

spring 2018

expressions

east carolina university's minority publication





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Letter from the Editor



When I was 16, I stopped crying. Not entirely, but it was less. Much less. These four years have been steeped in discovery. I learned how far I could be pushed and how hard I could push back. I learned pain. I learned there is no comfort without it. That I feel better around people who have tasted rock bottom and found that it makes the triumph sweeter. (Resilience is an acquired taste.) I could fill books recounting nights spent in dim hallways or bundled in blankets in the dark, whispering secrets and peeling back layers from masks we'd built years ago. All this is to say that there is no rising without first falling. We have spent years searching for parts of ourselves in other people. We have been silenced, ridiculed, blamed, and scapegoated for our race, sex, cultures, and religions. We have prayed in a world that felt godless and searched for humanity in monsters. Still We Rise is the product of these experiences. If you find yourselves in any of these situations, I hope you find comfort in knowing that others share your experience, and like you, are determined to rise.

Summer Tillman
Editor-in-Chief



Introduction

Expressions is ECU'S minority literary arts publication that strives to provide an alternative voice for underrepresented populations. We exist as an outlet to address the experiences, concerns, and perspectives of students who defy the mainstream.

Front and Back Cover Photo By: Alonza Mitchell
Featured on the Front and Back Cover: Pooja Shah

Still We Rise

Gleaning its name from the 1978 poem, “Still I Rise” by civil rights activist Maya Angelou, this year’s theme stands as a testament to the courage, strength and resilience of our community. Through personal stories of pain and triumph, Still We Rise proves that together, we can heal after trauma and prevail in the face of adversity.



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Charlottesville

Claudia Dockery

Sounds of agony and strength filled the
church that day
as they sang no more weeping and wailing.
Perpetually tired of the fight,
the fight to be seen as human not less than.

They remind me of my strength.
They remind me of my resilience.
They remind me that history never wanted
me to succeed.
They remind me that this fight isn't just about me,
but my ancestors and my predecessors.
Just because their president makes them think
that they have the right to terrorize us
doesn't mean that they do.
I keep remembering that we can't go back
to the way it was.
I hear the sadness in my grandparents' voices
because I know they thought it would be better.
I hear the fear in my mother's prayers that
"They will not defeat us."
Just because you wear hoods
doesn't mean we don't see you.



When my mother speaks

Anonymous

When my mother speaks, a snake coils around my neck.

He tucks his head parallel to my chin and says everything
she needs to hear.

You see, the tongue of a snake reassures her that it's ok.

You are the confidant to remind her that her life is going as
she plans,

when really your life is a spiral of indecisive moments matched
with hiccups of depression.

Depression that you press into your chest,

pushing it so deep inside you that no one notices it's there.

The only assurance you have to life is the resolute beating in
your chest,

a rhythmic foundation holding up your heavy heart.

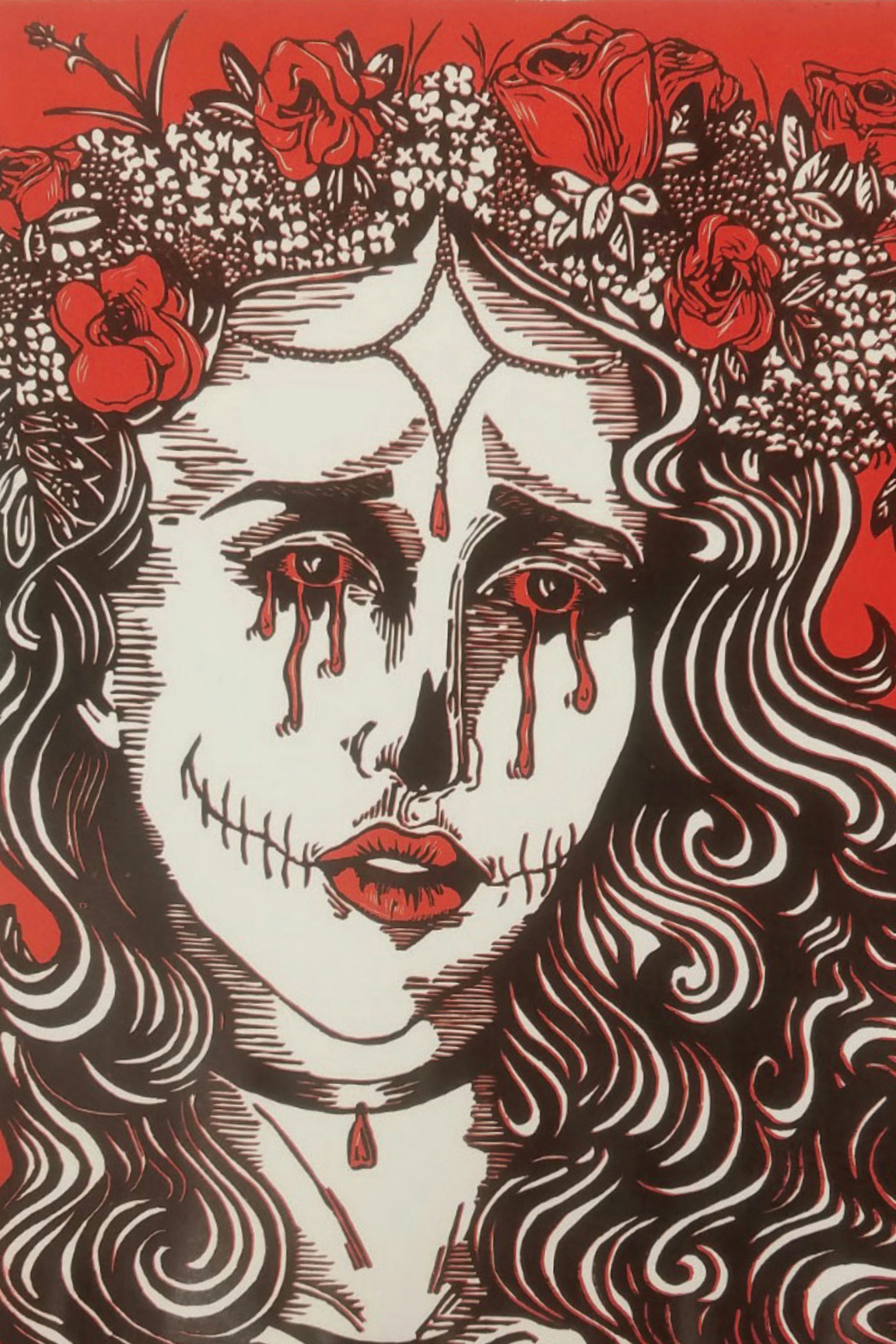
So sure, the snake helps with feeding the reassurances others
beg to hear from you once in a while.

I have the reassurance of new breath and shed tears to patch
up today's sorrows

-M.A.

Photo By Kofi Sackey







I kissed a girl once.

And no, for the record, I'm not a lesbian, or bisexual, or experimenting, or anything of the sort—just completely heterosexual. It was fall; it was high school.

We were at some all-county art event. The staff told us we were having lunch outside. There was a slight breeze in the air. It smelled like someone was burning firewood nearby. I sat next to that girl. We met online and just so happened to go to the same high school. We were friends. She was tall and skinny—super skinny. She had recently dyed her dark brown hair strawberry-blonde and cut it to rest just above her shoulders. Her skin was pale and her cheeks were rosy. She always wore this black XL men's jacket, even though it barely fit her.

We were eating lunch and generally having a good time, laughing with the new people we'd just met, telling jokes, sharing anecdotes, et cetera. I remember dropping something on the ground. I don't remember what it was since that was seven years ago, but it's not really important. When I looked down, that's when I saw it: her pain, her suffering, her sadness. It was all there, displayed as red slashes and scars on her right wrist. I felt my stomach flip and my heart sank. I self-consciously pulled my own sleeves down.

I reached over and touched them and she whipped her head around and looked at me. Her smile faded. My hand was still holding her wrist. I pulled my own sleeve up slightly so she could see my own, then I yanked it back down and held her wrist again. "I'm here for you," I mouthed to her. Her eyes started watering. I lifted her arm up and kissed her scars gently.

I let go of her arm and she pulled the large sleeves of her jacket back over her hands. We hugged; having had an entire conversation without saying anything out loud. I pulled away from her and held her at arm's length, then just smiled at her. She smiled back. We're closer friends now; we're both better now.

Artwork By Elysia Netter

Who
I
Am
and
Who
I
Am
Not

Maurice J. Carter

I cannot tell you who I am, but I can tell you what I am not.

I'm not

The blackness of my skin

The naps of my hair

The attire I wear.

I am not my ego

The expression of my sex, gender, and sexuality.

I am not my learning disability

The roles I play as a person in everyday life.

I am not the mask I wear every day.

I am not my secrets.

In fact, this is a secret I have been holding back from you.

I am not this sickness that will kill me in a few years.

While many of you will start families and careers,

I will be amongst the graves.

Here is the good news:

I am not the brokenness on the inside.

I am not this body.

I am not this Prison

Cage

Abyss.

In fact, I think I can tell you what I am now.

I am a warrior determined to live.

I am a survivor who will live to tell history!

Photo By Joan Avilez





TOBACCO IN A PIPE

David Warren

Tobacco in a pipe, the flame is lit
Now watch you watch us burn
Your watch is ticking faster than our heart beat
Your pale finger pointed, trying to keep up with the time
We burn slowly, but time moves so rapidly
Better yet, what is time?
What is speed? What is light?
This little light of ours, watch us shine it so desperately as you inhale our
smoke
Watch us glow so effortlessly as we burn and you choke on our potent
dominion
Yeah, I know
We are strong, yet you still use us
We carry a light fully lit
You need us in your constant dark days, hours, minutes, seconds
Wait, time?
What is time when we carry eternal light?
We are formidable
We illuminate through the fire that you lit
We encounter you with power
Our strength stings your innermost being
No matter what pipe you stuff us in, we will rise through the trenches of
your mouth
You can't deny our glow
And if ever so,
We will sting your innermost being, forcing you to cough us out
Now exhale our charismatic greatness
We chill on your breath, but you flex as if it's you when you're speaking
We gave you your strut
We are the formula to your corny math equations
Better yet, call us the glue
You will never stop smoking us
Remember, you need us
We are the tobacco in your pipe, the flame is lit
Now watch you watch us burn.

Photo By Alonza Mitchell

Riding Rollercoasters In April Showers

Tasia Caldwell

Why is it exciting to be so scared?

I understand that sometimes my heart feels like it's been here before,

almost as if my soul got stuck in this transitional phase.

Between the person I put so much effort into being versus the person that was hand-crafted from a life of heartbreak and drugs .. I meant 808s

I know I've made mistakes and somehow allowed Siri to take over my GPS. So here I am... standing in front of your heart when I thought I was on the way to mine.

Tell me, have you ever been so afraid that you're not even afraid anymore?

That's the feeling you give me...similar to the time I crawled through my own heart...hands and knees bare but my mind strong enough to understand that my shoulders were responsible for holding my head...knowing that they would do a better job than she ever did.

I've heard that rollercoasters are for those who have never been in love and theme parks are created for those souls that were fortunate enough to have never been molded into an irregular regular shape that those who in geometry have a difficult time calculating the area of.

There's a curious streak in my spine that tickles those baby hairs at the very edge of my hairline. It scares me to know that I'm on the edge of something...on the edge of growth...I just want my soul to get stuck in that feeling of bliss that "Miss 20 something" slid in my back pocket that 2 a.m. night at Walmart. I just want to know how it feels to just fall...I just want to be high enough to know what it feels like to just fall....

Photo By Joan Avilez



HER WINDOW

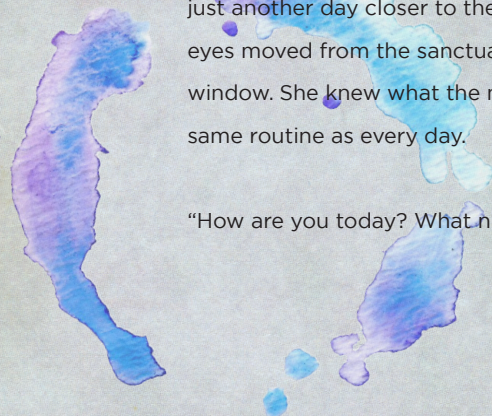
Monika K. Dunton

She couldn't remember the last time she felt the world, the last time a soft breeze brushed upon her face, the last time chill bumps filled the back of her neck after a kiss, or the last time stiff September grass curled underneath her bare feet.

Now, it was unrelenting bed sores, the faint smell of urine, and trying to fall asleep to the rhythmical beeping of a distant electrocardiogram monitor echoing through the empty hospital night. She remembered dancing amid a field of daisies, wearing her white Sunday school dress, twirling under the warm blanket of the sun. Her father would come from behind and scoop her up, throwing her body over his shoulders. Giggling and laughing, Lucy would demand that he put her down, while wishfully praying that he never actually would.

It was only a few years ago, yet it felt like a lifetime since Lucy was cancer-free. She missed those days of leisure, back when her life seemed to have so much promise and adventure. Dreams were achievable and tomorrow was still a mystery then, and not just another day closer to the end. The door opened, and her eyes moved from the sanctuary of the park outside her hospital window. She knew what the nurse would say because it was the same routine as every day.

"How are you today? What number would you say your pain is?"





These were two questions Lucy always felt were redundant. The answer would typically be a 6 or 7 out of a scale of 10. Truthfully, her pain was closer to a 9 or a 10, but through the years she became accustomed to dealing with significant pain. Diagnosed at 10 years old, the terminally ill life was nearly all that Lucy had ever known. After five grueling years of countless treatments, chemotherapy, and the burden put upon her parents' lives and marriage, she felt that pain just came naturally to her.

The nurse came in and left after erasing and rewriting numbers, times and the names of various pills on the whiteboard. A silent keeper draped in white, she was one of many ghostly nurses that would come and go. Lucy recalled hundreds of them entering the door into her life, never knowing if they were to return through that door again. The thought didn't frighten her anymore though. After living with cancer, and being so vulnerable to death, not much frightened her at all.

The nurse left and Lucy once again peered upon the sanctuary that pulsed with life outside the window, trying to spot the young family with the black puppy which had moved out of view. Oh, how she wished that she could be outside, chasing autumn leaves that now floated freely from the tips of maple tree branches. The family had appeared to move on from the park, back to their home, and back to their busy lives. Still, Lucy peered on. She was somewhat startled by the blackbird that flew up toward the window with a strand of brown straw in its beak. A blackbird, so innocently majestic, brought a sense of peace to Lucy. She watched it fly away and could almost feel the gauzy breeze of the world slip from her hands like a curtain.



enigma

Ruby Kirk Nancy

Your lids,
thick and heavy,
guarding dark eyes,
give nothing away.
Your hair,
wild, black, free,
sheds no light
on what thoughts swirl beneath.

Your voice,
deep, subtle,
rasps out words
more like riddles,
circling me
as I dance
to grasp their meaning.

These few clues
do not reveal
the heart
of the person inside.
I see you, and know you not.
Yet still I choose,
simply, and with love,
to embrace you
as you are.

How Shelby Felt

Emily Wood

When I was little, I was always afraid I was going to die.

I thought the house would erupt in flames, or murderers would slaughter the whole family in the middle of the night, or perhaps a tree would uproot from the yard and fall, crushing us while we slept.

I stopped fearing my own death when Shelby crashed her car into the back of a truck on the highway and ceased to live.

Now, I welcome death. Not because I want to die, but because I know that it can't possibly hurt as much as being left alive. When all the things you thought would never happen to you, do, you become fearless.

So, I am left crumpled on the floor inside the room of a girl who came and went so quickly that I wonder if she was even real. Who painted these purple walls, if not an angel? Who burned the white carpet black with ash from discarded bowls, if not a figment of my imagination? But I watched her do it, sitting across from me, her tiny, pointed body bent over the broken bong she never replaced. She looked fragile enough to be snapped in half, but when she spoke, you suddenly believed that she could withstand anything. She was a Leo, a lion: the most charismatic of the zodiac. She was Sicilian, like me, but looked more like it. Her long, bony nose—which she hated—rested atop her tiny, pink lips. I envied her. She was smarter than me, but also darker, sadder. Some days, she let the world swallow her whole and spit her back up. Some days, she let her boyfriend hit her in the face and then tell her that he loved her.

Now, the stars have shifted, and I've never felt more like her. I am standing in my boyfriend's apartment, in the same room where I was 6 months ago—before he was my boyfriend—when her mother called me to tell me she was gone. I am backed up against the wall, sobs ripping through my chest, wishing I could push a little harder and sink through the plaster. All I can see through the blur of tears is the face of a man I no longer recognize, and all I can feel is Shelby. Even as he draws back his hand, quivering with rage, spit from his angry words spewing in my face...I still love him. I realize suddenly that I want him to hit me; that I want to suffer at his hand. I want him to hurt me so he can hold me again, so we can be together.

Broken, but together.

Photo By Gregory Arnold





Havana Cuba

Glenesha Berryman

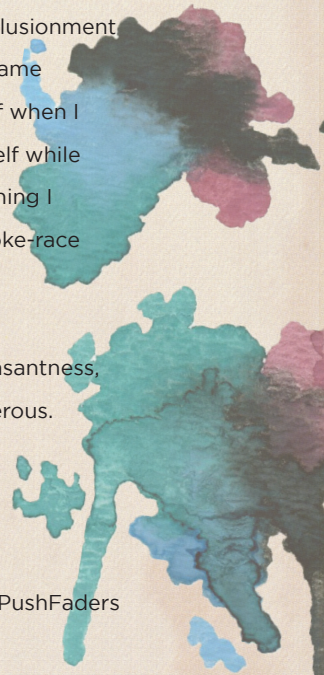
The entire experience was beautiful and affirming, worthy of its own essay, but like every beautiful experience I had while in Cuba, it was colored (haunted) by the words of Jamaica Kincaid's "A Small Place."

"The thing you have always suspected about yourself the minute you become a tourist is true...a tourist is an ugly human being."

Who I met in real life; their IG was beautiful, stunning, smart. Their pictures of colorful Old Havana houses were matched with reflective captions showcasing the deepness and joy one will experience when wandering the streets of Havana Vieja, like the ones that inspired me to go into Cuba in the first place. Even though I was back in the United States, my mind was stuck in and on "A Small Place." The feeling of discomfort and disillusionment that I hoped to leave on the shore of Playa Baracoa, came swelling back. And the thing I suspected about myself when I first arrived in Cuba, the thing I suspected about myself while scoffing at imperialism on the back of a bicitaxi, the thing I suspected about my new Spelman friends and our woke-race conversations, came and choked me:

We were ugly human beings, disguised in beauty, pleasantness, consciousness. We were not only ugly, we were dangerous.

Photo By JayPushFaders







The Little Things

Melissa Glen

It's the little things. It's the fact that I can feel all alone, all painfully alone. I can feel so desperate, desperate for anything—a touch, a moment, a conversation.

It's the fact that I can feel as though I will fall to pieces at any second, or the scary realization that I'm already in pieces and no one is here to pick them up.

It's the fact that none of this seems to matter when I see that next drop of rain hit the pavement at night against the streetlights, that the hurt and the fear is replaced with comfort when I see children, innocent children, happy and carefree like I wish I could be. Like I used to be.

This hate, this anger that I am feeling, that I am almost always feeling can be erased in a matter of seconds just by seeing your eyes and hearing you laugh, hearing that I made you laugh. Years of trouble seem so far away when I'm riding in the car with the windows down and the music up. When that one really good song, that truly beautiful song comes on and the whole world stops. Frozen, I'm standing still in my tracks, and the world comes back, but this time in color, as if I'm staring at this carnival life with fresh eyes. The darkness fades away, and I cannot stop smiling. No literally, why can I not stop smiling.

It's terrifying because as quickly as these little things come in and turn my life upside down for the better, I know the voice will be back. I can hear it so plainly. You can't do it. You will never be able to do it. You will never have it. You just can't have it, so stop trying.

I wish the little things were all I saw. I wish this voice would stop screaming, stop yelling, because I'm exhausted. I'm exhausted, and I am disappointed in myself for allowing this other person, this outside voice to take control of my life. The voice I want to hear is not this voice. I want to hear the voice telling me to slow down, actually eat breakfast for once. Stop, smell the roses, it's okay to be late for class. You won't look stupid, and the teacher won't hate you. Buy the shirt, even if all your friends say they hate it. It makes you happy. Say what you are too scared to say, do what you are too scared to do. Breathe. Ride around yelling or singing at the top of your lungs and breathe, because I am me, and you are you, and they can only meet if they are separate first.

Together we will stand, but not if individually we fall.

Artwork By Elysia Netter

Forty Forty Five

Cameron Green

Honestly, it reeks. It reeks of old people. It reeks of bleach, and of sickness. It smells like this before you even get past the lobby. The same middle-aged female security guard is there, every single day, no matter what time. Do you think that she wanted this job? Do you think that she told that to her mother, to her teachers when she was younger? She doesn't seem like she would ever actually hurt anybody. Her smile is too big to be working in a hospital.

"Forty Forty-Five" you say as you check in with the woman at the desk. You've been here enough times now that she recognizes you. Her smile gets a little smaller each time you come in. Nobody wants to be a regular at the hospital.

You head over to the elevator from the information desk. They have hand sanitizer, the kind in an automatic dispenser so that you don't have to touch it. You use it, you use it every chance you get. You're terrified of catching something, some disease. You're terrified of catching the smell; it sticks to your clothes like wet paint, in globs, no matter how careful you try to be.

The fourth floor is liver and kidney. Nearly everyone there is geriatric. You try not to look at any faces when you walk by the open rooms. You can't help it, though. You try your best to at least forget the faces, block them out of your memory. They stare with eyes that are already dead and watch old movies with actors who died a long time ago.

You start to feel sick. At least you're in a hospital. Every time, you think maybe this is it, maybe I've got swine flu or Ebola or some other epidemic-worthy disease the media hasn't even brought to my attention yet.

It is just nerves. You take a deep breath, and some of it goes away. It's the feeling of ants in your belly, crawling around in loops like motorcycles at the circus. You have never been to the circus, but you'd seen it, in the movies.

You try not to make eye contact with anyone. It seems as though the nurses are doing the same. Some of them are pretty, but do not look at them. You don't want to be "the boy who gawks at the nurses." Besides, you're probably too sad to be looking at pretty nurses.

You walk up to the door, forty forty-five. There's another hand sanitizer machine. You use it. You make three timid knocks on the large hospital door, big enough to get beds and IV's through. Inevitably, some old man in the next rooms yells for you to come in. You don't want to come in, not to him or to anybody.

She's lying in the bed. You think she looks better than yesterday; at least she's sitting up. She's watching game shows on the television. Don't be like those dead people, you think.

"If I just sit, really, really still," she says, "the pain mostly goes away." You think it's that way with a lot of things, with most things, really. The day will come when you'll sit perfectly still, and you will never feel anything ever again.

So you sit with her and you watch game shows, silently. She has a fear of hospitals, of being alone in them. So do you, even though you aren't sure why.

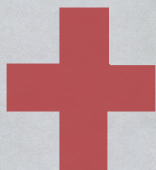
You're frustrated. It's frustrating, spending all of your time in the hospital. You realize that you're talking about yourself and not about her.

Every time a nurse walks in, she introduces you. "He's my bodyguard," she'll say with a smile. That's a lot of responsibility. You smile at the nurses, only the pretty ones. You've met too many nurses.

It's nighttime now. You kiss her on the forehead. She tells you that you give her strength. Squeeze her hand tight before you leave. You never know.

On the way out, you use the hand sanitizer by the door. You use it again by the elevator, and once more when you get to the lobby. The security guard smiles at you. This smile is a full notch weaker than when you came in a few hours ago.

Your hands are cold and they reek of disinfectant. You're afraid that your clothes smell like the fourth floor. You walk to your car, one of the last in the lot and you sit, silently. You sit really, really, really still. You sit, and you wait.







Tell her

Taylor McDaniel

Tell her

Love her even though her world would not

Love her through the pain

Live through her hurt

She has been waiting for you

Nourish her

Feed her soul

Teach her that crooked smile

Is the sunrise and sunset

Golden and warm

Tell her

To never fear the rain and chaos

For she is the storm

And the sun shining through

Tell her

Despite the inability of many others she went to war for

These scars are symbols of bravery

Tell her

To trust a flower can grow in the dark

That light emerges from within

It will illuminate your path

So never let your place in life

Define you

OR even attempt to design you

You are wonderfully created

To rise above that shit

So don't think as a woman you must always clean with that broom

Learn to fly on that bitch

Make sure you tell her that.

THERAPY

Paige Smith



"Okay, Paige. Let's try this again."

"Try what?"

"Tell me about the first memory you have where you've felt forsaken by anyone in your life."

"Forsaken...?"

"Tell me about the first time you've ever felt abandoned by anyone."

"I don't understand why you're asking me this."

"If we can get to the root of the problem, then we have a good chance of figuring out how to help you in the future"

"Oh..."

"So, try to think back as far as you can. Take a minute. It may not come to you right away."

"Umm..."

Summer of 1996:

Mama was holding my hand. She let go. I fell. Ouch, I said. She picked me up and walked to the swing. She sat me in it. She pushed me. She pushed me high. I laughed because it made my tummy tickle. I liked that feeling. She kept pushing. For a long, long time she pushed. Then Mama stopped. And then I saw her in front of me. She was running. I laughed because she was making funny shapes with her arms. Then I felt a buzz in my ear and it hurt. Then I saw it in front of my face and I screamed. And when I opened my mouth, it went inside. Then I felt it on my jaw. And it hurt. And then I saw it again in my face and it flew away. I was kicking and calling for Mama and she didn't answer me. I couldn't see her. And then I started getting dizzy. Then, things were getting smushed up in my eyes. Then I saw black. When I could see again, Mama was holding me crying, saying sorry.

Fall of 1998:

It's naptime and I'm not sleepy. My mat is by the colorful paper, so I eat it. It tastes good to me, kinda like a salty sweet. Then I have to use the bathroom so I ask Ms. Emily and she says go on. So I go in the bathroom and the lock doesn't work, but I use it anyway.

So I'm using the bathroom, then the door opens and I think its Ms. Emily, but it's Jeremiah and I tell him to get out because you can't see a girl's privates. Jeremiah laughs and runs away and leaves the door open a little so I have to finish quick so no one else comes in. I lay back on my mat and Ms. Emily says that my Mommy wants to see me. I go to her classroom. She looks mad, so I ask her what's wrong. She just grabs my arm and pulls me hard out of the daycare and she goes to the car. She puts me in the front seat and then shuts the door. Then she walks to the tree and breaks a switch and I start crying. Mommy gets in the seat with the wheel and pulls my dress up to my stomach. Then she says why did you tell Jeremiah to come into the bathroom and touch your private parts. But I couldn't answer because she started hitting me with the switch over my legs a lot of times. And then she stops and said you're gonna get some more when we get home if you don't act right. And then she said you better get it together by the time we get to the door. When we went back in the building, she made me say sorry to Jeremiah for saying look at my privates.

Summer of 2000:

I don't want to go, I told Mommy. But she said we have to go. I run to Mama and she says Shirvon, just let her stay here. Mommy says she's not your daughter, she's mine and we're leaving. Mama hugs me tight and doesn't let go. Mommy tries to take me from her, but Mama still wouldn't let go. So Pawpaw grabbed me from Mama's hug and gave me to Mommy. She put me in the Navigator and the truck starts to move. I role my window down and tell Mama I love her. And she says I love you too baby. When we get on the road Mommy starts to cry and says hush Paige, we're going to live in West Virginia now. I said I want to stay in Waxhaw. She said we couldn't because she was married now and married people have to live together. I told her I didn't like Rodger. She says don't say that again.

Spring 2002:

They keep fussin 'bout whether I should change my last name. I like my new step dad. He's better than Roger was. I even call him Daddy sometimes. I'm not going to tell them that though. My real dad just keeps looking at me. His dad is telling my grandma that this shouldn't even be an option. He keeps saying option, but I don't know what that word means. I'm just mad 'cause I only get to see my real Dad every couple of months since we moved back from West Virginia. Why can't we all just be happy? My grandpa tells me that if I let my new step dad adopt me, we won't be family anymore. That my real dad won't be my dad anymore. I thought adopt meant that I would just have his last name, Smith. I look them in the face. My dad, my grandma, my grandpa, my uncles. No one says anything. They agree with him. I didn't know changing your name was bad. My Mommy changed her name three times already.

Fall 2008:

Alexus and I went to visit Foobie. We have to call him Daddy to his face because he says that his daughters shouldn't be calling him by any other name than Daddy. My mom drops me off first. Alexis' Mom drops her off a little later. The first thing he says to us is please help me clean. So we clean his house and he watches TV and drinks a beer. After we finish cleaning we sit and watch movies in the living room. A Harry Potter marathon is on. After a couple of hours my dad comes into the living room and tells us not to come into the kitchen. He locks the door and puts something against it so we can't get out, I guess. Me and Alexis look at each other and brush it off. Then we smell something that smells really bad. The smell gets stronger and Alexis says she feels dizzy. I tell her she's just tired, but I know what it is. I'm not stupid. When Foobie opens the door, Alexis and I don't say anything. It smells like Febreze and whatever the bad smell is. When I got back to my house, I told my mom. She started crying and asked me what the smell was like. I said like cigarettes, but not as smelly. I don't want her to know that I know what weed is.

"I don't think I've ever felt that way before."

"Never?"

"Nope. Not that I can remember."



Photo By Kofi Sackey



KS

Rungs of June

David Lee Buchanan

june is knitting god for me it
knows the ins and outs of sunbeams
blessing limbs and breaking skies the
summer trees form jacob's ladders

bright light through an afghan
dreams are sewn with evergreens
real is what you make it so i touch

the rungs of june and yearn to climb

June 2009 | dB





Solace

Tamia Smith

Thursday, June 22, 2017

7:41 p.m.

"I've found solace in the strangest place
way in the back of my mind."

-Sia

Consolidate my heart, comfort my mind
Soothe my spirit, love my soul
Distress clouds me, sadness suffocates
me

I can no longer breathe....
become my solace, fill the void
Remove the pain, bring the joy
I've found solace in you
I've found solace in Jesus... solace in
prayer

Solace in repenting, solace in...
everlasting love

Solace in expressing my love for Jesus
through my art.

Photo By Jalen Matthew Neal

Tools

Maurice J. Carter

Photo By JayPushFaders

“The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” Audre Lorde (1979)

There is a system, a house that needs to be dismantled.

It will not be dismantled by the tools of division, tools forged by the master.

Using the master’s tools only cultivates more injustice and keeps conquers a divided people.

The tools of the master will not dismantle his house, but it will dismantle us, again and again.

Most of us have been baptized in the rivers of oppression, so clamped down by these tools that we have become numb to the tempering that echoes through our existence: be divided and be conquered.

We have learned how to become still with the motions of these tools as they hammer at our bodies and screw with the minds of the victims, the hopeless lost souls itching to live.

What is Lorde shouting to us from her place of rest? Shouting out about these master’s tools?

Divide and conquer are the master’s tools, Lorde still shouts.

Divide and conquer are the adversaries, the tools we must rise and fight against.

These are the same tools that were used throughout history:

Slavery, Jim Crow, War on Drugs, mass incarceration,

Police brutality, poverty, greed, hate, sexism, racism,

Islamophobia, colorism, capitalism.

Tools that separate us set the master free.

These tools keep the master’s house well-maintained, while we dismantle ourselves. A people divided is a people conquered.

To persevere, to rise, to dismantle these systems, and to awaken from our old ashes,

we must not divide ourselves to be conquered.

We must embrace our differences, not simply tolerate differences, but embrace our human diversity.

We must reclaim our own stolen tools: our voices, our respect, our humanity, our revolution, and most of all, our love for each other, the love that liberates and makes us draw near to each other.

When we work together, we become a new tool to dismantle the master’s house.

Unity is the tool that keeps us going.

Our ability to rise, to dismantle the master’s house, is all in the tools we use.

What tools will you pick up?





I Compare You to Binge Drinking

Alissa Rogers

The throbbing headache and nausea
I can endure; I've had worse.
Right now I could cry,
such a raw hope consumed me
as I thought about you, desperate.
It was still dark for me then,
when I needed you. Now it's day.
It brings a true smirk to my face
to know you are nothing more
than a night of binge drinking;
a foolish part of my youth,
a consequence of boredom.
I could not hold your liquor,
I vomited all that bile you said to me
in the hedges outside. Don't fret,
this is not a bad memory. In fact
you might never be a memory at all.
I am well. I will drink better and
far more dangerous poisons.
I am today, you are only last night.

Artwork By Kirsten Fay

Campus Rape;

An Advocate's Story

Angela Song

Education has always been important to me and I had desperately wanted to continue my college career after earning an associate's degree as a young single parent. However, raising two children, largely on my own, took a toll on plans that didn't include my kids. Even so, I enjoyed being a mom and committed myself fully to it, while freelancing when I could. Because I wanted to make sure that they didn't have to struggle the way I had, my children grew up with the understanding that an education could exponentially increase their standard of living.

My constant reminders paid off and once they had both headed to college and were living their own lives, I felt I could devote more time to my own career, so I began the process of changing my reality. I continued to freelance part-time while applying for staff positions anywhere there was an opening that required my particular skill set. I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, but I knew I wanted to do something useful and upon securing a position at a university not too far from my kids, I packed up my life and set out on a new adventure. The campus was picturesque, my salary was adequate, and I was excited to enter the world of higher

education, if not as a student, at least as part of the staff community. My supervisor had been floundering on his own for some time, so my arrival was heralded as the best thing to happen to the department that year. I settled into my tiny, windowless office, formerly a janitor's closet, to begin the process of getting to know the student population I had been hired to assist. My boss was awesome and supportive. Together, we enjoyed many successes and genuine praise from our students and colleagues. Excellent performance reviews were commonplace and despite the fact that I had not received a raise by the time my second work anniversary rolled around, I felt fortunate to have a job that I enjoyed so much, working with friends who felt more like family. I actually didn't mind the grueling schedule or the fact that, due to constant budget restrictions, we could not afford the two additional staff positions we knew were needed. My supervisor and I were a great team and so productive that we honestly didn't mind our heavy workload.

Then one day in the spring of my third year, as the trees in the courtyard began their startling transformation of color, everything changed. Just after I had

finished a hastily eaten lunch, my next student showed up and as I worked on her request, she perused the assortment of photos and announcements on my bulletin board. She asked specifically about the self-defense class I had organized to mark Sexual Assault Awareness month. I invited her to attend and explained the mechanics of the class, then she asked how I had become an advocate for sexual assault victims. I told her about a former student who had been forced out of school after one of her classmates had touched her inappropriately. The student had complained to administration and they had simply proceeded to cause her as much distress as they possibly could until she finally retreated in resignation. Victim shaming and blaming was the most popular strategy for many U.S. colleges in response to sexual assault then, as it is now in far too many cases.

As I turned back to my computer I heard the student quietly whisper, "that happened to me last fall" and I froze as she added, "You're the only person I've ever told, besides my mom." I closed my office door and moved to sit beside her as she relayed what had happened one evening when the classmate with whom she'd been studying brought her back to her dorm room. Her mother had urged her to file a police report, but had allowed her to make the final decision and her daughter, muted by the stories she had heard from others who had endured

the same sort of violation, decided to remain silent. This wasn't surprising to me because I knew through the research I had done in preparation for Sexual Assault Awareness month that "between 64 and 96 percent of all rapes are never reported to criminal justice authorities." I don't know if the student who abused her went on to victimize others, but I assumed it was likely that he had, since research also suggests that "63.3 percent of college offenders reported committing repeat rapes, either against multiple victims, or more than once against the same victim."

When I arrived on campus, I had no idea of the pervasive nature of sexual assault and rape, and that college freshmen are particularly vulnerable. In fact, "over 21% reported being involved in at least one incident of sexual assault, attempted sexual assault, or sexual abuse since their arrival on campus." Many of those victims already had a history of abuse when they checked in at orientation; according to the White House Council on Women and Girls, nearly half of female survivors were raped before they were 18 and over one-quarter of male survivors were raped before they were 10. I was horrified and made it my mission to educate students and staff alike, in honor of my former student and on behalf of all women on campus who faced such risks. I had a very personal interest as well, as my only daughter had recently been accepted into a Master's program at a sister campus. The thought of the risks

she faced for simply attempting to earn a degree made me angry and I vowed to do my best to change the culture on campus. I wrote email after email and rallied a large group of faculty and staff, who agreed to organize to finally call attention to what was happening behind the smiles of staff manning the tables at orientation and open house. Parents and students were told that sexual assault didn't happen on this small, cozy campus, but in fact, it did. It happened in dorm rooms and parking lots and common areas and even at the library, yet the online crime reports for the university listed only those incidents that culminated in a conviction, which was rare, likely due to the fact that campus police handled the majority of complaints. Once a victim had gone through the barrage of questions from poorly trained staff and even other students about her behavior, her clothing choice, her previous sexual relationship with the attacker, if any and an array of other inappropriate and painful inquiries, she was simply ready to let it go, desperate to move on with her life and just try to forget. The trouble was, many a victim was then forced to sit through classes for the remainder of the semester with the attacker, as university administrators refused to punish the perpetrator, based on the 'kangaroo court' that school officials passed off as justice.

As I became more active in exposing the rampant rape culture that had been allowed to proliferate on campus for

decades, I also apparently became more of a threat to administration. I was told to cease and desist, despite the fact that many of my colleagues supported my advocacy efforts, especially those who had been with the university for many years and had seen firsthand the gender discrimination and misogynistic culture that had been allowed to flourish there, I was informed that my job was not to serve as advocate or educator, but simply to assist the director with the responsibilities within our department.

I watched helplessly as traumatized students began to disappear from campus in increasing numbers, afraid to go to class, afraid to walk alone at night, afraid to further challenge those with the power to make things right. They most often dropped out and moved on, rather than face scrutiny and doubt and blame from their classmates and former friends. In the meantime, my boss came to my defense and was mysteriously let go the week before fall semester began. I was left alone, save for the interim director pulled from another department on campus. I did my best to hang in there for our students for several weeks, to the point of exhaustion and depression and shortly after, I was told that my position was being eliminated. Due to my protected job status, termination was out of the question, but administration could and did make my life miserable as several staff members succumbed to herd mentality. I finally gave in and submitted a layoff request, knowing

full well it would be granted. For several months I managed to support myself on whatever freelance work I could find, as well as one month of severance pay and a small retirement fund. I struggled to come to terms with what had happened and after weeks of therapy that included a diagnosis of PTSD, I finally began to move forward. One year after my departure, I returned to college to pursue the Bachelor's degree that I had waited nearly twenty-five years to complete. I worked hard, was on the honor roll every semester, and recently graduated with a nearly perfect GPA, just after being accepted into an excellent graduate program. My children are happy and healthy and life is good.

For survivors of rape and sexual assault though, recovery can and very often does last a lifetime. I intend to continue to advocate and raise awareness for those whose own voice may have been silenced as a result of their trauma. My experience on that campus changed my life and I think of each of those incredible women often. I hope with all my heart that they have found some semblance of peace.

“In practice the standard for what constitutes rape is set not at the level of women’s experience of violation, but just above the level of coercion acceptable to men.”

-Judith Lewis Herman

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Lisak, D, and PM Miller. "Repeat Rape and Multiple Offering Among Undetected Rapists." *Violence and Victims*. 17.1 (2002): 78

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White House Council on Women and Girls. *Rape and Sexual Assault: A Renewed Call to Action*. 2014. Internet resource. 1.

STAFF

BIOGRAPHIES

Victoria Schule *General Manager*



Victoria is a senior communication major with a focus in public relations. She started in Student Media her sophomore year as a reporter for the The East Carolinian and joined the magazines as a reporter her junior year. Victoria helps overlook the production of *expressions*, Rebel and The Hook; ECU's Student Interest magazine where she is also Editor-in-Chief. Victoria hopes to pursue a career in public relations after graduation.

Summer Tillman *Editor-in-Chief*



Summer is a senior communication major from Atlanta, GA concentrating in journalism. She is a communication ambassador, a University Writing Center Consultant, and the founder of the Creative Writing Club at ECU. She began her writing career as an intern at ECU News Services before joining Student Media as a WZMB DJ and Editor-in-Chief of *expressions*.

Mary-Beth Drummond *Chief Designer*



Mary-Beth Drummond is a junior graphic design major from Winston-Salem, NC. This is her first year working with Student Media, where she serves as the chief designer for *expressions* and The Hook. She has a strong passion for graphic design, and is always trying to improve. Mary-Beth hopes to find a career in graphic design once she graduates.

Erin Flynn *Designer*



Erin Flynn is a sophomore majoring in history education from Raleigh, NC. After changing her major from art education/graphic design, she was missing the aspect of art in her life, until she joined the *expressions* team. She has been taking in school and after school art classes since the third grade and loves everything about art. Erin joined the *expressions* team halfway through the semester and has loved everything about it!

Rebecca Seftor *Copy Editor*



With an anticipated graduation date of May 2018, Rebecca will be earning two Bachelor's degrees in both Communications and Political Science. She has been a member of Student Media since January 2016, and has thoroughly enjoyed her new position in the magazine division. Rebecca is still exploring career options, but is considering working on political campaigns, at a public relations firm, or with a media company upon graduation.

THANK YOU

To Our Contributors,

Thank you for your strength, your vulnerability, and your honesty. You are the lifeblood of this publication and we are honored to share your stories.

To The Magazine Staff,

Victoria, thank you for your commitment and passion through this process. I couldn't ask for a better GM. To Mary-Beth, Erin, and Becca, I'm so honored to call you my team. I will forever be grateful for the publication we've created and the laughs we've shared along the way.

To Terrence Dove,

Thank you for your guidance and faith in our team and your commitment to this year's theme and publication.

To John Harvey,

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To John Herron,

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To Julie Roman,

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To The Agency,

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Artwork By Marjorie Freeman

Together we can overcome adversity through...



MULTICULTURAL

If your multicultural organization is not listed, please contact expressions and we will feature you in the next issue.

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Submission Guidelines

expressions is currently accepting submissions for our next issue. Contributions can be any illustrations, poems, short stories, photographs or non-fiction works. All submissions should include your full name, major and classification. Please send all work to expressions@ecu.edu. Those pieces selected will appear in our next edition.

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LGBT

LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANSGENDER

RESOURCE OFFICE

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252-737-2514
ecu.edu/lgbt

The LGBT Resource Office offers a safe and welcoming environment that promotes understanding, acceptance, and visibility of the LGBT community through a comprehensive range of educational programming and advocacy services.



Intercultural Affairs *at* ECU

The Department of Intercultural Affairs, composed of the Ledonia Wright Cultural Center and the LGBT Resource Office, develops programs and services that engage the community in experiences which challenge bias and encourage understanding and self-exploration.

East Carolina University.

LWCC

LEDONIA WRIGHT CULTURAL CENTER

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ecu.edu/lwcc

The Ledonia Wright Cultural Center (LWCC) provides specialized diversity and social justice experiences so all students can become confident, culturally aware, global citizens.



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WE'RE STUDENTS, TOO.



Your source for news, music and sports.
Your...

Student Media



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