

# NARRATIVES

OUR STORIES TOLD BY US

FALL 17

ISSUE 1

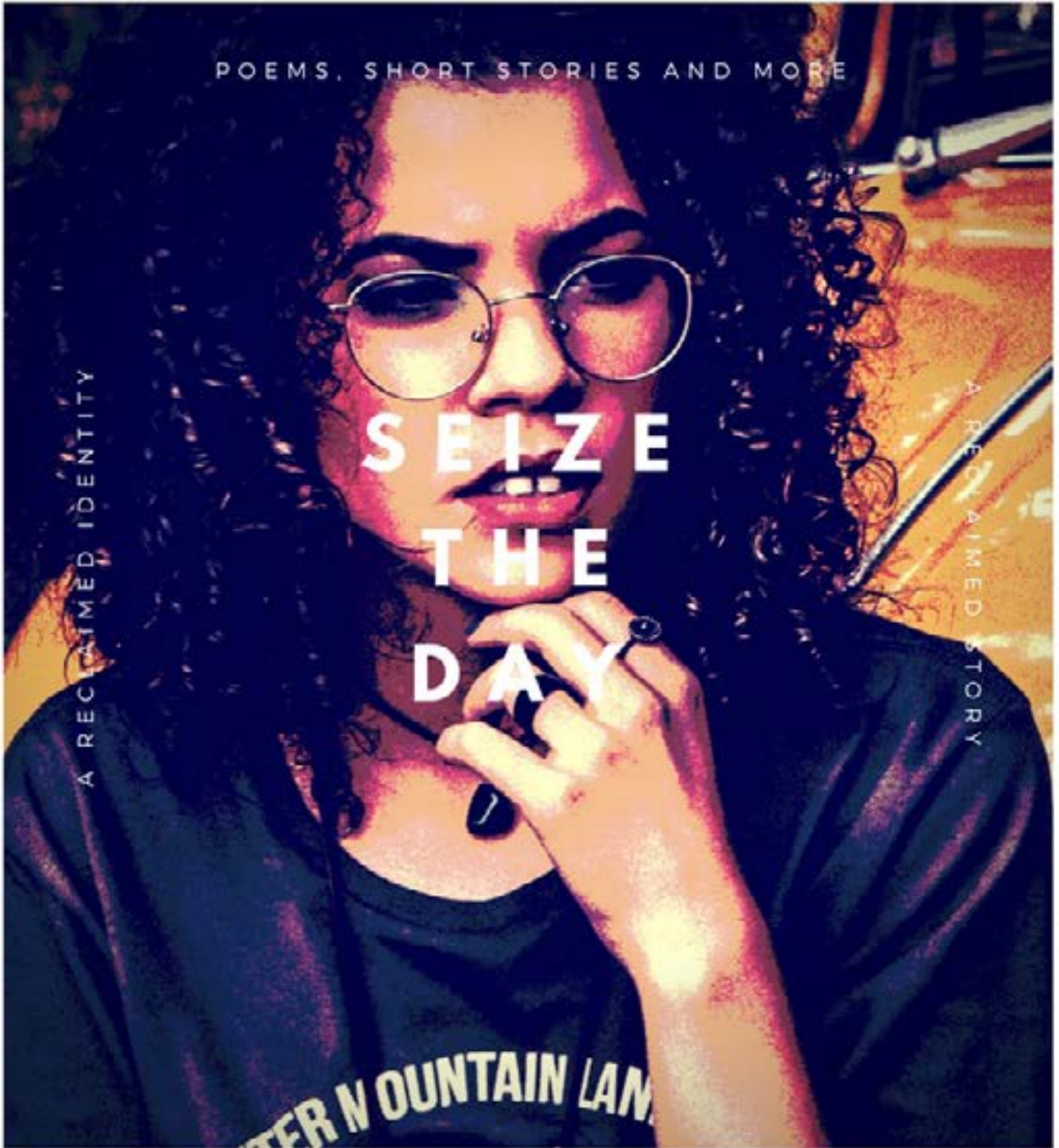
POEMS, SHORT STORIES AND MORE

A RECLAIMED IDENTITY

SEIZE  
THE  
DAY

A RECLAIMED STORY

TER N MOUNTAIN LAN



**THERE IS NO  
GREATER AGONY  
THAN BEARING AN  
UNTOLD STORY  
INSIDE OF YOU**

MAYA ANGELOU



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# NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

This magazine is an expression of opinions. Although they may be seen as controversial, take this opportunity to listen and learn, ask so we can be heard.



**FREED YOURSELF  
WAS ONE THING;  
CLAIMING  
OWNERSHIP OF  
THAT FREED SELF  
WAS ANOTHER.**

**TONI MORRISON**

## **INTRODUCTION: DON'T TELL MY NARRATIVE**

lorien pereyra

My narrative is my story. It is the woven tales of the people who came before me, and the unfinished stitching for those who'll come after. We live in a world of stereotypes and misrepresentation. A world forcing their perceptions of who we are unto us. In this world, we are no longer free to act, think, feel like an individual. No, we are who are lable says we are. We are the box we are in and nothing more.

But that is not who we are. We aren't flat static representations of a race, ethnicity, or any other group of people.

Our personalities and interest are not measured as the distance between few and far between. We are the collection of eloquent thoughts, ideas, beliefs, interest, and values, all woven together to form our tapestry. All in perfect synergy with one another, elements of a composition named us.

Our identities are our own. Our stories are our own. Ours to tell and no-one else's.

This collection of stories is our narrative. We are the storytellers.

## **HEIR TO THEIR NATION**

bethany cherry

I'm angry

There. I said it.

Wait, hold on.

I made it too palatable.

You're too comfortable for this conversation...

Let me start again.

I'm angry at White people.

Yes. I'm angry at you.

I'm angry at you because I can't live

One single day

Without knowing my Blackness and the disadvantages I face

Without being reminded of the system that systematically disregards me

And you You get to wake up and look in a mirror

A mirror of normalcy that constantly advantages you

A mirror that reflects everything your white Founding Fathers desired for you

When they thought of you, heir to their nation

When they wrote the Declaration of Independence

They held truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal

Nevermind the woman

Nevermind the slaves that chopped the wood





That could then be manufactured upon which your Founding  
Fathers wrote their declaration

That in all the lines of that document

That spoke of oppression under British rule

That petitioned for redress and repeated injury

How interesting that the Black human  
Can so empathically comprehend the nature of such a document

For our people were under the same hand of oppression that  
cracked the whip

Noosed the rope

And laid hand on the Black woman

For our people were under that same hand of oppression

That simultaneously penned a petition of freedom for "all men  
who are created equal"

But I bet they didn't tell you that part

They didn't want you to know

Oh, but you knew

You thought that it didn't matter

That it was old history

That racism doesn't happen anymore

Wake up.

You are a product of a founding that sprung out of oppression, and  
yet

At the same time created its own treacherous oppression

An oppression that has lasted over 400 years

An oppression that you benefit from

They certainly didn't want you to know that You benefit from my  
oppression

That your white brother and white sister call the police to report trespassing

And they come for my mother

Nevermind coming for the racist who called to bother

You benefit from my oppression

And here's the worst part

You are my teacher who taught me to love the American flag

But didn't teach me that the writer of its anthem owned slaves

You are my friend who is concerned about our systematically unjust society

Then asks for my permission to stand up for racial injustices

You are my fellow churchgoer, who visits me at my home because it's the Christ-like thing to do

Then privately messages me a dialogue about how George Washington has already been saved, "Oh and  
lay off a little..he was a benevolent slaveholder, unlike the rest"

You are my college advisor who I go to for all the knowledge because they told me you were the  
knowledge-keeper

**"YOU CAN SAFELY  
PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE  
TO A COUNTRY THAT  
NEVER OPPRESSED  
YOUR PEOPLE"**

Then you referred to the way my people speak as "Ebonics, or, what is it they're calling it these  
days...Ghetto Talk?" African American Vernacular English would have been less ignorant.

You're that customer in the store in Maine, who was shopping for some souvenirs by the Lighthouse

Then you kept shopping while the shopkeeper kindly conversed with you, and blatantly refused me  
service

You're my friend who I love dearly, and I'd never want you to know how much it still hurts

That when we were little girls, you once told me I'd turn white when I went to Heaven because that's how things worked

I know you think you're 400 years off of a society of people who did some excruciating things

But the fact remains

That you benefit from my oppression

You can safely pledge allegiance to a country that never oppressed your people

Black people have died fighting for justice, have been murdered for creating a community, culture, and force that protests against injustice. When you join the protest, people are more likely to listen to you, rather than kill you

Your Founding Fathers created a nation; My Founding Fathers were taken from theirs by yours

In the midst of planning your college career, your advisor won't say things to you that are ignorant micro-aggressions, well, none that directly affect you, anyways.

You won't have to worry about a shopkeeper ignoring you when you walk into the store: I know because they'll be too busy ignoring me

And you certainly won't have to worry about what color you'll be after you die. Our artists who depict Heaven guarantee you'll stay White. But the Whiteness vs. non-Whiteness of God, the Host of Heaven and the Angels itself has probably never occurred to you, since most Western art depicts people who look like you in Heaven, anyway.

I'm angry,

I'm angry at white people

But that's not the point

The point is

You benefit from my oppression

The sooner you acknowledge it and identify the ways in which you benefit The sooner you can disavow the ways in which you benefit from my oppression,

The sooner you can find ways to dismantle the system that benefits you but oppresses me.



## STUDENT OF COLOR

grayland martin

I grew up in Southern California, where diversity and culture flourish. Being half Puerto Rican and half Black, I never stood out amongst my peers. In high school, during Black History Month, it was common amongst liberal arts teachers to offer some sort of "special lesson" about it and how it relates to the material that they are teaching. One Language Arts class comes to mind, we watched the great Martin Luther King

Some may have felt that it was an "awkward silence" or a moment of silence for those who have gone through that anguish and misery. I believe it was a moment well shared amongst different cultures and students. I felt that each person was strengthened and enlightened from the experience.

Fast forward three years, I am Brigham Young University in a Political Science



### "I BELIEVE IT WAS A MOMENT WELL SHARED AMONGST DIFFERENT CULTURES AND STUDENTS"

"I Have a Dream" speech. A speech has never moved me more than any other speech. Not just for the pain and suffering of a people that was relayed through the speech, but also the rhetoric and style of the speech. In that class, I can recall 6 African Americans, 10-12 Hispanics, 8-10 Asians, and 12-14 Caucasians. I didn't feel alone. I could see the tears falling down some of their faces. Although I was one of the two LDS kids in the class, I could feel a powerful spirit in the room.

class. The focus of the class was understanding the three branches of government and how they function within each other and with third-party groups and events. We began discussing different bureaucratic subgroups and the legislating and passing of many Federal programs because of great movements in U.S. society. We discussed slavery, prohibition, abolition, monopolies, and etc. Once we began discussing the Civil Rights Movement, I noticed that the professor

began to slow down and teach the material in depth. I didn't quite understand the need to emphasize this topic in a governmental structure class but I played along. Then he spoke a great deal about MLK as a key player in the Civil Rights Movement, so much so that he played that same "I Have a Dream" speech that my Language Arts teacher shared three years prior. As I watched it, I couldn't help but lose my train of thought constantly. Instead of losing myself in the prose and rhetoric of the speech like I did three years prior, I couldn't help but look around me and see that I was the only student of color in a complete auditorium of approx. 150 students.

Instead of being strengthened and enlightened, I could not help but feel isolated. I mean, it's not class's fault they are all Caucasian. So why did I feel so alone? I also had this feeling that the professor wanted the students to feel some sort of sympathy, empathy, and/or punishment from what their ancestors have done. I am still trying to figure out how to overcome the marginalizing feeling I have whenever I have in a classroom at BYU. I am now aware of two things: 1. Feelings, no matter how hard we try, can be determined our those around us. 2. When diverse groups of people are together, feelings of marginalization are shared.



# WOMAN OF COLOR

jenna rakuita

I LIKE THE WAY YOUR  
MESSY HAIR  
DANCES ON YOUR HEAD  
LIKE A CROWN—  
HOW YOUR TIRED EYES  
PAINT CIRCLES ON THE  
SKY  
SEARCHING FOR WAYS  
TO CLIMB A MOUNTAIN  
THAT KEEPS MOVING.

# THE STORMS

melodie jackson

I CRY TO THE DUST, TO THE OCEANS, THE  
WIND. TO MY ANCESISTAS. SAYING I AM  
WEAK. I AM TIRED. I AM BLACK.

THEN.

I HEAR THEM WHISPER SOFTLY. HAVE  
YOU NOT HEARD US, QUEEN? HAVE YOU  
NOT SEEN OUR COLOR IN THE  
HURRICANES? HAVE YOU NOT FELT OUR  
GLORY IN THE STORM? HAVE YOU NOT  
TASTED OUR DUSTY TEARS IN THE  
TORNADO? WE ARE CHOCKING AND  
RESTORING THE MOTHER EARTH TO ITS  
BEAUTY AND BLACKNESS. OPEN YOUR  
SCARS TO THE SOUND.

JUST LISTEN. LISTEN. LISTEN.  
SO, I LISTEN, I SMILE, I WAIT.  
I HOPE FOR THE NEXT STORM. I AM  
BLACK. ASE. ASE. ASE.  
(LET IT BE SO.)

## UNTITLED

jenna rakuita

You tell me that you don't like being political  
and I wonder why the well-being of my body is up for debate.  
You see, you don't have an option not to be political  
when the politicians are discussing the value of your life.  
So believe me when I say that  
I hate silence and the way that it cuts through the air like a knife  
deepening wounds and letting them fester.  
"Calm down," you say,  
before I've raised my voice  
assuming that racism is not something to be angry about.  
The word privilege escapes your mouth like a dirty word  
in the form of a question  
"what is white privilege?"  
I tell you that it is the ability to walk around campus  
without your race strapped to your back—  
the ability to navigate white space  
without a constant reminder that your body often acts as a weapon.  
You seem uncomfortable—  
Which makes me a little uneasy until I realize  
that I have spent my entire life  
trying to swaddle you in blankets  
and make you feel warm.  
I have spent days on my feet for hours—







sun-splitting headaches and medication pulsing through my veins.  
Painful, but not as painful as the days when the color of my skin  
acts like a weight on my shoulders,  
when my backpack isn't the heaviest thing on my body;  
when the television screens house pyramids  
of black and brown limbs strewn on the asphalt  
and sinking in oceans.  
I can't breathe—  
My lungs are thick with blood and I am traumatized by the way the air  
remains stagnant and the voices never rise.  
I feel the sudden urge to retract what I just said—  
to bury my experiences in sea of people tangled  
six feet under—  
the memory of a learned dance routine filling in my steps  
like a bad habit.  
I stop  
and remind myself that I am allowed to be angry at a system  
that robs people of their dignity and  
values comfort over human life.  
So again,  
believe me when I say that  
I hate silence and the way it quietly approves the oppression of others,  
stealing breath in order to sustain itself.



"IT IS OUR  
CHOICES... THAT  
SHOW US WHAT WE  
TRULY ARE."

J.K. ROWLING

## TO THE PERSON LOOKING FOR THE LIGHTEST CRAYON IN THE BOX

maya donnel

Judging someone by their skin color is the most unfair action I've ever heard of. I didn't choose to be brown. You didn't choose to be white. No one chooses their skin color. No one chooses what they're born as. But you do choose what you think, what you say, and what you do. You choose to hurt or help. You choose to destroy or create.

You choose what you pursue, what you learn, and who you become. And that is what a person should be judged by. Not by their color. Not by their outward appearance. By who they are and what they do as a person — not as a color.

## CHOCOLATE CHIP

melodie jackson

No, no people. I don't have a chip on my shoulder.  
More like a whip on my shoulder. (It's Toby or ELSE).  
A ship on my shoulder (Why black people don't like to swim?).  
A zip on my shoulder (shut your mouth BOY).  
A clip on my shoulder (no, no, Solange told me I had to let it go).  
A snip on my shoulder (let's tell them this is a free checkup).  
A lip on my shoulder (why you always gotta play the race card?).  
A rip on my shoulder (Beat him. "You know we only kill black folk").  
A grip on my shoulder (you're the reason racism exist. What's institutionalized even mean anyway?).  
A blip on my shoulder (Hands up! DON'T SHO.. 🍈🍈)  
A strip on my soldier (welcome home soldier. No! Hey! Get up! Don't kneel!!).  
A dip on my shoulder (Hades must be black because black neighborhoods are the real underground.).  
A flip on my shoulder (who else can make a \$1 out of 15cents and build families out of ash?).  
A quip on my shoulder (Solomon got his wisdom and gold from the Queen of Sheba).  
A scrip on my shoulder (the worth of a body is great in the sight of ...) A skip on my shoulder (the federal government is the best at UNO).  
A slip on my shoulder (oops did we say war on blacks? We meant war on drugs! \*goes and whistle to his dogs).  
A thrip on my shoulder (I always wondered why America was referred to as white and feminine.).  
A tip on my shoulder (here's 40 acres and a mule. Keep working.)  
A trip on my shoulder (if you don't like things, you should just leave.. Marcus Garvey was a terrorist anyway.).  
But really a Pip on my shoulder (awaiting the Great Expectations of my Lord.).  
Besides. We invented chips anyway.

## HER FAITH HAS MADE HER WHOLE

bethany cherry  
I celebrate because...

I see her  
I couldn't before, but now  
I see her  
There became a woman inside of me  
Who carved out a space in this world  
A healing space  
A magical space  
A stand-bol-in-their presence type of space  
I didn't know her power, the glorious being  
The divine crafted  
But I celebrate anyway because  
The journey is only the beginning  
It proceeds the recognition  
The woman I saw  
A familiar face  
In disbelief, I reached outward  
To touch this recognition  
My finger met mirrored glass  
And it shattered against my palm  
And so I tore the remaining pieces down  
The sharp edges pricked my fingers  
The jagged reflection gave birth to pain  
It cut down deep and red, like self-fulfilled  
non-existence.  
It.burned.  
So I used my fingers  
And I carved a space in to the wall behind  
the recognition  
Etching  
Digging  
Clawing  
I climbed inside  
Seeking the hidden balm my body ached  
to find  
To heal the brokenness I still felt inside

And what I beheld inside the space I  
birthed  
The sacredness I crafted  
The womb I carved with my own hands.  
No longer could I fear.  
Another pane of mirrored glass  
Exactly like the one that first cut me  
Like the one that chipped off a piece of me  
The one that shaped up some resilience  
into me



The one that sent me on a journey to find  
healing for me  
There became a woman  
that carved out a space in the wall  
And what she found  
Behind the pieces of broken  
Within a space she carved with her own  
hands  
Was another reflection  
The woman I saw

A familiar face  
In faith I reached outward  
To touch recognition  
My finger met mirrored glass  
And it stood whole against my palm  
And as the firmness of the  
Recognition pressed back,  
Sure, steady, and undefeated  
The woman I saw on the other side  
Began to weep  
And as she wept, her tears  
Rolled down my cheeks, my chest, my legs,  
From its innermost source the space i  
carved  
Filled all the way up,

Held me safe and tight inside,  
Nourished me, cleansed me, like  
A mother's womb, from the inside flowing  
out  
It gave birth to something that had  
Always been there before  
Floating in the water the woman  
Floating in the water the woman  
She celebrated me  
And I her  
I see myself  
Now  
I see myself  
And that is cause for all of the  
Celebration

# WOMAN OF COLOR

lorien pereyra

I was born a "Woman of color"  
To be seen before I was felt  
To be groped before I was held

I was born a "Woman of Color"  
To be used and discarded, Jettisoned off this ship  
Only good enough to look at, not good enough to keep

I was born a "Woman of Color"  
To have smiles painted on my face  
Or risk being the girl who cried wolf

I was born a "Woman of Color"  
To never know what it meant to be desired  
By a society that would take your face but give it a different name

But before I was a "Woman of Color" I was a woman  
The most delicate and fragile  
Incomplete from all the cracks and nicks

I was born a woman  
My hair smelling like coconut oil  
And my skin is smooth to the touch

I was born  
My laugh infectious  
And always sincere

I was  
Waiting to be called beautiful  
Waiting, because I am a "Woman of Color"



# PRISMED LIGHT

jenna rakuita

A sea of faces extended above a woman clothed in white light  
Their ivory bodies intertwined.

An intricate web of faces—painted with only half of the palette.

The angels are draped in paper robes that match the color of their flesh.

And though I know my father must be there, I do not recognize his face—

His hands are colorless.

My veins house crimson rivers of my parent's lineage.

My father's mother knelt by water pails—

Her hazel colored skin.

I am the daughter of a traveler; a child of an immigrant.

I sang the tunes of hope inside the chapel walls.

And saw prised light dance across the windows seals.

I was taught that God dreams in hues that do not yet exist.

Yet you strip me of my color and the pigment of my skin.

## POEM ABOUT THE GREATEST LOVE I'VE EVER KNOWN

bethany cherry

There's been so much talk of... "love"... lately.

I'm sorry but...

When did love equate ignorance, blind eyes, and silence? When did love cherish beliefs without actual work? When did love become hesitant in taking a stand? When did love start finding equality with choosiness compassion? When did love, in a friendship, mean convenient respect? When did love wind its way into the corner of silent support? When did love, all of a sudden, become selective? When did love surpass the quality of life, traded in exchange for ands, buts, ifs: could haves, should haves would haves, if onlys. When did love--desperately sought after compassion--become a robotic, apathetic response of rules, logic, and excuses? When did love transform into ..... that greatest detriment of them all----- nothingness. Silence.

The love I know consciously and purposefully brought peace to a world that was embroiled in peacelessness. The greatest love I know of brought voice to those who felt voiceless. The greatest love I know of carried the burdens of the heavy. The greatest love I know of bled for a cause. The greatest love I know of unapologetically and openly acknowledged ignorance, then unapologetically and openly told, taught and LIVED TRUTH to combat the ignorance. The greatest love I know of reproved, yet afterwards uplifted the very ones who sought to destroy truth and life. The greatest love I know did not let fear overcome liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The greatest love I know of fought with every fiber of being for equality, liberty, freedom, and happiness. This type of love--the greatest love that I know of--came with great sacrifice.

### "THE GREATEST LOVE I KNOW DID NOT LET FEAR OVERCOME LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS"

I'm sorry but...

The greatest love I know of was not silent. The greatest love I know of always told the truth, no matter the repercussions, no matter how uncomfortable the truth made others feel. The greatest love I know surpassed all things dark to bring forth all of the things that are light. The greatest love that I know of boldly brought justice to those who were dealt the hand of injustice.

I'm sorry, but...

I am not sorry to sacrifice ignorance. I willingly choose a love that equates powerful transformation and change. I'm not sorry to sacrifice turning a blind eye. I choose to perpetuate love by seeing a better way. I am definitely not sorry to sacrifice silence. I choose a love that reverberates and echoes throughout my life's amphitheater. I cherish beliefs upon which I ACT, not just think about.

I choose to consciously create powerful, educated, gracious, courageous love, because I understand that love requires justice. And justice requires this type of love. Love requires sacrifice. Love requires a voice. Love requires change  
I'm sorry, but...

I'm not sorry to be consciously, almost painfully aware, that if love breeds more love, as I frequently hear the suddenly unsilent say, well, then all things must remain in balance. And if all things in this life remain in balance, and the laws of energy remain consistent...then ignorance breeds more ignorance; apathy breeds more apathy. Blindness gives way to continued blindness. A system unchanged only brings more of that same unchanged system. Pretending only gives birth to an excess of putrid pretending. So please excuse me....

But I am not sorry for knowing that love has space for justice. Love has space for compassion. Love has room for loud courage. Love has a bold voice. Love does not shrink. Love is not apologetic. Love is bold. Great love, courageous love, sincere love, and bold love touches corners of the earth and souls of humans where silence cannot.

I'm sorry

But not sorry

I choose to live a life patterned after the powerful example of the greatest love I have ever known.

# ITS NEVER THE CHANGES WE WANT THAT CHANGE EVERYTHING

JUNOT DIAZ



# OCEAN OF INK

darrion chris johnson

Become that Moses Traverser of Blood  
Weary Herald of the Diaspora  
Tears not shed salt the sea, time adds to the  
Bold neutrality of hard place and rock

Abused and drained once fertile lands remain  
The face that the conqueror sculpted  
Anointed the one, the other occulted  
Plowing and planting black seeds in their wake

I lie in the black my ears sound with the mute  
Pour over my brain and fills in the cracks  
The Corpus Collosum still is intact

In the center of me I find the truth  
Consumed is the page, blank and torn from  
that  
Faint Middle passage all written in black



"DON'T TELL US  
WHAT TO BELIEVE,  
WHAT TO FEAR.  
SHOW US BELIEF'S  
WIDE SKIRT AND  
THE STITCH THAT  
UNRAVELS FEAR'S  
CAUL."

TONI MORRISON

## PRIVILEGE

melodie jackson

Don't tell me to ignore the thunder and  
lightning  
And focus on the rain.  
Don't tell me to see the flowers  
And ignore the choking weeds  
Don't tell me to love love  
And hate the healing of my body  
Don't tell me to paint the black with white  
And pluck out the eyes that see color.  
Don't tell me to suffocate quietly

And sew my lips with oppression  
Don't tell me drown my intelligence in  
culture  
And bleach revelations with power  
Don't tell me to beam beyond the deaths  
And seek motes of living in life.  
Don't tell me to peacefully pray  
And violently stand still  
I am Black. I cannot be gray.

# BEING BROWN

andrea henriquez

Being brown is something that you can't turn off.  
I can never blend into the black world because I'm too light-skinned, but white folks especially don't want me.

Being brown I am constantly asked "what are you"  
Because obviously I can only be either Mexican or Indian

Being Brown can truly be a curse

Because somehow no one seems to claim you  
You are too much of an oreo or too much of a chola  
Being brown can really suck when theres a race war  
Because you know you believe in one side, but no side wants you

Being brown though can truly be a blessing  
My skin is touched by the golden sun  
My eyes are as black as coal  
my lips look like cherries  
and my hair bounces like a basketball  
Being Brown ...

I can see a rich history behind me  
the work of the Mayans and the land of my grandfather  
Being brown means that I never stop fighting  
Being Brown is my greatest blessing because when I look in the mirror, a hard worker is all I see



# IMAGINE

melodie jackson

The sun was blazing, searing our skin, when I saw her passing my house around noon. She was no bigger than a junebug and her flesh was so black that it was almost purple. Her arms looked like twigs and her legs like toothpicks. Her nose was so strictly structured that if she wiggled her mouth or smiled, it looked like it would break. Her lip were plump and pink just like two pieces of chewed bubblegum. Her hair, barely growing out of the scalp, had the appearance of little ants searching for crumbs. A beauty radiated from her. I fancied her a young Phillis Wheatley the way her body spoke poetry.

I heard her mother tell her to go to the store to get milk and bread. I also heard her tell the little girl to be careful. This was Mississippi. Little girls leave home and never come back.

"Look where ya going before ya go. Walk with yo head down and don't acknowledge the whites. Don't call any attention to yoself. Don't smile. Don't talk. Don't look. Just go in the market and get the bread and milk. Don't touch anythang else. And when the white man follows ya, keep yo head down and go straight to the counter. When ya leave, make sure to have the receipt in yo hands so they can't accuse ya of stealing. If somebody stop ya, show the receipt and keep walking. Don't speak. Then when ya get near, I'll send yo daddy to come and fetch ya when he comes from work."

She waved to me and said, "it sure is a hot, but beautiful morning out here" then she walked, kind of stumbled, down the road. I watched as her skinny body and ant like hair walked into a world that would take her poetry and bury it in a river.

I heard her mama scream the next day. Though I didn't know why exactly, I knew the pain of that scream. The pain of a mother weeping over a lost child. The pain of soul hurting. Hurting from hurt, hurting from violence, hurting from blackness. The whole neighborhood rushed to see the problem, but I couldn't stomach the news. I knew. I heard the people talking and their words burned my ears. The breath flew out of my chest and my eyes filled with liquid prayers.

Her father had waited like blacks always do, but she never showed up. Panicking, he followed the route she had taken. Nothing. His desperate searches were just as empty as his dreams of safety for his daughter. He rushed home and told his wife and they called other neighbors to help with the search. Still nothing until today when I heard that scream. Her skinny body had been found. The twigs snapped, the toothpicks broken. Her nose unstructured. Her lips, flat and red. The little ants finding their resting place in the red clay of Mississippi hatred. My little Phillis Wheatley. Her poetry had been misread and discarded, just like the holy scripture that her offenders claimed to have in their hearts.



Though, there were plenty of hearts that reeked with malice from people of my kind. I wasn't one of them. I had loved her. I had known her. We shared hearts and smiles and memories. I had done nothing to protect her, but I felt her absence.

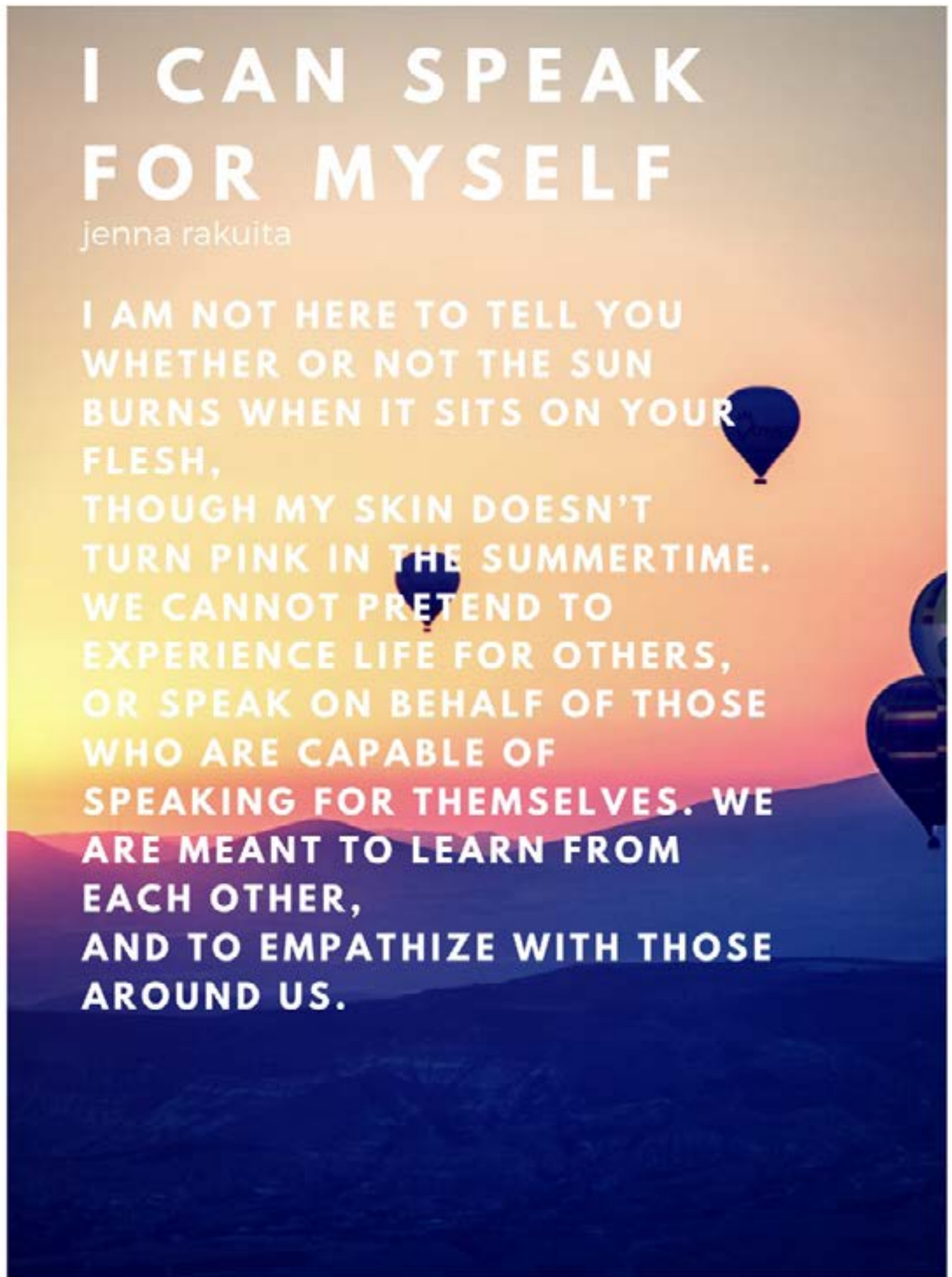
I imagined her last walk from the protection of her home. I imagined her hopeful and unexpected heart as she made sure to do all her mother said. I imagined her giving that same scathing scream I had just heard from her mother minutes ago. I imagined her innocence being thrust into the dark depths of hell. I imagined her imprinting the faces of hate and evil before receiving those of peace of and rest. I imagined her mother's heart beating a little less from the hole that wickedness snatched from it.

Then I heard a voice, like the vengeance from a just God, whisper ever so calmly, "Now, imagine that she's white. Imagine that she's your daughter."

# I CAN SPEAK FOR MYSELF

jenna rakuita

I AM NOT HERE TO TELL YOU  
WHETHER OR NOT THE SUN  
BURNS WHEN IT SITS ON YOUR  
FLESH,  
THOUGH MY SKIN DOESN'T  
TURN PINK IN THE SUMMERTIME.  
WE CANNOT PRETEND TO  
EXPERIENCE LIFE FOR OTHERS,  
OR SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THOSE  
WHO ARE CAPABLE OF  
SPEAKING FOR THEMSELVES. WE  
ARE MEANT TO LEARN FROM  
EACH OTHER,  
AND TO EMPATHIZE WITH THOSE  
AROUND US.







## REFLECTIONS ON BIKO & BLACKNESS

maya donnel

Steve Biko once said: "Being black is not a matter of pigmentation - being black is a reflection of a mental attitude."

To me, this quote seems to suggest that white people can refer to themselves as black people if they "think black". I personally find that ludicrous. How can all of the people of an entire race share an identical "mental attitude"? I think people should stop generalizing and start seeing people as individuals. I disagree with Biko. I believe that black is pigmentation. And just because you have a certain pigmentation.

that doesn't mean you have to have certain thoughts and beliefs. I think it's important for people to be who they are and not let a skin tone define them.



## DISRESPECT

melodie jackson

Dislocated shoulder that bears the burdens of your colorblindness. The presence of your absentmindedness. Your sheep's cloak of Christian kindness.

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock."

Grievous wolves not sparing the clock. The past is not the past. Just the past in present form. Y'all know that "My granddaddy didn't own slaves and you weren't a slave. Stop dividing." My professor calls my people Negros. He brags about the glorious history of his family in the KKK. But to him, it's okay. To him I am a slave to heritage. A slave to time. He teaches about family history yet he ignores my family history, better yet my family mystery because America has erased them to numbers on property lists. Numbers that my professor cares nothing about. He owns the narrative and my body as it burns into invisibility. My body is not my own for it belongs to the street blacked with blood. It belongs to your code of honor that tells me that my existence isn't Honor enough. It belongs to your Jesus that erases my eyes and paints my eternity white. I am owned by your ignorance and apathy that calls me Negro. the civilized kindness of slavery. I am whipped by your justice system that denies justice to just us.

See.

The past is not the past. Just the past in present form.

Grievous wolves not sparing the shock. Whiteness like the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah. Supremacists white and feminists, whiter. You push your legs forward like the bodies chained black only to turn around and see that's there is no distance between the other side of the mountain, the other side of supremacy, the other side of feminism, the other side of suffocation and the gripping white smoke, like Lot's wife.

And y'all wonder why I'm so salty.

Grievous wolves not sparing the block. My body a thing of gaze. Mullvey coined the term "Male Gaze." But did she ever think about the Return Missionary who served in Africa, in Brazil, in Chicago, in Detroit, in Compton, in Miami, in Houston, in Atlanta, in Birmingham, in Louisiana, in Mississippi gaze? Did she write books about my existence being a fad? Something that's "rad" to say that Billy's had an exotic Black girl Mad? Did she make movies about my skinbrothers fasting from brown because our love when found is a like a rush without sound that quickens your heart and you become drowned in all this black girl magic?

Is it too many pounds?

Or you trapped in the underground?

Do you not want this crown?

Anybody got an Amazon Prime account?

I need these books and movies. Recess of mind except there's no Sabbath for racism. No break from bigotry. No Conference for reckoning. No mission for mental sanity. No recommend for Wokeness. No temple for black temples. No general authority for my voice being authoritative generally for all black souls. No scripture for scripted narratives. No primary for boys with mothers whose lives ain't been no crystal stair. No Mutual for understanding that my kneel matters too. No hymnals for spirituals. No spirit for music gospel. No missionary for unlearning and unlearning and unlearning and unlearning. No visiting teacher for permanent students of panels by black people for white people, white savior progressives. No prophet for the prediction of the security of my diction. Because Uncle Tom dog whistled at that old Cougar, America.

Suspicious suspect clothes all black, skin mismatched with warrants intact. They're watching.

You.

Spectators.

"If you're Black at BYU, you're very loved because you're on the basketball or football team." My body, Entertain. Entertain. Entertain. I whisper to my limbs "Come on ancesistas!! Send me your rhythm! Send me you beat. See me your flight." I have to move when they say move to add the Ettes to the Cougar! I have to sing when they snap even though my grandmother once told me that I sound worse than a dying cat. I have to run and jump and play their game though I'm much too grown of a black Woman to play the game of "inmates in prison." This is NOT what I meant when I said my ancestors were in me. I can't be your Joe Lewis. I am NOT Tina Turner. Michael Jackson, though he may be daddy, did not moonwalk me to my Blackness.

My existence. Enterpain. Enterpain. Enterpain.

Disrespect. I try to speak that word in Blackness translated from Whiteness but I only speak English and Portuguese.



Language barrier.

Disrespect.

For those who are fluent in that language, is it spelled P-R-I-V-I-L-E-G-E?

I offer dis respect to my ancesistas and skinfolk.

We make the world go round,  
We pull skies to the ground,  
We got so magic that most other drown,  
We are culture and divinity's sound,  
We give the own to the color brown,  
We are the sheep by which the other 99 are found,  
We are to the Lord twice as bound, We are Simeons carrying pounds,  
We've visited with Christ on Golgotha's mound.

So, My sistas, my brothas, go shine yall's crowns.

I gotta go fix my shoulder and kill some wolves.



# STREET CORNERS

darrion chris johnson

Devils and Fiends on the street corners

Spirits and demons in the convenience stores and

Doin anything to keep from Being bored

If it means life can seem normal

And as a 13 year old recruit in the street wars it'

Hard to find a dream to reach towards

Barely enough socks to keep his feet warm

Let alone decent goals no concept of peace at home,

As he watches his Mom and the people that she escorts

And the tears she sheds when she's alone

Can't let that weakness show so he finds a cause to bleed for

It's the gang life he knows ain't right but it'll make ends meet for her

And what's a thug for a role model when you've only seen your

Sperm donor off of the police reports

So he lets the nine-millimeter heat forge

His destiny and character wrestling his heritage

Everyone just stares him

Musta been the weed of

So now he smokes anyone with the weird notion

That the mentality of fear holds him

He's seen corpses of both friends and enemies war is

Indiscriminate of who it leads to Elysium's fortress or Hades' torture

Shells to the back like a green tortoise

It can seem morbid

And his morals are more relatively warped with

Each moment he spends inside of this deep hole it's

Different from the land of the free that he borders

But feels he can't be part of so he seeks other means to be noticed

To be adored to get that feeling. How he fiends for it

And how it seems hopeless to escape from these horrors

The yoke of his city worn on each shoulder

Bearing his cross he roams the streets hopin

He can bring hope to the streets that he strolled the

Streets that he rode with his homies, a pistol, and cream soda

Peer pressure told him to be colder to be older

To defeat those who told him to keel over

But now with a vision to remold his people, he holds the

Key to each door that for him can be opened

If he can keep focused, but like Icarus whose wings soared But Were eventually scorched as

he was drowned, and dragged down to the sea floor Cuz



He was distracted by his delusions of grandeur,  
believing he's chosen

To be the black shepherd for the black sheep for the  
millions of seeds sown from

Sierra Leone to Ethiopia, America west to east coast  
But he's poisoned by the doubts that seep slowly

Into his thoughts, confidence and identity stolen

By society's ploys to own him in these courts

But a baller he's known how to free throw since playing/living in Detroit

And now at the end of all, he's faced with these choices:

"Will he hoist the banner of peace to free those in oppression without holding a weapon?"



Or prostitute himself while grossly obsessed with the power the industry totes

Will he be sold to a different master the same slave

Different actors the same play

Different factors the same fate

These chains on him that symbolize Mephistoles' hold

Will he get to be old? What does the reflection of destiny show

Heck if he knows. Just writing the rest of these poems

Cuz he knows that each poet lives and breathes sits and feeds on each word to

**"WILL HE HOIST THE  
BANNER OF PEACE TO  
FREE THOSE IN  
OPPRESSION WITHOUT  
HOLDING A WEAPON?"**



To be certain that his legacy stirs in

The hearts of those that he's served hoping it burns for

Eternity but nobody's heard Of Him yet. He gets better with each stroke

And curve of the pen, blessed he feels hope

And real purpose again

When he sees those monsters under his bed

He remembers it was the underlying fears that fueled his dreams of success

So dear Father please know that he strove to leap over these boulders he hopes his  
deeds you'll accept

So gates of heaven please open and receive his Soul when he's dead