



recognition

TRANS &
QUEER
WRITING
ON
SEXUAL
HARM

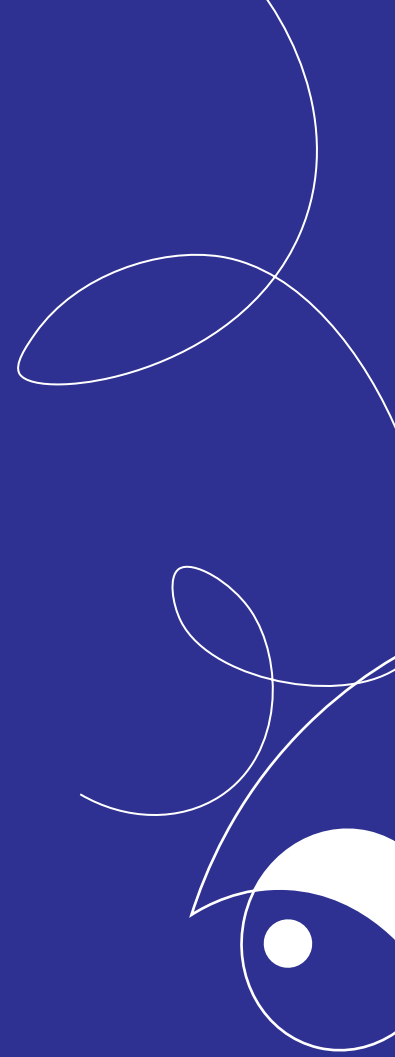


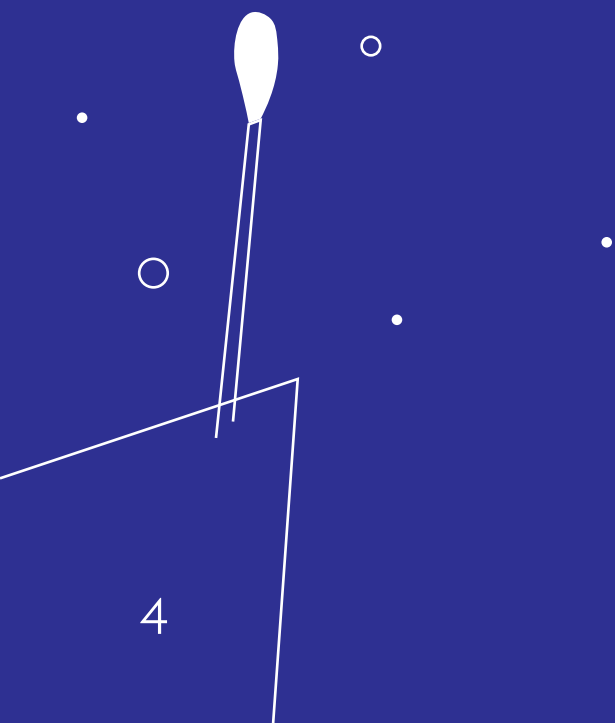
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This zine was created on the unceded territories of the Squamish, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. However, there is art here from across Turtle Island, and many Indigenous nations deserve our recognition for the collective wisdom expressed through the artists.

We can't separate our understanding of sexual violence from our understanding of colonization, any more than we can make sense of the gender binary outside of the attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples. For this reason, and many others, acknowledging the land we're on also means acknowledging the sovereignty of the Indigenous nations, and their right to autonomy and self-determination. In the antiviolence sector, it is impossible to understand violence outside of the context of colonization; and queer and trans communities, it is impossible to understand liberation outside of decolonizing.

We start with a land acknowledgement so that we can remember that all of our work and community building must start with decolonization.





I N T R O D U C T I O N

To say that the past year has been difficult would be an understatement. I have wondered many times over 2020 - and now well into 2021 - how this year will be spoken about in history books; the year the world shut down and held its breath, the year wildfires darkened the skies for weeks, the year we were afraid to leave our houses. It's also been a year of mass social movements for justice; right before the pandemic, we shut down Canada in defense of Indigenous sovereignty, and millions of us demanded justice for Black lives and reckoned with the role of police in our communities. It is baffling to recount how much has happened since the last time we published *Recognition*, and I feel the weight of the past year in our artists' work.

Recognition is about visibility for queer and trans experiences of sexualized violence. Visibility has always been a tough thing for us. On the one hand, it feels liberatory to see ourselves reflected in the world, and we can only build community when we can see each other. On the other hand, visibility can be dangerous - straight and cis people can spot us to target for hate, or to fetishize under the veil of inclusion. This push-and-pull is even more heightened during COVID, when it seems like every other article online is about us, but many of us are going

weeks and months without seeing another queer person. This complicated relationship to visibility is even more present when we talk about queer-on-queer violence. We often say that queer violence is made invisible by the deep heterosexism of mainstream antiviolence movements, and that we don't have much understanding past the narrative of cis men harming cis women, period. It's impossible to talk about violence in our community when we don't have the words to do so, and I know many queer survivors who have struggled to recognize abusive relationships because nothing they were experiencing was reflected in the resources they found, or recognized by the crisis workers they spoke to.

But even though it's hard to name, queer and trans people know exactly how much violence goes on in our communities. It might not be spoken, but it feels present in queer spaces, like a slight shift in air pressure. We hold our breath, and our tongues, in order to create an airtight seal of silence to keep straight and cis people's hatred out.

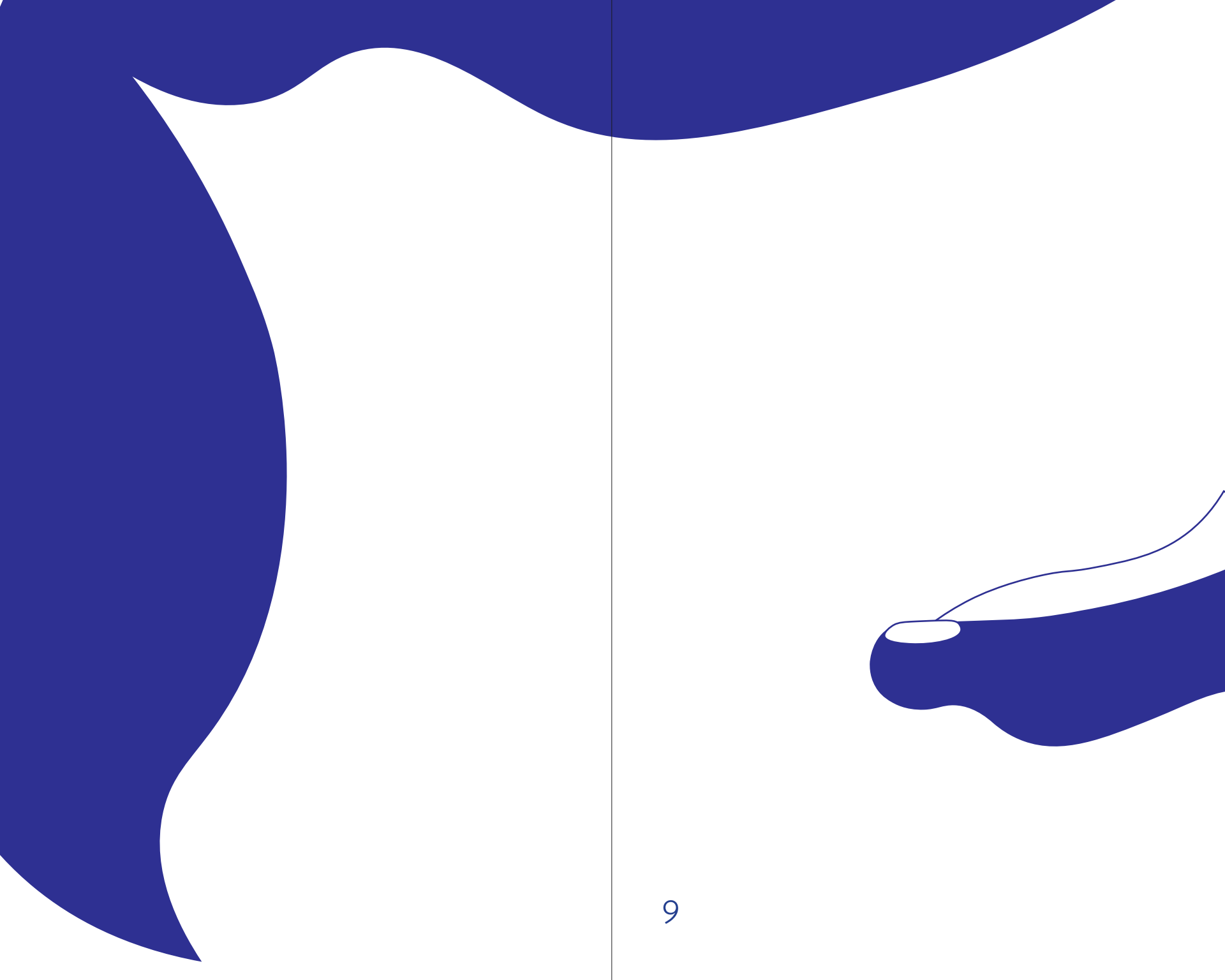
We can see this as an act of resilience, or as a way to discard the most vulnerable among us in order to protect the most powerful among us. The silence happens because we know that breaking it risks bringing more hatred to our communities from a heterosexist world. Every time I talk to groups of social workers about queer-on-queer violence, I have an old knot in my stomach that says don't tell them this part. They already think we're all sick.

Recognition is meant for queer and trans people to share with each other what violence has looked like for us, and to start giving words and meaning beyond what we were all taught about sexual violence towards cis straight women. It's a place to name, explicitly, what might be hiding unspoken in our guts or spoken only in euphemisms.

In this isolated, hyper-visible time, I hope that hearing about other queer and trans people's experiences feels like a lifeline. I hope we can see ourselves reflected in each other, rather than how the dominant culture sees us. I want to thank all of the contributors for their bravery and vulnerability, and all the queers out there who are surviving their way into the liberation we deserve.

Until next time,

Felix
Trans Inclusion Project Lead
WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre



innocence is a state of mind

F.J.T.

Teen girlhood is one of the most violent things one can
experience

It was not sweet like they said it would be

It was bruised knees

It was violation

It was panic attacks in the shower

It was trading adrenaline for despair

When girlhood was over it took a lot

To forgive the world for robbing me of my 'purity'

And so I granted myself the authority

To treat it like something I could pick up and put down

And not something to cling to and preserve

Like a delicate flower

I decided that innocence was a state of mind.

pheremone soaked prey

F.J.T.

I was appalled at the thought that my liberation

Would take place post-menopause

When my sexual fire dimmed to glowing coals

I did everything to disown my internalized male gaze.

And rebuilt my world with the hands of the women in my life.

I refused to let the experience of my womanhood

be reduced to feeling like

Pheromone soaked prey.



uncanny valley

CATHERINE GARRETT

The fear of something that falls between almost and fully human is believed to be a natural aversion.

Example: anthropology says homo sapiens killed off other species of almost humans

This vestigial uneasiness is thought to be as honest as blood can be.

Think dolls, computer ai, robots, and in this case, me all homunculi.

The Uncanny Valley is what happens when you are stuck in shades of grey

the hypothesized relationship to the degree of an objects resemblance to a human

and then the emotional response.

When I try and push my best friend's cousin off me my hands pass through him like smoke.

I am the sketched spectre left over after you try and
erase the pencil marks.

Watching this unfold from the outside, I am human.

But too drunk to do anything about it.

He... is human, too.

They say whoever commits such an act of violence is a
type of beast.

I will tell you he looked like a person for every moment
I was with him.

They call the man a *demon*
as if I should have noticed the distinction.

Did he really rape me if I didn't recognize myself while
he was doing it?

new years day 2016 and I am in the ER
trying to bridge the gap between
almost and completely
my group of friends and I pretend this never
happened.

When my mother and a family friend go to confront him
he says I wanted it to her face.

I refuse to do a rape kit because it feels like
overreacting but I know something is wrong.

it feels like I just keep telling the same story

His aunt does not know this when she says *I bet you've
had a shower.*

Things like this aren't supposed to happen in small
towns, we keep each other safe here

*just because you regret it doesn't make it what you're
calling it*

The concept suggests humanoid objects imperfectly
resembling human beings provoke uncanny or
strangely familiar feelings of revulsion among
observers.

After being assaulted, the hands are the only thing
I can remember properly.

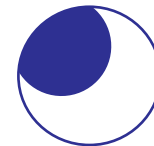
I won't look myself in the mirror for months.

My mother calls this a defense mechanism.

I tell her it's respecting the dead.

*Ariana Brown says it takes love to name the damage on
one's own body.*

I just let it rest before trying to find the words.



ANONYMOUS

T B A N S F R I E N D A L Y

S H E S H O W S

M E H E R R E S U M E O F M A S C S

S H E M e T o n T I N D R

N O N E O F T H E M

W I L L S P E A K T O H E R

LJUDMILA PETROVIC

As queer and trans folks, we have historically existed outside of normative definitions: outside of definitions of what gender looks like, what love looks like, what family and community look like. So when violence occurs in the queer community, as it does in all communities, our definitions of violence and safety and healing will also be different.

The anti-violence sector has historically challenged male supremacy and male violence against women. But it has also sometimes upheld binary ways of thinking and erased the experiences of many communities, including queer and trans folks, sex workers, and other folks made marginalized. For example, there have been shelters for women that don't accept trans women or women escaping violence from someone other than a cis man. Even though this is changing, there are still few services that support trans, non-binary, and 2 Spirit folks and few services that provide specific safe services for queer and trans folks experiencing violence. Usually even if a queer or trans person is accessing a service, they are accessing a cis-het-normative service that at best tolerates them and at worst excludes them or causes further harm.

The cis and heteronormativity of our world and historically of the anti-violence sector means that there is little space for the specific needs of queer and trans survivors. It also means that heteronormativity and gender normativity are assumed. Even when queer folks have experienced violence in what is read as a heterosexual relationship, the nuances of queerness and the different ways we can show up in the world and our relationships are erased. This may show up as bi erasure or misgendering of non-binary folks, as a flattening of ideas around gender, as a policing of what queer looks like or what violence looks like. It may show up as pushing a survivor to cut ties with their community or as not believing survivors because of preconceived beliefs about who can be a survivor and who can cause harm.

It's not just a matter of not having access to spaces. It's also a matter of having to shift or bend or hide parts of ourselves in order to access spaces. It's a matter of not being seen in our entirety.

When we can't show up authentically, we can't fully heal from violence.



Healing Balm for queer survivors

anonymous

You will need:
Herbs of your choosing
A mason jar
Beeswax
Cheesecloth or a colander
Access to a stove



This is a recipe designed to help us reconnect to nature in a way that feels personal and meaningful. As queer people, we are often lead to believe that we don't have a place in nature, and as survivors, it's easy to feel like our connection to our bodies and to earth has been severed. You can use this balm however you like, as a daily practice or when you feel like you need grounding.



1: Choose your herbs

New moon

There are no right or wrong ways to do this; the idea is to feel connected to the earth and your place in it, and then bring that feeling into the balm you're making. The new moon is the perfect time to start something, and to set your intentions for the next moon cycle.

Go out into a place in nature where you feel safe. I like to light a candle or incense for grounding. Give thanks for the land that you're on, and for the nations that have stewarded it. See if you can connect with a certain tree or plant, and ask yourself what message it has for you; maybe a tall oak feels sturdy and protective, and reminds you that mother nature always has your back. Maybe a little flower feels like hope, or a piece of lichen feels like tenacity. Ask the plants if it's OK to collect them, and try to listen to how they respond.

When you're ready, pick your herbs in a way that feels respectful. If you want, you can research how your ancestors might have done this; many will leave a coin in return, or a piece of their hair. You don't need much. I find it's helpful to write down what I've taken, and what lessons each plant had for me.

2. Steep your herbs

waxing moon



Place your herbs in a clear mason jar. I like to crush them in a mortar and pestle first, to start the process of releasing their oils. Cover them in the carrier oil of your choice; olive oil works fine and is the most accessible, but might cover up the scents of your herbs. Grapeseed or avocado oil has a gentler scent, and coconut oil feels great on your skin. Fill the jar just enough to cover the herbs and place it on a sunny windowsill.

Leave the jar there to steep for the two weeks of the waxing moon. A waxing moon builds energy and the potency of your balm. You will want to shake the jar every few days to release more oil and to prevent mould from growing on top.

3. Moon water (optional)

Full moon

On the full moon, I like to gather moonwater to add. This works best if it's raining; simply leave out a container to catch some of the rain overnight. Otherwise, you can leave out a dish of tapwater under the full moon, or I sometimes gather a bit of seawater. In the morning, add a few drops (just a bit! Or else the final product will be watery) to your balm and shake.

Waning Moon

Place the jar back on the windowsill for the remaining two weeks of the waning moon, as in step two. The waning moon is the time for releasing anything you want to let go; you can practice releasing self-doubt, victim blaming, or any doubts you might have that you are loved by nature.



4. Finish your balm

Just before the next new moon, there will be a short period of little to no moon presence in the sky. This is a good time to explore and make space for the darker parts of your healing journey, but make sure you have any support in place you will need.

On the next new moon, it's time to finish your balm. Strain the herbs out, using either a colander or cheesecloth, and collect the infused oil back in the mason jar. I will sometimes leave pieces of the herbs in. Discard the herbs in a respectful way - you can either bring them back to where you got them, or place them outside your home.

Take the mason jar and place it in a pot of water, about halfway up the height of the jar. Heat it up slowly on the stove. It's important to double-boil this way for safety, and to not directly heat the oil.

While you're heating the oil, prepare your wax. You can buy shaved beeswax, or grate a beeswax candle with a cheese grater. It's OK to use regular candle wax too, but it's best to use something unscented.

When the oil is hot, start dissolving some wax into it, and stir. How much will depend on the amount of oil you are using, and how firm you want it to be. You can test the thickness by putting a small amount on a spoon, and placing it in the freezer for 2-5 minutes.

When you are happy with your balm, take it off the stove and let it cool. In about an hour you will have your new healing balm.





hurtful thoughts

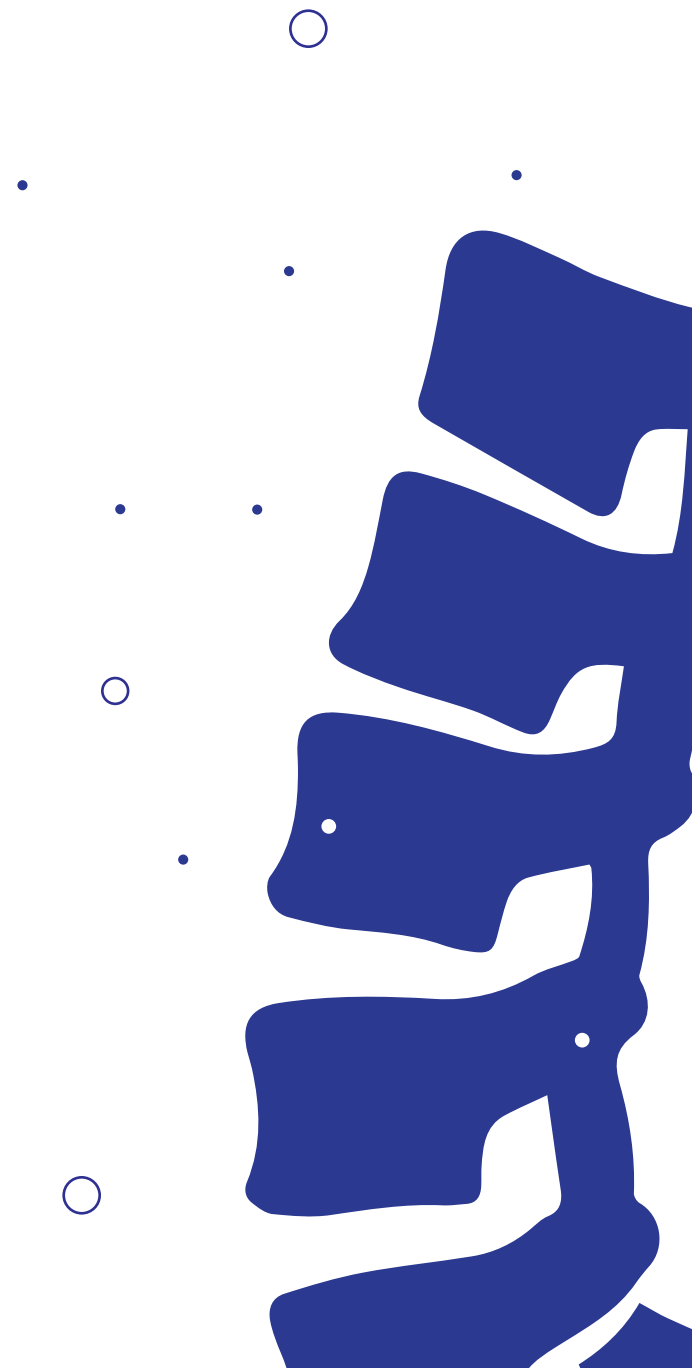
NIKKI REYNOLDS

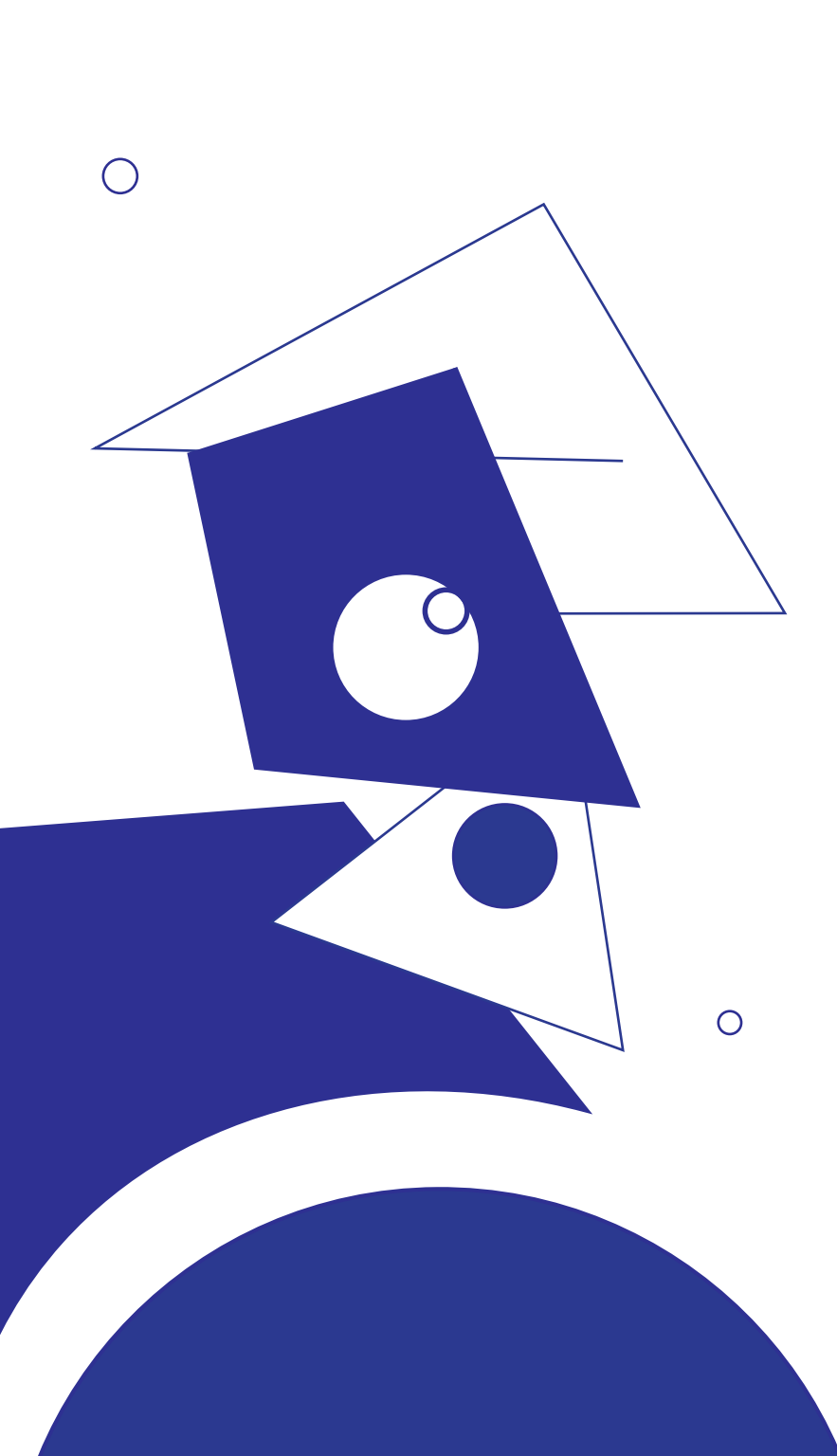
Why is life so bleak and dark
When I should see light at the end of the tunnel.
Why does the light hurt so much,
Compared to the darkness that can be so comforting at times.
Why do my thoughts have to be so hurtful and dark,
When they could be light like the clouds in the heavens.
Again, why are my thoughts so hurtful in the end,
When I don't see light at the end of the tunnel of life.

assault

NIKKI REYNOLDS

I'm so scared that I don't want to move,
Because I am afraid it's gonna hurt.
It hurts why did he have to be so mean,
When he could have been so tender and caring.
Why did I freeze and live in the pain of my body,
When I could have told him stop, fight, and flee.
I scream as it hurts but it's all in my head and no one hears,
But I do and it's so deep and it hurts the rest of my froze body.
I cry and scream and still nobody hears and if they did
They wouldn't care because they couldn't hear.





misgendering myself while sleeping with a straight man

CATHERINE GARRETT

they say what you don't know can't hurt you
so I look the other way when he takes my shirt off

the man on tinder asks me:
"so in what way are you bisexual?"
says you don't look
non binary
& suddenly

I am just a confused woman
pulling out pronouns for a party trick

*do not urge me to leave you, to turn my back and not follow you
wherever you will go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge*

he calls me
beautiful

so maybe in this moment i believe it

he tells me to say his name when I don't know mine
& he does not ask

he marvels
at how much of me he can fit in his fists

if I am uncomfortable we can stop
my breasts are in his hands
this could be called a prayer
both of us brought to our knees

& just tonight
my gender leaves the room when I turn off the lights
but he can't tell the difference

I let him call me
woman
is such a heavy word
but I seem to only have to explain that to the men

I first read the story of Ruth and Naomi in kindergarten
I didn't know why I liked it
maybe it's the thought of seeing
& being seen
but not having to question

he asks
if I like it
& his clumsy hands shake

the *yes* from my mouth like baby teeth

I say *yes*
forget myself
say *yes* and mean it
until tomorrow
until he comes

retraumatization looks a lot like desire when you hold it up
to the light

three thousand years later my love is still the same
how long can I have one foot in each grave before burying
myself alive?

I have spent 24 years thinking I have to lie to be loved

woman or attention seeker

mentally ill or faking it

too afraid of the empty side of my bed to tell the truth
but I change the pronouns on my social media
lighting a candle for a loved one
hoping someone notices

Ruth welcomes Naomi into her house after she lost her
husband and two children
together/ the two women chased the grief from each
other's bones
history names them friends

memory will call them destiny

Ruth promises Naomi she will stay with her always
I don't remember the last time I trusted myself not to leave
so I go out on every first date dressed for a funeral

my mom says she wants grandkids
my dad refuses to learn pronouns
he tells me to pretend I'm straight

*your people shall be my people & your god shall be
my god*

two women who braid their stories together into legends
born in different countries still somehow can't breathe
without sharing the same space
Ruth prays to the stars & whispers Naomi's name like
a constellation
Naomi's bottom lip trembles & Ruth's rib cage turns
to dust
these two/prove that the word love/sounds the same in
every language

thank god you're here
thank god you're mine
my love I am not going anywhere

*because where you will die, I will die too
& there I will be buried*

I don't tell my parents about my first girlfriend until
after we break up
I tell a tinder date I prefer they-she pronouns before
I tell my mother

*thus and more may the lord do to me
if anything but death parts me from you*

the same word used to describe how Adam loved Eve
is used for Ruth's Old Testament feelings for Naomi

she is alive again in the words of wedding vows
centuries later
& with these words in mind
I decide to do myself the justice
of finally being honest

otherwise
when my family finally gets me in a wedding dress
I'm afraid it will be an exorcism

& not
a celebration



stretch and fold

HANNAH

There is a particular kneading technique when making sourdough bread where you stretch out the dough and fold it over itself. It is not so dissimilar from when I stretch my own body and my soft belly rolls fold and get in the way of my low lunge. This year of collectively shared trauma also brought the passing of my sister and maybe too much time spent thinking about death, my body, and how trauma has informed my relationship to self. The process of kneading through the complicated feelings that accompany grief, loss, and survivorship has been horrendous, and yet, amongst it all I have managed to experience so much joy. Eating fresh sourdough makes me feel joyful, moving my body with loving care or singing in my room covered in paint as I create something new makes me feel joyful. I did not set out to do a self portrait when I started this piece but it slowly emerged as one. Being in the company of my plants, who have taught me much of what I know about resiliency and reciprocal love, while naked and stretching out is how I find happiness and a sense of grounding these days. I wish my fellow survivors space and time to discover what invokes similar feelings, or if they already know, time to do what it is that brings them peace.



My NO

Anjalica Solomon

I want a world
in which there are no seasons
to slut-shame daughters
and daughters can choose
not to be daughters

I want a world
in which there are no excuses for the violence of
fathers and men are not traumatized by the
violence of their fathers
and daughters can choose not to bear
the blood of the wounds

I want a world
in which
the gloss of my nails
the length of my hair
the brown shell of my body
the expansiveness
of my gender
are not up for debate.

I want a world

my NO
makes way for
the cosmic *yes*
the orgasmic *please*
the fucktastic *more*

in which I learn to say
NO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
from the belows

I walk away proudly, dripping in gold
dancing on the stage
men drool in confusion
my queerness is ceremony sacred
untouchable
i am not your sweetheart
im a bitch with my tongue out, ass out,
tits out and a garland of heads like Kali
Ma and everybody knows

*(we are in your dingy studio where you
touch my thigh uncomfortably and call
me sweetheart, you kiss me without
permission and instead of doing nothing I
say STOP and the party is frozen in time
and the drunk jazz players stop dancing
and the cocky boy in the turquoise baret
whips around and the band's horns loose
their brightness like an erection losing
blood. You do not gaslight me. You do not
deny my experience. You fall to your
knees and pray at my feet. Now, begging
to be absolved*

not to fuck with me

but it was never my duty to fix you.)

B I O S

ANJALICA SOLOMON is a genderfluid Desi poet, spoken word artist, organiser and multi-disciplinary performer based in what is colonially known as Vancouver, BC on the stolen and unsundered territories of the Coast Salish, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam Nations. You can watch their most recent poetry film production “The Fruiticana on Fraser Street” which recently premiered on YouTube! Anjalica is currently conjuring an arts collective of queer brown women and non binary artists and working on their forthcoming collection with *Write Bloody Publishing*. Follow **@Anjalicrush** on Instagram to learn more about upcoming poetry collections, short films, experimental fringe productions, virtual workshops, #brownhistory and for #birdoftheday features!

CATHERINE GARRETT is a queer/non-binary line cook turned poet-journalist currently living in Prince George, BC. They were born in Ontario, raised on Haida Gwaii, and went to Journalism school in Vancouver. They are currently the associate editor for *Dovecote Magazine*, and a full-time reporter. They have represented Vancouver and Victoria a total of 6 times on national and international poetry stages, have two self-published chapbooks, and really love hockey. Their work has been featured in *The Hellebore*, *Muriel's Journey Poetry Prize*, *Wide Eyes Publishing*, *Oratorealis*, *Turnpike Magazine*, and *Link Magazine*.

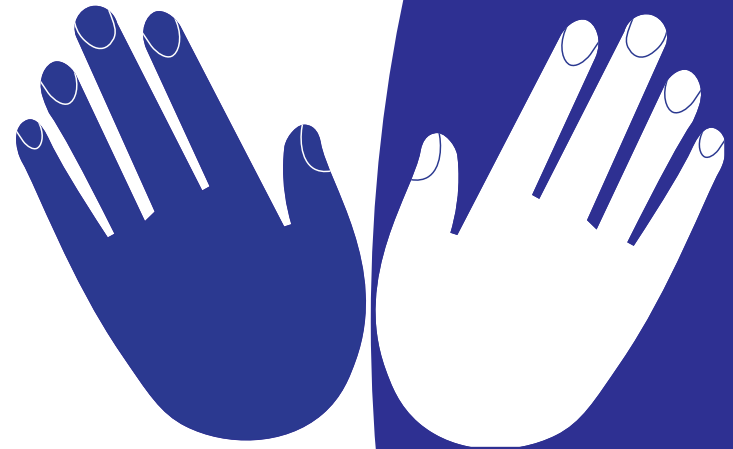
NIKKI REYNOLDS is a trans woman who is incarcerated in Texas. She is a devoted friend and a dreamer.

FIONA is a 21 year old bisexual/queer artist, and yoga teacher. Throughout my life I have always looked to poetry and art as my only sources of self-expression - a place to dive deep into the depths of my emotions and portray them in a way that felt right. I cling to words and expressions as if I've finally defined my being. Like the truest version of myself is just out of reach, and maybe I can reach under the veil of words and take a chance with their meaning.

HANNAH is a non-binary queer settler residing on the stolen lands of the xwməθkwəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh and Selílwitlh people. They are an emerging visual artist that is deeply preoccupied with the body and how we can work to deepen our connection to ourselves through the intimacy of abstract portraiture. That's a fancy way of saying that they love painting butts, nipples and tummy roles. Hannah hopes that their work can support people in feeling at home in their own bodies and act as a catalyst for healing.

LJUDMILA PETROVIC (she/her/hers) is the counsellor on WAVAW's transformative justice team. Prior to this,

she was part of WAVAW's hospital accompaniment team and has worked in various roles supporting survivors of gender-based violence, queer and trans youth, and folks in harm reduction settings. She is currently completing her MA in counselling at SFU, with a research focus on conflict-generated diaspora and intergenerational trauma.





wavaw

shifting society for the future