

Whispers from the Wood

Racism/sexism

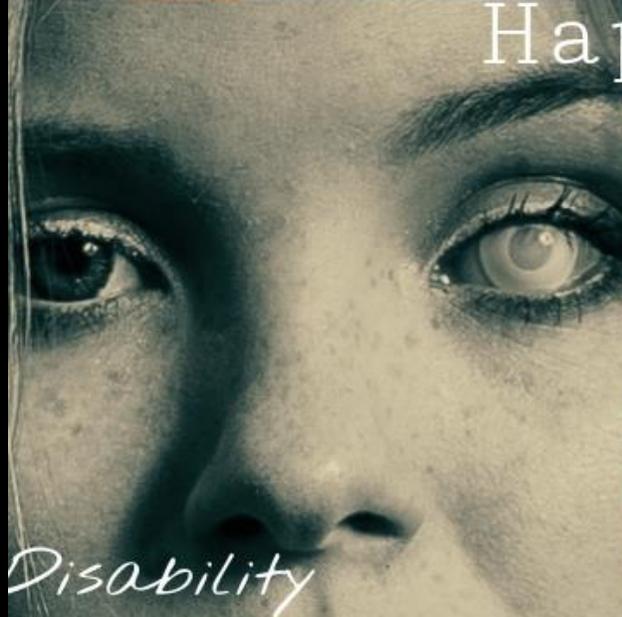


Pollution/global warming



Make Change
Happen

Disability



LGBTQ+



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Social Justice Edition

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Jonathan Baumgartner

Little Mistake, Big Change

Kendrick Winslow is a 15-year-old boy who goes to Washington High. He likes things that most other boys his age like. He loves playing and watching basketball, playing video games, watching shows on Netflix, going to the movie theater, and many other things. He wants to become a nurse after high school and is already taking big steps to do so. Another thing, he was born into the wrong body. He has a female body and can't stand to look at himself every day. The pain is almost too much to bear. The sight of a mirror or glint of reflection sends him into a dark place that reminds him that he isn't what he was born as. His parents are fully supportive of him and will start gender confirmation surgery when he turns 16. One day at school, for the first time since he discovered he was male, attempted to use the restroom inside of the school. He asked the teacher politely, received a bathroom pass, and left his classroom. He walked down the hallway and instead of going into the female bathroom, he went into the male. This was where he was comfortable of course, and this is who he really was, so there shouldn't have been an issue. He entered the bathroom, and the other guys immediately started laughing about how she had made such a dumb mistake, going into the wrong bathroom. But it wasn't a mistake, and he deserved to use that restroom just as much as them. As he tried to walk past the few boys, he felt a hand grab his shoulder.

“Where you going girly?” One of the boys asked.

“Hey, get off of me!” Kendrick yelled as she shrugged him off. Kendrick walked past them and entered a stall. As he tried to use the bathroom the other boys yelled and shook the stall door.

“Why are they doing this?” He thought as a tear fell from his eye.

He wiped it away and left the stall, barging through the now larger, louder crowd. He walked to the female bathroom and went inside, feeling just as out of place as in the male bathroom. No one batted an eye as he walked in, so he went into the stall. All he could feel was shame and embarrassment, that he couldn't even do something as simple as using the restroom that he belonged in. He went home that day with a sadness he hadn't felt before. He questioned whether or not it was worth it to be himself. He barely slept that night. Every time he started to doze off, he remembered what had happened earlier in the day. He went to school the next day and talked to his 1st period teacher about what had happened, and the teacher couldn't do anything about it. He went to his next teacher, and then the next, and then the next, and all of them told him the same things. He went to school the following day and talked to his counselor, and for the first time, someone was able to help. She called the parents to confirm everything Kendrick claimed, and the parents agreed to what he said. The counselor went to the school board about the issue, and luckily, they agreed to solve the issue in the most appropriate way. They used extra funding to build unisex, single person bathrooms at the school to accommodate all students. A few weeks later construction had finished, and there were new bathrooms all around the school. There were many other students who were happy to use them, preferring them over the filthy bathrooms used by the groups of bullies. Slowly the attacks against Kendrick stopped, and he was able to go to school without worrying about being treated differently than others.

Punctures in the System

by Brylee Ceraul

Close your eyes.
Picture a perfect world.
Tell me what you see.
When I close mine, I try to vision unity.
Until a gunshot shakes me back into reality.
Another family grieving over the pain of their lost one,
but for what?
He was just walking down the street.
Alone on his two own feet.
Never making it to his friend he was going to meet.
What was your excuse this time?
Here let me guess,
“He fits the description”
“I’m sorry sir, I was off my prescription”
“I called for him, but he didn’t listen.”
None of these reasons are good enough to shoot.
Let alone stand up in court,
but day after day we see these people walk free.
Without paying any type of fee,
because they get off on an innocent plea.
Our world is broken.
We need to come together to fix it.
It’s time to hear the chatter.
Raise your voices and make some clatter.
Now say it with me, Black Lives Matter.

Wanderlust

by Keyami Collins

Executive dysfunction
Another day passes,
And I lay here unmoving.
Dishes pile around me,

I'll bring them down later.'
But I never do.
'You need to go eat.'
Instead I allow myself to deteriorate.
My grades drop.
My friends stop texting,
As they know they won't get a response.
I'm being sabotaged by my own mind.
I swear I'm not lazy,
But I'm rarely believed.
My mental health isn't taken seriously,
Because the other characteristics that come with it aren't present.
I have the diagnosis,
So why is it ignored?

Equality

by Ryen Gordon

Why is there no such thing as equality?
Why are we in a world where there is no equality
Why is it that men can walk alone at night and women can't?
Why is that a woman can work twice as hard as a man and get paid less
Why is that some people are more comfortable in their skin than others
Why
This world has turned to a disaster
Even in the beginning of times this world had nothing to offer but anger
Nobody is equal
No matter how hard people try to convince you that it is
Equality is always strived for, but it is never given
It will never be reached
At least not in my lifetime or the next generations
Everything has been done
Wars, Revolutions, Protests
And yet here we are still fighting for one thing
Equality

Pigment

by Kyle Jackson

A dark pigment,
Everyone seems to avoid,
But somehow involves in everything.
Targeting them with hate,
And turning them away,
Where is the love for these beautiful people?
Helping craft the United States,
Giving us their culture,
And forming who we are today.
Yet they get no recognition,
We take it all,
And call it our own.
I may not be able to relate,
But I'm here for you.

Get Me Out of Here

by Makayla Kendrick

Get me out of here

Since when is obstructing a man's airways seen as reasonable force?

Since when is the killing of a human justified?

Why did his skin color make his punishment worse?

Why was that man grinning when George Floyd died?

I asked myself these questions after watching that video.

That video that I will never be able to unsee.

I witness the murder of an innocent, unarmed black man.

Do you even understand what that means to me?

My brothers are black, my father is black, my mother is black,

I. Am. Black.

As rage fills my heart the fear begins to creep in.

What if someone I know is next,

And they are killed in cold blood because of their skin?

Another innocent black person is dead, and the police still collect their weekly paychecks.

Imagine being able to leave the house at night with no fear.

God, get me out of here.

Golden Rule

by Sarah Verbeck

The preacher's voice echoes through the sanctuary.
He goes on and on about this "Golden Rule."
Treat people the way you want to be treated,
his gruff voice echoes.
My mind ventures off as images crash through,
People beaten in the streets,
staining the pavement with tears and blood.
I drift back into my surroundings,
observing as everyone raises their hands in agreement.
If they agree,
Why won't they do anything?

Hate

by Ayanna Bravo

They have no idea what it is like
To feel like a threat to society
People all around bash, criticize, and hate
On immigrants so much
Yeah, I get it, they cross the border without paperwork
It is illegal, I know
But for such a nonviolent crime
Their punishments are so harsh
Humans don't deserve to be neglected
Humans should not be put in cages
They shouldn't have to fear
They'll be torn apart from their families
No human deserves that kind of treatment
Immigrants are not less worthy
Of opportunities and freedom than ourselves
Immigrants come to overall better themselves
To have a better life
They are beautiful hard-working people
That can change the world for the better

Run

by Leea T. Copeland

we used to spend nights
chasing each other around the block
trying to see who was the fastest
who could go the farthest before
our ashy knees gave out
before we fell to the ground
lungs filled with laughter
I was always faster than you
and then there came a time
where instead of running from home
we ran from red and blue lights
we had seen what they had done
to young black boys running
and young black boys standing
our sneakers could only take us so far
your lungs began to fill with blood
instead of laughter
you watched as I kept running
the wind in my hair,
a bullet in your chest
this was the only time you reached the finish line before I did.
another young black body used for target practice.
another young black boy being outran by the bullet.

Shimmering

by Zack Jenkins

I see bullet holes in my mirror reflection
But I am past the point of terror
What resides in my heart is indignation
For how I am perceived by my skin color
Every step out the door feels like a death wish
Every word I speak out is my death sentence
Every shift of eyes is an opportunity to serve me up like a dish
And then, I'm another hashtag people pretend to have repentance.
White people don't imagine being born just to die on the spot
White people don't cower in fear of the people who protect their lives
White people are lucky, whether they know it or not
Because they're safe on their land, and we're just walking over knives
How many murders does it take to make a change?
How many bodies on the street does it take to say something?
How many more screams must we hear to have the rules rearranged?
How many more times can the world handle this before erupting?
"All lives matter" is a nice thought
But it's only a fantasy
Because not all of lives are sought
Resentment and ignorance is our reality
And my own loathing for being born in this world in which my very existence is a disgrace
Is it all because of the shade of my race?
I hate it

I Wish

by Isabella Monge

I walk down the sidewalk
Look left, right, then left again
Only I'm not looking for cars so I can cross the street
I'm looking for people, specifically men
The constant fear weighs me down
Will I be the next one he chooses?
The next survivor, I mean victim, because women are weak, right?
I guess it won't matter because things never change
Just another news article
Just more people giving their thoughts and prayers
Just another man who gets to walk free
Anyways what's all this thinking
I have to be listening and watching
One headphone in, one headphone out
Can't wear anything revealing because I would be a target
Teachers always tell us to cover up because it could distract the boys
Even the slightest bit of shoulder could send you to the principal's office
But maybe we're not the problem
I wish society would be aware, just like we have to be

Headphones

A gust of wind grazed her hand as she placed her headphones in her ears, but her rapid heartbeat was the only thing she could feel. Her feet carried her to her destination, she was on her way to the small cafe down the street where she worked. Every night, before she went to sleep, she dreaded the moment she knew she would face the next morning, he would be there.

She held her cardigan together to cover her stomach and tucked her hair behind her ear, making sure, that the headphones were visible as she rushed down the sidewalk. The warmth of the sweater hugged her torso, averting her eyes to the ground, she attempted to avoid eye contact with the man that she knew would be waiting for her as soon as she turned the corner. She clicked the volume button all the way up, feeling the vibrations of the sound but not knowing what song was playing.

“Hey, pretty little lady.” The creepy old man flashed a smile at her as she stared at the movements of his mouth. “Did you get all dolled up for me today?” Her face paled and she wrapped her arms around her upper half tighter, quickly trying to scramble away from the dark-haired man. Her entire body flung backward as she felt a strong arm around her upper half, immediately resisting and trying to wiggle her way out. His heavy fingertips grazed her body until she finally got out of his hold and looked back before she ran.

“I know you wanna say hi to me. I don't bite, and I can see the way you stare at my lips, baby,” he growled. He let her go this time, he had already gotten farther than last time, and one step closer to what he wanted, already planning on what to do next. Her feet stumbled as she ran over top of the uneven pavement, not caring about who was watching her run. The keys jingled as she shakily unlocked the front door of the cafe, a sigh of relief was let out as she finally had a chance to breathe again. She lifted a stool off of the bar table, seating herself in it and letting her head fall into her hands, her shoulders bouncing up and down as muffled sobs filled the room.

I just want him to stop, why won't he stop? Is it my fault? Was mama right when she told me I was a whore for wearing revealing clothes?

There was a soft squeeze on her shoulder that caused her to snap out of her deep thoughts, her watery doe eyes staring directly up to the figure that hovered above her.

“What's wrong?” The blond man softly questioned; his wrinkled cheeks lightly tinted rose due to embarrassment after startling the fragile body that sat in the chair in front of him.

It was him, her unstable hands barely signed. Her eyes never leaving his, all she could see when her eyelids shut was the creepy man's lips repeating the same sentence over and over again.

“It couldn't have been my fault, could it have been?” She wondered.

“Hey, none of that.” The raspy voice said, pulling her into a tight embrace. He pulled back and gripped her cheeks in his rough hands, wiping the tears away, making sure she could see his face clearly. “It wasn't your fault. Next time you need a ride to work don't hesitate to ring me, okay?” he reassured the girl with furrowed eyebrows. He told her this before, but she felt like too much of a burden knowing that he had a family of his own to deal with at home. With this, she knew he meant it when he said he was there when she needed him, and she decided that she would no longer delete her text messages asking for a ride, knowing that before she never even gave herself the chance to send them.

One of Us Too

by Maya Joyner

You're one of us too.
Why must you be afraid of our existence,
When others look at you the same way.
You place labels that you refused to remove,
Based on stereotypes that roam your mind.
But you don't realize, you're one of us too.
Our oppressors fear that you may cause damage just as bad as the next race,
But you look at us like you're not a threat as well.
Why must you go against us when we can come together?
We could support each other through thick and thin
But you choose to remove yourself.
This affects you because you're one of us too
Although you may not listen
Because being stubborn is a drug
Step into reality and please remember...
You're one of us too
When you look in the mirror.

When

by Shelby Powell

When did a woman's body...
become a man's world.
Where her freedom is no longer hers,
Her decisions no longer valid,
Her opinions no longer wanted.
Because everyone can agree with a woman
when she speaks beside a man,
But when she stands alone,
It is somehow...different.
Authority will love a strong woman
unless she refuses to praise their every word,
Then she is insubordinate.
They all can respect a woman's space
but once no one is around,
She no longer deserves it.
Everyone cherishes a woman's choice
until she makes one for herself,
Then she becomes...selfish.
And the world will love a woman for who she is,
until she won't be a mother,
Then, she is committing a crime.
When did a woman's body become a man's world?
When a man forgot that he came from one.

Woman

Norah Sheldon

It's always a challenge
Always told to be perfect
To look a certain way
It's always had an effect
But always told to "Stand up straight" "Don't slouch" "Cross your legs"
"You can't wear that" "You were asking for it"
Enough!! We can't stand it anymore.
But one day
Maybe soon
We can be ourselves, surpass our "superiors"
They always doubted
But always need us
We never pouted
Worked hard but without a word of how we really felt
Being compared to the ideology of man
But they can't take a mad woman

Breathe

by Melissa Downs

Familiarity is all we could ever ask for today
Some would say it's what we need
When the plates are shifting, and we're shaken by reality
The past is like a buoy in the sea
So, I can't imagine what it takes to face the fire,
Flames that ravaged through the western coast
That stole away your memories, your comfort, and your home
And whose hate-filled embers dried the grieving' eyes
Before they had a chance to recover
Where can you hide when you're being ambushed from all sides?
What can you do when all the gates are closed?
How can you fly while the skies are burning?
What can you say when there's no air to breathe?
These questions have travelled just as far as the California smoke
They echo past the flames
And the world is listening,
If only for awhile
And the world, here's what to say:
Where do the hopeless need a helping hand?
What doors can we open to broken hearts?
How can we sit and let our wings shed feathers?
Let's give our world a bit of air to breathe.

Brown Skin

by Janiah Scott

You see my skin as a treat
But you also swore to honor and protect
How can black lives matter when were shown signs of neglect?
We shouldn't have to defend our melanin
We should be proud of our brown skin
164 black lives lost in only eight months
Why can't you understand that enough is enough?
Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Dreasjon Reed, Ahmaud Arbery
Do their names ring a bell?
Black lives matter whether we have to shout or yell
Sometimes I wish our brown skin was bullet proof
We continuously yell, "Hands up don't shoot"
We've been fighting for our rights for more than 400 years
But till this day in 2020 our brown skin still shows signs of fear

Nothing but

by Jadayah Parker

Nothing but
They watch me,
Waiting for me to fail,
To stumble and fall on the concrete.
Hoping my knees get scraped,
Anticipating for blood to fall from my flesh,
So, they can rub salt in my wounds.
So, they can rub slurs in my face.
They surround me,
Watching my every move
Walls and waves of wavering voices,
Yelling at me telling me to stop,
Telling me to go,
Telling me to pull over.
They follow me
Surrounding me with their eyes,
Biting their nails at the thought of me,
I can hear the trails of footsteps
Lingering behind mine,
I can feel their red eyes tracing my skin.
Inspecting each and every movement that my brown skin makes.
They watch as if my brown skin is the only thing that matters.
And then they call it worthless
They call me worthless,
Say I'm nothing
Treat me like nothing,
Treat me as if I am nothing but a number meant for a statistic,
Nothing but a word meant for a page in your report.
Nothing but a name meant for the news.
Nothing but a black girl who is afraid.

Your Consequence

by Martina Jeudy

Imagine being hunted down
For a skin color you had no choice in picking
Everyday being a blessing
If you survive the constant hate
That is spewed
We walk in fear
For we never know what the world will bring us
The cops fear us greatly, they must kill us
The racists hate us greatly, they hunt us
We walk alone
What did we ever do to deserve any of this?
We were stolen from our continent
Just for them to tell us to go back
If you never wanted us here
Why kidnap us?
Why make us do your bidding?
Now we are a part of this country
Forever embedded in the treacherous history
That shaped this miserable terror

Generating Change

by Alex Clarke

No longer can be discreet
Say what we need with little hesitation
Our skin should not be the sole cause of confrontation
I think no one should be judged by their pigment
But I guess some people think differently
They'll hate just because of the way you look
Equality is the word in high demand
Said to be given to everyone
Time and time again proven false
Change is imminent
That time is now
We're living it

Justice?

by Erik Davis

Where was justice,
On March 13th, 2020?
When the wolves killed the lamb.
Where was Justice for the innocent life that was taken?
Where was Justice,
On September 24th, 2020?
Six months after the wolves killed the lamb in cold blood
The courts only
punished
one of the wolves.
If you could really call it that.
A flurry of bullets flew through the air on the night of March 13th,
Yet they were only punished for the ones that missed the target.
“I know we did the legal, moral and ethical thing that night,”
Said one of the wolves.
Legal? Moral? Ethical?
You do know what those words mean, don't you?
Murdering a woman in cold blood isn't moral!
Stripping an innocent person of their life isn't ethical!
But from what I can see,
you might be right about legal

Just Another Number

by Serenity Goode-Hurd

I guess I'm just another number,
Another body in the pile,
Subjected to hate and violence.
Cause the pigment of my skin.
My pleas and my screams are inferior
To those who think they're above me
So, I march in the streets with people who understand,
Who hear our screams,
Even then they call us thugs and criminals,
Disrupting the peace.
There is no peace just ignorance,
It must be nice,
To not just be another number,
To be another face,
Another name on the news,
Because of my black skin,
I'm seen as less than,
So maybe just listen,
Listen to our pleas our cries,
So, you can understand.
We don't want to live this way,
Always in fear,
That, well, be just another number.

Yours Truly

by Jordan Powell

Nobody truly understands.
They don't see everything,
They don't see you on the inside,
They don't see those heartfelt moments,
They don't see those nights filled with cries,
Nobody truly understands.
They don't understand what you're going through,
They don't realize how hard it is,
They don't know how you feel,
Nobody truly understands.
They don't know why your acting different,
They don't see past that fake smile you put on your face,
They don't ever understand,
They never will.

Distractions for the Masses

by Maia Sigler

The foundations of this country were
Built off corruption.
Our system rests on crookedness.
Our Gov. feeds off of injustice and hate.
They feed off of our division.
They mold TV shows and media, they craft our school systems to teach us how to play their
game.
They don't want to see us together; they only want to see us apart.
They want to see us at war with each other because it takes the attention off of them.
They corrupt us to get mad and kill each other so they don't have to get their hands dirty
themselves.
We are mad at the wrong people.
We are fighting the wrong people.
We should be fighting the hatred that goes on in their hearts and ours.
We should be fighting the crookedness that goes on behind the scenes.
When are we all going to open our eyes and see what they are really doing?
When are we going to see what they are trying to do to us?

Don't Forget

by Jairah Tucker

How are we supposed to live like this?
Waking up wondering if we are going to lose another Black King
It's a shame just a straight shame
This nonsense must stop
It hurts to know that we live a country where innocent lives are being taken
Through all the senseless violence it could have been my father or my brother
That would have left me heartbroken
When will enough be enough?
Why are our lives so invaluable?
Did they forget that we helped build this country?
Did they forget that our inventions helped this country progress?
How do we go on when we feel like we don't matter?
All lives can't matter if black lives don't matter
I want my Black Kings to know that
WE DO MATTER

Budget

By Diamond Hicks

Every morning I can open my pantry and smile,
I can pick from bacon, eggs, or something pre-made.
An array of food I can choose from,
Lunch and dinner is always there.
I remember a time where I was baffled,
at the fact that many weren't as fortunate as I.
That they couldn't have three meals a day,
or even a single meal for a few.
My mind stuck in a world,
where everyone had that option.
One day my mother showed me the reality,
that we used to be what I couldn't believe.
My mother told me of a time over a decade ago,
where every day we had a small budget per day.
Of two ten-dollar bills,
that was all we could afford for dinner.
She admits to the fear she felt,
not that she wouldn't eat,
but I wouldn't be able to.
Every day was a scare.
Would she be able to be creative enough
to feed a child with a specific taste?
Would her savings survive the night?
A constant scare daily fright,
yet she worked hard.
Went to work with determination,
to earn a meal for those she loved.
A pit that she had been stuck in for so long,
started to slowly become shallow.
Till the darkness started to fade away
and light bled into the pit.
Until it became so shallow that
she stepped out.
With her child, she walked in the sun.
Into an apartment, into a rented house,
then a house she owned.
With a job she loved and a child she raised.
Where she stays this very day.
Where she can smile at the life she built,
She changed her budget

from two ten-dollar bills.

Sanai Roberts

Depression

Though you see me laugh on the outside. On the inside I'm weeping deeply. My emotions are always confused. I'm always sad, but not in front of people of course. I wouldn't say I'm fake, but I have a somewhat permanent mask on every day. I take it off when I'm alone at night, and cry. Society takes a toll on me. Tells me how I'm never good enough. Physically nor mentally. Nowadays my age is irrelevant. No matter how young, I'm still expected to be one of the best.

Society's Issues

by Imani Lane

Our society still needs to have a lot growth
Between the police brutality
And judging others betrothed
And locking people in cages
Or judging women for having abortions
Like it's a man's decision.
As if it causes anybody misfortunes.
People harassing others for their religion,
Making them scared to express themselves.
Ignoring the thousands of children going missing.
I can feel the world slipping
When will it start clicking,
As long as we all can learn to accept others.
Then I believe we can grow as a society.