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## A Story About A Girl With Snakes For Hair

Kate M. Turner  
VCU

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**VCU**

Graduate School

**Theses and Dissertations Graduate School**

# **A Story About A Girl With Snakes For Hair.**

Kate Turner  
Virginia Commonwealth University

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts, Sculpture + Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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## Abstract

My work is autobiographical. I use various art making processes to create a visual archive of my life. By abstracting these memories and experiences, I can examine how culture works surrounding issues of identity. This is my story.

**Part One**  
The Girl With Snakes For Hair

I grew up in West Chester Ohio.  
“White Chester” we would call it.  
It was a township made up of around 62,000 people.  
One of those “Voted best place to live by so and so Magazine”,  
kind of places.  
Where only 7.99% of the population lived in poverty.  
75% of the families were considered traditional.

The traditional family.  
I had one.  
A man and a woman and one or more biological  
or adopted children.  
I was that adopted child.

In 1990 I was born into a too familiar situation.  
My mother did not have the resources to take care of me.  
That’s the story I grew up to know.  
I was adopted by Dick and Malana.  
Two musicians.  
Looking to complete their family with one more.  
They had already adopted a child two years before.  
Sidonie, my sister.  
A unique spelling of the name,  
inspired by music.

I imagine music was my parents first love language.  
I remember they would play together.  
Mom on the piano,  
Dad on trumpet.  
A duet so in sync it could only have been composed of time and care.  
It’s one of the only memories I have of them intimate together,  
and happy.  
That and the one time, when I caught them having sex.  
But what was that!?  
I remember the feeling of walking in on *something*  
and not knowing what it was.  
And why couldn’t I sleep in their bed?  
What was the thing that made them want to do that?  
I had not been introduced to that *thing*,  
I was,  
at the time,  
innocent.

Both my sister and I are black.  
Dick and Malana are white.  
That is what made our family not so traditional.  
Transracial adoption was not as common then as it is now.  
Media had not yet branded celebrities' black children as a trend.  
It was common enough to have a paradox.  
Not common enough to name the complex that comes with it.

At *that* time the ads that ran in the paper about black children marked us as,  
"unwanted".

That's what I was told the paper called me.  
Unwanted black children filled orphanages with no one to claim them.  
Dick read this paper and was furious.  
They wanted a baby,  
black or white.  
They didn't see color.  
They were color blind.

He wrote to the government demanding an explanation.  
He was the first person to fight for me.  
When he would tell me this story, as a child,  
I saw him as some kind of superhero.  
Funny how some stories don't age well.

I read in a tweet that it takes three generations to forget someone  
completely.

You were my hero,  
and I believed you could stand the weight of that word.  
Hero.  
Maybe it was the time that caught up to you.  
Batman after all is a capitalist fascist who beats up poor people and  
Prince Charming only wants pictures of your feet.  
And all that might just be too much,  
for most.  
So we throw a half-tone over it,  
and talk about throw-backs in code.  
#tbt

#transformationtuesday

#Waybackwednesday

#Memorymonday

#throwbackthursday

#flashbackfriday

I don't think kids build relationships with adults.  
Adults build them with kids.  
So if I had to describe my relationship with my father,  
right now, with my glasses on?

I would say he was my

coach, conductor, clown, cop, captain, cookies

Consonance, a beat?

It's the beat you gave to me.

Sid in a name,

Me in song.

Brass.

I remember you giving me lessons on my trombone.

I remember.

I remember a little very happy girl eating Oreo cookies with her best friend.

Looking back,

fuck my neck hurts.

But us black women are used to watching our backs.

I am trained in that stretch.

I actively look back

on my childhood

with such sickening *n*

*o*

*s*

*t*

*a*

*l*

*g*

*i*

*a.....*

Spending days on end in the creeks that ran between the neighborhoods,  
and along and under the roads,  
in my suburbs.

Spending late nights causing mayhem in the computer room of our finished basement.

That basement,

like many Midwestern suburban finished basements,

with a computer room,

saw too much.

First blood on the walls was mine.

My innocence,

fading.

Kissing wavy haired boys on trampolines.

Garage hopping. Rock throwing. Cig smoking.

Born from A.O.L., Wheelchair Jimmy, and that plastic blow up furniture.

Belly laughs.

My childhood was amazing.

I was a CREEK KID.



I unknowingly murdered so many tadpoles,  
and snakes,  
and frogs,  
and I just wanted to  
explore  
and touch  
and laugh and laugh.

I was governed by that *thing* that we spoke of,  
then.  
Especially then, during the *early* creek days.  
Sticking my hands under rocks,  
grabbing snakes like it was nothing.  
Motions of someone that knows how tiny one is in the world,  
and how precious moments of entanglement are.  
Receptors of a child let loose in the suburbs and told to “come home before  
dinnertime.”

In my younger years I was what was called a  
“tomboy”.  
I hated anything “girly.”  
Tech Decks, mud ball fights, and hunt’n.  
My parents wanted a boy before they got me.  
My sister had told me so in a taunt one day.  
“Mom and Dad didn’t even want you.”  
Add them to the list.

I ran around with the most wild and rambunctious group of boys.  
White boys of all shapes and sizes.  
We made a dirt bike trail near one of the creeks we played at.  
That was our spot.  
That’s where I learned my first care tool,  
building.  
We built what seemed like a village in those creeks.  
The boys and I.  
Building bonds and bridges to futures imagined.  
We were constantly in competition with each other.  
“Who can jump this higher than me?”  
“Bet you can’t spit past that tree over there.”  
“Dare you to yell fuck as loud as you can.”  
I could never pass on a dare,  
it’s still hard to resist.  
We were always poking fun at each other, the way kids do.  
“Ha! You throw like a girl!”  
“I got more boobies than you do!”

“Eww what are those? Snakes for hair?”  
“Look, it's Medusa! Run!”  
Sometimes I had wished I was Medusa.  
With the power to turn them all to stone.  
But I didn't know we already had to many towns  
full of statues of white men.

If only I knew then what I know now,  
about the powers of a black woman's hair.  
The histories it holds.  
The rituals necessary to have a healthy crown.  
Responsibility, self care, ritual.  
Tools to navigate the systems I would later be thrown in.  
I can't say I would have been unstoppable,  
because I am not a superhero,  
But with that knowledge I would have been stronger.  
It would have been enough to feel stronger,  
in a self.

I wonder what powers the creek holds now.

*N*  
*o*  
*s*  
*t*  
*a*  
*l*  
*g*  
*i*  
*a* is there,  
it will always be there.

No matter what McMansion sits there now.  
The McMansion,  
a by product of *n*

*o*  
*s*  
*t*  
*a*  
*l*  
*g*  
*i*  
*a* itself.

It wades in the pools of the emotional excess.  
What part does

*n*  
*o*

s  
t  
a  
l  
g  
i

a play in this **thing**?

Let's call it **desire** for now.

**Desire.**

No one seemed to mention **desire** to me with the depth,  
and dialogue needed to even remotely understand it.

I remember the talk about not taking **desire** from strangers.

**Desire** shape shifts into potato chips.

Little girls get fat and start an ABC diet.

**Desire** touches your hair without asking.

**Desire** flies down the hill in a big red wagon,  
with your best friends and you.

My **desire** ran wild.

I was fearless.

Fear.

**Fear.**

In a culture of cult manners one can get used to a gag.

There is a sense of freedom in keeping your mouth shut sometimes.

We don't teach the right times though.

Suppression is key to success.

Gotta hide those maladjustments.

Where was that coach, cop, captain, caregiver to teach me emotional intelligence?

If I grew up knowing that word.

But I grew up on "I dare you to's" and competition.

On putting it all out on the field.

No holding back.

The kid other moms would talk about while wine drunk.

The wild *other* in me they **feared**.

**Fear** is a funny thing.

**Fear** is a white boy a grade younger than you  
who must have misread the cards you had dealt.

**Fear** can quickly turn a game of flirt into a nightmare.

**Fear** was the quiver in my voice as I said no.

**Fear** and **shame** can both burn skin.

Worse than a relaxer.

Chemical combinations and lack of conversations

leave scars.  
A touch can be a force of mass destruction.  
Forces that parents need to teach young children  
before they learn at the hands of the lies we won't admit.  
Before they learn and become another statistic  
in the systems that we built.  
Like the kids in the churches,  
stuck in the systems  
forever.

FUCK THE CHURCH.  
I say I don't believe in God,  
but I also say I have met the devil.

**SHE** was a bible thumper that lived down the street.  
Her house a shrine to "his almighty".  
Concealed in the Christian gaze by tiny Jesus eyes watching you from atop crucified  
door frames.

**SHE** was what I would come to find out to be a manipulator.  
Playing the worst kinds of tricks on people.  
I was a bystander to a kid's game of torture.  
Guilty in my silence for later not telling my parents.  
When it came time to pay it was only easy to blame me.

**SHE** wouldn't do that.  
**SHE** was a child of God.

What was I?  
An unwanted black child,  
remember?  
I pleaded my innocence.  
I had what they would say  
"Nothing to fall back on"  
Not whiteness  
Not maleness  
and no faith.  
God saw me and said I was to be unwanted,  
and this innocent impersonator sits and smiles,  
with her eyes  
telling me I am her submissive.

Her parents were there defending their kin  
with the holy shields the heavens provided.  
Yelling names from a book I was only familiar with because of that class  
I was "encouraged" to go to.  
Where I was "encouraged" to remember bible verses by receiving flare to embellish a  
Jesus vest.

That seems to be a theme in my life.

Shame.

Forced Shame.

And fashion.

Her parents sat there and touched her.

My parents stayed at arm's length.

Telling me I am her submissive by telling me,  
to "admit it."

What so we can take the walk of *shame*,

across our white picket fence,

where our grass must not be greener,

because HER house was on the other side.

If SHE was to win and this god didn't want me,  
then he was no god of mine.

I was an alien.

I was foreign.

I was not holy.

There was no man that governed me named god.

So I will say it again, fuck the church.

Fuck our religions.

All stupid corrupt system.

I was forced to live in these white coded systems,

made and reshaped to maintain a distance from the other side.

Benefits made to stay on benefits.

School to prison industrial complex.

"Freeze! Don't move or I'll shoot!",

but that doesn't always equal freedom.



**Birth Certificate Performance**

Performance Still

Materials: Original Birth Certificate

I waited a couple of days before I messaged my birth mother.  
I had found her on facebook after paying for my original birth certificate.  
I was afraid she would ask me if I believed in god.  
Fear and shame both still there.  
Embedded in the bindings of my archive.  
An archive I am making through my art.

Some people need to believe in these systems like religion.  
It's a lot to hold onto,  
when you believe that this is all for you,  
like I do.  
That the world gives you no redos.  
#thoughtsandprayers  
So they can believe  
our babies,  
our D.O.A. babies,  
our  
Tuskegee babies,  
OUR  
strange fruit babies  
have a place to go to when privilege comes a knocking  
with a new smile on his face.  
And this smile lives next door, or writes your prescriptions, or wears a badge.  
And he's not that boy who took things too far with his desires anymore.  
He's now a man who was never taught that his desires  
need boundaries.  
And that has to change.

Or he is just going to keep perpetrating.

And the hashtag graveyard of our babies will keep consuming more names,  
forever entombing them in our systems.

#TRAYVON MARTIN

#KEITH SCOTT

#ATATIANA JEFFERSON

#JONATHAN FERRELL

#JORDAN EDWARDS

#STEPHON CLARK  
#AMADOU DIALLO  
#RENISHA MCBRIDE  
#TAMIR RICE  
#SEAN BELL  
#WALTER SCOTT  
#PHILANDO CASTILE  
#AIYANA JONES  
#TERRENCE CRUTCHER  
#ALTON STERLING  
#FREDDIE GRAY  
#JOHN CRAWFORD  
#MICHAEL BROWN  
#JORDAN DAVIS  
#SANDRA BLAND  
#BOTHAM JEAN  
#OSCAR GRANT  
#COREY JONES  
#AHMAUD AUBREY  
#BREONNA TAYLOR

#justicefor(You Son Here).

There was another white girl down the street,  
on the other side.  
I let the other girl fuck me.  
I was 11.  
That purity that **sue** had that made **her** so special.  
That purity dads wave around at balls under disco lights,  
building sick chastity cages,  
and forced promises.  
Wanting to be the first one to put a ring on their  
baby's tiny  
little  
finger.  
More trauma.  
All for the control of our bodies.  
Gave mine away for a night of fun with a caring friend  
who knew just a touch more.  
Who let their **desire** meet my **desire**.

Experimentation.  
I just wish I would have more explanation.  
Deeper tools than meditation.  
Tools for my black liberation.  
How are generations supposed to build nations  
if we hold them to our imagined limitations?

**SHE** is friends with my mom on facebook.  
Has kids, was married in a church.  
Does she hold trauma like me?  
Or does her god help wash it away,  
like Dove on brown dirty skin.  
I can see why someone would want one  
something to take the shame away,  
fight fear.  
Someone who will forgive you when you let desire turn into greed.

The night of my mother's stroke I had wished there was a god.  
I pounded my fist against the ground,  
as the ambulance lit up the sky  
like fireworks.

I hate fireworks.

With all of me I asked god to make my mother whole again.  
To bring the light back in her eyes  
that she would have  
when she played  
the piano.  
She is a lovely person on the piano.  
There is no god.  
I have not seen that woman again.  
She fades in my memories.  
Nostalgia playing her games,  
making her mothering  
just a burn on the leg  
with a hot comb  
and the piano plays next to a pile of Christmas presents.

## Part 2

### Ethereal Moments of A Midwestern Athlete

“You're not going to get into college without a scholarship”  
Words I can clearly remember spoken by my father.



From a young age I was an athlete.  
My body was made to move.  
Trophies lined my walls validating my performance.  
I learned to love my name in the papers.  
The applause of a crowd.  
To tantalize the idea of performing my way out of this town.  
After all "Most Likely to be on ESPN" was my senior superlative.  
That's midwestern code for written in stone.  
I trained and practiced,  
building my body into the perfect spectacle.  
The perfect package for entertainment.  
The perfect shield.  
I wouldn't be beat,  
by strength again.  
I threw myself at the athletic system.  
Happy to be surrounded in an environment with diversity.  
Able to adopt an identity,  
temporarily.  
Forced happy family, ten to thirty girls, a coach and me.  
If we were to be consumed by all around us,  
like that,  
shouldn't we have a system of protection?  
I was once after all a young,  
promising,  
female,  
gymnast.  
They needed protection.  
Because those systems in place were made just to see us dance in boxes,  
all for entertainment and profit.  
And they were just kids.  
We were just kids.  
They are just kids.

My nickname was Gumby because I was so flexible.

Growing up in White Chester, most who consumed me were WPP.  
"Your pretty for a black girl",  
"Nigger is a certain type of black person, You're different"  
White girls throwing hard Rs over wet cigarettes.  
The hallways were a totally different playing field then the turf.  
I wish blackness came with a playbook.  
Maybe if I had been introduced to "Chicken Heads"  
or Bell Hooks,  
or Toni, or Tupac.  
Maybe I would have had my shield,  
instead of feeling  
so  
alone.



**“You Can't Sit Here” 2019**

**Materials:** Couch, Marble, Assorted Hair Oils, Wood, PVC Pipes, Metal Drain,

**Dimensions:** 8ft x 12ft x 14ft

A couch hangs upside down on a wall and slowly seeps hair oil onto a white marble floor. I am 10 and my neighbor is telling me not to sit on their new couch because my hair oils will ruin it. I was young but the memory still shoots stinging tentacular bolts of hot emotion to my face. I am 10 and uncomfortable and in this installation, the viewer is there with me. My memories often come to me in nightmare-like visions or fantastical dreams. I use these surreal illusions to create work that opens up space for dialog around identity.

Blonde haired peers had mothered my sense of self.  
My mother had not been the same since betrayed by her body, her music, and her husband.  
Or whatever order they went in.  
I wouldn't know,  
emotions were not talked about in the house.  
Or out of it.  
I mean who needs therapy when depression is really just you not trying hard enough?

To get attention when I was young I would exaggerate my asthma attacks.  
My parents would take me to the hospital where all attention was on me.  
No more competition for the day.  
For attention.  
For acceptance.  
Just lovely people running all around making sure I didn't "need anything."  
It was always warm blankets and the concerned eyes of my parents.  
And everyone touched me,

with care and healing powers.  
Maybe that's where I developed the love language of manual care.  
Distinct from the multitude of modalities of care.



***Untitled Installation Room***

**Materials:** Two monitors, redacted personal bills, artificial flowers, dirty laundry, a bed

**Duration:** Two 1hr films on loop.

2019

Film Link: <https://vimeo.com/383660843>

Young women can be brutal to each other.

I tried on so many costumes,  
so many masks,  
so many bodies,  
to try to feel normal,  
comfortable,  
accepted,  
pretty.

Most of all I wanted to feel pretty.

Priorities right?

What else was I supposed to think when I grew up with the internet?

Voteforfun.com only talked about the pretty girls.

I wasn't a pretty girl.

What else was I supposed to think when all my rambunctious

boy friends

turned into my white girl friends'

boyfriends

and I was left  
the unwanted black child  
with snakes for hair,  
remember?

Pretty = Popular = Important = White =why am I in love with Sarah Michelle Gellar and The Pink Power Ranger?

The only tool I knew how to use was my body.  
If the boys were fucking me,  
then I must be as pretty as the girls they dated.  
Other girls othering me must be from jealousy right?  
I asked into a void not equipped to answer back.  
That's what you told me,  
"they are just jealous."  
I wish I didn't think my hands could medicate me.  
Fist-fights at the waffle house.  
Not gonna talk shit if you don't have teeth to talk through.

My first fight was because I was "too white".  
My dad defended me against the system,  
again.  
But with no justice.  
Suspension.  
"She was just jealous of what you have."  
The haves and the have nots.  
I was told I was a have and that was something.  
The haves are the ones who get places in the world.  
Now all I haves are regrets for listening to the stupid fucking advice.  
Guess I'll make art about it.

When the time came my body was packaged and sold  
to Bowling Green State University on a full ride to play soccer.  
I had a new daddy in my life and I called him coach.  
They really don't prepare athletes for reality.  
After all only 2% of NCAA student-athletes become pro.  
College athletes graduate at a far lower rate than normal students.  
I went to the mandatory athletic lecture on how not to get sexually assaulted.  
A little too late.  
Most of us were one of the statistics.  
Some of us to become one.  
Perpetrate one.  
Ya the football players were there too.  
So it's not like you can say you did not know you were wrong.  
Privilege,

what a thing.

What about the lecture on how to survive after the university uses my skill and revenue making abilities without providing me with the means necessary to provide for myself in life outside of athletics?  
I never had a chance in hell at becoming pro.

And look at the pro black athletes we have now.  
Serena Williams,  
no matter how many championships she wins  
she is still seen/not seen  
as that girl from Compton.  
Colin Kapernick,  
told to just “shut up and play.”

We play in white light boxes  
bodies breaking  
for their profit  
and it must be done  
with a smile.  
But what is the alternative?  
Black people have had to perform in  
the cry smile mask for centuries.  
We have been commodified  
to the point of dehumanization.  
One outburst of dissatisfaction  
and we are ungrateful,  
un-American,  
thugs,  
animals.  
Michelle Obama,  
The First Lady of the United States,  
was compared to an ape.  
All the degrees won't lift the veil because the veil is a second eyelid.  
We have yet to evolve out of it.

### **Part 3** Precious Times

I started stripping at the age of 20.  
I found myself in a position where I needed money.  
I needed resources.  
I needed help.

A lot of sex workers fall into this line of work for the same reasons.  
There are also a lot of sex workers who come to it for other reasons.  
All our stories are different.

All our stories are important.  
Sex work is real work.

My formative years as an athlete,  
a spectacle,  
a mover,  
had trained me for dancing.  
My athletic black body, something of a commodity.  
Men, women,  
all eyes on me,  
as I enticed them into keeping my lights on.  
False hopes with long blinks.  
Fake laughs to comfort egos.  
I was caring for them as much as they were caring for me.  
Except my care was emotional and physical labor.  
Their care was in the form of bills.  
When I was desperate or low I would prostitute.  
always finding a man in my life I could trade *desires* with.  
Comfort for sex, sex for comfort.  
Talking about decolonizing the nuclear family.  
I let so many people raise me, fuck me, beat me.  
I flipped it and now The Gaze is dead in my work, my kids have so many dads  
who freakin love them,  
and we are all doing just fine.  
Haven't gotten the system beat yet,  
but I can feel it coming.  
Am I doing it right?  
For so long I thought I was doing everything wrong.  
Maybe because I had not built the language,  
or built a way to build a language  
to best tell that system  
to fuck off.  
Fuck all the fucks off.  
I thought language was so important because I had been surrounded by slick tongued demons  
my whole life.  
Jack was the slickest tongue of them all  
him and *n*

*o*  
*s*  
*t*  
*a*  
*l*  
*g*  
*i*

*a* were best friends.

Through their lense,  
Jack smells of car rides to soccer practice,

or SB08.

I learned in AA to at least admit I have a problem.

Along with a list of things *n*

*o*

*s*

*t*

*a*

*l*

*g*

*i*

*a* is one.

She is a pill that makes you forget to see,  
a Disney dream.

She is a tool to make you remember,  
like when America was Great.

And she will try to make you forget  
that Jack beats you every time you go back.

And will gaslight the fuck out of you.

Shame you.

Because "Fuck are you pregnant?" shouldn't be an appropriate response to  
"hey I am not drinking anymore,"  
right?

I became one of the 33% of college athletes  
that do not graduate college.

Turns out the contract I signed allowed the university access  
to my body,

and only the university.

A stripper, how could you?

Shame, shame, shame.

Kiss that scholarship goodbye.

Only we can make you dance.

Only we can make your money.

Scholarship gone.

Bye bye American dream.

I lived in my van for a bit.

I experienced what it was like not having a safe home.

Not being able to pay bills.

Have you ever cried in a grocery store because you couldn't afford a can of Manwich?

White Russian mornings,

followed my cocaine dreams.

I was an addict and suicidal and that's where I was when I got pregnant.

How do I survive in a place that's created to keep me still?

Like I said I was born to move.

**Part 4**  
Motherhood

Motherhood.

There are not enough words,  
or there are just none.

I wasn't ready.  
I was scared,  
and alone.

Twice I reached out my hand and felt the light gesture of loneliness.  
We did a dance.  
And I accepted its embrace.

I stretched my body into the shape of a tool,  
and began to fix myself.  
For them,  
and me,  
and  
no one else.

The little girl with snakes for hair was now staring at me.  
With the same big brown eyes I used to hate.  
And I had to take every

**Now?**

*N  
o  
s  
t  
a  
l  
g  
i*

*a* is just your anti-mother in a fursuit.

Beautiful seductress.

Fucking weird.

Begging you to take another drink.

Your sobriety is new,



so your mind is still fuzzy.  
You don't know how this new body works.  
She entices you with a Lisa Frank sticker and a family album.  
You get goosebumps.  
Salivate from the pastel fauna and flora decorated life,  
you used to have.

*N*

*o*

*s*

*t*

*a*

*l*

*g*

*i*

*a* isn't that bad if you take it in small doses right?

I'm an addict, ass hole.

And *n*

*o*

*s*

*t*

*a*

*l*

*g*

*i*

*a* fucks you in the ass every time

even though I said no,

remember that?

I do **now**.

**Now**, when we scream "but it's 2020!"

Still in dismay that X, Y, or Z is still happening.

And tech is bringing us posthuman.

The web!

How are our kids supposed to navigate feelings

when they can get so much (miss)information from the web.

One search and they land on a person fucking an alien dildo  
from Primal Hardware and their dick gets hard.

What will you say?

What will you tell her?

Lock them in a box?

Disown them? ya we are still doing that.

I want my art to be something someone can come to.

Gather around,

find themselves in.

Like dispersed vibrations,

if we are all on different wavelengths  
then we won't be as loud.  
Music is in my blood.  
Being loud is in my nature.  
Like I said, I was born to move.

I am still broken.

My words and equations still don't always add up.

But I cut away that second eyelid.  
And with my hands,  
through my art,  
and with the hands of whoever will help me,  
I will heal myself and hopefully in the process help heal somebody else.



**“Cooking A Steak With A Hot Comb”**

Performance Still

**Materials:** Hot Comb, T-Bone Steak, Pink Hair Sheen, Leather Whip, Hair Glitter Spray, Mirror

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/374338640>

When I was young I used to get my hair braided into long braids. I would get so excited when I got to choose different colors to put in my hair. The boys would tease me and call my Medusa. My hair was gross snakes they had

to run in fear from. I had wished my glare would turn them into stone. One of my parents would take me to a lady who would braid my hair, or relax it or hot comb it. My mother

had tried to learn but dropped the hot comb on her thigh. I remember her in pain, the sizzle of skin, and it had been my fault in my head. Getting my hair braided hurt. I screamed and cried. The hairdresser and my mother would say "pain is beauty and beauty is pain." How many black girls are branded with the ear scar of the hot comb? In this performance, I cook a steak with a hot comb and brand myself with the 500-degree instrument.

Make a better picture.  
Build a stronger frame.  
Reimagine what we think is impossible.  
Demolish white supremacy.