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Colorful Voices  
A Creative Writing Zine



Edited By: Ashley Tiara Lilly

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Contributors

Editor:

Ashley Tiara Lilly

Poetry:

Jasmine Walker  
Richard Renelique  
Angelina Lilly

Artwork:

Christa G. Speranza  
Richard Renelique  
Ashley Tiara Lilly

Short Stories:

Ashley Tiara Lilly

## **Her Place In Society**

Mother borrowed the hands of artisans to cook his meals, whether porcelain or Tupperware, eve  
or morn, thanked or scorned

And after my vocal chords inquired, they sat still because the answer was simply

“Tradition in our country. Culture. A woman’s role.”

So I ponder the axioms that found a home in her mind and find myself wanting to dismantle  
them,

To burn them to cinders and let the ashes fly freely in a world that Gloria Steinem envisioned:

A time when a woman can stand on the mountains that patriarchs climbed and no longer be  
looked down upon

Preach to the praying mantis that females are inferior,

Tell the spotted hyena that daughters are not to be feared and you’d be as fallacious as the  
promise of American privacy

Now I know I’m a man and could never walk an inch in women’s shoes, forget a mile

But still I will use the decibels in my voice to crack their glass cages

I’ll still do what I can to shrink the gap in wages

As I turn the internet’s pages and adore feminist sages

Because they speak the truths that power hungry men can’t digest

Because if equality isn’t what we seek then how can we call ourselves:

**Humble,**

**United,**

**Magnanimous,**

**Achievers,**

**Noble,**

How can we call ourselves **Human?**

-Richard Renelique

## **The Anatomy Of Connection**

All of us, every single being from the soles of our feet to the faces that eyes so frequently meet,

Are bound

Bound like the coils of barbed wire or cursive letters, we flow

Identities and emotions drifting through a nameless ocean

We are misguided angels looking for sin-cleansing potions

Instead of wings we wear clusters of labels- black, white, strange, insane, loner and millions of other misnomers

So shed the hate

Feathers are tantamount to dead skin anyway, right?

But like I said, we can be misguided angels

Some of us with halos that hovered down and became chains

After all no spirit is fully cleansed, no path of gravel is without cracks, the only change that occurs is how you place your toes and how many steps bring you from dark alleys into Nirvana

Please come as you are with your fellow human

There's no need for a disguise but society will argue otherwise

It's taught us to erase our sense of community and just as John Dewey theorized

The language we now speak is one of individuality

It sometimes saddens me, it's tear-inducing but I want to be fear-reducing...

Can my love be the antiseptic to your wounds,

Can it be the crutches that let you walk with pride,

Can your love cradle the other fallen angels and keep each other from descending?

Despite the hands of time falling like perpetual rain

Unstoppable and never ending.

-Richard Renelique

## **Generations**

Though we've evolved past slavery,  
the traditions of torture remain intact and unjustified.  
The master's belt on the colored generation  
in an attempt to educate self created ignorance  
is wielded by our own. Relentless cruelty  
bestowed on the unfortunate youth, molds a  
culture wrapped in wrong.

Passed down from our masters is the one  
link we share—religion. Our god is  
one and the same seeing equally, not  
the pigment of our skin, our deeds not our dialects.  
Both Black and White deserving persecution  
for all the wrongs we have  
committed. For we  
believe in this omniscient being and act  
as if we fear him, yet we do not  
heed the scripture. We do  
not see that our universal master is angry  
at our lack of compromise. And so the hate  
and foolishness continue to simmer.

We do not know better. Letting  
the pale crocodiles desecrate our basic human rights.  
Replace what's fair with liberties  
an untrustworthy government has  
“blessed” us with.

Though we fight for the same victory we are segregated.  
Segregated in our attempts for glory, put down for trying  
to dip our unclean hands into success.  
So violence relinquishes the era of hording the Black people.  
Keeping a fellow citizen, neglecting him the  
potential equality that would paint us all the same. And so  
continues the era of a dark man's abuse.

-Jasmine Walker

## **His And Hers**

His eyes are like circles and her eyes are shaped like the moon  
His skin looks like chocolate and her skin is the color of a Wendy's spoon  
His hair is long and twisty and her hair is short and nifty

His people fought for freedom, hers escaped persecution  
But their hearts are exactly the same, full of Love within.

-Angelina Lilly



“Magic Fluids” by Richard Renelique



“Fight the Patriarchy” by Christa G. Speranza



“Wearing Identities” by Ashley Tiara Lilly



“All Different, All Beautiful” by Ashley Tiara Lilly

### **Promise Land**

Grace held her small child close to her, his messy, brown hair smelling sweet like apples from the hotel shampoo. He wrapped his arms and legs around her like a baby chimp, his snoring soft as he rested his head on her shoulder. Their knitted sweaters kept them warm, and everything they owned was tucked away into her small backpack. Held tight in her palm was the golden ticket that carried all the hope they had for a new life and new beginnings, for safety and a sense of normalcy.

She could just picture their new home. She could see the pots of plants she would display on the windowsill, hear the sound of water bubbling in a pot as she prepared dinner, the sound of her son laughing while he played with a new toy truck, and she could smell the scent of her favorite spices that would always remind her of home. Perhaps she would be a nanny or a music tutor, like she had been for years before she became a mother. This new world felt so close to her. She could hear its music, see the way its cars and buses traveled down highways—free people with free dreams, and her child could be one of them. The only problem was, a wall now stood between her and the Promise Land. The golden ticket she had been given was no longer being accepted, and she was confronted with feeling like the weight of the world rested on her shoulders, while also feeling so small and insignificant.

Her son yawned and stretched, mumbling in his half-asleep state.



“Are we going to the Promise Land now, Mama?” he asked. She kissed his forehead and looked up at the wall again. It seemed so tall, so foreboding. She wanted to fall to the ground and let her tears fall, but she had a reason to stay strong; a reason that was even bigger than this wall. That reason was the beautiful child that was falling back to sleep in her arms.

“Not yet, Love,” she said, “But don’t worry. We’ll have a new life. I promise.” The wind blew the golden ticket from her hand and it landed at the foot of the wall. Her heart was still filled with the hope that someone would take it.

-Ashley Tiara Lilly

## **Geraldo**

Geraldo sat alone at the bar sipping a White Russian and skimming the front page of *The New York Times*. Swirling his drink, he watched as cream splashed over the clanking ice cubes. A sigh escaped his lips with every headline about political corruption. He shook his head at every sentence about hate crimes, tired of the way ignorance would breed fear, causing people to further value ignorance, creating an endless cycle. A desire burned within him to change the world, to make it better. Every new story of injustice fueled his fire of frustration, and it was exhausting, this constant need to do something but not always knowing what to do. He took another sip of his drink.

Someone sat in the stool beside him. He didn’t need to look over to know who it was. He could tell by the way the person tossed their keys onto the counter that it was Tyrese. As usual, he was late. Taking off his jacket and straightening out a couple of magazines, Tyrese ordered a Tom Collins and a side of potato skins. He removed his hat and smoothed out his hair, clearing his throat while he got settled. He was a dark-skinned man who always entered the room with a smile. There was a certain jubilant energy he carried around with him, in spite of the fact that he rarely drank coffee. A faux leather jacket was his favorite accessory, and he often smelled like cologne, not so much that it was off-putting, but enough that one would enjoy the sweet aroma of it and then forget about it a moment later.

He gestured to the newspaper.

“How are things in the world today?” he asked. Geraldo shrugged.

“Oh, you know. Same old, same old,” he said. They drank in silence for a while, reading articles as the voices around them blended together, the words so indistinguishable that it might as well have been white noise. As his glass grew emptier, Geraldo talked more about the things that were bothering him. He wondered if there were any point to him staying in his studio all day, making paintings and sculptures, when the world seemed to be in a constant state of falling apart.

“You’re giving your gifts to the world. That’s the noblest thing you can do,” Tyrese said, offering him a piece of potato that was covered in cheese and chives.

“Easy for you to say. You’ve worked for the Peace Corp.” He shoved the piece of potato into his mouth and turned to the Arts and Culture section of the paper. A new play was coming to Brooklyn this weekend. Maybe he would go see it. The conversation shifted to upcoming events, art shows, and protests. It was amazing how crippling the desire was to be a part of something, yet when the time came to join others at an event, it was easy to want to stay home with a bottle of Bourbon and last month’s copy of *The New Yorker*.

Geraldo heard giggling before he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned to see two girls, younger than him but not too young to be in a bar. One was a blonde in a blue dress and cowboy boots, the other a brunette wearing cheetah print and black flats, both holding onto each other for dear life.

“Excuse us, but are you Geraldo Marino?” the brunette asked. He said he was and the two young women squealed in excitement and held each other tighter, if that were even possible. As it turned out, they were familiar with his work.

“I’m Ariel and this is Jess,” the blond said. “We loved loved loved your summer exhibit, the one about stepping outside the box of your gender identity. Truly inspired.” She tucked her hair behind her ear.

“It changed our lives,” Jess added, “I’m not kidding. It’s part of what made us start our own student organization. Its goal is to make our campus more inclusive of all genders.” It was hard to hear everything she said over the music and other people talking, but he got the gist of it. She explained their proudest accomplishments, including the creation of their own “leave a book, take a book” library that helped educate more people about gender studies.

“You should totally come speak at our campus. People would love that,” Ariel said. They already looked so excited at the idea, so Geraldo wasn’t sure how to tell them he wasn’t much of a speaker. Lucky for him, or unlucky depending on how you looked at it, he had Tyrese with him.

“Of course he’ll do it! He’ll be honored,” he said. He took the liberty of giving the young women one of Geraldo’s business cards, and the two of them left with the promise that they would arrange everything and give him a call.

Geraldo sipped the last of his drink, which was mostly melted ice, and gave his companion a long, hard glare. He was met with only an unwavering smile, which became contagious. He wasn’t in the mood to be angry anyway. It was just one talk. Fine, whatever, he’d do it.

“You see?” Tyrese said, putting on his jacket. “Sitting in your studio painting and sculpting makes a difference to at least one person. That’s what it’s all about, right?” Geraldo supposed that was true. He left a wad of cash on the counter and pulled his jacket back on. He spent all of his time wanting to do something, but when the opportunity came to try something new, he felt insecure, like he wasn’t good enough. It didn’t feel like any of his actions could make a real difference.

But maybe it was true. Maybe he really could reach at least one or two people. And maybe, sometimes, that was enough. They left the bar and stepped out into a busy New York City street, where the desire to somehow change the world was widespread and electric.

-Ashley Tiara Lilly