

The Student Insurgent: Despair & Hope Issue (Winter 2023)

Various Authors



2023Matt Phonga

Contents

Letter from the Collective	3
Native American Student Union Budget Hearing	5
Solidarity Forever: The First Step Towards Unionization	6
The Subtleties of American Propaganda	7
Works Cited	9
Introduction to Anarcho-Nihilism	9
A Delicate Rose...	11
Beautiful, Horrible Things	11
The Dark Gift of Day Vampires	12
Despair, Hope, and MoTHERHOOD in Colombian Cinema	13
Weaving Hope: Resistance and Reexistence in Indigenous Colombia	15
Anarchist Leaks the TSA No Fly List	18
Mother Knows Best	18
My Kingdom For A Horse	21
Solidarity with Stop Cop City	23
An Offering	23
Diasporic Bodies	25
Taking Up New Tactics: I grow tired, but dare not fall asleep	27
Contact us	29

Letter from the Collective

chOccyraln: Alongside contributing to summerisle's piece Introduction to Anarcho-Nihilism, I also took it upon myself to write the piece Anarchist Leaks the TSA No Fly List because it exposes the racism inherent to the security theater institution in the form of data visualization. This sort of approach to understanding institutional racism has previously been used by W.E.B. DuBois for the 1900 Paris Exposition, and I hope my article will be insightful. However, since I was unable to finish the data analysis in-time, the article will primarily go over the technical details until it is properly finished, where the web version will be updated.

J. Ellis: The journey I've been on with The Student Insurgent is the embodiment of hope and despair, an ebb and flow of constant contradiction. Hope and despair captures a revolutionary dialectic, from the lowest of lows and woes to the highest of highs. I've seen this publication at its worst, and I've also seen some of its best times. As my last issue as an editor, it was important to me that we tell the story we've been living through in recent years. The climate for political organizing is tougher than ever, but also more necessary than ever. I don't know what will happen to the Insurgent after I'm gone, and that prospect fills me with both dread and faith. Regardless, I've exhausted myself of this venture; I grow tired but dare not fall asleep. Thank you for giving us your attention span <3

Summerisle: Despair is a paralyzing emotion. When engaging in any form of action its important to bring your anger with you, but it's just as important to bring joy — joy at working with your comrades, joy at helping others, joy for the world you're working for. Joy and anger are animating forces that thaw the ice of despair.ir

S.V: As the radical feminist saying goes, the personal is political, and in interweaving personal stories with political narratives, I have sought to bring this principle to life in my writing for The Student Insurgent. In this issue, I pair my thinking around issues of Indigenous autonomy in Colombia, of the despair inflicted by colonialism and the hope that has emerged from cultural and territorial resistance and reexistence, with the lows and highs of my own life story. As far away from Eugene as my writings are set, I hope that readers here can take from them lessons of hope and resilience applicable to the personal and political struggles they are engaged in.

Dorian Blue: During Winter Term, I always feel a certain degree of melancholy. The rain pounds down, the clouds crowd me in. Though, it is also a time of renewal, where I can spend my hours inside and ponder. Recently, I've continued my meditations on queerness and vampires, with my piece about AMC's Interview With the Vampire and the way it navigates the despair, yet freedom, offered by an eternal life. The frustrating politics of campus are on my mind as well, with the recent situation with ASUO cutting NASU's budget. Much healing is needed, especially as the world around us continues to fall into a state of distressing violence.

Brigham B.H: This is my first term with The Student Insurgent, and it's been filled with nothing but hope for me as a writer. Looking at our behavior as a society,

particularly as young people, in response to government action within news and social media is crucial to the way we read the news. My piece is centered on not-so-free press, and the perspective people must have moving forward to filter through sprawling propaganda as it becomes a daily occurrence. As much as some media outlets attempt to push us to a place of despair and desperation, a collective sense of hope must be established as a response to the oppression of our right to consume information.

River: the despair comes easy, easy like the leaves fall like the police kill like it was born within or maybe we were just born into it. and the hope, in its intriguing colors, taunts, feels or looks out of reach most hours of most days like meeting the beach before sunset, in winter, when the days are too short and we wrestle with worth, with forgiveness. but then, the beach, beyond the fog; in the sun, like a dark shell was shed and even if only briefly, there's so much love and meaning in this eternal, fleeting, moment. and i think, drunkenly hopeful, everything that felt never worth it, was all so we could be right here and hold feelings as deep as i imagine the ocean to sink into earth.

haze: i was very excited when we decided that the theme for this issue would be despair and hope—i had a really great idea for a written piece, and i couldn't wait to see what everyone had to contribute and piece this zine together. then, the depression hit, harder than it has in a long time. for three weeks i struggled to even get out of bed, and of course i never got around to writing my submission. and i wasn't alone—the state of the world right now is not conducive to good mental health. but we live in a beautiful world. an evening two weeks ago, i left my house just after sunset, feeling miserable, and i saw a crocus—my first this spring. that single flower had a profound impact on me, and i ended up getting up the next morning and going to class. every year after the coldest, darkest winter, these flowers come back, heralding the return of the sun, of the spring, of hope. and so must we.

Rosie/Misandry: It sounds corny but it's true that life cannot be beautiful if it isn't also filled with despair. Despair is a difficult but necessary part of the human experience. We cannot have hope without despair, we cannot have happiness without despair, we cannot exist without despair. Like a rainbow after the storm, the joy that comes after the hardships is what makes humanity so complexly beautiful.

Joe Hill: The critical essence of revolutionary politics is the act of struggle against what seems like impossible odds. Against the ever-more engorged forces of capital, the task of reclaiming our humanity seems to become ever dimmed. However, do not let go of hope! Behind us stand a hundred generations who have fought for our emancipation. It is their legacy which we inherit, and it is their soul which still burns brightly in our movement. What was their cause is now our own: liberation. Let us keep fighting the good fight, and regain the dignity we all deserve!

Thank you for tagging along for all the highs and lows. Please read this issue and let us know what you think, our contact info is on the back. We look forward to hearing your praise and reading your hate mail.

Native American Student Union Budget Hearing

By: Dorian Blue & River

On January 17th, the ASUO meeting for NASU's budget was packed to the gills. The tension was palpable; more and more people squeezed in and the ASUO committee members sat aligned at their table and firmly asked no one in the room to stand behind them, even as space dwindled. As the meeting convened, the NASU members sat across from the ASUO budget leadership. The ASUO Chair outlined that the meeting was closed to public comment and any filming.

During COVID, like many groups on campus, NASU dealt with disruption and rocky transitions in leadership. This resulted in them missing a budget deadline in the spring and NASU explained that they lacked the support they needed for budget guidance. Megan Van Pelt, a member of NASU who spoke, described the actions of ASUO as spitting in their elders' faces. NASU is an essential campus resource to indigenous students at UO and for so-called Oregon's indigenous communities in general. "We need the budget for the generations ahead of us."

Indigenous students are underrepresented at UO, with recent demographics counts putting them at 0.6% of the student body. Depriving an already marginalized circle of students of resources they need over a simple bureaucratic deadline is shameful. Two of the many issues NASU faces with a lowered budget is funding for the Indigenous Women's Wellness program as well as the Mother's Day Powwow, which is the longest running student-led powwow in Oregon. It is incredibly arrogant that UO uses NASU and the events at Many Nations Longhouse to market and elevate the university, but continually disrespects the needs and survival of indigenous students.

After the tumultuous meeting, steeped in the typical bureaucratic jargon with intermittent reprieve from rousing speeches from NASU members, ASUO announced that they would not raise NASU's budget for this year. While explaining this decision, several trembling ASUO members repeated that the budget verdict had ultimately been made by their predecessors. It's a fair point to bring up once, but not an excuse. They also claimed that if they gave NASU their full budget over other organizations in a similar budget situation as them, it would be biased. However, ASUO agreed to fund the Mother's Day Powwow in whole (one of the largest and most significant events put on by NASU yearly) with the caveat that NASU drop all other line items. They also recommended NASU go to the ASUO surplus fund, which still has a large sum of money, due to the lack of in-person events held during COVID.

It is inspiring to see students mobilize and take up space in response to the undermining of NASU needs but it is unlikely that this will be the last time the wellbeing of minority students are disregarded by this extremely wealthy institution. We wish NASU luck in continuing to endure the settler-colonial ideologies of this university (and beyond) that refuses to relinquish dominance and funding, and much healing in their upcoming events.

Solidarity Forever: The First Step Towards Unionization

By: Joe Hill

Photo courtesy of: @uostudentworkers on Instagram

On Saturday January 21st, a pivotal event occurred at the University of Oregon. The UO Student Workers, a movement dedicated towards uniting the many student workers of this university, called their first “mass student worker meeting” (as described on the promotional poster). At this meeting, student workers gathered together to voice their grievances and demand that they be redressed. In light of repeated failures on the part of University Housing, the meeting concluded the only path forward was to form a wall-to-wall organization which is composed of the whole body of student workers. From students working in the various dining halls to students serving as RAs in the dorms, a union can be made.

This is precisely the sort of union that student workers need to ensure that their needs are met. Moreover, it is what all workers need to assert themselves, to receive more than mere charity from their bosses. We do not need charity, we need prosperity! This student workers union will ensure that we receive exactly what we are justly owed. We should not have to worry if our jobs can cover our tuition, or if we will be forced to choose between paying for food, for heat, or for rent. To be part of a union is to assert that we choose all of these things, that we deserve to choose all of these things! It is our right as workers, no matter our age, to be justly compensated for our labor and to be treated well while we give our labor. No, it is our right as humans to deserve these things! With the formation of the UO Student Workers Union we will have the means to realize these rights and gain a little more control over our lives.

However, the struggle is not over yet. It has hardly even begun. Those who run University Housing, who see us and treat us only as machines, will fight tooth and nail for every scrap of a concession we pry from their fingers. Just as it is in our eternal interest to assert our humanity, it is in their interest to condemn us to inhumanity. In their perfect world, we would remain in the bottom of the boat, chained to the oars and forever propelling forward their grotesque and duplicitous yacht of profits. They know that they are only kept moving by the labor of us below, and they are terrified of what will happen when we realize that truth and set down the tools of our oppression.

That is why they so aggressively suppress our attempts to unionize. That is why they take down our posters, intimidate our organizers, and try to keep us silent. They do it not because they are powerful, but because they are weak. They are weak without us at the oars, without our tireless labor behind their desks and in their kitchens. The moment that we stop our work is the moment that the floor gives way beneath their feet. Our emancipation begins where their mastery ends.

The fight for a union at the University of Oregon can only be won through the actions of the workers themselves. Should more than half of us simply sign a union

card, that's the ball game right then and there. The existence of a union is only the first step towards the realization of our rights as student workers, but it is a critical one. With a union, we will have the legitimate platform we need to bargain with our bosses on equal terms. Instead of being forced to face down the overwhelming might of University Housing as isolated individuals, we can act as a unified bloc to assert that which is our right.

To my fellow student workers: I implore you, if you have not signed a union card, please do so. If it is within your ability, assist your fellow workers in organizing and encouraging others to sign. We are so close to grasping this next rung on the ladder towards our collective liberation, we need only stretch those few more inches. I cannot personally prophesize what our future holds, but I can guarantee that that future will be significantly brighter if we stand together rather than apart.

May we all live long and prosper. Solidarity Forever!

The Subtleties of American Propaganda

By: Brigham B.H

Social media, news media, and advertisements comprise many of the images we see daily, but many people simply accept this virtual reality instead of questioning its existence. Modern man has been moved to look through windows into many detached experiences through the mediums of social media and news that no other generation has been subjected to. The structure of this intake of information has led to a new way of consuming and producing news. Scrolling through Twitter, Facebook or TikTok for fifteen minutes could present you with pictures from a NASA expedition to a porn ad, a cute puppy video to one about the climate crisis, or an old family photo to a debate over gun control between your cousin and uncle.

Our indifference in disregarding each post for the next has distorted the perception of which stories we inherently value over others. These platforms have developed a massive audience, unprecedented throughout the course of human history, and our government has taken advantage of this. The CIA has admitted that it has influence in a range of sources within the sphere of news media, and recent reforms of the National Defense Authorization Act have made it legal to produce domestic propaganda for US citizens' consumption (Adl-Tabatabai & Kelley). The collective use of social media has been weaponized against its users to promote mass-consumerism and retain the status quo. Nationalist propaganda has been one of, if not the most vital weapon at the disposal of the American government, and social media is their atomic bomb.

Throughout the 20th Century journalists dominated the news industry and were relied upon for deciphering the worth of each story. They condensed the massive amounts of information in their possession into the most worthwhile for their readers and viewers. There was much less freedom in the hands of the public regarding what information they were exposed to in terms of access. Today, the average person can open their

smartphone and find articles about seemingly any topic of their choosing, and social media algorithms decide which stories are worth showing to the individual. On the surface this seems like a massive improvement in reporting and news coverage, but data analysts, psychologists, and engineers are aiming to simply keep you engaged with their platform. They have developed reward systems that affect our brain chemistry in a way that keeps us coming back for more. The actions we take and thoughts we express online seem to do more than tangible work or activism does, which disillusion us into deriving more self-worth and a larger sense of commitment to our virtual lives.

This phenomena of escapism— accepting one’s dismal real-life existence for a favorable online presence— is an incredibly manipulative disbursement of a complacent, consumerist attitude. We are pushed to buy faddish product after faddish product as a solution to the problems we are told we have by businesses that simply care about making a profit. We are told to model our lives off successful people who cater their lives to us as an unattainable playlist of their best moments. The media-induced romanticism we attribute to our lives is the largest tool of our suppressive government. The spectacle-oriented society that has come to fruition is unsustainable, but more importantly, it’s incredibly dangerous.

News outlets have an ethical commitment to providing accurate stories without misleading the public, but they are also a business. As more sources have arisen since the early 2000s, especially on TV and the internet, these companies have had to fight to retain and grow their audiences. Competing for viewers creates a conflict of interest between transparent coverage of a story and theatrical portrayals of the same story. There is a daily battle for the biggest headline which is disregarded the following day by its replacement. This way of taking in knowledge on social media does not allow for critical thinking or promote reading comprehension, but rather looks to deliver a surplus of information as efficiently as possible, almost like a fast-food restaurant for journalism. We all know that fast-food is lacking in its substance, but convenience trumps the content, so we choose to be ignorant for the sake of time. This ignorance slowly develops into a habit of no longer thinking about the prior point. The same situation has transpired with the consumption of information, as people actively choose to get as much information as they can without lingering on any single story for too long. Our willingness to conform to this way of life is suppressing our ability to think freely. It is numbing our awareness to the true phenomena occurring around us and is an active concession of our free-will.

The comment systems attached to these posts further limit free thought and create a herd mentality of non-critical thinking. Groups of isolated individuals stuck in the echo-chamber of social media algorithms and comment sections have been trapped in dangerous ideologies from the likes of Ben Shapiro, Stephen Crowder, and Jordan Peterson, among others. Similarly, viewers of FOX News, CNN, and other mainstream news channels have been trapped in their own uncritical ways of thought, as their ideas are never under scrutiny, and the ideas they possess are not their own. Being isolated in thought is limiting for the individual as well as a collective society.

The increased integration of identity politics over the last eight years or so has also damaged collective dialogue. People have begun attributing their identity to their ideology, and as a result, emotionally charged conversation take up the most airtime, while rational debate has taken a backseat role in political commentary. We are being actively divided into voting demographics and statistics for politicians to increase their power at the hands of addictive applications. We are lulled into a false sense of security through constant affirmation and a relinquishment of free-thought. It's comforting to simply watch someone else think about and analyze the issues you find important, but it resembles a dictatorial way of calling people to act and turns the audience into mindless consumers of rhetoric.

The world has shrunk to fit in our pockets, and the performances we put on feel like we're contributing to something, when in reality we're falling into the hands of the oppressive individuals and institutions that seek our return to the seemingly important digital world. It's critical that we increase our awareness of the blatant mass manipulation occurring everyday in the palm of our hands. Social media can be used as a tool towards progress, and the potential for good is just as large as the potential for bad. We need to use our virtual canvases to educate, socialize, and promote dialogue with others rather than submitting ourselves to the wants and needs of social media developers and politicians.

Works Cited

Adl-Tabatabai, Sean. "CIA Admit They Have Infiltrated Every Mainstream Media Outlet in America." News Punch, 3 May 2021, <https://newspunch.com/cia-infiltrated-mainstream-media/>.

Kelley, Michael B. "The NDAA Legalizes the Use of Propaganda on the US Public." Business Insider, Business Insider, 21 May 2012, <https://www.businessinsider.com/ndaa-legalizes-propaganda-2012-5>.

Introduction to Anarcho-Nihilism

By: summerisle & chOccyrain

What is Anarcho-Nihilism?

Both anarchism and nihilism are chronically misunderstood words, so it only makes sense that the term would draw lots of confusion. Nihilism is often assumed to just be misanthropic and/or 'doomer'. If one wants to get a good understanding of anarcho-nihilism, they will need to put these assumptions to rest.

Is Nihilism Just Another Word for Doomerism?

No — at least, it doesn't have to be. "Doomerism," as it's called here, is the idea that everything and the world is fucked. There's nothing we can do, and we just gotta ride

it out, or lie down and die. While you can see nihilism like this it's a much broader umbrella term. Nihilism, very simply put, is the belief/ philosophy that there is no inherent meaning to anything, no deeper direction or layer — nihil, nothing. Despair, and therefore doomerism, is the most common response to the shittiness of the world, but it's by no means the only response. In fact, nihilism in the context of anarcho-nihilism flips that on its head.

How Does Anarcho-Nihilism Flip It On Its Head?

Anarcho-nihilism finds joy in having no inherent strictures binding reality. It sees things such as time and society, along with race and gender, to be arbitrary and artificial. It rejects the dichotomy of despair and hope entirely, not being paralyzed by the former and disregarding the latter to inscribe its own arbitrary meaning of joy in the face of capitalist, colonialist horror.

Is Anarcho-Nihilism Reformist?

As a post-left ideology, there are some major departures from some of the fundamentals of traditional left-wing viewpoints. One which is of particular contention is the question of 'reform or revolution?' or as we shall see, an alternative to both of those strategies entirely. As Serafinski writes in *Blessed is the Flame*, "After two centuries of failed revolutions, nihilism has perhaps become even more disinterested in conventional socialist programs and radical milieus." While this may seem at-first like a reformist argument (that revolution is unrealistic/leads to tyranny, so we should just reform the system), it is not. Rather, anarcho-nihilists argue for a rejection of any sort of interaction with order, whether it is revolutionary or reformist beyond hostility. This manifests as insurrection, which is distinct from revolution in that it does not seek to establish a new order, but is entirely set towards the sabotage and destruction of it by any means necessary. It is truly nihilist because it is a strategy focused on negation: abolition rather than change. We have seen glimpses of that even in traditional left-ist circles, such as with the contemporary interest in prison abolitionism among even non-anarchists. Although, the sincerity of those claiming it is dubious at best without abolishing the state.

Anarcho-Nihilism in a Larger Context

Speaking personally for a second (me being Summerisles), anarcho-nihilism, is, in my view, a call to action or challenge to the left at large. While knowledge and theory is absolutely important, and something I don't want to de-emphasize, at the same time it feels like sometimes people can lose the forest for the trees. Caught in an endless circle jerk of debate, it can be easy to never get involved in action. Anarchonihilism is a call for action over discussion, to go out there and get shit done — to throw a wrench in the gears not for some greater overarching goal, but for the joy in destroying the gears. Rejecting the paralyzation of despair for the animation of joy, and turning that into a joyful defiance for defiance's sake — that's, in my view, the basis for anarcho-nihilism.

A Delicate Rose...

From the moment I entered this world, my parents knew I was a delicate rose.

I was the first flower they planted on their own, and although their parents didn't teach them to garden, they did their best to gently tend to the growing thickets of the rose bush they so thoughtfully sowed.

As I grew throughout the changing season, I did my best to weather the storms that constantly plundered through the garden.

They did everything they could to keep me growing safe and sheltered from the storms, but even a greenhouse can shatter with strong enough winds, and they knew that the most resilient flowers bloomed in the open air.

When I did begin to bloom, many stopped for a minute to marvel at the beautiful blossoms I had finally grown and maybe snip a few off for themselves. But when they got closer and felt my thorns, they decided a softer flower might be better to take home and keep around their loved ones.

And who could blame them? At least a lily doesn't cut you when you try to hold it close.

I spend my days staring longingly across the garden at the delphiniums, the daffodils, the daisies, and the bluebells all side by side, no thorns... no aphids... just happily coexisting.

Every once and a while someone decides to try and make it through the thorns so they can add the romantic rose to their bouquet...

A rose cut off from its bush dies quickly, but even if my blossoms wilt away in a vase, or are trampled into the dirt by a forlorned lover, I'm happy when someone chooses to cherish them even for a moment.

It's easy to assume that because a rose has thorns we aren't delicate, but even the prickliest plants will wither without water.

Sometimes during a long period of shade, a drought, or another storm, parts of my body begin to decay...but a well tended rose bush has the resilience to come out of dormancy and create new blossoms, even after the harshest winter.

The beauty of a flower is that we are ephemeral. we all must die eventually, but the seeds that we leave behind in the earth stay for generations and the garden will continue to grow.

I'm a delicate rose, but I'm learning to tend my own garden.

Beautiful, Horrible Things

By: Icarus

I don't think death is as beautiful as the poets say.
Yes, there's something pretty about dead roses

and rotten fruit, mice
skulls and bones, but I'm reminded of how easily
skulls can split, or
how easily bones could break, and in my heart,
there's another funeral
and it's raining. My head is rushing to meet the
frozen ground, but
I should be prepared for it. It's nearly taking me
three separate times,
and every time I look in the mirror I recognize
myself a little less.

What can I do? Is it worthwhile digging another
grave?

Do the birds stop singing? I cannot afford to put
my life on halt.

I fear if I stop, I will never be able to start again.

What can I do?

Nowhere is safe. The streets of America have
become killing fields.

You take a risk every time you step outside. You
take a risk. You pray.

They said they remember. They have better things
to forget.

You die. You die again.

I push back getting my license another year. I
think I've forgotten how to breathe.

The Dark Gift of Day Vampires

By: Dorian Blue

The Interview With The Vampire TV show, an adaption of the 1976 book of the same name, debuted its first season on Oct 2nd. It dives into the fraught relationship between the two leads, Lestat and Louis, and their time living together in the jazz age of New Orleans. It is twisted and devastatingly beautiful, bringing the gothic genre back in full swing. Louis sits in a penthouse in the modern day, recounting the events of the past in a poetic and melancholic narration to a cynical journalist named Daniel Molloy, who had originally interviewed him fifty years before. Louis tells Molloy to “let the tale seduce you—just as I was seduced.”

It is an adaptation in the truest sense. The original book was set in the 18th century Antebellum south, in which Louis was a plantation owner who gave his interview to

a reporter in the 1970s, which was then the present day. In the show, the story is set in the 1910s through 1940s. Louis is a Black Creole man who owns brothels. His life is full of posturing and lies as he exists as Black, Catholic, and deeply closeted in the Jim Crow-era South, which tortures him. He has to provide for his family, even as they know and disapprove of the illicit places his money comes from.

His life is a series of performances; in each aspect of it, he has to hide an important part of himself to fulfill the roles set for him. By becoming a vampire, he hopes to gain true control for the first time. “Take a Black man in America. Make him a vampire. Fuck with that vampire and see what comes of it.”

The changes made exemplify the heart and soul of the story. The characters are the most vivid versions of themselves that I’ve ever seen on screen.

Interview with the Vampire is regarded as both a gothic masterpiece and homoerotically charged. Any discerning queer person can tell from Louis’ spiteful recounting of Lestat that they were lovers, but for many straight readers, it went over their heads. All ambiguity is cleared in the second book, when Lestat, the narrator, describes how he fell “fatally in love with Louis” and in the modern day epilogue, they reunite and kiss.

The show masterfully takes the subtext of the first book and more overt themes of the later books, brewing it into direct text. Louis described Lestat by saying “he was my murderer, my mentor, my lover, and my maker.”

Instead of engaging in the tedious “will they won’t they” that a lot of media does with queer pairings, Interview delves deep into Lestat and Louis’ relationship; its shining moments and many shortcomings.

As Lestat professes his love to Louis on the altar of church, stroking his cheek & telling him, “I send my love to you and you send it back round to me,” violence and carnage surrounds them. They are hopelessly drawn together, but will also never truly understand each other.

As the episodes progress, the show becomes a tale that is more and more twisted. It draws the viewer in with its chilling depictions of intimate partner violence, taken to the extreme with vampire powers. That is followed up by love bombing, false promises, and a family dynamic so fucked up Freud would have a field day.

Interview With the Vampire is campy, viscerally horrifying, and stunningly beautiful, all with the backdrop of New Orleans. What more could you ask for?

Despair, Hope, and MoTHERHOOD in Colombian Cinema

By: s.v.

Colombia is a country of contradictions. For the average outsider, its reputation as a warzone riddled with internal conflict, narco-trafficking, and organized crime precedes it

and obscures this South American country's rich history and cultural vibrancy. Before I went for the first time in 2019, my family fretted over my safety and my friends joked that I might be kidnapped. Yet over the three visits and nine or so months that I have spent in Colombia during the past few years, I've grown comfortable with the rhythms of life there. The more familiar with the country I become, the more convinced I am that its violent reputation is harmful and undeserved.

But it pays not to grow complacent, nor to look at the world—wherever you are in it—through rose-tinted glasses. Colombia, like all countries, has its problems. Some of these are, it's true, glaring, as many Colombians will be the first to point out. Inequality, poverty, and corruption remain prevalent across the board. The Colombian state, the traditional elite, transnational corporations, and right-wing death squads keep going into business with each other, as they have throughout Colombia's 50-year internal conflict. For Indigenous and Afro-descendent Colombians, defending their communities' territorial rights against extractive development projects and illicit cultivation is a deadly gambit. Femicide and domestic abuse are endemic. Should you walk down the street in any Colombian city, you will witness the masses of homeless, displaced, disabled, and immigrant people that the Colombian government continues to fail. For millions of Colombians, life is far from easy. And yet, life goes on. When succumbing to despair is not an option—for one's got to make a living—hope finds a way. For all its problems, many Colombians look to the future with hope, especially following the election of Gustavo Petro, Colombia's first leftist president, in 2022.

Film has always been an important medium for addressing both social problems and the intimate details and relationships of human lives. Colombia, with its generational cycles of structural violence, has produced its fair share of filmmakers whose cinematic eye and narrative style are clearly influenced by their country's complicated history and present. Below are three recent Colombian films which skillfully depict the intersection of despair, hope, and motherhood in the country's complicated context.

Choco, 2012, directed by Jhonny Hendrix Hinestroza:

In Colombia's Blackest state and one of its poorest, where incessant rains make this stretch of Pacific coastal rainforest one of the wettest regions in the world, a young mother by the same name as the state—Choco—struggles to buy her daughter Candelaria a cake for her birthday. Choco's dire poverty is accentuated by grueling mornings spent in the open-pit mines where she and other Black women pan for gold that will make others rich in return for pennies a day. In the evening, she washes neighbors' clothes in the river to afford to send her children to school. And by night, she returns to a ramshackle home where she is greeted—and frequently accosted—by the father of her children, a layabout who spends his days drinking and gambling.

A sense of despair and precarity looms as the viewer witnesses Choco's efforts to support her children while suffering racism and abuse from which there seems no possibility of escape. All she wants is to buy her daughter a cake—until one night she snaps. This film serves as a disturbing meditation on the daily struggles faced by

Afro-Colombian women and on the general situation of the region, which is defined above all else by the state of poverty, exploitation, and institutionalized racism that reigns when people and places like Choco are abandoned to oblivion and decay under an endless torrent of tropical rain. But under all that decay, there smolders an ember of hope.

Una madre, 2022, directed by Diogenes Cuevas:

Following the death of his father, Alejandro leaves his family home in Medellín to “rescue” his mentally ill mother Dora from a convent in the Antioquian countryside where she has lived sequestered for the past twenty years. Not having seen his mother in all those years, Alejandro doesn’t know what to expect, but he’s sure that she isn’t as disturbed as his family has always told him. He arrives at the convent to witness with horror the physical abuse and condescension inflicted on the women institutionalized there and decides to break his mother out. But with the police now after him, along with discovering that his mother is indeed less able than he first assumed—she doesn’t even recognize him as her son—Alejandro is forced to make some hard choices as his hopes of a happy life reunited with his mother quickly unravel. This film asks what it means to love and to let go at the intersection of motherhood and mental illness. Alejandro discovers, rather too late, that what is best for both of them is not all that he wishes.

Amazona, 2016, directed by Clare Weiskopf:

Decades after her mother Val leaves her family for an isolated life deep in the Colombian Amazon, British-Colombian documentarian Clare Weiskopf, herself pregnant and soon to become a new mother, retraces her family history to determine just what went wrong between mother and daughter and to begin a journey of mutual healing. The viewer joins Clare in her exploration of her mother’s past, beginning with Val’s youth as an English hippie who ended up in Colombia in the 1960s for one love and left it for another. Treading a fine line between responsibility and freedom, the two women seek to come to terms with an understanding of both motherhood and personal identity. Along the way the viewer learns that it was tragedy—the death of her first daughter—that compelled Val to abandon her family, leaving an eleven-year-old Clare confused and hurt. With the passage of the years, some wounds close and others open, but the power of love and forgiveness—the need for hope to remedy despair—runs through this film’s narrative thrust.

Weaving Hope: Resistance and Reexistence in Indigenous Colombia

By: S.V.

Amid the undulating shaman's song and the gently falling rain pattering on the roof of the ceremonial roundhouse, I fell back on the blankets spread over the floor and wrapped myself in the folds of my poncho—blue, white, black, and red in the traditional Kamentsa pattern.

“Paint, yagecito, cure, heal, bless, protect, yagecito,” intoned the shaman as I closed my eyes. Soon came the visions, then the purging, then the shaman's gentle words as he leaned over me and cleansed my body of malevolent spirits. My habitual doubts and anxieties dissolved. Into that space of healing entered an unfamiliar feeling: a sense of place and belonging. I knew then that I had found a lifelong connection to the Sibundoy Valley and the relationships I had forged there. I felt myself engaged in a project truly meaningful, not only academically and professionally but also in deeply human terms. I had come to the Sibundoy Valley to live among the Kamentsa for the sake of my anthropology honors thesis, but I left it as more than just a detached researcher. Spending two months among the Kamentsa was a rite of passage that taught me much about the movement from despair to hope.

Like all Indigenous peoples in what we now call the Americas, the Kamentsa, one of two Indigenous groups to inhabit the Sibundoy Valley of southwest Colombia since time immemorial, were and continue to be victims of territorial, cultural, and sociopolitical dispossession. The Sibundoy Valley, a lush and verdant basin situated between the Andean highlands to the west and the Amazonian lowlands to the east, was first “opened” to colonization and settlement at the turn of the 20th century, when Capuchin missionaries built roads into the valley with Indigenous forced labor under the auspices of the Colombian state. The following seventy years of quasi-feudal Capuchin rule saw the Kamentsa stripped of much of their ancestral territory, language, and cultural identity. Even since the Capuchins left in 1970, the valley has undergone continued settlement and land theft at the hands of non-Indigenous colonizers from the rest of Colombia, while casual racism and discrimination is still an everyday occurrence today. And yet, despite the challenges—and, it bears repeating, like all Indigenous peoples of the Americas—through creative and strategic resistance and adaptation, the Kamentsa have survived the traumas of colonialism and guaranteed their continued existence as a vital, vibrant, and autonomous people. Much still, however, remains to be done.

The Kamentsa intuitively understand, based on a cultural knowledge system built up through the experience of millennia spent inhabiting their special corner of the ecologically superdiverse Andes-Amazon piedmont, that actions have consequences. For thousands of years they and other Indigenous populations inhabited the relational fabric of their territories respectfully and sustainably. Only in the past several centuries, especially since the advent of industrial capitalism and its all-consuming need for the natural abundance of their ecosystems—what industrialists and technocrats term “natural resources”—has nature's delicate equilibrium been thrown out of balance. The old Capuchin road along which missionaries and settlers once entered the Sibundoy Valley to strip the Kamentsa of their culture and dispossess them of their land has long since been overtaken by the jungle—nature always reclaims its own—but new roads, like

the one locally known as the “Trampoline of Death” due to its towering death toll, continue to allow settlers, developers, and agents of the state to infiltrate and develop settler-colonial and extractive projects on the territory that the Kamentsa are fighting to reclaim.

Kamentsa activists and land defenders have made some important gains, but the struggle continues. As in all Indigenous communities in Colombia and beyond, fighting for environmental rights and social justice is a risky prospect; Colombia was the most dangerous country in the world for environmental activists in 2021, and several among the Kamentsa have been assassinated in recent years, likely by hitmen hired by the various extractive business interests (both legal and illegal) present in the Sibundoy Valley. Constructing autonomy and securing the future of their culture and community is, like the insidious colonial projects that the Kamentsa are resisting, a continuous and iterative process.

So when the shamans tell me that “water is life,” referring to the paramos, alpine wetland ecosystems that provide the bulk of Colombia’s drinking water but which are rapidly degrading under climate change, or speak of the communal hearth as “grandfather fire,” I listen up. Because despite centuries of colonization and decades of territorial and cultural pillaging, these notions rich with meaning are as resilient and resonant among the Kamentsa as ever. They embed them in the tsombiach, the pictographic woven belts that can be read like books and which are wrapped around infants to impart to them the wisdom of their mothers and grandmothers. They put these notions into embodied practice in their daily work in the jajan, the gardens full of edible, magical, and medicinal plants which are repositories of traditional knowledge but which are under threat from the monoculture system brought by settlers. They keep these notions, like all the collective knowledge and values of Kamentsa cosmology, alive in their language—whose future is threatened by Spanish hegemony. Armed with the wisdom of their ancestors and the strength and resolve of their youth, the Kamentsa confront contemporary challenges with hope.

Hope is a powerful tool that we must all learn to wield. The Kamentsa example of a profoundly relational existence suggests other possibilities for our own society, a vibrant and viable alternative to our own ways of being in the world, and a possible bridge over the deep divide that separates people from nature in globally mainstream societies built on the Western capitalist model. That divide has brought our species to the brink of environmental and social catastrophe on a global scale. Perhaps it will take the ideas of people like the Kamentsa to give birth to a world more sensible, just, and sustainable than the one which is presently on its way out.

If you are interested in supporting the Kamentsa community and buying an authentic bead bracelet straight from the hands of the artisans I work with, write me at rowang@uoregon.edu

Anarchist Leaks the TSA No Fly List

By ch0ccyra1n

A certain cat has been making the rounds across the security world as of late. Her name is Maia Arson Crimew (yes, really). She did it while “being bored and browsing shodan,” a search engine that allows for anyone to browse exposed ‘Internet-of-Things’ devices and other servers that may have been unintentionally exposed to the internet. While browsing, she managed to find an exposed Jenkins server (a server used to manage automation of software projects) belonging to CommuteAir, a US regional airline headquartered in North Olmsted, Ohio. On this server, she managed to find projects labeled noflycomparison and noflycomparisonv2 “which seemingly take the TSA nofly [sic] list and check if any of commuteair’s [sic] crew members have ended up there.”

When looking at these projects, she found that there were credentials for Amazon Web Services, a very commonly used cloud provider with monopolistic business practices (just like everything else Amazon does!). With these, she could basically do anything she wanted with CommuteAir’s infrastructure, from spinning up new servers to reading databases from their website. However, even though she had these credentials, she didn’t actually have to use them, as she went back to the noflycomparison repository in the Jenkins server and found a certain file named nofly.csv.

“holy shit, we actually have the nofly list. holy fucking bingle. what?! :3”

- Maia Arson Crimew

With this highly sensitive, personally identifying information in her hands, she did the responsible thing and is only releasing it to “journalists and human rights organizations” via DDOSecrets, a nonprofit which specializes in the release of classified information “in the public interest”. I personally reached out to DDOSecrets on behalf of The Student Insurgent making sure to follow their protocols, and received access the very next day. Unfortunately, my analysis is still ongoing so it will not be available in-time for the release of this issue. Be sure to check out <https://studentinsurgent.org> and follow our social media accounts to get notified about updates.

Mother Knows Best

By: aubrie edmond

I know I am not supposed to go out on my own but the temptation is too great. The sun is shining and this is a good omen, the sun is light and light is good. Mother is in the kitchen preparing dinner and Father is at work. If I leave now no one will have to know. I will not stay out too long as this is a Punishable Offense. I shiver. Spare the rod and spoil the child. I am not spoiled.

I will go to the grocery store because it makes me feel real and Adult. I suppose I am an adult but Mother says I am not ready. I always listen to Mother. In school the kids used to make fun of me so I stopped going to school. Mother said I am Normal and Good and she never lies.

The walk to the grocery store is simple. When I exit the house I turn left and go straight for four blocks. I stop at every Stop Sign and I look both ways. Mother would be proud. After the four blocks I make a right and see the Piggly Wiggly at the end of the street. I have to cross a busy street. I stop at the Stop Sign and I look both ways and then I close my eyes and run. I stop when I feel the bumps of the sidewalk under my feet and I walk through the dirt landscaping until I am in the parking lot. What an adventure! I have exactly twenty dollars in my pocket and I am ready to face the Real World.

Once inside the store I am confronted by noise and color and bright lights and people. I am prepared for this, I take my headphones from around my neck and put them on. I do not listen to music, but they make the noise quieter. I am going to buy three things. I like the number three, it is a good omen. Mother does not allow me to eat processed foods. She says I am like this because she ate a lot of fast food when she was pregnant and it broke my brain. I figure if my brain is already broken a little treat will not kill me. My body craves sugar and salt. I grab Sour Cream and Onion Lays because I saw an advertisement for them once, as well as Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and Skittles. I want to Taste the Rainbow.

I bring my selections to the checkout and I am greeted by a plain faced woman. I take off my headphones and she smiles at me, asks me how my day is going and all the other small talk pleasantries. I love her face because it is simple, she is easy to look at and easy is beautiful. I tell her this and she thanks me, I pay her and she gives me my change and bags my snacks and then I leave the store. I sit on the curb by a bush to eat and I think about Grocery Store Girl. It is the most wonderful feast I have ever had, I eat quickly and then I go home.

Mother is furious when I return. She is standing in the kitchen with her hands on her hips, lips tightly pressed into a thin line. She reminds me that this is a Punishable Offense and she will have to tell Father. Father has never liked me much. Thinks Mother babies me, thinks I am Too Old to live in the house, I am a Waste of Space. I beg her not to tell him, screaming and crying, tears streaming down my face. She hits me and I fall to the ground. I am afraid I have shown too much emotion. I apologize and go up to my room, it has bare white walls with a cold bed and one pillow. Mother says it is meant to keep me sane. I think it has the opposite effect. Father comes home for dinner and we eat in silence. Mother decided not to tell him, she believes her coldness is Punishment enough. Dinner is white rice and chicken, no seasoning, and steamed vegetables. Mother is always very proud of her meals. She spends all day in the kitchen cooking, which I do not understand. It should not take all day to make a meal this tasteless. After Tasting the Rainbow, this meal is utterly unappetizing and it turns to mush in my mouth. I think about Grocery Store Girl and she gets me through dinner.

I want to tell Mother about Grocery Store Girl, but I know that would not be wise. Instead I go to bed and dream of her, her kind eyes and soft face and beautiful simplicity. I know I have to see her again, but Mother has been talking about barring my windows like a prison cell. This much is clear: if I leave I can never come back.

In the morning, I eat breakfast with Mother and Father. Mother attempts to start conversation, asking Father what is going on at work and such other matters. Father simply grunts in response, and everything is quiet again. When breakfast is finished, Mother clears the table and Father leaves for work. I wait for Mother to retreat to the kitchen before I excuse myself to begin preparing myself for the Real World, preparing myself for Her. What does one require for the Real World? I grab my backpack and think of something I saw once in a book, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Physiological Needs: I will pack clothes and nonperishables, bottled water and the little cash I have collected. When Grocery Store Girl and I live together I will have Shelter. Safety Needs: Father keeps a gun under his bed. He taught me how to shoot once, he said I am a Bad Shot. Everything Else: Grocery Store Girl and I will Fall in Love and I will finally be happy.

I sneak out the house and walk to Piggly Wiggly. When I arrive I put my headphones on and search for Her. I spot her at the register, same as before, and wonder when she gets off. I can wait. I wait a long while. Surprisingly no one questions my presence, I walk around ever so often so I look like a Shopper. I arrived at ten in the morning, and at about four in the afternoon I see Grocery Store Girl packing her stuff to leave. Must have had a short shift. I wait for her to leave and follow her at a distance. I do not want her to think I am a Creep. She walks in the opposite direction of Home, towards the Apartments. The walk is short and she ascends the steps three stories, Apartment 33. A good omen! She opens the door and goes inside. She does not lock it.

I ascend the steps and enter Apartment 33. What are you doing in my house? Her voice is slightly shrill, but tolerable. I close the door behind me and urge her to calm down, tell her that we are supposed to Fall in Love, tell her we are perfect. She reaches for her phone and I scream. I tell her to hand it to me, tell her I have a gun but I do not wish to hurt her. She is crying.

Grocery Store Girl gives me the phone and I call Mother. I tell her I did a Bad Thing. She asks where I am and says she will be here soon. I sit on the floor across from Her while she cries. I try to comfort her but it makes things worse, so we just wait for Mother.

Mother takes ten minutes to arrive. She walks to the door and I run to her, she holds me in her arms. Shhhh, it's all going to be okay. You trust me, don't you? You know I know what's best for you. I am caught off guard by her informal speech, she never talks to me this way. She holds me until the Sirens come to take me to a Better Place.

My Kingdom For A Horse

By: Matt Phongam

***Author's note: Matt is a Sag sun with a cap moon and rising in cancer.

By most reputable accounts, 2022 was the hottest year in human history, on pattern with climate trends since the turn of the century. The uncomfortable truth is that we have moved past the point of preventing a climate disaster, just preventing a more catastrophic climate disaster than the one unfolding before us. Property is no longer billed as 'climate-friendly' and now billed as 'climate-resilient.' World governments bicker over budgets and who has the best ideas, a contest of egos and not a synthesis of solutions that is meant to save the people they have been (not always fairly) elected to preside over. It's a large-scale issue that not a lot of us want to acknowledge, we all swipe away the headlines and breaking news hoping somebody else will do something about it. We — on an atomic, individual scale — are powerless to stop the Earth's death. No amount of electric bikes, going vegan, or recycling our plastics is going to matter to politicians and capitalists who are banking on the rest of us dying while they are in possession of resources. In the game of climate disaster, there exists winners and losers. Westerners almost never want to acknowledge their consumption habits have consequences, or that their cute pet cat who loves treats and cuddles could decimate a bird population if it wanted to, something that happens often.

The negativity doesn't stop, climate is just one global issue on a declining planet. Scaled up to the largest metric possible, it doesn't account for every nation's specific problems. This includes the energy crisis of Europe, the opiate epidemic of North America, and the lack of refrigeration in African countries that ruins an unthinkable amount of food. Look at us, putting figures and statistics on something everyone needs to live. These numbers are almost never good news and just tell us how fucked the situation is. We've traded humanity for capital gains and profitable properties, it is not how it was meant to be; it was how the global economy was designed to work, with more winners and more losers. Economics can be described as 'the study of scarcity', but 'scarcity' can be a relative term, and that makes us have different working definitions of a lot of things. We have a scarcity of coffee in North America because it is not grown here, however the US is the number one importer of coffee in the world. The average North American doesn't have a sense of that scarcity or of the coffee harvesters' life. I win because I'm a citizen of NA and just have to swipe a card to get my coffee, and they lose because the ethics and labor rights situation of global scale trade are morally bankrupt and just fucked in general. This statement co-exists with the statement 'we are both victims.' Like 'scarcity, the victimhood is relative.

So, what is left for us? We get to watch the Great American Experiment fail right before us with no backup plan. When the last precinct is burned, the last oil field bled

dry, and the last billionaire has flown off into the cosmos, all we can do is turn to each other and acknowledge that we have to cooperate if we are to survive. It will be difficult, we will argue with each other, we'll spend time reading theory and doing the practice to see what works and what doesn't, we'll live with contrarians and haters for better or worse. It is not really something anybody wants to see happen, we want a static lifestyle where our ideas aren't challenged too hard, but we still get to feel good about our diversity, inclusion, and intersectionality.

'Despair' is our everyday; every news story is too depressing to acknowledge, every overdose on the street a failure. Most of us would rather live in ignorance than see the country our ancestors worked, looted, lied, committed genocide, and enslaved others to build is failing just about everyone. Maybe America falling can be accredited to karma, maybe the country is just evil and was something that needed to be destroyed. Still, we live on in this land that has blood stains in the soil and chemicals in the water, with each other, so hopefully we choose each other and don't die bitter with remorse that we didn't choose each other.

Americans really cling to this idea of 'scarcity' and that 'you have that so I/We/They can't have that' mentality that we invented along with money and resources. But hope and good faith are not something there is a finite, worldly supply of- we can make as much of it in our heads as we please and give it out until we get exhausted from it. It sounds trite and maybe even superficial and unrealistic, something you'd feel from finishing a Final Fantasy game before moving on to the next video game, but it's true. It sounds trite because we were imparted with mentalities and attitude to keep late-stage capitalism alive, and sometimes we just cannot conceive another way of being or operating the world.

I honestly hope reading this made you depressed. I got depressed thinking of what to say. I love my convenience and first world products like you do. I enjoy waking up every morning knowing I have food to eat and a machine to wash my clothes and keep my food fresh, we all do. As we should. We should live by sustainable standards that keep us alive and happy, de facto or (begrudgingly) de jure. Is the goal not to uplift everyone? I hope you sunk into this 'despair' The Insurgent was going for, but now I want you to take that energy and put it towards agency and praxis towards hope. The media often reports what's wrong with the world, and good news is something one must seek out, but all you have to do is ask. But the fact there is any good news at all is worth knowing. We pay money to have a cycle of breaking news that gives the impression that all our problems are worse than they really are, and that we have no agency over the actions of others. Someone once told me 'read the news enough and you'll think the world is ending'. So know when to close the NPR or NYT app. The barrier to entry is minimal. Listen to people who don't look or think like you, take what they have to say into consideration, and let yourself learn and grow from it. All you have to do is listen and think about anything substantial that they had to say. I hope it sticks with you and you remember it when life seems like it's good. You don't have to solve every issue all in one go, you just have to be able to say you

chose hope when most of what was there was a feeling of despair. Yes, the long term climate situation looks bleak. No, we don't have to passively watch it happen. Learn who is in your community, take into account what they have to say, have constructive discourse and dialogue, and wonder if maybe the circumstances of your existence are something the world does or does not need. Even if others don't live by your example or attitude, you'll live knowing you lived your truth. It is a process of inward reflection and outward projection that we'll never stop doing.

Solidarity with Stop Cop City

Rest in power Tortuguita

April 23, 1996 — January 18, 2023

Murdered by Georgia state patrol

Indigenous anarchist, loving partner, dear friend, forest defender, trained medic, brave soul and so much more.

Tort died a revolutionary death. They did not die in vain but for the movement to end police militarization and protect our forest. In tort's name, we continue to fight to defend the Weelaunee forest and Stop Cop City. With love, rage and a commitment to each other's safety and well-being.

Justice for Tortuguita

Fight like hell for the dead and living

From Atlanta and beyond, we are all forest defenders

defendtheatlantaforest.com

An Offering

By: River

Everything we do is an offering these days even my spits a gift to the ground
to the plants and i bury the end of my blunt while i'm thanking the
trees

like i'm blessing the dirt like this the only ritual ill stick to

And everything we do is an offering

So i'm still trying to watch what words come out my mouth and

Choose which thoughts i listen to more carefully I'm wondering who suffer-
ing stains dark red my hand

When i trade in these dollars for some plastic wrapped bullshit

Enough gas to get me to the beach and back then Thousands of miles away
from this city
And i'm practicing my apologies in the car All the ones i haven't offered
yet
Because im scared i can't make them words so
I sit and just watch them
Listen and think and
Try to remember for when i need them
And i'll offer my love in exchange for your presence
Cuz i'm still struggling to offer myself peace inside any four walls
Over anyones four wheels when ive fucked up for the fourth time
Or something hurts so bad i feel 14
Everytime i forget to respond to something important
Forget what to say forget how to be
When i can't rest in this form and these features and this voice and
most days around 4:00 cuz most already passed
Before my eyes
Because im still tryna see myself befce
Still tryna remember to let myself be you leave...
Before i remember everythings an o And i want to be seen someone Some-
thing vulnerable so real it's already heartbreaking
Shed my shame until my presence _ immediately disruptive
Offer my fear to the fire of love
The flame of intimacy
So you can find me ...
So the next time i've got your heart in my mouth
i'm not choking on the blood dripping down my throat
I'm not scared to be seen
Crimson honey leaking from between my lips
No longer petrified that you'll tear your heart from my mouth
or tempted to take mine first
But as my teeth sink deeper
Our dance becomes softer
Our laughter become stronger more frequent
Even when your veins are thick or your body is far
I want to offer you my greatest love letters
Even when i inevitably freeze from fear
I want to offer myself forgiveness
I still want to face you
Unafraid of the future
Unafraid of myself

I am aware that everything we do
is an offering
To this moment to all expanding time moments beyond now
To outliving these oppressive patterns
Honoring and embodying these sacred life cycles
To earth, all elements, all being which has created us
Among who we ceaselessly create
So it is joyfully that i rest rest in your cavities
and gratefully i awake to everything else
And in bliss i offer myself to the process today
/ / And when i blink
And find myself in the belly of night
When i break and bend and bow before reflections
I will seek raven — do not cower do not relapse
Wide eyed creature you can honor the void
You can hold the wholly magic you can offer
this self you sit with
To darkness and be transformed in the mystery
Reworked nonphysical
Cosmic hearted creature
You can heal and release your consciousness here

Hear your breathing
Thank you for being here

Diasporic Bodies

By: S.V.

There's a word in Arabic, *ghurbah*, that one dictionary defines as "a feeling of longing for one's native land, of being a stranger." I think that feeling approximates what it is to live a diasporic being, but we diasporic bodies have no homeland.

Mine is the history of the Jews, my ancestors who, through exile and diaspora, learned to live with uncertainty and placelessness. Not like my friends among the *Kamentsa*, whose ethnonym supposedly means "people of this place with our own thought and language." It could be said that what drew me to them was their emplacement, so firm and immutable. The *Kamentsa* say that the body is the first territory. Maybe so. But what happens when you lose the map?

The alluvium of the past, time's sediment, grows ever skyward, piled like ruins built on ruins. Caked to the knees in mud and clay, I live wading through it. Thinking tries to thin the morass, to free the legs for running— running to outrun. I just didn't realize then that you can't think yourself out of the mud but must drag yourself out inch by inch.

The feeling of going nowhere fast. The feeling of moving to Alabama, or to what seemed a desert wasteland over the mountains shielding the valley of childhood, at six years old, and feeling horror under the weighty veil of a humid night. We're stopped on a roadside, the highway is abandoned, there is a void where there was once, impossibly, a landscape. Only a gas station store with fluorescent lights that make for an artificially white interior. The clerk is undead. We step back outside, hear crickets in the cornfield, there is no wind and one would wonder (if one knew enough to wonder then) if the Earth were still turning.

There is a night that lives in memory, a night nestled deep in summers past. I remembered falling off my bike in the middle of a field, sprawled in the tilled dirt under the stars, and I wept—for I was unhappy in life, but loved and affirmed it all the same. There were orchards around and all was inscrutable. I wonder if I was changed by that night, whether something then took hold in me that has never left. Of course, change is always possible, ever happening, though one doesn't always observe it in oneself. But on nights such as these, possessed by familiar moods, that night lost to remembered summers always enjoys a renaissance.

Running to outrun, running so as not to be outrun, the fear of being outrun, of having been outrun. It makes me want to pick up and leave, to turn away, to show my back, to challenge what has been prescribed, to defy the foretold, to deny the future. My life is my own. Spare the present the past. Free the future—or abolish it.

I take shelter in teen dreams, in memory, in nostalgia. I return to summer nights in fields and orchards under the stars—weeping, dirt under my fingernails, blessing life.

We must learn to take joy in the small mundanities of life. The cool wind through the window and its sound among the leaves of the trees and those on the ground, the moss on trees' bark, the colors of the world, the feeling of embodiment, of being beings of flesh, blood, and bone. Even pain is a reminder and a blessing of the diversity and promise of life.

On the horizon is a desert, its face engoldened by the light of a sun rising or setting. I am leaving the primordial forest of the past and treading now upon its liminal sands. Beyond the crest of a sloping dune which I am beginning to ascend stretches a vague world of formless forms and imagined possibilities infinite in number. Clarity will come with the descent of the other side. In the ascent I choose optimism.

Yet we cannot avoid following our seasonal migratory routes, which alter little and always return us to the source, to the beginning, where our various journeys start and end. Or so it has been with me, and so, I expect, it will continue to be. As far afield as we may wander, some mysterious force draws us back to the point of departure: emotionally, psychically, if not physically—but physically too, as when I come over the familiar verdant hills on the approach to the prison of my childhood. And it is not always good to return, but perhaps it is necessary, though I have sometimes wished that it weren't, that I could establish myself in permanent difference, that I myself could be other than I am. And to borrow another cliché—but one of which I am always reminding myself—it is a fact that wherever you go, there you are.

I'm learning to live with that. With a new year comes a new promise: wherever you are, take stock of the ground beneath your feet. Even diasporic bodies can find solace in ceaseless motion.

Taking Up New Tactics: I grow tired, but dare not fall asleep

By: J. Ellis

The saying "print is dead" has been hanging over my head for the entire duration of my time with the Insurgent. I walk around campus and town trying to offload our thousands of printed copies, stocking the newsstands, and asking passerby "hi, would you like a free copy of the Student Insurgent?" Nine times out of ten I'm met with a stern no, untouched stacks on racks, or worse yet, vandalized ones. Sometimes I try a simpler approach, "hi, do you like to read?" Once I was met with a chorus of "no's" so demoralizing I began to wonder why bother at all. I'm kept awake at night imagining our hard work lining the enclosure of some townie's pet guinea pig.

We are facing a crisis of apathy on the University of Oregon campus. Its origins are innumerable, and beyond the scope of this article. Besides, it would just come off like a list of complaints anyway. I signed up for this, no? Besides, I'm in too deep now, I fear. In the last four years I've come to the defeated realization that perhaps the university is not the setting for real change. The ephemerality of the student body, the legacy of capitalistic white supremacy inherent to these institutions, and the bureaucratic red tape such an institution depends upon, all make meaningful organizing/ resistance unsustainable in such a setting. Its policies and practices are at the mercy of whoever's in charge, and the direction of the university has never been in the hands of the people, its students. No, no. Instead, the direction of higher ed in this country is left in the hands of bureaucrats more versed in economics than education. Such a model robs education of its potential for empowerment, as the University is fundamentally a system designed to reproduce the next generation of the ruling class. It often feels like the Insurgent's fight against this has been fruitless at its best, self-destructive at its worst.

That's not to say what we're trying to do is insignificant or meaningless. There's a Castro quote that goes "the weapon of today is not guns but consciousness," and for this reason alternative media is a fundamental part of any movement. Look to the Black Panther newspaper, or the tabloid-toting Trotskyists that troll campus, to your beloved local distro, or the Rojava meme-makers. In a media saturated society, the use of media is an ideological survival strategy. But our activism can only go as far as our attention spans. Where do we turn when we tire of writing, are exhausted by reading? Can there be destruction without creation?

Despite the frequent bouts of despair I've encountered in this endeavor, my belief in the importance of radical media has never wavered. I've never questioned the importance of our intentions, only the efficacy of our impact. After all, as we continue to engage with such blatant corruption as enrolled members of the university system, is it not our responsibility to critique it? As students, and as activists, we have the responsibility to turn our education — against itself by observing and CALLING OUT the structures of oppression we learn about in class at play in our own educational system. Publications like *The Insurgent* are necessary for this reason.

As Dr. Bones writes in “The Rise of the Radical Reporter,” writing, reporting, and journalism are “literal weapons we need to employ to ensure the field of affinity expands.” We need people willing to take up aliases and create a platform that rejects absolute power.

The former editor in chief of the *Insurgent* on my first ever assignment all those years ago, a benefit-show *r* review/interview, handed me (already stoned as fuck) two beers and said some words I'll never forget: “Go Gonzo, / kid.” And so I stumbled up to the band and took fifteen minutes of their time to slur out some improvised questions about the intersection of environmental justice and punk music. In the spirit of that moment that started it all, allow me to invoke a Hunter S. Thompson quote:

“There are a lot of ways to practice the art of journalism, and one of them is to use your art like a hammer to destroy the right people — who are almost always your enemies, for one reason or another, and who usually deserve to be crippled, because they are wrong. This is a dangerous notion, and very few professional journalists will endorse it — calling it ‘vengeful’ and ‘primitive’ and ‘perverse’ regardless of how often they might do the same thing themselves. ‘That kind of stuff is opinion,’ they say, ‘and the reader is cheated if it’s not labelled as opinion.’ Well, maybe so. Maybe Tom Paine cheated his readers and Mark Twain was a devious fraud with no morals at all who used journalism for his own foul ends. In my case, using what politely might be called ‘advocacy journalism,’ I’ve used reporting as a weapon to affect political situations that bear down on my environment.”

I think I've clung to The Insurgent so closely because I've always seen this kind of potential power within it. Its very existence is a form of protest on this campus.

Contrary to the university's best efforts against it, I've learned a lot in my time here. That is probably more a product of aging and experience more than the number of credits I've completed. As I move on from my invested involvement at the *Insurgent* and *ROAR*, allow me to impose a few words of undergraduate wisdom.

- ***Don't ever be fooled:*** the administration is not on your side. “Viewpoint neutrality” is a joke. We threaten their interests, and they threaten ours. The Admin sucks farts!

- ***Bare minimum:*** keep the prison project going at all costs. This is the audience we have the largest reach in, and is probably the most tangible impact we have as an organization. Never neglect our allies and accomplices inside.
- ***Stay punk:*** don't give into myths of professionalism. Embrace typos & reject formality !!! this isn't OURJ
- ***Keep your fingers on the pulse:*** maintain a global and local scope to issues. Pay special attention to the things mainstream media isn't talking about. Stop trying to form new hot takes on electoral politics. There is nothing to say about Trump that hasn't already been said. For the love of Creation, talk about Myanmar, Palestine, Peru, Iran, or literally anything else instead. The more priority we give to the happenings in the imperial core the more power we grant it. That said, never lose sight of what's directly around you. The press is valuable for its function as a watchdog. Watch for corruption and authoritarianism on a local scale.
- ***Uphold Consensus and Solidarity:*** The Student Insurgent was once too autocratic for its own good. Whatever capacity may be, ensure the distribution of labor becomes even more equitable over time. It may seem easier to have the bulk of responsibility fall to one person, but believe me, it's not. We are a collective effort.

For months, I've struggled to find the words to articulate my feelings about finally moving on from the Insurgent. I've written countless drafts of what you're reading right now. What could I possibly say to close such an intense chapter of my life? How do you say goodbye to passions that no longer serve you? Fuck, what if all the effort I put in to keep this sinking ship afloat is all in vain? Hah, it's not like my friends ever read anything I wrote anyway. Alas, woe is me. Just do your best, that's all I've been doing. If this thing is meant to be, it shall. For what feels like the first time in a long time, I have hope in the Insurgent beyond my time with it. As for me, from now on I'll see ya on the streets instead comrades.

(Thank you to River, Rosie, and Stella
for the arts <3)

Contact us

www.studentinsurgent.org
1228 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

Email: insurgentuo@gmail.com

Twitter: @insurgent_uo

Instagram: (a)uo.studentinsurgent

Mastadon: https://emeraldsocial.org/@uo_studentinsurgent

The Ted K Archive

Various Authors

The Student Insurgent: Despair & Hope Issue (Winter 2023)

2023Matt Phonga

<https://archive.org/details/insurgent_34.3>

<[instagram.com/uo.studentinsurgent/p/CpGfmVdyv7T/](https://www.instagram.com/uo.studentinsurgent/p/CpGfmVdyv7T/)>

www.thetedkarchive.com