

ISSUE 002

THE MATCHSTICK

AMNESTY CANADA'S ARTS & HUMAN RIGHTS MAGAZINE



Created by and for youth, *The Matchstick* promotes human rights activism through the creative imagination of young artists around Canada.



Issue 002

The Matchstick is Amnesty Canada's Arts & Human Rights magazine, dedicated to raising awareness of human rights violations and sharing the perspective of young human rights activists who speak through their craft.

Issue 002 features visual arts and poetry submissions from Canadian artist/activists under 25 and two guest essays curated by Amnesty International Canada.

We offer you The Matchstick as a reflection of youth human rights advocacy today and a creative archive of global solidarity.

Masthead

Saadet Serra Hasiloglu
Literary Editor

Rachel Lim
Creative Director

Kyo Lee
Literary Editor

Arishi Maisra
Visual Arts Editor

Megan Bailey
Layout Editor

Miranda Monahan
Web Designer

Laila Jafri
Editor in Chief





Tender

KYLA YIN JAMES

Medium: digital using Procreate and Photoshop

Dimensions: 18" x 24"

Year: 2021

'Tender' is a reminder that queer people of colour deserve to experience and see representation of themselves in healthy relationships. Tender can be interpreted as both tender, the state of vulnerability, and tend-er, someone who cares for the world around them. Tender looks at the softest moments and says, this is where all forms of love come from. This piece is a love letter to queer love, platonic love, romantic love, and friendships.

Kyla Yin James (they/them) is an illustrator and designer whose work is inspired by mythology, the unconscious, subcultures, speculative fiction, and sociopolitical systems. Their work is filled with symbolism that creates surreal and speculative scenes questioning the status quo.

Return from Olympus

MISHA REZA

Return from Olympus

Misha Reza

The cursor blinks for the length of my coarse, frozen breath as I plot the escape of these words
The cursor blinks for the upright
The upstanding, the grand vertical columns of our new world with its new language
Where grief is unspoken and offered to new gods in return for everything, all the time
Now I am racing to escape it, now I try to get to the point, unravel the solution, outrun this
ticking wrong
I cannot let go of the world
Her horizons crossed by lines rising up, reaching down, borders cut with blood and stale air
I am trying but I cannot name her wounds like I could before
When my rage cracked forwards like a nameless dawn, drowned by a storm, a cloud dense with
fear and fierce
Against their high glittering thrones
I cannot let go of the world to strike them anymore
I know my body now as half poison half antidote

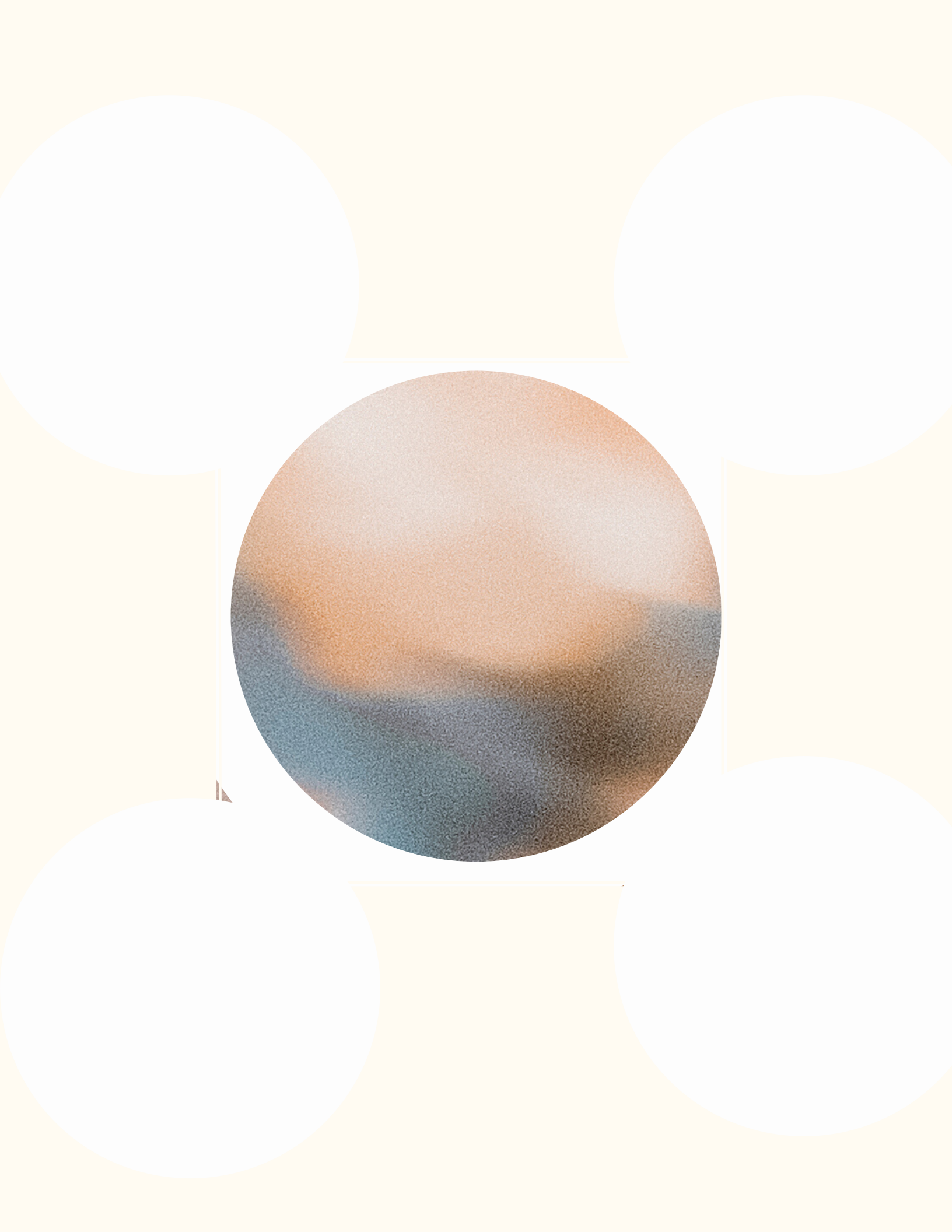
To the rivers that flow like prayer
To the winds that play by reason
To the soil that teaches time, birds that stretch the sky
Wild mother, your eyes are my window to the moon
Forget the stars, I wish upon you.

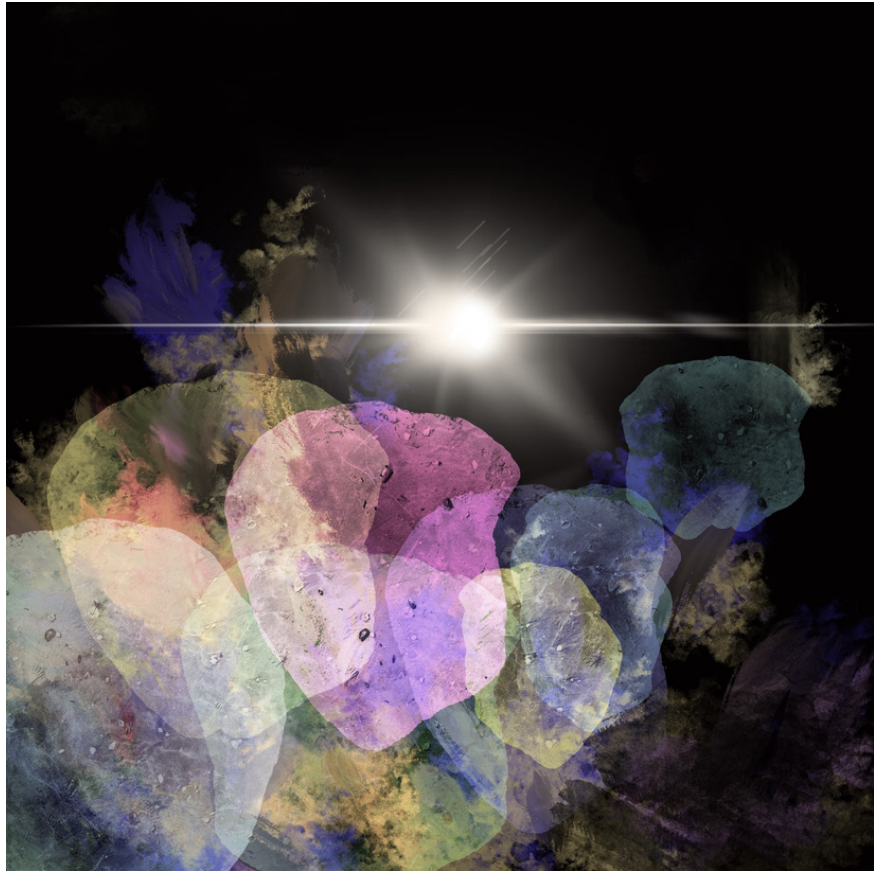
Return from Olympus

MISHA REZA

'Return from Olympus' is a response to the climate crisis and an ode to land defenders who fight for change and justice. This piece is a critique of the uncommon patience preserved for wealthy people and corporations; it challenges the socially and morally fractured institutions through which climate injustices are committed. The poem reflects on the willful ignorance and directionless desires of the rich few who interrupt the balance of the Earth at the expense of many. 'Return from Olympus' also recognizes the continuous re/formation of our planet and the layers of geographical storytelling within this process. Ultimately, this piece speaks to an internal feeling of dissent that comes from and returns to a place of love; it calls for a determined fight for climate justice - of nourishment and power restored to a planet that must be protected.

Misha Reza (They/Them) is a poet based in Canada. Her writing is driven by a deep regard for the natural world and interprets the ways in which people perceive and interpret the socio-ecological environments they occupy. Misha is devoted to the cause of climate justice and the protection of women's rights across the world. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science and is interested in learning more about sustainable construction/re-construction of affordable housing. Misha's poetry is inspired by the beauty and complexity of the world people share with each other as well as the many living things that sustain life.





Morningstar

BITA SHOURIDEH

The climate crisis has approached a dangerous edge: floods wipe out thousands, farmlands are destroyed by droughts, forest fires are rushing across the planet, species are at the edge of extinction and the defenders of precious land and water discover their work is a death sentence in a world committed to the accumulation of wealth and power by any means possible. 'Morning Star' is a tribute to the environmental activists and defenders as a sign of gratitude for their bravery and spirit which will nurture and illuminate on our planet in even the darkest moments of a future that is hanging on a thread.

The two pieces are intended to be showcased as a pair: one signifying a future where we have a rich planet full of biodiversity to protect, the second a possible future without the protective powers of our planet but the light of those who try to defend and preserve it.

Bita Shourideh (she/her) is a high-school student in Vancouver interested in public health and community building. She views art and activism as inseparable companions and uses her own work as a means to express her feelings about the world. Bita has been painting since she was 5 years old and is currently practicing with oil paints and digital art. Though she has always loved working with colours and different mediums of expression, she began to pursue art seriously due to the works of an Iranian artist, Arghavan Khosravi. Khosravi's works inspired Bita to combine her love for art with her concern for climate and the people defending it.





coreopsis

: the american dream

KYO LEE

coreopsis

: the american dream

KYO LEE

a new life broods inside the lips
of the coreopsis: its scent swims across the ocean
finds the dying & sells its dreams. sticky whispers:
come to america. you are hungry. you wade
across an unsplit ocean on the search for the promised land.
your only float line, the stem of the flower
that you hold between your teeth like nitro
under the mines. you reach the land. you are hungry.
your fingerprints are gone. washed away in the ocean.
english is a cockle on your tongue
that bites back. america is a permanent
temporary home. you sacrifice
& sacrifice & sacrifice. you decay into the soil
that feeds the flower. when yellow petals
opens its lips there is no promised land
only desert. only dark red stains
spilling outwards, tickseed biting
at your skin until you are infected
with america & all of its dreams.

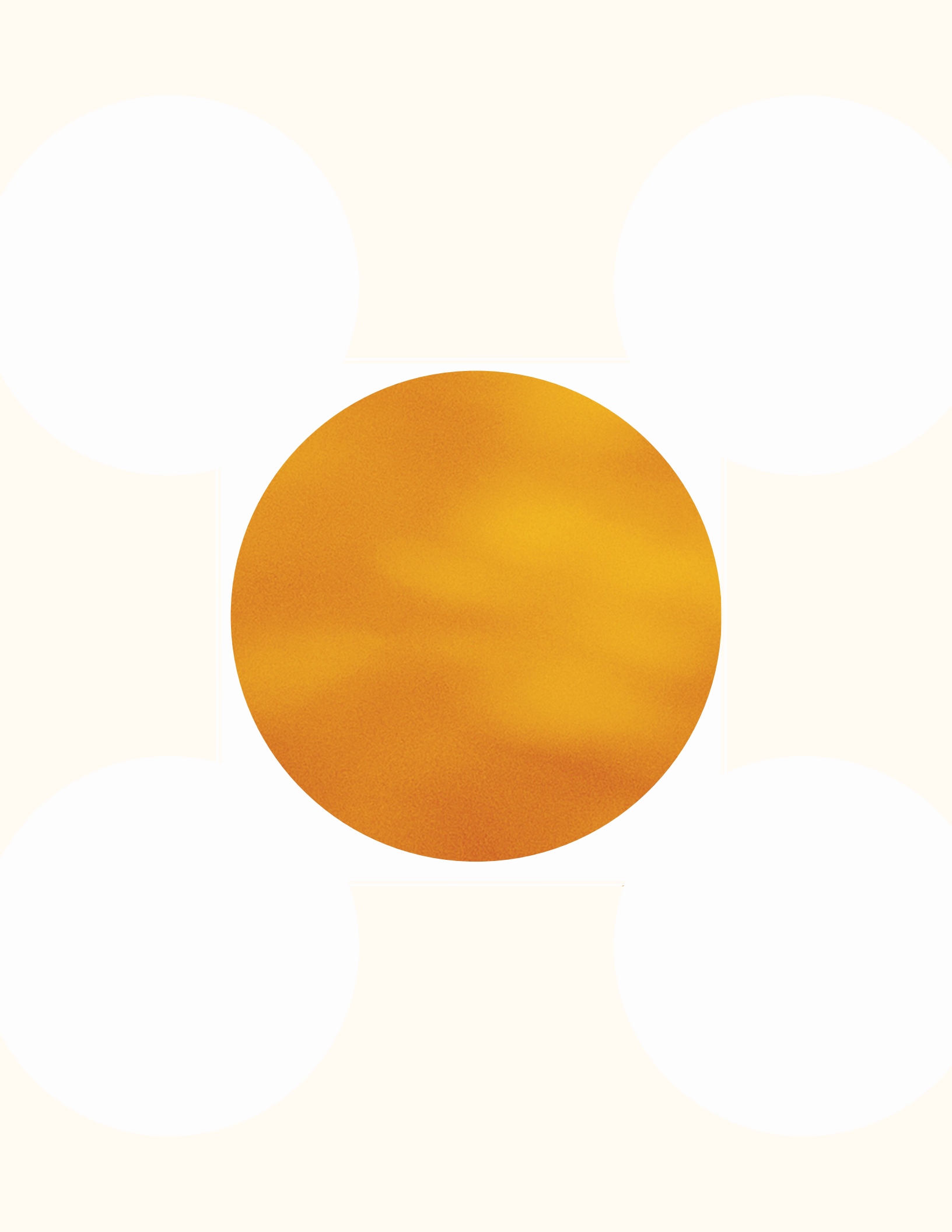
coreopsis

: the american dream

KYO LEE

“coreopsis” aims to display the harmful perceptions portrayed by the modern-day American Dream and its impacts on refugees, migrants and displaced peoples. It reflects on the inner and outer conflicts that occur in the search for success in a foreign land, from economic inequality, linguistic discrimination, loss of identity, assimilation and more. The poem incorporates true events from the early American Dream and connects it to the ethos’ modern presence. “coreopsis” speaks to the suffering and survival of a Diaspora and hopes to enlarge knowledge and empathy towards the subject.

Kyo Lee (she/her) is a youth social activist, writer and, dare she say, poet based in Ontario, Canada. Her literature has been recognized by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the Poetry Society of the UK, the League of Canadian Poets, the Scholastic Writing and Arts Awards and more. Kyo’s writing is often inspired by her own experience as a 2SLGBTQ+ Asian woman. She aims to use literature as her voice of activism and believes that it is a powerful tool of advocacy that amplifies the unheard and crafts experience into art. Therefore, she attempts to approach her art from an anti-oppression and intersectional view. To Kyo, writing is a voice, a form of self-confession, and of course, a magical power. She loves sunrises more than anything and she names all her houseplants.



/My Mother in Metaphors/

HEBA KHAN

I. The ocean of mercy
Brittle metacarpals wrenching
forgiveness
out of a crimson dungeon
for the unapologetically unremorseful
will be my fatal flaw.
My shallow empathy,
mere shackles on my ankles
and I drown in a sea of misery.
The only thing that
will set me free,
is submerging myself
in the ocean of my Mother's
infinite mercy,
performing an ablution
in these sacred saline waves,
hoping to absolve
the sins of the unforgivable.

II. The window and the light
My mind is a dark room,
out of which there is no escape.
Monsters, voices, demons
obliterate my existence
but then the verses
my Mother recites in hymns
echo in my ears
as hummed prayers,
make me a pilgrim,
seeking the Light,
teaching me
the essence of hope,
infusing my soul
with fragrant optimism.

III. The bird and its flight
Aren't all daughters
born in cages,
wings severed at conception
in this cultural prison,
dishonourable expectations
burdened on our shoulders
but my Mother carries these
mountains on her vertebrae,
that calamities converted
to ashes from which she rose,
a dove —
became
the flagbearer of serenity
so we could salvage
our remaining sanity;
so that all her foremothers
and granddaughters
could rest in peace

IV. The city and its history
Grief has a resilient past —
a city is never created outside
of war.
The mortar of skyscrapers
is always crimson sandstone
drawn from aquamarine vessels.
My Motherland is colonized
by storming troops of sorrows,
camouflaged in the trenches.
A city only exists
as a haunted tale of partition
and yet, as harrowing a history
that battles beget,
borne of the bloodshed
is the fertile land of dreams
and fragile opportunities.

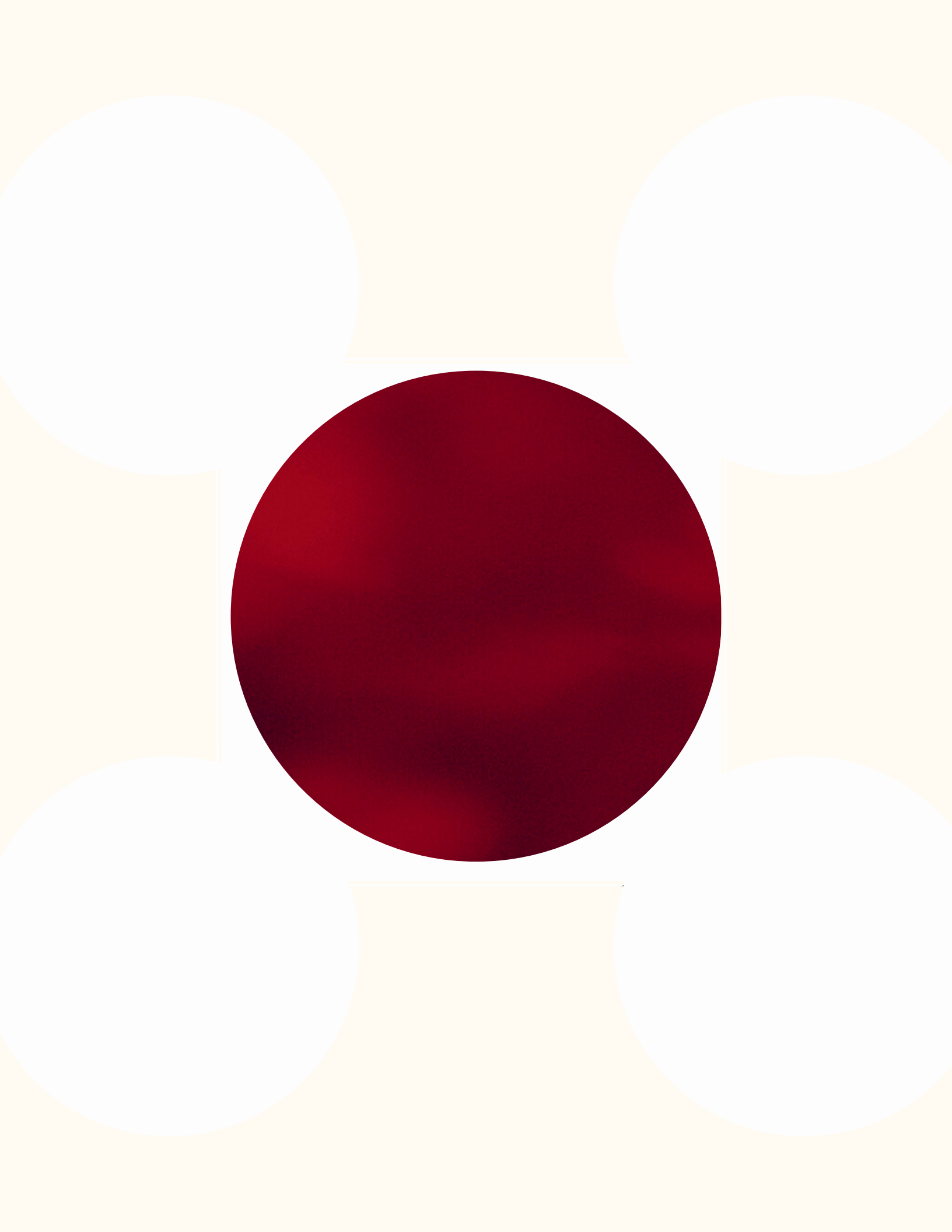
V. The tower and its strength
The minarets testify to ignorance
and in their oblivion,
still call me home to salvation
even when the wind
denies me entrance.
The strength
of my Mother's spine is derived
from her ancestral narrative
where her Mother
birthed migration
before her first offspring,
in a winter that did not spare
these god-forgiven towers.
Beware,
prodigal daughters,
you will be idolized
as the epitomes of sacrifice
but let not the earth-shattering cries
of your Mothers
drown in their hollow noise
and remember this truth — Divine;
beneath your feet lie the gates of paradise.

/My Mother in Metaphors/

HEBA KHAN

My Mother in Metaphors is a multiverse of metaphors to represent all Mothers — the women in our lives who have birthed us, the foremothers that have reincarnated in us, the mother figures who have encultured us, and the Motherland whose soil and narratives we are molded from and woven with. This poem advocates for the roles that women have embodied and their right to exist and have agency unapologetically. For centuries, women have been epitomized as the source of all sacrifices and empathy and through this poem, I hope to capture the strength and glory of all the women who have paved the path for us and demand justice for them, for us and for all our future generations of daughters.

For Heba Khan, poetry is a form of protest, a declaration of existence, and a way to reclaim the spirit of all the strong women who came before her. Heba writes about women who have paved the path ahead of her for the sake of inscribing an integrated narrative into the fabric of history. She views poetry as a harbor for the grief and resilience that reflect her perception of the word. A 'Jill' of many trades, Heba hopes one day to become a master of each skill. After all, if the writers don't dream big, who will?



To Your Land

SARA K.

To Your Land

SARA K.

To your land,
I owe the lowered sky,
a glaring closeness to god
To your land,
Which grants the true meaning of distance
To your land,
That rises from the waters of ashen dreams
I credit the music of conviction
To your land,
sacred seer of being, I find each road a favour
for each wound redeemed

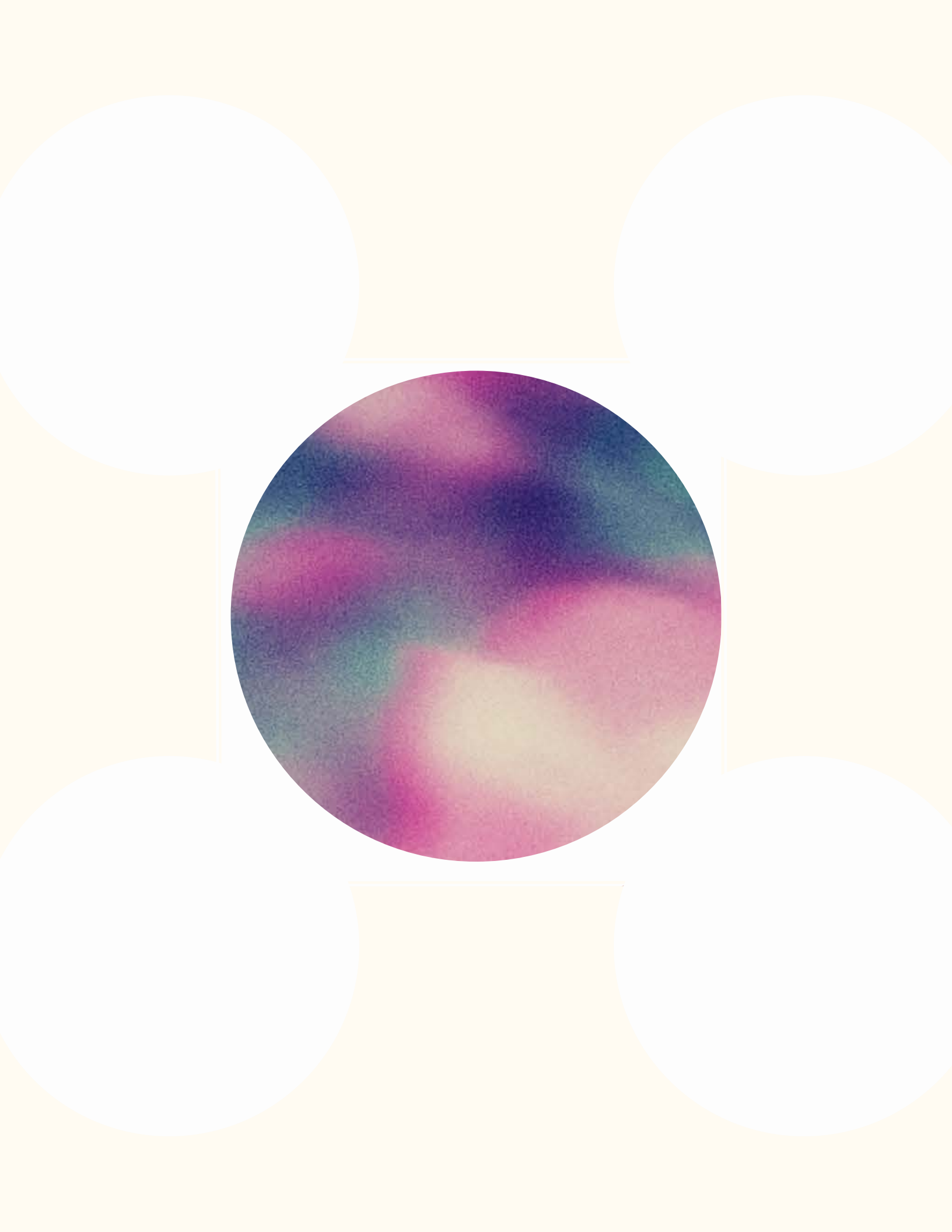
To your land —
To go on
To go on and on and on
To go on and on and on and punctuate only with prayer

To Your Land

SARA K.

This poem is a tribute to the late Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and his poem “To our Land” that touched the hearts of so many and strengthened public solidarity for the Palestinian cause. Despite being forced to live in what is best described as an open air prison, being subject to discrimination, violence and dispossession by the state of Israel, the Palestinian people remain models of strength immense perseverance. “To your Land” is a message of love and dedication for the Palestine remembered by our elders.

Sara K. is an artist and fierce advocate for climate action and refugee rights. She is motivated by the spirit of all the women in her life and is inspired by the teachings of activists who came before her. Sara enjoys making playlists for her friends and family and spends most of her free time drawing and reading.



Ensnare

SARA K.

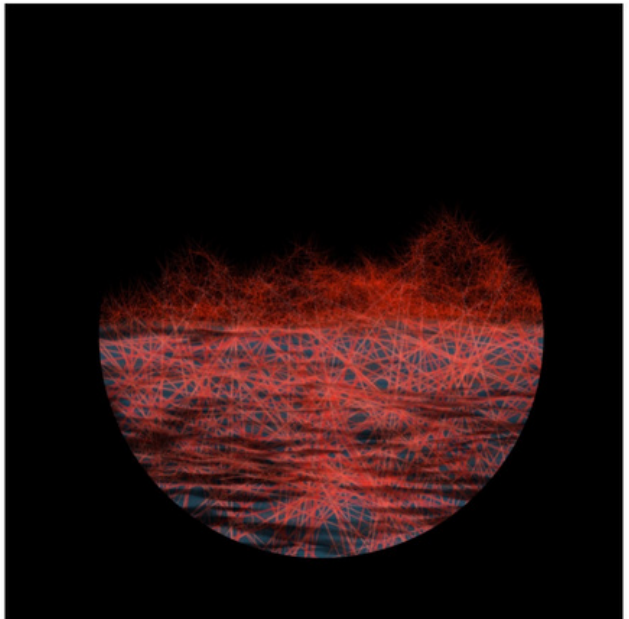
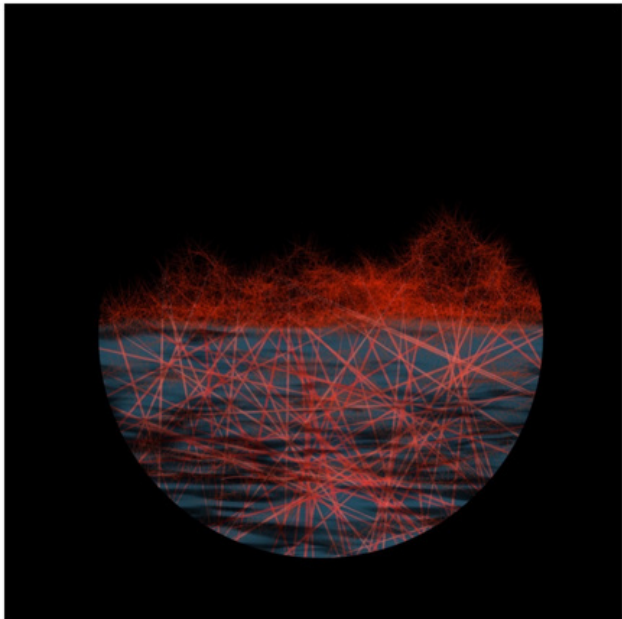
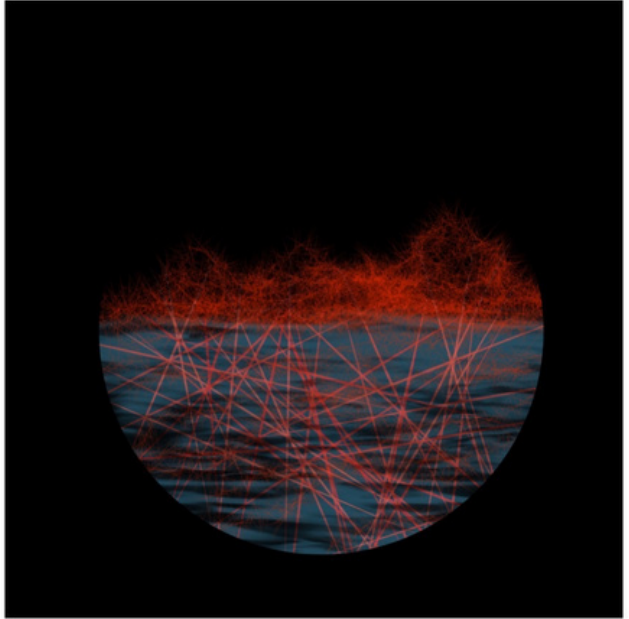
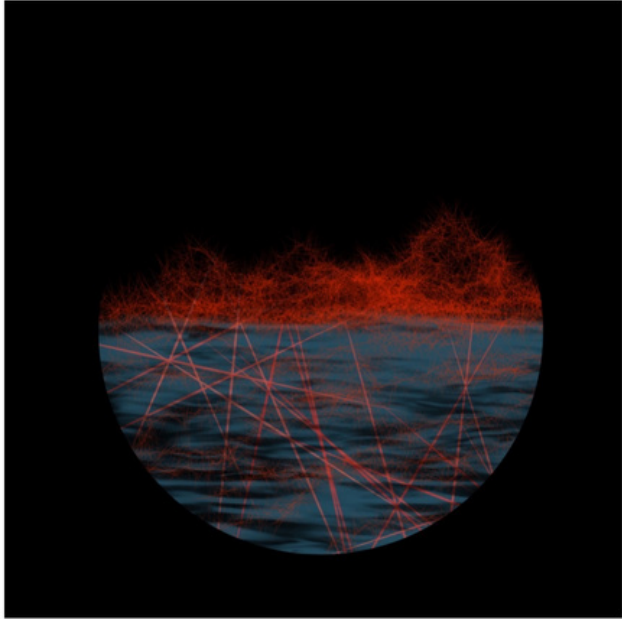
Medium: digital using Procreate and Photoshop

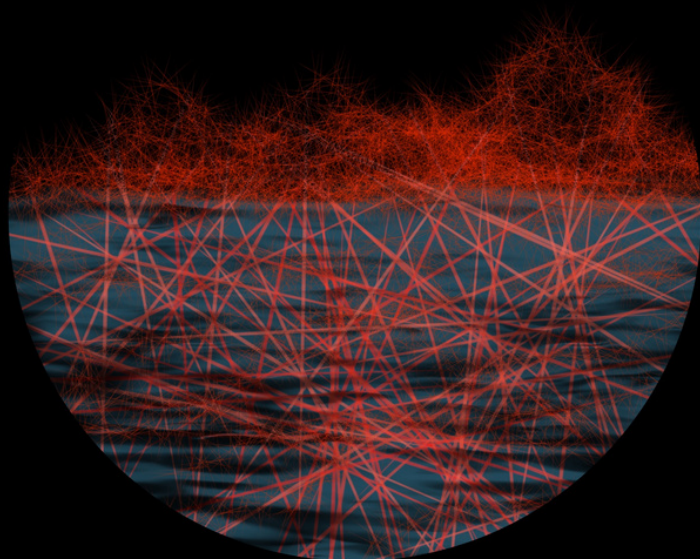
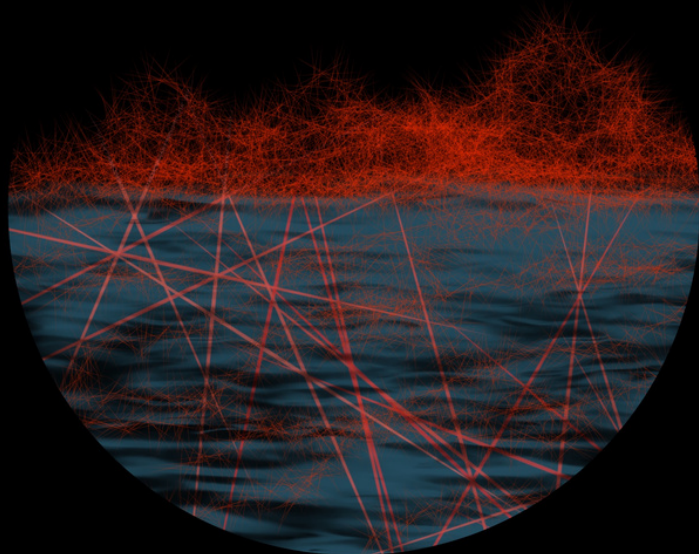
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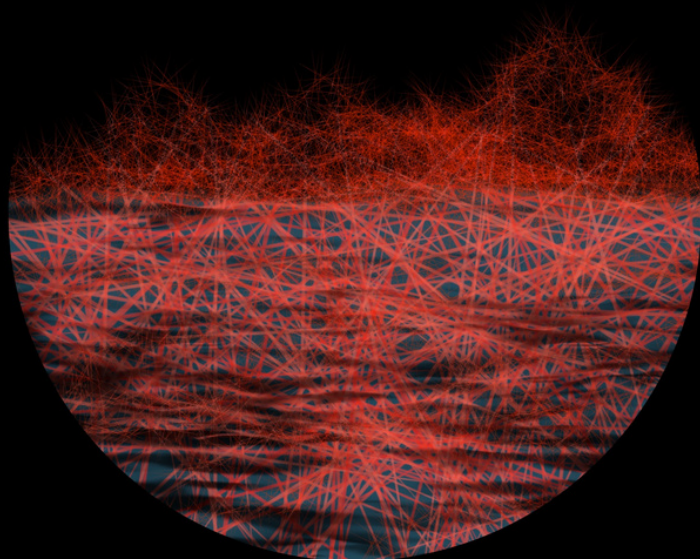
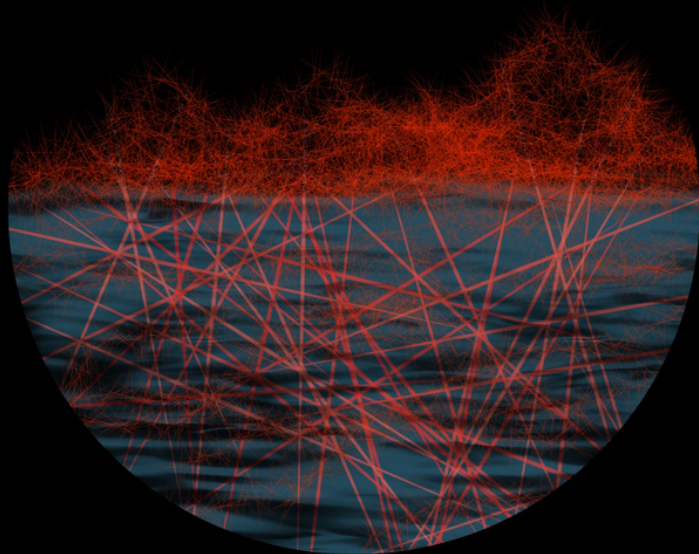
Year: 2021

Our oceans and seas are burning because of the greed of the powerful and their refusal to divest from the fossil fuel and arms industry. The same waterways are crossed by millions of refugees looking for safety, only to find another war zone created by the intolerance of those on land. Split in four to reflect how normalized this two-fold cruelty has become now-- each injustice feeding the other --- the red spikes through the water and land represent a sea and shore choked with borders, fences and the blood of innocent families and children. When looking at scenic landscapes of water and mountains, it is difficult not to think of the borders imposed on those fleeing dangerous conditions and the many dimensions of injustice that many countries exert on them.

Sara K. is an artist and fierce advocate for climate action and refugee rights. She is motivated by the spirit of all the women in her life and is inspired by the teachings of activists who came before her. Sara enjoys making playlists for her friends and family and spends most of her free time drawing and reading.







Industry, Police, and MMIWG2S in Wet'suwet'en Yintah

Jennifer Wickham is a member of Cas Yikh (Grizzly Bear House) in the Gidimt'en (Bear/Wolf) Clan of the Wet'suwet'en people. She currently lives in Gidimt'en yintah in what is now known as northern British Columbia and is the Media Coordinator for the Gidimt'em Checkpoint. Jennifer is currently co-producing/co-directing the documentary film "Yintah" about the Wet'suwet'en fight for sovereignty. She loves to bead, write and spend time with family. She dreams of freedom for her people and bright shiny futures for all the young people!



The Wet'suwet'en people have lived in what is now known as northern British Columbia, Canada since time immemorial. We have governed and maintained 22,000 km² of land through careful monitoring and through balancing a reciprocal relationship with the land. As a matrilineal society, our governance system is rooted with our women, and it is from our mothers that we get our house membership. Our practice of cultural transmission, which includes our duty to protect the land, was intentionally broken by the government by its forced removal of our people from the yintah (land). All the historic and ongoing violence of colonization has been perpetrated with the singular intention of having unfettered access to our territories and resources. As confirmed in 1997 by the Supreme Court of Canada case, *Delgamuukw—Gisdaywa*, our rights and title as Wet'suwet'en people have never been extinguished. The day after this decision was announced, the government and industry schemed ways to circumvent the decision in order to ensure their ongoing access to our yintah. As reported by The Narwal:

“Internal emails, memos and confidential briefing notes also show that, immediately after the *Delgamuukw* decision came down from the Supreme Court of Canada on Dec. 11, 1997, B.C. government officials discussed tactics to fight land rights with legal challenges, to curb direct action or litigation by First Nations and to use federal money intended for the healing of residential school survivors to make treaty negotiations more attractive.”

Today, this violence continues as mega-projects such as gas and oil pipelines are forced onto and throughout our lands as our laws and systems are disrespected, our women are victimized, and as our people are criminalized for upholding Wet'suwet'en laws. In December 2018, *Gidimt'en*, one of the five clans of the Wet'suwet'en Nation, took control of access to our territory by erecting the *Gidimt'en* Checkpoint. This was done to stand in solidarity with the *Unist'ot'en* house group for the protection of our sacred headwaters *Wedzin Kwa* (also known as the Morice River), our main salmon spawning river with water so pure we still drink directly from it.

Since then, the RCMP have organized yearly militarized raids to forcibly remove Wet'suwet'en people from their very own land, including key spokespeople like Sleydo' Molly Wickham, Gidimt'en clan member, and Howilkit Freda Huson of the Unist'ot'en. This was in direct contravention of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has issued three letters to Canada addressing these, and other, human rights violations.

The criminalization of our people goes back to the potlatch ban that was in effect from 1884-1951. During this time, Wet'suwet'en governance practices were outlawed by the Canadian government within the Indian Act. There were many ways the government tried to control and eradicate our ways of life through the Indian Act, including creating the reservation system, imposing the governance of chief and council, creating residential schools, and what has been come to be known as the 60's Scoop – the intentional and forceful removal of Indigenous children from their families and homes and their placement in predominantly white foster homes without access to their culture. Many of these colonial tactics were rooted in the belief that Indigenous people were barbaric, uneducated, and had no religious beliefs. These beliefs dehumanized Indigenous people and led to legitimize the theft of their land, resources, and children, under the guise of 'saving them'. In 2008, then PM Stephen Harper delivered an apology to Residential School survivors, stating, "These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, 'to kill the Indian in the child'." 14 years on from this formal apology, the same kind of colonial violence that tries to upend our rights, suppress our governance, and menace our community, prevails against us in our daily lives on Wet'suwet'en territory.

Many of the widespread harmful beliefs that were imposed on to our people were also taught to generations of non-Indigenous children. These harmful beliefs have resulted in the systemic failure to end the staggering numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

“Expert witnesses, institutional witnesses and Knowledge Keepers told the National Inquiry that resource extraction projects can drive violence against Indigenous women in several ways, including issues related to transient workers, harassment and assault in the workplace, rotational shift work, substance abuse and addictions, and economic insecurity.”

Very recently, a former Coastal GasLink employee filed a lawsuit for sexual battery. The Inquiry specifically recommended: “We call upon all governments and bodies mandated to evaluate, approve, and/or monitor development projects to complete gender-based socio-economic impact assessments on all proposed projects as part of their decision making and ongoing monitoring of projects. Project proposals must include provisions and plans to mitigate risks and impacts identified in the impact assessments prior to being approved.”

The 231 Calls for Justice still have not fully been implemented and it has taken years for the federal government to create a National Action Plan, all the while our women are still being murdered and going missing. We have received reports of assault and violence from individual Indigenous women who have worked for the Coastal GasLink pipeline within our territories and supported them in their filing of police reports and choices to take action to protect themselves. Turning to the RCMP to report assaults is not a reliable option in Wet'suwet'en territory as RCMP are known to harass and intimidate our women and community members on a daily basis.

Since March 2022, there have been hundreds of visits by the Community-Industry Response Group (a division of the RCMP) who threaten, arrest, intimidate and surveil all persons coming and going from the territory who do not appear to be industry workers. They set up road checks with no clear purpose other than to stop and identify Wet'suwet'en people travelling in their own territory for cultural purposes.

“They have repeatedly been found idling on the driveway of Sleydo’, Gidimt’en Checkpoint spokesperson’s home and have even gone so far as to shine flashlights through her windows while claiming to be ‘checking in’ on her family’s safety.

This kind of blatant harassment has extended to the site of our newest project, the building of a balhats (feast hall) at Tsel Kiy Kwa (Lamprey Creek), an ancient village site that is a physical embodiment of our governance system on the land. It’s clear that these are attempts to suppress our forms of governance, cultural practices, and even frighten our leaders into silence.

The fight for Wet’suwet’en sovereignty continues against the face of colonial violence, with Wet’suwet’en women at the frontlines defending their children’s futures.

Essay image description: Wedzin Kwa is the river at the headwaters of the salmon spawning channel for all the communities from Wet’suwet’en yintah down to the west coast. She is pure and contains everything needed to sustain life. The Wet’suwet’en people occupying their territory on her banks still drink from her. She is the boundary line between Cas Yikh and Unist’ot’en and they both fight to protect her from Coastal GasLink and other oil and gas pipelines that want to destroy her for profit.

Image credit: Michael Toledano.



Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender-Diverse People Are Humans With Rights.

Lynne Groulx is a Métis woman from the Treaty Three historic Métis community of Rainy River/Lake of the Woods, and is the Chief Executive Officer for the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). NWAC is a national Indigenous organization representing the political voice of Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people in Canada, inclusive of First Nations on and off reserve, status and non-status, disenfranchised, Métis and Inuit. NWAC was founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Indigenous women within their respective communities and Canadian societies.

For many Canadians, summer's warmth inspires travel plans: driving along forested highways, road trips exploring new territories, making pilgrimages to annual reunions. For Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, travel plans raise significant safety dangers. Canada's transportation corridors remain ground zero for incidents of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), both solved and unsolved.

Investigations into Indigenous deaths and disappearances along highways continue, despite the misperception that the MMIWG crisis has been resolved. While most Canadians enjoy their human right to bodily security, the continuing genocide against the people represented by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) means they face a significant risk of harm every single time they travel, especially if they are travelling alone.

"Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people are left to rely on their own tools and supports as they navigate the continuing safety risks they face. Grandmothers, aunts, cousins, sisters, and mothers all share information with each other along informal lines, warning against places and people to avoid."

In 2021, NWAC developed a map that identifies risk hotspots for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people across the country as part of its Safe Passage project. Using MMIWG case data, the map tracks violence intensity zones. It is a vital resource and tool in helping those at risk when making travel decisions.

Many Indigenous women who travel this country's roads are not on leisure trips. Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people may be travelling alone because they are fleeing violence, poverty, or other unsafe situations in their home or community. They may be going to work or a medical appointment in a community that has no direct link by public transportation.

The Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG Report released in 2019 explains, in depth, the ways colonization increases these risks. Call to Justice 4.8 calls “upon all governments to ensure that adequate plans and funding are put into place for safe and affordable transit and transportation services and infrastructure for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people living in remote or rural communities.” Call to Justice 17.9 calls on Canada to provide safe transportation options, such as “safe ride” programs in rural, remote, and Northern communities. These calls have yet to be fulfilled.

NWAC’s Safe Passage project is both a response to the continuing MMIWG crisis, and a critical tool highlighting the urgency and importance for Canada to take meaningful action. We continue to add cases to the database on a weekly basis and the creation of the map is just one of the actions we are taking while governments dither about what to do next. NWAC calls on Canada to begin to take the steps necessary to address the 231 Calls to Justice in the MMIWG Final Report.

Our recent analysis finds there has been little effort in that regard since the release of the Inquiry report. Budget 2021 directs \$2.2 billion over five years, but concrete action items are not separately costed, and provide little information to show how these funds will help. While we advocate for these concrete steps, we can turn to human-rights laws to demand meaningful action. “Human rights laws set the stage for shifting away the perspectives that devalue Indigenous lives and view them as less important. Laws can recognize and affirm that we are inherently and equally worthy of the rights to life and safety.”

Human rights laws, both domestic and international, cannot promise safety for Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, but they do offer a path to change the grim reality of the MMIWG crisis. Human rights laws set the stage for shifting away the perspectives that devalue Indigenous lives and views them as less important. Laws can recognize and affirm that we are inherently and equally worthy of the rights to life and safety as any other Canadian.

Human rights laws also hold Canadian decision-makers accountable for the actions they are taking (or often, not taking) to address violence, especially when it is an ongoing, national crisis harming a specific group of people. For example, when the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reviewed Canada's human rights commitments to children earlier this month, they called on Canada to take stronger steps to investigate and provide justice to MMIWG family members.

Yet, we face barriers when we try to get help and seek protection from violence. Witnesses told the National Inquiry numerous stories of police ignoring requests to help locate missing women, hesitancy to call police during domestic violence for fear their children would be taken and violence committed by health care professionals. Canada does not honour our human rights when it allows unsafe systems to continue operating. These include systemic discrimination in health, child welfare, and justice systems. In reality, this means that Canada's continued failure to address violence against women is perpetuating genocide.

As a result, Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people are left to rely on their own tools and supports as they navigate the continuing safety risks they face. Grandmothers, aunts, cousins, sisters, and mothers all share information with each other along informal lines, warning against places and people to avoid. NWAC's map is helping them.

We do this because we know, from lived experience, the people in power are not making decisions and taking actions that prioritize our safety. This must change.

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Essay image description: Indigenous women honour and pay tribute to Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people.

Image credit: This image was generously provided by NWAC.

TAKE ACTION

ENGAGING IN ACTIVISM

Amnesty supporters are making the world a fairer place. Because of the actions of individuals, lives have been saved, unfair laws have changed, the wrongfully imprisoned have been released.

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