

A Collective of Political Poetry



UNFORGIVENESS



M. Buechler

Cover art: Judith with the Head of Holofernes (1610-1612)
Cristofano Allori

Mature content warning.
Graphic content warning.

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A DEATH ON APRIL SEVENTH

I dreamed of the journalist
who burned alive in his tent
by the hospital in Khan Yunis

Ahmed Mansour

He came into my room, and with arms outstretched,
approached me slowly with his melted mouth agape,
a wide yawning hole that groaned
and groaned

I remember the reaching,
and I remember the pleading,
all the missing fingers,
and how he groaned

Groaned madly with the torture of having
all the things in the world to say,
but being silenced

When I awoke
I looked toward my closet for any sign of him
and there, written on my wall in blood
were the words

Do something

THIRTY EVE

Hope is the thing I'm chasing,
as the rain taps on the roof and rattles in the downspout
I'm looking for hope, but
I keep seeing the footage of a headless baby
that was blown up in Gaza when I close my eyes,
and when I don't

Sitting on my floor, I ask God
to help me realize what it is I have to say
But the truth is
I have a flood of words, I've just swallowed them down
because they feel too small to do any kind of relief

We children of the age of online
have learned to hold the future with open hands
Criticized for our ways of coping, we've tucked
pieces of ourselves away to make room
for the grief that comes with this slow descent

As many thoughts as raindrops begin to lull me
and when I open my eyes,
I'll have existed for three decades

MY ENEMIES

A woman selling flowers
on a San Francisco corner
was born somewhere else,

A kid in Pennsylvania,
playing for the school tennis team
not the other school tennis team,

A bank in Ohio, has its callers,
press 1 for English

A teacher taught something
A girl thought something
Someone poor buys chips

College students conclude
genocide is wrong
They write words and sit on lawns
The words are sometimes shared

My friends don't read them, or buy flowers
or plant seeds. But they protect me
and they are practicing, burying
ambulances in the sand

EMPTY
WALLS

Americans have 128 military bases outside our borders.
Americans have 750 bases across 80 countries.
Americans have nearly 800 bases in more than 70 countries and territories
Not America exactly
Not North America
Not the United States I'm familiar with
The True Americans I'm not allowed to be familiar with

Artificial intelligence has led drones across your skies and ours
The Americans said it's alright to do in pursuit of our shared goals.

Israelis can be familiar with Americans in a way I can't.
Not Israelis exactly
Not The Tribes of Israel
Not The Jews who speak of Jacob in their writings
The True Israelis I'm not allowed to see fault in

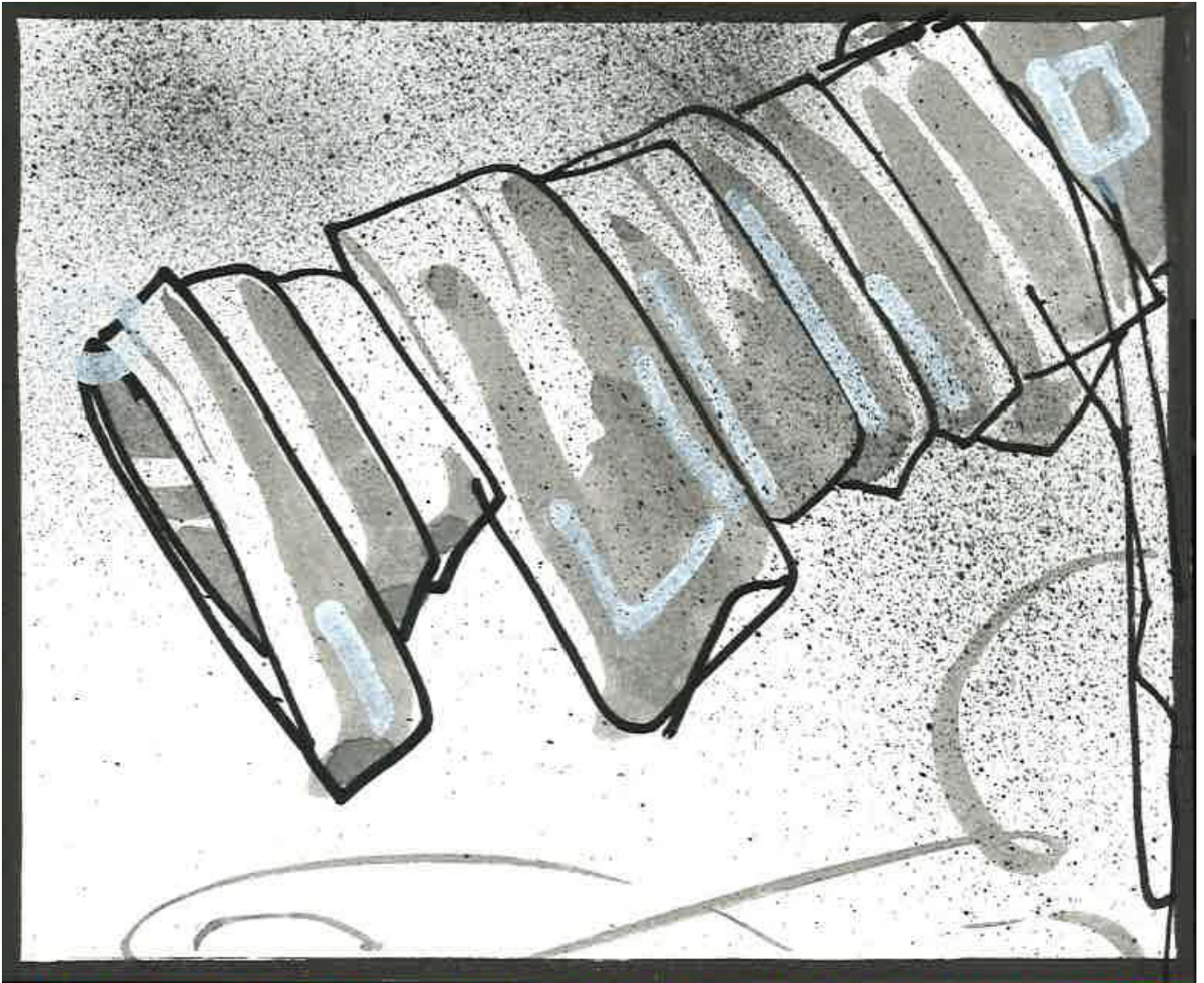
Artificial intelligence has told me which homes are wrong for water
The Israelis said it's alright to do in pursuit of our shared goals.

My goals are watched closely
In case they are dangerous but I was told we agree so it seems wrong to worry
I have no guns or plans or property
The eye of the truth they want watches me through every place it can see
Waiting to keep us apart
Lying in wait of what I'll say next
In case it is new or exciting or true in a tone they dislike

Artificial intelligence waits to replace my words of love
The Masters have goals and we have our humanity

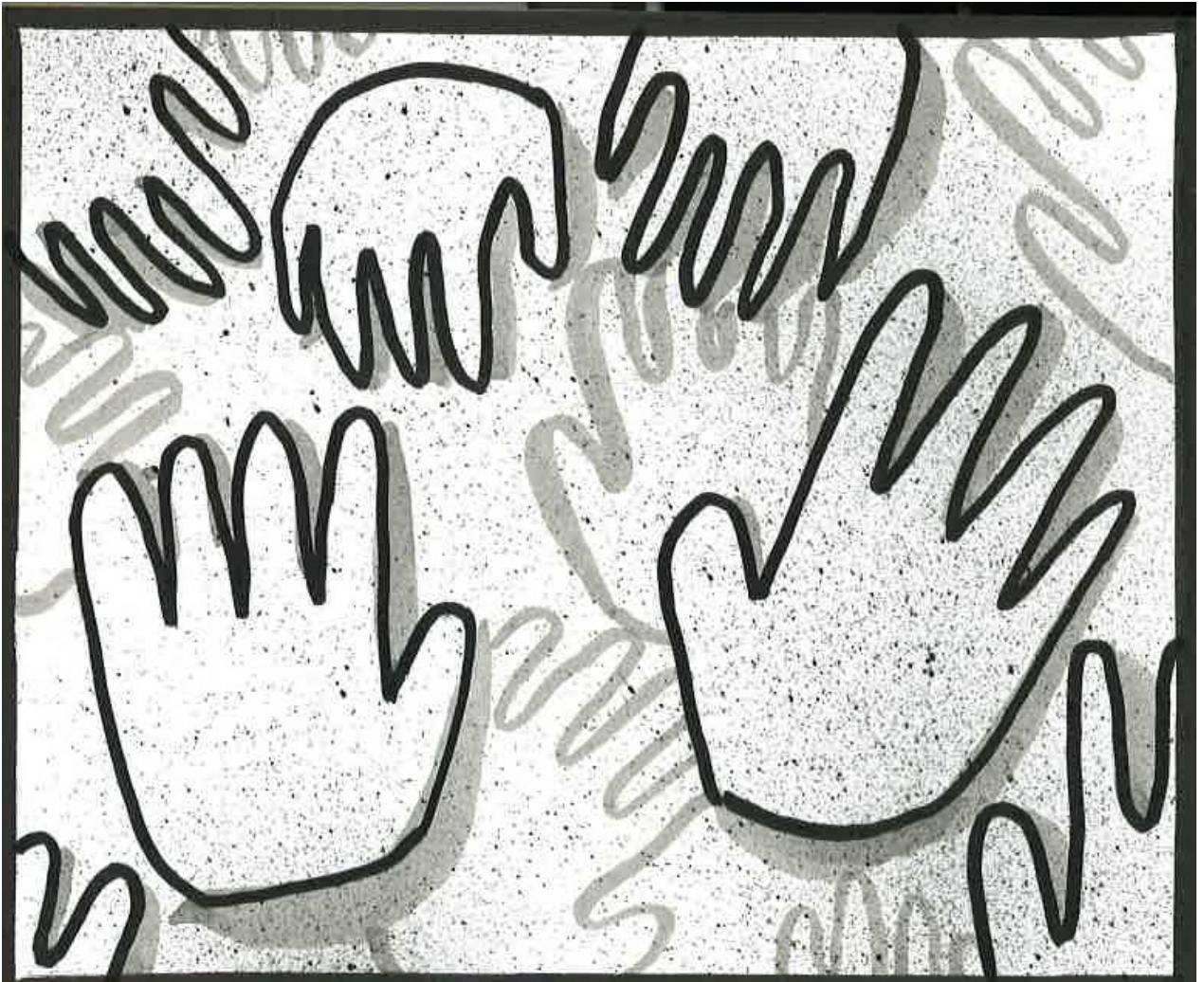
EMPTY
WALLS

Jesse James L.



*STOLEN
GLOVES*

A beautiful house, a comfortable life, a loving family;
Wood from a thief and a town without promise.
I panic when we're apart from each other because I don't have time for meaning
But the strength we have together brings a passion I can build with
Give us all a passion when our needs are never met
Our lands may never meet without
Give us all our stolen time
The hands we'll never touch and the meals we'll never eat may dance through our
dreams again



FROM
AFAR

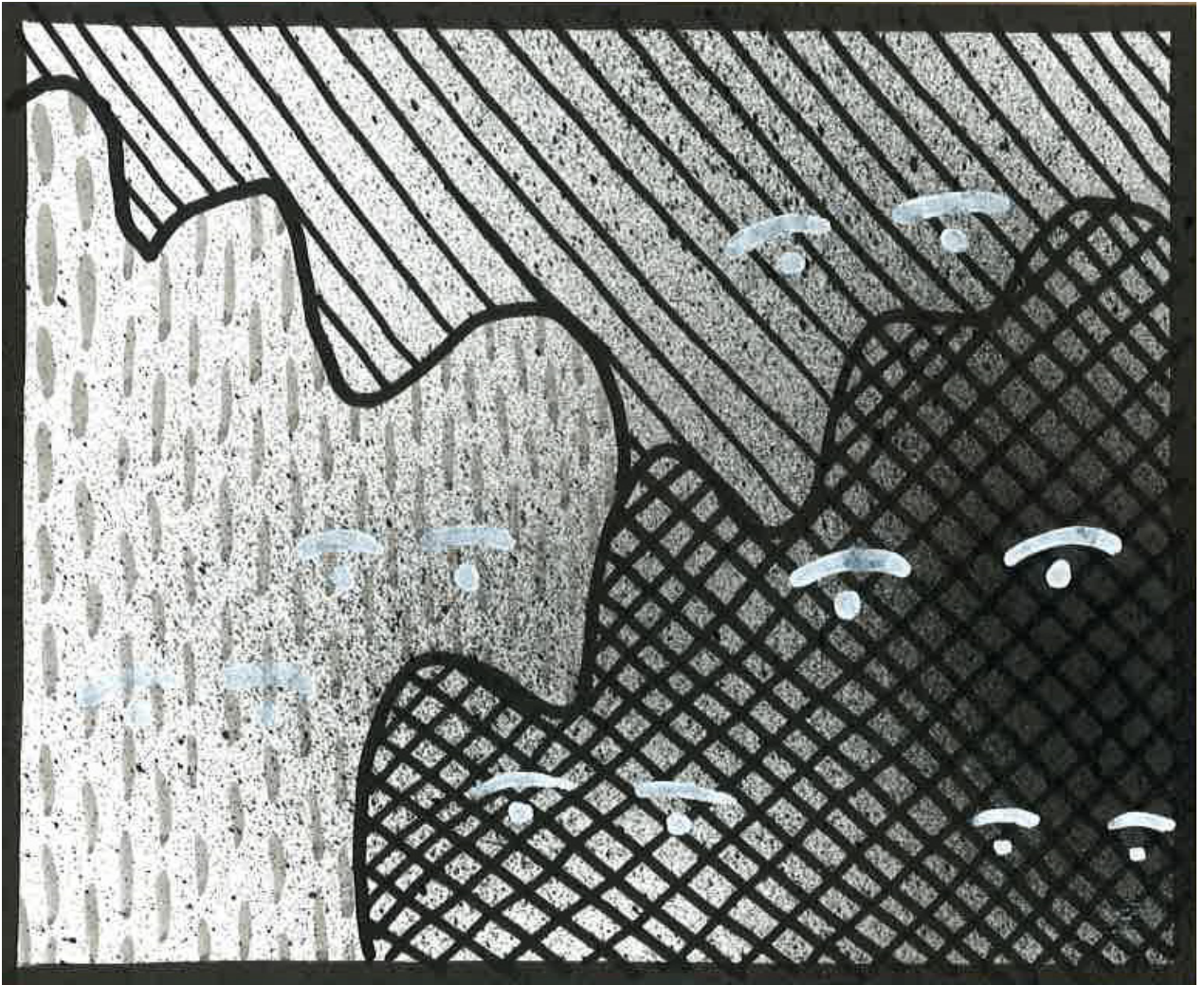
Mothers tell you hold your loved ones close
Fathers insist danger is outside waiting
Or planning to have your trust forgotten
Same as us.
Your friends are outside waiting
Not too far and not too close

Thin and unturned faces waiting for a sound or snap
Hoping for a snack or nap
Listening to a foreign voice broadcast
Across a sea.
Decisions for an eye afar
Not that close but not that far
Afraid for only
A moment

One can find death.
Together more

*FROM
AFAR*

Jesse James L.



YOUNG BONES CRACK EASILY

Young bones crack easily.
Small limbs scatter the earth.
The blood that soaks the dirt is a crime against God.
They are not your kids, so you move on.
Silence is complicit, sympathies are not enough.
For the most powerful nation on earth, we sure are scared to make a difference.

If doing the right thing is not our benefit, prepare the world for our wrongs
May the cries and the names haunt you forever

Soft teeth, many dreams, big hopes
When it comes time to inventory the loss, rows are made of
dead children with open eyes
The soot in their hair
The rubble in their throats

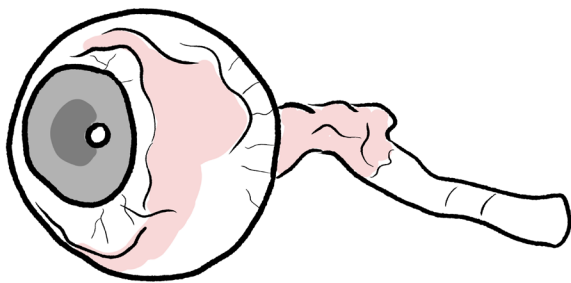
This one died giving her brother oxygen,
That one collapsed across his mother's pregnant belly,
and then there's the boy who carried his dead baby brother in his backpack so as not to
leave him behind

NARIMAN

Nariman, I see you
I see your battered face,
 smeared with yellow serous fluid and singed flesh.
I see your stolen eye,
 where it once spilled from your skull.
I see your missing leg,
 amputated after melting away.
I know you were separated from your mother,
 as she now sleeps under the rubble.
I know your home has been scattered,
 blown apart by Israel's bombs.
 Not just Israel's bombs.
Our bombs.

Nariman, I see you
I see how strong you are,
 your strength persists, inshallah.
I see your unrelenting heart,
 it beats in spite of the devastation.
I see your fireproof spirit,
 it rests in the palm of God.

I see you, Nariman.



NOW I PRAY FOR MERCY

A mother holds her baby wrapped in a shroud,
A boy clings to his father's empty shoes,
a man sifts through a morgue of children with broken faces in search of his daughter

Ramadan is a time for peace, but the bombs are not stopping
Ceasefires are not a solution

In desperation for relief, I begged for God's wrath torrential to drown out
the ones who did this —
 smite them,
 strike them,
 Destroy

So He showed me a vision,
and I saw my hands —
 red with blood
 So much blood

See, they scoop up buckets and buckets from our pool of money —
 heaps of money!

They turn those heaps into fighter jets and bombs,
automatic weapons and tanks

And those tanks crush small bones and silence big screams
And the rifles shower families in line for food;
 And the bombs and the jets — well, they shed blood

buckets and buckets of blood
Heaps of it

And now, instead of asking God for terrible vengeance on those responsible —
 well, now I pray for mercy.

ENOUGH

M. Buechler

Graphic Content Warning

They have children whom they love just as dearly.



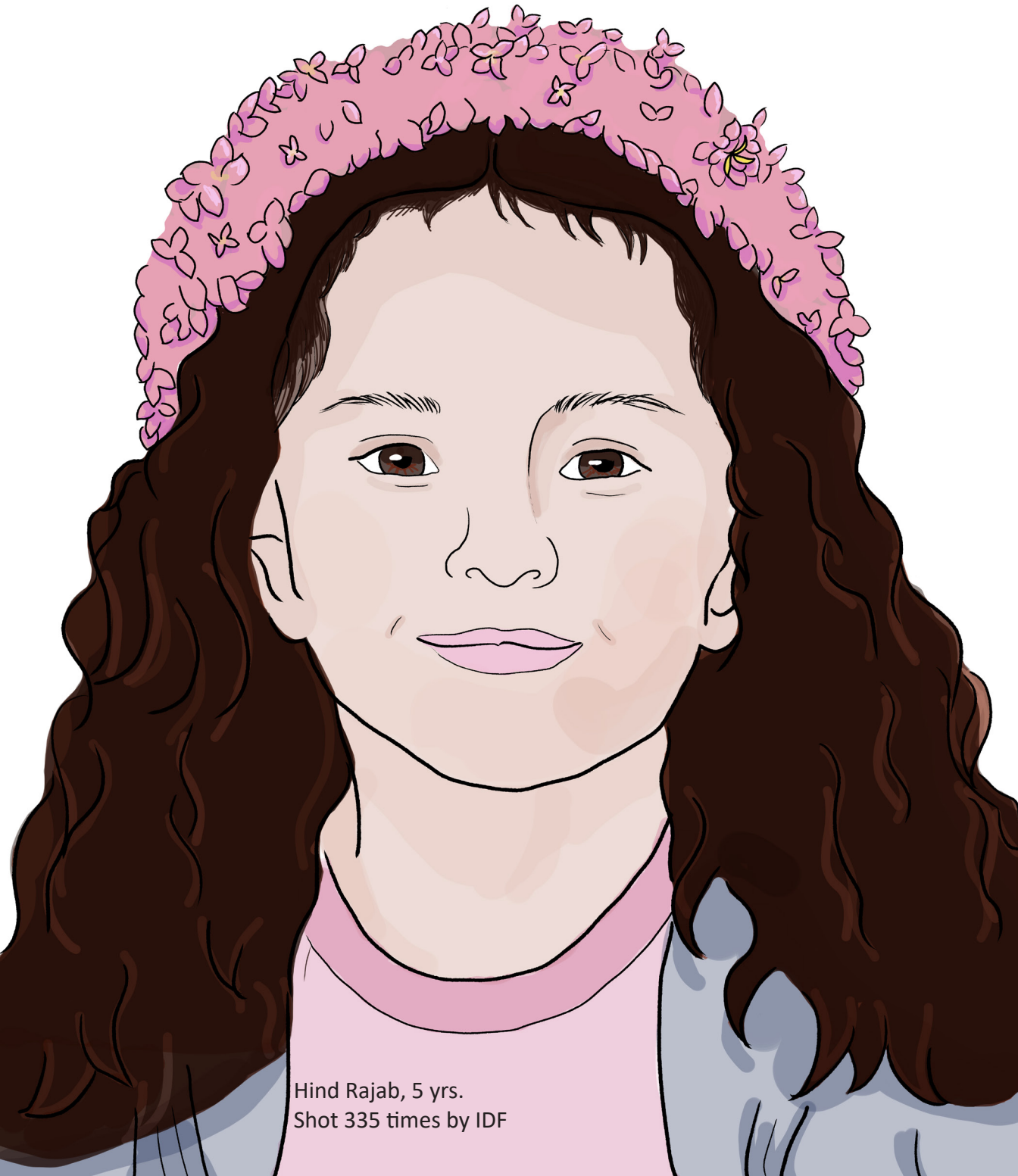
Names unknown

Whose fingers are just as tiny.



Abdulrahim Mohammad al-Jarabe'a,
10 yrs.

Whose laughs are just as innocent.



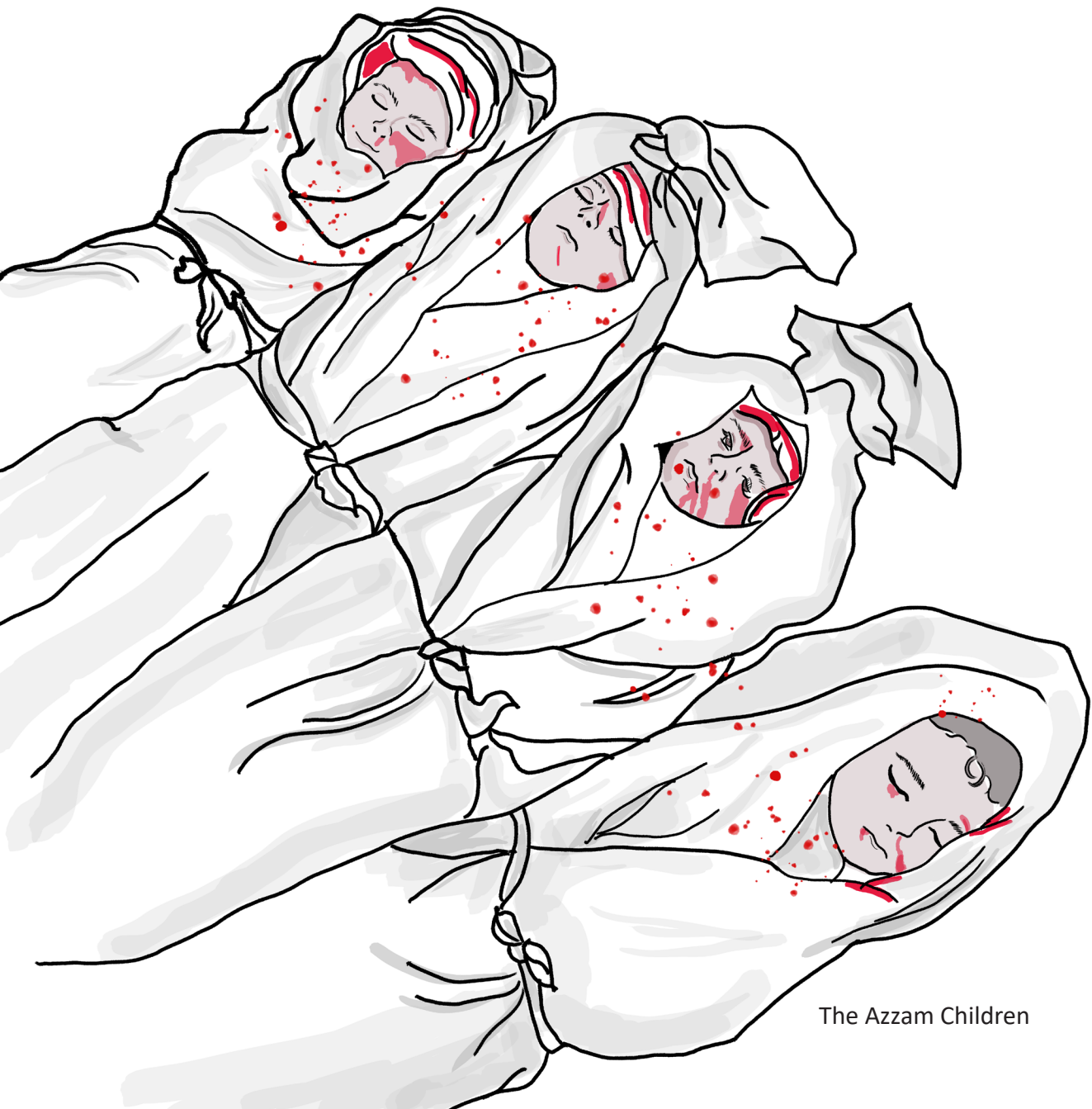
Hind Rajab, 5 yrs.
Shot 335 times by IDF

Whose eyes are just as hungry for life.



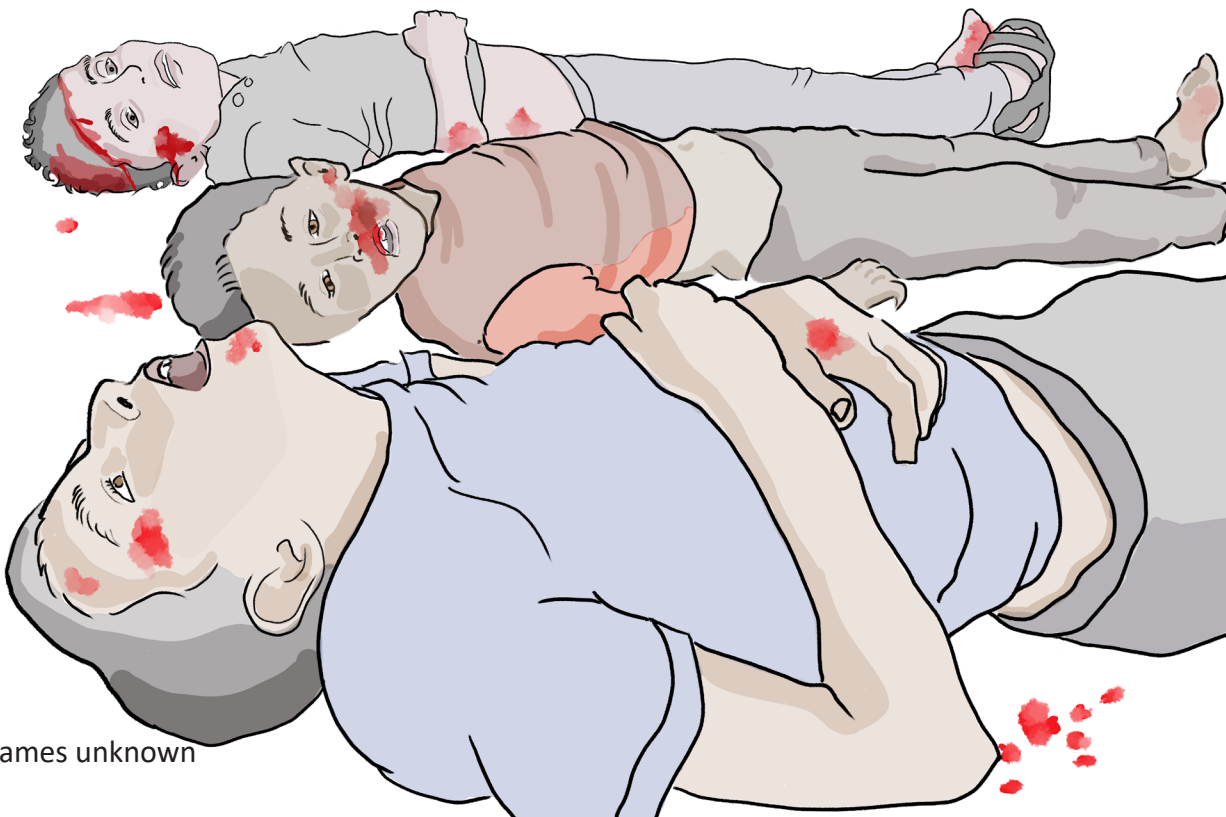
Razan Abu Zaher, 4 yrs.

They wanted to live.



The Azzam Children

And that should have been enough to spare their lives.



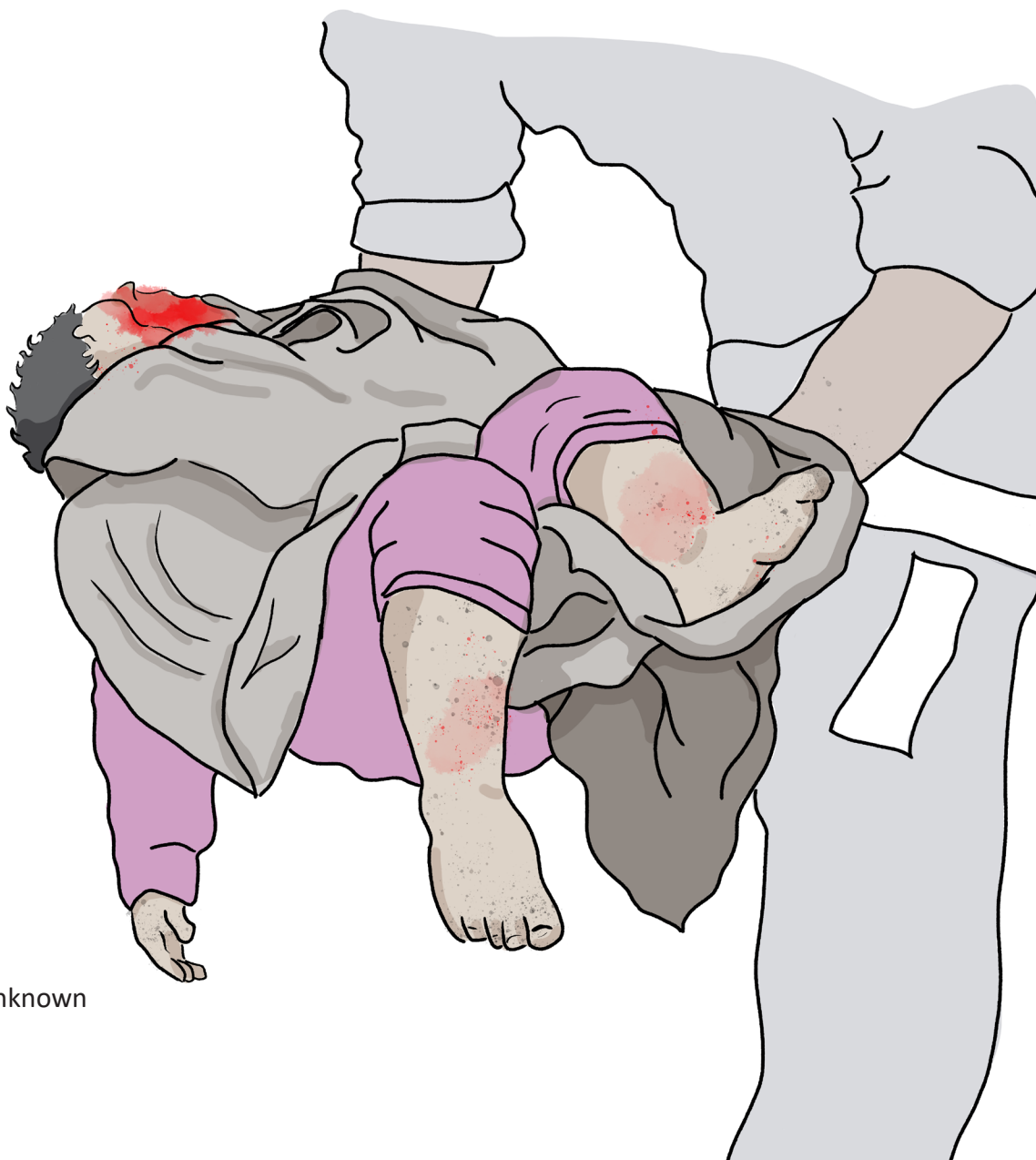
Names unknown

But it wasn't.



Name unknown

Why wasn't that enough?



Name unknown

THE DIVIDED STATES

There is a shadow looming over us,
Threatening to turn us into dust
So cry and rage if you must,
but we are faced with the truth into which we've all been thrust

We are being distracted by contempt and blame,
meanwhile they hedonize without shame,
Basking and rolling in usurped fame,
This administration's choking on God's name

It isn't the mom using Snap to buy food,
or your black neighbor minding his business
The true enemy is treason and coup,
and policies that serve the richest few

Seeking refuge has become banned
ICE uses the excuse of following command
No way on trial that shit will stand
Pretending we aren't all immigrants on stolen land

Everything from your mouth's a lie
Anywhere else you'd have been disqualified
May you reap what you sow, pay back in kind
Fascism's a bitch, but so am I

Your perversions as rank as your tales are tall
You try oh so hard, Mr. President,
but you are so, so small
United we stand. Divided we fall.

THIS IS THE LAST CHRISTMAS TO HOLD YOUR FAMILIES CLOSE

"Can you at least let us get through the holidays?"

Late night comedians say

Here come the flurries, here come the songs.

A tyrant takes office

 a president pardons his son.

I look out the window at the soft quiet snow

awash in a somber glow for what I hope's not the last time.

It's knocking at our doors

Get ready for

 silencing of defiance

 and incitement of violence

The left will be criminalized

 because we chose someone ten times as qualified.

This is how far we've come –

 say goodbye to your freedom.

I think of Jesus and I think of the cold.

I've seen paintings of Bethlehem, asylum seekers, hues of blue;

a tale as old as time and twice as cruel.

We're all trying to hold onto what pieces of happiness we can,

because we all know what's coming, and yet we can't understand.

I already prayed to the Father

I called to the Son, and I begged the Holy Ghost –

 This is the last Christmas to hold your families close

There are people who say they love God,

yet in their actions and in their cause, their hatred eclipses love.

You who preach about consequence, you who cannot define oligarch,

your fate will reflect the blackness of your heart.

We were warned time and time again, but we did not listen.

This trajectory,

this bleak actuality,

This is the unhealing path we chose,

And this is the last Christmas to hold your families close.

Half wanted to resist this.

This Christmas mind the remissness

 and mind the cold.

For this is the last Christmas to hold your families close.

UNTITLED

Either you find a way
To give yourself to the world completely
Or you fight like hell
For the world to give itself to you
And after all the splendid suns
It ends with us
A population in pieces
Longing for a world in peaces
A quiet requiem for the way things used to be
What if the world crumbles before us?
And what if we let it?
Touched might not be the word
Shifted, radicalized, transformed rather
Accidental gods of our own tiny universes
And somewhere between two voids
We summoned a light
Where the lost gather to get more lost
An unspoken agreement for spirits silenced
We exist between the spaces
Where you left us
And awoke
To find ourselves

AGAIN

Today

Waking up staring, numb.

Another shooting - tiny lives snuffed out.

More thoughts, more prayers, polish your guns.

Go to work, try to smile.

Today (again)

Waking up tired, sore.

More dead children, limp and missing their heads.

Bombs tear apart bodies and lives - a genocide no one will stop.

Go to work, try to smile.

Today (again and again)

Waking up aching, nauseous.

Diseases, new and resurrected, looming, creeping ever closer.

Dead birds, dead kids, no masks.

Go to work, try to smile.

Today (again and again and again)

Waking up brokenhearted, helpless.

Too many. Too much. Too often. Too late.

We are beaten we are dying we are scared.

Go to work, try to smile.

TO ALL THE SMALL LEADERS

Genocide in Palestine
Women cannot choose
Nothing is affordable
Culture numbed by booze

A rapist is in power
Our kids are getting shot
Don't worry, this is normal
Except, no, it's fucking not

The poorest work the hardest
The richest are not taxed
We just want a life worth living
Is that so much to ask?

Stop bombs, feed children
Listen to our screams
We the people demand better
We are not your machines

MATRIARCHY

She is the essence of Earth herself.

She nourishes,

loves,

teaches.

She holds us closely in her warm embrace.

The light of day brings opportunity

for transformation,

connection,

growth.

When she leads, her priorities shine vibrantly

with the colors of equity,

respect.,

tranquility.

Storms come from nature, not from battles.

By men she is protected.

By men she is uplifted.

She will lead the world one day,

and for that day,

we cannot wait.

THE (DIS)INFORMATION AGE

Some rules matter, some don't, apparently.
Actions have consequences, unless you're white, rich and merit-y.

Truth is irrelevant, storytelling is key.
If you have no moral compass,
what an era this will be!

If more people were educated,
maybe there'd be a reprieve.
But it's easier just to say
"thoughts and prayers" while they grieve.

I want to believe truth will rise above the confusion.
Or maybe poetic justice was no more than my youthful delusion.

HERE IS WHERE IT DIES?

We watch the news filled with lies
Free speech
Controlled media
Fear controls the narrative

Can we fight to keep it
Join together and march
Too far gone
Together we can be strong
Human not inhumane

Bombarded with false information
Nothing is mundane
Taken little by little

Democracy

IF YOU REMAIN SILENT

Where is your wolf?
Where are your fangs?
Why do you hide and where is your shame?
If you remain silent, you don't get to complain

The world needs you
The future needs you
You distract yourself with other things,
but
Your inaction is compliance
Your silence is violence

ONE DAY THE CHILDREN WILL MATTER MORE

I'm certain that one day the children will matter more than the guns,
but only after eternity

And I will always think what a shame it is we didn't care more about our kids
than the right to kill
sooner

so they could have lived twice

GREATEST WEAKNESS

Only in the US do we have protesters whose signs say
Choose the second grader over the second amendment!

Only in the US do we have far too many people who say
NO

YOU DO NOT GET TO WEEP

You sold your daughters' bodies
You sold your grandkids' air
You sold your freedom of speech and thought

You sold a family's life
 because their skin is browner than yours
You sold your ability to afford consumer goods
 in favor of a budget policy from the nineteenth century
And for how much?
 The price of eggs

I thought you loved me, you say you love me,
yet you turn your back on our future
In the rape of democracy, you will forever be complicit

Now I know you know what you've done
 deep within the hollows of your mind
You chose your hatred over humanity
You ate lies because your hypocrisy was hungry
 — but you're still hungry

Because the truth is
 you sold yourself
 and the price was even lower than you thought

So when you are faced with the atrocities of your hatred,
 the slicing of your wannabe nationalism,
 May you be reminded

this is what you chose and you do not get to weep
When the plagues of your hardened hearts come for blood,
and the locusts are feasting on your flesh,
 Remember
 This is what you wanted and you do not get to sleep

THE SIN OF EMPATHY

But woe to you for wearing the name
of a man who empathized so abundantly,
 he bled for you

If you believe empathy is a sin,
why do you claim to worship a God
who so empathizes that
 He draws near to you

 even when you are unlovable?

WITHOUT MERCY THERE IS ONLY CONDEMNATION

The precipice has been breached; there is weeping in the streets
but not compared to the weeping that will come

You who feast on the death of masses,
You who tear infants from their mother's breast
and rape children in cages, whilst they starve and plead
When the future comes crashing down upon the ones you were supposed to love,
Remember: You chose this

You who say you advocate for life, but what you truly value is control
You who have strayed from the root to become the broken vine,
abhorring the daylight, dishonoring the Son

I have not faith in mankind
I never really have

May dogs lap up your blood in the street,
only to drop dead from the murder
and poison which seeps
from your rotting soul,
 putrid and rank
May your skull
be trampled by the hoards who know no honor
Damn you to hell
and then damn you farther

An Annotation on
WITHOUT MERCY THERE IS ONLY CONDEMNATION

If this poem sounds harsh to you – good. It’s supposed to. While this poem doesn’t reflect my true feelings, the worse things get, the more desperate people become for change from the festering contempt. When we become desperate, we risk abandoning our compassion, integrity and mercy.

This poem is meant to parrot the toxic language and treatment that often comes from American nationalists and the bigoted wing of the right that is currently in power, but flipped on its head and coming from the other side.

So if this poem makes you uncomfortable, think about that the next time you try reserving mercy only for those who look like you, speak your language or practice the same beliefs as you.

A LETTER TO THE REST OF THE WORLD

When our leaders
broadcast threats and flash violence
around like a grand

expensive gesture,
please remember We the people
are just trying to

tread open water
in between coming up for air

A LETTER TO MY FELLOW AMERICANS

The responsibility
to advance the line
is not lost on you

When an opportunity
to do anything
even small arrives
if you should fail to take it,
there is no excuse

Ever wonder what
you'd have done during
the Nazi Reich or Jim Crow?

You are doing it right now

Sometimes

DISOBE
DIENCE

is the same as

LOVE.

HUE OF MAN: WEEP TODAY, HOPE TOMORROW

The hue of man?

Different shades, emotions

Across a swinging pendulum.

Swing forward

Find intellect

Swing back

Get lost in ignorance

Carreen forward, heart open

Retreat backward, reunite with fear.

And yet,

I *yearn* for the past,

For progress, inclusion,

For Liberty,

For Justice.

But,

I *live* in the present.

As the progress of yesterday dissolves into dust.

The dissolution of democracy in favor of kleptocracy,

oligarchy,

and authoritarianism

The dissolution of inclusion in favor of religious extremism, racism

The dissolution of choice,

of free speech,

of scientific advancements...

I weep for Liberty

I weep for Justice

I weep for Freedom

Tears streaming,

Head turning,

Back and forth,

watching the pendulum

...stop.

The hue of man? Hate.
But wait. Don't let it stop.
Push.

PUSH.

PUSH!

The pendulum will swing, again.
Keep pushing. Don't stop.

Swing forward.

Keep swinging.
Because when there is momentum. There is hope.
Hope for the future.
Hope for Liberty.
Hope for Justice.
Hope, once again, for Freedom.
For a tomorrow defined by Freedom, Liberty, and Justice, for all.
And *when* **that** tomorrow comes, I'll ask, once more.
The hue of man?
Love.

BLOOD ORANGE

The most beastly among us pretend they're not weak
You snarl at criticism; you rage at critique
Try to silence the media and control our speech
Déjà vu to *Then They Came for Me*

Poetry on poetry
You can't stop me, my hot streak
We're not done, we're not sheep
Sorry not sorry

Raids, shades
Glitter and gold
Blood orange face, pitch black soul
Lies, crimes
Wealth inherit
So rich coming from the boy who cried merit

Billions and trillions, and still you want more
You give to the rich what you steal from the poor
Twisting the truth, misinformation and lore
We're angry, unbroken, knocking down your door

Targeting those who do not bend
Lonely and broken, you've not one friend
Weak leadership on which we cannot depend
This country's our home for which we're prepared to defend

Poetry on poetry
You can't stop me, my hot streak
We're not done, we're not sheep
Sorry not sorry

Raids, shades
Glitter and gold
Blood orange face, pitch black soul
Lies, crimes
Wealth inherit
So rich coming from the boy who cried merit

May music and laughter once again fill our halls
May we build longer tables not higher walls
Take back what's ours, 300 million strong
Take heart, Americans, We ride at dawn

UNFORGIVENESS

It comes easily to me
I chant it out like prophesy
An intuition, a visionary
of what's yet to come; a cautionary poem
Turn not your heart to stone

A lust for empire
which consumes us like a fire
tied to a pyre, the flames
burn higher
 and higher
this country's future is more and more dire
But the lot of us grow desperate and tired

This is how we lose,
when we refuse to be moved
Pining for the truth
but not wearing each other's shoes
I beg you —
don't let your hearts be hardened,
Enemy or friend
Ezekiel among them, may our ashes be risen,
our bones will dance again
when we allow ourselves to bend
After all,
 it's Unforgiveness that marks
 the beginning of the end

Let vengeance dissolve like fallen snow
Much too proud to beg or borrow
Our triumph
our sorrow
It won't happen today
and probably not tomorrow,
but
soon will come the day
 this regime is gonna hang
 from its own gallows

A sincere thank you to every contributor for digging deep to find your inner message and externalizing it into words. I wish you a tremendous congratulations for speaking out and refusing to remain silent in such a dangerous time.

Thank you to our readers for taking the time to read our thoughts and often painstaking work. May you find inspiration and *be* inspiration to stand up to oppression in a way that you are especially suited for.

CONTRIBUTORS

J. MANES

JESSE JAMES L.

Jesse is a clown-man who also does art under the name sourbuddy.

S. AMARO

KURT

Kurt is a writer and an artist. His poem was written on his phone during a Mother's Day lunch, sitting in his car later, and in bed later still. Kurt is not a poet.

SYDNEY BULLOCK

Sydney is a ketamine infusion nurse living in Seattle. When she's not trying to help people heal from the harm of the world, she likes to do yoga, play ultimate frisbee, read, and try different creative outlets.

ANONYMOUS

K. HARDY

K. ROSE

K.Rose is a copywriter, narrative designer, and poet with nearly a decade of creative and professional experience. Although, she's been writing as long as she can remember.

After some formative career detours, she earned her B.A. in Public and Professional Writing and forged a successful career as a copywriter, until she was bitten by the narrative design bug.

She now spends her days writing for video games. When she's not writing games or playing them she can be found running, reading, spending time with her furry kids, or organizing her various collectibles. She also frequently lulls herself to sleep with an episode of her favorite show of all time, Alias.