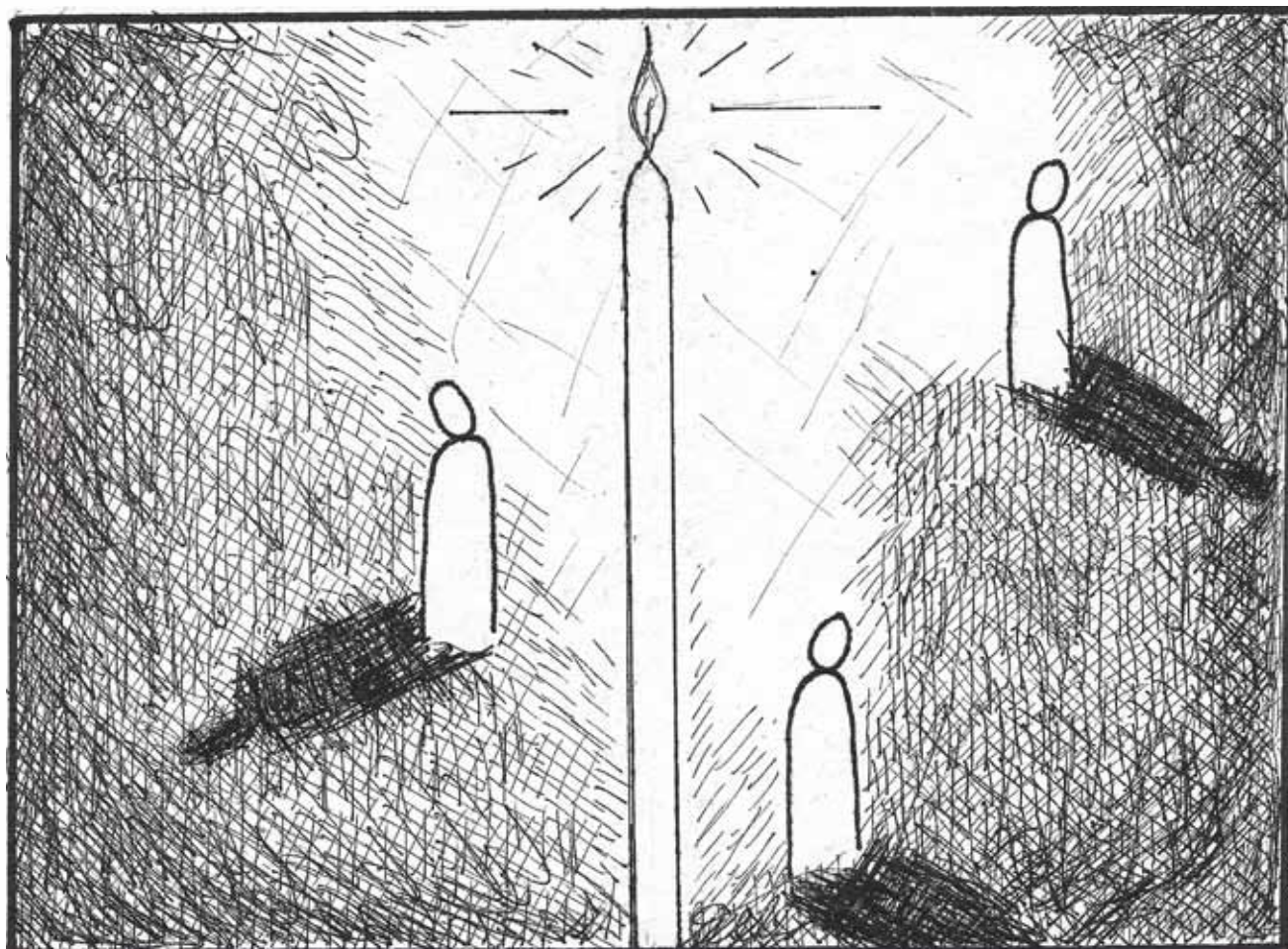


For A 2018 Better World



POEMS **BY** DRAWINGS ON
PEACE **BY** JUSTICE **BY**
Greater Cincinnati Artists

**“For a Better World”
2018**

Poems and Drawings
on
Peace and Justice

by
Greater Cincinnati Artists

Editor:
Saad Ghosn

“Being at the service of dialogue and peace also means being truly determined to minimize and, in the long term, to end the many armed conflicts throughout our world. Here we have to ask ourselves: Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society? Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade.”

Pope Francis

“Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.”

Frederick Douglass

Foreword

“Poetry is born in the caverns of the human heart, pausing before that which yearns. Poetry can contribute to social justice when it moves others’ hearts, wakes people up to the world around them, stirs the moral imagination, or kindles the embers of hope.” writes Jean Stokan, poet and Director of the Justice Team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in Washington, DC.

In this 15th edition of “For a Better World” seventy three poets and thirty seven visual artists, use their voice and their artistic power to contribute to social justice, to combat darkness, violence and evil, and to spread instead love, peace and justice that they would like to see prevail. They speak for a world after their heart and values, a world of hope, of fraternity and unity. Of all ages and backgrounds, their art and talent state their concerns and affirm their beliefs and values. By doing so, they also strengthen each other’s diverse voices and give life to their hopes and dreams.

In a world still prey to injustice and wars, these artists weep for the dead, revolt for the oppressed, denounce unjust societal wrongs, advocate for the poor, the homeless, and the neglected, reject violence and its consequences, fight for the battered environment. They also challenge the prevailing societal values of materialism, consumerism and domination and speak for a change in values towards love, compassion and forgiveness. They paint a beautiful world, a world of diversity and equality, where peace is based on truth, justice, and kindness. With their lucid song, these artists also confront the evil in this world and promise to stand up for the fight. Their song is an appeal to each of us to join in and make a change; it seeks to eliminate our isolation and loneliness and invites us to hold hands and share in the same well of strength and energy for a better world.

To every participating poet and visual artist, and to everyone who directly or indirectly joined in the making of this book and in the spread of its message, my heartfelt thanks and gratitude. My appreciation also goes to Jerry Judge, Kamal Kimball and Annette Januzzi Wick who kindly reviewed all the submitted poems and provided their editorial advice.

For a better world, always, a world of love, peace and justice.

Saad Ghosn
Book editor and organizer

May 2018

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POEMS:

ELLEN AUSTIN-LI

Ellen Austin-Li is a poet and freelance writer who lives in Cincinnati, Ohio. After dedicating 18 years to the nursing profession, she is now committed to writing poetry and prose. Ellen's life of service, combined with her colorful experiences, informs her art. An award-winning poet, she has been published in the LA Writers Tribe Review, The Maine Review, Mothers Always Write, the Poet Laureate of Cincinnati's webpage, The Poets' Craft, and in the annual Cincinnati's poetry anthology, *For a Better World* (2012-2016). Ellen is an active participant at *Women Writing for (a) Change* in Cincinnati.

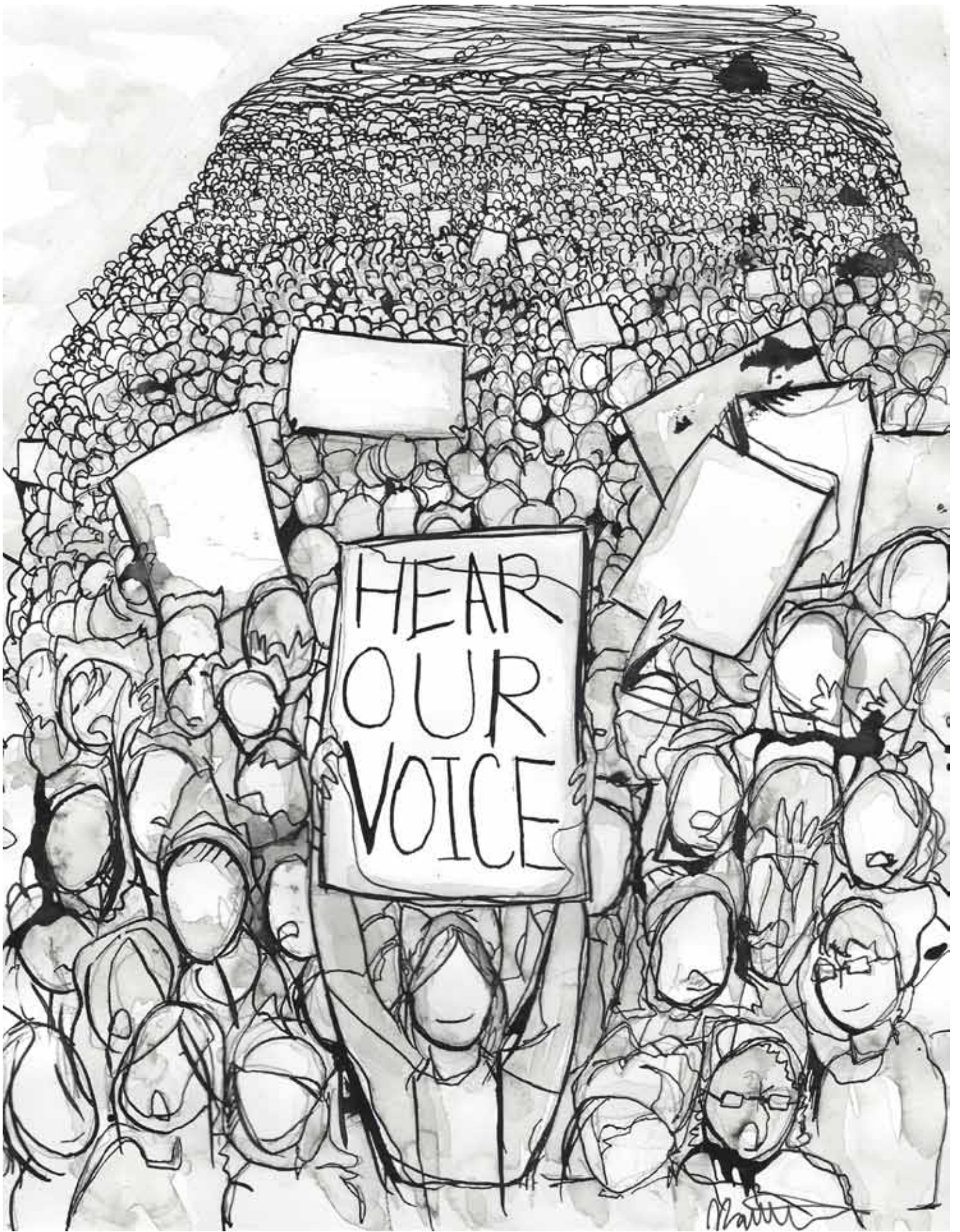
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DRAWING:

MADELEINE WITTE

Maddie Witte is an artist from Cincinnati, Ohio, currently working towards a Masters in Fine Art at the University of Cincinnati's DAAP program. Maddie received a BFA in Fine Art from Capital University.

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The Comfort of Millions

On the one year anniversary
of the night before the Women's March in D.C.,
I remembered how I went to bed pondering possibilities
of the twenty-four hours ahead, enthusiastic
to be one voice added to many — maybe
a million women would descend
on the nation's capital. My "Hear Our Voice" poster,
mounted on foam board, Metro pass, and water bottle
nestled in its new sling, waited
by the door, ready to board the bus.

Twenty-four hours later found me
six hundred miles northeast, not southeast in D.C.
My bus seat empty, instead
I connected flights to Upstate New York, where
family was gathering,
mobilized by the senseless loss
of my sister's son in a car accident.

I felt frozen, automatic, as
I hustled between flights. I have little
memory of how I got home, which airline
I flew, or what terminal I was in
when I crouched down against a wall
to phone my college-aged son, competing
with overhead announcements, and told him
of his cousin's death.

The next day, the TV was on
in the background while brothers
and sisters congregated on couches.
Numbness began to thaw
as I saw split screen scenes of women
in multiple cities, hundreds of thousands
of them, streaming out of buses, up subway steps,
pouring into streets, down avenues, carrying
protest signs, wearing pink pussy hats.
They looked like an army of ants
invading, or like liquid spilled
in slow motion, spreading everywhere,
unstoppable.

I swallowed, throat thick,
eyes swimming, as I watched
the united power of women unfold
before me. These were my people.

They carried me on their collective
shoulders; my sorrow body-surfed
the crowd, lifted overhead, if only
for just those moments
on one of the darkest days.

This year, I joined
the Women's March in Cincinnati,
a voice among many, grateful
to be in the intimacy of thousands. Though
this protest is forever entwined
with my nephew's loss, I held my sign high;
I walked arm-in-arm
with the millions of women
who held me the year before.

Postcard Protest

We gathered in a circle,
a quilting bee of sorts,
stitching words of protest
in ink, our pens the needles
we worked in and out
of fabric, our joint project
essential - a blanket
of purpose to pull-up
over helplessness, a comforter
to cover injustice.

The patchwork postcards
scattered atop the wooden
table grew, fueled by tea
and conversation, each stamped
with seashell postage meant
for vacations to the shore, now
repurposed with notes to
senators and congressmen, saying
We are here,
we are not going away.

Bombogenesis

We've all learned
a new term
for a mid-latitude cyclone,
when arctic air collides
with relatively warm air
massed over the Atlantic;
the Eastern seaboard braced
for bombogenesis, for winds
to lacerate the coastline.

Another bomb cyclone
swirls in Washington, only one

bombastic push to launch
cataclysm. Our collective
breath is sucked-out
by the rapid drop
in atmospheric pressure,
as one hot-headed hedonist
faces-off against an icy ideologue.

We are one tweet closer
to apocalypse.

We seem as powerless
to stop the genesis
of nuclear war
as we are to turn back
the vortex churning
over the ocean.
We can only wait, hope
for survival — for the storm
to change direction
and be blown-out to sea.

POEMS:

MARC BASKIND

Marc Baskind, born in Cincinnati and raised in Indiana, now lives in Northern Kentucky. He graduated from Washington University and Indiana University. Marc is a retired faculty member from Cincinnati State Technical & Community College, where he ended his career teaching computer classes. He always wrote poetry.

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DIANA BECKET

Diana Becket was born in Manchester, England and lived for ten years in The Netherlands before moving to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1989. She began writing poetry when she retired from the University of Cincinnati where she taught Composition courses.

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DRAWING:

SUZANNA TERRILL

Suzanna Terrill is an artist and Gallery Manager of the 124 West Pike Street Gallery. She recently relocated to Cincinnati and was living before in Townsend, TN, painting, and bringing artists together as one of the Founding Member of the Townsend Artisan Guild, now in its' eleventh year. Drawing, painting and printmaking, have always been Suzanna's way to experience and react to the world around her.

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AP Lindcut

"MASS MESS"

Suzanna Terrill

Refugee

(by *Marc Baskind*)

Refuse the refuge
Gee, how can we
Not see the need
to care for thee?

We all come from refugees
Cross the border or overseas
My family's from Russia
Yours from Ireland, Mexico, Germany

How can we not see
It could be you, it could be me
Starving people
Just trying to be

Searching for peace and enough to eat
A place just to have a seat
A chance for prosperity
To live life as it could be

Truth be known, we're all refugees
Life is a search of the unknown seas
Who has the answers
Who has the keys?

Let's ask the refugees

Knock at Our Door

(by *Diana Becket*)

I found out where to search
the website to know the rights
under the shifting change of
laws for people without the
documents that allow them to
stay in the only land they know.

If I'm stopped outside, I must:
be calm, keep silent, and not run.
If there's a knock on the door,

we don't need to open to ICE*
officials; they cannot arrest us
without a judge's warrant.

I've always lived with arrest-fear
from my early memories of our
first home just inside the border.
But now the net is all around us,
length of time here unimportant;
my parents are undocumented.

They both work sixty hours, heads
down and focus on a way for our
family to survive. It's the troubled
shell of peace I know, but their
speech betrays us to strangers
as temporary and poised to go.

I watch my teacher's eyes readjust
and try to piece my father's broken
word fragments. Parents are the
ones I love, yet the ball of pain
because they can't relate is always
with me: a lump in my soul.

From the beginning, school was the
door for sorting words, a way to
understand my life. Now they watch
from the safety of their homeroom.
Teachers no longer expect I'll finish
tasks and complete what I must do.

On the website we're told to find
a qualified guardian who is able,
if my parents are taken, to give me
a place to go. We do not know who
is legal and daren't ask. We can't
reveal our illegal right to live.

We wait for a dark shape at our door.
We will not move but watch to see if
there's an envelope pushed inside.
My father will reach for the letter.
We'll first check the signature and
if our names are there in full.

*ICE = Immigration and Customs Enforcement

Crossing the Water

(by Diana Becket)

Families wait at the office on the quay side,
trapped by the endless flow of foreign sounds
from those who do not pause for questions.
Children watch exhausted parents grasp
at words and wrestle to understand.
Worn people avoid the eyes of young lives
they've failed. Authority faces behind the desk
distrust those who ask to come to a safe haven
away from the bombs, the piles of rubble,
rotting corpses, and lines that wait for no food.

They can't go back over the miles of dark water
and face again the treachery of the ocean currents
that have smashed lives: a small boy lies
in his red anorak washed up on a nearby shore.

Elegy for CHIP*

(by Diana Becket)

I brought my granddaughter
for her vaccine shot today. This
may be our final visit to the office
as CHIP may no longer survive.

My daughter stretches her life
in part time jobs to meet the bills.
At just above the poverty line,
she has no other benefits.

The child on my knee is healthy
and touches a chemo-bald boy
with no energy to smile. He'll
die without the care he needs.

Pregnant mothers will not know
if their babies are strong, as
letters that warn CHIP may end
are ready to be mailed.

*CHIP = Children's Health Insurance Program

POEMS:

AMY BAUER

Amy Bauer is a Creative Writing graduate from the University of Cincinnati. She writes poetry, hybrid forms, literary fiction and non- short prose. Amy is working on a collection of queer retellings and her first screenplay.

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RICHARD L. WESTHEIMER

Dick Westheimer lives and gardens and writes with his wife, Debbie. In his spare moments, when not running or playing bluegrass with his neighbors or visiting with his friends, children, and grandchild, he attends to his day job and to devoting his time to local organizations. Currently those include MORTAR, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, and the Greater Cincinnati Energy Alliance, whose board he chairs.

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DRAWING:

TERESA KOESTER

Teresa Koester, a Louisville-based artist, teaches art at Louisville Collegiate School. She is a passionate advocate for social justice and engages her students in art that challenges and ignites the viewer. Teresa co-founded Spetra, a collaborative light artistry group that finds uses for old overhead projectors. She loves live performative light projection and has worked as such with many organizations, including KMAC Museum, LVA (Louisville Visual Art) and the Louisville Ballet. Teresa spends her summers with family in England.

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dating to a time before his time.

Now you know, he says:

The mask is off.

Oh. I think. I know this. I knew this. My shame is –
now I can see us gringos more as the people of this hillside
have – forever. For all time we have
shouldered into this world –
much like the conquistadores

who severed Zapotec hands and made Zapotec
gold theirs. Our trade treaties have ripped
at their hearts – made native lands our land,
made their sacred seed our food and our seed
a plague.

We suck men from their villages to cheapen
our food. We heap treasure upon their warlords,
their police, their politicians who drive those
with the deepest roots – those old ones
who built the temples and worked the dirt
with sticks and fishes and invented corn
bred beans and squash and cultivated cacao –
it is our words, our money, our ways, our greed
that drives their children from their common lands
and into factories – the places shaping the stuff
of our material world.

We have wrecked our way into their way, made them
to dream
our covetous dreams.

We pacify our own poor with what
produce from these people
we have stolen.

Gustavo and I wander back the stone path, by the milpa:
ejote creepers draped on ragged maize – both shading
twining squash vines. As we near the house, Gustavo
turns and speaks:

Your people have always come smiling
but beneath those smiles we see
the teeth of the conqueror.

Your Mr. Trump's teeth are no different from the others.
He just bares them in a snarl
instead of a smile.

POEMS:

PHEBE (KAREN) BEISER

Phebe (Karen) Beiser is a poet, retired librarian and aspiring Buddha. Her book collaboration with a woman in New Delhi about their different, yet similar, lives as women writers will be published by Hay House India this spring.

Phebe teaches at *Women Writing for (a) Change*.

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Laurie Lambert

Laurie Lambert is the mother of adult triplets and a retired research scientist. Her family home is a 50 acre paradise on Todd's Fork of the Little Miami River. Laurie is a V-Day activist, labyrinth enthusiast, and certified facilitator at Women Writing for (a) Change in Cincinnati. Her first chapbook *What I Can Carry* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2016.

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DRAWING:

Lindsay Farrell

Lindsay Farrell is a drawer, painter, and mixed media artist born and raised in Cincinnati. She earned in 2013 a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Cincinnati and has since dabbled in a little bit of everything, from illustration, to graphic and web design. Besides creating, Lindsay enjoys wandering, podcasts, coffee, and lounging around with her dog, Ingrid.

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Lindsay Farrell 2018

Two Women Wearing Wreaths in Their Hair

(by **Karen (Phebe) Beiser**)

Today they are celebrating their same sex love for one another. Family finds common ground in the ageless rituals; others see free spirited elders creating the day they want, the way they'd dreamed, without forgetting society's legalities, blessings of the Supreme Court. Their slow dance shows how loving Joyce and Karen are:
Charlie the little white dog enjoys a song in the spotlight, held in the midst of two moms.

Peace

(by **Karen (Phebe) Beiser**)

I scan the headlines from the *New York Times* hoping for a week without crisis. I resist the best I can, donating, calling, sometimes marching. At the present moment I am on my deck practicing peace with my neighbor as he tries to beautify his yard with some loud instrument of destruction. Me, I just plan to pause after grocery and errands allowing the water rushing the rocks to remind me that peace is a part of me.

Weeding the Labyrinth

(by **Laurie Lambert**)

I have been working in the labyrinth lately, rather than walking the circuits. There's a lot to be done there in the summer, mostly weeding, it's never finished.

Lately, I think of it as a prayer, my weeding. As I tug at unwanted, unsightly, and occasionally prickly green, it is a prayer for healing.

My own private prayer, a poor poet's metaphor to pull the malignant cells from the body of my friend.

And too, to take out poisonous pieces from the body of the world. It is my sacred work, my only way to pray.

Yesterday I tugged at the last weed from the outermost circuit. Of course, this meant it was time to start over in the middle, where they were once again poking up their green heads.

But this morning, instead, I lit a candle and walked. I entered quiet, though I usually begin with a chant on my lips. I wanted to see what would come.

Within the first few steps a song rose in my mind, and repeated. I listened to a glorious nameless symphonic rhapsody as I walked, and eventually I opened my throat and sang along.

I've never sung in the labyrinth before. I was loud, bold, and perfectly in tune with my mind's melody that no one else could hear.

As I came at last back to the entrance my face was wet.

Dear World, whatever I may have done to deserve this moment of peace, power, hope, and joy, show me how to do more.

POEMS:

CAMDEN BENTLEY

Camden Bentley is an English Creative Writing Major at Northern Kentucky University. He often writes social and political poetry, gathering inspiration from the ideals of Abraham Lincoln and Robert F. Kennedy.

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KRISTINA NICHOLE BRODBECK

Kristina Brodbeck's poetry has been published in *The Cape Rock*, *For a Better World 2017*, and *The Oddville Press*. She has an MA in English and teaches English Composition and Literature at Mount St. Joseph U and Cincinnati State.

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JUSTIN WILLIAMS

Justin Williams is a Cincinnati Native, who has been writing poetry for 16 years, competing on local and national levels. Justin recognizes the power that words wield and, as a result, strives to use his to inflict a positive change in the world around him.

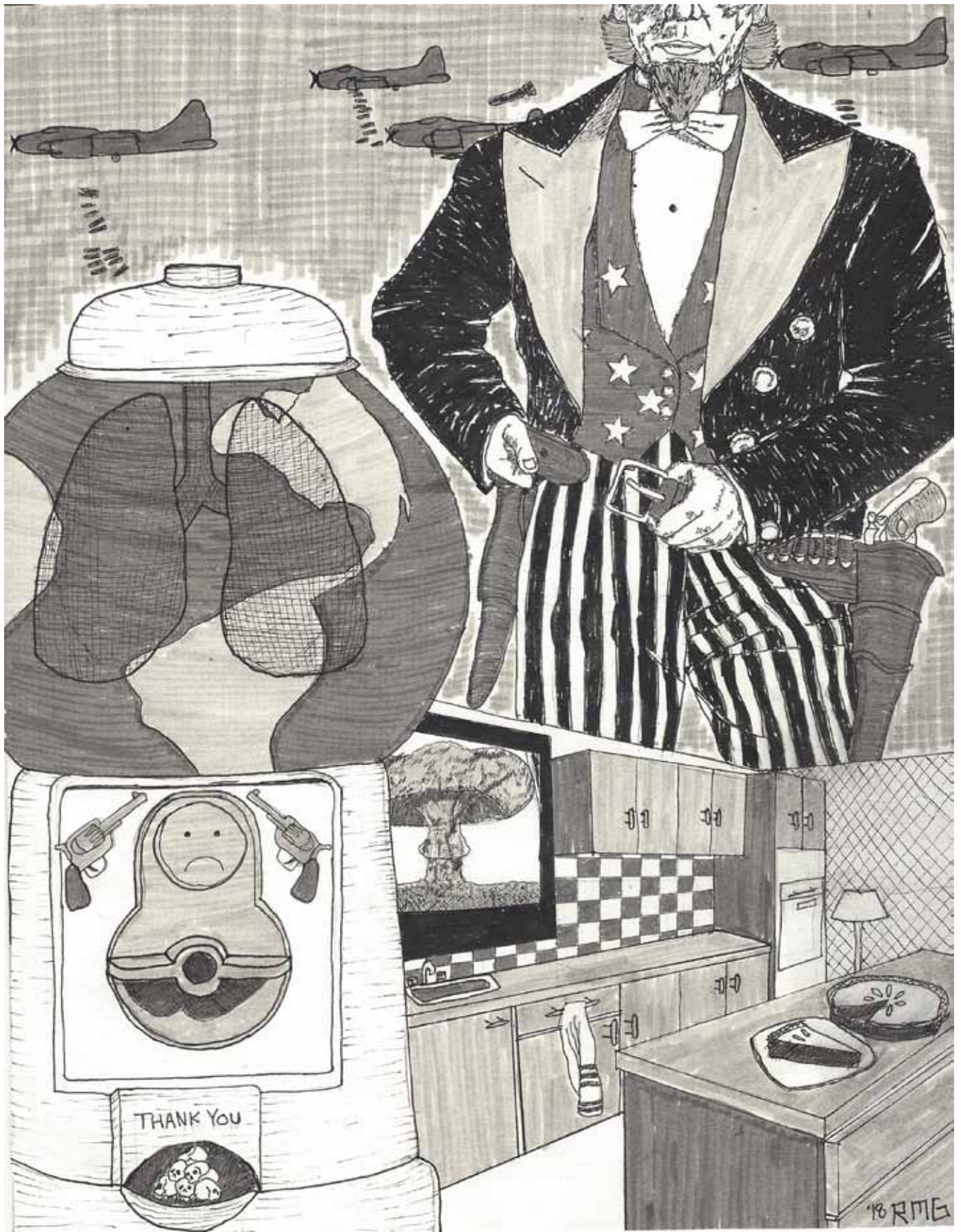
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DRAWING:

RICHIE GOULD

Richie Gould is a Cincinnati based artist, currently pursuing his BFA and a license for Education. His artwork is heavily centered around references to the story/history of America and the debate and interpretations of individual experiences within media. Richie works largely in Collage and Ceramics.

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WALL TO WALL

THANK YOU

18 RME

Colorblind

(by *Camden Bentley*)

I feel like a gumball,
twist the handle to see who you get,
try until you draw your favorite color,
each one the same flavor as the last.
The days flow in this pattern,
biting down, the white center revealed,
and even when we will not break, glossy,
we shine in our enclosure,
protected from the danger just outside the glass.
They cruise the streets,
Waiting to pop one of us out of existence.

Heat

(by *Kristina Nichole Brodbeck*)

I thought that I had to fight
to come up from air—for air.
When this plan failed, I started over

I pushed deeper
into the Earth
to find my breath.

You, I cannot save, though.
Having travelled so far within a different
Earth, one far away from here.

(Protected)

Far from where new bodies lay in our streets today,
old politicians' hands feeling inside my uterus
the same rhetoric lining the same gun barrels.

Far from where children offer up innocence
for their subsidized lunches and toy guns
to be bludgeoned at sixteen after a forgotten
turn signal.

But close enough to still have your healthcare
taken to pay for a round of golf and private plane.

I came back to the surface to mop up these bodies,
to wait, to wait, to gasp.

My Country's Kitchen

(by *Justin Williams*)

Hi, there.
I'm Uncle Sam

And today, I'm sharing a
300 year old Family Recipe

Baked and handed down
To mouths of 8 generations

Because my forefathers
Thought it was to die for...

Literally...

Once you sample
My world famous

American Pie

You'll find out why
Genocide tastes sweeter

Than most folk tend to realize.

The ingredients you'll need
Are all provided in this pre-packaged set;

Set by every Republican
That has access to my Cabinet,

Based on what they've
Stocked in my prison cells...

I mean blocks...
No, shelves...shelves

What they've been putting
In my shelves

So,
Let's get started.

Step 1:

For making your crust,
Gingerbread bodies

Work best; once They've been broken	Preheat your gas chamber... ...oven...preheat your oven	I find that black boys... I mean...berries,
And cookie cut To fit the shapes	Like a concentration Camp fire;	Smash easier When they're bruised
Of stars and stripes.	To about 400 degrees For about 70 years...	By tasers and bullet wounds. That is where your blues come in:
So make sure These chocolate chip	Just enough time For the suffocation...	Stir up just enough conflict To watch the pressure blue boys...
Colored corpses Have been strung out	I mean...baking The baking process	I mean cops... I mean berries...
Properly;	To be as Effective as possible	Blue berries will add
Lynch their Freedom of Speech	For an entire batch At a time.	By hatching Jim Crow-egg Beaten bodies
With a Star Spangled Banner	Now, if you're in a hurry, Hand held burners work best.	That can be picked up Off the streets
And bury it 6 feet Beneath a sugar coated	Feel free to go ballistic,	For free
American Dream That will never come true.	Because with your favorite selection, You can clutch enough heat	Because the cost of living Has already been paid.
That's what makes this Such a deep dish...	To blowback barrels Of bloody powder puffs	Black boys, I mean men...
Because once this bakes,	In any direction You choose...	I mean berries...berries Blackberries...
You can scrape Away any dark skin...	And that's what you'll Need to do for	Are freshest In their last breaths.
I mean crust...crust That may flake to the sides	Step 3: Which is to	You can also see the recipes For my Tamir Rice Cakes,
Trying to rise to the top Because that'll ruin the recipe for this pie	Make sure you mix your berries For that strange fruit flavor;	My Castille Cream Pie, Or my Garner
That's why in Step 2:	Especially your blacks and blues	Ground and Pound Cake So make sure you call
You can use Holocaust Heating Methods		

The number on your screen
Before the Sean Bell

Goes off
Step 4:

Add in a couple
knight sticks of butter.

And a small sprinkles of heroin
As a secret ingredient.

“Crack is whack”
Because it’s more addictive

This way.

Ball up your ingredients
As tight as you can

And put your crust on
Baking sheets of concrete

So that if this explodes;
While spoon feeding

Korean Missiles
Over Round Table talks

The only hot spots
Will be on any street...

I mean ghetto...
I mean sheet...

Any baking sheet...

This pie is resting on
Before you nuke it.

Hell is a furnace
That boils over

In ovens
Like mine

Because it makes
Ethnic cleaning up

So much easier;

And hiding the aftermath
Of this guilty pleasure

So much sneakier.

Because washing away
The taste for blood

Digested by your hands
Is so much greasier

Than pretending you were
Never power hungry

To begin with...
And that is so much easier;

And besides,

Not having to share
Makes this black body...

I mean...berry
Filled crust

So much sweeter.
Thanks for tuning in...

And please,
Eat up...

Mass murder has never
Tasted this delicious

POEMS:

MATTHEW BIRKENHAUER

Matt Birkenhauer teaches English at Northern Kentucky University's Grant County Center, with an emphasis on Composition and Rhetoric. In addition to *For a Better World*, his poems have appeared in a number of venues, including *Trajectory: Writing That Illuminates*, *Words*, *The Licking River Review*, *Tobacco: A Literary Anthology*, and others.

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DIANE GERMAINE

Diane Germaine, writer/choreographer, was a Principal Soloist of Paul Sanasardo Dance Company (NY) and was awarded fellowships and grants from NEA, City of Cincinnati, and Ohio Arts Council. Her poetry and stories appeared in *For a Better World*, *Chronogram Magazine*, *A Few Good Words* (anthology of Cincinnati writers), *OhioDance Newsletter* and *Overseas Adventure Travel*. Her photography has been seen at Kennedy Heights Arts Center exhibitions.

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DRAWING:

CHRISTIAN SCHMIT

Christian Schmit is an artist and educator living in Northern Kentucky. He has shown his work all around Cincinnati, including a solo show at the Weston Gallery in 2016. Christian makes things out of paper and cardboard, and sometimes draws and paints.

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Rituals, Diane Germaine · Christian Schmit

“Let’s Make America Great Again”

(by *Matthew Birkenhauer*)

Boxes aren’t bricks, but
they’re better than nothing,
I guess. Her feet stick out
one end; her stockinged calves
and feet sheathed in cheap
gym shoes can’t fit in her
boxhome. Her headboard newspaper,
she sleeps in her boxbed.

While a remnant from our last war
dines from a full dumpster.
A half-eaten hoagie
is his meal, I suppose.
His eyes are wolfish, hungry.
He wonders when the war will end.

She wonders when the babies will.
Holding her week old infant,
she doesn’t see her son and daughter
melting into her fat arm.
Her look distracted, evicted.

Millionaires beget more millionaires.
(When, one wonders, will the wealth trickle down?)

The Orange Hair in the White House exudes
“Let’s Make America Great Again!”
while blithely cutting food stamps,
housing, health, and education.

Rituals

(by *Diane Germaine*)

- *In the Shadow of “Fire and Fury”* -

Light skims in as I flip
the blinds nested in the
deck door. Light lingers,
rests in the air.

I begin soaking the tea,
prep coffee, nuke cereal,
tear plastic off a daily biscotti...
debate getting a second ready

To share with Manya
who rushes out, confronts me,
turns to munch dog cookies
I left on the step, then waits
to ‘please’ release the gate.

She goes to setup
sentry duty on the deck,
her snout lodged between
rails sniffing up wafts.

Now ‘MnM’ begins talking -
a mewling bordering on
complaint, but it’s actually a
discourse in the vernacular

Of her own language. She won’t
say, “Food! *Food*. **Food!**” –
not exactly – but the sound
surrounds that idea and
I quickly get it ready.

I’m about to open the
kitchen curtain - cream colored
but with a soft glow from sun,
indirect. And a soft satisfaction

Comes with sliding them back,
revealing the large maple
spread out, waiting for
my acknowledgment.

I watch as a shower of leaves
falls in multiple hues –
crisp gold-brown, gold with
orange tips, reds bordering
on fuchsia, cerise –

There is usually a peace
to these repetitions, but today...
I’m making anxious note of them
before all of it disappears.

The Daily Papers or Oblivion

(by *Diane Germaine*)

They're accumulating –

Little paper wads rolled up
all over the house – crispy,
crackling as they're shot,
punted across the floor
skittering sideways under
the baby gates - pucked
back and forth aperture
to aperture, around table
legs, lodging beneath
refrigerator and myriad
other inaccessible stops –
the stove, hutch, toy chest.

Can't sip my coffee or read
for a ten-minute stretch without
'*Gungabinjes*' – my goalie kittykat –
brandishing her puck, prancing
head erect to the pitcher-captain (me)
to plunk her prize at my feet
or drop on the kitchen-table -
smack dab center-center of
my current New York Review of
Books – where she will patiently
await the next pitch into diningroom
outfield or short stopped at the
dog mat.

Swat!

Swat!

Punt!

I'll bet there are thirty-odd wads
trapped under the living-room
couch - though Mz. Manya,
my Husky dog who harbors
my mother's indomitable spirit,
occasionally has munched
a few like the irresistible treats
she snarfs from cat bowls
whenever she gets a chance.

Today she ripped them into
a million little pieces, then left
the confetti for me to cleanup.

It strikes me it is a great way
to relieve Trumpian distaste.
I can crumple up his stupid
statements, non-stop tweets,
and outright lies, and toss them
into the air. Goalie cat and
Mz. Manya can chomp, punt
swat, stomp, kickass, knock
sideways, gobble or parry them
under the couch where they will
forever be cast to dust or oblivion,
which is just where all such shit
belongs.

POEMS:

NNEKA BONNER

Nneka Bonner is currently a Mental Health Specialist at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, where she has found her passion for helping children. She also enjoys writing, reading, musicals, and anything art related. Nneka plans to get her graduate degree in forensic psychology, aiding juveniles, in the criminal justice system, who have mental health issues and disorders.

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STAR CANDELARIA

Star Candelaria is the essence of feeling and imagination, a Creative Content writer in the Greater Cincinnati area who writes in a creative, connected and cynically-comedic way. She is the writer behind *starcandee.com*, a platform and healing space for all women.

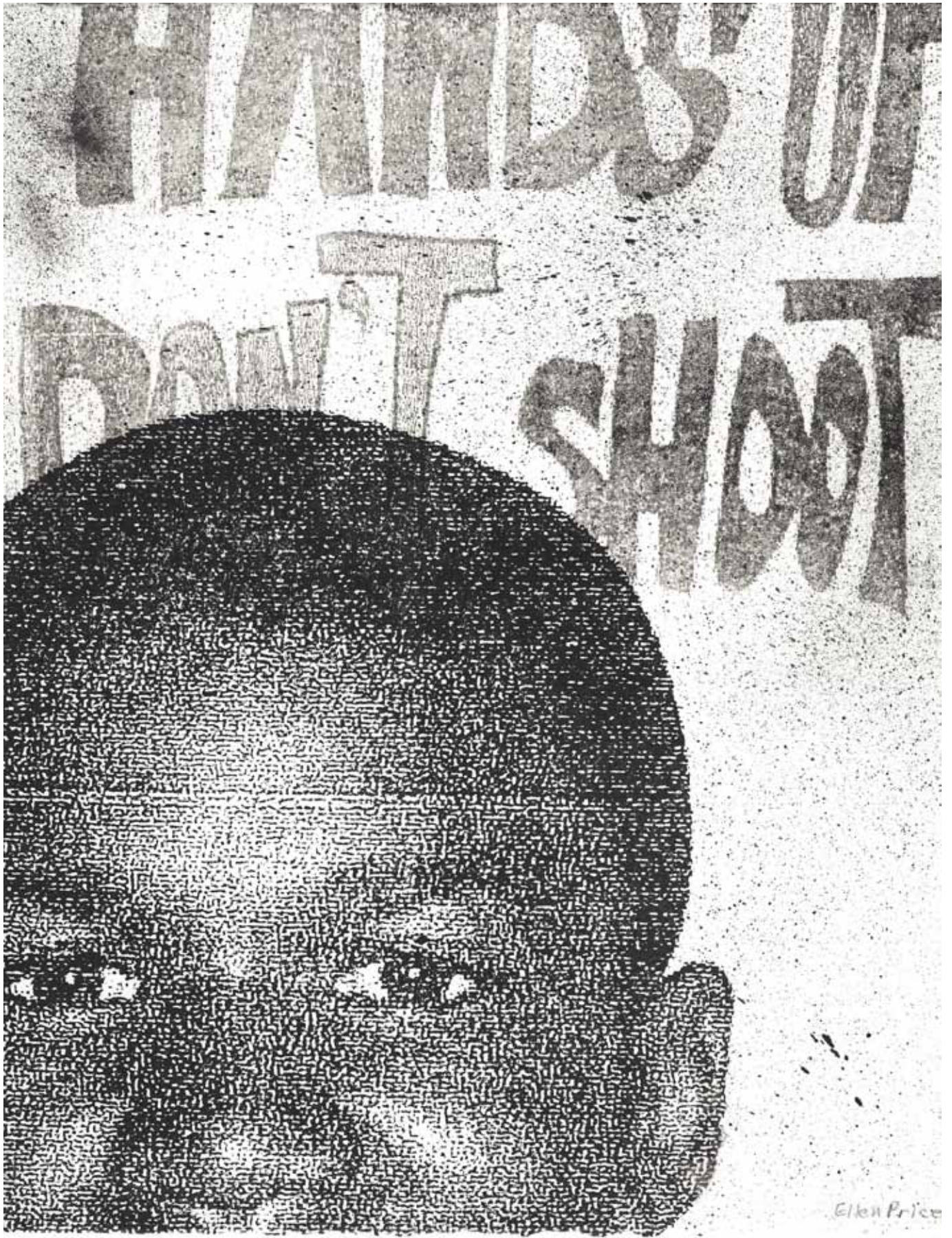
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DRAWING:

ELLEN PRICE

Ellen Price was born in New York City and received her BA in Art from Brooklyn College and her MFA from Indiana University in 1986. She is currently a Professor at Miami University, where she teaches printmaking. Ellen's creative work has been recognized with Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Awards in 1996, 2001 and 2009.

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Ellen Price

When All Hands Are Raised

(by **Nneka Bonner**)

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away, and the deep fog of misunderstanding will be lifted from our fear drenched communities and in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all of their scintillating beauty.” – Martin Luther King Jr

When all hands are raised
There shall be no more tears and sulfurous agony
Of the backbiting words and snares of being a certain “color”
When all hands are raised
Children will look at each other
Not with accusing and assumption filled eyes
But with kindness and tenderness, holding out their friendship
When all hands are raised
Adults will lay down their past anomalies and taught values
And start teaching their young more about equality
Instead of differentiation
When all hands are raised
Society will not view interracial intimacy as alien
But more as amour and attraction
When all hands are raised
As organizations that breed loathing and inequity crumble,
Ones that promote brotherhood and peace will emerge and flourish
When all hands are raised
Stereotypes and stigmas that would deem another’s disposition
Will be replaced by the judgment of their character
When all hands are raised
While racism’s meaning becomes non-existent
Egalitarianism will become better known
When all hands are raised
Those who mourn over the loss of loved ones
By assailants that insinuate assault and murder because of one’s color
Will have the justice they deserve
When all hands are raised
The distasted fueled words of derogatory and slandering
Will be voices that spew kindness, brotherhood and mutuality
When all hands are raised
Basing to aid another based on their skin and disposition
When all hands are raised
The race that will truly matter and be dominant
Will be the HUMAN race
When all hands are raised
The Ku Klux Klan’s, Neo-Nazi’s, Black Panther’s and hate organizations’
Message will cease
As Martin Luther King’s becomes a reality
Yes, when all hands have finally risen,
The bondage of racism will rust and collapse
And we’ll ALL be set free

No Justice, No Peace

(by *Star Candelaria*)

No justice, No peace, No silence in the streets except to mourn the deceased murdered by police.

Through blurry eyes the people seek the cleansing of the undercover sheets, but this is America don't you see? Built by the greedy upon the meek.

Their worshipped ancestors washed upon these shores and enslaved the indigenous; too lazy to do their chores

Then they sought a different source, on a different course they found Africa; land open, with labor resources and more.

Kidnappings, money exchanges and lies were the lure. Babies snatched from mothers and out of their eyes water poured.

Whippings, brandings, lynchings, murders and burnings; and for not even a month this is a *peace* of our learning.

Totaling five hundred years and even youth today are living in fear. Afraid to succeed in anything besides a dead-end career.

No teaching of the bombings and looting from our success, because we are taught to believe that we were and will always be less.

Today, labeled as beasts and barbarians while our captors, murderers and Klansmen are seen as humanitarians. The wise question the façade but remain in the sanitarium;

Where propaganda is breakfast, lunch and dinner. Where the racists lead the races, who will be the winner?

Stuck in the sanitarium, eyes glued to the TV to which they are programmed to see- the stereotypical you and me.

The same image that allows Darren Wilson, George Zimmerman and Ray Tensing to walk free. I say 'and' because the list is too long, so lengthy

I need space to say to Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown and Sam Dubose may you rest in peace and tranquility. While we, will continue the fight in Unity-

Fighting for and against humanity, fighting through the trauma and calamity.

All day and night looking to the North Star for the light, and as it twinkles and gleams. We recognize that it is our ancestors smiles that beam,

because they see that it is our turn to rip injustice from the seams

Of the American flag of these divided states and to finally permanently abolish systematic hate!

Post-Election Thoughts

(by *Star Candelaria*)

A broken community full of broken hearts
Here we are attempting to mend the separated parts.
Learning different ways to teach our respective societies
About the fullness of pan African ideologies.
A shift in the world caused a mass of painful confusion
We all thought we were headed into a future of inclusion.
The decision was made to perpetuate and promote hate
Under the campaigning disguise of "Making America Great"
My Pastor says we are paying for the sins we have committed,
By turning our backs/forgetting God, hate is what we permitted.
So, we cannot and shall not harbor anymore hate
We must practice what we preach and pray that this man makes America great!
Time here is limited and together we must unite
Just because it isn't our own does not mean we shouldn't fight.
Welcome your brethren and open your hearts
Reconnecting with God is where you should start.
Our community is not as divided as we are made to believe
Through building an understanding, love and unity we'll achieve.
This does not mean to quit being pro black
But please be mindful that we are not always under attack.
Free yourself in the mind, spirit and heart
Address your own issues before your words tear us apart.
Hurt people. Hurt people. We know this so well,
Break free from the chains and the mindset of hell.

POEMS:

JOSHUA BRACKENRIDGE

Joshua Brackenridge was born and raised on the west side of Cincinnati.

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DESIRAE HOSLEY

Desirae “The Silent Poet” Hosley was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. Known for being the quietest person on the scene, Desirae is a little lady whose big voice packs a powerful punch. Leader of the new teen poetry generation, she is a teaching artist/program coordinator for Northside’s creative writing and literacy nonprofit, *WordPlay Cincy*.

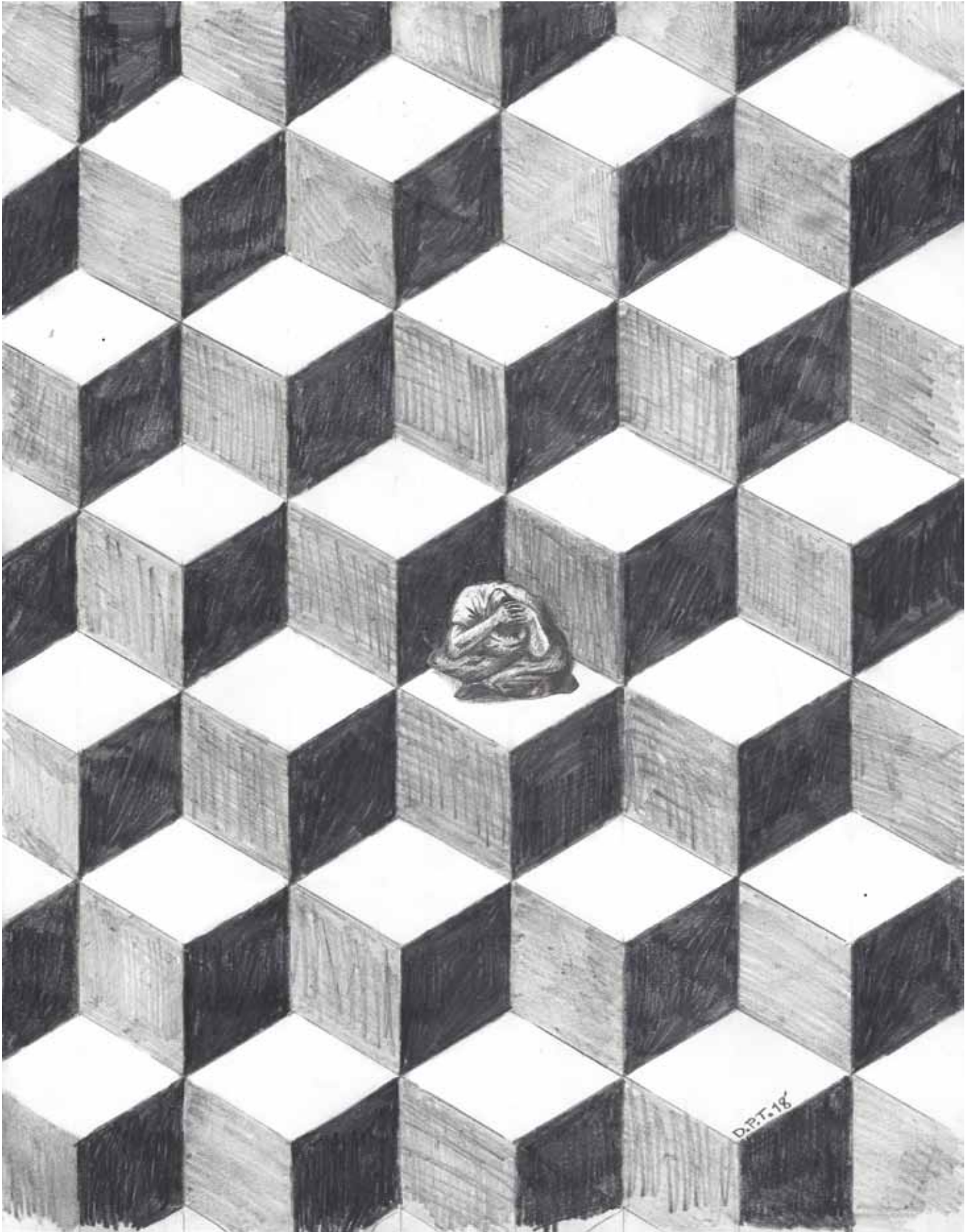
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DRAWING:

DEREK TOEBBE

Derek Toebbe is an artist living and working in Covington, KY. A graduate of Northern Kentucky University fine arts program, Derek continues to pursue his passion with local and regional exhibitions as well as public artworks and community engagements. Derek does design projects and commissions.

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D.P.T. 18

I Do the Same Things

(by *Joshua Brackenridge*)

I used to be overcome with corruption, death, and destruction.
No one understood what was my major malfunction.
Count this no assumption. I was far from production.
Everyday at home or school I was the cause of disruption.
I was lost and confused this you could say the least.
No one could save me now and put my soul at peace.
So I welcomed that cool moonlight and transformed into a beast.

It's hard to count it joy. Through the hurt and the pain.
I've heard it all before, but still I do the same things.

Death is a decision. A calculated mission.
I know what I'm saying. I can self destruct with precision.
It's hard to envision the walls that you've put up.
Tear em down brick by brick before you get stuck.
Drugs had me drowsy and stuck in a daze.
All these scattered thoughts. It's like walking through a maze.

It's hard to count it joy. Through the hurt and the pain.
I've heard it all before, but still I do the same things.

It's time for a change. Removed the dope from my veins.
My only claim to fame was selling pills and cocaine.
Made some sacrifices. I will no longer fall victim to my vices.
Life is full of surprises and I'm living proof.
How else you think I got here to spit this in this booth.

It's hard to count it joy. Through the hurt and the pain.
I've heard it all before, but still I do the same things.

Voiceless Voices

(by *Desirae Hosley*)

"I'm not gonna change the world, but I guarantee that I will spark the brain that will change the world!" —Tupac Shakur

Even though many may not feel so free among us all, voices of the youth carrying their ancestors' roots keep chains broken. Giving them the benefit of the doubt, we unlock our ears and attention. Zoom in to their knowledge since we are their first teachers and remain in awe of their excellence.

Freedom...

Was lost in history books

Burned in churches
Gunned down by humanity
And locked up to never be seen
Yet my eyes are tired
Guessing why anger lies in these streets
Captured in this cold world
Witnessing more body bags than graduation caps
I want our youth to be elevated
Feel the power of appreciation and build up this world in solitude
We are destined for greatness
But our masks protect nothing more than our opinion
Our masks corrupt more lives through social media
We barely know if people are alive or barely living
Live moments being captured quicker than the news
Our youth needs this outlet
To voice more than ranting emotions
Knowing that they are heard
Dreams are written to manifest a future plan
With hope that it will come true
In essence it will give us a way to work on those possibilities
Fragmented through the DNA of our children
They see more than we wish could be covered by blinders
Yet the blinds are open
And through fear and disappointment, they have been captivated by a future of let-downs
Where no one is held accountable for their actions
But these voiceless voices have been awakened
And are not sitting, waiting for action
Better yet taking action
With the tools and resources that are gauged for greatness
They will not sit back and be told what will not happen
Rather than just do.

POEMS:

TIMOTHY CANNON

Timothy Cannon is a Husband, Father, Grandfather, retired Licensed Hairstylist, Poet, Photographer, Artist, Idea Maker. Being pretty much confined for the past 15 years due to a rare autoimmune disease allowed him to observe the vibrational changes of the Earth and of its people. He thinks that we all need to change for the better, abolish wars and protect our planet for our children; and that we humans are all the same, and that we need to love, and be loved.

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ELLA CATHER-DAVIS

Ella Cather-Davis, now retired, writes poetry, essays and children's stories. She holds an Associates of Arts degree in English Literature from UC and is a member of the Greater Cincinnati Writer's League and Ohio Poetry Society. Ella loves classical choral music and sang 15 years with the May Festival Chorus. She has been published in a number of books, anthologies and newspapers.

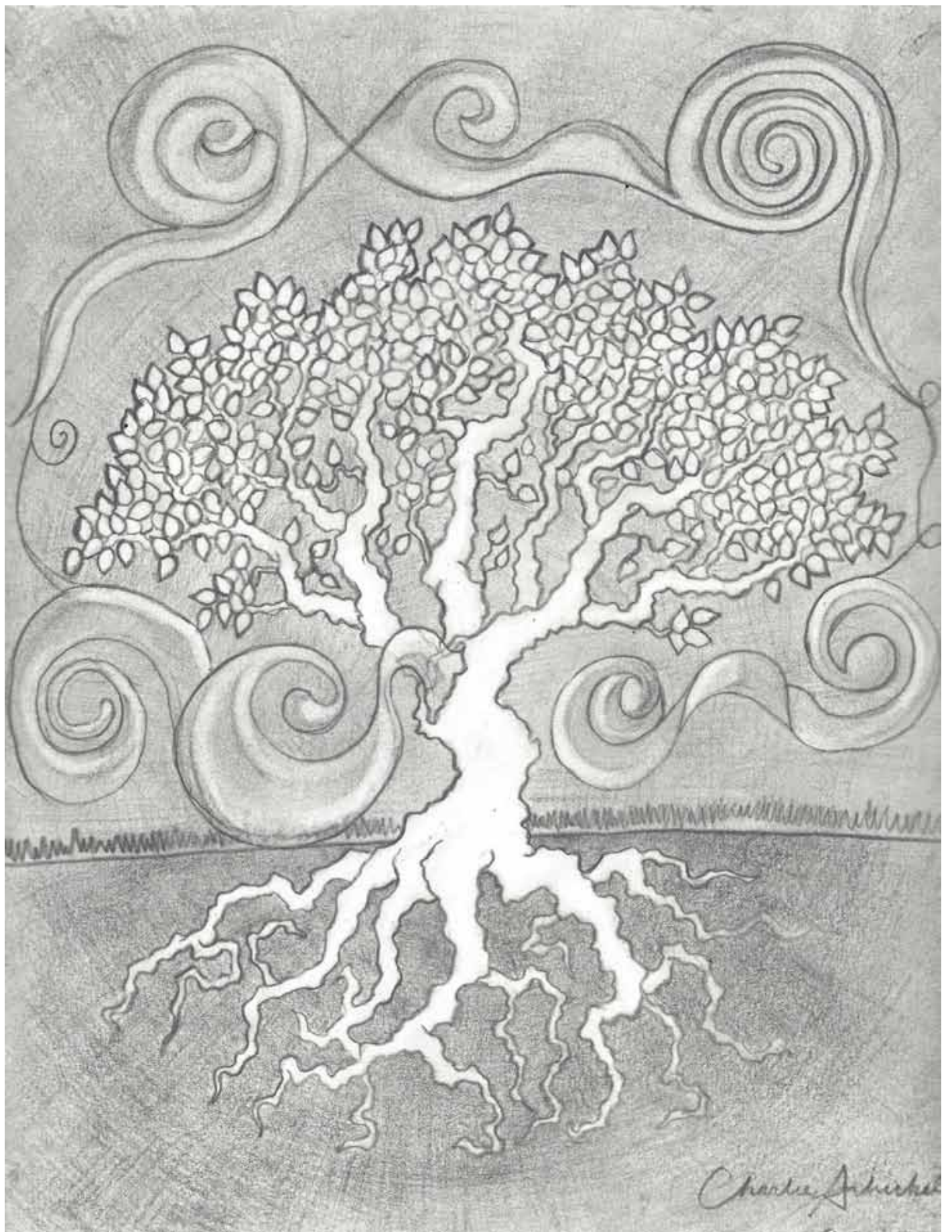
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DRAWING:

CHARLES SCHICKEL

Charlie Schickel is a student in the school of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning at the University of Cincinnati. He explores a variety of media in his practice in hopes of gaining an eclectic understanding of art. His goal is to utilize this understanding to make a positive impact on the world.

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Mist in My Eyes

(by *Timothy Cannon*)

You can tell by the mist in my eyes,
You know I'm just a little dime
In a pocket of change
Thrown onto the ground
Trampled on,
Trampled on.
Got lost in another's hands
You know I never understand
The lust of love
Or is it just money spent
Frozen in time,
Frozen time.
I ran out the door
Of a moving train
You know I've seen the same
Self-destruction, gone too far
It's so insane,
So insane.
You picked me up from the ground
That held me down,
Like the spit piece gum
Stuck on a shoe, worn down
Cements a little rough,
a rattle and hum,
You know,
You know.
So, I let you in
You know it's not a sin
Honesty cries away
The broken lies, the abuse inside,
You know I'm not just a dime
You showed me my worth
Each day and everyday
Everyday.
You can tell by the tears in my eyes
I'm not just a dime, Value wise
Palms entwined, you held my hand
Forgiveness has its worth
It's worth.
Deep within, let it cry, you know you'll survive
The pain inside, broken pride
It's not what you think
With simple love
A simple love.

With love, it's always love
That fills the glass emptied dry
You saw me smile, we laughed a while,
Let's spend some time, on love,
On love because in the end,
It's always love,
it's always love.

The Breathing Tree

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

Just outside the glass doors
of this God-forsaken room
over there by the pool,
that tree is breathing.

I view it through half-open eyes
inhaling - - - exhaling
its leaves rustling like tiny bells.
I am too afraid to sleep

I force my heart to slow beats
and cautiously review once more
this vile day which has sent me
fleeing here for asylum.

I await rescue from me,
fight smothering panic,
will my eyes to return to
that calm breathing tree.

I hear a dove call Ooo, Ooo, Ooo.
The world is going on as it does
and I must awake tomorrow
to face its consequences.

And the world will go on
as it always does.

Self

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

*“This meeting with one’s self
is at first the meeting with one’s own shadow.
The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door
whose painful constriction no one is spared
who goes to the deep well.”*

Carl Jung

Self

painfully emerges from the safe womb
and in that startling moment it begins
to know unequivocally, who it is - -
whether it is male, female, other
or an Ardvaark or an Ant
even if nature disagrees.

Self knows its preference of lover,
and despite any attempts to define it
reserves the blessed right to choose
who and what to love. Gender, pigment
and ethnicity are extraneous to Self.
These have nothing to do with its identity.

It knows its place in the world scheme and
insists on its sacred right to occupy it
assuming, regardless of roles assigned,
any office or service it feels called upon
to do in the allotted years of its life.

Self sits sacrosanct.

No cataloguing please. Contrary
to square pegs and round holes
and at your own folly . . .

Do Not Try To Tell Self Who It Is.

It deeply knows.

I Love You in This Moment

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

Iron grey lady, wandering the city streets
with your possessions in that shopping bag,
I wince at the despair in your eyes and
I love you in this moment.

And you, the dropped off dog helplessly
wandering down the country road
bewildered at the abandonment and
your present situation. I love you.

You, there in your wheelchair at the
Supermarket, missing legs, grateful
for the assistance with the high shelf items,
I turn back to smile, I love you in this moment.

You, shuffling in the nursing home,
half cognizant of your present existence.
What is the journey you take every day.
Good morning, I love you in this moment

I reluctantly return to the self-assigned tasks
which equal or outpace the amount of hours
of each day after day after day. The endless
ways these things require my energy, my self,

I take a moment to look at the lives of each
being in despair, placing myself there, and
I smile and love you all in this moment
It’s really all I can do. Isn’t it?

POEMS:

MAROLEE COLLINS

Marolee Collins' skills and training have been as a visual artist, her lifetime passion. She has also written prose, poetry and short stories for herself, her family and her close friends.

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CAROL FEISER LAQUE

Carol Feiser Laque's most recent poetry collection *Mother of Pearl* (2017) celebrates Hester Prynne's moral and poetic vision as well as her own. Carol is teaching Poetry Workshops to Fifth graders at The British School in Chicago. In progress is a new collection of poetry titled *The Face of Water*.
Queen City blood courses through her Windy City veins.

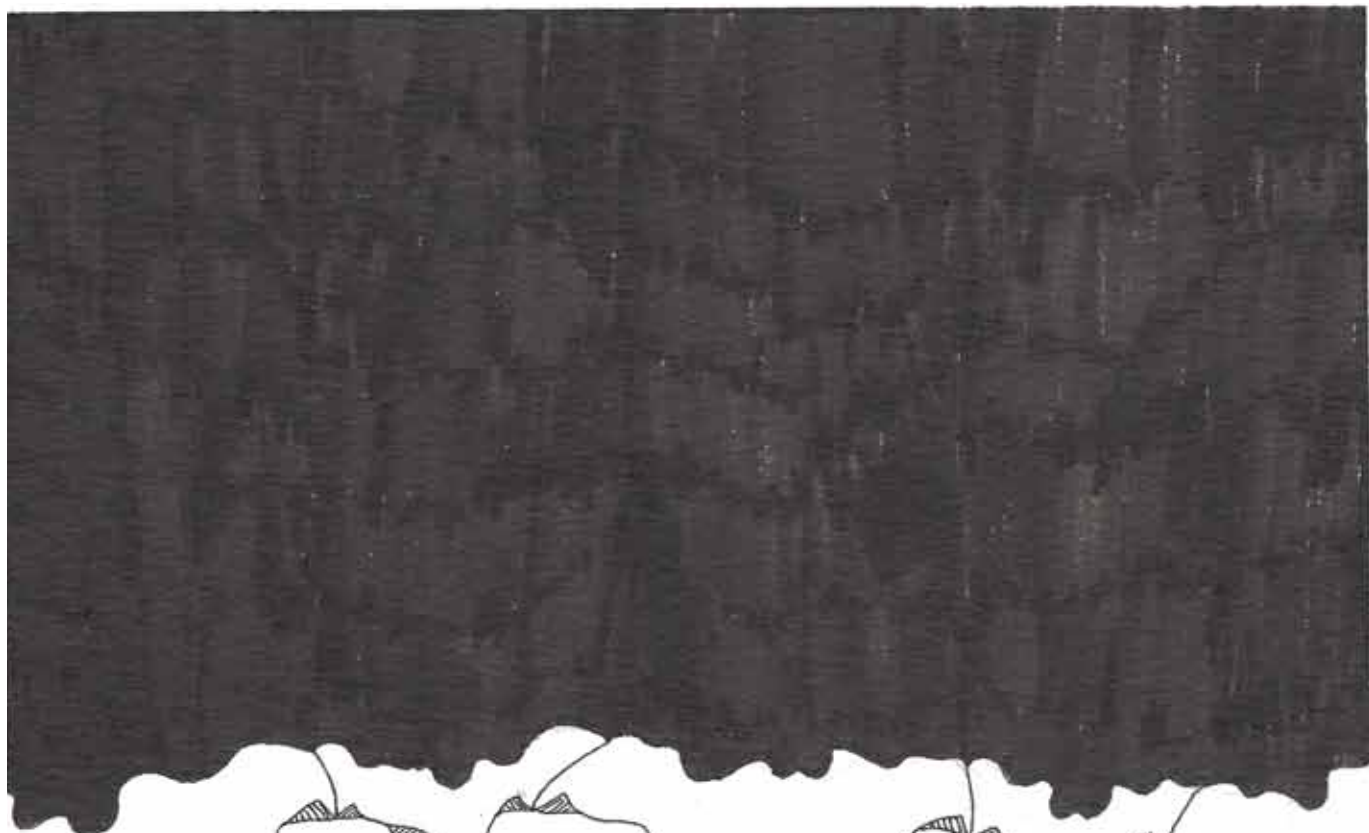
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DRAWING:

TORI WOODRUFF

Tori Woodruff, born in Cincinnati, OH, is a young expressionist artist working her way into the contemporary world of art. Her works focus on the reverberating effects of childhood trauma as it travels into adulthood. Tori creates a mix of figurative and abstracted works fabricated mostly by the imagination; she strives to create intimacy between femininity and pain. Specializing in painting and printmaking, her recent works delve into the inner psyche of her trauma, and the misconstructions of her reality and dreams due to a "fragmented" childhood.

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"The Thread That Binds Us"

Vai W. H.

LifeBreath

(by *Marolee Collins*)

I breathe the life of Moses while walking through time
I was the soil on Masada hearing the anguish of my people
As they looked on their last sunrise . . .
Journeying the Shtetlakh of Europe smelling the aroma of names kholent
Drifting into the airs of persecution. I walk the yards
Of concentration camps seeing the mist of death in the faces of
Destiny . . . Hearing their memories of relationships, homes,
Sedars of childhood, joys and intimacies -
The longings and regrets of a lifetime
With these eyes I then saw the wildflower lit by the bright sun of the day
I hear the oppressed, vilified, victimized and persecuted
I feel the compassion, courage and ultimate hope
For I am the thread that runs deep through the heart
Of Everyman -

The Face of Water

(by *Carol Feiser Laque*)

Who is the face of water - the children ask?

The Jewish children and their families
were murdered by ordinary people
from 28 countries - were shot by
Killing squads - were herded to death
camps - the grandmothers say
This will never happen again.

What is the face of water - the children ask?

Ashes have no face - ashes have every
face. We are gassed to death
all of us. Children were alone
in huge gas chambers and then
burnt in ovens. We cannot speak
out loud. The grandmothers speak
for us saying remember -
This will never happen again.

When is the face of water - the children ask?

A world war. An army of storm
troopers. Hiding. Terror as six

million Jews were murdered
by Nazis. Gone. Our history is old -
our babies are young the grandmothers
say. Remember -
This will never happen again.

Where is the face of water - the children ask?

The oceans and rivers whisper
Six million of us have no grave.
We are as invisible as our parents are
in empty death camps burnt to
Dust by the Nazis. Our faces are gone.
They tried to burn us all, but we
escaped the grandmothers say.
Remember - this will never happen again.

Why is the face of water never found - the children ask?

Look down on the water and what
you see - your face too - is carried
away - is lost and found. The
sky cries rain. We are two
women here to tell you what is lost
may be found. The sky cries rain.
We are here to tell you the story
of the Holocaust and collect the rain
in our bare hands, the grandmothers say
This will never happen again.

The children ask again - who is the face of water?

Our ghosts cry. Our names are lost.
We never grew up. We never had
children. We are destroyed, but
we will not be forgotten. Our
voices must never die. Our story
must be told. The grandmothers
speak: Remember how we starved first.
This will never happen again.

The children ask again - what is the face of water?

We were hidden in attics, basements,
barns and murdered. We did no wrong.
We were killed for being Jewish.

Whole villages are gone. The
grandmothers say we look like
children everywhere. Remember -
This will never happen again.

The children ask again - when is the face of water?

The face of water is the history of
the Jewish People, and we have
nourished the world. Our tears
are no longer silent and like
a rain storm, we speak with
lips of thunder. Our spirits belong
to the earth - the grandmothers say
This will never happen again.

The children ask again - where is the face of water?

When you learn the story of the
Holocaust we tell you: Remember.
The face of water is all of our faces.
Our stories are as many as you are.
Our story is six million stories.
Say the grandmothers remember so
This will never happen again.

The children ask again - why is the face of water?

We cannot tell you why evil lives along
with good in the human heart. Feel
the rain falling on your faces. These are the
tears of the stolen Jewish children
of the Holocaust. The tears fall lost -
then found on every face. You can remember
the story of the Innocent. We are the
survivors of Mass murder. Our story
must be safe with you. You must
not forget us. Remember we have
names like you. Remember we could
not go to school. Remember we
died homeless as orphans. Remember
six million pairs of stolen shoes.
Remember we two grandmothers were
children who escaped. The grandmothers
tell all of this and they say Remember -
Never again.

POEMS:

KAI CRAWFORD

Kai Crawford is a trans man who loves his pets more than people and sometimes writes about his feelings in the hopes that some lovely person will publish it.

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KATHY LONGSHORE

Having a fascination with words, Kathy Longshore plays Scrabble several times a week. She also loves children's literature and gives books to her grandchildren every Thanksgiving. The Las Vegas massacre was the first thing she heard about on the news on the morning of her birthday and she was saddened, angry and frustrated with the current gun rights laws.

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DRAWING:

GABRIELLE ROACH

Gabrielle Roach received her BFA in painting and printmaking from Indiana State University in 2014 and her MFA in 2017 from Miami University. She has been included in various solo and group exhibitions including The Future of Art, 2016, and Tate London and Young Painters, 2018. Gabi currently works for PAR-Projects in Cincinnati, OH and teaches at Miami University.

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Gabi Roach

Untitled Words

(by *Kai Crawford*)

Come on,
You really think I wouldn't be alright?
I've got my mama by my side.
We laugh at your ignorant and snide
remarks as they sting me.

Get in line, you're not the only one
trying to hurt; sticks and stones
may break my bones, but words,
words can hurt me.

Today is 55 people like me dead,
and January isn't at its end.
We hide and try to run, yet
you find us and kill us and
we still don't show you the hate
you've shown to our community.

Our voices may not be as loud,
but we scream and fight; we're proud
of who we are and who we'll be; proud
to be free in our identities,
secure in the knowledge of our strength
and the power of all of us as one.

Come on,
did you really think you'd get us down?
We will fight hate with love,
sometimes fire with fire,
but we will never give up or give in.
We won't let your hate win.

Intrusive Thoughts

(by *Kai Crawford*)

"See, it's right there, take it.
It's sitting there for you.
Waiting for you
to take it.
Just take it, Kai.
Grab it, wrap your hand around it,
feel its power between your fingers.
Lift it, aim it, pull the trigger.
It's so easy,
just do it.
Just take your chance now while you've got it."

So I did.
I grabbed it, wrapped my hands around it,
felt its power radiating heat through my fingers,
lifted its weight to aim and I fired.
I fired.

There is no peace inside.

An Anthem of Anguish and Frustration

(by *Kathy Longshore*)

October 1, 2017 Las Vegas

O, now how could they see, through the bright neon light,
They had waited so long, since the twilight's last gleaming.
Entertained by the stars on that perilous night,
Facing Mandalay Bay, music gallantly streaming.
Then a gunman was where? Bullets bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that his gun rights were there;
O, say how can we justify all the lives that they gave
In our land of the "free" and the home of the "brave".

POEMS:

JOHN CRUZE

Through his poetry, John Cruze tries to reach those folks who still find themselves at this precarious point in human history, frantically searching among the received wisdom of their beliefs for some ism based justifiable loophole in the Golden Rule.

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DRAWING:

MATTHEW LUEHRMANN

Matthew Luehrman is an artist out of Oakley, originally from Batavia. He creates paintings, sculptures and museum exhibits to fuel his practice. Matthew's work is based around his day to day and is a visual outlet. It enables him to respond to the milestone events in his personal life as well as in society.

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The River Judgment

Weary with certainty, we slipped down to the river – found ourselves in its shallow pools.
As ants swarm fallen fruit, our faithful darkened the shore – echoed the one true song.
We knelt - with each gulp some part of our hearts turned wonder back to stone.
We gathered up the hefty providence spread along the shore, turned back to the village and circled the others who drink from a different river.

Money Tree

this chip you see
all muddy
on my shoulder
that's all that's left
of a place I knew
a mountain of truth
a forest of gifts
where enough
was plenty
and a proud people
proud enough
got by for a while
harnessed the old ways
made them their own
breathed that place
fiddled that place
sang that place
sweated that place
opened a bloodstream
along its ridges and creeks
from family to family
barn to barn
house to house
generation to generation
church to school and back
and all the way round
just far enough
to suit them in that place

before the clever ones
got out clevered
gave it away
like a backward daughter
for a meager dowry
took pieces of silver
to help the ones
wielding fine print
chop it down
cut it up
bulldoze its spirit
and haul it away
only to leave us
wondering
how to make a life
from a landscape
of splintered
mud weary
walked over
no account chip

Hollow Points

Jesus just joined the Judgment Day Militia.
I saw him on social media adorned in camo
from boots to thorny crown shooting hollow points
into the New Testament from behind the Rock of Ages
surrounded by his hard-core rapture now disciples.

He wants his followers to know he's still keeping the faith,
but with a little more evangelical swagger in these times.
A spokesperson assured us all these new optics were not
in any way inconsistent with his traditional core values
and unrelated to his primary challenge from Ted Nugent.

POEMS:

DONELLE DREESE

Donelle Dreese is a Professor of English at Northern Kentucky University. She is the author of four collections of poetry including *Sophrosyne* by Aldrich Press and the co-authored ekphrastic chapbook *Frame and Mount the Sky* by Finishing Line Press. Donelle is also the author of the ecofiction novels *Deep River Burning* and *Cave Walker*. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in a wide variety of literary journals such as *Blue Lyra Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Louisville Review*, and *Potomac Review*.

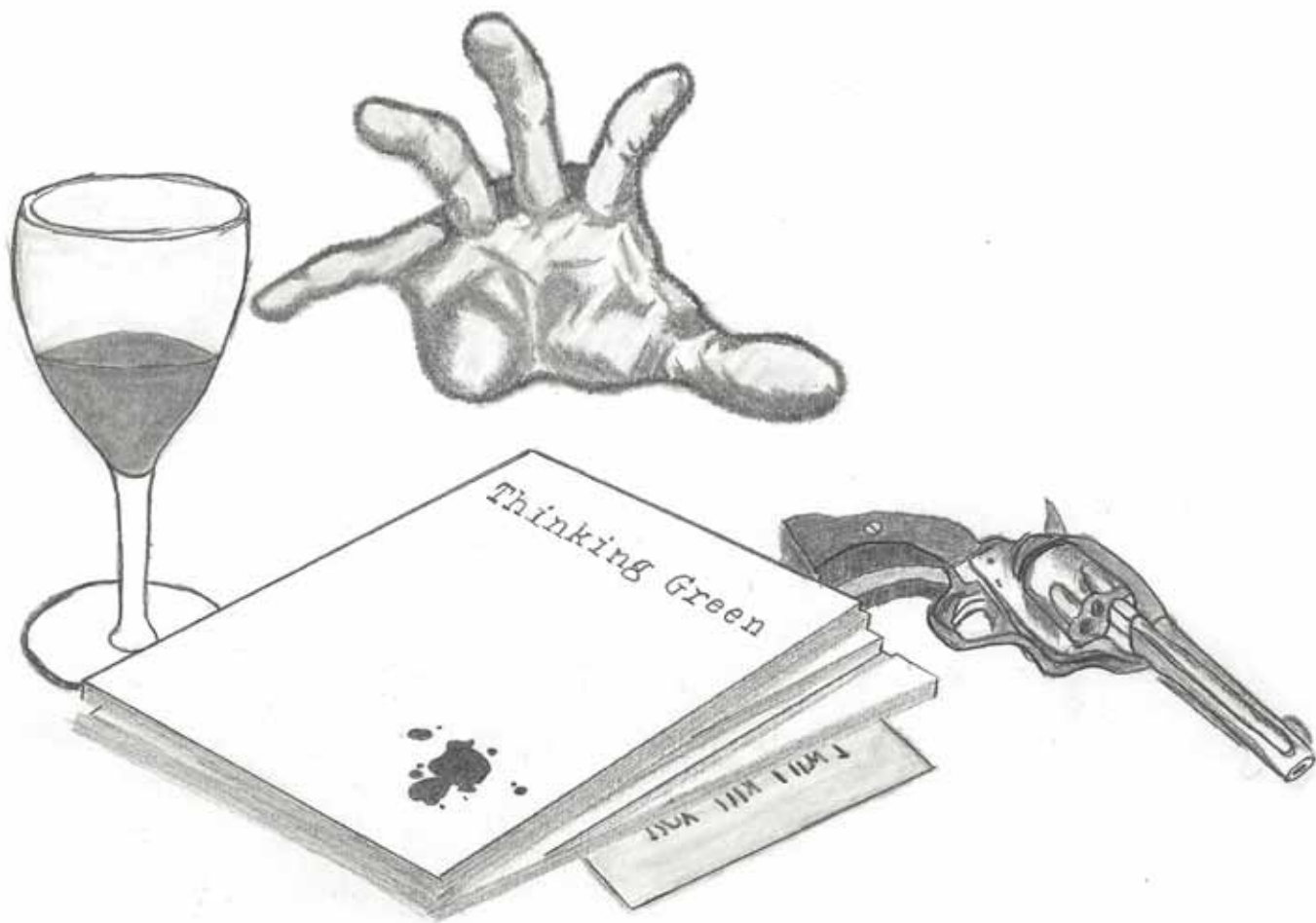
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DRAWING:

JUSTIN BROWN

Justin Brown is an architectural major working for his Master of Architecture at the University of Cincinnati. He previously graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from Bowling Green State University and is looking forward to becoming a licensed architect.

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Justin T Brown

Petra Kelly to Her Green Party Partner and Colleague Gert Bastain

I want to end this questioning
of you killing me.

You, with your rose and bone fingers
gunpowder-smudged, old fruit.

It is always the lover
with gunpowder on his hands.
Had living in my shadow grown
dim, so quiet and opaque?

They called me Jeanne D' Arc
an endangered person

so the murder could have been staged.
It could have been the authors

of death threat letters who fume
with contempt for the Green party.

The Dalai Lama said to me
Keep going. I'll meditate for you.

So I wrote a book to infuse
spirit into the body politic.

But who left the typewriter humming?
Who pressed the trigger and final key?

Was it you, my partner, my life, my love?

Was it your hand that encircled the gun
as if curled for a glass of wine?

Love Canal Haiku

for Lois Gibbs

Bricklayer's daughter
boat-rocker from Love Canal
blue collar shy

Land for a dollar
sold to a school for children
chemical graveyard

Years of hard rain
ooze and rusted drums surfaced
playground sickness

Knuckles knocked on doors
self-taught environmentalists
mobilized mothers

Picketing power
civil disobedience
asbestos jail cell

A child's coffin
for the Governor's office
wooden petition

Niagara Falls
Superfund legislation
history maker

Grassroots warrior
looked to the soil to save her son
braved her heart to heal

The Sugared World

for Phyllis Mullenix

What happens when research is so bright
it turns toothpaste into white soot?

It should have blackened the industry
behind the smile of unsound science.

It should have saved betrayed mothers
who poured poison water into baby
cups thinking it would postpone the rot
and decay of the sugared world.

It should have saved the workers
at Hurricane Creek, Virginia who waded
in the liquid lie of the factory before
it shattered and shivered their nerves.

But a scientist was fired, unfunded
accused of hysterics from long hours
spent charting the convulsions of rats.

Her work was squeezed, brushed, spit
out to preserve the toxic experiments
of Harold Hodge--the father of fluoride
whose chemical research informed
the making of the atomic bomb.

The myth swims in the water supply
where it stays a savior for the sweet tooth
a barbed shrub behind a wall of honeysuckle

holy water still used for blessings
upon entering the church and leaving.

POEMS:

HOLLY END

Holly End is a writer, nonprofit director, wife and mother from the Pleasant Ridge neighborhood of Cincinnati. She was a speaker at TEDx - XU on the Transformational Power of Service, and her writing has been featured in *Soapbox: Cincinnati* and the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

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SHANNON QUAY

Shannon Quay is a writer and a middle school teacher in Cincinnati, Ohio. She graduated from Miami University with degrees in poetry, literature, and education.

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TAUNJA THOMSON

Taunja Thomson's poetry appeared in *The Ekphrastic Review* and *These Fragile Lilacs*. She co-authored a chapbook of poetry, *Frame and Mount the Sky* (2017). Her chapbook *Strum and Lull* was semi-finalist in Golden Walkman's chapbook competition (2017). Her chapbook *The Profusion* will be published in 2018.

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DRAWING:

SARAH FRANCIS HOLLIS

Sarah Francis Hollis, born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio, received her BFA from the Art Academy of Cincinnati (2004) and her MFA from the University of Cincinnati (2007). She is an artist, educator, and entrepreneur who has shown her work all over the country, most notably at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati. Sarah currently lives and works in Erlanger, KY.

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January 2017

(by *Holly End*)

I saw the sun today.
Still it rises, just like Maya;
rises through the hateful clouds
of pollution and weight of indifference.
Still it rises.

I saw the seedling today.
Still it grows, just like Eleanor.
Though the grand oak says it's the wrong shape
the wrong color, inferior; it refuses to consent.
Still it grows.

I saw the bird today.
Still it sings, just like Malala.
Although its voice is low,
it knows the power of one song when there's silence.
Still it sings.

I saw the water today.
Still it flows, just like Margaret.
Single droplets unite to form a rushing river,
that never doubts its power to change the world.
Still it flows.

I saw the bee today.
Still it flies, just like Teresa.
It cannot soar to great heights,
but it *can* add great sweetness to life, so
Still it flies.

I saw the woman today.
Still she leads, just like Gloria,
because she knows the time has passed to look to others,
and now *she* is the right person to fight for our collective
soul,
So still... she leads.

Mothers

(by *Shannon Quay*)

I read an article that said
a mother calling out her child's name
awoke children better than smoke alarms
60% of the time:

The womb packed in our ears,
our invisible homing device, buried in us.

And somehow, suddenly, all of the women
who have moved and worked and hoped
before me—
have become a Mother.
All of the women who said no before I knew
I could say no,
the women who have marched
and eaten their fill, and chosen joy in spite of
inconceivable darkness,

The magic of these women—
It is as if they have held milk in their hands
and willed it not to spoil—

Every woman who imagined it all on her own,
planting gardens,
making room for one more,

Every woman who moves enough to shake
the whole bed when they dream.

Every single voice beneath my chin.

Grandmother

(by *Taunja Thomson*)

In this place daytime moon does not ride
a distant horizon—this soft white
orb broods between sharp red
mountains with cobweb
clouds for adornment.

The field below has been plowed
so that its soil lies braided
into cornrows—thick
russet ropes stretching
taut across landscape.

A woman rises above the beginnings
of cassava tentacles and amaranth
her legs formed from copper
soil her skin rich as if
knit of stars and metal.

No one will acknowledge that although
this woman is grown from the field
her grandmother was the first
to understand seed
to drop it into ground
to feed her people.

POEMS:

MARK FLANIGAN

Mark Flanigan is a poet, performer, columnist, fiction writer and a screenwriter. His “*Exiled*” column is archived at semantikon.com and citybeat.com, and a compilation, *Exiled on Main Street* is forthcoming. His volume of poetry, *Journeyman’s Lament*, appeared in the Aurore Press publication, *Versus*, and his free e-book, *Minute Poems*, is available online from Three Fools Press. In 1/2014, Flanigan co-founded an open/feature reading, Word of Mouth Cincinnati.

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JUANITA MAYS

Juanita Mays, an artist/poet of Appalachian heritage, has been published in the Ohio Poetry Association Anthology *Everybody Stops and Listens*, NFSP *Encore*, KY Poetry Society *Pegasus*, and the Anthology *Quarried*. She has self-published two chapbooks: *Dog Dreams by the Fire* and *Layers*. With her daughter, Lillie Ann Teeters, she also co-authored, *Pickles, Prozac and Watermelon Ice Cream*.

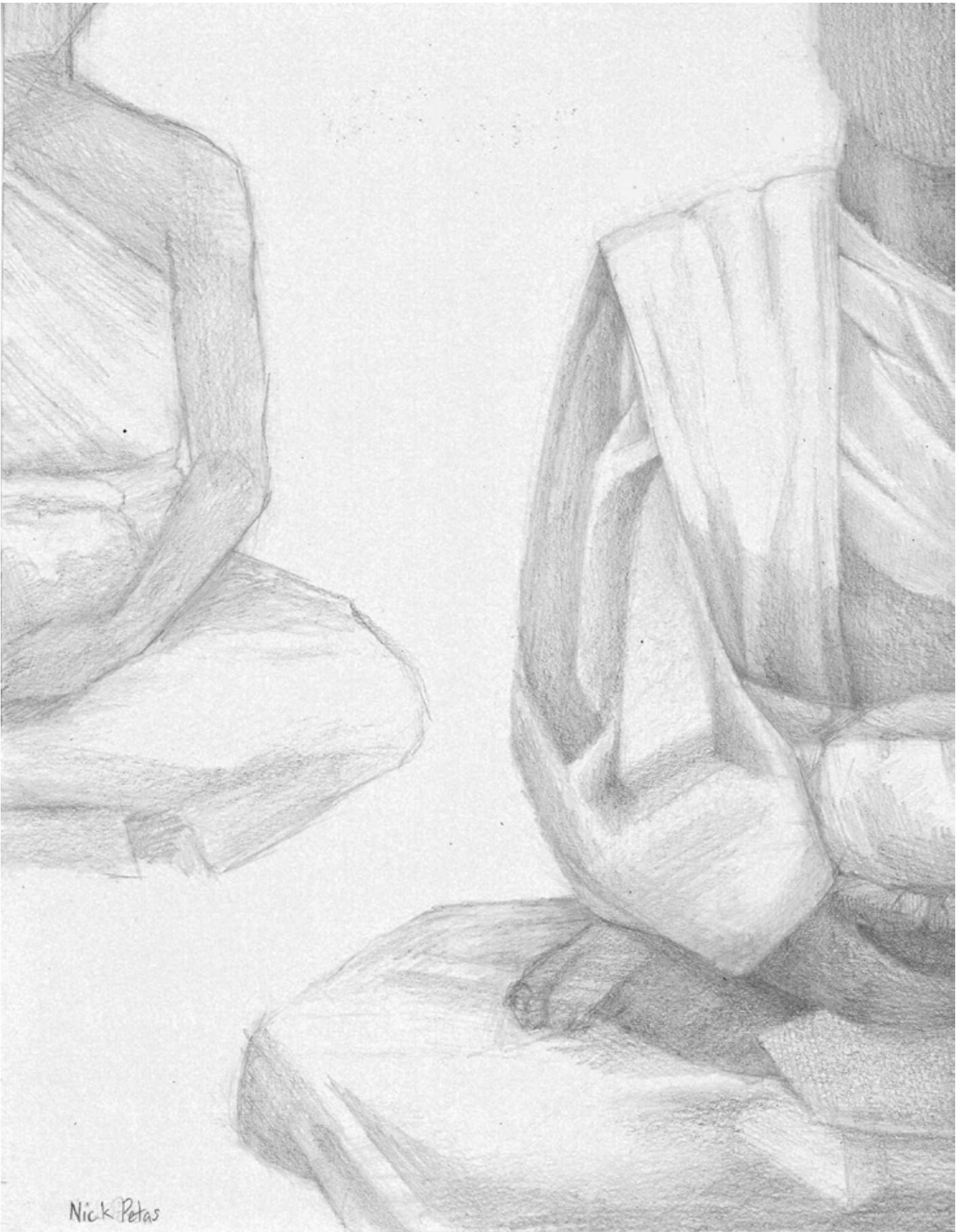
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DRAWING:

STERGIOS (NICK) PETAS

Stergios (Nick) Petas is currently a student in the Graphic Communication Design program at the University of Cincinnati, DAAP. He is also working towards a dual minor in Fine Arts and Art History, exploring the many complexities of drawing and painting, while relating them to Graphic Communication.

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Nick Petas

Enlightenment at the Buddhist Temple

(by *Mark Flanigan*)

nine Buddhist monks dead.

the newsman
says
nothing was taken,
nor were there
any signs
of a
struggle.

Untitled

(by *Mark Flanigan*)

time is infinite
the mountain top high

both are illusions

there is only one step
there is only one moment

this one

Pray for Voices of Doves to Be Heard Again in the Land

(by *Juanita Mays*)

Words ricochet, rocket fumes spit lies
from the bloody beak of a vulture.
He shouts through his bullhorn,
guttural tweets; drools
with the power to denigrate.
Eater of wings, he and his, hover,
they cast foreboding shadows across a nation
that mourns as a democracy implodes.

Pseudo Christians flock to kneel
at his feet, they watch
him descend the golden tower.
He is a gift from their great-white-god,
a thief, amasser of
fortunes, this wall builder, divider.

He has polluted waters of the red-feathers,
snakes razor wire around
young ravens as their mamas weep.
He strangles brown sparrows
mid their songs;

this orange fowl who has devoured diplomats,
picked their bones clean.
Diplomacy, now a skeleton,
hung to rot and rattle in the wind.

The buzzard's breath reeks,
he anticipates weak birds dying.
And he is not *entirely* stupid,
has patterned well
the iron claws of dictators.
He lines his filthy nest with
a nation's *free press*,
her very freedom of speech.
He talon-scratches and defecates
upon its pages daily.

When shall cages filled with birds,
wild-eyed and thirsting
burst to open?
In November,
when starlings, in wave after wave
swarm and swarm
and swarm the skies.

Joy in Troubled Times (a triptych)

(by *Juanita Mays*)

I. Landon, two, with runny nose,
snuggles with me in the recliner.
We hold a bowl of nearly thawed
blueberries. The Lan-man's finger
in his nose, he says, *It stuck*,
then reaches that lightning-fast finger
to pluck a berry from the bowl.
We have a spoon but he has his own
personal preference.
From the nose to the berry to the mouth.
From the nose to the berry to the mouth.
I give up! Later I sing:
Boogers and blueberries
Boogers and blueberries
Boogers and blueberries
That's our song!
He dances, spins, swirls and sings, *dat our song*.

II. Laney Love, also two, helps her mama
make a cake and pours the measured cups
of flour into the bowl: *one, two*
then counts and dumps *one* cup of sugar.
The egg carton opened, Mama Traci tells
Laney, *Get three eggs*.
The Love-bug-girl grabs *one, two, three*,
and holds them to her chest.
Like bouncy-balls she tosses three white orbs,
quickly into the mix, flings her arms
into the air like a cheerleader and shouts, *I did it!*

III. Cohen, seven, takes bread in February,
when gulls from lakesides and seas,
flock inland behind the Burger King.
I drive slowly near bird souls seemingly lost,
and Cohen, who wants to be called Zebra,
tosses broken bread into the wind.
White and grey wings, swoop and flutter,
grabbing at food from his fingers,
nearly diving into his face.
The Zebra, filled with joy and trepidation,
squeals and ducks, opens his bag
and does it all over again.

What to Do?

(by *Juanita Mays*)

What to do with fifty-two thousand dollars?

Buy new coats for hundreds of
children up and down the hollers
where I was raised, and snow boots
for nearly frozen feet wearing mesh
gym shoes in the January.

What to do with fifty-two thousand dollars?

Afford fresh fruit and veggies,
even in the wintertime: lemonade,
limes, fresh apple cake, buy a
case of Spam or a spiral ham
smelling so good in the oven.

What to do with fifty-two thousand dollars?

Buy a bus pass, pay student loans,
put tires on cars and pick-up trucks,
fill gas tanks and fuel-oil drums,
turn thermostats up to 72.

What to do with fifty-two thousand dollars?

Pay rent that's late, or electric
overdue, afford co-pays when
a baby gets the croup and
a humidifier to replace pans
of water boiling on the stove.

What to do with fifty-two thousand dollars?

Repair or buy a car, fix the porch
floor, add a room, pay for Cobra
insurance to retire while you *still*
can walk, buy asthma inhalers,
not covered anymore... a magic
foam mattress for aching bones.

Or...buy *one* garment
to be worn a few hours on the
taxpayer's jet,
like

Melania's fifty-two thousand, five hundred
and fifty dollar Italian floral jacket.

POEMS:

CHARLES FINNEY

Charles was a creative director in the advertising and public relations business. Now semi-retired, he writes for the enjoyment of it and finds poetry challenging and rewarding. He is a member of the Monday Morning Writers Group.

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CAROL IGOE

Carol Igoe taught English at the university level. When her son was born with Down Syndrome, she saw the world that people with disabilities live in; then, the world where poverty, injustice, prejudice, cruelty... injure fellow human beings. Carol works and writes to change this world, one voice at a time.

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NOEL ZEISER

Noel Zeiser is a poet and short story writer. She recently published a short novel, *The Pearl Street Flood*, that tells of one man's experience of the 1937 Ohio River flood; that man was her father. Noel is now preparing to publish a book of poems.

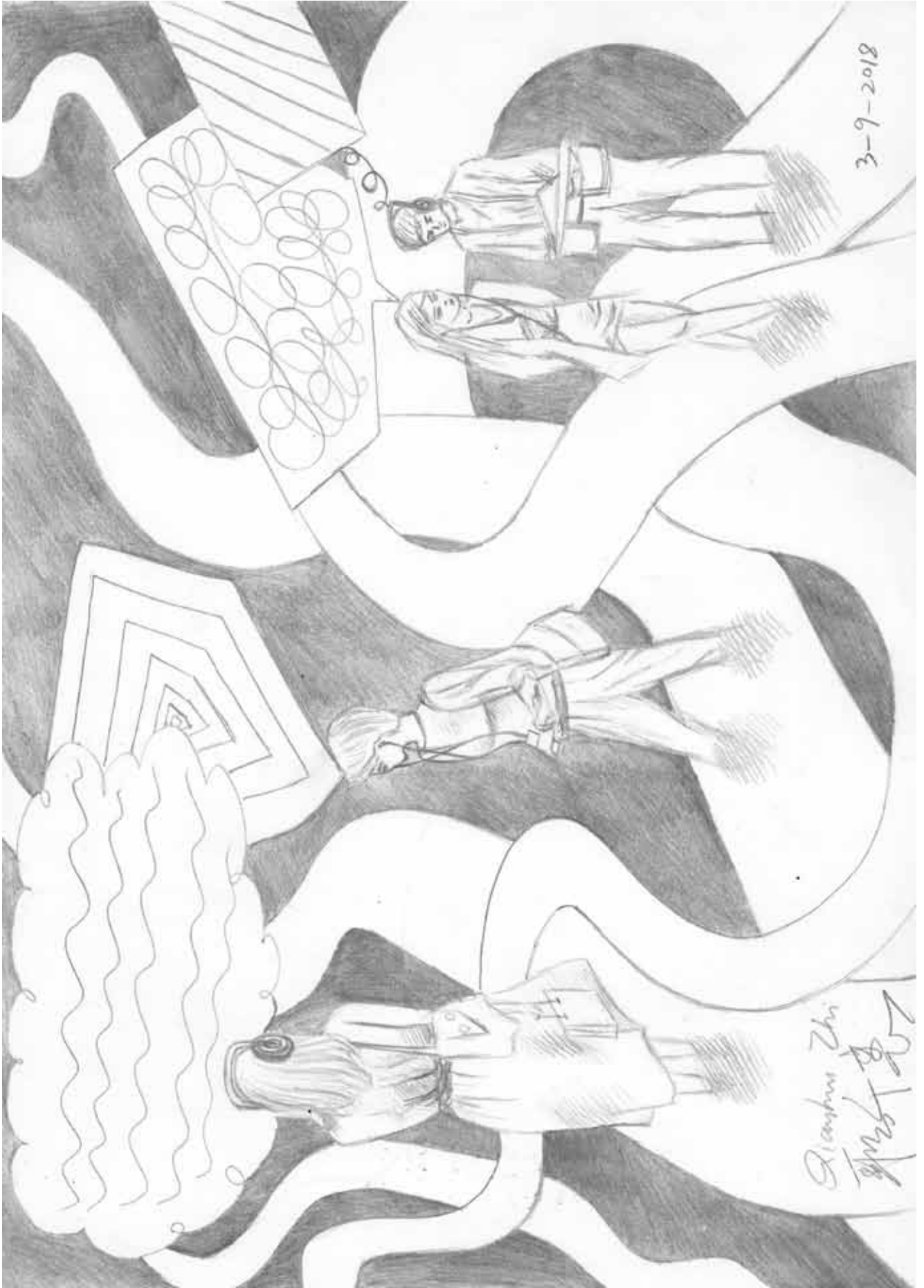
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DRAWING:

QIANHUI ZHI

Qianhui Zhi was born in China. She is an artist located in Cincinnati completing her undergraduate studies majoring in Fine Arts at UC/DAAP. Her work includes lithography, drawings, photography, animation, and game arts. Qianhui likes to blend the Asian and American cultures in her art works.

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3-9-2018

Rianhuo Zhi
3-9-2018

How So?

(by *Charles Finney*)

How noble sounding are the words of the false patriot
when his words are enshrouded in the ragged fabric of hate.

How strident are the orators who proclaim “all men
are created equal,” except for many millions who are not.

How strange the words of those who scatter the fairy dust of
superlatives as if to obscure their baseless nonsense.

How false are they who practice verbal alchemy, trying to
convince others to exchange their hopes for ersatz gold.

How deceiving are those who point to a convoluted “yellow
brick road,” as the perfect route to a brighter future.

How blissful are they who pledge their unquestioning loyalty
to him who promises greatness to his adoring followers.
Sad.

A Good Man: Indianapolis April 4, 1968

(by *Carol Igoe*)

(50 years ago, 50 years later)
In this time of trouble

In this time of trouble, who can guide us?
In this time of trouble, who can take our hand?
In this time of conflict, (a) time of tricks and hate,
Who can teach us justice, in our breaking land?

Call on Bobby Kennedy, 50 years ago,
Announcing Martin’s murder, took the risk of blame,
Called out love and kindness, joined the angry crowd,
Shared the people’s anguish, in that troubled time.

When our leaders fail us, try to teach us hate,
Seal our country’s borders, lock up freedom’s gate:
He left a prayer to teach us, In our cruel time ,
He left a lamp to guide us, reaching out his hand.

Look, Mister

(by *Noel Zeiser*)

Look, Mister, you can’t expect people
To listen to your rules and regulations.
People have their own agendas;
Their own hungry, anxious plans.
You wear everyone out with your
Declarations and parliamentary
Procedures.
Knock it off, give it a rest,
For goodness sake, why
Don’t you take a walk,
Take a nap, take a trip.
I’ve listened to you for
A day and a half
And I refuse to listen
For one more minute,
We’re not married, are we?

Finding Pause

(by *Noel Zeiser*)

The distractions full numerous
 divide my attention,
harden my hearing, deaden my taste.

I fail to grasp splendor.
 Circus outshines shimmer.
I praise the flowering pear tree;
the forest does not register.

How loud our chatter, how funny our jokes.
I'm a crazy kid at the party.
 I grab the chandelier.

Along the edge of night, a scene arises
that teaches in dreams. It tiptoes its truth
 to uncover the real.

I smile into my coffee, flick aside
 what I learned.
I slash the night, stir up the day.

My near-sighted eyes
squint to catch the daily parade.
 Yet the dream breathes near.
It haunts when I'm still.

POEMS:

KARA GALL

Kara Gall is a Cincinnati poet and Writing Tutor at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College. A graduate of San Francisco State University's Creative Writing MA program, she is currently compiling her first poetry collection. Her poetry and essays have been widely published in award-winning anthologies.

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SUE NEUFARTH HOWARD

Sue Neufarth Howard is a poet and a visual artist whose free verse poems have been published widely and received Prize awards. She has published the poetry books *TreeScapes*, *EarthWords*, *In and Out of the Blue Zoo*, and *Haiku Moments*. Sue is a past member of Greater Cincinnati Writers League (GCWL).

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LINDA KLEINSCHMIDT

After teaching writing at colleges for 20+ years, Linda Kleinschmidt is now a worldwide academic, book, and ESL editor. She works with writers from Asia, Europe, the Mideast, and the US. Linda has written short stories, flash fiction, poetry, children's books, and articles on the writing craft and advocacy issues.

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DRAWING:

CHRISTINA VUOTTO

Tina Vuotto is a Cincinnati native who has been surrounded by art her entire life. She did community art projects during her time at William Mason High School and later went on to attend DAAP at the University of Cincinnati.

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Tina Vuorio



Caught Against a Fence

(by *Kara Gall*)

Once I wrote a lyric, but they didn't want to sing it
the young women who danced in the Redwood trees
with their tarot cards and crystals.

We won't link darkness with fear, they cried.

I wanted to explain the night I wrote it:

a barbed-wire fence under a November new moon
coyote howls creeping up from canyons.

How I sang in the darkness that night.

How I was scared but found my voice.

How I imagined those coyotes in daylight:

white and black, brown and red fur.

Now I am trying to write a poem about a poem.

I want my life like poetry, I start, built-in white space.

And I mean it to mean the portion of page unmarked.

I mean it to mean a space uninterrupted, a place to rest,
breathing room for the eye. I mean it to mean absence
of clutter, of distraction. Of noise.

What I mean it to mean is not all that it means,
anymore. Tumbleweed words detach from stem,
roll with the wind across divided American frontier,
collect meaning in their tangled branches,
releasing their seeds after they swell
with the raucous rain, the reign, of injustice.
White space is the privilege the poem didn't know it had.

So I stop writing about darkness and white.
I aim my pen, instead, toward enjambment,
words tumbling over from one line to the next.
No fences. No end-stops. Each margin
an invitation to continue the conversation
beyond the typical breaking point.

The Peace of Wandering

(by *Sue Neufarth Howard*)

On the walking path
this morning's hint of war, gone
in the wake of woodland stream.

I revel in the silent breath of trees,
aura of sunning turtle dreams, patterns of
thread-thin blue dragonfly whoops and
whirls.

Seduced by moments of innocence
bubbling water speaking joy
the song of wind breath, a pause in
despair

my soul shimmers.

Always Peace

(by *Linda Kleinschmidt*)

There's always more peace
Needed, waiting like
An eternal clock ticking softly.
Peace paces off the times
Of war, the times of turmoil,
A skewed giant silent and
Too often trampled, yet still
Stalking the forest compulsively
Perhaps lost..... but
Forever searching
For the right resolution.

Forgotten Memories

(by *Linda Kleinschmidt*)

What humans can do, indeed have done
Is often lost, no longer a reminder of the
Cruel and hideous, or the necessary
Required, even demanded
Of all new generations. Each must
Recognize, learn how humanity
So easily dissolves into chaos
From disregard, collaboration, or the
Precise coordination of the machinery
Of death, slavery, or other evils.
Such is the simple ignorance we pass down.
Truth long ignored and fear are encased in
The lost reminders of sad tales for
How mankind so easily accepts the
Demonic and then acts on it.

POEMS:

BRIAN GARRY

Brian Garry is a community leader and organizer, an environmentalist, a green business owner, a writer, a son, a father and a grandfather. He ran for City Council in 2017 as a Fearless Progressive Democrat.

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PATRICIA GARRY

Patricia Garry, a consultant in community development, a psychic reader and healer, a writer, a mother, grandmother & great grandmother, has used her life to build communities and bring folk together to create the world they want to live in.

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MARY NEMETH

Mary Nemeth, a retired elementary teacher, is new to the poetry scene. She has been taking a Writing Poetry class, through the Olli program at UC, for the past three years. A member of the Monday Morning Writers Group and The Cincinnati Poetry Project, she has gained valuable insight and critiquing to help her writing.

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DRAWING:

APRIL HUERTA

April Huerta is an illustration major at the Art Academy of Cincinnati with a minor in creative writing. She works heavily in mixed mediums, but also does digital work. Her art focus is mostly related to any of her writings, which are horror, apocalyptic, and sci fi fantasy themed.

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We Don't Talk About This

(by *Brian Garry*)

Unfortunately, I know the pain of #metoo.
Expand the realm of the speakable.
I never told my mom.
In fact, I never told anyone.
Men don't do that –
Too painful, too shameful.

I've never talked about it in public.
It's always someone we know –
In my case a family friend,
A trusted uncle type.

He was a man –
I was a boy.
Breaking and abusing
a soft spoken and innocent kid.

Soul shattering devastation.
Closeness wasn't safe.
Trust wasn't safe.
Never be vulnerable again.

I refuse to be a victim any longer –
This pain is not my name now.
Who I was is not who I am.

Why Is It So?

(by *Patricia Garry*)

Why do all the women I know –
My age 77 all the way down to teens –
Have #metoo stories?
Including me, of course, from
11 or 12 years old.

And why did we not scream and shout?
Why did we believe it
when we were told it was our fault?
The way we dressed, the way we looked
at the world?

#TimesUp on all that –
It is good to see
Justice being done.

Too Powerful to Fall

(by *Mary Nemeth*)

Thousands of successful, powerful men,
waiting for the other shoe to fall,
are now shaking in their boots.

“Am I safe?”

“Would they tell?”

“Will I be next?”

They secretly ask themselves.

Watching the formerly mighty tumble
from atop their once secure perches
one by one, they quake, quiver and question:

“Would they destroy me like that?”

They wouldn't, would they?” they ask.

“It was mutual. They wanted it!” they insist
as these men try to convince themselves.

Afraid for their future, families, fame and fortune,
they hurriedly rummage for excuses,
others to blame, and denial, denial, denial.

“Who are all these women?”

“Why are they coming out now,
destroying respected, hardworking men?”

They nervously question themselves and others.

But sure they are too powerful to fall,
are respected and loved by one and all,
they can't believe WOMEN could be their downfall.

POEMS:

PAULA GRAPEVINE

Paula Grapevine is a long time resident of the Greater Cincinnati area. Her roots are in Ohio. She has always enjoyed both reading and creative writing and believes in the “forever” power and enchantment of words. She is currently retired and lives in Goshen Township with her husband.

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NICASIO URBINA

Nicasio Urbina, PhD, is a Professor of Spanish American Literature in the Department of Romance Languages & Literatures at the University of Cincinnati. He is also the co-editor of the *Cincinnati Romance Review*, and Vice-president of the Festival Internacional de Poesía de Granada

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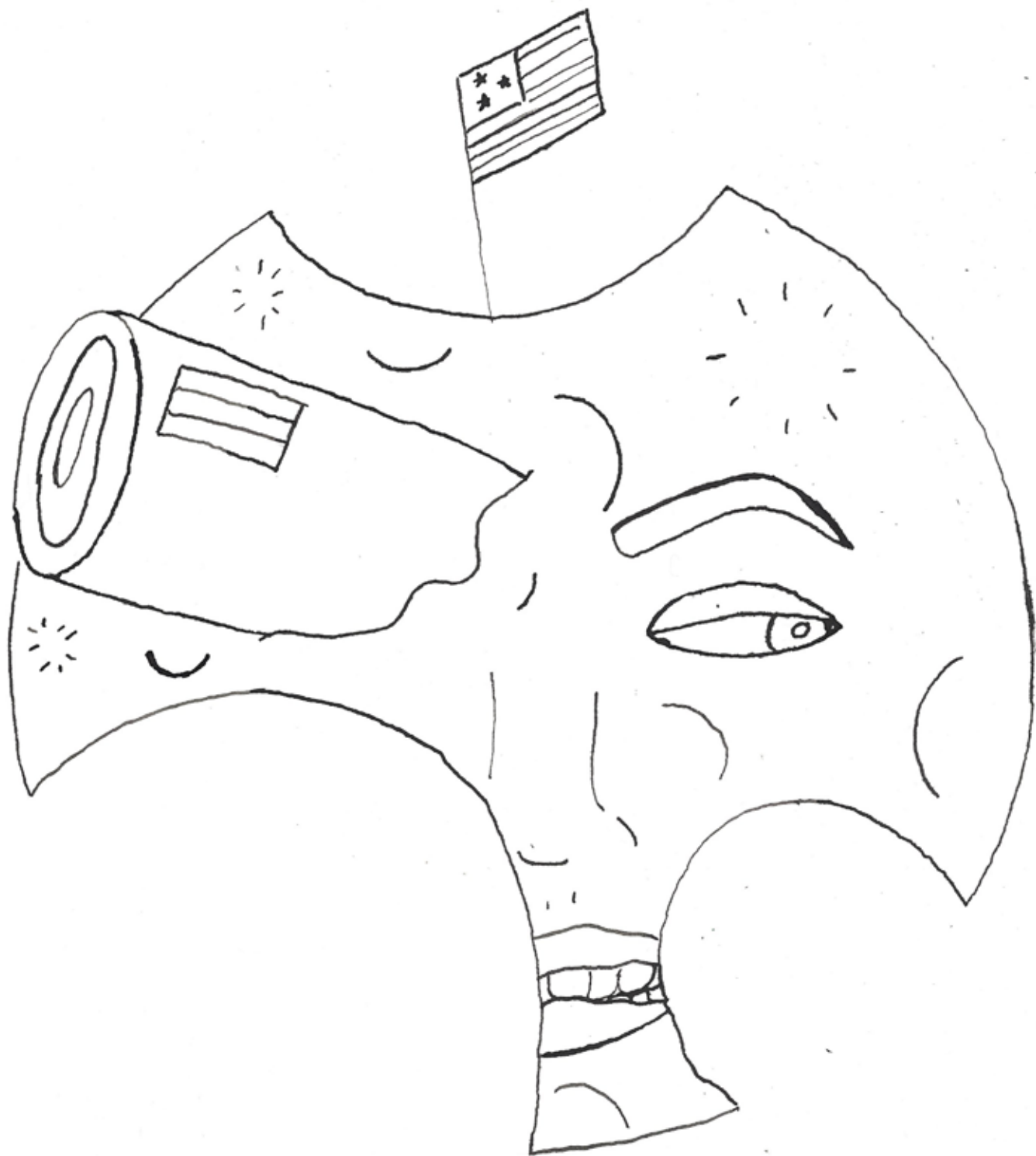
DRAWING:

LAUREN BOEING

Lauren Boeing is a graduate of the University of Tennessee and a student at the University of Cincinnati. She lives in Cincinnati with her two cats, one dog, and the love of her life.

Lauren makes zines and crafts and always has too many tabs open.

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Lauren Boeing

Song of Peace

(by **Paula Grapevine**)

Two nations clashed in a meadow
So many years ago
That the prize for which they struggled
Now no one seemed to know.

After years of bloody battle
No peace could be maintained,
Though praying hands and tear-stained eyes
Of mothers still remained.

Then came a deadly serenade,
“Tu Woo, tu woo, tu woo.
Let gentle death rescue your soul!
This song is sung for you!”

Whispering into the soldiers’ camps,
Deliberate and true,
While the soldiers slept that night
They bid their lives adieu.

That song of death crept o’er the land
To silence all that heard
And then stalled like some grotesque plague
Till nothing living stirred.

With dawn of morning came a breeze
Purging those notes of death.
The golden sun then searched the land
To find no life was left.

“Let gentle death rescue your soul!”
Whispered the serenade.
At last the fields were peaceful again
Where endless war once raged.

Fight

(by **Nicasio Urbina**)

For years both sides had disputed control of the city. Almost destroyed, the city was dying under military rule. Then the leaders went before the judge and asked for a definitive solution. Destroy it, the judge ordered, and the city was totally destroyed. A few days later the sides continued fighting for the possession of the ruins.

Por años ambos bandos se habían disputado el control de la ciudad. Casi destruida, la ciudad agonizaba bajo el dominio militar. Entonces los líderes acudieron ante el Juez y le pidieron una solución definitiva. Destruyanla, ordenó el Juez, y la ciudad fue totalmente destruida. A los pocos días los bandos siguieron luchando por la posesión de las ruinas.

Corn

(by **Nicasio Urbina**)

Juan Diego had devoted his whole life to growing corn. He sowed, harvested, prepared the land, replanted. Until one day the water ran out, the earth dried up, the air became rarefied; and Juan Diego had to leave his ranch and go to the city, where the corn was imported, the water came in bottles, the earth was in clay pots and the air was gray.

Juan Diego se había dedicado toda la vida a cultivar maíz. Sembraba, cosechaba, preparaba la tierra, volvía a sembrar. Hasta que un día se agotó el agua, se secó la tierra, se enrareció el aire; y Juan Diego tuvo que abandonar su rancho e irse a la ciudad, donde el maíz era importado, el agua venía en botellas, la tierra estaba en macetas de barro y el aire era gris.

(both poems translated from Spanish by
Nicasio Urbina)

POEMS:

ROBIN GRISHAM

Robin Grisham is an ever budding poet, writer, and thinker and an author of many yet to be published poetry collections. A nature lover, she is as always, a bird among people and a person among the most colorful of birds.

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ELAINE OLUND

Elaine Olund imagines a world where creativity and mindful movement begin to tip the balance towards greater peace. A certified Amherst Artists & Writers method facilitator, she leads an ongoing workshop at the Clifton Cultural Arts Center. She also teaches yoga, runs a graphic design business, and is constantly learning to listen better.

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DRAWING:

MEGAN HUSTMYER

Megan Hustmyer is a visual artist whose work primarily involves the experience of embodiment as a vehicle for healing. Megan works in a variety of media to create objects and spaces that are activated by the body, with the aim to make participants feel safe while engaging with the work and one another. Her work is filled with experimentation and a desire for uncovering the facets of inter connectivity between people and the world.

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meganHustmyer

Gargantuan Cataclysmic Wingspans

(by *Robin Grisham*)

Life is a funny
Terror-ridden tale
That makes anything else seem
Infantile

No one makes it out alive
No one knows how much time
They really have left
To leave any kind of mark

People come, people go
Planets keep turning
Around and around
Almost enchanted by their own light

Bonds are formed, bonds are broken
Bombs go off in the distance
Cataclysms exacerbate
Cemeteries fill

Newspapers curve around stories
Never-ending edits
Cynics stare at black walls
I write poetry

Call to Arms

(by *Elaine Olund*)

My words seem to be losing muscle lately
wavering over-boiled, clumpy like pasta left too long,
soft, pale, not much use, weak, quivering...

I want to deploy my words, join with yours—
march together, march further, march forever
make our words stronger harder fitter fiercer

how else to stand up to steel-plated lies
rapid-firing like assault rifles, twenty-four/seven

while my naked little words shiver breathless
all
alone

tremble like a toddler's bottom lip
afraid they don't matter, that they are—
unwanted.

Oh, grow up, words, and hurry:
it's time to arm even the tiniest, newest-born syllables
teach each string of sounds
to sing songs of bravery on dark nights
trudging across a cold graveled world
that crunches under each little descender
as the letter travel forth, ascenders aloft,
like banners of hope under the starry sky

let them sing for strength, for purpose,
for reasons to go on gathering this way
day after day after day
let them form drill teams
let them pour out single-file onto unlined pages
fan out across blue screens
infiltrate closed hearts and shackled minds
let them fight battles—
let them win.

Oh, arm each expectation, equip each conclusion:
impenetrable, razor-wire sharp
give every syllable steel-plated strength
call them all to duty
unleashing truth as a secret weapon—

let them be relentless.

Casting Stones

(by *Elaine Olund*)

*for Maribel Trujillo-Diaz,
deported one Wednesday to Mexico*

An April dawn was breaking
when Maribel was snatched off the streets by ICE agents.
Her four American-born children,
ages 3, 10, 12, and 14,
never got to say goodbye to their mother,

who used to work just a few miles from me,
processing chicken parts
grueling labor—
she paid taxes, went to church,
made a family, built a life...

now her deportation is
breaking on air, breaking my heart

newsfeed comments roll past
smelling as I imagine chicken innards on a
conveyor belt might smell, gagging—

*“Go home to YOUR country and think about
what you are going to do with the rest of your life,”*
says the red-headed woman whose profile picture is a
multi-colored “Kindness Matters” meme

*“She caused the breakup of her family when she
decided to live her criminal lifestyle,”*
says a woman grinning in full Irish regalia,
forgetting about her own ancestors who fled from famine,
many of them illegally

“The blame is solely on her,”
says the beefy red-faced man
whose Facebook overflows with
snaps of him and his wife and three kids
at an Easter-egg hunt after church

*“If she was in fear she should have
gotten help long before now,”*
chides the woman whose profile picture
shows her close-up, kissing a blonde toddler

*“Why does this get so much attention?
Is she the only mother that has ever been sent back?”*
asks the woman who’s recently surpassed
level 65 on Candy Crush

“The law outweighs compassion,”
says Butler County Sheriff Richard Jones

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself,”
says the second commandment

In Fairfield tonight, four children cry for their mother,
who did not get to tell them goodbye

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself,”
repeats the second commandment, falling on deaf ears

ears closed, hearts closed
tight as a dusty bible

Maribel’s children grieve, hearts crushed

while the closed ones
harden, harden, harden
scrolling Facebook
trolling newsfeeds
playing games
passing hours—
casting stones

Havens

(by *Elaine Olund*)

For months the children drank poison
boil it, said the city and the parents protested
while faraway, wealth bathed in safe havens

what can we do? asks
my friend, brow furrowed.
I mean, if there’s no money to fix it...

ah, but if you’re rich enough,
your currency gets a warm place,
a safe place to grow

brown/yellow/metallic/stinging
fine, fine, fine, boil it, boil it, it's
economic reality, a money-saving effort

in Michigan babies
drank poison in utero
no haven for them—damage done

lead poisoning is irreversible
and preventable
and also apparently deniable

until outside investigators measured lead
above toxic-waste levels
flowing freely from household faucets

for months, thousands of children
bathed in poison, drank it—as their growing bones brittled
minds marred, skin pocked

somewhere, snug behind walls of steel and green glass,
precious money remains cradled, safe in shelters,
golden, gilt and bond-plated havens

four years on, the stock market
is bull, over 24,000 on the Dow
while children in Flint still can't safely drink the water

POEMS:

GERRY GRUBBS

Gerry Grubbs is a lawyer who has been writing poems for as long as he can remember. His poems were published in numerous literary journals. Gerry has also published six books of poetry, his most recent, *Chrysanthemum Moon*, from Dos Madres Press.

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FRED TARR

Fred Tarr is actively involved as an administrator doing intake work for a members writing and publishing group in Massachusetts. He lives in Ft Thomas, KY, but continues to work with the North Carolina Poets and Writers Association. Fred appeared several times in 2017 in the Old Mountain Press anthologies.

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DRAWING:

MARIO BARBI

After a lifelong career in advertising where he covered almost all possible positions on the creative side of the profession, from art director to creative director, to television commercial writer and director, Mario Barbi now dedicates his time to drawing, painting, and making art. Mario recently obtained a BFA from NKU and shows his work locally and nationally.

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Who You Are

When you are alone
And all the world is gone
The heart that beats around
The soul that lives within
The light that shines
And all the world is gone
Yourself in a way you never
Thought of and this wave of love
That flows from you and me
On your long journey
Through the world and all
That you will see
What you have thought of
The things that you are

marioharki

Who You Are

(by **Gerry Grubbs**)

When emptiness opens its door
And all those boxes
You have been moving around
From place to place since
You left the womb lighten
And disappear and you enter
Yourself in a way you never
Imagined and that wave of love
You have felt now and then
On your long journey
Washes over you and doesn't
Leave you realize
What you have longed for
Has always been who you are

Together

(by **Gerry Grubbs**)

Together we are like a song
That the birds have learned to sing
A song that makes more light come

when the love I give to someone in need...

(by **Fred Tarr**)

I am the richest man in the world when the love I give
to someone in need to whom no one sees

is returned over time in ways that establish my being,
moves me like a wave emptying a surf

on the forehead of a beach, transports all that I am
above sky blue nothingness of which I have no

knowledge... into infinite blackness of which I have no fear, carries
me across electric fields of

broken synapse, their darkened bands animated by a juggernaut of
language,

a detritus of rumor, a paroxysm of hate: manic shears flash in the
darkened fields, cut off the reach of Dreams.

...to someone in need no one sees.. whose emperor's clothes hang in
tatters,

attract less and less the resuscitation of the Phoenix,
whose impassioned signing of the deaf releases the body electric.

...to someone in need whose reddened hands
are discolored fingers that have never known an excrescence of diamonds...

whose swollen knuckles and gnarled fingers have never known the weight of
gold, garnet, amethyst, tourmaline, jade, or silver.

Above this blue expanse of which I have no knowledge
the shoulder of an infinite blackness of which I have no measure carries a band of brown
in which incalculable Permissions loom. It is the aura of the Existential
of which I have no feeling, no wish to acknowledge or define.

Today is Tuesday and I remember
the murder of your smile, how hatred kills the body, how love nurtures the
soul

POEMS:

RICHARD HAGUE

Richard Hague's latest books are *Earnest Occupations: Teaching, Writing, Gardening & Other Local Work* (Bottom Dog Press, 2018) and *Studied Days: Poems Early & Late in Appalachia* (Dos Madres Press, 2017.)

Richard is Writer-in-residence at Thomas More College.

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ANNETTE (TONI) LACKNER

Annette (Toni) Lackner, a native Cincinnati, wife, mother and grandmother, takes every opportunity to share her words. She enjoys writing fiction and has also written a one-act play, but finds poetry the best way to express her thoughts on peace and justice. She is a member of *Women Writing for (a) Change*.

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DRAWING:

VIRGINIA ELLIOTT

Virginia Elliott is a working artist from Cincinnati, OH. She received her BFA from the University of Cincinnati with minors in Geology and Psychology.

After interning at Josephine Sculpture Park, Elliott follows her passion for 3-dimensional art to Sculpture Trails Outdoor Museum where she will continue to create sculptures that converse with the environment.

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Cosmas
Saint
and
Damian



Virginia Elliott

Steps in Defending One's Self from "Empowered Ignorance"

(by *Richard Hague*)

1. Gather the facts
from impeccable sources
and array them with style,
logic, and beauty.
2. Approach the foe
with respect. Speak
calmly. Resist
firmly when
interrupted.
3. Check everyone
for weapons.
4. Remember all
the kind untruths
your mother told you
to keep your happiness
untrammelled.
5. Now, expect blatant unmotherly
denial of your points,
followed by public expressions
of scorn and contempt.
6. Do not appeal
to reason when it is clear
that reason does not prevail.
7. Shorten that to RDNP
and expect to encounter it
again and again.
8. Swallow your anger.
9. Stifle your outrage.
10. Order out for a massage.
11. Practice the pangolin
defense:
roll up into a
ball and close
your eyes.

12. After the "bargaining
session" breaks down
and the taunting foe, tucking
in his napkin,
calls for cheeseburgers and beer,

check everyone, again,
for weapons.

Angoville-au-Plain

(by *Annette (Toni) Lackner*)

I. Then - 1944

There's a little stone church, in a medieval stone town
It shows no vestiges as a place of renown

Did they see it as they dropped from the sky above
The place that would teach them all about love

They were so young, nineteen and twenty-one
Their training as medics just barely done

Cleanse the wounds, stop the bleeding
Administer morphine, as men are pleading

Were there sheep in the meadows and cows in the corn
When the bullets were flying that fateful June morn

They heard "medic", "medic" in the helter-skelter
A refuge was needed to treat and to shelter

This little stone church would serve quite well
To treat the wounded of this on-going hell

They pulled them from battle in ones and twos
Laying them gently on the old wooden pews

As they raced back and forth, up and down
A boy was brought in who lived in the town

He was wounded by cross-fire, the damage severe
The medics made way said "Lay him right here"

They toiled and toiled midst the blood and the stink
Merciful God, not a moment to think

A German sniper hiding over their heads
looked down at the wounded on their make shift beds

He aimed his rifle, looked at the dying
“What do I do with you” they heard him crying

“We’re medics they yelled making a deal
“Bring us your wounded, we’ll help them heal

They worked and worked until the fighting was done
Saving hundreds of soldiers and a town’s boy of one

II. Now - 2017

I walk the aisles, touch a bloodstained pew
I can almost feel them, those heroic two

But there ‘s more to the story than that fateful day
These bullet-pocked walls have more to say

The photos they hold show these two men
Some from now and some from then

One married a French girl a picture shows
A gown made from a parachute drapes to her toes

Middle-aged men stand full of pride
But who is that posing at their side

The town’s boy of one now full grown
No sign of the bullet that hit his bone

One became a minister when he returned
The other a businessman with wisdom that he earned

Both are gone now but their story remains
Of how they dropped from the D-Day planes

Half of one’s ashes buried here in a plot
The other half lying in an American spot

Statues of Cosmos and Damien from the alter look down
The patron saints of doctors we are told by the town

As I leave the church walking toward the door
I realize again there is still more

A stained-glass window gives the church light
Depicting a parachute in mid-flight

The window was erected as a way to give thanks
To those young, brave medics, the American yanks.

POEMS:

KAREN HEASTER

Karen Heaster began her writing career in advertising. She went late to college where she received a degree in social work, then on to graduate school. Karen now writes educational brochures for her employer. She originally refused to write poetry but got over it. She greatly admires Billy Collins and Ogden Nash.

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TERRY PETERSEN

Terry Petersen, the author of two middle-grade fantasy books, *The Curse Under the Freckles* and *Stinky Rotten Threats*, is a regular contributor to Piker Press. She tries to dive through the muck of everyday chaos to find the hidden gems.

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DRAWING:

JOSEPH GREULICH

Joseph Greulich, a 22 year old artist working out of Cincinnati, uses illustration as his preferred medium of creation. Joseph combines clean lines with a defined color scheme in order to convey a sense of humor that makes it easier to address issues of mental illness and addiction in his work.

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Joseph Greulich

You Shouldn't Do That at Your Age

(by *Karen Heaster*)

I was in my 50s when I went to a skating party
Fell, and fractured my arm
You had it coming said a friend
You should have known better at your age

Now I'm in my 70s and enjoying taekwando
The black belt who teaches the class
Panicked when I mixed up my feet
And had an easy, laughing fall to the floor

This week he told me not to come back
He had to "Let me go"
He might start a class for over-50s in the future
He knew I'd understand

I answered that I understand age discrimination
Especially when it smacks me in the face
But
He should know better at his age

Trickle Up (About Love, Not Theory)

(by *Terry Petersen*)

Anne Frank's words:

"I don't think of all the misery,
but of all the beauty that still remains."

Her sound was forever silenced.

Yet, her voice rings true in this oh-so-similar era,

where a white supremacist learns empathy.

A car plows into protesters.

It steals life, but not purpose.

A girl who knew hunger and abuse discovers trust.

We become best friends.

Hope. Insight. Peace. They grow inside seeds
that don't recognize their worth when planted.

Small, invisible in a world

where power and greed rule.

Buds of integrity bloom, then refuse to die.

Summer Trick or Treat

(by *Terry Petersen*)

I cough and Ella holds her ears.
My sensitive granddaughter hurts when I do.
Empathy lives in her being.
Yet, we play, even as I wheeze.

Halloween, she says,
handing me a reusable grocery bag,
a plastic box of snacks in her lap.
What's your costume?

An apple. A squirrel took a bite.
Got any apple bandages?

She giggles and waits
for my next costumed character

I arrive as a mouse and ask
if she has any cats?
Another smile as I peek inside
her pretend home.

What's your costume? her eager voice asks
as I become a fish with three eyes,
whose third orb roams. It won't behave.

My wrist pressed into my forehead, I ask Ella
If she wants to share a worm.
It hasn't been dead long.
Ooh is sufficient response.

My imagination clicks with hers too well.
She shortens her turn as trick-or-treater.
And I wonder if I'm doing myself harm.
My six-foot circled path
along our living room rug mimics
the challenge of a triathlon.

The noise in my chest audible,
illness is obvious. I want to rest,
stare at nothing, disappear
into self-imposed limbo.

But, Ella has had two open-heart surgeries.
A tripled twenty-first chromosome,

Down syndrome, matched with
an up personality, sharpens
her awareness of struggle,
life's balance at a cost.
I hand Ella the box of treats
and pick up the bag.

One more time from the top.

The National Anthem— Revisited Someday

(by Terry Petersen)

Oh, say can you see through the horror and greed
of the powers that lead to the edge of destruction,
simple people who care, solid people who speak
about truth, about love, about change that needs to be?

No more rockets' red glare. We all live with healthcare.
We prove through our lives that the reign of Trump is bare.
O say, does the world now see more than a flying banner?
Our shores, a land for all. Now, the home of humankind.

POEMS:

MIKE HEILMAN

Mike Heilman grew up, terrorized, and still lives in the suburbs of Cincinnati. He has a family now and writes when time allows or the universe makes him. He also enjoys making old rust bucket motorcycles run again. He relates to them.

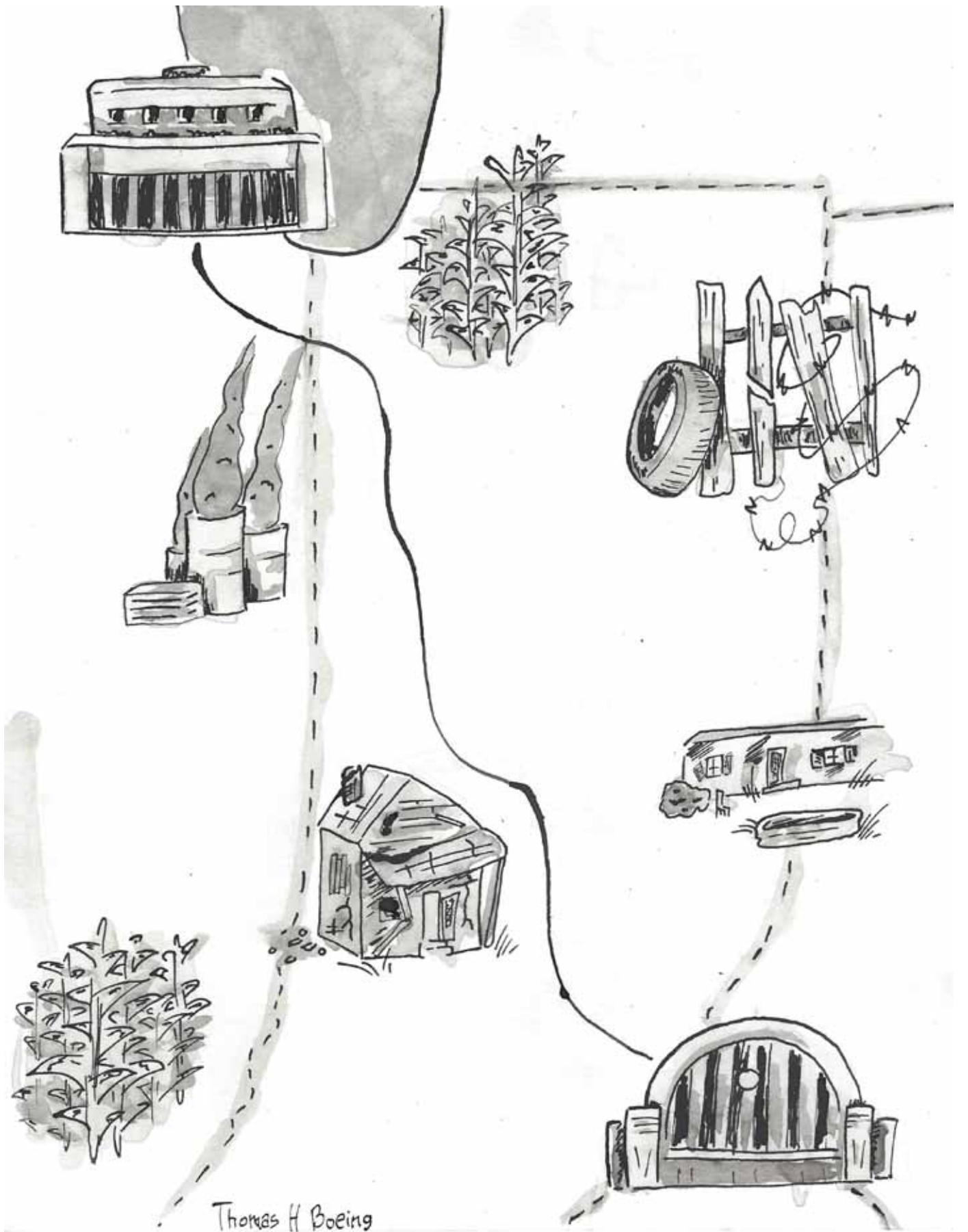
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DRAWING:

THOMAS BOEING

Thomas H Boeing, a cartoon artist, graduated from Columbia College in Chicago. He had an irrational hatred for Michael McDonald and lives in Cincinnati with the love of his life and their pets.

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Thomas H Boeing

Amtrak Cincinnati to Chicago 3/12

Past decrepit trailer parks,
tired houses
built in front of fences
leaning, peeling
clapboard sheds
hiding old tires,
forgotten tools
propped up in their cobweb corners

Past corn fields, bean fields, soy fields
frozen in March
crossing rivers and
little icy streams
brown muddy banks with roots
reaching for water
cutting through a dusting snow

Past the back side
of factories,
razor wired compounds
of hulking, sprawling
lit up, menacing, machines.
parking lots the size of small cities.
furnaces belching smoke and stink and rust
built on the rail line
to ship whatever they make
to wherever it takes,

Past the little lives spinning within these confines,
above ground mines where safety
is marked in days without injury
big above the rear entrance
-it had been only 4-
the worker's children play
in yards where
garbage clings to the chain link weeds
swept in from the streets and fields
with the rush of every train,
cracked kiddy pools filled with muddy, moldy water
and dormant mosquito larvae,
squirrel nests rest bare
in the winter trees.

We've been rocking
click-clacking across the landscape for hours
on this train,
but could just as well be still
just minutes from home.

Tenementality

The sounds of the street
are all right most moods,
window, shade up, sun music,
relaxed as clothes
aired on a backyard line. But

Other times-

The street is restless
long screaming sirens wail
through the night, around corners,
off to emergencies,
tribal beats thump from trunks
drowning out arguments.

When the street is all wanting,
yearning and disappointment,
times of draught, and starvation

I must then shut off the lights.
Secure the shade
and wait.

Mni Waconi (Water Is Life)

In North Dakota
Native American
Water Protectors wade
waist deep into a Creek,
met with pepper spray
rubber bullets, cruel and ironic
fire hoses in freezing temperatures.
They just don't want an oil pipeline
going through their Sacred Burial Sites
and under their Lake and River.
It's simple really.

But prayers The Creator may not hear
are answered with riot gear,
troopers from all states,
the national "guard".
For generations this battle has gone on.
Since the Buffalo were
left to rot in heaps on the Prairie
and gold was found in their
Mountains and Streams.

It disturbs my center, I'm outraged
I want to join, paint my face
climb in the Water with them
square up tall, strong,
defiant, peaceful, prayerful.
They are the rightful agitators
in an environmental revolution,
and though,
Mother Earth needs them
I fear, again,
they will weep
wounded and crushed under
the American machine.

In Ohio
the Autumn leaves
ornament the side of the hi-way
and twirl to the Ground
on a cool Breeze.
A Red-Tailed Hawk lands atop a lamp post
scouring the tall grasses at the guard-rail for a
Meal
as I drive
toward the next exit
for fuel.

POEMS:

MARY-PAT HESTER

Born in West Virginia, Mary-Pat Hester moved to New York City in 1966 where she worked in periodical publishing for 27 years. She is a founding member of St. Marks in the Bouwerie Poetry Project and has read her poetry widely in NYC. She moved to Cincinnati in 2007 to pursue her interest in poetry writing. A member of the *Monday Morning Writers Group*, Mary-Pat is 72 years old.

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PAUL SHORTT

Paul Shortt is a set & theater designer; an ad hoc architecture, interior/exterior designer; an ad hoc poet, playwright, short story, essay writer; and parent, grandparent, & husband to Marcia, retired graphic designer. Paul is also the proud co-founder of Theater Design & Production department at UC-CCM and a professor emeritus. He wonderfully co-exists in Cincinnati & California with his wife Marcia.

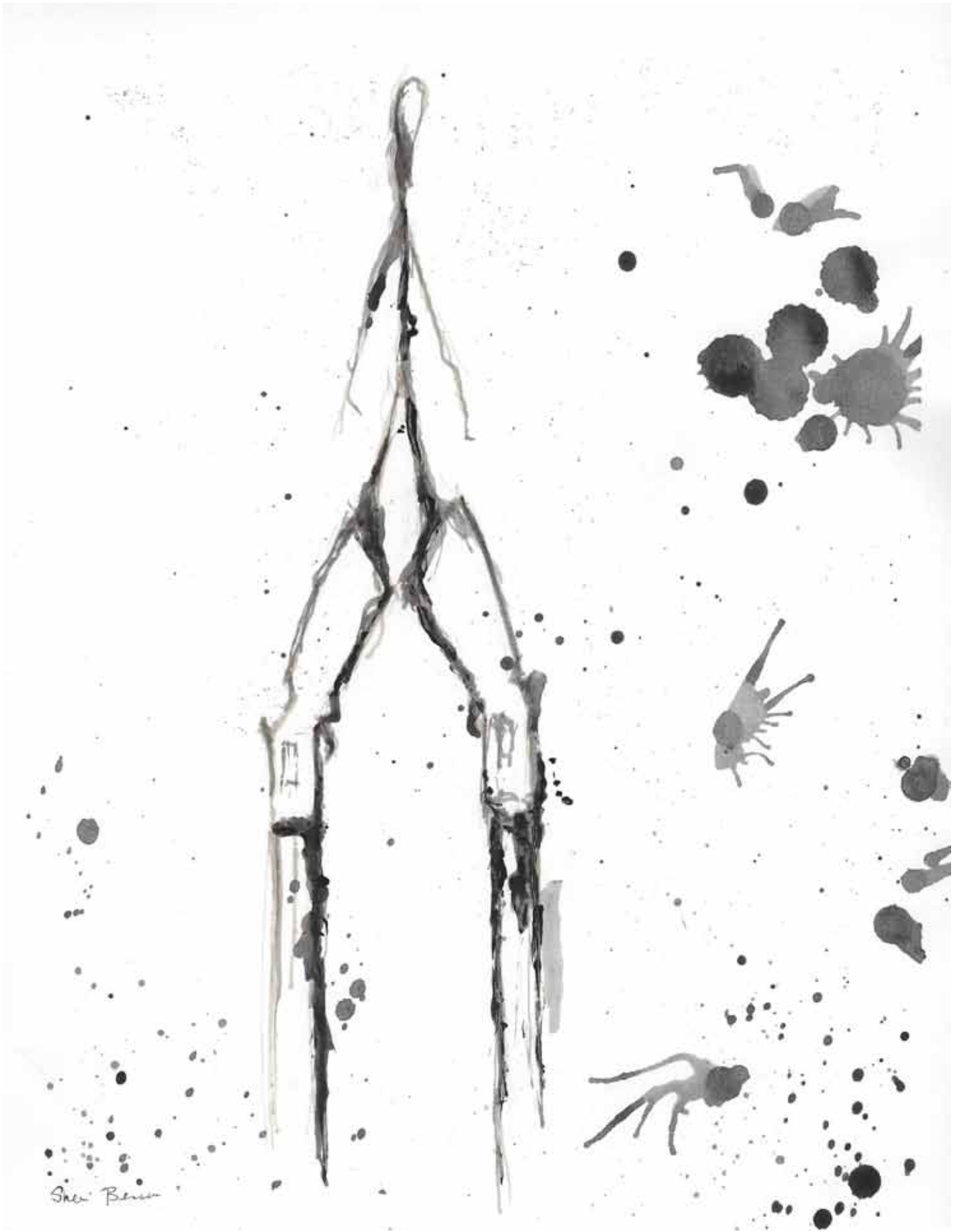
Contact: paulshortt1@hotmail.com

DRAWING:

SHERI BESSO

Sheri Besso is a native Cincinnati artist and a museum professional.

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Shen Bao

Guns

(by *Mary-Pat Hester*)

hand cut tight, whip light motion
telling time, it's a knife's
fissure, an instant in me,
a dark bleeding sound
which I note. it continues
as blank shells shoot
to hit marked pigeons;
the range is close.
it splatters: a bird cries;
I'm hit with my ricocheted aim.

i have been told
guns are for protection;
carried these days
for just that purpose.
non caring self-protector,
i see you on the street
with your short primal aim,
your pretentious blast blaring.

i have been told
ahead is Revolution.
shot straight,
fate, right
through the heart.
we stand on stilts,
the highest rung,
legs untouching,
wooden metallic things
tinged with fear.

Open Carry Kitchen

(by *Paul Shortt*)

I put your Remington in the lunchbox Sally.

Why Ma?

You put that on the lunch table -
Those girls won't bother you *any more*.

Ma, Dad's old Glock's too heavy for my backpack,
An' Joe-Bob's got a brand new Feather-Lite 9.6.

Ask your father for Christmas.
Who's got target practice today?

Seventh graders, Ma – Can't hardly hit a barn.

Baby! Take that gun out of your mouth -
Jody, where're the Wipes?

In your apron, Ma.

There now, all clean! An' not in your mouth.
Like this Baby – Point it at Sue-Ann,
An' squeeze the little trigger.
See, isn't that fun?

“Bu . . . bu . . .*Bang!*”

Aww. Baby said “Bang.”

Jihad

(by **Paul Shortt**)

Hey, look at me . . .
Now say it . . .
With me -

Im . . . mor . . . tality . . . is . . .

. . . nearly mine. I can see its . . . Glory . . .

. . . though I am . . .

. . . blind. It will gleam more . . .

. . . than the brightest . . . sun.

Soon my Brother . . .

. . . we are joined . . . as one.

Good! Now say it to yourself . . . seven times.

42nd Street – That's us.

They rise and grab their backpacks,
hoisting them onto shoulders,
homemade signs visible –
HITCHING ACROSS USA ,
AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

One holds a small American flag,
the other puts on a Yankees cap – backwards.
They disappear quickly out the subway door.

Down the car
A small girl asks -

What are those mans doing, Mommy?

POEMS:

KAREN I. JAQUISH

Karen I. Jaquish lives in Milford Ohio. She is a past winner of the Nation/Discovery Award. Her poetry chapbook "*What Remains*" was published by Finishing Line Press in 2015.

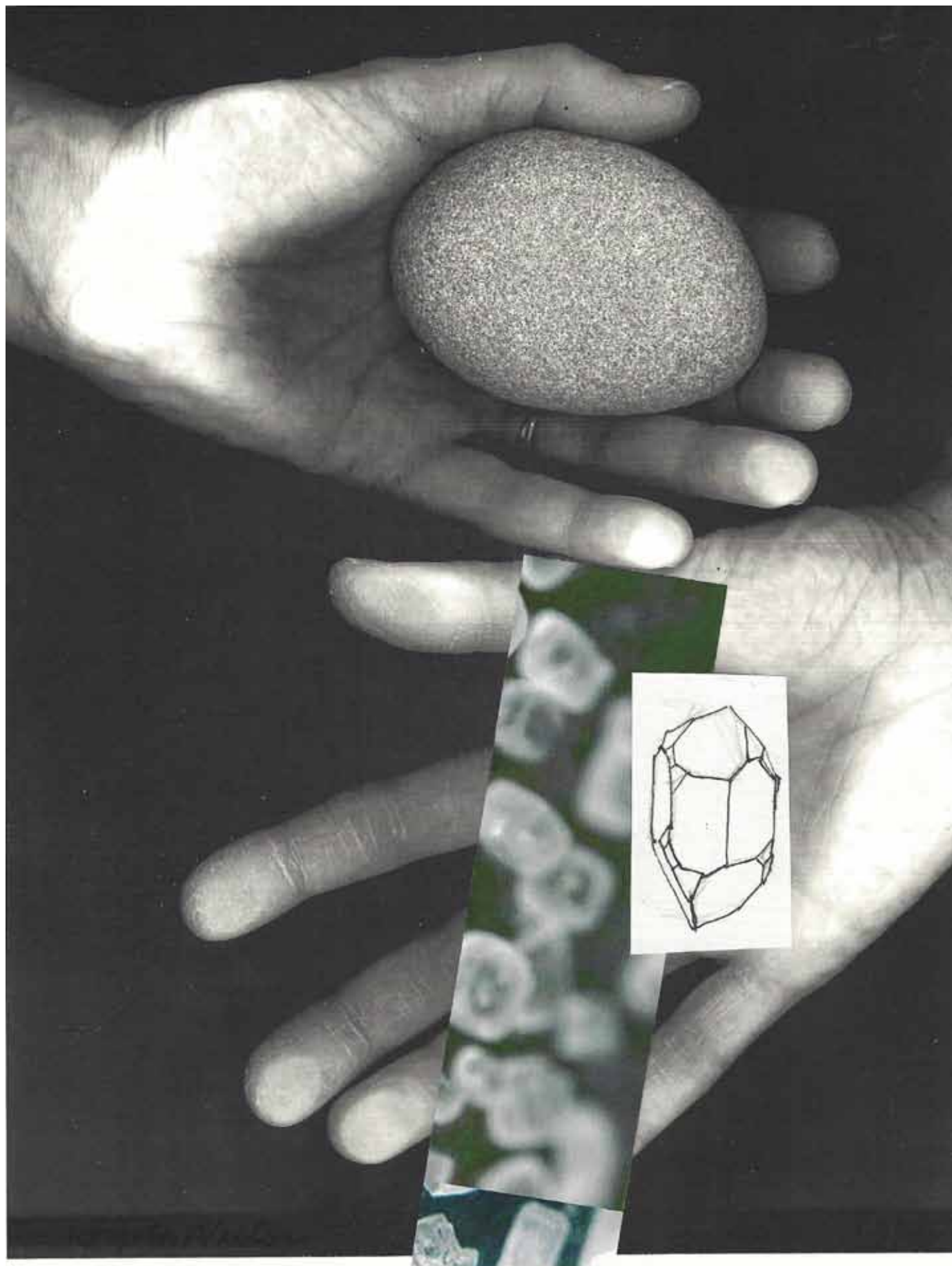
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DRAWING:

LOYOLA WALTER

A native of Louisville, KY, Loyola Walter holds a MFA in Painting from the University of Cincinnati (1988) and a BA in Art from Bellarmine College (1980). She is an associate professor of fine arts at Mount St. Joseph University where she has taught drawing, painting, figure sculpture, art writing and ceramics handbuilding; and where she received the Mount's Clifford Award for Excellence in Teaching (2005). Loyola's sculptural commissions include building-mounted sculptures for the Hyde Park Community United Methodist Church and a life-size bronze sculpture of St. Francis of Assisi for the Franciscan Media headquarters on Liberty Street in Cincinnati, OH.

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Wynne Wallace

April 2018

L'Occupation

Annette

No bread today. Mama forages in the cellar
for bits and pieces in make un potage.
Gray with determination, Papa writes by candlelight.
His pen rustles like mice in the attic.
Letters pile on the hall table seeming as humble
as the paste diamonds that Tante Elise used to wear.
As we dared not admit the falseness of her jewels,
so too we dare not post Papa's letters of outrage.

Michelle, next door did not return from the marketplace.
At midnight, dogs wake me, howling in the courtyard.
Another death or cries of hunger? Day and night,
soldiers clatter up and down our avenue.
Their boots scatter pebbles over our stoop.

A boy passes, wincing with every step.
The light catches his eyes. They glitter like raindrops.
We do not attend Mass. What must the priest think?
Each day I dress myself in my threadbare uniform.
Yet, I do not pass our door. Nothing to do, save wait.

Gunther

My feet ache. This marching, constant imbecile marching.
I believe each bone is crushed like the cat Hans bayonnetted
last night. I have memorized every twist of this damned block.
We're ordered to show force. Against what?
Some flickering candle glimpsed through a shrouded window?
If the villagers only knew less than a dozen bullets keeps them
at bay. Ach, I hear their laughter, starting as low as the mist
and rising like some frantic night bird, desperate for light.

There is no news of home since we arrived at this place.
Even the trains no longer arrive. They have been deterred.
We scavenge like rats in the underground. Victory is not a word.
Only Herr Kommandant – his greasy jowls spit out praises
as if they were wreaths to lay across our shoulders.

This morning as I stumble over dew-soaked cobblestones,
I spy a girl, her face tissue-white, watches me through a fold
of drapery. I remember my sister Berthe. Will we return
to our Fatherland? Will we return wrapped in flags or carrying one?
Another order echoes down the line. Nothing to do save obey.

What Remains

Sitting across from each other
in this Russian rail station,
smoke rings and garlic breath
circling our mouths,
we talk of peace
and violence,
the way each news story
festers and then inoculates
us against any feelings
but despair.
Oh, my friend, what we need
is Babushka to make up a fable.
Maybe a story about a magic wand
and a princess whose heart was
constructed from diamonds,
so wherever she traveled
she had to balance her heart
between delicate white hands.
While journeying across her kingdom
she meets a giant who has lost his way.
And despite his gruff voice and hairy brow
we know eventually they'll reach
the *happily ever after* part.
Or so the story goes.
We need to believe in something,
will lead us beyond
this incarcerating light
to a place of small windows.
And these small windows will open
as tenderly as mists among cumulous clouds.

Little by little, we'll see how
heaven parts. Can you imagine
that space between trees as
the place that gives birth to wind?
And somewhere between the tower
and wood
is the very spot
where the stars sleep.
So Babushka will say as she promises
one day we'll return,
all pungent and shimmering,
like apples or raspberries tumbling along
black tiers of earth. Maybe all we have
to sustain us are fables,
those common dreams, that lead us.
Without them, how else can
we proceed during these small days
between wars without the dark?

Sugar, Salt, Stone

For Katherine Solomon

One: Voices Outside

Detroit

Sugar, salt, stone:
think of them as simple blessings for the table.
Think of the table as large, round, a steady Maple.

Such basic items, sweets to feed, bitter to cure, the last
to build a haven from the earth to air.
Consider too, how the stone can become
an instrument of pain and destruction

We could make peace of words
as sweet as sugar granules, so peace can be
easily captured, then swallowed.

Of course we know salt is vital,
scraped from deep walls underneath dark cities
and slowly hauled up bucket by bucketful.

Gathered around this table, remember how a stone
can be both deaf and dumb, an object of awesome strength
and muted beauty, not unlike our dream of peace.

Maybe stones don't dissolve in water,
as salt and sugar will, but a stone turns to dust given
enough pounding and grinding.
Everything can disappear.

Two: The Voice Inside

*Yesterday in the alley outside the market,
the townspeople found three hands severed
from absent bodies.*

*A student looked at me
and said, "Welcome to my country."*

*Does the earth matter more
than a bloody hand? As I write these lines
this war is ten days old. I'm still awake and writing.*

*Three hours before dawn, planes overhead are circling and circling.
Their engines rupture the silence of the moon.*

*Deaths have become uncountable.
Missiles are flying in place of the spring crows.
I would like to remember
peace as something solid like marble,
but I've never known peace as it's described
in stories and fairy tales.*

*The air has turned into smoke and oil. Orange sand lifts
with the wind. We're all choking, even the strongest among us.*

Three: Voices Underneath
Baghdad

We have so much sugar and enough salt gathered
around this global table. A stone is a shield.
It can be both weapon and tool.

What shall we choose to carry?
a pound of sugar or a sack of stones?
Will salt erase our eyes? If we have two eyes,
which eye will see?
Whose life will be stopped by stones?

Do we possess a choice?

With our two hands, which hand will hide
behind the rock and which will fall bloodied
palm-down in the alley?

How should we imagine a bag of sugar or these granules
cupped in my palm? What is it about this stone that makes us
imagine the slope of a skull?

Listen for the music coming from this rock.
Blend the sweet with the bitter. Lift the heft
by its vein.

We can live in peace, an unknown country,
or we can live like grieving angels must
with salt-crusting eyes and stones
clogging our veins.

POEMS:

NANCY JENTSCH

Nancy Jentsch has taught German and Spanish for over 30 years at NKU. She has published scholarly articles, short fiction and poetry in journals such as *Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *Eclectica*, *Aurorean*, and *Blinders*. Her chapbook, *Authorized Visitors*, has been published by Cherry Grove Collections (2017). A collaborative chapbook, *Frame and Mount the Sky*, was also published in 2017.

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KAMAL E. KIMBALL

Kamal E. Kimball is a poet, grant writer, journalist, and teacher. She is the host of *Inkwell poetry night* at Urban Artifact every second Monday of the month, a member of the *Cincinnati DIY Writers* and the *Ohio Poetry Association*, and she serves as a poetry reader for *Muzzle Magazine*. Her work has been published in *Rattle*, *Sundog Lit*, *Bone Parade*, *The Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *Zetetic*, *Kaaterskill Basin Literary Journal*, *Indolent Books*, *Califragile*, and elsewhere.

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DRAWING:

SAMANTHA LAKAMP

Samantha Lakamp is a Fine Arts Major at the University of Cincinnati, with a minor in art therapy and art education. She primarily works in 2D mixed mediums and drawing. Her art focuses on positive social change, environmental concerns, and social interactions.

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Samantha
Lakamp



Murmurs

(by *Nancy Jentsch*)

Foaming waves bring
echoes of moaning
tortured coral reefs
tumble like bleached
grave markers

ground's spring sponge
crackles dry with dismay
seeds grunt Demeter weeps
below bedraggled
blanket

Sky swears *sotto voce*
thirsts under sun
grays grumbles
mourns mountaintop
removal

When will grief
muster a battle cry
drown out

thunderclaps that bluster promise
to make minions great again
underscored by a lone
lightning bolt
that wrings drops of vigor
from water earth air
into Zeus's fiery pocket

Women's Work

(by *Kamal E. Kimbal*)

Tear the stripes from the flag
loop them from the rafters like
streamers.

Dance all night in Sappho's taffeta.

Stomp the barn floor with boots
you ripped the straps off yourself.

Be a moon. Get drunk
on your own shine. Never ever work
to glow. Take it from the sun.

Be a sun-tongued, honey-lip girl,
string fangs around your neck like
pearls.

Sit down, rest when you're tired.

Stand up, when they try to give you
a cleaver by the blade, tell you it's a
butter knife,
tell you there's justice and other lies.

Let your lips loose in the forest to run.

Peel the nylons from your thighs.

Steal every pleasure and give it all
to a woman until her eyes roll
so far back she sees tomorrow.

The only work you need to do is the
work
of getting free. It doesn't pay in coin.
Don't care.

You're giving birth to the sky,
all this air is space for us to breathe

Fetch

(by *Kamal E. Kimbal*)

We chuck driftwood for the dog,
entire copses corpse the beach.

When she nears the spot
where it dropped, she turns.

Her stick is lost, she sniffs
for the scent of a human hand

but the whole lake, this whole
goddamn wrecked world

reeks of hands. Smells the same
when the orangutan sifts the rubble

of her jungle, razed for palm oil,
scrounges for a reason, finds

only her own bones. She will go,
another thing we can't bring back.

Offerings

(by *Kamal E. Kimbal*)

I sprinkle seeds I've taken,
skip stones I pick up,
hum the bird's song back at her.

Everything I think to give
it's own kind of taking.

I'm waiting to leave
the river my hands. Hoping
it will make sense of them,
put them to work in the ways

I've failed: the bees,
the bleached reef, people.

There's no archer left to nock
a different kind of arrow.

When I'm gone, you may as well
burn my carbon, more soot
but tuck me in the urn of the Earth
to sleep, to dream myself useful.

POEMS:

JERRY JUDGE

Jerry Judge is a Cincinnati based social worker and writer. He has had seven books of poetry published and has had poems in several journals and anthologies. He is an active member of the *Cincinnati Writers Project* and *Greater Cincinnati Writers League*. Jerry also volunteers at two no kill animal shelters.

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KEVIN C. MCHUGH

Kevin C. McHugh is a retired English teacher and a former proofreading/copy manager for an international branding agency. He works part time as freelance writer, editor and proofreader. Kevin is the author of professional and historical articles, and a contributor to poetry publications, literature and writing texts.

He and his wife, Chris, live in Cincinnati.

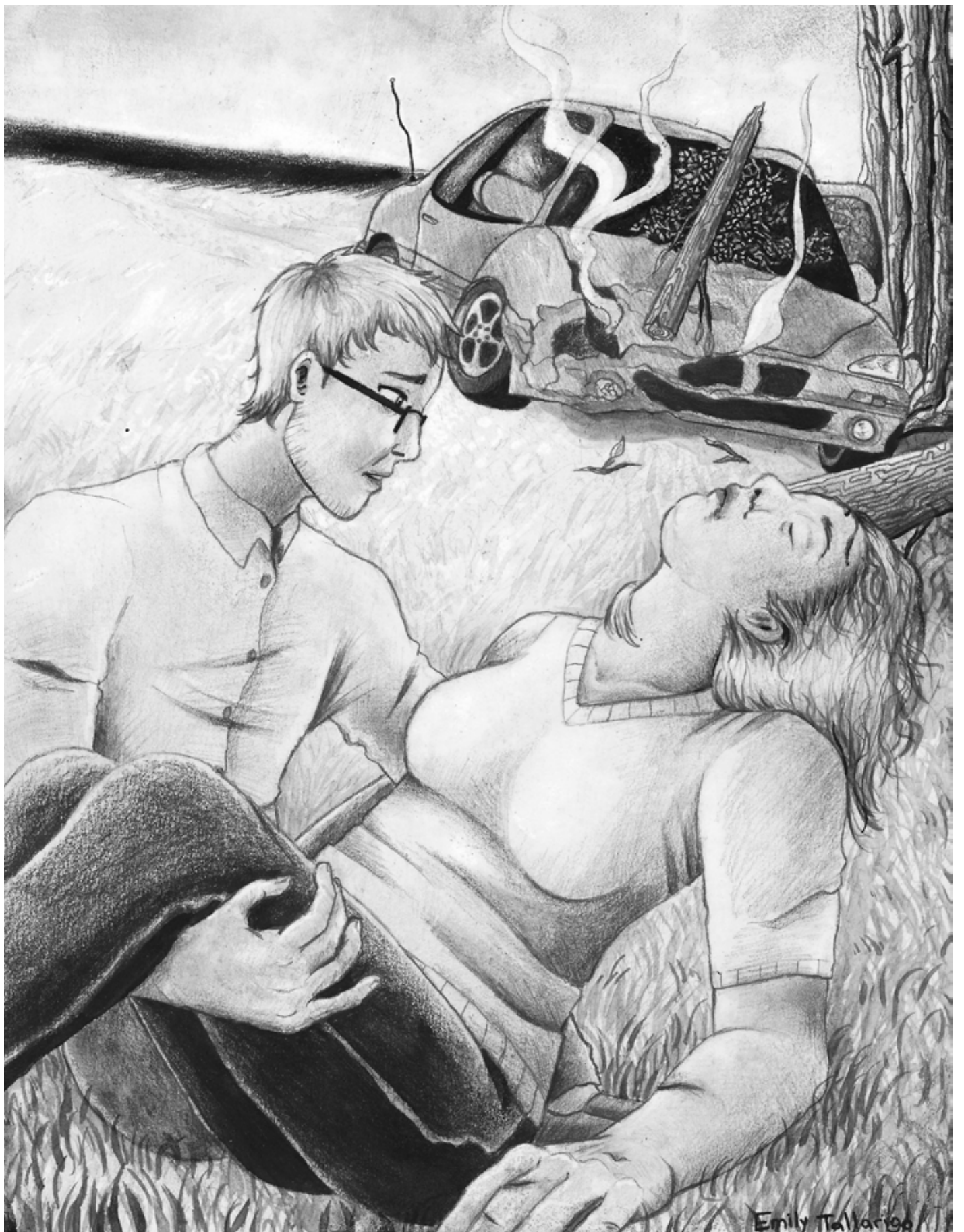
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DRAWING:

EMILY TALLARIGO

Emily Tallarigo, an artist currently living in Cincinnati, OH, is studying illustration at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. Emily enjoys character design and likes to explore themes such as gender, anxiety, and the cosmos.

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Emily Tallarico

Waiting in Line

(by *Jerry Judge*)

I could eliminate the stranger
by just saying hello.

I choose him to remain nameless,
to try names on him,

different personalities and professions -
zookeeper to assassin.

His hair can be lengthened and darkened,
perhaps a fashionable limp.

The many secrets he guards might
destroy all our illusions

about self, country and world governments.
He's probably a terrorist.

I want to turn him in to authorities,
but I don't have enough evidence.

Maybe I'm wrong, and he's a philanthropist
in disguise assessing the needy.

His hair can be lighter and shorter,
no limp and a little plump.

I'm starting to like him. I hope
he accepts my invitation to dinner.

State of the Union Address - 2018

(by *Jerry Judge*)

a downpour of hate spews
splatters inside of my screen
without respite –
feverish sweat
while I pray

our tortie cat
clings
to my lap –
glares at me
appalled

seldom used landline
rings and stops
three more times -
caller ID
unknown Washington, DC

I Do Not Know You

(by *Kevin C. McHugh*)

*for Melissa**

I do not know you.
You're just the red Grand Am
in front of me as I merge
from the westbound ramp.
A shape that as I watch
glides gently to the shoulder
and back between the lines
and only then do I begin
to think of you.
As a person.
A someone maybe nodding off
or texting on the edge
and when all seems well again
you drift off softly from the road
and keep on going—up
the hillside shoulder there
transforming to a flash
of scarlet in the green of fast
and spellbound spectator trees
almost as if someone had yelled
"Action!"—the camera rolling on
in slo-mo as I pull up even and
you hammer the unmoved wall
to rise up heavenward before
you shudder right side up—
coming at last to a stop.

Like me.
But not like me,
a passerby stopped reflexively
by the way, upon reflection
rushing unthinking to the wreck
not sure of what to do and signaling
the driver just pulled up
to ring the EMS.

And then I see the you
that you are, a person trapped
inside a buckled shell,
your door barred by a bent
and broken branch, another blocked
by jagged naked steel
turned almost inside out,
stolid in the midday sun
that likewise will not yield.
So I weigh for an instant
if I've been summoned here
unwillingly to be but a witness.

I am moved by that fear.
The abstract thought of you,
not the who you were
or may yet be
but who you are,
with me and here
and maybe dying in the flames
I conjure coiling now beneath
the smoking, twisted hood while I
like Nero fiddle your life away.
And so I wrench a back
door loose and climb inside
the crumpled cage with you,
there, where for a breath
I take stock—of your breath
and the smoke leaking out
like the blood at your mouth.

You are my age. With wild,
white and air-bagged hair arcing
into me as I lower your seatback
down into my waiting lap
from where I wrestle you up
and slowly over the seat
and onto me and in my embrace
then to slide out with you
through the fractured door
to be delivered from the wreck,
breech-birthing together
in the waving, welcoming grass
and we are out.
For the moment free.
And I am ready to rest there
with you in my arms forever.

Other hands reach in to help—
practiced, latex, baby blue—
passersby in medical pastels
who ease you up so that I
can wriggle out from under.
In a daze.
Where I stand.
In the outside world.
Amid the flashing lights,
the squad cars and the ambulance
that have by now arrived.
Where I watch
as others ask your name,
swaddling you onto a backboard.
Where I am become a signer of forms,
the fumbler with the pen
scribbling away in adrenalined scrawl
for the record and for the veterans
avouching daily struggles such as this
so now they seem unfazed,
untouched by all who pass
beneath their professional gaze.
And it strikes me then,
as they lift you up and then away,
that even now I do not know
your name. Or you.
But, God as my witness,
I will not forget you.
I can't.

*whose name I now know

POEMS:

LONNA KINGSBURY

Lonna Kingsbury is the author of several books, plays, scripts and artistic endeavors. Wandering about these United States, spewing poetry remains her favorite lifework. Founder of Cincinnati's original *Poet's Anonymous*, she is attempting in her compilation *If These Walls Could Speak*, to be released soon, to capture many of its stories and memories.

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MARK LOUIS LEHMAN

Mark Louis Lehman is a long-time Cincinnati resident. His novel, *Mocky's Revinge*, imagines an 8-year-old girl describing her eccentric small-town-Ohio family.

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DRAWING:

GABRIELLE SAPATA

Currently living in Cincinnati, OH, Gabrielle Sapata is a printmaker and designer, creating primarily handprinted tapestries. Her work is influenced mostly by culture and her own experiences. Gabrielle studied art and advertising at Xavier University and graduated Spring 2018.

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A/P

Under the Stars

D. Sapat

Underscored - the Music

(by *Lonna Kingsbury*)

Between . . .
the braying and the trumpeting
each discordant sound
decreed by those in unity
perfectly in tune
implicitly
invariably
incessantly
takes ground
rooted in absurdity
stifling profound
truthful chordings - absolute
long erased
as base
by chilling all melodic trust
when far sides take the stage
betray
each chorale conducive
dispelling any interchange
discarding commonality
for self-achieving goals
the tones
the chortles
gleefully
embraced by those extreme
the brayers
and
the trumpeters
drowning out the screams.

The Games

(by *Lonna Kingsbury*)

If ever there was time
its now
suspended 'till
we all as one
heart to heart
soul to soul
truly meet the goal
without a trace of mockery
without a hint of disbelief
without the scantest disregard
without the smallest tint
of condescending attitude
of superficial mimicry
if only there was time
to pause
to realize the goal

There is!

to know that we are truly one
no matter how each game is played
to know that brothers / sisters all
work and dream and reach and grow
through common calls to sow
the seedlings of our unity
entwining each to strive beyond
self-invested sacrifice
with homelands cheering on
one by one
two by two
teams dedicated to each dream
breach every human difference
and prove

our time is now.

Threnody for the Lost

(by *Mark Louis Lehman*)

How can the road
We cannot follow
Take us away?
Where can we go
When we cannot go?
Where can we stay
When we cannot stay?

How can we sail
On the sea
That swallows us?
How can we flee
When the winds wail
Fierce and the waters
Take our small sons,
Our trembling daughters?

Adrift and alone
We drown in the dark
Our cries unheard,
Our graves lit by
Bright stars that pierce
Black skies to
Shatter on the waves.
Our unmarked bones
Bleached by the sun
Sink in the sand
Unseen
And shunned.

Where can we be
When we cannot be?
We, the unwanted,
The nameless,
The forsaken
And lost
Of this world.

We,
The many too many.

POEMS:

ALISTAIR J. KRAFT

Alistair J. Kraft is a Cincinnati poet, teacher, and pet rescuer, who currently works as an editor for a legal publishing company. When not walking dogs and cuddling cats, he's often found cleaning up after them, cooking, or practicing with the *Cincinnati Men's Chorus*. Despite a superficially glittery persona, Alistair is very concerned with issues of equality and social justice, and is always looking for new ways to make the world a better place.

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JOSIE SMITH

Josie Smith, a senior at McAuley High School, will major in zoology in the fall of 2018. For the last four years, her poems have won silver key and honorable mention in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. In her free time, Josie volunteers at the Cincinnati Zoo and the Joe Nuxhall Miracle League Fields.

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DRAWING:

DENISE WELLBROCK

Denise Wellbrock is a current MFA Candidate, Teaching Assistant at Clemson University and received her BFA from Northern Kentucky University. Her work has been exhibited in places such as The Cincinnati Art Museum, Art Academy of Cincinnati, and University of Cincinnati-Blue Ash.

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Dennis Westwood

Untitled 1

(by *Alistair J. Kraft*)

If we could turn all
the blood spilled in the name of
 profit
 into ink
to write the sins of those
 who washed their hands, who
 signed off, who
 blinked and looked away at
 bank account balances
 made thick and robust
 with grief and loss

If we could, we
 would cut down all
 of our forests to print
 the truths, the tears,
The land would become barren
 air stagnant, an arid
 field of life
 where dollar bills will not stand firm
 enough to shelter us.

Cry of Grief

(by *Alistair J. Kraft*)

Loving men was easy, it came
Naturally enough to my heart, the pulse
Of blood through my veins, the longing
Of my skin for their strong shoulders.
Breaking silence was harder, almost
Impossible, a work of thirty years,
Twenty knowing the truth spoke clearly.
Before embracing my truth, before
Sharing it with others, I first learned to mourn
For the generations before me who had been lost
To indifference and cruelty. You left us to die,
Even if you didn't rejoice, didn't call it
A just punishment for our sins, sins that didn't
Touch you, didn't hurt you, didn't hurt anyone,
Still you left us to die and we are mourning
Still mourning, always mourning for the lives
Cut short in their youthful vigor, wasted away
In the arms of lovers and a country that looked
Away, that chose to look away as long
As possible.

If I could raise the heartbroken dead for a moment
To tell their tales of fear and shame and isolation,
The world would be knocked out of orbit
From the pain of their cries, from the pain of the
cries
Of their loved ones, who watched death, who
watched
Gaunt skeletons emerge from familiar faces,
Who watched a world push us back into hiding.

Our wails of hear us, hear us, we mattered, we
Did, we just wanted to live and to love, and we did
Not deserve your indifference, we did not deserve
Your cruelty, we did not deserve.

You left us to die.
You left us to die.
You did.

Born a Girl

(by *Josie Smith*)

They tell me to sit still and cross my legs.
They tell me to always look impeccable.
They tell me to keep quiet and never raise my voice.
And when I ask why,
they simply say "because you're a girl."
I was taught to fear.
I couldn't walk alone at night.
I couldn't set my drink down at parties.
I couldn't keep my car doors unlocked.
The day I came into this world,
there were rules for how I had to live.
I wasn't allowed to get dirty.
I wasn't allowed to wear "masculine" clothes.
I wasn't allowed to look strong or muscular.
I couldn't walk with a "manly" gait.
But I refuse.
I refuse to stay silent.
I refuse to be afraid.
I refuse to conform to the rules
That women are made to follow.
I will choose how I dress.
I will choose how I act.
I will choose who I am.
Why is being born a girl considered a crime?
I say we should be proud to be women.
I say we are powerful.
I say we are strong.
I say we are equal to any man.

POEMS:

MARILYN KREBS

Marilyn Krebs, a resident of Cincinnati for 18 years, has retired from 27 years as administrative assistant at CCM, UC. She has Bachelor and Master degrees in Music Education from UC. and currently teaches private and group music lessons in piano and guitar, preschool music, and reads bilingual stories. Marilyn enjoys writing and sharing poems at the Mt. Washington Presbyterian Church.

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BILL MC CORMICK

Bill Mc Cormick is a retired high school teacher of German and English. He is saddened that so many Americans exercised their right to hypocrisy in bringing a would-be tyrant into the Oval Office. Bill hopes the US Constitution will stand up to the assault on its principles.

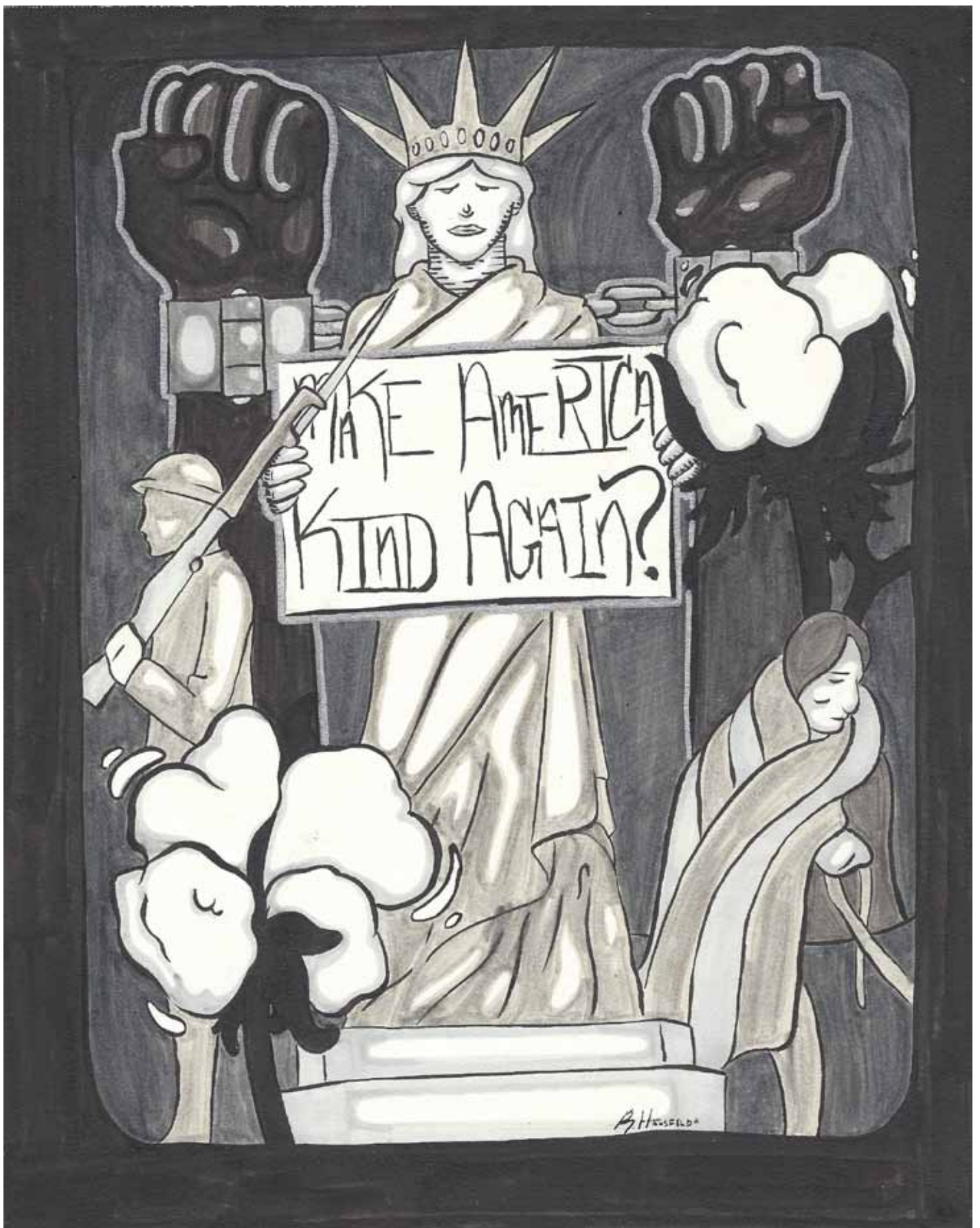
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DRAWING:

RUSSELL HAUSFELD

Russell Hausfeld is a writer and illustrator based in Cincinnati. He is the co-founder of Naturalized Publishing, and creator of *“Read This Sh*t!”* magazine.

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Living Outside

(by *Marilyn Krebs*)

What would we do if we lived outside?
How would we abide?
Without furs or feathers to keep us warm
Would a cave or a teepee keep us from harm?
Under the covers, snug in my bed
I lie with a pillow under my head.
The new furnace and humidifier, their warm breath blowing
While outside it's cold and snowing.

They say we came out of Africa to these far-off places,
The different climates created the races.
Our ancestors foraged or grew their food.
They built dwellings however crude.
The heat of a wood fire was all they had.
They sang and danced and they were glad.
Now we heat with oil and coal that doesn't seem to warm the soul.
However nice our lives have become,
It would be sad to forget those who have no home.

The Color of Justice

(by *Marilyn Krebs*)

What is the color of justice?
Is it the rainbow flag for gay pride to celebrate diversity?
Is it black gowns of #metoo to protest sexual harassment?
Is it a yellow ribbon tied around a tree to show support for our troops?
Is it a pink ribbon for breast cancer awareness
Or the pink pussycat beany to promote women's rights?
Is it the Red, White and Blue of our flag for freedom?
No, the color of justice is clear, 'tis the color of a tear.

They wanted us to notice they wanted us to see
And so they wore their colors prominently
To spread a message to make us think
And when we see injustice, never to blink.

discomfort

(by *Bill Mc Cormick*)

i didn't eat lunch
today and Tuesday
the money goes
to charities

a discomfort

i first tried
giving up a dinner
no way couldn't
sleep that night

double discomfort

by the way
some in Bangladesh
Senegal Libya
had no first second
third meal

dare i really
speak of discomfort

Owed to Us—A Declaration

(by *Bill Mc Cormick*)

We citizens of this land have endured injuries most grievous;
Our commonwealth, in one year's time, has quit the "common good."
Those with the power in Washington now ply it to deceive us
We're owed redress a thousand-fold for all that we've withstood.

Our president, by word and deed, is to his ears in debt:
For making of his office a position worth disdain,
For using that same office to disguise his yearly net,
For taking greatest pleasure in enhancing other's pain.

The people's representatives, beholden to their dogma,
Who've traded their *raison d'être* for uniformity,
Who've staged morality charades-- though done with highest drama--
How much of restitution they are owing you and me.

Not least in debt are those who tout mysticism over science,
Dispense with observation as the means to gain the truth;
They've raised the threat from global warmth in holding their alliance
With industries, who, in their greed, will often speak untruth.

This count of harms we now make known, and with a citizen's right
Request "the common good" revived as law and joint desire.
Let each official, teacher, preacher strive with all their might
To show the kind of public spirit we plain folk can admire.

A Kind America

by *Bill Mc Cormick*

Her sign said
Make America kind again

Of the hundreds
held by women, men,
LGBTs, seniors, juniors, kids

(Impeach Trump
Hands off my behind
Women's rights=human rights)

That one made me blink
Then—like a fleeting thought—
It was lost in the panoply of demands

Yes, I said, make America kind
But, again? Was it ever really kind
Wasn't it ever prone to unequal largess

White Europeans, stake your claims
Black Africans, enter here to be claimed
Native dwellers, make no claim to precedence

Field laborers, cross over, earn pennies
Ask no respect, have no thought of staying
Women of every stripe, labor under imbalance

No, not that kind of America, but truly kind
Value our differences and those that others bring
Share the rich resources, the wealth of this land
of plenty

Let our sign read
Make America kind

POEMS:

REBECCA S. LINDSAY

Rebecca S. Lindsay is editor of *Pegasus*, the poetry journal of the Kentucky State Poetry Society and a member of the Monday Morning Writers Group in Cincinnati, OH. She has had poems published in among others *Inscape*, *Change Happens*, *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel*, *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*, and short stories in *Inscape* and *A Few Good Words* (Cincinnati Writers Project). Her novel, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers*, the story of Mennonite pacifists and Unionists in the South during the Civil War, is forthcoming.

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JEAN SYED

Jean Syed moved recently from Loveland, OH to Washington State where she is a member of the *Plateau Area Writers' Association* and was published in their annual anthology *Contrasts*. Her poetry has also been published in in *The Rotary Dial*, an e-magazine out of Toronto and in *Lighten Up Online*.

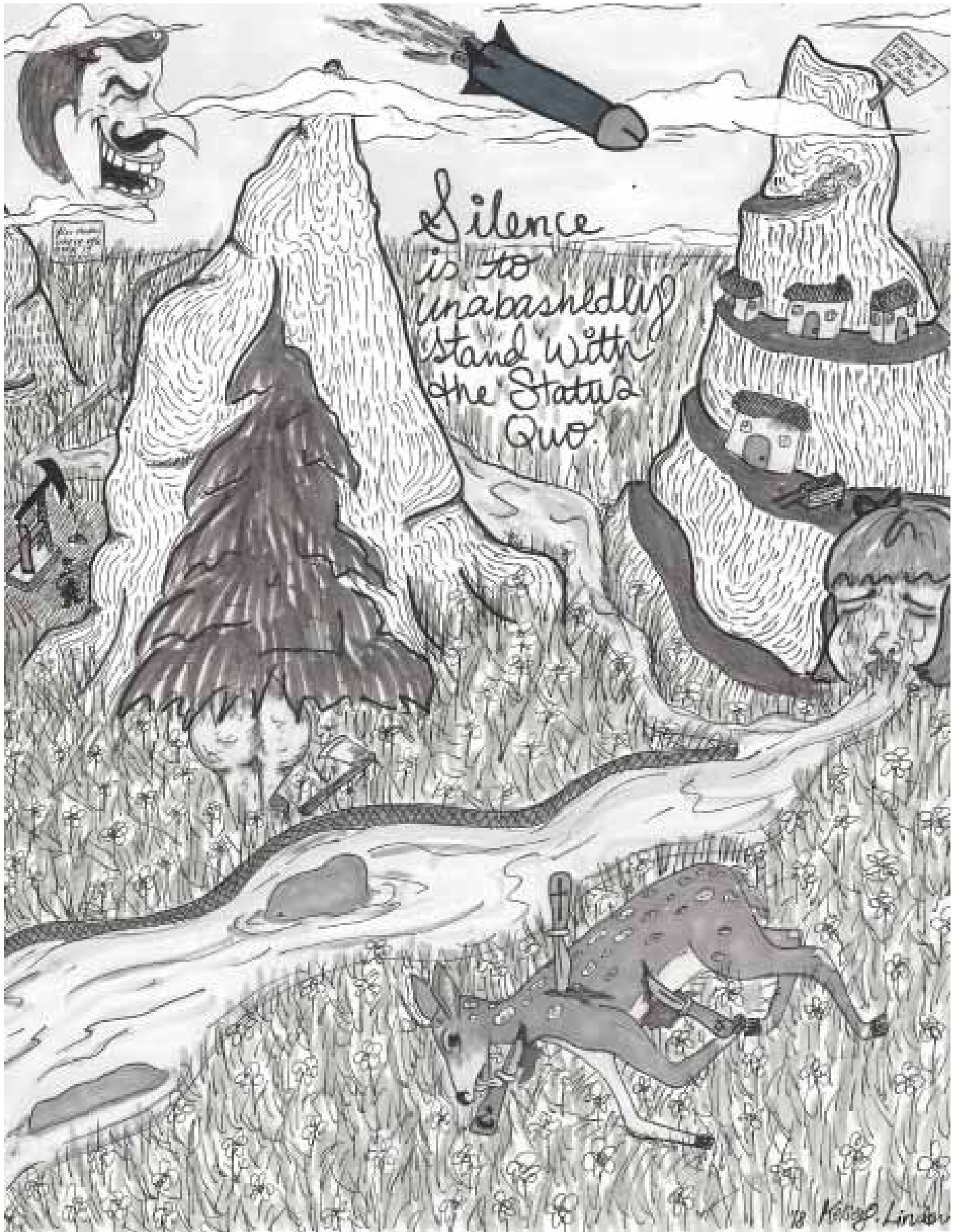
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DRAWING:

KELSEY LINDER

Kelsey Linder is a southern girl from the swamps of Florida brought to Cincinnati through a series of strange and fantastical events. She is an intersectional feminist artist who traditionally makes multi media works that create a colorful and hyper stimulative environment. Kelsey has her foundation in life drawing.

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Silence
is to
unabashedly
stand with
the Status
Quo.

Standing in Line at the Anne Frank House

(by *Rebecca S. Lindsay*)

I. They come a million strong each year,
jamming the entrance,
stretching down the block,
crowding the courtyard behind the church.
The world on holiday stands and waits,
chattering in its multitude of tongues.
Bikes whiz by; boats ply the canal.
A man hoists furniture to a fourth floor flat.
The bells of Westerkerk chime the quarter hour.
From deep within, a young girl calls,
and they come.

II. Inside, the rooms are stark,
devoid of desk and bed,
naked of the comforts once hidden there.
Voices haunt the rafters, cry from the corners.
Photographs accuse—the finger points both ways.
How could they?
How could we?
The world ceases its chatter,
snakes its way in silence
as tourist morphs into pilgrim.
A grown man slips his finger behind his glasses
and wipes his eye.

III. Tendrils of a young girl's thoughts reach out
and pull the pilgrim in.
Step behind the bookcase.
Pass with Anne from seen to invisible.
Climb the steep stairs into the annex;
Enter the womb where the writer was
formed and born.
Sense how safety became prison,
the only respite light from the attic windows,
the bells of Westerkerk,
Peter, paper and pen.

IV. Anne said, "Someday, this war will be over."
It is never over, Anne,
only periodically paused like a video
while the world raids the fridge
and the next despot grows hungry.
Round them up!
Round them all up
and send them to stand in line
at the Anne Frank House.

Another Thanksgiving Day Poem (2017)

(by *Jean Syed*)

I saw a begging mother
Beside the grocery store
I gave her daughter not much
I wished I gave her more

As I thought about the beggars
On Thanksgiving Day,
They won't have chestnut stuffing
For that's terribly gourmet.

Then I thought about the beggars
In other lands than this
Beset by devastating war
Brought on by prejudice,

For that continues forever
Over all frontiers
Where there's the battle, power play,
As in yesteryears,

Protestant versus Catholic,
Sunni versus Shiite,
Hindu versus Moslem
What continues is the fight,

Moslem versus Jew,
Buddhist versus Moslem

And we say *our way is right*,

But atheists think it's bunkum.

Sweet Candy

(by *Jean Syed*)

*Men triumph over women still,
Men triumph women's rights at will
And man's lust roves the world untamed*
John Masefield

She did not have enough clothes on,
And was a chilly day,
She wished she could have filet mignon
With fries, or a café au lait

To warm her, but only a scone
To help her on the way,
Her sweater was of cotton.
Heard at last a jerk say,

"O, darling, you are so wan,
Come up to this tray
Accept this sweet candy bonbon
Then after we will play."

It came from the suited moron
Who stood in the foyer
At the entrance to a salon,
Outside was a buffet,

He passed her then a sausage, whereon
He groped, and said, "Okay?"
He was a boss, Dirty Don,
What could she do but stay.

How does it end, this liaison,
With this white-haired roué,
Because to him she was anon
Enquiring for her pay.

POEMS:

MARY-JANE NEWBORN

Mary-Jane Newborn practices and promotes liberation veganism, materials and energy conservation, reuse and recycling, and finding humor wherever possible. Methane production by anaerobic digestion of wasted organic matter excites her.

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LARRY SIMPSON

Larry Simpson recently moved to Charlotte, NC. For the last 20 years he has been collaborating with a Cincinnati musician, Gary Woster, on a series of songs and poems, a science-fiction novel of sound, to be soon available on line.

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CHARLES STRINGER

Chuck Stringer belongs to the Thomas More College Creative Writing Vision Program. He received a BA in English from Carson-Newman U, and has pursued poetic study at NKU and UC. His work has been published widely. He lives near Fowlers Fork in Union, KY.

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DRAWING:

SARAH RODRIGUEZ

Sarah Rodriguez is an artist working in drawing, collage and painting. She earned her MFA from Miami University with a focus in painting in 2017, and her BFA in Studio Art from Wright State University in 2014. New to Cincinnati, Sarah lives and works in Westwood with her husband and cat.

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Sarah Rodriguez

Liquid Assets

(by *Mary-Jane Newborn*)

Remember how, whenever we were thirsty,
we could just turn on the faucet
and drink all the water we wanted?
And how we used to buy all those flimsy little bottles instead?
And just throw them away?
Imagine--God! To have some of those bottles now--
clean, with tops. God!
Remember how we used to let that water just
run down the drain like there was no tomorrow?
How we used to take showers every day, sometimes
two or three times a day, long showers, all that
water running away?
And remember how we used to wear something one time,
and then throw it in the washer?
And use towels only once?
And how we used to flinch away from beggars
and wrinkle our noses and feel superior to them because
they looked dirty and rumpled
and maybe smelled funny?
God! Smelled funny? You gotta laugh!
And remember watering lawns? Lawns!
All those loud lawn mowers and weed eaters and leaf blowers--God!
Ha! We're the weed eaters now,
Remember driving cars all over the place?
Remember throwing things "away?" As if!
Remember light switches?
Remember "24/7?" God!
Remember heating and air conditioning?
Remember toilets? Ha!
Flushing all that clean fresh water like it could never run out.
Remember when we used to complain when it rained?
Remember faucets?

Climate Haiku

(by *Larry Simpson*)

The world smokes too much.
Ghosts of glaciers fall from sky.
Fish swim on highways.

Orleans Trail Prayer

(by *Charles Stringer*)

Help me stoop to pick up trash
on this path; bag spell-breaking
bottles, butts, wrappers, napkins,
cups, lids, straws, and crumpled cans;
help me find here today
my yoke of servant love; leave
a better person, better place.

POEMS:

LISA PRANTL

Lisa Prantl, a Cincinnati native, has a BA in English from UC, and is winner of that university's Elsie B. Westheimer Short Story Prize. She is an active member of *Women Writing for (a) Change*.

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AUBREY STANFORTH

Aubrey Stanforth, a high school student, loves to write. She lives in Clermont County and enjoys playing soccer, drawing and singing. Her poetry has been published in *For a Better World*, *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, and *Words*.

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SHERRY COOK STANFORTH

Sherry Cook Stanforth is founder and director of Thomas More College's Creative Writing Vision Program. She teaches fiction, poetry, environmental and ethnic literatures and serves as co-editor for *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, the literary journal of the Southern Appalachian Writers Cooperative. Sherry performs regionally in a 3-generation Appalachian family band, Tellico.

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DRAWING:

CRAIG LLOYD

Craig Lloyd received an MFA in painting from UC and a BFA in painting from Wright State U, Dayton, OH. He is currently a professor at Mount St. Joseph U where he teaches drawing, foundation design and printmaking. Craig's work has been shown regionally and nationally in over 160 group and solo exhibitions.

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Craig Lloyd

Above it All

(by *Lisa Prantl*)

The clouds stand
tall and singular
earth's chimneys
I dream anger and angst
meanness and malice
fly up the flue
and evaporate in the
high, dry sky.

A million trillion hateful thoughts
rise in their own heated exchanges
filtered through puffy white tunnels
disappearing in endlessly patient blue.

Posthaste

(by *Lisa Prantl*)

It's all rush and bluster
hurry and do
that's the thing
all the rage
no pausing, not stopping
a continuum
like conveyor belt sushi
variety and choice
going round and round
and round
be ready to grab a plate
of the thing you hunger for
as it moves closer
then, in a moment
an eye-widening moment of
recognition and regret
it's there and gone
already too far past a comfortable stretch
without an elbow encroaching
on someone else's decision and desire

The foot-tapping, leg-jiggling realization
that what is craved will eventually come 'round again
leaves only want
and compromising, substituting
is a more immediate gratification
grabbing second chance sushi
as a clock blinks

counting down
feeding the haste
the idea that space is waste
and time must be filled
like a hungry belly

Spyglass

(by *Aubrey Stanforth*)

through the spyglass we see a utopia
a potential world for us
a world with hope
a world with justice
a world other than our own
the roads aren't paved
the trees aren't trimmed
the land isn't touched
by our dirty hands

but we want symmetry
we want order
our hands reach down into the spyglass
our fingers warp the land
and we watch our utopia decay

then
one by one
our hands pull up
out of the spyglass
we try to wipe the lens clean
as if it will fix what we see
we smear it more
and this is our justice
our justice is served

A Season Beyond the Election

(by *Sherry Cook Stanforth*)

outside Sedona, on the West
Fork Trail, every red crack
mattered, every dust cloud,
each twisted juniper in
the clearing. Creeks sighed
an answer and so did the desert
willows—I knew this to be, yet
could not translate the meaning.

My children hopped from rock
to rock, gleaming, alive, scaling
Supai towers and singing wild
songs as we ascended. A blue-
licked salamander perched
on my boot while I ate
cactus pears I'd bought
from a grandmother
in the market. This day
asked us all to heal.
In the shadow slants left
by broken saguaros, I sat,
wanting to understand
every stone, bird, flower
and why the cottonwood's
rattle talked tears from my
eyes, and why a raven
calling down the canyon
path raised lost memory—
folded me into its odd,
boundless realm of faith.

POEMS:

RICHARD L. SCHOEFF

Richard L. Schoeff has written poetry most of his life agreeing with and paraphrasing the poet that 'it's difficult to get the news from poetry, but you can die for lack of what is found there.' Richard lives in Cincinnati in an old house on a hillside that is moving slowly down toward the river.

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ROBERTA SCHULTZ

Roberta Schultz is a singer songwriter, teacher and poet originally from Grant's Lick, KY. Her poems have appeared in *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *Still: the Journal*, *The Main Street Rag*, *Kudzu*, and other anthologies. *Outposts on the Border of Longing* (2014) and *Songs from the Shaper's Harp* (2017) are her chapbooks published by Finishing Line Press.

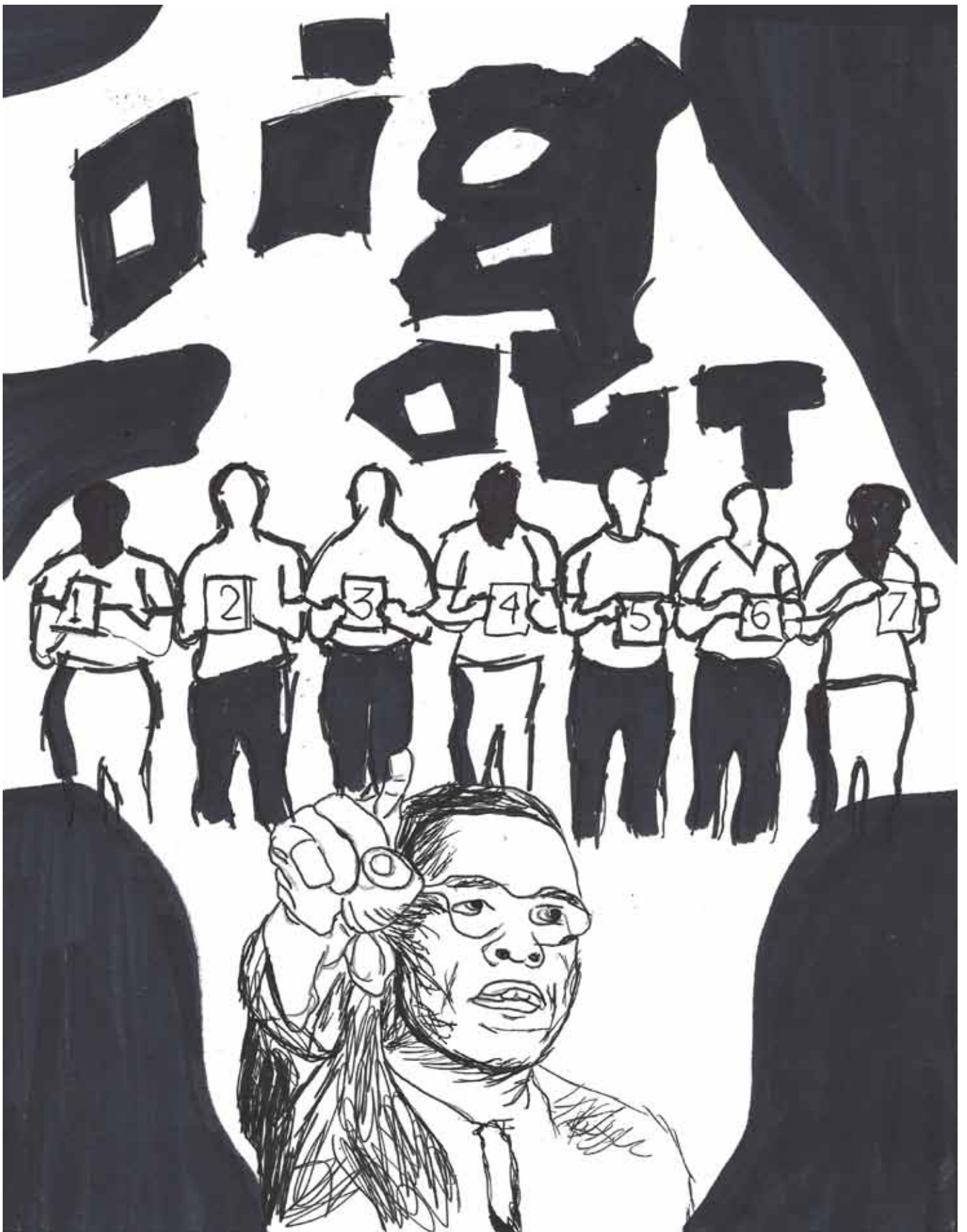
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DRAWING:

DEVIN HATCHER

Devin Hatcher is a Cincinnati artist who focuses on the exploitation of culture. As an art educator, he treats education as a form of social practice that gives students agency and a platform for inquiry. Devin's art is about his identity as a black male. Through historical and contemporary topics, he uses and alters found images through forms of printmaking, painting and drawing. By using something already in existence and manipulating it to his satisfaction, Devin indirectly speaks of how black culture has been presented in alternate ways.

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Devin Hatcher

Dig Out (a spoken song)

(by *Richard Schoeff*)

We gotta dig out
Cause we're buried
Under bullshit
Buried under
 Prejudice Oppression
 Injustice and Ignorance

We gotta find a way to dig out
Cause we let it buildup
We let it stack up, pile up, backup
'til we hardly can't move
'til we hardly can't breath
'til we hardly can't think
'til we hardly can't feel

It's time we gotta dig out
We gotta cut out
 All the bull shit
We gotta use less
We gotta put back
We gotta clean up
 Act like we care

We gotta love one another
We gotta love ourselves
 Like our mothers
We gotta feed clothe and shelter
 One another
Like we care

We gotta grow up
Respect the thing we live on
Respect one another
Respect all the sisters and brothers
Respect all the fathers and mothers
All the children – ours and other's
Like our lives depend on
digging our selves out
From under all the bull shit
 We've let build up

After the Polls Closed on Election Day

(by *Roberta Schultz*)

After the polls closed on Election Day
my mother's back straightened.
No stooped shoulders or downcast
eyes. Her mouth drawn in a line
of defiance, she did not fawn or keen

while shuffling the bags of groceries
up the walk from the Volkswagen
to the salmon colored metal cabinets
that flanked our ranch house kitchen.

In practiced relay, my sisters
and I crouched to stuff
those low makeshift pantries
with bread, can goods, cereal packs,

instant teas and coffees
while my mother stashed
quart jugs of beer in the fridge
and fish sticks in the freezer.

One night—Saturday—
we were allowed to sip
soft drinks from straws.
But not on Tuesdays

when my father tripped
through the door at 7:30
already "three sheets,"
as Mommy called it, from his stop

at Shorty's. That Election Night
we drank Nestea from tall
plastic tumblers crammed
with ice cubes.

And while Daddy stumbled
to the living room, slurring
"bring your old daddy a beer,"
we set the table and giggled.

I peeled off from the assembly line
long enough to deliver a quart jug

of Hudepohl and a tiny glass
to the lounge chair where

Daddy slumped, his back to us all.
“In your heart, you know he’s right,”
my father bellowed to no one in particular.
He downed a quick beer shot

then looked over his shoulder
and over his glasses at my mother,
who deliberately stirred a pot
of spaghetti sauce at the stove.

“That’s one good thing about voting
booths, Bobby.” My mother grinned
that smile that made you realize
too late you would be smacked

full on the head with a hairbrush.
“Nobody goes in there but you
and your conscience. And I will sleep
well tonight knowing that my vote

cancelled yours out.”
Daddy said no more. He took
his supper in the living room where
he chewed slowly in his chair.

Camp Onward

(by *Roberta Schultz*)

In the beginning they had
me at the word.
I didn’t need to know
that the word was God
or that the word was with God.

Early on they confused
me with God is love.
I imagined an all-knowing
white-bearded grandpa smiling
down at me and Mighty Mouse
as we flew on our swing.

Later they hooked
my teen-aged mind

with the red print of a King James
bible and the poetry of Jesus wept.
I could draw sword, drill down
and shout prophecy:
Arise, shine, for thy light is come!
I could recite exact chapter and verse:
Isaiah 60:1

In the end they lost
me at—of all places—
church camp when that boy
who said I played guitar
like a man declared
All Chinese people
will go to Hell.

I searched all faces
that leaned toward the campfire,
waited for a trace of proverb
a sliver of psalm.

None of the counselors spoke.
I still feel their silent amen.

POEMS:

GARY WALTON

Gary Walton has published seven books of poetry. His latest is *Waiting For Insanity Clause* (Finishing Line Press, 2017). His novel about Newport, Kentucky in its heyday as a gambling Mecca: *Prince of Sin City* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2009. He has been nominated for the Pushcart prize twice and in 2010, he was voted Third Place: “Best Local Author” Best of Cincinnati 2010 issue in City Beat magazine.

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DRAWING:

KATE BALL

Kate Ball likes to draw comics, make puppets and animations. Her work often features mixed media with a mood of light-hearted horror. Kate recently taught printmaking at the University of Cincinnati as well as animation camps and workshops in Cincinnati and Sandusky.

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GRASS

SMILES

GRASS

SEE

KATEBALL '78

Nomaste, Bitches*

“Today, I don’t want you to think
About our postmodern government—
That the president is a signifier without

A discernable signified in which
Paradox and irony have become a cosmology,
That he is no more substantial than

A hologram flickering on the side
Of a red brick row house, an elision
Of memes, sound bites, clichés, slurs,

And hackneyed slogans—an aleatory
Concatenation of Russian borsht,
Yellow bile and green bilge—

Do not consider that he sees the world
As a solipsistic reality tv show with
The lens trained constantly on him in

Some weird parallax of perception,
His orange peel face and dainty, doughy
Hands mugging like a 3 year old begging

For ice cream—nor that his lieutenants
Hang on to his simulacrum like weasels
Floating on flotsam after a flood—

Do not contemplate which extinction
Level event that could be triggered by
A random tweet or aside or when, say,

A cranky missile from Korea aimed at New York
Might miss and fall short, landing in your
Back yard—nor that Miami Beach is so

Flooded from rising seas that it resembles
Venice or that the fires in California burn
Year round like the first ring of Dante’s Hell

Or that the world banks play our economy
Like a Las Vegas casino letting it all ride
On one more spin of the wheel, teetering

All the while on the edge of insolvency—
No, do not think of the plaque pasting the
Walls of your Aorta, the heavy metals clogging

Your liver or the triglycerides stiffening your
Capillaries or that your brain is shrinking
Like an apple left too long in the sun—

No, just focus on the stream of breath that
Fills your lungs—feel it fill you up from your
Diaphragm to the tip of your nose—in and

Out—in and out—this is *your* moment—
In the end, it is all you have, and really,
All that you have ever had—so, relax....”

*from a sticker on the lid of a student’s laptop

In the New Season

We see the gunman
Swing those Kalashnikovs
In rapid replay and watch
As the terrified Parisians

Run helter-skelter from cafés,
Tables upturned, chairs tipped
Over the recently dead—
Such an assault on the senses,

Yet, we can’t look away as the
Third floor window ignites in
Red and yellow flames shooting
Out into the black night air from

Another suicide vest vaporizing
The calm and marrying flesh with
Horror as if in a ghastly sunrise—
Surprise! The images stab our eyes

Like bone chips blown into the skin
Of bystanders—this is modern war—
A digitized television show macabre
In its flash and gore spiced and

Pierced with car commercials and
Advertisements for penis pills as if
They were the punctuation in some
Dismal and interminable sentence....

Cut to: Afghanistan or Iraq
Or Syria and watch the buildings explode
Like demented fireworks dropped from
Dispassionate drones delivering death

Like eggs from some disinterested dinosaur—
Then close up on dust caked, anonymous
Bodies, bloodied and mixed with rubble
Like some cruel batter from a sadistic

Baker... children, mothers, crying—
Then, a quick fade to a three
Year old refugee lying face down in the
Surf in Greece, dead as his father's hope

For escape and peace....
Is it any wonder that our kids
Spend their days with Instagram and
Candy Crush? Anything to avoid the
Horror film running on Mom and Dad's
Video screens.

Masque of the Orange Menace

(A Forced Reverie of the Current State of Trump World)

Scudding the national nadir
As a tiny surfer might ride out
A storm swirling to the rim of

An alabaster porcelain appliance:
This is what we have come to
Pulling our heads in our shells

Like so many terrapins trying
Desperately not to be tarred by the
Taint flowing from above—

Hope has devolved into
"This too shall pass"—although
We don't really believe it;

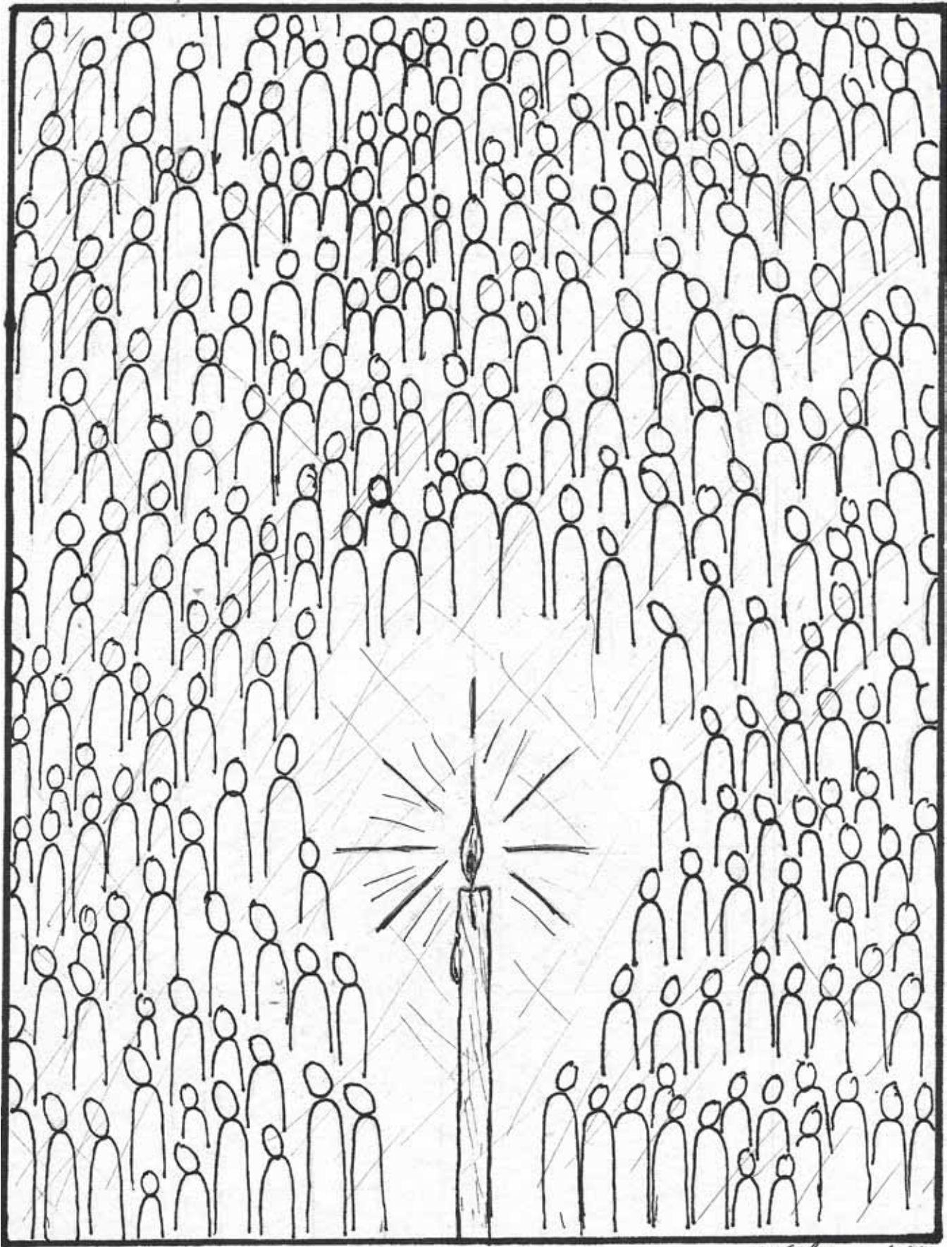
At best like stunned survivors
Stumbling out of our makeshift
Shelters after an unexpected,

And certainly undeserved, attack
We wander about, in shock,
Wondering what we will find

Still working in the gutted carcass
Of our former pleasant lives
Once the flood recedes--

Even now as we find ourselves reeling
From one impertinence after another,
We ponder as events unfold as if

From some sweat soaked fevered dream
If, in the end, we'll find the means
To be waking up at all.



cover art by Billy Simms

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