

ang(st)

the feminist body zine



QUEER LOVING

A QTBIPOC ISSUE

angst: anxiety/ frustration

ang (अंग): body/ part/ member

A Note from the Editors

When we decided to create a Pride issue featuring QTBIPOC, we hoped to provide a space for tenderness, healing, and courage. We wanted to uplift voices, especially Black queer ones, that are often lost even within the queer community.

We present to you a powerful and colorful collection of pieces that embody courage in softness and vulnerability, in loving despite the odds. Embark on a journey of realization, loving, longing, and reclamation with eighteen pieces that explore: What does it mean to love? What or who do we love? Where do we feel the safest?

TW/CW: Some pieces contain reclaimed racist and homophobic slurs.

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A QTBIPOC ISSUE | JUNE 2020

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love as a political act

KAY-ANN HENRY

All around me were revolving doors but somehow, she found me. Or maybe I found her. Fire ravaged the lush lands of my soul but still I trusted god, put my knees in the dirt and asked for a love so strong it could soothe a blaze, stop a war.

I needed love to bathe me in twilight, then send me giddily running to the moon. I needed a love that had my nose and eyes and lips. I stood in pools of ice tears watching the world. Colored bodies filled prisons and the earth. They needed love too.

She appeared one February when life was as ripe as suffering, forming a doldrum that could only be killed by springtime.

We've both cut ourselves open and tasted our own blood. Brown eyes sunken from seeing/feeling/being too much. But this love could be salvation. With every kiss planted and every crevice found, I feel present. When she takes me into her mouth like holy communion, I know she's worth the sacrifice.

We lie together, dark limbs plaited, kissing so deep we could merge into one. They demonize us the same anyways. I listen to our playlist of sirens, protests, and the heaving of car mufflers. Our hands clasped like we were still praying for each other, for the world.

Origin Stories

RENATA SMITH

*TW: homophobic and racist slurs

I am a living contradiction. Black in a country not made for me, yet built on the blood, tears, grief, pain, and bodies of my ancestors. Gay in a country where conversion therapy is legal in 31 states and living in a world where same sex marriage is illegal in 71 countries. My Black brothers and sisters are used for target practice by the police and my queer and trans kin are disowned by their families and kicked out of their homes just for being who they are.

I am a nigger. A faggot. A dyke.
I do NOT matter to the police.
I do NOT matter to this country.
Sometimes I do not even matter to me.

For centuries, my people—Blacks and Queers have not mattered. Segregated. Discriminated against. Victims of poverty. Beaten by the police. Disenfranchised. Disempowered. Silenced. Forced into the closet. Held down by chains. Sold like cattle.

Nevertheless. We. Persisted.

Fighting for our freedoms with sit ins, riots, and protests—peaceful and violent. We broke the rusty chains that held us down and forced our way out of closets.

I am the lovechild of revolutions. Compton's Cafeteria and the Stonewall Riots where queer and trans people stood up to the police and rioted for equal treatment. MLK's March on Washington and the Sit In movements where Blacks protested for their civil rights in the face of hate and injustice.

I am the daughter of angry drag queens, throwing bricks at cops and fighting to protect the community they call home. I am the sister to Black boys and girls who endured the police's spray of high-pressure water hoses and dog attacks in the name of equality.

Shaped by the traumas my people withstood and their bravery in the face of the KKK, the police, the nonbelievers and the doubters.

Forged by spite, by hate, by sadness, by anger, by love, by pride, by excellence. Freedom runs through my veins, expelled into the word with every breath I take, with every word I utter.

No Justice. No Peace.

Fuck Trump. Fuck the police. Fuck the Homophobes and the Transphobes.
Fuck anyone who has ever dared to underestimate the power of
any Black or queer or trans person.

By existing, I defy. My origin story—my Black brothers and sisters, my queer
and trans kin, matter.

I matter.

What's your story?

I Matter

RENATA SMITH



do the gods not anger?

TRISHITA DAS

in hazy light, twisting into sleep like a prayer,
the universality of love is reborn in secrets.
it hasn't changed: two boys bathed in light,
two girls touching hands in a garden of flowers,
a gaze from across the room. the language
of eyes: it leaves no room for Greek statues and paintings,
or the stratification of love into seven types.
i only know the whisper of your anklets, the geometry
of your waist; i have been a warm weather insect
humming over the soft hairs on your arms.
i know all the repulsive and lovely and formidable
parts of you, and you have looked behind my eyelids too.
we are captured in our gentle, tender humanity,
in the places where we think no one is looking,
where vulnerability is a strength, and the sun
is too busy setting the world on fire to notice
the way we burn and tremble. we carry our dreams
and our burdens, not alone, but together,
singing into the dawn, as we wait
to eat the world raw.

The Safest Sleepover

TRINITY C.



billie

FERAL KENYON

when i look into her eyes
i see oceans.
i see waters that glitter and glisten on the surface,
pulling in anyone brave enough to
wade in its shallows
deeper
deeper
and deeper still
until they reach her uncertain depths.
i wander farther and farther
away from what is familiar to me
and wonder if a mermaid lies in wait
at the very depths of them
to feast upon me
and spit out my bones

Something Better

ARSHA ADARSH

*Once more into the breach, we said.
Once more into that too-familiar
aching void between two states.*

We clung together in the dark;
my stomach twisted in its grip.
Your heartbeat was my only hope.

Blind, we lurched for something better—
our pure, glowing hope in outstretched hands.
Then loved ones whispered safety, and

we flew. We sailed across the sky
(that pilgrimage our blood knew well)
to land hard where the breeze was soft

and sleep a while. But when we woke,
we woke to something better.

A Radical Act of Love

GERI GALE



Forty-two Queer-Loving Years

GERI GALE

excerpt from a memoir: *PK, Cancer & the Tragic Ruts of Time*

Writing for me has always been a portal to another world. Today PK says that's why she makes lists—you take the crazy thoughts plaguing your mind and you write them down. When my grandmother died, we found boxes of lists in white leatherbound notebooks. I thought the notebooks were open doors to her mind—they were lists of things to do.

Today my writing pulses with existential dread. Reality is placed in sharp relief—and sharpness always pollutes my imagination. It is a gorgeous Seattle day—the sun shines a vibrancy I've not witnessed in some time. I perceive beauty, while civilization hurtles toward its own destruction. I thought my witnessing of destruction would be rapid—like cinematic speed compressed on the screen—but this COVID-19 is slow. For four months, I watch the numbers increase to 1+ million cases in my country and 2+ million worldwide.

The faces of Americans now have the look of survivors not conquerors. The faces of our leaders drip with stupidity. I'm embarrassed because it's tortuous to watch. Today anthropogenic climate change is causing mass extinctions while a virus is on a rampage, and I'm here upstairs in my room writing my memoir, and PK is downstairs working on urgent Fire Department business to chart the health of firefighters.

Even in non-COVID-19 times, PK finds it hard to sit still. When she was a child she used to vomit when her mother took her on a bus downtown. If they had the drugs then that they have now—drugs that calm children—I'm sure they would have prescribed them for her. Her movements, her speed, her tasks, her acts of doing business—in all her activity, she applies herself to the task of living. I just want to lie down and die, but she pushes me to keep a lively lifestyle, even during my cancer. She is the holy grail of preparedness. Do not overact. Do not react. The Seattle Fire Department, all the uniformed men and women love PK, the civilian, the technologist. She has bonded with them and their paramilitary order. They are in the service of servicing people. When she was a child, PK used to stand by her father as he disassembled a radio, a car engine, a blender, a TV, a watch, and then reassembled each part into a working order.

I drove PK's uncle's 1967 gold GTO with a 327 V8 engine. During our first major lesbian fight: I fled the house in my typical escapism and took a walk—and returned to my car to leave her forever—and PK had pulled the wire from the distributor cap and the car would not start. Unable to escape, I went upstairs and we laughed and I stayed. There is no forever, but I stayed—for forty-two queer-loving years together.

Checkboxes

SHLAGHA BORAH

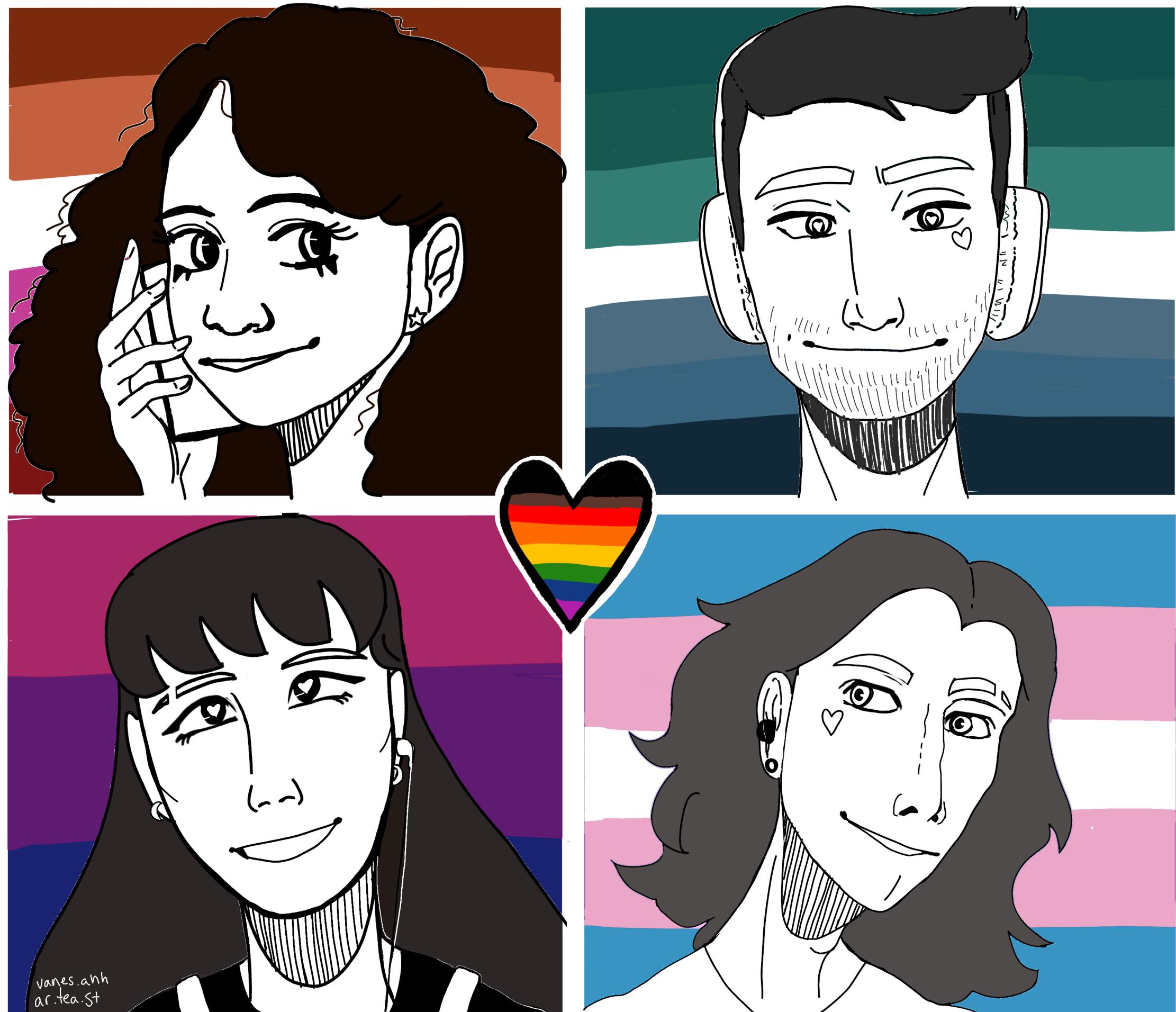
all they taught you was to fit
right inside the checkboxes;
if you existed outside of them,
you're invalid,
 invisible,
 the 'other.'

so you wrapped up
your genitals and your gender together
so they fit into the same box
for so many years
because your folx
didn't tell you

the only checkbox
you need to fit is yourself.

Unity

VANESA CARDENAS GARCIA



White Polaroids

HEMALI GANDHI

I'm a bad poet.

I suck at love poetries. I spent years figuring out why and I realized: it lacks the most basic ingredient of a love poem—LOVE.

How am I supposed to associate this emotion with his curly hair and dashing personality when my heart screams about her white kurti and movie type red duppatas?

How do I associate this feeling with him when I keep picturing on and on and on that it was her kissing me?

My vocals wish to tell him that it is meant for her kisses, not yours. But I recollect my aunt telling me, "Beta, find a guy like your dad." and it rings incessantly in my ears over these years.

Guy. Dad. Guy. Dad.

I do not ask him to stop kissing. But my mouth is not made for this. It is a frenzied revolution; it wants to be the war cry in this straight world—even if it has to stand solitary.

You tell me how is it my fault that you store everything within the white boundaries of photographs and my boundaries aren't white because I don't like white. How is it a fault if the white bordered polaroid of yours has a guy on his knees with a black kurta and red roses but my polaroids have an unintentional picture of a woman in that white kurti and movie type red duppatas as she brushed past me in the bazaar.

What can I do if your hands rush to highlight lines in texts and prints that say 'homosexuality is a crime' and my fingertips tap tap tap to anything I can find on Instagram or YouTube to support because you stand strong with your underlines but I, I need support.

The cursive writing in your journal might be about a heartbreak that you went through when you were what, 18? Mine has inkblots over pages I've cried on—words that earlier read—

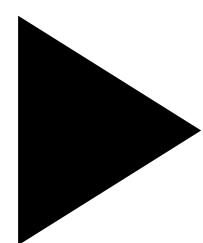
I didn't wish to be kissed by him passionately. I wish that passion would have come from her. It spoke of a love story I never had because aunty—guy—dad.

I write my letter to her and put it between my lips because

1. My faint maroon lipstick marks on words meant for her is the closest I can come to kissing her.
2. The lack of strength of posting it. Just birthed a letterbox with no letters, didn't I? But when writing to her, I am permitted to begin sentences with 'I' but dare not end the same with 'love you.'

He tells me he loves me so easily, because of course, the society stands with him. Cinderella has to have an ending with Prince Charming; how dare I think that she could admire Rapunzel's hair instead?

Take me back to the smells of my childhood, aunty, you've told me to find a guy like my dad, the Romeo to my Juliet, but have you for once thought—She is my Romeo?



[See the spoken word performance here.](#)

pretzel girl

NOREEN OCAMPO

the girl balancing a platter of soft pretzel samples
is kind enough to smile at me / even though all I can
offer is / a salt-lipped grimace that I thought was
a smile / we're sweating / her from the sun & the pretzels
/ me from the sun & the sheer effort of standing there /
& grimace-smiling / & / & / & / & /

you're really pretty

/ I stutter-choke out / & we're still standing & sweating
& my face is probably twisting cherry-red & flaking off
right in front of her pretzel samples / I'm about fourteen /
maybe fifteen / gummy caramel for brains / wearing
skinny jeans / that will soon rip in the crotch /
but I still should've been smart enough to know something
about myself then /

the pretzel girl knots a sweeter tune
over my pitiful half-laughter / & she really is *really pretty*
/ I wonder if she knew / she says / *thank you*
so much / & I melt away with the still-warm excuse / of
the pretzel sample

Navigator

JADE MUTYORA

make me a map of your freckles
for me to fold into my heart
and pull out when we're unanchored
i'll follow it to both our pasts
and show it to your ancestors
they'll recognise the markings
as yours theirs and mine
i'll explain the universe's plan
to bring you and i together
how in its desperate confusion
it pulled me across an ocean
to where your foremothers lie
where I was more lost than ever
unaware that it was the beginning
of my voyage to discover you
although the stars ordained
that our trails should cross
they patiently lay in wait
until the world was ready for
the love our collision created

h.e.r.

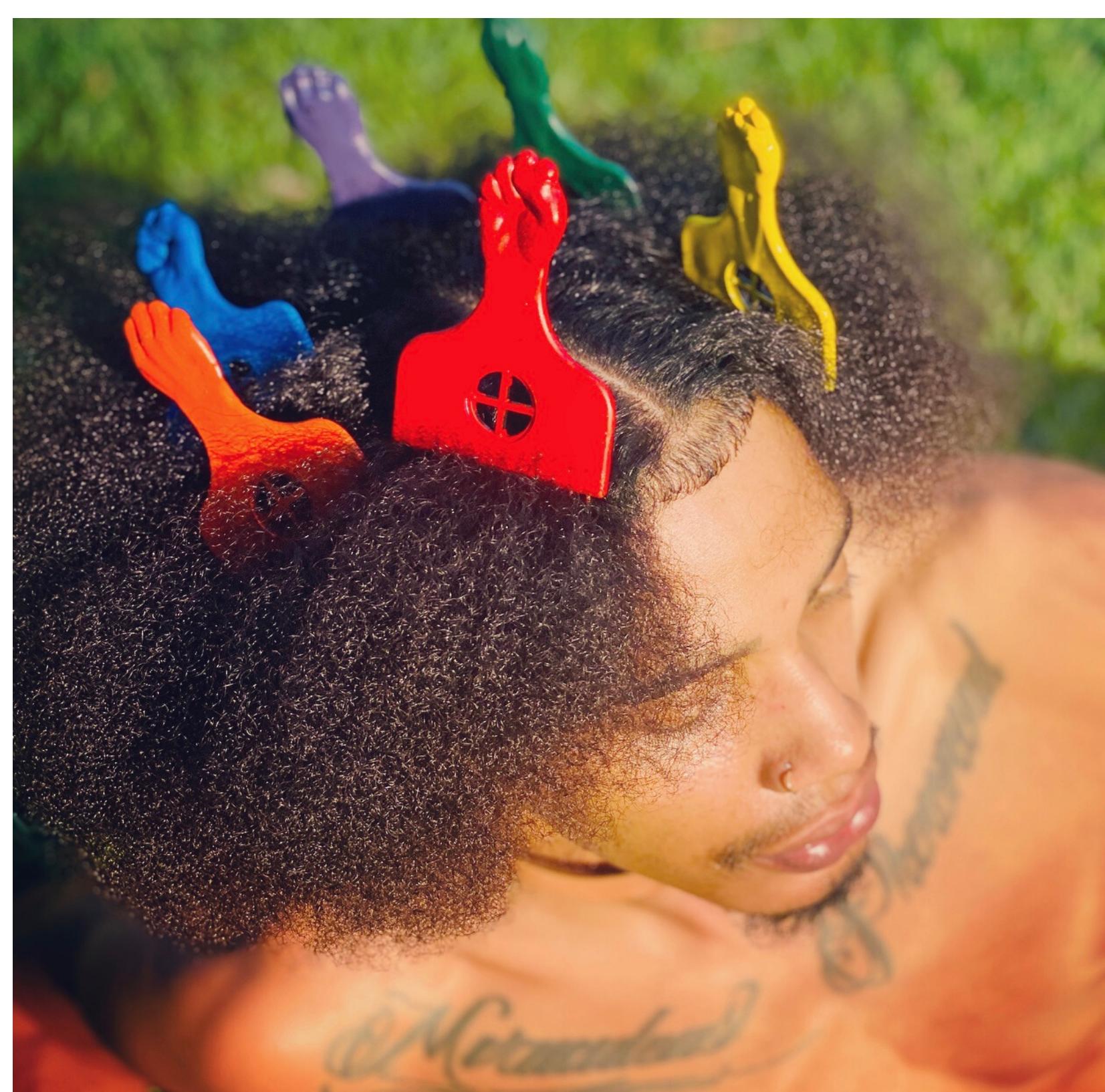
MOON ROSE

limb desires and practical precautions,
on the slow dance
we hold hands, fold hearts
and focus.
reaching for stardust
caressing this connection

48 hours, and I'm still laid up with H.E.R

Rooted in Pride

ALEXANDER PETERSON



To Fidget With Your Hands & Your Feelings

SHRINGARIKA PANDEY

My knuckles are burning, unsurprisingly so—I have been sitting beside her for an hour now, fingers brushing each other's just enough to break me from the inside. I have held these hands before, in empty modern art galleries while she rushed to click a picture of me beside the Amrita Shergil painting, in crowded bookstores behind the non-fiction shelf, and every time I have said goodbye.

This is another goodbye, one where we can't hold hands.

To fall in love with a girl, one much smarter than you, gives you as much undulating fascination as it gives you fear. The world becomes rounder, as if desperate in its attempt to match how her glasses look resting just above her cheeks. I had tried to live up to this desperation—yearning to fold all my fear in an envelope, gently drop it at her feet and beg for mercy. But if you've ever loved—more specifically loved a teenage girl in high school—you should know they aren't usually kind. Moreover, if you've loved the way I have, in hiccups, and on cycles without training wheels which is to say in ways that were as cruel as they were unforgiving, I didn't deserve the kindness either.

My love had always been precarious; I was too eager with it, like bus conductors passing up tickets before the next speedbreaker hits. I had thought of doing everything right, I'd written poems and asked her about her favorite color every day, wanting to know if it ever changed. I couldn't imagine someone asking me the same question—a test to prove if I ever knew her, and me getting it wrong, that would have been the worst thing for me; maybe the fact that for me, my shortcomings were restricted to getting the name of a color wrong was part of the problem. There were worse things, I'd find out later. I knew every shade of Yellow ever known, but not how to tell her the world wouldn't hurt her. I didn't know how to make promises—perhaps that's why she never demanded that I make them. These absences shriveled into silences quicker than I could have registered. The silence is the reason we're here now. Barely a few inches apart like we'd gotten used to, but our hearts in such different places that no amount of bus conductors frivolously handing out tickets could ever help us find our way back.

We were young and never learned how to talk to each other, never could comfort each other in a way we both understood. Nobody ever taught us either; what do you say to girls who like to kiss other girls but don't understand why? Perhaps I know the answer now. You tell them it's okay to be afraid, it's okay to not know where to place your hands or your chin, to have sweaty palms, to not know how to kiss with your glasses still on. You tell them it gets better, that love indeed is made for them.

Now that I am sitting here, looking at the same eyelids I used to dream about kissing every single night, I know I am not afraid. Not that it matters anymore. There's no love to call our own amidst this silence. Neither there is any room for an apology, but there is a sense of forgiveness that is only owed when you're seventeen and terrified of who you are. I am sorry.

She walks me to the door, as if the emptiness of her house picks us both up and rushes us out. A warning to be more careful of the spaces and the people we collapse in the next time. I walk home with my heart breaking apart in my breast pocket, my knuckles still burning and my hands, vacant but still soft.

But, What If...

BONNILEE KAUFMAN

Remember how we always were
honest with each other, how we
spoke in soothing tones & you...

You always spoke so slow
it kinda made me crazy but
we laughed & love felt real
the way it grew

From the ground up remember
that first time
doors opened, how we kissed
in that very first instant warmth
surprising us both because some
thing deep
down in that soul place

& I nicknamed you
One Who Keeps Her Promises
and you did
for a long time

& now here you are
in front of me in the midst of
all this world
weary of injustices
June sunlight glistening
on your locks. I can't believe how long
they've grown

Ohh, turn round &
round again
show me everything, show me

Contributors

Kay-Ann Henry

Kay-Ann Henry (she/her) is a queer Jamaican writer and poet living in Miami. She is currently attending the University of Miami, studying journalism, sociology and creative writing. Kay-Ann loves astrology, June Jordan and day-dreaming. Find her on Twitter @kaypoetaa_ and Instagram @kaypoetaa_.

Renata Smith

Renata Smith (she/her) is a queer black girl, writer, and artist from D.C. An incoming college freshman, she loves art history, the color yellow, reading, and baking, and is planning to major in Political Science and Theatre Design with a minor in Gender Studies. Follow her on Instagram @Renata.Tsmith.

Trishita Das

Trishita Das (she/her) is a student and writer from Mumbai, India. In her work, she celebrates and archives the magic of everyday life. She also enjoys culinary experiments, fluffy dogs and bathroom singing. Read more of her work on Instagram @fine_lined or on her blog: manybrokeenteacups.wordpress.com.

Trinity C.

Trinity C. (she/her) is a bisexual black artist who uses her work to explore the world, as well as herself. She wants her work to bring whatever emotion you need in that moment. Find her on Instagram @neptuune.jpg.

Feral Kenyon

Feral Kenyon, author of Phoenix: poetry and prose, is an Atlanta based author and poet. Her work stands out among other female contemporary poets by focusing on the darker sides of feminism, mental illness, and the horrors (and blessings) of everyday life as a woman. Follow her on Instagram @feralblacksheep.

Arsha Adarsh

Arsha Adarsh (they/them) is a queer and disabled Desi writer from the UK, currently based in Oregon. A lot of their work is either written for or inspired by their relentlessly supportive queer family. Arsha's hobbies include crochet, sleeping and learning bass guitar. Their work has been or is due to be published by Ang(st), ANEH and Write.as/cues. Find them on Twitter @Arsha_Writes and Mastodon arsha@writing.exchange.

Geri Gale

Geri Gale is a Jewish lesbian married to a Japanese-American. Her award-winning books include: Patrice: a poemella (2015 Silver IPPY Award: GLBT Fiction, Independent Publisher Book), Alex: The Double-Rescue Dog (2016 National Indie Excellence Award, Picture Book, Finalist), and Waiting: prosepoems (Dancing Girl Press). She is also a 2016 Moth StorySLAM winner and performed in the Moth Seattle Grand Slam. Currently she works as a copyeditor at Starbucks Creative Studio and writes and draws at night and on weekends.

Her poetry and prose have appeared in Sinister Wisdom, South Loop Review: Creative Nonfiction + Art, Bayou Magazine, Under the Sun, Raven Chronicles, Sunday Ink, Otoliths, and the Canadian Jewish Outlook. Find her at gerigale.com or on Instagram @gerigaleword.

Shlagha Borah

Shlagha Borah (she/her) is pursuing her undergraduate degree from Lady Shri Ram College for women. She is a regular contributor and Select Writer for Terribly Tiny Tales and has been an editorial intern with Katha Publications. Her work has been accepted and published in various online literary platforms like Ayaskala, Marias at Sampaguitas, The Literary Impulse, GroundXero, etc. She is also the co-founder of the student-led collective called Pink Freud that works around destigmatizing mental health issues. Find her on Instagram @shlaghab.

Vanesa Cardenas Garcia

Vanesa Cardenas Garcia is a sixteen year old self taught artist in both traditional and digital mediums. She is constantly exploring her style and forms of expression in her art with themes of identity, development, home, and love in all forms. Reflecting her own mind, her art and coloring fluctuates between maturity and whimsy. Find her on Instagram at @vanes.ahh and @car.tea.st.

Hemali Gandhi

If you come across a super active person who is cheering almost all the time, that is Hemali (she/her). She literally lives on biryani, thrillers and spoken word poetry. If you need a go-to person for fashion suggestions, instagram captions or great shady places to laugh your heart out at, hit her up! Instagram: @theek_hai.

Noreen Ocampo

Noreen Ocampo (she/her) is a Filipina American writer studying English and Film Studies at Emory University. She is also a book reviewer for Counterclock and a regular contributor for Marias at Sampaguitas, and she aims to work in the intersection of storytelling and education. Find her on Twitter @maybenoreen and Instagram @noreen.ocampo.

Jade Mutyora

Jade Mutyora (she/her) is a British writer of British and Zimbabwean heritage. Her novel *Soaring* is a coming of age story about birdwatching, friendship, and navigating two distinct families and cultures. She also writes short fiction, poems and creative non-fiction. Find her on Twitter @JadeMutyora and Instagram @jademyorawriter.

Moon Rose

Moon Rose (she/her, they/them) is a renaissance artist who specializes in word play. Her colorful language reimagines the juxtaposition of poetry and prose. Her dream is to obliterate the literary canon. You can follow her on Instagram @moonroseuniverse and on Twitter @moonroseuni.

Alexander Peterson

Instagram: @iamphenomal

Shringarika Pandey

Shringarika (she/her) is a 20-year-old English Literature student at Delhi University. She loves Fiona Apple's music, metro rides and old book stores. As much as she enjoys reading, she spends more of her time looking for her glasses. Find her on Instagram @shringarikaa and Twitter @rvmantics.

Bonnilee Kaufman

At 65, (damn) Bonnilee Kaufman is still workin it. A Lambda Literary Fellow & QueerWise emeritus, she (dyke/femme) participates in readings at various venues. Publications include Sinister Wisdom, Selfish, The Brillantina Project, Gyroscope Review & recently included in Los Angeles' Library National Poetry Month celebration.

Our bodies speak. Are you listening?

ang(st)

Intersectional. Transnational. Diverse. Inclusive.
Body-positive. Sex-positive.
Queer. Non-conforming.
Feminist.

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