

# Palaver

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Spring 2022





/p 'læv r/

n.

A talk, a discussion, a dialogue; (spec. in early use) a conference between African tribes-people and traders or travellers.

v.

To praise over-highly, flatter; to cajole.

To persuade (a person) to do something; to talk (a person) out of or into something; to win (a person) over with palaver.

To hold a colloquy or conference; to parley or converse with.

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Graduate Liberal Studies Program  
University of North Carolina Wilmington  
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## Masthead | Spring 2022

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Front cover: Feelings by Alexis Choi  
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# Note From the Editor |

Julie-Ann Scott-Pollock, Editor-in-Chief

Dear Reader,

It has been an honor to serve as the editor in chief for the 2022 edition of Palaver. I am eternally grateful to the managing editors Deepal Patel and Michelle Marks-Osbourne for their commitment to curating a diverse selection of artists, writers, and creative researchers to include in this year's issue. We are indebted to Makenna Judy who joined us this year as our layout editor. Her expertise enabled us to create a publication to showcase the work of these talented contributors who range from high school students to seasoned professionals and offer their insights from a range of backgrounds and cultural locations. Each offers a unique and thoughtful lens through which to understand humanity and culture. We invite readers to engage with the range of perspectives and modes of expression they share.

I would like to take this moment to make an important announcement regarding the future of Palaver. Palaver is a creative project of the Graduate Program in Liberal Studies (GLS) at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Next year, the GLS program is entering a period of deep reflection and redesign as we decide how to best meet the needs and goals of future students interested in an interdisciplinary online asynchronous graduate degree program. For the 2022-2023 academic year, we will be pausing admission so we give our full attention to this rigorous process. Palaver will be part of the GLS program's redesign and is also paused for a year during this timeframe. We are slated to begin accepting submissions again in 2023 for a 2024 issue. In the meantime, please follow our process at UNCW Liberal Studies on Facebook and @Palaver\_Journal on Twitter.

We look forward to the opportunity to return with a revitalized program and publication that effectively speaks to the current cultural moment. Until then, please enjoy this issue and do not hesitate to share your responses with me. I would also welcome your feedback and what you would like us to consider as we redesign Palaver and the Graduate Liberal Studies Program at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

Sincerely,

Julie-Ann Scott-Pollock, PhD  
Professor of Communication and Performance Studies at the University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Graduate Coordinator of Liberal Studies

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Tsoukalos Stupam  
CJ Hungerman

## In Defense of Oceanic Poetics | Kym Cunningham

### In Defense of Oceanic Poetics: Caesura and the Possibility of Alternate Spatialities

When we think of literature, we do not often consider the material reality in hand. That is, a book of poetry is comprised not only of carefully selected and arranged diction but also of the binding, the pages, the spatiality of the work itself. Possibly more so than writers of other genres, poets must contend with the physical arrangement of the words on the page. But it is not only the presence of the words themselves that constitutes poetry; it is also their absence—that-is-not-entirely-absence in the presence of white space on the page. That is, we might think of the apparent absence of words not *as* absence but as a kind of presence: the presence of white space. As Indigenous poet Orlando White acknowledges, this white space “is just as important as the text in a poem, whether it’s the *counter* that shapes an *O* or *S*, a *line break* after a word or a *caesura* within a line. With space, one can shape sounds and language to create a poetic field” (White). The spatiality of verse’s poetic field—possibly in ways that distinguish it from prose—requires the poet and later the reader to reckon with the physical materiality of language itself.

But we know this: we know that space matters in poetry; we learned form in relation to content. And even though we might have understood this adage in regard to metered sonnets and classical poets, we might realize that such reciprocal equations still hold when we conceptualize the ways in which modern poets—especially poets of color—interrogate the ramifications of space within the American cultural consciousness. That is, many modern poets engage in a kind of linguistic deconstruction—or “the goal of decentering the language” (*She Tried Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* 88)—by relying heavily upon spatialization. Here, we might think, specifically, of the fluidity in words-as-space evident within the archival reconstruction of M. NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!* (2008). The poem, the collection, the work of *Zong!* seems to take up an inordinate amount of space on the page. Or rather, *Zong!* uses white space—and specifically caesura—in ways that we are perhaps unaccustomed to, as economy of language translates not to limitation but rather excess in terms of the physical amount of space accorded to the collection’s words. What we are talking about then, is not containment but sprawl, poetry that refuses to be confined by either linguistic or formal conventions. But the question becomes why this is important or perhaps even necessary to the further development—or perhaps unraveling—of poetry. That is, why might poetry—especially in works that deal with archival reconstruction à la *Zong!*—

require critical engagement with material reality vis-à-vis space? And to begin to unpack this question, we might first turn to an understanding of the social ramifications of space itself.

We cannot extricate space from culture. That is, our understanding of space is always already filtered through the lens of our social unconscious. As a concept, “space is simultaneously perceived, conceived, and lived” (Ahmed xvi). Indeed, we might conceive of space in the same way that we conceive of gender: as a construct—the perception, conception, and lived experience of space reflexively reiterate its construction. Space remakes itself in every interaction, perhaps in gender-esque mimesis (see Butler 186). And indeed, space cannot be extricated from systemic power structures that dictate how we interpret space: “the racialized, gendered, sexed, classed, and imaginative body-self necessarily interprets space and place—in its limitations and its possibilities” (McKittrick 2). That is, we not only *cannot* extricate space from itself, we also cannot extricate space from the racialized, gendered, sexed, et al. power structures through which we envision the world. Simply put: there is no such thing as innocent space, even on the theoretically blank field of the page.

And this anti- (or perhaps ante-)innocent space is perhaps most concretely policed and understood through structural intersections, those “force[s] behind [...] highly organized patterns of movement and spatial organization. Behind every hegemonic order, there is a system responsible for its creation and reproduction; nothing in our produced environment is natural. In our case, that hegemonic order is capitalism” (Ahmed xi-xii). And it is important, perhaps, to clarify that the overarching power structure that we call capitalism does not simply refer to Marxist social class stratification; rather, we might consider capitalism and, specifically, its effects on space as always involving the biopolitical intersections of race, gender, sexuality, ability, et al. Because when we think about space, we are usually referring to bodies, even, for example, in literature—or what we might call the body of a text. And in our society, bodies—and the spaces they inhabit—are never really free from these power structures. And so it is perhaps not enough to question “how the capitalist distribution of space affects our everyday lived experience” (Ahmed xii). Rather, when we speak of the biopolitical production and distribution of space within the body of a text, we must also interrogate the ways in which the text reifies—or possibly resists, or maybe both and/or neither—such spatiality. That is, how does the text work towards producing and/or resisting hegemonic spatialities? What effect does such labor produce within the relationship between author, speaker, and reader?

Because it is important to note that even though the space of the text exists within—and to some extent reifies—these hegemonic structures, space itself can be manipulated: “It is also contestable—the subject interprets, and ruptures, the knowability of our surroundings” (McKittrick 6). And it is this idea of rupture that is perhaps most applicable to the spatiality of *Zong!*, both in terms of theoretical engage-

ment as well as the physical materiality of the text. That is, *Zong!* works, in part, as a kind of archival re/construction—or perhaps excavation—of *Gregson v. Gilbert*, the legal case which equated black bodies with property through the speculative fiction of insurance. And this background is crucial for how we approach the spatiality of the text, especially in the first section, “Os.” “Os”—an anatomical bone that reads sonically close to the collective ‘us’—features the forgotten (yet re-imagined) names of the 150 Africans thrown overboard and drowned at the captain’s behest; these names sink to the bottom of the section’s pages as footnotes in a different kind of memento mori. After all, they do not serve as a reminder that all will die but rather remind the reader of a kind of ante/narrative that underwrites the anti/narrative, and in this case, the law: black death. These names, smaller than the rest of the text and read as subscript, become the chant of the ocean labor; the text’s waves bring forth the forgotten names and push them back out to sea. They exist “only in the space where [the narrative’s] not told—literally in the margins of the text, a sort of negative space, a space not so much of non-meaning as anti-meaning” (*Zong!* 201). And it is this antithesis of meaning that renders the reader’s eyes forever torn between this subscript at the bottom of the page and the words floating above, leaving the reader with the question of what threatens to surface and where that surface lies.

And these questions of surface—what we might think of as an oceanic rendering of the presumed binary between interior and exterior space—then become further complicated when we consider *Zong!* as both re/constructed archive as well as re/sistance/sponse to the extant archive of *Gregson v. Gilbert*. That is, we might conceive of the archive itself as “palimpsest, a document that has been inscribed several times, where the remains of earlier, imperfectly erased scripting is still detectable” (Gordon 146). In this way, we might think of archival space as exceeding modern conceptualizations of linear time; as palimpsest, the archive resists narrative trajectory—it resists completion. The presence of the palimpsestic archive always already indicates a kind of absence: it is work that can never be finished; it exists only in the space of unrest. And so the dead do not rest at the bottom of the page but always threaten to surface. It remains up to readers as to whether they will acknowledge this potential dynamism so deftly equated in eponymous subscript. That is, the reader faces a series of choices: will the reader begin to read these names first, before the rest of the page’s text? Will the reader not read these names at all? Will the reader read these names all at once, and then re-read these pages’ text only after reading the names? Will the reader return to the names as afterthought, wherein what/who is forgotten becomes literal subtext? But in identifying such choices, we realize that they all compose a singular question: how do we read what is subsumed? As palimpsest, the archive still bears traces of an ‘original’ form as the text becomes haunted with what we know is there but also potentially cannot imagine—something that seems to remain just out of reach. There is something im/possible about this

spatial orientation, a kind of textual openness that allows for multiplicitous readings while simultaneously precluding both coherence and complete legibility.

And it is this space of im/possibility wherein the archive becomes not only palimpsest but en/gravating (Gordon 177), something carved into and over itself that partially erases what came before and perhaps limits that which might come after. In order to understand the archive as en/gravating, we must also consider the physical act of re/constructing the archive. That is, en/gravating requires physical excavation on the part of the author, wherein writing becomes an act of “literary archeology: [...] you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply” (Morrison 92). And yet, it is crucial to understand this archeology not only in terms of the remains—that is, the presence of found material—but also in terms of the possible, or the imagination of what ‘these remains imply.’ The necessity of implication—or what also might be thought of as imagination—then indicates a kind of archival incompleteness. That is, in archeology—literary or not—there is always something missing; we only ever have fragments to re/construct. In *Zong!*, this archival absence is most keenly felt in those names inscribed at the bottom of the page, names wholly absent in *Gregson v. Gilbert*. And so in part, Philip en/graves these names at the bottom of the pages to remind the reader of the absence inherent within the archive, which reflexively reaffirms, reiterates, and re/constructs the absence of this en/gravating itself. Through this en/gravating, the absence then becomes as important as its presence. That is, the text becomes a kind of absented presence as its physical presence requires an absence in the material itself, an absence that is remade with each reading. The openness of the text limits our ability as readers: we cannot extract the archive from the grave of itself. Rather, the archive makes its own grave, wherein “the grave itself is never enough” (Loichot 21). Archival work then becomes the act of en/gravating both on the part of the author and of her readers, whereby the inscription and recitation of words—onto stone, bone, or the page—always already necessitates an absence, as the mark identifies what remains unmarked. Indeed, the tension between un- and -marked links the reader to the author through the im/possibility of textual completion.

And this oscillation between un- and -marked perhaps identifies a goal of archival re/construction itself. That is, archival re/construction—especially within works, like *Zong!*, that interrogate the “the afterlife of slavery” (Hartman 45)—must contend with the rupture of loss, including “what has been lost in the unified contemporary space under [racial] capitalism” (Ahmed xiii-xiv). Such work seeks to articulate the ways in which loss becomes not only an absence but a presence as well. *Zong!*, for example, seems to labor in bringing the idea of absence into the realm of signifier and signified, as in: how do/can we signify loss?

And here, even in such attempt to mark an absence, we must be careful of the mark itself, as

“the mark is race, the mark is gender, the mark is class, the mark is [...] The mark is a system. Property and law follow the mark” (Farley 223). And so even in an attempt to re/construct the archive against hegemonic power structures, we must ultimately accept that our understanding of signification—of language—is hierarchical. And so perhaps what we are looking for—and what *Zong!* might also offer—is the use of caesura as a kind of reversal of the mark. That is, *Zong!*’s usage of caesura as an ant[i/e] mark—in the same way that the forgotten names manifest as anti-meaning—might offer poetics which resist enclosure by racial capitalism through the act of en/gravating.

And if we consider caesura as en/gravating’s mechanization, we begin to see the way in which the reader becomes pulled into the textual labor. In sections such as “Ratio” and “Ferrum,” the physical white space between the text on a single line offers the possibility of reading the words both horizontally across the page as well as in localized clusters. In “Ferrum” particularly, Philip’s dismemberment of words into morphemes—or even singular letters—threatens constant il/legibility, oscillating between what can and what cannot be understood. In this way, “Philip’s poem is an interactive cemetery that needs the readers to infuse life and meaning across its infinite combinations of fragments” (Loichot 22). The en/gravating, then, becomes not only Philip’s work but the constant and continued work of her readership as well. And here, we might return to a discussion of archeology, in that what is absent from the remains involves not only what cannot be found but also what has not been passed down—what we mean when we talk about generational loss. And this distinction—between what cannot be found versus what has not been passed down—is important because excavation often involves a distance between archeologist and subject matter: when dealing with the archive, with the found objects of the past, we assume separation between ourselves and the remains. But Philip’s archival re/construction does not allow this divide, as the reader becomes the very breath of the text *through* caesura. Even in the writer’s capacity (or perhaps duty) to make meaning, Philip refuses, or at the very least plays with, literature’s sedimented boundary between reader and author, “invit[ing] reader/viewer identification with a speaker whose positionality is progressively destabilized and diffused” (Shockley 507). That is, Philip shows the boundaries between reader, author, and speaker for what they are: lines in the sand where the earth shifts and moves beneath the text. Philip seems to suggest that we can no more easily section off the earth—as dynamic as the ocean—than we can distinguish between reader/speaker/author. These categories, after all, are constructed and therefore malleable.

Similarly, if we think of caesura in terms of silence or breath, this dynamism in how the text might be read allows the reader “to experience the silence personally” (White). While this personal experience might seem insignificant in terms of, say, the experiences of the enslaved or even of the archive itself, such personal space *is* significant when we consider racial capitalism’s impulse towards

“obliterating spaces of secrecy and intimacy” (Ahmed xiii). That is, this unsure, dynamic placement of the reader offers a space in which the individual might escape social enclosure or policing, creating the possibility of secrecy and intimacy. There is fugitivity in this possibility, a fugitivity created in the absented presence of the archival caesura.

And we see this intimacy—or its possibility—reiterated in the intimacy between words via space. That is, when words ‘touch’ each other, our brains tend to connect them; we begin to see them as linked due to their proximity to one another. So possibly, instead of thinking of language as “based on opposition” (Saussure 70), we might also consider the ways in which, at least syntactically, language becomes a matter of geographic or spatial intimacy. And in this linguistic intimacy, the caesura might act as the site in which the reader’s mind interacts with the author, or at least, the reader’s interpretation of the author’s self-depiction. And even though such interaction might seem like a game of mirrored selves wherein the reader cannot achieve coherence with the author, we might think of even this attempt at intimacy *as* radical. That is, when we consider racial capitalism’s individuating impulses to categorize and thereby separate (see Melamed 78), even the attempt at intimacy becomes an act of rebellion. And so instead of racial capitalist enclosure, wherein “the body becomes an object of inspection [and] subjectivity is sieged within increasingly narrow boundaries of a disappearing inner space” (Ahmed xii), caesurae might allow for a fluidity between—or perhaps within—inner and outer space that allows for movement away from, outside of, or in resistance to the confines of hegemonic power structures.

And in terms of redefining how we view space, caesurae not only have the power to re/define intimacy but also to acknowledge what is sacred: namely, everything. That is, the caesura’s very dynamic capacity—between and amongst both words and individuals—creates a spatiality based on and in the unmarked. And in terms of spatiality, “*unmarking* not only desecrates soil and water but also makes all ground possibly sacral. Thus the Western duality between profane and sacred places, objects and acts, fails” (Loichot 13). Part of the integral importance of caesura, then, rests on its refutation of binaries; these binaries, after all, not only uphold hegemonic power structures but also constitute a lie: the norm that can never be attained, the word that can never encompass but must always also contain something other than itself. In the way that presence necessitates a kind of absence, the spatial poetics of caesura demands a fluidity that ensures everything is at once both sacred and profane.

What we are thinking of, then, is an oceanic poetics, one that resists enclosure specifically through its usage of space. This dynamic poetics shifts constantly between author and reader in furtive movements which cannot be pinned down. And so what oceanic poetics might offer us, then, is a possible mode of resistance to these hegemonic structures that so deftly cordon off who we are and where

we are supposed to be. And in this way, we see how “poetry has the capacity to deterritorialize language, making uncommon, queer senses available to thought. Poetry is a way of entering the unknown and carrying back the impossible; it is productive of ideas or knowledges that were incomprehensible and unacceptable before their distillation as such via poetry” (Keeling xii). This productive capacity of the caesura offers possibility in the face of apparent loss—the dispossession at the root of racial capitalism. What is important, then, is not possession as resistance to dispossession but the openness accessible through caesura in terms of spatiality. It is not enough, after all, for resistance to offer us hegemony’s opposite. Such contradiction only serves to reaffirm the presence of the very binary that we are attempting to overthrow or, at the very least, escape. Rather, we must look towards the ways in which caesura presents one and many spatial possibility/ies precluded by racial capitalism. We remember that chains lose importance when we learn to breathe under water.



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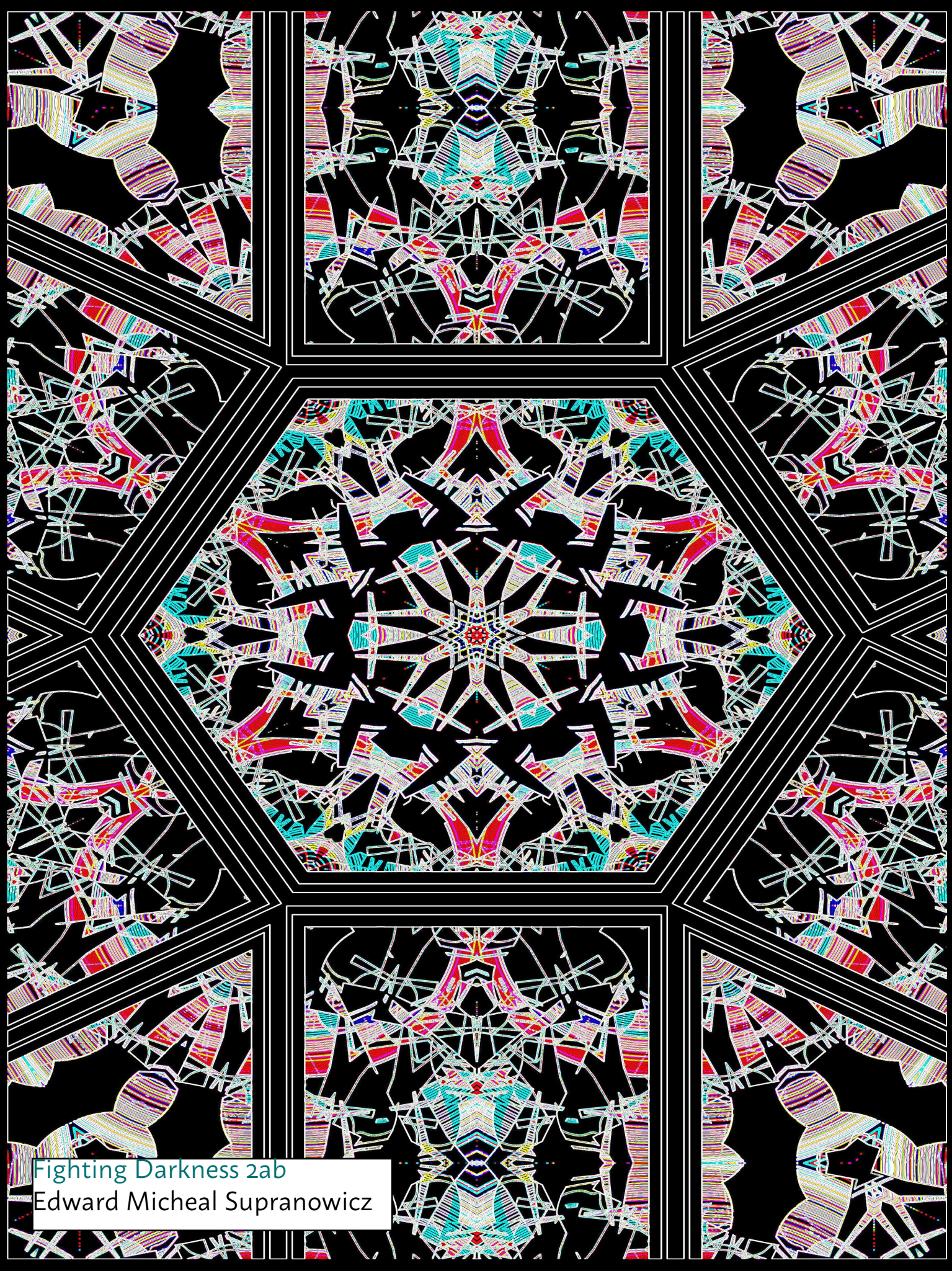


Abstract Portrait 8/22/2021  
Hanna Wright

HW  
2021

School Lunch 20  
Lisa DeLoria Weinblatt





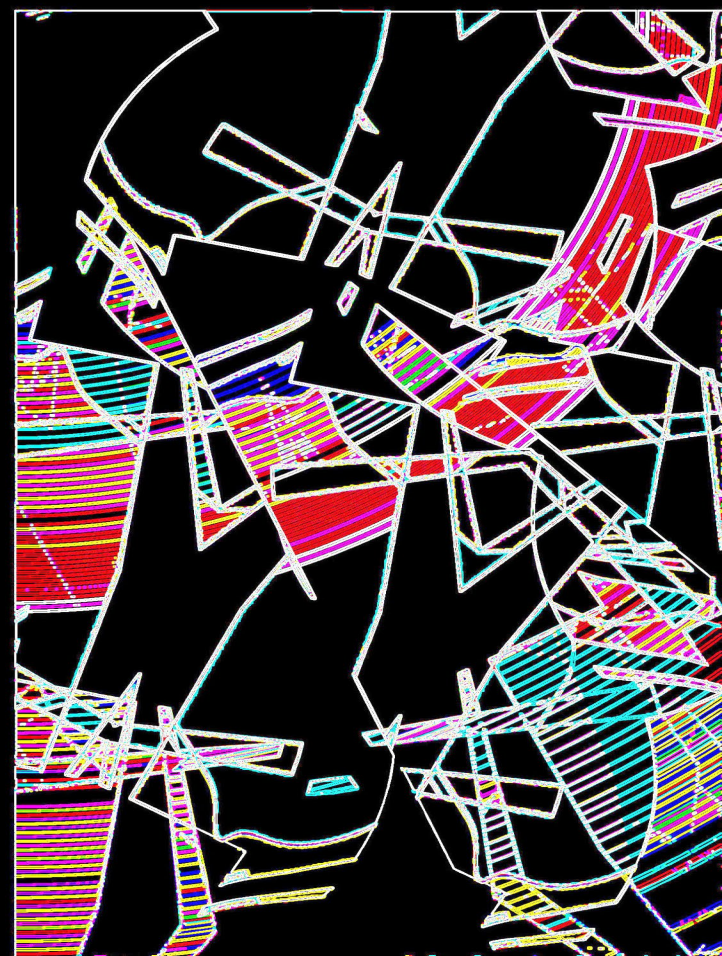
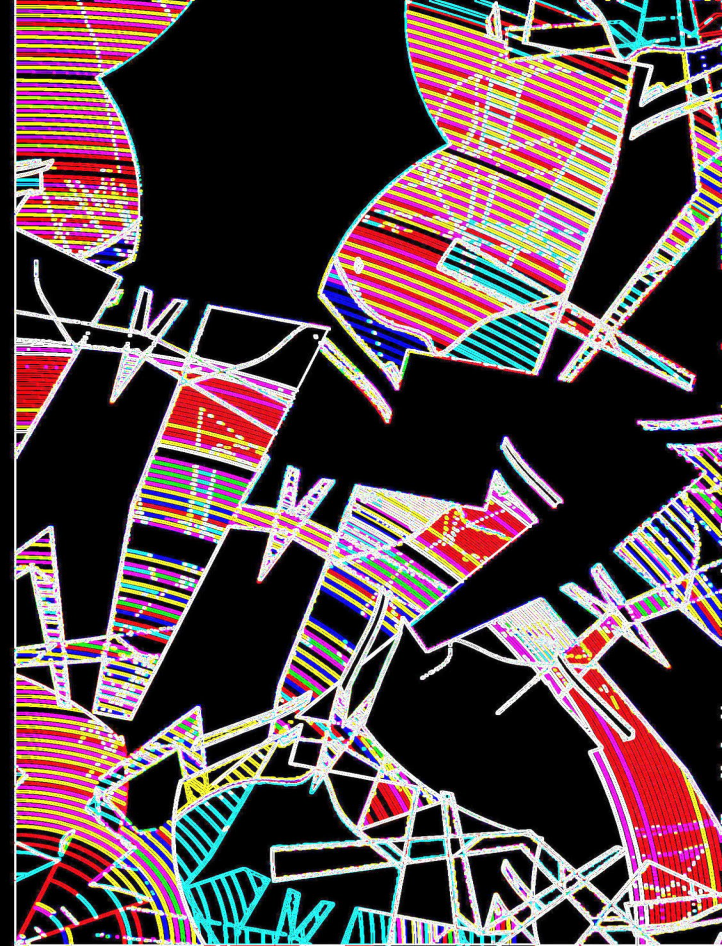
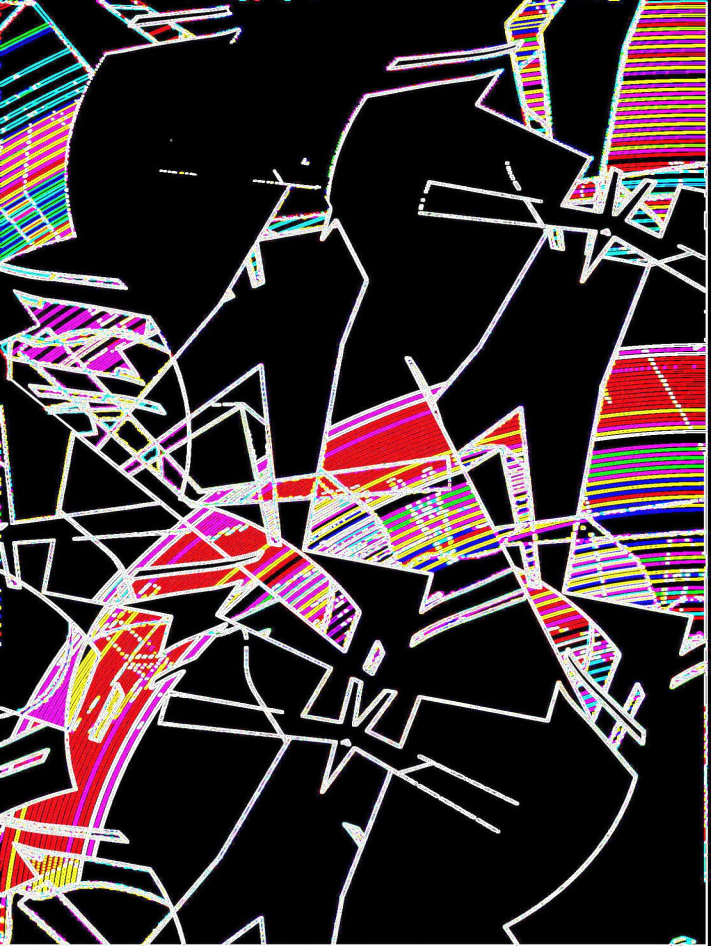
## Ladies Night Out | Edward Micheal Supranowicz

Friday evening in Athens, and groups of young women are starting to make their way to the uptown watering holes. They walk in close formation, hoofing up and down and across streets in hi-heels, lipstick and perfume.

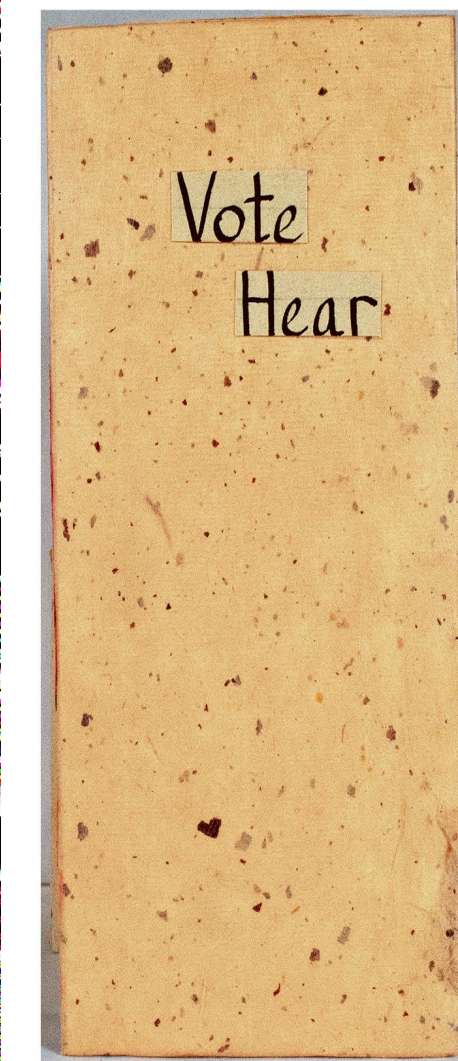
Then, four blocks away from downtown, I see a group of four figures cross the street. Moving towards them and a streetlight, I see it is four does, all fairly young. They surround a small tree and nibble on its leaves. As I get close enough for them to sense me, they turn towards me with mild curiosity, but quickly return to nibbling on the leaves.

And as I walk along, Lady Midnight and her dark sisters surround everything.

Fighting Darkness 2ab  
Edward Micheal Supranowicz



Fighting Darkness 2h  
Edward Micheal Supranowicz



Vote Hear  
Open View, top  
Closed View above left  
Open View Detail, above right

Vote Hear  
Diane Podolsky



Abstract Portrait 8/15/2021  
Hanna Wright

## In Search of My Souls Home | Michelle Marks-Osborne

*“Har-lem born! Har-lem bred! When I die, I’ll be Har-lem dead!” ~Anonymous*

This was a common refrain of my childhood as we played games such as hopscotch during steamy New York summers in Harlem. There was a deep richness to the Harlem that I was born in, grew up in. Harlem was the community that had been a consistent backdrop for my family for four generations. I was so proud to be a Harlemite. To be honest, as a native of Harlem, I will always be a Harlemite and am proud of it. I loved *that* Harlem. The truth of the matter is that I still do and always will, but I also know the Harlem that I love is all but gone, sacrificed on the altar of gentrification. I never thought that I would leave Harlem.

My beloved Harlem... the undisputed capital of Black America.

My beloved Harlem... The cultural mecca of the Harlem Renaissance that begat writers, artists, musicians, and more.

My beloved Harlem... Home to the Apollo (“Where dreams are born, and legends are made!”) Theatre.

My beloved Harlem... Where Zora, Claude, Countee, and Langston were among those who dazzled us with words that inspired those who read them and have continued to speak for generations.

My beloved Harlem... With streets that were tread by Malcolm and Martin, and where Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. preached empowerment and liberation.

My beloved Harlem... Harlem, the place where Black Intelligentsia thrived and where Black southerners came seeking to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

My beloved Harlem.

The immortal words of Langston Hughes' 1951 poem, "Harlem" seem to have framed generations of my family's journey:  
What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

For my family, the hopes that they had that drove their decisions to migrate to New York, whether deferred or dashed, drove me to leave the only home I knew in disappointment, and discover the home that my soul longed to find.

*"I am a northerner with southern sensibilities."*

My familial roots in these United States of America run deep. Like deep, deep. As in pre-American Revolution deep. Four generations in Harlem, and at least six generations in the South. Yet, in many ways the United States does not, and may never truly feel like home. The United States is not where my lineage truly begins. All of my great-grandparents were born in the South, specifically North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, except for my maternal grandmother's mother. She was born in Maryland, which despite not seceding from the Union, did not abolish slavery until 1864. Three of my four grandparents were also born in the South, with two from North Carolina and one from South Carolina. My maternal grandmother was born in New York City – in Harlem. My mother was born in New York City too. And so was I.

The imprint of my family's experiences in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, and even West Virginia were carried by them, as they found themselves among the approximately seven million Black folks who left the South for the promises of the North. Even as they crossed state and regional borders to their version of their "new world" there were traditions that remained. Despite assimilating through learning to speak without their southern accents, joining clubs and organizations for the "upwardly mobile" and more, our southern roots shone brightly through family traditions, colloquialisms, and food.

Two of my maternal great-grandparents, William from Norfolk, VA and Louise from Cumberland, MD migrated to New York, in search of untold opportunities and fulfilled dreams. Harlem became my great-grandparents' home in the 1920s, during the "Great Migration". They met, married, and raised my grandmother, Jacqueline, in Harlem. In Black Harlem, the wealthy and the worker mingled together. Among my great-grandparents' neighbors were Count Basie, Paul Roberson, Joe Louis, and Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark. My great-grandparents lived in Harlem for the duration of their lives, Louise passed away in 1952, William in 1980.

My maternal grandfather migrated as an adolescent to New York City in the late 1930s. By the early 1940s, his mother and his immediate elder sister and brother joined him from South Carolina, leaving the only life they had known behind. More than a decade earlier, in the later 1920s, my grandfather's father and eldest sister had migrated to New York. My great-grandfather died tragically of pneumonia in May 1930. Interestingly, my family was not counted in their city's recording of the 1930 US Census because they were in New York City retrieving the body of my great-grandfather and transporting his remains back to South Carolina for burial in his homeland.

In Harlem, as he aged, my maternal grandfather settled once again. In the Summer of 2000, he received the medals that had been denied him 55 years prior, at the end of World War II at Harlem's 369<sup>th</sup> Regiment Armory. This historic armory was the home of the World War I's legendary "Harlem Hellfighters". It was also in Harlem, just over nine years later, where he

drew his last breath and joined his ancestors. Harlem has just always been there.

On my father's side, I am in the first generation of his family to be born in New York City. He was born in North Carolina, as was his mother and father, and their parents before them, and their parents before them. His family has been in North Carolina since at least 1732. My paternal grandmother arrived in Harlem in the 1950s. Settling in with a home and job, she brought my father to New York 1962. I was born a decade later, after he completed his service in the US Army in Vietnam.

*The dream deferred had become the dream denied.*

Despite poverty, crime, crack, AIDS, and other social ills, to live in the Harlem of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and beyond was an experience of wonderment for me. No matter what the media portrayed it to be, I knew the true Harlem. I knew its promise and splendor. Although I knew that there could and would never be a Harlem like the one that resides in my memories. No matter what happened to me outside of Harlem, I found safety and acceptance there. It was there that a healing salve was applied, and strength granted that gave me the courage to face whatever the outside world threw my way.

As Harlem went from the target of gentrification to being gentrified, the love that I had for the only home I knew was confronted by the fact that the place I loved no longer existed. My dreams to buy a brownstone or a co-op in a pre-war building violently dissipated as prices skyrocketed. Rents steadily increased, forcing people and families like mine who had been a part of Harlem's communal framework for generations out of what had become our homeland. It was then that the words of Langston Hughes' iconic poem, "Harlem" spoke the words that my heart knew, but my mouth refused to speak, giving them an energy that would dash all hope. For gentrification painfully revealed that fulfillment of the dream that Harlem promised to my great-grandparents and grandparents, and the hope that they had passed onto me that I would

see that dream fulfilled, had in fact been denied.

O Harlem! With a broken heart, I realized that I had to leave you. Alas, it was the best thing that I could do for my soul. For while you would always be in my heart, you no longer held the promise that my ancestors came to you seeking. It was this that led me to realize that while it was the place that had been home from the day I was born, maybe it never really was, and my journey to find my true home began.

*The Journey Home*

Around the country I went. I was in search of the place I could call home. Home meant being grounded, feeling like I belonged, and never wanting to leave again. I needed to find the place that I could not live without. Could I find that place? Like a nomad, my journey to home led me to Detroit (MI), DC, Hampton (VA), Philadelphia (PA), Norfolk and Newport News (VA), and finally, Raleigh-Durham (NC). Oh, and between living Hampton and Philadelphia, I returned to Harlem to be with my mother as she dealt with the sudden death of her father.

Upon his death, my mother realized that she knew extraordinarily little about her familial history. While we learned some family history listening to them reminisce, as we mourned, we realized that the stories they told were filled with holes, and now there was no one to provide the information that we were seeking. As I sat in my mother's house, watching her mourn, I began my, our ancestral journey. As I built our family tree, I found that everywhere I had lived, a direct ancestor had lived. It was if they had long been beckoning me to uncover the hidden truths, but I had missed them. Now I was scrambling to put the pieces together.

While living in Newport News, VA, I discovered that my maternal great-grandfather was born in Norfolk, VA. He never talked about being from Norfolk or his experiences there. He never spoke of living in Detroit either. I also found the burial plots of his father and grandfather in one of Norfolk, VA's Black cemeteries, which had been created during Jim Crow,

when even burial grounds were segregated. Had I not lived there, I would have never had the opportunity to stand before their graves. Yet, my heart was not settled there.

When I moved to North Carolina, it was as if the ancestors were smiling down on me and I could feel their approval. Their daughter had come home. Living here, I have found more family than I could have ever thought I had. I no longer feel alone in the world.

I. Am. Home.

Souls Holes 2 Animbus  
CJ Hungerman







HW  
2021

Abstract Portrait 7/15/2021  
Hanna Wright

Soles Holes  
CJ Hungerman



# Endless Summer |

## Nathan Leslie

Why Wayne becomes afraid of change.

He becomes afraid of change in a big way, suddenly.

One day he is a fairly normal man, working, eating, sleeping, etc. Then he realizes that by virtue of doing the same thing every day, he is stuck. He realizes that the only way he can do something different is if physically forced. In other words, he won't. Unless his leg is severed or he is diagnosed with some rare blood disorder or he loses his job. Those are the only events that might force an alteration of his normal patterns. Otherwise, Wayne is a creature of habit--has become a creature of habit. Repetition is his master.

When autumn arrives, Wayne does not like autumn arriving. Summer please. He would like for it to stay summer, please, forever. He has nothing against autumn, per se. He simply would like for it to stay summer. The light. The whirring insects. Why this need to change seasons? Why this need to push the envelope forward?

In the mornings before the thirty six minute drive to work he notices the jarring decrease in light, the changing leaves, the drier, cooler temperatures. When he returns from work he turns up the heat to mimic the summer swelter. He paints a sun on the wall to mimic the summer beams that, not long ago, warmed up his house naturally. When the leaves fall, Wayne collects the leaves. He paints the leaves green and affixes them back on the trees with tape. Using his computer speakers he blares the sounds of cicadas and frogs to recapture that August feel. He walks around the house in his bathing suit. He drapes a beach towel around his shoulders and drinks cold ice tea with mint.

Later he takes this picture of the leaves he has painted. They look like real leaves,

no? They look *just* like real leaves. You can even see the veins and the chlorophyll. There are veins.

It becomes more difficult to pull off come November. Wayne runs out of green paint and the leaves become so brittle the application of paint is a cataclysm. He attempts to cover each leaf with a film of packing tape and then paint that, but getting the paint to adhere to the plastic tape is problematic and it is also quite time consuming and eventually the leaves crumple. Also, the windier it becomes the more difficult it is to adhere the leaves to the trees. The wind knocks them back down again and flings them into adjacent neighbor yards. Then there are leaves affixed with tape all over the neighborhood.

He gives up, slowly. But in his car he plays old slack key guitar. At home, inside his sweltering bedroom, he listens to the sounds of thunderstorms pumped through his computer speakers and he drinks ice tea. Not much has changed. It is still summer, he thinks. He just avoids looking outside the window, where it is snowing and dark, where his carefully painted green leaves are covered in snow or have fallen again and blown away. The shades are drawn. He closes his eyes and makes his own summer. Like some aloof film director. Like some envious god in an obscure pantheon.



School Lunch 19  
Lisa DeLoria Weinblatt



School Lunch 17  
Lisa DeLoria Weinblatt

# The Man Who Turned Into a Mountain |

Gloria Lucas

*Paul was turning into stone. He did not notice the curious metamorphosis until the day he lifted his leg to step over a log and found that he could not. He frowned and quickly spotted the problem: a foot made of rock. Later, after starting the fire to prepare his dinner, he took inventory of his body. A foot, a knee, and a spot above his navel had swapped flesh for stone. He could have blamed a witch, a curse, or even the gods themselves. But he knew better. He knew it was he who was at fault. And anyway, he welcomed the change.*

*Let me become the Earth, if only to stop this mortal heart from hurting.*

*Paul was a hermit, tucked among the foothills of a faraway mountain range. He worked from sunrise to sunset, hunting, fishing, building, repairing, hoping to quiet the mind that always found its way back to them.*

*Lily. Rose.*

*Once upon a time, he was a happy man. He didn't know how, but the most beautiful woman in the village agreed to be his wife. Lily was a woman who laughed and smiled often. When she sang, he imagined that even the angels stopped to listen. She was smart, she was generous, she was kind. But the most beautiful part of Lily was that she loved. Deeply, fully, and without apology. Best of all, she loved him. She was more than he ever thought he deserved. And so, being a fair man, he worked hard to ensure he could match what she gave.*

*A year after their union, Lily found herself with child. They were ecstatic. The town was overjoyed for them. However, the pregnancy soon turned difficult and it pained him to see her so ill. When her labor pains came, he almost fell over with relief. The midwives arrived, nervous that Lily wouldn't be strong enough to withstand the work of delivery. But the baby seemed to understand this and came out so quickly, no one thought to catch. She cried out once, as if to announce her offense at being caught by a bed rather than hands, and was settled quickly against her mother's breast.*

*For six months, they lived a life that knew only happiness. They named their daughter Rose and the town delighted in both her temperament and her beauty.*

*But, like all happy things, they're never meant to last.*

*One day, Rose fell ill. Their normally cheerful baby could barely tolerate being held. Her breath was quick and shallow. Her parents invited every healer they knew into their home. Try as they might, no one could cure her. One night, she slipped away, forever.*

*A darkness fell over the house that day; a darkness that embedded itself into Lily. Paul mourned deeply for his daughter, but it changed his wife. She forgot how to laugh, she could not smile, and her soul was devoid of songs. The doctors said she died of a fever, but he knew the truth. She died of a broken heart.*

*After he ensured she was properly buried, he returned to his home, a wifeless husband, a childless father. He sat and wept until the rivers rose in response. The town, afraid he would drown them all, begged him to see the little joys in life. They assured him that time would heal his wounds, that he could find another wife, that he could have more children.*

*In response, he grew angry, but was too weary to fight. He didn't understand how the world could continue without the beacon of light that was Lily. He was not sure how to walk through the town without seeing the ghost of his daughter among the girls that ran and played. He imagined it was Rose singing her mother's lullabies. He imagined it was Rose skipping rope with her friends. He imagined it was Rose taking her first tentative steps out in the town's marketplace.*

*Thus, he decided to pack up his anger and leave his memories. He walked for days until exhaustion forced him to collapse. When he awoke, he found himself near the mountain range and decided it was as good a place as any. He built a tiny house, hoping there wouldn't be enough room for ghosts. However, he found that ghosts haunt the mind and in there, room was plentiful. Consequently, he kept busy. He hunted, fished, built, and wandered, rising earlier than the sun and only returning when the night threatened to release its hidden dangers.*

*That was probably why he didn't notice the changes until they weighed him down. Day after day, week after week, more and more of him turned to stone.*

*The mountain took notice and when the man who lived near it was almost too solid to walk, it said, "Come, human. Join us."*

*Paul shook his head. Or rather, tried. "No," he replied. "I prefer to be alone."*

*The mountain chuckled with the wisdom of millennia. "Nothing in the world is alone. Look around you. See the rocks, the trees, the birds, the rushing river, the gentle breeze. Do you really think you've been alone? Set down your stubbornness and join us here before you are too stiff to walk."*

*Paul hesitated, then slowly, slowly, slowly, made his way to the mountain. As he walked, he grew, his size reflecting the grief and anger he held. When he reached the mountain, there was nothing human about him.*

*“And now,” the mountain said, “we wait.”*

*At first, Paul’s portion of the mountain was harsh and dangerous. The cliffs were too steep, the rock too unforgiving. No animals sought comfort in his caves. No people dared to explore any adventures that lived in him. No vegetation dared take root in him.*

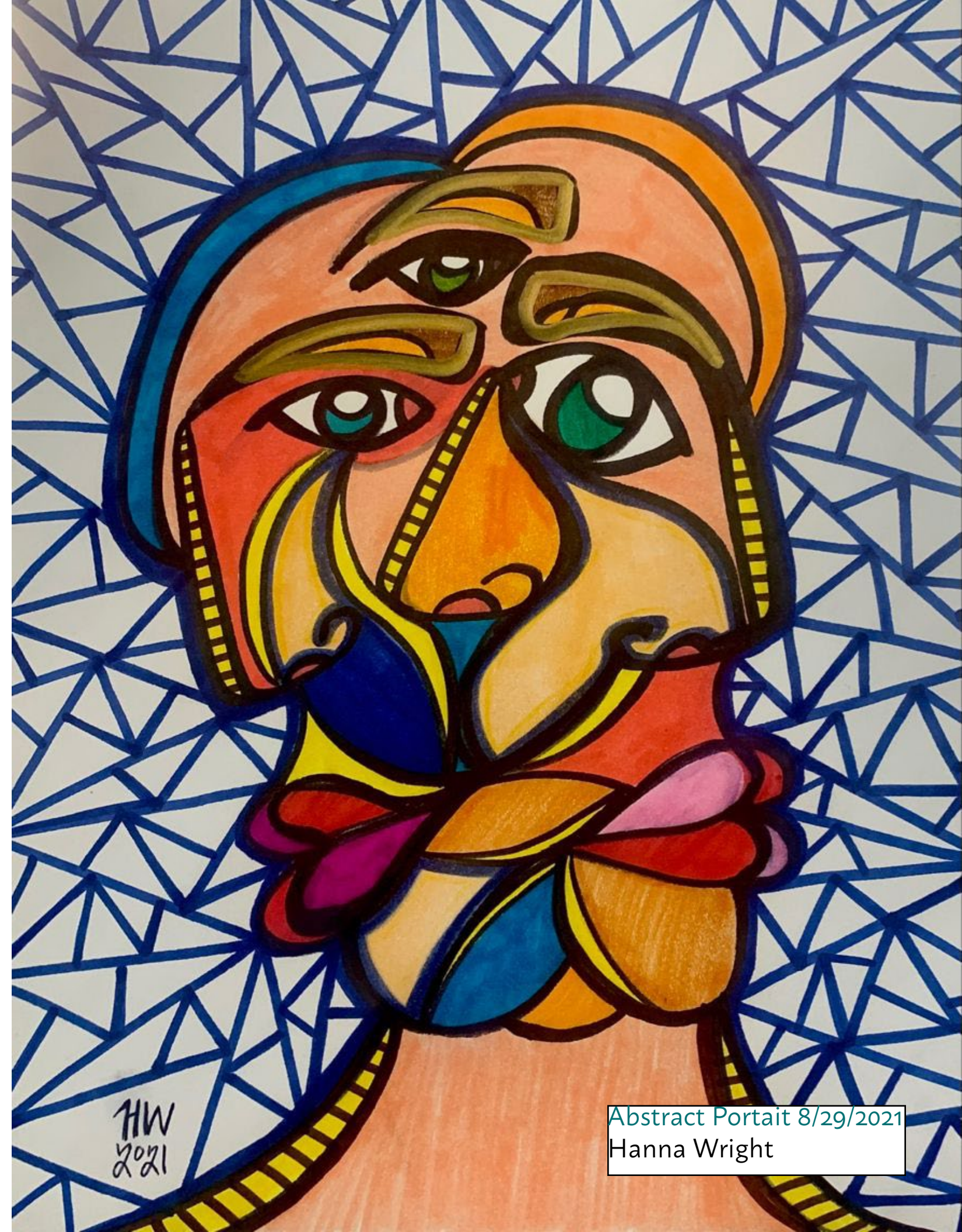
*As time passed, first years, then decades, perhaps even centuries, the winds came and caressed his face; the rain fell and wept with him. Eventually, the rough edges of his corners began to smooth; the impenetrable walls began to hold paths. Slowly, trees began to take root, animals started to make homes, and people began to visit. Paul became used to his new form and his new friends. He liked watching the mama bear play with her cubs. He liked seeing how high the young adventurers would climb.*

*“I see you’ve invited the trees,” said the mountain to Paul.*

*Paul smiled inside. “I did.”*

*“And you’ve invited the flowers. Tell me, Paul. What kinds are those?”*

*“Those are lilies. And these are roses.”*



HW  
2021

Abstract Portrait 8/29/2021  
Hanna Wright

# Children as Refugees and Asylum Seekers |

Jim Ross

## Children as Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Images on Postcards

During the golden age of postcards—roughly the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when postcards served roles ranging from greeting card to text messaging—images of children were among the most popular. At times of duress, they showed us children who had been turned into fugitives and asylum seekers due to war, forced immigration, separation from (or death of) parents, and homelessness.

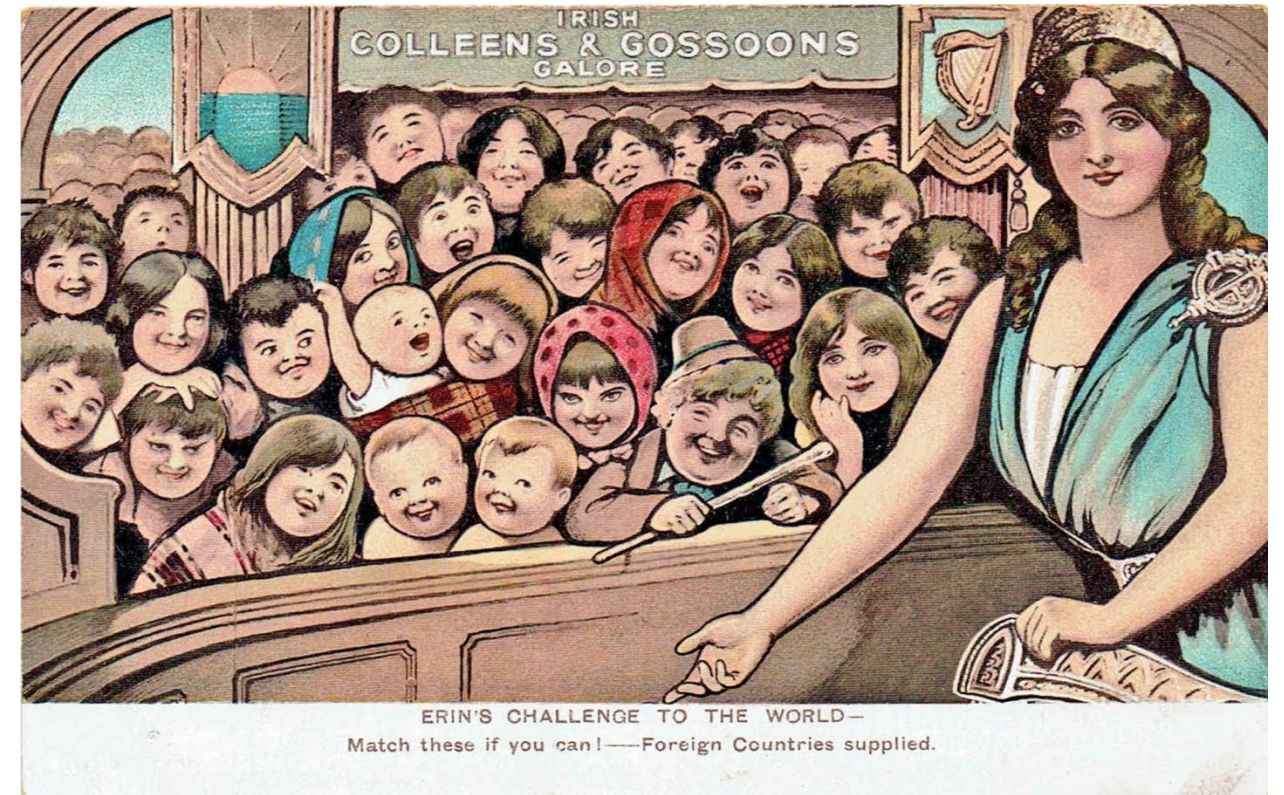
A 1908 photographic postcard of the Dover Street Union Rescue Mission shows dozens of children, mostly boys, who had been given respite from life on the street. Perhaps that rescue mission had programs geared to help children ease out of risky factory jobs, be children while they still could, obtain at least an elementary education, and get off the street. Some of the drawn faces remind me of pictures of immigrant children who toiled inhumane hours, often with no regular place to spend their nights. In 1900, 16% of full-time U.S. workers were under age 16. Despite ratification of Federal child labor laws in 1924, few states ratified them until the Great Depression of the 1930s.



A U.S. postcard postmarked 1909 shows an artist's rendition of children's faces representing a multitude of races, ethnicities, and countries of origin. While the card is titled, "All Kinds of Little Troubles," this wasn't an anti-immigration card. To the contrary, the artist's clear intent was to capture their innocence and extend a welcome to children from around the world.



This Irish card is the flipside of the previous card, which showed the faces of babies from around the globe who might wish to enter the United States. This card from the same time period shows “Irish Colleens and Gossoons galore,” and issues Erin’s challenge to the world, “Match these if you can! — Foreign countries supplied.” I interpret the card as a request for the world to welcome some of the colleens and gossoons who are keen on emigrating from Ireland.



This card takes another view of the great Irish emigration, which began around 1841 and, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, had halved the population Ireland had achieved before the emigration began. An extract from the printed text on the back of the card: “Never since the Israelite captivity has there been such an exodus on such an immense scale. A whole people flying in such numbers that, were the exodus to continue at the same rate, the date would not be far distant when the population would be reduced to a mere handful.” The pathos of the image strikes home since many Americans are directly descended from immigrants who left Ireland or another country to seek refuge and opportunity.



Within a few years, in 1914, war

broke out in Europe. Quickly, Belgium fell, and France was decimated. In some communities, not a single man survived. A French series of “orphelinat des armées” or “orphan armies” was published during and immediately after World War I. The cards were sold to raise funds to support organizations that served war orphans. The larger purposes of their sale were to raise public awareness, help marshal funding needed to care for war orphans, and encourage the United States to enter the war. This first card in that series shows a disconsolate girl, with her hands covering her face. Is she crying or has she run out of tears?



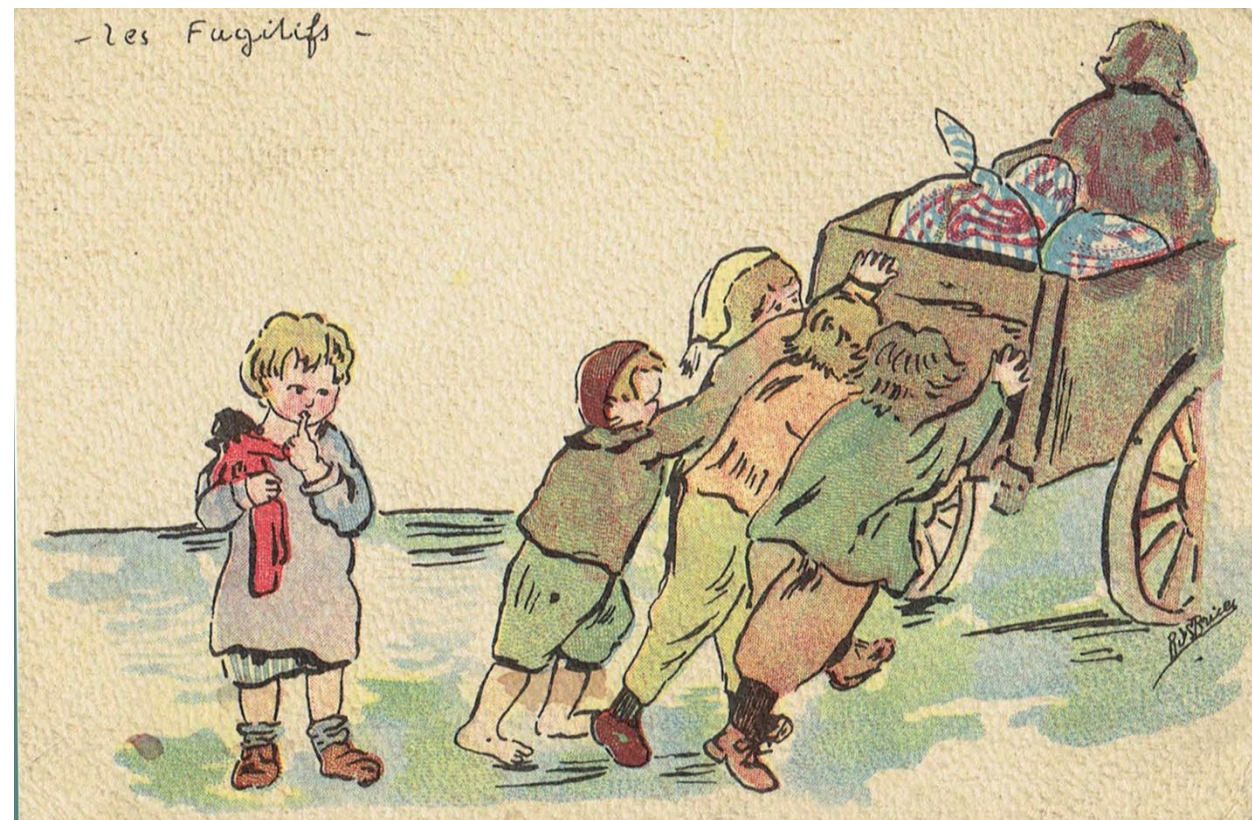
Another card in the “orphan armies” series, titled “les Fugitifs,” shows four children pushing a wooden cart holding four small sacks. I imagine that each sack holds one child’s worldly possessions. A little girl carrying a doll stands bewildered, isn’t helping push the cart, and I wonder whether the doll is her only earthly possession.

Were such children refugees? According to the UN convention, which didn’t exist quite yet, a refugee is: “A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is



outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it..”

If their parents are dead, and the communities they knew have been leveled to the ground, and they wander aimlessly looking for refuge in a land occupied by a destructive invader, but they remain in the land they call home, or they don't even know where they are, but they feel pervasively unsafe and live in fear, and if they wish to seek asylum even though they may not know the word, are they refugees? Perhaps, because their homeland is occupied by a destructive invader who wishes to annex it, they are refugees in their own land. They are certainly propelled to find a safe home.



A third card in the “orphan armies” series shows three children with hardly anything to call their own pulling a cord outside a house to ring a bell and attract the attention of the house dwellers. They're probably looking for a little something to eat, some stale bread, perhaps some dry ends of cheese. Nobody had much so they didn't expect much.

A fourth card from the “orphan army” series shows a more realistic scene of devastation. A mother sits hunched over a child who at first seems to have found warmth sleeping on her lap. A boy stands with head bowed, hands held together as if in prayer. Both the boy and mother look as if they’ve lost everything. After looking at this image for some time, moving away, and coming back to it, I realize that the sleeping child is a casualty of war. The date of June 20, 1915, which appears as part of the image, might refer to the devastating offensive initiated on precisely that date in the Meuse-Argonne region.



”Journée Française du Secours,” or “national day of relief,” was another series issued in France during World War I to direct attention, offer hope, and garner support. This first card, by Theophile Steinlen (the famous cat artist), shows children, women and the elderly seeking and being offered solace by a kindly woman, probably Marianne, who represents the spirit of France.

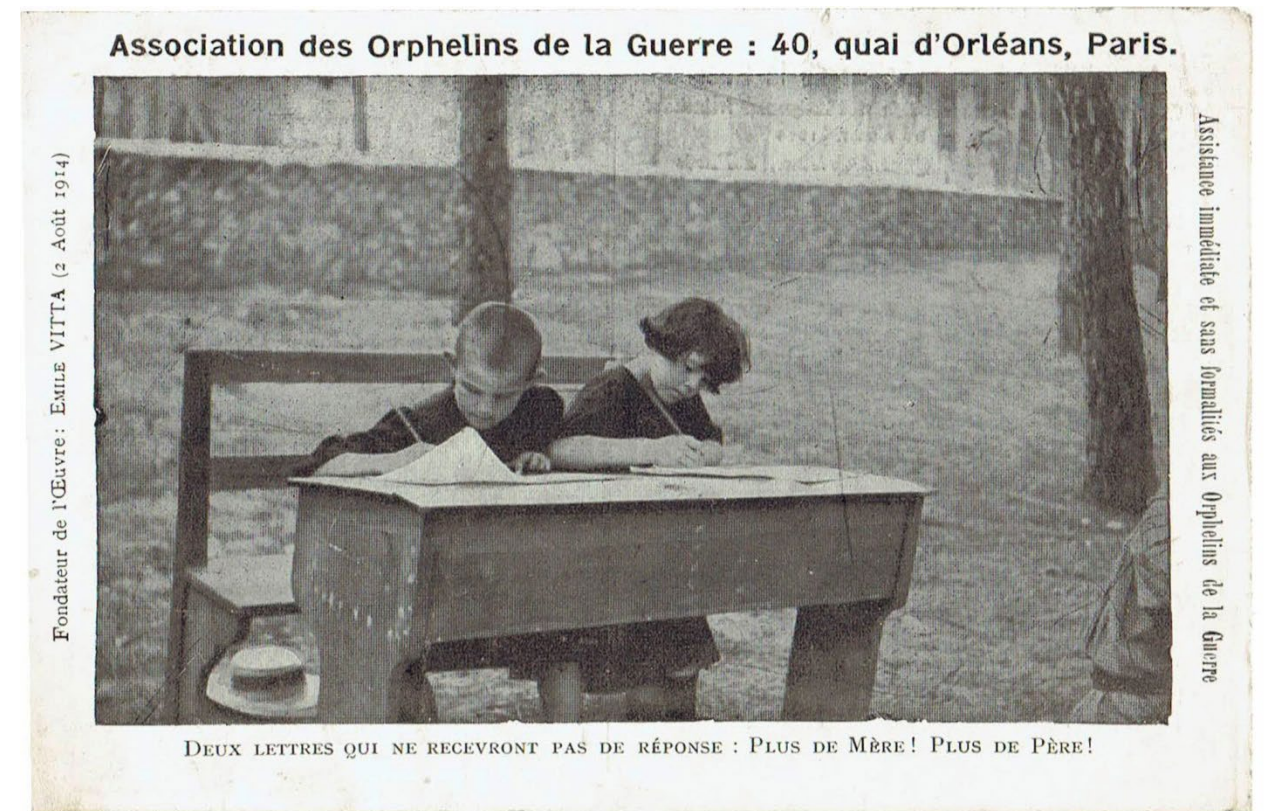


A second card from the “national day of relief” series shows children who have become vagabonds and appear to be seeking shelter in a doghouse as the dog watches. While the oldest child carries a sack and the girl next to her holds a pail, other items—like the cooking pot on the roof of the doghouse—look as if they were blown there by chance.



A third French series, published by the “Association des Orphelins de la Guerre,” or the Association for War Orphans, sought to bring attention to the number of children orphaned by the war, solicit financial support for orphanages, and find warm families to adopt or at least foster orphans. With hundreds of thousands of children in France and Belgium orphaned before the United States entered the war, there was widespread support in the United States to support war orphans long before there was public support for entry into the war.

This card from that series shows two children sitting at a desk side by side writing letters. At the bottom, it says they’re writing letters to mom and dad that will never be answered.



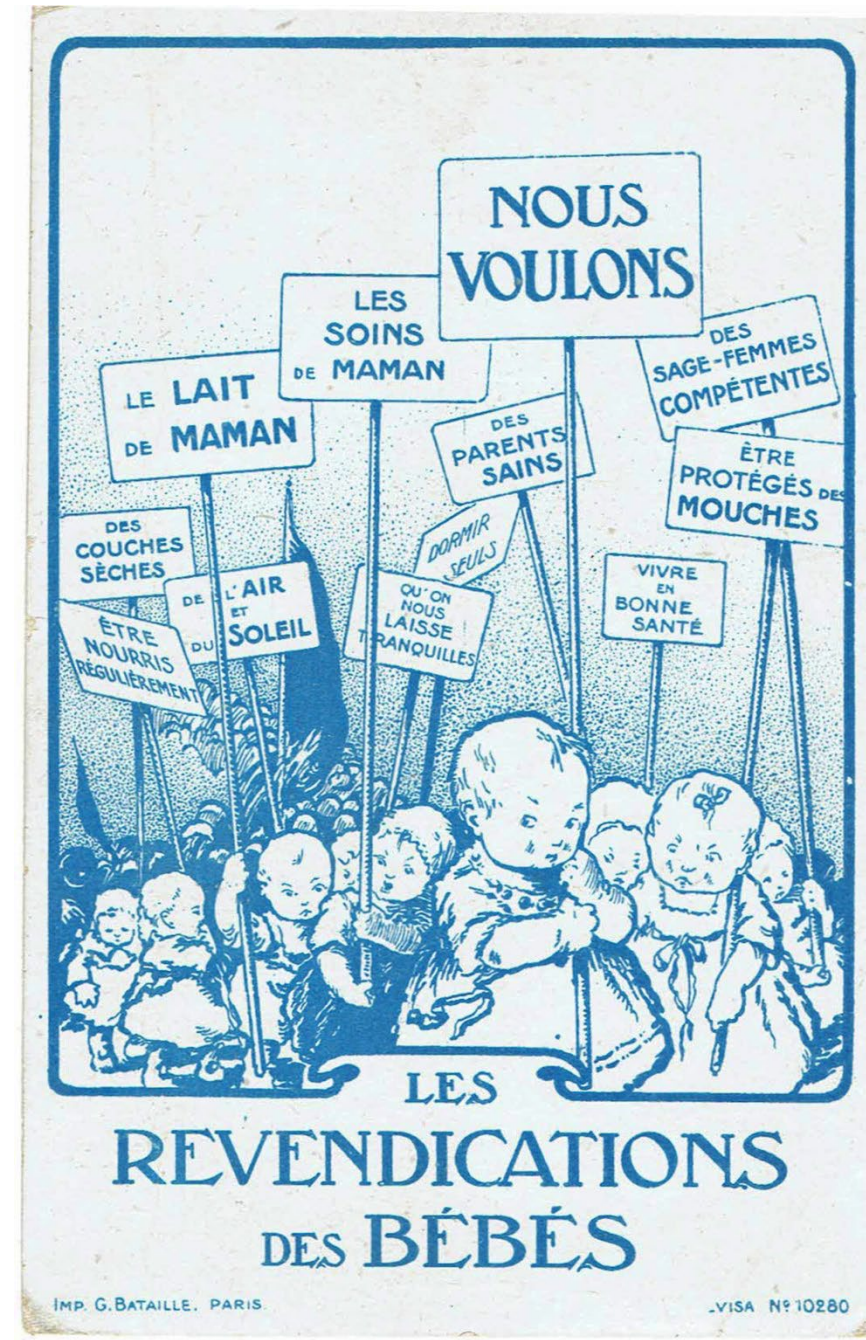
Funds raised mostly in the United States and Britain to support war orphans in France and Belgium helped to create orphanages operated by religious orders. This card shows the children from a French orphanage. As in many orphanages, the children wore uniforms typical of Catholic schools of the era. Other orphanages clothed children in whatever they could lay their hand



There were many ways children lost home and family due to war. For example, during World War II, as shown in the film *Mother of Mine*, over 70,000 Finnish children were sent to live on farms in neutral Sweden until war's end, yet after the war many never quite found the home and family they had left behind. During and after World War I, many children bunked on farms. In addition to children orphaned, millions more lost their fathers and, in dire circumstances, were abandoned by their mothers and, in effect, became orphans. When economics permitted, extended family members took in orphans as their own. However, with entire communities devastated—in some French and Belgian villages every man was killed—it was essential to pursue the possibility of immigration to other countries, including the United States.



This postcard was published by the American Red Cross operating in France, probably right after World War I. It shows babies walking a picket line, carrying signs that say in French: here are the babies' demands—we want mother's care, mother's milk, dry diapers, regular feedings, and healthy parents, or we are left alone.



One of the iconic images to emerge from World War I depicts an American soldier encountering children whom war has turned into refugees. In some images, the soldier picks up a couple of children and trades smiles with them. In other images, he encounters a throng of children and doesn't know where to begin. In yet others, he finds children at a cemetery weeping for their father killed in battle. This postcard is of the last type. It was originally distributed in 1917 as a poster by Ouvroir Funds, an organization that channeled resources for the education and support of French war orphans to nine different groups in France. In captions, the soldier harkens back to the aid the French provided to the colonies in 1778-1883, says we owe France an unalterable debt of gratitude, and makes a commitment to the fallen French soldier, "French comrade, your children shall be as our children."



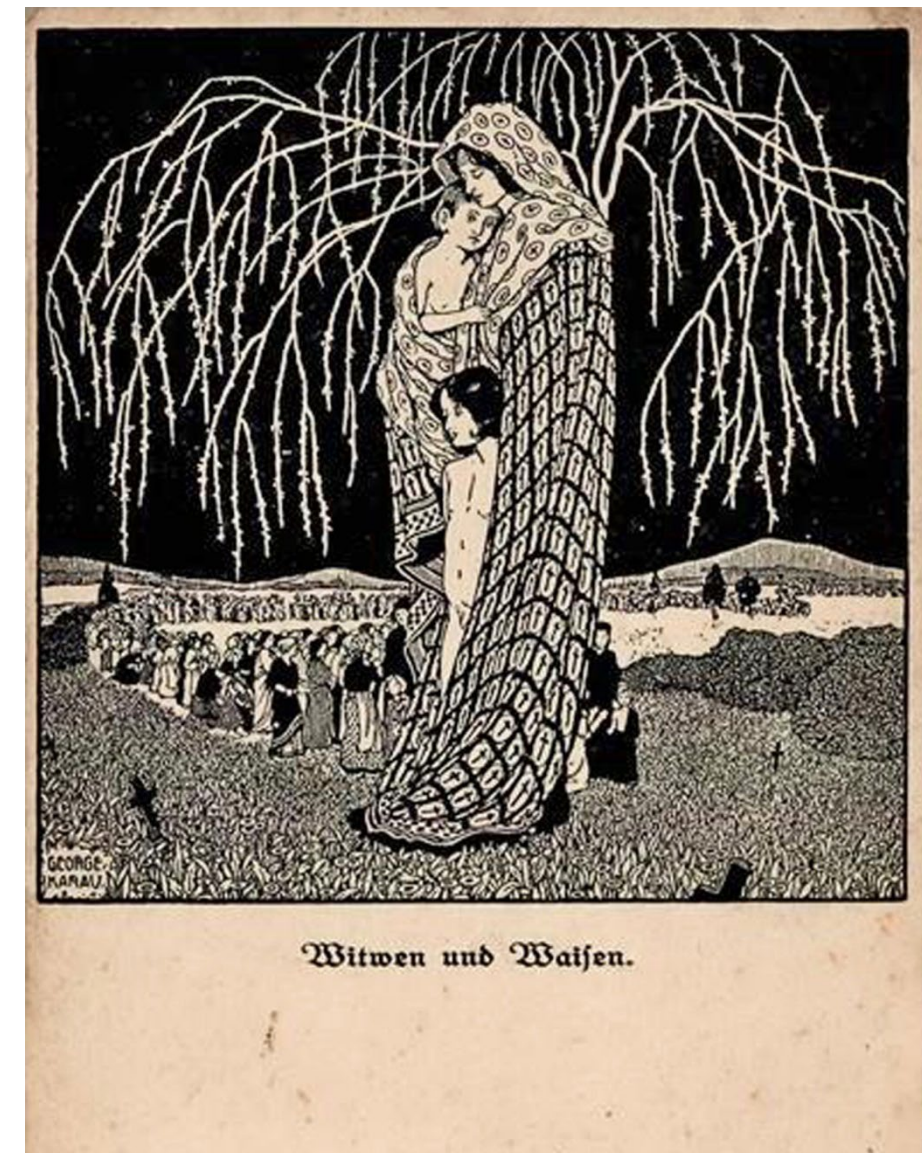
But the encounter between soldiers and children in wartime represents much more of a universal theme, one which causes us to question, "Why war?" Such encounters tie into questions about the child's losing innocence, being uprooted and sent to roam, and the soldier's sense of responsibility for such children. I can share little about this fuzzy card except that it came to me with three other cards marked "Balkan Expedition," so it probably represents the Balkans, though I can't be more specific than that. What we see here is a throng of displaced children flocking to a military convoy. It looks like they're probably mutually amused by each other. I wish I could say more.



For Germany, it's more difficult to locate postcards related to orphans, even though its losses mounted. Throughout World War I, German children were shown playing war, and the deaths of their fathers in battle only seems to have hardened their resolve. While postcards show French children playing war too, that occurs typically in the background, with children in the foreground trying to escape the war play. German children were often shown wearing the clumsy *Pickelhaube*, a metal helmet with a spike at the crown, which in battle had the unfortunate side-effect of catching the enemy's attention. This postcard, written and posted in 1915, shows four German children on bivouac, that is, in an encampment. Only one wears the *Pickelhaube*.



Like France, various organizations in France Germany printed cards to raise public awareness and funds to support orphans. In most instances, a given card brought attention to the plight of *Witwen und Waisen*—both widows and orphans. Occasionally, those disabled by war—who often got their own cards—were added to the widows and orphans cards. The stark card below shows not a mother but a widow and two orphans. Behind the Madonna-like figure who shelters two naked children, a twisting line of those similarly affected by war disappears over the horizon.



Germany operated orphanages, but unlike France, it doesn't appear that they were typically run by religious orders. Dozens of cards were published by *Deutscher Verein für Kinderasyle*—the German Association for Children asylums. On the back of each card, these words can be found, *Sagt nicht wir haben schon gegeben. Unsere soldaten sagen das nicht wir haben schon gekämpft*—Don't say we have already given. Our soldiers don't say that we have already fought.

The cards are marked as selling for 10 pfennig each, of which 3 pfennig went to the *Wohlfahrtsstelle* or welfare center. Most *Deutscher Verein für Kinderasyle* cards that I've found were written and posted through the mail using stamps and seem to have been sent Frau to Frau. Some, however, were sent by soldiers using free *Feltpost*. Instead of being labeled as *Postkarte*, such fund-raising cards were marked as *Wohlfahrtskarte*, or welfare cards. This first *Asylum* card shows one nurse caring for several cooperative babies.



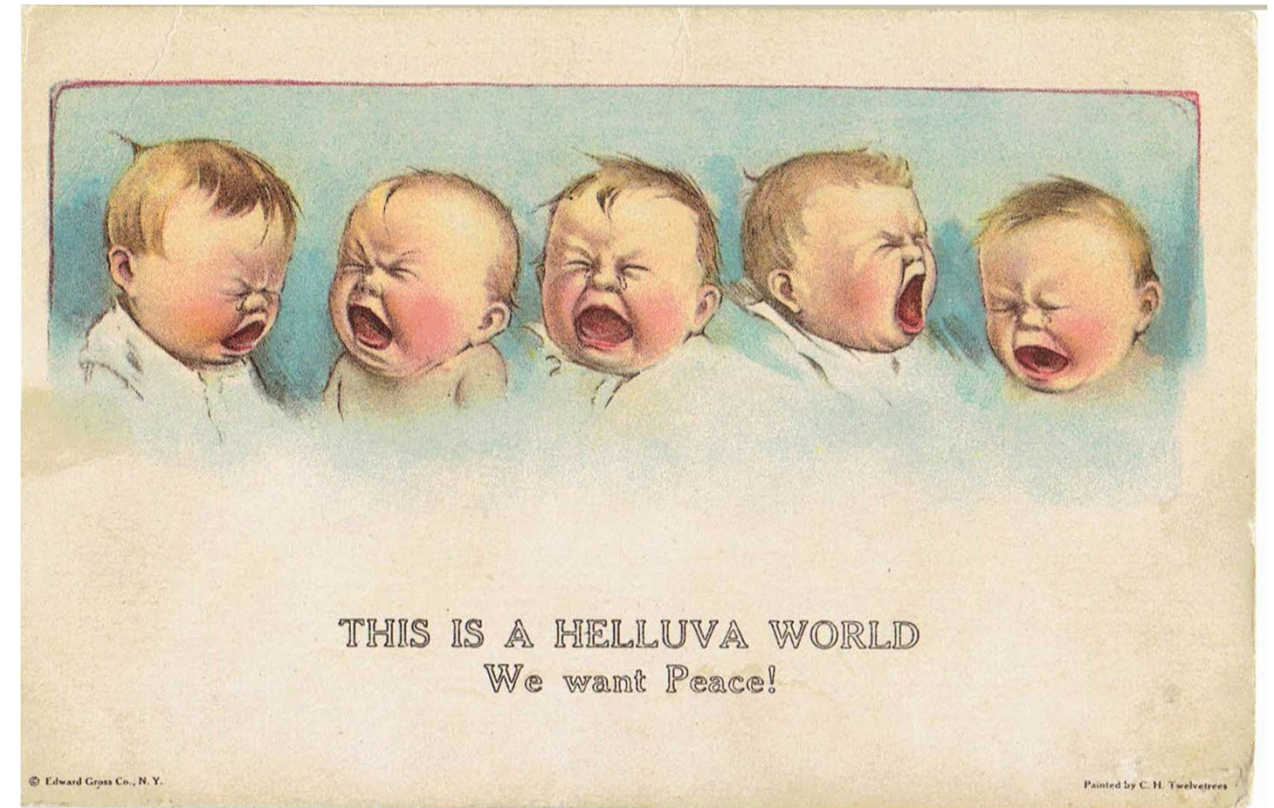
Many *Deutscher Verein für Kinderasyle* cards show children going about their daily lives as if unaffected by war. Some were mailed during the post-war years of political, social, and economic upheaval. Like the typical German postcards that showed children playing war, the spokesmodel for the *asyle* was a young boy in military uniform. Sometimes, as in this card, he conveys an utterly cavalier attitude toward war and its effects on families. A message on the image side of each *Asyle* card says, “Remember our warrior orphans.”



The next card from the World War I era shows a boy pointing to a picture of Uncle Sam. He's saying, "That's my Uncle Sam and maybe I'm not proud of him." One can speculate about what Uncle Sam was doing or failing to do that caused the boy to feel this way. The postcard bears a date stamp on the back of May with no indication of year. The United States declared World War I in April 1917, after two and a half years of insisting on maintaining neutrality. It's unclear what the boy is upset about, but clearly, Uncle Sam was doing something the boy wishes he weren't, or failing to do something he wishes he would.



Another U.S. card from World War I shows five crying babies who are conveying to us the message, "This is a helluva world. We want peace." I suspect this card predates the entry of the United States into World War I.



One of many postcards published by the Russian Red Cross (the Saint Eugenia Society) during World War I shows two girls wearing the traditional garb of Red Cross nurses. The girl on the right seems to be folding a bandage; the one on the left seems unsure how to help.





Normally, children didn't design postcards, so we don't know much about how they perceived a war and its effects in turning the members of communities into refugees. This card was part of a series created during World War I by child artists enrolled in Franz Cizek's art education school in Vienna. This and several other series of postcards emanating from Cizek's art school were distributed internationally by the Junior Red Cross. I see this group of people—children, the elderly, perhaps a mother and father—as refugees, but not as divided, and may represent one family, still together, despite war's ravages. It doesn't seem as if they're walking with a particular destination in mind except to find safety, or perhaps they're merely wandering.



From Prof. Cizek's Juvenile Art Class, Vienna  
(Austrian Junior Red Cross, Vienna, I. Stubenring 1)

(10)

Italy's children too bore the brunt of the war. As far as I can tell, big orphanages were operated in Italy by religious orders, much as in France. I'm not aware of a significant American effort to jump to the aid of Italian war orphans. Almost surely, there were far fewer war orphans in Italy than in France or, for that matter, in far smaller Belgium, which was quickly brought to its knees. Italy probably had welfare postcards, like France and Germany.



Spendi una parola in favore degli orfanelli: diffondi la nostra cartolina e non ci mancherà il pane quotidiano

Orfani del disastro Calabro-Siculo, ricoverati in POLISTENA (Reggio Calabria)  
50 cartoline lira una a cura di Mons. MORABITO, Vescovo di Mileto. Sezione Maschile

And, in Germany, in addition to *Deutscher Verein für Kinder asyle*—the German Association for Children asylums—there were other institutions that cared for war orphans. This 1920 postcard, owned by the U.S. Holocaust Museum, shows children at the Baruch Auerbach Orphanage for Jewish boys in Berlin. We can safely assume that nearly all these boys are war orphans. Beyond that, we can assume that the fathers of many of these boys died in uniform fighting for Germany.

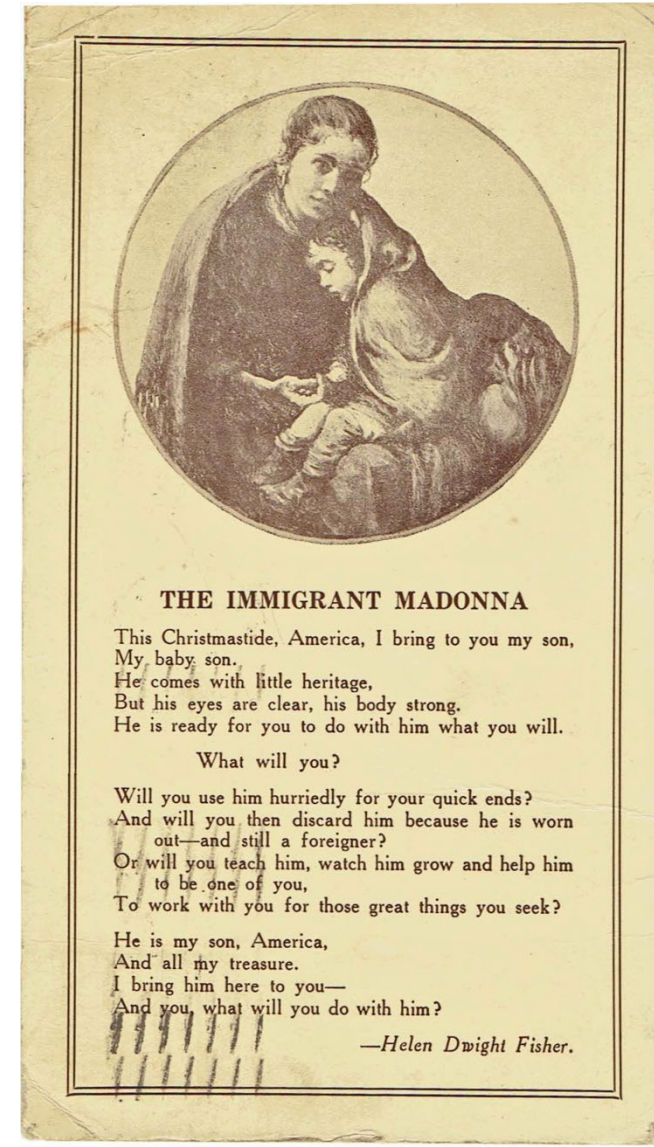


While many of the cards here show how war turned children into fugitives and asylum seekers, we shouldn't forget that, considering the devastation throughout Europe, many children emigrated to other parts of Europe, North America, or elsewhere.

This rare postcard of "The Immigrant Madonna" was published by the U.S. National Child Labor Committee, organized in 1904 to lead efforts to regulate or eliminate child labor. Postmarked in 1921, the card shows an immigrant mother holding her child, looking unsure what's to come next. Beneath the image is a poem by Helen Dwight Fisher. The second stanza asks:

Will you use him hurriedly toward your quick ends?  
 And will you then discard him because he is worn out and still a foreigner?  
 Or will you teach him, watch him grow and help him to be one of you,

To work with you for those great things you seek?



One of the strongest, most persistent artistic voices in Germany throughout the first and second world wars and the years in between was Berlin's Kaethe Kollwitz. Long before war broke out, death played prominently in drawings and engravings. Several images show the anguish of mother and children at receiving bad news from the front, such as *Gefallen*, or death in action. Many images show a mother reaching out to the welcome hand of *Tod*, or death, who appears outside the boundaries of the image. A mother caressing a dead child appears repeatedly. Being taken by death is another recurrent theme.

This first Kollwitz bears an image that isn't one of the artist's better-known. A girl about ten years old holds a younger child. Both look worn, hungry, tired, perhaps depressed. I pre-

sume they are orphans, but without knowing the image's provenance, I can't be sure. The postcard was written and posted in 1917. I've seen few Kollwitz images on war-era postcards that went through the mails.



Most of Kollwitz's better-known images of the ravages of war were created during the postwar years and emanate her observation that, "The war is over, but there is no peace." This card, *Die Ueberlebenden*, or *The Survivors*, published in 1922, duplicated a poster. The quote to the right of the image, *Lehrt die Kinder nicht den Krieg und die Kriegshelden verherrlichen; Lehrt sie den Krieg verabscheuen*, can be translated as, "Don't teach the children about the war and glorify war heroes. Teach them to loathe the war." This Dutch card was part of an

international appeal to help war orphans from all countries.



Kollwitz's 1924 poster of several hollow-eyed children holding out empty bowls, *Deutschlands Kinder Hungern!*, or Germany's Children are Hungry, was used repeatedly for multiple causes and fund collections, including for war orphans. The image also was released in numerous editions of postcards. This particular one was probably published during the 1930s. It was neither written nor posted.



While war was raging in Europe, the Ottoman Empire initiated the systematic, planned elimination of Armenians, which is widely regarded as creating precedent both for the Holocaust transpired by the Third Reich, and for comparable crimes against humanity. The term “genocide” was coined in 1943 to refer specifically to what the Ottoman Empire had done to the Armenians living in Turkey. Initially, the Armenian men were killed or sent to work camps. Eventually, women, the elderly, and children were sent to concentration camps, shipped in cattle cars, burned to death in stables and haylofts, or sent on death marches, often naked, in the direction of the Syrian Desert. The Ottomans deliberately withheld facilities, food, and drink among the hundreds of thousands of deportees sent on death marches. Many children were shipped out to sea and thrown overboard. The genocide began in 1915, but as late as 1920 the Ottomans were still annihilating Armenians. The United States were aware of the genocide but remained neutral. The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (also known as Near East Relief), established in 1915 just after the deportations began, cared for 132,000 Armenian and Syrian orphans in its first year. Between 1915 and 1930, it distributed humanitarian relief to a wider geographical area, helping around 2,000,000 refugees.

This postcard shows five young Armenians walking to safety in Syria. This image also appeared on the cover of *New Near East Magazine* in April 1923.



This postcard shows another image of an Armenian refugee from the holocaust in Turkey. According to Near East Relief, even while on the run Armenians maintained their traditions, like knitting, as this girl is going.



This 1925 postcard shows a band from an Armenian orphanage serenading Americans at the train station in Jerusalem. They hold banners saying, “Armenia thanks America.” As they had done for war orphans after World War I, Americans had jumped in and assisted in building orphanages to house orphans of the Armenian holocaust.



After the 1930s, relatively few images of children as refugees and orphans can be found on postcards. First newsreels, movies, and print journalism, then television, and eventually the Internet, took over as the means through which such images reached the public. I own many German postcards of prisoners of war, which German soldiers proudly sent to friends and family. I doubt postcards of concentration camps were ever created and, if so, I dread who could imagine sending one.



Kollwitz's starkest images remind us that war took the lives of children too. Several of her images show a mother caressing a dead child. After arrival of the Third Reich, in 1934-1935, Kollwitz created an eight-part series called *Tod*, or death. One the better known is *Tod*

*greift in Kinderschar*, or Death reaches into a group of children. Kollwitz remained in Germany until her death three days before Germany's surrender. This unwritten, unposted card was published after World War II.

Although postcards of POW camps were widely published in Germany and sent home by soldiers like antlers mounted on a wall, I'm thankful I've never seen a postcard of a concentration camp. However, postcards can be found of children on the eve of the holocaust. One such postcard, owned by the Holocaust Museum, shows a baby, Lea, born in December 1938, with her mother Friedl. Lea, Friedl, and her husband Yitzkhak were deported from Berlin to the Lodz ghetto in Poland in 1939. Lea died there that year. Friedl was deported to Chelmno killing center and murdered in 1942. Yitzkhak died in the Lodz ghetto in 1944. Not only do we have such images, but we know their provenance. Even more powerful than that postcard is the image of Lea's red shoes. In this case, rather than show the postcard, I'd like to make an exception and show Lea's shoes



If the effects of World War II in creating child refugees had been documented in postcards as well as they had been during World War I, the images would sear one's soul. The French weren't steamrolled in World War II the way they were in World War I, but fatalities remained high, so children and entire communities became refugees. Overall, World War II's effect in creating orphans and other refugees was scarcely documented on postcards. Indeed, many of those children died or were murdered in ghettos or concentration camps. The drawings of some of these children survived.

This postcard of a child holding a garland was part of a series published by the Czechoslovakian Red Cross to express thanks for aid provided to war-affected Czech children immediately after World War II. The backs of each card were decorated by hand in colorful Slavic stenciling.



A 1950 photographic postcard by Robert Capa captures the pain experienced by Shaar Aliyah, a child refugee living in an internment camp in Haifa, Israel.



Over the past 50 years, refugees have fled their homelands driven by fear by the hundreds of millions. When genocide was involved, many children were orphaned and became refugees. As an example, in Rwanda, a significant refugee stream already existed for years when in 1994 approximately 800,000 people were killed within 100 days in an act of genocide. Over one million Rwandan children became orphans. While the genocide may not have been an appropriate subject to carry via postcard, the existence of one million needy children was, and the moral obligation to never forget still is. The postcard below was issued in Bogota as part of a 2010 exhibit to never forget Rwanda.



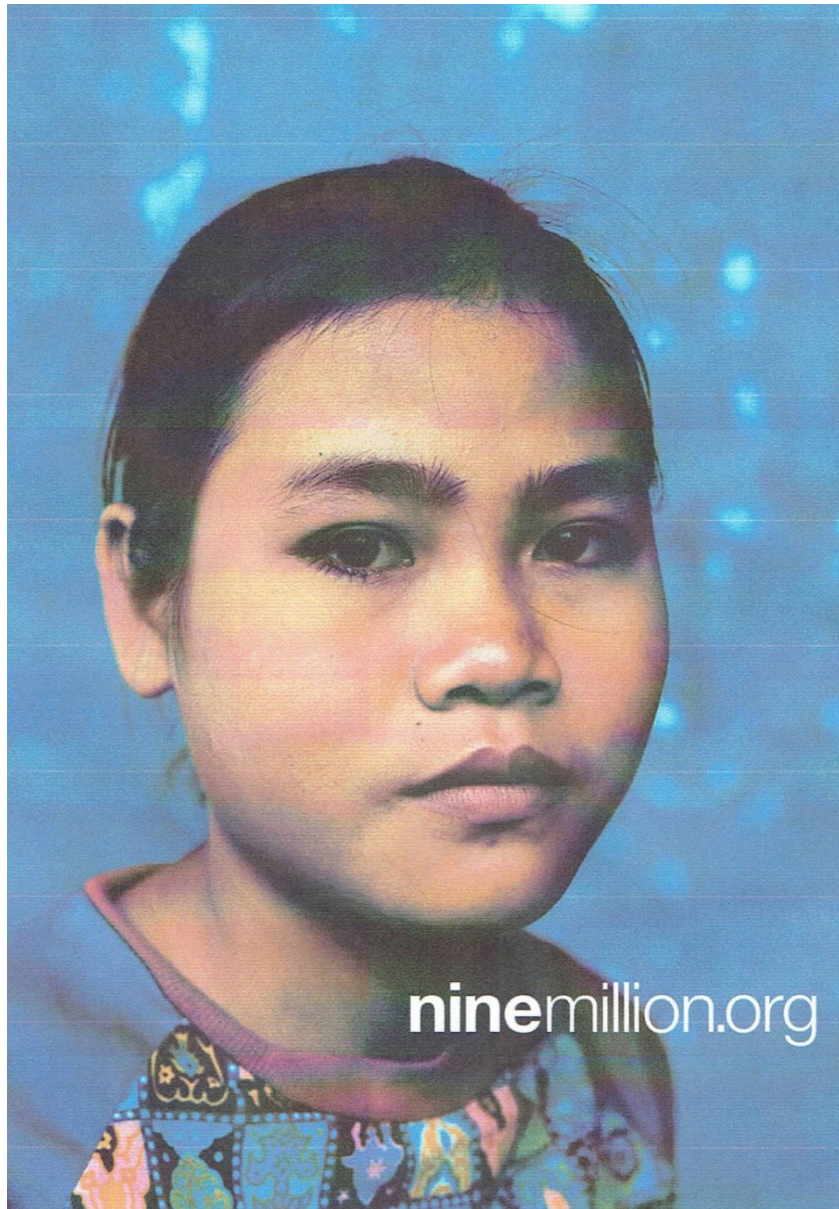
Similarly, the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, operates a comprehensive program to ensure that the Armenian genocide cannot be forgotten, and that we continue to learn lessons from what occurred. As part of this program, the Museum has issued postcards about key developments and persons in Armenian history. The card pictured here was issued on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Adana massacres.



Postcards have undergone an enormous transformation and are considered integral to social change initiatives. Most social awareness postcards are either “Free Cards” available on racks at commercial establishments, or virtual postcards to be sent electronically or downloaded, printed, and sent through the mails. Postcards continue to bring attention to the plight of child refugees, to solicit contributions, and to encourage people to contact elected officials to say, “I support refugees.”

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) typically incorporates postcards in its initiatives around the world. In 2006, it issued six postcards in “The Nine Million” series. The fronts carry the picture of a child’s face; the back tells the child’s story and the message: “nine million faces. nine million names. nine million stories. nine million children are refugees right now. Help them play, let them learn.” This child was living in Thailand, among refugees who fled Myanmar.





At present, the media in the United States foster awareness of refugees coming from Mexico and Central America, Syria, and Africa. The forced migration of Syrians—the same people who once accepted the Armenians with open arms—has riveted attention in Europe and North America.

This postcard was created by a child from Syria who was forced to flee her country. Part of the International Rescue Committee's Postcards of Hope series, this postcard is titled, "despite the pain, hope remains."



The British Red Cross's *Postcards for Syria* project enlisted artists, celebrities, and schoolchildren from Syria and the UK to make postcards illustrating themes of "hope, humanity, and home." The postcards were exhibited at Red Cross headquarters and then auctioned online. This card was created by Tamman Arraz for the *Postcards for Syria* project. Several other groups have done something similar.



This is an example of a downloadable postcard to be printed on card stock and mailed to elected officials to indicate support of welcoming Syrian refugees. It was designed by a Church of the Latter Day Saints member in imitation of classic American postcards from the World War I era.



This postcard published by Unitarian Universalist Association shows a young

mother holding her child. The card doesn't advocate for any one refugee group. Rather, it informs recipients of two summits on the refugee crisis and asks them to call on the United States to lead by example.

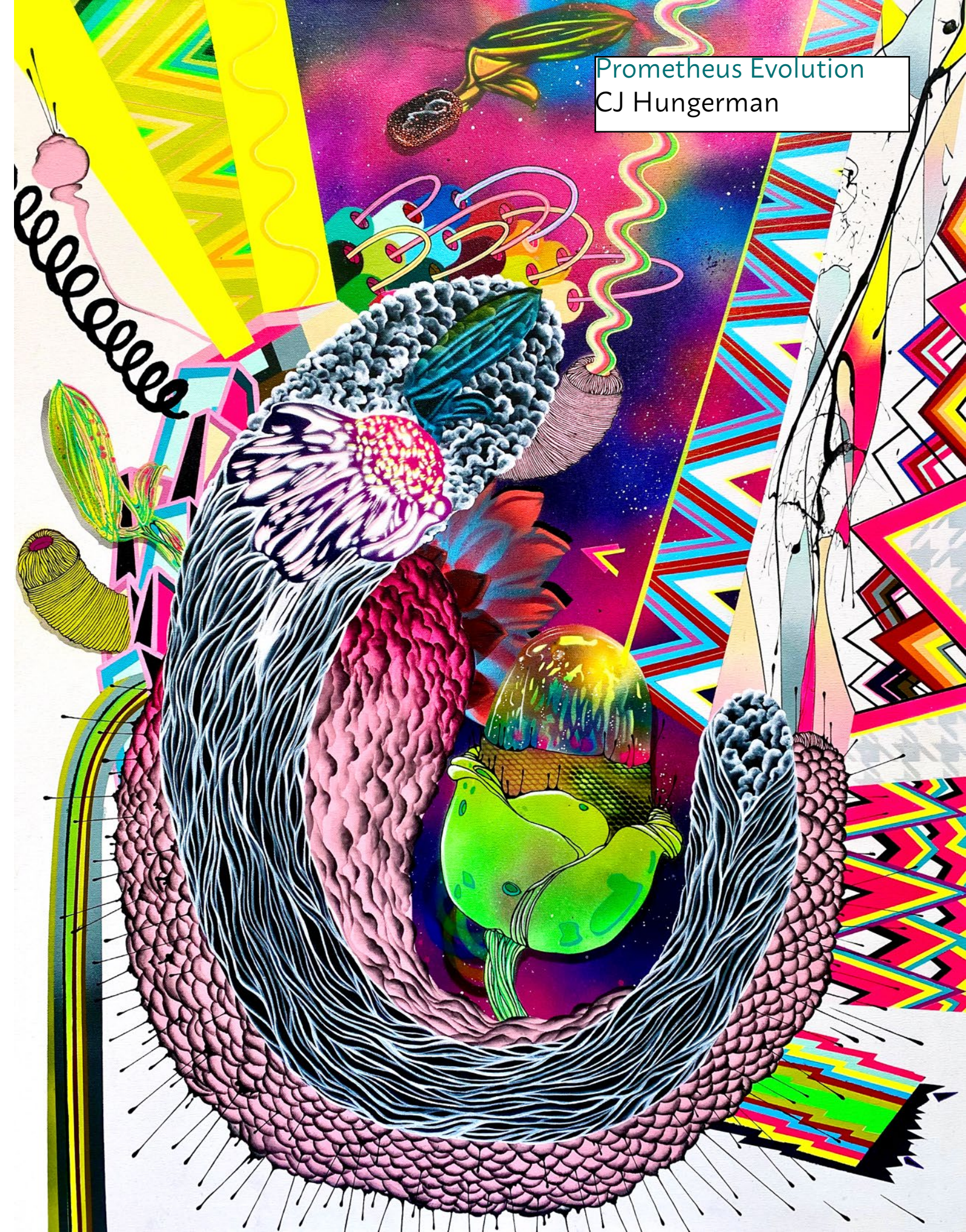
A black and white graphic with text. At the top, it says "THIS SEPTEMBER". Below that, it reads "THE UNITED NATIONS AND PRESIDENT OBAMA WILL HOST SUMMITS ABOUT THE REFUGEE CRISIS WITH WORLD LEADERS. GLOBAL GOALS INCLUDE:". A list of four goals follows: "increasing humanitarian aid by 30%", "doubling the number of refugee resettlement and admission opportunities", "guaranteeing the right to work for one million more refugees", and "ensuring access to education for one million more refugee children". At the bottom, it asks "WILL YOU JOIN US IN CALLING ON THE UNITED STATES TO LEAD BY EXAMPLE?".



A 2011 postcard shows a baby, called Ali, imprisoned by immigration authorities and held behind a fence for the first six months of his life without trial for one offense: his family sought asylum in Australia. The back explains that at that moment 1,027 children ages 17 and under were being detained indefinitely in Australia. It notes that Australian and International law stipulate that children are to be detained only as a last resort, but in Australia they were being detained as a first resort. For many years, Australia was the only country that detained children who entered the country as asylum seekers. Opponents of this practice stressed the long-term corrosive effects on children of being held in internment camps, especially in terms of mental health. Yet, the practice continued for over 20 years.



After the first quarter of the twentieth century, postcards ceased playing a primary mode in day-to-day communications because the communication options expanded to encompass radio, movies, television, and telephones. Decades later, having a PC with access to the Internet provides a the capacity to create postcards of one's own or to find suitable postcards sponsored by any of several refugee or child welfare organizations. Although child refugees are unlikely to become the subject of conventional postcards, it's easy to obtain printed "Free Cards" distributed by the UNCHR or other organizations, or to send postcards electronically, or to download, print, and post postcards to convey support to refugees, to enlist the support of friends, or to persuade government officials to treat refugees as their own ancestors would have wished to be treated.



Prometheus Evolution  
CJ Hungerman

# Cacophony|

Haley Horton Cole

There are always the devices  
drawing people's attention (head down, eyes down, hopes down)  
while others laugh with friends (heads up, hopes up, cheer up),  
always people walking about,  
always someone about,  
and the constant flow like a river  
washes the streets new every day.  
And yet, still, for the independent,  
a philosophical existence could be found  
upon listening for the nonexistent silence  
all around. (A heightened existence of noticing things.)  
The roar of vibrating car engines  
increases then softens,  
passing you by, (the doppler effect, they say)  
singing then sighing away,  
the sound of loud music  
from the car on the left, (bet they think they're cool)  
and the patterned ring of construction  
somewhere  
always ringing,  
the sneakers faintly squeaking,  
the headphones too loud from a few yards away,  
the constant flow of life down sidewalks to classes.  
It is your favorite kind of day,  
The normal day,

the familiar way,  
it is your favorite kind,  
and you can't return home  
until your thoughts have flowed to words. (For there are so many thoughts, too many.)  
And so, people pass you by  
though they're not here for words  
or thoughts or wandering meanings  
but just the hustle and bustle  
they accept and know;  
they're wishing for something interesting to happen,  
when life is the interesting thing.

# This Berry Blue Sky | Haley Horton Cole

The sky is blue,  
What an ordinary claim.  
But what of the berry blue  
In the sky of the same?  
You must be confused  
For surely am I.  
So let me explain  
This jolly big sigh.  
Are the heavens the sky  
Or the sky a vast gap?  
A room for us to play  
Or a word for earth's cap?  
Do we soar,  
Do we float,  
Do we cry,  
Do we gloat?  
And thus, I wonder with pause  
If we give meaning to life  
Or if by heaven's laws  
We find meaning by strife.  
So, when the sky is blue,  
Blue as a berry,  
Or when the sky paints pink  
Or red as a cherry,  
It must mean more, I think.  
It must be more

Than a gap of air.  
It must say more  
Than, "Hello, you down there!"

We breathe in and breathe out  
Whispers of air  
That once was a cloud  
Or strong wind way up high.  
One could say, and I do,  
That the sky is in us.  
Indeed, the heavens now rest  
And wake up breathing in us  
In the home of our lungs  
Where it does its best  
To guide and inspire  
The very breaths  
Flowing in us.  
The berry blue sky  
Is not far after all,  
Indeed,  
It's our call,  
It's our cries,  
It's our sighs,  
It's whatever we make it,  
It's wherever we take it.

Abstract Portrait 8/26/2021  
Hanna Wright



HW  
2021



School Lunch 18  
Lisa DeLoria Weinblatt



Abstract Portrait 8/27/2021  
Hanna Wright

HW  
2021

## In Their Own Words: Hare Krishnma Motherhood

Diane De Anda

*I stood there, long dark hair streaming down my back, gold hoop earring glinting in the sunlight, the pattern on my maxi dress a dizzying zig-zag of colors and realized that I would be the most conventional person in the community I was entering. The year was 1973, and I had ventured into the “first world headquarters” of the Hare Krishna Movement in Culver City, a suburb on the Westside of Log Angeles. The Hare Krishna Movement was flourishing, with large numbers of young devotees<sup>1</sup> living in several U.S. cities in compounds comprised of temples, apartment houses for the devotees and their families, grocery stores, and, in Texas, a boarding school for children six years of age and older. For a class assignment, an ethnography of a cultural group, I decided to interview Hare Krishna mothers. My job was to see and record the world from their perspective. I was a 28 year old Latina graduate student who considered herself fairly counter-culture, and I was eager to see if I could be as accepting of their difference as I expected mainstream culture to be accepting of my own “difference.”*

*This two-block square village within the big city was comprised of a temple complex and a series of twenty-year-old apartment buildings for married devotees and their children. Two hundred and eight five devotees (including children) lived and spent most of the time in the Center’s property, although the single people left the complex during the day to preach.*

*My initial contact was made simply by walking up to a male devotee who was sitting on the temple steps and explaining my purpose. Like all the other adult males, his head was shaved, and he wore swirls of orange cloth wrapped around a white tunic and a*

<sup>1</sup>

Name used by members of the Hare Krishna movement/religion to refer to themselves

*dhoti (loose fitting, calf-length pants). Standing amid the multicolored sari-clad women of the compound, there was no doubt he knew I was a karmi, an outsider that some felt could be a contaminating force. Nevertheless, and perhaps because he believed I might be there to join them in renouncing the ways of the world around them, he directed me to Tulsi<sup>2</sup>, who was particularly well-respected in the community. Tulsi readily agreed to participate and assist me in the process, arranged the interviews with three other women, gave me a tour of the temple, fed me prasadam,<sup>3</sup> and provided detailed information regarding their beliefs and practices without ever proselytizing.*

*The women were all in their twenties and the mothers of preschool aged children:*

*Tulsi, a devotee for five years, was described by others as “a very advanced devotee.” In addition to her maternal duties, she also transcribed the Spiritual Master’s taped translations of various spiritual works. Her husband was a Sanskrit scholar who traveled with the Spiritual Master. Her son was a very active three-year-old with long, golden curls that cascaded to his shoulders. Sabina, the mother of a two-year-old girl, hoped to begin illustrating children’s books with Krishna-consciousness themes. Revati, the mother of twin four-year-old girls, was a member of a group of devotees who taught the children in the community Krishna-consciousness through the medium of puppets at 5:00 p.m. every Sunday. Radha, the mother of a four-year-old girl, was known for her willingness to let great numbers of children play and enjoy themselves in her home.*

*I explained that my purpose was to see the world and their role as mothers through their eyes. The initial plan was to ask a set of questions in a methodical, sequential manner. However, I obtained all the information I was seeking by allowing the mothers to talk freely and interjecting the questions only when there was a lull in the conversation and the material had not been covered. The exchange was very open and often punctuated*

<sup>2</sup> All the devotees had East Indian names. Pseudonyms are used to protect their identity.

<sup>3</sup> food that has been offered to the deities

*by laughter. I joined the mothers in their homes, outdoors in child care, and in community rituals. All conversations were taped and transcribed to avoid any misrepresentation or misquoting and to allow their perspective to be presented in their own words.*

### *Philosophical Background*

*Knowing I was a karmi, part of the world they renounced and a stranger to their own world, they began by instructing me in the basic principles of Krishna-conscious philosophy. I learned*

*that existence consists of polarities: 1) maya or all that is material and, therefore, subject to the four miseries of birth, death, disease, and old age, and 2) spiritual existence, which is an eternal, blissful, transcendental relationship with God, and that humans, by their very nature, are intended to seek the latter:*

*According to Krishna-conscious philosophy, this human form of life is specifically meant to become God-realized...other forms of life such as animals, plants, trees, they don’t have intelligence...to be self-realized (Tulsi).*

*The religion requires full renunciation of maya through a total immersion in the spiritual life:*

*We’re trying to be engaged twenty-four hours a day in Krishna service in order to go back to Godhead, in order to develop love of God (Tulsi).*

*According to the mothers:*

*material existence = material attachments = misery*

*Krishna-consciousness = detachment from material things = happiness.*

*Every devotee takes four “vows” upon becoming initiated: 1) no intoxication, 2) no meat eating, 3) no illicit sex life, 4) no gambling. The vow against meat eating is tied to the belief that a devotee must never harm any “living entity,” but in a broader sense, is tied to the belief that the devotee should not engage in sense gratification. Therefore, illicit sex*



is not only defined as sex outside of the marriage, but “...sex life is allowed in marriage once a month only for the propagation of a Krishna-conscious child” (Tulsi)

Being a devotee requires unquestioning belief in and obedience to the Spiritual Master, who is considered the “transparent medium,” that is, Krishna talking and teaching through him:

*Everything comes from our Spiritual Master. If we conger or make up our own, then it becomes mental speculation. In other words, we don't know how to please God, Krishna. That's why he sends us a guru. Our Spiritual Master knows exactly how to please Krishn, God. He tells us how to do everything perfectly in harmony with Krishna's love, including raising and disciplining children, how to brush our teeth, how to take a bath, how to dress, how to comb our hair...”(Revati).*

However, this obedience is never demanded per se by the Spiritual Master himself, but is woven into the structure of the philosophy: “You're supposed to follow the orders of the Spiritual Master... He doesn't force us to do anything, but he'll tell us that this is his desire...”(Revati); for example, to send their children to Gurukula, the boarding school in Texas, at age six.

The principle of the Transmigration of Souls holds that the only permanent individual realities are spirit souls. All plants, animals, and humans have spirit souls. Spirit souls travel up the hierarchy of “living entities” if they have had their consciousness elevated during their lifetimes and down if they have not. At death, the spirit leaves the body and takes another body unless it has attained a degree of Krishna-consciousness sufficient to allow the spirit to go back to Godhead and never again be reborn. One of the mothers fed stray dogs prasadam (holy food) to help elevate them to a higher level in their next life.

Respect is given to all things, even those outside the system, because they are all spirit souls and have Krishna in their hearts, but only the insiders (devotees) are guaranteed a return to Godhead, because their status and their actions as devotees have purified them:

“Even if a devotee commits the most abominable actions, he is to be considered saintly be-

cause he is properly situated”<sup>4</sup>

However, because karmi (non-devotees who are dedicated to the material world) have intelligence, they can choose to become Krishna-conscious while animals and lower forms of life cannot. Nevertheless, though not intentionally malicious (as are demons), karmi are still a contaminating influence, particularly for children.

#### General Beliefs Regarding Devotee Children

As a community, there are shared assumptions regarding children, derived either directly from the scriptures or from the teachings of the Spiritual Master.

Children born of Krishna-conscious parents are considered to be spiritually advanced from the moment of conception:

*...on the day that we're going to have sex life, we chant on our beads fifty rounds which is quite a lot. We chant practically all day long in order to elevate our consciousness so that when the child is being conceived, we're assured of having a pious child, a Krishna-conscious child. (Tulsi).*

Parents see their children as more advanced than themselves, because they have been “...worshiping Krishna... [and] completely vegetarian from birth” (Radha)

Because these children are Krishna-conscious from conception, it is believed that they have been yogis in many of their births prior to this one. However, devotee children must also learn “mundane” or worldly knowledge just like any other child, but they never lose the spiritual knowledge and development of their previous lives.

Despite all their spiritual qualities, the mothers expect the children to behave like most children, fighting amongst themselves and getting into various kinds of mischief. The Spiritual Master has taught them that fighting is normal behavior for young children, but substantiation for the mischievous nature of children comes from the behavior of Krishna

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from the Bhagavad-gita (9.30) by the Spiritual Master in a letter published in the movement's magazine, *Back to Godhead*, no. 55.

himself as a child:

*When Krishna was a little boy, he was very naughty. He used to steal butter...from the butter pot. He would stick his hands in and just eat it. And mother Yasoda would come and scold him. Krishna would look at her and run away... (Tulsi)*

*The Spiritual Master has further instructed that young children develop best if given free reign, that is, minimal and gentle discipline and regulation. The freedom is not only seen in the children's behavior, but in the long tousled locks of the young males. After age six, however, their lives must be strictly regulated, otherwise "their senses go hay-wire"(Sabina).<sup>5</sup> Sabina's analogy succinctly described this belief:*

*It's just like a little plant... First you let the plant grow. You let it seedling; you let it bush out and grow, then start to clip it back and to train it. And it grows beautifully. But if you don't clip it and train it, it just grows into a weed.*

*It is at age six that the males have their heads shaved, and the children enter the strict culture of Gurukula, the boarding school, where, for example they are not allowed to use the bathroom after twelve noon.*

*Mild forms of punishment are allowed, with the following progression: 1) Tell the child nicely not to do it or stop doing it; 2) Warn the child that he/she will be tied up if the behavior does not stop; 3) Tie up the child only if he is "very naughty." Tying up the child consists of loosely tying a soft rope that is attached to a doorknob around his/her waist for anywhere from one to ten minutes until the child promises not to transgress again. The punishment is not used vindictively, but is done in a matter-of-fact manner, and all of the mothers giggled when they described it. This form of punishment is used for two reasons, because*

<sup>5</sup> In direct contrast, at Gurukula, the boarding school, children's lives are strictly scheduled and regulated, even bodily functions, with no urination or bowel movements allowed after 12:30 p.m.

*young Krishna's mother employed this particular form of punishment with him and because it is a dispassionate form of punishment.*

*If I don't do this, sometimes I might lose control and get real angry and passionate, and that's not good for you or for the child... If I ever lose control, I just feel terrible afterwards. My whole body feels all shook up or something. (Tulsi)*

*Children are the main focus of the home and the environment should be tailored to meet their needs. Radha stated this directly, "My house is for children. My house is for her. If I didn't have her, I wouldn't have this house; I would just live in the temple."*

*During this time, I also made two observations. The devotee mothers used a very gentle speech when talking with children. All comments directed toward children were spoken in soft tones, lower in volume and much slower in pace. Mothers and their children showed a great deal of mutual affection and had much physical contact. The informants managed to continue the interviews while addressing their children's demands for attention. While I interviewed Revati, one twin girl laid across her lap while the other swung happily on her neck.*

#### *The Education and Socialization of the Preschool Child*

*Although the child prior to age six did not participate in a formal educational institution, his/her daily activities and interactions with peers and adults, particularly the mother, were all part of an educative process that consisted of socialization to the major beliefs and practices of the community and the learning of certain practical skills. The content of this education/socialization as described by the women follows in terms of what the mothers indicated was important to learn, how they taught this, and how their children showed that they had learned it.*

#### *Philosophy, Beliefs, and Ritual*

*There was general agreement among the women as to the important philosoph-*

ical principles to be taught to young children, although mothers differed in their emphases and the extent to which they expected their children to comprehend:

*What's Important:* "Love of God, the theme of life." (Revati)

*How Taught:* "Automatically, by following the principles and by chanting Hare Krishna, Love of God begins to develop in the heart." (Revati)

*How Show:* "They begin dancing and singing and chanting Hare Krishna." (Revati)

Children are not expected to learn "love of God" through instruction. Rather, it is an automatic consequence of ritualistic actions, the chanting of Hare Krishna. This automatic aspect of the process results in a tautology in that the chanting becomes both the means to attain Love of God and the way to determine whether one has achieved the Love of God.

They felt it was particularly important for children to understand from a very young age that their true self was a spirit soul, not the body in which it resided:

*What's Important:* "And another most important thing for the child to learn is that I am not this body. I'm pure spirit soul, eternal servant of Krishna." (Revati).

*How Taught:* "As soon as a child falls down and hurts his body and says, 'I am hurt,' you say, 'No, you are not that body. You are a spirit soul, part and parcel of Krishna....'" (Revati)

"I talk to her about death, about how things die. She'll say, 'the bird is dead.' And I'll say, 'No, no, the bird body is dead, but actually the spirit soul that was in that bird body has just gone back home. Just constantly when ever we run into it in our daily lives, just reminding her that the body is just a temporary home for the real soul.'" (Radha).

*How Show:* The two mothers quoted above expected their children to show their

grasp of this principle through correct answers to specific questions.

For example, Radha's four-year-old daughter answered correctly that her tongue was for chanting Hare Krishna and for eating prasadam, but failed the test when she reported that she was made of "stool and butter puffs."

Children were taught respect for all living things:

*What's Important:* Everything has a spirit soul and, therefore, one must never hurt any "living entity."

*How Taught:* "For instance, like a bug, a little bug by them. They see it, and they become very excited and start poking it and want to do something. I say, 'Don't hurt it. Krishna is in its heart. It's a spirit soul; it's not that body.' So then they begin to realize that it's not my position to hurt any other living entity." (C)

*How Show:* A group of five boys squatting around a wounded fly earnestly explained to A. that they were only "blowing and spitting" on the fly and would never injure it.

Because the important reality is spiritual, children are taught to restrain the pleasure they take in sensory experiences:

*What's Important:* Children must learn not to engage in sense gratification.

*How Taught:* "Like all the foodstuffs that we prepare we offer to the Lord. We don't ever smell flowers without giving them to the Lord. Like sometimes I'll say, 'Now you shouldn't just enjoy that for yourself or pick it for your sense gratification. You should offer it; then it will be beneficial to the spirit soul that has the flower body.'" (Radha)

*How Show:* Children could be seen both at the evening services and at their own

little altars offering flowers to the deities before smelling or taking possession of them.

Sensory experiences related to spiritual rituals, however, were encouraged:

*What's Important:* Revati stressed that she wanted her children to learn to listen to "transcendental vibrations."

*How Taught:* "An ordinary person in his home would have some rock 'n roll music on or a television set or like that. But instead, we only listen to our Spiritual Master singing mantras." (Revati)

*How Show:* "...their hearing becomes purified and automatically when they begin speaking they will speak only pure thoughts... Then they begin to chant." (Revati)

The twins, who were listening to the conversation, began to chant at this point.

*tices:* All parents felt it was important for their children to learn a variety of ritual practices:

*What's Important:* "Like obeisances [bowing], chanting, dancing." (Sabina) "Offering, offering all food to God." (Tulsi)

*How Taught:* Explicit instructions are given along with demonstrations, but probably the most effective means of learning is through modeling the behavior of the adults. Since children are included in almost all major services daily, they have numerous opportunities for observing the entire cultural repertoire of ritual behaviors.

*How Show:* During Arotika (the evening service), I observed even children under

two years of age make proper obeisances when entering the temple. Children also chanted, danced, played drums and karatala. An infant, barely a year old, fearlessly passed his hand through a flame representing Krishna's mercy.

### Virtues or Qualities of a Devotee

In addition to specific beliefs and ritual practices, all the mothers indicated that they wanted their children to develop qualities or virtues that are the hallmark of a good devotee. Again, the major differences between the mothers was not with respect to content, but as to what extent each felt children were capable of developing these qualities at so young an age.

The mothers identified three virtues they felt were most important to develop in their children: humility, austerity, and detachment.

Humility was recognized by all as the most important virtue.

*What's Important:* Humility in this context meant a recognition of the value of all living things as spirit souls along with the paradoxical recognition of one's own unimportance.

*How Taught:* "When she walks on the grass I say, 'See, the grass is letting you walk on its body, and it's not complaining or biting your feet; it's not fighting back. And the tree also is so tolerant you can climb in its branches, take knives and carve hearts on it, and take saws and cut off its branches. It just stands there and doesn't mind when offend it. And so that is the way we should be. We should not take offense against ourselves when people are mean. We should accept all offense against ourselves considering that actually we deserve worse....'" (Radha)

*How Show:* Revati said she would know that her girls were developing humility if

*they would fall down immediately upon seeing a saintly person and offer their "...obeisances... respects...services."*

*The children were taught a particular perspective with regard to austerity:*

*What's Important: The Spiritual Master has instructed that children not only be taught the quality of austerity, but that austerity is fun.*

*How Taught: Radha tells her child that "...it's fun to get up at four o'clock in the morning when everyone else is asleep. And it's fun to sleep on the floor and not have a big soft bed. And it's fun not to have television...who needs them. We have books and beautiful pictures...."*

*How Show: The informants remarked that their children enjoy sleeping in sleeping bags. M. reported that her daughter enjoys listening to the cassette recordings several times during the day, and that she cannot miss radio or television, because she has never been exposed to them.*

*Detachment was recognized as the most difficult virtue to instill in both children and adults:*

*What's Important: Two informants, in particular, stressed the importance of detachment, one with relation to objects and the other with relation to people. The other two informants agreed, but did not emphasize it to the same degree.*

*How Taught: "We try to teach them that everything belongs to Krishna. There's a Sanskrit expression... that means 'Nothing is mine.' We try to*

*teach them that Krishna has given them these things, these toys, for instance, but at this age they don't understand to much." (Tulsi)*

*"Her father left...to travel and preach. So when she starts asking after him... I say, 'Oh, yes, we're attached to daddy, but we shouldn't be attached to daddy's body, because his body is not him. We should be attached to Krishna, because Krishna is the only person we can always be with, the person we can love eternally, because his [father's] body is going to grow old and die.' And now her aunt who is also a devotee is going to be leaving for Dallas, and so there's another chance. Krishna always sends me chances to teach her detachment." (Radha)*

*How Show: Radha reported that her daughter seemed to take her father's leaving very well. All the informants stated that children had no difficulty leaving their parents to go to Gurukula, the boarding school in Texas.*

*The mothers attempted to teach this concept through verbal instruction, using concrete examples related to the children's experiences. Note, however, that again there is a difference between what Tulsi and Radha feel children are capable of understanding and practicing. Radha stated that her child understood the concept and demonstrated it quite well. Tulsi, on the other hand, stated that children could not adequately comprehend the concept at this age and that, in fact, detachment was a quality that adults must work at all their lives, because it is so difficult.*

#### *Individual Differences.*

*Despite the fact that the religion is very structured and fairly precise, there were, nevertheless, some individual differences among the mothers in the application or interpretation of various principles. An area that demonstrated the greatest individual differences was with regard to relations with the outside world. Although all the mothers lim-*

ited and controlled their children's exposure to the outside world and the influence of karmi adults and children, one mother was adamant in limiting interaction with her parents, while another encouraged it for the sake of the parents as well, aiming to "Get them real attached to her. That will do them some good." (Radha)

An interesting area of controversy deals with the concept of "nonsense." All the informants agreed that they did not want their children speaking nonsense and that nonsense in general meant anything not related to Krishna-consciousness. However, application of this general concept varied. One mother said she tried to discourage her child's nonsensical remarks such as "Hare Goo Goo" or "Hare Toothbrush." Another mother strictly classified all actions performed without offering them to Krishna as nonsense, such as playing lion with a child unless the lion was depicted in one of the Krishna stories. Lastly, one mother referred to nonsense as gossip and fault-finding:

Sometimes she'll come and say, 'so and so thinks he's so big.' And I'll say, 'Oh, but he's a great devotee.' One little thing I use, well Prabhupada [the Spiritual Master] uses it to explain to us, and it works great....I say, 'There's bees and there's flies.... You find the bees hanging around the flowers taking out the nectar, and you always find the flies hanging around the stool. And so, when we're talking about our friends, are we going to be bees or are we going to be flies? We can look for the nice things or we can look for the bad things.' (Radha)

#### Children's Activities

Although the Hare Krishna children appeared to engage in activities common to all children their age, the content was frequently related to Krishna's life and principles. For example, the children helped prepare food, but the food was a type of holy food (prasadam) and first offered to the gods. Music and dancing were always related to some form of worship. Even going for walks with their mother became times for instruction in the application of Krishna-conscious principles.

The children played with various toys, but were allowed to use their blocks only for building temples to Krishna and not to build "mundane structures." The children had their own little deities and altars. Although they played with them, one mother insisted that "they have respect for them. They can't drop them on the floor, put them in their mouth, or let their feet touch them." (Revati) The principal aim of this play was to develop a friendship with Krishna.

#### Culmination: Arotika

The children's most striking behavior occurred in the temple during Arotika, the evening service. The main room where the services were held had an open area where the devotees chanted and danced before three altars of deities that stood in the middle of elaborate, gold-pillared platforms filled with flowers and colorful cloth decoration. Most of the deities looked like large ceramic dolls, had long, black, wavy hair, and were dressed in East Indian garb. Facing the altars, toward the rear of the room was a large ornate chair covered in purple velvet, where the Spiritual Master, with world-renown second only to the guru of Beatles fame, sat when he was present during the ceremonies.

The temple was crowded with over 200 members of the community loudly chanting and dancing to the rhythm of the drums and karatals. Children of all ages wandered about freely, they and their parents secure in this sacred environment. Some children joined in the worship by leaping and dancing or playing drums or karatals to the beat of the adult drummers. Others simply walked about calmly snaking their way through the dancing crowd. Babies sat quietly on their mothers' laps, rarely cried, and even slept despite the volume of the drumming and chanting that filled the room.

I stood quietly watching, leaning against a wall as children and adults danced in swirls of color, grateful that I, the karmi, the outsider, had been allowed to enter their world. The mothers' words came to life in the exuberance that filled the temple as devotees and their children leapt for joy,

chanting:

*Hare Krishna*

*Hare Krishna*

*Krishna Krishna*

*Hare Hare*

*Hare Rama*

*Hare Rama*

*Rama Rama*

*Hare Hare*



Abstract Portrait 8/22/2021  
Hanna Wright

HW  
2021

# Because of You|

Talynn Kel

*Because of You*

*Because of you I learned how to scream*

*Uncontrollably*

*Internally*

*Because of you I learned how to hurt*

*Unceasingly*

*Invisibly*

*Because of you I learned how to cry*

*Unabashedly*

*Incessantly*

*Because of you I learned to heal*

*Undeniably*

*Impressively*

*Because of you I learned to love*

*Uninhibitedly*

*Incontestably*

*Unequivocally*

*Indisputably*

*All because of you.*



School Lunch 16  
Lisa DeLoria Weinblatt



## Things of Beauty |

Audra Burwell

The raging sea thundering against shell-strewn caves,  
Bleaching bones left behind by lives past.  
Dewdrops caressing the velvet petals of a rose,  
Soft and supple.  
The sun blooming radiantly upon the dusky horizon,  
Lavender eyeshadow spilling its pigment across a scratched glass table.  
A myriad of butterflies claiming the sky with the majesty of their wings,  
Beating the air,  
Powerful muscles churning with hope.  
An innocent mind seeing the world for the first time,  
Snow falling on blackened ground.  
Mushrooms, flies, ants, and fungus crawling through the rich soil,  
Breathing fire and rebirth.  
An eclipse of life.



Knowing  
Nate Buachidze



Moralist 2  
Nate Buachidze

## Expiration | Adura Burwell

Flies swarm his mangled skull  
Eyes sunken and sightless  
One arm bent, the other obliterated  
A tribute to the overlord of death  
Who commands our hearts and souls  
With an unyielding grip and a sadistic mind  
Each snap of his finger and we cower  
Like marionette dolls, our strings tangled  
Woven through life's ugliness  
We are the slaves of decay  
Organic material crumbling with every step  
Our fate predestined from birth  
We know what's coming  
It lurks in the dark crevices of our subconscious  
Something dirty, something rotten  
Like a vegetable patch in autumn  
Maggots crawling, fighting for dominance  
Over flesh long forgotten  
Unwanted and used by greedy hands  
You may cringe, cower, attempt to look away  
But there is no escaping this grisly fate  
It is life undone



Ilusha Again  
Nate Buachidze

## Aging| Adura Burwell

On the corner of 5th and 21st street,  
A presence lingers,  
Wedged beneath the cracks,  
In the crumbling ruin of a city.

It's yellow eyes flicker curiously,  
As it watches souls float by,  
Silently gathering secrets,  
Of all those who have departed.

No one knows the origin of this creature,  
Nor its purpose on Earth,  
As it predates the beginning of time,  
A guardian for all millenniums.

With hungry eyes and desperate thoughts,  
It gathers life from those near,  
Slowly draining them of youth,  
And laughing as they shrivel before it.

It crushes childhood memories,  
And vanquishes youthful hopes,

Leaving a burnt carcass,  
An empty shell of lost dreams.

Some believe they can defeat it,  
With a fabled fountain buried deep in the Earth,  
Bubbling with everlasting beauty,  
And brimming with eternity.

But it continues to elude all those who search,  
Sheltering its sacred waters,  
From the demented and the deranged,  
Whose souls continue to wither.

Forced to face the hellish beast of time,  
Humankind trudges on,  
Shoulders slumped, eyes sunken,  
Praying that their demise is still distant.

Soul Holes 3 Animbus  
CJ Hungerman



# Gatekeepers of Womanhood: Labia Stretching in Zambia |

Mubanga Kalimamukwento

## INTRODUCTION

*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.*<sup>1</sup> For the Zambian woman, this journey to womanhood is centered on the socialization process that will carve out the best wife for a future husband. In this paper, I investigate the symbolic significance of labia stretching to womanhood in Zambia using other research papers, articles, and fictional texts. Being a Zambian woman myself, I am interested in the motivations behind this act of self-modification and how the internalization of those motivations spill into other social structures. I will also tap into my experiences as a lawyer in Zambia to question why and how legislation fails to address labia stretching as a child rights and women's rights issue.

## BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS

The term Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.<sup>2</sup> *Western feminists argue that the practice reinforces men's domination over women and creates inequalities, as it is practiced to control female sexuality. The Western feminist perspective has condemned FGM as a violation of women's rights that must be handled as universal women's rights and claimed that the cultural practice must be outlawed.*

1 De Beauvoir Simone, *The Second Sex* (1989)

2 World Health Organization, Female Genital Mutilation, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/female-genital-mutilation>, (Accessed on 05.07.2020)

*African*

*feminists condemned FGM as a cultural practice but refute to consider the rigid binary men*

*versus women.*<sup>3</sup> This narrative on the motives behind FGM has led to some misconceptions about the practice, including the idea that men force women to undergo the procedure. In fact, elderly women often do the most to perpetuate it.<sup>4</sup>

In 1997, the WHO classified female genital mutilation into four different types. Since then, experience with using this classification revealed the need to subdivide these categories, to capture the varieties of FGM in more detail. Severity (which here corresponds to the amount of tissue damaged) and health risk are closely related to the type of FGM performed as well as the amount of tissue that is cut.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, I argue that labia elongation falls under class VI FGM, which is described as, *'All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, for example, pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterization.'*<sup>6</sup> Labia elongation consists of the manual stretching of the inner folds of the external female genitalia. It is carried out with the aid of herbs and creams, until the desired length is achieved, which can range from 2–8 cm. Girls are told to start the practice as early as 7 years old. In sub-Saharan Africa, (the practice is sometimes) an expression of women's strategies to control their partners, and to ensure commitment in their marriages.<sup>7</sup> Numerous forms of type IV FGM are widespread in African communities,

3 Diop Mame Kani, Stewart Pearl & Herr Kathryn, A Black African Feminist Theory To Examine Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Within African Immigrant Families In The United States, (2017), <https://www.ncfr.org/sites/default/files/2017-08/TCRM%204%20-%20A%20Black%20African%20Feminist%20Theory.pdf>

4 Khazan Olga, Why Some Women Choose to Get Circumcised, *The Atlantic*, (2015), <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/04/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-anthropologist/389640/>

5 World Health Organization, Sexual and Reproductive Health, <https://www.who.int/sexual-and-reproductive-health/types-of-female-genital-mutilation>, (Accessed on 05.07.2020)

6 World Health Organization, Sexual and Reproductive Health, <https://www.who.int/sexual-and-reproductive-health/types-of-female-genital-mutilation>, (Accessed on 05.07.2020)

7 Martínez Pérez, M., Mubanga, M., Tomás Aznar, C. & Bagnol, B. Zambian women in South Africa: Insights into health experiences of labia elongation, *Journal of Sex Research*, (2015), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292906659\\_Elongation\\_of\\_the\\_Labia\\_Minora\\_Insights\\_on\\_its\\_implications\\_for\\_women's\\_health\\_A\\_study\\_with\\_Zambian\\_migrants\\_in\\_Cape\\_Town\\_South\\_Africa](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292906659_Elongation_of_the_Labia_Minora_Insights_on_its_implications_for_women's_health_A_study_with_Zambian_migrants_in_Cape_Town_South_Africa)

including countries where the estimated prevalence is not high such as Zambia.<sup>8</sup>

From the description above, it is clear that labia elongation does not involve cutting, like the other forms of FGM. This physical difference has led some authors to suggest that it is not mutilation, further arguing that it has held a cherished place in the cultural norms of the Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa for generations.<sup>9</sup> Another reason for the resistance to classify labia elongation as mutilation might be the representation of FGM in Western media lumps all forms of it with the extremely rare practice of infibulation, which is the sewing of genitalia to preserve virginity.

The portrayal of FGM in Western media is of helplessness, giving African women no agency. For example, in *Possessing the Secrets of Joy*<sup>10</sup>, the author writes a fictional story of Tashi, an African American woman who goes to Africa and chooses to become circumcised as a gesture of Pan African solidarity with the indigenous women. Instead, she returns to America as an emotional and physical wreck, incapable of any form of rationality. In *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women*<sup>11</sup>, a non-fiction perspective on female circumcision, it is proposed that Western feminists have to save African women from circumcision because they are oblivious of their oppression.<sup>12</sup>

These representations might explain resistance in categorizing labia elongation as FGM.

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

8 Ariyo Debbie, Ssali Rose, Nambuya Barbara & Olurin Folasade, Voices of the Community: Exploring Type IV (Labia Elongation) Female Genital Mutilation in the African Community across Greater Manchester (Final Report), (2016), <https://www.afruca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Final-Labia-Elongation-FGM-Report.pdf>

9 Ariyo Debbie, Ssali Rose, Nambuya Barbara & Olurin Folasade, Voices of the Community: Exploring Type IV (Labia Elongation) Female Genital Mutilation in the African Community across Greater Manchester (Final Report), (2016), <https://www.afruca.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Final-Labia-Elongation-FGM-Report.pdf>

10 Walker Alice, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, (1997)

11 Walker Alice, & Parmar Pratibha, *Warrior marks: Female genital mutilation and the sexual blinding of women*, (1993)

12 Quichocho Jennifer, *Through the Yoruba Lens: A Postcolonial Discourse of Female Circumcision*, University of Denver, (2018), <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2468&context=etd>

While international and regional human rights instruments have recognized female genital mutilation as one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women and girls, in many African states, FGM is a deeply entrenched cultural practice. There is a consensus against FGM, as evidenced by its criminalization in several African countries. The mere fact that the practice continues despite legislative measures to protect women and girls against FGM raises the question of whether change can be legislated.<sup>13</sup>

As a former British colony, Zambia's legal system is based on a combination of inherited English common law, formalized through legislation, and unwritten customary law. The term *customary law* though, in the Zambian context covers a people split into 72 different tribes. Both systems, exist within the framework of the Constitution<sup>14</sup>. Article 1 therein provides that, '*This Constitution is the supreme law of Zambia and if any other law is inconsistent with this constitution that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void.*' Article 11 further protects young persons from exploitation and protects their security of person. But, no Zambian law specifically mentions genital mutilation. This is not surprising considering how deeply conservative Zambia is. There is a consistent avoidance in legislation to call things relating to sexual organs by their names. For example, rather than say, child rape, Zambian law euphemistically calls it 'defilement' because an innocent child's virtue has seemingly been destroyed.<sup>15</sup>

Section 137 of the Zambian Penal Code<sup>16</sup>, provides in part that, '*Any person who unlawfully and indecently assaults any woman or girl is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for fourteen years.*' The provision covers physical assaults on women and girls, (usually by men) which does not lead to intercourse. However, because same-sex relationships are prohibited under an equally vague provision of the same law, the concept of women '*indecently*

13 Nabaneh Satang & Muula Adamson S., Female genital mutilation/cutting in Africa: A complex legal and ethical landscape, *Gynaecology and Obstetrics*, (2019), [https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ijgo.12792@10.1002/\(ISSN\)1879-3479.FreetoviewCollection](https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ijgo.12792@10.1002/(ISSN)1879-3479.FreetoviewCollection)

14 Chapter 1 of the Laws of Zambia

15 Kasonde Linda, Why do we blame women for rape?, *Zambia Daily Mail*, (2018), <http://www.daily-mail.co.zm/why-do-we-blame-women-for-rape/>

16 Chapter 87 of the Laws of Zambia

*assaulting*’ other women and girls is not included in this section.

On the international landscape, Zambia ratified the Maputo Protocol<sup>17</sup> in May 2006. Article 5 of the protocol provides inter alia that *States Parties shall prohibit and condemn all forms of harmful practices which negatively affect the human rights of women and which are contrary to recognized international equality. States Parties shall take all necessary legislative and other measures to eliminate such practices, including: (b) prohibition, through legislative measures backed by sanctions, of all forms of female genital mutilation, scarification, medicalization, and para-medicalization of female genital mutilation and all other practices in order to eradicate them.*

Domesticated, this translated into the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act<sup>18</sup>, which promises to; *‘provide for the protection of victims of gender-based violence; constitute the Anti-Gender-Based Violence Committee; establish the Anti-Gender-Based Violence Fund; and provide for matters connected with, or incidental to, the foregoing.’*

Collectively, these provisions align themselves with the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child<sup>19</sup> (CRC), to which Zambia is a party. They respond to the rights of girls to be protected from all forms of mental and physical violence and maltreatment, per Article 19(1) of the CRC, as well as the right to the highest attainable standard of health protected in Article 24 and the freedom from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment under Article 37. Per Article 2 of the CRC, inter alia, Zambia is also committed to respecting and ensuring *the rights outlined in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, color, sex, language and should take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination.*

In CEDAW<sup>20</sup>, the term discrimination against women means *any distinction, exclusion*

17 The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights of Women in Africa, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2003

18 Act Number 1 (April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

19 November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1989

20 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1979

*or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on the basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. As a state party, Zambia agreed to take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of the sexes (5.a)*

In addition, as a party to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Zambian children are also entitled to *the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this Charter irrespective of the child’s or his/her parents’ or legal guardians’ race, ethnic group, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.*

*Discrimination against girl children is a serious violation of rights, affecting their survival and all areas of their young lives as well as restricting their capacity to contribute positively to society. Moreover, the adverse effects of FGM on children’s development contravene the best interest of the child - a central notion to the Convention (Article 3). Because FGM is performed without the consent of the girls, it also breaches the right to express freely one’s view (Article 12). Even if the girl child is aware of the practice, the issue of consent remains, as girls are usually too young to be consulted.<sup>21</sup>*

## **CULTURE: RITES VERSUS RIGHTS**

*International law has recognized the importance of culture—in UNESCO documents, for example. Recent UNESCO work on cultural heritage has also affected the scope of cultural rights. Although the law of cultural heritage is broader than the human rights considerations, it*

21 EndFGM, Female Genital Mutilation, <https://www.endfgm.eu/female-genital-mutilation/> (Accessed 04.22.2020)

raises important issues related to cultural rights. At the center of cultural rights is the generic right to culture, recognized in Article 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>22</sup>

The enjoyment of the rights by women, especially in Africa, is wrapped within cultural backgrounds. Thus, when discussing labia elongation within the FGM discourse, it is essential to acknowledge that cultural context is the basis for the construction of womanhood and therefore needs to be seen with specific cultural settings. In arguing that labia elongation is a women's rights issue, neglect to consider culture can jeopardize women's justice.<sup>23</sup>

However, *culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture.*<sup>24</sup> Culture is used as the most prominent defense to FGM. In addition, because women live in a community where rumors say if you elongate men will not run away, there is pressure to do it.<sup>25</sup>

### WHY LABIA MINORA ELONGATION (LME)?

In a 2013 article published by the Global Press Journal, it was reported that *'Zambian girls report that family matriarchs and counselors pressure them to stretch their labia minora, but they dare not question the cultural practice.'* Like many practices of this nature, tied in closely with the concept of womanhood and the aspiration to marriage, it is rooted in secrecy. As such, research on the long-term adverse effects is limited. *Only one cross-sectional study, in Tete province, central Mozambique, has been conducted to assess the prevalence of labia minora elongation (LME) and its adverse effects. In that study, 98.6% of a sample of 919 women*

*representative of the whole province reported ever having practiced elongation. Only 4.5% of the women reported that they had suffered from minor harms as a consequence of LME, such as irritation or pain, itching, inflammation, and dyspareunia (Hull et al., 2011). Qualitative studies on LME have indicated that participants may experience other discomforts such as pain, lacerations, edema, swelling, or irritation.*<sup>26</sup>

In one study, Dr. Kenneth K. Mwenda suggests that labia elongation is not a human rights issue. *The validity test of African customary law – that is, a custom is only valid if it does not offend public policy, or any laws of a concerned country, or natural justice, good conscience, and equity – is seen as the determining factor as to whether labia elongation violates the rights of women. Unlike situations of female circumcision involving partial or complete removal of the external genitalia, or removal of the prepuce (hood) of the clitoris, or full excision of the clitoris, labia minora and labia majora, the case of labia elongation does not involve offensive physical violence against women. The paper argues, therefore, that the practice of labia elongation per se, as customary in many parts of Africa, does not violate the rights of women. Such a practice can, however, offend African customary law and violate the rights of women where a woman is coerced into labia elongation or where she is misled fraudulently or negligently into the practice. Also, the practice of labia elongation can offend African customary law and the rights of women where legal norms of a particular society show that labia elongation is contrary to either public policy, other laws of that jurisdiction, or natural justice, good conscience, and equity.*<sup>27</sup> In his view, therefore, women are given a choice as to whether they stretch their labia or not. He further contends that since they are, then the practice cannot offend African customary law. This argument is problematic since it assumes either that the girls can give consent or that the practice is carried out on women who can.

22 Xanthaki Alexandra, Cultural Rights, (2015), p.2

23 Masresha Yazew Andarge, The Difficulties of Ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Case of Afar Pastoralist Communities in Ethiopia, International Institute of Social Studies, (2014)<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/FGM/NGOs/ActionForIntegratedSustainableDevelopmentAssociation.pdf>

24 Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, We Should All Be Feminists, (2015)

25 Varia e Memória & Chabal Patrick, Enhancement of the sexual experience is the primary-cited purpose for engaging in LME, Cardenos de Estudos Africanos, (2014), <https://journals.openedition.org/cea/1522?lang=en>

26 Martínez Pérez, M., Mubanga, M., Tomás Aznar, C. & Bagnol, B, Zambian women in South Africa: Insights into health experiences of labia elongation, Journal of Sex Research, (2015)

27 Mwenda Kaoma Kenneth, Labia Elongation under African Customary Law: A Violation of Women's Rights?, The International Journal of Human Rights, (2006), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13642980600976369?scroll=top&needAccess=true>



Some girls have described it as painful. *It wasn't really something pleasant for me as a person. Because at that time, you're something like 12 years, 11 years — you're not sexually active. So why are you doing this thing? Honestly, why are you doing this so-called 'pulling,' whatever people call it? I didn't know why, but because we were many, some days, they would say, 'Get a partner. Get a partner; you do it to each other.'*<sup>28</sup>

At the heart of this elaborate socio-cultural institution, it is the aunt whose role is to tutor young girls in a wide range of sexual matters, including pre-marriage preparation and erotic instruction. Between the age of nine and twelve, girls are guided to prepare their genitals for future sex. This is done through a procedure that involves elongating the labia minora. Pubescent girls would 'visit the bush' for a few hours every day over a period of about two weeks. The aunt persuades them to comply by advising them that if they did not, no man would ever ask for their hand in marriage. Worse still, if a man later discovers that his bride had not 'visited the bush,' he will send her back home to fulfill her duty because a woman without elongated labia is a half-baked one.<sup>29</sup>

In Zambia, these psychological pressure techniques take place years after the initial 'encouragement' to stretch one's labia. For example, cases have been reported where *a newlywed bride is sent back to her parent's home by her husband so that she can have her labia stretched before moving into the matrimonial home. In such cases, the commonest way of stretching the labia in the shortest possible time is by clipping wooden or plastic clothes pegs to it. The experience can be very painful, although it will, in almost all cases, produce the desired results. A traditional herb called 'umu-tuntula' can also be used to stretch a woman's labia. The application of the plant causes the labia to swell to the desired length, though inflicting excruciating pain for a week or so. Thereafter, the labia remains elongated. A common argument advanced by some women in Zambia is that labia elongation provides a man with the necessary sexual*

28 Athumani Halima, Ugandan Official, Traditionalists Clash Over Female Genital Stretching, Voice of America, (2020), <https://www.voanews.com/science-health/ugandan-official-traditionalists-clash-over-female-genital-stretching>

29 Tamale Sylvia, Eroticism, Sensuality and 'Women's Secrets' among the Baganda: A Critical Analysis, Feminist Africa, (2005) <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2006.tb00308.x>

*'toys' to arouse his libido before having sex. Another argument is that elongated labia can hold a man's penis firmly in the vagina during the sexual act. There is also a view that stretched labia have traditionally helped women satisfy their men sexually and thus maintain their marriages.'*<sup>30</sup>

This idea that a girl who was ill-prepared to satisfy her future husband made her inadequate is one that I explored in *Womanhood*.<sup>31</sup> In it, the influential female figure in the girls' life was her grandmother. Like the aunt in Tamale's study of labia elongation among the Baganda, this relationship of trust is enough to convince the young girl to modify her body for a future husband.

Thus, despite this resistance to call labia elongation mutilation, many girls practice it under social pressure, typically before a girl's first mensural period.<sup>32</sup> In a 2016 article published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a survivor of FGM said, *'While Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is not technically a taboo topic in this country, the practice is so normalized that it is not considered different from other medical practices. Our culture silences discussions of women's bodies out of modesty, or because women's sexuality itself is considered too shameful a topic for polite company. Further, girls all over the world are often treated as having no autonomy over their bodies, so performing a procedure that forever alters them is considered acceptable and to some, obligatory.'*<sup>33</sup>

Simone de Beauvoir's provocative declaration, 'He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other,' signals the central importance of the self for feminism. To be the Other is to be a non-subject, a non-agent—in short, a mere thing.<sup>34</sup>

30 Mwenda Kaoma Kenneth, (2006), Labia Elongation under African Customary Law: A Violation of Women's Rights?, The International Journal of Human Rights, (2006), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13642980600976369?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

31 Kalimamukwento Mubanga, (2019), Womanhood, Overland Journal, <https://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-237/fiction-womanhood/>

32 Martínez Pérez, M., Mubanga, M., Tomás Aznar, C. & Bagnol, B, Zambian women in South Africa: Insights into health experiences of labia elongation, Journal of Sex Research. (2015), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292906659\\_Elongation\\_of\\_the\\_Labia\\_Minora\\_Insights\\_on\\_its\\_implications\\_for\\_women's\\_health\\_A\\_study\\_with\\_Zambian\\_migrants\\_in\\_Cape\\_Town\\_South\\_Africa](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292906659_Elongation_of_the_Labia_Minora_Insights_on_its_implications_for_women's_health_A_study_with_Zambian_migrants_in_Cape_Town_South_Africa)

33 <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/we-still-dont-talk-about-it-fgm/>

34 Anderson Ellen, Willett Cynthia & Meyers Diana, Feminist Perspectives on the Self, The Stanford Encyclopaedia

Some researchers have reported contradictory findings such as significant swelling, mild bleeding from the minor cuts and sores that occur during the initial sessions, and occasional reports of neurosensitivity as a result of hypertrophic labia. There is no increased chance of transmitting sexual infections, especially as the process is complete before the girl becomes sexually active. The primary risk would appear to be that females who choose not to undergo the procedure are stigmatized and less likely to find eligible partners among their tribe. For this purpose, they may be intimidated by various psychological pressure techniques into accepting it.<sup>35</sup>

So, while this type of mutilation, physically does not cause long term harm, it does not consider the possible damage to a young girl's understanding of sex as she is pressured to mutilate herself for an imaginary future husband. In fact, *social research findings show that children's earliest experiences significantly influence their future development. The course of their development determines their contribution, or cost, to society over the course of their lives.*<sup>36</sup>

The international community has recently promoted legislation as an essential reform strategy for ending female genital cutting (FGC); there exist divergent views on its potential effects. Supporters argue that the legal prohibition of FGC has a general deterrent effect, while others argue legislation can be perceived as coercive, and derail local efforts to end the practice.<sup>37</sup>

Legislating a practice that is deeply rooted in culture, however, conflicts with the internationally accepted standard of respecting cultural rights. Rather than providing more access to justice for victims, it may only work to alienate them, especially in Zambia's dual legal system. In my article, *Legislation: Is It Ever Enough?* it is illustrated that, *when the legislation was put*

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of Philosophy (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/feminism-self/>

35 Thomas Liji, Labia Stretching, News Medical Life Sciences, (2018), <https://www.news-medical.net/health/Labia-Stretching.aspx>

36 UNESCO, The Right Culture, [http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-sector-knowledge-management-tools/10\\_Info%20Sheet\\_Right%20to%20Culture.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-sector-knowledge-management-tools/10_Info%20Sheet_Right%20to%20Culture.pdf) (Accessed on 05.07.2020)

37 Shell-Duncan Bettina, Hernlund Ylva, Wander Katherine & Moreau Amadou, Legislating Change? Responses to Criminalizing Female Genital Cutting in Senegal, US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health, (2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3997264/>

*to the test in the Courtroom, it failed to meet its own high standard. Cases of domestic violence, sexual violence, and gender-based violence against women continued to be tried using outdated laws such as the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Codes. Many of the victims of these shortfalls in the law are nameless and have no safety net when their cases fall through. The Penal Code gives the state the right to prosecute cases on behalf of victims, even after they give statements stating that they wish to drop them.*<sup>38</sup>

In addition to highlighting the inadequacies of legislation in reform strategies, the above article also shows the problem with asking people to testify against trusted members of their families. In the case of FGM, children would have to complain to authorities against aunts, grandparents, and older siblings, something which is unheard of in their culture. Following the legal route would subject them to speaking about something considered sacred in a public space (a courtroom). This hesitation is evident in other sexual related cases in Zambia since *the burden of shame rests on the woman...To illustrate how few sexual crimes are reported, an article by Innocent Makasa and Lucy Jane Heathfield in the Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine published in February 2018 states that between 2007 and 2014 a total of only 1,154 sexual crimes were even reported – that is the rape of adults and children.*<sup>39</sup>

To put things into perspective, over a period of seven years, only around 127 women reported a case of rape; that's an average of 18 women per year in a population of around 15 million Zambians. To eliminate the practice, addressing the empowerment of girls and women is vital. This can have a positive impact on gender relations, sexual and reproductive health choices, and health-related behavior in general, thus accelerating progress in the abandonment of the practice. Since FGM is deeply embedded in culture and considered central to the identity of many Africans, the issue must be approached with great respect for the cultural context and rationale of this tradition. If FGM is to be eradicated, African communities and international

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38 Kalimamukwento, M, Legislation: Is it ever enough?, The Advocates for Human Rights, (2019)

39 Kasonde L, (2018), Why do we blame women for rape? Zambia Daily Mail, <http://www.daily-mail.co.zm/why-do-we-blame-women-for-rape/> (Accessed 05.09.2020)

support agencies must work collectively at the grassroots level to evaluate the implications of the practice.<sup>40</sup>

For Zambia, one approach could be addressing the issue, not just as a human rights and women's rights issue but as a child rights issue. Since the practice of labia elongation is seen as a teaching moment, cultural beliefs around children can also be used to change the narrative. Among the Bemba people of Zambia's Northern region, various proverbs are shared to illustrate the importance of children. For example, the phrase, 'ukufunda umwana kufikapo,' represents the importance of speaking frankly when teaching children, while 'imiti ikula empanga,' translates into 'small trees that grow, become the forest.' It also means that *the presence of a young generation assures the survival of the family, clan, and country.*<sup>41</sup> From this perspective, it can be argued that to preserve the young generation, introduction to practices so closely linked to their sexuality must be delayed until they are old enough to give informed consent.

In an article published in Zambia in 2019, Senior Chief Madzimawe of the Ngoni people said there was a need to partner with all stakeholders to fight female labia elongation. He called it a harmful practice recognized as a form of female genital mutilation. He said some girls and women in Zambia and in the Southern Africa region, are forced to pull and elongate their genitalia because of demands by sexual and traditional practices.<sup>42</sup>

However, the comments beneath the article are telling. A reflection of pushback against calling the practice mutilation. Many defend it in the name of culture, some stating that women who do not do it will be unmarriageable and that anyone who fights against it, should marry those women themselves.

Such comments illustrate just how often the practice is justified for cultural reasons, and

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40 Williams-Breault B. D, (2018), Eradicating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting Human Rights-Based Approaches of Legislation, Education, and Community Empowerment, Health and Human Rights Journal, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6293358/> (Accessed 05.09.2020)

41 Kangwa-Wilkie, Kapwepwe M, (2014), Insoleso na Mapinda Ancient Bemba Wisdom for Modern Living, Ukusefya Words, P.120

42 Phiri C. (2019) Girls Should Stop Pulling Malepe, Zambia Reports, <https://zambiareports.com/2019/11/01/girls-stop-pulling-malepe-says-madzimawe/> (Accessed 04.30.2020)

reducing women into the other sex. They also show that, like female genital mutilation, which involves cutting, the practice of stretching the labia to enhance the sexual experiences of men *reflects deep-rooted discrimination against girls and women, profoundly entrenched in social, economic, and political structures. The practice is perpetrated without a primary intention of violence. It is considered to be a necessary step to enable girls to become women and to be socially accepted, together with the rest of the family. FGM/C functions as a self-enforcing social convention or social norm. Families and individuals uphold the practice because they believe that their group or society expects them to do so, and they expect that they will suffer social sanctions if they do not. A legal framework that clearly states that harmful practices are unacceptable is undeniably an important measure for contributing to the end of these practices. However, when laws that ban the practice are introduced in contexts where people are still expected to engage in the practice and fear social punishment if they do not, the practice will continue and may be driven underground. The challenge is, therefore, to develop, introduce, and implement legislation in ways that contribute to a social change process that ultimately results in the decision by communities to abandon the practice.*

*When it is accompanied by human rights education programs and community dialogue to foster a consensus on the abandonment of the practice.*<sup>43</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Labia elongation is a topic seldom discussed as a women's rights issue classified as type VI female genital mutilation. It is nevertheless a relevant, timely topic since girls are initiated into the practice long before the age of consent by any analysis. *The gatekeepers of womanhood: labia stretching in Zambia* however, goes beyond narratives of victimhood and examines the cultural rationale and players that keep it in place. Since girls face the double burden of be-

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43 UNESCO, (Legislative Reform to Support the Abandonment of FGM, (2010), [https://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/files/UNICEF\\_-\\_LRI\\_Legislative\\_Reform\\_to\\_support\\_the\\_Abandonment\\_of\\_FGMC\\_August\\_2010.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/policyanalysis/files/UNICEF_-_LRI_Legislative_Reform_to_support_the_Abandonment_of_FGMC_August_2010.pdf)

ing both young and female<sup>44</sup>, the practice of labia minora elongation is a women's rights issue. Women's rights are the rights and entitlements claimed for women and girls worldwide. They differ from broader notions of human rights through claims of an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls, in favor of men and boys.<sup>45</sup>

Due to the secrecy which cloaks this practice, few studies have directly examined the effects on women. However, there are statistics to suggest why this future-marriage focused training thrives. For example, 31% of Zambian girls are married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and 6% are married before the age of 15.<sup>46</sup> It is essential that the narrative is driven by the girls' perspective since the practice is rarely practiced in adulthood except as a form of punishment on a married woman who did not do it in adolescence. Singling them out, using gender-specific language, and addressing their individual needs, we can help even more girls defend their rights, live full lives, and thrive in their communities.<sup>47</sup> My research also gives an emic voice without diluting cultural traditions or practices, while adding to the overall debate of FGM practices.

44 Plan International, 7 Reasons the world needs the girls' rights platform, <https://plan-international.org/7-reasons-world-needs-girls-rights-platform> (Accessed 04.09.2020)

45 Fran P. Hosken, Toward a Definition of Women's Human Rights, Human Rights Quarterly Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 1981), pp. 1-10

46 Girls Not Brides, What's the child marriage rate? How big of an issue is child marriage? (2018) , <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/zambia/>

47 Plan International, 7 Reasons the world needs the girls' rights platform, <https://plan-international.org/7-reasons-world-needs-girls-rights-platform> (Accessed 04.09.2020)



APX Vortex  
CJ Hungerman

# Contributor Bios

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**Alexis Choi** is a tenth-grader attending Seoul International School in Seoul, South Korea. This is her first time submitting her artwork to a larger audience.

**Kym Cunningham** earned her MFA from San Jose State University and currently pursuing her PhD in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Her work examines the confluence between poetic spatialities and linguistic de/construction, being especially indebted to the labor of radical Black feminists. Her debut essay collection, *Difficulty Swallowing*, was published by Atmosphere Press in 2019, and her second poetry chapbook, *new mythologies*, is forthcoming from Dream Pop Press.

Read more of her work at <https://www.kym-era.com>.

**Hanna Marie Dean Wright** is a self-taught folk artist residing in Keavy, Kentucky. She uses her experiences from growing up in rural South-Eastern Kentucky, teaching special education classes, and living with obsessive compulsive disorder to inspire her unique works of art. Hanna Wright uses bold lines and bright colors to create abstract figures with relatable and at times deeply emotional expressions.

Artist Website: <https://www.pinterest.com/hwright4643/artwork-by-hanna-wright-of-keavy-kentucky/>

**Lisa DeLoria Weinblatt** is a native New Yorker, received her B.A. Magna Cum Laude, Art Department Honors, Queens College/CUNY and M.F.A. at the School of Visual Arts, NYC. She has been awarded seven national Artist-In-Residence Scholarships, NYC Public Art Grants, and National Endowment for Humanities, including a New York City Artist Corp Grant (September 2021). Lisa was also awarded the Grumbacher Gold Medal for Painting.

Weinblatt recently exhibited the SCHOOL LUNCH series at Central Piedmont Community College (Charlotte, NC) and will exhibit it at the Oculus, Westfield Screen, World Trade Center, May, 2022. It was previously featured The Nabisco Corporation Gallery, NJ has twice featured SCHOOL LUNCH, on the announcements for & in exhibition of 'Faces of America: Celebrating Diversity & Multi-Culturalism for Black

History Month”.

Silvermine Art Center (New Canaan, CT) produced a YouTube video of Weinblatt’s artwork – <https://youtu.be/ULzF80zU9j4>.

**Edward Michael Supranowicz** is the grandson of Irish and Russian/Ukrainian immigrants. He grew up on a small farm in Appalachia. He has a grad background in painting and printmaking. Some of his artwork has recently or will soon appear in *Fish Food*, *Streetlight*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *The Door Is a Jar*, *The Phoenix*, and other journals. Edward is also a published poet who has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize multiple times.

**Diane Podolsky** has enjoyed a substantial and varied career in the visual arts includes positions as a teaching artist, exhibiting artist, curator, and arts administrator. Ms. Podolsky’s work has been collected widely by individuals as well as museum, library, and corporate collections and has been featured in several publications. In addition to her career as an artist, Ms. Podolsky completed Master Naturalist Training through Central Carolinas Master Naturalists. She will have a solo exhibition of her artist books at the Hickory Museum of Art in 2022.

**Michelle Marks-Osborne** is one of Palaver’s Co-Managing Editors for the May 2022 issue. She is a native of New York City, currently living in Raleigh-Durham, NC. Professionally, she works within the inclusion and equity space as a consultant, focusing on anti-racism, anti-misogynoirism, and anti-oppression. Michelle received her B.A., General Studies from Hampton University (Virginia) and her M.A., Liberal Studies from the University of North Carolina will be conferred in May 2022. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in the near future. Michelle is an avid reader and has written poetry as well as fiction and non-fiction short stories for as long as she can remember. This is the first time that one of her pieces is being published.

**Nathan Leslie** won the 2019 Washington Writers’ Publishing House prize for fiction for his satirical collection of short stories, *Hurry Up and Relax*. Nathan’s nine previous books of fiction include *Three Men*, *Root and Shoot*, *Sibs*, and *The Tall Tale of Tommy Twice*. He is also the author of a collection of poems, *Night Sweat*. Nathan is currently the series editor for *Best Small Fictions*, the founder and organizer of the *Reston Reading Series* in Reston, Virginia, and the publisher and editor of *Maryland Literary Review*.

Previously he was series editor for Best of the Web and fiction editor for Pedestal Magazine. His fiction has been published in hundreds of literary magazines such as Shenandoah, North American Review, Boulevard, Hotel Amerika, and Cimarron Review. Nathan's nonfiction has been published in The Washington Post, Kansas City Star, and Orlando Sentinel. Nathan lives in Northern Virginia.

**Gloria Lucas** is an emerging writer who enjoys writing fiction and creative nonfiction. Through her stories, she explores difficult topics like grief, loss, trauma, and current events. She has been writing stories since she was a young girl, but only recently has she begun publishing her works. She holds a Masters in Healthcare Management and currently works in clinical trials. In past lives, she served in the United States Navy, was a birth doula, and a midwife's apprentice. She is a mother of 4 and enjoys going on road trips with her family.

When she is not working, she enjoys playing with her children, hiking mountain trails with her fiancée, reading, and knitting mistake-riddled blankets. You can find more of her work and information on her debut novel on [glorialucas.com](http://glorialucas.com).

**Jim Ross** jumped into creative pursuits in 2015 after a rewarding career in public health research. With a graduate degree in psychology from Howard University, in the past six years he's published nonfiction, fiction, poetry, and photography in over 150 journals and anthologies on four continents. Publications include 580 Split, Bombay Gin, Barren, Columbia Journal, Ilanot Review, Kestrel, Litro, Lunch Ticket, New World Writing, Stoneboat, The Atlantic, The Manchester Review, and Typehouse, with Hippocampus forthcoming. A nonfiction piece led to a role in a documentary limited series for broadcast internationally. Jim and his wife—parents of two health professionals on the front lines and grandparents of five preschoolers—split their time between city and mountains.

**Haley Horton Cole** is a writer, scientist, artist, and advocate for gender equality. As a modern-day Renaissance woman, she offers a rare, interdisciplinary voice. Her written work has appeared in CBE International, Clemson University's The Chronicle, and Covenant College's The Thorn.

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**Diane de Anda**, Ph.D., a retired UCLA professor and third generation Latina, has edited four books on multicultural populations and published numerous research articles in scholarly journals primarily on issues affecting adolescents, as well as developed cognitive behavioral intervention programs in violence prevention and stress management for adolescents. She has published short stories, poetry, and essays in *Rosebud*, *Straylight*, *Storyteller*, *Pacific Review*, *Bilingual Review*, *Frogpond*, *Modern Haiku*, *Bottle Rockets*, *Presence*, *Ruminate*, *Third Wednesday* and others, thirteen children's books (plus 2 in press) which have won multiple awards, satires and parodies on a regular basis in *Humor Times*, and a collection of 40 flash fiction stories, *L.A. Flash*. Her books can be viewed at: [deandabookshop.com](http://deandabookshop.com).

**TaLynn Kel** is a published essayist, educator, and cosplayer. She uses her enjoyment of cosplay to examine social and structural issues of American culture through the lens of pop-culture fandom. An avid essayist, her writing has been featured in Huffington Post and Everyday Feminism. TaLynn has a unique perspective, especially as a fat, Black, woman and has been featured on NBC and The New York Times for her approach to the art of cosplay. The poem reflects a time when TaLynn learned many of the hard lessons of being a sensitive person in a world that uses vulnerability for nourishment. You can find more about TaLynn and her work on her website: [tallynnkel.com](http://tallynnkel.com).

**Audra Burwell** is a Creative Writing Major with a strong emphasis on fantasy-themed, novel-length fiction and allegorical poetry. She studies at California State University Fresno where she is aiming for her master's degree. She is currently employed by Fresno State's Kremen Department as a Communications Assistant where she designs articles, media advisories, press releases, and flyers that advocate for numerous college programs and that promote the student body on campus. She also works for A Book Barn in Old Town Clovis and for their sub-business, HBE Publishing, where she has held a position for over six years. There, she performs a variety of tasks including clerical responsibilities, social media administration, inventory management, book design, editing, and event planning. Some of Audra's hobbies include archery, photography, snowboarding, skydiving, horseback riding, cosplaying. Audra is inspired by the beauty and intricacy of the human experience, a notion that fuels her literary passions.

**Mubanga Kalimamukwento** graduated from Cavendish University Zambia, and the University of Minnesota, Twin-Cities Law schools. She practiced law in Zambia until 2019. Her first novel, *The Mourning Bird* (Jacana Media), won the Dinaane Debut Fiction Award. *The Mourning Bird* was also listed among

the fifteen most notable books of 2019 by *Brittle Paper*. Later that year, she won the Kalemba Short Story Prize. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Killens Review of Arts*, *the Advocates for Human Rights Minnesota* and elsewhere. She was shortlisted for the Nobrow Short Story Prize and the Bristol Short Story Prize. She's an alumna of the Young African Leadership Initiative Fellowship in 2017 and the Hubert H. Humphrey (Fulbright) Fellowship in 2018. Currently, Mubanga serves as a fiction editor for *Doek!*, and is the Associate Fiction Editor for the Water-Stone Review. She's also an MFA candidate at Hamline University.

**Nata Buachidze** is an artist from Tbilisi, Georgia, born on 14.10.1967. She grew up in a family of artists and architects, so being an artist for her is something very natural. In 1990, Nata graduated from Tbilisi State Academy of Arts (Graphic design department), Tbilisi, Georgia. In 1990-1991 she did a training course in Gray's School of Art (Painting and photography course), Aberdeen, Scotland, UK. Nata works in different media: painting, drawing, installation. Her artworks are in private collections in Georgia, the USA, the UK, Belgium, Germany, Czechia, France, Norway, Australia.

**CJ Hungerman** is an accomplished and award-winning artist and graphic designer making his second appearance in Palaver Journal. A native of Pittsburgh, PA, he currently lives in Chicago and completed his graduate degree at Northern Illinois University. He has created many public art projects in Chicago. Selected by James Rondeau, the Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Institute of Chicago, for first place in the Art Future 2012 show. In 2013 one of CJ's pieces won the Alice & Arthur Baer Award from the Beverly Arts Center. The most notable example of his technical competence is an original 500-square-foot piece created for the new Chinatown Library in Chicago, which was commissioned by Mayor Rahm Emanuel along with the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events Chicago Public Art Program. For the Abraham Center for Cultural Education in Chicago, CJ created a mural in the entire hallway, which enters into their history gallery. In the gallery are eight four-sided pillars (3'x 9') that were also custom painted in the space. The design for the Abraham Center for Cultural Education was a collaborative effort by their creative panel and CJ. He has created a mural for the Lincoln Square community of Chicago as well.

