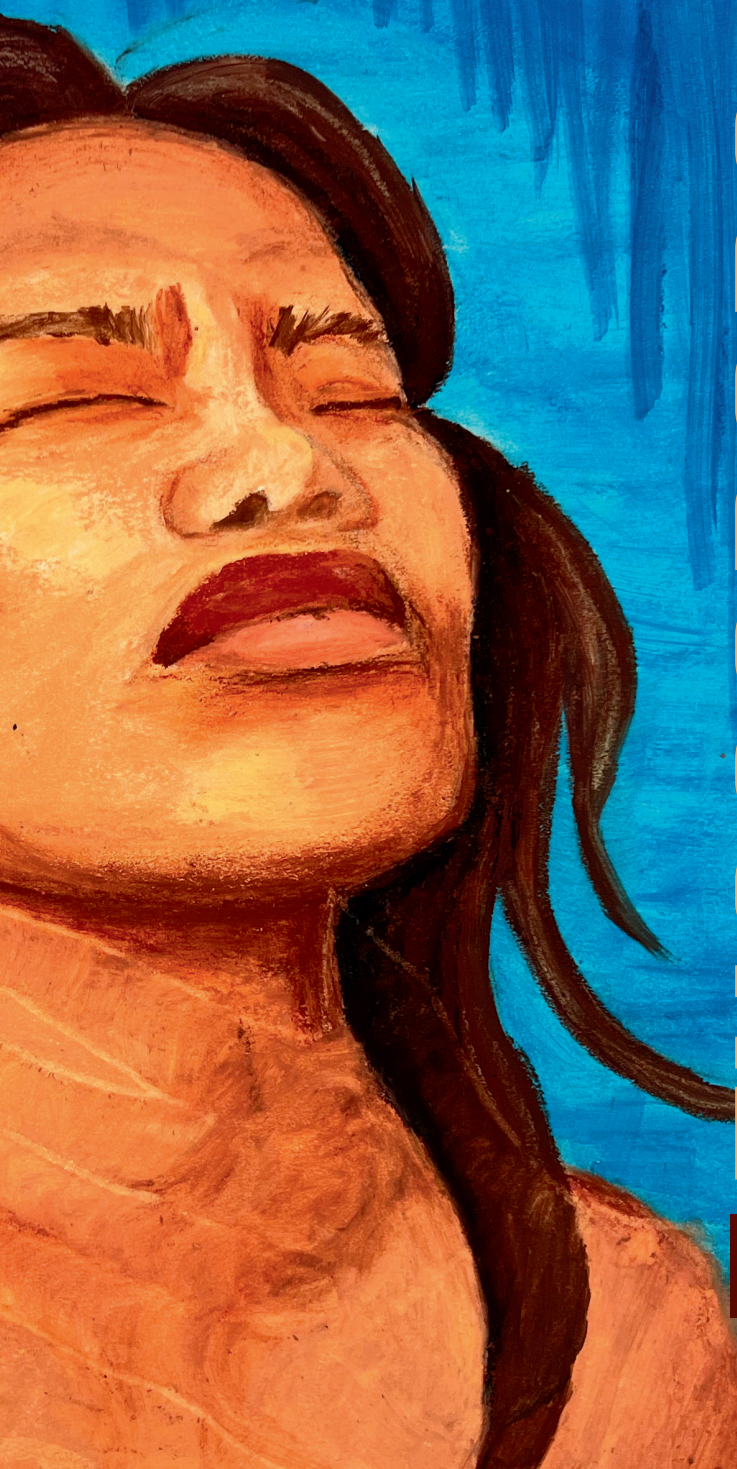


A FREDERICK COMMUNITY COLLEGE MAGAZINE OF THE CREATIVE ARTS



THE TUSCARORA

REVIEW

44TH EDITION

Mission Statement

The mission of the Frederick Community College magazine of the creative arts, *Tuscarora Review*, is to provide an annual showcase for the outstanding literary and visual art created by the College community.

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The Tuscarora Review

*A Frederick Community College Magazine
of the Creative Arts*

~ ESTABLISHED IN 1980 ~



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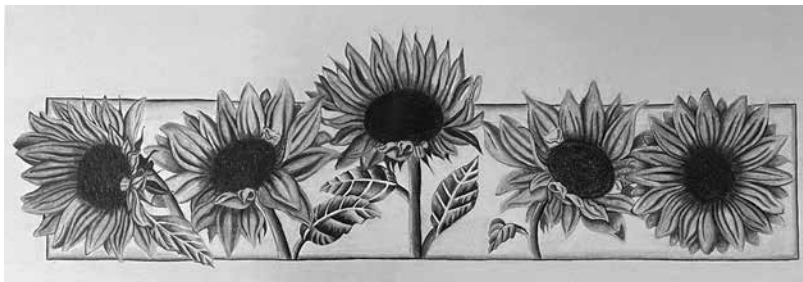
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ART

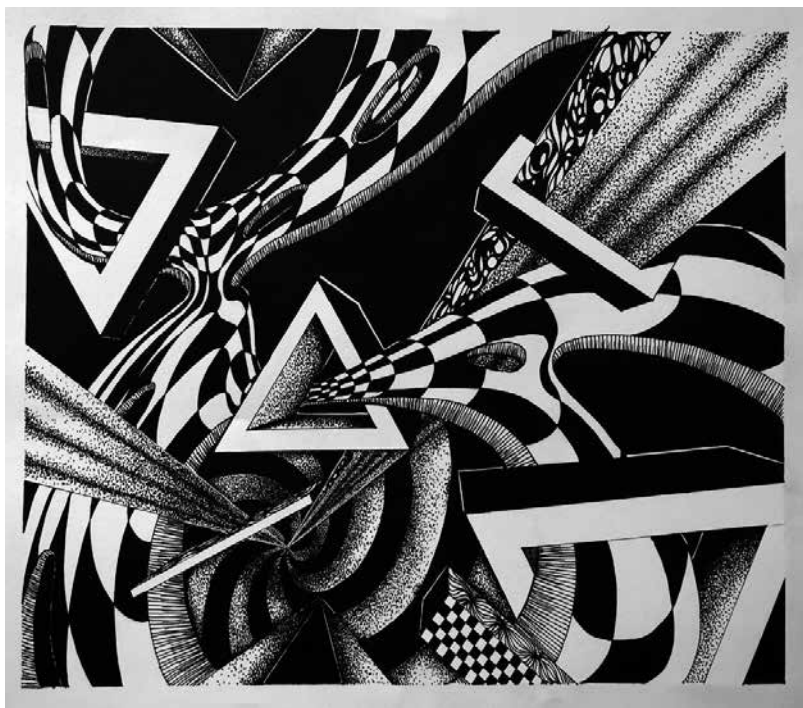
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COLOPHON

The magazine cover is printed on 80 pound Endurance Gloss Cover, the four color inner pages are printed on 70 pound Endurance Gloss, and the inner pages are printed on 60 pound Finch 94 Smooth White Offset. The publication is perfect bound. The fonts used are Breuer Condensed Family, Breuer Text Family, Palatino LT Standard Family, Big Noodle Tilting and Windings.



SUNFLOWERS Jazmin Hernandez *Graphite*



ENTANGLEMENT **Consuela Agostini Broadt**

Pen and Ink

Dedication

*“When we realize that there is never
a single story about any place, we regain
a kind of paradise.”*

—Chimamanda Adichie

A single story is a one-dimensional perspective of a complex reality. It is a lens that narrows our perspective and limits our understanding. Currently, many titles are being challenged in libraries and school systems because their content is deemed too inappropriate. Books on the topic of gender, sexuality, race, racism, or slavery in the United States are the main targets of these book bans. Between 2020 and 2022, the number of individual titles banned spiked more than 1,100%, from 223 to 2,571, according to the American Library Association. When we ban books, we’re closing off readers to people, places, and perspectives. But when we stand up for stories, we unleash the power that lives inside every book. We liberate the array of voices that need to be heard and the scenes that need to be seen. In this edition of the *Tuscarora Review*, we dedicate ourselves to seeing beyond the single story and embracing the beauty of diversity, so that together we may break free from the confines of one-dimensional thinking and open our hearts to the many stories that exist in the world. ■



BEAST (FANTASY) **Natalia Janus**

Pen and Ink

A Letter From the Editor

When I picked up a copy of the 43rd edition of the *Tuscarora Review*, I felt deeply the power behind the students at Frederick Community College. These creative expressions tell the story of a community, and detail the dark, light, and balance of the human experience. Although hardships come and pass, the perseverance of our peers remains. Through any form or media, I am proud to be a part of the strong commitment to share oneself and tell a story that has not yet been told.

The staff this year was inspired by the creative vulnerability of student submissions and commends every person for sharing such incredible literary and visual work. We received groundbreaking numbers of submissions this year and, though, regretfully, we cannot include all of them, we sat in awe of the brilliance of each. It was our honor to read the submissions and we hope that this collection will encourage the continuation of such.

This edition would not have been possible without the enthusiasm of our extraordinary team. I want to show my gratitude to every member of the Editorial Board for their drive and ambition.

To Delilah, our art director, thank you for your continued outreach and support to our art faculty. We would not have been able to meet our deadlines without your determination.

To Jada, our copy editor, thank you for working tirelessly to uphold the literary and grammatical standard of our work and ensure that we stay on schedule.

To Charity and Zoe, our assistant copy editors, thank you for your continuous look-throughs and bearing through my incessant reminders. I want to thank Charity for conducting an incredibly motivating interview, and Zoe, for persevering through multiple hospital visits. Your persistence is something I have greatly admired.

To Audrey, our social media director, thank you for your endless creativity and for bringing new perspectives to every discussion.

In passing off the 44th edition of the *Tuscarora Review*, we hope to ignite the desire of others to tell their untold stories. ■

—Faith Haemmerle, *Editor-in-Chief*



WARMTH Peyton Morris

Pastel

glass • child • ren

Faith Haemmerle

glass • child • ren \~\ n. 1. The siblings of children with disabilities; those overlooked by their caregivers who focus on the child with the disability; not fragile, neglected. 2. The solitude of one's own mind, as of an empty playground, and sometimes regarded as a type of equanimity: This swing hit by a soft breeze, / This flourishing wooded patch of evergreens, surrounded by concrete, / This reflection of others' desires, a mirror in a full room, / This "spoken of, never to," / This unspoken fit of given definitions, easy and forgotten, / To reside in isolation, / Behind a locked door, / In a room, / In a home full of love, just not for me. ■

Author Inspiration: This piece is inspired by A. Van Jordan's "Afterglow." My sister has an autoimmune disease called Juvenile Dermatomyositis. When I was young, I was given the nickname "The Forgotten Child" because the needs of my siblings were often more demanding and received precedence over mine. My poem highlights the feeling of alienation caused by emotional negligence in childhood.



YOUR PHANTOM **Giulietta Jafari**

Pastel

Crushed

Steph Potisk

We had another fight last night ... but I can't remember what it was about. All I know is that when I went to bed, you didn't come with me. And, when I woke up at two in the morning in a cold sweat, you weren't there.

But you're here now.

You're sitting on the edge of the bed, leaning over to tie the laces on your boots. I don't know when you got here or how long you've been here.

But you're here now.

Everything feels different the morning after a fight. Even though I don't remember much of this one, apart from the box of Cheerios. How the box opened once it hit the wall after I dodged it. How the Cheerios came spilling out all over the floor. How some of them rolled under the kitchen counter and the refrigerator. Yet, my head still feels clearer. I'm sorry about what happened. I don't know what it was ... but it was probably my fault.

It always is.

I say good morning to you, but you don't respond. I lean over the side of the bed to check the time. It's half past six. You're supposed to be at work at seven. The light coming through the blinds is orange. Maybe a little red. It puts stripes all down your back, across the wrinkles of your work shirt.

I don't know what to say.

You stand up and walk out into the hallway. I linger in bed for a moment. I don't know what I should do, so I shadow you. You're in the kitchen now. Where it all happened. The box of Cheerios is still laying on the ground—face down. There are Cheerios everywhere. I can't walk across the floor without stepping on them.

I'm sorry, I say.

You turn to look at me. Your green eyes are tired and sad. I've never seen you look so dull before. You're always sorry, you say. You open the fridge and take out the bagged sandwich you always bring for lunch. You cross the kitchen floor, Cheerios crunching under the soles of your boots.

I don't follow you this time. Your keys jangle together as you pick them up off the table.

It's quiet now. All that's left here is me. The Cheerios and me.

I reach under the sink to get the hand broom and the dust pan. I set to work, sweeping up all the mess. So many of the Cheerios have been crushed. The little pieces have gathered in the grooves between the tiles. I'm sure I'll miss some of them. I'm sure we'll be finding bits of Cheerios for months to come. Even after we move out, there will still be Cheerios. The next renter will find one and say, how long has this been here? But they won't know what happened.

I am sitting on the kitchen floor. The Cheerios are mixed in with bits of hair and dirt in the dust pan. I put it in my lap. I don't want to throw them away.

The box was almost full.

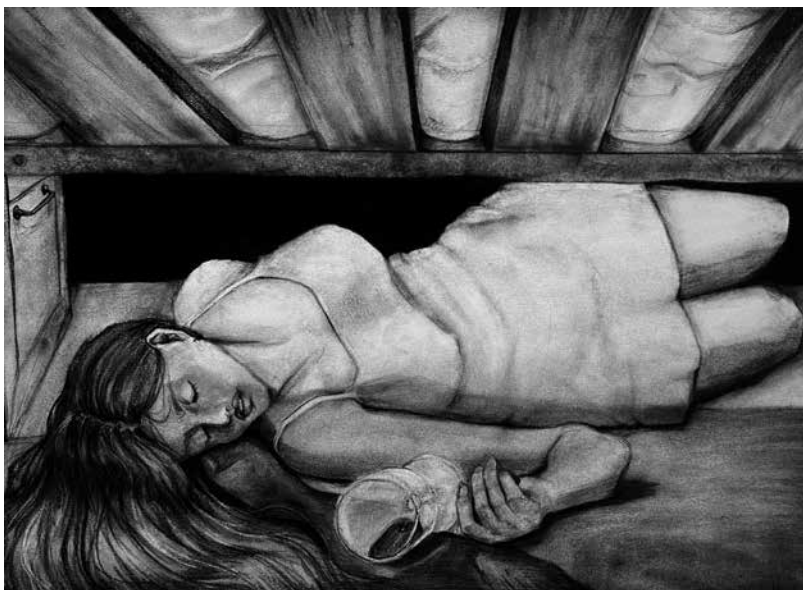
What a waste. ■

Author Inspiration: This is a flash fiction piece that was written for my creative writing course. It is about two of my characters, who remain unnamed, and tells the story of their dysfunctional relationship. I chose to write this piece as a direct address to the reader to make it more personal.



CADUCEUS Laura Appler

Charcoal



NARRATIVE **Brooke Marshall**

Charcoal

Jumpoff

Jasmine Baltimore

Lightning flashed across the downtown Dallas skyline as rain droplets cascaded down the Rosemont Crescent Hotel window panes. Lying across the king-size bed, Harper was consumed by the flight check-in time displayed on her phone. She looked up at the sound of footsteps approaching the door of the bedroom.

Ian walked over to the bed grinning with a smile as big as Texas on his face. He carried an uncorked tall, dark, green bottle in one hand while holding the stems of two empty wine glasses in the other. Harper propped herself upright against the headboard.

Ian handed her one of the empty wine glasses and poured dark ruby red wine into it. He sat at the edge of the bed, turned his body towards her in delight, and held his half-filled wine glass in the air.

"I would like to make a toast. Congratulations to you for becoming the Most Powerful Woman in Business Sports after making your client, Christian Townes, the highest-paid quarterback in the NFL. And to the Philadelphia Eagles victory over my Dallas Cowboys in overtime," Ian exclaimed with pride.

Harper giggled because Ian was right. Today her client Christian Townes's running touchdown clutched the Eagles' victory resulting in her becoming the President of Football Operations for her agency.

"Thank you," Harper said, raising her half-filled wine glass towards Ian's. The room echoed at the sound of their clinking glasses. The intense aroma of vanilla filled her nose as her lips touched the glass. The full-bodied wine tasted fruity and sweet like chocolate.

"This is very good. Is this Merlot?" Harper asked.

"No, it is Domaine Clarence Dillon. It's a Bordeaux from France," Ian said, "I'm glad you like it. I felt like this moment was an appropriate time to also celebrate us, this evening."

"Hmmm..." She mustered with a faint smile, wondering what Ian meant by us. Harper pretended to study the embossed design in the hotel room's ceiling.

The backlight from her cell phone began blinking and vibrating on the bed. Harper turned towards the nightstand, and placed the wine glass down.

She glanced at her screen and saw her Delta check-in reminder reappear. "I should finish checking in for my red-eye flight back to Philly tonight."

Harper looked over at Ian who was still sitting on the edge of the bed. He was scrolling through his phone checking the weather.

"You know, the weather is not looking good. You should check to see if your flight is canceled." Ian mentioned.

"It's not canceled." Harper said as she placed her phone on the nightstand next to her glass of wine. "My alert just reminded me to check in."

"Why don't you stay the night tonight?" Ian asked.

"You know my answer, Ian." She replied firmly.

Harper stared into Ian's dark brown eyes; she already knew where this conversation was headed.

"Can I wake up to you just once?" Ian begged.

"Sorry. The answer is no. The answer will always be no." Harper spoke sharply. Feeling uncomfortable with Ian's request she started searching for her clothes.

"How can I change your mind?" Ian pleaded, looking up at her.

"I should leave." Harper said, slipping her bronze silk dress over her head.

"Please—" Ian reached out for her and grabbed the back of her arm. "Just talk to me. What are we doing?"

Harper, irritated by his petition, slid into her heels.

"I can't give you what you want." She looked over her shoulder at him with empty eyes. "You know that I didn't want anything serious. This is just fun."

Harper walked out of the bedroom into the living room of the spacious hotel suite. She grabbed her purse from the sofa and draped it across her body on her way towards the door.

"Fun?" Ian laughed while pulling up his shorts. "Oh wow, two years of fun huh." He followed after Harper.

"Yes. Fun, Ian." She snapped and turned to face him. "I fly into town when attending one of my client's games. I text you there-after. You book the hotel. I come over. We act bad. I fly home. Fun times as friends remember? Why are you trying to turn this into something serious?"

"Because I love you. I am in love with you. I want more than just sex with you." Ian said, stepping closer to Harper.

Harper turned towards the hotel door and opened the flap to her purse. She reached her manicured hand inside and pulled out a white envelope. Her face was blank and her lips pursed into a hard line as she held her hand out for Ian.

Ian's heart pounded at warp speed as he looked into her hazel-brown eyes for a glimmer of hope. He waited for her response.

Harper knew she could never care about him the way he deserved. Weddings and family plans were never foreseen in her future. Like a six-speed charger, Harper dodged settling down.

Harper walked over to Ian and placed the envelope in his hands. Just as she had done in the past during their twice-a-year rendez-vous during the football season.

"Thank you for another fun night, Ian." Harper slowly pulled her hand away as she turned for the door.

Ian was left staring at the closed door despondently. After a moment, he opened the envelope. Inside, there were five one-hundred-dollar bills with a note that read, 'For your service. Until next time. Thanks again! xo Harp.' ■

Author Inspiration: The concept for this story came to me after I listened to a song titled "I Want You Around" sung by the artist Anoh Aalegra. While hearing the song, I came up with the idea to create a story about a woman changing the dynamic of a relationship between a male and female. What would it be like for a man to yearn to be with a woman chasing success, who doesn't envision marriage or being in a monogamous relationship in her future?



CRADLE **Mina Yanek**

Pastel

Goblin

Joseph Close

The dungeon was dark, but in the darkness, I found his gangly claw. I grabbed hold and wrapped my fingers around it. It was hard and bony; his skin felt slimy, like that of a frog. I ran a single finger down to the tip where I felt the sharp nail at the end. It punctured the skin on my finger pad, and a drop of blood coasted down into my palm. My eyes adjusted enough so I could see the blood flow into the lines of my hand, running like the Nile River in the book of Exodus.

The creature grabbed my wrist and led me further into the depths of the labyrinth. It wasn't long before the tight hallway became a room with a tall ceiling, laden with chains just out of reach overhead. There was a single torch in the middle of each of the four walls, but only one was lit. This provided enough light to see the owner of the hand. It was a goblin with green skin, a bat nose, and pointed ears that must've been a foot long. I felt myself begin to reach out to graze my unsecured hand on his ear but stopped myself.

He released me from his grasp. He stepped aside and behind where he was standing, a pink cloth recliner stood in the middle of the damp stone brick floor. I sat on the recliner and returned my gaze to the goblin. He grabbed the lit torch and used it to light the others. As he made his way around the room, I lifted my shirt and unhooked my bra. He finished lighting the room and noticed me. He dropped the torch and pounced on me, sinking his teeth into my right breast. Blood rushed around his mouth as he unclenched his fangs to lap it up. His tongue was a ten-inch long, forked tentacle that wildly flew around my chest, not wasting a single drop of that red nectar. His tongue shot back into his mouth, and he pounced off just as suddenly as he had pounced on.

I looked at his wild eyes, and he met my gaze for the first time.

"Why'd you stop?" I said to him as a wicked smile crept onto my mouth.

I leaped up from the recliner and rushed at him, tackling him to the ground as I unhinged my jaw and sunk my teeth deep into his side. A rush of endorphins flew through my body, making my head buzz as his sweet blood slid down my throat. His body tensed and jolted as I bit down, but his muscles relaxed as he wrapped one hand around my waist and the other on the side of my head. He opened his toothy maw and clamped down on my neck, reaching from under my ear to my collarbone. He pulled my hair, so I scratched at his chest, leaving deep gashes across his pectorals.

He was a goblin, a vicious monster. And so was I. We were both monsters, and we were doing a monstrous thing. We were wrapped in each other, jaws clenched into flesh, claws piercing and stabbing. One could not tell where I started and he began. At that moment, our grotesque and vile act fused us into one monster. One of our own making.

He grabbed my left hand, put it into his mouth, and bit off three of my fingers. He spit them out onto the ground and, in the torchlight, the diamond ring that was still attached to my finger sparkled brilliantly. I pushed the goblin off of me. The euphoria of tasting his sweet flesh was replaced by a sludgy ache in my stomach that buckled my knees. I screeched at the goblin, letting loose a guttural squeal that echoed through the dungeon. I fled into the dark on all fours, using my knuckles to dash across the cold tile.

I ran up from the dungeon, and back into the halls of the castle. I started to make my way to my room when I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror. My pale-green skin was savagely torn apart, and the edges of my mouth were saturated in blood. I stared into my eyes as my skin turned back to its normal pink, my fangs shrunk back to being only a little too big for my mouth, and the wounds on my body were healed. The last thing to disappear was his blood from around my pink lips and under my short fingernails.

When I was presentable, I made my way up the stairs in the highest tower, to my room at the top. I quietly pushed open the wooden door and crept across the rugged floor. I climbed back into bed with my husband, who was still fast asleep, and laid down with my back facing him. A tear ran down my cheek as I looked

longingly at the door I had just entered. My husband rolled over and put his arm around me, causing a soft squeak to escape my lips. He stirred a little, but didn't wake up. He sighed and pulled me closer, wrapping his hand around my waist. I could still feel the goblin's claw digging deep into me. ■

Author Inspiration: I was inspired to create this piece because I wrote about an event that happened to me. I wanted to rewrite my story in a way that was cloaked in metaphor, so I could have some separation between me and the piece.



HAND MOON Faith Hutson

Mixed Media



WEeping ANGEL **Ethan Neslen**

Pastel

Dahlia

Sanya Ailawadi

"No," Alice says, pulling my arm away from the elevator button. It's the first word she's spoken to me all day. Her voice is raspy and dry.

"I just need to grab something from the room, it'll be quick." I try to reassure her, but she won't listen to me.

"You can't leave me alone," she says, making the grip on my arm even tighter.

"You can come with me," I suggest, knowing she won't like it.

"No!" She cries out. "The walls, they'll kill me!"

She hates small spaces. She never used to be scared of them. She wasn't scared of anything before the accident. I pull my arm from her grasp and place both my hands on her shoulders.

"If you don't want to come with me that's fine, but I have to go. I promise I wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't important." I squeeze her shoulders gently before pressing the button—hearing a ding almost immediately.

I slowly walk into the elevator and watch Alice's face as the doors close. She's crying. I feel awful for hurting her; the only thing in this world that matters to me is making her happy. I remember when I was able to do that. My thoughts are interrupted as the elevator reaches my floor.

I walk to my room and unlock the door with my key. The room is small, not tiny, but small. There was a time when Alice and I lived in a beautiful two-story home, but then Alice lost her job, and we couldn't afford to pay the mortgage with my money alone. The apartment we live in now isn't bad, but it's a far cry from what life used to be.

I flick the lights on. A dark red bouquet of dahlias stands out against the dullness of the room. I grab them and make my way out

of the room and back down to the lobby. When I get back down, Alice doesn't talk to me. She waits for me to walk towards her and grabs my hand.

We walk out together into the night, only lit by the dim street lights scattered on the sidewalks. I feel Alice's grasp on my hand tighten. We've been girlfriends for seven years, and friends long before that, but she has never acted like this. She used to be the bravest and boldest person I knew. But that was before the accident.

As we continue walking, I feel her head fall onto my shoulder, closing the gap between us. I can smell her lavender conditioner as her curled black hair makes its way closer to my face. I lean into her head and give her a quick kiss. She opens and closes her mouth as if she wants to say something but can't quite find the words.

I take quick glimpses at her, trying to get a look at her face and figure out what's wrong without her realizing I'm staring. I used to be able to read her so well before things changed. Before she changed.

I think she's still mad at me. I consider trying to talk to her, to apologize, but I know that it won't do any good. It will take her a long time to forgive me, maybe she never will. I never should've left her alone.

The ground beneath my shoes changes from stone to grass as we make it to where we need to be, Rose Hill Cemetery.

As we walk through the field of headstones, I wonder if the people underneath them are looking up at me right now, watching me—then I see it. Amongst all the others you would think it was just a normal grave, but to me, it's the most important one there. We walk up to it and place the dahlias down on the grass, right beneath the gravestone of Alice Johnson. Though I know her body is underground, I can still feel her hand wrapped tightly around mine. ■

Author Inspiration: This piece was inspired by the feeling of grief. Grief is a unique experience and complex emotion. It is nearly impossible to describe as it materializes differently within everyone. My piece originated from denial. I have often found myself stuck in this stage of grief. I typically do not experience the levels of depression and anger that many others do because a part of me refuses to accept reality. I wrote this piece to represent those feelings of desperation; clinging to something that is no longer here because you are unable to live without it.



WORD PROJECT: CAPTURED **Co-Co Agostini**

Oil on Canvas Paper



SIMPLICITY **Delanie Burriss**

Photograph



FLOWER IN THE DARKNESS **Delanie Burriss**

Photograph



PHOBIA: INFECTIOUS **Veronica Vazquez**

Watercolor on Board

The Last Words of Methuselah

Mags Johnson

The trees don't sing anymore. Not that people listened when they did since they were always preoccupied with other pursuits, the grand industrialization. The constant pursuit for growth somehow overlooked the growing life around them, leaving billowing clouds of smoke in its wake. After polluting our rivers, burning our forests, and wiping entire species off the face of this planet we once called home. Now, we've turned to the stars, scrambling for another place to suck the life out of before our endless black hole of greed and profit consumes us too.

In the heart of the Inyo National Forest, there is a tree. Nestled deep within a grove of withered pines, the Methuselah rests among her sisters. An ancient race of Bristlecone Pines lays forgotten. Ever since the war started, the National Parks Service had to shut down to allocate resources to the military funds, leaving all parks unprotected. The once-sacred land had been defiled by man-made wildfires, pollution, and the occasional misplaced bomb.

A man made his way through the overgrown brush, tripping over snarling branches. The hot California sun beat down on him, the air filled with choking ash. The fires had finally stopped here, but the air was still thick with the aftermath. He breathed shallow breaths as he moved. Despite his aching body and screaming lungs, he knew he must continue. He had to reach his destination. It was their only hope since all other resources had been exhausted. He had tried to argue with the nation's governments to make them see the destruction they were heading for. He'd tried to reason with them. They wouldn't have it. They weren't going to stop until they had felt victorious.

The Great War. Somehow the name had lost its meaning. Thrice they'd seen its might, and not once did they see its glory, only the skeletons of its closets. The Great Toll, they should've called it. By now the world should've learned that war only ends in one way: death.

It was 'one more war to end them all', one last hurrah before they left this world for the next, and so here he was climbing his way through burnt-down pine groves, desperately searching for what he believed would save them all.

His mother had told him stories of the great Methuselah tree. She had taught him to listen closely to nature, especially in the moments he felt lost.

"The trees will always be a guardian to us. They will never leave you." Her words echoed through his head.

"The forest has a song for those who are kind enough to hear it." He missed her ramblings, but most people thought she was a little mad. Though he always thought she was a little more sensitive than most. Perhaps he was a little mad too.

His foot snagged in a snarling root that was raised out of the dry, dusty dirt, pulling him from his thoughts. But not quick enough for him to catch himself. Thud. He landed face-first in a pile of dust and soot. Maybe I am mad, he thought to himself.

"I am going to die out here!" He shouted into the ash-filled air, immediately coughing and spitting dirt out of his mouth.

"It is as good as any place to die," said a voice above him.

He lifted himself up and looked around. There was nothing except the fallen trees, half charred from the last forest fire. Next to him, a knotted tree grew short and stout, mangled and rotted. Even though it was still standing it looked like it had been dead for years.

"Who said that?" The man asked. Surely, he had gone mad. The hot sun is known to play tricks, and his water canister had emptied miles ago.

"I did," the voice spoke again.

The voice was coming from the mangled tree beside him. The man jumped and crawled backward away from the trunk and outstretched roots. His mother had told stories of the trees and their stories and songs, but he had always treated it like a metaphorical thing. Surely this tree was not speaking.

"I have journeyed a great distance to find you," the man finally offered, deciding the matter at hand was more important than his apparent psychosis.

"To find me?" The tree pondered.

"You are the great Methuselah are you not?" The man asked firmly. "Please it is very important that I find it if you are not."

"I have many names, yes, that is one of them. It has been a very long time since someone came looking for me. What is it you need, my boy?" The tree's voice was steady and firm, much like that of an old weathered man.

"There isn't much time, you see, I need some pieces of you—" He paused, considering for the first time perhaps this tree did not want to have parts of it harvested. "Er- rather, if you would be willing, I need to study you. You are the oldest living tree, and if I were to understand how you function, and how you have survived, I might be able to replicate the process and use it to save everyone. I just have to work fast enough so I can have it by next week's summit, then the governments of the world—"

A deep-bellied chuckle cut the man off; the tree was laughing.

"Do you think it is funny?" The man snapped at the tree. "The planet is dying; our air quality is decreasing by the day! The world is on fire and I am trying to find a way to save us all, and I am being laughed at by a tree in the middle of what used to be a lush forest!" His hands balled into fists. "If I don't do something, it will all be gone. Everything will be gone forever." His voice trailed off. The tree's laughter softened.

"This planet has seen many extinctions; it has witnessed life's greatest triumphs and its greatest losses. I, myself, have watched civilizations fall. I have outlived many empires. Perhaps it was meant to end." The tree told the man gently. The man was quiet as the tree's words sunk into his worried mind.

"Doesn't that scare you? The thought that we might face another great extinction? That all of this will end?" He asked quietly.

"Does the sun still rise?"

"It does." The man responded questioningly.

"And the moon? When the sun sets, does the moon not rise?"

"It does. What is your point?" the man asked, while tears of frustration welled in his eyes.

"The Earth still turns. The sun, the moon, and even the stars in the sky? They still go on. I have been here five thousand years, I have seen flood, freezing, famine, and even these wars your people have made. Pieces of me have long since died, and yet" the tree paused, its voice firm. "This pinecone here is alive and new."

The man looked closer at the tattered body of the tree, within its graying bark there was a brighter piece of green growing. Sure enough, a fresh pinecone dangled from this branch.

"The life that will spawn from it could outlive me by thousands of years more." The tree was quiet. "Of course, it frightens me. Man has devastated this world faster than it can rebuild itself. But I have to believe that life will continue in its own way. Even if that way does not include me. My life cycle is nearing its end. As all things do eventually. You cannot save all life."

The tree's voice changed. It was almost sympathetic. "Just because you cannot save all things, does not mean that the things you do save do not matter. Take this cone, and learn what it has to teach you. Help who you can." The man leaned in close to the tree and plucked the fresh pinecone. He wrapped it in his bandana and tucked it away in his pack.

"Thank you," said the man, rising to his feet. The tree was silent. The setting sun in the distance glowed around them. "It's a beautiful sunset. The first one I think I've noticed in years."

"It is a beautiful end." The tree spoke for the last time. The man rested his hand against the mangled bark.

"And a beautiful beginning." ■

Author Inspiration: This was originally an assignment for my ENGL 100-101 class. My professor suggested that I share it with you all.



LOVE AND SORROW **Noe Flores**

Charcoal



LIFE IN THE WASTELAND **Jacob Burnes**

Graphite

A Soldier's Duty

Ryan Carrell

On a dreary, cold night, on a planet far from Earth, a man slammed down his fifth shot of the evening. Some alien drink, with a name he couldn't hope to pronounce, made through a process he'd rather not imagine. Around him, the hazy bar brimmed with every manner of odd character, from humans to aliens hailing from a dozen different planets, and twice as many species. Some with multiple arms, others with facial features so far removed from humans that he couldn't tell what any of them were. Sighing, he grabbed the bartender droid's attention with a finger, pointing to his glass as a signal for a refill.

With a programmed hesitation, it obliged, refilling the small shot glass once more. The man grabbed the glass, lifting it to his lips to take a sip, before he was interrupted by a grab on the shoulder. His drink nearly spilled onto his sleeve as he was jerked back.

"I told you to leave me alone," he said, speaking to the figure behind him, "tonight's my night off."

"We don't get nights off," it said, "you of all people should know that."

The man gave a tense smile, recognizing the gruff voice. Gesturing to the seat next to him with his glass, he spoke, "have a seat, drink's on me."

Besides the man, the empty bar stool was filled by a new figure. A fellow human, tall and somewhat lanky, wearing a military uniform: Rear Admiral Draygon, a fellow member of the United Navy.

"Any particular reason you're drowning yourself in this dingy old bar, Chuck?" Draygon said, leaning in closer, "this place smells like death."

Chuck smiled a bit at the comment. With so many species mixing together in one place, the different body odors probably made the place smell foul to any creature with a nose.

"Nah, just..." He set his glass down. "This whole border war feels wrong. I can't help but wonder if we'll end up on the right side of history."

Draygon frowned, looking at his friend's face. "You aren't usually this introspective."

"Yeah, yeah..." Chuck closed his eyes, trying to ignore the flashes of memory coming back to him. "But the massacre at Centaria... I guess it's just got me wondering."

Leaning in, Draygon grabbed at Chuck's shoulder, the amusement in his voice gone.

"You know we can't talk about that in public. Hell, we shouldn't even be using the media's name for that battle. If anyone found out—"

"I'd be court martialed. I know." Chuck looked at his friend, his voice lowering to a whisper. "Doesn't that make you wonder, though? How we cover up our mistakes, so we can't be criticized for them?"

He put his head in one hand, and rubbed his scratchy beard. With all the frontline action the Navy had seen, he hadn't had the chance to shave.

Draygon rubbed the back of his neck, trying to find the right words.

"Look, Chuck," he said, "we're soldiers. We follow orders. If those orders are wrong, that's for historians to decide long after we're buried in the ground. If there is a god, I don't think he'd be mad at us for doing our duty."

Chuck laughed a bit, a dry chuckle devoid of humor.

"Just because we're soldiers, doesn't make us droids. We still have a moral compass, we can't ignore it forever. If we do, we're doomed to walk the pits of Hell with our actions as the chains binding us there."

"Didn't know you were a poet, Chuck," Draygon said, a bit annoyed. He sighed, putting his head down. "Listen, We can discuss this on the way out tomorrow. Just get back to the ship before 0600. We're leaving at local dawn."

With that, Draygon stood up and patted Chuck on the back, before he left the bar, squeezing past some alien with five arms that eyed him with contempt.

Chuck looked down into his glass, the brown liquid reflected a twisted image of his own face. It looked more accurate to him than his reflection in a mirror.

Ever since he joined the Navy, he had wanted to be on the front lines, fighting for freedom and liberty. But this... it wasn't right. He had trouble sleeping at night, the faces of those innocents he was ordered to shoot down lingering in his head, mocking him for his indecisiveness.

Chuck's eyes went out of focus as he thought back to it. The sound of his ship firing its main gun, the distant flashes of light as the shells found their mark, the intercom filled with screams before going static. Then silent.

No. He thought, feeling like cold steel, his doubt turned into determination. No. I don't get my happy ending. Not after what I've done.

Slamming back the last shot, his mind was made up. There were rumors of a local resistance around here. He could join up with them, working to atone for his sins.

He'd leave the Navy, all right. His career had been filled with explosive battles.

He'd end it the same way. ■

Author Inspiration: I really enjoy Sci-Fi novels and shows. This piece was inspired by some of the more morally gray franchises in existence. Are our protagonists the heroes or are we seeing only one side of an equally just conflict?



CHECKMATE **Avaril Beard** *Graphite*

Another Argument

Mireya McGaha-Eastep

A wave of musty air hit me full force as soon as I pushed the door to the stairwell open. The already dim lights on the ceiling were flickering, making everything creepier than expected. I ascended the stairs, trying to bite back the anxiety crossing my face. The stairs looked like they could go on forever and every noise echoed off the walls on the way up. I could hear the rain pounding, every footstep taken, and the creak of each stair.

I walked down the hall to Jeremiah's apartment, the familiarity setting in from this point on. The elevator is the way I usually go, but since it was currently out of service, the stairs were the only other option. I waited outside the apartment, already knowing how tonight was going to go. I stood at the gray door, hand on the knob, and stared at my reflection in the golden "26" above the peephole. After finally gathering my thoughts, I turned it.

"I think we need to talk," I said with a small voice, walking into Jeremiah's apartment. The anxiety bubbled inside of me, making my stomach curl upon itself as my heart sped up and my index finger instinctively went to the already peeled skin on my thumb. I was not ready to have this conversation, but we needed it to fix whatever was left of us.

"About what?" he said through belches, staring at the television, not sparing me a glance. He was wearing what seemed to be his only shirt, hardly white anymore, and the stained dark blue sweats he wore with it. His feet were propped on the wooden coffee table in front of him. He'd not moved a muscle since I left twelve hours ago for work.

The dishes were still dirty, the pile of mail on the counter was untouched, and there were beer cans littering the granite tops next to the sink. I sighed, trying to focus on staying calm and ignoring how the sleeves of my hoodie clung uncomfortably to my arms from the rain that beat down on me a few moments prior.

"We need to talk about boundaries and respect, and how to fix this." I spoke hardly above a whisper, not wanting to set off his temperament before we had a chance to have a civil conversation.

"Is this because I broke some of your stuff? You know I didn't mean it." He responded quickly, his head whipping around to look at me. He looked genuinely regretful. I had to dismiss it and turn my head so I didn't fall down the rabbit hole of pushing my own needs and feelings off again.

"Well, that too, but that's not the only reason," I said, setting my keys on the counter and slipping off my shoes.

My gaze dropped down to the floor, I traced the grain of the wood with my eyes as I mustered the courage to speak.

"Do you even love me or want to be with me? You only want me when you need something." I didn't look up from the floor. "I feel used, Jeremiah. Like I'm something you just fuck and throw away when you're done with me."

"Oh, give me a break. You know I don't mean for it to come off like that, Evelyn." Jeremiah asserted. "I'm sorry that you feel that way." He added lazily.

I watched him stand up out of the corners of my eyes. The floor trembled as he walked over. He lifted my chin until I met his eyes. Those dull, brown eyes bore into mine with no emotion. There was nothing there, no spark, no passion, no love. Nothing.

"It's not just that. You make my best friend uncomfortable because you make comments about you and I being together." I said, as he turned away from me with a frustrated laugh.

"You glare at him and, honestly, you treat him like shit. I'm at my end with it. I've given you literally every single piece of me and it's still not enough for you." I spat, nearly running out of air. The pit inside my stomach grew, waiting for his reaction. I clenched and unclenched the wet cotton of my sleeves as I watched him face me, anxiety like a bubble about to burst within me.

"Evelyn, he's trying to ruin us! Can't you see that through your thick head?! Are you that dense?!" He yelled, inches from my face. I could feel the heat radiating from his flushed face. My anxiety was washed away by white-hot anger.

"You're the one ruining us. You're doing it all on your own! You seem to have more hatred for Connor than you do love for me. I'm your

girlfriend and you treat me like crap. I don't deserve this," I yelled back, weight falling off of my shoulders with each release of pent-up anger.

"You make it so difficult. You do everything I ask you not to! You say you love me, but you don't show it! You're not 'Little Miss Perfect' in this relationship but somehow, I'm always pinned as the bad guy!" Jeremiah rebutted.

"I give you everything! How is that not enough for you? I drive you everywhere, I cook dinners for you, so we don't have to eat out and we still end up doing that! I work three jobs just to pay rent at someplace I barely come to! I make you gifts that end up in the trash! All you do is sit around and waste whatever money you can scrounge up on alcohol and watch television all day. I do everything for you, Jeremiah. I need more from you and as soon as I ask that of you spin it on me!" My hands started to shake as my head pounded from the yelling.

A strike of lightning flashed, filling the small apartment. A clap of thunder followed.

"You never make time for me!" He screamed.

I don't know how much longer I can handle the back and forth with him. I love him, but sometimes love isn't enough. He's made it very obvious, my love for him will never be enough.

"I'm too busy trying to support you." My voice echoed throughout the apartment. "Get your crap together Jeremiah. I can't keep doing this."

"So, what? You're going to leave me because I can't get a job?" He scoffed as if he hadn't been listening. As if it wasn't properly laid out on the table in front of him.

"Don't do that shit! Don't guilt trip me! I'm telling you what I need, and you still try to play the victim!" I screamed.

"I need you, Evelyn!" He cried with the same blank eyes.

"I need better." I grabbed my keys off the counter. Jeremiah pulled me back by hook of my elbow.

"We're done, Jeremiah." I ripped my arm away, ending the conversation with one final slam of the door.

I'm tired of fighting. ■

Author Inspiration: I had a prompt in my creative writing class to create a conflict scene between two people. One has something the other wants and won't give up. It was inspired by a few arguments I have experienced both directly and indirectly through overhearing them.



BEAST (HORROR) **Olivia Baez**

Pen and Ink

Polarity

Chan Byrd

Editors' Note: *If you are dealing with a mental health crisis call 988 for help.*

Day 1

I was in the lobby with my dad again. It was cold in the ambulance. It was cold in the elevator. And it was cold in the lobby. I'm not sure if the cold is from the weather itself or the papery, one size fits all, hospital gown. The paper strings struggled to hold itself together. I grabbed a blanket from the ER to bring with me on the stretcher. Instead of clawing at my own skin, I scrubbed the material of the blanket all over my hands. The texture was equitable to that of scratchy, cheap hotel linens.

Some worker, wheeling around a computer on a cart, stopped in front of me to snap my picture, and added it to the system. So much about this place is different. The first time, when they snapped my picture, I smiled. That's what you do in a picture, right? The second and third time, I was already in that hospital's system. This time, they positioned me on a chair against the wall, and a woman took my picture. My hair was greasy, my eyes had bags under them, and my face was a sneer. It looked like a mugshot.

The workers led me and my dad into a random office for paperwork. A man started to rattle off policies and legal procedures before finally showing me where to sign.

I don't want to be here. But on some level I recognize that I need help. Maybe this could even be good for me. I want it to be good for me. Holding the pen, I signed myself over in exchange for the "good" they promised me.

The man said the average stay is between a week to ten days. The intake coordinator hurriedly mumbled to the effect of not being able to leave until the doctor granted permission. Without comprehending whatever he said enough to ask a question, we shuffled onto the next section.

I was dragged off to yet another room, this one with a changing curtain and scale with anti-suicide details that didn't go unnoticed. The changing curtain was hung with magnets so people didn't try to hang themselves from it, and so there were no metal hooks that could be used as weapons.

In the makeshift exam room, I'm stripped of my clothes. My mom brought me things to wear, all stuffed into a bag, along with some of my personal items. The workers dug through my things haphazardly. Pulling out strings of sweatpants, unlacing shoes, and flipping through each one of my books one by one to be sure there's no razor blades between the pages.

The nurse looks all over my body while wearing only my underwear, all the way down to the bruise in the crook of my elbow from getting blood drawn. I feel more like a lab specimen than a patient. She hands me a plain, bright blue T-shirt and baggy gray sweatpants to change into.

I'm led to the second adolescent wing, which of course went through the first adolescent wing. The first wing was unnerving. Half of the kids were screaming and the other half just sitting there. Their blank stares followed me down the hall. There were no windows.

The second adolescent wing opened up from a pair of double metal doors. Those doors led to a never ending hallway of dull beige. At the end of the seemingly joyless hallway was a desk space across from the two day rooms. And finally behind yet another pair of doors, these ones locked, was the hall with the bedrooms. The same dull beige hallway, but with the walls lined, one door after the next.

Everyone else has been lined up against the wall to receive their little paper cups of shampoo and soap before being split up to shower. Each bathroom was shared by two people, so half of the people sat outside the doors waiting.

I stood next to a girl who was very adamant on the acceptable ways to spell her name. Whatever. There was another girl, Maddie, who gave me a welcoming smile and a somewhat obsessive stare.

The staff here was made up of assorted nurses, therapists, social workers, and psychiatrists, all with different specialties and skills. However, none of the skills included listening. One psychiatrist refused to give me a diagnosis, so he just prescribed more medicine.

"You definitely have bipolar disorder." He said, "but the paper-work is a hassle." He chuckled with a wheeze.

I go back to the day room to talk to Maddie. She quickly became a good friend and always laughed too hard at my jokes. Before we left for showers, she gave me a color-by-sticker sheet with a letter on the back confessing her undying love for me. I didn't know what to say. I didn't say anything at all.

Going to bed that night was uncomfortable.

Day 2

I saw my assigned therapist. She talked about things that went in one ear and right out the other. She reminded me vaguely of my sixth grade science teacher at first. Same eyes, same hair, but none of her kindness. Her words were harsh. She said it's tough love. I don't think any kind of love could exist in a place like this.

Someone led me to the lunch area, which also happened to double as a gym, but today it was turned into a makeshift meeting room. I met with my "team" of adults who didn't care what I thought. I begged them to let me go home until they reminded me of the papers I signed. I didn't even have time to talk before they all agreed that I haven't shown enough improvement in a day, but that maybe they would reconsider in a couple days or so.

Madison left.

Day 6

The days blurred together with the new medications and all of the letters I wrote to my best friend that I know I'll never show her.

Day 7

Another boy was admitted. A 12-year-old named Liam. I hated him more than I ever thought I could hate anybody, even more than the nurses. On some days the nurses would take away our golf pencils and crayons and make us all sit in the day room without anything to do, in an attempt to "discipline" us, but I had hidden a blue crayon between the notebook pages the day before. I went to the quiet room and pretended like I was talking to my best friend.

Day 8

Liam became a problem. When we all went out to sit on the gated blacktop, he threatened to beat a young boy—a boy that sat next to me at lunch when he was scared. A boy that came crying to

me about his parents, and that I had made my job to protect. The anger in my chest nearly broke my ribs outward.

He punched me in the eye after I lunged at him. I pinned him to the ground. A staff member watched as my friend ripped me off of him.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” She gripped me by the shoulders, “do you seriously think they’ll discharge you if you pull a stunt like this?”

Someone must have told my therapist because there was no incident report filed but she didn’t look happy to see me in group therapy later that day. She was disappointed when she talked to me. It kept getting harder for me to find the energy to care about what she thought.

Maybe I didn’t care about getting better.

Day 12

There were holds every few hours and the glass walls in the day room did nothing to muffle the screams or to hide the way the staff tackled kids down to stick them with a sedative. The screams echoed in my head and I couldn’t look anyone in the eyes anymore.

I don’t care about getting better.

Day 14

My therapist told me my behavior was only making things worse. I drove myself crazy trying to stay calm so they’d let me leave, but at this point I had abandoned everything but the animalistic need to run as far away as possible. I’d run across the state lines from Virginia back to Maryland just to get away from here.

Day...

I don’t care about getting better.

Just get me out of here. ■

Author Inspiration: This piece was inspired by my stay in a psychiatric hospital; what I considered to be the worst days of my life. I was there for two weeks before being discharged. I wrote 70+ letters to my best friend at the time to keep myself from going insane. I titled it Polarity after being diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I tried to write it in the disorganized style that I often used in my journals.

INTERVIEW WITH

Professor Shemica Sheppard

Professor Shemica Sheppard is a highly experienced faculty member at FCC, currently teaching a diverse array of courses, including Communication, African American Literature, and The Language of Hip-Hop. Having spent over a decade at the institution, she has been an instrumental force in promoting inclusivity and diversity. In January 2025, Professor Sheppard will lead a trip to Ghana, with the goal of introducing students to a culture outside of their own. Charity Hoskins recently conducted an interview with Professor Sheppard, where she discussed the upcoming trip in detail and her motivations behind it. The Editorial Board of *Tuscarora Review* extends its sincere appreciation to Professor Sheppard for her continuous efforts at FCC and in our community.



Professor Shemica Sheppard snaps a selfie.

What did you do before coming to work at FCC?

I was a middle school reading specialist for about seven years at an inner city school district. I worked mostly with middle schoolers, and I worked with some high schoolers as well. Two days a week I taught at a community college. The other two days I taught GED at a prison.

How long have you been at FCC, and what led you to seek out FCC as your place to work?

At a certain point, I was ready to leave public education and go into higher ed. I applied to every school in the country that I could think of. I got two interviews in Maryland, one at Howard Community College, and one here. I interviewed for both and I got offered both positions, but I ultimately chose FCC because I like the family. The way that the English department is really close. We're like a close-knit family.



Professor Sheppard poses with the FCC PASS group in 2022.

Who do you take inspiration from in your current work, and who do you want to inspire?

My inspiration is my students. Now and then, I'll get an email or students will stop by and say, "Oh, my God, you changed the way I think about things, you changed my life." I'm inspired to teach students how to think, as opposed to what to think. We live in a world that's trying to force people to believe one way or another. I think a lot of students come with no belief system of their own. They adopt what they think they should believe and, a lot of times, they don't have all the information to form an opinion. They may come with opinions, but they don't have the information to formulate them. I just love teaching.

What inspired you to plan the trip to Ghana?

I, along with a few other professors, won a grant at FCC. We had to create a class that we would teach [to] students before taking them to a different country. The State Department wanted to create connections with different countries all over the world. They had a few that you could choose from. The two that I remember were Japan and Ghana. We picked Ghana because I've always wanted to go to Africa. I know that's where my ancestors came from. I've always wanted to go and visit sites and see what it was like to be on that continent.

Which cultural sites do you intend to include in the itinerary to enhance the students' understanding of Ghanaian culture?

Many of the places that we go to have some connection to the transatlantic slave trade. We will visit the Cape Coast Castle, and then Elmina. They call them slave castles, but they are really like dungeons. The first one was initially a place where they housed goods, and once they realized that they were going to start



Professor Sheppard meets children in Ghana.

trading people, they turned it into a place where they would house people before they got on the ship to come to America. We also are going to visit a place called the Last Bath. That is the place where they would take those who were enslaved before they came to the Americas, and they would wash them before they put them into the castles to be sold.

What educational goals do you aim to achieve by exposing students to Ghanaian culture firsthand?

They get to see a different aspect of history to tack onto the history that they may or may not already know. The cultural exchange of getting to know the people, the food, [and] just how they live. The music [and] the people were just amazing. Everyone was so nice. I felt very safe. I think it's important that students experience what it's like to be in another country and experience the culture, the foods, the language, the music, [and] the art. We're hoping that students come back well-rounded from this trip.

Why did you decide to teach African American literature and what impact do you hope to make through this course?

It was given to me by the department chair at the time, who was having trouble with students not taking the course. He gave it to me because he said, "I know you'll add some life into it". It's not like I chose it, it chose me, and it was probably one of my favorite classes when I was an undergrad. I read a lot of literature, so I think it just fits. I hope that reading the literature and hearing other

people's narratives, and their stories will give students a better understanding of the culture and why the culture is the way it is.

What are your thoughts on the recent challenges to remove books by African American authors or about African American characters and/or history from public school libraries?

It's a way for America to rewrite their history and to make themselves feel comfortable. However, what it does is it alienates those who are from that culture. It's not just African American. It's LGBTQ+ materials, Native American, Latin American, [and] Asian American. It's anyone that does not fit into this wonderful narrative, that is America.

It challenges what America wishes that it could be. But it's not. It's not a society that's always filled with love and care for those who are marginalized. So if they can take that information away, I believe they're hoping that all the ills that they've done in the past will be erased, but that's just not the case. You could take away the books, but you can't take away the knowledge. I'm on the board of trustees for the public library here in Frederick County, and we're not taking these books out of the library. We live in a pretty liberal state, so that's not something that they can force us to do. People have a right to read and they have a right to read what they want to read. I am annoyed by the idea that they want to take these books out, but I know that they have a purpose for it.

What books and authors do you like to read?

I'm all over the place. I do read a lot of African American literature, but I also read British literature. I love that it makes me not have to think about anything. It's just like Romantic literature. I read mysteries sometimes. I'll read just about anything. Except sci-fi. I'm not a sci-fi person. Anything sci-fi or fantasy is not my thing. Anything with a good story, like a really good story that makes me laugh, and makes me cry; if it brings about emotion for me, then I'll read it.

We understand that you created and teach a Hip-Hop class at FCC. How does Hip-Hop serve as a unique lens for exploring different cultures?

Hip-Hop is the culture and rap is just what they do. The class is called The Language of Hip-Hop. It's meant to act as a way to teach social issues through the lens of Hip-Hop. We look at things that created the genre of Hip-Hop like poverty, laws, policy, and the

environment. The lens opens itself to understand why things are the way they are in society. We look at the institutions that created these situations, and the policies, laws, and institutions that create poverty in the inner city. That poverty created people who wanted to make music to have fun, to bring the community together, or whatever the case may be. What it does is it opens



Professor Sheppard ventures over the 130-foot-high rope bridge in Kakum National Park.

us up to looking at what we apply the knowledge that we learn in sociology class. We apply it to real-life situations but look at it through a different lens. That lens is Hip-Hop.

Who are your favorite Hip-Hop artists, and who do you recommend we listen to?

My favorite is OutKast. I'm from Atlanta, Georgia, [and] they are also from Atlanta, Georgia. I love J. Cole and Jay-Z. I love people who have something to say, like Kendrick Lamar. I am mostly into old-school 90s Hip-Hop. If I could recommend anything, I would say to go back to the '90s when it was pure, not quite innocent, but it was just fun.

What is one thing you would want FCC students to know or understand better about you?

I am pretty open. I love my job. I love what I do. It doesn't feel like a job to me. I come here to engage in amazing intellectual conversations. I came from public education, so you had to be more than a teacher. There was more to what you did than just teaching.

What would you consider your greatest success, professional, personal, or both?

My greatest success would be as a mother. I am doing the best that I absolutely can in terms of mothering my boys. I have two young men, and they are amazing kids. They're well-rounded and well-traveled, and they're honor roll students with perfect

attendance. They are my greatest success. When I see them doing great things, [or] when a teacher comes up to me and says, “he’s so great”, “he’s so nice”, or “he’s so polite”, or “such a good kid.” That’s my greatest success.

Can you share an experience you had with a student that was influential to you personally?

It may sound cliché, but I always tell them that I learned from them just as much as they learned from me. So, I can’t say a specific student, but all of them give me something that gives me hope that there’s a bright future and that people do want to learn, converse, and change the world. I’ve seen students come as [new] parents and they’re trying to learn but they can’t find a babysitter. They ask if they can bring their baby to class. I’m like, “sure,” so, I’m holding a baby while teaching. Things like that inspire me. This is a community college, that’s what we’re here for, to support students’ growth. I had former student[s] who I taught in middle school. One is a sports journalist for a very famous NFL team. Another is in DC. She’s a meteorologist on TV every day. When they go out into the world, and they change the world, that just pleases me. That’s why I do what I do.

What would people be surprised to know about you?

Most people are surprised to know that I’m an introvert. When I come here, I have to be ‘on’ all the time, but when I get home, I’m in my cocoon. I don’t go out and party, but I love concerts. I’m very to myself. My most comfortable place to be is in my home. I have made it so comfortable that I don’t want to leave. Most people don’t believe that I’m an introvert. I know how to be on when I need to be on but most of the time, I just want to be home or on a plane going somewhere new.

If there is one piece of advice you could tell your younger self what would it be?

Stop caring about what other people think of you. As an older person, I no longer care, but there was a time that I used to care. When we care about what other people think about us, it’s crippling, because we can’t be ourselves. Just be who you are. Everybody’s weird in some way. I don’t care about what other people think and eventually, you’ll learn that. That comes with age, wisdom, and experience. ■

About the 2024 Editorial Board

Faith Haemmerle loves dried flowers, cats, and collecting books. She is an English major graduating from FCC in May 2024. She plans to continue her studies in DC, focusing on family law and inequality. Her dream is to help children and fight for those who cannot fight for themselves. She is also passionate about writing poetry and reading stories about women's experiences.

Delilah Ricketts enjoys reading and creating art, from clay to painting. She lives on a farm and has quite a few pets. Having much experience with and love for animals, she is interested in pursuing a degree in ecology. She believes that stories are important no matter the format, whether they are told through movies, books, art, audio dramas, or songs.

Jada Powell loves all things related to stories from comics to books to movies. As an English major at FCC, she hopes to transfer to a 4-year to double major in English and Creative Writing. Her dream is to be an author to a young adult dystopian franchise that gives accurate representation to those reading. With her inspiration being Lemony Snicket, she too hopes to challenge the rules of literature in order to change the ways stories are told.

Charity Hoskins has a love for reading and writing, but chooses to pursue her desires for helping people through the medical field. She is currently a STEM major at FCC and hopes to get into UNC to continue working to become a doctor and radiologist. She loves helping people, so she hopes to make it her full time career.

Zoe Tobery is an avid lover of all things history, reading, and traveling. She plans to graduate from FCC and go on to pursue a doctorate in modern world history with a specialization in World War II. Her dream is to help preserve the stories, documents, and artifacts from the Second World War with hopes for generations to learn and remember the sacrifices made. She also hopes to write her own historical fiction novel one day soon.

Audrey Ze loves eating yummy food, listening to music of all genres, taking pictures and reading self help books. She is graduating from FCC in May 2024 with an English degree. She writes a lot of poems and is currently working on her first novel. Her dream would be to attend Columbia University's Journalism School and work at a fashion magazine in New York.

Magin LaSov Gregg loves encouraging FCC students' self-expression through the written word. Her writing has been noted in *Best American Essays* and appeared in literary journals, anthologies, and major news outlets, including National Public Radio, the *Gettysburg Review*, *Bellingham Review*, and the *Washington Post*. Her first book, *An Altar in My Heart*, was a 2023 Autumn House Press Nonfiction Book Prize finalist. She lives in Frederick with her husband, son, and small family of pets and houseplants.



Pictured on the front cover: WORD PROJECT: CONTAINED Jas Volante *Oil on Canvas Paper*