The Community Storytelling Composition Project

The Right to Tell Your Story
A Call for Justice
The CSCProject’s performance initiatives are less about putting on a show, and more about generating a conversation around racially charged social injustices in this country. The hope is that this conversation does not end with the presentation alone, but translates into long-term institutional, economic, and infrastructural policy change.

This Zine takes visual and poetic works contributed by 20 artists, each of which reflects, provides commentary, and/or shares personal experiences in relation to racism, inequality, systemic injustice, and the Black Lives Matter movement. We acknowledge that everyone receives, learns, and digests information and emotion differently, and so by creatively distributing this zine throughout the performance, we provide another medium through which more people might engage. The CSCProject believes the visual and physical medium of a zine will provide another access point to the dialogue, as well as diffuse the stereotypical relationship between spectator and performer. This gives people agency around the matters being discussed, as the conversation will literally be “in their hands.”
“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.” — Angela Davis

“Still We Rise”
Imagine the Revolution - print
Emma Ismawi

Protect Our Community - print
Emma Ismawi
9/23/2020
Charizma Simpkins
On this my 18th year I am asked to vote
White man vs white man,
where’s Obama when you need him?
I really don’t want to, in my eyes it’s just another waste of my time.
They don’t want us to vote anyways, they just want us to go.
I will vote.
Not just to be spiteful.
I will vote because it’s my birth right. Besides, is it really gonna hurt? I can be an artist and vote.
Charlotte did it. Way back when black and white women were two different things.
Back when “Female” was only associated with kids and a ring.
Back when black was a burden and not a crown.
Back when black women were meant to be seen, never to make a sound.
Mary Ann was a lawyer I will be held to her standards and her standards ONLY. And voting is one of those. I wanna go down in history
It will read
Charlotte you trailblazer
Harriet you strong black attorney
And Charizma you teenage voter

-A poem by Charizma Simpkins
WHAT RACES

What races thru the mind of Officer Pantelleo as he strangles the throat of Eric Garner?

Maybe something to the tune of Goddammit respect my authority!

And what races thru the mind of Eric Garner as he struggles on the arms of Officer Pantelleo?

Probably something to the tune of Dear Lord, can he just respect my humanity?

What races thru the minds of the grand jury as they decide not to indict the officer?

Maybe something to the tune of Well, he had to do it—he probably feared for his life.

What races thru the minds of the Garner family as they’re told the officer gets to keep his badge?

Where in God’s name is the justice we deserve?

And half a decade later without an ounce of closure?

a crippled system trying to maneuver on flat tires?

What races thru the American psyche when it sees a crippled system trying to maneuver on flat tires?

What races thru your mind when I raise the question of what race is in the Land of the self-proclaimed Free?

July 2019

WAKING DREAM

Fake battles in our hometown
Creating wars all around,
Counting sheep as they’re blown from the ground
By fake bombs touching down.

Fake battles in our hometown;
Bodies dancing to the sound
Of baseline bombings shaking the ground.
And high-hats firing tri-pul-et rounds.

Fake bullets fill our newspaper-down,
Bed and blankets on the ground.
Detonations blowing shrapnel around.
We’re wide awake, but we keep our heads down.

Fake service when they tell us, “Get Down!”
Hands raised to the sound
Of clicked-cock, pop, and gun hammer pound
Bleeding out, we’re on the ground.

Fake kindness when they’re scared that they’ve been found
Off of their guard from the pistol redound.
These fake battles have me wandering ‘round
Asking for pinches. “Won’t you please wake me now?”

A poem by Michael James Haley @nomaspar

-A From Empire Sunsets by Carl Gabriel Straut-Collard @carlgabriel.poetry
I live in a land where history is the first casualty
Where specific voices of past and present still struggle to breathe
Where truth is silenced, and justice buried alive
Where dreams are sold beneath capitalistic white lies
I live in a land where overdosing on profitable pills
We're programmed to sensationalize weapons of sex and death
We're taught to worship clean green paper bills for basic needs to be met
But the cheap thrills come at a cost you see
In a land that laments the day away in utter defeat
In a land whose only company is an irregular heartbeat
In a land that pursues in sinking the corporate tax rate
But can't overcome the spewed race class hate it so masterfully exonerates
Discharging derogatory slurs to somehow make itself again great
While maxing out credit cards on higher incarceration rates instead of subsidizing those same boys and girls from the hood who can't afford books and then dares call out at them
Damn hoodlums, bums, degenerates, crooks!
I live in a land that strips away the culture
And puts it up in malls for further torture
But only rings the alarm bells when profits and property are in jeopardy
A land that beats innocence to a pulp
A land that places red targets on my black and brown and poor folk
A land that puts their devalued time high up on a forgotten shelf like a product for sale
Was meeting the quota worth it, Sarge?
You say the streets are now safe, but I see the unseen lying behind bars
The nation's scars may look minor from a far
But what if you took a closer look at the price we must pay?
Did you know residential segregation thrives to this very day and
Institutionalized racism still guzzles blood on the pavement way?
I live in a land that tells inferior lands it can make war as it pleases
In the All Mighty Name of Christ! Jesus
He sneezes at a land that bombs indiscriminately
And doesn't bother to keep a body count
I can barely believe this!
A land that terrorizes the indigenous!
A land that rips babies from their own mother's hands!
Lady Liberty, she desperately wheezes!
Electing bombastic goons, looney toons and small-handed buffoons to lead us
Oh, gimme a break! I have no other choice but to say
I live in a land where inferior lands can make war as it pleases
In the All Mighty Name of Christ! Jesus
He sneezes at a land that bombs indiscriminately
And doesn't bother to keep a body count
I can barely believe this!
A land that terrorizes the indigenous!
A land that rips babies from their own mother's hands!
Lady Liberty, she desperately wheezes!
Electing bombastic goons, looney toons and small-handed buffoons to lead us
Oh, gimme a break! I may be younger than you, but I can see straight
Our true leaders come from the bottom up, not the other way
I live in a land that bends over face down for a fluttering flag
But loves to finger wag when we say we aren't all free
A land that sees Colin Kap as a complainer with no right to speak or kneel
Remember when they said the same about The Champ Mohammad Ali?
What they see is just another stupid ball-playing uppity
Some folks will agree to disagree, but I tell it like I see
Another trigger pulled. Another badge to protect
The killer goes uncharged for choking out dreams dead
Another big-bank scandal
Another bail out by the feds
Another family table trying to get fed
Damn I live in a land that truly
Puts the word hypocrisy to the test
I live in a land where some of my own people will choose to ignore these lines
They'll convince themselves that I hate this confusing troubling land of mine
They'll tell me to leave and find a new home
Because that's what unfettered patriotism can do
Glue your eyes shut and break down your bones
I'll tell them hold up, hold up bro!
This land is my home, and so help me Mother Earth
I am not afraid to set her record straight
I am not afraid to use my hands and to dream for her to wake up
Every single day
Are you looking in the mirror?
This land is trying to stay awake, Can you hear her?
A new America is waiting in the wings
And I want you to set sail and discover her
Not like Columbus
But like the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King
Who understood his enemies from the perils hidden within
Who believed in people power
Who called out hate and greed for what it’s always been—
The weakest of sins, when we know how to love
King said The Bank of Justice don’t go bankrupt
And while his body was taken from us
His vision for our new day still sings the fucking chorus
So when I say this land was made for you and I
Let’s aim high
Past the swarms of bullets and drones in our polluted skies
Because you live in a land called the United States
And it’s impossible to spell the U.S without us & united
You and I

September 2018
Brooklyn, New York

-From Empire Sunsets by Carl Gabriel Straut-Collard
@carlgabriel.poetry
Straight for the bullet
Releasing a trigger does nothing once you pull it
What happened to electric charges?
Man, I ain’t even hear no charges before you went
Straight for the bullet

My ethnic history razed
And now you’re crying foul because your precinct is ablaze?
We’ll make our country greater once we send yours to the grave
Since you’ve forgotten how to taze
Nah, you go
Straight for the Bullet

Fascism on display
White noise screaming
“Race, rats, race!”
Tee down on tail holding my race in place,
And more white noise laughter:
“It’s a Race Rat Race!”
Runners on their marks,
Keep those splayed hands raised,
Get set! He’s Go...
Straight for the bullet.

Tired arms from past times cracking that whip, huh?
Cramped up hands from all that nightstick grip, huh?
Water’s jetting hard from heavy hose;
Try not to slip.
“Your arms tired? (mine too)
I better lighten up this clip’
Straight for the bullet

—A poem by Michael James Haley
@nomaspar
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