

UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

R E S O U R C E S F O R L B S S T A F F



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HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

These packages were created to help staff better understand the experiences of those they are serving or underserving. It is important to note that not all people in a group have the same experiences. These packages are about starting a dialogue and creating a culture where difficult and complex issues are discussed.

Have one person choose 1 or 2 passages to read at a meeting. Print copies of the passages and pass them around at the time of reading. Read aloud and then discuss. Allow the conversation to flow honestly and openly. If you need help getting started, the reader may ask any of the following questions

- How did the writing make you feel?
- What did you like?
- What didn't you like?
- What one word or phrase really resonated with you?

You can choose to put these tools on your agendas regularly. Perhaps you use one package, reading one passage for several months. Or maybe you focus on one underserved group at each meeting. As you become more comfortable, invite staff to bring their own pieces to meetings, including more voices and more experiences.

HOW TO USE THESE RESOURCES

It's important to know that while these voices in the passages are representatives of these groups, the tools were curated by a group of white women. While discussions of bias and privilege occurred in hopes of prioritizing objectivity, we all walk with our past experiences.

This project incorporates bibliotherapy which is a non-clinical, developmental intervention that promotes connectedness and wellbeing through guided reading. In this context, LLN is using bibliotherapy as a social arena for the discussion of the experiences and perspectives of underrepresented groups.

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Underrepresented Groups

People with Addiction Issues

Addiction or Substance Abuse Disorder: A treatable medical condition that affects the brain and involves compulsive and continuous use despite negative impacts to a person, their family, friends and others
-Government of Canada



Quick Facts

21% of all Canadians will struggle with addiction during their lifetime

Men have higher rates of substance use disorders than women

Emerge
By Digital Poet

I can't change
What I've done in the past,
How I've built weak walls
And let them crash,
But now the face of insecurity
I once displayed,
Melts with reality
As a man is portrayed.

In this new clarity
I comprehend my self damage,
I see that through pain,
I've gained an advantage,
I've been face to face with death
Like most will never see,
The trials I've survived
Empower and strengthen me.

I've looked through the eyes of men
And seen evil demons,
Flipped the iris to a mirror
So it's something to believe in,
I realize I've been places
No man ever need endure,
And suffer a disease,
Which can be paused but has no cure.

Many have shown me love,
When I turned them to opponents,
Making my whole universe
A drug infested dark enclosure,
And when the heroin handcuffs
Would tighten around my wrists,
I'd walk through forests of fire,
To have another fix.

I've tortured myself
Above and beyond humility,
And wished my own mother
Had been born with infertility,
But the spirit inside of me
Knows self-defeat must finally end,
I'm trying to be a man,

I've always heard poems about fluffy clouds
And blue skies,
Not to demean them,
I just keep it real with my demise,
I'm not even a poet,
Just a survivor with war stories,
Fighting day by day
To regain happiness and glory.

Be humble and make amends.

I know the road to recovery
Is like scaling the tallest mountain,
But like the 'Little Engine Who Could'
It will halt my self-doubting,
I know my final destiny
Hasn't come knocking for a reason,
And my purpose on this earth
Isn't only people-pleasing.

My reflection displays a boy
Who has felt too much,
And emotion overload
Has detached his inner touch,
But if I lose sight of the past,
Then I'm doomed to repeat,
And my body just can't stand
Being a slab of meat.

Through my tribulations
I've been degraded and abused,
Inflicted self-torture,
And let myself be used,
Now when I look back,
I see how I'd lost control,
Fell victim to my voids,
And entered a black hole.

I spiraled lost with no direction,
No purpose, aimless,
Dismissed all society,
With acts considered heinous,
And though shame and guilt,
Ice the cake of my heart,
I can finally say
I deserve a fresh start.

There can be no more lonely,
Cold, and sick nights,
Because small wonders of life
Bring many delights,
A bright aura has replaced
My cloud of damnation,
The void I once had
Is now bubbling inspiration.

My Master

Selena Odom

I have a master of an evil kind.
He totally controls my body, soul, and mind.
At first he was fun and cool,
But soon I became his fool.
A victim without a chance,
He took my life in just a glance.
He's so sneaky and full of deceit.
I wonder why we ever had to meet.
Thanks to my master, I am now someone I hate.
I used to have a life, and it was somewhat great.
Now all I do is cheat, steal, and lie,
And then lie in bed praying to die.
Still I can't leave my master for any reason.
He's too strong and his control is never ceasin'.
He's the one I run to when I wake.
I can't rid him, even for my children's sake.
I used to be loving, caring, and enjoyed my life,
But that was before my master took me for his wife.
Everyone says I don't look like the type.
They can't picture me locked in my room smoking a pipe.
I once was a pretty girl from the South,
But now I am left with teeth rotting in my mouth.
My master says, "You'll never stay clean;
You love me too much to be happy and serene."

Selena Odom. "My Master." Family Friend Poems, August 13, 2010.
<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/my-master>

When the fat girl gets skinny

By Blythe Baird

If you develop an eating disorder when you are already thin to begin with, you go to the hospital.

If you develop an eating disorder when you are not thin to begin with, you are a success story.

So when I evaporated, of course everyone congratulated me on getting healthy.

Girls at school who never spoke to me before, stopped me in the hallway to ask how I did it.

I say "I'm sick". They say "No, you're an inspiration!"

How could I not fall in love with my illness?

With becoming the kind of silhouette people are supposed to fall in love with?

Why would I ever stop being hungry, when anorexia was the most interesting thing about me?

So lucky it is now, to be boring.

The way looking at an apple and seeing only an apple, not sixty, or half an hour sit-ups is boring.

My story may not be as exciting as it used to, but at least there is nothing left to count.

SCARS

&

STARS

JESSE

THISTLE

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *FROM THE ASHES*

ST. STELLA

She became a paramedic—
I knew her in high school
years before this addiction bound me in
shackles.

Many times, at Kennedy and Queen,
in the dead of night,
she was the only person
there, in her ambulance
as I scoured the streets for change
and maybe a little money.

She noticed one evening,
me, alone and waiting for a midnight bus that
wasn't coming.

"Come clean up at my place," she said, as if
stardust was caught up in her hair.

I don't know how she drove with me all ripe
in the passenger seat.

She let me shower when we got to her place
offered the couch
gave me twenty dollars, a pack of smokes
and let me tell her of a man who used to live
inside this old heart.

She turned off the lamp after
and went to bed in the next room.
As quiet sank in, I stole away in the night
ashamed that I had nothing to offer

this girl I once went to school with.
This girl who still cared to remember
this, the paramedic-saint of Peel Memorial;
a hospital they tore down
many years ago.

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER

“witty, clever and convincing”
The Sunday Telegraph



the
unexpected
joy of
being
sober



“Admirably honest, light, bubbly
and remarkably rarely annoying”
The Guardian

catherine gray

SURPRISING SOBER BONUSES

1. I SMELL NICE

I am always surprised when people now tell me I smell lovely. Literally nobody said that when I was drinking. Probably because I smelled like a barmaid's apron.

2. I GET LETTERS OFFERING ME CREDIT CARDS

Or telling me my bank account has been automatically upgraded to the fancy-pants one. I used to get letters threatening me with court over late payments.

3. I CHECK OUT OF HOTELS EARLY, EARLY!

In sobriety I have never been ousted from a hotel room an hour past the check-out time, by an angry cleaner/hotel manager.

4. NO MORE 'CAN WE CHAT' PARANOIA

'I have a bone to pick with you' was like an icy dagger being plunged into my heart. Jumpy 'beer fear' has been replaced by a luxuriously clean conscience.

5. I LOOK IN FRIDGES NOW AND SEE FOOD

Rather than automatically clocking and cataloguing the booze in there. Fridges were just enormous drinks cooler boxes.

6. MY BIRTHDAY CARDS ARE NO LONGER ALL ALCOHOL-RELATED.

I no longer open them and have to fake-laugh, when actually I want to cry. 'Is that all people see when they look at me?'

7. THE REVELATION OF 'SPARE' CHANGE

I used to spend every last £1 rattling around in there on wine. 'Spare' money was a foreign concept.

8. RAIN DOESN'T MAKE ME MURDEROUS

'Shakes fist at sky' I straightened my hair this morning. GODDAMMIT. Wind was a personal affront. Scorching sun was merely a global plot to melt my make-up. Now, I know that I cannot change the weather. I pull up my hood and feel happy that the flowers are getting a drink.

9. NO MORE REPLACING COATS/BAGS/CARDS/PHONES

I no longer 'lose' my belongings to the underbelly of Soho (read: chuck them on the floor). No more palaver having to replace said items, or cancel my cards or whatever. No more returning to the scene of

my boozehounding with my tail between my legs, to ask if it'd been handed in. That was fun. Not.

10. I DON'T HAVE TO WATCH TV TWICE

I spent so many hours squinting at the TV in an in-the-bag blackout. Watching telly with one eye shut so that the people stopped doubling and blurring. Rewinding a scene several times because English had started sounding like Egyptian. I watched the last two seasons of *Breaking Bad* while drinking. I couldn't tell you what happened. I have no idea how it ended. No idea. Was it a good ending?

11. MY HANDWRITING IS LEGIBLE

My handwriting started to look drunk. I remember ripping up a birthday card once, because my spidery scrawl was ungiveably messy.

12. I ORDER MILKSHAKES IN BOUTIQUE CINEMAS

The point of going to a swanky vintage cinema now is to sink into the velvet seats, eat artisan food and enjoy the film, rather than mainline wine.

13. GOODBYE RANCID FAKE-TANNED SHEETS

I no longer plaster fake tan over my puffy face, red eyes and toxin-ravaged skin. I was like a zombie trying to blend into the human crowd. I no longer want to get into bed greasy and smelling nasty. I have put my own comfort above what people think of my Irish skin. That seems unrelated to sobriety, but it's totally related.

14. BEGONE UNEXPLAINED BRUISES

I was constantly finding mysterious ink-blotches on my thighs or, even more creepy, fingertip-shaped stains. I used to tell myself that I 'bruised like a peach.' Nope. I don't. I can't remember the last time I had a bruise.

15. I GET REFUNDS ON UNWANTED ITEMS

By the end of my working day, I was either on the starters-block to get to the pub, or too hungover to face it. And the 28-days-return window would snap shut.

16. I DON'T HAVE TO RUN TO THE TRAIN STATION IN HEELS

Getting out of bed every morning used to be such agony that I always had to half-walk-half-jog to catch the train.

17. NO SWEAT

Unless I'm playing tennis or something, when you're supposed to sweat.

18. I DON'T KNOCK OVER PINTS OF WATER IN THE NIGHT

In fact, I don't need any water beside the bed. Because I'm actually hydrated, rather than waking up at 4am with a raging-inferno thirst.

19. I DON'T HAVE TO COVER UP 'ALCOHOLIC FLUSH'

I would look in the mirror and squeak with horror. Not only did I have shaking hands; my fire-engine-red cheeks were sounding the alarm too.

20. I TAKE MY MAKE-UP OFF EVERY SINGLE NIGHT

No smoky eyeshadow on my new seersucker sheets, or skin clogged with foundation. I even floss (sometimes).

21. I HAVE A FIVE-STAR UBER RATING

I am really, really nice to the drivers. I would have been kicked off Uber (and Airbnb for that matter) by now, if I was still drinking.

22. MY CLASSPASS ATTENDANCE IS 100 PER CENT

I have never been fined for non-attendance. I always use my five classes per month. "Flicks imaginary dust off shoulder"

23. I NEVER, EVER WEE IN ALLEYWAYS AT 2AM.

(You know you've done it too.)

24. FOOD TASTES BETTER

I always thought that wine enhanced food. Turns out booze numbs your taste buds. It makes the food less tasty. Huh.

25. PARANOIA WILL DESTROY YA

I can now see people without the soul-eating paranoia of what I did or said to them last time I saw them.

26. I READ ABOUT TEN TIMES MORE BOOKS

I can even remember the plot. Sometimes. Kinda.

27. THE LEVEL OF MY FRIEND'S GLASS IS NOT A FIXATION

Funny thing: I never ever feel like ripping my friend's head off when she pours herself a centimetre more elderflower cordial than me.

Underrepresented Groups

Black Voices

Racism, like smog, swirls around us and permeates society. It can be intentional, clear and direct or it can be expressed in more subtle ways that the perpetrator might not even be aware of.

-National Museum of African American History & Culture



Quick Facts

Between 2013 and 2017, a Black person was nearly 20 times more likely to be shot and killed by the police in Toronto compared to a white person

Within Canada, there are five chapters of Black Lives Matter: Toronto (founded in 2014), Vancouver (2016), Edmonton (2016), Waterloo Region (2016) and New Brunswick (2020).

Too Black

by C'Moore Productions

They take my kindness for **weakness**.
They take my silence for **speechless**.
They consider my uniqueness **strange**.
They call my language **slang**.
They see my confidence as **conceit**.
They see my mistakes as **defeat**.
They consider my success **accidental**.
They minimize my intelligence to "**potential**".
My questions mean I'm **unaware**.
My advancement is somehow **unfair**.
Any praise is **preferential treatment**.
To voice concern is **discontentment**.
If I stand up for myself, I'm too **defensive**.
If I don't trust them, I'm too **apprehensive**.
I'm deviant if I **separate**.
I'm fake if I **assimilate**.
My character is constantly **under attack**.
Pride for my race makes me "**TOO BLACK**".

POCKET CHANGE COLLECTIVE

BLACK INTERNET EFFECT



SNAYONE CHARLES



I started at Twitter as an intern in 2012, less than a month after my college graduation, when the app was a small San Francisco-based start-up. I was the second Black intern to ever work at the company and the first-ever Black woman to intern there. I mostly knew of Twitter through word of mouth and within the budding tech industry circles I had managed to start cultivating after my Google internship. In 2012, Twitter was the emerging breakout social media platform and talk of the town in Silicon Valley. My decision to go to Twitter and work some of the longest, mentally grueling days ever was absolutely driven by my passion for the platform and the possible promise of being part of a historical public company that could

financially change the trajectory of my entire life.

My first interview with Twitter was one of the most important days of my life and set the tone for how I would choose to show up as a Black woman in tech for the decade to come. For my interview, I actively made the decision to show up to Twitter HQ in downtown San Francisco (the heart of Silicon Valley) with my natural coily 4C hair. My afro was out and proud, in full effect. Arriving in San Francisco, smack-dab in the middle of tech's predominantly white, male workforce, was an intimidating culture shock until I thought more about just how valuable my background and perspective would be in a sea of people who more than likely shared the same outlook and backstory. I chose to proudly lean in to my own identity, tapping into everything that made me different, with a mission to normalize the concept of a Black woman unapologetically existing and thriving in that environment.

Before the interview, I felt a wave of confidence wash over me the very moment I decided to present the truest version of myself. I figured if I showed up

as my Blackest, most authentic self from day one, that'd give me all the wiggle room in the world to just be me, day in and day out. If I got the job, I'd then be able to pull up in an afro, or a wig, or braids, or a hat—I had set the bar. The fact that this sort of construct and anxiety lives within the minds of Black women who show up to job interviews and wake up to go to work every day is a whole other tragedy and unfortunate truth in itself. With my 4C crown on, I went to my interview and *slayed*.

A week later, I found out I had been selected for the paid three-month internship, under the condition that if I did well, there was a strong likelihood I'd be hired into a full-time role. Given I had just graduated from college and needed to find a full-time job right away, accepting the internship at Twitter and betting on the startup was a huge risk for me.

At the start of my Twitter internship, a mentor of mine introduced me to one of the few Black employees at Twitter at the time—a recruiter named Scott, who ultimately came to be another dear friend, ally, and professional mentor. Scott was the first

friendly face of color I met at Twitter. His warm smile and bright soul lit up the room when I ran into him in the lobby on my first day. He later introduced me to Bakari, who was Twitter's head of legal. Bakari was rumored to be the first-ever Black man to be hired full-time at Twitter. We joked about this to make light of his historic arrival, but in all honesty, we knew the lack of diversity at Twitter, more specifically the absence of Black employees, was a major problem that we wanted to help change.

After meeting Bakari, I sought out more information on employee resource groups and the presence of employees of color at Twitter. I started to ask questions about ways to get involved with the surrounding community and felt compelled to figure out how I could help diversify Twitter's work environment, create a funnel for Black interns to get hired, and improve the experience for Black employees who were there full-time. Weeks after meeting Bakari, he introduced me to a powerful Black woman named Erin, who had just gotten hired full-time. From there, we routinely got together to

lunch and impromptu coffee meetups with the other few Black employees. Bakari and Erin were a lot busier than I was in their full-time roles, and they empowered me to offer a helping hand and contribute time toward officially starting Blackbirds—Twitter’s first-ever employee resource group for Black employees. With their support, I worked after hours for months to help draft the statement of purpose and develop the official charter for Blackbirds. With any free time I could find, I set up internal gatherings, community service projects, and recruiting events and initiatives that served to ramp up the organization. By the time I was hired full-time, I was the president of Blackbirds and had worked alongside a collective of other Black Twitter employees based in San Francisco and New York to bring the organization to life.



POCKET CHANGE COLLECTIVE

CONCRETE KIDS



AMYRA LEÓN

legacy

We write our names in the concrete
Just in case mourning comes early
Just in case we start disappearing
Just in case the moon don't shine
And there ain't no melody in our cry
Just the absent ache of becoming

We write our names in the concrete
To claim what is rightfully ours
To manifest a legacy
They said we could never know

To reclaim the history
They tried to silence
The revolution was
Jazz in response to violence

They could not
Take the rhythm

From our bones
They could not
Disintegrate the
Melody in our marrow

Brass and Gospel
Funk, Rock 'n' Roll
They may steal the land
But they will never capture the soul

We write our names in the concrete
Line the track with our heartbeat
Beat beat beating the life
Into the ground where
All our kin seem to be

We write our names in the concrete
Dreaming of the day
We are finally free

POCKET CHANGE COLLECTIVE

THIS IS WHAT I KNOW ABOUT ART



KIMBERLY DREW

↓ In the days following the deaths, images by photographers and other witnesses began to define a resurfacing justice movement for Black victims of police brutality. Though my workplace was utterly unchanged by the moment, my community responded in full force, trying to make sense of it all through their creative and collective work. My faith in the importance of art had never been more concrete. It was images, sculptures, and writing that helped me wade through the anger I was feeling. There was a moment of respite whenever I encountered a work that mirrored feelings that felt too complicated to define on my own.

One night after work, I went to a reading by my dear friend Morgan Parker. She read from her poem "I Feel Most Colored When I am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background: after Glenn Ligon after Zora Neale Hurston":

I am growing two fruits.

I feel most colored when I am thrown against
the sidewalk.

It is the last time I feel colored.

Stone is the name of the fruit.

I am a man I am a man I am a woman I am
a man I am a woman I am protected
and served.

I background my country.

My country sharp in my throat.

I pay taxes and I am a child and I grow into a
bright fleshy fruit.

White bites: I stain the uniform.

I am thrown black typeface in a headline with
no name.

Or, no one hears me.

I am thrown a bone, "Unarmed."

I feel most colored when my weapon is I.

When I get what I deserve.

When I can't breathe.

Hearing Morgan read her poem for the first time,
I wept. It feels dramatic to say, but the tears felt like a

battle cry for the strong person I needed to become at that point in my life, in my career, and for my growing audience. The tears helped me liberate the part of myself that I was afraid to be. A part of myself that I thought I had to hide.

Later that year, Americans witnessed the murder of John Crawford III at a Walmart, Akai Gurley in New York City's Pink Houses, Laquan McDonald, and twelve-year-old Tamir Rice, killed right before his sister's eyes. Every opportunity to heal the wound was met with extreme violence and disappointment.

On December 5, 2014, I posted a call for art in support of the #BlackLivesMatter movement on Black Contemporary Art. The page, which still exists on the blog, links to work that was selected by our editors or submitted by our community. It was developed as a space for collective healing and mourning—for anyone who needed to experience art that attempted to offer sense in this tumultuous time. In that moment, I began to understand how intimately art and activism could work together to produce a collective voice and shared community. And for me, there was no going back.

THE COLLECTED
POETRY OF
NIKKI
GIOVANNI

1968-1998

INTRODUCTION BY VIRGINIA C. FOWLER



Hands: For Mother's Day

I think hands must be very important . . . Hands: plait hair . . . knead bread . . . speak letters . . . write in anguish . . . shake the air in exasperation . . . wipe tears, sweat, and pain from faces . . . see at the end of wires which hold . . . Yes hands . . . Let's start with the hands . . .

My grandmother washed my Mother . . . every Monday . . . If you were a visiting grandchild or a resident daughter . . . every Monday morning at 8:00 a.m. . . mostly in the dark . . . Inquisitely in the cold . . . certainly alone . . . you heard her on the back porch starting to hurr . . . as Black Christian ladies are prone to do . . . at threshold . . . some plea to higher beings for forgiveness and the power to forgive . . .

I saw a photograph once of the mother of Emmett Till . . . a slight, bony woman with pillbox hat . . . white gloves . . . eyes dark beyond pain . . . incomprehensibly looking at a world that never intended to see her son be a man . . . That same look is etched each year . . . without the hat and gloves, for mother veils are not chic . . . at the Arctic Circle . . . That same look is in vogue in Atlanta, Cincinnati, Buffalo . . . for much the same reason . . . During one brief moment, for our passing wrinkle in time, Nancy Reagan wore that look . . . sharing a bond, as yet uncircumvented . . . with Betty Shabazz, Jacqueline Kennedy, Coretta King, Ethel Kennedy . . . The wives and mothers are not so radically different . . . It is the hands of the women which massage the hair . . . the statements . . . the letters into the bodies for burial . . . It is our hands which cover the eyes of small children . . . soothe the howling of the brothers . . . make the beds . . . set the tables . . . wipe away our own grief . . . to give comfort to those beyond comfort . . .

I shud from women whose hands are Black and rough . . . The women who produced me are in defiance of Puerellans and Jergens

Underrepresented Groups

People with Disabilities

The term “disability” covers a broad range and degree of conditions. A disability may have been present at birth, caused by an accident, or developed over time.

- Ontario Human Rights Commission



Quick Facts

In 2017, 22% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older had one or more disabilities.

Among those with physical disabilities, close to half (44.9%) required at least one type of aid, assistive device or accessibility feature at home.

Males are about 1.5 times more likely than females to report having a developmental disability

In 2017, the Canadian population included 22% with developmental disabilities – over one in every five Canadians

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE
GLASS
CASTLE



JEANNETTE
WALLS

"Walls has joined the company of writers such as Mary Karr and Frank McCourt who have been able to transcend their sad memories into literature." —Book

A BANTON BOOK

"Mum," Mum said, she didn't approve of glasses. If you had real eyes, Mum believed, they would start to get strong. The way she saw it, glasses were like crutches. They prevented people with weak eyes from knowing to see the world on their own. She said people had been trying to get her to wear glasses for years, and she had refused. But the more she thought about seeing, Leo couldn't stand because seeing she most glasses, and she almost would pay for them, so Mum gave in.

When the glasses were made, we all went down to the optician. The lenses were so thick they made Leo's eyes look big and lipped like the fish eyes. She kept rubbing her head around and up and down.

"What's the matter?" I asked. Instead of answering, Leo ran outside followed by the two standing in the parking lot, glaring in awe at the lens, the lenses, and the other buildings behind them.

"Do you that eye over there?" she said, pointing at a mountain about a hundred feet away. I nodded.

"You can only see that eye. I can see the individual houses in it," she looked at me triumphantly. "Can you see them?"

I nodded.

She didn't seem to believe me. "The individual houses? I mean, can you see the houses in each little hill?"

I nodded. Leo looked at me and then looked into mine.

On the way home, she kept seeing for the first time all these things that Mum always she had stopped noticing because they'd been there every day: the road street signs and billboards around the corner and the mailboxes perched on the telephone wires. We went into a bank and she stood up on the vaulted ceiling and described the marginal patterns.

At home, Leo insisted that I try on her glasses. They would like see what so much as they concerned her, she said, so I'd be able to see things as she always had. I put on the glasses, and the world dissolved into blurry, blurry shapes. I took a few steps and banged my shin on the coffee table, and then I asked why Leo didn't like to go wearing as much as I did and I did. She wouldn't see.

Leo wanted them to try on the glasses, too. She'd slipped them on and, blinking, looked around the room. She studied her at her own paintings quietly, then handed the glasses back to Leo.

"Did you see better?" I asked.

"I wouldn't say better," Mum answered, "I'd say different."

"Maybe you should get a pair, Mum."

"I like the world just the way I see it," she said.

But Leo loved seeing the world clearly. She started immediately drawing and painting all the wonderful things she was discovering, like the way each strand of the sea lampbrush's neck can be seen several shades on the fish's body, and she saw the setting sun painted the underbelly of the clouds pink but left the peak up top purple.

But long after Leo got her glasses, she decided she wanted to be an artist, like Mum. —

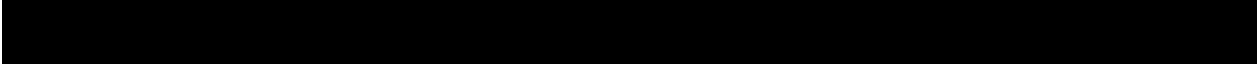
I'm rewatching the She-Ra episode where Glimmer gets sick for the first time

BY ARIANNA MONET

and I keep mistaking the screen for a
mirror. By which I mean, I too was once
adolescent and unconquerable:
purple hair; a body unmarked by pain.
Then, the bright unholiness of onset.
She screams, glitches into crimson static.
In the right light, even pain can sparkle.
Blood cells glinting into oblivion.
Flicker of agony, scarlet against
the ego. Candescence of a body
as it burns itself undone. If I am
to live this way—neurons blazing, my fists
clenched proudly against a whimper—let me
at least malfunction in a way that shines.

The Autistic Experience

By: Aimee Critchley



Sometimes at night
Without all the noise and lights, the sound and PEOPLE
I can finally hear and see the world.
So I stay up in the quiet hours with just enough
light from the moon to finally breathe.
My head can finally process and I can finally feel
everything I usually keep down.
I go through what he said, what she said and wonder
how I hurt your feelings.... You asked a question and I gave an
honest answer but I guess that's not what you're supposed to do.
That's what mum says anyway.
And then I think about the fact that you get mad because
I can't look you in the eye but that doesn't mean I'm not listening.
My leg shaking or hand flapping doesn't mean I don't comprehend.
And just because I can't talk to you doesn't mean I don't WANT to.
High functioning low functioning no functioning,
Who said it was for you to choose
How I cope with the world?
So my weighted blankets keep me down to stop me flying away
My earphones trap me inside and everyone else OUT so
your shouting and chewing and stomping can't hurt me.
I have my safe places and people to protect me in the unknown.
And I try again tomorrow.
And the day after.

"These essays are the heart, the bones,
and the blood of Disability Rights."
—Gaelynn Leo, musician and activist

Disability Visibility

FIRST-PERSON STORIES FROM
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

EDITED BY

Alice Wong

The Beauty of Spaces Created for and by Disabled People

c.c. smith

The theater is dim and just warm enough that I don't need my sweater, which I leave draped on the back of my creaky wooden seat. We are hushed, waiting for the lights to come up on the swooping ramp where the dance piece *Down*, choreographed by Alice Sheppard in collaboration with Laurel Lawson, will be performed. This is one of my favorite parts of any theatrical production, the moment *before*, when anything might happen. Where all the barriers between us have fallen away.

Sheppard and then Lawson roll out, and they begin weaving precise patterns with their bodies and wheelchairs while the music flows over them, with Michael Maag's lighting and projection weaving around them. The audio describer speaks in a low, rhythmic voice that broadcasts in the whole room, interplaying with the performance and the music.

There is something wondrous and sacred here.

It is very rare, as a disabled person, that I have an intense sense of belonging, of being not just tolerated or included in a space but actively owning it. "This space," I whisper to myself, "is for me." Next to me, I sense my friend has the same electrified feeling. This space is for us.

I am spellbound. I am also overwhelmed, feeling something swell in my throat as I look out across the crowd, to the wheelchair and scooter users at the front of the raked seating, the ASL interpreter in a cup black next to the stage. Cases dangle from seat backs and a gilded prosthetic leg gleams under the safety lights. A blind woman in the row below me turns a tiny model of the stage over in her hands, tracing her fingers along with it in time to the audio description.

"I really wish I could have crammed all my disabled peeps in there," I say later.

Members of many marginalized groups have this shared experiential touchstone, this sense of unexpected and vivid belonging and an ardent desire to be able to pass this experience along. Some can remember the precise moment when they were in a space inhabited entirely by people like them for the first time. For disabled people, those spaces are often hospitals, group therapy sessions, and other clinical settings. That is often by design: we are kept isolated from one another, as though more than two disabled people in the same room will start a riot or make everyone feel awkward.

The first social setting where you come to the giddy understanding that this is a place for disabled people is a momentous one, and one worth lingering over. I cannot remember the first time it happened to me—perhaps a house party in San Francisco or an art show or a meeting of friends at a café. The experiences blend together, creating a sense of *crip space*, a communal belonging, a deep rightness that comes from not having to explain or justify your existence. They are *meeting points*, even as they can be emerging and exhilarating.

Crip space is unique, a place where disability is celebrated and embraced—something radical and taboo in many parts of the world and societies even for people in those spaces. The idea that we need our own spaces, that we thrive in them, is particularly troubling for able-bodied people socially as a negative; why would you want to self-identify with the other cripples? For those newly disabled, crip space may seem intimidating or frightening, with expectations that don't match the reality of experience—someone who has just experienced a tremendous life change is not always ready for disability pride or defiance, needing a kinder, gentler introduction.

The creation of spaces explicitly for marginalized people and not for others has been fraught with controversy. Proponents insist they're necessary for people to have intra-community conversations and they create a safe environment for talking through complex issues. They also may say that people find them empowering, especially those who have been cut off from their community.

It isn't that nondisabled people are unwelcome at this dance performance. But the space has not been tailored to their needs and designed to seamlessly accommodate them, and they stand out. The experience pushes the boundaries of their understanding and expectations.

During the Q&A, the dancers roll forward and the ASL interpreter trails them.

"Any questions or comments?" one asks, the interpreter's hands moving swiftly in sync. The audience is momentarily frozen, as all audiences are at this question every time it is asked. The disabled people are still processing. We feel slightly giddy; this is a piece that speaks our common language, silently and beautifully, that reaches the deep parts of us we normally keep hurtled up and hidden away. The nondisabled people are hesitant, nervous, unsure about what to say in response to the work in progress; we'd all been invited to witness.

"I liked . . . the ramp," one of the nondisabled people says loudly, gesturing at the set.

It must have been an unsettling experience, to be invited into this space. To be on the other side of the access divide. To see disabled people spreading their wings and soaring. To see wheelchairs turned into powerful extensions of dancers' bodies, enabling them to do things physically impossible for bipedal people.

Those in positions of power, evidently fearing that people are talking about them behind closed doors, persistently insist on barging into such spaces. They call these spaces divisive, and their organizers are told that they aren't valuing the contributions of allies. These bursts of petty outrage at stumbling upon one of the few places in the world that is not open to them inadvertently highlight exactly why such places are needed.

This is precisely why they are needed: as long as claiming our own ground is treated as an act of hostility, we need our ground. We need the sense of community for disabled people created in crip space. You, like any ground, it comes with soft spots and pitfalls, a reminder that the landscape is not uniform, can even become treacherous.

Even as some of us find a sense of belonging within these corners of the world carved out for one another, not everyone feels welcome in them; disability is a broad sociocultural identity and experience, and not everyone thinks about disability in the same way. This can be the paradox of crip space: When do we exclude others in our zeal to embrace ourselves, with our refusal to consider the diversity of human experience? How can we cultivate spaces where everyone has that soaring sense of inclusion, where we can have difficult and meaningful conversations?

Crip space is akin to a fragile natural place. It must be protected in order to preserve the delicate things within, while remaining open

is change with the seasons and the passage of time. That protection sometimes requires sacrifice or challenge, awkward questions, but that makes it no less vital. Because everyone deserves the shelter and embrace of crisp space, to find their people and set down roots in a place they can call home.

After the dance, after the Q&A, after the drinks and snacks in the lobby, we must regretfully disperse back out into the chilly December night. The theater is in the Tenderloin, a community in transition, indie cafes cheek by jowl with hipster bars, and as we fan out across the sidewalk—stained with bird shit and mysterious sticky substances that cling to wheels and canes—we must return once more into the outside world, beyond crisp space. The barriers begin to reappear.

A child across the street points at the phalanx of wheelchair users and says, "Look, Mommy!" Two adults stare, surprised when an adult wheelchair user unaccompanied by an attendant, leaving the world alone, transfers into his car and slings his wheelchair into the backseat, pulling away from the curb with the quiet hum of an expensive German engine.

At the BART station around the corner, the elevators are, as usual, out of order.

I wasn't born a minority. But a three-metre fall at the site of our house addition in 2016 rendered my legs useless and left me a full-time wheelchair user. Before that, as an able-bodied, white, non-transgender, straight woman, I never had to contend with the fact the world wasn't made for me. So, imagine my surprise when I re-entered the world on wheels after my accident and discovered that my value to society felt diminished.

Before I was paralyzed, I never knew a few stairs could mean the difference between feeling included and feeling ostracized. Before I was paralyzed, it never crossed my mind I might go somewhere and not be able to use the bathroom. Before I was paralyzed — while I was never habitually punctual — I never thought I'd be late to my daughter's swimming lesson, circling the parking lot with her in tears because the few accessible parking spots at the community centre were occupied. Before I was paralyzed, it never occurred to me I might not be able to take my children to soccer because access to the fields required stairs or a dangerous attempt to push myself up a steep hill. Before I was paralyzed, I never thought my life would change in such a way that would bring these issues into the spotlight — for me, and for the people who know and love me.

But then I was paralyzed and found what didn't change were my responsibilities as a parent and a partner. It didn't limit my desire to go shopping, to attend events or go to restaurants and hotels.

What it did change was the vantage point from which I saw the world.

CBC "Let me be that person you know in a wheelchair, so we can all think about how to be more inclusive" by Codi Darnell, June 2021.

Underrepresented Groups

Indigenous Peoples

"Indigenous peoples" is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants.

-Government of Canada



Quick Facts

More than 1.67 million people in Canada identify as Indigenous

The Canadian Constitution recognizes 3 groups of Indigenous peoples: First Nations, Inuit and Métis

A hymn of love to the world.

—ELIZABETH GILBERT

BRAIDING
SWEETGRASS



Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge,
and the Teachings of Plants

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

THE GIFT OF STRAWBERRIES

I once heard Evun Peter—a Gwich'in man, a father, a husband, an environmental activist, and Chief of Arctic Village, a small village in northeastern Alaska—introduce himself simply as “a boy who was raised by a river.” A description as smooth and slippery as a river rock. Did he mean only that he grew up near its banks? Or was the river responsible for rearing him, for teaching him the things he needed to live? Did it feed him, body and soul? Raised by a river: I suppose both meanings are true—you can hardly have one without the other.

In a way, I was raised by strawberries, fields of them. Not to exclude the maples, hemlocks, white pines, goldenrod, asters, violets, and mosses of upstate New York, but it was the wild strawberries, beneath dewy leaves on an almost-summer morning, who gave me my sense of the world, my place in it. Behind our house were miles of old hay fields divided by stone walls, long abandoned from farming but not yet grown up to forest. After the school bus chugged up our hill, I'd throw down my red plaid book bag, change my clothes before my mother could think of a chore, and jump across the creek to go wandering in the goldenrod. Our mental maps had all the landmarks we kids needed: the fort under the sumacs, the rock pile, the river, the big pine with branches so evenly spaced you could climb to the top as if it were a ladder—and the strawberry patches.



When We Were Alone



DAVID A. ROBERTSON

JULIE FLETT

When we were your age, at home in our community, being with family was the most important thing. We played with each other, did chores together, and shared everything. But at the school I went to, far away from home, they wouldn't let us be together.

My brother and I were separated like day and night.

"Why were you and Nókornis separated?" I asked.

"They didn't like when we were with family," Nókorn said. "because when we were together we thought too much of home."



But sometimes in the winter, when we were alone,
and we were sure that nobody could see us, we
would find each other. We would take off our mitts,
and in the crisp, cold air we would hold hands so we
could be with each other.

And this made us happy.

"Now," Nokom said as she reached over and
held my uncle's hand, and mine, "I am always with
my family."



SCARS

&

STARS

JESSE

THISTLE

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *FROM THE ASHES*

TEAR IT DOWN

I take your statues, your heroes,
of hate
and power
and generations of stolen land
and forced labour
and we throw it into our
oceans of love
and knowledge
and monuments fall like stacks of dominoes.
Finally, after whole forests of stone and
bronze have felled,
and rains quench the Earth,
our narrative is told.
This—after worlds
and injustices
and lifetimes apart,

Speaking Tree

Joy Harjo

1951 –

I had a beautiful dream I was dancing with a tree.

—Sandra Cisneros

Some things on this earth are unspeakable:
Genealogy of the broken—
A shy wind threading leaves after a massacre,
Or the smell of coffee and no one there—

Some humans say trees are not sentient beings,
But they do not understand poetry—

Nor can they hear the singing of trees when they are fed by
Wind, or water music—
Or hear their cries of anguish when they are broken and bereft—

Now I am a woman longing to be a tree, planted in a moist, dark earth
Between sunrise and sunset—

I cannot walk through all realms—
I carry a yearning I cannot bear alone in the dark—

What shall I do with all this heartache?

The deepest-rooted dream of a tree is to walk
Even just a little ways, from the place next to the doorway—
To the edge of the river of life, and drink—

I have heard trees talking, long after the sun has gone down:

*Imagine what would it be like to dance close together
In this land of water and knowledge. . .*

To drink deep what is undrinkable.

From *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* by Joy Harjo. Copyright © 2015 by Joy Harjo.
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Carving Space

The Indigenous Voices
Awards Anthology



SELECTED BY
Jordan Abel, Carleigh Baker,
and Madeleine Reddon

Reclaim

I walk

I talk

I live

Can you see my past?

It leaves a dark trail where I pass

We lived free

Before the settlements

Long before residential schools

Beading, storytelling, praying

I was invaded

My land then my body

My territory so beautiful

Innocent and pure

The water

The trees

The barren lands

A sliver of light in December

The cold wind passing through

Day after day

We were civilized, you know

More than some

Colonialism crept slowly under me

Through me

■ FRANCINE MERASTY

Without consent

Touching, grabbing, hurting me

I will reclaim my body

I will reclaim my territory

I will reclaim my land

Bowling, praying

And telling my stories

*"These essays are the heart, the bones,
and the blood of Disability Rights."
—Gaelynn Lea, musician and activist*

Disability visibility

**FIRST-PERSON STORIES FROM
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

EDITED BY

Alice Wong

The Erasure of Indigenous People in Chronic Illness

Jen Decrinwater

“Are you an Indian?” I’ve answered this question a myriad of times in various healthcare settings. I’ve stared the question down, shooting arrows with my Indigenous eyes. I’d like to gather the collective rage of my ancestors to burn the question to the ground—much the way our crops and villages were burned by colonialists. Native people are often asked to define ourselves with these white supremacist, settler-created racial categories like “American Indian.” I am not an “American Indian.” I am a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. I am Tsalagi.

When filling out official forms, including medical forms, I’m often forced to swallow my rage and check “American Indian” or write in “Native American”—another term I detest—in the “Other” category. We’ve been turned into “Americans” to justify the theft of our lands and resources, and continuing to call us “Indian” reinforces the idea that we are loinclothed savages whom Columbus “discovered.”

Then there is the "Other" box. This flattening ignores that Indigenous people are not a race but rather hundreds of distinct nations with tribal sovereignty. And even when I mark one of these categories, I am still listed as "white" in my medical records. Erasing my Indigeneity ensures that I never receive the medical care I deserve.

the second time
by Rosanna Deerchild

i ask mama
about residential school
she says no

i ask her again
she says no

the third time

i stop listen
to her silence

ask about her diabetes
her hip achy back

her sore knees
did she get her hearing aid fixed

whether she thinks it will rain
tomorrow

mama talks about all this

says i'm not too good my girl
my sugar is too high

arthritis acting up that damn doctor
won't give me any more pain pills

this hearing aid is shit
and the rain

the rain hurts
my girl

i listen to her talk
back words slow

fill her cup
with tea

(Painting by Simone McLeod)

Underrepresented Groups

LGBTQ2S+

LGBTQ2S+ is used instead of LGBT or LGBTQ to include two-spirit Indigenous people and also other gender and sexual minorities, in addition to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.

Because there are so many different identities that involve gender and sexuality, it can be challenging to select a word or acronym that makes everyone feel included, though that is the intent. Some people and organizations use 2SLGBTQ+, LGBTQI2S, LBTTQQIAAP, and many other variants.

-Toronto Pflag



Quick Facts

Canada is home to approximately 1 million people who are LGBTQ2S+

An estimated 1 million people in Canada are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or of another sexual orientation than heterosexual - representing 4% of the Canadian population aged 15 years and older

Gender identity is a person's innate sense of their gender

"Hilarious and heartfelt." —DIABLO CODY

GIRLS

CAN

KISS

NOW

ESSAYS

JILL GUTOWITZ

CARA DELEVINGNE AND MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ VAPING

If there's one thing I've learned, it's that straight couples sit courtside at Lakers games; lesbian couples sit courtside at Knicks games. In 2014, model Cara Delevingne and *Fast & Furious* actress Michelle Rodriguez shut down TMZ with a photo set of the duo at Madison Square Garden kissing, drinking, yelling, and vaping. In their tenure as a lesbian couple, these women performed all kinds of romantic feats for the paparazzi: making out topless in the ocean in Cancun, entering and exiting airports, and, of course, sloppily making out at a basketball game. When I saw this photo set in 2014, I realized that queer female couples don't have to behave like their heterosexual predecessors who were photographed courtside did. Many people don't know this, but each time a lesbian or bisexual woman blows hoops or wisps of vape smoke into the air, a space is queered. What this couple and this paparazzi photo did for queer women who vape . . . cannot be understated. Marla Grayson in *I Care a Lot* has these two to thank for the freedom she enjoys to vape while being a lesbian.

PEOPLE

"A deeply generous and
honest gift to the world,"
— ELLIOT PAGE

Vivek Shraya

CHANGE

The more labels I've "embraced," the more apparent it is how little they benefit me, how

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much they serve the dominant culture. Whiteness, for instance, doesn't need to be named at all; it's ubiquitous and doesn't require "understanding"—it just is. When I'm speaking in some spaces, I might refer to myself as gay instead of queer because I know how provocative "queer" can sound, and in using it I run the risk of detracting from my message. Similarly, sometimes I'll say I'm bisexual instead of queer because I'm purposely trying to promote bi visibility. And sometimes I've called myself a trans woman because I know that this will be clearer than saying trans feminine person of colour or even just trans. All of these choices I make for the comprehension and comfort of others.

But which one am I? Gay? Queer? Bisexual? Trans woman? Trans femme? Non-binary? I am whichever one makes sense for the particular moment and social context I'm

situated in. I am all of these identities and
none of them.



TRANS LOVE

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TRANSGENDER
AND NON-BINARY VOICES

EDITED BY FREIYA BENSON

THE RENTS

Silver

I want to write about my parents,
but it's hard
because what I want to say isn't always kind
and it isn't always good.
I want to say to them
you know you messed up right?
I want to say to them
when you use my old name, my old pronouns
that it cuts me like a knife.
I want to shout at them
it is so easy
it's just a few words you need to change
you do it all the fucking time with everything else
you even correct people when they call your dog he
so why can't you do it with me?
I want to ask them why
why is my chosen name so hard for you to say?
why don't you give enough of a shit about me to use she?
why do you say you love me

and want to see me
and know how my life is
then push me away
with your sharp hard words?
That's what I want to say.
God fucking damn it.

So anyhow, I have therapy.

Because I know that if I say these things
they'll say
we didn't know
you never said
you played with cars
you liked the colour blue
you were our boy, and we can't let go of that right now.

POCKET CHANGE COLLECTIVE

BEYOND THE GENDER BINARY



ALOK VAID-MENON

men and women have valid experiences as men and women, but these cannot necessarily be generalized. For example, when we say that women give birth, we neglect that some women are not capable of giving birth while some trans men and nonbinary people are. The gender-neutral alternative "people who give birth" holds all of these realities just like the gender-neutral "siblings" includes brothers, sisters, and nonbinary siblings. Using gender-neutral language isn't about being politically correct, it's just about being correct.

Biology

The word *biological* actually has nothing to do with gender or even an original state of being. It just means pertaining to living matter. But some people use the word *biological* to position trans and gender non-conforming people as artificial and everyone else as natural. This is part of a larger system of using science as a rhetorical strategy for a normative goal. There is absolutely no biological basis for why boys should not paint their nails or be sensitive and

girls should not play football or be taken seriously for their ideas. This is not about science, it's about

power76



TRANS VOICES

Becoming Who You Are

Declan Henry

Foreword by Professor Stephen Whittle, OBE
Afterword by Jane Fae

Warren. 'Will I pass? Won't I pass? Will society accept me or not? These are never-ending questions. Being trans is part of my history. It is also part of my present. I am different to someone who was born male. Because for 20 years of my life I was socialised in a different way to cisgender men, therefore I have a different perspective of the world. In many ways, life is about closing the gap between being a man and being a trans man. I am fortunate to pass easily as a man, and have never hidden from people the fact that I was born a woman. Although I want people to first and foremost see me as a man; I want them to recognise the experiences I have as a trans man. However, setting out to mark this difference does not mean that I am ever inviting them to see me as a female, because I'm not. The end point here is that I am male but I was not born male and therefore I request that society recognises this difference. This means, for my part, that I must be upfront about my experiences.

Underrepresented Groups

People with Mental Health Issues

Mental health is the state of your psychological and emotional well-being. It is a necessary resource for living a healthy life and a main factor in overall health. It does not mean the same thing as mental illness. However, poor mental health can lead to mental and physical illness.

-Government of Canada



Quick Facts

In any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experiences a mental illness

The economic cost of mental illnesses to the Canadian healthcare and social support system was projected as \$79.9 billion for the year 2021

Yvette Dulo

**SHE
CHOSE
to LOVE**



WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

She asked at the dinner table

I replied, myself

Sometimes,
when I close
my eyes

and the past
starts dancing
over the screens
of the eyelids

*The shadow
puppets emerge:*

that conversation
with my boss
from nearly
three years ago,

five most awkward
encounters
with at the time
intense crushes

*This morning—
running into
the delivery person
on the stairs*

(How you should have
said it differently,
the shadows dancing,
feathers decorating
their shaven heads)

I'd rather delay
the world
with an hour

Let me watch some
YouTube Shorts,
let me listen
to some 2000s
throwback hits

Let me close
the curtains

*the outside laughter
do not resonate,
the outside laughter,
the outside*

A POETRY COLLECTION

Melancholy & Cinnamon

A JOURNEY THROUGH MENTAL HELL



GABRIELLE G.

TODAY

Today feels like the clouds are heavy,
The grey of the sky suffocates my soul,
And the tears of the rain are too hefty,
For me to climb out of my hole.

Today feels like the wind is pounding,
Gusts freezing my broken mind,
And the twirls are thundering and bursting,
The peace I try desperately to find.

Today feels like a November day,
The dampness having paralyzed my heart,
And left my brain in total decay,
So I give in and embrace my darkest part.

But tomorrow will feel like a sunny beach,
With hopes tanning all my sorrow,
And my smile will be a visible speech,
So my words can sing like a sparrow.

The owl and the chimpanzee

By Jo Camacho

The owl and the chimpanzee went to sea
In a beautiful boat called The Mind
The owl was sensible, clever and smart
The chimp was a little behind
The owl made decisions, based on fact
And knew where to steer its ship
The chimp reacted a little too fast
And often the boat would tip
The waves would come and crash aboard
The chimp would start to cry
Large tears would roll right down his face
Afraid that he would die
The chimp and the owl would wrestle at night
When the world was quiet and still
The chimp would jump up and rock the boat
And the boat would start to fill
Then the owl stepped in and grabbed a pail
And started to empty it out
And the chimp would start to get quite cross
And would often scream and shout
The battle continued night after night
Until the chimp started to see
That if it let the owl take control
A more peaceful night it would be

Resilience

By Alex Elle

look at you.
still standing
after being
knocked down
and thrown out.

look at you.
still growing
after being
picked and plucked
and prodded out of
your home.

look at you.
still dancing
and singing
after being
defeated and disassembled.

look at you, love.
still here and hopeful
after it all.

Poem (unnamed) from The Sun and Her Flowers

By Rupi Kaur

when the world comes crashing at your feet
it's okay to let others
help pick up the pieces
if we're present to take part in your happiness
when your circumstances are great
we are more than capable
of sharing your pain

Underrepresented Groups

Newcomers & Immigrants

Newcomer – a person who has recently left another country to settle here

Immigrant – a person who has settled permanently in another country

-Government of Canada



Quick Facts

Annual immigration in Canada amounts to around 500,000 newcomers

Immigrants could represent from 29.1% to 34.0% of the population of Canada by 2041

Almost one in five recent immigrants (18.6%) were born in India, making it the leading country of birth for recent immigration to Canada

Bent to the Earth

BY BLAS MANUEL DE LUNA

They had hit Ruben
with the high beams, had blinded
him so that the van
he was driving, full of Mexicans
going to pick tomatoes,
would have to stop. Ruben spun

the van into an irrigation ditch,
spun the five-year-old me awake
to immigration officers,
their batons already out,
already looking for the soft spots on the body,
to my mother being handcuffed
and dragged to a van, to my father
trying to show them our green cards.

They let us go. But Alvaro
was going back.
So was his brother Fernando.
So was their sister Sonia. Their mother
did not escape,
and so was going back. Their father
was somewhere in the field,
and was free. There were no great truths

revealed to me then. No wisdom
given to me by anyone. I was a child
who had seen what a piece of polished wood
could do to a face, who had seen his father
about to lose the one he loved, who had lost
some friends who would never return,
who, later that morning, bent
to the earth and went to work.

"Bent to the Earth" by Blas Manuel De Luna. From *Bent to the Earth*, © 2006
by Blas Manuel De Luna, published by Carnegie Mellon University Press.

Brief Dialogue Between the Self-declared East African Micronations of Regent Park Estate (Toronto) & Regent's Park Estate (London)

by Momtaza Mehri

There is always someone to stay with.
Someone who will give up their bed,
the plushness of their comfort.
Neighbours bring pouchfuls of spices
back from the motherland. Sit without invitation.
Someone offers the heat of their body.
Willingly loses long hours to gossip.

Gossip slides down bannisters.
Legs to head. Haphazardly thrown slippers.
We lie in pairs like skinned kippers.
Against my back, your elbow is a fence.
Non sibi sed toti. Separation is distal.
Misplacement volleys between us.
Video chat. Background chatter.
All hundred, peeled eyes. Our block's
windows blink like an advent calendar.
All-seeing Argus. Our bereft, blitzed tower.
Our cherished nook of experience.

Experience is straddled. Like our knees hugging
the cold frame of orange benches.
I crossed an ocean to meet you here,

in your other life, so faintly similar
to my own. A meniscus between decisions
we had no hand in. Choices determining
how far apart we sit today. Our likeness
is viscous, discreetly trapped in our saliva.
Over subway rattle, I can barely hear you conspire.

Conspire to survive their revitalisations.
Teenagers hotboxing in cars, trading
contraband dreams in different accents but
similar twangs, courtesy of Xamayca,
insolent island of outsized brilliance.
Past the school gates, the leisure centre,
the shelter for 'Aboriginal' men,
throughfares tingle with familiarity,
the same British names flinging
our lives into different orbits.

Orbit the hood's circumference.
Your blood knows its way around.
Around us finance capital belches
its nuclear shrooms. Scattered ash over our heads.
How formless our dreams have become,
are becoming. Like steam rising
from a nearby church. An airless prayer.

© Momtaza Mehri, from *Bad Disapora Poems* (Penguin, 2023)

5. *Japanese Apple*

She was given an apple on the plane,
round and fragrant with the scent
of her grandfather's fruit orchards
during autumn, when chestnuts
dropped from their trees and struck
the metal rooftop like the small heavy
tongues of bells, and black dragon-
flies like quick shiny needles darted
in and out of the spin and turn
of leaves fluttering down like soft
bright scraps of silk. She wrapped
the apple in a napkin to save
for later, and it was confiscated
at customs before she had the chance
for even a taste. Over the years it
seemed to grow larger, yellower, juicier
and more delicious, and even though
there were burnished rows of apples
stacked in gleaming pyramids
at the supermarket with quaint
names like Macintosh, Winesap,
and Granny Smith, and even though
there were sunlit apple orchards
at my American grandfather's ranch,
where rattlesnakes slumbered
in the heat and redolence of fruit
flesh, frightening the horses,
she sampled one after another,
but they never tasted as sweet
or as bright as the apple taken from her,
the one she had to leave behind.

Lee Ann Roripaugh, "Transplanting" from *Year of the Snake*. Copyright ©
2004 by Lee Ann Roripaugh. Reprinted by permission of Southern
Illinois University Press.

Source: *Year of the Snake* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2004)

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

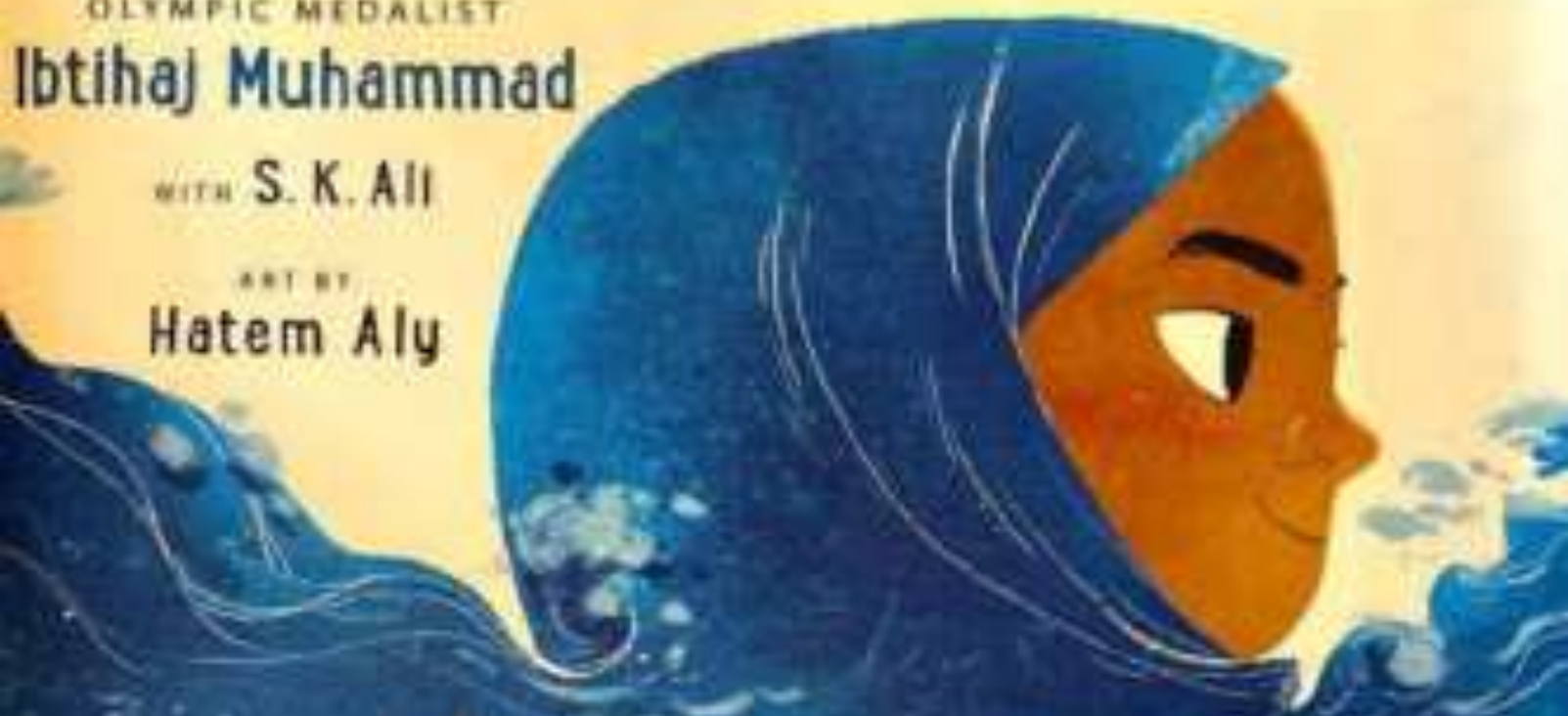
OLYMPIC MEDALIST

Ibtihaj Muhammad

WITH S. K. Ali

ART BY

Hatem Aly



THE
PROUDEST
BLUE

A Story of Hijab and Family

In class, I draw a picture.
Two princesses in hijab having a picnic
on an island
where the ocean meets the sky.



The girl who whispered in line says she likes it.
She says it so loud,
the teacher comes over to see it.

I wonder if Asiya drew a picture too.





Recess time is for five cartwheels in a row.
I land the last one
near the sixth graders.
Near Asiya and her friends.

Near a boy yelling, "I'm going to pull that tablecloth
off your head!"



Amiya's hijab isn't a tablecloth.
Asiya's hijab is blue.

Only blue.

Asiya turns away. Her friends turn away.

They race to the middle of the schoolyard, their shoes
pounding the pavement, playing tag.



Mama: Don't carry around the hurtful words that
others say. Drop them. They are not yours to keep.

They belong only to those who said them.

My tongue is divided into two BY QUIQUE AVILÉS

My tongue is divided into two
by virtue, coincidence or heaven
words jumping out of my mouth
stepping on each other
enjoying being a voice for the message
expecting conclusions

My tongue is divided into two
into heavy accent bits of confusion
into miracles and accidents
saying things that hurt the heart
drowning in a language that lives, jumps, translates

My tongue is divided by nature
by our crazy desire to triumph and conquer

This tongue is cut up into equal pieces
one wants to curse and sing out loud
the other one simply wants to ask for water

My tongue is divided into two
one side likes to party
the other one takes refuge in praying

tongue
english of the funny sounds

tongue
funny sounds in english
tongue
sounds funny in english
tongue
in-funny english sounds

My tongue sometimes acts like two
and it goes crazy
not knowing which side should be speaking
which side translating

My tongue is divided into two
a border patrol runs through the middle
frisking words
asking for proper identification
checking for pronunciation

My tongue is divided into two
My tongue is divided into two

I like my tongue
it says what feels right
I like my tongue
it says what feels right

Underrepresented Groups

People Living in Poverty

“Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time.

Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, and has been described in many ways. Most often, poverty is a situation people want to escape. So poverty is a call to action -- for the poor and the wealthy alike -- a call to change the world so that many more may have enough to eat, adequate shelter, access to education and health, protection from violence, and a voice in what happens in their communities.”

- World Bank Organization



Quick Facts

Households which are led by female lone parents, immigrant families, and Indigenous, Metis, and Inuit households experience a disproportionately higher risk of living in core housing need.

Recent estimates indicate over 14% of Canadians suffer from low income

THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE
GLASS
CASTLE



JEANNETTE
WALLS

"Walls has joined the company of writers such as Mary Karr and Frank McCourt who have been able to transcend their and themselves into literature." —*Booklist*

A MEMOIR

When I started with girls, the other kids made fun of Brian and me because we were so skinny. They called us spindly legs, skeletons gal, pipe cleaner, two-by-two, bony legs, stick woman, bean pole, and giraffe, and they said I could say bye to the rain by standing under a telephone wire.

At lunchtime, when other kids swapped their sandwiches or brought their hot meals, Brian and I would get out books and read. Brian told everyone he had to keep his weight down because he wanted to join the wrestling team when he got to high school. I told people that I had forgotten to bring my lunch. No one believed me, so I started helping in the bathroom during lunch time. I'd stay in one of the stalls with the door locked and sit flat on my back so that no one would suspect my illness.

When other girls came in and threw away their lunch bags in the garbage pail, I'd go retrieve them. I couldn't get over the way kids tossed out all this perfectly good food: apples, hard-boiled eggs, packages of potato-masher crackers, sliced peaches, half-pint cartons of milk, cheese sandwiches with just one bite taken out because the kid didn't like the preservatives in the cheese. I'd come to the milk and pick up all my tasty finds.

There was, at times, more food in the remainder than I could eat. The first time I found extra food—chili dogs and cheese sandwiches—I stuffed it into my pants to take home for Brian. Back in the classroom, I started worrying about how I'd explain to Brian when it came home. I was pretty sure he was rooting through the trash, but we never talked about it.

As I sat there trying to come up with ways to justify it to Brian, I began eating the chili dogs. It spread to all the whole school. I became terrified that the other kids would find it, too, and that they'd turn and see me, unshowered, pale, and since they all knew I never ate lunch, they'd figure out that I had grabbed it from the trash. As soon as class was over, I ran to the bathroom and threw the sandwich back in the garbage can.

Missus always had plenty to eat, since she had made lunch for eight out the night she died and would show up at their houses around dinner time. I had no idea what Missus and I were doing to feed the three other boys, actually, was getting harder. One evening when Dad was away and we had nothing to eat and we were all sitting around the living room try-

ing out to look at her. Miss kept whispering under the blanket on the table top. At one point Miss looked over.

"Are you showing something?" he asked.

"My tooth, yes!" Miss said, but she was getting all stuffy-eyed, glancing around the room and smiling at no one. "It's my bad game, I'm making my jaw to increase the size of my teeth."

Miss pulled the covers back, lying on the mattress next to Miss was one of those huge family-sized Hatcher charcoal bags. The other silver zipper zipper pulled back and was open. Miss already came half of it.

Miss started crying. "I can't help it," she sobbed. "I'm a sugar addict, just like your father was alcoholic."

The cold glass should be good for the cause was no longer. Eugene had let her drink, he was not at all a thing. Miss watched up the chair. She had and decided it was time to go. While Miss watched, he walked there down.

Poverty At Sixty

Mike Essig

Poverty is the fence around your life. Poverty wakes you up at 4 AM only to whisper meaningless slogans in your ear. It is the school of Piranha nibbling at the back of your brain. It is two hours waiting in the anteroom of despair for \$22 worth of food stamps and being glad to be there. It is changing your phone number frequently because bill collectors are such boring conversationalists. It is the empty space your heels used to fill. It is letting your hair grow long and scraggly and your grizzled beard sprout because you know that although you sleep in rented rooms tonight, the street is not far off, and you want to fit in when you arrive. Poverty scalds the lint from your pockets. It is your private Treblinka within which you rage but are crushed. It is desperate prayers against dental catastrophes, blown tires, surprises of any sort. Poverty is when everything you own is frayed including your nerves from sleepless moments spent trying to solve the equation that will make X number of dollars cover X + ? number of bills, knowing that such math would defeat Newton or Einstein. Poverty is eyeing the cat's kibble imagining that with a bit of sugar and a splash of milk it might be fine and then eyeballing the cat himself thinking of protein of last resort and trying not to measure him against the microwave door. You ration your cigarettes; whiskey is a fading memory. Passing a diner on the street, you catch a whiff of burgers too expensive to consider and experience a Pavlovian moment. Poverty is trying to keep your head up and then remembering you pawned your neck. Poverty is watching the needle eat your last few gallons of gas. Poverty is the archeology of despair. It portends the death of irony. There is nothing ironic about a car with 217,000 miles and no insurance on it. Facts are facts in the world of poverty. Poverty is the last quarter reclaimed from beneath the cushions. It is too much time and not enough quarters. It is the specious logic of the self-righteous proclaiming that you deserve to be poor because you are, which in Amerika passes for wisdom. Poverty makes each day like the next because nothing does not vary. It is who you are and where you are going, although you won't get far. It is the life you lead inside the fence. It is the sum of what you lack. It just is.

The Struggle to Survive

By Gabriel Cruz

In the corners of the world, the shadows lurk,
Where the struggle to survive, is the daily work,
Where poverty reigns, and hope is in vain,
And the lack of basic needs, is a constant pain.

For the children who dream, of a world of play,
Where laughter and joy, can brighten up their day,
The lack of food and water, is a harsh reality,
A struggle to survive, in a world of brutality.

For the families who seek, a place to call home,
Where love and safety, can help them to roam,
The lack of shelter, is a daunting fear,
A struggle to survive, in a world that's unclear.

For the sick and the injured, who need a cure,
Where healthcare is scarce, and the cost is obscure,
The lack of medical care, is a desperate plea,
A struggle to survive, in a world of unease.

For the world that watches, from a distance far,
Where compassion is needed, but hope is ajar,
The lack of action, is a failure to see,
The struggle to survive, of humanity.

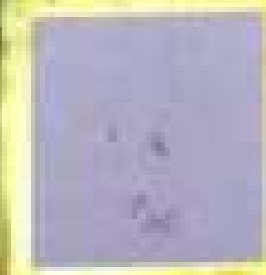
But hope still remains, in the hearts of the brave,
Who fight for the rights, of the oppressed and the slave,
Who work to provide, basic needs to all,
To help them to thrive, and to answer the call.

For the world can be better, if we all lend a hand,
To the ones in need, who struggle to stand,
To break the cycle, of poverty and pain,
To help them to survive, and to thrive again.

For the lack of basic needs, is a challenge we face,
But with unity and love, we can create a better place,
A world where everyone, can live in peace and harmony,
And the struggle to survive, can be a thing of history.

POOR-BASHING

The Politics of Exclusion



Jean Swanson

Raised to poor-bash

↓ I interviewed **Mary Smith** (not her real name) in a hotel in Ottawa in 1997. As a representative of **low-income people from Saskatchewan** she, like me, was attending a **NAPO board meeting**. She told me she was **raised to poor-bash**: "I think poor-bashing first affected me when I was about five years old and I could hear my dad sitting at the kitchen table talking to his neighbours, saying, 'We should just go on welfare like the rest of those sons 'a bitches, quit working so hard,' and so on. I think he was a person with an attitude about the poor, that they are all lazy, useless, and good-for-nothing people. To be on welfare would be the ultimate form of degradation to him."

Smith's father's "attitude" rubbed off on her, she admitted. "I've been guilty myself of snubbing [people on welfare]. In Estevan when I was a nice little middle-class mother, we had a problem relating to a single parent who was on welfare," Smith related. "We used to wonder what they did with their time, going to bars and what not," she said.

"Then I became a single parent and a poor person, someone who had to go on welfare. I think the hardest thing in my life was walking through that welfare door being full of shame and degradation and personal failure and looking at suicide because I couldn't support my kids in a way that they deserved to be supported and seriously feeling that to take my own life would be the best possible solution." A good friend stopped Smith from suicide and helped her realize that she wasn't to blame for not having a paid job.

Many of the people I talked to observed that it is often those who are most at risk of needing welfare in the future who carry around a lot of society's hatred for people who already receive it. But they may face a crisis—their job ends, their spouse leaves, their health deteriorates—and when they have to resort to welfare their feelings about people on welfare are transferred to themselves with devastating personal consequences, like Smith's suicide attempt.

For Smith, the poor-bashing continues, even in her own family. "In my siblings I think there's poor-bashing by ignoring the fact that we don't have as much as they do. They don't want to know, and they can be very critical. For example, last time I went to a NAPO board meeting, my sister heard how much my babysitter was paid. [NAPO pays low-income board members child-care expenses so they can attend meetings.] So she said, 'Oh, welfare must pay pretty good.' She doesn't even know the difference between welfare and NAPO.

"I still find it hard to get away from the shame of my own poverty," Smith said. "This past month I signed up for a new careers training program and the teacher is a poor-basher. She told me how she feels that the food banks are grossly misused. She doesn't want her taxes going to people who smoke and drink booze and I'm sitting there smoking with her, but I'm not one of them?"



SCARS

&

STARS

JESSE

THISTLE

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF FROM THE ASHES

PLEASE REMEMBER MY NAME

The hardest part about being homeless was
not hearing my own name for months at a time.
The silence of identity.

I never told anyone my name,
for fear of reprisal, for being a "rat."
I drifted for years
between lives and cities and civilizations and shelters,
always afraid to tell people my name.

Looking back, that was what hurt most—
not hearing my name.
Sometimes I'd wander alone,
and whisper *Jesus* just to hear it,
a reminder that I was still me,
and still human,
and that I, too, had a name.