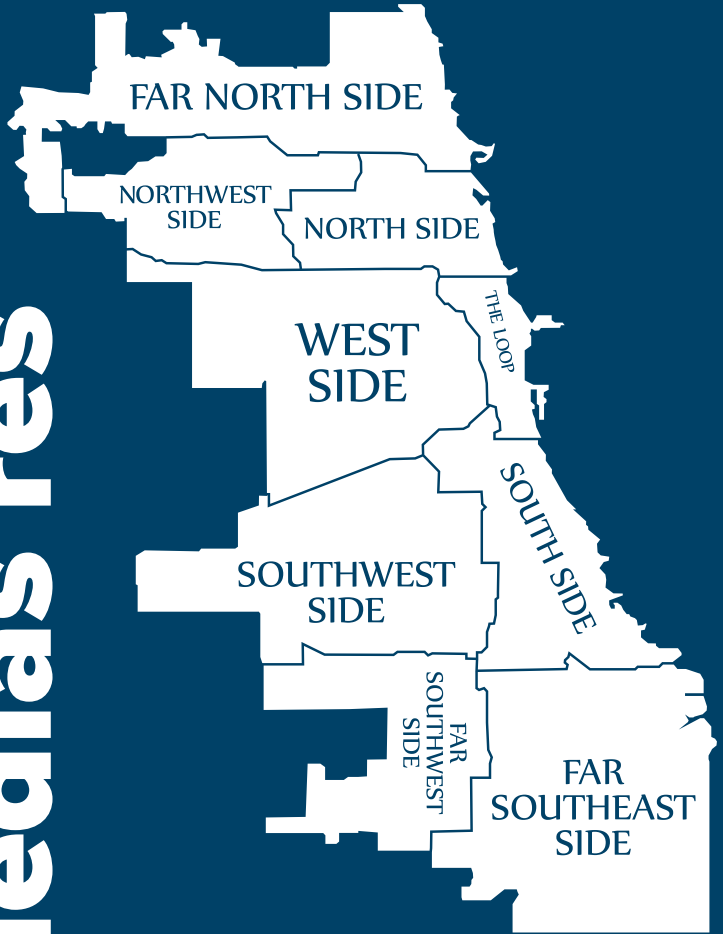


# in medias res



a journal of THE ODYSSEY PROJECT





# in medias res

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a journal of

THE  
ODYSSEY  
PROJECT

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## About the Odyssey Project

The Odyssey Project, offered by Illinois Humanities, is a free college-credit bearing humanities program for income-eligible adults who have had limited access to higher education. Our students, faculty, and staff work together to build a supportive, intellectual community and a firm foundation in the humanities through courses in literature, philosophy, art history, U.S. history, and critical reading and writing. We are proud to be accredited by the University of Illinois Chicago. The Odyssey Project has been in operation since 2000 and has graduated hundreds of students, a high percentage of whom have gone on to complete degrees in higher education, find new or better jobs, and gain leadership positions in their communities. Just as importantly, Odyssey students gain deep friendships based on a shared commitment to lifelong learning. To learn more about the Odyssey Project and to apply for our next cohort of students, visit: [ilhumanities.org/odysseyproject](http://ilhumanities.org/odysseyproject).



# About Illinois Humanities

Founded in 1974, Illinois Humanities, the Illinois affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, is a statewide nonprofit organization that activates the humanities through free public programs, grants, and educational opportunities that foster reflection, spark conversation, build community, and strengthen civic engagement. The mission of Illinois Humanities is to strengthen the social, political, and economic fabric of Illinois through constructive conversation and community engagement. We are committed to ensuring access to free, high-quality humanities experiences in Illinois, particularly for communities of color, individuals living on low incomes, counties and towns in rural areas, small arts and cultural organizations, and communities highly impacted by mass incarceration. For more about Illinois Humanities, visit: [ilhumanities.org](http://ilhumanities.org).

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# A note from the Editor

*Julia Rossi*

It is my pleasure to introduce this issue of *In Medias Res*, a journal of creative written and visual work by Odyssey Project students and alumni. Each piece printed here brims with its own originality and insight; as a collection, the pieces in this volume combine to form a sample of the creative powers of the Odyssey community.

The organizing theme of this issue of *In Medias Res* is “Place.” It is an apt frame for pieces that were produced in a time of pandemic; the ongoing public health crisis has challenged us in multiple ways, including in our relationships to geography, location, distance, home, work, and identity. The Odyssey Project’s courses have been experienced remotely — in a kind of “placelessness” — this year, with all students and staff tuning in for intellectual conversation from their own corners of the world. In the pages of this journal, you will find poems, essays, stories, and visual artwork that take up the theme of “Place” in a range of imaginative ways. There are pieces about ordinary places and paranormal



places; about cherished memories of childhoods spent in Chicago; about the meaning of “home”; and more.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity to work with the Odyssey Project this year as an intern. Though all of my conversations with students, alumni and staff have been virtual, I have still felt the full force of this community. The passion and brilliance of Odyssey’s people comes across with dazzling clarity, even through grainy Zoom connections. I am honored to have been a part of it.

This issue of *In Medias Res* would not have come to fruition without the unfailing guidance and wisdom of Becky Amato. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Toy Robinson, Stephanie Manriquez, Jacqueline Andrews, Audrey Petty, and Tara Betts, all of whom poured their time and energy into producing this journal. Finally, I would like to thank all of the Odyssey students and alumni who contributed the submissions that are enclosed here. *In Medias Res* reflects a true community effort.

*Julia Rossi is a PhD student in English Literature at the University of Chicago. She worked as an intern with the Odyssey Project this year and helped to produce this issue of In Medias Res.*

# A note from the Director

***Rebecca Amato***

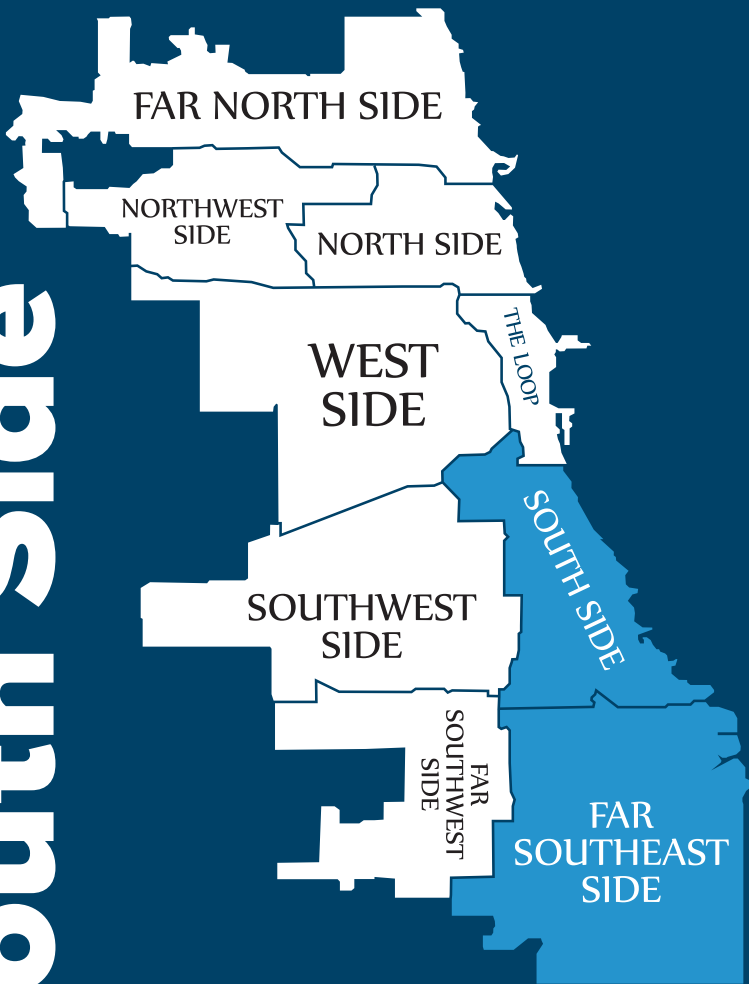
Welcome to the latest issue of *In Medias Res* — a phrase that means “in the middle of things — and, therefore, evokes the issue’s theme of “place” in its very name. What you are encountering is something phenomenal, not only in the colloquial meaning of the term, but in its very essence as referring to an extraordinary phenomenon or occurrence. That Odyssey students and alumni, as well as our wonderful intern Julia Rossi and designers Sarah Sommers and Gabrielle Curtis, were able to create, craft, imagine, document, explore, edit, arrange, and manifest such a gorgeous journal is an exceptional feat. As Julia writes, this year of Odyssey has been defined by “grainy Zoom connections”; busy chat boxes; shouts of “you’re on mute!”; kids, cats, dogs, and partners popping up in the background (or foreground) of class; and long, dreaded e-mails that have tethered us to some semblance of structure even as we long for the informality and closeness of face-to-face contact.

So, then, how would — how *do* — you think about “place” under such circumstances?

I am writing this to you from a laptop on a plastic lap-desk while sitting on my couch. This couch, like the desk from my grandparents’ home in the other room, has been my office for the past year. For our students, the classroom has been a similar arrangement of personal spaces and objects reimagined as communal ones. Such translations and transformations underline how much “place” whether it is home or homeland, El train or airplane, geographic or fantastic, lost or discovered — formulates our sense of self and literally locates us in the world. The tremendously sensitive and imaginative pieces with which you are about to engage invite us to tour the creative, emplaced worlds of our talented Odyssey students and alumni. We hope they will inspire you to investigate the meaning of place in your lives as well.

*Rebecca Amato is the Director of Teaching and Learning at Illinois Humanities and directs The Odyssey Project.*

# South Side



Chicago  
*illinois*

## ***Autobiographical Note #2***

by Larry Queen

I was born in the shadows of the 63rd Street elevated train tracks.

It was structured in my awareness for as long as I can remember.

In the shadows, the streets of Woodlawn were as numerous as the stars in the sky, with names that evoke a pristine, naturalistic retreat, like Stony Island, Greenwood, Kimbark, Kenwood, and Cottage Grove.

Every block tells a different story of life here in the shadows.

The sound of the passing train formed the background of my coming of age.

It laces its way into the cacophony of sounds that populate these shadows, like a requiem to its own everlasting.

It echoes the ebb and flow of Lake Michigan in perfect unison.

For a long time, this train dictated all of my arrivals and all of my departures.

## ***Aftermath***

by Chamberlon M. Clark

Outside of a late evening window...  
a stirring figure was reaching  
to leave a small puddle on the ground.

There was a cry before touching the phone.  
Potential questions were long gone —  
no follow up until the streets would comment on rumor.

Because of loose lips,  
there had been a mother, a job and a girlfriend;  
much talk of tragedy while shaking the head.

But in silence, the creator was praised  
because it was not you.

In a short time, the puddle dries  
into a permanent shrine,

in memory of the time  
when everyone spoke  
without saying a word.

## ***The Derelict Playground***

by Chamberlon M. Clark

From far away the rust does not show;  
not until the gates unlock  
for those who knew not,  
until they could not  
step foot inside unless in a pose.

I have yet to see any renegades  
making the chains rattle for fun.  
It was alive before, now it is cold  
how the slides and handlebars  
struggle to present awareness

of what was once innocent.  
In recess, deals were made  
for lunch money and desserts  
while the teachers looked on  
attentive to gossip old and brand new.

From far away, the rust does not show;  
not until the gates unlock  
for the people to take revenge —  
to congregate after hopping the fence,  
to a reminder of life in beginning.

## ***Exterior Design***

**by milo bosh**

These images are from a photo project called *Exterior Design*.

They are random snapshots of outdoor sites found in the city of Chicago that mimic interior spaces.

I was intrigued by how furniture and home décor items were thoughtfully arranged in public settings such as sidewalks, vacant lots, or alongside viaducts.

In documenting these locations, I wanted to honor them much in the same way they would be honored by a feature in an interior design magazine.

It's no place to call home in the traditional sense yet there's a sense of solace nested in these environments that reflects the comfort and — in some ways — privacy associated with the physical aspects of housing.

*Exterior Design* is a work in progress.





*Master Bedroom, milo bosh*



*Sitting Room, milo bosh*



*Store Front Room, milo bosh*



*Unliving Room, milo bosh*

## ***Chicago's Skyline***

by HL Polk

The city of Chicago is the place I awakened to fresh out my mother's womb. The first neighborhood I stayed in was Englewood. I recall Englewood as being predominantly Black and the neighborhood included Caucasians; their exodus was in the late 60's, early 70's. I remember visits from "Officer Friendly" to our classroom, while engaging us on how to cross the street, observing the pedestrian walk and don't walk lights, crossing with your crossing guard or patrol guard and the dangers of jay-walking or crossing against the lights. It would end with Officer Friendly shaking our hands and providing treats. We respected him and looked up to him and it never crossed our minds to disrespect or cause harm, because you may have to encounter Officer Friendly again on a not-so friendly term. I even recall the city's police patrolling the streets and the parks and I got a chance to ride in a squad car with both my sister and cousin, as curfew rolled around and the police officers wanted to ensure our safety going home. Wow...

You could stay out all night on your porch with your family; neighbors visiting your porch and listening to certain neighborhood groups singing (doo-wopping)

under the streetlights. I remember those old streetlights: white and dim, only providing light under the perimeter of their glow, casting their shadows as you approach or leaving their dim perimeters. The city replaced those lights in the early 70's with the amber-glow looking lights that were brighter along the streets, with the changing of those canary-yellow and black lettering street signs, to the green and white-lettering street signs.

And, there were gangs; but back then, there were fights, fisticuffs, chains, brass knuckles, knives and guns. But you really had to have done something really bad for the knives and guns to be used. Occasionally, there were really bad fights when jaws, heads, and bones were broken, but again, from what I remember, you really had to have caused big trouble. Those cats back then still had morals and a conscience, if that's believable or even acceptable; nobody shot a child, a mother, a grandmother; that was unthinkable.

There were Black-owned businesses and Ma & Pa stores all over. As a kid, I could go to the store with a note from my parents to pick up items and it would be placed on a tab; then Daddy or Mama would pay up on pay day or when they went to the store. Everyone knew whose child you were, and it was understood that if a son or

daughter came in with a note for groceries, or for candy and chips, you were good to go because your parents would pay the tab. Now, Black-owned businesses as such have faded as I knew them, and the Ma & Pa stores were robbed and vandalized so much, it caused the families to close the stores because it became too dangerous. I even remember when jitneys and taxis would frequent the neighborhood and all it would take is a wave for any driver that was available (Yellow, Checker, King, etc.) and they would stop the vehicle and pick you up and charge for the miles driven. Eventually, they charged you for just getting in, additional for more riders and the mileage to and from. Soon, that became extinct, as drivers of those taxis were victims of robbery and many were killed. Now, you don't see taxis in Black communities, especially on the Southside and Westside. I tried calling a Yellow cab to pick me up in the Roseland neighborhood back in 2018; I'm still waiting on that taxi.

I remember the fun we had going to the city's parks as a kid, playing on the swings and see-saws, drinking from the water fountain on a scorching hot Chicago summer day, playing in the sand box, returning to the picnic area to eat with my family while listening to the AM-FM battery operated radio belting out R&B music. And now,

I dare you to go to a park in our neighborhoods; not many cook-outs and picnics and if there are, the swings and see-saws are vandalized with graffiti, broken or gone; no water from the water fountains and if there is music, it comes from cars' tweeters and woofers, belting out chest-pounding noise to warn you, you had better get moving, because if one of those carseats contain a driver or a passenger that has a vendetta, tomorrow there could be a makeshift memorial with teddy bears, balloons, flowers and candles where the vendetta was carried out.

This city that I have known all my life, has taken on a new look but it keeps its old ways. The oppressive systems of segregation, classism, racism, socio-economic and health disparities; it is disheartening. The Black neighborhoods can be found now with food deserts, not enough dry cleaners, banks, clinics and hospitals to provide healthcare and services to the elderly and disabled; shuttered school buildings with no plans to reopen for education or housing for the homeless and the blight of abandoned properties, vacant lots (growing fruit and vegetables in some), broken sidewalks, laced with crime. Unsavory and unsafe in almost all directions of the city, of course, except the city's skyline at night.



Chicago's skyline at night is the place where my starry eyes look up to gaze into what I remember, the city I knew as a little girl. The night skyline shows the glow of businesses, diversity, integration, well-being, entertainment and enjoyment; the oneness of the city where residents lived in harmony with neighborly smiles and genuine togetherness. Yes, looking up there at that night skyline holds everything about the city of Chicago, as it should that I loved; I just can't breathe when I look down.

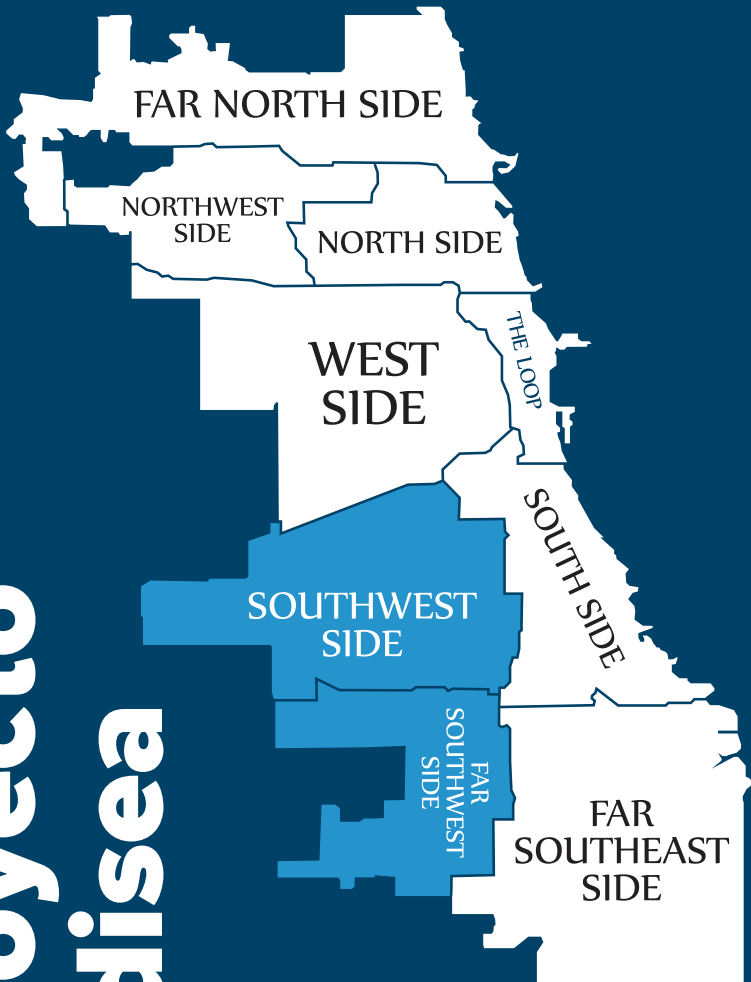
## ***Whimsical Life***

by Kimberly Buckmaster

This cookie house, *Whimsical Life*, represents my interpretation of Place — HOME and what I value. At the head of my home you see TRINITY — God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit that guide me daily. LOVE embodies the entire home that starts with self love. The front door PEACE signifies what I want everyone who walks through it to experience. REST, one of the front windows, symbolizes exactly that. We need rest to replenish and rejuvenate ourselves so we can accomplish what tasks are ahead of us. SHARE denotes my love for cooking and being hospitable. It is also a place to share the space with my Love. Another window, FREEDOM is also important in my home — a place that I can be myself openly. Lastly, there is the window BELONG. It exemplifies everything indicated previously and where I feel the most comfortable.



# Proyecto Odisea



Chicago  
*illinois*

## ***Una Historia Diferente***

por **Lucía Wrooman**

George Williams Cosme Vrooman fue hijo de un padre alemán y de una madre mexicana. Nació en Nueva York en 1919 y creció en la Ciudad de México sin documentos, lo que lo volvió algo así como un indocumentado en el país de su madre. Aunque sí emigró legalmente, las razones fueron desconocidas. Ahí, a los cuatro años de edad, la memoria le recordaría durante toda su vida el momento en que las balas atravesaron el cuerpo de sus padres ante sus propios ojos. En ese instante perdió mucho más que a su papá y mamá: perdió su identidad y sus derechos, a pesar de que poco se hablaba de derechos del niño en aquellas primeras décadas del siglo pasado.

Sin embargo, los infortunios no evitaron que recibiera el amor de su tutora Conchita, una mujer analfabeta pero repleta de valores que contrastaban con la perversa malicia de sus parientes maternos Elisa y Delfina Salvatierra, dos hermanas mestizas que desconocieron los valores familiares y al pequeño George. Totalmente indefenso y bajo las prácticas del adultismo, el apellido original Vrooman fue modificado por Wrooman, pues

ellas no querían verse relacionadas con apellidos de raza aria, no solamente por cuestiones políticas, sino por clasismo. Alemania aún no se proyectaba como potencia mundial, pero sí las dictaduras y sus consecuencias.

La noticia del asesinato de sus padres Natalia Bello y George Williams Vrooman llegó a la primera plana de todos los periódicos. Sin duda alguna, de haber procedido de España o Francia su historia hubiera sido otra, ya que la extrema influencia de esos países en México en esa época se infiltró, sin remedio, en cada hogar de clase media.

El pequeño George creció en un ámbito de privaciones, pero por lo menos tuvo la fortuna de ser aceptado en una escuela — a pesar de no contar siquiera con un documento que lo reconozca como ciudadano mexicano — para acceder a algunos años de educación básica. Conchita, en tanto, lo nutrió de compañía y afecto. Sin embargo, ella no poseía los medios para brindarle ni una alimentación ni una atención médica adecuada, lo que redundó en una severa tuberculosis y cáncer que George padeció en su adultez.

Con el correr de los años, George — siempre lleno de energía — se enamoró de una mujer a la que observaba bordar en su terraza en cada reparto de ropa de la tintorería donde trabajaba, y él desaceleraba el pedal de su bicicleta para poder contemplarla un poco más. Su nombre era Evelia Sousa Zalazar y, sin imaginarlo, formaron una numerosa familia.

George se especializó como camarógrafo en una imprenta y ese trabajo le permitió darse ciertos gustos: al cumplir cincuenta años pudo acceder a su primer automóvil, y en su vecindario llegó a ser el único que poseía teléfono y televisión a color.

George solía repetir la frase, “Yo soy americano,” pues esas tres palabras resumían la impotencia, la sensación de orfandad que él sentía al saberse separado de su tierra de origen.

Cierto verano George decidió llevar a su familia a recorrer la Riviera Maya, pues siempre fue gran admirador de la cultura prehispánica. El viaje se dio en condiciones extremas, ya que viajaron en un coche deteriorado y con un presupuesto limitado. Fueron más

de diez personas trasladándose entre incomodidades de todo tipo, pero de todos modos la experiencia tuvo su faceta positiva: conocieron un buen número de ruinas arqueológicas y lograron contactarse con sus raíces.

Más adelante, George obtuvo el anhelado documento mexicano. Para lograrlo no le quedó más remedio que recurrir a una falsa identidad, pues debió sobornar a un empleado del registro civil de un pueblo de Veracruz para conseguir un acta de nacimiento falsa con la que accedió al documento que le permitiría, llegado el día, obtener el pasaporte para entrar a Estados Unidos.

El tiempo siguió transcurriendo y sus hijos crecieron. Y fue su séptima hija quien le facilitó los medios económicos para conocer parte del continente europeo al que también pertenecía. Algunas personas heredan dinero o bienes materiales, pero la herencia que Guillermo Wrooman le legó a su hija, Lucía, fue la necesidad de un mundo más igual y justo, que se manifiesta en sus intervenciones en diversos movimientos políticos a favor de los inmigrantes.



## **IGNORANCIA** *pasos que guían*

por Lucía Wrooman

Pasos que guían al ralentí

vacíos de deseo

Equipaje lleno de historia viva

nostalgia y ser

Añoranzas

Gozos

Memoria

Ignorancia con la vista corta

(nubla el destino)

La mano sobre el hombro que detiene e impide el futuro

Bestia llena de insignias que condena la esperanza e

identidad

Conduce la ignorancia

Que extingue

Aniquila

Esclaviza

Mutismo que observa cómo del árbol caído se hace leña

Giros con tiempo indefinido

Inmigración entorpecida

bifurcación forzada

esperanza en luto.

## ***Sueños de un souvenir***

por Isis Macedo

*“Sueño con serpientes  
Con serpientes de mar  
Con cierto mar de serpientes  
Sueño Yo.”*

— Silvio Rodríguez, “Sueño Con Serpientes”

Es acaso un sueño lo que nos ha hecho llegar al lugar donde vivimos y llamarlo hogar o es solo un lugar a donde las circunstancias y casualidades nos ha llevado a establecernos llamándolo hogar y así haciéndolo nuestro sueño?

Somos seres vivos habitando un espacio de este paraíso llamado tierra y la mayoría de los individuos soñamos anhelando pertenecer a una comunidad creada dentro de nuestros sueños. Ese lugar, es en el que nos sentimos aceptados, compartiendo nuestros ideales, buscando esa estabilidad, creando el lugar de nuestros sueños o solo albergando lo que la casualidad y su causalidad nos ha llevado a vivir ahí. Sin pensar ni siquiera que somos producto de un sueño ajeno que hemos hecho propio.

Es un sueño heredado e integrado en nuestra esencia a través de esa sustancia llamada ADN, siendo esa parte humana lo que nos ha llevado a la creación de perseguir un sueño, ya sea por determinación o por inspiración de otros. Si ya en los textos más antiguos se habla de la creación de un paraíso en donde Adán y Eva buscaron sus sueños y con ello cambiaron su identidad, así es como la humanidad misma ha decidido salir de un mundo ideal a la búsqueda de un sueño. Mismo que ha coartado la libertad e identidad de nuestro ser. Adaptando nuestra existencia a semejanza con lo que idealizamos en los sueños de los demás, creando un sueño efímero de aquello que era nuestro ideal y de esta manera alcanzar el sueño americano, desconocido en la realidad de nuestra composición esencial. Ese sueño que hemos hecho nuestro, hurtado de una publicidad vendedora de ilusiones de los años 30 (James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America*, 1931) para una cultura ajena a nuestra realidad. Lejos de ser un sueño para los que no lo habíamos ni imaginado. Ese sueño no era el de nuestra raza y aun así lo hemos buscado hasta hacerlo nuestro. Aun con miedo lo soñamos, llevando la incertidumbre en la esencia de su conformación.

Esa incertidumbre invadió la creatividad e ilusión en la mente del individuo o en nuestra misma mente, descubriendo estar dentro de un sueño que ni uno mismo creo, sino que es en mero sentido de otros. Donde vivimos sueños ajenos, impuestos y obligados que por ósmosis o por reflejo adoptamos como nuestro objetivo de vida.

Hasta que nuestra naturaleza despierte y haga coalición con la realidad, iremos despertando a esa realidad premeditada y sometida a la esperanza del grupo o comunidad a la que pertenecemos.

Condicionando nuestra esencia interior, por esa realidad que ha sido marcada en nuestro sueño. Si aún esa influencia exterior nos hace ser y somos lo que nuestros sueños nos dictan en nuestro interior y anhelan la realización de nuestra imaginación. Esa es parte de vivir la casualidad con la causalidad de nuestro sueño influenciado.

Si hoy estamos viviendo dentro de un lugar llamado hogar ese fue condicionado por los creadores siendo el sueño y casualidades de otros. En el momento que nuestros sentidos se despierten y por un sueño intrínseco con lo que aspiramos realizar, es lo que nos motivará a buscar eso que ahora son nuestros sueños.

Somos memorias creadas por la sabiduría de las experiencias, circunstancias y casualidades así, viendo las cosas cómo son en realidad, buscamos la realización, la tranquilidad, la transformación y el cambio de nuestra realidad.

Esas influencias, esa cotidianidad, esos sueños ajenos terminan siendo la realidad a un sueño que nos inspira a caminar en la búsqueda de ese sueño que podremos llamar hogar.

Al buscar la materialización de un sueño es a través y sólo por medio de la motivación de nuestros pensamientos, que nos hará inspirar y transformar lo que se es u se posesiona dentro de nuestro sueño. Siendo nosotros mismos los responsables de la realidad que nos rodea y en la cual vivimos. El hogar que hemos hecho nuestro sueño ha sido conformado desde ese despertar de conciencia en la primavera de la conformación de nuestros ser.

Si una pequeña niña hubiera creído en las casualidades que se presentaron en su vida, habría creído y confiado en todos sus sueños por realizar y así por mera curiosidad diseñaría su camino al sueño que tenía por disfrutar. Pero fue solo en ese justo momento de

casualidad en el que adquirió de las manos del padre un souvenir de lejanas tierras; una bolsa de forma circular en color amarillo canario con un borde ribeteado y cierre en color rojo, al costado unas letras sin ningún significado aún; que rezaba esa palabra desconocida y llena de enigma, venía a su mente le daba vuelta, la leía y releía, una y otra vez repitiéndose que será “ILLINOIS?” esa incertidumbre convertida en curiosidad llevó a dar rienda suelta a la creación de sueños en la que no sabía si eran realidad o solo parte de una quimera.

Tan inciertos son los sueños y los caminos por recorrer; que mientras esa niña vivía en los sueños de una fría ciudad llamada “La bella Toluca de Lerdo” sería la misma casualidad la que la llevaría años más tarde y a millas de distancia de sus sueños de primavera; a conocer una “Ciudad de los Vientos” y, cerca de otra Toluca con otra pronunciación y, con otros sueños por contar.

Tal vez son las casualidades las que crean las causalidades para hacer realidad esos sueños. Hoy los sueños se convirtieron en esa realidad llamada hogar, haciendo aquel sueño hurtado en un sueño deseado con la remembranza de un souvenir.

Hoy, en esta realidad, aquella niña y la causalidad la ha encaminado a vivir en los sueños de esta mujer, que sabe y que vive su propio sueño llamado ILLINOIS dentro de un Chicago bordeando un lago con sueños de gran mar, donde se puede ver caer la nieve sobre la suave arena y reposar, a través de un tren recorriendo el “Loop” de la vieja ciudad, colmada de magnitud arquitectónica e historias por contar, entrelazadas a la modernidad y, entre sus sueños un hogar hecho realidad.

## ***“La vida es un sueño”***

por Armida Olivares

La vida es un sueño, fue ideada bajo la ciudad de Chicago, en una noche donde comenzó un cambio; se transformó en un estilo de vida que es la incertidumbre. Es por eso por lo que el color azul combinado con el ocre le dan el toque de misterio. El viento y el agua crean una escena que busca representar la vida y la muerte, está presente en cada instante, sin ser vista, que nos puede llevar a una burbuja o formarnos en ella donde todos estamos. Pareciera que somos y estamos en un mundo encerrado, hay algo más que eso, abrir los ojos despertamos a una realidad que ya lleva un año. Los globos son aquellos que nos han dejado, en eso busco dar a la memoria algo que es pasajero pero es una realidad. El tono azul y sus diferentes matices, representan la esperanza de que la vida continúa, en una vida paralela y efímera en un gran caos.

Formato: Óleo sobre lienzo 24 x 30





## **GRILLOS.**

por Juanjo Lopez

(Cuento Corto).

Era en la sala de la casa del señor Gamborro, el reloj casi mordía las 3:00 de la mañana, “la hora del umbral,” era un reloj de esos marca Majestic en forma de sol, tenía unos cuantos lustros colgado en la pared del pasillo que le da la mano agrietada a la sala.

El refrigerador del cuarto contiguo que estaba habilitado como cocina, de pronto se quedó mudo, cansado de hacer ruido parecido al de un tractor de granja, el enclenque motor viejo por fin se tomó un descanso. Poco después, la atmósfera se llenó de un silencio sordo.

Y, ahora solo se escuchaban los grillos que daban la impresión de estar en grupos amontonados para poder entrar al concierto de un artista de moda. Desde el exterior se podía percibir el desenfreno y el éxtasis que reinaba al interior, cada vez eran más los que ya pasados de copas desentonan su canto, y, se confunden con él (punchis, punchis), de bocinas y subwoofers, a veces parecía que reñían por diversión. Yo creo que

por la compañía de alguna grilla con cintura pequeña, voluptuosa, de esas que de seguro bailaban pomposas.

Dos carros que pasaban allá afuera le pusieron la cereza al pastel, iban haciendo una combinación de música y estruendos; como cuando tronaban los transformadores de luz allá, en el barrio de San Cris. Sí, deberás, me acuerdo de que cuando era niño cada que tocaban los grupos musicales de la colonia en plenas fiestas parroquiales, había una sobrecarga de electricidad, eso no podía faltar. Parece que fue ayer, como olvidarlo. Se oía el tronido y hasta el eco de los cables chillando junto con el griterío de la gente, parecía que venían de detrás del silencio y los músicos allá en la tarima eran como el cantar de los grillos entre murmullos burlones.

Pues entre el ruido y la velocidad de los dos carros que pasaron afuera, solo quedaba un hueco profundo y sórdido; como de lamentos. Y si a eso le agregamos que el sistema de calefacción también se activó, a lo lejos se distinguía con las orejas medio empolvadas el ruido de una secadora de ropa, también se oía y se sentía casi parpadeando un cielo que jamás fue azul.

Me pareció como que alguien estaba lavando ropa, yo pensé que podía ser el vecino que trabaja doble turno, pero era cada vez más agudo y cercano el sonido de

la secadora. Había un quejido molesto que taladraba las orejas, sonaba como que se les olvidó sacar las monedas a los pantalones antes de echarlos a lavar.

Era insoportable y tedioso tal ruido, trin trak torok, trin trak torok, trin trak torok.

De seguro le servía de sonsonete a los grillos que seguían de fiesta. Han de haber dicho; ya llegó a tocar la banda o un grupo de esos que en mis tiempos nunca imaginábamos, ahora les dicen música alterada, o peor tantito el mentado reguetón.

No faltó quien gritara en lo oscuro...“de aquí nadie se va, hay que seguir con la fiesta, hay que seguir bailando, hay que seguir chupando, hay que seguir gozando cabrones.”

Afuera se encendió el motor de un carro, también se oía como que iba pasando un avión, yo creo que era un jet. Porque cuando era niño y pasaba un avión haciendo mucho, pero mucho ruido, veía a mi abuelito José que observaba detenidamente al cielo y me decía: Mijo ese es un jet... los jets hacen mucho ruido y corren más que los otros aviones en el cielo, bueno eso me decía mi abuelito José.

También se los les decía a los señores que se la pasaban platicando con él.

Habían de haber conocido a mi Güelo, así le decía yo de cariño.

Él también me platicó acerca de los grillos, me dijo que los grillos no cantaban, que los grillos lo que hacían era aplaudir; pero que los grillos no aplauden como nosotros con las manos.

Porque ya ven que, nosotros aplaudimos con las manos cuando algo nos gusta mucho ¿verdad?

Ah pues mi Güelo me dijo, que los grillos usaban sus antenas como si fueran sus manos para aplaudir, mientras que las verdaderas manos de un grillo; me dijo mi Güelo. Una sujeta un papel y la otra un lápiz...y se la pasan escribiendo canciones y poemas que, al otro día, los músicos y los poetas cantarán.

Y que las escriben para los amantes que no están juntos.

Por eso, ahorita quiero esconderme en mi pequeñez para hacerme un grillo, y, poder escribirle una canción y hacerle un poema esta noche a todos los que yo quiero.

¡A lo mejor logro escribir algo hermoso!

Diantres de grillos que bien se divierten, sobre todo los que se ponen a las esquinas de los cuartos en el techo, yo los he oído desde niño, cuando con la luz apagada me arrullaban hasta quedar bien dormido.

Pero me han dicho que lo mejor de sus fiestas está debajo de las tapas de los aljibes y en las tuberías del drenaje. Por eso, quiero darme una vuelta al sótano. En el cuarto de lavado ahí dónde está el desagüe...ahí está calentito y, además "aquí las fiestas son permanentes."

¡A ver; esperen!

¿Cómo y cuándo-me-hi-ce... un grillo?

Recuerdo que dormía y después no podía despertar, pero escuchaba todo, los veía a todos ustedes, todos me hablaban y me escuchaban; nos abrazamos, reímos, nos enojamos y, hasta nos peleamos; luego nos contentábamos y volvíamos a cantar y reír... Luego; ya no tengo claro qué ocurrió.

De pronto todo seguía oscuro y frío, y desde entonces no me acuerdo de nada, a según eso desperté; pero sigue siendo de noche. Y mi reloj marca estar próximo a las tres de la mañana.

Pero, entonces; ¿Quién es Don Gaborro?

¿Por qué dicen los grillos que este no es ni aljibe ni drenaje?

¡Todo es muy raro! Huele a tierra y madera mojada, hay lombrices, gusanos y escarabajos...

¡Entonces no eran carros los que se oyeron afuera!

Dicen algunos que fueron truenos y estaba lloviendo, que no eran ni aviones ni jets los ruidos y estruendos.

¡Dicen que es el llanto juntito de todos los que quieren regresar!

No veo el reloj de la sala, ni el sistema de calefacción, ni refrigerador, ni la secadora; Ellos me dicen que esas son las épocas del año allá afuera. Que el transformador que tronó, era mi propio estertor y que la falta de luz; mi último suspiro.

Y que no es la sala de Don Gaborro dónde estábamos antes de bajar.

¡De haberlo sabido antes!

... Dicen, que Gaborro, es el nombre del se-pul-tu-re-ro.

## **Encuentro**

por Ana Isabel Arroyo

Encuentro....

We live in a society where the obstacle of trusting thy neighbor is in peril

Even though we politely acknowledge each other every evening in sorrow

The entrance to a civil comprehension of acknowledgement force with obstacles

The base of acceptance is not but an inch away

Our hands we reach

We don't encounter

It is viewed upon with gates, bridges, and walls

The human race hungers for validation through justice, we all seek

Why can't they just see, it's but a handshake, "¡Yo se!"

A critical condition falls upon us to break

That nothing but waking up with a pure soul

Can save us

Falling down in HATE, insane labyrinth

The timeline of a past underlines

The values of innocence recall to ache

Where everyone knows your name

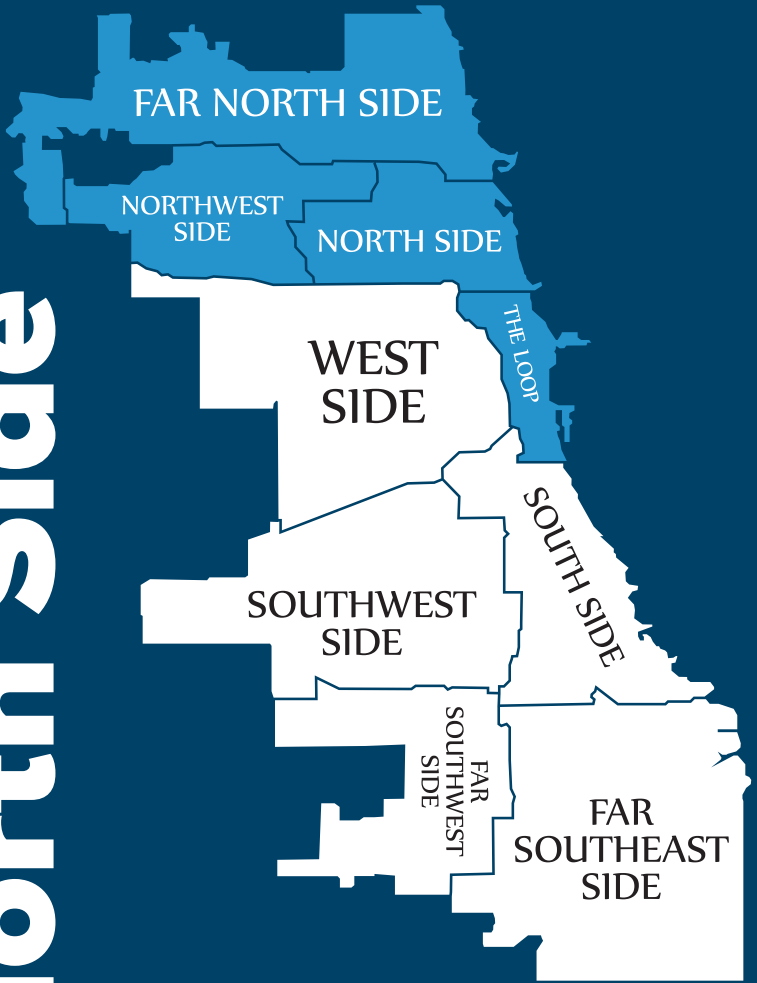


Lost in the name of HOPE ... in the dismay of shame  
Now let's come together and become a community  
forever not in hate  
Scream through the winds of time and say "¡Yo soy un  
niño que merece ser!"





# North Side



Chicago  
*illinois*

## ***Sentimental Value***

by Nicole Bond

*“When I think of home, I think of a place where’s there’s love overflowing. I wish I was home, I wish I was back there with the things I’ve been knowing...”*

— “Home,” sung by Stephanie Mills from *The Wiz* soundtrack

I have lost my “home” a few different times. The first time was when smoldering electrical wires in my childhood Chatham flat set a blaze, destroying everything inside, leaving nothing in its wake but my family, standing outside watching, on a cold January night.

The next and most devastating time I lost my home should have made me a multi-millionaire but racism and class would have no part in *doing* that. Rich people spend copious amounts of time and money to avoid doing what is right. Especially when that doing concerns someone Black. Making me a millionaire was the bare minimum the billionaires of behemoth Wirtz Realty/ Chicago Blackhawks should have done *for* me, after what they had done *to* me.

Imagine coming home from a long day's endeavor and seeing on the ground, scattered belongings that look like they could be yours but knowing that they are not yours, because how in the world could they be yours? Only to discover at closer approach, that the mix of abandoned items: *old textbooks, file folders of miscellaneous papers and receipts, random shoes though none from the same pair, a quirky lamp, a few out of season garments, a push button telephone, and other odd nick knacks*, strewn on the ground in front of 422 W. Melrose, do belong to you. It is in that moment when you realize that these useless items, not only belong to you, they are now the only things that belong to you.

As you survey the damage in a catatonic stupor of sorts, passersby report how people drove up in trucks to loot the things that also belong to you – still belong to you some thirty years later, but are no longer in your possession, after Cook County Sherriff muscle forcibly moved them onto the sidewalk. *The king sized bed you managed to make look like it was not the dominant piece of furniture in a studio apartment, the cushy foam sofa from Affordable Portables on Clark Street next to the Wiener Circle, that pulled out into a full sized bed for*

*visiting friends, the turntable, speakers and vintage vinyl collection which included your cousin's Beatles Abby Road album you kept promising to give back to him after confessing you had borrowed it when before — you said you had not, your grandmother's sterling silver tea service the Pennsylvania senator's family she cleaned for gave to her, that she gave to you when you married the boy who always said towel paper instead of paper towel, your big color TV and your little color TV, your cookware, your stemware, your art work — art you made and kept inside your oversized leather portfolio when you took art classes at Loyola University in the classroom at their Water Tower campus that overlooked the Blackhawk restaurant that you made a pen and ink cross hatch drawing of— art you bought — art your father made — oil paintings appraised at high value, your family bible with the birth and death dates of the people who came before you and the flowers pressed inside from funerals and notes written in the handwriting of the people you love who are now all gone, your photographs which cost nothing but money couldn't buy, your jewelry — jewelry that for some odd reason you choose not to wear that morning when you left home, the clothes you would have worn the next day down to the very panties and bra of it all, the coats*

*you would have worn that winter, the plants that were living beings you watered and loved the same way they purified the air and nurtured you, the mop, broom and bucket of it, the tampons and maxi pads, the lipsticks, eyebrow pencils, the lotions and potions and perfumes, the bath towels, wash clothes and throw rugs, the throw pillows, the things thrown in the hamper and the hamper too full of its smells and stains, and the so much more, the little things and the big things that make a home. Gone.*

That was the horror of horrifying horrors that greeted me on the day the fine folks from Wirtz Realty/Chicago Blackhawks evicted me for non-payment of rent that was Paid In Full. My home was taken with no remorse, and no apology. And in its stead four years later, a puny out of court settlement accepted only after a deliberate wearing down of every fiber of my being.

Home is the little things that make up the big things. It is not the location or the address as much as it is closing your bathroom door or leaving it wide open because you decide. Home is the smell of only the foods you want to cook, then first flipping through your collection of cookbooks to decide what that will be. It is leaving your purse where you left it and knowing it will be exactly like you left it when you return to it. It is leaving the thermostat



on high and every light bulb burning or reading in the dark by the flicker of a candle. Home is a junk drawer in the kitchen full of twist ties, ketchup packets, rubber bands, batteries and glue. It is little soaps and big towels you use only for show — never to be touched by any hand. It is your baby teeth in a jar that your mother saved, and Christmas decorations in a box on a shelf way up high. It's Encyclopedia Britannica and a globe where most of the countries have been renamed. It's ostrich feathers and peacock feathers; comic books and marbles in a coffee can. Granny's sewing kit and her jewelry box that plays a tune when you wind it. It's a picnic basket, linen tablecloths and mothballs. Home is umbrellas by the front door, a broomstick for luck and a nightstand drawer full of none of your business.

Today I have another apartment, at another location, full of other things, including the ache for the pieces of home still gone.

## ***Broken Promises***

by Rita Alvarez

I shudder to think  
About the water we drink  
The air that we breathe  
And the soil we seed  
Once surrounded by industry  
Employing thousands  
We basked in the soot  
Withstood pollution afoot  
It put bread on our tables  
And money in our pockets  
We died at young ages  
Cancer hit us in stages  
But then Industry left us Ravaged and broke  
Promises made to revitalize the hood  
But all we got  
Was stuck with crooks  
Employing the tens instead of the thousands  
The saviors came  
Proclaiming a change  
Attend this meeting  
Speak up  
Clean up  
Volunteer  
Telling us all what we wanted to hear

They came, they took, they made their money  
Caring nothing for those remaining behind  
Polluting our air  
Our water  
Our soil  
Crumbling bridges  
Empty storefronts  
Vacant swaths of land  
More taxes will save us  
Recycle they say  
Meter your water  
Pay for your bag  
Outlaw plastic straws  
These actions will make our City better?  
A bandaid to fix  
A gaping wound  
Petcoke  
Manganese  
Lead  
Asthma  
Autism  
Cancer  
Neurological concerns  
I shudder to think  
About the water we drink  
The air that we breathe  
And the soil we seed

## ***My Name***

by Beth Wagler-Nicholls

My name is a secret gift I didn't know I'd been given. When I was young I wrote a poem that began, "Beth, bland as a button..." It got worse from there. Two things my mother gave me, my life and my name. They made a deal, my parents, he would name the boy and she would name the girl.

I was told she called me Peach when I was still glossy with afterbirth and she, exhausted with pain. Peach? A feminine, perfumy fruit, soft and fuzzy that does not pair well with a masculine, motherless house. I am no peach. If she had remained perhaps I could have been a peach but my mother gave me my name and departed almost instantly.

Beth. Why Beth? No one knows or they won't say. I learned a long time ago that asking is futile. The family's lips are closed tightly and firmly forming one blank line. No answer remains the answer. No answer will always be the answer. But I've known for some time what it is they could never know or see or comprehend. My name is a gift and a prophecy from my mother.

My name is a parting gift, a consolation prize. It remains the only expression of her own wishes. Amid the 1970's cloud of Tiffany's, Christy's, Stephanie's, and Kimberly's, names of girls destined for Coppertone tans, tube tops, and banana clips, I was named Beth. My name means home or house. I've never been told my mother was a prophetess, not that I've been told much at all, but I believe she was. When I was young I believed that my birth was the match that burned the house down, which gave the prophecy a sinister tone. Yet who can look at a big, fat, grinning baby and blame it for anything at all? Still, prophetic words hold mystery which in my experience, is a running theme. Prophecies also carry hope although that hope is often wrapped in a riddle.

I had been working alongside people experiencing homelessness for over 25 years when, like gradually increasing sunlight after a long rain, I found the prophetic meaning in my name.

How many thousands of people have I seen move into their own homes following the long night of homelessness? I could see the meaning in my name being lived out every day. And the one who bestowed it. She knew me for only a moment. My name is a deep mystery that is still being revealed. A mystery that connects me to my mother.

## ***Anna's Atlas***

by Anna Mangahas

1. Irving Park and Kimball, Chicago, IL. My childhood home where I learned to be American and Filipino. I filled a lot of American cultural gaps through sitcoms from the 80s and 90s. I remember watching *Roots* and *Gone with the Wind* on my own. I ate rice and did homework every day, and go to church every Sunday.
2. 3554 W. Irving Park Road, Independence Branch Library. My first job with a paycheck, an introduction to team work and shared community spaces — so many different kinds of people use libraries for so many different reasons. Also, where I learned the power of storytelling and the magic of books and yes, responsibility, library fines were 10 cents a day then.
3. 1852 W. 19th Street, National Museum of Mexican Art. The first time I remember seeing brown skinned people depicted in art; previously, I had only been to the Art Institute on field trips. Once this happened, I

craved and looked for brown skinned representation wherever I could.

4. 1200 W. Harrison, University of Illinois at Chicago. I took Latino Cultural Studies, Multi-ethnic literature and Intro to Women's Studies, the only classes I took seriously there. My mind is further cracked open as I read Maxine Hong Kingston, Gloria Anzaldua and Audre Lorde and so many other important, foundational works.
  
5. Daly City, California. I move to California in my 20s. The urge to leave home was strong because I didn't leave for college. My mom arranged for me to live with cousins of hers that I met a handful of times at weddings through the years. I'm welcomed with open arms. I'm around more Filipino people than I have ever been in my life that summer. It's comforting since I was so far from home. I learn more stories about my mom's family and each branch's immigration stories. I'm grateful to have heard those stories even though I only remember bits and pieces now. I marveled at how there are so many Filipinos in the Bay Area.

6. 1301 Gilman, Berkeley, CA and 401 Jones Ave, Brookfield Elementary. I'm in my own one bedroom apartment, working two jobs. During the day, I'm a reading buddy / literacy tutor, aka best job ever, for 10 first graders at Brookfield Elementary. It's a minimum wage job thru AmeriCorps and I'm on a team w/ 9 other people. In the evenings, I'm shelving books at the Berkeley Public Library. Proposition 187 politicizes me — supporters of Prop 187 wanted to deny health care, public education and other services to undocumented immigrants — people that look like my family. It is very clearly bs to me to deny anyone health care and education. I also saw income inequality in very clear ways. I remember visiting a Berkeley Hills home that had 6 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms and meanwhile, Isaiah, one of my first grade reading buddies had to share a toothbrush with his brother.
  
7. Rosemont, Illinois. I'm back in Chicago after Americorps and my Oakland raised boyfriend at the time (also my son's father) joins me. He's driving me to my job at United Airlines. We are stopped by the police. No good reason. This happens only when he's driving. Yes, he's a Black guy. Each time, we



shake our heads and he half-jokingly, half seriously says, “Why didn’t you give me my white guy driving mask, babe?”

8. 5400 N. St. Louis, Northeastern Illinois University, 6700 N. Greenview, Kilmer Elementary, I almost become a Chicago Public School teacher. Student teaching was hard af. Even with incredible support from Grow Your Own, a program that supported people of color to become teachers, and encouraging professors and CPS teachers, I struggled. I couldn’t name the ways how then and even now, it feels hard to explain. Even in this fuzziness, I clearly felt in my gut that CPS would have eaten me up. The specter of structural racism, paternalism and white supremacy lived in a classroom that would only bolster the school to prison pipeline. I just knew I couldn’t do it. After student teaching, I was scared to be a teacher.
  
9. 7345 N. Washtenaw, Rogers Philip Park. My 11 year old son is helping me paint the soccer field lines as part of our volunteer commitment to his AYSO soccer league. He has a spray can of field paint and is ahead of me by 2 large soccer fields. He’s painting just the

corners of the field and I watch a police officer park his car, get out of the car and walk across the field to where my son is spraying the grass. I want to run over, but I don't — who runs towards a police officer? I watch the officer talk to my son, my son shows him the can of spray paint. The officer returns it. My son points to me walking over from two fields away. I curse my short legs. The officer waves at me. I wave back. The officer walks away from my son. I asked my son what the officer talked to him about. My son very plainly says, "He thought I was doing graffiti on the ground." I asked how the interaction went. My son shrugs his shoulders and just says, "It was normal". I let him know I'm glad it was normal. Weeks later I decide to tell him how scared I was when I watched the officer walking towards him.

10. 125 S. Clark, Illinois Humanities. After a decade since taking the first year Odyssey Project, I return to finally take their second year course to obtain the final six credits I need to graduate from college. It's way better than my classes at Northeastern for so many reasons. It felt as exciting as my first college classes at UIC. I manage to complete my assignments and I'm able to graduate from Northeastern with a degree

in Interdisciplinary Studies. I don't feel like such a jerk telling my son that finishing college is important now.

11. 935 W. Wilson, Everybody's Coffee. Through my service provider roles I'm invited to attend Organizing 101 with a community organization. Yes, ok, I'll go. I'm frustrated in my service provider roles and giving out referrals feels like banging my head against a wall. Folks need more than services. I learn about community organizing and building power and the root causes of big issues. How did I miss all these learnings in my life? It gives me names to my experiences and invites me into a community of hopeful people who put in the work to build a world that my immigrant parents and biracial son deserve.

## ***This Place This time***

by Kathy Fitzgerald

I am loving life  
Righ now  
Sometimes not so much  
When I was young and only interested in fun  
Uncertain of the future uninterested in the past  
Never knowing what would last  
Years have passed  
So slow so fast  
I look to the future and cherish the past  
Voraciously devouring everything life has  
to offer this old soul  
A soul not interested in regrets  
Looking towards the next 20 years  
Consuming the past  
Listening intently to Plato, Socrates and Dante  
All the parables amazing plights  
I am loving life  
Righ now

## ***A Story of a Place***

**by Paxton A. Murphy**

There's a thing about little towns in Illinois. There is a place in Illinois called La Place only it's pronounced Lay Playce by the locals. It's a little census-designated unincorporated community in Piatt County just south of Cerro Gordo, Illinois. Cerro Gordo translates from the Spanish as fat hill but to my knowledge, the little podunk village of Cerro Gordo has nothing to do with the battle of Cerro Gordo in the Mexican American War. Anyway, back to La Place. It's some big ass grain elevators surrounded by a few streets on which there are houses, empty lots, garages and sheds. The grain elevators are everywhere in the agriculturally based economy in Central Illinois, dotting the landscape every few miles in corn and soybean country with a capacity to store thousands of bushels of grain. Silver and cylindrical, they can vary from the size of a space capsule splashing down in the ocean to the size of planes. In little towns, in summertime, kids ride bikes along the hot broken sidewalks with crabgrass erupting through the cracks. In the Midwest mid-spring one could begin to smell the lilac and honeysuckle enveloping a body with humidity.

Our brows stirred by the breeze, with glasses of iced tea and a full moon overhead spilling white night all over the backyard, I was talkin' to Hank, my best friend over the summer. He was big and not very bright in school but had more “horse sense” than most people much smarter than himself. We talked about UFOs in rural areas and other regional myths.

Hank asked, “Hey Linc, have ya ever heard of the Marfa lights?”

Yeah I'd heard of them. Supposedly, a young cowboy in Texas had first seen them near the town of Marfa, Texas in the 1880s and the legend had been kept alive throughout the decades. We talked about the Coulter's Mill legend. Some say it was a ghost. Some say a monster.

Much like the jiggly lights of Marfa, the legend of Coulter's Mill is similar...the details are sketchy, but here is what's known: the rains broke the dam by the mill. Some farmers and their wives, children, and friends rallied to help save the mill then some mysterious, unmistakable force came accompanied by strange lights that drove them out. Then the mill floated away and a lot of grain was lost. One farmer's wife claimed it felt like an alien, sinister presence.

“Do you believe there’s alien intelligence?” Hank asked. Before I could answer, we saw a white spot in the distance. It was strange because we couldn’t determine how far away it was. It dimmed then brightened then dimmed again and it was moving in a jiggedy pattern.

“What is that?” asked Hank.

“It’s somebody with a flashlight” I said.

“No it ain’t,” replied Hank.

“Well, what the fudge!”

The floating light came closer and it wasn’t right. It glowed weirdly and was not of this earth. It came closer, too close, real fast.

“RUN!” I yelled.

“GO, GO, GO, GO!” Hank screamed.

We ran to the old storage building near the grain elevator, our breath coming hard. A sound we’d heard a thousand times, a sound so familiar that it was wormed into our consciousness unaware, a sound so common, everyday and ordinary that when we heard it with our ears, we failed at first to identify it. It was the sound of grain upon grain upon grain of corn by the thousands

and millions as each individually and collectively struck one another. It was merely the rustling of the corn inside the silo. Yet, there was also a sense of an alien, sinister presence.

“Shhhhh,” I breathed.

Our eyes bulging out beyond our face like cartoon eyes, our hands clamped over our mouths so we wouldn't even breathe a whisper, we waited in sweat popping silence for whatever was going to happen next. Then there came a sound of a slow click, click, click like a cicada's wings. But it was too early for cicadas.

We stayed there frozen in fright for who knows how long.

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Next morning, the hot sunlight creeping under the crack of the door, we came to, blurry eyed and exhausted.

“What happened?”

“I own't know.”

“What time is it?”

I checked my watch. It was 8:12 a.m.



“What? We've been here all night?”

“Hell with this, let's go!”

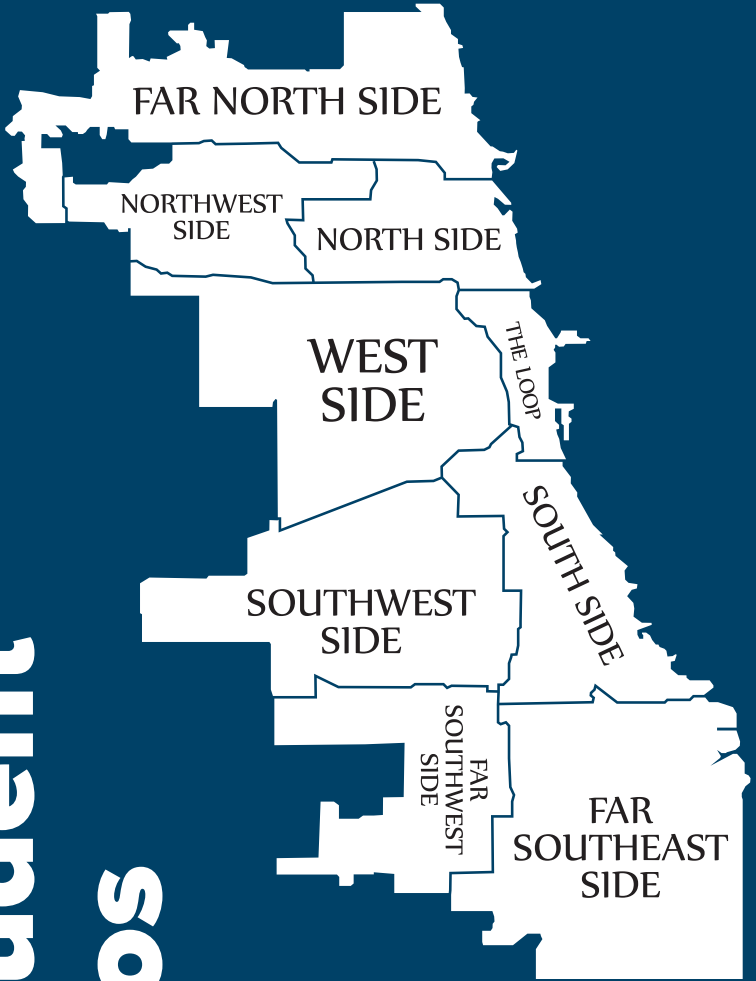
We painfully stretched our limbs and eased out of the shed and saw the weirdest marks scrawled in the dirt outside that I've ever seen. Hank said the marks looked like something he'd read about called runes. They were not a thing like crop circles but marks that made our flesh crawl and a distinct sense of something powerful, alien, sinister, and most of all dangerous.

No, we hadn't been smokin' a lid or even drinkin' a bottle of Boone's Farm Strawberry Hill. Without even sayin' a thing, we took some old broken up sidewalk paving stones left aside from earlier years and piled them on top of the strange marks. Over the years, I've noticed squirrels and rabbits never went near the spot and dogs walkin' past gave the area a wide berth.

I've never been the same since and on that morning, my hair turned pure whitish gray.

Hank's family moved away that summer and some 30 years on, last I heard of him, he had become a Mormon and was somewhere in Wyoming working as a paranormal investigator.

# Student bios



Chicago  
*illinois*

## **Rita Alvarez**

Lead Museum Educator at the Smart Museum of Art, Executive Director of Sunflower Project US, Educator, tenth child of Mexican Immigrants, community activist, creative, volunteer, loving caregiver and life partner of 31 years.

In 2007, I came across an email seeking participants for the Odyssey Project. I excitedly read it aloud to my Partner. While I already had my degree, it seemed like a perfect fit for her. The deadline to apply was the very next day. We got everything together, applied and she was accepted. She happens to be a quadriplegic, so my assistance and attendance was vital for her full participation. I sat there through each class, took notes and even raised my hand in her stead. I loved the classes, other students and the wealth of discussion and level of education which was being provided. The Director, noticing my constant presence and dedication, invited me to join in, I gratefully accepted and was appreciative of the camaraderie, the knowledgeable instructors and all the supportive services provided.

Today, my Partner and I work as Lead Museum Educators at the Smart Museum of Art, an opportunity made possible through our connection to the Illinois

Humanities Odyssey Project and the Civic Knowledge Project of the University of Chicago. My partner and I published a book in 2013, entitled *Your Move! Because You Are Different Now*, and in 2016, we started our own non-profit organization called Sunflower Project US, which seeks to benefit our environment via education, planting, conversation and art.

### **Ana Isabel Arroyo**

Ana Isabel, soy yo....Lo único que se...es que un día me libre...al escribir mi historia y mi viaje a este lugar de hoy que me escucha a mi voz y mi ser. Hija, Esposa, Madre y Mujer me define el mundo en cual estoy. Pero yo digo... soy más que esto al recuerdo de hoy. Estaré sola en mi definirme lo se. Pero yo creo el mañana va a decir. Esta chica..creció a cambiar el mundo...ilusionada en el amor, captada en suspiro de preguntas, pilar de palabras, y el silencio de versos del viento así algo mejor. La devoción, mi razón, resiliencia, va a romper el pasado olvidado que mi modales me enseñó. Hay que sonar un pasado de tolerancia, olvidado. No, repetir estos pasos mal escuchados. Pero seguir guiado por la cultura y mi llanto. Por mis hijos y sus hijos....por mis padres... reclamo mi ser, mi alma, espíritu, y mi calma. A un mejor mañana.

## **Nicole Bond**

Nicole Bond is a class of 2016 Second Year Odyssey Project alum. She is also a nationally recognized teaching artist, an award-winning poet and she has lent her voice as a contributing writer, stage and screen editor for *South Side Weekly*.

You can find more of Nicole's work at [somegap.wordpress.com](https://somegap.wordpress.com).

## **milo bosh**

milo bosh is a lens-based artist, writer and self-described "culture nerd". He is a proud 2020 South Side Odyssey Project First Year graduate whose photographs have been published in *South Side Weekly* and the 2019 Whitney Biennial catalog.

You can find more of milo's work at [mboshphoto.com](https://mboshphoto.com).

## **Kimberly Buckmaster**

Kimberly Buckmaster is a baking artist and the owner of Nibble Chicago. She is also a Second-Year Odyssey Student with Illinois Humanities. Kimberly received her professional education at CHIC. Nibble is a sweet and

savory professional, home-based baking company that prides itself in creating exquisite pastries. During her childhood, Kimberly developed a love for the craft of baking. Growing up, every Christmas the kitchen was filled with heavenly scents of sugar and spice to share with those that make everyday life special. Kimberly attributes her love and knowledge to her family for sharing all of their baking treasures with her.

### **Chamberlon M. Clark**

I am a lifelong Chicago resident and former journalist who for many years has studied, appreciated and put into personal practice both the fiction and non-fiction aspects of the written word. My previous work has been published in the *Garland Court Review*, a literary journal of Harold Washington College. (The *Garland Court Review* can be found at [apps.ccc.edu/gcr/index.html](https://apps.ccc.edu/gcr/index.html)).

### **Kathy Fitzgerald**

I am a Lead Museum Educator at the Smart Museum of Art (PT), a volunteer at the Museum of Science and Industry, and Executive Secretary of Sunflower Project US — a not-for-profit organization which my partner, Rita

and I began in 2015. In 2013 I was motivated to write a book, *Your Move*. The newfound confidence which Odyssey fostered led me to where I have gone and inspires me to continue being enrolled in the University of Chicago Graham School. I need to mention that I am a quadriplegic.

### **Juanjo Lopez**

Originario de Guadalajara, Jalisco, México. Trabajo como Profesor de Educación Física. Reside en Chicago desde el 2009, donde ha incursionado en diferentes actividades artísticas y culturales, locutor de radio, presentador de TV, y desde el 2014 incursiona como actor. En el 2015 cursa el primer año del Proyecto Odisea y en 2018 el segundo año, actualmente vuelve a cursar segundo año.

### **Isis Macedo**

Ciudadana del mundo, Aprendiz de la vida, Abogada, Escritora, Terapeuta Masaje Tailandés y Ciencia del Bienestar, Violencia Doméstica, Voluntaria en Mujeres Latinas En Acción.

## **Anna Mangahas**

Anna Mangahas (she/her) is a native Chicagoan living on land stolen from Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa as well as the Menominee, Miami and Ho-Chunk and Kickapoo nations. She's a lifelong learner, the daughter of immigrants, sister to a librarian and mother to a half Black and half Filipino son. ONE Northside is her political home, Odyssey Project is her learning community and Rogers Park is the neighborhood she loves. She's also an insomniac with an Instagram page of found hearts at @heartseen. She's working on being brave enough to write more and tell her story.

## **Paxton A. Murphy**

Paxton A. Murphy is a Year Two, North Side Odyssey student, hailing from the heart of the Corn Belt in Central Illinois and living in the South Loop for the past 15 years. Writing a tale of Midwest Gothic, Paxton tells a story of place which he's not sure really didn't happen.

## **Armida Olivares**

Armida is a painter, born in Aguascalientes, Mexico, 8th of October, 1972. She grew up in a small community



where, thanks to her family, she learned how to grow corn and harvest guayabas, which later influenced her works of art.

She began her studies in drawing and painting at “La Casa de la Cultura de Calvillo” in 1993 under the tutelage of Sergio Zamarripa Alvares, who is still her teacher and mentor. When she learned her first drawing techniques, she knew that she wanted to make art for a living.

Although she had to leave the field for many years, she picked up where she left off, while in Chicago in 2005. She independently began to delve into painting once again, and explore the arts from the comfort of her home under the tutelage of her mentor.

After 2011, she met Ms. Sonia Rodriguez at a Blue Island Public Library, who managed Spanish workshops, and offered Armida the opportunity to give art workshops for children and adults.

In 2013, she was invited by Pilsen Open Studios to exhibit at Prospectus, two years in a row.

Since then she has exhibited at various galleries across the City of Chicago and continues to teach art to children. She works out of her home, which also serves as a gallery.

## **HL Polk**

HL Polk is a Baby Boomer, born on the Southside of Chicago in Englewood; she is also a product of the Chicago Public Schools and, excluding two years living in Georgia and a season in Suffolk, VA, she has lived in Chicago all her life. Her heart for the city of Chicago is huge and she is still starry-eyed when she gazes at the city's breath-taking view at night; there is nothing like it. Her love for Chicago still palpitates in her bosom, but as a resident, her soul racks with pain as she watches its ruin because of oppression and segregation. Herein is her place in that city as she sees it.

## **Larry Queen**

While taking classes at the Art Institute of Chicago, I found a job in a typesetting shop just when the industry was moved from hot-metal to digital. The first typesetting machines filled a room. Now, the same thing can be accomplished with any home computer and printer. As a result of the many years spent in this field I have developed a deep interest in the typographical character.

Years later, I entered the carpenters union working in the exhibit industry. In Chicago, that means going to

McCormick Place, one of the largest trade show venues in the country. It was a good experience, but my real passion is woodworking.

In my second year of high school, I started practicing Transcendental Meditation, when, in the early 70's, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi introduced this technique to America. I have been practicing TM for over 40 years. In 2014, I was one of 60 men, from all over the world, selected to take part in a 5-month TM Teacher Training Program in Bali, Indonesia.

### **Beth Wagler-Nicholls**

Beth has found renewed joy in learning through the Odyssey Project. For over 25 years, she has lived in an intentional, faith-based community. During these years, Beth has found joy and heartbreak working at a large homeless shelter that serves men, women, and families. One day she hopes to earn a degree in Sociology or Social Justice. She enjoys reading, writing, walks, and adventures with friends and family.

## **Lucía Wrooman**

(Ciudad de México, 26 de septiembre 1960)

La singularidad de Lucía Wrooman contrasta con la cultura mexicana porque sus orígenes son alemanes, franceses, y españoles. En 1980 ingresó a la aviación como asistente de vuelo y en 1985 se trasladó a España cuando se casó con un italiano. Durante 1987-1989 trabajó en un trasatlántico alrededor del mundo y más tarde en 1990, se reubicó en Acapulco, México. En 2002 tuvo que inmigrar a Chicago. Wrooman, actualmente está comprometida con los motivos y derechos de los inmigrantes, especialmente en Estados Unidos de América.

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