



BI-ANNUAL ZINE

VOLUME ONE

This zine is dedicated to the memory of Alex Ghassan, Hanna Ruax, and all those who fell victims to the Oakland Fire. We love you.



BLACK MAIL

A MESSAGE-BASED COLLECTIVE

To renegotiate, elevate, and promote
our black culture through creativity,
community, education, and commerce.

—with love, The Black Mail Collective

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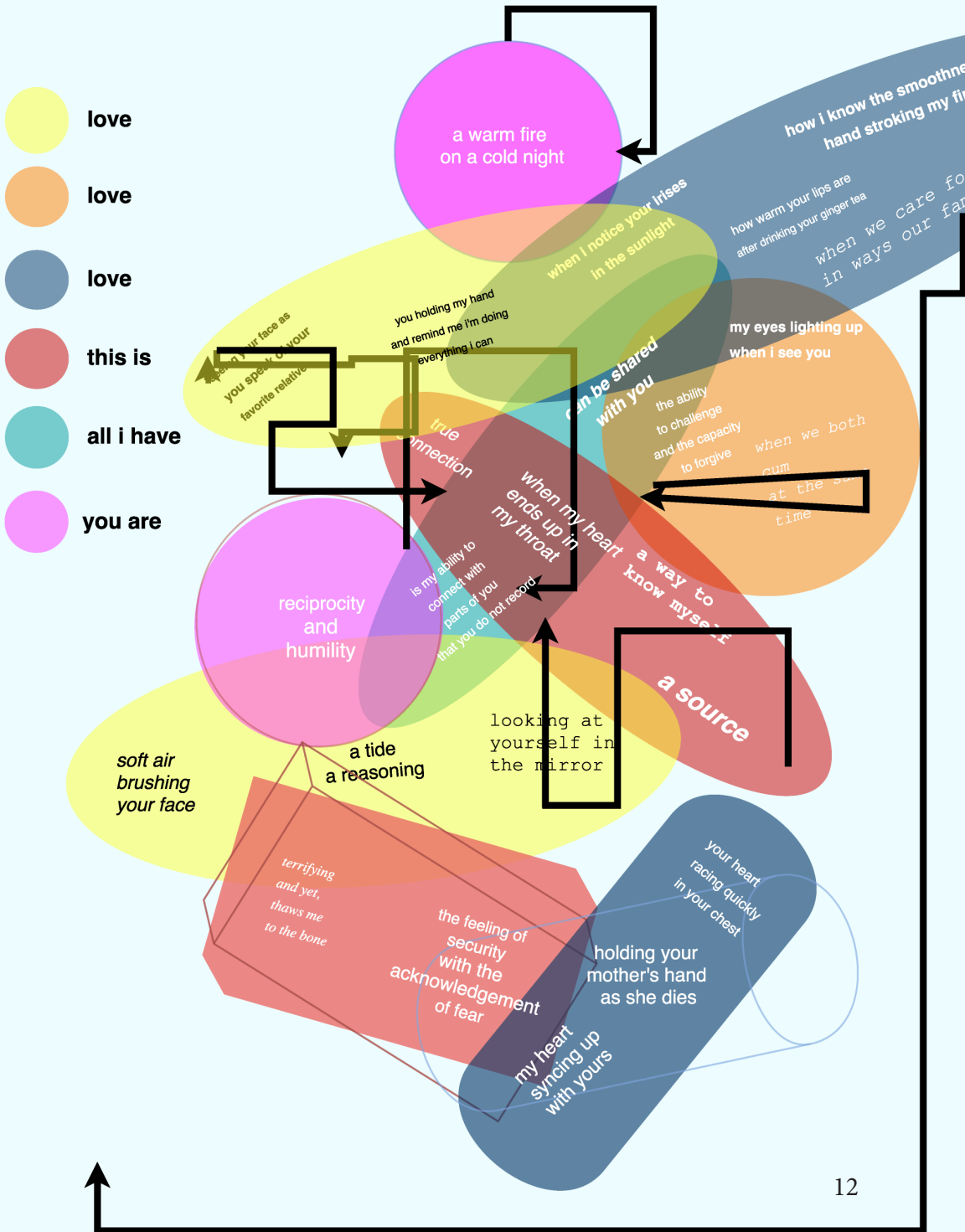
rafael salgado
love brought you here

- 1 . why i love you // the ultimates
- 2 . i'm a fool for you // george scott
- 3 . this love, pt. 1—*timmion* // bobby oroza
- 4 . this love that i'm giving you // the joytones
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- 10 . keep your love strong // the webs
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- 13 . i don't know how—to *say i love you*
—don't walk away // superlatives
- 14 . try it // master plan inc
- 15 . you and me // penny & the quarters

listen here:
<https://blackmailcollective.bandcamp.com/releases>





ess of your
ngertips
r each other
ilies cannot

you planting seeds
and watching them grow
within me

me planting seeds
and watching them grow
within you

is time to
further love myself

me watching your
fingers move
as you play the drums

the air on
a still and warm
evening

praising your
past
present
and future self
for all
that you are

you watching my
eyes widen when
i solve a problem

helping you succeed

all i have

asking you
for help

all you have

acknowledging your pain

everything that ever hurt me
healing itself up for good

me laughing at
the faces you make
in line for coffee

a rhythm
i've chosen

holding you as you weep

fervor unfolding

a promise
to compromise

thanking your ancestors
for bringing you this far

a holy being

a blessing
i was given

kissing my eyelids
to wake me

a reflection of me

is time to
further love you

biting my neck
as you burrow into my
collar bone

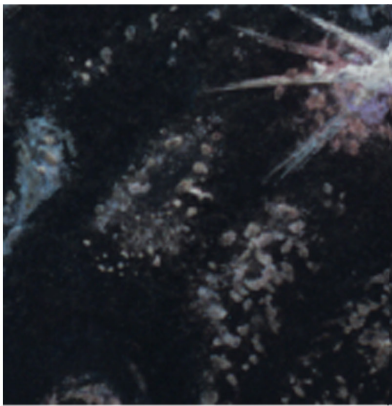
a feeling that i want
to last forever

watching your
children grow

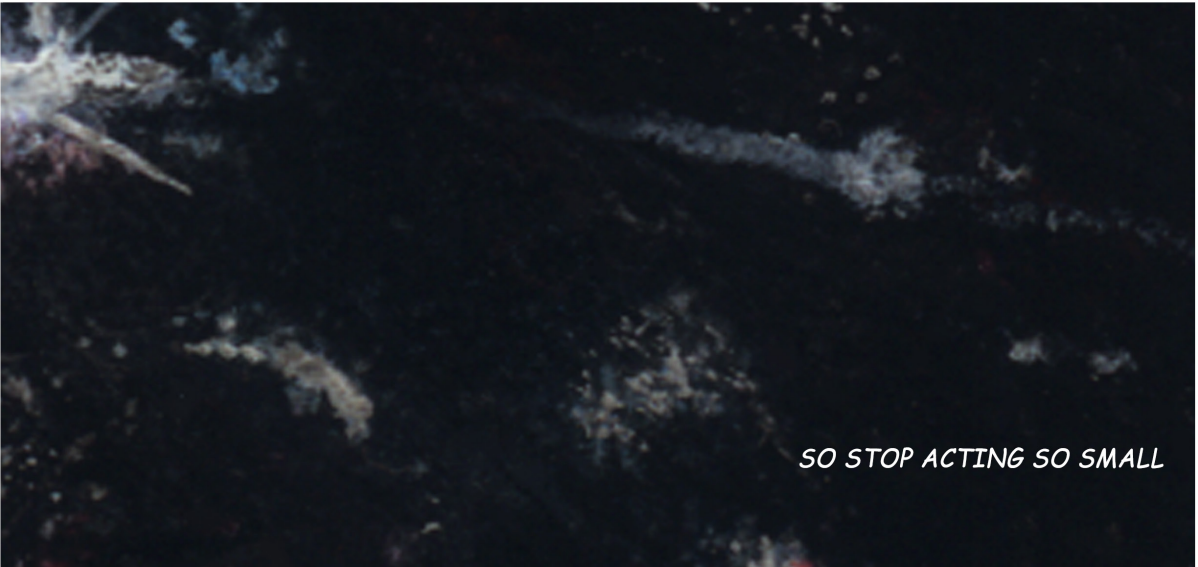
a hallelujah chorus;
a joy noise

building our own fire
watching the flames grow

Chris Burch
Astronomy

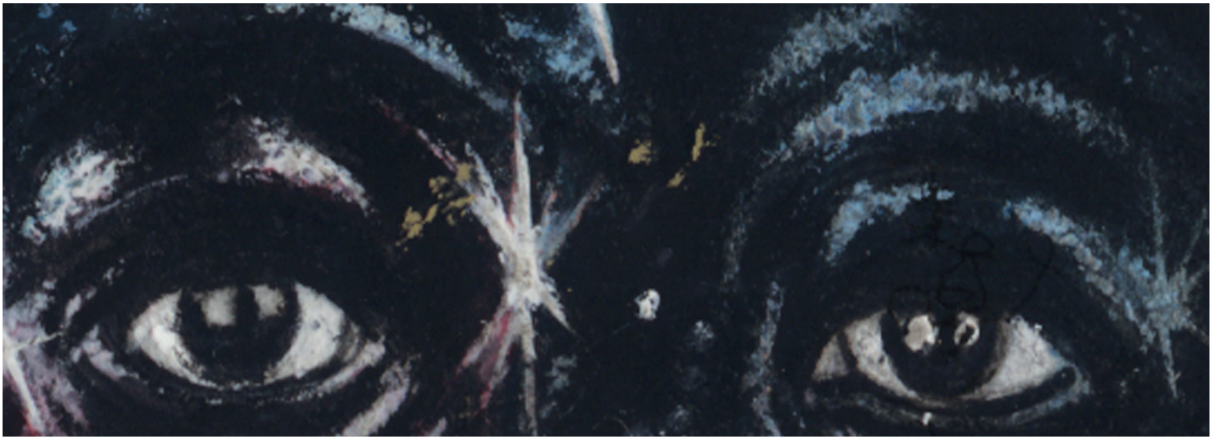


*THE ESSENCE OF THE HEAVENS
MOVES WITHIN ...*



SO STOP ACTING SO SMALL





...YOU ARE THE UNIVERSE

...IN ESTACTIC MOTION*



XXavier Edward Carter | Poet

A POEM FOR THE END OF A LONG DAY

Lucky I met you, lucky I kept to my guns, lucky I crept through the cracks in your heart to find a home, lucky I met you, met your mind, met your hurt, met mine, lucky I get you, and sometimes don't but lucky I get to, talk to you on the phone at 3 in the morning my time when you're watching the sunrise on another coast, in another bed, on another plane, lucky i get to hold you sometimes, and when you push away, lucky you scold me sometimes, and when I look away, lucky you hold me too, your chest, your breasts, your eyes looking back at me, and glad to see, you again and again, lucky I met you, lucky I kept you smiling because you love me, lucky you hug me like I'm the only thing worth holding onto, lucky you kiss me like I was in a movie and the credits are coming, ain't that something like the world changing just enough for us to fit together, lucky to close my eyes and you'll be there in the tomorrow, goodnight my love.

MY HONEY—IN THE MEMORY OF FRIENDS

My honey, be like the copy, right for the occasion, commonplace, like the sense, give it up, be like the stinger, missile, acumen like a war head, war, like Aaron, the only nigger in the whole play, born anew, the royal, be like gold, on black, on gold, reflecting over the green, when they say you can't, show them slow motion footage, high definition images, and the insides spilling from your insides, just defending your own, be, like the thought of the arrow head, or better, the feather, guided, meditating on the wind, the hairs on the back of your neck, be, blonde with the dust that makes flowers grow, be, sweet like blood mixed with chocolate, be live, be live, be live, be screaming and dancing in the light of fires burning through our homes, my honey, oh, be, bold letters, the headline, letters, like the shadows you cast across lives, you are blessed, and be that forever in our lives and in the eyes of us.



A SHORT LOVE POEM—SOUNDS LIKE A SONG

Dancing through the stress, in the kitchen, the morning, young and in
love, in the evening, colored lights, all the, young and in love, stripes and
soft skin, I hear songs in, the landing brakes, the soles, it takes, my breath
away, like climbing stairs.





Jared Mitchell
Static Storm Brewing

"When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace."

-Jimi Hendrix

After receiving a mother's care, fumbling through a childhood crush, testing commitment for the first time, pulling together the pieces after your first break-up, watching friends find lasting love, witnessing a marriage crumble into divorce, and teaching yourself to love yourself; what do you believe drives and sustains love?

Richard Lannon, Thomas Lewis, and Fari Amini explored the connections between neuroscience and literature's explanations of human interaction in their book, *A General Theory of Love*. These scientists reason that the three layers of the human brain—reptilian, limbic, and neocortical—can explain many of our love-related behaviors.

The outer-most layer of the brain, the neocortical brain, stores information and patterns that allow humans and a few other mammals to perform higher logical reasoning. The inner-most layer, the reptilian brain, allows all sentient beings to react to sensory stimuli. However, reptiles like snakes or turtles whom abandon their eggs and leave their young to fend for themselves do not possess

emotional bonds with one another.

The middle layer, the mammalian or limbic brain, found in mammals that carry, birth, and nurture their children, allows mothers and children to communicate with emotional signals that precede language. Emotional language for humans is not optional. The limbic brain communicates in this language every second, triggering a multitude of physiological reactions in ourselves and the mammals around us.

I believe in a love so obvious that it often goes overlooked. I believe in hugs and how are you's. I believe in the gifts, favors, and words that we share with one another as subtle reminders that we're not alone in this great, big universe because we're loved right here, in this moment and in this skin, a soulful testament to our creation and evolution. I believe in practicing love towards ourselves, our families, our friends and partners, our neighbors, every breathing soul of the world. I believe in love.

I also believe in balance. On the spectrum between selfishness and altruism, pure selfishness is emotional and physiological suicide, pure altruism is physical suicide, and balancing our love for others while loving ourselves ensures survival.

Pure selfishness doesn't exist outside of reptilian life. The most famous stoic philosophers all wrote letters to their peers and scholars, and Nietzsche's Zarathustra came down from the mountain to

dialogue with the people. Henry David Thoreau, author of the naturist essay, *Walden*, apparently receded from society 1.5 miles from his family home. Even Aaron McGruder's *Stinkmeaner*, mean and hateful as he was, had friends from hell that would help him enact revenge on Robert Freeman. Absolute isolation is impossible.

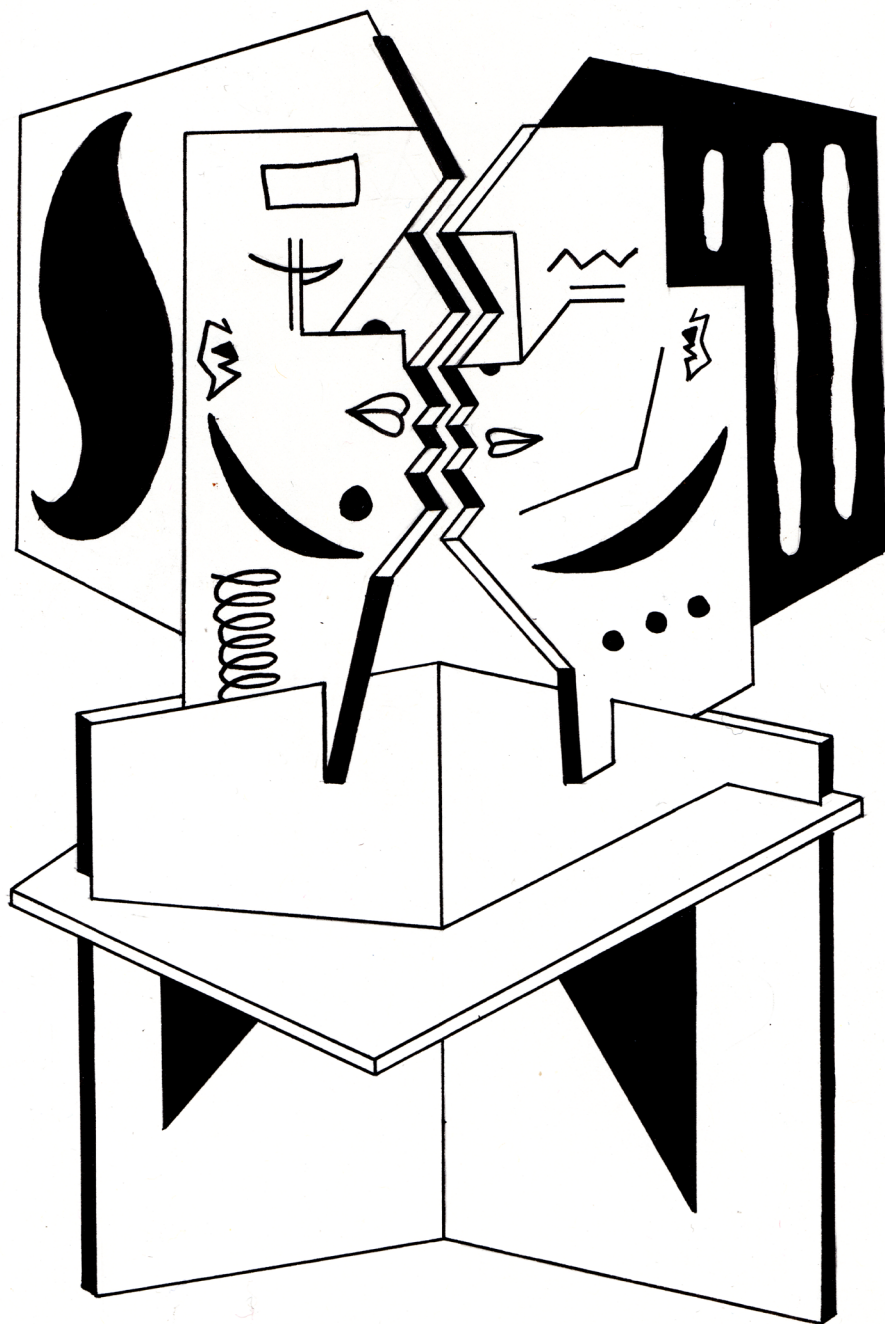
Inversely, some extremely admirable people come very close to pure altruism. Soldiers, fire-fighters, and other rescue service providers ensure their loved ones' survival by rushing into dangerous situations that could cost them their lives. But the obsession between Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, whom willfully drank poison to not suffer a world without each other's love, is both reckless and goofy, deeply poetic and woefully impractical. I want to love how Andre 3000's friends recommended in the International Player's Anthem, to love while keeping my heart.

And alas, no conversation about love is complete without acknowledging Radio Raheem's story of right-hand-left-hand, the tale of good and evil. "Hate! It was with this hand that Cain iced his brother. Love! These five fingers, they go straight to the soul of man... The story of life is this: static. One hand is always fighting the other." Still, Radio Raheem does not close his speech by saying,

Down! Left hand hate is KO'd by love! He finishes his speech with static, I love you, but if I hate you," and an affirmation, "I love you.

In 2016, a presidential candidate for the United States of America ran on the campaign slogan that Love Trumps Hate, and although she won the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes, she lost the election by 74 electoral votes. In 2016, everyone who believed that Love Trumps Hate was reminded that the power of love can only overcome the love of power when we so empower our love.

I'm afraid that the years ahead will be filled with a lot static. The disruptions in our domestic norms and international commitments are innumerable, and the static is building to a boiling point. As the static builds, I challenge you to consistently choose love and to empower your love through whatever means are most accessible to you and influential to whom your love strengthens. Whatever your choices and practices, I will love you through them.





LOVE DEEPER THAN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

INTERVIEWS

Horacio Lopez

Luna Gomez

Soleil Summer

Muzae Sesay

Adrianna Adams

Christopher Martin



Response to the piece:

It was around 12 am. I remember just feeling warmth coming up from my belly to my heart, looking at the universe within this one living breathing beauty of a man, him staring back at me until finally we were making out in the back of a bus in the middle of our Querida Mexico like a couple of lovesick teenagers. I realize that everyday I let the stressors of life eat me up, and love to me means remembering those sweet moments where we are truly living and loving. It's all in an instant. It's the little things. It's having each other's backs and tenderness.

Luna Francesca Gomez
San Francisco, California / Printmaking

Horacio: So what got you into printmaking?

Luna: I took a relief class, like linoleum and intaglio printing. That was my first class, and also monoprinting. Monoprinting is what you should learn when you are first learning printmaking. It's really simple: you use brayers to roll up ink onto a plexiglass plate and create different textures with the manipulation of the ink. You can use cut out stencils onto the plexiglass, use oil with the ink, mix it up, paint with it, scratch into the plexiglass, and create grooves within the plate itself—you can do so much. I think that's what drew me to printmaking. I work in a very experimental way. In printmaking, even if you work really hard on something, it could come out completely different than what you imagined. It teaches you to be okay with that. It's like teaching you this sort of non-attachment to things.

H: So I have noticed two recurring objects in your works, skulls and tampons. Could you expand on those?

L: The tampons started coming up in 2015. I was a Women/Gender Studies major and I switched over to printmaking later on. I was very much in this mind state of playfulness within understanding my womanhood and identity. Then I started to do more research into tampons and realized that for me anyway, the tampon industry is modern day colonialism, it's like feminicide...nearly 95% of their products contain traces of herbicide. They also include AMPA, which are a form of covert feminicide. Like come on, they're exposing millions to these poisons everyday without our consent, it's disgusting. Can you imagine having to risk your life just by wearing a tampon? I know it sounds like I am exaggerating but for example, if you wear a tampon too long, you can get toxic shock syndrome. That's why I use a diva cup, which is not only burning a hole through my pocket, but it's better for the environment and my body. Overall, with this tampon series I want to bring attention to the toxicity that is in feminine hygiene products and also, confront the notion

that women's bodies are dirty and unclean, which further perpetuates the sexualization and violence we face daily. The skulls are a part of this series called Mythic Memory, which is about merging the border between the past and the present. I wanted to explore the origin of a spiritual present within womanhood, especially in women of color. I find that sisterhood amongst women of color reflects both a personal narrative as well as a collective heritage of culture and ceremony. It's not only pertaining to our own generations of ancestry but also a cultural genealogy that all of us are tied to. So, to answer your question, the skulls are a representation of antiquity and past generations merged with this current generation of women who are the models in this series. My next project with cyanotypes is a continuation of this series, I'm going to explore masculinity within this same aesthetic, except specifically men of color.

H: Given with all of your experience and your strong presence in the community, especially since you're from San Francisco. What do you think is essential to a healthy community?

L: I think honesty is definitely a key to a healthy community. It's about communication and calling people out in a healthy way, non-aggressively. Being open to dialogue with each other, and if we don't like something someone said we should be able to approach them in a productive way. Especially going to the Women's March, I've been having conversations with folks about what community and allyship looks like to the POC community. At the March, it was majority white people, and heard this was the case throughout all the Women's Marches. We need to be having conversations about what it looks like to be supporting each other across races. Like, I still see a divide, I don't think it's on purpose, but I think there is a level of fear. I don't know how we can step out of that. I think we need to just be honest and be able to trust each other more. Also, trying to see the best in people and not saying that their intentions are inherently bad, because I feel like there are lot of people complaining about things but not looking for the positive in them.



Soleil

Miami, Florida | Painting and Illustration

Horacio: What's been keeping you busy the past couple of months?

Soleil: I guess it's kind of illustration. I'm still trying to figure out the line between illustration and fine art, especially today where there's a lot of blurred lines between those two. I've been really occupied painting with color, which is something that I never really did before.

H: All your pieces have this emphasis on the black body and abstracting it. There's this drawing I saw where the body is blue but the face had African American features. Could you expand on this a topic a bit? Where do you think the fascination comes from?

S: I feel like I maybe made that blue drawing after feeling some sort of heartache or disappointment in a relationship. Can't remember exactly which because there have been plenty [laughs]! But I definitely think that over the last couple of years I've come to settle in my black body and with that, I've come to realize a lot of the ways in which it is treated in the world.

H: When you mean settled, I hear the word being used as a way of bringing it all back and controlling it. But your work can be a bit unsettling, just in the way the body is contorted.

S: I do struggle with depression and anxiety—it affects me mentally and physically. Even just within my posture I'm always feeling like, *AAHH!* I'm often contorting myself in these weird ways and a lot of that is subconsciously expressed in my work. Sometimes it feels like there are parts of me that are missing. Or mentally I will feel here and then another part of me will feel like it's across the room. I guess they call that disassociation or

whatever. I think the root of that unsettling feeling is the illness...me accepting it and trying to move with it.

H: When you draw these figures that are contorted, they're not sitting straight and they keep moving. As societies develop sets of manners, your movements in these figures has this counter to that, like some sort of anti-mannerisms. You're not creating your own set, but you're not abiding to the standard way of sitting.

S: That's funny you bring that up because when I was younger my mom tried to send me to etiquette school. She would always get really upset when I would put my elbows on the table and all of that. I was just always against it. Like why would I go to etiquette school? What do I need etiquette for? Nobody cares, why? I mean, I understand now—why she would do that—but I still think it's bullshit.

H: Blackmail now becoming a message based collective and becoming more inclusive, what do you think about when the idea of a healthy community comes up?

S: Something that's really important for me within a healthy arts community, beyond funding, is just encouraging and uplifting one another to continue creating. Because I'm sure there will be times when it will feel pointless...times where we'll get caught up being sad or uncertain, holding whatever negativity. It's really important for us to reflect on how people have used art to navigate any antagonism that comes their way. A lot of that has to do with banding together, making sure that folks can be in their feelings and still have the support they need to move forward. Even with Blackmail, here are all of these black folk getting together, motivating each other to build something bigger than themselves with each other, for each other.



Muzae Sesay
Anaheim, California | *Painting*

Horacio: Do you ever consider venturing outside of your *Starting 7* color set? I'm curious if you did would it complete go outside of your trajectory?

Muzae: Well that's an interesting one because with that piece I knew it was going to be really expressive. I think at the very beginning, I went with my *Starting 7* colors because I wanted to be wild and express my feelings but I also didn't want an ugly piece. I knew at the end the piece would still come together as long as I paired my aggression with my typical harmonious color composition. So there was still a limit to it all—kind of like a mad dog on a leash sort-of-thing where I'm pissed and attacking, yet I'm still holding back and being conscious of the overall image. And sure enough in the end, I was looking at the mess I made and started seeing what I could develop from it. And if I wasn't using those colors and really letting go, like black, I didn't use any in this piece. Then I was like that's a very strong element to throw into a piece and it would've changed the whole thing; then I could've just ended up with a really ugly looking piece. Deep down I still want this to be a harmonious piece within the chaos of it all. You know a lot of it came from a week of intense thought progression in which each day was a different layer and form of expression that reflected the phase of how I was feeling.

H: To jump into a different part of your work, I want to talk about your use of space. I remember you showing me the Clare Rojas book and I began to approach your work with more depth. You were mentioning how these abstract shapes in her work had various qualities and angles that appeared once you looked closer. I'm curious where this fascination with space comes from?

M: I liked the idea of people looking at a piece first and just thinking of it as color compositions but within further inspection you can see different spaces within it. Now I throw in elements that signify as a space to be recognized. You'll see a lot of stairs, archways, doors, and other kinds of architectural staples. Part of it comes from me always wanting to become an architect.

H: Oh, there it is!

M: Laughs—You were waiting for that one huh?

H: I mean the next question was where do these certain figures of space come from? So you've answered that.

M: Yeah so I do notice space a lot. Even as I'm sitting here talking to you I'm looking at this fan thing/air duct, they're these subtle spaces that come up in the shadow and its angles; it's something that I would consider putting into a piece. These little subtleties that make you think, *what's around that—space?* I also like the abstraction that comes from these surrealistic structures, spaces and landscapes. Also playing with dimensions. I'm using people's idea of perspective and putting a two-dimensional plane in a three dimensional space and having it cross in weird ways.

H: Another aspect of your work is framing. The more I think of this, there's such a strong aspect of *looking in*. Even with your Winter Athen B. Gallery piece, there's this marble part that frames that piece. You're interested in this frame within a frame. Can you expand on this?

M: I feel like framing separates the piece from everything else. When you have that thick black frame, it feels like this is where the piece begins. For *Blackmail II*, there was this huge black frame around the entire wall. I was inviting viewers to see the entirety of the piece. A lot of it has to do with the aspect of using space. I'm usually painting surrealistic landscapes and anti-structures and the frame is *looking into* the space. It's weird when thinking about framing, because people generally think of the literal frame around the piece. I would consider the venue, the type of show, and the artists involved to be considered in this definition as well.

H: To end the interview, I want to talk about community. Given the uncertain state of things with the hot political climate, what do you think is essential to a healthy community going forward?

M: People being active, critical, aware, questioning, and having dialogue. In terms of creatives I think it's important for us to really take control of our identities. A key element of *Black Mail* is us renegotiating this idea of black masculinity and blackness in general through the creative arts. It's that kind of thing that I would like to see in everyone, not just the black community.



Adrianna Adams

Santa Rosa, CA | painting, drawing, printmaking

Horacio : Was there a certain influence that got you interested in painting?

Adrianna : I think, in school, painting was touted as being *next level*. Like, *Oh, you've been drawing for a while? Now it's time for you to paint. Check out these old masters who painted perfection at age 12*. So I painted. And it was frustrating so I stuck with it. It's still frustratingly satisfying and I'm still figuring it out.

H : Any current influences?

A : Recently I'm working with watercolors, and Josephine Baker does a lot of strange watercolor work. I saw her work in college too, she's pretty influential. Other artists I've had in mind are Didier William, Tschabalala Self, and William Villalongo.

H : What does your work process look like?

A : I think I work better with an idea that pops into my head or trying to think of a concept first before doodling. But sometimes I'll just draw and an image will pop up, and that's the one that I want to use for a painting and build off of that. So it comes both ways.

H : So going off of your past work that's currently on your website, I'll say that your work is pretty intense. It's pretty sick and I fuck with it.

A : You're including that in the text?—*laughs*

H : Yeah whatever, fuck it! They all have this smooth texture but they all seem to be very layered and intense. We'll go off the one with the bedsheets and these figurative images. They're *weirdly comfortable* even though they're a bit chaotic. In one of these pieces there's a hand that appears to be picking up something. In another context this hand would be intimidating but in that piece it's still seamless with the rest of the figures on the page. Can you expand on some of the pieces on your website?

A : I think *weirdly comfortable* is a nice description. I think that's something that I was going for without being as aware of how I wanted to describe what I was making. But weird and comfortable, peace and confusion are feelings I had while I was making it and

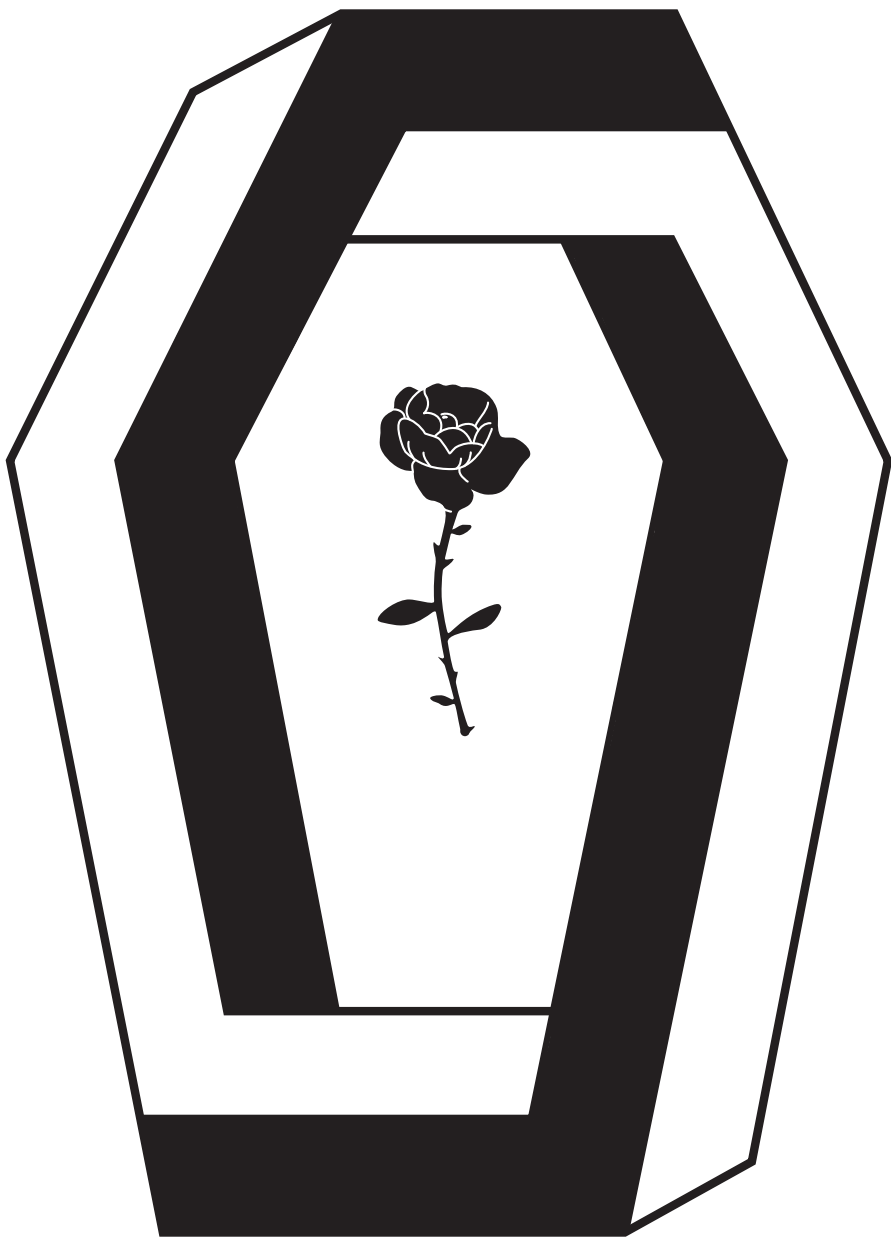
definitely something that I want to come through as a product of the painting. I don't remember too much in regards to what I was thinking. I know there were certain elements I wanted to explore, and then it just manifested into that painting and few others. I wanted to try to paint using a collage reference that incorporated figurative elements. Also beginning to explore fabric work was something that I was interested in. Getting weird with paintings and finding ways to subtly fuck them up.

H : Given the current social climate and what may be coming these next couple of years, what do you think is essential to a healthy creative community?

A : I feel like building new genuine and positive relationships while maintaining current relationships one has is essential, especially given the uncertainty of what's to come. There's going to be a lot of love that's needed these next few months and years. A lot of love within immediate communities, being influenced, enjoying the presence of others, hopefully branching out and continuing that kind of flow.

H : Do you mean more of a support system, or a compassion

A : Initially I said compassion, but what I meant was empathy. An understanding, a sharing. Love in both forms of support and empathy. Empathy that can turn into action and action to produce change, or resist it if that change sucks. I mean I'm concerned. I've been living here my whole life. So if some stuff is about to go down it's about to fuck me up. You know? Where do you go after this? Not that serious things haven't been going down, because they have. If the so-called *bubble* is penetrated in terms of its 'progressiveness', then what? So it'll be interesting. I'd like to be more active in my community, local community. At least be aware and involved with what's going on locally as well as nationally. But it's perplexing how two human beings can have views that stretch to opposite ends of the horizon when making choices according to what they both believe qualifies as good.



Horacio: This cut and sew approach that you've been getting into, did you get into this in college?

Christopher: No, actually this was something I jumped into since moving to SE, about two years ago. I was still in a transition phase as an artist and everyone had known of me mostly as a photographer. So when Ace had approached me with the idea of doing the first Blackmail show, I had a few photos I thought were appropriate. But they didn't display who I was as an artist at the time, so I had a little period of soul searching. Eventually I came across a documentary on B.B. King and after that I was inspired to create a few graphic designs that depicted a story of coming from the south. The designs were intended to be used for print but after looking them over they felt kind of cold on paper. One design in particular had a stitch pattern and I then made the connection that maybe the medium should be on fabric. I then began to take those same designs and enlarge them to fabric. I loved how it merged my love for the clothing line my mom and I had started as well. Recently, most of my designs were meant for personal wear, but they eventually ended up in art shows. It's also a personal struggle figuring out if I want to put these designs on to T-shirts because they have this energy and I don't know if I feel comfortable with anybody wearing it. I'm still battling with that now.

H: When you mean these designs that you're unsure about, I'm thinking of these textile pieces you've been doing recently. It seems you're thinking how they could fit a shirt but also you are aware how weighted the imagery can be, and hesitant about who could wear it.

C: Yeah, exactly, just a little bit hesitant. Like the Family Tree design, that was meant to be something that was packaged as a false documentary. I wanted to do a whole package that included posters, prints, t-shirts, and stickers; eventually it just turned into a banner, which was still great. The initial plan for Family Tree was meant to be a t-shirt, and there were supposed to be more elements involved like fonts and a layout to give it a documentary feel. I also wanted to have false awards that it had won to give it the appearance of a real documentary, from afar, but when you read it up close you realize it's not. That's

how it is with most of my designs, I design and move them to where they fit best, whatever platform.

H: I think of the South coming with a certain set of images and contexts. I feel that you're aware of these symbols too. This may be your design background coming into play here too, but you have this affinity towards flipping these symbols. I'm curious where it comes from.

C: I can't deny that they probably do have an impact on my life. You deliver pizzas to people in the south and you see a confederate flag hanging up front—*laughs*—so it's conflicting, you know? I internalize my feelings often so that's probably a result of absorbing what I've seen and creating images that relate to that experience. A lot of that plays from the black and white aspect in the South. I plan on taking images that I see from Birth of a Nation, which is a movie that empowered the KKK, and taking various images referenced in that film and flipping them around. Like what does this mean when a black person displays this instead of a white person? Because the message could go either way, it just happens to be under a confederate flag person's ideal. So what happens when I take this—*Conquer we must, our cause is just*—image and it's a black person who says this? What's this mean now?

H: Word. Given the current state of the union and what's to come these next couple of years, what do you think is essential to a healthy community?

C: I feel like the community is one of the big topics that we want to discuss with Black Mail. You're almost like a product of your environment though. So if we can change the environment to produce a positive product I think we'll be fine. If we can get out to these different schools and get to the youth and just be there, I think that's half the battle because so many kids are getting their art programs cut. I'm currently out in Bayview right now with the Bayview Opera House teaching art classes and I plan on teaching classes with MoAD too. I think it's important that the youth is involved and to not be selfish. Because as artists we're so invested in our craft but it's also important to give back to the kids so they can grow.



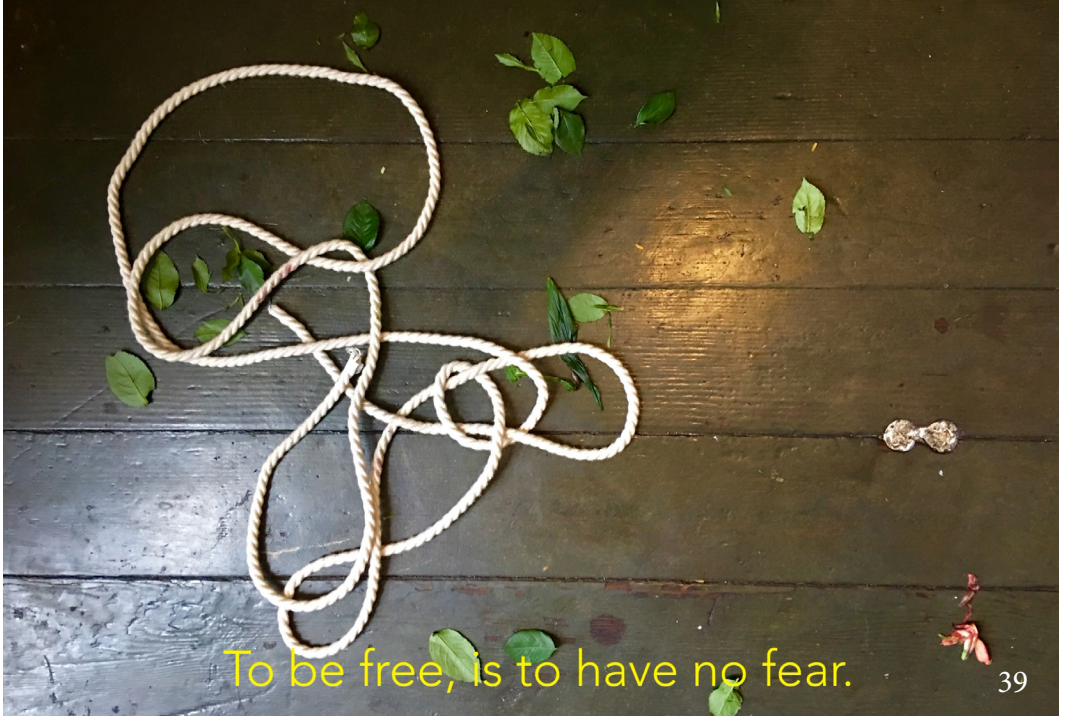
Hvað er frelsi?



C'est comme, comment pouvez-vous dire à quelqu'un ce que c'est que d'être en amour, vous pouvez le décrire, mais vous ne pouvez pas le montrer.



Es solo un sentimiento, solo un sentimiento



To be free, is to have no fear.

Food Is Love
Rodney Spencer

I grew up in a economically poor, rural community in North Carolina. However, I didn't feel poor because my basic needs were satisfied. We had shelter, clothing, fresh water, and plenty of food. As a child I couldn't fully appreciate the fact that I was literally surrounded by food. My grandmother had a garden. The neighbors had gardens too. There were even berries and fruit trees scattered around the neighborhood. The shelves in my grandmother's pantry were loaded with mason jars filled with pickled and preserved goodies. We sometimes traded produce with neighbors when they had something we lacked, and vice versa.

As a kid, I really dreaded harvest time. It meant that play time was sacrificed for harvesting chores. I never really worked the garden beds, however, my fingers were nimble enough to shell peas and shuck corn after the harvest. I also had to gather pecans that fell from the enormous tree in our yard. We had apple trees too. I could only reach the low-hanging fruit and those that had fallen to the ground. When I got older, it was a real joy when I got to climb the pecan tree to shake the pecans loose.

At every family and community gathering, there was food. More often than not, the food was produced right at home or close by in the neighborhood. Dinner-time was a real thing. We sat down together and had breakfast, lunch, and dinner at about the same time everyday. Sundays were particularly special because it was the big meal of the week. Whenever guests came by, they were always offered food and drink. Food was the centerpiece of all our holidays and food was also a symbol of support in times of loss. "The way to the heart is through the stomach," was and still is an often-heard ex-

pression where I grew up. For me it means that feeding someone is an expression of love. And I carry this sentiment with me today as an adult. Even though we were poor by definition, I don't remember ever going to bed hungry. In fact, I remember there being an abundance of food all year-round. I took these experiences and memories of food for granted until I moved away and began living in more populated urban areas. I had no idea that there were entire neighborhoods of people who lacked access to fresh produce. I found myself living in areas where people were completely disconnected from the routines involved in producing, distributing, and consuming community food. Nowadays, I'm work with an organization that provides access to healthy, affordable food that is grown in the local community. I'm also working to encourage individuals, families, and community organizations to become part of the local food producing community. The act of growing and sharing food is a demonstration of our love for self, the community, and the planet that supports us all. I'm convinced many of the issues in the community are food-related and that growing more food locally is the solution. In the long run it's cheaper, safer, and more meaningful.

So if you have a tiny bit of space, try growing something in it. A small vegetable or herb garden is a great place to start. Or you can volunteer with an organization involved in local food production or distribution. These small steps will move us rapidly toward better physical and emotional health. So, let's start growing together.

Rodney Spencer is the executive director of City Slicker Farms in Oakland, CA.



What is not Said
Queens Delight

Finding solace when terror waits
In the debts of a mind unclear
Filled with treasures and trauma
No one can walk through that
With out great discovery
Within deep awakening
What is finite sculpts the infinite

Jared Mitchell
The Storm's Peaceful Eye

*"In America, I was free only in battle, never free to rest
—and he who finds no way to rest cannot long survive the
battle."*

—James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street*.

Already, in 2017, we've witnessed the Women's March rally nearly 3 million people worldwide to demonstrate their investment in protecting women's rights. In response to President Donald Trump's executive order to ban immigration from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, citizens throughout the nation flocked to their international airports to protest the ban and lawyers followed to prosecute, pro-bono. Protesting and prosecuting may not be your most accessible means of empowering your love. Nonetheless, you can empower said love with the these simple, actionable steps:

Become Invested:

(a) Take some time to reflect. Whether you write, meditate, or pray; reflect on your values and how your values guide your thinking on various topics.

(b) Find an organization that defends one of your values and contact them about how you can either volunteer time or donate money to the cause. IndivisibleGuide.com provides a directory of more than 4,500 organizations that are organizing nationwide. This directory is a great starting place.

Become Informed:

(c) Avoid struggle hopping. Every topic is dubious right now—first amendment rights, labor rights, public education, mass incarceration, racial justice, religious freedom, public health, environmental protections, wage inequality, shall I continue? Rather than chase the crowd behind every tweet

and scandal, make a long-term investment in understanding a particular topic and building trusting relationships with people whom will activate with you when the moment's right.

(d) Subscribe to Google Alerts about the issues most important to you. This tool is great for monitoring topics' complexity and rapidly changing nature. The more we know about a topic, the more we can identify opportunities to make an impact and help our comrades get involved. Creating a separate email account is helpful for organizing your news updates if the alerts start collecting in your inbox faster than you can read them.

(e) Please avoid the Frogs and Eggs on social media. Frogs are social media trolls that try to manipulate people's negative emotions to dominate conversation by inciting argument. Most trolls lose interest when you refuse to reciprocate the hate that they fed you and feed on. Eggs are fake social media accounts, sometimes robot accounts, which are not affiliated with a physical, real life identify and which artificially skew conversation.

Ignoring trolls and eggs altogether or responding with love is a game-time decision. On occasion, I've responded to trolls' hateful comments and tweets with messages of love and created space to dialogue with people about how their political convictions trigger others' cultural trauma and disregard their humanity. In this way, I believe that controlling our initial reactions of pain, anger and frustration may help us expose others to alternative points of view.

(f) Protect your cyber-identity. The National Security Agency NSA has programs to sweepingly collect metadata, recording who we're talking to, the duration of our communications, and the locations from which we're contacting each other. To public knowledge, the

NSA cannot intercept the content of our communications but we've also yet to receive any assurance that such capabilities cannot be developed and authorized. To browse the internet without your IP address being monitored and recorded for every website that you visit, download and use an open-source TOR *torrent onion router* browser from torproject.org.

To communicate with your friends and family with end-to-end encryption that cannot be intercepted, download and use Signal and periodically confirm that the security of their technology has not been compromised. Practitioners in the cyber security community will notify us if something goes wrong.

(g) Attend a teach-in for community organizing. In 2000, renowned sociologist Robert Putnam released a book called "Bowling Alone" about how America's institutions and cultures of community are degrading, but we can restore them. Right now, groups of people are hosting teach-ins at schools and in libraries across America about how to successfully assess our community memberships, build partnerships, and strategize collective action.

If you can't find any teach-ins happening in your community, contact a local group and ask how you could help them host one. Build a space, share the invitation, and I assure you, people will come.

(h) Compassion! Trust and listen to the people most invested, informed, and engaged in their topics. Billionaire executives should trust and listen to their workers whom need a living wage. Citizens in urban areas should trust and listen to citizens in rural areas whom are suffering from stagnant economic growth. Men should trust and listen to women about how they think about, feel about, and treat their bodies. Hetero-cishet people should trust and listen to how Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual Queer Intersex and Asexual *LGBTQIA* people think and feel about their

sexual and gender identities.

Non-Muslim people should listen to Muslims about the history, nature, and values of their faith. Non-Black people should trust and listen to Black people about their struggle for equity in the same country that enslaved, segregated, and disproportionately imprisons and extra-judicially kills them while disproportionality failing to educate and employ them. And so on and so forth. Become Active.

(i) Check in on your family and friends. Ask how they're doing. Ask if they're struggling with any challenges that you can help them overcome. Ask if they've identified any opportunities that you can encourage them to explore or explore with them. Those three questions can be so impactful: (1) how are we, (2) what challenges do we face, (3) what opportunities can we explore?

(j) Store your local and state politicians' contact information in your cell phone to voice either your support or opposition to new policies and their implementation. Voting is not our only opportunity to be heard or felt. Call your representatives' offices. Send them emails. Write them a letter. Inform your representatives that you care, you're paying attention, and your vote is contingent upon how well they honor the public's trust.

(k) Nonprofits and legal defense funds are constantly looking for money donations and volunteers. A very effective way to make the world a better place is to donate your money and/or time to an organization that's leading the way.

SHOUTOUTS:

3.9 Collective	This Will Take Time
AlliedForcesPress	CTRL+SHFT Collective
Athen B. Gallery	SF Chronicle
Betti Ono	Snowbird Coffee
Book and Job	Brooklyn Circus SF
B.Side Bruja's	Social Study Bar
Chulita Vinyl Club	Wing Wings
Design Rehab	Upper Playground / FIF-
E.M. Wolfman	TY24SF
Fuzzoscope	Tailored Heritage
Goodmother Gallery	Empire in the air
Hot Record Societé	Hause of Gospeed
Illetante	LeVanguard
Layer Studios	Tangible Gallery
The Luggage Store Gallery	Smile a day
Malidoma Collective	Tribe City
Naming Gallery	Power Plant Oakland
Not Your Baby	House of Malico
Qulture Collective	Little Lodge Gallery
Regina's Door	Ritual by Design
Shade Zine	Benny Gold
Slap Functions	89.5 KPOO radio
Smartbomb	Penelope Anstruther
SOMArts	Molly Evans
Space 236 *R.I.P.*	Rachel Davis
T.Y.P.	SF art enthusiasts
Unity Press	Forthrite Printing
Wine & Bowties	All Gold
Y2K	Modest Pressing
Hoodline	Pwrplnt

Take Care Of..

Muslim // Black // Women // Latinx // Native // Trans
Queers // Immigrants // P.O.C. // Lovers // Disabled
L.G.B.T.Q.+ // Low Income // Artists // Children
Our Allies // The Disenfranchised // Friends // Family
Humanity // Diversity // Marginalized Communities

At all costs. In all ways. With empathy in mind.

Thanks for fuckin with us. Yee!