



Amendment

Mission Statement

Amendment seeks to

— provoke thoughtful conversation and communication concerning issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and any other oppressions the student body sees fits to discuss.

— extend, expand, and equalize publishing opportunity for VCU students and additional emerging writers and artists

— inspires writers and artists to seek knowledge through artistic and critical expression while increasing awareness about social and political issues.

Amendment currently is an annual fall student publication funded by student activity fees. **Amendment** promotes social change through artistic expression and social thought. It is common misconception that **Amendment** only accepts submissions from women and queer-identified folks. This journal is intended to bring voice to all of the diverse voices of the VCU community. It is with our best intentions that we publish the works of predominantly sociopolitical minorities to provide a forum for voices often silenced. **Amendment** accepts rolling submissions and offers workshops for fresh and new writers and editors. We encourage submitted works of fiction and non-fiction, poetry, prose, critical and non-academic essays, short stories and plays art, graphic design, photography, and any other genres of printable literature and art. Please visit our Web site <http://www.studentorg.vcu.edu/Amendment> or contact our editorial staff at Amendmentvcu@gmail.com for more information on how and where to submit. Also, you may visit our office in person or mail submissions to the VCU Student Media Center c/o Amendment Journal 817 West Broad Street, O.O. Box 842010, Richmond, VA 23284-2010.

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Women's Studies, English, Mass Communications, Art History and Foundations, Sociology, Social Work, Psychology and somehow we got submissions from Biology majors!

Amendment also appreciates the support of the following professors who tolerated our visits to their classrooms, who voluntarily taped flyers on their office doors, and inspired our editorial staff and submittees:

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Amendment would also like to thank our part-time associate editors and graphic designers, Erica Mullins, Callie Jean Furlong, and Charlotte Tinnell-our resident art hunter.

*Amendment wishes to dedicate this journal
to Queertheorem,
formally known as Fivesquare..*

Introduction

**"We're going to
Mars because it
gives us a reason
to change."**

— Nikki Giovanni

Hope. A reason to change. Another world. Possibility. These themes resounded in Nikki Giovanni's talk this Spring at VCU. Part of the reason Amendment is here is because we embrace that hope for a better world and try to promote it through publishing, workshops, and building a community. We're dreamers, artists, activists and writers. We're critics, friends, and allies. We're trying to not only provide a space for folks to use their voices, but also a medium through which these voices can be transmitted, so that the community gets larger, the voices get louder, and the journey to a more just world moves further.

It may not be enough to say that we are in an age where the voices of folks usually silenced are needed more than ever. In her talk, Ms. Giovanni urged us to use our voices, to get out there and dare to hope, to build that dream. She also asserted that in order to move forward, we must listen to the voices of those who have been silenced, as they have the directions.

I hope that you enjoy the pieces in this volume of the journal and that they inspire you to write, speak out, and make yourself heard. We are grateful to our contributors and supporters and we look forward to continuing the journey.

To read a version of Ms. Giovanni's talk and her poem, "Quilting the Black-Eyed Pea (We're going to Mars)" go to <http://www.virginia.edu/uvanewsmakers/newsmakers/giovanni.html>.

Liz Canfield
Spring 2006

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Sarah Irons

While Riding #1 church hill/R Street

jem fiasco

i saw a black man
angry man
what is his rage?

i ask, as
i turn the page
amiri baraka
is talking to me
about loneliness

i want
to tell this
black man
angry man
that i love him

i understand his rage
as Church Hill/R Street
heads to Shockoe Bottom
where no one remembers
Gabriel's revolt

on this hot Saturday
i am at least
satisfied?
that it is not Monument Ave
i am heading down
where blood, sweat, tears
are dried
crusty and white
on the grounds
for slavery

"NEGRO"

Audrey Blake

I see Eve
On the fertile African plain
Sending off her seven daughters
To the far corners of the earth

I see
Ruth on the banks of the Nile
Picking up baby Moses

I see
Men walking down dirty Pennsylvania Ave in Washington D.C.
Carrying signs that read
"I am a man"

I see Cleopatra
Eyeing
Mark Anthony

I see the faces of the children of
Thomas Jefferson

I see
The tears in the eyes of Sojourner Truth at the
Second suffrage convention asking
"Ain't I a woman"

I hear
Nat Turner's chains

I see
Adolph Hitler
Leaving the athletic stadium when America's son
Jessie Owens
Won the gold metal at the 1936 Olympics

I see
Huck and Jim
Rafting down the Mississippi
Proving the words
“All humans are created equal”

I see
All women

I see
The bloated face and broken body of
Emit Till
As they pulled out of the river

I see
The brave and decorated faces of the
Tuskegee Airmen
Sitting on the back of a bus
In the post war south

I see
Woody Guthrie
Sleeping on
Leadbelly's Couch

I hear Jim Crow laughing
And
Bob Marley Singing

I see
The “Peekskill Riot” of 1949
Paul Robeson
Son of a former slave
Defeating the KKK
His only weapon song
Sung by him and
30 thousand

Equal, Americans

I see

The mistakes in history books
That make John Brown out to be a crazy
And not the hero that he was

I see

Martin Luther King Jr.
Sitting alone in a room,
Reading the works of
Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman
And
Becoming the dream

I see

There is no truth
Only perception

I see

The shame in labels

I hear

Eve
The mother of mankind
Crying.

Crochet

Tess Von Gezcy

I saw a woman today
On the back of the bus
Crocheting a small, white baby bootie,
One hand with extra appendage,
Thin, silver, and hooked,
Briskly whisking in, out, around, and through,
While the other,
With delicate fingers,
Pulls out the knots
And supports the work of the first.

I look at these hands,
Pale, manicured, ringed with gold,
Performing the tasks for the past-time appeal,
And think of the woman,
With hands of callused brown skin
That have never touched gold,
Performing a similar task
With the same clipped efficiency,
But with the goal of feeding her family in mind.

And I wonder,
Does the former ever think of the latter?
And if she did,
Would it make a difference?

Individuality

Rachel Harris

For its 2005 essay contest, Vanity Fair magazine posted a topic intended to compare current activism, or lack thereof, to that of previous decades by asking “what is on the minds of America’s youth today?” The easy answer to this question is that we simply do not feel the need to do or change anything, as it seems that prior generations have made all the necessary societal improvements. In short, we are labeled as being lazy, indifferent, and essentially at fault for not attempting to correct the current problems with which we continue to be faced. But, is it really this simple? Are all individuals who were too young to have protested the immorality of racism, sexism, and the Vietnam War so unconcerned with what is happening around them that they would rather play video games than risk confrontation? Does this all ultimately rest within individual people, or is there another dimension to this apparent indifference?

In general, we, as Americans, view life in terms of the personal, the individual. In this way, we can rest assured that our accomplishments are the direct results of our hard work and ability, while feeling less guilty when others fail, as it is their own apathy that holds them back. This way of thinking, however, is quick to praise or blame without even considering or understanding the situations into which different people have been placed. For those who so highly value the experience of the individual, it becomes easy to ignore the issues confronted by others if they are not personally faced with such problems. As a result, various dichotomies pitting male against female, white against black, heterosexual against homosexual, and rich against poor are created, promoting the ignorance of the

privileged and the struggle of the oppressed.

At the beginning of the fall 2005 semester, I was taken aback by a comment made in class by a female student, stating that sexism is not an issue because she had not personally experienced or witnessed its effects. Perhaps I am overly sensitive to sexist remarks and actions, but I notice sexist behavior often, if not everyday, regardless of how harmless the action or comment may seem. In attempting to wrap my head around this blatantly ignorant statement, I immediately considered her thoughts to have been justified by sheer ignorance to the androcentricity of social life, for “if a society is oppressive, then people who grow up and live in it will tend to accept, identify with, and participate in it as ‘normal’ and unremarkable life” (Johnson, 1997, p. 93). But, overtime, I began to consider her ignorance, and my own for that matter, from an additional perspective. For, while this student is female, “no one is simply a man or a woman. Each of us embodies intersecting statuses and identities, empowered and disempowered, including physical and demographic traits, chosen and unchosen” (Disch, 2006, p.1). For, beyond simply being female, she, like myself, is also white and obviously has access to higher education. Such factors have left us both, in some regard, blind to different forms of oppression by placing us at advantaged social positions that we do not necessarily deserve.

At the time, I took offense at her statement on the basis of my female identity. Having been yelled at inappropriately, grabbed, and dismissed as being hormonal, I know personally how it feels to be sexually harassed and demeaned. And yet, on nearly every other level, as far as economic status, education, race, ethnicity, and sexuality are concerned; I am unduly placed upon a pedestal from which I am allowed to look down upon others who do not meet certain criteria. In this way, I, just as this student, have been and still am somewhat ignorant of the

Warning Label

The material in this journal contains material on sexual assault, child abuse and violence. *Amendment* carefully and respectfully reserve the right to forewarn survivors/victims of the presentation of sexual assault and other forms of violence discussed in this journal that **may be potentially triggering to our readers**. At the end of this journal is a resource guide of information where you or a friend may receive counseling and other forms of services to deal with these issues if you have not already. *Amendment* applauds and admires the courageous individuals who offered to share their stories with us in this issue. We chose to publish these literary works in attempts to give voice to the often silenced and to draw attention to an issue unfortunately all too pervasive in societies worldwide.

The following sections include literature containing material on sexual abuse. **[include on page before these poems start or put this in the Toc page]**

I want the bold stuff to stand out somehow so for now I just put it in bold but do u have any ideas. I'm really pro walking on eggshells with this.

extent to which “power from unearned privilege can look like strength when it is in fact permission to escape or to dominate” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 74). In the end, although the psychologist in me cannot accept that personal responsibility is wholly nonexistent; this overemphasis on the individual and on the singularity of identity completely overlooks a major portion of existence and social survival. Upon realizing this, it becomes necessary to incorporate and focus on the organization of social institutions in order to prevent unjust treatment, rather than waiting to trap and punish those who do not fit into the revered heterosexual, middle class, White male mold.

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A Ballad of an Inattentive City

Dana Porush

The loony goony serial zombie killers lurk the streets
disguised as Mr. Rogers and your lunch lady.

Underneath those thick glass frames are tranquil steady
eyes with even steadier hands in which to carve out flesh to
make new frocks.

They breed and stomp quietly around Richmond waiting
for the right little girl to run friendless across their path.

Seeking refuge into their quiet mansion atop the hill, pil-
low covered screams are never heard.

**((This is an epidemic that runs silently disguised
through the veins of an in attentive, forgetful City))**

Untitled

DTEvans

You sensed it
Smelled it on my clothes
Smiled when you realized your luck
I begged to be comforted
But you opted for something else

And you stripped me of my armor
It barely protected me
And you took your sword and cut me in two
Robbing me of my innocence and confidence.

You saw it
Pulled me closer to feel it
Orgasmed from the high you received from my pain
I begged to be helped
But you wanted something else

And you stripped me naked
With my insecurities for all to see
You brandished your sword and cut me in two
Robbing me of my innocence and confidence.

And I saw them point and laugh
As I tried to cover myself up
But it was too late for me
And just in time for you

And you waited until I was weak beyond repair
And you revealed the weapon of choice
And cut me in two.

Lie there Still

Mc Jules

-
I screamed your name
Screamed your name
Screamed *your* NAME!!
So mute you never listened again...

Gagged in the drowsiness of intoxication
You were my toxic fixation, that
couldn't materialize, that
maternal eyes, had warned against
my breath stifled in suspense...

He
clutched me further,
farther...
until *too* far there.

Flipped me, Rammed me, Programmed me, to
fear and be ashamed, as if I - should fake it physically,
but his mentality was derogatory, I - was just
another sloppy story to tell his heathen buddies

the Hook-up that ShOOK up and DoWn the Hall
they didn't have to hear it - they saw it all - I

took the fall
against a cacophonous wall of applause
talking dirty as nasty, oh how it burns me - being

Pumped, unprotected, interrogating my sensibility that
until then, was pure, yet pretentious sensuality

Never once would I allow another to stir my drink, or
even think of making me a statistic in a sober state.
All my convictions to scream your name, as he

creamed and came in your domain - un-tapped
- fractured -
captured and crushed from a rush of blood-flow.

Sowing his soured motion - I
couldn't move or prove
free will, disadvantage - I
lie there still, where
he instilled a half-
life of self-
inflicted
guilt.

I wanted to sleep it off
Out of control, he turned me on, then over
and over,
and over again
Until I would never be covered in warmth again,
and again

I was helpless in decision-less consent, and it
burns down there. I cheapened you with
subdued, impaired, deafening despair, but I

Swear to you I cared -
Screamed your name -
through the roots of my hair -
whimpers and whispers into thin air - and to you
it still isn't fair -
all I can say is -
it burns down there -

I wasn't prepared for impact,
didn't know how to react, to save
our pact of born-again virginity, that
this indecent Mr. took as
feminine frigidity like myths, that
I would never again - be a Mrs., that

someday I would innocently
hold *your* hand in support of a
child inseminated of *our* love, but I'm

infiltrated by an act that debilitated our
promise and longing because -

I wronged you when he wronged me
I wronged you when he wronged me
I wronged you when he wronged me
...indefinitely mangling my-self worth.

Hung sullen self-curtained hurt, humiliation
complication of my situation that night-crawler
evening - the mourning I felt the morning after
seeking, needing medical remedy; fostering seedy
gamble of injecting me with infesting pregnancy

Is that why it burns down there?
Please don't think I didn't care.
Now I see you were with me there,
and I couldn't breathe you,
like I couldn't breathe air.
Believe me, I know it isn't fair.
My scalp still tingles and regret
still lingers there. I lie there still,
- going senseless, to fill the void,
so vast with paranoia - it lies there still.

I am no longer anointed or encrusted like the jewels of our
intentions, I couldn't mend the infection that tarnished your
luster - or muster the gumption to expose his consumption
because it was too close for comfort. Afforded in a moment
of lewd impulse and ludicrous dysfunction, that would alter
us
with confusion for the entirety of our affair.

But you have to know that I fucking cared, because -
I burn for you more, than it burns down there -
louder, than the screams through my hair -
faster, than I fell through air -
for you.

Construction Site Etiquette

L.E. Grabenstetter

when she gets excited
grazing, (pounding) slurping
her nostrils filled with the pressure of semen
thick weighty spice meeting and parting
bilious hips collecting in great arcs
sledging through myopic choices
men who fit her less
than they fit her sister and friend before her
men whose labored sweat only slicks their heels
away, wheels
churning in her pasty soul
outwardly placid.

But he had hips like a jackhammer.

Bend, Break, Persevere

Naghmeh Moadab

Palm, fingers, grip
Shove me, spiraling downwards- drowning

Figurative, imaginative, reality
A young sapling nipped, never to
reach its potential

Forcing, taking, stop
Reach out, call out my sisters- regain my strength
Taste the bitter truth
swallow it whole

overcoming, surviving, Retaliate
Fear not the autocratic sex
Strike the hand
Rise out of the murky waters- baptized
New possibilities forthcoming.

That Day

LeaAnne Eaton

Bodies getting nearer
Touching...almost
Fingering the hair,
lightly rubbing the shoulders...
I want to say something,
But I do not.

I want to jump up,
Slap you,
Run away,
And yet, I stay seated.

My mind races,
My body tenses,
And you take no notice
Of the obvious discomfort
I know I am showing.

I retreat into myself
I hide from you,
From the world.
I'm locked inside my head...
If only I can get get out.

I want to jump up,
Slap you,
Run away,
And yet, I stay seated.

What seems like ages pass,
Your phone rings,
But you don't move
You are called to leave,
But you don't...not yet.

You stay close by,
Hovering over me,
Like a hawk looking for prey.
You move slowly,
Like you don't want to go.

Thankfully, you do.
I sit entombed within myself
And wonder what I did wrong,
Who do I call?
What should I say?

I walk away from the place
I will have nightmares about.
You don't know,
I don't know,
I will never be back.

I took a stand,
I won't return.
It was wrong,
You should know better,
And now so do I.

on being, four

jem fiasco

inside of me

are colors
puce and olive green

inside of me

is rotting flesh

out,comes

YOU

laughing at me

as

i

stand there
unamused
confused
bruised
reviled
i

wanna throw up
bile, but

i

can't
move, do
anything
but be

no longer me

YOU

inside of me

oozing, out!
my rotting flesh

YOU

wronged me
in-two
gaping holes
like mesh
was

it

a test?
how much could

i

take?

being, four

i

bre-ache
in two
shattered
heart,broken,
mug-ged...

smug

YOU

walk away

If you're dealing with being a survivor, it might help to...

penny w.

1. Make lists. For me, making lists helps to clear my head. I don't have to be writing toward a conclusion, or even use sentences. Even the most out of control things are, at least in one way, made manageable and orderly. Make lists about anything you want. Here are some suggestions:

a. Make a list of allies/friends/people you trust/safe people.

b. Make a list of things you need, even things you couldn't just call someone up and ask for, and make yourself show it to your friends. Or give it to one friend and ask them to give it to others. Add to it as much as you need to.

c. Make a list, or write a letter, and include everything you want to say to your assaulter. Whether you're completely SURE you'll NEVER confront them, or you might do it real soon, this writing has some serious potential to help you sort things out.

d. Make a list of things that are good for your mental health. Consider posting it on your wall, door, fridge, bathroom mirror. Mine goes like this:

coffee
tea
dessert
bike ride
cooking
scrubbing
printing
sewing
when it's really bad, running
loud music
jamaica kincaid
red mixtape
going fast (but not rushing – there's a difference.)

... Consider also carrying this list around in your wallet.

e. Some other lists I've made: Potential Responses from my assaulter, "Rich" to Being Confronted/How to Deal with Them; Facts About the Mediation (written pre-mediation to make it less overwhelming); My Goals for the Mediation; Things That Are Bad for My Mental Health; People I Don't Feel Safe Around (these last two were also useful for my friends to see)

2. To avoid feeling isolated or like "the only one," try to find avenues to expose yourself to how others have dealt. One way is to read zines on this—it might help to have friends research this or go with you to do it yourself. You might also talk to folks in your community who've dealt with this and are OK with talking about it. In my town, we have a history of survivors' situations

becoming sort of public and things going all haywire, which I think has to do with sexual assault being so hard to think about that a lot of members of our community would rather try to forget it ever happened than try to learn from our mistakes. In some ways that's made it easier to find out who I can talk to about assault and my experiences/needs — but obviously, in a lot of ways, it's made everything harder.

3. My really great friend recommends reading Hothead Paisan comics

4. setting aside an hour or two each day to write in your journal, and then — closing it and walking away

5. making sure you're eating (sufficient amounts of nurturing food)

6. “dating yourself”

7. watching episodes of Buffy (or movies, or whatever you like) while eating junk food (whatever that means to you) if you need to. I agree with her on these points.

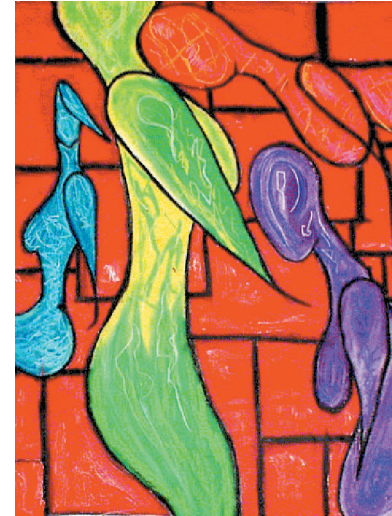
8. It can definitely help to get counseling. Remember, you're not stuck with it if it's not helping, and you can always switch counselors. If you're avoiding this, tell a friend you need someone to schedule it for or with you, and have someone spend some time helping you pamper yourself before/after. This is about making things better for you, not about dread.

9. Every situation is different, but sometimes confronting your assaulter can have more pros than cons for you. If you are interested in this, do some research, and get the support of some very level-headed people, and give it a lot of thought.

10. More than anything, remember: this wasn't your fault. No one could ever deserve this, no matter what your demons might be telling you. You are so amazingly strong: it takes so much to survive even a minute of this. You are brave and you deserve to get through this and to love your life.

11. And finally: Whatever you know in your bones is best for you, IS best for you. This is just a list of suggestions. They won't all work for everyone. For example, I have some trouble with #4. I tend to write for hours on end and then not write for days. We are all a little different and that is totally okay.

Sexual assault Resource List



Untitled
Liz Wattiker



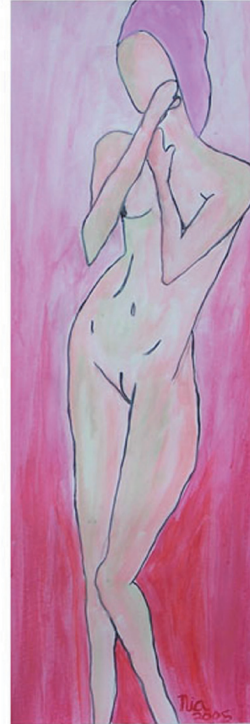
Lying Them Down Wrong
Maya Goldweber



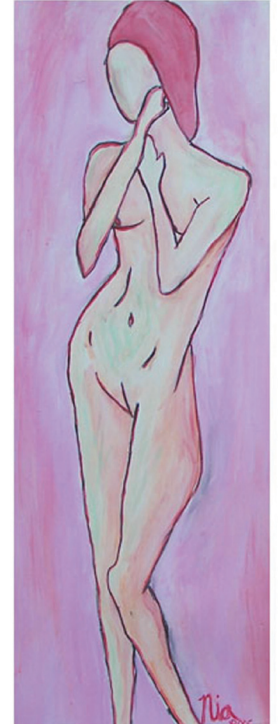
Temperature with Metal Tins
Maya Goldweber



Untitled
Sarah Irons



Schiele_Final.jpg
Nia Burks



Work
Tisa Kachanohoti



Infant Genital Mutilating Circumcision

Lisa Rhein

My God The scream
The tears shed
The boy lay strapped upon the bed
So small So soft
Precious head
bleeding on the bed
Screaming Crying
Bleeding red
needs you on the bed
Your choice Not his
So they said
howls upon the bed
The pain The scars
It will mend
not him upon the bed

The boy is
The boy he
The boy he
For you

FGM:Passing on the Tradition

Deepu Bindal
Nonfiction essay

FGM resources list

Ceres

The Place That I Desire

Raphaella Teshner

Is it a Utopia?
This place that I long for
Will it never be?
This place that I long for
No one is talking about another behind their back
No one is laughing as another passes
No one is being ignored because they don't have status
No one is being denied because of how they look
No one is being watched because of their color
No one is winning the election because of their religion
No one is being denied promotion because of their sex
No one is getting funny looks because of their gender
No one is unable because of a disability
No one is able because of their shape
No one is paid more because of their sex
Everyone has true equal opportunity
Everyone has the ability to succeed in society
Everyone
This is the place that I long for

Love At The Beginning

Lisa Rhein

Love at the beginning, at the end, and in between, is all that really matters.

I'm often paralyzed at times like these as to what to say. I wait... and wait... and wait... for just the right words to say... for just the right words to write...just the right thing to do... to come to my mind. Time comes and time goes and I'm still waiting.

While waiting what comes to mind is...

the passage of time

from birth to death...

How life begins and how life ends...

how the love that is in between is all that really matters.

How the softness of a babies skin returns in old age...

how we come out blinded by light and

leave in hope of finding pure light

how our first steps are so unsure

and so are our last

how our last unsure steps are often guided by those we guided...

While waiting what comes to mind is...

how much love matters...

How we start out like a bud, new, pink, sweet-scented, glowing,

and

become a

blossom fresh, colorful, fragrant, growing...

and

we end a

flower old, faded, malodorous, going,

how we grow, change, adapt, transition...

age.

While waiting what comes to mind is...

that love is what really matters...

How we nurture the baby into life...

the youth to teen, teen to young adult, young adult to middle age,

and middle age,

nurtures the old to death.

How as a baby we groped around on the floor and in old age we grope around in our minds.

How we grow in strength until we begin to weaken

How we are immature, then mature, then our minds become unsure...

How we spit up, sit up, stand up and walk

How we drool, sit down, fall down and talk

talk that might not make

sense, we begin to feel dense

our minds they defy us, our bodies deny us, once again we are shaky not very stately

How we were once so grand and now need a hand

again

...

as when we stepped into life, we step out, and we hope our frail hand will be held in love.

While waiting what comes to mind is

that love is all that really matters...

How the love that brings us to life, takes us through life, will lead us to the end of life.

How the hand we held... holds ours

and the

hearts that set ours beating

one day we'll watch seizing

to beat.

What comes to mind while I wait for the right thing to say is...

that love is all that really matters.

I won't wait, during this natural transition paralyzed, for just the right words to say... for just the right words to write...just the right thing to do... to come to my mind because what has come to my mind is that the love at the beginning, at the end, and in between, is all that really matters.

Fear Inside Self

Waldo Jeffers

It's 3 a.m. I'm sitting up in bed writing this as a distraction from loneliness. I'm wondering how I've managed to live twenty years without so much as getting a little loving from a girl. I don't know what's wrong with me. There must be something. I look in the mirror and I'm not repulsed. I know I'm not ugly. I know I'm not beautiful. Every time I'm with a girl, everything that comes out of me is wretchedly boring and so self-conscious. Yet around a girl happily taken, I am free to be myself, and make her laugh and make myself laugh and nothing, of course, happens.

Is it that I have been fooling myself? Do I only want to like girls? That would explain why I don't have the balls to just kiss one. It scares me. I have gay friends. They're fantastic people, usually much more down-to-Earth than anyone. But me, one of them; the thought is fucking terrifying.

My friends are cool people, but I have the suspicion that things wouldn't be the same if I was gay. Some of them may phase me out of their lives altogether. Oh, and my parents, they would cut me off, at least my father would. My mom might be able to come to terms with it, but it would take her years. But myself, to know that people would hate me for being me, I would hate the world so much. I would be so bitter. I may even turn suicidal.

I'm acting as though I've convinced myself.

I've felt the feeling only a few times. That intoxication that is so hard to describe. The first time it happened I was with some friends. We were meeting for lunch at a Sushi

restaurant. As I walking down the sidewalk, I saw my friends standing a block down from the Sushi place. They were talking to a girl with a short stack of paintings which she was trying to sell. Some of it was really impressive. I joined the group and we were all talking art. One of my friends asked her to have lunch with us. She agreed. She wasn't much older than me, probably around twenty three or twenty four. I don't remember her name anymore, but I do remember her face and her lips; both full and red and moving. At lunch we had the most brilliant conversation that was really about everything and she understood me immediately. She put me into words in a way I wish I could. If only it wouldn't come out of me conceited or remorseful. It was right when we were finishing lunch that it suddenly hit me how badly I wanted her. I didn't know what to say without it coming out weird, and we split ways. She had given me her email address. She told me to send her some of the things I've written and have yet to write after I'd told her that I write and am serious about it. I lost the address. For her I felt the strongest feeling, intoxication, attraction that I have ever felt.

I have felt something similar with both guys and girls. It happens when I realize how beautiful they are and we are connecting with an excited and glowing spark in our eyes because the vibes are so fantastic.

All this probably means that I am bisexual. My parent wouldn't see any difference there. My friends I'm suspicious of, I doubt they would see any difference either.

I'm going to try and sleep. This is too much for me in this moment. All I want is to share something with someone. For now I'll dream it.

Multiple Consciousness

jem fiasco

do you know what
it's like
to be
mini/many me's-

do you see what
I can
see through
mini/many eyes

do you think what
I think
of with
mini/many minds

do you feel what
I feel
flowing through
mini/many souls

I like this
dissociative identity
disorder, characters
and their flaws

I frequent the buffet
plate piled high
take a bite of me

taste mini/many desserts
taste mini/many desires
of mine

eat only
with yr heart's consent

never die poor
never die alone

though it is fretful
(never regretful)
to feed
mini/many me's

The Last Minuet

Dana Porush

They danced until long after the music had stopped. The decadence and romance of the evening had long since disappeared for everyone else. The few people left were drunkenly rummaging through the small pile of fur coats. Makeup smeared across her cheeks, the hostess slept on her velvet couch. Her cocktail still in her hand spilled onto her lap forming a dark purple stain on her lilac satin gown. It was a surprise to them that no one had tried to steal the extravagant diamond necklace from the hostess's neck. And perhaps it was the abundance of champagne or the Turkish coffee drink served after dinner, but they were still eager for the night to go on, dreading the inevitable sunrise. Reluctantly acknowledging their overstayed welcome, they picked up their coats and hailed a cab.

Leaving the Lakeside Avenue apartments behind them and rushing deeper into the city that was still so alive, Mae tightened the straps on her shoes and attempted at refastening Ryan's cufflinks. Mae ordered the cab to stop in front of a bustling nightclub. As they climbed out of the taxi, girls in short skirts and small revealing overcoats smoked furiously in front of the entrance to the club. The girls eyed Mae and Ryan in their formal dress wear. Mae pulled her hair off her shoulders with a rubber band she had found on the seat of the cab. Inside the club Mae took off her necklace and stuffed it into the hidden inside pocket of her mothers fox fur as she handed the coat to the big bouncer.

"You kids coming from a prom?"

Ryan laughed and grabbed Mae's arm. Mae smiled and tipped

her head at the bouncer as Ryan dragged her onto the dance floor. Girls danced webs around the men wearing expensive shoes and gold watches. Ryan felt like sometimes there was no escape from the diamond-encrusted lives they lived. Men peered down the shirts of unknowing girls who knelt a little lower. If it had been up to Ryan they would have gone to an intellectual coffee bar on the lower east side where they could discuss Hemmingway and listen to Feist drone in the background. Instead they were at this crowded sex-filled club. But it was Mae's night so Ryan went compliantly along. The truth was, Ryan didn't mind dancing, and actually rather enjoyed it, especially if it was beside Mae. Ryan had lusted after Mae since she had arrived at Ryan's school two years prior. Ryan never could have dreamed that this night would happen.

Men kept coming up and asking to dance with Mae. It was understandable, Ryan thought as Mae spun around revealing the grey tulle under her ashen silk dress. Leave it to Mae to rebel against the upper west side dress code.

Mae was out dancing on the floor with some tall boy and Ryan had retired to the lounge area where a group of girls were trying to revive their drunk and probably underage girlfriend.

"You might want to pull her shirt down" Ryan tapped on the red-headed girl's shoulder.

"What?"

"You might want to pull her shirt down, your friend, she is exposed." Ryan pointed to the drunk girl's naked breast. The redhead sneered and turned her attention back to her friend. Ryan looked out onto the dance floor where Mae was swinging her hair around her head. The boy's arms were wrapped around Mae's tiny body. She was holding her dress up exposing her small ankles and seemingly painful stiletto heels. The girls had finally left the lounge and now even the dance club was staring

to thin out. Last call had come and gone and in less than ten minutes the club would be closing.

The boy that Mae had been dancing with walked over to the bar. Ryan could see him writing something on a napkin. Mae smiled as he handed her the paper. He kissed her cheek and left. Ryan wished to make Mae smile the way the strange boy just had. Maybe someday Ryan thought. Mae turned towards Ryan and beamed. She grabbed Ryan's arm.

"Did you see him?" Mae gushed. "He goes to NYU Ryan, he studies *poetry*"

"Yes, I saw. Did he give you his phone number?"

"Yeah!" she squealed, "I don't know, I want to call him when we get back to Martin's apartment" Mae laughed as Ryan helped her into her coat.

"Let's go, you can call him tomorrow after dinner, tonight would be pushing it a little, no?"

"Maybe." Mae reached over to fix Ryan's tie as a cab pulled up to the curb. "It's best to wait anyway right? Isn't that how they play the game?"

"Yes, it's probably best to wait."

The next 2 train wouldn't be running for another forty minutes, so they decided to take a cab back to Williamsburg. Mae was cat sitting for her cousin Martin while he was on his honeymoon. It was a drastic change from their usual central park home with large open rooms, pianos, maids, and French lessons. Mae had asked Ryan to stay with her because she only truly felt safe when Ryan was around. Sometimes Mae would catch Ryan gazing out the classroom windows, and for a second she would believe that Ryan was the most handsome person on earth, that in some ways Ryan was this celestial being. Too good and smart for this materialistic world that they lived in.

Sometimes Mae would pretend that Ryan was her lover and they had escaped the scandals of the Manhattanites and got lost in this alternate world where money was of small value. She would dream that they lived in a small apartment with meager furniture and low rent like her cousin. They would never have any need to go to the west side ever again. They would choose to go to Bryant Park instead of Central park where, god forbid, they could run into someone from their old lives. Ryan could write novels on a vintage typewriter and Mae could find a job at a little diner, or perhaps making dresses for the little dress shop on the corner. They could pawn their jewelry and make all new friends. The kind of friends that didn't ask what the theme was of her debutante party, the kind of friends who didn't have memberships to a country club, or go to auctions. No one would have to know about their trust funds. They could live their happy lives in Williamsburg, and no one would ever have to know about the lives they led before they graduated from The Dwight School. It would be their secret. Something they both could have and keep.

By the time they arrived at Martin's place it was almost five a.m. and the dreadful sun would be up soon, prepared to ruin their perfect night. The champagne had long worn off and their feet were sore. Thankfully it was Sunday and they could sleep as long as they wanted. The inside of Martin's apartment was small and a little cold. It only had one bedroom and a bathroom that Mae could barely lay down in. Mae went into the bedroom and lit a candle, its warm soft glow a relief throughout the bleak apartment. Mae lifted her arms indicating she needed help with her dress. Ryan laughed and freed Mae from the corseted gown. The grey mass fell to the floor and Mae stood coyly covering her bare stomach. Mae reached around Ryan's neck and untied the bowtie as Ryan undid the cufflinks. Mae crawled into bed

which was just a mattress on the wooden floor. Ryan undressed in front of the mirror in hopes that their eyes would meet. Mae rolled onto her stomach.

“We should run away. Switch schools; go to a public school for a change. We could live in Williamsburg and pawn our jewelry. Think about it Ryan, we could start all over, we would never have to go back. We could be free from all the shame.”

Ryan’s pants fell to the floor next to the silk dress. The sky was turning a lighter shade of white; already one could tell it was going to be a dreary day. Ryan crawled under the sheets and Mae wrapped her arms around Ryan’s thin stomach. Mae’s body was trembling and for minutes they let the silence envelop them. Ryan was stunned with how quiet it was. The only sound was of Martin’s cat, Gunner, purring at their feet. Mae opened her eyes and kissed Ryan hard. She did not want anything to escape. They kissed until there were no remnants of the night before and the only witness to it was the soles of their shoes. Mae lifted her head and looked at Ryan who slept so perfectly under the ever diminishing yellow glow of the candle.

“Ryan?” Ryan shifted under the covers. Mae ran her fingers through Ryan’s short black hair.

“You are... infallible Miss Lydia Ryan.” she whispered “I don’t know how to explain it... you are just unlike any other girl I have ever met.”

The day stood still and the light continued to fight with the blinds as the candle lost its battle and gave out, leaving a soft grey trail behind its dramatic demise.

More Than Words

Elizabeth S. Wattiker

Her laugh is nothing short of enigmatic; pleasantly unexpected. She smiles to herself as the television plays a line from the past. Her voice cracks lightly - not quite noticeable unless you’ve spent endless hours talk about nothing with her. It’s the kind of crack in her voice that comes from a twelve hour work day, and a basketball game; even when her day has been ceaseless and tiring, she still brings an air of togetherness - pure confidence.

This is all emulated in her arms; the veins that start at her fingertips and run, like interstates up her forearms. Her hands could bend steel, but instead, they linger carefully in her sandy blonde hair. Pensive, gentle. It envelops her shoulders slightly, so as not to intrude. So as not to hinder her strength and her weaknesses all in one. The divots in her shoulders that look like they came out of a page in a magazine- perfectly cut to brace the weight that she carries.

She bites her lip, and I have to wonder what she’s thinking. Maybe the volume is too loud. She removes herself from the bed, tripping over my dog, calf muscles flexed and earnest- just as I suspected. She carefully turns the knob and shoots a glance in my direction...

The eyes that swell like the depths of the ocean- a vibrant blue-green, like the Sea of Cortez, like the sky on a summer day; not a cloud in sight. They catch me off guard and I can’t help but blush and avert my eyes from hers; it would be too easy to get lost in them tonight.

I know if I take my pen off of this paper, distraction will be inevitable, and I need to finish this draft. I need to make sure that I capture this moment. The essence.

It has been a long day. The sun set too early, and it will rise too quickly, no doubt. Life seems to come too quickly these days. It feels like just yesterday I was being thrown into this city; a new start, a fresh beginning, and now, not even seven months later, I feel jaded and tired. I tire of places quickly, I've never spent more than three years in any one, specific city (since I was old enough to make those decisions for myself, at least). I've never spent more than three years doing anything, come to think of it, with the exception of breathing, and going to school. I even gave up talking for a brief stint in 2002 when I thought all of my words were in vain (it didn't prove anything in the long run, except that I looked like an ass). Nothing in my life has ever seemed very permanent. My family has swayed in their opinion of me; in their reception of who I am as a human being. I've pushed friends and acquaintances away because I don't like the feeling of getting too close to someone and risking losing them for some unknown reason. Significant others have never really been too significant; not in retrospect at least. I've given myself, my life, to people who I never should have, but isn't that how it always feels when you look back on a past that haunts you relentlessly?

It's a night not unlike every other weeknight that I've spent for the past two months. I have been in class or at work since nine this morning; it's midnight now. Midnight and I still have two books to read, a paper to type, and some sort of incoherent dreams to be had. But this is how I function these days, and with her in my life, it doesn't seem quite as abrasive as it used to...

To use the phrase 'best friend' seems so cliché to me, and the last thing that I ever want to be is cliché: not in my writing, my thinking, my life in general. As I said before, people come and go in my life without much thought. When I first moved to this bustling little city, I wasn't looking for anything or anyone, with the exception of myself. I knew what I needed to do to pull myself out of the hole that I had descended into. I knew what I needed to do to piece my life back together. Like one of my mother's fine selections of Creamware, I had shattered into a thousand tiny bits; putting myself back together was my only option for survival.

Work and school would be the only things that I would let consume me, or become a significant part in my life; that had been the plan at least. The last thing that I expected was to meet someone at a bar, let alone, slowly let them into every aspect of my life.

At a glance, it wasn't an exceptionally electrifying night on the town. A few beers, some good friends, and a mix tape that would be the soundtrack to a night which would prove to be both eventful, and memorable; one for the records, you could say. I remember exactly what she was wearing, only because I'm naturally drawn to the color blue, there's no saying why...but chances are, that if you're wearing blue, I'll look twice.

An introduction wasn't something that I was looking for, but I couldn't help relaying the message to my close friend that, "That one over there is cute...." **Bad idea** - at least that's what I thought at the time.

"Hey Liz, I want you to meet Christy!", Lori exclaimed in a drunken slur.

Embarrassed, I stepped away from the side of the bar, hand extended, "Hey, nice to meet you....", the sheepish response wasn't abnormal. I'm not one to put myself out there, and being

what I would term as ‘fresh meat’ in the ever-changing social scene that I had submerged myself in, I definitely didn’t want to be the talk of the town the next day. I had been dragged, grudgingly, to “the bar” by friends, and wasn’t exactly thrilled. Needless to say, that night progressed through a trance of bass beats and salty shots of cheap tequila. Bodies grinding, laughing at the unknown, quick encounters that we chide one another about to this day; uninhibited self-expression through intoxication.

We stepped out of the club just in time to watch the sun rise; spinning swiftly and reluctant to deal with the scheduled activities that we were all individually obligated to, namely-work.

I didn’t think much about that night. My time was passed at S’ine Irish pub, waiting tables; distraught that I was missing the summer, allowing it to unfold, day by day, as I served Suits fish and chips and lost my sunny glow.

A few weeks passed, and I randomly heard from Christy, or, rather, she randomly heard from me. I figured “what the hell,” getting to know someone didn’t mean that a relationship had to be imminent, and, thankfully, Christy and I would spend the next seven months dissecting each others psyche, our pasts and presents; never lingering too long on the future.

More than anything, she knew that I was not looking for a relationship. My issues with trust had extended further than I had imagined, not to mention the fact that upon leaving Radford University, only a few months prior, I had left a series of books unfinished; never having any closure to my past relationships or friendships. A true friendship was all that I needed from her; someone to stand by me through thick and thin, even if it meant seeing and hearing things that weren’t always encouraging. I never expected to meet someone who would help me make sense of so many things. My past, that

which deviously haunted me day to day, was something that she understood and helped me to navigate. My present, heavily laden with distrust and circumspection, was warmly received, even when I pushed her out of my life time and time again in response to my own insecurities. Six months passed, and I grew to understand what unconditional love really was. It’s something that I had never truly experienced before with the exception of my family. Christy gave me a no-holds-barred-friendship; a trust that I was reluctant to embrace. She has let me see that there is more to a relationship than surface tensions that will fade with time; pretenses that shatter when things get tough.

A piece of blue-lined notebook paper, folded in four, flaps underneath the weight of my windshield wiper. “Meet me on Mars” is scribbled hastily in red ink. It’s a Thursday in mid-October. The wind gusts and the sky threatens rain-maybe more. It smells like snow to me, but I’m not so naive as to think that I would be that lucky as to be graced with a day off of school. She has left me a note, a little indication of the events for the night to come.

*

It’s 12:34 a.m. and rain is coming down in sheets outside of Mars Bar, the local watering hole for scene kids, underage drinkers, the homeless, and everyone in between. I’ve lost her in the clutter that surrounds us-the clutter of drama that has ensued, the lines that have been blurred for too long, the inconsistency, the lack of a label which has caused confusion. I catch her headed out the door, gracefully barreling through the sea of oblivious frat boys; collars popped with pride. Immediately, all senses heightened, all pseudo-tipsiness aside, I realize that letting her walk out of that door is just as significant as letting her walk blatantly out of my life.

I trip over the collage that surrounds me, and am thrown into the street that has become a tiny river. Were Noah here, he'd be building his ark; a fleeting thought that crosses my mind.

She's just across the street, and I carefully dart in between city cars; the ones with bumpers chipped, and headlights amiss.

"Christy, wait!" is all I can muster, wiping the ceaseless raindrops from my face. She turns around, nonplussed.

"Are you kidding me?" she pauses, "Since when do you run after anyone, Liz!?", she asks with a coy edge.

Standing eye to eye, all I can do is shake my head. I push the hair off of her face, her jaw rests on the periphery of my hand, and her eyes burn into me; that blue-green-gray that catches me when I'm least expecting it.

"Since when, Liz....and why would you run after me?"

To date, she has seen the worst of me, the best of me, and everything in between. Saying that she's a "best friend" doesn't really suffice; Christy is someone who has shown me what it is to take care of someone, and what it means to be a genuinely good person...hopefully, she'll be in my life indefinitely. She's the first person in a long time who understands where I've been, and what I've experienced; the good with the bad...

She puts the book down that she's spent the past two hours effortlessly paging through and looks at me with a hint of exhaustion in her shimmering eyes. I ask her why she's crying; only mildly concerned, women are notorious for having random "moments"...I can say this, only because I'm a woman, and I know. Even with that said, it's strange to see her affected. This statue of strength in my eyes, however feminine, has shed

a tear at the end of her novel.

We laugh carelessly at the unspoken- we've both been there. Crying at a happy ending, or having a life altering moment as the last word of the last chapter meets the period at the end of the page. She tosses the book nonchalantly to the ground, without a word, and turns off the light with a flick of her wrist. Smiling timidly, her sandy hair falls on my shoulder, her arm around my waist, so vigilantly. Her arms, the ones that mimic a highway roadmap; tight around my hip.

"You're quiet tonight," she whispers into my shirt, inhaling a mixture of Patchouli and Eight.

"I'm thinking," is all I can proffer as a response.

There is no change in her voice, the innocuous cracking that comes with sleep as she divulges to me the ending of the novel from her perspective- it's one I've already read. Words grow further and further apart as her breath deepens and slows. Her hand loosens its grip on my jutting hip bone and she's in another place; facing those incoherent dreams that I can only hope to have tonight. This may be the first time in months that she's fallen asleep before I have.

And in my head, a line from a song played, that seemed too appropriate, "I watch your chest rise and fall, like the tides of my life, and the rest of it all."

I slowly drift to sleep, forgetting to set my alarm for the morning, which will, inevitably, arrive too quickly...

CONFUSION

Annie ridout

You're on my mind everyday, whether it is the speaking of
your name or gazing into the sky.

Walking the beach, hiking the mountain. I don't understand
the times!

If my mind thinks it and conceives it, then one should be able
to achieve it. Yet can I?

I know I want it but my heart says to wait. Then you tell me
the timing is never right.

I don't know you, yet I like you. If I die it is you I want to
die beside.

I only hope for the years to be with you.

I can only hope to have faith that the years are part of ones
predestined.

I want to learn to love all of you, your artist ability, and the
knowledge inside

that you carry on the outside.

The deepest mystery of your eyes--

leads to the beauty in which your soul hides.

Queer Resource List

Choke

Megan Schulze

So here's a little something to choke down. An abstract, if you will, of swollen tongues droning with lip-locked femininity. Oh what misconception. Oh what a delightfully delicious cliché. Do bring a knife and fork because I am Lucy the sirloin steak. I'm Lucy; the always pleasant, always polite, always pinky up when drinking a god-damn cup of tea, always daintily sitting. *Now Lucy don't forget to cross those legs so there's no winking going on down there*, on my white-washed, white-trash, white-world porch. You can't fool me though. I'm a wanton carousel hell-bent towards lewdness and self-indulgence; an ample aphrodisiac completely aware of those Jesuit stares screaming: "Hey you! Aha... I made you blush!" Except... I really am blushing, but down there. Baby pink, where no one can see. It will be our little secret... but only if you hold me and take me home.

Home. That lukewarm setup of dirty tiles and greasy air, weepy lilac printed wallpaper, and perverted Jo downstairs with the Italian cut and blue-cheese stained shirt giving me the old "fuck me eyes." I'm blushing again, but oh what a contradiction my Richmond paradigm of bohemian sarcasm is. Another life lived with the bitter aftertaste of lost innocence and upheld female modesty; a tasty tidbit for those midnight meat cravings.

Gushing and tumbling, soaked in cunnilingus imagery, this organ-grinder is suddenly hushed by darting eyes over early-

bird newspaper tops screaming: "Look at that Ham!"... that box lunch. Instead of purring I simply "harrumph," pressing my hot forehead against the thick bus window, just to feel its coolness, thickness, just to rest for only a moment and remember; tiptoes over sunshine and round mermaid eyes. Yet, unfortunately pinned between a buxom tweed hip and a ripe plaid jacket, I simply resorted to closing my eyes. I'm on my way home... always on my way home.

Home-going

Tess von Gezcy

This gentle metal monster will take me away,
Swallow and hold me in its benign maw
To carry me over this small wide world.
We know no rest, she and I,
The whale to my temporal Jonas.
And when her mouth re-opens to spit me out,
I wonder to which awaiting world she'll have
Seen fit to transport me.
One terrible,
 fantastic,
 frightening,
But surely not new?
 Surely.
Only filled with maybe wanting shadows
Of what was left behind
All those many eons ago.

Lip Glue

Diana Nickelsen

Stoic South Dakota Senator
slips a stronghold over my ovaries.
He applies
Rubber cement lip gloss and
Naked-
I stayed and numb
At 13
Night after night as
Foster father
Fast-Thrust his sweaty body over me—
Pumped me full of demon seed.
I lay hollow, still
I stayed and numb.
They say I have no choice any more.
Man
Made
me a slave-
Child labor in a baby making factory-
Shuffling papers and a smile for the news.
I lay in the hospital
As they told
Me that I must cast this--reminder
Into the world
To-dandelion-flower
In a foster home somewhere
Out there-
It will always be.
I stayed and numb,
Scraped his foul secret out with a
Coat hanger from the rack.
I am already dead.
Only life can beget life.
I stayed and numb,
Slipped mutely away.

180 Degrees and Getting Colder

L.E. Grabenstetter

I could never tell a nickel from a dime,
a man from a beast, the beard hides all you need to know
in the gnash of his sweet-smelling prickle,
meeting between kisses taken and kisses given and
really what's the difference? when a choice is not a choice but
a wrenching birth,
sores scraping your insides clean of anything but a wet heart-
beat
and a raw cheek from where he bent to touch you.
While it's still all a question of degree.

Self-determination

Quillin

self-determination (slfd-tûrm-nshn) n. 1. Determination of one's own fate or course of action without compulsion; free will. 2. Freedom of the people of a given area to determine their own political status; independence.

Self-determination is a woman's right to live a life free of sexual and intimate partner violence

Self-determination is the right for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer persons to parent and be on the birth certificate

Self-determination is the right for youth to think, act, create, and build a world/revolution to fit THEIR needs

Self-determination is the right for poor people to have access to QUALITY health care without losing their homes

Self-determination is a people's right to live free of imperialism and create communities that serve their needs

Self-determination is a woman's right to decide if, when, and how many children she will have

Self-determination is a drug users right to have access to sterile syringes to protect themselves and their communities and families from harmful viruses and disease

Self-determination is the right to a living wage and safe working environments

Self-determination can be many things. Self-determination also defines the ways so many of our struggles are connected.

For more conversation and to build coalitions....
Email southernabfund@nnaaf.org

RRFP Resource List

Ceres

Editor's Note on Survival

Ceres

