



# Community Quill

*Spring 2023 Edition*

The Saint Elizabeth University  
English Department

*"Dark Storm"*  
H. Francis

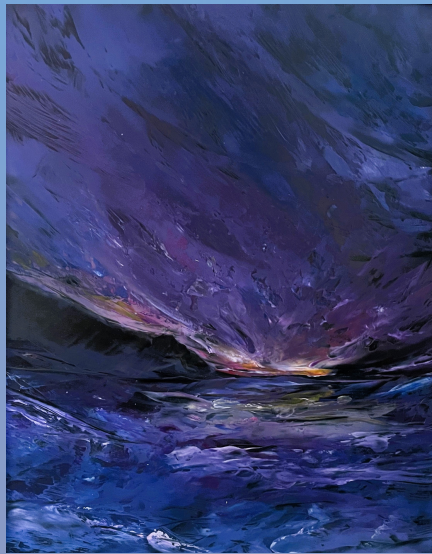
# *Community Quill*

## *The Saint Elizabeth University Literary Journal*

### *Mission and Vision*

The Community Quill, the literary journal of Saint Elizabeth University, is a publication that celebrates the talents of the campus community through a collection of creative writing and art. As a community, we strive to provide a space where literary and visual artists can share their own work as an expression of their human experience. We welcome students, faculty, staff, and alums to share their own work and collaborate to contribute to our literary community.

We encourage diversity and variety in style and voice and will highlight the meaningful work of the community, while maintaining our core values of integrity, social responsibility, leadership, and excellence in teaching and learning.



### *Editorial Board*

*Editor - Aerial Brown*

*Asst. Editor - Deaundre Bobb*

*Faculty Advisors - Carla Ferreira & Lynne McEniry*

*English Department Chair - Dr. Laura Winters*

# *Table of Contents*

"Buck Garden"-K.Francis	
"The Girl In The Mirror"-Ta'Nasha Samuels Wilkerson	
"Cat"-Charles R.	
"Layers of Life"-Sydney Salomon	
"Make A Wish"-Theresa Lewis	
"What I Saw vs. What I See"-Aeriel Brown	
"Love"-Chloe Gregory	
"The Theme of My Story"-Deaundre Bobb	
"Stairway"-Anthony Waldman	
"Adversity" by Mekhi Fields	
"Vase of Flowers II"-K.Francis	
"Seasons"-Khandi Williams	
"They Cry Too"-Theresa Lewis	
"Too Old For Meatballs"-Luke Hughen	
"Women's Rights"-Chloe Gregory	
"Women's Access"-Emily Cruz-Gil	
""-Anthony Waldman	
"Intrinsic Justice"-Lucas Aquino	
"Vase of Flowers"-K. Francis	
"All Out"-Timothy Geary	
"Shenandoah"-K.Francis	
"Is College Worth It?"-Madison Dodds	
"Peony"-K.Francis	
"The College Student's Survival Guide(Excerpt)-Matthew	
Lowke "Peony II"-K.Francis	
"Captured"-Alessandrinie Laine	
"The Place Where I"-Deaundre Bobb	
"We Can Do It"-Chloe Gregoy	
""-Anthony Waldman	
"Asian Americans"-Emily Cruz-Gil	
"Colors Multiplied"-K.Francis	
"Photo of Sculpture"-Anthony Waldman	
"Curiosity"-Ryan Patrick McLaughlin	
Social Justice Winner Spread	
Acknowledgements	



*"Buck Garden"*  
H. Francis

# The Girl In the Mirror

Why am I always tired?  
Why can't I sleep?  
I look in the mirror and I don't see myself  
I don't see myself at all  
I see a hurt girl who's lost  
She looks so empty inside  
Who are you?  
I am you  
No you're not this isn't me  
Yes it is  
No it can't be I'm always happy  
We think we are but we're not  
Why aren't we happy?  
Because everyone keeps leaving  
Will we ever be happy again?  
I don't know time will tell  
Who are you?  
I am you  
No you're not this isn't me  
This is you look in the mirror and see  
I see now  
Who am I?

-Ta'Nasha Samuels Wilkerson



*Untitled*  
*Charles R.*



*"Make A Wish"*  
Theresa Lewis

# What I Saw Vs. What I See

The night before she left for United States Marine Corps Recruit Training, she went to look at herself in the mirror. She saw a 21 year old girl. No more than 115 lbs. Long hair past her shoulders. She was smiling...for a second. As she let her thoughts consume her mind, fear began to take over her body. She was shitting bricks. Every venture she'd taken after high school had failed. She failed. She felt as though she continued to let her family down. She didn't want it to be more of the same. This time though, she may have bitten off more than she could chew. That didn't matter now. There was no turning back. The contract was signed, fingerprints recorded and her future was waiting for her on a bus heading to Parris Island, South Carolina. She leaned forward, using the sink for balance, and whispered to her reflection with eyes filled to the brim with tears, "What the hell have you done?"

## Three Months Later

The night before Marine Corps Recruit Training Graduation, she went to look at herself in the mirror. No longer did she see a 21-year old girl. She did see a 21 year old woman. She was completely different from the one seen three months ago. This woman had gained about 15 lbs of muscle. That long, shoulder length hair was gone. She now wore a cut close to her head. Behind her glasses frames a black eye that she'd earned in a boxing match. This woman gained more experience in three months than any job could teach you within a year. She was stronger. She was wiser. More confident. She saw the world in a completely different light...and she was ready to conquer it. This time when she smiled, it stayed. She looked away for a second to pay attention to the announcement that was being made.

"Alright Marines! Almost time for lights out! Don't want you to be tired at graduation!"

She took one last look and softly fist bumped her reflection.

"You did it, girl." she whispered softly. "And this is only the beginning."

-Ariel Brown



*"Love"*  
*Chloe Gregory*





*"Stairway"*  
*Anthony Waldman*

# Adversity

The entire neighborhood was shaken by the sound of the police sirens, "WOOOO,WOOOO,WOOOOO." James was informed of the tragic event that had taken place; either a shooting or a stolen car had decided to travel around the city like a mouse in an apartment, and police were chasing them with a broom to get them out. James was accustomed to this occurring in his area on a daily basis. In Newark, New Jersey, growing up as a young child in a single-parent household is like having a unique outer shell that may either make or break you. Unfortunately, despite being one of New Jersey's most dangerous places, it was hard for people to avoid danger and improve their position in life. James realized that his hobbies were his only way to avoid this negative environment in which it consisted of basketball and spending time with his mother.

Basketball served as his means of getaway, allowing him to experience new surroundings and connect with individuals who may inspire him to become a better version of himself. He was aware that his mother was doing everything in her power to ensure his success, and that if he made a mistake in class or decided to be a knucklehead, she would do her utmost to strip the color from him until only the white meat remained. "Remember, you can't be a student Athlete if you're not a student first" his mom states daily. This helps mold James into a mature young man easily avoiding outside distractions knowing that he is bigger and that he can get there with the love and support of his mom.

-Mekhi Fields



*"Vase of Flowers II"*  
H. Francis

# Seasons

There is a reason for every season  
My tears have filled my emotional reservoir  
Now I'm void of droughts

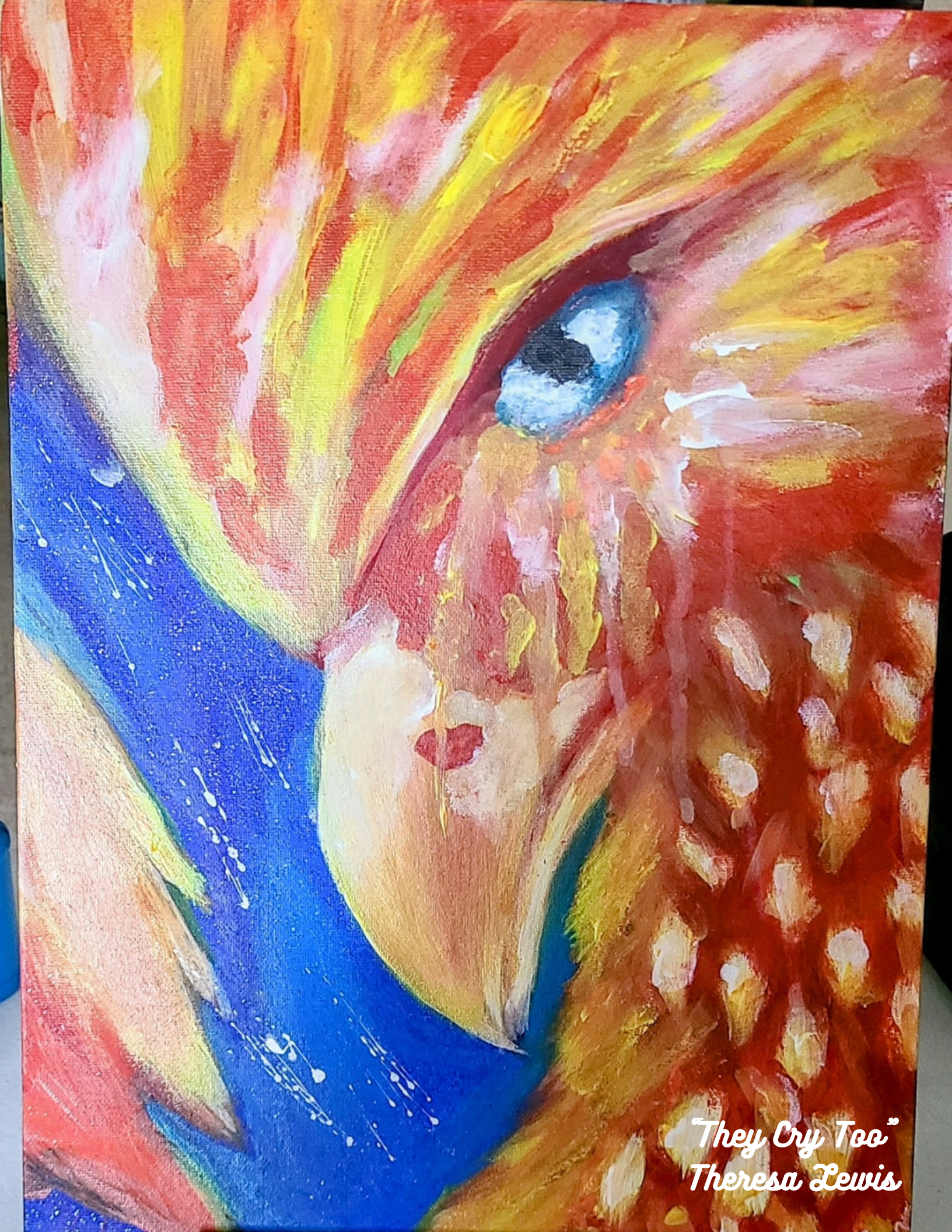
My money has run dry a few times  
But my God supplied my needs  
Now when I have an overflow I give to those in need

Frustration and perseverance go hand in hand  
Without these two I could not stand  
One propelled me to seek out solutions  
The other held me accountable so I would not quit  
Now I'm cool, calm, and collected in the midst of  
Quick-ly How life drums up tornadoes

Being in the middle of a storm is like screaming out "boo, tomatoes"!  
But I tie up my boots and hold my head up high  
Cause' if God before me no man or disaster will take me out  
Now I rest in God cause he already figured my situation out

Each season has a reason  
I know this now  
But those tears, those finances, and those storms  
Helped me to help my fellow man  
To keep going, keep fighting cause in the end you and me will continue  
to stand  
Cause every season has a reason

-Khandi Williams



*"They Cry Too"*  
Theresa Lewis

# Too Old For Meatballs

I used to have a GG. For a while at least I did; a long while realistically. 18 years I remember my GG playing a prominent role in my life. From the Sunday church days to the daily hospital visits, she would always greet me with a smile and hug. Oh, how I miss those hugs.

A younger Luke would not remember much from the early age of eight. One memory I have yet to forget was my birthday that year. Now unlike most eight-year old's, longing for a bowling party with all of their friends, I had a family party, which in time, I learned to love these. Instead of consuming cardboard labeled "pizza" by thousands of second graders at your nearest Chuck E. Cheese, I would much rather a home cooked meal. If that isn't normal, I don't know what is. And if I am being honest, that stupid mouse creeps me out anyway.

What makes this home-cooked meal so memorable were those Swedish meatballs. While the prime rib was standing out like an elephant at the circus, I was fixated on the clown. Some people hate them, some people love them; usually, a little odd but a good little warmup for the rest of the circus. To me, it was the main attraction. About 30 meatballs later, I would make the claim that "I want them every year for my birthday". To this day, they are my favorite food. As birthdays pass, each year my GG would make them for me. I could still remember that crockpot full of meatballs glistening on their way to the table.

Even though it was a little heavy for her, she scored a ten on the dismount as they splashed perfectly over the waves of the noodles. It was an art. The perfect blend between taste and comfort that can only be attained through her meatballs. From the creaminess of the gravy to the pop of flavor, from that first bite to the last; GG poured her love for me into those meatballs. I could honestly talk about how good her Swedish meatballs are for hours.

As my family parties evolved into family and friends, my GG's crockpot would be taunting me on the counter. I know I have to wait for dinner but just one? Who would notice? I did not realize at the time but around the time my friends started to come over, my GG would not be there. 14-year-old me would not understand the importance of her missing presence. As long as those meatballs were there, I figured she was busy or something. Better yet, I was happy. She made the meatballs, so she had to be okay.

My 15th birthday was accompanied by my mother's meatballs. She took the recipe from my GG who was not staying at her house anymore. Those meatballs were damn good too. I could hardly tell the difference. As my GG's meatballs slowly were becoming my friends favorite too, they became my mother's Swedish meatballs. By my 18th birthday, they were my mother's meatballs for three years now and will be from now on. It was okay though. Every time I eat them, I thought of her.

My brother and sister hate Swedish meatballs. For years, they have begged me to switch up my birthday dinner. I didn't really care though because it's my day. If I want meatballs, I'm getting meatballs. Or so I thought. My 20th birthday was two weeks ago After many years of battle, my siblings finally won. Saying as we get older, meatballs won't be enough food. We need a "real" meal. One that is filling but won't taste as good I assume. My birthday dinner became pasta carbonara.

*Am I too old for meatballs?*

-Luke Huguen

WOMEN'S  
RIGHTS  
ARE  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS

*"Women's Rights"*  
Chloe Gregory



*Untitled*  
*Anthony Waldman*

# Intrinsic Justice

Get 6 to 8 hours of sleep daily, as you will wake up refreshed and ready to take on any tribulations you may face in your journey. Make your bed everyday when you wake up, so even if your day was miserable and sad, at least you can come back to a bed that is made. Prepare your meals the night before, so all that they require is a push of a button; after all, this creates discipline and creates consistency, because we all know that consistency is the answer to effective results in the longevity of our existence. Stay away from junk foods as a whole, but it's ok to have an ice cream and such when you're out on a date or with your loved ones, for a treat once in a while is acceptable in the face of adversity.

At the bottom of the barrel, you may find that you have lost all hope, and you have nothing else to lose, but remember why you decided to wake up out of your twin bed every morning; because you yearn for an answer that only you may be able to find. When reaching the peaks of success, take a pair of binoculars and look beyond the horizon, for you have only climbed a plateau out of many ranges in the far East. And at the end of the day, relax and rest on the bed that has been made, for tomorrow must be dealt and sought only by tomorrow's you.

When taking these values to the fullest, and seeking justice to the highest degrees...what have you to offer to the world? What have you to save for the people? Justice is as subjective as one can perceive, and as one can use to the betterment of their potential. If I'm willing to use my intrinsic values to better myself, I will prove myself hospitable to offer the best effective change I can, and I welcome controversy. Entertainment would be a great thought, expression of thoughts and experiences. Are you stuck in a chamber of isolation and destitute, or shall the fruits that you have endeared for as long as you can remember have a true impact on society? Only you can bring an answer for love and grace, for the grace of the world which you shall impact, dearest one...

-Lucas Aquino



*"Vase of Flowers"*  
H. Francis

# All Out

Book a tee time

I parred on hole nine

On a bright Sunny day not even a swine

My friend swung the club, he may whine over his shot

Right on the green, dot

The day hot unbearing the 72 I shot

We go out tomorrow not a single bad thought

The night was brisk, went to sleep, I was thinking a lot

The alarm clock rang it was unblinking

I will go out today with wishful thinking

My brother told me before I went through the doorway that I will shoot par but I was  
doubting myself

I was scouting the course before I went out

It was the 18th green

I was on the tee box, the drive I hit was like a hit from a movie scene

-Timothy Geary



*"Shenandoah"*  
*H. Francis*

# Is College Worth It?

College is a chance for someone to further themselves through their education or become a better person. But at the same time, I feel like for some people being a college student isn't what is best for them. We as a society put so much pressure on young adults to come to college when really it can be doing more harm than good. We even see this through popular teenage television shows. At least the ones I was exposed to. These characters go through their high school years and then automatically go to some kind of college. Like Rory Gilmore going to Yale or Blair Waldorf going to NYU. Since we're exposed to this while we were still growing and developing, college can seem like the only opportunity because of how much it is used in our world.

For me, I think it is where I need to be to get to the place I want to be in the future and really just to grow independently. Growing up I always wanted to be a teacher. I was the kid who always wanted to be near the teacher and just watch them do whatever. It was really the only career path that I really cared about. Well besides the years that I decided I was going to do all these weird jobs that were never practical. I always came back to wanting to be a teacher. It is the only place I feel like I can in some way make a difference. And with that dream, came college.

If you had asked me during my freshman year of high school if I would have ended up in a pretty small Catholic school about 10 minutes away from my hometown, I would have told you that you were insane. I then would have probably told you that there was no way I was going to stay anywhere near this town and would probably end up far away from home. We were taught in my high school that everyone should go to college and we saw most people going to college were going to big schools. They never really told us about smaller schools so I never checked. I just trusted the guidance counselors cause they must know more than 14-year-old me. Let me tell you I was wrong.

But as I grew, I realized that my college experience didn't have to emulate anyone else's. I saw that it didn't matter what school you went to. I didn't have to do whatever my guidance counselor said. Now that I think of it she wasn't much help at all but that's beside the point. I realized that these big schools weren't what I wanted and really what I needed. I saw how I thrived when talking to actual people and not just listening to a professor talk to me for hours on end. Realizing that made me really look at the places I wanted to be. I started changing the way I thought about college. It was always something I wanted to do and knew that I needed to do it, but I just needed to figure out what was right for me.

For me, it wasn't living far away from home in a school with hundreds of people in a lecture hall. It was about being able to be in charge of myself and start life as an actual adult. Not just this hybrid kind of phase where you feel like you're just playing dress-up. Through this realization, I figured out that I needed to be somewhere where people actually knew who you are and you weren't just a number. If you had come back and asked me now if my college plans were worth it, I would tell you that going to college is probably one of the best decisions of my life. I know that when I leave college, I'll be able to have the kind of job that I dreamed of when I was six years old but this time the dream that I talked about all my life would become a reality.

And while this kind of plan isn't for everyone, it worked out pretty well for me. I think in some way everyone figures out where it is where they can thrive. Whether that be going to college or not. I don't think college is the only opportunity for us to look at in our after-high school planning meetings with the guidance counselor. Most importantly I would tell myself to maybe take what the guidance counselor says with a pinch of salt and do whatever feels right.

-Madison Dodds



*"Peony"*  
*H. Francis*

# The College Student's Survival Guide (Excerpt)

To anyone reading this, you may very well be the future of our nation—perhaps the future of our world. So, congratulations are in order! You're probably fresh out of high school and have decided to take the bold step of heading towards college. Well, as someone who's something of a university veteran, having *been around a little*, let me offer you some advice on how to survive your first semester. I think you'll find that you'll need it, lest you end up like the others...

## *I. Getting Financial Aid*

Before you can actually begin thinking about grades, campus parties, and blood rituals—all standard facets of college life—you'll probably end up having to fill out the FAFSA (Financial Anthrax For Stupid Assholes) form online; this is assuming that you didn't take out a massive life insurance policy on a family member who later died under mysterious circumstances. So, you'll probably need to take out a few loans and get some federal and state aid. Luckily for you, the process couldn't be easier. First, you need to access the FAFSA website and create an account. You will be required to put in just a small amount of your personal information. This will include, but not be limited to: your blood type, favorite breed of horse, a list of all your mental weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and a digital copy of your high school transcript—you will, however, need to make a second account to access this transcript online.

To create this second account, you will be prompted to type in a detailed account of every embarrassing thing that you have ever done or said while you were in grades nine through twelve. Yes; they see you trying to lie. Turning off your webcam won't stop them from seeing you. No, they're not behind you. The only way to make them go away is to fill out the form truthfully. After completing this process, turn off your computer and go to sleep. Should you have truly shorn yourself bare for all to see your past embarrassment, you will be visited in your dreams by an apparition of your childhood best friend; they will not say or do anything. They will only stare at you through blackened eyes as you begin to ponder your insignificance within the universe.

You will want to weep in confusion and fear, but nothing will come out. It will be as though your tear-ducts have been salted dry—as if you hadn't cried in years—decades even—despite the fact that such a length of time goes against how old you think you are right now. What is happening to you? Oh my god. *Nooooooooooooo—nonononononono—make it stop— MAKE IT STOP!*

When you wake up the next morning, look under your pillow and you'll find a username and password for your new account; these should be hard to miss, as the standard procedure is for your new login credentials to be scrawled onto your mattress using the ashes of a creature long thought to be extinct. Remember not to wash your sheets until after you have stored this information away in a safe place such as on your phone or scratched into the sole of one of your shoes. You will now be able to retrieve and upload your high school transcript to the FAFSA website. Alternatively, you can simply call your old high school directly and ask them to mail you a hard copy.

Later in the application process you will be prompted to upload your most recent tax filings with the IRS to the FAFSA website. Thankfully, the IRS is an institution that has never made anything difficult for any average person; they just want to make life easier for you as you go about filling out your FAFSA application. Therefore, retrieving your filings from last year couldn't be easier. Go ahead and find the IRS website—it should be called `legitIRSthisisarealURL`—then log in using all of your most sensitive information that you didn't realize the government has access to (wherever you're looking, that's not where the hidden camera is). An excel spreadsheet should open up after about ten minutes of buffering due to the size of the document. Numbers will flood everywhere, filling up the whites of your eyes—abbreviations that you don't understand will fill the synapses of your mind as you try to unravel their possible meanings—you will begin to break as you fall apart in a cold sweat. Don't fret though! You can always look-up the IRS's guide to understanding their number salad, so that you can extract meaning from the nightmare that you've found yourself in. If that doesn't seem to be enough help, then you can always download the little boy's big boy guide for the main guide for a reasonable \$9.99. When you, hopefully, figure out how to escape the maze of numbers with the information that you need, return to the FAFSA website and put the fruits of your labor into the tax section.

Congratulations; you're now one step closer to being in constant pain for the next thirty to forty years of your life as you try to pay off your crippling student debt.

-Matthew Lowke



*"Peony II"*  
*H. Francis*

# Captured

“Don't look back; keep running.”

The world is falling apart, everyone has officially lost their minds. Bodies all over the floor, people are screaming in pain, crying families, where did it all go wrong? Last thing I remember was this creepy, bold yet beautiful woman. You could tell she wasn't from around here “literally not from here.” Her skin looked like pearls, eyes were to die for. She calls herself Ray. She was born in Saturn and she is the last of her kind. That's why she came to earth, to turn humans into her kind. Apparently it's not working, she's just killing us one by one and she's not going to stop until she accomplishes her goal.

Since she arrived, so many people have perished. She brings at least fifty individuals to this location each week, and if any of them resist, she immediately murders them. In addition, she would urge you to join her in the loveliest voice imaginable, and if you declined, you would die. If she finds you, she might let you choose how you want to die, if she's having a good day. For exactly eleven months and one day, she performed this. Oh, 111 is an angel number. Why be so exact? The people she had stolen returned after eleven months and one day, but they weren't the same people they had been before; they had been mutated, and boy, were they unhappy.

They had only murder and attack on their minds. They murdered many people, including my best friend. “Don't look back; keep running,” were his parting words. These mutated beings have been nothing but a disaster. Everyone is fighting for their lives: “everyone for themselves” or “kill or get killed”. These mutants have all sorts of powers. We are ants to them. The only person that can fix this madness is Ray. But no one would go to her and ask. Yeah I'm scared too but that's not the point. I really don't want to die so I'ma just go to her myself. I knew exactly where she was because that's where she's always at. I was five minutes away from her when I saw a mutated being. That's wicked. So I ran, yes I ran.

-Alessandrinie Laine

# The Place Where I

The place where I feel like a superhero, the place where I feel like I can do anything. The place where I feel as if the rest of the world is shut out and silent. The place where the only thing that matters is what happens in between the lines. The place where everything makes sense, the place where I am the most confident, the place where the version of me is more sure of himself. That place will always be the baseball diamond.

I feel as if I have always been an escapist, I'm not scared to face confrontation but when it all gets too much, I always find myself finding places where I can find peace and get away from it all. The diamond has always been that place for me, it is a place where the outside world doesn't fit into the beautiful game of baseball. Even when we have those days or games where we get absolutely obliterated, there is no place I would rather be. It's to the point where I get frustrated when teammates are talking about what they're gonna do when they get home, or what they did last night, or what they plan to do right after the game. How can you talk or think about anything else when you have the game going on right in front of you?

Even when I'm not playing and I'm just a spectator, I get the same feelings of wonder. It is one of the only places where I feel safe, I feel as if the real me can come out and not be ashamed of it. I feel like in my day to day life I have to suppress so much of my personality, I can't be myself around people, without feeling self-conscious about it. This still happens sometimes when I'm on the diamond, but to me I could care less, because the only thing that matters to me at that moment is the game.

Some people can say I'm being obsessive or melodramatic about the importance of baseball to me. Well I say to them the diamond is the only place I had for a long time. The diamond was the only thing that ever mattered to me for a long time. I could care less about my school, I didn't have any friends, and I had so many family issues to deal with at home. For the longest time the diamond was my home, the diamond will forever be my home. I may not have these same feelings of anger and sadness, but the diamond will always be the place for me to confide in. Just holding a bat, a ball, or gloves calms me down, it makes me feel safe.

The diamond is the place where I grew, the diamond is the place that saved my life, the diamond is the place that stopped me from self-harm. The diamond is the place that means the most to me. The diamond is the place where I was saved, it was the place where I was granted so many amazing opportunities.

-Deaundre Bobb



*"We Can Do It"*  
*Chloe Gregory*  
*Inspired by Norman Rockwell*



*Untitled*  
*Anthony Waldman*

# Asian Americans

I understand that in the beginning of the pandemic much was not known about the COVID-19 virus. However, that did not excuse the hate and fear many Asian Americans faced during the height of it. I follow some instagram pages that would post what was happening within the news and they would share videos and gofundme pages of the people who have been affected physically by the hate of others.

I remember being horrified and disgusted with how horrible people would use this fear of the pandemic to allow their racist ideologies as an excuse to enact physical violence. I felt like I could be doing more to help and to bring awareness to what was occurring. But I also could not attend protests because I was afraid of getting COVID and bringing it back to my mom and grandma. However, I did know that a little bit could go a long way. With that mindset I shared whatever I came across regarding the issue and I would donate whenever I could to gofundme pages.

Even with that mindset I still felt frustrated. What caused me to feel frustrated is that the media and people in politics would use derogatory language in their reports. I am sure we can all think of some politicians that have made some derogatory remarks. Which certainly did not encourage relief nor support to the Asian American community. Instead it had encouraged attacks, threats, and discrimination against them. What kind of politicians and media would report or use that kind of language with the power they have?

This kind of behavior makes me glad that I chose a university that values the inclusion of people who come from different races, gender, sexual orientation, etc. I say this because after what occurred during the height of the pandemic with Asian Americans, it is good to know that there are schools out there that value people from different backgrounds and encourage the diversity that many offer.

-Emily Cruz-Gil



*Colors  
Multiplied™  
K. Francis*



*Photo and Sculpture  
Anthony Waldman*

# Curiosity

The cat is going to die.

I could stop it, because I know how it's going to die—every unsightly detail. When I was younger, a preacher told me that the devil's in the details. I guess that's just a saying, but it rings true for this poor cat.

Anyway, I could save this cat, but I promise you I'm not going to.

Why not?

That's simple.

Its death benefits me.

Does that bother you? Well, don't be too self-righteous. You could save it, too. But you won't, either, because you're going to benefit from its death as well. In my limited experience, we humans aren't great about helping others who differ from us when it means forgoing benefits. The more different the other is, the less likely we are to help. Of course, the one exception is when they're similar enough to us that they remind us we're not really *that* different. Then we *really* hate them, and we might kill them just to maintain the illusion of difference. At any rate, cats are pretty different from humans, so if we get enough out of their deaths, we're probably going to let them die.

Here's another commentary on human nature: I feel a great relief knowing that I'm sharing this experience with you. Here we are. Two people, both unwilling to save this cat. Both responsible for its death. Sharing the guilt. I find that guilt's always best when it's shared. Like a good meal.

Before this cat dies, we ought to make some observations. I've always thought (isn't that a curious expression?) that no creature should pass from this world without others celebrating its life. This is a bit unorthodox seeing as how the creature in question is still alive at this point. Still, since we're confident it's going to die, I can't see any good reason to wait. Isn't there some pithy aphorism about not putting off until tomorrow what can be done today? That makes me wonder. Maybe we should have funerals before people die. After all, what good is a funeral to a dead person?

So... the cat. You'll have to forgive me, but I don't know its name. That's lamentable. Names help us differentiate one thing from another. Luckily for us, I can substitute the idiosyncrasies of the cat for its name. What's more, I can tell you how the cat dies, which is perhaps the most unique aspect of its life. Just to warn you, though, the tale is rather grim.

The cat is mostly tan with a few pitch black stripes. A single white ring crowns the edge of its tail. It also has a white spot surrounding its left eye. Maybe its name is “Patch.” Its feet are clawless, so we can assume at one point someone owned it, stripping it of its wild nature. No collar, though. It must have become a burden. The fur on its feet is slightly darker than the rest of its fur. Funny. It looks like the cat’s wearing socks. Maybe its name is “Socks.”

When you pet it, a warm purr bubbles up from its soul—or whatever cats have. That must have developed after it was thrown out. No one is heartless enough to discard a cat that purrs like that—as if it’s longed for love for a thousand years. I would describe its hiss, but I’ve honestly never heard it. I’d like to think that this cat is too innocent and loving to hiss—like a child who’s too young to hit. But I have heard its meow. It’s thick and low. If you start rubbing behind its ear and then stop, you’re sure to hear it. The cat will meow and then nuzzle your hand. I heard that cats do that to mark their territory. There may be some truth to that, but I think it’s more likely that their heads are just itchy. Maybe it’s both.

Now that you know more about this cat, at least enough that you would recognize it in a close interaction, I can tell you what it’s doing. It’s trotting down a sidewalk. Don’t be misled by this mundane activity. It will be the death of this poor creature.

The cat crosses an alley entrance after an SUV merges with the local traffic. A small child in the back seat points out the window and shouts, “Look at the little kitty. She’s so cute!” To satiate the child’s curiosity about the cat, the mother drives slowly alongside it. This is socially acceptable, but only because there are no cars being held up.

Meanwhile, a small, almost inexplicable, set of storm clouds meanders overhead. The ominous foreshadowing of these clouds should not be overlooked. Imagine all the elements of chance that contributed to the formation and position of this trivial blemish on the sky—a lottery culminating right over this cat which, unless you intervene, will certainly die.

Serendipitously, a raindrop pelts the windshield of the SUV, momentarily drawing the mother’s attention. She hadn’t noticed the shadowy clouds in the sky. A flash of lightning, contrasting against the bright blue sky in the distance, strikes a tree and severs a branch, which falls on the road a short distance ahead of the SUV. The mother, already distracted by the pummeling rain, is all the more shaken by the thunder accompanying the bright flash. By the time she regains her focus, her only recourse from the rogue branch is a sharp twist of the steering wheel. The car careens, eventually finding an uneasy rest against the very tree that provided the branch leading to this crash.

We ought to take a moment to mourn the unfortunate day of this tree—struck by lightning, robbed of a limb, and now assaulted by an SUV.

The cat is already on edge. Considering the ensuing chaos, who can blame it? Adding to the hysteria, the cat is hit on the back by a small twig that falls from the tree after the SUV hits it. The surprise causes the cat to dart across the street. During this sprint, it's tagged by a Dodge Ram TRX. Fun fact: those trucks get 13 miles per gallon. No one can hear it, but a sound of cracking bones joins the chaotic din. The cat tumbles onto its side and roles towards a sewer drain. With its front legs shattered, it's just the right size to squeeze into it. The familiar sights of the street are replaced by the darkness of the sewer. The cat plummets into the cold water.

I'm not sure what it's like to be a cat. I don't know how their thoughts work, but I imagine the cat is wondering why its legs won't move—why it can't swim. It flops around, its head dipping above the filthy liquid every now and again. Then, it disappears—sinking into a stream of human waste.

.....

It's safe to assume that the cat has died.

I told you this would happen. But you wanted your benefit. You just couldn't leave it alone, could you?

Can you place the guilt? What killed the cat?

I'm to blame. I could have stopped it. But then, I wouldn't have a story.

And you're to blame. You could have stopped it. But then, you wouldn't have known how my story ended.

Well, is your curiosity satisfied?

We both participated. I set it all up, and you went along willingly.

What a pair we are! Me, the killing author. You, the killing reader. Collaborative killers.

Collaborative.

Killers.

At any rate, the cat died.

-Ryan Patrick McLaughlin

This year, Saint Elizabeth University held a Social Justice Contest where students could express their concerns through short stories, videos, poems, song-writing, photography and art work. These students not only expressed themselves but were also the finalists of the schools competition. Due to this, they received cash prizes, certificates and their own spread for their submitted piece. This section is dedicated to the students who submitted and placed. Congratulations students and we hope you enjoy their work!

“Violence in the Eyes of the Innocent”-  
Kristina Ashton

“Dear Black Woman”-Ngozi Oyeneke

“The Mind of the Damaged”-Zavier Bell

“My Body, My Choice”-Chloe Gregory

“Call My Name: A Collection of  
Transgender Poems”-Tyson Berardo

“The Lunchroom”-Sydney Salomon

“Dear Book Burners”-Matthew Lowke

“We Try Our Best”-Cibeles Eberaige

“Diary of a Black Girl”-Zyane Shepard

“After The War”-Michael Harrison

ALYSSA ALHADEFF, 14 MARTIN DUQUE ANGUIANO, 14 CATHERINE HUBBARD, 6 JAMES MATTIOLI, 6 JOSEPHINE GAY, 6 CAROLINE PREVITI, 6 ALLISON WYATT, 6 DYLAN HOCKLEY, 6 CHASE KOWALSKI, 7 MAKENNA LEE ELROD, 10 BENJAMIN WHEELER, 6 LAYLA SALAZAR, 11

NICHOLAS DWORET, 17 ALAINA PETTY, 14 ANN PERKINS JAMIE GUTTENBERG, 14 LUKE HOYER, 15 SHANA FISHER, 16 CARA LOUGHRAN, 14 JARED BLACK, 17 GINA MONTALTO, 14 KYLE MELOD, 15 JOAQUIN OLIVER, 17 RYAN CLARK, 22 ALAINA PETTY, 14 MADISON BALDWIN, 17 MEADOW POLLACK, 18 ANDY WILLIAMS, 15 HELENA RAMSAY, 17 BRIAN BLUMM, 2 ALEX SCHACHTER, 14 AUSTIN CLOYD CARMEN SCHENTRUP, 16 PETER WANG, 15 HANA ST. JULIANA, 14 RACHEL SCOTT, 17 KEVIN GRANATA, 15 DANIEL ROHRBOUGH, 15 JUSTIN SMILING, 11 KYLE VELASQUES, 16 STEVEN CURNOW, 14 CASSIE BERNALL, 17

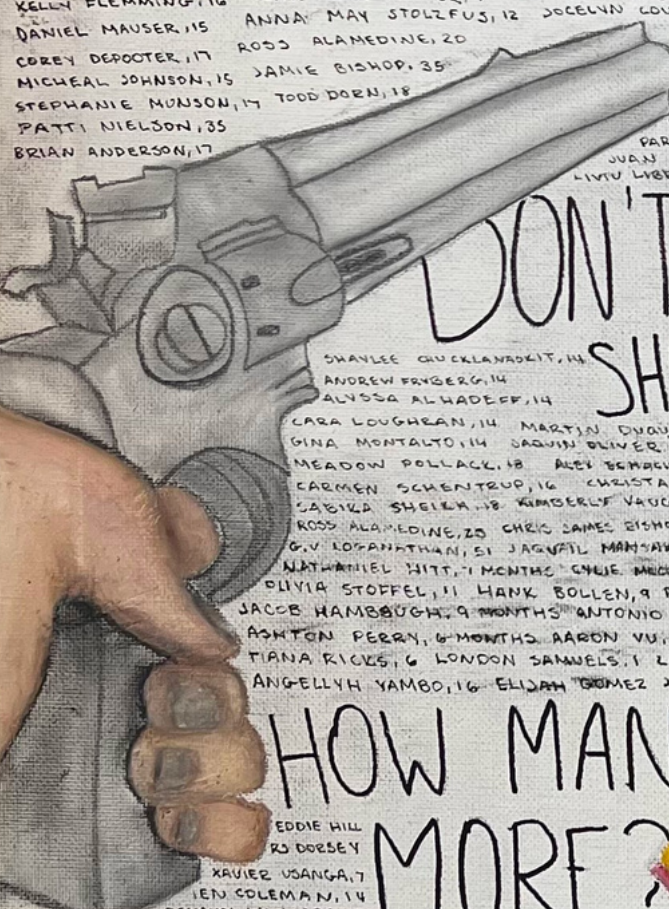
JOHN TOMLIN, 17 SEAN GRAPES, 15 MARK TAYLOR, 16 LANCE BIRLIN, 16 JESSE LEWIS, 6 DANIEL BARDEN, 6 JACK PINTO, 6 IRMA GARCIA, 48 ALICIA WHITE, 15 ISAIAH SHOELS, 18 MATTHEW KECHTER, 16 LAUREN TOWNSEND, 18 KELLY FLEMING, 16 DANIEL MAUSER, 15 COREY DEPOOTER, 17 MICHAEL JOHNSON, 15 STEPHANIE MUNSON, 17 PATTI NIELSON, 35 BRIAN ANDERSON, 17

# ENOUGH

RYAN CLARK, 2 AUSTIN CLOYD, 11 BRIAN BLUMM, 2 RACHAEL HILL, 12 NICOLE WHITE, 20 MAXINE TURNER, 2 MICHAEL DOHLE, 23 ERIN PETERSON, 18 MINAL PANCHAL, 20 LAUREN MCRAIN, 20 JACRETT LANE, 22 EMILY WILSCHER, 16 GRACE KIM, 28 LYDIA SIM, 2 KATLEEN PING, 24 GEORGE CHEN, 19 WEIHAN WANG, 20 VERONIKA WEISS, 10

# IS ENOUGH

JAMES KING, 17 KAVIAN DAVID, 16 NATALYA BELLAN, 2 KRISTIAN MARCHE, 18 ANTHONY GRANT, 17 EMMA JONES, 12 ANNABELL GUADALUPE RODRIGUEZ, 10 JACE CARMELO LUEVAND, 10 MATEO JULIANA RODRIGUEZ, 10 JALIAH NICOLE SILVEIRO, 10 AMERIE JO GARZA, 10 LEXI RUBIO, 10



## DON'T SHOOT.

SHAYLEE GUCKLANADIT, 14 ANDREW FRISBERG, 14 ALYSSA ALHADEFF, 14 CARA LOUGHRAN, 14 MARTIN DUQUE ANGUIANO, 14 JOAQUIN OLIVER, 17 HELENA RAMSAY, 17 MEADOW POLLACK, 18 ALEX SCHACHTER, 14 CHRIS STONE, 17 CARMEN SCHENTRUP, 16 CHRISTIAN RILEY GARCIA, 15 SABELA SHEILA, 18 KIMBERLY VAUGHAN, 14 TATE MIRE, 16 ROSS ALAMEDINE, 20 CHRIS JAMES BISHOP, 35 MATTHEW GWALTNEY, 24 G.V. LOFANTHAN, 51 JAGUAIL MANSAMANT MONTHS, MAKAYLA DYER, 8 NATHANIEL HITT, 1 MONTHS CHIEF MCGILLUM, 5 CADEN MCGILLUM, 5 OLIVIA STOFFEL, 11 HANK BOLLEN, 9 PAYTON BENSON, 5 SAM EPS, 11 JACOB HAMBROUGH, 9 MONTHS ANTONIO SMITH JR, 9 ALTON PERRY, 2 JACOB PERRY, 6 MONTHS AARON VU, 10 SEBASTIAN SWARTZ TIANA RICKS, 6 LONDON SAMUELS, 1 LA'VONTE WILLIAMS, 5 ANGELLYH YAMBO, 16 ELIJAH GOMEZ JASON EBERHARD

## HOW MANY MORE?

EDDIE HILL, 20 DORSEY XAVIER USANGA, 7 IEN COLEMAN, 14 DEVAUN WINTERS, 17 DERREL WILLIAMS, 15 OMARION D. COLEMAN, 15 JESSICA REKOSI, 6 MICHAEL HENDERSON, 15 DAJORE WILSON, 8 OLIVIA ENGEL, 6 MYIESHA CANNON, 16 MAKIA JONES, 15 AVIELLE RICHMAN, 6 CHARNITA KEYS, 11 HOLSTON COLE, 3 GRACE AUDREY MCDONNELL, 7 KENNETH POWELL, 3 MEXKI JAMES, 3 NOAH FORNER, 6 JASHON JOHNSON, 16 GABRIELA FARIAS, 1 ANA MARQUEZ-GREENE, 6 JANARI RICKS, 9 ELLA FAIN, 5 EMILIE PARKER, 6 NATALIA WALLACE, 7 EDDIE DANIELS III, 17 JAYDEN PIEDRA, 2 MALIK SPENCER, 18 DAMANI CHADLY, 17 CALI MACK, 4 TERRY WILSON, 16 LENA NUNEZ ANAYA, 10 JAMES KENNITH LINDQUESTER, 3 AIDEN MICHAEL TALMAGE, 10 JAE'LYNN ROSE WILLEY, 16 MALIK SAYEED MURPHY, 12 SARAH NICOLE WOLFE, 8

## PROTECT OUR YOUTH.



*Violence In The Eyes of the Innocent*  
Kristina Ashton

# Dear Black Woman

We live in a society that subjects black women into boxes (both young and old). As human beings, there are reasons why we allow ourselves to be in that predicament, one of the most influential reason being the need to be accepted by the community.

During the years when my mind was filled with barbies and playhouses, I was already placed in that box, I remember wearing fishnets underneath my skirts with my cute little dresses, and received judgements, sexualizing comments and stares from people. I was told that I looked grown, but when a white girl wears the same thing, it automatically became cute. I have always been passionate about fashion. My eyes always lit up when I see styles and elegance. But for the majority of my life, I was insecure about expressing myself and style because of the fear of being judged. I felt the need to water down my style because I was told that I was doing too much.

I am currently 19 years old and the hyper judgementation of black women has not come to an end, it is grotesque. Fortunately, I don't allow it to affect me anymore and neither should you.

To every black woman out there, YOU DO NOT NEED TO FIT INTO ANY STEREOTYPES. A lot of people have misunderstood this statement so I will address the concern regarding it. Am I saying that we should dress immodestly? Absolutely not, I am a woman of God, I am in no way encouraging immodesty, what I am saying is that you're allowed to be creative, you don't have to wear long skirts and cowboy boots to be modest, I am simply encouraging creativity in modesty. Christ does not stand against our creativity, He stands over it. It is an instrument of worship to Him. It pleases Him. So, If my Father is for me, who then can be against me?

---

-Ngozi Oyeneke

<https://youtu.be/QFp1ihZ5DkQ>



*"The Mind of The Damaged"*  
Javier Bell

# MY BODY MY CHOICE

*"My Body, My Choice"*  
Chloe Gregory



# Selections from “Call My Name: A Collection of Transgender Poems”

## Fighting the Reflection

framed glass pieces  
of someone i don't recognize  
a baby-faced prepubescent child seemingly lost

you aren't supposed to be here

you are supposed to be  
taller stronger hairier bigger flatter chested  
me

tougher      more angular      more

you will never be me

you aren't supposed to look like this

you are  
short weak childlike far too small and soft  
squishy you will never be me

and

these pieces of glass don't come  
together to make a whole image  
they split personas and shift  
day by day things change  
the glass shatters

-Tyson Berardo

# The Miracle of HRT

it really is a miracle to take a shot  
and turn into  
who i see in the mirror

it really is a miracle  
that You want to take away  
who was it made for in the first place? You

You say

We must protect the children!  
and i agree

but you seem to be confused about who the real monster is

You hide them from reality shield them from freedom from books and knowledge  
from people who are comfortable being who they really are

You try to silence the future

by shielding children from truth

how can they stand up for themselves if they never get the freedom  
to learn and become who they really are

You take away the rights

of adults who know who they really are because they defy the norms  
of a crumbling society

that prevents people from becoming who they really are what's next?

are we really the land of the free?

or do You just want us to submit—conform—surrender another cog in Your machine

-Tyson Berardo

# Beautiful Boy

She was the most beautiful baby girl  
with rosy cheeks and frilly  
socks  
pink skirts and pigtails tied up with  
ribbons but was She happy?

They weren't who you expected  
dinosaur obsession and all  
shopping in whatever clothing  
section They pleased

He is the son you never asked for  
with baggy grass-stained jeans and  
t-shirts slowly growing into a man  
but isn't He still beautiful?

this beautiful boy is changing  
faster than you thought  
He wears cologne and men's deodorant  
a shadow of stubble forming on His  
chin

yet He will always remain your beautiful  
boy

-Tyson Berardo

# The Lunchroom

It was not an easy task to live up to the endless expectations  
To serve as an African American female who is an undergraduate student  
In an engaging environment that identifies as Saint Elizabeth University  
Providing students with endless opportunities to spread their wings and soar  
When I am granted the wonderful chance to wake up every day and be better

Better than I was yesterday  
Better than I was last semester  
Better than I was last school year  
Better than I was before I committed to this school

Better than the woman I was yesterday  
Because Saint Elizabeth strives to find the better  
In each and every individual  
Even after they have succeeded in every existing aspect

Waking up in O'Connor residence hall was not the hardest part of my day  
As the sun grows bright in my dorm room  
It was getting out of bed and figuring out  
How can I be better than the student I was yesterday  
Because this community pushes me beyond my strengths  
To be a successful being in every aspect of my life each and every moment

The most challenging task is the lunchroom  
Rose dining hall at eleven in the morning is dreadfully beautiful  
Because you see the majority of the community already in a joyful manner  
Due to the completion of their day  
That consists of athletic commitments, morning classes, employment, and much more

As I gather my plate that warms my soul to remind me of a home-cooked meal  
From my mother who has rushed home to provide a meal for my hungry stomach  
After her long shift at work that greeted her with traffic due to rush hour  
From other individuals working hard to get home from a long day of work  
Because humans are social creatures that thrive in community

I stare blankly to find a comfortable seat in the cafeteria  
A belonging  
A wanting  
An identity

As I built the courage to dine in on a chilly Wednesday  
Just like the kind of weather that you can get away with  
A light jacket on the boardwalk as the waters of the shore

A wanting  
An identity

As I built the courage to dine in on a chilly Wednesday  
Just like the kind of weather that you can get away with  
A light jacket on the boardwalk as the waters of the shore  
Provide waves of salt as a complimenting body perfume  
While you take a stroll as the wind blows calmly on your face

Without any recognizable friends by my side to accompany me  
It was hard to see myself fitting in this lunchroom  
And ultimately this university as I identified students who were  
And find my place when I was surrounded by successful students  
It made me feel like I was not doing enough even on the days I felt burned out  
As a double major in the Nursing and English field

I look in an anxious manner both ways as my plate begins to get cold  
From standing with a pale face of fear in a crowd that does not recognize my name  
Enough to invite me to their table because I am only acquainted with them  
Through smiles and quick conversations that last as long as a walk-by  
Like a stranger you make eye contact with at a New York subway station  
Until I hear a voice that screams with happiness to see my spirit

I look around to identify where the sound is coming from  
And see a student that waved to me as we walked out together  
From our 9:45am English course in Santa Maria  
And comforted me with a waving gesture to sit with them  
To discuss our assignment due the following class

I felt welcomed at this moment  
As if I found a person that was meant to recognize me as an individual  
Who deserves to be noticed  
And as we sat down and I glanced around  
There were more smiles and waves in my direction  
With excitement to see my presence in the dining hall  
As if they have been waiting to see me all day long

I felt part of the community  
As I finally recognized my place in it because others acknowledge mine  
Which is the greatest thing about this school  
The community takes time to identify each individual as a name rather than a number  
Because this campus becomes a home when the community comes together to build it as  
one

And now I know that on the days I wake up alone feeling lost  
I can remember that this community is rooting for me on the sidelines  
To ensure that I still thrive even on the days I feel burnout  
When I am not as successful to feel like a name and find myself as a number  
Because there is always that one person waiting for my face  
To greet me with a smile and conversation that brings joy to know that I am noticed  
Because they are waiting for me and to recognize my worth in the lunchroom  
Because human beings belong in relationships and communities

The community takes time to identify each individual as a name rather than a number  
Because this campus becomes a home when the community comes together to build it as one

And now I know that on the days I wake up alone feeling lost  
I can remember that this community is rooting for me on the sidelines  
To ensure that I still thrive even on the days I feel burnout  
When I am not as successful to feel like a name and find myself as a number  
Because there is always that one person waiting for my face

-Sydney Salomon

# Dear Book Burners

Dear Book Burners; I've gone back and forth so much on whether or not I should call you out by name—but at this point, I think most of us know who you are. I fear that, were I to mention anyone by name, I would waste precious time blasting out a string of expletives as opposed to discussing anything worth anyone's time. Besides, time seems to be a precious commodity in our day and age—what with the ever-increasing amount of books being pushed further into the bonfire that you've turned bookshelves into; the flames continuing to lick higher with each passing day.

Dear Book Burners—I really am sorry that you're so bashful; yet you needn't blush every time you see two men or two women holding hands. If it really makes you feel more at ease, you can imagine that one of the two men has a vagina and breasts. Of course! Female anatomy is the ultimate solution. So the next time you feel the need to scrutinize a children's book that happens to have two men holding hands, just imagine that there's a vagina somewhere on one of the two men. If it's two women, you can even add high-quality visual effects. Just pull out a magic marker and draw a wee-wee on one of them. That way, there'll be no need to burn the book at all, as it will in no way be considered pornographic; an opposite pair of genitals are the most important thing that can exist within young children's literature.

Dear Book Burners; what's the deal with your whole obsession regarding genitalia? Someone was born with a vagina and wants a penis; big deal. Someone wants to trade in their penis for a vagina? I hardly consider that world shattering. Literature should be allowed to reflect other people's lives and experiences while also serving as an exodus for us to clamber out of our bubbled enclosures. Maybe you feel the only way for you to crawl safely out of your closeted bubble is to burn the trans tales. Perhaps, you fear that these books might emanate some form of gay spore, and that the only way to protect yourself from something that you don't understand is through destruction. Maybe, it's time for you to step out of the closet and experience life for the first time.

Dear Book Burners; I really am sorry that you're absolutely abysmal at trying to find excuses to throw Toni Morrison into a dumpster fire. Having your one token black friend to use as cover isn't as convincing as you think it is. Have you really been that blinded by those three gaudy colors on that rag draped around you? History kind of sucks. Discomfort is supposed to be a part of the package, so you might as well embrace the pain that so many others have gone through. It really is the least you can do. Also, on a side note, if you're going to get rid of Maus 1 & 2, the bare minimum you could have done is wowed everyone with some brilliant galaxy-brained thinking; your sexual content argument was painful enough to read that you owe me money for a bottle of aspirin.

Dear Book Burners; apparently we're still doing this. Look, I'm sorry that you don't realize that most kids have access to the internet in this day and age. A book from the school library that talks about two people 'doing the sexy time stuff' isn't going to rock the world of a middle schooler; nor will it turn them into a sexual deviant. I understand that you probably come from an era where, if a woman's ankle was exposed, it was considered deeply erotic. However, this doesn't justify you bringing lighter fluid into a school library because natural bodily functions are mentioned within a few lines of a book. I am going to politely ask that you forfeit your matches for the sake of literature.

Dear Book Burners; I am growing so tired of this. I want to scream inside when I see those bookshelves in that Florida classroom—stripped completely clean of their contents. You claim that each book is 'under review' to determine how much of their content is supposedly offensive. At the rate you're going, I can't help but fear that you'll soon conflate 'paper-cuts' with offensive. How much more do you plan on growing your bonfire?

-Matthew Lowke

# We Try Our Best

Not everything is perfect  
Not everything turns out  
alright I know that it might be  
hurting But we try our best all  
the time

Society is trapped  
between Prejudice and  
misogyny Racism and tragedy  
When is it enough to agree?

It seems like we are at war this time  
It seems like we always lose the  
fight But we try our best all the time  
Our best is not enough this  
time Our best is not enough  
this time Our best is not  
enough this time Our best is  
not enough  
Our best is not enough.

Injustice that boils inside us  
We need to make our voices heard  
I would like to pray, but my hope is all  
lost But there's light in the kids among  
us

It seems like we are at war this time  
It seems like we always lose the  
fight But we try our best all the time  
Our best is not enough this  
time Our best is not enough  
this time Our best is not  
enough this time Our best is  
not enough  
Our best is not enough.

It is old news to black America And fake news to white America From old times, this is  
a replica And for immigrants nightmare America

A change in the mindset is all we  
need To obtain a climate change  
remedy  
To reform school system and their safety  
What is the price to pay for some humanity?

-Cibeles Egeraige

# Diary of A Black Girl

Why do you cry black girl

Has your life not been fruitful enough

Have you not had the joys of the other children

Do you not skip through the playground when recess is called

Why do you fear black girl

Do you not know that you are safe

This is the land that is equal and just for all

You do not have to walk with your head bowed

Your posture is no pistol to be taken as a threat

Why do you yell black girl

You are far too loud than your counterparts

Your anger bubbles up and spills over like hot summer heat

Lower your voice as we will not listen anyway

Your tone is too eccentric for our ears to process

The black girl cries because she is tired

The other kids ask her why she is so expressive

1:30 she is playing in the sandbox and 5:30 she turns the tv on to see another black man shot

She learned the words “hands up don’t shoot” before finishing her ABC's

Instead of playing with dolls she holds a BLM poster in the June heat

She marches as her brow sweats and drips down her coco-colored skin

Each foot digs into the ground that her ancestors helped build from scratch

The black girl fears because she knows she is unsafe

She has been taught that her skin color is a threat

Before she opens her mouth, America has placed her under a

statistic “Mommy why do they not like us?” she cries

Her emotions are always received as “too strong” “too sassy” ... “too ghetto”

The black girl yells but she is not angry

She goes unheard when she is in a room with white voices

Her barrettes and cornrows make her hard to palliate

“Why don’t you straighten your hair?” her classmates say

Her google search consists of slime tutorials with a side of how to make her skin lighter

What do you tell this black girl

Do you lie and say that she will be okay

That her life will be easier as she grows up

Do you tell her that the loss of her black brothers and sisters will be no more  
Do you ensure that her words will no longer melt off the backs of those she is  
speaking to  
I was once that little black girl  
By the age of seven I knew the definition of police brutality  
Trayvon Martin, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castille  
I saw those who looked like me being turned into a hashtag before the age of 40  
We cannot fix a system that was made broken  
We must create a new one that closes the margin between people of all races  
One day we will be able to look at that little black girl and tell her that she is  
safe  
And that her days of crying, fearing, and yelling are finally over.

-Zyane Shepard

# After The War

It was a cold early spring Friday night. I was sitting in the Jaegerman's Inn in my barony, but a stone's throw away from my keep. I started the tradition of drinking with my junior officers and senior enlisted during the winter nights as a measure to keep morale up during the worst of the Marberg Rebellion.

It was a group of men from the First, Fourth and Sixth Fähnlein. Most of them young Junior Officers, some only smelling the powder smoke on the parade ground, others smelt the powder smoke in combat against goblin warbands or bandits. A few of the men with me like Oberstleutnant James Muller were veterans of a true war. When he was just a young Lieutenant he served with me in the Marburg Rebellion trying to put down the rebel host.

None of the men with me are old enough to have served with me in the Spike Invasion. I was a young man all those years ago, before my hair had turned gray. I was but a young Captain, or Hauptmann in my native Haitian Tongue. I was in the Ursine Cavalry, like every highborn second son wants to be. I wore a large breast plate and carried a straight broadsword into battle.

I spent much of my early career in the colonies as a gendarme and was back at The Fort waiting for the 9th legion to be reassigned when it happened. We received a message from the capital, Antillean troops had made landfall. At first we were preparing to mobilize to the coast but with shock and horror were informed they made landfall in the capital.

In my reminiscence I didn't realize the stranger entering the Inn. He had the look of a military man about him, tall with a broad build. He was a man of about my age with peach skin and dark black hair. He had a charismatic smile and carried a saber at his hip. Intrigued, I invited him to drink with us.

"Thank you Baron Von Henderson, when I first came to this nation I was told of the legendary hospitality but never expected to be sharing drinks with you."

"Eh, you just caught me at the right time."

"Well regardless I thank you, Lord Baron."

"If I may ask you a question, did you serve? You have the air of a military man about you."

"Yes I did, I fought in the Spike Invasion, wounded in action at Ostagal and was present when Prince Vlodomir of Hakkon came with his relief fleet."

I replied to my newfound friend and long lost brethren, "I was there too, 9th legion, 5th Cohort Ursine Cavalry, First Century, My unit was one of the first to reach The City."

The man replied, "What was it like ? I assume you're like me, those days are hard to remember, but impossible to forget."

I thought long and hard before saying, "I had only seen minor fighting in the Savage Hinterlands. I saw Gennite Janissaries in disarray, they were pillaging and I ordered my men to charge the disarrayed Gennites. They did, got ourselves a foothold in the city. What were those first moments like for you?"

"I was one of the first units in the city too, my men, and I were ordered to secure Temple Row so I did as best as I could with my 120 men, we got in and hastily made a rifle line. We couldn't defend that many buildings with so few men. Eventually we got pushed back, and fell back until we could regroup."

I kept thinking about what must have been going on in the minds of those Gennites, slaves taken in as children, given guns and cheap armor and pointed at their enemies. They knew nothing but fighting. I said to the man, "My cousin, the Duke, and I were talking a few years ago and he told me that in his opinion if General Zandox and Antillian High Command weren't leading them, the Gennites would have been a serious threat."

The man laughed and responded, "Yes, I know exactly what you mean, Zandox inflicted more casualties on his men than any Thindiran commander did, The only good general in the Antillian Army was Torinold, Shame he got kicked up stairs with all their infighting."

I laughed, "I'd rather look at it like a blessing". I collected myself for a few seconds and said, "Yeah the fighting in the city was hard, on the second day I was shot twice, I was in my heavy cavalry armor and had a warpriest nearby so it wasn't much of a threat but I was out of action for that battle."

The Man then asked me "Where did your unit go after the battle in Thindir City?"

I replied, "we marched south to resupply before going down to Ostagal where did you go?"

"Oh my unit marched into the lowlands before we went to Ostagal."

"What did you do at the battle?"

The man responded "I was near the Thindirian gun line. The fighting there was hard, some of the worst fighting at all of Ostagal. I was a forward observer for one of the battle mages. My men were assigned as bodyguards, human shields."

I responded with a degree of curiosity "I didn't know we had a battle mage deployed over there."

The man chuckled "Yeah one Thindirian battlemage to the eight or so Antillian ones, you know why they don't issue Gennites much in the way of armor?"

"Yeah, so they don't bake when a battlemage goes danger close with a fireball, for someone who doesn't like Wizards it's an irony that my daughter went to the great school of magic, so after the war did you have any children?"

The man "Yes, a son trained as a battlemage, the pride of my world, he was killed in a skirmish on the Isle of Dawn."

I nodded, "Sometimes I forget the two empires are still trying to go at it over that wet rock". I paused thinking back to my halcyon days of riding with the cavalry, before I was saddled with the chains of command or the ironbound bonds of leadership. "The war isn't over, not for me, not for you, not for any of us, every night I walk the battlefields in my dreams revisiting Ostagal, and Luln, Fort Craigen, and all the other places where I fought."

"No truer words have ever been spoken" but after a pause the man then said, "No my beloved Roxas has seen the end of war."

"Wait Roxas, that's an Antillian Name."

"I never said I served in the Thyatian forces during the Spike Invasion."

In a low and angry voice I let out in harsh tones, "GET OUT, the war might be over but I still don't brook Antillians with kindness."

The man nodded and said "I understand."

As the man got up and began to leave I said, "Wait, at least share a drink with me."

The man agreed and a glass was poured for each of us.

"To those who've seen the end of war."

-Michael Harrison

# *Acknowledgements*

On behalf of the Saint Elizabeth University English Department, we would like to thank all of the students and faculty who submitted their artistic and literary masterpieces. Without you, this issue of the Community Quill would not have been possible.

As the semester comes to a close, we encourage everyone to keep striving towards the finish line. Also congratulations to our seniors as they ready themselves for upcoming Commencement on Friday, May 19th. We hope to see familiar and new faces in the next issue! Enjoy your summer. Seniors, good luck in all of your future endeavors! Everyone else, we hope to see you back in the fall!

Also, a special thank you to our senior interns Deaundre Bobb and Aerial Brown for taking the time to edit the Spring 2023 issue of the Community Quill!