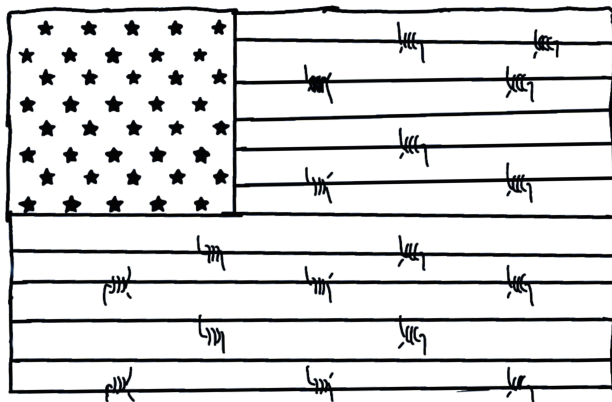


Uprooted

Poems of Resistance, Witness, and Survival



The Chaos Section
Poetry Project



Uprooted

*Poems of Resistance, Witness, and
Survival*



The Chaos Section Poetry Project
Austin, TX,
2026

Copyright © 2026 The Chaos Section Press

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except for brief quotations used in reviews, critical essays, or scholarly works.

All poems remain the property of their individual authors and are used here with permission. Publication in this anthology is granted on a non-exclusive basis. Contributors retain full rights to their work and are free to publish it elsewhere.

Jeff Tweedy quote from "Hints" © 2022 Words Ampersand Music (BMI).

"What We Tend" © 2025 by Meridith Allison. First published in *Record of Dissent: Poems of Protest in an Authoritarian Age*. Used courtesy of the author.

Wendell Berry, excerpt from "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front" from *New Collected Poems*. Copyright © 2012 by Wendell Berry. Reprinted with the permission of The Permissions Company, LLC on behalf of Counterpoint Press, counterpointpress.com.

Cover Artwork: "Inclement Freeze" by Bonner Fowles (acrylic on canvas)

Interior Artwork: "Land of the Free" by Phoebe Shade (mixed media illustration)

Interior photograph: "Mexican beet workers, near Fisher, Minnesota," 1937. Photograph by Russell Lee, Farm Security Administration. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Public domain.

Editors: Nick Allison and Rachel Armes-McLaughlin

First Edition, 2026

ISBN: 979-8-9993042-3-0

Published by The Chaos Section Press
Austin, Texas

Publication Credits

Taquería by Nick Allison was first published in *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change*.

Ice Surrounds my Car by Bartholomew Barker was first published in *The Orkney News* (February 2, 2026).

On Bitches Promoted to Fuckin Bitches by Michelle DeRose was first published in *The New Verse News* (January 2026).

Umbilical Cord by Nina Kodrič and Snježana Vračar Mihelač was first published on the Versopolis platform as part of Poetry Expo 2026.

Refugees by Rainer Neumann, an earlier version, was first published in *Intersections of Concern* (Landsandsky Publishing, 2020).

Predators by Michael Renshaw was first published in *West End Poets Newsletter*, issue 92 (December–February 2026).

February Thaw by John Steele was first published in *The Blotter Magazine* (April 2026).

Demilitarize Your Tongue by Cam Wheelr MD was first published in *W.A.R. II ~ We Are Revolution: Too Much Blood*(inner child press ltd., January 2025).

A Note on This Edition

This collection exists to share voices of resistance, witness, and survival. Every contributor retains full rights to their work, and none were charged or compensated for its inclusion.

The print edition is offered at or near production cost to help offset publishing expenses. A completely free digital version is also available to read or download at **thechaossectionpoetryproject.com**.

Thank you for supporting the spirit of this project, and for honoring the work of the authors included here.

This book is dedicated to fellow poet Renée Nicole Good and to every person disappeared, detained, or driven into the shadows. And to those who keep watch, keep records, and keep faith that cruelty is not the last word.

*“There is no middle when the other side
would rather kill than compromise.”*

— Jeff Tweedy, “Hints”

*“You can only fight a tyrant
where your feet touch the ground.”*

—Meridith Allison, “What We Tend”

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Espejo Roto	5
Broken Mirror	6
In Seminario's Courtroom	7
The Interpreter	8
Julissa	9
Donde esta Eduardo? Yo no se	10
Morning Ghosts	12
There's Options	13
Coda	14
What You Can Do For Me	15
Caged	16
ICE	18
Bunny Hat	19
It's Real	20
Ice Surrounds my Car	21
Comrades	22
Demilitarize Your Tongue	23
An Atheist Perspective	26
I protest that I must protest	27
To the Game-Show Loving US President	28
Moral Injury	30
This Crimson Life	31
February Thaw	32
Sonnet for the Untitled	33

Ghost of Nurnberg	34
Make My Day	35
Do-Over	36
Treats in Suburban Chicago	38
time dilations	39
Refugees	40
The Possible	44
somewhole	46
Indivisible	48
Eye of the Storm	49
Stars of Minneapolis (Sestina)	50
The Exiled Colossus	52
Mother of Removal	53
Umbilical Cord	54
Dreamers (no hyphen can say what kind of American I am)	59
Snowboarders Hate Ice	60
In Plain Sight	61
Dear Trump Voter	62
More Years of the Insane: A Prayer	64
Even the Meadow	66
Predators	68
Taquería	70
How Many?	71
mirror-touch synesthesia	72
A Nurse's Sacrifice	74
Flowers	75

Preservation	76
On Bitches Promoted to Fuckin Bitches	77
For Renée Nicole Good	78
On a Pale Horse	79
with what is given	80
I'm Sorry	81
Gone In The USA	82
The fabric of society is ripped	84
The End is Nigh	86
The Bucks' Naked Truth	88
Occupied	89
Remember Good	92
Deniability Denied	93
Our National Anathema	94
Least of These	96
Contributor Bios	99
Acknowledgments	109
About The Chaos Section Poetry Project	111

Introduction

As we were putting the final touches on our last collection, *What We Hold On To: Poems of Coping, Connection, and Carrying On*, news broke that would change the course of what came next. On January 7, 2026, poet Renée Nicole Good was shot and killed by an ICE agent in Minneapolis. She was unarmed and posed no threat. A week later, Alex Pretti, a VA nurse who stepped in to help a woman who was violently shoved to the ground by an agent, was pepper-sprayed, tackled, and fatally shot by Border Patrol agents.

Their deaths made national headlines. Vigils were held and their stories quickly spread across social media and cable news. And we understood why. Renée was an artist, a mother, a wife. Alex was a nurse, a caregiver, someone who selflessly ran toward people in need. They were also white and American-born, the kind of people whose deaths mainstream America was already prepared to grieve. And while their stories deserved to be told, the story itself is not new.

Immigrants and people of color have been abused, disappeared, and killed by immigration enforcement for years. Families have been torn apart in pre-dawn raids. People with every legal right to be here have been swept up and detained. Immigrants have died in overcrowded, underfunded detention facilities from preventable illness, neglect, and despair. Children have been separated from parents and lost in the system. Due process has been ignored and mocked by the very people meant to enforce the law. This didn't begin with Renée and Alex. It has been happening for a long time, to people whose names and faces didn't trend on social media.

We don't say this to diminish what happened to Renée and Alex. We say it because their deaths cracked something open, and we believe poetry should walk through that crack and keep going.

This collection grew out of that belief. We put out a call for poems about the overreach and abuse carried out in the name of immigration enforcement under the Trump administration, the brutality, the human cost, and the resistance it has inspired. The poets who answered that call include immigrants and American born citizens, veterans of this fight and people writing about it for the first time. We're grateful to all of them.

—Nick Allison and Rachel Armes-McLaughlin
The Chaos Section Poetry Project
Fall 2026

Uprooted

Espejo Roto

Sofía Reyes

mis papeles dicen que existo,
que soy real

pero el miedo no sabe leer,
no pide documentos

una mirada hacia atrás
un carro negro
un corazón que corre

ojos que se esconden

un alma que alguna vez
estuvo llena de esperanza

ahogándose en el miedo

La traducción al inglés está en la siguiente página. / English translation follows on the next page.

Broken Mirror

Sofía Reyes

my papers say I exist
that I am real

but fear doesn't know how to read
doesn't ask for documents

a backwards glance
a black car
a heart that runs

eyes that hide

a soul that was once
full of hope

drowning in fear

In Seminerio's Courtroom

R. Yael Weissburg

We brought two priests with us today:
Father Tom and Father John.

The judge is less unkind when they are with us,
and today is bound to be unkind.

This judge, Seminerio, seems to take pleasure
in the ritual of humiliation,
celebrating the liturgy of cruelty over his iniquitous flock;
demanding penance, but offering no mercy,
issuing orders of removal as divine retribution.

Seminario.

Spanish, for Seminary.

I wonder, how did his people arrive here?
From Mexico? Ecuador? Peru?
Did they come on Spanish ships, preaching Christ?

Did his grandmother, young and pregnant, also flee violent men?

January 12, 2026

The Interpreter

R. Yael Weissburg

What is it like, I wonder, to know someone's fate before they do?
To translate their future into existence?
To be its messenger?

One interpreter, I notice, speaks with eyes closed,
maybe to focus on the task at hand,
maybe to avoid the impact his words — not the judge's —
have on the young woman just five feet away.

Another is attentive, with gentle eyes and a soft voice;
His imprecise translations a small act of defiance.

"Come forward. Sit down."

"Good morning, ma'am. Please have a seat."

"Is it true that you came here illegally?"

"Did you arrive without documentation?"

I want to hug him for this infinite kindness.

January 29, 2026

Julissa

R. Yael Weissburg

That day outside the courtroom when you fell into my arms,
after he told you you'd been wasting your time,
that they would send you to a country you've never known,

I didn't realize how quickly I'd come to love you,
in our broken sentences, our tightly held hands,
our reassuring touch when we ran out of words.

I wanted to tell you it would be ok;
I could keep you safe;
I would love your babies and raise them as my own.

My chin on your head;
Your head on my chest.
Our sobs finding each other,
Our breaths syncing to the other's tempo.

For a moment, the whole world stopped.

February 9, 2026

Donde esta Eduardo?

Yo no se

Delores Gilmore

Summer solstice breeze
Cast diamonds on water
Rippling ashore
Salty air ruffles the tents

Friday morning farmers market
Eduardo's Fresh Strawberries
Booth stood between the honey seller
And the vegetable stall

Emptiness fills the space
with a view of the ocean
like a tooth missing
from the vendor's smile

Donde esta Eduardo?

I ask the neighbor
His eyes narrow
Dart around crowd
His voice lowers

Yo no se

His fear telegraphed
As he glances to the empty stall
His breath shallow
Hands trembled

I have been called
Fearless, fierce, formidable
Yet I quiver, helpless
Angry

Donde esta Maria?

Her wispy grey hair
That dangled in her eyes
Brushed away by sunburnt hands
As she gathered the debris of the day

Yo no se

Stories stoke the flames
Of fear
And anger
The child's cry startles me

Fear tastes like
Acrid smoke from stale cigarettes
Wafting through the air
After the man disappeared

Fear tastes like
Cotton candy strawberries
Rotting in the fields
After the raid

Fear tastes like
Salty tears and
Empty fruit stands
At the farmers market

Donde esta Eduardo?
Yo no se

Morning Ghosts

Michelle DeRose

Five-dollar breakfast on a plastic tray.
A dark-eyed family slips
into the booth behind, whispers
in Spanish, mutes even the crinkles
unwrapping their muffins.
Five lanes of thick traffic
beyond the large window. A grey
Expedition, front plate
blaring out-of-state.
The booth, already cleared.

There's Options

Chad Parenteau

You can always walk away.
You can leave your car behind,
hand him the chain, your finger
clutching the key to your house
in good faith. You don't want
anything real added to your
fabricated record. You don't
have to use your feet to run
away. Get on your knees and
look to his pelvis to guide
the way home or to the ground.
If he's hungry, you can always
feed him your heart. The protein
and the blood are all he wants.
It's what he's supposed to get.
You can give it now or later,
but now is always better.
You can stop asking so many
questions, or any questions.
All orders are clear and never
wrong. And if any orders
seem to contradict, then do them
in the order heard, give in
to confusion then collapse.
Anything that gets you closer
to the ground. On the ground.
All we want is you on the ground.

Coda

Meghan Woodward

It all culminates
in this,
masked faces
grabbing brown
people
because they
do jobs
we want
but won't ever do;
Then magically,
wands in the
wind,
industries get
exceptions
because
capitalism Trumps
humanity—
greed always wins

What You Can Do For Me

Eileen McCluskey

"You can help them with their homework... You can put them down for a nap... and you can put them on a plane to Brazil. You can bring them back to me."

— Mother facing deportation, Boston Globe, July 2, 2025

You can call my husband when
ICE grabs me in the courthouse.
You can take a video when they are breaking
my car windows, dragging me away.

You can tell them I'm not a criminal.

You can walk our streets, watching for them.
You may know them by their masks, or their guns.
You can remind me of the hotline number,
and of the rights I am still supposed to have.

You can bring us supplies as we hide
in our homes.
You can hold a backyard fundraiser
to help us pay for food and lawyers.

You can instruct politicians
to fight for our dignity.
You can smile at us when you see us.
You can wait with us and our children at the bus stop.

You can understand that as we suffer, so do you.
We are in this together, although you
will not be disappeared, not yet.

Before you lose your rights, too,
You can demand that they stop.
Demand that they stop.

Caged

Steve Babb

For Leqaa Kordia

She's gone so long without a glimmer of the sun
Or sliver of the moon or morsel of halal cuisine
Without a face that doesn't scowl
Or voice that doesn't drawl contempt
That she cannot recall a time
When her whole world was not haram

She's grown so used to shackles that
Her ankles are accustomed to their gravity
She has become inured to the fluorescent lights' relentless glare
And she sloughs off the frigid blasts of air-conditioned air

She almost has become accustomed to
The blur of days which haze to shallow sleep
And to the roiling dreams which only plunge her back
Into the waking nightmare which now passes for her life

The seconds and the seasons multiply
But she stays mired in eternal now
And zeroed out at midnight's stroke
And it's always midwinter in the cockles of her heart

The iron bars and the barbed wire snarls become her furniture
Her jailers' taunts and curt commands become her parlour talk
And bit by bit this Prairieland dystopia
Comes to impersonate an obscene travesty of home

She half-persuades herself this is the only world
She'll ever know or ever has deserved
And that she truly is entirely alone
And utterly forgotten here
Immured within this misbegotten catacomb

It's only natural that she should feel that way
For, after all, she's just one woman, gaunt and frail
Arrayed against the whole force of a lawless state
Which is hellbent on crushing her

Beneath its suffocating weight

But then she starts awake
And steels her fortitude
And she resolves
That she won't let
Her jailers grind her down
Into decrepitude
And break her like a mule
Inside this godforsaken rank corral
Called Prairieland

Where nobody but the pariah prairie dogs
And mourning doves and the untethered tumbleweeds
Break the monotony
Of the dismal hellscape
That she's been relegated to
And that's swallowed her whole
And unrelentingly refuses to
Regurgitate

ICE

R.M. Carlson

ice creeps in
slick, shrouded
grim
grinding
violence

iceberg inches
plows
over the living
hard to crack
its dead heart
turning blind
a sleeted slide

waiting

water reaches
with glacial tendrils
deep
into marrow
leeches out
blood's warmth

depths
draw ice in
adrift
beside other bodies
in a crowded polar sea
ice floats
bloated
blind

it's forgotten
how to be human

kind

Bunny Hat

Merril D. Smith

You think it will never touch you,
they'll never come, not for you,

but the hate of others—
brown-skinned, trans, non-English speakers—
(maybe you)

has bloomed like toxic mold,
black spots darken everything.

Just business, they say,
private prisons and concentration camps,

money to be made on incarcerated bodies
warehoused without medical care, beaten,
raped—

children

grasped by careless hands
(*I don't care, do you?*)

Just doing our job,
the masked men say,

using as bait
a boy in a blue bunny hat,

little Liam should have been safe
at home, playing—

just following orders, the masked men
say again,

hoping their regime stays in power.

It's Real

James Brumbley Jr.

It's never real until it happens to us.
They come in the night and take strangers.
Hard-working people trying to get by,
in no better positions than everyone else.
We don't speak up because it's not anyone we know.
They come in the day and take our neighbors.
Familiar people we borrow things from.
We say nothing because it isn't our problem.
They come to our home and drag away those we love.
The people we care for are taken away.
We say stop and for our dissent we get dragged away too.
It's real and it will happen to all of us.

Ice Surrounds my Car

Bartholomew Barker

Left by a winter storm
thick enough to block the light
and resist the plastic scraper

I smash the blunt handle
down on the windshield
hard enough to leave a crater

like a bullet hole

The ice which seemed so strong
was melting from above and below
fragile as tyrant's lace

After the first flaw
it comes off in sheets
like opening a zipper

A shard cuts the meat of my palm
not so much pain as surprise
and with dismay I realize

It will be our blood
that melts the ice

Comrades

Kerfe Roig

Who, then, can we become? Our identities have been erased. We have been sorted into anonymous composites of bodies and minds—cut, rearranged, superimposed and pasted onto a predetermined transcript, that allows for no individuality, no escape from their prison boxes of perjury. Our faces have been frozen into synthetic amalgamations of alien avatars.

Where have you hidden our laughter, our spirits, our tears?

Who knows us? Who sees us as real? Who will call us by our true names?

cold as ICE
these masks without human faces
hiding behind guns

Demilitarize Your Tongue

Cam Wheelr MD

Choose a date. A lunar event will suffice.
An equinox or solstice will do. Any moon phase
you please. An insignificant day works best.
Next Tuesday. Even today.
Today. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Write it down.
Begin in the bone.

Oust the hustle and grind of these least
bodies, exhaustion-driven, by colonialists'
powers. Their classism and castes.
Their urgent hustle and scurry. Shuck
their loads off your back. Wrench their boots
off your neck. Organ grinder's beasts, cease
fetching rich men's coins for mere dust and ash.

Refuse to perform for them.
Prepare. Rest up. Take a nap.

First, you must undupe your mind's ear
of all the tyrants' metaphors of war.
Uproot combat's weeds from your core.
They've choked you since the Before
before this violent Now.
Rip them out of your tongue one by one.

Yank *pull the trigger* from your mouth.
Hurry.

Extract all these:
 on the attack
 bring the fight
 merciless, relentless

battle on, test your mettle.
Cease *targeting* and *drawing a bead*
on anyone. On anything.
Keep every being out of your *sites*.
Your *crosshairs*.
Your *laser focus*.
Never *lower the hammer*
get *triggered, unload*.
Rest when you must, but don't
pause to reload.
Release your need to maintain
situational awareness, to keep a *go bag*
near, to urge one another to *jump in*,
rally, pile on, join the fight, soldier on,
maneuver and *scout*.
Delete all these:
the fog of war
war on drugs, war on crime
war on guns, all war on all things
and war chests, waging warlike campaigns
every battle cry, revolution, coup
every back against the wall
all the ways you get pinned down
disappeared, overthrown
or dodge a bullet or hunker down
No longer praise amazing success with,
this is fire and you've blown up,
she slayed, he killed, blow the roof off,
you're the bomb and my mind's blown
POW! WHOOP! BOOM!!
Nor hail great fun with, *Whatta blast!*
Void them all and so much more.

For leverage, use a crowbar
or a daisy stem.

If you must, hum:
"Imagine"

"All You Need Is Love"
"Blowin' in the Wind"

Beat your word-swords
 into plowshares
Improve our soil.
Weave wider images.
Plant wiser seeds.
Speak our world into peace.
Spin together anew. Landscapes
 dripping with birdsong.
We can all thrive under one sun
attuning our ears to the quiet thrum,
 of every gentled skull
 still intact.

An Atheist Perspective

Mark Sebring

A military-style ICE raid on a Chicago apartment building arrested 37 undocumented immigrants. Innocent citizens living in the same building were brutally treated and detained for hours, for the crime of being non-white. When a woman, concerned about the children, naked and zip tied together in the street, asked, "Where is the morality? Where is the humanity?", an ICE agent replied, "Fuck them children."

Our country is ruled by brutes
who don't care about the rights of anyone
who is different from them.
It appears that most of the people
who call themselves Christian
are on their side.
They make excuses
to justify the brutality
against those who are not them.
Or simply deny that it exists.

It is easy to recognize
that they are hypocrites
and difficult to understand
why they can't recognize it themselves.
They don't seem to realize
that they are Star Witnesses
to the idea
that their God doesn't really exist.

Show me one True Christian.
Someone who is actually Christ-like.
(They seem pretty rare these days.)
I will disagree with them.
But I'll probably get along with them
just fine.

I protest that I must protest

Carl "Papa" Palmer

I protest that I must protest—

That rights are bartered, not possessed
That laws are bent for those best dressed
That power plays the game of chess
That we pawns are crushed and dispossessed

I protest that I must protest—

That our history facts are skewed at best
That memory is repressed and distressed
That progress does not pass the test
That hope remains as half-addressed

I protest that I must protest—

That rage is seen as ill expressed
That pain is labeled as obsessed
That opposing opinion is repressed
That silence leaves us all suppressed

I protest that I must protest—

That no protest suggests our coalesce
That revolt is labeled as mob unrest
That truth is filled with second guess
That peace is just a failed request

To the Game-Show Loving US President

Eileen ike West

To he, who just understands the ‘dumb’
At the end of free-dom,
Let me tell you:
Only TV cop shows start with dumb-dumb,
Not real life.
So please, pass seven new letters,
And let’s put back on the board,
The full word, F-R-E-E-D-O-M.
As is, the game seems mighty rigged
Against the main.

While we’re at it, let’s wipe the slate clear
Of the word, S-N-O-O-Z-E-S.
Too many government rep’s put that up
At the start of this game’s round,
And stick to it religiously.
Please, somebody poke these bears,
Blow off those useless letters,
Replacing the lot with: W-A-K-E-U-P-N-O-W
G-E-T-O-F-F-D-U-F-F-S
And D-O-Y-O-U-R-W-O-R-K.

The last—and definitely most urgent—reboot of the game,
Let’s dump D-O-J I-C-E agents’ goals in winning,
Basically, their horrific play of choice,
“Screw everyone who’s not us—jail and deport the lot.”
Make good on an exit strategy for the turns ahead,
Change the game completely.
In the D-O-J I-C-E column, throw out the old,
Draw completely new letters, like
W-E S-T-O-P V-I-O-L-A-T-I-N-G
And, let the final draw guarantee words such as
N-O-W A-N-D F-O-R-E-V-E-R.

Such great plays assure we get F-R-E-E
Back in front of D-O-M,
Quitting the president's dumb-dumb
And more dumb actions.
FREEDOM, not just a word, but an ideal to treasure.
Give every American forced to play your games
Fifty points, and 200 dollars.
Then, absolutely, press in the hand of each detainee,
A get out of jail free card.
Ensure, not only government game hosts,
but all people are winners.

Moral Injury

Mona Lisa

More often than not,
Our heroes discover
Running into danger
Antagonizes
Leaders who avoid it.

Instead of praise,
Near-sighted autocrats
Judge according to optics,
Urge us to see all sides.
Righteously indignant,
Yet indifferent to suffering.

This Crimson Life

Julie Parker-Kinsey

gossamer-thin this crimson life
me and mine sought refuge within
immigrants stalked by gun and knife
gossamer-thin this crimson life

this is how their hate becomes rife
brute force tattooed upon our skin
gossamer-thin this crimson life
me and mine sought refuge within

February Thaw

John Steele

The backyard is writhing. The ground—
that expanse of leaf litter and pine needles
where there is no grass and we are not
enslaved to a nonexistent lawn—it is
churning, roiling, leaves flipping into the air
like bubbles bursting in a pre-spaghetti
pot of water headlong toward boiling.

Wind? No wind.

But robins. Dozens of robins. Blitzing insects
by instinct, overwhelming worms in a whirl,
diving, divotting. Shocked and awed quarter acre,
almost Hitchcockian moment, collective nouns
insufficient: not a bashful blush of robins,
no insouciant bobbin of robins, no reliant,
not a rouge, not a breast or the rest.
There's just no—

Ah. A riot of robins.

Not what you expect in your backyard,
even after snow and ice have melted,
and birds are aggressively aflutter, all just surviving.
Meanwhile in the wider world's sadistic carnival mirror,
it is ICE running riot, federalized terrorists
puffed up in paramilitary plumage
in a feeding frenzy of their own cruelty.
Resistance. People with phone videos and whistles,
putting their lives in harm's way.

Always the seasons turn. Be alert.
They are distressingly early this year,
the first fascists of spring.

Sonnet for the Untitled

Barbara Harris Leonhard

This isn't a sonnet about gold-leafed mantels
lined with stolen trophies. It's about our grannies,

crocheting mantles of our legacies. This is a sonnet
for the Jackson Magnolia. Its demise provides space

for a vast golden ballroom fashioned for the fake king.
This sonnet isn't for that great pretender.

This is a sonnet about underage girls exploited
by power and privilege. It's about the injured.

The disabled. The murdered. The brown. The black.
The truthsayers. The exiled laborers. All those

'disappeared'. Denied. All those torn from their cribs—
naked, shackled toddlers. It's for Good and Pretti.

This isn't a sonnet about the unspined.
It's about the unsung. All those maligned.

Ghost of Nurnberg

Paul Cannon

Hypocrisy is back in fashion
you can deny everything
is that why,
ironically (of course),
you decided to enact your
project 1930s redux
immigration rules,
a phrenologist's wet dream
a clansman's hard-on,
a dixie wish
white rich nationalists only,
toxic masculinity preferenced
women and children as
rape toys
ethnicity as denial,
separating
murdering
maiming
maligning
gulagging,
boundaries locked and loaded
for privilege,
every day I search
for your obituary.

Make My Day

Russell Dupont

Do you suppose he smiled
when he ordered Troopers
to deny water to migrants
in the blazing heat?

Do you suppose he laughed
when he heard that,
on his orders, bloodied
women, children, men
were forced, pushed
back into the Rio Grande?

Do you suppose he snickered
when he heard that a woman
and infant girl were found
drowned near the razor wire
barrier he had erected
across the Rio Grande?

Do you suppose he leered
when he shrugged off
the massacre of five people,
labeling them "illegal immigrants"?

See him sneer and turn his back
when the woman stuck at the barrier
cries, "Help me. Help Me"
as he smirks and mutters
"Make my day."

Do-Over

Steve Babb

Thoughts on driving past the future site of the Social Circle immigrant detention center

I drove past pod on barren pod
Of vacant warehouse space
The sites of future segregation cells
And scenes of pending crimes
Already in the planning stage

They stretched on endlessly
And made me contemplate
Our infinite capacity
For inhumanity –
All of the thought and sweat
And treasure we've misspent
In order to augment the sum of human misery
As if there was a deficit of it

They made me think of the stockade
A few hours away at Andersonville, where
Gaunt Rebels held emaciated Union prisoners at bay
Beneath the broiling sun and pouring rain
Without a bivouac to shelter them
Or any source of drinking water but
The creek they did their business in
While sentries trained their guns on them
And watched them waste away

What would I give to have the chance
To nip such horror in the bud
And to avert such needless suffering
On such a massive scale
Inflicted with such callous apathy

ICE says they plan to squeeze

Ten thousand human souls inside
This latest, greatest model of
A cost-effective modern charnel house
Which is explicitly designed
To maximize the cruelty
And to dehumanize the detainees

Now is our chance to intercede
So our descendants will not need
To dedicate a monument
In order to commemorate
The victims whom
We could have saved
If we had only had
The will and fortitude
And to redeem the guilt
We might have spared ourselves
And won't be able to escape

Treats in Suburban Chicago

Michelle DeRose

We were warned about apples,
how the seedy center might hold
a blade. The nutted caramel hid
its invasion. Rumor, of course.
Urban myth to taint the walk,
wrap the fun size in suspicion.
Now tear gas clouds the block
in spooky smoke, the scare to teach
that nothing sweet comes from masks.

time dilations

Cam Wheelr MD

a body
on a gurney
on the
roadside
in handcuffs
endures

by *a body*,
i always
mean
my body
broken

each body
i
every
body
mine
how can i
make you
know
the length
the breadth
the stone-
weight
of this

Refugees

Rainer Neumann

On the borders
Of abstraction
Lines drawn upon the earth
Fought over killed over defended and agreed upon
Demarcations of circumstance
That history won't let go
All earthly life fills the spaces in between
Humanity must pay heed to the barbed wire the walls
The lines at the airports
Where the authorities decide if the passports match
And the dogs sniff
And the guns are heavy and obvious

On the borders
Of desperation
Walking running
Riding the buses
Jumping onto a boxcar
The open pickup trucks
The closed semi trucks
Holding on to every breath
Holding a child's body
The hand of a daughter
The arm of a son
Children born in a mother's pain
Suckled and nourished
Within a mother's love
A father nearby and in the world
Not of his own making but of his working
Hands rough from the fields and too long the days
Fighting for fairness too often denied
Too often brutally denied

In a village somewhere in a country

Far from the prying eyes of decency
With no recourse to justice
Men women in uniforms
Local militias state armies
Not obvious in a dim light
Following orders of an unseen authority
Following orders amid claims of innocence
Following orders once decided by world courts
As crimes against humanity
Too often deaths of innocents mothers fathers
Perpetrated centuries ago and just yesterday

In a village somewhere in a valley
Families live in the rhythms of their traditions
And in the transitions to the modern incursions
The on going massage of cultures
They live in their daily needs of water and food
Live in the arts of their ancestors
And the lore of their natural surroundings
Live in their communion their moments of love
Joined by millions around the world
On a street somewhere near a home
Growing fearful of the local predators
Organized gangs of young people with few options
The sound of gunfire
The tap of boots on gravel
Local militias
The click of ammunition in the chamber
Military orders
The rap at the door

A father is taken fighting for a plot of land
Wanted by anonymous greed and board room decision makers
A daughter is raped by a misguided uniformed man
A mother is abused by the anger of a frustrated husband
With no where to turn
Leaving fear and foreboding
In the wake of their exploitation and abuse

Destroying the connections of family
Community all the work for a better life
A hopeful future

Within gnawing fears somewhere in a fragile home
A mother packs what she can
What she may need
To keep her children alive
On an unknown journey
Leaving everything she's known
Leaving her past her familiar life
Her spoons her pots her rugs woven
In a corner of their room
Her children's clothes and toys
All they've ever known

On a bus somewhere in a strange land
Going north with a suitcase with
A few pesos saved over the years
Holding her daughter close
Her son asleep beside her
Late into the night into the
Darkness of her loss into the
Darkness of what is ahead with only a
Spark of light inside

At some time at some place
In a town somewhere a bus station
A mother takes her children off a bus
Walks with her children
To an address that says asylum
Somewhere in her world of possibility
She has an address written in hope
An address for asylum

Near the bus station somewhere an official office
With a flag of stripes and stars
She opens the door the threshold of a better life

For her and her children

She is questioned she speaks through an interpreter
She does not understand the questions
Her children holding on to her
She is told that they need to be
Taken care of will be taken care of
No one to trust no one's eyes meeting hers
Her children are taken to another place
She is taken to a holding place
Not knowing what has happened
Or what will be

The authorities act without emotion
Acting on orders from above
Just another refugee trying to bring
Her children across the border....

The Possible

Merril D. Smith

"When we come to it

We must confess that we are the possible"

—Maya Angelou, *A Brave and Startling Truth*

Snow falls, feather-soft
a silent shroud,

but ice is unyielding, strident,
treacherous—

hard, cold, cruel—
it can murder you.
even if you just stand there,
even if you're trying to help others,

ice can kill heroes.

You could fall through the ice,
and no one would find you,

even if you're a child
stranded like a polar bear

alone
clinging
to hope.

In hope,
I scatter words of truth and
compassion

breadcrumbs on the snow,

I watch one creature pick them up,
then another,

whispering them, then shouting,
singing

with robin joy
and mockingbird memory

all the words
that we carry inside
with the stardust
of our chaotic, unpredictable universe—

the impossible made possible
with our light,

we melt the ice.

somewhole

Robin Rich

three things broken
count the parts they are
more than the whole
one jigsaw

billions of parts to interlock

count the parts

One:

body in the doorway how they have folded up their bits
rough sleepers sent off in ships
touch paper,

i am a blue fuse in your
post code

Two:

citizen types
bodies in movement
in transport or in commute.
one a health or school run.
another is being transported
to a border
under
a State order

he is my busted cousin

Three:

the bust up family
Parent Child and Spirit
the cross in three parts used as sticks to beat the difference
a resurrection incomplete

we are assembled without congregation

to be whole
out of anything wholesome
only piles of disconnects
forced to align repellent poles
twisted magnets
when our natures attract

Four times we have been wronged

Indivisible

R.M. Carlson

tiny bare toes
zip-ties cut into tender skin
loose-limbed, heads lolling
slammed together
naked skin flinching
cold metal of a box truck

Still We Come

predators pacing
circling
leaning in
bullets shatter glass, enter skull
blood dribbles down onto chin, chest
fucking bitch

Still We Come

woman shrinks
a rabbit flattening to the pavement
staring at black boots
white collared shepherd steps in:
take me instead
strapped goon, pupils dilated
points his piece at the pastor in cuffs
you afraid now?
eyes level, unshakable: hell, no
agent: *you're white —*
you won't be any fun anyway

Still.

We.

Come.

Eye of the Storm

Rachel Armes-McLaughlin

Quiet now -

We mistake it as
a pause
to breathe.

It is not.

The silence
stretches,

lengthens into
something that feels safe

even while families
are taken - *shh, shh* -
today, next door.

The twins are no longer
featured news, yet

their families write to us
from afar, describing
scenes from war.

So calm and deceptive,
what do you see

in your omniscience,
eye of the storm?

Stars of Minneapolis (Sestina)

Karen McGee

This heart fractured and frozen as the ice
outside the window and on the nightly news. Losing power
no longer an idle threat. Then, resistance breathes
new life—neighbor by neighbor they map routes
and deliver food—commoners tenderized
by compassion contrast the cruelty of men wearing stars

on their Nazi-wannabe jackets. L'étoile
du Nord this city—a city forged by cold and ice
on land carved from solid rock and tendered
at the meeting of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers—
a source of power
where the Dakota and Ojibwe took root—
where their remnants of holy defiance resurfaced
with George Floyd's stolen breath.

Strong and deep, these resisters move with a breadth
of courage that replaces false power with starry
solidarity. Blowing whistles, they stare down the barrels
of the guns of men with roots
so tenuous and weak they are frozen by fear. An icy
defense so fragile they mistake masks and armor for power.
Ha! So easily revealed as weaklings by the tenderness

of Good and Pretty heroes.
Witnesses to the violence show up tender-
hearted and peaceful, offering comfort and space
for the targeted to breathe.
Loving their neighbors regardless of color or creed powers
the truth that we are all stars—
interstellar dust grains fused with ice—
people and planet of a single root.

I resist despair and root
for my fellow citizens as they reveal an army too tender
to withstand freezing temperatures and solid ice.
The courage of the ordinary radiates fire like dragon's breath
from the city known as the Star
of the North. Their powerful

acts of humanity raised to a contagious power
that unwrings my useless hands and uproots
this mortal to merge with the celestial body of Minneapolis stars
at the most granular level: offering legal tender
and letters of support, waving signs and singing to inspire
a nation to disarm ice.

A city of stars. A people's power.
A grassroots movement melts ice
and tenders one breath.

The Exiled Colossus

Barbara Harris Leonhard

A golden shovel sonnet after "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus

The suffering of people *de-fame-d*
and cast from this *land*
based on their skin color, not where they *stand*.
The would-be king, who speaks with *flame-s*
and double-checks his list of *name-s*,
refuses refugees a *hand*.
Instead, he issues heartless *command-s*.
Without the the facts, DHS frame-s
Poet Renee Nicole Good, shot by ICE when *she*
drops off her school-age child. Now a *poor*
child without his mother! — Are foreigners no longer *free*
to safely seek refuge on our *shore*?
As for *me* —
Will I, too, be shown the *door*?

Mother of Removal

Nick Allison

after "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus

Not like the torch-lit welcome of storied fame,
With open arms set wide from land to land;
Here at our tower-lined, floodlit gates shall stand
A stone-faced sentinel with a torch, whose flame
Burns warning now for strangers, and her name
Mother of Removal. From her closed hand
No welcome glows; her iron eyes command
The razor-wired threshold fear and fortress frame.

"Keep your broken lands, your wretched!" cries she
With bare lips. "Show me your documents, your dread,
Your huddled masses cuffed without a hearing,
Your children handed to the state's cold keeping,
Left to count the hours in numbered rooms.
Send these, I'll send them back in chains,
I've dimmed the lamp, bolted shut the golden door."

Umbilical Cord

Nina Kodrič and Snježana Vračar Mihelač

the news of the day cut right through
mothers start refusing food
as if it could be real
it's not a hasty decision
it stirs our indifference
they have nothing left to lose
blasts through
except for their voice
the rampant apathy
they stop impassable bodies
endless pretence knows no bounds
scattered like cargoes
instead of a containable everyday life
vital like breathing
we carry the burdens of our streets
they save the world
we are not mere spectators
by self-annihilation
because of her we huddled together
by renouncing their own bodies
system upgrades on-screen
it's in our blood
reviving weak bodies
it's in our wound
sensing a sharp pain
inevitable like glycogen depletion
we refuse the handshake
like dehydration
we must heed what was pledged
a complaint stored in the collarbone
breath turns into expectation
a muscle tissue breakdown
announcing the state of crisis
a slow pulse and nausea
we require more than what we possess
they do what they think they should do
women in the front lines

they have already split once
written out of history
now the body will be denied the rest
we stand in the midst
they enter a survival phase
of a restless city
the voices of children in their mothers' throats
prohibited passage
the collapse
for the insurgent women
potassium phosphate sodium
a cycle that never ends
the vain hearts of dead children's mothers
depleted signaling
their size disproportionate to their function
urban noise
they shrink and reduce
missed calls on the phone
the liver slows down
where are the boundaries
the kidneys reduce filtration
of the body's capacity
mothers open the way for infections
with the remaining strength
dead children's mothers
the will refuses to yield
lifeless bodies are all theirs
human shield
they start self-decomposing
shallow breathing
hunger chews the silence as slowly as Sunday
severe anxiety attacks
mothers cramped like workers' apartments
a ruin an inner disorder
unspoken bodies
unspoken remnants
tied with an umbilical cord
injecting strychnine
in a night inhabited by silence
dissolving the strings of cellular membranes
demolished and burned

oversaturated and fumed
persistent like bedbugs
from both sides
like supporting pillars
where do you stand
like a timetable
the forecast is clear
upright like a lighthouse
palpating the vein in the neck
light like hand palms
facial expressions
pure like good water
reveal nothing
defiant trees reaching upward
the stop sign is burning
burn never stronger
it is changing
never better
starving in the shadow
mothers against the regime
of the imperious media machinery
severe hypoglycemia
demolition decompression
heart arrhythmia
summons to agony
multiple injuries
gathering strengths
loss of consciousness
ragged we will surge into the streets
death risk
aware of the consequences
but what is death
dead mothers leaning on one another
for dead children's mothers
the air thickens into an omen
for children without eyes
buried on the podium
for eyes without children
excavated in a vacuum
for the hunger of children elsewhere
they look on feasting

from foreigners' dining rooms
from the piled-up colonial tables
bone rattling
for sight with no future
for having the backbone
mothers are opening doors
for mothers fed up with pain
grasping
mothers hungry for justice
guarding
like griffon vultures
with the blade's razor-sharp edge
that graze white sheep
they wound they assail
while the canopies collapse
stomping to the last
cities like glass
compressed cheeks
boulevards of rage and no sense
skin too tight
hospitals with no incubators
it lingers in our mind
the corporations sow death
the corporation's insatiable appetite
corruption occupation greed
futile petty change sanctions
economy of genocide
we will be the ones to stop it
infrastructure of femicide
the arms-fuelled mania of the patriarchy
shoots better than knife
an axe or a fall down the stairs
drone and sniper
stop squinting
a man standing by a man
indifferent eyes
they spread their hands around the world
every dead cell in the body
women refuse to give birth to abusers
fighting for survival
to dead soldiers

no temporary solution will suffice
they spend time on the edges
intertwined communities heal
they reject personal geographies
what's been destroyed
European racism
false hope refuses to die
colonial history
evil
glorification of war crimes
evil
permanent violence
EVIL
body collapses
system collapses
dead women
the sound between us
starved to death
is a scream
dead children's dead mothers
at last exhale without fear
undermine the machinery
sharp edges blur
dead mothers living mothers
those we shape together
living women
the hypocrisy evolves
they shine our way in the dark
into endless hope
relentlessly
there will finally be
like a neon sun
a safe space for us

Umbilical Cord (*Mrtve matere žive majke*) is a two-voice poem originally written in Slovenian and Croatian. In this translation, the two voices are distinguished by typeface: Palatino (Nina Kodrič) and Gill Sans (Snježana Vračar Mihelač). Translated from Slovenian by Nina Hudej; from Croatian by Ivana Maksić. Proofread by Jelena Mandić.

Dreamers (no hyphen can say what kind of American I am)

Kerfe Roig

How will I name myself?
What voice speaks for me?
Whose dreams can I share?
What door opens to welcome me?

I am full of nothing, separated
into parts that were never
something I could call my own—
how will I name myself?

Where is the language
that sounds natural
on my tongue?
What voice speaks for me?

Everything belongs to someone else—
even my questions are not my own.
I am unjoined, unincluded—
whose dreams can I share?

I sit afraid, alone,
clashing with my background.
My days pass unnoticed and unbound—
what door opens to welcome me?

Snowboarders Hate Ice

Jennifer Elise Wang

It's why we're glad X Games is in Colorado and not the Ice Coast.

Ice makes you slip.

Ice makes you catch an edge.

Ice hurts.

I.C.E. kills.

I'm struggling with the ice-cold response to the news in Aspen.

I get the athletes needing to have ice in their veins

To win the ice X Games created in lieu of traditional medals,

But why is everyone else still sipping their ice-cold beers

And dancing to a remix of "Ice Ice Baby"

Like the government hasn't created a secret pol-ICE?

I thought snowboarders hated police like they hated ice patches.

And icing on this shitty cake was the national anthem

And red, white, and blue lights painting the superpipe's icy sides.

I sat my ass on the iced-over ground and think

Of the icy reception I got here for having skin

the color of sand and not snow.

Have I been iced out of this sport I love so much?

But later I see a snowboarder compete

with "Abolish I.C.E." on her hoodie

And the ice crusting over my heart thaws a little.

Falling on ice is dangerous.

Confronting I.C.E. is dangerous.

But snowboarders don't let fear take away our joy.

In Plain Sight

Chad Parenteau

Pizza parlor
blares country,
covers trail.

Whiskey in hand,
on windowsill,
drunk on lyrics.

Kenny Rogers
croons, owner
glares outside.

Teaches himself
where they watch
back, when to run.

Dear Trump Voter

John Steele

May higher tariffs
raise the price of everything you need.

Dear Trump voter,
May mass deportation of undocumented immigrants
destroy the agriculture industry
and other sectors of the economy
that rely on low-wage, back-breaking labor,
although I'm sure you and your friends
will rush to claim those jobs that were being stolen
from you.

Dear Trump voter,
May threatened librarians and public school teachers
exit, en masse, your community.

Dear Trump voter,
May Obamacare be repealed
and your pre-existing conditions
come home to roost.
Who knew healthcare was so complicated?

Dear Trump voter,
May your loved one come out as LGBTQ
and be demeaned, bullied, assaulted,
persecution assailing your home,
not just those of Others.

Dear Trump voter,
May you or your wife or your daughter
be denied emergency medical care
for a complicated pregnancy.

Dear Trump voter,

May gutted environmental protections
foul your water and your air
and speed the destruction of your planet.

Dear Trump voter,
May you or your wife or your daughter
be sexually assaulted
and ridiculed and libeled publicly
by the assailant.
Would you still condone this behavior?

Dear Trump voter,
May you suffer a crisis of conscience
and be tarred heretic
by your spiritual family,
your blood family,
by your angry, petulant God.

Dear Trump voter,
May you, someday,
suffer empathy
for someone living a life
different from your own.

More Years of the Insane: A Prayer

Barbara Harris Leonhard

(A response in kind to "For the Year of the Insane: A Prayer" by Anne Sexton. I used her first and last lines as mine.)

I.

O Mary, fragile mother,
I hold a silver rosary,
pray, and listen.

Our world has been ill
for more years
than I can count.

Cancers grow in the garden.
Deniers seize dying bees.
Unceasing fires boil clouds,

melting relationships.
Earth's axis is atilt, like our minds,
conflating reason.

Some can hang on no longer.
The bridge of faith crumbles
in their handholds. Worse yet,

mass shootings. An insurrection.
Political corruption. Treason. Wars.
The United States' fall from grace.

The vulnerable: immigrants, trans people—
anyone considered easy to bully.
To blame—cast aside as OTHER.

Protestors brutalized or shot dead by ICE
for standing with immigrants. The poet.
The ER nurse. Peace lovers. Gone!

ICE grabs anyone of color to fill quotas.
Even citizens. Even babies from their cribs!
And throws them into 'concentration camps,'

where they beg for decent food. A bottle.
Medical care. A clean toilet. A bed.
An immigration attorney.
Time itself is moving us
backwards
into a black hole.

II.
O loving mother of mercy,
hear my prayer. I'm a helpless elder.
With scars carved into

my left knee and spine.
For comfort, my pen and prayers.
For safety, pepper spray.

I admit that though I hold this rosary,
I live in fear. Thrown off my axis.
All that I love in my world

is covered in sludge. I have
no strength to shovel myself
out of this hovel.

*I am locked
in the wrong house.*

Even the Meadow

Eileen McCluskey

The meadow sighs. Its tall
grasses bow. It misses

the children and their mothers
who sang under the trees.

It misses that music, flown
across the meadow
by bees and breeze.

In its loneliness, the meadow speaks
a strange tongue, echoes the scratching
moles burrowing beneath its stony flanks,
mimics the sipping roots and hopping birds.

The sun overhears and worries,
knowing meadows are meant
to be quiet and listen to the laughing
stream that visits after a rain, listen to the birds warn

of coyote's approach
so the rabbits will dive
for their warrens.

Nothing can bring
the meadow back its joy.
Every day new sorrows invade
its tree stands, goldenrod,
grasses and brook.

The sun could almost weep.
Despite its many powers
and fiery love, it cannot
burn away what has been done,

or will
into being
what hasn't.

Predators

Michael Renshaw

Sweltering in my screened porch,
faded black T-shirt soaked, front and back.
Fan spins but doesn't cool me.
I think of ICE in city streets
and wild life in my country garden
as I ponder predators and prey.

Out among my ancient oak trees
cries of hungry baby red-tailed hawks
huddled together in a rugged tree-top nest
impatient, they squeal to be fed.
Mother's raspy screech replies
Kee-eeeeee-arr! Kee-eeeeee-arr! Kee-eeeeee-arr!
I'm coming! I'm coming! I'm coming!

And prey, that hear, pray too!
Quivering gray squirrels leap
from birch to hickory to sweetgum
racing to nests where helpless babies lie.
Red and brown cardinals emit sharp, metallic cheeps
warning defenseless fledglings to silence
while nestled in their thick holly bushes.

A tiny mother mole races for safety in her tunnels
as she senses motion of wings that sweep down.
She tries to dig deeper, but too late!
She's food now.
And down in her nest, like orphans in city streets,
little pups whimper, twist, seek a nipple
that will never come home again,
and too young to forage, slowly, they die.

From the safe comfort of my porch, I ponder
impoverished children in war-shattered cities,

American children starving in ghastly ghettos,
all running and playing in trash-strewn streets.
Meanwhile, caregivers struggle to feed them
while ICE-hearted predators swoop down
to imprison, enslave, even kill them.
And do those children, like mole pups, starve too?

Taquería

Nick Allison

I saw a story about ICE agents
eating at a taquería.
Hours later they came back
to cuff the hands that fed them.

I wonder if they finished their plates.
I wonder if they laughed at the table.

I wonder if they slept well that night,
their bellies full
of carnitas and tinga de pollo.

I wonder if they tipped.

How Many?

Mona Lisa

How many times
Have I said "Use your words"
To quell the impending tantrum
From a frustrated, overwhelmed child
Or a frustrated, overwhelmed me.

How many ways
Did I learn to defuse
And de-escalate the tension
When pain and suffering turned outward
Because the pain had to go somewhere.

How many times
Did I say "It's okay"
Not knowing if it really was?
But the choice to believe in okay
Was the only choice I could make.

How many times
Did I think "say nothing
if you can't say anything nice"
When their words landed like sticks and stones
That broke my heart instead of my bones.

How many tears
Have I willed not to fall
So that others felt safe and sound
While I cut tiny half-moon crescents
Into the palms of my tight-clenched fists.

How many times
Must I watch people die
For daring to do the right thing?
And the words disappear from my lips
Because I don't know what else to say.

mirror-touch synesthesia

Cam Wheelr MD

1* 2* 3* bullets

* ** recoil

echo of blasts

resistance

witness

* **

a masked man

jerking her

door

* ** my misreading

of tug of tug

of tug

as thug

recognition

re/cognition

* ** sensorial

remembering

they thug

at our bodies

* ** on loop * **

tangible

* ** embodied

we feel * **

thugged

all through

* **

our gut-gasp

our re/membering
* * * incarnate

we feel * * *
our own body

* * * again & again
in her place

A Nurse's Sacrifice

James Brumbley Jr.

Binding and healing their wounds, that's what he did.
Nursing the sick and old, caring for veterans of war.
Even when they died, he never forgot their sacrifice.
He went to help a woman, but aid was forbidden.
Arresting people is a chore,
So he had to pay the price.
He joined the veterans as another casualty because heaven forbid,
That a nurse joins the uproar.
Now his corpse is on ICE.

Flowers

Merril D. Smith

In Memory of Renée Nicole Good

One spot—as a seed—
blossoms into a sticky, crimson flower,

a giant poppy
unfurls across her shirt,

drops black pips
carried on wind and whistles—

(I hear—
ghost voices,
long time passing)

flowers know what to do,

(fleeting, eternal)

from sidewalk cracks
and suburban gardens,

they multiply—
with nectar and thorns,

they wake. Rise. Bloom.

Beckon to bees, birds,
continue.

Preservation

Kalina Smith

My sensitivity has been pickled,
saturated in the vinegar & dill
& peppercorns
left by agents of the freezer:
ICE,
& frozen meat
& popsicles. Freezer
burnt, by cars set on fire
& big guns
designed to slaughter.

While my jars sit in pressure cookers,
building, heating, waiting
to explode
when the lid comes off.
Pop.

I see a poet,
a mother,
a wife
reduced to a headshot
& an accusation
of terrorism
by the coldest ones.

As if the freezer isn't full,
as if the freezer burn does not spread
to the bags of carrots & peas
until they're inedible.
Corpses.

On Bitches Promoted to Fuckin Bitches

Michelle DeRose

Bitches bring whistles, not guns
to neighborhoods, with four-pawed
long-haired bitches in the back
of Pilots who wish to lick
six year-olds good-bye
for the day, hope for walks
before they wag their packs
back home at 3. Lady Bitches
record, chat, encourage lunch,
smile. One proclaims no anger
at dudes, leaves windows down
even as she sees the threats
and locks doors. She leaps
to fuckin bitch by being so empty
of madness she drives him to it.
With bullets he wishes were his fist
he kisses the fuckin bitch good
night, hissin with piss that her cower
was inadequate, his power
unacknowledged. He shows her.
In this world all good
bitches ride bullets to heaven.

For Renée Nicole Good

Paul Cannon

They shoot poets don't they
when they speak it blunt,
they shoot poets in Minneapolis
when they break ice,
making life navigable
creating flow
for the good
at self cost
never to be silent,
without vanity
life as witness,
as spotlight
on a creeping shadow
that would dare
to strangle love.

On a Pale Horse

Rachel Armes-McLaughlin

They were going door to door
on a pale horse
in Minneapolis.

The largest raid ever,
boasts the bloated king.

But you know this
better than any.

Just the first day -
one week
into this fresh new hell -

and you were shot
for taking a video.

What did she say
when they shot you, dove?

Stuffed animal, air bag,
her face - covered
in your blood.

She cried out, *It's my fault!*
But it's not her fault.

You know.
Your wife saw you out,
with fear but with love.

Those masked monsters
shot you, point blank -

It's their fault, full stop:

Death on a pale horse
in our streets.

with what is given

Kerfe Roig

how to rectify—
the living and the almost
dead, the fear
and the need to carry on

the living and the almost
with or without hope
and the need to carry on
despite, because

with or without hope—
how to grow
despite, because—
the water, the sun

how to grow
secretly
the water, the sun,
in all the dark places

secretly—
how to be safe
in all the dark places
where waiting is done

how to be safe,
lost in the internment
where waiting is done—
the empty spaces,

lost in the internment—
the dead, the fear,
the empty spaces—
how to rectify

I'm Sorry

Eileen McCluskey

I'm at my wit's dead

end in this un-
real reality. Facts hide in plain

I could have said sight
but who's looking?

The corners of
my mouth turn

down the streets are killing
us/ fields. Say the slash. We're end

to end encrypted, I'd ask
who's listening but

everyone already knows. It's not
enough to allow my face

to crumple. Whatever I do will never be
should I shout it? Enough!

I am so

sorry this has a sad ending.

Gone In The USA

Steve Babb

I have a friend
Who's disappeared
From the world's face
Into the void
Without a trace
Without a trail
Without a word
Without a clue
Without appeal
Without reprieve
Without concern
Apparently
From anyone but me

He could be anywhere, I guess,
He could be in detention in
A Migra concentration camp
He could be caged in Gitmo or CECOT
Or Prairieland or Sde Teiman
Or Alligator Alcatraz

He could be dead
Or wishing that he were
He could be being tortured as we speak
He could be being shipped
In shackles on a plane
To a land that he's never seen
Or can't recall

He could be in
A coma or
A stateless state
He could be being
Coup de graced

By putschists who
Had cut their chops
On January 6th
And had received
A get out of jail free card from
Their Oathbreaker in Chief

He could have been forgot about
Discarded in some godforsaken ICE black site
Or in a freight car or a truck trailer
Or in a meat locker or shallow grave
Inside some one-horse podunk town
A thousand miles from anywhere
Which history had left behind a century ago

I have a friend who's disappeared
Who would believe such things could happen here
In the Land of the Free
On the 250th commemoration of
Our declaration of our liberty?
In retrospect, I guess it was a little premature
Our corpses still aren't secure
And habeas is not assured
For folks of the wrong hue

Who would have thought
We would have been so reckless with our rights
And that we'd do such a poor job of keeping track
Of where the hell our brethren are
And what condition they are in
In case we're asked
By a Higher Authority
What we have done with Abel in
This most ungodly Nation Under God?

The fabric of society is ripped

Sue McBean

Four weak, two superior.
The leg Commandment.
Pigs indistinguishable from
corruption they rebelled against.
Gambling the oppressor's cards.
Cycle of exploitation enslaving spirit.

Carnivorous Bladderworts
set a triggered proximity trap.
Prey sucked in, trapdoor closes.

Ruthless incivility,
snaring of aliens, noncitizens
has other natural parallels: Lures, slippery or sticky surfaces
and drowning in digestive juices,
evolved over millions of years.

Man-made tricks for profit-detention treachery,
in place during the first 100 days of red cap.

Lurking transparently:
the sweaty underbelly of our communities
fosters stinking yeasts
in groins become insanely itchy. Scratching becomes obsessive.
Skin is picked off and oozing. Nothing can heal this
until the rich predatory bullies
(who swore oaths to serve)
Account for being disgusting Kafkaesque insects
and parasites that
they quickly metamorphosed into.
Predictably.

People passing by, killed in their car or in the gutter.
No time for last words for loved ones.

Our streets become an unregulated abattoir.

In the warehouses our neighbours become
the industry product.

Zero choices left.

Detained, facing disease, deportation

Maybe death.

Medieval infection risks:

contagion, contamination, crowding,

poor hygiene

and fearful dehydration,

dysentery, untreated cancers.

Rights absent.

There is still time for “domestic terrorists”
to rage over the starving by the gate.

To stand together.

For ordinary kindness

And lines in poems to shout truth

and support.

Fear not cruelty, so much as loss of belief in survival.

Carve these words on your palms.

Share them:

Connect. Be heard. Be seen.

Refuse, endure, act, outlast.

Resist. Don't own hope:

be it, do it.

Unbearable alternative:

see a cage in a grain of sand, hell in a wildflower,

the end in an hour and held in your hand: a prison.

The End is Nigh

John Steele

Getting out of bed some days can be a hard sell.
So much of the world is... well,
not good. Skipped purgatory, went directly to hell.

Rising seas, deadly weather, oligarchy unleashed,
unhinged leaders, deluded followers willingly fleeced.
Fuck the poor. Tax cuts keep the stock market greased.

Forever wars on immigrants, on women, on anyone Othered,
wars on science, on medicine. Now measles rediscovered.
Wars on speech, on dissent, democracy smothered.

As bad as all that, if you will excuse my bitchin',
a horde of relentless fruit flies has invaded my kitchen.
My peace of mind giddyup has got a hell of a hitch in.

Silent, unobtrusive, oranges rotting in their leathery shrouds.
Clueless, I was, until diminutive winged demons
erupted in clouds.
Not a handful, not a dozen, but innumerable crowds.

In my periphery, in my face, no bounds to their marauding.
They elude me, the buggers. I chase them, fruitlessly applauding.
The gall, how infuriating! Like a fake charity
or fake university defrauding.

The world may be crumbling, buffeted by a petulant,
vile, orange clown,
feudal Darwinism returns, bend the knee, kiss the ring,
pat the crown,
but, with God as my witness, at least these bugs are going down.

Apple cider vinegar with dish soap will serve as my lure,
like a pedophile ring to QAnon MAGAs on a conspiracy tour.

So crazy, the Epstein lie, the only lie they cannot endure.

Hammer and nail, tiny holes in a jar lid, no trouble.
If only so easily pierced: the bloviating bullshit
of a hateful rightwing bubble,
shrill chamber of echoes, where logic is circular
and talk is double.

Lie, lie more, deflect, find a scapegoat for the stocks,
for the pillory.
Blame Biden! blame Obama! hell, why not blame Hillary?
GOP toady sycophants drink Kool-Aid crack,
sniff fumes at the distillery.

But like sunrise and rainbows, there are still signs of hope,
despite infestation or vindictiveness of unimaginable scope.
My jar trap, at least, fills with pests that don't float.

May they choke, may they drown, scavengers,
fruit flies, and fascists,
victims of their own spite, cruelty, and avarice.
Insects, at least, don't act from stupidity,
incompetence, and malice.

This orange, that orange, rotten to the core,
festering fruit or stunted, withered soul, corruption's whore.
Makes keeping one's sanity an imposing, ongoing chore.

The Bucks' Naked Truth

Eileen ike West

Imagine a world
Where cruel men lose it all,
Become buck naked,
Not physically nude,
Although that'd surely be
A comeuppance.

But for oligarchs to feel
Organically—to the depths—UNentitled.
I speak of males naked in the light, or soul,
Where deception—in thoughts or deeds—
Shows up as dark blobs.
So, lying, corrupt men march forth, exposed.

Imagine storm clouds brew around midriiffs
Of such leaders, naked in the light,
Bullies showing themselves in advance of words,
Spewing out barbs, small hooks,
Snaring anyone they can on the receiving end
Of their 'til now invisible attacks.

Envision such a revamped world.
Surely, it's the one on tap,
Warming up in the bullpen.
Soon to blossom, the light bodies of men
First seen by women with second sight,
And developing new power in the collective.

Occupied

Randy Koch

1.

A pierced laundress with a ripple in her diction heckles a brown shirt on the blue-black avenue, not far from where Lowenstein and pig's feet are served in a corrugated shack favored by dozy truckers. He bawls after the girl twisting around tardy doldrums, scrambling through

the laundromat's chemical memory, and vanishing in worn-out taffeta, vacant fumes, and pressed satchels waiting for their mail carriers. He's as cold as he seems, he and his barked orders, his threats echoing in a dryer drum. He's numbed from counting the caged who, in the half-moon

distance when the wire and steel cool, crouch on concrete, watch crumpled pages measled with redactions cling to the chain-link and razor wire, and find only newsprint in the latrine. He tromps like Moses sore at the statuary, dumb as a sleeper stacked in a garden thick with crawling

fungus, his scruples listing with the shifting quotas, and cruel as the jealous critic awash in senility. And so, he denies her way home, brags about the riddled windshield, the gunshot thighs, and the eyes swollen shut, scoffs at the raw scrape across her cheek, and sneers at the ghostly

vapor drifting through the gutter, the gassed shirts abandoned in the dryer. So. When whistlers disappear in zip ties, when a knee on the neck is worth two in the back, when those rats infest school yards and Target, airports and court houses, construction sites and sewers, and litter

hairless nestlings in their poverty of pipes and malice, let early risers wake and crack the dawn.

2.

Bells and sirens, despite their conflicting vocabularies, make similar declarations.

Consider this: three in the steeple overlook
your sins while those in the street clamor
for teargas, thrill at the disabled cries bulldogged
into an SUV, a database swollen with fresh
IDs, the veiled south-bound flights. When guilt
is propped up and civil rights disassembled like
carcasses swinging down the line, when the press concedes
to threats and their dalliance with forgetfulness promotes
a date with a kennel or the block and tackle in a warehouse,
when the itch of vengeance rubs his thin skin raw, when all this
comes to pass, then the cultured virus of the day after
38th and Chicago has found us, blights us with what
might have been. Or may still be.

3.

Bar the doors. Line the streets. Assemble the barricades
and unfold your duct-taped umbrellas against the flashbangs
and pepper spray. Then, drag *him* through the ruts and nettles,
make *him* feel the prickle and licentiousness of dislocation,
and remind *him* while he howls that forgiveness is never coming,
that while she might be Native or Asian or Mexican,
she is, first, human.

4.

In times like these, when masks conceal
the shank of threats, one might retreat
into the resolved past, when trouble
is but a shimmering memory, a shattered
road already crossed, a stumble caught near
the roof's edge, a recklessness forgiven,
the proof hidden that might have left you
punctured with suspicion or guilt.

In spite of the miles, there's no sane or right
way to avoid the least designs assembled
at gunpoint: the trampled snow above
the gutter, the woman in the pink coat,
the gloved applause over his body as the ice
retreats into a crescent of wonder, the cloud
of whistles dissipating in a gray sky glittering

with frost. Then, a woman's wail cuts
the air, and shouts lift it over the still body.

Compressed by the point-blank reports, outrage,
like a held breath, now expands, swells toward
that dense thuggery impaled in their midst.
Broken voices black with invective pour
from storefronts, from people bundled up
against the cold and filling the street, and
off a rooftop where men in coveralls raise
shovels overhead like semaphores. A nurse
throws the door shut on her Civic left
idling in front of a clinic and marches across
the asphalt. Throngs tromp over snowbanks
driven curbwise by plows. Phones, voices,
and fists rise. The crescent tightens and thickens,
brown shirts and masked faces receding,
their backs to the body, muzzles to the crowd,
their boot soles stamped with his blood.

5.

For days and weeks after—while standing in line
or waiting for the light to change, kneeling beside
the tub and bathing your child or passing laundry
from washer to dryer, staring out the window as water
runs into the kitchen sink, or clinging to the other behind
the bedroom door—unnerving memories creep in.
Sirens whine across daydreams, and gunshots spider-
web nightscapes. Awake at 2 a.m., shoulders tense and
jaw clenched, we're pierced again by the clamor of orders
and threats, dread and mourning, stabbed by echoes of
assaults and murder that wound and occupy us still.

Remember Good

Jennifer Elise Wang

for Renée Nicole Good

You called yourself a “poet” first,
And I’m thinking of all your unwritten words.
I’ll try to step up and help fill the void
So there are more verses instead of guns
And maybe one more person can fill their heart
With something besides hate.
Some have asked why “queer” and “poet”
Are mentioned with your name,
Alongside “mother” and “wife”,
And I want them to look up from their screens
To see rainbow sidewalks painted over
And read phrases on a page so revolutionary
They made martyrs of writers.
You’ve become a martyr too
For watching and listening—
The prelude to composition
Because a man whose heart
Consisted of ice and violence
Decided that Good should die.
So now it’s our mission to
Carry on and compose
And do good.

Deniability Denied

Paul Cannon

Sure
you were more than
3,000 miles away,
never knew them
never physically
pulled the trigger,
but you loaded the
mind bullets
for the frozen hearts
baying for their blood,
someone's blood,
knowing the consequences
for innocence and life.

Our National Anathema

Biff Rushton

Oh say can you scream
in the rose blush of morning,
when autocracy's cold calculations

creep forth your street like a wolf?
Will you scream when they come
for your neighbor, or shoot

your son's teacher in the head?
Justifiable homicide, says faceless men
with Glock 19 sized chips on their shoulders,

testifying how, *the keys in her hand*
were gleaming like an AK-47... imminent danger
deadly force, liberty, and other words tossed

about like dissenters across the asphalt,
or detainees thrown in kennels of broad stripes
cast of iron - the bowed ribs of an American

dream, cleaved and sundered by silence, apathy and
the goose-step of jack boots, gallantly streaming
over delicate spines of compassion, decency, and

the fragile architecture of our democracy.
A red glare of sirens, blood, and weeping
of the widowed, the orphaned, and the terrified

masses huddled behind cages of cold-linked
chain and razored-wire; ghosts of Bergen-Belsen
preaching on *the clinical erasure of soul*. Vestiges

of a bedeviled republic's hollowed heart, where
silence mistaken for neutrality is a heralding of the

status quo; a vacuum where fascism can breathe,

take root, and migrate from the borders of history
to our doorstep. Dress rehearsals for the powerless
that will be refined for the rest of us, lest we kick

and scream as our star-spangled banner waves,
o'er the land where the free have been dishonored,
and the brave are the ones who dare make a sound

Least of These

R.M. Carlson

too many hearts closing
like barbed wire borders
curling deadly, end-to-end
dividing the land

building fences
like Hadrian's Wall—
to keep them out
or fence us in?

they walk together
bottoms of hems
stiff with dirt, clay
shoulders bent
under everything they own

our eyes watch
wrinkles pinching
between our brows
lips pressed thin
we see faces gray with dust

they smile
reaching out
palms up
and we cower away
covering our eyes

deadbolt slides home
wood paneled door
graced with a cross
and a crown of brambles

welcome, stranger

*"Denounce the government and embrace
the flag. Hope to live in that free
republic for which it stands."*

Wendell Berry,
"Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front"

Contributor Bios

Nick Allison is a writer and editor based in Austin, Texas. His work has appeared in *Slate*, *HuffPost*, *CounterPunch*, *The Fulcrum*, *The Shore*, and elsewhere. He is the editor of *The Chaos Section*, an independent publication focused on politics, power, culture, and the human condition, and co-editor of *The Chaos Section Poetry Project*, which has published three poetry anthologies to date. He also secretly enjoys writing his own bio in the third person, probably because it makes him feel a little more important than he actually is.

Rachel Armes-McLaughlin has written poetry for over 25 years. Her work is published in *The Chaos Section Poetry Project*, where she currently assists as co-editor; in venues such as *Loblolly Press*, *Middle Mouse Press*, and *Medicine and Meaning*; in a Central Arkansas Library System anthology; and elsewhere, with one poem nominated for Best of the Net and another nominated for a 2025 Pushcart Prize. Rachel lives in the very red state of Arkansas with her husband, Jack; daughter, Isabelle; and four cats. You can find her on BlueSky at @mother-poet.bsky.social.

Steve Babb is a retired public health worker who has fought for social justice for his entire adult life. He volunteers with El Refugio, a hospitality house for relatives visiting detainees at Stewart Immigrant Detention Center in Lumpkin, Georgia (elrefugiostewart.org). His poems address a variety of social justice struggles, including immigrant detention and solidarity with Central America and Gaza, and he has been inspired by the poetry of witness of Anna Akhmatova, Mahmoud Darwish, Refaat Alareer, Hiba Abu Nada, Mosab Abu Toha, Fadi Joudah, Roque Dalton, Carolyn Forché, Wilfred Owen, Nour Elassy, and Hanan Azaiza. His work has appeared in *Wayfarer Magazine*, *The Rising Phoenix Review*, *IMMPRINT*, and *Mothering Magazine*.

Bartholomew Barker is an organizer of Living Poetry, where he has hosted a monthly feedback workshop for more than a decade.

His first poetry collection, *Wednesday Night Regular*, written in and about strip clubs, was published in 2013. His second, *Milkshakes and Chilidogs*, a chapbook of food inspired poetry was served in 2017. He was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2021 & 2025 as well as the Best of the Net Anthology in 2024. His work has appeared in *The Lake*, *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*, *Panoply*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *the Gyroscope Review* and *the Naugatuck River Review* among others. bartbarkerpoet.com

James Brumbley Jr. is a writer who focuses on short stories and poems about current events, with his writing centering on systemic issues that impact people. He is a library worker and also organizes fundraisers for local nonprofits and community organizations. He enjoys reading and favors genres such as alternate history, dystopian, and thrillers.

Paul Cannon is a poet and writer from Western Australia who lives in the south-west corner at a place called Augusta with wife Lyn. Paul has a background in philosophy and theology, and he works occasionally as a spiritual director or companion. He loves creativity, nature, meditation, and is committed to non-violence. Paul's poetry is all about asking questions, social justice, evoking experiences, stirring hearts, and trying to be a better self.

R.M. Carlson's work has appeared in *Record of Dissent: Poems of Protest in an Authoritarian Age* (2025), *What We Hold On To: Poems of Coping, Connection, and Carrying On* (2026), and *Uprooted: Poems of Resistance, Witness, and Survival* (2026), all from The Chaos Section Poetry Project, as well as #MEAction's #MillionsMissing 2026 social media campaign and Poem City 2026 (Kellogg-Hubbard Library, Montpelier, Vermont). After decades away, writing has become her home—and she has a lot to say. She chronicles the natural world, social justice, chronic illness, and humanity. She extends her middle finger toward fascism.

Professor Emerita of English at Aquinas College, **Michelle DeRose** lives and writes in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Her most

recent publications appear in *The New Verse News*, *Peninsula Poets*, *Dunes Review*, and *The Stafford Challenge Anthology*.

Russell Dupont is the author of three novels, a short story collection, two collections of poetry, and four chapbooks. His work has been published in numerous journals, including *the albatross*, *Spectrum*, *The I, For Poets Only*, *The Anthology of South Shore Poets*, *Mozaic Daily Jazz Gazette*, *Re-Side*, *Oddball*, *JerryJazzMusician*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Rye Whiskey Review*, *Last Stanza Poetry Journal*, *the new post-literate*, *DADAKU*, *One Sentence*, *the Northern New England Review*, *Verse-Virtual*, *The Lothlorien Review*, *Pick-Me-Up Poetry*, *Silver Birch Press*, *The Poetry Porch*, *Tell-Tale Inklings*, *Concrete Formalist Poetry*, *The Prose Poem*, *Rockland Rhapsody*, and *Cold Moon Journal*.

Bonner Fowles is an Austin-born artist based in Central Texas. He works with multiple mediums, with a strong focus on drawing and both oil and acrylic painting. He has painted the covers for all three volumes in The Chaos Section Poetry Project series. bonnerfowles-artist-austintx.yolasite.com

Delores Gilmore is a student of poetry writing with Vanessa Poster at The Write Way. Her poems include *Today*, *After the Election*, published in *Women in a Golden State* (Gunpowder Press), *Life's Secrets in the League of Women Voters Newsletter*, and *Sunday at the Stadium* in the *Omnilore Newsletter*. She is President of Zonta Club South Bay, a 501©(3) charitable organization, and a retired Vice President of Human Resources in the fashion, apparel, manufacturing, and retail industries. She holds a BA in Business from California Pacific University and completed Advanced HR Studies at UCLA. Delores is a lifelong Californian and beach enthusiast.

Two collections of **Randy Koch's** poems are forthcoming in 2026: *Against the Risen Flesh* (Alternating Current Press) and *Amends* (Finishing Line Press). His work has appeared in *The Caribbean Writer*, *Chiricú Journal*, *The Texas Observer*, *Revista Interamericana*, *J Journal*, *Bilingual Review/Revista Bilingüe*, and many others. A

longtime columnist for *LareDOS: A Journal of the Borderlands*, he earned an MA at Minnesota State University Mankato and an MFA at the University of Wyoming and was twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Nina Kodrič (aka NinaBelle) is a musician, lyricist, songwriter, DJ, producer, and activist based in Ljubljana. She works as a musical accompanist for literary programmes on Radio Slovenia and organises club and concert events locally. Since 2017, she co-develops the electronic duo Warrego Valles with Nina Hudej, releasing four albums (*Location Off*, *Botox*, *Save as*, *Turbo*) and several singles and remixes. Their performances blend post-club electronic styles, remaining genre-fluid and experimental. She writes original lyrics, is part of the queer DJ collective Ustanova, co-organises the Grounded Festival, and produces events at Pritličje, focusing on women-led collectives. linktr.ee/warregovalles

Barbara Harris Leonhard is the author of *Three-Penny Memories: A Poetic Memoir* (2022) and *The Lost Book of Zeroth* (2025). She is co-author of *Too Much Fun to Be Legal* (2024) and *Broken Rengay: Unruly Poetry* (2025). She is a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee. Trending Poets recently named her Poet of the Year. Her poetry has been translated into Italian, Albanian, and Chinese. She is the editor for Masticadores USA, FEED THE HOLY, and Latinos USA.

A friend of **Mona Lisa's** once said, "You're officially a shit-magnet" in the most caring way possible, to which she replied, "But I've handled all of it." Handling it has included teaching football players to love Shakespeare, raising two profoundly decent humans and several rescue animals, and launching a second career in healthcare at 47. She lives where the heat and insects match her relentless determination to prove that she's got everything under control, and she's learned that sometimes, burning bridges is the only way forward.

Her poem *How Many* is for the mothers, nurses, protectors and poets who live by the words they speak and write, no matter what.

Sue McBean is a sailor, nurse teacher, wildflower photographer, and botanist who writes creatively. Living many years now on the North coast of Northern Ireland, she was brought up on the flat lands of the Cambridgeshire Fens. She writes mainly prose with poetic style, reflecting on her life and exploring themes of sea, sailing, island life, and nature. Sue felt most honoured to have poems published by The Chaos Section Poetry Project in *Record of Dissent: Poems of Protest in an Authoritarian Age*, *What We Hold On To: Poems of Coping, Connection, and Carrying On*, and *Uprooted: Poems of Resistance, Witness, and Survival*.

Eileen McCluskey's publications include poetry chapbooks: *Divorce Haiku* (once banned) (Origami Poems Project); *Topless* (Main Street Rag). Her poems appear in *Ibbetson Street*, *Main Street Rag*, WBUR's Radio Boston, *Boston College Magazine*, *Rufous City Review*, among others. Poetry recognition includes: Wickford Art Association's 2019 exhibit of poets and painters; finalist, The Poetry Loft 2015 Chapbook Contest; and Cambridge Poetry Awards 2012 competition.

Karen McGee writes from Baltimore, Maryland. She is a poet and essayist, and MFA Candidate in Creative Writing & Publishing Arts at the University of Baltimore. Her work has appeared online in *The Sunlight Press*, *Fauxmoir*, and *Coastal Shelf*, and in the poetry anthology, *Close Up: Poems on Cancer, Grief, Hope and Healing*. She also has a chapbook of poetry, "Prayers of an Ordinary Goddess" and her flash memoir piece, "Golden Joinery" is in the Spring 2026 edition of the literary journal *Welter*.

Rainer Neumann has been a writer and artist throughout his life... painting, poetry, books, songwriting... he has created and published all of these art forms over the years. While living in Detroit, he studied humanities and received a Masters of Arts degree along with teaching introduction to humanities at the

local community college. Traveling west, he spent 30+ years in San Francisco, starting a graphic design business in 1979 and publishing an arts magazine called *Canticle*. During those years, he published several novels while continuing his pastel drawings and veil paintings (watercolors). After moving to Half Moon Bay, he has exhibited pastel drawings in galleries and cafes and published books that combine poetry with pastels and watercolor images.

Carl “Papa” Palmer of Old Mill Road in Ridgeway, Virginia, lives in University Place, Washington. He is retired from the military and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), enjoying life as “Papa” to his descendants and being a Franciscan Hospice volunteer. Poetry awards include the Sally-Sue Hughes Memorial Award, DAVA, State Department of Florida Award, Veterans Voices T.H. Horton Award, and Gladys Feld Helzberg Award.

Chad Parenteau hosts Boston’s long-running Stone Soup Poetry series. His work has appeared in journals including *Résonancee*, *Molecule*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Pocket Lint*, *Cape Cod Poetry Review*, *Tell-Tale Inklings*, *Off The Coast*, and *The Ugly Monster*. His newest collections are *All’s Well Isn’t You* and *Cant Republic: Erasures and Blackouts*. He serves as Associate Editor of *Oddball Magazine* and co-organizer of the Boston Poetry Marathon.

Julie Parker-Kinsey is a poet, writer of short stories, songwriter, and amateur photographer. Her work has appeared in various physical print and / or online publications including *Dust & Bone – Our Poetic Legacy*, *SciFanSat Magazine*, *The Solitary Daisy*, *FromOneLine Volume 7*, and *Women of Auckland Write: An Anthology*. Originally hailing from the United States, Julie lives in New Zealand.

Michael Renshaw lives in North Carolina among fields and forests where he discovers poetry stirring and waiting to be nurtured. He spent a lifetime evolving with computers that continuously grew smaller and far more powerful. When they

shrank beyond nanodots, he elected to retire and just write words which he could still see.

Sofía Reyes is a college student living somewhere in the Southern United States.

Robin Rich is a bin man who discovered writing poetry from pushing beyond limericks composed about people or as commentary on social and environmental issues. Child of the space race era, of Welsh blood and Black Country grit. His work has been curated by ATLA publishing in his first collection *Walk to be Herd*. His haiku are regularly published in the *Asahi Shimbun*.

A resident of New York City, **Kerfe Roig** enjoys transforming words and images into something new. Her poetry and art have been featured online by *Silver Birch Press*, *Feral*, *Pure Haiku*, *Zen Space*, *Visual Verse*, *Collaborature*, and *The Ekphrastic Review*, and published in *Ella@100*, *Incandescent Mind*, *The Raw Art Review*, *The Anthropocene Hymnal*, *The Polaris Trilogy*, and *What We Hold On To: Poems of Coping, Connection, and Carrying On*. Follow her explorations on her blog at kblog.blog

Biff Rushton is an East Texas writer / musician / painter / oilfield worker, who has cultivated a lifelong love of the written word, art, and the act of creation. His vows to poetry, began in childhood, have evolved through raw, lived experience and the beauty of the world spinning around him. For twenty years he has balanced 14-hour days in the Texas oilfields, with a quiet (almost silent) devotion to poetry—often having to hide in the porta-john to write. His words reflect this resilience, along with the soulful majesty and wonder found in everyday life, a testament to experience and self-taught artistry.

Mark Sebring is a retired systems programmer from Omaha, Nebraska. He is also an amateur philosopher and poet. His AuthorsDen website contains an odd assortment of songs, poems, essays, and short stories he's written over the past 50

years. "An Atheist Perspective" was originally published on his website.

Kalina Smith (she/her) is a Pushcart Prize and Best Poet of Arkansas nominee. She teaches high school English. Her work has appeared in *One Art: a Journal of Poetry*, *Arkansas Review*, *Tulsa Review*, *Blood+Honey*, *dipity*. (Pushcart-nominated), and *SLANT*, among others, with work forthcoming in *Jabberwock*. She served as the poetry editor for *Shadowplay* during the Spring of 2025. Her first chapbook, *Scorpio Season*, was published by Kelsay Books. You can find her on Instagram @kalinasmithpoetry or kalinasmith.com

Merril D. Smith is a Pushcart and Best of the Net nominated poet. Her second collection, *Held Inside the Folds of Time* (Jane's Studio Press), was published in 2025. Her first full-length collection, *River Ghosts* (Nightingale & Sparrow Press), was *Black Bough Poetry's* December 2022 Book of the Month. She writes from southern New Jersey. Find her at Bluesky: @merrildsmith.bsky.social; Instagram: mdsmithnj; Blog: merrildsmith.org.

John Steele, a North Carolina poet and writer, has studied creative writing at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. He has been a teacher, a nonprofit tutor, a logistics coordinator, a high-ropes-course director, a warehouse technician, and, for one fateful day in the deepest, darkest, coldest recesses of January in southern Indiana, an arborist assistant. Poetry is the loose thread of sanity at which he cannot stop tugging.

Snježana Vračar Mihelač (born in Pula) lives and works in Ljubljana. She is a poet, journalist, and translator active in the Slovenian and post-Yugoslav literary scene. Her work has appeared in literary magazines, journals, and anthologies, including *Sreča je sol* (2025), *Signali u noći* (2024), *ZaNa III* (2023), and *Tanane revolucije* (2023).

Her collection *Kad zatvorim oči vidim modro* (2022) won the Presing competition for Best Poetry Manuscript. She has received several regional and international awards. Her latest book, *Srce na baterije* (2025), published by the Croatian Writers' Association, was shortlisted for the Jovan Popović Literary Award (Partizanska knjiga, 2024) and received a special mention from the Drago Gervais Award jury (Rijeka, 2023). Her poetry has been translated into several languages. snjezanavracar.com

Jennifer Elise Wang (they / she) is a nonbinary femme in STEM and punk rock pretty boi poet from Dallas, Texas. When they're not in the lab or writing, they enjoy action sports, cosplay, dancing, and volunteering at the animal shelter. They have been published in *FERAL*, *just femme & dandy*, *Penumbria*, and *Bethlehem Writers Roundtable* and featured in *Inner Moonlight*, *Phynnecabulary*, and *Cobalt Poets*. jenniferelisewang.com

R. Yael Weissburg is an accompaniment volunteer in the San Francisco Bay Area, accompanying undocumented immigrants to their asylum hearings and ICE check-ins. A long-time lover of poetry, she was moved to begin documenting her experiences in the immigration enforcement system as a way to metabolize the grief and rage she experiences, and as a witness of its cruelty. These poems mark her first published work.

Eileen ike West, MA, is an international teacher and writer featured in Susan Smit's *Wise Women* (NL, 2003) and Susan Taylor's *Sexual Radiancy* (US, 1998). Across decades, West's essays have liberally sprinkled magazines and other publications in the US, UK, and EU. Samples are available at ikewest.com. West's first poetry collection, *Whistler of Petty Crimes* (2023), and her earlier novels, *Away from Hannah's Castle* (US/NL, 2006) and *Another Giant World* (UK, 2018), are available through various outlets. West is a contributor in all three of The Chaos Section Poetry Project's publications to date.

Cam Whelr MD is a dis/abled pediatrician, poet, writer, and visual artist whose words appear in *Pleiades*, *The Rumpus*,

Collaborature, and *IceFloe Press* among other journals and anthologies. She is a Best of The Net & Pushcart nominee whose works explore marginalization, trauma-forged and chronically ill embodiment. She forages a nourished and well-rooted creative life as a practicing A[r]tivist for The Res[t]istance from mid-Missouri where an affable service dog allows her to share her home. She can be found as @CamWhelr on IG, FB, and Bsky, as well as Substack: *Lucent Splinter*.

Meghan Woodward is a poet and app developer residing in Tacoma, Washington, where she spends her time advocating for victims of sexual and domestic violence and loving on her dog and cat.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, thank you to everyone who contributed their poetry to this collection. This project exists because poets answered a call at a difficult moment and trusted us with their words.

Thank you to the independent bookstores that have supported this series. Beth Quarles at Paper Hearts Books in Little Rock, Arkansas, and Sarah and Ainsley at Lioness Books in Leander, Texas, were both among the first to carry our books, and Sarah and Ainsley in particular have been a steady source of help and encouragement throughout. Jane at Lark and Owl Booksellers in Georgetown, Texas, has carried us too. If you ever find yourself on the beautiful town square there, swing in, grab a coffee, and buy a book. And BookPeople in Austin, it was beyond cool seeing our little project on the poetry shelf of such a big, iconic store.

Thank you to Jeff Tweedy, for nearly four decades of music and words, and for permission to use the excerpt from his song "Hints" that opens this collection. And to Meridith Allison, a wonderful writer and poet in her own right, for the line from her poem "What We Tend" that stands alongside it. She doesn't have a poem in this particular collection, but she's been part of this project from the start, and we're glad to have her words here again. If you don't know either of their work, you should probably address that post-haste!

Thank you to everyone who helped spread the call for submissions to people who wouldn't have otherwise seen it, especially Kai Coggin and Heather Cox Richardson. What an honor.

And to Bonner Fowles, for once again dropping everything to grab a paintbrush and create yet another amazing cover.

And last but certainly not least, thank you to our families and friends, who have supported this project from the beginning, whether through words of encouragement, helping with the project itself, buying the books, or promoting the work. We couldn't do this without you.

This book passed through many hands before it reached you, contributors revising, each other pushing back on word choices, readers catching what we missed. Any errors that remain are ours.

The closing epigraph is from Wendell Berry. As we were finishing this book, Mr. Berry passed away at the age of 92. He was a favorite poet of both of ours, and the line we chose sums up an idea about this country as well as any we know: you can love it, and the liberty and justice it's supposed to stand for, and still denounce the government when it fails to live up to those standards. In another line from the same poem, "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front," Berry reminds us to be joyful though we have considered all the facts, a sentiment worth holding onto as well.

So, consider the facts. Recognize the injustices. Stand up and be heard. But don't ever let the monsters steal your joy.

— Nick and Rachel

About The Chaos Section Poetry Project

The Chaos Section Poetry Project grew out of *The Chaos Section*, a long-running opinion site founded in Austin, Texas, in 2012. After publishing essays for years, we wanted to open the door to poetry as well—a way to explore the same world from a different angle and to create room for more voices and forms.

Our first collection, *Record of Dissent*, gave voice to resistance in an authoritarian age. *What We Hold On To* turned inward, exploring how we cope, connect, and carry on in uncertain times.

Uprooted bears witness to detention, disappearance, and the abuse of power carried out in the name of immigration enforcement... and to those who resist, survive, and refuse to look away.

All of our poetry and prose releases are published under The Chaos Section Press.

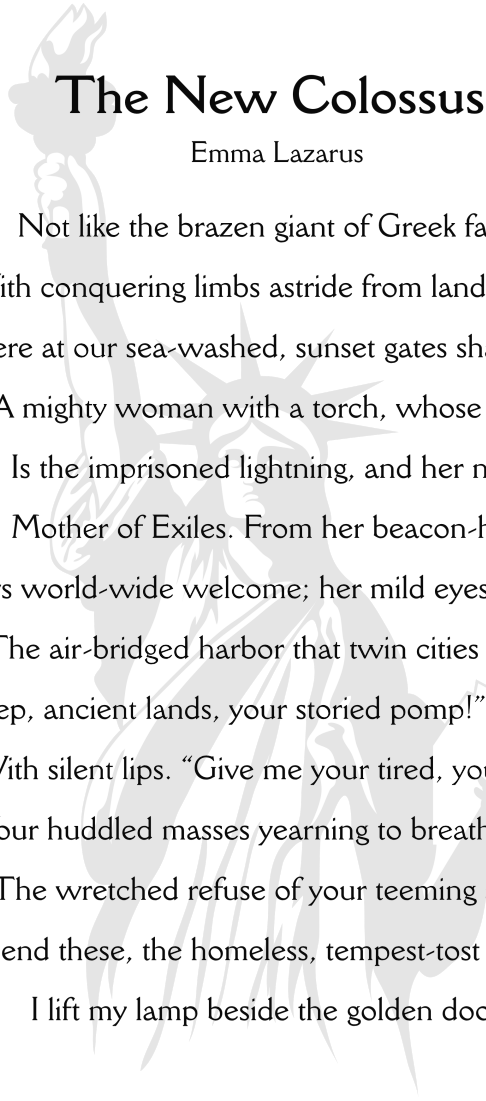
For updates or to submit work for future publications, visit thechaossectionpoetryproject.com.

Vox Poesis Est Vox Libertatis

In the DIY community spirit of The Chaos Section Poetry Project, this page is intentionally left blank for you to write your own poem of witness, resistance, or survival.

Even if no one ever reads your poem but you, your voice belongs here, too. If you do decide to share, we'd love to see it—post your poem (or a photo of this page) on Bluesky and tag us @chaossectionpoetry.bsky.social.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



The New Colossus

Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glowes world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

In January of 2026, poet Renée Nicole Good was shot and killed by an ICE agent in Minneapolis. Later that same month, VA nurse Alex Pretti was killed by Border Patrol agents after stepping in to help a woman being assaulted on the street.

Uprooted gathers poets writing in the aftermath, and in the long history that came before it. This is a collection about enforcement and immigration overreach under the Trump administration: the raids, the detentions, the disappearances, and the resistance rising up to meet them.

Some of these poets are immigrants. Some are citizens who've never had to think twice about a knock at the door. All of them are writing toward the same reckoning: what this country does in the name of law, who that law applies to, what it costs the people living here, and how much cruelty a nation will tolerate before it answers back.

*The Chaos Section
Poetry Project*

