

# QUIZ & QUILL

OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE | FALL CHAPBOOK 2020





Cover photos courtesy of Otterbein student, Nijah Dent. From left to right on top: protests in Columbus, Ohio; Otterbein student Desmond Fernandez. From left to right on bottom: Otterbein student Kandy Otchere-Boakye; protests in Columbus, Ohio.

# QUIZ&QUILL

OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE | FALL CHAPBOOK 2020

**MANAGING EDITORS** Kaitlyn Bader & Emma Wardell

**FICTION EDITOR** Lucy Clark

**POETRY EDITOR** Whitney Burton

**ESSAY EDITOR** Marlie Griffith

**PLAYWRIGHT EDITOR** Jake Ronk

**COPY EDITORS** Mary Jackson & Jordan Hamzee

**PAGE DESIGNERS** Kaitlyn Bader & Emma Wardell

**SECRETARY** Ashleigh Miller

**SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER** Lucy Clark

**FACULTY ADVISOR** Jeremy Llorence

## STAFF

Thea Hartley

Tash Lee

Madeleine Norton

Deloren Tisdell

## SUBMISSION POLICY

Q&Q prides itself on publishing the highest-quality creative work. Therefore, every precaution is taken to assure writers' anonymity during the selection process. Only the advisor of Q&Q knows the identities of those who submit work to the magazine until after staff members' selections are finalized.

The background features large, stylized, overlapping swirls in red and grey. The red swirls are more prominent and appear to be in the foreground, while the grey swirls are slightly behind them, creating a sense of depth. The swirls are thick and fluid, resembling calligraphic flourishes or decorative scrollwork.

**LETTER**

from the

**EDITORS**

# DEAR READERS,

We are so excited that you have found your way to our publication, either again or for the first time. For us, this starts our bittersweet journey into our last year with Quiz & Quill. As you know, it's been a difficult and confusing year for all. Not only have we been faced with a pandemic, but our own country has been in a constant state of political and humanitarian turmoil.

It was important to Quiz & Quill that we use our literary voice to bring to focus the stories of social justice and activism in this Fall 2020 Chapbook. 2020 has challenged all of us and has tested all of our characters. All of us in Quiz & Quill were horrified by the backlash that the Black Lives Matter movement received across the country. It continued to get worse every day with increased police brutality against black bodies, as well as members of the LGBTQ+ communities. We knew even before this semester had started that we wanted to dedicate our entire fall chapbook to underrepresented narratives. We also took this time to look back at previous Quiz & Quill publications starting in 1966 to include alumni writing that are still relevant to this theme today. We are proud to say that this chapbook combines the voices of past and present Otterbein writers and feel confident in the messages they deliver.

In such a trying time, we are so thankful for our incredible Quiz & Quill members for keeping the writing alive and helping us to publish another chapbook. Our Editorial Board members and Staff faced another difficult semester of only being able to communicate and see each other via online video chats. Not spending our Thursday evenings together eating Papa John's pizza and talking about each other's zodiac signs has been difficult to say the least. We would also like to thank our incredible faculty advisor, Jeremy Llorence, who has kept us all motivated and inspired while being apart. Thank you to all of our friends and families who continue to support us from all around, none of this would be possible without the support and encouragement we receive.

Our publications would never be possible without the students who have taken the time to create beautiful pieces of writing and submitting them to us. Especially for this chapbook, we understand the emotion that goes into writing these pieces. We would also like to thank Nijah Dent for capturing such powerful images and allowing us to showcase them on our front cover.

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE,

KAITLYN AND EMMA

YOUR MANAGING EDITORS

- 8**      **8:32 AM**  
*Elizabeth Lopez*
- 9**      **YELL, EVERYONE (1966)**  
*Mike Hudson*
- 11**     **CALL AND RESPONSE**  
*Morgan Pack*
- 12**     **WHAT DIFFERENCES DO THE DIFFERENCE MAKE?  
(1982)**  
*Kay Stith*
- 14**     **DIS-UNITED STATES**  
*Wesley Strobrel*
- 15**     **NOW LISTEN HERE—AN INNER CITY  
INTRODUCTION (1997)**  
*Amanda Greaves*
- 16**     **NEVER FORGET**  
*Niah Themelaras*
- 19**     **STRAWBERRY SEASON (2003)**  
*Allison Barrett*
- 20**     **NOTHING YOU VIEW ABOUT ME IS FAIR**  
*Kydirrah Mitchell*
- 23**     **BY DEFINITION (2003)**  
*Rajahm Sellers*

|                                                                    |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>FEAR RUNS LIKE MY TEARS (WHICH DOESN'T<br/>HELP ANYONE</b>      | <b>24</b> |
| <i>Wesley Stobel</i>                                               |           |
| <b>UPPITY NIGGER (2004)</b>                                        | <b>25</b> |
| <i>Ladan Osman</i>                                                 |           |
| <b>HOW TO BE A MAN</b>                                             | <b>26</b> |
| <i>Morgan Pack</i>                                                 |           |
| <b>TO THE WAITER THAT THINKS MY BOYFRIEND<br/>IS A GIRL (2015)</b> | <b>27</b> |
| <i>Lydia Crannell</i>                                              |           |
| <b>ON THE NIGHT THAT RUTH BADER GINSBERG DIED</b>                  | <b>30</b> |
| <i>Kelsey Brown</i>                                                |           |
| <b>THE MCDONALDS OFF OF CLEVELAND AVE.</b>                         | <b>32</b> |
| <i>Gyasi Hall</i>                                                  |           |
| <b>QUIET NIGHT THOUGHT II</b>                                      | <b>33</b> |
| <i>Mary Jackson</i>                                                |           |
| <b>ON THE VARYING KINDS OF BLACKNESS (2018)</b>                    | <b>34</b> |
| <i>Claudia Owusu</i>                                               |           |
| <b>MY STRUGGLE WILL NO LONGER BE TELEVISED</b>                     | <b>36</b> |
| <i>Morgan Pack</i>                                                 |           |
| <b>A EULOGY FOR TAM TÒA CHURCH<br/>IN ĐÔNG HỚI, VIETNAM (2019)</b> | <b>37</b> |
| <i>Alex Futo</i>                                                   |           |

# 8:32 AM

Elizabeth Lopez

Dreaming of someone I can no longer recall  
I am awoken  
by a buzzing beneath my neck  
Squinting at the caller ID  
I dismiss her  
Vibrations run through my fingertips  
as her message displayed in the harshest light

Everything within me shuts down  
I begin to trace back all memories of him  
As a child sitting across from him at dinner  
teaching him how to say “coffee”  
How he rose every morning with the sun  
only to come home when it descends across the horizon  
How his flesh resembled the leather of his boots  
He missed my graduation  
so he would have money to throw me a party  
Knowing that once I leave bed  
I will walk the line of reality  
My father is being deported

# YELL, EVERYONE (1966)

Mike Hudson

Many have said,  
“God is not dead.  
For who could ever look at the sky in April,  
October, or even August,  
Or who could ever sip rootbeer on a July afternoon  
While the kids sprayed each other with the hose.  
Or climb a hill, execute a perfect jackknife dive  
Into cool Bluedeepness, watch a baby.  
Or sit alone, at peace,  
And doubt that God lives?”

But many others just as wise have said,  
“How can a person watch the six o’clock news.  
Or read of dog’s jaws tearing into Southern black flesh,  
Of black spears tearing into African white flesh,  
Receive Top Value stamps  
From his minister,  
Listen to Sam the Sham  
And the Pharaohs,  
Watch Christmas advertisements go up in September,  
Or see a good man die as he waved to the worshipping crowd,  
And doubt that He is dead?  
Who can dwell in today’s muck  
And say that God is alive?”

But one day a wise philosopher-poet,  
Loved by all the world,  
Decided to use  
His seasoned mind  
To solve the great dispute.  
A day, a week, a month the sage did muse.  
The public waited fearfully.  
For they had feasted on his quips,  
His lectures, and his interviews.  
Now they sought him in vain.

At last he faced them.  
He was haggard and pale.  
Smiling he said, “Brothers please hear me,  
For I have found that God still is around.  
Not dead, he sleeps, oblivious to our pain.  
We must now awaken him and make Him ours again.

Comrades, brothers, shout to Him,  
Sing his praises, call to Him:  
O dearest Lord, O Host of hosts,  
Commander of angels and holy ghosts.  
We sing Your praises  
We beg You to awake. Reclaim Your lost children. Amen.”

The people heard their sage.  
They knew he spoke the truth.  
All humankind was moved as never before.  
Together, they decided.  
Together they would wake Him, Almighty God with their praise.

It was on the appointed day.  
All Mankind had prepared a song of praise.  
It was on the appointed day,  
All Mankind had prepared a song of praise.  
For He was to awake that day.  
In the waiting stillness a child was heard to say,  
As she held her father's thumb tight in her fist,  
“Daddy, what if God wakes up mad?”

# CALL AND RESPONSE

Morgan Pack

The Events

That sparked our minds

That lit our fury

That organized our determination

To make the changes that

Politicians refuse to make.

To catalyze the revolution

To push forward

And march

And cry

And yell

And be heard.

To finally be heard by those who plug their ears,

And cover their eyes,

And we force them to see.

And we are loud enough to ring through their cowardly hands.

And we stomp long enough

For them to say something

About the blood we trailed from the school doors.

We have to bleed from our feet hands mouths

To finally be heard.

And we are not done.

Not even close.

Not enough has been done.

Not enough has been said.

Not enough has been changed.

To protect ourselves and

The generations to come.

But They want to sacrifice us

They want what has been.

Because an altar has been built

By parents and grandparents

Who want to maintain ancient legacies.

They have made lambs out of us.

We will no longer march soberly to our end.

# WHAT DIFFERENCES DO THE DIFFERENCES MAKE? (1982)

Kay Stith

I tried to write a strong, clear essay on what I feel are the challenges that face women in the 80's. I tried to make as many bold points as possible and to grace my opinions with keen insights. But I can't write an essay on women because I'm still a girl. I've never been married; I've never had to choose between a child and a career. I have no experience to guide me and no genuine anger to stir me. If I have talents, they are as yet untapped. If I have desires, they are as yet to be made acute by deprivation or denial. I'm young and I'm still being formed. I'm hungry for consistency. I need something to be denied me.

Although I've admired, loved, respected, feared and hated different women, no woman has become my ideal. I'm told that we're all individuals, setting out alone. The world has been opened for women, and the endless opportunities that await us are frightening. The burden of deciding how we want to live feels heavy and as crippling as it must feel to have no options at all. Will we flourish in our freedom? Or will broader horizons make us uncertain?

I was born in 1960. I was three when President Kennedy died. I was a child when blacks and women fought for their rights. I was just tall enough to stare directly into the television screen when children my own age were being napalmed and sent fleeing from their villages in Vietnam. I was in second grade when Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy were gunned down. I was an unimpressed nine-year-old when Nell Armstrong walked on the moon. But when I was twelve, the women's movement touched my home—after 16 years of marriage and two children, my mother divorced my father and went back to college to find a job that she could love.

I was brought up to achieve and to compete in a man's world. I am a step ahead of my mother because of my youth and a step behind because of my reluctance. Do I want to be like my mother—an aggressive businesswoman? Or like my best friend's mother—forever surrounded by the smell of cookie dough? I searched everywhere for clues. I read history and poetry, I made friends and enemies. I joined clubs. A teacher told me that everyone has a special talent, so I waited for mine to pop out of the closet and introduce itself to me.

I was led to believe that women could be anything they wanted—strong and soft. But, being young and romantic, I rejected liberated women as hard and selfish. I hated advocates of new, free and easy lifestyles in which no wish went ungranted. Yet I admired prominent women in politics, sports, arts and sciences. At the same time, I just

couldn't accept all the conflicting Images that were thrust on me by the media and by other women. Businesswomen told me to go for broke; society told me to care, fashion magazines said that I'd better be attractive; and everyone said that the "real me" counted.

I now believe in only one responsibility: to do what one must do and to do it well. I feel that I have to choose my own paths, walk them with determination and take responsibility for the results. No woman should be denied the right to do what she wants—whether she wishes to be single and on her own, or married and raising a family.

# DIS-UNITED STATES

Wesley Strobels

Riot shields bashing youth and bombs in mosques  
erupt.  
Kindergarteners, a target with hundreds of baby bullets nesting in their  
flesh  
Lynching was a social law but now a hobby for the racists  
except  
you can't mount the head anymore or wear the hood in public.  
Gunman in the club didn't pull his trigger to the  
beat.  
The rich using singles to shit; while others can't afford tap water.  
Neo-Nazis scream so the blood of oppression can flow  
"Free." (Ha)  
Rubber bullets the size of apples  
Given to the next generation's teachers' faces  
Who lectures the wrong  
lesson  
The system saw the skin and thought  
Evil  
Like ink in milk, the culture was "tainted"  
Like mold on bread, the whole loaf was pitched  
Letting the family  
starve  
Babies in cages and women in death grips  
Cries so shrill wine glasses shattered  
But a toast was still raised for  
"Justice"  
Thousands of indigenous women raped  
Or missing  
Or murdered  
Or all three  
This is the Dis-United States where the law is pitched against life  
And the person with more money wins  
Every  
God  
Damn  
Time

# NOW LISTEN HERE—AN INNER-CITY INTRODUCTION (1997)

Amanda Greaves

I am High School.

I am  
straight up  
tight  
in your face  
throwin' salt in the game  
you'll be sweatin' me  
for the rest of the year.

My Voltaire readin' eyes  
get to watchin' your books blush.

I am a chicken head  
wearin' Crypt-smashin'  
Blood-beatin'  
shoes  
that stepped out of my  
Ghetto  
as the 5-0  
laughed and  
laughed  
cuz a Ghetto  
just don't go that fast...

Now listen here...

The truth is  
I am  
emotionally-incorrect  
politically-incorrect  
educationally-incorrect

So give me some props (I think)  
and we'll  
moon the public education system  
of the world.

Any questions?

# NEVER FORGET

## Niah Themelaras

The woman walks the earth with grace and dignity, her dress flowing with the breeze. Her skin is dark as ebony like mine, but it is soft and unblemished. Her husband, a man with ivory skin and blue eyes, holds her hand. They are like day and night. Her eyes light up with joy when she looks at him, not with fear or hatred. He whispers something in her ear and bursts out in laughter. He does too, he would do anything to make her laugh. They are not alone. They both hold a child's hand with their free one, a son and a daughter. The daughter has her father's blue eyes that contrast her bronze skin and her hair is longer than her mother's, reaching her shoulders but she has her round face. The son has much shorter hair that barely passes his ears, his curls thicker than his sister's but more relaxed than his mother's. He has her brown eyes. The woman had taken the day off from work to spend time with her family. I remember laboring from dusk until dawn. The sweat cascaded from my brow and my muscles were torn apart from the use of foreign tools. I would have to stop before I collapsed; I feared the whip more.

They arrive at a museum. It takes the form of a ship. The girl takes her brother as they run onto it, exploring every room they can find. I remember traveling on a ship, chained between two corpses who were chained to hundreds of other men by the ankle, forced to lie on the shelves beneath the deck. My back was covered in scrapes and sores. The weeping, the stench, the deaths. I first arrived at this strange land starved, battered, and broken – sold to the highest bidder like cattle. I begged the spirits of my ancestors and later the God of the Christians to end my life, to end my suffering, but I was met with silence. The family leaves the ship to enjoy ice cream at a parlor. The daughter notices something in the distance and she turns to her parents. “What’s that?” she asks, pointing to the object. It is a memorial stone surrounded by a small garden. The woman and her husband take the son and daughter to it. The epitaph reads:

In memory of all of the Africans who died on the Middle Passage.  
To the survivors who were sold into a fate worse than death.  
And to their descendants who endured four hundred years of slavery and oppression.  
May you all rest in peace. And may we never forget.

“What’s the Middle Passage?” asks the son; the mother turns to him, “The Middle Passage was a time when millions of Africans like me were forced to sail across the Atlantic Ocean to be sold into slavery. Many died along the journey. They were forced under the ship where there

wasn't much light and they were chained to each other so tightly that they couldn't move. They were only allowed up to exercise every once in a while." The daughter interrupted, "But what if they had to go to the bathroom?" But the woman is patient, she understands that her children are still too young to fully grasp what she is being told. "Then they would go to the bathroom where they were. They had no other choice. Disease spread throughout the ship, killing many of them. They were fed small portions of food which weakened their bodies. Many committed suicide by jumping off the ships, and if they were caught, they were tortured for attempting it. The horrors of the voyage were just too much." The woman looks back at the graven image. "Those who survived were sold to landowners in America, separated from their families. Living difficult lives of hard labor and cruel treatment from their masters and society.

"Our ancestors were among these people, until the Civil War ended. Our family had to suffer in slavery and then they had to struggle from segregation until after the Civil Rights movement but that's another story. Slaves weren't able to keep records of their families, but for as long as I can remember my family spoke of one ancestor who survived the Middle Passage and lived his life as a slave until he died. We don't know when he came to America or who his master was, we only know his name."

"What was his name Mommy?" the son asks; his mother looks at him. "Ned, his name was Ned."

"Ned? That doesn't sound African," the daughter states. I chuckled and the woman gave her a faint smile. "No, technically that wasn't his real name, but that's what his masters called him. Slaves were property dear, they weren't even seen as human."

"Oh..." The daughter looks down. Her father puts a hand on her shoulder. "But things have changed now. Slavery had been abolished and blacks and whites are now seen as equals, but there's still racism in many parts of the world, even here, but we will keep fighting. We should never forget the past, but we should always forgive."

"It's not fair that the Africans had to suffer," the daughter exclaims. "No, it's not, but thankfully we serve a God who cares about us even in our darkest hour."

"But why didn't he rescue them?"

"I don't know honey, this is just how the world works. But we must always remember that even when people hurt us, something beautiful will always spring out of it. But we have to allow it." He rubs her shoulder. The woman wraps her arm around her husband. "We should get going soon." The family takes each other's hands and walks away. The daughter gasps, "Wait! There's something I want to say to the memorial." The woman and her husband look at each other before looking back at their daughter. "Make it quick dear," says the woman. The daughter runs back to the memorial. She stands in front of it wringing her hands. "I'm so sorry for what you had to go through, especially you, Grandpa Ned. None of you deserved it, but something beautiful will come out of it, and I hope you are all happy now!" She blows a kiss before returning to her family.

If I were able to shed tears again, I would. No one has ever called me “Grandpa Ned.” My lips also stretch into a smile. Yes, something beautiful out of this, just not in the way I had expected. My descendants are free. Free from the whippings, free from bondage, free from oppression. My daughter is married to a white man who would cherish her all of her days. She can work and receive payment, she can be seen and heard. And her children can live the same. We may never forget the past, but we should always forgive it.

# STRAWBERRY SEASON (2003)

Allison Barrett

The sun reflects off  
buildings in shiny slices,  
as Starla and I walk home,  
her pony-tail bobbing,  
my long hair swishing  
side-to-side.

The air yawns warmly,  
the palm trees dream  
of fireworks

Behind the rickety fruit stand,  
across the street  
from Von's supermarket,  
is a man with yo-yo eyes  
and a maniac mouth.  
There are no crates  
of friendly red strawberries,  
just the Crazy's ghoulish hands  
clutching his dick.

My head swivels forward,  
I block out his lewd grunts  
and think  
Wild dogs smell fear.  
"Don't run," I hiss at Starla.  
Our rubber band Gumby legs  
are dignified for ten seconds  
before bursting into  
a wobbly gallop.

Later, the officer's eyes are bored  
by our lack of details.  
We flinch when he says penis  
because we all know  
he has one  
as well as shiny boots  
and a gun.

# NOTHING YOU VIEW ABOUT ME IS FAIR

Kydirrah Mitchell

My skin is the first thing you notice.  
Then you may notice my outfit, J Cole tee,  
Covered by a bomber jacket.  
You may have overheard my stories of pain and hurt  
From your friends, maybe someone in my major.  
Many believe I am “one of the good ones”  
*Which means I fulfil whatever standards that You and Others like You  
Have put in place for me.*  
You think you know me,  
From knowing your black friend from elementary school.  
Who let you touch their hair because they liked it.  
*You have watched Good Times,  
With myriads of other “ethnic” and black families on TV,*  
And through car windows as you pass downtown.  
You believe you know my hardships, because you’ve seen them on the news.  
You heard stories of families broken by gunfire,  
Ravaged by poverty we all need to “just work our way out of.”  
Of children pulling themselves up by their bootstraps.  
Like me.

But you don’t know me.  
My dark skin is as foreign to you  
As the hope of being treated like a human by You.  
I place on a *fake smile and giggle,*  
*When you joke about my heritage,*  
*Or attempt to do dances that you believe I inherently could do.*  
It is not out of friendship, or need to be accepted,  
But self-preservation

I need to be seen as “Not A Threat”  
In order to survive in Your world.  
I cannot be too Loud, nor too “Weird” or anything that wouldn’t please  
You.  
My identities are shaped around your needs.  
The need for conformity  
The need for names to be easy to pronounce  
The need for You to feel comfortable around me  
And not for me to be too proud,  
As not to scare you with my presence.

You think we are friends.  
My mom once told me you need to know someone for seven years  
To call them a friend.  
I never understood it so clearly  
Until now.

You believe you understand me  
We may have lived in a dorm together  
Or frequented the same clubs or activities.  
You've seen my room, covered in pictures of a life  
You've never had.  
A city You'll never go to.  
And while You'll never tell  
It's because of stories You've only heard  
*From Me.*

I might have told you things in confidence  
*Or fears about my future*  
*What will I do after "this"*  
*Or mention issues more intimate*

But because "We're both women" or "You and your boyfriend are so great together!"  
All the struggles that I have faced are all now  
Equal to or less than Yours.  
*All while disregarding or ignoring my subtle hints*  
*Or silent pleas*  
*Or cut off sentences*

*I am suffocated by Your presence,*  
*Your words speak as loud as you ignoring me*  
*The silence fills my head,*  
It is an overwhelmingly bittersweet feeling  
Almost as if hearing two lovers died within a day of each other  
While you are sad that they are both gone,  
They both didn't live without their love for too long.  
But what about the day in between?  
Was the grief just too unbearable to stay in their home?  
Did fate lay it out that they would never be too far behind?  
*I remember to inhale as I realize I'm clutching a pole for support*  
*And whisper as I leave to excuse myself to*  
*"Go get some work done"*

And the truth is, neither of those people know me.  
Neither have walked in my shoes.  
And it may take many more trips until they  
Have traveled as far as I have.  
How is it fair to judge someone on their ability to walk in my shoes?  
Mine are covered in grass stains from frisbee games,

The soles worn down from walking downtown on the hot cement  
The colors are bleached from the sun.  
How could you say that they're not a friend?  
For something they weren't around for?

Though none of my friends have indeed walked in my shoes.  
But I know they are my friends  
Because they have walked beside me in theirs.

# BY DEFINITION (2003)

Rajahm Sellers

Me being I has nothing to do with what you see  
I'm the ultimate surprise of two uniting to be  
The color of my skin is what has been defined as black  
Look me straight in the eye and tell me some dumb shit like  
that  
Tan's the color I feel I am  
You may disagree with me but I don't give a damn  
My mother used to call me a gray child and I would laugh  
Today I realize her crazy analysis of half and half didn't  
have adequate math  
I have heard all the remarks; confused, Oreo, zebra, lite-  
bright damn near white  
Never understood why this was said to me but was willing to  
put up a fight  
Nothing about being biracial is humorous like people  
thought when I was young  
Now I've gotten wiser people aren't apt to speak with such  
an ignorant tongue  
As an unhyphenated African American helixed with European  
ancestry created like you  
If you think you are pure of one race or ethnicity, I laugh  
out loud cause you are the fool  
I love who I am, what I am and things to be  
I hope people who don't approve of the unbelievable will  
finally see  
If we keep defining ourselves with definitions for who we  
are  
We will never become examples for the future by near nor  
far

# FEAR RUNS LIKE MY TEARS (WHICH DOESN'T HELP ANYONE)

Wesley Stobrel

Oh, God! I weep  
into my own soft palms,  
Stained with vengeance, scorn, and ferocity;  
splinters  
under my nails from my shattered pencil.  
I hide and cower beneath ignorance  
Feigning my courage, I'm afraid to  
live.

When you peel back the skin and see the ruby hearts  
And feel the sharpened tongues whip out for equity  
And see my body, naked, bruised and  
proud

Do you

cower

Or stand with me? Stand with them?

There are so many names I can read but reading them wouldn't be  
enough,

Sharing their stories wouldn't be  
enough,

Breathing through tears is not  
enough,

My bloody splinters aren't

enough.

ENOUGH!

I'm full of enough,  
Enough rage, enough bullshit, enough silence, enough pain, enough  
suffering, enough unchecked privileged, enough unlearned biases,  
enough spitfire, enough tears and bruises and bloody noses and  
nightmares that I say  
enough.

This has to be enough...

It just has to be...

# UPPITY NIGGER (2004)

Ladan Osman

The first time I was called a nigger  
I was walking down the street  
When a little blond boy grinned  
And bared his yellow teeth  
Then as simply as you damn well please  
He spat the word with gleeful ease,  
And kicked some gravel onto my sandaled feet.

The nigger in me  
Wanted to choke and beat  
That dirty kid with crooked teeth,  
The nigger in me  
Should've grabbed that beast  
And made him kiss my dusty feet.  
My Nubian goddess feet.  
My mahogany mistress, ebony vixen,  
Somali queen feet.

But you'd better believe  
As simply as you damn well please.  
My Negro step didn't miss a beat  
As I sauntered past him  
And down the street.

# HOW TO BE A MAN

Morgan Pack

Don't speak.

Push it down.

Don't listen.

Keep it away.

Don't look.

Beat it 'til it's dead.

Pound your chest hard so your heart jumps out.

Choke it so it stops pumping the genuine to your smile.

Push it down.

Drown it.

Resist community.

Fight your human nature.

You don't need them.

Push it down.

If they're nice to you:

Don't believe them.

Be wary.

Lash out.

Make them run.

Push it down.

Push it out.

Make yourself empty.

Keep yourself safe.



It makes me remember  
the night he couldn't look in a mirror  
ribbons of hate wrapped around his knuckles  
afraid that the world will never see the  
light.

And I want to tell him  
You are a man  
flesh & bone  
mind & soul.

You are a man no matter the arrows that  
spring from their lips.

I want to tell him  
You are man but  
You are also so much  
more.

You are the sun when it sets  
and the sky turns  
pink  
red  
orange

You are the song  
the bird will never  
forget how to  
sing.

And I know I sound cliché  
but it's a risk  
I'll take  
So that one day  
you'll believe me.

3. Dear Leelah,  
You will always be remembered.  
Love, Lydia

4.  
I've been writing this poem for five months  
unable to put pen to page.  
but  
My skin crawls  
with words I can't say out loud.  
and  
This is a poem I never wanted to write.  
I shouldn't have to.

5. You are a man  
You are a man.  
You are *my* man

# ON THE NIGHT RUTH BADER GINSBURG DIED

Kelsey Brown

I was scrolling through Twitter during the slower parts of my TV show—

that children’s cartoon where the young people have to fight against fascism, no, the other children’s cartoon where the young people have to fight against fascism, no, the other children’s cartoon where young people have to fight against fascism. Yeah, that one—

when I began to see her quotes. They were plastered across my phone screen like shrines along fences after great tragedies, candles strewn everywhere in hopes of returning a little bit of light to the world. I was grateful for the light, small reminders of feminine strength at the end of a long day.

The first news article I saw was not about her death, not about how she was at home with her family, not about how she will be remembered, but about

the precedent set when Scalia died. Reminding the world of the words spilled from Republican lips in hopes of electing one of their own to the bench, as if her death was nothing but a crumbled wall of defense, as if they would really hold themselves accountable to what they said, as if they would acknowledge they ever said it.

I remember where I was when we heard the news about Scalia, too. My history teacher was trying to teach us about setting precedents and what “sitting duck” means when some other kid raised his hand and asked why it mattered. She paused, folded her hands in front of her, and said that those with power will do anything to cling to it, even if it means leaving it hidden in the roots, ready and waiting for the next of their kind. I shared a look with the girl next to me and we both shrugged.

I wonder if she feels the same way I do right now. I wonder if she remembers that look we shared. I wonder if she can remember a time before every news article felt like a new death threat.

On the night that Ruth Bader Ginsburg died, my roommate knocked on my door to tell me something and I said have you heard the news? All she said was

oh, no.

because that's what news feels like now.

On the night that Ruth Bader Ginsburg died, I felt fear pour out of me the way it does when it has no more room to rattle around in your head. My dinner grew heavier in my lap. Every tweet I scrolled past filled my heart with more lead, until I began to see

“May her memory be a blessing”

added in growing numbers to the piles of candles along the imaginary streets. “May her memory be a revolution,” running along all the fences, sung by the people in the streets. The candles grow brighter,

until it's 1 am, and I sit at my desk, kept unwillingly upright by the urge to write, and I leave a candle lit on my desk even after I go to bed.

# THE MCDONALD'S OFF OF CLEVELAND AVE. SPEAKS THE DAY BEFORE IT GETS TORN DOWN (2017)

Gyasi Hall

*i mean come on man it's not like i asked for the boy to die it aint like i asked people to put flowers and shit in the alley behind me cuz i wanted to fuck with traffic they just do that cuz he aint got a grave yet i mean come on it's not like i drank the ripe blood cuz i wanted it's like when you open a can of pop too fast after shaking it up ya know that shit started bubblin that shit started seeping in through the floorboards that shit will flood the whole block if you let it so yeah i drank it but not cuz i wanted to ya know cut me some slack there are families here man yeah course the news gunna say it's a gang thing but come on what else is new and sure i didn't know him personally but i know 20 kids just like him and i knew the kids that knew him and they all say someone was talking shit is all someone brings a gun to a fist fight and paints the hood a shade of red you only get to see when you know they aint comin back and of course no one gunna want to wade through that shit just to eat a big mac sure but i swear man you tear me down and aint no one gunna build shit around here ever again you gunna have a lot filled with ghosts and gravel for like 15 years but if you keep me around maybe the families might return cuz yeah the hood may be haunted but shit people gotta eat man look i know what it's like to be robbed shit just last summer this dude ripped his heart out and held it up to the light but i thought that shit looked like a gun so i just gave him all the money i had to give and you know what i stayed in business i rebuilt i survived each sunset a penny at a time and filled whatever half empty stomachs wandered close enough come on man please yeah this shit is tragic but if you kill me people are gunna starve out here man please people will eat each other alive man please if you kill me linden will become a graveyard and then what will we do*

# QUIET NIGHT THOUGHTS II

Mary Jackson

What a strange thing it is,  
to lack something and not feel less whole.  
To look at what others want and think,  
“I don’t feel the same way.”  
Many people search for things that make them feel like more,  
like adding stars to the night sky,  
filling the darkness with their light;  
they seek to cover their own blankness with those thousands of little  
lights,  
to feel their strokes and embrace their touch,  
the passionate heat of a lover’s caress,  
to form something completely new and different.

But I feel comfortable in the darkness.

# ON THE VARYING KINDS OF BLACKNESS AND WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FREE AND AT HOME IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT (2018)

Claudia Owuso

in a hole in the wall African restaurant, around the relatively rough parts of Columbus, Ohio—or the “surviving enough” parts, blackness exists in all the different shades there is, with cackling laughter bouncing through the walls and back, the way it tends to when things are still, and held intact high life music sings of a love lost or a love trying to be attained, and on a Sunday noon like this, right after the weekly sermon, everyone leaves themselves loose, trying to fill their stomachs and find a good place to lay their minds to rest

we ask each other about our journeys, we thank God for the arrival, but we never ask about the water we never ask what it looks like from the sky, from the belly of the metal beast, whether it boils over like soup or like bloodlines furrows inside of itself like sand or like leaving your mother’s country behind today, the language is a porcelain plate in our mouths we crawl over it wrap our tongues around its cold neglect its desolate we grind our teeth into the halves and tell our children to find meaning

at the restaurant, i wash my hands in the bowl of water the waitress brings i rinse them over and once more for eating i stare my reflection into a full moon and i am back home on the outskirts of the school compound with a bucket full of well water and the school teachers calling my name over the sound of the school bell wishing me well telling me “take care” “let the Lord wrap you in His word” “let the wind take you to all the good places” “let the sun harden you” “let it prepare you for all the wars you will fight inside yourself”

and i’ve never seen a farewell like this except in the movies except when i brag about my home country in my American classes and i feel worlds away from everyone else in the room except when my Black playwriting professor tells me to “take it easy” every time we part —except when the only other Black student in my class says “see you around” and something inside me stings for reasons i am not yet sure of

in the winter i dream of summer and in the summer i dream of summer i dream of sweat comfortable between my napes and my hair quieted down by humidity i think of electricity i think of grass fields turned into

makeshift dance floors the voices of musicians asking to search my body  
in pidgin<sup>1</sup>

i see Ghana in my dreams sometimes; and it is a dark skinned guy in  
skinny jeans and a loose shirt with coarse budding dreadlocks, spitting  
some lines about name brands and getting jiggy with the nights like it  
birthed him

the waiter brings our food one by one and we eat from each other's plates  
we calm our tongues with cool air when it stings and we exhale through  
the glass windows, we watch the city all around and at the gas station  
down the street, a Black man asks me for a couple of dollars, anything...  
really...if you have it, to fix my broken down car my brother and i with  
music blaring through the speakers pass him our pockets he asks if we  
are Jamaican if we come from the islands his hair hanging like a willow  
tree over his eyes "No." we say, "are you?"

---

1 A language that has developed from a mixture of two or more languages and is used for communicating by people who do not speak each other's language (*The Cambridge Dictionary*).

# MY STRUGGLE WILL NO LONGER BE TELEVISED

Morgan Pack

Why must our traumas,  
Something so raw and personal,  
Be the basis of our activism?  
Why must we expose our vagus nerve to the world,  
In order to be heard?  
I don't want to talk about my tears anymore.  
No one else needs to hear about my pain.  
Young people,  
Who are grasping at anything  
That will help figure out who they want to be,  
Need to hear about my triumphs.  
The euphoria I felt  
The first time somebody called me "Sir."  
How now I smile  
When I hear my friends use Xe.  
My new, made up pronoun  
Because I have finally let go of the binary.  
I'd rather write about how good it feels  
To paint a coat of shiny black polish  
At the ends of my fingertips.  
I want to write about the Toxic Masculinity I still have to reign in.  
It has coated my bones as much as the polish has coated my nails.  
I thin out His fear with acetone  
To make room for Them.  
Sweet, sweet Them.  
They complete me.  
They embraced my washed out He  
And laid Him to rest.  
So stop asking me about the specifics of my struggle.  
My therapist is the only one privy to that information anymore.

# A EULOGY FOR TAM TÒA CHURCH IN ĐỒNG HỚI, VIETNAM

Alex Futo

I'm sorry that you've become the monument of a war crime, a constant reminder of your destruction standing as a plaque in front of your doorway— always reminded, as if you could ever forget. I'm sorry that you awoke to heavy fire along the river, to planes dropping bombs, and I'm sorry that you could only stand in place as parts of you fell to ruin. You are only a face now. A face stained by smoke and death. You've lost most of your body to war, to the "American aggressors" written on your plaque. Your chimney stands tall on its own behind you, but you may never know that. You only look forward, watching mournful faces pass you by. While some don't even spare you a glance. You're already blending in against your will.

It is my mournful face you see reading your plaque. It is my words, American words, infringing on your being and way of life by telling you that your story is sadness and destruction and nothing more. Maybe some look at you with pride because you refused to kneel, because you are a memorial of a war won, not a war lost. I can hear children playing down the boardwalk, only a short walk away from your feet. Families stroll on the boardwalk, holding hands, smiling, and laughing as if there is no pain here. I see boats out on the river and fishermen setting traps for the morning. I see people living, people thriving, and I'm the only one mourning you. I understand if you don't want my sympathy. I'm just another guilty American standing in front of you because of a war that wasn't my fault. I'm stuck in that paradox and can't help but ask more of you.

Did people die praying inside your body? If they did, do you still hear them? Have you slept in 50 years? Do you have nightmares about bombs and a destroyed city where no children played a short walk away? Did you glare as American soldiers marched past your mangled body? How long before you forgave them? Have you forgiven them? Do you miss your life before war, as a church, not as a monument? Does nature pester you with her ivy, roots, and flowers sneaking into what's left of your foundations, becoming a part of you? Or do they heal, nurture you? Have you seen more faces like mine, mournful faces? How do you live in the aftermath of war?

I'm out of questions. All I can do is stand in front of your face and read your plaque in mourning. But you deserve better. You are a testament

of strength and resilience because when your city fell, you stood tall on your own. There was the river, you, and rubble. You deserve my respect because my country couldn't defeat you. You are Đông Hới's resolve, its spirit, its heart—never forget.

# WRITING BY:

ALLISON BARRETT

KELSEY BROWN

LYDIA CRANNELL

ALEX FUTO

AMANDA GREAVES

GYASI HALL

MIKE HUDSON

MARY JACKSON

ELIZABETH LOPEZ

KYDIRRAH MITCHELL

LADAN OSMAN

CLAUDIA OWUSU

MORGAN PACK

RAJAHM SELLERS

WESLEY STROBEL

NIAH THEMELARAS