

PROUD

2013-
2014

COLORS



Cover art by Mohammed Fayaz

More of his art can be found on:
mojuicy.tumblr.com

PROUDCOLORS*

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

As Queers of Color, we are forced to straddle a history of division. Historically speaking, the struggle for racial equality has been heterosexist in its vision, and the queer liberation movement has been predominantly Euro-centric in its scope. As people who struggle with our own questions of identity, we are also burdened by the need to find a tenuous balance between groups that have traditionally displayed open hostility towards each other, framing their struggles as entirely separate, completely independent missions.

We reject such a view. A historical perspective shows that the highly complex processes that constructed the identities of people of color as the vilified Other also resulted in an often unspoken consequence: heterosexism. Men of color have been constructed as maniacal sexual perverts, women of color as exotic sexual objects, white women as passive sexual victims, and white men as virile sexual protectors.

While the creation of racialized gender stereotypes are obvious, what is not so obvious is the normalization of sexuality along lines of race and gender. From this normalization results compulsory heterosexuality, and its flip-side, homophobia. During the period of European imperialism that heralded the beginning of modern racism, the considerable number of institutions and cultural practices of same-sex sexual behavior in colonized societies were destroyed by an imposed compulsory heterosexuality.

Clearly the roots of racism and heterosexism are not independent, but rather intimately connected. Any recognition of racism must necessarily recognize sexism and homophobia at the same time. Any liberation movement that does not do so denies the complexity of its oppression, and is doomed to failure in its struggle against the oppression as a result.

But current conventional wisdom insists that the struggles against various oppressions must not be combined. As a result, Queers of Color are often marginalized within groups that are already marginalized. We are forced to fight racism and homophobia in society at large, as well as racism within the queer community, and homophobia within communities of color. We must face a constant onslaught of multiple oppressions, coming from all directions at once. What is lacking, and blatantly so, is a safe space in the University community where Queers of Color are marginalized no further, and are free to discuss and address issues and concerns that are unique to our situation.

But at the same time, we also recognize the importance of linking oppressions. From our perspective, we see, on a day to day basis, the intersections of racism and homophobia, as well as their connections with sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination. We also recognize the importance of collective action and struggle, and are committed to such strategies in combating and destroying institutionalized racism and heterosexism, as well as other forms of oppression.

As a result, Queers of Color is committed to an organization that does not discriminate on any basis, especially race and sexual preference. We welcome anyone and everyone who is committed to addressing issues and concerns that affect many people, but Queers of Color in particular. We claim unity with all organizations that are committed to fighting racism and homophobia. And we look forward to the day when society is truly and totally egalitarian.

In the tradition of the Combahee River Collective, and in the footsteps of Queers of Color like James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga and Jewel Gomez, and Nick Deocampo, we rightfully claim our place.

- April 17, 1995

*Proud Colors was started as Queers of Color

PROUD COLORS MISSION STATEMENT

Proud Colors is a group on Columbia University's campus for and about people. The overall objective of Proud Colors is to implement a comprehensive action program to promote an understanding of the past, present, and future experiences, problems, and needs of queer and trans- students of color as well as the queer and trans- community of color as a whole. Proud Colors intends to develop effective methods of dealing with these problems. Further, we know that neither we, nor the peoples we aim to serve are simple, fixed entities of colors and desires. We believe that the notion of queer includes, but extends past gender expression and sexual orientation. We understand queerness as the call to respect and affirm the complex intersections of one's ethnicities, gender expressions, religions, socioeconomic statuses and backgrounds, nationalities, abilities, and/or sexual orientations. It is in these critical points of collision that we situate ourselves and our activism, as it is in these intersections that we truly live: Queer and Proud.

-November 2, 2011

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FOLLOW US:

Tumblr: proudcolors.tumblr.com

Twitter: [@proudcolors](https://twitter.com/proudcolors)

Facebook: facebook.com/ProudColors

WEBSITE:

columbia.edu/cu/qoc

PROUD COLORS SUPPORTS PRISON DIVESTMENT



Proud Colors supports prison divestment because as queer people of color we fundamentally oppose any systems and institutions that impose violence upon our bodies.

More info can be found here:
www.facebook.com/columbiaprisondivest

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AMARI TANKARD



Donna from Parks and Rec

School/Year: CC/2017

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
she/her/hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Proud Colors means break from the quotidian life at Columbia. Proud Colors is a safe haven where the only rules and grades are the mutual community agreements of equality, respect, and open communication.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Join as many clubs and activities as you can. Tame the wild beast (Columbia) by fully immersing yourself in the community.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

DAVID LUNA QUEZADA

School/Year: CC/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
they/them/theres

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Chosen family. Strength. Home.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

I wish you the serenity to accept and love the people who will truly have your back. The courage to let go of those who will not. And the wisdom to know the difference.

Hint: go to PC and don't waste time trying to prove your humanity (or those of your loved ones, that's important!!!) to white/cis/straight ppl.

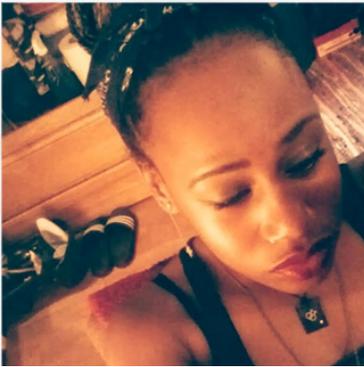
that never really works out.
come home.
there's a lot of good shit waiting for you :)

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

The Fifth Hokage and one of the 3 Legendary Saanin: the honorable, beautiful, and tender Tsunade-sama of Konoha village.



CHEYENNE STEWART-HART



Gail from Rookie Blue or Dexter

School/Year: CC/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
she/her/hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Authenticity. Genuity. Not only acknowledging the many extentions and layers of ourselves, but celebrating them as wonderful and unique.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Get connected, but with the right kind of people. Be in community and make sure you have a support system of people you can trust. It makes all the difference to have a good solid community of peers in this sometimes dreary and bleak place.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

MICHELLE

School/Year: BC/2017

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
she/her/hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

A space to practice and better understand QPOC solidarity and support. As someone coming from Shanghai, Proud Colors was the first chance I've ever had to discuss issues like racism within the LGBT community. The people here have given me so much support and love, while also challenging me to look further into the different ways oppression can assert itself.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

To all the QPOC first years: Don't be afraid to go out and explore different communities. This University is famous for a reason- take advantage of the events going on. But at the same time, remember to keep some down time for yourself so that you don't burn out. Being at college means being able to spend whole nights watching tv shows. Take advantage of that too.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

Any of the Sailor Scouts in Sailor Moon, because they all kick ass while looking gorgeous in mini skirts. If I could even be half as amazing as them, I'd be satisfied.



LUIS SALAZAR



School/Year: GS/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
No preference

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

It signifies a safe space to learn and debate ideas regarding our own, ever-developing, identities. One of the best things to take away from PC is the great amount of varied experiences shared by all members of the group; in this manner we can all take away a lesson or two about love, pain, reconciliation and understanding. The things I have learned in this group I will cherish forever.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Join any student group that might spark your interest! It's a great way to meet people and

make potential great friends! School ought to be an important age of experimentation and exposure to things unknown to us - so enjoy, responsibly. Enjoy!

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

I would be Storm from the X-men franchise. She can fly, she's a leader and she controls

DAVID

School/Year: SEAS/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
No preference

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

A space where I can meet with other queer people of color to talk about and figure out the messy and sometimes complicated experiences that I have as a QPOC navigating Columbia.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

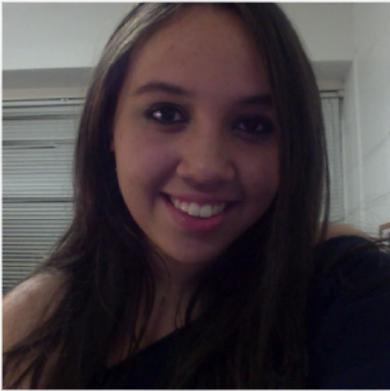
Find communities in which to ground yourself during your time here, whether it's Proud Colors or something else. Don't get worried if you don't find that community immediately. Use your four years to explore, take chances and discover the people and spaces that will support you and help you develop and flourish.



If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

I would be Lana Kane from Archer or Veronica Mars.

GABRIELLA



School/Year: CC/2017

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
she/her/hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

A place where I can be vulnerable, insecure, and afraid without worry of losing my footing. Because life is often unforgiving and difficult to navigate, especially when oftentimes it feels as if you're a single speck in a large crowd. It's a breath of fresh air to have a pit stop along the way where I can heal, grow, and learn from others.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Don't let anyone tell you that your dreams and aspirations aren't valid. The bravest people are the ones who go after what they want despite the

opinions bogging them down. You're the only person who can make you happy and keep you healthy. So explore things that interest you. Leave your comfort zone, but don't lose sight of it. Make friends who love the broken parts of you, and keep those friends. Everyday, try to find something to smile about.

ZAINA

School/Year: CC/2016

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
No preference

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

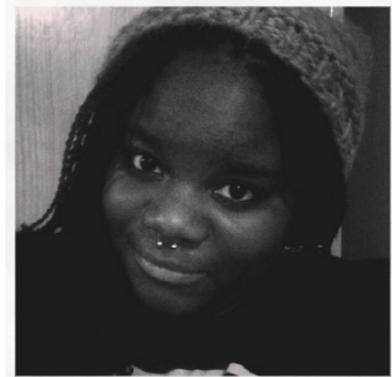
Proud Colors is a space where I can bring all my identities in the room and still feel completely comfortable. It's a space where my politics are constantly challenged, where I am inspired to think more critically about my experiences and where my mind and heart are opened. I always feel loved, heard and valued in Proud Colors.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

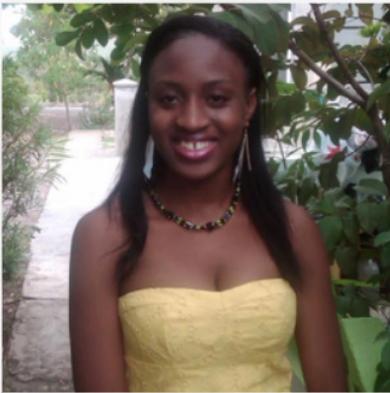
Find your space at Columbia. It will make your experience here a lot brighter if you have at least one space where you can unwind and feel completely at ease.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

Katara from Avatar: the Last Airbender.



KATHILEE KENLOCK



School/Year: SEAS/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
she/her/hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

When I transferred to Columbia, I decided that I wanted to be more open in regards to my sexual preference. Proud Colors has not only allowed me a space to share my feelings but to learn from others. Proud Colors has made my transition to Columbia much easier. I feel at home and a member of a family as a member of Proud Colors. I enjoy all the lovely faces I get to see each week (and in between).

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Do what is best for you. never feel rushed or forced to make any decision that makes you uncomfortable. Find a space that you feel comfortable in, even if you are not always an active participant. As for Proud Colors, stay connected with the members, have lunch, come to non-meeting activities. We all have different experiences

to share so take advantage. Also, Proud Colors is open to not only people who are openly queer, but questioning souls too.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

Alice Cullen, from the Twilight Series is my favorite. Not only is she really cute but I love her whimsical side. She seems to always have a personal sun following her around. And she usually is happy regardless of what is happening around her. I'm not sure if I would want the ability to see into the future. That's a lot of power and responsibility. Plus I don't want to know too much because that leads to expectations, which may be too grand.

ANDREW GONZALEZ

School/Year: CC/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
he/him/his

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

To me, Proud Colors has been a space where I can express who I am without inhibitions. Each meeting is a time during which I can share my experiences and seek support from my most compassionate peers. It seems hard to believe that I went so long without attending Proud Colors meetings, and it's now even harder to imagine my time at Columbia without this support network. This group has become integral to my growth at this university, and for that I am forever grateful.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

My advice to incoming first-years would be to join a club or organization, and to put yourselves out there. Discomfort is an agent of growth, and in many cases it is discomfort that allows one to confront one's innermost fears head on. College is not always easy, but time flies, so explore NYC and do what makes you happy.



If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

I would be Captain Planet. He has the power of all natural elements, including heart. It was one of my favorite cartoons growing up, and I think it would be really cool to possess all of Earth's elemental powers.

KANEISHA



School/Year: CC/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
she/her/hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

A safer space to vent frustrations, offer support, and reflect. A place to talk shit and sympathize. People who listen. People to learn from. People to be fabulous with. People I can be weak with, and come out stronger for it.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Do what you want, with who you want to do it with. I mean it. You're not too cool for anything, I promise.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

I would be Tamika Flynn from *Welcome to Nightvale*. This girl has defeated monstrous librarians, organized a guerrilla resistance force to battle an ominous corporation, and read many books far beyond her reading level. She will challenge you to 100 days of hand-to-hand combat. I relate.

XAVIER JARRETT

School/Year: CC/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
they/them/theirs

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Proud Colors means home. It means getting to come into a space every week, knowing I'll see someone close to me. It means becoming invested in the stories that we share and the voices that surround me. It means recognizing that there are people in my life who actively care about me and that a chosen family can be the healthiest family.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Talk to people. Make friends earlier on, and start doing all of the wild and reckless shit you want then before your major requirements and the core really begin to take over. Take it easy on yourselves, and recognize that 4 years might feel like a short amount of time, but there's so much space in there for some fuck-ups and recovery.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

Amethyst from the show *Steven Universe*. She's a pseudo magical gurl of color with an unabashed love for herself and life. Plus, the power to shape shift into any conceivable form. She would be my ideal form.



CHRIS



School/Year: SEAS/2015

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
he/him/his

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

proud colors to me means family when family is something that is no longer accessible , it means a supportive group of people to help you realize who you are while being critical n loving of that self . proud colors has been one of the main reasons why ive been able to stay sane on this campus its been an emotional pillar in my life that i am so grateful to have found / built a part of myself on .

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

just do it .

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

if i had to limit it to one fictional world id be a hybrid of a gengar n alakazam in the poke-mon wrld cuz i luv the sinister playfulness thats inherent to gengar's character n i luv the potential of unleashed mental power that alakazam has . but in general if i wanted to have anything itd be telekenetic pwrs to mess with ppl without them knowing its me n laughing

GERARDO ROMO

School/Year: CC/2014

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
he/him/his

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Proud Colors was my life support on campus and I really do not know who I would be without the space that became Proud Colors. I am so grateful to be able to share all of myself with the group. :)

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

You're not alone in your loneliness. Try not to be scared of meeting new people and if your friends are making you feel bad about yourself, try finding some new ones. There's literally like a thousand people here put yourself out there and eventually you'll find someone. Or skip all that and come to Proud Colors and become friends with everyone there.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

Ash Ketchum from Pallet Town.



MELISSA



I would be Olivia Pope from Scandal.

School/Year: BC/2017

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
she/her/hers

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

Proud Colors is a space where identities and expressions are affirmed. It is where I come to connect with people and become visible. Proud Colors is a positive space where we can grow and learn from each other.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

Decide what your priorities are and don't let anything else get in the way. Always take time out to do what matters most to you.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

KYLE

School/Year: CC/2016

Preferred Gender Pronouns:
he/him/his

What does Proud Colors mean to you?

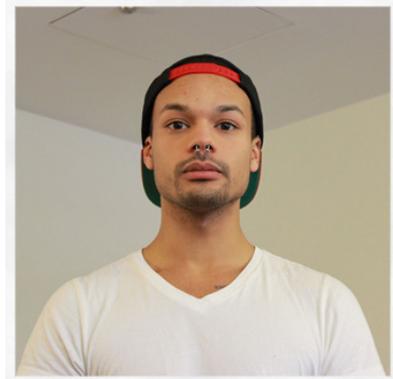
Proud Colors to me is more of a friend group than an extracurricular body of CU. It's filled with people who share similar/parallel experiences and is more like a weekly gathering of friends to discuss issues particular to our lived experiences here at CU and in life in general.

What advice would you give to incoming first-years?

I would say that your first year will be filled with people and groups that push varying agendas and views (whether they be political, social, economical, etc.) about a variety of things. Some of these may be far removed from your lived experience and may even seem too "radical" for your taste. Make sure you give everything and everyone a chance though because you'd be surprised how influential such things can be in your formation here.

If you could be a fictional character what character would you be?

As of right now I think I would want to be Madoka Kaname from Madoka Magica. A fellow PC member had me watch the anime and other than being amazed by the amazing storyline and varying stunning animation I think that the character of Madoka is super cute and friendly and well dressed!



OUR CREATIONS

EXCERPTS FROM 13 YEARS XAVIER

when i was 17, at boarding school and hopeful that one of the 30+ out gay boys would finally be into me, i sat and watched while they hooked up with each other, designating me (and the three other Black queers, and the femme Filipin@ and the two young Chican@s) as outsiders. i cried. i cried at an unknowable difference that made me undesirable to a “huge” amount of gay boys. i cried at the fact that as my roommate(s) would cuddle with his/their boyfriend(s) while i struggled to cope with naming myself and naming my difference. i cried because i traded the potential comfort of Black faces for the continually emotionally abusive circle of white queers. i cried because i was in love with my best friend, and he wasn’t “attracted to me” nor my “type of body” and the unstated racialized difference between us. i cried because i hated them all, while simultaneously desiring their bodies and the ease with which they could engage in a hookup culture that was unknowingly sanctioned by our institution through their “gendered residence halls” and accompanying rules. i cried until i gave up and prayed for college.

when i was 18-going-on-19, i attended every super-queer-super-loud-super-“this-should-be-promising” first friday dance party at columbia. i went the standard route: booze, music, laughter, more booze, “30 mins late is not enough!!!! let’s get there at 12,” more booze, and then finally arriving at the space. i swallowed my discomfort at watching pair after pair of white fit cis men make out. “you’re next,” i always thought. hopeful. one casual approach and offer to dance being turned down was whatever. two casual approaches and rejections were discouraging but fine. ten of them took a toll on heart and soul that had been armored with alcohol that was quickly fading and bringing reality sharply back into clarity. my Black and round(er) body felt out of place in a sea of white men in tanks, hands groping one another’s pecs. my fat ass unappreciated in a way other than a spectacle to be watched and lauded, but never desired. i did hook up a handful of times. i often prayed for those rare nights where i approached someone and ended up with them in their room or my own, ignoring the casual: “oh, these [my chest/my pecs/my breasts] actually hang down,” “it’s so big,” “[unwanted hands pulling on Black hair],” and “this can only happen once” or “you’re not my type, but...” anything to be sexually desirable for a night. anything to get off despite never being committed to the act, but rather lost in the thought of whether or not my skin was too dark, my body too large, my weight too heavy [have i ever enjoyed sex???

i’m 21 now. 3 months later, and i still cannot fathom being desirable. i still cry [internally] over this realization and the implicit meaning of my acceptance of this. at some point, i forgot how to see myself as anything other than what i envision others must see me as: heavy(ish), Black, visibly queer, visibly femme, temperamental, angry, 2000 steps removed from a standard definition of “attractive.” but my Blackness, my queerness, my femme-ness are all too much for me to sacrifice for someone else at this point. i watch a lot of television to keep myself entertained and to stay distracted and to live vicariously through the romances there and to stop myself from hurting so often. in my world, reality [the actual life that i’m living] is just as tangible as these televised worlds, and within those worlds i see me. i see me in a really complex and lovable way. i see it in the way Lafayette Reynolds is unapologetically queer and magnetic and magical. i see it in the way that Noah Nicholson honors his own aesthetic before all others. i see it in the way that Alex Kirby has Trey Iverson and they make it work. i see it in the way that Nathan Seymour maintains that femme is power and that Black femmes particularly refuse to be told otherwise. i see it in the way that Bootz Durango creates and speaks multitudes about different genders through the construction of a “nigga bitch” identity that addresses both his presentations outside of an explicit binary system. i see it in the way that B. Scott adamantly refuses to be silenced. i still cannot conceive of myself as desirable, but regardless, i’m starting to see myself, which is worthwhile, right???

SPELL WORK WITHIN THE WITCHES' DEN

XAVIER

we work our craft by the soft glow of christmas lights—the off-white kind because i still abide by my mother's general rule: "colored christmas lights are tacky!" i'm sure this isn't what she had in mind when she drilled that saying into my head, though. i wonder what she'd say if she saw our ingredients spread out before us, meticulously accounted for in preparation for the sloppy and the unkempt spell work ahead of us. i hope she would understand.

our witchcraft is our survival, our response to the persecution of our unbridled expression of the relationship we have with the unseen and the supernatural. i mean, they say we're the monsters in the dark anyway—the things that go bump in the night and appear outta the fog and possess your loved ones. FAGGOTS! they scream. our power resides in our mere presence, our existences. we leech away the masculinity that they've worked so laboriously and tirelessly to balance on the thinnest of wires, praying that if they can identify and punish us, no one else will notice them sl-sl-slipping. we invade their minds, casting images of fantastical presentations that they swear cannot exist outside of the words written into their latest hunger-games-inspired-futuristic-and-outlandish novel that they can't get enough of, and yet, gawk and harass us for bringing them to life. we distort their realities, our Black and Brown bodies seeming unnatural to the eyes of white demons whose foreparents erased our histories and detached our bodies from humanity.

but we were never birthed into this "humanity" nor did we ask to be brought into it. trauma plagues us, clouding our connection with the ethereal, the supernatural—the realm that gave birth to us and still has claim over us. our witchcraft is the only reminder that we were once—that we are—more than glitched game characters being thrown around by a cruel unseen overseer.

"can we do another, mama x?" i snap back to reality, staring at the prince's warm smile as the words finish falling from his lips.

"yah, of course," i say, knowing how consuming spell work actually is, but relishing the feel of magic, of transcendence. i pass the prince our coven's wand. he scrunches his face, concentrating on his desires and wants and needs before igniting the spell. the glow consumes his face, and he inhales to relax his body as he enters into the protective circle of the coven. we—the queen, the jester, and the prince—face each other, entranced in our own witches' den, detached from the boundaries of the physical world. our lips move as our stories spill from our mouths. words that are so endless that they crowd and fill the space, demand attention and confrontation, drown us in the enormity of their realities, only to resuscitate us in the second after our confessional deaths. this is spell work. the words that banish fear, and contempt, and disgust, and challenge love, and desire, and ethics and generate happiness, and trust, and community. our spell work is imbued in the power of our words, and we gather beneath the night to perform this act of transcendence until we can learn to channel our power without the cover of the witches' den. one day our craft will consume the world, and our trauma shall be known, so we can heal in the realms of our ancestors and stop hiding our ethereal selves within the shadows.

but until then, we're the coven of witches—the faggots—practicing the spell work that terrorizes your oh-so-perfect world under the cover of the witches' den.

MY FIRST ONE NIGHT STAND

ANONYMOUS

We'd decided to take a shower together. In our drunken state.

You liked the water a little colder. I liked it hot. So whenever you stepped out to grab something I would turn the handle to the worn out red "h" on the metal.

I collapsed to my feet and you proceeded to sit on my feet in front of me as the hot water came pouring down from the shower in between us.

Hot water hitting our bodies and splashing our faces, I said you were beautiful. Actually. Naturally. Especially your hands. Exquisite. And your arms. Lovely.

And you stared at me with the weight of a thousand and one broken promises and said... nothing.

And then I asked you. What were you thinking? What was on your mind?

And you told me. All the people you have loved before. That you gave your heart to. You wish they had said the things I was saying to you now. You wish those words had come out of their mouth. His mouth.

But they never did.

And here I am. A stranger. Saying the words she always wanted to hear.

You were engaged. Three times. Each time you thought it was real. This was it. This was your chance. So on you went, and I sat listening. Taking in your story as we lay side by side, our naked bodies now mangled in the sheets and each other after yet another explosion of passion.

Your first lover was a young guy you met when you were 17. He was cool. Exciting. Fun.

But he was selling cocaine to your best friend on the low and then you knew he didn't love you. Because if he had loved you, he wouldn't have opened that door for your best friend to get hooked on cocaine and nearly lose her life. He knew how much you hated the foul substance...how it destroyed your brother's life back in Columbia. How could he say he loved you? And then go behind your back to nearly destroy the life of someone you loved and cared deeply about.

The second one. You didn't go into as much.

But your third. You did talk about your third. You had a lot to say. You'd just recently broken up with him and you were currently in a vulnerable state. I had caught you in a vulnerable state. And little to your knowledge, you had caught me in mine.

But I liked the feeling of giving you some kind of solace...I liked that you very comfortable enough to share your heart with me. Even if for one night. I knew your wounds ran too deep for me to mend. But a listening ear can be the most powerful medicine. My own wounds were still in the process of healing.

You missed all your interviews the day after. Because you wanted to lay in bed with me.

Every time I would move you would just tell me to stay there. Lay naked in your bed. It's okay. Relax. Don't move. You wanted me there. And I liked feeling wanted. Because I hadn't felt that way in a while.

So we lay there. In our bareness and vulnerability. And it was lovely.

You. Are lovely.

LEGACIES OF TRAUMA

GERARDO ROMO

*a version of this essay was published on Columbia Spectator on October 21, 2013

Several nights ago, I tried to explain to President Bollinger at his fireside chat what I thought was a hypocrisy in affirmative action at this school. The contradiction I, and many of my friends, feel stems from how our Black and Brown bodies are counted for claims of diversity and progress while our traumas and needs are systematically ignored.

I want to make it clear that I am not talking about all students of color. I know many students of color who are content here, particularly those students who have had access to private education or well-off public schools and are used to predominantly white environments. In a similar vein, many upper class international students of color cannot relate to the struggles and issues that many poor people of color go through in this country that can stress students out. Some examples could include growing up in heavily policed neighborhoods whose racist practices target Black and Latino youth or going to an increasingly overcrowded school that does not have the resources to meet the needs of every student.

However, the stories of students for whom affirmative action was created are often quite different. I was the first one in my high school of predominantly students of color in Southern California to get into Columbia. I applied early decision without ever having left the West Coast in hopes that I could feel free in New York City as a gay person and escape the slurs and loneliness of being one of five out gay kids in a school of over 3000. My idea of gayness and the misconception that in order to be queer I had to sever myself from my family and community came from a completely white-washed idea of the LGBT community, one influenced by the mainstream: Lady Gaga, Dan Savage, and a misconstrued historicization of the Stonewall Riot that ignores the crucial role of transwomen of color such as Sylvia Rivera.

After my first full week in New York and NSOP was coming to an end so was my idea of freedom and limitless gayness. I remember calling my friend back home, sobbing in the dark on the floor of my Hartley single to express my sorrow and deep regret that I left everyone I knew 3000 miles away. The extreme culture shock I felt didn't leave until my sophomore year after I had already discussed the possibility of dropping out or transferring to a school in California with my CSA adviser and CPS therapists. My depression got so intense that I stopped being able to believe that I would feel anything more than the giant void growing in me. After joining Q House my sophomore year and helping to rebuild Proud Colors, our organization for queer people of color, my depression temporarily calmed down and I was able to continue my existence on this campus.

Many of my friends have had similar experiences. Since my time here, I've known over nine students of color that have had to take medical leaves for depression, most of them queer, and many more, myself included, who battle with on and off depression and anxiety. The overwhelming amount of instances of people of color, especially queer people of color, who are currently or getting over depression and anxiety on this campus goes to show that this is a systemic issue that should not be seen as a problem that an individual has to face alone.

How can we piece together the causes of this systematic depression of students of color? We have to challenge history to understand these complex issues because part of the ongoing mental and physical colonization of people of color is denying us our history and making our stories and pain invisible or irrelevant. How are we to survive this trauma while ignoring the very damaging legacies of genocide and enslavement on this continent, on this campus, and on our Black and Brown bodies? We must address the legacies of trauma that students of color embody before we can begin to heal our communities on this campus.

GODDESS REBORN

GERARDO ROMO

Goddess Reborn

I

Our chest hair
intertwining
in the friction
of our caress
remind me
wholeness is
possible again.

II

Naive confidence, my only
mission: find out who the hell
that fine motherfucker is
lookin' all cholo-femme,
a faggot in the room
full of straight Chican@s,
the tip of Haleakalā poking
her head through the ash-
clouds surrounding her.
Your shy, goofy smile
told every follicle
of my body to reach out,
try not to get burned.

III

A month later we kissed
my insides erupting volcanoes
your fingers melted into me,
across my chest
explosions in the wake
of your hand.
I became a goddess
born out of the ashes of the
lava overflowing out
of me.
Your soft lips
burning.

Gerardo Romo

SPACE AND TIME
CHRIS



QPOC SUPREMACY

CHRIS



NESTING

KANEISHA

I want to swim in the shhh shh shhh of your hands
rubbing together in December fog.
The warmest seasons of known time belong
to those temperate waves, arrive as they demand.

Let me haunt the susurrations of your sighs,
where weariness and whimsy waltz
to decrescendos that twine thunderbolts
with thread. Let me join them with my eyes.

I want to sleep in the hum of your heart just as you wake.
The psalms of all planets are your dreams,
so to understand what those worlds mean
I must learn the count of your aortal quake.

BOARD SERIES #9

KANEISHA

in love as in appleseeds
the state that cholera proceeds
consumes the tongue with bitter bite,
hounds light reeling into night

WHEN I TELL A MAN THAT I AM NOT A MAN

DEZMOND GOFF

I am a fox
I have learned to eat the smaller things
 the rabbit, the shrew, the vole
I have learned to hide myself from the larger wolves
I have learned to blend in and the bear my teeth

Some day you my find me huddled
inside a hollow log covered in a blanket
of snow and ice, here
I will be weak and yet most at home
in the fragile of my own body
and will not grudge you your attempt to swallow me whole

ON MATTHEW 4:4

DAVID LUNA

i got tired of walking.

no one wanted the fruit of my harvest
so i sold out
and the factory they built in my name
cut down the very tree i tried to save.

exploit as in capitalism

exploit as in gotcha
and in one easy squeeze:
splat .

exploit as in you've got some dollars in your name
so you don't notice the
plop
plop
plop
of the rotten apricots as they hit the ground,
painting the grass silently with their orange stench

no todos son así, my mom tells me.
falling in love with yourself is liberating and shit.
don't wait for someone to bring you flowers
or whatever the fuck.
but i sigh because
even the most diligent gardener
appreciates the gesture.

i'm so tired of walking.

"you're beautiful" leaves dust on you
like some form of holy baptism,
quitandote los cuernitos.
no one wants fucking horns on their head.
but then you choose not to get confirmed.
so what's left?

at first you find new atheism.
you're like yeah, this shit's great
fuck god
i don't need anyone
i don't need the santa for adults
but then you get over your indignant
white man on youtube phase
and laugh.

because they told you it was a cracker
but even though you always thought
it might've needed some seasoning
you've realized the gravity of the situation:
they don't sell body of christ wafers
wholesale at costco

so you pray for new dust
to scrape knowingly across
the weathered lines of your forehead,
to reveal the childhood skin underneath.
not weathered like a baby with horns
weathered like i would walk a thousand miles
and did.

because in the midst of your retail
western liberal arts education
you realize there's nothing comforting about
atoms.
and even if it might be true,
it doesn't make it The Truth.

you realize you want that shit in mayúscula.
mayúscula as in not capital.

i need my letters, my words, my heart
to touch the ceiling of this cathedral.
even if i've always loved being short,
no one says no to wings.

but there's no room for anger
in a confessional already too small
to hold both your self and your hatred.

so i guess i'll keep walking.

maybe one day
they'll find a way to reattach
a fallen fruit to its branch,
the horns to a baby,
a baby to its mother,
like before the first dust
like before the capital letters.

but for now i walk
thinking fuck god
but like

Fuck.

God.

TO THOSE WHO: AMARI TANKARD

To those who are ignorant, beware of the storm upon us. The tide is turning and intolerance is unacceptable.

Des 6 à 16 ans, nous sommes tenus d'aller à l'école, d'apprendre, de nous éduquer pour l'avenir. Cette éducation ne doit pas et ne s'arrête pas là.

To those who hate, didn't your mama ever teach you that if you didn't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all ?

Votre haine ne peut pas conquérir mon amour. S'il vous plait, arrêtez-vous votre haine alors pour que l'amour peut régner. C'est le temps pour toutes nos voix de se faire entendre.

To those who hope, carry on the love because you are not alone.

Il y a des personnes qui veulent vous combattre, qui veulent vous perdre votre espoir, mais reste forte. Les mots ne peuvent pas vous casser. Il faut que vous gardiez votre espérance et votre amour. C'est pour vous que nous travaillerons pour un avenir meilleur.

FOR LILA... GABRIELLA

Who thought touches were experiments.

That people were chemistry kits children used to test reactions that always failed. Who feared prodding hands that grabbed and placed her back on tarnished shelves.

Who thought me a liar: bored with games that others played. Thought kisses were kinks pondered when beds cooled.

Who couldn't feel when breaths spilled and mixed. Couldn't notice that cries flew when gasps soared. Thought intentions were downhill slopes: one growing, feeding, until the other shrunk.

Thought pressing was skimming. Thought a covered mouth was shame. Thought fear of love was a fear of her.

Who needed proof.

That teasing isn't hesitance. That banter aren't hateful. That not everyone picks up glass just to drop it and watch it break.

I am not a fraud.

I hope you hear me.

I hope you are well.

WE ARE CLOSETED

GABRIELLA

I wanted him.

He tempted my palate in a way that made me want a taste—never a whole bite, never a meal. My stomach was shrunk. Anything too rich was thrown back up. I never knew how to keep healthy when everything moved too quickly for me to care. Grab one thing, put it down, take the next. No quitting. Forward. Not back.

He burned. But she was sweet, and skin slipped against mine like milk down my throat. Her eyes made me want to paint whorls of color in my own. Give myself some life. Put something there. Then maybe someone could drown in me. But I pulled along and kept her arms empty just as they came to swallow me and take me—where? Where do sweet, smooth, silky people take you when they swallow you up?

I thought I'd kill her and drag her down with me. Because I'm down, and staying down, ten counts and I'm still unconscious. But I don't want my dark eyes to bleed into her own when she stares too long. So I smack her away, because I hurt, and don't heal. She'll never know how much I treasured her heart before I spit it back—how hard I wish I could stand the taste.

“Open your mouth.” He shoves his fingers in. Metallic. Blood. Mine? Yes. Biting my lips, ravaging like a starving vermin, filling himself with scraps, knowing he won't be full. His eyes are necrotic, and his fingerprints slice. He can't bring, and I can't deliver. We're chipped puzzle blocks, scraping against edges that can't fit.

We're nesting on putrid sheets when he asks me about her. I have nothing to say. So I ask if he had a her that blinded him with her good.

No, he says. He had a he.

“Nice,” he smiles. “He made everything hurt less.”

But the pain never went away.

“But I liked how he sounded. Our talks lasted hours.”

Talks that curved and went nowhere.

He kept his he's where I kept my she's—in little boxes padlocked with fear where our mothers couldn't touch, and our fathers couldn't see. I stared at mine in the dark and whispered inside to stoke the contents to life. But I shushed them when they keened too loud. I spent all my time shushing, one eye on the ones I couldn't have, and one eye on the ones I was afraid to keep.

I feel his fingers across my lips, brushing to pick up traces of my pleased gasps. He should get what he can find. There won't be much left once I lick them clean.

I cover his mouth with mine. I shove my tongue in. Metallic. Blood. Now his. I know we won't last. I will keep hiding until I can wrap my sprains and find the courage to indulge and be filled.

I am weak. I can only stomach him for a bit. A taste. Never a meal.

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