

VOLUME 003

THE MATCHSTICK

Amnesty Canada's Arts & Human Rights Magazine



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Transcending Trauma:
Challenging Colonialism

Created by and for youth — *The Matchstick* is Amnesty Canada's Arts & Human Rights magazine, dedicated to raising awareness of human rights issues and sharing the perspective of young activists who use art as a tool to resist injustice in all its forms.

Volume 003 features visual arts pieces, poetry, prose and interviews all centered around the theme of *Transcending Trauma : Challenging Colonialism*.

We see this collection as a tribute to the diverse youth groups in Canada and their determination to move through and against the trauma inflicted by pressures like neo-settler colonialism, climate change, racial discrimination and the persisting threat to gender and queer rights.

The artists we showcase offer a glimpse into how this new generation challenges the oppressive, discriminatory and disastrous consequences of colonialism while healing their own individual, intergenerational, and communal wounds.



THE MATCHSTICK

MASTHEAD

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A special thank you to **Elena Dumitru**
for her mentorship and visionary spark.

THE MATCHSTICK

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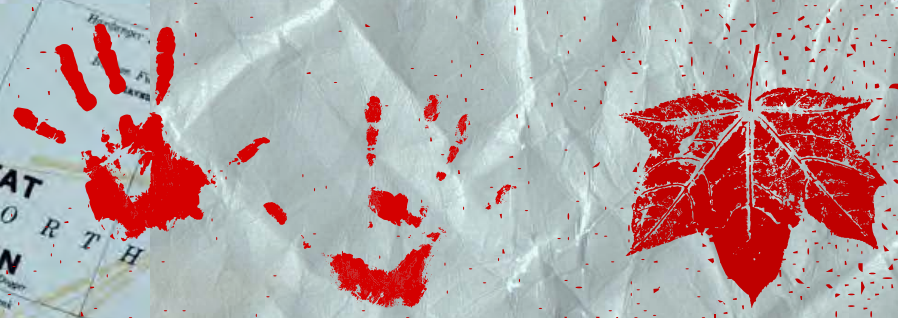
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*The digital version of this publication is available
online at TheMatchstick.org*



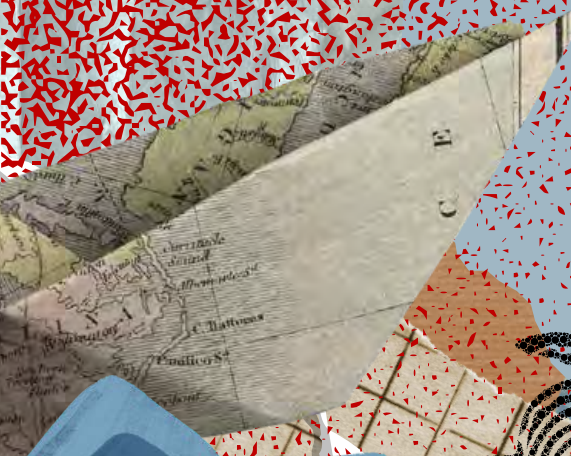
“

OUR home

and ON

Native

Land”



“Our home ~~and~~ ON Native land”



As activists and artists, we at **The Matchstick** are committed to advocating against systems of oppression that have dispossessed Indigenous peoples of their lands and denied them of their rights to self-determination. We believe that this work is essential to broader human rights work across the world and are honored to be able to pursue our goals together on Turtle Island, and on this land that we now know as ‘Canada’. The name ‘Canada’ is the colonial version of the original Huron-Iroquois term ‘Kanata’ meaning settlement or village. As this publication focuses heavily on visual and literary arts in all its forms, it’s crucial that we discuss the colonization of Indigenous languages and ongoing erasure of Indigeneity.

Many of us on the editorial team are immigrants, or children of immigrants, who have a distorted and incomplete understanding of the history of this land. Although we are both victims and perpetrators of colonial values, we are nevertheless, here as settlers and must devote ourselves to unlearning harmful misconceptions and relearning the truth from Indigenous peoples. Given the theme of this issue, *Transcending Trauma: Challenging Colonialism*, it is crucial that we critically reflect on our roles and contributions to the ongoing disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples across Canada.

As an inherently settler-colonial organization based on land acquired through genocide, Amnesty Canada recognizes its role and its duty to uplift, empower, and stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities. Advocacy for global human rights includes equal recognition and taking accountability of our own complicity. We stand alongside Indigenous peoples as they mourn the lives lost to brutal colonial violence and demand justice and basic human rights. The very institutions that serve as the backbone of so-called Canada are built upon Indigenous suffering and continue to enable capitalism at the expense of Indigenous lives. By collectively demanding action and change, we can hold the state and its mechanisms accountable for the genocidal atrocities it has, and continues to, commit.

We are vocal about the injustices faced by communities. We advocate through our campaigns such as *No More Stolen Sisters for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse Peoples* and we take action for Wet’suwet’en land defenders facing human rights violations and unlawful arrests by the RCMP for merely protecting their traditional territory from oil and gas pipelines (for more information about this topic please read the article review by Juliano Gaglione at the end of the issue). In our efforts against climate change, we look to Indigenous nations as the original defenders of the environment who hold traditional land-based knowledge. We believe a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous sustainable ways of being may very well be the key to attaining effective climate action. As these issues persist and continue to impact future generations to come, we at The Matchstick hope this publication will help dismantle narratives that misframe Indigenous suffering as a dark chapter of the past, and bring attention to our fight in the present.

Together, we resist, we fight, and we stand against injustice.

“*” also “Untitled” — Sacha Samouk



“*” also “Untitled” — Sacha Samouk

Cold Streets, houses, people
Loud silence, alienated, self-estrangement
Expected Absence, loneliness, repugnance.
Nauseating!

Was Lynch right?

It seems to me

so distant.

Demolishing thoughts

of determined course,

Like a newspaper column,
overflow my mind.

And I cannot escape.

I am waiting for a victim. And it is ultimately me!

I am cleaning my nails. Roughly and fast.

It satisfies me.

The serenity is strenuous. I am searching for an exit.

I got into difficulties. I cannot explain myself.

Without will and energy

I search

the dark Underground.

It's boring. Neurotically depressing.

Like a self-diagnosis.

Like lifting soiled laundry in the hospital basement

or

the weight of 70 kg coffee bags with a bulky Ukrainian

Like that dirt under nails.

Artist Statement

This piece is dedicated to my family and my father, as he is the true hero in my life.

“*”, also known as “Untitled,” is written from the perspective of Sacha’s father and set in the gloomy winters of recession-era Toronto, encapsulating the essence of an immigrant experience. Through evocative imagery and lyrical prose, the poem takes readers on a nostalgic journey, delving into the unfamiliarity, isolation, and harsh realities of starting anew in a foreign land. “*” details the physical and mental pain of adjusting to a new country while also attempting to establish oneself. The reason why it is untitled is that there is no word or phrase that can describe the heavy weight of leaving a country and adjusting to a foreign one under precarious circumstances. Ultimately, with its portrayal of the immigrant experience and the profound challenges faced in a foreign land, “*” calls readers to witness the emotions of the human spirit as it seeks to transcend the trauma of displacement and forge a new sense of belonging and resilience.

Artist Bio

Sacha Samouk (she/her) is a fourth-year student at the University of Toronto, currently pursuing an Honours of Bachelor Arts. Sacha draws inspiration from her father's remarkable journey as an immigrant and an experienced poet and journalist. Her writing has been significantly shaped by this familial connection to storytelling.

Through poetry, Sacha explores the themes of individual loss, mental health, geographical identity, and alienation. She seeks to capture the uncertainties and aspirations of immigrants, shedding light on the pursuit of the elusive "Canadian dream." Sacha also desires to comprehend her own dual identity and the intergenerational trauma that permeates her family history by delving into the experiences of her father's upbringing and immigrant experience.

Sacha's ultimate aim is to contribute to a more inclusive society that cherishes immigrant narratives, granting them the recognition they deserve. By combining her passions for literature, journalism, and law, she strives to create lasting impact and promote social justice. Through her words, she invites readers to join her in navigating the multifaceted journey of being a second-generation Canadian, where heritage, identity, and the evolving concept of home intersect. Sacha also aspires to assist in the publication of her father's literary works, which remained unfinished due to the onset of war.





Artist Statement

‘Eleftheria I Thanatos’ is the national Greek motto. It means ‘Freedom or Death’, and the irony is that for refugees crossing Greek waters in 2023, that is precisely what their fates were reduced to. The space between those two words can only be filled by justice or suffering. I make this art because I want to scream when I read the news and realize that there are people who wait and watch while others drown.

The loss of these souls casts shadows in the shape of those who survive them; the violation of one human life violates every life. I would like to imagine healing for the survivors: a young passenger in search of peace and a place to realize his dreams, is carried on still waters to a safe and welcoming door. A mother, for whom the ocean is a vast grave, is granted a wish. She longs to hear her children laughing again, and each time she sits by the shore, the waves carry their voices to her.

Artist Bio

The artist (she/her) chooses to submit anonymously. Currently studying Literature at UofT, she identifies as a third generation immigrant living on unceded lands in Canada. She is an advocate of refugee rights and a student of art and philosophy. The artist comes from a long line of women who speak up against oppressive regimes that attempt to enforce draconian border rules.

Dear Peacekeepers — Sabine Plummer



Dear Peacekeepers — Sabine Plummers

There are bodies beneath our feet.

Strange ontological phenomena, not to have questioned the dips where the grass has bubbled and softened, like wet ledger pages; red ink leaching, bleeding into dark bodies, and we blame the pigmentation of the dirt for not having seen the careening Holocene run smack into its unsurprising, undeniable end. Call for applause, what a flourish of a finale! The slap of flesh on flesh rings triumphant – violence, the historic crowd pleaser – lets us sit and become obsolete viewers to our own anthropogenic destruction.

There are bodies beneath our feet.

Call the expert witness to the stand, and let them determine the depth of the issue, what bedrock can flesh form? Soil is the favoured criminal of forensic anthropologists. And the historians? Skin so thin, stretched like cling wrap over these fresh bones, translucent and tight and tremendously aware of its own fragility. Clever obsession, to agonize over undeniable finality and pretend its escape grants us a modicum of experience, of knowledge, of rights, of History. Capital H. Archaicity wielded better than any man-made ballistic, its scope outweighs our conception of time, the way stars always die tomorrow, and the world always ends next year, and climate change is not a matter of yesterday. Chronology is already a master of noose-tied narratives spun around native necks. We live in a liminal bureaucratic: the colonial a matter of the historical, and progress a question for the eventual.

There are bodies beneath our feet.

Or so the journalists say. The peacekeepers clap each other on the back and forget that peacemakers must come first in orderly denial. I make origami out of photographed massacres in the newspapers, the bodies fold up and out of mind, yet more endangered species for us to second-hand starve. Consider this a retroactive introduction to a manual of heavy-handed instruction on the subject of Newton's First Law:

And we put them there. Tell me about pyrrhic victories without malice, rhapsodize about the cost of war like the tags assigned have names instead of prices.

Sing the high praises of systems that make the most out of little and call it resilience as if no one can see the desperate and the sacrificial recouping the cost.

The archeologists soon won't be able to differentiate the political leanings of the dead, soon this criticism of the past will be a lesson in fads, and will fade, leaving us authors as unquestionable arbitrators.

As long as we are not squeezed into the margins, and the spines of these books remain unbroken, we will continue to make history out of vellum.

Statelessness is not a threat to patriotic pride, but a state of human dissolution, of collagenic erosion. I am not asking for homogeneity, I am asking for empathy.

There are bodies beneath our *feet*.

The state of terror of being, I study the homo sapiens unbecoming as a measure of this nationalistic stratigraphy.

Dig deeper and find elements empirically, determine how we disarticulate, best discombobulate, confuse, confer, confess.

Tell me again why country lines are a matter of safety when people impale themselves on the spikes erected to keep bodies separate

on either side of this divide, limestone eroding down to salted history until we cannot account for racism by markers of geography?

We leave the fates of refugees to the seas but carved apart oceans to steal land from wide open hands,

making savages out of a people we still today refuse to name

Border presumes order - call a specious hope what you must, we do not name ruins after survivors.

There are bodies beneath *our* feet.

Privilege sours in my mouth, I bleed generational wealth, I sleep with pleasant ignorance (dressed), believe myself faultless.

Forget about the angry women and the angry children, let us count the fault lines across this arid land that was archived before our time.

An eye on the depreciating future! That 20/20 vision does nothing for the constant attrition of our common liberties, for the transgressions of this land, crushed to the texture of sand.

What would resistance look like faced with regard and care for instances of violence beyond insistent insolence and ignorance?

Make me a banal radical. Make me redundant. Make me obsolete.

There are bodies beneath our feet.

My hands are red with wet soil, and I am outnumbered by the bodies in the square foot I have been assigned, waiting patiently for my frazzled attention.

I try to ignore how the skeletons rest, curled around one another in an embrace I will have to break, for the sake of knowing you.

How the passion of these deaths are what I hear echoed in my friends' protests, even as I trace osteological evidence of violence.

I am on my knees, dirt under my fingernails, wondering how many more lives this earth will accept before the ground stops cleaving beneath our shovels,

refusing to take back what we have broken. There are bodies beneath our feet.

But, there are lives in our hands.

Artist Statement

This poem is a call to action from the perspective of an archeologist, vividly aware that institutions are built from the ground up with little regard to what's, quite literally, beneath their feet. The piece takes the time to pull apart such a statement and face the various factors that make up its reality: colonialism, institutional racism, borders and migrant experiences, the consequences of landlessness and the effect of our common human identity. The ambivalence of the complex issues are mulled around in the text, meant to be pulled apart and tasted on the tongue, for teeth to sink into. It is a call out from the white child of white parents, who's own legacy is one of perpetrators of violence, to challenge this history which not only continues to affect communities today, but seems to refuse to stay squarely in the past. It's from an archeologist who sees bodies fall today as they have before, and worries for the stories of the future, for where they will stand, and where they will lie.

Artist Bio

Sabine Plummer (She/They) is currently a Rhodes Scholar studying Archeological Science at Oxford. She has worked in everything from pharmaceuticals to slaughterhouses, studied everything from chemistry to art history, and has written, and written, and written. Sabine turns to the medium when not much else makes sense (which is most of the time) and makes what her therapist would call "creative use" of a deep seeded anger and despair at the state of the world. You can find her work in Pokes and Pollicles, The Compass, and other obscure corners of the internet.



50 YEARS LATER, PALESTINE LIVES!
C.P.C.

Palestine



فلسطين

CEASEFIRE NOW

PALÄSTINA.

Maßstab 1:1.350.000
Kilometer

Antike Namen sind in Grottek eingetragen.
Sj: Sijbel Berg N: Nahr Flak
T: Tall, Hügel W: Wadi, Flußthal
S: Sas Spitze Kap Ch: Chirba, Hünen
Höhen in Metern

- Unter dem Meeresspiegel gelegenes Land
- Grenzen d. Vilajets
- Berüt und Damaskus
- Grenzen der Massassirlik.
- Löban und Jerusalem
- Grenzen der Livan.

Die Hauptorte der Livan sind unterstrichen



JERUSALEM
NÄHERE UMGEBUNG.
Maßstab 1:37500

FROM
TURTLE
ISLAND TO
PALESTINE
OCCUPATION
IS A CRIME!

END
OPPRESSION
ALLOW
EXPRESSION
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

SEEDS
OF
HOPE
RESIST

NO ZIONIST
COLONIZATION
OF PALESTINE
NOW!

Palestine

RESISTANCE IS A HUMAN RIGHT

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL
amnesty.ca

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

INTERVIEW WITH RAWAND MUSTAFA

June 21, 2023

Rawand Mustafa is a Palestinian-Syrian student living in Canada. She graduated from the University of Windsor's English and Creative Writing program where she conducted English research as an Outstanding Scholar and received the Edith Bowly Scholarship in Creative Writing. Rawand draws inspiration for her writing from her experiences as a first-generation immigrant oscillating between Eastern and Western cultures, and she is particularly impassioned by the struggles and resilience of Palestinian and Syrian refugees.

Rachel: *Tell us a little bit about yourself. Your background as an artist or poet, and the kinds of mediums and tools you apply.*

Rawand: I've been a student at the University of Windsor for a while... that's where I obtained my undergraduate degree in English Literature and Creative Writing. I went onto a Master's equivalent while continuing my artistic and creative writing journey through poetry.

INTERVIEW WITH RAWAND MUSTAFA

Rawand: I'm interested in writing about what I know: my perspectives as a Muslim woman, and also as a Palestinian Syrian woman. I focus on relevant issues whether it be the Palestinian cause or the war in Syria and its aftermath. I like working with acrylic paints and experiment with regular pencil sketching but my main tool is words.

Rachel: *Your previous work was so compelling and really showcased your versatility as an artist which brings me to this next question of what motivates you to create and how do you use art as a tool for challenging oppression?*

Rawand: So in terms of what motivates me to create, I'm coming fresh out of a very academic environment. Being immersed in those programs shaped my perspective. Being surrounded by other creative writers was fueling my passion but the aspect of undergoing critiques also taught me the essence of constantly improving and adapting. On the other hand if I'm traveling to Syria for example, I find that I am also heavily influenced by that experience. Inaccurate media coverage serves as a major source of motivation. Engaging in genuine social justice education and challenging oppression especially in regards to Palestine has helped me find peace.

Art in general can be a form or means of untangling or interrogating political issues to better understand our own positions within the complicated threads at hand. I think ignorance is a dangerous form of oppression to one self and to the people around. I learned that to create is, first, a process of exploration. Interrogating these questions through art helps to dismantle one's own ignorance, and then hopefully to find an effective way to challenge other forms of oppression through works of art that inform and motivate. The main aim, I think, is to move people on an emotional level, and then hopefully, that movement carries through to physical movement and deliberate action.

Rachel: *Thank you for this beautifully articulated response. There are obviously a lot of issues that concern your personal, social, cultural, and religious identity. Looks like there you've found a lot of ways to reconnect with your identity and methods to help you promote and educate others on certain topics. This year our theme for the magazine is 'transcending trauma and challenging colonialism.' Do you have any thoughts on that particular concept and can you describe any instances you have translated this concept into your own work?*

INTERVIEW WITH RAWAND MUSTAFA

Rawand: Absolutely! I think it's an incredible topic to focus on as it is very relevant especially in this era and, in my personal experience, I would relate it to the ongoing oppression of Palestinians at the hands of Israeli settler colonialism. Violence is at large, and so the focus for my Master's thesis was a collection of poetry incorporated with excerpts from testimonies by elder Palestinian women who witnessed the Nakba in 1948, which, as you know, saw the establishment of the State of Israel, and the persecution and forced exile of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, including my grandparents. I weaved excerpts from their testimonies with my own perspectives as a Palestinian who lives in the diaspora and is yet to set foot in Palestine. I only recently experienced somewhat of an awakening about the ongoing oppression of Palestinians and the importance of claiming my Palestinian heritage in the face of ethnic cleansing. **When you have these forces trying to erase a people, to erase a language, to erase a culture.... what better way of challenging that than reaffirming the existence of those people, their voices, their culture, using language as a weapon against the erasure of language, affirming it, reaffirming it.**

I hope that my work provides a better understanding of the Nakba. It's a unique framework, very particular to the Palestinian context because the Nakba explodes into every thread associated with the Palestinian story. I think there will always be a tension between wanting to hold onto a national framework and also challenging such a framework as it does not adequately consider the reality of the fragmentation. It includes the stories of generations of dispersed Palestinians, sometimes growing more and more distant from their culture, their homeland, mostly trying to preserve and persevere. **It's a multi-layered, multifaceted picture but we must try to comprehend, and so I hope readers recognize the horror of Israeli settler colonialism and apartheid.**

It's not just reminiscing about the past and trying to heal, although that is part of the desire and hopefully part of the process. **What do we do with this trauma? For me, my blood is still boiling. I can't simply heal from a knife wound when the knife is still in my back. It's still there. I'm witnessing it.** I may be far removed. I may be very, very privileged as someone living in Canada, which has its own colonial context to consider, however, I do think I'm very privileged. I can witness these things from a distance. The trauma is still there when I hear stories of my grandparents. I also deal with another facet of the Palestinian context, which is what happens to my people after they leave Palestine?

INTERVIEW WITH RAWAND MUSTAFA

Rawand: In my case, my family fled to Syria and still feel the repercussions of the war, and so these aspects pile up and pile up in a way that, of course, can be traumatic. I think, as a writer with my privilege, it is not simply to heal my own so-called wounds that are, in my opinion, negligible compared to the literal wounds, and other deeper psychological wounds of Palestinians and other oppressed peoples who are witnessing and living the violence. It's not simply about focusing on ourselves in a sort of personal, romantic idea of what identity is and trying to feel better but rather addressing the entire cause holistically. I think in this day and age, we're becoming numb from constant exposure to oppression and forms of violence through social media or news outlets. Now more than ever, striking artwork has the power to captivate global audiences and wakes us up from that emotional desensitization.

Rachel: *Thank you, Rawand! This past May I also participated in rallies for 75 years of Nakba. You addressed the challenges of mobilizing art in a more effective manner and constantly battling censorship. Despite the surveillance artists face, our activism and art still reach and extend beyond borders, influencing people and changing lives.*

It seems colonialism just fuels mass global diasporic displacement in a domino effect of conflict, genocide and separation. Yet we see strength come from the masses of those who, in spite of trauma and grief, find ways to mobilize. They are assembling, and they're fighting, and this is being passed down generational lines, as you see with youth collectives who are still trying to fight in honor of their ancestors, their grandparents and other kin who didn't get that chance to voice dissent. This brings me to my next question, which is more so about how you perceive art as an important component in the fight for human rights.

Rawand: I think art has the power to move people. Writing that challenges oppression has a force of emotion that encourages action in the fight for human rights. My process as a writer has involved heavy research and uncovering archives. I'm trying to piece together whatever I can because, like you said, the settler colonial regime and what has cascaded afterwards left gaps in our family histories. I learned a lot about my family through my artwork and writing process. I learned that part of the repercussions of the Nakba was the displacement and scattering of Palestinian refugees around the world. I had family members kidnapped. I had family members who we thought were on the verge of execution. I realized it's important to remember, because the goal of the settler colonial enterprise is to make us forget so that they can replace the narrative with ease.

INTERVIEW WITH
RAWAND MUSTAFA

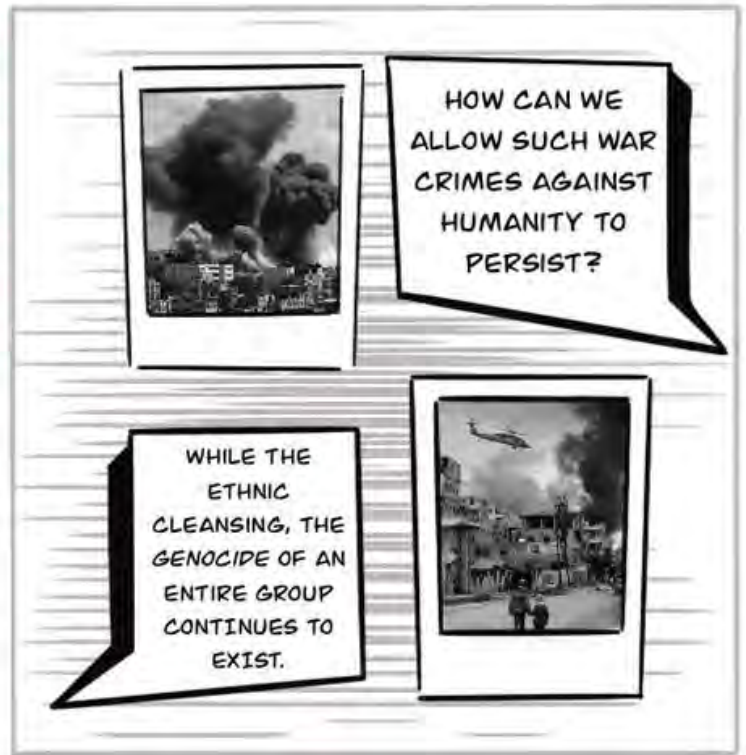
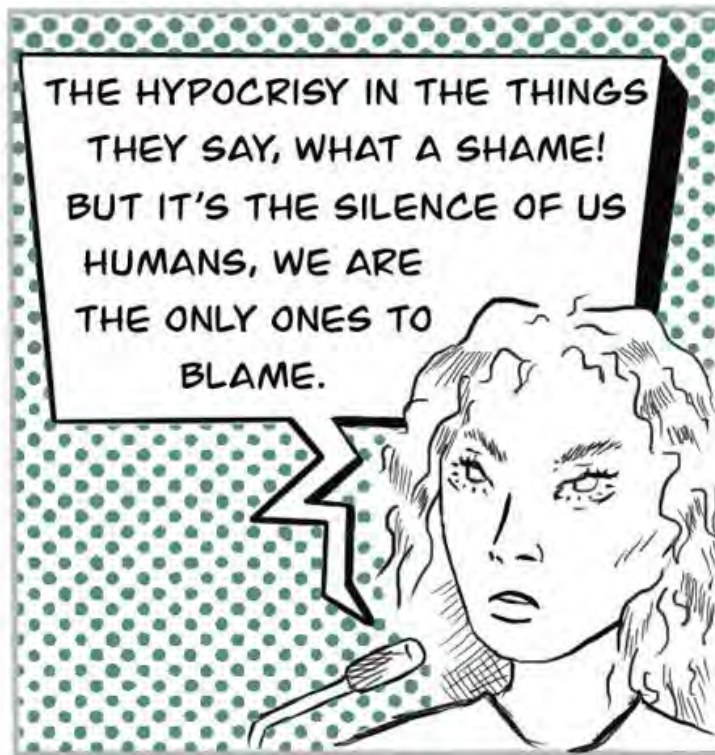
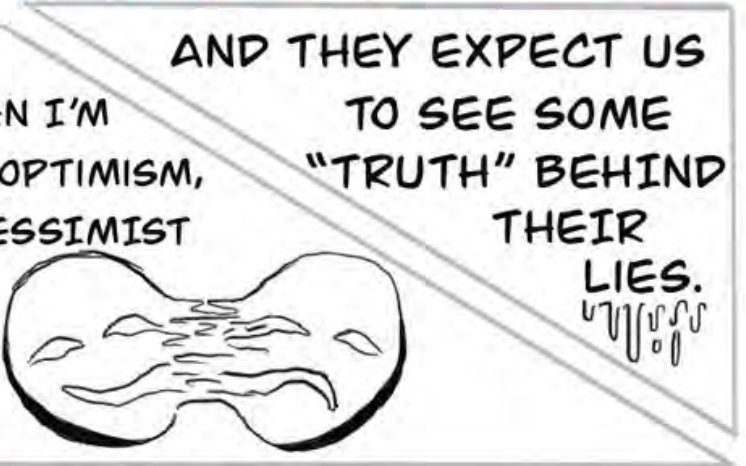
Rawand: We need to acknowledge, to learn, to deeply research, to trace the dots and understand our own history in that sense. We need to have that archive where we can go and learn about our lineage.

My writing process has been, first and foremost, a personal journey to collect these stories in order to understand the Palestinian context in all its complicated and layered psychology. My work is now multifaceted, and perhaps the best approach to this type of writing and art is to reach out to more people, to friends of friends, to family members, to their neighbors. Every moment you're in, you have to understand the motivation behind the artwork that you're trying to create. **[To use art] in the fight for human rights, I think the artwork itself has to be a testament to the current moment in time.** What does the human condition look like right now? How do we understand it? What are the sources feeding our understanding of this condition? And how can we use this now? It's a busy world with so much coming at us. How do we process that? How do we use that to understand these forms of oppression so that we can find effective means of challenging those forms of oppression through our art?

You can find Rawand's poetry and artwork in Issue 001 of The Matchstick

SO HERE'S THE THING,

I DON'T GET IT!



I'M TALKING ABOUT
PALESTINE,
I SAY IT LOUD
AND
CLEAR

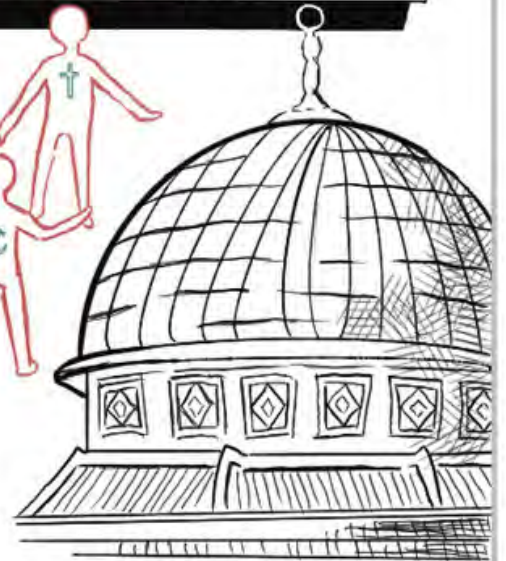


BUT
THE
WORLD
IS
INDIFFERENT
AS IF
THERE'S
NOTHING TO
SEE AND
NOTHING TO HEAR.

PALESTINE WAS A BEAUTIFUL LAND WHERE
CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS, AND JEWS LIVED
TOGETHER WELL...



BUT SINCE
THE
ZIONIST
STATE OF
ISRAEL
COLONIZED
IT,



**IT ALL
TURNED TO
HELL!**



THEY SAY ISRAEL IS A JEWISH STATE



**BUT THAT
IS A LIE**

IT'S ALL PART OF THEIR MANIPULATIVE GAME,
IT'S ALL PART OF THEIR ZIONIST PRIDE

REAL JUDAISM DOESN'T KILL,

AND JUDAISM DOESN'T STEAL

**SO DON'T ADD
INSULT TO
INJURY WITH
YOUR PHONY
AND ZIONIST
APPEAL.**

**PALESTINIANS
HAVE BEEN
SUFFERING
SINCE
1948**

FROM THE BRUTAL
BULLYING, WAR
CRIMES, AND
APARTHEID BY THE
ISRAELI STATE.



FORCED EVICTIONS, DEMOLITIONS OF HOMES, AND THAT'S NOT EVEN THE HALF



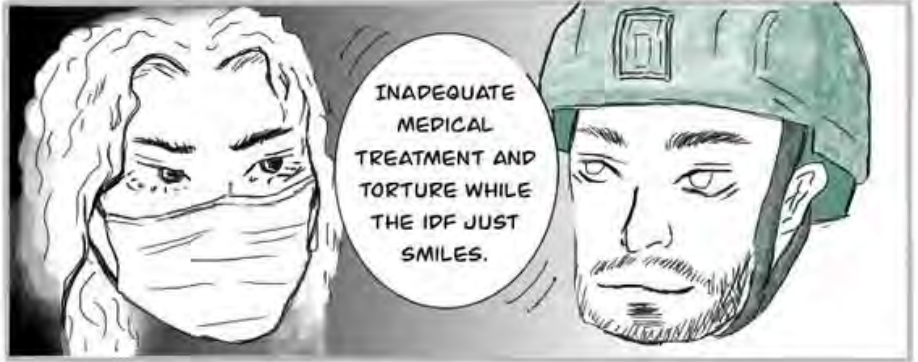
WHAT RIGHTS DO THE ISRAELI STATE THINK THEY HAVE?



PALESTINIAN PRISONERS ARE SUBJECTED TO UNFAIR TRIALS.



INADEQUATE MEDICAL TREATMENT AND TORTURE WHILE THE IDF JUST SMILES.



POOR HONORABLE SHIREEN ABU AKLAH,



SHE WAS JUST REPORTING WHAT SHE SEES.

UNLAWFUL KILLING OF INNOCENT WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND WHAT ABOUT THE PRESS?

ISRAEL IS GETTING AWAY WITH ANYTHING, THE WORLD IS SUCH A MESS!



WHAT ABOUT THE WORSHIPPERS IN THE AL AQSA MOSQUE BEING ATTACKED?

EVERYONE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO PRACTICE THEIR RELIGION, AND THAT'S A FACT.



DID YOU HEAR THE LATEST ABOUT THE PALESTINIAN FLAG? OH, WHAT A THREAT!

IF YOU WAVE IT THERE, OR EVEN WEAR ITS COLOURS, YOU CAN GET ARRESTED, OR MAYBE EVEN END UP DEAD!

BUT THE ZIONISTS WANTED TO SILENCE HER,

SO THEY TOOK AWAY HER LIFE IN A BREEZE.



THE ZIONIST STATE OF ISRAEL WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO MAKE SURE PALESTINE NO LONGER EXISTS



BUT THEY SEEM TO UNDERESTIMATE THE BRAVE, COURAGEOUS PALESTINIANS WHO WILL NEVER CEASE TO RESIST!

WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE VOICE OF THE OPPRESSED, AND WAVE THEIR FLAGS, OH ZIONISTS, DO FEAR!



ISRAEL'S GOT TO DROP!



AND THAT'S ONLY THE PALESTINIANS THERE,



BUT WHAT ABOUT US PRO-PALESTINIAN ACTIVISTS HERE?



THE PALESTINIANS DEMAND JUSTICE, AND THEY WILL NOT STOP. THEY WILL NEVER SURRENDER THEIR HOME.

FIN.

POEM BY NATALIE KHALLOUF

ART BY ERICA LUO

Artist Statement

Israel's government commits apartheid on the daily, it's time we speak up and hold them accountable for their actions.

Artist Bio

Natalie Khallouf, is a sixteen year old Syrian-Canadian human rights activist who constantly fights for the betterment of humanity's future. Movements like Amnesty International are her motivation to push through injustices and fight for peace.

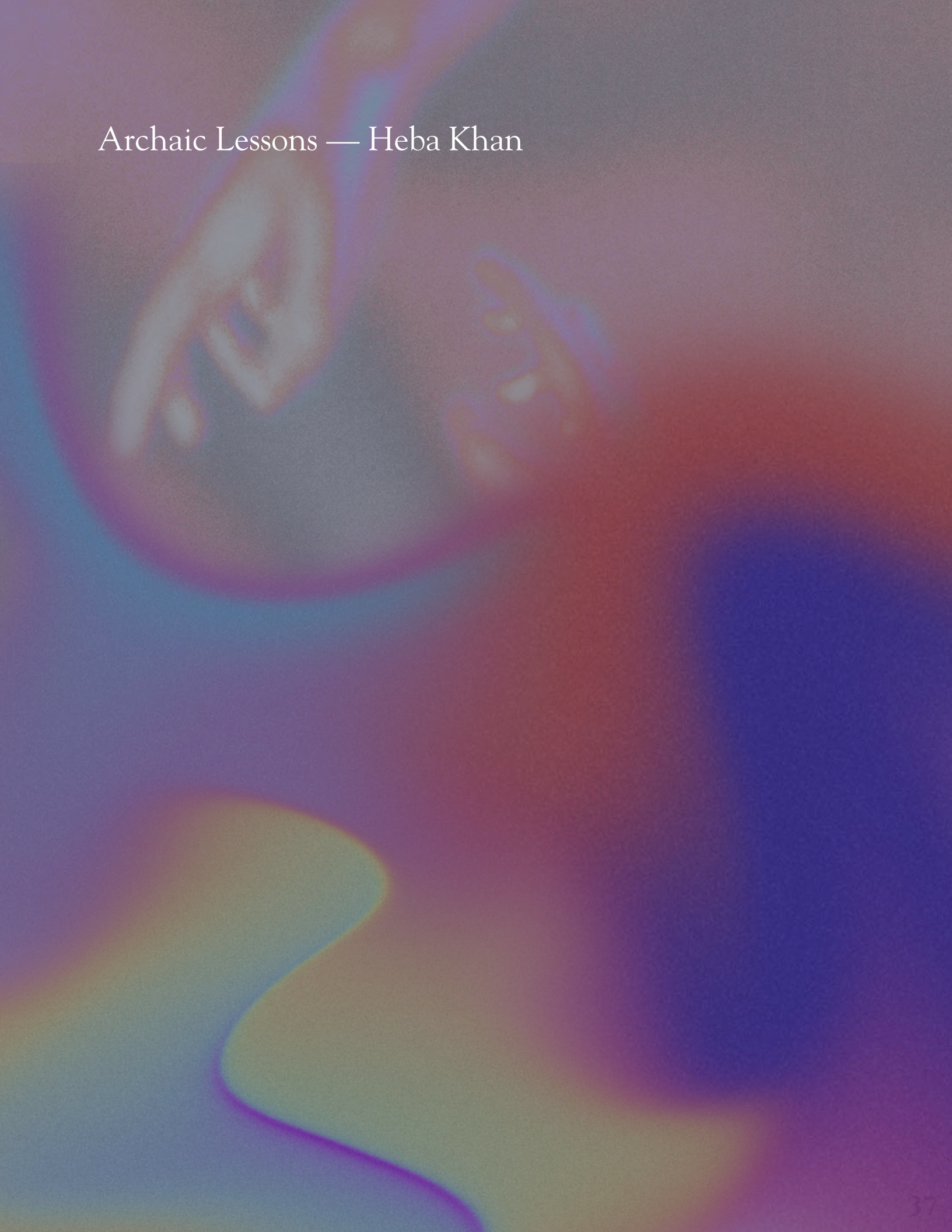
ART IS ACTIVISM



Photo of participants painting a banner and climate protest signs at the 2023 Amnesty Canada Annual General Meeting Workshop on Indigenous Women and 2SLGBTQIA+ Water and Land Defenders: Stories of Resistance of Indigenous Homeland Territories

Photo Credits: Elena Dumitru

Archaic Lessons — Heba Khan



Archaic Lessons — Heba Khan

Historically universal,
the first lesson in history
is always
why do we have to learn history?

Historically inaccurate,
the answer is always
so that history
doesn't repeat itself.

Our future is in retrograde.
We are living in the past.
More ashes of history resurrect
from the pyre,
the cremation of humanity
was performed in.

When you knit the narrative
into the moral fabric of your nation,
forget not the disclaimer,
that this cloth will be used
as the shroud of the culture
you seek to eliminate,
under the pretense of assimilation.

Language must be such a
threatening weapon
since it is always met with
a violent silence.
You have exhumed my
ancestors' graves
and eschewed my children's skeletons.

We will persist.
Our skin turns into poems
and we will haunt you
for generations.



The phantoms of our dreams
will linger over your meninges.
Our blood will not be erased
and you will vomit the ink
our stories were
written with
until you breathe.

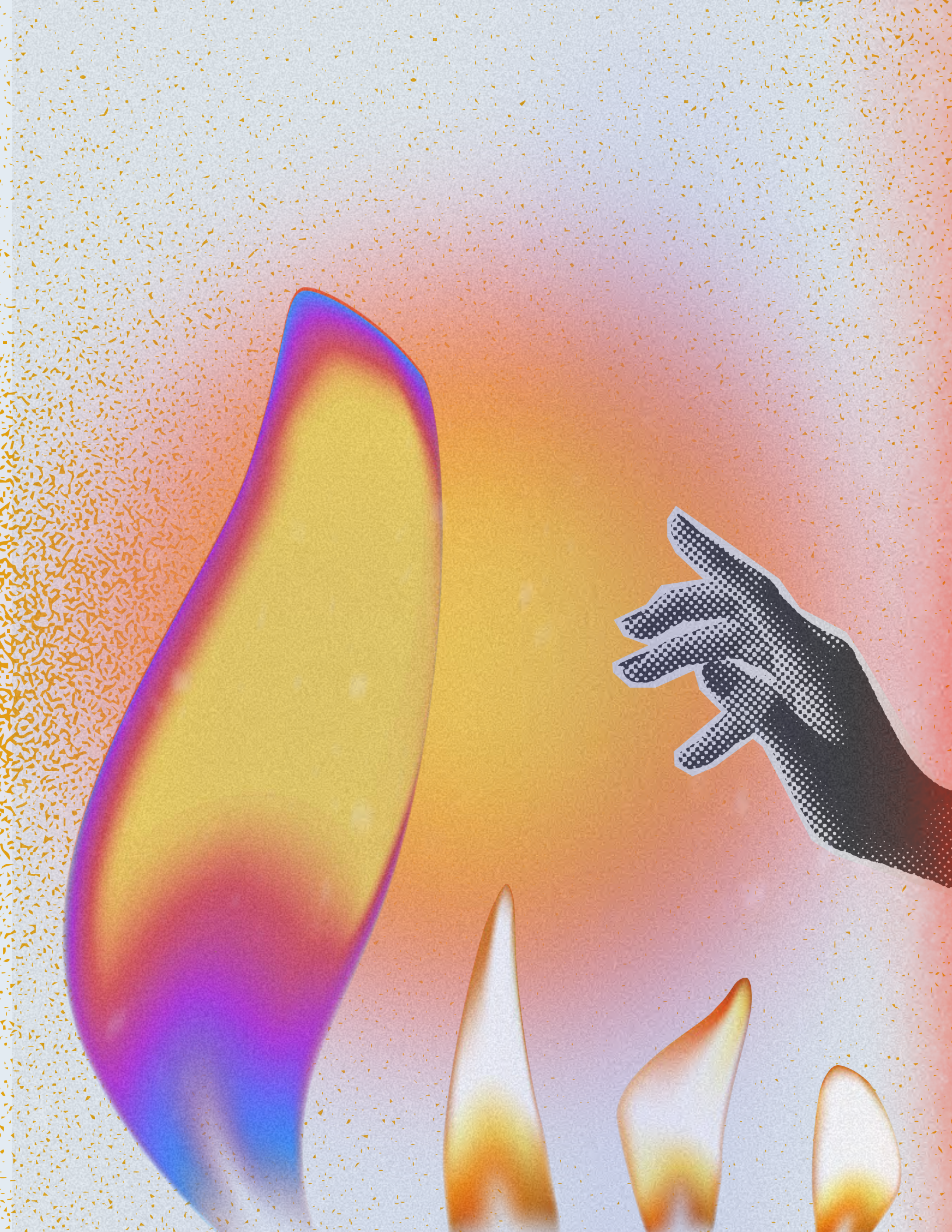
We may be restless,
but you will not rest in peace.

Artist Statement

Our genes carry the stories of our ancestors; recounts which are translated through poetics and modified by our memory, perception and experience, as we create our own legacy. The gutting discovery of the mass graves of Indigenous children was a stark reminder of all the legacies that were buried and all the lineages that were unjustly cut short — I think of how my own ancestors suffered under colonial rule, the stories that were snuffed out before they could be spoken, the cruel crimes of the past that still ripple into the present. In *Archaic Lessons*, I tried to capture the irony of all the inaccurate history lessons I have been taught in a colonial system. I also recognize that little is being done to reconcile and restore justice and that we must speak out on behalf of our communities. As a poet, my words are how I choose to honour the ancestors that have lost their identities, homes, languages to settlers. Through poetry, I hope to capture the narratives as they exist before they are warped into falsehood for textbooks. This poem is a recount and reclamation of our concept of history, and a small, humble attempt at showing solidarity against oppression.


Artist Bio

When the injustices of the world wear down the fibers of her resilience, Heba Khan turns to poetry as an outlet to express her grievances. Therein, she finds redemption and a community that experiences pain and grief in similar capacities albeit due to different causes. Mental health, spirituality, her identity as a daughter and the complexity of relationships often find themselves at the center of her work. Driven by the need to be the voice for the foremother and daughters that were silenced, Khan writes about the women that have paved the path to her poetry in an attempt to invite more to share their stories.



Fought it Hard — Rona Kong

Really fought it hard
 Your fallen cards
 They felt the need to bring you down
 Said it was your fault
 Impossible
 You were always indifferent
 Those names they gave
 Your darkest place
 Some years and still, it weighs you down
 Never knew it was
 Just because
 You were a little different
 Cry
And just wonder why
You try to unpack all those tears but they won't flow
 Cry
And just wonder why
 You know they're not worth all these tears but they just flow
 Something in you knew
 It pierced the roots
 It starts to lean, what can you do
 One degree was slight
 But start the flight
 And time grew still and gave you up



There's no why, there's no reason
 The colour of your skin
 Is all they see and need to act
 Like they're right, like they're above you
 You're just an excuse to
 Lift their pride and rise
 Cry
Don't you wonder why
You try to unpack all those tears but they won't flow
 Cry
And just wonder why
 You know they're not worth all these tears but they just flow
 Look around you now
 These people count
 They see you for you and won't back down
 Took a while to say
 You're so brave
 Go ahead, start living

Artist Statement

Fought It Hard is a song about the mental health impact of racial discrimination on young, marginalized people. This song rose out of stories that are far too common in racialized communities: children being bullied for their skin color, families mocked because of their cultural practices, young adults understanding microaggressions for the first time. It highlights the struggle of overcoming painful memories, of finding an inner strength and taking control of the future. This song signifies the journey of moving on from trauma and unpacking suppressed memories. With this song I want to validate how overwhelming the emotions after a racist experience can be; the sadness, anger, betrayal and confusion are all a part of you and your journey to seeing your full self, as someone strong, special and worthy of connection and respect. This song is a message to say your tears are a type of protest and your power is in your ability to recognize injustice and respond to it both within and outside yourself.

Artist Bio

Rona Kong (she/her) is a twenty-year-old songwriter, artist, and architecture student at the University of Waterloo. Hailing from China, she moved to Calgary at a young age. Rona has carried a love for singing and social justice all her whole life. Inspired by her mother's social work, Rona has been active in several human rights youth groups and campaigns such as the COVID-9Teen Youth Group, Giving Music Project, and has performed in Antyx Canada's 150th Anniversary showcase, highlighting the discrimination within Canada.

Rona's exploration of music is intertwined with her experience of the world as it relates to Human Rights. She views her songs as the bridge between her emotions and the wider reality they exist in. For Rona, music is a safe space to be vulnerable, to share uncomfortable feelings and understand the traumas that racialized people struggle with from a young age.

INTERVIEW WITH HANNAH FLORES

July 25, 2023

Hannah Flores is a Canadian Award-Winning spoken word artist, writer, podcast host, and filmmaker based in Toronto, Ontario. At just 19 years old, Hannah has been able to impact people of all ages through social justice advocacy and the creative arts. She has performed for the Toronto Raptors, OVO, the Consulate General of Canada in Los Angeles, and the City of Toronto's FIFA World Cup Host City Bid campaign. As a student at the University of Toronto, Hannah continues to mentor youth by helping them to find their voices through educational workshops and writing competitions.

Olivia: *Thanks so much for joining us today! Let's start off by discussing your journey as a spoken word artist. How have you incorporated activism into your art and what motivates you to create?*

Hannah: It all started in sixth grade for me, at the age of 12, when I performed in my first poetry slam through the York Region District School Board. It was then that I knew I could not leave this art form to the wayside. It felt freeing to write and perform poetry that was not bound by rules of maximum lines, stanzas, and constantly trying to rhyme. In English classes, reading more traditional forms of poetry, I thought that haikus and diamond poems were all that poetry could be. I am so glad that I was wrong and found a way to grow as an artist throughout elementary and high school.

INTERVIEW WITH HANNAH FLORES

Hannah: I was fortunate enough to turn spoken word into a career path while continuing school, commissioning original poems, and collaborating on major projects with awesome international organizations. But I never lost sight of my core value as an artist: to champion causes that moved mountains. Incorporating activism into my art has become an integral part of my creative process and identity as an artist. My motivation to create stems from a deep-rooted desire to effect positive change and challenge the status quo. I use my art as a platform to address social issues, advocate for human rights, and shed light on the experiences of marginalized communities.

Olivia: *I'd love to hear more about how you've used spoken word as a form of activism. In what ways do you believe spoken word can be a powerful tool for dealing with intergenerational trauma and the consequences of colonialism?*

Hannah: [I think] its transformative essence lies in its ability to create a safe and empowering space where individuals can unravel the depths of their anguish, pain, and experiences, ultimately fostering healing and resilience. I found that through spoken word, marginalized communities can reclaim their narratives, weaving their stories into a tapestry of strength and resistance against the oppressive legacies of colonialism. **It breathes life into forgotten voices, sheds light on historical injustices and ignites a collective consciousness that unites people in their shared struggles. Culturally-sensitive spoken word artfully preserves and celebrates diverse traditions, languages, and identities, while dismantling the foundations of colonial supremacy. I think that by embracing the power of spoken word, we unleash the potential for catharsis and social transformation, breaking the chains of trauma and forging a path toward reconciliation, empowerment, and justice.**

Olivia: *As a young artist, what impact do you hope to make through your art and activism?*

Hannah: My deepest aspiration is to wield the influence of my art and activism to become a catalyst for change in the realm of human rights and the struggle against colonialism. I want to use my creative expressions to illuminate the rich tapestry of my dual heritage, shedding light on the intersecting narratives of resilience and resistance within the Black and Latina communities. **My art has become a platform to explore the complexities of my identity, challenging prevailing stereotypes and celebrating the beauty of cultural fusion.**

INTERVIEW WITH HANNAH FLORES

Hannah: Art infuses the struggle with creativity, emotion, and resonance that words alone cannot capture. It transcends language barriers, cultural differences, and societal norms, communicating universal truths and shared experiences that unite us as a global community. By voicing the unheard stories of my ancestors and present-day communities, I aspire to reclaim their narratives, and fortify a sense of belonging and empowerment. Through art and activism, I hope to spark dialogue, and inspire others to embrace their diverse identities and join the movement for social justice and equity. My ultimate desire is for my artistic endeavors to leave an indelible mark on the world and like so many great artists who inspire me, ignite a ripple effect of empowerment, justice, and genuine equity for the next generation.

Olivia: *Many of our readers are young artists and activists navigating through a tough world with their bold idea, are there any specific challenges or obstacles you have faced as spoken word artist using your art as a form of activism? How have you overcome them?*

Hannah: As a young spoken word artist I have encountered my fair share of challenges and obstacles along the way. Being underestimated due to my age has been a recurring hurdle, with some dismissing my voice as inexperienced or lacking in depth. However, I have learned to embrace my youth as a strength, showing up unapologetically as my authentic self. Through the power of my words and unwavering conviction, I have shattered preconceptions, proving that age does not dictate the potency of one's message. I believe I found a way to transform this particular form of exclusion into an opportunity for growth, seeking mentorship and forming connections with fellow artists who have become my chosen family. Learning how to be my best advocate has been a transformative journey, finding the courage to promote my work, assert my worth, and advocate for the causes that drive my passion. Through perseverance, self-belief, and a commitment to honing my craft, I have overcome these obstacles and emerged stronger and more determined to use my art as a tool for activism.

Olivia: Could you share an example of a specific poem or performance that addresses the themes of transcending trauma and challenging colonialism? What inspired you to create this piece? What message would you like the viewer to take away from this piece?

Hannah: "To the Only Black Person in the Room " paints a vivid picture of the unique struggles and experiences of being the only Black person in a room, while also encapsulating the resilience, strength, and power of overcoming these challenges.

INTERVIEW WITH HANNAH FLORES

Hannah: I wrote this because I have been the only Black person in the room. Many Black people have been the only ones in the room. I was initially writing this as a letter to this “person,” but after writing it, reciting it, and producing the spoken word video for it, I realized that I needed to hear those words for myself. Maybe more than anyone else. That being said, this poem became part of my healing journey as well. This poem dances around themes of imposter syndrome, tokenism, and feeling the need to constantly “perform” as a Black individual in order to be accepted. Through evocative imagery and heartfelt prose, the poem serves as a powerful call to action, urging the reader to reclaim their space, embrace their authenticity, and break through the limitations imposed by others. It reminds us that despite the pressures and expectations placed upon them, the only Black person in the room is a force to be reckoned with, a symbol of hope, and a powerful voice that will not be silenced.

Listen: [“To the Only Black Person in the Room”](#)

Olivia: *What advice do you have for other youth artists who want to use their art as a means of activism?*

Hannah: To all aspiring youth artists who seek to use their creative voices as a powerful means of activism, my advice is simple : Embrace the potency of your art and fearlessly wield it to challenge the intergenerational trauma inflicted by colonialism. Let your passion for justice ignite the flames of change in your work, allowing your art to become a beacon of hope and resilience for marginalized communities. Educate yourself about the historical context and lived experiences of those affected, infusing authenticity into your creations. **Dare to question the status quo, and remember that your voice matters. In your pursuit of social justice, remember to cultivate empathy, as it is the bridge that connects us all.** Be unapologetically authentic, letting your art be a catalyst for healing, understanding, and transformation. **Through your craft, you have the power to spark a movement that dismantles oppressive structures and paves the way for a more equitable and inclusive world.**



TOMORROW
When you get there, do not greet them.
Now they are carving up your children
on their platters;
they have charred your nest,
set fire to the straw
and sheaves of wheat . . .
Tomorrow it is you they will slay
and dig for treasures
in your craw
Tomorrow, our ancient cities
will turn into cities of tents
pitched along a stairway
to the scaffold.

Tomorrow — Sara K.

Artist Statement

"Tomorrow" is a collage inspired by Egyptian poet Amal Dunqul's (1940–1982) poem of the same name. This visual arts piece addresses the often-overlooked structural impacts of consumerism, capitalism, and colonialism on the development of identity and its temporal implications concerning both the individual and the collective.

This art is based on the idea that contemporary media systematically reduces human rights violations to representative images in our minds; just like flags and logos that enforce the violence of borders, class, and inaccessibility, all the while feeding neocolonial agendas. I ask how these new habits, bred by a reliance on tech and algorithms, dampen our capacity to comprehend the present and take necessary action for our future.

Through this collage, I unpack my own curiosities as an organizer and a student: Can we consume information intentionally enough to see how our unique selves can impact a fragmented world? To what extent is content consumption sedating our conscience and crippling it to the point of performative activism?

Our history and our present contain patterns that inform our 'tomorrow'. Are we aware enough to see them and seek each other out before it's too late? If our 'tomorrow' is someone else's 'today'; will we wake up and care enough to warn and protect one another?

Artist Bio

Sara K. is an artist and advocate for climate action and refugee rights. She is motivated by the spirit of all the women in her life and is inspired by the teachings of activists who came before her.



Don't Fetish the Flower — You'll Fuel the Fire

Rachel Lim

Artist Statement

This digital illustration represents the harmful hypersexualization and fetishization of East and Southeast Asian women, particularly young girls. As a Chinese-Malaysian woman, I am constantly subject to the disgusting assumption that cultural appropriation = cultural appreciation when they are two very contrasting things. The fetishization of the East, often regarded as ‘Orientalism’ by Edward Said (1978) positions us and our cultures as a spectacle for the white colonial gaze. To them, we don’t fit the narrow confines of being human because we lack those attributes of whiteness. From male soldiers forcibly marrying young Asian brides during wars instigated by Western states to countless other instances of sex trafficking, abuse, and pedophilia, the Orient is not just some foreign land where the West longs to secure territorial possession by force. It is a means to gain ownership of women’s bodies in efforts to promote the Western colonial agenda. It’s an opportunity to commit sexual crimes without fear of retribution. From the infantile, precious lotus blossom to a cold-hearted, silent dragon lady — we are degraded, demeaned, and dehumanized. Even when massacred like in the Atlanta Spa Shooting of March 2021, we are remembered by these toxic, racist ‘yellow fever’ tropes.

My illustration aims to capture these emotions — these fears of feeling trapped and helpless in societies that constantly push distorted, romanticized narratives about our bodies as numbers. The violence we experience is multifaceted. It’s intersectional, and that’s what makes it so much more lethal. Once you spread one stereotype — once you fetish one flower, it fuels a wildfire of misrepresentation, pain, and trauma that leaves our collectives feeling broken and defeated. Though portrayed and perceived as delicate, fragile flowers, we continue to form strong communal connections that support resilient efforts to flourish in spite of such desolate environments.

Artist Bio

As a queer Southeast Asian woman, Rachel Lim (she/they) emphasizes equity and justice through a decolonial, anti-oppression, and intersectional feminist lens, especially as it concerns climate, gender, and racial justice. Rachel focuses much of their advocacy and academic work on challenging the colonial displacement, dispossession, and unlawful extraction of natural resources from sovereign Indigenous territories in North America and Latin America. This area extends to general studies on settler-colonialism and the detrimental impact on diasporas across the globe (especially Asia) as it concerns driving environmental degradation and violent oppression of marginalized communities. Rachel believes that creative expression is a powerful activist tool crucial to all forms of solidarity work. To them, art is political, and operationalizing it as a human rights education and community engagement method attests to its power to provoke, demand, and highlight the need for social change. Rachel is obtaining her Hons.BSocSc in Conflict Studies and Human Rights and Indigenous Studies at the University of Ottawa. She holds many youth leadership roles within Amnesty International and plans to pursue a graduate degree and career rooted in solidarity work.

Cage Wrought of Flesh (Gaia's Grace) — Emily Chaisson

Cage Wrought of Flesh (Gaia's Grace) — Emily Chaisson

She is drinking tea when it happens. The scent of mulberry and tea curls protectively in the heat of her umber palms: the fragrance of tranquility, an old forgotten memory. The silk drapes by the window flutter uneasily, the sun blotted out like pluming ink stains on white paper.

They come into the house quickly, unexpectedly, charging through the door she always kept unlocked, the one that reminds her of mountains and valleys and the brown bones of the earth. They come with hulking, heavy monsters, shadows strapped to their backs, and glinting metal murdering their eyes.

Disquieted, she stares a stare strong enough to draw a tsunami up from the depths of the ocean floor. She stands her ground in the yellow-lit kitchen and notices—feels—the black veins creeping beneath the paint on the walls. They surge forward.

They are yelling—are they? Doubt cascades her. Are they pushing her, pulling her towards their dirty, dark cities she has tried so hard to protect her brethren from? Are they, really?

She looks into their desperate eyes as they beg in their petty, immature ways. Pain pierces her heart then, as it always has when she looks at them. But her butterfly-soft grace allows her to forgive them.

They are her children too, simply and beautifully, a product of the earth. A product of her. The warm-lit room fades from her vision.

Mulberry and tea dance together on the tangents of a drawn-out dream. They cling to each other's strength and rich accents and comforting properties before they are joined by the raw tang of the earth. And then, after a moment, they hang on to that too. In a swirling mass of wispy storm, they hold onto each other. They are slipping, all three of them, so they weave into each other and grasp tightly.

Mountains take an eternity to build, and an eternity to fall.
Sometimes.

She awakes in a four-walled room that feels like a cage. A steel-wrought cage of black, tarnished blades. A cage of flat-faced walls, of fearsome machines, of bitter silence, and desperation. A cage wrought of broken flesh. But it is simply a room, bare and stark.

When she brushes the wall, pain twists through her palms and lodges in her heart like a sword of obsidian. She recoils and fear winds around her ankles. It purrs loudly. If they looked closer, they would see the mountains rising swiftly in her eyes: strong, wilful, determined.

Now, suddenly, they begin. Without warning: they shake the walls of the room and drag her from it mercilessly. Take her into another, darker room in which she cannot see—she can only feel.

At first, she does not scream; she releases her anger, shock, and sorrow in the floods that drown whole cities, which in turn become merely legends. Each tear into the earth is a tear into her skin. She grips her arms and covers her legs, the ones eaten by rugged, jagged merciless lines. They strike again and again and again. And the lines open slowly, then more quickly. They never used to move so quickly. They grow so fast.

They need so much, and do not give any reason.

More.

Blood struggles between her worn, slender hands that formed the land, but not for oil or death or destruction. The crimson redness of it spatters the cracked cement beneath her bare, muscular body. A body of lakes and rivers and richness and soil.

They take that too, the blood.

After their theft of her body, they drag her back to the room and then leave, but she feels them watching through the sturdiness of the walls. Feels their rough hands still, groping at her body and stealing what is not theirs to take. They pry loose what they want. Earthquakes shudder. Bones snap. Her mouth bleeds. She stumbles, whereas she once stood tall. But they are her children.

At first it was less, now it is more. Constant, constant, constant. She chokes on oil, and heavy machines, and the weighty press of too many dead bodies thrown upon her chest. Her lungs strain: they want to fail, but she forcibly forbids them. She is cloistered by fumes and gasses and hatred. She drowns in putrid waste; it rots her skin and the flesh peels away slowly at first, then faster, like everything else. Her skin loses its once-bright sheen.

They say they notice—but do they? For they continue making their death and poison as quickly as they can—they call it economy. They hide her behind cement walls of flesh. Say they are protecting her with green plastic labels that only hurt more. Has it been months or days, or weeks, or only minutes?—she gathers herself up. Decides with a breath of courage: she touches the walls, again and again and again, despite the pain. How long has she been here? She slaps the rough barrier, and yells her rage, her grief, her helplessness at the silence they leave her with.

“When will you let me go?” she cries in the tongues of many. Her voice comes in the form of howling wind, a vicious thunderstorm, the sound of cracking earth. Harsher and more violent than she has known. Her voice rakes glass shards up her throat into her mouth. It feels like their fingernails, grasping at her voice, trying to take it away.

Her heart has split many times, but never has cracked open. It does now, at last, when they do not answer.

She sinks to the floor, naked. They gave her nothing but these walls and despair and powerlessness. In a black pool of blood, she huddles, wrapping her arms around herself.. There is nothing left. Remnants, ruins of ruins.

Her forehead touches the shattered cement. A tsunami rages in one half of the place here her heart is supposed to be, a scorching wildfire in the other half. A drought parches somewhere in the middle. Her mouth is dry; her skin riddled with deserts of its own. The soles of her feet, they bleed. It hurts to breathe, to move.

During one rare moment, they move her with an unexpected bout of gentleness and kindness. Their arms lift her up and place her on a bed of starched white featheriness. She sags against them. The rain outside, her sorrow, becomes soft and light.

“What have we done?” It is another voice, cracked and broken like herself. Their hands slip, she falls, but they do not catch her. She is not surprised. She should not be.

Upon impact, lava spurts from the earth and becomes rivers.

They do not pick her up again.

Sometimes, a strangled, startled cry filters through the walls with which she sympathizes fiercely. Fire like the tongue of Hell falls from the sky. Buildings fall in their dirty cities, but she cannot break through the wrought, stolen flesh of the cage to soothe her other children. The steel walls sap her energy even further, leach more green from her eyes and more brown from her skin.

There is one lush patch of healthy umber skin lined like the geography of the earth that cowers near the small of her broken back. It is the untouched grail of a blue lake, or the old-growth forests, or the wild kiss of the frozen Arctic.

Once, in her younger, later years, in a time of not this—not torture—she could and would move freely on the wind. She would cross to the sunroom, open the balcony doors wide, and drink the sunshine. And her children would swarm around her ankles, kiss her thighs, and nestle on her shoulders.

Her hair fell in waves to her bare, diamond feet.

When she was happy, they knew. When she was upset, they knew.

Now, they do not seem to care.

Acid tears leak down her bruised cheeks.

Her grace is like no other.

Still, they persist. She curls into the ground, wails, punishes with every last breath, and still they refuse to see her beaten form. Sooty water gushes from her ulcerated mouth. Then it only dribbles.

“Can you see the stars outside?” Her voice, a dry creek bed.

“Not anymore.” It is a child who answers.

More—

More—

More.

She lays her head on the floor. Her heart beats in the dull, deadened sound of the earth. Nothing has beaten her absolutely quite yet, for her grace shines bright despite all the ache, the robbery. And she hopes they understand, as she gives them another chance.

Artist Statement

“Cage Wrought Of Flesh or, Gaia's Grace” explores the tumultuous relationship between humans and the Earth over thousands of years. The unnamed protagonist serves as a metaphor for the planet and weaves sentience into the land. This piece serves as a plea for acknowledgement and resolution of the damage perpetually inflicted upon the world in which we live and upon those around us. “Cage Wrought of Flesh or, Gaia's Grace” embodies voices that are often unheard or buried under the power of careless others and aims to bring awareness to these hearts, their strength, and their significance, as well as the pain that accompanies their love.

Artist Bio

Emily is a sixteen-year-old aspiring short story writer and novelist based in Ottawa, Ontario. Her work is inspired by quotidian life and its big questions. She is passionate about healthcare, creativity, and knowledge--especially curious about current social, political, and ecological issues--and uses writing as an outlet to express these passions.



On the Wet'suwet'en Pipeline: Canada's Response to
Indigenous Legal Conflict through an Undermining of
Fiduciary Relationships

Juliano Gaglione

23 January 2023 [Edited Oct 5 2023]
Originally published in "The Candlelight"

This year, Amnesty International issued a press release regarding LNG Canada’s Coastal GasLink pipeline which criticized the Canadian government and CGL (Coastal GasLink) for their continued policing and criminalizing of Indigenous “land defenders”—members of the Indigenous community eager to protect their territory from the pipeline’s development. As a call-to-action pressuring the Canadian government and CGL to allow the “Wet’suwet’en people [to] exercise their rights over their traditional territories” , the article addresses a conflict which prompts questions of whether the Wet’suwet’en community possesses legal rights to unceded land, whether such rights are acknowledged by the Canadian government, and, more importantly, whether such conflict constitutes a threat towards Canada’s Indigenous relations. Through investigation, we’ll find that the Wet’suwet’en do, indeed, possess legitimate claim to such territories, thus rendering the Canadian government’s infringement on Wet’suwet’en title is wholly unjustified. Such an analysis of the Wet’suwet’en pipeline conflict may illustrate a current irreconcilability between Indigenous and Canadian sovereignty, resulting from the Canadian government’s unsurprising exploitation of fiduciary privileges to substantiate their own economic priorities.

A brief overview of the conflict and its opposing interests prove essential in contextualizing the present argument. The Coastal GasLink is a natural gas pipeline being developed in northern British Columbia which partially traverses territory belonging to the Wet’suwet’en First Nation community. While all five relevant Wet’suwet’en Nation band councils have signed benefit agreements with CGL consenting to the use of their land for pipeline development, the nation chiefs—possessing power within a “hereditary clan system”—refuse to offer their consent. Here, an important distinction must be made between an “elected band council,” the form of political leadership endowed upon First Nations communities by Canadian settlers via the Indian Act; and a “hereditary clan system,” the traditional form of political leadership found within First Nations communities prior to colonial contact. Claiming to have been granted Aboriginal title (unceded land rights) in the 1997 trial of *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* , the hereditary Chiefs argue that the nonconsensual yet unremitting development of the CGL pipeline is an unjustified land rights violation. As such, many Indigenous land defenders throughout the province, eager to discourage the project’s completion, have been protesting these alleged injustices by establishing roadblocks to prevent project development officials from reaching their construction sites. Meanwhile, standing to earn an estimated twenty-three billion CDN over the span of forty years following the pipeline’s construction, the federal government has largely endorsed the CGL pipeline ever since first commissioning the project in 2018 . Such financial interest at least partially explains the government’s policing contributions towards the project, with RCMP officers consistently tasked with enforcing the law over supposedly criminally behaved Indigenous protesters throughout the territory. Despite opposition by land defenders, the pipeline is nearly 90% complete as of CGL’s May 11th briefing, and should soon arrive at full completion.

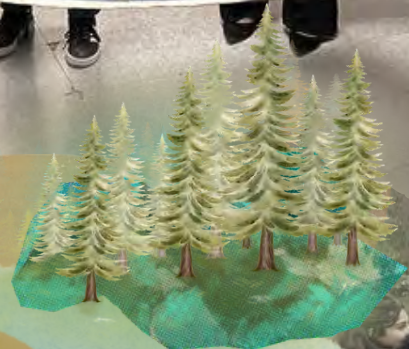
Upon inspection of *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* —a Supreme Court case resulting from Gitksan Chief Delgamuukw’s appeal of a previously failed trial—it is clear that the Hereditary Chiefs of Wet’suwet’en First Nation were granted Aboriginal title over their territory in 1997, resulting mainly

from the Chief Justice's reconsideration of the Wet'suwet'en oral tradition, "kungax," as valid historical evidence of pre-colonial territorial occupation. In remarking upon the original trial, Chief Justice Lamer stated that "the trial judge expected too much of the oral history of the appellants," and that "if oral history cannot conclusively establish pre-sovereignty occupation of land, it may still be relevant to demonstrate that current occupation has its origins prior to sovereignty". In the following trial, such oral history would be found sufficient in illustrating a pre-sovereign origin of occupation, granting Aboriginal title to the hereditary Chiefs who brought the case to the Supreme Court. Insofar as possessing Aboriginal title, the Wet'suwet'en chiefs would obtain recognized land rights characterized as (1) inalienable; (2) recognized by the Royal Proclamation of 1763; (3) communally held; (4) limited in use to actions which are "reconcilable with the nature of the claimants' attachment to those lands" (i.e., forbidding ecologically negligent land use); and (5) protected by section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982. Clearly, then, Wet'suwet'en protestors are correct in their assertion that hereditary chiefs are owed unceded land rights as per the result of *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* in 1997.

With this being said, there are additional details within *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* which stipulate the circumstances in which Crown infringements of Aboriginal title are justified ("constitutionally recognized aboriginal rights are not absolute and may be infringed by the federal and provincial governments..."). As such, we should consider whether the Canadian government could find justifications for the infringed use of Wet'suwet'en territory in constructing the CGL pipeline. In the document, the two tests of potential justification include: (1) furthering a compelling and substantive legislative objective; and (2) acting as is consistent with "the special fiduciary relationship" between the Crown and Indigenous peoples (e.g., "the development of agriculture, forestry, mining, and hydroelectric power," "general economic development," "protection of the environment," and the "building of infrastructure and settlement of foreign populations"). First, the CGL project does not stand to contribute towards any immediately notable legislative objective, and so cannot be warranted under the first test of justification. Second, while an argument may be asserted for the infrastructure, employment, and "economic development" produced within Indigenous communities by the CGL pipeline, the project also contributes towards ecological destruction and population displacement while compensating the Indigenous communities with only a fraction of the total economic value estimated of the project, thus discrediting any claims of the pipeline's contributions towards a productive fiduciary relationship. Essentially, such analysis illustrates the CGL pipeline's failure to attain justification through either of the tests established within *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*. As such, the use of Wet'suwet'en land by federally commissioned enterprises would rely upon the full and lawful consent of Aboriginal title holders—in this case, the hereditary chiefs. With the Canadian government's infringement of Wet'suwet'en land rights thus proven unjustified, their use of police action to enforce lawful compliance within Wet'suwet'en communities while refusing to hold themselves accountable to their own legal abidance of Aboriginal title demonstrates a self-contradictory logic which effectively

undermines the legal precedent meant to support Canadian-Indigenous relations in a broader sense. The federal government's policing, surveilling, and criminalizing of the Wet'suwet'en community via RCMP police action throughout the pipeline's construction, negligent of the community's title rights, aptly indicates whose interests are most readily maintained—and whose most consistently undermined—within Canadian-Indigenous legal confrontations. In criminalizing land defense and mobilizing police action against Indigenous protestors, and thus in transgressing the principles of Aboriginal title belonging to the Wet'suwet'en as is clarified within *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*, the federal government inadvertently undermines a legal precedent imperative to prosperous Canadian-Indigenous legal relations. As Queen's University Professor Michael Luoma remarks on the federal government's legal maltreatment of Indigenous communities in "Collective Self-Determination, Territory, and the Wet'suwet'en," "if we cannot provide a consistent [note—consistent] answer to questions, then from a moral and legal perspective, the future relationships between Canada and many other Indigenous nations are in danger of being carried out in an ad hoc or arbitrary manner". Indeed, the negligent treatment of the Wet'suwet'en community and their legal history, if persisted upon, could further complicate Indigenous relations throughout the country. As such, steps should be taken towards the increased acknowledgement of Indigenous communities and the legal rights they are owed so as to facilitate a sustainable future for Canada's Indigenous relations, rather than undermining not only legal precedent, but consequently, legal integrity and Indigenous diplomacy.

While I do not wish to trivialize the issue at hand by prescribing any naively-optimistic solutions, I do believe the Wet'suwet'en pipeline conflict offers, if nothing else, a productive springboard for considering how we may disentangle an embedded history of settler colonialism from Canadian law, and as a result, envision a clear future for Indigenous solidarity. I believe meaningful progress may be achieved in both these efforts through a broader understanding of TMU Professor Shiri Pasternak's conceptual framework in her 2014 article, "Jurisdiction and Settler Colonialism: Where Do Laws Meet?" Here, Pasternak frames Canada's legal undermining of Indigenous sovereignty as an issue of competing jurisdictions, or "overlapping authority claims between Indigenous, state, regional and private interests," resulting from a historical legacy of settler colonialism which frames Canadian law as the nation's single sovereignty. Pasternak suggests that the decolonization of Canadian law requires recognizing Indigenous jurisdiction as one of several co-existing forms of governance throughout the country, thus defeating the settler colonial notion of Canada as a sole sovereignty. Fairly compelled by Pasternak's conceptual framework and suggested solution, I believe the concept of overlapping jurisdictions should thus underpin our understanding of not only the Wet'suwet'en pipeline conflict, but all prospective Canadian-Indigenous legal controversies as well. This signifies an effective approach to Indigenous solidarity and necessitates the recognition of Indigenous legal actors' legitimacy within their jurisdiction, even as they overlap with federal, provincial, regional, and private jurisdictions. Once this legitimacy is established, the next course of action would be staging formal protests or alternative advocacy strategies to affirm Indigenous sovereignty and raise awareness for their claims.





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