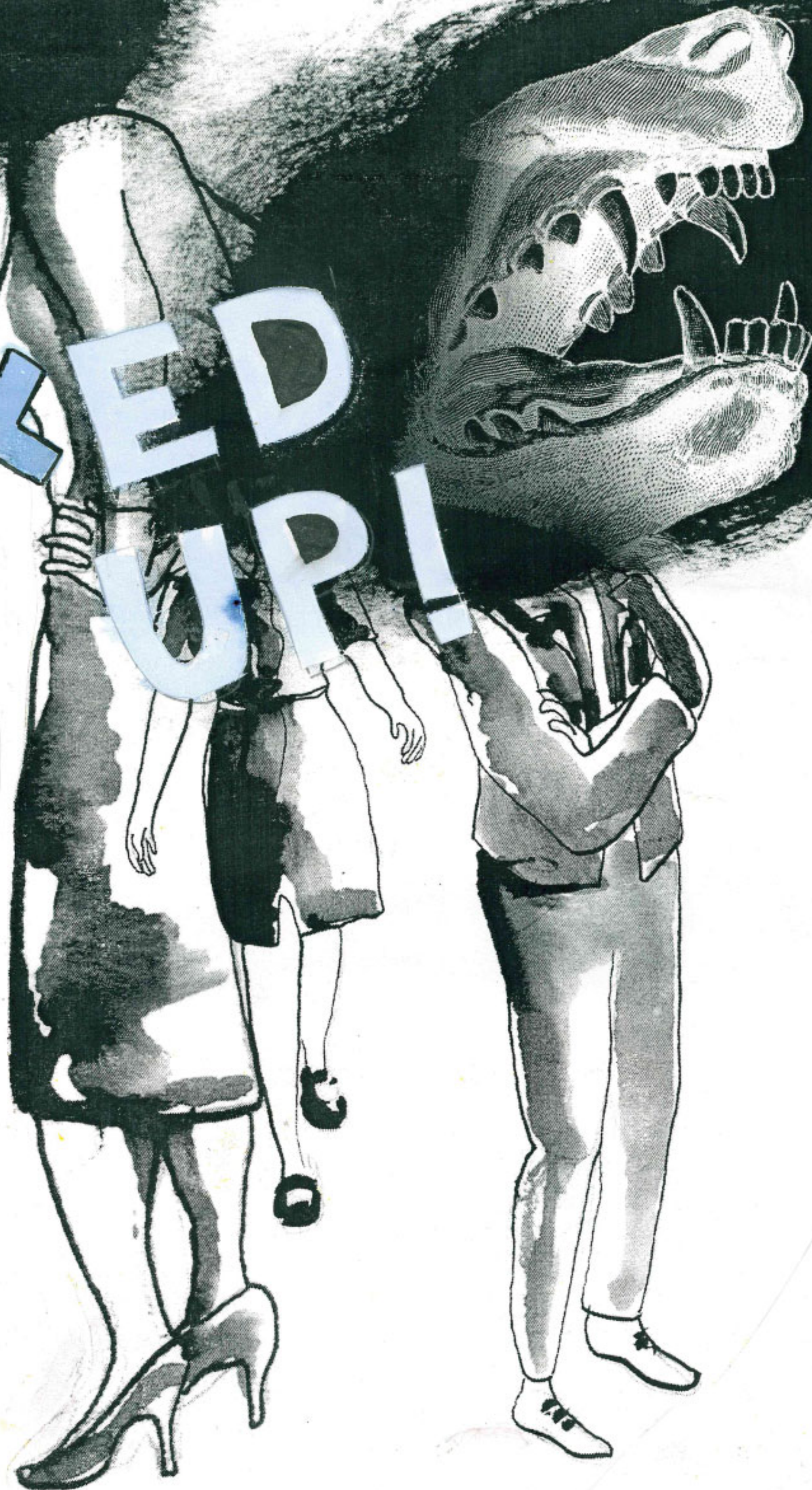


MIXED UPI!

a zine about
mixed
race
queer +
feminist
experience





Dearest readers,

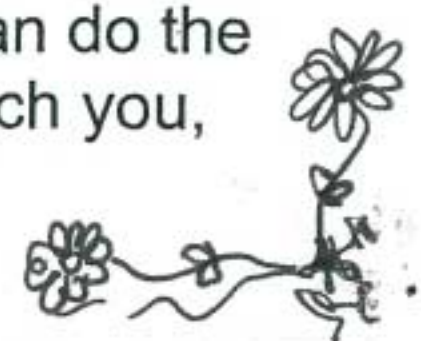
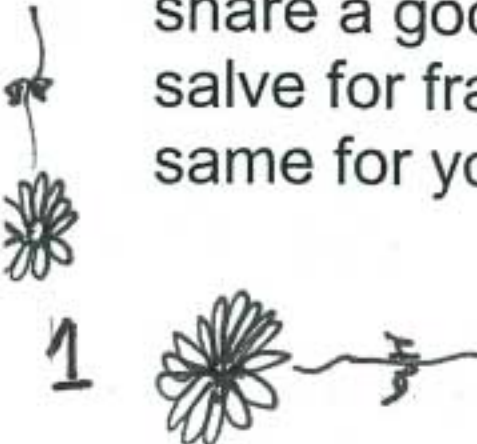


We are so excited to welcome you to Mixed Up! A Zine about Mixed-Race* Queer & Feminist* Experience. In compiling this zine, it is our hope to bring stories and experiences of mixed-race folks to the forefront, with a focus on broadening conversations around race/ethnicity/lineage, and challenging narrow frameworks that conceptualize 'Person of Color' and 'White' as binary opposites. In the pages that follow, the authors and their respective works carve out a space in-between the binary. Space where mixed folks get to rant, poke-fun, get critical, wax poetic, and bear our souls.

In responding to the lack of representation of mixed-race folks like us, we also take on the responsibility of paying respect to and building upon the expansive body of anti-racist and decolonial work that came before us. As such, we are deeply indebted to the countless beautiful queers and feminists of color who have demanded to be heard; who fight, survive, and die on a daily basis. We are indebted to colonized people and feminists of color around the world and in the states who have taught us that black and brown are beautiful; who have shown us how to act with compassion and love and thoughtful rage in the face of white supremacist violence. We want this zine to be a call to continue this work, given the nuances of our lives as mixed-race queers and feminists; often living on and benefiting from stolen land, while refusing to forget the land stolen from our ancestors.

No doubt, racism against folks of color is fucking real, and those of us who are mixed race and sometimes or always pass as white are much less prone to the multiple forms of violence faced by black and brown folks. However, too often, that's the end of the conversation. As mixed-raced queers and feminists, we refuse to whitewash our histories. We refuse to label individuals based solely upon our perceptions of their skin color or features. Colonialism attempts to whitewash, erase, assimilate and subjugate through violence and oppression. We refuse to finish this work. We invite you to collectively participate in this refusal.

One of the themes that has connected a lot of the pieces in this collection is the loneliness of being mixed - so many of our contributors express feeling stranded or isolated. We've found so much comfort and affirmation in creating this zine, in reading and seeing how, even though we come from so many backgrounds, we still share a good deal of common experience. In so many ways, this zine has felt like salve for frayed ends we didn't even know we had, and we hope that it can do the same for you. We hope this zine creates visibility and affirmation that reach you,



mixed-race queer & feminist friends, and that the zine contributes to the creation of communities of resistance and healing that so many of us want and need.

Editing this zine has been fucking amazing. We feel so privileged to have spent countless hours with the included works; we laughed and cried, felt shivers traveling down our spine over and over again, and snacked a lot throughout.

With love from your editors,

Lee, Lil & Lior

April 2013

mrqfzine@gmail.com / tumblr.com/mrqfzine



***A Working Definition of Mixed Race:** While this may not be the perfect term, we are using it to frame a very broad set of experiences and identities, which may include tracing all or part of one's culture or heritage to brown people and colonized people, inclusive of all skin tones. This may also include being raised with multiple cultures or with immigrant experience. We use mixed race as a solidarity term - a term that allows us collect and organize all the beautiful work you are about to read in this here zine. And as a term to be elaborated upon.

***Why Queers & Feminists?** Not only are we interested in the ways that mixed-race folks' identities interact with queerness and feminism, but we also believe that it is important to prioritize stories from queers and feminists, whose voices are often marginalized. Moreover, with a topic as broad as race, we want to anchor our discussions in some common politics. This anchor is important because it is a big part of how we (the editors) choose who to organize with, live with, form community with, fuck, and, in this case, write zines with.

Trigger Warnings: We've placed trigger warnings around the zine in places where we think it could be helpful for folks to have a heads up before reading pieces that contain references to violence. There are no specific descriptions of physical or sexual violence in this zine, but there are a number of pieces that refer to or discuss physical or sexual violence. You'll find trigger warnings before these pieces.

Extra special thanks to: Our contributors!!! MOM AND DAD THANNNXXXX, Sappho the cat, Flamingo Palace for the space and snax, lior thanks flourless chocolate cake during passover editing parties. Ice cream. We all thank cute dates and partners. and non-romantic cuddle-buddies. and chosen family, we love you so.



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TAMRA

OF

COURTNEY

MIXED-RACE MANIFESTO

BILLIE RAIN



I WILL honor my ancestors, all of them
I WILL NOT use my ethnicity as a bargaining chip
I WILL define myself according to my own realities
I WILL NOT be defined by how others perceive my phenotype
I WILL seek community with other mixed-race folks
I WILL NOT be forced, or attempt to force others, into rigid racial categories
I WILL learn about my family history
I WILL NOT use that history to justify my existence
I WILL change my identities as i learn and grow
I WILL NOT apologize for differences or perceived inconsistencies
I WILL be responsible for my privilege
I WILL NOT force myself into a monoracial box

REHEARSAL XAVI MALDONADO

please
quantify a body that gawks and alludes,
telling stories with light skin,
freckles.
not not brown,
just some sickly otherness,
a sorrel lectures
waiting to start.

mixed
means explain yrself.
audition for gas station attendants
wielding dispossessed English
as undone as my Spanish,
a call back
I wouldn't even understand.
mixed means eyes like grandfathers,
hands like conquistadors,
skin like limestone.



wreck me with pejoratives versed
and aimed.
tenacious guilt tended to,
a shallow radish patch,
the nonsense of roots fidgeting.

“that's funny, you don't look Mexican.”
dark and lingering second cousins
spit observations
like I spit
out tamarindo candy.
laughing at my unease
their English asks why I don't
like it
“demasiado picante”
the stubborn stubble
of my second language
barely legible.

Forging our own identities: a mixed-race manifesto ^{Sam} Alexander

I feel uncomfortable. To not fit into the identities that society has created for me means perpetual discomfort at best, and marginalization, erasure, and attack at worst. Binarist thought has deprived me of a true sense of belonging, and I will no longer tolerate that shit.

I am gender-queer. I am a radical, womyn-loving, feminist, sex positive, queer, dyke. I collect these identities because they all expose me to a community where I feel accepted and included. Each grants me access to a subculture that allows me to explore, expand, and navigate my self-identity. These are spaces where I feel comfortable, where my identity gives me a sense of pride. Proclaiming myself as genderqueer has allowed me to give a name to my fluid and in-between feeling of gender. In the feminist and queer communities, the breaking down of the gender binary is creating a smorgasbord of labels for sexual identity, sexual orientation, and gender identity. They range from the very specific to large umbrella terms, closing the gap and leaving less people stuck in the middle. It is debatable whether or not the emergence of these new identities is necessarily a manifestation of more freedom for non-binary folks. However, creating or adopting a vocabulary to articulate your cause is one of the first steps in the fight against oppression.

So why is it that when people ask me to identify my ethnicity, I find myself at a loss for words? Here we reach the void of identities. On one side is White, on the other side is Asian. In between is a pit of terms that range from derogatory to appropriative. My mother is a first generation Japanese-American, and my father comes from Scots-Irish descent. So what are some of my options in naming myself?

- ⇒ "Ainoko" – a Japanese term used in the 1940's for a child born of two different races, commonly associated with impurity and poverty
- ⇒ "Eurasian" – a product of European colonialism in Asia, often tied to rape, prostitution, and bastard children
- ⇒ "Amerasian" – a specific term for children of soldiers in Asian wars in the latter half of the twentieth century, also tied to rape and prostitution
- ⇒ "Hapa" - slang from the Hawai'an term "hapa haole" meaning "part foreigner," often considered appropriation of Hawai'an language and culture, has a past rooted in colonialism

With such inadequate and offensive identifiers, how am I supposed to find a community and culture for which I have no name? How can I feel like I belong? How can I begin to assert myself and gain visibility for my race, when I don't even know what I'm looking at? This kind of namelessness creates a sense of anonymity and

isolation. It inhibits the growth of communities and has forced many, like myself, into accepting the life of a misfit and an outcast. Namelessness and erasure has kept the idea of a thriving, independent, mixed-race culture off the table. What have I been missing out on, not having a space where I can interact with people like me? We will never know what we have lost by keeping mixed-race peoples separate and marginalized, merely pushed to the fringe by their parental races.

If we would only apply a queer, non-binary thought process to the idea of race, we would come up with an expansive spectrum of colors. The labels we currently have for racial identities should not be fixed as a constant. Rather, as new identities and communities emerge, we should work to define the gray areas in the void in between binaries. If none of the labels available to me are satisfactory in identifying myself, why can't I make my own labels? Just as we have created and forged new sexual identities and communities in rejection of the gender binary, so should we be able to form our own mixed-race communities in rejection of the racial binary. When we form our own identities, our benefits are two-fold. We create a space for ourselves to feel open, comfortable, and embraced. These spaces and sub-cultures also act as a form of resistance. By defining ourselves on our own terms, we spit in the face of the power structures that constantly seek to define us on their terms.

Only when we name and gather our own mixed-race communities can we begin to create a culture of our own. When we mix blue and yellow, we do not call that color half blue and half yellow. We do not call it mixed-color. We call it green. I am not half of any race, I am all of my own race. I am not a mutt, half-breed, or less-than. I am a homogenous human being and it's about time I get my own fucking color. Rather than submit myself to choosing between two races and cultures that will never come to fully accept me, I choose to identify myself as racially non-conforming. As racially non-conforming, I do not have to accept the erasure of the non-white part of me by white people, and I can choose not to include myself in POC spaces where my white-passing privilege may make others uncomfortable. Rather, I create my own space – a space for me to feel whole, and a space that I can claim as my own without fear or hesitation. I am racially non-conforming and gender-queer, as I will not let anyone else define me.

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string for a bow

CHELSEA SMALL

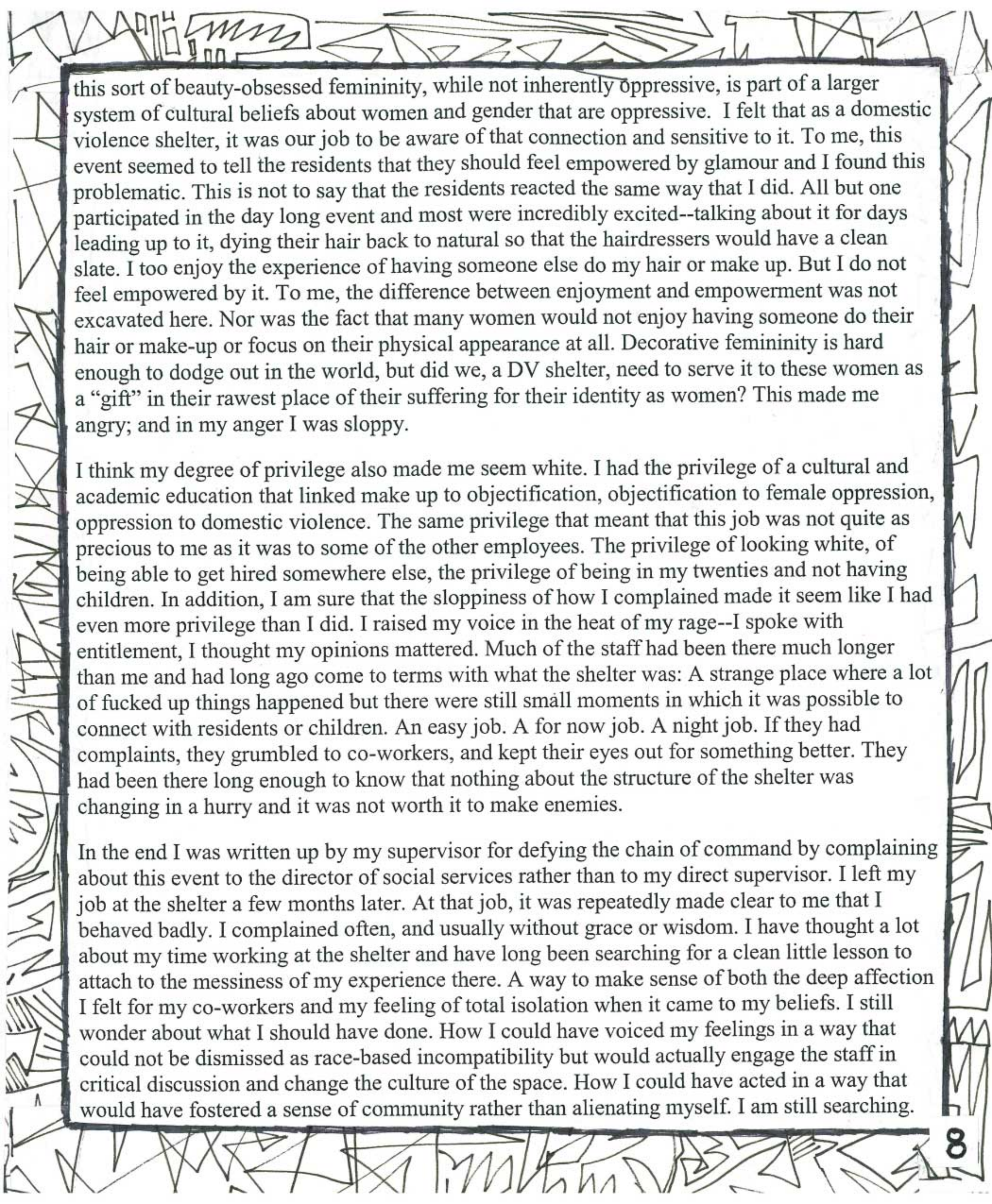
People like to guess. The guesses I usually get are Italian, Spanish, Greek, Persian. A little bit Native American, a little bit Hispanic, a little “something”—something meaning not white. These guesses usually come from people who are also, at least a little bit, something. People who are invested in me being “something,” a little bit off from the given whiteness.

A lot of people assume I am Caucasian. Caucasians assume I am Caucasian. White like them. Often, even when they find out that I am mixed race, they forget. It is convenient to forget. I am fair skinned. I look white. People treat me like I am white. I receive all of the privilege white women get. Most people are not very interested in the fact that I do not identify as white. It is negligible. I look white so I am white. Nevermind that my mother is not white. Nevermind that she is an immigrant, from India, who came to America and married a white man. That doesn't matter. This, I believe, is because what still matters to people about race is not ethnicity, but color. We don't care much about origin, we are color struck. I am not threatening because I am not perceived to have color. My racial identity is most often treated as a blank slate for other people to project onto, what they would like me to be. What they would find convenient, comforting, connecting.

I once had a job at a shelter where I was referred to with regularity as “the white girl” by residents and staff alike. I was told by another staff member there, who new that I was of mixed racial background, that I would never be able to get along with the staff at the shelter because I had “white standards” and everyone else had “black standards.” She went on to explain that one was not better than the other but that they were just different and there would never be any middle ground. I found this both sad and interesting. Interesting because the staff at the shelter was in fact quite diverse—Dominican, Puerto Rican, Jamaican, African American, Barbadian, among other things. It made me sad that somehow, among this collection of diverse women working at a domestic violence shelter, for her, it still all came down to a (false) black/white dichotomy. Worse still, it was served up with that old racist paternalism of “separate but equal.” Her words stung me. She was the closest friend I had at that job. She was saying this to “help” me. And here we were, women this dichotomy most oppressed, using this false notion of race—race as the deepest truth, race as black against white—against ourselves.

I have thought about what she said to me many times. This was a woman who was fully aware of my mixed race background. I have thought about what, at that moment, made me “white” and everyone else “black.” What made that lie feel like the overwhelming truth to her at that moment?

I think it was the way I voiced my complaints. That is what made me white and everyone else black. The shelter had just had an event called “glam day” which I found appalling. Hair stylists and makeup artists and fashion designers came in and decorated the battered women who lived there. They flat ironed their hair and decked them out in high heels. In my opinion,



this sort of beauty-obsessed femininity, while not inherently oppressive, is part of a larger system of cultural beliefs about women and gender that are oppressive. I felt that as a domestic violence shelter, it was our job to be aware of that connection and sensitive to it. To me, this event seemed to tell the residents that they should feel empowered by glamour and I found this problematic. This is not to say that the residents reacted the same way that I did. All but one participated in the day long event and most were incredibly excited--talking about it for days leading up to it, dying their hair back to natural so that the hairdressers would have a clean slate. I too enjoy the experience of having someone else do my hair or make up. But I do not feel empowered by it. To me, the difference between enjoyment and empowerment was not excavated here. Nor was the fact that many women would not enjoy having someone do their hair or make-up or focus on their physical appearance at all. Decorative femininity is hard enough to dodge out in the world, but did we, a DV shelter, need to serve it to these women as a "gift" in their rawest place of their suffering for their identity as women? This made me angry; and in my anger I was sloppy.

I think my degree of privilege also made me seem white. I had the privilege of a cultural and academic education that linked make up to objectification, objectification to female oppression, oppression to domestic violence. The same privilege that meant that this job was not quite as precious to me as it was to some of the other employees. The privilege of looking white, of being able to get hired somewhere else, the privilege of being in my twenties and not having children. In addition, I am sure that the sloppiness of how I complained made it seem like I had even more privilege than I did. I raised my voice in the heat of my rage--I spoke with entitlement, I thought my opinions mattered. Much of the staff had been there much longer than me and had long ago come to terms with what the shelter was: A strange place where a lot of fucked up things happened but there were still small moments in which it was possible to connect with residents or children. An easy job. A for now job. A night job. If they had complaints, they grumbled to co-workers, and kept their eyes out for something better. They had been there long enough to know that nothing about the structure of the shelter was changing in a hurry and it was not worth it to make enemies.

In the end I was written up by my supervisor for defying the chain of command by complaining about this event to the director of social services rather than to my direct supervisor. I left my job at the shelter a few months later. At that job, it was repeatedly made clear to me that I behaved badly. I complained often, and usually without grace or wisdom. I have thought a lot about my time working at the shelter and have long been searching for a clean little lesson to attach to the messiness of my experience there. A way to make sense of both the deep affection I felt for my co-workers and my feeling of total isolation when it came to my beliefs. I still wonder about what I should have done. How I could have voiced my feelings in a way that could not be dismissed as race-based incompatibility but would actually engage the staff in critical discussion and change the culture of the space. How I could have acted in a way that would have fostered a sense of community rather than alienating myself. I am still searching.

HEATED PAWSE



by Nia King

BUTCH ASIAN GIRL MANIFESTO

SARAH NAKANO

FOR ALL MY ASIAN-AMERICAN QUEERS + BENTO BOX BUTCHES
FOR ALL MY TATTED, SLANTY-EYED, MUSCLE-TEE DYKES
FOR ALL MY TERIYAKI TOPS WHO STILL SHRED THE CELLO

FROM BERKELEY TO TAMPA TO PHILADELPHIA
FROM BEIJING TO TOKYO TO THE PHILIPPINES

BECAUSE I AM ENDLESSLY FRUSTRATED BY THE TRAGEDY OF OUR INVISIBILITY
BECAUSE I WILL NEVER BE THE HARVARD STUDENT DATING A NICE WHITE BOY
(WHO MY MOTHER WANTS ME TO BE)

FOR ALL MY CLOSETED HONOR-ROLL SUSHI SISTERS
FOR ALL MY HIROSHIMA HOMOS WHO RADIATE QUEERNESS (LITTLE BOIS)

FOR ALL OF US STANDING OUTSIDE THE GATES OF THE "QUEER WHITE UTOPIA"
AT THE INTERSECTION OF LGBT + RACIST + SEXIST DISCRIMINATION
FOR ALL OF MY QUEER P.O.C - (YELLOW, BROWN, AND BLACK BODIES)

BECAUSE GENDER IS NOT SHIRO // KURO
BECAUSE OUR HISTORY IS NEVER TALKED ABOUT
AND MY PATIENCE IS WEARING THIN AS THE RICE PAPER WHICH
HOLDS MY BIRACIAL EXISTENCE TOGETHER

FOR ALL OF MY INVISIBLE ASIAN-AMERICAN QUEERS WHO
CHALLENGE COLORED ASSUMPTIONS + STEREOTYPES.

DEAR BUTCH ASIAN GIRLS OF THE WORLD - (READ MY LIPS)- WE EXIST.

About this piece: The manifesto I wrote is a piece rooted in satire. The intention of the text is to confront problematic and compartmentalizing East Asian stereotypes in conjunction with queer issues through alliterative humor. What I wrote comes from a place of deep frustration regarding the discrimination and assumptions that I face daily as a butch, asian, gay woman. The manifesto is an assertive statement that I defy stereotypes, I transcend assumptions, I am present, I exist. What I wrote in the piece is a manifestation of my own experience and thoughts. It does not intend to speak on behalf of others. It was not my intention to perpetuate racism, but rather, to acknowledge the stereotypes I face, then combat them through humor.



self portrait

susan kikuchi



both / neither

by Susan Kikuchi

who are your people?

This question is a pretty important one. It begins to get at how you identify, how you grew up, what language you might speak, what foods you might eat. It doesn't answer any of those questions for a certainty, but it begins to get at some of them. Too often though, this question gets asked as an attempt to locate us in the binary; to know how to relate to us. When mixed race people talk about race, we must always navigate the binary framework: either you're one or the other. Speaking as a mixed person, I find that the binary has failed to describe me and my life time and again and again.

When white people ask me about my "heritage," "ethnicity," "background," "nationality" (that one always gets me, since that refers to my passport), or everyone's favorite, "what are you?" I inevitably bristle, unless they have already earned my trust. It's an important thing to know, *if you know me and care about me*. Otherwise, from the white community, I interpret it as an attempt to racialize and other: *why aren't you white?*

When people of color ask that question, especially Asian American people, I hear a very different question. They ask, "are you Asian?" "are you mixed?" I hear, *what do we have in common?* And, sometimes, *can I trust you?* The second always saddens me, but I understand its necessity. As a mixed race person, I sometimes get a pass from the white community whether I like it or not. And with this comes privilege that separates me from my non-mixed Asian American sisters.

For awhile, I tried to deny that reality. I was really loud about the Asian half. The pendulum swung: as a young girl, I remember trying to open my eyes wide every time my photo was taken. So they'd look "bigger." As a young woman, I tried signing only an initial and a last name to artworks. "S. Kikuchi." Get rid of that white girl name. But in time I realized that in order to truly honor my story, and to honor the struggles of my sisters, I had to be real. I am the Yonsei daughter of a Japanese American man and a white American woman. My community is as fragmented and obscure as my identity. And identity requires context. As a teenager, envious of my California cousins, I wished I lived on the West Coast so as to have some cultural context. In my Midwestern home, I was never fully sure what I could call *culture* and what I could call a familial quirk. Family, however, provided me with enough context to be read and racialized by my peers—for better or for worse. Growing up, my peers and neighbors knew my family, knew more or less how we lived,



(middle class, Asian food alternating with lasagna, Buddhist temple alternating with Unitarian church) and could interpret my identity based on these facts. They never let me forget that I was not white enough. As an adult, I moved north for work and my then-partner. Faced with life without a ready-built community or context, I was reminded constantly of my racial ambiguity.

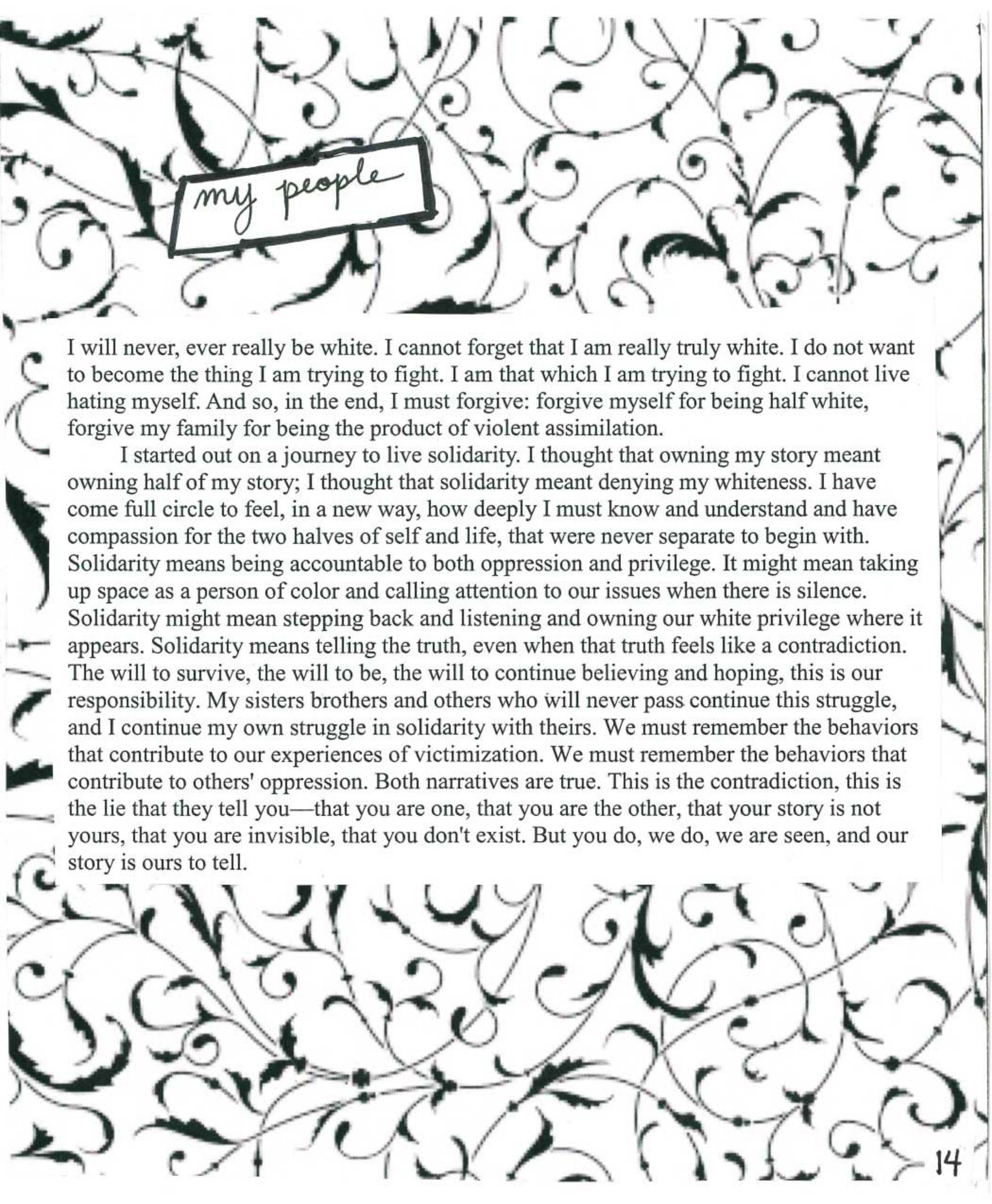
I discovered, heartbreakingly, that sometimes I pass as white. Heartbreaking because as I grew as a person, my pride and identity as Asian American grew and solidified. I responded to the realization of my passing privilege by trying to be more vocal about my heritage, to wear it on my sleeve. Despite my newly bristling APIA 'tude, I found that people raced me according to no particular logic that I could discern. I discovered what I had always known—that identity, as well as being contextual, is open to interpretation.

From the Asian American communit(ies) that I've been around or part of, I receive moments of inclusion, or recognition as Asian, with so much delight. I receive the interrogation of my identity, or questions that subtly try to get at "how Asian" I am, with silent heartbreak. I always appreciate it when other Asian Americans do not reduce our cultural differences to whiteness. A friend (who is APIA, but not Japanese) recently began a cultural anecdote by saying, "I don't know how it is in your community, but in ours..." and I paused for a moment, because I had to consider community then.

who are your people?

Community is an incredibly loaded term. It refers to any one of overlapping identities, group memberships, geographic locators. Let me be clear, identity is not community. It can deeply correlate though. Community is a *source* of identity. My struggle with identity comes from the fact that the "community" I grew up in did not reflect my identity, and did not honor it. Identity as a mixed race person is so, so invisible. I feel that I've been told so many times in so many ways, subtly, that I do not exist. At times I have believed, slightly, that I do not exist. I must not. I should not. I used to hear stories of experiences like mine so rarely as to sometimes believe I was making it all up.

The absence of a community that made sense for me has often felt like a personal failure and been a source of shame. It was not until I was an adult and read *Ungrateful Black White Girl*, that I found another person had perfectly described my search for "community." And what I found that I already knew was that community is not inherent or stable. You may have to search for it, long and hard. You may have to work, long and hard, to create it or to preserve it. And create, and preserve, I believe we can and must, in order to survive and be whole and happy.



my people

I will never, ever really be white. I cannot forget that I am really truly white. I do not want to become the thing I am trying to fight. I am that which I am trying to fight. I cannot live hating myself. And so, in the end, I must forgive: forgive myself for being half white, forgive my family for being the product of violent assimilation.

I started out on a journey to live solidarity. I thought that owning my story meant owning half of my story; I thought that solidarity meant denying my whiteness. I have come full circle to feel, in a new way, how deeply I must know and understand and have compassion for the two halves of self and life, that were never separate to begin with. Solidarity means being accountable to both oppression and privilege. It might mean taking up space as a person of color and calling attention to our issues when there is silence. Solidarity might mean stepping back and listening and owning our white privilege where it appears. Solidarity means telling the truth, even when that truth feels like a contradiction. The will to survive, the will to be, the will to continue believing and hoping, this is our responsibility. My sisters brothers and others who will never pass continue this struggle, and I continue my own struggle in solidarity with theirs. We must remember the behaviors that contribute to our experiences of victimization. We must remember the behaviors that contribute to others' oppression. Both narratives are true. This is the contradiction, this is the lie that they tell you—that you are one, that you are the other, that your story is not yours, that you are invisible, that you don't exist. But you do, we do, we are seen, and our story is ours to tell.

DISAFFILIATE ^{tamar boodaghians} OR: IT'S OKAY TO CALL ME
A PLETHORA OF
SYLLABIC COMBINATIONS THAT
BEGIN WITH THE LETTER "T" AND OTHER

UNTRUTHS

"Tay-mar Booda-hagins? Is Tay-mar Booda-hagins here?"

"I'm here," I mumbled.

Attendance was the worst. I rarely corrected teachers when they mispronounced my name because they looked stupid enough when they couldn't sound out a string of letters. And I didn't care what they called me anyway. Sure. "Taymar is here."

Sometimes my classmates would correct the teacher for me. "It's Tuh-mar, not Tay-mar." Everyone giggled. But not the laughing kind. It was the kind that was muffled, that you knew everyone was trying to hide.

"I'm sorry, TUH-mar," said my teacher, placing an unnecessary and unnatural emphasis on the first syllable of my name, as if this pronunciation would prevent him from fucking it up the next morning (which it didn't). "Next time you should say something."


I didn't have a voice in elementary school, and even now, I struggle to find one. Why should I allow protected thoughts to become tangible words that linger in space—that can be judged by the giggling others? My thoughts are safe because I am the owner, but when I turn these thoughts into words, when what's mine becomes yours and everybody's, I panic. Words don't belong only to me. Everyone has them. And just like matter can't be created or destroyed, neither can words. They exist, and we have to assemble them. And once thoughts become words, they're forever. This permanence is unsettling, so often times, I choose to use as few words as possible. I'm a word rationer. I assemble them with caution. In elementary school, telling my teacher "It's TUH-MAR" was unnecessary. A waste. I had better words to assemble.

As if having the name Tamar wasn't stressful enough in a room full of Saras, Mikes, and Ashleys, I was often confused with a boy who spent four fifths of his elementary school career in the principal's office. One classmate went so far as to ask me, "Hey Tamar, are you related to Jamar?"

I could hear my teacher's voice on loop playback in my head – *Say something. Say something. Say something.*

On the surface, Jamar was my elementary school antithesis. I did my homework. Jamar did not. I hid behind a basketball pole during recess and pretended I was invisible. Jamar did not. I fantasized about being a new member of the Spice Girls—Ethnic Spice. Perhaps Curry, Cardamom, or Coriander. I wanted to believe they were missing a flavor and I could fill that void. Jamar did not. I am white. Jamar is not. And if this inquisitive moron knew anything about genetic material, he would know that Jamar and I were as distantly related as Bach's twenty children were from one another.

"No," I said, after a tremendously awkward pause.



Uninterested by my succinct response and mysterious demeanor, as most of my eight year old peers were, the boy ran over to the soccer field to tell all of his equally moronic friends that Jamar and I, in fact, are not related.

But then, while everyone else was playing sports and chasing each other and getting woodchips in their shoes (something I was always petrified of, being the neurotic child that I was, as if getting a woodchip in my shoe would be some irreversible event) I chose to spend my recess doing the unthinkable—thinking. So maybe Jamar and I weren't genetically related, but we had more in common than I originally thought. We were both misunderstood. We were culturally and racially confused in an environment that supported nothing but homogeny. And we had certain things expected of us. Obviously, I should be good at math because my name is near unpronounceable. Obviously, Jamar deserves less attention than the students who are actively trying to listen and learn. I understand this is a crude judgment. I also understand this is a reality. Jamar and I had no idea where the fuck we belonged so of course we believed it. We viewed our peers as molds for us to become, which is a horrible feeling. When you grow up expecting to become something that's impossible for you to become, you know what failure feels like, and you know it doesn't feel good. Until you realize much later that this isn't failure at all. It's a victory. It's a victory to take what's expected of you, shoot it to hell, and emerge unaffected. Jamar and I were different, and we were reminded of it every day. I chose to internalize this reality. Jamar did the opposite.

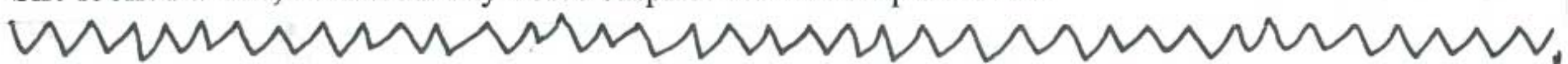
When students misbehaved on the playground, the principal, Mr. Enderly, would announce through a megaphone exactly who was misbehaving and according to the level of unruliness, what the consequence would be. "JAMAAAAAAR STOP KNOCKING PEOPLE DOWN ON THE BASKETBALL COURT! JAMAAAAAR REPORT TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE IMMEDIATELY." Like those awful games of telephone that girls played at birthday parties where a phrase never ended up the same from beginning to end, somewhere in between Mr. Enderly and the megaphone, the megaphone and the playground aids, the playground aids and the main office, the main office and the loudspeaker message, Jamar became Tamar, which was hilarious because everyone thought that the girl who read library books on the bus, returned them on time, and didn't speak knocked her friends down on the basketball court to score two-point layups. The truth is, if I had had the physical ability to do so, I would have. I was angry too. But I coped by reading books and principals didn't do much disciplining for that. The phone rang, summoning me to my least favorite place in the entire school—worse than the playground.

"Will Tamar please report to Mrs. Dougherty's office?"

That's right. I had to see the school guidance counselor—not for believing I was invisible behind a basketball pole, not for pretending to be a sexy member of a British pop band, not for speaking an average of four words per week—but for "an inability to constructively cope with anger on the playground."

"I'm Tamar," I said to Mrs. Dougherty, who always wore too much perfume. "Not Jamar."

She looked at me, confused. My voice surprised her. It surprised me.



Winter in Bedford Stuyvesant
~ Acacia Marable ~

It's cold again. I have layers built up all around me. Protection from the frost, from the wind and chill that has enveloped everything. Ash congregates on my skin as the summer fades from it. I am once again pale. Which is becoming more and more of an issue. At this point I've given up hope that my tan will finally, after all these years, stick. That I won't be the "golden-pacific islander-puerto rican-white-girl???" looking kid in the holiday photos. That I will go to the barber shop and bravely say, "nigger" when referring to some mundane thing. And no one will look up at me like I've just overstepped my welcome. That I'll even have the need to go to the barber shop, instead of stubbornly letting my hair grow out to proclaim "I AM BLACK! LOOK AT THIS AFRO!" With nothing to read except my pale freckled face protruding from my down and cotton shell, I can't blame people for treating me like an outsider of my own community. I wonder what classification they give me. What they think when I show up and appear to be the only "golden-pacific islander-puerto rican-white-girl???" in the room. When at large family functions it seems I'm just someone's friend who has come along. Sometimes at night I see people cross the street ahead of me and hope it's because to them I'm a black man. Finally some recognition! Accepting racism as the only sign of the inclusion I miss. On the corner, when walking down the street, in line at the grocery store, at a bar... anywhere a fellow brother or sister appears I'll look and see if they SEE me. Or just past, another light skinned kid invading their neighborhood. Talking down to them. Acting afraid of them. I wonder where these slanted eyes and aristocratic nose came from. A half I never got to meet or know. A half so foreign to me it's strange that it is what people see. Because I don't feel it. I'm left to hastily take off my beanie. Russle and fluff my hair. I am here. Look at this afro, bitch.

I Ne VeR

Wanted
my hair
To riot.

"RIOT" ANGELA DAVIS FEGAN

by: Lior Hadar

1:

I find myself on the subway
Or on the bus
The early morning commute
To the Brooklyn high school
Where I work

I find myself taking my hands from outside
My jacket pocket
Setting them on my lap
Palms down
And comparing
Comparing.
My skin color
With that of the person next to me
So that I can feel brown enough.

When the color of my skin is a similar shade of
brown

To that of the person next to me
Whom I read as a person of color
I am so delighted
On a crowded Brooklyn bus
At seven in the morning, in the rain
I feel

Delighted
Can you imagine?

But more often than not
I am the whitest *looking* brown fag
Sitting on a Brooklyn bus
Listening to Lauryn Hill
And Nina Simone
Or Jo Amar
Singing in Hebrew and Moroccan-Arabic
The swirl and tumble
Of slurred Mizrahi quarter tones
Music of my childhood
Moves me to tears

And I am using other people as my measuring
sticks
Knowing fully well that I have
No fucking clue
What it feels like
To be shitted on for being brown.

2:

I find myself in a New York City
Cab. The driver is from *Rabat*.
Maybe 50 years old, he helps
Me figure out that the Arabic for *Larache*, where
Savta Vida
And Saba Nissim grew up,
Is *El Araich*.

He drops me off and asks:
"Why do you live in this neighborhood?"
"The people are so deeply kind,"
I respond
And he smiles.
Wisdom shines,
"If you were straight and white
It would be a different story"
He says.

3:

Specificity is important.
So allow me to be specific,
For just a moment:
I am Jewish-Moroccan-Tunisian; spoken-to-
In-Spanish-by-one-set-of-grandparents-sung-to-
In-Arabic-by-another-
Born-in-Israel-
And-Israel-is
Not really Israel.

I think

I am often unplaceable
A lightish brown creature
With faggy flower tattoos
And metal piercings
Awkwardly angled
Into ear cartilage
Struggling to heal

4:

Specificity is important because
The existence of Arab Jews
Is a living/historical threat
To the building blocks of modern Zionist
Narrative
Wherein Arab-equals-enemy
So let me break it to you, Jewish anti-zionist
Establishment:
Arab/Mizrahi Jews need to be central
And *centered*
In all Jewish anti-zionist
Collaboration. Plain and simple.
Take a step back.
As all Jews must step back
In collaboration with
Palestinians.

Specificity is important
Because I am not black
And because my queerness
Tends to divert attention
From my 'middle-eastern look'
So obvious to some;
Tends to divert from ever being perceived
As a 'suspicious looking' Latino.
Which means,
So very simply
That I am WAY LESS likely to be
Harassed/fucked with/
Shot dead
By racist NYPD

After all,
They are not told to
Stop and frisk

And kill
'Suspicious' folks of color.
They are told to stop and frisk
And kill dead
'Suspicious' black and Latino men

5:

I want to remember. (Prayer)

I want to remember where I stand,
To be acutely aware of my place
In this world/on the streets of Brooklyn,
In the classroom.
I want to remember when and how
I am more or less
Vulnerable to
State/hate
Hate/state
Violence.
In all its interwoven forms.

I want to remember
When to demand allyship.
And when to listen, take direction
And guidance, as an ally.
I want to celebrate the specificity of my
Difference,
And indulge the rituals and memories
That serve as reminders of where I come from;
And what sustains me;
That keep me aware of
How I move/
Take up space
In relation to my surroundings
The context in which
My mixed-up
Mixed-race
Mizrahi
Person of color beauty and
Struggle
Exists.

Live and die and
Shine on.

DISLOCATION

HANNAH CRISTINA

Older white lady. Fifty-five, maybe fifty-six, just like my mom, no longer sure of whether she is approaching or abandoning an age. I see her walking towards me, a couple elephant lengths ahead, graying hair that used to be red.

I see you so vividly, see into you, through you, between you, wondering where I fit. Because when I look at myself, in a mirror and with introspect, I see you in my eyes, imaginary freckles on my nose, strawberries in my hair, and then, blackness. Do you know that you look like my mom? That your frame gives me comfort in the morning light? That you somehow have the ability to make me fit right?

Cuz' when you see me approaching, you veer to the left, kicking up more dust than before. I must scare you because my hood is up and my pants are low and I think you can see my brown chin from just beneath the shadow of my brim. I want to reach out to you, touch your hair, feel the years folded into your hands, nostalgic for your embrace. Desperate to see my bones in your face.

Older white lady, I could have been your child. Could have danced naked beach dances then let you wrap me in a towel, shivering, you tell me I'm yours. And I never would have questioned you, I never did, because you would have showed me my birth tape every year on the day it was filmed. And I would have seen my head exit and enter, exit and enter, exit and enter from the only place that has ever felt like home.

So sometimes when you pass me by, avoiding my vulnerable gaze, recognition-seeking eyebrows raised, without a glance in my direction, it stings my core. Do you know that I could have been yours?



"Family Portrait, 2011"
 Brannon Rockwell - Charland Photograph (family photos projected onto artist)

torres, rio grand do sul, december 5th
Amal Rana

on the ethereal beaches of strangers we sit
with sea mist and sand slowly licking our skin
and perhaps we remember
in this moment of high cliffs, shifting dunes and cicadas
another life, another place
we once called home
or wanted to call home
but have never seen
never tasted the fragrance of kashmir
never set foot in her hills
or traced the shape of her skies with these hands that still hold in them
memories of roses so deeply scented they make your heart explode joy
one crimson petal at a time
never to return to my mother's village, now erased from existence by a military pen
never to visit the place she was born, to make the pilgrimage of a daughter returned
past military checkpoints and curfews
and borders that bring that familiar smell of fear pooling below a seemingly calm
facade
but there is something in this beautiful place of strangers
something in this land of pagan goddesses and old blood
where jinn dance on the sand under saffron moons
there is something whispering: never is a long time
never is a long time
never is a long time my love, and we **will** return...

For The white Girl who Loved Me

Felix Rucker

There is and will always be a barrier between our selves and our skins. Your shade of cream does not meld with my brownness, does not emit the same rays of fire and love and struggle as my own. As we lay breasts over breasts, there is beauty in the way our bodies intertwine. But I feel no intensity in our closeness. I do not feel your flesh burning into mine the way it burned with the one before you. It stays limp, draped over my own while I stare into you, wondering if you ever think about the difference between the galaxies. Somehow, I don't think you do.

Desecrating the Pearl

Mette Loulou Ayoub von Kohl

I want to peel away the layers of skin that cover the blood wandering in my veins. Back and forth it flows. Strip by strip I peel. With each layer releasing its grip, their whispers become louder and louder until they can be heard.

I hate my skin. The lie that I cannot erase, that I cannot take back, that I cannot deny. I resent it for the safety it provides. This safety makes me weak. This safety strangling the whispers beneath it. Strangling my own cries dying to repeat those words suffocating under my skin.

I want to carve these whispers into my safety. Desecrating this pearl, so at least *then* you can see my strength, oozing through the cracks, seeping from the gashes in my heart.

Drop by drop I will collect this strength, treasure it like the power that only guilt can buy, and one beautiful, sun-kissed dawn, like on the day when the new world came, I will drown you in their whispers. In my strength.

WHAT DOES MIZRAHI OPPRESSION LOOK LIKE?

by Amirah Mizrahi

A poemthing for Americans and others who give their solidarity elsewhere

It is cultural genocide forced assimilation kids not speaking their mother's mother tongue. Kids killing kids who speak their mother's mother tongue or wanting to.

Seeing the enemy in the mirror being told from birth that's how the enemy/mirror looks like.

Kids kidnapped from their moms and the moms criminalized before during after.

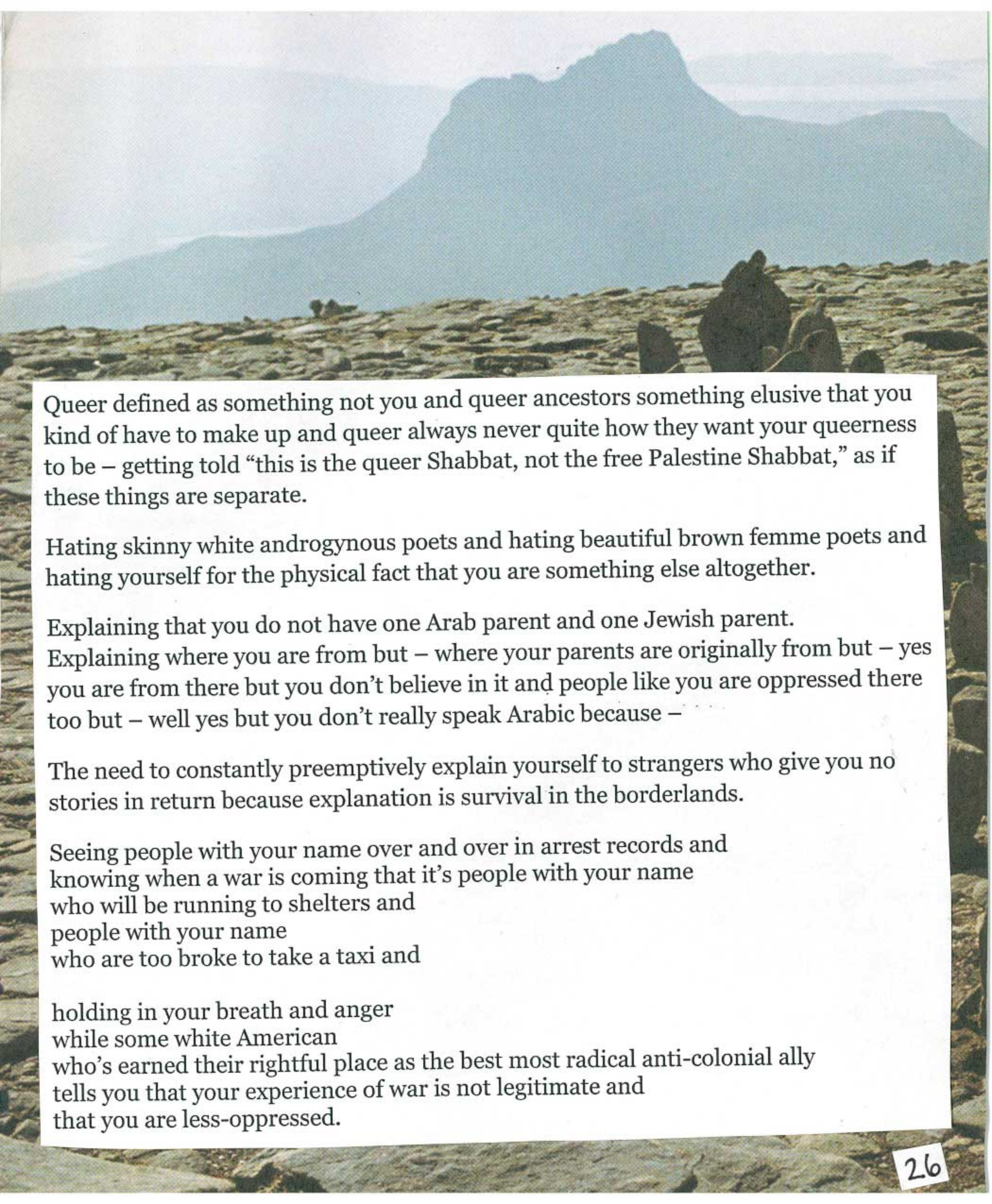
Welfare lines and demands dismissed as needless tears.

It's nine pages out of four hundred in history books it's stories that die with your grandparents it's not knowing you come from somewhere.

Huddling together in hoods against the coldest cold of warm cities.

It's being a pawn
in someone's argument
and on the geopolitical map moved
into the border zones
to absorb the bullets
of the armed resistance
while handed guns
to point
in the wrong
direction.

It's watching your baba's friends die of cancer one by one, due to medical experiments conducted by the state in their childhood,



Queer defined as something not you and queer ancestors something elusive that you kind of have to make up and queer always never quite how they want your queerness to be – getting told “this is the queer Shabbat, not the free Palestine Shabbat,” as if these things are separate.

Hating skinny white androgynous poets and hating beautiful brown femme poets and hating yourself for the physical fact that you are something else altogether.

Explaining that you do not have one Arab parent and one Jewish parent.
Explaining where you are from but – where your parents are originally from but – yes you are from there but you don't believe in it and people like you are oppressed there too but – well yes but you don't really speak Arabic because –

The need to constantly preemptively explain yourself to strangers who give you no stories in return because explanation is survival in the borderlands.

Seeing people with your name over and over in arrest records and knowing when a war is coming that it's people with your name who will be running to shelters and people with your name who are too broke to take a taxi and

holding in your breath and anger while some white American who's earned their rightful place as the best most radical anti-colonial ally tells you that your experience of war is not legitimate and that you are less-oppressed.

calling all
white women

x
By: Zisa x
x Aziza

Amerika, England, Germany, and the like
your democracy is your whiteness

If you lose your constitution,
the Military will have its way with you

Freelance Negress

I ain't no billboard or illustration
Of a succeeding white liberalism
Nor do I don red, black and green
Because shit is deeper than black and white
Don't be confused, cuz I ain't no oreo either
Because if you rip me open you'll find a rainbow
I ain't always queer though
Because sometimes I don't know what it means
I ain't an anarcha-feminist
Because they make a habit of forgetting all women ain't white
I ain't a bleeding heart liberalist
Because libertarians talk about freedom
I ain't god fearing
Because faith in one man does not suit my soul
I ain't poor and I ain't rich
But I gots everything I need
I's a negress and I ain't nobody's pawn
Because everyone seems to forget that I exist
'Til they got a movement that serves their interests

missionary.

- HEIDI ANDREA RESTREPO RHODES

colonisation sits sticky,
residue, viscid, layering my aorta,
pulsing through my blood,
from my hypothalamus to my labial nerve,
deep beyond years beyond the days i've breathed beyond centuries
beyond the rapes of my grandmothers' grandmothers' grandmothers

colonisation sits sticky,
with palos that holy hands took to beat,
with postes that crushed children
so cathedrals could be built
so that souls could be saved
in a world where already
the language of god was in the soil and the sound of jungle birds
and the harvesting of corn and plantain
priests staked their claim
planted crosses like dead trees
that feigned to give eternal life
impaling the blood of the earth
impaling my body
centuries into a future they could not foretell.

and they told my grandfathers
how to fuck their women
for the glory of god
and what once were
potent dancing flowers
fierce with skilled weapons in their skirts
became in their eyes
machines to make more slaves,

slave-factories
before factories were factories

and oh how my grandmothers bled
and fought
and died
and refused to die
(for i am here)~

and i drip, wet,
this residue between my legs,
five hundred years of history
i carry between my legs
and in my bones
and in the adrenaline of fear that forces my descent...

...some things are so safe they are already-dead,


life threatening automatic factory doings
replaying the theatre of salvation
to survive the farce of (il)legitimacy

...these are stories carved against my will
with the pointed tip of a tagua rosary

into the folds of generations
the blood i bear
which weighs on my skin
the uninvited hell that was wrought upon me.

Author Commentary :

Hegemonic discourse pathologizes "Queer". Our heteronormative, neo-colonial, hyper-Christian, racist, capitalist nation understands "Queer" as pathological, and aims to neutralize it, to make it

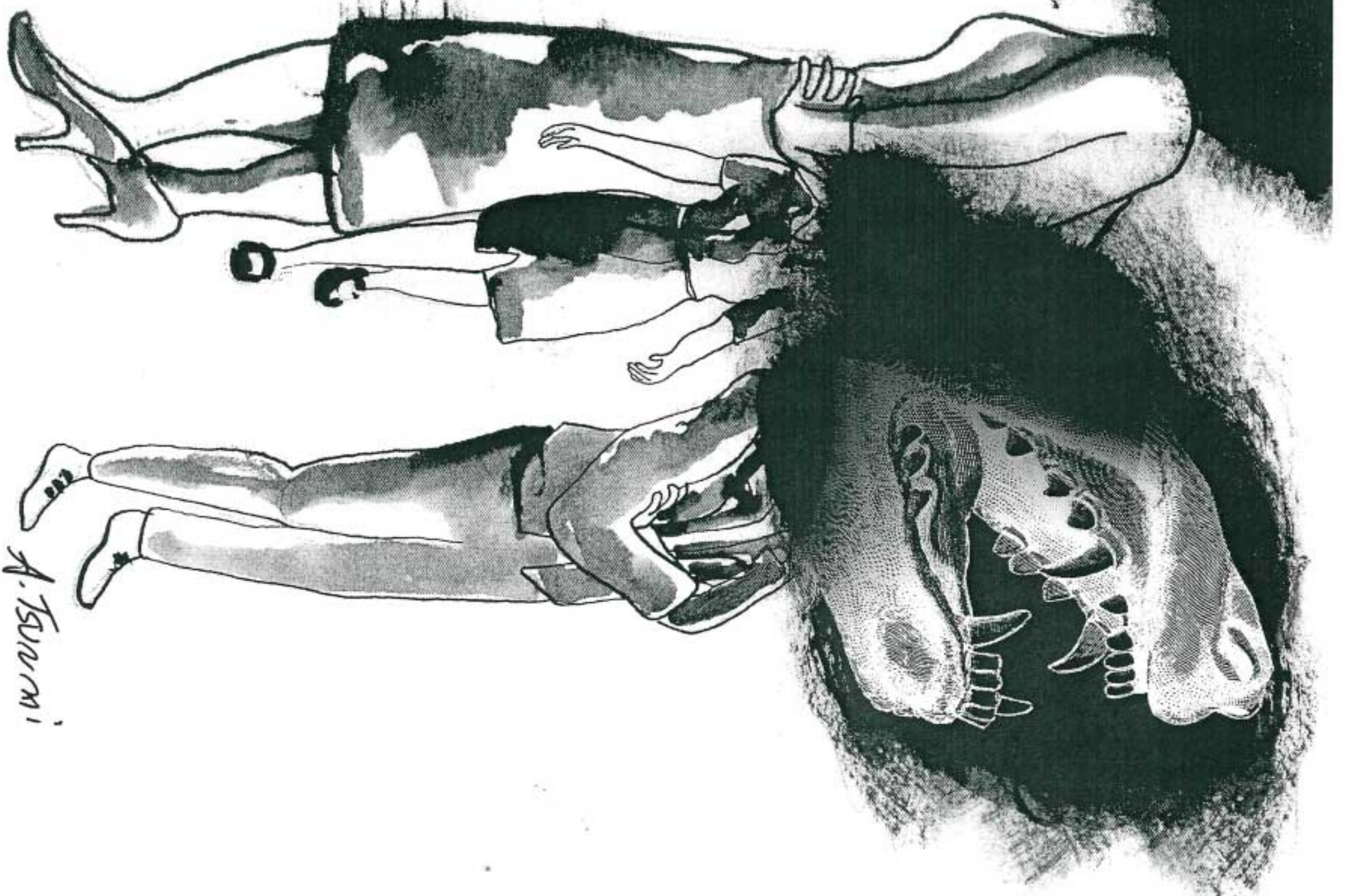


docile. To live Queer, is often to embody that which does not make sense to the world, which does not fit, which refuses to be moulded by social mandates to assimilate, to 'unstrange' one's self –(in Spanish, we are often called “la gente rara”, which literally means “the rare people” but translates more suitably to “strange or weird people”). As a queer person of color, the weight of these requisites is multifold. For me, the violence of racism as it intersects with homophobia in this world, digs into my muscles, deep, like barbed needles that agonize my might, constantly, every day.

This poem is like a seance for me. An exorcism of a kind. Politically, it calls forth pieces of historical and bodily memory that are mine and never only mine. It calls forth the spirits of those I came from, who died and survived in infinite ways at the hands of colonization. It calls forth my own demons, of sexualized violence that haunt my skin, my body, my imagination. It subverts the burden and isolation of this madness, and fortifies healing by contextualizing it in centuries of generations of social, political, spiritual, and historical trauma. It de-individualizes the presence of violation in the body, to reflect that how we move in the world, how we respond to different kinds of violence do not have to do with us alone, but with a complex world, rife with violations founded in the racism, sexism, nationalism, and homophobias of empire and expansion. On my mother's side of the family, I come from Colombian Mestizos, as well as Sephardic Jews who left Spain centuries ago to escape persecution. I come from Indigenous and Afro-Colombian people, whose histories in my family have been forgotten, but whose presence remains in quiet ways. I also come from white, privileged places, and grew up with many of the privileges that often come with residency in these United States. The privileges gained through diaspora have also meant loss via generational forgetting. This poem, entitled “missionary” addresses the intersections between: the racialized violences of the Spanish colonizers through Colombia's history; the intimacies of that history with the Catholic Church and the process of missionizing or conversion; the use of sexualized violence as central to the domination and enslavement of subaltern communities and their religious conversion; the institutionalization of legislation and policy which sought the ‘purification’ of the racial constitution of the new nation; and the ‘unqueering’ of the act of sex through rendering sex in the ‘missionary position’-- for the purpose of reproduction -- the only holy and acceptable sex act, another form of conversion. These are histories I believe we collectively and individually carry in our bodies, whether or not we are conscious of it. It is an unfortunate success of the colonial project: that we are relentlessly subject to it, which requires our unremitting fight against it. This poem is an act of memory in diaspora. It re-members me. Brown, Queer, and committed to counterhistories through the word, I remain a symbol of heresy and treason. We live and breathe and love and fight, and our survival remains insurrectionary.

you're just shit at
listening.

YOU'RE
JUST
SHIT
AT
LISTENING



A. TSURUMI

.....quiet asian girls by andrea tsurumi.....

I Want to be REAL

Jessica Mustachi

I...want...to be REAL

I want to be ME

I want to be whatever it is I am supposed to be...
and not what you think...say... I should be...
or what you think...know...believe... me to be...

Stop placing me into your little big boxes
...telling me who I am...
...not asking ME about ME...

Must I always have to carry an axe with me?
Must I always have to be prepared to fight back?
Must I always feel ashamed?

...when I do not stand up against you and your words...
...against my ancestors

...my grandparents

...my parents

...me?

but I'm sorry, excuse me... YOU... were the one who has been misinformed...
because

WE WERE taught to be critical...

WE WERE taught to fight back...

and that is the only reason why WE...
are still HERE

And yes I am angry

And yes I need to be angry

And yes I don't want to have to shut up and swallow the words you constantly...

throw out...

hurl out...

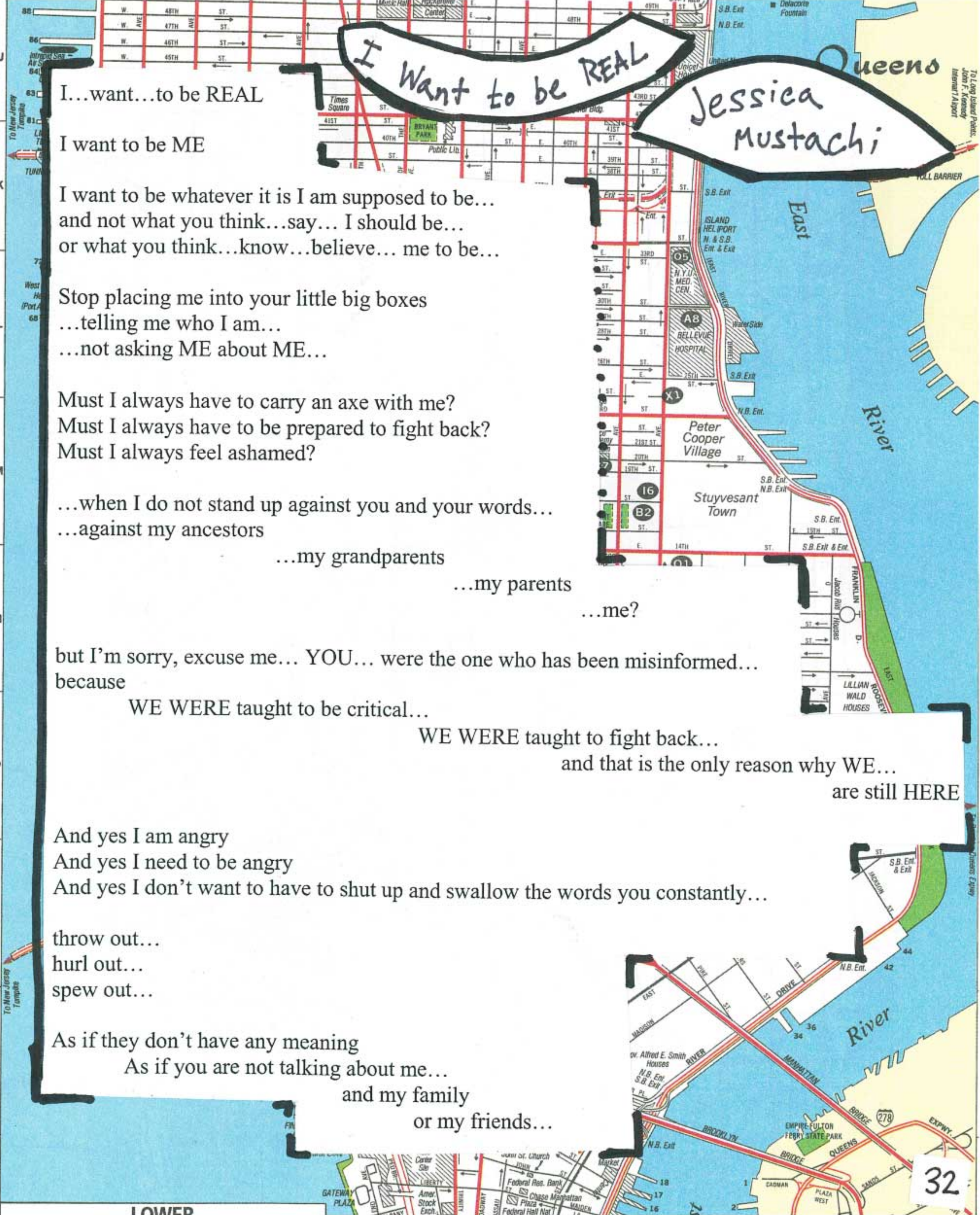
spew out...

As if they don't have any meaning

As if you are not talking about me...

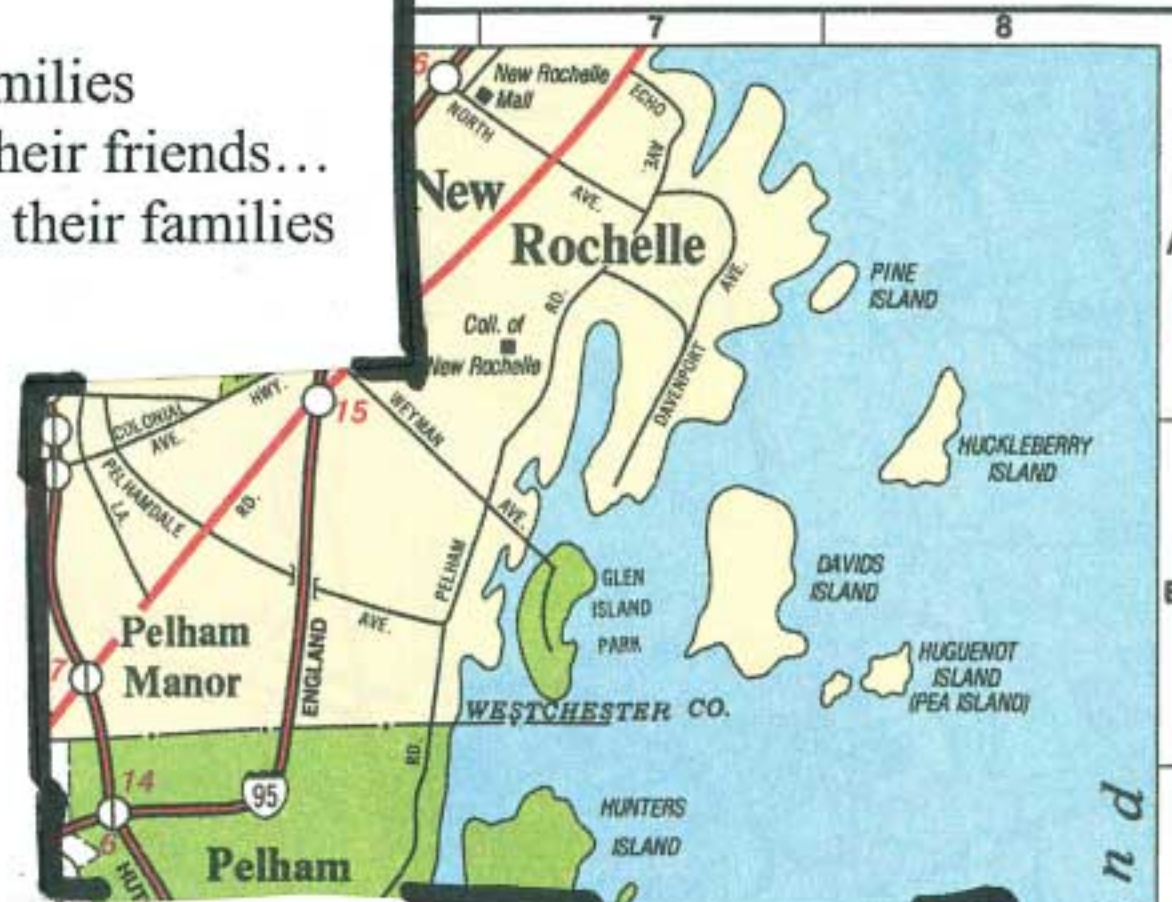
and my family

or my friends...





and their families
or their friends...
and their families



And all of this is making me sick

Sick of hearing your bull shit
Sick of tears that I don't want to shed anymore
Sick of being shocked
Sick of not being shocked
Sick of YOU not being shocked

SICK!!!

Sick of carrying around these tools to chop down the thorny vines you place around me
Sick of trying to chop down the thorny vines that you do not think are important to take down

Sick of feeling like I am doing nothing...
Sick of my privilege...

Sick... of being... sick

Because, I...
am not what you think I am
because, I...
am what you think I am NOT



This... is who I am...
I am that mixed kid from 4...,5, 6, 7,8 generations back

...and it never was weird until you said it was

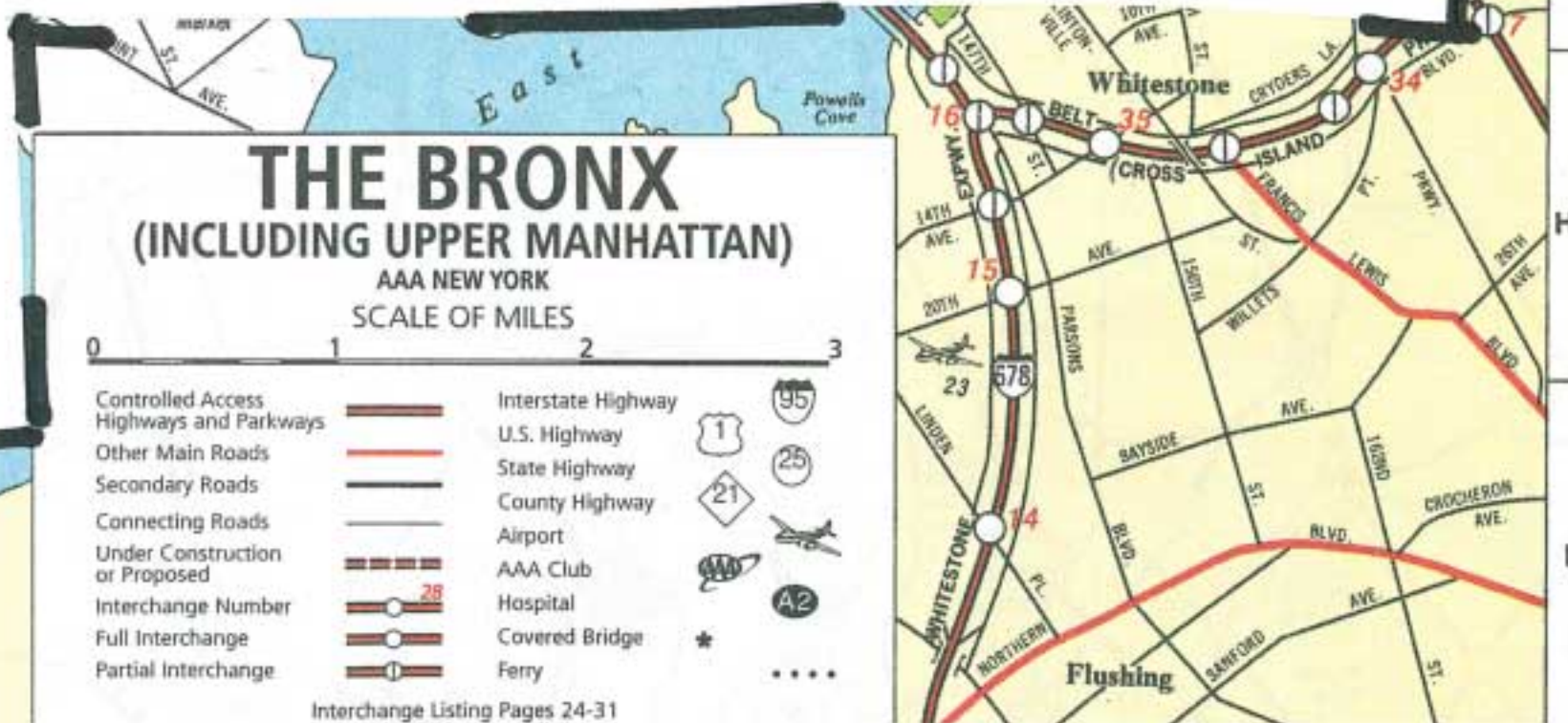
I am that super short girl who does not need you to tell her that she is short... trust me I know
I am the brown turns yellow turns brown skin colour cuz I change with the seasons
I am the grrrl who will open the door for boys cuz girls aren't supposed to do that

I am confused most of the time
I am confused right now

Not knowing where I am going
Not knowing... where

I am

Where?
am I?



Straddling...

- 2 countries
- 4 generations
- 5 cultures
- 100s of family and friends

Where am i?

this place...

- that once WAS home
- that once COULD have been home
- that now IS home

and Yet...

Nothing is Adding Up...

Because the 20pounds I just paid for a plate of chicken biriyani
Equals the 40 Canadian bucks that I would never have paid for a meal back home
And that somehow equals the amount of Sri Lankan rupees my nana definitely
did not have to feed her children lunch everyday

And yet here I AM spending 20 pounds for a plate of chicken biriyani

And so how did I get HERE?

Here...

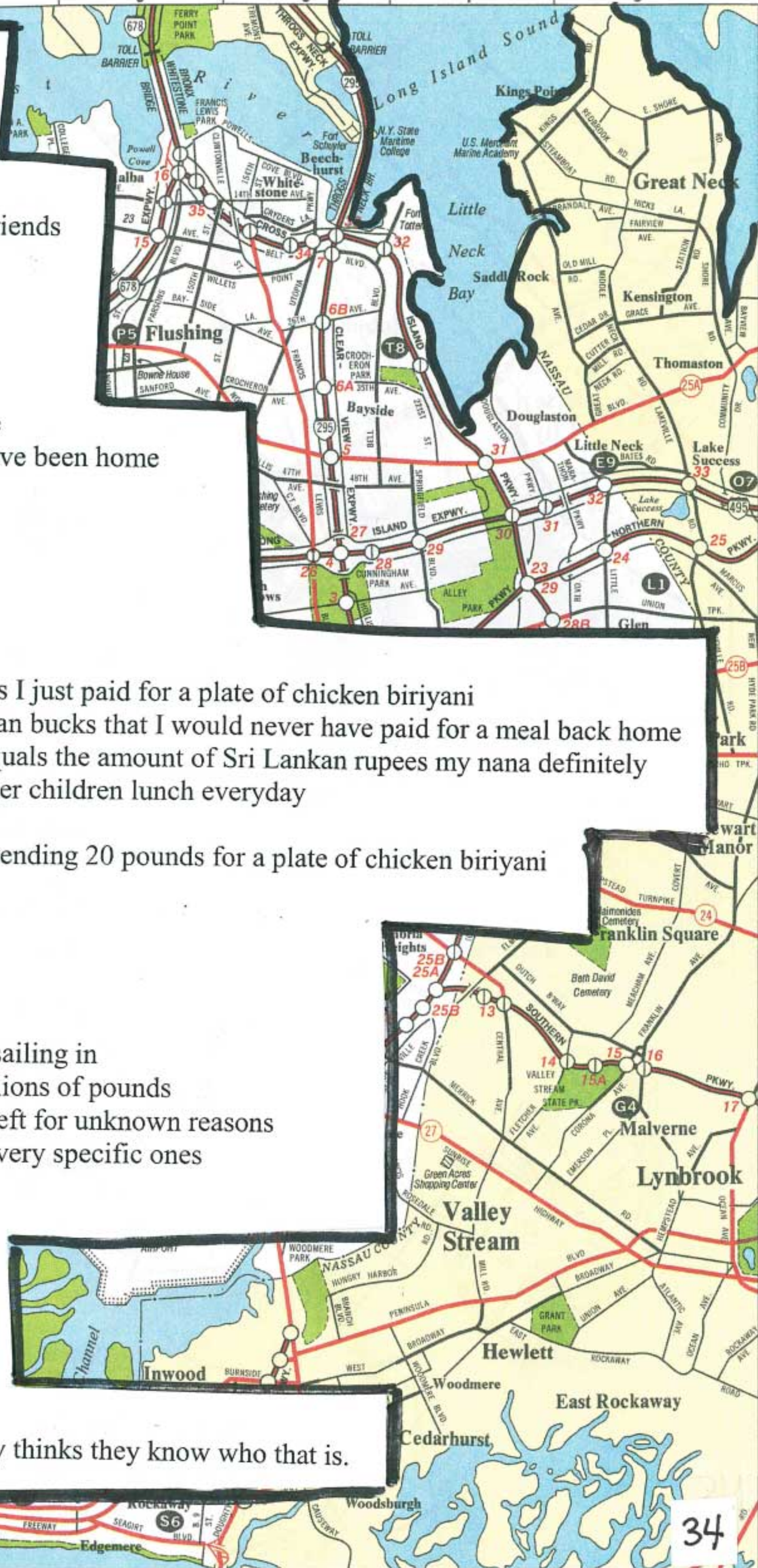
- Living by a bridge
- Where the ships used to come sailing in
- Where the flats now go for millions of pounds
- Where my great-grandmother left for unknown reasons
- And where I have returned for very specific ones

So much changes in 4 generations

And yet...

Here I am confused...
Trying to find me...

When everyone else around me already thinks they know who that is.



"Interview"

w/ Daniela Capistrano

By: "Nia King"

Daniela is a self-made woman of color media professional. In addition to her day job at Current TV, she has put tremendous amounts of time, love, and energy into building community among POC zinesters through the POC Zine Project, which wrapped up it's Northeast/Midwest "Race Riot! Tour" early last month. I caught up with her in Current TV's San Francisco office to find out about the success

How did you become interested in zines?

In the late 90s, I was a teenager and I met a Mexican lesbian punk. She was the first lesbian I ever met, and we were friends in my hometown of Sacramento. She had a bunch of zines in her studio. What led me to where I am today though was that most of her zines were by people of color. Since I had never encountered zines before, I thought that zines were mostly a POC thing. At that point I didn't know anything about riot grrrl, I didn't know much about punk culture, I was really naïve.

Over time, as I became more involved in DIY/punk/feminist communities - not only making my own zines but trading with people and trying to be a part of zine communities - I became really aware that a lot of white folks with a lot of privilege issues made it really difficult for me to be a part of those communities. I was really disappointed because I really loved how zines made it easy to make new friends and to find out more about the world. At the time the internet wasn't really a thing yet. For several years I stopped making zines because I felt disappointed. I felt like, "Oh well, maybe zines are a white thing and I've just been deluding myself."

I kept having conversations about this with folks of color, and they would say "that sounds nice and all, but there are these bigger issues more important than diversity in zines." And I agreed with them. I honestly don't really care about zines. What I care about is *how self-publishing and creating your own culture is so empowering. Sharing your thoughts in writing, and the process of even writing it down, is so cathartic and so healing. Even if you're not the one who wrote it, if you're just the recipient, the culture built around that exchange is so healing. Especially when it's with someone of color who understands what you're going through.*

The tagline of the POC Zine Project is "activism and community through materiality." Could you talk a little but about why materiality is important?

I feel like there is this healing process that comes with putting your ideas on paper and seeing it manifest as this completed project. *Knowing that you can, for very low cost, sometimes free, create something that will inspire yourself and others.* A lot of times there's a lot of thought put into zines. "How am I going to do the layout? What images am I going to use?" *A lot of times you can develop new skills through making zines that can tangibly pay off, not only in your professional life, but in rethinking what your own creative abilities are.*

A zinester will grow, if you look at the body of their work. Every time you make a zine and you get feedback from people and you look at it you're becoming a better writer. *A lot of the feedback I get from folks of color, making zines helped them figure out who they are, their politics.* And helped them let go of a lot of baggage. There's a reason why there's art therapy. Making zines is kind of like giving art therapy to yourself for free if you can't afford a therapist.

Any other final thoughts?

Never underestimate the power that you have when you express your reality in writing. The impetus of starting the POC Zines project was your zine, *Angry Black-White Girl* in the Queer Zine Archive Project archive, and I want to give huge credit to QZAP for inspiring POC Zine Project. Because of finding your zine in there, I was like "This has to happen. I have to do this." So never underestimate the power of your words and of your ideas and what happens when you share them. You have all these great ideas. Write them down and share them with the world, and you never know what could happen.



MESTIZAJE

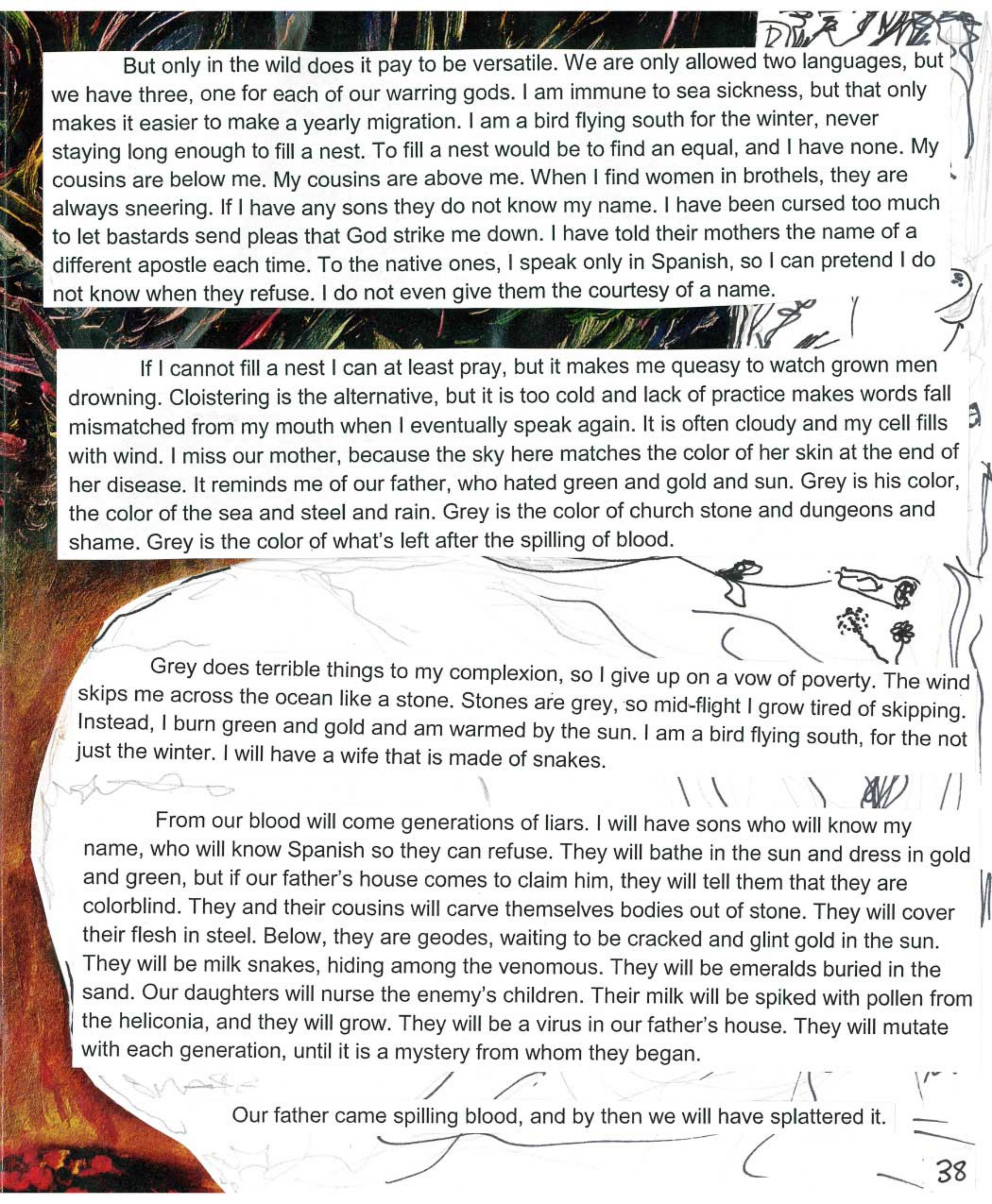
by
Alex
Kingsepp

After my father's men first stood on the shore, they did not return again for ten years. They came back with women and children and steel. They came back with Dominicans and fire and shame. They dug stakes into the ground and their animals uprooted the soil. Our uncles fought, bled, and were burned, one after the other. When crisp, our mother said they smelled like sulphur. She told me that the crackle of fat and soil is a recipe for futility. Our mother knew too much. She knew that all men are men in the end. She understands that the most important thing about blood is that it stays inside veins. She learned to bake their bread and read their words. It does not matter that her tongue trips over the vowels. What matters is that we have been bred for camouflage. Our mother was one who learned to survive. Survival of the fittest is messy.

We are that mess. Treachery is in our bones. It bleaches our skin. We are what happens when paint mixes, what you find when war is over and you pick through the rubble. We are part of the bullet and the target. We are the poison you slip to the villagers, the vomit that pools on the ground. We are heathens for the Glory of God. We are those who order that their skulls be harvested and then we are those who weep. Our father's children pour, like our treasure, into Madrid, while we are secret princes, hidden in the hull of the ship, just in case. We are the dog that nobody wants.

If you count us, you will know all the times our father was bored. We are the husbands and wives to the children of whores because nobody else will have us. They crush our sisters' hips in whalebone and tell them they are sinful. On their wedding nights they are unwrapped like stolen sweets and swallowed whole. They are prisoners in a menagerie. Our brothers have wives that hold them as if they were made of snakes. We are all liars, though the truth is stained across our faces.

They have not invented a baptism that works on the skin. Our flesh is dark with original sin. The painters mask our faces with too much sun in the hopes that no one will notice. Our grandmother wants to pluck out our eyes and feed them to the pope, but the pope only collects souls, and mine was one of the first to be sent, just born, to Alexander in Rome. Our mother cleared its trail and sent it well-wishes as it sailed across the Atlantic. I did not drown when they held me under water until they gave me my name. Perhaps it is not only her survival that she played for. When she called us names that tasted strange on her tongue I knew that we are an experiment in natural selection.



But only in the wild does it pay to be versatile. We are only allowed two languages, but we have three, one for each of our warring gods. I am immune to sea sickness, but that only makes it easier to make a yearly migration. I am a bird flying south for the winter, never staying long enough to fill a nest. To fill a nest would be to find an equal, and I have none. My cousins are below me. My cousins are above me. When I find women in brothels, they are always sneering. If I have any sons they do not know my name. I have been cursed too much to let bastards send pleas that God strike me down. I have told their mothers the name of a different apostle each time. To the native ones, I speak only in Spanish, so I can pretend I do not know when they refuse. I do not even give them the courtesy of a name.

If I cannot fill a nest I can at least pray, but it makes me queasy to watch grown men drowning. Cloistering is the alternative, but it is too cold and lack of practice makes words fall mismatched from my mouth when I eventually speak again. It is often cloudy and my cell fills with wind. I miss our mother, because the sky here matches the color of her skin at the end of her disease. It reminds me of our father, who hated green and gold and sun. Grey is his color, the color of the sea and steel and rain. Grey is the color of church stone and dungeons and shame. Grey is the color of what's left after the spilling of blood.

Grey does terrible things to my complexion, so I give up on a vow of poverty. The wind skips me across the ocean like a stone. Stones are grey, so mid-flight I grow tired of skipping. Instead, I burn green and gold and am warmed by the sun. I am a bird flying south, for the not just the winter. I will have a wife that is made of snakes.

From our blood will come generations of liars. I will have sons who will know my name, who will know Spanish so they can refuse. They will bathe in the sun and dress in gold and green, but if our father's house comes to claim him, they will tell them that they are colorblind. They and their cousins will carve themselves bodies out of stone. They will cover their flesh in steel. Below, they are geodes, waiting to be cracked and glint gold in the sun. They will be milk snakes, hiding among the venomous. They will be emeralds buried in the sand. Our daughters will nurse the enemy's children. Their milk will be spiked with pollen from the heliconia, and they will grow. They will be a virus in our father's house. They will mutate with each generation, until it is a mystery from whom they began.

Our father came spilling blood, and by then we will have splattered it.

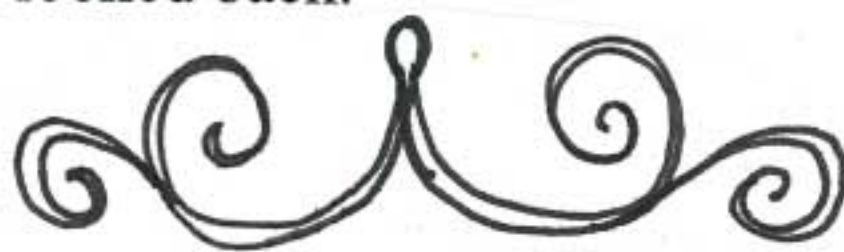
Split Personality

tales of a biracial childhood

by Olivia Marie

I was named after a ballerina my mom had admired as a child. When I was younger, my mother had a figurine of her in her bedroom. Every day I would look up at the figurine's sparkling blue eyes, pale porcelain skin, and flawless blonde hair tucked away into a perfect bun, and I would wish with all my might to be like her. My eyes were brown, and my hair was a curly mess. Where she was endowed with a slim boyish frame and grace, I was cursed with curves and a knock-kneed clumsiness. She was beautiful, and I was not. As a young girl, like most young girls, all I wanted was to be pretty. And from what I had seen on television and in the movies, pretty meant white.

It was on my 20th birthday that it finally sunk in that I would never be like my namesake. My mom is white and my dad is black, and I've never looked like either of my parents. Since my parents' divorce when I was very young, most of my time has been spent with my mom and her side of the family - all blonde hair and blue eyes. Being around them made me feel as though my tan skin and curly brown hair were simply a phase of childhood, like acne or braces, and that by the time I reached adulthood, I'd be as blonde-haired and blue-eyed as the rest of them. But sitting on my kitchen floor eating leftover birthday cake, staring at my reflection in the kitchen window, I realized adulthood had arrived and along with it, came the final realization that I was stuck with who I was. My teeth were straighter, my hair was tamer, and I had far more fashion sense, but as I looked at my newly twenty year old self, a disappointed nine year old looked back.



Each year on Christmas my brother and I would alternate between our parents' homes. With our mom, we went to her parents' house and played through an idyllic Christmas that would put Martha Stewart to shame. With our dad, we would sit on his kitchen floor eating fried chicken and listening to jazz - Rosemary Clooney was nowhere to be seen.

All my life there have been attempts at pulling me to identify with a single race. When I was younger, older black girls would try to take me in and teach me how to act like a "real black girl." No one found my upbringing as disappointing as my paternal grandparents, Southern Baptists from Baltimore. Their childhoods had been like an episode of *The Wire*, if it was set in the 1950's. On the rare occasion my brother and I would go visit our paternal grandparents, we became immersed in a world completely different to what were used to. My mom would only take us to church on Easter and Christmas; our grandmother goes twice a week. My

grandfather died when I was younger, but both of my grandparents were very religious and invested a good amount of time in their Southern Baptist church, a place where sweaty old women would frequently pass out in the aisle. To the congregation, my brother and I were sinners and were so chastised for what we believed that our mom eventually forbade my grandmother from taking us to her church. When we weren't at church, sometimes our grandmother would take us to the Black History Wax Museum, and it was absolutely terrifying. The museum featured life-like depictions of lynchings, slave ships and plantations. Although our grandmother was simply trying to educate us on the horrors our ancestors had suffered, to me it was no different than the notion of the boogie man. It seemed all attempts at making me blacker had fallen on deaf ears.

The most telling example of my naivete happened when I was fourteen. My English class was assigned to read Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*. *The Secret Life of Bees* is the story of a 14-year-old white girl in the American South in 1964 who goes to live with three black sisters to escape her abusive father. Like most fourteen year old girls, I was also an absolutely terrible human being. Puberty had not been kind to me and I had just gotten braces. To compensate for my face, I thought I had to compensate for it by being cool, which in ninth grade meant mean. My friends and I hated *The Secret Life of Bees*, and we thought it was our mission to make everyone else hate it too. The book tackled issues of race, so, the fact that all my friends were white and our teacher was black, probably didn't help the situation. I came from a pretty diverse school, so the concept of racial inequalities still existing never crossed our minds. One day, when the class was watching a movie, my teacher pulled me out of class to talk - she was concerned. For an hour my teacher sat with me and expressed her disapproval of my friends, and the way I expressed my disapproval of the book. I tried to explain to her that race wasn't an issue for me, racism didn't exist anymore. When she reiterated her point, I simply rolled my eyes. As a teenage girl, fitting in was far more important than enlightenment. It wasn't until years later that I appreciated what she was telling me. I haven't read the book since that fateful year, but I'm sure the older, more enlightened me might like it.

Four years later, during freshman year of college, I ate my words. On a break from school, I was sent to pick up my younger brother. He could not yet drive, and hated taking the bus. A few miles from my brother's high school, I got stuck behind a car going what felt to me like two miles an hour. The bumper of the car was plastered with pretty racist anti-Obama sentiments. I tried to pass the car, and saw a tiny old woman in the driver's seat. As we got to a red light, the woman rolled down her window, flipped me off and yelled "Stop following me, spook." I was shocked. First of all, because the term "spook" was hilariously outdated. Was it 1870 all of a sudden? But most importantly, because no one had ever called me out primarily, if not only, for the color of my skin. I laughed it off at first, but it began to concern me. Did this woman find me threatening? At 5'2, I looked like a well-endowed ten year old.

This incident sparked a curiosity in me. Learning about the unfair disadvantages life had served me was jarring. It turns out everyone knew I was different, they just never had the common courtesy to let me know. My mom never prepared me for this. Despite my childhood of relative privilege, I will always have to work twice as hard to prove my value. When I was a kid, I watched the happy little white girls on television and played with pretty white Barbies dreaming of being just like them. This discomfort with who I was, who I am, led to a deep seated insecurity in everything I did.

My hair has always been the most glaring representation of my self doubt. It was a big curly mess, and my white mom had no idea how to handle it. Whenever I opened a beauty magazine (which, despite my resolution to stop buying them, I'm hopelessly addicted to), it was rare that I find anyone who looked like me. It took me years to figure out how to do my own hair, because according to magazines, it couldn't exist. It was far too fine to be black hair, but much too curly to belong to a white person. All the little blonde girls would mock my frizzy mess, or worse, pet it. From ages eight to sixteen, I refused to wear it down. As I've gotten older, I've tried to learn not to rely on others in order to determine my self worth. I haven't completely submitted myself to nature just yet -- if I don't get my highlights retouched every six months, I throw a fit.

I've come a long way from that insecure teenager who cried when she looked in the mirror. Still, every morning, I take a veritable cocktail of anti-psychotic drugs. A blue pill for anxiety, white for depression, and brown for my ADD. Although most of my problems stem from chemical imbalances passed on from my father, they've all been amplified twofold by a childhood of displacement.

Because of my parents' divorce, my two races were always separate from one another and I've never felt that I fit into either. I am most like my mom in terms of values and idiosyncrasies, but people take one look at our vastly skin colors, and refuse to believe that she could possibly have given birth to me. All races, in their natural state, deserve a place in our notion of what beauty means. I spent most of my adolescence in denial, secretly wishing I was a different ethnicity, wishing that I had different hair, a different family, a different life. The pretty, blonde white girls had an immense power over me that they never asked for and were most likely never even aware of, but it was given to them because that's how privilege works—you don't have to ask for it, you already have it. For years, I struggled with the way I looked. Now, my awesome hair and tan skin represent a hard-won liberation from expectations, judgment, self-hate, and racist and sexist conditioning, both my own and those of the society in which I was raised.

NAMING our HISTORIES

by LIL

Sadie, he used to call me.

I was named after his wife, Lillian Lefkowitz.

My name, my existence, the formation of my identity, was a gesture.

An attempt to please him.

It was my parents' intention, to give me his late wife's name, who he revered above all else, so he would feel connected to us.

So he would look at me and not see a mut, a goy, a spick, an abomination; but his granddaughter.

and Sadie, is what he called me.

To remind us that that is exactly what he didn't see.

My father was his only son, we were the only grandchildren he had.

And when he died, he would give my father his inheritance

Under the sole condition that he divorced my mother, leave our family,

And marry a Jewish woman.

Blancos diablos

is what she called us.

She had so many grandchildren she didn't even feel the need to delineate between my brother, sister, and I.

No less call us by name.

And yet our name was never outside of her mouth.

"them"

using her sharp tongue to drive a steak between us and the rest of the family and while it was true that she tried to pit everyone against each other, like a Latina matriarchal trope,

It was our whiteness and our privilege that made us "them".

greedy, selfish, and misbehaved, is what she called us.

He was the child of Russian and Polish immigrants
Raised in the most meager conditions imaginable in Bensonhurst Brooklyn in the 1930's.
He worked so hard for every single thing he ever had.
And he wasn't about to see it handed over to some fucking goys; *catholic, Latinos*, no less.

He was a true Jewish-immigrant success story.

And I always heard the stories:

He was a man of profound brilliance, who dropped out of school at the age of 13 to support the family when both of his parents died young and unexpectedly.

He worked tirelessly at multiple low-paying jobs to ensure his family's security.

He took any work he could find, and eventually became a successful entrepreneur.

From rags to riches.

And while everyone always discussed all that he had accomplished, which was an unfathomable amount,

It was always his humor, his ability to dream, his passion, and his wit, that I have heard, was most captivating.

My abuela was all but born and raised in San Isidro.

She lived much of her childhood in the mountains.

She lived in a time before running water, electricity, plumbing, and even bridges.

Her dark skin indigenous features and made her life considerably more challenging.

Costa Rica was heavily colonized by Spain, it is a country of many mixed-looking people, but like many other colonized lands, the darkest peoples were the most oppressed.

She achieved a third grade education before she began work.

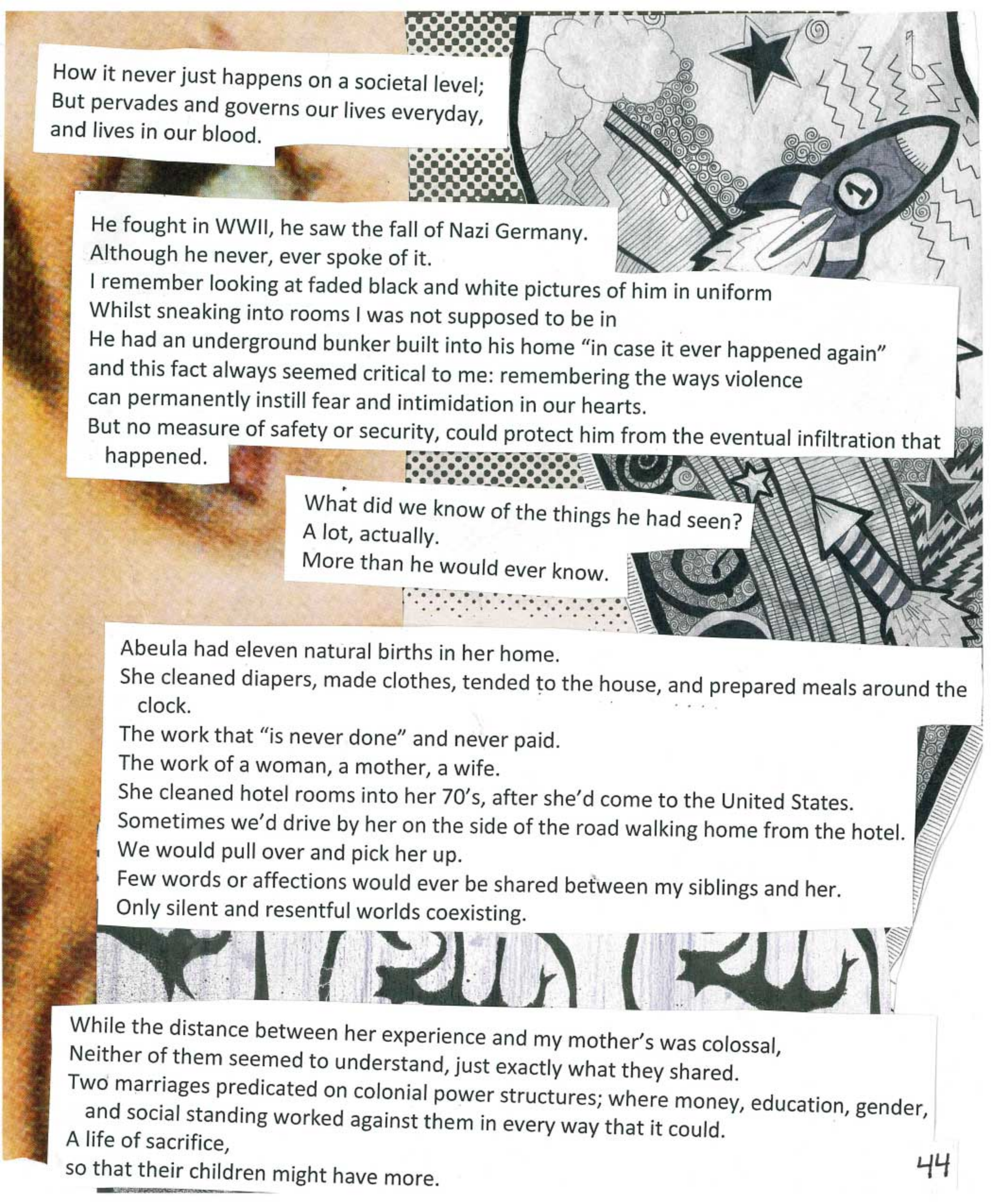
When she was 7 years old she began picking coffee and cutting rice.

She eventually became a seamstress and a maid.

She had eleven children by her married, Spanish boss and eventually married him somewhere in that time.

A whore, they called her, when they kicked her out of the house.

And I would hear the stories from my mother,
And not from some god damn academic book,
About how power, abuse, rape, and violence are perpetuated
between the colonial subject
and the colonial object.



How it never just happens on a societal level;
But pervades and governs our lives everyday,
and lives in our blood.

He fought in WWII, he saw the fall of Nazi Germany.
Although he never, ever spoke of it.

I remember looking at faded black and white pictures of him in uniform

Whilst sneaking into rooms I was not supposed to be in

He had an underground bunker built into his home "in case it ever happened again"
and this fact always seemed critical to me: remembering the ways violence
can permanently instill fear and intimidation in our hearts.

But no measure of safety or security, could protect him from the eventual infiltration that
happened.

What did we know of the things he had seen?

A lot, actually.

More than he would ever know.

Abeula had eleven natural births in her home.

She cleaned diapers, made clothes, tended to the house, and prepared meals around the
clock.

The work that "is never done" and never paid.

The work of a woman, a mother, a wife.

She cleaned hotel rooms into her 70's, after she'd come to the United States.

Sometimes we'd drive by her on the side of the road walking home from the hotel.

We would pull over and pick her up.

Few words or affections would ever be shared between my siblings and her.

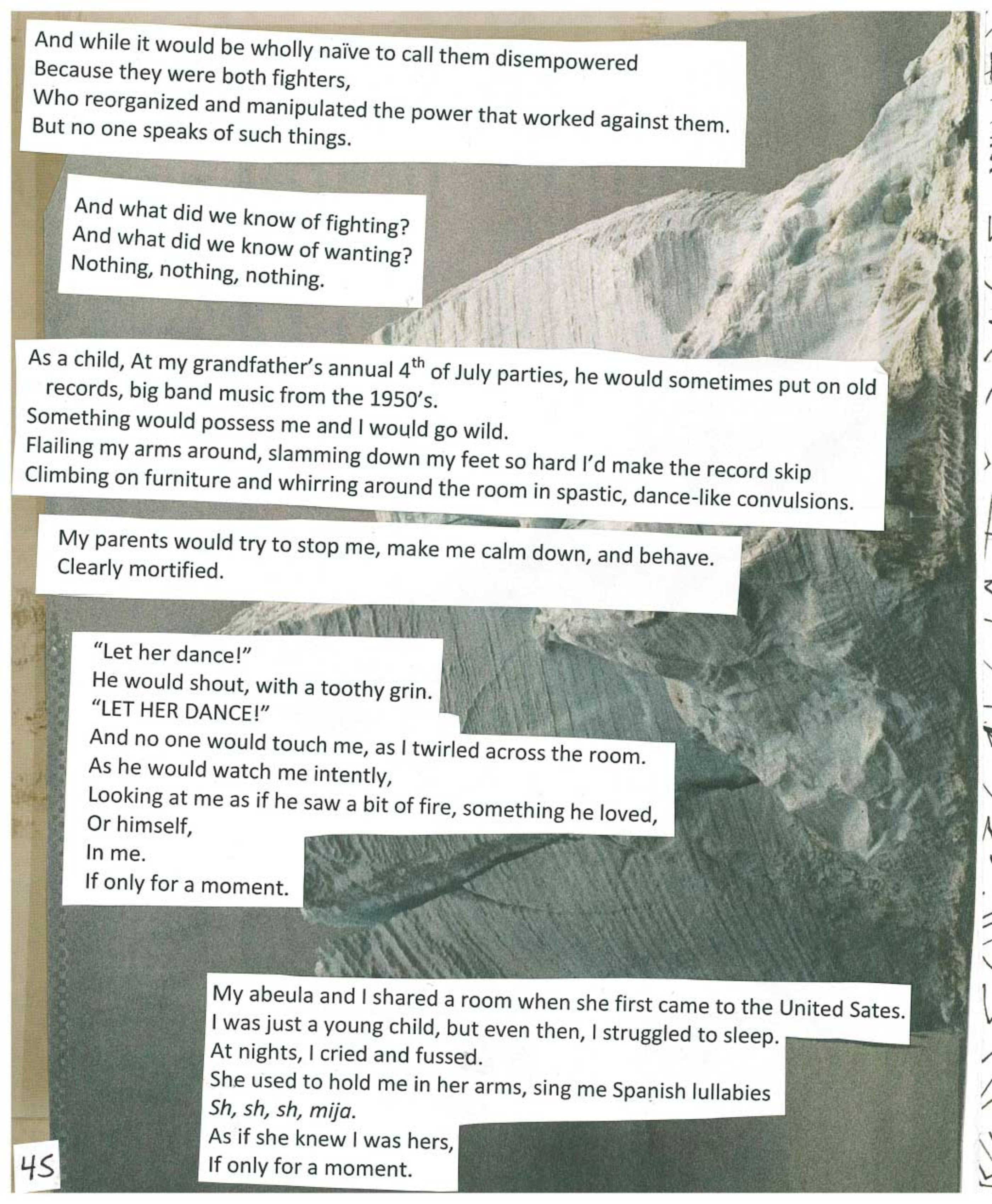
Only silent and resentful worlds coexisting.

While the distance between her experience and my mother's was colossal,
Neither of them seemed to understand, just exactly what they shared.

Two marriages predicated on colonial power structures; where money, education, gender,
and social standing worked against them in every way that it could.

A life of sacrifice,

so that their children might have more.



And while it would be wholly naïve to call them disempowered
Because they were both fighters,
Who reorganized and manipulated the power that worked against them.
But no one speaks of such things.

And what did we know of fighting?
And what did we know of wanting?
Nothing, nothing, nothing.

As a child, At my grandfather's annual 4th of July parties, he would sometimes put on old records, big band music from the 1950's.
Something would possess me and I would go wild.
Flailing my arms around, slamming down my feet so hard I'd make the record skip
Climbing on furniture and whirring around the room in spastic, dance-like convulsions.

My parents would try to stop me, make me calm down, and behave.
Clearly mortified.

"Let her dance!"

He would shout, with a toothy grin.

"LET HER DANCE!"

And no one would touch me, as I twirled across the room.

As he would watch me intently,

Looking at me as if he saw a bit of fire, something he loved,

Or himself,

In me.

If only for a moment.

My abeula and I shared a room when she first came to the United States.
I was just a young child, but even then, I struggled to sleep.

At nights, I cried and fussed.

She used to hold me in her arms, sing me Spanish lullabies

Sh, sh, sh, mija.

As if she knew I was hers,

If only for a moment.

amnesiac rips

Désirée Dorsainvil

The dark hills of my body have been invaded, mined./ Hundreds of thousands of acres of lush trees/slashed, ripped up from my thick soil/blood roots, my roots, the roots of my people ripped up from my thick skin./ My skin is thick from hundreds of years of the hills of my body being invaded, exploited./ The roots of my trees, of my people, are severed and bloody./ Their blood, the blood of ma Grand-mère.

(I can sense my roots so far from my surfaces that I can hardly articulate their source. It is in this that I feel the gut knotting urgency to do the work of (re)discovery and decolonization, as I start to recognize myself in me.)

Ma Grand-mère, Azou—silent seamstress surviving bloodied wombs. Boiling orange peels and smashed tomatoes, she secured a better life for her son, and for over 40 years kept the secret of his conception. Cane candies and sweet whispers: “mwèn renmen ou, je t’aime mon cheri.” In the future she knows things will be better. She clasps her cross to her chest and prays, let him be safe. This is where he learned most things about hope, about surviving.

Papa gave up everything when he came to be an American./ Assimilate to survive, or die. He gave me a chance—but interracial love and “mixed” baby in the early 90’s was still dangerous./ After the first pregnancy brownness meant that her baby could never be—what were they thinking bringing a biracial child into this world?

Brown baby, assimilate or die.

Please God, make her light/teach her English (and French) only,
Let her survive.

Ashamed and embarrassed of his past, he kept his longings, love, and language locked up under his tongue. I never learned about the revolution, the resistance, the resilience of my blood. I too seem to have forgotten.

Amnesiac rips run through our collective tapestry. Jagged rips that run deep as canyons separate us from our stories in thin crimson strings of struggle, resistance, and survival.

I spin

transparent silk scarves of invisible memories that can’t be remembered.
I have the sticky nostalgic residue of a past I have never known on my fingers.
It’s like the smell on my tongue that I know I’ve tasted before,
like the space between my lips that I know I’ve felt before
but nothing’s there.

Small phantom bugs crawl across my forehead to scratch at the back of my skull
and my vision blurs as I try to catch an intelligible glimpse of what’s real.

I can’t remember because I’m not supposed to.

Colonization has severed my history from me,
has severed me from me.

You see, I am only what has made me, my history—
the bloodlines of pain, trauma, resistance, survival, and hope that run through me.
The stories I want to hear, the stories I want to tell, dangle
just above interpretation, floating in the spaces around my heart.
And it is this profound loss that Avery Gordon implores I start with.

To be honest, I am just now coming to realize how much I need to stay here for a while—to Feel it, to fall apart a million times again. I want to scream, puke, shake, cry, no—weep, until my body fails me and I am brought to my knees. I want to laugh and scream and dance until I remember, until my body remembers where I come from, who I am, how to make revolution.

And yet I am reminded once again, that what I am missing the most lays burrowed just below my skin, tucked within rose petal folds, in the musty archives of the BPP, within my own infrastructures of black radical feeling. Reimagined fragments—shards of glass, I can feel small rips in the seams, chasms, breaks in time, in the only story I was ever told, in the present moment, in the only ways I have hope for the future.

When I hear stories of resistance, of people who look like me resisting, of my people resisting, I FEEL it.

My blood separates—the nuanced mixing of genes and histories means varying densities. I'm weighed down, weighed away, constantly pulled at all sides

by the real pain of the present, by the reality of what I don't have, of what I long for:

safety from violence and sexual assault/liberation of all/Kreyól/community/mutual accountability/recuperation of history/collective story making/preservation of families/a better future for my children/racial and economic justice/alternative ways of dealing with conflict/prison abolition/de-pathologization/decolonization/healing, healing, Healing.

I want to be well, whole, wholly well and healed

and I have a "responsibility to self and to history" to be just this. We all must heal the damage of our collective undoing, our collective falling apart, our collective pain.

I must turn these wants, these longings, into "vital needs"—DEMAND to find glimpses in the present, glean moments from the past, and make the future we need now.

I dream of a big breasted brown mama holdingme

*I grasp her charcoal hair and bring it to my face. Her oils seep into the pores of my lips and I smell the orange peels on her sweet breath. She rocks me, and I nestle into the rugged ravines of her arms/She collects the waves of my bloody tears in her mouth as she thanks God. Thank God she has let me come home to her
Her in me.*

Her dark eyes tell me she is healing me. She plants seeds in my soul to grow back the lush trees that shade my heart. And hers is pulsating with the blood of my children.

Violation, exploitation, rape.

I can hear the faint rattling of all our pain in the heaving of her chest.

And I feel our Struggle, our Resistance in all her veins.

I dream of a big breasted brown mama holdingme

My body obeys the Kompa rhythms of her steady time—she makes me move. With her I can be soft, and tender, and strong, and speak in tongues. Whispering tongues that crack the barriers of silence, Whispering tongues that scream—

REMEMBER ME.

She brings me into her body's warmth and I search her familiar folds.

I make love to her with the coded memories on my skin. We make love with the coded memories on our skin. She collects the waves of my bloody tears in her mouth as she thanks God/She has let me come home to her.

Her in me.

"What — can take"

by Caro Reyes

Late nights. Cold nights. Reflective nights. Weeping nights washing out trauma fossils buried deep. Ibuprofen. Water. Tea. Coffee. Alcohol. Smoke. Drug mixtures. Self-induced all nighters. Night dreams. Day dreams. Extremes. Waiting until the last minute. The rush. The adrenaline. The cold sweat from running late. Dancing, moving, bus'ing. Shoving my face. Shoves from strangers. Smiles from strangers. Sharing with strangers. Scents and cents from strangers. No contact with strangers. The bruises, the cuts, the broken bones from playing, from tripping, from mindlessness. Appointments. The probing, poking. The triggers. Grateful for sunshine on my face. Facebook. What's on Facebook? Netflix until 3am. Eyes wide. Forgetting to blink. In the zone. Stiff neck, stiff wrists. Frozen shoulder. Crunchy back. Tight hips. Computer all day. Forgetting to break. No time to break. Helping. Calling. Reading. Texting. Asking. Finding. Fighting. Standing. Planning. Walking. Going. Running. All day to work, to live. I've got to be doing something! The stimulants. The shakes. The shocks. Rubbing myself down. Self-care. Prescription meds to take the edge off. "I am helping myself live," I say. The numbness. The escape. The obsession. Obsession with projects, with drawing perfect lines, perfect shapes, perfect color combos, perfect arrangements. Obsession with control.

Oh, what a body can take.

+ + + + +

I've been told many times, at various times in my life that my eyes bear an "old soul" and I know they see the stony-eyed soberness that grows each day, each week, month, year the world unzips its pants and pisses all over me, pissing me off...

how by age 5, having to hold ground against being told what I am as if I were the only object among people to be traded, tossed, explained. Told on a daily basis that I did not belong here in their world, to go back to where I came from. Or else. The hostility, the anger, the humiliation of not understanding where my home was.

how by age 14, learning I lived in the most concentrated neo-Nazi/KKK centers of California and this news actually relieved me, soothed me. It gave me hope that when I walked across an intersection or was in the car with the windows down

the constant rain of racist acts would remain contained here.

how by age 18, realizing with each visit to see mi familia en México "China, china" chants with fingers pulling eye skin back would continue to be the norm, showing me how my community could share language with neo-Nazis from the place I could never call home.

how by age 20, finding how in the tolerant Bay Area racist remarks masquerade in scholarly language, the intellectual recontextualization continues to make me shake, showing me how my community could offend in a way that disturbed me more than the neo-Nazis from that place that was not my home.

There was no safe haven, which deep down I knew, but never wanted to believe it could be true. Racist acts have become a deadly mutating virus embedding itself in policies, structures, power, politically correct lingo... but what truly gets under my skin is that constant stream of subtleties. Is it crazy to say that assumptions are what oppress me?

To not be reactive. To not be violent. To not be the crazy, angry QPOC. To not be a stereotype. To be the bigger person. To talk it out. To give examples. To be the example. To not want to be the example. To educate. To be tired of educating. To come from a place of love. The time. The stress. The worries. The burying. The triggers. The unhappiness. The pressure. The depression. The energy. The exhaustion.

The finding the courage to repeatedly exclaim in every look, gesture, movement, intention, word: "People like me, we, connected to our ancestry, we are beautiful. We have always belonged. We are connected. We are essential.

To repeatedly exclaim in every look, gesture, movement, intention, word: "I am beautiful. I belong here and now. My confidence, my self-love is what they don't count on. My existence is essential. I am essential."

Oh, what a mind can take.

+ + + + +

23 years of life prepared me
for a world that was not prepared for me,
for someone that is no easy read,
blurring categories many are not well versed in.

And that takes time, the couple of minutes you do not have,
the extra effort to understand in a time priming us all
to move quickly, to get going, to understand our world
via set categories and Google, its
one-second-download-click for all we want to know...
...if we have the time.

I was prepped for this:
to navigate appearing one way, but being another,
an existence of in-betweens.

To sometimes look like an immigrant: "Where are you from? No, *really*, where are you from?"
To sometimes look like a game: "Don't tell me... Chinese? Japanese? I'll get it! Please don't
tell me."

To sometimes look like a tomboy: "Wait, you're gay gay? You're not a femme or butch!"

To sometimes look mixed: "Oh, so you're half white."

But

to not look disabled and being judged by all those above
to not look disabled and carrying a load invisible to all
to look young and healthy when my body has aged to 64
is something I was not prepared for.

This "looking healthy" to pain ratio disconnect has me floored.

Do I tell you

how each time I cross the street, getting
yelled, cussed, honked at by
old retirees to young, speeding worker-bees
for not walking fast enough, makes my tongue heavy with the
daily complexity of choosing to scream my pain or lie?

How do I share

how my sacrum freezes into a bloodless numbness
making my legs uneven wooden beams,
how I teeter forward and back, hearing a piano play
to entertain the gods staring in disbelief from above
at my attempt to stand and start my day?

When do I explain

how every time I take a step,
my calf fills like an hourglass of needles
each burning needle falling slowly into my foot,

my mind clawing its way out to escape my body's
auto setting: Numb Here-Numb There-Now?

Why share my pain-pocked days
as your own struggles squeeze pity onto mine?
While ashamed to say I envy how you can numb
yourself away into far-away dreams, a reality for the healthy and young,
something I lost when I was bound and gagged into a time machine
that spit me out into an aged body I was not prepared for.

Oh, what a soul can take.

+ + + + +



"Spilling out nerve pains"

by Caro Reyes

"say my name, say it,
the way it's meant to be said.
I want to know that I knew you
even before I knew you."

-from "Dulzura," Sandra Cisneros

Crushlandia

-By-
Sabina
Ibarolla

i've been sleeping with rose quartz under my pillow for months now
and i've been wishing on stars,
and now here we are.

transformative Latina femme-on-femme makeouts

in the park
on the street
on the B train
in my bed

the brujería of lace on lace
love spells in espanglish
mix tapes
text messages
slumber parties, freckles
andina-chicana sexmagic

"you're this Latina femme stoner witch punk girl.
how did i find someone who's all the same things as me?"

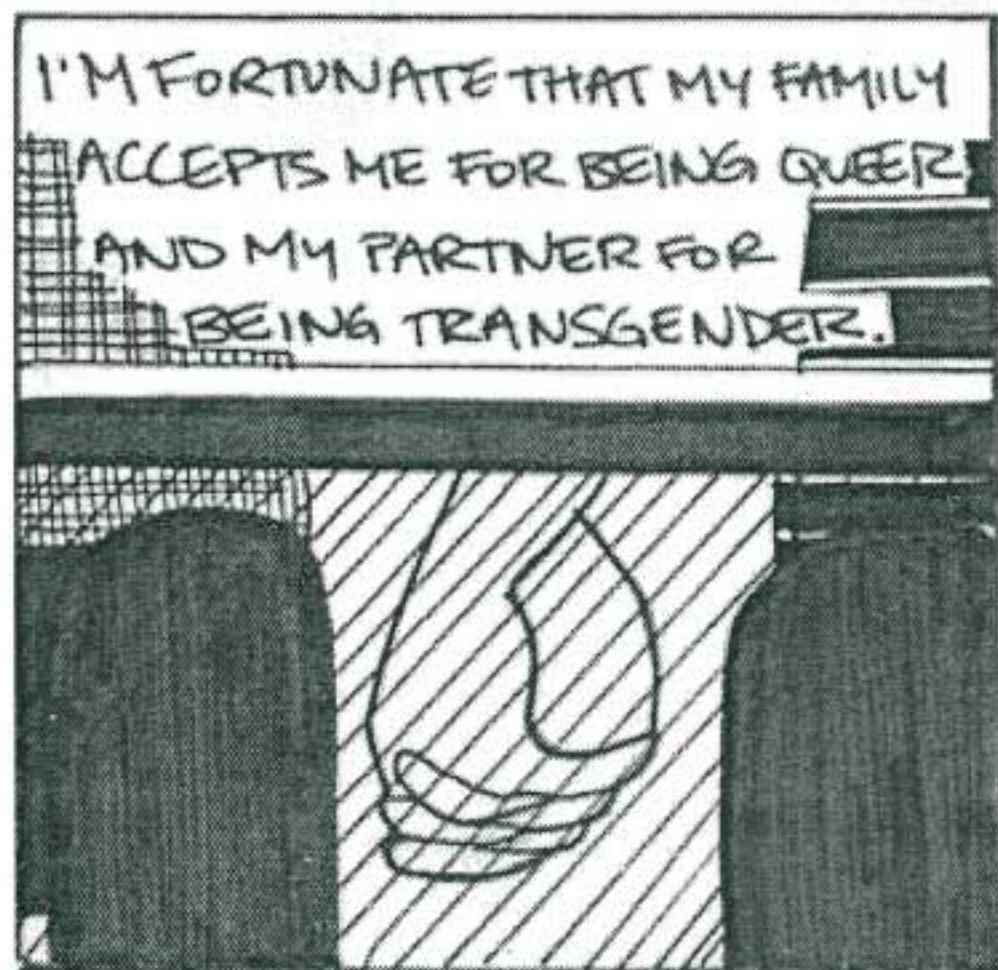
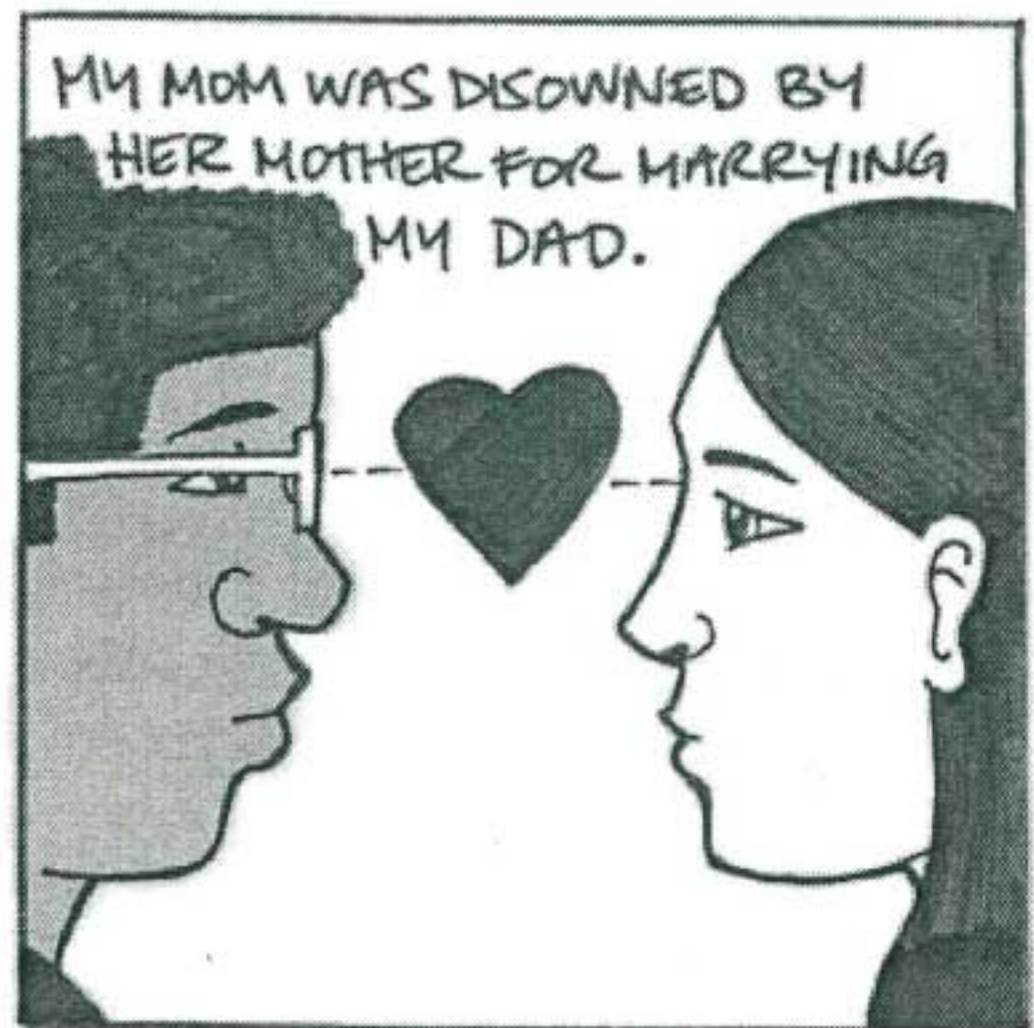
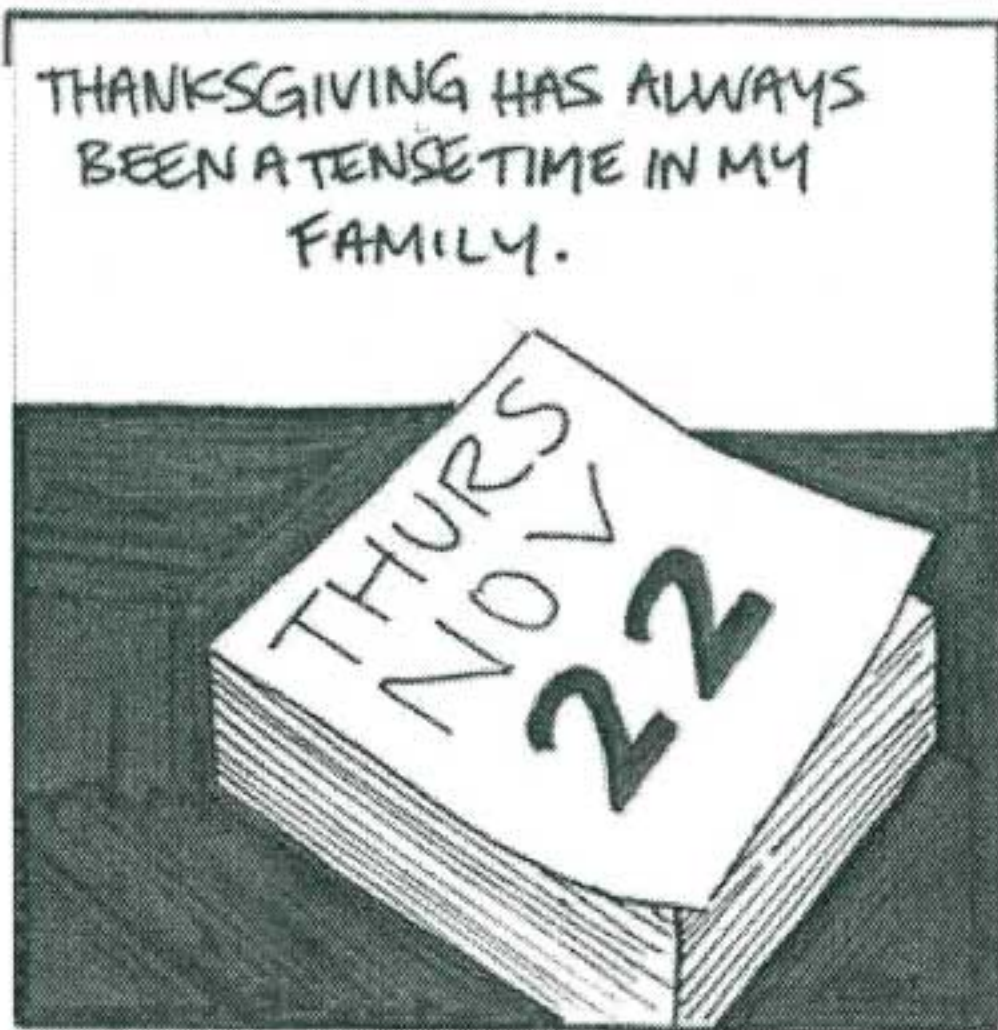
for you, i
come so hard i burst into tears
come so hard i burst into laughter
come so hard we burst onto another planet.

we travel back to the before-before,
tiempos de nuestras bisabuelas.

even then, we knew each other.

THANKSGIVING

by: Mia King. Originally printed at colorlines.com



Mia King 11/11/12

in-visibility

By: Tobi Hill-Meyer

"I think it's important that we acknowledge that all the folks in this group are wh—" He stopped himself and looked around the room, "Or that at least none of us are visibly people of color."

It had happened a dozen times before, but for some reason this time it didn't inspire feelings of shame. I didn't retract into thinking I'm not a 'real' person of color, or at least not real enough to count. For the first time, I responded with anger. "*Who's this white guy to tell me whether or not I am 'visible'?*" I thought to myself. "*Just because you don't see me, doesn't mean I'm invisible.*"

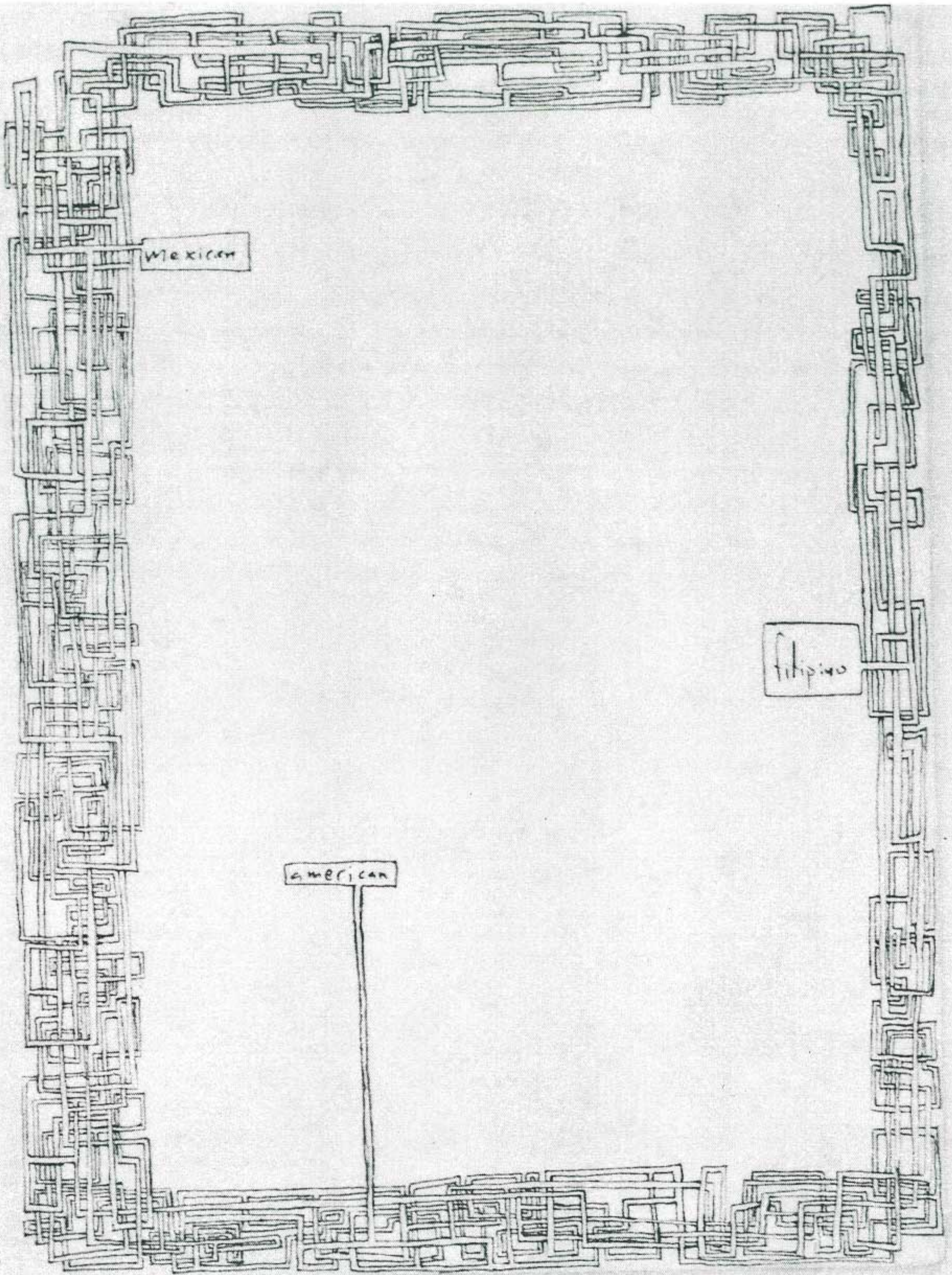
Visibility is not a thing that I am, but an interaction I have with every single person I meet. It's not simply the inherent characteristics of my body, as if the rest of the world has no say in the matter. What happened with that guy was actually his inability to see me, rather than my inability to be seen.

For years I had focused on how the things I do impact how visible my race is: my hair length, my clothes, wearing cultural symbols or political slogans. Now, I'm realizing that the one factor that matters more than anything else is whether or not the person looking at me has any significant experience with Native communities. That is something entirely about them, and has nothing to do with me.

Just last year I had a very different experience at a queer conference. In a room full of a hundred people, an organizer of a two spirit group walked past everyone else to come talk to me and invite me to their group, because to them it was obvious that I was Native. Experiencing that shook up the narrative I had always been told about being invisible and I realized what had been true all along: among Native people I am very visible. The Native spaces I've been a part of have been full of folks who are mixed. And to my knowledge, I've never had a Native person assume that I'm white.

Dealing with what I pass as and how people read me has also been a big issue around my gender. Earlier in my transition, whenever I got called 'sir' or 'he' I felt a pang of failure, as if I had done something wrong. I would think "Did I let my voice get too low?" or "Maybe I should start wearing makeup even though it's not my style." After enough time, I reached a place where my womanhood seemed to me to be obvious enough. I stopped seeing it as my failure when someone couldn't see me as a woman, but as theirs. Now I laugh, waiting for them to correct themselves, rather than cringing and wanting to hide. I think I'm finally beginning to reach that same place with my race.

So the next time someone comments on my invisibility, I'm going to say "Invisible to who? You? Oh I get it, you just don't see race."



MEXICAN

FILIPINO

AMERICAN

alejandro t. acierto

selections from *Book of Mazes I*: 25 april - 18 may 2011 (left)

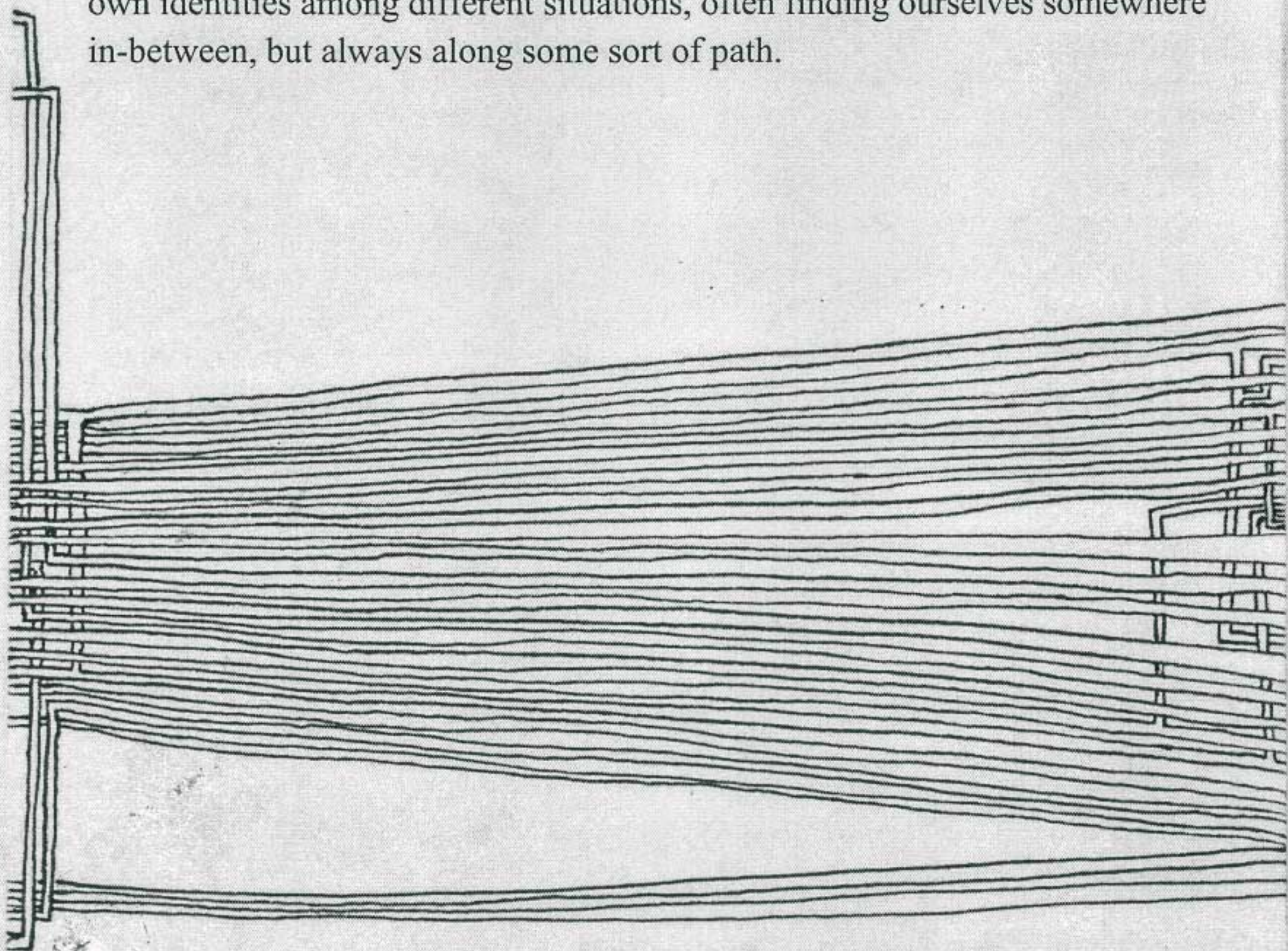
21 april 2011 (right)

ink on paper

4 x 6 inches each

2011-12

book of mazes I (2011-12) are a series of circular and often difficult maze drawings that are part of a deeper exploration of liminality, space, and place, through what is normally considered a children's game. This labyrinthine "game," while fun and engaging, thus becomes a metaphor for the constant negotiation and "play" of identity and also alludes to a similar set of drawings I used to make during my adolescent years. Through these mazes, I highlight the often difficult (and sometimes frustrating) way in which we navigate our own identities among different situations, often finding ourselves somewhere in-between, but always along some sort of path.



trigger warning: sexual and other violence (not specific instances, speaking about historical and personal context of colonialism and structural violence)

Sexuality, Race & Colonialism

by Lee Naught

As a mixed person, Mexican and white, indigenous and settler, I feel like I constantly tread on precarious ground -- on racialized ground that could crumble beneath me at any moment. In the cultural spaces that I inhabit and with the gender that I currently present, I am read as white much more often than not. I move through the world with white-passing privilege and I do not identify as POC. I step back from POC spaces because those spaces are important to hold for folks that do not have white skin privilege. I want to be direct about this from the start: racism against POC is real, light skin privilege is real, and the difference in folks' experiences and lives because of skin tone are not to be diminished or disregarded. Because of my skin tone and features, I hold a permanent invitation to participate in white spaces and institutions and I am welcome to share power held by white culture.

When thinking about mixed race, there is a tendency for the conversation to stop here, with light skin privilege, but that's not the end of the story -- at least not for me. My earliest thoughts and feelings toward identifying as white, with my white schoolmates and the white half of my family, felt uncomfortable, gross and wrong. My parents divorced when I was little more than a toddler and this requirement to participate in whiteness was an attempt on my father's side to erase my mother's Mexican culture from my body, to take the Mexican away and induct me into an affluent white culture. At times I gave in to the social and familial pressure to identify as white as a young person, but it didn't fit me and I felt trapped, squirming under my skin. I still feel trapped in my skin in those moments when folks' perceptions of me seem to be singularly defined by my white passing privilege.

All too often, people want to require mixed folks to be one or the other: white or POC. The reality is -- we're not. With race as well as with gender, it's tempting for those who are uncomfortable with the experiences of folks who live outside of fixed and socially acceptable identities to make these experiences disappear by instead assigning them fixed and well-known categories. As such, in many folks' accounts, I look white -- but I'm not white. According to other folks, I'm POC because I'm part Mexican -- but I'm not POC. I'm chicano. I'm part mixed-up Western European, I'm part Spanish, I'm part Chichimeca and Purépecha, I'm a small part many other bits that have been lost over time. People have expectations of who other people are based on skin tone (or a variety of other readily noticeable markers, including features, hair, clothing, voice, and more), and these expectations are revealing of how folks categorize the world around them. These exercises in skin tone-based categorization minimize the reality of people's experiences because they are perceptions based on a single dominant visible marker that then claim to understand an enormous

amount of another's lived experience. I look white when people think I look white; I look mixed when people think I look mixed; and I look Mexican when people think I look Mexican. Alone this feels like an impossible space to hold -- this mixed space, this grey space. I wonder if it would begin to feel less shaky with more people holding this ground together.

Colonialism: The shape of colonialism is such that it infiltrates every border and body, and its effects are so far-reaching that it may be impossible to fully define what colonialism is, but here are some things that colonialism contains: Colonialism is about power. It's about resource extraction. It's about violently and coercively erasing sovereign physical and cultural boundaries, and imposing new ones. It's about fucking up a sovereign culture enough to erase many of its roots and much of its power. It's about creating division -- assimilating many folks to a new dominant culture while creating a lower class out of others. It's about imposing extreme difference in order to create people who can be used and people who use them. It's about erasing the grey spaces that confuse that class division; that blur the used with the users; that call the logic, meaning, or right of that division into question.

Heteronormativity is the requirement to be sexed, gendered, have sex, and form relationships in specific, limited ways, enforced by social and institutional punishment against those who do not live within these limits. People are expected to express sex, gender and sexuality based on a Western European post-feudal Christian model,¹ which evolved in a worldwide capitalist context as the nuclear family with a female/feminine mother figure and male/masculine father figure that have reproductive sex to produce (Christian) children who form the exploitable labor force for the next generation of those in power. Institutions such as marriage, laws forbidding sodomy (in all its beautiful non-reproductive forms), the practice of sexing children as male or female on permanent birth certificates, and binary gender pronouns are examples of ways heteronormative relationships are legally and culturally enforced.

There is nothing natural about heteronormativity -- nothing inevitable or more "civilized." Colonial subjects were forced through rape and murder en masse to accept new roles and behaviors, including European submissive cis-femininities, aggressive cis-masculinities, monogamy, and sex only for the means of procreation and not for pleasure. Before the imposition of colonialism, sexuality, sex, gender and relationships were incredibly diverse globally, having evolved different structures and dynamics specific to each region, ethnic group, religion, and culture. The echoes of this diversity are still present among the colonized, remembered in mixed and indigenous bodies and amplified through voices working to dismantle the homogeneity enforced by heteronormativity and colonialism.

Heteronormativity and colonialism are inextricably intertwined. It is possible to understand that there are different institutions at work demanding that bodies either assimilate or be marked as outsiders, but it is impossible to separate them within this oppressive social framework. No one

experiences the effects of racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, etc as individual and divisible experiences; we experience each together, as a cohesive lived experience within an oppressive hierarchical social structure. Heteronormativity and colonialism, both driven by capitalism, have been formative elements in the creation of the globalized world in which most humans now participate.

Capitalism necessitates and depends upon heteronormativity within a colonial context, requiring the creation and maintenance of a workforce that can be exploited by colonizers. Many post-colonial writers have shown us that rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence are among the strongest tools of colonialism, both as a means of creating babies and as a means of dividing and controlling colonial subjects. Sexual violence, gender violence and race-based violence have contributed to the history of most of the mixed folks I know (as they have contributed to the history of most of the POC I know) -- either affecting them directly, or having been enacted upon their mothers or fathers, their grandparents, great grandparents, or generations past.

bell hooks says that "There is in each of us and in the objects that surround us a place of primal memory. I believe that we have memories that extend beyond what we have consciously experienced. That we carry within us ancestral memory." I believe that we, mixed folks, carry ancestral memory -- that it is passed down as we are raised by colonial subjects, in their recipes, stories, worldview, politics, warnings, and perhaps even in our shared blood or maternal mitochondria.² We carry family histories of colonialism, of coercion, of violence -- but of much more, too. We carry individual, collective, and cultural survival. Resilience and resistance course through our veins. The continued ability to love in the face of oppression has been passed from heart to heart.

I was raised by four Mexican women. None of them had male partners for the majority of my childhood and they stuck together like the toughest glue, watching each other's backs, creating the support necessary to navigate this world in which colonialism systematically and individually oppresses women, people of non-European descent, and people of color. My politics were molded by women who taught me to make myself heard, to not take shit, to be critical of anyone or anything telling me I should do anything that I know to be against my best interest -- including the state, white people, men, borders, and institutions.

My own politics come from being raised by chicanas, from internalizing their perspectives and re-applying them outward. My politics come from being socialized as a girl in a conservative environment, and deciding that the role of binary girl/woman was not one I could play. My politics come from growing up queer in a violent environment, with the fear of violence at white hands always just under the smooth-looking surface; from being unwilling to perpetuate the violence I saw playing out in normative gender roles and sexualities, and coming to understand that we need

to build safe places to hold our desires and express our love -- because most of the world out there is not inherently safe for anyone's love or desires.

Structural Violence: When we talk about violence, it's often understood to mean things that are visible and measurable, like bruises and cuts, but violence means a lot of other things too, including smaller acts that build up over time to form something much larger. What does it feel like to be in a position of having less power? As an example: biting one's tongue around a boss every day can result in a million small moments that feel like rage or defeat mixed with persistence, and over time can be incredibly draining. Discrimination against POC, disabled folks, and trans folks doesn't only play out in intense confrontational moments with fists or fucked-up slurs; it can mean a lifetime of working for less acknowledgement and less pay -- it can mean a lifetime of working harder to meet one's goals compared to white-skinned, able bodied & cis-folks, which means more stress, more wear on bodies that are discriminated against, and even means faster aging. These small, insidious ways that violence accumulates within individuals, aligned with axes of power, are known together as structural violence.

Structural violence is felt in many ways by different individuals, and I'm definitely not aligning the above as my personal experience or as all mixed folks' experiences. However, an important thread carries through different experiences of structural violence: the constant fight to be seen, heard, and respected; the fight to exist, recognized as a valuable and complex human being in the eyes of others. Continuing to carry our complexities and histories that are in threat of erasure is a means by which we can resist and respond to structural violence. Although some people feel they have the right to tell others who they are, we believe that we define who we are ourselves.

Calling any mixed-race person "white" is a form of violence. Deciding that mixed folks have been watered down enough that they no longer count as anything but white is a violent act of colonialism -- or, rather, it's completing the work that colonialism started by enforcing the assimilation of mixed folks. Saying that mixed folks are really just white is an act of erasure -- eliminating the complex grey area that destabilizes race-based class divisions -- and that means aiding colonialism, aiding racism, and harming colonialism's opponents. It disposes of the forces that created mixed folks, including violent heteronormativity and the subjugation of indigenous folks through rape and for the expansion of the labor force. Telling mixed folks that they are white is burying generations of violence, pretending it never existed, denying the oppressive forces that *forced* together Western Europeans and indigenous folks and made them mix -- made us.

When someone tells me I'm white, it feels violent. It feels like ripping my roots out from under me, knocking the wind out of me, and telling me to stand alone -- to forget my history, forget the colonialism that shaped my family and formed me, forget the reasons for my politics and ethics. Without my history, I am hollow.

In the past, I've had doubts: I've allowed space within myself to wonder if folks who have told me I'm white are really right. If my light skin color, which provides me with white-passing privilege in this world, defines my race more than any other facet of my identity or history. I've been teaching myself that I can't have space for this doubt. That I can never believe myself to be white without risking assimilation -- without risking the severance of the line between myself and my mom, my tía, my grandma, my bisabuela. Yes, I am different than they are -- I have grown up in a truly globalized world, with a white father, with access to resources that none of my predecessors had. But it is both my right and my responsibility to remember and continue representing the lines from which I have come. Their knowledge, their struggles, continue having a life, a presence, a resonance, in me.

These days, sometimes, when someone tells me I'm white, and I can ground myself enough to remember what's being erased by the speaker -- genocide, rape, subjugation, incredible levels and layers of violence and oppression -- I can begin to feel rage bubbling to the surface. Rage passed down along my lineage. Rage over colonialism continuing to act in these subtle ways. Rage that anyone would dare forget that colonialism is a continuing process, or that anyone would turn a blind eye to histories of violence.

Queerness can be an act of refusing colonialism, of saying "no, I won't engage" in the partnered violent forces of heteronormativity and colonialism. Queerness can mean refusing to engage in oppressive binary gender practices and patriarchy, refusing to thoughtlessly follow normative and violent models for sex and relationships. And queerness can be a space to find a hope of reshaping the world in anti-colonial ways.

I'm grateful for the ways I've seen my communities -- mixed people, queers -- resist colonialism in our lives by means that are affirming, creative, and grounded. We reassert destroyed boundaries by exploring our limits and putting our known boundaries firmly in place, in sex and in the rest of our lives. We find community and lovers who recognize those boundaries and respect them. We ask and listen. We see, in our friends' and lovers' skins and features, what they have offered about their stories, how they tie back to where they come from, with sweetness and mutual recognition. We see folks' histories, how they are formed by racial and ethnic experiences, and we respect that those experiences are integral parts of their selves. We work to hold and expand identity spaces that aren't well-defined, and allow folks to define themselves rather than trapping them within unchangeable categories that are tied to violence and coercion. We *choose* to see folks' self-expressed desires, genders, sexualities, and ethnicities.

I've been writing half in academically-worded assertions, and half in personal experiences, but this essay isn't the result of studying books and compiling research. This is knowledge that comes from my bones, from the legacies that were passed along to me. While I move through the world light-skinned, my analysis of race can never be devoid of the histories of colonialism and

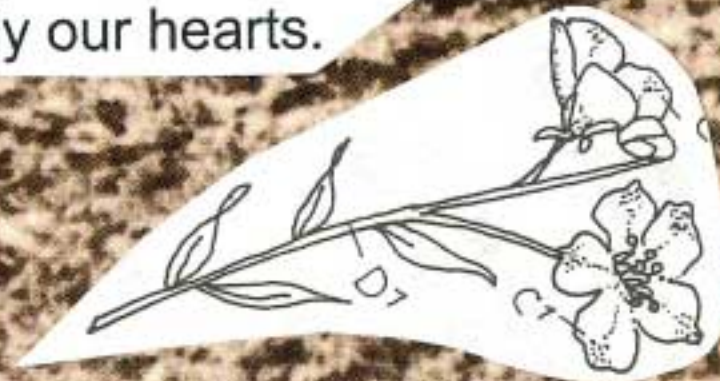
oppression that created me -- of the interpersonal and institutional racism and sexism experienced by my family, of the manipulation and militarization of borders, of the codified government discrimination called immigration law, of the genocide and rape enacted against the indigenous Chichimeca and Purépecha, of the continued racist and heterosexist violence of colonialism, of so much more. In my heart, I know myself to be the product of global colonialism, in my queerness as much as in my race; the product of all kinds of power playing out on the large scale, of all kinds of oppression that were enacted yesterday and 500 years ago and continuing through today.

I am chicano: home feels like hot dry desert now suburbs, like tofu mole and brightly colored houses (on the inside if not the outside), like español y inglés saliendo de mi boca in whatever order they want, like pan dulce when I feel like cheating vegan with mexicanismo, like el rebozo negro de mi abuela when I was little y se me dio frío in the cool nights of the hot days, like el olor de marigold pa' recordar lxs que vinieron antes, lxs queers y la familia que ya no andan aquí con nosotrxs.

I am genderqueer: my gender feels like the choice to be tender when I could be hard, like looking tougher on the outside than I feel on the inside as a defense against the violence that has touched me with its white hands before and that I don't want to touch me again. My gender feels like a betrayal to my roots, at times -- like choosing gringo masculinity over mexican femininity. I wish I could hold both at once: both the safety I find in my queer gender, and the symbols of cultura chicana that can be worn as gender presentation. Once upon a time, I had found the space to be read as a mixed-chicana woman. I'm still searching for the space to be read as a mixed-chicano queer.

I am a homo: sex and love feel like affinity, like searching out those who can find in me what I find in them. I need my mixed-queer lovers. We need each other, in our skins and guts and bones and especially our hearts.

We need recognition of all our parts -- our histories, our roots, our desires, our presentations, our skin and blood and guts, and our hearts. Especially our hearts.



¹ Check out Sylvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch!*

² At times, heritage and blood are used as an explanation (read: excuse) for appropriation; folks use heritage and blood to claim they have "rights" to access and control specific cultural practices, property and knowledge. I would argue that if a practice, property, or knowledge was not consensually handed down to us, we don't get to claim it just because we associate it with some (frequently tiny) fraction of our ancestry. I think specifically of a claim commonly made by white North Americans -- that seemingly everyone has some Native American ancestor, many generations back, and this means it's alright to self-initiate participation in Native rituals (alone or in groups), adopt Native spiritual beliefs, wear clothes and accessories that use Native imagery, etc. These behaviors are *not* what I'm talking about in the referenced paragraph. These behaviors are appropriation, and they are *not* okay.

"Funny Kind of Girl)"

AUTHOR

AUTHOR

Morgan Melendres Mentz

My great-grandmother is one of the most independent, strong-willed, and inspired women I have ever known. So it broke my heart today to see her vulnerable and fragile, trapped inside a 98-year-old body that is beginning to dissipate. How should I react to seeing her eyes flooded with tears as she asks me to pray for her death so she might be released from this corporeal prison? The reality of losing the family matriarch and my closest friend brought me to my knees. As unrealistic as it seems, I have not allowed myself to accept the truth that our weekly visits and shared insights would eventually end one day.

It's not that we have a romanticized matrilineal bond -- in fact, at times I've always felt excluded from favor being that I am hapa and not a "purebred," as my uncle commented once. Due to this fact, however, instead of seeing me as a great-granddaughter she has confided certain things to me as a friend that she has kept secret to others in my family. My incessant questions and genuine intrigue are what navigate our weekly conversations. Hoping that beneath each exciting or benign tale of her past I will be able to unveil a small treasure of wisdom that I can take with me along my own path of life.

A tomboy who was constantly rebelling against gender norms and breaking the rules on her Issei father's plantation in Hawai'i during the 1920s, my great-grandmother roamed her childhood world with a free spirit. As a youth on the islands she dictated her own reality climbing trees, rolling in the volcanic earth, and refusing to learn domestic chores. Always the protector, my Grama Evelyn would come to her younger sister Betty's rescue when teased by the local boys, "I would fight them! Troublemaker I was," she would say with a tempered voice reminiscent of her defiant youth. The oldest of four, she was ambitious and fortunate to get a scholarship to an all-girls boarding school in Honolulu during a time when female education in the Nikkei community was not valued. At school she befriended a young girl who "was a fast kind of girl, brave I should think, always running around with boyfriends and telling us sex kind of things," such things that ironically were of no interest to her during a time of hormonal transformation and swelling urges.

Always motivated on her own endeavors, heteronormative ideas of dating were of little concern to her until she met Howard Yoshino, a slick-talking and attractive

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BORROWER'S NAME

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Nisei man nearly ten years older than her. They would eventually marry, but "He was a flirt! And no good at business things. I always handled the money, but he could talk the kind Japanese that I couldn't, you know pigeon kind." Frustrated with his infidelity, my Grama would eventually leave him and take their three children to California hoping he would straighten out. Unfortunately, he died of a stroke a few months later in the home of his mistress. A widow and now single parent, Grama Evelyn decided to stay in California and build up a real-estate business that would create great success and allow her to make new male friends, many of whom would propose to her only to be let down each time with rejection.

Curious by this fact, I could never understand why anyone would want to remain alone for the span of such a long lifetime as hers. Then a glimpse of an answer revealed itself to me sitting on her couch one afternoon when she nonchalantly asked, "Do you like sex?" Caught off guard and feeling flustered thinking it was a trick question to get an answer about my sexual ambiguity I replied, "Yes, so long as it is with someone who I feel connected and safe with." This was a simple cop-out answer because I didn't think she would understand my own frustration with constantly having to define my sexuality as a queer celibate woman. "I never liked it, I don't understand what the big fuss is? Everywhere is sex sex sex! You know I didn't want to have children either, and asked the Doctor to fix me up but he said, 'No Evelyn you gonna have these babies.' So I did what the doctor said." Explosions of disbelief boomed inside my brain but my lips remained silent. How could I respond? It became clear as to why she never remarried. Never enjoying sex and afraid to be forced to carry more children by being denied reproductive rights. I thought of my own sexual history and how Planned Parenthood had been a frequent stop for free birth control, condoms, and gynecological check-ups. I remember a Saturday afternoon sophomore year in high school when I took a close girlfriend to get an abortion and felt seething anger as we passed angry white middle-aged male protesters in the parking lot. As if this experience wasn't difficult enough, she did not deserve to be shamed or shouted at for taking control over her own body. But to be denied the option altogether by a physician whom you trust with your body helped me to remember the importance of preservation and protection of such rights.

Knowing she never enjoyed sex or knew the elated feeling of safely exploring sexuality in a sacred space with a lover in 98 years of life was heartbreaking. To not experience the pleasure of releasing your body in ecstasy, entangled in the warmth of another as I felt for the first time with my high school girlfriend. Sam, a mestiza and stud who played on the football team, tackled my heart and captured me for over three years. Our relationship allowed me to explore self-determination within my own sexual fluidity that I had not experienced in previous relationships. At a family birthday

DATE DUE
BORROWER'S NAME

party Grama Evelyn expressed her liking of Sam, but saw her as a "funny kind of girl" and always addressed her as my special friend but never my partner. I wonder if Grama ever saw a bit of herself in Sam with her tenacity and nonconformity to gender norms as a youth. Would she have explored life differently if given the space to venture outside of the heteronormativity within the home of her Issei parents?

The freedom of safe exploration and self-determination in defining one's own sexuality at the intersections of racial identity seemed to be an experience lost on her that would also tragically impact one of her children as well. My great uncle Steve, an attractive and "sweet young boy" as Grama Evelyn describes him, cut his own life short through the barrel of a gun. In his room gay pornography and other signs suggesting Uncle Steve was also a queer person of color like myself seemed to be the cause of his fatal decision. This is a silent event that rarely gets discussed in my family and, as a result, new stories have emerged to take its place, such as "the cops must have shot him and covered it up, because he was an oriental man" as Grama Evelyn tells herself, avoiding the responsibility of not recognizing the pain he was going through. Her grief from his loss, still fresh even after four decades, makes me pause and reflect on the innumerable silenced stories of queer persons of color that have been forced to leave a world that they felt had no place for them.

POWER'S

As a queer hapa that openly challenges the misogynist white hegemony in all aspects of daily life, I am aware of the blessings I possess to exist in the time and place I am in. I sit and look at my great-grandmother from the edge of her bed, once tenacious and now tiny and fragile, ready to soon depart from me, and I remind myself of her experience and the legacy that she has given me. This woman before me that has experienced the deepest pains a mother and wife could know endured betrayal, loss, and misogyny so I might exist as a dear friend at her bedside today, whispering a quiet promise to always be truthful to myself and walk with integrity. I vow to her to be unafraid to define my own sexuality in this racially ambiguous body, and to build on the strength that she has placed inside my heart, so I may set a new foundation for my own granddaughters to one day explore their world with pride and love.

POWER'S NAME

65

shapeshifters:

for my mixed race, gender/queer binary

fucking, brown reclaiming
(and getting there) beauties

theories, stories, experiences, and practice. from the amazing words of women of color and feminists of color, this is what it's about. theory and life. life and theory. all is necessary, complementary, vital. learning theory was how i began to articulate, name, process my experiences. it's also how i've found ways to resist, reclaim, and fuck with shit. with that, here are some of my stories, experiences and thoughts with so much love, compassion, realness, and commitment to my mixed race, gender/queer binary fucking, brown reclaiming (and getting there) beauties.

:: **cuentos** ::

the inside of my left forearm reads "travesía." right underneath it "shapeshifter." the outer side of same forearm reads "jaime." all three tattoos, a reminder, a commitment, a connection to who i am, the spaces i inhabit, the pain, power and the beauty of my mixed race, gender non-conforming, fat, brown boi body. it's a political commitment to brown people, a lifetime struggle, a dedication of my life energy to inhabiting and fucking up binaries.

:: **travesía*** ::

my racial/ethnic identity has been a journey, a crossing. a crossing from feelings of in-betweenness, being mitad y mitad, feeling not brown enough and feeling not white enough to feeling more whole, more self-welcoming and at home in my body. this journey has been just as much about identity as it has been about my body and the politics of passing and in/visibility,* which for me, i've come to understand, are intimately connected. my mexicano and white, mixed race body and identity is a product of pain, of hurt, of genocide, of rape, of colonization, of the denying/hiding/hatred of brownness, of the denying/hiding/hatred of femininity, of assimilation, of exoticization, of otherness, of objectification, of violence. some maybe forced, some maybe involuntary, some maybe out of survival, some maybe out of the need and desire to belong. but when can this mixed race, gender non-conforming, fat brown boi body be more than just reaction, subversion, transgression? how and when can my body be about healing, about thriving, about reclamation, about celebration, about being, about home?

:: shapeshifter ::

coming into my queerness has created an entry to understand, process, and become politicized around my white and mexicano ancestry. coming into my mixed race identity has supported my curiosity around how do i create and build an intentional gender/queer masculinity that is feminist, tender, non-oppressive, and fat accepting when so many models of masculinity aren't. the context--who i'm rolling with, where i am, who i engage with--impacts the ways in which my race/ethnic identity and gender are read. at times, i wonder how my gender reveals, hides, blurs, supports my racial/ethnic identity. at times, i wonder how society's assumptions and my internalized shit around my racial/ethnic identity and my body size allow for certain gender expressions over others and what i get to inhabit.

for most of my life i was told that i was mexicano and i should be proud of the people i come from. this came from my mexicano immigrant father who left everything behind for a better life in the united states. and consequently, a "better life" for his children. having children with a mixed race (mexicano and white) woman meant two lighter skinned children. this potentially reads: more access, more opportunity, more play within institutions and life. much of my mexicano identity is tied to my dad, even though i know very little about him and have spent most of my life with my mother's mixed race family.

:: jaime: my name is my own* ::

pronounced "jay-mee" in my family. my mother's family. white and mexicano. my grandparents on my mom's side had six girls. all grew-up, got married, some got divorced, taking on their ex/husband's last names, and had children. "jay-mee." left to become children's middle names or first name or just forgotten. "jay-mee." my middle name. in the u.s. dominant white culture, middle names are a thing. but many brown and black folks have multiple names and what may appear to be a middle name can actually describe our lineages, peoples and places.

i remember growing up and finding that spelling "jaime" was tricky. i couldn't remember if the "i" came before the "m" or if it came before the "e." "jay-mee," the anglicized, brown denying/forgetting pronunciation of the spanish name "jaime." as i got older i realized, "shit, you spell 'jaime' in spanish..." and haven't forgotten since. and i love my family. my choice to have my family's name tattooed on me, although patriarchal in lineage, was incredibly important to me. the likelihood that our family name will be passed down is slim. cus i'm hella gay and cus i cherish the ways in which queer and poc communities value

and see "naming" as ritual, i may choose to pass down our name. but til then, it's always with me.

naming. something queer folks and folks of color know very well. naming can be powerful, connecting, reclaiming, beautiful, painful, erasing. the act and process of choosing one's name or how we want to be referred to, is very much valued in queer community. my first name has a number of painful, awkward, annoying, and objectifying memories. and yet, i love my name. naming is interesting to think about among mixed race folks. depending on which parent is poc and whether our families come from peoples who admire, uphold, acknowledge "maternal" or "paternal" lineages may impact how we are named. my first and last names came from my dad. my name has patriarchal connection and lineage. my middle name, connecting to my mother's paternal lineage. if my father were white and my mother poc, the likelihood of my having a white, anglo name would be real real. my name directly connects me to my mexicano racial/ethnic identity and people. it's also a point of contention to those who have often assumed i was "white" or thought "something's different" about me when they first met me. when i utter my name, as my name escapes my lips i'm immediately "othered" and marked. if i had an anglo name, this shit would be easier to go under the radar, to deny my brownness and my connection to my poc heritage and self. at times, because of my lighter skin and for the many times i've been read as "white," this feels like my only direct connection to my brownness, even complicated as it is.

:: sigo volviendo ::

i've been in anti-racist spaces that focus on race and the history of race within the context of the u.s. for a minute now. i'm noticing and processing and articulating how "mixed race-ness" and bodies fit, don't fit, blur, fuck with, complicate the dialogues around race and racism and how it's come up while in these spaces. i want to offer thoughts, conversations, struggles, compassion, real talk, anger, beauty, reclamation, affirmations, contradictions, no answers.

this is what i keep returning to:

white supremacy has a habitual need to categorize, to racialize. often our mixed race bodies fuck with the "white/black," "poc/white" binaries because we question the irony, the complete made-upness of race and racial markers. and, race has real, material consequences that deeply impact, shape and often harm people's lives and well being.

it's imaginary, yet so incredibly real. sometimes our lighter skinned mixed race bodies get mislabeled, misprivileged, misassigned in ways that can completely deny and erase our brown/poc ancestry. just as i've been misgendered and my they/them pronouns fucked up.*

real talk: the world can give two shits about how we self-identify. the social context we live in reads us, labels us, categorizes us, others us without our consent and is often not welcome. so what do we as mixed race folks do? we need a growing fierce analysis. a fierce analysis that questions: who gets to identify as mixed race? who gets to label and be labeled? who can claim and reclaim? how does racial power, privilege, and control shape the ways in which mixed race folks who are lighter skinned navigate and engage the world (and at whose expense) and how does the world navigate and engage and/or invisibilize light skinned mixed race folks? how does colorism and the tactics of white supremacy continue to tear apart our black and brown communities to further separate us from one another, even down to the ways we ourselves, "police" each other's mixed race identities? how do we bring our experiences of mixed race identity and gender non-conformity to question, fuck up, flip and reverse, and blur our societies' investment in borders, categories, boxes, binaries, while building and practicing a worldview that's invested in choice, "both/and/many," living within contradictions, fluidity, self-determination, etc.

light skinned mixed race folks, we can be seen as "easy" targets for assimilation and we're a growing "demographic" and face of the u.s. we're palpable to u.s. white dominant culture. we're brown but not "that brown," and consequently not threatening enough. but assimilable we are, and they can mold us to be invested in power structures of--what bell hooks throws down-- white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. we need to continue to engage and build a fierce analysis that not only critiques white supremacy but also places us (not centers us) in conversations around colorism, racial power and privilege, access, politics of perception and reading, and accountability and allyship to our black and brown people and movements (particularly in the ways we can access multiple spaces and move through them sometimes fluidly, sometimes unnoticed. this is powerful and potentially harmful to our black and brown people if we remain unaware of our impact). we inhabit spaces of intersecting power, privilege, fluidity, access, choice sometimes at the expense of the targeting of darker skinned ("visibly"/readable) black and brown folks. AND how do we grow awareness of the ways in which racism plays out and the tactics of

white supremacy while building, creating spaces of healing for mixed race folks... cus this shit fucks with us.

:: **“caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar”*** ::

we build bridges as we wander, as we navigate, as we gain clarity. this shit's not easy. it's messy as hell. mixed race folks and those of us who are gender nonconforming have unique positionalities and experiences to share. there's a consciousness and awareness that's shaped and nurtured from the ways we inhabit, cross, blur, complicate, and question boundaries and borders. sometimes pretty, sometimes not. we're fluid, intricate, messy, shapeshifting, boundary, border crossers. we have so much to bring and offer. know this. reclaim this. own this.

—yecelica jaime valdivia (yjv)—

* homage to gloria e. anzaldúa and the impact *borderlands/la frontera: the new mestiza* had on my life, my mixed race identity and gender/queerness.

* i use “in/visible,” knowing there are potential ableist impacts. i think it's not the most awesome. i also want to put this conversation in the larger context around the politics of visibility and invisibility and how u.s. society is very much tied to visible markers and how we understand race. i would also love feedback/conversation about this.

* reference to june jordan's “poem about my rights.”

* by saying this, i'm not equating the process of race and racialization to our socialization around gender and misgendering. i do though, want to acknowledge how my body and gender are misread/mislabeled not necessarily misprivileged. we live in a society that objectifies and targets womyn, trans folks, and gender non-conforming folks. i'm also processing through even though i'm genderqueer, i am still read as a “woman” or “lady.” because of this not only am i still somewhat placeable within society's understanding of gender and supposed “female” bodies but i think this also labels me as less of a threat because i am placeable. not to say that i may not experience violence or that shitty things can't or won't happen. i think there's something there to have conversations and build analysis around.

* gloria e. anzaldúa

BIOS:

editors

Lee Naught is a radical, genderqueer, homo, chican@ organizer who has participated in a variety of collective, feminist, and sexuality-based projects. Lee spends most of their time working as a collective member at Bluestockings Bookstore, in addition to sex educating with Fuckin' (A) (also known as the NY Radical Sex Positivity Project). Lee plays drums in a queer cuddlecore band, and enjoys bikes, politically rowdy queers, cooking vegan enchiladas for a friendly crowd, herbalism, watching too much Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and pretty much anything that involves excessive glitter.

Lil Lefkowitz is a second-generation, Jerzey-born Latina with a passion for feminism, graphic fiction, and finger snappin'. Her endeavors in New York have included teaching creative writing to high school students, organizing a community-supported agriculture project, and working on women's economic empowerment initiatives, non-profit style. Lil currently spends most of her time as a support worker for folks with developmental disabilities (learning all about badass self-advocacy), attending trainings at the Anti-Violence Project, and watching *The Twilight Zone*.

Lior Hadar is a Mizrahi-homo-queer musician, educator, and tofu scram extraordinaire. He is always looking for opportunities to talk with his students about Audre Lorde and Dorothy Allison; especially when he's tasked with teaching boring SAT Prep classes. These days, Lior is a counselor at a Brooklyn High School. He plays guitar in the queer-wave band Gay Panic and is also behind the acoustic project Music Was My First Gay Lover. This is the first zine he's ever edited AND contributed to, and he feels so grateful for it all!

contributors

billie rain is a disabled writer, activist and filmmaker. years of chronic illness and a rare tumor condition have given hir an amazing sense of groundedness, connection and self-advocacy that fuel hir passion to bring truth, in all it's pain and glory, to audiences everywhere. find billie at dualpowerproductions.com.

Xavi Maldonado is a 20-something queermo currently living in Southern Indiana. Writing poetry and eating unripened fruit is their thing.

Sam Alexander is a sad queer going to school at UC Berkeley. When not rolling their eyes at white academia, they can be found printing wannabe-punk patches, running around with the East Bay Queer Scouts, rating everyone 5 stars on OkCupid, or crying to Cat Power. A secretary by day and little spoon always, Sam was once described as "charmingly skeptical."

Chelsea Small was born to an indian mother and an american father in san francisco. She studied painting at Barnard College and currently works as a domestic violence counselor and advocate in New York.

Nia King is a podcaster, filmmaker, illustrator, and writer with a passion for social justice. She currently works for Colorlines.com and has previously worked as a grassroots fundraiser, researcher, and social media marketing specialist for various racial justice and LGBTQ nonprofits. Her writing about race, gender, and sexuality has been published in the journal Women and Performance, and the book Zines in Third Space. You can contact her at niaking@zoho.com.

Sarah Nakano is 20-year old art student living New York City.

susan kikuchi loves politics. she is an amateur hairdresser and culture worker. her truth is ever changing.

Acacia Marable is an artist and writer living in Brooklyn, NY.


Angela Davis Fegan is a native of Chicago's South Side. A graduate of Chicago's famed Whitney Young High School, she received her BFA in Fine Arts from New York's Parson's School of Design. Angela has mounted shows at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Montgomery Ward Gallery, the Flat Iron Building (Chicago), and the MC Gallery (New York). She has been featured in Muzzle Magazine's Best In Print Issue, and her art has been selected as for book covers including How to Seduce a White Boy in Ten Easy Steps by Laura Yes Yes and The Truth About Dolls by Jamila A. Woods. In 2011 Angela was selected to be a member of the Chicago Artist Coalition's Hatch Project, where she exhibited in three group shows over the course of a year. She is currently enrolled in Columbia College's interdisciplinary MFA program in book and paper arts.

Brannon Rockwell-Charland is an Africana Studies and Visual Arts major at Oberlin College. She is interested in artistic intersections of race, sexuality, and gender, and is currently completing a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship on mixed-race media representation.

Amal Rana is a Jeddah born, mixed race, Pakistani femme poet. She is grateful to come from a heritage where poets are revered for bearing witness and provoking change without apology. She loves making street art that reflects the true nature of evil doers while working with other Pakistanis to seek real "hope" and "change" in Pakistan instead of democracy "Amreekan" style and is currently involved in glitter filled campaigns against the pinkwashing of Israeli apartheid. She can also be found terrorizing Islamophobes and other fascists with weapons of mass destruction such as glitter, kebabs, spirit gum and giant puppets.

felix rucker is a mixed (black&mexican) queer space gal living in chicago where she is studying race and gender.

Mette Loulou Ayoub von Kohl: I am a Palestinian-Danish performer currently living in New York City. My creative works strive to explore the intersection between art and constructions of personal and national identities. As a Palestinian, I am curious in exploring my relationship to Palestinian national memory and history, and how these relationships interact with my experiences as a racialized and sexualized being. My



included poem explores the intersection between my Palestinian identity and passing, articulating how many family's history is mapped across my body.

amirah mizrahi is a queer, mizrahi poet, comics-maker, educator, translator, cat-sitter, and space creature. she has witnessed all kinds of violence with her eyes and ears and heart and other body parts, but has also known a tremendous amount of support, love, and resilience. she misses mangos and warm oceans. she writes herself into existence and hopes to hold a place for others. she dreams of a free palestine. she makes a mean shakshouka.

Zisa Aziza: I am a queer enigmatic negress who ain't from here. I write as I evolve, and I wish to share my findings. A pdf/ebook file of Collected Nonfiction entitled: "From Darkest to Dawn" can be found at Truths89.com/ebook. ZisaAziza@Truths89.com.

Heidi Andrea Restrepo Rhodes is a U.S.-born and raised, Queer, mixed-race Colombian, scholar, activist, and writer-artist living in Brooklyn, NY. She is a passionate advocate for social justice and community healing.

Andrea Tsurumi is an illustrator/cartoonist playing merry hell in New York City. You can see her work at: andreatsurumi.com

Jessica Mustachi is a lover of art in all its different forms. Other than writing she has a passion for dancing and music.

Alex Kingsepp has lived her entire life in New York City. She studied Biology and Anthropology in college to better understand how humans work, and Spanish to eavesdrop on her grandparents at dinner. She's currently working on a Masters degree in Epidemiology so she can be on the front lines during the inevitable pandemic apocalypse. Her hobbies include drinking too much coffee, making up stories about people on public transit, and wasting the time she barely has on the Internet.

Olivia Marie: Biracial babe reading english in a "living history museum". Ebony, ivory, and all around nice guy. Probably shorter than you.

Désirée Dorsainvil is a half/first generation Haitian-American queer femme who grew up in Idaho. This experience has informed her focus on the impacts of & resistance to racial capitalism and she is graduating with a BA in Cultural & Regional Studies from Prescott College. Désirée is currently putting down roots in Oakland where she lives with her grandmother and works to remember. She spends her time being rageful & glittery, dancing, and imagining a world without prisons.

Caro Reyes is a 27-year old mexican-korean-disabled-queer artist creating work, writing, and movement practices that reexamine health, the vast experiences of minorities, and the landscape of social injustices. Caro lives, teaches yoga, and coordinates curriculum events in Oakland, CA. See some of their work soon/follow them on their new site caro-rayo.tumblr.com.

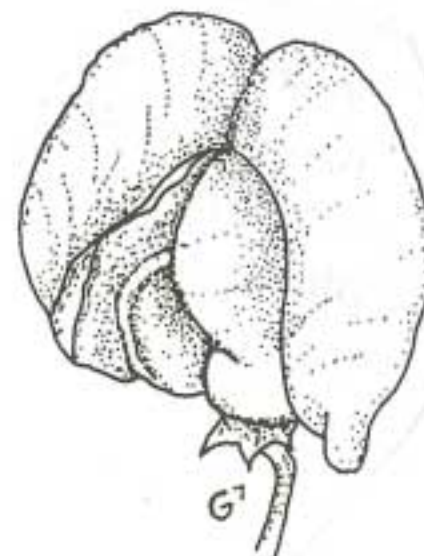
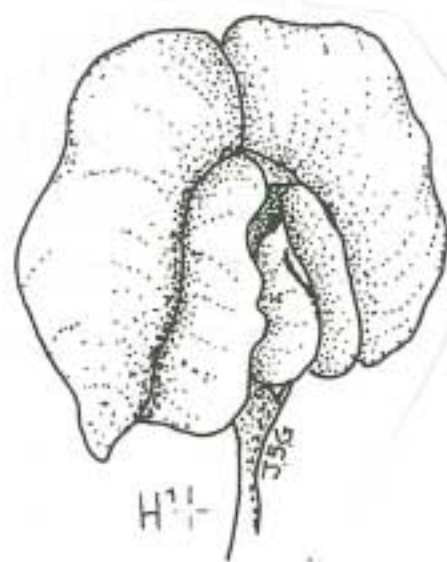
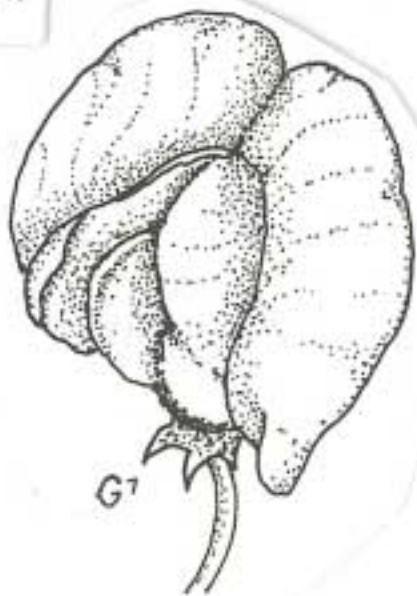
Sabina Ibarrola is a queer mxd-race Latina - a dancer, bruja, and burlesque artist on the path towards becoming a writer and healer, too. She lives in Brooklyn among many cats and resilient femmes.

Tobi Hill-Meyer is a multiracial trans activist, writer, and filmmaker. She is the director of *Doing It Ourselves*, and winner of the Emerging Filmmaker Award at the 2010 Feminist Porn Awards. She started producing media to fill the void of diverse trans characters and to offer an alternative to the overwhelmingly exploitative and exotic ways that trans women's sexuality is often portrayed.

alejandro t. acierto is a musician and multimedia artist currently working in Chicago and New York. His work focuses on notions of fluid identities and the slippages of cultural definitions stemming from his multiple identities. He has exhibited work and installations in Brooklyn as part of the Arts in Bushwick SITEFEST and at the Center for Performance Research, as well as in Madison, Chicago, LA, and San Fransisco. He has also self-released an album of works for acoustic contrabass clarinet which can be found at his website: alejandroacierto.net.

Morgan Melendres Mentz: I am a Chicanese (Chicana-Japanese) Feminist of faith and a native of San Jose, California. I Graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a B.A. in Religious Studies and am currently working towards a Master's Degree in Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. I am inspired by my Mother who has shown me unconditional love. And it is my goal to push the boundaries of my reality each day and to explore life with an open heart.

yecelica jaime valdivia (yju): i'm a mixed race, genderqueer, masculine presenting, fat brown boi. i was born to a mexican immigrant father and a mixed race mother from working class roots. my work is about all things queer, mixed race, social justice and liberation, healing, and living with intention and integrity with the hopes of filling my life with more of the things i deeply long for. oh, and i'm secretly a dreamer with a tender big heart.



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Back cover art: *past/future* (23 april - 26 april 2011) from *Book of Mazes I* by alejandro t. acierto

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