

TRANSITION

The Magazine of Africa and the Diaspora 121



Childhood

 Hutchins Center
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African American
Research
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University

TRANSITION

Transition was founded in 1961 in Uganda by the late Rajat Neogy and quickly established itself as a leading forum for intellectual debate. The first series of issues developed a reputation for tough-minded, far-reaching criticism, both cultural and political, and this series carries on the tradition.



TRANSITION

THE MAGAZINE OF AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA

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Cover: The Guardian. Oil on canvas 60 × 42 in.
©2015 Armando Mariño. Courtesy of the artist and Monica & Kim Balle Collection.
Copenhagen, Denmark.

Correction: The issue 120 cover photograph, "Cotton Mouth," was incorrectly attributed to artist Sheldon Scott. The photograph is a staged image inspired by Scott's performance work, taken by Joshua Cogan. Copyright of this image was not properly attributed in issue 120, and should read ©2013 Joshua Cogan www.joshuacogan.com.

Un|Fixed Homeland

exploring the Guyanese experience of migration

Grace Aneiza Ali

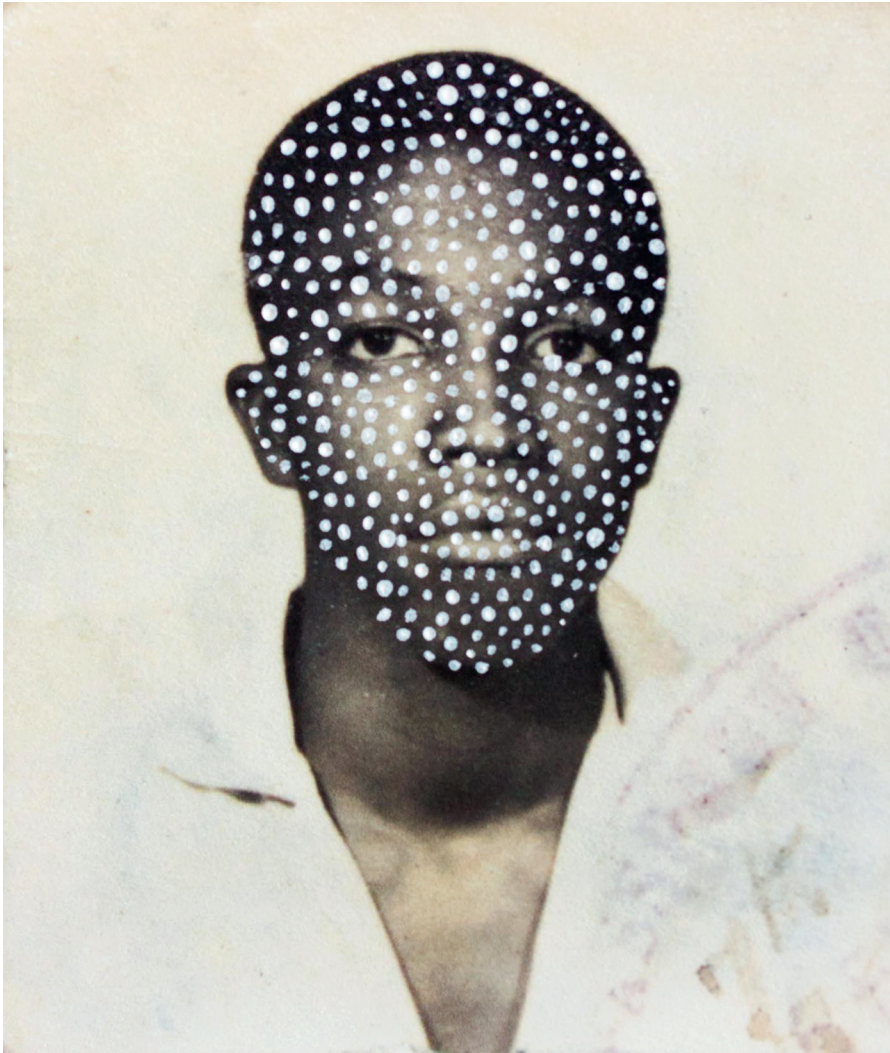
In the exhibition Un|Fixed Homeland, recently on view at Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art in Newark, New Jersey, thirteen inter-generational artists of Guyanese heritage explore their intimate relationship to the experience of migration: Kwesi Abbensetts, Khadija Benn, Frank Bowling, Sandra Brewster, Erika DeFreitas, Marlon Forrester, Roshini Kempadoo, Michael Lam, Donald Locke, Hew Locke, Maya Mackrandilal, Karran Sahadeo, and Keisha Scarville.

Via an Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Curatorial Fellowship, Guyanese-born curator Grace Aneiza Ali sought artists who reflect the reality of the country's diaspora—artists working in Guyana, as well as those living in five metropolitan cities: Boston, Los Angeles, New York, London, and Toronto. Utilizing photography in their artistic practice as medium, object, and archival language, the artists examine “homeland” as fixed and unfixed, a constantly shifting idea and memory, a physical place and a psychic space.

IN 1995, MY family emigrated from Guyana to the United States. We became part of what seemed like a mythical diaspora—an estimated one million Guyanese citizens living around the globe while the country itself has a population of around 760,000. In other words, my homeland is one where more people live outside its borders than within. For those who leave one place for another, fueled by choice, trauma, or entrenched poverty, sustaining the vulnerable threads to homeland is at once beautiful, fraught, disruptive, and ever evolving.

Making the journey with us were a handful of photographs chronicling our life. Owning photographs was an act of privilege; they stood among our most valuable possessions. There were no negatives, no jpegs, no double copies—just originals. Decades later, these photographs serve as a tangible connection to a homeland left behind. Many of them are taken at Guyana's airport during the 1980s and 1990s when we often bade farewell to yet another emigrating family member. Guyana celebrates its fiftieth anniversary of independence from the British in 2016. These last fifty years, however, have been defined by an extraordinary ebb and flow of its citizens.

What then does it mean to have a homeland that is no longer home? This question underscores the Un|Fixed Homeland exhibit. Employing



Untitled.
Detail from the
series *Passport*.
Mixed media,
2 ¼ × 2 ¼ in.
© 2012–2016.
Keisha Scarville
(b. United States
1975). Image
courtesy of the
artist.

innovative use of photographic mediums—archival images, documentary photography, self-portraiture, studio portraiture, painted photographs, passport photos, family snapshots, and selfies—the artists unpack global realities of migration, explore symbols of decay and loss, and avoid trappings of nostalgia by envisioning avenues out of displacement and dislocation.

One of the most defining movements of our time is migration. Few of us remain untouched by its sweeping narrative. Guyana *is* a country of migrations. Presented here is a selection of artists who intimately understand this liminal space of leaving and returning. Through their work, they represent the ones who *leave* and the ones who are *left*. Some of the artists return to Guyana often and some rarely. Others examine what survives and what is mourned.



Untitled.
 From the series *Passport*.
 Mixed media.
 © 2012–2016.
 Keisha Scarville
 (b. United States
 1975). Image
 courtesy of the
 artist.

Keisha Scarville

The passport photo is a document of agency, of one's freedom, or lack thereof, to move about the world. In Keisha Scarville's *Passport* series, a singular photo of her father at sixteen years old, taken in British Guiana in 1955, becomes a canvas for the transformative effects of migration. Visible in the photo, preserved by the New York-based artist in her family archive, are signs of age and decay via its yellowing tones, frayed edges, and faint timestamp marking a period when the colony was rife with political turmoil and haunting racial violence between Africans



Amalivaca.
Archival pigment
print. 48 × 32 in.
©2012 Khadija
Benn (b. Canada
1986; works in
Guyana). Image
courtesy of the
artist.

and Indians. In 1968, two years after Guyana gained independence, a young Keith Scarville left Guyana, transitioning from citizen of a British colony to a young, black, immigrant man immersed in America's civil rights era.

The tension within this fragile space of departure and arrival is deconstructed in Scarville's varied collaging, distorting, scratching, and layering of the portrait with found objects. In several reinterpretations, Scarville masks her father's face with items that almost eclipse him. Black-eyed peas, basmati rice, sugar cane stalks, and gold dots embody collective histories of a homeland—slavery past, racial strife,

**Some of the artists
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exploited labor, colonizers' greed—that this young man shoulders and aims to break free from. In other artistic gestures, Scarville confronts the barriers of invisibility, censorship, and racism—often meted onto those who dare build lives in foreign lands—by doing violence to the image. In one treatment, she blinds and mutes the subject with white-out over his eyes and mouth. In another, the artist scratches out the portrait with a knife using cross-hatch patterns—aggressive acts that result in a ghostly outline of Keith's presence. Yet, there are sweet notes of possibility as one rendering shows the young



Chrysalis.
Archival pigment
print. 48 × 48 in.
©2013 Khadija
Benn (b. Canada
1986; works in
Guyana). Image
courtesy of the
artist.

man shielded behind a mask of tiny white dots—eyes visible, face brilliantly illuminated.

Khadija Benn

Khadija Benn's painterly photographs, lush with color, light, and a heavy-handed brush of glamour and romanticism, might appear as replicating the picturing-paradise aesthetic that dominates Caribbean visual culture. However, it is this aesthetic Benn exploits by inserting the female body in these landscapes, oftentimes her own via self-portraiture, as in *Amalivaca*. Her training as a cartographer led her across Guyana's remote places: the Rupununi savannah plains, Kanuku Mountains, and coral ferns of Linden, landscapes which form the foundation of her digital photography.

Photographed in the Rupununi grasslands, a region bordering the Brazilian Amazon, *Amalivaca* confronts the underlying histories that have created these complex spaces as well as the contemporary framing of them as exotic. While indigenous Amerindian peoples have

called the Rupununi home since the early eighteenth century, this landscape has famously served as muse for the colonial European imagination, notably Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World* and Walter Raleigh's El Dorado quest. The Rupununi has also seen much loss: two major measles and small pox epidemics brought on by European arrivals devastated populations of indigenous peoples. In Benn's act of claiming space and ownership of these sweeping vistas, *Amalivaca* becomes an image bridging the land's past and present. Benn states, "Not wanting to contribute redundant pictorials of Guyana, I sought a re-interpretation of these places through portraiture . . . by anchoring and abstracting the female body within the landscapes." While foregrounding the body, Benn simultaneously employs an "erasure of the faces of the women photographed" (seen also in *Chrysalis*) to remind us of the ways in which Caribbean women are often exoticized and hypersexualized in Western art. The rendering of the subject's face as pseudo-hidden allows Benn to shift attention to another artistic gesture of reclaiming—naming the work "*Amalivaca*," a figure of Amerindian legend who teaches harmonious existence with the environment. In addition to these prescriptive acts of reclaiming, Benn offers the ambiguous. The subject's posture is captured mid-turn, leaving the viewer to question: Is she running away *from* or returning *towards* homeland? Is this a site of terror or beauty? Or, both?

Hew Locke

Born in the United Kingdom, Hew Locke arrived in Guyana the year it gained independence from Britain. He was seven years old and would spend the next fourteen formative years (1966 to 1980) there, bearing witness to the birth of a nation. Often, he incorporates into his work remnants of colonial and postcolonial power, interrogating how these artefacts are altered by, or stand the test of, the passage of time. The C-type photograph, *Rose Hall*, in which the artist blurs the line between photograph (the original image was taken in 2013) and painting using acrylic and ink, feature a traditional wooden plantation house on stilts. These impoverished beauties still pepper the Guyana countryside. Within them lie histories of a colonial past embodied physically and metaphorically through architecture and landscape. Drawn to their beauty, decay, and signs of neglect and disrepair, Locke states: "These houses are falling apart, and returning back to the earth from which they originally came as trees. They are like spirit houses . . . I am seeing my childhood falling down. Beautiful houses I dreamed of living in as a child are now wrecks."



Framing *Rose Hall* in all its ruin and brokenness implores the viewer to interrogate the ancestral ghosts haunting its structure. It also calls to mind present-day poor living conditions for many in Guyana. The viewer might ponder the things that led to this state of wooden wreckage—economic depression, abandonment as owners emigrate, and perhaps, a withering away of hope for a country.

In a brilliant artistic intervention of the original photograph, Locke alludes to the constant threat of flooding Guyana endures by rendering the house physically and symbolically flooded. The artist notes, it is “. . . the flood of the mind, or memory, washing away the past.” Floodwaters also create an opening for renewal, an opportunity to rebuild what was lost, to usher in the birth of a new nation.

Kwesi Abbensetts

Kwesi Abbensetts’ roots in Guyana stem from city-life in Georgetown and country-life in the East Berbice-Corentyne coast. From these cross-road-perches, the bustling capital and provincial countryside, Abbensetts became an early witness to constant acts of emigration, observing friends and family leaving for “another land, for gain and training . . . good dollars and education.”

In *Pieces of Land, From Where I Have Come*, Abbensetts embeds into small canvasses key objects, what he calls “helpers of memory,” to aid

Rose Hall.

Acrylic paint and ink on c-type photograph. 81.5 × 122 cm. ©2014 Hew Locke (b. United Kingdom 1959). Image courtesy of the artist and Hales London New York. Photograph by Charlie Littlewood.



(Left) **My Dreams Talk About A Place** from the series, *Pieces of Land, From Where I Have Come*. Mixed media, painting, and photography on canvas. 8 × 10 in. ©2016 Kwesi Abbensetts (b. Guyana 1976; works in United States). Image courtesy of the artist.

(Right) **You Booked Your Passage** from the series, *Pieces of Land, From Where I Have Come*. Mixed media, painting, and photography on canvas. 8 × 10 in. ©2016 Kwesi Abbensetts (b. Guyana 1976; works in United States). Image courtesy of the artist.

him in conjuring a homeland he hasn't seen since 2001. The artist is now based in New York City where Guyanese make up the fifth largest immigrant population. Abbensetts wields a palette of deep, bold reds, blues, and greens, as well as softer, lighter hues of yellows and pinks to frame the photographs of his family and friends. Collected from that last visit to Guyana fifteen years ago, the analog photographs capture public and private spaces: a family wedding taking place on a street dotted with Guyana's quintessential wooden stilt houses or a line-up of mini-buses awaiting passengers in front of Georgetown's Stabroek Market. This choice of photographs tells us something about what is valuable to a person surrounded by movement and transition. Layered onto and around the photographs are abstract lines, handwritten notes, brown mud, white rice, brown sugar, and strips of paper towel baptized in acrylic paint—a symbol of “an identity immersed by all things Guyana,” states the artist.

This trifecta of paint, photograph, and objects functions literally and figuratively as “pieces of the land” Abbensetts poetically references in the work's title. In its layers and complexity lies a simple desire: to



The Impossible Speech Act. Digital photograph. 40 × 40 in. ©2007 Erika DeFreitas (b. Canada 1981). Image courtesy of the artist and Canada Council for the Arts, Art Bank.

reconnect, to reclaim homeland. “I am distant and removed,” the artist says. “The paintings are a contemplation of space . . . a forgotten space.”

Erika DeFreitas

Erika DeFreitas’ grandmother sold cakes out of a humble home in Newton, British Guiana in the late 1950s. She passed down the practice to DeFreitas’ mother who migrated to Canada in 1970, and in turn, taught the Canadian-born artist the intricacies of icing cakes. This act of passing on a sacred craft, from Guyana to Canada, through three generations of women, forms the portraiture series, *The Impossible Speech Act*.

Guyana is “A place I’ve never been to and a place my mother has not returned to since my birth,” states the artist. In this work, rooted in maternal histories, DeFreitas’ mother is subject and collaborator. Together the two took turns in a series of documented performative actions, both poetic and playful, hand-fashioning face masks out of green, yellow, and purple icing. From start to finish, the series unveils the meticulous detail, labor, and artistry in masking a bare face with sculptural objects of flowers and leaves. The diptych featured here is the final portrait in the process. “In a sense these repeated actions situate my mother psychically closer to her homeland as she remembers it, but only places me further away,” says DeFreitas.

The artist’s employ of icing as material and process is symbolic, noting that “historically icing was created with two purposes: to be decorative and to preserve.” However, DeFreitas’ chosen symbol of preservation becomes one of irony as the icing inevitably disappears.



Bridge. Detail from the installation *Place in Reflection*. Photo gel transfer on wood. 8 × 6 in. ©2016 Sandra Brewster (b. Canada 1973). Image courtesy of the artist.

Do the memories of these spaces belong to the artist? Or, are they borrowed, reflecting an imaginary place, a desire for a homeland that never was?

“The masks did not become a substitute object in each of our images,” says DeFreitas, “they melted from the heat emitted from our bodies, the flowers and leaves eroding, sliding slowly down our faces . . . a reminder of the persistence of impermanence.” The viewer is left with the notion

that even when we commit to preserving a homeland’s memories and traditions, loss still pervades.

Sandra Brewster

The first time Toronto-based artist Sandra Brewster stepped foot on Guyana’s soil was in 2008. She was thirty-five years old. Her Guyanese-born parents were part of a great migration of the 1960s to Canada. In fact, in the coming years, Toronto would emerge as a prominent node in the Caribbean diaspora as one of the largest and oldest Guyanese populations outside of Guyana. As a daughter of immigrant parents



living in Canada, Brewster grew up hearing her family's stories of life in Georgetown—stories that simultaneously gave her a connection to as well as “. . . a longing for a home I had never been to,” says the artist. “They would talk about a place that was once beautiful and productive, then debate over the county's troubling economic conditions now.”

These are the questions and stories that Brewster mined, along with the scenes she documented from her inaugural trip to Guyana, to inform a robust collection of twenty-six wood panels in the installation *Place in Reflection*. Here, process and material are just as key as visual imagery of markets, school girls dressed in uniforms, or palm-tree lined streets. The artist employs a gel transfer technique to transfer black and white photographs, many of which are tattered, torn, stained, and scratched, onto small wooden panels. “These transferred images are reflections that naturally, through the material, reveal imperfections,” states Brewster.

In her intent to expose the flaws and make visible the defects in the images, Brewster alludes to the trappings of false memory. We are left to ponder: Do the memories of these spaces belong to the artist? Or, are they borrowed, reflecting an imaginary place, a desire for a homeland that never was? 🌐

Place in Reflection. Installation. Photo gel transfer on wood. ©2016 Sandra Brewster (b. Canada 1973). Image © Aljira, a Center for Contemporary Art. Photo by Argenis Apolinario.

Notes on Contributors

Kwesi Abbenetts is a New York-based photographer who hails from the Corentyne Coast of Guyana. He moved to the United States in 1995. Portraiture has been Abbenetts' main photographic foundation. He is a 2016 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow in Photography. His work has been included in Reginald F. Lewis Museum, Baltimore (2011); African and African-Caribbean Design Diaspora Festival, London (2011); Aljira, A Center for Contemporary Art, Newark (2009); Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, New York (2010); and the Nathan Cummings Foundation, New York (2010).

Temilola Alanamu is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of Kent in the United Kingdom. She has a master's degree in Women and International Development and a doctorate in History. Her current research centres on Childhood and Memory in Nigeria. She has written various articles on women and childhood in Sub-Saharan Africa in academic journals, edited volumes, and encyclopaedias. She is currently working on her first monograph titled "The Gendered Lifecycle in Nineteenth-Century Abeokuta."

Grace Aneiza Ali is an independent curator, faculty in the Department of Art and Public Policy, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, and Editorial Director of *OF NOTE*, an award-winning online magazine on art and activism. Her essays on photography have been published in *Nueva Luz Journal* and *Small Axe Journal*, among others. In 2014, she received an Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Curatorial Fellowship. Highlights of her curatorial work include Guest Curator for the 2014 Addis Ababa Foto Fest; Guest Curator of the Fall 2013 Nueva Luz Photographic Journal; and Host of the 'Visually Speaking' photojournalism series at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center. Ali is a World Economic Forum 'Global Shaper' and Fulbright Scholar. She holds a MA in Africana Studies from New York University and a BA in English Literature from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Ulli Beier (1922–2011) was a German-born scholar who fostered appreciation of African art and literature as the founder (1957) and coeditor (1957–68) of the Nigerian literary periodical *Black Orpheus*, which provided an outlet for creative writing by Africans and West Indians. After completing his studies at the University of London (BA, 1948), Beier was appointed (1950) associate professor of extramural studies at Nigeria's University College, Ibadan (now the University of Ibadan). In 1961 he helped a group of young writers in Ibadan and Oshogbo (where he lived) organize the nonprofit Mbari Mbayo Club, which eventually encompassed an art school, a theatre, and a publisher. In the late 1960s Beier accepted a teaching position in Papua New Guinea, where he established the literary periodical *Kovave*. He returned to Nigeria in 1971 to become

director of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ife. Three years later he became the first director (1974–78) of the Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies in Port Moresby. He was also the founding director (1981–85, 1989–96) of the Iwalewa House at the University of Bayreuth (Ger.) Africa Centre. The author of numerous books, Beier was particularly admired for his English translations from Yoruba, including *Yoruba Poetry: An Anthology of Traditional Poems* (1970) and *Yoruba Myths* (1980). [Bio adapted from *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ulli-Beier>]

Khadija Benn grew up in the bauxite mining town of Linden, Guyana and later settled in the capital city Georgetown. She received a BA in Geography from the University of Guyana, and postgraduate certification in Applied Digital Geography & GIS from Ryerson University in Toronto, Canada. In the last six years she has undertaken projects that have enabled her to travel throughout Guyana, including working as a cartographer and spatial analyst in areas such as land use planning, community development, and heritage preservation. She discovered her affinity for photography at age twenty-three, eventually favoring conceptual portraiture for achieving creative balance and self-expression. She has also produced a body of documentary work that focuses on the diversity of Guyanese people, places, and cultural experiences. Currently Benn is pursuing a Master of Science in Geo-Informatics at the University of the West Indies at St. Augustine, Trinidad.

Sandra Brewster holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from York University and is a recipient of grants from the Toronto, Ontario, and Canada art councils. Her work has been published in *OF NOTE*, *The Walrus*, *Small Axe*, *Chimurenga*, *Mix Magazine*, and *NKA Journal of Contemporary African Art*. Brewster's work has been included in Allegheny College Art Galleries, Meadville (2015); Alice Yard, Port of Spain (2013); Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto (2012); A Space Gallery, Toronto (2009); Robert Langen Gallery, Waterloo (2010); The Print Studio, Hamilton (2010); SPACE, London (2011); and FiveMyles Gallery, New York (2009). Brewster is currently pursuing a Masters of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto.

Sheila Pree Bright is a fine-art photographer, with a MFA in Photography from Georgia State University, who is nationally known for her photographic series *Young Americans*, *Plastic Bodies*, and *Suburbia*. In recent years, Bright has documented responses to police shootings in Atlanta, Ferguson, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. Bright's current and most ambitious project to date, *#1960Now*, examines race, gender and generational divides to raise awareness of millennial perspectives on civil and human rights. Bright's photographs have appeared in the book and exhibition *Posing Beauty in African American Culture* and the 2014 documentary *Through the Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People*. Bright has exhibited at the High Museum of Art, the Smithsonian Anacostia Museum, MOCA Cleveland, Look3, and FotoFest Houston, among other institutions. She is the recipient of several awards including the 2006 Center Prize formally the Santa Fe Prize for Suburbia; and her work is included in numerous private and public collections.

Aaron Brown grew up in Chad and now lives in Kansas, where he is an Assistant Professor of Writing and Editing at Sterling College. His poetry and prose have been published in *World Literature Today*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Cimarron Review*, *Portland Review*, and *Warscapes*, among others. He is the author of the poetry chapbook *Winnower* (Wipf & Stock, 2013) and the novella *Bound* (Wipf & Stock, 2012). Email: aaron.brown.writer@gmail.com

Sokari Douglas Camp was born in Buguma, Rivers State, Nigeria, and currently resides in London, England. In the past she has represented Britain and Nigeria in National exhibitions and has contributed to over forty solo shows worldwide. Douglas Camp works with welded steel, making installations about Nigerian Festivals and celebrates London's cross cultural influences. Her Battle Bus Living Memorial travelled to Nigeria as part of Action Saro-Wiwa, a campaign to clean up the Niger Delta, in summer 2015. Since arriving in Nigeria it has been detained at Lagos port because it is seen as an art object that might incite violence. #FreetheBus

Panashe Chigumadzi was born in Zimbabwe and grew up in South Africa. She is the author of *Sweet Medicine* (BlackBird Books, 2015) and the curator of the inaugural Abantu Book Festival taking place in December 2016. Chigumadzi is also the founding editor of *Vanguard Magazine*, a platform for young black women coming of age in post-apartheid South Africa, and contributor to a number of other South African titles including *City Press*, *The Times* and *The Star*. She has been a commentator for the *BBC*, *The Guardian*, Netherlands' *Nieuws Uur*, and Germany's *Spiegel*. In 2015 she became a Ruth First Fellow and is currently completing a master's degree in African Literature at Wits University, Johannesburg.

Darius Christiansen is a seventeen year-old writer from New Orleans, Louisiana. Darius was introduced to the art of writing from when he would secretly taking his mother's portfolio of poems with him to school. While all the other students were reading their bibles for early morning mass, he would be reading his mother's poems. Inspired by his own childhood, Darius pulls a lot of his writing from natural elements and the southern life in which he grew up. He attends the arts centered high school, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, where he studies Creative Writing. He has been published in the literary journal, *Umbra*, and the inaugural issue of the online literary journal, *Umbra*. He considers writing to be one of the best ways to connect with and reach people that are placed all around the world. He hopes to one day be a writer who is able to do just that.

Matthew Kevin Clair is a PhD candidate in sociology at Harvard University. His academic research and writing focuses on culture, race, justice, and social inequality and has been published in *Criminology*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Public Books*, and *The Guardian*. In his leisure time, he creates visual art that explores themes of valuation and racial identity. His art has been displayed in galleries and homes in Cambridge, MA and Nashville, TN and published in *The Dudley Review* and *The Diverse Arts Project*.

Taylor Ashley Crayton is a seventeen year old poet from New Orleans, Louisiana. Now a senior at Lusher Charter School, Taylor's work explores issues of race, religion, grief, and relationships. She has been awarded gold and silver keys in the Scholastic Writing Competition and was recently recognized as the first place winner in the Louisiana Writes Competition. Email: taylor_crayton.stu@lusherschool.org

Erika DeFreitas is a Toronto-based multidisciplinary conceptual artist. Placing an emphasis on process, gesture, and documentation, she explores the influence of language, loss, and culture on the formation of identity through public interventions, textile-based works, and performative actions that are photographed. DeFreitas is a recipient of the Finalist Artist Prize from the Toronto Friends of Visual Arts, and a graduate of the Masters of Visual Studies Program at the University of Toronto. DeFreitas' work has been included in Project Row Houses, Houston (2015); the Art Museum at the University of Toronto, Toronto (2005); The Art Gallery of Windsor, Windsor (2014); Platform Centre for Photographic & Digital Arts, Winnipeg (2008); Centre for Print and Media Arts, Hamilton (2013); The Art Gallery of Mississauga, Mississauga (2013); the Pollock Gallery at the Southern Methodist University, Dallas (2014); the Houston Museum of African American Culture, Houston (2013); and a residency at Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, Winnipeg (2010).

Endale Desalegn is an Ethiopian based in Addis Ababa where he studied at the Addis Ababa University School of Fine Art and Design and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in painting in 2008. Endale works with oil and acrylic on canvas, often morphing the meaning of a painting as he responds to changes within his environment. His paintings are rich and dark, built up with layers of paint into exceptionally tactile objects, which combine texts and symbols in a meditative practice. Endale's work is influenced by the rich culture of his home country, in which a strong sense of mythology is layered with everyday experience.

Ugochi Egonu is a poet from Santa Clara, California. Egonu was a finalist in the 2015 Bay Area Teen Poetry Slam and leads spoken word workshops for young women. Her poetry has been featured on BBC Africa's *Out* radio program, *Rookie Magazine*, *Teeneye Magazine*, and Creative Communication's quarterly student anthology. Email: ugochiegonu@gmail.com

Born in Canada, **Zetta Elliott** moved to the U.S. in 1994 to pursue her PhD in American Studies at NYU. Her poetry has been published in several anthologies, and her plays have been staged in New York, Chicago, and Cleveland. Her essays have appeared in *The Huffington Post*, *School Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. She is the author of twenty books for young readers, including the award-winning picture book *Bird*. Her urban fantasy novel, *Ship of Souls*, was named a *Booklist* Top Ten Sci-fi/Fantasy Title for Youth. Three books published under her own imprint, Rosetta Press, have been named Best Children's Books of the Year by the Bank Street Center for Children's Literature. Rosetta Press generates culturally relevant stories that center children who have been

marginalized, misrepresented, and/or rendered invisible in traditional children's literature. Elliott is an advocate for greater diversity and equity in publishing. She currently lives in Brooklyn.

Alex Fattal is Assistant Professor of Film-Video and Media Studies at Penn State University. His scholarship and creative work illuminates the mediation of the Colombian armed conflict. Learn more about his projects at alexfattal.net.

Amy Fish is a PhD Candidate in American Studies at Harvard University and a Student Associate Editor of *Transition*. She is writing a dissertation on the role of literary collaborations between children and adults in anti-racist movements in the 1960s-1970s United States. Before beginning her graduate studies in American literature, performance, and childhood, she taught at Year Up Boston.

Moraa Gitaa is a Kenyan writer, humanist, and is passionate about social justice. In 2014 Moraa won a Burt Award for African Literature for her YA novella *The Shark Attack* which tackles drug abuse/ trafficking along Kenya's coastal strip. In 2010 Moraa was short-listed for the Penguin Prize for African Writing and won First Prize in the National Book Development Council of Kenya (NBDCK) Adult Fiction literary award in 2008. *Crucible for Silver & Furnace for Gold* was Moraa's first full-length novel followed by *Shifting Sands* both published by Nsemia publishers. Moraa's short stories have featured in several anthologies including *Author-Me Author Africa Anthology* (2008, 2011) and *G21 The World's Magazine - Africa Fresh! New Voices from the First Continent* (2007). Recently Storymoja Publishers have published her first crime fiction novella titled *Hila* and her latest addition is a children's book by Kenya Literature Bureau titled *The Con Artist*. Moraa is currently busy with several works-in-progress including a memoir about her childhood on Kenya's coast. Moraa is a member of PEN International, the World Association of Writers, and also a 2015–2016 global volunteer for Empower Women which is facilitated by the UN.

jacklyn janeksela, founder of Female Filet, is a Parisian-based poet who moonlights as educator, protestor, dancer, sorcerer, and truth-teller. She forms half the group of a post-punk duo called The Velblouids. Email: jacklynnyyc@yahoo.com, jacklynnyyc212@gmail.com

Chris King is a journalist, writer, producer, musician, and movie-maker based in St. Louis, MO. In *Transition 77*, while the events were unfolding in the late 1990s, he wrote about his work and adventures in the Nigerian democracy movement against the dictator General Sani Abacha. Nearly twenty years later, in *Transition 121* (with the permission of Wole Soyinka, who was central to the action), he is able to complete that story by narrating a covert action that has never been discussed publicly before. Follow him on Twitter [@chriskingstl](https://twitter.com/chriskingstl) and look for his band Eleanor Roosevelt wherever music is streamed or downloaded.

Hew Locke spent his formative years (1966-1980) in Guyana before returning to the U.K. to complete a MA in sculpture at the Royal College of Art (1994). Locke explores the languages of colonial and postcolonial power, how different cultures fashion their identities through visual symbols of authority, and how these representations are altered by the passage of time. To illustrate this layering of time, Locke's work is accompanied by a unique merging of influences from the artist's native Guyana and London, where he now lives and works. Locke's work has been included in the Guangzhou Triennial, China (2008); Kochi-Muziris Biennale, India (2014); and Prospect 3 New Orleans Contemporary Art Biennial, New Orleans (2014), among others. He is represented in varied collections including The Pérez Art Museum Miami (U.S.), The Tate Gallery (UK), The Brooklyn Museum (New York), The Victoria & Albert Museum (London), and The British Museum (London). Currently, Locke's work is featured in the major exhibition *Artist and Empire* at Tate Britain (2015-16), traveling to the National Gallery of Singapore.

Armando Mariño is a Cuban-American artist who lives and works in New York. Influenced by periods of time living in the varied landscapes of Cuba, the Netherlands, France, and New York's Hudson Valley, the artist's large-scale works explore relationships between the figure and the natural environment. Mariño graduated from Jose Varona Pedagogical Institute, Havana (1992) and from Rijksakademie Van Beldeende Kunsten, Amsterdam (2004–2005). His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions in Paris, Ontario, Copenhagen, Madrid, and Miami among other cities. His works are represented in major private and public collections around the world such as Deutsche Bank Collection; Shelley and Donald Rubin Collection, U.S.; 21cMuseum, Kentucky, U.S.; Centro Wifredo Lam, Havana, Cuba; CocaCola Foundation, Spain; Colección Berardo Museo de Arte Moderna, Sintra, Portugal among others. Marino has been awarded The Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2011.

Bernard Matambo is a Zimbabwean national and Assistant Professor in the Creative Writing Program at Oberlin College. He has received residency fellowships from The Blue Mountain Center and the I-Park Foundation among others.

Mbewane is a poet and writer currently residing in Paris. Half Belgian and half Centralafrican, his writings have appeared in *The Meantime* (a collaborative collection of short stories) and on BlackstotheFuture.com. He shares his poetry and short fiction in French and English on his blog mbewane.wordpress.com.

Longinos Nagila is a young experimental multimedia visual artist living and working in Nairobi, Kenya. Primarily focusing on video art and the exploration of digital imagery, Longinos' work is influenced by a deep love of early cinema and black and white photography, which he blends with paint and transferred images on paper and canvas. After graduating from the BuruBuru institute of Fine Arts, Nairobi in 2009 he studied documentary and film making at the Apulia Film Commission in Bari, Italy. In

his most recent canvases and video work, Nagila is beginning to explore the concepts of industrialisation, mass production, and rapid urbanisation. Billboards advertising international brands sit next to stencilled images of traditional people and street market scenes, highlighting how the lack of infrastructure pushes people to move to urban areas where they often end up producing what they cannot afford to consume and commenting on the invasion of mass-marketing on the urban landscape.

French digital collage artist Mathieu Saunier (aka **Khan Nova**) creates compositions as colossal as his name suggests. Inspired by visions of the future from previous decades in the afrofuturism and retro-futurism culture, Khan Nova fuses together elements of past narratives with current conversations to create otherworldly conjectures. Khan Nova's worlds are populated by men and women around the world. Furthermore, while deep space was a major topic for the great science fiction writers of the twentieth century, Khan Nova recasts atmospheric exploration as just above the clouds. Set juxtaposed to desert landscapes or as the background for people encapsulated, the clouds elevate Khan Nova's subjects to a higher realm, while also acting as stark reminders of the problems facing humans today.

Troy Onyango (@TroyOnyango) is a twenty-three year old Kenyan writer. His fiction has appeared in *KUT Anthology*, *DNB Stories*, *Afridiaspora*, and *StoryZetu*.

Wale Owoade is a Nigerian poet and literary enthusiast. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Apogee Journal*, *Chiron Review*, *Pine Hills Review*, *Radar Poetry*, *Spillway*, *The Indianola Review*, and *Vinyl* among others. Some of his poems have been translated to Bengali, German, and Spanish. Wale is the Founder and Managing Editor of *EXPOUND*.

Kayla Reado is a seventeen year old high school student at the New Orleans School for Creative Arts, where her discipline is Creative Writing. She has performed spoken word pieces at Jazz Fest and urban art installation Exhibit Be. Her work has been published in her school literary journal, *Umbra* and she has had national acknowledgement from Scholastic Writing Contest and William Faulkner Writing Contest. She enjoys writing poetry and fiction that reflect her southern lifestyle, reference her childhood, and explore the experiences of Black women.

Niousha Roshani is an anthropologist and human rights consultant specializing in childhood and youth in conflict-affected regions. Niousha is completing her PhD in Anthropology at the University College London (UCL) and holds a master's degree in International Development from Cornell University. As a fellow at the Berkman Klein Center, she is researching the discourse of media and young people of African descent in Colombia and Brazil from a political, social, and economic perspective. She is also the Executive Director of the Nukanti Foundation for Children, a non-profit organization dedicated to engaging, educating, and empowering youth to address the social impacts of long-standing conflict, poverty, and human rights violations.

Keisha Scarville is a photo and mixed media artist based in Brooklyn, New York. She is currently an adjunct faculty member at the International Center of Photography in NYC. Scarville's work has been included in the Studio Museum of Harlem, New York (2012); Rush Arts Gallery, New York (2011); BRIC Arts Media House, New York (2015); and The Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York (2001). Additionally, her work has appeared in publications such as *Vice*, *Transition*, *OF NOTE Magazine*, *Nueva Luz*, *ARC*, *Small Axe*, *Oxford American*, and *The New York Times* where it has also received critical review. In 2006, she was awarded a grant through the Brooklyn Arts Council's Community Arts Program. She has also been an artist-in-residence at The Center for Photography at Woodstock, Lightwork Artist Residency Program, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace Program, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, and Vermont Studio Center.

Lise Schreier is Associate Professor of French at Fordham University and Associate Editor of *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*. Her studies of race, colonialism, and French popular culture have drawn on diverse material, such as feminist newspapers, travelogues, fashion plates, children's literature, vaudeville theater, and early comics. Her current project, *Playthings of Empire: Child-gifting and the Politics of French Femininity*, follows the changes in French textual and visual representations of African children used as gifts, pets, and fashion accessories during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She is the recipient of the Children's Literature Association Diversity Grant, an American Philosophical Society Grant, and a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for 2016–2017. She is the author of *Seul dans l'Orient lointain: Les Voyages de Nerval et Du Camp* and *Gens de Couleur dans Trois Vaudevilles du Dix-neuvième Siècle*. Email: lschreier@fordham.edu

tmstringfellow (Tara Stringfellow) is a poet and an attorney living in Chicago, originally from Memphis, TN and Okinawa, Japan. Third World Press published her first collection of poetry entitled *More than Dancing* in 2008. Her poems have appeared, or are forthcoming, in *Apogee*, *Linden Avenue Literary Journal*, *decomp: a literary magazine*, *Voice and Vision: An African American Literary Magazine*, *Prompt*, and *North by Northwestern*. Currently, the author is a MFA Candidate for poetry at Northwestern University.

Terrell Jamal Terry was born in Germany and raised in Raleigh, North Carolina and Central, Texas. His poems have appeared in *The Literary Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *West Branch*, *Washington Square Review*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. His debut collection, *Aroma Truce*, is forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press in the summer of 2017. He resides in Pittsburgh, PA. Email: t.j.terry81@gmail.com

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Chris King

To many Nigerian lovers of freedom, especially the younger ones, finding a way to kill Abacha with their own hands seemed a legitimate and perhaps necessary project. And for Soyinka, young people of courage . . . could even make him believe in funding the creation of a secret commando unit, starting with an unpromising cadre of college students and urban professionals living in exile.

Bernard Matambo

Cato and I have booked seats on flights to America with a number of airlines. It makes the journey feel real, palpable even, like it's something that could actually happen. The airline holds your seat for a week at a fixed price, and the best part is you don't need to pay anything. But after that week your booking is canceled and you must start all over again.

Lise Schreier

In a number of nineteenth-century narratives, black children, often presented as gifts to white children, turned them into responsible youths with a proper understanding of French propriety and of their role in society. *Lisette* went further than previous iterations of the theme—it turned the black-child-as-educational-tool into a mass-market product.

Zetta Elliott

As a black feminist, I'm part of a long tradition of black women writers doing whatever they have to do to tell their stories their way. My work is likely to be assessed, acquired, and then reviewed by someone who . . . has limited competence when it comes to my culture(s). So self-publishing allows me to focus on delivering authentic, relevant material to my own community.

Panashe Chigumadzi

I was Writing Existence. Would either Marechera, or Fassie, for that matter, have frowned on that? Not that I've ever entertained any ideas of myself as a Comrade, let alone a Radical, but I want to know, would he think less of me because I wasn't writing to destroy? I was Writing to Live? That I was writing with the hope that, if words weren't enough to stave Death, each word, each sentence, each paragraph, each page would be a ceremony to cremate the worst in our lives.



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