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Black Ice, Volume 1: Studying Abroad On My Own Campus

Black Student Union, University of Puget Sound

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Black Ice

Volume One:

Studying Abroad On My Own College Campus

The Black Student Union Zine

Art, Essays, Fashion, Humor, Poetry, Photography, Stories, Rants, and Much More
Dear Reader,

I first had the idea for a Black Student Union-produced zine during the spring of 2010. It was my sophomore year and I was Vice President of the BSU. I wanted to create something that would showcase the talents of Black creators. I wanted to create something that would motivate people to stop ignoring and denying the fact that race is an important part of our lives. I wanted to create something that would encourage people to stop running from talking about race and dealing with race.

I have always believed that the issues that are discussed in BSU meetings are worthy of a lot more attention than they generally garner. This also holds true for many of the other clubs that meet in the Student Diversity Center. The work that BGLAD, VAVA, CHispA, NASA, APASU, Safe Men, and other SDC clubs do is perhaps the most important and worthwhile work that student-run organizations can do for this campus with respect to social justice and getting dialogues started.

Every Wednesday night the BSU would meet and talk about race, class, and gender and everything in between. We would have wonderfully thought-provoking discussions, but our ideas, knowledge, and opinions remained in a cyclical rotation that rarely made its way outside of the SDC and into the larger campus population. I thought it was foolish to keep such speculative and meaningful conversations and ideas from the rest of the campus. I thought of all the ways the campus could benefit from hearing the voices and experiences of Black students and knew that this zine was something that needed to happen.

I met my junior year with great trepidation with regard to the production of the zine. My Co-President and best friend at the University was in her final year and although she was just as much in love with the idea of creating a BSU-produced zine as I was, the timing wasn’t right. She was very busy finishing up her undergrad career and, at the time, I couldn’t even begin to think of producing a zine without her help. So I let the idea fall flat.

My desire to create this zine was re-awakened by one of my professors. He asked me if I had ever thought about the BSU creating some sort of journal or literary work. It was as if the universe decided to wave a flashing neon sign in front of my face, demanding that I work on and complete this project.

The BSU went full-force into creating Black Ice in the middle of the semester. Many hours of work and dedication later, we are happy to present the campus with this zine of Black voices and expression and we hope that what you find in this zine will inspire critical thinking about systems of oppression and will inspire a willingness to make this campus a place where every student feels like they belong.

Sandra Rosa Bryant
Black Student Union President
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My Bedfellow
Nicci R. Montgomery

Misery, the open wound I cling to.
Married to festering heartache.
Oh, childhood tempests.
Oh, thirty-year-old demons, making love to me again.
Mangled flesh and rancid desperation entangled in a love affair.
Thank you for cradling me tonight.
Oh, you play so slovenly, yet passionately with wounds.
I must feed on you, for there is no other.
Love again and again.
Oh heartache!
Oh self-mutilation!
Touch me softly
And everything will bleed,
Oozing puss-filled self-release.

No, don’t go!
I’ll be better this time,
suffer lonelier than before.

Oh no! My only friend, don’t leave me weeping.
Not again!
Oh please, not again.

Oh Misery, it’s midnight again.

Alone in my bed
I am an empty children’s swing blowing in the wind,
Creaking forth and back.
I am wings flapping in startling, final flight.

It’s when you leave me that I feel you most,
And what subtle pleasure it brings me to know
I remain succulent, waiting, in your absence.

Oh, what peace has crept in--the silence after rain.
My insides flood at the sight of you.
Where your touch last felt me is where my heart remains.
Touch me again.
Touch me softly.
Yes. Yes!

Rainfall once more.
Agonizing grief.
Wretchedness.
Oh yes, once more!
Thank you, my love.
Thank you.

My Bedfellow
The Arduous Road of a Spelling Bee Pro

By Sunny Wyatt-Nelson

The evening began like any other Tuesday evening had since they signed up for the Spelling Bee. All of the students were seated, fidgeting, around a table in a third floor room of McIntyre at the University of Puget Sound campus. They were tired and restless because they had been memorizing and spelling words out loud for weeks now. With the Bee Excellent Links Spelling Bee a few months away, they were given the words to study at home. Tuesday evening practice rounds with Access Programs tutors ensued. And now, it was crunch mode. The young team of six was on campus practicing words with Abigail and the Access tutors up to three days a week.

The team even got together on a Saturday to spend the morning at St. Leo’s Food Bank volunteering and again on a weekend to attend a practice round. At the practice round they found out that, composed entirely of 6th, 7th and 8th graders, they were the youngest team in the running. But, nothing could get them down. The community service, long hours of practice and the occasional giggling breakdown over someone’s word memorizing methods all brought the team closer together. As one cohesive unit they showed up to Evergreen State College on that fateful St. Patrick’s Day and took a solid 2nd place.

It is youth like this who are academically engaged, the ones who have the support of their parents and programs like Access, who are defying the achievement gap. According to the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee, a committee created by the Washington State Legislature to address the achievement gap, a troubling trend is growing in this misty green state. Students of color and students of a lower socioeconomic status are scoring up to 30 percentage points lower on math and reading tests. Lack of resources, initiative, and support are certainly to be blamed for this troubling statistic. Students like these spelling bee pros are the key. Students unlocked their potential by attending Access Programs’ weekly tutoring sessions, taking part in the mentorship program, and volunteering for extracurricular academic competitions like the Links Spelling Bee. Their 2nd place against all the odds just goes to show; equalize opportunity and the rest will follow.
Modernist Shame
By Hans Ostrom

A student asks some simple questions of Modernists, of canonical tycoons such as Eliot and Pound, Rexroth, William Carlos Williams, Amy Lowell, and Wallace Stevens:

Why didn't you write about Jim Crow?
Why didn't you include images of lynching in your Images? Why didn't your art confront the core savagery of your American civilization? Your "achievements," as my professors call them, are as nothing in the face of what you chose to ignore, therefore support. *Dare to eat a peach? Crowds on London Bridge? Much depends on*

*a wheel barrow? Much depended, literally, from Southern trees. Brown fog of London is nothing compared to stench of a burned body. You can shove your peach.

A goddamned jar in Tennessee? Are you Fucking kidding me, Mr. Stevens? And I read that letter, the student says, in which you wrote, "coons in Ethiopia." You, you Modernists, your work lards anthologies I'm asked to buy. You didn't see them as people, did you? You didn't see their catastrophe as your catastrophe.

First published in KONCH, edited by Ishmael Reed (Spring 2012)
Gentle Giant

Spanish Blues
Oreo

By Tifphanie Wooten

Definition: a delightful snack of two crisp chocolate cookies with a white creamy center of deliciousness…

Wrong! It is a derogatory term used to describe an African American person who is black on the outside but acts like a “white” person on the inside. A term mostly said by an African American to another African American, although it has been used by persons of all races and ethnic backgrounds to describe said African American.

What is so white about not wanting to embarrass your ancestry, the people who fought so that you could have an education?

What is so white about acting like you have that education, when you do have it?

What is so white about acting like you have class, when you do have class?

What is so white about acting like you have common sense, when you do have common sense?

What is so white about being how you are, when that is who you are?

No I’m not an OREO; I am a human being that is true to who I am. So next time you see me call me by my NAME!!!!
Break the Bubble

Casey J. Krolczyk

I’m a Tacoman. Not a Taco-man. A Tacoman – hailing from the city of Tacoma. The South Sound is what I love and where I choose to be. I enjoy long walks through Point Defiance and Wright Park. My favorite place to eat is at the farmer’s market down on Proctor on Saturday afternoons. I can slip quietly into some of the most pristine and exotic wilderness in the world with the same ease I can slip into the urban jungle. If I had a car, I’d park it on the wrong side of the street in true Tacoma fashion. There is no doubt in my mind that Seattle is a suburb of Tacoma, not the other way around.

A Tacoman… but only by choice.

I’m a born and raised Minnesotan, as well. When I graduated from high school, I was given the unbelievable opportunity to live anywhere in the country. I chose here. I can’t imagine a greater expression of admiration for a city. For me, Tacoma beat out Boston, Madison, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Portland (OR). Given that 75% of us moved here from other states, I would think that a majority of Loggers would express a similar level of love and affection for this city.

So my question to the entire school is this… where is the love for Tacoma?

We could argue that students came here for the school, not the city. To push back on that though, did any of us come here with the intention of spending nearly every hour of our Logger-lives trapped in a self-imposed box between 6th, Safeway, and Gibson’s? On top of that, we develop painfully few meaningful relationships with non-Logger Tacomans. If we were to ask an alien from outer space, “What do you think Loggers value most in a friendship?” it would probably say, “A webmail account.” In part due to a culture that precedes all of us and in part because of personal choices, we don’t connect with the city, and that has consequences. We become engrossed in our own little world, sheltering ourselves from the perceived “otherness” that is the rest of Tacoma. We toss around the name “T-Loc” (short for “Tacoma Local”) for people we don’t recognize. It’s also been deemed common knowledge that, “everything south of 6th Ave. is “sketch.” Even campus security and Residence Life actively warn us about the dangers of locals who will steal our bikes and break into our rooms, lending their institutional prestige to the cause of perpetuating our world within a world. We call our predicament the Puget Sound Bubble – a playful way of saying “isolated” and “exclusive.”

What’s so bad about everything outside of the Bubble? Answering this question will get you to the root of campus climate issues. In order for the Bubble to be maintained, we must be able to identify and keep out
those who do not belong here. There are really only two distinguishing factors that separate Puget Sound and the rest of the city: poverty and diversity. The Tacoma outside of our Bubble is both more diverse and poorer than our student population. To be more exact, it’s almost four times blacker than us (11% to Puget Sound’s 3%) and about twice as Hispanic (11% to our 5%). We do have a proportionally larger Asian/Pacific Islander population (10% on campus to about 9% in the rest of the city), but I wonder why we lump “Asians” and “Pacific Islanders” together while the U.S. Census accounts for them separately? It’s because we count white students from Hawaii as Pacific Islanders, who then get tossed into the “Asian/Pacific Islander” category. We use it as a way to artificially inflate our diversity numbers. On the class side of the equation, about half of Tacoma’s households could not pay for a year of a Puget Sound education even if they devoted their entire income to it (more than half of all households earn less than $48,000 per year).\(^1\) For the purpose of this article, I will leave class aside for another time, but I should add that one need not conflate being non-white with poverty. The middle class in Tacoma includes non-white families, of course. For now, I’m going to take a critical look at how we use race to construct our Bubble. I should note, the vocabulary that I use is geared towards a discussion on Black/White experiences at this school – I am modestly more in-touch with issues facing Black students here. Keep in mind, the Bubble exists only because we choose to perpetuate it; we could also choose to end it at any time. Alas, I am only writing this article because that day is still ahead of us.

I have a pretty nice life here. I get to live as if I am without race. I’m never asked if I will be “paying with cash” when I buy food in the SUB. The librarians don’t inquire as to what exactly I’m doing in the library. I’ve never been stopped by the police or campus security when I’m out walking after dark. I don’t feel odd or out-of-place when I’m on campus. I know that wherever I go, I will have people who look like me. Everyone here assumes that I got into this school based on “merit” – not my race. These are all part of my white privilege, and I know that this privilege exists because I know that too many students of color are often deprived of these simple advantages every day. Just as important as recognizing the advantages of being white is realizing that there are corresponding disadvantages to being non-white. For every privilege I listed, there is a corresponding experience that is its opposite. It’s not a satisfying conclusion to come to, but we have to admit it to ourselves – we don’t provide the same warm, welcoming, inclusive experience to students of color as most of us have enjoyed in our time here. If anything, our school is often hostile to our non-white students. This hostility is a direct result of the Bubble.

I’ve asked a number of students why we construct the Bubble and why we are afraid of locals. The conversation usually goes something like this. The Bubble is meant to keep T-Locs out. Why do we want to keep them out? To keep ourselves safe. From the T-Locs? Yes. The T-Locs. What have they done to us? They’re sketch. I heard about this one guy who stole half the bikes out of Seward last year. Wow. What

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\(^1\) Demographic statistics are from the 2010 U.S. Census and the University of Puget Sound’s “Facts and Figures”
about all of the sexual assaults and hazing at this school? Are T-Los really more dangerous than the average student?

Italics man/woman usually starts to fall apart at this point. What they’re trying to articulate is a fear of something they don’t know much about: race. When we say “T-Loc,” I think we’re often referring to the multiethnics residents of Tacoma. The Bubble has kept us from feeling the inevitable discomfort that is associated with a sincere attempt to understand people who are different from us and the experiences that flow from that difference. It has also kept us from asking if “safety” and “whiteness” are supposed to be the same thing on campus.

Our collective effort to build our own little world is getting in the way of our ultimate desire of making this – invoking the words of President Thomas – our home. This is why it’s time to do away with the Bubble. Connect with the community. Talk to your neighbors. Take a stroll from campus to downtown and back. Volunteer. Get involved in a community service project. Take an AFAM class. Imagine for a moment what life is like for Black or Latino students surrounded every day by students who look different from them and/or experience this campus in a drastically different way. If you’re white, try finding a way to go an entire day without seeing and interacting with people of your race (impossible here, but I’m sure students of color could do it any day they like). Urge the administration to build a more diverse student population through enrollment, and don’t accept cliché excuses.

If any of those are too much, start small. Don’t evacuate a party simply because a local shows up. Everybody is here to have a good time. And stop calling locals “T-Locs.” It’s derogatory and has negative connotations. It makes us sound like snobby, rich students who must – to our great inconvenience – live among this lesser population in order to achieve an education that will give us a ticket back to the upper echelons from which we came. I don’t think that’s how any of us want to come across to others. Even if it’s just for four years, we’re here, and we are a part of this community. Embrace your inner Tacoman.
What’s Going On?

Isaac S. Lewin
Pata Pata

Isaac S. Lewin
On Walking to Wyatt

I was once walking to class with a white friend of mine. We were heading up the lane, going towards Wyatt. Along the way, we crossed paths with a middle-aged Black man. I nodded at him and he nodded back.

"Do you know him?" my friend asked.

"No," I said.

I could tell she was confused, but I didn’t know how to explain what she had just seen. So I just told her as best and as simply as I could. “A lot of times Black people will say hi to each other, even if we don’t know each other.”

She still didn’t understand.

“It’s a sort of quiet way of saying ‘I see you. I acknowledge your presence and know what you go through in this world. I’ll walk with you forever and when the world turns its back on you, I’ll still be there. Our struggle is the same struggle, and I have love for you.’”

I didn’t know how else to put the meaning behind the nod into words.

“That’s so cool!” she said.

And we laughed.

My Secret Desire

Ever since I came here, I’ve had a secret desire to go out at three in the morning in a black jumpsuit and ski-mask, climb all the way up Jones, and replace the American flag with one that was red, black, and green. You know, just to see what would happen.

One of the few times I wasn’t offended or annoyed when somebody asked to touch my hair

It was my first year here and I was hanging out with fellow Schiff-mates. We were all just getting to know each other but we could see long-lasting friendships on the horizon. We were in a room full of about ten people. A floor-mate was sitting on a bed and I was sitting on the floor in front of her. Quite suddenly she asked, “Can I touch your hair?” There was a moment of quiet in the room after she asked and we all understood what it was about very well. I said, “It’s okay, go ahead.” She touched my hair and then said to the room, “What?! I’ve never had a Black friend before!” I told her that in my high school there were less than five white students and that I only knew one white person
in high school. The reason this particular account didn’t offend me was because my floor-mate was honest. She had never had a Black friend before and she wasn’t afraid to tell me that. She didn’t shy away from talking about race. And I’ve always respected her for that. No progress will be made if we refuse to be honest about race and our experiences.

My Abrasive Afro

The few times I’ve worn my hair out in an Afro on campus, not tied back into a puff-- just out and free and big-- people wouldn’t make eye-contact with me. It was like they were afraid to look at me. It seems like Blackness needs to be spoon-fed to people at Puget Sound, even in 2012. Too much at one time is too much to handle. People need to be eased into it. If not, they’ll get an upset stomach.

A list of movies that always make me miss home

- Friday
- Poetic Justice
- Crash
- Menace II Society
- Quinceañara
- The Wood
- Set it Off
- Don’t Be a Menace in South Central While Drinking Your Juice in the Hood
- Boyz in the Hood
The White Mountain
By Shady

The Mountain stays white
All year round.
The Mountain stays white
All year round.
The whiteness never melts.
The Mountain never moves.
The Mountain stays white
All year round.
Fashion by Neil Jackson
The Oppressed Need to be Given the Freedom to Speak

By Taymyr Bryant

The oppressed need to be given the freedom to speak. As People of Color, as Womxn, as Persons whose identities are outside of a white, male, normatively abled, heterosexual status quo, our voices are indiscriminately under attack at all times. I cannot support this silence. Speaking up about and confronting privilege, power, and those who possess it, is something that NEEDS TO HAPPEN. Regardless of how uncomfortable it makes people feel. If our speaking up makes someone who carries privilege uncomfortable, think how uncomfortable a person who lacks that privilege feels by remaining silent.

By asking the oppressed to remain silent, calm, “civil,” or indirect about that experience, we are simply continuing a cycle of disempowerment. We should feel free to call out privilege and to VOCIFEROUSLY CHALLENGE OPPRESSION regardless of who is in the room, regardless of how uncomfortable it makes people feel, regardless of all the bullshit that makes the oppressed feel guilty about speaking up in a world where we are constantly told that our voices have no power or meaning. I'm sick and tired of dancing around the issue of white privilege, of MALE PRIVILEGE, of Oppression, just to accommodate the people around me. IT IS NOT MY FAULT THAT I AM OPPRESSED. Don’t ask me not to talk about the fact that I'm oppressed. Don’t ask me to put on some bullshit minstrel show and dance around the issue, waving my hands and clicking my heels like everything is okay. Don’t tell me it’s rude to be real. Don’t tell me to change my tone, or talk about the issue so it isn’t offensive. Oppression offends me, and my response will be a reflection of that.

There have been moments in my past when I've felt guilty about dealing with oppression because I didn’t want people to feel attacked or bad. The fact that we want to be nice to people gets in the way of the fact that we cannot ignore our oppression. I don’t think we should be forced to be nice about our oppression. Oppression isn’t a nice issue, and we should treat it with the same regard. You want us to feel guilty about the ways we deal with being oppressed? Really? Like that shit is an easy thing to deal with. We can’t continue to internalize our oppression and the feelings that our oppression creates. To ask someone who has been stabbed repeatedly in the heart not to scream about it, not to cry about it, not to speak angrily about it, is inhumane to me. Control over the voices and emotional expression of the oppressed has historically been a part of the system of oppression as a whole.

The issue of our freedom isn’t something that should be contained, diluted, put in a bottle or set aside FOR ANY REASON and especially not because it is inconvenient for our oppressors and inconvenient to those who are on the 'in power' side of this war for freedom. I encourage all of us to challenge privilege, regardless of whether that privilege and power belongs to you, your peers, members of your family, your friends, your professors, co-workers, government officials, strangers, lovers, etc. Whether you benefit from some aspect of oppression or suffer because of it, each and every one of us has a responsibility to allow space, emotion, and movement towards a LIBERATION that belongs to us all.
The Dig

Danae Smith

The sun shone down on the yard. A boy and girl sat in a sandbox, digging. The small, plastic shovels scooped up sand and moved it into piles away from the hole in the center of the box. The boy asked the girl, “Did you know, if we dig deep enough, we can reach Hell?”

“Really? Let’s go!”

“But we have to get back in time for lunch or my mom will get mad.”

They dug faster now. The small piles of sand became bigger and bigger and the small hole became deeper and deeper.

“What do you think Hell is like?”

“I bet there’s lava, and huge rocks—”

“—and alligators swimming in the lava!” They went back to work and the only sound came from the shovels digging. The shovels moved faster than ever. Suddenly, there was a thud.

“I can see something!” They used their hands to push away the sand.

“It’s just wood…”

“Where’s Hell?”

“Is this the bottom?” They looked at each other.

“Kids! Come get lunch!” They looked toward the house. The little boy’s mother stood in the doorway waiting for them.
Faith Matthews Photography
Sha’Ran Lowe

The Block
Personal Reflection

Not to take advantage of sweet hungered souls,
To be noticed by the ones who always pose,
To be recognized of lies,
But not by your eyes!

Tifphanie Wooten
My Mother Once told me

My mother once told me
Long ago to never let your
Hate run high,

For if you do, your world will change.
She said hate is a Burden you carry,
It is not a treasure you wish to keep

All it will bring to you is trouble.
Hate brings regret followed by sorrow.

Those words filled my heart, and all
At once, I took back everything
I had said

Tifphanie Wooten
I Don't Get It

By Taymyr Bryant

I don’t get it. How can you not understand why a Black Womxn living in this racist ass world doesn’t want to date white people, and doesn’t want to date folks who ain’t Black. I mean, is it really that confusing? Don’t give me this “people are people” bullshit like we live in a color-blind society. We don’t. Some people are people with power and privilege. White people are people with white power and white privilege. What the hell is so hard to understand about why a Black Womxn doesn’t want to bring that power and privilege into her persxnal, and intimate spaces? I have to deal with this white supremacist shit enough on the outside; you want me to allow white people to colonize my bedroom too? NO THANK YOU. Since the day of my birth, in everywhere I go and everything I do, this world has told me to adore, love, covet, assimilate, and admire not only whites, but anyone who isn’t Black. Is it really that confusing why I would choose to reject all that bullshit in my love life? Is it really so hard to believe that my Black ass wants distance from white people and their racist shittery? Or that I want to rebel against the pressure that Black Womxn everywhere feel to look at Womxn of other races as having more desirable looks or attitudes or any of the other bullshit white people’s racist hierarchy would have us believe. White people created a racist hierarchy that placed Black people at the bottom, and white people at the top. I’ve watched Black men chase after Womxn of different races, in hopes of having lighter-skinned children, spouses who are ‘easier to control’ or ‘more attractive.’ Is it really that hard to understand why I, as a Black Womxn who dates other Womxn, don’t want to replicate that internalized racism? Are folks so used to accepting the idea that white Womxn should be desired, that it’s impossible for them to imagine a Black persxn who doesn’t desire white Womxn? Are folks so used to the idea that Black Womxn are unworthy of partnership, desire, and love, that it’s impossible to comprehend someone actually wanting Black Womxn, and only Black Womxn? I’ll say it again, like I’ve said it before: My partner will be a reflection of the love I have in my heart for my people, a proclamation of the true worth and beauty of Black Womxn, and a testament to the fact that a Black Womxn is an infinitely worthy, cherishable, beautiful, amazing, sunkissed wonder. From my natural hair, to my dating habits- the choices I make in my persxnal life are an act of resistance, a call for liberation, a persistent denial of white lies of the inferiority and worthlessness of my sistahs. MY DATING HABITS ARE A BLACK POWER FIST, smashing through nights of terror, punching holes through the decks of transatlantic death rides, reaching up and forward and beyond SO FAR that my chains crumble before me- broken and stretched beyond their limits, and finally gliding FIST-full, restful, powerful, back to a time of the rising African Sun of my Black Past and Black Pride and Black People.
Faith Matthews Photography
The Trayvon Martin Generation: Opening the Casket of Silence

By Ayanna K. Drakos

There are many layers of injustice to consider in the aftermath of the tragic killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin as the nation asks itself, in the words of President Obama, “how does something like this happen?” Over a month has passed since Trayvon’s life was taken on February 26, 2012. The outpouring of support for Trayvon and his family is in full-force and continues to grow in cities and communities across the country as well as internationally. The wearing of hoodies in honor of Trayvon, the mark of suspicion according to the assailant George Zimmerman, has emerged as a way to speak-back to this targeted act of violence. What black families and communities know, however, as well as those who pay attention to history, is that what happened to Trayvon in Sanford, FL, is nothing new, nor are the stereotypes that allowed him to be labeled “suspicious.”

Layered amidst the harshness and haunting nature of this particular killing of a young black man, exists the countless number of black people who continue to be killed across the United States every day; many lives are taken by the tragedy of normalized inner-city violence, alongside regular killings by law enforcement and now civilians, empowered by the growing Stand Your Ground Law. This law, permitting the use of deadly force when believed necessary for self-defense, has now spread to twenty-four states. The worldwide visibility for Trayvon’s case, sparked by witnessing accounts of what happened the night of February 26, has interrupted a system that most often favors the discretionary judgment of law enforcement and our nation’s structural fabric of racism. With the initial success of forcing the nation to pay attention to the killing of Trayvon, how can we take the next step towards removing the silent racism that continues to allow travesties like this to occur? I propose that we take a lesson from our not-so-distant history when only fifty-seven years ago, black communities demanded that the world direct its focus on the mutilation and murder of young, innocent, black, Emmett Louis Till.

It was August, 1955, when 14-year-old Emmett Till was visiting his great-uncle in Money, Mississippi and was brutally murdered and thrown into the Tallahatchie River after allegations that he had flirted with a white woman. Unlike the thousands of other lynchings in the United States following the Civil War, the murder of Emmett Till made national news. Till’s mother, Mamie Bradley, insisted her son have an open-casket at this funeral so that the nation could bear witness to his mutilated body. She also allowed Jet magazine to feature photos of Till’s body on their cover. Like with Trayvon, this publicity removed the silence from a form

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2 “President Obama on Trayvon Martin Case,” produced by whitehouse.gov
of violence perpetuated by racism, and inspired a great deal of the American public to push the United States to re-examine its moral conscience.

Philosophy and African American and Diaspora Studies professor, Lucius Turner Outlaw, in the preface to his 1996 text, *On Race and Philosophy*, characterizes his generation of young black men and women as being of the “Emmet Till Generation.” Outlaw was born in 1944 in Starksville, Mississippi where he was raised in what he calls, “the brutal life-orienting structures of the racial apartheid of segregation.” As Outlaw implies for himself, and for black young men and women growing up in the years leading to the Civil Rights Movement, what happened to Emmett Till represented what could have happened to any young black man in the South at the time. Because of the publicity the Emmett Till tragedy received, Outlaw and other young black Americans could see their faces in Till’s. This inspired young people to bring their innovative energy to the growth of the United States Civil Rights Movement. With this history in mind, what would it mean, then, for young people in the United States today to understand themselves as part of the Trayvon Martin generation?

A major success of the Civil Rights Movement was that it made overt racism socially unacceptable. As we honor this success, we must also recognize that what is coined as “subtle” forms of racism continue to criminalize people of color in many of the same persisting ways. For example, current studies in various school systems across the country examining how young people are disciplined points to an important layer of how the lives of those in the “Trayvon Martin Generation” are being oriented. What is being found is not so subtle, after all.

National statistics from 2010 indicate that black male students are more than twice as likely to receive out-of-school suspensions as white males and three-times as likely to be expelled. We also know from a recent study across 3,900 Texas public high schools, that only 3% of disciplinary actions taken in Texas schools were for serious criminal conduct that requires mandatory suspension or expulsion under state law. The other 97% were based on the discretionary judgment of the teacher or administrator. When the same study disaggregated these disciplinary actions by race, it was found that 83% of all black males had at least one discretionary violation on their record. Statistics also indicate that black male students are being penalized more harshly for the same infractions as their white peers. This is a valid marker of why it is important to always question the legalized practice of discretionary judgment; for it is those in positions of authority whose discretion dictates the definition of criminal behavior and criminal appearance.

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Findings such as these are not unique to Texas. A study done in our own Tacoma Public High Schools from 2007-2011 indicates that while black students make up an average of 22% of the population, they account for 42% of all behavioral infractions. There is a strong relationship between school discipline, dropout rates, and ending up in prison. The New York Times reports: “students who experienced one discretionary suspension or expulsion were twice as likely to be held back that year and nearly three times as likely to end up in the juvenile justice system the subsequent year.” Nationally, in 2008, black males accounted for 41% of the male prison population ages 18-34. These data sets should be cause for fierce scrutiny of how racism continues to dictate systems of education, punishment, and possibility for this generation of young people.

A discretionary system of discipline, like in the case of our schools, will continue to produce inequality until the nation holds itself accountable to the racializing systems that continue to guide us under the guise of “post-racialism.” Through the Civil Rights Movement, the Emmett Till Generation re-shaped the way the nation viewed overt racism and ensured that blacks be considered equal by law. To truly honor Trayvon Martin, we must re-define how the nation views subtle and subversive forms of racism. This would mean that unwavering pressure be kept on this case while Zimmerman awaits trial. It would mean that following the outcome of that decision, Trayvon’s death does not become only a moment of sensationalism in our nation’s history, but a moment that galvanizes a generation of young people to confront the silence that nourishes racist practices. Then, if a young black man gets shot for being black, perhaps the socializing structures that told Zimmerman, “Trayvon must be criminal,” will be put to trial as well.

*If you’re interested in social justice dialogue and mapping strategic action for change, come join The Conversation, every Sunday from 12-2pm at the REACH Center.

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8 Patterson, Gregory A. “Separating the boys from the girls,” Phi Delta Kappan: Educating Black Males, (February 2012), 40
A Real Man

I want to meet the guy that has the balls to go after what he wants.

Who is not intimidated by my brains or beauty.

The guy who loves me for who I am and cherishes my mind, body, and soul.

The guy who is not afraid of a real commitment.

I need the guy who is ready to step up and be a MAN.

Tifphanie Wooten
Airiel Quintana
Somebody I used to know

boys like you
with rhymes like those
who live and die young
breathing in trouble
and exhaling smoke
boys like you
with rolling r’s
who fight over street corners
nobody owns
and skulk in shadows
with baggy pants and
bad intentions
boys like you
with an elephant’s memory
of a curly haired
“down ass chick”
who iced your lip
the day you jumped in
boys like you
who won’t forget
and send spanish slang words
to a stranger
asking her to come home
sing to you
and be the girl she was
An Open Request to the Board of Trustees

Dear Members of the Board:

We appreciate the work you do for the University of Puget Sound. Thank you.

However, we believe the University’s commitment to diversity is ineffective.

Therefore, we urge you to take the following measures immediately:

1. Establish a standing sub-committee on diversity on the Board of Trustees.

2. Request that President Thomas instruct the Office of Admission to develop a plan, including measurable goals and changes to recruitment-patterns, to increase significantly the number of students of color in the student body. The Office of Admission should present this plan to the Board, the President, the faculty, and the student body.

3. Request that President Thomas instruct the Academic Vice President to develop a plan, including measurable goals and changes to hiring practices, to hire more tenure-line faculty of color. Fewer than 1% of the tenure-line faculty is Black.

4. Request that President Thomas instruct the Office of Admission and the Dean of Students Office be more frank with students of color about what their experiences will be like at Puget Sound.
Longing

Nicci R. Montgomery

(May 26, 2008)

When this night is yawning, eyes crusted thick with sleep, we will be in each others arms in a room we will never be in, on a bed that doesn’t exist, yet gives peace to restless thoughts.

After we have massaged our sweat into a languid salve of passion and our tongues have become tired of playing on all fours, we will spend the remainder of this night rotating positions and rounding warmth from nook to crevice and heartbeats from fluttering hummingbirds to rhythmic pulses aligned.

A lingering hand on my navel and your hairy leg creeping through the residual stickiness of my thighs will rest easy as our toes mingle lullabies that lure us to sleep. Only in this place, sleep cannot exist, for I think too much.

Now I let this night go, and we slither, still intertwined, under the childish mattress of my mind. For only a few minutes longer, the chasm in my heart will be filled with a great panting exhalation of balance and then again left open to the mercy of my own desperation.

Longing.
The Size of an Ass

By Taymyr Bryant

A Womxn’s worth in this society, to herself, to those around her, to men, to lovers, etc. is overwhelmingly based on how she looks. Whether her body features, weight, height, shape, etc. meet particular social standards determines her social status and overall worth; it’s how we determine whether a Womxn is worthy of notice or desirability, how long we look at her, how much we talk about her, how interested we are in her. Without knowing who she is or ever having heard her voice, a Womxn’s appearance is invitation enough for critique, praise, arousal, thoughts of ownership, jealousy, and possession. Historically, within the system of patriarchy, a Womxn’s status has been determined by her use and worth to men—how well she can provide a service to men, the leaders in the patriarchal gender caste. What type of service? Largely domestic service; encompassing: sexual service, child bearing service, and housekeeping service. Because sexuality was one of the ways that Womxn were rated in terms of their service to men, her body became object. Her body became scrutinized for its worthiness as a sexual commodity. As a commodity, she was not a humxn—she was the sum of what people thought of her body parts—-in addition to the other forms of domestic servitude she was supposed to perform. When we pick apart Womxn’s bodies, we continue this tradition of sexual commodification. We assign worth to particular shapes, sizes, colors and body types of Womxn like we assign worth to particular makes and models of cars. Every day of her life a Womxn is put up on an auction block, and bought and sold by various strangers inside their own minds. As I walk down the street, I know that I am walking on this auction block, and that somewhere someone is looking at my body and rating my parts as good, bad, okay, pretty, ugly, fat, skinny, short, nappy headed, buck-toothed, okay shape but ugly face, okay face but not a very good ass or breast size... Whatever. Every day I am one of the various cars at a car show, whether strangers plan to actually buy (date), steal (rape) or just window shop (passively rate Womxn). As Womxn, we live our lives constantly on an invisible auction block—-as strangers and friends silently or vocally determine the worth and price of what they see.

I remember the first time I ever learned that an ass was something that I, as a Womxn, should be concerned about. It was middle school, and a friend told me my ass was big. It was the first time I had ever paid any attention to the ass as an area to scrutinize. I already knew that breasts were supposed to be big, waists were supposed to curve in a certain way, legs were supposed to be long and hairless... but the ass... I never knew it was something people looked at. At the time, I thought having a big ass was a bad thing. I became worried that my ass was too big, that boys wouldn’t like it, that girls wouldn’t think I was pretty, and that it made me unattractive. I began to wish for a smaller ass like I had already learned to wish for bigger breasts and lighter hair. At the time, my idea of what an attractive ass looked like was informed by the images of beauty I’d seen on tv. The non-Black Womxn on television that were the objects of everyone’s desire didn’t have big asses. It wasn’t until I went to highschool that I learned that for Black men particularly, the larger the ass, the better. So I immediately stopped wishing for a smaller ass, to being happy about my ass size. Then I got to college, and the men in my life coveted asses that were bigger than mine. Once again I wished for a change in my ass size. In middle school, social pressure and norms taught me that smaller asses were more attractive, so I thought mine was too big and therefore less attractive. In college, social pressure and norms taught me that bigger asses were most attractive, so I thought mine was too small and therefore less attractive. I went from having NO thoughts about asses at all; to praying for a SMALLER ass, then to wishing I had a LARGER ass. If no one had ever told me what to think of asses, I wouldn’t think anything of asses at all.
I’m lucky enough to remember the moment of my indoctrination into the oppression and objectification of my ass. It’s therefore easy for me to recognize that the things I have been told to be attracted to have been informed SOLELY by social pressure and the male gaze. Others are not so lucky. Most people go their entire lives without realizing how brainwashed they are- foolishly coveting particular shapes and sizes and body parts simply because society has told them what is and isn’t beautiful. They don’t know anything else, so they assume that what they believe is the norm. If my thoughts about a Womxn’s ass can be informed and modified so easily by the norms and pressures of society, then not only am I asking you to REDEFINE beauty, but to question whether or not IT’S REAL or can be identified as any ‘type’ of anything. Why do we pay so much attention to certain sizes and shapes and ignore others completely? What makes the differences in attraction we assign to different sizes of an ass any more valid or worthy of notice than the difference between the size of the nail on your forefinger as opposed to the size of the nail on your middle finger?

Question what your preferences are. Question what you’re attracted to. Make a list of what you consider to be attractive, and if you think your preferences are completely your own, as opposed to being informed solely by social pressures and norms, then tell someone else to do the same, and ponder why their list is almost exactly the same as yours. Question why even the categories are all the same; i.e. why we think some body parts are worthy of mention and others are not. Why do we think some things are better bigger, and some things are better smaller and how that varies across gender? When we are assessing attractiveness, why do words like waist, breasts, ass, eyes, etc. come up more than words like temple, earlobe, armpit, or knee for all of us? You have to ask yourself: if your ideas about beauty are so original, and aren’t the result of mass social pressure, why are your ideas about beauty so much like everyone else’s?

Society has not only told us WHAT beauty looks like- what shapes and sizes we should consider to be attractive. Society has convinced us that beauty is definable all together... that beauty is something definite, something with substance that can be given preference based on relative and abstract things like size, shape, and other lines and geometric figurations. If this were the movie The Matrix: Beauty- what we consider to be attractive, would be the Spoon. The Spoon has been engineered by the manufacturers of your reality. The Spoon- beauty, will continue to exist in the form it was handed to you, until you realize that it isn’t real. That it is simply a mirage- a production of the imaginings of the creators of the cultural, racial, and gender biased world you live in. Remember that the spoon is only a projection of the racial, gender, and cultural prejudices that you have been taught to consider truth and reality. The Spoon- Beauty is only as definite, as standard, and as real as you continue to allow it to be. With persistence and acceptance, mythologies become truth. The beauty you believe in is a mythology you have allowed to become your truth. The Spoon is only silver, round, and hard because you refuse to believe otherwise.
My Father’s Confessional Poem
Renee Simms

Water was always cold
when I got in the zinc tub

me the seventh one in
to soak in lilypads of dirt

my sisters stealing looks &
when I would climb out

Rubie hanging asafetida
round my neck. It smelled.

It smelled like the man
they strung in that tree

fat & baffled by Georgia sun
when we found him.
I Stopped Believing in the Tooth Fairy On a Sunday

By Danae Smith

I can still remember the pain of losing a tooth. Each time I lost a tooth it was a similar experience. When I first noticed a loose tooth, it was impossible not to push it with my tongue and notice the discomfort that followed when it moved back and forth. Usually my mom pulled my teeth out, using a napkin to grab hold of the tooth and then gently tug it out. I couldn’t fathom tying one end of floss around my tooth and the other around a doorknob and slamming the door shut. I was the type of kid that liked to pull off Band-Aids slowly. After the excruciating pain of having my tooth ripped out, I’d press a clean paper towel to the gap in my teeth and wait for the bleeding to stop. Afterwards, I’d run to the bathroom to rinse the tooth off. Then, with my newly polished tooth, I’d race back to my mom’s room and we’d put it in a plastic Ziploc bag. My mom would then pull the necessary Tooth Fairy pillow out of her dresser drawer and give it to me. The small, heart-shaped, floral pillow held a little slit that I could easily slide things into. I slipped in my tooth and placed the pillow on the dresser next to my bed. At night the Tooth Fairy would replace my tooth with a dollar, rewarding me for the suffering I had faced as my tooth was pulled.

This was how I usually lost my teeth, but there was one exception. It also happens to be one of the only memories I still have of my father.

I used to wake up early on Sundays. I’d jump out of bed and race downstairs for breakfast. After eating I would run back upstairs to get ready for the day. Most of the time, I spent Sundays waiting for the moment when my father would arrive. He would eventually come knocking a couple hours later than planned, and take me to the car that was crammed with all my half-siblings. There are five of us and I am the middle child. We all have different mothers and live in separate houses. My father always drove around and desperately searched for a park where he could let the five of us wild children run loose. He lived in
Sacramento, two hours north, and as a result, he often had to pull the car over and ask for directions to the nearest park. If he discovered one, my siblings and I found a way to create an adventure.

My older brother Justin always liked to challenge me. In order to impress the “big kids,” I always tried to keep up with whatever he was doing. One time, my brother shouted, “Hey, Nae Nae! I bet you can’t climb up this slide!” Not wanting to miss an opportunity to prove myself worthy, I shouted back at him, “Yes I can!” and scurried up as fast as I could. As soon as I was halfway up, Justin slid down and his foot hit my mouth. I fell backwards down the slide and landed on the ground, blood gushing from my lips. Realizing something was different, I slowly rubbed my tongue across my teeth, examining the new gap. I stuck my finger in my mouth just to make sure. My tongue was right—a tooth was missing. My father immediately rushed over, grabbed my hand and hurried me to the nearest water fountain. “Get some water. Then swish and spit,” he commanded. I did as he said and when I stopped bleeding, he patted me on the back. He reached into his pocket, pulled out his wallet and handed me a five-dollar bill. Smiling, I grabbed it and rubbed it between my hands, waiting for the moment when I could show Justin what I now had. *Wait, the Tooth Fairy was supposed to give you money when your tooth fell out.* I stopped smiling and my hands fell to my sides. *Why was my father doing her job? The tooth fairy isn’t real.* I quickly pushed these thoughts out of my head. *Of course she was real.* But that moment created kernels of doubt that seethed in my mind. Losing a tooth would never be the same.

My father used to visit every Sunday but, eventually, every Sunday became every other Sunday. Then every other Sunday turned into some Sundays. My father would call me and tell me why he couldn’t make it that week. It’s too far to drive. The car is broken down. There’s a lot of traffic. Then communication stopped altogether. The last time I talked to my father was ten years ago. Like my belief in the Tooth Fairy, my father disappeared.
Four years ago, my older sister found my number under a stack of papers at my father’s house.

Through her, I have come in contact with all of my brothers and sisters again. Today, I still consider myself a middle child.

Sometimes, I wish my father had been a war hero or the victim of a tragic accident. It would be easier to know that than to know he just doesn’t care.
Airiel Quintana Photography

Boy with Basketball
Look at the Calendar

By Crispus Attucks

Look at the calendar, 2012, and assume that if they were going to enroll more Black students, they would have done it by now.

They take a deck of 52 excuses, shuffle it, and deal a few to you, who are the most recent to point out their choice to fail. This time it might be Stanford has more money, we have a new formula, it’s complicated, we feel your pain, it’s a tough environment out there.

If you press them, they’ll try to divert you: We’re interested in all kinds of social diversity, not just race.

Or, defensively, they’ll point to small changes they’ve made, as if such pointing is an answer. They’ll assure you how committed they are.

They don’t put much effort into the game. They can play the game forever and never lose.

If they don’t change, never believe them. They’ve never earned your trust.

Whiteness is part of their brand. Part of what they sell.

If they were going to enroll more Black students, they would have done it by now. Look at the calendar, get your degree, and flee the shameless university.
Things I mutter/think whilst shopping at Safeway: Confessions of a die-hard frugal shopper.

Sandra Rosa Bryant

- Five dollars for a box of Grits? They must be out they minds.
- Where all the off-brand cereals at?
- If that was my kid, I’d put some duct tape over his mouth. Yellin’ like he ain’t got no sense.
- Three dollars for some mushrooms? I ain’t payin’ three dollars for some fungus.
- I wish they would try to make me pay all that money for some damn sandwich bags.
- Pudding!!!
- So you just gon’ leave your cart in the middle of the aisle like nobody’s in this store but you?
- Ooh, a sale on hash browns. I see you, Safeway.
- How they gon’ have a little ass bag of cheese for four dollars?
- Dang, Safeway be trippin’ though.
- Oh, look! Another Black girl.
- He oughta be ashamed of himself, going to the express lane with a cart full of stuff. You ain’t slick, old man.
- Ginger ale? Yes, ma’am!
- Oooh, the ethnic hair care section. Let’s see what they got.
- Eight dollars for a two ounce bottle? Girl, please.
- They ain’t got no 99 cent bagels? Ya’ll can bag that nonsense up and throw it out the window.
- At least the price of spaghetti is cool.
- Too bad they didn’t let that carry over to the pasta sauce.
- I don’t care how much ice cream cost, I’m getting me some ice cream.
- That much for an itty bitty slice of cake. No, sir.
- Damn, dude with the dreadlocks is fine as hell.
- I never understood why people hate on Brussels sprouts so hard.
- No, I don’t need help out, not unless “help out” is a ride home. It’s too cold to be waiting on buses.
Dear lord, she was so gorgeous. Consuming my mind was her smooth goddess-like figure that had been so unfairly covered for the past two months by what could barely be conceived as “business attire.” Today, the dark blue, slim skirt she had worn was only helped by the thin black belt she had used to accentuate her trim waist and strong, yet soft, voluptuous hips that mesmerized even women as she walked away. Her cream button-up top left no secrets to the ample shape of her supple breasts that she most certainly chose to outline with a dark bra that was easily detected through the light material of the blouse.

"Excuse me."

This wide, grayish haired older woman awkwardly maneuvered her cart around me through the aisle. Jesus, I had been caught-up; daydreaming in the middle of the snack section with my cart stopped in front of the small Wheat Thins display. It was my turn to do the grocery shopping this week, so I had stopped by Safeway on the way home, which was located just a few blocks away from Colbert & Jobe Accounting.

I'd been here for thirty minutes already and hadn't yet put a significant dent in our grocery list. Sarah would be wondering if I'd gotten lost or something. We'd just moved to Newark, New Jersey about two months before, when I was hired as an accountant at Colbert & Jobe. This job was a step up from the smaller accounting firm I had previously worked for in Vermont. The change to a larger city had proved to be an interesting one for us, to say the least. Sarah and I now found ourselves surrounded by thousands of people who all had to get somewhere and get there fast. We'd made a few friends in our apartment complex, but nobody really seemed to be that interested in developing any sort of friendship other than the occasional 'hello'. Overall, it felt like here, in the city of Newark, being the aggressor was key.

Finally, arriving at the apartment almost an hour later, I greeted Sarah with a kiss on the cheek. She had let her dark hair down and had already changed from her work clothes to some comfortable grey sweats and a white t-shirt. We’d been married for three years now and still, upon seeing her looking sexy as hell in her sweats and t-shirt, I wondered how I had gotten so lucky. Sitting on one of the black barstools in our kitchen she looked so settled and content as she waited for the oven timer to go off.

"How'd it go at the office?"

"Ahh the usual. Can't complain I guess." I sat down on the barstool next to her and began rubbing her back.
"They still hate you, huh."

We both laughed. It was an ongoing joke we had about working at Colbert & Jobe. From the first day I stepped into the office, it felt as though all the employees had made it a point to make sure I knew that we were all there to work, not for social hour. This came as no surprise to me as accounting isn’t much of a ‘work with others’ type job, but I wasn’t expecting everybody to take this mantra so seriously. Most of the lunch breaks I’d taken involved only Emilia and myself; meaning I would be drooling over her from afar as I attempted to eat my turkey sandwich.

We ate dinner with a glass of wine to celebrate another day of surviving Newark, and settled down on the couch for the rest of our evening activities. Her body was warm next to mine as we talked and snuggled close. Flipping through channels of nonsense, I felt my mind wander.

Reminiscing back to earlier in the day at the office, I became aroused as my mind began to heat up with thoughts of Emilia. The tight blue skirt, her sly smile as she passed by me knowing I would stare, knowing I would be removing her clothes layer by layer...

"You awake, Darryl?"

Losing track of what I was doing I had let the channel rest on what appeared to be an infomercial for a Velcro belt. Quickly, I began flipping back through the channels. The love I have for Sarah is so deep it will never be broken. While my thoughts and how my mind wandered to Emilia may seem questionable for a married man, that is exactly what they were, just thoughts. Never would I consider, or have the chance to, commit any form of adultery, no matter how sultry or seductive the woman may be.

I snapped back to reality as Sarah began to grab my hand. Looking down I smiled at her. Her dark brown hair spilled onto my chest as her head lay still on my shoulder. There had been many nights where we lay on the couch like this for hours, just happy to be next to each other...but tonight I’d need a little more.

I wouldn’t consider myself to have a one-track mind, but with her body pushed up against mine I couldn’t help but feel a little excited as her breasts slightly pressed against my arm.

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I woke up and slid out of bed, it was only 3am but I knew I had to get to the office. Silently leaving my bed, making sure I wouldn’t wake Sarah, I slipped into a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt and snuck out of the apartment and into the parking structure without a sound. Promptly, I arrived at the office.

The lights in the building were almost all off, as I stepped through the front door. In the elevator, riding up to the fourth floor a bag of emotions began to rise from my feet, stopping around my middle region, scuttling past my heart, then straight to my head. Is this really happening? This is so wrong...but I hope she’s here. What about Sarah? Her body. I don’t wanna be that guy. Those Hips. Stop. That Ass. I’m better than this. Just. So. Amazing. I’m MARRIED. The things I would do to her...

As I stepped out of the elevator onto the fourth floor, my heart kicked into fifth gear. Looking around, not knowing exactly what I was looking for or expecting, I saw that the light over Emilia’s office was on. I absolutely had to get her attention, I don’t know why, but it was crucial right now. Although we were obviously the only two people on the floor at the time, I decided to stage the casual walk by, as though I had
some alternative reason for being here in the middle of the night. *Yeah right.* Like this dorm room move would work with a grown woman like Emilia.

Taking a deep breath, I told myself to go for it and began a slow awkward walk, which just happened to take me past her door. With a casual glance into her office, I saw her. As always, drop dead gorgeous. The same blue skirt from earlier hid from my view of what would surely be her silky smooth, thick but toned thighs that seemed to squeeze tightly together and lead to her slender waist that appeared to be waiting to be groped.

"Darryl..." Our eyes met and she smiled as she sat atop her desk.

"Hey you."

Oh shit. Sarah. I opened my eyes and rolled over to face her. What had happened last night? I wasn't quite sure. Last night had been a little too real to be just a dream. I sat up and examined myself; feeling around, making sure everything was intact. Why was I so sweaty right now? Much to my surprise, and horror, I realized I had a sweatshirt on. Why the hell do I have a sweatshirt on? And what happened at the end of my dream?

"I think you woke up cold and put a sweatshirt on last night, Darryl." This couldn't be happening. "You got out of bed for like five minutes then came back, I think. I don't really remember, I went back to sleep. Was gonna say something but I figured if I did you'd try to get frisky, so I went back to sleep." She chuckled, poking fun at the sexual power she had possessed over me for years.

"Oh, Ms. Sarah, you've got jokes as always."

Trying to play it cool, but still a little rattled from my imaginative excursion from the night, I slid out of bed and began to get ready for the day. Dark slacks, light dress shirt and a tie being my usual uniform, I decided to switch it up for the day. Light tan slacks. Feeling like a new man, I began my day.

Arriving slightly early at work, I began my daily routine by playing the game I cleverly named "Avoid My Co-Workers." It started off pretty easily as I literally walked through the middle of the fourth floor without so much as anyone glancing up for the daily 'hello' followed by the immediate look away.

My day continued smoothly like this until lunch time hit, when I decided to leave my office for a second to grab a Sprite from the vending machine in the break room. On my walk to the break room, I decided to take my daily casual glance in the door of Emilia's office. As I turned my head to look, she just happened to be walking out. Almost running into each other, I instinctively put my hands up to protect myself. Bad idea. My hands slightly rubbed against her firm breasts as we bumped into each other. She had on another skirt, this time a black one that made her smooth milky legs glisten in contrast. Her breasts bulged through the white sweater that she wore, and her hair was done up today in a Chinese bun. The slight sample of the feeling of her breast being the highlight of my day, I knew I wouldn't be able to get much work done.

"Sorry about that, I didn't see you there."

Apologizing, I tried to step to the left to create space. Emilia trying to do the same stepped to the right and we ended up even closer, with my midsection almost at her hips.
“It’s ok, it happens. Nice pants by the way.”

She looked down at my crotch region. I couldn’t tell whether this was her being way too forward in flirting, or maybe she was just as awkward as I am. Either way, I felt myself feeling a little too risqué under her gaze and hastily walked away.

That night as I lay in bed next to Sarah, I began to recall the past 24 hours’ happenings. Being pretty sure the previous night had been just a dream I began to analyze what had gone on during work. I usually never had any interaction with Emilia whatsoever; was it just a coincidence that the day after my dream we actually talked? Why had she looked at my groin, my pants, or me like that? I can’t believe I touched her breasts. Those soft, perky, firm, juicy breasts. Feelings and analytic reason that I haven’t had or used since my days at Weston High came flushing back.

“Darryl, what’s been up with you, you’ve been kind of out of it all night.”

I had no idea what to say. All night I had been recounting and walking myself through different scenarios where I would show up for work only to find Emilia, naked, on my desk. It had been an interesting evening.

“Usually you’d be all over me by now.” Smiling at me, she rolled over, coming close so I could straddle her.

“I know. It’s just been a long day. Craaazy stuff at work,” I said sarcastically, although I sort of meant it. "I'm just tired, I guess."

Slowly, we fell asleep.

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Again, I found myself up at 3am. This time I’d have to be more stealthy than last night. I couldn’t have Sarah even suspecting that I’m awake. Slithering out of the sheets I quickly jolted from the room. I would just grab some sweats and a jacket that had been sitting out by the couch instead of getting clothes from my closet. Before I knew it, I was back in the elevator about to step onto the fourth floor.

_How did I get here? What the hell am I doing here again? This can’t be real?_ I was alive and well in a dream world, some sort of twisted fantasy that I must have created in my perverted, little mind. This time I walked straight into her office. There, Emilia sat on top of her desk, clothed in what she had on earlier that day. She slowly pulled off her sweater, revealing her well-mounded breasts sitting plump atop her chest. I froze.

"Don’t just stand there. I liked what I saw earlier, I know you liked what you felt. I’ve noticed you staring at me for the past couple months. I’m here."

I walked up to her and slowly wrapped my hands around her waist.

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"The hell is going on."
Waking up on the couch with the T.V. on, I was nothing more than confused and a bit perturbed. How did I get here? More importantly, why was I here? I began to panic. What had I done? Am I actually cheating on my wife? I remember walking up to Emilia and grabbing her waist, but nothing after that. Standing up, I realized, once again, that I was in the clothes from my dream, or whatever it was. After I began to calm myself down, I found myself standing next to the couch in my sweats and jacket feeling sore, uncomfortable and tired as though I had been out all night. Am I turning into a schizophrenic? How come I can't remember anything? Had I been out all night? Some things were beginning to add up, in an unfavorable way.

"What are you doing out here?"

Not knowing what to say, I simply shrugged and muttered some lame excuse and began to get ready for work.

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Stepping onto the fourth floor that day I felt more rattled than ever. Something weird was going on but I couldn't tell what it was. Rushing through the floor, I stepped into my office and there she was. Emilia.

"Mr. Davies wants you to bring him the files from the Addison account." She sat on my desk and smiled. The way she sat showed off her long, slender legs. I just stared not knowing how to react. "Looks like someone's in trouble, good luck, bad boy." She walked past me with a grin. Had she winked as she said that? Maybe it was just her blink; maybe I only saw one eye. This can't be happening.

Deciding to leave work early that day, I came home in order to clear my conscience to Sarah, hoping that no matter how bad it may seem she would somehow understand. The moment I stepped into our apartment I began spilling my guts, telling her everything that had been going on, from my night time excursions that were hopefully dreams, to the happenings at the office, both daytime and after hours, to the clothes and the couch. Everything. Sarah looked at me, deliberated for about twenty seconds and smiled.

"I'm glad you're honest with me and feel the need to come forward, but Darryl, this is just your perverted imagination running away with you. You may be a pervert, but you aren't a cheater. We fall asleep and wake up together, you're never gone more than a few moments, hon."

She sounded so sure of herself, there was no way she could be wrong.

That night, after falling asleep with Sarah tight in my arms, I stayed asleep. No dreams, no schizophrenia, no sleepwalking, no nightmares. Waking up the next morning I felt refreshed and ready for work. I went back to work and was enjoying falling back to the status quo of avoiding all forms of interaction when I found myself walking towards the elevator as Emilia came walking from it. Our eyes met and she gave a look of pleasant surprise.

"Ahh, glad you're back," she said as she gave me a wink, "Didn't know if I'd see you again, missed you yesterday."

As she walked away I couldn't help but stare.
TAQUENAH BRYANT

Dance of the All
86’d and Social Class

By Nicci R. Montgomery

During a recent visit to the E.R., I experienced the burden of caring for an undetermined illness without employment or medical insurance to cover the costs. While answering questions about finances, I was reminded of advice delivered by my last professor when a classmate was overwhelmed by student loans with little money and no income to pay.

My petite Korean American sis-female professor stated,

"You cannot pay with what you do not have."

In other words...those that request it will get it when I can give it. Nuf Said. Hallelujah, Teach. Preach on! I tried to conjure this very sense of relief while lying in my RM. 13 hospital bed, but my thoughts detoured to the perverse.

Have you ever seen Repo Men? The film with Jude Law and Forrest Whitaker cast as two bounty hunters who repossess manufactured organs from clients who have defaulted on their loans. First of all, the corporation sells these organs for some God awful price ($600,000 for 1 lung), on a line of credit. When folks can’t pay, Jude and Forrest recollect the loaned organs, like vehicles, leaving empty cavities and corpses instead of empty parking spaces.

The remaining images of pleading people, saying their check is in the mail before being gutted alive, are what came to mind as the insurance guy came into my room, where I was having chest pain and shortness of breath, signs of cardiac arrest. Was it possible that my emergency services could be revoked, taken back? My blood cultures hewn in my face and my black ass tossed out on "J" street???

He asked me the name of my insurance provider and I was prepared to dine and dash.

"I don’t have a provider," I said.
I survived.

He left me with an envelope marked Financial Aid Department. Perusing the request form inside I was asked for basic info: my name, address, phone number, and employer. To the last bullet I responded NONE. The next question asked for an explanation for how I was covering my living expenses.

All I could think was "luck."

Well, even though I feel as though I am constantly catching up instead of making confident strides with my finances, somehow my head is still above water. I am not in the middle or upper socio-economic classes nor is any person in my immediate family. Even so, to some I am considered to be a power or privilege holder in terms of socio-economic class simply because I have had access to higher education. So much for luck. Ok, so how come I couldn’t feel this power when I was discussing my lack of income and insurance with my emergency service providers? Hmmmm...?

According to Nieto and Boyer in Beyond Inclusion, Beyond Empowerment, upward mobility in Social Class is "associated with fluency with social codes" and those with power are those with "access to institutions of education, to property, and to institutions of control." Nieto and Boyer highlight a dividing factor between the have-s and the have-nots (or agent and target groups) as the amount of energy spent trying to achieve the same ends. They define this process as "the economy of energy."

The more access to institutions of power the less energy spent trying to access the things they need like healthcare, transportation and for some, banalities such as laundry service. The energy that is saved during the process of acquiring needs for those with easy access can be used to focus on building finances, maintaining relationships, personal growth, self-care (vacationing over the summer, golf, spa treatments); and health.

2008's Pierce County Homeless Housing Plan states that an individual in poverty lives at or below an annual income of $10,400 and families of three live at or below $17,500. In 2009 12.3% of Pierce County was living beneath the poverty line. This is up from 11.5% in 2008 at which time 8% were families with 23.8% headed by women. The economy of energy for these groups is very low, making upward mobility difficult.

Access points are the key to upward mobility. Nieto and Boyer explain that those from target groups who seek access points must have an ability to transcend their cultural upbringing and learn the behavioral
codes and especially communication codes of the middle, upper, and [property] owning classes.

Without this knowledge, much more energy is spent searching for access points that accept these individuals as they are. Most of these services today are not provided by privately owned businesses or corporations, but by non-profits and other federally funded social service programs.

This fact not only marginalizes these communities but also allows private business owners and the community members they serve to remain ignorant to the plight of existing strife and likewise ignorant to their own ability to be access points to those in need.

Back at the hospital, I was dismissed with the appropriate respect and a diagnosis of GERD, also known as acid reflux. Having a regular check up or even a primary physician is a foreign concept to me, and though my heart is fine, and I am only suffering from a case of severe indigestion and stress, the doctor delivered me another diagnosis that will require several more visits and regular check-ups and tests. Until I have insurance, I am settling for the information I can gather on the internet and through my social network of nurses and doctors (my friend’s parents)-- my access points.

Thankfully, no one was threw me out onto the street for being poor. Even so, I am no fool for raising my hackles under the cinematic glow of an imaginary like Repo Man. It is only a matter of time for those struggling to survive, and I had better get my ass in gear with my finances if I want to be among the number left living.

When I returned home that night, I wrote a letter to the financial aid department requesting assistance as a recent graduate, searching for work in my field. I used language that would garner compassion and suggest solidarity, not otherness.
Black Like Me
By Aaron Edwards

Born with understanding
Built on a solid foundation
Cultured beyond belief
Well traveled, well versed
Despite all this, my motives are still in question

My back against the wall
My burdens have only grown heavier
Yet I've always found a way...

What they call me:
Nigger
Rapist
Thief

Suspicious
Lazy

Who I am:
Musician
Educated
God-fearing
Leader
Motivator
Teammate
Friend

A son to a strong black woman
A friend to many
A testament of hard work and perseverance
If only they knew...
The hardest part was standing in the empty apartment. My uncles had been working the entire day, cleaning out everything. Nothing was left except for some furniture and a few boxes piled in the center of the room. “It’s too bad you didn’t know him before the stroke, Nae Nae. You were so young when he had it,” my mom said while turning to look at me. “He was a completely different person. If he’d have walked in here before he had the stroke, he’d have taken one look around and walked right back out.” I closed my eyes and pictured my grandpa’s house before it was cleared out. Stale and unused boxes of cereal covering the table, the living room barely lit up by a single dim lamp, cans of Lysol covering the kitchen counter. The apartment had a comforting, familiar scent of cigarettes and stale coffee. My grandpa’s house was always chaotic but he never wanted anyone to clean it because when things were arranged in ways that irritate most people, he was comfortable. I opened my eyes again and saw a spotless table, an empty bookcase, and the TV. I inhaled deeply and smelled the fresh scent of spring resulting from my uncles leaving the front door open all day in order to carry boxes out to the truck.

My mom and I used to have lunch with my grandpa every single Saturday. We only lived thirty minutes apart so it was easy to visit. We’d bring sandwiches from Togo’s or pizza or something that we cooked the night before if we had the time.
When I started taking classes at DeAnza Community College, which was next to my grandpa’s house, I would stop by to visit him after class and before I had to catch my train. One day, after a frustrating math class, I went to visit my grandpa. He was sitting in his usual spot on the sidewalk overlooking the parking lot, talking to the other tenants. When I reached him, he turned to me and said, “Come on in Nayner, I have a special treat for you!” He powered up his scooter and drove ahead, leading me across the parking lot, to his apartment on the ground level, through the tiny hallway, into the kitchen. My grandpa opened up the fridge and pulled out a little basket of strawberries that had been cleaned and cut. “I know they’re your favorite, Nayner, so I stopped by the store and picked some up then cleaned them for you!” That was quite a feat for my grandpa. The supermarket was a ways away, which must have been hard to travel on just the scooter, and cleaning the strawberries couldn’t have been easy when he could only use the right half of his body. “Thanks, Grandpa. I love strawberries! This looks like a good batch!” I ate them and sat on the couch and listened while he told me some of his favorite jokes and stories.

I opened my eyes again but I would have preferred to keep them shut. The apartment was familiar, yet completely different. “Well let’s start going through the boxes,” Uncle Dan said. My three uncles, my aunt, my mom, and I all sat in a circle around the boxes and opened them up. They were all filled with pictures depicting my mom and her siblings when they were young, my grandpa throughout his life, extended family, weddings, and grandchildren. “Oh my God, look what I found. Nae Nae, this is yours.” My Uncle Matt held up a photo of my grandpa and me when I was really young. The photo was taken from behind. My grandpa was in his wheelchair and I was behind him, both hands reaching up, gripping the back of the chair, with my head bending slightly, while pushing him forward.

“Wow.”

“Oh my God.”
“I can’t believe it.”

I didn’t have any words. All I could do was hold onto the photograph.

Finally I said, “I didn’t realize he still had this.” I reached into my pocket and took out the folded duplicate of the photo and held it next to the other.

“Dad kept the original photo,” Uncle Dan explained.

“You know, he held onto that—your photo there, Nae Nae—until the end. I put it in his hand when he first got into the hospital and he never let go. The nurses told me they’d never seen anything like it,” Aunt Annie pointed out, her voice quiet and barely audible in the silence. She cleared her throat and said in a louder voice, “And then one of them asked me if it was a Jesus card and I said it was close enough!” Everyone started laughing.

We continued looking through the boxes. I took some pictures, his high school class ring, and the portrait of him that Marjorie made. I wanted the Ohio State hat that my grandpa always wore. I hardly ever saw him without it, but my Uncle Matt got it first.

The phone started ringing. Nobody moved. The chatter that had started immediately stopped. The ringing continued. Finally, it went to the machine. A crackly old voice projected into the room, “Hi, Don, this is your old pal Bud. We haven’t talked in a while and I thought I’d give you a call to check up and see how you’re doin’. You have my number give me a call back. Bye.” Beep.

There was a pause. The only motion came from our eyes as we exchanged glances with each other. Then, there was a tentative giggle and we all started laughing in unison. “Well you’re a little too late, Bud!” my Uncle Matt exclaimed between bursts of laughter. I laughed so hard that tears came. I took my sleeve and wiped my eyes dry before anyone could notice.

“Ok, are you guys hungry? Let’s go get dinner,” Uncle Marty said. We all crowded around a table at the Outback Steakhouse. Our silence was jarred when a line of waiters walked through the
restaurant, clapping a rhythm, and stopped at the table next to ours. Startled, I looked up to see what was happening. The waiter at the front of the line held a small cake with a single candle in it. All the waiters started singing happy birthday. No one in my family joined in. We just watched in silence as the cake was placed in front of a smiling face and a chorus of voices rang “make a wish!” After the candle was blown out the tables around us started applauding. We joined in, clapping slowly.

“You know, you were his favorite.”

“I know.”

While I stared at my hands, My mom put her hand on my shoulder and gave it a little squeeze.
Asian Poetry From a Half-Filipino White Kid That Grew Up Around Black Folks

John Eklof

Driving to Lakewood I swim in contemplation
I think of the idea of the dancing brown man seducing white women into
enjoying the ancient carnal pleasures of unification
between the masculine and feminine energies
terrifying the man with the noble burden of civilizing
the childlike devils from the archipelago by way of stealing,
lying to them and killing them-
all in the name of Christianity
because that’s what Jesus meant when he said love thy neighbor
The white man’s colonization
has weighed heavy on the hearts of my people for almost 400 years
and the result of succumbing to such brute force, motivated
by greed as intense as the sun,
has brought about a self-hatred down in the depths of my relatives
that I hypocritically deny within myself
every single morning when brushing my teeth
but we both know it’s there
the unconscious historical trauma
doesn’t disintegrate after becoming aware
of the wounds
all that I have gained now is the knowledge
of how they got there in the first place
but at least I can touch my scars
and feel the perseverance swelling in my heart
knowing that making it through another day is embedded in my culture

The dominant ideology’s stereotype about Asian men in mainstream cinema
makes me want to take steroids
go to Hollywood to become an actor
audition for as many romantic comedy movies as humanly possible
preferably with the highest number of love scenes
and single-handedly reverse the stereotype
that Asian men are androgynous karate masters
uninterested in anything sexual
because I am interested in everything sexual
but then I think about Bruce Lee
and how by slaying his own dragon
he inadvertently spawned a new one
in its place
and that’s just one extreme to the next
so I think that aspiration must be extinguished
and besides I don’t think my girlfriend would agree
with my ambitions to become a Filipino sex symbol
regardless of how pure my intentions are
I am not a nerd although I wear glasses and love reading
I am not a martial arts master
but I did receive a black belt in Tae Kwon Do when I was 8
I am not an A plus student although I do get good grades
or that’s the story I tell my mom
and I am not passive I am not docile
and I am most definitely not a model for other minorities to follow
I am a model for everyone to follow
because I am just me
**WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?! IS THIS REAL LIFE?**
Shit white people say to black people at UPS (and what we wish we could say back)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shit white people say:</th>
<th>What I wish I could say back:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Oh my gosh. You’re so lucky, you don’t ever have to tan. I WISH I was as tan as you are.”</td>
<td>Yeah, I’m sure you do! Do you want to know the BEST part of my tan? It never ever goes away. I actually know of people who are so enamored with my tan that they follow me around in grocery stores, at the mall, or even when I’m just walking down the street at night. Bitches be cray cray!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel like I see you with a new hair style every day! How do you change it so much?”</td>
<td>My hair is versatile, boo boo. Get over it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hey guys! This is my black friend, <em><strong>(Insert name here)</strong></em>”</td>
<td>OH! Now I see our friendship in a whole new light. Do you think that they can tell I’m black now? Yeah? Cool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Why don’t you talk black? Why don’t you act black? I’m blacker than you! I would be a WAY better black person than you are.”</td>
<td>That’s actually a really good question. I don’t really know why I don’t “act black.” I didn’t know that was a thing. I guess I’m a phony black person. Damn it! I’m a failure! What will society say?!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I sometimes think that black people deserve the racial profiling that they get, you know?”</td>
<td>Yep! Follow ME around, especially at night. I love the attention. It definitely makes me feel safe. Driving while black is TOTES a legit reason to get in trouble.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I’m excited to meet yo’ black mama!”

When you see her, you should tell her how excited you are to meet my black mama. Say it in that vernacular, too. See how fast she’ll slap you.

“OH MY GOD! YOU HAVE BLACK PEOPLE HAIR TODAY!”

...Do you think before you speak? Does my hair frequently change races? Did I have Asian hair yesterday?

“Will you take me to a black church?!”

You don’t even go to church. I don’t even go to church.

“Ah! Your hair feels like my poodle!!! Can I call you poodle?!”

Who are you? No, you may NOT call me poodle. I’m not a dog! I am cute though, huh?

“The Lil’ Wayne party was a TRIBUTE party to him. Wearing blackface is just a way to emulate him. We just wanted to look more like him.”

Are you serious?

I’m not racist. I have black friends, anyway.

Ehhh, they’re PROBABLY lying to you

WHAT’S UP MY NIGGA?!


*No names will be used to protect the ignorant.

Taylor Harrison and Andrea Fontenot
Naming Things

Renee Simms

She is seven & she loves trees. The aspirin-white trunks that crowd nearby fields, the trees that drop hard berries for the boys to throw, trees that sprinkle helicopter seeds.


She never asks why her father can name every genus of tree, or why, haunted by the forests of Georgia, he moved North to a state just as green.

Her school is Magnolia Elementary. When she plays hard at recess, her hair escapes its careful braids & hangs in strands like a willow.

Her mother is sad like a willow—sudden mushrooms wherever she walks. Each night begins with the pop of wooden corks & low-flying birds in the halls.

This is what she will recall from inside her family’s tree house. They live two blocks beyond city limits & are safe from every thing, save themselves.
I remember earlier that day, Billy Wilkins, the boy next door, taught me how to light matches. I spent the whole time after church sitting on the back porch with a match book and a jar of water. I lit match after match and dropped them into the jar just before the fire could burn my fingers. I was ten years old and it was the summer of 1945.

That night looked like any other South Carolina night. The moon wasn’t too bright, the stars looked the same as ever, and there wasn’t a wind to be heard of. It was hot and humid and didn’t nobody feel like doing much of anything but sitting on their porches and watching the lightning bugs sink down into the bushes.

Nobody except my big sister, Nettie Mae.

It seemed like everybody in Aiken County knew Nettie Mae was heading for trouble. She was seventeen and as hard-headed as an old mule and for whatever reason, she never learned not to be spending all that time in Clifton’s General Store, tossing her hair and smiling all big at them white boys. Nettie Mae was just asking for trouble. Whenever I went into the white part of town with Nettie Mae and Mama and Daddy, Nettie Mae would parade around the place, showing off and acting like it was the best thing in the world to be whistled at by all them menfolks. Daddy was always fit to be tied whenever we went into town with Nettie Mae.

Daddy had been wanting Nettie Mae to go down to the colored school and get a job as a teacher. Mrs. Beula was about ready to have her child soon and they were gonna need somebody to take her spot. Nettie Mae was smart enough to be a teacher. If there was one thing about Nettie Mae that Mama and Daddy were proud of, it was her smarts. She taught me my letters and how to string them together to make words, but nobody in their right mind was gonna give Nettie Mae Mrs. Beula’s job. She had too much of a bad reputation and didn’t nobody want such a wild-running and fast-talking girl teaching their children.

Nettie Mae knew just as well as anybody that she wasn’t gonna be no teacher, so she yelled and hollered at Daddy every time he brought it up. But on that particular night, she had almost just about yelled herself hoarse. The curls she had put in her pressed hair earlier that day for church had fallen down and her hair was in a big old mess all around her face. Daddy wasn’t much of the arguing type, but when it came to Nettie Mae, something came out of him that made him want to yell just as loud as her. Everybody knew that if they heard Daddy yelling, it had to be because of Nettie Mae. Wasn’t nothing else that could get him riled up so much that he would take to raising his voice. Mama didn’t bother much with trying to get Nettie Mae to act like she had some sense. Mama had given up on that a long time ago.
That night Nettie Mae had had enough of Daddy’s teacher talk. I’d seen Nettie Mae mad plenty of times before, but I ain’t never seen her as mad as she was on that night. She stormed about the house still in her yellow church dress, hollering about how she wasn’t a little child and how she could make up her own mind about her life and how wasn’t nobody gonna tie a ball and chain around her ankle. Those were the last words she said to us before she left the house, slamming the door so hard that one of the little glass panes cracked right down the middle.

Mama and Daddy were right livid that night but they tried to hide it from me by sending me up to bed early. I did like I was told but when I heard their bedroom door close I got out of my bed as quiet as I could, changed out of my night things, went downstairs, and then ran out into the night after my sister.

I knew right well where Nettie Mae had gone. Clifton’s General Store closed at four in the afternoon most days and didn’t open on Sundays, but Chesney Clifton, old man Clifton’s grandson, was home for the summer from college and had keys to the store. On Saturday and Sunday nights, Chesney would open up the basement of the store and he and some of his friends would have themselves a little party of sorts.

Wasn’t too many colored folks who could say they’d been to one of Chesney’s basement parties, but Nettie Mae had a way of putting herself in good with them white boys.

By the time I settled myself behind one of the grated openings set into the side of the building that looked down into the basement, the party was in full swing. Nettie Mae stood out like a frog in a bucket of snails. Everybody was talking and laughin and having a good time, but when it came to the dancing, Nettie Mae was the only one who looked like she knew what she was doing. She was in the middle of the room with a crowd of clapping and stomping boys around her. By the looks of things, they were more interested in watching her dance than they were in doing anything else. When the upbeat opening notes of Louis Jordan’s song *Caldonia* filled the basement, Nettie Mae hitched up her skirts, threw back her head, and let out a loud "Oowee!"

One girl whose dance partner had left her to join the group around Nettie Mae was looking at my sister like she had done her some great personal harm. "Hey, Nettie Mae! You got a run in your stockings. That darkie daddy of yours can’t afford to get his girl new stockings when she need them?"

Nettie Mae didn’t even turn around. She just kept right on dancing.

"You gonna let her talk to you like that, Nettie Mae?" Chesney said.

I could tell by his tone that he was waiting for something exciting to happen.

"Don’t make me no never mind," Nettie Mae said. "I came here to dance. I ain’t thinking about that girl, Louise."

"She is right though, you know," Chesney said, looking my sister up and down as she continued to dance. "You do got a run in your stockings. Looks to me like they ain’t no good no more. Why don’t you just take them off and show us them pretty little legs in all their glory."
Again, Nettie Mae just continued to dance. But the crowd around her was starting to buzz.

"Don’t waste your breath, Chesney," Louise said. "That Nettie Mae thinks she’s too good for everybody. Colored and white all the same!"

"Oh, now that ain’t true is it, Nettie Mae?" He moved in closer to my sister as she continued to dance, but Nettie Mae didn’t budge. He got right up close to her but she just kept on moving with the music. "Why don’t we show old jealous Louise that she’s wrong?" He closed the space between himself and Nettie Mae and took her by the waist and pressed his body all up against hers.

Finally, Nettie Mae stopped dancing. The crowd around them was laughing and egging Chesney on but Nettie Mae wasn’t having any of that. She loosed herself from Chesney’s grip and then hit him across the face. It wouldn’t have been so bad if Nettie Mae had just slapped him, but she was so mad at Chesney that she followed the slap with a nail-digging rake that left ragged bleeding cuts on his cheek.

The crowd went quiet for half a second and then exploded. Everybody in the place was yelling at Nettie Mae and calling her names. They closed in tighter around her until all she could do was push every body that pressed against hers to get out. But the more she pushed and the more she yelled and the more she tried to get out, the angrier the crowd got. Louise had gotten right into the middle of everything and was yelling right up into Nettie Mae’s face.

"You little darkie slut! Coming around here everyday, throwing yourself all over everyone and then acting like you’re too good to even be looked at! It’s about time you got what was coming to you!"

Louise raised her hand to Nettie Mae’s face, but Nettie Mae wasn’t about to let no loud-mouth, good-for-nothing girl put hands on her. She caught Louise’s hand before it could touch her face and then twisted it until the girl was yelling so loud that I was sure people in the next town over heard it.

After that, folks started pushing and hitting any inch of Nettie Mae that they could reach and Nettie Mae was pushing and hitting anybody in the crowd that she could get her hands on. With the crowd all around my sister like they was, I could hardly see Nettie Mae, but when her face did come up, it scared me more than what them people were doing to her.

I ain’t never seen Nettie Mae look so scared in all my life.

I had never seen a man hit a woman before, let alone a group of them, but I saw it right bright as day that night. If something didn’t get done quick, Nettie Mae was gonna be beat dead.

I knew I couldn’t just march into the thick of that scene down there so I did the next thing that came to my mind. I pulled out my match book and tried to get my hands steady enough to strike up a flame. I was so scared for Nettie Mae in that moment that it seemed like everything Billy Wilkins had taught me about matches had just jumped up out my head. But after a few tries, I was able to get one lit and I dropped it right through the grate and into the basement. It landed on top of the store’s supply of laundry detergent and it wasn’t long before the flames were big enough for everyone to see.
The crowd around Nettie Mae broke up as quick as lightning. Chesney and some others ran to put out the fire and save as much of the supply as they could. Others just decided to run up the stairs and out of the basement. Nettie Mae was with this group. Didn’t nobody seem to care too much about beating up on Nettie Mae once those flames got going.

Nettie Mae was running as fast as she could back toward the colored part of town. As soon as I saw her, I hurried to catch up but she was going as fast as ever. I kept calling her name but she wasn’t turning around.

"Nettie Mae! Nettie Mae! Wait, it’s me!"

I don’t know if she heard me or not but she kept running until she came to our porch. I thought the first thing she would do was go inside, but instead she just sat right down on the porch and watched me running to her.

"Girl, what you doing running around out here by yourself at night? Don’t you know better?"

"Don’t you know better, Nettie Mae? Look what they did to you! I seen everything Nettie Mae!"

Nettie Mae just stared at me for a time and then began feeling her face, moving her hand from her cheeks to her forehead and down to her neck. "How bad they mess me up?"

"Pretty bad. Ain’t no way you gonna be able to hide that from people."

"Well, I ain’t telling the whole world what done happened. And I expect you to keep your mouth shut too, you hear me?"

"I aint gonna say nothing about what happened back there as long as you don’t say nothing about me almost burning down old man Clifton’s store."

"What we do aint nobody’s business but our own, girl. Now get on up to bed."

After that night Nettie Mae didn’t go anywhere outside of the colored part of town. Everybody got to talking about how she got all them cuts and bruises. Some of the rumors were worse than others and some people even found out the truth from some of the white folks in town but Nettie Mae never talked about it with nobody and I didn’t either. I figured Nettie Mae was right. What we did was nobody’s business but our own.
About the Submitters

Nicci R. Montgomery is an Evergreen graduate with a degree in multicultural counseling psychology. She currently lives in Tacoma and works as an English and writing tutor and as an advocate for survivors of domestic violence. When she grows up, she hopes to become a writer of novels, college text books and—bashfully—a superstar musician. Nicci attests that good music, defined by the listener, should also be labeled as therapy and used accordingly. She is ever grateful to the creators of good music and good writing for saving her life.

Sunny Wyatt-Nelson is an ally to our community. She is a work-study student with Access Programs, a University of Puget Sound program, helping with the academic achievement of under-represented students. Sunny and a few other University of Puget Sound students were a piece of the pie to what made our Access students successful at the Links Spelling Bee. Sunny is a huge believer in social justice and is invested in Access Programs students.

Hans Ostrom is Professor of African American Studies and English at Puget Sound. With J. David Macey, he edited The Greenwood Encyclopedia of African American Literature (5 volumes).

Isaac S. Lewin. These pen and ink drawings are personal re-visions of musical artists Marvin Gaye ("What’s Going On"), Miriam Makeba ("Pata Pata"), Yusef Lateef ("Gentle Giant"), and Ron Carter ("Spanish Blue"). In these drawings, I have altered the negative space surrounding the portraits. I have eliminated the original titles and fonts of the albums and inserted shapes and forms that represent magical or unknown forces that are conjured in my mind during the process and enjoyment of listening to these musicians. Losing some of their commercialization, I hope that these figures present a feeling in their image as they have presented a feeling in their music. Peace and Love to all my brothers and sisters in the Black Student Union...I’m an ally for life.

Tifphanie Wooten I’m a senior/soon to be alumni of the University of Puget Sound. I heard about the Zine from Sandra Rosa Bryant, she approached me and a fellow contributor in class one day with the idea of Black Ice and I loved it. I decided to contribute my poetry to the zine because I strongly believe in the message of Black Ice. In my four years at the University of Puget Sound, I have not felt like I had a voice, I literally did not speak in my classes many times because I was not conformable enough to be myself. I had not shown the University who I truly am or the bright person I can be. So I saw Black Ice as my path to this, I wanted to leave the University with something to look back on and show that I was here and present and that I do have valuable things to say and contribute.

Casey J. Krolczyk. I wrote "Break the Bubble" as an original essay for this publication. It speaks to a topic that has weighed on me for some time now, and I thought this would be a productive place to let off some steam. I’m the
host of the KUPS talk show “Across Campus,” an ASUPS senator, and a proud ally to students of color. My parents taught me to take ownership of issues in my community, so I find myself constantly drawn to causes that make my home (wherever it may be) a more friendly, inclusive, and equitable place for all people.

**Sandra Rosa Bryant** is a senior at the University of Puget Sound. She is from South Central, Los Angeles, California and serves as the president for the Black Student Union. She hopes to be a published novelist one day soon and is very interested in adult literacy. Sandra Rosa is the youngest of six siblings and was fortunate enough to have two of her siblings submit works for the zine.

**Neil Jackson** is a biracial Los Angeles-based fashion designer. Upon hearing about a dear friend’s involvement in the production of *Black Ice*, Neil was eager to support the zine by submitting his creative works. Through his fashion, Neil aims to empower diverse women to feel that beauty is being true to one’s self. One day he would like to launch his own label that targets young multicultural women and encourages them to feel beautiful and worthy, regardless of societal parameters that dictate harmful ideas that promote and maintain inequality.

**Taymyr Bryant** is a student of life. She spends much of her time in a perpetual struggle towards the decolonization of minds and hopes to inspire the use of radical knowledge production and sharing as a means of liberation. Taymyr believes that there’s no such thing as being too real or fighting too hard or being too strong when it comes to your LIBERATION. After hearing about this zine from her sister, Sandra Rosa Bryant of the University of Puget Sound, Taymyr decided to submit her work, in hopes of inspiring dialogue, reflection, and activism amongst the Puget Sound community.

**Danae Smith.** I am a sophomore at the University of Puget Sound and an active member of the Black Student Union. I enjoy all forms of creative writing and decided to submit a few essays that I wrote for a previous class to *Black Ice* because I think that it is important that voices of color are heard around campus.

**Faith Matthews.** I’m a sophomore at UPS. I was born in New York, but my hometowns (Saint Louis and Kansas City) are in Missouri. I play three instruments; guitar, piano and trumpet. I love music, art (photography especially) and reading. I’m a member of the BSU and that’s where I heard about the zine.

**Sha’Ran Chareese Lowe**
Oakland, CA.
University of Puget Sound Senior 2012.
Active member of Black Student Union.
Ayanna K. Drakos recently graduated from the University of Puget Sound in May, 2011, majoring in History and African American Studies. Her passion for activism was cultivated in large part through her involvement in the BSU as a student. Ayanna has a goal to become a scholar and pursue graduate school next year. She offers the highest of congratulations to Sandra Rosa Bryant and the rest of the BSU for making this zine a reality.

Airiel Quintana is a student of Communication Studies at the University of Puget Sound. As a multiracial poet she strives to tell the story of her peoples, and diversify the canon through her speech.

Renee Simms has published fiction, essays, and poetry in Hawaii Review, North American Review, Oregon Literary Review, Inkwell Journal, Brain, Child Magazine and in several anthologies. She is a recipient of writing fellowships from Cave Canem, PEN Center, Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation, and she received Inkwell Journal’s Grand Prize in Poetry for a poem selected by Elizabeth Alexander. Renee is a visiting faculty member in African American Studies at UPS.

Edric Egberuare is a senior at the University of Puget Sound and enjoys spending his time writing.

TAQUENAH BRYANT Artistry and creation are focuses very well known, and simultaneously, extremely unknown to Taquenah. Early on in life, Taquenah found himself absorbing other’s creations in the forms of cartoons like The Super Friends, and various other television programming, alongside his brother, Sanyika. In those days, the colorful plastic figurines associated with the different kinds of animated and live action media Taquenah and his brother consumed, were used as a means of creating stories, realities and realms of possibilities. But unlike the vast majority of other children, who played with their toys mimicking tales provided to them by others, Taquenah and Sanyika created elaborate stories of their own around the characters provided to them.

It wasn’t long before the two grew aware of the limitations of creating around others’ creations. It was this point in space-time and realization that really fused Taquenah and his brother Sanyika’s advancement in the artistry and creation of original concepts and ideas that were not bound by limitations in the perception and awareness of others. They now not only created their own stories, but all of the elements those stories revolved around. Characters, settings, languages, names, ideas, cultures and more; were now in need of being manifested to please the five senses, they were led to believe, were the ultimate ends of observation... But how? How would they create these story elements? Very easy... By taking up all forms or artistry needed to make their creations objective and tangible.

They delved into the disciplines of writing, acting, drawing, sound engineering, architecting, animating and any and all other aspects of translating their subjective creations into objective observations. As the two began to branch off in directions of focus in life, Taquenah found himself in need of crafting and shaping culture, and ultimately belief. His desires guided him through many paths enabling him to evoke the abilities necessary in crafting the numerous elements defining culture. “Renaissance Man” is what some would consider this philosophizing, psycho-analyzing, logical dreamer of an individual.

For more on Taquenah and his focuses visit: www.unknowndepths.net and www.stillalive-2012.com
Aaron Edwards  
Class of 2012  
Men’s basketball, Captain  
I submitted this work as a chance to make my thoughts known about this campus. It is important to me that my peers understand who I am, during the short, two-year academic career that I had left. It is equally important that my fellow classmates understand that not all blacks, whites, reds, and yellows are the same, and that we should uplift and appreciate our differences as members of this campus community. All it takes is ONE voice to make a difference in people’s lives!

John Eklof. I am from Lakewood, Washington and I am currently a student at the University of Washington. I am majoring in American Ethnic Studies. I first heard about the zine through my friend Tifphanie Wooten. She sent me a facebook message about it and recommended that I submit something for it. Taking this as a sign for the universe to help spread the message in my heart I quickly perused my poems and found one that I felt best represented me and my ideology at the moment. I would identify myself as an ally. I am of mixed heritage. I am Filipino and Swedish. What motivated me to create this piece of work is because I am very proud of being a Filipino American and I wanted to touch base on a few social issues that effect not only Filipinos but also many Asian Americans within our society—specifically colonial mentality, the model minority notion, and negative stereotypes of Asian men in movies.

Taylor Harrison. I’m a junior Psychology major at UPS. I decided to contribute to the zine because I think that it’s important that others know that not everyone’s experiences at UPS are hunky dory. I think that I submitted my piece to the zine because I do let people say these things, and I wish I could respond, but I don’t want people to know the millions of bitchy and sarcastic remarks that go through my mind.

Andrèa Fontenot. I’m from Boise, Id (yes, there are black people in Idaho). I dig science and this crazy thing we call identity. I heard about the zine through the Black Student Union here at UPS and my interest to get involved was out of the need for black voices to be heard on this campus.
Special Thanks

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