



rhode island
stories
of

solidarity

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2023

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This zine was produced in the city of Providence, Rhode Island, on the ancestral homelands of the Narragansett Nation. We acknowledge that the Narragansett people had their land stolen through settler-colonial violence, including legal injustice, coercion, forced assimilation, ethnic cleansing and genocide, and that they continue to be kept from that land through state-sanctioned violence—actions that have led to continued systemic oppression, impoverishment, and invisibility. We recognize their continued presence as a sovereign nation and millenia-long steward of this land, its waters, and all living things. We are committed to amplifying the stories of Rhode Island's Indigenous communities and their vibrant contributions to our culture.

a note from the publishers

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, writers, artists, archivists and activists with ties to Rhode Island were invited to submit written/spoken/illustrated work on the theme of solidarity. This contemporary archive gathers their disparate histories and reflects on our present moment with narratives of activism and social change. SOLIDARITY prioritizes the work of Black, Indigenous, POC, Queer, Trans, Disabled and other historically underrepresented identities. Uplifting a multiplicity of voices is an integral tenet of our organization, and we stand in solidarity with our writers and their stories.

Recognizing that readers will bring a rich variety of life experience to the zine, we have worked with a team of reviewers to recognize sensitive content and to identify potential triggers with content warnings. Please take care of yourself by reviewing the content warnings indexed at the back of this publication before proceeding.

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kou tukala nyan

Solidarity.

How can this be?
 How can this be?
 What does solidarity mean?
 Psalm told us that Unity is such a blessing
 Like an anointing oil that travels from the top of Priest Aaron's head down past
 his beard
 What a JOY it is to unite
 Despite the frights
 Even in moments of tumultuous strife
 We still come together to fight to make things right
 Join together to refresh and heal
 This is **SOLIDARITY**:
 Souls stand together as **One**
 Longing, striving, moving towards a better world
 In hopes for a change
 Don't need these things to stay the same
 Ambition to start a **Revolution** so needed In
 These strange times
UNITY
 What a gift it is to be united, healed and free.



kannetha brown

The Americans

The Americans is a photographic essay honoring my community of Asian Americans in Rhode Island; I began this work in response to the heightened xenophobia during the pandemic.





Asians have been an integral part of New England history since the 1800s, but our stories have been erased, falsified, and underrepresented.

I'm the daughter of Sara Brown, a well-known Cambodian doctor caring for Rhode Island's large Southeast Asian community. She immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 14 after growing up during war and genocide. One of the most consequential memories of my childhood was when I waited to learn about my community in school, and the day never came. It was rare to see positive, let alone any, representations of Asian people in advertisements, books, or television. Now, I photograph my family and friends to create the representations that were omitted, to glimpse further into their nuances and complexities.

karlie zhao

The Back Side Story



Scan this QR code to view the piece and its transcription on the RISD Museum's website



My submission is a series of documentation of my work, a textile zine titled "The Back Side Story". With cute and brightly colored patch works and embroidery, the zine documents Chinese people's daily life, sufferings and resilience under the government's zero-covid policy.

Inspired by the Arpilleras made in Chile during the military dictatorship (1973–90) of Augusto Pinochet, The Back Side Story uses the same embroidery techniques and aesthetics as weapons to tell stories and spread information. This work hopes to inherit the soft power from arpilleras – a kind of power that is tactile, subtle, and voluntary, which gathers the collective intelligence, talents and efforts. As a point of mobilization, this textile piece might inspire more people, especially those who are currently living under dictatorships, to create more pieces that possess this political power with fabric scraps, needles and threads.

christopher samih-rotondo

Cultivating Your Own Gravity

I've been a community organizer with DARE (Direct Action for Rights & Equality) for eleven years. DARE was founded around a kitchen table in South Providence in 1986, by a mutli-racial group of women who would no longer tolerate the condition of their neighborhood. Like so many predominantly Black neighborhoods of post-industrial cities in the 1980s, South Providence was the site of municipal neglect and abuse, illegal dumping, absentee landlords, and police violence. The neighborhood and its people were the target of the US' racist drug war, new sentencing laws, and massively expanded prison systems.

The founding DARE organizers fought back against city leaders' abuse and neglect with direct action community organizing. This style of organizing was being utilized in the 70s and 80s to build power and leadership among welfare recipients across the country (including in RI), and was honed in the cauldron of the Civil Rights Movement in the US South.

The foundation of this organizing was meeting people where they're at, physically and politically. Organizers met folks at their homes, churches, stores, and playgrounds; they honored the deep, historical wisdom of folks' lived experiences. This organizing tradition was (and continues to be) cultivated at The Highlander Institute in Tennessee, and was formalized as pedagogy among peasants in Brazil. Popular education, as described by Paolo Freire, remains essential to organizing at DARE. This approach recognizes that, though the oppressed have been intentionally denied formal education and taught lies by their oppressors, some of which they've internalized over generations, they have the critical wisdom of lived experience. Even if folks were illiterate, as they were in rural Brazil, they could still "read" their world.

Popular education theorizes that questions and intentional spaces for folks to interrogate the contradictions of their world create openings to formulate demands and assert power over their lives. As in the civil rights movement, there was no illusion that folks who suffered racist violence and oppression, alongside the degradation of capitalism, didn't desire to be free, or understand what freedom meant. And like at DARE for the last 36 years, spaces are created for liberatory

understanding, practice, collective and individual revolutionary change. DARE, like the Highlander Institute and other spaces of the Black freedom struggle, is a place carved out of the oppressive world, where organizers pose questions, facilitate scenarios and discussions, and bring outside information and experience to bear, charting a way towards liberation.

This is what I believe solidarity to be. Too often we see solidarity as showing up to one action. In our times, posting an image or message, or, at worst, self-righteously attacking folks for perceived (or actual) slights or actions online. At a young age, I was taught to question this form of solidarity; to be an organizer, not an activist. While an activist may follow trends, or seek an in-and-out form of solidarity, an organizer must take the long view, must invest the time to build relationships. An organizer acknowledges what they know and what they don't. They do the unglamorous work of figuring out what and how they can contribute to a struggle. Never assume to know how from the start, regardless of what or who you've read, how you've studied, or how you've lived.

An outsider, in so many ways, when I arrived at DARE in 2009; I made many mistakes. I was allowed those mistakes by experienced DARE leaders. I did not live the experiences of DARE members and despite having studied the organizing model and similar movements, I knew nothing when I arrived. With the blessing of those leaders who supported and tolerated me in the early years, and those who graciously taught me, I learned to apply these lessons on organizing, popular education, and solidarity.

I learned early on to always be myself. In all of my whiteness, my class status (working class, but the upwardly moving one from the 90s, before the economic restructuring and decline that brought my parents' generation down a bit), my lack of experience of Black, Indigenous, Latino/a culture (and, despite years of inconsistent practice, pathetic Spanish). The most important lesson I was ever taught was by DARE's Lead Organizer. She was an experienced organizer, who led a police accountability campaign

as a volunteer, following the violent beating of her son by Providence police. She told me that I was not a threat to Black folks at DARE, because I was comfortable with myself.

I share this critical wisdom with everyone who may feel an outsider to DARE. Solidarity requires sophisticated self-awareness. But not the kind of performative self-awareness that can make someone insufferable. Folks who are never vulnerable, or share nothing of themselves, always remain suspicious, apart. We must ground solidarity in the joy and liberation we fight for. Where is the joy, the self-expression, in your solidarity? Folks will gravitate to the genuine expression of self, of joy, and cultivating this gravity is essential to organizing.

If you hope to act in solidarity, recognize what you don't know, listen and question, create space for others to liberate themselves, and never shy away from the work of understanding yourself.

selene means

My Perfect Week

Monday - Sistafire Justice Circle

Tuesday - Black maternal health campaign or mutual aid committee

Wednesday - Dare Behind the Walls committee

Thursday - Therapy and Dare membership meeting

Friday - Sistafire Communication committee

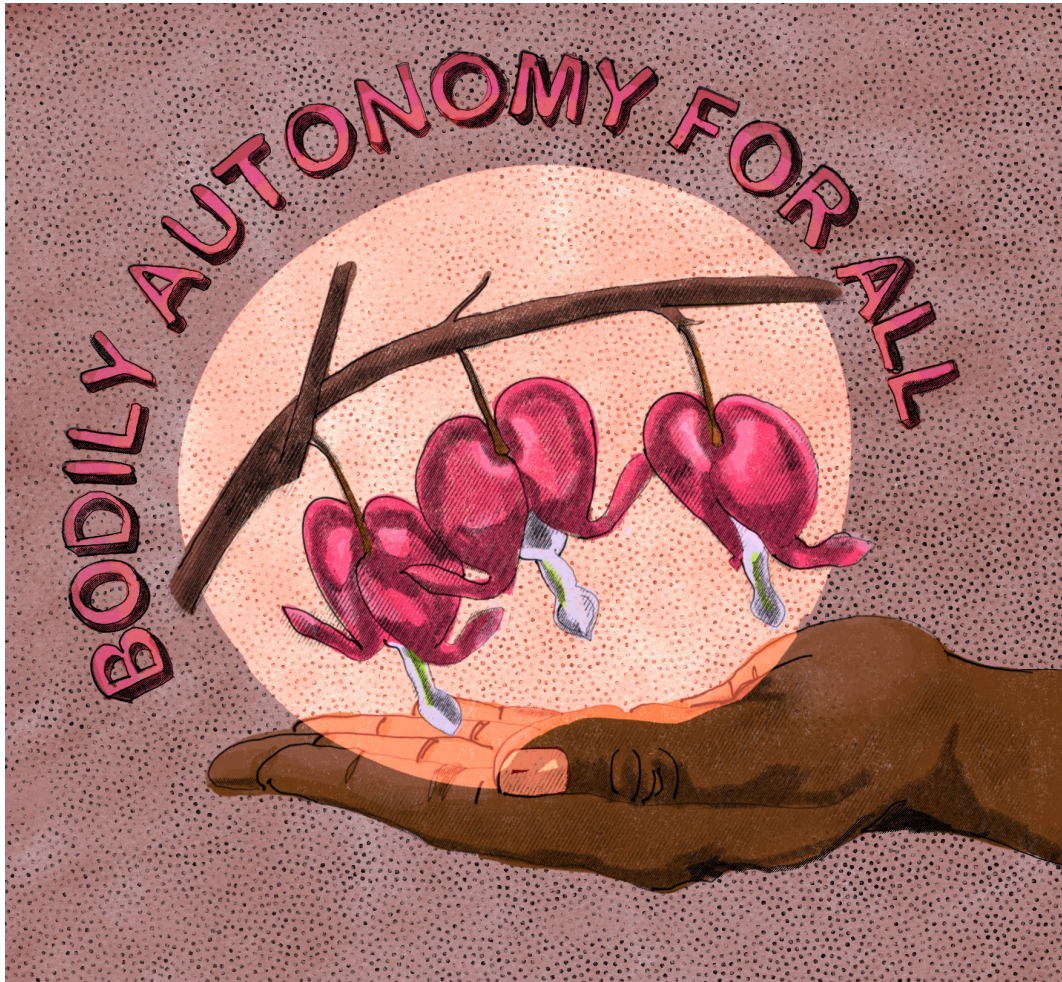
Saturday - Haus of Codec community market

Sunday - Clean the house. Cook a big meal. Have people over to eat and play.

[[* now if only I didn't have to pay rent.

Am I actually feeding my soul?

Where is the { I } in this collective?]]



phyllis gingerella wade
Abortion Truth 1

ses houghton
all or none

Sex work as a career has been unfairly prosecuted both socially and legally. Despite some facets being accepted, full service sex workers are often overlooked. Decriminalizing sex work gives people more autonomy over their bodies.

Not only that, but sex workers can be barred from future employment, housing, and socialization due to stigma and discriminatory behavior. Sex work is work and people are deserving of community.



pilar hernandez

Solidarity in the Reels of Slaughter

The man's basement was covered in faux wood panels and beer memorabilia surrounding an empty bar that suggested an attempt was made to make the space feel warm, social and celebratory. Now that it sat dry and cold, and the man and woman in it even dryer, it reeked of loneliness.

They sat on opposite sides of an L shaped couch. It had been years since they last spoke but they found themselves in that same moment in the same place of desperation and decided to once again trick themselves into thinking this time their attempt to connect wouldn't hurt so bad.

Each held their phones and their pride close. A large screen TV took up a full wall and tried to take their attention from the unending pain of an existence with awareness, but no clue as to the why, by playing a stand-up comedy special. This was mostly ignored, like all the other senses that needed to be stimulated simultaneously to imitate a dopamine reaction in place of their favorite numbing activities.

"We are gonna laugh ourselves into detention centers", she said.

"And dance", he replied.

"Ha!" she exclaimed, "TikTok dances from cages", she cried, almost too excitable.

"The whole world watching and doing nothing" she stated now more solemnly.

"Well not nothing, they will share and spread awareness", he assured her sarcastically.

"Right, solidarity in the reels of slaughter" she retorted quickly. They both laughed but they were scared and sad, a feeling that had become so common it was hardly worth mentioning.

"There is nothing new in this world" he said matter of factly.

They sat in silence for a moment, allowing the entirety of the history of violence to seep in and fill the void space between them.

"No new horrors, until..." she thought out loud almost to herself and then trailing off into morbid reflection.

"Right" he whispered through a soft exhaling breath.

She then took a slow deep and steady breath in, counting to four, holding for eight and exhaling for seven, the way the happy people taught her. "If there is nothing new under the sun then we are free to keep making the same mistakes" she finally stated. "What a price for freedom" he blurted out before he could stop himself or be sure of what he meant.

They sat there searching for the humor, grasping desperately in the dark that surrounded them but were left with nothing but meaningless words and deadpan delivery that betrayed their own mouths. They no longer believed in what they said nor felt any connection to their own thoughts. They felt aware of their programming but were too tired to even begin to understand it or their resentment towards it.

"I hate people", she said.

"No you don't" he replied, "you hate that you are right about them".

"So what are you saying, I hate my own expectations?", she asked incredulously.

"Maybe?" he sang almost playfully, the corner of his trained mouth pulling with all its will to form an empathetic half smile. Her eyes grew bigger, focusing on his lips as they returned to neutral, but with the full effect of the now faded crooked smile's power already and unavoidably inside her, filling her to the brim, without her consent, of energy and hope.

"I don't want to be right about you", she admitted with a vulnerability and sincerity that shocked even her.

"Me neither", he softly conceded and suddenly he was overcome with a wave of calm and serenity like he had never known.

The feeling passed. He thought he was crazy at first and then because of the feelings brevity he concluded that it just wasn't real. Not like the body of his digital archive, timelines of posts that told a story of a life he wanted to live and so therefore he came to believe he truly did.

Her face still hot from his smile, her eyes began to water and she did not know why, she dimmed her screen and rubbed them and when her vision returned she could see the phone's glow on his stupid serene face. They were searching for a solution she just realized at that moment had yet to come into existence. Suddenly she could imagine the sun, energy itself illuminating their faces and burning with vitality. She could picture tomorrow. She opened her mouth and gulped a giant breath in and out and finally began to speak. He pulled his gaze from the screen and turned to meet her words and allowed them to lighten up his mind, body and soul, unafraid now of seeming pale in her presence or of being fully consumed by her brightness in his dark lonely basement.

While the wheels of slaughter kept churning out more misery, they gave rest to their sore thumbs and had at last found some solace in each other. No longer did they care about finding sanity in a reel world made absurd, they would settle for happiness wherever they could meet each other's gaze and choose not to look away. In a world of infinite possibilities, they came to believe that was enough.

Sam Ra

Beeswax Promise Poem

Make a promise to the future they said
 Keeping showing up
 Dip your brightest leaves in beeswax

Hold out your hand in hope
 Tell yourself it might not get better
 But at least you won't be alone

Humans always show up
 For each other in an
 Emergency

Rising shores will force us closer together
 But don't believe the lies
 That your neighbor's out to get you
 Keeping show up and they'll show up for you

Have a little faith they said
 Dip your leaves in beeswax
 Hold them up to the light

Find a way for the light to fill you up
 For dark days may be ahead
 But you're anything but alone

Remember how spring's violets make you feel
 Together
 A part of something bigger

Their inevitable return
 A promise of the future

j. valley

Solidarity's Serendipity

This is what I think, sitting on the old oak stump in the long-Winter shadows of the Armoury.

Solidarity is like a tree.

Tell me, how often have you climbed the trees in Rhode Island?

I have a colonial great-great-and-beyond-great grandmother who climbed trees in Tiverton. She met a man under a tree, whose family had perhaps climbed trees thousands of years before Mary's family had ever set foot in Massachusetts Bay and from there, for religious liberty, kicked up their heels and trekked down through Bristol County and then to the Peninsula, where not only were Catholics welcome, but also in some places, women who climbed trees.

We were walkers, we are walkers, and trees are not.

But a tree is where you stop when you walk, and that is Solidarity.

I will stop to see the sea with you. I will stop to climb and take a view of the world I could not have on my own, on my own two feet.

We were walkers in both branches of my family, but also tree-climbers. This is a bit different from tree-cutters, who often want to reduce the view to something they can manage and control, to flatten the curve, to enforce the long-and-only view.

But a tree is its own height and a tree enforces its own bounds on the people on the ground: how you climb, and whether you make time and space for someone to come up beside.

In a tree, I rely on something different and more than me, and respect something different from me, and look out from a platform I did not build.

But a tree is its own height and a tree enforces its own bounds on the people on the ground: how you climb, and whether you make time and space for someone to come up beside.

In a tree, I rely on something different and more than me, and respect something different from me, and look out from a platform I did not build.

A tree gives me wonder, and solidarity.

Walking also puts you near to the dust, and so my family on both sides knew dust, and trees, and solidarity, and a certain kind of liberty which we walked for and met.

In each other and in the land.

Religious liberty.

Cartwheeling liberty.

The liberty to marry where we would and whom, in a church or in a tree. They say Mary married in a tree, although she had a priest who consented to celebrate, calling the birch God's cathedral in the New World...

...which my great-great-great...you know...grandfather called an old, old world.

Which was simply the world where new feet were meeting.

And for once, in Rhode Island – at least for that early age when Mary was young – feet and heart were meeting in solidarity because they met with liberty, and in a tree.

douglas kolacki

Recruiting for the Gaspee

Son, get out here! It's time to go vote.

About that, now--ever think it's funny how Election Day comes right after Halloween? For us, that has a special meaning. Climb in the car, and I'll tell you on the way. I'll need your complete attention.

I would not lie to you about that Halloween part--it's all true. I saw the Gaspee's commander myself, Lt. Duddingston, schooner and all. Of course there's no proof, yet I know it for a fact, just as all who have seen him somehow know. Not off Newport in my case, or even Gaspee Point, but right in the middle of Waterplace Park! When you're a spirit (or as some would say, "demon") you can do that, I guess. No doubt he meant to show us what he can accomplish-- up to a certain point at least. His creaking black silhouette of a ship towering in the dusk, its sails even flapping when the wind kicked up. It looked awfully solid for a "ghost ship."

So I was on the steps coming down from Francis street when the Gaspee seemed to rise up in that wide space of water. Burned to the waterline or not, there it was. A flock of geese scattered up away from it, honking as if to raise the alarm. And there he was, a too-tall specter who seemed to weave himself out of the dark, a tricorn on his head as if to say "Yes, I really am from 1772," and I froze. He was close to me, then closer. He's going to ask me, I thought, pulse racing and all in a sweat. I was too blamed scared to run. He's chosen me this time!

And he put to me his question.

I knew what he was going to ask. This was his fifth appearance, and he's phrased it the same way to everyone: Would you like to reign supreme, along with your people, over this state?

There was no misunderstanding it. The Gaspee had burned, yes, but now it was

reappearing again, along with its commander. The citizens of 1772 didn't burn him too, by the way; they only took him and the crew captive. He lived on, and died some other way. I want you to know that. But now it seems he wants to resume his harassment of Rhode Islanders, and worse than just their shipping; the way he put the reign supreme was pretty decisive. And then he elaborated. No elections, no legislators, and no one in power--ever--except myself, and our party too. I could choose the ruler or be the ruler myself. No kidding, and no political experience necessary. We would make the laws, we would hire the guns to enforce them, and no one would ever set foot in the State House except us.

How would that work with the rest of the country? Would we secede from the Union, then, into some kind of ghost-dictatorship? This has raised all sorts of questions, and I don't think I would like the answers. Duddingston and his ship brought back something of the other side with them, something powerful, that this world doesn't have the means to fight. But it also comes with rules. He's never explained them, but evidently he needs at least one "yes" before he can go ahead. Maybe it's like how a vampire can't enter a house unless invited. So how many of us does he need? Has anyone signed on already? In their own blood, perhaps? And how many more will it take? No one knows.

So yes, he approached me, who has belonged to our party since the age of eighteen. And he's approached someone from the other party. To another person he simply pitched it as "you and your friends." And the fourth person, who belonged to no group at all, simply told him to bugger off and kept on walking.

What did I tell him? Nothing dramatic or defiant. Nothing at all, in fact; I was too paralyzed with fright. I only shook my head, violently to make up for my lack of words, and backed away. Then I turned and bolted back up the stairs, two at a time, to the welcome traffic of Francis Street and the lights of the mall. He didn't call after me, or try to pursue. I never saw him again.

And it was also like that for the four others, as I'm sure you've heard. Maybe it's another rule. He makes his offer once, doesn't haggle, and that's it.

So as you can see, we're all on the honor system. God only knows why it has to be this way, but it is, and that's how we have to play it. Will someone from our party take advantage at some point? Will the other? Will someone else? And what would our state look like in each case?

It might be tempting to consider, but I think we all know that anyone taking Duddingston's offer would, sooner or later, become nothing more than his unknowing puppets. Because, you see, there has to be something in it for him. Maybe just establishing an absolute power and watching it run--and there's that saying about how it corrupts absolutely?--would give him the ultimate entertainment.

A song I learned in grade school goes "Freedom Isn't Free" and "each generation must win it anew." But for the dear life of me, I must confess, I never thought it would happen like this.

So now you know: be alert. Any evening you happen to be near water, whether it's Waterplace Park, the beach in Newport or Narragansett, or even a riverbank--be alert. If you see that dark hulk rise up, and that black apparition shuffling toward you crooking his finger, the clouds perhaps parting long enough for you to catch his eyes glinting in the moonlight--

Be alert.

erin austin
American Troops Overseas

Mystery guards in the night to some,
to others they are relatives of folks back home.

Cold, tired, hungry, and alone they may have each other.
But what they really want is some tender loving care from everywhere.
So let's give them the support they need and to the naysayers do not heed.

sally bozzuto

Caesura

We're in the moment when the bow lifts from the string and is held at the end of the symphony. We are suspended in this moment like the weightlessness one feels at the peak of the swing set. We are all dressed in our most outrageous clothes, but only those that express who we truly are. We are at the most raucous dance party! We are forming a band and playing hits of the '70s, '80s, and 3000s. We are dancing, we are feasting, we are holding hands and each other. We are unbound. We're at the horizon, where the sea meets the sky, we're around the fire, we're in the forest, we're in a martian landscape. We are always together, it is always now.

rita kova moore

Hurricane Carol and Charybdis

blinded
 by the sapphire sparkles
 dancing on the waves
 like cascades of starlight
 washing over us again and again
 let's stay on this water
 going with the flow
 as we pass by the Charybdis
 pretending that the powers above will spare us
 once again LOL



rob yaffe

The Rise of Our Better Selves in Disasters

About a week after Hurricane Ian blew through the west coast of Florida I boarded a flight to North Fort Meyers, the epicenter of the near total devastation it left behind. I was rejoining with the same disaster response organization which I volunteered with, when 17 years earlier Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and the Gulf Coast just east in the area around Biloxi Mississippi. Over 1700 people lost their lives, the homes along the coast were wiped from the ground and deposited in splintered pieces in a debris field about a hundred yards inland.

Cars, sections of homes and all the contents they held were scattered and deposited wherever the receding waters left them. Mardi Gras beads, clothing, kitchen counters, bicycles and a baby's crib adorned the trees, a scene of dystopian Christmas ornaments.

As we began our descent, I began reflecting on that experience in 2005. I wasn't thinking about the devastation at all. What I remember most was the experience of joining up with a group of individuals, all unknown to each other, from all over the world and the speed and manner in which a bond automatically united us.

As soon as the storm had passed, I along with millions were glued to our televisions, watching our government's response in New Orleans, and then our president responding with a flyover from thousands of feet high in Air Force One. The more I watched, the angrier I became. I physically could not sit still. The impulse to do something led me to trying to volunteer with the usual organizations and groups that mobilize when a disaster happens.

I was greeted with a lot of paperwork. Then on September 4th I left the restaurant, needing to get away for a few hours. I couldn't stop thinking about how I could do something.

Driving down Hope Street I caught the middle of an interview with David Campbell a former Boston tech entrepreneur. He was on the radio being interviewed about his organization All Hands USA. He was sitting in the Beauvoir Methodist Church in 2004 Christmas tsunami which had killed over 200,000 people.

I pulled over needing to concentrate on his every word. Then it happened. The interview was winding down and he announced right then, "if anyone wants to join me and volunteer just call me"

I got out my phone and as he was giving out his number I was typing it in. The interview continued about another few minutes. The second it ended I pressed send. David answered the phone, "what took you so long?"

Three days later I landed in Gulfport Mississippi and made my way to the church which became the base of operations for Hands on USA/Katrina.

I can still feel the moment I walked in and saw the small initial group of volunteers. I introduced myself and immediately everything and everyone felt familiar. I was the 7th volunteer to arrive. Within a month there were over a hundred.

Thinking back to this moment as I'm about to rejoin the same organization I realize that even before meeting the Katrina team, we were all connected by the choice we all made to leave the comfort of our homelife and volunteer to do what we could to help the community recover.

One of the first side effects of disasters is the emergence and rise of community. Landing in Tampa and arriving at our basecamp at the "Sonshine Methodist Church" in Port Charlotte, I joined the community of All Hands and Hearts/Florida.

Within a week we had about 50 people who had arrived from all over the world, some coming from other, long term projects. We slept on red cross cots in the day care classrooms, eight to a room, men and women. Very quickly we are acclimated to being thrust into a shared living environment.

Any inhibitions or discomfort immediately vaporizes from the magnitude of the task at hand. Everyone is instantly a part of something immensely greater. In the midst of such overwhelming need and suffering, we are all galvanized towards one purpose.

Each day we are paired with another and given a task. There are six to seven teams of pairs. The work is brutal in 90 degree heat and humidity, as well as potentially dangerous and toxic.

My first day, I along with my teammate spent the day “ mucking”. It feels like it sounds. The home we were working on was owned by Judy J. The waterline on the interior walls was at four feet. Everything below that was a combination of water from the wave which tore through her home, as well as the contents of her septic system.

We were on our knees for 7 hours cutting out four foot sections of wall to wall carpeting, kneeling in the still soaked carpets. A section that large weighed about forty pounds which we carried out to the front yard, it's liquid contents emptying out onto us the whole way.

No matter what was needed, how precarious the task, nothing diluted our commitment to achieve the results we had set for the day. Everyday was overwhelming, and everyday was a victory of sorts.

In such an environment there is an unspoken credo. “I got your back” From the very first moment of work, someone shows up you've probably thought of at some point in your life. In her book “A Paradise Built In Hell”, Rebecca Solnit writes about the phenomenon of “the better version of our selves we always strive towards” showing up in the midst of catastrophe. That tendency combined with an organized purposeful group effort, creates an experience of that “Paradise” she speaks of.

The beauty of this is, it can only be achieved as a group, a community.

James Celenza

Migratory Birds

(After *Los Nadies* by Eduardo Galeano)

Depending on number of participating actors can be read at one pull by single actor, a soliloquy if you will. If more than one actor is involved than each can alternate lines as in a dialogue; and the stage should be full of chairs, chairs of different sizes and types (folding metal, straight back-wooden etc) each actor can move from one chair to another, even moving a chair to the edges of the space....

If there is more than one actor {} signifies all recite the same line in unison.*

We are the ones rounded up in an early morning gloom to climb over the barbed wire into the back of the trucks.

We are the ones who die in the desert on the way to pick your succulent strawberries apricots and grapes.

We are the ones who drain your cesspools.

We are the ones who wash the desiccated corpse of your dead mother.

We are the ones who end up in the bone yard.

We are the ones who feel the steel blade against our throats to forfeit money... labor... even our bodies...

We are the ones crammed into the airless bowels of that box-truck abandoned under the overpass by the dry river basin in the City of Angels.

We are the ones who end up in unmarked swollen graves.

We are the ones waiting in endless lines, dying on our feet, one by one, waiting for the glass doors to open; fucked, fucked, fucked, fucked. Fucked.

We are the ones who cook slags of coke on hillsides to feed insatiable fires.

We are the ones forced to conceal under offal-filled rubbish pits when ICE is spotted outside the plant gates.

We are the ones the privileged have no knowledge of as if their material needs were met by invisible beings.

We are the ones huddling in the snow behind recycling dumpsters to watch as multitudes scamper after the lure of SUVs, ipods, designer tshirts and sneakers.

We are the ones who move only when it is dark.

{*} We are the ones who are worth less than the car bomb that dismembers us. Or the random bullet that shatters our fragile skull.

We are the ones who lift our children into crowded rafts because it is safer there than where they are now.

{Pause several beats adjusting, remembering letting it sink into the bone. Pace and projection should shift.}

We are of the same family of the ones who train giant telescopes on the night sky to capture flickering starlight from the edges of the universe.

...

We are of the same family of the ones who created symbolic languages that include infinities that contain infinite infinities.

...

{*} We are of the same family of the ones who invented the piano, books, records, paintings, cameras, rugs, linens, plates, mirrors, chocolate, wine, blankets, pottery, stoves, jokes, windows, fences, crayons, flashlights, thermometers, shoes, soap, poetry, cutlery, pillows, eyeglasses, family letters, photographs, the spiral corkscrew, the safety pin, the mineral water siphon, the canal lock with winch and sluice, the suction pump....

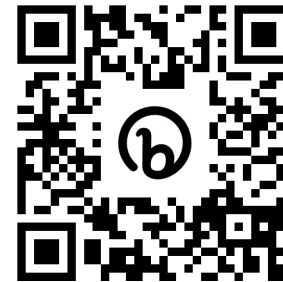
...

We are of the same family of the ones who climb upon a dark stage to impersonate imaginary lives in front of complete strangers.

...

We are of the same family of the ones who keep the dead alive through words. {*} Yes, that's who we are. And yet even as we gather together astride the lip of our common graves, we are the ones that still have hope...that still have dreams.

Dedicated to Erik Ehn



Scan this QR code to view a recording of Migratory Birds, performed in 2019.

Time code: 0:00 - 4:30

Recording of Migratory Birds, performed as part of Lighting The Way: Climate Change Theatre Action presented by the URI Providence Campus Arts and Culture Program and Wilbury Theatre Group, in collaboration with the Climate Change Theatre Action network, September 19th 2019 at URI Providence Campus Paff Auditorium.

The Climate Change Theatre Action (CCTA) is a worldwide project involving the commissioning of plays from around the world on various topics of Climate Change Action with performances presented worldwide. The Wilbury Theatre Group took on the challenge in 2019.

Migratory Birds by James Celenza
Performed by Marcel Mascaro and Helena Tafuri
Directed by Logan Serabian

reza rites

Taking the Moon

Can you see
The moon
If your skies
Are on fire
Lit by bombs
Built in Rhode Island
And accelerated
With and by
Hypocrisy
Greed
And hegemony?

Can you seek
The Moonlight
For answers and riddles
Or are you buried
Under a bunker
That doubles
As your self-made
Grave?

Can you track
The ebbs and flows
And the tides
And depths
Or are you praying
Not to be caught
In the waves of bodies
And despair
That come with
With the package
Of artillery
Signature not
Required

I'm sorry we have taken
Your land and nations
I'm sorry we have taken
Your families and ancestors
I'm sorry we have taken
Your seas
And skies
And taken
Your Moonlight

reza rites

Sink Deep: a poem and prayer inspired by the middle passage and the hulls we have yet to escape

Slave ship
Sink deep
Or I shall throw myself
Overboard

Slave ship
Sink deep
Or I may never see again
My family

Slave ship
Sink deep
Or I may never feel joy or love
Again

Slave ship
Sink deep
For even in this era, now,
Enslavement awaits

Slave ship
Sink deep
Or send the spaceship

Humanity awaits

It must.

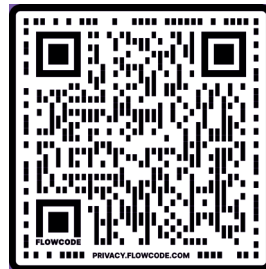
kwana adams

Black History Black Culture Black Life

This piece is very important to me as it calls out the racism that lurks underneath the surface of Rhode Island culture. It started out as a documentary about black history and became something else entirely.

This story is important because transparency is needed when talking about race and solidarity. The voices in this piece come from my family and it's up to me to uplift them and shine a light on what they went through growing up black in Providence.

The following is the artist's transcript of their audio piece. Scan this QR code to listen



D.A: I don't use the word picnic anymore because what I had learned was that during the slavery days, white people used to pack their bags up and be standing out there and they would call it 'pick a nigger'. That's where the word picnic came from.

K.A: During Black History Month in school, we were always taught about Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X and slavery- and how it was very, very bad; but how bad was it, really? And how much of that history is glossed over or completely erased from our history books? I had so many questions and I was determined to get the answers. I asked my grandparents and my mom to tell me what they remember, and I also asked them if they know certain prominent figures in black history.

[music] D.A: Alright, hi. My name is Darlene Adams, and I went to Gilbert Stuart Middle School- to the 8th grade and then I went to- I went and got my GED after that. So I didn't attend high school.

K.A: What did they teach you about slavery?

D.A: Not too much. When I was in school, all that was taught was that Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. They didn't teach us anything about how they were treated- how they were mistreated. We didn't learn that until we started watching Roots.

D.A: When I was in school, what they taught me, was about Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and George Washington Carver.

[music] D.A: Yea, we weren't allowed on Federal Hill- cause if they seen a black person, they would jump you. They would call us niggers.

D.J: Yeah

K.A: This was in the 60s?

D.A: This was in the 70s

D.J: Yeah, 70s

[angry noise from K.A]

D.A: Yep, I'm serious. Back in the day, you wouldn't catch a person on Federal Hill.

D.J: Yea I remember when I was like 8 or 9, used to have a store down on North Main St called Irving Market. We went in there, and um, the dude was like- oh man- we was in line and the dude was like "yo man, take care of me before you take care of these niggers and shit" and said "move away from the counter, move away from the counter" So... it was bad back then.

D.A: Yep, we lived it

[angry noises from K.A]

[music] K.A: My only living grandmother was born in 1960. Her birth certificate says 'Negro' as her race. That really boils my blood and is a completely different story- but I really wanted to know what her generation was taught. The Civil Rights movement took place before and during when she was growing up. They must've been taught so differently that I was taught. I learned about it but she lived it.

D.A: As I was growing up, we would walk around with the Black Panthers and [inaudible] with our hands and our fists, you know, saying "Black Power. Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud" I grew up during the 70s when we was experiencing that. Your mother didn't tell you what she learned about Black History?

K.A: She said the same thing: Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Harriet Tubman.

M.A: Hi, my name is Mandilyn Adams. I went to Mount Pleasant High School. I learned a lot about Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and what they did to give us our freedom and independence.

M.A: Well, when I was coming up, in the 70s I was young. It was a lot different than it is now. It was a better time than it is now, actually- I believe. The 80s were pretty great, the music was great, the schools were great. I mean- it's just a different time than it is now.

D.J: Yea, I remember the riots in the 60s- the Civil Rights riots in the 60s... Rodney King.. I remember Martin Luther King, all the stuff he used to do. I remember the Black Panthers.

K.A: A lot of times we also hear comments like "oh slavery is over, segregation is over, it's not like that anymore you know, it was hundreds of years ago" Wrong. This was when my grandparents were growing up. It's only two generations removed from me. Me, my mother, my grandparents... it was not that long ago.

K.A: The Civil Rights movement took place during the 50s and 60s. My grandmother was born in the 60s. She marched alongside The Black Panthers, Martin Luther King. She lived this era, and what we learned in school wasn't the whole story.

K.A.: Kwana Adams, Author

D.A.: Darlene Adams, grandmother to Kwana Adams, mother to Mandilyn Adams

D.J.: David Johnson, grandfather to Kwana Adams, father to Mandilyn Adams

M.A.: Mandilyn Adams, mother to Kwana Adams, daughter to David Johnson & Darlene Adams

reza rites

Stolen; Get the Fuck Out [of] My Way

1)

Stolen land
 Stolen people
 Stolen culture
 Stolen lessons
 Stolen souls
 Stolen rights
 Stolen opportunities
 Stolen childhood
 Stolen confidence
 Stolen romance
 Stolen styles
 Stolen homes
 Stolen neighborhoods
 Stolen ideas
 Stolen families
 Stolen children
 Stolen land
 Stolen rites
 Stolen rituals
 Stolen hairstyles
 Stolen fashion
 Stolen justice
 Stolen peace
 Stolen dreams
 Stolen art
 Stolen artifacts

2)

Stolen women
 Stolen innocence
 Stolen beauty
 Stolen submission
 Stolen leadership
 Stolen leaders
 Stolen names
 Stolen husbands
 Stolen rhythms
 Stolen voices
 Stolen jobs
 Stolen food
 Stolen technology
 Stolen education
 Stolen history

3)

Stolen history
 Stolen
 Dignity
 But I
 Steal
 Back

4)

Get
 The fuck
 Out [of]
 My way

mara rose

1998.,

I was the little girl in
Little boys clothes
Whos pants
Were too
Big and
Tied tight with
Hidden silver chain
Swagger

I was the little girl in
Little boys clothes
Who made their
Mom proud to have such
A beautiful little
Boy

I was the little girl in
Little boys clothes
Who sometimes would
Not even correct
The cashier, the teacher
Or the red scarfed lady
On the street

I was the little girl in
Little boys clothes
Who sometimes imagined
What it would feel like
to have something
Different in between
My legs

I was the little girl in
Little boys clothes
Who went into the
Wrong bathroom
When all the other real
Little girls were watching

who's blood red
little cheek landed
between the
ceiling and the floor
because no matter
how much I swam
in my brothers old shirt
they knew

I was not a little
boy

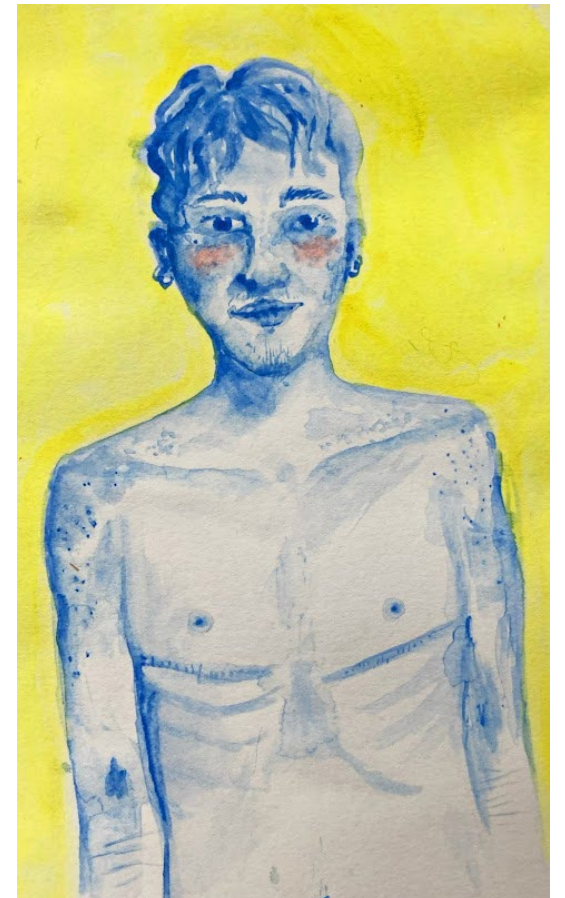
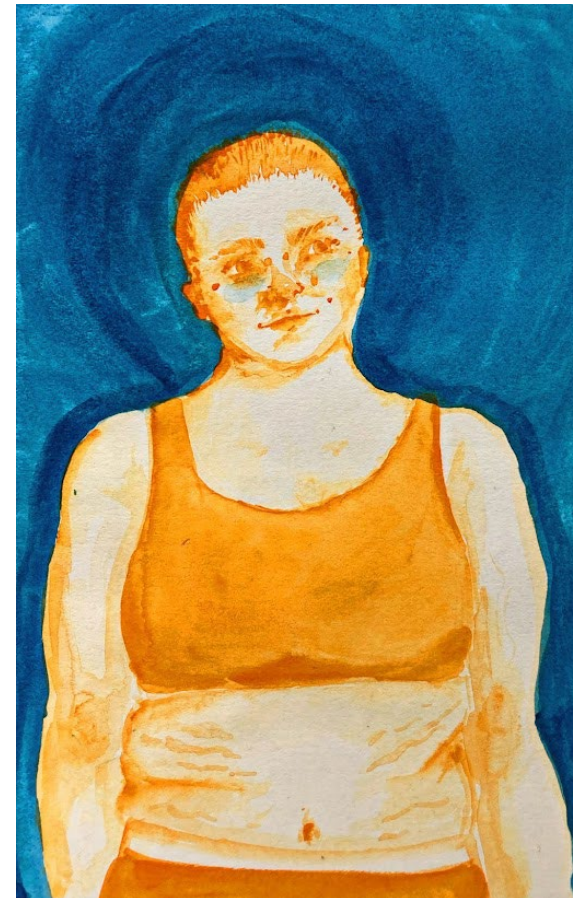
now I watch and
see
little girls in
little boys clothes
sauntering down
the aisles,
unafraid of tripping
over their own
baggy pant
swagger

instead of
sneering glances
from old men
trying to decipher
boobs or
poor mother to
mother look-
these little girls in
little boys clothes
are smiled at, tucked
into arms, undefined,
loved and
short hair
tussled

I tuck my blouse
in and
silently apologize
to the little girl
inside, offering
only in that
when my little girl
wants to wear
little boy clothes
she will not
find herself alone
on the tiles of the tear
stained boys
bathroom but instead
laughing in the
toothpaste dotted mirror
of her friends

1. mueller

Trans Joy 1 & 2



creative writers of west bay ri

These poems were written by the Creative Writers of West Bay RI, a writing group formed out of a basic human need to connect during a time of disconnection. Friendships and community have developed from creative collaboration and mutual respect. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic West Bay RI, an organization supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, partnered with the Writers Club on initiatives from a pen pal exchange to podcasting to writing groups.

The group is made up of individuals varying in age and abilities. The writers include Carol Bruins, Rachel Savastano, Joe Henderson, Peter Seabra, Megan Picard, Jake Castore, Melissa Angilly, and recently joined Evan Huddon. The group is facilitated by Marjorie Shortway Pavao.

Love

Be strong for someone

Love

Even through struggle you can care about each other

Accept people for who they are

Support when someone needs you

Do whatever it takes to make sure someone knows how much you love and care about them

Everything I Do

I would walk the world for you

I sing

Do whatever it takes to make sure someone know how much you care

True love

Everything I do makes me feel joy

It makes me smile when I think of you

I love you

Everything I do I do it for you

Heal the World

In a time of crisis we come together

It makes me sad to see what is going on in the world

Happy thoughts, Happy world

Cry happy tears

Heal the world

Let It Be

Let the past go

Live for the future

The past can make you feel sad thinking of those we have lost

Think of those people and be happy

Music can make you feel good

It makes it feel like you are in heaven

Moonlight ♡

On a cool fall night, I was under
the moonlight

The moon was half full + half round

At night when I go to bed, I
pretend I'm on the moon! ↓

Sparkly stars, dark skies. The moonlight
dances in my eyes!

Hoping that the sun won't rise,
because I like the way the moonlight
flies!

Starry nights, pumpkin pie - my oh my!
Watching how the moon changes size!

Goodnight, moonlight! ♡

melissa angilly
Moonlight & Friendship

Friendship

Friendship to me means connecting with
the people I care about.

Friendships are like sunflowers -

I love sunflowers!

The more you water them - the
stronger they grow.

The people I love are important to
me because they help me grow!

I love coffee dates with my friends -

Cheers! ↓

Nothing is better than friendship!

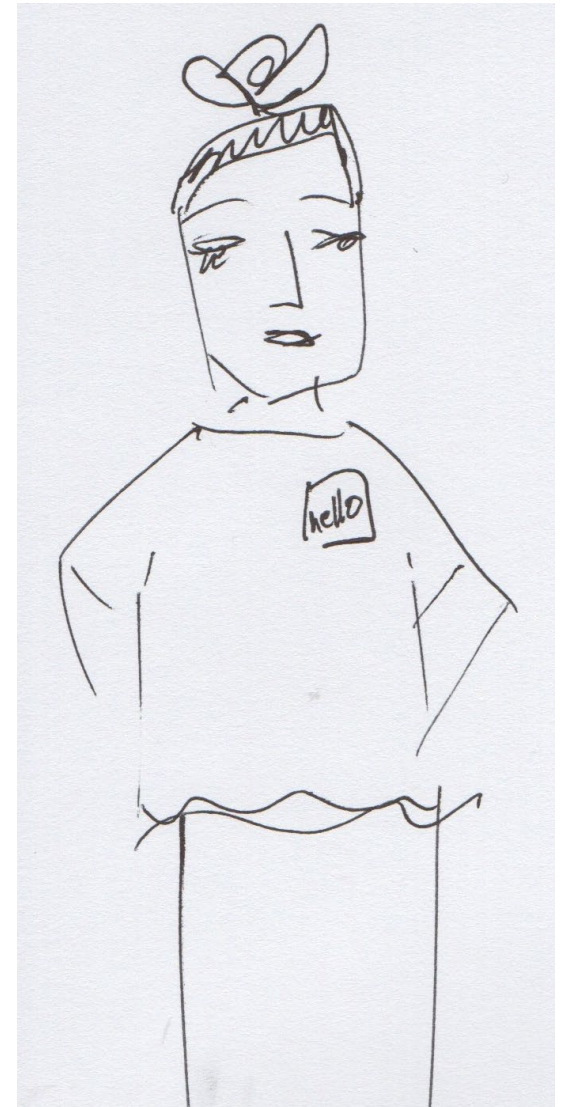
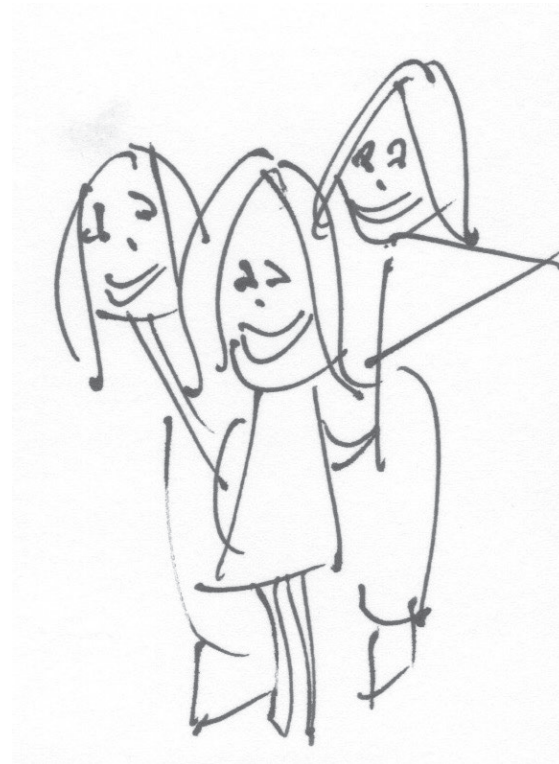
kristen curry

people, stand for something & hello



My approach to solidarity, or an openness to community, is probably best described by an attitude of curiosity and interest in others, whether writing about them or drawing.

I'm fascinated by people and spend a lot of time drawing them. My selected images depict the open attitude of meeting others to embark on a cause, different people coming together, and making a stand.



charmaine mandisa porter

Belonging

I belong to this earth—
 Can belong to the ground and plant my feet in it.
 I can grow and spread my toes like roots,
 and my limbs like branches.
 Soak up the sun, the whole world spins in its beam while I rise or sink in esteem—
 all I have to do is breathe.

I do not own any of it.
 We do not own any of it.
 Cannot control cannot overpower or overthrow—
 No matter how many times a human says so, we cannot contain
 glory in our hands, cannot trap beauty in a box.
 How can one label the order of a rose?
 Splendor is everything.
 Splendor is everything you have never even considered.
 We cannot define it or an object.

Language is useless.
 Words cannot embody emotion;
 The way I feel when the wind brushes against me, when the rivers laugh with me,
 and when the fire burns inside me it will rage against the dictionary
 eating up definitions and implications, the construction of dictations.
 I am here to tear down towers!
 Because I belong to the earth and she is not Atlas, cannot carry nations on her back
 and sustain it.

Industry is a gaping wound across her face.
 Concrete jungles, parking lots, hot showers,
 money spent, money owed, money stole,
 fast food, media, civilization,
 cell phones, the internet.
 Their comfort is a gaping wound across her face.
 Their comfort is a gaping wound across her face.
 We pour our selves into the gash, and provoke infection,
 That eats away at the surface and spreads.

I believe in an Earth indescribable.
 A world washed with God's grace where I can listen to the
 hush wind stir the gentle grass and understand
 that I am not alone. I am not one, not without all of the rest.

Not without the dirt and scum and bugs,
 nor the dogs, the lions nor fish.
 Not without the trees, their leaves, the fruit and the root.

We are all particles floating in space.
 Without the pull of the earth's breath,
 all would spread apart and dissipate.
 So let gravity do its job in grounding us.
 To belong here, we only have to breathe.

l. mueller

We Were Girls Together

we're ten
or twelve
or it doesn't matter, what i'm saying is
we are nothing
to be ashamed of, we are girls, we are
unreachable, here:

huddled together
in my child's bed
reaching for starlight, promising
to protect each other
from the world, from the certain chill
of august midnight, we don't talk about
goodbyes, about the ways we will unbecome ourselves.
we don't talk about anything.

and god, was it wonderful.
how ecstatic we were
for each other.

i'd watch her
watch the movie:
all that harsh light
against such a new face
number tawny freckles
and delight in losing count.

we'd press the tips of our noses together
while i held her, as if breakable
in my too-big hands
memorizing the galaxies
resting so easy
in her eyes.

in this story, the cats still fit
in our palms
chase each other
around old living
room. our parents
aren't anything more.
her mother still lives
just down the hall
in that big yellow house -
and *this* is why
we must be quiet.
tomorrow we will play hopscotch
find any excuse to hold
weightless hands, i will catch her sister
jumping from the top bunk, still all clear-skied
tea-party pink whisper
of a girl.

in this story, she wraps me
around her little finger
and i offer her spoonfuls
of moonlight.

in this story, i look at her -
i look at her -
and i tell her
what joy it is
to share
this irreplaceable,
unremarkable,
time.

in this story, i remember.

wanna know a secret? [girl's eyes light up. she nudges girl.]
[girl nods, rolls onto her back. watches time unfold.]

promise not to tell? [she just smiles.]
c'mon, promise. [and smiles.]

i'd stop it all here if i could
in an instant.

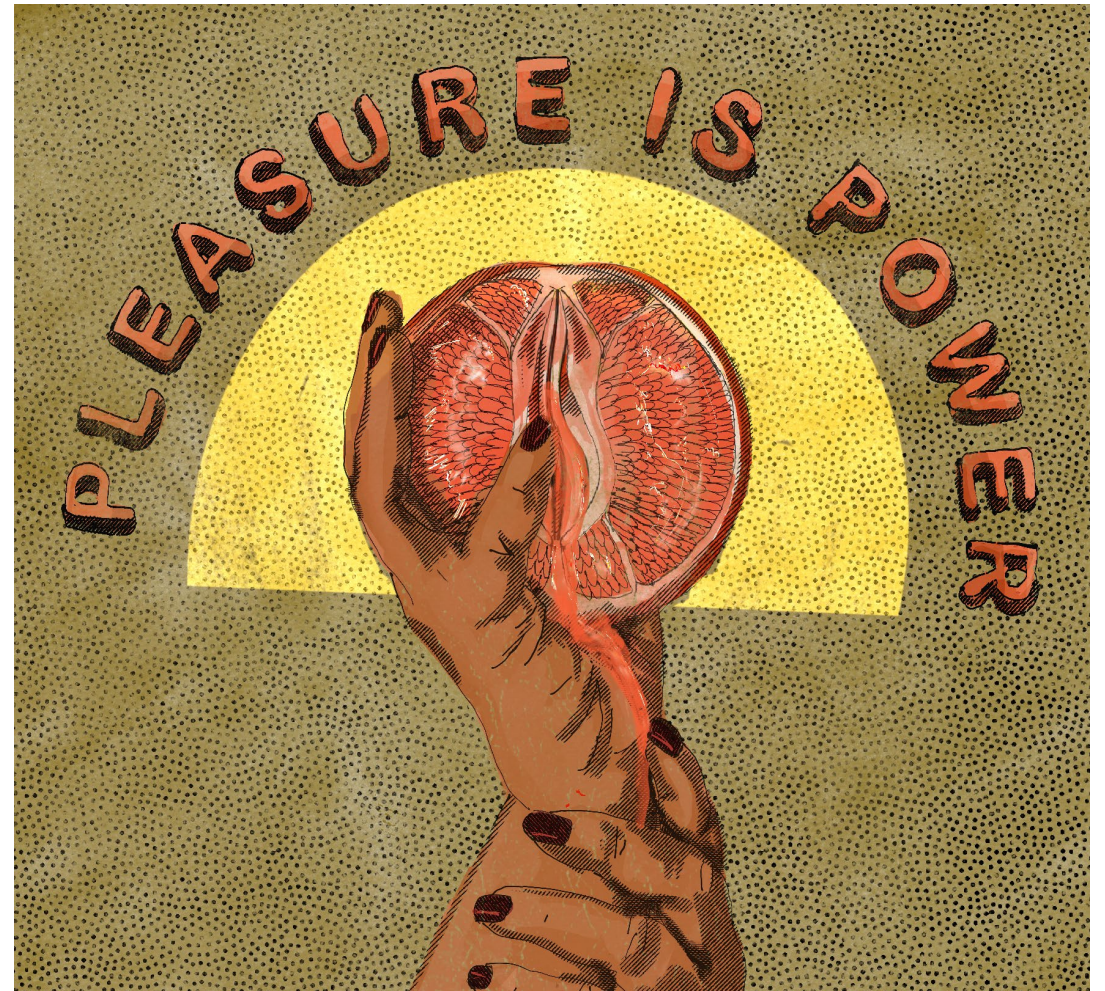
silvana melo

God (they / them)

I am convinced
that God's
pronouns are
they/them.
How long have we been
misgendering God?
Calling them
a Him
with a capital H.
As if the immensity of God
could be confined
within society's boxes of gender....

phyllis gingerella wade

Abortion Truth 2

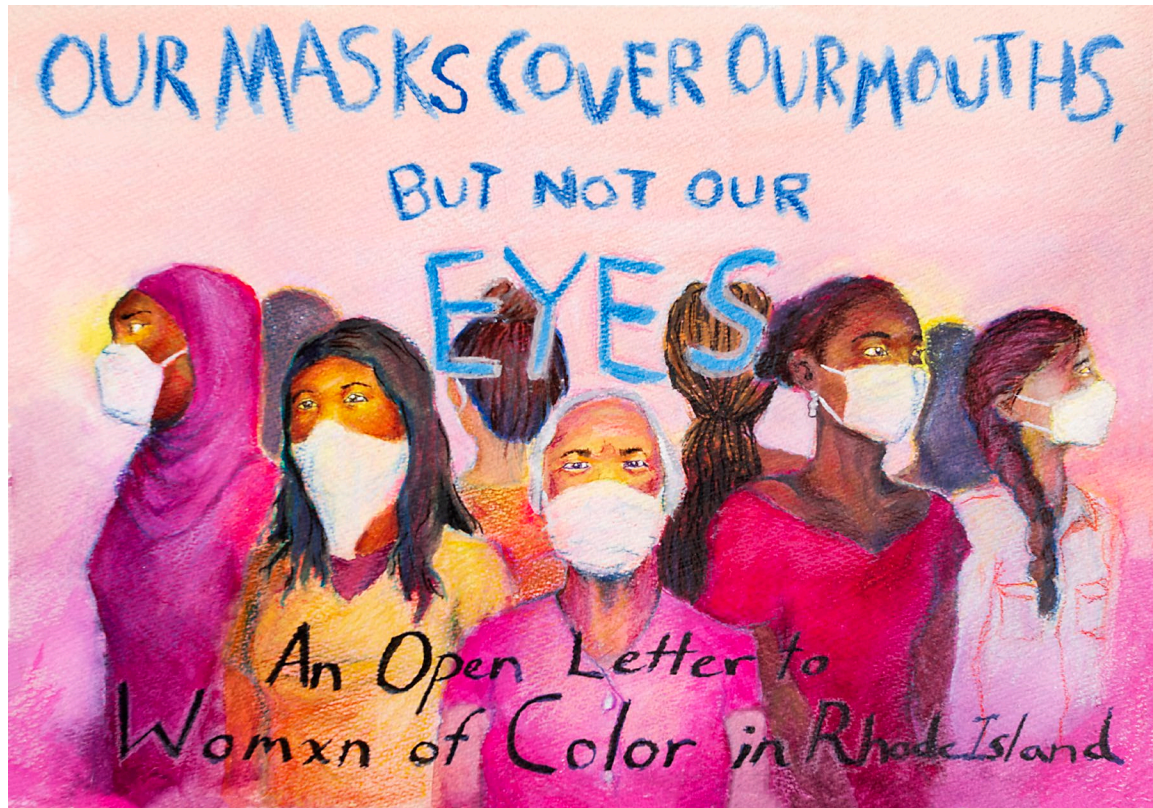


selene means

Covered but not Silenced

These images, used with permission, were first published in a 2020 Open Letter by SISTA Fire (www.sistafireri.org)





selene means

Covered but not Silenced

phyllis gingerella wade

Abortion Truth 3





marshal

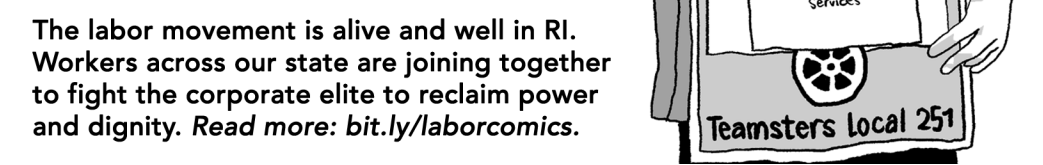
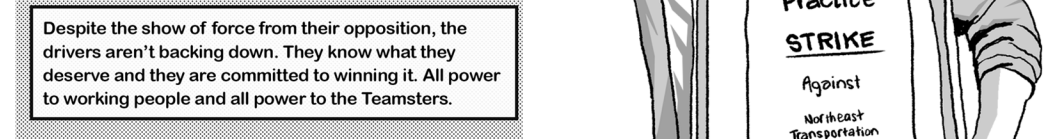
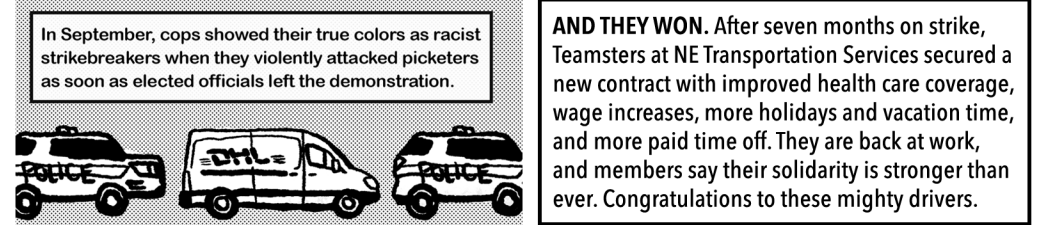
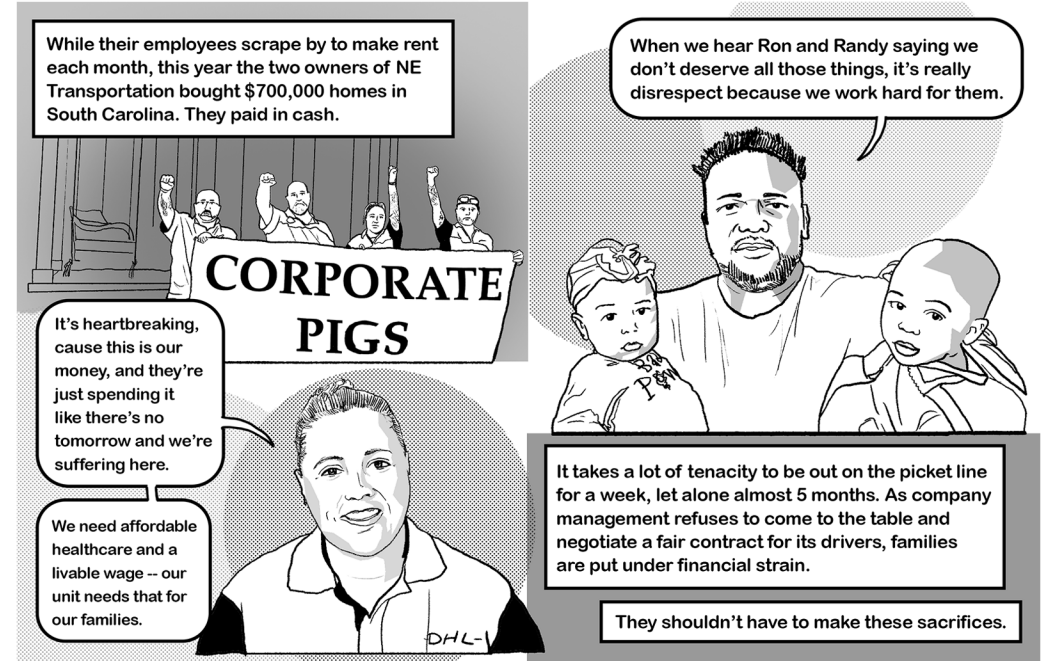
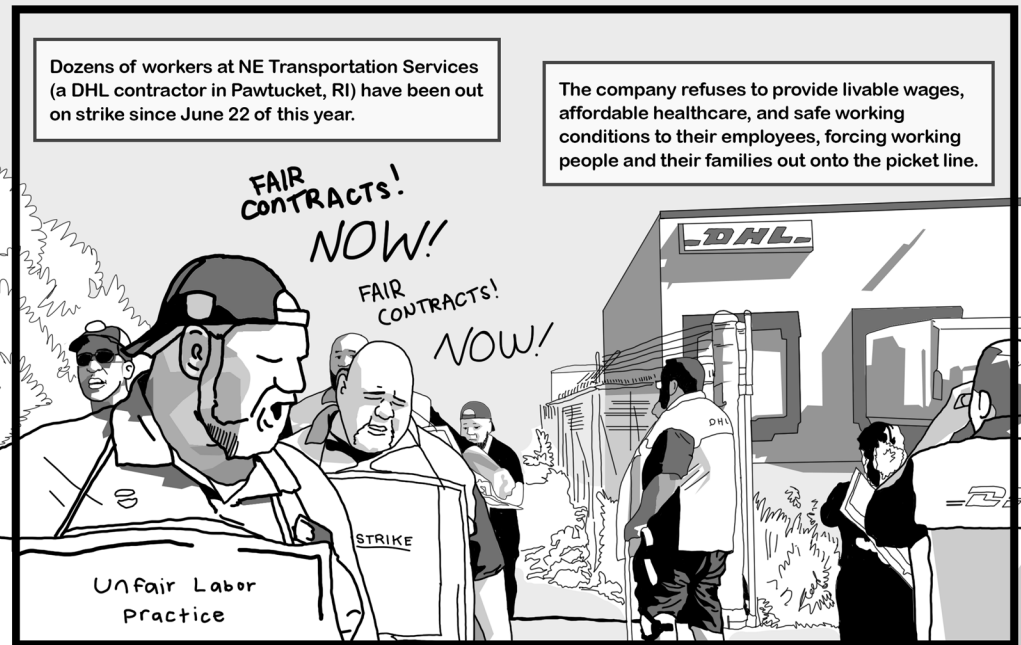
Driven to Strike & Breaking Bread

These comics, used with permission, were first published
in 2022 by Uprise RI (www.upriseri.com)

The foundation of the labor movement is solidarity. Every story that I write about a strike or about new organization at a workplace is a story about a group of people developing a profound trust and commitment to one another. Some of the strongest families are forged when everyday people join together to stand up against powerful, anti-worker actors: wealthy bosses and politicians alike.

DRIVEN TO STRIKE DHL WORKERS ON THE LINE IN PAWTUCKET

A WORKER POWER COMIC BY @LABORCOMICS | PUB. NOV 2022



BREAKING BREAD

THE STORY OF THE SEVEN STARS UNION



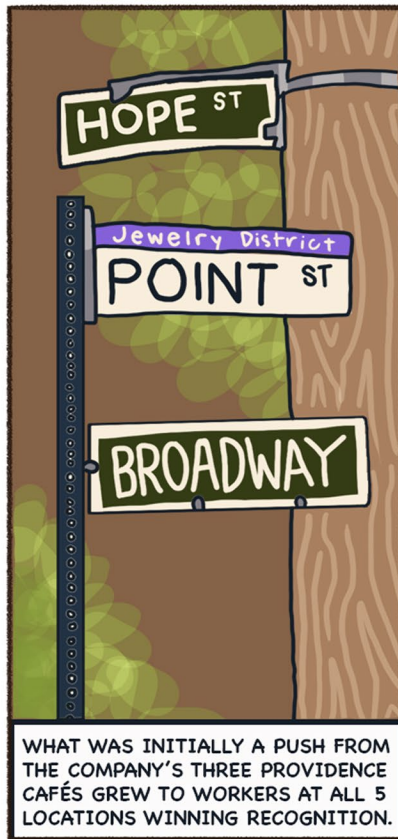
AT ONE OF PROVIDENCE'S MOST ICONIC COFFEE AND PASTRY SPOTS, WORKERS ARE SPEAKING UP AGAIN FOR THEIR RIGHT TO DIGNITY ON THE JOB.

@laborcomics



THIS SUMMER, SEVEN STARS EMPLOYEES WON VOLUNTARY RECOGNITION OF THEIR UNION WITH UFCW LOCAL 328. NOW, THEY'RE BACK ON THE SCENE TO FIGHT FOR A FAIR FIRST CONTRACT.

ON JUNE 10TH, A SUPERMAJORITY OF FIFTY WORKERS AT SEVEN STARS BAKERY — BARISTAS, COUNTER STAFF, KEYHOLDERS AND RE-STOCKERS — DELIVERED SIGNED LETTERS TO THEIR EMPLOYER PETITIONING FOR REPRESENTATION IN THEIR WORKPLACE.



WHAT WAS INITIALLY A PUSH FROM THE COMPANY'S THREE PROVIDENCE CAFÉS GREW TO WORKERS AT ALL 5 LOCATIONS WINNING RECOGNITION.



ANYONE WHO KNOWS SEVEN STARS KNOWS THAT THE FOLKS THAT WORK THERE CARE ABOUT THEIR JOBS, AND ARE DEDICATED TO DOING THEM WELL. BUT THE HOURLY BASE STARTING WAGE THAT THE COMPANY OFFERS IS JUST (SIGNIFICANTLY BELOW OTHER LOCAL COFFEE SHOPS).



BARISTA CHARLIE SAPERSTEIN NOTES THAT:

"MANAGEMENT CUT EMPLOYEES' PAY AT THE START OF THE PANDEMIC AND HASN'T GIVEN ANY INDICATION OF A RETURN TO PRE-PANDEMIC WAGES, EVEN AS THEY OPENED A NEW STORE AND MADE PLANS TO EXPAND FURTHER. WE WANT TO SEE RECOGNITION THAT EVERYONE WHO WORKS AT THE BAKERY SHOULD BENEFIT FROM OUR COLLECTIVE SUCCESS."

DESPITE CLAIMING TO OFFER "COMPETITIVE PAY" ON THEIR WEBSITE, SEVEN STARS MANAGEMENT OPERATES WITH A MODEL THAT MAKES THEIR CUSTOMERS PICK UP THE TAB FOR ANYTHING ABOVE \$9/HR IN WORKER'S PAYCHECKS.

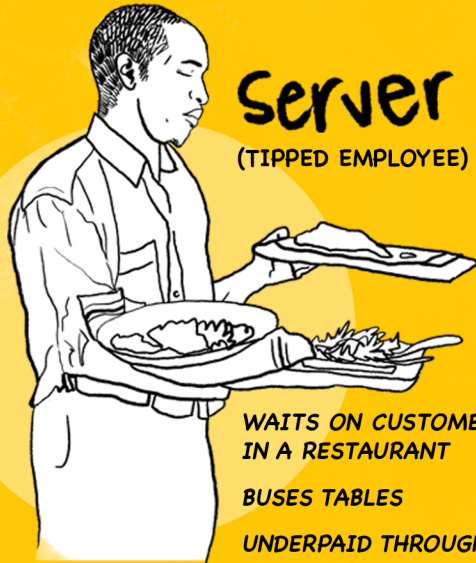
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE? ISN'T MINIMUM WAGE \$12.25/HR IN RI?



NOT FOR TIPPED EMPLOYEES! THE BASE WAGE THAT COMPANIES HAVE TO PAY TIPPED STAFF IN RI IS JUST \$3.89/HR, AS LONG AS CUSTOMERS CAN MAKE UP THE REST OF THE STATE'S MINIMUM WAGE IN TIPS.

THIS MEANS THAT IF YOU WORK FOR MINIMUM WAGE AS A TIPPED WORKER, YOUR EMPLOYER CAN LEGALLY PAY UP TO \$8.39 OF THAT \$12.25 IN TIPS YOU'VE ALREADY EARNED! IT'S BLATANTLY UNFAIR.





server

(TIPPED EMPLOYEE)

WAITS ON CUSTOMERS
IN A RESTAURANT

BUSES TABLES

UNDERPAID THROUGH
WAGE-TIP MODEL!

CURRENTLY, SEVEN STARS MANAGEMENT IS CLASSIFYING THEIR WORKERS AS TIPPED EMPLOYEES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS MISLEADING SYSTEM.

Seven stars counter staff

(ALSO UNDERPAID THROUGH WAGE-TIP MODEL!)



NOT ONLY DOES THIS CONFUSE WHAT CUSTOMERS MEAN TO DO WHEN THEY LEAVE A TIP FOR THEIR BARISTA, IT HAS REAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE PEOPLE THAT WORK THERE.



WHEN TIPS ARE LUMPED INTO PAY BY MANAGEMENT AS AN EXCUSE TO NOT PROVIDE CONSISTENT BASE WAGES, PAYCHECKS FLUXUATE CONSIDERABLY.

COUPLED WITH INCONSISTENT HOURS FOR PART-TIME STAFF, WHO DON'T HAVE BENEFITS OR A RELIABLE PATH TO BECOMING FULL-TIME, SEVEN STARS EMPLOYEES ARE LEFT GUESSING HOW OFTEN THEY'LL WORK, AND WHEN THEY DO, HOW MUCH THEY'LL BE PAID.

NO MATTER WHERE WE WORK, ALL OF US DESERVE CONSISTENT, FAIR PAY, GOOD BENEFITS, AND DIGNITY ON THE JOB.



SEVEN STARS EMPLOYEES KNOW WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE, AND ARE COMING TOGETHER, UNION STRONG, TO MAKE THEIR WORKPLACES BETTER. BY STANDING UP TO MANAGEMENT AND BARGAINING FOR THEIR FIRST CONTRACT, WORKERS ARE SHOWING WEALTHY BUSINESS OWNERS LIKE BILL AND TRACY DAUGHERTY (WHO BOUGHT THE COMPANY FROM ITS ORIGINAL OWNERS IN 2018) WHAT ALL OF US DESERVE WHEN WE WORK A "BREAD-AND-BUTTER" JOB HERE IN RI.

Since the publication of this piece in November 2022, Seven Stars employees at all five locations unanimously approved their first contract! Their strong union of over 100 employees won significant wage increases, guaranteed minimum hours, and new and improved benefits.

Congratulations to these UFCW members!



All across RI, workers are standing together in solidarity to fight for rich and meaningful lives outside of work, which starts with justice on the job. Our stories, struggles, and victories matter. They are beautiful and deserve to be shared. Follow and support art for worker power at:

<https://linktr.ee/laborcomics>



tom flanagan

Portrait of a Week that Nurtures My Soul

A recipe for a week that feeds my soul
 Waking to a sense of new opportunity
 Walking toward newness with a sense of presence
 Belief that the world will reveal itself today
 Sitting for a few long moments
 With others who sense and share a presence
 Sharing a sense that grief and celebration
 Are the natural footprints of life
 Being greeted once again with the kindness of “Hi, Alex’s Dad”
 Affirming that a lost relationship lingers – in both its virtue and its pain
 Knowing that nothing which was ever real can be negated
 Discovering a new hook – a new toehold
 That helps me climb closer to the compassionate healing of another
 Being asked – to open my heart – not for judgement,
 But for the hope that it might kindle hope in another heart
 Staring into the eyes of my dog
 As he searches for his sense of love within the mystery
 Of my own eyes
 Feeling the infinite fabric of otherness
 That holds all together in possibility
 Realizing the unvoiced song that resonates
 With my hopes to be a real person

silvana melo

Keeper of Stories

My grandmother,
 a *minha avó*,¹
 is the keeper of stories.
 She keeps stories like a songbook,
 describes her mother singing,
 “*Rosas brancas em Janeiro*
cravos roxos ao luar”²

She passed on the songs,
 much like the stories,
 I carry them in my pockets,
 everywhere I go.

My grandfather,
 o meu avô³
 is the keeper of silence,
 whole hearted laughs,
 actions, the here and now.

My grandmother sits in her kitchen,
 her mother’s kitchen,
 to tell yet another story,
 as my ears yearn for more,
 my cousin begs her to sing
 the song of the *lavrador*.⁴

Sometimes she sings her stories,
 When she does,
 we look at her in awe,
 and pray summer passes slowly
 so we can stay children

¹ Portuguese for grandmother

² Portuguese for: white roses in January, purple carnations in the moonlight

³ Portuguese for: grandfather

⁴ Portuguese for farmer



susan tacent
Bastion

tara roumes

Silence Kills

The sound of silence
slipped between his lips
as his small fingertips
tugged at the end
of her polka-dot
skirt.

His hands were around my neck.

A whisper barely audible—
the cafeteria is loud and filled
with elementary children—
he is a child;

he is just nine-years-old;
a child who has been
tortured into thinking
it is a game;

count how long his eyes
can stay
open, how long air
can fill his lungs,
how long
the word please
can echo in with
someone's ears;

His hands were around my neck.

And it all faded to black.

silvana melo

my body.

my body is a foreign land
 my body is a patriarchal hazard
 my body is a civil war
 my body is accepting applications
 for unwanted commentary
 my body is a burial ground
 home to the gravestones
 of teenage boys
 whose epitaph reads
 beloved by friends but
 brainwashed by patriarchy

my body is alarmed
 every time
 a car drives by too closely
 activating its fight or flight system
 my body is in flight mode
 my body is claimed
 and (re)claimed
 my body is wanted
 and (un)wanted

my body is a systole
 diastole reaction
 my body is pumping blood
 into a cardiovascular system
 that is systematically oppressed
 my body is anything but mine

i (re)claim my body
 as my native land
 but the troops are invading

the newspaper reads
 civil war
 the newspaper reads
 territory is too big
 and must be divided

social media reads
 diet
 the television screen reads
 white, thin, blond, barbie
 the billboard reads
 taylor for your bodysuit
 something for everybody
 the advertisement reads
 pain(less) waxing

i (re) claim my body
 but white men
 wrote lies in its history books
 i (re) claim my body
 but there is nothing
 left to claim
 every synapse has been invaded
 every natural resource
 has been stripped
 waxed and depleted

i (re) claim my body
 but even the neural pathways
 in my mind are under attack
 i call all troops to
 mind-control station
 i (re) write the story
 i burn the old history books

i (re) turn home
 (safely?) late at night
 i (re) claim my body
 i (re) claim
 my body
 my
 body
 my body.

1. mueller

Ode to Flagging, or: the 100-Footer

god bless the pronoun pin
 the backpacks dripping with patches
 everyone over, under, or un-dressed
 platform shoes at the bus stop
 every self-made haircut
 and self-made man, the obscure slang
 and box dye on your ring-cluttered fingers
 clatter of keychains, wallet chain, leather
 ode to acrylics and buzzfeed.com
 to your eyeliner, your converse, your cuff
 i raise you my flannel
 my sappho-judy-garland-tegan-and-sara-whatever-else-has-caught-on
 and never let go

let me sing for all the possibilities
 not the stereotyped, myopic, narrow, no -
 let me sing instead for what we could be
 for black and brown bodies
 for decorated cane
 for the pride flag
 streaming after the power chair
 it's time we worship
 every body
 i want to see a world where androgyny
 isn't a thin white whisper
 of privileged boyhood
 i want to see a world
 where everyone is exactly who they think they are

ode to the dreamers
 the free-thinkers
 to the people whose bodies are prisons
 for the people whose bodies are divine
 those of you keeping republicans up at night, thank you
 here's to the kids on tv
 they can only shake their heads at,
 they will always be confounded
 by the miracle
 of us.

we are the holiest thing
 they have never seen.

this one's for the most of us -
 the homeless queers, the queers of color
 families with memories in place of genes
 how she has her mother's eyes
 those of us praying at some altar
 those of us digging for meaning, always
 let us always remember we are the authorities
 that only we can tell our stories
 the thousands upon thousands upon infinities
 of stories
 but in the meantime, ode to the kids
 drenched in rainbows
 here's hoping
 it seeps to all of us.

contributors

kwana adams

Kwana Adams is a graduate of the Rhode Island College with a Bachelor's degree in Media Communication and Digital Media Production. She currently works from home as a freelance writer along with working part-time with disabled adults in a group home setting. Creative work that serves a purpose is what she wants to create.

melissa angilly

Melissa Angilly lives in Cranston, RI. Melissa enjoys expressing herself through her writings. Melissa enjoys creating different works of art that incorporate the written word and the visual arts.

erin austin

Erin Austin lives in Warwick RI. Has been writing poetry for many years. Erin also enjoys creating pottery. Her dream is to be a published poet.

sally bozzuto

Sally Bozzuto is an artist, educator, and creativity coach with specialization in lens-based arts, installation, social practice, and sound. She is passionate about the intersection of art, science, and activism and helping others integrate meaningful creative expression into their daily lives. For more information visit sallybozzuto.com.

kannetha brown

Kannetha Brown's artwork contemplates the relationship between social justice and photography, and considers how representation shapes self-identity and perception of others. She is a recipient of the MassArt Global Competence and Intercultural Understanding Award for her contributions to the Asian American community as an artist and scholar. She is one of The Phoblographer's "Six Best Asian American Photographers", and is working on a public art installation with the Providence Department of Art, Culture, and Tourism.

james celenza

James Celenza's plays have been performed at Perishable Theater for the Think Tank Festival, the New Ten Minute Plays Festival; the Columbus Theater, Trinity Repertory Company Kickoff, Barplays, Culture*Park, Roots Cultural Center, What Cheer in the Park, Poetry Loft, Providence Fringe Festival, Wilbury Group-Climate Change Theater Action. His plays have been published in *Ars Medica*, Univ of Toronto, in Co-produced the Station Nation: National Reflections on the Station Fire in collaboration with Soulographie and TAPSBrown; and the Barplays Festival Words Progress Administration Collective.

contributors

creative writers of west bay ri

Creative Writers of West Bay RI is a group of individuals that came together during the COVID 19 pandemic. The group formed out of the need to connect with others. The group is made up of individuals varying in age and abilities. The writers include Carol Bruins, Rachel Savastano, Joe Henderson, Peter Seabra, Megan Picard, Jake Castore, Melissa Angilly, and recently joined Evan Huddon. The group is facilitated by Marjorie Shortway Pavao.

kristen curry

Kristen Curry is a nonprofit writer living and working in Rhode Island with recent articles for the University of Rhode Island, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and Roger Williams Park Conservancy. She also enjoys sketching and recently auctioned art for the Woonasquattucket River Watershed Council and Newport Art Museum.

tom flanagan

As a father of two sons born in Ecuador and raised here in Rhode Island, Tom Flanagan has found himself living two lives. On one hand he lived a privileged life as a scientist and on the other hand he lived through his younger son's behavioral health struggles and eventually accidental overdose. He has chosen now to follow up on the path of hopefulness that his son discovered.

pilar hernandez

Pilar Hernandez is just a guy from Rhode Island, who finds humor in language so she attempts to speak several of them. As an AFAB individual using she/her pronouns, she is committed to being a life-long learner and conspirator of love.

ses houghton

Ses Houghton is a lesbian, an illustrator, but most importantly: a cow enjoyer.

douglas kolacki

Douglas Kolacki began writing while stationed with the Navy in Naples, Italy. Since then he has placed fiction in such publications as *Weird Tales*, *Liquid Imagination Online* and *The Lorelei Signal*. He currently haunts Providence, Rhode Island.

marshal

Marshal (they/them) is a queer + trans artist and organizer living on occupied Narragansett land. They make nonfiction comics about local labor movements and our collective fight for beauty and dignity. @laborcomics, bit.ly/laborcomics

selene means

Selene Means is an artist/photographer, hispanic queer non-binary non-stop positive force.

silvana melo

Silvana Melo (she/her) is a poet, singer-songwriter and educator focusing on the beauty and challenges of language in describing our human experiences. As a bilingual poet, her writing sometimes draws on the Portuguese language and elements of the immigrant experience. She is passionate about writing that breaks barriers and exposes shared humanity and vulnerability. www.silvanawrites.com

rita kova moore

Armed with deep knowledge and love for the natural world, Rita Kova Moore creates art that embraces the beauty, and mystery of nature. She is a single mom who recently moved to Barrington from Atlanta after falling in love with the state. With an awareness of the urgency and need for future generations to become good stewards of the land, Rita's images and poetry impart a sense of awe, fantasy, and potential change needed.

l. mueller

L. Mueller is a creative operating at the intersections of queerness, disability, trauma, healing, and activism. They'd like to recognize the Future Perfect Project for their life saving and changing work with young LGBTQ+ people across the continent.

kou tukala nyan

Kou Tukala Nyan is a multidisciplinary artist who works with creative writing, memoir, journalism, performance, and curation to tell stories. Within the past decade, she has self-published "Jesus, Adulting, People in Poetry," written for Rhode Island Monthly and Providence Media, and curated over 20 community and fundraising events for various occasions and organizations.

charmaine mandisa porter

Charmaine Mandisa Porter is a poet and performer born and raised in Providence, RI. Charmaine writes from their experience as a way to further explore the human condition. They are a graduate of RI College where their studies focused on creative writing, but also included linguistics and French. Language plays a huge role in Charmaine's entire way of being, as illustrated in their work.

sam ra

Sam Ra is a maker, writer, forager, chef, human interested in the intersection of what webs we can weave between each other, our material world and the landscape to best survive the crumbles of the status quo as we currently know it.

reza rites

Reza Clifton ("Reza Rites") is a writer, artist, educator, and cultural savant from Providence, RI. She brings all these things together by using traditional and new media tools to teach and tell stories, and to explore and celebrate the African Diaspora, women, and other oft-oppressed groups and communities of color. Topics that often appear in Reza's work include racial and social justice, feminism, radical self-care and holistic healing, love, and "the bountiful beauty of nature."

mara rose

Mara Rose is a senior majoring in English and Philosophy at the University of Rhode Island. She is currently working as an intern at the Motif, is published at URI's Ether(bound) and loves a good mountain to climb.

tara roumes

Tara Roumes is a junior at the University of Rhode island where she is studying English and journalism.

christopher samih-rotondo

Christopher Samih-Rotondo grew up in Bristol, RI and attended the Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA, studying political economy, the historical development of capitalism and liberatory social movements, as well as popular education. Christopher lives in the North End of Providence with his wife and three kids. He's also a writer, musician, soccer player and martial artist who believes that Palestine will be free in his lifetime.

susan tacent

Susan Tacent's work appears in Tin House Online, Michigan Quarterly Review, Blackbird, DIAGRAM, Slice Magazine, Coolest American Stories 2022, Reckoning, and elsewhere. In addition to teaching writing workshops for her public library and Creature Conserve, a nonprofit that celebrates, studies, and protects animals and their environment by bringing artists, writers, and scientists together, she feels lucky to facilitate a lively assisted living book club, seven years strong, whose participants' collective age exceeds 900 years.

contributors

j. valley

J. Valley writes from trees. Her ancestors on the maternal side lived in Rhode Island before it was so named, and some of them came around the time it was first named, seeking the haven of Providence. She likes to see things from upside down; takes long walks; and has been listening to and telling stories since she was too small to be noticed by most people. Activism is her second name, figuratively speaking.

phyllis gingerella wade

Phyllis Gingerella Wade is an artist, educator, scholar and activist based in Providence, Rhode Island. She especially likes causeways, nightshades and tin whistles.

rob yaffe

Rob Yaffe has been serving carrot juice to the region for 50 years going as far back as 1971 when his mom opened up the Golden Sheaf Natural Foods Market and Juice Bar. He is the Co-Owner of The Garden Grille/ Wildflour Vegan Bakery Cafe and formerly The Grange.

karlie zhao

Karlie Zhao is a Providence-based interdisciplinary artist, activist and programmer, who is dedicated to reflecting on the power system imposed in every aspect in our lives with art and some philosophical thinking.

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