



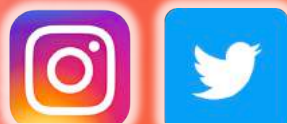
**free princess**

**fall '19**

Welcome to Free Press: the only arts-and-culture focused magazine on BU's campus. We are a microcosm of the artsy, open, kind, queer, and warm community that you may have already met, or are excited to dip your toes, keyboards, cameras, and glitter gel pens into. Whatever it is you want to talk about, do, or collaborate over, chances are we are game.

We want to hear about your introspections, your visuals, your ideas, and we want to help you make them sparkle. We want to hear about your anger, your love, your frustration, your bliss, your failure, your success, your stagnation, your growth, and then we want you to channel it, with us. We are always seeking out new budding writers, poets, artists, photographers, graphic designers, and overall creative and kindhearted individuals to work with us.

Our creative workshops are underway, and our website is about to get much, much bigger. Our meeting days and times vary with each issue we put out, so if we sound like people you'd like to grow with, contact us by emailing [editor@bufreepress.com](mailto:editor@bufreepress.com). We'll make sure you get the memo. In the meantime, follow us. Our social media manager is very funny, we promise.



@bufreepress

The **full-color** version of this issue is available online at **[binghamtonfreepress.com](http://binghamtonfreepress.com)**!

While you're there, check out our past issues, or stop by the newsstand outside our office (UUBW05) to get your hands on them!

Background Art // *Plamena Diulgerova*

# *letter from the editors*

*Hey, cutie!*

Thanks for picking up our strength, togetherness, and movement issue! So many of you pitched wonderful themes at our very first meeting of the year, and we decided those three ideas would work really well in tandem. We're ecstatic about how people ran with those vague terms and made them their own. As always, we are so delighted to share the incredible pieces our contributors worked on.

This issue places a magnifying glass on the relationships, emotions, and communities our writers are inspired by. We hope you connect with the writing, and get inspired by the artwork. We've been told Free Press makes for some insane collage content, in case you've got some scissors and a glue stick on hand.

Thank you to the writers and artists who made this issue possible, and to our incredible E-board who worked so hard to produce the magazine you're holding right now! And of course, thank you to Amy for being such a beautiful soul and posing for our magical front cover.

Stay cute,

*Jason & Plamena*

## *meet the e-board*

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***Associate Editors:*** Nikita Narsingh & Kaitlyn Cottrell

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***Treasurer:*** Nikita Narsingh



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# ONE OF THE GROUP

BY AMBER CHERICHETTI

A given community doesn't just belong to you. It belongs to everyone in that community, too, and everyone has different ways of interacting with and making meaning from it. It's through this shared ownership that a culture becomes a community. The togetherness that's fostered in that kind of space is experienced by everyone in it in different ways, and one of the most common ways that community affects members is by helping forge their individual identity.

Communities help you grow through the people who encourage you to find your true self. It's hard to express yourself the way you want if you're in an adverse environment. I should know; after being in the stifling Catholic school system for 14 years, coming to college and finding a place where I could be myself was life changing. My upbringing seriously had a huge impact on how I forged my identity. Especially as a queer, gender-nonconforming person in such a hostile environment, I found that I could never dress or act or look the way I truly wanted to without fear of backlash, bullying, or even being accidentally outed as queer. I used to be surrounded by judgement and people who were not at all like me, and now I'm confident in myself since I've found places where I can just...exist as me.

Ever since I found people who are accepting of me, I've gone even further with how I express myself. I don't shave anymore! I wear traditionally men's clothing! I actually talk in social spaces! I have come to find myself, but I wouldn't have been able to without the

wonderfully supportive people I've found here at Bing who gave me a loving community to be a part of. I'll be grateful for the rest of my life.

It might be hard at first to find the right culture to embed yourself in, but once you reach it, it's like you belonged there all along. You might go through a bunch of communities before you find the one, but that's fine. They'll all play a hand in how you develop and grow as a person. Trying to integrate yourself into new communities might be scary, but it's like taking a leap of faith. Actually, it's an ongoing process consisting of, like, a bunch of leaps of faith. Eventually, though, you take a certain amount of jumps and find that the distance has been getting shorter and shorter. Eventually, being one of the group is as natural as walking. I promise that it's worth it, even if you break a few ankles in the process.

If you haven't found a community to call home yet, it's okay. You're already doing the hardest of work by reading this article. Hopefully, you're consuming a piece of media in the hopes it'll bring you some kind of meaning. Maybe I'm making a few too many assumptions, but the desire to find a space where you can be you is most of the battle. By picking up a copy of *Free Press* (go you!) you're embedding yourself in art and literature in a way that's unique to you, and that passion is shared by a lot of other people who would be happy to love and accept you.

And if you're still not convinced, just know this: I love and accept you.



Art // Linda Zheng

# A Letter to My BY CINDY WONG Younger Self

Dear Younger Cindy,

Hi, me. I'm you, from the future. I've got a word limit here, so I'll try to keep this as short and concise as possible (but at this point, you'll have learned you love to follow rambling trains of thought when you write). I'm 19-year-old you. I'm at the "cool" age you dreamed about. If I remember correctly, you thought you'd be the type of 19-year-old that is fiercely independent, wears so much jewelry you could steel knuckle punch someone, and for some reason, wears leather miniskirts. Well, I own fewer rings than you wanted and my wardrobe is admittedly lacking in the leather clothing department, but I'm pretty proud to report that you're making progress on the independence part. And isn't that the most important part?

I know you'll spend a lot of time watching those Youtube videos titled "X things I learned in X years" (spoiler: you still do), so I'm here to surprise you with future you's very own list of 10 things I learned in 19 years! (Can't make it 19 because of the word limit, but we love a rule-breaker.)

## **1. You can make friends with your anxiety.**

This one must sound absurd to you. You're struggling to acknowledge that you have anxiety at all, that it is a separate entity from you. You hate yourself for feeling anxious when you believe you shouldn't feel anxious. Our anxiety doesn't go away, but we'll learn to make friends with it. A meditation app called simple habit, a poet named Rumi, a little comedian by the name of Bill Hader and so, so much more will help us learn to become friends with our anxiety, which we now visualize as a scared floating sheet ghost asking us for help or a little monkey on our right shoulder. And it will get easier.

## **2. The world doesn't revolve around you.**

What a shame, right? The world's missing out on our 2 am dance parties and sitcom worthy trip-and-falls. Truly a shame. But also, what a relief. This means no one cares when you mess up during a dance class, or what you decide to do with your life. Everyone's too busy worrying about their own lives.

## **3. No one has it figured out.**

As composed as the adults around you might seem, they don't have it figured out either. They have their own life problems, and you'll realize that through small things, like the frantic way your grad TA barges into the classroom five minutes late, or when your favorite English teacher mentions their past divorce with a grimace. Try not to worry so much, 'cause we're all still trying to figure it out.

## **4. Happiness is something you let yourself feel.**

You'll read a list of the top five regrets of the dying, and the last one will stay with you most. It reads: I wish that I had let myself be happier. The thought of us laying in bed, wrinkly, near death, and having spent most of our lives chasing happiness but not feeling it, is a scary one. You don't need to win an award or find your soulmate to be happy. You're alive. You've got a warm bed to sleep on and Harvest Moon to play on DS. It's pretty awesome, so you can let yourself feel psyched about it.

## **5. Writing makes life more enjoyable.**

When you write, you'll realize that your thoughts become clearer. They begin to circulate throughout your mind with ease because you're taking the time to listen to them and write them down, instead of letting them accumulate and stagnate in your brain. You'll also learn that the title of a "writer" is not much of a title anyway. It

doesn't do much to distinguish a person from the rest, since there isn't much difference between someone who calls herself a writer and someone who doesn't, except that the former chose to tell their story. And because they continually make the choice to tell their story, they get better at it. So keep writing!

### **6. Avocados.**

You haven't yet seen the light, but girl, you will.

### **7. Nothing is perfect, and nothing ever will be.**

Ugh, I know. This one's frustrating, especially for the perfectionist in us. But this fact will save you from spending unnecessary time obsessing over the little things. We will learn the concept of "good enough". We will begin to appreciate imperfection and how it gives beauty a whole new meaning.

### **8. Nothing is permanent, and life is short.**

Nothing is permanent. Not people, not mistakes, and especially not ripe avocados. Life is short! This one will be another hard pill to swallow, not just for us, but for all of humanity. It'll put everything you do into context. You'll learn that staying mad at someone is not worth the time you waste feeling unhappy and that even though your family members may not agree with you on everything, it's a miracle that you're both alive and able to see each other at all, and that time is definitely worth cherishing.

### **9. Your worth is not determined by anything external.**

You are not defined by your face, your body, the clothes you wear, or how many people like you. You are already whole, worthy, and loved. You don't need to change to become worthy when you already are.

### **10. Don't take yourself, or life, so seriously.**

This lesson is related to all the other ones about imperfection and impermanence and no one having anything figured out. We all exist on this giant rock. That spins around the sun. Which is a giant ball of gas. Like, what?! What are the chances that we as a human race are even alive right now, enjoying high-speed internet, trashy reality tv, and thin-crust pizza??? It's all kind of absurd. Laugh a little more, and enjoy the crazy journey.

So why did I go through all the trouble of sorting through my mind to pen down these life lessons for you? It isn't in hopes of preventing you from making the mistakes I did, because those mistakes are exactly what's going to help you learn these lessons. I won't lie, it won't be an easy journey. Some nights, your pillow will be soaked in tears and you'll feel tiny. But I'm writing to let you know that somehow, everything's gonna turn out okay, so keep on keepin' on, soldier.

With much love,

*Your 19-year-old self*

*Art // Cindy Wong*



# lifting myself

BY ARIELLE HANOCH

**I** *It was early June, and believe me, I was ready to make shit happen.* I quit my drive-thru job at Dunkin' days before and hopped in my beater (my ride or die '02 Corolla), packed all my belongings and hauled ass nearly 1,800 miles. I drove over 25 hours, sleeping in parking lots to save money along the way (although I got a little tied up and had to spend the night outside an O'Reilly Auto parts in rural Kentucky where my car leaked a bunch of oil), but I safely made it to Austin. I would be spending the summer there (potentially longer) living with my sister and working, auditioning for student films, interning at a place that didn't teach me jack shit (yuck), creating designs for my soon-to-be graphic tee/clothing line, and just figuring things out. I wasn't sure whether or not I wanted to return to Binghamton or stay in Austin, where I could finish my degree online, get a waitressing gig, and work more than I could tolerate. That likely would have been a recipe for disaster... so, I think I made the right choice coming back.

Although I've always been fortunate to be 'ok' with and even like my body, I knew it had greater potential. I've always wanted to work out and finally seized the day to enroll in a gym. After much deliberation, I hired a personal trainer for a few sessions to help get me started. The personalized attention, starter strength-training routine, diet knowledge, and that extra 'push', made it a worthwhile investment. Like all territories uncharted, it felt foreign to me and the difficulties were real, but I stayed consistent. I made that trip daily and gained 5 pounds of muscle in no time. By choosing to make the gym an integral part of my life, it helped and continues to help transform my life, slowly but surely.

Exercise benefits you physically and mentally. Yes, it releases endorphins. You feel better coming out than going in. But in a larger sense, it is truly transformative and amazing. When you persevere in the gym, the effects are far-reaching and powerful. This is because exercise takes self-discipline, patience, commitment, and power. You see beyond what's in front of you. By extension of sprinting on that treadmill, conquering that barbell, murdering those squats,

and otherwise going beast mode for your physique, you teach yourself you're worth investing in. You're a work in progress worth dedicating time to, worth nurturing, worth loving. You're worth reclaiming your personal power, your agency. You're honing the glory that is your temple, the house you live in every single day of your life. The only house you will never move from in this lifetime. You're feeling those sensations in places you didn't even know existed, and a sense of connectedness in return. You're doing it for yourself and no one else. You rediscover your value. You make your house your home.

I built upon and incorporated these traits and concepts into my life. They created ripple effects. I started to dedicate more time to other stuff I care about. I did other positive things. I felt better about myself. It's not always easy; some days I lose them. Sometimes I feel lost, sad. I feel resentful and stuck. I feel hurt. I feel like life is broken beyond repair even though that can't be true. I'm not saying physical fitness is an end-all because it's not. Honestly, I wish. But it's an act of power. By making that trip to the gym, I'm bouncing back. To myself, it's a reminder that I'm taking steps forward each day. A reminder that I'm empowered, and I choose. I choose to honor my temple, and therefore, honor myself. I choose to craft a reality and forge a path, to author my own narratives, and not let them craft, forge, or author me. I choose to choose wisely - to take full responsibility of the person I'm becoming and become the person I want to be. No excuses.



Art // Cindy Wong



# I suppose ..

BY BREE E. PEREZ

\*CW: assault

"I love that blush you have after... that pinkish red, a rose gold afterglow."

We would go to the mirror together after. Point it out.

Point out our body to each other the new marks  
Scratches that cascaded your back,  
Lovemarks on my neck

I loved it  
Loved.

That powerful connection that subdued any doubt,  
Any questioning.

I wish I could relay how this confidence is laced with shame,  
Worry and blame.

How I see this body curiously  
How there is Love and...Fear?

Fear to indulge once more

In this connection I'm refusing to reach again-

Denying you that yearn

You deemed a right.

And after your proclamation of "right!

(MY JOB; MY GIRLFRIEND; YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO)"

After your begging, despite a timid,

"sorry no..sorry I'm tired no...no no. no."

Turned "yes, sure. I suppose"

And I faced the pillow on all fours and began to beg myself

Drift away. not here. that is my right

you said between (DRY AND RAW) thrust,

through the sweat; in a cloud of hot,

moist, living, real,

This is real, air "look at me."

It added a new loathing.

I have no right.

Of self, sexuality, body-

body

That makes will

Disposable to "need,"

A glow of stifled tears,

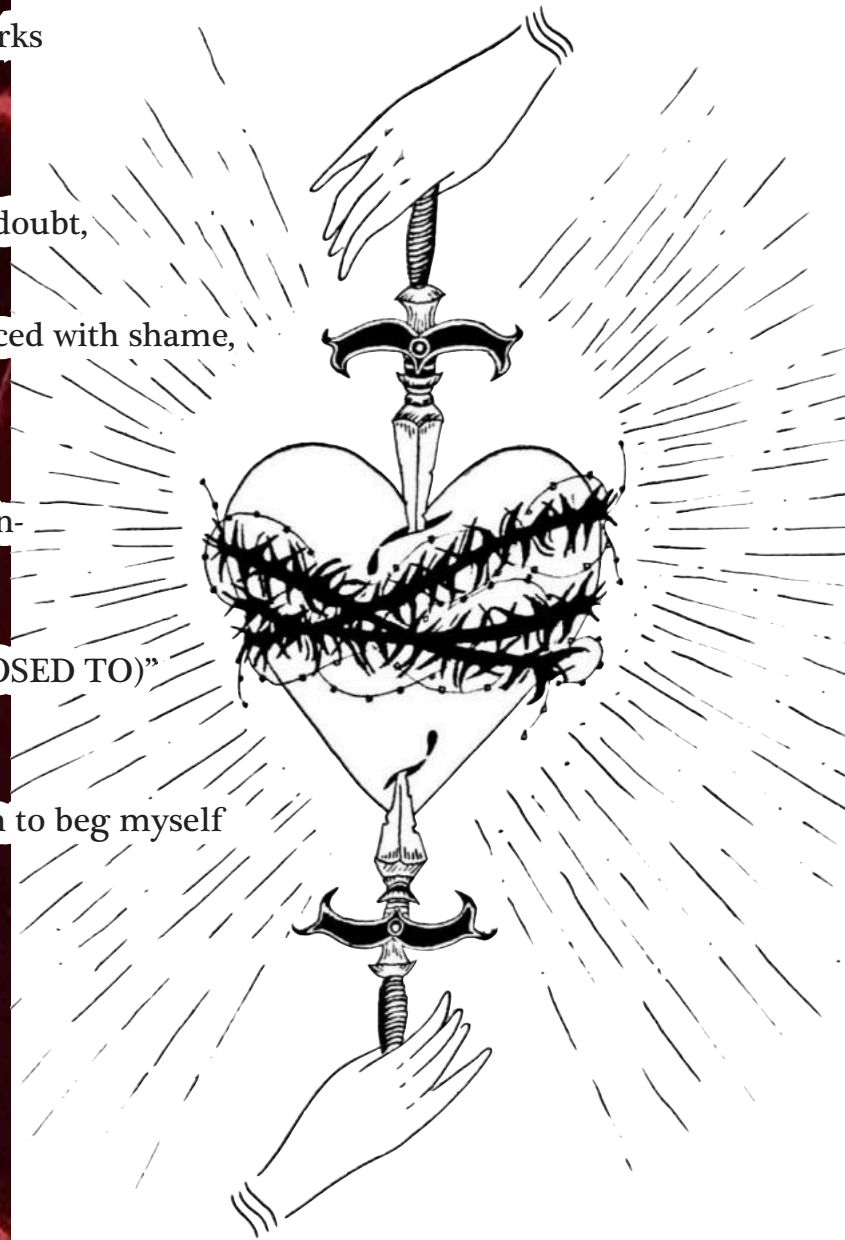
Marks slashed against a palm,

Begging to spread just a bit further down.

And still I am sorry for "making it happen."

I should've just said "no, no...no." I suppose-

No.



Art // Linda Zheng

## *Icarus— an ekphrastic*

*BY SAMANTHA BOUCHER*

from a mellow night sky, six newborn starbursts,  
merigold splatters appear. bright spots  
we point towards to know home, circle the body

revolving in reverie. i forgot to ask, do you know  
how a ray of sun cries?

me neither

but you can cry, beside my five a.m. bedroom window  
who sings a blue of the same shade,  
an ode to the sleepless

dawn in which we love one another as celestial ghosts. what i mean is,  
legs and arms and torso and head and feet and ribcage,  
forgive me. i am blessing

the uneven curves, the misplaced edges, the softness that resides in the  
crook  
of your chest, where beautiful is too small a word

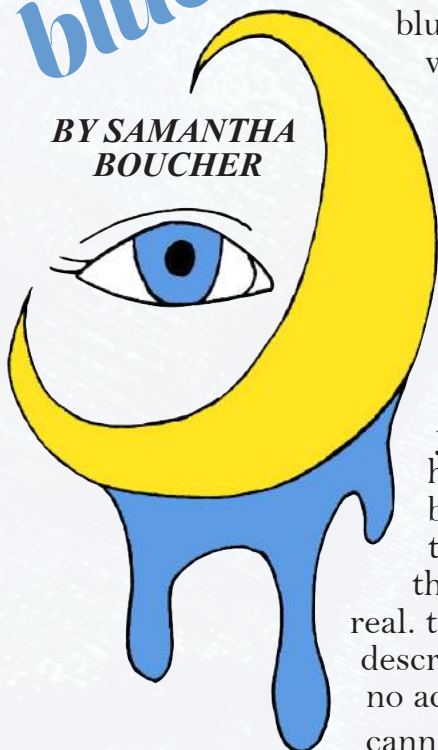
you are galaxies i dream to hold



*Art // Henri Matisse  
“La Chute d’Icare”  
(The Fall of Icarus)*

# blue

*BY SAMANTHA  
BOUCHER*



i want to write a poem explaining the exact shade of blue your eyes  
are when you look at me. i want to slice open a cluster of light,  
blue and reaching, touch the center where my ache begins. i'm  
worried if i describe your blue, the enigma, any scrap of  
anonymity will be gone forever. the blue i catch between  
my teeth by the ocean, the blue i see in my dreams when  
you are in your childhood home inexplicably sitting on the  
couch with your friend who is also an ox, the blue i find on  
sunday mornings underneath my fingernails and tangled  
in my hair like burdock from the quiet mesh of woods,  
the blue i taste when i am in bed curled up like a young  
crazed girl too upset over the boy who could never love  
her as much as she loved him, the blue folded into the way  
you press my body up against yours and hold me hold me  
hold me until the moon fades into dawn, the blue hanging in  
between one moment and the next when i almost tell you the  
truth, when you almost forgive yourself and also me, when  
the 'almosts' lose meaning and we do not hide from what is  
real. the blue i imagine a heart is, the blue i love. if i wrote a poem  
describing that blue, the world would need no more information.  
no adjectives or memories, nothing more. this blue, your blue,  
cannot be found anywhere else.

*Art // Cindy Wong*

BY SAMANTHA  
BOUCHER

## a lesson on my body: a place i wish i loved



Every day, I bleed. I have become a bombshell of blood and sudden panic. I am washing the dishes. I am eating pasta with red sauce. I am stumbling in the bathroom of a frat house. I am calling home. My hands are covered in crimson paint and I think of what it means to love. It is still snowing outside, and I am searching for excuses to be a child again. My knuckles are cracked and dry and older than I remember. My nose is unforgiving and bloody at least three times a day and I laugh every time. There is so much to say about this. The stained sheets, the guilt, the mess-- is too much and too often. I wish I could be a time traveler, a patchwork memory of who I was and who I will soon be. Because here, on the floor of a house I do not know or in the backyard of another night out, I am an alien to my body. How quickly have I created myself into a person who lets themselves bleed, but not cry? I want to abandon myself, to go sledding in wet boots and to wake early on snowy mornings. I think I know all there is to know and I have loved all there is to love, yet the blood is still here, relentless and with meaning. I am excluded from the snow that falls in frozen time and yet, and yet, I wonder, is this what it is to grow up? To be past the point of experiencing nature, to be a mere observer? My earth is just earth and my blood is just blood. I am sitting on floral sheets, watching myself fall apart. And I am thinking maybe this is all just a part of girlhood-blood, I mean.

BY SAMANTHA BOUCHER

OCEANIC

i must admit, i am not walking around  
i am not in nature, i am not noticing the way  
a squirrel makes its home under a park bench  
unaware to the croaks of a frog and oblivious  
to the holes in a leaf carved out by a bug.  
in fact, i am sitting down, with my legs crossed  
on a mattress of a bed that isn't mine, writing poems.  
the sheets are a dark teal, a color you wouldn't think is beautiful  
but reminds me of something growing, somewhere deep  
and unseeable. he tells me everything is nature,  
flopping down beside me like a big, unruly fish  
i watch his back move up and down  
in steady motions, i conclude  
he must be right. because if this moment,  
the smell of rain - the gentle sound of breath - the hardwood floors  
is not nature, then i am not sure if anything is

Art // Cindy Wong



Photography // *Helena Ojarovsky*



# seedling

BY NIKITA NARSINGH

there is evolvment now  
in my atoms

growth

i can taste the sunlight that comes with it  
on my tongue

i sprout  
and fast now  
everything is changing  
every fiber in me  
shifts like the tectonic plates do

i sprout  
like a flower,  
i reach towards the sun  
(which is, unsurprisingly, synonymous to you.)



Art // Jess Lamazor,  
"Timeless Room," oil on wood

# CHERRIES

BY BRIANNA ECHSTEIN

My life is like  
a bowl of cherries;  
do not forget to  
spit out the pits.  
I kiss my issues  
with stained  
lips.



# P.S. I Love me

BY CLARISSA AGATE

Falling in love is a strange work of art  
But more importantly,  
falling in love with yourself is where you should start  
You have fought the battles over and over with your heart  
You pull out the strings  
And overlook the things  
that might cause you scars  
But don't overlook the person you truly are  
You are strong, resilient, and beautiful in every way  
With each stroke of your hands,  
You have the power to take all your pain away  
You can reach for the stars and achieve all your dreams  
All you have to do is believe;  
Believe that you are more than what has been preconceived  
Believe that you are amazing in spite of everything;  
When you feel like you might shudder  
Look out from under the covers  
Because only you have the power  
to be something you've always wanted to be



## ROAD<sup>TRIP</sup>

BY SOPHIA PELLEGRINI

The back seat has become a memorial  
Of old memories, slowly weighing me down:  
The pine air freshener swings on the rearview mirror,  
Reminding me of home. I ask if we're there yet.  
Grandma replies, "It depends. We're somewhere right now."  
Grandpa's three-hour Elvis CD croons and crescendos  
Throughout the truck, leaving the fields of wheat and flowers  
Rhythmically swaying in our wake. The receipt from the greasy,  
No-name diner reminds me of the candy-colored waitress  
Who pinched my cheek. "Want some pop for the road?"  
The creased brochure of confederate and civil rights statues  
Who face-off from across state lines-  
Talionis- prompts silent reflection. My rolled-up  
"Shrimp House" t-shirt smells of the savory Southern  
Cuisine spices. My mouth still waters, and my tongue  
Is still warm. The dogeared atlas tucked into the backseat  
Pocket elicits images of our silver pickup truck catching the sun  
As the odometer clicks, as the memorial becomes my home.  
Time slows as the highways stretch between  
Here and there. Our journey feels as if it is timeless,  
Infinite. And as my eyes scan the time-hewn landscape,  
I feel timeless, infinite, boundless.

Art // Linda Zheng

i let charlotte find her way  
some time ago  
and now she's spun her hay  
gold in search of a beau

today through her web i walked  
pillaging her labors  
we'd never talked  
though we'd become neighbors

i looked around to apologize  
but she'd taken a crawl  
around the corner, all eight eyes  
blinked back a bawl

she scurried and dropped a rope  
the corners of her fangs sullen and meek  
in that moment i had some hope  
we'd finally get to speak

charlotte cried and cried  
all eight eyes rained down her legs  
and with no place to hide,  
"you've saved me twice," she said

she saw confusion press my brow,  
so she reached out an arm  
no acting did my face allow  
i'd never think she meant harm

charlotte knew this and knew this well  
for she'd seen me reminisce  
desperately, pray tell  
dying yearning begging for a kiss

on the toilet i'd sat that first day  
when i saw her on the grout  
between cracked tiles we couldn't pay  
to have taken out

down the drain was not her place  
so i looked away and flushed  
when all eight eyes graced my face  
little did i know she'd very well blushed

# Charlotte

BY PLAMENA DIULGEROVA

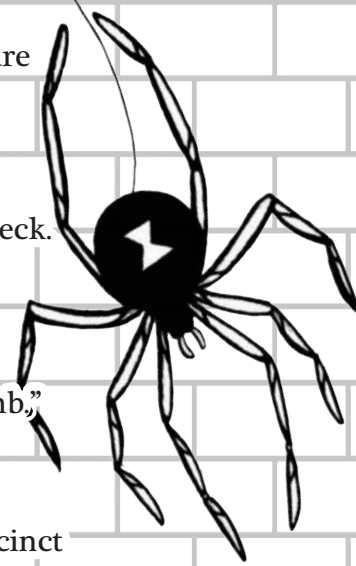
so charlotte cried and cried  
finger tip to fur  
touching barely, noncontrived  
we both knew intimacy was a lure

"i tried to spin enough  
to place around my neck  
but my plan has been so tough  
because i thought you'd be a wreck.

now we can go together  
down the drain for a swim  
i've never been in wet weather,  
so we can hold on limb with limb."

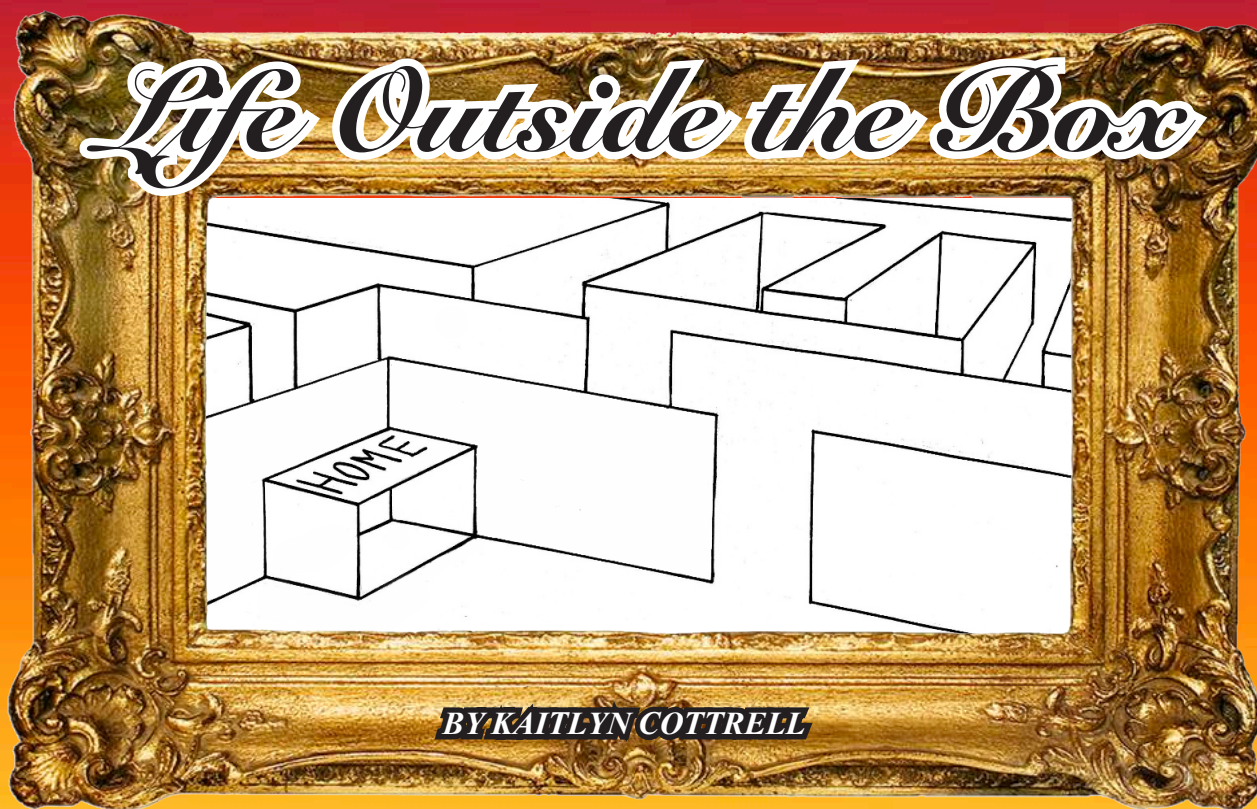
charlotte blushed and blinked  
and then she bit down  
she'd made our romance so succinct  
we'd never even gone to town

i'd cried and cried, yes i had,  
then in her sweet voice i heard  
"you saved me twice so don't be mad,  
our salvation is a third."



Art // Linda Zheng





BY KAITLYN COTTRELL

Your whole life you've been told to think outside the box, but to never color outside the lines. You didn't expect that the first time you step out of the box, you see the lines everywhere. Up, down, they're there even after you close your eyes. So you retreat. Even though the darkness surrounds you, suffocating you, making you feel like you'll never see again, it's familiar. The next time you leave the box, you're determined to stay out. Explore.

This time, you glance back and take one last look at the place that has housed your thoughts for the majority of your life. It's more intricate than you expected. The box has always been referred to as if it were the very thing keeping you within simplicity. But it has a beauty to it. Safety, you think. It's big, too. Comfortable. Not like out here. The lines rise ten, twenty feet over your head, forming a maze that seems to have its center at the box you spent so long thinking your way out of. Hundreds of times, you take different turns through

that maze. No matter what, you're left staring back at the box. Without fail. Reluctantly, you trudge back to its safety. Every few days, or months—you're not sure—you'll take a risk and go for a thought outside the box, but no matter the path you take, you end up where you started.

Years of the same routine may have passed by until, by chance, one day you lean against one of the walls of the maze to rest, and find yourself falling through. On the other side, you see boxes in every direction, seemingly infinite; somehow totally different from and exactly the same as your own. When you try to gaze back at the place where your thoughts once resided, you see it enveloped in loops and whirls of color in no particular pattern. There are only a few other boxes in the distance that aren't still in black and white, but you know that you cannot help those who are living without freedom just yet. *They must learn to color outside the lines.*

Art // Cindy Wong

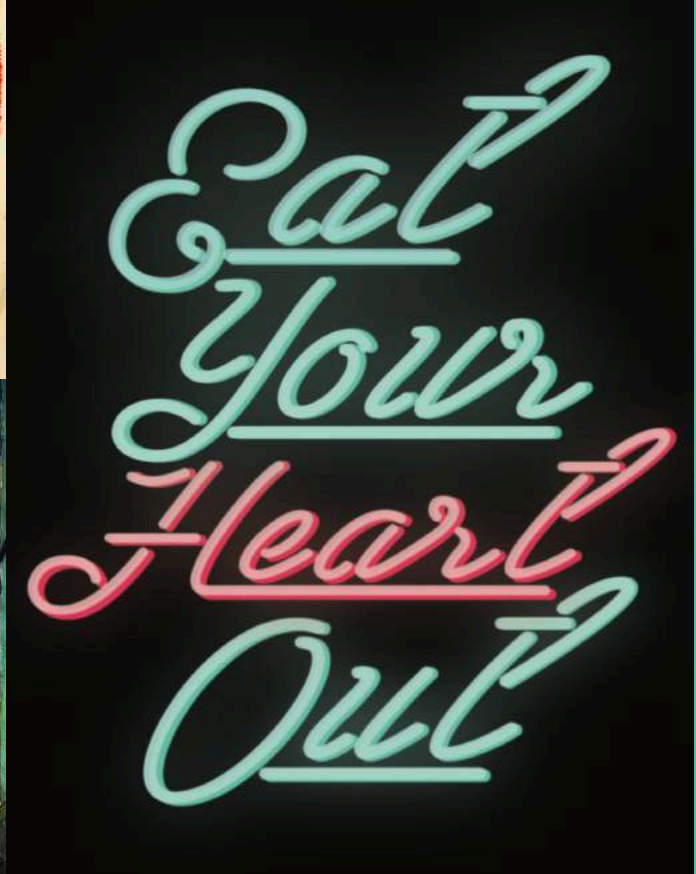


# TOGETHER, WE WILL RISE

BY KIKELOMO SANNI

Martin Luther King Jr.'s grave was the first I'd ever seen  
His blood in the American soil  
But hopefully not his dreams  
Make America great again?  
I don't understand, what do you mean?  
When hands were physically in chains  
Or when the mindset couldn't stand change  
Are your plans working, coming true?  
Families torn and dead bodies on the floor --  
One thing for sure is your "power" doesn't work  
Because hope is our undying flame.  
The voice of everyone will not be shied away.  
We will be one, united family.  
Mr. King, we will rise above everything.  
Our generation will use our voice until love is finally restored  
Together and forever more.

Art // Linda Zheng



Art // **Top Left:** Safura Sein // **Top Right:** Arielle Hanoch  
**Middle & Bottom Left:** Jess Lamazor // **Bottom Right:** Bella Seastrand

# *How to Survive Your 5th Year of College*

BY HANNAH BURKE

Your head pounds as the dense beats of electronic music vibrate through some familiar basement. This certainly isn't your first rodeo, but with each new party you recognize the people there less and less. Everyone seems... younger.

## *You're still here?*

The quasi-question you've been asked all night. Yes, you're still here. You've been in a four-year college for more than four years, and you still haven't graduated.

Feeling weird, lost, or stressed? Here are some tips to help you get through it. And to help you graduate, damnit.

## *Don't beat yourself up about it*

Maybe your major's department is small and your university doesn't offer enough classes. Maybe you were a transfer student and your previous credits weren't accepted. Maybe you needed to focus on your mental health. Maybe you just needed more time.

People take "longer" to graduate for a multitude of reasons. A study from the National Center for Education Statistics found that only 41% of first-time full-time college students earn a bachelor's degree in four years.

Fifth-year student Andres Gomez took a while to decide what to study, eventually declaring a double major in cinema and political science.

"We all kind of have different reasons for why we're staying late," he said.

For Brenda Darcy, a fifth-year double major in



theater and English, joking about it has helped her challenge the misconception that there is shame in taking longer to graduate.

"I feel like making fun of myself makes it easier to talk about it and deal with it," she said.

## *Grow comfortable with the uncertainty of the future*

Graduating college doesn't guarantee graduate school, a well-paying job, or a future. A lot of the time, it's a transition period to figure out what you want to do with your life.

"I have a lot of friends who graduated, don't have a job, live at home, and feel miserable," Darcy said. "But I get to use this extra half year to learn and to feel more prepared to go out into the real world."

Caoily Andrews, a fifth-year student majoring in anthropology and history, speaks to the misery that her postgraduate friends are feeling.

"My friends all kind of hate their lives," she said.

So, luckily, you have a bit of time before you can start hating your life, too -- or with some planning, maybe you can even prevent it altogether.

### *Keep yourself busy*

Though the finish line is near, it's no excuse to slack off on schoolwork.

"This is like, the best semester I've ever had, schoolwise," Andrews said. "It's like extra time, so you might as well take classes you're interested in and want to learn about."

That being said, you might even feel like you have a leg up in class, since you've grown familiar with how college classes work.

"I almost feel superior in 300-level classes," Darcy said. "Not like I'm better than anyone, but I feel almost more confident in how to do school."

### *Enjoy the time you have left*

As for the parties, the never-ending question will be why you're still here. There are endless reasons for staying in school, and there's no shame in acknowledging that you're working on completing your degree.

### *But if shame is what you're feeling, try connecting with other fifth-years*

Luckily, you're going through the exact same thing.

"Try hard to move out of your comfort zone in terms of making friends," Gomez said. Hard as it may be, "try not to be jaded."

This opportunity gives you a reason to hang out with people you may have not known before. Additionally, you may even find a support system in like-minded individuals.

And keep this in mind: you're almost done. For many students, college is the hardest thing they've ever done. There's no need to make it harder.

"Don't feel bad about it, feel lucky," Darcy said. "Work your ass off -- and enjoy this cushion time."



Art // Amber Cherichetti

Background Art // Bella Seastrand

# POWER ANT HEMS PLAYLIST

In case you forgot how much of a bad bitch you are, this playlist is here to remind you.

BY RACHEL SLOTNICK

## 1. *you should see me in a crown* // Billie Eilish

The understated simplicity of the melody backed with ample blown-out bass and sound effects creates a soundscape only Billie Eilish can pull off. "I'm ok, I'm not your baby, if you think I'm pretty... you should see me in a crown." She's a girl who knows that she deserves to be treated like royalty.



## 2. *Cocky Af* // Megan Thee Stallion

2019 is the year of Megan Thee Stallion. She knows who she is and she rightfully owns all of her positive qualities. She knows she is admired and when she performs, crowds go crazy. She's getting her degree, and her flow is insane!

## 3. *S&M* // Rihanna

Does this song ever get old? Honestly? "Sticks andstones may break my bones, but chains and whips EXCITE ME." I just know Rihanna is a dominatrix. I had lunch with her in 3rd grade and she is so powerful.



## 4. *I Don't Give a Fuck* // Boss

I first heard this song at the end of an episode of *Orange is the New Black*. If you like old school rap or you just don't give a fuck, this is the song for you. Blast it from the rooftops and flip off the haters.

5. S.L.U.T. // Bea Miller

"Sweet little unforgettable thing." This pop anthem fucks. It is all about owning your identity and living shamelessly, because at the end of the day, no one's judgements matter.



6. Born This Way // Lady Gaga

Of course I had to include the holy grail of self-acceptance and self-love anthems on here. Every time I hear this song, I wanna dance and cry because of how happy and empowered it makes me feel.

7. Double Dare Ya // Bikini Kill

This fast-paced punk song is a big fuck you to the patriarchy. You can feel the raw energy and passion. I feel as though I can reclaim some of my power whenever I hear this.



8. Mother's Daughter // Miley Cyrus

Going off a similar vibe from the aforementioned song, Mother's Daughter is the latest Miley song that awakened something inside of me. Channel your baddest bitch energy and don't take shit from anyone!



9. I Am a God (feat. God) // Kanye West

Not to stray from the (un)intentional women's empowerment vibe I've got going on, but come on, how could I not put Kanye on this playlist? This song is featuring God for God's sake! (See what I did there?)



10. Freakum Dress // Beyoncé

Is it a cop-out to end this thing with Queen Bey? I don't even care. This song is based around the tri-tone, AKA the devil's interval, which is rarely used in music because of the dissonance. But does Beyoncé care? No. Of course not. She's fed up and she knows just how to tease her man when he isn't acting right.

