



# OUR VOICES

GONZAGA UNIVERSITY  
JOURNAL OF CULTURE AND DIVERSITY  
VOLUME VII-2020

*Words mean more than  
what is set down on paper.  
It takes the human voice to  
infuse them with shades of  
deeper meaning.*

Maya Angelou



Cover art and design by Dylan Huber

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# Our Voices

*in collaboration with*

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Diversity  
Monologues

Dear Reader,

Inside this journal is bravery.

It is a celebration of culture and it is a reminder of the beauty diversity gives our world. It creates a space that allows people to speak their truths on difficult topics. At times, the pieces on these pages will make you angry. They will make you sad. They will make you happy. First and foremost, they will make you think.

Reading this journal is an opportunity to reflect on the experiences of others, no matter how similar or how different they might be to your own. It is a chance to listen to voices who have not always been heard.

Now is a time to value difference.

I was first introduced to this amazing journal at the 8th Annual Diversity Monologues. The partnership between *Our Voices* and the Diversity Monologues is near and dear to my heart. I joined *Our Voices* the same year I was added to the Diversity Monologues committee. Working behind the scenes of both productions, both this year and last, has shown me the impact one can have through their writing. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the 10th Annual Diversity Monologues were not performed to a live audience. I am so grateful that they were able to be published in this journal, allowing the performers to share their message.

To be a part of this journal for Volume VI and to lead Volume VII is an honor that I cannot put into words, and I thank everyone who had the strength and the courage to share their story with the *Our Voices* team and the rest of the Gonzaga community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan Gonzalez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and "G".

Jordan Gonzalez  
Editor-in-Chief

# Our Voices Staff

**Jordan Gonzalez, *Editor-in-Chief***

**Andrew Sepulveda, *Assistant Editor***

**Tess Pickar, *Copy Editor***

**Dylan Huber, *Graphic Designer***

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# Soy Negra

*Zabelle Messick*

• • •

Soy Negra  
My hands are brown  
Parched, rough, (but) warm  
Each crevice, a window into my soul y

Mi corazón es puro  
It is kept in my palms and not on my sleeve  
So, each embrace is sacred  
I have given my love to many

Soy Negra  
Eyes dark as coal  
Warmth radiating with each glance  
The flames, do you see them dance before you?  
Do you fear the flames will devour you?

With the freedom of today,  
Soy Negra  
My essence, you can behold but not consume  
My skin, like the earth's soil,  
Toiled and brave  
bares the scars of yesterday  
Of rebirth  
Bares scars, starry and fluorescent in resilience  
Refusing to dim  
Refusing to be forgotten

Unconditional is  
The love of a black woman  
Life given from dusk

My body is a shield,  
My back, a bridge  
My heart, a place for you to rest your worries and fears

I hold you here,  
Siempre con Amor  
Always without question

I shield you  
From harm  
From fate  
From you

Soy Negra  
And all of me is given before it is received  
Pero with the freedom of today  
I choose to give to myself the love I once gave to you  
In pursuit of the freedom of tomorrow

Soy Negra  
And these hands are brown  
This body welcomes love  
The way it once cherished you  
And if you look into my eyes,  
You will see me before you see your own reflection

Negro es el color of the love I possess for me now  
And how beautiful it is  
To be resilient  
To be Negra

# Trauma State

*Liz Vosler*

• • •

I think that I'm living in a sort of trauma-state;  
Somewhere I have been stuck these last two years.

Two years where conversations run inevitably sour:

*"How do you know you haven't met the right man yet?"*

*"It's just a phase."*

When the time comes to tell her, my heart jumps to my throat,  
my mind jumps to conclusions;  
just let me fly away

away from here, away from her, away from the fear and the hurt  
and the pain.

*"You're being influenced by pop culture.*

*It's cool to be gay.*

*Why can't you just be your own person?"*

*"Sometimes you have to choose what's right for  
your family  
over what's right for you."*

You can't blame me for my reaction— the fear in my veins I can't shake away.

The fear that someday, somehow this conversation will turn back again,

*"I can't imagine a child being raised by two women."*

*"I can't think of your future - I don't want you to have kids."*

I know I focus on the negative,

Pick out what she said.

I shouldn't, I know, but I do.

I do

Because she has yet to say anything positive—  
anything good.

Anything to remind me that I am not a fucking disappointment to  
her simply because I want her to know my girlfriend.

Not boyfriend.

My girlfriend.

*"I just kind of want it to go away."*

# Is Extinction Upon Us?

*Emma Craven*

• • •

Instead of the last single girl,  
I am the last Jewish girl,  
or at least that's how it feels.

Our numbers are dwindling,  
becoming a rarer species in each passing day,  
not knowing what the future holds for us.

We are spotted snow leopards,  
endangered,  
fighting,  
trying to stay alive.

We feel threatened,  
by all of the lions and bears—  
that outnumber us.

I may not be the last,  
but at some point, I may be.  
We persist,  
trying to stay alive.

# Crohn's Disease

## *Emily Evers*

• • •

The complete person— mind, body, soul.  
My body was rent from my hands,  
Taking my definition of image,  
How the world sees me and how it treats me.  
My friend asks, “are you anorexic?”  
Landing a crushing blow that makes my blood drain.  
As I wrap my arms around my stomach,  
My mind regroup as I manage a “no.”  
Laughing it off with a smile like daggers.  
They don't deserve to know the truth,  
If my body is all they see.  
So I lie and tell my sweet nothings  
And they nod like it means nothing.  
My body is at war with my person,  
Some days being “normal” and some days being a compromise.  
So I cower, and wait, and scream, waiting for the war to end.  
But the truth is,  
There is no cure.  
The truth is,  
I will live with this for the rest of my life.  
The truth is,  
I have had to redefine my entire person—  
Mind, body, and soul—  
At 16 years old.

# Productivity Culture and Mental Health

*Sarah Kersey*

• • •

When I first started writing this piece, I decided I wanted to include a definition of productivity culture. Turns out, there is a startling lack of research into this topic. So, to account for this, I've decided to personally define the version of productivity culture that I witness on Gonzaga's campus and beyond on a daily basis.

I'd like to argue that productivity culture is the idea that your worth is defined by your success. It is the "I just have to push through it" mentality. It is the fear of never being good enough, and the ways we overcompensate to quiet this fear. It is Gonzaga students joining every club and organization possible because that is what they did in high school and that's what they expect of themselves now. It is only doing things for the sake of their end goals. And, it almost always results in deep, intense burnout.

I believe it is additionally crucial to acknowledge that it does not take additional leaps and bounds to recognize how this productivity culture phenomenon can disproportionately affect women. Women are often already subconsciously working twice as hard to prove they are just as competent and capable as men with the same, or lesser, qualifications. And, as a white woman I have not experienced this phenomenon in the same way a person of color would. I believe it is vital to acknowledge the disproportionate effects that this has on people of color.

---

I have always operated under the understanding that the



ultimate goal in life was to be successful. For me, success has always been defined as external validation. More specifically, it has been defined as people's satisfaction with my performance. This has created a myriad of issues for me within both my private and public lives. I am terribly conscious of how people will interpret what I put into the world and how they will perceive me, and I feel as if I am constantly working to prove myself.

When I was in high school, I was a straight A student. For the totality of my junior year alone, I was the vice president of Key Club, the yearbook editor, an Honor Society member, a Math Honor Society member, a Link Crew leader (akin to Gonzaga's small group leaders), a varsity tennis team member, and taking at least two AP classes a year. During my senior year, on top of all these commitments and applying to colleges, I somehow managed to keep an active social life and serve as the honors speaker at my graduation. All of this together was a herculean task and the external manifestation of the following thought pattern:

Hard work » Productivity » Validation » Success

At this juncture, it is incredibly important to note that I've never been more unhappy than I was during the time in high school that I was exhibiting the highest level of my understanding of success. Truthfully, pouring myself into school and exuding productivity was a distraction from everything else going on in the rest of my life. I have yet to parse out how much of my ongoing struggle with productivity is due to the fact that we live in a productivity-oriented culture and how much of this is due to my mental health issues. At this point in my life, I'd argue it's a combination of both. I've been dealing with generalized anxiety and clinical depression since I was

12, and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) since I was  
16. I've also been exposed to productivity culture from the second I  
entered school. It is impossible for me to separate what parts of my  
struggle with productivity are due to my mental health and what  
parts are due to being a living human being in 2020. Author B.J.  
Neblett is often quoted as saying that "we are the sum total of our  
experiences," and that is what I try to remember while writing about  
this.

---

In the early spring of 2019 during the second semester  
of my junior year, my therapist looked me in the eyes and asked  
me why I felt the need to justify each and every one of my actions  
by explaining how it was productive. Quite honestly, I don't think  
I've ever been that caught off guard by a question as I was at that  
moment. I don't entirely remember, but I'm fairly certain I didn't  
say anything when she asked me this, I just stared at her, deeply  
confused.

My prior definitions of success became even more  
complicated when considering that I am a creative writing major,  
meaning, my academic pursuits often revolve around me creating  
something personal and listening to subjective feedback. There are  
some days where this idea of creating knowing it will be critiqued  
is so paralyzing that I am unable to get a single word out onto the  
page. There are some days where I'll tediously work on a draft for  
weeks just to scrap it completely because I don't feel like it's "good  
enough." Sometimes it gets so bad that I don't write anything  
for months because I don't want to create something that's not  
massively successful in the sense that it will be deemed "good" by

those around me.

For a very long time, I could only read for pleasure if it also meant it would serve as inspiration for my writing. I could only go to sleep if it meant that I would be more functional the next day. I could only make dinner each night if it meant that I would have leftovers and prepared lunches for the rest of the week. I wasn't reading to have fun, or sleeping to rest, or eating to keep myself healthy. I was doing all these things because they lead to some other end-goal that was outside of myself. I had to justify every single thing I did with a nod to productivity so I could sleep at night not feeling like a massive failure.

Needless to say, this level of pressure wears on you. By the time the spring semester of my junior year came around, I was experiencing a level of burnout I didn't know was possible. This, combined with an uptick in my struggle with my mental health left me completely exhausted with little to no idea of what actually made me happy outside of success and productivity.

I want to say there was some big climactic moment where I realized that productivity didn't define me and everything changed. There wasn't. When my therapist first asked me the question about my desire for everything to be productive, it unsettled me, but I continued on as I had been. I could not visualize any other way of being. Over time, however, I've worked to build my confidence in myself and try doing things outside of academia or other success-oriented fields. I am trying to write the shittiest of shitty first poems or essay drafts and be okay with it. It's hard, but I'm getting there.

---

I've been on a really incredible journey over the past year

and a half or so where I've gotten the privilege to take the time and practice the care needed to redefine what success means for me. This was not without difficulty and, admittedly, there are some days I am still convinced that if I don't write the best paper I could have, I have failed myself and those around me. Quite frankly, at this moment, I am writing this piece in an effort to make myself feel better about not working on another paper by reasoning that at least I'm still "doing something." Old habits die hard.

All this being said, while my new definition of success is constantly changing and evolving, I can say with some sort of certainty that I know it needs to involve my happiness and personal well-being. Additionally, I also can say that I know that external validation cannot be the majority party determining that happiness and personal well-being. It has to come from me.

# Searching For the True Self

*Opheila Duncan*

• • •



*This piece is supposed to be about the missing piece in the identities we've formed.*

# **I am a Strong, Independent Black Woman**

*Jacquelyn Gaither*

• • •

I am a strong, independent black woman

One that has experienced the oppression

But overcame its depression

Society defining me by the color of my skin

From the stereotypes passed down from their kin

Who am I? You ask

While the true me is under an everlasting mask

With my shadowed down skin with even darker

Bags under my eyes

Showcasing countless nights of staring up

In bed and wondering... why?

My ashiness in dying need of lotion

As my tears fill the room like an ocean

Where I look to the police for protection

But only faced with unwarranted inspection

33 times have thy neighbor complained

Just because my skin is of a different stain

Hands up, don't shoot!

For most, that statement they will only dilute  
They get the birds and the bees  
I learn that being black comes with fees  
The acts of hatred forming lists upon lists  
Because they unwelcome me to exist

I am a strong, independent black woman

Who has been faced with violent bats  
By white men dressed in red hats.  
Arms raised high  
Saluting the sky  
While my six year old sister  
Drops her head so confused of why.  
People say progress?  
Well I see distress  
Black men and women still bowing their heads  
Praying that night they will again reach their beds

My ethnicity is nothing of a guessing game  
Nor that of a shame  
For I am a creation of the slave  
That many years ago found its peaceful grave.



That history runs through my veins  
And is cuffed to me like chains along with the pains  
My race nothing of a joke  
I'm here to make you woke

I am blessed to mature expeditiously  
My family stand with me enviously  
I am the strength of a grizzly bear  
Destroying anything that doesn't care  
I bury the tears and stay strong  
So I am the safe haven for the young  
My little siblings looking at me for hope and reassurance  
Fearing our father's last appearance

I am a strong, independent black woman

That dreads the moment of my fathers last breath  
But can never win the battle of death  
I work to help pay the bills  
And try to reduce life's chills  
My destination is here  
Because I stand to be Shakespeare

To be the voice of the frightened  
Hoping to leave many enlightened

I am first generation  
Here to end damnation  
I want to be the provider  
And no longer the rider  
I will strive to make a difference  
And stop the damn ignorance

I hope to be the inspiration  
That extinguishes the frustration  
And be the role model  
That shows people that they can be unstoppable  
I am here to make my family proud  
And tell it how it is out loud  
I am a strong, independent black woman

# Advices to Myself

*Paulina Thurmann*

• • •

First and foremost—

Love fully, unconditionally,  
everyone, always. Be sincere,  
have integrity.

Surround yourself with people  
who accept, encourage, and  
empower you.

Your life is a gift from God;  
who you become is your gift in  
return.

*At work—*

Be efficient, consistent, and  
realistic.

Use your organization to foster  
collaboration and teamwork, not  
group work.

Use your planning to prioritize.

Use your creativity to innovate.

Use your drive to make it  
happen.

Keep things simple.

Patience.

*On play—*

Make time for it.

Do not let your body be in one  
place and your mind in another.

You are allowed to enjoy  
yourself.

*With others—*

Rejoice in their successes,  
accompany them in their  
struggles. Encourage investment  
in passions.

See, know, and love them, just as  
they are.

*Always, seek understanding—*

Open your mind, humble your  
heart. Encounter and honor  
diverse identities. Hear both  
sides.

Show abundant compassion and  
grace, also to yourself.

*Notice and build from your  
weaknesses—*

Do not succumb to comparison;  
know thy worth.

Do not merely “tick the boxes”;  
finish things because they  
matter.

Do not slave to external  
expectations; do only what you  
love.

Do not apologize as a default;  
say only what you mean.

Stop settling for mediocrity;  
pursue life fearlessly, fully,  
daringly, boldly.

*When you face challenges—*

Breathe deeply.

Know thyself.

Progress, not perfection.

Grace in all things.

Grow from the opportunity to learn. Try again.

*Know this—*

It is all connected.

God is real.

Mistakes are allowed.

Vulnerability is not weakness.

You wield strength, power, and influence. You are loved.

*When you see injustice—*

Fight it. Resist it. Dismantle it.

Be gentle with the Earth.

Strive for equity and peace, prevent violence. Amplify, advance, and advocate for truth.

Let love be your “why.”

*And last—*

Walk quietly.

Listen.

Dance.

Cry.

Learn.

Retain.

*Live.*

Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam.

*Serve mindfully—*

Help where you can, but do not impose. Listen and advise, but only when asked. Speak for the silenced, but not over others. Lead with fortitude, but also humility.

*Practice gratitude—*

Take in beauty and greatness all around you. Acknowledge those who lift you up.

Say thank you. Mean it.

*Renew thyself in four dimensions—*

Gravitate towards natural light.

Make time for silence.

Cultivate habits that anchor excellence. Pursue truth, goodness, and companionship.

# Carmen's Tamales

*Jordan Gonzalez*

• • •

I watched my grandma make tamales.

My dad and I drove a little over an hour from Wenatchee to Mattawa, a small central Washington town where my grandma lives in a purple trailer and parks her giant red Chevy truck. Walking to her front door, I noticed bird cages propped up on the trailer. My grandma doesn't own some special kind of bird. She feeds pigeons. Inside, my grandma greeted my dad first, then she turned her attention to me. She gave a loud "wow" and I knew she was shocked. She had not seen me since I was in middle school. By now I was a junior in college. As she wrapped her arms around my waist -- she could never reach my shoulders -- my dad asked if she knew who I was.

"Yes," she says. "The baby."

---

There is an unspecific-specific identity that mixed race people have. We answer the "can I ask, what are you?" with our mixture of browns and whites and so on and so forth, but our identities are ambiguous enough to never be able to identify with either side of our ancestry.

We find it hard to truly relate to anyone who is racially similar. We find that our skin is too light to know the woes and worries of our darker peers. We find that we will have advantages they do not, even if we try to identify with them.

Yet, there are people of blended races who may not give any hints that they subscribe to multiple. There are also people who feel they must be one or the other. Both scenarios, a true loss of identity. The balance of your racial makeup comes from what you know, what you have experienced, within your cultures.

---

I watch my grandma make tamales.

She has two plates set up on the table, one for my dad and one for me, and enough tamales on the counter for each member of my extended family to eat two, and then take two home and she's still making more.

It is Christmas Eve. My grandma is prepping to spend Christmas at my Uncle Carlos' house, to which she'd be driving later that night, tamales in hand. She and my dad speak to each other

in Spanish, although I will say she was doing most of the talking. It is a beautiful thing to hear your grandma speaking in her native language, as if she had never left Mexico. I don't understand most of what they are saying to each other, but I know she's gossiping.

I made a mistake by eating lunch before we went. She plopped a whole lot of food on my plate, and I grabbed one lone tamale. I didn't finish it completely, and of course she noticed.

"What?" she says. "You don't like?"

---

There is a sense that we must always explain ourselves. We make the jokes, the ones where we laugh about our skin color or facial features. We do the fake smile where we politely ignore the ignorance of the comment that was just made about us. We entertain the microaggressions that are meant to be funny, but almost never are.

We spend so much of our time explaining ourselves to others, when we need to be explaining ourselves to ourselves. Do we know who we represent? Do we know what challenges our respective races face? Do we appreciate our heritage, even if it is only one piece of our whole puzzle?

There are small moments and memories that may connect us to our ancestry. The reflection of them build our understanding of the identity into which we are always trying to prove that we fit. They are our collection of culture.

---

I watch my grandma make tamales.

After lunch, we move over to her couches and I examine the mismatch of framed photos plastered on her walls. She points to one of me and my sisters when we were little. Me, the baby, as a baby. She looks through her presents, all of them unlabeled, and picks the ones she thought were for my family. She got most of them right. My cousin's 7-year-old son Logan accidentally ended up with a fruit rack and my mother received Hungry Hungry Hippos that Christmas.

I watch my grandma pack up her load of food and I remember how much I admire her. Eight kids, with five surpassing adulthood, a survival of her own against machismo culture, and a work ethic that got her past the potato factories to there, that day, with hundreds of tamales.

She sent us home with some. I hugged her goodbye and I got a close up look at her indigenous-looking features and I knew that no one would match us up as grandmother and granddaughter if they were to pick us out of a lineup. But as I am hugging her goodbye, that doesn't matter. She is my Nana Carmen, and I'm thanking her for giving me a moment of tradition.

I climb back into my dad's car and I watch them say their final words to each other. I'm leaving Mattawa with no stronger understanding of Spanish, but I can see them using it to say goodbye. As we back out, she stands and waves until we get far enough out of sight, a gesture that needs no language for us to understand her saying I love you, and I'll miss you.

The drive back to Wenatchee is quiet as we each make peace with the afternoon we just had. I watch the central Washington landscape roll by as I feel my Mexican ancestry light up inside of me. This moment, this feeling, brings me to myself, a girl with Mexican heritage beyond her last name. I reflect on how I got to this awareness.

I watched my grandma make tamales.



# Boodle Fight in Pampanga

*Ronnie Estoque*

• • •



*Kamayan makes your food taste better!*

# Mother Tongue

*Alexander Porada*

• • •

“Mother, what is the nature of my being?”

“Contemplate...my child”

Witness the lofty terrestrial breath of the beckoning sand  
Lapping ocean tongue of our verdant land  
Crimson brow of that fair dawn  
Shimmering dapple, fiery corona resist not— for we are drawn

Eternal ember of that warm summer day  
Alabaster silk-refine earth upon which you lay  
Cascading grains from these tethered hands...slip through  
Tranquil song of the endless horizon, enchanting blue

Shushing shells of the swirling shore  
Celestial realm, colossal might, the land is no more  
Flamboyant palpitation of the elated heart  
Ba-dum...ba-dum...ba-dum...internal rhythm of our art

“I see”:

Ecstasy of tongue ascend upon a throne  
High pinnacle of all that is known  
O’ silent melody of thought  
Cascade...  
Descend...  
Transcend...  
Ebony scribble...my being wrought

Precipitate, tap, and brush against the human ear  
The orchestral force of the mouth  
The daunting plume of thought, arise from the pen  
Hymns of my mother tongue...incessant zephyr

Swirling aura of the blackberry night sky

Knitted cloth of the Virgin's cloak  
Holy Mother, gentile hand you brush the Earth  
The stars they fall in the colors of the soil  
I am the maize

In the simple field...I grow  
Let my roots embrace the richness of the Earth  
My beautiful leaves  
Twisting  
Pivoting  
Dancing  
Volcanic plumes, give me the strength of a thousand years  
I am the Maize... standing tall in the luster of the sun

Magnifying mosaic of expression  
Eternal bliss in the wondering of the restless soul  
In the simple field...I grow  
Cut!

Snap!

Break!

Gnash!

In the horror of the night  
When all is still, warm, and dead  
The crimson river ebbs and flows...  
Brutish hands— I speak no more

Straddled between two hemispheres  
I am Atlas, the world is upon my shoulders

Do you see the spiral of the mountain slope!?  
Where the spirits of the warriors have fallen  
Where the blanketed dapple of heaven's dominion has befallen

Rising turquoise, kiss the blessed fecund field

Lustrous sun, brush the murmur of the ancient city  
Dazzling cloths, adorn the hands of the meek and withered

I am one with the places  
In the land of the mother tongue  
Where the color of the soil is the color of my mother

...

The sun just kissed her more...I thought  
From the land of the cocoa  
The palette of the coffee plant  
The strokes of the hand that form the brown clay pot

...

The essence of life

...

The sun just blessed them more...I thought

...

Here lies the root of my being.  
I am the Maize torn from my world.  
Torn into halves.

To love two lands at once.  
To express two forms.  
But denied my mother tongue.

I grow like the maize.  
Reaching for the sun,  
The bristling wind against my leaves,  
External Defiance

I am meshed in the alabaster ocean spume  
Created from the ash of the volcanic plume  
Born to love roots in distant lands,  
Brushed in cultures with caressing hands

I am one with more  
To play the rhythms of my heart and soul  
Dancing in the nature of my being  
For I am the maize...indestructible and defiant.

# We Were Slaves Too

*Emma Craven*

• • •

Shackled to the walls of the pyramids,  
Shackled to each other,  
There is no escape for us.

They couldn't exterminate us,  
so, they punished us,  
worse than death,  
they made us slaves.

When we weren't slaves—  
we were segregated,  
separated,  
marginalized,  
treated like garbage—  
thrown out on the street.

We are the slaves,  
long forgotten.  
Others came after us,  
and to whom—  
we passed our thorn'd crown.

No, we are not the slaves of African,  
We are the slaves who call Israel our home,  
The ones who suffered long ago,  
We are the Jews.

# Sacred Spaces of Coming Out

*Zoe Jaspers*

• • •

Upper Eastside Cafe.

Deep reds and rich blacks, the New York skyline projected upon the wall.

The plush leather couches are so welcoming, inviting, embracing.

Kristen is behind the counter making coffee, prepping sandwiches, smiling.

The smells of hazelnut and espresso waft through the store, mingling with the scent of baked goods.

People murmur, laugh, joke — each in their own world.

The words don't stumble, but they don't come easy, either.

Bodies pressed snugly, perhaps one too many people squeezed into the corner booth, but always just right.

The words slip out into half-finished mugs held between long-sleeved arms, fall from forks mid-bite of lemon-triple berry scone, drop into laps alongside crumbled cookie bites...

Not often, not close together at first, perhaps weeks apart, but here and there, just a slip, and then another, and another, and another...

Each trip is a respite from the rest of the world, a haven from the need to know, to know right now, to know ever...

Here is simply a place to be.

—

The quiet of a full classroom, the scratch-scratch of pencils, smooth white printer paper stapled in the top left corner.

The blank back of a finished Spanish exam, "Tell me something about yourself."

First, they come slowly, uncertain, but gain traction on the page, growing certain but more erratic before falling complete with the colorful, plastic pencil down next to them.

—

The quiet of a near-empty classroom, somehow yet full, full to bursting with warmth. Whispered affirmations and gentle hugs, before the close of the day.

—

Cool linoleum tile beneath bare calves, backs braced against rough brick walls.

Lime green t-shirts, slightly sweaty from the work and fun of the day. Tears, half-dried, stain the collars and sleeves.

Words spill from the mouth of another, but then two together, tentative first but then spill, spilling and pouring and falling out like tears of relief.

Others simply observe, not hostile, not awkward, simply still, walls protecting from the openness of the vast, echoing entryway.

Hesitancy tries to hold words back but the dam is broken and they spill and spill and tears spill and now hugging, sobbing, clinging to “You are not alone.”

-

Sleepy, though not quite warm light shining against dark midnight windows.

Beige couches, speckled, cool gray carpet, beige walls.

The murmur of conversations across open common room, tucked in corners, around mismatched tables, soft, bashful piano drifting from the room’s opposite end. Laughter, velociraptor squeals, song.

Green t-shirts traded for more comfortable, less sweaty options; pajamas, sweatshirts, tank tops.

The words are soft, gingerly layed out but buzzing still, ready to be snatched back at moment’s notice...

And then silence.

And then arms, arms wrapping, arms enfolding, arms holding, arms protecting, whispering that they will not let go.

-

Darkened bedroom, fleecy blankets surrounding, enfolding.

Youtube poetry becomes sudden urgency, need, revelation.

Panic — no, not panic... excitement, eagerness to share this new understanding, new self.

Digital clicking of fingertips against screen, unable to type fast enough.

Clicking and clicking and clicking and... sleep.

-

Cool, speckled plastic tables, smooth under anxious sweated hands. Legs bouncing, bouncing against cold metal legs as the room settles in around.

A church meeting room, buzzing but tense, but warm. The ache of the world and all its needs, all its brokenness, all its hurt lies heavy in the middle of the tables, weighing downwards, bending in. Youth wanting to name and to fix and to heal but not quite knowing where to begin.

The words are not even aware of their moving until they are lying out, presented upon the table, too late to hide, too late to take



back.

The room softens, heavy hearts lay down their burden for a moment to open, to love, and to welcome.

The world is still broken, but it leaves the room a bit more divine, a little less broken than before.

-

High ceilings, far-away walls, the large open convention hall lays open, buzzing with movement and conversations and laughter. Floral carpet leads down yards and yards and halls and halls to open exhibit halls and rows and rows of tables.

Wonder, wide eyes, heart growing, opening, expanding. People unashamed, large and small, bearded, breasted, bearded AND breasted, skirts and loud prints and suits and hair halfway to heaven and twice as bright, and beautiful.

Soft cotton between fingers, trailing across swirling colors and rainbows, soothing and warm and home.

People, strangers, but somehow intimately familiar, welcoming, mothering.

No words, none, only shiny metal pin pinched between fingers, pinched between layers of fabric.

No words, but instant recognition, welcome, open arms. No words, but home.

-

The tacky, yet comfortable college hospitality of grey futons amongst poster-decked walls surrounds, enfolds in its warmth.

It is comforting and unfamiliar all at once, filled with friends new and old alike.

Bottles, both plastic and glass, resting half-empty, the tender glow of moderately inebriated giggling and arms platonically, but no less lovingly, draped across shoulders, legs folded over another's, Thor Ragnarok long-forgotten amongst still-warm, now empty Zips bags.

Words pour into the openness of the big room, tasting like Sunny-D and pineapple Smirnoff, pouring into the champagne flutes scattered on the table, muffled into the shoulder of another's shirt, buzzing and pouring and laughing and just a little afraid and pouring into the not-so-quiet room, stopping just before spilling over the rim.

They are welcomed with open arms, ushered into the party, a new vibrancy to the smiles and tears and 2 a.m. pasta-making and drifting to sleep on a now familiar futon.

-

Green walls, the smell of chocolate sauce and fresh cut fruit. Elbows propped on smooth laminated tables, laughter between spoonfuls of froyo.

Words flow, only partially impeded by the mouth half-full of chocolate almond milk yogurt, brownie, and Captain Crunch... Knowing smiles, more froyo, and then moving along to talk of the next D&D campaign.

-

Evening has settled in and the soft and ever-present rain drip, drip, drips outside.

Thin Primark blankets guard against the breeze and ever-open window, the old bed creaks beneath shifting weight and crossed legs.

Soft, lilting Londoner cadences reverberate down the hallway from the kitchen beneath the microphone static of FaceTime.

The hours draw on, the giggles of catching up singing all the while, evening on one end and only but early afternoon on the other. The words are simple, not much more than an afterthought, really, between other stories of adventure and new learning.

-

A familiar church hallway, the aged linoleum flooring well-acquainted with the pounding of feet and giddy, out-of-breath laughter of high school youth, ducking in and out of storage rooms and meeting rooms.

Now it is quiet, but comfortably quiet, aside in one of its several familiar offices.

Shelves and shelves of music, filling the whole wall, a piano expanding to fill nearly half the room. At other times, its music can be heard meandering, waltzing through the church halls, all the way down to the sanctuary. A wilted, though supposedly not half-dead jade plant sits in the window.

Words do not come, they do not need to come. They hang in the room unspoken, but not as an intruder, but as a friend already invited in. They are already known. They are already loved. Deeply, wholly, fully.

# United We Stand

*Dr. Manuel Gomez*



**UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL**

**EL PUEBLO UNIDO, JAMAS SERA VENCIDO**

Despite all of their ugliness, all of their crass political currency, their ragged and tired promiscuity, some of the most fundamental truths of the human condition sit squarely at the center of clichés. Every culture has them.

**El Sol Sale Para Todos...The Sun Comes Out for All**

And only a moment before the cliché existed, there was the dicho, (proverb) the collected wisdom of the people, unique and sometimes untranslatable.

Entre lo dicho y lo hecho hay un gran trecho...Between what is said and what is done, is a grand ditch.

At what moment does the dicho become a cliché? Is it at the moment it crosses national borders and cultural boundaries? Or is it the moment it becomes the human wisdom of uncomplicated truths, not just the wisdom of one people?

**Si Se Puede; We Can Do It**

Fraying the edges of our pretenses to sophistication and transcendence, pushing up against our best intentions to originality and creativity, exchanged, rearranged, debased, discouraged, disavowed, the seemingly wasted language of proverbs and clichés represent some of the most powerful articulations of cooperatively owned wisdom.

**A Chain is only as strong as its weakest link.**

In their conspicuousness, in their vulgarity, these utterances seem to reflect only the truth of their inadequacy and naïve appeal for the untutored politics of our Ignation humanism. For the gap between

such simplicity and the complexity of history, policy, nationality, and economics are rarely ever traversed by the wisdom of even the most popular sayings. And certainly, our sophisticated understanding of the polarized, toxic politics of our time, the politics of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, and identity precludes any acceptance of trite clichés.

### **Actions Speak Louder Than Words**

But certainly, our understanding of the crucible of history and its impressions and traumas on the evolution of identity, we must see that what we mourn in our proverbs is our inability to achieve such simple truth. It is our human failure, not the failure or untruth of the words.

### **United We Stand, Divided We Fall.**

We have failed to reach beyond our manufactured and circumstantial divisions to our fundamental unity. And in this failure, we have still to fulfill the promise of our own identities, whatever we may call ourselves.

So much has happened over the past year, the past century, the past millennium, to divide us. Why is it that conquered people learn so well how to defeat each other? How is it that we have come to believe that our divisions are circumstantial scars and find the wholeness of our community? How can we cooperatively own our individual identity and strengthen the identity of our children? How can we reconcile our cultural, national, political, and historical differences with the radical sameness of our humanity?

I believe that the truth of our collective strength lies in the delicate balance between our understanding of ourselves and our presence in the larger society that often surpass the peculiarities of personal and cultural identity. The way in which each one of us defines ourselves conforms to the particularities of family, geography, history, and personality. For us individual identity is inextricable from memories of conquest, and thus ultimately, the personal becomes political.

### **Birds of a feather fly together.**

Such collective engagement in the imposition of historical oppression often creates a sense of insecurity circumscribing our identity, both individual and communal. Our attachments to the

effects of oppression often turns us against ourselves and each other, as we seek our strength in the rejection of those who are unlike us, and like us. Division and conquest, initially imposed upon us, becomes second nature, relegating our commonalities to rhetorical exercises. Without a fundamental recognition of our responsibility to each other as humans

and within our groups, coalition remains impossible and the causes we individually promote are weakened.

For the truth is that we do stand united, whether we recognize it or not. And the sooner we recognize this simple truth, the sooner we can collectively cultivate solutions to the complex issues we face within this culture, within Gonzaga University, within the world.

### **Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam**

There is no difference between a proverb and a cliché except that which our imaginations prescribe.

### **El Pueblo Unido, Jamas Sera Vencido**

### **United We Stand, Divided We Fall**

# Absolute Zero

*Maya Coseo*

• • •

Everything grinds to a halt  
when I try to find meaning in the universe.  
These days, it seems, things  
have gone off the rails.

At what point do we throw up our hands  
and say, “fuck it”—  
apathy and paralysis,  
an insufficient response  
to a turning, rising tide—  
I can feel the chill already.

Life is change—  
cells cleaving, stars collapsing,  
the shockwave that created  
us all ever-expanding—  
which is why the concept of  
immobility  
seems so strange.

Once there was the geocentric view  
of the universe.  
Now there is the humancentric view  
of our planet.

We do not reside in absolute zero.  
Rarely pause a moment and breathe.  
Rest is a hypothetical thing in the modern age;  
it is hard to imagine stopping.

But one day, zero degrees Kelvin will be a proven concept.  
Perhaps not observed by us or our descendants;  
maybe by the animals left behind, or the aliens  
whom we will never see.

Paris, Nairobi, Rome, Beijing, Cairo, New York, Seattle—  
immobile, inhospitable, empty. Frozen.

Paintings hanging dusty and unseen on the walls.  
Monuments failing. Buildings falling.  
Human cultural centers devoid of meaning.  
No us. Not anymore.

With this in mind,  
how can we still only ponder:  
where is my place in the universe?

# School of Rock

*Megan O'Herron*

• • •



*Just a group of good friends playing good music for their good friends. School Bus is a band made up of Zags Bryce Makela, Jordan Lach, Rachel Dorr and Jack Burns.*



# The Underground Community

*Morgan McCurdy*

• • •

*Trigger warning: the following piece mentions suicide and sexual assault.*

Someone I loved tried to commit suicide,  
to escape the hunger of drugs inside.  
They were assaulted and abused,  
hurt and confused.  
They wanted a different life,  
but didn't have the money to pursue.

My friend was raped,  
not once, but twice,  
assaulted when they only wanted a good time.  
Ruining of nights,  
blamed for the act,  
for the way they were dressed  
Or what was between their legs.  
They told them, "You should have been with a friend."  
"This wouldn't have happened if you did this, this, and that."  
Like it was their fault,  
a rapist came along,  
taking something that didn't belong to him.

They touched his hair  
without his permission.  
Thought it like, an innocent curiosity.  
What they didn't realize,  
how animalistic  
it was to see him as a different species.  
"Is he white?" they asked.  
I say no.  
Their faces change  
from excitement to oh god no!  
Like my boyfriend's skin is more important  
than his personality  
or the fact,  
that I love him.

They punched me in the face,  
the arm and the leg,  
in the stomach,  
around the throat,  
wherever to inflict pain.  
They left me in the dark,  
at the age of 8,  
tied to my desk chair,  
with the words  
“worthless”  
echoing in my brain.  
I screamed and I kicked,  
but it did no use.  
No superhero came to save me from this abuse.  
Eventually I went silent,  
no words left to scream.  
Eventually I went numb from the act of simply being.

Now, I'm dealing with shit,  
the loss of a brother,  
not blood,  
but so loved,  
someone who was family.  
I miss him so much,  
everyday feels heavy,  
but I do this for him,  
because I know that I'm ready.  
I'm tired of kids taking their lives  
because they feel like they have no happiness inside.  
I know what it's like to feel so helpless,  
the darkness, a demon,  
controlling my body.  
Depression is a disease,  
something you can't control,  
but I can tell you it gets better  
because I know.  
It's definitely hard,  
you've got to fight like hell,  
but I'll tell you it's worth it,  
to end up with a community,  
that understands and loves you,  
so you're never alone.

# The Octopus Man

*Megan O'Herron*

• • •



*A coastal Moroccan sunset makes a picturesque setting for some evening tidepool fishing. This man had a small octopus at the end of his hook that he'd caught earlier.*

# Big Red Lips

*Zabelle Messick*

• • •

I have big lips.

And when I wear red lipstick, it has been known to make other  
women very uncomfortable

They say

Red lipstick makes my lips bigger than they already are

So, I guess when I put it on, that's me responding, "I don't give a  
fuck"

They say

Red lips are too much

Too loud

But

My voice

is not small

So why should my lips be

They say

Red lips would make me a woman of the night

Darling,

look at my black skin

Brown,

like the earth's soil

I am no woman of the night

I am a woman of the world

Do not mistake my dark skin for servitude

The night sky, is still the sky

And

She serves no one  
In red lips,  
Not only can you hear what I am saying  
You can see the words I breathe life into  
So when I speak  
There is no misunderstanding  
From the same red lips that gave you kisses, can come daggers  
I can both love you and burn you  
Red, is multifaceted, baby  
If it were up to you, you would have me erase myself  
Isn't that right, Grandma, Auntie, Sister  
Better to disappear, than to create uproar, they say  
But my very being is a revolution  
Each step I take, a riot  
To live, when others would have you die  
Is to create chaos  
And I am chaos  
I am alive  
And I will have you see and hear me at the same time  
Red was not meant to blend in  
I was never meant to blend in  
Though red can create other colors,  
And I, other skin tones  
We  
are fire on our own  
If you are lucky,  
I will wear mine,  
here,  
and let you gaze

# Forget

*Liz Vosler*

• • •

This may sound bad but,  
this may sound stupid but,  
this may make you hate me but,

sometimes I forget.

I have moments, long ones —  
stretches when I don't talk to her and I forget  
I forget that she doesn't agree,

fundamentally,

with who she thinks I choose to be,  
who I am.

Not who I choose to be, because who I am  
is not a choice.

And yet, sometimes, I  
forget.

Sometimes I forget about our talks,  
those words so sharp my insides still bleed,  
words so hot I still feel their wounds  
Sometimes I forget she knows.

Not because things are getting better no —  
no, because things are still the same.  
The same as always, the same as  
before.

I forget  
because  
she acts the same, treats me the same, pretends all is normal when  
really,

it's not.

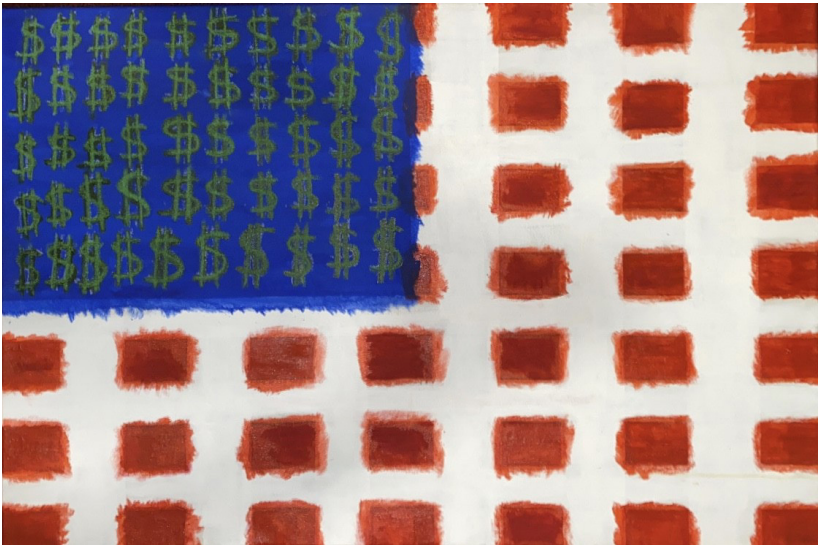
And when I remember again,  
the wounds reopen; the bleeding starts.

It's all worse,  
Again.

# Flag

Pato Gomez

• • •

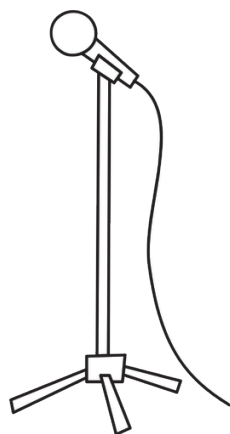


*I wanted to express my perspective on the state of American culture today. As a Mexican immigrant, I viewed America as a country that was divided. I saw it as a country that was unsure of its identity. I wanted to reflect the lack of identity by making the division in the flag blurry. The dollar signs reflected the selfish and materialistic attitudes that I've experienced on campus. The flag is one of the most valuable symbols in American culture and I wanted to expose the true values that the flag is attached to.*



**10<sup>th</sup> Annual Diversity  
Monologues**

**Unapologetic: The Power of  
Radical Self-Love**



**The voice of doubt, shame, and guilt blaring in our heads is not our voice. It is a voice we have been given by society steeped in shame. It is the “outside voice.” Our authentic voice, our “inside voice,” is the voice of radical self-love!**

**-Sonya Renee Taylor, *The Body Is Not An Apology***

This year, we celebrate 10 years of Diversity Monologues performances! We celebrate the creativity of GU students who are passionate about diversity and inclusion, and their courage to share their stories to inspire change. Our bodies are the keepers of our thoughts, our hopes, and our dreams. As we grow and as we learn, we find that we have no need to apologize for our bodies. We find that radical self-love—the power to love ourselves and all our identities—says that we belong here and that we are not sorry.

This is true liberation.

I would like to acknowledge the founder of this powerful program at Gonzaga University--Rudy Mondragón, former UMEC staff member, and everyone who has contributed to making this program what it is today.

It has been an honor to work with the student planning committee! Fese Elango, Jordan Gonzalez, and Nila Hoxha have been a dedicated team who have given so much time, energy, support, and heart to this program. I so appreciate their creativity and insight.

I have deep appreciation for the faculty and staff who have given their time and energy to support the participants as they walk the journey of writing and performing their monologues: Rani Chavez, Juliane Mora, Karen Petruska, and Jonathan Rossing. Lastly, I am grateful to Gonzaga's Student Media for sharing these stories in the *Our Voices* journal.

In peace,

Deb Ellis

*Unity Multicultural Education Center (UMEC)*

# Uncivilized

*Jordan Martinez*

• • •

Long after dogs had stopped talking,  
Before I could speak,  
My mother  
Set my clumsy feet on green grass  
And taught me to pray  
In time with drums and  
The first, jingle-shaped stars  
In the constellation of my being.

Long after “Saynday Was Coming Along”,  
But before I could scribble my name,  
My mother  
Set upon my shoulders a shawl  
Laden with my history and soft as the holy water of Medicine Lake.

Long after my people sang my first memories into creation,  
Before I could sing,  
My mother  
Taught my eyes to bow and trace  
The path I have trod back to the first imprint of Kiowa moccasins  
beyond the oaken stump through which my people climbed to enter  
this world.

My voice,  
My spirit,

My Entirety  
Is inseparable  
From  
My People.

When you see me speak,  
You hear my mother's voice.  
When you read my words,  
You read the traumas of Kiowa children who died in boarding  
schools.  
When you hear me sing,  
You witness thousands of indigenous women and girls who have  
been brutalized and  
Silenced  
By men and systems  
You helped  
put or keep in place.

All for the belief that we are  
Uncivilized.

\*\*\*\*\*

Your people called mine uncivilized for speaking so many languages  
that were not yours.

You condemned us for our ill-grasp of English,  
Using that uncivilized word  
To say we had no speech worth learning,  
No culture to humanize, and

No intelligence of our own that called for your good esteem.

Uncivilized.

That uncivilized word,  
Which you now use so flippantly  
And dare call colloquial,  
Taught  
My Grandmother,  
My Mother,  
My Sister,  
And now  
Me,  
Language is Protection  
In the White Man's World.

When we could not write with your words,  
You called us  
Uncivilized  
And wrote our failures as your histories.

When we could not speak your tongue,  
Again we were  
"Uncivilized"  
So you ripped ours out  
From the throats of our children.

When we could not sing your hymns,  
We were the worst of the  
"Uncivilized" New World,

And so you killed our sacred buffalo,  
razed our medicine lodges  
and raped our holy land  
to guide us to One True God.

But we are a sharp people.

We learned to speak our truths with your words.  
Chief Satanta, Great Orator of the Plains,  
Spoke for many more tribes than his Kiowa people when he crafted  
alliances out of enemies, and reminded his people of their dignity.

We learned to write our stories with your letters.  
Navarre Scott Momaday, the Progenitor of the Native American  
Renaissance,  
Wrote on behalf of many more tribes than his Kiowa people and  
became one of the most decorated authors in American history.

I will master your language and teach myself three others to protect  
myself from the barbs of your slang.

I will write with twice the skill you possess to be regarded with half  
the laud.

I will learn to speak with the command and Kiowa assurance  
that my words will be my legacy, outlasting my body by seven  
generations or more.

Each syllable imbued the warful prowess of my ancestors and  
the belligerent resilience of my own experiences.

My legacy will be carved out in essay, fictions, poetry, lyrics.  
Every art relied upon to convey the spirits of humanity.



Your legacy will live only until you die.  
Defined by the casual cowardice with which you used that single,  
uncivilized word,  
That justified the genocide of my people,  
Refurbished as “slang”.

No atom of my being has ever or will ever be  
Uncivilized.  
So don't you dare say I'm savage.

# Continue?

*Ryan Liam*

• • •

10 Hopes and Dreams

Ignorant to what this world means

Just a smile on my face that burst through its seams

9 close friends I trust

Hand-in-hand, no ounce of mistrust

Willing to amend, willing to adjust

8 new problems that arise

I feel like I'm about to capsize

I am now forced to problem solve, only patchwork solutions I  
surmise

7 solutions found to those 8 problems

No matter the bounce-back, always would hit rock-bottom

Salvaging what is left, feeling nothing but condemned

6 people appear to fuck my shit up and over

Call myself lucky like finding a lucky clover

Because this was a moment of clarity with a severe hangover

5 times mhm was said

"Mhm, I'll do it" he said with dread

"Mhm, love you too" he said with no emotion just like if he was dead

4 friends that had to go  
Said my goodbyes as they left nice and slow  
“Continue?” appeared to unpause the journey, which honestly hurt  
like a wombo-combo

3 deep breaths slow and steady  
Have to wait until I’m ready  
Because my heart and my soul is too heavy

2 fucks I give at this point  
With too many broken bones, sprains, and pain in my joints  
Now too tired to continue, I had finally reached my flashpoint

1 last breath I take  
Hoping it’s the best one I make  
Eyes roll back, now be quiet for my sake

o

Silence and Tranquility  
A chance to rest, no forced activity

1 voice in the distance  
A quiet voice that reeks of persistence  
Pleading and trying to give their assistance

2 eyes open  
But to my surprise, there was no emotion  
As I was still broken

3 attempts to stand up straight  
Because life gives no time to wait  
I'm already behind, I'm already late

4 fake smiles I must wear  
For my sins are mine alone to bear  
Little did I know how this ignorant bliss would put my heart into a  
snare

5 Counselor visits to sort myself out  
Not being true with my feelings drained everything, causing a  
drought  
Like a candle being burnt out

6 times I've broken down  
My tears cause me to drown  
Fears of what is and what was caused my mental shutdown

7 times I've stood up  
Because my friends were there and showed up  
We started to run and didn't slow-up

8 self-care days of rest  
The only way I know best  
It's usually a pedicure day I must confess

9 detours taken  
Unbroken and Unshaken  
Because we knew we weren't forsaken

10 Thank you's given

I couldn't, maybe even wouldn't be here if y'all haven't forgiven

I'm deeply grateful for this decision

However I also cannot forget about the 11th thank you

Because I can't forget me too

For choosing to live and undergoing a debut part 2

# Disabled

## *Makenna Presnell*



Disabled. Hi, I'm Makenna, and I'm disabled.

Please do not tell me that I just walk funny or I am differently-abled or I have special needs. I have needs, but they aren't special. I'm disabled. That's the language we're using today – please and thank you. My disability is a sacred part of my identity. It is a story of perseverance, and survival and brokenness and defying odds. My disability is a story of learning and relearning activities most of the population. It is a story of learning to be okay with being out of control. It is a story of trying again.

My body and its scars provide you with a road map of all the times by body has been violated, cut into, poked, and prodded – of all the doctors and therapists who thought they could fix me. I don't need fixing.

I learned very quickly my body doesn't belong. I will never forget the time I had a professor look me in the face and said, “we don't have disabled students in this program,” or the time a professor asked me “what I thought I was doing here?,” or all the times they told me I should drop out, my body wouldn't make it through nursing school anyway.

Everywhere I go, people ask what's wrong with me, or what I did to myself. They think I'm injured – you would not imagine their look

of shock when I tell them I was born incorrectly. You didn't think you could be born "wrong" – did you? But when they attached a diagnosis to me, all the sudden my body became political and who it belonged to was called into question as my ownership was stripped away one doctor's appointment at a time. Today, I assert with every room I enter that disabled people belong there, whether that message gets received or not. It is a practice in self love to become comfortable when my body takes up space.

I have never had a better teacher than my own flesh and blood. My body teaches me about patience, and perseverance, and about giving things my best shot. My body taught me that the hundredth time you try something might be the first time you succeed. My body taught me that life is unfair. It also taught me that gravity is a harsh reality and falling is a certainty – I learned very quickly that being able to get up is a privilege.

My body taught me how to live with things I do not like. There are days when my body hurts so badly I can feel my soul scream "get me out of here!" as it pounds on my ribcage. There are days when I think I cannot manage one more thing. My body teaches me about defiance. It has a host of problems seen in people two or three times my age and it does not care how I feel about that. My body asks for more, always. More time, more work, more maintenance, more help. More, more, more. There are days when I am convinced I have nothing left to give it, but I think there is a lesson in there, that we can always ask for more.

My body shows up when it is not welcome – especially when it is not welcome. My body does not care what the plans were for the

day, or what you had in mind. My body does not care how you feel about it, even if sometimes I do. I have not always been welcomed in predominantly able spaces, my cries for awareness and accessibility and inclusion are not always heard. But my body teaches me how to show up to pain, and agony and fear, and do it anyway.

I have spent a lot of time apologizing for my body. “I’m sorry that I take up space...I’m sorry that I need accommodation...I’m sorry that we need to slow down....I’m sorry I need to rest...I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry”

Or maybe, I’m not sorry at all.

In a world that tells me that my body is wrong, broken, and othered, loving my body is a radical act. Disability is a natural variation on the human experience. I’m disabled and proud. I will not apologize for it.



# Saying Good-Bi to Apologies

*Lillian Piel*



I'm sitting across the table from my best friend since childhood, trying to enjoy the colossal ice cream sundae at the restaurant we had always wanted to try at the mall. She's telling me a story, I don't remember what about, and as she talks, she gestures wildly with her hands, as she always does when she's excited. But I'm distracted, trying to work up the courage to tell her something. I'm trying to find my voice to tell her something.

We're walking to my car. Of course, I had driven us there because she didn't like driving on the highway, or at night. I have to tell her. I have to tell her. I sit down behind the steering wheel, and as she slides in next to me in the passenger seat, I turn to her before I lose the tiny ounce of courage I had managed to muster and in one hasty breath and a rush of words I finally say: "I have to tell you something."

She turns to me, smiling, like she always is. I'm not even looking at her now. I take a few moments, not saying anything, feeling almost as if our friendship is hanging in a balance. Both of my hands are gripping the steering wheel, my knuckles turning white, my heart pounding in my chest like it wants to escape from inside of me, my thoughts a blur. I hear myself say "I think I'm bisexual."

I thought it would feel like a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders after finally coming out to my best friend. Instead I felt like I had to

apologize. It wasn't anything she did; she was just a little confused. She said something to the effect of "I never would have known." And why would she have? She had known me for so long, since we were just little girls playing on the playground, so carefree.

When I first started questioning, I was terrified. I knew something about me was different, that I didn't only like boys. At one point in my life, whenever I thought about who my partner would be or listened to love songs the person that came to my mind first was a girl. But my mind wouldn't cooperate with my heart, and I was fighting against myself. I denied that I had a crush on her, I hid from myself, I buried my feelings, but they kept resurfacing no matter how deep I dug. The message that my brain and that society was sending me was that if I liked girls, there was something wrong with me. As time passed and loosened the reigns on my fear of not being straight, I began to believe that bisexual is the right label for me, though when I was sure that I am bi, I wasn't entirely comfortable wearing that label. In truth, I was far from it.

I felt so uncomfortable about coming out to my best friend that I distanced myself from her for a time. I felt like I had to apologize for myself. I wouldn't call it hating my bisexuality. It was more like I feared it, because of the power it has to change how people think of me in an instant.

It's one thing to accept my sexuality, but it was a completely different battle to get to a place where I could love that part of myself.

A year after I came out for the first time, I found myself in love. But

my boyfriend didn't know I was bi yet. One of the most important parts of being in love with someone is being able to be vulnerable, not just with your partner, but with yourself too.

My boyfriend and I went out for ice cream at our favorite ice cream shop, stealing bites of ice cream and kisses from each other. As we walked back to my car, hand-in-hand, I could feel that it was the right moment to tell him. There I was again, sitting in my car, finding the courage to come out to the one I care about the most. I took a deep breath, turned to him, gazed into his eyes and said, "I need to tell you something, but this doesn't affect our relationship at all because you're the one I'm in love with. I'm bisexual." His response was "That's cool. How long did you know?" We hugged each other tightly, for a long time. When our eyes met again, I could still see the same love in them that was there all along.

Now when I come out, I make sure never to say "I'm sorry," because I'm not. When I come out to someone, there's always a tiny fear in the back of my mind that I won't be accepted, even when I'm 99% sure that I will be. But apologizing tells them I am ashamed, that I don't love myself. It's okay to not be out to everyone yet – the power to proclaim who I am is mine, and mine alone. And I'm still working on that too. I'm not out to my parents yet, but when I do tell them, I will not say sorry. I love myself, all of myself, and I'm not sorry.

# Keahi

## *Jordanne Beckwith-Barros*

• • •

“Mental Illness”

What a stigmatized phrase.

Those who have it feel the need to hide it

And those who don't feel the need to avoid it.

The words “anxiety” and “depression” treated like a new fad diet

The validity of my mind they try to deny it

It's not a one size fits all implication

Even though that's the expectation

I know it was hard for you

And I'm sorry I had no clue

Baby brother.

Self-love.

Do you know him?

I used to hear good things

But I never got the chance.

I used to look in the mirror and tell myself

Today is the day

But it never was.

Until one night

I tried to find this self-love everyone was talking about

I tried to find him but all I found were my demons

They were waiting for me

Telling me I would never make my family proud

Telling me I would never make myself proud

I never found him.

Self-love.

Do you know her?

We used to be close but, I haven't seen her in a while.

I miss the days I could look in the mirror and say

Wow

I am capable of so much and I won't stop until my I make myself proud.

Those days brought me a sense of joy.

Joy that gave me little butterflies

The ones you get when you feel like you're doing something right.

But

She vanished with him

Those good days vanished with him

I feel like I am vanishing with him.

I find myself apologizing for my bad days

The days my mental health isn't stable

And my body isn't able

I find myself apologizing in insincere ways

The days I miss him most.

So I took the store-bought serotonin and covered the numbness with a smile

For something not physically visible I tried so hard to hide it

Then I wondered

How many others are hiding just like me?

How many others are fighting their own terrifying battles?  
How many others feel the way I feel?

My dear sister  
Don't apologize.  
Your story isn't meant to end like mine.  
You didn't choose my path but  
You can choose yours.  
Your disabilities do not define you  
And you know that.  
Don't let your demons trick you  
Don't lose your self-love.

I know you can't hear my words  
But listen to your own.  
You used to tell me "we are capable of so much, Keahi"  
You used to tell me "falling isn't weak Keahi, because it teaches us  
how to get back up"  
You used to say "Keahi, no one has the power to make you feel  
inferior unless you let them."  
Please remember  
That includes yourself.

There is a misconception  
Of those who've lost their direction  
That they are weak and want attention  
But that deception ends here.

I realized something  
I realized that postvention is prevention

And I need to stop apologizing for the way I heal and  
Focus on healing with intention.

“Mental Illness”

What a stigmatized phrase.

Those who have it feel the need to hide it

And those who don't feel the need to avoid it.

This doesn't work for me anymore.

So I'm taking a stand

A stand for my self-love

A stand for my mental validity

A stand for those who haven't learned how to love themselves yet

A stand for those who never got the chance

Each day is an uphill battle but I'm stronger for it

No one can take self-love away from me anymore.

I won't deprive myself of the love I deserve anymore.

I will do no harm, but I will take no shit.

I'm done hiding from the shame of the phrase “mental illness” when

I have nothing to be ashamed of.

Now

I can look in the mirror and say

Wow

I have done so much

Now

Seven months, two weeks, and two days later

I still miss my baby brother

I still have a lot to process  
I still have bad days  
But  
I know he would be proud of me  
Because I am proud of myself

Now  
I've found self-love  
She was just waiting for me to accept her.



# Unapologetic

*Kayla Kim*

• • •

and i now have this  
beautiful life that  
i cannot claim as my own  
but you paid it all  
so that i could find my way home

oh how i wish that i could tell you  
that we made it  
and that i am okay  
that i don't take this lightly and that  
i will make you proud someday

my entire life i have  
existed in between  
your two worlds and  
considered it a curse  
to be washed up on these shores

because i know it must have  
broken your heart to  
watch me water down  
my story in the name  
of a better life

but you did not cross  
an entire ocean so that  
i would run away from  
who i am and you did  
not lose your baby brother

it is you and the  
others that came before me  
that have taught me how to fight  
the expectations are enormous here  
stacked generations high

so that i would shrink  
on this holy land and  
i am sorry for what i have done  
what i thought i had to  
give up in order to stay

but this beautiful life has  
never been mine  
and so i will choose  
not to live it for myself  
one last time

and so i will choose to  
dance on these shores and  
in this messy in-between  
their man-made borders  
have no absolutely say on me

and so to all those that  
came before me  
i will never have the words  
i'll start now with thank you  
and end with loving myself

and you did not cross  
an entire ocean so that  
i would run away from  
who i am and so i will  
learn how to love myself here

unapologetic  
on this holy land  
i searched for a  
reason to stay and  
i found one in your arms

in the love that carried  
me through and in  
the life of an immigrant child  
it is here that i stand and  
here that i fight

i hope that it mends  
your heart to watch me  
reclaim this story  
in the name of  
a beautiful life

# It's Beautiful

## *Sanskruti Tomar*



My name is Sanskruti.

Suns-krith-ee. It's easier than you think, but you just have to try.

Suns-krith-ee. It means culture. It's beautiful.

Sanskruti. It's not simply a beautiful name. It's heavy too. The thoughts of dances and spices are erased, and replaced.

Sans-kurti

Not really.

Sans-krew-tee.

No. That's not it.

Sandy-skruti?

No. Are you really trying?

They stop trying pretty early. I stop correcting them. My peers spit my name out with distaste, every time a new variation, a new way to leave it mangled and broken. My teachers call me entitled for expecting them to make an effort to say the name my parents chose with so much love.

My name justifies it when no one saves me from him.

My name is Sanskruti. In his mouth, it's followed by the words, "Go back to where you came from. You don't belong in my country."

He's not the first to say these things, but he's the first to say he'll kill me to get me out. I hear it every day from him. Every day, I hesitate to go to class, I fear the power my name has. My name is Sanskruti and I'm eleven years old. My name is Sanskruti and I'm scared.

My school changes, and maybe my name can too. I don't want it anymore. I'm not strong enough to carry its weight. Do I have a nickname, you ask me. I let you decide.

My name is Sunny.

A bright name. A name that's full of joy and light if given the chance to shine. A name that brings a smile to the faces of many.

A name that hurts my parents. Why would you leave behind your real name, they ask? Why would you leave behind your culture?

But Sunny. It's a name that glows. A name that'll make me belong. A name they'll accept.

Sunny. I had hopes for the name.

But the name Sunny is the one he uses when he tells me he'll kill himself if I don't say yes to him. It's the name he uses when he

says he can take what he wants from me. It's the name whose light flickers out for the year I spend in his clutches. My name is Sunny and I'm 14 years old. My name is Sunny and I want to die.

It's a name I keep carrying, even when I've cut him out of my life. It holds the weight of abuse, of rejection, of a daily fear. But it's a name that has a personality attached to it, and I have to live up to it. I keep smiling, I keep radiating light.

I tell myself it's right. I tell myself I'm making it easier on others by hiding my fear and pain, I'm doing the right thing to choose a name that can fit in their mouths.

My name is Sunny, isn't that nice? It becomes more than just the abuse, it becomes more than just pain. I make friends and they say my name with the spark in their eyes that I hoped a name like Sunny could bring.

A name like Sunny that fits into the mouths of colonizers make them see beyond my brown body. My skin isn't fair and lovely to their eyes, but at least I'm making an effort to melt into the pot.

My name is Sunny and it's nice.

It isn't until I step foot on this campus that someone asks me why.

Why is my name Sunny? He asks me that question more than once. He knows my real name. Why do I insist that my name is Sunny instead?

I would've been upset with him for refusing to let it go, but the kindness in his eyes when he asks softens my heart. He asks why I'd leave behind a name as beautiful as mine.

I try to explain to him the way it catches in mouths that don't know the difference between a KR and a kruh. I try to explain the way that teachers look at me with that panic in their eyes when I say my name. I try to explain the kindness of a nickname. I try to explain that my name isn't important. I try to explain that I'm more than just my name.

As soon as I say it, I know that it's a lie. My name, both of my names, are a part of who I am, and who am I trying to convince by saying anything else? I'm so much more than my name but my name is a foundation that I've built on.

Why don't I use my beautiful name?

I don't answer. I can't answer. I don't want to answer.

Because it's a name seeped in my own blood. It's a name they use against me. It's a name that could put me in danger. It's a name that reminds everyone that I shouldn't be here.

But I'm here. I'm here and I earned it.

My name is Sanskruti, and it's not nice. My name is Sanskruti and it's beautiful. My name is Sanskruti. And you're going to use it.

# QWeird Love

*Diana Nguyen*

• • •

I thank God for my ability to love women.  
In high school, I was still figuring myself out when I laid my eyes on  
Cresseda,  
With her long flowy hair and confident walk;  
She'd talked the talk the way she dribbled the basketball.  
I wanted to be her. Ooh, I wanted to be with her.  
Yeah, you know. I know.

I know how I drafted love poems with masculine pronouns;  
hiding every soft curve of her smile beneath a mask of his grin.  
How when I wrote short stories of superheroes, I imagined that I  
was Superman sweeping Lois Lane off of her feet,  
and for a second, I forget that I am Diana—Wonder Woman.

The first time I came out to my mom was my third try, and the  
second it left my mouth... the second phrase out of my mouth was  
an apology.

Gee, mom, “Con xin lỗi mẹ.” I’m so sorry... for being.

I knew how my mom would feel so I didn’t hold hands with my first  
girlfriend.  
To my friends, she was the first girl I’ve ever loved,  
But to my mother, she was the girl I shared my lunch, my friendship,  
and my taste in music with.

I knew how my mom would feel so whenever she said,  
“Thank God that you aren’t gay.”  
I could only stand there with a grimace and nod along as if I agreed.

My mom wanted me to be “more girly” to be into “girlier things” but  
she gets maAaaaAd when I reveal that I like the girliest things of all!

I’m queer. Queer as in weird, queer as in peculiar,  
queer as in not like the others as if  
Being like the others is something that we romanticize.

Queer as in my jeans are cuffed,  
To make up for the fact that I’m not.

Queer as in I fall deeply and madly in love... on the second date.  
Queer as in I fall out of love just as violently.

Do you know what love feels like?  
When you’re warm and fuzzy and your entire being buzzes with  
excitement.  
Not for anything in particular, but just because you look forward to a  
wonderful life.  
When your smile lights your eyes,  
When there’s a bounce to your step,  
Do you know what loving yourself feels like?  
I don’t either, yet.

I am 92.5% gay.  
I learned to love with 99.9% of my heart.



I am no longer a force to be controlled,  
My soul may have come from the stardust in the galaxy,  
but to the ground of the earth I will return,  
like the glimmer being brushed off of our faces  
on the bus rides home from Pride,  
like the fire ignited behind our eyes.

Now, I take back my apologies, all of those that I allowed leave my  
lips,  
insults to my queer ancestors who hid who they were so that I may  
be who I am.  
If I know how to love others, I know how to love myself.

My thoughts are worthy of being thought of. Of being. In all of my  
parts and pieces and halves and whole— I am worthy of being.

# This I Believe

*Michael Tanaka*



For this I believe: To the teacher that was surprised I struggled with math. To my peer after class that called me a Jap. To the kid at the park who asked if I spoke English. I will say this one last time: I'm sorry. That you don't have the competence to acknowledge my presence, to respect me as I am, to empathize with my self-conscious; one that is heavily influenced by my cultural identity. You see, leadership was taught to me from a bottom-up approach, I should never think of myself over another, in any capacity, regardless of my ability, skills, or experiences. In short, I was told leadership was never something I should seek out but something that should seek me; similar to the plot of any superhero movie where the main character through a series of events actualizes supernatural abilities that will empower them to save the world. In essence, leadership to me was an inherent quality meant for those who fit that mold. Do I fit that mold? No. Do I want to fit that mold? Hell no. Why? Because that's not how I was raised, and that's not what I value. In a collectivist culture where family and stability is valued more than freedom and the individual, where humility and grace is honored more than merit and achievement, I realize that my leadership capabilities are largely influenced by my familial and cultural values more than anything else; embedded within Japanese heritage and Buddhist mentality, something I've found to be deeply spiritual, transformative, and something I can't separate myself from, nor do I want to.

For this I believe: to my mother who would tell me “You’re not Asian, you’re American, you were raised white.” I will say this one last time: “you’re right.” I am Asian, I am American, and I was raised white. But the way I was raised doesn’t take away from the way I was born; I am Asian-American: one identity, one movement being led by people who are defining histories of activism, solidarity, and systemic oppression on this land we call America. I understand that I grew up in the same neighborhood your father used to take you to mow lawns and prune bushes, but wasn’t he given that opportunity on the basis that he was American, not Japanese? In America there is no such thing as “both and,” just “either or,” because privilege is defined on the basis of how you’re perceived; the way you look and act and not the way you are. To define as Asian-American is a political statement, it’s reclaiming 200 years of citizenship and belonging that were taken from us. While it may seem decentralized by the sheer diversity of nationality, economic class, and skin color, it is entirely a socially constructed identity being proudly reclaimed by the people who were all categorized into the one word when they first stepped foot on this land: Asian.

So to the “perpetual foreigners,” the ones that will always be asked, “Where are you really from?,” to those who will fall victim to stereotype threat, imposter syndrome, and the myth of the American Dream; to the immigrants and refugees trying to survive in this country, I’ve figured it out. I am no less of a person because of the way I am and how I was raised, I’m just a different leader taking up this space to speak the truth; for the many people that have struggled in the same ways I continue to, believe me when I say for this I believe, you are worthy.

# I Know I Love

*Zabelle Messick*

• • •

I was marked Black at the moment of conception  
The world outside of my mother's womb, much darker than my own  
complexion  
Proclaiming me aggressive, dangerous, and wild  
Before the world could bother to learn how to pronounce my name  
How a black child is both hunter and prey is beyond me

I was adopted at 8 months old.  
I am a survivor, a survivor of malnourishment, malaria, and civil  
war.  
My parents saved my life.  
But they didn't tell me that the war I was escaping would be  
replaced.  
That the safety of their white hands I placed mine into would  
not resemble all the white hands that would one day be reaching  
towards my black body

I have learned  
As a black woman  
I am unknown but stereotyped  
Undesired but fetishized  
Hunted and human

When I came to Gonzaga, my understanding of myself changed  
I became accustomed to watching others see my skin tone before

they saw me

So much so, that I too began to see my skin tone before I saw myself  
Black skin, not tan, the “too dark” kind

I occupied a body that did not fit in the space that was granted to me  
upon my acceptance onto this campus

My big smile couldn't stop the awkward glances from peers when  
people of color became the class discussion

My background, couldn't stop professors from asking me to correct  
them in class conversations

My body, clothed in casual attire couldn't stop the rush of superficial  
flattery I received while walking down the halls

Who knew that jeans, PLAIN jeans, were “so cute?”

I began to realize that I had that look

Skin, they mistook for a jersey

Educated,

Well-read, and not threatening, a pleasant surprise

Those eyes, you know

Foreign

Just enough to be a conquest

For the boys who've never “dated a pretty girl of color,” whose  
favorite flavor was “chocolate”

For the men who wanted to try a “black woman,” joked of wanting  
mixed babies, and whose childhood dreams consisted of being a  
black basketball player in the NBA

I observed how

I was just right, to a lot of people, for all the wrong reasons

In an effort to understand how I was perceived and why I was  
wanted

I lost value in how I saw myself

I forgot how to love myself

I forgot that Black is beautiful

Black girl magic, is Black after all

And Dark-skinned Black girl magic

is just double the melanin, and double the magic

Kinky hair, rain or shine,

skin glowing, divine

You'll have my love until you don't deserve it

I make mistakes

I fall, I get back up

I cry when I laugh

I shout at the TV

I clap on beat,

I do squats for fun,

And not because I need to

I wear hoop earrings even though they're over done, and

I'll still be wearing them when a new fad is appropriated.

You see,

My understanding of myself changed when

I stopped apologizing for being different

And started saying you are welcome

I am not the same, naïve, girl that marched on campus four years ago

I have even higher standards now

I've decided that ....

1. If you want my attention, you'll pronounce my name correctly

2. If I don't show up in the group photo, it's not me and it's not the camera, it's you

Learn how to use it

3. If you want to post me as your black friend on insta, you're going to have to pay me

Nothing in life is free and that includes me, I'm not an exception.

I have become very selective

The people I let in,

My loved ones,

Are Courageous,

and Unapologetic,

Y cuando digo "Sabes con quien estás hablando," they laugh

I have become intentional

I value myself so that others can learn how to value me

Because of this

I see love more quickly now

Like cocoa butter on cocoa bean colored skin

Like wearing red lipstick to class because I feel like it  
Like dancing my way to my friend's car as they blast our favorite  
song  
Like when my friend makes tortillas and I bring the sangria  
Like when my professor stays on campus just so they can work one-  
on-one with me

I know love  
I've been able to find a community in which I am cherished as much  
as I cherish myself  
The confused child I once was, finds nothing wrong with the woman  
I am today  
I was not born to thrive in a box, to conform to a label, or to fit in

I was born, as me  
And I stand before you, as me

I no longer tolerate conditional acceptance.  
I no longer accept conditional love.  
I know love  
I have learned how to proclaim my own humanity



## CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

**Alexander Porada** is from San Diego, California and a current first-year student in the Honors Program at Gonzaga University. Having developed a deep interest about his cultural heritage from a young age, he is a double-major in International Relations and Criminology. Committed to holding on to his linguistic roots (having grown up speaking Spanish and English at home), he dedicated a poem he wrote earlier this year about my identity as a Mexican-American. With the encouragement of his English professor Dr. Jeffrey Dodd and his experiences as a volunteer at Logan Elementary School's English Language Development Program (ELD), he has been able to enrich both his writing and sense of self as he interacts with all people from different walks of life. In understanding individual identities and cultures, he feels committed to our Jesuit Catholic mission in acknowledging dignity and worth in the human person.

**Diana Nguyen** is a junior studying communications and computer science. She wants to remind you to affirm yourself often and remember that you contribute so much good to the world whether you know it or not.

**Emily Evers** is a freshman at Gonzaga University. She is currently studying biochemistry with a focus on the pre-med track, as she plans to go to medical school after college. She plays the trumpet for the Wind Ensemble and started her freshman year at the age of 16. She also participates in undergraduate research in synthesizing inorganic molecules. She absolutely loves science fiction and listening to music!

**Emma Craven** is a senior at Gonzaga University studying English Literature and psychology. She has previously had pieces submitted in *Charter* and *The Fringe*. One of her main inspirations for writing poetry stems from traveling and experiencing other countries and cultures. In her free time, Emma enjoys traveling, reading, writing, spending time with family and eating as much pizza as possible.

**Jacquelyn Gaither** was born in Houston Texas where a familiar face was always within proximity. It wasn't until she moved to Washington did she begin to question her identity, her placement in society. She began to encounter the life of being black in today's society. If it wasn't for the strength of my family, she wouldn't be the person she is today. She wrote this poem in response to the final project in her Communication and Speech class. She found that

vulnerability is strength and power as she laid my life in the brief five minutes to her classmates and professor. Her struggles, her pains have become a part of her and has shaped me into who she is. She is a strong, independent, black woman that refuses to let any pre-constructed identity build a box around her and what she can offer in society. That is why she is here at Gonzaga University!

**Jordan Gonzalez** is a senior journalism major with a minor in English. She is a vast believer that Nalgene water bottles are better than Hydro Flasks.

**Jordan Martinez** is a fifth-year music education major. She's had multiple experiences throughout her time at Gonzaga that involved students, peers, or professors both celebrating and denying her cultural identity. Her piece was written in response to one incident in which a classmate used a racial slur repeatedly, but when reported to professors and administration, was ignored. She hopes that Gonzaga's administrative team, especially Title IX, will eventually have the understanding to see the intersection of racial issues with the demands of Title IX protections.

**Jordanne Beckwith-Barros** is a senior business administration major, concentrating in human resource management and entrepreneurship & innovation. This is her second year doing diversity monologues.

**Kayla Kim** is a senior studying sociology and elementary education.

**Lillian Piel** is a freshman majoring in communication and minoring in social justice. She is a member of GUTS, and is also involved in dance. She also loves swimming, theatre, and being dramatic in general.

**Liz Vosler** is a junior English and secondary education major with a concentration in writing. Her favorite book is "The Name of the Wind" by Patrick Rothfuss and her ideal job is to be a published novelist. In my free time, she love to read, write, run, and play frisbee (#DisclsLife).

**Makenna Presnell** is a senior studying nursing.

**Manuel Gomez** was appointed Interim Vice Provost for Student Affairs in January 2020. He is responsible for overseeing the Student Development Division as well as assist in guiding the transition to a Provost structure by more fully integrating the academic and co-curricular experience. In his previous role, Dr. Gomez was the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at the University of California-Irvine.

**Maya Coseo** is from Portland, Oregon. She's a senior majoring in

English (with a creative writing emphasis) and minoring in Spanish. She discovered her passion for writing while in high school, after one of her poems was published in a student anthology. After graduating, she hopes to write professionally.

**Megan O'Herron** is a senior who loves skiing fresh powder, dancing to live music, taking photos of her friends, and eating chocolate cake.

**Michael Tanaka** is a senior studying international relations and political science.

**Morgan McCurdy** is a math and social justice double major. Originally from Seattle, they enjoy combining art and activism as a means of expression and therapy.

**Opheila Duncan** is currently a sophomore and pursuing an art major at Gonzaga University. Art has always been a part of her life. Her mother loves to draw and her younger brother did as well and still does. As a kid, art was always interesting to her and fun to do in school, but she didn't really take it seriously until her senior year of high school. During her senior year she saw how much her brother's art had progressed and wanted to do the same. She wanted to create beautiful art like him. He was her inspiration. She's still working to continue to get better and hope that in the future art will still be a part of her life. The piece she's created is about identity. People have formed identities based on the ideas provided by society. But this is not their true selves. She believes that there is something beyond these identities that people have formed that must be searched for.

**Pato Gomez** is a junior marketing major from Monterrey, Mexico. He has two cats named Coco and Mimi. He is a fan of Arsenal FC, and his favorite painter is Rene Magritte.

**Paulina Thurmann** is a junior sociology major with minors in leadership and social justice. She believes honey is not only a condiment, but the most superior condiment of them all. She also loves mountain goats and her Hydroflask, Kyle.

**Ronnie Estoque** is a junior communication studies major from Seattle, WA.

**Ryan Liam** is a senior majoring in communication studies and minoring in critical race and ethnic studies. Some fun facts about him are that he can cook, switched his major 5 times, and his favorite color is blue.

**Sanskruti Tomar** is a sophomore double majoring in theatre arts and criminology with a minor in solidarity and social justice. They're involved with theatre and Mock Trial and is sort of all over the place if you're wondering why the name sounds familiar. They need a break.

**Sarah Kersey** is a senior English major with a writing concentration minoring in WGST. She's very tired and has intense senioritis (which is very real, by the way).

**Zabelle Messick** is a senior majoring in psychology and minoring in communications. She was raised in Portland, Oregon. Zabelle's passion for creative writing began in the first grade and grew throughout her time in school. Since her time at Gonzaga, she has discovered a new love for slam poetry. She enjoys watching slam poetry performances and hopes to perform her own piece one day.

**Zoe Jaspers** [they/them] is a senior studying history and religious studies, where their focus is topics of queer theology and queer religious history. They can often be found knitting in class, engaging in shenanigans of the highest caliber, and drinking perhaps a bit too much coffee.



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