



TOYON MULTILINGUAL LITERARY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 72

SUMŪD / صمود

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Despite Tiara Taylor
One Step at a Time Ra Ross
I'm Here to Stay Ra Ross

To access spoken word selections, please visit toyonliterarymagazine.org/listen.

Awards

Jodi Stutz Award in Poetry

Someone Said This Land Has No People by Fadwa Al Qasem

Richard Cortez Day Prize in Fiction

Nebraska, 2035 by David T. Fisher

Editors' Award in Creative Nonfiction

Dear Nour: To honour our ghosts and build a home in these uncertain times by Florence Ng

Toyon Staff Award in Visual Art

Beneath the Silence by Ayoub El Khadir

Barbara Curiel Award in Multilingual Writing and Translation

Palestina Canta / Palestine Sings by Ana M. Mahomar Siman

Environmental Studies Program Award in Environmental Justice Writing and Art

A Spoonful of Dirt by P.V. Beck

Fuerza Award in Spoken Word, Audio, & Multimedia

I'm Here To Stay by Ra Ross

LETTER FROM THE Managing Editor

“Your silence will not protect you.”

Audre Lorde (1977)

It's easy to see the world falling apart from the screen of your phone and panic your way into stillness. It's easy to shut down, fight-flight-freeze, or give up in the face of normalized discrimination, the climate crisis, state & interpersonal violence, and a country rapidly heading toward authoritarian facism. It's easy to fall into the belief patterns that tell us, *well, this is it! The world is burning and there's nothing for me to do but accept it! This is the way it's always been and will always be!* It's easy to embrace silence, simply minding your own business until the end of the world.

But, the reality is, the world has *been* burning. The fire didn't start with this presidency, it didn't start with the one before that, it didn't start with the icebergs melting, and it surely didn't start with Palestine. The fact that some of us are just now learning that the world is burning—both literally and metaphorically—is an incredibly huge privilege that is utterly incomprehensible. In the face of adversity, violence, and oppression, it is easy to feel disheartened. It is easy to post a story on Instagram, attend a No Kings protest, and put a Palestinian flag sticker on your water bottle. It's easy to feel sad for those suffering, do one good thing, and feel a sense of catharsis. To feel like you're a part of something.

Well here, now, we are saying *fuck the easy way*. We are asking you to *do the hard thing*. Because, as Audre Lorde said, “The transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger.”

Toyon wholeheartedly believes in the revolutionary and liberatory practice of art and creation, and therefore learning about your innermost self. We believe that the only path forward towards true liberation for *everyone* is speaking up, speaking out, and taking action, even with the inherent risk of danger. We believe in *sumūd*, or the notion of everyday resistance in the face of adversity. Whether it be direct community action against ICE detainment, writing about one's experience in the diaspora, or protesting the genocide in Gaza, *sumūd* gives us the language to critique global inequities and prejudices.

Authors in this issue were prompted to explore what *sumūd* or everyday embodied resistance to oppression feels like to them. They were asked to explore non-traditional, subversive ways of production and to lean into any other languages they speak/write/think. We received so many inspiring, caring, radical, breathtaking, mournful submissions that the *Toyon* staff thoughtfully narrowed to the magazine you hold in your hands right now. A common throughline within them all is a call to action, a call to speak. A call to move beyond silence and complicity, and take a stab at transformation and futurity.

In close, we're going to once again let Audre Lorde take the mic:

“The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.”

Here's to breaking silences. Immerse yourself in the voices of the future.

In unending solidarity,

Soph Robson
Managing Editor, *Toyon* 72

LETTER FROM THE Translation Editor

In the shadow of what remains of Gaza's old city walls and the unbowed olive trees that refuse to fall.

As I sit to type this editorial statement for *Toyon 72*, the weight of the word *sumūd* presses upon me like the ancient stones of Gaza's Old City enduring walls. *Sumūd*, an Arabic word that could be translated to steadfastness, perseverance, an unyielding root that defies the storm. It is not mere survival; it is a defiant bloom in barren soil, a quiet revolution of the spirit against erasure.

In this edition, we center *sumūd* as our guiding theme, inviting voices from the margins to rise and resonate, particularly those echoing the Palestinian experience of resilience amid relentless adversity.

It is truly an honor and a profound responsibility to serve as the guest translation editor for this volume, a role bestowed upon me not by chance, but by the threads of my own life woven into the fabric of this narrative. My journey with *Toyon* began last year, as a translator bridging worlds. In *Toyon 71*, I lent my voice to submissions that were chosen to be translated to the language of those trapped under a sky dropping millions of tons of bombs, rendering their words with the care of one who knows the intimacy of loss and the sanctity of language.

Born with roots that run deep, where memories of olive groves and sea-salted air mingle with the echoes of displacement. I am a native Arabic speaker shaped by the stories of my people. Gaza is not just a place on a map; it is the heartbeat of my heritage, a testament to *sumūd* in its purest form. When the editors of *Toyon* invited me to step forward as a guest editor

for this themed issue, it felt like a call to honor that legacy to curate a space where perseverance is not whispered, but proclaimed.

In these pages, you will encounter a tapestry of *sumūd* that transcends borders and mediums. We received submissions from writers chronicling the everyday acts of resistance: a mother's lullaby amid rubble, a child's drawing of a home that refuses to fade, the unbreaking gaze of elders who plant seeds in scorched earth. But *sumūd* is universal; it resonates in the Indigenous poet's reclamation of stolen lands, the immigrant's odyssey across hostile seas, the artist's brushstroke defying silence. As a guest editor, I sifted through these offerings with a reverence for their raw power, selecting pieces that pulse with authenticity, poems that sear like desert sun, prose that flows like the Jordan River, artwork that captures the unyielding human spirit. Translations, too, hold pride of place, ensuring that voices in English and Spanish find their echo in Arabic, fostering a dialogue that bridges divides.

This edition arrives at a moment when the world bears witness to the fragility of peace and the ferocity of perseverance. In Gaza, *sumūd* is lived daily, not as metaphor, but as necessity: families rebuilding homes from ash, artists etching hope onto canvas amid siege, communities sustaining one another through unbreakable bonds. Yet, *sumūd* is not confined to suffering; it is the spark of joy in shared meals, the rhythm of dabka dances under starlit skies, the insistence on education and creation as acts of defiance. By amplifying these narratives, *Toyon 72* challenges us to confront complicity, to celebrate resilience, and to imagine a world where steadfastness yields justice. As we turn these pages, let us remember that literature is not passive; it is a form of *sumūd* itself, a refusal to let stories die.

I am grateful to the *Toyon* team for entrusting me with this role, and to the contributors whose

courage illuminates our path. May this edition inspire you to stand firm in your own truths, to extend solidarity across divides, and to carry the flame of perseverance forward.

In steadfast solidarity,

Dr. Abdulaziz Akila
Guest Editor, *Toyon 72*

LETTER FROM THE Theme Editor

What brings me to write to you as guest theme editor of *Toyon 72* is a chance opportunity to humbly carry forward a piece of my ongoing, decades-long journey of turning to my Gazan and Palestinian rootedness. How the *sumūd* of my ancestors and family and the rescuing of my Palestinianness helped me reclaim my voice and place other lost parts of me throughout my past, as a living practice in my current, and certainly in what is yet to come. It is in this reclamation of *sumūd* that I am brought to the life work of honoring, fighting for, and tending to Palestine, harmonized with the supplication that I might do right by my people. If *sumūd* belongs with me, it is with the people I cannot reach. Held in the liminal space between a lost and a longing and the machinery of borders hoping to eclipse the Palestinian sun inside of us. But they don't realize that *sumūd* is also our Palestinian moon that dances, sings, prays, laughs, and waits in these passing shadows.

As a person who confidently speaks only the colonial language of english, I am painfully aware of the limits of this language. It is in this humble role I serve, alongside the hearts and spirits unequivocally pointed by the compass hands of the liberation of Palestine—of us all from empire—that I entrust these works to spell out some of what *sumūd* is and can be as an aperture illuminating the embodied, human expression of a defiant and loving will to live, despite all of the odds against some of us.

Sumūd is shaped by the losses, the names, bodies, homes, lands yearned for, missed, and dismally out of reach. *Sumūd*, at once, transcends a definition in words alone and requires an initiation all of its own, constellating into universes of meaning. In this evocation of the word *sumūd* and all it can encompass,

sumūd is a promise. A promise to leave this world better than we found it. In honor of the lives brutally taken from this world, to all who remain here today in our collective struggle for liberation. The legacy of these struggles are woven into this promise of justice, embodied in the life-affirming practices of *sumūd*.

Sumūd transcends the word resilience. What does “resilience” even mean when your community is being carpet-bombed, forcibly starved, abducted by the thousands, displaced for the 37th time, censored from the media, and erased from their Indigenous land? What Palestinians have shown to the world is that survival is a collective act, grounded in our deep and enduring connections to one another and our earth. The connections the crooked machinery of colonialism seeks to exterminate.

In honoring *sumūd*, it demands we mirror the promise of livability Palestinians show to us, directed into action until you, Palestine, rose of our hearts, are free as you help lead us in our work to free all other lands. *Sumūd* is committing to the promise of justice—one that Palestinians have anchored into for so long—and carrying it forward, even as the world remains determined to deny it. In this profoundly undignifying world of unfathomable colonial violence, it is our duty to disrupt what seeks to destroy. Though we may feel deeply wounded and, at times, fragmented by all that has been destroyed, through *sumūd*, we rise. We know that we are rooted to the land, entwined with it in life and in death; no matter how disfigured or dispersed we may be, we persist—we must persist—in reweaving together our stories of livability. Even when parts of our lives remain fragmented, our resistance remains in our words, our art, our voices, our cherished connection to one another. Through *sumūd*, we defy this fragmentation, and instead, translate this shape into the promise of seeds, scattered across the land.

“here, down deep,
we are more than seeds,
we are the systems and the soil that we need...”
- an excerpt of a poem by Devin Atallah

It is in every act of our own seeds of resistance that we bloom this promise of *sumūd*.

Until liberation. For all of us.

Jamilla Hashem
Guest Editor, *Toyon* 72

BETWEEN ROOTS AND RETURN

Julz Makes Art



My Gazan Thobe

Jamilla Hashem

I don't carry a lived experience of my Palestinianness through growing up in the culture or in the region but through relationships I've cultivated in the liminal space between a lost and a longing. It's a calling I heeded when I had the honor and heartbreak of walking the land of Palestine. It's a thread I've learned to weave among my work, education, advocacy, art, relationships, personal growth, and healing. Symbolically so, *tatreez* has naturally become my most accessible tool of severing connection—of this meaning-making. Our *tatreez*, represented in our dress through creative repetition of story-telling colors and patterns, transcends a colonial imposition of linear time. Rather, our *tatreez* represented in its lack of perceivable beginning or end is in a constant state of becoming. This Palestinian expression, ancient and evolving, is not just of the past nor eventual, but ongoing. Just as the promise of return. It is known that when the rhizome of a plant stem is ruptured, its network is

not destroyed, but rerouted. Diverse as we are as Palestinians, we remain connected to this rhizomatic network of all that it means to be Palestinian, and we carry a rupture of the Nakba that remains both unresolved and ongoing. In the current space, place, and time I hold as a mixed Palestinian in diaspora, both privileged and disconnected, I mourn our ongoing Nakba while also being held in the web of our collective, liberatory imagination. I mourn our Nakba as I stitch my first thobe—though seemingly individual in nature—as a living being held in our Palestinian web of intergenerational, indigenous feminist, land-based knowledge. An embodied *sumūd*. It connects me to knowledge I may not know how to articulate, but my body still has a felt sense of, finding its way through the shapes my hands make with this needle and thread. This ritual of my thobe and all the ways I fight are dedicated to Palestine.

“In a revolution, one is born a hundred times and dies a thousand more. The

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revolution isn't a rocket but a river that flows and pours forth." - Sahar Khalifeh

MY THOBE STORY (in progress)

I struggled to begin her. What was her story to be? Must the story be complete before I could begin? Or could I allow her story to be told and unfold through me? So I began to stitch. Of course, she would be Gazan—an ode not only to my roots but because nothing is more on my mind, in my heart, and alive in my blood, body, and bones than Gaza.

A GAZAN SUNSET

I let the colors develop as they might, sun setting over a beautiful Gazan coast.



I began envisioning, basing my inspiration on a traditional Gazan thobe, which my thobe pattern is based on. I chose traditional Gazan motifs, which are often geometric and vibrant. For the chest piece, I truly allowed the visions for the placement and motifs to come through without worrying so much about what the story and motifs might be telling.

I trusted my ancestors to speak through my hands.



Continued on page 17

Dear Nour: To honor our ghosts and build a home in these uncertain times

Florence Ng

Dear Nour,

There's a scene in a show that I haven't been able to stop thinking about.

In the scene, a man dressed in blue is walking slowly out to the gardens. There is a kerfuffle out there: a fire is burning, characters are shouting in all directions, and there is a comically chaotic moment where everyone is simultaneously trying to figure out what is happening, put out the fire, and catch the person who set the fire in the first place. The man in blue looks unphased as he enters the garden, his expression so still you can feel the vacancy of his soul down to your core. He announces that his wife is dead, and he goes unheard. An injured woman on the ground glances at him, but she is too defeated to respond. He tries again to no avail. He yells for their attention, and he once again tells everyone that his wife is dead. In that brief moment where all eyes are on him, the firestarter runs away, and everyone rushes past the man in blue to find her. For a few

prolonged moments, the camera settles on the man in blue's empty expression, his grief so large it could fill the room, yet so invisible as a blur of people push past him on both sides.

In a later scene, he is seated across from the door of his bedroom, where his wife's body remains, and he is hunched up in an alcove all alone. His blue clothes contrast with his muted surroundings. A man runs by him, looking for the firestarter, and asks him about how he's feeling as an afterthought. The man in blue tries to open up, his emotions coming out of him in awkward clumps, and he asks the man whether he would help him bury his wife because he wouldn't be able to do it himself. His voice is small and fragile, and the man is uncomfortable—he knows he should comfort the man in blue, but the seconds stretch and he really needs to go. He says yes to helping the man in blue bury his wife, but they will never have the chance. At the end of this interaction, the man in blue ends up kneeling in front of the bedroom door, praying to a god he did not believe in for anything at all to help

him navigate the ways he was drowning in his grief.

This scene brought me back to the feeling of childhood, where every confusing and overwhelming moment held the same stakes as the man in blue. Every big feeling, as kids gifted with the language call it, lay dormant inside that bedroom door—it's not locked, but for years, you'll be the only one brave enough to go in, even if you've never wanted to do it alone. It brings me to adulthood too, and the realization of how little things have changed.

I know, my friend, that we've been through a lot. (The last few years especially have felt like an exercise in painting grief in neon and throwing it down a deep, dark abyss.) Our parallel lives have made us grateful that we have a well-structured house inside us, and that gratitude has taught us to overlook everything else: the haunted bedroom, the garden on fire, the leaky ceilings, the peeling wallpaper, the parts that don't work, and the parts so out of date that we're astonished when we witness the shinier parts of others.

Recently, I feel as though something has been ripped out of my programming like a wrecking ball to the second floor, and I can't tell yet whether it's a good thing. In one recent conversation with one of our mutual friends, I talked about the undefined broken bits inside of us—they gently reminded me that adrienne marie brown calls those parts brokenbeautiful. These days, I don't feel broken per se, but rather void and blank, like I am undergoing a factory reset in which my body is attempting to shield me from all the things my mind has been waging war against for longer than I can define. I feel to some degree, this must be how

it feels to be a ghost, hollow and haunting and made of grief. As I said once over drinks, I'm not sure that I fear dying as much as I fear the moment of disappearing. I fear, with all the humility of one tiny human tethered to the tapestry of so many others, the regret of leaving behind a world so unfinished, and all the trappings of an emotion as powerful as yearning.

I know, Nour, that you understand what it's like to feel so utterly lost within the folds of your mind. It is a hopelessly lonely journey, no matter how often you rehearse the parts you can say out loud. They say that's really the crux of what therapy should be—a space for you to spill your guts and find your way with an observant stranger, so the ones who love you don't have to hold you while you bleed. And yet, the cold rationality that we worship—the part of us that has been trained to be perfect and presentable at all times while taking up the least amount of space—has only brought us deeper into that loneliness. A good therapist will attempt to draw you out, but more likely, they will only affirm what you're able to give. There are vignettes in our life that have never been spoken out loud, and the more we keep it shut behind closed doors, the more we envision ourselves in those stories to be far more monstrous than we are.

Perhaps there have been others who have offered to open the bedroom door for us and walk us in. Perhaps we're so accustomed to doing it alone that we don't recognize such an alien gesture.

I've only just begun to realize that being like the man in blue has never gotten me anywhere. I am stuck in my patterns and

envious of the freedom of the firestarter. At the same time, it's hard to start a fire when you've trained yourself to see everything around you to be a blaze, and the only way you know how to earn anybody's love is to put out fires.

In moments when I hear myself, I can't help but wonder whether we've always been like this.

Sparks

Do you remember that day where we sat by the water and talked about what it was like to feel orphaned by both parents while they are alive, yet utterly dispossessed of yourself and who you are beyond the value you bring to your family? I've spent the last few months writing and thinking about liberation and community, yet it is so ingrained in me—this haunting of my younger self—that I sometimes feel like an imposter.

I believe you and I must've had a great spark when we were little, something that probably could've filled a room with light if the adults around us knew how to protect it. Something we didn't fear then but others taught us to later. Instead, you might've been the golden child, overwriting your spark to make others happy and never succeeding. I was the problem child converted into something gilded, and that incredible intuition I had about what I wanted, the fearlessness in which I conveyed that want, and the creativity I possessed was so quickly eroded away. I felt my spark turn monstrous, blasphemous (though you might have inherited another word for it), and when it finally sinks in that the adults might be right, and you might actually be broken or bad in some way...you spend a lifetime making up

for all the ways you fall short.

I've been toying with the hypothesis that I fear success more often than I fear failure. As you've seen, my fear of rejection can be crippling, but *failure* feels like a more comfortable, familiar place to be at times. Success means you have something to lose and the thing that is making you happy in the moment can be gone in a second. Failure is another Tuesday I know how to bounce back from. When I reflect now on recent feelings of rejection, there must've been no small part of me that feared being liked for who I was and being unable to trust it. Both feel equally difficult to me.

I heard it said once that neglected kids are addicted to coping. We find any reason at all to rationalize away our trauma responses—the things we do and feel that we can't explain—often in ways most unkind to ourselves. After all, it's hard to take your own feelings seriously when so, so few people do. It's easy to move about different social circles fearlessly when relationships are transient things. It's incredible when those transient moments turn a little more permanent. It's terrifying when you realize you want both unconditional and forever and you have to *trust* others to hold the worst parts of you.

And why would they want to? The world is in shambles. You hold the world in your heart and love it for all its worth—you build futures and dream beauty into song, but you can't help but wonder if that's enough. Is that enough light to swallow the dark? Is that enough love to earn love in return?

So you learn to patch up those little broken pieces of chaos inside of you and hope the

worst of you is not as bad as you feel. And there are days where it will feel irreparable, but the thing that really breaks my heart is how common our experiences really are. I've seen it in so many kids, even before I could recognize it in myself—kids who tell me there is something wrong with them that can never be fixed. My instinct is to set fire to the systems that put those words in that order into the heart and soul of these kids, especially when all they are doing is whatever they can to be the best versions of themselves.

I know that the world is vast and there is enough space for all of us. I also know that even the strongest of us can sometimes be swayed by the myths of smallness.

In other languages

Here in a white-dominated space where everyone else comes to assimilate, I've found times where I could spend hours talking about my world, yet it will get lost in translation. I know you've felt this way too. When our worlds cannot be so simply funneled into the lens of what is comprehensible to those who benefit from our extraction, we bastardize our own stories to fight the exhaustion of retelling it to an audience who don't understand. What is the Disney version of intergenerational trauma in cultural exile, for example? Bastardize is a funny word, isn't it? It speaks to an experience of orphaning in its own way—a bastard as one who knows their origins and is rejected for it. As such, to bastardize is perhaps to birth an idea, one where you can trace backwards in time and understand the purpose of its existence, yet reject it completely as something defective.

I've been thinking lately of an impossible to translate Cantonese word: 忍 (yun). The character is a knife over a heart, with an extra barb attached to the end of the knife, and it means to withstand, to hold, to resign yourself to suffering—to hold a knife in your heart without complaining. Our culture has always been proud of all that we can withstand, all the blood, sweat, and tears embedded into every aspect of our lives. There is a sense that the West is delicate, and the one thing we can hold over them is our ability to work harder, do triple the work in half the time, and above all, never lose our footing no matter what comes our way. To say 忍 out loud is to indicate that you don't like what's happening—it's an open invitation for the other to relieve your suffering, yet never make the move to remove that knife, that badge of honour, on your own. Simultaneously, we tell our children to 忍 when they scrape their knees and cry. It is a word that ought to be value neutral, like so many in Chinese, until it is paired with another and situated in context, yet it feels deeply fatalistic in today's world.

English grew out of a world that is used to forced assimilation, assigning specific melodies to each word so they can remain the same in any context. It takes from other languages and sometimes makes monsters of those words. For example, I think of the word kowtow, which comes with a disdainful air of subservience. To kowtow to someone is to lick their boot, to follow them off a cliff, and smile unquestioningly while you do it. It's a word that traps us in history, yet can't make sense of the culture in which it was created. China's culture of bowing has long since been eroded

away. To 磕頭 is to live in the past, and we no doubt have internalized the western disdain for it to some extent. I think of traditional weddings, where a couple will honour their families and each other with a 磕頭. The bowing looks different now, and maybe the reverence does too. Maybe we don't actually have a way to honour each other the way we used to.

Since I've moved away from the big city, I've been hearing my own accent change—the words don't come as easily as they used to, and I sound foreign even to myself. I watch videos sometimes to hear Cantonese in the accent I once felt sure of. I try to learn new phrases and carve the old into my brain. It doesn't always stick. As I've grown a bit more into myself, as I've begun to live more authentically—casting away slowly that Hannah Montana life, as you call it—I've been feeling oddly lonely on this journey. In Western movies, being able to live unapologetically as yourself is the greatest feat a queer person can achieve. And yet, they never talk about the grief of compartmentalizing your life when the ones you love can only love you in a different language. What is liberation then when there are no words to convey our joys and our sorrows to the other half of our lives? The difference between us and Hannah Montana is that both Hannah and Miley live in the same world. Florence and Nour, alongside 沉瑤 and نور, live two parallel lives: one half building a dream, halfway guilty for the compromises we've made, and the other half caught in the yearning of the past, trapped in a world we don't always understand, yet know that we will never see again.

Neither halves know what to do about the

future ahead.

Neither halves are able to hold each other in the first place.

Neither halves possess the language to bring our worlds together and make us whole.

Chameleon

I once wrote a story of a shapeshifter whose ability malfunctioned to the point where they were shifting uncontrollably into another person every few seconds.

In the stories we've exchanged about our families, we've often had to take up the role of shapeshifter at the drop of a hat. It's how we learned to survive. The big emotions around us can be so wonderful, then plummet without warning, and we will be whoever we need to be to catch them. Because nobody else will. Being a shapeshifter is lonely, and there are days where you've shifted so many times that certain faces begin to stick—that's who you are now, and still your body may not feel like your own

In the story, the shapeshifter is tied down when she couldn't stop shifting, and her magic is stripped from her. Though it saves her life, she describes it like a phantom limb, like a part carved out of her she will never get back, and she misses it. Similarly, our ability to shift can be wonderful and bring about a level of connectedness that many envy.

Being a shapeshifter can also be exhausting, because it's not just you changing in a vacuum—your whole reality warps into something that you must now adapt to. There is emotional labor to unmeshing from multiple selves and healing from the injuries we sustain along the way. There is also the

constant wondering of whether or not another version of yourself would be preferred. You can gather a room full of people who profess to care for you and still feel like the loneliest kid in the world.

I'm fine (I'm not fine)

As I am writing these words, you are going through one of the hardest times of your life, and it's in these moments I feel the limitation of language. To capture the full breadth and depth of grief is impossible, and to try would do a disservice to you. I've heard the ways we sanitize ourselves and our emotions, colour them presentable as we proffer them up to be witnessed, to be held and understood, yet bookended by cries of how fine we are—lest we make others uncomfortable by revealing how not fine we actually are. Even against the backdrop of genocide, facism, and continual violence, we're asked to eat, pray, love our anxieties away and be fine.

By definition, fine implies neutrality erring on the side of positivity. To be neutral is to exist with the potential to hold or become any and all states of being—shapeshifters, so to speak. In that neutrality, we contain both the potential to return to the comfort of our palatable selves and the possibility of diverging into something different—something sinister, perhaps—something that reflects the darkness lurking within. Perhaps both can exist in tandem, one above and one below, like Jekyll and Hyde at our least generous. How much can one take, after all, before the Hyde in us grows past acceptable rage?

Ultimately, it is a painful thing sometimes to reveal the soft parts of ourselves and give

into wanting. Yet we do it anyway: desiring alternate futures for our parallel selves, desiring the kind of seenness that could heal any open wound, desiring open invitations to exist with our messy, impulsive inner children, etc. Impossibly, we dare to desire love that can coexist with each iteration of our shapeshifting selves, and be held and seen when shapeshifting inevitably becomes untenable. Amazingly, we desire because there is someone underneath all of who we are supposed to be—someone who simply is.

The point is, there is a very possible world in which all that we desire is right in front of us. And still, I'm not convinced any singular force could help you believe in the things that others tell you. We sit so comfortably in the things we tell ourselves, even when—especially when—they are unkind, that it becomes second nature to brush another's acts of care off like dirt off your clothes. Perhaps it might help to hear words of affirmation over and over until you create some sort of Pavlovian self-love response—or perhaps you've tried for years and it still hasn't happened, but if I just hear it a little more...if I just model it to myself a few more times...if I could just reframe it...if...and if...and if... If everything just changed and everything could just be the same or different—that's always how it goes, isn't it?

What if it's not words of affirmation that we need? What if community and village-building is really just all about asking questions?

I've been thinking a lot more about curiosity as the conduit to building that trust with others and ourselves. Perhaps fixing shattered internal worlds is moreso about

picking up the pieces and co-recreating them with the people who profess to love us, people who can reframe the fractures and paint gold over them.

I confess I don't know what all of this means yet. Love in its many iterations has broken me up more times than I've given it a chance to put me back together, but curiosity feels easier to achieve than our grander utopian ideals.

Curiosity feels like potential.

Curiosity feels like creation.

Rebuilding

At the end of this essay, I'm reminded of the story you wrote of the windows, and the vignettes of everyday life in liberated Palestine. I think of the kids in those stories, no longer needing to throw rocks to protect their home as final acts of defiance, and the communal rebuilding of Abu Suhayb's home. It's really such a beautiful story, my friend, and I look forward to the day I can accompany you home and share a fig with you as we rebuild.

Until then, maybe we can help each other put down our ghosts for a while and renovate our internal homes.

You've no doubt heard and said every platitude in the book whenever you hear the creaking of another's worn floorboards. We've trained ourselves so well to act at the first hint of distress, after all. Maybe you've even told yourself the very same platitudes, intellectualizing every imperfection on the wall, in the ceilings, in the haphazard decor that fill our rooms. Whatever it takes to convince ourselves we'll be okay. But what does it take to *believe* others when they tell us we're okay? What does it mean to *let* another

care for you and to mend your wounds? To trust in another so deeply and unwaveringly... it's as beautiful as it is difficult.

I wrote earlier of our internal homes and the sturdy frame we've been given, even when we feel like run-down fixer-uppers. There is, as you've said before, only so much we can do to embark alone on a home renovation journey as big as this, and I wonder now what it would look like to give into that exhaustion and let others clear the rubble once in a while. What would it look like to sing and dance and take our time as we pick through paint chips together as we finally tackle the peeling paint? I imagine listening to "Crème Brûlée" and line dance like those Asian aunties. Then we'll share a meal, and maybe in the morning, we'll finally fix that leaky faucet inside us that never stops dripping.

And who knows, maybe it'll all fall apart by Tuesday.

Maybe a bull will run through and tear out the floorboards again.

Maybe the wearing and tearing is subtler than that: like water expanding wood and rusting on hinges when you least expect it.

Or maybe it'll stand a little longer than we ever thought possible.

With love,
Florence

Living vicariously through the fading childhood memories of home

Georgina Muñoz-Villanueva

I live vicariously through the fading childhood memories of home,
before I moved here and became a success story to those who stayed “behind.”
As I move from place to place unsure of where I belong,
I remember the cool feeling of the mosaic floor underneath my feet,
peeling oranges in the porch on the summer season,
racing my neighbors through the roots of mangrove trees,
the pozole and dulce the cebada,
the communal naps,
preparing for hurricane season on the spring,
and the unconditional love
before the family separated in the pursuit of a dream
that was never mine to begin with,
only to become alien to this land as a settler
and alienated by a nation-state that wants me gone.
I live vicariously through the memory of home,
and the expressions of care that I desperately try to recreate.
To me, the opposite feeling of home is clutter,
confusing, sometimes undistinguishable, and overwhelming,
a single feather sifting through the air at best,
and, at worst, everlasting toxic waste,
do you know what I mean?
Do you ever feel that too?
Like many others, I also wish to return,
but I no longer know *where* or *how* as a physical space.
So for now I return by resisting forced compliance to the settler state,
through expressions of love, care, trust and connection,
and by vicariously living through the fading childhood memories of home,
until the day I *literally* return.

Graffiti

Lily P. Merrell

One day I walk past the wooden bridge,
spray-painted with demands for justice.
In the bathroom the stall door tells me
WE CANNOT BE FREE UNTIL ALL OF US ARE FREE.
The next day the bridge has been sanded clean,
the walls scrubbed and painted over.

What lengths you go to, to keep up appearances,
to keep our free speech falling on deaf ears.
Did you even think about how many lives might be saved
if your custodial budget went towards freeing people?
Ignoring the problem doesn't mean it's not happening:
You can erase the graffiti but we remember their names.

Don't you realize you're missing the point?
Here, I'll spell it out for you:
You can sand that bridge down to nothing,
paint the walls until they're two feet thick.
You can erase our messages all you want.
But we are the children of the future,
and the future is here.

Troje

Erandi Hernández Aguilar

P'AMATAKUARHU, JUÁTARHU¹

Náante K'eri ka Táata K'eri²

Frente el troje

Juchari taa

Juchari sirangua³

Sonreindo

Pensando

Náante K'eri con el yauare⁴(yauari?)⁵

Cocinando

Lavando

Sus ojos lleno de brío

Vida, ternura ka historia

Historias que he escuchado y nunca escuchare

Con su trenza ka con liston tejido dentro su pelo

Woven into her hair

1 The name of my pueblo located within the sierra P'urhépecha

2 Mama Grande y Papa Grande | Grandmother and Grandfather en P'urhépecha

3 Nuestro hogar, nuestros raíces | Our home, our roots

4 Metate

5 Históricamente P'urhépecha es una idioma pasada oralmente, la pronunciación y escritura cambia dependiendo en region. Mi Náante K'eri me dijo la palabra en P'urhé pero no se como se escribe. | P'urhépecha historically an oral language, words / pronunciation varies depending on region. I've heard my Náante K'eri tell me the word in P'urhé but am not sure of the spelling.



Náante K'eri Eloisa ka Táata K'eri Epigmenio sitting in front of the family Troje, from the family archives.

TOYON

Streams of white and grey blossom from the roots cascading down her back and shoulder
Leading you down to her beautiful smile
The smile which my Nana K'eri has, parecen gemelas

Táata k'eri junto a ella
Sentado
Looking forward
Lookin all firme
Con su sombrero

Una mesa a su lado con comida y un cantaro de agua
Hay como amo al agua de cantaro
De sabor a mineral, a barro la mejor agua en el mundo

Tazas, cantaros, platos, cazuelas tras ellos
Todos de barro
Tsitsikuecha⁶ a su lado

Inchánhekua⁷ colgando a su lado
lleno de t'u olor, t'u sīpiata, tu ser
Tu huella
Junto con el olor a juata⁸

Táata K'eri,
Dice juchitti Táata sapichu Omar , “Erandi uandani como Táata K'eri Epigmenio, igualito como el”⁹
Sera cierto? Es cierto? Cuentame, que crees?
Espero que sepas que ji uekasinanki juchitti Táata K'eri
Ji uekasinanki juchiiti Táata K'eri¹⁰

Náante K'eri,
Yo me recuerdo de cuando nos visitabas
Estabas sentada en la esquina en la casa de juchitti Nana K'eri
Envuelta en tu rebozo

6 Flores | Flowers

7 Gaban

8 Sierra/Montaña | Mountain

9 Dice mi tío Omar, “Erandi habla como Abuelito Epigmenio, igualito como el”

10 Espero que sepas que yo te amo Táata K'eri Yo te amo Táata K'eri

La bandera P'urhépecha
 Piritakua de Tata Jurhieta¹¹ ambrazandote
 Pirekuecha¹²sonando desde el boombox
¹³Tsitsiki urapiti, xanchkare sesi jaxeka,
 Ka xani P'untsumeni jaka...
 Ji uekasinanki juchitti Náante K'eri¹⁴
 Ji uerasinga sani, ka chanksini nona
 mirihurhinia...

Les extraño, les amo, les recuerdo

Axam uerani, axamu k'arhácheni,

Nokeni jurhakuakia...

11 *Rayo de Papa Sol*

12 *Traditional P'urhépecha songs which serve as a form of storytelling, expressing emotions, maintaining our history.*

13 *Pirekua: Tsitsiki Urapiti Flor De Canela*

14 *Yo te amo Náante K'eri Nokeni jurhakuakia...*

A Defiance

Giancarlo Campagna

for Palestine

Each of us must do our part to grieve, to admonish, to pray.
The words of the poet whose verse is quickly delivered
to the trash heaps, replaced by the logic of governments
and lodged into the double speak purview of generals.
They say we trust only those with their hands on triggers,
or thumbs jiggering the locks of bank vaults and holding
trays out to be filled with a generation's inheritance.
No food, no entry, those who are injured must suffer
the consequence of conquest. The way it has always been
done, forever and ever, amen. But look, now, remnants
of families are writing letters to their loved ones, kissing
the parchment pulled out of splintered rubble, etching
the names of their relations, saying goodbye to their mothers,
saying goodbye to the earth. They turn their heads
toward the morning sun and shout we will not be defeated
by this wayward cousin. We are alive now as the sun is alive.
We are dancing and singing praise songs to our kin.
We are loving the moon, the bright expanse of her spirit
embraces us, whispering in the way the moon does:
*you are the light reflected on my craters, you are the children
blessed by your suffering, I shall await your love at the next turning.*

My Gazan Thobe (Part Two)

Jamilla Hashem

ROSE MEDICINE

A beloved plant medicine that purifies the spirit and soothes the soul.

When I began envisioning the sleeves, I loved the idea of the repetition of roses— a plant very special to me and for Palestine and all across the land of Cana'an. This flower bed of white roses is an ode to the Palestinian babies and children brutally stolen from us at the hands of the genocidal, zionist state.

The white symbolizes their innocence and purity, and also the colorlessness left behind in their absence. The motif often called feathers surrounds the roses and serves as blessings and prayers to the beautiful souls on their journeys heavenward.

The placement of these motifs on the sleeves serves as a reminder to me that for the actions I take, may they be in relation to the collective fight for justice.



Continued on page 50

how do i resist

Calista Requijo

how do you resist how do you stand tall how do you break out and reach between the bars and pull justice through their teeth and the honest answer is. i don't. the honest answer is my downcast eyes and my long long hair and my voice soft but steady like a trickling stream in the middle of the wood, it all protected me like a suit of armor or a tailored suit of the businessman we laugh at. the honest answer is i said please and thank you to the judge who served up all she could when justice was never on the table, when the best we could do was win me some peace and quiet and aloneness. the honest answer is i resisted for so long by not resisting, by giving my lips and my touch until it started wearing off of me like chalk, and now all that's left to do is lay on my couch and follow a finger moving back and forth while the other hand collects the lost pieces of me, strewn across floors covered in dead mice and fearful cats and shattered screens. the honest answer is it's all i can do, to cry here, to beg my eyes to stay closed and let me sleep, to try and try and try again to learn to tell my friends no, to enjoy the home i pay for by never leaving it. the honest answer is as much as my resistance is not resisting, i can't seem to lay down my hammer and lay down my knife and lay down the data i collect and study and unpack, unpack, unpack. the honest answer is i am proud when i can just listen to a minute-long song or strum through a C chord or sit on a noodle in the water and not ask it to mean anything at all.

Someone Said This Land Has No People

Fadwa Al Qasem

SOMEONE SAID THIS LAND HAS NO PEOPLE

And so it was emptied
 of skins and bones
 words and mouths
 sunbirds and new moons
 olives and oranges
 wedding dresses chocolate water and laughter
 soils uprooted and strewn in the wind
 displaced, stolen, forlorn
 stories twisted, smothered, untold

SOMEONE SAID LET THERE BE EXILE

And so there was
 from the seventh day before I was born 'til the seventh day before I died
 ...
 And in the spaces between exiles,
 between breaths caught, that space where words still have wings
 I wrote my stories
 ...

TOYON

In my stories
I am a citizen of clouds
My skin changes color, depending on the weather,
or the spot from which I choose to look up to the sky
In my stories I am earth's calligraphy
and when earth calls, I rain, I pour
'til jasmines sprout from arid hearts

In my stories
I am few words
Not a hopelessness helplessness puddling at people's heels
I am not urgency
Not guilt
Not the desire to be a thousand stars
In my stories I am endless stretches of living
Not legs running across hot desert sands and barbed wire and climbing cement walls and
walking on oceans with holes in my feet

In my stories there are no oceans for children
to drown
In my stories, my shoulders are dinghies,
My arms tents
And in my stories, I have only two eyes
... they have not yet learned to cry.

I taught my stories to ooze from pores
tiptoe through veins
deliberately cause laughter lines
frown lines
welling of eyes.
I taught my stories, to whisper
because stories live longer as murmurs on lips.

SOMEONE SAID LET THERE BE GENOCIDE

Let the children write their names on severed arms
 Let the mothers drown in the rivers they weep
 Let the fathers pull out corpses from under the rubble
 Let this genocide cover the sky, the ears of man, the eyes of God
 And so there was
 One day, one hundred
 One bomb, one hundred
 From a safe distance
 One life ended, one dream, one hundred, ten thousand, twenty
 Five
 Thousand
 Seems under these skies
 One or three is a good age to die
 Where only moments ago
 Life was whispering hope in their ears
 And all the trees hold their breath
 No time to exhale
 Between one death and another

And Then Everyone Understood

How the Phoenix learned its magic from a Palestinian child
 How a rainbow can paint horizons in the draught
 How a stream becomes a powerful river that flows upright
 How a broken wing can soar high
 Without the help of the wind

BENEATH THE SILENCE

ayoubelkhadirart





قال أحدهم: هذه الأرض خالية من الناس

فدوى القاسم، ترجمة د. عبدالعزیز عكيلة

قال أحدهم: هذه الأرض خالية من الناس

و قد كان... فأفرغت
من جلودٍ وعظام
من كلماتٍ وأفواه
من طيور الشمس وأهلةٍ جديدة
من زيتونٍ وبرتقال
من فساتين زفافٍ وشوكولاتةٍ وماءٍ وضحك
تُنزَع التربة من جذورها، تُذرى في الرياح
مشرّدة، مسروقة، ميّمة
قصصٌ تُلوى، تُخنق، تُدفن ولا تُروى

قال أحدهم: فليكن هناك نفي

و قد كان
من اليوم السابع قبل أن أولد
إلى اليوم السابع قبل أن أموت

...

وفي الفراغ بين نفي ونفي
بين أنفاسٍ محبوسة

حيث لا تزال للكلماتُ أجنحةُ
كتبتُ قصي

في قصي
أنا مواطنةُ السحاب
جلدي يتغيَّرُ لونهُ حسبِ الطقسِ
أو حسبِ الزاويةِ التي أرفعُ فيها وجهي إلى السماء
أنا خطُّ الأرضِ وقلْمُها
إذا نادتنِي الأرضُ أمطرتُ، انهمرتُ
حتى ينبتَ الياسمينُ من القلوبِ اليابسةِ

في قصي
أنا كلماتٌ قليلةُ
لستُ عجزاً يائساً يتجمَعُ في بركٍ عندِ الأقدامِ
لستُ استعجالاً، لستُ ذنباً
لستُ رغبةً في أن أكونَ أَلْفَ نجمةِ
أنا امتداداتٌ لا نهائيةٌ للحياةِ
لستُ أرجلاً تركضُ فوقِ رمالِ الصحراءِ الحارقةِ تخترقُ الأسلاكَ الشائكةَ تتسلقُ الجدرانِ الإسمنتيةِ
تمشي فوقِ البحا رباً أقدامٍ مثقوبةِ

في قصي لا يوجد محيطاتٌ لتغرقُ فيها الأطفالُ
في قصي كنفائِي قواربُ نِجاةِ
ذراعاي خيامِ
وفي قصي لي فقط عينانِ
لم تتعلما بعد أن تبكيا

علّمتُ قصي أن تتسربَ من المسامِ
أن تتسللَ في الأوردةِ بخفةِ
أن ترسمَ خطوطَ الضحكِ والعبوسِ عن عمدِ
أن تُدمعَ العيونِ
علّمتُ قصي أن تهمسَ
فالقصصُ تعيشُ أطولَ حين تكونُ همساً على الشفتينِ

قال أحدهم: فلتكن إبادةٌ جماعية

فليكتب الأطفال أسماءهم على أذرع مقطوعة
 فلترمي الأمهات أنفسهن في أنهار دموعهن
 فليخرج الآباء الجثث من تحت الركاب
 ولتملأ هذه الإبادة السماء و أذان البشر وعين الله
 و قد كان
 يومٌ واحد أو مائة يوم
 قنبلة واحدة أو مائة قنبلة
 من مسافة آمنة
 حياة تنتهي، حلمٌ واحد أو مائة، عشرة آلاف، عشرون
 خمسة وعشرون ألفاً
 يبدو أنه تحت هذه السماء
 عمرٌ سنة أو ثلاثة هو عمرٌ جيدٌ للوفاة
 حيث كانت الحياة قبل لحظاتٍ فقط تهمس بالأمل في أذانهم
 وتحبس الأشجار أنفاسها
 لا وقت للزفير
 بين موتٍ وموت

و أخيراً فهم الجميع

كيف تعلّمت العنقاء سحرها من طفلٍ فلسطيني
 كيف يرسم قوس قزح الأفاق في موسم الجفاف
 كيف يصبح الجدول نهراً قوياً يجري واقفاً
 كيف يحلق جناح مكسورٌ عالياً
 دون مساعدة الرياح

Ring of Flowers

Claire Hsu Accomando

He came to America from South Africa
via Canada on a student visa.
Born on another land in a far-off continent
he is naturalized, therefore, has rights.

Now the enormously rich man elevates a chainsaw
above his shellacked face. He, who fathered a dozen-
plus children (five *in vitro*), with many women,
refers to his young trans daughter as his dead son.

Empathy, he says, is killing civilization.
It's the fundamental weakness of the West.
He is wrong. Without empathy, our planet would
be an ossuary littered with Neanderthal bones.

Caring, not cruelty, planted the seeds of society
long before recorded history. To honor the dead
and comfort the living, early humans lined graves
with a veneer of mud and aromatic plants.

A small skeleton on a bed of sage and mint,
a broken femur in a splint, rings of flowers circling
a burial site, these gestures are the tender bricks,
the building blocks of civilization.

LA PODEROSA

Ernesto Iniguez



Nebraska, 2035

David T. Fisher

Content note:

This story contains discussions of racism, anti-immigrant discrimination, police brutality, transphobia, cynicism and solidarity in the bleak, authoritarian dystopia that is not as far away as you think.

The angry, red sun peeks out through a haze of smoke from the annual wildfires as it slowly sinks behind the blue mountains, casting long shadows over abandoned wheat fields. Drumming your fingers on the dashboard as you wait, you watch the blinding headlights of self-driving cars rush by on the highway nearby. The engine hums as your ancient, gas-fueled truck idles so you can keep the air conditioner running. You're glad that the two of you agreed to meet at dusk, not just for the cover of darkness, but because the scorching heat was even more unbearable than usual today, and it always cools down quickly after dark.

As you fiddle with the radio trying to find a station that plays anything other than

static noise, a black speck appears over the hill, slowly growing larger as it approaches. It follows along the edge of the highway, then turns off onto a dirt road, headed straight towards you. You wrap your denim jacket around your shoulders and flash your headlights so your guest can find you, before hopping out to meet her.

The loud whir of June's electric bike comes to an abrupt stop as she hits the brakes, kicking up clouds of dust from the road. You raise a hand to shield your eyes as she carelessly drops the bike in a patch of dead grass under the shade of a lonely tree. June tosses her windswept black hair out of her face – no helmet, of course – then turns to you and waves.

“Hey!” she chirps.

“Hey,” you reply. Your boots crunch against dry, dead leaves around the base of the tree as you join her under its boughs, already starting to shed as autumn looms closer. You fish a joint out of your breast pocket and light it up. After taking a customary couple of drags, you pass it to her.

“Thanks,” June mumbles, joint between her teeth. “Here.” She opens the leather messenger bag slung over her shoulder and hands you a brown paper bag.

“Pleasure doing business with you,” you joke as you tuck the crumpled bag into your jacket pocket. Transaction complete, you haven’t seen June in a while, so you want to hang around a little longer and catch up. You always do.

Towering over the highway, a couple hundred feet away, an electronic billboard emits soft blue light against the dim sky. It’s an easy landmark to look for when you head to your monthly meetings with June. Graffiti covers half the screen, and more than a few pixels are dead, but you recognize snippets of traffic updates, weather forecasts, news clips, and advertisements. In a tiny office, in some major city on one of the coasts, a minimum wage employee is still updating the software for billboards like this all across the country, though it’s always outdated by a few days, if not weeks. An emotionless, androgynous voice booms out its scripted lines to uninterested drivers every few minutes.

TEMPERATURES REACH RECORD HIGH OF
119 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT IN ASHLAND
TODAY. RADIANT AURA SKIN-LIGHTENING
SUNSCREEN™ ON SALE NOW!

“Damn,” June says. “Remember when ads used to be good? Like, they had catchy little jingles and stuff? Now every ad has to be one second long so people passing by at like a hundred miles-per-hour on the highway can’t miss them.”

You laugh. “It’s not like anyone listens to them anyways.” Between the electronic announcements, it’s quiet out here. You can hear birds whistling and the rustling of wind blowing through waving stalks of overgrown yellow wheat. “So, how is everything in June’s world?”

June sighs and leans back against the sturdy trunk of the tree. You notice dark circles under her tired hazel eyes. A rope hangs from a branch above, her head taking the place where a tire once swung.

“Yoli got arrested,” she says.

“What? When?”

“Like, a couple days ago.”

You let the news of that sink in. You don’t know Yoli very well – you’ve never met, actually – but she’s June’s girlfriend, so you can’t help but be concerned. It’s very like June to just not mention things like this until you pester them out of her.

“What happened?”

June puffs on the joint, then hands it back to you, one end now covered in her black lipstick. “Last weekend, she went out with her friends, they were just standing outside the bar talking, when the cops showed up. They started questioning and harassing them and, you know how Yoli is, she fucking hates that. I’ve told her to just keep her head down when that happens but she doesn’t fucking listen, and she was super drunk. So she already wasn’t really on their good side, but then they asked to see her ID, and that’s when they put

her in handcuffs and took her and her friends down to the police station.”

June crosses her arms and stares down at her boots. You can't tell if she seems more angry at the cops, or at her bullheaded girlfriend. “They couldn't prove that she was in possession of estrogen, cause, like, I handle all that for her.¹ But obviously they saw her ID that clearly doesn't match what she looks like, and that's enough.”

You yourself have known plenty of friends who were arrested over the seven or eight years since those archaic “three item” crossdressing laws^{2,3} were reinstated in what was at the time still called Nebraska. It's a big part of the reason why you're too scared to move to the city, like they did. Whether you're reported by your neighbors or a vengeful ex-partner, outed by an employer, stopped by the police like Yoli was, or you simply don't pass, it would only be a matter of time before you were punished for the crime of existing while trans, too. Out here in the countryside, there's barely anyone around to judge how you look, and the cows certainly don't care.

ONGOING CONSTRUCTION AHEAD IN SIX MILES. NO DETOUR AVAILABLE.

“Anyways,” June continues, “she got six months in jail. I guess it could have been worse.” From what you've heard, sentences for “crossdressing” or “public sexual displays” range from mandated community service to

up to a year in prison, plus the charge of public intoxication they must have added to it. A few days might sound like a quick trial, but you already know that there probably wasn't one. It's no longer considered a fundamental right for people like you.

“She's technically in the men's prison, but I think they're letting her stay mostly in solitary confinement. They won't let her have any of her meds. She said they took her makeup and feminine clothes, but they haven't made her cut her hair – yet – and she got to keep her bras and underwear cause cops are afraid of exposed female breasts even on a trans woman.⁴ I told her she still looks good in the baggy orange jumpsuit, though. She would look good in anything.”

June laughs to herself, and you wonder how she seems to still be able to have a sense of humor about anything. It's her survival tactic, you suppose. It's better than yours, which is usually just pretending that the problem doesn't exist.

NEXT REST STOP IN TWO MILES.

“I'm so sorry, June,” you offer helplessly.

She runs her fingers through her hair, a stress habit she's had since she was a kid. “Yeah, well. She's just lucky she didn't get deported.”

“Wasn't she born here?”

“Doesn't matter.”⁵

Things are quiet for a moment. June

1 Reed, Erin. “The Trump Administration Threat to Transgender Adult Care Is Growing at Lightning Speed.” *Erin in the Morning*, 15 Apr. 2025, www.erininthemorning.com/p/the-trump-administration-threat-to.

2 Ryan, Hugh. “How Dressing in Drag Was Labeled a Crime in the 20th Century.” *History*, A&E Television Networks, 25 June 2019, updated 2 June 2025, www.history.com/articles/stonewall-riots-lgbtq-drag-three-article-rule.

3 “Covering Anti-Drag Legislation.” *NLGJA: The Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists*, 19 June 2025, www.nlgja.org/blog/2025/06/covering-anti-drag-legislation/.

4 Castigan, Mady. “I Cannot Imagine Surviving’: Read the Stories of the Trans Women Facing Forced Head Shaving and Medical Detransition in Florida Prisons.” *Trans News Network*, 13 Jan. 2025, transnews.network/p/i-cannot-imagine-surviving-read-the.

5 McCray Jones, Jon. “SCOTUS Just Gave ICE a Green Light to Profile Latinos. We Should All Be Outraged.” *ACLU of*

SUMÜD

Rabbit Hutch



wordlessly extends her hand to you, and you place the joint between her fingers.

“I need to start getting shit together. When she gets out, we’re moving.”

“Moving where?” you ask.

“Yoli has family outside of L.A.,” she responds immediately. It sounds like she’s been thinking about this a lot.

Ever since you met in high school, you and June have been talking about finding a way to get to California: a paradise, where you wouldn’t have to be afraid to be yourself anymore. Even then, it always seemed like an impossible dream.

You have some relatives in Canada. Although it’s not even close to as strict as the Southern border, it’s still very hard to get through. It’s been a long time since the days of just driving up north in the family van to visit your aunt and uncle in Toronto as a kid. A lot of things have changed.

Besides, you’re sure that as soon as the border control officer looks at you and then at the gender on your passport and then back at you, there will be problems. Even if you could change the gender marker on your government identification^{6,7}, you’re not sure you would. What gender you’re read as can vary based on

Wisconsin, 12 Sept. 2025, www.aclu-wi.org/news/scotus-just-gave-ice-a-green-light-to-profile-latinos-we-should-all-be-outraged/.

6 Howe, Amy, “Trump Administration Urges Supreme Court to Prevent Transgender People from Choosing Sex Markers on Passports.” SCOTUSblog, 19 Sept. 2025, <https://www.scotusblog.com/2025/09/trump-administration-urges-supreme-court-to-prevent-transgender-people-from-choosing-sex-markers-on-passports/>.

7 “Identity Document Guidance for Transgender, Nonbinary, Gender-Nonconforming, and Intersex People.” Lambda Legal, July

who's perceiving you, what town you're in, the tone of your voice, and how you dressed or styled your hair that day. It feels impossible to predict and you have no idea what would be safest. You've given up completely on using public bathrooms. Maybe it's for the best. Your gender identity can't be so easily defined by a checked box or a single letter, anyways.

You silently look out over the open field. Only a few miles north, the suburbs begin abruptly, followed by the electronic jungle of Omaha. When you were a kid, all of it was undeveloped, untouched land. Now, the library in your rural hometown has been replaced by a shopping center, complete with hostile architecture to prevent homeless people from sleeping outside. It's hard to wrap your head around how quickly things change.

You're not a naïve, desperate kid anymore. You're aware that, under the shiny surface of performative politics, California isn't really that much better than any of the other six megastates. While you're happy for your friends who have managed to escape the state or even the country, you personally couldn't just leave. You've lived here your whole life. You didn't ask for it, but it's your home. The feeling of the chill of lake water against your bare skin and the quiet solitude of the early morning as the sun rises over the wheat fields will always welcome you, even if the people don't. And even if you are lucky enough to be able to get a ticket out of here someday, you couldn't just leave behind all the others who never will.

BREAKING NEWS: NEW EVIDENCE REVEALS PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL

2025, lambdalegal.org/tgnc-checklist-under-trump/.

8 Rector, Kevin, and Ana Ceballos. "Charlie Kirk Railed Against Transgender Rights. His Killing Has Further Fueled the Fight." *Los Angeles Times*, 16 Sept. 2025, www.latimes.com/politics/story/2025-09-16/charlie-kirk-railed-against-transgender-rights-his-killing-has-further-fueled-the-fight.

SHOOTER HAD TRANSSEXUAL ROOMMATE.⁸

"Yoli won't be able to get a job here with her criminal record, but the laws are a lot less strict over there. It'll be easier to get hired for both of us. And we wouldn't have to worry about holding hands in public, or getting thrown out of restaurants, or being stared at, or having trash thrown at me, or..."

You want to tell her that there is no place where she wouldn't have to worry about those things, but you hold your tongue. It's not what she needs to hear right now.

"And I've been thinking a lot about surgery lately, dude. I know I used to say I was fine with how things were and I didn't need it, but... I don't know. I don't think I can tell myself that anymore. I don't want to end up getting so desperate that I do something stupid."

You've heard stories of people seeking out unlicensed body mod surgeons who charged a high price for their risky, amateur services. You've had friends who felt so helpless that they tried to recreate on themselves what they saw in a video on the dark web. Banning gender-affirming surgeries was never going to stop people from needing them, or from being transgender. It just made it much more dangerous. Maybe the method doesn't matter, though – whether state-sanctioned conversion therapy, or something more lethal – as long as it decreases the number of existing trans people in one way or another.

"I need to do it before they make it illegal in California, too. I know it'll be expensive. I know health insurance doesn't cover it out there either. But I've been saving for years, and

I have at least another six months to plan. And from what I've heard, with how the waiting lists are looking, it'll probably be several more years until I can even see a surgeon anyways."

You, yourself, gave up on the idea of changing your body a long time ago.

"I mean, I can't even go to the regular doctor without being scared they'll report me for taking hormones. It might be more expensive to live there than here, but I think it would be doable, with us both working. I think it would be worth it."

You stay quiet, but June continues. You wonder if she's trying to justify her reasoning to you, or to herself.

"And I don't feel like I'm helpful here. I couldn't stop Yoli from getting arrested. I can't stop my friends from being miserable. I can keep going to protests and city hall meetings, and sending emails to my representatives, and donating my spare change, and writing my stupid poems, but what difference does it make? No matter how nice and calm and peaceful I try to be, they always find a reason to hate us, even if they have to make one up. And all I can do about it is, what, vote every four years and hope it counts, until they take that right away from us too? What's the point in staying and fighting when nothing I ever do will matter anyways?"

You think about what you're doing with your life. Is it in service of your community? Is it enough? You've isolated yourself from your friends in the city. Any kind of support system you have is an hour away. You don't use social media anymore; you don't need corporations collecting your data, and it's been nothing but bots arguing with each other for a long time,

anyways. You limit your time on the internet, and the only news you hear about comes from daily worried texts from June, sending you articles you don't read. While she's become anxiously obsessive about staying informed, you're happy to be ignorant.

Instead, you spend your time reading escapist queer fantasy novels or working in the garden and greenhouse in your backyard. You grow mostly weed, but also fresh produce – apples, cucumbers, carrots, melons, strawberries, tomatoes. What you don't keep, you give to friends in the city when they run out of food stamps. Since the FDA dissolved five years ago, the lack of food regulations has become a normal part of life. You help your friends avoid the risk of going to the grocery store whenever you can. It's a small, perhaps unimportant thing, in the grand scale of injustices your generation is living through. But it's what you can do.

PRESIDENT TO SIGN EXECUTIVE ORDER TO INSTITUTIONALIZE RADICAL FAR-LEFT TERRORISTS LATER THIS WEEK.⁹

Inside the crumpled paper bag in your pocket, you run your thumb over the blue plastic cap of a vial of testosterone. You don't know how June acquires it – you've never really wanted to ask. It's a risk she takes for herself, for you, for Yoli, for other trans friends. She doesn't have to. It would be easier not to. But she does.

"I don't think you're doing nothing," you reply gently. "All the small things matter. If all you can do right now is just survive, that's enough." Some days, in the face of a world that

9 Riedel, Samantha. "How Trump's Executive Order on 'Crime' Could 'Commit' More Trans People." *Them*, 13 Aug. 2025, www.them.us/story/trump-crime-and-disorder-executive-order-trans-people-consequences.

would prefer you to not exist, just getting out of bed feels like an act of resistance.¹⁰

“I don’t want to just survive anymore,” June huffs.

You sigh. “Well, do you really think it’ll be much better anywhere else?”

“Maybe not,” she admits, “but I’ll be happier. That’s good enough for me.”

A soft buzzing sound grows faintly, like a fly hovering around your ear. June drops the blunt and stamps it out with her boot as you look up to see a drone passing overhead. Now that the sun has slipped behind the hills, all you can see is a distant red, blinking light in the night sky, like a haunted star.

“I’d better go,” June says.

You nod. You don’t want to stay out too late after dark in the middle of nowhere, either, and she has a long bike ride home. June wraps her arms around you. A couple inches taller than you, especially in those boots, your chin rests on her shoulder. Outside of the stench of wildfire and weed overwhelming your nose, she smells like lilac and cherry. You think you’re supposed to be comforting her, but with her arms wrapped tightly around you as if clinging to anything good she has left in life, it feels more like the other way around. For a fleeting moment, you feel safe and secure.

Crickets chirp. Owls hoot. The drone buzzes high over your heads.

June sighs as she finally pulls away from you. You wonder if it’s just as unthinkable for her to imagine you returning to your boring life in the countryside, as it is for you to imagine what being trapped in the city must be like.

“Hey, wait a minute,” you say, then run to

collect a plastic bag from the passenger-side seat of your truck. Along with the rest of the joints you owe her in exchange for getting you your medication, you remember that you’d made a jam for her from the last strawberries you would pick this season before summer turned to fall.

It’s a small thing, but it’s what you can do.

June gives you another quick hug before turning to pick up her bike. She starts up the motor, waves goodbye, and takes off along the side of the highway toward that Midwest metropolis in the distance, shimmering like an oasis in the desert, kicking up dust in her wake.

You lean against the warm metal door of your truck, letting the high slowly drift away before you drive home. As your mind defogs, you watch the bright headlights of cars zooming past on the highway, their passengers probably fast asleep, zipping by so fast that they look like shooting stars against the darkness. You stare at the horizon as the last twinges of pink disappear and the dusk fades into night. A thousand lightyears away, on the West coast, the sun is still setting over what’s left of California’s beaches, yet to be consumed by the tides.

Above the highway, the 48-foot-wide screen casts a blue light over the fields and crackles with static as it reads out distances for cross-country travelers.

21 MILES TO OMAHA.

511 MILES TO DENVER.

1,255 MILES TO LAS VEGAS.

1,523 MILES TO LOS ANGELES.

¹⁰ Castigan, Mady. “On Surviving Trans Genocide.” *Trans News Network*, edited by David Forbes, 20 Sept. 2025, transnews.network/p/on-surviving-trans-genocide?utm_source=transnews.network&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=on-surviving-trans-genocide&_bhlid=5206767331f5e6280b9fde6c2457860900a_53bbd.

A Spoonful of Dirt

P.V. Beck

If we had a spoonful of dirt and asked:
Where do you come from?
What are you made of?
What are you used for?
We would see a whirling terrarium of great and little things—
earth's imperfect contours
ancient oceans fossilized under grand prairies
mineral messages striated on canyon walls
ancient rivers fanned onto flood plains and sifted into silts and shales.
In a spoonful of dirt are microscopic remnants of pollen and seeds,
a million mosses exploding their spores into the unknown
rhizomes springing forests, bacteria mounting armies,
leaves making humus in a riot of rot and decay.
Dirt is our planet's skin,
a skein of elements from which everything emerges and returns.

We wander unaware of what is under our feet
hypnotized by artificial intelligence,
deafened by the chatter of our devices and inventions.
In thrall to the toys of human ingenuity
we forget that our earth is alive from its core,
we forget that it shudders and trembles
when a melting glacier that has held fast for centuries

cracks off a continent and slams into the sea.
 When fracking sucks dry an underground lake of oil
 earthquakes shake the land around,
 when bulldozers tear through wetlands
 and ploughs break deep prairie sods
 the earth gasps from the pain of steel blades tearing its flesh.
 Graded and degraded dirt becomes an outcast.

And when our glittering devices are broken and silenced
 they are scraped into landfills where they lie inert
 beside the busy lives of dirt with its native intelligence,
 its collective memory of everything alive and dead.
 Crooked seams and boundary surfaces—
 these are the places where life thrums,
 sneaks out and creates butterflies from cocoons
 and honey from the alchemy of bees.

So leave the fossil fuels with the fossil ferns
 in the swamps, the peat bogs and marshes;
 leave the tools of death by a thousand cuts
 to rest their rusted skeletons in the grass.
 Plant trees and orchards along abandoned train tracks
 plant gardens in the cracks of sidewalks and vacant lots,
 re-wild the dirt from poisoned fields with clover—
 let milkweed seedpods burst into a silky wind
 to unspool their threads of microbial memory into wasted meadows,
 smell the dirt after a little rain, its scent of dew and honey,
 imagine the earth as a living thing
 the spoonful of dirt our home.

Palestina Canta

Ana M. Mahomar Siman

cantá Palestina en olivos
y manos que los tienden
cantá en manjares de aceite y zaatar
y pan que los recoge
cantá con corazones sembrados en el tuyo
latiendo al mismo son de lejos
cantá cuando cantan gallos
y cuando luna sale a bailar,
despertando luz y vida
a su alrededor
a todas horas.
cantá Palestina en tus amapolas
su rojo flameante
nuestra bandera.

canto yo ahora
en valles de las lágrimas
bajo fuego rugiente
con hombros cargados
canto yo, Palestina porque cantaste primero
en voces de abuelos e higueras
cocinas y mesas compartidas
voz resonando
en mis cejas y nariz
en fotos, frutas, abrazos.

Palestine Sings

sing Palestine in olive trees
and hands tending to them
sing in feasts of oil and zaatar
and bread that soaks them up
sing with hearts planted in yours
beating in unison from afar
sing when roosters sing
and when moon comes out to dance,
awakening light and life
all around
at every hour.
sing Palestine in your poppies,
their flaming red
our flag.

sing I, now
in valleys of tears
and under raging fire
with boulders on my shoulders
sing I, Palestine, because you sang first
in grandparents voices and fig trees
kitchens and shared tables,
voice resounding
in my eyebrows and nose
in photos, fruits, hugs.

yo canto porque me llamaste, Palestina
 porque vive en mí tu anhelo
 de ser música
 y cantemos juntos
 entonces cantemos Palestina
 hasta quedarnos sin saliva
 que nuestra melodía haga eco
 en cada pecho
 cantemos asustados y valientes
 inundados de gozo y dolor
 cantemos con ríos de sal en los ojos,
 riendo a carcajadas
 cantemos furiosos y soñando
 soñemos furiosamente
 que cantamos
 libres.

será nuestro cantar
 furia
 que nos libera

I sing because you called me, Palestine
 because your desire to be our music,
 to have us sing together
 lives in me,
 so let us sing Palestine
 until our saliva runs out,
 let our melody echo
 in everyone's chest
 let us sing afraid and courageous,
 overflowing with joy and pain
 let us sing with rivers of salt in our eyes,
 as we roar in laughter
 let us sing furious and dreaming
 let us dream furiously
 of singing
 free.

for our singing will be
 fury
 that liberates

A Prayer Against Despair

Giancarlo Campagna

Don't cry over the violence. Don't
Move an inch. Be still. Find a spot the
round bones of your feet can settle.
Soon the rampage will conclude.
Those who survive are
permitted a ghost dance for the
remnants of themselves they walk to.
Return now to your daily registry,
start your motors, begin again to wash
your plates and bowls, check on your
children, and close your eyes to the moon
which no longer lights a path to the
dead. The dead have no more
ground to bury themselves. They will
walk like metaphors into a desert
prescribed for them. They will go by
way of dreams poured into a shot
glass. They will flow the way blood
flows into broken ground.
The way of a blazing truth,
urgent and bright, lifting
its heart to the sun.



Alpraz

CHRISTMAS IN GAZA

Nuestra Tierra

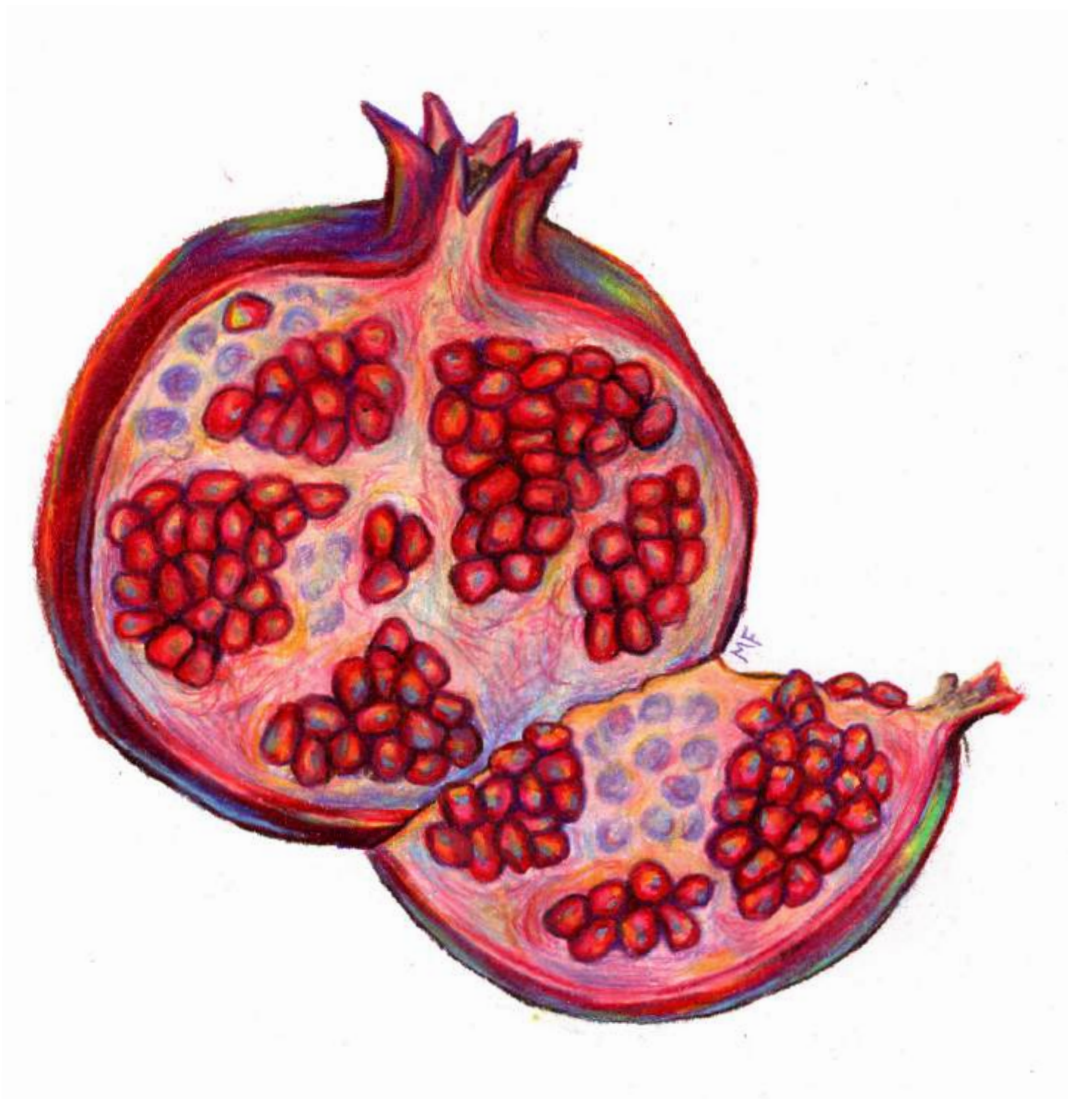
Preston M. Gillespie

Nuestra tierra, fiel y fina.
Nuestra tierra llena con su riqueza y munificencia.
Nuestra tierra invadida, conquistada, robada.
Nuestra tierra violada, robada de su inocencia.
Nuestra tierra, nuestros recursos, nuestro pueblo.
Nuestra fruta ya no es nuestra, ya no es hondureña o guatemalteca o tica, es estadounidense.
Nuestro pueblo ya no es nuestro: son trabajadores estadounidenses.
Nuestra ya no es nuestra.
Nuestra tierra no es nuestra: merece a quien puede pagar o amenazar o manipular.
Nuestra tierra no es nuestra.

Our Land

Preston M. Gillespie, translated by Naidely Gonzalez-Herrera

Our land, faithful and fine.
Our land filled with its richness and abundance.
Our land invaded, conquered, stolen.
Our land, violated, robbed of its innocence.
Our land, our resources, our people.
Our fruit is no longer ours, it is no longer honduran, nor guatemalan, nor costa rican, it's american.
Our people are no longer ours: they are american workers.
Ours is no longer ours.
Our land is not ours: it belongs to those who can pay, threaten, or manipulate.
Our land is not ours.



EVERY SEED

Madison Finen

“revolution is not a one-time event”

chrys furrer

my whole, holy body
is tight, tense
suspended
clenched
rigid, ready for danger

they said that if we can just loosen up, slacken the fist of anger
we'd find a tiny bird in our palms
holding the promise
of everything we've missed,
of everything that's been lacking from our movements

so i worried that i had crushed my tiny bird,
that i had lost my grasp on goodness
i worried that i wasn't capable of resistance to these oppressive systems – each one their own
angry fist – because of the anger that lives in my own shape/i shift
i twist
i writhe like a worm in the dirt
(a worm that gets eaten by the tiny bird,
the same way our dreams of transformation
get eaten up by false promises of completion)

i write, i write, i write

banging my clenched fist up against
 an argument built on the very language
 i'm trying to dismantle it with*
 Lorde, help me—
 she tells me:

“revolution is not a one-time event” and

“I am going to write fire until it comes out of my ears, my eyes, my nose holes— everywhere.
 Until it's every breath I breathe. I'm going to go out like a fucking meteor!” (Lorde, 1988)

so fuck their tiny bird
 i set my whole, holy body ablaze with these words
 and let them burn at the altar,
 an alternative offering to their faulty promises:
 let us not falter at the end of the[ir] world
 let us collapse, fall together
 let us compost and compose, make something better

peeling back my fingers from a fist clenched in anger,
 remaking my body into the shape of prayer, (this prayer is also a threat and a promise and a
 premonition):
 revolution is not a one-time event.
 we get turned around — revolved — again and again
 and this work has no repose but requires we re-position:
 you must
 find what you love
 and let your body burn for it

let us all go out like a fucking meteor

*from the Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House (Audre Lorde, 1979)

For Martyrs

Eugene Violet

i.

Dreams were big when
I was small but now
it seems to be about
selecting the most
useful way to die

I might as well
spend my last thin dime
wisely human rock for David's
sling sparrow's beak to drone's
heart jagged thumb in the eye
of a blue suit 10,000 miles away
from a sharp blade and a second.
So I babble like the brook
who broke Narcissus'
reverie and stole
his self regard
bestowing it upon
the ancestors of salmon just
enough to make their bellies blush
singing —I have never been so alone—

ii.

And in this moment in the bush
outside god's house with the spiders
and devout raccoons I find
a silver chisel. My only gift
is to destroy.

What did you say during the maiming? *I said nothing, for it was only my limbs.* What did you say during the cutting? *I said nothing, for it was only my blood.* What did you say during the killing? *I said nothing, for it was only my life.* What did you say during the Genocide? *I said nothing, for it was only my*

for Aaron Bushnell

What do you say in the face of genocide? How can you spit in a Cyclops' Eye? I can not scale
 The heights of depravity on spindly little faun legs nor plumb the depths of despair with an
 Arm made for casting shadow puppets. I cannot breathe the poison fume of the fighter
 Jet: God gave me a Play-Doh® heart, the Devil his crooked smile. Mother gave me
 Joy and pain in equal measure. Gemini—Janus—Demeter—Aphrodite. Mother
 Of my broken heart. Shattered into glass for you to see. Rearview organ red.
 There's not much space left on the park bench next to the creeping dread
 Of a Spring long delayed, of ice so old it's grey, freezing gnome faces
 In paroxysms of pleasure. Yes Oh Yes, preserve my ardor for some
 Other season better suited to its flames. Kick not the stray dogs
 Of conscience as they scratch at your kitchen door. Let them
 In and feed them of the flesh from which you've fallen. I
 Need a passage into Mercy's walled garden, so secret,
 So holy, so tragic in its passing from the private to
 The common good. There is beauty in all of the
 Collisions. Here lies victory in the tombs of
 The Martyrs—it sings through the stones,
 Fix your voice to its rising cadence—
 And rejoice! This world is coming
 To an end; let a new world rise,
 Let us all walk wounded side
 By wounded side into new
 Wonder, you, and you,
 And also I. Please, I
 Beg of you, never
 Forget it, forget
 That we tried,
 We did try,
 You & I,
 You &
 I.

RESISTANCE

Eugene Violet

My Gazan Thobe (Part Three)

Jamilla Hashem

STORIES OF INJUSTICE

Refuse normalization. Resist. Never Forget.

As I began envisioning the side panels, I knew the roses must continue to be planted—a meager, symbolic attempt to indicate the ongoing and unfathomable theft of Palestinian life. I then realized the motif, Pasha's Tent, must accompany the roses.

The Pasha's Tent motif is traditionally associated with the tateez documentation of the Ottoman Empire and the high-ranking officials known to travel with luxurious tents. However, I am putting a spin on its meaning for my thobe. Instead, this motif symbolizes the tents that Palestinians in Gaza have been forced to live in, have been bombed inside of, burned alive inside of.

The back bottom of the dress symbolizes in red the targeting of Palestinians by the zionist state, intent on seeking their complete annihilation. And yet, the promise of return, resistance, and growth prevails, evident in the growth of the Cypress trees from the seeds of resistance.



To be continued...

Contributor Bios

Ayoub El Khadir is a Moroccan visual artist. His work is inspired by street art and focuses on identity, emotions, and human presence. He started drawing at a young age and developed his style on his own, without formal training. After completing his first mural, he began exploring public art as a way to share his work with a wider audience. Through simple yet expressive visuals, he aims to create a direct and honest connection with viewers.

Anaiss Arreola, often called Ana by friends, is a Chicana born and raised in the Bay Area. With a huge passion for public service and community outreach, and a history in disability politics, she has spoken at the Nelson-Akins Museum with other panelists for their exhibition “Access + Ability” and has written a published article on the need for Disability Voices in the world of STEM. In her free time, she enjoys baking, crocheting, and playing board games. Fuck ICE.

Claire Hsu Accomando was born in Switzerland to a Chinese father and French-Armenian mother. She spent her childhood in rural France during the Nazi occupation, as told in her memoir, *Love and Rutabaga* (St. Martin’s Press), published in a French translation in 2020 (L’Harmattan), and re-issued in English this summer by The Press at Cal Poly Humboldt. The family moved to New York when her father joined the United Nations. Accomando graduated from New York University with a science degree, but was always drawn to the arts. Two volumes of Accomando’s poetry were published in 2025: *Evaporation*, a poetic memoir, and *Lifting Elephants* (Third Coast Publishing). Her poems have appeared in journals including *Atlanta Review*, *Mudfish*, *Toyon*, and *Bullets into Bells*, and several anthologies.

Alpraz, a comic artist and illustrator, was born in Sardinia, Italy, where she currently lives and works. She works in comics, illustration, and animation—mediums through which she explores themes of otherness, introspection, and the absurd. In 2021 she self-published her first graphic novel, *Io non sono io*, followed in 2023 by *Vertigini*, a collection of short stories and illustrations originally featured in independent magazines. She is the illustrator of *BALUCAMA*, written by Francesco Pelosi and published by SputnikPress. Also for SputnikPress, her latest publication is *Interiora II* (2025), part of a series dedicated to authors’ “unpublishable” notebooks.

P.V. Beck is a poet from northern New Mexico whose most recent cycle of poems traces the wild terrain of a northern New Mexican mountain valley over which a Gray fox wanders through the seasons and the wits by which the fox navigates her radically changing habitat. She is the author of *The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge*, *Sources of Life* and the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant for the multi-media project, *Oremos, Oremos: New Mexican Midwinter Masquerades*. Her recent album of tunes, *The Wild Path: Twelve Waltzes and a Jig*, is at bandcamp.com. In addition to writing poetry, songs, and essays she is a community organizer, an artist, and restores and chronicles the phenology of riparian habitats in her mountain watershed

Giancarlo Campagna writes poetry from his home in Northern California. He makes his living as a jack-of-all-trades. He works as a substitute teacher, tennis coach, and a shoe salesman. Through his work he is after a peaceful kind of clarity. Even a reconciliation of his perceptions of himself and the

world. He has studied poetry writing at San Francisco State, earning an MFA.

Madison M. Finen is a recent graduate of 6 Rivers Charter High School. She spends her time reading, drawing, and dreaming of justice, liberation and an end to the imperialist capitalist society.

David T. Fisher (he/him) is an MA English student at Cal Poly Humboldt in Arcata, CA. You can find more of his work at davidtfisher.wordpress.com. Free Palestine.

chrys furrer is a white, disabled, and genderfluid wizard. They are a trans-disciplinary writer and artist obsessed with edges, ecotones, interstitial places, intertidal zones, liminal spaces, and thresholds. Their work explores questions like: what does it mean to be alive at the end of the [modern] world? What is our responsibility in attending to personal, political, and planet-scale tragedies, ever unfolding within and around us?

Preston M. Gillespie is a sophomore at the University of South Carolina-Aiken and is an Eagle Scout. He speaks English and Spanish.

Jamilla Hashem is on a lifelong path of practicing belonging, navigating the responsibility of what it means to be a good, uninvited guest on stolen land while following the diasporic path to her ancestry and teachings of Indigenous Palestine. She stitches the journey together through community organizing, as a tatreez artist, a therapist working toward licensure, and through her love and devotion as an auntie, sister, daughter, friend, and cat mom—all with a fierce, visionary belief in our collective promise for liberation from empire.

Erandi Hernández Aguilar is a P'urhépecha ka Xicana Indigiqueer first generation college student. She is part of the first generation of her family to have been born outside her ancestral homelands of Juárez located within what is commonly known as Michoacán and on the other side of the colonial structure commonly known as *la frontera*.

Rabbit Hutch is a trans artist, activist, and retired Drag King working from the land of the Wurundjeri Nation in Naarm-Melbourne, so-called Australia. His creative roots were cultivated in the 90s music scene, running a t-shirt label producing custom merch and posters for local and international bands. Rabbit's emotive, playful and sometimes dark pictorial style has evolved over 40 years of creative practice to incorporate political commentary alongside deeply personal accounts of life and illness. Since October 2023, Rabbit has been working to amplify the Palestinian resistance, fighting for his friends in Gaza by spreading their messages through street art, badges and global digital movements such as *Flyers for Falastin*. As a disabled trans man, Rabbit is limited by physical barriers but his voice stays strong as he connects across land and sea to support the freedom of the Palestinian people.

Ernesto Iniguez creates digital artwork inspired by chicanafuturism, science fiction, and video games. They were born in El Paso, Texas and raised among the many cities within the Inland Empire in Southern California. Ernesto is currently obtaining their Masters in English at Cal Poly Humboldt.

Julz of Julz Makes Art is a Palestinian-American printmaker based in Vancouver, BC. She works at the intersection of heritage, resistance, and the politics of memory. Her relief prints confront the

fractures created by displacement while celebrating the creativity passed through generations. Using stark, intentional lines, she brings forward the everyday objects and stories that survive occupation and migration. Through this work, Julz reclaims narrative, honors her lineage, and creates space for identity shaped by both history and possibility.

Lily P. Merrell is a third-year English Education student at Cal Poly Humboldt, as well as a lifelong book lover and storyteller. Like many students in public school, they used to “hate poetry,” until a wonderful teacher turned that around. She hopes to one day be that teacher for someone else.

Florence Ng is a writer, educator, eldest immigrant daughter, and a dreamer of worlds. They used to spend their days teaching kids how to write, but now find joy in creating for themselves and their loved ones. You can find their latest media analyses and miscellaneous creative non-fiction ramblings @thesunflowerdispatch on Substack.

Fadwa Al Qasem is a Palestinian-Canadian mixed media artist, bilingual author and advocate for hope in the shadows. Fadwa has spent her life trying to answer the same questions: where do I belong? What does it mean to be Palestinian? What does it mean to be a woman in this world? Her work spans painting, fibre art, poetry, performance and literature; always circling these questions, never quite done with them. She writes in Arabic and English and has lived in many countries, currently Spain. The page has always been her home.

Calista Requiyo is a Filipina American copywriter and writer from Queens, New York. Her writing explores survivorship, the body, and softness as resistance. She has recent and forthcoming work in *Braver Collective*.

Ra Ross is a Hip Hop Artist & Spoken Word Poet from San Jose, CA. He started writing poetry and raps when he was 17 as a tool to process the world he was in and his experiences. His artist name is RA MHTP. MHTP being pronounced as Imhotep and being an acronym for Music Heals The People.

Ana M. Mahomar Simán (ella/she/her) is a Honduran-Palestinian daughter, sister, friend, therapist in training who is constantly curious about the world. Writing is how Ana pauses to remember what she sees, hears, and savors, how she’s confronted and comforted, who she loves, and how she’s been shown love. Ana composes poems to honor those who came before, create community, and make room for more voices to join the writing choir. As she expresses grief, wonder, rage, joy, and everything in between, Ana hopes her words will move us to collective action and solidarity.

Tiara Taylor is a Marketing major and a new addition to the Cal Poly Lumberjack community. She is a passionate and curious soul, who has an ever-expanding appreciation and love for the arts. She believes that education is the avenue to true growth and liberation from a system that suppresses and exploits the people under it, and art can be a way to merge human consciousness. Motto she likes to leave people with after interacting with them: “Check on people.”

Eugene Violet is the nom-de-guerre of a poet, musician, educator, and communist from San Francisco. He is now in his 40s and has, for some reason, recently graduated from an MFA program. He is submitting his poems exclusively to *Toyon* because it consistently boasts the best themes. Free Palestine.