California with her first husband. Us three younger siblings sympathize with each other. We recognize how the older ones are coping. My older sister plagued the house with her mood swings. One of my brothers, after his divorce was physically around but not really “there,” and the other brother is an alcoholic. Not aware of the fear and tension caused by his drunken state. Always ranting about the “ungrateful little shits” wasting his money ---Mom would pay him to babysit us—, accusing Dani of spitting in his food, ruminating over politics and conspiracies, and how someone is messing with him, watching him. He doesn’t like that we have a “good childhood” compared to his. Within my small bubble, it was easy to avoid questioning life outside and just survive. To not worry if I was “fucking up the vibe” or seen as a “Handout” because of Cris and Dani. We are content with just each other’s presence. My closest friends stopped inviting me because I’m no fun. They did not understand why I was not going to their birthday parties and sleepovers; why I was not buying red-bull spritzers with them and decked out in school spirit gear; or why I acted
differently: quiet.
Though I admire my parents
and their sacrifices; I feared
disapproval.
It was apparent that I was born
different from my white friends,
and I resent that.
Self-conscious of my ethnicity,
how I spoke and represented
myself.
I panic over the idea of
communicating with other
people.
Ashamed to see myself
imagining I was the one making
interactions meaningful,
when I see others having fun.
Even if I really wanted to, I am
not used to banter and keeping
conversations.
My parents are very talkative
and they did not trust we were
safe with other people.
“Que no sabemos la maldad que
tiene la gente.”

My younger sister and I knew
we had to talk to a professional,
To find a release from this cycle
of destruction, destroying us
from inside.
But instead, mom threw it into
Titi’s face as
un berrinche,
“que te calles! Go cry
again.”
papi kept silent.
Galing Galing Ang Pamilya Ko!

When I was in the second grade
I dreamed of a nose job.
I dreamed of a bridge
So prominent that I could
Turn my nose up at my Filipino self;
So prominent that I could
Turn my nose up at my own differences.
I desired blue eyes and blonde hair
And skin so pale that I would become
Transparent.
Invisible even.
Invisible to my culture, my language,
And my family.
In my second grade eyes,
This was the definition of beauty.

But beauty,
As I’ve come to learn,
Is my brown skin.

It’s my Asistido eyes
And my Reyes smile.
It’s the 4’11” shortie
With a voice so loud
You have no choice but to turn
And listen.

My beauty originates from the sacrifices
Of my immigrant parents.
Sacrifices that, for too long,
I took for granted.

Sacrifices like the “kaya mo yan” that
My daddy would repeat as I rehearsed
A reading for church mass or a speech tournament.
Sacrifices like the Vicks Vapor Rub
My mama would massage into my feet
As I lied in bed with a fever oh so turbulent.
Sacrifices like their time away
from home,
Working long hours,
Just so they could provide
For me, Matty, and Mikey—
Allowing us three M&Ms
To grow up sweet, strong, and
spicy.

It’s the ube cookies my mom
bakes,
The durian bread my dad
creates,
The mischief my 18-year-old
homie Matty provides,
And “The Lazy Song” by Bruno
Mars that Mikey cries,
That teach me what it is to truly
be beautiful.

From my mama I have inherited
a devout faith,
Salamat at salamat sa Diyos for
her unending strength.

From my daddy I have learned
how to fail forwards,
Through his support kahit naka-
limutan ko ang mga words.

From Matty I have been inspired
by his profound leadership,
Both on the field, as a Kuya, and
through our twin friendship,
And from Mikey I have been
energized by his youthful
demeanor,
Galing galing si Mikey as he
dances in front of the mirror!

Ang aking pamilya has taught
me
That I don’t need a nose bridge
to be beautiful.

It’s our love (and the lechon at
lumpia!) that makes us beautiful.

Salamat.
Grief is a strange emotion. It’s expected that everyone will experience it, but no one can tell you how it will go for you, or why, or when, or how to handle it. It is the one thing that is entirely governed by you, by your very most organic self. Even under layers of lies, of physical performances to appear strong and stable, it will seep through like blood beneath a shirt, until you’re soaked and reeking of copper. And the only person who will be most aware of it is yourself.

People often expect grief to be these oceanic waves of deep sadness and hollowness and anger, like the five stages that they first teach us about in health class: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Sure, enough people have to experience those specific emotions, in that specific order, for it to be a recorded fact.

See, to me, that’s misleading, and oftentimes incomplete. Hate. Relief. Hate that is borne out of the feeling of relief. Guilt. Shame. Paranoia. Irritation. These should be included in the list. And what people didn’t tell me about grief, is that it can begin long before the loss even occurs.

The long nights of pacing, cursing, wondering when, wondering how. Wondering where I’ll be when it happens. The deep sweltering anger at the things that cannot be controlled, or changed, or improved. The hatred for the years of hurt that lurks deep inside my chest. The heated desire for death, even if not for me. Nauseating
guilt, from knowing I could be handling the situation better, thinking better, being better. Anguish, because the days last longer and longer when waiting for something to just happen so I can move on, so I can finally do something instead of waiting. Pain in my jaw, from clenching, biting back rage and flesh-eating words that would sear. The gentle words that come out instead, words that will deescalate, words that show that I care, because I know nothing will make much sense to him anymore. I go to sleep with teeth gritted. I wake up tasting salt in my mouth.

I think to myself, Just let it happen already. Just let him go. Just GO ALREADY. GO. And then I’m ashamed, because he’ll ask me if I’ve eaten or if I need anything from the store.

Relief. Isn’t it weird, knowing that the feeling I’m anticipating the most is relief? How selfish of me. How self-centered of me. I feel sick, guilty bile rising up my throat. I’m shaking, convulsing, because I’m pretty sure the chambers of my heart are actually rupturing, bursting from this tortuous waiting. I hear myself, in my head, and hate myself all the more. Someone who loves me is dying, and all I can feel is how much lighter I’ll be after it all. How heartless of me. Evil.

Am I really, though?

Our society is obsessed with putting parents on pedestals. “They did everything for you, they did so much for you, you should be grateful!” Should I only picture the loving palm...
that was shown to me, and ignore that I also saw the backhand of that same hand? Should I only picture lips that kissed my skin and not the lips that curled back to threaten me? To spit at me? Gratitude should not come with a shadow, because that shadow grows into this, into resentment and sorrow that complicates grieving, a task that was already too complicated to begin with.

That doesn’t mean I’m not grateful, or that I don’t love them, or that I’m not in agony at the prospect of losing a loved one. I simply cannot—and will not—ignore that I suffered just as much as I loved. And I like to think that it is not evil to wish for relief, to be at peace.

It’s just messy.

I’ve learned that what’s important isn’t what emotion I’m feeling, no matter how alarming they are. What’s important is how I govern them. What’s important is that I let them flow, but don’t attach myself to them. I am human, and there is beauty and ugliness and impermanence to everything I experience.

Grief is a strange emotion, because it’s not an emotion. It’s a cumulation of hundreds of emotions shoved inside a bottle. Don’t do it the way that’s comfortable and appealing for everyone else. Grieve the way you grieve. Everything is on the table, and only you are in control of how you will employ it. Do it wisely. I can only hope that I will.

Author’s Note: This piece was inspired by Jennette McCurdy’s memoir, I’m Glad My Mom Died, where she discusses her complicated feelings of grief towards her mother’s passing after years of explicit abuse and trauma.
My personal experience eating dim sum in the U.S. and in China

I go to dim sum restaurants when I visit my family and friends in California. Many of my Chinese relatives and close family friends live in the San Francisco Bay Area. Usually when we go to restaurants it is for family banquets, so they are a rare occasion. There are few restaurants in Spokane that serve Dim Sum. For instance, Salma, my BRIDGE mentor, treated me to dinner from Hong Kong Express to celebrate the Lunar New Year several years ago. It had a small selection, but I was glad that I could order some comfort food. It reminded me of the food that my mom makes which made me less homesick. I associate eating dim sum with happy memories of getting together with friends and family.

As I got older, I became more interested in learning about my Chinese heritage. In 2016, I traveled to China with my mother to meet some of my relatives from her side of the family. My mother is from Shanghai, so we were mostly in Shanghai or Xi’an during the two weeks we were there. My mother served as the interpreter during the trip because I only knew a few Chinese phrases. Even though it was difficult for me to communicate with my relatives they discovered that I love to eat Chinese food. As a result, one of my cousins made my mother and me homemade char siu bao and lo mai gai. He would also treat us to meals from restaurants and give us recommendations for places to
try. For instance, in Shanghai, I went to a restaurant with my mother that specialized in soup dumplings! They had a variety of dumplings with different flavors and sizes. I got one that was the size of my palm. It is served with a straw so you can poke it then suck up the soup. There are many different types of Chinese food to try.

**Etiquette and examples of dishes**

Dim sum is normally served in the early afternoon; however, the time may vary depending on the restaurant. Usually, people order many dishes and then share them with friends and family. Customers normally pick out a tea first before they order dishes. According to traditional etiquette, the person closest to the teapot should pour tea for guests before pouring their own cup (“What is Dim Sum”). Waiters from traditional restaurants push carts that contain dishes around tables and then deliver them to customers. However, more modern restaurants will give customers menu cards to make ordering easier and less chaotic. Menus vary widely across restaurants, and they normally make a limited number of dishes. I would advise people to arrive early if possible and to make a reservation at the restaurant.

Some of the most popular dishes are shumai, soup dumplings, char siu bao, and rice noodle rolls. Shumai are pork or shrimp dumplings. Soup dumplings are filled with “hot broth and pork” (“What is Dim Sum”). Char siu bao are barbeque pork buns. They are one of my favorite dishes! I also like to order lo mai gai which is sticky rice with
History of Dim Sum

Dim sum is a popular type of Chinese food that people usually eat around brunch time that consists of small dishes served with tea. It originated in the Guangdong region of China because of teahouse culture. Merchants traveling along the Silk Road would stop at local teahouses for “rest and conversation accompanied by a cup of tea” (Radez). There, they could negotiate business deals. As a result, dim sum became associated with the Cantonese phrase “yum cha” which means to drink tea (Radez). People can order dim sum from all over the world. It became increasingly popular due to globalization and increased trade between countries. Chinese immigrants introduced dim sum to the U.S. as a way to feed themselves and their families. Then, it changed overtime due to access to different resources and efforts to conform to American tastes.

Chinese food was introduced to the United States because of Chinese immigrants pursuing job opportunities. During the early 1800s, Chinese workers “played a monumental role in the development of the railroad system” (Adhiyaman). Despite the important contributions they made towards improving the infrastructure of the country they faced heavy discrimination from other laborers. Many non-Chinese workers saw them as competitors in the job market which increased “animosity” towards them (Adhiyaman).
The Chinese community was targeted by extreme white racists. They were victims of horrific violence such as the massacre of twenty-eight Chinese residents who lived in Rock Springs, Wyoming in 1885 (Uyematsu, 10). To escape violence and persecution, many Chinese workers and their families “fled” to the West and East coasts (Gourse). They worked for long hours with meager wages just to support themselves and their families. Chinese workers continued to face discrimination against them such as rising racial tensions which eventually led to the Chinese Exclusion Act. It prevented “any further immigration of laborers” from China and it increased anti-Asian sentiment in the U.S. (Gourse). Many of the immigrants were poor, so they made inexpensive meals. Chinese workers turned to dim sum to remember their home. They modified recipes when they did not have access to traditional ingredients. For example, in Chinese American dishes vegetables such as bamboo shoots and cabbage are typically replaced by broccoli and carrots since they are easier to find in grocery stores. Additionally, as Chinese food became more popular, restaurants adjusted dishes or created new ones to appeal to the American palette. Americans preferred “milder, sweeter items,” so recipes for dishes such as General Tso’s Chicken were adjusted from the original salty, savory flavor to a sweeter, tangier version (Adhiyaman). Many Chinese and Chinese American restaurants catered
towards American preferences because they were afraid of not attracting customers if they served authentic dishes.

Chinese American food varies from traditional Chinese food in ingredients and taste because it reflects American preferences. Many traditional recipes incorporate every part of the animal into the food which was considered “revolting to Americans” (Adhiyaman). The demand to satisfy American consumers led to the popularization of Chop Suey. It is made of “bite-sized pieces of meat and vegetables in a brown gravy and is served over rice or noodles” (Ku et al., 60). Chop Suey became extremely popular in New York City, so to support the growing demand for the dish, “each of the three hundred Chinese restaurants ... maintained a Chinese staff of five waiters and four and a half cooks” even though xenophobic legislation prevented legal immigration (Ku et al., 54). Restaurant staff worked in grueling conditions which perpetuated the demand for more Chinese workers. Many came to the United States illegally to support their families. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act prevented Chinese laborers from immigrating to the U.S., and it was the first U.S. immigration law “to restrict a group of immigrants based on their race, nationality, or class” (Lee, E.). People were forced to pay a fine if they did not have documentation which prevented immigration from China to the U.S. Furthermore, the Chinese Exclusion Act set a precedent for other legislation to prohibit the immigration of other ethnic
groups to the United States. These racist laws restricted workers’ access to jobs they could apply for. As a result, they were stuck in dangerous, low paying jobs.

Despite terrible working conditions, Chinese workers could not unionize because of racist policies. The Hotel and Employee and Restaurant Employee Union (HERE) which was part of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) explicitly excluded Chinese and black workers from joining the union (Ku et al., 63). As a result, these marginalized groups did not benefit from efforts to improve work hours or increase wages in the industry. The AFL protected the interests of white workers, so it saw people of color as competitors that should be removed from the job market. It continued to suppress Chinese workers’ rights by pressuring Chinese restaurant owners to hire unionized white workers. As a result, HERE “mounted a series of strikes ... that raised the minimum wage to twenty-nine dollars a week” (Ku et al., 64). While these strikes benefited white workers, they hurt Chinese laborers who were forced out of jobs. In response, the Chinese community created its own organizations to regulate the food industry. The Chinese Restaurant Association negotiated with government agencies over regulation changes and policies that often targeted immigrant communities. Additionally, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) mediated conflicts between restaurants (Ku et al., 65). Both organizations were intended
to protect workers’ rights and the interests of restaurants. Many restaurants were small, family-owned businesses, so business owners preferred to hire family members over other potential employees. This led to resentment from workers to their superiors since they “suffered through years of low pay, long hours, and hard work” (Ku et al., 65). Workers usually did not get promotions within the restaurant because family members were prioritized over them. Furthermore, restaurant workers could not assist family members with the immigration process since it was too expensive. They aspired to eventually own and operate their own restaurant. However, existing owners did not want additional competition in the market, so they used the CCBA to reduce competition between restaurants. It mandated that all major business transactions were authorized by the CCBA (Ku et al., 66). The CCBA’s strict policies allowed the Chinese elite to maintain power over the restaurant industry. Discriminatory practices both outside and within the Chinese community restricted opportunities for Chinese laborers.

**Anti-Asian hate because of the Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacted Asian owned businesses and restaurants**

Asians and Asian Americans have been falsely blamed for spreading Covid-19, and as a result many Asian American businesses have experienced hate crimes. Racist memes insinuated that the pandemic started because Chinese people...
eat bats which is not true. Conservative media outlets and Donald Trump perpetuated racist rhetoric about Covid-19 which fueled anti-Asian sentiment in the United States. Michelle Fox, a reporter from CNBC, interviewed several Asian American small business owners in the Los Angeles area about the anti-Asian hate they experienced. For instance, Leo and Lydia Lee, owners of RiceBox, told her that “People would ask, ‘Do you serve bats? Do you serve Covid?” (Fox). Asian American business owners were concerned for their safety as well as their business surviving during the pandemic because of the increase in hate crimes. Some restaurants were vandalized, or people left them nasty voice mails because of the stereotype that Asian food is “dirty” (Fernando and Mumphrey). Additionally, employees of Asian American businesses were “pushed or spat upon” because of anti-Asian hate (Fox). In response to these hate crimes, some employers adjusted work schedules, so their employees would be safer and less likely to be harassed. All these horrific acts are rooted in xenophobia and racism. They are a form of white supremacy, and these acts are designed to promote fear and division between people. Hate crimes and discrimination should not be tolerated. People should support initiatives for social justice to combat white supremacy.

There is a history of cross-cultural solidarity between Asian Americans and Black Americans because Asian American activists such as
Yuri Kochiyama and Grace Lee Boggs advocated for creating meaningful, long-term relationships between different communities. They challenged the stereotype of Asian Americans being “silent citizens” by actively engaging in activism (Uyematsu). Yuri Kochiyama, a Japanese American activist, joined the Civil Rights Movement while living in Harlem. She learned about the injustices her neighbors experienced by talking with them. At first, she supported initiatives to improve the quality of schools in the Harlem area. Then she joined the labor movement to try and prevent discrimination in hiring construction workers to build a medical building (Abdelfatah et al.). Yuri met Malcolm X because of her community activism. Overtime, they developed a close friendship. Initially, Malcolm X opposed integration since he saw it as a “trap” (Abdelfatah et al., 2021), however Yuri Kochiyama believed that cross cultural solidarity was possible. She thought for integration to occur “non-Black Americans first had to recognize that they were the problem” (Abdelfatah et al., 2021). Yuri believed that people had to overcome their own prejudices before joining a social justice movement. Throughout the rest of her life, she continued to support the Civil Rights Movement and other social justice movements.

Grace Lee Boggs was a Chinese American woman who became a Black power activist because of the connections she made with the Black community in Detroit. She was a Marxist philosopher, and she was particularly
influenced by Hegel. Hegel promoted the idea of dialectical thinking which is the belief that "every idea contains its opposite and by only struggling through those contradictions can you get closer to the truth" (Lee et al.). As a result, Grace valued conversations with other people. Through them she could challenge people to reassess and evolve their ideas. Grace became an activist when she moved to Chicago. There, she met a group of people protesting against “rat infested housing” and that was her introduction to the Black community (Lee et al.). Grace wanted to join the Civil Rights Movement, so she collaborated with other philosophers on promoting workers’ rights, especially Black workers’ rights. Grace became active in the Civil Rights Movement by helping organize marches and supporting other initiatives. However, Grace and other people with left-wing views were excluded from attending a Civil Rights Conference because of political pressure. In response, they created the Grassroots Leadership Conference, and they continued planning future activism (Lee et al.). Grace wanted to encourage young members of the community to become activists, so she created the Detroit Summer program. They designed projects such as urban gardens and murals while developing communication and teamwork skills (Lee et al.). These initiatives allowed the younger people to engage with and connect with neighborhoods.

Both the Black Lives Matter movement and the Asian American community want
to end racialized violence; however, white supremacy has impacted these communities in different ways. The Black Lives Matter movement seeks to end police brutality and racist violence against the Black community, and the Asian American community wants to end violence against Asian Americans (Chang and Tran). People should foster cross cultural solidarity because these movements are combatting similar issues. For instance, after the horrific Atlanta shooting, the Movement for Black Lives Matter supported “public safety solutions” proposed by Asian Americans Advancing Justice Atlanta (“M4BL Statement on Anti-Asian Violence”). Some of these solutions included increased mental health support services and greater language support for immigrants. Asian Americans Advancing Justice Atlanta rejected “increased police presence or carceral solutions as the answers” because they wanted to create a community centered response (Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta & Georgia NAACP). They wanted to focus on providing resources for people to deal with their grief and trauma.

People can help foster solidarity on campus by attending meetings of different cultural clubs and by purchasing tickets for their signature events. Additionally, students can connect with social justice organizations in their local area to develop community based activism.
Forests and mountains are where I belong, they give me space to reflect on myself and the energy to live in the town. I am from Hokkaido, Japan. I was raised in the middle of nowhere near the Northern Territories in east Hokkaido. Hokkaido is the largest and northernmost island, known for its natural hot springs, agriculture, and volcanic mountains. It is also famous for its unique Ainu culture because it was the last place to be explored and developed by the Japanese government in the Meiji period. People are known to speak slowly compared to people in Tokyo or the Kansai area, easygoing, and not punctilious. Even though Hokkaido is too big to call a community, people from Hokkaido often have a sense of unity. They seem shy and introverted because they are prudent, but they are usually open once you become friends with them. They have a special feeling for their hometown, and they usually get along fast with other people from Hokkaido. There is a word どさんは (dosanko), which means a person or people born and raised in Hokkaido.

I am also a mountain climber. In the U.S., people seem to have a positive image of nature lovers and hikers, but it is not the case for people in Japan. Japanese people judge mountain climbers as terrible at social situations, and they assume going to the mountains is the only option for pleasure we have since we hate human interactions. Not every mountain climber in Japan is anti-social, an ultimate introvert. We love social interactions and small talk, too.
When I was 15, I joined a Wandervogel club in my high school because my best friend was in it. The year after I joined the team, I became the team leader. I had to lead the team, and make sure everyone feels okay when we climb. Weather forecasting was one of my important jobs. In my senior year in high school, I was extremely stressed out and depressed because I lived away from my dad for three years in a vast city called Sapporo, and living in a big city was simply not my thing. Last summer, we had the All Hokkaido Mountain Climbing Competition. It’s a five-day event where we climb 4 to 5 mountains and put up a tent, the leader predicts the weather by drawing a weather map. I also learned what leadership is and how I can contribute to a small community as a leader. Leadership is not just about leading people, but also supporting team members and making sure nobody is falling behind in the team. Having an important role in a small community forces you to develop as a person.

I love immersing myself in nature and enjoying the beautiful view and clean air. Although Japanese people judge me as if I am a freak, I spread my arms and take a deep breath, set aside all problems I have when I am in the mountains. Now I feel less overwhelmed in everyday life because I know there is a place to escape for a little while.
You drink your pain away
Sober wide awake
Yet deny the inequalities
That you created
You numb yourself
To the realities
Under the
disguise of democracy
Burnt tongue
On the feelings
Of white saviorism
And doing the “Lord’s work”
You are the hero
In your egotistical story
Where all these
Black and brown
helpless people
Need saving from you
When really you
Should be
Saving you
from yourself
You are a monster
Wrapped up with lies,
False promises,
Fake justice
That emanate from
Your revolting, crusted lips
You abandon those
You promised to work alongside
War torn countries
Were torn by your presence
Under the
disguise of democracy
Bombed 40 years ago
But the presence
still felt today
By millions of
Hmong and Laotian children
Seeing them as
toys to chuck
Or balls to kick
You made our people
Think we should
bow down to you
Keep our head down as
The “Model Minority”
And kiss your ass
We’re oh, so grateful
Like we owe you

You’re nothing but
A pathetic liar
A sneaky snake
That corrupts nations
And destroyed generations
Of dreams

The bully who targets
The most vulnerable
Under the
disguise of democracy
But we are still here
Fighting against you

Your time is up

cont. Letter to the United States
every year i would begrudgingly
say happy new year to you,
sometimes in february,
sometimes in january
i had to hear your voice over the
phone and hear questions about
how i was doing in broken
english
i hated talking to you
i could never understand what
you were saying to me or
wanted to say
i hated hearing your accent
my mom had to translate for
both you and i
i hated having to talk to you
because i couldn’t talk to you
i felt like you could never speak
to me
and then you couldn’t speak
at all
i’m not sure if after your
accident did i feel guilty
or if it was always inside me
and after it took you away from

me did it finally come out
i heard about your crash in april,
maybe march
i remember being told as i was
in the pantry getting an after
school snack
“ông ngoại is in the hospital, he
got into a motorcycle accident”
if i were to look back on myself
in that moment, i would see
a momentary pause before i
continue my task like nothing
mattered
i hated when you visited all the
way from oklahoma
i hated when you made me pick
the numbers on your lottery
cards
i hated when you asked to hear
my voice and see me when you
were bedridden
i didn’t want to see you
i wonder if it ever really did feel
guilty at all
or was it because i was expected
to?

when i got called into my
parents' room to hear the news
"my dad died. my father has
passed."
i think was the time I felt truly
disconnected from you
this was the first time you
weren't referred to as ông ngoại
- grandpa - to me

i wondered if i had just wished
you happy new year before your
accident
if you would still be here

one night i was looking for
something on the bathroom
counter with no lights on
it was a simple task and i knew
where it was
for some reason it was taking
me too long to find it in the dark
i was about to give up and turn
the lights on until an electric
toothbrush finished charging
and slightly lit the counter with
its green light
i found what i was looking for
and left

i don't normally believe in the
supernatural or divinity or
magic
but my first thought was that
you were looking out for me
like you've always done

i know that you have loved me
since the very moment i was
born

you left this world not knowing
if i loved you or not
i wish i could have told you i did
i wish i told you happy new year
i wish i had more time
i wish i could have been a better
granddaughter
“Sana sana colita de rana” is a common Mexican song meaning, “Heal, heal the tale of the frog.” In calling this piece, “Sana sana colita de Giana” I am putting it out there that I am trying to heal myself and my past through sharing my story. I was brought into this world two months early by the strength of my mother’s body. I am told that she cried the first time she saw me. It seems as if that cry was a culmination of confusion, exhaustion, and pain. As I was strawberry blonde, fair skin, and soon to have blue eyes that faded to green at the age of three. “She doesn’t look like me!” my mother wails. In a way, she was right.

This story became a joke told at family gatherings throughout the years. As many do in a state of confusion, I would chuckle along with my family’s remarks not really thinking about the layers of it all. I have a vivid memory of releasing my breath slowly in my laughter while simultaneously turning to my disheartened mom weathering in her own discomfort. It was no joke that my mom wanted a daughter who could relate to her experience as a brown woman, but at the same time, she would give anything to have her child not go through the racism that she had. Due to our differences, we couldn’t escape the public stares, the questions from strangers, “Are you, her nanny? Y’all look nothing alike!” As if the difference in skin tone hid the button nose we shared, the smile that goes from ear to ear, the apple cheeks that form the same lines alongside our noses, or the sunspots we develop.
under our eyes in Texas heat.

Unfortunately, the division between brown and white within my family didn’t stop at comparisons between my mom and I. My grandparents, on both sides, made the decision to not teach their children Spanish, meaning my parents were taught to speak in English in order to protect them and set them up for success in a white world. So, I am left wondering, ‘Why was it more important to fit into white society rather than Mexican culture?’ The answer I have come to understand is survival. Currently existing at a predominately white institution I find myself asking this question more and more and I do not yet have an answer. Not knowing Spanish created a divide within the families. Those who spoke Spanish separated from those who did not, leaving my Primas and Primos and I to feel ignorant for not learning and frustrated for not being taught— despite understanding the social implications.

In tandem with keeping future generations from learning their native tongue in the home, trying to fit into a white world took on another form, otherization and favoritism of the white. My grandma gave nicknames to her grandchildren that reflected this favoritism. To name a few, the oldest was called Sunshine (she is white), the youngest was called Mandona (she is brown), and I was called Precious— I am white.

Growing up I often felt as though I didn’t have to do anything to make my family
proud as my whiteness did it for me. My skin seemed to be who I was. It surrounds my physical body—swallows my fingers, toes, and creases as I move. It creates my perception of myself and how I should interact with characters in my life. Socially constructed, yet one of the most real things I could know. Skin holds implications, stereotypes, and melanin. But also narratives, minds, passion, and culture. For my primo, skin holds discomfort. At the age of 3, he tried to scrub away his brownness with a sponge and Dawn dish soap. He hurt his own skin. His beautiful brown skin that holds his narrative, mind, passion, and culture, tarnished by a family that values whiteness over the same blood each member shares.

The Martinez and Villarreal families are complicated ones. In addition to what I have shared there is so much love and faith within one another and yet the racial dynamics are never discussed. So, I try my best, to question the spaces I exist in, as I would never want people to feel like I do within my family, that I am not Mexican enough.

I personally have not felt like I fit into my culture, but I am learning to understand that none of the identities that make up 'ME' are homogenous and I don’t need to prove to anyone that I am Mexican or anything for that matter. I want to revisit a question that I asked myself earlier in this mixture of stories: 'Why was it more important to my family to fit into white society rather than Mexican culture?' A lot has to do with
the system we exist in that perpetuates and uplifts whiteness. I don’t know if it was a choice to pick white society over Mexican culture or if it was simply inevitable. Whether or not this was a conscious or unconscious choice, its contribution to the flourishing of white supremacy is real. However, through reflection and conversation pain can be acknowledged and hearts can begin to heal. Again, it’s complicated, but through sharing my stories I can feel my agency in relation to my culture begin to resurface.
I am the byproduct of mass incarceration, I am the byproduct of Slavery, I am the byproduct of the War on Drugs, I am the byproduct of red lining, I am the byproduct of Jim Crow laws. They call us (me) The minority but the majority of us are in prison, we are the minority but the majority targets of violence, I am the minority but makeup the majority of deaths across the nation, I am the minority, but the majority follow our trends.

They call us (me) the minority, but we built a majority of the country.

I am a minority, but your minimal ideas and stereotypes do not define me.

I am (we are) the living result of destroying preconceived notions of what it is to be a minority.

We define who we are, we define what it means to be us, we get choice, the option, the opportunity to be who we want unapologetically.

We are the people that WILL break generational curses, we are the people that WILL be educated enough to stand up for ourselves, we are the people who WILL teach the future generations on what it means to be ourselves.

The oppressive mannerisms of the majority WILL not stop the cultural richness of us, you put us in chains, we dip them in gold and wear them around our necks, they used to call our
cont. We Are Evolved

hair dreadful, so we named our hairstyle dreadlocks. No matter what oppressive system they try to put us in, we will always overcome and evolve. And that’s part of what it means to be us. Thank you for your time.
What is your race/ethnicity?
The question stares me back in the face. It’s a question I have had to fill out several times, and each time, I check the box that reads “Hispanic”.

While I do identify as a Latina, I feel more distant from my Nicaraguan roots than ever. Growing up in a predominantly white area, it has been difficult to connect with my culture. I can try to blame it on outside factors, but I know that it is primarily my own fault. It has been my own negligence and disinterest that has steered me away. But I have had time to think about change.

There are some traditions that made the jump to the US with my dad, one of those being the Nicaraguan style chicken that we make every year for Christmas dinner. This year I decided it was time to learn the tradition: I want to reclaim my roots.

During this time spent in the kitchen with my dad, it brought me back to the Christmas my family spent in Nicaragua so many years ago. I was just a child, but the memories flooded back. Something about the Latin music we were listening to, and the familiar smell of plantain leaves made me feel at home. For once in a while, I felt closer to my roots than ever.

As I continue to find who I am, I have plans to study Spanish and study abroad to experience Spanish speaking cultures, experiences that I feel like I have missed out on. This is the start of a wonderful journey of self-discovery.
You need to work on not being so aggressive"

9 words and I, a black woman expressing hurt and frustration, was reduced to a monolith by someone I considered a friend in a fraction of a second. In that instant, I recoiled. It was as if I was suddenly 12 years old, the only black child in the classroom, completely isolated. Playing into the stereotype that has overshadowed women like me for decades. Taking back-handed compliments and passive-aggressive remarks on the chin, as I was taught to do. “You’re so loud!” “Could you be any more extra?” “You’re honestly really pretty for a black girl.” “You’re so eloquent in the way you speak!” Shrink yourself. Blend in. You’re noticeable enough as it is.

To be honest, I should’ve seen it coming. The whispering of the word “Black” in conversations, as if someone might overhear. The disgusting lack of empathy and understanding when the murders of Black men were concerned. Why would I expect to be treated any differently? Am I naive enough to think I’m the one you finally accept? Your only black friend in 21 years of life should have been a caution in itself, but I was never known to heed warnings. You came with your preconceived notions before you even said hello. You spoke of the blatant racism you witnessed towards your teachers, towards your peers, yet you held your tongue. Inside your little bubble, nothing else mattered. No one else mattered. And so, in your first adult confrontation, you condescendingly throw talking
points and insults at me, like the superior being you clearly see yourself as. But truthfully, how could I have expected anything else?

There was venom in your words. Cowering behind your victimization in the face of conflict. Hundreds of years of prejudice and discrimination, stereotypes and preconceptions. You laughed off your damaging ways of thought as a product of your upbringing, yet look down on those in the south that justify their hateful rhetoric the exact same way. At least they’re honest. They don’t hide behind hashtags and empty black squares and pretend to care. You are so much worse. You brush off your indifference to Black struggles as a result of your sheltered nature. You weaponized your inexperience with difficult conversations as fear of my rage. My rage, unjustified if it means you are uncomfortable. Irrational if it means you have to take any sort of accountability. Terrifying. Threatening. You’ll take your crocodile tears and speak of how attacked you felt by my calling you out on your mistake and will never accept responsibility for the role you played.

I’ve always understood that I was different. The negative connotation my darker complexion held has followed me around, shaping the way I enter rooms and relationships. Growing up in the South, my younger brother and I were taught to be hypervigilant of our surroundings, as well as those we chose to surround ourselves with. But make no mistake, regardless of where
in the state, the country, or the world we were, the lesson still applied. Beyond the flying of confederate flags or proud sporting of MAGA hats, racism has embedded itself into the framework of this country—of this planet, despite one’s political affiliation. In the three years I spent in Louisiana, I thought I had seen the worst of it until I arrived here. Here, it’s covert. Here, it’s hidden within the shadows, waiting to strike with graffiti over a mural or turning away black students from a social gathering. Here, it’s real and it’s sinister but since it does not take on the traditional form, it’s ignored. Brushed aside as a figment of our imagination. But it’s working in the hiring processes, in the admissions building, and in the social groups of this institution.

The lack of diversity in the demographics at this school is astounding and has been something I have struggled to navigate in my semester here so far. I urge my peers to work on opening their eyes to this issue. To work on challenging themselves to reach beyond their little bubbles. To work on educating themselves on how destructive micro-aggressions and ignorance can be. And to work on speaking out on the blatant racism permeating throughout this university. I want to believe most people do not set out to be intentionally hateful, but apathy in the face of discrimination is just as detrimental.
DIVERSITY MONOLOGUES.
Del monte surge la mano de una niña
Que desde lo oscuro tiembla y luce pálida
Pero al salir de la tierra su piel es tierna y de un color marrón
que deslumbra los grumos a su alrededor
Ella creció de la tierra, en la tierra, y para la tierra

Sus tiernas manos se convierten en unas polvorosas palas que siembran los próximos frutos para su pueblo
Día tras día procura hablarles y cantarles
Hasta que crezcan fuertes y jugosos para alimentar a su familia

Bendito es el fruto de su vientre
Mientras algo crece de la tierra, en ella crece una hermosa alma
Que vendrá al mundo para ayudar al pueblo

Bendito es el fruto de su vientre
Es recibido con gracia en un hogar acogedor
Esta alma tan bella que se convierte en una grande mujer
Sus tiernas manos se llenan de callos al cosechar los frutos de su madre

Sus esfuerzos dan alegría a todo el pueblo
De la tierra se nutren
Gracias a las bendiciones de Dios se llenan de nutrientes y los frutos dan a luz
Dejando un legado para las generaciones por venir

Ellas curan las heridas de sus tierras y construyen un imperio que será utilizado cuando ellas se marchen

El monte se convierte en pavimento
No hay tierra a la vista
Se ven obligadas a reconstruir
un hogar en un lugar nuevo
El trabajo es nuevo e indignante
Su labor ahora hiere su piel y
sus manos de nuevo duelen

Las voces de los demás las
hunde
Pero esto no las detiene

A lo lejos escuchan llamar sus
nombres
Ellas siguen a las mariposas
hacia el lugar de sus sueños
Marchan por días y días hasta
llegar al mundo que se merecen

Pero no es lo esperado
Sus manos de nuevo se utilizan
para dar frutos a la tierra
Aquí se queda su ternura

El lugar mágico que se
esperaban ahora es uno de horas
largas y largas
Uno de más y más trabajo

Pero esto no las detiene

Juntas siguen marchando
Pronto, de su vientre nacerá otra
criatura
Por fin sus manos se ganan un
descanso y ella tiene al amor
que tanto esperaba
Las dos continúan marchando
juntas
Ahora con más integrantes a la
familia

Su pueblo pequeño sigue
creciendo y las mariposas van y
vuelven con los mensajes de sus
seres queridos
Sus manos se nutren de amor
y continúan dando frutos al
pueblo

Después de años,
Ellas se separan
Pero mientras el piso bajo sus
piernas es diferente,
Las continúa uniendo:
El fruto de su vientre
Dear Diary

Dear diary,

I heard that journaling can be therapeutic
So i guess i’m writing to you

I am a mad. Black. Woman
It has been too many days of waking up with sadness but fury
So mad that I could name too many that ought to stand before a jury
Im so tired of the lame ass excuses
While i am left battered with bruises
And your empty apologies, useless

I really tried
But my patience has shriveled up and died
I had convinced myself that I could show someone to care
That no matter the color of skin, the struggle of oppression we

share
Ive come to realize that people like me always have to have grace
Or we would be labeled as radical and a disgrace
My expectations were so low for equal human dignity
That I realized I sacrificed the proper accountability
Ooo I am tired of tiptoeing around white fragility
Just to preserve their everlasting tranquility

Dear diary

I am so angry

Because for some reason i have to justify who i am
But my aunties and uncles always told me that i am black and beautiful and anyone who thinks otherwise can scram
You want re-assurance yet
degrade my humanity
And I ask you, who is to comfort me?
Existing in these white spaces
it becomes so effortless to be
washed away
And continue to keep culture erasure

I’ve been so tempted to let this anger consume me
Let them control all of me free
But this rage is the equivalent of the sun to the tree
And feeds my soul like fuel to a fire

Let me tell you what blackness is
Blackness is excellence in every way imaginable
A concept for some that can’t seem to be fathomable
Blackness is resiliency in the face of adversity
Despite the extreme and horrific monstrosity
Blackness is the beautiful shades of melanin skin
That holds trauma and beauty from our kin
Blackness is harmonizing together in our deepest pains
While still making sure we achieve our gains
Blackness is hoping with humor.
And blackness is power

I came from the strength of my ancestors who built this country
And then marched for justice from Birmingham to Montgomery
I came from the black gospel and old school rap that has touched nations
That fills our ears in the face of marginalization
I came from the fighter of my father who refuses to let cancer win
Who forever reminds me to not
forget who I grew to be within
A force to be reckoned with
Dear diary
I am a mad. Black.
- Jacquelyn Renee Lee
Reclaiming your roots. That’s the theme of this monologue. But what does that really mean? The act of reclaiming your roots? First off, *reclaiming* as stated by the Oxford dictionary is the act to, “retrieve or recover (something previously lost, given, or paid).” *Roots* as stated by the Oxford dictionary when referring to a plant is, “the part of a plant which attaches it to the ground or to a support, typically underground, conveying water and nourishment to the rest of the plant via numerous branches and fibers.” Although, in reference to a less literal definition it means, “the basic cause, source, or origin of something.” I think both the literal sense and the non-literal definition apply to this theme. In the sense that an individual’s roots are from their point of origin or source of someone, from looking at the aspect of lineage, ancestry and culture that take part of one’s identity. This is then also intertwined with the definitions of a plant’s definition of roots and is similar to the less literal form where these roots act as a type of support and a nourishment that can guide you to the type of person you are and who you will be. It is the essence of these definitions that an examination of where my roots are is the question. What is my point of origin exactly? And have I reclaimed these roots?

My ancestral lineage most known begins way back in a pueblito in Mexico called San José De Gracia, Nayarit where my parents and generations before them resided and later on in a large city called...
Guadalajara, Jalisco where my older brother was born. It was not until a couple years later that an opportunity to go to the United States was offered that those original roots spread towards new land. It wouldn’t be permanent to move to Washington or as my little cousin refers to it el polo norte (the north pole) due to how cold and far it is. But that did not become the case when those roots were then permanently established in 2003 the year I was born in Spokane Valley, Washington. And it was then that through the years those roots planted in Mexico from Jalisco to Nayarit slowly diminished more and more as the years went by and were not as strong or plentiful as they once were. There was still some connection to those roots but it was only explored at home where a continuation of my parents cultural traditions were still practiced. From tamales and pozole that was always made during Christmas, avocado, beans, tortillas, rice made always aplenty in the household, Maná, Vicente Fernández, and Los Tigres Del Norte always continued to play especially during días de limpieza (cleaning days), to shows such as Hasta que el dinero nos separe and El chavo being the classics always seen and referenced, and the common phrase always heard “dimelo en español” to remind us to speak spanish at home. Although being raised in Spokane, a connection to these roots was only found at home and there was a lack of acceptance or commonality from others. And that difference in origin simply brought questioning...
and stereotyping to occur. The constant remark and question surrounded how part of my roots that resided in Mexico were not plausible, for how could I speak English so well and how come my skin was so light. Growing up surrounded by this it developed a huge disconnection to those roots for years as a little kid. It was not exactly shame but certainly not a sense of curiosity for them or major pride from where I came from.

It wasn’t until years later that a shift in that area happened through an occurrence of various events but most importantly by going back to where it all started in el pueblito de San José de Gracia, Nayarit. Visits to Mexico had always occurred but going at an older age didn’t just bring a large number in age and a large number in height but also a larger perspective. I got the chance to have my eyes opened to the true struggles and dreams that were put to plant these roots in San Jose and spread them out to where I am now in Spokane. From the hours of work my bisabuela implanted towards her dream of establishing a restaurant in el pueblito, to the struggles that my grandpa faced working as a railroad worker for years to provide for his family, to my grandma who as single mother worked full time and raised a son and supported him through his higher education. And ultimately to my parents who left their home to come build new roots somewhere else with better opportunities for their children. Understanding this gave me light to my history of
what came before me. Although, what truly struck me was when I saw my great aunt who once had liveliness in her eyes was now gone, years had grown on her with her hair fading in color and ridges collecting around her eyes. And that year as she greeted me with her eyes welling in tears saying in Spanish her common phrase “look how you have grown” and then what was abrupt and out of script was a small cry and true pure sadness exclaiming, “I thought you had forgotten all about us and all about me.” Hearing this brought a sharp stab to my heart shame of her thinking that we had all forgotten about my family and my origins.

Going back to that start of it all, of that journey and the struggles and dreams and the loss of connection to my roots and my family directed me towards the process of reclaiming my roots. I know I haven’t reclaimed them but I am going back to what I missed and have not learned. A connection to those roots is still being built but I now know that it won’t be forgotten and that it’s a constant journey of self discovery of one’s genealogy, heritage, culture, and history of where they truly come from and what happened to get there and how it can direct me towards who I am and who I can be. Like singer songwriter Natalia Lafourcarde explained it best in her song Hasta la raíz “Mire el pasado sabrás que no te he olvidado, Yo te llevo dentro, hasta la raíz.” And I like to know I keep the words true to my heart as my journey of self discovery and constantly reclaiming my roots that I will remember what and who came before me and have my origins close to me “hasta la raíz.”

cont. Hasta la Raiz (To the Root)
Under the summer sun she worked life into the soil of her garden. Her brown hands covered in brown dirt as she planted the seeds of her soon to be fruits. With sweat beams and aching knees, she created a sanctuary in our backyard. She saw weeds more than she saw progress and yet she did not sway. Treating them like her children, she called her flowers by name but knew they would leave her by October. Manually manifesting growth and keeping faith the size of a mustard seed – her garden would eventually bare remnants of all her work.

A mother with a green thumb. My mother and her green thumb. Like her garden, her womb gave life to children that would make her proud. Two daughters and a son—a physical manifestation of her manual manifestation of a family. She passed down her brown skin and asked the sun to shine on it. Watering us with boundless love, compassion, and dedication—her green thumb made her easy to find in a crowd. Nurturing has always come naturally; her mother planted that seed. She told stories of our roots, hoping we would carry them with us in the fabric of our being and one day give them to our own fruits. Three grandsons and a granddaughter — they too are remnants of her all work.
cont. My Mother’s Garden

She was always watching over her garden.
She put fences around her plants to protect them, tying their stems to sticks for support.
And wilting leaves... they never stayed long. Adamant that nothing gets in the way of her blossoming flowers.
Her garden was a beacon for prosperity and so badly she wanted it to stay that way.
She exchanged life for life.
She gave so they could receive, and they would soon return the favor.

return each year.
Her values have engrained themselves on our spirits.

Like her garden,
my mother worked us,
fed us,
demanded success,
and nurtured our souls.

Living fruits, rough hands, and happy children.
It was all worth it.

I am from my mother’s garden.

Then, our sprinkler arched rain on the soil, reflecting rainbows with the day’s light.
With bare feet and soft smiles, we ran through the water.
Now, we work that same soil with her guidance.
Roots so strong, some plants

return each year.
Her values have engrained themselves on our spirits.
**both speaking = bolded**
**Akon speaking = normal**
**Kellyn speaking = italicized**

Oil and Water

Oil and water.

**The two have different densities and different polarities. The two have different identities and different backgrounds.**

When I was ten years old and deeply invested in my local library’s reading competition, I read a book entitled Oil and Water and learned about how the two substances physically cannot mix. My first thought was “who says they can’t?” Naturally, I set off to prove this notion incorrect. I tried all kinds of experiments to see if I could get oil and water to mix, but none worked.

Growing up, I didn’t know I was being conditioned to be the other. I lived in a world where everybody is silently judging me. My role was already made for me. Loud, rude, angry, expressive are words you said describe me. I realized I never had a chance to be “a girl.” Instead, my blackness over encompasses who I could ever be. I am trapped in what is supposed to be the beauty of me a part of who I am.

**Growing up, I was told that nothing was wrong.**

Before I could even spell the word “flag”, I pledged my allegiance to one. I vowed that I would stand for a country.
United and indivisible
One nation under God
But that was never really true, was it?
How can our country be united and indivisible

When my America is different than your America?

In My America police would patrol the neighborhood,
Kids in the corner standing on the street because we couldn’t wait for the police to hand out blue coupons to the local corner store for free slushies
They can’t be a threat because they protect our neighborhoods
Back the blue they said
Back the blue when my body is forced face down on the street
Back the blue when my heart is on its final beat
Back the blue...when I lay on my coffin

And repeat
Because my America is different than your America.

In my America
My whiteness protects me
While I fear being kidnapped for my womanhood,
I do not fear being kidnapped quietly
My face would headline NBC News
Many faces do not.

In my America,
The black experience is homogenous
I lack in individuality, but I also lack unity
I hear black power, but I don’t see it
Every time I take a step forward there always a foundation pushing me back
I see pathways opening to help me grow but are shut down the
minute someone is “threatened”

In my America
Much of the pain which I
experience comes from those I
share blood with
Rather than the very
foundations of this country
As it does for many.
When I was eleven, my father
took my brother and I to a local
lumberyard
Where we were told to pick out
a few planks of wood.
I carefully selected several
planks of cedar wood,
Assuming we were building an
Adirondack chair like my mom
wanted
Soon to be covered in
popsicle drippings and sticky
fingerprints.
I was so wrong.
My father told us that if we
ever made the “decision” to love
someone of the same gender, we
would use our planks of wood to
build our own house on the pile
of dirt next to the dog run in the
backyard.
That way, we were not “sining”
under his roof, but he could still
“keep an eye on us”.

I covered from this homophobia
for years.
It consumed me.
It consumed me when one of my
best friends texted me from Club
Q on November 20th,
Saying that if anything
happened, he loved me.
It consumed me when my high
school took down the rainbow
colored flags promptly on July
1st.
It consumed me.
It consumed me.
It consumed me.
Until now.
This past December, sitting on
the Adirondack chair that I built
seven years later,
Twenty feet from the now
warped planks of cedar wood,
I came out to my mom as bi.
It should have been popsicle
drippings covering that chair.
In my America, it was tears.

In October, the two of us
traveled to Washington, D.C.
to attend the Ignatian Family
Teach-In for Justice.
Here, we converged our stories,
our experiences, and our
perspectives.
Here, we heard stories about
other people’s Americas. This is
what we took away.
To be radical is to be rooted.
In order to heal, we have to
believe that we are worthy of
healing.
I want to be a better human and
a worse settler.
Community is where humility
and glory touch.

We are storytellers for urgent
change.
Fuck the flag.
True freedom is what I
represent.

No human being will ever be
illegal.
Everything is possible and
nothing is an obstacle.
Optimism is optimal.

The notion of being a “voice for
the voiceless” does not exist.
This is a lie. A misconception.
We ALL have voices. Some of us
just aren’t listening.
They want to make our
movements divided and
separate.
Anybody fighting for justice are
your people.

If something is more accessible
for one person, it’s more
accessible for everyone.
Flip the table feminism. They say us women want a seat at the table. 
_Fuck the table._
**We’re going for a walk.**

Most importantly, we hear you. We feel you. 
**We love you.**

_The one thing that I took away from those childhood experiments of mine is that when oil catches fire, water is the worst possible thing to add to the mix, unless you want the flames to grow. Maybe this was never about getting the two substances to mix. Maybe this was all about burning a stronger fire than either could create on their own. Maybe all we need is a match, because when oil and water come together, they can burn these foundations to the ground._
A Sampaguita

Alright, Ready? On the count of 3 smile!

1..2...3...

“Click”

As the ID prints, I feel this rush of nerves through my body. Anxious to see a reflection of a girl that has sprouted on the growing vines of this earth but as I receive this ID and hold it in the palm of my hands, I can’t help but feel like an imposter. An ID of blurred facts as nothing feels certain in my own identity. A girl unable to believe that she comes from a field of sampaguita’s because her soil was from a different garden A girl with the roots of her soul so fragile with every lift that is taken, as the planters of her environment move her from one garden to another, unable to pinpoint exact characteristics of the flower she is supposed to be. Leaving her to replant and grip the soil beneath her each time, trying to finally build a foundation that can nourish her growth and sprout beyond the pedals that are questioned by the outside gaze. Feeling the leaves along her stem to faulter, as the world she grows in, increases the weight of pressure to sprout into a flower that is desired to be cherished for the characteristics of beauty that is the standard.
Feeling out of place in a garden that doesn’t feel like home yet to move her in a vase cherished in a home, will still never feel like a home.

“Ang hindi lumingon sa pinanggalingan, hindi makakarating sa paroroonan”

A person who does not remember where they came from will never reach their destination.

It wasn’t until recently that the soil I’m planted in began nourishing the growth of my existence.

Connecting my beauty to the stem of my foundation, watering my features with what I know rather than drying myself of pursuing to look like the sampaguita’s that I am surrounded by.

To acknowledge that my growth is paced at the timing of my own understanding of this Filipino Experience, I have learned to care for the environment that deeply connects to the peace of my own soul.

To be a sampaguita is to symbolize purity, fidelity, and hope. To be faithful to who I am regardless of the ground I grow from, just as the flower isn’t native to the Philippines, my identity is still cherished by the beauty of features I offer to share with the earth around me.

Sampaguita deriving from the phrase “sampai kita” translated to “I promise you” I can promise to myself that like
cont. Sampaguita

this plant with flowers smaller than others that holds a rich fragrance that is loved by its world, I will be loved in my own world, accepting that this reflection I see of myself now, will only continue to be nourished by the nutrients I let in.

Allowing myself to accept that the blooms of my pedals is just as beautiful regardless of the garden I am growing in because I symbolize the strength of sampaguita’s before me.

And so, I must promise myself, to bloom through the seasons of change and nourish the ground of my foundation so I can become a Sampaguita that is planted in a home that feels like home.
Growing up, I learned to love mornings back home

Mornings where the sun would glow on my skin,

Never heavy with heat,

Always light paired with the smell of grass and birds singing

There were fields, all filled with people

All who looked like me with brown skin and different levels of Spanish all throughout

Fields full of strawberries.

Where the strawberries grow

The ones you get in a little clear container at the grocery store

The kind of strawberries my grandma and I would go pick.

Fruit that lives in my mind back when I was so young

Picking them with my favorite person in the whole wide world

While I was there with my favorite person,

Mama Viki was watching out for the kind of favorite person that you want to live the rest of your life with.

See Mama Viki all her life had handsome men waiting for her hand.

At first when she would tell me the stories

I had imagined a gentler version of myself,

{Jocelin Garcia}

Strawberries
Always wanting so eagerly to be exactly like her

I engraved all the stories that she would tell me

The stories that would give me insights to all that she lived in Mexico

All the stories of her and Papa Gerardo before coming to the states

Papa Gerardo came to the United States because his daughter was having me

He crossed the border to be able to pick me up from school when Mama Viki was stuck at home making dinner

For when my mom was stuck in LA and missed a train to come back home

He left his home full of people that knew him and the type of people we’ve always been to be a part of my home

Gerardo Garcia Lopez

And for the first time

It comes out of my mouth because I get to say his name in the beautiful ways he’s lived

And not because I didn’t even know he had Lopez in his name

I found out after having to repeat it so much after his nine digit inmate number

One morning I got up to go to school

Before I left I remember my grandma asking me if I had money for lunch and telling them
that I was late and that I loved them

My little sister Pala tried leaving an hour after I did and was met with officers

When I got home that afternoon the apartment was quiet

Pala was in the living room with my godmother’s daughters

My godmother was in my grandparents room repeating over and over

El va a estar bien, va a estar bien

Such a wonderful man

Kind and soothing

The kind of father that provided for his daughter and his new granddaughter

Moved to this country that was so foreign to him

The kind of person that spent his entire life trying to learn the language that now his children’s children were coming home speaking

The golden sun became dull

The fields turned grey, and the strawberries in my mind weren’t bright but bitter

Ultimately becoming the realization that my comfort

The feeling of being safe was being shattered

Grief

Became like glitter grasping on to every thought when I think of him
Not being able to fully wash it away because you’d eventually find traces of it somewhere

Grief

After every time I say his name

The name that I inherited

Was being put in newspapers and flashed on the news with words that I had never used before

Words no one ever thinks of when thinking of the man that raised you

And loved you

My roots were being dug up from the soil that had taken generations to heal, and it was being thrown back into the water that continuously kept drowning us

I had always loved home

But home turned into the place that kept him behind a cell

It kept him behind bars because even though I would tell everyone my family was from Mexico so proudly,

It was being used against us

Like the words were so dirty that they shouldn’t ever be associated with anything worthy

Anything loved

Him dying made me realize just how much home was in him and how he made me feel in every new space

Not on land that constantly kept burning us

_Cont. Strawberries_
How was it that the thousands of years my ancestors had continuously pushed through so that I could potentially exist felt like they were being scorched to ashes everything that we were

There’s a veil that gets released when you get to the point where the world isn’t always so bright

How was I living in a country that was constantly teaching me I could do it all

When it would turn around and tell the rest of my family they didn’t belong and to go back

Maybe it’s the trauma that is constantly sticking

or maybe it’s because we’re constantly growing up at the age of 6, 7, 8 when those around us are learning about them at an “appropriate” age

How is it that I had to learn about deportation and the starvation

The forced sterilization of women crossing borders

The children behind cages that are dying behind the bars

And my peers having the comfort of learning about it if they want to

If they want to take the extra class that somehow fits all my traumas of being chicana in this country
In One Fucking Class

So while you get uncomfortable in these white walls that continuously lift you up in your discomfort while I’m told I’m “feeling” too much

I’m back here growing through it

I’m crying through it

I’m rising from the ashes that were supposed to burn me alive when in reality it made my ancestors and those who come after me indestructible.

So continue sitting in your discomfort

I’ll continue rising and eating the fruit my people continuously have to grow

But my roots are getting deeper

Good luck trying to uproot my people again

Because if we go

We’re taking all that we’ve brought with us

cont. Strawberries
To the Little Girl with Big Dreams

You are my sunshine. My only sunshine. 
You make me happy when skies are gray. 
You'll never know dear how much I love you. 
Please don’t take my sunshine away.

To the little girl with big dreams, 
I am sorry to say that I did not become the person that you wanted me to be.

You used to dream about one day being just like everyone else: funny, smart, tall, beautiful. And looking like the people in the magazines with pretty long, straight hair, fair skin, long legs, and to make a room go hush as you’d enter. You dreamed of being a showstopper and a light in other people’s lives.

But that was until, other people began to take the light out of your life.

Instead, you became something you had trouble imagining: You learned quickly that you do not fit the status quo. Your hair so big it blocked the views of others, your curls too tight to lay flat and unfortunately by the age of 13 you didn’t get much taller. But it didn’t stop there.

You grew up surrounded by the beauty of other people and other cultures, but for some reason that meant in others eyes you were ghetto. You grew up in a place that lacked resources because the world is unfair.

So, you had to work twice as hard to get into places where
some people just walked in.
You grew up in a family whose skillset and knowledge you exceeded in college because it is beyond their grasp. So, you had to learn to do it not only alone but for them too. You grew up realizing that you were fighting for not only yourself, but your family, for your community and for every other little girl just like you.

To the little girl with big dreams, I am sorry that I did not become the person that you wanted me to be. But I’m so excited to tell you that I became someone even better.

Stop dreaming about being like everyone else because you are not everyone else. That big curly hair that you wanted so bad to get rid of, well it got longer and bigger because who cares that it blocks the view, Baby I am the view.

You will learn to love the parts of yourself that some people can’t appreciate. Your ancestors laid seeds on your head to grow a beautiful crown that know how to defy gravity. Your ancestors crossed oceans in the midst of war to plant you in a place of opportunity.

Baby girl, you are a showstopper. You are a trailblazer, you are a warrior continuing to pave a path for you, your family & your community. You have a confidence that makes a room for hush, Because you are
unapologetically bad ass

To the little girl with big dreams, you are exactly who you need to be, don’t sell yourself short or make yourself small. Don’t fit try into a box, you never belonged in one. Keep dreaming and dream bigger because this world is what you make it.

So, to the little girl with big dreams, I am sorry to say that I did not become the person that you wanted me to be. But I am excited to tell you that I am someone you would be proud of.

You’ll never know dear, how much I love you. Please don’t take my sunshine away.
Tree

Son of cop, jokes to me, about me, about cotton crops and trees, 2 trees, labeled poplar and family. About slaves and strange fruit, about don’t shoot pleas. Pleased, he jokes to me about murder, coast ivory, the sea. About black bodies lost black bodies shipped. About black bodies ripped from homes and history. How hilarious the ham, son of pig the real joke, apple always falls close that’s the thing about trees. Concerning parent child ideological proximity. Offspring raised with fear in mind, in soul. Dehumanize king and queen, hate perpetuate the goal, Offer outward oppression via disguised hegemony. Because leaders lack spleen, spine, and deep-thinking mind.

Equipped with cold heart, rotten soul, there’s corruption at core of apple. Apple taught; apple grown. Apple bought; apple owned. Does not take tongue slip for true colors shown. Investigation unrequired for noble cover blown. Remove covers, truth revealed to Innate disdain requited. A bastardized profession, professional bigotry is required. No repercussion for confessional, never fired or retired. Simply moved on to the next job, with hardly a shift in attire. Traded in white hood for badge and gun. A whip for a taser. Black bodies bruised by cops donning blue. The Pinkertons were slavers. Unchecked police behavior. Bodies protected; bodies served.
That’s a phrase misconstrued,  
it’s really  
black bodies used.  
Expectation black and blue,  
misused power abused.  
Abuse protections, take  
advantage of immunity granted.

Permitted hypocrite standards,  
underserve people on purpose.  
Purposely protect mind from  
undeserved brain sore.  
Mandate means of revolution.  
attrition, war.

Educational places protect  
confederate spaces.  
Slave owner statues are saved  
by idealess statutes.  
And ideals of black dudes with  
placated attitude.  
Become common in country full  
of racist habitude.  
White supremacy in the states is  
merely a platitude.

Prideful government institutions  
averse to restitution by means  
of constitution preach American  
lore.  
It’s a red herring history, hateful  
heritage galore.  
Greatest American revolution  
written as profound mystery  
Not fought for tax and tea  
or against a red coat. Instead  
fought for spread of facts and  
the peoples right  
to vote.  
I hear a knock on the door, and  
a slam on the ceiling doubles as  
somebody’s floor.

Hear ring of phone with calls of  
pain, pained shouts fuel fight for  
freedoms flame.  
In name of retribution, for mine  
most prevalent, keep in mind  
the relevant, melanin, oxygen,  
required for survival.  
Strife, vital resistance, my  
existence is no recital.
Name plates are arbitrary, there’s too much value in a title. Too much value placed in color, placed in shades, placed in hue. Value placed in lives of people, that is value placed too few. And what’s the value of freedom, when it’s cost isn’t free. Country feigns liberty, idea less sturdy than tree. Idea understood by trees apple. Hate’s passed down with ease. Tree from corrupt apple grows into glorified bully. And apple from rotten tree completes the circle fully. But trees don’t hate only, trees can show peace soley. A tree free of aversion, inevitably spreads love wholly. Perpetuating infinite is each and every tree.

Keep everything pristine cause everything is everything, Everything is tree roots, everything is apple juice, everything is persistent purpose presented with undisputed proof. Maintain trees word as oak, per what’s needed to succeed. Swift spread of strong roots allows wisdom proceed. Upkeep every tree, and sustain each apple, and discover every forest and win each battle for the apples that find themselves intertwined at the roots. Dig deeply to see where existence collides, and the war has gracefully concluded. Cause it takes every apple, and it takes each tree to combine into the forests that allow us to breathe.
Tree has roots, and tree has apple, and apple is tree, and tree was apple, and we are tree, and we are apple, and roots are we entangled eternally, for everything is everything is everything is everything.
Aaliyah Mae Lewis
[Sampaguita]
My name is Aaliyah Mae Maniego Lewis, I’m from Tacoma, Washington. I’m currently a third, majoring in Computer Science & Computational Thinking with a Concentration in Communications. Here at Gonzaga, I work with 3 different departments, those being CCE, UMEC, and being a member of the GUCDEI Council. All while participating in clubs such as FASU, AAU, and HPIC and being a current ActSix Scholar in Cadre 12.

Akon Edwang
[Oil and Water]
Akon Edwang is a sophomore at Gonzaga University. She is currently studying Political Science with a minor in international studies. She works with UMEC as a BRIDGE mentor. She loves activism, hanging out with friends and playing volleyball.

Analesa Amira Mason
[My Mother’s Garden]
Analesa Mason is a Junior at Gonzaga, majoring in Criminology and Sociology. She was born and raised in Tacoma, WA. She values intentionality, authenticity, and family. Her grandma, Tina Mason, a professional poet, inspired Analesa to write and through that inspiration came some of her best work. Her passion for writing has become more apparent and platforms like Diversity Monologues and Our Voices have instilled confidence and created community for her.
Andrea Galvin

To the Little Girl with Big Dreams

Andrea Galvin is a first-year student and Act Six Scholar at Gonzaga University majoring in English Literature with a minor in Political Science. She is from Tacoma, Washington and was on the Editorial Board of Write253’s Disclaimer magazine, a local non-profit literary arts organization that provides meaningful opportunities to young creatives in Pierce County. Last year, she served as a Daffodil Princess, the first to represent Silas High School, and Official Ambassador of Pierce County, accruing approximately 500 hours of community service. In her free time, she enjoys frequenting the local coffee and book shops in Spokane. After graduation, she plans to attend law school.

Anisia Khammala

Anisia Khammala is a senior at Gonzaga University studying Sociology & Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. She is a low-income, first generation, student of color and hopes to obtain her degree to work in college-access and/or student affairs to help students like herself gain access to higher education. Khammala has participated in multiple leadership roles on campus to first-hand be the representation she wishes she had for the younger students at Gonzaga and through representation and community she believes it can create greater sense of belonging for students of marginalized identities.
Angeline Elguero-Mateo

[Cha'tine a ba - Te Quedes]

As a low-income, first-generation student of color from an immigrant household, Anji Elguero-Mateo is navigating new spaces, to cultivate bonds with different communities. During and after her time at Gonzaga, she hopes to gain an academic and holistic understanding of the world while personally striving to learn from the stories she hears. Anji’s former leadership positions consisted of seeing roles as placeholders, but nothing is one-sided. Therefore she wants to integrate inclusive and engaging dialogue into headlines, worldviews, and experiences through multiple lenses. Anji is personally commit to aligning her actions and behaviors with the values ingrained from her family of diverse representation, optimism, vulnerability, and perseverance.

Antonio Campos

[Ashes to Ashes, The Gypsy’s Requiem, Western Progress]

Antonio Roman Campos is a Gonzaga University Honors College senior currently pursuing a major in civil engineering along with minors in English, writing, Catholic studies, and philosophy. In addition to being a student researcher investigating transportation engineering technologies, he is also president of Gonzaga University’s chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers; he is a member of Alpha Sigma Nu, the Jesuit International Honor Society; and he is the vice president of Tau Beta Pi, the Engineering International Honor Society. Though pursuing a career in STEM, in his free time Mr. Campos enjoys reading and writing, with an emphasis on the styles and topics of late nineteenth and early twentieth century literature. A highly decorated Eagle Scout from Colorado, Mr. Campos also considers himself to be an outdoorsman, and he enjoys hiking, backpacking, and horseback riding. He has won awards for speechwriting, visual, and
Amari Troutt

[Broken Heart Syndrome]

Major: Sports Management with a minor in General business Hometown: Spokane, WA Fun fact: I’ve always been drawn to the arts and the creative processes

Audriana Alfaro

[NO TITLE]

My name is Audriana Alfaro, I’m from Spokane, and I am a human physiology major in my first year here at Gonzaga

Ellie Williams

[What to Work On]

Ellie Williams is a GU student athlete who transferred here in the fall of 2022. She plays on the collegiate soccer team and is in Black Student Union and Concert Choir on campus as well. She is majoring in International Studies with a minor in Spanish and has plans to attend law school post graduation. As the child of immigrants raised Dallas, Texas, she had an eclectic upbringing that has shaped her view of the world around her differently than most of her peers. She hopes that in pursuit of higher education post-undergrad, she can diversify a traditionally homogeneous career field and work to positively impact the lives of disenfranchised women in the process.
Emma Larson
[Whered You Go]
My name is Emma Larson. I am a freshman at Gonzaga University, but originally from Everett, WA. I am planning on pursuing a career that involves photojournalism, I have seven years of experience though photography and I just like to casually write here and there! Ultimately, I love to spend my time running track for the team here at GU while also enjoying some of my hobbies such as photography, hiking, running, writing, and listening to tunes with the friends (my favorite song right now is “candy grapes” by Foushee and Steve Lacy).

Giana Martinez
[Sana Sana Colita de Giana]
My name is Giana Villarreal Martinez. I am from Austin, TX. I am a sophomore Philosophy major with minors in Leadership Studies and Women and Gender Studies. Outside of school, I work for The Arc of Spokane as a Direct Support Professional with young adults with disabilities and I am the play performance coordinator for GUSR here at GU. In my story I am discussing my whiteness coupled with my Latina identity and how that intersectionality has manifested itself in complex familial relationships. Further, I am using this as a way to heal myself and my family moving forward in hopes of making strides in discussing racial dynamics and differences.

Gwen Mitchell
[Fomorion, Worship]
Gwen Mitchell is a poet and writer from Juneau, Alaska. She is a junior at Gonzaga University studying Communication Studies and English with a concentration on Writing. She writes to understand the world and her place in it. When she’s not brooding over a notebook full of poetry, she loves to play Dungeons and Dragons.
Hatsune Kubota
[Japanese Mountain Climbers]

Hatsune Kubota is a freshman at Gonzaga majoring in Environmental Studies and English with a Leadership Studies minor as an international student from Japan. When she is not studying, you can find her volunteering for Campus Kids or enjoying the scenery in the mountains. This essay was her very first writing in the English 101 course since she came to the US 6 months ago.

Jackie Lee Gaither
[Dear Diary]

Senior studying criminology and communication studies on the pre law track. Passionate for social justice and much love for black student union!

Jocelin Garcia
[Strawberries]

My name is Jocelin (yo-se-leen) Garcia and I am a Criminology and Sociology double major at Gonzaga. While I’m from Southern California, Spokane has been home for a couple years now. I tend to write about the hardships and traumas of living in predominantly white institutions as a Hispanic First Generation college student.

Juliette Aguilar-Gomez
[Hasta la Raiz (To the Root)]

Juliette Aguilar-Gomez was born and raised in Spokane and is currently a Freshman at Gonzaga University. She is majoring in Biology with a minor in Health Equity. In her spare time she enjoys thrifting, eating rice cakes, hanging with friends and playing and watching soccer.
Kaitlin Le
[ông ngoai, Untitled]

My name is Kaitlin Le. I am a senior studying Spanish and minoring in Business Entrepreneurship at Gonzaga. The things I write are a true reflection of my thoughts and feelings. When I share, I never expect or intend to make people relate or feel so strongly by some of my experiences and things that I say. I just want to let people know what I think about something in a way that is true to me but also clear to others what exactly I mean. After a lifetime of listening to other’s thoughts, I am glad to be able to share my own.

Marianne Macanaynay

[All the Great Writers Swear on Killing Your Darlings, What I Did This Summer]

Marianne Nacanaynay graduated from Gonzaga in December 2022 with a major in Communication Studies and an English minor in Writing. She is currently abroad, spending time in the Philippines with family. Her poetry largely focuses on her Filipinx American identity and unpacking how white supremacy has damaged her sense of self and her relationship with her cultural community. Outside of school and work, she spends her time baking (she’s currently trying to perfect a focaccia recipe, so if anyone has any ideas, please let her know).
Max Reyes

[Galing Galing Ang Pamilya Ko!]

Max Reyes, originally from the Seattle area, is a current third-year student at Gonzaga University studying English Literature, Secondary Education, and Leadership Studies. She keeps herself busy by working as a lifeguard and swim instructor for the Rudolf Fitness Center, serving as a Resident Assistant in Coughlin Hall, and providing tours to prospective students and their families as a Gonzaga Ambassador. In her free time, Max enjoys going for swims, reading and writing poetry, catching the sunset, or watching documentaries on anything that she takes interest in. Above all, she is grateful for her GU community and is proud to celebrate her Filipino-American identity, especially alongside the Filipino American Student Union (FASU).

Meagan Graves

[What I Can’t Say Aloud]

Meagan Graves is a writer from Portland, Oregon, and is a senior completing a degree in English Writing and Communication Studies. She is the Editor in Chief of Gonzaga’s Reflection Journal, and she explores the themes of home and connection through poetry, prose, and playwriting. In her free time, Meagan performs in Discantus Treble Choir, the GUTS improv troupe, and Boone Street sketch comedy troupe.

Odalys Sanchez Cedillo

[Bendito es el Fruto de su Vientre]

Odalys is a sophomore at Gonzaga majoring in Accounting with a minor in Communication Studies. In her time at Gonzaga, she has become involved with the GU community as the current Director of DEI for the Gonzaga Student Body Association and the current president of the Association of Latin American Students. Odalys hopes to continue her work in DEI in her future career to amplify the voices in our communities and fight against social and racial inequity.
Piper Fine

[Dismember Me Gently, Please]

My name is Piper Fine. I’m a sophomore majoring in Psychology and minoring in English. I was born in a tiny town in Vermont, raised in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, but my mother and I recently moved to Merrimack, New Hampshire. I have always hated writing, especially poetry, but I recently discovered a love for it after taking an English course. It’s so refreshing to have a new artistic outlet, and I hope to continue exploring poetry.

Reagan Bowyer

[I am all that and Dim Sum]

Raegan Bowyer is a senior Biology major with a Research Concentration. She is from Twin Falls, Idaho. Raegan is also one of the secretaries for Asian American Union. She is an avid reader and is happy to give people book recommendations.

Red Kwenda

[The Demon]

Red Kwenda is a junior at Gonzaga University. A Music Composition major, they tell stories through both words and music.

RJ McGee

[Tree]

RJ McGee (he/him/his), Sports Management Major, Aspirations to coach basketball.
Shay’den Howell

[We are Evolved]

My name is Shay’den Howell. I am a freshman at Gonzaga University studying business finance with a minor in leadership. I am from Tacoma, Washington and come from the Science and Math Institute (SAMI). In my free time, I am highly interested in martial arts/wrestling, this prompted me to start the first ever Grappling Club at Gonzaga University. This club is focused on community and growth of the whole person, where we learn and teach, wrestling/jiu justu principles. After graduating I want to teach financial literacy principles to communities that are marginalized and suffer from the lack of knowledge.

Stefanie Hinkaew Marlow

[Grief is a strange emotion]

Stefanie Hinkaew Marlow is a twenty year old, first-generation Thai-American student pursuing a degree in biology at Gonzaga University. She was born to a single immigrant mother and was adopted when she was twelve by the person she has called her Dad since she was seven years old. When she turned eighteen, her father was diagnosed with dementia, a disease that only worsens over time, while also being the only source of help for her mother, who needed help navigating certain aspects of the world due to a language barrier. Since then, she became responsible for her parents wellbeing. She finds solace in sharing her story so that others who may feel the same way know that their emotions are not unique, and that they are not alone. Her piece, Grief is a strange emotion, is her first personal piece published in any kind of media.
Sydney Abrahamson-Fernandez

[Let Us Be]

My name is Sydney Abrahamson-Fernandez. I am a first year Sociology major looking into minoring in Native American Studies. I am an Act Six Scholar and member of Cadre 14. I’m also an enrolled Spokane Tribal citizen and affiliated with the Chumash, Choctaw, and Seneca nations, and I represent the Spokane Tribe as Miss Spokane ’22-’23. In my future, I’d like to pursue law school to become a lawyer in American Indian Law so I may go back and contribute to my community on the Spokane Reservation and to help others create change and to find their pursuit of happiness. In my free time, you can always find me with my friends, beading, or with family.

Syvana Arwood

[Rain Dance]

Syvana Arwood is a Junior at Gonzaga. She is majoring in Psychology with a research concentration. She is from Spokane Valley, WA and has found roots at Gonzaga in Act Six and in UMEC. In her free time, Syvana is a Social Justice Peer Educator, operates a small thrifting business, and she loves to spend time with her friends and attending Gonzaga basketball games.
Tia Moua

[Letter to the United States]

Tia is a senior, double-majoring in Communication Studies and Sociology, and minoring in Solidarity and Social Justice. Tia is a College Equity Ambassador for APIC Spokane, a local Asian advocacy organization. She is currently leading the Asian American Activist group on campus to fight for a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable Gonzaga campus environment. In 2017, Tia was Miss Spokane’s Outstanding Teen and went on to become Miss Washington’s Outstanding Teen. She was the first Hmong-American state titleholder in the Miss America Organization. Tia enjoys dancing, listening to music, cooking, creating art, attending concerts and art galleries, and riding her bike on the Centennial Trail. She has a passion for advocacy and activism work, especially advocating for the civil rights of Asian Americans, women’s rights, and racial justice.

朱水晶

[A Letter to My Ancestors, A Letter to My White Friends, Colored, His Name]

A girl with too many thoughts in her head and no place to put them except on paper.
To the contributors to this journal: The courage to share your story shows your strength and I want to remind you that you are never alone. Thank you so much for being a part of our journal and I hope you are greatly proud of your work.

To Jessica Hernandez and Carmen MacRae: Thank you for your participation in working on this journal. The amount of work that you did this year was immensely appreciated and the positive impact that you have made is what makes this journal special.

To Hailey Shoda: Thank you for designing our journal once again and sharing your creativity with our audience. The cover is beautiful once again and I hope you continue to share your art with the world.

To Michele Pajer, Tere Graham, and the Diversity Monologue Team: Thank you for continuing to support Our Voices, along with personally supporting me over the past year. Your support and advice has allowed me to create this journal full of beautiful pieces. An additional thank you to the Diversity Monologue Team for giving us the opportunity to see your vulnerability and live in your reality.

To Joanne Shiosaki and Morgan Scheerer: Thank you for your patience and guidance with me this year. As you both know, the past year has not been the easiest for myself, but the continuous amount of support helped allow me to grow and see the good in everything I do. This journal and my own self-growth would not have been possible without the both of you leading me through this hard time in my life.
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