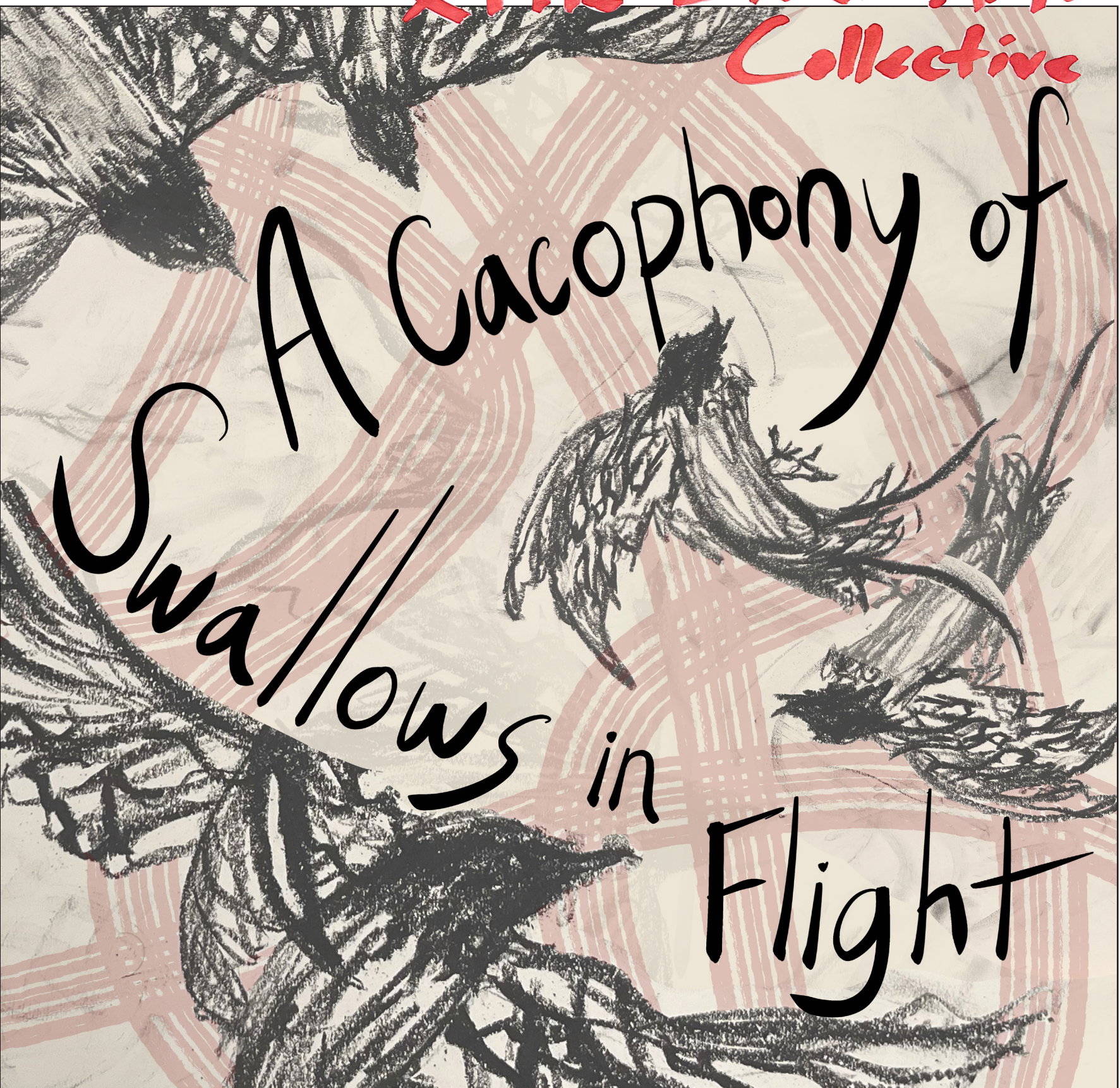


This week, the *Nass* shares the floor. Enjoy this special co-curated issue with the Black Arts Collective.

The Nassau Weekly

x *The Black Arts Collective*



Volume 49, Number 5
April 3, 2025

In Print since 1979
Online at nassauweekly.com



A CACOPHONY OF SWALLOWS IN FLIGHT

Masthead

Editors-in-Chief Alex Norbrook Frankie Solinsky Duryea	Second Look Associate Editors Sofia Cipriano Aina Marzia Joshua Yang
Publisher Ellie Diamond	Business Managers Nora Choi Vivian Clayton
Managing Editors Jonathan Dolce Sasha Rotko	Communications Manager Naomi Segel
Design Editor Sophia Macklin	Director of Outreach and Alumni Affairs Margo Mattes
Art Director Chas Brown	Historian Oliver Berke
Head Copy Editors Charlie Milberg Danny Flaherty	Web Editors Leah Shefferman Sarah Park
Senior Editors Mia Mann-Shafir Aiko Offner Cecile McWilliams Ivy Chen	Audiovisual Editors Mannix Beale-O'Brien Juna Brothers
Junior Editors Claire Beeli Nell Marcus Livia Shneider Narges Anzali Annie Wang Laila Hartman Sigall Gavin Stroud	Staff Creator Director Harper Vance
	Events Editor Amy Başkurt
	Social Chair Wendy Wang
	Trustees Alexander Wolff 1979 Katie Duggan 2019 Leif Haase 1987 Marc Fisher 1980 Robert Faggen 1982 Sharon Lowe 1985

Dear Readers,

This week, the *Nassau Weekly* and the Black Arts Collective try something new. As part of our efforts to link this campus' artistic worlds, this special issue highlights content created by Collective members, which has been edited by *Nass* staff and co-curated by the leadership of our two respective groups.

This special issue is motivated by two intentions. First, it seeks to acknowledge the Collective's artistic force. The group continuously produces sharp-cut exhibitions and shows around a shared yet varied aesthetic vision. Its members have defined the vanguard of Princeton's artistic scene, and we are excited to showcase their work.

Second, this issue is an attempt to address the historical homogeneity of the literary magazine world. While the *Nass* rejects this precedent in our attitude, systemic change is only possible with more concerted efforts. If the *Nass* wants to represent the alternative literary contingent of Princeton, it will only achieve this goal once it includes writing and art from a more diverse group of students on a more diverse range of subjects.

So take this letter like a manifesto-invitation; the door is opening on what will hopefully become a long-running collaboration, and we believe that by expressing our intentions formally, we can retain everything good about the *Nass* while growing in a positive direction.

What you see over the next 20 pages is neither solely *Nass* or solely Collective work. It is the intersection of our two spaces, rendered into beautiful art. Time to hand it off.

Much love,

Frankie Solinsky Duryea and Alex Norbrook, EICs

- 4
- Auction
By deity
Art by Ryla Dapremont
- 6
- Blackness in Residence
By Christopher Butcher
Art by Davina Thompson
- 7
- Love Is
By Nnamdi Udeogu
Art by Raven Reid
- 8
- The Risk of Growing Old
By Nsebong Adah
Art by Nsebong Adah
- 10
- Ammo
By Aunyah Romeo
- 12
- A Restaurant in Hayward
By Aminah Aliu
- 14
- A Cacophony of Swallows in Flight
By Kenneth Simmons
Photography by Kenneth Simmons
- 15
- Anthracnose: An Exodus
By Davina Thompson
Art by Davina Thompson
- 17
- Trapped
By Nnamdi Udeogu
Art by Raven Reid
- 18
- Okro anaghi eto kari onye kuru ya
By Chisom Nwadinobi
Photography by Nsebong Adah
- 20
- An Unparalleled Catastrophe, Ancestral Wisdom Made Flesh
By Christopher Butcher
Art by Davina Thompson

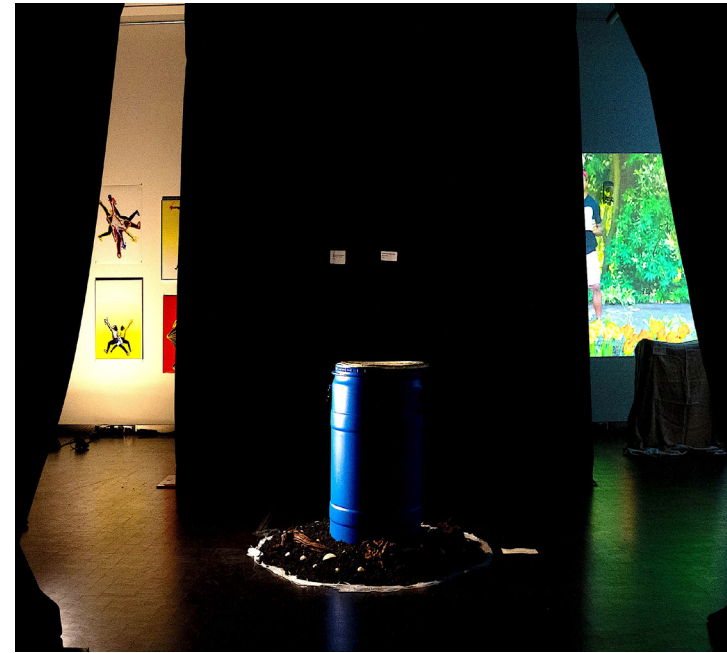
Nsebong Adah, Chas Brown, and Xavier Foster

A Letter from the Curators:

By Nsebon Adah,
Zavier Foster, and
Star Ross

The Black Arts Collective is a group of Black artists on campus that come together to think about the world around us and create our responses to it. Across various mediums including painting, dance, sculpture, photography, and film, we have established a generational conversation within shared frameworks. We have notoriously avoided institutionalization and a formal mission as the identity of the space tends to evolve with membership. The Collective was born in 2022 and since has held numerous internally curated exhibitions

including *anticulation* (2022), *AFROBUBBLEGUN* (2023), and *A Thousand Brackish Channels* (2024). This edition in collaboration with the *Nassau Weekly* provides an amazing opportunity to give our writers a space to present work within our newest conversation: *A Cacophony of Swallows in Flight* (2025).



INSTALLATION PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATHALIE BARNES

Entrance of *A Thousand Brackish Channels*.

Upcoming Show:

A Cacophony of Swallows in Flight

Lewis Center for the Arts CoLab
April 4-10

Opening Reception, April 4 @
6:30pm

A Cacophony of Swallows in Flight emerges from its predecessor, *A Thousand Brackish Channels*. Featuring 15 artists from the Black Arts Collective, this new show meditates on the macro-concept of ancestral intelligence. Our journey mimics that of the swallow—one of the few species to migrate between Africa and the Americas. We understand our position in the now not linearly, but multi-temporally, overlapping with ancestral microhistories.

Our responses to the *now* vary, but are connected

through our ancestral intelligence, an archive of all collectively owned black knowledge. We exist as anachronistic examples of our psychological and spiritual proximity to generations prior. Mirroring these ideas, this show is a loud and chaotic movement forward. It is the deafening flutter of hundreds of swallows' wings making a journey embedded in ancestral memory. This chaos is not a senseless disorder because ours is a percolating identity that can be dated at any point in history.

The *Nassau Weekly* is Princeton University's weekly news magazine and features news, op-eds, reviews, fiction, poetry and art submitted by students. *There is no formal membership of the Nassau Weekly and all are encouraged to attend meetings and submit writing and art. To submit, email your work to thenassauweekly@gmail.com by 10 p.m. on Thursday. Include your name, netid, word count, and title. We hope to see you soon!*

Read us: nassauweekly.com

Contact thenassauweekly@gmail.com

us: Instagram: @nassauweekly Twitter: @nassau_weekly

Join us: We meet on Mondays and Thursdays at 5 p.m. in Bloomberg 044!

About us:



introducing the body
size thirty-four B tits, forty-four round hips
slim twenty-nine-inch waist
thick thighs I used to once hate

a gap so spaced that words fly out of it
a forehead so big you could play chess on it

brown skin, lips thin
height small, not tall

disclaimer of the body
I can't be maintained
I'm an active body
I'm full of disdain

prone to change moods
my hands heal wounds

slick mind, hard find
hard head, well said

valuation of the body
with whom do I place my value?
is my body only a holder for a child?
do I lose purpose if I can't provide?

value placed through autonomy
male opinion turned philosophy

tears shed, wounds bred
lies told, dreams sold

deposition of the body
I am not here to please you or ease you
my body is not made to amuse you or be used by you

my body is merely a holder for my soul
with no interest in being controlled

closing of the body
measures thirty-four, twenty-nine, forty-four
one hundred and forty pounds at 5'4
though my hips screech divine feminine
and skin exudes fine melanin

look through my skin fondly
I am more than just a body





Blackness in Residence

By CHRISTOPHER BUTCHER

The Amistad sails a silent scream across the sea.
In its wake, a dark tapestry woven with violence.
Mouths in the hold lie open, inaudible, begging for the nothingness that is everything.

On this ship, terror lurks.
A violence of abstraction separates Black from man and kills him twice,
Discarding his body like dead weight into the hungry waves.

Thrown into the ocean, carried for a moment by the sea's merciless drag,
But sick and emaciated bodies do not float.
Sharks, eager specters in the wake, consume the sick not yet dead.

Yet nobody dies of old age in the ocean.
The Black body dances between life and death. Atoms of the past
forever remain in the ocean's depths.

Resonating energy echoes, eternalized by the same water.
A cycle; atoms stuck in time, bearing witness,
With a residence lasting forever.

In the void of anticipatory logic, the Black man rests.
Entangled in a racial epidermal schema,
The world recoils – and his body forgets itself.

A vessel of endless possibility, yet forever vulnerable,
Whose blood paints the ocean red and mixes with its cruel embrace,
Giving coherence to the superstructure eventually called home.

Through the afterlife of slavery, we navigate a covert racial order,
Resistance emerges and survival endures,
Both in a past that lingers in the present, in the archives of
history.

In this hellish existence, we stand, beholding the echoes
of time.

We cast away the compulsion of capital and imminent death,
Towards Freedom on a path littered with Black bodies.
Although under siege, we envision liberation:
a beacon of hope amidst death in the wake.

As we behold and are beheld, we imagine waves in harmony.
In the timeless resonance, where everything is now,
The cacophony of violence transforms,
Into a symphony of resilience, echoing through our liberated future.





Love Is

By NNAMDI UDEOGU

Love is an expression
simple to understand but tough
to maintain.

It's like a symphony of
instruments

created individually but only
complete together.

The catch being that
the notes are obscure.

The sheet music is unscripted
and all that's left is
You.

Its blind conductor who was giv-
en no directions.

You see,
love comes without instructions.

Love arrives exactly when it's
supposed to,
like a bottled frenzy of laughter
and comfort.

Uncapped and filled to its brim.
And when It splishes and splash-
es, it leaves messes and trails.

Overflowing with promises burst-
ing out of its plasticity confinements

Love runs down its edges, empty-
ing as quickly as it was filled.

You see,
Love has that effect.

But just when you think love is
gone, it visits again.

Sweeping you off your feet
taking you for a ride, except this
time,

maybe it's not so smooth.

Love is inconsistent
because when

bad days turn to speed bumps
and mistakes turn to roadblocks,

love pops your tires and leaves
you stranded.

You see,
Love is unforgiving

It comes in packages
bundled up and sent in bubble
wrap labeled fragile.

But you tear it open anyways un-
wary of what is inside
you see,
Love is impulsive.

Solitude trumps fellowship
when all you have is yourself

When shattering existential
pressures grow less satisfying

Than fortifying your walls
Because locking yourself in is
easier than opening yourself up

You see,
Love is complicated

And when love fails,
you try again.

Because even though you are
tired and weak and ready to give up,
it takes all you have left to lay
there and die.

So when love shows up at your
doorstep

you spring to the chime of the
bell and welcome it

with open arms and kisses from
head to toe.

You see,
love is just like that.

The Risk of Growing Old

What is the rush and rationale we feel to advance in our age?

By NSEBONG ADAH

I wonder often how different my life would be had my grandparents not passed away before I was born. I wonder what stories they would have shared about their childhoods in the villages in Akwa Ibom or Ogun State. I wonder what obscenities they would have shouted after my parents when they were in trouble, and how it would have opposed the way they spoke of their children with pride in their accomplishments. I wonder at what age my grandmother would have taught me to sew on the machine that she used herself as a seamstress in the shop. Or if my grandfather's stubbornness rivaled that of my father, who refuses any way but his own. I sit here wondering about so much history that I unfortunately will never get to learn and experience first hand. My grandparents exist now only through the generational memory of their children. I mourn the loss of these people I never knew, but to whom I am spiritually connected

So, why do we feel this rush to grow old? Especially since I now know that to grow old means to accept the emotional risk of losing everything. How can we possibly manage to come to terms with this inevitable end and maintain

the discipline to achieve anything at all? The rush comes because we must first obtain the world before it can be taken away. There is a peace that comes with accepting the risk, and allowing these questions to ebb and flow throughout our lives with no definite answer. A peace that comes from accepting that we must grow old.

The boy who once prayed for this still does so with a full heart, even knowing that it means he'll get closer to the end. He knows now to dream with the generations after him, that will lift up the same prayers as they seek to break the curses generations prior. He prays that one day he will rejoice as the elder of a village that will grow old together doing the things they love. Mann, I pray we grow old.





L

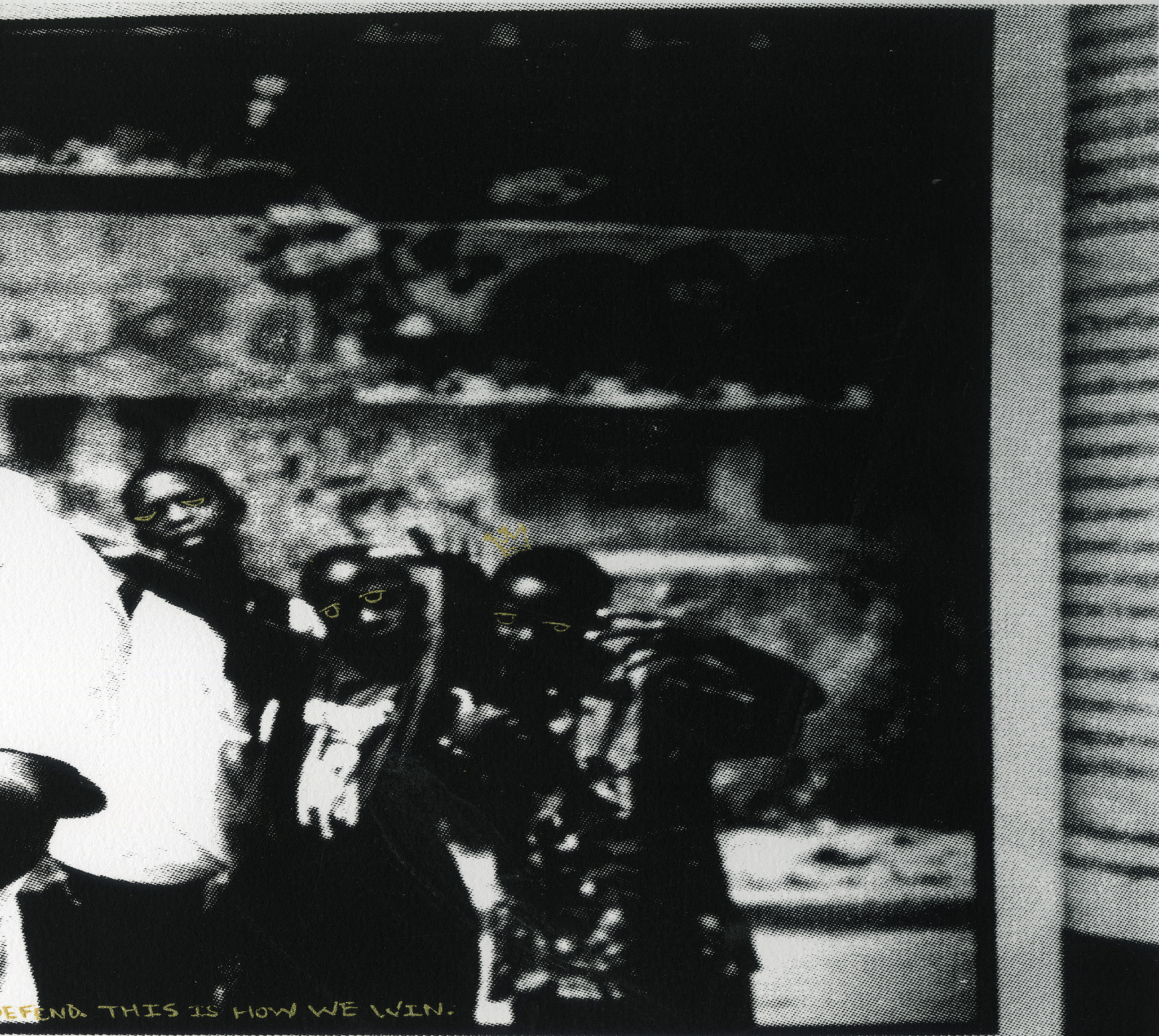
et me make an image that would
destroy the feeling without
struggling with the words. Midway
through our tour of his massive
retro-copied at the

recent video murals encompass
JR aims to find a real story that
comprehend our world.

Since we last spoke to him,

**LEAVING A STORY
ALTER**

ART BY AUNYAE ROMEO



DEFEND. THIS IS HOW WE WIN.

ing entire cities
can help us better
**THAT CAN NEVER BE
ED**

subway. This is in the projects outside Paris. That's
my best friend, Lael, and we started together. I did
that photo at 19 years old, and a year later, a bomb
exploded in front of a pasting of it. The mayor sued
A STORY OF REAL LIFE.

A Restaurant in Hayward

By AMINAH ALIU

Mmm, linoleum floors, my favorite, I think.

It's 7:30 am, according to the analog clock on the wall,
and I'm officially pissed at being up this early
for my driver's license exam.

"Window 10 is OPEN!" an older lady screeches, and I lunge forward.

She wears glasses that hang
from a cord of beads around her neck.

Stepping up to the window,
I cram my application under the glass divider.

"What's your name, sweetie?" she asks,
vigorously shuffling through the paper.

"This your first driving exam?"
She beckons for me to stick my hand under the divider,
and she presses down for a fingerprint.
Thumb, index finger, *wow she's pressing hard.*

"Where are you from?"
"I'm from LA, actually," I say, finally getting a word in.

She sticks a card reader under the divider and says,
"Application fee increased, it's \$50."

Once the card reader is on her side of the counter, she continues,
"Where are your parents from?"

I respond, "My mom's from Nigeria,
but she moved to the UK in her twenties before moving to the US."

Mid-keystroke, the lady stops.
She cranes her head around her monitor, and puts on her glasses.

"Does your mom own a Nigerian restaurant in Hayward?"

My brows furrow. I cock my head and offer a confused smile.

"It's just—you said your mom immigrated from Nigeria to London
before coming to the US," the woman explains eagerly,
"and the woman who owns the restaurant told me the exact. Same. Shit!"

"Best food of my life, by the way!"
She goes back to typing.

Huh. That *could* be my mom.
That could be anyone's mom...
the woman who owns the restaurant in Hayward.

Huh.

On the Collective Wisdom of Flight: *Artist Process and Meta-Writing*

By AMINAH ALIU

I was walking around earlier and trying to figure this poem out. The point of this poem is to convey a moment of realization that the unique is also mundane, is also pervasive. Whereas, I had thought immigrating to England to be a particular, pivotal part of my mom's life (ancestral microhistory), the restaurant question from the woman at the DMV and ensuing conversation made me starkly aware of the tens if not hundreds of thousands of Nigerian women who must have immigrated to London from Nigeria, then to the US. These Black women, Black folk, are the swallows in flight, and I am pleased to say that they have landed.

My mom was not special in that migratory path, but also I *insist* that she is special because I was born to her, I grew up with her, not with any of the other women who went where she had gone. On the other hand, there is solace in the thought that any of *these other women could have been my mother, and my mother could have been any one of these women*. It's like being at the optometrist's office and the doctor holds up two lenses. "Which one looks clearer? Lens number one *chu-chink* or lens number two? One or two?" And the difference in clarity is one almost taken for granted.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that

my mom's experience was not singular, but it was *specific*.

What is the relationship between
unique and *universal*?

I think the point of this poem (the conversation and my internal reflection) are more important than who I'm talking with or where. That said, I do want to zoom people in to a particular moment, and particularity correlates with detail. Further, these details are important insofar as fundamental questions around *who* and *where* might prevent the reader from getting to the realization with me, the *what*.

In editing this poem to add in that detail, though, I (re-re-)realized something. A lot of my writing recently has been poems that were actually meant to be essays. I'm an essayist, man. Poetry has its limits when what I'm trying to give you, the reader, is a video and not a series of pictures.

There's maybe one more thing to unpack here. The woman, in asking if my mom owned the restaurant, was trying to find out how her story intersects with mine/my mom's. I'm trying to do that, too, I just don't have all of the information. But what would it mean to look at (im)migration as a form of ancestral foresight?

The curators might hate me for this, but I thought the title of this show was excessive at first. A lot of syllables. After taking time to unpack the symbolism, and to see how it aligns so completely with this poem (which was written a year ago), I have come to the conclusion that it's actually exactly right.

In my research, I learned that many birds migrate to the same general location year after year. The reason they're able to do this is because they can follow an internal map and compass of sorts, and rely on instinctive navigation. They can use celestial cues, like the sun and stars in addition to the Earth's magnetic field, to navigate. Talk about ancestral knowledge!

Recently, I've been thinking about going to Nigeria to learn my parents' native language. This show has me reading into that thought--in all its hope and uncertainty--in a new way. This is not just about *language learning*, it is about *learning language* that encodes forms of intelligence and ways of being which remain as an inheritance from my ancestors. I am from a womb that was from a womb, and Princeton had me running around like I didn't belong to all of this. So this is my loud and chaotic movement forward. This is my homecoming. I am completing the migratory circuit.

A Cacophony of Swallows in Flight

A flight to the Caribbean to escape the confines of Princeton.

By KENNETH SIMMONS

“A lot of you look like you got some sun this past week,” my professor in the AAS seminar remarked to our class.

Why are so many students of color flocking to the islands for spring break? Is it just to escape the brutal winter and decompress after a challenging semester at a place like Princeton? Or is there something more at play—like the need to connect with other Black and Brown people, something that feels distant at a school like Princeton? Maybe it’s not just stress, but a deeper desire for warmth, relaxation, and a sense of belonging.

“We should stay in the US,” she urged. She was on edge for several reasons. As an international graduate student, she understood that leaving the US would complicate things under the current US administration. She was smart, cautious. She’s a sailor. A pirate. A mathematician. Like many women of color at this institution, she wore many hats. One cold day in February, after a trip to a bathhouse in Brooklyn, we had enough, she planned a low-cost trip for us to Puerto Rico and then on to St. Croix. That trip, with rainforests, scuba diving, and plenty of rum inside pineapples, could fill an entire short story. We still hadn’t had our fill of playing in the sand.

It seemed like many of my classmates shared the same experiences. The cold in New York had been brutal, and the semester had been grueling. Tough internships, less-than-stellar grades (A- somehow

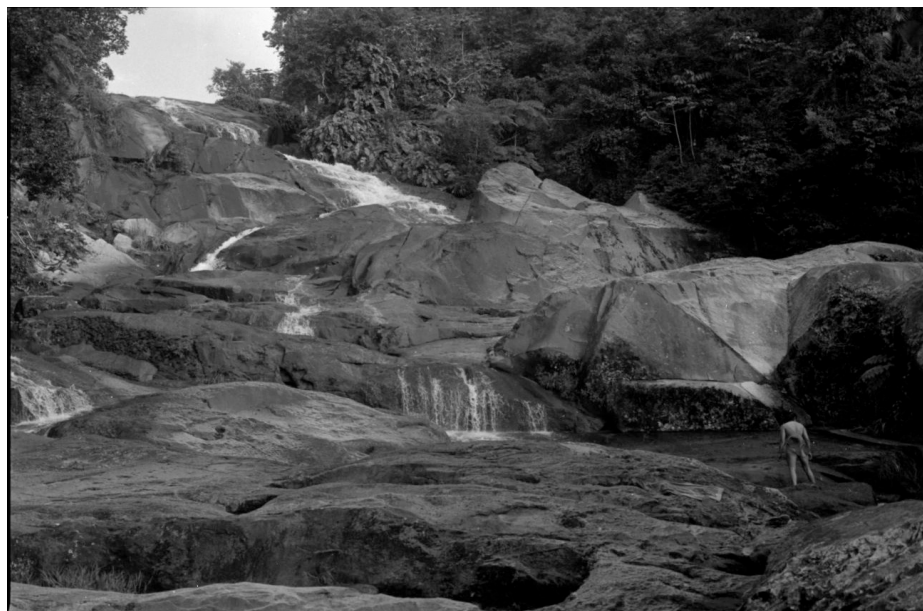
felt like a disappointment), and the constant pressure of problem sets and papers had worn us down. At Princeton, the isolation felt even more pronounced—especially for Black students. The cold weather only added to the distance, making it harder to connect with others who didn’t understand the unique pressures we faced. We needed a break, and the beach was calling. We screamed back.



What was most beautiful about the trip was how much it felt like home. It reminded me of my time in South Sudan and Uganda—places where I could relax and not feel like the minority despite it being a warzone. There, I didn’t get the shrewd looks or the discomfort I often felt back at Princeton. It wasn’t just about being Black; most of my white classmates will never experience what it’s like to feel like

the minority. In the islands, it was refreshing to see people greeting each other with the warmth and familiarity that reminded me of my small-town home.

It’s clear that, for students, especially students of color, taking time off from the relentless grind at Princeton isn’t just a luxury—it’s a necessity. The pressures of tough internships, challenging coursework, and the weight of being in a predominantly white institution create an environment where we often feel isolated, alone, and different. For Black and other minority students, this experience is compounded by the need to constantly navigate spaces where we don’t always feel valued or understood. That’s why finding a place where we can relax, connect, and feel normal isn’t just important—it’s essential for our well-being. Just like creatures attuned to the rhythms of the planet, we seek warmth, comfort, and community. Maybe it’s a natural impulse, or maybe it’s simply the need to escape the constant grind of work. We crave a space where we can feel like ourselves without the weight of being an outsider. Watching the swallows fly back and forth, heading to their place of rest, reminded me of our own need to find that place—a space where we can breathe, where we can feel at home.





*“We needed a break, and the beach was calling. We **screamed** back.”*



Anthracnose: An Exodus

By DAVINA THOMPSON

Leaves cascade from the oak,
to which my parents swore,
stems diseased
by my sins?
I trace the veins anyway,
hoping they will lead me
to their quiet, promised land.

It lies within
a barren forest.
where *whispers* linger,
taunting as they pray for me.
I am lost,
trying to find my breath.
I suffocate
just enough
to recite falsehoods,
in unison with
the seasoned.

When spring comes,
I gather scattered words
watered by familial oaths,
as I run towards faultless mountains
where the whispers warned
milk is fermenting
and honey is crystallized.



TRAPPED

By NNAMDI UDEGOU

The tracing of distress
tailored against the coarse lining
ripples and bumps
engulf flickers of dim hope.
The clashing dissonance overwhelms
one boundary, edging
to the brim of its inverse.
The tracing persists.
Wrenching and tugging at seams
of a suffocating cloth
proves pointless.
A bloody mind splitting battle
entails a victory lap to celebrate recovery.
Facade.
A false recapturing of life
Disfigured by addiction,
Only to fall victim
To a privilege never truly extended.

By CHISOM NWADINOBÌ

OKRO ANAGHI ETO KARI ONYE KURU YA

Ma snatched me out her stomach on a Wednesday. My first day as abrupt as it could be

Gather the elders, gather the aunties. Ma didn't plan on having me

They sang a song to put her at ease

Her diary said that God must have sent me I was born to a river amongst vast seas.

Grandma blessed me on a Thursday, Waking hours spent thinking where I'd be without her prayers protecting me.

She'd call for me. She'd dance to be free. She'd guarantee

that she'd always be here with me.

I thanked the sky for her in my diary.

She came to the village on a Friday- Greeted with warm skies and kind eyes. She appeared as traditional as an ori. Elders stared coldly but grandma held my hand and serenaded me.

Sommy is what she had named me and gave me a lock to seal my diary.

She called me to the river on a Saturday,

Wash your body of what used to be you move with the water just like me.

Grandma was more mouthy than I.

She would oil my hair and sing at night then nag about how coarse my hair may be.

Quietly, grandma left us on a Sunday. I wiped the hot tears from my ma and sang for her that night.

Let me have the final say-

Ma, ask our maker what She sees in my eyes. I wonder what I'll be gifted my final day Perhaps an Igbo proverb you'd read for me, or a letter you wrote in your diary.

I'll accept the grant whatever it may be. I will pray for you as you prayed for me I'll write a poem about you and I-

and wherever you are is where I'll be.



An Unparalleled Catastrophe, Ancestral Wisdom Made Flesh

By CHRISTOPHER BUTCHER

The human brain coevolved with the emergent faculties of language and storytelling. Memory and narrative are not merely byproducts of cognition; they are fundamental to how we organize experience across time.

For humans, the physical body does not precede the story we tell. We are the only species that biologically and metabolically emerged alongside the very language used to describe our biology and metabolism. Our story dictates our biology.

If biology and myth-making capacities evolved together, then the inverse must also be true: changing the story changes the body.

This raises an unfamiliar possibility. If we introduce a new story, perhaps we could be physically different in this world.

To be different in this world—to locate the narrative that makes our words beautiful flesh—we need not look beyond ourselves.

That is, precisely, because we exist in tandem with the narratives of our past.

Our conception of self resides in a sacred cosmos of knowledge. Hidden behind a cursed veil, kept safe by our predecessors.

Nevertheless, Ancestral Intelligence is not just knowledge; it is the inheritance of meaning, the withheld and secreted stories that have shaped our way of being since the beginning of time.

These narratives do not merely live in our minds—they live through us, encoded in ritual, in language, in the way we touch, move, and dream.

This inheritance has been fractured, seized by a racial order entrenched in the afterlife of slavery, but never lost.

We are born into stories that long predate us—ancestral narratives crafted in meaning, memory, survival, love, ritual, and resistance.

Yet, through an unparalleled catastrophe, many of these stories were disfigured or silenced, replaced by descriptive statements that taught us to see ourselves through the gaze of the other.

But what if the stories of our past—told about us, by us—were the very scripts

we needed to adopt? What if Ancestral Intelligence held not just history, but instruction?

The stories of our past—told about us, by us—still remain.

They hold the truths we were meant to perform, the self-knowledge we were meant to embody, the archives of our lineage, the myths, the proverbs, the ways of knowing that existed before we were told what was possible, what was true.

Our physical bodies do not exist in isolation but instead perform and enact the narratives that surround us. If story has the power to shape our biology, then ancestral wisdom has the power to reshape our world.

