



*Nevertheless,*

**#ShePersisted**

BARBARA JANE REYES, EDITOR



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## SHIRLEY ANCHETA

### Strike: Salinas, 1933

The town is named for a river.  
The river is hidden beneath sand and silt  
with salt marshes where it meets the sea.  
it is September. And the leaves  
of the cottonwood are almost golden  
in a cold light.  
Not far from the river  
in the labor camp named Green Gold  
for the lettuce we harvest,  
even the fighting cocks pecking their corn  
seem bright bronze in a tame light.  
it is 1933. Our wages have been cut from 35 cents an hour to 20.  
We are Filipino and “hard to manage”  
because we say *strike*  
in the language they taught us.  
Down the road  
vigilantes piss in the ditches.  
A car is on fire,  
But that is not the lesson –  
It is meant to distract us.  
They splash gasoline  
on the bunkhouses and chicken coops.  
Flames burn the buildings to the ground.  
We inhale the smoke  
of 100 sacks of rice put aside for the strike.  
*They thought our hunger would make us quiet.*  
Like birds we send ourselves  
into the night  
the color of stars  
soon to fall. Our leader is in jail.\*  
We continue to strike.  
*For months we buried our hunger  
with edible weeds we pulled from the ditches.*  
When we nod to our empty hands  
And, in later days, when you look for us –  
absent in books                      abandoned by history—  
someone will be holding a dark fire,

someone will be writing us out.

Our eyes search out those who left, those who stayed.

At the end of the fields is the edge of America:

We were held by a word.

We stand in the light of a clear blaze

in a moment of all possibilities,

nodding to ourselves

as if you had found us.

## XOCHITL-JULISA BERMEJO

### **The Body is an Ocean Weeping**

*I bled and thought about the people to be killed. I bled and thought about the people to be born. –Maxine Hong Kingston*

I had my IUD removed, a shackle  
around my womanhood, the other day.  
My ovaries bloomed roses  
inside me to show they were thankful.  
Possibilities have been set free,  
and I dream  
of those who now have a chance  
to be born, and those who will never be.  
The child born to a beach, the boy  
I try not to think of, emerges  
like a prophecy, but he is only  
a toddler.  
Red dungarees and blue shorts  
hugging chubby legs say as much.  
He is a woman warrior's son  
still in baby shoes with orange soles  
washed clean by waves.

# TARA BETTS

## **She Persisted**

Resist is just two letters  
away from persist, so  
excuse me if this heart  
is still pumping and stays  
doing that after I'm dead.  
Some of us extend beyond  
sugar water and blood, lies  
claimed as facts. Some of us  
have always been alternatives  
so when that word is taken  
too, and when I say "too,"  
please understand that our  
names, labor, language, land,  
and many dollars that should  
have been in our pockets are  
are on the list before we get  
to silence and persecution  
that you have claimed to face.

Do not ever tell me about  
persistence as the twin  
of disobedience, a body  
double for anything alien  
that teems and festers  
on this pristine America  
sequestered behind  
an impossible wall.

Do not tell me how a white  
woman and government official  
need to shut her mouth  
and behave, so you can allow  
her male colleagues to parrot  
the same words. I watched you  
shoot another of her colleagues  
in the head while a young brown  
man held her head together.  
I am used to these games.  
Some of us will never play  
by the rules that you set.

# IRENE FAYE DULLER

## **maganda isn't yours**

they won't respond to your cooing  
nor your offers nor your scent

they won't turn your corner  
nor keep your house nor make  
your bed

they won't  
don't try

this is a requiem of such myths  
that bind them by wrist  
that they willfully resist

every  
day  
since

and now

you look for them  
(like they know you would)

they do not seek you

they've changed their names

they do not look the same

they are learned and lit

every  
day  
since

they found each other

# MEGAN KAMINSKI

## Riot Love Poem

A riot an order a call in the night to say I love  
you and you and you and most especially  
the street and open space and our bodies  
unbound by restraint and moneyed constriction  
and in dreams last night you spoke of fire  
of labor and building and soft nests not armor-clad  
SUVs on urban boulevards not oil money not Stoleshnikov Lane

This morning I exhale across continents breath joined  
with yours and ours and wanting more than boundaries  
street lamps awakened petals unfurling hands opening  
burn treasury burn prison burn credit burn churches  
burn drones burn austerity burn banks burn office buildings  
sing certainty and mass gatherings totalities  
I opened to I into we

Now we are in Moscow now Perm now Mordovia  
now we are in Paris now London now Guantanamo  
now Wall Street now Ferguson now Oakland  
now the avenue the bakery the café  
text springing from fingers  
language from mouths

## MEGAN KAMINSKI

### **Your lines are as long and despondent as our own**

A flock of birds hooks the sky flying north  
in snow dripping fat and damp flattening against  
sparsely covered dirt the old man cranks by in his  
late model compact back windows obscured by  
papers and books I think of you in Grand Rapids of  
you in Philadelphia of you in Atlanta and Oakland and Portland  
and the snow falls faster and winter is hurtling itself  
into April and why are we all so cold and distant and far  
tree roots dig deep the snow minor correction to drought-  
begotten fields trees uprooted branches line the road  
we carry we into hearts and warm dinners and soft sweaters  
we bring we in through books and words and letters  
and packages sent through long winter months  
breath deep carrying spore from hand to page to mouth

# RAINA J. LEÓN

## poet : code's story

you think it is so distant the lynching what to make of the story  
my mother told in the car on the way to my wedding how there  
was a boy who liked her came calling round and said *what would  
they do if we went to prom together* the white boy asked she  
said *you might live but me they'd find in a ditch* because that's  
what happened to one black boy who went calling round a pretty  
white girl the folks warned her they warned him  
but young in love defiant all that high in the mountains what  
screams to not hear they found him in a ditch but her  
she didn't come back to town but lived but not so far in time  
more recent still the moroccan boy on the edge of manhood  
by the side of the road between pennsylvania and ohio a group of  
us had just returned from a conference on race and organizing and  
social action hopeful not on guard must be 14 years now  
we got lost he turned around in the wrong gravel driveway  
the man came with his gun called the police we saw  
it that rifle on a brown leather seat manuel he held  
his hands out front still only reached for his wallet when  
the officer said and slow from a distance my friend david so black  
and proud went mad we had to hold him back so many hands  
*it's not right it's not right* and still that officer made manuel  
go back to the gravel rake it level with bare hands that rifle  
was there while whiteness watched while we in the next van  
watched just to know he would leave alive  
and on the day of my wedding on the way to marry an Italian man  
my mother told a story I had heard before a  
lesson was that ditch still yawning and then a month later when we  
went bowling the mountain alley what more to do how love  
noticed the whiteness all the whiteness whispered in my  
ear *so white* and i said *you notice but i feel and we've been here  
two hundred years* and him *but remember i'm the foreigner*  
and so we two found the lightest ball not skilled it was a turbulent  
brown we held and aimed and let go not skilled so many  
gutters waiting next to us a couple with a toddler i smiled because  
children she smiled back but him not one word while he  
launched his green against the raised guards set to guide his son's  
way

Raina J. León

**poet reads the bloodlust news**

we cannot sleep

bullet

we cannot listen to music

bullet

we cannot technicolor dream

bullet

we cannot go to space

bullet

we cannot marry

bullet

we cannot have children

bullet

our children cannot play

bullet

our mothers cannot seek help

bullet

our fathers cannot be tall

bullet

our grandmothers cannot open doors

bullet

our grandfathers cannot remember

bullet

our cars cannot break down

bullet

we cannot speak

bullet

we cannot vote

bullet

we cannot eat

bullet

we cannot be

be bullet

## MARGARET RHEE

### **What We Write, What We Believe: An Asian American Poet's Manifesto After the Third World Gay Revolution (1972)**

*For Michael Derrick Hudson*

1. We want the right to self-determination for all Asian Americans and poets, as well as control of the destinies of our communities. We believe that Asian Americans and poets cannot be free until we are able to determine our own destinies, our own poiesis, and names.
2. We want liberation for all women and their right to enjambments at any place, anytime.
3. We want truthful teaching of American literature.
4. We can guarantee full equal publication for Asian American poets and all poets of color.
5. We demand all poets must read Langston Hughes as a primer.
6. Only a white man could write, I celebrate myself for pages, we love Walt Whitman, but still tho, keep this in mind.
7. We want reparations for all the Asian American poets who have experienced racism in poetry workshops.
8. We want the abolition of the prison industrial complex, and to abolish the idea that politics is not poetics.
9. We want the abolition of the academic industrial complex, and to abolish the idea that poetics is politics.
10. We want an end to the fascist poets who utilize aesthetics for racist purposes. An end to their access to Microsoft Word, paper, pink suits, glibness, and gel pens.
11. We want all Asian American poets to be exempt from any tokenization, be it an anthology, committee, press, and marriage.
12. We demand all allies to step up and cut. Closer to commit to actual structural

practices that open up poetry to diversity; this means actively fostering Asian American poetry as a viable literature with a future and history.

13. We believe in the spectacular. See: Joseph O. Legaspi on the future of Asian American poetry.

14. We want a new society and a new poetics. A revolutionary one, free food, free poetry, free books, free pencils, free love. Free art for all. We want a poetry society where the needs of the most oppressed poets are first, not just white poets.

15. We want to demand that the politics of poetry is not simply on the page, or stage, or Twitter, but the organized movement for change, see: UndocuPoets.

16. We want an end to all banned ethnic literature, we want to insist on ethnic pulp served as sustenance.

17. We believe there is nothing inherently just about poetry, but in the hands of wrongdoers, it can go terribly and we need to leave from the reading.

18. My skin is my own shade of yellow; you can't take what belongs to me.

19. How to become human: the soft moan of recognition at the breath of a line, how she began crying after reading Li Young Lee for the first time in her college library.

20. Consider the history of yellow.

21. Consider the history of your hand.

22. If only it was as easy to take on your name.

23. Maybe then you'd get it now.

24. The cars now are driving fast on the highway.

25. How two poets reclaimed a love song called Kundiman, this is what we believe.

26. She picks up her pen.

27. She calls it out.

28. She writes one word.

29. Take me closer.
30. Take me nearer.
31. Rhapsody in plain yellow.
32. John Donne, are you listening?
33. Remember, poets daydream?
34. Remember, we danced.
35. Remember, you believed.

# MARGARET RHEE

## Day 0

I prayed for Gaza while you slept next to me. I prayed not like I was taught, but lying down, eyes opened, and through my teeth, so not to wake you.

In the night, I wake. I want to kiss you while gazing at the side of your face, but I don't. You might wake and a dream should never be interrupted unless. More bombs dropped today, they said. Now, it's Day 3, and more than 80 lives. I don't pray for Gaza aloud, you might wake. All I want is your body underneath mine, my boulder, I pray because your breathing, reminds me why.

On the fifth day, I forgot to pray. But I woke in the middle of the night. I looked up for a while at the ceiling in our dark. More than 172 people have died now in Gaza. You were facing the wall. I rolled over to my side, and wrapped my arms and legs around your body to pray. You heaved a great sigh in your sleep. Then, you began to snore.

On the seventh day, more than 350 people died in Gaza. How can pain translate through a newsfeed? In the future, we should be able to step into the photographs, and feel. Haptic won't cut it. Perhaps, feeling pain is the only way, we would want peace, and the only way, we would begin to pray. How does death look like? On the seventh night, you murmured and wailed in your sleep. I sang a soft song to you, and then held you to soothe you.

Your lips and hands know how to hold my wrists like so, how to hold my neck like so. Stay the night, because across the ocean and landmass and what we call borders, people are dying. More than 600 people died now in Gaza today. It is Day 14. I prayed for Gaza while you slept. I should've prayed for us too.

More than 1,000 people died in Gaza. It is Day 19. Today, I drove on the freeway. Red ripe tomatoes sunbathe on the entrance ramp. They will soon rot from the sun's heat and car exhaust. I pass the tomato truck. In front of me, the garlic truck moves slow. Garlic skins flies through the wind and lands on my window. Skins easily discarded and disgraced. You said nothing while this was happening. I said nothing, too.

By day 27, more than 1,700 people have died. I prayed, lover. I prayed. I never told you this in the morning.

Ten years ago, I watched my father die a slow death. It was one that began, when he stopped eating, and his refusal for food lead to his diabetic collapse. Then, in the hospital, the stroke took him into a coma, and I never got to talk to him again. Before the coma, he grew so skinny in the hospital. He grew skinny without his permission. The nurse held his head as he began to whimper. His reluctance. When given a second chance, my dying father wanted to live.

The difference between wound and womb? Palestinian and Israeli? You and me?

A fruit fly rests in the crevice of the peach. I can smell the peach at an arm's length. I want to shoo the fly away. I want to cut and feed you peach pieces before we sleep. A digestive act to ensure sweet dreams. Your body mapped against mine. Do not leave me in the night. Do not leave me when you close your eyes. Now, over 2000 people have died.

It began again because four young men were murdered. One burned and bludgeoned. Three shot. Here are their names and ages. Muhammad Abu Khdeir, 16, Eyal Yifrach, 19, Naftali Fraenkel, 16, and Gilad Shaar, 16. Let's not take the back door here. Let's say frankly that names matter, and that all lives matter, and borders have no place in prayer. The death count is lopsided. Why? Injustice exists and so must peace. We are human beings. I want to see images of a young man imprinted in me: his smooth face full of hope, and his crinkled smiling eyes of pleasure, and alive.

You were a young man once. I think you were about 17, leaning against the doorway of your childhood home. Seeing that old photograph is when I began to love you.

I mouth this to you and will you to wake. Hold my palms still together with yours.

Let us pray.

**the geo-physics of de-tribalization**

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Chapter 1. *Hurricanes*: counter-clockwise winds of disruption, more than five hundred years of category 5 storms, all of them named *Massacre* named *Betrayal* named *Stolen* named *Genocide*

Chapter 2. *Drought*: only our ancestors' blood poured onto the cracked earth, everything green dying, violence and screaming, and the smashed skulls of infants laying bleached under the sun

Chapter 3. *Wildfires*: disease, the land stolen as the fires of smallpox and influenza, bubonic and pneumonic plagues, raged in every direction, leaping wildly, as they added blankets to fuel the roaring, leaving charred bodies in a ravaged landscape

Chapter 4. *Tornadoes*: piercing cyclones between their thighs, the rape of their dark-skinned flesh, blood and weeping, invading seeds, wombs straining in the wake of a war without name

Chapter 5. *Volcanoes*: molten earth rising, orange and red lightning splitting the dark skies, the ash of colonization smothering histories and libraries and human bodies

Chapter 6. *Earthquakes*: vehement earth, injured earth, ruptured earth, lands come undone, millions disappeared, nations forced from their lands, nations scattered even the clouds wept

Chapter 7. *Floods*: raging waters of amnesia which ripped away all of our stories, leaving families, communities, nations like broken-limbed debris

Chapter 8. *Sinkholes*: erosion of our names and our languages, cataclysms of forgetting, shadowed caves of shame, collapses which rendered us unrecognizable

Chapter 9: *Magnetic fields*: we are the children, electric in our waiting, inexorably pulling us to each other, recognizing no distinctions in time

Chapter 10. *Deep ocean currents*: under the surface of the ocean, hidden and immense, returning, rising, writing our names on the sand  
we may be de-tribalized but we are still indigenous to this land  
we still belong



# LEHUA M. TAITANO

## hyphenation

"There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism...  
 a hyphenated American is not an American at all."  
 --Theodore Roosevelt  
 Columbus Day, 1915

hyphens mostly to break apart or  
 can join separates

hyphenation process reading

the same El Dorado  
 a conversation turns to hyphens  
 you we who we feel someone says  
 we are either side of the perforation  
 someone says i am the hyphen

i remember practice  
 sheets the lines  
 to curl to

Write your name in this space write your name in this space write your name

i would not mostly to break apart  
 i would not fit

the practice sheets  
 before we too many  
 vowels said together  
 should shorten to you  
 Lehua

LEHUA M. TAITANO

**Kituwah**

*for Ching Fu*

reservation river,  
and the incremental  
trestles criss  
cross the broken flag tree  
signaling the creek where  
villas sell for half  
the asking.

remember when  
I posed with the stuffed  
black bear  
outside the fudge shop?  
at six, I came away  
with that polaroid, a toy  
tom-tom and a blooming  
disquietude.

we weren't yet  
friends.

that was when  
the pond was swollen  
with prize fish,  
when half-baited hooks  
would snag any flap  
of fin or gill,  
and the boy at the wooden  
counter hefted  
a lead pipe with his striking hand.

I think the sign read:  
Whole in the Morning.  
Filletted by Nightfall.

but now we slip  
on the cobbled bank pitched  
toward the olive lip of  
bridge water  
and the cars are all mangled,  
wedged carefully across  
the stream.

silvered bumpers  
piled in the pattern

of surrender,  
the roadside having shrugged  
them over the rails.

how neat the battering,  
how organized the rusted  
lament.

not far from this place,  
just downstream,  
we will stumble upon  
Kituwah,  
move quietly through her  
barren cornfields,  
sing silently  
our prayers.

# ANGELA NARCISO TORRES

## Feather

The almost-neon sheen of moss  
spreading like a stain on  
the ash tree's grooved bark,

the hammock's frayed rope  
to which goldfinches return  
each June, needling, trailing silk

to their nests, but mostly the quiet  
of a neighbor's house, white  
drapes billowing, bring back

those summer silences  
I moved in as a child, a shadow  
slinking through empty rooms.

Dust motes tunneled light above  
the cold floor where, belly-down  
I sprawled, goose feather in hand.

If I lay there long enough,  
if I brushed the feather  
on a fixed spot on the pebble-

washed floor, how long before  
I'd make a dent? The point  
is not that when night fell

there was barely a scratch. The point  
is how, armed with a feather,  
I believed I could make a mark.

# VICKIE VÉRTIZ

## Dictation

The INS came to our house. Our house was built in the 1980s in a suburb. The outside was painted a brown beige. It was two stories, so you know it was a dream. And because there were no other houses around it, I let the INS officers in. And because I call them INS you know this is in the past, but it's here again, just with a different name. The Anus officers had wives. One of them had brown hair and bangs, a short haircut, a street bob. The Antennas officers didn't say anything. They were dressed like sheriffs, deputies from Los Angeles: green slacks and light beige shirts, aviator glasses. They hid their eyes. They stood around the kitchen and said nothing. One of their wives, I asked her to have a seat. Or maybe she just took a seat. You know how those people are. And I knew I had to feed her, feed them, after all they were our guests. And we knew that they were there to take my brother Jesus, though I know that he was born here. And because we were expecting the Ay-and-yes to come, Jesus had gone to hide in his black Mustang, his old Mustang, a late 80s model. And he was sitting in his car, hiding in the garage. He was in the dark, in plain sight for we who can see in the dark. He sat in his car for hours and hours, waiting for our guests to leave. He waited so long he turned into a Mustang, and so it ended. I must have served sandwiches, maybe the kind with the crust cut off, but that's not the kind of food we make. They were polite, tight-lipped, light-skinned. One of them had a thick accent and a high and tight, a buzzzz. He cut it himself with a chainsaw. He was mad at me for making him drive. He asked me what language did I speak. I said, All of them. And they finally left, bellies full of silence.

Next time, said my lover, we don't have to let them in. I reached out and held his hand and said, Thank you for reminding me.

Next time, I said, I'm going to cut their bellies and feed them chicharron.

## ABOUT THE POETS

**Shirley Ancheta** co-edited the poetry anthology *Without Names* (Kearny Street Workshop, San Francisco), one of the first such collections by Filipino American poets. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, including *Bamboo Ridge* (Honolulu), *Quarry West*, and *Premonitions: the Kaya Anthology of Asian North American Poetry*.

**Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo** is the author of *Posada: Offerings of Witness and Refuge* (Sundress Publications 2016), a 2016-2017 Steinbeck fellow, and former Poets & Writers California Writers Exchange winner. She has work published in *Acentos Review*, *CALYX*, *crazyhorse*, and *The James Franco Review* and is a cofounder of Women Who Submit.

**Tara Betts**, author of *Break the Habit* and *Arc & Hue*, holds a Ph.D. from Binghamton University and a MFA from New England College. Tara is a co-editor of *The Beiging of America: Personal Narratives About Being Mixed Race in the 21st Century*. She teaches in Chicago.

**Irene Faye Duller** is a founding member of SF based Filipino American spokenword group, 8thwonder, Sisterz of the Underground Hip Hop Collective and Rhapsodistas. Currently, an adjunct of Asian American / Pilipino Studies at USF + SFSU, she has also been a featured performer and published poet with Galeria de la Raza's Lunada Series. She is a mother of two dragons and resides in Haight Ashbury with her partner.

**Megan Kaminski** is the author of two books of poetry, *Deep City* (Noemi Press, 2015) and *Desiring Map* (Coconut Books, 2012), and many chapbooks, most recently *Providence* (Belladonna\*, 2016). She is an assistant professor in the University of Kansas' Graduate Creative Writing Program and an Integrated Arts Research Initiative Faculty Fellow at the Spencer Museum of Art. She also curates the Taproom Poetry Series in downtown Lawrence.

**Raina J. León**, member of the Carolina African American Writers Collective, is the author of three collections of poetry, *Canticle of Idols*, *Boogeyman Dawn*, and *sombra: (dis)locate* (2016) and the chapbook, *profeta without refuge* (2016). She has received fellowships and residencies with Macondo, Cave Canem, and CantoMundo, among others. She also is a founding editor of *The Acentos Review*, an online quarterly, international journal devoted to the promotion and publication of LatinX arts.

**Margaret Rhee** is the author of *Radio Heart, or How Robots Fall Out of Love* (Finishing Line Press, 2015) and *Yellow* (Tinfish Press, 2011). Her full length book, *Love, Robot*, is forthcoming Fall 2017 by The Operating System. She is also a new media artist, and scholar. [www.mrheelo.com](http://www.mrheelo.com).

**ire'ne lara silva** is the author of two poetry collections, *furia* and *Blood Sugar Canto*, and a short story collection, *flesh to bone*, which won the Premio Aztlán. She and poet Dan Vera are co-editors of *Imaniman: Poets Writing in the Anzaldúan Borderlands*. ire'ne is the recipient of the final Alfredo Cisneros del Moral Award, the Fiction Finalist for AROHO's 2013 Gift of Freedom Award, and the 2008 recipient of the Gloria Anzaldúa Milagro Award.

**Lehua M. Taitano**, a native Chamoru from Yigo, Guahån (Guam), is a queer poet, writer and artist. She is the author of *A Bell Made of Stones* (poems, TinFish Press), and two chapbooks: *appalachiapacific*, which won the 2010 Merriam-Frontier Award for short fiction, and *Sonoma* (poetry, Drop Leaf Press, 2017). Her poetry, essays, and Pushcart

Prize-nominated fiction have appeared in *Poetry Magazine*, *Narrative Witness*, *Witness*, *The Yellow Medicine Review* and others.

**Angela Narciso Torres's** book, *Blood Orange*, won the Willow Books Award. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Nimrod*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and *Colorado Review*. A graduate of Warren Wilson MFA Program and Harvard Graduate School of Education, Angela has received fellowships from Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Illinois Arts Council, and Ragdale Foundation. Born in Brooklyn and raised in Manila, she is a poetry editor for *RHINO* and a reader for *New England Review*.

**Vickie Vértiz** is from southeast Los Angeles and was the 2016 Summer Resident at the University of Arizona Poetry Center. A Macondo Fellow, Vickie is also a VONA and Community of Writers alumna. Her second book and first full collection, *Palm Frond with Its Throat Cut* will be published by the Camino Del Sol Series, from The University of Arizona Press in the fall of 2017.

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Margaret Rhee: "What We Write, What We Believe: An Asian American Poet's Manifesto After the Third World Gay Revolution (1972)," was first published in *Amerasia*. "Day 0," was first published in *The Good Men Project*.

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Angela Narciso Torres: "Feather," was first published in *Pirene's Fountain*.



## Locofo Chaps

2017

Eileen Tabios – *To Be An Empire Is To Burn*  
Charles Perrone – *A CAPacious Act*  
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