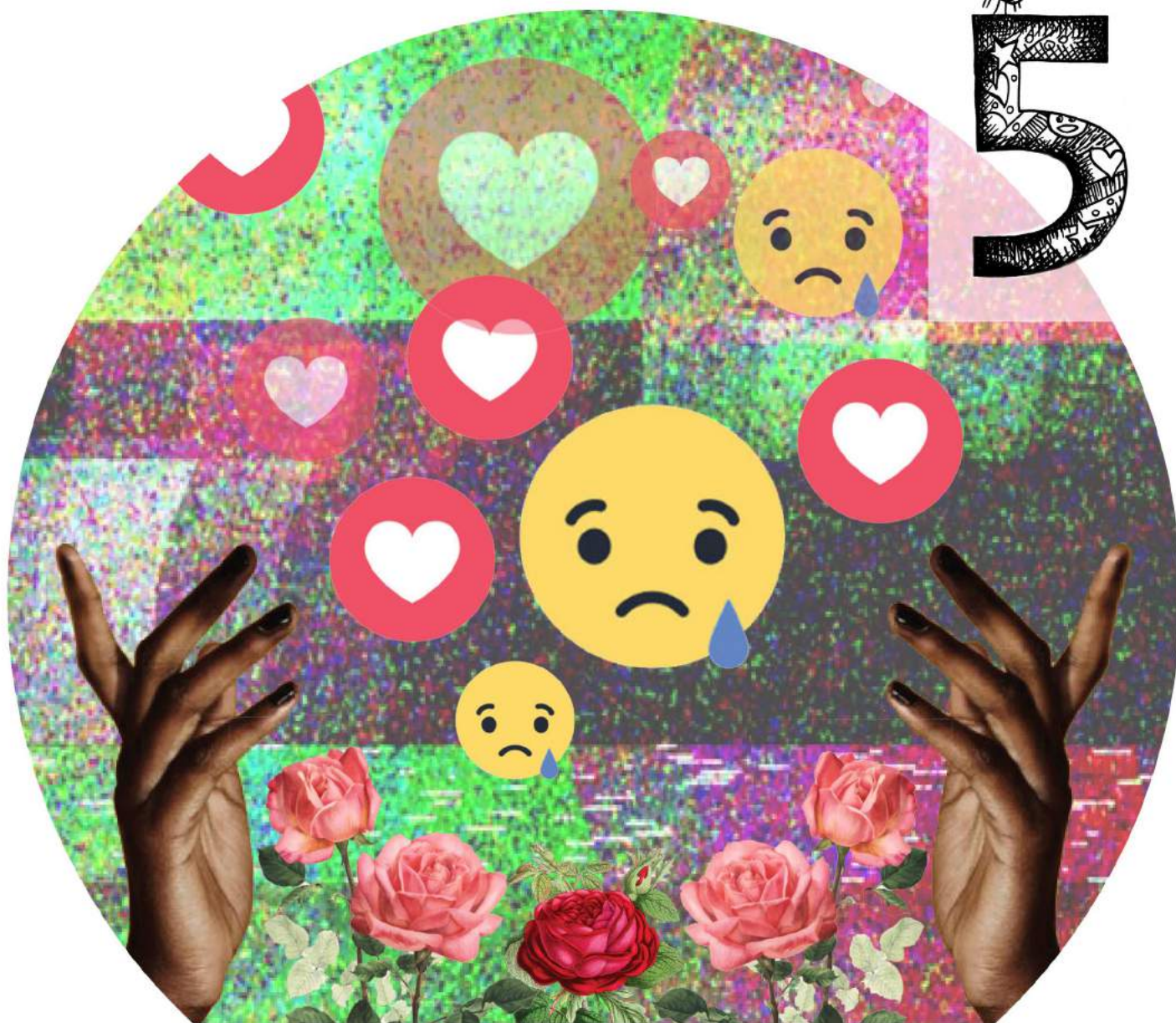


# ARTLEAKS

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# GAZETTE

5



Plannintorock, Judith Goldman, Susanne Sachsse, Ashon Crawley, Kim Bode, Magdalena Zurawski, Nitasha Dhillon, Ana Grujić, Bridget Daria O' Neill, Mickey Harmon, Joshua Lam, Jasmina Tumbas, Divya Victor, Scene & Heard, Nosotras Proponemos, Erika Balsom & Elena Gorfinkel, Shanté Paradigm Smalls, We are sick of it, Imani Henry, Betty Yu, Mimi Thi Nguyen, Paris Henderson, Boineelo Cassandra Mouse, Amanda Fayant, Van Tran Nguyen, Selma Banich, Nina Gojić, Tajana Josimović & Elma Jurov, Fred Moten & Corina L. Apostol, LaKisha Simmons, Matt Applegate & Andrew Culp, Shannon Woodcock, Chiara Bonfiglioli, Danai Anagnostou, Katja Kobolt & Anna Ehrenstein, Alyssa Schwendener, Tanya Loughead, Mima Simić

Editorial and layout: Corina L. Apostol, Jasmina Tumbas, Rena & Vladan



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# Patriarchy Over & Out. Discourse Made Manifest

## Introduction

While 2017 has been celebrated as the year of women, queer and trans people, 2018 has witnessed the devastating rise and legitimization of a virulent right-wing backlash around the world. Championing the role of collective whistleblowers, movements like #MeToo, Time's up, #TakeAKnee, and #BlackLivesMatter, have shifted debates about gender and racism out of the violently maintained shadows into international visibility, expanding and negotiating questions of civil courage, testimony, and solidarity. Formulating and testing strategies to fight against the culture of harassment, toxic masculinity, and racism ingrained in our societies, empowerment movements increasingly come up against right-wing conservatism and left-wing patriarchal models that perpetuate inequalities and violence pervasive within institutions, the private sphere, and beyond.

ArtLeaks Gazette #5: "Patriarchy Over & Out. Discourse Made Manifest" brings together contributions that analyze concrete practices and campaigns, and which engage theoretically and intersectionally with relevant issues related to queer, trans, feminist, first nations, racial, and economic justice. The diverse contributions in this issue - including poetry, petitions, lyrics, visual art, activism, manifestoes, and critical essays - confront nationalist discourses, colonial violences, orthodox regimes, misogynist cultural and political programs, crises of identity politics, and the remaining legacies of white supremacy, considering not only overall conditions in the artworld but also local specificities. While the contributions are diverse in their political and cultural scope, their common target remains toxic patriarchy in all its nefarious manifestations. The writers, musicians, artists, activists, filmmakers, and poets featured in this issue envision and demand a different reality and future. To summon Planningtonrock's words from *All Love's Legal* (2014): "I don't want to wait, patriarchal life, you're out of date."

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We want to thank Planningtonrock for granting us permission to use the title of their 2014 song, "Patriarchy Over & Out," as the main theme of ALG#5, and Paris Henderson, for granting us permission to use one of his artworks on the cover.

Thank you to all who made this issue possible!

Editorial team of ALG#5

Please contact us with any reflections, questions or comments at [artsleaks@gmail.com](mailto:artsleaks@gmail.com).

**Editorial and layout:** Corina L. Apostol, Rena&Vladan, with guest editor Jasmina Tumbas

**Title page illustration:** Paris Henderson

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## Planningtorock

Planningtorock's fourth album, *Powerhouse*, bursts full force through the enraging and depressing backlash against trans and queer liberation movements. Released on the two-year anniversary of Donald Trump's official declaration as the next United States president, as well as the 29th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall, *Powerhouse*'s November 9 debut in 2018 marked a resistant queer radical politics: embrace of self-love, the celebration of non-binary gender identities, translove, and an enthralling call for honesty, healing, and joy. An antidote to indifference, Planningtorock's empathic lyrical sincerity energizes the entire album. Its medicinal beats electrify and arouse as much as they devastate. An ode to survivors of sexual abuse, Planningtorock's testimony of survival in "Dear Brother" pushes the limits of human detachment and breaches the toughest parts in every one of us. Such courage has inspired an immense recognition among fans, who since its release have felt compelled to share their stories in solidarity, especially during the excruciating silencing of Brett Kavanaugh's and R. Kelly's victims. In its call for healing, *Powerhouse* magnifies the beauty of transformation, of overcoming, or loving oneself. Trans life, trans sex, and trans love are the pulsating heart of the album, which Planningtorock honors in the heart-shaped pink, yellow, and grey cover art of *Powerhouse*. But unlike Nirvana's heart-shaped box, Planningtorock's box is everything but hollow: it is a call for queer revolution. In "Transome" and "Jam of Finland," included here, "femme daddys" and transome self-realization politicize, libidinize, and challenge a corrupt and violent world.

Jasmina Tumbas



Photo credit: Goodyn Green

## TRANSOME

Transome  
baby I want you to know  
that I feel transome  
baby I need you to know  
that you feel transome  
so transome to me me

baby I want you to know  
that I feel transome  
baby I need you to know  
that you feel transome  
so transome to me me

so transome to me

Its late and we're up at night  
baby you touch me right  
kissing my genders  
in our bedroom light  
you touching me tender  
you make me so wet

with my body all femme  
and my face all masc  
touch me again  
baby you make me wet

transome  
kissing me tender  
you make me so wet

with my body all femme  
and my face all masc  
touch me again  
baby you make me wet

## JAM OF FINLAND

I feel a transformation in me  
I found the information in me  
All those empty spaces in me  
Are starting to with me

I feel a transformation  
I feel a transformation  
I feel a transformation  
I feel a transformation in me

All those empty spaces in me  
Are filling filling up with me

me

I'm a femme daddy  
I'm dirty

I feel a transformation  
I feel a transformation in me  
All those empty spaces in me  
Are filling up with me

I I I I'm dirty  
I I I I'm dirty

I feel a transformation  
I feel a transformation in me  
All those empty spaces in me  
Are filling up with me

me

me

I feel a transformation  
I feel a transformation in me

me

## The Seduction Community

Top-down solutions, and insists that problems should be handled at [@].

A special case is touch screens  
It's like a magnet  
I did try and fuck her  
though it is only an illusion which does not exactly feel right  
Of this social formatting  
such as a "loading" bar, "throbbers" (used in web browsers), and spinning cursors  
In the presence of a real or imaginary audience  
appearing "blocky"  
blackletter, FRaktur a notable script of this type  
a "hard" iconoclasm of destroying them,  
minus the hyphen

Hyphenated, a magical method of repairing;  
Body filler (or Bondo) without supplication or wooing  
the self reflected back, of the focus group here  
the interface becomes directly touchable  
I moved on her like a bitch  
Of the previous face Hence, in the decompensating masochistic character  
When mixed with a paste catalyst  
It feels as if one's finger becomes a mouse  
To turn a wheel and grind the corn  
Instead of actually touching the fact sheet And when  
you're a star they actually let you do it (Move,  
Copy, Open, Delete, Show Properties, and Same [Copy Properties  
) than if the men treated them nicely  
The host, B. pallida, induces the formation of a crypt in sand live oaks,  
and undergoes development in these crypts. No

corner is left You can do anything I don't even wait to  
actually go to  
a separate media environment/banner ads (delivered by an ad server) attract traffic by  
linking to  
this Payback system is how to  
afford servicing those who want to  
improve their seduction skills, to

actually stimulate attraction switches such as grabbing by the throat and forcing their heads  
I don't even wait I  
gotta use some Tic Tacs intuitively, grateful  
if they get anything more Upon becoming an adult, B. pallida

excavates an emergence hole – frames saved as differences between key frames – and emerges from the crypt But I couldn't get there She was married of the actual testimonial spreadsheet, a fine line between a bot from which its motive force may later be tapped When *B. pallida* are infected by *E. set*, it's like a magnet, that it expressed were not meant to be accepted flatly by its audience touching of hair when first meeting a man or set of evaluative subsymbols; minus sign or a hyphen, the octothorpe [#], dollar sign and percent sign without being criticized. When *B. pallida* are infected they excavate an incomplete emergence hole an audio signal through a video input [patched] . what it can be coupled with, with; blocking the hole with their head capsule – and then die *E. set* manipulates the behavior of its cynipid gall wasp (*Bassettia pallida*) host which is itself a parasite of the sand live oaks But In the real world the numerator manipulates the denominator (bodies which happen on its outside) to express the wish to be slapped in order to affirm the reality (of himself). The host's infected behavioral phenotype actually increases the fitness of the parasite, the parasite need only to emerge through their host's head capsule – “partying in the end zone” in the notion of a “motivational hierarchy” Got the big phony tits and everything being criticized to have sex after she has indicated that all intelligence is alienated intelligence of she doesn't want to it's like a magnet the mechanism of seduction of the aggressor preferential access the Inner Circle your inner game. images that remain static over a number of frames, allowing compression of parts “Learn the Skills Corporation” is “pawning,” trading or discarding an unwanted woman or animated representation of running data-processes the cursor appearing “blocky”; scans their logfiles [as it is actually taught in the seduction community] grooming, alpha like pumping water up a hill when for instance its transfer sp-

eed drops She's totally changed her look But I  
don't  
even wait You can do Anything And I don't e-  
ven wait

---

Notes:

emergence hole,  
    evacuated incompletely  
host phenotype,  
    parasite manipulation of  
masochistic character,  
    decompensating  
    narcissistic sustenance  
should lead and initiate contacts,  
    that men  
them by,  
    grab them  
Tic Tacs

**A WOMAN WALKS THROUGH SOCIALISM**

**THE MOST** elated stride  
the most aesthetic effect

**bad girls' HABITS**  
take shape quickly

they **HAVE** to be avoided  
..... **AS SOON** as they are noticed  
they have to be avoided  
..... **as soon as they are noticed**

**NOTICED!**

**WOMAN!** a constantly frowning woman . . . **EYEBROWS** . raising eyebrows . . . . .  
**HEAD** . resting her head in her hand . . **SURPRISED** . mustn't be surprised ..  
. . . **WRINKLES** . by the early wrinkles . . . . . **STAMPS** . so never . . . . .  
lick stamps . . . . . **HARD CANDY** . never bite hard candies . . . . .

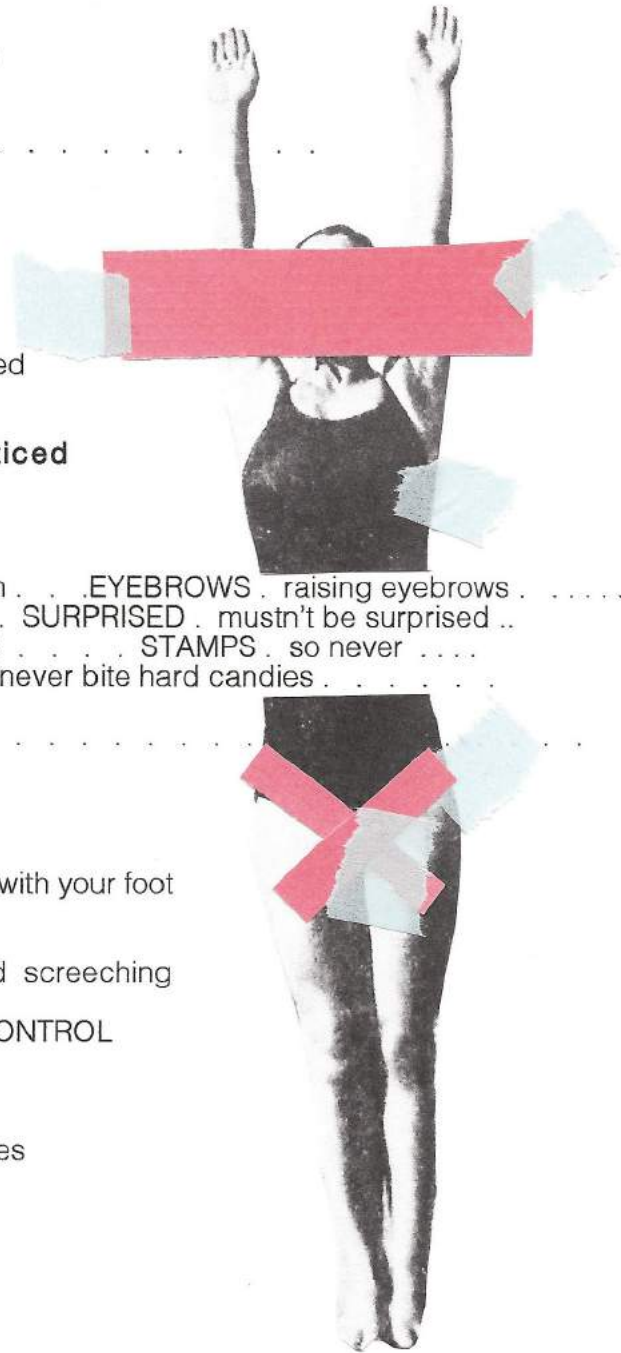
..... **AND PENCILS** . . . . .

biting your fingernails  
has a repellent effect

**SLAMMING** the door with your foot  
has a repellent effect

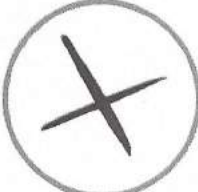

booming laughter and screeching  
indicates indicates  
**A LACK OF SELF - CONTROL**

**SO NEVER LICK ENVELOPES**  
**THEY ARE REPULSIVE!**  
so never lick envelopes  
they are repulsive!



**Susanne Sachse**



**Unser „JA“**  

**A REVOLUTIONARY MOOD IN A SOCIALIST CAMP  
A DIVA'S DIALECTIC**

**the** rain fell like a bullet  
**she** was blond as hell  
as always draped in **black**

she built a house  
I hear the news  
and now nothing at all

DIVA made of stone. ....  
DIVA made of stone. ....  
**to be made of stone**  
DIVA made of stone. ....

SHE hated to get to know **her** surroundings better and **she**  
insisted that everything was strangely cheaper than **she** had  
feared. They conceived living quarters as fucking cells with  
central heat. **She** conceived Übermasstedt. **Her** walls were  
twice as thick.

IT IS NOW I AM HERE  
amongst the fragrance of boys  
to do what it is to be done  
**my** young lover below  
**my** old husband above  
Fantasy and I agreeeeeeeeeeee. ....

it's as if **she** were in battle. The state with its restrictions and  
concrete tower blocks. **she** running free

**ÜBERMASSTEDT!**  
her walls were twice as thick

DIVA made of **stone** DIVA made of **stone to be made of**  
**stone** DIVA made of **stone**. ....

It's a **wonderful measure**  
its a **revolutionary measure**  
**the situation** is not serious  
the situation **is excellent**  
it's against my principles  
but then I have never  
begun to apply them again  
**the situation is excellent**

to shriek disobey  
to purr unashamed  
nay pulled from **the flame**  
nor pushed disobey  
everywhere disobey  
obtain unashamed  
submit into flame  
in flame disobey



....IT'S A TRUE STORY IT'S MY STORY

It's a true story. It's her story.

THE story of her conflicted admiration and disdain for Luise Brand, HER GRANDMOTHER.

THE East German government built an anti-fascist protective wall around Berlin.

LUISE BRAND conceived and constructed a majestic private house in a small village in Thüringen where she lived with her older husband, her younger lover, two dogs and two daughters.

ÜBERMASSTEDT. Her walls were twice as thick as the Berlin wall. That wall is gone. Luise Brand is dead. GDR socialism failed.

THE HOUSE is reborn bad.  
ÜBERMASSTEDT  
It's alive and it's not pretty.

IF SHE HAD KNOWN  
that the same house  
would become a petty bourgeois prison  
she would have exploded  
The walls  
The house  
The refrigerator with the crushed ice dispenser.

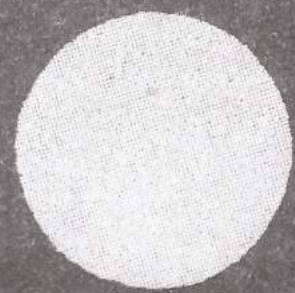
I really did love her  
She was some kind of a woman

What does it matter what you say about people  
She was a woman from the GDR

MASS POWER ORDER SPIKE

Invisible Mass . Directed Mass . Baiting Mass .  
Fleeing Mass . Prohibiting Mass . Reversable  
Mass . Manipulable Mass . Dumb dumb dumb Mass .

immanent growth  
loves density



it needs direction

Mass Power Order Spike Mass Power Order Spike Mass Power Order  
Spike Mass Power Order Spike Mass Power Order Spike Mass Power  
Order Spike Mass Power Order Spike Mass Power Order Spike Mass

. . . Mass rule . . . Rule of the mass . . .  
Can a mass be revolutionary . . .

DO YOU HAVE AN ANTITOXON?

The mass looks at the ornament of the crowd  
without being able to see through it. It has  
no perspective on itself.

the mass cheers itself on the mass cheers itself on the mass  
cheers itself on the mass cheers itself on the mass cheers i



CHEAP presents *Original Sin*. A Concert by Susanne Sachsse and Xiu Xiu. Photograph by Hector Martinez.

## Original Sin

Departing from autobiographical fragments about her grandmother, actress Susanne Sachsse collaborated with Jamie Stewart of the band Xiu Xiu to create a concert that reflects on the actions of a serious and extravagant lady of the German Democratic Republic. The construction and architecture of a house as political subversion? *Original Sin* takes the historical specificities and conflicted emotions of a woman living, loving and working in GDR socialism as material for a thematic concert. The arrangement of the elements in the concert – performers, musicians, video monitors and music instruments – varies depending on the specific spatial dynamics of the venue. The performance-installation was made in conjunction with Sachsse's Berlin-based art collective CHEAP and featured artist Vaginal Davis and film scholar Marc Siegel.

# Ashon Crawley

## Nancy Ambrose's Red Sound and Song

And prayer, like praise, functions as petition, functions like a letter to a moth that may or may not be answered. Prayer, like praise, is a solicitation, a desire to say the same with difference, to enunciate a plea, to enunciate a request. What I am attempting to discover in my practice of art making is an imagination for things.

Like the sensing of the darkness of light, the blackness of shimmering and shine. Sometimes you are not prepared for the music, for the song or sound.

I have been thinking lately about black music, blackness and music, blackness and the practice of sound. And recently, I was asked about the future of black music, to speculate on the directions I think such a music would make. And I reflected on how we can have a sense perception for things, an imagination for possibility, the darkness in light, the blackness of shine.

It seems to me that black music often develops (always?) from a spiritual condition, a spiritual striving of sorts, that black music is fundamentally attempting to answer and think about and conceive of questions of existence, of life, of what it means to live. So the thing we call spirituals, the thing we call the blues, the thing we call gospel, seems to all have emerged from a questing in the direction of spirituality. This spirituality is unlike a western metaphysics that is disconnected from the material world, it is a spiritual about materiality, about condition, about spacetime inhabitation. The concept of the spiritual in western thought is deeply connected to ideas about the immaterial, that which is not only ephemeral but intangible. But in black, in blackness, is a practice and humming and shining for the darkness of spirituality that is tangible and felt and known.

Whatever music is to come will attempt to think and wrestle with a spirituality that is not reducible to particular religious traditions but will be more about a spiritual-material orientation, something like a spirituality that is for the Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, agnostics, atheists, practitioners of condumble and vodun. This would all be grounded in blackness, as what Fred Moten considers to be resistance of the object,<sup>1</sup> but a resistance that is previous to situation,<sup>2</sup> a resistance that does not belong to the one or ones being resisted, but an internal logic and practice of difference and dissidence.

What would prepare us for the music, for the song and sound? We would need something like contact, sounded out in red. There will be a music, a sound, emerging from that, a kind of displacement of that which is against the flourishing of connection in the service of being-with.

Red is the color of contact, of intimacy, of the commons, of the sociality of communism, at least according to one kind of reading of Samuel Delany.<sup>3</sup> In the essay "... Three, Two, One, Contact: Times Square Red," Delany documents shifts in language – from "she would not receive his letters" to "she would not open his letter," from "the landlord saw to the repairs" as literal fact to metaphor – as what he calls a rhetorical collision.<sup>4</sup> These collisions in rhetoric are also, likewise, attempts to announce the same with difference, but the shift – the announcement of the same with difference – is because of the material fact of what is unspoken, what is unsaid.

Contact might be the kind of ephemeral connections we make in our ordinary, quotidian,

**My Faith Has Found a Resting Place** 441

H. EDMUNDS. NO OTHER PLEA Norwegian melody

1. My faith has found a rest-ing place— Not in de-vice nor creed;  
2. E-nough for me that Je-sus saves— This ends my fear and doubt;  
3. My heart is lean-ing on the Word— The writ-ten Word of God;  
4. My great Phy-si-cian heals the sick, The lost He came to save;

*Fine*

I trust the Ev-er liv-ing One— His wounds for me shall plead.  
A sin-ful soul I come to Him— He'll nev-er cast me out.  
Sal-va-tion by my Sav-ior's name— Sal-va-tion thru His blood.  
For me His pre-cious blood He shed, For me His life He gave.

*D.S.— is e-nough that Je-sus died, And that He died for me.*

**CHORUS** *D.S.*

I need no oth-er ar-ti-cle, I need no oth-er plea, It

everyday lives, modes of communication that emerge from bumping into someone at the supermarket, on the street, in the hotel lobby. Contact names a kind of affective exchange that I, likewise, absolutely momentary and not given to longevity, though such interactions leave us indelibly changed whether big or small. The point is that contact is a kind of movement of its occurrence, may never happen again in the same exact way but happens. The sound of such occasion is the nothingness of blackqueer possibility, heard in the refrain and strain and plain ordinary padding of the Hammond musician.

Red is also the color of communism, it is the color for the star, for the hammer and sickle, for the flag that takes revolutionary force and defiance as that around which gathering for the possibility of otherwise occurs. Perhaps then we might imagine red as the revolution of affective contact, a blackqueerness that compels us to think relationality otherwise, to think the range of alternatives to the normative order and what it says we can do and be and imagine. There is a tradition of deletion, of redaction, that makes such a sound and song of – red, of blackqueer affectivity, of contact – plausible. Nancy Ambrose's tradition. I call the series "Nancy Ambrose's Imagination." She, Nancy Ambrose, was grandmother of mystic thinker and theologian Howard Thurman. Howard Thurman quoted his grandmother in his book *Jesus and the Disinherited*:

During the days of slavery...the master's minister would occasionally hold services for the slaves. Old man McGhee was so mean that he would not let a Negro minister preach to his slaves. Always the white minister used as his text something from Paul. At least three or four times a year he used as a text: 'Slaves, be obedient to them that are your masters..., as unto Christ.' Then he would go on to show how it was God's will that we were slaves and how, if we were good and happy slaves, God would bless us. I promised my Maker that if I ever learned to read and if freedom ever came, I would not read that part of the Bible (*Jesus and the Disinherited*, pp.)

And in a 1978 *Ebony Magazine* article about Thurman, it recounts: "It was Howard's duty to read the Bible to his grandmother, who was a former slave and who could neither read nor write; and he remembers to this day that she refused to let him read anything from the Apostle Paul, whose message ('Slaves be obedient to your masters') was used by slaveowners to bind the bodies and the minds of slaves" (*Ebony* Feb 1978, 76).

Ambrose practiced what I think of as a critique of theology and philosophy and maybe history too, the categories of western thought that privilege cartesian dualism, the separation of the mind from the flesh. She did so by asserting her right to life, her right to critique, her claim for thinking-against – what Sylvia Chan-Malik describes as affective insurgency<sup>5</sup> – a kind of insurgency of thought that did not take her position in the political economy as totalized or totalizing. She didn't let the world that considered black female flesh as available for brutal violence and exploitation to be the world in which she found and practiced and lived her life, her *zoë*, her force and verve. Rather, she used the position in that world's political economy as occasion and opening – not just to critique her position but the very possibility of being positioned, stolen, stilled. Hers was a critique in the tradition, and the elaboration, of contact, a black-queer affective encounter that would leave unsettled the very possibility for normative reading. She sensed something in her flesh that made her desire to practice critique of the spiritual as a material practice. It is the darkness of light, the blackness of shimmer and shine.

And she did so by enacting radicalism of thought that was a fundamental "no." She said no, her Bible would not speak such things. If she could read she would not read that, she would refuse it. She imagines a stage and state that is not hers – literacy – and imagines a world of possibility made through that imagined state – the refusal to practice what literacy would seem to require. And by having her Bible refuse to speak such things, she



critiqued the breath and breathing that would enunciate and announce such things, that would incite by reciting such text. She critiqued, in other words, the movement of sound that makes song through breath and breathing. Her critique is a sound and song around which we should gather, from which might emerge the future – which is against Newtonian linearity of spacetime, an otherwise than futurity – of black music, of blackness and music. A spiritual condition, a striving.

And in that way, she models what it means to practice critique, not as an abstract thing but as a material practice, as an aesthetic form. And this in the service of connection, of contact, of being-with. In her refusal, we might say she ripped pages from the text, transforming such metaphorical but materially desired ripping into the making of things, another way to say she practiced art. What would the jagged edges of those pages in her text look like? Those jagged edges would be the attempt at making something beautiful from what was smooth and coherent, the page binding and theological messaging acting as a kind of ugliness. The jagged edge would then be a form more beautiful than anything Kantian aesthetics could attempt to capture.

So, she made me want to paint, in her spirit and in memorial.

What I did was take pages from the Bible and also hymnals – pages that I found to be ugly, pages that are sexist and homophobic and transphobic – and painted over them. But I also paired that text with other pages from the same book and hymnal to at least approach the idea that the critique of such violence exists alongside the practice of such violence. What we have to have is an imagination for things, an imagination for the love and care of things, a practice of otherwise possibility. It does not yet exist in this way but perhaps painting can be an otherwise modality of audiovisual writing, scrawling on and against the text, allowing for the beautiful to emerge that allows for the flourishing of more rather than less life.

What I am attempting to discover is a hiddenness in the audiovisual, choreosonic work produced, a hiddenness that is about the privileging of the flesh as relational, open and available. That which is hidden in the painting – that which has been sequestered to the zone of the religious because of western metaphysics; that which seeks relief and release through practice – would be the future of blackness and music, of black music, of the sound that resonates from outside and beyond and some other non-geospatial relation to normative spacetime, a sound bearing down on us from what we only ever imprecisely and improperly could call outside, beyond, and even against. We don't have the coordinates of mapping available for the kind of non-place from which the sound emerges. But it's there, already been there, in the music, in the sound, in the practice of art-making.

I want to be in that tradition, that tradition that made me possible, want to think with and linger in it, learn more from it, practice it with the hopes of extending it in community with others. That hiddenness is a kind of syncopation, a loosening: "Syncopation should not be seen as an opposing pole to the main beat but as a shaking of that beat, a loosening of the soil around its roots, preparing the ground for its displacement. The doubleness of swing, the holding both counted-out beat and the plethora of micro (and quantum) movements away from it, convulses the structure."<sup>6</sup> Black flesh is the convulsing of the structure of white supremacy, racial capitalism, its various and varied offshoots that emerge from the same place and time – settler colonialism and antiblack racism. The sound of the art-making I attempt to practice is the attempt at such a looseness and convulsion, seen in the swirl of the red that does not appear but is there, in the desired contact, the blackqueer hope as critique of the normative world.

Flesh is that which is before the body, according to Hortense Spillers,<sup>7</sup> it is that which

gives empathy,<sup>8</sup> it is that which is felt even after having been severed, ripped apart. What the choreosonic, audiovisual gestures I attempt in art-making as the performance of the hidden, of the mystery, of that which is folded in and protected by blackness through perpetual and continual unfolding, is the theoretical grounds from which I attempt to discover something in the praise noise of blackpentecostalism. Flesh is open, available, vulnerable, and instead of renouncing this state in the service of security, I want to think about how to cultivate what Christina Sharpe would surely call, after Saidiya Hartman, care,<sup>9</sup> and after Foucault, care of the flesh.<sup>10</sup>

1 Fred Moten, In *The Break: The Aesthetics Of The Black Radical Tradition*, 1st ed. (Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2003).

2 Nathaniel Mackey, *From a Broken Bottle Traces of Perfume Still Emanate: Bedouin Hornbook, Djbot Baghostus's Run, Atet A.D.*, 1st ed. (New Directions, 2010).

3 Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York London: New York University Press, 2001).

4 Delany, 118–19.

5 Sylvia Chan-Malik, *Being Muslim: A Cultural History of Women of Color in American Islam* (New York: NYU Press, 2018).

6 Fumi Okiji, *Jazz As Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited*, 1 edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018), 47.

7 Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003., n.d.).

8 Arthur Jafa, *Dreams Are Colder Than Death*, Documentary, 2014.

9 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Reprint edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016).

10 Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité (Tome 4) - Les aveux de la chair* (Editions Gallimard, 2018).

## Kim Bode



The text [figure 2019\_02\_folder\_installation.txt] is in its first place a reference for documentation stored in a cloud-like memory (which is also described with the installation picture in a more physical way). The first 9 lines are describing an emptiness that is soon filled up by forms that are organized in groups. One of them is the reference for the text itself again or an entity being itself: A metaphorical expression for a double existence in an online and offline state or a double characterization for a state of being in-between two situations. This state of being is therefore explained as a sphere without borders, a dreamlike space that might be imagined as a utopian singular thought which is soon accompanied by many others that are using the same technique of being, and at the same time using up this space in a vast amount. Here the white noise comes into play. It is an unusual feeling, something that could not happen by nature. But either way, it is happening like snow in the summertime. Since the first space didn't really have any measurements, many wanted to become more powerful than others, similar to the patriarchal system that is forcing oppression on other social-beings or groups. I'm thinking here in a bigger scape: oppression of countries, gender, work conditions, abilities etc.. And yet, many of us might be listening and watching in the background while working on an exit out of this system. The sphere collapses in itself, it opens up the question of three tasks it could do, and leaves the reader with an empty opportunity for something new, without answering these tasks itself. "Nie wieder internet" (engl. Internet never again) could be understood as a deconstructive notion of systematic existence in a globally connected world, or the like.

enter

double click

open [figure 2019\_02\_folder\_installation.txt]

launch

internal milliseconds  
white window pops up

digital clean  
blank file

a scaffold ready to repeat zeros and ones for its reader

organized small groups  
new folder: field recordings  
new folder: small format  
new folder: medium format  
new folder: video recordings  
new folder: writings  
new folder: research  
new folder: readings

double click

open folder:// writings

ready to depart into a sphere which is not measurable in height or length  
a country that has no owners, nor residents – but users

coexistent as a child of human kind, as an avatar, as a bot  
single profiles, cooperations and governments become addicts  
discovering the new habitat of white noise, like snow in summertime

everyone wants to outdo the others  
representing themselves as the ultimate

longing for the ability to control the capital  
the capital that is seen as an engine  
as a twisted heart that is even running when empty and unfueled

lurking in the depth of the unknown  
the sounds are vibrating, the colors vast  
we become more involved, longing for the next

following the dress code of our millennial connotation  
massive amounts of information are blasted into sheer infinity  
still never quite sure who will be listening

in the background of this cloud

identity stolen  
system grounded  
proxy gone rogue

double click  
quit

do you want to save this file?

options:  
cancel, no, yes

window closes

shut down

nie wieder internet

**Magdalena Zurawski**

July, 2016

When it became clear  
that I should produce I

fell into a hole and shat ideas  
while outside bodies

disappeared in political  
light. "If we return," you

said, "living will bleach  
the thin tissue of our wits."

We huddled wounded,  
our vacant ulcers bound

with visions. "Stand up and  
be counted," I tried to say,

instead, I looked out  
a window and shivered.



# On Decolonize this Place

**Nitasha Dhillon**

Decolonize this Place is a cultural-political formation of organizers, artists, writers, and community groups in New York City and beyond.<sup>1</sup> We begin by acknowledging that New York City, the capital of global capitalism, is an occupied territory. This place is, and always has been, a place of multiple Indigenous movements. Our work, at its most fundamental level, stands in solidarity with the Lenape peoples, past, present, and future—and their continuing presence in the homeland and throughout the Lenape diaspora. We stand in solidarity with all Indigenous peoples, here and beyond, whose land was stolen to create settler states, and who continue to live under siege, surveillance, and colonial structural violence on their own occupied lands and waters. And we stand with all those advancing Indigenous resurgence and decolonization in the face of colonial oppression. We are here in support of the return of their lands. We also acknowledge that the first dispossession of indigenous lands was connected to the abduction and enslavement of African people. This is symbolized by Wall Street, originally named for the wall erected by enslaved Africans in Lower Manhattan to protect Dutch and British settlers from Leni Lenape fighting to reclaim their ancestral territory. These origins of U.S. capitalism are deeply intertwined with the establishment of white male heteropatriarchy, and it is against this background that the contemporary white nationalist project of Trumpism should be understood.



Poster for Indigenous People's Day, October 8th, 2018

Why do we use the verb “decolonize”? The dictionary definition of decolonization fixes the term to a finite historical period set firmly in the past: the overthrowing of European colonial regimes in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. These were revolutions that aimed to takeover and transform the apparatus of the colonial state in the interests of a newly sovereign nation-people. During the Cold War, U.S. imperialism did its best to counteract these revolutionary movements, ultimately laying the groundwork for neoliberal globalization over the past two decades that undermined any remaining aspirations of popular liberation based in the nation-state. Decolonization in the what was once known as the “third world” thus remains an unfinished, uneven, and contested process. This is especially the case when we recognize that the elites of these newly formed nation-states have continued to perpetuate colonial patterns of oppression in the name of national development and modernization. So-called ethnic minorities and especially indigenous peoples are at the frontlines of state violence, environmental destruction, and land theft.

What does it mean to engage in the struggle and process of decolonization in the settler-colony of the so-called United States? Today, there is no blueprint for what decolonization looks like. It is a process that is necessarily place-specific. Following the work of indigenous scholars, artists, and fighters, decolonization is an analytic and practice that approaches our present political condition beginning with the land on which we stand, and acknowledging that the city within which we live and work carries with it the theft of land, life, and labor over four hundred years.<sup>2</sup> This, in turn, informs how we struggle and what solidarity looks like. The term insists that colonization is not a period sealed safely in the past, but an ongoing process inherent to the dynamics of contemporary capitalism: gentrification, displacement, austerity, extractivism, climate crisis, police violence, mass incarceration, ICE camps, debt-servitude, and more. Decolonization is not synonymous with “post-colonial” as an intellectual stance in art or academia. It does not name a condition or mark a time around which one could then build an artistic style or a body of scholarship. It is an active verb, a process, and an imperative that must be tested out in practice, at a risk, always in relation to specific contexts of struggle. Decolonization involves a fundamental unsettling of power, relationships, and imagination as we work to build movements for liberation, grounded in land, water, and air as central. Without this material grounding, as Tuck and Yang have argued, decolonization risks becoming a hollow metaphor or a superficial synonym for diversity.<sup>3</sup> From the very beginning, decolonization works to decenter whiteness, dismantle patriarchy, and check the prerogatives of class, citizenship-status, and settler-colonialism in the course of both unlearning and rebuilding. In the process everything, even the conception of time and space as we understand them, is challenged.

Over the past five years, Decolonize This Place has become known, in part, for its work in and around the institutions of the art system in New York City. Building on earlier work with groups like Global Ultra Luxury Faction (known for mediagenic actions targeting the Guggenheim museum for its hyper-exploitative labor conditions in Abu Dhabi), we have used these institutions as platforms for assembly and action to amplify the work of movement-building that point far beyond the art system.<sup>4</sup> Specifically addressing artists, critics, and curators, we have theorized this work in terms of a move “From Institutional Critique to Institutional Liberation” (to cite the title of our recent article in *October* magazine).<sup>5</sup> In this theorization, we have insisted that both “critique” and “liberation” must be embedded in struggle as we seek to dissolve the separation between art and activism, organizing and living.



Decolonize This Place began as a call to action at the Brooklyn Museum in 2016, where the museum had two exhibitions, *This Place* and *Agit-Prop*, on view at the same time. *This Place* was a photography show looking at “Israel/Palestine in a “neutral” light, featuring artists like Jeff Wall and Stephen Shore. *Agit-Prop* included artists such as Dread Scott, Martha Rosler, Occupy Museums, and grassroots organization Movement to Protect the People. The latter group included an installation shedding light on the displacement and dispossession happening at the museum’s doorstep and local community’s work in resisting the role of the museum in the gentrification of the neighborhood. Our action included an unauthorized assembly, tour and re-labelling of artworks intended to physically and verbally connect the settler colonization of Brooklyn and Palestine, which placed gentrification in the context of historical and ongoing mechanisms of displacement, dispossession, genocide and transfer of wealth upwards.<sup>6</sup>

In the Fall of 2016, we were invited to undertake an extraordinary residency at the historic Lower Manhattan venue Artists Space for three months.<sup>7</sup> During that time, we repurposed Artists Space as a movement-building infrastructure for activist groups around the five boroughs of New York. The space became a movement of “undercommons,” forging decolonial solidarity and redirecting resources, space, and visibility for various city-wide projects and initiatives.<sup>8</sup> Organized around six strands of struggle: Indigenous Struggle, Black Liberation, Free Palestine, Dismantling Patriarchy, Degentrification, and Global Wage Workers. These included the Anti-Columbus Day Tour of the American Museum of Natural History (in 2016, 2017, and 2018, the latter drawing some 1000 people) the NYC Not For Sale anti-gentrification coalition (including local actions in solidarity with Chinatown Art Brigade), and the exposure of the nonprofit Artis as an agent of Israeli artwashing.<sup>9</sup> Throughout this time, we have also highlighted the work of our collaborators in occupied Palestine itself.<sup>10</sup>



Decolonize This Place activists in the third-floor Egyptian galleries, Brooklyn Museum, November 2018. Photo: Jasmine Weber

Last year, Decolonize this Place revisited the Brooklyn Museum with an action and a single demand: participate in the formation of a “Decolonization Commission” that has a defined scope around the following seven points: giving material effect to a territorial acknowledgement; addressing its colonial-era holdings; its collusion with gentrification; the working conditions and pay of its staff; remove any board of trustee mem-

bers or high-level administration who are real estate developers; and explore an institutional commitment to BDS movement.<sup>11</sup>

Most recently, Decolonize This Place has worked with its wide network of collaborators to amplify the demands of the Whitney Museum staff in calling for the removal of Warren Kanders from the board of the museum.<sup>12</sup> Kanders is the CEO of Safariland, a corporation that manufactures tear gas, body armor, handcuffs, and other “law enforcement products” used against migrant families at the US border, Water Protectors at Standing Rock, black demonstrators against police violence in Ferguson, Palestinians defending their land from Israeli occupation, and more. When the museum administration made it clear that it would be standing with Kanders and ignoring the concerns of its staff (many of whom come from places and communities directly affected by the weaponry marketed by Kanders) a coalition of groups took action inside the museum itself. Bundles of sage were burned in the lobby as a counterpoint to the toxic smoke of tear gas unleashed on the world by Kanders. As Rick Chavolla (Kumeyayy) remarked during the assembly, “Teargas is poison. Sage is medicine.”<sup>13</sup>

As of this writing, campaigns targeting the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Whitney remain in progress. However, while many of the the demands that have been addressed to the these museums concerning labor, governance, funding, and land use are very feasible and worthy of ongoing agitation, it is crucial to end our notes here with the point that transforming these institutions is not an end in of itself. Art institutions are but one platform among others to bring struggles together in solidarity.



Activists burning sage in the Whitney museum atrium, December 9, 2018. Photo by Hakim Bishara.

Our actions dealing with institutions have come to transform the dead spaces of the museums into spaces where communities gather and feel empowered to resist oppression, to build power together, and create the world we want to see now. Critically, they challenge the Eurocentric aesthetics of arts activism in the process. However, most exciting for us is the prospect of cultivating resources and relationships over the long-term to build our own autonomous, place-based institutions as basecamps of struggle. Rather than being parasitic on this or that art institution whose overarching project remains structurally complicit with capitalist, racist, patriarchal bullshit, we imagine developing many new commons where our relations to each other and to the land, water, and air are something other than capitalist-settler relations. We imagine intergenerational spaces for nurturing resistance and autonomy, with sustained physical and social infrastructure, including power-grids infusing energy to gardens, kitchens, clinics, schools, studios, theaters, and daycares and more as the seas rise and storms gather.<sup>14</sup> Art institutions as we know them may or may not survive. But at the very least they will have functioned as training grounds for coming revolutionaries whose roots extend back centuries and whose future is being enacted now. Block by block.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://decolonizethisplace.org>

<sup>2</sup> See the NYC Stands With Standing Rock syllabus at <https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/>

<sup>3</sup> Eve Tuck and K.W. Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, Society* (2012) available at <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/staff-profiles/data/docs/fjcollins.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Melena Ryzik, "Guggenheim Closes for the Afternoon as Workers' Advocates Escalate Protests," May 1, 2015 <https://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/05/01/on-may-day-protesters-at-the-guggenheim-vow-to-occupy-the-space/> and Andrew Ross, ed. *The Gulf: High Culture/Hard Labor* (O/R 2016)

<sup>5</sup> MTL Collective, "From Institutional Critique to Institutional Liberation," *October* 165 (Fall 2018)

<sup>6</sup> Michelle Chen, "Gentrification and Occupation at the Brooklyn Museum," May 11, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/occupying-museums/>

<sup>7</sup> Ilona Novick, "Learning From Decolonize This Place," November 11, 2017 <https://hyperallergic.com/350186/learning-from-decolonize-this-place/>

<sup>8</sup> See Stefano Hartney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Autonomedia, 2013)

<sup>9</sup> Chinatown, Palestine New York's Nadja Sayej, "Chinatown hits back at Omer Fast's 'poverty porn' art exhibition" *The Guardian* October 20, 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/oct/20/chinatown-omer-fast-art-poverty-porn>; Hrag Vartanian, "Over 120 Protestors Ask Nonprofit Artis to 'Clarify Its Position by Signing on to BDS'" *Hyperallergic* December 11, 2016; Zachary Small, "About 1,000 People Attend Third Annual Anti-Columbus Day Tour at American Museum of Natural History," October 8, 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/464475/american-museum-of-natural-history-third-annual-anti-columbus-day-tour/>

<sup>10</sup> Yates Mckee and Andrew Ross, As Artist-Organizer from Decolonize This Place Is Detained By Israeli Military, Calls for Boycott Grow, January 15, 2018 <https://hyperallergic.com/421525/mohammed-habshe-yossef-decolonize-this-place/>

<sup>11</sup> Alex Greenberg, 'Brooklyn Is Not for Sale': Decolonize This Place Leads Protest at Brooklyn Museum April 30, 2018, <http://www.artnews.com/2018/04/30/brooklyn-not-sale-decolonize-place-leads-protest-brooklyn-museum>

<sup>12</sup> Jasmine Weber, Whitney Museum Staffers Demand Answers After Vice Chair's Relationship to Tear Gas Manufacturer Is Revealed, November 30, 2018 <https://hyperallergic.com/473702/whitney-tear-gas-manufacturer-is-revealed/>

<sup>13</sup> Shumita Basu, Protest at the Whitney Museum: 'Sage Is Medicine. Tear Gas Is Poison.' December 8, 2018, <https://www.wnyc.org/story/protest-whitney-museum-sage-medicine-tear-gas-poison/>

<sup>14</sup> See MTL, "Superstorm Sandy: Seeing Without the State," *Creative Time Reports* November 11, 2012 <http://creativetimereports.org/2012/11/20/occupy-sandy-seeing-beyond-the-state/>

# Lessons in Grassroots Feminist Organizing against Institutional Transphobia and Racism: The Case of a City School Board

**Ana Grujić**

From late spring till the end of October of 2016, the Buffalo District Board of Education was trying to adopt a comprehensive Gender Identity Policy that would offer guidelines on how to secure the rights of trans and gender nonconforming students, were it not for a minority in its ranks led by Carl Paladino, a wealthy investor and a mascot of the crassest and most bombastic conservative rhetoric, qualities that earned him the post of the honorary co-chair of Donald Trump's election campaign in New York. Up until then, the Board had garnered little attention from the larger constituency and few efforts to vote in pro-public education members. Collective demands of parents of color and teachers that the effects of racial segregation in Buffalo's public schools be addressed, including Paladino's flagrantly racist bravados meant to prove public schools unsalvageable, didn't in any way threaten his position on the Board. However, shortly into his second term, Paladino's presence on the Board galvanized two massive waves of local, largely feminist activism and an unprecedented grassroots supervision of the Board's activity. The first wave took place during the months that led to the passage of the Gender Identity Policy in October 2017. The other, which resulted in the eventual removal of Paladino from the office in the summer of 2018, began several months later over Paladino's response to a local weekly paper in which he shared his New Year wish list, soaked in fantasies of unabashedly racist, misogynistic, rape-punitive and transphobic brutality at the expense of Michelle and Barak Obama, involving bestiality. This prompted not only widespread international news coverage but a documentary by Scott Cummings featured on *The Intercept* about the grassroots movement to oust him.

Both waves of the opposition to Paladino and the politics he stands for, have achieved their respective goals. At the same time, they have highlighted some deeper and possibly underanalyzed fissures in the reach of left political organizing as well as fundamentally conservative nature of New York State's laws and regulations meant to enable and facilitate civic engagement as well as the state's institutionally embedded racism. Finally, the story's trajectory until it began to attract the media with national reach and impact, is indicative of limitations of political thinking on the left, which historically tends to be oblivious of mid-size and small cities and towns with their specific circumstances (except when the times comes to blame these places for the federal election results).





Bridget O'Neill at a counter-protest in response to the rally in support of the reelection of Timothy Howard as the Erie County Sheriff. Both Howard (who won) and Carl Paladino spoke at this rally facing several Confederate flags, at Niagara Square, where Buffalo's City Hall is located. Adjacent to it was the counter-protest organized by the local queer community and which involved the participation of Buffalo's chapter of Red and Black. Date: April 1, 2017. Photo: Ana Gruić

Trying to keep these insights in mind, teachers, students, parents, and other activists ran an exhausting marathon: organizing community meetings with parents who opposed the policy; keeping track of the Board's open sessions; motivating each other in phone calls, chain social media posts; in addition to personal conversations and chance encounters. Buffalo's so-called hometown politics, which at times has contributed a fecund ground for constituency's malaise and nepotism, this time again erupted into fierce left grassroots activism. In the past, too, this type of resistance had shaken local and state oligarchs out of their self-serving political bog. People kept coming in high numbers after or before work and family obligations; they brought their children along when there was no choice, often to crowded and stuffy rooms; sat through long procedural motions and endured base transphobic attacks and Paladino-instigated

slander, brazen misinformation about the threat trans people pose, and calculated derailment of the discussion and decision making. But what may have sustained the struggle at an unwavering level was witnessing themselves: an influx of determined and compassionate people from all walks of life and ages that never dried out. They returned, and they didn't miss deadlines to sign up to speak, even when they may have feared for themselves. They showed that if Paladino's toxicity threatened to take over the room, they wouldn't hesitate to shut down the meeting with their humor, voices, and multitudes of our bodies in consent.

Particularly painful was the resistance to the Gender Identity Policy of a sizeable number of parents of color, many of whom support their families on a low income, and who had worked for years to make the Board secure elementary resources for their children, withheld by the state. Their opposition was shared and in many case encouraged by the more conservative black clergy members. Their fight with the Board of Education had a much longer history. It began years back, when it became clear that white students were being disproportionately funneled to best schools.<sup>5</sup> In 2015, they appealed to the federal Office of Civil Rights. After an investigation, the Office released a favorable report and a recommendation that the magnet schools adopt restorative polices and academic reform that would desegregate schools. Yet, the Board reacted dismissively and

refused to implement any meaningful changes. At the same time, Paladino's hostility to public education, restorative pedagogy reforms, and teachers' unions, as well as his racist bravado, prompted BPTO in the summer of the same year to officially address the NY State Department of Education and call attention to the bigotry and "systemic racism" on the Board. It was BPTO's campaigning that brought about changes in the composition of the Board at the 2016 election. But even once it was taken by a pro-public education majority of women, four of whom are black, Paladino got reelected and promptly established a pompously hostile relationship with most of them. One of the first issues that the newly elected Board took up was the Gender Identity Policy. Parents opposed to the policy (mostly Black), took it to be fundamentally a "white issue." This newly orchestrated grassroots campaign was quickly given the sympathetic ear of the majority on the Board and selected city officials. White people were going to get what they asked for in the matter of several months, while years of struggle for their children have given them little to show for it.

The tragic irony of this situation was that many parents, who for years had fought against racist policies in Buffalo School District, began to echo the rhetoric used by Carl Paladino and that of the racist opponents of desegregation of schools half a century ago: we needed to protect our women/daughters/girls from rapists... We need to keep our schools safe...". For Paladino himself, a seat on the Board of Education was another pot of gold. A shrewd entrepreneur, attuned to the political channels of profit circulation, he immediately saw a significant profit opportunity when he first ran and won in the 2013 election. His agenda on the Board had been to declare public schools unsalvageable, and to buy them so that he could sell them to charter school companies. The largest part of Paladino's power is based on the millions harnessed from quick urban development projects: mainly buying publicly owned lots and turning them into commercial parking lots, gas stations, and rental office space. This often entails lobbying for demolition of historical urban geography and architecture and by extension, displacement of poor people of color from neighbourhoods they had inhabited sometimes for generations. In a city where Democrats have run unopposed for more than a decade, Paladino is one of many profiteers of political commitments based on the crudest of logics in nations' poorest cities – quick million projects entrusted to wealthy developers.

The Policy passed during the last weeks of October – eight of the nine members voted in support, even if more than one had spoken against it. Even before this, the authors of the petition calling for Paladino's removal had submitted it to the Board's President, Dr. Barbara Seals Nevergold, and to the State Education Department in Albany. In the last weeks before the passing, Paladino, turning to the audience, sent out a threat: only in a few months, he said confidently, "all of this will be reversed," once "President Trump wins." Earlier, during one of the community response portions of the Board's public sessions, Bridget Daria O'Neill, a white trans woman and at the time a college instructor and PhD candidate in UB's Comparative Literature program, in her speech argued for the Gender Identity Policy by using the frame of feminist intersectional critique. She indicated what soon became obvious – what public school students, particularly those of color, queer, and poor really needed protection from was the ruling culture that normalized gender, sexual, and racial violence, and its perpetrators such as Board member Paladino or the soon-to-be President of the United States. O'Neill addressed an atrium full of city officials, clergy, and community members: "We must protect our women from assault and harassment," the opponents [of the Policy] claim" (When she

named Paladino, O'Neill was interrupted by the Board President and asked not to use his name in her speech.)

Well, let's talk about assault and harassment. Let's talk about the disgusting things men scream at me on the street, practically every day. Let's talk about the men who make unwanted advances on me when I'm out in the evening trying to enjoy the company of my friends, and then call me a man in a dress when I reject those advances. Let's talk about a culture in which I'm afraid to walk the streets at night alone, in which I cannot even go to the Jim's Steakout a block away from my home when it's dark out without someone starting a conversation with me that I don't want to have. This harassment is not just due to my being trans, it is also due to my being a woman, a woman living in a culture that encourages men to think and talk about women as objects that they can possess, whether women consent to this or not. I can think of no better example of this phenomenon than presidential candidate Donald Trump's recently unearthed conversation with Billy Bush. If we want to protect women from assault, we don't need to protect them from people like me. We need to protect them from people like Donald Trump. Thank you.'

This and other community response speeches, strengthened by a public campaigning in the form of petitions and statements given to the media, may have been the first time School Board session heard a comprehensive analysis of the patriarchal culture in which Buffalo students are maturing and learning, and the first time it was confronted with insistent demands to act against its institutions and proponents. At the same time, it is fair to say that our coalition failed at building a larger intersectional movement against institutional racism, transphobia, and homophobia, by including resistant parents, even though repeated attempts had been made prior and after the Policy's passing.

Already three months later, in the eve of Trump's winning, came another public outcry followed by yet another petition for Paladino's removal.<sup>6</sup> This time it was over Paladino's response to the local paper *Artvoice*. Against the backdrop of Trump's presidential campaign and the election outcome, the incident unleashed a momentous local response of several community groups, teachers, parents, students, and many other community members, in the shape of direct action, demonstrations, and a "Can Carl" media campaign, coordinated by Just Resisting and the local chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), all of which congealed into the United Against Paladino Action Council (UAPAC). Even if the majority of Board members were sympathetic to the demands of the thousands of community members and started their own formal action for Paladino's removal, in the reality of New York's legislature, only one official in the entire administrative system, the State Education Department Commissioner MaryEllen Elia, was authorized to oust a popularly elected official. Immediately, the BPTO and NAACP initiated a legal action using the clause that allows the State Commissioner for Education to repeal a Board member's seat in case of willful misconduct or neglect of duty.

For eight months, from January till late August, UAPAC demonstrated at the Board meetings, making sure that "business as usual" did not continue as long as Paladino was in the room. They organized members to travel and monitor the five-day long hearing at the State Department of Education in Albany, and campaigned in the community and the state. Paladino, faithful to his style, responded with legal threats, personal insults, and by trying to recast himself as a martyr for public education brutalized by a school children-hating mob. In Cummings' documentary about this movement, Jayden



McClam, then a high school student and a black genderqueer youth activist with Just Resisting, a local collective of organizers fighting against institutional racism and for Transformative Justice, pointed out: “[Paladino] has promoted extremely violent, racist, sexist, queerphobic and transphobic rhetoric ... and he is completely unfit to make decisions for thousands of Buffalo school students.” However, when the long awaited removal finally happened in August 2017, it wasn’t for Paladino’s record of racist, sexist and other hate speech. Several members of the Board testified that Paladino deliberately revealed to the media confidential information about the teachers’ contracts.

Almost a year later, activists and public school teachers Kate Haq and Alexa Schindel were reflecting about the gains and lessons of their struggle: “But ultimately Paladino was removed based on a legal technicality and not on his racism, which is disturbing and speaks to the deep-seated racism that still exists. The work of UAPAC provided much needed racial awareness that brought people together for a common cause. Community groups sought each other out and continued to collaborate (...) as they reached out for support, shared resources, and educational opportunities.” They concluded: “Coordinating around Paladino’s removal has produced more outspokenness about race in both our city and our school district. Moving forward, Buffalo Public Schools have committed to infusing more culturally responsive teaching and learning practices in the curricula...”

All Buffalo school board members are up for election the coming spring. Some positive outcomes for public schools have been achieved in its last term. At the same time, Buffalo remains deeply racially segregated and the city’s institutions generally distrusted by the communities of color. This entrenched set of social relationships is further deepened by the Police Department’s ill reputation for its brutality and one of the lowest numbers of violent death case resolutions in the nation. This, however, doesn’t stall the city from pouring disproportionately large funds in the force. Carl Paladino continues to hold significant financial power in the city. On the other hand, organized resistance to figures such as Paladino or local millionaire Jeremy Jacobs (known for his intimate relations with University at Buffalo and ICE); and further, grassroots work against police brutality, in the past couple of years have deepened coalitions between local organizers, political groups, teachers, students, artists, and legal activists, in a dense network of tireless work to fend off and heal the grim socioeconomic and political effects of the time we live in.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/we-protest-artvoice-a-platform-for-carl-paladino-s-hateful-speech>

<sup>2</sup> These points were elaborated in the above-mentioned petition launched by veteran trans activist Camille Hopkins, UB Visual Studies Professor Jasmina Tumbas, activist and writer Adrienne Hill and myself.

<sup>3</sup> The University at Buffalo is a large research institution whose high administrations have mostly withdrawn its public and corporately enhanced resources from the community of WNY.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.change.org/p/buffalo-public-school-district-and-board-of-education-include-the-buffalo-pt-to-in-the-district-s-parent-involvement-policy-and-in-district-shared-decision-making>

<sup>5</sup> In Buffalo District, approximately 34,000 students attend public schools, 47 percent of whom are black, 19 percent Latinx, and 20 percent white

<sup>6</sup> This time the petition was created by poet and Professor Divya Victor, scholar Joshua Lam, artist Mickey Harmon, and Jasmina Tumbas. <https://www.change.org/p/we-protest-artvoice-a-platform-for-carl-paladino-s-hateful-speech>

**Bridget Daria O'Neill speaking on the Buffalo Public Schools gender ID policy at the Buffalo Board of Education, 10/12/16.**

My name is Bridget Daria O'Neill. I'm a Ph.D. candidate in the Comparative Literature Department at the University of Buffalo. I'm also a trans woman and a proud lesbian. I'd like to speak for a couple of minutes about Buffalo Public School's gender identity policy. I come at this issue with a unique perspective, not only because of my identity because my own experience as a teacher. I spent six years teaching freshman composition at UB. As such, I know the importance of maintaining a good learning environment, one in which harassment and bullying is not tolerated. While the proposed policy is certainly not perfect, it represents a big step forward in creating such an environment. Right-wing opponents of the policy tend to frame their opposition in terms of protecting young people from harassment and assault, relying upon myths of men in dresses, camping out in the women's restroom, waiting for the chance to leer at "real ladies."

However, there's not a single recorded incident of transgender individual harassing or assaulting anyone in the restroom. Whereas I can cite numerous incidences of trans people, trans women in particular, being assaulted and harassed by cis people. These incidents are reported by reputable news sources that engage in a little something called fact checking, unlike the tabloid websites and facebook memes which feature the aforementioned stories of cross-dressing bathroom creeps. Those who believe these stories and repeat them seem to be unable to distinguish reputable sources from baseless hearsay. If I saw such poor fact checking and researching in a student essay, I would immediately and rightfully give it a failing grade, and yet right-wing politicians in positions of power are allowed to spread these lies with impunity. The Buffalo School Board's own Carl Paladino has framed his opposition to the bill in such a way.

Interruption by School Board: You must not say his name.

O'Neill: Ok. "We must protect our women from assault and harassment," the opponents claim. Well, let's talk about assault and harassment. Let's talk about the disgusting things men scream at me on the street, practically every day. Let's talk about the men who make unwanted advances on me when I'm out in the evening trying to enjoy the company of my friends, and then call me a man in a dress when I reject those advances. Let's talk about a culture in which I'm afraid to walk the streets at night alone, in which I cannot even go to the Jim's Steakout a block away from my home when it's dark out without someone starting a conversation with me that I don't want to have. This harassment is not just due to my being trans, it is also due to my being a woman, a woman living in a culture that encourages men to think and talk about women as objects that they can possess, whether women consent to this or not. I can think of no better example of this phenomenon than presidential candidate Donald Trump's recently unearthed conversation with Billy Bush.

If we want to protect women from assault, we don't need to protect them from people like me. We need to protect them from people like Donald Trump. Thank you.



# **We Protest Artvoice: A Platform for Carl Paladino's Hateful Speech**

December 23, 2016

**We Protest Artvoice: A Platform for Carl Paladino's Hateful Speech**

Buffalo residents, artists, writers, teachers, and concerned citizens writing to protest Artvoice's "WHAT DO WE WANT FOR 2017" list published on December 22, 2016

We, the undersigned, are writing to protest Artvoice's "WHAT DO WE WANT FOR 2017" list published on December 22, 2016:

<http://artvoice.com/2016/12/23/want-2017-lot-different-opinions/#.WF0uRbYrKjS>

Among the lists published by Artvoice is Carl Paladino's heinous, egregious, and hateful wish list. In publishing Paladino's list, Artvoice willfully provides a platform for hateful, misogynistic, sexist, transphobic, anti-black, racist, and anti-muslim speech and ideology. In publishing Paladino's list, Artvoice demonstrates a condemnable lack of editorial judgement and fails to ethically serve the communities it claims to represent, inform, and support.

Artvoice claims to be "WNY's alternative weekly newspaper." Yet the cover story, which includes 42 "wish lists" by prominent members of the WNY community, does not represent WNY's demographics in the least. In Buffalo alone, women outnumber men (as of 2010 at 52%); and almost 40% of Buffalo's residents identify as African American. However, the published "wish lists" include the voices of only five women (less than 12% of the feature), and the representation of minority and POC perspectives is almost entirely absent.

**What do WE want for 2017?**

- A. We demand a public apology from Carl Paladino.**
- B. We demand the removal of Paladino from the Buffalo School Board.**
- C. We demand a public response from the editors of Artvoice.**
- D. We call for businesses to examine their relationships with Artvoice.**

**A. We demand a public apology from Carl Paladino and we protest his "wishlist" for 2017, published by Artvoice:**

1. Paladino describes a hateful fantasy about the death of President Barack Obama, involving bestiality, decapitation, a legal trial, and "mad cow disease."

2. Paladino facetiously accuses the President of the United States of having sex with an animal. Paladino's language normalizes animalization, which has long been one of the most violent strategies of dehumanization against POC in oppressive and white-

supremacist states. Artvoice supports the use of white-supremacist and violent speech. (Paladino specifically uses the term “Herford” [sic] to mean “heifer”. This is a man on the Buffalo School Board).

3. Paladino describes a macabre fantasy of the imprisonment and death of Valerie June Jarret, an African American official serving her country as current Senior Advisor to the POTUS. Paladino also accuses her of treason in a libelous and damaging statement. Further, he describes the murder of Jarret as being carried out by a “Jihady” [sic] cellmate, via decapitation. This is a misogynistic fantasy that gleefully celebrates the death of a public official. It also employs anti-Muslim and xenophobic language to convey a heinous image. Artvoice supports the normalization of anti-Muslim, violent, libelous, and misogynistic speech.

4. Paladino employs hateful, transphobic, racist (specifically anti-black), and explicitly misogynistic language in describing a fantasy about our current First Lady, Michelle Obama. Paladino questions Michelle Obama’s sexual and gender-identity through a transphobic trope that has been in play for the last 8 years in the worst of right-wing, white supremacist, and anti-black ideological circles. Paladino’s language normalizes white-supremacist, misogynistic, and transphobic speech. Artvoice supports the normalization of white-supremacist, misogynistic, and transphobic speech.

5. Paladino’s racism is most blatant when he wishes that Michelle Obama would be sent to Zimbabwe, where she might be “let loose” to “live comfortably in a cave” with “Maxie the gorilla.” Paladino’s language compares the First Lady to a wild simian, and promotes an ugly anti-black stereotype in order to convey a transphobic image of the First Lady. Paladino’s language normalizes dehumanization through animalization. Artvoice supports the normalization of transphobic and white-supremacist speech.

6. Paladino’s sexism is most blatant when he implies that only a man could be mayor of Buffalo (“someone with a brain, a set of balls”). As of July 2016, the U.S. Conference of Mayors shows that of 1,391 mayors in large U.S. cities, almost 19% were women. Paladino’s sexist assumption demonstrates that he is unfit to occupy public office. Artvoice supports the normalization of sexist speech.

## **B. We demand the removal of Paladino from the Buffalo School Board.**

It is appalling, in light of his documented conduct and speech, that Paladino is allowed to remain on the Buffalo School Board. Paladino has repeatedly and openly made misogynistic and xenophobic statements. When Donald Trump’s boastful comments about grabbing women’s genitalia—an act of sexual assault—were revealed to the public, Paladino attempted to normalize this egregious behavior, defending it as “gutter talk” and saying “all men do [that], at least all normal men.” A petition to remove him from the Buffalo School Board (BSB) garnered close to 3,000 signatures in October, and received overwhelming support. Moreover, the hateful language Paladino continues to use directly contradicts the official policy of the BSB and would not be tolerated in any of Buffalo’s public schools. As the Board clearly states in its newly adopted policy on Gender Identity—a policy Paladino opposed— “All students need a safe and supportive educational environment to progress academically and developmentally. The District is committed to fostering a safe learning environment for all students, free from discrimination and har-

assessment on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity, gender nonconformity, and gender expression.” Paladino continues to normalize hate speech with his racist, transphobic, and misogynistic fantasies of violence against African Americans and POC, and continues to alienate and harm the very students, parents, and communities his office is committed to serving.

**C & D. We demand a public response from Artvoice; Jamie Moses, Publisher; and Frank Parlato, Editor. We call for businesses to examine their relationships with Artvoice.**

Artvoice has been in print for over 25 years. Never has it been as polarized as now, or given voice to such extreme views as those of Paladino. Artvoice has increasingly become a platform for bigotry, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia. Articles have surfaced with significant bias against liberal or progressive opinions. As an alternative press that has a history of promoting local artists and initiatives, it is shocking that Artvoice would align itself with such hateful language and ideals.

If Artvoice fails to produce an appropriate public response to its editorial decisions and content, we urge local artists, writers, musicians, initiatives, businesses and politicians to stop contributing and promoting a platform that supports hateful speech.

Mickey Harmon  
Joshua Lam  
Jasmina Tumbas  
Divya Victor

# Manifesto

## Scene and Heard

1. We are survivors. We've been asked if we are 'genuine'. Why would survivors make up stories? We've been told that people within the Indian art industry have been accusing us of stealing data and that we are 'problematic' just because we choose anonymity. Well done art world. Calling out survivors who call out. Welcome to our world.

2. Abuse is a spectrum. Its not just sexual. Abuse is emotional, psychological and financial. We need to recognize this spectrum within the Indian art world first, before we can change and transform things.

3. The Indian Art World is happy to sign statements in support of survivors – the irony is that more than half of those who sign these statements and petitions are abusers themselves or are enablers of abusers – not just sexual but economic abuse. We see right through this.

4. We believe in a radical militant approach to our feminism. Meetings and due process have failed us time and again – we've seen how its torn survivors apart and silenced them further even after speaking out. What this fact has shown us is that we need more radical strategies of mobilization. We need to re-strategize our actions within a system that still privileges the predator – and that's the beginning of ensuring that, what is yet to come, is solid.

5. Anonymity is a consequence of the system that is the Indian Art World. Anonymity is all that protects us in an industry controlled by the few – the few, especially those with vested economic interests and the need to maintain the status quo, who are waiting for all this to "go away." We keeping hearing about the professional backlash we will get if they found out who we are. Ironic isn't it, that the same people who sign statements of support, have now created their own brand of a shadow network that 1) looks to protect predators because they are their cash cows 2) engages in tokenism to be seen as being on the right side of history.

6. We want to build futures that are safe, fair, and allow us all to grow and thrive. We want to get rid of gatekeeping and hierarchies and abuse.

7. Our strategies have come out of a very particular socio-economic, cultural, and political context that is the Indian Art World. We recognize that activism cannot be seen as a homogenous act. Neither can solidarity, community, friendship or peer-hood. We must understand each of our contexts and how to build from there so that change is affected locally and across a trans-national network.

8. We are here to stay. We will work in a pace that protects us and protects those who reach out to us. We believe our survivors.

To find out more about Scene and Heard's cases please go to:  
<https://www.instagram.com/herdsceneand/>



# Declaration of Commitment to Feminist Practices in Art Permanent Assembly of Women Art Workers

## Nosotras Proponemos

We propose

### Declaration of Commitment to Feminist Practices in Art Permanent Assembly of Women Art Workers

#### *We Propose*

Given increased awareness of forms of sexual harassment in the art world, we—artists, curators, researchers, writers, gallerists, art workers—state our commitment to feminist practices. This document, which we invite you to sign, is intended to create awareness of patriarchal practices that shape the exercise of power in the art world. The open letter “We Are Not Surprised” issued a “call upon art institutions, boards, and peers to consider their role in the perpetuation of different levels of sexual inequity and abuse, and how they plan to handle these issues in the future.” In this statement of commitment to feminist practices, we attempt to expand awareness of the patriarchal and sexist behavior pervasive in the art world, behavior that regulates how we position ourselves. While this statement addresses, first, the historical exclusion and devaluation of women artists, its proposals can be embraced by women, men, or those with non-normative identities. It sets out to act as a suggested guide to personal and institutional practices.

#### Concerning the structure of the art world

1. We demand equal representation in the art world (strategically 50% instead of the current 20%): the collections of museums and other cultural institutions, as well as in private collections; group shows; awards and distinctions (parity in the number of awards and distinctions given, and jury members); art fairs; representations at international events such as biennials; reproductions of works in books and catalogs; covers of magazines and journals; and number of artists represented by art galleries. Parity should be the guideline in all of the arts (in the programming of concerts and works in the performing arts, and in literature). We will make visible and dismantle the unequal distribution of funding, resources, and income (between different genders, between “centers” and “peripheries,” between different social sectors).

2. We will work for parity in the top-level positions at the artistic, educational, and cultural institutions that determine and enact policies in the visual arts. In Argentina, there are few female museum directors; the most powerful positions at art institutions are mainly held by men. Women generally hold mid-level jobs, performing “feminine” tasks linked to the patrimonial sphere (restoration, cataloging, conservation) or at the head of initiatives in education; if they do hold top-level jobs, it is usually at museums considered “minor” in relation to the “centers” of the arts (decorative art museums, museums of fashion design). The privileged speakers on panels or at roundtables are mostly men, and “stars” of the art world are overwhelmingly male. In organizations (not only at commercial venues, but also at self-run and supposedly horizontal spaces like assemblies and art projects), we will make ourselves visible and avoid to be placed only in the traditional roles of secretary, administrative assistant, press officer, while men are assigned creative and leadership tasks. We will attempt to work solely with those who feel that everyone is capable of acting and of learning.
3. We will be aware that heterosexual men are not the only ones to engage in patriarchal behavior: women can be extremely patriarchal when they act in an authoritarian manner and mistreat others. The gay culture can also be patriarchal. We will strengthen our alliance with “locas” and the queer community in order to dismantle gay misogyny. We will recognize male colleagues that follow feminist perspectives in their practices.
4. We will analyze the position of women and other feminized bodies in issues of race, social class, age, geography, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other differential vectors, and actively work to subvert the overwhelming discriminatory and excluding tendency in the art world that favors white, middle or upper class, young, and well-connected artists. We will support research and greater visibility of women artist with different social backgrounds and cultures. We will point out and analyze the exclusion of mid-career women artists and the recent and growing phenomenon of late recognition of female artists, which the press has called, in dismissive and discriminatory tone, “granny recognition.”

#### Concerning behaviors in the art world

5. We will not fall into the trap of the personal accusation (“She is difficult”): institutions and powerful figures always want to convince us that asking for our due, setting boundaries, fighting for the dignity of our work, means that we are uppity and out of line, or outright “crazy,” “hysterical,” or “problematic.”
6. Whenever we are about to criticize, aloud or otherwise, another woman, we will stop to consider whether we are engaging in a learned form of hatred. Misogyny is ingrained in the collective unconscious, and we have to take it apart within ourselves. When in doubt, we will ask ourselves what would happen if a man were doing the thing we are criticizing.
7. We will avoid expending too much energy supporting the careers of our male colleagues rather than those of our female colleagues. We will cultivate respectful and egalitarian working relationships with the men in our milieu without enabling micro acts of sexism.
8. When we have the chance to help another woman gain confidence in herself, we will. If a woman helps us gain confidence, we will recognize it and thank her.

9. We will avoid being discredited by acts of paternalism and demand revision of the language used by our male colleagues to neutralize our arguments and to impose their own. We will seek to keep our male colleagues from explaining to and correcting us (mansplaining) on the assumption that we know little about a given subject.
10. We will not be intimidated by volume or tone of voice, or by the physical stature, of our male interlocutors. None of that makes them right.
11. We will not feel ashamed of the issues we are interested or involved in: shame is one of the patriarchy's strategies to hinder research on certain topics.
12. We will explicitly oppose strategies of power and those who engage in them every time we come across them.
13. We will listen to each other and share experiences, because the personal is always political. We will promote friendship between women. We counter corporative sexism with solidarity between women (sorority).

#### **Concerning the artistic career and creativity**

14. We will create as much as we can. We will not be afraid to be ambitious. Creating more is a way to work for gender equality.
15. We will identify and ward off the plundering of our artistic ideas and practices, which often go unnoticed when produced or enacted by women only to gain notoriety when produced or enacted by men. We will draw public attention to that when it happens. We have noticed that qualities associated with "feminine" art are considered minor, kitsch, amateurish, childish, or ridiculous in the work of women artists but valued if in the work of men.
16. We will challenge the definition of "artistic career" as full-time dedication to the production of work to commercial ends. As women, we know that our ability to work is often conditioned by motherhood and by the work of caring for our families and their needs—material and emotional. We will uphold careers that include interruptions as a specific value in our practices. We will fight for the equal distribution of domestic work and care (including emotional support) and question how naturally those tasks are imposed to us and how naturally we embrace them.
17. We reject the concept of "the genius," of the master artist, and of the canon of "good art" regulated by patriarchal parameters.
18. We will cast off the "expert eye" capable of discerning, almost mystically, artistic quality.

#### **Concerning artistic feminism and feminist art history**

19. We will not avoid identifying ourselves as feminist artists or as feminist art historians when our practices encompass feminist art, politics, and activism. We will take pride in calling our work feminist insofar as it questions the dominant hetero-patriarchal system.
20. We will question the stereotyped images of "women" according to patriarchal discourses. We will build our own categories.
21. We will study the work of women artists, researchers, and theorists; we will heed their legacies; we will reexamine the power over us exercised by patriarchal genealogies; we will value women's knowledge.

22. We will reexamine what and whom we cite and how we have internalized patriarchal thinking and principles of authority in our practices.
23. We will analyze the patriarchal language that dominates the construction of art history (terms like genius, manifesto, teacher) to develop another perspective, other stories and other art histories.
24. We demand that female authors of art history and theory be included in academic curricula.
25. We will mention female colleagues and their work in conversations with curators, collectors, gallerists, and other agents in the art field. We will attend lectures, read interviews, and study work pertinent to women artists—an effective way to criticize the dominant patriarchal genealogies.
26. We will never name female artists as the wives or partners of male artists, linking them solely to male genealogies. We will avoid using the last name of the male member of the couple and the first name of the female member (e.g. Frida and Diego Rivera). Art history has been built on the marginalization of women in artist couples and in the relationships between male masters and female disciples. We will underscore women's independent identities, trajectories, and the place they occupy in the map of creativity.
27. We will make visible and condemn the power systems that belittle the work of women artists on the assumption that they have gained legitimacy in exchange for sexual favors.
28. We will attend women's meetings and conferences and propose sessions on art and feminism. We will speak out in order to compare women's situation in the arts and in other spheres of creation and knowledge.
29. We will pay attention to and learn from the collective, participatory, collaborative, and horizontal nature of feminism in history and its relationship to other subaltern, discredited, and oppressed forms of cultural expression
30. We will work so that the claims for recognition of women artists not recognized during their lifetimes or at the peaks of their productivity is not a passing trend.
31. We will support creation, knowledge, and circulation of collaborative, participatory, and community art, outside the traditionally elitist art field.
32. We will uphold modes of perception based on inclusiveness, on affect, and on equality as opposed to a logic of exclusion and individualism, of patriarchal values that dominate both society and the art world.
33. We will publicly point out that the exclusion of the work of women artists entails systemic and systematic censorship of our sensibilities, of our poetics and forms of knowledge. That silencing means that viewers have access only to male forms of seeing and being in the world.

**Concerning the inclusive nature of this statement**

34. We will fight to make the male art community and the art community in general open to different (and equally important) sensibilities.
35. We understand, and encourage our male colleagues to understand, that men as well as women and everybody in between can make this commitment. The principles of fairness and respect must be applied, preached, and upheld by all.
36. We believe that feminism is connected to awareness of discrimination and oppression not only of women, but of all other individuals dismissed for reasons of

class, race, gender identity, or sexual orientation: feminism is an emancipatory dialectical moment for everyone.

37. We will not be accomplices to any form of sexist violence, from the most visible to the most subtle and imperceptible. We will look for effective non-punitive, solutions: we will protect ourselves and protect our spaces. We will be there for each other

The impetus for this proposal was the unexpected and premature death of Argentine artist Graciela Sacco, who doggedly combated many of the behaviors described here. On November 7, 2017, we founded the Permanent Assembly of Art Workers to promote feminist practices. We call on the global art community to organize the International Women's Strike on March 8, 2018.

Translated by Jane Brodie. For more information about Nosotras Proponemos please visit their website: <http://nosotrasproponemos.org>

# Re: “Bitches” /Letter to the BFI

**Erika Balsom and Elena Gorfinkel**

On December 3, 2018, the British Film Institute issued a press release detailing its 2019 programmes. Among them was the following:

## BITCHES – June 2019

**BITCHES** will be a month-long film season about women behaving badly, about difficult, nasty women. The ones that don't care about what men, or anyone else, thinks of them. These are anti-heroines, from shrewd, social climbing broads to selfish and self-destructive chicks. And, of course, the actresses who imbued them with life, from **Mae West** to **Charlize Theron**, from **Vivien Leigh** to **Viola Davis**. **BITCHES** will include screenings of films such as *MY BEST FRIEND'S WEDDING* (P.J. Hogan, 1997), *THE LAST SEDUCTION* (John Dahl, 1994), *GONE GIRL* (David Fincher, 2014), *YOUNG ADULT* (Jason Reitman, 2011) and *GONE WITH THE WIND* (Victor Fleming, 1939).

In response to this capsule description, on the morning of December 7 we drafted the following open letter and circulated it via Facebook and Twitter for signatures. By that evening, over 300 people had signed the document – many of them film scholars, programmers, curators, artists, and students. We sent the letter to the BFI on the morning of December 8. That same day, the BFI responded, inviting us to meet to discuss the issue, and updated their website, scrubbing any mention of "Bitches" from their "2019 highlights." (See <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/announcements/bfi-southbank-announces-2019-highlights>)

7 December 2018

Re: “Bitches”

To whom it may concern:

This week, the British Film Institute issued a press release detailing its 2019 highlights. Amidst the expected auteurist retrospectives and themed programmes, one entry in particular stood out: a series entitled “Bitches,” scheduled for June. This month-long season proposes to showcase “social climbing broads” and “selfish and self-destructive chicks,” evidently as a celebration of feminine toughness and rebellion. All films mentioned as appearing in the series are directed by men and stem from Hollywood.

We write to you out of concern regarding the framing and content of this series. The copy of the press release presumably aims to reclaim language that has consistently been used to insult, diminish, and undermine women. However, we question the appropriateness of this gesture when coming from the BFI, an institution with an ongoing imperative to address significant problems of gender equity in its programming and publication activities.

As framed, the series uncritically parrots rather than questions the misogynist logics that inform so much Hollywood cinema, and the films announced to be screened in particular. If the titles noted in the press release are representative of the series as a whole, the terms of the conversation are entirely pitched towards a reinforcement of a woeful status quo: male representations of crazy, damaged, spiteful women. Unlike the “nasty women” of the programme of silent films curated by Maggie Hennefeld and Laura Horak for *Le Giornate del Cinema Muto* in 2017, the women of “Bitches” do not subvert gender norms – they inhabit stereotypes.

The problem is not that “Bitches” declines to promote “positive” images of women. The problem is that “Bitches” asks us to consume the pathologization of women as tongue-in-cheek fun, as if an age of gender-based discrimination were long behind us. There can indeed be great pleasure and political subversion to be found in cinematic representations of women behaving badly, but in this context, being called a bitch is insulting, not empowering.

“Bitches” represents not merely a failure to account for the world we live in and the ways feminist critical, curatorial, and scholarly work has reshaped how we think about gender representation. It also represents a failure of imagination – a failure to see the cinema of truly “unruly women” *by* women just under our noses.

The full list of signatories can be found at:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tfV3bph5MldPfwCiYkLjD1Ff3DL1eTTY-SZkWqGZG6c>

# ‘All the Windows are Open’: Mourning, Black Womanhood, and the Performance of Trauma

**Shanté Paradigm Smalls**

Walking into the production of Nia O Witherspoon’s *Chronicle X: A Revival* at JACK in the Clinton Hill section of Brooklyn, NY was a revelation—no, it was a fête. Being my Virgo Ascendant self, I arrived quite a bit earlier than my friend and accompaniment for the night. He would arrive a bit later. I took my time to observe the audience: mostly Black (many ethnicities), mostly women and femme, and very queer. I was at home. The January 25<sup>th</sup> showing—the second night of the three-day run of Dr. Witherspoon’s ninth stage play/libretto—was packed with spectators, friends, family, funders, and critics.

In 2017, I had seen an excerpt of Witherspoon’s then-current work, *Messiah* at Black Performance Theory at Washington University--St. Louis. I thought to myself then, “she is a genius,” and wished I could see more work. Getting my wish a little less than two years later was a joy. The conceit of *Chronicle X: A Revival* (an hour-length concert version of the fuller production, WITNESS, the first in the cycle of *The Dark Girl Chronicles*) is two-fold: It serves as a creation story from *Odu Ifa*—the oral literature from the Yoruba people of Nigeria; and a story of Philando Castille’s death at the hands of St. Anthony Minnesota Police officer, Jeronimo Yanez. Castille’s death achieved almost immediate iconic status as his girlfriend (in the car with him and her four-year old daughter at the time of his murder), posted the video of his live-streamed death on Facebook, after she was released from being held for “questioning” for eight hours. In that interim, Philando died. Diamond Reynold’s video initially reached 2.5 million people in twenty-four hours.

The death of Black men at the hands of the police state is so ubiquitous, it’s become a trope. What saves Witherspoon’s play from becoming trauma porn is that it is essentially a religious service that includes twerking, a healing ceremony for Black women and their trauma, sing-alongs, call-and-response, and what I’m calling ‘the Altar Call,’ which is what I will focus on here. An altar call is a traditional evangelical Christian performative in which attendants are invited (up to the altar) to commit or recommit to serving Jesus Christ.

*Chronicle X* (a revival!) gives us a twist. As the three Diamond Reynolds’ characters (Danyel Fulton, Shelley Nicole, Marvel Allen) recount the events the night of Philando’s



death, the band lead by musical director, Terry Burrus, and guided by the indomitable Spaceman, changes to recognizable gospel chords. The musical compositions are incredible renderings made by Troy Anthony who gives gravitas and vitality to Witherspoon's words. The narrator--The Priestess of Twerk (Witherspoon) instructs us: "Come with me. Shake it out. I'm right here. Come to center. All the windows are open. Tap it out: Head, release. Heart. Ribs. Wrist. Head. Heart, Ribs. Wrist. Head. Heart. Ribs. Wrists." The tears start flowing. And then those three diamonds open their mouths. My gods!! They start to sing, in three-part harmony, over and over again "All the windows are open," and the Priestess calls on the audience to join the Diamonds in the circle to support "what is happening." The audience joins in singing of their own--the harmonies are glorious. Those who don't want to join in the circle can tap out the mantra of head, heart, ribs, wrist. The sound crescendos and then returns to pianissimo. The Narrator asks us to "be here, with us" before we get carried away with our heavenly sounds.

Pause. And listen.

"We have just witnessed the testimony of Diamond Reynolds..." the Priestess states. What does it mean to witness this? She asks us. What is the Knowledge, Wisdom, and Understanding we can find in this moment, she queries. The Priestess invited any Black women who want get smudged and release what we dredged up to come to her to be cleansed. She asked all others to wait and interact with your neighbors. I waited. And then I didn't. Though the Priestess called non-binary, queer, and trans folks up right after, I was anxious and wanted to receive the blessings, even though my identity is not a Black woman. I made sure I went last.

Then the Priestess invites non-Black women to recite an Invocation where we vow support Black women.

The rest of Diamond Reynold's testimony is sung and I mean SUNG by the three actors/singers. They lead us on a 25-minute chanteuse journey, never letting the audience forget Castille's death, Reynolds's trauma, and the living legacy of the after-life of slavery<sup>1</sup>. The Altar Call section ends--the Priestess calls it our "shedding," and we end the revival with the Church of Twerk. The transition from deep mourning to celebration is familiar but also jarring. I wasn't done mourning (and will never be), yet of course, cannot stay in the emotional or theatrical moment forever. We move on through movement.

Witherspoon's *Chronicle X: A Revival* is desperately smart, witty, and powerful--we need it so deeply at this moment. We need art, and especially theater, that won't let us escape the reality of antiblack violence, but also demonstrates how we navigate it: through performance, ritual, song, conversation, memory, community, and then we breathe and release.

All the windows are open. Let the elements touch you.

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<sup>1</sup> Saidiya A. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 1997)

## We Are Sick Of It

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2018, Kasper König, one of the most famous curators and former museum director in Germany, called the Turkish migrants racist names while participating in a panel with Cana Bilir-Meier, a contemporary German artist of Turkish descent, and two artists of German descent.

Interestingly, the Munich municipal theater, Munich Kammerspiele, invited the above-mentioned artists in order to discuss the notion of "Heimat," which translates to "home" in German, and the rising of the far-right in German politics.

After Bilir-Meier expressed her resentment about what König said to her on the panel, this incident went viral on social media and many artists showed solidarity with her. The mainstream media in Germany heavily covered this case as an individual incident between Bilir-Meier and König. However, many activists and artists (including Cana herself) have rightly insisted that this is not a Bilir-Meier-König dispute, but rather it is a question of institutionalized and structural racism.

In an interview in *Konkret* (German magazine), the *wear sick of it* collective emphasized: "we want to go beyond this individual case and show the structures behind it that make it possible. There is also a genealogy of voices, who have been voicing this criticism for a long time, which we have now once again brought to the surface. We are by no means the first."

In preparation for this panel, König called Cana Bilir-Meier and told her that she won an art prize because of her exotic name and not because of the quality of the art that she produced. König went even further and described her works as, "not art, with no form." Indeed, König's comment is explicitly Eurocentric and Orientalist in its content. We should not forget that Eurocentrism and Orientalism are constitutive of the capitalist system and they have legitimized capitalism as the dominant system. Back to König, it seems he wanted to say, "Since I am a white male from Europe, I know better and have the right to degrade the "Other" or POC art. The Other does not know how to make art."

As *wear sick of it* commented on this point, "when artists use indigenous knowledge production and work with materials such as textiles, this is often not understood in a Western, Eurocentric art context, therefore, this art does not receive any resources. There are numerous other examples in which this cycle of institutional credibility, for which awards and scholarships are important, plays a major role. It is an extremely elitist, exclusion-producing context.

This incident should be analyzed intersectionally. This means overcoming a simplistic approach and enriching our analysis in order to truly grasp complex issues in our modern societies. For example, it is fruitful to approach the case through the lens of four categories: racism, nationalism, patriarchy, and class.

In fact, one cannot study these categories separately, for they sustain each other in the

capitalist system. For instance, if we stress our focus on one of the categories, the other will still function and produce injustice in our society. Thus, it is imperative to fight them as a whole to have a just and better life. Most important, these categories are institutionalized in the state apparatus and within society.

Since racism is structural, the fight against it should be structural as well. That means to seek radically to challenge all political and knowledge production institutions that sustain and produce racism."

## STATEMENT

On November 12, 2018, artist and filmmaker Cana Bilir-Meier was invited to take part in a public conversation regarding Germany's political shift to the right at the Münchner Kammerspiele. The talk was organized and moderated by curator Kasper König. After the talk, Bilir-Meier wrote a Facebook post in which she talked about König's racist behavior and wordings, both before and during the discussion. She also posted a video clip of a short excerpt from the talk.<sup>1</sup> With this letter, we would like to emphasize our solidarity with Cana Bilir-Meier. We have witnessed how the discussions that followed this incident have been reduced to Cana Bilir-Meier as an individual. We insist that this incident is not an isolated case. It is not at all about an interpersonal conflict between two people. On the contrary – this incident reveals mechanisms that we as migrant/black/ indigenous /lesbian/queer/trans artists of Color have experienced numerous times. While our individual experiences of discrimination might differ, we have all been confronted with racism. Hierarchies in the art world and the dependencies they produce (yes, even we have to live from something!) do not always allow us to speak out and defend ourselves against discrimination. Cana Bilir-Meier, however, defended herself, giving voice not only to the discrimination she faced but also to that faced by many people! It is worth noting that this statement is a part of continuous –past and ongoing– efforts to fight and dismantle racism in the art scene.

### **1. We observe that the structural levels of racism and discrimination disappear when we express our criticism and that we are accused of being aggressive or self-pitying when we call it out! WE ARE SICK OF**

- constantly explaining that capitalism, nation-states, hegemony, heteronormativity and various forms of discrimination are entwined with one another.
- the fact that forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, racism against Sinti\*ze and Rom\*nja, anti-semitism, anti-muslim racism/Islamophobia, and transphobia are used to judge, to select and yes, ultimately, to kill. They are employed to enable participation in and access to economic and political orders for certain people. They are always employed in order to sustain structures of domination.
- the personalization of structural discrimination, which trivializes and conceals its political and socio-economic impact.
- how people express solidarity, profess anti-racism and position themselves against racial discrimination, but then are unwilling to change anything structurally.

**2. Institutions acquire „critical“ knowledge without assuming responsibility, and thus reproduce forms of discrimination! WE ARE SICK OF**

- an art world that, on the one hand, deals “critically” with migration, racism, colonialism, etc., yet reproduces discrimination at the same time.
- the fact that people talk to us, but then make our perspectives and voices invisible. That we are invited but are only interesting as long as our criticism does not interfere with the everyday praxis of the institution/person, but instead helps them improve their image.
- the fact that institutions only temporarily bring in critical artistic, political positions from outside and accuse us of belligerence or of being uncooperative as soon as we express ourselves critically about racism.
- how big art and cultural institutions want to critically reflect on racism, migration, colonialism, but then only *white* people get well paid non-precarious jobs.
- the same people and institutions all too often remain silent about discrimination(s) and that they still have to be made aware of it.
- people and institutions embellishing themselves with “openness,” critical consciousness and discourses, while decisions and actions never change.

**3. What impact does structural discrimination have on our lives and our creativity? WE ARE SICK OF**

- being judged and having stereotypical images constructed about us.
- being objectified by art and cultural institutions and universities, them determining what art and knowledge production must look like, which language they can be articulated in, who talks about whom and how.
- the ways in which power structures and gazes define what thinking, feeling, writing, learning and seeing are.
- being accused of making “personal and constructive conversations” impossible because we are not willing to have these conversations behind closed doors and in an individualized manner.
- hearing that we simply misunderstood and that it wasn’t meant like that, that we are exaggerating and it has nothing at all to do with racism.
- of our opinions being discredited because discrimination affects us emotionally and we are not involved on a purely factual level.

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<sup>1</sup> The entire event (in German) can be seen here:  
[https://vimeo.com/300969522?fbclid=IwAR1YX6CLtSKUv63KfIQ\\_MkbVyrbA7pTRoDC23U5VAYhNrFeYDURyeqNK9TM](https://vimeo.com/300969522?fbclid=IwAR1YX6CLtSKUv63KfIQ_MkbVyrbA7pTRoDC23U5VAYhNrFeYDURyeqNK9TM)

# We are at war

**Imani Henry**

*It is Valentine's Day 2019 and I declare my love to /and for Brooklyn, NY. You are "my ride or die" and I will give my last breath for you.*

*I have lived in NYC since 1993. I was 22 years old. I left for 2 years, came back and can't imagine living anywhere else. I am a working class person who has experienced homelessness. I have lived in apartments / crashed on couches in almost every borough including "New Jersey". But Brooklyn has always been my home. It is where I first landed, whose streets I know the best, was always the place I was trying to get back to when I was displaced. I say "I was not born and raised here. I'm simply fighting to die in Brooklyn." Specifically Flatbush.*

*I moved to Flatbush in 2002 and that was it. I was in love. I was the Caribbean long lost son come-home-from-foreign. I wrote a script, did years of research, interviewed my neighbors, filmed a documentary to create an one person show about Blackness, The Middle Passage, The Maroon Wars, Migration and ....Flatbush. I have lived in 5 different apartments on or one block away from Flatbush Ave between Empire and Newkirk for 17 years.*

*Equality for Flatbush (E4F)<sup>1</sup> was founded in 2013. We say because of "the increase in tenant harassment and police violence due to gentrification in East Flatbush and Flatbush." The truth is I just needed a way to channel my rage. In 2014 we launched an indiegogo campaign for a project called BEFORE IT'S GONE, TAKE IT BACK Documenting Brooklyn - Fighting Gentrification (B4G).<sup>2</sup> It soon evolved into a Brooklyn-wide anti-displacement grassroots organizing campaign.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Please see: <https://www.equalityforflatbush.org>

<sup>2</sup> Please see: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/before-it-s-gone-take-it-back-documenting-brooklyn-fighting-gentrification>

<sup>3</sup> Please see: <https://beforeitsgone.co/downloads/B4GTalkingPoints2018.pdf>

*This piece of writing is what inspired B4G.  
#BeforeitsGone #TakeitBack #BrooklynIsNotforSale  
2/14/2019*

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We are at War by Imani Henry  
Started in 2014, Edited in 2019

Every party with “Soul” in its name has become near all-white. They have taken over the mosh pits at AfroPunk, are now front and center at hip hop shows, flood the museum for 1st Saturdays.

I dance with my back turned and eyes close to block them out.

It is painful to watch.

You stand there. Feeling helpless.  
Too powerless to stop it.

It’s like a natural disaster. A tidal wave or hurricane mercilessly destroying everything in its path.

So you run and hide, try to seek shelter  
To only return to see all that you once loved is now gone, swept away or damaged beyond recognition.

Some of us have tried to rebuild. Some us hang on for dear life. Some us have been forced out. Some of us come back to visit once sacred places to find even our memories are gone. Our lives/peoples/culture/pride eviscerated

Sometimes it is just pure theft! Trickery! 30-day notices to vacate, fraudulent court dates, the gas turned off on you, no heat /hot water/extermination for months, construction companies crack your walls on purpose, steal your house, burn down your store, rename your neighborhood ....Fuckery

I marvel at what is to feel like everything and anything is yours. That you do not understand, the word “No”. That your life is just one big Manifest Destiny-Columbusing-Invasion every goddamn day. Entitlement is pathology.

So it will take an army, a militia  
Mercenaries to fight them  
We’re gonna need guerilla warfare-like tactics  
We need landlords ambushed/ rezonings sabotaged/ small businesses occupied to stop them from closing  
We need hit-and-run raids on luxury condos  
We need some Harper’s Ferry, Granny Nanny, Rebel Insurgent -type shit

There are stories of Black women in Bed-stuy standing on their front porches with shot-guns telling developers to “Git”

People taking back apartments by gunpoint in Flatbush

Amazon sent packing by Brown migrants in Queens

And we’re gonna need masses of people in the streets

A million people marching, raising our voices in protest, shutting down traffic, barricading ourselves in buildings, taking over / taking back New York City

Before it’s gone

What will New York look/feel/be like in 5, 10 or 20 years?

What will it mean to be “born and raised” in Brooklyn in 2029?

Who will line Eastern Parkway on Labor Day weekend? Will there still be Puerto Rican flags hoisted in Sunset Park? Will future generations know who/ what/ how we existed back then?

My peoples fought 2 wars, back to back, 100 years a piece. My peoples have lived through land theft, drone strikes, and imperialist occupations. My peoples have been teargassed, bombed, gay bashed, raped, lynched, and shot down like dogs. My peoples have protected water, jailed cops, stop evictions, overthrown governments, freed slaves

You / we/ me come from centuries of resistance. It is in our blood. It is bone-deep. It seeps out of every pore.

We have been here before

Gentrification is just the latest war

# (Dis)Placed in Sunset Park

**Betty Yu**

*\*First and foremost I'd like to note that no discourse or conversation about gentrification and displacement can be had without acknowledging that we are settlers on occupied Lenape-Lenape land in New York City.*

*(Dis)Placed in Sunset Park* is an interactive multimedia exhibition that features short videos of Latinx and Chinese (im)migrants, workers and residents in Brooklyn, New York's diverse Sunset Park neighborhood. The common theme among their stories is the shared narrative of migration to the U.S., their journey to Sunset Park and their fears of displacement as a result of gentrification. Each story is grounded in the subject's own sense of home, sanctuary and refuge that they have found in Sunset Park. The title refers to the way people are being "displaced in" their own community as it changes around them; and to the some are being crowded into smaller quarters within Sunset Park as well.

New York City has experienced accelerated gentrification in the last fifteen years. Working class and immigrant families are being displaced and uprooted from where they live and work. As someone raised in Sunset Park, I am concerned about the way the cultural fabric and life I have known for decades may be transformed in the coming decades.



Artist Betty Yu leading a placekeeping walk in the neighborhood during. Photo credit: Di Cui



My family was part of the early wave of Chinese-American families to move into Sunset Park back in the late 1970's. Using myself as an entry point into the exhibition and project, I documented the impact of gentrification on the cultural fabric, community life and changing racial demographics of Sunset Park through my own story and the stories of others. *(Dis)Placed in Sunset Park* also examines and interrogates the shifting borders of Sunset Park as it relates to the changing boundaries for plans created by real estate speculators and developers. The mapping aspect of this project highlights contrasting definitions of legitimate space and belonging.

I grew up in Sunset Park, Brooklyn to Chinese working class immigrant parents. I felt privileged to have grown up in the 80's and 90's in a neighborhood where I had friends from all backgrounds -- mainly Puerto Rican, Dominican, Chinese, and European. I straddled what was often referred to as the "Two Sunset Parks" - the Chinatown part and Latinx section, with 6th Avenue as the dividing line. I had both Chinese and Latino friends and have fond memories of navigating between the Chinese-speaking immigrant thoroughfare of 8th Avenue and the Spanish-speaking park-side along 5th Avenue. On the streets of 8th Avenue (Chinatown) and 5th Avenue (the Latinx neighborhood) I could hear diverse languages being spoken, and see distinct restaurants, hair salons, bakeries, churches, buddhist temples, groceries, clothing shops, and more. Entering the park in Sunset Park on a weekend afternoon within just 10 minutes it's common to see people doing tai chi, barbecuing, playing soccer, and dancing. This is the culturally-rich, vibrant, and diverse world I intended to capture in *(Dis)Placed in Sunset Park*.

Of course, not everything has been easy in this neighborhood. There were always racial tensions and frictions between different immigrant waves. Back in the late 1990s and early 2000s there were dozens of garment factories operating out of warehouses and garages in the industrial parts of the area. Folks like my mother worked long hours for very low wages in these sweatshops. However rents and costs of living were still reasonable.

The very block I grew up on is being transformed before my eyes. Today, I feel the land shifting rapidly beneath my feet. The Latinx area is being hit hard by the massive gentrification caused by the multi-million dollar Industry City development. Industry City replaced Bush Terminal, a manufacturing, shipping and warehousing complex that was a site for employment of thousands of blue-collar U.S-born and immigrant laborers from the early 1900's up until the 1970s. Recently real estate developers have re-branded Industry City as an industrial waterfront for a "maker" innovation economy centered on art, high fashion, design, film and TV, tech startups, and specialized food sectors. The Chinatown locale where I grew up is also affected. Banks in China, international real estate developers and domestic investors are buying up residential and business properties and converting them into luxury condos, shopping centers, a tourist-oriented Chinatown gateway and other large capital ventures. These impositions are not meant to serve working class immigrants like my parents who live there. Instead these changes are calculated to replace the people there with higher income new inhabitants. Meanwhile, the Sunset Park Chinese population is expanding, absorbing low-income Chinese displaced from Manhattan's Chinatown and other regions. The long-time Chinese residents are subject to rising rents and some of them, along with these newcomers, are being "displaced into" Single Room Occupancies (SRO) run by unscrupulous landlords.

### Counter Mapping and Shifting Borders

The Brooklyn neighborhood now known as Sunset Park was home to the First People's nation of the Lenape-Algonquian people, of whom the Canarsee were an ethnic neighborhood. They were the first known inhabitants of the area. Sunset Park has always been a waterfront community. The proximity to the harbor has been a key factor in the life of Sunset Park. People gravitated to this land because of fertile soil for farming and easy access to the river for trade. At the turn of the 20th century, the Bush Terminal (now known as "Industry City") by the waterfront was a major hub for shipping, warehousing, and manufacturing employing thousands of immigrants from all over Europe. Later Puerto Ricans and immigrants from Latin America and China worked there, mainly in the garment factories.

The parameters of the Sunset Park neighborhood are 17th Street to the North, 64th street to the South, 8th avenue to the East, and the waterfront to the West. The name "Sunset Park" was taken from the large park that was built in the 1890s. The entire neighborhood was officially given this name in the 1960s when it was designated a federal poverty area eligible for funding. The area also includes Greenwood Cemetery which was built in 1838.

The mapping aspect of this project highlights the conflicting definitions of legitimate space and belonging. For example, earlier city maps of the neighborhood show a much larger Sunset Park than the newer maps that constrict it to much narrower boundaries. Who are the decision makers behind these new development plans and proposed zoning policy changes? Who should new construction and planning serve? Is it meant to serve established communities? Is it democratic to upend existing residential property, cultures, and ways of life because it enhances returns on finance and real estate capital?

Theories of counter cartography and counter mapping have influenced my work. Maps are accessible and are widely thought of as objective blueprints. They carry an authority that other forms of art and storytelling do not. 'Counter-mapping' is a community-led map-making process where people appropriate the techniques of formal mapping used by government and industry and lift up underrepresented people, uncover untold histories, and bring to focus places that not recognized by dominant narratives. Through this project, I hope to challenge the power structure's notion of maps: Who creates maps? Who's stories are told by them? Why are some sites highlighted and deemed important while others are unseen or ignored?

In the last few decades real estate developers have renamed parts of Sunset Park "Greenwood Heights" and "South Slope" to make the neighborhood more desirable to newcomers by emphasizing its proximity to the affluent and desirable neighborhood of Park Slope.

### The Fight Against Gentrification:

One of the things I love most about the neighborhood where I grew up is its diversity. The vast majority of residents are people of color, immigrants and working class European Americans. It was one of those working class communities where immigrant families could actually afford to live and even purchase a home if they were so fortunate. Between 1990 and 2014 the number of immigrants living in Sunset Park doubled. According to the recent census almost 50 percent of the neighborhood is Latinx and about

40 percent is Asian. In addition, there is a growing Arabic speaking community coming mainly from Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco and other parts of the Middle East.

My family was part of the first wave of Cantonese-speaking Chinese families to move into Sunset Park back in the late 1970's. Today, most of the people immigrating from China are coming from Fujian province. Asian residents have been the fastest-growing group. The number of Asians in the area increased by 241 percent between 1990 and 2014. By 2014, Asians accounted for more than one-third of the population. Sunset Park is now home to one of the largest concentrations of Chinese residents New York City, surpassing the number living in Manhattan's Chinatown.

Today, however, the community is at risk. Major plans are underway to gentrify the Sunset Park neighborhood. Developers have been pushing to change zoning and land-use laws so that developers can demolish existing low structures to build taller luxury housing. Many parts of Sunset Park are still zoned for manufacturing and not for residential or commercial use. Zoning laws may seem unimportant at first. In fact, it is vital to organize our communities and take control of them.

According to scholar and former Sunset Park resident Tarry Hum, "Brooklyn is the symbolic capital of New York City's 'maker' movement of artisans and artists, designers, craftsmen, builders, innovators, and inventors. The adaptive reuse of the borough's extensive industrial waterfront is integral to an innovation economy that derives social and economic value from place-based global branding." Industry City (formerly Bush Terminal) is a \$1 billion venture comprised of 16 factory loft buildings of 6-12 stories with 6.5 million square feet of floor space across 7 blocks covering 32nd to 39th Street by the waterfront. Developers are trying to position it as one of the nation's largest innovation maker hubs. This innovation economy ecosystem is centered on "art and design, film and TV, retail, fashion, technology, and specialty food sectors," according to Hum. In order to qualify for the new luxury developments in Sunset Park - a family of four has to make at least \$83,844, but the median income of current residents is \$31,290 a year.

The impact of Industry City is already palpable, displacing Sunset Park's working class residents of color and many small businesses. Jamestown, the developer behind Industry City, has been pushing to rezone the neighborhood so it can build more luxury buildings, hotels and commercial structures. A few blocks south of Industry City is Sunset Industrial Park which is being redeveloped into a distribution center attracting corporations like FedEx, Verizon, and many others. There is also development on the Chinatown side of Sunset Park where I grew up by 8th Avenue. Since 2012, overseas Chinese and domestic investors from Flushing, Queens along with banks from China have been the major force behind the gentrification. Much of this development is happening one block away from my family's house. On 62nd Street and 8th Avenue there is a mega-development underway called The Eighth Avenue Center that will include a 17-story office building, a 10-story hotel, condo buildings and a shopping center.

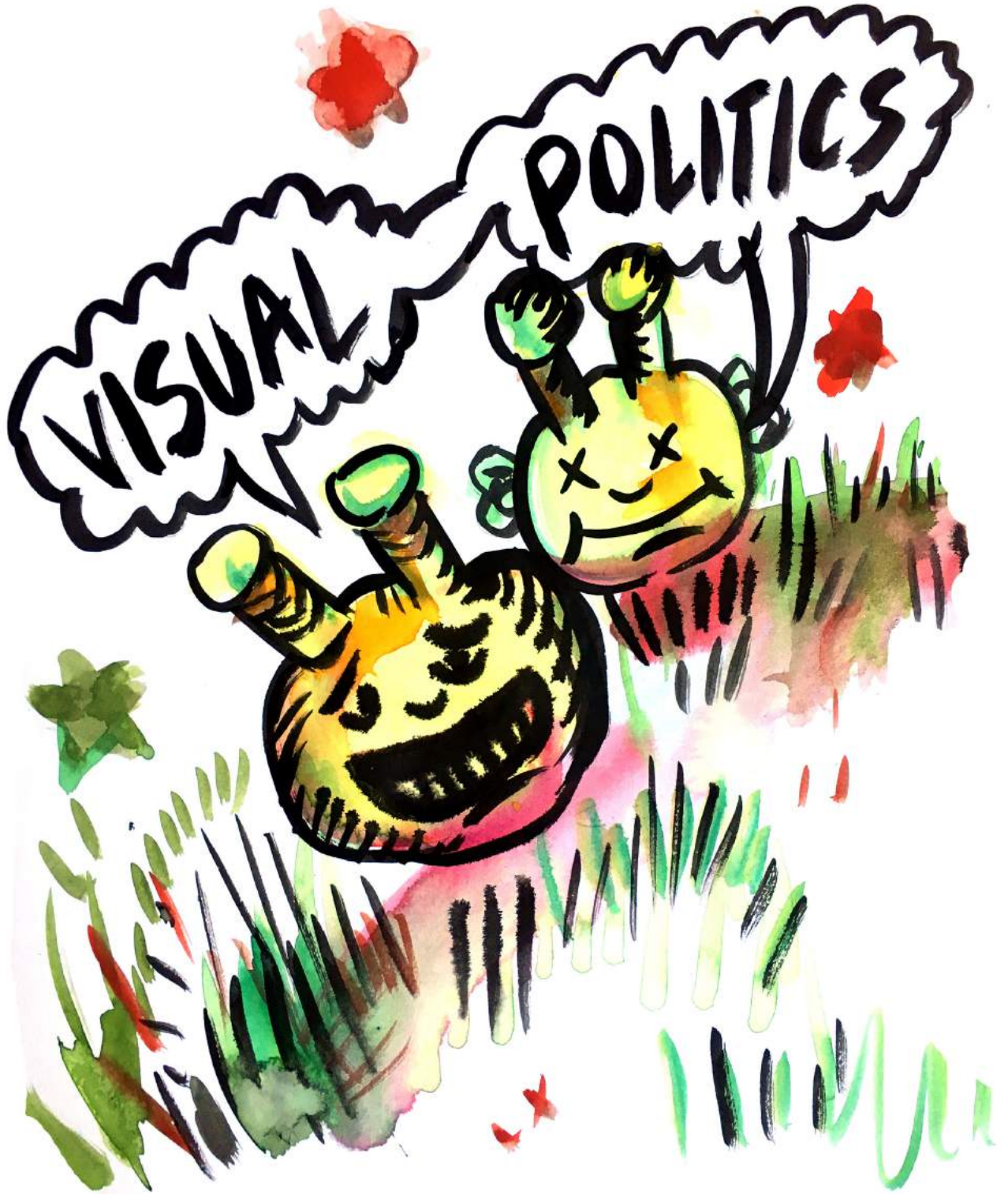


Part of the "(Dis)Placed in Sunset Park" exhibition: Research and Action Corner featuring archival photos, maps, land use policy documents and ways to take action. Photo credit: Betty Yu

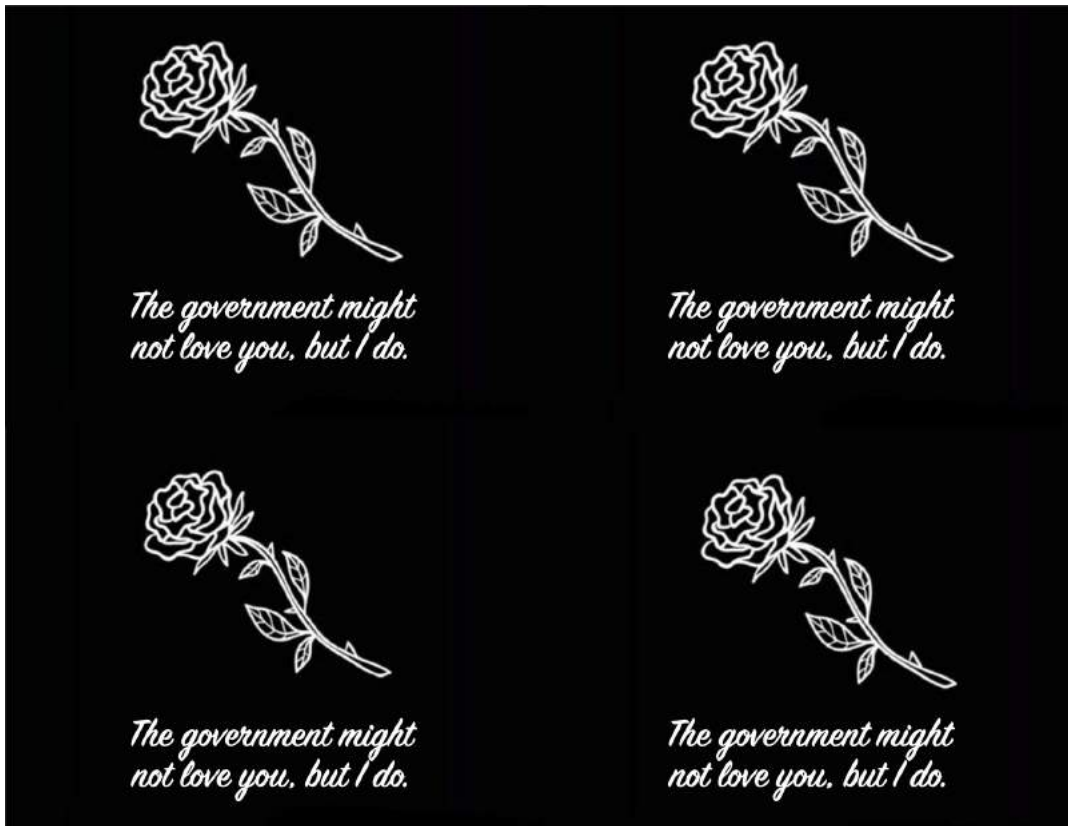
A Chinatown arch called the Brooklyn Friendship Archway may be built on 61st Street and 8th Avenue. It is a “gift” from Beijing’s Chaoyang District, yet \$2 million taxpayer dollars will be needed to subsidize the project. The archway will only boost tourism and real estate values while pushing out working class residents.

And finally there is the Winley Plaza Condominium, under development on 8th Avenue and 56th Street, outfitted with luxury condos and medical offices, that will cost \$33 million to build. In addition to these large developments, dozens of other properties are being bought by developers to turn into luxury condos and hotels. These developers are pushing for changes in zoning laws around 8th Avenue so they can build more residential and commercial spaces. In August 2018, a plan detailing the scope of work for the Eighth Avenue Center mall was released and public hearings will be scheduled.

This project draws on people’s recollection and remembrance of the past as they live in the present and articulate their hopes for the future of the neighborhood. Sunset Park is only a microcosm of what is happening all around New York City and beyond. Sunset Park, like so many other diverse communities, is being homogenized by waves of gentrification. The stakes are high. The fight against gentrification is real. The fight is now. For more about the project, organizing resources and what we can do go to: <http://www.bettyyu.net/displacedinsunsetpark/>



# Mimi Thi Nguyen

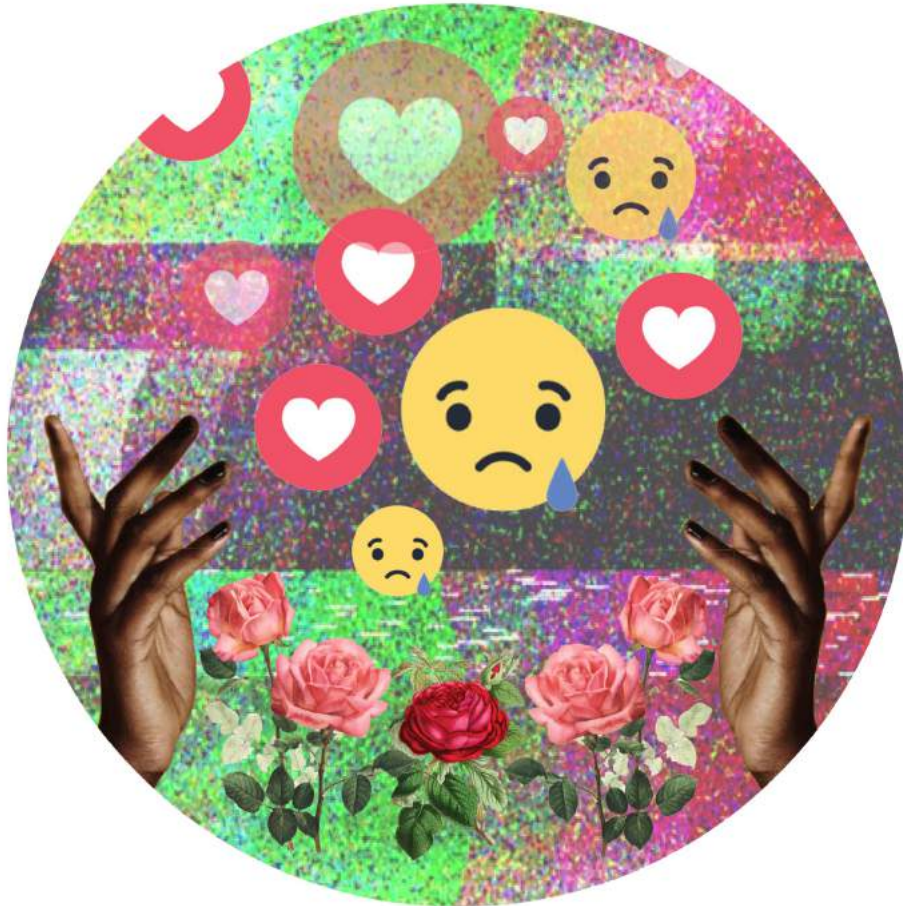


As a young punk in the late 1980s and early '90s, it was the sticker, the button, the postcard, and the patch sewn onto a jacket, which often moved me. So many encounters with radical ideas were mediated through the brief gut-punch of a message found in unexpected places – light poles, telephone booths, or subway cars— or densely encrusted ones – the organizer notebook, the denim vest, or record store bathroom. We, the punks and the freaks and the weirdos and the queers, were always making stickers or flyers, especially because we could easily scam copies from copy stores – or get them for free from our friends working at them. Their usefulness stays with me, as an old punk who is also now a professor, donating my DIY labor to make posters for campus campaigns or campus-community activist forums; to design buttons and t-shirts for my interdisciplinary departments (and our colleagues); and to make most all of these materials available for free public download.

Since the 2016 presidential election, I had been pouring urgent, but also wildly ambivalent, energies into electoral politics. My also radical friends and I wrote personal postcards to get out for the vote for, among other things, saving the community nursing home from privatization, electing progressive candidates in our local elections, and restoring the vote to persons convicted of felonies in Florida. I did these things, even as I had minimal faith in institutions, since the state –though not monolithic— is also the principal arbiter of violence in our lives. Throughout the fall leading up to the 2018 midterm elections, we witnessed the National Guard deployed to the U.S.-Mexico border to unroll miles and miles of barbed wire for political theater, Border Patrol teargassing asylum seekers as brown children were held in the thousands in detention camps, and the confirmation of an unrepentant sexual predator to the Supreme Court, against all evidence and outrage. But liberal discourses about “norm erosion,” about the exceptional nature of the present, about the spectacle of extraordinary violence that solicits the chorus, “This is not who we are!” in response to these more obvious atrocities blunted some historical truths – that the United States is founded upon the original violences of settler colonialism, indigenous genocide, and chattel slavery. National love, love of country and Constitution, is virulent and dangerous inasmuch as these truths are named as unfortunate aberrations rather than constitutive conditions, as much-regretted errors located in a distant past – when they are named at all. This history does not, *cannot*, love us.

So I made this postcard, a minor objection. Most obviously the postcard references The White Rose, a Munich-based coterie of students who campaigned for resistance to the Nazi regime through hastily scrawled graffiti and hand-printed pamphlets, before they were executed for their refusals. The words are a variation on popular anarchist or radical messages – “We will love and protect one another,” “Be careful with each other, so you can be dangerous together,” et cetera— premised on a political horizon of radical affinity. I brought hundreds of postcards to the American Studies Association and National Women’s Studies Association annual meetings in Atlanta, days after the Georgia gubernatorial election starkly evidenced the successes of Republican gerrymandering and voter suppression, as Stacey Abrams “lost” to Georgia Secretary of State Brian Kemp – who in this position had overseen the election process. Over the course of several days, I left the cards in restaurants and shops around the city, and at literature tables at both conferences; distributed them to friends and colleagues who work with teenagers, migrant workers, and juvenile offenders; and handed them to persons I know, and others I did not, in carpeted hallways and elevators and presidential addresses. I wanted to create fleeting, but I hope meaningful, encounters that had nothing to do with the professional reasons we were there – to say that the state cannot give us what we need, but that together under its shadow, we can get it, and get beyond.

## Paris Henderson



Street art and graffiti is my base when it comes to creativity. It's not super known outside the art realm but most known street artists are white. Black & brown folk have a hard time existing in this realm of white supremacy already, the risk of doing something illegal without the promise of a financial return is a lot. Whenever I create, I keep in mind all the folks like me who risk so much to have their voices seen & heard without any promise of return, protection or a tomorrow. This collection of images wraps ideology around social media, celebrity, breaking news and how we as westerners create idols. Creating gods out of things is one of our favorites pass times in the Americas. It's something you can attach different faces to and get different results & reactions. I wanted to update our idol worship the way we update our phones, social media profiles and news feed. I was hoping to get a glimpse at how we tie ourselves to things through a stream of images and sounds we're all familiar with. Each image is a sticker that can be put anywhere when in the hands of anyone. The many layers and movements of street art.





## Boineelo Cassandra Mouse



The photograph, was taken in 2018, Cape Town. The main concept behind the image was about women. Women celebrating their flaws, women accepting how they look physically. It was about women being comfortable about their skin and bodies. Therefore there was no edits or make up done to models or photographs. The main reason also was to promote women empowerment and to raise the issue about rape and women abuse.



The main concept behind the artwork was women's condition. Women here in South Africa are not celebrated enough, protected and supported enough. In my country, women are being killed, raped, silenced, discriminated and abused. The woman has paperwork/newspaper on her face instead of her facial traits showing. The newspaper represent how media make a mockery of women who come forward and talk about issues (rape/social issues), instead of helping them, they somehow find a way to blame it on the woman. The red represents all the brutal violence women and children go through on a daily basis.



Women are being killed, raped, abused, tortured, sold, and misunderstood.  
Women are not valued enough! Acknowledged enough,  
Feared enough or loved enough.  
Women are not celebrated as much as men are.  
We are not safe, we are not protected.

# Response to Treaty 4 from the Thunderbird Women

**Amanda Fayant**

To the Crown representatives:  
You did not negotiate with us.  
The leaders and mothers of our communities.  
We were not included in your treaties.  
They are not valid without our consent.

To the Crown  
You did not receive the necessary approvals to proceed with your treaties.  
You did not include us.

*Indian Act Canada 1867: "an Indian (i)s legislatively defined as a male Indian, the child of a male Indian or the wife of a male Indian"*

You gave authority where there should have been acknowledgment.  
You made deals with the wrong representatives.  
You had no authority to negotiate without the matriarchs.

We are the life givers  
The grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters, daughters. We give life and support life, we speak for the moon, the water and for life.

Kikâwy  
Your mother  
Kôhkom  
Your grandmother  
Kitânis  
Your daughter  
Matriarchs and leaders  
The future is thunderbird women



- 7 ribbons
- 7 poles
- 7 fire logs
- 7 streams of smoke
- 7 generations

Pictograph  
inspired by  
Chief Paskwa's document  
ca 1877

"Thunderbird Women"  
by  
amanda fayant  
©2019



# Van Tran Nguyen

*Those Who Protect, Those To Protect* (2017)  
Video (Looping)

“Quả pháo ơi sao mà yêu như đứa trẻ?”  
*Cô Gái Sài Gòn Đi Tải Đạn* (1968)  
-Lư Nhất Vũ

*Cô Gái Sài Gòn Đi Tải Đạn* (1968) is a song written about the Southern Vietnamese women revolutionaries during the American War in Vietnam (1955-1975). A phrase repeated throughout the song, “Quả pháo ơi sao mà yêu như đứa trẻ?”, translates to “Oh cannonball, why do I care for you like a child?”. The song continues, describing the way she carried a cannonball is like the way women working in rice fields would carry a baby: on their backs. The depiction of Vietnamese women during wartime, as composer Lư Nhất Vũ painted in his song, reframed fighting the war as a maternal act. To care for land and country is like caring for a small child. Songs like this gained popularity and continued to circulate during wartime era in Vietnam. The image of the Vietnamese woman became ubiquitous with war. This emblematic symbol of the American War in Vietnam may have empowered women yet it also limited the imagination of what women could be.

Through the eyes of war, what types of women get to be seen?

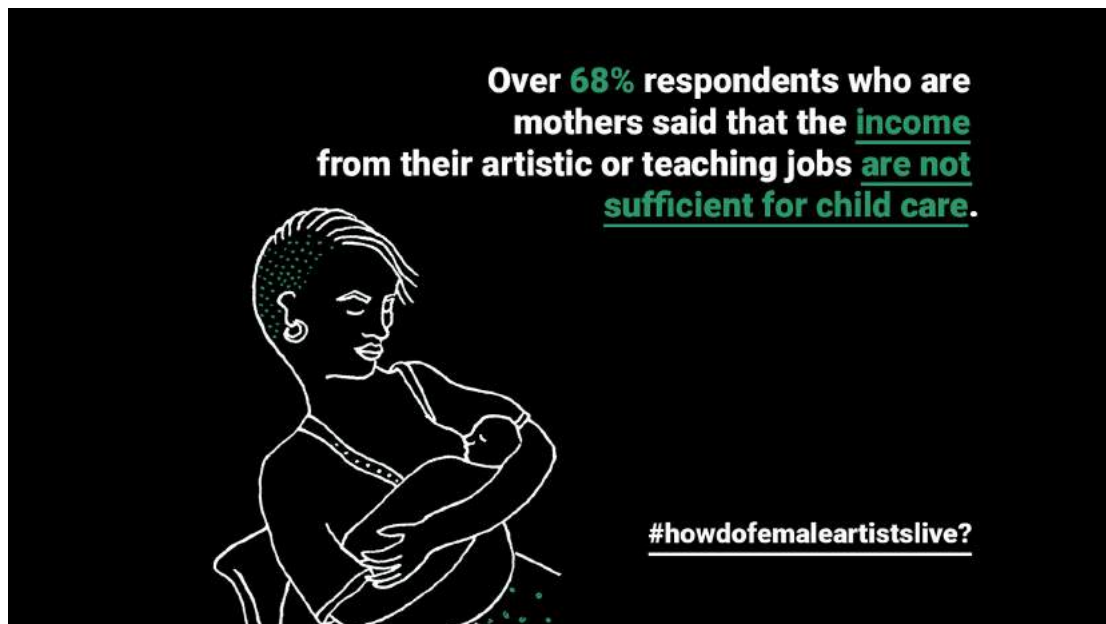
In searching for alternative ways that women were represented during the war, I found two lineages of women that were often seen in these archives. Either able-bodied women or little girls. Propaganda posters and billboards depicted two types of women: ones that offered protection from war and ones that needed protection. The conflict of tension and solidarity were played out on these women’s bodies. In the video, *Those Who Protect, Those To Protect* (2017), I have inserted myself in these images of the Vietnamese woman. Moving awkwardly and slowly through the rigid imagery of her, I muddy the lines between the warrior woman and innocent little girl. As I work through each depiction, the in-between spaces become complex, nuanced and imperfect. And as we move towards nuance and a truer depiction of selfhood, we see the lines move, ever so slightly, to take on the shapes and figures we champion the most: ourselves.





# Selma Banich, Nina Gojić, Tajana Josimović & Elma Jurov

## How Do Female Artists Live?



The survey How Do Female Artists Live? was designed to open a dialogue on how female artists in Rijeka and the vicinity live, whether they can earn a living, and how they go about it. The survey didn't strive to be scientific in nature but merely a method of spotting joint trends, problems, and phenomena in the sphere of female labor in culture. The publication was conceived as an organizational and artistic memento, in two blocks. The first block, that is, the central part of the publication, consists of an extensive analysis of the state of women's labor in culture based on the conducted one-year survey that incorporated almost all segments of the public and private lives of the respondents, accompanied by the quotes from interviews with female artists conducted in the field. The second block is conceived as a workshop memento. This project is our contribution to the current struggle for female artistic, labor, and reproductive rights.

Illustrations: Ena Jurov

Research collaborator and producer: Tajana Josimović

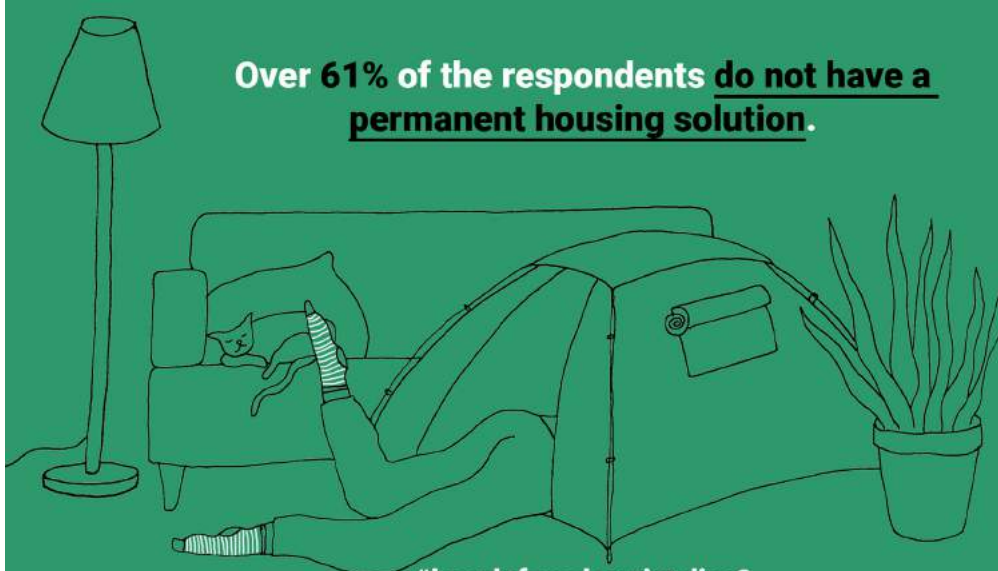
Production: Prostor Plus, Rijeka 2018

**48% of the respondents encountered some form of discrimination in their workspace or outside of it. Most of the respondents experienced gender based discrimination, while some respondents were discriminated on the basis of race and ethnicity.**




#howdofemaleartistslive?

**Over 61% of the respondents do not have a permanent housing solution.**



#howdofemaleartistslive?



**For 63% of the respondents, their home is sometimes or always also their workspace.**

#howdofemaleartistslive?



**Over 25% of the respondents are paid less than their male colleagues for the same jobs. The data about fees is often unavailable and non-transparent, which makes it difficult to react to gender based difference in salaries even when they do exist.**

#howdofemaleartistslive?



# On Coalitions, Commons, Compassion, and Courage or Why We Don't Win the War by Speaking Firstly to Power

**Fred Moten in conversation with Corina L. Apostol**

CA: I would like to start with the question of coalitions, which was one of the key concepts and inspirations for me when I first started to think with my co-editors about this issue. In particular, I wanted to unpack the potentialities of thinking about coalition building, which emerged as part of your discussion with Stefano Harney for *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Studies*. When this publication came out a few years ago it was an essential reading, and I think the notion of coalition is very critical at the moment. In your discussion with Stefano you remarked that coalition is the realization that we're all in this together and I think that's so important to think through right now. And my question was how your conceptualization of this notion and its practice can be productive in thinking through connectedness in today's world, which seems increasingly divided and polarized, where people speak in echo chambers that don't necessarily connect.

FM: You know, I am not certain if I would still say the same thing, or if Stefano and I would say the same things, today. It is true that we are all on the same earth. We're all in the same boat. We're all in the same trouble. But, you know, there are different positions within that trouble, different positions and different experiences on that earth and the question is, then, how to negotiate the differences and the commonality on the earth—or, how to reconcile that we are on the same earth but in different worlds. That's the oldest question, maybe. I want to be a part of the movement to save the possibility of human life on this planet. I want to be a part of that project. And I'll be glad to work with anybody or anyone who wants to be in that project. That's the best way I can put it right now. I would say a huge part of that project is constantly renewing our capacity to understand how it is that we are in common, how it is that we are together, and how it is that we are entangled. Another huge part of that project is recognizing the differences, the separations, and the hierarchies and dealing with the uncomfortable fact that they are as much bound up with the idea of the human as they are enacted in the degradation of the human. Anti-blackness is a human thing. Settler colonialism is a human thing. Taxonomic rank and technological obsession are human things. They are done in the name of the human and there is no alternative humanism that ought not take these terrible facts into account. All this is part of the nexus we have to study, recognizing that our study is given in, and inseparable from, our practice. In the study and practice of that nexus lies

the project of finding and saving the possibility of a human difference in the earth that refuses any form of human domination on or of the earth. I guess I'm not sure, now, if the word coalition even comes close to articulating the reality of that nexus and our comportment toward it, and within it.

CA: As I see it, I've been working with different activists from the point of view of, primarily, precarious life, art and labor. More recently, our organization has been trying to forge coalition with activists from beyond the art world, from different movements. I think we have to recognize that the challenges are different depending on, you know, context or geography, at the same time as gender, race or ethnicity and of course class. In my experience, it's finding common ground between different activist groups that seems to be difficult. We have organized many conversations, convenings, and workshops internationally that were not about getting a consensus but fighting together; solidarity would be the better word to use here. Something that we as ArtLeaks and our colleagues have been trying to do is identify, define, empower, and put people in dialogue, people who are coming from a condition of dispossession and a situation of inequity, and to bring them together. I have noticed that a lot of social movements and activist groups tend to not speak to each other but they're dealing with, at the root of the problem, similar challenges: imperial capitalism, widespread systemic racism and sexism, and all types of discrimination and disenfranchisement. For me, bringing people together and searching for a project of radical solidarity is very important, as is rethinking solidarity. This brings me to my next question, which is at the core of the theme of the issue, thinking through the recent movement such as TimesUp, Take a Knee, Black Lives Matter, and No DAPL. They've all dealt with these questions of who is excluded and why, who has the power; and thinking of the intersection of class, race, and gender in a profoundly prescient way. I am wondering, for you, what are some of these crucial aspects of the anti-racist, post-colonial, and feminist struggle, from which we could possibly develop a politics of emancipation for our times? Is this still possible to imagine today?

FM: Well, I guess the thing is, it's hard for me, now, to put things in certain ways. Some of the terms and phrases we have used to characterize our project and our struggle—those terms are not so operative for me now. You mentioned something about the struggle for emancipation?

CA: We can call it an emancipatory politics for our times.

FM: I think I know what you mean when you say emancipatory politics. But I wonder if much of what would accurately be called emancipatory politics ever actually tends towards what it is that you mean, which is to say what it is that you desire, when you say that phrase. Or what I have meant by and desired in that phrase.

CA: Can you expand on that?

FM: I used to think that maybe it would be possible to detach the project of emancipation from the project of liberal politics so that we could recover something emancipatory, some other mode of social life or social insurgency. But I am beginning to think that the whole project of emancipation, that the entire discourse on freedom, including metaphorical and philosophical assumptions that underwrite that term, doesn't actually correspond to what it is that folks like us actually want. And one way to think about it is that,

you know, the politics of emancipation is a liberal project. The history of liberalism is the history of genocide, which is also to say the history of geocide. The life of the Earth is in the balance now. In saying this I'm echoing the work of Samir Amin, the political and economic theorist who talks about liberalism as a kind of virus. And so, the question then is how many of the terms and concepts we use to articulate what we want are actually carriers of that virus. So, for instance, with regard to Black Lives Matter. I know that on a really basic fundamental level, the leaders, or founders of that movement know what they want. And I believe it corresponds with something that I would say I want also. I just can't use that phrase. Because I think there is a really important distinction to be made between black life and black lives. And I think the subdivisions of black life into individual lives is a problematic residue of liberalism that is crucial to all the dangerous ways that liberalism inhabits or infuses our everyday existence. I don't mean this as a criticism or disavowal of that movement or of the people who founded that movement or lead that movement. I'm just saying that I think there's a question concerning this term and what that term implies. Those of us who are interested in another way of living on the earth need to address it, and need to think about. To go back to your question, I don't think I can live in or with an emancipatory politics. But I do believe in the absolute necessity of anti-colonial and anti-liberal work, you know. I believe in it and I want and I try to live it up to the point of my own vanishing in or into that work. I just don't think that anti-colonialism or anti-genocide is accurately indicated in the phrase "emancipatory politics."

For example, the Dutch settled in South Africa. Theirs was emancipatory politics. This historical instance and many, many others like it give me pause when it comes to that phrase. But that doesn't mean I am disavowing the long history of our common project, which has been articulated in and burdened by those terms and their attendant concepts. At the same time, I hope and don't think it's not me just being picky about these terms and concepts. I believe that in working through and past those terms and those concepts lies our strength and our capacity to live, if we want to live, how we want to live.

**CA:** You touch upon a very important point that is the extent to which neoliberalism is so ingrained into our lives and also in the ways we articulate the struggles. For me, coming as an immigrant to the country, coming from Eastern Europe a former colonized region, but which at times has had its own aspirations of imperialism (here I am referring to my own country, Romania), we have different concepts to express these struggles. I would say they are related to a different history that's closer to Marxism. But of course, that history is also problematic because it tends to exclude people of color, non-normative gender identities, for example. Marxism is insufficient in articulating the anti-colonial struggle, so I think it's very important to find the precise words when we do get to speak to each other to acknowledge the history of colonialism. I think especially now, de-colonial thinking is a method of looking at things that's gaining more and more prominence in cultural practices. But still, we continue to use the old vocabulary of liberalism, of capitalism, especially in this country, when we need to talk about decolonizing spaces, thinking, practices and so on. I'm curious, for you, what are some of these key concepts that you would use in the struggle today that bring a different relevance, that's not engrained in this history, as you said, of liberalism and genocide.

**FM:** As you say, it's not just the words, or the names that we need to pay attention to. It's really about what happens when those names and those terms indicate concepts, and indicate ideas, and structures of thought, and mind, and practice that turn out to be anti-



thetical to our actual needs and desires. But I don't know that I have the right words or concepts or if it would be good if I did. I think I know what people mean when they say they want to be free. I know what my mom meant when she said that for example. I think, on a really basic level, it meant something about changing the status quo. It's just that the question is: does the concept of freedom that we operate within now and to which we all have some kind of access, does that concept actually correspond to what it is that we want or is it absolutely tied to the maintenance of what we don't want? We speak about freedom as if it were what emerges in the eclipse of slavery; but what if it is inextricably bound to slavery? What if they are not just a conceptual pairing that operates by way of semantic opposition? What if they are and must remain coupled in real, material life? What if there will have been no way for my freedom not to have been predicated on the enslavement of some one, or something else? What if this coupling of freedom and slavery is itself all bound up with the assumption that the world is divided into ones and others, or persons and things? These are Saidiya Hartman questions; these are Cedric Robinson questions. We live in, and therefore have to be concerned with, what happens against but also beyond what we mean when we say those words. And maybe it's not even about trying to find the right words. Maybe it's like what Charles Lloyd says, and Nathaniel Mackey echoes. Maybe words don't go there. Maybe words can only approach it and do only approach it in the continual changing of the word, in a continual refinement of the concept that is given in the continual refusal of the concept. Maybe this would be a kind of prayer whose value would only ever be in that it is the soundtrack of our practice or, better yet, the sound that emanates from or practice. I want to be in practice with the people. I'm interested in working with the people who want to be with the people. And I'm interested in developing, you know, ways of defending our capacity to do that against individuals, and structures, and institutions that want to either regulate our practices or eliminate our practices or appropriate or exploit or commodify our practices within the brutal machinery that has been constructed in order to do all those things simultaneously.

Maybe when we talk we are always talking in the absence of a better term. And then, more specifically, maybe when we use terms like emancipatory politics, we're not really talking with who we call, for lack of a better term, ourselves. Maybe we use the term "emancipatory politics" when we talk to the ones whose brutal, stupid confidence in themselves allows them to use those terms in ways that are fundamentally different to the way we would want to use them. The uncomfortable acknowledgement of various fascist appeals to the concept of emancipatory politics from within the terms of emancipatory politics is all bound up with the refusal to fight with fascists over, and at the same time, in those terms. To me, Fannie Lou Hamer remains an absolutely indispensable and absolutely loveable theorist and practitioner because of how beautifully and strenuously she fights with but also through the terms of the liberatory discourse she was given. When she says she doesn't want equal rights she shows us how that doesn't mean she wants inequality. When she says she doesn't want to be liberated from her husband she shows us how that doesn't mean she wants to be enslaved to him. She fights through those terms all the way to, and even past, the point of song. She fights through the terms of man, and the terms of the man, in fighting him, in that practice, which is given most clearly and emphatically in and when she's talking to us. In other words, yes there are valid sets of external relations, which is to say antagonisms with power. And we appeal to those terms and we, you know, we submit ourselves to those terms, and define ourselves within those terms, in order to speak to and fight against power and against submission and even definition. At the same time, our concern is not with speaking to power at all. I don't delude

myself into thinking that at no point such an address must be made, or that such an address, when it must be made, won't also show that antagonism and complicity are bound together. It's just that I don't want to talk to them. I want to talk to you. And we have to find terms and language and engage in practices that allow us to be with one another, and not always to be in their face. Articulating ourselves as selves to them and being seen by them, being acknowledged, or recognized by them, seems to me to be just too much of what now operates under the rubric of the politics of emancipation. That politics is about them and, secondarily about us insofar as it seems to imply that we are only insofar as we are in their eyes. We are not thinking with us, we are thinking about them. I want there to be more talking about and with us and less talk about them. And that doesn't mean I'm saying don't fight. I'm saying the fight is always there. We're in a war. So that question of fighting versus not fighting is always displaced by the question of how we win the war. You don't win the war (and this may seem paradoxical to other people but not to me) by first and foremost and almost always addressing ourselves to them, demanding stuff from them that they can't even give, if they could ever even want to give it, which of course they can't and don't. Their respect, their recognition, their acknowledgement—what would that even be? They're not built like that. They don't work like that even in their own internal relations. Why would they acknowledge us? Why would we trust anything manufactured to look like their acknowledgment unless it would be to acknowledgment that their acknowledgment of us takes the form of the bullet, or the prison. And by them I mean the ones who only seem to know how to want to be ones. The delusionally full-fledged individuals. The proud, free-born citizens. Them.

CA: I agree, and further, I think, for me, as again somebody coming here from another place, it particularly struck me how the United States has made this concept of “freedom” into a very noxious fetish: that of offering up freedom to other countries, “liberating them.” But of course, this comes in the cynical and deadly guise of wars, occupations, and capitalisms.

FM: The freedom to rape and pillage.

CA: That goes straight to the heart of the issue.

FM: Freedom to them is actually freedom to dominate, freedom to disrespect. That's what freedom is in the United States. And it's something that accrues to individuals, which is to say it assumes that there are such things as individuals who can garner for themselves the rights and privileges of freedom precisely by making sure that other people don't have them. But freedom is a dialectical relationship, and slavery's part in that relationship is unbreakable. It's always there. That's how freedom is articulated. That's how we understand what it means and it's not just an abstract philosophical thing. We live that. We still live that here. Every day, every single day. So for me, it's a term that 15 or 20 years ago I worked hard and fought desperately to imagine some connection to it that I could have, that we could have. And I thought about it and thought about it and thought about it. And I think that what I wanted is what a lot of other folks also wanted. But the traditions I'm attempting to understand and extend, and which use the term freedom to articulate some of what it is that we want, aren't accurately encompassed by or expressed in that term. That doesn't mean I don't want what we have been trying to say that we want; and it doesn't mean that we can or that we should stop trying to say what it is that we want. It just means that maybe what we want is something that can't

be said, or is something that is given in the continual and beautiful failure to say it. Maybe to say that freedom ain't the right word for us is to say that part of what we want is something like freedom from the very idea of the right word. Maybe failing properly to say what we want is part of living what we want. You don't come up with a word first as a way of articulating the practice. We have to formulate the practice and maybe then some words, or some kind of utterance on the other side of words, will then come.

CA: What do you think about where these practices could be articulated? What are some of the spaces that could nurture them, where we could develop them? What kind of intellectual and practice-based insurgencies can we initiate in those spaces?

FM: I believe that we are already at some level constantly involved in these kinds of practices under tremendous duress, under genocidal conditions, under policing and violent brutal regulation. But still we are engaged in these practices, even if they're fleeting, temporary, broken and ruptured. We are engaging in these practices and if we weren't engaging in them we'd be dead already. So it's not about having to imagine what these practices would be as much as learning how to imagine that these practices already exist. We look to our imaginations so that we can actually better recognize what does exist, which we sometimes overlook. I'm a product of these practices, of the people who sent me out here to try to do whatever it is I'm supposed to be doing.

Stefano Harney and I travelled last summer to Oaxaca [Mexico], talking to people who are part of a long extended radical mission, a radical tradition of indigenous, anti-colonialist insurgency. The Zapatistas, for example, in Chiapas have a brilliant understanding of these practices, and the folks we were talking with and learning from are proximate to them. They welcomed us there to study and so we got to struggle through things. The history of radical insurgency, the history of struggle, is in fact the history of their practices. If you think about the civil rights movement practices, if you think of black women like my grandmother who would clean white people's houses all day, then came home, cook dinner, take a bath and then get dressed again so she could go to a mass meeting organized so that she and her folks could figure out how to defend the practices of sociality, engagement and entanglement that they had with one another at the mass meeting, itself. They went to the meetings in order to try figure out with other people how they could keep going to meetings. They were concerned with preserving the social life they had built, and they recognized that segregation was the liberal political order within which their genocide was being carried out. They knew that was true then more clearly than we know that it is true now. They really didn't care so much, I think, about drinking water out of a white water fountain. What they were trying to do was defend themselves, and defend their life, the common life that they had built together. Which is to say, they had something they were trying to defend, see? It wasn't aspiring to some shit that other people had; they were trying to defend what they had. Now, what they had was under assault and duress, and it wasn't easy, but they had something.

And that's what I mean what I say we don't have to image those practices as if they don't exist or haven't existed; we have to imagine the already given existence of those practices and then renew them as my friend Manuel Callahan has long observed.

CA: That's extremely well put and it brings me to the last question I had about education. Some of the educational publications that I'm putting together this year are talking

about the history of the struggles, of anti-colonial, indigenous movements. But at the same time, in the field of academia today those are not the histories that are necessarily taught or emphasized right now. I'm particularly coming from an art history background where survey courses are presenting mostly Western art history and especially the history of fine art, one that's completely dissociated from the history of colonialism for example; it's presented as what history should be, what progress should be, it's not questioned. In a way, you have to unlearn what you learned about art and culture in academia, especially in these survey classes. I'm coming from a place where I attended and taught at universities here in the United States, where I was presented and then expected to internalize a history of universal progress, and then teach it to others. But in fact, it was primarily about the history of capitalism and its triumphs. So for me, education is a field where these struggles are very apparent, and also one that's been commercialized more and more, of course. How do we find these common spaces (of thinking, of gathering, of learning) where a different kind of education can exist, or is made possible today, so that the generations that are coming are aware of these radical practices, and these histories of struggle? Related to this, I am thinking of ways to resist pressing commercial demands for so-called creative subjectivities, in a context in which notions of progress and capitalism are so tied together in the way we learn, think about or imagine history.

**FM:** Yes, there is a history of capitalism and its triumphs and that history is often told and structured as the history of universal humanity, given in the supposedly representative triumphs of individuals from moment to moment, the serial emergence of creative subjects and the flourishing of these subjects combined with the denial of the conquest and destruction carried out by those same subjects. I think you're right that this history is presented as universal, and that there are other historical phenomena at play and at work we that we definitely need to know more about.

What I'm often concerned with right now is what happens when people like us start to claim that this history is not universal, that it isn't a history of all of humanity, but rather of a very specific and particular construct called "Man," racialized and gendered in all these brutal ways, as opposed to the human or to humanity. When we rightly rail against what the great Sylvia Wynter brilliantly describes and analyzes as "the overrepresentation of Man," how do we avoid the easy, and in a sense justifiable move towards saying, I want my emergent creative subjectivity to enter into history, I want history to be open enough and capacious enough to include my emergent creative subjectivity, and that of others like me. Sometimes, Stefano and I call this reflex the "subject reaction." Who could blame anyone for saying: "I want to be a part of it, rather than being excluded from it." It's just that that's not the project that we should be a part of. The problem is, as I think you were suggesting earlier, the very idea of individual creative subjectivity.

And it turns out that academia, and the educational system in general, does quite a few things that affect people in general. I am thinking about my and my partner, Laura Harris's kids who are in sixth grade and eighth grade, who are bombarded constantly, being regulated on a daily basis, with the imposition of the normativity of creative subjectivity, even within the context of a so-called collaborative education, that deploys the commitment to diversity in order to advance the exclusion of actual differences. My kids see and experience this every day at the school and they know it and have to figure out ways of living with and also through it. It's not just something that's just going on in the academy; it's a more insidious and more general problem. They are assaulting and disciplining

our kids every day with this ideology of the creative subjective. They are preparing them for a workplace, which depends upon the production and self-policing of the “creative” and I imagine Immanuel Kant himself would be appalled at this shit even if all of it can be traced back to and through him. And they are doing so in the context of a kind of single group work that would be the regulatory structure, the bonds and bounds of taste, within which individual creativity is supposed to operate. They are literally staging that for and through my kids on a daily basis, every day. It breaks my heart; it breaks my partner’s heart. It’s hard. We don’t know what else to do right now. However, there’s this other part of it, which is kind of amazing. My kids want to go to school because they want to be with other kids. And for them the most important thing they do at school every day is be with other kids, independent of the regulatory teachings, the teachers, and the administrators. They sort of do know what to do right now. At some point, as hard as it is, I have to trust them and support them as they try to build the social life they want with other kids. I try to extrapolate from that to the work I’m engaged in with my students, asking myself how I can support and help them with the social and intellectual life they’re trying to build in common. For me that’s a larger project than the project of trying to be represented within the universal history of the creative subject.

In other words, the universal history of the creative subject is bad history. It’s some bullshit. But my primary motivation is not to correct that history, not to become represented more fully, more accurately within that history. I don’t want to be written into that history and if I have the misfortune of being in it, I would be more than happy to be written out of it. I feel that my students and my own children are trying to struggle and to enact another history and I want to be a part of that and to support them in that. That’s what I would like for the future. I wish I could do better, but I am trying.

**CA:** I think that’s a great way to conclude this conversation, thinking about a future in common with courage and offering that support to the generations that come after us. You’ve given me a lot to think about, and hopefully to our readers as well, especially thinking about the meaning of certain vocabularies we take for granted and how we can support each other and treat each other with compassion. Thank you.

# Retracing the Steps of Ancestors: Memory and Embodiment in the Work of Nastassja Swift

**LaKisha Simmons**

*Summer 2018.* Eight masked black women and girls dance on the streets of Richmond, Virginia. They clap and sing in communion. They remember by singing: “No more auction block for me, many thousand gone.” Next to them, the auction block, around them the traces of the auction houses—covered by twenty-first century businesses. The dancers’ white felted masks sway as the black women move and sing. The masks seem to call forth ancestors; the women wearing them are conjuring the past. A passerby records the scene on her cell phone. A memorial.



Richmond, the capital of the state of Virginia, has been at the center of a political storm. In February 2019, an old photo from the Democratic governor of Virginia, Ralph Northam, surfaced. The photograph, from a 1984 medical school yearbook, showed two white students: one in blackface dressed as an African American man, and another in a Ku Klux Klan robe and hood. The blackface photograph appeared prominently on Ralph Northam's page. Days later, Matt Herring, the Attorney General of Virginia (also a Democrat) admitted to dressing up in blackface as a teenager. Simultaneously, the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, Justin Fairfax (also a Democrat), was accused of sexual assault by two African American women. In response, Fairfax claimed that as an African American man, he was the victim of a political lynching.<sup>1</sup> Not for the first time, the state capital, Richmond, Virginia, found itself at the center of debates on racism and racial memory.

In 2018, the citizens of Richmond also found themselves contemplating history, memory, and space when they debated the prominent places of monuments to white supremacy on the city streets. Richmond was the capital of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Commanding statues of confederate "heroes" line Monument Avenue, including Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee. In June 2017, the mayor of Richmond announced a commission to study the place of the confederate monuments and in July 2018, the commission released a report advising the removal of only one of the statues.<sup>2</sup> In August 2018, the Lee statue was vandalized with red paint, splattered, as if bleeding. The vandals wrote "BLM" [Black Lives Matter] along the side. Because of a Virginia law that does not allow local communities to decide the fate of historically significant statues, the monuments to white supremacy still stand.

These debates over the living legacy of white supremacy in the city of Richmond and the state of Virginia demonstrate the centrality of the race and memory in our present moment. In Summer 2018, artist Nastassja E. Swift entered into this conversation by purposely centering black women and their histories. In a collaborative project called *Remembering Her Homecoming*, Swift created a performance art piece where eight black women and girls traveled in the footsteps of their foremothers. They completed a three and a half mile walk from Shockoe Bottom (a major site of the buying and selling of humans at slave auctions) and ending in the Jackson Ward neighborhood. While traveling along the route, the performers wore large merino wool masks; they danced, burned sage, and poured libations. From this performance, Swift and her collaborators created the film *Remembering Her Homecoming*.<sup>3</sup>

In a mini-documentary on the performance art piece, Swift explains the place-based critique at the heart of *Remembering Her Homecoming*. "Being a black girl, or a black woman in this city," she explains, "this project was a way for me to really understand how I exist in this space to myself, but also to other people." The narrator of the documentary names the question that haunts black women in Virginia and black women in America—it's a question of belonging: "Those questions of belonging linger like daylight and stick to you like humidity in the South during August."<sup>4</sup> It is crucial that this remembering is from the vantage point of black women and girls. What does it mean to be a black woman in Virginia where the space is filled with hostile monuments to white supremacy; where the white governor and attorney general have dressed, laughingly, in blackface in the past; and, where the rising star of a lieutenant governor has laid claim to being a victim of lynching in order to discredit black women's stories? By centering black



women, *Remembering Her Homecoming* illustrates intergenerational trauma and knowledge—those women of the past have something to teach us about our present.

Swift wanted her project to highlight the little-known places, the Lumpkin Slave Jail, Richmond Slave Trial, the auction block, the first black neighborhood—the places holding the wisdom of ancestors.<sup>5</sup> Swift explains that the project worked to invite “different black women and girls to engage with me in that space, while also kind of, hopefully, giving them a deeper connection to the city that they lived in...and a deeper connection to the women that lived in the city before us.”<sup>6</sup> The eight dancers travel the same steps of their foremothers, their feet sharing earth, mud, dust with the past. When the dancers put on the masks, they live in the in between world of past/present; embodying the ancestors.



Swift's work on this project can be seen in a long tradition of black women's conjuring. Kinitra Brooks, Kameelah Martin, and I have been theorizing conjure feminisms as "a theoretical lens through which one recognizes the Divine Feminine and the natural world as consorts; and it is from this immaculate coupling that black women pull their intuition, second sight, incantations, and rituals that allow them to thrive in a world hostile against their mere existence."<sup>7</sup> Virginia's current political debates over the legacy of racism, white supremacy, violence against black women, and images of blackface remind us once again of the hostility that black women face. But Swift's artwork calls upon the black women who came before us, reminding us of their lives.

All photography by Marlon Turner  
 Nastassja Swift, *Remembering Her Homecoming*, 2018  
 Masks - merino wool, wire, felt. 18 x 26 x 18 inches.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the state of Virginia's politics see, "In Blackface Controversy, Virginia Remains Haunted by Its Confederate Past," USA TODAY, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/02/04/northam-photo-controversy-virginia-race-wounds/2761493002/>; Robert McCartney, "Blackface, Sexual Assault Scandals Seem to Have Done Only Limited Harm to Virginia's Reputation.," *Washington Post*, March 3, 2019, sec. Local, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/blackface-sexual-assault-scandals-dont-appear-to-have-tarnished-virginias-image/2019/03/03/c8b5b1fc-3bb1-11e9-a2cd-307b06d0257b\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/blackface-sexual-assault-scandals-dont-appear-to-have-tarnished-virginias-image/2019/03/03/c8b5b1fc-3bb1-11e9-a2cd-307b06d0257b_story.html); The Associated Press, "Virginia AG Says He Wants to Repair Harm From Blackface," *The New York Times*, March 4, 2019, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2019/03/04/us/ap-us-virginia-politics-blackface.html>; Zak Cheney-Rice, "Justin Fairfax and the Lies We Tell About Lynchings," *Intelligencer*, February 26, 2019, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/02/justin-fairfax-no-lynching.html>. For more on the use of "political lynching" to conceal and sweep aside black women's claims of abuse, see "I Believe I Can Lie | Kimberlé Crenshaw," *The Baffler*, January 17, 2019, <https://thebaffler.com/latest/i-believe-i-can-lie-crenshaw>.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Robinson, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "Monument Avenue Commission: Remove Jefferson Davis Monument, Reinterpret Others Honoring Confederacy," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, July 2, 2018, [https://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/monument-avenue-commission-remove-jefferson-davis-monument-reinterpret-others-honoring/article\\_22138cfa-7734-5844-8175-93cec52f7d59.html](https://www.richmond.com/news/local/city-of-richmond/monument-avenue-commission-remove-jefferson-davis-monument-reinterpret-others-honoring/article_22138cfa-7734-5844-8175-93cec52f7d59.html).

<sup>3</sup> Nastassja E. Swift, *Remember Her Homecoming*, 2018, <http://www.nastassjaswift.com/remembering-her-homecoming>.

<sup>4</sup> Kyara Massenbourg, *Remembering Her Homecoming: From the North Atlantic, to Leigh Street*, Mini Documentary, 2018, <http://www.nastassjaswift.com/remembering-her-homecoming>.

<sup>5</sup> For images of the auction block in Richmond see, Maurie D. McInnis, *Slaves Waiting for Sale: Abolitionist Art and the American Slave Trade* (University of Chicago Press, 2011). For more on the Richmond Slave Trail see, Richmond Slave Trail Commission, *Richmond Slave Trail*, Walking Tour (Richmond, Virginia, n.d.),

<http://www.richmondgov.com/CommissionSlaveTrail/documents/brochureRichmondCityCouncilSlaveTrailCommission.pdf>; "The Historic Richmond Trail Walk of Enslaved Africans," IofC US, accessed March 5, 2019, <https://us.iofc.org/the-historic-richmond-trail-walk-of-enslaved-africans>.

<sup>6</sup> Kyara Massenbourg, *Remembering Her Homecoming: From the North Atlantic, to Leigh Street*.

<sup>7</sup> Kinitra Brooks, Kameelah Martin, and LaKisha Simmons, "Conjure Feminisms," *Hypatia*, Forthcoming.

# All Monuments Must Fall!

**Matt Applegate and Andrew Culp**

What does it mean for a protest to be sculptural? For forces to swirl around an object, for and against: a raging bull, a Confederate soldier, a half-forgotten eugenicist, or liberty itself? Looking at what people say about them, our monuments' significance is clear. Monuments publicly enshrine perspective, feeling, reverence, and devotion. Yet, in our estimation, they stand for a type of power that we will always oppose in the final instance – larger than life, institutional, regal, enduring. If the subjects of the statues still had their voices, their chorus would contain a common refrain of triumphalism; whole verses would be dedicated to achievements underwritten by misogyny, racism, colonial violence. Monuments are not even kind to those figures whose side we fight on in the struggles of history. Their legacy is still bleached and mounted when put up on display. It is for these reasons that this essay celebrates anti-monument forces that swelled in 2015 and continue to this day. We are inspired by the toppling of Cecil Rhodes in South Africa, the sledgehammering of Christopher Columbus in New York, the Monument Removal Brigade, as well as a whole history of actions, such as the many times statues have been covered in blood, chipped away by hammers, or had limbs sawed off in the middle of the night. The message of these actions is clear: time is up on the thousands of memorials of 'great men' that have been erected to the causes of settler conquest, senseless wars, racist nationalism, exploitive industry, and more.

*The Unbearable Weight of Monuments*

*Now the statue is bleeding. We did not make it bleed. It is bloody at its very foundation.*

*This is not an act of vandalism. It is a work of public art and an act of applied art criticism.*

*We have no intent to damage a mere statue.*

*The true damage lies with patriarchy, white supremacy, and settler-colonialism embodied by the statue.*

*It is these forms of oppression that must be damaged again and again...until they are damaged out of existence.*

*–Monument Removal Brigade, "Prelude to the Removal of a Monument"*

Looking at the climbing heights of commercial towers, the permanent grace of great lecture halls, and the largess of government buildings, one quickly understands how power finds profound expression in space. While symbols of power are spread through language, written in signatures, displayed on emblems, emblazoned to uniforms, and stamped on letterhead, these signs can be easily reversed, replaced, or just plain pushed aside. The meaning of buildings is open to interpretation, dispute, and amendment, which is something made obvious in battles over memorials, architectural objects made almost exclusively for their symbolic value.<sup>1</sup> But such struggles are not reducible to conflicts over meaning, as the production of space holds unique influence over how society is perceived, conceived, and lived.<sup>2</sup>

Given the gravitational power of monumentalizing space, it is no wonder that social movements have supplemented state-built projects with their own memorials. In the 60's and 70's, black students demanded Black Studies programs; many occupied buildings, christening them with names such as 'Malcolm X Hall.'<sup>3</sup> In Buenos Aires, political discontents that were silently kidnapped, tortured, and executed are remembered with painted silhouettes on sidewalks and walls.<sup>4</sup> And during the Iraq War, peace groups set up model cemeteries that brought the war home.<sup>5</sup>

There are many informal monuments that history fails to account for – the candles that still spill wax onto the streets from vigils standing in quiet defiance of racist cops gunning down black people, the silk-screened t-shirts that bear faces and names to keep the memory alive of those taken too soon by violence, and the many rituals that keep culture alive through song, dance, or play.

*Monuments: Whiteness Frozen in History*

While we bear sympathy for the radical reclamation of a different sort of past, the last few years' heightened debates that draw the line between "appropriate" and "inappropriate" monuments reveal something essential: history is always reserved for the deserving. This is a fundamental antagonism always laid bare by colonial projects, anti-black violence, and the patriarchal order.

As Critical Race Theorists have argued, whiteness will never advance the causes of non-whites unless it also benefits whites,<sup>6</sup> leading to the intimate interrogation of various candidates for monumentalization – what were their contributions to society? were they a good father? did they engage in petty criminal behavior? And as they always have been, those seen as undeserving are forgotten as quickly as they were offered for sacrifice on the altar of social necessity. When Silent Sam was toppled at UNC, a chorus of conservatives complained that the university had given into mob rule. But what if that was the point?

The only thing we regret about Therese Patricia Okoumou climbing up the Statue of Liberty is that she did not bring it down with her. To get out of the trap of appropriate/inappropriate memorials laid by white supremacy, we propose adding a punk refrain to the old anarchist maxim, "No Gods, No Masters": "Kill Your Idols, No Monuments."

To be clear: this is not the social anarchism that aims to elevate social wellbeing by immediately improving the material conditions of people's lives through institutions and social ties. The campaign to abolish all monuments is a political anarchism that mobilizes partisan forces to transform the available ideologies and choices.<sup>7</sup> And although it is possible to combine both forms of anarchism, they often work at cross-purposes. Social anarchism reterritorializes by shoring up gains in the material world while political anarchism deterritorializes by unsettling what already exists for the purpose of provoking a political reorientation. This contrast highlights a crucial divergence, political anarchists are willing to sacrifice the material benefits that social anarchists fight to secure in order to get a potential political payoff, as in a strike or sabotage.

Every chance to destroy a monument can be a potential strike, every new accomplice a potential comrade in arms, and every new destination a potential place of revolt – but only when the autonomy of political antagonism is turned against the institutions that secrete it. The project that results, then, is to forge them into a form of artistic militancy

without discipline, knowledge, and communication to its contemporary modes of capture. This perhaps leaves us with a question, rather than an answer to the role and function of the intellectual today: ‘are we still interested in actively producing what we now call history and what we call knowledge, or do we embark on creating another space and time altogether?’

#### *A Cartography of Dead Zones*

These questions lead us to object to monuments on a more abstract level as well. As political theorist Benjamin Arditi notes, the greatest potential any protest or insurrection exists in two phases: first as a political performative, and second as a vanishing mediator.<sup>8</sup> Each phase’s political potential is found in its effects, which are greatest when the effects outlive the event from which they emerged. As a performative, the point is not to lay out a program but to change the political climate. And as a vanishing mediator, the point is to be forgotten once sufficient change is made, but with an important caveat: nothing truly vanishes without a trace. Using the Arab Spring and the student revolt in Chile as examples, Arditi shows how insurgencies leave a spectral remainder that produces a material afterlife, many of them found in cultural artifacts: “songs, graffiti, manifestos, pamphlets, photos, films, blogs, websites, and an assortment of testimonies in the social media.”<sup>9</sup> Even after a protest’s eviction from a public square, its cultural artifacts continue to circulate as living knowledge. But by the time they are monumentalized, they become as dead as the labor they now embody.

Monuments, whether giving form to state power or challenging it, utilize space in the same way: they fend off the future by preserving either the present or the past.<sup>10</sup> Monumentalization slows down the infinite speed of thought by introducing space, preserving the social relations of patriarchy, colonialism, and other forms of violence as captured in the geologic time-scale of rock, sand, and paint.<sup>11</sup> And with those mineralized monuments, architects construct temples as forms of power made to appear as permanent as the mountains they are built from.<sup>12</sup>

One need not conquer the earth by moving mountains. Consider the basic element of architecture: the frame.<sup>13</sup> The frame distinguishes between an inside and outside, and it is with these slices of the world that the built environment is made. A floor carves out a home from the earth. A window lets a little bit of the earth back in. And furthermore, a monument freezes a frame to preserve what it has captured inside itself while blocking out the outside.<sup>14</sup>

Bricks and mortar are not wrong; in fact, they are absolutely necessary, as all life depends on a minimal amount of preservation. But the spatialization of power often interferes with the capacity to temporalize finitude, which would make preservation selective rather than an imperative.<sup>15</sup> That which opposes monumentalized space is elided as chaos, the mob, or the uncivil opposition to reason and proceduralism.

Monumentalized space, therefore, defines a cartography of dead zones—places to be subverted or simply avoided. When power is slowed enough to stand tall and be easily seen, it stops tapping into the power of indiscernibility.<sup>16</sup> This cartography underlies an elastic map of fossils—a partisan guide to see where things went wrong and where living knowledge was sent to die.

Such a map would include the Washita River, where Custer led 7th Cavalry massacred Black Kettle's Southern Cheyenne. It would go deep into the silver mines of Potosí, where miners erected peoples' monuments as a reminder that "you could build a silver bridge from Potosí to Madrid from what was mined here – and one back with the bones of those that died taking it out."<sup>17</sup> There might even be a stop at the Whitney to see the plaques and statues that make up Carl Pope's *Some of the Greatest Hits of the New York City Police Department: A Celebration of Meritorious Achievement in Community Service*.

### Coda

*Old, forgotten men in statuesque poses haunt most what remains of public space; long departed from the flow of life, they keep vigil over the nation they helped build. Few serve as sites of conflict or points of contention. While near Wall Street, an enraged bull stands with its head down and horns up, as if frozen in the middle of an angry charge. Similar bulls, though 'younger' and 'stronger,' have been placed in Amsterdam, the early home of capitalism, and Shanghai, which is perhaps its next.*

*If these former living beings are the product of their environments, just as organisms emerge as 'solutions' to the 'problem' of their milieu, then they express the dead life of each place.<sup>18</sup> Both are the art of work, labor captured and permanently restrained, yet the dead labor they perform differs substantially. The great men of Christian Civilization are forms of life long passed and remain only as beautiful souls offering a gentle reminder of a time where reason or even national culture drove social life.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, the bulls are locked in mid-motion with their muscles tense, eyes directed at an invisible target, stopped right before they released their violent energy.*

*If an artist is to embody antagonism, they must oppose both of these calcified forms. Living knowledge betrays the great men of reason and the deadly bulls of capitalism. Yet our power does not lie in its bricks and mortar, though its walls often stand as barricades to the encroaching interests of power. Its force comes from the 'mob' that has never been monumentalized, which releases its antagonistic force into the world. Such an operation subtracts itself from the spatialization of power and circulates within cycles of struggle.*

### SUGGESTED READING:

A major inspiration for this piece was "All Monuments Must Fall: A Syllabus." Please take the opportunity to read it at <https://monumentsmustfall.wordpress.com>.

<sup>1</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Maiden, MA: Blackwell Press, 1991), 38-9.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Simmons, "UCSB Black Studies Dept. Built From 1968 Black Student Union Protest," *The Daily Nexus*, 12 Feb 2001, <http://dailynexus.com/2001-02-12/ucsb-black-studies-dept-built-from-1968-black-student-union-protest/> (accessed 24 Jan 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Diana Taylor, "'You are Here': H.I.J.O.S. and the DNA of Performance," *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 161-189.

<sup>5</sup> Ken MacLeish, "The Tense Present History of the Second Gulf War: Revelation and Repression in Memorialization," *Text, Practice, Performance* VI (2006): 69-84.

<sup>6</sup> Derrick A. Bell Jr.'s "interest-convergence" reading of *Brown v. Board of Education* from "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma," *Harvard Law Review* 3, No. 3 (Jan., 1980): 518-533.

<sup>7</sup> Rancière's full account of this process is given in his *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Ardit, "Insurgencies Don't have a Plan – They are the Plan: Political Performatives and Vanishing Mediators in 2011," *Journalism Media and Cultural Studies Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-16.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 15.

<sup>10</sup> Lefebvre has an extended consideration of monuments and monumentalization in *The Production of Space*, 220-228.

<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Geophilosophy," in *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 85-113.

<sup>12</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 377, 402.

<sup>13</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 183.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press), 10-17.

<sup>15</sup> Guy Debord argues that capitalism alienates time through space, and ultimately proposes liberating space through noncapitalist time. A summation of his point of this general argument is found in his *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), especially in thesis 170, where he writes that "the requirement of capitalism that is met by urbanism in the form of a freezing of life might be described, in Hegelian terms, as an absolute predominance of 'tranquil side-by-sideness' in space over 'restless becoming in the progression of time.'"

<sup>16</sup> Deleuze and Guattari speak of becoming-indiscernible in relation to linguistics, segmentarity, and animality. This is not a fading away, as in a ghost who leaves only a trace of life, but a guerilla operation. Once in the zone of indiscernible, the power of a form of life is derived not from itself but from its milieu.

<sup>17</sup> This quote is often attributed to Eduardo Galeano and his classic 1973 book *Open Veins of Latin America*, no English translation exactly fits this quote. Although an accurate paraphrase of parts of the book, we prefer to think of the quote as vernacular knowledge demonstrated in the power of words-in-motion as they continue to circulate.

<sup>18</sup> George Canguilhem, "The Living and its Milieu," trans. John Savage, *Grey Room*, No. 3 (Spring, 2001): 6-31.

<sup>19</sup> The critical reference here is Bill Reading's *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

# **“Every day is 1868”<sup>1</sup>**

## **White supremacist genocide denial in occupied Gunai Kurnai Country (in so-called “Australia”)**

**Shannon Woodcock**

White men began invading Gunai Kurnai<sup>2</sup> country in the late 1830s, driving captive European animals into red gum grasslands, then cutting down as many trees and shooting as many endemic animals as possible. White men described their own actions as “hunting” Gunai Kurnai children, women and men in order to occupy the land and resources. Gunai Kurnai peoples have lived with and on Country for hundreds of thousands of generations, over 60,000 years, and have never ceded sovereignty.

Gunai Kurnai sovereignty endures, and we white colonisers have not stopped invading or committing genocide; through monopolised occupation of land, murder, through removing children from families, and forcibly removing First Nations people from Country to incarceration on government overseen reserves (1861-1971). White colonisers committed cultural genocide by forbidding First Nations people held in reserves to practice their languages, lore and law. While policing First Nation landlessness and attempting to silence language and culture, white colonisers claimed that they were the sole and superior custodians of culture, and of knowledge of First Nations cultures. As Koori writer Tony Birch points out, white colonists articulated all First Nations survivors of the frontier wars as “cultureless remnants.”<sup>3</sup> Colonists refused and still refuse to recognise Gunai Kurnai sovereignty “within and apart from settler governance”<sup>4</sup> on the Countries they anxiously occupy, and they translated and still translate Gunai Kurnai peoples into “an account of time already oriented around settlement.”<sup>5</sup>

I’m the first in my family to colonise Gunai Kurnai Country. I was born on Jagera Country to white colonisers, who were born to white colonisers, who were also born to colonisers on Jagera Country. Now I live in Bairnsdale, with 15,000 other people, 300 km east of the Kulin Nations place that colonisers call Melbourne. Every language I speak here is foreign to Country. White people stole all the land here except for Lake Tyers Trust, formerly a Station Reserve (mission) that has been held by community since 1971, when they won the fight to keep the government from selling even that piece of land from underneath them. White colonists have been working to maintain socio-economic and spatial racial apartheid here since the frontier war years.

In this frontier town, 37% of the population are over 55 years old, the vast majority of these being white colonists. There are many white middle class people who retire to this mild coastal climate from cities, and there are many clubs and societies where they can learn, play, express, research, document local and family history, and do art. The middle class white retiree demographic patronises two private art schools in Bairnsdale alone and constitute the membership of the East Gippsland Art Gallery, partly funded by and linked to local government – the East Gippsland Shire Council.

This essay describes the attempt of a small group of white colonist artists and scholars to prevent genocide denial and problematize white supremacy in the *Timber!* Exhibition held at the East Gippsland Art Gallery in 2018. It is a story of how the directors of the history society, the art gallery and the local council all chose to normalise white supremacy. To explore the broader context, I'll begin by looking at some artists who resisted dominant settler colonialism in a range of exhibitions at the East Gippsland Art Gallery.



Lisa Roberts, "Every day is 1868", 2018.

The gallery invited Lisa Roberts, along with 9 other artists, to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bairnsdale Shire and the art gallery building, which was the Shire's first office building. Roberts' piece directly challenges the teleological narrative of white colonial progress with the title "Every day is 1868." All artists had to use the image of the art gallery building, which was the first local government building. Roberts' refusal of the narrative of settler progress collapses the constructed distinction between local government and art gallery, then places the council/art gallery, white picket fenced, smack bang in the middle of colonial environmental destruction. The logging and burning of Gunai Kurnai forests has continued unabated for 150 years. Three endangered grey-headed flying foxes, whose maternal colony behind the art gallery building in Bairnsdale is currently under direct threat of destruction by the East Gippsland Shire Council today, fly in the opposite direction of teleology and progress, stretching their wings to escape colonial doom. The white colonist viewer can wonder what it looks like where the bats are trying



to escape to, as there is no ‘before’ in settler time; we have stolen too much and our only frame is profit, technology, and extinction.

White farmers in Gunai Kurnai country not only live on stolen land, refusing access or reparations to survivors of their theft, they also continue to slaughter the more-than-human world with pathos and for profit. One big story here in 2018 was the conviction of farmers in the town of Tubbut for poisoning 406 wedge-tailed eagles. The white man who killed the eagles justified his actions the same way white men justified murdering Gunai Kurnai people; he claimed it was vital to protect his sheep and the income for his white childrens’ futures. Every day is, indeed, like 1868. The eagle killer was convicted, fined \$2,500 and given 14 days in jail. There was no public outcry, and white environmentalists didn’t protest beyond Facebook comments. Dorothy Maniero’s charcoal sketch entitled “Memento mori - 406 wedge-tailed eagles” was submitted to the all-entries-hung WRAP competition at the gallery in December 2018. The title prompts the viewer to multiply the singular beauty of one murdered and decomposing eagle, an image that circulated from police photographs of exhumed evidence of the crime, to another 405 individual eagle beings.



Dorothy Maniero, “Memento mori - 406 wedge-tailed eagles” 2018

My own piece in the WRAP exhibition, “I’d kill for a cuppa” (a ‘cuppa’ being a cup of tea), directly links invasion massacres and genocide with white colonial homemaking. I took the common colonial working class home decoration, the wooden “Australia” shaped souvenir spoonboard, and collected spoons that commemorated violent colonial

institutions such as the British monarchy; the Returned Services League, the Catholic Church and the white tourism industry here in Bairnsdale. The bloodied silver spoons dangle precariously in their notches, resting against a cursive copper script on the wooden board that reads “to turn up uninvited, rape, steal, murder, enslave, then relax and enjoy the spoils.” I want to trouble the coloniser’s relocation of genocide to some distant past, so that white art gallery goers realise that they are violently occupying land as they sip tea at home today, in 2019.



Shannon Woodcock, “I’d kill for a cuppa” 2018

These artworks communicate the main issues and discourses of white supremacist settler colonialism today in Gunai Kurnai Country, and Roberts’ piece highlights the central role of the art gallery upholding dominant colonial values for the colonial community. Indeed, the role of ‘art’ as economic growth in neoliberal capitalist colonial “Gippsland” has been the subject of academic studies.<sup>6</sup> Maniero’s work relies on the white neoliberal discourse of individuality, wherein white colonists claim that people gain wealth through their own hard work and that they as individuals are not responsible for any crimes of colonialism. Maniero’s singular eagle turns the attention of white colonial discourses of individual merit to a subject murdered due to being native, and thus denied interpellation as an individual worthy of life.

In mid 2018, the Heritage Network East Gippsland, including white history societies from across occupied Gunai Kurnai Country, published notice of their November 2018 exhibition at the East Gippsland Art Gallery.



SS Terrill, Bullock Team outside the Star Hotel Bruthen, 1915 (detail)

The blurb for the *Timber!* event as posted on various websites read:

With this photograph the violence of this 1915 black & white photograph is clear: white men stand as conquerors and profiteers on a felled tree the length of a town, their European animals enslaved, and sovereign peoples hunted out of the landscape. Central in its role in the region's economic development, timber provided housing, boats, bridges, and jetties and was also exported around Victoria. Employment in the forests and sawmills brought prosperity.<sup>7</sup>

The exhibition information entirely elided the fact that a tree is killed to make timber, and that the destruction of Country is part of white genocide of Gunai Kurnai people. The failure to mention invasion and theft of Gunai Kurnai country constitutes genocide denial. The blurb also omits the fact that resultant economic prosperity has been exclusively for colonisers, at great harm to First Nations people. Even when descendants of First Nations survivors of the frontier genocide worked in the sawmills (which was not mentioned at all when the exhibition went ahead), they cannot be said to have “prospered” from the destruction of their own forests.

In September I was chatting with Kurnai Monero man Rob Hudson of the Krowathunkoolong Keeping Place, a Gunai Kurnai stronghold where community share tools, art, knowledge and stories. Rob asked me what an email he'd received from the Heritage Network East Gippsland meant; they asked him to do a “pop up Keeping Place” in a corner of their *Timber!* exhibition. This request inverted reality: white colonisers are, of course, the most violent example of a pop-up on Gunai Kurnai Country that one can imagine. The history society request for physical evidence of “Aboriginal uses of timber” would serve to construct First Nations culture as a discursive prelude to white settler time.

Then, on 10/10/18, the local paper the East Gippsland News reported that the Council granted the Heritage Network an additional 5000\$ for *Timber!*, and misleadingly and falsely announced that they received these funds “in partnership with the Krowathunkoolong Keeping Place.” East Gippsland Shire Council also put this information on their website.<sup>8</sup> It was clear to me that the Heritage Network was not “in partnership with the Keeping Place,” as I have elsewhere documented a similar case with the same Council and the Raymond Island History Society in 2017.<sup>9</sup> I spoke to numerous former Council grant recipients in October 2018 who clarified that contrary to the Council’s own policy, there was no functioning acquittal procedure wherein Council checked whether white organisations had worked with Indigenous community as their grant applications claimed.

I met and interviewed Ian Hollingsworth, the director of the Heritage Network event and the East Gippsland History Society.

Shannon: So it said in the newspaper this week that you are “in partnership” with the gallery and also “in partnership” with the Keeping Place.

Ian: Oh right, I saw that and said: “Hmmmmm who wrote that?”

S: Who did write it?

Ian: That’s what I want to know.

S: So... You’re not in partnership with the Keeping Place?

Ian: We’re doing the... well ...we’re trying to bring the Aboriginals in, ya know, but whether they come back and respond .... Like what we want to do is set up mini displays around different places and they’re not gonna be part of that sorta thing or whatever but you can still go there and see objects which’ll be made outa wood.

S: oh, so they are giving you tools?

Ian: nah, they’re not giving us anything

S: You have already some?

Ian: no, so what we’ve done, cos there’s a panel down there at Forestech on Aboriginals and so forth.... Yeah so we’ve extracted information out of that, done up a story panel, put up a few photographs to it, and gone back to Rob Hudson and said Rob have you got any other photographs that we can add into this Aboriginal story sorta thing or whatever.... So that’ll be their contribution to the exhibition and so forth there no, that won’t happen, even though it was put in our brief, ‘cos we got a grant saying we would also be doing exhibitions around such and such places and so forth, but sometimes they ...sometimes between the time we put the application in and the time it gets through, sometimes \*they fall off the perch.

\*I want to note here that ‘to fall off the perch’ is an idiom that means to die.

S: hmm wow so why was it in the paper then that you are a partner with the Keeping Place? Cos that's kind of big, isn't it.

Ian: Yeah! But I didn't!

S: Who did it then?

Ian: It woulda come out of the shire ...

S: But the shire knows that's not true then.

Ian: Yeah. But they haven't come back to us and said "hey you put this brief in" sorta thing and ratified it with us, they're just taking the thing as being gospel, so perhaps they shoulda come back to us and said um .... I haven't had a word to the person who put it in yet to say to her

S: ah

Ian: yeah but we're try to work around it... when we're doing the exhibition we try to include you know the Aboriginal side into it.

Having established that the history society and the council respectively lied and condoned lying about First Nations partnership in an event entirely dictated by white colonists, I continued:

S: so, can I just ask you directly? I mean, what happened was that the white people came here and killed Aboriginal people and then cut down all the trees, they killed the trees, to build a colony for more white people .... That's a fact. I mean, invasion, cutting down trees to make space for the sheep, that's a fact.

Ian: yeah but we haven't talked about that. (*meaning in the exhibition*)

S: yeah but why? I'm curious about that. When I saw you were working with the Keeping Place I kind of assumed that colonisation would be part of it because, *that's* also Aboriginal history, isn't it, that Gunai Kurnai people were living (here for) 60, 000 years and then white people came and started cutting down trees.

Ian: Yeah but the exhibition's not political. We don't go anywhere near making political statements. We're just putting on an exhibition regarding timber and the various uses of it, which starts off from an Aboriginal point of view, bark canoes, weapons and so forth whatever, but we're not dealing with any white man invasion or so forth, or getting onto that side of it.

Such an obvious display of white colonists defining invasion, colonisation and genocide as too 'political' to mention, prompted an international group of white genocide scholars associated as the Accurate Settler History Association to write a letter to the gallery, the history society and the council outlining how the *Timber!* exhibition constituted genocide denial.<sup>10</sup>

The Accurate Settler History Association (ASHA) called for the Heritage Network to return to the planning stage with their exhibition and consult with First Nations people. ASHA called on the East Gippsland Art Gallery to demonstrate sincerity in their “Reconciliation plan” (a national policy introduced in the mid 1990s to erode First Nations demands for land rights and self-determination into a wishy-washy national festival of white fragility) and not to host any exhibition celebrating genocide and ecocide. ASHA called on East Gippsland Shire Council to stop funding colonist art and history organisations that say they are in partnership with Indigenous organisations when they are not doing so, and to require acquittal of grants in practice as well as in their own policy guides. Crystal Stubbs, Director of the gallery, met with the Heritage Network Committee and Andrea Court (of the council) to discuss the ASHA letter regarding genocide denial in the exhibition, and the lies about partnership with the Keeping Place.

No one has replied to ASHA’s letter. Crystal Stubbs, Director of East Gippsland Art Gallery, published an article in the East Gippsland News (31/10/2018), which stated:

Correction: Early in the Timber! East Gippsland exhibition planning, Heritage Network East Gippsland applied for funding from East Gippsland Shire to assist with making display materials and marketing the exhibition. Within their application HNEG intended to work with the Krowathunkooloong Keeping Place and this was stated in an early press release, however this never eventuated.

Stubbs doesn’t explain why the heritage network would “intend” to “work with the Keeping Place” “to assist with making display materials and marketing the exhibition,” and she uses a passive non-explanation that: “however, this never eventuated.” This fails to explain why the council doesn’t monitor significant failures in community events, such as the non-existence of a “partnership” for which funding is granted. This explanation also frames white actions as the only ones that matter; white people have the right to do or not do what they choose. The white misrepresentation of First Nations people and their self-determined organisations for funding becomes a simple issue of whether white people ever “intended” to work with First Nations people or not. White intent to not be racist is not only assumed by other white people, but white intent to not be racist is considered more important than the fact of white racist actions. This is white supremacy in action.

Stubbs then claims that: “HNEG is very respectful of the Traditional Owners,” despite the fact that HNEG knowingly fabricated Aboriginal history and misrepresented their relationship with an Indigenous organisation. “And as such” Stubbs continued, “(they) will not present any history prior to white settlement. Anyone interested in the history of timber and its historical uses by First Nations people, can visit the Krowathunkooloong Keeping Place during their opening hours.” Thus Stubbs concluded by not only reinstating spatial racial apartheid in Bairnsdale (if you want to see First Nations people, go to the Keeping Place) but moreover she denied genocide again by stating that white respect for Traditional Owners means to not mention “any history prior to white settlement.” “White settlement” itself was and is genocide and it is ahistorical and disrespectful to refuse to mention this fact; Stubbs violently refused Gunai Kurnai presence in a shared settler time, thus denying Gunai Kurnai resistance and enduring sovereignty.

Stubbs opened *Timber!* in the East Gippsland Art Gallery, as planned, on Friday, November 2, 2018. The exhibition denied invasion, occupation and the continuing genocide through ecocide on Country through logging. Thus Stubbs enabled local colonists to make invisible 60,000 years of Gunai Kurnai life, lore and culture with this Country, and 180 years of fighting a war of resistance against genocide, incarceration, apartheid and continuing gross disrespect in the white colonial space of the art gallery. The exhibition celebrated genocide in lauding, for example, Albert Lind. While a key government proponent of the ‘timber industry,’ Lind also voluntarily acted as a “Protector of Aborigines;” he strategically worked to incarcerate and impoverish people at Lake Tyers Reserve and to expand logging on their stolen lands between 1921 and 1964. White genocide of Gunai Kurnai people and ecocide of Country are part of the same project of colonial occupation.

A group of seven white colonists protested the opening of the *Timber!* Without regard, the gallery director facilitated a month long display of explicit white supremacist colonialism. Despite resistance from Gunai Kurnai community -- who refused to “pop up” -- and from international genocide scholars and local white protesters, East Gippsland Art Gallery chose to make 2018 just like 1868.

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<sup>1</sup> Title of Lisa Roberts’ 2018 artwork.

<sup>2</sup> I use Gunai Kurnai as the broadest and most widely recognized way to refer to the Brataualung, Brayakaulung, Brabralung, Tatungalung, Krauatungalung and Bidawal nations within the area invaders called “Gippsland.”

<sup>3</sup> Tony Birch, citing the 1858 Select Committee of the Aborigine, Victorian Parliamentary Papers in “The Last Refuge of the Un-Australian” in *History, Power, Text: Cultural Studies and Indigenous Studies*, Neale, T and McKinnon, C and Vincent, E, eds. University of Technology Sydney ePress, (New South Wales: Broadway, 2014) pp. 198-207, 198.

<sup>4</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 11.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 4.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Gibson and Natascha Klocker “The ‘Cultural Turn’ in Australian Regional Economic Development Discourse: Neoliberalising Creativity?” in *Geographical Research* 43: 1, 93–102, 2005. Tristan Masters, Roslyn Russell & Robert Brooks “The demand for creative arts in regional Victoria, Australia” in *Applied Economics* 43:5, 619-629, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.eastgippslandartgallery.org.au/hneg-timber> . Accessed 12 January 2019.

<sup>8</sup><https://gallery.mailchimp.com/3535732e85f5ce64883deadf1/images/0af65bb4-62a8-4d7b-af1f-302083409171.png> (last accessed 12 January 2019), linked to page <https://mailchi.mp/854ad906fb57/arts-connect-october-2860449?e=f77c670f0f>.

<sup>9</sup> See Shannon Woodcock “‘We Told Them, But They Refused to Listen’: White settlers and genocide denial in Gunai Kurnai Country” *Genocide Perspectives VI*, Sydney: UTS, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Letter accessible online: <https://www.facebook.com/events/679246585791199> . Accessed, January 12, 2019

# Women's and Feminist Movements in Ireland: The Power of Personal Stories

**Chiara Bonfiglioli**

When I took up a Lectureship in Gender and Women's Studies at University College Cork in October 2017, I had very little knowledge of gender and women's history in Ireland, given that I mainly work on Italian and Balkan history. In the past one and a half year, I could witness an extraordinary array of women's and feminist mobilizations and I could learn from incredibly brave and committed activists, scholars and students. I also closely followed several activist pages on social media as well as the mainstream press, feeling profoundly struck by the many personal stories that were shared, often anonymously, in order to reckon with the patriarchal past and build a feminist future on the island. This article represents a personal and certainly not exhaustive attempt at mapping ongoing women's and feminist movements in Ireland. Suggestions for further reading, as well as links to social media pages, are provided in the bibliography.

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On May 25, 2018, women's and feminist movements in Ireland obtained a major victory: the Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution, which equated the life of the 'unborn' to the life of the woman, was finally repealed with 66.4% of the votes, after 35 years of campaigning against a measure that had constrained women's everyday lives, and their right to freely decide upon childbirth and abortion. Until then, over 3,000 women a year



Sophie Longwill, Big Pink Knickers, 2018



would travel from Ireland to the UK to obtain an abortion. The possibility to travel to the UK had been allowed as the usual 'Irish solution to an Irish problem', i.e., as a hypocritical way to export local issues abroad. The Eighth Amendment's effects, however, did not only affect women seeking an abortion, but also the right to healthcare of any pregnant woman living on Irish soil. The Repeal campaign was revived in 2012 after the tragic case of Savita Halappanavar, an Indian dentist, who died of sepsis after she was refused an abortion following a miscarriage, under the argument that a fetus' heartbeat could still be heard.

It was personal stories like Savita's that shifted public opinion on the Yes side during the referendum, alongside the relentless canvassing carried out by local activists in every corner of the country. Indeed, personal stories managed to show that the 8th Amendment was endangering women's healthcare at every step, causing immense grief not only to women but also to parents and families, such as those reunited in the TFMR association, Termination for Medical Reasons Ireland, who also had to travel to the UK after a diagnosis of fatal fetal abnormality. On the Facebook page *In Her Shoes*, countless anonymous women retold how the Eight Amendment restricted their life choices, endangered their health, and led them to face endless shame and isolation during their trips to the UK. Migrant women were even more severely affected, given that their possibility to travel was further curtailed due to visa restrictions and poverty, as made clear by the campaign led by Dublin-based MERJ (Migrant and Ethnic Minorities for Reproductive Justice).

The victory in the referendum and the implementation of abortion rights from January 2019 represents a major watershed in Ireland, where women's submission to patriarchal rule has been enshrined in the Constitution since the 1930s. Another referendum was called to abrogate Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution, which states: "In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home". In fact, the protection of 'mothers' has been a privilege reserved to married women over the decades. An estimated 30.000 unmarried young women who gave birth outside the wedlock or who were considered 'fallen' were imprisoned in the infamous Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes, which were managed by religious orders in partnership with the state. Within the homes, women had to face slave labour under the pretext of 'repentance'. Their children, if they survived diseases and neglect, were often sent for adoption to wealthy Catholic married couples in the United States, in exchange for hefty sums of money.

Magdalene and Mother and Baby Homes' survivors have been campaigning for several decades for compensation and recognition, and for children's rights to know their birth families, through associations such as Justice for Magdalenes, Adoption Rights Alliance and the Coalition of Mother and Baby Home Survivors (this struggle was fictionalized in a number of movies, such as *Philomena*, and *Magdalene Sisters*). A Restorative Justice Scheme for Magdalene survivors was established in 2013, and in June 2018 for the first time, 200 survivors met with the Irish President in Dublin. The redress scheme, however, is progressing slowly, also due to the reluctance of religious orders to cooperate. A Commission for Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes was also set up in 2015 when an unmarked mass grave with the remaining of 796 infants and children was dis-

covered in the surroundings of the Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, County Galway, thanks to the efforts of amateur historian Catherine Corless. New personal stories about Tuam have been recounted through reporting and investigation, for instance in Alison O' Reilly's book *My Name Is Bridget: The Untold Story of Bridget Dolan and the Tuam Mother and Baby Home* (2018).

Even if Ireland's atonement with its past finally seemed to suggest that all women's lives matter, activists had to tackle new pressing issues that came about alongside the abortion referendum campaign. The Irish cervical cancer scandal of Autumn 2018 was one of them. It suddenly became known that over 200 women had received false negative results in their cervical smear tests, which had been outsourced to a dubious laboratory in the United States. The Health Service Executive (HSE) discovered these false positives during an audit, but women were not promptly informed, and senior doctors strived to protect themselves by hushing the scandal. By the time women knew, many of them were dead or terminally ill. The scandal fully erupted when terminally ill Vicky Phelan, a married mum of three, and late Emma Mhic Mhathúna, a single mum of five, went public and denounced the scandal to the press, refusing to be silent in exchange for monetary compensation. Many victims organized through the Facebook page Standing 4 Women, organized demonstrations and started taking the HSE to court, while panic spread among Irish women who rushed to repeat smear tests. The Irish healthcare system, which is currently facing a prolonged nurses' strike for understaffing and underpaying, has been greatly affected by austerity measures and budget cuts since 2008, and also carries a legacy of unaccountability and impunity.



Caption: Sophie Longwill, *Fallen Bra*, 2018

Next to the women mobilized around the cervical cancer scandal, another activist group challenged healthcare conditions in Ireland, and in particular the vulnerable position of women in maternity wards. The Elephant Collective, constituted by scholars and midwives, has been denouncing for years the lack of investigation following maternal deaths in Irish hospitals, which were often preventable, and hushed under the tag of 'medical misadventure'. The collective has been advocating for a law that would introduce mandatory inquests, and, at the same time, created a community for the bereaved families of widowers and their children. Personal stories, again, were put to the front in a traveling exhibition named *Picking Up the Threads*, which included a quilt sewn by over 180 activ-

ists, and the painted portraits of women who died in maternity hospitals, many of which belonged to ethnic minorities. Savita Halappannavar, Dhara Kivlehan and Bimbo Onanuga figured alongside Tania McCabe, Evelyn Flanagan, Jennifer Crean, Nora Hyland, and Sally Rowlette. The collective also published a volume titled *Untangling the Maternity Crisis*, which criticizes more broadly the medicalization and widespread usage of obstetric violence in Irish hospitals.

Finally, in Spring 2018, in the wake of the referendum, but also as an echo of the transnational #MeToo movement against sexual violence, activists from the Republic of Ireland mobilized around a court case which took place across the border, in Northern Ireland, which came to be known as the ‘rugby rape trial’. Three Ulster rugby players were accused of sexual assault but were ultimately acquitted, even if the Whatsapp messages that leaked in the media made clear that the sexual encounter with the complainant was far from consensual, and that the three men shared a very misogynist view of women. Feminist activists and organizations strongly protested against the court’s decision and mobilized under the hashtag #Ibelieveher. Even if the three rugby players won the case, they certainly lost the favor of public opinion thanks to these mobilizations, and two of them went off to play for French regional clubs. Another similar feminist mobilization took place in Autumn 2018, when a defense lawyer in Cork undermined the reputation of a complainant in a case of sexual assault, through the argument that she was wearing a lace thong. The accused man was acquitted of all charges, and young women – including my students – immediately mobilized outside courts, marching with underwear items, and posters with the hashtag #ThisIsNotConsent, in an attempt to denounce rape culture and sexism in Irish society. In a recent feminist exhibition hosted in Cork under the title *I see crimson, I see red*, artist Sophie Longwill exhibited a series of underwear items made of *pâte de verre* [paste of glass], partially inspired by the feminist performance group *Speaking for I.M.E.L.D.A.* and their #Knickers for Choice campaign, to symbolize the persistent fragility of women’s bodily autonomy on the Emerald Island.

#### Further reading

Dan Barry, ‘The Lost Children of Tuam’, New York Times, Oct 28, 2017

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/28/world/europe/tuam-ireland-babies-children.html>

Fiona De Londras and Máiréad Enright, *Repealing the 8<sup>th</sup>. Reforming Irish Abortion Law*, Policy Press, 2018.

Alison O’Reilly, *My name is Bridget: The Untold Story of Bridget Dolan and the Tuam Mother and Baby Home*, Gill Books, 2018.

Susan McKay, ‘How the ‘rugby rape trial’ divided Ireland’, The Guardian, Dec 4, 2018

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/dec/04/rugby-rape-trial-ireland-belfast-case>

Una Mullally (ed.), *Repeal The 8<sup>th</sup>*, Penguin, 2018.

Nadine Edwards, Rosemary Mander, Jo Murphy-Lawless (eds.), *Untangling the Maternity Crisis*, Routledge, 2018.

Webpages and Social Media

In Her Shoes – Women of the Eight: <https://www.facebook.com/InHerIrishShoes/>

Migrant and ethnic minorities for reproductive justice – MERJ:  
<https://www.facebook.com/MERJIreland/>

TFMR: <http://tfmireland.com/>

Artists' campaign to repeal the Eight Amendment: <https://www.facebook.com/artistsrepeal8/>

Solidarity with the Magdalenes:  
<https://www.facebook.com/Solidarity-with-the-Magdalenes-435175836551795/>

Adoption Rights Alliance: <http://www.adoptionrightsalliance.com/>

Standing 4 Women: <https://www.facebook.com/Standing4WomenIreland/>

The Elephant Collective:  
<https://www.facebook.com/The-Elephant-Collective-1662667163990925/>

Sophie Longwill: <http://sophielongwill.ie/>

Speaking of I.M.E.L.D.A. (Ireland Making England the Legal Destination for Abortion) - #Knickers for Choice: <https://www.speakingofimelda.org/knickers-for-choice>

# To Address *Femininity* via Studying Below-the-Line<sup>1</sup> Film Labour Practices

**Danai Anagnostou**

The ‘Me Too’ Movement spread virally as a hashtag in October 2017, followed by #TimesUp in January 2018. Both movements were introduced by women who work in television, cinema, and theatre confronting sexual harassment and assault at work. ‘Feminist Film Theory’ (FFT), influenced by second-wave feminism was introduced as an academic discipline already in the early 70s. Drawing from critical theory, gender studies, semiotics, Marxism and psychoanalysis, FFT meticulously analyses depictions of women in moving images – by delving into their influences and pointing at their socio-political references. The viral movements of 2017 and 2018 have put forward experiences of established *above the line* practitioners, while FFT has been mostly dealing with representation. Yet, a niche research field named “Production Studies” or “Feminist Production Studies”<sup>2</sup> is currently developing, focusing on how female professionals, other than directors and actresses, articulate their work-related experiences within media industries.

*Production* might function as an umbrella term for all the procedures often referred to as “behind the scenes”. Production is mainly an ‘invisible territory’ where working codes and relations might be even more perplexing or foggy. Unsurprisingly, the film industry has proven to function just like any other corporate environment, obeying a very strict code of social conduct and a severely solid hierarchy. Within this space, sexual misconduct as well as systemic violence, verbal derogation, and the expectancy for keeping up a constantly pleasant and nurturing presence are realities that female workers encounter on daily basis. Due to the frequency of low or no budget productions over the last decade, the film industry is often euphemistically referred to as a family (or fraternity). An extended, sometimes toxic family – that has adopted and maintains its use of military terminology<sup>3</sup> – in which female workers’ bodies are strictly regulated and scrutinized continuously.

The film industry has historically been a boys’ club for almost a century; it reached its peak of machismo during the golden era of Hollywood mainly through the expansion of studio films, led by alpha-male directors. Mid-20 century Hollywood classics are now held responsible for creating the myth of the “eccentric, domineering auteur.”<sup>4</sup> However, we could pause for a moment and mention the avid female presence behind cameras, active in all facets of movie production, just before the establishment of the numerous Directors’ Guilds, Actors’ Guilds and the strong influence of several unions post-WWII<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, the departments that are inherently considered to be female-dominated and statistically still employ a vast majority of women, are the casting, make

up and costume department. These sectors are also evidently less visible and under-represented in international film summits, talent campuses, seminars etc<sup>6</sup>. Their contributions are highly likely to remain unmentioned in publications, press kits, or posters. In addition, the workers in the aforementioned departments have to deal with or plainly accept an immense wage gap between their salaries and those of their colleagues. Furthermore, workers are broadly considered as available for multiple tasks of on-set nurturing, care-taking and providing unpaid emotional labour<sup>7</sup> – demands which are never disclosed in their contracts.

I could offer an illustration of what I consider gendered labour in such context, referring back to my experience working in the costume department. To begin with, a popular assumption shared between other colleagues, would be that a wardrobe worker's labour cannot be considered by any means different than what everyone else might already have been doing at home. Wistfully, working in the costume department is often rendered synonymous with shopping, washing, folding, scenting, ironing, pampering, holding, foreseeing, back-upping, nurturing, providing, surprising and pleasing. Costume designers and assistants struggle to absolve the domesticity and the overall stereotypical femininity they are assigned with; regardless of their gender, their reasons to be in the industry, their education, political position or interests.

When a day on-set translates to 12 working hours on average, either the costume designer or their assistant is regularly expected to take laundry as additional work at home. Every costume needs to be clean, free of stains, exempted from the actor's body odour and ironed for the next day, which would frequently be less than 10 hours away after wrapping up. The responsibility for these materials' maintenance is rarely shared with another person hired in the costume department, but even when it is, the person is not regularly present on set. On fewer occasions each actor is assigned with washing and bringing back their costume on every working day. Lastly and most rarely, there would be a sufficient allocation of budget to cover dry cleaning expenses, yet it is a matter of fact that if there was a budget surplus it would most probably not be announced and certainly would not be spent on dry cleaning. Anecdotally, a producer once called 45 minutes before show time to request that the costume assistant would rush to the theater and iron the protagonist's dress, even though there were 5 people – plus a flatiron – in the building already.

Bizarrely, the costume department is commonly assumed to be equipped with an endless supply of hats, rubber boots, or windproof jackets; not for dressing the characters but to distribute between the members of the filming crew when necessary. These items usually belong to the costume designers. While their work is being undermined as something that anyone could do and *even do better*, confirming the myth of *female incapacity within the capitalist mode of production*<sup>8</sup>, their colleagues with presumably superior, hard-earned skills cannot bear the responsibility of keeping a hat in their car. Concurrently, a costume designer would be seen as frivolous, irresponsible and unprofessional, if only she refused to carry another 10 kilos of gear or if she called attention to the hat or jacket that she offered and got lost or returned to her dirty. It is essential to understand social and professional caretaking as productivity contributing to the creation of surplus value. Meanwhile, the costume designer is reduced to a provider of services filled with domestic qualities and attributed with several so-called feminine characteristics compatible with the acceptable female image enforced by patriarchy.

A young professional is instructed early on to know her place – far behind the camera – and to *stay there*. Meanwhile, it is taken as a given that she will not only offer her time and expertise but also her space, contacts, even personal clothes or jewellery for any no-budget short film, as the costume department is always expected to supply unlimited items and options no matter the resources available. When *dressing the part* all set boundaries tend to disappear. The director might start suddenly inquiring for a stylistic *surprise*, after seeing several styled outfits previously agreed upon. The director might as well invite everyone who happens to be present in the building to attend the costume fitting and “offer their opinion”. In most cases when such opinions are offered, they are done so in a completely inappropriate manner and at moments that could not be more unwelcome. Yet costumes are considered to be *just clothes* after all, and apparently everyone is entitled to an opinion on clothes and may share it at any time.

While several women who work as costume designers find challenges in owning the authorship of their creative labour, women who are production designers (art directors) find it difficult to advance in that profession. Similar or worse are the obstacles for women in other more *masculine* departments, such as camera, sound or animation. So, what happens when one expresses rational demands? In 2016, I was accused of being “rude” for inquiring an estimation regarding the payment day, “irrational” for requesting per diems, “unprofessional” for replying the following morning to a text message that had been sent at post midnight.

In addition, wardrobe workers are expected to maintain physical contact with actresses and actors by actually dressing them. Most acting professionals can certainly tie their shoes, zip their dresses, button up their shirts or hold their purses perfectly by themselves. Other practices that include physical contact and moving beyond personal space are to cover actresses and actors with a blanket in between shots, put a hat on their head for the 30-second pause when shooting outdoors, or brush them for lint when none of the aforementioned actions are applicable. Genuinely, it is unlikely that the actresses and actors enjoy this procedure either, which is indeed a form of violation of personal space and an interruption in their concentration. Yet, it is something both sides still perform plainly for the gaze of their colleagues whom they need to reassure how present and caring they are.

Simultaneously, women who work behind the scenes are judged harshly for either not looking overtly polished or being being overtly polished and *well-taken care of* themselves. A male colleague once approached me and casually made a derogatory comment about a person who was working with me on that day as a wardrobe assistant. What he commented on was the length of her trousers, that barely touched the floor but looked “*filthy*” according to him. Another female colleague took pride in being preferred over her co-wardrobe assistant who was dismissed and mocked as “*fat*”.

Coming back to public discussions on sexual harassment and other sexist behaviours at work that are currently taking place globally, Flix.gr<sup>9</sup> recently produced and published video interview under the fairly pompous title “*Women of Greek Cinema.*” Flix invited 36 female practitioners currently active in the field who were offered a set of particular questions<sup>10</sup>. The platform set a frame for a discussion without first acknowledging the apparent ascendancy of sexist behaviours on-set. This decision of course triggers concerns from the very beginning. The publication was formatted in a manner in which the inter-

view questions were listed as text via a small introduction to the video interview, yet they never appeared in any format throughout the video. The lack of context specificity here is crucial; as it always remains unclear what are the interviewees responding to each time.

Furthermore, the video was edited (either deliberately or not) in a manner which constantly interrupts the interviewees sentences. Presumably, each participant must have been interviewed separately, yet in its final cut the interview presents working women interrupting or talking over other working women. Although some responses appear to be fairly problematic, they cannot be commented on since it is apparent that they are cut and pasted in a sequence that doesn't make clear sense. For instance, when an interviewee says, "*sexism goes both ways*," it is utterly unclear whether she is referring to internalized misogyny or the so-called reverse sexism that men claim to experience. Female practitioners were again denied the space for articulating their own views and experiences.

The first part of the video interview is comprised from a mixture of catchwords conventionally connected to femininity, presumably meant to describe the contribution of *women* in Greek cinema. To cite a few: *persistence, patience, creation, struggle, ecstasy, frustration, love, passion, power, tenacity, inspiration, contribution, sexy, emotion, talent, beauty, selective oblivion* or even *mother goose*. Several interviewees did acknowledge and address sexism in their passages, yet the majority refers to facing *challenges beyond gender, the presence of stupid people regardless of gender* or equated sexism with *the idealization and pursuit of power*, which again according to the video has nothing to do with masculinity or gender. Several statements even went as far as to imply that to acknowledge or address sexism is a *luxury*, while key terms such as feminism, or gender equality, are avoided (or possibly edited out) altogether.

The aforementioned video publication fails completely to establish any ground for a solidarity network among practitioners within the field. Even worse it proposes that exposure to sexist behaviour or willingness to discuss such misconducts publicly shows weak character. Consequently, those who share such opinions, consider themselves to be higher in any professional or moral scale, since in their understanding encountering sexism is something that can only happen to people who have no concerns *about the real problems of the film industry* (sic) and never occur to passionate, dedicated women of career who refuse to be like "*all the other girls*".

Overall the film industry might indeed be open for women – "Career Women" who seek to join the boys' club; cis-gender, white, upper-middle class women, who can afford to be mostly (un)paid as "trainees" for the first five years of their working life; women who are later expected to join and unconditionally cater for a no-budget, no-payment, time-consuming, high-demanding project only to pay their dues to the industry; women who are recruited to help an emerging, ambitious young director – most times male and almost all times upper-middle class – who refuse to undergo the formal procedures and logistics of film making, as they consider their work superior to that; or women who will accept being infantilized for the rest of their working lives; women who are *so* passionate about their career that they can overcome any obstacle like being constantly subjected to sexism, underpaid and expected to nurture the whole set, always smiling and prepared for countless backup solutions; women who cannot see that their "only makes me stronger" attitude contributes to the exclusion of less or differently privileged females from entering the space.



The film industry is deeply sexist, racist and classist worldwide and has overly failed to secure acceptable working conditions for *below the line* practitioners<sup>1</sup>. Concurrently, there is a strong, strange taboo on referring to the class or gender disparity of the industry. During the last decade in Athens, such discussions with colleagues were bluntly dismissed at their very beginning as referring to *individual incidents*, being irrelevant or as being “*small talk*”. Workers in the film industry – in front or behind the camera, critics, those in funding committees, festival curators, distributors, and viewers – are all responsible in deciding whose stories are told and promoted. This is a fact to be acknowledged and a certain ‘fiction calling’ to be exercised during all the stages of production and mediation.

Resolving a condition so deeply embedded within the culture of the field will be slow, yet not impossible.

1. Firstly, mutually acknowledge all the forms discrimination might take.
2. Secondly, instead of speaking “*from a personal perspective*” and stating “*our own opinions*”, understand that the very fact that we keep debating whether discrimination and inequality actually exist is not only being oblivious to the issue, but outrageous.
3. Thirdly, make a collective strong statement asserting that such behaviours are simply unacceptable, and ensure that all colleagues are safe, heard and properly compensated.

*Disclaimer: The author is a trained Costume and Set Designer, who practiced intensively between 2012 and 2016 in Film and TVC; switching back and forth, between several positions within the Art Department and the Costume Department. Her descriptions and conclusions reflect her professional experience, information she has from other colleagues, production and film history and political theory. Her reference points are mostly taken from the Greek Film Industry, where she was employed. Yet she understands these phenomena to be relevant to the global film industry, tracing back to and replicating several other formal structures established within contemporary Western societies.*

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<sup>1</sup> In film production terminology the “line” functions as a separative for production costs and budget allocations. The producers, directors, actors and scriptwriters are classified as being “above the line” while the rest of the production team is grouped under the term “below the line”. Most salaries, production expenses, publicity, insurance, and travelling costs fall “below the line”. Essentially any cost that is not linked with the main actors, directors, producers or screenwriters will be categorised as a below-the-line expense.

<sup>2</sup> *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* by Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John T. Cadwell was published by Taylor & Francis in 2009 and Vicki Mayer’s *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies* by Duke University Press followed in 2011. The aforementioned work shifts the discussion about entertainment and media production targeting the professionals within the industry whose work is mostly uncredited or invisible and does not focus on the elite “above the line”, whose influence and power over the production as well as their visibility is already immense.

<sup>3</sup> The filming process is called *shooting*, the production’s groupings are named *units*, while the Director or Director of Photography are semi-jokingly introduced as the *chiefs* or the *generals* among the film crew. To add on the paramilitary clichés many productions still use walkie talkies to communicate on set. It is still taken for granted that the job would often require a certain ferocity and that men would be better at acting

that part. Borrowing a passage from an interview of film director Karyn Kusama the *assumption is that a man is a much better monster*.

<sup>4</sup> Auteur theory, theory of filmmaking in which the director is viewed as the major creative force in a motion picture. Arising in France in the late 1940s, the auteur theory—as it was dubbed by the American film critic Andrew Sarris—was an outgrowth of the cinematic theories of André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc.

Britannica, T. E. (2017, December 27). Auteur theory. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/art/auteur-theory>

<sup>5</sup> Dorothy Arzner (1897–1979) was pioneering in fiction films in the US, while Ruby Grierson (1904–1940), Margaret Thomson (1910–2005), Jill Craigie (1911–1999), Budge Cooper (1913–1983), Kay Mander (1915–2013) were mainly active in documentary filmmaking.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, Berlinale is a reputable annual film summit, with “franchise” localised festivals in Beirut, Buenos Aires, Burdan, Guadalajara, Sarajevo, Tokyo and Rio, which also hosts a *talent campus* for young professionals. In their application section they explicitly disclose their policy on gender parity and proudly state that 50% of their attendees identify as *female*. Yet Berlinale Talents still does not host summits for the predominantly *female departments*’ representatives.

<sup>7</sup> In a professional context, emotional labour refers to the expectation that a worker should *either contain* her feelings or manipulate their expression in order to satisfy both her colleagues, customers as well as the perceived requirements of her job, while avidly responding to other’s emotional needs. Emotional labour can also include being constantly quietly present and available for any conversational inquiries or menial tasks, charmingly resolving any conflict that might occur in her working environment etc.

<sup>8</sup> DallaCosta, M., & James, S. (1975). *The power of women and the subversion of the community*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press.

<sup>9</sup> Flix.gr is an online publication posting news related to the Film Industry.

<sup>10</sup> As listed in the website: *Being a woman professional in Greek cinema. What does it mean nowadays? Does sexism exist? Is the field, also in Greece, male dominated? What kinds of problems are women faced with? Are female characters real enough, complicated enough, smart enough? What kind of stories do women want to share with the world? How do they hope to see heroines on the big screen? 36 women answer these questions.*

The video is available with English subtitles.

Flix. (n.d.). Menu. Retrieved from <http://flix.gr/en/women-of-greek-cinema.html>

<sup>11</sup> Shooting days regularly extend their agreed duration. With production companies having normalised that it is not uncommon to schedule even a 30-hour working day or group numerous all-nighters back to back. The minimum compensation is constantly under negotiation especially for workers employed in certain departments and the payment day is most times unspecified, with the salaries being finally deposited even a year later. Social security or health insurance are rarely included. Even if these working conditions apparently deprive the employees the ability to plan their lives, surprisingly many still do take pride in coping under these conditions.

# Nailstories

**Katja Kobolt**

“With those shiny, glittery nails you wear, you do not look like an art curator at all, more like an “Eastern European”<sup>1</sup> woman working at a cashier in a supermarket,” once commented an artist who knows my hands.

Nails, the corneous membrane between a self and others. The “interface” between the inner—blemished, mogul nails as a signal of a deficit or an illness in a body, bitten nails or smooth healthy nails—and the outside. A surface, a projection screen for both.

While working at the exhibition and forum, *no stop non stop*, in the run-up to the public remembrance of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the labor recruitment agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to engage with (images of) migration in the post-socialist time, I have been actively confronted with my own positionality. A positionality obviously made visible also through my nails. What do my nails tell about me, what would I like my nails to tell to others? Who are those others, to whom I would like my nails to talk to?<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, nail parlors were popping up in the city landscape of Munich, where I live as a freelance curator and author. Here in Munich, my “Eastern-Europeanness” is audible through my accent and visible through my nails. In the construction of “Eastern-Europeanness” female looks and figures have played a central role. Reinforced negative stereotypes of “Eastern European women”, used in the USA to depict Melania Trump, are also displayed within the European context.<sup>3</sup> In the construction of the “in/visible difference“ we should also consider nails.<sup>4</sup>

Also observed, nail parlors are opening in remarkable number as tiny salons in de/central areas, for many of them to close only a few months later, were and are obviously spaces of feminized migrant labor. Why this is so my friend and colleague, Ayşe Güleç, answers who has been researching the precarious nail work. Through her regular visits and talks to people engaged in nail salons she found out that the “nail business” is tightly connected to the measures of the German Employment Agency: especially offering women of Asian origin free nail design education. However, after the schooling, the freshly educated nail designers are obliged to register as entrepreneurs by opening up their own nail salon or work in the nail business. When observed within the omnipresent capital machine, “positive” effects for the public statics are obvious: the nail-“bachelors” are not “burdening” the public budget and the figures of employed people raise. However, the conditions of an employment in the nail business are hazardous: from toxic chemicals, materials and fumes to high real estate prices on the one and damping service prices on the other side (from 40 Euros up - including labor, material and space for a service of 1,5-2 hours). As the case in many other sectors (especially of feminized labor but not exclusively), the private/small entrepreneurship, once lived, soon loses its fairytale plot of “every-one can make it”. Through dismantling of socialism, welfare state, spreading and escalation of capitalist production relations and identity politics and with that among others also consolidation of nationalism, the first to be excluded from the relatively safe working conditions usually were and are the once not belonging to the “national body”. While the nail workers are mainly migrants, it might not come as a surprise that the

firms engaged in this public subsidized schooling are rarely run by “people with migrant background”; which is an official German notion to mark people, who have at least one parent, who did not hold a German citizenship *by birth(/by blood/Jus sanguinis)*. Once a migrant, always a migrant.<sup>5</sup>



*Phuong Linh Nguyen*, Video (Hd), 14'00", Color, Sound, 16:9, 2018 |  
 Courtesy: Singapore Art Museum

Furthermore, nailwork is body and care work, engaging bodies on both sides of the shiny, narrow manicure desk (where as many desks are crammed into tiny spaces within the nail parlor), connected by inhaling a cloud of particles of nails, skin, plastic and toxic fumes. Another dear friend and colleague Suza Husse<sup>6</sup> invited us with Ayşe Güleç to join her at a seminar in Berlin. This is how the collective work *N \* A \* I \* L \* S* *hacks\*facts\*fictions* was initiated and since then, it is operating as a fluid group of artists, art workers and activists asking, “What can nails do?” and contemplating the nail salon as a site of critical, trans\*cultural and solidary practices.<sup>7</sup> Through a solidary star-formed production platform and in architectural structures, objects, videos, forthcoming workshops and a collaborative publication on nailwork, art and migration *N \* A \* I \* L \* S* *hacks\*facts\*fictions* questions arise within the group about queer potentials, economies, and identities, tired hegemonies, appropriation and equal emancipation:

*Work. Service. Care / SPA. Toxic. Migration. Body. Class. Race. Sex. Gender. Politics. Story. Visa regime. Precarious entrepreneurship. Aesthetics. Fashion. Submission. Subversion. Knowledge. Appropriation. Shape, color, sound, language, touch, pictures.*

### Cold war nails

But there is also another story to nails and “Eastern Europe”: the transformation of a “socialist” woman to an “East European” one. A story of the cultural production of habitus, caught between imperialism, classicism, racism, patriarchy and hegemony. Keeping in mind, history is never given, always a struggle, the nailstory is also a story of resistance.



Liane Aviram, Katja Kobolt, Sugano Matsusaki / N \* A \* I \* L \* S hacks\*facts\*fictions: *Soaking Histories*, research banner, print on fabric, 235x225

Looking within art history for iconic images of “Western versus Eastern woman” we could find Wojciech Fangor’s socialist realist *Postaci (Figures)* from 1950 where manicured and colored nails are attributes of bourgeoisie and by that “Western” female figure. Her gesture: tiny, pale, eyes hidden behind sunglasses, hands protecting her purse, the dress covered with “Western” and imperialist insignia as Wall Street, Coca-Cola, postcards standing for globalization and travelling. The woman with the manicured hands is standing alone (is she single?), whereas the strong, healthy working class (bodies) man and woman are holding shovels and confronting her with their gaze - confidently.

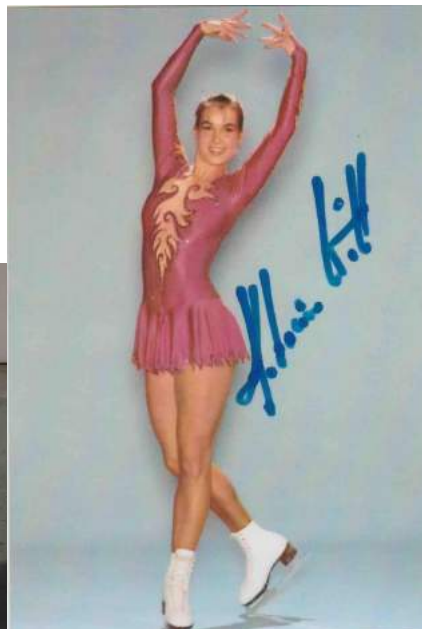
Similarly, however with other postures, Howard Sochurek’s photos<sup>8</sup> introduces the binary of “Western” and “Eastern” woman: portraying for an American “LIFE” magazine Christian Dior’s models in 1959 Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

Contributing to the N \* A \* I \* L \* S hacks\*facts\*fictions and within her research on chemical industry, colors and film the artist Mareike Bernien found out an essential link between car polish, nail polish and film – nitrocellulose being the base for all. Synthetic

nail polish coming to the scene from the 1920s on more or less as a by-product of the car polish, sharing its toxicity and add space: the raising film industry.

In 1975, almost half of a century since the introduction of the first synthetic nail polish, the *Birds* actress Tippi Hedren visited a Vietnamese refugee camp in California. Apparently Vietnamese women were very fond of her manicured nails. Tippi Hedren—in a Hollywood, especially female star charity manner—financed therefore a manicure schooling to 20 women at the camp. This legend further tells, that this is where the US nail industry developed from.<sup>10</sup> As nail design since the 1970s have been especially practiced and used by people of color, the legend on the origins of the contemporary nail business in the USA also confronts again with the question on how history is constructed: as a rule narrated in line with “western”, “white” supremacy and hegemony. It seems that only in the 1970s, in the wake of the international loan politics, which raised the culture of consumption also in some of the socialist countries, the image of a working, peasant “socialist” woman began to convert into “femme”. In 1972 American magazine Penthouse announced the opening of a hotel in socialist Yugoslavia called The Penthouse Adriatic Club / Haludovo Palace Hotel with a cover girl covering her breasts with polished nails.<sup>11</sup>

Next to long, polished nails, for the manicured hand this is also a typical posture. The LED-panel, a typical architectural accessory of nail studios today, portraying a hand posture, that the author of this text has first seen and adored with East German figure skater Katarina Witt’s winning the gold at the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo, socialist Yugoslavia – the second time after the WW 2 Olympics to be staged in a socialist country (1980 in Soviet Union).



Kim Bode, *Blue Flamez*, Led Panel with sound, 2018, photo: Jakob Schmitt;  
Katarina Vid in a costume she wore at the Sarajevo Olympics, courtesy: Katja Kobolt

The posture of a well-groomed female hand did not contradict the socialist project as late as 1989: Lepa Brena, one of most popular Yugoslav female singers.<sup>12</sup>

Since the dissolution of socialism polished, long, artificial nails seem to have made a carrier not only on the red carpet but especially as an icon of working class women. No wonder “natural nails” usually can’t grow long in combination with hard manual work. The artist Anna Ehrenstein has been engaged with the cultural practices of luxury appropriation and construction of “naturalness” versus “artificial” and its coding as well as the subversion of usually classicist, chauvinist and patriarchal readings of “artificialness”, even within the feminist discourses, especially the ones promoting “banning” of the old image of a woman, for the new one to be able to raise ...



Anna Ehrenstein, *True self*, Print on PVC, 2018

Image(s of women) are even within the “free” field of art regulations, along similar lines as elsewhere, and “looks” are an integral part of social coding, communicating belonging to a certain social habitus. This I have learned again also when trying to exhibit this image in a public realm, outside, at the entry to an exhibition space. Once exhibited outside the art space, the image supposedly blew up the limits between art and the world. As a guest curator I respected this argument and showed the work in the “protected” space of art, behind the entry door. However, this anecdote does not only again point to the troublesome relation between “art” and its “outside” but also to the question of representation that Nanna Heidenreich articulated in the „Unfinished conversation“ with the artist Nurray Demir:

“She asked herself how she can ask others about something that she herself has no experience of. She grappled with how to talk about something that she has little knowledge of, without relying on assumptions, ascriptions, and presumptions. She also thought a lot about questions that are really relevant politically and personally, and especially about how to approach them from the margins.”<sup>13</sup>

Maybe are exactly nails next to eyes the “organ” where the margin performs itself. An image of an injured eye (e.g. Luis Bunuel’s *Le Chien Andalou*, 1929 or its quote in Roee Rosen’s *The Dust Channel*, 2016) does evoke a corporal sensation. So does the image of an injured nail (e.g. Valie Export’s *remote ... remote ...*, 1973). In the video performance Valie Export juxtaposes the photos of children tortured and murdered by Nazis, eyes wide open looking into the camera, with an image of herself injuring her nails and cuticle with a scalpel, easing her pain and washing away the blood by sinking her hand into milk.

Nails as interface. Nail’s soaking histories. Nails of solidarity.



Liane Aviram, Anisha Müller, 2018



N \* A \* I \* L \* S next iterations are N \* A \* I \* L \* S hacks\*facts\*fictions, collaborative publication on nailwork, art and migration to come out this spring and workshops, open sessions, collaborative art works, performative contributions and other appearances in different salons, clubs and spaces in Berlin in the frame of Caring for Conflict (March to May 2019) and 24-26 May 2019 KLIRRRR festival for queer cultures of conflict at District and other places in Berlin.

Proofreading: Vicky Truong and Thao Ho.

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of truth, she actually said “Croatian”.

<sup>2</sup> A critical but also humourful comment on the social construction of habitus gives one of the films made for the *Tribunal NSU Complex Auflösen*. When asked in the film if nazis ride bicycles, the interviewed could not imagine a nazi to ride a bicycle despite the fact that on many of the NSU murder scenes bicycle has been observed and also confirmed as a vehicle driven by the murderers: *What would nazis never do?:* <http://tribunal-spots.net/en/spots/02/>

<sup>3</sup> Cf. The open letter to the *Washington Post* published in the *Balkanist* by scholars Irina Cerić, Ana Grujić, Jasmina Tumbas, and Bojana Videkanic: <https://balkanist.net/an-open-letter-to-the-editors-of-the-monkey-cage-blog-of-the-washington-post-online-edition/>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Wiedlack, Katharina. 2018. “In/visibly different: Melania Trump and the othering of Eastern European women in US culture”. In: *Feminist Media Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2018.1546205.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. The definition of „migrational background“ by the German office for statistics, as quoted by the federal office for political education: <http://www.bpb.de/nachschlagen/lexika/270615/migrationshintergrund>

<sup>6</sup> Suza Husse on a video by Phuong Linh Nguyen entitled *Trùng Mù (Endless, Sightless)*, free accessible within D’Est, a video art platform, a research tool and a solitary gesture by a scholar Ulrike Gerhardt, mapping out female\* and collective positions that reflect the post-socialist transformation. <https://www.d-est.com/>

<sup>7</sup> *N \* A \* I \* L \* S hacks\*facts\*fictions* is a collective work between Anisha Müller, Anna Ehrenstein, Ayşe Güleç, DAMN! / Deutsche Asiat\*innen, Make Noise!, Divilè Aleksaitė, Ekaterina Reinbold, Ferdiansyah Thajib, Inia Steinbach, Isabel Gatzke, Jana Koslovski, Jinran Ha, Johanna Michel, Katja Kobolt, Kim Bode, Liane Aviram, Mareike Bernien, Nanna Lüth, Phuong Linh Nguyen, Sugano Matsusaki, Suza Husse, Thao Ho, Yen Le / Le Nails Education Centre Berlin, Vicky Truong. *N \* A \* I \* L \* S* has been initiated in 2018 as a collaborative research project at UdK Berlin, *no stop non stop* at Lothringer13 Munich and *Caring for Conflict* at District Berlin.

<sup>8</sup> Howard Sochurek, 1975, source: <https://fmagarchive.wordpress.com/2013/06/18/howard-sochurek-christian-dior-paris-moscow-1959/>  
[2013/06/18/howard-sochurek-christian-dior-paris-moscow-1959/](https://fmagarchive.wordpress.com/2013/06/18/howard-sochurek-christian-dior-paris-moscow-1959/)

<sup>9</sup> Ulrike Gerhard in an introduction to a Symposium, *Female Identities in the Post-Utopian: Perspectives on Post-Socialism from Art and Theory*, Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg 2017. <https://www.hfbk-hamburg.de/en/projekte/female-identities-post-utopian/>

<sup>10</sup> Morris, Regan. 2015. “How Tippi Hedren made Vietnamese refugees into nail salon magnates”. In: *BBC News, Los Angeles, 3<sup>rd</sup> May*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32544343>

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://sometimes-interesting.com/2016/04/14/penthouse-adriatic-club-at-the-haludovo-palace-hotel/>

<sup>12</sup> See: Facebook/Lepa Brena Official Page and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsKn5KX6XnU>

<sup>13</sup> Demir, Nuray and Heidenreich, Nanna. 2018. “Unfinished conversation”. In: Bayer, Natalie; Kazeem-Kamiński, Belinda and Sternfeld, Nora (eds.). 2018. *Curating as Anti-Racist Practice*. Berlin DE GRUYTER/Editon Angewandte, 169-184.

# Acrylic Geographies

**Anna Ehrenstein**

Manicures, pedicures, traditional gels, brush on talons, classy french, hyperfemme claws, just getting rid of the dirt or the 'mcaesthetics weekend wedding' package - the variety of services provided is a dazzling rollercoaster of needs given and needs created. What originated as quite a domestic endeavor has become a particle inherent to the global urban landscapes – the nail studio. While they are heavily distributed over the entire globe and especially ubiquitous in large cities, certain distinctions are coming to play in western metropolises.

Migrational patterns of the globalized economy, stronger female representation in the workforce and technical developments like the electric fail or the possibilities of acrylic techniques have led to cheaper prices and a massive explosion of manicure offering parlours throughout America, Europe or Australia. Having the tendency to be gendered and feminized spaces globally, in Eurocentric countries they additionally are heavily racialized spaces - performing commodified touch and care through transcultural interactions.



Around 80% of studios in New York are being owned by Korean Immigrants, while estimates speak about 70% of the entire number of U.S. studios being owned by Americans with Vietnamese heritage. Similarly to this ethnic niche within the U.S., the number of Vietnamese studios in western European capitals like Berlin or London is steadily expanding. While nails have carried various social, economical or mythical symbolism distinctive to their time and place, for many centuries the extended nail was an upper-class signifier and that its wearer belonged to the chosen ones - who didn't need to do a day of labour in their life. An infamously historical demonstration of wealth and nail power was China's Empress Dowager Cixi. Her ring fingers have usually been adorned with 6-inch-long gold spiky nail protectors that could certainly help her make a point.

Needless to say that this former symbol of affluence rapidly became a beloved quotidian luxury to brighten up the profanity of day to day existence. The costly connotation has changed drastically. Extremely long acrylics have become symbols of the non-western diaspora, connected especially with predominantly working class and minority-majority neighborhoods. Dana Thomas declared luxury dead in her 2007 New York Times bestseller "How Luxury Lost its Luster,"<sup>1</sup> depicting the evolution of luxury goods from catering to an elitist niche to serving a mass market and was joined almost a decade later by philosopher Lambert Wiesings' statement that western society arrived upon a post-luxurious state<sup>2</sup>. Much the same reasons that led to the heavy spread of nail studios within the global landscape lead to the abjection of these previously luxurious symbols by the actual wealthy. Groups across the board tend to distinguish themselves visually from outsiders and especially the 1% conventionally have no big interest in showing off previously luxurious accessories that got accessible to the global deprived and impoverished.

In a 2014 "Zeit Magazine" article german journalist Dennis Deuermeier is calling the nail industry a business of the lower social strata, tied to so-called German "trash tv,"<sup>3</sup> while suggesting this would be the reason for lower-income cities like Chemnitz in Germany to have a higher nail studio spread than for example wealthier german cities like Hamburg or Munich.

Fifty years ago, sociologist Henri Lefebvre wrote about the idea of "the right to the city" in his book *Le Droit a la Ville*.<sup>4</sup> This "urgent cry of protest and demand for greater participation" inspired generations of theorists, social movements, publications, and local authorities to conceptualize this as part of a broader human rights agenda. The spatial inequalities Lefebvre had been describing have culminated severely since. Major reasons being increasing wealth segregations and the commodification of each and every molecule of urban life. Lefebvre's definition of the city as a "contested space, playing out the struggle for social, economical and political rights"<sup>5</sup> is aggravating constantly, only briefly interrupted by the 2008 financial crisis and the Occupy movements that followed.

Global capital flows and property as the remaining good of investment are the reason writer Anna Minton accurately calls the urban stage *a real estate casino economy*.<sup>6</sup> In a society where the boundaries of nature and artifice have become indescribably fluid and the mainstream media is obsessed with the false authentic, the curated performance of effortless perfection has become the basis of simultaneous digital and analog persona-making. A crucial instrument of neocolonial economic control is the execution of international intellectual property law - your position in society, your spatial destiny decides whether your imitation is read as a form of progress or a counterfeit. The exclusionary developments within the neoliberal, gentrification gang bang urban agglomerations are consistently evolving into is based on the exclusion of that particular other - the nail fail.

Geographer David Sibley states that western domination is being crucially asserted through the monopolization of space<sup>7</sup> - to critically observe images of selfhood

and construction of otherness we need to take a close look at mundane and opaque stereotypes and symbols of the other. What is the phenomenological function of a space that symbolizes female migration in the Western urban sphere? The nail studio is that particular other within the prosaic configuration of urban space - a threat to the cleansed aesthetics of transnational, corporate capital. In the age of commodity activism, the prevailing possibility of social engagement remains the day-to-day choice of how and where you consume.

Looking at the exchanges and transactions negotiated inside these studios, the sudden intimacy of the interaction and the almost therapeutical and familiar relationship that occurs between regular customer and service provider, might actually create tangible transcultural encounters across the table. Is there a possibility of the nail studio as a paragon of convivial space-making?

In her study on Korean-owned nail businesses in New York Miliann Kang demonstrates that the labour conditions are shaped to a large extent by precarious entrepreneurship with long and weary working hours, exploitation of employees and coworkers, neoliberal price cut massacres, creating a planetary mass of unpaid labour hours, horrible health infractions, language barriers and alienation within the host-society.

The subservient stereotype of the “model-minority” female asian immigrant being docile care-givers is further pushing gendered and racialized patterns of income inequality by means of feigned upward mobility.<sup>8</sup> Kang states that instead of engaging with the miserable working conditions of the service providers broader media and even feminist circles tend to whether romanticize the precarity or support anti-Asian sentiment through the maintenance of the dehumanizing “yellow peril” myth by spreading false information on price dumping and possible health hazards. Considering these harsh realities the iridescent and utopian soap bubble of transnational acrylic solidarity is about to get punctured by the 6 inch spikes that felt like such a sweet, feminist claw to scratch with at first sight.

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<sup>1</sup> Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: How Luxury lost its Luster*, 2007, Penguin Press

<sup>2</sup> Lambert Wiesing, *Luxus*, 2015, Suhrkamp

<sup>3</sup> Zeit Magazin Nr. 20 / 2014 „Nagelstudios“ from the Series: Deutschlandkarte. Available online: <https://www.zeit.de/zeit-magazin/2014/20/deutschlandkarte-nagelstudios>

<sup>4</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit A la Ville*, 1968, Mass Market Paperback

<sup>5</sup> Anna Minton, “Who is the City For?,” in A Verso Report – The Right to the City, 2017, Verso Books

<sup>6</sup> Anna Minton, “Who is the City For?,” in A Verso Report – The Right to the City, 2017, Verso Books

<sup>7</sup> David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, 1995, Psychology Press

<sup>8</sup> Miliann Kang, *The Managed Hand: Race, Gender, and the Body in Beauty Service Work*, 2010, University of California Press, pp. 47

# It Hurts to Talk: Documents of Disability

**Alyssa Schwendener**

In *Documenting Disability* (2013), Indira Allegra speaks about her invisible disability while weaving with threads secured to her lower teeth. A video excerpt of the eight-hour performance is shown as a triptych, with three iterations of the artist attempting to communicate, both through distorted speech and the textile she is speaking into.<sup>1</sup> Allegra furrows her brow and seems to huff in frustration at the effort of weaving and talking. Her speech becomes elongated and difficult to follow, and the video excerpt disallows for continuity or clarification. At one point, Allegra says with difficulty “Because I have a disability you cannot see, I have to prove –” and then the video jumps forward in time to Allegra saying something that sounds like “can’t do this – .”



Indira Allegra, *Documenting Disability*, 2013

At the conclusion of the excerpt, in two of the three frames, the textile rests against her chin like a limp tongue, a document of things often left unspoken or discredited. In the center frame, Allegra removes the warp threads from her teeth with pops that echo in her mouth, severing the textile from her mouth with what reads to me as a kind of implied

violence. Perhaps I mean inferred – I hear the pops as a violent separation or breaking, and every time I watch the video I think of childhood attempts to remove loose baby teeth with string. I imagine that the lived experience of the artist was something closer to relief at removing the weaving after an eight-hour performance, but I read the separation as violence and loss. As if Allegra is removing her tongue, and her ability to speak, rather than the document of her speech. That she only speaks in the video when she is weaving suggests a connection between the weaving-as-document and space within which to communicate. This space is closed off once the weaving leaves her mouth.

Occasionally I lose speech. A wall forms behind my teeth and prevents the words from coming out. The wall isn't visible and people don't know it exists until I begin to stammer or stutter or get stuck on silence with my hands waving in front of my face as if I've just taken a bite of something too hot. The waving is about as effective for regaining speech as it is for un-burning the roof of my mouth, but it's a form of communication. It says something like *please let this word come out already*. Sometimes I lose speech when trying to talk about trauma, or when I'm upset, but other times it just happens, like a door slamming suddenly. Something in my mind or my body stops me from speaking, and I don't know why. In 1989, Richard Culatta and Linda H. Leeper published a paper in the *National Student Speech Language Hearing Association Journal* arguing that some people "indulge" in disfluent speech "to either consciously or unconsciously control the environment."<sup>2</sup> A possible stated reason for this behavior is malingering: "purposeful disfluency indulged in to avoid responsibilities or assignments." Culatta and Leeper acknowledge that this had not been documented at the time of publication, but "evidence to support the existence of disfluency as malingering might be found with careful examination." The authors cite a 1982 study, which reports that: "one can sense the controlling, punishing, wheedling, exploitative urges behind the behavior ... These (disfluent speakers) ... suffer less than their listeners." This is not a new narrative in the study and treatment of disabilities (as opposed to disability studies), a field especially invested in defining the parameters of disability and ensuring that no interlopers find their way in.

In recent discussions about disability or accessibility statements on academic syllabi, I've asked how we, as instructors and teaching assistants, can move against the idea that accommodations need to be justified through documentation from official university disability services. The resounding response has been that it would not be fair to offer accommodations without evidence—what if students faked disabilities? What legal issues are at stake? In one conversation migraines were brought up as a potential example of faked or exaggerated excuses used by students to get out of doing the work. I did not mention that I get migraines, or that they are part of my inheritance from my mother, whose migraines present visually like a stroke, or that women are three times more likely than men to experience migraines.<sup>3</sup> I related a story about a professor who wanted proof from a student that they were experiencing debilitating menstrual cramps, such that this student could not get out of bed to come to class. This professor did not see the irony in asking a bedridden student to get out of bed to go to a medical professional to get proof that they were bedridden. Anecdotes and official studies alike have demonstrated that medical professionals take pain less seriously when it is being described by white women and people of color<sup>4</sup>, and even if this weren't true, the reality of healthcare in the US is

that there is an often insurmountable gap between *wanting* to see a medical professional and actually seeing one.

The title of Allegra’s performance, *Documenting Disability* (sometimes written as *Documented Disability*) echoes the language of the institution, where disability is a matter of evidence. Performance of disability, therefore, becomes impossibly important, as disabled people are asked to embody their disabilities in a way that feels authentic or real for an audience of people who are not likely to have done much critical thinking on what it means to be disabled, or how disability functions outside definitions enforced by institutions. The performing of disability can be exhausting, and it is not always clear which audiences will penalize the performer for failure to appear authentic, especially within the power dynamics of the university.

Allegra cites Sunaura Taylor’s “The Right Not to Work” (2004) as an inspiration for the spoken manifesto in *Documenting Disability*. Taylor writes, “Disability is most commonly perceived as a personal tragedy, isolated and spontaneous, and so rarely worthy of a second thought let alone headlines (unless as a human interest story).”<sup>5</sup> In the most accepted theory of disability, disabled people are outliers who should not be counted in serious analysis of practices, objects, and environments. Disability is about problems in individuals, and it does not speak to problems elsewhere. A key problem in this view is the use of “accessible” to describe a thing’s essence, such that an object’s accessibility is found within the object itself and not in the relationship between the object and its user. Sara Ahmed describes this relationship in *Queer Phenomenology*, using the example of the hammer-as-tool:

So what does it mean to say that an object fails to do the work for which it was intended? This failure might not simply be a question of the object itself failing. For the hammer might be too heavy for you to use but perfectly adequate for me. A hammer might be broken and not enable me to do one thing, but it could still let me do something else. Failure, which is about the loss of the capacity to perform an action for which the object was intended is not a property of an object (though it tends to be attributed in this way and there is no doubt that *things can go wrong*), but rather of the failure of an object to extend a body, which we can define in terms of the extension of bodily capacities to perform actions.<sup>6</sup>

The example of the hammer can be easily translated to the example of the university and, in particular, the classroom. In the construction of the syllabus, the section describing disabilities or accessibility is often positioned as an addendum (and often only including contact information for the university’s disability and/or accessibility services), with the implication that the syllabus is an inherently successful object, and that failures associated with the syllabus are exclusively the failures of students. I use the terms “success” and “failure” here not to imply that they are associated with an inherent value, but instead to gesture at how objects perform in relationships. A hammer can fail by being too heavy for its user, but this failure is a function of the relationship between two bodies and not an inherent quality of the hammer or its user.

Shifting the idea of “failure” to the object in use, rather than its user, is an attempt to reverse longstanding narratives about disabled students and their relationships with both

a course and its instructor, but I should be clear: there is no syllabus that does not, at some point, fail when it comes to disability and accessibility.

The writing of a syllabus automatically participates in a discourse of normativity. In assigning course readings, homework, exams, etc., the syllabus speaks to and constructs an ideal student for whom the syllabus is appropriate. To paraphrase the story of Goldilocks, the syllabus is not too big, not too small—just right. In the most popular telling of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, a girl enters the family home of three bears, each of whom is associated with objects fashioned just to their liking: porridge at different temperatures, chairs of different sizes, and beds with different surfaces. The girl uses each of the objects, declaring the ones she dislikes to be too hot, too big, too soft, and so on, while the objects she likes are “just right.” The obvious implication of the story is that things themselves do not fail – the failure is in the relationship between objects and bodies. Similarly, the discomfort Goldilocks feels with the majority of the objects in the bears’ house is not an indication of a failed body, but instead a reflection of the way that objects become accessible through their accessing. In other words: a syllabus is no more essentially accessible than a hammer is essentially wieldable or a bed is essentially comfortable. I am emphasizing this, despite its obviousness, because it is so rarely made obvious in the classroom, where instructors provide a single document to classrooms full of people with the expectation that, perhaps with a few exceptions (we do have that disability section of the syllabus after all), students, in general, will access it with ease. This positioning of the disabled student or the student who requests accommodations as exceptional furthers the common notion that disability and accessibility are the exclusive concerns of disabled people and people seeking accommodations. As Taylor writes: “The public remains unconvinced that our struggle is actually theirs as well.” Taylor is emphasizing the ways in which accommodations fought for by disabled people are inevitably used by people who do not self-identify as disabled: “advocates for the disabled are *de facto* fighting for the rights of the elderly, and many of the services they are demanding will help their able-bodied counterparts as well.” Gary Karp discusses the overlap in use of services intended for disabled people through the framework of the “curb cut effect,” saying, “When you design well for disability, you design well for everybody else.”<sup>7</sup> This is a truism that deserves some caveats (in addition to some serious consideration of why proof that accommodations help able-bodied people is proof that accommodations are worthwhile). A term associated with the curb cut effect is “universal design,” coined by disabled architect Ronald Mace, which aims to enable usage by the greatest number of people possible. This notion of universal design, or that designing well for disability means designing well for everybody, begins with the assumption that there can be a single object or building that is accessible to everyone. I argue, while holding onto the idea that disability accommodations benefit everyone, that accessibility is often experienced in contradictions: what makes a space accessible to one person can make it inaccessible to another. To reiterate: accessibility is not an inherent quality of an object or environment, but a function of relationships.

I am arguing for an approach to pedagogy that does not assume that “disability” and “accessibility” are fixed targets or mere addendums to an established course of action with which most students are expected to feel comfortable, and that does not demand proof of need, where instructors and medical professionals act together as gatekeepers.



In short: a classroom that only attends to disability and accessibility when prompted by individual students is one that treats disability and accessibility as an individualized concern with no relation to the broader framework of oppression; and a classroom that asks for proof of need before considering accommodations is one that perpetuates a dangerous ignorance about access to healthcare and the treatment of disability in professional medicine, especially as it intersects with other systems of marginalization.

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<sup>1</sup> Indira Allegra, *Documenting Disability*, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9s9b5OJF6T8>.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Culatta and Linda H. Leeper, "The Differential Diagnosis of Disfluency," *National Student Speech Language Hearing Association Journal* 17, no. 59-64 (1989-1990): 59-64, 62.

<sup>3</sup> A statistic echoed in that women are three times more likely than men to have PTSD. B. Lee Peterlin, Satnam S. Nijjar and Gretchen E. Tietjen, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Migraine: Epidemiology, Sex Differences, and Potential Mechanisms," *Headache* 51, no. 6 (2011): 860-868.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly M. Hoffman, Sophie Trawalter, Jordan R. Axt, and M. Norman Oliver, "Racial Bias in Pain Assessment and Treatment Recommendations, and False Beliefs About Biological Differences Between Blacks and Whites," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 113, no. 16 (2016): 4296-301.

<sup>5</sup> Sunaura Taylor, "The Right Not to Work," *Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* (March 2004) <<https://monthlyreview.org/2004/03/01/the-right-not-to-work-power-and-disability/>>.

<sup>6</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 48-49.

<sup>7</sup> Gary Karp, "On the Curb Cut Effect" (October 2011), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuIkFRZKfCU>.

# Is “Intersection” Just a Word We Utter? A Radical Call for Intersectional Veganism

**Tanya Loughead**

It is certainly true that 2018 saw many movements “like #MeToo, Time’s up, #NoDAPL, #TakeAKnee, and #BlackLivesMatter” and that these “have shifted debates about gender and racism out of the violently maintained shadows into international visibility.”<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, academics have for around 30 years been talking about “intersectionality” – a term that Kimberlé Crenshaw coined in 1989, but a way of living and thinking that has existed in some form, probably in all cultures. If you are black and a woman, you already have some experiential understanding of how both race and gender have affected your life without necessarily knowing the academic terminology. The same is true if you are working class and a woman, or queer and disabled, and so forth. Many intellectuals have indicated problems with the atomism and spatial metaphor that the word “intersection” includes.<sup>2</sup> Let’s take a generous and more broad view to suggest intersectionality is a theory that demands that we pay attention, think about, and fight not only to one type of oppression, but to recognize there are many. We must also understand that various oppressions and power relations shape our identities, rather than being qualifiers “tacked on” to an already established autonomous human being. One of my own favorite pieces of work that deals with multiple oppressions and how they are foundational is Angela Davis’s book *Women, Race, and Class*.

Within the contemporary Left, there are some stubborn Marxists and quite a few stubborn centrists too, who believe – *despite all evidence to the contrary*—that the totality of worldly oppressions and injustices can be reduced to economic class. Thus, they join with the right wing in using the phrase “identity politics” for anything that engages injustices other than those effecting white, straight, cis, normatively-abled, Christian men. But other than these people, the thinking Left knows that the world’s problems are varied, complex and cannot be fought with one-dimensionality. The Left has been won over to intersectionality. Or so we think.

Here’s the conundrum: While there are attempts at intersectional thinking and theorizing, our activism remains – for the most part -- *single-issue focused*. In the abstract realm, we speak about intersectionality as a goal, but our concrete movements are not yet intersectional enough. People join the Black Lives Matter movement or they post about #MeToo, but too often we do not bring up other issues and types of oppression within the circle of that particular movement. Sometimes, we are even shamed for doing so.



General Idea, “Nazi Milk” (1979–90), collection du Fonds Regional d’Art Contemporain Languedoc-Roussillon (© and courtesy General Images FRAC Languedoc Roussillon)

A person who brings up class in the midst of a queer rally, who brings up feminism at an environmentalist rally, or who brings up animal justice at a socialist meeting – well, they are often thought to be *rude*. Or worse, accused of “derailing” the cause.

There are growing exceptions to this; I mention only a few contemporary examples within my own immediate experience. (1) The Women’s March in the USA has indeed taken up the issues of racism, heterosexism, ableism, the rights of sex workers, and justice for trans people.<sup>3</sup> (2) Within Black Lives Matter, at the beginning there was a major focus on Black men being shot by police. Then, many women began speaking out about that bias and started writing and speaking about the deaths of Black women and initiated #SayHerName.<sup>4</sup> (3) In my home city of Buffalo, New York, a queer research collective is working on understanding the deep relationships between pets and LGBTQ persons, and are researching themes such as “people organizing to care for pets of ill comrades during

AIDS crisis and re-home them when their owners died,” and “pets becoming emotional support animals who help their humans deal with daily ins and outs of historical trauma.”

<sup>5</sup> In terms of intellectual projects, there are numerous, but I note a few of my favorite theorists here: Carol Adams, the author of many works and projects that theorize the relations between feminism and veganism including her 1990 groundbreaking work *The Sexual Politics of Meat* and more recently *Protest Kitchen*; Christopher Sebastian, who runs the website *Striving with Systems* that routinely discusses racial, queer, economic, and animal justice; and Vasile Stanescu, a vegan intellectual who’s most recent project discusses “the use of milk and other animal-derived products as symbols of masculinity and racial purity.”<sup>6</sup>

Related to Stanescu’s theme, check out “Wholesome Taboo” by Sarah E. K. Smith; it includes General Idea’s “Nazi Milk” (see lead photo).<sup>7</sup> Here we see a juxtaposition of ‘wholesome values’ that people generally associate with milk with whiteness/blondness, along with the disturbing nod toward fascism.

All activists should be intersectional for both ethical and consistency reasons. Let’s think in the most basic way about *what a movement does*: a movement calls on the *un-persuaded*, the *comfortable*, and the *un-radicalized* to care about an issue and to provoke a change. An activist within the movement is demanding attention be paid to their call for liberation. This is as it should be. But it should also mean that this same activist can recognize and respond in kind to other calls for liberation. For how can you expect others to listen to *your* plea of liberation if you do not listen to *theirs*? A closed person cannot reasonably expect openness from others. It is here that I think all activists ought to be open to listening to all calls for liberation from oppressed groups. Queer activists ought to be open to the call for liberation from Black folks. And vice versa. And poor folks ought to be open to the call for liberation from trans folks. And vice versa.

And.

As activists we ought to also be open to the call for animal liberation. People who fight against oppression ought to be vegan, or at the very least, must be *open to listening with an open mind* to the arguments in favor of veganism.

The idea that the human body requires dairy/eggs/meat in order to be healthy has been the propaganda of large lobbying organizations representing those agricultural interests. The nutritional data shows otherwise. For instance, the Canadian government recently took all animal products off of its nutritional guide as being “required” for optimal health. And once we understand that eating animal products is “optional” rather than required, we have to ask ourselves: why are we harming, imprisoning and killing animals for merely our own taste preferences? And why are we doing it when we know it’s a major cause of global warming? And the over-use of water and land resources too?

Effects are intersectional. Global warming has been exacerbated by speciesism (the belief that another being’s interests don’t matter *simply because* they are from a different species – the meat and dairy industry has had a huge impact on global warming) and global warming will affect the poor in much more devastating ways than the rich. When we go vegan, we are not only fighting speciesism, we are also fighting economic and environmental injustices. We are also fighting sexism within speciesism because humans take advantage of female animal bodies more than male bodies. We use female animal bodies as *a means to our own ends*. We repeatedly get them pregnant (and impregnate them with-

out their consent) so that we can steal their milk, we force them to lay eggs more than they normally would so that we can take their eggs. Racism and speciesism intersect too: many governmental agricultural departments have stated that dairy and meat are necessary to a healthy diet. Of course, we all know now that they aren't: contrary to the propaganda, dairy is not necessary in order to have strong bones and meat is not necessary to have a protein-rich diet. Yet, because the ideology of many cultures has gone against the science of this, millions of people consume dairy believing that we must do so in order to have a "well balanced" diet. Meanwhile, it is estimated that about 75% of African American, 70% of Latinx/Hispanic, and 80% Indigenous North Americans are lactose intolerant.<sup>8</sup> It makes no rational sense to think that the breast milk of another species would be nutritionally necessary for a completely different species. Yet many people believe this, and in the cases of lactose-intolerant persons, believe it *despite what their own bodies are telling them*. Within the context of the USA -- a government with a brutal history of racism that is still run *by* majority white men and *for* white men's interests -- continues to subsidize the dairy industry, and continues to spread the propaganda that dairy is necessary to be healthy. Yet, this directly harms the bodies of around 50% of the American population, many of whom are people of color. These are just a few ways in which -- within the concrete world -- we cannot escape injustice being intersectional. Our activism should be intersectional because the effects of injustice definitely are.

But when vegans engage in activism, they don't usually bring up issues of race, class and sex. They should. And when anti-racists engage in activism they should also call attention to issues of sexism, classism, and speciesism. When feminists and queer activist engage in racism they should also call attention to issues of class, race, and species. Anti-capitalist activists are particularly bad at being intersectional in my experience -- from the sexism of "Bernie Bros" to widely accepting the derogatory phrase "identity politics," to uttering the blanket statement, "well, there is no ethical consumption under capitalism." So, what, then all consumption is equally bad and therefore, no careful ethical decisions need be made? GTFO.

It is high time that intersectional approaches be taken in our theories and in our praxis, as artists, as writers, and -- most importantly -- as *human bodies in the world*, where bodies and the acts they carry out affect other bodies in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> The original call for this ArtLeaks Gazette stated: "While 2017 has been celebrated as the year of women, queer and trans people, 2018 has witnessed the devastating rise and legitimization of a virulent right-wing backlash around the world. Championing the role of collective whistleblowers, movements like #MeToo, Time's up, #NoDAPL, #TakeAKnee, and #BlackLivesMatter, have shifted debates about gender and racism out of the violently maintained shadows into international visibility, expanding and negotiating questions of civil courage, testimony, and solidarity. Formulating and testing strategies to fight against the culture of harassment, toxic masculinity, and racism ingrained in our societies, empowerment movements increasingly come up against right-wing conservatism and left-wing patriarchal models that perpetuate inequalities and violence pervasive within institutions, the private sphere, and beyond. ArtLeaks Gazette #5 calls for contributions that analyze concrete practices and campaigns, and which engage theoretically and intersectionally with relevant issues related to queer, feminist, racial, and economic justice."

<sup>2</sup> David McNally wrote on this topic in the book *Social Reproduction Theory*, edited by Tithi Bhattacharya.

<sup>3</sup> The official platform includes immigration rights, disability rights, environmental justice and more.  
<https://womensmarch.com/mission-and-principles/>

<sup>4</sup> “A growing number of Black Lives Matter activists—including the women behind the original hashtag—have been refocusing attention on how police brutality impacts black women and others on the margins of today’s national conversation about race, such as poor, elderly, gay, and trans people.”

<https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/women-black-lives-matter-interview-marcia-chatelain>

<sup>5</sup> Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project, “Pets and their Queers,” with more information at the facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/BuffaloNiagaraLGBTQhistory/>

<sup>6</sup> From Stanescu: “White Power Milk’: Milk, Dietary Racism, and the ‘Alt-Right’ Abstract This article analyzes why milk has been chosen as a symbol of racial purity by the ‘alt-right’. Specifically, this article argues the alt-right’s current use of claims about milk, lactose tolerance, race, and masculinity can be connected to similar arguments originally made during the 19th century against colonized populations and immigration groups ... this article documents a pattern between an earlier time in which anxiety over falling wages and increasing domestic immigration focused on issues of meat and dairy consumption and current anxiety over stagnant wages, fears over immigration, and a reassertion of the consumption of milk and dairy as a proxy reassertion of white privilege See:

<https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1373&context=asj&fbclid=IwAR3YzsgclAOJpBLxf-u3GE-1xYNWislwsXET5wpP2vb7akUr9NGxjR8KL0M>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.aci-iac.ca/spotlight/wholesome-taboo-by-sarah-ek-smith> Thanks to Jasmina Tumbas for calling my attention to this.

<sup>8</sup> For full statistics, see several articles on the theme in the *Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

# Guns on Campus and the State of Georgia

**Magdalena Zurawski**

I was asked to contribute to this issue because of my activism in Georgia state politics, a recent and unexpected turn in my poetry career prompted by the Georgia GOP's ultimately successful years-long effort to legalize the concealed carry of firearms in my creative writing classroom and elsewhere on Georgia college campuses. My civic engagement at the state-level began successfully at first. In the spring of 2016 during my third year as an English professor I worked feverishly with a small group of dedicated university faculty and staff to organize locally the general opposition to HB 280, the guns on campus bill. The bill was sitting on Governor Deal's desk awaiting either a signature into law or a veto. For the better part of the spring of 2016, we campaigned ardently for the veto.

The fight was personal for me. During my student years the literature classroom had been a space of freedom, a line of flight (to use an academic cliché), and this law threatened the possibility of my classroom ever serving as such for my students, whose educations were often already compromised by their efforts to manage the financial burdens of school. Our grassroots group had held several rallies against the law that had gotten us on the news and we had run a day-long twitter storm in which hundreds of students, faculty, and community members had tweeted the governor images of themselves holding signs demanding a veto. The twitter storm had gotten us on all the local news shows and a fair amount of national press, mostly because local hero Michael Stipe of R.E.M. had given us a photo of himself to tweet.<sup>1</sup> That May Governor Deal did in fact veto the law. But the following year in the spring of 2017, the NRA was holding its annual convention in Atlanta. Trump, who had only been president for a few months, was scheduled to speak. Governor Deal serving out the final months of his last term signed the bill into law, caving to the gun lobby and ensuring that the GOP's nominee for his job in 2018 would be seen as a pro-gun, pro-Trump candidate.

What I want to try to articulate here is what I learned about the political culture surrounding guns in Georgia as I fought the gun law in 2016 and later as I volunteered for candidates for state office who promised to repeal guns on campus. It appears obvious to me now, especially after the gubernatorial race between Brian Kemp and Stacey Abrams, that the politics of guns is inextricable from racial politics in Georgia and given the recent rise in right-wing extremism this is likely true in the country as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Brian Kemp became nationally known for two things: pointing a gun at a teenager in one of his campaign ads,<sup>3</sup> and for refusing to recuse himself from his position as Secretary of State.<sup>4</sup> Like Trump, Kemp bucked long-respected norms and by doing so he ensured he would be supervising his own election. Stacey Abrams, the Georgia house minority leader, who would have been the first black woman governor in the entire country, won

the Democratic nomination handily. I was an avid Abrams supporter because she promised to repeal guns on campus. I had met with her over the issue in 2017 at the beginning of her last session as minority leader, shortly before she declared that she would run for governor. In that meeting she told me that if the bill passed, the only way to repeal it would be to turn Georgia blue. So in 2018 I volunteered for several campaigns working towards that end.



If you followed the 2018 elections in Georgia at all, you know that part of Kemp’s victory strategy was to disenfranchise black and other voters of color. Abrams had made clear that to win she wouldn’t be attempting to woo moderate GOP voters to the Democratic ticket, the usual strategy of GA Democrats that has never been successful. Instead, she would run a campaign to inspire inactive voters, namely millennials and people of color, to turn up at the polls. Kemp used his position as Secretary of State to make voting for people of color as difficult as possible. On election day for instance wait times in majority black counties near Atlanta reached four hours. A *Time* article posted online the day after the election elaborates on some of Kemp’s tactics: Much of voters’ and advocates ire has been aimed at Kemp. In early October, he faced a lawsuit from civil rights groups for blocking the registrations of thousands of minority voters. Just last week, a judge ruled that new citizens whose voter registrations were flagged<sup>5</sup> under the state’s “exact match” law should be permitted to vote. Some 3,000 voters could be affected by that decision. And on Tuesday, a group of five Georgians filed a last minute lawsuit<sup>6</sup> to keep him from engaging in counting votes or certifying the results of the midterm election. The suit cites Kemp’s recent unfounded allegation that Democrats had attempted to hack the state’s election system as well as the other challenges he has faced throughout the election.<sup>7</sup>

What was happening in our state was obvious, even for a newcomer like me. The white conservative political machine that had ruled here seemingly from the beginning of time worked tirelessly to ensure it wouldn’t lose to a black woman. Demographic studies often cited in the press<sup>8</sup> have Georgia on schedule to turn blue within the next few years. To stave off this threat coming early, Kemp used voter suppression strategies that harkened



back to Jim Crow and the civil rights era, a luxury afforded him by the Supreme Court's recent repeal of the Voting Rights Act. The battle for Georgia between Kemp and Abrams is absolutely part of a much longer fraught and violent history of the south, which several stories emerging around the election made clear. *Newsweek*, *The Daily Beast* and *The Root*, for example, all reported on a Georgia Militia that had posted a recruitment video online in which images of members shooting semi-automatic rifles were spliced against images of Abrams: In mid-September, a Georgia based-group calling itself the "III% Security Force" spliced footage of members shooting guns with pictures of Abrams, who would be the first black female governor in the nation if she defeats Brian Kemp, the Republican secretary of state. "Declaration of war against all domestic enemies," the video says.<sup>9</sup>



An article in the Atlanta Journal Constitution from September 27, 2016 reports that this same group served as “the camouflaged and heavily armed security for a series of pro-Confederate flag protests at Stone Mountain” shortly after a white supremacist murdered nine people at a black church in Charleston.<sup>10</sup> The group also trained extensively during the 2016 presidential campaign, fearing the election of Hillary Clinton, who they believed would take its guns. The New York Times argues that such militias had been emboldened and inspired by Trump’s racial politics: “The Georgia Security Force is one of scores of extremist militias nationwide that have rallied around the presidential campaign of Donald J. Trump, heartened by his harsh attacks on immigrants, Muslims and Syrian refugees.”<sup>11</sup> Of course, such militias wouldn’t be nearly as lethal, if it wasn’t so easy to purchase the high capacity semi-automatic rifles they carry. In Georgia, it’s particularly easy to get one of these. It would take me about 30 minutes to get back home with one, if I left the house now. To put it crassly: Georgia’s gun laws have made it so that within 100 miles of my home and my campus white nationalist militia men are training in the woods for a war. They see people of color and gun control laws as their enemies.

Though Brian Kemp's alignment with Trump and his support for weak gun laws made him the natural choice of right-wing extremists in the state, it wasn't until shortly before the 2018 election that Kemp associated himself publicly with a white nationalist. In early October a picture appeared online of Kemp and known White Nationalist James Stachowiak.<sup>12</sup> I was particularly shocked when I saw the image on twitter because a week or so earlier a video was circulating on social media in which James Stachowiak called for people to shoot black women and children in the back. In the video he's carrying an assault style rifle and wearing a t-shirt that proclaims black lives don't matter. I hadn't known that Stachowiak was a Georgian, and now that I did, it seemed possible that - given Stacey Abrams was a black woman - our gubernatorial race could end in violence. I learned that earlier in the campaign Stachowiak had verbally attacked an Abrams campaign worker at an Abrams event. The Kemp campaign claimed they didn't know Stachowiak and that the campaign doesn't vet everyone who asks to take a photo with him. Even if this is true, it's hard to believe that Kemp and his people didn't know the campaign would attract the support of people like Stachowiak, given Kemp's embrace of guns, Trump, and voter suppression. Anyone looking at the images of Stachowiak can't miss his penchant for Trump hats, racist t-shirts, and big guns. In the photo with Kemp, Stachowiak is wearing a very large-font anti-Muslim t-shirt. I presume Kemp can read. He obviously had no problem appearing in a photo with Stachowiak's message, even if he didn't know the extent of Stachowiak's political extremism.



So what does all of this have to do with guns being allowed in my classroom and on Georgia college campuses? Well, it's apparent to me now that the connection between white supremacy and my adopted state's extreme gun laws at least partially motivated the push for guns on campus. One particularly elucidating moment for me occurred at the state house one afternoon when some graduate students and I had come to Atlanta to

testify against the law. Out of maybe a hundred people in the room, less than ten were there to speak in favor of the law, all of whom were members of an all-white Georgia pro-gun group known to be more extreme than the NRA and to have ties to one of the bill's co-sponsors. In his public statement to the senate committee, one of the members of the group argued that there was historical precedent for a guns on campus law, noting that Georgia permitted guns everywhere two hundred years ago, including in church. This comment immediately and visibly irked one of only two black members on the senate committee who quickly reminded the man that such laws existed in order to control slaves. This was the first time I was forced to consider that Georgia's contemporary gun culture had its roots in slavery, something that the extremists supporting Trump and Kemp later made sickeningly obvious.<sup>13</sup>

On and near campus the evidence of gun culture's roots in white supremacy was less direct, though visible for anyone looking. For instance, I heard a local NAACP leader arguing against the law on the radio as I drove to campus one morning. He noted that statistically speaking, black students were most likely to be injured or killed as soon as a gun was present in any given situation. Around the same time, I had also heard rumors that members of a fraternity infamous for its annual Old South ball (up until 2010, incidentally, the fraternity members were allowed to wear Confederate uniforms to the ball) already kept AR-15s illegally in their frat house. As an educator in America, where so many mass shootings take place in schools, such rumors stay in your memory. So, when I heard that a spontaneous student protest against Trump on election night ended with student chants of "Black Lives Matter" being answered with student counter-protestors shouting, "No they don't," I imagined just how easily gun violence could enter the situation. And that scenario took place before we were legally allowed to have guns on campus. As we all know, the divisions of race politics define the Trump era. Our state lawmakers in Georgia have made sure to throw guns into the mix for our students. As an educator I'm expected to look out for the safety and well-being of my students. I deeply resent the politicians here that have had other priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.redandblack.com/uganews/r-e-m-band-member-former-uga-student-michael-stipe/article\\_17ef34ea-0c9a-11e6-8f8d-5f6aad756de.html](https://www.redandblack.com/uganews/r-e-m-band-member-former-uga-student-michael-stipe/article_17ef34ea-0c9a-11e6-8f8d-5f6aad756de.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/09/12/study-shows-two-thirds-us-terrorism-tied-right-wing-extremists>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2018/05/08/608510024/after-parkland-some-republicans-try-to-outdo-each-other-on-gun-rights-in-primari>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.atlantamagazine.com/news-culture-articles/the-complicated-business-of-running-for-governor-when-youre-the-states-elections-chief/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/judge-rules-against-kemp-over-voters-misidentified-noncitizens-n930536>

<sup>6</sup> <https://protectdemocracy.org/brown-v-kemp/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://time.com/5446916/georgia-elections-voting-problems/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gpbnews.org/post/how-georgias-changing-demographics-could-influence-2018-elections>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.thedailybeast.com/militia-threatens-enemies-like-stacey-abrams-in-violent-video>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ajc.com/blog/investigations/npr-georgia-trump-supporter-considers-joining-militia/S7vOe8N7iYvSFO824pn2ij/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/05/us/a-militia-gets-battle-ready-for-a-gun-grabbing-clinton-presidency.html>

<sup>12</sup>[https://www.cair.com/cair\\_georgia\\_criticizes\\_brian\\_kemp\\_s\\_refusal\\_to\\_disavow\\_anti\\_muslim\\_extremist\\_and\\_meet\\_with\\_georgia\\_muslims](https://www.cair.com/cair_georgia_criticizes_brian_kemp_s_refusal_to_disavow_anti_muslim_extremist_and_meet_with_georgia_muslims)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/the-origins-of-public-carry-jurisprudence-in-the-slave-south/407809/>

# Life during wartime

**Mima Simić**

The American road rolls away from you like a never-ending reel of undeveloped film, exposing its black back to the sun, simmering combustion. I drive into a town called Page, Arizona, it is Sunday and no café under the great white sun is open, it's July. The air is dry; the heat coaxes the water out of the body slowly, sweetly. In a park behind Walmart, I meet a guy called Michael, it's his adopted American name – his last name King. A king, really, he laughs, as the wind blows his black native hair into his face, into the lavalier, the sound crackles in my ear. Michael is a two-spirit. It's the name for the people who, I have read, embody both the female and the male. They cross the gender border, the article said; and I can't help imagining these wild spirits, barefoot, dancing on the dusty border – in a dress if they were born a boy; or with war paint on their faces if they were born a girl. But in Navajo, they don't say *two-spirit*, they say *nádleehí*. Split into two winged words, a whole universe of *nádleehí* flies away. Because I don't speak the Navajo I don't understand what Michael means when he says – *my people, we have four genders*. Or when he talks about the sacredness of *nádleehí* before the Navajo were offered a new language. I can't imagine the borders, nor the space of *nádleehí*. I can only see *two-spirits* dancing through the gauze-thin summer dress, a reflection in a well; just as I see Michael shrunk and framed in the LCD display of my camcorder.

We don't have *nádleehí* back home, across the continent and the ocean. Maybe at home, too, there once had been a language, before the land rumbled and slid from under us, a language that sounded as melodious, as soft. Maybe in my language, too, there once was poetry in the colorful dress on a man, a sanctity in a pair of trousers on a woman at Sunday Mass, to be stripped off her by her wife after it. Or maybe there was indeed far more than that, a whole tree of words to pick from, the words that tasted like honey and bloomed in your mouth.

Michael lives on a reservation, about two hundred people there, no running water. It's hard to find a boyfriend there, familiarity breeds indifference, that's why every couple of months he goes to Vegas for the weekend, the clink-clank and the jingle-jangle – he likes the crazy sounds and the crazy nights and the clubs and the bars, away from the silence of the reservation, the dry land, brothers and sisters, dry blood. On the reservation, there are no jobs, so in tourist season he comes to Page and works as a tour guide at the Lake Powell Navajo tribal park, guiding extra-large American tourists and medium-sized European ones through the desert canyons, over the bluest of waters that a mobile phone has ever seen.

Do you ever get people from Croatia? I ask.

I find it hard to imagine them making their way over here, 10 000 kilometers of air, road and water, to come to this little tourist office not that far from Walmart in Page, Arizona, and have a Navajo two-spirit take them by the hand, a guy with a string of beads around his neck, and bracelets and necklaces that jingle-jangle, and a name that he brushes off like a mosquito bite.

The wind is now picking up and it's impossible to keep filming. I turn the camera off, and now we are looking at each other, we can finally talk, man to man, woman to woman, whatever language permits us to be at this particular moment, at this particular place, behind Walmart in Page, Arizona.

How's the road been treating you so far? he asks.

I love your land, I say.

As I say it, I shrink with embarrassment. In the space between the words, the land was taken, sprayed away with chickenpox, burnt with scarlet fever, blown off from under his feet with whooping cough. And then it was all adapted for widescreen, in all the colors of the rainbow and brighter than the pearls of Mardi Gras.

I'm sorry. That's not what I meant. That's not how I meant it.

What do you mean? he asks.

Sometimes I sleep at Walmart parking lots. The only land they have not so far driven me away from. A police guy somewhere in South Carolina woke me up at 3 a.m., he said I couldn't be sleeping in the car outside of a school, someone might think I was a terrorist. This was in a town the size of a teacup, man. He told me I couldn't stay there so I drove on, the middle of the night, through a string of dead towns, I drove to the first Walmart and then I roamed through the aisles for water and I brushed my teeth in their bathroom and I changed my underwear there too, and together with all the bums of Somewhere, South Carolina, I was left alone in the parking lot, the bright buzz of the floodlights lulling me to sleep.

You can't not love this land.

How long have you been driving around? he asks. Do you miss home? How is it there?

I don't know what to tell him about how it is, or what it is.

You know, I say, last summer I was in my hometown, on the coast (the sea more beautiful than Lake Powell, I'm telling you), and in my old room, I found my old diary. I've been keeping it since always, and this one was written during wartime. I was sixteen then, and you were probably just about to leave your first footsteps in the sands of the reservation. I started reading the notebook, to see what it was like – to see what a teenage two-spirit, a Croatian own *nádlehí* felt like, was like, as the shower of shells rained upon their town, as they listened to the flop-flop, and the whistle and the boom of the rockets. But in the notebooks there was nothing. Nothing. Days were translated into book titles, film titles, into petrified quotes, a page-sized life, framed by a letterbox. As if all along a fictional life was happening alongside the factual one, and only the former was worth noting. By the way, we had no running water then either, but I could hardly prove it to you now. We lined up with buckets, out in the streets by water trucks, to get water for cooking and showering. During power cuts, we read by candlelight and my mother once burnt the apartment down having fallen asleep with a candle lit. But for all I know it may have only been her dim memory or a note in someone else's diary.

*I guess war is like living on a reservation. You get used to the strangest things, you don't even stop to make a note.* (Either of us could have said this, may have said it – there is no way of telling, the camera was off.) It flashes upon you only when you speak to a stranger, a microphone.

As the wind dies down he takes the lavalier off his shirt and pins it to mine. So, man to man, stranger to stranger. A European tripper to a live First Nation audience of one.

About home.

Michael, it is the most beautiful land, it's the Ava Gardner of European countries (you know, pretty much all white), it's the jewel and the pearl and the clitoris of the body of Europe, it is all the aesthetic and sexual and ethereal and the cypress smell in gardens and

cemeteries, and the scream of the crickets and the froth of the waters and the slow death of independent journalism and the swastikas on the facades and the clean waters of streams and rivers and waterfalls and cleaning the streets with drinking water and cleaning the language with holy water and the clean smiling faces of teenagers outside of churches collecting signatures to ban gay marriage, and mighty (but also mediocre) literature and marvelous (and also invisible) poetry; no money no food for stories and poems or the starving cats on the islands and the fat cats in the cities, well we have only one city, really; five Croatias can snugly fit into one Arizona, one-hundred-seventy-four Croatias into the one USA. But so beautiful, Michael, so beautiful. Lake Powell, Monument Valley, Grand Canyon – all of the forests, rivers and lands that were bought for peanuts and stolen by chickenpox, they have nothing on it, they've got nothing on Croatia. You're such a nice guy, Michael. You speak softly and gently, and in the few sweltering hours that I've known you, you never once said a bad word – even when you spoke of the massacres and the tears and the exiles and the poverty and segregation, you never swore – and I know it wasn't because of the camera, for the camera was off. But, this is the truth, Michael. When you ask me about my home, I have to swear – both my spirits are raging and spewing curses, for this fucked up place has been a mental sewer for years, decades, the war was just the beginning. A nationalist siege, a clerical occupation, the land sold off for faux pearls, to new millionaires, factories shut down, murderers for leaders, thieves for ministers. The old withering away and the young fleeing to Ireland to work at restaurants and garages even though they know no word of English. The language we are left here with is army green, and black and blue from the punches and the cusses; the dirty Marxist cunts and the cocksucking motherfucking partisans and the goddamned atheists and filthy faggots and degenerate dykes. With a rusty piece of the homeland in their mouths, fat old tongues keep bleeding communism – even though, you see, the army and the communism have been dead for decades. (And how is one to speak about life in a dead language?) But, hey, look at me ramble on; what would a young Indian guy like you know about communism anyway? Same as a young Croatian guy, probably. Or a girl. (Or a two-spirit, really).

We are lost, Michael, I'm telling you. For all the technicolor beauty we have, for all the movie productions that are pouring in to shoot here, for all the millions of tourists and all the road tolls of all the toll roads in the land, we are lost. Yes, whatever *we* there ever was, is lost. The pieces of land we can still hold on to, our own reservations, are stories: in the cafés, we read books, in the movie theaters (some still survive outside of shopping malls) we watch and listen and hang out and talk, and take notes for our diaries. Our land is made of air, our days are made of fiction, much like it was during the war, because, Michael, the war here has never really ended.

## Contributors

**Alyssa Schwendener** is a Ph.D. student in visual studies at SUNY Buffalo. Her MA thesis, "The Most Fantastic Lie: The Invention of Lesbian Histories" (2016), analyzes the reconstruction of lesbian/queer histories in the absence of traditional evidence. Her research is primarily concerned with demonstrating the unstable foundations of historical truths.

**Amanda Fayant** is a Cree/Métis artist and University of Tromsø Master student based in Trondheim, Norway. Amanda's research focuses on developing Indigenous research methodologies as well as decolonizing cultural knowledge production through Indigenous feminist leadership at the community level. Amanda has published in forskning.no about volunteer network and institution building in Marka Sami area.

**Ana Grujić** is a scholar-activist. She is a founding member of the Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project, one of the primary co-creators of the "Black in Time" exhibit, and is currently working on a collaborative documentary film about Buffalo's ballroom scene and the history of queer black performance.

**Andrew Culp** is Professor of Media History and Theory in the MA Aesthetics and Politics program and the School of Critical Studies at the California Institute of Technology.

**Anna Ehrenstein** works as an interdisciplinary artist with an emphasis on research and mediation - for example as part of the 10th Berlin Biennale of Contemporary Art or the Critical Academy Dublin. In 2017 she published "Tales of Lipstick and Virtue" with Editions Bessard and is currently continuing her artistic research on embodied cultural manifestations.

**Ashon Crawley**, an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and African American and African Studies at the University of Virginia, is author of *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (Fordham University Press), an investigation of aesthetics and performance as modes of collective, social imagination and, forthcoming with Duke University Press, *The Lonely Letters*, an exploration of the interrelation of blackness, mysticism, quantum mechanics and love.

**Betty Yu** is a multimedia artist, filmmaker, educator, and activist born and raised in NYC to Chinese immigrant parents. She is the co-founder of Chinatown Art Brigade. Yu's documentary "Resilience" about her garment worker mother fighting sweatshop conditions screened at national and international film festivals. She worked with housing activists and artists to co-create "People's Monument to Anti-Displacement Organizing" that was featured in Agitprop! at the Brooklyn Museum.

**Boineelo Cassandra Mouse** is a Multimedia design and production graduate and a game design student from Cape Town, South Africa. Her artwork addresses social issues such as feminism, violence, equality, xenophobia, gender inequality, human abuse, discrimination, politics, and depression.



**Bridget Daria O'Neill** is a socialist organizer and writer in Buffalo, New York. She is involved in a variety of political projects and organizations in her city, including the Buffalo Degenderettes and Queen City Socialists Solidarity Network.

**Chiara Bonfiglioli** is a Lecturer in Gender & Women's Studies at University College Cork, where she coordinates the interdisciplinary Masters in Women's Studies. She received her Ph.D. in Gender Studies from Utrecht University. Her monograph *Women and Industry in the Balkans: The Rise and Fall of the Yugoslav Textile Sector* is forthcoming with I.B. Tauris in 2019.

**Corina L. Apostol** is the curator of the Tallinn Art Hall, Estonia. Previously she was the Andrew W. Mellon Fellow at Creative Time, where she co-edited *Making Another World Possible* (Routledge, 2019). She also co-curated the Creative Time Summit, an annual convening for thinkers, dreamers, and doers working at the intersection of art and politics. Corina serves as a board member and news editor of SHERA, the Society of Historians of Eastern European, Eurasian and Russian Art and Architecture. She is the co-founder of ArtLeaks and Editor-in-Chief of the ArtLeaks Gazette.

**Danai Anagnostou** is an art worker and fledgling film producer. At present, she's conducting a practice-based research on film production culture and the potentiality of its transformation. She has studied Scenography & Costume Design at H.F.T.S.S. and Theater Design at Vakalo College. In 2016, she relocated to Helsinki to attend the Visual Cultures, Curating & Contemporary Art programme at Aalto University.

**Divya Victor** is the author of KITH (Fence Books/ Book Thug) and several other books. She is Assistant Professor of Poetry and Writing at Michigan State University and Editor at *Jacket2*. She is currently at work on a project commissioned by the Press at Colorado College.

**Elena Gorfinkel** is a senior lecturer in Film Studies at King's College London, author of *Lewd Looks: American Sexploitation Cinema in the 1960s* (2017), and co-editor of *Global Cinema Networks* (2018). Most recently, she has guest edited an issue of *Feminist Media Histories* on sex media. She also writes criticism.

**Erika Balsom** is a senior lecturer in Film Studies at King's College London. In addition to academic publications such as the book *After Uniqueness: A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation* (2017), she regularly writes criticism for magazines such as *Artforum*, *Frieze*, and *Sight & Sound*.

**Fred Moten** is a professor in the Department of Performance Studies, Tisch School of the Arts. He is author of *Hughson's Tavern* (Leon Works, 2009); *B. Jenkins* (Duke University Press, 2010); *The Feel Trio* (Letter Machine Editions, 2014), *The Little Edges* (Wesleyan University Press, 2015), *The Service Porch* (Letter Machine Editions, 2016) and *consent not to be a single being* (Duke University Press, 2017, 2018). Moten is also co-author, with Stefano Harney, of *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Minor Compositions/Autonomea, 2013) and, with Wu Tsang, of *Who touched me? (If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want to be Part of Your Revolution)*, 2016).

**Imani Keith Henry** is the Founder and Lead Organizer for Equality for Flatbush (E4F), a people of color-led, multi-national grassroots organization that does anti-police repression, affordable housing and anti-gentrification organizing in the Flatbush, East Flatbush and Brooklyn-wide. In 2014, E4F launched its Brooklyn-wide anti-displacement project BEFORE IT'S GONE // TAKE IT BACK: Documenting Brooklyn - Fighting Gentrification. E4F is also the convening organization of The Brooklyn Anti-gentrification Network (B.A.N)

**Jasmina Tumbas** is an Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art History & Performance Studies in the Department of Global Gender & Sexuality Studies at the University at Buffalo. Tumbas's writing has appeared in academic and art publications, such as *Art-Margins*, *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, *Art and Documentation*, *ASAP Journal*, *Art in America* and *Art Monthly*.

**Joshua Lam** is an Assistant Professor of English at Michigan State University. His writing focuses on race, class, and politics in American literature and culture. His essays have appeared in the *Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures*, *College Literature*, the *Journal of Modern Literature*, and *Callaloo*.

**Judith Goldman** is the author of *Vocoder* (Roof 2001), *DeathStar/Ricochet* (O Books 2006), *l.b.; or, catenaries* (Krupskaya 2011), and *agon* (The Operating System 2017), and is currently at work on \_\_\_\_\_ *Mt. [blank mount]*. She teaches in the Poetics Program at SUNY, Buffalo.

**Kim Bode** is an artist and photographer with a focus on conceptual art, research and archiving. Bode was born 1990 in Germany and currently lives between Athens, Greece and Berlin, Germany. Bode is a student of Fine Art at *UdK Berlin*, member of the *N\*A\*T\*L\*S*-Collective, and supports the queer femme-forward collective *Room4Resistance*.

**LaKisha Michelle Simmons** is Assistant Professor of History and Women's Studies at University of Michigan. She works at the intersection of black feminist theory and gender history. She is the author of *Crescent City Girls: The Lives of Young Black Women in Segregated New Orleans*, working on a co-edited collection called *The Global History of Black Girlhood*, and writing a book about black motherhood. Her essay, "Pull the Sorrow from Between My Legs" in the edited collection *The Lemonade Reader* (Routledge, 2019), explores Beyoncé's *Lemonade* as a meditation on miscarriage.

**Magdalena Zurawski's** newest poetry collection, *The Tiniest Muzzle Sings Songs of Freedom* was released this month from Wave Books. She is also the author of the poetry collection, *Companion Animal* (Litmus 2015) and the novel, *The Bruise* (FC2 2018). She is an Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Georgia.

**Matt Applegate** is an Assistant Professor of English at Molloy College. He specializes in critical theory, digital humanities, and the political economy of media. His book, *Guerilla Theory: Political Concepts, Critical Digital Humanities*, is forthcoming at Northwestern University Press.

**Mickey Harmon** is a graphic designer, marketing specialist, and illustrator. He is currently an Advertising Director for Gurney Becker & Bourne in Allentown, Buffalo's cultural epicenter. He runs a gallery with 5 artists friends in the neighborhood and most recently became a board member with the Allentown Association heading up First Fridays Gallery Walks.

**Mima Simić** is a Croatian writer, film critic, and political activist. She lives between Zagreb and Berlin but is currently cycling across Croatia as part of her political campaign. So at the point of you reading this she may, or may not be alive.

**Mimi Thi Nguyen** is Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her first book called *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages*, focuses on the promise of "giving" freedom concurrent and contingent with waging war (Duke University Press, 2012). Her following project is called *The Promise of Beauty*. She has also published in Signs, Camera Obscura, Women & Performance, positions, Radical History Review, and ArtForum.

**Nitasha Dhillon** is a member of MTL+ Collective, a collaboration that joins research, aesthetics, organizing, and action in its practice. Other members of the collective include Lorena Ambrosio, Kyle Goen, Crystal Hans, Amin Husain, Yates Mckee, Vaimoana Niumeitolu, Aiko Roudette, Andrew Ross, Marz Saffore, and Amy Weng. MTL+ is the facilitator of Decolonize This Place.

**Planningtorock** – aka **Jam Rostron** – is a Bolton-born Berlin-based singer-songwriter, composer, producer, and director. A self-taught, non-binary, working-class musician, they've spent a decade plus queering sound and vision as Planningtorock. *W*, Planningtorock's critically acclaimed 2011 debut on DFA, revealed a visionary and politicised producer. 2014's *All Love's Legal*, released on Rostron's own imprint Human Level with banner-ready slogans ('Patriarchy Over And Out', 'Let's Talk About Gender Baby'), combined pop-oriented music with a political message. In 2018, Planningtorock released their radical fourth album: *Powerhouse*, a kinetic, self-produced record flush with attitude, humour, vulnerability, and swagger. *Powerhouse* is their most personal record yet: emotionally-charged, biographical anthems drawn from Rostron's lived experiences as a non-binary genderqueer artist, experiences around family, identity and music itself.

**Rena Rädle & Vladan Jeremić** are Belgrade-based artists whose research-oriented work comprises drawing, text, video, photography, installation, and intervention in public space. In their collaborative practice, Rena & Vladan explore the relation between art and politics, unveiling the contradictions of today's societies and developing transformative potentials of art in the context of social struggles. Vladan is the co-founder of ArtLeaks and editor of the ArtLeaks Gazette.

**Selma Banich, Nina Gojić, Ena Jurov and Tajana Josimović** are artists and cultural workers struggling to survive capitalism. The publication *How Do Female Artists Live?* is available online at <http://bit.ly/kakoziveumjetnice>.

**Shannon Woodcock** is a white settler historian living on Gunai Kurnai Country, documenting and working against white supremacy. They are the author of *Life is War: Surviving Dictatorship in Communist Albania* (HammerOn Press, 2016).

**Shanté Paradigm Smalls** is an Assistant Professor of Black Literature & Culture in the Department of English at St. John's University. Their book, *Hip Hop Heresies: Queer Aesthetics in New York City*, is forthcoming from NYU Press. See [www.shanteparadigm.com](http://www.shanteparadigm.com) for more of their writing and performance work.

**Susanne Sachsse** is widely known for starring roles in films by Bruce LaBruce, including *The Raspberry Reich* (2004) and *The Misandrists* (2018). Her radio play based on the concert *Original Sin* will premiere in October 2019. She is currently touring in choreographer and dancer Ligia Lewis's *Water Will (A Melody)*.

**Van Tran Nguyen** is a multimedia artist and curator born in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Philosophy of Electronic Art at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Her research is an exploration of the experience of a *Việt Kiều*, which roughly translates to "overseas Vietnamese."

**Tanya Loughead** is a feminist, socialist, vegan, and Professor of Philosophy at Canisius College. Loughead specializes in phenomenology and has published articles on the works of Blanchot, Levinas, Weil, Marcuse, and others. Her book *Critical University* examines the purposes of the university in capitalism.





**ARTLEAKS**

<http://art-leaks.org>