



**THE
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THE RACKET

Hi.

How is everyone?

I saw in the paper recently that as of September, three percent of the workforce in the United States have quit. This means, due to a variety of reasons, 4.4 million citizens of the US of A, have voluntarily walked away from their jobs in the last ten months. It's breathtaking. It's eye-opening. It's a clear sign that, in general, the employers of America are more than just "doing something wrong" they're continuing to hold up systems of employment that in our radically changed society no longer make any sense.

And people are pissed. People, with families and children and homes and aging parents, are angry enough to put their economic stability to the side and walk away from their jobs because what the societal norm of "working" is no longer works. The day-to-day grind, the long hours, the employment hierarchy we all clung to as the way to exist was shown with the onset of COVID-19 to be, if not a sham, a fossil; an ungainly system that continued to exist only because we'd all grown so used to it that the massive flaws in it had become endurable background pain.

Now, finally, the band aid has been ripped off (duh) and all the holes in the system are suddenly exposed. And again, people aren't too happy. And with two years of pandemic anxiety pushing down on our collective chests, people are saying change the system or we're not going to work.

Sure, there is a performative movement in a lot of companies to "change the way things are done" but when you peer closer it's less revolution and more a lot of smoke and mirrors being tossed around to disguise the simple fact that great change in employment (or hell, maybe anything) is too detrimental to the status quo to ever truly happen. Instead, companies—big and small and everything in-between—hem and haw about the future of work while moving the needle of the way we work just far enough to imitate change. Just far enough to make it seem like a new horizon is beckoning when truly, we're just doing the same shit in a new, remote way.

In my humble opinion the jaw-dropping figure of 4.4 million Americans stepping away from their jobs makes it seem pretty obvious that the jig is up. That the changes needed in the way we work are more than just wage hikes or balance initiatives or kinder leaders steering the ship. The system of employment in America is broken and we need drastic change; we need to upend the entirety of how we think about work—a top down hierarchy, a forty hour work week, the entire concept of a career-based identity, to name a few—and replace it with something that is built out of empathy and built towards providing economic stability that does not come at the cost of our lives as human beings.

I had written, "to staunch the bleeding of The Great Resignation" and I erased it because I don't believe the bleeding needs to stop. Rather, I believe that The Great Resignation is the symptom of a rotted foundation. The more people who leave their jobs in search of something different, the easier it'll be to see just how bad it has got.

And seeing isn't a solution, but it's the only way to start finding one.

'Till next time.

N

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police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

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A bit annoyed about the air pockets.

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We aren't in this for the money.

That said: there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

If so, we're working on some special rewards. And we know you love special rewards.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

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PIGGY-BACK
MICHAEL HYUN GU KANG
2021

Raspberry sugar.

DS MAOLALAI

drunk again, of course
and of course
on the patio.

we open
our hands
in our laps
and pour them
with pennies
of ice.

we are ferris-
wheel workers. we are bumper
car workers. around us,
the stickiness

of old cotton candy
smoke. staining our outfits,
tasting of raspberry,
sticky old fingers
and sweet.



EXITO
ISAAC VAZQUEZ AVILA
2021



SHADOW
ISAAC VAZQUEZ AVILA
2021

When She Stood Dripping Wet

COURTNEY CLIFTEN

We were doing acid in Natasha's makeshift backyard pool. The birds on the wire looked like *chopsticks* on the piano—two fingers thumping in unison. There is a period of time before our eyes adjust to the darkness and there is a moment before she kisses me where she looks absolutely ridiculous. She started doing harder drugs that summer, started asking us all for grocery money, which almost checked out—what with the collarbones and a hollowed rib cage and all. Last time I saw her, I felt like somebody somewhere had drained her eyes of pigment, needled her cheeks dry.

I loved her
when she still had smooth hair the color of sunlight on rivers.
When she stood dripping wet while I dried her thighs.
She looked up at the birds on the wire, just whispered
music.

And her knees, I spent so much
extra time drying her knees.
Later, under the table,
I touched mine to hers
both sunburnt and warm.
Birds and bones making music.



DUROYDALE
ISAAC VAZQUEZ AVILA
2021

Where I Come From is Dirt

JULIA HALPRIN-JACKSON

Miles of it, carefully arranged in long rows, braided with water and left to simmer in the heat. I like to walk out beyond Russell Boulevard, between the row of olive trees, and watch the people in triangle hats nudging, pushing, rolling seeds in soil. It's an earth oven, and when the plants are ready they perk their heads above the soil, little groundhogs blinking in the sunlight.

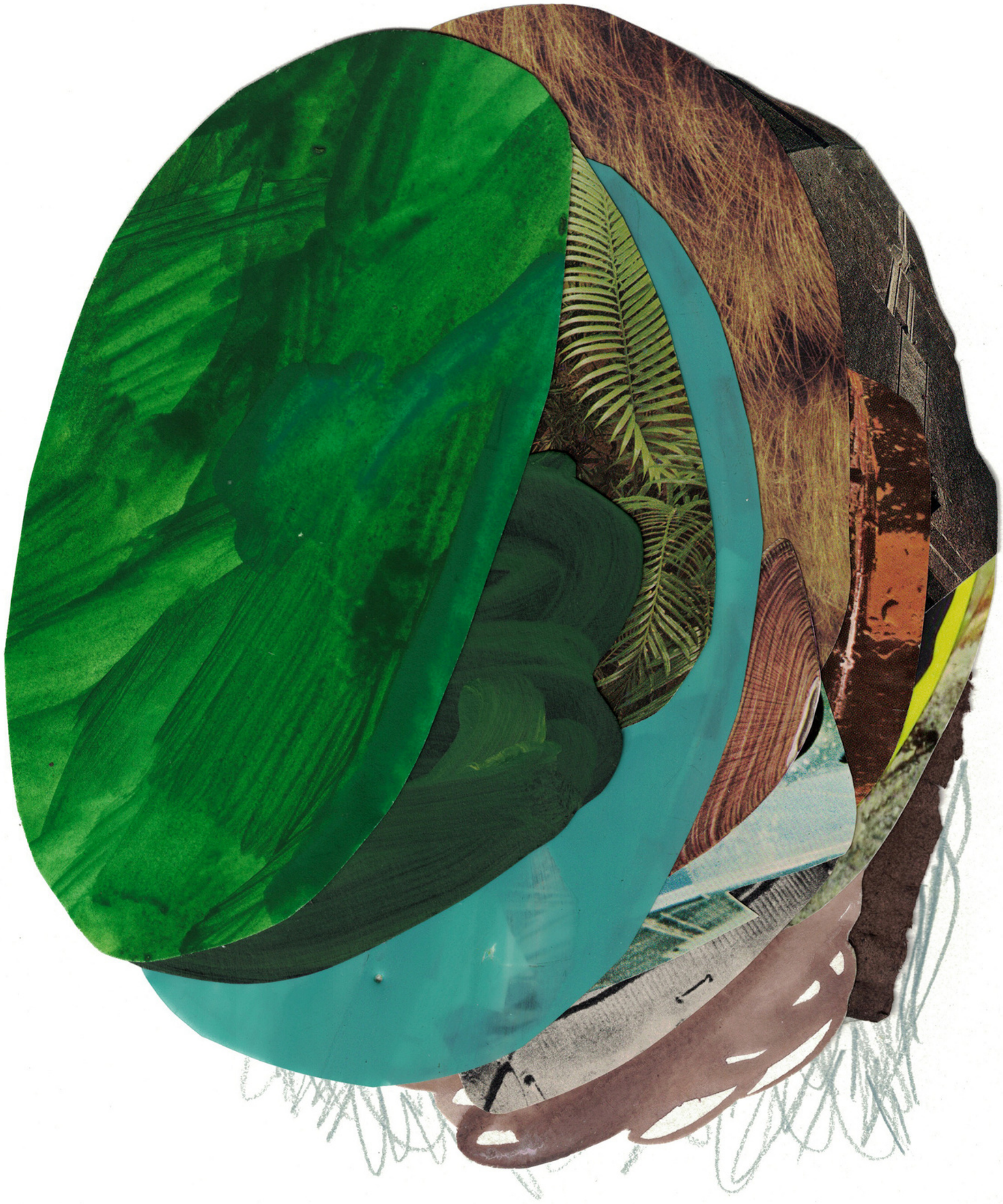
Where I come from people worship this dirt, package it, sell it, tease it, study it, trample it. No one is ever ready to just let it be dirt. Sometimes when Putah Creek is full I wander out where the sheep drift mercilessly, and out there the dirt just sighs.

Where I come from people fight over dirt. It's wealthy soil, my mom says, and she should know because she grew up on a farm, a farm whose dirt was overturned by a lusty levee on Christmas Eve. Dirt is rich, she says, like German chocolate cake, and before you know it, its very essence fills you up, fills up the room, fills up the sky, because in the end, it's what we all become.

She should know, because on Christmas Eve 1955 she spent the night on the floor of a church. The only night she ever spent in a church. The only Christmas she ever observed until she met my father. Christmas Eve 1955, and a Yuba City flood wiped the dirt clean, drenched the walnut orchard my grandfather grew up tending.

Sixty-five years later people live spitting distance from that very same levee. A woman recently called the county office to inquire when they would remove that big pile of dirt outside her kitchen window.

Dirt, my mother says, is rich where I come from.



I CAN ONLY TRAVEL IN LEAPS AND BOUNDS
XOCHI SOLIS
2021
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WHAT GIVES US THE WILL TO CHANGE
XOCHI SOLIS
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SHE IS ALL WIND & WATER
XOCHI SOLIS
2021
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gun poem

PAOLO BICCHIERI

emerging from a black mitsubishi
the man tells me has the power

to silence faces through phones
like the power to silence bodies

through guns with silencers
he tells me this in fog wind

Ocean Beach & he tells me this
unsolicited & when he tells me this

I imagine he means to silence me
through the power of a gun with a silencer

but his firm hewn grip is all I receive
before he enters his car &

through what kind of silence should I
divine meaning from his warning?

...

when I tell you the police drew guns
on my brother I don't mean to draw
upon a wound

I tell you this because we are in front
of my grandfather's house at two in the morning
after getting drunk in downtown Minneapolis &

we are drunk in 2015 so George Floyd is alive &
all I can think is those police knew the house itself
was a wound & the Mexicans outside could only be

collaborators in the trauma &
I tell you the police drew guns because
it frightened my brother & my grandfather

was dead at this point &
it's just another scratch on the glyph
I draw on the family farm that reads

ACAB in charcoal

...

Theo & I wait for a midnight movie / when my brother
drives by in a pickup truck showing / his AR-15 to Theo
who thinks / it's a toy & he recoils / at my brother's laugh
& my brother reveals the not secret / it's not a toy / & my
brother rolls / off & Theo laughs the shaky laugh of a boy
/ who wishes he was a man / already who wasn't afraid of
things / already

...

when I tell you the Pulse shooting got me off the Internet
I don't mean to draw upon a wound

I tell you this because I have loved Florida
& I have loved men & I have shot a gun

& I have hoped humans might
be a little better to each other than that

...

we danced in Denton with pistols on hips
all around so I know joy is complex

because caballeros carry & caballeros conceal
& caballeros ride bucking bulls &

through what kind of breaking can I let you
into worlds built by hot lead & smoking barrels?

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WE'LL BE BACK.
RIGHT?**

