



we
own
our
wards

A ZINE FROM INSIDE THE WASHINGTON
CORRECTIONS CENTER FOR WOMEN

we own our words

a zine from inside the
Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW)

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FEPPS provides a rigorous college program for incarcerated women and trans-identified and gender nonconforming people in Washington and creates pathways to higher education after students are released from prison. FEPPS uses a liberal arts education, with an emphasis on writing, creative expression, and critical thought, as a means to dismantle carceral systems and oppressive institutions that deny people's humanity. If you would like to support the college and extracurricular programs at FEPPS, including the *Untapp'd* literary journal, we encourage you to give at fepps.org/donate

INTRODUCTION

by Shawn

At WCCW in Gig Harbor, WA, prison is not as you would think. We don't fit the TV model you see on the screen. Many women are mothers, taking parenting class and drug treatment; trying to be the mother they should be. Many of us crave knowledge, and beg for more education—anything we can do to better ourselves and achieve new and/or long lost goals. The charity work we do, and giving to our communities, bring us joy. We are intelligent, brave, and strong, as you are about to see.



Tatiana

objects appear closer

by Tatiana

in silence i watch
as you scatter around
pieces of cotton and linen
searching adamantly for perfection
you stare at me
while you tease your hair
and apply generous amounts
of paste to match your face
you ridicule me making
fierce accusations and distorted
faces
i never once showed you anything
but who you really are.

7.29.20

Tatiana is a dedicated lifelong learner, mother, and self-proclaimed "shark-ologist." She uses her gift of writing to convey what her mouth sometimes cannot. Her life goal is to embrace the youth and encourage them in all their abilities to express their true selves.

TIME

by Lisa

Yesterday I walked through my life without seeing
the hurt that I left in my wake, the pain that dogged
my every step, the hope in the faces
I left behind.

Yesterday I walked away from children who
desperately needed a mother to love them and
to guide them through the daily struggles
of being a child.

Yesterday I had no regard for the man I called
Dad, I knew he was dying and needed me
to be there so he would have someone
to depend on.

Yesterday I broke my Mother's heart
with my lies and deceit, with the drama
I created and believed with all my being,
she knew the truth.

Yesterday I thought of no one but myself
placing my wants and wishes before anything
else, the needs of others were not as important
as my desires.

Today I am scarred from the pain I have
caused the people who love me, I am
healing the broken and bruised pieces of
the woman I was.

Today I embrace the rebuilding of damaged
relationships, grateful for the forgiveness of the
wounded I left behind and the grandchildren
they allow me to see.

Today I can forgive myself for not being
around to care for my ailing Father, for not being
the daughter he needed, he forgave and died

proud of me.

Today my Mom is my best friend, my confidant
my beacon of truth, the one I turn to when I
am in need of advice or direction because
I'm not perfect.

Today I am a work in progress gradually becoming
a woman of worth with value in the hands of the
potter I am reborn into the woman God
created me to be.

Tomorrow I will still feel the loss of all that
I missed when I slept through the life
I was given and threw away taking it
all for granted.

Tomorrow I will celebrate the years my Dad lived
and live the rest of my days in a way that will make
him smile down from heaven to lay claim to the fact
that I am his daughter.

Tomorrow I will take care of my Mom for a change
she will never wonder how she will manage
again I will be her shoulder, her best friend
I won't let her down.

Tomorrow I will continue to heal the broken
within and around me restoration foremost
in my heart second chances appreciated
for the mercy bestowed.

Tomorrow I will walk free amongst my
beloved embracing opportunities gifted
to me as I welcome the challenge of being
a woman cherishing time.

MY BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

by Sabrina

Don't care what you think.
From my kinky hair, to the soles of my feet.
My black is beautiful tho I been through so much.
This is my story I hope you feel touched.
I was raised by people of a different race.
Growing up I felt empty, all the way out of place.
I had thick lips, thick hips I was told I was fat.
That wasn't true, the truth is I was black.
I didn't know then, what I know now.
My black was beautiful both inside and out.
13 years old I ran away chose the streets over home.
In search of something to not feel alone.
Met some people who looked similar to me.
I conversated with them, loved the rhythm of their speech.
Their movement, their talk I felt deep in my soul.
It was like looking in a mirror
I felt complete and whole.
I fell in love with those people
I fell in love with those streets.
In my young mind I thought this is what blackness means.
Later in life I got woke, I learned so much more.
Black people were everything
Scientists and Doctors
Not just "thugs" who play sports.
Black people you know we come in all different shades.
No matter your tint
You're still wonderfully made.
I've finally learned my black is beautiful
I no longer feel odd.
My existence you see
was destined by God.

Dante

by Tatiana

i knew i would be the cause
for all the ruin
our separation
your neglect
it was kind of you to assume
eighty percent of the blame
that i caused

simply because i can't
see me the way you do
i don't feel like i'm good
enough for you
so i can't believe that
you would choose me

i felt it from the jump
i was going to push you
as far away as possible
until you just walked
away from me

i don't know how to
save myself from
self-destruction
but if you could look inside

you'd see my willingness
to love and be loved
i am so very sorry

that it was me

who hurt

you.

5.8.2020

UNEXPECTED FREEDOM, AN LWOP HEADS HOME?

by Shawn

A new bill passes, signed off, and becomes law. Resentencing a possibility, even for me, who has life without possibility of parole. I chose to go to trial and then it's life without. How does this equate? By exercising my constitutional right to a trial, I became unrehabilitatable; but rehabilitatable if I took their deal. It's now 3+ decades later and I'm looking at what freedom would look like to me.

I no longer have a home; my daughter does not know me—thanks to her father's lies; I've outlived all my family, except cousins in other states. I never lived alone, or held a real job; never had to worry about bills or money. Who will help me navigate this all? As years went by, friends fell to the wayside. Who would even pick me up? My hometown has become a strange, unrecognizable place; from glimpses on outings I have seen. Technology, the Internet, did not exist when I got locked up. Home computers were new and expensive; no one I knew had one. Cars ran on regular—no computers did they have. They did not talk, brake, parallel park, or drive by themselves. Phones were rotary and landlines, not smart or voice-activated or blue-tooth hands-free. Music came on albums and cassettes, not from spotify or apple itunes to download at will. Movie rentals came on VHS tapes, not a streaming service or directTV. TVs were big and bulky, not flat against a wall. Refrigerators didn't have special drawers, TVs, or make your shopping lists. Cars had keys not keyless doors and ignitions. Houses were not smart, to be controlled by an app, Alexa or Siri. Job

hunting meant doing the work, want ads, filling out applications at the business, waiting for a call to come back to interview; not a job search application done and resume sent online, skype interview, only to work from home online, no office location downtown. Computers were big and heavy, not laptops, keyboards with a flat screen, or tablets. To shop you never need to leave your seat, let alone home. Everything is at your fingertips to be delivered to your door; no more going to any type of store. Banking was done in person, not on a secure website; deposits required a deposit slip, not click a photo and send. I have no idea what things should cost. Or what is a good salary for a job, or what new money even looks like. To do these things, I have no clue; I've only recently seen a laptop and to log on, I can't seem to do. On top of all these unknowns, the fears I have: Who will hire a convict in her 50s with no job experience? Who will rent to me with no references or credit score? No one in my old neighborhood, that's for sure. Am I destined to ask, "Would you like fries with that?" Living in poverty, alone in the hood. There will be no time for a 20-year career, retirement benefits and stocked IRAs for my twilight years. Will I end up in a state-run nursing home to await my own end? Don't get me wrong, I will go for my freedom no doubt about that, but is this my destiny, returning to a world where I no longer belong?

SHAWN: I crave knowledge and education. I strive to become a psychologist, working with at-risk kids, using pet therapy to break through.

HAIKU

by Soy

My misconception
is the truth of confession
checkmate perception

EPISTEMOLOGY

by SOY

it's like one doesn't Exist
But
living an illusion is more intense than Reality

invest over Illusion?
confess over Reality?

The power of one's existence overrules one's Capacity

Epistemology

Hello, World. My name is Soy _____. I am currently housed at Washington Correction Center for Women (WCCW). Are you wondering how my imagination came about? Well ... when I was a little girl, my father punished me for being the first female in the family. I was accused for many things and was beat for defending myself. I was an angry child and I would question life. If I was to describe myself, I would say I am "The Thinker." According to Steve Kolk, "As an epistemological position, solipsism holds that knowledge of anything outside of one's mind is unsure." For I am the only one that exists and now it's time to reveal my thoughts to the Universe!

"I am thinking, therefore I exist"
—René Descartes

ON PAUSE

by Breanna

despite all this distance,
we can
read, learn, enjoy relationships,
dream,
watch the clouds, name the stars,
listen to music
watch the news.

Slowly our tilted axis
will right itself;
we'll feel
less
wobbly
uncertain.

Our world will come
gradually
back into focus,
and, with it,
that mad rush
which is
society's
"normal" pace.

Maybe there's a lesson
in slowness
and
distance.

Meanwhile, we wait—
legs crossed,
fingers drumming on tables,
feet tapping,
counting out the
moments that
spread us out
from one another.

We are
like paper hearts,
strung 6 feet apart,
but holding,
onto each others'
lives
enjoined.

we need you

by Tatiana

i alone as a woman
am nothing phenomenal
indeed, far more lesser
intended as a prize
sold and bound to generational
oppressors
the slave master's eye
the same turned out men
to aggressors
we, used as the tools to your
emasculatation
forced to watch, faced without
option to defend, to endure

our rape/molestation/insemination
humiliation

as we learned distrust
toward you
to discredit your worth, your words
under the thick welts formed
by rawhide, leather slivers
digging, slicing open your
flawless charcoal canvas
our men!

continued dissension grew
your degradation of us
our disrespect of you
enervating you repeatedly,
constant reminders of your inadequacies

compared to your awareness
your ambition, your grind
navigating life's hell best as you can
your very extensive cursed and
accused, our dichotomy

categorized in duality;
the criminal or athlete;
the deadbeat or bum;
the babymama or golddigger;
the hoochiemama or welfare queen
seriously . . . ?!
our men!

we know the side unseen
your benevolence, broad
shoulders and head held high
continuing in faith, love
engraved into your soul
all gained from life's journey.
the agape expressed in homes
and communities
fathers of children aware of their
place in the world, apples to your eyes
you who believe to forgive your past
your griefs turned over to your beliefs
you who see, who revere
we—as we are
meant as your queen
phenomenally.
our men!

11.4.18

A PLEA FOR HELP (a sestina)

by Sheryl

There is nothing more mystical than the ocean spewing out its invisible powers to heal humans. Is it the foam that is left by the waves crashed upon the shores? Is it the phytoplankton that feeds? No, it is the misty air crystalized by salt and the ocean's endless supply of sustenance.

Humans' lack of knowledge to the sustenance of the seas is sorrowful. Dynamics of oceans are ruled by gluttonous humans. Yet the salt continues to purify, purging is healing for the human soul. And the minute phytoplankton survive, life is balance, life is waves.

Hypnotic surge sensation of swelling waves feeling of expectation that nourishing sustenance of the seas will always be. The phytoplankton always giving never taking. The giving oceans are over-taxed. Our bodies maybe healed by all its glory, by fate all left but salt.

Humans are parasites and leech-like upon the salty seas, dolphins dying, whales wailing. Waves raging. Can humans help keep the healing powers of the ocean alive? Is the sustenance of the seas disappearing too quickly? The Ocean cries with plastic. Pollution drowns the phytoplankton.

Realization for loss of bounteous phytoplankton starts collisions of cascading crystalline salt enriching seafood eaten ravenous from ocean's banks. Generates forces of wind creating waves of anger for dying seas. The nourishing sustenance will no longer be, let alone powers to heal.

The time has come for all to be healed and come together to save the phytoplankton from harm. We must not rely on sustenance of the seas, as it is a precious gift of salt, sand, water and life. If not, the ocean waves may rise up, swallow us, become one massive ocean.

Sustenance of the ocean's salt is healing to the phytoplankton and lets it play in the waves of the ocean.

UNTITLED

by Shawn

Four more years? He profoundly accepts!
the monster, the monster
the monsters awake
oooh, see I'm shaking
in old orange face's quake.

With a click, click, click
and a tap, tap, tap
the venomous tweets take flight.
Nothing but imbecilic gibberish and lies
targets acquired, underlying orders implied.

To the supremacists,
the black lives protests
with targets abound.
With an AK-47
entertainment is found
if you have no gun
just run them down.

To the Satanists, pedophiles,
white nationalists, and KKK;
all very fine people
my goodwill they invoke
they're not deranged lunatics
as long as they vote.

The Russians, the impeachment
oh, Nancy you tried
but you see I'm like teflon
nothing sticks to my hide
so, sling your mud Nancy, who cares if it's true
truths can easily be turned into lies, too.

To human traffickers, my friends
to you, my good wishes I send.
Ghislaine, what a gal, she ran the show
Jeffrey was too weak, he just had to go
it's stitches for snitches
and a tag for your toe.

Face masks?
are you crazy?
I won't wear, though I should
but not with my comb over
I can't make that look good.

Doctors are stupid!
Their reports are dumb.
Oh, just shut up,
my brain's going numb.

Drug trials are rushed
a vaccine we must
by election day have
or the votes are up for grabs.

The cdc overrode by the DHH
we'll have a resurgence of COVID
oh, for goodness sake
screw science, the decisions "I" make,
I run this show, I thought you knew
oh shit, here comes the flu.

Ignorant scientists
you're not smarter than me
climate change is a hoax
it will get colder, just leave me be.

To the whiny West Coast
all full of smoke
all democrat states, so screw you,
it's forest management you must do.

At 18 months all trees dry up and die
the mighty redwood, old growth forests, a lie.
All those homes burning down
families lose all
homeless numbers increase
who cares how many are deceased.

Oh Bobby Woodward, screw you and those tapes,
that's not even my voice, you've made a mistake
it's Nixon of old, speaking in code
no COVID at stake, just leftover from Watergate.

Well it's time to stop texting
and let my phones recharge
a night out with my boys
3 handsome men at large.

You see, I'm THE DONALD,
behind bullet proof glass I ride,
with Putin and little rocket man
riding here at my sides.
I will not suffer disrespect
or this you will find
a fuse up your ass,
Kaboom, and Goodbye.

Rocketman: "hey boys, let's play golf."
Putin: "yes, yes, let's play. But, Donald, don't choke."
Donald: "that's a good one Vlad. POW, POW, POW, POW, POW,
POW, POW. It's so good to be me."

THE PROSTITUTE

by Shellie

She couldn't live without him. She loved him still, her pimp. The unfairness of thinking she would always have him and that he could and would accept her with all the baggage, all her flaws. Being a prostitute was a religious lifestyle of a different kind. Her very first words to him were, "What's in your wallet?", like it says in that credit card commercial. She never would have looked at him twice, yet he could save her. She didn't know how and couldn't save herself. Should she have stuck it out with her pimp and, if so, how many more beatings could she withstand? Once again, she found herself a way out of the life trying to be "square." Never did it last very long. She was too well-rounded and "Daddy," her pimp, always tracked her down. She had a hard time being the "bottom bitch," but she wouldn't have it any other way. Being the "bottom bitch," she thought, meant he loved her above the rest. He had her so brainwashed into thinking she was the "foundation" to his empire. She gave new meaning from city to city, state to state. Never was she allowed to sleep if money was to be made. She would have to use body make-up to cover up her bruises around her throat again and she wouldn't have to worry about brushing the dried blood in her hair from the stitches because she could just wear a cloth headband. She would have to remember to not let any trick touch her hair or headband. Her head was still slightly swollen and tender from being clocked by the butt of Daddy's gun. He always made sure not to touch her face. How can he love them all? When one leaves, it is up to her to catch a new bait for him. This is not what God intended when he said, "Be fishers of men." Or women for that matter. Who really needs whom here? Doesn't she know she is worth so much more than the fabricated love of a man? Who will love her now? She can.

DEAR POLICE OFFICER

by Sabrina

What gave you the right to prejudge me?

Is my black skin excluding Me from common respect in white America?

Why does the stop and frisk seem like your favorite pastime?

Do you even care that you're being prejudiced?

Now we're both prejudiced.

Dear Police Officer,

You are the reason blacks don't feel safe after dark.

You are the reason we feel any certain way about the dark.

I don't like you because policing is deeply rooted in racism.

Look at history and slavery.

Now I'm feeling unsafe in my own skin.

Dear Police Officer,

Black and gangsta two different worlds, but you've made them synonymous.

All blacks are not the same,

if you'd open your minds you'd see that.

Dear white America,

Why do you think all blacks who dress down are gang members?

Blacks dress down, just like blacks enjoy watersports and fishing.

Dear Police Officer,

I don't think being black is just cause for being pulled over and I don't think we should be pulled over just cause.

Why else do you think we have tinted windows in our cars?

Dear Male Cops!

Black skin is not a weapon

so stop fearing Black Males.

Dear Female Cops,

If I'm talking to you it's only because I have to

so deal with it.

Dear Police Officer,
I'm beyond tired of telling you
"I'm not a thug," so stop saying that.
When did you first think black equals gangsta?
Where did that shit come from?
Was it from watching TV?
Was it from reading the newspaper?
Was it because your grandfather was the Grand Wizard of
the Ku Klux Klan?

Dear Police Officer,
What's your concern when blacks discipline their kids?
Like a black Mom's discipline is somehow more suspect than
a white Mom's discipline.

Dear Police Officer,
You make me want to strike back!!

Dear Protestors,
Thank you for keeping Black Lives Matter in the spotlight.

Dear Racial Profiler,
We have nothing in common.
You hate anything that's not white.
I delight in diversity.

Dear Police Officer,
Let's talk about
Rodney King
Breonna Taylor
Mike Brown
The list is growing every day.
What happened to the voice of our forefathers?
Who marched for equality for all!!!
Who sat in for racial change.
Who dreamed of one day seeing a black president.
Who fought and died for the rights we have today.

Dear Black man,

I see you
Even though you don't want to be seen.
You walk the streets with your hat low on your brow.
I understand why you do that.

Dear Police Officer,

Standing in a group of blacks without being labeled
"gang member" "thief" or "drug dealer" is a luxury not
afforded us.

But today I am hangin with my boys dressed how I want.
I give dap to everyone I see
I feel safe standing in a sea of black faces.
We give each other the one bob-nod and say
"We don't have to go back to Africa for this."

WISTFUL

by Fermina

the last dying breaths
of a woman,
who has tried to salvage
the scraps left,
by a tempest
of a broken soul.

I sense it.

I read it in the arch
of your smile,
listen to the inflection
in your voice,
glimpse the shift
in those eyes.
Only then do I lose sight
of my own (in)securities,
the matters I hold dearly
cease to live on,
now I'm filled
by how you had to mature,
how you nurtured yourself,
how one moment
should have turned you
into a monster.

rage
should have killed everyone
you touched,
yet—you chose to shine
after shattering.

the invaluable love
that wasn't given,
became the dream

of all dreams,
creating ambition
born from the deepest sore
of your heart,
that what you imagined
will be
the blessed reality.

nuances
in your body language
speak a revelation
that I grasp
continually,
even after years of
fragmented recollections.

but i cannot hold on
with fists,
so I let go,
slowly unravel
curled fingers
widening,
open palms,
ready to receive.

we return
to what we know,
until someone else
shows us,
we're worth more
than we're accustomed to.

that broken soul,
those dying breaths,
aren't yours to keep.

10.2019

mental fornication

by Tatiana

you used to f_ck me so good,
i validate you
when you said you loved
only me
you used to f_ck me so good
had me feelin' like
invincible woman
head on swoll
you used to dive deep
explore parts
i didn't even know
existed
untapped nectar
you used to plummet
chipping into gold
mines
mine
you used to lay it down
and i'd pick up
right back up
every
single
time
every
three word line
you used to f_ck me so good.

huh.

2.5.20

untitled poems

by Tatiana

always give praise to
the roses in the concrete:
lotus in the mud
no ups to the dandelions
regular ol' weeds
sprayed with pesticides
ripped out day in and day out
stomped on, crushed
weed-whacked, plucked
still resilient than anything
annoyingly reverent
an eyesore of beauty
the child's delight.

12.8.2019

as the days pass
melting into years
do we choose to remain finite
existing in the realm of time
measuring until our deterioration

preludes reformation
not incarnation of self within a lesser
no, none of the things mortal
that which is retinal invisible
the exhaustion of all imagination

2.25.20

CONTROLLER OF THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY SWITCHING TRACK STATION

(Character, Place, & Time)

by Sheryl

Fresh out of the Navy Fleet he became a Controller for the GNR at the Spokane Switching Track Station.

It was a time of the Great Depression and it brought on hard times, loss of faith, and hungry people.

Hungry people get desperate with no hope, no jobs and no reason for precepts for reality of the moral good.

It brought hobos hopping trains and dirty drifters devious of criminal intentions.

To work was good but at night brought loneliness and trepidation like a wandering cognizance of the foreboding.

The Switching Track Station was near Hang Man's Creek where they hung Natives in the past.

A small old wooden shack holding only an old wooden desk, and a squeaky chair was his headquarters.

A single light bulb swinging overhead oozed out images like that of ghastly ghostly visions dancing on the walls.

Leaning against the corner was a long piece of driftwood coated with varnish; a walking stick/weapon.

It was time to go out into the black cold abyss to the Train Switching Zone.

Grabbing his stick was like a feeling of fortification and companionship; out into the dreaded night he went!

Pungent smell of coal and tar cresol creased his nostrils.

The moon's fullness gave life to the glinting steel as his mind's eye perceived a long slithering snake.

Sound of gravel crunching under his thin soled booted feet was like walking in a broken bone yard.

Wind howled and whipped around him like an intruding assailant as it brought chilling rattles to the senses.

Clutching the smooth stick in his right hand, his left hand swung freely at his side like a pendulum.

He kept watch and listened like a soldier guarding his realm from invaders.

As his left hand swung back, palm out, it touched something wet and cold!!!

An instant horror! Like sticking a fork in a light socket! The cerebral cortex vacillated! What was it?

A walking dead corpse dripping with blood?

An armed gunman looking for money and food?

A desperate crazed axe murderer?

A vengeful Black Foot Native with a tommy hawk ready to scalp him?

He turned ready to strike whatever fate God had given him. He saw nothing but heard whimpering.

Down went his eyes to that of a big black dog with a cold wet nose looking for company and a scrap of food---

the disappearing man

by Tatiana

dear _____

hi. how's it going?

living that best life, huh.

yeah, same here ...

there's some stuff you should know:

i don't hate you.

i don't even dislike you.

i do feel let down.

i am disappointed.

i am a child that has been told,

"we aren't actually going to Disneyland after all."

the frustration, confusion

the anger, and sad beggy-whiny

"why me" phase has passed

instead i can be grateful,

am grateful

there have been conversations i

could have never had with those

in my immediate circle, or square

probably triangle fits better

all my hard angles

i thought, rather believed you

were a try-angled block, attempting

to push into the open cutout of my heart

i, uh, was sadly not coated

with the proper conductor

i, more than twenty percent,

pushed you back out

i do miss you, your silliness and

stupid facts that only someone as

neurotic as us would enjoy knowing

i selfishly miss your adoration and

showering complements down on me

i miss reciprocating that back to you

and hearing you get all bashful
i don't miss your curt tone or
annoyance, but even now i would
accept it
i often want to slap myself for
continuing to care, to pray for and
smile at the thought of you,
but truly i have released you and
am hopeful that you'll return
to some capacity, a friend is
what you have always been to me
and, uh, i do hope that can be
reconciled too.

and honestly i never had the desire
to go to disneyland as a child. i was
a busch gardens kinda kid ... just so
we're clear. ciao.

8.24.20

THE PLAYGROUND

by Chelsea

When I was a little girl, I absolutely loved playing on the playground at school. Recess was the highlight of each weekday. I remember watching the clock in class. As the minutes grew closer to the recess bell, I got more and more antsy. Sometimes, the anticipation would take over me, and I would find myself up and out of my seat wandering towards the door, as if being the first one out of the classroom would be some sort of advantage. As I got a little older, my favorite part of the playground would change. I would go in phases. Sometimes I would favor the slide. Other times, I was fully focused on being the tether ball master. I enjoyed one obstacle the most: the bars. I spent a lot of time perfecting my skills. The penny drop, the dead man's drop, and one more thing I can't remember what it's called: I would loop my right knee over the bar, hold on with both hands, and spin around it as many times as I could.

One day in second grade, I had broken a rule and was forbidden from recess. I found myself sitting in a gazebo with the recess Duty Lady. I remember studying her face, and wondering how she could be so cruel as to take my recess from me. I sat there silently, arms folded, with tears rushing down my cheeks. I wondered why grown-ups don't feel the same as kids when it comes to playing on the playground. What changes inside them that makes climbing on a big toy not so appealing? It made absolutely no sense in my mind. I thought for sure I would never grow out of playing, even if I were a hundred years old. My enjoyment grew even stronger as I passed through grades three and four. When I hit fifth grade, the playground at my school was amazing. It was like a wonderland, equipped with a tire swing, slanted parallel bars, and a merry-go-round. If you asked me what my favorite subject was in school, my answer would always be recess. Most adults would look at me and grumble under their breath, "recess is not a subject," but to me it was.

When I graduated from the fifth grade, I was so excited. Next school year, I would be in middle school. What I wasn't prepared for was that there was no playground at middle school. My first day was tragic. What used to be a time of day dedicated to fun turned into something that consisted of benches, soda machines, and "tweens" congregated into groups everywhere. There were no jump ropes, no monkey bars, and no swings. Just a concrete area with a couple of trees.

After a while, I hardly ever thought about playgrounds. I was more interested in figuring out who I wanted to be. I went through many stages that ranged from slightly awkward to extremely gothic. Things that used to seem important didn't seem so important anymore. even when I wasn't at school. I noticed my interests changing. Rather than play at parks, I would rollerblade around them, or hang out with my friends under the trees. At one point, the only time I would find myself at a park was if it was after dark and I was sneaking out with my friends and partying. Now if I look back at my life, I still don't have an answer to why grownups aren't interested in playing on playgrounds. I know if I visited a park today, I wouldn't be drawn to climbing the big toys, crossing the monkey bars, or jumping rope.

Playgrounds have changed quite a bit since I was a kid. A lot of toys have been deemed a safety hazard. When I look at children playing, they still have that sparkle in their eyes that I once had. When my children ask me why I don't want to come to play, I wonder why don't I? I am curious to know if playgrounds in schools being restricted to just young children has a negative effect on growth and creativity? That is a question that I believe is worth answering.

SAPPY MEEK OLD WHITE WOMAN

spoken word poem

by Sheryl

This is my sappy old white woman poem. It's meek. It's sappy. It's white. It's old woman. It's meek and it's white and it's old woman because you all love to watch us be meek and sappy and white and old woman. So ask me why I'm submissive. I'm submissive because that is my role. See, this country run by men expect old white woman to be silent, meek, and obey. I swear it's 1950s June Cleaver's fault to be subjugated. See her smiling, cleaning her immaculate home wearing pearls, a dress and heels. Ask Margaret Anderson of "Father Knows Best" if she was happy cooking up meals in a hot kitchen all the time, I'm submissive because Sigmund Freud touted females childish and uneducatable. See him as a misogynist. See his wife and mother mousy, caged in a corner. I'm submissive because mid twentieth-century "Better Homes and Gardens" exploited women to be perfect housewives. They brainwashed me to keep my hair, clothes, and household in always perfect orderly fashion. Always wear makeup to be pretty. Be cute, be polite, don't talk

back, be demure, be sweet, be a martyr. Be a doll in a doll's house. Girls can only aspire to be teachers, nurses or secretaries. Go to college aim for a husband not an education. It's a man's world. Don't have an opinion, don't be smart, don't be strong, don't think for yourself, men won't like you.

You'll end up like me, a sappy, meek old white woman.

I am not a human. I am just a doll in a doll's house.

INVISIBLE

by Lisa

In the journey through my existence
I see so many things I wish I could un-see
The pain, the struggle, the loss that
Plague the masses irrelevant of class
Your skin color does not change
Be you Black, brown, red, yellow you are
For all intents and purposes
Invisible

The loss of life for your people
Is not news worthy
Whether murder, suicide, accident or
Natural disaster there is no attention
Paid to the senselessness of it all
Unless of course it was caught by the
Lens of an incidental selfie it will be
Invisible

The struggle to make ends meet
To feed and clothe your
Children, to provide a roof
Under which they may rest
You must be lazy they may say
Neglectful, drug addled
As you run from job to job still
Invisible

I may not matter in the large
Scheme of society
I'm but a peon on the intersectional
Ladder. But I've walked in
Your shoes on the unseen two lane
Road, dust kicking up as we march
Forever forward ... I see you, you are not
Invisible

UNTITLED

by Fermina

There is a shaky system at work,
which lurks, awaiting for the struggle to regress
into the ugly and worst,
all of it is unfair.

Peaceful protests calling forth
for recognition of rights,
becomes a dismal unrest falling short,
averts unification with riots.
What's left is the bias.

Police bodies generalized as
racist systems of oppression,
take part in setting the whole country on fire,
tear gas as suppression
as we gasp in submission
were they conscientious of the power before they were
hired?
We tire in desperation.

I feel the collective tension
all the way to my prison cell,
the beliefs i upheld
recklessly thrown at the tv screen,
flinching from bloody screams,
a reverb in the deep recesses
of my mind,
as I'm stuck seeing kids
clean the mess
adults have left behind.

8.14.20



An illusion that was never yours

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