

[OFF BRAND]

2020-2021



Escape into Yourself

Savannah Blake, [Cover]

Dear Readers,

We hope you enjoy reading the second edition of [Off Brand], ACPA's art and literature publication!

Completed during our primarily digital school year, [Off Brand] Volume 2 would not have been possible without our core group of dedicated student staff.

This edition of [Off Brand], in keeping with the events of the past year, decided on a theme of ESCAPE, asking students to consider what that word/action looks like, as well as what it doesn't. Art and literature often offer some form of escape, especially with what we have all faced this past year. These selections show the perseverance and strength of our ACPA community.

Thank you to our readers, writers, and of course our student staff who diligently and compassionately chose pieces for this publication.

Here's to year three!

For more information about [Off Brand], please email offbrandlitmag@artcollegeprep.org

Sincerely,

Ms. Autar & Mr. Lowery

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The Lovers

6 Arin Davis, [Art]



The Hanged Man

7

Thousands Escaping

Briana Wasil, [Poetry]

How do you know when to run or hide?
Where do you go just to survive?
Shout and sirens reverberate off the haunted dark walls,
I try to speak, but-
My thoughts are weighing me down like an eternity,
Every which way, I twist and I turn,
They're closing in on me, it's suffocating...and lonely
I cradle my head, folding up my knees,
Closing my eyes,
And hoping that it's all a fantasy.

How do you know when to run or hide?
Where do you go just to survive?

Too little time from now until then,
Hundreds waiting to see their families and friends,
Only if I could make it all go away,
Undo their pain, make it come loose,
So much grief, anger and lost,
Anchors buried, deep under all the frost,
Nascent ideas coming onto display,
Does this mean that there is still hope for today?
Someone once told me to keep holding on, don't give up, we'll come out strong.

How do you know when to run or hide?
Where do you go just to survive?
One simple touch and it's all okay,
One simple letter and I know the whole play,
A thousand things could happen from my touch,
Just as a thousand stories could be written from my clutch,
The black and white keys-so many ways to go,
Pen and Pencil, written with a flow,
Always the soft sweet melodic sound,
Following me, forever abound.

How do you know when to run or hide?
Where do you go just to survive?

Each little step, is one more to sing,
Such sweet sorrow that one world could bring,
Can't but help, to wish it all away,
Asking for a miracle to keep us moving through the days,
Paroxysm is the only voice that we can hear,
Integrity is lacking, because it isn't always near,
Nobody really knows, when it's the right time,
Guess it's something that we get to decide for survival...run or hide?



The Weeping Dead

Archer Calingo, [Art]

Karra

Mack Rogers, [Prose]

I glance through my shopping list: eggs, bacon, cheese, bread. Milk “dammit.” other side of the store and it was about to close too. I push my cart into a dash to the other side. When I slowed down, I noticed someone who had followed me from the other side of the store. But let it go. Maybe they need milk too. I go up to milk, glancing through.

Whole, whole whole, soy, 2%. “Got it.”

“Attention shoppers, the store will be closing in 15 minutes. Please collect your things and check out.”

“Dammit.” I went to head back to the front when I saw the person who followed me didn’t grab milk or have anything for that matter. That’s when I heard them: “Karra.” I couldn’t tell before; they are definitely a girl with short hair and a hood. And I swore I heard my name. No maybe not. I could have misunderstood. I start walking.

“Karra , Karra please.”

No that’s my name but I don’t know her.

“Karra listen to me please.” I speed up my pace. So does she. “Karra stop, listen carefully.”

“I-I don’t know you.”

“I know.”

“Then please leave me be I’m not who you’re looking for.” I go a bit faster.

“Karra.” She speeds up. At this point I’m sprinting, but so is she. I let go of my cart and just go for the door, slowing down to draw attention

“Karra. listen please. Listen carefully.”

I push the door open and grab my keys. And head towards my car. “Karra. Karra.” Her voice almost echos. Like she’s on both sides of me. “Listen carefully. You.”

I run.

I get to my car and slam the door close, locking the door.

I pull out my phone as I see her approach my car. “Kara! Please I need to talk to you it’s important.” It’s dead.

I wanna go home, but I shouldn’t. Then she’ll know where I live. She knocks on my window: “Karra. open the door. Karra. listen carefully now.” I turn on my radio and she slams my window. “Karra!” I turn it up as loud as I can. But it’s not a song, it’s not some DJ talking, it’s whispering my name through my speakers. “Karra Karra. Karra. Listen to her. Karra. Listen Karra. Karra. Karra. Karra.” I start to cry. I try to turn it off but it won’t. She slams on my hood “LISTEN CAREFULLY KARRA!” I sob “Stop! Stop! Stop!”

“KARRA KARRA.” “Karra listen.” “KARRA!” Her and my speaker are shouting at me. I can’t turn the radio off. I can’t turn it down. “LEAVE ME ALONE!” I screech.

Then it goes black.

I woke up. In my car. The sun is up. The parking lot is full. My radio is off and when I turn it on, a song quietly plays. There is a piece of paper under windshield wipers. I get out shaking and grab it. I get back in my car and lock just to be sure.

I gasp... it says:

Karra Karra Karra Karra Karra you left your door unlocked Karra. See you at home Karra <3 make sure to get that milke Karra. We need some Karra . And next time you should listen or you would have heard me call your name every single day. Karra Karra Karra Karra.

I haven’t been back in a year now. Everyday I just keep driving. I don’t use that name any more. But everytime I think I’m far enough away. I’ll go to start over. I’ll be in bed in a hotel and I’ll hear her by my door, outside the window, even in the ceiling “Karra”. I go days. Months. Even a year at one point. Without hearing her. She knows when I start feeling comfortable. I stopped using my card. I don’t go to any chain stores, hotels, fast food, even gas stations. She still finds me. Every. Single. Time.



[Untitled]
Norah Inman, [Art]

Social Dilemma

Eamon Aveni, [Art]



1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Alexis Peiffer, [Poetry]

1,2,3,4,5 I just want to survive
6,7,8,9,10 To see the light again
1,2,3,4,5 Is anyone else alive?
6,7,8,9,10 In this horrid den.

untitled.

Caroline Davis, [Poetry]

A thousand eyes are in the thickets,
Peering, piercing, staring, watching.
My hand is trembling, my knees are weak and i cannot
Begin to think
My thoughts are lost in ocean waves.

The eyes, they frighten me, ever restless
They do not care to see the pain, the past, the present-
They only care to find the flaws,
and watch as my virtue
Is forgotten in ocean waves.

Time does not heal, and age does not change
The holes that fester and deepen,
but the eyes don't even try to see them
They care not for ocean waves

I raised my voice, to try to stop them
Stop the words, the hurt, the vengeful eyes
But the scars overlooked, they began to rise
And my voice
Was swallowed in ocean waves

And so i ask, with lungs full of water,
With heart stinging with the violent sea's salt
If the eyes that follow me, ever are satisfied
And if my soul finds rest for my heart
Rest from the ocean waves

And i've found that the truth is-
The eyes never stop, they keep searching and seething
and sneering
And they are resilient, never blinking
Until they find you washed ashore,
Drowned by the ocean waves.

[Untitled]
A'Lisa D. Harrell, [Art]



Where I'm From

Katherine McGowan, [Poetry]

I'm from instability,
the chronic fear of leaving and starting over.
From losing the sound of cicadas and crickets,
and not being able to walk to grandma's house for cookies after school.

I'm from the loss of objects over time,
only having immediate family.
From the generic paintings in hotel rooms,
losing my best friends and having to make new ones.

I'm from being the new kid,
the target of confused and curious looks.
The constant questionings,
the bullying from fear of my strength and tenacity.



A Million Words

Maisie McLaine, [Art]



The news in which they had once been so invested was still on in the background, though they had left the words of sorrow and panic and grief behind long ago.

"You're not scared?" The voice behind him shook when it spoke. It shook more than usual.

He smiled at his boyfriend, and neither man could tell if it was scared or if it was genuine. He simply smiled. And nodded.

"I'm not sure," he says, and it occurs to his boyfriend that he had never seen him in such a state, he had never seen his eyes so puffy and so tired and so red. "What is there to be scared of?"

Neither answered, for the space that hung between them knew that it was a stupid question, and that there was nothing and everything to be scared of at once.

"Mom and dad said they miss you. And they love you." Tears began to well in the shorter man's eyes again as they had when he had spoken to them on the phone, and his boyfriend stepped forward to grasp him tight. If it was visible that those words hurt as much as they tightened around his heart, neither one let on.

A strike of guilt flooded his throat as he tried to speak in response. He wondered how his own parents felt. How they would feel. But even at a time like now, it still seemed that they would not be speaking again.

"You don't need to tell them, but I love them too." He smiled yet again, but a hint of genuinity sheltered itself in this one, as if he briefly forgot the surroundings which embraced them.

The shorter boy stood for a moment, considering what to say and how to feel. He buried his head in his hands. "I still can't believe there's nothing we can do. There's nowhere to escape."

The taller scoffed. "There's never been anywhere to escape for people like us. If you don't have the money for the shelters, you were never on their radar of

survival to begin with."

He realized, with a second of self-reprimanding, that even now he couldn't stop himself from political remarks.

He frowned, and reached towards his boyfriend's hands. They interlaced their fingers, as if their hands were subconsciously bracing themselves.

"I'm sorry. You know I'm scared too."

"I know." The smaller boy rested his head in the crook of his neck and smiled. He reflected on how strange it was to find comfort in such a negative emotion.

Repeating the other's earlier words, he asked "What is there to be afraid of?" and they both laughed in a way that seemed to attempt to shelter and express every emotion bottled within them simultaneously.

They, without knowing it, both longed in that moment for the music that they had not and would never hear, and they wished they could listen to it all, and that it would not be lost to time and space and to the moon and the sun. They hoped that if it was, as it would be, that they would appreciate it as much as they did. Maybe it was stupid to spend their last moments reflecting on the grief for something they never did and never will try, rather than that for what they were able to experience, yet they both allowed their thoughts to mull over nearly any missed opportunity they could think of.

"Should we sleep? Maybe it would be easier that way." The taller man had a habit of attempting to cope with things he could not reconcile with, no matter how out of his control they were.

"I'm not sure. I'd never be able to sleep. I'd never want to spend my final moments without you."

Soft darkness blanketed the night sky. Soon, there would be nothing below it but the remnants of structures strong enough to withstand, without purpose, what was to happen, and although the volume below was far from silent, it soon would be nothing but.

~Miles France, [Prose]



[Untitled]
Lillian Tayse-Baillicul, [Art]



[Untitled]

Terrance Alexander Vader Knotts, [Art]

Aftermath

Cen Centeno, [Poetry]

The bang of orange is the final blow to the defense that lacks any real
protection
The wire holds no value, shrapnel blown to bits. The man hides in the corner.
He is lost, and he has lost.
He has no value.
Soon the battlefield where dreams and people lay lifeless will be covered in
the residue of the blast and
the tears of those who suffered.
The man in the corner had not suffered, for he ran away.
You run like a coward, naked and afraid, man in the corner.
These bodies are rotting.
Yours has decided to start rotting at the soul.
You ran from men just as young as you.
It will weigh on your conscience until the day you end up just like these men.
Dead and alone.

So was it worth it?

I Am Who I Am

Katorya Washington, [Poetry]

I am who I am

I am who I am to my wide nose to my full lips
To my curves to the melanin in my skin
To the naps in my hair
To the clothes that I wear
I'm the one who gives color to the empty canvas I am the one that shows you
your path
I'm the one who shows you creativity in this plain world
I am the reason you smile
I am black and I love my curls

I love my girls
The girls who came from nothing and made it into something
The girls who were hated by there looks but yet they are desirable
Desirable is such a funny word to be desired is to be wanted

but they don't want us there afraid of us
there afraid well take there world but there world was made by us
They hated us
No they hate what we made
We made a family from the color of or skin from the way we take care of our
kids
we made a family from the family reunions to the cookouts
To the long hair don't care to the hot combs to the fros we wear but they don't
care
No they don't care

It doesn't matter what our men wear
they still put us in jail from walking home on a cold night from a job that we
don't like
to fend for our family so they can see the sunlight
but no all they see is red and blue lights around the corner out of sight they
pull they gun out on sight
I bet they all wants us dead by sunrise

The girls who sat in the corner crying for better days praying they don't get
taken away the moms who's son died cause the cops caught them by surprise

I lied saying that my dad was Alri but he going to jail for the 3rd time
Yet my life is going perfectly fine I am not defined by the clothes I wear by
shoes I buy I am defined by what's in my mind how I carry myself
through this life
How i carry my kids to the light
I gotta show them how to win this fight
Stand up and do what's right
I don't care if you black or your white
You chose what's right
And that's all I Gotta say I'm sorry I can't take the pain away all We Gotta do
is pray for better days
All I want is my world to be safe



Leaving Town
Faith Jones, [Art]



Home Words

Bean Clifton, [Poetry]

The child slept
As moonlight seeped in
Through rain soaked clouds
Storming another castle
Willing to let peace
Never to surrender
We wish to march
Only to watch
Our homes become
Our only freedom
Our savior
From the world
Which we are
Which we shall
Which we hope
Where we hope
Only to leak
Our only bleak
And savage thoughts
Rage from where
They are never signed free from.

A Dip into the Mind of Reality

Bea B. [Prose]

She couldn't help doing it; just diving right in seemed so simple and easy to her now. She couldn't understand why so many people had trouble with it. It was the getting out of it that was the difficult part for her. But that seemed to be the easy part for everyone else. She had yet to meet another person who dove into their own mind as deeply as she did, and stayed there. Willfully or not. Most times she didn't care for getting out. Only when she was stuck in the black void that crept up around her and encapsulated her thoughts, turning them oozy and thick. But there was a better place to escape to, not just the inky void. No, her place she ran to, escaped to, was warm and vibrant. Filled to the brim with magical creatures and people she had only known in books. A place where her mind could make anything it wished into a reality. She couldn't often manipulate it to what she wanted. It just happened. And it just knew. She could dive in and be surrounded in a warm tranquil void surrounding her and letting her defy gravity, floating about in a peaceful kind of way that she had yet to find outside her mind. Or it could throw her into wonderful situations with people that could only be seen in dreams. But she didn't have to sleep to go to these places. She could leave herself on autopilot and take a step away from the captain's seat, away from all the harmful noise and destructive people. And it was to her surprise when she found someone in one of those special spaces that existed in the real world, the one she has only just left for this one.

Standing there with a warm smile and strong arms embracing her and making her glimpses of hope of the future a reality in this space. She didn't even question it, unable to. That's just how her spaces worked most of the time. You went with the flow of what they offered. But only after being dragged from that space did she stop to wonder why something from this world had been in that one. It was supposed to be a place to let her escape and forget. And yet she saw her again, standing there with marigolds in her hair smiling that welcoming smile. It was fuzzy and warm around the edges of the memory, but it was there. It was still there. She couldn't escape it, having it replay in her mind and stick as if with invisible tape in front of her face. It made her wonder. Often when she was dragged forcefully from her mind she was upset and felt intruded upon, same for when she found something from the real world that shouldn't be there. But this time she didn't feel intruded. Or upset or angry. Instead she felt a whisper of that same smile across her own lips. This was something that she hadn't wanted to escape from, hadn't wanted to leave behind. Something that she wanted to return for.

A beacon of hope that maybe she could find in this world what she had only been able to receive in her ocean of spaces and thoughts.



Daydream Escape
Mariah Napier, [Art]

Walking Home

Kate Jones, [Prose]

Walking down the street, arms folded over my chest, keys between my fingers, praying for someone to realize that I need help. He's right beside me. Head down, don't give him the attention he so clearly wants. Someone help me escape; he doesn't realize that I am a minor. If he does, he clearly doesn't care. Why did I decide to walk home from the bus stop down a busy street. I can't go home now; if I go home then he'll know where I live and that could be even more dangerous.

He's shouting at me, calling me a b---- for not giving him any attention. Please someone, anyone, realize what is going on and help me. I need out of this; I have been walking in circles for almost a half hour. My mom must be getting worried, but if I take out my phone then he will see everything on it and then get even more mad. I should have taken my friend's offer to walk me home, maybe then this man would leave me alone.

Oh dear god he's getting mad again, he is calling me fat and saying that I should be glad that he is giving me attention that I wouldn't get any other way. If there was another man along this street who didn't look as though he would join in this disgusting display then I would run up to him and pretend that he is my brother. Then maybe this man will leave me alone. But sadly there is no one out tonight. I can't lose him. Maybe if I just start running I can lose him for long enough to call the police or my mom. No, that wouldn't work, he is easily 6 feet tall and I am only 5'2". This man looks like he is over 30; he is clearly drunk but that just makes everything more dangerous.

If I say anything it will just egg him on more. If I say I have a boyfriend, he'll ask where he is or say that the boyfriend doesn't need to know. If I say I am gay, he would fetishize me and ask if he could watch. If I say that I am a minor that could go one of two ways, he could either be a pedophile or he would leave me alone. I can't take any of those chances, he is too drunk to be thinking with sense. I just need out. I can't die like this. Please god don't let me be kidnapped here.

No no no, he reached out to me and is now touching me with his grimy hands. Do something! I can't deal with this. Should I use my keys? I have to. Oh my god! I cut his hand! He slapped me! I am out of his hands though. Run! Run! Run! Is that a person up ahead? Am I saved? It is! What do I do now? Run up to him! Pretend he's your friend, your brother, your boyfriend, anything! Hide behind him! The drunk man is still behind me watching the entire thing.

This man is a lifesaver; like, he literally could've saved my life. Who knows what could have happened if I didn't see this man and if he didn't go along with my story. Now is the challenge of getting home. I need this man to walk with me at least half the way just to make sure that if the other man was still watching us, he would think that we are still together. Once I am home safe I am investing in some pepper spray and mace. This is really sad that this is something women have to deal with on a regular basis.



The Promised Freeland

Meesca, [Poetry]

Wake up
Start a new day
Stuck in the dark
I thought it okay
The promised freeland
I dream of away
Though it's quite far
I stay here and pray

Someway
Somehow
I'll get up and bow
That night I say
I'll get up that day
The promised freeland
That's where my soul will stay.

Africans Reign

Zainab Hussein, [Art]



Where I'm From.

Caroline Davis, [Poetry]

Where i'm from is broken and bruised
It screams of sadness and my mother's sorrow
It was never just one place-
I left my comfort in Ellendale Minnesota,
My hope in Gaylord, just two hours up

I'm from my brother's broken down spirit
Worn from the drugs and my father's anger
The cigarette smoke laced on his clothes

I'm the child stripped from their mother's arms too quick,
Forced to grow up too soon.
By 5 years old I feared my father,
and by 9 I lost myself
I'm from late nights of tears and the evenings of poems,
the scorching sun on sunflowers and the calloused cold encasing northern soil.

I'm from South Dakota sunsets,
midnight music, and long afternoons of library visits
I'm from breaking in ballet shoes
And never being brave enough to trust

Where I'm from is tragic-
It reeks of silent insecurity
And never quite knowing where I fit
Of giving it all but it's never enough
Yes, where I'm from is defeat

But where I'm from is different now,
it's healing, it's growing, it's changing
Now I am from prescription pills, and picture frames
and baby's breath flowers blossoming from their vases

Now I am from polaroids of pleasant moments,
from rosy cheeks, and car rides,
My mother's sweet smile and my sister's soft hand,
Now, I'm from a healing home, with so much love to give

This Face
De'Lana Sanders, [Art]



Guernica

Anonymous, [Poetry]

I dream of strange images, twisted and unfamiliar brutes
I wake to normalcy and miss the facade
When I return I take in the shapes
And the contrast of shadows and whites
They must make a noise
But it is a noise I cannot hear
And when I wake I think of them again
I attempt to recreate them onto paper
But the image is never quite right



Skully
Ash, [Art]

Icicles

Nate Robinson, [Art]



The Blue One

Nazum Alkelly, [Poetry]

I sit in the crowd.
Completely filled with joy.
As I sit and watch the magic
and laugh at the clowns as I enjoy,
a girl stands on a Horse.
As I suddenly hear a chorus,
I look up above me
and I realize all of this is Ridiculous.

I climb up my oak tree, and feel the scratch of the bark on my hands, the air raid sirens blaring all around me.

My world crumbles from within, as I feel the warm air wash over my face. The beautiful red of the sky as I see the end of my race.

This hateful world is finally over, and I like many, have escaped to my happy place for its final moments. Breathing in the cold autumn air, I am finally at peace. There is nothing more to worry about or fight for, and I in a state of complete neutrality.

It is a strange feeling, this calmness, I feel like I should feel sad for the end, but it is a relief. The hot steam from the fires washes over me, and I let go. I let myself plummet towards the ground, and

Lil Tayse-Baillieul, [Prose]



Lights
Shauna Minter, [Art]

Diverse

Aamya Petite, [Poetry]

Diverse
yet separated,
Together,
Yet against one another,
Weak,
Yet destructive,
White,
But black,
Livable,
Yet insufferable.



Peace, Finally

Callie DeRouen, [Art]



[Authors & Artists]

Anonymous: When I wrote this, I was thinking about how sometimes we need to escape from other ways we use to escape, such as when a form of coping is or becomes unhealthy, we need to find ways to stop, or escape.

Ash: I don't know, I just work here.

Bea B: A creature not from this world looking to observe this world and its inhabitants while trapped in one of your people's bodies. Your minds are a strange place. And your reality even stranger. I'm still learning to love it again.

Savannah Blake: I often find myself lost in thought, especially when looking in a mirror, and wishing it was another reality I could come and go from at will. I wanted to convey that through my piece. Also my favorite colors and pink and blue.

Archer Calingo: My art tends to reflect a piece of me: things I like, things I feel, things I want, and things that bring me joy, sorrow, stress, or serenity. Sometimes they mean nothing at all emotionally and exist for purely aesthetic appeal. You could interpret this piece however you like, whether you just like the colors and look of it or maybe you see something a little deeper. It means something to me.

Cen Centeno: Dunno what I submitted. but hey, I'm here right?

Caroline Davis: My name is Caroline, and my goal for my work, whether it be poetry or painting, is to make someone out there feel a little less alone.

Callie DeRouen: I use my experiences to influence my art and how I create it. It's messy and often turned in late, but I am happy to be here :)

Adrien Godin: Backgrounds are hard, but I tried. I love these supernatural boys so much! Senior year was weird but I made the most of it - hey look, my art is in [Off Brand]! :D (*chaotic neutral energy intensifies*)

A'Lisa D. Harrell: Hehehe I made it back onto offbrand....hi mom.

Kate Jones: Hi! My name is Kate and I honestly forgot that I had submitted my piece of writing! The story shows what is going on in this young person's head as a man is catcalling and harassing them and how they are able to escape. I hope you enjoyed!

Terrance Alexander Vader Knotts: Hello, my name's Terrance and I made this piece and randomly thought it was cool, and took a picture of it. Hope you like it.

Meesca: I like to draw and write! This was just a poem based off of a picture I saw in class. About balanced unbalance.

Mariah Napier: My art piece was made to be a big example of what goes through my mind. I'm a person who constantly daydreams and thinks of random things during the day.

Alexis Peiffer: Hello, I am 14 and I love animals and fun facts about everything! My favorite fun fact is that after a human head is cut off you are still alive for about 15-30 seconds and depending on where your head was cut off you can still talk!

Mack Rogers: This is a piece that I wrote for Creative Writing and I was proud enough to share! I hope that one day you go from reading my work here to a book that I publish one day! I've been writing since I was 12 and am rather proud to see something of mine shared! :)

Briana Wasil: Books are here for the adventurous, writing is here for the imaginative, and we are here for the inspiration. I love taking ordinary words and putting something extra on it to make them extraordinary :)

Congrats to our Additional Authors & Artists:

Nazum Alkelly

Eamon Aveni

Arin Davis

Miles France

Zainab Hussein

Norah Inman

Faith Jones

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