

“There is no greater agony  
than bearing an untold  
story inside you.”

*- Maya Angelou*



# ***OUR VOICES***

***2020-2021***

in collaboration with

the 11th annual  
Diversity Monologues

Dear Reader,

This journal is dedicated to the representation of difference.

Difference is what has inspired these brave authors to share their most vulnerable works in this book. Stories of years of oppression and tragedy are contained in the following pages, reflections of the contributors that poured themselves into their work.

But difference isn't only expressed in trauma. Our Voices is as just as much a platform for the celebration of diversity as it is a space to discuss hardship. Our Voices is devoted to always being an open stage that puts diversity at the forefront of art and literature. Representation is extremely important to myself and the Our Voices staff and we hope that you can understand why it is through the selected pieces in this book.

I know for many students of Gonzaga, art and writing is one way that they can best express themselves. Our Voices is and will always be a platform meant specifically for them; a space where these students facing racism or other forms discrimination can channel the many complicated feelings around race, culture, and diversity into their art.

As you read through the submissions that were curated for this year's edition of the journal, we invite you to open yourself up to listening to what people of other identities and experiences have to say. Perhaps this journal can even be a way for you to challenge what beliefs you carry with you already.

Most importantly, I hope that Our Voices helps you to experience difference in whatever way that means to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Sepulveda". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A'.

Andrew Sepulveda  
Editor-in-Chief

## **Our Voices Staff**

Andrew Sepulveda, *Editor-in-Chief*

Tess Pickar, *Assistant Editor*

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A

R



MY SKIN COLOR SHOULD NOT BE A CRIME. INJUSTICE ANYWHERE THREATENS JUSTICE EVERYWHERE. THERE COMES A TIME WHERE SILENCE IS BETRAYAL. IF ALL LIVES MATTER THEN TELL ME WHY BLACK PEOPLE ARE GETTING KILLED FOR JUST BEING BLACK? ALL LIVES DO NOT MATTER UNTIL BLACK LIVES MATTER. I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO TEACH MY CHILD HOW TO INTERACT WITH A COP BECAUSE OF HER SKIN COLOR. YOUR SILENCE IS VIOLENCE. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. YOU PRAY DIFFERENTLY WHEN YOU HAVE A BLACK SON. WHEN THE COLOR OF YOUR SKIN IS SEEN AS A WEAPON, YOU WILL NEVER BE SEEN AS BEING UNARMED. IF YOU WANT PEACE THEN WORK FOR JUSTICE. IF YOU ARE NEUTRAL IN SITUATIONS OF INJUSTICE YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE SIDE OF THE OPPRESSOR. I CANT BREATHE. WE ARE NOT STARTING A RACE WAR, WE ARE JUST WANTING TO END ONE. NO MORE SEEING PEOPLE OF COLOR AS LESS THAN HUMAN. WE CAN NO LONGER LOOK AWAY. I SEE THEM. THEY'D RATHER LET THE WORLD BURN AS HUMAN BEINGS. RECOGNIZE YOUR PRIVILEGE AND RECOGNIZE THE INJUSTICE. TO BE SILENT IS TO BE COMPLICIT. THIS IS NOT A POLITICAL ISSUE IT IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. I JUST WANT TO BE A GOOD MAN IN A WORLD THAT PAINTS ME AS A CRIMINAL. PEOPLE LEARN TO HATE, AND IF THEY CAN BE TAUGHT THAT, THEY CAN BE TAUGHT TO LOVE.

**BE THE CHANGE  
BLACK LIVES MATTER**



TAMIR RICE 2014  
HANDS UP DONT SHOOT  
I CANT BREATHE.  
NO JUSTICE  
NO PEACE. LET  
ME LIVE. BLM.

GEORGE FLOYD 2020

AHMAUD ARBERY 2020

BREONNA TAYLOR 2020  
BE THE CHANGE  
NOW  
JUSTICE FOR  
GEORGE FLOYD.  
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH  
BLACK LIVES MATTER  
I STAND WITH YOU.

**When Will You See**  
*Jessica Hovland*

## Never Refuse to Refuse

*Rebecca Simmons*

---

*Starbucks alone produces 4 billion cups annually. That means 10,958,904 cups are thrown away daily from Starbucks alone! Most single use cups (paper or plastic) are not decomposable or recyclable, allowing them to end up in landfills, the ocean, or in the bellies of animals and marine biodiversity. While Starbucks has made statements saying they will have bio-degradable cups by 2022 no efforts have been published as to how they will accomplish this. You might think the fate of the planet is in the hands of mass-producing companies, which most of it is. You might find it hard for yourself, one tiny individual, to make a difference; but you can! My art instillation was designed to inspire you to change a negative daily habit into a positive one. I made 145 cups of coffee from clay, thrown over a human drowning in the waste. This is a representation of what a single person's trash would look like if they drank 2.5 cups per week. So, next time you go out to buy a drink from Starbucks or any of your favorite coffee spots, bring your own re-usable cups. "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it." - Robert Swan*





TRAY  
OSE

## A Poem for Emma, 03/28/2017

*Sydney Fluker*

*Trigger warning: Suicide.*

I walked into third period  
Spanish,  
And the air was cold.  
Only a couple people were  
there,  
All of them my friends,  
All of them with tears  
staining their cheeks.

I panicked,  
I lightheartedly asked  
“Who died?”  
To which my friend replied,  
“Emma.”

I remember everything  
from that day;  
My friend collapsing with  
grief  
When she found out,  
And me catching her.

Racing to the bathroom to  
throw up  
The chocolate muffin I had  
for breakfast.  
Sitting on the cold  
bathroom tile,  
Numb.

I didn't leave school,  
I couldn't.  
I needed the distraction,  
but I couldn't focus.  
So I spent the day,  
completely mute,  
Sitting with a counselor.

I never talked about it.  
I let the grief and the guilt  
Pile and pile  
And pile and pile  
Until I started drowning in  
it.

I turned to music,  
And never took my  
headphones out.  
I connected with friends,  
The people who  
understood,  
But didn't understand the  
whole thing.

How do you grieve for  
someone  
You used to know?  
Someone you knew your  
whole life,

Except for the year she  
died.

Recess, looking for bugs,  
Swimming, playing tag,  
Creating whole imaginary  
worlds in our heads  
When we knew we were  
too old for that.

Middle school  
Using her hip injury as an  
excuse  
To leave Spanish early and  
hang out.  
Get ten minutes of peace,  
Before leaving for science.

The same excuse to leave  
science,  
Fifteen minutes early  
To catch up on our day  
What was happening in our  
mind.

How do you grieve,  
When someone dies from  
the same thing you had?  
When you bonded over

shared mental health  
issues.

When they can't handle it,  
But you can?  
How do you grieve,  
Four years after it  
happened?  
When you held it together,  
Because no one else could,  
So they forgot it even  
affected you.

When your scars  
disappeared  
When she did.

When her wounds became  
your wounds,  
But you were forgotten in  
the aftermath.  
Forgotten under a  
mountain  
Of grief and guilt  
And guilt and grief.

## **year one**

for Lauren

Olivia Baughman

In the hazy teals and fogs of  
the in-betweens  
Where my heavy eyelids  
flutter between open and  
closed  
You are still here

When the sunrise bleeds pink  
And I can hear the laughter  
It brings from the hills of  
lausanne  
You are still here

In the shimmering rich  
sunsets  
The paint-splashed liminality  
Of orange and deep purple  
the who-are-you  
Where-are-you  
Are-you  
Twilight  
You are still here

My throat closes up  
My face burns  
I sink to my knees  
I feel you  
I counted every star in the sky  
But I could not find you

Night leaves and day breaks  
I breathe in  
You are here  
I breathe out  
You are gone  
And my hand closes on  
nothing.

But the light shines in  
And dries the tears  
on my cheeks  
Tomorrow has come  
I am still here  
I wish you were too

*alainasvoice.org*

# A Greek Tragedy Waiting to Happen

Tess Pickar

Your psyche is devastated and tangled,  
Like vines caught in the depth of marble columns  
Frozen in rock for eternity,  
With nowhere to go.

The vines don't die,  
But remain forever verdant  
Bearing grapes to make soon-to-be-vintage wine,  
If you wait a century.

Rome wasn't built in a day,  
But it was destroyed in one.

Mind like the Colosseum:  
filled with gladiators.  
Warriors with weapons sharp with self-doubt, hate,  
uncertainty.  
A never-ending rampage.  
There's nowhere to hide in this ancient rink.

*Audentis fortuna iuvat*  
Fortune favors the brave.  
What if I can't be?

# Porcelain

*Tess Pickar*

---

We are like dolls—  
With glass eyes and porcelain limbs.  
Objects meant to be treasured and protected,  
But others only want to play with us until our dresses are  
soiled,  
Our hair is knotted, and our skin is smudged with filth  
We can't put into words.  
We are tossed aside at the first sign of improper wear.  
Our worth is defined by how pure we are,  
But purity is not easy to keep.  
Purity is a choice that has been violently  
Stripped from some of us along with the  
Clothes scattered across the floor.

We are forced to mold ourselves  
To fit the rough hands that hold us.  
If we refuse to give in, the hands tighten and we break,  
But aren't we already broken by letting  
Rough hands threaten us into submission?

Porcelain is meant to be broken,  
Also mended and sewn.

# How to Lose it All

*Michaela Friedrich*

---

Play the victim to play it safe.  
Never take responsibility,  
because the blame is easier to give out  
than it is to take.  
How long before you learn?  
Once they begin to understand you,  
your game will no longer work.  
Projection becomes a thing of their past,  
but it will haunt you in all tenses.  
You have trapped yourself in a world of lies  
and taken away any chance to find help out.

# My Monster

Lizzie Vosler

My roommate told me once that she wasn't sure how I existed

without crying twenty-four seven.

See – I'm a Pisces, Cancer, Cancer so apparently... I'm emotional.

We tend to feel things too deeply – detrimentally we overthink, we over feel, we overanalyze.

Or that's what my roommate tells me.

I never thought that I had anxiety.

In high school I was nervous – nails bitten down to the beds, knee bouncing under each of my desks, over planning everything I did because it made me feel in control –

But no... I wasn't anxious. That's not anxiety.

In high school I was nervous - yes

But I competed in Speech and Debate, I was okay with giving presentations, I liked to talk to people so I couldn't have anxiety. Right?

And yes, technically I know I'm not diagnosed with clinical anxiety

but at this point in my life as a 22-year-old woman, what is the point?

I've lived my entire life with this monster in my closet.

What is the point

When I know how my splintered mind

intentionally miscommunicates to my body  
things

that don't make sense logically,  
and I know.

I know they don't make sense, but I feel them  
anyways.

What is the point

When I know that my heart beats 2x faster than  
anyone else because I read into

everything, everything, everything

Everything.

Everything is a threat.

Always.

I never thought that I had anxiety.

Freshman year of college I told myself I didn't want to  
party because I was too busy.

Sports, School, Volunteering, Work - I was working  
"No, sorry I can't - *I'm working.*"

I didn't give space to the thoughts in my head that were  
afraid-

no not afraid - *paralyzed* of the consequences of  
drinking.

Instead consumed by the thoughts in my splintered mind  
that told me I was a bad girlfriend -

because I wouldn't take care of her when she was sick.  
She was alone on the cold dorm bathroom floor and my  
eyes were red and raw

- huddled in the corner of the dark 4am single  
bedroom rocking back and forth and back  
and forth and back and forth and

I wanted to go check on her - to see if she was  
okay but I

couldn't.

For the fear that clung to my chest, digging its claws into  
my shirt  
staining the floor.

That wasn't anxiety about the consequences of alcohol -  
*no.*

I was just a bad girlfriend - right. *Yes.*

I know now that I *probably* have anxiety.

No, I know now that I *definitely* have anxiety.

But why get diagnosed 4 months out from graduation

Four months out from real life when the

potential time for helpful accommodations

has

come and past.

I've lived my entire life with this monster in my closet.

Chained in the dark, she sits, and she waits and when  
something,

anything could go wrong

She strikes.

I've lived my entire life with this monster in my closet.

We're friends now, I think. Sometimes I even

Almost

know how to wrestle with her.

I've lived my entire life with this monster in my closet.  
Why take her away from me now?

# **Fuck You**

*Michaela Friedrich*

*Trigger warning: Sexual assault/Rape*

Resonance can be a beautiful thing  
but unfortunately for me  
the one thing I know  
will always reside within me  
is the fear that you so generously placed within me I  
wish I could unsee  
The way that you tossed me around like a rag doll.  
Limp and lifeless,  
I laid there completely unaware,  
and not a split second did a thought go through your  
thick skull  
to stop.  
Never a thought to care.  
You never were much of a thinker,  
and I can only imagine the way  
that you stared at my body  
and all you saw was a perfect piece of meat.  
Nice and rare,  
you felt it'd serve as the perfect feast  
to appease your barbaric appetite  
that I'd so consciously tried to suppress.  
How convenient!  
You need not prepare a single thing  
and you still got to eat.  
Your mouth watered,  
your eyes glossed over,  
and you indulged  
and indulged some more.  
That 'piece of meat' wasn't the only thing that you

devoured at your feast.  
You've taken one of the most innocent parts of my soul.  
Not a drop of remorse  
but oh of course!  
The main goal was  
you having your full course.

## Beautiful Girl

Ariah Mann

*Trigger warning: The following includes content such as bulimia, eating disorders, and self harm.*

*Author's Note: This piece means a lot to me, and for a while I had buried it in a pile of scribbles. The text provides a raw and very intimate look into a dark time of my life at GU when I allowed body-image issues and an eating disorder to unravel me. While I have since made progress on the path to recovery, the struggle is still familiar and ever-present. However, something about voicing the struggles I have overcome to other human beings makes the weight of shame and time lost seem a little lighter. In a society where we are constantly pressured and berated by images of the unattainable, I realize that many others struggle with similar issues. Perhaps just a single page from my story could have a positive impact on the life of another. That hope alone gives me the courage to share.*

Beautiful girl,

I see you in front of me, jogging on this track, doing your best to keep going when everything inside says to stop. I can tell the extra weight you carry bothers you, eating away at your self-worth.

I try to imagine what it must be like in your shoes.

I pass you on the right side and my heart aches as I notice the tears in your eyes and the look of defeat across your face.

As I take another lap around, I can't keep myself from thinking what you must be feeling right now, how you probably hate me, and my heart breaks for a stranger.

Beautiful mind,

Stuck inside a body you have learned to hate, and yet it doesn't take a special pair of eyes to see that there is so much more to you than what the mirror or the scale reflects back each day.

Beautiful soul,

I see the marks, not physical, but clearly evident: old scars calloused over by time and acceptance, intersected by still-gaping wounds caused by society's standards, and carved deeper by your own desperation to conform to them.

Is it wrong to have goals, to strive to be what you want to be... or at least what you have learned you should want to be?

Beautiful heart,

You take another look at yourself and are reminded why you're here, why you hate who you are, and why you're running to try to lose yourself.

The anger pushes your pace, legs beating into the track

with all you have, but you know you can't hold that pace forever.

Soon it breaks way to tears, burning muscles, aching joints, another wave of self-disappointment, negative thoughts, and mental beatings.

You know you will never overcome this.

You will never be good enough.

Thin enough.

Pretty enough.

How I wish I had the courage to stop and talk to you, to look you dead in the eyes and speak these words of truth:

YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL.

YOU ARE STRONG.

YOU ARE LOVED.

YOU ARE MORE THAN ENOUGH.

How I long to give you a hug, not a brief touch that quickly fades away, but one that establishes connection, one that proves to both of those in it that they are seen, noticed by another person on the face of this earth, recognized for more than just what they look like.

A hug that imparts the courage needed to take another breath, the faith to trust one's sense of belonging and value, and the audacity to believe that you are worth it.

As I pass by you again, a lump forms in my throat, and tears sting at my eyes. I am convicted of my own secret.

Beautiful one,

Why is it that I can be strong for you? Why is it that I can see your breathtaking beauty and infinite worth, and yet I am not strong enough to fight my own battle?

I am no better.

The marks on my heart may be better hidden, but I assure you they are just as deep.

I finish my lap, make a detour to the locker room, and force myself to vomit the contents of my stomach up, over and over again, until my throat burns with fire and my nose starts to bleed.

I wash my face, rinse my mouth, and then I begin to run again.

Lap after lap, driven by my own anger, resentment, and self-loathing.

I tell myself tomorrow will be the day that I make a change, the first day of the rest of my life... but I know it's a lie.

Not because I don't want it, because I want it so bad, but because I've heard it a thousand times before, and the patterns remain the same.

Beautiful girl,  
I choose to love you for you...  
because I can't bring myself to love me.

# **Sacrificial Time: A letter to those who have a sibling with special needs**

*Emma Craven*

I bet we have all done it. Sacrificed our time, sacrificed what we wanted to do, sacrificed attention we were getting, and even sacrificed the attention that we wanted and needed. And if you're anything like me, you've definitely sacrificed your television time for your sibling, only a couple thousand times.

It is hard to explain to someone who doesn't get it. They try their hardest, but do they really understand? They have not been in the middle of a grocery store during an episode or been at a theme park during a sensory overload or even just been in the living room and a simple change in schedule caused a cataclysmic meltdown.

As the siblings, we have experienced all of this. We know how all of this feels whether it is a monthly occurrence or even an hourly one. We sacrifice our time, wants, plans, and even dreams at times. While we consistently do this, I know I am not alone in saying that I would not change a thing. That even with the meltdowns or stubbornness, it is totally worth it. I would not change one single thing about my brother.

I want you to know that you are not alone. Your sacrifices do not go unnoticed. And even if your sibling may not vocalize it, they are so thankful for your sacrifices and what you do for them. You are strong and don't you ever forget it.

Sincerely,

A sister whose brother with Autism and ADHD was the greatest gift she has ever received.

## **Who am I?**

*Emma Craven*

---

I don't mind being alone,  
I find solace in the silence.  
With God, I can find the real me.  
You have to know yourself before you can know anyone  
else.  
Do not let somebody else tell you who you are.

I'll discover my heart,  
so then I can find yours  
I want to stand on my own before you lift me up.

I'll know who I am,  
what I stand for  
and find what is important to me.

I must find me,  
the Jewish me,  
the Jewish me that doesn't have to hide,  
before you find me.  
I need to know what I'm up against.

# The Questions of a Jew in America

Emma Craven

How do we belong

-in a world that hates us?

-in an environment not made for our survival?

-in a place that thinks we do not exist?

How can we survive

-in the next fifty years?

-long enough to see a change?

-right now?

How can we find purpose

-being hidden?

-in this ever-changing world?

-when it feels we are not wanted?

The answer to all these questions is simple-

We can't.

If we want to

belong,

survive,

and simply exist,

we must make it happen.

## An Undercover Jew

*Emma Craven*

---

I look outside and all I see is hatred.  
People hate us even though they do not know us,  
they're afraid of something they don't even understand,  
afraid of people they have never even met.

The years of listening to Hitler jokes and Concentration  
camp puns—  
I was too scared to open mouth,  
so no one ever knew.  
They never thought the blonde-hair, blue-eyed girl—  
could ever be a Jew.

Once I got the courage to tell,  
the amount of times I've heard—  
“you're a Jew?” or “you're the first Jew I've ever met,”  
they could fill a book,  
so I went silent again,  
buried deep in my disguise.

I don't want to be undercover anymore.  
I'm tired of the jokes,  
comments,  
unreasonable and pointless hatred.  
I'm proud to be me,  
proud to be free.

## Emery and Lucia

*Lindsey Anderson*

Two little hands find mine. Six bare feet walking along the dirt road. These children barely know me; how could they be so trusting? I shudder at the feeling of their dainty hands clasping mine. This physical expression of trust is foreign to me, the daughter of two adults very averse to touching.

“My feet hurt.” The younger one complains. We’ve only been walking for two minutes. “Can I have a piggy back ride?” She asks me as if we have known each other our whole lives, forgetting we are nearly strangers.

How do you say “No” to a four-year old?

“Not like that!” She complains while I hoist her onto my back. She’s big for a toddler, and I’m small for a fourteen-year old. “Higher, and don’t hold my legs like that! Ugh, Shannon does it better.” I roll my eyes. This child knows something about herself to be able to talk to me that way. And yet, I do as the small tyrant tells me. She seems so confident; I am now certain I have been giving piggyback rides wrong my whole life.

Night falls over our beautiful lake. The birds find coverage and the bats begin to frolic through the sky. As the stars come out to play, the children gather on the beach, bundled up in blankets and oversized hoodies, ready for the show. A big white screen blows in the wind, situated between two sturdy oaks. As Tinkerbell blesses the castle, ensuring us we will be contributing to the Disney monopoly this evening, two tiny silhouettes make their way through the crowd.

“S’cuse me, s’cuse me!” Their raspy high voices evoke

groans from the older children who just want to enjoy the movie.

“Can we sit with you?” the older one asks, her big brown eyes blinking at me from behind a pink blanket.

How do you say “No” to a five-year old?

“There’s room right here,” I say, patting at the space on the blanket next to me.

To my surprise, and somewhat to my horror, the small girl crawls right into my lap. Her sister sits next to me and grabs my hand.

A big brown bear runs across the screen, evoking shouts from Emery next to me. It’s Brother Bear; everyone has seen this movie, and even if you haven’t, the fact that there’s a bear in the film shouldn’t be a surprise. But she’s four, and can’t read. The epitome of the action scene is now upon us: the brother and the bear careen over the side of a cliff. Everyone is silent, saddened by the tragic onscreen death. Suddenly, children’s laughter breaks through the somber mood.

“Ha! Ha! Ha! Good! The bear is dead!” She is laughing so maniacally, I start to wonder if I am watching the makings of a future serial killer. Soon, her brothers come, telling her it’s time for bed, embarrassed by the psychotic display going on in the first row.

“Can I stay?” Lucia asks. The brothers look at each other and agree. She’s the quiet one.

Halfway through the movie, her little head comes to rest on my chest and I feel something stirring in me. I look down at her precious sleeping face. We don’t have the same parents, or the same skin tone, or even live in the same state, but when I look down at her, I see my little sister. Pulling the blanket up to keep her warm, I realize that I will watch out for her and her sister, cherish their spunky personalities, and protect them, as

much as I can, from the world I grew up in.

It is a magical summer of beasts, vampires, and evil grandmothers who cook children in their ovens. Lucia has discovered Snapchat, and my phone no longer belongs to me. Over the last year, she learned to read, and I now have the Harry Potter series memorized, despite never reading a single book myself.

“You would be a Gryffindor,” she tells me as I float on a mattress, watching her and Emery dip in and out of the waves.

“I’m a Hufflepuff!” Emery chimes in.

Lucia continues to tell me about all the monsters of the Harry Potter universe. Her eyes shine as she talks about the adventures of Harry, Ron, and Herminoe. Gone are the days she would sit on my lap and listen to me read her *The Adventures of TinTin*, as now she is devouring books like I used to at her age.

“I want two braids, just like yours!” Emery exclaims as we dry off from our dip in the lake. I sigh, knowing this will be a difficult task. I ask her to comb out her tangly hair, but her brain is in too many places at once and in thirty seconds my request has been forgotten. I try to braid as gently as I can, avoiding clumps of sand and dirt.

“Ow!” She howls each time I pull just a little bit.

“They’re gonna be loose braids then,” I warn her, “but, you know, that’s the style right now.” It’s not. I just don’t want to hear her complaints in ten minutes when she realizes they look so bad. To my surprise she is delighted with my work. Lucia wants to go next while Emery begins picking flowers to put in our braids, so we can look like princesses. Once we are pretty, she will teach me a dance. A dance I will forget five seconds after she shows me, but that is part of the fun.

Once we all have our double flower braids, Emery declares us Princesses. Lucia is the Princess of magic spells. She has a wand and can cast any spell she wants. She will help us defeat the evil “Children of the Corn” that lurk in the bushes. I am the Princess of Kindness, my talent is braiding hair and bringing Emery more of my chips. Emery declares herself the fiercest of us all, the Queen of Booties. She erupts in giggles, continuing her running gag about spanking booties. There is not a pair of bikini bottoms within a two mile radius that is safe from her strike.

The older kids egg her on with knowing glances. Surely, someday, she will look back on this whole booty thing and cringe, but for today, it is hilarious to all of us. Her brothers roll their eyes, knowing it will be weeks, months, maybe even years of the booty jokes. She is hilarious, and to most, her charm is in the innocence of her not knowing why she is so funny. Someday, she’ll know. We all grow up, and forget how to be confident. God, I hope Emery never does.

The older kids invite Lucia to come dance with them on the beach. She is lost in the pages of a fantasy novel, and would rather stay inside reading. They giggle, remembering the days when books were still magical. She is precocious, and to most, her charm is in the innocence of not caring about coming off as nerdy when she would rather read than play with the others. Someday, she’ll know. We all grow up, and forget how to be ourselves. God, I hope Lucia never does.

Someday, they will grow up. I hope they never forget their bravery, their confidence, their spunk. I hope I never stop being their cool big sister, the Princess of Kindness, the water horse who swims them on adventures.

Summers come and summers go, but our adventures are constant. Emery and I become an iconic dance duo, performing for all our neighbors under twinkling lights. Lucia and I partner up for the annual fourth of July soccer World Cup Tournament. She's the smallest player out there, but we score our way into the history books, always reppin Guatemala, the country she was adopted from. Emery tries desperately to fit in with the aging older girls, who eventually become "screen-agers." One day they sit on the edge of the water, shaving their legs. Emery wants to join, but Lucia reminds her she is not old enough to shave her legs. So, Emery shaves her face. Lucia becomes obsessed with *The Greatest Showman*, and names the banana floatie I give her for her birthday after the movie's star, "Hugh Banana-Jackman." Emery decides she really loves Jesus, even more than Booties. Lucia isn't so sure what she thinks of religion, but both of them think the funniest joke comes when Emery accidentally refers to him as "Jesus Crust". One day they come to the lake with dyed hair. Emery flips her new blonde highlights into my face while Lucia patiently waits for someone to comment on the red streak in her dark brown hair. It makes her look like a vampire. Emery declares a new love for romance, and wants to hear all of my romantic stories. I make some up for her. She tells me and Lucia about the rated R romantic show she's been watching. I raise an eyebrow until we google it, and explain to her that it's merely PG and just because it's made in Australia does not mean it's rated R.

So much has changed in the nearly ten years I have known them. Now, it is a summer of facemasks and social distancing. We are ordered to only interact with

those who are in our family. Of course I am spending the summer with my sisters, like always. Their hands are so big now. Emery can see the top of my head. Most of the time, I'm not cool enough to dance with her now. Now, she films them for TikTok. Lucia has cut her hair short, too short for me to braid anymore. She has moved on from the hopeful magic of Harry Potter, and now obsesses over the woeful music of The Gorillaz. She shakes her head at me from the back seat of my car. I just don't get it.

So much has changed, and yet, I could not be more proud of these girls. Two hands find mine.

"My feet hurt," Lucia complains. We have only been walking for two minutes now.

"Would you like to hold my sign?" I ask, hoping she will be distracted from her feet. She nods and I hand it to her. We walk along the streets in a distanced crowd of people, chanting under our dark face masks, "Black Lives Matter!"

When the fall comes, they will both be in middle school. My heart breaks when I remember what those years were like. Most of their classmates will make crude jokes, racist jokes, homophobic jokes. They wouldn't be found at a Black Lives Matter march. I wouldn't have been found here either when I was their age.

Lucia is thirteen now. With more bravery than I have ever had in my twenty-one years of life, she has come out to her family as a lesbian. She is exploring herself and her identity, and finds lessons in each shopping trip we take. We go into Goodwill, looking for men's shirts we can cut into trendy crop tops for the summer. Emery loves everything. Lucia is more careful to indicate what she loves. Her face lights up when I pull a blue collared shirt out.

“This would be a cute crop top!” I say. She looks the shirt up and down.

“Can I have it?” I buy her the men’s shirt for two dollars. As soon as it is washed she puts it on. She emerges from the laundry room in her blue and white checkered shirt, buttoned up to her neck, and tucked into her black jean shorts. She looks radiant in her Goodwill outfit. A shimmer of confidence flashes across her face as she whispers to me, “Thank you. I never get to shop in the boy’s section.”

Shopping has become a regular part of our afternoon routine. Lucia dons her new used men’s shirt and the three of us go to Michael’s in search of art supplies for the day. The pandemic has prevented Pride from happening this year, so all the rainbow knick knacks are priced on sale. We pass by the clearance section and Lucia stops to stare. She picks up a tiny rainbow flag.

“I would love to have this on my desk.” She whispers so quietly, as if protecting her most precious secret. I nod and tell her she can get it, it’s only one dollar. She picks it up and looks around, checking to make sure nobody here will judge her for who she is. “I don’t know. I’m afraid to go to the check out lady.” She says, dubiously.

“I got it!” Emery exclaims, snatching the flag from her sister’s clutches. With her classic Emery confidence, the girl struts up to the counter. “I would like to buy this flag please.” She says, handing them her dollar. We leave the store and Emery hands Lucia the flag. I am so proud of her. As we all get back into my car, I realize I have just watched the coronation of the new Princess of Kindness.

Back at the lake, the place we all met so long ago, the three of us dive into the waves. I am no longer the water horse; they can swim better than I can now. Gone are the frilly colorful swimsuits. Emery can, and often does,

wear mine when she “forgets” her own. The imagination is still alive in the waves, however.

“I am Princess Aqua, and I have water powers! Lucia is Princess Violet, and she has earth powers! You are Princess Dirk.” Emery declares as we float on mattresses on the lake.

“What does Princess Dirk do?” I ask.

“Well, you’re a little bit chubby, and that’s okay. You have color powers, also, but your main thing is that you’re chubby but okay with it.” I laugh as the three of us swim out to the buoy to fight the bad guys with our magical powers.

They’re getting older now. They’re middle schoolers. There’s gonna be mean girls, and mean boys. There’s gonna be crushes, and possibly heartbreaks. But if anyone can handle it, it’s these girls. They’re kind and empathetic. They know who they are, and they are so confident in that. Over the years, I have struggled to become half the woman these girls have always been. They loved me and trusted me when nobody else did. They taught me how to love myself, too. I am always learning from them. They have given me a glimpse of the future, and I am so excited to live in their world.

**Diary of a Gaybie**  
*Alex McCurdy*

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Dear Queers,

I write for the girls and the gays.  
I write for the bears and the butches.  
I write for the bicurious and the certain.  
I write for the pansexuals, and the ones who just love  
pans and skilletts.

I write for the asexuals and the agenders.  
I write for the transgender and gender-fluids.  
I write for the queens and the femmes,  
the lesbians and the gays,  
and the unicorns who just can't find their place.

I write for the allies and the supporters.  
I write for the families that accept their daughters.  
I write for the friends that lean on each other.  
I write for the icons that pave a better future.

I write for the bigots and the ignorant.  
I write for the homophobes and the racists.  
I write for the ones lost in hatred.  
I write for the ones who fear difference.

I write to show you my truest feelings.  
I write to show you our earth's veracity.  
I write to show you my humanity.  
I write to show you the world's reality.

Sincerely,  
Alex

# Cotton Socks

Lizzie Vosler

You hold your hands up;  
proud,  
unknowing it seems, of the  
pain  
you continue to inflict.  
Though, maybe, you do  
know.  
Maybe you do know,  
and that is simply a part of  
the joy,  
the excitement.  
The signs you thrust  
forward:

                                  “Thank God  
for Dead Soldiers”  
inflict wounds so deep  
I snap,  
                                  and  
my emotions bleed through  
my cotton socks.

Feeling a target on my  
back,  
                                  I sink into  
myself.  
A queer youth bred from a  
family who thrived in the  
military,

                                  I am their

target.  
A fracture crawls down  
my spine, ready to crack  
because-  
-they  
hate everything I am.  
You hover over this day,  
maybe a coincidence  
...probably.  
This day, special.  
                                  This day is  
ours.  
                                  It’s *supposed*  
to be ours.  
Is it still ours if you taint  
it?  
Is it still ours if you  
spit slurs, shoving hate  
down our throats?  
                                  Does this day  
still belong to us?  
                                  “God Hates  
Fags”  
Search them out:  
GodHatesFags dot com.  
Are we a joke to you?  
How can you stand there,  
in front of  
                                  your children,



# Ladylike

*Lindsey Anderson*

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- “Playing with worms is not ladylike.”  
“Lifting your shirt is not ladylike.”  
“Spitting is not ladylike.”  
“Crossing your eyes is not ladylike.”  
“Kickball at recess is not ladylike.”  
“Talking back is not ladylike.”  
“Your sour mood is not ladylike.”  
“Uncombed hair is not ladylike.”  
“Wearing pants to church is not ladylike.”  
“Sitting like that is not ladylike.”  
“Fishing is not ladylike.”  
“Those jokes are not ladylike.”  
“This movie is not ladylike.”  
“Cursing is not ladylike.”  
“Talking too much is not ladylike.”  
“Being a ‘know-it-all’ is not ladylike.”  
“Playing sports is not ladylike.”  
“Science classes are not ladylike.”  
“Trying too hard is not ladylike.”  
“Being too easy is not ladylike.”  
“Kissing on the first date is not ladylike.”  
“Wearing that short skirt is not ladylike.”  
“Paying the bill is not ladylike.”  
“Opening your own doors is not ladylike.”  
“That job is not ladylike.”  
“Pursuing a career is not ladylike.”  
“Asking for a promotion is not ladylike.”  
“Letting him go all the way is not ladylike.”  
“Waiting to have children is not ladylike.”

“Having kids before marriage is not ladylike.”  
“Telling what he did is not ladylike.”  
“Speaking up is not ladylike.”  
“Hitting him back is not ladylike.”  
“Going out with bruises on your face is not ladylike.”  
“Asking for help is not ladylike.”  
“Ruining his career is not ladylike.”  
“Divorce is not ladylike.”  
“Self-preservation is not ladylike.”  
“Thriving is not ladylike.”  
“Survival is not ladylike.”

# The Power of a Myth

Ariah Mann

When I was born, I had no limitations,  
yet, with each passing second I spent in this world,  
I learned what they should be.

Pregnant with her second child,  
my mother was told by a spiritual woman  
that her baby would be strong:  
courageous, determined, warrior, leader.  
So, they decided I was going to be a boy,  
because strength is always male  
and fragility is always female.  
I shocked my world the day I was born.

From a very young age,  
I wanted to be tough.  
“I’m Hercules!” I would shout,  
as I made a tiny muscle with my chubby little arm.

I liked running fast, playing sports, working on the farm.  
“Tomboy” they called me,  
because a girl couldn’t be just a girl  
and do these kinds of things.

As a female born into our society,  
I had a lot to learn about how the world works,  
and more importantly,  
for whom it works.

*“The Daughters”*

*“Oh girl, wash your face before you come to the table  
Girl, know your place, be willing and able  
Take it on the chin, let the best man win.  
Girl, shoulders back and stand up straight  
Girl, watch your mouth and watch your weight  
Mind your manners, smile for the camera  
Pose like a trophy on a shelf  
Dream for everyone, but not yourself  
I’ve heard of God the Son and God the Father  
I’m still looking for a God for the daughters  
Girl, don’t be weak but don’t be strong  
Say what you want, just as long  
As you nod your head with your lipstick on  
I wash the dishes, feed the kids, and clean up all this mess  
Do my best, forgive myself, and look good in this dress...”*

As I grew, I began to conform,  
to “learn my place,”  
to understand what people meant by  
“just how the world works.”

I learned how to tread lightly on the eggshells of societal norms.

I began to recognize the boundaries that were pre-set for me,  
and know the labels that would be assigned if I pushed against them.

In this way, I constructed my box.  
A box that fit neatly into its place on the shelf  
without disturbing anything around it,  
complete with a glass ceiling which I myself had created  
to match those that I saw around me.

Because when I looked around,  
I saw the roles that women in my life played,  
and I came to understand  
that this was just “the way things are.”

When a woman stands up for herself  
she is either labeled “butch” or “bitch.”  
and yet when a man stands up for himself  
he is strong, heroic, admirable.  
Women are teachers, mothers, bookkeepers, assistants.  
they are not administrators, CEOs, bosses, heads of  
companies.  
They do not hold office, or if they do,  
there is always a man somewhere higher up.  
They listen, they follow.  
They don’t question, challenge, lead, or decide.

*“The Joke”*

*“You get discouraged, don’t you, girl?  
It’s your brother’s world for a while longer  
We gotta dance with the devil on a river  
To beat the stream  
Call it living the dream, call it kicking the ladder*

*They come to kick dirt in your face  
To call you weak and then displace you  
After carrying your baby on your back across the desert  
I saw your eyes behind your hair  
And you’re looking tired, but you don’t look scared.  
Let ‘em laugh while they can*

*Let ‘em spin, let ‘em scatter in the wind  
I have been to the movies,  
I’ve seen how it ends  
And the joke’s on them.”*

There is a myth that has been perpetuated in our society,  
one that instills false hope on the surface,  
and yet below there is a message of stagnation.

They say “one day”  
women will be allowed a place at the table,  
a place where their voices can not only be heard,  
but recognized as important.  
They say “one day”  
women will be found in positions of power and authority  
in our nation,  
and yet we are never told just where or when this day  
will come.

Instead, we are left waiting and hoping,  
wishing better for the next generation,  
dreaming big for our daughters,  
but signing off in agreement against our own futures.  
Now is not the time.  
People just aren't ready yet.

What I've begun to realize about myths  
is that a myth only continues to hold power  
if you believe in it.  
What breaks my heart the most,  
stops me up short,  
is the realization that I have bought into this myth,  
and some days I believe it for myself as much as anyone  
believes it for me.

I have bought into the idea that society just isn't ready  
for women to take on leadership roles.  
It isn't ready

for female representation in positions of power.  
This is “just the way things are,”  
the way they have been for centuries,  
so why would anything change now?

My heart is full of hopeful expectations,  
I have dreamed for the “maybe someday”  
and hoped for future generations,  
and yet I have already limited my own agency and  
influence.

Because when I looked around,  
I didn't see women in positions of power or leadership.  
When I look at the field of my profession,  
I don't see many women in the roles I dream of  
achieving.

*“Armor”*

*“Let it begin, let Adam in*

*Step one: original sin*

*Underneath the leaves, Adam found Eve*

*Both of them found something sweet under the apple tree*

*Then it was over, roads divide*

*Step two: learning how to lie*

*Let me ask a question to present day*

*How the hell did Eve end up with all the damn blame?*

*All the damn blame*

*To all the dirty looks, the kitty cat calls*

*To the ones who try and throw us up against the back*

*walls*

*Let me tell you something you’ll understand*

*Only the little boys tell you they’re a big man*

*To all my sisters and all our friends*

*We have to thank them, please*

*Strength means blessed with an enemy*

*Step three: I see*

*The unforgettable, incredible ones who came before me*

*Brought poetry, brought science*

*Sowed quiet seeds of self-reliance*

*Bloomed in me, so here I am*

*You think I am high and mighty, mister?*

*Wait ‘til you meet my little sister*

*What you didn't do to bury me  
But you didn't know I was a goddamn seed  
You don't scare me, I am of the earth  
So tired of your empire  
Blind men only set the world on fire  
Sad you can't see it  
You brought the flame, here comes the phoenix,*

*All my, my, my, my armor comes from you  
You make me try, try, try, try harder  
Oh, that's all I ever do, ever do  
Oh, no no, my, my, my, my armor comes from you  
You make me stronger, stronger*

*Now, hand me my armor”*

The women in my field often seem few and far between,  
but we are making progress.

The most detrimental thing we can do is believe the myth  
about ourselves.

Although, it may often seem easier  
to limit our own potential before others can do it for us.

Today, as I look around,  
I see the exceptions in the field that I am going into,  
those who have refused to buy into the myth  
and instead have freed themselves  
from the boxes society expected them to live in.

The Marin Alsops, Hildur Guðnadóttirs, Eímear Noones  
who live in the twenty-first century  
but refuse to accept the limits it has placed on their  
careers  
based solely upon their gender.

The Karen Fairchilds, Sara Bareilleses, Melissa Dunphys,  
and Nikita Gills  
who use their creativity, art, and musicality  
to inspire generations of women  
to stand up and ask the questions.

Why is it 2020  
and we are still having firsts for women in the music  
industry?

Why do we have all-female composer concerts?

Why can't we just have composer concerts?

I don't want special recognition just for being a woman,  
although I am proud to be one.

I don't just want to be seen for the gender that I am,

another pretty face or a pair of legs,  
but for what I am capable of  
and judged by the content and caliber of the art I create.

When I take a music history class  
I want to hear the stories of incredibly influential men  
and women  
who changed the course of history,  
and pushed the field of music to new levels.  
I don't just want to be taught to worship the white male  
patriarchy,  
being dissuaded to even attempt to reach for  
what has already been deemed "beyond my abilities."

When you listen to a piece of music,  
is the first question that comes to mind  
"I wonder if this was written by a woman?"  
Does it truly matter who wrote it?  
Or is what matters what it says,  
how it moves you, the wordless truths it speaks,  
the footprint it leaves on your mind and on your soul?

What if we believed  
that we didn't have to continually settle  
for labeling what is right  
measured by the ruler of things we can see around us?  
What if we, instead,  
acted on the things we know to be true?  
Not because we see them when we look around,  
but because we recognize their importance, value, and  
worth.

What if enough of us quit believing the myth for  
ourselves,

quit accepting “just the way things are?”

What if we stopped playing by the rules we never agreed to,  
and instead climbed outside of our boxes?  
What if we realized that what we had to say  
was unique, important,  
different perhaps, but completely valid,  
and an absolutely necessary piece of the whole.

So, I choose to stop believing in the myth.  
To stop buying into it  
to stop strengthening its power.  
I believe we are ready,  
and have been for some time now.

We are ready for women in positions of leadership.  
We are ready for their voices to be heard.  
We are ready for young girls to see more female role  
models  
in their chosen professional fields.  
We are ready for them to exercise their rights as human  
beings,  
without having to ask a man’s permission first.  
We are ready.  
That is what I choose to believe.

*“Wild Embers”  
“We are the descendants  
Of the wild women you forgot  
We are the stories you thought  
Would never be taught.  
They should have checked the ashes  
Of the women they burned alive.  
Because it takes a single wild ember  
To bring a whole wildfire to life.”*

All words in italics throughout this work are lyrics to songs written  
and composed by living female artists:

*“The Daughters”* - Music and Lyrics by Karen Fairchild of Little Big Town

*“The Joke”* - Music and Lyrics by Brandi Carlile

*“Armor”* - Music and Lyrics by Sara Bareilles

*“Wild Embers”* - Lyrics by Nikita Gill, Composed by Melissa Dunphy



ARE

# Finding My Way Back to Temple

Kate Inge

I have grown up Jodo Shinshu Buddhist, attending temple every Sunday. It is a community I am scared to share with others, mainly in fear of judgment or inability to explain properly. My home temple in Tacoma (though I am from Seattle) is rooted in Japanese tradition and community, many Sunday goers being my extended family I didn't see otherwise. It is relatively small and is beginning to experience the reality of dwindling Japanese community membership. I am most comfortable there, as it has helped me build leadership skills and enforced the morals that I define my life with. Since attending Gonzaga, my experience through the temple in Spokane heavily reflects the reality I have learned in college, just with a different context.

When I first toured GU, I was excited not only because of the school, but because the Spokane Buddhist Temple was only five minutes away. To me this was incredibly lucky, as there are only 60 temples in the US. After touring GU, my dad and I attended Sunday service. The Hondo (main hall) resembled the one at home but with slight variations as expected. I counted off the differences: smaller, less gold, no red carpet, and only two chairs on the onajin (altar). But as the service went on I slowly became mortified. Their chanting pitch was off, they didn't play music except for a pan flute, members did oshoko (incense offering) after the service, they only had volunteer minister assistants, and no one was truly chanting. I was used to filling my lungs and proudly chanting from my gut, the way my home

minister taught me. Now I was hardly whispering. After service ended, I smiled and met an older woman my dad knew, but rushed out to the car making an excuse for the long drive ahead. In reality I never wanted to go back. It didn't look or feel right, like the Tacoma Buddhist Temple. A sorry excuse for a temple, I thought.

When I arrived on campus last August I felt lost. I was struggling to understand how to restart, panicked at how I was expected to trust and understand people who didn't know anything about me. Surprisingly, I found an upperclassman that attended one of the largest temples in the US, so we ended up going to the Spokane Buddhist Temple together for the first few weeks. But the service wasn't different, so we ended up giving each other sideways looks when the pitch or pace was off, or when something was mispronounced; like we were the experts in the room. After a few weeks, he stopped going, saying that he didn't 'vibe' with it and that he wasn't used to the congregation being so Caucasian. I began to think about dropping out as well, it would be easy to play the 'busy college student' trope even if it wasn't true.

For some reason I continued to go, but began to get frustrated in how no one was approaching me, trying to get to know my background. "Aren't they intrigued with the college-age Buddhist?" I wondered, feeling discouraged that it wasn't a fit for me. My family is prominent in the Buddhist Churches of America, holding places on past national and local boards. My sister and I have always held leadership positions, often the youth reps for Tacoma. I was confused on why I wasn't getting recognized or approached. My past involvement did not affect how they thought of me. This was my misstep I realized. I wasn't particularly doing anything that would make them even want to approach me, especially with

the entitled energy I was likely putting off. I decided to change this and work backward from my end, making an effort to learn other members' names and to make sure that they would remember mine, while changing my outlook in the process. It was like jumping into college all over again, but in an environment I felt fully confident. I knew the chants, readings, ideas, and rituals like second nature, the people were my only obstacle this time. To build a community, I realized, you couldn't rely on others to do the work. In the end, it is up to you.

I slowly learned to accept the differences for what they were. Looking back at my initial impressions, they were incredibly ignorant of me. Unlike my home temple who only recently faced the reality of relying on the community for membership (not just surrounding Japanese families), SBT had been living such a reality for the last ten years. They make do with what they have, and with what works with the attending people. Why sing if no one wanted to? What's the point of doing oshoko before when more people would rather do it afterward? After I got over the ritualistic shock, I began to appreciate the community for what it was. So what no one knew me before, it was now up to me to make a name for myself. I could no longer rely on people knowing me because of my family's prominence. Additionally, I was reminded that the aesthetics of temple at its core only enhance the teachings of the religion but are not the determining factor in the religion itself.

Over the rest of freshman year, I began to enjoy temple rather than go because I felt I 'should', to be a 'good' Buddhist. Before COVID, I would sit by the same people each week, be greeted by the old-timers, and be included in conversations, like I was wanted there. It was

a community I was reluctant to accept as it didn't seem "Buddhist" enough. There is no such thing. Although my initial judgments were wrong, I am happy they have concluded this way by allowing me to learn.

Reflecting, it is one of the only spaces in Spokane that I can embrace on my own, uninterrupted. Oftentimes it is only on Sundays that I reflect on my week and realize how much I miss my family or the comfort of my time at home. Even when I miss Seattle, I have grown a liking for the independence of SBT. The members here fill the void of the Sunday community. They have become one that is just for me, not one my family has already defined.

The people there seem fully invested in the religion, and I feel like they take me more seriously than the ones at home where I am still viewed as the daughter of my parents. Here, I have explored my faith much more than at any other time in my life. By being forced to make a name for myself, integrate into a new community, and accept things for what they are on my own has helped me grow as an adult, and as a Buddhist.

Looking back on that upperclassmen, I wish he saw what I see now. What temple community looks like isn't the same everywhere, and it isn't supposed to be. It won't come to you, you have to build it yourself. For him and I, we were used to temples being consistently mundane, everything within comforts. But you can't just give up because they don't treat you the way you're used to. Just because they look different isn't an excuse either. Using differences as an excuse to dismiss similarities will not lead you to find or build honest communities. This sort of exclusiveness is unfortunately very prominent in communities like temples and have the ability to divide and dwindle the already small populations.

SBT is my community, one I have chosen for myself

as I had to actively decide if it was where I saw myself. I continued to go because I wanted to, not using my uncomfot as a reason to disregard the members. I am wanted at the SBT because of who I am, not because of where I am from. In high school we have all of these credentials, class president, awards, instruments, ASB member, SAT scores, sports captain. But once you step on campus, no one knows about these achievements. Like a temple, my credentials don't mean anything to those who I met. They didn't care much about what I did then, but rather who I am now. Though achievements in high school got me to GU, they are meaningless to my peers. Similarly to temple, my past involvements say nothing to individuals that they don't apply to, or don't know what they are. To present yourself you have to apply the learning of those credentials, live up to their name even if they are never mentioned. Though frustrating at times, it forced me to prove myself, something I wasn't used to doing.

I have attached to other groups on campus, Bulldog Band, AAU, Wind Ensemble groups of friends, and many more. I find that I am my most well-rounded self when I'm surrounded by multiple communities. So, where I lacked community at GU I made up for it at the Spokane Buddhist Temple. I don't think that you can find one community that can fill it all. For me, I can feel more balanced, grounded, and supported when I have different groups that reflect the aspects I value in my life.

When I first came to GU, I would have defined the community as a group of people with whom I feel comfortable around and can freely express myself. Although this isn't wrong, finding a community shouldn't be easy. It should challenge your idea of how you constitute yourself, and who you want to surround

yourself with. SBTs differences, though hard to accept, made me realize that to be accepted into a community you have to understand the challenges and struggles that define those individuals. They are Buddhists as much as I am.

# A Dedication to the Cultural Clubs That Made Me

Andrew Sepulveda

At this point, it is heavily cliched to say that 2020 was a difficult year. Between the global pandemic, tumultuous elections, and general dissatisfaction with the world, we have been constantly bombarded with just terrible, negative feelings about the current state we're in. Many of the conversations I have with people recently just naturally shift towards talking about COVID. How our lives have changed in quarantine, our general annoyance with wearing masks, or what we want to do as soon as this is all over have become common topics of conversation. The lack of human interaction is something that has been difficult to adapt to, but as a Gonzaga student who has been deeply involved in the cultural clubs during my entire time here, I feel especially hurt by this pandemic. For myself and for the others who were robbed of the formative experiences that I had through the clubs.

La Raza Latina was one of my first interactions with other people of color on this campus. I looked forward to every Monday evening, where people who shared my identity as a Latino were welcoming me into a space to be my authentic self and voice my experiences on campus and back home with my family. These weekly meetings weren't a support group to vent my issues about my predominantly white school, it was a time to see the people I called my familia; it was my weekly chance to hang out with some genuinely friendly people who were always happy to see me when I walked in through those glass doors of the Joann Jundt Lounge in Hemmingson,

every single week.

One of the greatest things to happen to me at this school was when my friends in that club voted me to be the Secretary. The best part was that this wasn't something that I ever intended to do. After missing the meeting, the week before for being out with a cold, I walked into an election where I was then written into. The following day when I got that email that had my name proudly displayed in the subject line, congratulating me for being elected, I was actually scared. Here I am a pocho who can't even speak Spanish, and suddenly I'm being asked to be a leading member of the entire club. I didn't deserve that spot. There were plenty of members that could have taken that role, why was I the one that got elected? The nervous freshman who was initially afraid that he wouldn't fit in with the other Latinos in the club was not ready to be one of the people responsible for running everything.

I don't even know how much I owe to my friend Liz who talked me into taking the offer. It's really because of her that I was able to become who I am right now. If I had backed away from the job, I truly don't think that I would be the person who is close to graduation, having found a genuine love for his culture and a passion to share it with whoever is willing to listen. In the blink of an eye, COVID ripped all of this away from me.

I'll never forget the week in mid-March when I read that email from President Thayne declaring that we would officially be closing campus for the rest of the year and that all planned events would be cancelled. I had spent that last five months planning the annual festival for La Raza. "The Beauty of Migration" we had decided to make the theme. Dozens of members had signed up to perform in cultural dances, create the beautiful

decorations we had designed, or just run the event in general. This was going to be my third festival I had assisted in planning and running. As the vice president, I felt that it would be what defined my time in the club. All it took was a week for all of those dreams to fade away. Just a single email to send me home while none of our officers' hard work saw the light of day. On March 28th, instead of spending my night in a room filled to the brim with people who had come to celebrate our culture, I sat at my home in California and watched TV. As many of the officers of cultural clubs can tell you, it's one of the most stressful experiences to run a festival, yet I found myself missing that stress. At least that was better than a lonely night spent hundreds of miles away from the people you had called your familia.

To say that I had taken all of this for granted is the greatest understatement of 2020. I look at how our club has had to adapt to the current climate and I just feel sorry for the current members and the future members. To me, this club had been a welcoming space where I could have fun and just be myself around people who appreciated me, but now it's a cold replacement for what used to be, with meetings taking place over video calls, just like every other thing we do on this campus now. In other cases, this switch to Zoom has opened up even more difficult experiences.

The racially charged attack against the Black Student Union angered me, but it also felt like the last punch in the gut that could have happened to Gonzaga's cultural clubs. In the video that was posted to social media, I could see people that I called my friends visibly hurt while the horrible, racist attackers hid behind their anonymous screens. The cultural clubs that have been a safe space to me and members of all of the other clubs

no longer felt safe. These people had invaded one of the few, fully open places on campus that people of color can exist in. Where we once felt comfortable to be ourselves, the other cultural clubs had to wonder if they were going to be the next targets. Even when they are able to fully transition off of Zoom in the hopefully near future, I don't believe that the cultural clubs will ever be the same because of what the strong and resilient members of the Black Student Union had to go through.

Despite this, it is absolutely necessary that these cultural clubs remain a part of this school. Because Gonzaga is a predominately white institute, students like myself aren't as easily able to feel included when they first step onto the campus. We need a place to be able to find the community that will welcome them in, even if the rest of the school doesn't feel as welcoming. COVID took the thing I loved most about this school from me, but it doesn't have to be ruined for the other students of color that will come after me.

La Raza Latina, Black Student Union, Asian American Union, Filipino American Student Union, Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders Club, and Queer Student Union, thank you for an unforgettable undergraduate experience, even if it ended in a way that we never could have anticipated.

# The Racial Backlash of COVID-19

*Dominic Pe Benito*

In February 2020, the start of the new year was hovering over every living person. However, the new year was off to a bad start in some parts of the world such as Wuhan, China where the coronavirus was affecting their country. Who would have thought that a virus that was not affecting the United States would affect Asian Americans as a community? For example, my grandmother, who is a Filipino immigrant and American citizen, was grocery shopping at Safeway in Gilroy, California when a white lady passes her down an aisle, covers her mouth with her shirt and gives my grandmother a dirty look to avoid “getting sick.” If only this was the last time this racist interaction would be experienced, but sadly it was a repetitive occurrence for my family and every Asian across the world. My skin color, my eye size, and my culture were all put up to the test to face the backlash of an Asian-originated virus. The thought of Asians being capable of withholding the virus just because of our racial features is discrimination, yet every Asian was tested by the non-Asian dominant society daily as we were seen and treated as sick people walking the streets of our “community.”

The United States of America is going through some of the most stressful moments of American History due to the pandemic, the fight for racial justice, fires and smoke covering the entire west coast, and, in addition to all of that, a contentious presidential election coming up in November. At this moment in time, it is hard to watch the news and focus on one aspect as we worry

about catching the coronavirus or worry about protests for the Black Lives Matter movement growing or possibly worry about the end of the world. However, it seems as if the moments before the pandemic hit the United States, the time before George Floyd's death, and also a life without smoke filling American lungs has been all forgotten by Americans. Even worse, I experienced some of the most intense prejudice in my life as an Asian American during these times. All the hatred and racial injustices that Asians worldwide faced during early 2020 possibly caused Asians to question the validity of being subjected to racist attacks and given responsibility for the COVID-19 pandemic.

The coronavirus or SARS-CoV-2 is a global pandemic that originated from the consumption of exotic animals such as bats in Wuhan, China. Ever since December of 2019, the virus has impacted people of all ages and races. Over thirty-two million people have been infected by this cold-like flu, while almost a million people have died. Based off these statistics from the CDC, the U.S. contributed seven million of those cases which resulted to the death of more than two-hundred thousand Americans. The virus is only getting worse, but here we are living in this treacherous society that refuses to help stop the pandemic. People are surviving the infection, but people are also dying. My life was not heavily impacted by the coronavirus until mid-March after my last track meet during my senior year at Bellarmine College Prep in San Jose, California. There was news going around that schools around the bay were shutting down due to the COVID-19 cases, but my world suddenly flipped upside down after I finished my last race and received an email that school would be cancelled indefinitely. Many thoughts and emotions ran

through my head from “Will I ever run track again?” to “What about graduation?” but the main question was “How will this impact my life?” I wish I knew before the virus hit the United States that I would face some of the worst moments of my life, so I could have felt prepared. Losing my job last summer, along with not being able to see my family and friends was heartbreaking. Then on top of all that, I began to face some of the worst racist injustice that I have ever faced. Never in a million years did I expect to be scared to show any part of my face and not embrace my culture but at the moment many Asians felt similarly.

The movement against Asians began with the mistaken belief that Asians are the ones that infected Americans. Many Americans believe that the virus spread from within the borders through the travelers from China. This ideology is perpetuated by the irresponsible media outlets that continuously perpetuates this misinformation, along with through the influence of political leaders such as President Donald Trump. For example, President Trump emphasizes the effects of the “China-flu” and “Kung-Flu” daily. The president contributes this racist ideology and some racially-biased Americans jump onto the bandwagon when they hear him speak on the virus. Plenty of Americans from both political parties truly believe that if there is someone to blame for the virus, it must be the Asian community. These Americans believe that the Chinese are responsible for the creation of the virus, but also for spreading the virus abroad. Regardless of what is said and done, many Americans have a fixed viewpoint that the virus should be blamed on one ethnic background only: the Asians.

Moreover, while many Americans believe in the stereotype that the Asian community is responsible

for the spread of the virus within the U.S., this is false as it came from infected travelers or residents across the world. Traveling from Asian countries, European countries, South America, and more became highly restricted after airlines and government officials finally concluded that the virus is spreading because of all the travel problems. Frankly, it is outrageous to blame only Asians for the spread of the coronavirus when it is the people that travel that caused the virus to spread. This explains why there are travel bans in a majority of countries made through and against the United States. Some Americans believe that blaming Asians is an easier way to cope with the cause of the virus; they do not understand that the only reason the virus entered our country was not only from the tourists or residents from Asian countries, but through traveling.

Furthermore, due to the origin of the coronavirus from Wuhan, China, all Asians are considered Chinese and caused the birth of the virus. The classic stereotype that all Asians are Chinese is one of the most outdated stereotypes in society. However, this stereotype was put into action heavily after the coronavirus hit countries outside China. Asians were put on blast worldwide for being responsible for a virus just because it came from China. The usage of blaming all Asians in general is a simple scapegoat for why the virus came into our world, but to be called Chinese and be forced to take responsibility due to appearance is disrespectful to all Asian cultures. Social media for example and society in general has published videos, articles, and reviews of people saying that all Asians are at “fault” for the virus or that every person must stay away from a “Chinese” person because they are responsible for the virus. The Internet became a dark place after the birth of the

virus, because all of social media like Tiktok, Twitter, and Instagram had posts of racist comments against Asians because of this China-originated virus that “all Asians caused.” Asians have been marginalized into a single racial ethnicity, which explains the overall blame on all Asians that we as a whole are responsible for the coronavirus outbreak, which is simply not true.

Asians are full of diverse races and cultures that should not be mistaken or made responsible for the cause of the coronavirus. Our society consists of different cultures, traditions, and values thus every person is unique in their own way. To be blamed for the coronavirus is wrong in many ways, because every Asian country became affected by the virus too and no one deserves to be blamed for a freak accident that could not be foreseen. Asians are full of diversity and different cultures, thus we should not be stereotyped and belittled into being the catalyst for the virus. We had no control over the situation, but what we do have is control to fight against the virus. The stereotype should be buried because Asian cultures deserve respect and every Asian should feel free to show their true culture, passion, and beliefs without feeling categorized and feeling responsible for a virus that no one had control over in the first place.

The amount of racial inequality against Asians occurs worldwide as we are seen as “super spreaders” and “sick” due to our ethnicity. My family and I experienced the backlash of being seen as “sick” Asians. Social media would explode with people being racist towards Asians and asking: “Did you eat the rat or bat that caused coronavirus?” or someone gesturing to get away once someone sees an Asian person. Not to mention, Asians are the most safe and cautious with coronavirus

guidelines as wearing a mask in some parts of Asia serves as a cultural aspect and a majority of Asians wear gloves, face shields, and other protective gear just to fight against the disease. However, we see other cultures and races that refuse to wear masks, gloves, or any protective gear to the point where they take off masks in stores, outside, and use a shirt to cover their noses when in reality that does not help combat the spread.

However, when non-Asians see Asians with this type of protection, we are suddenly called “fools” and assumed to have the virus even more. For example, my family wore face shields on the trip to Spokane, but we were all made fun of and given dirty looks on our flights due to our “overacting” and “overprotective” gear. This is simply not true, because we were all just being cautious because the virus is an air-traveling virus, but we were assumed to be the “crazy” ones with all the gear while people of other races on the plane had no masks and protective gear when they were technically required to wear protection during the flight. I believe that this stereotype is hypocritical and racist, because how can one person say that I have the virus, but when I do everything in my power to protect myself, I am “crazy?” I am doing my part to stop the pandemic and I do not deserve the judgement. The pandemic arises daily, but it should be reminded to society that Asians are not all spreading the virus, but rather doing everything to stop it from spreading anymore.

Another racist stereotype is that many people believe that all Asians must “go home” to their original homelands due to the responsibility of the virus. During the early months and going into the summer arose the most videos and proof of racism against Asians around the world. Based off my personal knowledge, I know

that Asians in the United States were told to “go back to your country” as shown on viral videos. Asian cultures were tested daily as sitting in a restaurant, walking at the park, or even working consisted of nonstop harassment and phrases of sending Asians back “home.” The stereotype negatively affected Asians through family restaurants becoming bankrupt as communities assume they were a coronavirus hotspot due the Asian culture involved with the food. Asian owned companies were affected as American and European companies refused to keep business with Asians because “they were all responsible for the coronavirus”. Sending Asians back “home” would not better the spread of the virus within countries. If anything, Asians going back to their original countries would likely positively affect families both financially and mentally versus needing to face racism daily.

The amount of negativity that Asians faced is an injustice to today’s world. Not all Asians have coronavirus, not every Asian business is a coronavirus hotspot, not every Asian is responsible for the virus, and most definitely, no Asian should go home to their native countries. Asians do everything they can with fighting against the pandemic which adds to the security. The coronavirus is not some racially-based or genetic disease that having every Asian go home to their native lands would add any security against the virus. The virus is simply a global pandemic that every person must fight by following guidelines and putting aside political views and personal views because people are dying. It is racist for people to say that Asians are responsible for the deaths globally, but there are people that believe it. The stereotype will continue to live on but what people must learn is that Asians are not responsible for the

deaths, but rather we are all guilty because we fail to meet guidelines daily. However, a majority of Asians in the world do their part; thus, sending them “home” will probably add safety, but to their native countries, where they will actually listen to the laws and regulations. They won’t fight the rules, unlike here, where some will say that having a breathing problem is an excuse to not wear a mask while stepping into a store; or that wearing a mask is taking away one’s rights, but that saying to an Asian person to speak English and go “home” is not taking away an Asian person’s rights.

The amount of stereotypical hatred that all Asians across the world faced during the first couple of months of this year were unnecessary and cruel as not all Asians are responsible for the spread of coronavirus. The racial injustice through these stereotypes of being contaminated with the coronavirus, to being told to go “home” as a way to fight the virus, and the overall generalization for the responsibility of the virus raises the question of “Why were the Asians forced to fight alone in a situation where the rights and dignity of their culture was belittled and disrespected?” Many people fail to understand the backlash that the Asian community faced during the early months of the pandemic, not to mention the continuation of the Asian stereotypes related to COVID certainly live on today. However, if there is one aspect that the world and even the United States of America fails to discover is that most likely no one feels guilty for the disrespect and pessimistic feelings that all Asians are living with to this day. The big idea is simply that Chinese people may be Asian, but not all Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino, Japanese, or any Asian race should be categorized as the only people responsible for the virus. There is a reason why the virus

is a “global” pandemic and problem and not “local” or “countrywide” because all people have some involvement in the spread. The pandemic is a worldwide issue that may have started in China, but does not mean that all Asians are responsible, thus making the stereotype that all Asians having the coronavirus and being the cause of the virus invalid.

It is March 2021 and where are we now? The coronavirus pandemic has started to lessen as vaccines are being given to people worldwide. However, the decrease of cases does not mean a decrease in racist attacks against Asians. Many Asian Americans are facing backlash still due to the unrest caused by the country almost being in lockdown for almost a full year. The attacks are no longer verbal abuse, but rather physical. We see viral videos racist attacks such as an old man walking around the bay in California until a random man sucker punches him in the face which led to his death. The news is covered by the headline of “Asian Hate Crimes” occurring daily and specifically in the west coast and in New York. People are being physically abused, verbally attacked, cars’ brakes are being cut, Asian families are being targeted in white-dominant neighborhoods, and more, but nothing is changing. Asian communities live in fear to this day so we may have been suffering from the virus for a year, but Asians also have been facing racism for a year! Asians can post social media support and educate other Americans, but racism will always roam through the United States. We can hope and pray for the attacks to stop but they will not. Is there a solution? Possibly, but we can continue to educate our peers and communities over the struggle of living as an Asian American in today’s society. We need to tell people about the racist attacks and hope that people will join

our side of the problem and fight against the racism too. Maybe we need to have marches and protests for justice for Asian Americans too. All I know is that I am tired of all Asian cultures facing racism and stereotypical judgement daily over this pandemic. We are humans, we are Americans, and we deserve to be treated like them. I want to stop living in fear and believe that the future for Asians worldwide will not consist of racism against our cultures.

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# Death by a Thousand Cuts: My Struggle with Internalized Homophobia

Chloe Fox

If I would've told third grade me that I would kiss a girl on a Ferris wheel, I think she would've called me crazy and told the yard duty that a strange woman on the blacktop is telling lies. My encounters with homophobia were hard to pin down. There were a couple of instances of overt homophobia. I realized that 90% of my internalized homophobia came from peers, teachers, and even my family.

While growing up Catholic and being in denial about your sexuality is a cliché as old as Jesus himself, it wasn't until much later I realized how subtle my internalized homophobia was. Even at a young age, I was completely oblivious. It wasn't like my parents blamed "the homosexuals" for the decay of the American family or tried to hide it from me. We visited my mother's college friend, Linda, and her wife, Carol. When Andrea and Edna moved across the street, we welcomed them with open arms and often had dinner together, and got invited to the occasional block party. We even attended their wedding. It was a beautiful ceremony where I cried my eyes out. Despite these positive influences growing up, I still couldn't shake the feeling that being gay was simply not an option. Yes, gay people exist, and they are nice people, but I couldn't be one of them. My family never outwardly said it. There were little hints of it that I absorbed and that stayed with me for most of my life.

Even in elementary school, there were still interactions that indicated to young me that being gay was not a possibility. In third grade, I had my first crush

on a girl, Madison. I told my best friend, Eric, and then the rumor mill started churning. Eventually, word got around to Madison. We talked about it, and she said the words that would save my reputation for about two years, “You just like me as a friend, right?” I vehemently agreed, thinking it would put everything to rest. This was when the first seed of denial was planted. Of course, I liked her as “just as a friend,” I wanted to be better friends with her. That’s it. I thought that would be the end of it. It wasn’t.

Two years later, my ostracization and isolation began to build from the foundations of two years prior. The girls in the class did not want to be my friend and neither did the boys. I was caught between not being girly enough for the girls and too girly for the boys. As the year dragged on, my best friend, Sol, told me all the mean things that girls said behind my back. It came full circle, when my former crush and leader of the “popular girls,” Madison, told Sol to stop being friends with me. They said it was because I was a lesbian and a bad influence. The group was worried that I would turn Sol gay. I cried and cried and cried. My parents asked why they were bullying me and what they were saying. I lied. I couldn’t bring myself to tell my parents, so they chalked it up to “jealousy.” I knew better. I was so distraught that these girls were spreading lies about me, or at least that’s what I told myself. In reality, I thought this rumor was behind me and the fear that I was being exposed again was overwhelming. I was already feeling the isolation; I didn’t need another reason for people to stay away from me. My peers weren’t the only ones that were spreading this message. For months, I walked past the “Yes to Prop 8 sign” at church. I asked my mother what Prop 8 was. She explained that it would make gay

marriage illegal in California. Even as a fifth-grader, I felt my stomach churn as I walked by that sign every Sunday. Eventually, it became too much that I took the sign down and hid it in the bushes. I didn't want to see it anymore. My mother promptly told me that it is illegal to take down a political sign and to put it back. I dreaded going back to church and seeing the words "Yes to Prop 8" blazed on the front lawn. Looking back, my mom probably thought it was because of Linda and Carol or Andrea and Edna. Deep down, I knew it wasn't.

In the mid-2000s, it was common to use "gay" in a derogatory way. My brother was the biggest culprit. Even at home, my brother used the term "gay" freely to describe anything and everything he didn't like. "Going to school, that's so gay" or "This song is so gay". This became part of his vocabulary for years. The wall was gay. The floor was gay. Everything from video games to skateboards, from my parents to his CD player, it was all gay. If I had a nickel, my Gonzaga tuition would be paid off. Even now, I can feel myself wince even thinking about that. Each time he said it was a knife to the heart, and it didn't help my confusion and insecurities that were already going on. I remember when he said it in front of Linda and Carol. My parents told him to do his homework, to which he responded, "That's so gay!" There was a pause, my mom looked at Ben then at Linda and Carol. He ran into the living room without even apologizing while my mom changed the subject. His scolding was minimal and it sounded a lot like, "Don't say that in front of them." All of this indicated to young Chloe that being gay was bad, something to be ashamed of. My parents did not try to curb his language, just sighed and nodded their heads. This pushed me further into denial and self-loathing. I couldn't talk about why

I was feeling this way nor did I really understand why I was feeling that way. I was confused and deep in denial with no one to talk to. It was a vicious cycle. No one allowed me the space to talk about liking girls or much less said that it was okay that I did.

High school wasn't much better. I was surrounded by peers who were out (as out as one can be at an all-girls Catholic high school). This led me to pause and consider my sexuality. Still the denial set in and I once again convinced myself that I was straight—that I had to be straight. There was no official school policy saying you couldn't be gay. Instead there's an unwritten policy that mirrored "Don't ask, don't tell," and there were frequent stories of girls getting detention because of "inappropriate PDA." The teachers only served to reinforce the Catholic doctrine and the unwritten rules. Some of the students were not much better, instantly labeling girls as a "lesbian" if they decided to wear khakis instead of a skirt. Now, I never did figure where this particular unwritten rule came from, like many high school norms it seems to have come through osmosis. Students were not allowed to dye their hair an "unnatural color," that was instant detention; even a pixie cut would elicit stares and whispers in the hall. At St. Francis, the homophobia seemed more overt, but the people of the LGBT+ community found places to be. They couldn't have their own club so they found other clubs to join like the Latin Club, Robotics, or even the techie crew for the spring musical. If you looked really closely, you could find these little underground communities. I somehow always found myself in them. I went through a questioning phase in high school, for sure. I was friends with all the gay kids, often eating lunch with them in the corner away from the prying eyes of the lunch monitor.

Still, despite my friends and their support, I still couldn't quite shake the feeling that I was straight and that was it. Nothing to think or even consider further. Looking back, all my "friend crushes" on the upperclassmen were most definitely real crushes. After coming out to my high school friends, many of them weren't too surprised, but they understood why it took me so damn long to realize that I was bisexual.

As I got older, I began to realize the homophobia lacing my family's comments. My best friend, Sol, and I ended up getting a small gig selling flags at Sacramento Pride. I told my grandma I was making some money at Pride and her comment was, "Now, don't go getting any ideas" and chuckled. While trying to undercut the comment with a laugh it was clear to me that being gay was not something that belonged. It's like catching a cold or some "bad idea" I would later regret. I remember even thinking to myself, "You know, I'm not gay but that's actually pretty homophobic." Oh humble and naive youth. Every time my brother called a song "gay" in a derogatory way, or when my dad walked out of the room when Sol and Robert kissed on Grace and Frankie or my parents made passive aggressive comments about Linda and Carol's relationship were tiny little nicks on my heart. These little things build over time, and I internalized almost every interaction. It was slow, it was painful, but I had to suffer in silence. It is death by a thousand cuts.

It took me getting out of America to fully accept that I was gay. Studying abroad in New Zealand put me face to face with a girl who liked me and who I liked. It wasn't easy. One drunken night, she told me she liked me, I had a panic attack and decided to clean her kitchen instead of looking her in the eyes. She watched

skeptically while I scrubbed her stovetop and cleaned her sink. I even friend-zoned her telling me that I was straight and I didn't feel that way. But if I didn't like her why did I always think of her, and buy her alcohol and study with her. Why was I always wanting to be near her? Why was I constantly making excuses to see her? Why did I dress up for her birthday? Why did I ask her out to drinks? These questions and more swirled around my head as I walked around Auckland trying to come up with answers. From my flat to the harbor to a random park, I walked and walked and walked. I just about wore off the soles of my shoes. I journaled—attempting to rationalize these feelings. After almost running out of pages, I kept circling back to the same thing: you like her. Eventually, the memories of middle school came flooding back to me, hitting me like a tsunami. I even looked back at high school, thinking back to the glances I would steal during Latin Club and making excuses to talk to the upperclassmen. After a weekend of self-reflection, realizations, journaling and walking, I had to come clean to her, and more importantly, come out to myself. After an intense discussion, we decided to continue to be friends and revisit a relationship after New Zealand.

I had a lot of growing up and figuring out to do. In January, we met in Seattle and went on our first date. At the peak of the Great Wheel is where we had our first kiss. God didn't smite me down. The world didn't open up and swallow me whole. The Ferris wheel was not set ablaze. Everything was fine. It was okay. The world continued to turn as usual. Despite this big revelation, I still needed time to grow. The next day, I woke up early in the morning to throw up. The nerves, the anxiety, and the fear caught up to me. I made myself physically ill. Still determined to go on a second date with her, I

skipped breakfast and had soup for lunch. The second date didn't go quite as well. She was ready to commit but I still needed time. I obviously still had things to work through. I cried when I left her at the bus stop and cried all night. This, however, is not a sad story. This is a story of growth, realization and overcoming internalization.

In March, I went to visit her in California. After two months flirting and facetimeing, I decided I just needed to take the leap. I was ready and I couldn't string her along anymore. After staying up all night talking, I asked her to be my girlfriend. Her look said, "Oh god, finally." We are coming up on a year now, but it has been wonderful. Distance is not easy, but it is worth it. We switch off visiting each other. I was able to convince this SoCal gal to come up to snowy Spokane. She got the stamp of approval from all my buddies. I came out to all my friends and the overwhelming support I've gotten brings tears to my eyes. They embraced me with open arms, and it was a huge weight off my shoulders.

All things considered, I had it good. I just want to express the damages that these small comments have when you've heard them your whole life. From third grade to junior year of Gonzaga, I denied a part of myself that is actually who I am. I was forced into a closet, not even able to stick my head out into the light. I was so deep in the closet, I closed my eyes and swore up and down that I wasn't in the closet. Since I have come to terms with my bisexuality, I no longer throw up after dates with my girlfriend. I have a great community and lots of support from my friends and chosen family. I am not completely there but I am in a helluva lot better place once I realized how much harm I was doing to myself. This for all those closeted folks out there reading this. You got this. It may take you some time to get there and

you may need a new pair of walking shoes. Once you are out on the other side, it is phenomenal to finally feel the sun shining on you.

# Black Women and their Fight for Healthcare

Claire Booth

Of the minority groups continuously left out of the picture, Black women have been rejected by both the feminist and civil rights groups throughout history; seen as too genteel to fight with their husbands as women but too “rough” to protest with the feminists. Who “qualified” to participate in social movements continuously ostracized Black women’s voices and their calls for equality. Black women have fought for their seats at the table, yet our nation still evokes restrictions inhibiting their pursuit of happiness and success. One such obstacle lies in the medical sector. Access to healthcare is continuously perceived as a divide in economic classes, but Black women’s racist and sexist encounters with medical providers highlight a deeper layer of corruption. They are among the top three racial groups among females with the highest percentage of individuals lacking healthcare (National Partnership for Women and Families). Additionally, women of color are more susceptible to contract chronic health conditions, including diabetes, viral Hepatitis, and maternal mortality, adding to their increased need for proper medical access (National Partnership for Women and Families). Black women’s patient treatment emphasizes the deep historical stereotypes in our medical institutions today, and also how their respect and dignity is continuously undermined.

Before delving into the ideology behind racism towards Black women, one must understand the supremacist undertones of American whiteness that are

both weak in their immorality but also in their shaky foundation. The U.S. has built whiteness into a social and economic standard to hold every other racial group against. Mai Ngai's piece titled "The Johnson-Reed Act" further exemplifies this assertion by retelling the ambiguous and dynamic laws over who "counts" as white, with darker skinned European's reluctantly added for their assimilation into white culture (Ngai). This federal ostracization of minorities, rather than a proper classification of them, is how hegemonic structures have come to endorse racist behavior through seeing them as the "other." By reading how whiteness came to be, Dyer Richard states, "race is not only attributable to people who are not white, nor is the imagery of non-white people the only racial category...other people are raced, we [whites] are just people." In other words, rather than celebrate racial and ethnic group differences, white culture places their identity as the norm in which others must follow. This exclusivism transcends all aspects of life; extending roots into our measurements of dignity and our health sector's willingness to care for everyone equally.

Our history's tale of what it means to be "black" and "woman" are both narratives of subordination, inferiority, and ostracization from holistically participating in society. When combined, black women live the diluted legacy from the Jim Crow era as hypersexual, expendable objects for a man's pleasure. During slavery, Black women's acceptance of their life predicaments imprinted a stereotype of a stoic and tough personality, building a contemporary perception surrounding black women's high pain tolerance. This idea has seeped into many medical practices across the country, where such women may be denied pain

medication or given smaller doses. One profound example is seen in the medical textbook, “Nursing: A Concept-Based Approach to Learning” which categorized methods of medical practices to each race. In a direct excerpt from the book, a BBC article quotes the author’s perception of Blacks by reporting their “higher pain intensity than other cultures” and believing that “suffering and pain are inevitable” (Nursing: Concept-Based Approach). Such discriminatory beliefs open doors for nurses and medical practitioners to refrain from providing proper health care services and medication based on cultural stereotypes grown from enslaving Black women.

Moreover, Black women have been prevented from resisting their horrific living conditions and unequal opportunities since the mid-19th century. While overt racist actions like the practice of slavery are now eradicated, the perception of Black women as usable, hypersexual, and exempt from professional medical care has evolved from such times. Cynthia Prather et al. recount the evolution of stereotypes perpetuated by the federal government when they describe the health conditions of Black women through history in their narrative review. Throughout the 17th and 19th century, public and nude auctions were the fate of many Black women across colonial America, including subjection to “nonconsensual and gynecological and reproductive surgeries...performed without anesthesia” (Prather et al.). Additionally, the Jezebel stereotype emerged during this time, perceiving Black women as impoverished and sexual objects. The Civil Rights era between 1955-1975 still held onto the Jezebel stereotype, with lynching and other forms of violence continuing through the 20th century.

Today, non-consensual medical experiments gave way to unequal healthcare care access into the post-civil rights era. The report states black women continue to face, “targeted sterilizations, hysterectomies, abortions, and birth control” today (Prather et al.). From their analysis, it is easy to follow how hegemonic structures have evolved systemic oppression into subtle, nuanced methods more challenging to pinpoint as overt racism. From their findings, Prather et al. conclude, “the legacy of medical experimentation and inadequate healthcare coupled with social determinants has exacerbated African American women’s complex relationship with healthcare systems” (Prather et al). The historical beliefs and actions subordinating Black women is a key feature of hegemonic structures and motives today. Layered in other forms of oppression, it is essential we pull the root of racism in our healthcare systems into the open to stimulate discourse around the evolution of Black women’s medical mistreatment.

Such stories of systemic oppression give way to Black Feminist theory. Its work offers a more in-depth look into a non-hierarchical approach to understanding forms of discrimination. Through their identities as both Black and female, Black Feminist scholars have developed an intersectional approach to understanding racism and its many intricacies, including Kimberlee Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins. Their ideas recognize the collective sustainment of racism in our culture and political institutions and how our views of critical race theory must evolve to properly address them. In one poignant statement, Patricia Hill Collins once said, “empowerment involves rejecting the dimensions of knowledge, whether personal, cultural, or institutional, that perpetuate objectification and dehumanization.” With a pandemic,

new administration, and a recently updated census, it is vital our nation takes advantage of this moment in history ensure Black women receive the proper medical attention and care they deserve. But it will not change unless we empower the voices of those demanding its reform, and collectively recognize the humanistic call for dignity at hand.

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**EMPOWERING OUR TRUTH**

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# Gasping Awake

*Miranda Abunimeh*

It is Halloween and I am going to some event with other children, dressed up as Sleeping Beauty - I am maybe four.

I feel so pretty and pink in the car, smelling like the hairspray mom protected my eyes from, her hand cupped gently over my forehead.

I am eager for everyone to see me.

I don't remember who said it, but I remember another kid tells me that I can't be Sleeping Beauty, because I don't look like her at all.

I am wearing the dress and my hair flows past my shoulders, so I don't understand.

It's because you're dark, they explain. Your skin is dark and Sleeping Beauty's isn't, earth shattering statements rolling off the tongue of a child with ease.

It is shocking to me - it opens up a Pandora's box of the ways I am different for the next few years.

Suddenly I realize, I am dark. My nose gets even wider when I smile. I get nervous when I pass an intimates section with mom. Has it always been like this?

So, I spend the next few Halloweens desperately looking

for a girl on TV who looks like me to become my next costume - but there's no one.

No one who I can look at and say here, this person looks like me and she is beautiful and kind and all the things I try to be, and we all like her, right?

Maybe I want to see someone like my grandmother, who took my grandfather's hands, weathered from plantation labor for the Oahu Sugar Company, and married him.

I never met my grandpa, but I imagine the scene much like a knight rescuing a princess, bringing her to America from the Philippines. The youngest, precious daughter out of seven siblings. It's not hard to imagine her as a princess. She's beautiful. Mom told me that grandpa used to sit and watch her put her makeup on for the day, in awe of and in love with her.

When I picture this I get weepy. I think it could be because I feel that love, his love when I think about it. I yearn for that kind of love I think, the kind that transcends time, the kind that you know is true deep down into your bones.

My grandpa has never met me. All I have are fragments of him - I know he would only play hymns and Elvis Presley in the car, he loved Ronald Reagan, that he quit smoking because mom asked him to when she was a little girl. That was the man who loved my grandmother.

My grandmother, who loves me so much and speaks only with love in her voice.

Who brings me cut fruit, who makes sure I don't go to

bed with wet hair, who warns me that if I stay in the sun for too long I will turn black.

When you're a kid, you think all love is unconditional. And when you learn it's not, the world ends. Growing up, it destroyed me to think my grandma could love me less because of my skin.

But now, I think I can understand. And it comes down to this:

The world taught her that to be worthy of love, a woman was to be light-skinned, and should sacrifice her comfort for the sake of others.

And eventually beneath my hurt I found her wish to protect me from a world that isn't mine.

And in mine, my world, I bloom under the sun.  
I have the skin of the man she loves.  
And sometimes, I remember how useful I can be isn't what makes me valuable.

In the eighth grade there is a boy I think I like - he is blonde and charming even with his braces. I think the world of him.

We're flirting at a high school football game and I feel so mature and cool, my hair straightened and eyeliner done in a shaky hand.

He tells me I'm cute, that everything about me is small except for my nose. That I would be hot maybe, if my nose wasn't so big.

I laugh and save my tears for the public restroom, hands clutching the porcelain sink knowing nothing will hurt more than this.

Later, weeks later, he will touch me in my PE uniform until I cry. And in that quiet panic comes this thought: my nose wasn't such a big deal after all.

When you're a kid, especially a little girl, if an adult wants you to be quiet they play a Disney movie. I used to sit on classroom carpets, blue light from the rolling TV set cast upon my face, silently wishing I was that beautiful, too.

Revisiting those movies now it's interesting to realize that the princesses are the stars - the movies are named after them, after all - but they're not the actors. Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, Snow White, they all become objects to be saved. And they will be, but only because it's been established that they belong to the men in their lives. I won't be quiet.

I tell another boy I think I like about what happened in 8th grade PE, years later when I'm in college, trying to explain why I am the way I am, why I can't offer certain things right now - and he says he understands.

But eventually, he becomes disappointed. I was supposed to be the submissive Asian fantasy dream girl. I was meant to be the accessory on his arm that showed the world he was cool, woke, and interesting.

After all of it I feel like screaming, I get it, I can't be a princess but aren't I a person at least? Do you know that

I have thoughts and feelings that go beyond your weird yellow fever fantasies?

I have fantasies too. I wish I could fall into dreamless sleep like Snow White or Sleeping Beauty, only to wake up and want for nothing ever again because my true love has found me. Or, even better, I can stay asleep forever because it is exhausting to exist. Or, I could be the prince who's strong enough to protect the love of his life from the threat of violence that follows women like a curse.

As a child I was watching these movies thinking, yes I want to be a princess, to be glamorous, adored, *cherished*. Looking back, I confused wanting *to be with* and wanting *to be like*. Instead of being swept off my feet, I wanted to be the prince too. To be charming, suave and strong, because I thought the only way you could love a woman was to be like a man.

I think of grandma again. Her sweet face, prayers over the phone, a fabulous wardrobe from years of thrift shopping together. I think of grandpa, who worked with his hands for years, to open doors for a granddaughter he's never met.

I think of how much they mean to me, even when we'll never truly know each other.

I'm feeling lonely amidst a global pandemic, Rapunzel locked in her tower when I can finally say I only love women - that for too long I was trying to fit myself into a shoe that didn't fit.

But that doesn't mean I can't still be Cinderella, Aurora,

Snow White, sing to animals and find love. What if I still felt like the world could be a little bit magic? What if I could slay the dragon and get the girl?

What if when I kiss her for the first time it's like I am the one gasping awake?

I am a princess with my grandma's beautiful nose, my grandpa's handsome skin.

And I am a lesbian.

## Trapped

*Jacquelyn Renee Lee*

My identity is confined to discourse that stands  
indestructible

It has become so normal that it is no longer debatable

Instead, I have conformed, assimilated and adapted

Leaving me feeling suffocated handicapped and

When I thought I was ready to escape?

I was shot down and closed in by police tape

I am a biracial Black Woman living off of low income

In a society where the oppression has me numb

My voice carries on for a mile

But for some reason society sees me as hostile?

Jackie lower your voice

Jackie you don't get that choice

Stay in your little cage

With all of that unnecessary rage

Where my body is oversexualized just because I got

rhythm in my hips

And many think I did the Kylie Jenner challenge to get

these lips

"I love your hair! But that isn't yours, right? It's weave."

Damn why do people gotta be so naive

To cry out that I feel discriminated

Only labels me as bitter and outdated

How dare I be so ungrateful as to plea

When I stand on the so called "land of the free"

Free

A word that has been plastered on the backs of blacks

As if to heal the 400 years of wounds across our backs  
So, I say thank you and remain deprived  
Just so that I know, I can at least survive  
I sit with invisible chains scrutinized  
While my true self is secrete and left paralyzed  
Why can't they see  
That when MLK was shot down  
The same color of blood flooded the ground  
Instead, I have received the short end of the stick  
And it makes yall sick  
That I got my tricks  
My words weighing like bricks  
Cuz my strength is thick  
The black woman - is unstoppable  
One day my species is sought to be erased by gun smoke  
While the next it's seen as a caricature, a joke.  
The audacity that you spoke  
I have no choice but to revoke  
But what goes around comes back around right?  
Here it is ok to have hard r Thursdays  
But lemme guess, it would be racist to have cracker  
Wednesdays

Attending college was merely an impractical dream  
Because my life obstacles just seemed too extreme  
I am stuck in the patriarchal regime  
Where it feels like no one can hear me scream  
Black History Month, reserved for celebration  
But instead they mock Rosa Parks, hear my frustration  
The mistaken knowledge that spreads like a disease  
Has me begging for it to stop on my knees  
In this society I am the definition of abnormal  
But I have to say these dominant ideologies ain't that  
colorful

Predestined I have the duty to educate  
And hope that this new knowledge generates less hate  
I have made the unimaginable-achievable  
And my place on this earth unimpeachable  
I will get that degree  
And make freedom my own decree  
And I will be a vessel of inspiration  
For beautiful young minds across the nation  
My resilience profusely contagious  
To influence others to see their melanin as advantageous  
I have found the key of emancipation  
That unlocks the chains of others for rejuvenation  
Like roots of a tree, giving life to the leaves  
We are a force to be reckon with for those who deceive  
And without those trees, you cease to breathe  
-You need us-  
Where fear becomes the fuel that moves us forward  
Instead of leaving us weak and cornered  
Where we can all walk openly  
Claiming our space unapologetically  
Your security can no longer be my concern  
For, nothing- else of mine- will burn  
Once feeling trapped and suffocated  
I now stand indestructible and celebrated.

**- Jacquelyn Renee Lee**



**Alias**  
Taryn Lewis

Imagine standing in the Djolof and everyone knows you  
by alias;  
But you are not who they think you are.

If who I am has lifted; then the dreams from a past  
known and unknown to me, is revealed in my present,  
and reformed in our future utterance.

I have connected many lifetimes with the impressions of  
people having multi-colors of skin.

I have identified with them all, people, places and  
shadowing acts.

But as **I recall the evidence**, these are the likes of  
**recurring memories**.

Passing with the time, I am still HERE I am still ME

Without misspeaking on or misrepresenting the human  
nature of love and kindness, a retelling is needed.

See I've played the game and claimed my own name,  
because there is only my way or the highway.

Driving on the sands in a bush taxi, it can be hard to find  
your home.

Ignited with secrets, unbearable truths, and personal beliefs that conclusively exclude me from many pastures I can see, but I don't forget to rise.

Because what is most important to me is the choice in a new voice that is disconnecting monopolies of destruction.

Every day, I reconnect with real forces of power, inner hope, and efforts to face old history.

So, to move forward, I turn the wheel.

A fire unsettled within, sheds light on the broken parts, finding self-discovery as the oneness of participation, usefulness, empowerment, and social activism.

**As I draw closer to the flames, I am still digesting...**

Our truth isn't beyond us; instead, it is within and has always surrounded us too.

This is why I use what I got, to keep going.

Why I wear only the necessary lessons on my belt and Commune with those who need forgiveness.

I have been alerted with the esteem that I need to be in the crowd, amongst the people, because one of us is all of us no matter the fight.

Healing isn't always easy, KNOW that my skin is thicker than most but sitting under the garab, the tree, is enlightening.

Assimilation has insisted that some resist quiet peace only by depicting **a new structure and adding consequences to follow.**

Charged by uncertain groups who return to complacency and dishonest behavior just to save face of downtrodden leadership.

Social fever and systemic dreams fast become unworthy of sharing or having any positive effects on humanity.

This is where I draw the lines, and I ask...

Who am I? Am I a part of it?  
Truth is multi-colored and divine skins have made us, in this way.

Self-mastery is the only way, which is the same difference in our highest potential for giving and receiving the hidden messages. In initiating this movement, no more imitation is required.

*Since dreams: can never stop being what you make it.*

I have included the voices in my own who are never to be forgotten and pray that the future may know these patterns of fully existing interpretations and the real sense of life- giving conditions.

- Taryn A. Lewis





**DOORS**

## **Alex McCurdy**

### *“Diary of a Gaybie”*

I use They/Them pronouns. No, they are not an option. I also happen to be a lesbian. I'm a junior on campus studying applied mathematics with a minor in social justice. My dream is to one day combine them, to create a better world with the mathematical abilities I have. I love to travel and explore other cultures. I love Spoken Word poetry and my submission is one of many that I've written. I'm currently trying to write a book. This is one of my pages. I hope you like it.

## **Andrew Sepulveda**

### *“A Dedication to the Cultural Clubs That Made Me”*

Andrew Sepulveda is a senior from Los Angeles, CA, majoring in English with a writing concentration. As Editor-in-Chief of Our Voices, this is now his third year on the journal's staff, having worked as an editor to help produce the previous two editions. He is very thankful for his family who has been the biggest inspiration for his writing and the reason why he is at Gonzaga.

## **Ariah Mann**

### *“The Power of a Myth”, “Beautiful Girl”*

Ariah Mann is a violinist and first-generation college student at Gonzaga University where she is completing Bachelor of Arts degrees in music education and violin performance with a minor in conducting. Originally from Northern California, Ariah moved to Spokane to attend Gonzaga and pursue her love of music. During her time at GU, Ariah has been fortunate enough to play with the Gonzaga Symphony Orchestra for four seasons, serving as both Principal Second and later Concertmaster for the ensemble. She has greatly enjoyed working with GSO director Kevin Hekmatpanah and playing with guest artists, Gonzaga students, and community members from the Spokane area. Along with music, creative writing and journaling have always been one of her favorite ways to process through the daily happenings of her world. Ariah plans to graduate this May and begin a master's program in violin performance in the Fall. Her goals for the future are to perform in a professional symphony orchestra and to share her love of music with the next generation through teaching private lessons and becoming involved in youth orchestra programs.

**Claire Booth**

*“Black Women and Fighting for Equal Healthcare”*

Claire Booth is a Political Science major and Philosophy and International Relations minor. She is a member of GSBA, where she once wrote legislation requesting funding for the BLM t-shirts in the Fall 2020 semester. Claire wishes to pursue a career in US government after graduation in the areas of foreign policy and human rights issues. She is grateful for her CRES 101 class and professor for giving her the freedom and resources to write this paper.

**Chloe Fox**

*“Death by a Thousand Cuts: My Struggle with Internalized Homophobia”*

Chloe Fox is a senior at Gonzaga studying Criminal Justice and English. She enjoys trashy reality television, cooking new recipes and making cocktails. After a long journey through her sexuality, she was able to come out as bisexual to friends and chosen family. Chloe originally hails from Sacramento, CA. You can spot her around campus with her wacky socks and assortment of flannels.

***Dominic William Pe Benito***

*“The Racial Backlash of COVID”*

I am an 18-year old, first-generation Filipino-American from Gilroy, California. I feel like 2020 has been the hardest year for myself and the Asian community due to the effect of the coronavirus. From myself experiencing racial injustices and the increase in racially-based stereotypes, this year was the most challenging for all Asians and left all of us questioning our existence and goals in the United States. From facing the negativity of backlash in my own community to Asian businesses being torn apart, but why could Asians be facing these issues? Coronavirus was taking a toll on many Americans, but someone had to be blamed for the cause and spread of the virus, so the majority of Asians in this country faced blame and racism. A virus originating from China, an Asian country, automatically generalized a vast number of cultures into one. A virus that has infected millions and killed many has been forced upon the Asian community as our fault. I neither want to be blamed or feel as if I deserve the backlash that Asians have faced in the past year. People must understand the pain the Asian community experienced before all the other disastrous moments of 2020 occurred.

***Emma Craven***

*“Sacrificial Time”, “Who Am I?”, “The Questions of a Jew in America”, “Am Undercover Jew”*

Emma Craven is a Senior studying English and Psychology. she has previously been published in Charter and Our Voices. In her free time, she enjoys writing, reading, watching movies, and spending time with her family.

***Jacquelyn Renee Lee***

*“Trapped”*

My name is Jacquelyn Renee Lee, I am 19 years old and a Sophomore here at Gonzaga. I am double majoring in Communication studies and Criminology on the Pre-Law track. I am very passionate about civil rights, poetry, empowerment, and hope to be a civil rights attorney. I am driven by the need for equality and reform and hope that I can make as much change as possible in my lifetime.

## **Jessica Hovland**

### *“When Will You See”*

Jessica is a third year Gonzaga student, graduating in spring 2021, majoring in Psychology and minoring in sociology. After graduation Jessica plans attend graduate school and go into the field of clinical neuropsychology. Growing up just 20 minutes north of downtown Seattle, Jessica has always enjoyed being outdoors and exploring the many Washington hiking trails with her older sister Nikki. In addition to hiking, Jessica has had a passion for art for as long as she can remember, in particular painting and drawings. This drawing is one of Jessica's favorite pieces of her work solely because of the strength, power, and message behind the piece. She drew this just this past summer, in light of the BLM movement and protests. Moreover, hopes this piece can provide time for reflection, recognition, and appreciation of every individual, especially those marginalized.

## **Kate Inge**

### *“Finding My Way Back to Temple”*

Hi, I am Kate Inge and am from Seattle, WA. I am in my sophomore year as a Nursing Major and Psychology Minor. On weekends, I enjoy cooking with my friends, rock climbing, and spending quality time watching Game of Thrones. I am also a member of Gonzaga's Wind Ensemble, and if it were a normal year, the Bulldog Band as well.

## **Lindsey Anderson**

### *“Ladylike”, “Emery and Lucia”*

Lindsey Anderson is a senior at Gonzaga University. She is majoring in English and Political Science and minoring in History and Women's and Gender Studies.

## **Lizzie Vosler**

### *“My Monster”, “Cotton Socks”*

I am a senior English Writing Major getting my Secondary Education Certification. I hope to use my degree and my love for reading and writing to teach creative writing in the future.

### ***Michaela Friedrich***

#### ***“Fuck You”, “How to Lose it All”***

I am a sophomore journalism major and I just really enjoy writing poetry.

### ***Miranda Abunimeh***

#### ***“Gasping Awake”***

Miranda Abunimeh is a Public Relations major and French minor at Gonzaga. Originally from Honolulu, HI, Miranda considers Oak Harbor, WA to be home. Miranda sends her love home to her younger brothers and Sadie (her dog), who she misses very much. Sometimes she is thankful for her ability to feel things very deeply because life would feel flat without it. Other times, she would prefer to cry less (in general, tears of joy or sadness aside). In her spare time, you can find Miranda making TikToks (@mirthanda), embroidering, or thinking about Dungeons and Dragons. Miranda’s piece is dedicated to her parents, her grandparents Maria and Benjamin, and anyone who has ever wished on a star and felt lonelier for it.

### ***Olivia Baughman***

#### ***“year one”***

Olivia Baughman is a junior at Gonzaga majoring in English and secondary education with a music minor. She wrote this piece as a response to both the loss of a loved one and to the 2018 Borderline mass shooting in Thousand Oaks. It is dedicated to the victims of Borderline and their loved ones.

### ***Rebecca Simmons***

#### ***“Never Refuse to Refuse”***

I am Rebecca Simmons. I am a senior at Gonzaga majoring in psychology with the goal of becoming a PA. I have been raised in a family that is both very aware of the challenges facing our world, as well as being a part of the change by leading an activist lifestyle. True to one of my core beliefs, I want to reflect how even the smallest of moves as an individual can create a large impact. I am a vegetarian and supporter of being conscious of the footprint I am leaving.

***Sydney Fluker***

*“A Poem for Emma”*

Sydney Fluker is a freshman public relations and Spanish major from Pleasanton, California. She loves being outside, spirituality, the ocean, listening to music and exercising. She loves connecting with people and closely identifies with her Leo Sun, Aquarius Moon, and Sagittarius Rising.

***Taryn Lewis***

*“Alias”*

Taryn Lewis is a student at Gonzaga University pursuing her Master’s in Organizational Leadership with a concentration in Strategic & Organizational Communication. She is originally from Newark, New Jersey, and currently resides in Kent, WA. A global citizen, Taryn served in the Peace Corps as a Health Volunteer in Senegal, West Africa (2015-2017).

Taryn has a passion for the arts. Her impact is driven by continual participation to encourage others around her. Her goal is to become an “emerging public speaker” and a Ted Fellow one day. She is focused on the process of incorporating a Nonprofit Organization where she will be giving back to her community and enriching young people’s lives at home and abroad.

***Tess Pickar***

*“A Greek Tragedy Waiting to Happen”, “Porcelain”*

I am an aspiring author and poet. I want nothing more than to share my stories and show other young adults that anyone can be a writer, you just have to embrace the voice inside you and put it to the page.

*Thank you to the many contributors; the authors and the artists who made this book possible through taking the chance to submit their work. You are the ones that truly define Our Voices as the journal of culture and diversity.*

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