

Barrio Beat

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S O L I D A R I T Y



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EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

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|-------------------|--------------------|
| Fiction Editor | Arturo Magaña |
| Nonfiction Editor | Taylor R. Genovese |
| Poetry Editor | Jesus Ayala |

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contributors

Maria Lunamar Aranda has written poetry for forty years. She writes about politics, love, war, immigration, mental illness, and the overall human condition. Worked in the social work field for thirty years, taught parenting skills, imparting the knowledge to parents, that like air and water, we all need a sense of belonging to thrive. Won first prize in an anthology of poetry; Six Hills Equal A Mountain; a compilation of poetry, short stories, and photographs, by young Native American writers and photographers.

Stacy Clark is an environmentalist with a deep affection for stories. Much of her writing consists of non-fiction and lyrical essays, although both poetry and fiction sneak in from time to time. Her writing is deeply influenced by both landscape and community. Clark is currently living in Flagstaff, AZ, as she works towards achieving her MFA in Creative Writing at Northern Arizona University, and enjoys her role as the nonfiction editor of *Thin Air Magazine*.

Margarita Cruz recently received her MFA in Creative Writing from Northern Arizona University. She is currently a columnist for Flagstaff Live. Her works have been featured in *Miracle Monocle*, *Chapter House Journal*, and the *Susquehanna Review*. More at: shortendings.com.

Alvaro Enciso is an artist living and working in Tucson, Arizona. His work, in various media, deals with migration, separation, the myth of the American Dream, cultural identity, language, and more personal themes such as being the outsider, not belonging anywhere, and the constant search for home.

Luis Edgardo Muñoz is a 39 year old writer, poet, and musician born in Yuma, Arizona. He completed a Bachelor's degree in English literature at Arizona State University in 2004 and was awarded a Virginia C. Piper Fellowship in Creative Writing as he began work on a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing degree. Luis has two books of unpublished poetry and a screenplay based on the legend of La Llorona. He is currently working on a fictionalized memoir about his struggles with substance abuse, anxiety attacks, and bipolar disorder. He is currently a teacher at a charter school in Yuma. More at: luisemunoz.tumblr.com.

Bennie Rosa is an emerging writer from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Jere Truer is a poet living in the Desert Southwest, transplanted from the cold North. He also plays music and has worked in the mental health field since Freud.

editor's notes

Twenty-twenty, our senses stripped—

When I was a boy, I did not know that the streets here, and the buildings here, that we were, you know, what others considered impoverished. So much of the material things never seemed to matter. It was never the toys that colored our joy, but the people we shared such things with.

There was always food on the table. Fruit figs on the vine. Raw shrimp, ceviche. And now I remember a childhood with people sharing laughter, people around me praising such privileges: a clean floor smelling of a purple color, the bacon grease in the gordita masa, or the yucatecos burning with the sound of doves.

Now, sitting here, thinking, twenty-twenty. Hard times are always shouldered with the help of others, the stories and experience of others. Those that keep us healthy. Physically and mentally. I remember my teachers that erased the poverty from our eyes, as if they were erasing the chalk off of the blackboard. I remember the people in the fields picking and feeding. And I remember, that it is those around me, with all their complexity and story, they showed me with their quiet examples, how to face such times.

This issue is for all those shouldering those around them.

Saludos,

arturo magaña, fiction editor

SUBMISSIONS

Barrio Beat particularly encourages emerging artists from diverse backgrounds to submit their work.

Information about submitting can be found on our website.

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Front Cover Image Taylor R. Genovese

This decade has dawned with an efficacy of evil.

Moral realism is no longer idealist.

On the streets, I hear evil talked about openly, plainly, without hyperbole. The darkness oozes and crackles from the uneven asphalt and threatens to adhere to our clambering bodies like a careless piece of gum spat onto the sidewalk.

But life is a dialectic—the dark cannot operate without the light. We keep moving. We build mutual aid networks. We storm and set alight the oppressor's fortresses in places like Minneapolis.

We tend to each other's broken bodies. We lift each other's spirits. We build liberation.

The worst is yet to come, but that also means the best is yet to come. Yin and yang. Love and rage. Fuck around and find out.

taylor r. genovese, nonfiction editor

There's a book on my nightstand, left it there in December. It's titled, *The Teachings of The Buddha*. Printed in sixty-six. I bought the book at a gun show. Arizona and its gun shows. It is now October and the book sits there. I fear the book, sitting there. I encourage myself: read it. I am not a Buddhist. I've the thirst, the thirst of the flesh. But, man, doesn't everyone? Society's standards. I do my best to conform, in my way. I often think on what it means to be a member of society and what it means to be a good human being. I set standards and fall short. But I strive. Strive to see the silver linings. Man, maybe this is everyone's dilemma, my dilemma—living my harsh, roaring twenties and now I am twenty-nine. I must learn to unlearn all that I have learned. I have decided to kill who I am to become the person I want to be. This year has taught me one thing: I am not alone. There are words on the page here. Everyone can relate to the ink on a page and if they cannot, they can relate to the spaces between the ink.

jesus ayala, poetry editor

M A R I A L U N A M A R A R A N D A

A Quiet Truth

There is
so much
so much
to know.

The bliss point
that deludes us
into consuming more.

How greed has turned
in on us.

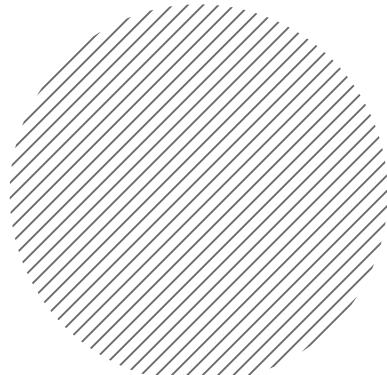
Zombie politics
is our government
being run by corporations
without souls.

This was practiced in other
countries while we stayed silent,
dreaming American dreams.

The shock doctrine has come home.

Did we see the naked children shedding
napalmed skin?
It was not true the general said.
The heads in El Salvador laid side-by-side eyes looking skyward.
The nuns faces in the dirt.
The Buddhist monks' garment set on fire.
His palm, a finger turned to truth, his burning body an offering to us,
truth.
Who are we?
if not ashes, and not on fire?

a quiet truth.



To Be Beautiful and Young

To be beautiful and young

To wear my hair long

To uncover my face

To look directly at anyone

To walk

Unaccompanied by anyone

This day to make mistakes

And not be chained by them

Like men to be free

To have my own regrets

That may taste bitter or sweet

To live free of the chains of those

Who would cut and stone me

For daring to be free

To taste the air of freedom like the salt of the sea

That I would sail away on

Men

What are you afraid of

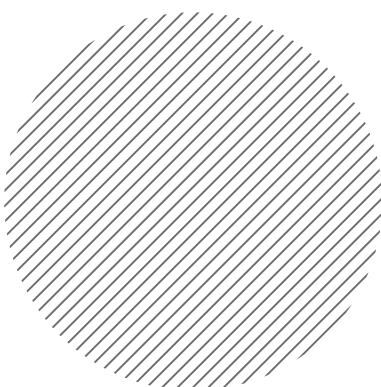




photo taylor r. genovese

When Thunder Sings Alone

stacy clark

The day is fading quickly. I watch the last threads of sunlight sew themselves into a dark quilt of forest, trees stretching into the horizon. Evening pushes into the sky, and pinks and purples splash against an indigo backdrop. Night arrives, birds quit their conversations, and the shadows reach for one another in the cooling air.

The sunsets of the Southwest are nostalgic; colors fade quickly, blending with the pale green-yellow of the grass. City sounds melt away and the trains that heave their way through Flagstaff are a distant whisper. I am racing the escaping light; running,

tracing the topography with my feet, almost back home. The dirt road whispers memories of rain, and I look at the lonely indentations where puddles might have lived. Plumes of dust spin behind the logging trucks that travel up and down the road; the trees watch with dismay. I pick up my pace and race the darkness to my doorstep.

At home, the porch light flickers on, sharp and bright, a cacophony of human fantasies. I take off my shoes and stuff cookies in my mouth, my back turned against the man and dog to whom I belong, the family that belongs to me. Kieko beats her tail

against the air and presses her nose against my knee to remind me that I have hands for petting. Your mom called, Derek tells me. She said the woods, behind your house—where you used to run all the time? Have been sold to a developer.

I know, I tell him. Nobody knows what to do.

He gives me a one shouldered shrug. I'm going to find that part, Derek says. For the water pump. So we can have water. I need a shower.

I nod. Good luck, I say. I am feeling benevolent, so I do not mention that he has gotten the wrong part for this project three times already, or the fact that his knuckles are raw from trying and failing to get the hoses connected. Whenever Derek works on the plumbing, the dog and I go sit outside together and listen to him curse at the kitchen appliances. No matter how loudly he yells at the pipes, the water refuses to cooperate.

I kiss his cheek and listen to the sound of his car wheels crunching over the dry ground, fading as he drives away. I wave goodbye through the window, but he doesn't see. Night presses against the house and I push back, sealing the door shut. If I'm not careful, the door will stay cracked and the cold will creep inside.

I sit down at the table and look at Kieko, who is watching her empty bowl. I busy myself with giving her dinner and attention; I turn on music and sweep the house—all 150 square feet of floor—send messages to friends who might respond. If I keep myself occupied, I won't have to worry about what being alone with the silence might feel like. I won't have to think about the ground beneath us, gasping with thirst; I won't have to worry about the rain.



When we first started building the house, we were warned that it was coming: monsoon season. It was April, and we had until late June, they said. That's when the rains would come to Flagstaff. Thunderstorms were going to hurl themselves across the sky without respite, and the wildflowers would put on their most colorful outfits. We knew we had to hurry.

The house, or the 'shed on wheels', as we like to call it, is 23 feet long and 8 feet wide. The biggest crocodiles in the world are as big as this house, I

would think, as I stripped the drill bit of the impact drill. I could be in the Amazon, balanced on the spiny back of a modern dinosaur. Instead, I was standing in our half-built disaster, watching the sky through the space where the roof was supposed to sit.

There wasn't enough time in the day to squeeze in time on the trail. My running muscles lost their spring; I became irritable and tired, confined to our human plans and thirsty for movement. The trees sighed as I spilled salt-water down my cheeks. Our failures rang in my mind and I was exhausted from not being able to move away from myself. Kieko followed us around carrying a frisbee that we didn't have time to throw.

We sawed up pieces of ply board into crooked triangles that almost fit where they belonged; we bought the wrong parts for the wrong projects, over and over again. We bickered and swore at the dusty pieces of a home we could not put together. I angled words like a sword against the dust, fighting uselessly with tools I kept on destroying, and Derek slammed his hands onto the floorboards that insisted on pulling apart from one another.

The house was not done, and the monsoons were coming.



I am running again, short, shuffling steps accompanied by short, panting breaths. The dirt road splits, reaches arms into the forest like veins from the heart. I follow the path of least resistance, my feet slapping against the ground as gravity carries me downhill.

Behind me, Kieko is sniffing at the air, and casting nervous glances at the darkening clouds. Thunder rumbles and groans, and I beat a fearful rhythm with my footsteps. Kieko dashes ahead, her bell jingling as she darts through the forest.

The house sleeps in a nest of trees under the charcoal sky. We race home as raindrops kiss our limbs; this is the water we have been waiting for, the monsoons we have been warned about. I watch the ceiling for leaks as the storm arrives, the thunder raising her voice into a whip against the world. Kieko puts her head in my armpit, and I press kisses on her damp furry shoulder.

It is over too soon. The sun fights back, and the storm slides to the east, leaving us with memories of moisture. Lightning flashes melodies but the thunder sings alone; the clouds break up and glide away. No more rain, I tell Kieko. She sighs and goes back to sleep, and when Derek gets home, he wrestles with the plumbing until dark, losing another battle in an endless war for water.



People are shaking their heads. It is the driest monsoon season in Flagstaff's recorded history. The dust coats our eyelids, our tires sending clouds of dirt behind the car like a veil. We are married to the radio as the fire remains uncontained. People are evacuated, and still the smoke grows like a sickly grey mold against the blue of the sky. The mountain disappears; children wear bandanas over their faces.

One morning we get a knock on the door: there is a wildfire less than a mile up the road. I watch the trucks race by with hoses dangling, limp from overuse. We load our bicycles and books into the car- the things we cannot live without- and escape. Kieko wiggles her body onto the center console, sighing deeply and looking forlorn. I scour Google for news on the fire, for the weather forecast that shows me a picture of a burning sun, 82 degrees.

We go home and I rake pine needles away from the house, eyeing the horizon. Derek sprays water in a circle around our wooden home, raising his eyebrows at the sky and laughing too loud against the silence. Kieko's white fur becomes a pale brown, and my skin is itchy. When will the water work? I ask Derek. He doesn't know, it isn't working like it's supposed to. He's trying everything but the sink spits air and doesn't explain.

We shake our heads at each other; at the water that is not there.

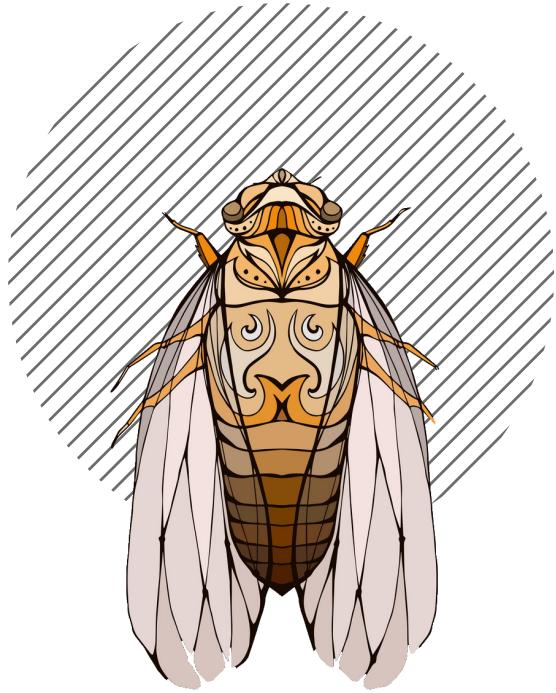


It's late fall, and Flagstaff is cold this morning. The sun rises against a pale blue sky, pushing the night away and waking up the weary trees. I lace my running shoes into sloppy double knots, twist my hair into a braid, and find a rhythm with my feet. Kieko follows reluctantly; she hates to leave the house unguarded.

Dust dances behind me, little plumes with every step. Ponderosa pines grimace at the empty logging trucks roaring up the road, and the driver scowls back at me. My back grows a patch of sweat, and the jingling of the dog's bell keeps pace with my hurried breathing. The melody of our movement is the only noise that breaks the calm.

We run through the unquenched forest under a blank slate of sky. The storms that did not bring rain are a faded memory now, bleached away by the relentless months of sunlight. Maybe the winter will bring snow, and maybe the next monsoon season will be better. The plumbing is still a work in progress; maybe we will get it right next week. But for now, all we can do is watch the sun rise and fall, trying to understand what we are doing wrong, over and over again.

I press my feet against the silent earth and worry about water.



TODAY I LEARNED CICADAS IN ARIZONA APPEAR EVERY SUMMER BUT IN MY LOVER'S HOME STATE HE WAITS YEARS FOR THEM

margarita cruz

You point to cicada shells on the tree truck and remark:
These don't look like the cicadas back home. I've never
seen these ghostly bodies cling like this. I untangle a
ladybug from my hair, watch it sit on my wrist, escape with
the wind. Later, when you are gone I sit in my hammock,
look up at the leaves of the trunk of the tree listen to the
cicadas silent earlier now sing a break from sirens in the
streets—different sounds of summer somewhere sounds
different, somewhere cicadas scream.



photo taylor r. genovese

Rest

bennie rosa

"Rest awhile." That was all she said to me as my daily journey ended. She patted the concrete ledge under the I-40 overpass on 12th St.

I'd made the trip in no time. Usually, when the summer heat baked everything hard like it always did in Albuquerque, and today was like always, I would walk from shade to shade if I didn't travel at night. So, I rested.

"Where you from?" she asked.

"No place."

I was too tired to talk anymore. Leaning back, I felt the heavy vehicles bouncing above and I felt safe. When I woke up, she was gone. She looked like someone's mother, maybe mine. I wasn't sure who I looked like because I hadn't seen myself in a long time.

Always wait till it's dark was how I was taught to travel. If you wait and look you might make it. If you listen to the others you might learn where it's safe to go but it's a choice, and you know how choices can be.

When I found myself at the city shelter, I asked around, not too much, if they'd seen the nice lady. Asking can get you in big trouble. A very tall old man, bent over even when he tried to walk, asked me if I knew that he'd won an oil well by eating an Oreo.

When I walked away into the morning, I asked a skateboarding standalone if he had seen the nice lady that slept under overpasses, he took out his earphones and said he couldn't hear me and even if he did, he wouldn't talk to a fucked up kid that lived on the street. I didn't exactly thank him but I should have because he looked cool.

I could never tell much about time. I could tell about how long it had been. Too long or not very long or just about right was about how it went. When I found her, it had been too long and I could tell she didn't remember me right off. She was shooting up inside the dumpster behind the Waffle House on Zuni.

I told her not to worry too much and that everything was going to be OK. I pulled the needle out of her dead arm and cried a prayer after I ate some fresh dumpster hash browns.

I told her to rest awhile. She couldn't listen anymore but I hoped she did anyway.



Ode to Tin Buckets

jere truer

There is something homely yet lovely
About the sound of a tin bucket
Being set down. Whether on a hard floor
Or on the ground.
A pleasingly melodic hollow sound
Perhaps our distant ancestors
Heard in the sound of the first drums
Made of hollowed logs talking
Through the forest.

It is the sound of my grandmother,
With her plain housedress
And muscled arms, finishing
Her work at day's end.
The sound of accomplished fatigue
Followed by the silence of dusk,
The fields mist with nightfall.
Could it be when we say *kick the bucket*
It is the sound of coming home.

Donde mueren los sueños

(Where dreams die)

alvaro enciso

The Constant Presence of Absence...

All my work deals in one form or another with the constant search for "The American Dream;" an elusive notion that gives all outsiders, like me, a false sense of hope. Is the American Dream so compromised nowadays that we can no longer recognize it? Or, is it another myth just like the "romantic west" that Hollywood invented?

Over the years, I have found pieces of this American Dream. Yet, when I have enough of these pieces to start putting them together, they scatter from my hands, and I am left with nothing. In a way, I am always reconfiguring this American Dream of mine, to placate my longing to belong somewhere.

When I moved to Southern Arizona in 2011, I learned that thousands of migrants had died crossing the desert looking for whatever is left of the American Dream. My work attempts to tell the stories of struggle, suffering, death, and broken dreams that the Sonoran Desert secretly holds. In telling their stories, I am divulging my own; after all, we are the stories we tell.

5 Crosses

Materials: The crosses are made out of wood and decorated with pieces of food cans discarded by migrants in the Sonoran Desert.



It Ended Here, #6



Untitled



Boonies, #3



Untitled



Untitled

5 Studio Pieces



The red dot series, #1
Materials: Repurposed metal, acrylic, on recycled wood.



Rumbo incierto

Materials: Food cans collected from migrant trails,
acrylic, on recycled wood.



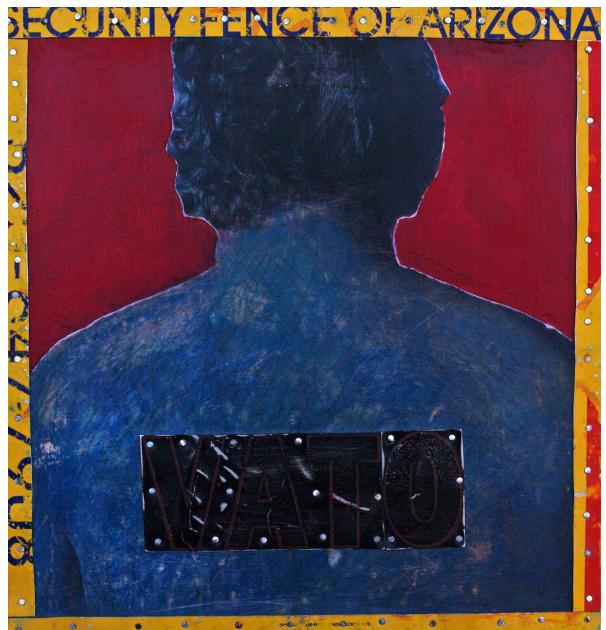
The incomplete circles series, #2

Materials: Repurposed metal, acrylic, on recycled
wood.



The circles series, #29

Materials: Repurposed metal, acrylic, on wood.



Vato

Materials: Photography, repurposed metal,
acrylic, on wood.

Alnitak

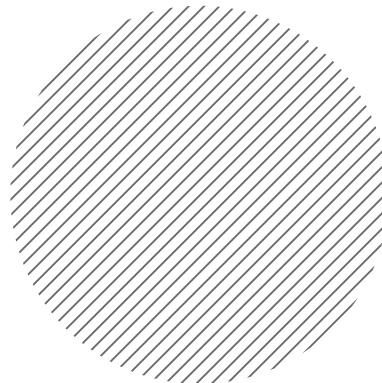
The trench was filled with light, warm water parting the cold frothy surface. He tried to swim against the current. I sat on the concrete bank watching the shadows shake leaves, his eyes lured upstream. Down, over his hair and forehead the water rushed by. I tried to follow his eyes, two sharp points of light lost in the comet's glare. The wind picked a handful of dirt in its hands and tossed it all around my body. The water leapt as if blessed by a priest. A single headlight illuminated each single grain of dust, each drop of holy water floating in the mist, sanctified lemon leaves. The tinted green light touched the bottom, a submerged fence covered in thick algae.

Swimming shouldn't be allowed here.

I waved him to shore but I couldn't stop him. I ran to tell his mother. An irrigation worker found his body and placed it atop a pile of leaves and rotting lemons in the orchard.

Beneath the silver windmill, she found him swimming in citrus and newsprint—the faded headline: César Chavez is dead.

Overhead, the moon, a constellation.

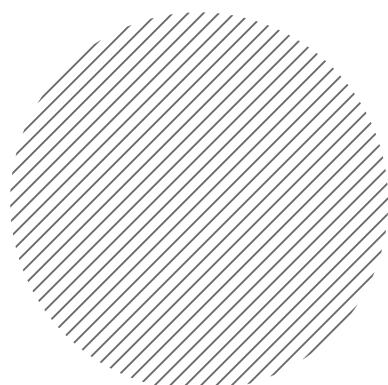


Mintaka

I work in the lemon orchards outside Bard, California. We met with a reporter yesterday, nice girl. Her hands seemed softest when she gripped my thick branch clippers. The red plastic handles were cracked from laying in the heat, and they matched her plaid bandana.

Her cameraman asked us to sing a *corrido* as we picked lemons and tossed them into brown crates. We sang of the moon, *las mañanitas*, spoke of our mother's habit of mailing us tortillas in yellow manila envelopes.

My hands, their cracked brown skin, belong to me, reaching for the highest limbs. My fingers grip until they ache. I work the lemon juice in. The burn acidic, human flesh evolving, turning into the very grove we stand in, these branches and roads of tilled soil.





IN MEMORY OF OUR FRIEND
DAVID GRAEBER
1961–2020

**"The ultimate, hidden truth of the world
is that it is something that we make, and
could just as easily make differently."**