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The Pen

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Unfinished Recipe

by Isabel Duarte

Take onions and drop them in the saucepan
 Add olive oil (enough to cover the bottom)
 Stir the onions for about 10 mins on Medium heat or until onions are yellow gold
 Turn off heat
 Grab meat
 Flatten it and add handful of salt
 Turn it over and do it to other side
 2-3 egg yolks
 Mix them all really well
 Make balls

I forget the rest of the recipe



Quiet at Midnight

by Teherama White

Regrets aren't ideas or abstract
 No, on the contrary they're tangible objects of upset
 Why, no i can't see them or touch them or hear them
 but the everlasting echo of feeling and the sharp taste of resentment
 are enough to prevent these
 untouchable memories from quieting their despair.
 i know it's unlikely to find any true peace
 when even at the slightest sign of dreaming, the long awaited trappings of
 remorse begins to enhance.
 The chance of dispelling these regrets is forever lost
 with a glance when something is askance.
 So please don't ask me in advance because i assure you that
 it's not perchance to find me transfixed on a sitch that happened long since.
 Be warned my friend that regret is a tricky thing,
 it's both a feeling and an accessory to be placed upon memories.
 So please don't forget that for centuries and centuries
 i'll regret, the many regrets i failed to intercept

Sunrise Behind the Washington Monument

by Jennifer Nehrer



On the morning of November 8th, 2020 I was able to walk up the steps to the Lincoln memorial and capture the beautiful sunrise behind the Washington Monument. Just two months later, days before the inauguration, the threat of a SECOND White Supremacist revolt all but shut down Downtown DC. This first picture was taken at one of the closest points I could get to the Lincoln Memorial, where I had taken the second photo not long before.



Some may say that the events of January 6th were a “wake up call” to the true threat of those white supremacists. To those of you who said that, were you really asleep for that long? Did you not see anything that happened before they stormed federal property? Have you been paying attention? Did you notice when they threatened, beat, and killed those who didn’t look, think, or act like them BEFORE January 6th?

Do you recognize the immense privilege you must have to not have to worry what they might do to you or your family?

It should not have taken an insurrection to get people to realize the true danger of White Supremacy. It should not have taken this long for some to take it seriously. But now that enough people are paying attention, maybe, just *maybe*, we’ll see some real change. Maybe someday, this country will truly be as beautiful as that sunrise behind the Washington Monument.

The Princess and the Frog

by Anneke Risch



My thoughts

by David Gomez

My thoughts
 Make me feel like a king
 Who's lost his crown.
 A smile is an upside-down frown-
 Reminds me of when I smile
 and make others laugh
 Like a clown.
 But they don't know that
 In this sea, I will drown.

My thoughts,
 They make me strong;
 Build my bonds,
 Pointing out all the things I did wrong.
 I sit there and pray;
 No response.
 Oh wait-
 It's okay,
 I have my own response anyway

My thoughts.
All I do is think, think, think,
My eyes open and close
And within a blink,
My mind begins to sink.
Thinking is good,
Overthinking pushes me over the brink.
Pour me a drink.
I'm tired,
Yet with all this,
Within me still burns scorching fire.

My thoughts
Break me down and build me up.
What is being sad?

Seems like I forgot to feel it.
Damn,
I've made thousands of memories
And hopefully,
you'll remember me,
Even though
I'll be the first to leave.

My thoughts.
But don't worry,
I'll be fine.
After all is said and done
Only two things remain
Me
And my thoughts

Little Red Cap

by Anneke Risch



Identity

by Benry Juno

I do not think
 that I am altogether human
 rather
 I am more
 I am space and time
 I am history
 and future
 given tendons and teeth
 I am divinity
 and all those who deny me,
 deny me the ability to be
 I do not know who I was
 nor who I am
 nor who I will become
 so I choose
 to be the unknowable passage of time
 to be
 divinity incarnate
 I gazed at what divinity
 was shown to be
 and I could not see me
 so I made myself
 divinity instead
 I was told,
 no,
 scolded,
 that love is what makes us human
 and when I looked down
 at my shaking palms
 I could not tell
 if I saw claws
 or carved marble
 if I drank blood
 that stained my fangs
 or milk and honey
 dripping from golden vases
 if my eyes

were pitch black
 or pure white
 If no mortal man nor woman
 can steal away my breath
 is it because my lungs have no air to begin
 with?
 I know I crave to be called a god
 but something monstrous prowls in my
 blood
 "I am just as human as the rest of you!"
 I cry, I wail, I sob,
 but as I look upon those I wish to live
 among
 I see only strangers
 in a beautiful world
 I cannot live in
 I hold my head up high
 but it is out of pride?
 Or is it to glare at passersby?
 Or even still to hide the threat or tears?
 Are the fabrics that cover my shame
 robes of heaven's mouthpiece,
 or just shaggy coats of fur
 like a sheep in wolf's clothing?
 If my body bears no marks of immortality
 nor scars of beastly transformations
 then what am I,
 if I cannot be human?
 Am I then rebellion?
 Is my very existence
 an act of treason
 against the universe?
 Do I need to apologize
 that I cannot give love
 in order to be worthy of receiving it?
 There are bruises on my knees
 Do they come from running wild in the

woods?
 Are they from kneeling at an altar
 praying to be gifted
 with belonging?
 When I sing,
 blinded by the gazes of a jury
 and floodlights,
 are my songs the echoes of the forest at
 night
 or the hymns of cherubim?
 I dedicate my soul to music
 and its makers,
 but why?
 Is it because I can hear the howls of beasts
 or because I can hear the refrains of the
 universe?
 When I write,
 hounded by the madness of creation,
 possessed by the worlds in my mind,
 there is always a dark force
 and a deity
 So which one is me?
 Am I the beast that prowls among the stars
 or the long-dead goddess
 kept alive only by her holy name
 (although my name is not spoken in
 sermons,
 nor cried by desperate lips,
 therefore it must be defiled)
 and her legacy
 (and worse still,
 I have no legacy yet
 in neither blood nor ink)?
 Is that why I can only write words of
 fiction?
 Because the world I walk in
 has made no space for me,
 so I must carve it out myself
 with pencils for chisels?
 (The world I call home

has made little room
 for anyone,
 I've noticed,
 so away I work
 chiseling away room in my worlds
 for reflections of my loves—
 those tied to my fingers by blue strings
 rather than fate's red)
 Are my fictions fantasies, then?
 Are they former lives
 or dreams of longing?
 When I call myself divinity,
 is it out of self-love,
 or fear?
 It's not as though
 I see the moon
 and shapeshift or begin to pray
 I chose divinity for myself
 but my choice is not the one that matters
 is it?
 I wonder
 if when I stare at the body in the mirror
 if she is me
 or a woman changed by the voices of the
 world
 I wonder
 if when the world looks at me
 they see a statue of the Virgin
 (not Mary, just me)
 whose cracks are filled with gold leaf
 or a jagged monster
 born of shadows
 and begging to be fixed
 by brute force
 I wonder
 if they will ever see me as human
 or if I am destined
 to be labelled as they see fit
 And still then I wonder
 why I fear my humanity

and further then still
 why I fear the other choices?
 (Because it means
 acknowledging
 that I do not belong)
 And so I am left alone

to ponder
 why I chose divinity
 If even angels strike horror in the hearts of
 men
 why then is it so despicable to be an eldritch
 Leviathan

Before

by Dylan Park



After

by Dylan Park



Quarantine Chronicles

by Dylan Park

I roll out of bed
 9:30 sharp
 Rushing to get to school
 Across my room I dart
 5 minutes later
 Still in my room
 I made it to class-
 Well, I made it to Zoom

I finish up class
 And prepare to go home
 Oh wait-
 I shut my laptop and I'm free to roam
 The day was exciting
 Full of worksheets-
 kinda cool
 I go back to bed
 To get ready for school

The Untouched

by Francine Worsoff

Life is like a rainbow,
 As pure as a crystal.
 Creation through humanity,
 A bird's smooth whistle.
 The soul and the body must merge together,
 For only a mother's love lasts forever.
 It is unnatural and beyond belief
 That even a baby can lack relief.
 Without the love needed to persist,
 Life on earth does not exist.

It is proven, not once or twice,
 That a newborn baby is created wise.
 Without a touch, or any affection,
 Life diminishes due to rejection.

It's true for adults,
 And fact for a baby;
 That without love,
 nature perishes daily.
 There is no yesterday without tomorrow,
 And no today without love-- only sorrow.

Why I Love Poetry

by Francine Worsoff

Reaching the summit of the eye-dry cliff as it crumbles miles down into the sea
 Is a mere representation of what poetry does to me.
 Without a rhyme, nor a verse,
 Those on Earth cannot converse.
 Because this world is meant for expression,
 What is a world that lacks confession?
 I feel the power of the led that glides upon my notebook
 As it splatters ideas in a thought, like a kitchen with a cook.
 The cracking earth collapses into my thoughts once again-
 But this time I remember to pick up my pen.
 Feeling the weight of the earth on the tip of your shoulder
 As the glorious days of dazzling adventure are about to smoulder,
 You grip tightly the vines of the bright green jungle,
 Which swings you about in a second of bungle.
 You upon an existence which poetry has guided,
 The pen rolls off your table.
 The day-dream has subsided.

The Hill We Climb Reflection

By Eliza Walker

The past does not define us
The present does not confine us
And the future we must design for us
Created to be the place that respects all “cultures, colors, characters and conditions of Man”
Even if we may not see the fruits of our labor in our lifespan.
No matter the obstacles we face
We must continue to chase
To find the ideals that our founding fathers fought for
So that others might hear democracy roar.
It is not for this reason alone that we fight
For we have seen tyranny and insurrection try to take over our country with all its might.
But that mustn't stop us from our destined direction
For these events have helped us to form a connection.
Because in the midst of evil we have found good, in the midst of darkness we have found light,
and in the midst of injustice we have found justice.
A wise saying said that there can be no “yin” without the “yang”, no good without the bad,
because we must know the enemy whom we fight.
Without it, how can this country unite?
If we want to know who we can be and what we can do, we must use our moral compass
Not only to right the wrongs of Columbus
But to make the song “America” true with the words that have been written.
We see the promise of creating a nation for our children that is better than the one we were given.
With this new found hope,
We can now have a brighter scope
Across all the lands of this country
As far as the eye can see, no matter how tall the Appalachian or Blue Ridge Mountains may be.
How far we are on the hill to democracy, we have yet to determine,
Said the wise words of Amanda Gorman



Why Students Need the Full First Amendment

by Jennifer Nehrer

[This article was originally published with the News Media Alliance at <https://tinyurl.com/8b4a2t99>]

Free Speech Week honors one of the most important freedoms in the First Amendment, but there are some limitations to what speech is protected, especially for students. I learned this in 2018, when I had the opportunity to attend a reenactment of the historic Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines*. Hearing that there was a legal precedent for student protest inspired me to want to better advocate for myself and my fellow students — but it soon became clear that the freedoms available to me were actually pretty minimal.

As the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) writes in their summary of the case, “[T]here are still limits on what students can do in public schools.” While they can protest, as Mary Beth Tinker did by wearing an armband, any protest that violates an attendance policy or otherwise disrupts the learning environment is not protected under the ruling. The ACLU also notes that since the use of social media as a form of protest has spiked in the last few years, “some schools have attempted to extend their power to punish students for speaking off-campus and outside school hours.” The ACLU has denounced and challenged such measures, but courts nationwide are not unified on whether or not this action is constitutional.

If you find yourself asking, “Why would students need to protest in school?”, the answer is incredibly simple: for the betterment of their educational environments. For example, 2018 saw widespread student protests following the shooting at Parkland, Florida’s Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. In order to get more attention from the government, students nationwide walked out of class and gathered in large groups to advocate for stricter gun control laws.

But instead of supporting the students’ right to free speech, many schools simply marked the children with an unexcused absence unless they had a note from a parent, essentially ignoring the students’ pleas. This put pressure on students who could not miss school or schoolwork for whatever reason and decreased the number of students who could make their voices heard.

During the coronavirus pandemic, some students have faced disciplinary action from their schools for sharing their experiences with reopening. Multiple students at North Paulding High School in Georgia say that they were suspended for sharing photos of the crowded hallway at their school where multiple students were not wearing masks. The Student Press Law Center has condemned NPHS’s actions in a letter, citing *Tinker v. Des Moines* and noting that the school cannot punish students for actions taken on social media after hours.

On October 20, students at the Ovid-Elsie High School in Michigan held a protest calling for a better system for online learning to be put in place, as they believe the one currently in effect is causing a large number of students to fall behind. This protest was scheduled to take place from 7:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., meaning that participants likely missed a day of school and therefore violated the attendance policy, an action that is not protected by the *Tinker v. Des Moines* decision.

Further, on Tuesday, October 13, students at Paso Robles (California) High School held a protest in the parking lot of the school during school hours to go back to in-person learning. Students socially distanced and participated in classes via Zoom while supervised by a school official. Though this protest was not in violation of any school policies, it certainly caught the school's attention.

These instances of student advocacy activity, however, are not limited to walking out of class and protesting. In fact, the students at my own school, the School Without Walls High School in Washington, D.C., are in the middle of our own coordinated response to the recent actions of our school district.

On October 7, our principal, Richard Trogisch, was abruptly fired. D.C. Public Schools (DCPS) informed the parents and students of this change via an email but provided no reason as to why he was let go.

This action caused an immediate uproar amongst the students, who took to social media in Trogisch's defense. I, personally, gathered all of the information I could about the situation and created a "carrd" with all of the links for students to reference. I have also helped create a Student Advocacy Server on Discord, a platform that allows users to create online spaces to chat over text or the phone with their friends. This platform allows students to organize and stay up-to-date on the situation, as well as form a unified response on this issue and any others that may come up in the future. A petition has also been circulated calling for Trogisch's reinstatement.

In addition to organizing online, students at my school have attended protests, one of which was organized by a member of our own student government. The others have been organized by parents and teachers but have featured attendance and speakers from the student body.

So why do students protest? The same reason anyone else would: for our rights. Every child in this country has a right to an education as well as a right to make sure that they are getting the best education possible. When a school system takes actions that disturb that education, the community has every right to be enraged and advocate for its repair. If necessary, this may mean taking actions that would violate the remaining restrictions on student free speech that *Tinker v.*

Des Moines outlined, such as in the case of the walk-outs for gun control in 2018. Actions like these force the school systems and their administrations to pay attention and listen to the demands of their students. Why, then, are they not allowed? Why must students be forced to protest their schools only in a way that the school sees fit?

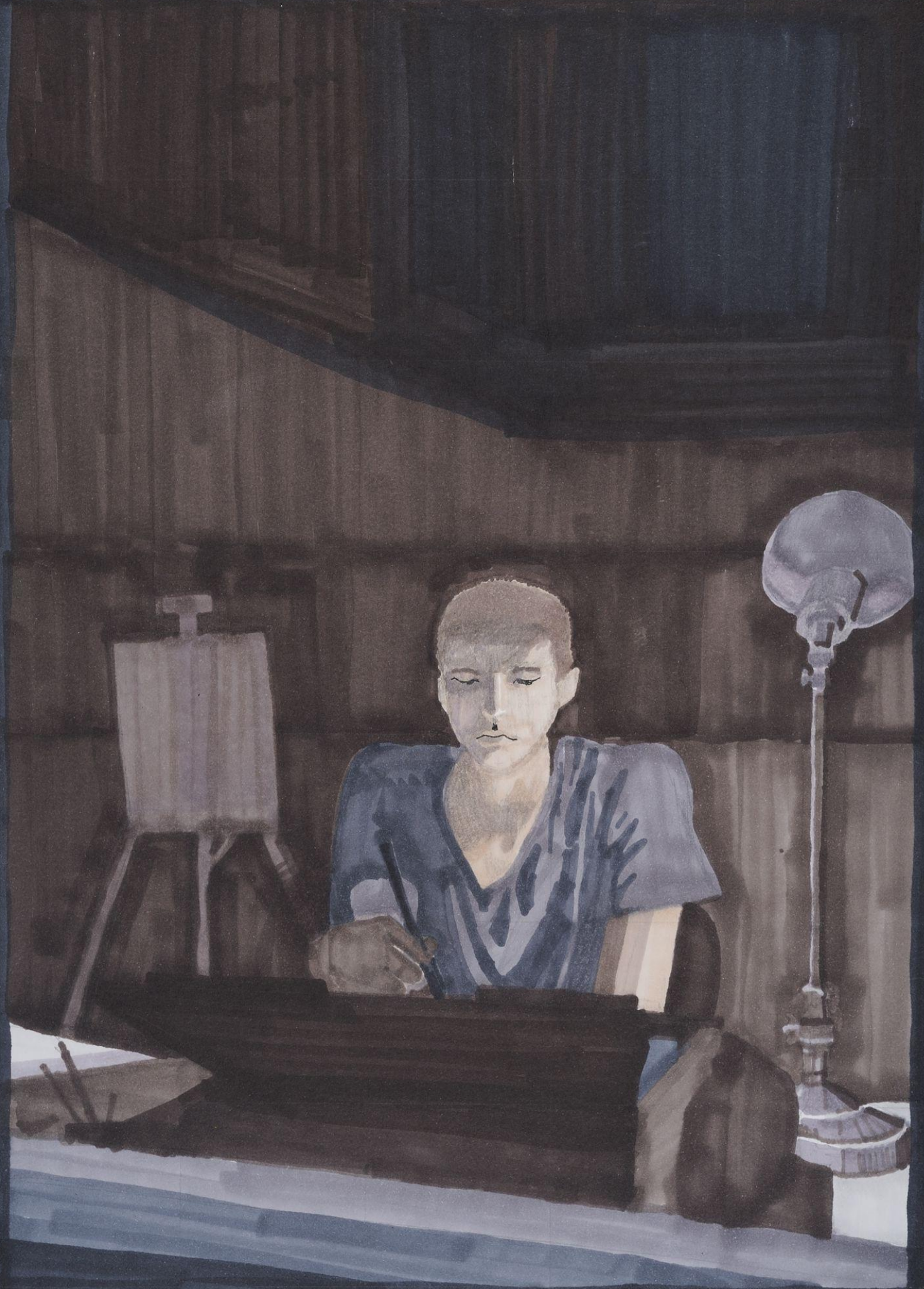
In order to ensure that student voices are heard, schools should not limit the freedoms of speech that are given to citizens outside of the schoolyard. An education is a human right, and therefore the ability to advocate for it should not be hindered by an organization that wants to make decisions for its own benefit, not the benefit of the students.



Stole My Heart

by Mrs. Jones-Hinnant

The moment you were born
 The masses did adorn
 How happy you have made the family
 Great is what you'll be
 Everyone is fighting the economy
 You are a king and your name says it all
 Pharaoh is what you are called
 They will bow down day and night
 Get ready to fight, fight, fight
 For equal rights, to beat poverty
 Just wait, you'll see
 We are still fighting to be free
 Free to talk, sing and stand our ground
 Everyday they take a black man down
 We get up swinging harder than ever
 They forgot that we are clever



Reflection by Linus Johnson

I was no longer a child

by Pao Milbank

I knew I was no longer a child when I realized the fragility of being alive --
I flicker and fade with every failure.
I learned life could be gone so fast after every threat of death
and I am scared of every corner I cannot see around.
I learned that life is hiding in concrete basements
under stairwells in unknown hotels and praying to a God I never really believed in.
I realized I had grown up when I could not let myself get close to anyone
because I knew what would happen eventually,
and I never want to be left trailing behind another beautiful boy.
I learned I cannot expect other people to be my backbone
and hold my head up for me.

I am never numb now.
I grew up with dirty fingernails like daggers against my spine
and the hope that seven years would erase how he made me feel.
I feel--
I feel so much it mauls me and
I can feel the pressure against my ribcage every time I take another breath.
And again and again --

I am fleeting;

I was waiting to be blown away, pushed further into the future,
and now I drag my heels into vinyl floors,
knowing it won't work
but still
I sink my weight further back.

The Maple Tree

by Josie Reich

[The following are lyrics, intended to be listened to. Hear here: <https://tinyurl.com/yzywssds>]

There is a maple tree at my grandparents' house
I sat under it as the spring would sprout
When I was eight the leaves shrouded me
Folded, spread out, and turned like origami
I used to think if the world came to end one day
I'd probably be safe here in my hideaway

I went to college, got my master's degree
I did all of my work under a sycamore tree
"Where are you off to?" asked the peeling bark
Used my fingernail to carve a question mark
Couldn't see down any path more than 20 feet
So I closed my eyes and I followed the breeze

The breeze floated me to Spain
Didn't speak the language, wandered 'round in vain
I picked a fruit off an orange tree
Was more sour than sweet, suddenly clarity
I turned around, walked the ocean route home
Gingerbread trunks and emerald leaves, finally saw the world in polychrome

In Senegal, so the story goes, the storytellers didn't work the land
So they were buried in the trees, now that's my demand
I've seen the pollen as it rides on the air
I'd follow it anywhere, so take me down
Take me down, down, down
Take me free
To the maple tree

Lip Paint by Anneke Risch



Hayden Planetarium

by Isabel Duarte

Coming home from a school trip

From the Hayden Planetarium

Shook me in such a way.

I was only eleven

There I stood

Frozen on the sidewalk

Still trying to process all the newfound information

I learned on that school trip

That our world was a rocky planet

And that no, the moon isn't made out of cheese

And that we live on a planet

Surrounded by thousands of others

And for once i felt small

Because i had finally realized

That the universe is bigger

Than I'll ever know

I sat there on the sidewalk

Contemplating the wonders of life

Thinking about how small and lonely i really was

Compared to the stars and more

tap tap tap

By Isabel Duarte

sometimes I forget i'm even doing anything. I feel so normal, so regular, I have a feeling of comfort. but maybe I should stop.

maybe I should stop working myself up, stop worrying about the unknown. I fill my mind with ideas and fears and constantly am thinking and thinking and thinking and thinking.

tap tap tap

tap tap tap

i almost forget that i'm making that sound.

tap tap tap

I should stop

I think

but then life wouldn't feel normal anymore.

something would be missing from my busy brain and I wouldn't be able to pinpoint what

I think maybe it's bad that i've come so used to it

I should stop

tap tap tap

I should really stop

tap tap tap

my mind is too busy sometimes

tap tap tap

I think I stress myself out more than life does

I think my head spins faster than the wheels on a car

my mind races against itself

tap tap tap

i gotta stop

tap tap tap

I NEED to stop

