



THE
BAYOU
REVIEW

Fall 2024

THE BAYOU REVIEW

FALL 2024



The Freedom and Deliverance Edition

THE BAYOU REVIEW

Fall 2024

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Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the editors.

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Editors' Note

We, the editorial staff, are nine students with varying educational and life experiences. Although we differ, we share a passion for creative writing and artistic expression.

We chose the theme of freedom and deliverance for this issue to spotlight the virtues of free and open communication, to celebrate our ability to express ourselves positively and rebel against oppressive systems.

The theme allows us to gain introspection into the many ways we can be free in our modern world, including our identities, ideas, and physical bodies, and understand how this freedom can deliver us mentally and spiritually to personal growth and enlightenment.

Our contributors have given us invaluable insight into their personal understanding of freedom and deliverance, shaping the theme with many brilliant facets beyond our expectations. These facets include topics important to our modern dialogue on freedom, such as the impact of technology, the confinement of urbanization, the rule of law, the bliss of youth, and many more.

We are proud to present these powerful and heartfelt works to you, the reader. We hope you glean bits of inspiration about what freedom means to you and that you can deliver yourself to a space of insight and illumination within these pages.

Ike Aro
A Long Awakening

A Long Awakening

If with all these rising wails
the hours keep
cowering in terror,
What living promise
The unblinking future holds
When we warp words
In frozen palates?

The air we ordained
is clotted
With spectral grinning groans
A long hiss of oppression
Reigns supreme.

Like under a naked curse,
Blanched souls,
We worship the dawn
We laugh away our itches
And swallow slowly our spittles of shame

It seems
To pet an hourless day
And crawl underneath
Crossbars of oppression
Have flayed out bones
Have muted our soles

If only with a tongueless stare
We could trigger a tsunami
Unwrap wealed words
To break
Panoplies of little deaths

Joselyn Arriaga
Acéptalo
Freedom de

Acéptalo

I think

(— Me detengo y tomo mi tiempo al
escoger mis palabras)

I think acceptance is freedom.

(Aún no lo puedo aceptar).

I want to move out.

(Quiero llegar a la casa)

Live by myself

(Verla cocinar arroz y frijoles)

Maybe I'll be happier

(Preguntarle cómo le fue hoy)

But I'd be terribly lonely

(Pero no la puedo escuchar al través
del ruido de la mesa)

Creo que tengo que aceptarlo

Para ser libre.

Freedom de

There's an angry teenager in my room.
Llora cuando está enojada.
I can't stop her ni calmarla.

I use all the tips the terapistista gave
But she's stubborn
Not from pride but from pain

I tell her we can't keep waiting to be saved
—Pero la salvación—she argues—debe de venir
Debe de venir

There's an angry teenager in my room.
She waits for Diosito to say something
Pero para mis palabras, she's immune.

I am not allowed to leave my room.
Not until she's okay.

How do I tell her
I no longer want to stay?

Willeana Coffman
FREEDOM

FREEDOM

WHAT IS FREEDOM
IT DEPENDS ON WHO YOU'RE ASKING
FREEDOM IS MUSIC AND FREEDOM IS
FASHION
TO DO WHAT YOU LIKE
AND FOLLOW YOUR PASSION

IN THIS LAND WE HAVE FREEDOM
FREEDOM TO QUESTION
FREEDOM TO PLAY
FREEDOM TO WORSHIP
FREEDOM TO PRAY
BUT YOUR FREEDOM SHOULD NEVER
RUIN SOMEONE ELSE'S DAY

IDEOLOGY, POLITICS, OR RELIGION - PICK
A SIDE
YOU ARE FREE TO BE - WHATEVER YOU
WANT
AND TO DO IT WITH PRIDE

YOU ARE FREE TO EXPLORE ALL THE
PLEASURES IN LIFE

AS LONG AS YOUR FREEDOM DOESN'T
CAUSE OTHERS TO HAVE
CHAOS OR STRIFE

FREEDOM IS A GIFT AND A PROMISE TO
YOU AND ME

PLEASE DON'T LET YOUR FREEDOM BE
ANOTHER PERSON'S MISERY
FREEDOM IS CASUALTIES AND TRIUMPH
AFTER THE FIGHT

AND FREEDOM IS EVERY HUMAN'S GOD
GIVEN RIGHT

FREEDOM IS A FLAME TO IGNITE

TO SHARE WITH THE WORLD

IT IS FOR EVERY WOMAN, MAN, BOY, AND
GIRL

FREEDOM IS A VERB

IT IS A STATE OF BEING

FREEDOM IS A THOUGHT

AND IDEAL FOR SEEING
THE WORLD AS A DECENT PLACE

SO NEVER LET YOUR FREEDOM INVADE
ANOTHER PERSON'S SPACE

BE FREE

**Kathi Crawford
For Immediate Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOUSTON, TX, MAR 19, 2008

Sorry, Kathi, but it's no longer necessary for you to serve as Vice President of Human Resources for our company. You can throw away your "Catbert" ("evil director of HR") stress balls. Effective immediately, you will no longer be having Friday morning tacos with your team. Nor will you be responsible for ensuring legal compliance and effective HR operations. No more need to collaborate with the executives. It's time to turn over your company ID, office keys, and computer. No, we don't need your resignation letter or a two-week notice. Let's just agree to disagree. You can pack up your 47-year-old Bottle Blond Hair and Blue Suits today. We wish you the best in your future endeavors.

NEWS FLASH: A WOMAN IS SOLD ON THE
AMERICAN EDUCATION MARKET

KENT, OH, JAN 1, 1987

One day in the early 1980s, a coworker at the bank in my Ohio hometown brought in a newspaper from Houston, Texas. Page after page was filled with opportunities for people with administrative skills as I had. Houston, it turned out, would be my promised land, where jobs were a-plenty with the oil boom. I worked

hourly administrative roles for large companies for many years. I thought being seen and not heard only extended to children in those days; soon I learned it also applied to women.

In 1985, I decided to return to college believing a degree would help me advance my career. I spent two years in community college in Dallas then returned to Ohio to finish an undergraduate degree. When I returned, I did so believing my mom's university employee benefits would continue. That is, tuition would be fully paid. As luck would have it, the university changed that policy my first year back barring any child over the age of 25 from receiving tuition. It was my goal to have a college degree in my back pocket, even if I had to empty those pockets first of all my cash and a bit of creative financing.

A DAY IN THE LIFE: CORPORATE LEADER

HOUSTON, TX, MAR 14, 2008

Most days my husband and I would stop at Starbucks along Shepherd Drive and chat with our barista before getting on the highway and heading to our jobs. Walking into my office, I had a pit in my stomach. My team wasn't there. The CEO had called them into the conference room. I was not invited. She was concerned about a candidate being rejected because of a failed criminal background check and wanted to change the protocol in a way that was not in

line with our legal counsel. She wanted to do it her way. Having reached a level of incompetence akin to the Peter principle, she had the authority to put the company, and me, in a liable position should something go wrong. This wasn't the first time her actions made me feel uncomfortable, but it would be the last.

HOT TIPS: HOW TO MAKE A CAREER TRANSITION

HOUSTON, TX, SEP 1, 2007

It turns out I fired myself from that job. I wanted to redirect my path. I wanted to work with people who shared my ethics and fulfilled my desire to positively impact others. But I was afraid to give up my idea of myself, my idea of "success," the perceived power of my VP-ness, the alluring trap of corporate life, and the salary.

Before I made the break, I put my emotional support team together. First, I hired a coach who had me create a list of at least twenty-five in each category of what I wanted to be/do/have in the next five years. I answered questions like: What could keep you from accomplishing your goals? Who can help you? Who can stop you? What are you willing/unwilling to do to reach your goals? If you don't make it what will your most likely excuse be?

To get through my day job, my coach said “Be amused. Be Maxwell Smart. Be a double agent. Don’t quit. Build a cushion of cash while you figure out what you want next.” “Do what makes you happy,” my husband said, “we’ll figure out the rest.” “Look to the future,” my therapist said, “not the past. Go for your life.”

BREAKING NEWS: EAGLE LAUNCHES NEW COMPANY

HOUSTON, TX, APR 1, 2008

Did you know eagles look for and fly into storms? As storms approach, lesser birds head for cover, but the eagle spreads its wings and with a great cry soars upon the powerful updrafts to heights of glory. Eagles use storms to lift them to great heights. Many of you know Kathi is an avid cyclist. Her bike often acts as her wings. And you know she is fearless in the pursuit of her business and professional goals. And just like an eagle seeks out opportunities to soar, so will she.

SCOOP: ENTOURAGE SPOTTED AT HOUSTON’S HOTTEST SPA

HOUSTON, TX, SEP 1, 2008

Sitting in the salon chair, as I waited for my hair to change back to its natural color – a medium

brown with caramel streaming through – I talked with my stylist about the ins and outs of owning a business. He was prepping my hair for a photo shoot with my Image Artist. She called my new look “tailored and approachable.” Now, I was ready to shed the “evil director of HR” vibe.

Scott Damon
Blue Man

Blue Man

I coasted through school, getting mostly B's, some grades a little higher, some lower. Teachers learned not to come to me for the right answer. The silence was as painful for them as for me. They would eventually move on, but learned quickly to skip the unnecessary first step of calling on me.

In gym class, I passed all the units, whether baseball, gymnastics, tennis, or swimming, but I never stood out. No coach ever beckoned me to join a team and no other kids admired my skills.

I managed to wrangle a few girls for dates, usually if they just needed somebody to go with them to prom or were tired of sitting home alone. One date with me was usually enough.

The day I got my first tattoo was when the Red Sea parted. It was a simple blue bird on my right forearm with a faint black outline. I didn't know any other sophomore in school who had a tattoo. Everyone wanted to see it. And hear about it. "Was it painful?" "How did I choose the blue bird?" "What did your parents say?"

Frankly, my parents were impressed with the tattoo itself and that I took the initiative to lie about my age and go get it on my own, although they also punished me mildly for going behind their backs. I didn't take any friends with me, since they look young and might have ruined my chances to accomplish my goal.

After two days, interest at school cooled. I was back to eating lunch with one group of kids one day and another cluster the next day, a nomad at lunchtime. That afternoon, I got my second tattoo, a blue snake on my outer bicep and up my shoulder.

The next day, kids went crazy! Not only did they love the look of it, they thought I was the bravest and wildest guy. One popular boy hung around with me for a couple hours after school. Girls looked at my body in detail.

That's all it took to find a rhythm. Every week or two, I'd get a new tattoo, always in light blue. The first few were scattered over different body parts, but then I started to connect them and form patterns. My parents loved my change in attitude and were amazed that I looked forward to going to school.

That was three years ago. I've tattooed all the common places, some big and some small. Also, the bottoms of my feet, my ears, palms, private areas, and face are massively covered in blue ink.

When I show it off at events around town, those are the questions I get most – what drove you to do this and how did you get started. I know I'm known as the Blue Man, so for one last time, this is how I got to this point.

Suryashi Dubey
Glory and Peace
Freedom in Digital Sphere

Glory and Peace

Searching for the depths of the mountains
I delved myself into the sea
I observed every shadow around me,
It's a mere reflection of what I cannot see
When sea is the mirror, for the mountains to see
They are proud of their heights,
When they lack in depths!

Deliverance is realized
When you chase depths
In the world of apathy
When you discover, empathy
Meanings when are realized through
compassion
The hearts are found in sea, and in mountains
through love and devotion.

Perfection is realised
When glory, rule peace

Through peace, glory is justified
In thoughts and practice truly bona fide
Mountains are glorious, seas hold the calm
When merged together; a surreal sublime
Seeking such imagery in the world, seems
divine.

Freedom in the Digital Sphere

World absorbed in mechanization
Feelings sinking in digitalization
Symbols depict emotions
Lost love! type with caution.

Monsters of anxiety
Faking life,
We post it
Every day, we are alive.

We seek presence in the digital sphere
While in reality, we often disappear.
Existentialism is unreal
And “the unreal city”
The dead city; alive seems to be.

Singing melodies in paranoia
Life is in Schizophrenia
It’s all in the Device.

Wake up!
Necessarily, we must realise
This is commodification, and
We are the price.

In appearances, we win
In reality, we lose
Body over Soul
We often choose.
Do we find purpose,
In this hollow space
Inclined towards, a tragic rat race.

Narcistic world; captured in images
Reality, then became a mirage
Are we the “post-human beings”?
Artificially refined, digital strings.

Epistemic! yet unconscious, struggling to
determine

Yes, we are fine...?

Chimera and simulacra are we

We see, yet we can't see.

Robert Anthony Keiser
Wintry Mix

Wintry Mix

Gin and fog eat
up the city in the distance.
Ice in a pool of hot wax
a corporate candle named wintry mix.
Shrapnel on the windows, the bank's
green light somehow still hums
all the way to tomorrow.
The steam furnace squeals,
the kittens and their fleas swarm up my legs,
the cat mews, hungry.
It is hard to say if all these hours
at the computer are worth this passing
moment at the window. It can't be
like this, not everywhere.
The cat whines for her kits, calls them
to nurse, to satisfy some mutual need,
to distract her from not being
allowed outside, where she's from.
One must hem in creation
of more mouths to feed.
Stretching out her limbs,
she gives up all her milk
to these suckling bundles of black fur
instead of running
for the crack in the door,
instead of satisfying a deeper need.
And I'm left with one
watered-down sip
of an old pine forest.

Abby Kesington
The Game
Runway

The Game

In the game of love, we dance across life's
battlefield,

In the silent spaces where frustrations yield.
He, a lion, exudes dominance and might,
While I, a deer, caught in his gaze, take flight.

His presence, a predator's stealthy stare,
I feign stillness, as if caught unaware.
Pretending submission, a delicate charade,
In this intricate dance, love's game is played.

I try to wiggle free from his embrace,
He pins me down, a smirk upon his face.
"I will be gentle," comes his whispered lie,
His tongue, like poison, moves to pacify.

He strokes my hair, his breath a heated gust,
Salivating, fueled by savage lust.
His eyes, they glint with hunger and with thrill,
Ready to strike and bend me to his will.

Then my hind feet got a life of their own,
Kicked vigorously till the lion was thrown.
In that moment, survival broke the trance,
Love's game morphed into a fight for chance.

The lion, stunned, backed off in sharp surprise,
As the deer stood strong, with awakened eyes.

Runway

Runway so smooth, not made for my stride.
Fractured beneath the weight of pride.
My heels sank deep in waxy self-doubt,
Each stumble louder than the cheers that rang
out!

I faltered, heels clutched tight in hand,
No longer the flawless walk I had planned,
But a clumsy shuffle through fear's cracks,
Barefoot now, yet on firmer tracks.

The runway remains, but it's no longer a show,
It's the path I walk, humbled and slow.
Unsteady at times, but finding my way,
With each step surer in resilience's sway!

Miriam Damaris Mardivino
(Maldonado)
Estado Civil
Plegaria

Estado Civil

Me gusta sentirme divorciada,
vomitar las monedas repetidas
que se permutan.

Me gusta creerme divorciada
evocar el caótico fénix
que derramó en mi estómago
un cántaro de lava.

Me gusta pensarme divorciada,
aún cuando las agujas del reloj
se derritan a las seis
con el olor de la cena recién puesta,
desabrida y monótona.

Me gusta imaginarme divorciada
sostener la copa hasta quebrarla,
quién sabe si callar,
sangrar, o buscarme fragmentada.
Solo sé que me gusta
soñarme divorciada.

Plegaria

Habitas en todas las luces
y sombras de mi caminar.
Existes dentro y fuera
del útero universal

Pariste a mis diosas: Orixas, Yemayá, Ochún y
Oya
Y también a mis demonias: Lilith, Santa Marta
y Pomba Gira.

A las ancestras que me acunaron
y a las que me abandonaron
en un intento de esquivarse a sí mismas.

Eres todas en ella y en mí,
en una sola carne y en todas las energías.

Dame la fuerza para alojar mi universo,
así cómo se la diste a tus hijas para levantar los
mares,
se igualaron en el Edén y devoraron para
alimentar su propio fruto.

Dame la voluntad de estar satisfecha con mis
acciones,

suelta culpas y libérame de las mías
sana Madre mía, sana.
Tú que llevas la vida y heredas la muerte
de todas nuestras historias, llénalas de ritos.
Bailemos del otro lado del Edén
y construyamos un lugar que a veces duele, a
veces ama.

Nuestro jardín de las delicias,
encontrado en nosotras mismas,
en nuestro presente.

Jennifer Nava
Dear Insecurity

Dear Insecurity

Dear Insecurity,

I can't ease my way into your world
In the same way you can into mine.
Your sultry promise turned so cold
As your whispers agreed with spite

I can at least say that I am trying
Trying to settle in your discontent
Insecurity, the Sister of mercies
Through my death and resurrection
You give me no pardon, no peace

Instead you baptize me in a tributary
My body weathering before I erode
Parts of me deposits like an accessory
All watershed tears, your home abode!
You had hoped with right enough pressure
You'd wash away the sins of my dearest
While praying earnestly for me to be pure

You had hoped with a high enough fever
That it would rid my wretched pestilence
Oh Insecurity, great deity, I am a believer!

But belief alone cannot masquerade
I am drowning in your ideals
Your wasted potential in my shade
To death, I make a plea deal

To stomp my heels on your chest
Wrap my hands around your neck
All while you drown, instead.

From the waters in your eyes
I find the stubborn child underneath
And I let go at sight of my reflection
Only I give absolution from this sentence.

Margarita Oro
Waiting Room

Waiting Room

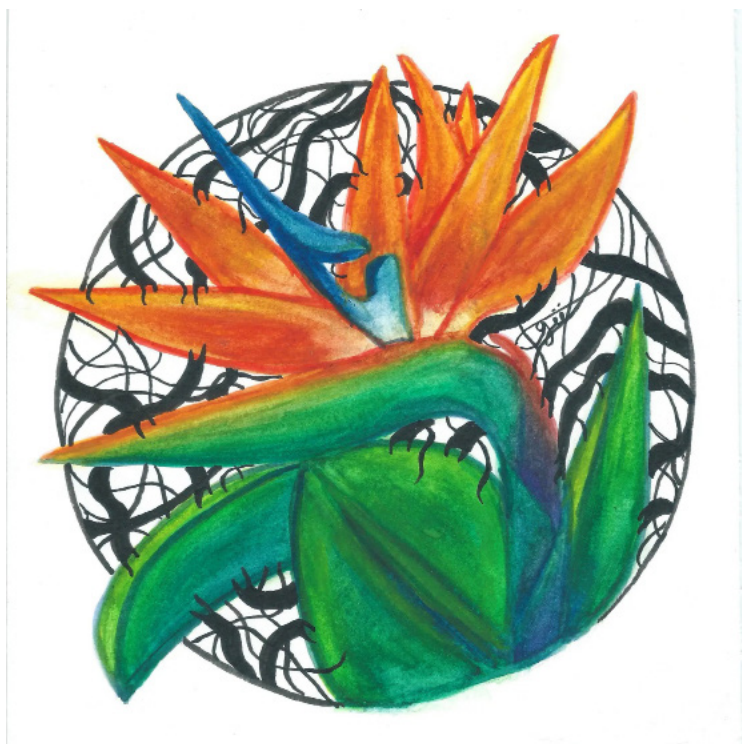
I always get the feeling that I should be somewhere like Berlin or New York. If you were to ask me why, I wouldn't be able to say. If you were to ask me "How was your day?" I'd probably have nothing worth mentioning. I woke up, went to class, got a coffee and came back home to do work on the computer. I fried thousands of brain cells scrolling through social media. Searching for a high that could change my life for a second. There's always an animal going viral for being cute and silly. That person I haven't seen since high school won't stop posting about their "Euro Trip." The biker boots I googled the night before keep appearing to me in ads. My last tweet got over 600 likes for being relatively self-deprecating. The high has worn off but the fear that the time to do something meaningful has passed begins to set it.

I fear I spend so much time being nothing. That I expected more than what life has to offer. I am constantly reminded of the limits I have and my lack of discipline. Lately, I've started thinking a lot about money. How much I have, how much I don't, how much more other people have, and how it makes their life better. I think about my body a lot too. 15k steps a day, overpriced smoothies and protein bars. I've learned that nobody gives up regular Coca-Cola for Coke Zero because they "like the taste better." Within these last 12 months, I've realized how the body is a social currency of its own. People are nicer and see you as someone worth approaching if you fit their standards. It's incredibly crass and yet it's always on my mind. I think about whether or not I'll ever get married. I'll

probably never have children. I think I'm okay with that. I can't remember the last time I had a crush on someone. Probably high school. I think about my childhood and the way adults used to speak to me and how it all ties into the person I am today.

I want to be great and yet I don't know how. I'm scared I want to be too many things that I'll end up being nothing. I'm supposed to be in the spring of my life but it feels that the leaves have already begun to fall. I want to know what the next step is but no one will tell me. I wait, I wait and I wait but nothing happens. Perhaps I know what the next step could be but I'm too much of a coward to take it. I'm rotting in bed, staring at my phone, waiting for my dreams to come true. I'm waiting for someone to come and save me but it's never coming.

Giselle Oviedo
Set Free



Natalie Peña
Lost and Found

Lost and Found

I remember the old man's oak tree in the garden
of secret keepers.

And magic plotters
Would you plant me in your memory garden?
Or discard me like a forgotten dream you once
had.

A memory you keep in a secret garden never
plotted.

Shadows never grow.
And it'll be less painful since you never bring it
up again.

But the lanterns are still lit.
And the shadow burns like a never-ending fire
on a matchstick
My powers, all my words, my wounds, my lives
I never lived.

But the window is clear as day.
The sky is blue.

No clouds in sight
I know the words you wanted to say but never
did.

I know your heart. It wasn't a secret.
I'm the gatekeeper carelessly listening.
And the battle wound from heartbreak you tried
very hard to hide are as clear as day.
They never hoped to stray away.
The lanterns are still lit and you explore.

The forest of my love you always searched for
Ever since you left.
Since you left
Oh, you left.
And the lost and found are secrets never
brought to light again.

Christopher Polanco
La Mente del Artista



Claire Poole
Sunday Drive

Sunday Drive

In praise of the Sunday drive
my family used to take,
with no particular place to go
or time you had to get there.

My father always behind the wheel
of the station wagon, my mother
beside him, draping her arm across the seat,
her oval brown birthmark in full view.

My brother and sister on either
side of me, my other brother
banished to the way back back,
can't be trusted to not start a fight.

We gaze out the window, seeing the landscape
change from city to country. Run-down
strip centers become vast fields dotted
with cows, maybe a horse or two.

Breathing in the air, fresh
with possibilities, all quiet
except the radio at low volume.

Sinatra? Or Tony Bennett?

Give me the freedom
of the open road again, my family
all together, happy, smiling,
before the shouting began.

Tex Reyes
Astronaut

Astronaut

A sailor of the stars
assailed by alienation
I am on a maiden voyage
casting nets like incantations
I try to convince myself
not every wanderer is lost
But I place my bets on sunken costs
and constellations double-crossed

Maybe I was fated to travel
on space missions unmanned
Maybe it is for a reason
I have yet to understand
I've always been wary of anchors
and the threat of gravity
That planetary pull
has plagued and fascinated me
Will I end up like Saturn
suffocated by its rings?
A satellite trapped in orbit?
A bottled message lost at sea?

They say that isolation is freedom
there's solace in solitude
They say I'm better off untethered
in the spacewalk of my youth
Still, I fear the stars have misaligned
Cosmic journeys cursed to fail
Ships that wreck before they set sail
I fear the light years will pass me by
without a close encounter of any kind

Sanjeev Sethi
Chorus
Statutes

Chorus

There are no goodies; give them god,
the ownership of an imagined utopia.
Frame othering as the anthem. Dub
naysayers as turncoats, as traitors.

In schism lies legislative prosperity.
Locate them to the diet of idolatry.
Single out those with the limelight
as flag bearers.

Let a homogenized palette color us.
Let us only focus on our brief. Let
our lingo play on. Let ad hominem
prevail. Let our riff be the only one.

Statutes

Laws will moderate
what they must,
freedoms and citizenry
go hand in hand,
not in handcuffs.

Lesser laws
more illumination.
The key
is edification
not edicts.

Jacqueline Williams
The Lord's Prayer
Young and Ready to Die

The Lord's Prayer

I hope one day when I'm old and gone
That I can come home
That you can forgive me
For all that I've done
That I can crawl into Daddy's arms
And all is forgiven

Love is a crux
Love is a crux
Love is a crux
Love is a crux

Love is a crux on which
We pin our faults
All are sins
In the bright daylight of the sun
For all the world to see
Bleed and die

Young and Ready to Die

We're young and ready to die
Beautiful and full of light
Bright-eyed in full flight
With wildflower crowns and rainbows in our
eyes
This is how we'll always be

We fall in love on a whim
Take risks 'cause it could be the end
This is how we'll always be
Wild and young and free

It's like summer '99, I was 14 and you just
turned 15
Rose colored views for a perfect world
As we kiss in a Lisa Frank paradise
Underneath optimistic skies
You electrify my heart
Set me on fire
Let's burn from the inside out
And burn it all down
Young 90s love over a boyband track
"Please don't go..."
Let's stay you and me

We're no Romeo and Juliet
Just two runaway dreamers
Leaving in your granddaddy's Oldsmobile
Ain't no looking back
Head out I-10 west 'til we hit Pacific blues

We fell in love and took a risk
'Cause tomorrow could be the end
This is how we all should be
Wild and young and free

Ernest Williamson III
En Toi Je Te Regarde
In Memorandum of the Good



In Memorandum of the Good

I do not know why I remembered.
Everything. White sunlight tickling
My hair. Me, the brown little boy. Age 5. Sitting
Happy subdued in August as if Santa came
fortnight.

So strange, the music of the ocean waves
Me and Andrew atop sand building a castle.
Both of us smaller than bad blood, colored
Reminders, or corridors of askance; treason in
the trees. Oblivious.
Now, I do not know why I forget everything
else.

The frowns on your faces. The colors of your
reminders. Oblivious
The matters in your lives. The oceans with
bleeding

Waves. The two buddies fighting to the death.
again. Oblivious. in a yellow dump truck.

My Mork & Mindy lunchbox. Oblivious.
From age five to eight. Andrew always smiled.

Whether we were building sandcastles or not.

Whether the news gives a damn or not.

Whether or not we

in essence

mattered.

As did the sand.

Sandcastles

Ocean music

White sunlight white

Smiles unending.

Dump truck. Yes.

The yellow one.

Oblivious.

A yellow one.

Acknowledgments

We had a lot of individuals that we'd like to acknowledge as integral to the production of our literary magazine in the Fall 2024 semester here at UHD. Our team of nine editors have compiled a list of acknowledgements highlighting the strengths and uniqueness of our team.

Primarily, we'd like to thank Dr. Stalina Villarreal for steering the ship and offering the editorial staff helpful and kind guidance in the creation of this Fall 2024 issue of *The Bayou Review* and for giving us the opportunity to experience the hands-on creation process involved with publishing a literary magazine.

We'd also like to thank our contributors who have given us a unique perspective into what this issue's theme of freedom and deliverance means. Through their works they have blown our expectations of this theme away with diverse and impactful points of view that challenged our own definitions with an oblique angle.

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Angie Villalon, a huge Formula 1 fan who's both great at ballet folklorico dancing and offering an unfiltered opinion.

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Karla Carrillo, who led the website and social media pages and is always ready with a quick-witted comment, both quirky and kind.

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Nicky Topp, a devout Catholic, full of intelligence and good spirit, knowing exactly what to say and how to say it with no fear of expressing himself.

Raquel Barrientos, a lively personality with an infectious laugh, used her Excel wizardry to organize all the submissions.

Seth Cornell, an inquisitive, passionate speaker who is always open to learning new things.

Tom Tice, a military veteran and fiction writer who did most of the literal and metaphorical heavy lifting for The Bayou Review.

Vincente, a fiction writer, crochet fiend, and cat dad, who is generally very cool with an air of mystery that makes him even cooler.

Many thanks to this pantheon of collaborators. Your dedication and support to The Bayou Review is acknowledged and greatly appreciated, and we hope to have inspired future collaborators and editors to find their own sense of freedom through literature and art.

Contributors

Aro, Ike

Ike Aro is a Nigerian poet, playwright and short story writer. His poetry has been featured in the Port Harcourt Review, Ife Poetry Portal, African Writer, Booksie, Poetry Portion and WordPress. His poems have appeared in anthologies such as 500 Nigerian Poets and Ogele.

Arriaga, Joselyn

Joselyn Arriaga is a first-generation Mexican American Houstonian who heavily enjoys literature and writing. More specifically, connecting my community with modern literature. Porque le falta sazón.

Coffman, Willeana

Willeana Coffman has been writing poems and stories since she was a kid. She loves to travel; her dream is to put her feet on every continent. She is most proud of raising her two kids as a single mom and being a first-generation college graduate in 2018. Go Coogs!

Crawford, Kathi

Kathi Crawford is a business/career coach based in Houston, TX and in 2008 founded People Possibilities, LLC. Her writing has been featured online and in print. Her chapbook, *Consider the Light*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. You can find her on Instagram @kathicrawford.

Damon, Scott

Scott Damon, from Houston, Texas, is a gay man who has lived through many societal changes and personal experiences. He has a strong interest in relationships between gay men in poetry and fiction. He has published two novels, "Debut" and "When Worlds Collide" and one live-action graphic novel, "Tarak's Ordeal."

Dubey, Suryashi

Miss Suryashi Dubey is a PhD Research Scholar in English Literature at Department of English and Other European Languages at Dr. Harisingh Gour Central University, Sagar(M.P.). Her area of research deals with cultural and film studies. She has published research articles in national and international journals and attended many seminars Keiser, Robert Anthony

Robert Anthony Keiser's poetry has appeared in a handful of places, including Rattle's Poets Respond series. His poetry translations

Keiser, Robert Anthony

Robert Anthony Keiser's poetry has appeared in a handful of places, including Rattle's Poets Respond series. His poetry translations have appeared in *The Southern Review*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Guernica*, among other publications.

Kesington, Abby

Abby Kesington blends her Nigerian roots with her adopted Texan home, infusing her poetry with cultural richness. Formerly a journalist in Lagos, she graces Houston's poetry scene with her eloquence.

Nava, Jennifer

Jennifer Nava is a poet and future English grad (expected August 2025) with a love for words and cozy moments. When she's not writing, you'll find her reading, doing Pilates, or daydreaming about her next creative project. She believes in the magic of storytelling and strong coffee.

Oro, Margarita

Margarita Oro is a full time student that enjoys writing, watching films and reading in her leisure time. She is a Texas native of Mexican-Nicaraguan descent. Her biggest inspirations when it comes to writing are Clarice Lispector, Elena Ferrante, Annie Ernaux and Joan Didion. She hopes to one day be a published author.

Oviedo, Giselle

Giselle Oviedo is a Fine Arts senior at the University of Houston-Downtown. She specializes in freelance, painting, illustration, and mural work. Oviedo has painted 3 murals, drawn over 150 illustrations for The Dateline, and will paint a new mural on the 8th floor of the One Main Building at UHD.

Peña, Natalie

Natalie Peña is a sophomore at the University of Houston-Downtown, majoring in English with a concentration in creative writing. She has been passionate about writing poems and songs since middle school. In her free time, she enjoys reading, music, and playing the guitar. Through her creative expression and storytelling, she aims to explore diverse narratives and inspire others.

Polanco, Christopher

Christopher Polanco is a self-taught oil painter from Honduras. Christopher loves spending his free time painting, traveling to new countries, playing soccer or in the look for the best Italian places in Houston

Poole, Claire

Claire Poole is a writer in Houston. Last year she won the Writers' League of Texas Manuscript Contest in the historical fiction category with her novel, "Piano Girl." Her poetry has been published by Pulse and the Write Launch this year. She is working on a memoir about her recovery from stroke.

Instagram: [clairepooletx](#)

Reyes, Tex

Tex Reyes is an English major with a concentration in Creative Writing. Though he enjoys all forms of writing, poetry is what he is most passionate about. Some of his poetic inspirations are William Wordsworth and John Keats. His hobbies include baking, photography, singing, playing guitar, and painting.

Sethi, Sanjeev

Sanjeev Sethi has authored eight books of poetry, his latest being *Legato without a Lisp* (CLASSIX, an imprint of Hawakal, New Delhi, September 2024). His poems have been published in over thirty-five countries and have appeared in more than 500 journals, anthologies, and online literary venues. He lives in Mumbai, India.

Williams, Jacqueline

Jacqueline Williams, a Houston-based illustrator and graphic designer, writes semi-autobiographical poetry and short fiction exploring family dynamics, relationships, mental health, other worlds, and magic. Her writing style and process are influenced by film, television, folklore, and oral storytelling. Jacqueline graduated from the University of Houston in 2011.

Williamson, Ernest III

Ernest Williamson III has published poetry in over two hundred journals including *The Roanoke Review*, *Pinyon Review*, *Westview*, *I-70 Review*, *Decanto*, *The Cannon's Mouth*, and *Poetry, Life, & Times*. Ernest is a three time Best of the Net nominee. Currently, he lives in Tennessee