Spring 2016

Black Ice, Volume 5

Black Student Union

University of Puget Sound

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Letter from the Editor

The Black Student Union at the University of Puget Sound is pleased to put forth the fifth edition of our literary magazine *Black Ice*. The heart of this project for the last five years has been to provide a platform on which students of color and our allies can have their artistry and pedagogy valued. We honor and celebrate the works of Puget Sound students, faculty, staff, and the Tacoma community as they explore topics of race, identity, and justice.

This publication was first crafted in 2012 by then president of the Black Student Union Sandra Rosa Bryant. It was her hope to create a magazine that highlighted the ideas, opinions, and passions of individuals and organizations meeting in the Student Diversity Center so that they might reach a greater audience in the Puget Sound and Tacoma community. As is evident by the presence of this fifth edition, the initial motivation of this project has only flourished as the years have passed, and we hope it will continue for many years to come.

Thank you to the Black Ice Editorial Team for all the work they have put into making this issue so incredible. Thank you to our community for continuing to support this endeavor and spreading the good word about this publication. *Black Ice* is offered each year at no cost to our community and the public at large. If you would like to contribute to our organization in a financial capacity, we encourage you to consider making a donation to the One More Scholarship, so that many more students of color can attend Puget Sound and share their experiences.

The Black Student Union is very proud to be a community that values activism, solidarity, and community. This publication is simply one extension of all three of those values. The submissions we received this year aim to challenge systems of oppression to allow marginalized identities access to a space where they may be heard and valued. As you read this year’s issue, I hope your heart is both broken and encouraged, that you grow frustrated and free, and most of all that you will be inspired to express what is in your own soul and mind.

In Solidarity and Love,

Rachel Askew
President, Black Student Union

Previous editions of Black Ice are available by .PDF at [http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/black_ice](http://soundideas.pugetsound.edu/black_ice)
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YOU’RE BLACK
By Rachel Askew

Um excuse me
I’m sorry
I don’t mean to pry
But what’s that in your skin
So beautiful
Is it a dye?
A tan?
That melanin I see
So rich
So dark
Well darker than me.
Were you born like that?
Oh yes I forgot to ask,
where are you from?
No your people
No your ethnicity
What about your great grandma?
Does she look like you?
Oh you have a white grandmother?
So what about your hair?
Oh sorry I don’t mean to smother
You—you are so beautiful I just had to touch
I’m sorry
You’re offended?
Please don’t worry
My 4th grade teacher was black
Oh you’re mixed with white
That’s right
So sorry again
It’s just your hair
And your skin
They look so
Well ya know
When I see someone like you
I just assume assume assume
White people ya know?
*laughs uncomfortably*
A Poem
By Brie Williams

A gust of wind pushes the girl in black.
She is grateful for the wind,
Though she can’t help but look back at herself.
She waves goodbye to her past life
And looks forward toward the future.

Far ahead is a giant, red curtain.
The girl knows that once inside,
There will be no coming back.
She remembers her times as a child.

Sitting in the back of a classroom.
Looking at all of the blonde,
Blue-eyed heads in front of her.
Opening the dusty, ripped book.
Wishing to read the new ones the others held.

Going to the grocery store.
Being followed by a blue-eyed man.
Carefully placing ideas in a basket.
Never looking up.

As the girl glides toward the curtain,
A single tear runs down her cheek.
Memories tell her she is wrong.

The curtain brings hope.
The curtain carries a new life.
As the girl goes through the curtain,
The black turns to white.
She is looked upon
As an angel, even though
She cannot fly.
The curtain is a mask.

The mask will become who I am.
No more being treated as the black sheep.
No more being followed in stores.
No more being guilty before action.

I have become a white girl
In a black girl’s body.
When people meet me,
They are surprised by my
Ability to act “so white.”

I did what I had to do
To survive in an unfair world.
I cannot help but miss
The girl I used to be.
The girl outside of the curtain.

There is no going back.
What Do You See When You Look at Me?

On a beautiful spring day two summers ago, I became painstakingly aware of a perception by others that I had not conceived of myself. I was walking back to my office heading south along Commencement walk when I noticed an older white gentleman and two white young ladies walking towards me. By the ease in which they were talking and the lighthearted smiles on their faces, I envision a father with his daughter and her best friend. With one girl at each shoulder, he casually turned his head side to side as he addressed them. I was also savoring the afternoon sun and the brisk air and was thankful that there was no rain in the forecast. As we approached Commencement Hall, the man looked up in my direction. Immediately, without speaking a word, he snapped his finger at the girl on his left, pointed to the right side of his body. She looked at him puzzled and shrugged her shoulders as if to say “what?” Again, he snapped his finger and pointed to his right side, making it clear that he wanted her to move in that direction. He needed to ensure that as we passed one another on the golden granite path, he would be closest to me. I was astonished by such an overt form of racism! He had made it clear, without so much a word, that I was threat and someone from whom they needed safeguarding.

His hurtful gesture both agitated and frustrated me. I felt belittled and enraged. I thought of all of the times I had advocated for students and collaborated with them to enhance their living and working spaces to design environments both beautiful and functional. How damning of him to make erroneous assumptions simply because of the color of my skin and to misguide students in pursuit of a quality education. And he did it, without so much as a word.

Racial discrimination is hurtful. It is not only damaging to the recipient, but also to those who have the misfortune of being educated in such a manner. This is why I am a proponent of people coming together at Puget Sound and talking about the impact of microaggressions such as these. Engaging in dialogue about the social construction of race and how our perceptions of others determine our reality may be difficult and uncomfortable, but necessary and important. We have to be intentional with a focus and a goal. We can no longer simply sweep the dirt of discrimination and racism under the rug of “northwest niceness” and hope it goes away. Eventually that grimy pile will burgeon into a repugnant heap that will stifle or overshadow what makes institutions like Puget Sound a great place to learn and thrive.
We are more than just angry and funny and loud and side chick and hoe and background sound
We are more than just lazy and fetishized and pushed aside

We are vibrant and life
And beauty and smooth
We are beams that carry light
That shine bright in the darkness
We are dazzling
All things feminine and whimsical
And all shades of black and mahogany and gold
Marked with purity and a song

I used to think that words soft and delicate and bright and shine and whimsical were
words reserved for my white skinned sisters
That black women couldn't hold words like that down in their souls
I ate the poison they fed me
I drank it down until it made me hate me

But it didn't take long for the blinders to fall
to open my eyes to see the clear blue sky
to see the sea of white I was swimming in
the only girl with melanin
I choked up the poison and got a new view
And rose from the ashes and the fear that consumed me
I saw that black was beautiful and strong
That celebrating it was a worthy call

I closed my eyes and whispered words of forgiveness of hating what the creator created
In me In you
I cried and grieved over the years of detachment
Praying for reattachment
To love and to walk alongside my sisterhood with pride
To wear the burdens and struggled and sparkle and shine
To empower those to find their BLACK GIRL MAGIC and the beauty deep inside
“I am Me”
by Gloria Muhammad

“No such thing as a life that's better than yourz”

J Cole amplifies these words in my head

I often wonder about the word instead

Instead can sometimes symbolize the word regret
The word regret can be symbolic of the word instead

I could have...
But instead I did this
I should have...
But instead I did this...

Living life just for you
What a shallow way to orbit the planet

To live a life just for you
Is a shallow way to orbit the planet

How often do we think big?

Standardized lifestyle

Is so repetitive

So similar to everyone else
But why be everyone else?
When you can just be you
When you can stand up and say

“I am me”
But often society

Shackles the definition

of “I am me”

It's hard to be yourself
When living life doesn't seem free

When your life is a cost for every hour you work

Minimum wage
When questions about "What's in my water? What's in my food?"

Answers are filled with fluoride and GMO’s

So we are forced to consume foods of ingredients we can’t read

When tuition cost is exuberant
And you just graduated from high school eating lunch free
I wonder how I can be different
Not for the sake of being different
But for the sake of making a change

So I can scream
“I am me!”

So I can tear up the American Dream

That’s what MarShawn McCarrel wanted

I bet he just wanted to breathe
Wanted to breathe the fresh air
So that he could breathe from his lungs

And scream “I am me!”

They didn't want Eric Garner to say “I am me”

They didn't want him to live

So breath is cut off

Last words were “I can’t breathe”

And we’re still tied
Post traumatic slavery

For the sake of my survival

I want to breathe
So I can scream “I am me!”
LAURA NELSON

I ain’t the one talking right now. He is. At least right now. But he knows one thing that I want right now, and that’s respect. And he knows. He knows. And I’m gonna get it. I’m gonna get it all back. That’s what all y’all do. Take and take and then when someone tryna take it back y’all just shoot em and take what’s left.

Y’all took my son.

My man told me this was gonna be the Promised Land, he told me this was gonna be our time, our chance, this was gonna be the time when black people didn’t have to look over their shoulder, we were gonna be free he said, and I told him I ain’t ever heard such shit before and he told me that this was Canaan we were talking about, this is what Lincoln was tryna make before he got shot and I said the Republicans have got to your head, what sort of bullshit are you tryna pull, tryna get us out to Oklahoma, who do we know in Oklahoma, who we gonna run to when they try to kill us in Oklahoma, and he said I’m just tryna do what’s best for L.W., you ain’t ever gonna see him grow up here, you seen what they been doing to Negroes round here these days, do you want that for him?

Y’all took my son.

He was fourteen. Tall, and you know he was gonna be the type of boy that cause trouble just for being round. He was gonna ride all y’all down, get inna good school, be out and about round town.

And y’all took that away.

This is what they wrote about L.W.

(She takes out a sheriff report).

“Subject appeared to be 16, weighing 190 pounds, and rather yellow, ignorant, and ragged. Subject tackled Deputy Sheriff George Loney to the ground, after which subject’s mother was able to pull gun from Deputy Loney’s belt and proceed to shoot him several times. Other members of the community, including Cliff Martin, Claude Litteral, and Oscar Lane, subdued the subject and the subject’s mother, during which both the subject and the subject’s mother resisted, causing a number of injuries to the members of the deputy’s party, including a bullet wound to Martin’s leg, bite marks on Litteral’s hand from subduing subject’s mother, and a cracked rib to Lane from subduing subject.”
Y’all write about so easily, don’t you? Always tryna be “impersonal,” always tryna be “objective,” and y’all are the one’s writing the report. Now my son, my son is 14, he weigh 120 or something round there. Anybody who ever look at him know he ain’t nothing but a twig.

And when they were tryna subdue, they weren’t puttin us in no place to go free, they were laying hands on my son, and he made sure that they weren’t gonna do nothing.

Imma talk about my boy a bit. He one of them old babies now, born in the last century, so that everybody saying he gonna have that old blood in him. He a good kid, always making sure he talk straight to his elders, always getting out of the way for white folks when he walkin down the street. He know what he gotta do to stay alive.

Can you imagine him? Getting outta the way for white folk? Knowing that if he don’t look down, look away, look ahead, look anywhere but them, that they can beat his ass right there on the street. If he even give a white woman a look, some busted-ass, shit-smelling, puffed-up white men gonna come over and lay a hand on my baby, and the law is just gonna watch, or they gonna come over and beat him too, and if you think Imma let that happen, you wrong as fuck. Imma beat him myself to make sure no one else gonna put a hand on him, Imma make sure that if he ain’t scared as shit of white people, he scared as shit of me.

Sometime L.W. say he gon be a farmer like us, and I tell him, no, you gonna go to school and get educated, and then he tell me he gon be a doctor, and I tell him, go, but watch out for whites cause you know they gonna bust your head in or throw you out first chance they get, and then he say he don know what to do and I just hold him and tell him it gon be alright, it gon turn out alright, we gon get through this, and then he goes to bed.

You know how hard it is to live out there, with white people who don’t give a shit about you, who want to watch you burn, who want to watch you get outta the way for them, who wanna piece of you? You know what they call the ears they pull of a man they just burn? Souvenirs.

They always tryna make it harder and harder for us to live, you know? Like we just wanted a place to rest, you know what I’m sayin? And white people they always tryna take our shit, tryna stop us from having shit you know, the second you have something good, they rob you, they say you can’t have shit like this, but they don’t say it right to your face, they just light it up and then when the sheriff comes he says I didn’t see nothing and all the work you did, all the work you put into this shit, it’s like gone girl, it’s like you don’t have nothing no more, and when you try to accuse anybody, everybody like we didn’t see nothing and you got no way to live no more girl, and that’s what always happens, that’s what always happens.
All my man did was tryna feed us, you know, all he was doing was going out there and tryna make it, tryna keep us alive, and then the sheriff come in here, and he like, “Y’all been stealing from a framer right here,” and I’m like, “What, nuh-uh, what we doing is what we do and it’s our business and you got no right to be stepping into my home,” and he say, “I got every right to step into the house of any Negro son of a bitch and if you thinking about touching any of us I suggest you do not.”

And I’m like, “If this dude touches my boy I’m gonna kill him, you touch my boy at all I’m gonna make sure you don’t get home tonight, you gonna die tonight, so don’t even think about it. Don’t even.”

But that’s it, that’s the problem, the minute you try to resist these rules they just push back on you as hard as possible, try to double down on the jury that you have to enforce these rules, have to make sure that the distinctions are as clear as possible, cause if they aren’t, than everything would fall apart and they’d have no way of keeping us where we are.

If you make the rules, you control the way the game works, right? But you gotta make sure that the rules stay in place, otherwise somebody may change the rules and suddenly you don’t get to be in charge no more, it’s someone else, and now they can do whatever they want with you.

You tryna live? You gotta make sure you push back against those rules, cause otherwise they gonna box you in, and unless you gotta higher power than that, they gonna keep you in there good.

This is the thing about white people. They are so convinced of their superiority that they can do whatever they want and justify it. They will shoot you, they will take your house, they’ll take your children, they’ll take your job, they’ll burn your neighbors blacker than any folk has ever been, and they’ll say, “You deserved it, cause you ain’t us.”

How you gonna convince someone they caused you pain, if they can’t admit it? How you gonna show them their bad points?

You can see that they’re afraid, that they don’t think they’re safe, that they think all their shit’s gonna get stolen, that they entitled, all of them entitled, that they don’t want to get punished now, cause now they know, they know they done shit forever, and they don’t want to admit it, so they keep on criminalizing us, keep on saying we the ones insane, cause if it ever came up that we are people and we demand a reparation for what has happened, they have to admit they been wrong forever.

And what else would you have to admit? That you’re greedy, that you always think you’re right, that you break your promises, that you can only look after yourself, that you a child, that you don’t deserve what you have.
You gotta admit you don’t care, that you think everybody is worse than you, that you don’t know how to listen, that you don’t remember anything.

I still ain’t the one talking. But you’re listening, so I figure I gotta speak, don’t I?

Y’all always get us with resisting. “Stop resisting arrest, stop resisting us, you are going to be put down for resistance, do not resist us, you cannot resist us.” Y’all are always trying to make sure y’all got the power, that we’re wrong for resisting. Honey, I ain’t ever done anything but resist you, and you know it. I ain’t ever done anything but try to break when y’all say, “Stay like this, stay in place, do not move, do not do anything or else I will have to make sure you feel it.” When y’all say, “Stop resisting,” what you really mean is, “I am right, and there is nothing you can do about it.”

This is how it happens. The deputy comes into your house while you tryna make dinner. He says he looking for the meat your man stole to make sure you and L.W. were fed, cattle which some white men say is his, out of the hundred that he got, and he’s saying it’s theft. The deputy don’t care that you say there ain’t nothing here, he gon “make sure there is nothing that you’re hiding,” and then he start tearing up the house, breaking down your walls to see if you got something in there, tearing your mattress, breaking the cupboards that your man made with his own hands and which you ain’t ever gonna get back now.

Now L.W. seeing this, and he see you silent cause you know there ain’t nothing you can do right now that gon be good for you or your man, cause you know if you make any sort of move that deputy will shoot you both dead, and you making sure he quiet, you give him the eye that let him know if he try anything you will beat his ass, and he knows, so he stay quiet.

Until the deputy come over to you and say that he didn’t find nothing, and you say yes, sir and he say that he got a tip that there was something here and you say I don’t know why you got that tip, sir and he say what are you trying to hide and you say nothing, sir and he say what else have you got in this house and you say nothing, sir and he say why are you lying to me and you say I’m not, sir and he say well you say you got nothing but I’ve got a tip that says you do and you say I don’t know why you got that tip, sir and he say are you telling me my tip was wrong and you say nothing cause you know there nothing you can say right now that’ll be right,
and he say answer me
and you say I don’t know, sir
and he say are you telling me I’m wrong
and you say I don’t know, sir
and he say you don’t tell me that I’m wrong, not in this county, not a negro gonna tell me that I’m wrong
and then he slaps you

And that’s when L.W. can’t take no more and he stands up from the dinner table and runs at the deputy from behind and tackles him and they fall to the ground and L.W. start beating this deputy, telling him he got no right to slap his momma like that he got no right to call his momma that and now you know if you don’t act quick your son gonna die so you come down on the deputy and you quickly take his gun and then you don’t know how it happen but you shoot him in the back.

Bang. He gone.

Or maybe you not remembering right. Maybe you take his gun and you pull L.W. away from this deputy and he get up and he say give me back my gun and you say nothing and he say stop resisting and he lunge for you and then you shoot,

bang bang bang, and he gone.

Or now you know if you don’t act quick your son gonna die so you come down on the deputy and go for his gun, and when you get it he throws your son off and he start going for you, and L.W. goes back to try and grapple with the officer and now your son is fight a grown man and you can see that if you do nothing right now your son gonna die and so you shoot.

Bang. He gone.

And now you a black women with your man in jail and with a dead white deputy sheriff in your house. And you know it could be your son on the ground, and there’d be nothing left of you and your labor, and you wonder for a second about leaving with L.W. and leaving Oklahoma; there ain’t no salvation, there ain’t no milk or honey, there only a dead white guy and his blood pooling in your house, and they gonna say you resisted the law and you gonna pay, and you know nobody gonna listen to how he made this happen and you know if you left you could save yourself and your boy.

But your man still in jail. And you got nowhere to run.
And you know they coming. You can hear the shouts, they calling out they heard a shot, they heard a shot, who got shot? They coming to your house, and you know there’s no way of running.

And you know there’s nothing else you can do but resist. So that’s what you gonna do.
Distorting, Displacing, Discouraging
By Alonna Mitz
"Through My Dark Brown Eyes"

Despise, hated, rejected, miss-educated, lynched, kidnapped, raped, burned to pieces, killed, body parts used as trophies, shot down, enslaved!

America was never made for the black man and woman!

Now we ain't in physical slavery but mental slavery.

A mental slavery that makes us go crazy.

A mental slavery that makes us want to kill our black brotha and sista!

A mental slavery were we don't know who our ancestors, our original language, our culture, our God, our religion, no-thin.

We have been stripped from it like how our people would get lynched in trees and be beaten with blood oozing out of their backs!

America was never made for the black man and woman!

We have been deprived of who we are!

All the killings are still happening to us today!

Nothin has really changed, we still enslaved!!

They shooting us for no-thin!

Are we gonna let this keep happen!


These are a few of the innocent lives that have been lost by police brutality!

Facing the truth is the first step to real change!!!

Let's unite!

Justice Or Else!!!
“On A Screen in America”
by Gloria Muhammad

I woke up to screens
Screenshotting the 4th world war
Screenshotting genocide, sex, and greed
Screenshotting modern day lynchings
Screenshotting “I Can't Breathe”
Screenshotting no reparations and stolen land
Screenshotting a White 16 year old, killed 4, blame it on affluenza though
On a screen in America
I see my face quite often
Often
On the ground
Gasping and grasping
For air
For clean water unlike Flint
For opportunity
For jobs
For education
For health care
For food
For justice
In the hands of the modern KKK
Blue suits and badges
I'm stuck
Lifeless

"Message to my people"
by Gloria Muhammad

Society sees you as a number
But I see you as glory
More glorious beyond anything this world could give me
The quintessence of my love
The ones that I'm fighting for
The quintessence of my strength
The ones who I'm striving for
The beauty in the bad
The faith in the sad
The comfort in the sandy storms
For the freedom we've never had
You are the ones who I'm fighting for
My people
"Mm, how do I put this?  
It’s not easy being the only one."
“Being Black”
By Gloria Muhammad

“My mama always told me, that if you can’t find something to live for, you best find something to die for.” – Tupac Shakur

Being Black has given me vigor to live
And define my own path
Since I have more obstacles
Than White America

Vigor to fight for meaningful things
Such as
Freedom, Justice, and Equality
Gives you knowledge of what it means to struggle

So your character is built
Wanting to make a change
You strive to use your resources and pull others up too

It’s soul music for the pain
Rock
Funk
Rap
And jazz
Every genre of Hip Hop
To Hip Hop bands

Culture and Lineage
Of Builders
Freedom Fighters
Inventors

Folks that lived bigger than the word “I”
Too much courage for people to grasp or understand
Where we get it from

From Lauryn Hill’s “how you gon’ win when you ain’t right within”
To Beyonce’s Formation
To Kendrick’s The Blacker the Berry
“I’m black as the moon, heritage of a small village”

Our creativity
To create the world we desire
To live in
Breathe in
Stand in
To prosper and thrive
For the future generations
Was I Called Out?: Reflective Thoughts on Student Voice and Justice Driven Practice
By Czarina Ramsay (written Spring 2014)

It has been a challenging semester for issues of inclusivity within our community. Over the last two months I have had more concerns raised, side conversations, and follow up conversations on the experience of race, sexual orientation, and freedom of speech on this campus than ever before. The stories shared have been candid, painful, and filled with questions about our institutional capacity to be socially just on a personal level. I end the year more exhausted than most, primarily due the energy I have used to assist our students, particularly those from historically marginalized and disenfranchised communities; in navigating their time at Puget Sound.

Our students have presented their narratives in very passionate and heartfelt ways using mediums such as the campus newspaper, blogs, social media, and speak out to highlight their frustrations and demands to access the kind of education they are paying for. A few tangible examples of these actions include student participation in local protests against the Northwest Detention Center, sharing of personal trauma with sexual violence during the Take Back the Night, and the Facebook campaign to ask your professor if they voted yes on the KNOW diversity proposal. These testaments from our students have been raw and unapologetic.

Although the sight of students speaking their truth excitements me personally, frankly as an administrator it has freaked me out. They have caught me off guard with their honesty and they have not been nice about it, which for a place like Puget Sound, can be uncomfortable given the constructed precision we placed into the presentation of our campus both internally and externally. I even bought a book about trauma stewardship as the stress of managing my own reactions while supporting the feelings of our students have taken more emotional toll on me this season than before. I searched for answers while supporting students who have vocalized why they cannot wait to leave a place where they regularly feel judged by their looks, beliefs, and self-expressions; indicating feelings of marginality and tokenism in and out of the classroom. As an alumna and woman of color who has had a relationship with this campus upon my arrival in 1998, these encounters with stereotypes and prejudices feels all too familiar.

I find myself dumbfounded that I have managed to make it to the end of this semester, let alone make it here since ‘98. The truth is my care for this place is deep. Puget Sound is where I became critical, independent, and courageous. I knew I could do anything once I completed my degree here. And I did, which ultimately let me to return to my alumna matter to serve as the Director for Intercultural Engagement with the hopes of constructing a more intentional climate of support for those most marginalized by the institution of higher education. I did this work while at the University of Alaska Anchorage, the University of Vermont, Seattle University, and
now at Puget Sound. Following multiple professional experiences since my time as a student, I
feel more confident of our ability to achieve success as a community in building an inclusive
environment for our students to learn and grow. However, my confidence has been rattled as I
have witnessed far too many opportunities for authentic collaboration hindered when my
colleagues across campus further perpetuate oppressive structures by questioning the validity
of the narratives of trauma and disappointment shared by our students, arguing institutional
intention when asked to shift for more current and justice based practices, and disbelief that
someone in our community would be so bold to call anyone out directly. It sucks to watch,
listen to, and be a part of.

I share my thoughts in this format not to make anyone feel bad or disempowered for their
contributions to our community. As I said previously, I believe in us, our students, and the kind
of education we provide - I am a strong example and product of this. However, I feel the need
to challenge us to think collectively about the honesty our students have gifted us through their
actions this semester and ask this question: Have we heard what they have told us? Through
quantitative and qualitative institutional assessments such as the National Survey of Student
Engagement, freshmen and senior surveys, and the 2013 campus climate survey our students
have told us we are not meeting their expectations when it comes to multiculturalism. They
have highlighted dissatisfaction with their experience both curricularly and cocurricularly. They
have noticed the fragmented partnerships across campus and shared that what they thought
the exposure they would get as students did not happen both structurally or socially. There are
times I feel the burden of this feedback. As a one full time staffed department, I know I cannot
do this work alone nor should I. We know that change and/or improvement cannot happen
with the effort of one person alone. Some of my closest campus partners in academic affairs
and student affairs also feel the challenge of meeting multiple needs and demands with little
resources to go around. I know this be true specifically for the work of my colleagues Michael
Benitez, Dave Wright, and Amy Ryken.

It is my hope this reflection can be a catalyst for us a community of leaders to ask ourselves
honestly if we have heard what our students told us this semester and how can we collectively
work together to support them on an both individual and group level. The power of narrative is
humbling and through each moment that a student has shared their lived experience for me
has been eye opening and vulnerable. When asked by others what makes Puget Sound so
special I always respond that this campus is based in relationships. People work here and
students choose to study here because connections matter. We have heard a clear message in
multiple formats from our students that connection to this place is at risk, particularly through
a multicultural lens. I challenge us to start responding together.
The Experience:
By Baiyinnah Muhammad

Every single day!
Every single day!
I wake up to go to school.
I wake up to loneliness, sadness, low self-esteem, despair.
Oh why, oh why do I feel this way!
I've been bullied!
In fifth grade it all started...
I've been bullied where no one would really sit next to me at lunch, even when I asked them to.
I've been bullied where students looked at me, like I was nothing.
I wonder why, oh I wonder...
Was it because of my thick lips, gapped teeth, broad nose, wide eyes, curly hair or my chubby face.
Was it because I am a black girl.
Was it because I wasn't good at math or reading at that time.
Or I wonder was it because I didn't love myself enough to stand up for myself.
School was so hard for me!
School was so hard for me!
But I learned...
I learned a lesson...
A lesson that taught me to be myself and to listen to the inside voice.
In school I wasn't being myself... I didn't use my inside voice... Today I am a different soul.
Repeat after me!
I am done with my old self and moved on to the present of time...
I've learned to use my inside voice within if something does not feel or seem right!
Dear students if you ever been bullied and want to take a stand please do it!
Don't ever let no one stop you from using your bravery and courage you possess.
You are the essence of the world!
Young queens and kings you were created by God to be victorious.
I am here to tell you, don't let no one, tell you any different. You were born to go against all stereotypes!
Repeat after me!
I am born to go against all stereotypes!
To achieve doesn't mean you have to be a soccer player, basketball player, rapper, singer!
I don't have anything against you if you want to do those things!
But let me tell you that you can think outside the box!
Repeat after me!
Be a doctor, dentist, pilot, chemist, mathematician, engineer, teacher, architect!
Dream about it and be about it!
Because I believe you can do it!
But do you believe you can do it?
I Am Afraid.

20 June 2015

For the first time in my life, I am afraid. For the first time in my life I am truly and utterly terrified of the fact that I am black. That I look black. That people see me as an African-American or a black individual or even black enough.

I am afraid. I am afraid. It’s astonishing that it took me until now to have a little more than the typical dose of "black concern" settle into my being. And hopefully it is obvious that this is not the concern about blacks but rather the concern over being black.

I am afraid. I am afraid of the color of my skin. I am in tears reading these words back to myself in my head because I have never, in my short nineteen years, felt this way until now. For some reason it never really occurred to me that looking the way I do, carrying the burden of society's stereotypes on my non-offending shoulders puts my life at risk.

Just this evening I was driving one of my best friends, a harmless-appearing Caucasian girl, to the Park and Ride less than a mile from my home, and a thought hit me: Does my mother worry that she'll never see me alive again every time I walk out the door? Is the sporadic hesitation in her voice when I ask to go somewhere because of that? Does she get upset when I don't communicate to her that I'm home when I stumble in after dark, hoping not to wake her, because of that?

My heart stopped. And sank. And my eyes felt heavy with tears in that split second. And I could not breathe. I wanted more than anything to tell my friend what I was thinking but it was heavy subject matter that I didn't want to weigh on her precious overworked heart. I wanted to spare her the dark glimpse into the everyday life of African-Americans and blacks.

Since that split second this evening, I can't shake this feeling. I can't seem to take deep enough breaths.

I am afraid. I am afraid. I cannot, by any means, call myself a saint but I strive every day to make the lives of others better because that in itself also improves my life. I've said things that have hurt others. I've broken hearts. I've called names. And I've pointed fingers. But so have you. If not all of those things, some of those things.

Why does the overabundance of melanin in my skin turn my actions in crimes? Why does it turn my words into insults? Why does it cause my feelings to be irrelevant? Why does it make my life disposable??

I am afraid. I am afraid. I am truly and utterly terrified that I have to think this and write this, that this is even a burden on my life.

I am afraid, I am so afraid.
By Gabe Newman

The photograph was shot by myself and I interviewed the person pictured for Humans of Puget Sound. They did not include their name.

“I was at the bar around the corner. There was a jukebox where you put a dollar in and you get the music. I put the music on – they had someone Nelson. It’s Friday. I didn’t want to hear that. I’m 25 -- I wanted to shake my ass, so I changed the music and this guy yelled “who goddamn put that jungle music on?!” After a year and a half of being out here... I haven’t even experienced this much racism. It’s appalling because they broadcast here as free and pro-LGBT, pro-equality, but the underlying issue isn’t really being addressed. It’s disappointing. I grew as a person here, but everything isn’t really what you think it is. The grass isn’t always greener on the other side.”
Dandelions on This School’s Grass

I fkn hate myself
No sense of belonging
Everyone looks completely different from me
I’m tall and shit
I move all different
Everyone else dances and moves ways I don’t know how to.

Everyone around me is green as hell
And I’m just chillin with my yellowass body
I’m stuck here
Can't even escape
I can escape if I sleep
Excuse me, can I lie down here for couple minutes?

Felt so much warmer
So much safer
I did not want to get up
I blended in with the others
Finally, I look like them
But why, why am I so different?

Can’t eat anything down here
I got no sunlight with all these shadows
I do not want to get up there again
Where I know, I’m constantly reminded
I’m fkn different from everyone else
I could slowly decay with them around me here.

*****

I feel different...
Why, how did I get up here?
Put me down, please
I don’t need to be reminded again..
I hate myself
Get me the fuck out of here

“I love dandelions!
I’m going to go make a wish”
What.
Pulled without any goodbye’s
Okay.
Escape
Lifted
Forced, but a gentle breeze came my direction
I was lifted
Parts of myself started to detach
Floating.
“I can move without my roots... I am loved”

Some project seeds
Some receive wishes

Dear UPS
By Benita Ki

My memories of you as you received me
and how you perceived me
told me more about you
than those welcome pamphlets and campus tours
could ever sufficiently describe.
The predictable rhythm of probing ignorance:
“What are you?”
“Where are you from...no, where are you really from?”
Alien. Or human.
Portland. Or my mother.
Oh, you don’t believe me? Sorry. You tell me.
“What’s your religion?”
“Damn. I thought you’d be Buddhist or something cool like that.”
Oh sorry. Turns out I ain’t that cool.

I felt out of place
not only because I am not white
but because I am not rich.
Your wealth oozes from your
REI tents, climbing shoes, and chacos,
Patagonia and Arcteryx shit
Slacklines and Subarus
DLSRs and sets of skis.
Hiding behind dorm rooms and meal plans
doesn’t actually hide your privilege
or help you pass as middle class.
It just makes me feel hyper aware of my own lack.
There was an inside crew and I didn’t even know about it
let alone get the invite.
When a tsunami hit southeast Asia in 2007
and I hear of TP-ers mocking the deaths with
“ching chong’s” interspersed with hysterical screaming,
I wondered if fitting in or “coming home”
(as Ron Thom so regularly reminded us)
was ever really an option.
Or maybe an elusive illusion
for someone who constantly felt dumb
in classes later looking up the big words people used
and asking what the hell they meant
and why a simpler word wouldn’t suffice.
School was an intellectual race to prove
your self-perceived sense of educated and liberal-ness
yet upon running up against and into my experiences
— “dim sum? sounds weird.”
“wait, you’re fucking religious!?”
“your parents are from Hong Kong? That’s so cool. Wait where is that?” —
the notion of liberalism proves really only lip service.

The pull was strong to be homogenous
in thought, ideology, and creed
and while that in theory sounds affirming and nice
our very backgrounds, class, race, culture, and faith
tell a story that doesn’t paint the world into
black and white
conservative and liberal
educated and ignorant.
If I learned anything in my time with you
each victory was met with equal pain,
feeling even now like I have to defend and not shame
the good that I discovered but equally hold the tension
interpreting from teachers who didn’t look or talk like me
commiserating with peers who cared not to understand
redefining my education as learning to think
critique
reconstruct
create
reimagine
what it means to be me.
I doubt you intended for that to come about.
For what it’s worth, I suppose I did learn plenty, inadvertently
more importantly about who, independent of you, I’m supposed to be.
New Moon in Aries
By Julia Lin

“Prelude, Passages, and Perspectives”
-to challenge you,
-to build connection,
-to develop your sense of comfort.

“40 Colleges That Change Lives”

“Welcome Home.”

Inclusion, recognition, and competence -- these are the themes that we sell, themes that people respond well to, the very same themes that sold me. Here at Puget Sound, we have moved beyond “diversity”. No, we are far more progressive than that. We are enlightened.

I always find myself having a difficult time expressing my lifelong narrative, as its complexities are as complex as complex gets. Why I struggle: I cannot deny the innumerable counts of generosity that I've received in my time here -- what could be considered once foreign professors and peers are now some of the most central people in my life today. They remind me why I do the things I do, why I fight the battles that need to be fought. In a grossly understated nutshell, they keep me sane.

I could talk for days about what I've gained, but I do enough of that on my tours. Let's talk about what I've lost:

The myriad of cultures in my neighborhood where I grew up. The O family’s phở gà. Papa Tolai’s greetings of talofa and homemade panikeke. Tell me the difference between Tongan and Samoan. Ate Anna’s sisig and pancit, the annual family gatherings where we pack the balikbayan box to ship overseas. You think you know filipino culture because you know what lumpia is? Think again. Screaming for our homies dancing with Loco Bloco at Carnaval and finishing out the night with El Salvadoran tamales. Autumn Moon Festivals (中秋節: zung1 cau1 zit3) where my Dad would obsess over the red bean and lotus paste mooncakes being sold. Worst of all, my favorite time of the year: Chinese New Year (農曆新年: nung4 lik6 san1 nin4). No lai see for me this year. Sorry Dad, I won't be able to bai sun and pour rice wine for the gods.

That's not pinyin you're reading. It's jyutpin. I'm not just Asian. I'm Cantonese.
The Panel

Their small bodies filed into the room. They took their seats. Their silence was deafening.

Do we tell them?

First Question:

What is your name? Where are you from? What year are you?


How do we say it? Will they pick up on it?

Second Question:

What is your major and/or minor? Why?


I don’t think they’ll get it... Maybe they’re too young? I don’t know!

Third Question:

If you need help here on campus, where can you go?

Therapy is okay. Take care of yourself. Take time for yourself. The CWLT. Professors. Take time for yourself. Exercise. Therapy is not a bad thing.

We’re running out of time. What do I do??

Their Questions:

Is there a design program? What is hard to manage? Do you have passing periods? What sports are there? Is it harder to get into college or to be in college?

How do we tell them!? Should... I?

The Final Question:

What is the best and worst thing about going to school here?

Silence.

Bullshit.

Silence.

Bullshit.

Silence...

“It’s difficult being surrounded by a bunch of rich white people.”

HE SAID IT. HE TOLD THEM.

Their silence deteriorates into gasps and giggles.

Do they get it??

They settle. They finally heard us.

But do they understand?
Untitled
By Yuki Umeda

Straight up clowning, pretty ironic
Just thinking about it makes me wanna vomit

Tacoma being one of the most diverse cities
But then, we got this fakeass university

Caring about how we look more than how we function
Just funneled funds into the sub and shit’s already leakin’

But let’s first acknowledge
Group of white people are talking about racial/ethnic issues

We spreading some diversity shit on this campus apparently
ok, let’s go get homies who’re colored phenotypically

From mommies and daddies
Givin’ grown men an allowance
They be droppin’ cash money like they buying a Mercedes

Maybe even enough for that cool whip, C-Sixty-Threes, with some frostings
For just a high school diploma, fosho, let’s invite them to “Tacoma”

But let’s first acknowledge
Group of white people are talking about racial/ethnic issues

I’m just saying what I’m thinking
That’s all I’m doing

This school is so white people think I’m from the ghetto
Because I speak the way I speak
They’ll never know how far I’ll get though

I wonder how people would be feeling
If they headed a mile away from the school or something

If they got out of this privileged ass neighborhood
Down by the waters
See the Tacoma, born and raised
Heaven’s sons and daughters
This school is smart in how they collect dough
Reaching out to the ones loaded, and frontin to the poor

While you at it,
Tell the prospective students who be visiting our campus
to pick up some sunglasses
to shield their eyes cuz of how white this place is

Do them a favor if they colored,
   let them chill and explore
And to let them experience the campus life,
   maybe leave them in our book store

“You’ll like Tacoma”
   Yeh, with all its oppression,
   I’ll like this white ass Tacoma
   And prolly end up with some glaucoma
We Need To Stick Together
By Alonna Mitz

Feeling alone.
Surrounded
Searching for others like me. Where you at?

Here! We’re here!
Where?
Here.
We have to stick together.
"To my stolen sisters"
by Baiyinnah Muhammad

Beauty starts in the heart but has been despise right from the start.
Dear sister, being beautiful isn't just about your physical but your mental...
America got us brainwashed thinking having a good body is the ultimate goal to having true beauty.

America is wrong!

What happened to building your mind to get some knowledge!
"A nation can rise no higher than its woman"-That's what Minister Farrakhan said!

We have been raped of who we are!

Society say you got to be a model, dancer or stripper...
Hold up I don't got nothin against what you do it's your life but, aren't we bigger than that...

We are original queens from our ancestors from Africa!

Please tell me!!!
Please...Tell...Me!!!
What happen to being engineers, pilots, nurses, doctors, chemist, fashion designer, business woman!

America got us mixed up in the head!

Beauty is having faith that you can be greater than these stereotypes of black woman...
To my stolen sisters it's our time to clean up our minds and beautify our souls within so we don't be brainwashed again...

It's our time Queens to rise higher, higher, higher than the sky!!!
Searching For Home  
By Nakisha Renée Jones

I wait for you with no answer  
You said you’d call me back some time ago  
No apologies for your disaster  
Instead you offered me an exit back home.

As though to leave is easier than to address the problems between us  
Your willful silence distorts the truth.  
Just because you were born a sinner  
Does not mean you need to die one, too.  
You are too caught up in your lies to realize  
that you left me waiting on the sidelines

I wait for you with no answer  
You said you’d call me back some time ago

I wait for your promise of justice and freedom.  
The one my great-great grandfather believed in.  
But when I called you out 300 years ago for cheatin’  
You said you’d call me back when you finished building your nation
Declaration  
of Independence  
1776
Emancipation  
Proclamation  
1863
You have been stringing me along for centuries  
Abusing my body and killing me softly.  
It is 2016 and still no apology for slavery.

No apologies for your disaster  
Instead you offered me an exit back home.

As the Back to Africa movement heightened  
You wanted to ship me and my ancestors  
Back to the land you stole us from.  
No care package, still shackled.  
We carry new forms of chains.  
Double consciousness, the unspeakable mental warfare.
I wait for you with no answer
You said you’d call me back some time ago
No apologies for your disaster
Instead you offered me an exit back home.
And I say,
“Mi nuh waan guh.”

Mi nuh waan guh back to mi motherland Africa
Where the sun shines and the flowers grow.
I’m trying to follow down the path of my family
And they’ve come to call America home.

I thought you would stay true to your promise
But you continue to profit off our blood, our sweat and our children.
Prison to pipeline
No resolution for this disillusionment called racism.
It has been too deeply engrained in you, America.
You are a filthy, cheating, liar
Who cannot own up to its own stench.

I wait for you with no answer
You said you’d call me back some time ago
No apologies for your disaster
Instead you offered me an exit back home.
And now I say,
“Mi nuh waan stay.”

Mi nuh waan stay in this place called America
‘Cause your ignorance has never been bliss.
My kindred are staying here dying
And we can’t find an answer to this?
Mi nuh waan stay in this place called America
‘Cause the darkness chills my bones.
While I’m standing on the blood of the innocent
I have never found this land to be home.

Mi waah guh back to mi moderland Africa
Weh de sun shines an de flowas grow.
Mi waah guh back to mi moderland Africa
Cah mi am still searching fah mi home.