

# UnBound Zine

OCTOBER 2020 | ISSUE 7



ANNIVERSARY EDITION

This zine is best viewed in a pdf reader such as Adobe Acrobat viewing two pages with cover view toggled.

The issue 7 cover was created by our team art lead, Lexie Dungan. You can find more of her work on Instagram @L.d.m.a.art

Extra graphics created by our publishing lead, Enkfi Saviero.

All other graphics were sourced from Canva.



UnBound is a creative collective working to share the voices and works of women, trans, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals, with an emphasis on the intersecting disadvantages faced by black folks, indigenous folks, and people of color globally. We aim our collaborative efforts at dismantlement of patriarchy, racism, and imperialism through educational and artistic projects such as UnBound Zine as well as local and virtual collaborations.

Content warning - this publication regularly includes creative works which may depict or describe nudity, violence, or other troubling themes. Viewer discretion advised.

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[Avenir](#)  
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Special thanks to daisie.com and the Daisie team for connecting collaborators across the globe

# Queens Village

  [Blackwomenforthewin.com](https://www.blackwomenforthewin.com)  
[@QueensVillageCincinnati](https://www.instagram.com/QueensVillageCincinnati)



NoniCakes is a local online bakery, serving all gluten and dairy free items (and sometimes vegan too!!). We serve mainly the North Columbus Ohio area, we also have products available at the Brown Bag Deli in German Village!

Find us at [NoniCakes.com](https://www.NoniCakes.com)



Queens Village is a supportive community of powerful Black women who come together to relax, repower and take care of ourselves and each other.

Queens Village is an initiative of Cradle Cincinnati, a collective impact organization that fights high rates of infant mortality that disproportionately affect Black women in Cincinnati and beyond. We center Black women's voices on changing not just racial disparities in birth outcomes but also the conditions that drive inequity in maternal and infant health.

We provide a safe space for Black mothers to support and be supported by their peers, to connect, to relieve stress, to process trauma and to build a better world together for ourselves and our children.

# Genderfucked Lingerie Suspenders

March 2020



Le Fae Rouge is run by Jamie, who is presumably a creative collective of fae in a trenchcoat. They make and specialize in comfortable, sexy underwear and accessories for folks all across the gender spectrum, including, soon, a gaff adaption to our standard underwear cut that externally looks identical to the non-gaff pairs AND has been touted by our sample testers as "the most comfortable gaff I've ever worn I never want to take it off".

The suspenders are made from lingerie elastic and lace as the back and shoulders, and the models are very intentionally poised opposite of presumed gender roles because Who Needs Those Anyway.

## Models:

 @ophelia.nethers SHE/HER  
@dmitrisins THEY/HE



# Content

## The UnBound Team

LASHONDA LOVE *executive director*

ANNE MILLS *assistant director*

SHA'TISHA YOUNG *interim social media manager*

LEXIE DUNGAN *art lead*

ENKFI SAVIERO *publishing lead*

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# Foreword

## Birth

In September of 2019, I was working at a lululemon in a mall in central Ohio. The gig was a hell of a lot of fun, but only part-time, so most of the rest of my time was spent between job hunting on Indeed.com and finding creative projects to contribute to on Daisie.com. Somewhere, nestled between my several denied applications to magazines, publishing houses, and lackluster blogs, and my ever-growing list of contributions to unpaid art and writing projects, the seed for UnBound was planted.

I was frustrated with how many of my applications were denied because they expected me to have years of experience writing for publications or being featured on well-established websites. I remember reaching out to my dear friend and amazing writer, Sam Tucker (you can read her not-so-astrology column in this issue), and asking something to the effect of "how the fuck do I get a job as a writer?" to which she responded something like "tell me when you find out". Even worse, all the places I had been applying to were filled with crappy, mansplain-y pieces written by the same five dudes. Cismen, full offense, but why do you feel entitled to put out mediocre work and still beat out other, exponentially more capable creators? At the end of the day, I decided not to wait for someone to give me permission to publish my work - I don't care if it's shitty, give me a chance to put it out there - and started a simple project on Daisie called "UnBound Zine". To this day, I find it deeply humbling how quickly and passionately folks have jumped at the opportunity to work with us.

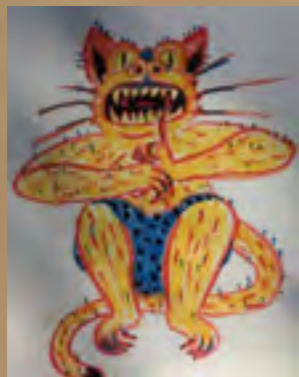
Actually, in the beginning there wasn't an us. It was just me. Issues 1, 2, and 3 were the product of hours spent hacking away at my computer in Panera and Crimson Cup cafes around central Ohio (shout out to the Crimson Cup in Clintonville/Columbus for making the best iced chai latte I've ever had). At that point in the zine's life, I created the website, ran the social media pages, shamelessly reached out to amazing creators with larger followings than the zine itself, like Melanie Lee (@smellanie.jpeg) and bethanyjlf (@bethanyjlf), and put every waking hour I had into formatting and laying out those first three issues in Canva and Apple Pages of all programs. The burnout was becoming real, so I routinely reached out to my best friend and college orchestra stand partner, Anne Mills, for assistance with editing hefty writing pieces, eventually helping to plan our Issue 3 launch party and, finally, to take on the role of assistant director.

It's very true that two heads work better than one. So do three heads, four, or really any number higher than one. I knew that all of these deeper goals and plans I had for UnBound as an entity and collective voice couldn't be achieved on my own. Thus, the zine team was born (our first group chat ever was called "zine team dream team"). I can't speak highly enough of these absolutely amazing humans and their constant patience with my all-hours-of-the-day group chat ramblings, "gentle reminders", and constant sugar-fueled "visions for the future". Did I mention, none of us get paid for this work? We've got folks across two states, two countries, and three time zones who are working during a pandemic and in capitalist grind culture for the sake of just fucking loving this work. The zine has and always will be free and accessible to anyone who wants it, we just believe in and love this work and we love all of you.

# Collaborators

I would be in big trouble here if I didn't take the time to thank, congratulate, and absolutely fawn over the folks who have contributed their heart, soul, and oftentimes shyly submitted masterpieces to UnBound. The outpouring of support and overflowing creative expression has been unreal. I don't know how best to honor every single piece that has graced these pages, so I will settle for sharing my all-time favorite collaborators from each of our seven issues.

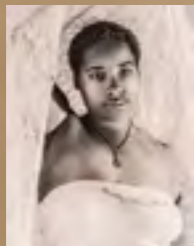
## Issue 1: Zhenya Gavrilova



## Issue 2: Nabeela Mahboob



## Issue 3: Mia Barnes and Melanie Lee



## Issue 4: Erin Lyons Ricketts

"In order to be responsible for my mental health, I had to first become comfortable with introspection. I had to learn to look at the ugliest parts of myself, no matter how much it hurt, in order to find how to fix them."  
- Erin Lyons Ricketts

## Issue 5: Chere R. Hampton

Be unapologetically proud of who you are. The world is ready for you, no matter who says otherwise. Shine and walk in your light. We need you.

## Issue 6: Jessica Smoleroff



## Issue 7: Alitasha Ahamad and Samantha Tucker



"I can't predict a future when I am living in a country whose past is ever present."  
- Samantha Tucker

# About Issue 7

Issue 7 is the culmination of a dream. It is "one year". It is "too many pages for me to call it a zine anymore". It is golden and glorious. Simply, it is the last issue until next year. Every time I introduce one of these issues, it feels like all the right words just come to me, but I just don't know what I can say to reflect the feelings in everyone's hearts this time around.

In the U.S. we have lost over 200,000 lives to COVID. We are battling constant oppression, suppression, and just downright lies from the Trump administration. As I am writing this, we are days away from what feels like one of the most crucial elections in American history. Across the globe, families have been broken, jobs have been lost, livelihoods have been put in jeopardy, and folks have been isolated from loved ones for months. This summer saw the gut wrenching emotional and physical labor of black folks as we collectively took to the streets, educated those around us, and educated ourselves through the uprisings for black liberation.

And what about our personal lives? I shattered my ankle and underwent surgery with a months-long road to recovery that I am still on, friends lost beloved family pets, others went through tough divorces and breakups, and still others grappled with their mental health. Many got new jobs, found themselves able to pay bills or save up for the first time, and many learned that working from home is exactly what they needed. Those are just events I've seen around me. What has happened in your sphere of the world? Your life?

This issue is a reflection of the many pieces of individual lives - stained glass that make up the window of our collective experiences this year. Where does your piece fit?

*Lashonda Love*  
executive director

# Tobi De'Da Nicol Ewing

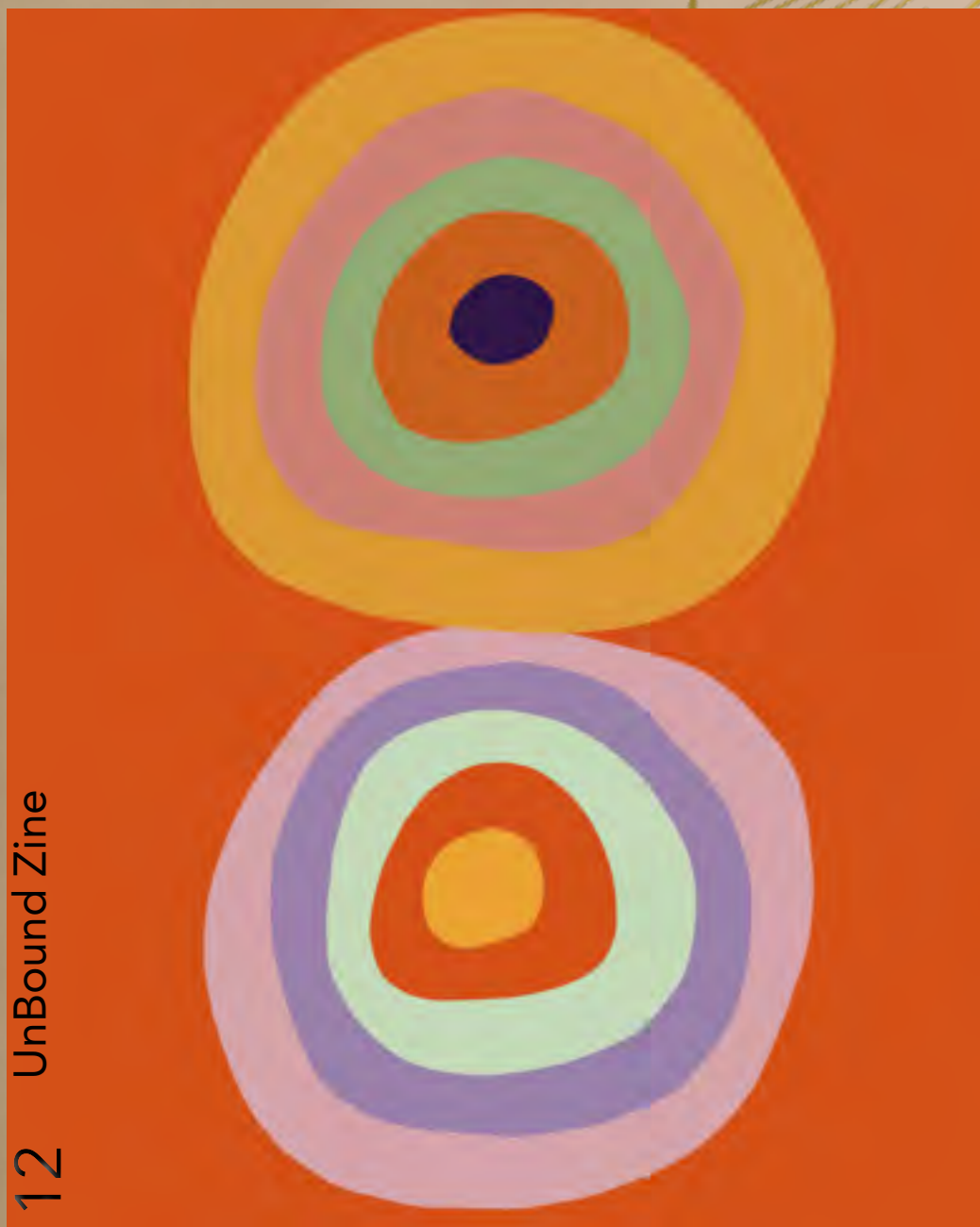
SHE/THEY

"Tobi is a multi-disciplinary artist exploring visual art, sound and storytelling as a tool for creative expression, liberation and self discovery. Tobi's artwork is described as colorful, fluid, pensive and expressive."

Sky, 2020



"As a Black and queer artist and storyteller, Tobi's work is centered in healing, pleasure, joy, connection and creativity." Learn more about her work at [beautyasametaphor.co](https://beautyasametaphor.co)



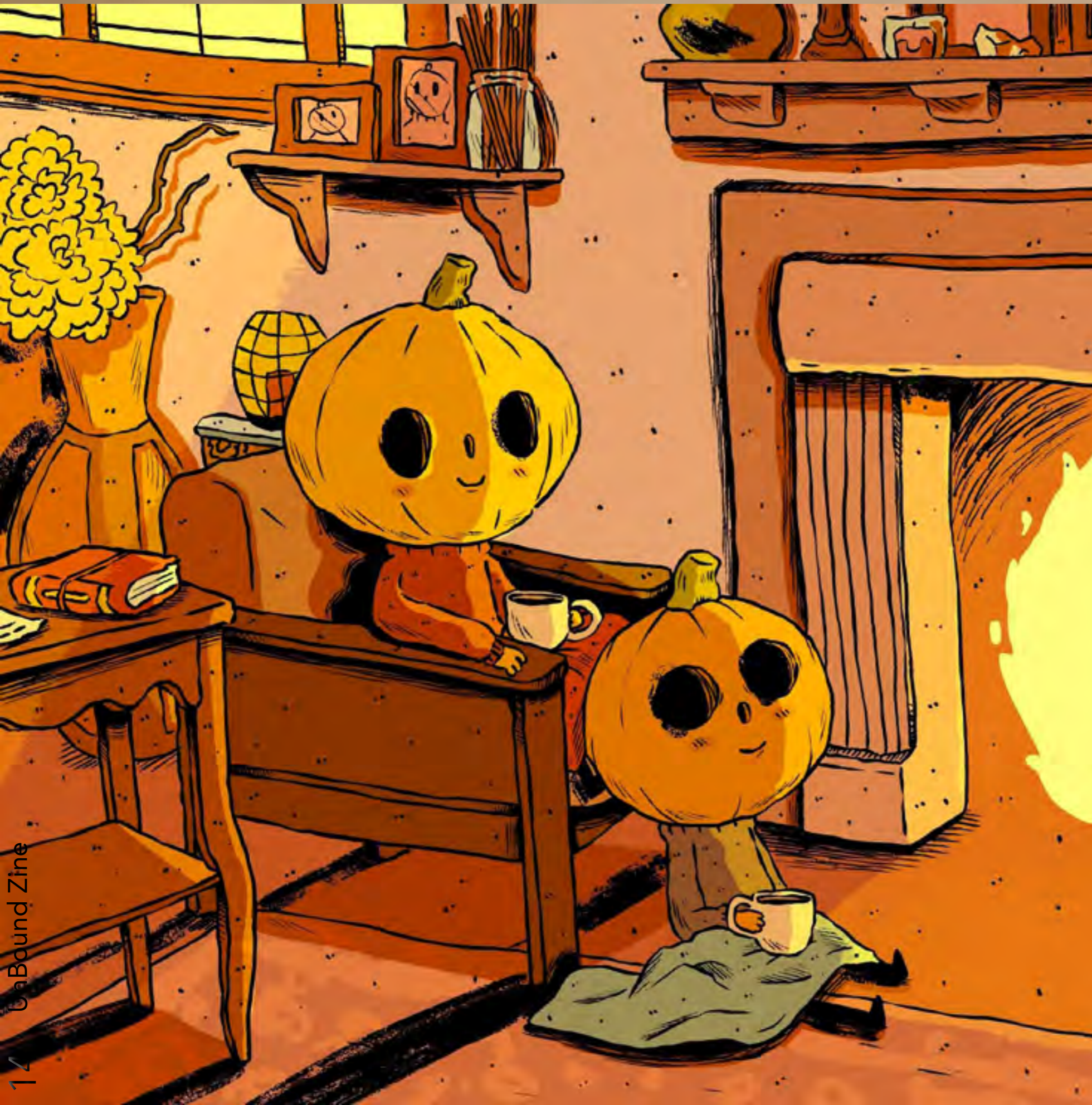
Answering an internal call, I am currently engaging in a long(er) term study/research of circles as a practice of sacred geometry, repetition and color. This study crosses over mediums and materials. These works are from this collection.

Dirt, 2020

Sea, 2020



## Toasty Pumpkins



I'm an illustrator, cartoonist and comics creator from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where I live in my cottage citadel (that's fantasy talk for cozy apartment on the top floor with no elevator) with my two kittens Lukewarm and Oopsydaisy. I have a webcomic *Detached*, which is a memoir of my experience coping with PTSD and anxiety, which is a theme in a lot of my work! Growing up, I turned to cartoons and comics as a comforting mechanism and now I want to create things that other folks can turn to for comfort and make them feel less alone.

If you'd like to follow my work on social media:

 [Facebook.com/angelasoddlings](https://www.facebook.com/angelasoddlings)

 [@Angelaoddling](https://www.instagram.com/Angelaoddling)

 [@Angelaoddling](https://twitter.com/Angelaoddling)

To purchase my work or for commissions:

[Etsy.com/shop/angelasoddlings](https://www.etsy.com/shop/angelasoddlings)

Or e-mail [angelaoddling@gmail.com](mailto:angelaoddling@gmail.com)

To read my webcomic *Detached*:

<https://tapas.io/series/Detached/>



# Sarah McCoy



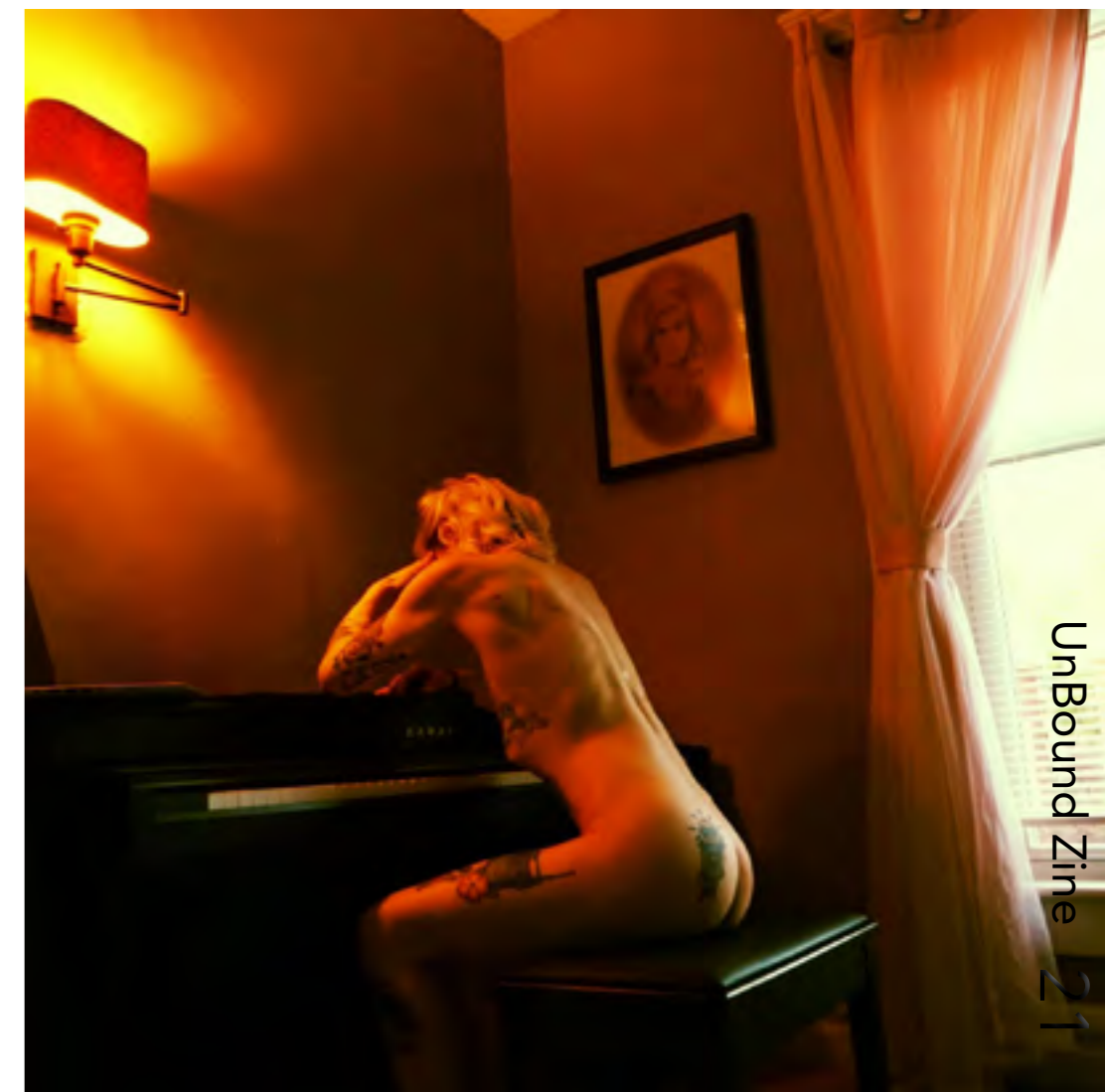




"I'm a self-taught artist focusing on human figures. I use primarily oil paints as a medium but have started dabbling in photography in the past year. I apologize for not having much else to say right now, but depression's a bitch. You'll always get the truth from me. "



*Sarah McCoy*  
SHE/HER  
@sparkle\_trash\_arts



# Emi Brener

"Emi Brener is a visual artist merging the mediums of painting and embroidery, aiming to convey moments of human intimacy, nuance and experience. Life as a queer womxn born and living in Uruguay largely influences the artist's work, always feeling supported creatively by the vibrant queer community there.



Andy, 25x35cm, 2018





**New York Sheets,  
12x12.cm, 2018**

Inspired by borrowed thoughts and emotions, Brener looks to expose the vulnerability of the human experience through the meshing of written language and art, while also highlighting the way we use our bodies to interact with one another in many different ways. The results are paintings that often depict fragments of the human figure, never showing the entire body and some even applying a distorted close-up viewpoint, further deepening the work's sense of intimacy.





The way skin and flesh play an important part in our lives is shown in artworks that display text as seemingly carved or burnt into the skin; representing how our emotional scars can manifest themselves physically, and exposing the psychology behind the surface. Also I am very gay and like to paint other queer people. Mostly that."



**Emi Brener**  
THEY/THEM  
@emibrener.art  
[www.emibrener.com](http://www.emibrener.com)

# Emma Posey

## The Island

The warm morning sun arose upon the island. Bird song fell upon the ears as the island began to awaken. I could feel the gentle lapping of water by my feet. Cool and refreshing as I opened up my leather notebook. I clenched the pen in my hand, stared at the blank page. Then I began to etch words into the notebook. A question I had written before and would probably ask again.

*Why do I write?* It is tough to answer. I grit my teeth as I stare off across an imaginary shore. Watching the sandy beach, feeling warm sun on my back. I believe I began writing to escape. From a dull writing desk to a glittering Mediterranean shore. From a small West Virginia town to ancient temples upon snowy mountain peaks. From a despised male body to a desired female form.

For years I would spend every afternoon writing. I would go on adventures where I was a kick ass knight-errant. Tall, black haired and beautiful. I would write these stories for myself. It was where I could be an idealized version of myself, a powerful warrior woman with perfect braids and witty remarks for every situation. These stories never seemed to go anywhere. They didn't need to. Each chapter was an adventure where I could escape my boring reality and become what I wished I could be.

I set down my pen and chuckle. I still don't have black hair; I grew out of that phase. I am somewhat tall though. If I count inner beauty, I guess two out of three is pretty good. Perhaps my writing still has some room for idealized versions of myself. It's not the main reason I write nowadays though.



Writing was one of the first ways that I began to understand my identity, my reality. As I sat alone in a dorm room, deep in depression and drowning in homework, I would write. That was the period when I wrote the most introspective nonfiction. I no longer wanted to simply escape. I craved to understand myself.

What is a woman? Who am I? Am I a man, a woman, something in-between? I asked these questions to a blank page. Sometimes it would simply stare back at me. Empty, unwilling or unable to answer. Other times it was like a torrential downpour of ink upon a leaflet. Vacant pages soon soaked with heavy thoughts, soppy solutions. Still, my musings were limited by themselves. I was only one person, I had only one experience. To truly understand my writing, I had to understand other's writing as well.

I began to read. Up until this point I had spent most of my time reading fantasy, science fiction. Books with things to say, but I could focus more upon the escapism. This was when I started paying further attention to the subtext. To Frodo's struggles with temptation. To Terry Pratchett's Death discussing both the ridiculousness and purposes of life. I stopped reading to escape and I started reading to learn.

That is where I learned an important truth. Good writing has a reason to exist. Whether for the author or the audience. Whether it is to help an author come to terms with an identity or to espouse the merits of inner growth. Writing is created for an audience, whether that audience is yourself, or someone else. As I learned this I realized one of the greatest strengths of writing. To offer an audience truths.

Whether I'm writing fiction, non-fiction or poetry I can share truths with my audience. Even if sometimes that audience is just myself. Yet, how much more powerful is it to share a learned truth with others? If you learn the secret to immortality yet keep it to yourself eventually you are all alone. Everyone else has gone while you are left alone. Yet if you share it, not only do you benefit but others do as well. The truth can aid everyone. It can even be examined, perhaps there is a different truth even more important that can come from a community of writers and readers.

As a transgender woman I have often found that community lacking. Fantasy and science fiction circles are opening up, but are still mostly a gender normative field. Even outside of my favorite genres transgender representation is often rare, or excluded entirely. Having spaces where transgender and gender non-conforming individuals can write is essential for building such communities. Places to find friends and share truths.

As I look upon myself here, no longer on a beach but on a bed I smile. Escape can be good, perhaps later I will return to that island. Yet, if I can escape and tell truths at the same time I can do so much more. Next time I am upon that island maybe I can bring a friend. Then we can share some of the truths we have both learned over fictional cocktails.



"Born in Ohio, raised in West Virginia and studying writing in Maine; it is clear she loves to move around. Currently in Columbus, OH writing, teaching and creating art in many forms. Emma loves to explore identity and trauma in her creative pieces. In her works she often tries to highlight how people of all genders and sexualities can be fantastic fully realized characters."

# Heriberto "Eddie" Palacio III,

MFA



The idea of showing affection to our fellow Black men is a social taboo and cautionary danger. Platonic intimacy in the scope of American society is stereotypically labeled at it's best as cautionary, and at its worst as forbidden. Police violence towards BIPOC only compounds layers of complexity and trauma. We love our Brothers with Caution because we are told we cannot platonically love without it being sexual. Hug your homies now, not wishing you did while grieving later. Love us.

**"CAUTION CUDDLE: The Danger of protecting my Homie", 2020**  
56 X 44 in.  
Digital Illustration



**"Crown thy good with brotherhood", 2020**  
44X 44 in.  
Digital Illustration.

Continuing my work on Black Bromances, I made this piece to create juxtaposition between Black boys, platonic intimacy, and the adjacent experience of being a Black male in America. The American flag embraces the resting Black boys as they sleep peacefully, or are they already gone from us and their beautiful corpses are resting in the linen of their enemy? Are we woke yet? Or can we finally rest in the arms of our brothers?





**“Imma pray with you Bruh”, 2020**

56 X 44 in.  
Digital Illustration

Continuing my work on Black Bromances, I made this piece to speak to spiritual relationships between Black men, empathy, and the experience of healing amongst Black men. “Our Black brother cries out in silence. When will we comfort one another? When will we seek peace and vulnerability brother? I pray that it will be soon.”

**“It’s okay bruh”, 2020**

44X 56 in.

Digital Illustration.

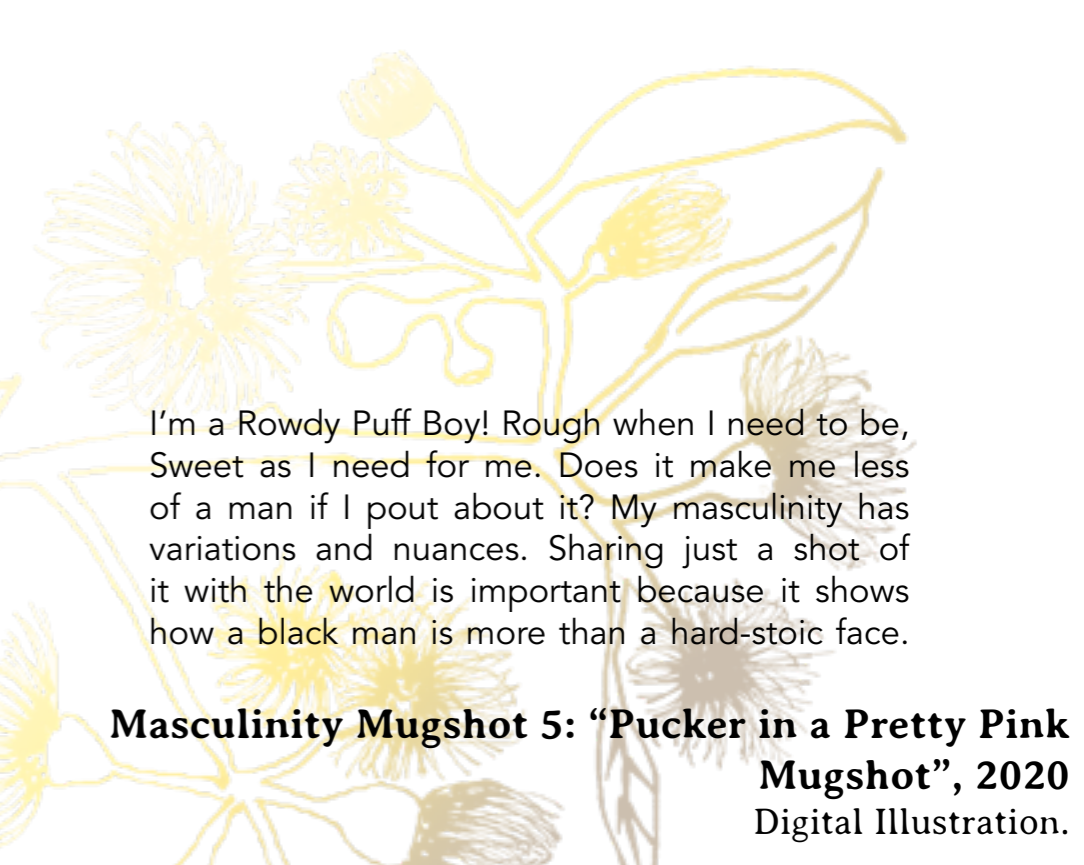




**Masculinity Mugshot 1: “Pain in a Pretty Pink Mugshot”, 2020**  
Digital Illustration.



My masculinity has variations and nuances. Sharing just a shot of it with the world is important because it shows how a black man is more than a hard-stoic face.



**Masculinity Mugshot 5: “Pucker in a Pretty Pink Mugshot”, 2020**  
Digital Illustration.



**Masculinity Mugshot 2: “Precious in a Pretty Pink Mugshot”, 2020**  
Digital Illustration.

A black man can still have his moments to be precious and vulnerable. My masculinity has variations and nuances. Sharing just a shot of it with the world is important because it shows how a black man is more than a hard-stoic face.



## Attitude —noun

1. *manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., with regard to a person or thing; tendency or orientation, especially of the mind: a negative attitude; group attitudes.*
2. *position or posture of the body appropriate to or expressive of an action, emotion, etc.: a threatening attitude; a relaxed attitude.*

### Runnin' tha streetz, 2020

44 X 56 in.

Digital Illustration.

The attitude of being a black man in America is so unrefined, yet rigid. Complex yet deciphered. Identified, yet undernourished. Black Boy Attitude is a series of work that will explore the strange customs of black male attitudes and how the influence of larger systematic damages to a community have yet to be repaired, but only reappropriated. What does it mean to look, express, pose, orient, exist as black men in America? How do black men embody their masculinity versus "perform" it?

"Heriberto "Eddie" Palacio III is an Afro Hispanic who is also apart of the LGBT community and identifies as a pansexual man. He was born and raised in Bronx, New York until his family relocated to Atlanta, GA during his high school years, giving him an introduction to southern culture. Palacio has gone on to study at Tennessee State University in Nashville, TN earning his BFA in Art and continued his education at Watkins College of Art in Nashville, TN earning his MFA in Visual Arts in 2020.

He is an interdisciplinary artist that makes work that speaks to African American masculinity and African American adjacent issues. He is also interested in mental health issues in Black male adjacent communities and is looking to utilize emotional intelligence to visually grapple with this subject matter's pervasiveness to said communities. Using graphic illustration, photography, performance, and video; he creates work that explores the social construct of Black masculinity in American society."

Heriberto "Eddie" Palacio III  
HE/THEY



@PalaceOfArts

# Shunayna Vaghela



## Reflection - 2020

Reflection is the artistic rendering of a self-portrait I took at the start of lockdown, one that I sometimes refer back to as that person's life feels very far from mine in the present, but reminds me that this will eventually pass.





## Let it burn - 2020


'Let it burn' is a response to the various social revolutions of 2020 - maybe this year isn't all bad, and we should let things that weren't meant to last, or shouldn't have lasted at all, burn.



"A Londonder born and bred, Shunayna has been creative for years. Having worked in film, TV, and publishing you could say she can't get enough. Illustrating and Writing are her creative expressions of choice, and when she isn't buried under swathes of drafts, you can probably find her on a new travel adventure."

*Shunayna Vaghela*

SHE/HER

 @shunayna\_

## The Year We Walked Through Fire

The fire blazed white hot as we marched angrily in the streets. Another life had been lost, needlessly to police violence, and we could take no more. Sure, the city had flashed some cash to the victim's family, but it wasn't going to bring her back, and it wasn't going to deliver any justice either. You can kick a dog in the teeth as many times as it will allow you, but when that dog gets tired, it bites your ass back. We are biting back, fighting back, and burning shit down. White people are up in arms, calling us thugs, losers, and worse. I don't care. At this stage, you're either with us or against us. Nothing else matters. We're tired. I'm tired. Things must change. You can either get on board or get run over trying to uphold the same bullshit that's been killing us for centuries.

As we march through the streets, fire propels us forward. People line the streets, cheering, jeering, and joining us as we walk. We're grateful for the ones who join us, seeing the need for change, feeling the hunger for justice and change as we do. To my left and my right are my brothers and sisters. This struggle to live and breathe has made us family. We'll walk together in love till the end. The cops are gathering at the end of the road. We will not be deterred. Their riot gear, rubber bullets, and batons don't frighten us. We've been gassed, beaten, hogtied, brutalized. We can take whatever they dish out. Our bail funds get us out of lockup, should we get brought in. We are tired. If things do not change, then it must burn. That's the mantra. That's our mission. We are sticking to it and holding firm. We will keep walking, unafraid, angry, determined, grounded in our purpose. No more husbands will be taken from the wives. No more sons will be taken away from their mothers. No more daughters will be taken from their mothers. No more mothers will be taken away from their children. We will burn this world down to the ground and rebuild everything new. Maybe that's what should have happened long ago. It's definitely what's going to happen right now.


We have lived through so much. The virus, the losses, the grief. We cannot stand another day of being murdered by those who are sworn to protect us. We don't deserve to be murdered in our beds or shot down in the streets like dogs. We deserve to live and thrive. We deserve to breathe. So today, we burn it all down. We burn it because we built this country and received nothing in return. We can rebuild it better, new, and fairly. This is our time. The line of cops are building. There are tanks now too. This ominous presence doesn't deter us. We have the blood and blessing of the ancestors at our backs pushing us forward, chanting freedom songs in our ears. We listen and we honor them, just by walking. We press on. We march on. They will not break us. We walk through the fire. We are the fire. We're ready to scorch the earth. They will know that we were here and they will remember all of us.




"This was written this year and it's a piece of short fiction. I have been writing for over thirty years. I specialize in poetry, haiku, and fiction. I love telling stories about Black people and what we experience in this world."

**Chere R. Hampton**

SHE/HER

 Chere R. Hampton

 @goblkphoenix

[www.writtensuicide.wordpress.com](http://www.writtensuicide.wordpress.com)

# Kali la Fae

Content creator on onlyfans and manyvids.

Dungeon master in all respects, Your dark queen. KFee.

Kali la Fae

SHE/HER

Photo credit: @crystal.rose.studios  
Edit by me: @kfee614



# Lashonda Love

## Miniverse

A universe was born in my glovebox.

I fumbled for my registration through teary eyes, rummaging around the other papers and napkins and crumbs that sprang out when I opened the compartment. The light had gone out months ago, but I was so distraught that I didn't find it odd at the time to see the overflowing hoard bathed in a soft, glowing light.

"Ma'am, have you been drinking?" the officer asked through the barely open window as raindrops drenched my seat.

"No, sir. I'm sorry, I actually just hit a rabbit like 5 minutes ago and I've never hit any animal before, I love animals, and I've just been having a really bad day - a bad week I guess - my mom is in the hospital and then the rabbit and I was crying and I just wanted to get home-" the words came pouring out through croaking sobs.

It must've been pity or the absolute icy cold of the relentless October rain, but the officer let me go with very little hassle. I drove the last few miles home under the speed limit, white knuckles throbbing on the steering wheel. It wasn't until I was sitting in the parking lot, sadly attempting to stuff the registration back into the glove box that I saw the faint, white nebula dancing between folds of napkins.

I hurriedly ripped everything from the compartment, stopping when the nebula was all that was left.

*Should I try to pull it out?*

I sat back in my seat and watched it. It didn't look dangerous, but even as I observed it, white wisps began expanding and swirling and... sparkling. The central nebula began filling with dimmer, twinkling lights. The new stars wrapped around the universe like so many Christmas bulbs and then suddenly began colliding. Their bursts popped and fizzled like the tab on a can of soda, sending new elements hurling through the miniature cosmos. The entire box was beginning to feel like a space-heater and I anxiously wondered whether it was going to overheat my car.

By the end of the hour, the universe had expanded to completely fill the box and, though it had begun to cool quite significantly, it looked like it was still growing, so I shut the door in hopes of containing it. I reluctantly lumbered inside and up to bed.

Over the course of a few days, the baby universe looked unrecognizable hour-to-hour. On the first day, I was surprised to find that several mini galaxies had started to form, clearing their large path of stray stars and stellar dust. My curiosity got the better of me and I stretched a single, shaking finger out to touch one galaxy's spiral arm, only to watch in horror as it broke apart, scattering out across the expanse of the box. Asteroids the size of poprocks pierced through other galaxies, smashing newly formed planets.

Within a few days, the matter in the tiny universe had settled into one distinct galaxy. It seemed my interference had fucked up the natural progression and the confined space had somehow stunted what might have been quite an expansive thing. I decided there would be no more touching.

However, the new galaxy trudged on and after a week, I had to call my friend Sam over for the celestial show. We sat under blankets in the front seats of the car, eyes focused on a handful of planets that had formed life. I wondered at my poking and what seeds of civilizations might have been decimated under my index finger. It must've started days ago, imperceptible microorganisms growing and evolving unbeknownst to me.

One planet had creatures close to humans while some had squirming blobs, trembling boulder people, and sentient gasses. Some planets looked like their very crust was moving, and we wondered what life hid below their surfaces.

Our obvious favorite was the almost-human planet. They were surviving miniature volcanoes and hurricanes, outfoxing vicious dinosaurs and, yes, even dragons. They seemed one evolutionary step away from being the same as us, so we watched in a trance as a tiny, hairy woman discovered fire. Quickly, the world was illuminated. Tribes of fire-wielding bipeds set out, creating little villages and towns. They hunted fearsome creatures to extinction. Within the blink of an eye there was agriculture. With the development of electricity, there was industry. Several wars covered the faces of their many countries until they all eventually settled into raising families and working in their communities.

The lives of our little people whizzed by until there were too many for us to mourn each funeral.

Very suddenly, in the corner of the galaxy, the planet of boulder-people sent up a very fine rocketship. It zigzagged and jetted masterfully through asteroid fields until it unceremoniously collided with an empty dwarf planet, marooning the interstellar explorers to their deaths. Sam cried for each one of them, remarking how brave they must have been to take the first ever space mission.

Our planet of humans followed immediately, sending up several clunky metal robots that all reached nearby planets and moons where they stumbled around taking pictures and collecting samples. Few of their robots returned, but once they had their samples, the humans sent up a half dozen pods with a few astronauts each. We sobbed for hours for the pods that simply floated off and out into space, searching and finding nothing, but watched in anticipation as one pod came upon the planet of sentient gasses. The gas planet sent up missiles and we covered our eyes and screeched in anguish as the last brave little explorers evaporated.

A day after the horrifying end to the humans space mission, the gas planet sent out a large fleet of spaceships headed right for our human planet. Sam kept begging me to let her pluck out the little ships and send them back home, but I insisted that we couldn't fuck with the very fabric of life as they knew it and she begrudgingly agreed. Before I could see the ships find their target, however, my phone buzzed.

I spent the last week of my mother's life at her bedside, Sam driving me to and from the hospital. I told my mom about the stars and asteroids, about the hairy woman who discovered fire, and all the tiny spaceships. I watched the stories sparkle in her eyes and then finally fade away in one last breath.

When I returned to Sam and my glovebox, she looked like she had aged a million years. She told me of great space wars between the humans and the gas people, but said that just a few short days ago, the star in the humans solar system had exploded in a brilliant supernova, wiping out all life in the system. She said all the little stars were starting to go and it had been a spectacular display, like fireworks, but almost none of the living planets had managed to survive.

One mothership full of the last living boulder people was drifting alone through space, dimly illuminated by the last dying stars. Sam also had identified a giant black hole at the center of the galaxy. Even if they did manage to sustain themselves on their mothership, it was a matter of days before the rapidly accelerating feeding of the black hole swallowed everything. She said she was tired. To call her if it looked like things might get better. And then she left.

She was right to go. As inevitably as she had predicted, the black hole swallowed everything over the course of the following week and left a glovebox much like the one I had a month ago. The only difference being that at its center sat a menacing, pitch black mass. I wondered about touching it. Feeling it. Trying to get rid of it.

Instead, I carefully slipped a napkin back into the box. Once it was within range of the black hole, it was ripped to shreds and then vanished.

The box stayed much the same for months until I realized it was emitting an icy cold draft and the black hole was shrinking.

Even as the black hole disappeared, the glovebox never felt empty. It felt fuller than ever with matter I couldn't see. I wondered how much of it was of my own doing - remembering all of the stars and life and exuberance of the early universe. I knew everything had to still be there. It had been in the black hole, and the black hole had decayed into... something. Yet the glove compartment was visibly empty. The only clue to its previous contents was the freezing cold left in its wake

Over the past year even that, too, has gone.

At some point, I shoved everything back into the glove compartment in hopes that it was the clutter that birthed the nebula, but all of the papers and napkins felt eerily out of place, so I took them back out.

I broke my no touching rule and placed my hands gently in the box. Feeling around. Calling out.

Lashonda Love

ANY/NONE  
@snozzberry.gif

"Lashonda is writer, musician, yoga teacher, and activist born and raised in Columbus, OH. She holds her B.A. in Music Performance from Denison University and is the Executive Director of UnBound. As a queer, pagan, woman of color raised in a low-income, trauma-affected household, Lashonda centers the intersections of identities as well as trauma storytelling in their works and projects."



# Beck Weiser

## SKY BLUE HOPEFUL

Walking to work this morning,  
 I noticed that the sky was thinking about being blue  
 What a change of pace  
 From the old book white it had been  
 The past few days as the world seemed to burn  
 But the winds came by  
 Heralding hopeful rain later in the week  
 And for a brief moment there was blue  
 Right next to the blood red sun  
 And I thought about temperance  
 Moderation in your own sadness and fear  
 I have lived with a backpack full of fear my entire life  
 Never taking rocks out  
 Only adding the problems of ever person I see  
 And it feels like the weight will never go away  
 But for a moment  
 I felt something like weightlessness  
 Because the smoke was clearing  
 And despite all odds  
 The sky was still blue

(written Sept. 2020)

## CRAVE LOVE

I know the type of love my friends crave  
 Big and bright and bold and branding  
 The love that burns you to the ground  
 A wildfire burning away the debris-filled underbrush  
 Making way for new growth  
 I don't want that  
 I want the soft simmer of a tea kettle  
 The warmth that comes with an old blanket  
 I want your head pillowed in my lap  
 My fingers carding through your hair  
 As I read poetry to you in bed  
 I want the quiet love that lasts a lifetime  
 It can flare up and burn down  
 Flickering in the wind  
 But never going out  
 Because who needs a bonfire  
 When a candle can do you just as well?

(Written July 2020)

## A REFLECTION ON MY OWN DEATH

On the day that I die there will be no silence I  
 didn't ask for silence  
 There will be the sound of wings  
 Trees will be creaking in the wind  
 People will continue laughing as they walk  
 Music will continue playing  
 And I will be dead  
 My body huffing as the trapped air gets ex-  
 pelled  
 Singing a hymn to the earth as I rejoin it  
 Because that's all my death will be  
 No grand gesture  
 No martyrdom  
 Just a body  
 Going back to where it belongs  
 And from that great beyond I will beg my  
 friends  
 Do not cry  
 This is no crying matter  
 I am simply following the path set before me  
 And you will miss me the way that you miss  
 The umbrella you left in your car during the  
 summer Ready and waiting for you  
 For when the rain comes again

(Written April 2020)



"Beck Weiser is a 21 year old non-binary person, currently studying creative writing at Southern Oregon University. Their passions include hockey, children's education and loving women. "

## CHERRY BLOSSOMS (THE BEGINNING OF THE END)

In the last few weeks of March  
 As we make the gentle ebb into spring  
 The cherry blossoms outside of Churchill bloom  
 Fallen petals line the walk ways  
 And it reminds me of fall leaves and fallen snow  
 It's the soft pink signal  
 That heralds the end of winter term  
 And the start of the final 10 week home stretch before summer  
 I'm missing them this year  
 I'm 300 miles away  
 Tucked into the corner of my bedroom  
 I play animal crossing absentmindedly  
 A way to feel like I'm passing the time  
 I can't go outside  
 I'm afraid to go into the front yard  
 I know that this will all be over eventually  
 But I think a part of me will always live here  
 Like my great grandmother  
 Who sometimes forgets  
 That there is no longer dust filling every wrinkle in her skin  
 And that there is no longer a mile high depression outside  
 No matter what happens next  
 If this all ends tomorrow  
 I know that I will come out changed  
 And decades from now  
 I'll tell my grandchildren this story  
 Of how the best way I could've ever served my country  
 Was to sit inside and do nothing  
 And I almost failed at that  
 Just because of my own loneliness  
 I will tell them of the rain that fell in sheets outside my window  
 Of my dogs coat growing longer and longer  
 Of the cans of Mango White Claws that began to litter my room  
 I will tell them of the cherry blossoms  
 And how I missed them  
 And everything they stood for

(Written March 2020)



# Kelli Edinger

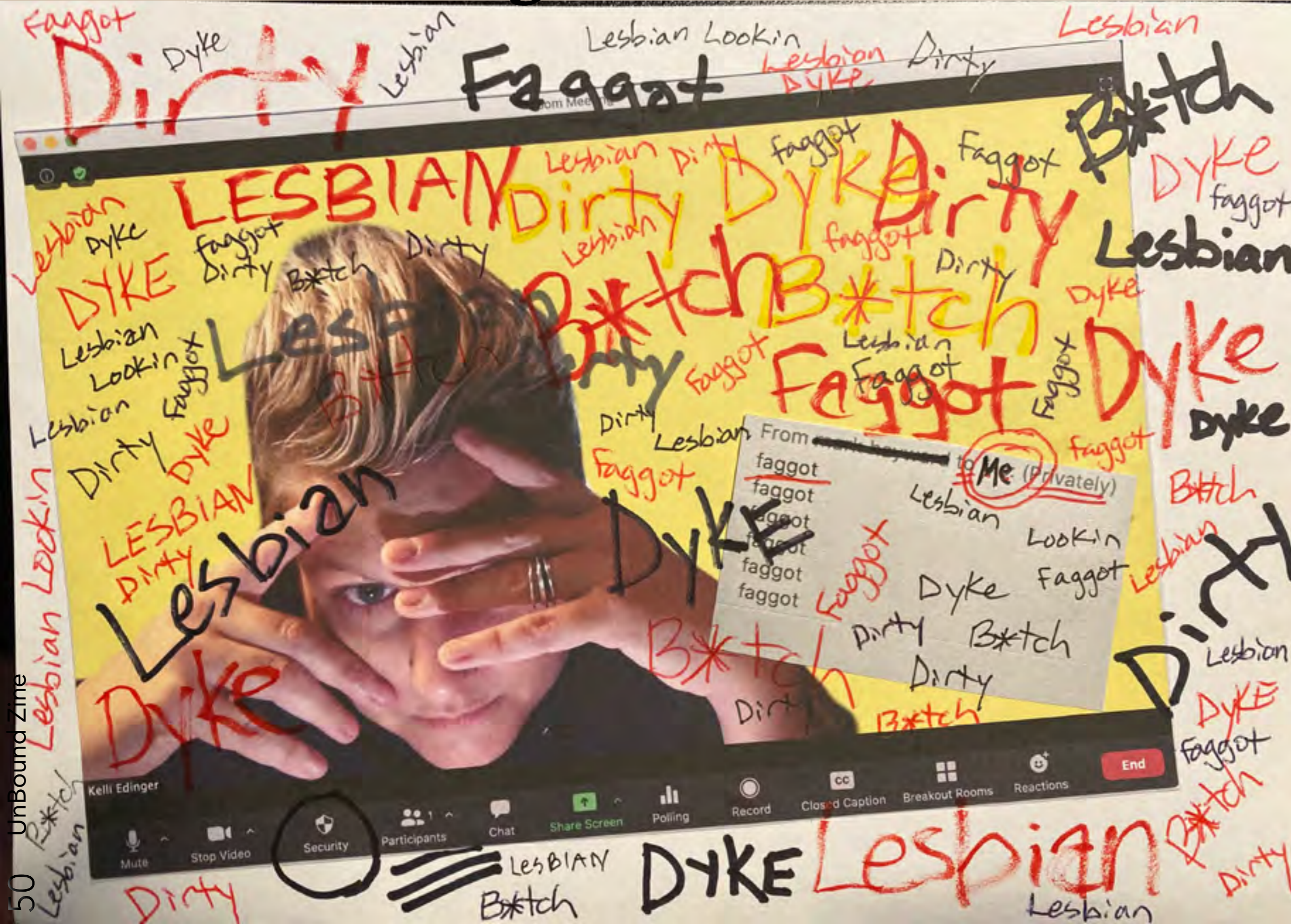
## Virtual Learning

Kelli Edinger  
(SHE/HER)

This submission is a mixed media piece that I created based on my personal reality adjusting to teaching high school art online. I am based in Columbus, OH where I teach a diverse student population made up almost entirely of people of color and English language learners. I assigned my students a project to create a piece of art inspired by two life experiences they'd had. This attached submission is the sample artwork I created from my personal experience.

My goal for this project was to facilitate a conversation with my students about pain and harassment. Being undermined, shamed, marginalized, or attacked. And how those negative feelings can be transmuted into artistic expression, giving one an outlet, a voice. A means to find strength and resilience when you need it most. The strong language used in my composition reflects the exact words hurled at me recently in a "Zoom Bombing" - live in front of a classful of students. Interlopers found a way into my virtual classroom and took over Zoom chat - weaponizing these words against me because of my gender and sexuality. Certainly, it was hurtful, but naturally, I was much more concerned about any LGBTQIA students in my classes - hearing and experiencing this harassment and hatred along with me. I wanted to give them a healthy and constructive way to communicate the most difficult and painful of feelings.

As hoped, this piece facilitated a great conversation with my classes. I was able to talk to them about what life as an out lesbian has been for me since I came out over 20 years ago. My students responded so well, and I had also had some approach me in private chat. After telling me how strong I was, one student told me that he was now so proud to be gay! My students ultimately created some very powerful artwork and presented them to each other, discussing the artwork and their personal experiences freely. It was powerful for me and hopefully also to the kids!



# Kenechi Unachukwu

No Justice - 2020

Skin Tone - 2020



The killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis was the catalyst for worldwide protests, and the neighboring state of Wisconsin was no exemption. On May 30, people from all ages and ethnicities led by young black men and women congregated at the capitol to voice their frustrations about a system that has led to the wrongful death of many black citizens at the hands of the police. Calling for an abolition of the police, the group numbering into the thousands proceeded to take to the streets behind banners stating "Black Lives Matter" and "Community Control Over Police".

However, the fight did not end on there. Nearly every day since the initial protest, groups have been out on the streets fighting for black lives and the black community. Local groups continually organize events such as marches, educational seminars, and even parties for the benefit and joy of the community. Even without the news coverage or the acknowledgement of the general public, people are still in the streets till this day.

Allies - 2020



Am I Next - 2020



**Black King - 2020**



**Black Royalty - 2020**



**Black Queen - 2020**






**The Learning - 2020**

"Kenechi Unachukwu is a freelance photographer currently based in Madison, Wisconsin. Kenechi first was drawn to photography by images documenting the underground bboy (breakdance) battle scene. He began taking photos in that realm in 2017, and has since branched out to street photography, landscapes, and portraits. As he develops his style, Kenechi aims to both tell stories that have not been told, as well as offer a fresh perspective on the things we see daily. "

**Kenechi Unachukwu**

HE/HIM

 @kenechi.una

[www.kenechiuna.com](http://www.kenechiuna.com)

**Not Black - 2020**



**Power - 2020**



# Camila Gallego



"A Colombian art historian and illustrator. Her work takes on traditional drawing and painting media while exploring archetypes, mythologies, power systems and themes loaded with references to pop culture and colonial art."

"Myrmecoleon"



"Mermaid"



"Medusa"



“Mystery Man”



“Harpía”



“Canocephalus”



“Reptilian”



“Chamrosh”

*Camila Gallego*  
 SHE/HER  
 @camilagallegosilva  
[www.camilagallego.com](http://www.camilagallego.com)

# Melanie Lee

“Melanie Lee is a NYC based illustrator. She is deeply inspired by horror movies and her work focuses primarily on the topics revolving around femininity.” Her work can be found at [melanieleeillustration.com](http://melanieleeillustration.com)

I drew this during my first week of lock down in NYC. Everything had come to a halt and I had a feeling of deep deep dread that we would be in this weird limbo for a long time. Nearly 7 months later and much of the **“The First Week”** world has moved on while we remain stuck.



## “QUARANTINE”

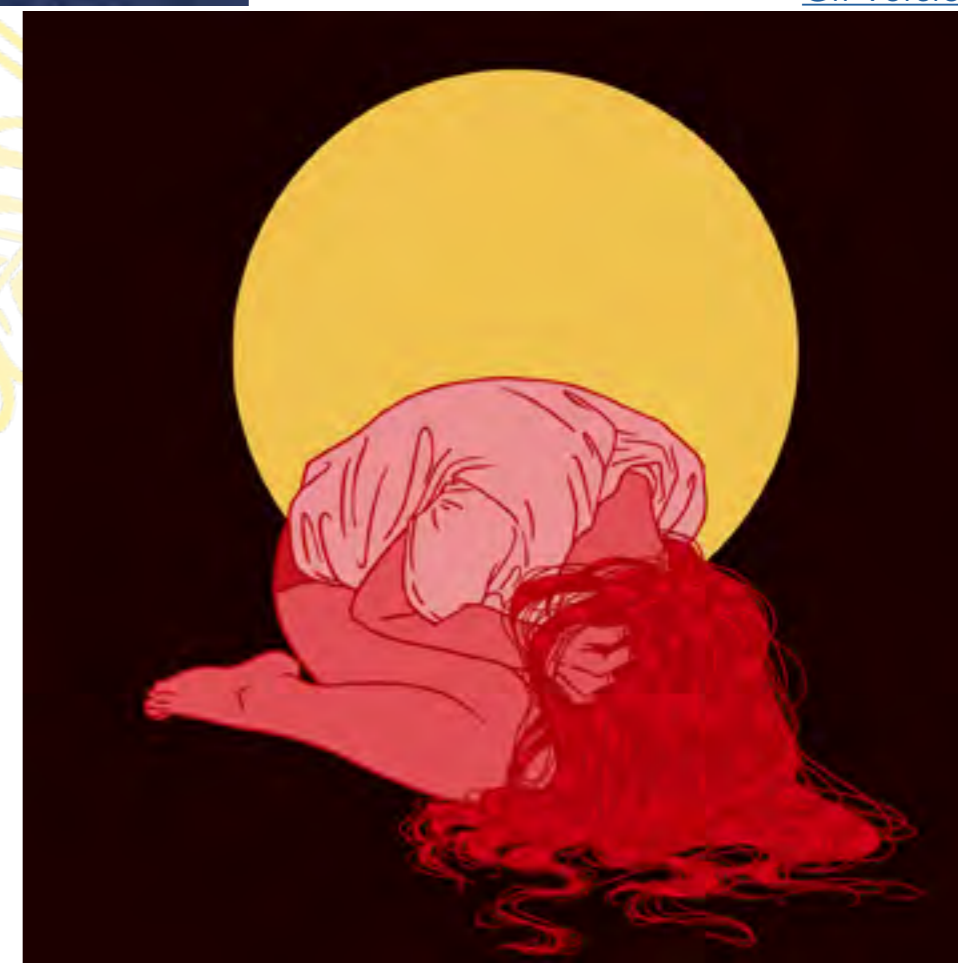
I think this was three months into NYC lockdown? I had been temporarily laid off, I was feeling hopeless, I hadn't seen anyone but my roommates in all that time, nothing brought me any joy, not even drawing and it got to a point where I would put on long sparkly dresses and heels to go grocery shopping just for the sake of feeling like I had something to do.

Melanie Lee  
SHE/HER

[Gif Version](#)

## “BLM”

I drew this at the very start of the BLM movement. I felt sick (emotionally) most of the time but the protests were incredible to witness. I had many lengthy conversations with my Black family members (I myself am Chinese American, not Black) as well as my Black partner. We spoke frankly about what I've done or said in the past that's hurt them, intentional or otherwise. I hope we can all learn from this.







# Lexie Dungan

Here's a coloring page.  
Do what you will.

"Lexie is a queer, radically feminist artist based in Columbus, Ohio. Her work includes paintings, comics, animation, photography, and physical installations among many other projects. Some of her current projects include collaboration on a mixed-media fantasy novel as well as collaboration on a story-telling project where she uses comics to represent interview experiences of people of color."



**Lexie Dungan**  
SHE/HER  
@L.d.m.a.art

LDMA

[Printable Version](#)



# Collaborator Highlights



# Al Dilozenzo



My heart sings  
With the wind



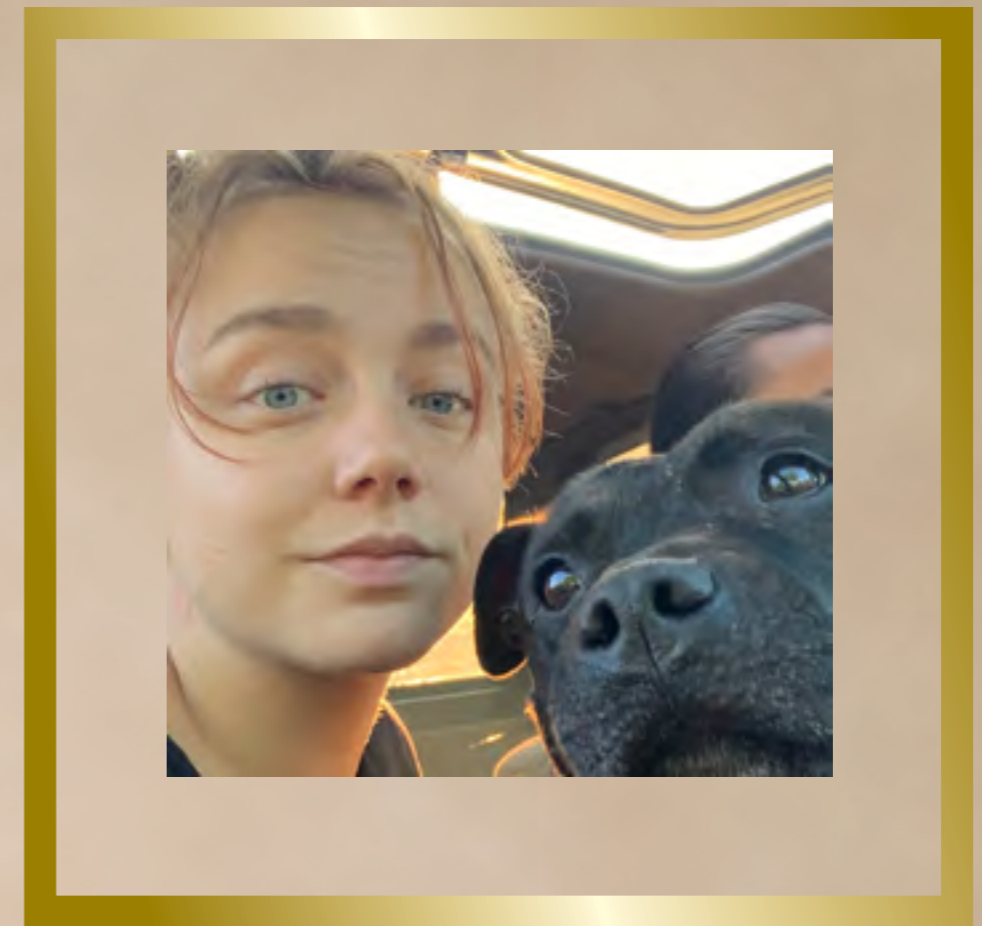
Endless hours  
Come and go

“At the time I was invited to be a part of the first issue of UnBound Zine, I was creating digital art from photos of my personal adventures and spiritual experiences. These works had an otherworldly and futuristic theme, which evolved into a collaboration with the Zine’s creator. The abstract photo series called Lov# highlights the relationship between beauty and ugliness. I found this dichotomy especially powerful in the context of life in the great Capitalist Experiment. These photos blur the lines between gore and desire in a way that was inspiring to me.

For the 7th issue of UnBound Zine I am sharing a series of photos in the form of a visual poem called “Once One Again.” The words in this poem came to me as an anchor in a time of chaos. The images are artifacts from my daily life, moments that have come and gone like lightning. I hold these close to my heart, knowing that every moment is its own work of art.



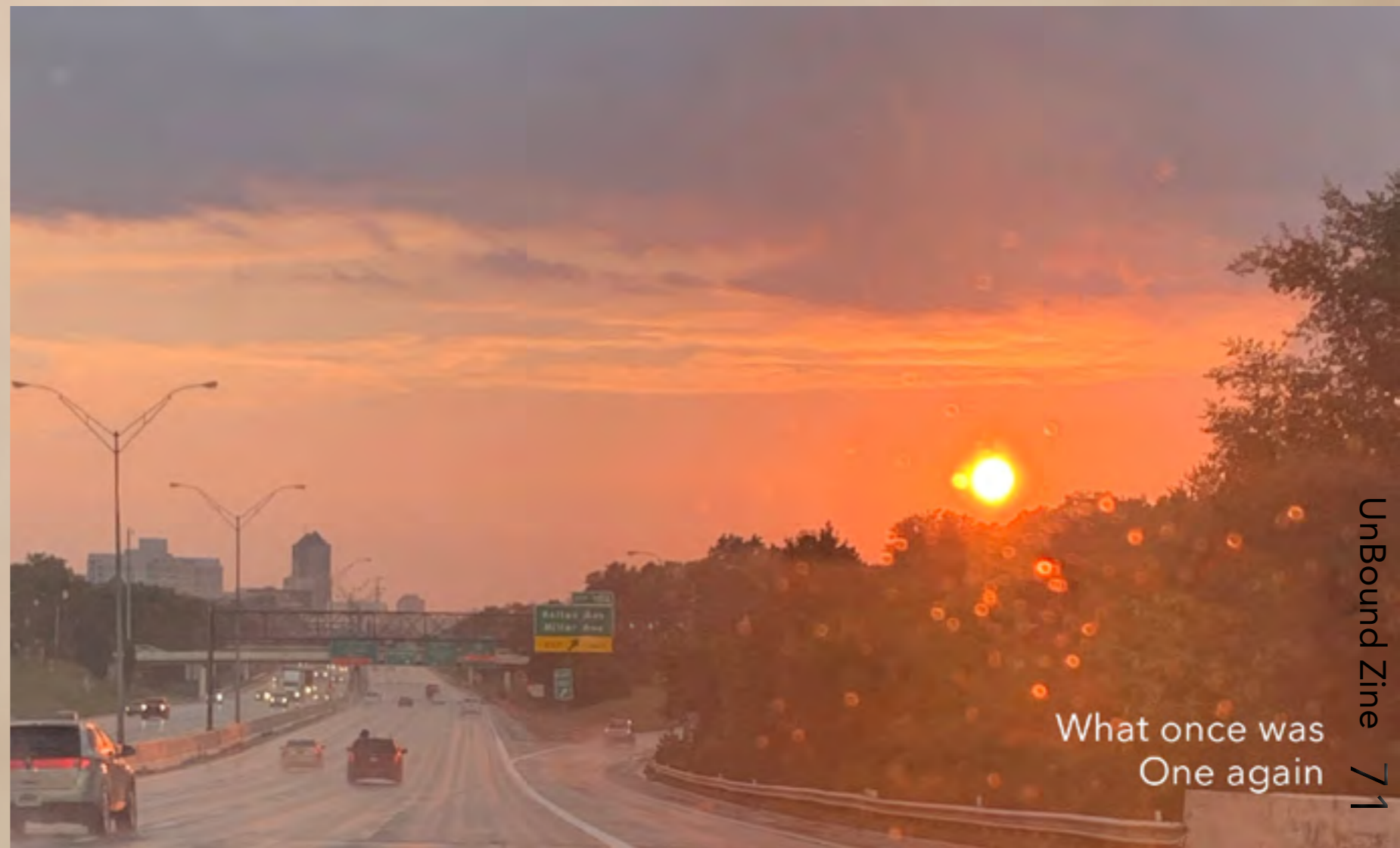
In time I Know  
We shall be



As for many folks, 2020 has been something else. Transformation has occurred at every level: individual, social, cultural, economic, and political. As an artist, this year has been particularly interesting as I've been working on some projects that involve my personal mission to bring together art, technology, and community to bring positive change to the world. This includes gallery exhibits using augmented reality and an app called "Dublin Fantasy Experience" that transforms my hometown into a magical adventure for anyone to enjoy.

I am so grateful to the UnBound Zine project for bringing together wonderful artists to enrich the world with badass content. I'm looking forward to growing with this community and shining our light for years to come."

Onward and Upward,



What once was  
One again

# Skye Cardoz

## What Do I Feel Like

You called me the moon  
The stars shine but it's not as beautiful as the moon

You say you find peace in me  
You tell me your secrets  
When it's late at night  
You only get sleep when you're in my bed  
And when you're in my arms

I take photographs of you smiling  
Because you're so beautiful  
I can feel your soul sing around me

I asked you to pick between the sun and the moon  
You told me the sun was warm, but it burned,  
It was moody, it was messy  
The moon is always bright  
And always tries to be there  
Even on days they don't feel complete.



"Skye Cardoz writes articles, stories, and poems, mostly on love and mental health. She has had an article published in Thought Catalog and has self-published a short story on Kindle. She loves exploring topics on love and its elements (whether it be heartbreak or little wins) throughout her work. She lives in Mumbai, India with her family and pet plants."

## **How did you get involved as a collaborator in our first issue?**

I was just looking out for opportunities to showcase and publish my writing. I had seen a posting on Daisee by Unbound Zine looking for creators, and I knew I had to immediately contribute. I think I had shared a piece about finding strength within oneself.

## **How has your art changed in the year since you were first featured in UnBound?**

My art personally hasn't changed too much. I have been experimenting in a lot of genres. Some have worked and some haven't. But I've seen UnBound GROW! It went from a collection of art to a platform with purpose. You've given us a platform to be ourselves and showcase our art without hesitation. That's beautiful!

## **How has your life changed in the past year?**

Personally, yes! I've been going through a shift where I have needed to find myself and reinvent myself coz the old me just left. Or is that too personal too share? On a writer's side, I have just wanted to focus on who I am and try to get myself as many stages to share my voice and poetry on as possible.



## **What plans, if any, do you have for your work or creative projects in the upcoming year?**

Yes, on November 13, 2020, I'm launching a Humanitarian Community Movement platform called Kind Hearts Brigade where I aim to bring people Reminders to be kind in everything they do. It is my tiny attempt to change the world! But for my writing, I do hope to be published in local Magazines too! Right now I'm just working on becoming a better writer.

# Zhenya Gavrilova

## How did you get involved as a collaborator in our first issue?

I stumbled upon the UnBound zine as one of the projects on Daisie app. Because of its topics and openness, it seemed incredibly friendly and curious. And it really lived up to these expectations:)



**How has your art changed in the year since you were first featured in UnBound?**

Well, it's still colourful and chaotic as hell. But now instead of constant sketching, I try to finish my drawings and make them look presentable enough. I've tried other formats and techniques, for example, collages. And made some video-works, but very soon realised that even with video-art it's hard for me to formulate a concept, I just do it natively. That's nice to know that there's a long way to go.

Drew my biggest work so far. With that piece I've participated in the exhibition for the first time. But that experience was quite strange, it's good for a CV but so so so far away from my dream exhibition. I'm still sticking to my archaic drawing style.





**What plans, if any, do you have for your work or creative projects in the upcoming year?**

In 2020 I've been digging deeper into the art theory to better understand contemporary art. My art right now is very naive and I can't explain how it works. Just through colours. Generally I want to try putting some real thoughts, stories and concepts inside of what I create. To develop it into another curious form.







### How has your life changed in the past year?

I spent 6 month in Italy, living in a family and going to Italian high school. It changed my perspective on a lot of things, because I had to be in a completely new environment without a language. I had a lot of time to be alone with myself, but also find some really special friends. Where else can you walk around a medieval town with an opera singer joking around about lord of the rings? Or try aikido during a class in the modern theatre? Cry over Korean drama with your Italian parents?

This experience was so out of all expectations that I can't describe it. This exchange year was interrupted by the virus and so I came back to Moscow. Quarantine was interesting, I felt overwhelmed by information (in a good way) and could just spend the whole day reading about cultures, watching lectures on contemporary art and again - adapt to new/old environment. And yet, I really wanted to run away. I guess the answer to the question would be - I've changed, cause surrounding changes constantly by itself.



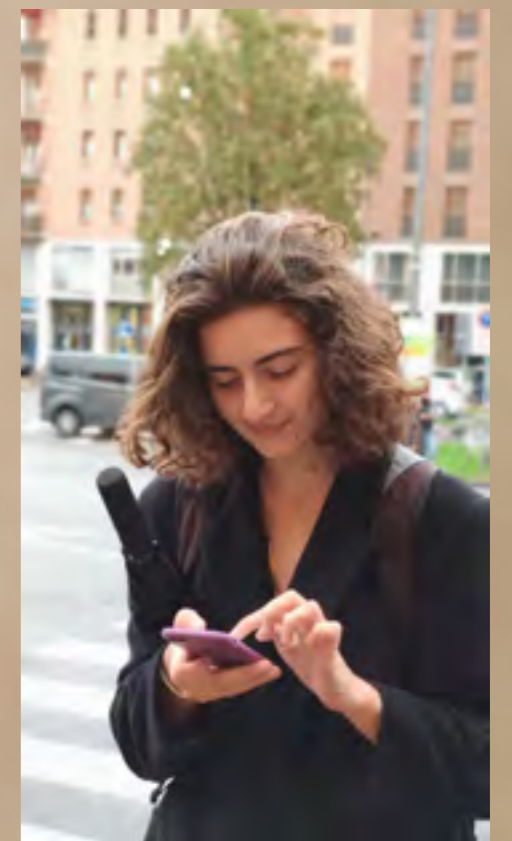
"I live in Moscow, Russia. Currently I'm interested in ethnography and cultural anthropology. I draw a lot, but I have never really studied the technique and it's really curious for me to learn it by absorbing and analysing my surroundings."

*Zhenya Gavra*

SHE/HER



@zhenya\_gavra



# Rayna Kingston

## I AM grieving

OCTOBER 2020

I recently got asked what this Movement has cost me. As a Latina Womxn who is white passing, I was inclined to say nothing. It's not that this Movement hasn't cost me anything, it's that I didn't think I had a right to share. What does it matter what I've lost? When others have lost so much more. That's a common response among "woke" allies. But it's not the true response. We do harm to ourselves and others by not acknowledging our own pain. My Black, Womxn Boss taught me that pain is not a competition. She asked me, what has this Movement cost you? The truth? My family.

This Movement has cost me my family. I'm on the verge of losing my mom. Losing as in might not see or speak to for the rest of my life, not losing as in not trying hard enough. According to my mom, I'm erasing all the values she raised me on. According to my uncle, I'm the angry one in the family, with a chip on my shoulder. According to my grandma I am no longer the golden grandchild because I had sex and got married too young, and because I am no longer a Republican.

And here's the golden question, why would I want that family in my life? Why would I want a family that believes in the ideals that I am trying so hard to fight against? The truth? I don't want that family in my life. But that doesn't mean I'm not grieving. Grieving for the family I once had. Grieving for the family I never had. Oh, but they're your family, you have to love them. No. No I don't. However, losing a family isn't easy. And losing a mother, it's the most painful thing regardless if she is dead or alive.





“Hi! My name is Rayna and I had work featured in the first Unbound Zine and am grateful that I get to submit work for the 1 year anniversary. I recently transitioned into a new job at a nonprofit where I help victims of crime. To be able to help victims of crime, you first need to be in touch and honest with yourself and what you are going through. This short piece was inspired after a therapy session where I finally realized all the grief I have been experiencing and carrying around with me.”

*Rayna Kingston*

SHE/HER

### **How did you get involved as a collaborator in our first issue?**

I am fortunate enough to know vastly and love deeply the original creator of UnBound. She had familiarity with my work, and specifically a year ago, knowledge of my sex poems about nature and had encouraged me to submit my work. I was, and still am, very proud of those poems and was grateful to submit them to the first publication of UnBound. Since then I have been an active promoter of the zine.

### **How has your life changed in the past year?**

Legit, an amazing idea came to me right before bed last night. It will be a type of art that I have not experimented with yet and I am very excited to see how it goes. I am looking for two models in the Denver area, if interested let me know! Hopefully I'll get to share it in an UnBound zine issue next year.

### **How has your art changed in the year since you were first featured in UnBound?**

Journaling has always been my medium. And while I am always raw in my journal, rarely am I vulnerable in work that I let others see. Over the past year, I have, slowly, gained more comfortability with being more honest about what I am personally working through. I have started to realize that I have unique perspectives on situations and that perhaps I can connect with others better by being more honest about my struggles.

### **What plans, if any, do you have for your work or creative projects in the upcoming year?**

As a twenty-something, I feel as if I have never experienced a year in which my life isn't changing quickly and continuously. I have settled into a new state, gone through two job transitions and I got married! But most importantly, I got closer to discovering me.

# Alitasha Ahmad



## How did you get involved as a collaborator in our first issue?

I came to know about Unbound through a platform named Daisie. I have a habit of falling asleep while browsing or mostly reading Historical events or Mythology, so I just happened to stumble across a project looking for artists to collaborate with. The name "Unbound" not only got my attention it also hit me hard, hard enough to go through the details about the project and what it required from the people coming together to be its part. The theme of the issue and my artworks were like a match made in heaven and what made me jovial was that one of my all time favourite painting "I Got It From My Mama" was selected to be featured on the cover. I was very proud of myself the day I saw the first issue and here I am a year later one of the few collaborators selected to celebrate Unbound's anniversary.



### How has your art changed in the year since you were first featured in UnBound?

This year has been nothing less than a rollercoaster ride for me both personally and professionally. And the outbreak of Covid-19 only made it worse. Although, when it comes to art I can without a shadow of doubt say that it has evolved. I'm an extremely observant and porous person and everything that I see is soaked up by my mind like a sponge the result of which can be seen in my artworks which is in constant flux. This year was all about being influenced by fashion, mystic creatures, women and returning back to the retro era mostly because I am in awe of that period. I even made 2-3 illustrations and short stories for children and hope to make more of those to someday have them published. Somewhere around mid- January I lost my interest in painting due to the loss of a person who meant a lot to me and sudden discovery of stylus led me to dabble in the field I digital illustration. I started by tooning-up my own picture which got a lot of appreciation from my followers and I started getting a lot of commission requests for digital illustrations. I loved making them all and what made me even more happy was seeing my clients flaunting them on their social media pages. Even though it was a "rocky Road" it had its lessons and I'm glad to have learned something from all of it.





## What plans, if any, do you have for your work or creative projects in the upcoming year?

Well, last year has been all about making tough decisions some of which were good some not so much the repercussions of which are still evident. I wouldn't lie that there were times when it became so difficult for me to continue with art. I had some short educational courses that I had enrolled into which also needed attention and by the time I was ready to bounce back the Instagram algorithm had already changed and I found myself way behind in the game. All of a sudden I was back to where I started from. What is the point of working so hard if your post doesn't even get any attention? How is one supposed to run a business if your products don't even reach to 20% of the people that follow you? It made me extremely agitated but it also helped me to realise the plight of other artists like me going through the same situation. So I created a movement called Kindness Contagious where I share the artworks of other artists on my profile through stories highlighting their style and unique perspective about their craft. It was an eye opener for me, these fellow artists have also the same aspirations like me. I'm not alone there is a whole tribe of people similar to me and if we stick together and keep supporting each other then there is no way an algorithm can suppress our talents from reaching the target audience.






### How has your life changed in the past year?

I am a firm believer of letting my actions speak louder than my words so it would be a tad bit inappropriate to discuss about my future projects and collaborations before I start working or being allowed to spread the word. But what I can disclose is that I would work harder towards making my presence felt on social media platforms by being more active and posting a lot more. I'm going to be incorporating various mediums and styles in my artform. Maybe invest more time into enhancing my digital illustration and jewellery making skills. I don't know I am just fond of taking one step at a time and going with the flow so let's see what life has in store for me.

*Alitasha Ahamad*

 @alitasha\_ahamad



# There is No Astrology Here

This is supposed to be astrological advice to know one in particular, but it's hard to see the future from here, now. The only signs I've seen lately are political.

I live in a very diverse neighborhood—my use of the word “diverse” should signal that I am a white woman. Only white people use the word “diverse” because white people have long been coddled by a world that was historicized, by whites, to be seen as white, to be sold and bought as white-centric; I've come to believe only white people would buy into such navel-gazing bullshit. American whites in particular, well, we've been programmed to believe that diverse means non-white—because white is the operative word. Another phrase for all this manufactured preferentialism is White Supremacy, but I think most white people prefer to rebrand it as being American. I think about this often because while I'm white as hell, red-haired and freckled and pale-faced as a full moon, I am also Korean. My maternal grandmother immigrated from South Korea in the late 50's, post-war and newly hitched to my terribly white Pennsylvanian grandpa.

This is also a very white thing to do, to point out how not white one's self is. Is it also a Cancer/Leo cusp thing to do?

Let's try again.

I live in a neighborhood. My neighbors are mostly middle-class and Black, and slightly less middle-class and white, and whole families who've fled Bhutan or Nepal, and people who've immigrated from Nigeria and Somalia and Mexico. There are old white veteran retirees living next to old Black veteran retirees living next to three generations of a Nepali family living next to me, a white-passing queer who made sure to be the first person on the block with a Black Lives Matter sign (beside my rainbow heart sign, the word “LOVE” declared in the middle).

I bike and roller skate around the neighborhood, and for weeks I've counted the Trump signs, growing like fascist weeds, marring the trees in their autumnal glory. I have, to date, yelled at three of seven Trump-signed houses in my neighborhood, rolling by like some medically-masked vigilante. I've stuck Pro-abortion stickers on my helmet, which feels like a redundant detail to share, and my socks say BITCH, and I feel so angry and competent when I tell the old white lady down the block, “I used to love all the flowers in your yard. Now, I just think you're a fucking racist.”

My partner is worried about me, but I feel like it's my job to tell other whites how awful they are. I feel like I'm clocking in, like I'm making an honest living, like I could retire on what I'm earning, like I've finally found the career path I've been destined for.

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When Grandma immigrated to America, she landed in Mount Vernon, Ohio. My Granddad's mom was a white lady named Ruth, and when Grandpa was shipped to Germany for several months, Ruth was ruthless. She stole money from Grandma, and instead of teaching Grandma how to drive, Ruth took the car Grandpa bought. Ruth called Social Services because she did not approve of the foreign way my Grandma carried her newborn son, my uncle, strapped to her back with a podaegi. My maternal legacy is one of horrific, all-American racism. Grandpa returned and he moved his new family to another Army base and he never spoke to his mother, or his white family, again. My Grandma never recovered. She never made friends in America. She did not find community. She did not trust anyone but Grandpa, her children, and eventually her grandkids, who look as white as that woman named Ruth.

Am I trying to atone for my own whiteness?

Another house, another lawn sign, with the addition of a giant Trump flag. The obviously white occupants of the house like to leave their garage open so passerby can see the endless supply of Trump signs they have stacked against the garage wall. The quaint, red brick house, has the kind of manicured grass that says, “I'm either managing this lawn or watching Fox News, I literally have nothing else to do.”

I stalked the house for days on end. I rolled by and glared, I rolled by and gaped, I rolled by and considered throwing the porch rocking chair into the street. Another day comes and the whites of the house stand in the open garage, an elderly white with a tucked in flannel shirt, and a forty-something white in khakis.

*Samantha Tucker*  
SHE/HER

I stop the bike and ask the younger white man if I can talk to him. I don't know what I'm going to say because my body made the decision to stop and chat well before I was fully on board. He squints at me, puts his hand to his brow like he has forgotten something important.

“Hey! Aren't you the lady who yelled at us from the bike, a week ago?”

Yeah. Yeah, that was me. I guess I forgot something important.

The white man walks toward me. I put my hand up like a crossing guard, pull my mask tighter on my face. He tells his dad, the elderly white man, to call the cops. A white woman in a car appears, drives between me and the fascist. She stops, then rolls down her window.

“Hey. Don't talk to them,” she says, calm and gentle. “They're stupid. Just keep going. Black Lives Matter.”

As she drives away, I begin to cry. I do not want the man to mistake my emotion for weakness, so before I jump back on the bike, I yell what I probably yelled several weeks prior.

“You fucking racist!”

None of this has anything to do with astrology, but it is happening now, and it is where I am. I could say I'm in an Aries mood, fighting to fight, or that I'm searching for the kind of optimism I find in Aquarius. I could tell Capricorn that she needs to be kinder to herself, or suggest a new job in finance for Scorpio.

The truth is, I can't be bothered with the stars right now. I can't predict a future when I am living in a country whose past is ever present. In all this searing whiteness, I've been searching for a sign of hope. I can't locate any, so I use all of the colors of chalk to scrawl a sign onto my garage door. DON'T LOSE HOPE, the sign says.



# A Tribute to Chadwick

Whether you knew him as T'Challa, James Brown, or Jackie Robinson; Chadwick Boseman made an undeniable impact both on and offscreen. I could spend the next little while talking about his incredible onscreen presence, his genuinely impressive range, or the way he conveyed emotion, but instead, I want to talk about his impact on not only myself but the wider BIPOC community.

For many, Chadwick was the first real onscreen Black superhero. For me, he was the first person I genuinely considered a role model. His dedication to his craft and to the growth and success of Black people and Black culture was noted by all, including the legendary Angela Bassett and Denzel Washington. His work for charity, his championing of other POC and Black culture as a whole, his dedication to equity, all these incredible virtues that I can only dream of embodying. His naturally emanating power, his excellency, his humility, by virtue of being his, was a show of strength to a world that only knows strength; a world that punishes our heroes.

My spirituality is deeply tied to my creativity. For me, drawing is a pathway to understanding whoever or whatever I'm depicting and connecting on a spiritual level. Chadwick said often "take your time, but don't waste your time" and creating this piece has taken an inordinate amount of my time. Not because it was particularly challenging technically but more so I wanted to honor him as the true King he was. I knew from the get go I wanted to show that infectious smile and portray him as the epitome of Black joy and regality. I chose to colour him in the colours of the Ancestral Plane as seen in Black Panther as a representation of his legacy; a connection to all our pasts and seeing the beauty and goodness in the world as he did.

Isaac Newton said a long ass time ago, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." In that vein, Chadwick Boseman was a titan, and we are all better for standing on his shoulders. Danai Gurira said about Chadwick, "He was the epitome of kindness, elegance, diligence and grace." and connecting with him through this piece is my way of thanking him for all he did for us. He was a light in this world and I am thankful to have shared this planet with such a genuinely good and talented man.

Rest In Power, Chadwick Boseman.

Long Live The King.





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