

Moore College of Art & Design - Poetry student responses to OYO
Instructor: Maggie Ginestra

Last year Maggie Ginestra brought her poetry class from Moore College of Art & Design to visit the *Organize Your Own* exhibit at Kelly Writers House. The class looked at the artworks and were provided select poems from the Young Patriots Organization chapbook *Time of the Phoenix*. Below you'll find the poems and an introduction from Ginestra:

The invitation to dive into Organize Your Own and emerge with poems was a juicy challenge - not just an ekphrastic exercise, but an opportunity for us to engage history and community where they meet poetry, which is all the time when seen through lenses (like OYO's) that are dialed to our moments of making.

*Before visiting the exhibit, we encountered materials shared with the contributing artists - several poems written by female Young Patriots for *Time of the Phoenix* (including some by organizer Peggy Terry) and a clip from *American Revolution 2*, in which Black Panther Bobby Lee roused the Young Patriots to greater self-determination. Many of us were surprised to find language and energy there that was so alive, immediate and exciting.*

We walked to Kelly Writers House on February 11th, which turned out to be one of the coldest (and sunniest) days of winter in Philadelphia in 2016. We started out from Moore's campus and followed the river. We might not have been bundled up enough to relax into our journey and our time in nature. We were very eager to arrive.

*As poets, we had a few things on our mind. We'd been reading and practicing the spirit of Maxine Hong Kingston's "To Be the Poet," in which she suggests documenting an alternating rhythm of your seeing and your feeling as a way to show up to your now. Thus, our chilled bones and geographical disorientation were very much a part of our meeting with *Organize Your Own*.*

*We'd also been thinking about assignments and their inevitable effect on our presence in the moment - how they can help us to show up and also confound our capacity to show up. We read Dorothea Lasky's mini-manifesto *Poetry Is Not a Project* and thought about how any loyalty to an idea of what to write might compromise our sharing of lived experience. But then we had many ideas in response to the layers of history and community we encountered at Kelly Writers House. Ideas that felt like living.*

*We hope we've collected our loyalties to living, and the spirit in which they emerged, in these poems, as a joyful and diverse response to the artworks and energies of *Organize Your Own*.*

(Maggie Ginestra)

Student Poetry In Response to OYO

- Kaylie Minzola - Begin the Hunt
- Sarah Bea McDade - Brotherhood
- Geneva Champagne - Darkness
- Alexandra Mosoeanu - End of the Ways of the White Folks
- Aidan Weiss - An Afternoon At Kelly Writer's House
- Colleen Durant - Woman. Working.
- Sapientia Park - A day of reckoning
- Shahada Mouzon - Organizing Humanity
- Brittany Snyder - Silent
- Alissa Outwater - Stand
- Pinky (Shaniyah C.) - Standing Still vs Moving Still
- Kelly Fitzpatrick - Sweeteners
- Rebecca Martin - This Place is Warm

Kaylie Minzola - Begin the Hunt

When man killed the last beast that hunted,
 No more tigers and shadows to hunt them in the night,
 Man grew bored when death no longer flirted.
 Boredom turns to cruelty, cruelty turns into
"That's just the way things are."

When man was no longer prey,
 Who caused man to hunt man?
 Hate nursed alongside mother's milk,
 Venom we don't remember consuming.
 Bring bloodletting back into fashion,
 Cut veins of humankind, no matter how painful, uncomfortable,
"This is not the way things should be."

Bleed until every drop of animosity strikes the dirt.
 Then begin the hunt,

For anyone who still holds a spear.

Sarah Bea McDade - Brotherhood

Men all gathered around in a room,
Talking about equality,
The Man,
And racism.

These men have different colors,
Colors of different races,
But they seem to not care,
As they embrace each other with open arms.

“The Man is what’s bringing us down,”
Said the Black Panther man,
Making everyone in the room cheer,
Saying “Amen!” and nodding their heads.

All of this action,
Is happening in a film,
Shows how unity still exists in this world,
Maybe one day,
It will bring peace into this world.

Maybe,
No hopefully,
We will all be as equal,
As loving,
As accepting,
As the Brothers in the film.

Geneva Champagne - Darkness

This skin could carry my death sentence;
Just like it has for so many others.

Why?

Why is there such stigma behind the color black?

Black is bad.

Black magic, black list, black mail, black balled,

There is nothing good about darkness.

In darkness, you cannot see;

In darkness, things go bump in the night;

In darkness, there is the unknown.

Forced into our heads is the thought that we are not enough.

We, the black, are

Not worthy.

I refuse.

I see beauty in darkness.

In darkness, you find stars.

In darkness, there is possibility.

In darkness, your other senses awaken.

Unapologetically black and

Unapologetically angry at the system;

Unapologetically fighting each day.

I am hyper aware

Of the stereotypes that linger in this skin,

The grim reaper in the seat of my spine,

Their hateful stare aimed between my eyes.

But I rise.

Tell me: When.

When will black lives truly matter?

I see it, but do you?

The system is unfair

And a war is being waged.

It needs to change;

It will change.

Soon.

I see it, but do you?

Those standing, uniting, loving;

Fighting,
Their spirit unbreakable.
There is humanity within them.
There is strength within them.
There is beauty within us.
I see it, but do you?

Alexandra Mosoeanu - End of the Ways of the White Folks

Published. Backwards.
Protected
BY THE LAW

Backwards, is it
Justice,
For all???

Backwards.
Is that why I cannot read?
Behind the Bright Blood of innocence
As far as horizon can see.

Backwards
Black, entrapped
Behind the ways
of the White
Folks.

Black Behind Bars,
TRAPPED.
BY THE LAW.

Patience. Patience.
Imprinted and stained.
This book is the old Way.
Organize, Formalize.

The People have the Power to
END
The Ways.

We organize, publicize
Make others realize.
Scream, Dance, Create and Make

BE HEARD!

So we equalize and mesmerize
Blacks, Whites all in between.
Formalize

Take a STAND

UNITE!
UNITE!
UNITE!

END
The backwards reign.
The WAYS OF THE WHITE FOLKS

Aidan Weiss - An Afternoon At Kelly Writer's House

An Afternoon At Kelly Writer's House

By Aidan Weiss

I reflect
and feel numb
walking across the river
wind chilling my knuckles.

They reflect
and feel empowered.
"The devil does not need an advocate",
I read, and felt
similar.

I am as white as the frost
that bit me.
I feel small
to make others feel big.

For I do not want to give up
for them.

Equality is harder
than it is defined
while freedom is lost
And confused by power.

I lust for equality.

Colleen Durant - Woman. Working.

I so often see the world
Through the rose-tinted lens of what it means to be
Woman.

Perhaps, more often I
Should lift those shades to better remember that
While I am earning 78 cents
for every White Man's Dollar,

She is earning 64 cents
Because of her deep toned skin,
And African lineage.

She is earning 59 cents
Because her ancestors were slaughtered
By what others called manifest destiny.

She is earning 53 cents
Because her family hails
From slightly south
Of that border

Into the land of opportunity.

Into this country of equality,

One step forward and two steps back,

Or so they say.

Sapientia Park - A day of reckoning

Where are you from?

I am from White!

Where are you from?

I am from Yellow..

Where are you from?

I am from Brown...

Where are you from?

I am from...

Black. (Black..)

Black!!!

Close your eyes.

Like you are blind.

What do you see.

BLACK

Nothingness becomes Something-ness.

The frosty grave is getting
darker and darker.

I hear

A dark echo.

Here and there.

Don't Cry

We are all together,

Black is in the frontier.

We are all from everywhere and nowhere.
We are all same.

Don't forget our cry.
Crossing the border that dark night.

Shahada Mouzon - Organizing Humanity

We stand here facing forward
Instead of looking in.

Labeled, criticized.
Turned others down,
All for humanity.

Gathered together.
Tested fate and our souls.

Bonded by equality, Not blood.
We applaud you
Any difference?

Louder and stronger like a Black Panther spreading the word.
"Paying taxes so the police can whip your ass"
Yet he wears blue.
Opaque blue.
Not the color of transparency.
Clear to understand.

Equation not complex.
Simple yet fragile like sign language.

We are
Determine to proceed,
We cannot forget.

Classified. Cliques,
We stand together.

Trials and tribulations, like
Colors on a shirt.

Black and tie-dyed.

Not thought of one, but plenty
I present you organized thoughts.

Brittany Snyder - Silent

My people belong in a bunch of white suburban homes
off the road to Philadelphia
Bensalem, PA
They are the sweetest ones I could find
in middle school
but they're fathers still hang on racial slurs
and I go over to eat dinner
to be silent over pizza
while they talk about the difference between a black person
and a nigger
My friends will apologize
and say sorry, my dad is a little RACIST
but I can see over time,
the way the words become your own
and now you think it's okay
to call your friend niggah
when he pisses you off
still, I'm silent.

My people are artists in college
they hang onto their own ideals
and we don't discuss race across studio space
but we're mostly white and
silent.

My people; my aunt
who says that the more we make it "us" and "them"
the worse the world we be
and I agree
that we are all just bodies
I can only speak for myself
aware of my own
because this is about bodies

not souls
or essence
but a surface level observation
obsession
and I think that you are so beautiful
but I don't tell you because
You might think that's offensive and here I am again
silent.

Alissa Outwater - Stand

A group of people—a crowd.
Clustered, huddled, moving as one.
Each face (all of them, fleshy mirrors)
Turned toward another.

Eyes widen, souls show

A collective “same differentness,”
A realization that being
Is what we're all doing
And that there's no way any of us
Can do it alone.

Pinky (Shaniyah C.) - Standing Still vs Moving Still

Looking from the Inside
Out
It looked nicer than it feels. I can feel
the chattering of my
mouth
It looked nicer than it feels.

Yet I will still be
on my way
Trudging through the windy
dampness
I am on my way
My hair is blowing
amiss

But I keep going,
Destination gets
near
I keep going.
If I stand still, I will get
nowhere.

That mindset gets me
going
And with it I will not be slowing,
Down.
I've gotten somewhere
Now.

Kelly Fitzpatrick - Sweeteners

Light cream of a milky vanilla
Poured into a rich cup of dark chocolate
Will surely enhance the experience of one's tongue

But like the crystalized whiteness of cane sugar
Poured into a black cup of coffee
The mixture may become sickeningly sweet
Oversaturated by overestimating
How many packets to rip open

And even then
All the looseness of the packaged fragments
May slip from the sides of the cup
Making for small bits of mess upon
A smooth granite or marbled surface

This is why cubes are preferable
As much more manageable and measurable units
Composed of organized particles of sugar

Rebecca Martin - This Place is Warm

I walked to this place downtown

At a college
In a little corner you wouldn't expect
It was freezing along the way
Cold and bitter
But this place is so warm
Warm in temperature
Warm in atmosphere
This place feels like a home
Not my home, but a friend's home
It smelled like my aunt's house at first
As I settled in
It smelled like books and old leather
This place has so many places to sit
It just welcomes you to sit down
Sit back and stay for awhile
The pieces here are so well woven in
They feel like they were meant to be here
Like I'm the conversation
And they are the hosts of the gathering
I feel like a guest here
Just stopping by to think for awhile
All seems calm until you read into the pieces
They all hold strong words
Even if they are wordless
I see messages and ages of trouble and turmoil
There is one prevailing meaning
That make them act as family
The pieces belong here as much as the people do