



LIBRARY ZINE!

VOICES FROM ACROSS
THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Volume 4
2020



New York
Public
Library

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THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Volume 4
2020 Issue

EDITORIAL TEAM

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Young Adult Librarian
Wakefield

Emma Eriksson

Young Adult Librarian
Hunts Point

Adena Gruskin

Adult Librarian
Epiphany

Victoria James

Adult Librarian
Stavros Niarchos Foundation
Library

Tabrizia Jones

Young Adult Librarian
Pelham Parkway-Van Nest

Karen Loder

Adult Librarian
Battery Park City

Greetings creative New Yorkers!

When the NYPL Zine committee came together and chose this year's theme, we had no idea it would turn out like this. That our communities would lock down, that our relationships would be forced into screen, that the birth of a new decade would mark so much suffering and death--we were different people before all this who could not have imagined such circumstances when we asked the city of New York to raise its voice. And still, despite the toll of months of uncertainty and fear and an ill fitting silence that threaded itself into its streets, New York City shouted back to us. Like the chants of the many Black Lives Matter protests that marched up and down every borough, this issue of the New York Public Library's Library Zine! echoes what New York City stands for.

Whether we were ready or not, this was a year of reckoning for the city. We were forced to reckon with the vile and systematic racism built into our infrastructure, the experiences of the oppressed and overworked upon whose back the city survives, and with who exactly we are as individuals. With notes of agony, anger, hope, and love, this issue harmonizes the voices who spoke out in a time of disaster.

The NYPL Zine committee hopes you take the time to listen to these voices who so courageously spoke up at a time when it's easier to stay in bed. Activism and progress requires both the speaker and the listener. At the time I am writing this, the country stands at that gap between the hook and the period of a question mark with the 2020 presidential election less than a month away. It's a moment in which we can't even imagine what that future time will look like when this issue finally makes it to our readers' eyes. Regardless of the outcome, if 2020 has cemented anything for us all, it's that you cannot silence New York City.

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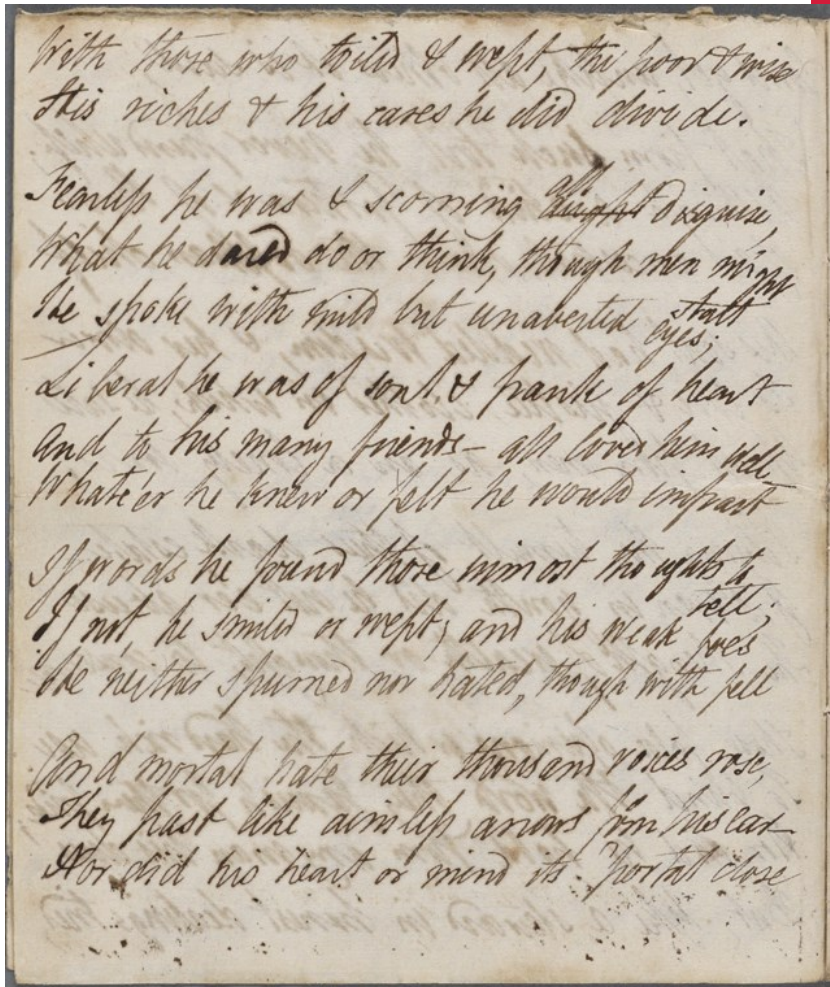
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Poetry

Everyone is welcome at The New York Public Library regardless of gender, race, sexuality, and creed. Here, you will find the poetry and prose that showcases how New Yorkers raise their voices. There is no better time than the present to be heard! Raising your voice means something different to everyone! Your voice is your art, your activism, your inspiration. You never know...one of these pieces might inspire you to raise your voice.

Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, The New York Public Library. "Holograph poem, "Athanase: a fragment"" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1819. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/bb74937c-055e-9a41-e040-e00a18067e20>

Poetry

Tonight, Things Come Singing Anannya Uberoi

From down the avenue
vigorous yowls of romance
come cycling from Queensboro,
the parted cherry on the sidewalk
works up a slow June roast,
plums grow sour to the rattle
and hum of prayers.

These are not small voices singing
despite you.

These are black bears and bighorn sheep
who do not forget their poachers.
These are remnants of fishnet fibers
drowned in the Hudson.
These are piping plovers that carry
epitaphs between their red-stained beaks.

Listen.

They are lifting your undertones
as you flag the streets. Tonight,
they join you in your struggle.

Tomorrow again, in your calm.

Color Chelsea Ternier

They disrespect us because of our color
Safety is promised when your color is duller
They just want to see us suffer
But that is what makes us tougher

You called us names
You locked us in chains
And you mocked us
But that was only for your gains

Are you infuriated because we have melanin?
Are you upset because we're fighting back and
we'll win?
Well ask yourself this...
If you were me, wouldn't you be fighting for
your happiness?

We built this "great" country
The least you could have done was let us run
free!
But no
Because you're scared to let our culture over-
flow

To all my little black boys and girls
Who are in great pain
Make sure you know
Your color and your rights are something they
can't contain.

They chant "All lives matter"
They think it has nothing to do
With the fact that all lives don't matter until
black peoples' do.

For the Escape-Fire Couple (And the Fires They Neither See Nor Love)

Britton Buttrill

They wrap one another in
The grate of the
Escape-Fire.
Below them
One Hundred and Twelve (-fth)

“All But Dissertations” wheel bound cases

Never having seen suits,
Aside from the one worn by
She who graded
How well the two of them
Gentrified that self-same avenue.

The Escape-fire couple allow the
Sirens to whirl loud and
Choral with Harlem Trap.
They strain their necks only to
Bump with it, kiss;

Not to search for a White Red and Blue.
Those colors lie dormant as a door-mat,
Never to be hang-manned on the
Wall behind the window-shelf.
They favor shelves stacked with contrarian
books.

New York City is burning and
The death-coughs rattle in
The bones of talking heads, and
The air is stuck in the lungs, because of a
Jack-booted and germ-dyed *Red'white'n'blue* .

From the throats of somebody who is,
So help them God,
Human,
They kiss.
The kiss doesn't take them away from

Brooklyn Fire, or the
Knowing.
She, the knowing, He
The knowing and not.
So it is,

And they know
“how it be?”
“It be ah'ight...”
Though orthography frequently
Fails the both of them.

Tense & aspect variance has no Affect,
'Cause
Within the switching of
Codes like train-tracks they
Hear one another's nuances.

“How it be?” only matters to Fourteenth Street.
“How it be?” that she's
A black'girl.
“How it be?” that he's
A white'boy.

Street, lying with syllables in a half-
Stanza,
Thus, you know “how it be”, so

Harlem burns and
Atlanta burns and
The bottom of the
Espresso maker burns.
And they burn and love.

They will know all of this, too.
The New York Burning and the
Shattering of convenient Civil fairy-tales,
Which they will never tell the kids who
Will play in Late-Capitalist ashes,

Just 'cause they want to,
The kids.

Nobody on one-hundred and twelfth street
Knows the names or cares to know
The names of the fire-escape couple,
Because all they can name are the names

On so many necessary signs.

So as the "All But Deserving" trickle out and
Catch a glance of them
Silhouetted in escape-fire love not
Escaping;
The two of them.

"Blacgirl"
"Hiteboy"

All kissing sweat, middle fingers mixed,
Up in the air flying in the face of
Fire and plague.
The two of them turn their
Self-same faces

Away from the street and
Into one another, then
Back again to the street.

"They don't make sense,"
Mutters the masked badge.

"They how it be,"
Murmurs the mask-less concrete.

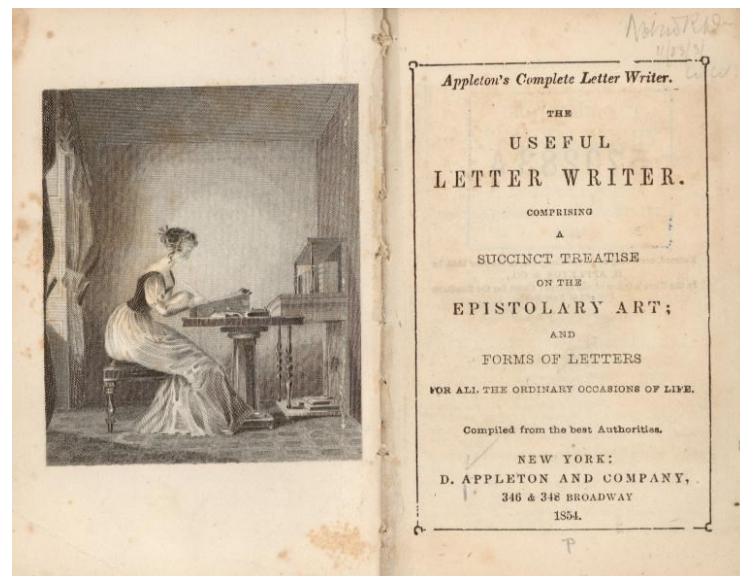
Neither catch a reply from the
Couple because the
Couple "don't say" a reply.
They are in the knowing.
They know it "don't make sense".

None of it makes Sense it
Never has made Sense, *see*
That's the Knowing.

With that they leave the
Fire-escape.
They wiggle into the window, walk
Past the books to the bedroom; louder
Sirens now.

They open the door, walk
Through it and shut it
Behind them.

They practice making babies all
Night because they can.
They want to.



General Research Division, The New York Public Library.
"Frontispiece and title page." The New York Public Library
Digital Collections. 1854. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/943c5f18-2efb-d44f-e040-e00a18061244>

Sisters of Color

Anannya Uberoi

We are tiny dreams
clinging onto colored feathers
and locked threads that writhe
at whiffs of whispers in the air.

We are renegade hearts who are not
afraid of becoming nightmares.

We are voices that refuse to be
restrained under reticulations.

We are shades that glide on white walls
to paint them coral, cranberry, gold.

We are stuff dreamcatchers are afraid of.



The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. "Audre Lorde. Staten Island, NY." The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1987. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5e66b3e8-cd03-d471-e040-e00a180654d7>

My Almond Eyes

Christina Tram

My almond eyes never saw myself
As any different from you
Until your mouth told me different and your
hands pulled your eyes back,
Closing your world and mine
To boxes and checks.

Who am I? Who do my eyes belong to?

The shape of my eyes shape the way I live.
My eyes tell you I am Asian before you
See that I am
a red, white, and blue patriotic American.

Where are you really from?

"Ni hao!" ...Sorry I'm not Chinese.
Your eyes still don't see my eyes any different.

Why are your jokes about my almond eyes...your
jokes hurt
Even when they are swept under your blinking
blindness to my Asian American self.

"You're just being sensitive"

Am I the Cho Chang or Mulan to what you call
Your circle of friends -
diverse to you is me as an ornament.

"Good at math"
...Well yeah you're Asian

"Like to read"
... Well yeah you're Asian

I'm not your model minority
please don't invalidate my hard work
Even if your racism is.

"When will my reflection show who I am?"
Beyond my almond eyes.

21st Century Woman

Carolina Thomas

“Stand up straight”
 “Smile”
 “Cover up” “show some skin”
 “That's going to distract the boys”

I wear a hoodie, I'm a prude
 A v-neck means you're asking for it

In stores all you see is ripped jeans, crop tops,
 and two piece bikinis.
 But you are told, “you aren't skinny enough” or
 it's too “slutty”.

When you are in an argument you are
 passionate about
 You are deemed: rude, emotional, bossy, intense
 or flat out too much

When you make a point in a discussion, they
 silence you by saying
 “You don't know what you're talking about.”
 When you get mad, they fire “is it that time of
 the month” at you

Paid less, overlooked is a reality for half of the
 country

A question I received from a very young age
 “Oh, when you want to have kids?”

Something women tackle on a daily basis
 “Oh you are a working mom?”
 “Oh you are a stay at home mom?”

Aiming high is perceived as reaching a little *too*
far or just not realistic
 Being an idealist, or a daydreamer

Being told from day one women can't be in
 positions of power.

Because we are too emotional and
 unpredictable.
 We don't know how to stand still and be pretty,
 as well as soft spoken.

21st century women are the social media models
 who are told they show off skin for clout
 Who are blamed for everything from having guy
 friends to boyfriends

Being told what to wear, how to wear it.

“Too much make-up.” “catfish”

We are constantly being compared to objects
 such as:
 Dishwasher
 Or we are told to make a man a sandwich and
 get back to the kitchen

When we return the favor and call men wallets,
 we are disrespectful and “can't take a joke.”
 But I thought *females were not funny?*

Our right to do as we please with our bodies are
 constantly under fire,
 “Murderer”
 “Irresponsible”
 “Whore”

Fathers are told to protect their daughters, and
 daughters are taught to always have a man by
 her side to be “safe”
 Why not educate your sons.
 Educate them to respect
 A woman's voice
 A woman's opinion
 A woman's body
 Her rights
 Her authority

Educate him to respect a woman.
 She is someone, not someone's.

In the Clearing Stands an Athlete

Art Gatti

They spit on Jack Johnson
 Jack Johnson!
 Jack Johnson! A man who could crush them with one
 mighty blow.
 And later Joe Louis, the so-called Brown Bomber,
 despite mobbed-up fight games, still gave them a
 show.

Cassius Marcellus Muhammad Ali
 stood up for his rights as an athlete born free.
 But they took back the title he honestly won
 and named him America's least-favored son.

Greek games reestablished was fascism's chance
 to capture the gold and to watch Hitler dance
 But then Jesse Owens, to the Nazi's disgrace,
Sieg hieled with his victory in Der Fuehrer's face.

But when Jesse returned to his old home down
 South,
 They said "Just stay in your place, boy, and do shut
 your mouth."
 Olympics, Olympics! Black fists were held high.
 Did it end our damn racism? Did we give it a try?

Word:
When slaves were collected by Arabic mobs,
they were targeted often to do certain jobs.
Plantation owners near levies so steep
needed river homes stilted when the high waters seep,
so they snatched them some architects of the Black
race
to shore up their mansions--to our nation's disgrace.

Now slavers raid high schools in poor neighborhoods
 but their promising contracts can't be understood.
 In place of diplomas false dreams are instilled
 and the teen boys are slaves soon, against their own
 wills.
 And then, if they're lucky, a rich bigot walks by
 and promises them everything up to the sky.

Forget that he's evil and forget all his sins
 and concentrate only on assuring him wins.
 He gives young men bling and big fancy wheels,
 figures they won't notice the stench of his deals.
 As long as they don't pry or ask or wheedle
 as he tries to pass camels through the eyes of thin
 needles.

Great wealth controls athletes throughout the land.
 If you fracture your kneecap you can still join the band.
 And you can sit in the front when you get on the bus.
 Not eating enough? Well, don't cause a fuss.
 You *could* soon be house-bound and out of the fields,
 with houses and cars and Sterling-clad deals.

Rich trustees of colleges can't write or spell
 when it comes to revealing their paychecks that swell.
 Two million per annum for their overseeing,
 but no lunch or snack time for young human beings.
 Caviar, lobster and big Champagne dinners
 for coaches that bring their schools national winners.

The kids? They learn lessons of struggle and need,
 but won't even earn Twinkies when their team wins
 first seed.

Well not anymore, kid! The clarion calls!
 It shakes all sports rooftops and rings off the walls—
 Free agents, free sportsmen, free Black, Brown and
 White,
 You're not disenfranchised, so take back the night!
 A new day is dawning when athletes make rules,
 and their first demand's simple: "Dump all racist fools!"

4th of July

Emma Suárez Báez

Sitting by
the Hudson River
all sorts of colors
light up the sky

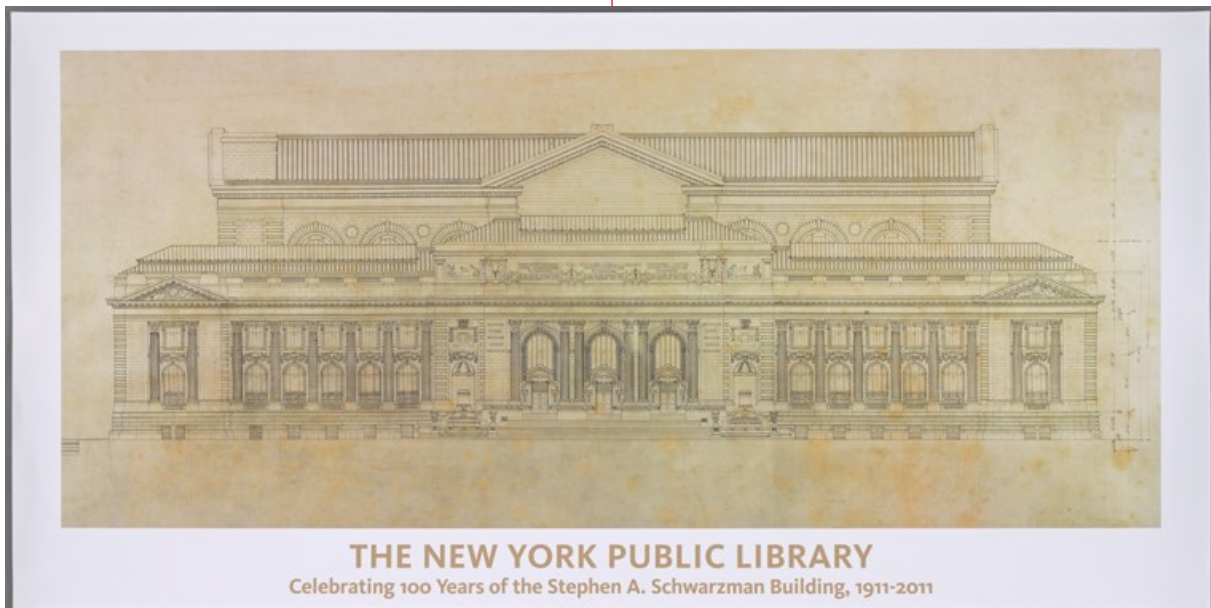
tiny golden fires
coming down
metal white lights
like fallen stars
against the black night

"This is the sound of war
in other countries",
my 7-year-old says

Colors of New York City

Rachita Ramya

At first glance,
It was easy to assume the landscape of the city
Being just a barrage of steely grays
However, once I looked closely
I realized it was hardly monochromatic,
It was a spectrum of vivid colors
Colors of different cultures, backgrounds,
languages, ethnicities,
Colors of shattered dreams,
Colors of warped up realities,
And colors of an undying spirit of never giving
up hope
Tangible colors that could only be felt,
Not seen,
New York, the city of dreams,
The place with nowhere to go and everywhere
to be



No Division, NYPL item, but not associated with any one Division, e.g. NYPL Art Work, The New York Public Library. "The New York Public Library" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 2010. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/052b4b80-98b3-0130-2bb3-58d385a7b928>

The Lies They Tell Us

Ella Collins

We've been told to "get to the back of the bus"
We've been told to "go pick cotton"
We've been told that we are less than human.
We've also been told to stop whining.

Being black in America means your baby is three times more likely to die.

Being black in America means getting declined from a job based on your name.

Being black in America means your medical issues are ignored.

Being black means you just have to be heard.

Black is beautiful.

Black is overcoming.

Black is independent.

Black people are too loud.

In this great country we are three times more likely to be killed by police.

In this great country our deaths aren't justified.

In this great country we are silenced.

In this country if you don't like it, just leave.

Our rights were given to us.

Our rights aren't to an equal education.

Our rights don't include basic housing needs.

Our rights are "equal".

As a black person, I was burned by god.

As a black person, I am only 3/5ths of a person.

As a black person, I should act ghetto.

As a black person, I am violent.

I have kinky hair.

I have ashy legs.

I have big nostrils.

I am exotic.

Black men are two times more likely to be imprisoned.

Black men are more likely to face jail time on minor charges.

Black men earn 75¢ to the white man's dollar.

Black men aren't dependable.

The N-word has a history of racist intentions.

The N-word was used to dehumanize a race.

The N-word is a slavery-era term.

The N-word is protected by my freedom of speech.

These racist words are hurtful in more than emotional ways.

These cruel words make black people feel ostracized by society.

These gross words separate the people.

These insensitive words kill.



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MRS. ROSA PARKS DAVID BOSTON (Parade Marshal)

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library. "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Mrs. Rosa Parks, and David Boston (Parade Marshal) at The Great Freedom March Rally, Cobo Hall" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1963. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/8e0981a2-4af2-a10a-e040-e00a18063089>

Small Talk

Gabriel Ross Madera

I'm being followed
 My breath is shallow
 My pace quickens
 Flashing lights
 White,
 red and
 blue

Why do they always assume?
 Do they just want an excuse to
 shoot?

Whenever I walk down the streets
 I pull the risk of
 Being misconstrued by the man in blue
 And them making me put my wrists
 up

Plant the gun in my hand
 Claim it was a stick up

Though I followed every demand
 This is stuff I have to think of.

Keep the pitbull chained
 So the mut can't act up
 Though they've never bared their
 fangs
 You wouldn't know if they could
 You draw your profiles
 Somehow it's always the same man
 One sketch leads to plenty deaths

Plenty lives

Destroyed

In just a matter of

Seconds.

I flinch at stop lights
 When the patrol car pulls up
 Clammy hands arms
 stiff at their sides
 Try to keep composure but I'm froze up
 Preparing myself
 Ready to get my phone up
 Green light goes on
 And the cop car
 drives
 off.

The season's odd
 No summer time shenanigans
 Everybody's panicking whenever someone
 Starts to cough
 Protests that strive for attention
 WE'VE BEEN WRONGED!
 Turn to riots when the police release
 The tear gas
 Making cries
 into sobs.

I feel trapped
 The world screaming in pain
 On my laptop
 I forgot the smell of laughter
 I'm being crushed by my
 Apartment walls
 I'd have more space in my school's
 Bathroom stalls
 As the walls close in

I've never felt so small.



Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library. "The Afro-American" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1955-12-17. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/b1d049f0-6dbd-0136-8734-575c24b1c9e9>

Voices of the Unheard

Hunter Cabiness

It was all going well.
 People were dancing,
 Chanting,
 Singing,
 Then red and blue lights covered the walls,
 Like drapes covering the windows of change,
 That blocks the sunlight of acceptance.
 And now that the suns been blocked,
 The gas stabs my eyes,
 My head meets the ground.
 My hands are restricted behind my back,
 As the kind boy in blue taunts me with his
 authority over mine,
 The barrel of that authority I can feel,
 To the back of my head,
 They say rubber hurts less,
 But I don't want to test it.
 I cry not to shoot as the gravel is inhaled in my
 nose.
 I see two more coming with their batons of
 justice,
 The same batons of justice that proceeded to
 beat in my face,
 bruised my brown skin,
 And when they saw darker spots appear on my
 forehead,
 they saw more of what they hate,
 And they hit harder,
 For justice, of course.
 And now I can't see cops,
 I see crips,
 Crips that are authorized by the state,
 Crips that are applauded when they shoot
 someone,
 Crips that are called heroes,
 They toss me in the back of their cruiser,
 Blood rushing down my face,
 While it is only a reminder of my mortality,
 It is the only warm confront I will find in this
 cold,
 Dark place.

Out my one good eye,
 I watch out the window,
 A city in ruins.
 This was our land.
 I shutter as I watched the streets that we
 paved
 The buildings that we made,
 Burned,
 Robbed.
 A riot is the voice of the unheard.
 Until that riot isn't one anymore.
 It morphs
 Shifts uncomfortably into something it never
 wanted to be,
 An opportunity,
 Not for a man who screamed "I Can't Breathe"
 Who wants to kill the injustice he was dealt,
 by killing the system.
 Not for a poor little Black girl,
 Who just wanted some chemicals to bleach
 her melanin,
 So she could now be a prom queen.
 Not for a poor little black boy to put a barrier
 between his feet
 And the cold, stone of the ground.
 But for the privileged.
 For a privileged little boy,
 To throw a small stone,
 That echoes a tremendous sound,
 To the anchors that tie down the ship of
 narratives
 into a wild sea of media,
 That shows a little black boy tossing stones,
 While a privileged boy hurls a rock.
 But there is a lighter stroke of the privileged
 Yet just as harmful,
 Is the Privileged having a bird,
 Share their message,
 Make it a banner of "honor",
 "Courage",
 And "support",
 So everyone can witness their bravery,

As they sink back into their golden castles,
 With high security,
 Sheltered from the reality,
 of where I am right now.
 In the back of a car,
 With my freedom tied behind my back,
 With my face bashed in with a baton of justice.
 The crips with badges return shortly,
 I see a few more outside,
 Breaking camera lights,
 So they can continue waltzing in the dark.
 So they can carry out more justice.
 With their rubber bullets of pain,
 Pain that burns,
 Pain that kills.
 The wheels spin and the car is going,
 The silence between me and them is acid in my
 gut,
 It burns,
 My stomach churns inside and out,
 And all I can do is vomit out letters,
 That string together,
 But the letters are still acid,
 Only it burns them.
 "Why did you stomp on his neck?"
 Silence.
 "Why did you shoot him for jogging?"
 Silence
 "Why did you raid her house?"
 Silence
 "Why did you choke him?"
 Silence.
 Their silence is a dagger in my chest,
 The more questions I ask,
 That dagger drives in deeper,
 Into my chest of pride,
 And makes me bleed,
 Blood of disappointment,
 Crying tears of anger.
 I let out one more question,
 It is a whimper,
 A ghost that has left my lungs,
 But will make little impact
 For they can't see it

They can't hear it,
 And they can't feel it.
 I don't expect a sound
 But the acid still burns on the tip of my tongue,
 And I need to spit it out.
 "Why do you hate us?"
 The cops let out a hesitated sound,
 My ears are ready to put up their shields,
 To defend against an onslaught of deflections,
 Deflects defending the west of the Earth
 While my ears,
 defend the west of my brain.
 "Your culture is violent"
 One scar
 "You can't be smart like us"
 Another wound.
 No job,
 No money,
 No house,
 No family,
 Nothing.
 Then I hear a crackle.
 Glass shatters.
 Water is on the ground.
 No.
 It's gas.
 The fire burst furiously,
 As it burns this station to a crisp.
 I stand there.
 And think about the fire.
 And the people who started it.
 That is not how the world works.
 I will make sure of it.
 I waltz outside.
 I turn to face the fire.
 I stare for a moment.
 I raise my fist.
 A crowd of people walks behind me.
 I don't need to turn around
 To feel a hundred more fists,
 Raised behind me.

Hear Jembe*

Lisa Goiens

Brothers, Sisters—hear jembe?
 Then lift your voices,
 Stamp your feet,
 And be trailblazers,
 Be hell raisers,
 Arise,
 Revolutionize,
 And change the world . . .
 . . . it's time.
 You know where you've been;
 You know what you've seen;
 You know where you are;
 Now find where you're going.
 Bring your struggles,
 Bring your suffering,
 Bring your pain,
 and from those....we shall gain.
 Bring your roots!
 Your afros,
 Your cornrows.
 Bring your fruits!
 Your couscous,
 Your mangoes,
 Your black-eyed peas,
 Your collard greens.
 Bring your colors!
 Black/Red/Green,**
 All shades, all hues.
 Bring diversity,
 Bring variety, and yes,
 Those too—
 For they are justly yours—
 The Red, the White, and the Blue.

Bring your knowledge,
 Your creativity,
 Your artistry,
 Your song and dance,
 Your history.
 Bring your Pride.
 Bring your Beauty.
 Bring your Glory.

Bring your essence,
 your spirits,
 Your souls,
 Yourselfs,
 Your best.
 Then—
 let us gather 'round,
 let us get together,
 let us get down,
 and as we do,
 Let us rise up!
 Amen

*Djembe or jembe (“jem-bay”) is the name of a West African drum, which in traditional African societies, is used to summon or gather the people.

**The three colors (cited out of order) of the Pan-African flag designed by political activist Marcus Garvey in 1920.



New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library. "Card catalog and seated readers" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-e4ec-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

Just a Joke

Lydia Luo

Laughter and voices thunder
Rows of tables and chairs
Opening my lunch
And they start to stare

Taunting with their songs
While they pull their eyes
I half-heartedly laugh with them
Ignoring the derogatory disguise

Until I'm just so weary
Finally speaking out
"Hey, it's just a joke,"
They continue to go about

And they think it's okay to point and shout
"IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!"
Cutting open my wounds
They throw more salt

Am I safe?
While down the street
Thinking to myself
Oh god, am I going to get beat?

"The Chinese Virus or The Kung Flu"
How ignorant, how intolerant can you be
"because it came from China," you try to defend
It promotes racism, don't try to flee,

Camouflaged as a mask
Your hurtful words spill
Don't think they aren't heard
What are you trying to fulfill

Can't you go out of your way to educate
yourself
And stop blaming
Learn to confront the racists
There is no use in framing

Your silence is deafening
As good as their jeers
Comprehend and tell them, shout, scream
It's not that difficult, just inform your peers

Please understand
Try to be more woke
We are in this together
It's not "just a joke"



New York Public Library Archives, The New York Public Library. "Desk and readers at cart." The New York Public Library Digital Collections. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dd-e542-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

Colors of New York City

Rachita Ramya

At first glance,
 It was easy to assume the landscape of the city
 Being just a barrage of steely grays
 However, once I looked closely
 I realized it was hardly monochromatic,
 It was a spectrum of vivid colors
 Colors of different cultures, backgrounds,
 languages, ethnicities,
 Colors of shattered dreams,
 Colors of warped up realities,
 And colors of an undying spirit of never giving
 up hope
 Tangible colors that could only be felt,
 Not seen,
 New York, the city of dreams,
 The place with nowhere to go and everywhere
 to be



Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. "Underwood Elliott Fisher Co. - Man and woman posing with giant typewriter" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1935 - 1945. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5e66b3e8-d93d-d471-e040-e00a180654d7>

Spanish

Emma Suárez Báez

Everyone looks in a dictionary
 for the meaning of a word
 I look in the English/Spanish dictionary so
 a word can hit me between the eyes
 the bullet go through my heart
 the memory bleed out

There is something about *español*,
 Puerto Rican/Caribbean Spanish, the daughter
 not the harsh, authoritative mother *el castellano*

S's in the middle of a word possess a native
 passion
 brimming with guitar melodies and *maracas*
 R's are loose and not so serious
 tired, sluggish
 in need of a replenishing *siesta*

Then the vowels
 the honesty they carry
 their sound is one, plain and simple
 no need to overthink it

This daughter language
 sculpts poets out of mutes
 abolitionists out of young men
 Supreme Court judges out of Latina women

Another and Another

Phoebe Young

Another and another Black life on their hands, another and another
police on the stands.
Another and another peaceful protest,
another and another city in unrest.
Another and another fight for human rights,
another and another sleepless night.
Another protest to say “black lives matter”,
another and another “they’re shooting scatter”. Another and another
fight to make a sound,
another and another protester tear gassed down. Another George Floyd,
Breonna Taylor, Oscar Grant, another and another and another chant.
Another and another riot is caused,
another and another mistreatment of laws.
Another and another siren going by,
another black person that didn’t have to die.
Another and another the hate you give,
another and another crime no one can forgive. Another and another bias
and murder,
another little girl whose parents have left her. Another policeman put on
trial,
another scary video that goes viral.
Another and another child turned scared,
another and another news story aired.
Another and another unjust crime,
another and another black person's time.
Another and another sad story to tell,
another and another name to yell.
Another and another “please I can’t breath”.
Another and another and another you see,
people will keep persisting until the battle is won,
but until then “bang” another mom loses her son



Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library. "Portrait of abolitionist Sojourner Truth, sitting with yarn and knitting needles" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1864. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/77fc47c0-b1fd-0131-0d5f-58d385a7b928>

Short Stories/ Essays

There is no better time than the present to be heard! This year's theme, "Raise Your Voice, Be Heard!" garnered powerful and creative responses from all ages. Here are the stories and essays inspiring us to raise our voices! We hope you enjoy their ideas as much as we did.

Short Stories & Essays

A Very Hard Climb: Dominicans Struggle for Citizenship

Amber Sosa

Climbing a mountain is a difficult task. It takes determination, courage, and the necessary resources. Most people decide to climb to see what's on the other side. Much like climbing a mountain, immigrating to America can be challenging, but it can also provide much promise for the future. Luckily for my family, my parents were able to complete their journey and open the door to many incredible opportunities. However, many other individuals, particularly those immigrating from the Dominican Republic, do not get the support they need from the systems in place to enable them to endure their journeys.

My parents' immigration journeys from the Dominican Republic were different, but they both encountered their share of obstacles. My father was already living in the United States when my mother decided that she wanted to come to America as well. She made the difficult decision to leave behind her family and a career in the Dominican Republic, in the hopes of starting a new and exciting future with my father.

With much hard work and dedication, she was able to gain her visa, and come to America to be with her husband. My parents decided to start a family and had my brother and me in the U.S. At this point, her visa had expired and she was stuck in America. She could not return to the Dominican Republic to visit her family. Eventually, my father was able to help legalize my mother's immigration status while she was pregnant with my little sister. That is when my parents decided to go back to the Dominican Republic so that my mother could finish her last year of college. This was not easy to do with a newborn baby, a three-year-old and a nine-year old who needed her, but to my mother, it was worth setting a good example for her kids.

"I wanted to prove to my kids that education is important, and that they should never ever give up on it no matter what the circumstances," my mother said. After finishing college, she wanted to continue to study and get her masters in the United States.

With very little knowledge of English, she was accepted to the Lehman College Masters' Program in New York City. "I remember staying up many nights with sick children, trying to finish projects for school, without any family around me to help me when I needed it most," she said. My father had the responsibility of going to work and providing for my family, so he could not help at home as much. My father's resources were limited because he was the only source of income, so he was working to provide for all five of us. Despite the language limitations and the struggles, my mother still made it in America. She finished graduate school with a 3.9 GPA. She showed me that no matter what, you push for what you want. After this she worked on getting her citizenship, and now she is proud to say that she is a Dominican-American with dual citizenship.

My father's journey was a long one to come from the Dominican Republic to New York. The first trip was from Santo Domingo all the way to Haiti, by bus. He stayed in Haiti for a week. From Haiti he flew to Panama. He stayed in Panama for two weeks. Then he went from Panama to Guatemala. He stayed there for three weeks. Then he drove to Mexico. He stayed in Mexico for a whole month. Then he drove from Mexico to Matamoros, a city at the border of Mexico and the US. Then he walked through the desert to cross the border.

He walked a full day to cross the border. In the middle of the night, the US border patrol caught him in Houston and he was arrested for a month. He paid a \$5,000 fine to get out. After he was released, he bought a bus ticket to New York, where his best friend awaited him. That is where my father began to work to provide for his wife. He then afterwards became a legalized citizen, and started his life again. My father learned that coming here illegally is a struggle. He went through a lot just to try to get himself a new life.

The immigration system in the United States is hard to navigate. According to Dominican Today, "53.21%¹ of the Dominicans who went to the U.S. consulate to request a B1 / B2 nonimmigrant (tourist) visa were rejected in fiscal year 2019. That shows that for the second consecutive year there has been a considerable reduction of American visas issued to Dominicans, from 142,580 approved in 2018 to 86,649 in 2019, or 55,931 fewer, according to immigration expert Roque Leonel Rodríguez."

According to Reuters, "The United States denies nearly 4 million visa applications a year."² Since many applicants get denied, several individuals resort to coming to America illegally, making it harder for those who are trying to follow the system. However, everyone coming here is after the same thing: more opportunities.

My parents' immigration stories are my way of raising awareness about immigration in the United States and how there needs to be a better system for it. America is denying people who want to come here, and not stopping those who are doing it wrong. I feel that change needs to happen in order for everyone to have a chance at the same opportunities my parents did. Change needs to come. This is my way of advocating for immigrant injustice.

Some individuals do not get the opportunity to strive the way my parents did due to the harshness of the immigration system in the United States. What most immigrants want is a chance to start fresh in a country full of opportunities and to ensure a brighter future for their families. My parents went through so much to give my siblings and me the life that we deserve--the life they always dreamed of for their children. This has made me who I am today, and it makes me proud to be a Dominican-American. That is why I am advocating for all Dominicans to have a chance at the same opportunities as me. America's promise of opportunity inspires each generation of Americans—regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, or national origin—to strive to reach his or her full potential.

That's all that Dominicans, such as my family want: a chance to strive. America's immigration system needs to change. Latinos aren't here to steal others' jobs. We are here to make something of ourselves and to make a successful life for our families.

I hope this story shows others that we are all in this together. It is our battle and we will make it through together. QUE VIVA LA RAZA.

¹Over 53% of Dominicans are denied a U.S. tourist visa," Dominican Today, January 15th 2020, <https://dominantoday.com/dr/local/2020/01/15/over-53-of-dominicans-are-denied-a-u-s-tourist-visa/>.

² "U.S. denied tens of thousands more visas in 2018 due to travel ban: data," *Reuters*, February 26 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-immigration-ban-idUSKCN1QF2KF>

What Do You Know About Black Girl's Hair?

Alexis Childress

When I was in the 7th grade, a white girl asked me if she could touch my hair. As trivial as it may seem, this embarrassing moment became one of the many chisels that molded my self-esteem and deformed my self-perception. Revealed through my story is evidence of the unacknowledged effects of internalized oppression, cultural stigma and biased media influences. Just one example of how these effects can paralyze social progress while reinforcing racial segregation and negative self-evaluation in small rural communities like mine.

It felt like a record scratch when Sarah abruptly asked me if she could touch my hair. I was caught off guard and suddenly found myself confronting my own discrepancies, feeling embarrassed, shocked, and overwhelmingly vulnerable. All this fostered by the fact that she was gawking at me as though I were an exotic zoo animal, and the tone in her voice stung with an antagonizing fascination.

From the perspective of a young black girl in raised in a white majority community, this moment was an echo of insecurities and exceeded the expectations of embarrassment. Sarah had

put a spotlight on one thing that made me lesser than her – I was black. For me, this confrontation of racial differences became a moment of reinforced inferiority, acting as a souvenir of my reduced place in our community. It reminded me that she was the local majority while I was the foreign minority; I was expected to learn the local language, not the other way around. An adolescent encounter that preyed on the internalized white supremacy established within black people across generations, triggering me to feel lesser than her because my skin was dark, and my hair did not look like hers. I had, and still have, a conviction that lighter is better.

I granted her permission to touch my hair.

I stood there resembling a dog on a leash, dignity diminished, while she petted the top of my head. Two others braved to touch my hair with the tip of their fingers, not unlike a child poking at an insect, which only accentuated my oddities and enhanced the indignity. Once the petting concluded, Sarah declared that my hair was softer than she thought it would be. I wasn't sure what that meant nor was I sure how I felt about it, so I said nothing while they jested about my

hair for a few more moments. Eventually, some other subject fell victim to their attention, and I was no longer the object of fascination.

Although the moment passed quickly in time, it was a lasting addition to the inferiority complexes that followed me into adulthood. Over ten years later, I found myself in a discussion about the current racial crisis in America and how it becomes intensified by people who retain disbelief that racial oppression still exists. At a time when trending equality breeds fabricated racial attitudes, I told my story to make a point that outside of large cities, racial inequality is thriving. As my coworker and I talked about what that embarrassing moment meant to me, the conversation directed us to an illuminating question: If the situation were reversed, and Sarah was in a circle with all black children, would the black children find her hair just as foreign and exotic?

An answer immediately formed in my head, still, it led me to another question I felt had to be answered in order to fully understand the dynamic of my hometown and why a white girl would find a black girl's hair so exotic in the first place:

What did I know about white girl's hair?

It quickly manifested that I knew a lot.

It appeared that media and consumerism provided me with all the information I could need. From shampoo and hair product commercials I knew how white women wash and dry their hair. From Barbies and other dolls, I knew the texture and feeling of white hair. I knew what happens to their hair when it gets wet and how to resolve tangles. I knew what kind of brushes they use as well as what products will have what effect. I knew that their hair is cut while it's wet. From movies, like *Legally Blonde*, I even knew what happens when a white girl's hair is permed. I may not have been an expert, but even in 7th grade, white hair was certainly not a foreign concept to me.

In opposition, there was nothing commercially, nor locally, to inform white girls on black girl's hair. There were no commercials showing how black women actually treat their hair. There were no Barbie dolls with real black hair like mine. There were no movies or TV shows to reveal the intricacies, strains and timidities that accompany black hair care. Locally, salons did not employ staff with experience treating black hair, resulting in white people styling white hair, and black people styling black hair. An unforgiving cycle of exclusivity harvesting yet another layer of separation within the community.

After I understood the influencing psychological factors, I resolved the answer to my

coworker's question was no. With an abundance of knowledge about white hair provided by media and other channels, combined with the local racial attitude demonstrated institutionally, I don't believe the black children in Jacksonville would find anything foreign, exotic or abnormal about white hair.

Pre-existing systems of segregation instituted in Jacksonville provide the two "necessary components of oppression – power and privilege" (David, Schroeder, Fernandez 1058), to stimulate racial divides and ensure unequal knowledge about races. Resulting in black and white children developing an endogenous sense of "us" and "them" conceived by colorism. The term defined by Kaitlyn Greenridge as a "prejudice based on skin tone, usually with a marked preference for lighter-skinned people," in the article, "Why Black People Discriminate Among Ourselves: The Toxic Legacy of Colorism."

Colorism is then reinforced through the manipulation of white-washed media. A deficiency of black presence in the media discourages interracial acceptance, while denying white children experience with, or the opportunity to learn about, black people and black culture at an early age. Causing white children to, even subconsciously, visualize white as normal and comfortable, while internalizing black as foreign and unapproachable. An environment such as Jacksonville, coalescing

physical and commercial segregation, encourages assumed white supremacy and allows internalized racial oppression to fester amongst black children. In their article, "The Influence of Internalized Racism on the Relationship Between Discrimination and Anxiety", authors Sosoo, Bernard and Neblett suggest:

While black students are exploring and making sense of their identity, they are also navigating unique stressors that may lead to the internalization of negative race-related messages and detract from positive psychological development ...This is especially important to consider for Black emerging adults attending predominantly White institutions who must contend with race-related stressors (e.g., negative stereotypes) within settings in which they are underrepresented.

The resulting misguided internalizations of both black and white children, then manifest in objectional social encounters such as mine.

At that time, I could not understand the deleterious systems of white power existing, both in and out, of Jacksonville, crafting the perfect conditions for the racially charged encounter I experienced. I knew I was considered different and strange, and I certainly knew that was because I

was black. However, I did not know how the long history of black oppression united with consistent subjective media representation, strengthened racial boundaries, solidifying the white authority and black stigma I knew as normal life.

Once my own story was dissected, I comprehended more clearly the crippling role media representation plays in supporting the concealed white power structures and systems that reign over Jacksonville. In this instance, media has fueled the racial boundaries in Jacksonville by fostering unequal racial knowledge between white and black people, contributing to the fortification of white power structures dictating the black community. Unequal representation and racial stigma generate damaging ripple effects that reverberate through and reconstruct the lives of black people in rural communities like mine. Even amid change, the infection of racism is not contained and will propagate as long as we allow systems that guarantee the right conditions to survive.

The author also created artwork to go along her writing submission. To view the art, please visit the art section of the magazine (page 45).

¹Greenridge, Kaitlyn. "Why Black People Discriminate Among Ourselves: The Toxic Legacy of Colorism." *The Guardian* (2019).

²Bobo, Lawrence, et. al. *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997: p2

³Greenridge, Kaitlyn. "Why Black People Discriminate Among Ourselves: The Toxic Legacy of Colorism." *The Guardian* (2019).

⁴Nelson, Kai. "Where's the Representation? The Impact of White Washing on Black Children." *Academic Symposium of Undergraduate* (2016): p8

⁵Sosoo, Effua E, Donte L Bernard and Enrique W. Jr Neblett. "The Influence of Internalized Racism on the Relationship Between Discrimination and Anxiety." *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* (2019):p2.

The Vote

Nadia Bongo

I walked on the bitumen path leading to the library as my mind drank up that novel idea—voting. In that provincial afternoon, the sun painted trees with its red, orange, and golden colors. Replacing the Mistral, the wind carried around tufts of pollen fluttered. Proudly, I entered the wooden first double-leaf doors of the university library, thinking “I’m here to vote for the students’ representatives!” Then, my flip phone started to vibrate, and I quickly went out when I saw that the call came from my country. Leaning on the stony small bridge before the library entrance, I answered, “Allo, I can’t talk, I’m going to vote for the students’ representatives.”

“Allo, Sana, ok, call me this evening,” my uncle said, his soft voice singing his amusement. Thinking about his bright smile, I thought of calling back right away, but duty called.

For the first time in my life, I was going to vote. In my small west-African country voting meant nothing because presidential elections have had the same outcome for decades. Since we gained our independence from France, one man had been democratically elected and re-elected repeatedly. When that man died, his son had been democratically elected and re-elected.

Thus, these simple students’ elections gained a meaning way beyond its weight. While French students were strolling in the breeze, probably plotting their next strike, I was enjoying the feel of my paper student card in my hand. That card had seemed so rudimentary when I registered to college months ago. Now, it seemed like it was made of gold and encrusted with diamonds since it meant more than education; it meant adulthood, hell, it meant freedom.

Warm sun rays blessed my shoulders while I reentered the library. The whoosh doors made while closing behind me gave some gravity to my actions, some pointedness. “Voting!” I thought, “finally!” All that was missing was some tune, then the other students in the library would start dancing and singing, “What a deliiiiight, to have the riiiiight, to vote.” The “to vote” would be said in a low tone. It was hard to compare this sensation to anything. My lack of originality geared toward sex, but the closest to sex I had been so far was hearing my roommate’s brief screams of pleasure at night through the walls of my tiny dorm room. Moreover, Mathilde would never talk about the guys or the sex, even on nights we smoked weed, even during our trip to Avignon. Thus, I couldn’t compare voting to anything, not even to the

delicious southern food, since I'd eat anything with bliss.

As my steps resounded in the library, it seemed to me that I was on the verge of passing doors separating a nonvoting girl to a voting woman, a woman with a voice, choices, and options. Voices of noisy students reached me as I walked towards the desk. However, instead of the usual "shush" I sometimes uttered, I felt like stopping in the middle of the room and say, "my fellow students, please adopt the solemn attitude necessary for such a glorious day, a day when our voice will be heard!" Some dramatic music would play in the background and although we were indoors, some breeze would blow through my blouse.

"Helloooooo," the librarian said behind the desk, "do you need anything?" The grey haired, blue eyed woman looked at me intensely. I leaned in slightly and asked about the sacred room where I was to cast my vote. Her gaze still held mine clearly searching if I belonged to the stone or the not-stone student body. My eyes only spoke of excitement and she smiled and pointed towards a little room on the side. The room's ceiling had long white neon lights. A couple of students were chatting next to the "magic" ballot box—a cardboard box with a slit. The young men looked at me and one of them, with hair reaching his shoulders, came up to me. His trim haircut and gleaming hair caught me off guard. This guy looked like a choir boy, instead of the dirty longhaired, leather pants

and jean jacket wearing voting freaks I had expected. Instead of nodding or pressuring me into post-voting intercourse, he simply went, "hey man, you can choose your bulletin on that table back there and put your paper in that box. Thanks."

As I approached the table at the back, I realized that between studying and bonding with new people, I hadn't had time to learn about the candidates, all white guys. That first year, I even had a hard time recognizing some of my professors. Their attendance to their own lectures had been erratic once they had introduced themselves to a packed lecture hall and informed us that only 20% would make it to the second year and so on. Sitting on a long wooden table, riddled with cuts and marks made by bored students, I thought of the way I had tricked my father into signing my college application while he was busy chewing his steak swathed in spicy sauce. Thus, instead of studying political science in the capital until I would find a lovely classmate willing to "save me", I was dabbling in the Arts in the South of France. How a few months had changed me, from an outwardly meek and shy high school girl, to an outwardly meek and shy foreign student. Only, I was about to vote for the first time, and I felt at the edge of something big. I decided to vote for Guillaume Roland.

As I passed the library doors, my phone vibrated while emitting the shimmering tune for text messages; it was Mathilde.

“Are you at the Library?” it read, “can you join me behind the main building, at the step-stones?” “Yes, coming.” I wrote back. The sky took darker tints as the wind became louder. Sitting on the steps, Mathilde wore a white tank top and a long purple skirt. Her shoulders exhibited an early tan. “Hey! Come look,” she said as I approached. After giving me three kisses on the cheeks, Mathilde dragged me to the adjacent wall; it had a huge graffiti. “I did it earlier today,” Mathilde said, her hands on her hips. Looking at the colorful letters, I said, “Cool. No one caught you?” She shook her head sideways.

“Hey, did you vote?” I asked excitedly.

“Hun, no, what for?” Mathilde answered with a puzzled expression.

“Dude are you serious?” I said frowning, “don’t you care about the people representing us?”

“I don’t know,” she trailed off, before adding, “Frankly, nobody cares about us in the humanities. Look at our building compared to the law section.” My heart sank.

We started walking back toward the stony steps, up, till we reached the little road leading to a grassy path to our dorm. Soon, that path would have red poppies all over, just like when I registered to university at the end of summer. We walked up the steep little path toward the

wire fence where a huge gap let us get into our residence. Finally, Mathilde broke the silence.

“I slept with Guillaume, one of the candidates,” she added before my puzzled expression. “I hope he can be a better representative than a lover.”

“Yeah. You’re enjoying yourself, aren’t you?” I said, broaching the subject as if some of her boldness would rub off on me. She shrugged. Maybe, Mathilde romanticized tagging the university walls the way I romanticized voting for this little students’ representatives and choosing my own studies. Our respective circumstances gave a different array of meanings to rebelling, raising our voice, or simply existing.

“Are you still hesitant about hitch-hiking to Montpellier? We’ll pass by Avignon and Le Gard, so we can see the bridges.” Mathilde said, with a little high note at the end.

“You wanted to see a friend who’s institutionalized to give her a teddy bear. Right?” I said.

“Yeah, it’s on the way,” she said, looking at her feet.

“Sure, let’s do this!”

The Privilege and Isolation of Passing for Straight

Jamie Zaccaria

I doubt there's ever been a society where people didn't desire to communicate their identities. 25,000 years ago, humans expressed their individuality by decorating themselves with jewelry and today we form communities around common interests like sports and video games — we all ache to show the world who we are and the things that make us special. But what happens when you identify (proudly) as something but don't know how to tell people? That's what being a “femme” queer woman feels like.

How do queer women communicate about the existence of their queerness to other women in their community? More importantly, how does one meet other queer women? One obvious way to do this is to go to a queer event, where you are comfortable in the knowledge that anyone else you meet is also “like you” or at the very least, supportive of you being queer.

Before it was safe to publicly host queer-gear events, liberal and radical political parties (including communist, socialist, and anarchists) have often been a safe haven for queer women to identify themselves. According to Elisabeth Jay Friedman of the University of San Francisco, many early lesbian activists of Latin America began in anti-authoritarian groups in the 1980s,

such as activist Alejandra Sardá who is part of the activist group Akahatá – Equipo de Sexualidades y Género based in Latin America and the Caribbean. The connection between queer identity and radical politics is still alive today, which is hardly surprising since when one has to fight for their basic human rights, they tend to get political.

Things are even more difficult for queer women living in countries where it's not safe, or sometimes even legal, to be queer in the first place. In many places, the existence of the internet has been pivotal in providing channels of communication for those constantly hiding their identity. In the 1990s, cyberspace became the main tool for queer women in Latin American countries like Mexico, Argentina, and Chile to connect. Through specifically-created websites (with names like VOICE, Sappho Link, and Breaking the Silence), these women were able to find others that identified as they did and build a network for communication. Here, they could talk to others about their true selves and safely form a sense of community. Some places, especially those where the culture is slowly moving in a more LGBTQ+ friendly direction such as Hong Kong, have safe queer spaces like bars but keep their exact locations hidden. In other places,

like Burundi in East Africa, where being gay is illegal, women must identify their queerness to one another in public spaces without alerting the general public. They do this by wearing a discreet symbol on their clothing. The documentary *Whistle*, by StormMiguel Florez about the queer community of Albuquerque, New Mexico in the 1970s and 80's, explains that young people made a specific sound to identify themselves to other queer women when out on the town.

As a femme lesbian, how I communicate my queerness has always been a confusing activity. Though femme can mean a lot of different things, I am the term here to denote a woman who appears to the average passerby as non-queer, or heteronormative, when she is, in fact, queer. This is how I define myself. By "passing" in society, I have the privilege of not being targeted frequently for hate crimes. But it can also be frustrating to have to constantly reaffirm my identity both for myself, and to those I consider as part of my community.

I find it difficult to communicate my queerness with others. I constantly feel as if I'm straddling a line between being too loud and too quiet, trying to navigate between the privilege and isolation that comes with "passing" for straight. Sometimes I want to shout "Hello lesbians, I am one of you! Be my friend!" I don't feel the need to change my appearance to match the stereo-

typical lesbian look (although I do own a flannel or two), both because it's not my personal style and because I think we need to help remind society that we come in all shapes, colors, and haircuts.

The problem with femme invisibility comes from both inside and outside the community. Within the community, women who are perceived as ultra-feminine, or fitting into the heteronormative female style, are often questioned as to the extent of their sexuality. These women are also often invisible within the cis-gender world since their sexuality is mostly assumed incorrectly and they find themselves having to reaffirm their identity time and again. Sometimes their sexuality is then questioned or mocked and this could potentially lead to dangerous situations for them.

Because of my identity, *Girl on Girl: An Original Documentary* is an important film for me. I empathize with the women in the film who felt stigmatized or invisible because of their gender expression and sexuality. This documentary showed how these women in the queer community desire more representation and recognition. As Director Jodi Savitz so wonderfully put it during the Q&A of the film's New York screening in December 2016, "Everyone's story deserves to be told." This documentary is desperately needed in today's environment because there are many other feminine LGBTQ+ women out there who can identify with the feelings of these women.

We're not all Alice Pieszecki (the personable and witty writer from the much-adored lesbian television show *The L Word*); we're not all able to express ourselves and our identity easily to others, or even ourselves. I have been open about my identity for half a decade now and even I still have difficulty having to explain myself to others. It's a personal part of our identity and it's awkward to correct people's assumptions of you, especially when you know some of those people may have a negative reaction to the news.

Maybe ten years from now the human population will be considered so sexually fluid that no one makes assumptions and most people are more open-minded about who they're talking to and what they may identify as. Even still, I can't see there not being that excitement when you find another queer person in public. It's like being in a foreign city and seeing someone wearing a sports jersey of your favorite team; you've found another member of the minority with a shared interest. While many queer women are familiar with the famous "head nod" that is often used to acknowledge each other in public, this is not always the case for someone like myself who isn't obviously not heteronormative-looking.

We all need to have a community where we feel represented, respected, and included. For some of us, this means finding people similar to

us, and I want to surround myself with other queer women. Communicating with others who have a sense of understanding of you and what you go through is important. As the writer, Shannon L. Alder says, "One of the most important things you can do on this earth is to let people know they are not alone."

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The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Photography Collection, The New York Public Library. "Writing letters to customers. Sears, Roebuck & Co., Chicago, Ill." The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1850 - 1930. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-5b22-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

Abnormal

Jenny Chen

I always grew up thinking that I lived a normal life like all of my friends and the people around me. I thought that their parents loved them harshly and never said 'I love you' too. I never picked up on the sly comments my dad made about his gay customers or how my mom would add on to them like it was no big deal. I can't tell you exactly when I realized that I was living in this bubble- a toxic bubble where no one who wasn't normal by my parents' standard was weird or dumb or something to joke about, but from then on I knew I could no longer stay there, even if it was everything I've ever known- I needed to leave.

When I was younger, I idolized my parents, they were like gods to me. I remember feeling like they were 50 feet tall, literally, and figuratively. I never thought that I could ever achieve what they had, which was starting a whole new life for our family in America. I lived and breathed their lifestyle, their mindset, and all their choices so perhaps one day I could be as successful as them. But I grew older, went to school, and became exposed to other mindsets and ideas about sexuality, race, sex, and so many other things. I started to question all the beliefs that I had adopted from my mom and dad. It hurt to think that these people whom I thought

so highly of, might not be what I thought at all. And it hurt to feel like I was betraying my parents by doubting them. Had I put them on a pedestal by accident? But how could I be okay with my parents stereotyping queer people when dozens of the people I saw every day in the halls at school were on the LGBT spectrum? It was difficult to live in a place where at almost every family dinner, I would be the only one who thought that it was wrong to categorize people by their sexuality, and assume that they have a frivolous and meaningless lifestyle, inferior to the ones of heterosexuals. But, there was an omnipresent thought in my mind, perhaps less of a thought and more of a moral war. I cared about my parents but I also cared so much for all the queer people I knew, so is it right to fight my parents on their beliefs or do nothing and let them be judgmental and offensive to not just my friends but also to so many LGBT people around the world?

Now, I get that I'm being harsh, but it doesn't mean that I don't love my mom and dad. Sure, there are times when I just feel like I may explode if they don't stop spitting heinous lies and ugly misconceptions about gay people, but I know that deep down I love them for taking care of me and being there for me all my life.

And knowing that I love them and they love me back, I thought that they did need to know that sometimes their actions were homophobic and that their opinions could hurt lots of people if they didn't correct them. That's what I kept telling myself, I needed to tell my parents to fix their toxic mindset so that I don't find them in a situation one day when they are being accused of being homophobic to a customer or a person on the street or to someone I care deeply about. But, I always kept silent. Perhaps, it was because I was a selfish person and I always thought that I was straight and I couldn't possibly be anything else, so I didn't have to think of ever confronting my parents about their toxic homophobia for my own sake. Then came the last year of middle school. 8th grade brought many changes for lots of people and I was one of them. It took me some time, but I realized that I was not just sad that a friend of mine was moving away, but that I was sad because I liked her.. you know, the 'butterflies in stomach' kind of way but I would not see her for an indefinite amount of time. I was forced to deal with my insecurities telling me every day that it was not okay for a girl to like other girls, it was abnormal. But over time I realized that it was just my parents' mindset carved into my brain. I didn't even fully realize it then, but those beliefs I had adopted so many years ago were still active in my mind even if I didn't want them to be.

As middle school came to an end, I decided to give a presentation at graduation about the importance of gender pronouns and topics related to LGBTQ+ inclusivity. I had seen so much hate from the world towards queer people, even from my own family members, so I felt proud (and very nervous) to step on to that stage in front of my classmates and all their loved ones to speak my mind and tell them about how we could all be supportive and tolerant, even if and because the world is full of diverse people. With every word I spoke, I felt as if weight was lifting off my shoulders and I felt liberated. I couldn't believe that I had been silent for so many years. God, it was wonderful to hear my thoughts spill out of my mind. Although I haven't told my parents that I'm bisexual yet, it felt so good to just tell them that I cared for people who were "abnormal", as they put it, and that it wasn't right for them to believe things like how queer people lived a certain inferior life compared to straight people or cisgendered people. There will always be things that we have to fight for, and it will be difficult, but when you speak your mind, often you open up the minds of many other people too.

Screwed

Max Frankel

The rain trickled down my car window. I glanced right. A yellow cab idled next to me. We both sat at the paint that framed Park Row near the Brooklyn Bridge entrance ramp. It nudged past the white line on the pavement while our light was still red. Unlike my car, an Uber driven by a 27-year-old guy paying for school to become a copywriter, this car had an experienced driver.

The car had experience too—a beaten Ford Escape with rectangular stick-on reflectors unevenly taped to the bumper. The fender had a football-sized indent. A vibrant gold and crimson mat covered the dashboard. A dozen trinkets, tilted from constant swaying, littered the dashboard.

The cab blew through the intersection just before the light turned green. Perfectly timed. The only way to hit a light that well is to look left and watch the pedestrian walk signal tick down to the flashing red hand. The traffic light isn't the real light. The red hand is the real light.

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Sayed

For the fortunate, driving affords time to float in daydream; for the unfortunate, time to ruminate.

From behind the wheel of his '06 Escape, Sayed Bahmani knew both well.

His first fare was back in 1986. He came from Bangladesh with a suitcase of clothes and a piece of paper in hand. His belongings bore little significance. But the scribbled piece of paper—that was his guide to America.

*new york state department of motor
vehicles 168-46 91st ave, jamaica
tlc driver institute 31-00 47th ave,
long island city
nyc taxi group 876 mcdonald ave,
Brooklyn*

The plan was simple. Get a drivers license. Take an 80-hour Taxi & Limousine Commission (TLC) driving course. Go to NYC Taxi Group. Lease a cab. Drive. That's what his uncle did. And that's what he would do too.

He rented a modest apartment in Jamaica, Queens and drove until the city felt small. He drove through it all. Three decades of regularly scheduled gridlock, thousands of gas fill-ups, and millions of miles in fares. With laser focus on his end-game, he pushed toward his final stop. A single destination that kept him going six days a week.

The Industry

There are two main actors in the taxi industry: The lessee and the lessor. The lessee, the cab driver, leases from the lessor, the medallion owner.

Medallions controlled the taxi industry for nearly a century. They gave yellow cabs, or “King Cab,” the right to pick up street hails in Manhattan’s lucrative Exclusionary Zone. Below 96th Street on the East Side and 110th Street on the West Side are where these historically endowed cabbies made a living. The metallic pentagons, written under seal of the TLC, are located on the hood of the cab, giving the vehicle exclusive legal right to pick up street hails in this strictly protected zone.

Big fines are issued to those that undermine the Exclusionary Zone. If the TLC Police catch you open your car door for hire without a medallion, prepare to pay \$2,000. These inspectors mostly operate undercover, baiting drivers with illegal street pickups. They did so 2,825 times last year. Get caught a few times and you’ll start paying five-figure fines.

There are roughly 13,000 medallions in New York. The City has been selling them at auction to the public each year since the system was created in 1937. The government-set cap on the number in circulation has kept taxi rates stable for passengers and medallion values appreciating for owners.

Since its inception, the medallion was seen as a city-backed gold standard. A sure bet during volatile times. With legal backing, King Cab ruled for generations.

The Pursuit

Go sit behind the wheel in New York City on a weekday afternoon. It’s not for the thin-skinned. Yet 13,000 taxi drivers do it every day, all while remaining painfully aware that most of their hard-earned money goes straight to the medallion owner.

Ownership is the dream; a coming-of-age for a cab driver. It takes decades to finally purchase a licensed taxi and lease it out to others at a premium (usually about \$200 per day). Now someone else can sit in traffic behind the wheel of *your* cab.

Purchasing a medallion is comparable to an employee purchasing a stock option in a company. But rather than investing in the future prosperity of a company, they’re investing in the future prosperity of King Cab. Throughout the 20th century, drivers lived a decent, middle-class existence investing in medallions. Families bought homes in the suburbs, sent kids to school, and financed retirements on its income and appreciation. The adage that “the biggest purchase you’ll ever make is

your home” holds true for most Americans. Medallion owners are the exception.

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Sayed

Sayed stared at the blurred-red trail of taillights creeping forward in unison across the Brooklyn Bridge. A rainy rush hour can make even a car’s idle speed feel fast-paced. He pushed the gearshift into park and rest his head on the window, hypnotized by his swaying wipers.

He could see his uncle, 30 years ahead of him, selling his medallion for \$1,250,000 after a half-century of driving in debt. Sayed fantasied about his uncle’s joy from the payoff and retirement at 70. Job done.

A chord of honks jolted him awake. He shifted back into drive and sped down the bridge off-ramp. Just around the bend, traffic bunched again. Shift into park.

His eyes closed and saw the contract. The one he drove for decades to sign. That paper now defined him.

It was five years ago but the memory became more vivid each day. He recalled his naive sense of accomplishment while buying TLC Medallion 6K58 back in the fall of 2012. He saw the wrinkles in medallion broker’s face, smiling with

encouragement. Average prices that year were \$1,300,000. For just \$7,800,000 with a \$120,000 down payment, the broker assured him that this medallion was a steal.

He grunted and banged his head against the cab window.

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Me

I started driving for Uber in 2017. I waited in TLC offices wrapped in queues of drivers renewing licenses. I leaned on my hood with other drivers at LaGuardia, Newark, and JFK, eating Halal food, waiting for rides. We swapped stories. The stories every driver has: our longest ride, our craziest passenger, our biggest celebrity. I met the faces behind the engines.

It became clear that operating a yellow cab is a game. They’re all playing for the waving suit with a briefcase, the long fare out to Westchester. What people misunderstand about cabbies is that driving like a maniac isn’t a preference, it’s a necessity. If you can’t catch enough fares or sit in traffic too long, you’ll not only go home profitless—you’ll end up owing the medallion owner money too. Each foot of the road and second at the light is accounted for. Wall Streeters chant the *time-is-money* mantra, but cab drivers live it with every acceleration and lane change. It’s the rawest legal hustle around.

Driving for Uber requires less commitment and hustle. It's the perfect part-time job for a student like myself. When I finish class I turn on the app and begin to drive. I don't have to think about leasing a cab or finding a fare. There's a steady flow of passengers, and Uber determines the rate.

Just a few years ago, the mayor and governor welcomed Uber to New York and allowed new ride-share drivers to pick up passengers in the Exclusionary Zone *without* a medallion. The law placed Uber and Lyft in the same legal space as the phoned-in Lincoln Town Cars. Ubers are considered just another "black car," free to pick up anywhere. This was the fatal blow to the taxi industry. When the Exclusionary Zone lost its exclusivity, the King Cab business model went bust.

The upheaval of the taxi system actually worked out pretty well for me. A few years ago, before Uber, I would have been stuck waiting tables on a restaurant manager's schedule. Now I have an entry-level job with a rare perk: complete autonomy over my hours. It doesn't pay much but it helps me afford my schooling to become something else; it's a means to an end.

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Sayed and I

I found myself idling next to the same cab from Park Row. This time I caught his face. It sagged, worn and tired. He wore a wrinkled button-down.

His hair was matted. He was lifeless.

I glanced at the 6K58 screwed onto the hood of his cab. Our eyes met through the rain-coated windows. We held a long stare. Ahead were a sea of plates that start with T and end with C: Ubers. I glanced back at the cab. His stare remained steady.

Every game produces losers. The 2019 average medallion price is \$117,000. Worth less than Sayed's 2012 down payment.

There's no sign of the value going back up. I was looking into the eyes of a man that lost everything. A man so underwater, he'll be trapped in that Escape for life. No means. No end.

My phone alerted me that Jennifer had requested a pickup. He watched as I tapped to accept the ride and further erode his life's investment.

UPDATE: The 2020 average medallion price is now \$110,000

Art in the City

Of course reading is not the only way to raise your voice and for many New Yorkers art is the preferred medium. Whether through painting, photography or collage, art can speak volumes. The following pieces reflect both the world our patrons see and the world they would like to see.



Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library. "Selma Burke with her portrait bust of Booker T. Washington" *The New York Public Library*

“Escape” 2019

Emily Cronin



“Decades” Series

Emily Cronin

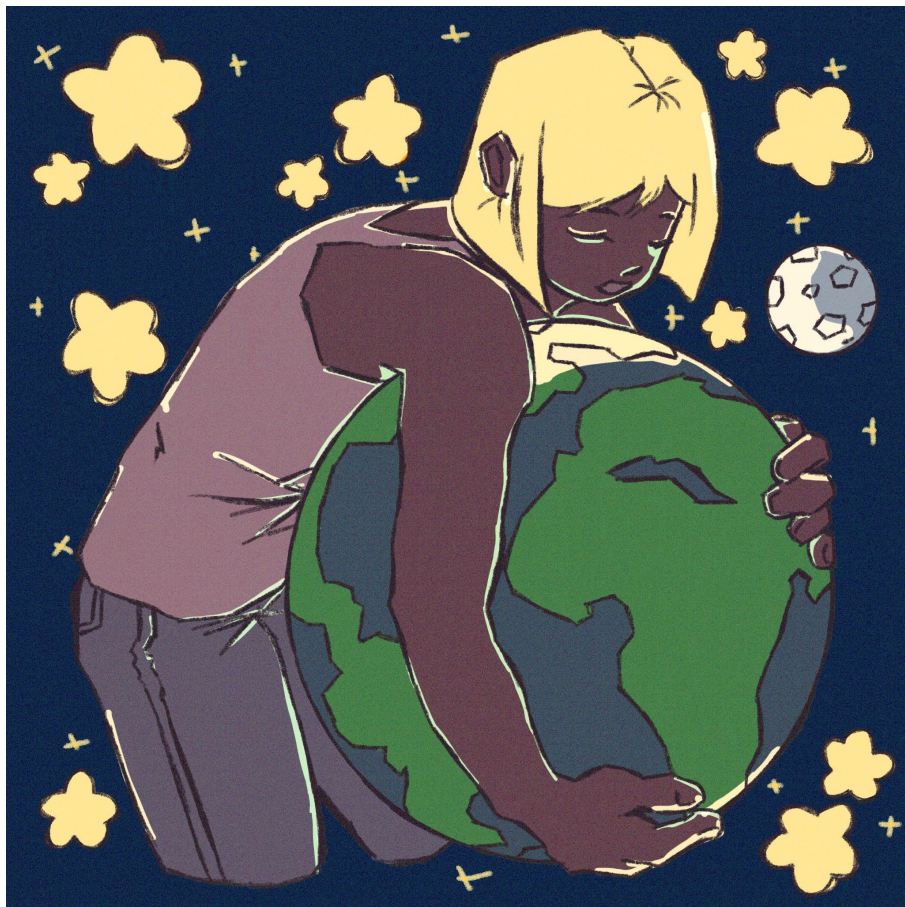


“My Own Star”

Ginger Chen

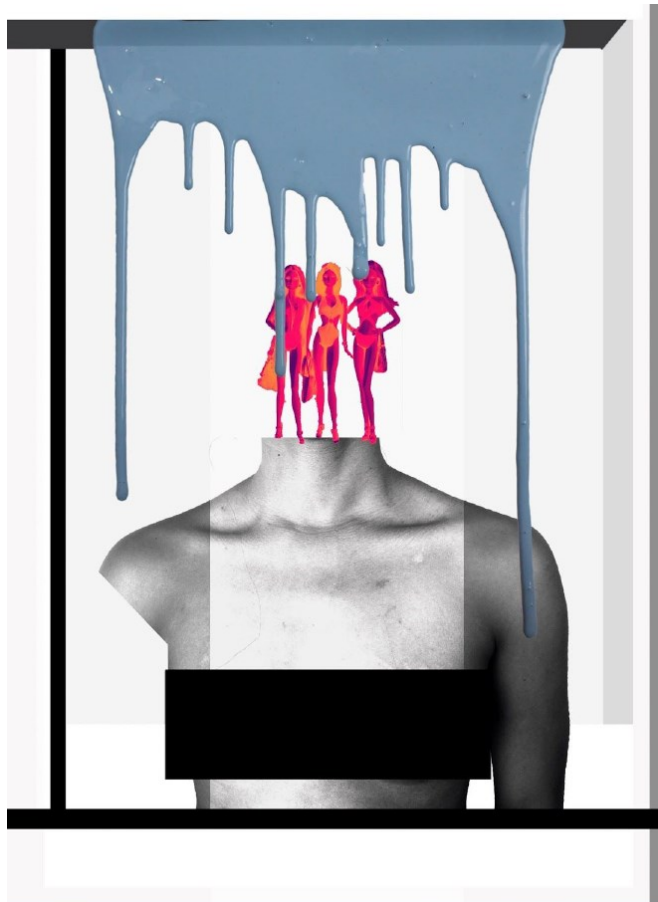
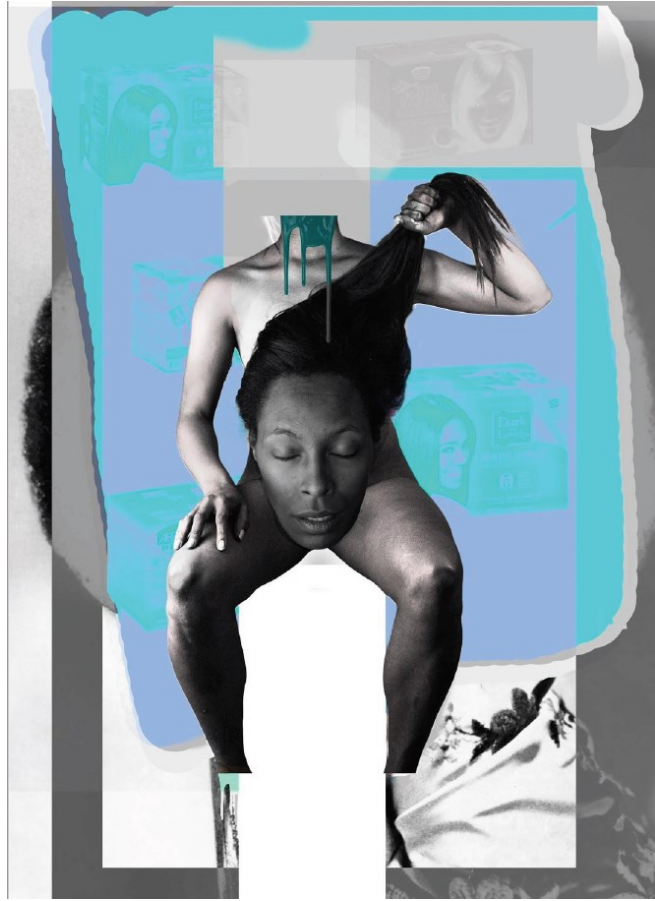
There have been giants before us that explored, changed, and took ownership of the world. I refer to those that serve as an inspiration for children today and even older people like myself, to let us know we truly can do anything in this individualist culture. I love learning about those around my age or with similar backgrounds who have already accomplished great things. It reminds me there is so much more I can do with my time and abilities.

The illustration depicts a female hugging the Earth, opening her mouth to speak. She tells the world I hear your thoughts and reasons and here are mine. She'd like to have a conversation, not to simply obey nor dictate. The stars nearby are others that inspired her. The hair of the girl begins to glow like the balls of gas around her; she may not know it at the time but her actions will inspire others.



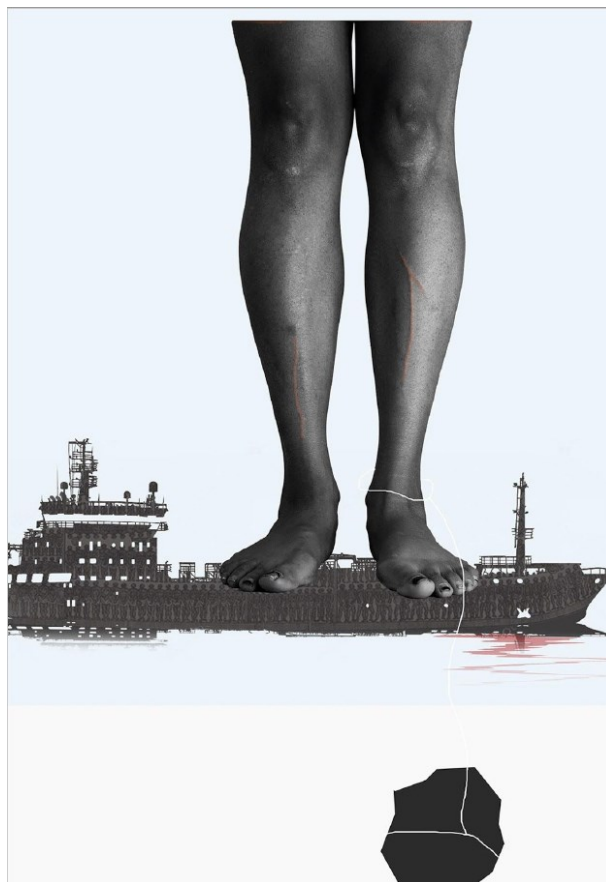
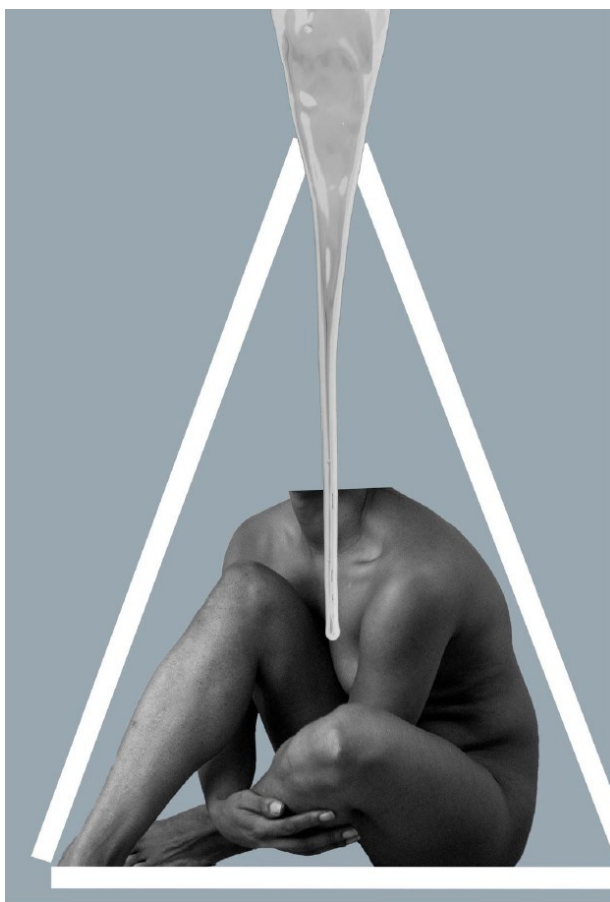
**From the Work
“What Do You Know
About Black Girl’s
Hair?”**

Alexis Childress



**From the Work
“What Do You Know
About Black Girl’s
Hair?”**

Alexis Childress



Seeking Freedom Series

Angela Ambrosini



Seeking Freedom Series

Angela Ambrosini



The **Innovation Project's** mission is to expand our horizons by surfacing and supporting staff ideas and creativity throughout NYPL. We aim to break down barriers, to imagine the impossible, to support and encourage each other, and to create a culture of “Yes! Let’s try that!”

The **Innovation Project** is part of an innovation landscape at NYPL which, along with the Innovation Communities, provides pathways for exploration and experimentation with the aim of improving our programs, services, and processes in ways that advance our mission and strategic priorities. NYPL staff bring smart, creative expertise to their roles in every corner of our organization and are often closest to understanding what innovative ideas might align with that aim. If you are a staff member with an innovative idea, this project can help bring it to life.

The **Innovation Project Team** is made up of staff from across the Library, including past awardees, to ensure representation of the entire system. All staff will have a voice in the process, by submitting their ideas, voting, or both. Also importantly, this process will expose staff to each other’s projects, which we hope will in turn spark more ideas and conversation across the system.

MEET OUR EDITORS

Four librarians—**Whitney Davidson-Rhodes**, **Adena Gruskin**, **Tabrizia Jones**, and **Karen Loder**—came together with the idea to start a publication that celebrates the artistry of the New Yorkers. They applied for and won The New York Public Library's 2017 Innovation Project, which is made possible by a generous grant from the Charles H. Revson Foundation. **Emma Karin Eriksson** and **Victoria James** have since joined this initiative to form what is now the New York Public Library Zine Committee. Meet the editor's for The New York Public Library's literary magazine, Library Zine!

Whitney Davidson-Rhodes is a Young Adult Librarian in the Bronx. Though an upstate transplant, she's found a home in this bustling big city. Whitney was previously on an art gallery committee that showcased original work from LGBTQ artists from the tri-state area. With a background and passion in art and literature, she's always wanted to produce work that showed off the talents of the people in her community. She's lucky to have found other people who shared the same goals.

Emma Karin Eriksson is a Young Adult Librarian in the South Bronx and has been making zines since she was 13. Zines have a long history of providing space for people to share their stories, ideas, histories, and voices. Zines, like libraries, provide space for learning and building community between writers, artists, and readers. Emma loves everything about reading and making and sharing zines. She is excited to share this one with you!

Adena Gruskin is an Adult Librarian in Manhattan. While she has been published before, this is her first time working on a Zine and she is very excited to get to see her fellow New Yorkers' creativity firsthand. An avid reader and writer, Adena is thrilled to have the opportunity to work on this zine with colleagues who share her passions. She is particularly excited about this project because it provides a showcase for our talented patrons and beautiful city.

Victoria James is an Adult Services Librarian with The New York Public Library. She holds an MLIS with a focus in Indigenous Librarianship and additionally has a BA in Global Studies and Social Justice. She has served on LGBTQ+ committees and worked with community organizations that speak out against violence against women. Victoria hopes to continue to speak up and empower others to share their stories through Zines. Although she is Canadian, she is learning to call New York home.

Tabrizia Jones is a Young Adult Librarian in the Bronx. As someone who was born and raised in the Bronx, she has seen the great things that make New York a creative and vibrant city. What better way to display that creativity than in a magazine that celebrates New York! Tabrizia has participated with literary magazines and newspapers in high school, both working on them and submitting to them. In her spare time, she loves to write short stories and poems, do art, and of course, read!

Karen Loder is a librarian for the adults at her Manhattan community's library where she promotes reading and writing and learning because she loves those three things! Throughout high school and college, Karen has participated with literary magazines either by working for or submitting to them. She thinks this one is particularly special since here she can show off the super talented patrons who attend her writing workshops. She thanks you for your interest in this publication and asks that you continue to support the library and the amazing people who shape it.

Next Issue:

FREE
PROGRAMS

DEAR FUTURE SELF...

WHAT DOES THE
FUTURE HOLD
FOR YOU?



Calling All Writers!

Get Published in Issue 5 of the Library Zine

This issue's theme: Dear Future Self...

2020 has been a tumultuous year where we have lived in "unprecedented times." But with our last issue "Raise Your Voice," New Yorkers let themselves be heard and told us there's nothing that can bring us down or stifle who we are. Now we are facing a more hopeful future and the NYPL Zine is looking for creative perspectives in which our patrons see themselves approaching a "new normal." We are also looking for essays about books that have impacted submitters' future self.

Call for Submissions Begin February 1

All ages and languages are welcome to submit!

All submissions will be reviewed. You will find the rules and requirements on the back of this flyer. For more information, please email nyplzine@nypl.org.



Connect with us:  
nypl.org/nyplzine

Submission Guidelines

Theme

2020 is a year that we will never forget. As we approach, a "new normal", full of new ideas and expectations, the theme of this issue is Dear Future Self.... We are looking for inventive and creative takes on self-expression and what that means to you. In this new world we are in, what would you write to yourself? We want to hear your voice, your hopes and your future dreams. We encourage submitters to please stick to the theme. Make sure to stand out from the crowd and make your title unique to your work.

Manuscripts

All written manuscripts **must be typed** in 12-point font with one-inch margins, and checked for spelling and grammar. At the top of your submission, please include your name, address, primary phone number, and email.

Poetry should be single-spaced and not exceed 1,000 words.

Short stories can be 500-2,250 words, about 2-8 pages double-spaced.

Non-fiction and essays should not exceed 2,250 words, about 8 pages double-spaced. **Non-fiction/Essays should be about a book you have read that impacted your future/current self. No other topics will be accepted at this time.**

Manuscripts must be in .doc or .docx format, and/or readable in Google Drive and/or Microsoft Word. Submissions can be written in any language.

Artwork and photography

Physical copies of artwork (e.g. paintings, sculptures, etc.) or photos will not be accepted. Instead, **take a full-frame picture or scan your work** into one of the following formats: .JPG/JPEG, .TIFF, and .PNG. Images must be 300 pixels per inch (PPI). Images containing nudity will not be accepted.

Along with your image, attach a separate Word document with a description of your work and a short anecdote of what inspired the work. **Any images included in the artwork must be the artist's original work and not under copyright.**

Please Be Aware

While Library Zine does not want to limit our patrons' creativity, be aware that this publication is intended for **all** audiences. Submissions must be mindful of language, the use of graphic violence and abuse, and the depiction of harmful stereotypes based on age, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and mental/physical disabilities.

Limit of 5 submissions for review per person, no guarantee that any or all will be selected.



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nypl.org/nyplzine