In the era of the digital and the virtual, curated urbanism and gentrification, and uncertainty about the future of our generation, we have reached a point of no return. In turning towards hyper-individualism, colonization has cemented patriarchal ownership of land, and ensured environmental toxicity and destruction.

How do we begin to queer our relationship to the land? How do we engage with and heal from the damages of imperialism and settler colonialism? Where does intimacy reside in questions of embodiment and property? How have layers of social sediment complicated our collective consciousnesses? SAFA’s 2020 zine invites you to share art, prose and poetry that meditates on the present and future of your relationship to the environment.
Climate justice is racial justice, this we know. But too often, communities of color are left out of conversations about environmental reform, unrecognized for their activism, and left unprotected as conditions worsen. We are seeing this today as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impact Indigenous, Black, and Latinx communities. As climates continue to change, sea levels rise, and catastrophes become more common, we can only hope that we learn from this global crisis to prevent such patterns from repeating during the next one.

In these (and all) times of fear, I find love in our communities and strength in the fact that this is our earth, too.
Growing up as a second-generation South Asian in the Bay Area I have always grappled with my identity. At my white predominant school my Indian heritage was ridiculed. I felt inadequate, distressed, and alone even at the age of twelve. Coming to New York I thought that everything would change. However, The Big Apple turned out to be The Big Melting Pot.
i met the Earth when
i met myself,
peeked into the cocoon, painted
four shades of green, camouflaged
by leaves in military formation
informing me
that geometry transcends
the shapes i place around it
but i need not burn them to shed their light;
for an apple is not its mother tree, but
the wrathful love of her soil
every spoonful a prayer
for her little red planet, wrinkled
by the tired hands that picked it, bathed
in the sigh that carried it
on wheels shaped by another's dream
along beginningless roads that began
to choke its red into purple
gloves, that hide the blood on their hands
waiting to claim more
til at last, that bloody fruit
claimed with pocket change
arrives in a bowl i've never met,
and i swallow cries
i'll never hear
can you hear them?
buried in noon's quiet shadows
in the silence between Earth's whispers
when trees bleed themselves brown, to give
birth
to summer's shade
where little creatures of four, six, no legs
rest in the beloved's embrace,
the humble frame that
holds a painting in its palms
like a holy offering
of wings to a caterpillar
so Earth and Divine
may dance
once again.
I told him to meet me at the Blue note jazz club, on the corner of West third in the village, or maybe on tenth ave on the tip of Manhattan after reading a New Yorker article about walking and Mrs. Dalloway. Of Dutch descent, with dirty blonde whips of hair receding into the silhouette of his architectural uniform, he was a platonic lover from my youth, who wanted to be more than he wanted to own me. Did the folks at the Blue note know they’d get their money back by the evening, and we’d spend the nights meandering the burrows, as newly unfettered birds and victims of stockholm syndrome? Such was the chaos that ensued at the Night at the Blue Note, a stream that began and ended on the afterthought of an eighth rest.

He said he’d meet me around the time night fell, and so I bought a female companion with the hopes of everlasting communion. One preferred the upright music of the bass, having slept with a bass player herself back in her Idaho high school, while her mother moved around fixing cranes. The other, a child of minimalism, every striving for the standard deviation between form and content. And so, we crossed the frontier that was the subway entrance, beckoning tales of formulated fiction as I recount my recent break-up, or as Kanye West would say “break-through.” As a self-proclaimed self-realized Stewart of socialism, it was only on a September morning on the A train to JFK at 7AM, that he notified me of his lack of desire since mid-June. My companion grins as I read aloud the rhapsodic text messages sent to the former lover:

“you move to the other side of the world to become spiritually enlightened, and you can’t let me know, ahead of time, that you’ve tied me in a fucking loop from the future?”

My anonymous companion recounts her recent break-up with a DC-relocated chemical engineer, but I know that she’ll be fine. She’s a type B lesbian on the Eclectic Energies enneagram test.

We take the long way through St. Mark’s square, and stop at the record store on the juncture point between white alternative mash makers and white rockers (their parents). The local politics of college radio are at the forefront of our minds, a concentric circle between the institutionalization of bebop jazz and country rock. I wonder if our brown hues will find solace in the harmonies of the black and white cookie-cut figures of the Blue Note. My long lost friend meets us in line, he’s just procured a job as a graphic designer at a food delivery conglomerate on the lower east side, but he reminisces about his recent break up with a Williams girl who was the president of the BDSM club.

“You were too vanilla for her,” I ask, cheekily.

“She peed in the uber I got for her, and then charged me 200 dollars.”

We were the 1st in line, and a husky man with relaxed shoulders beckoned us forward. We sat down at the place where I, with another former lover and his male escort- had previewed the state of jazz, two years prior. We had sat on the table on that night two years ago; today, we sat at the bar. As the latest residents of the newly formed Feminist anti-Biden coalition, we simply refuse to pay $20 for the wine. So we promptly demand our money in cash form, because we know that the old man working the ticket line has already apostatized Jazz.

There is the suggestion that we take the A train up to Silvana’s. The roasted cauliflower and raucous foreign life, except for the $30 lyft ride it costs to get from one side of Brooklyn to the other. God save the taxi driver or public safety offer that happens upon the wayward college student.

The street in buffalo Brooklyn where we eventually get off, is deserted with no evidence of self-organizing life, except for the $30 lyft ride it costs to get from one side of Brooklyn to the other. God save the taxi driver or public safety offer that happens upon the wayward college student.

And so, instead, we slouch towards the hallucinogenic dinner standing as nuclei of the man-made combustion chamber that is the Urban center at 12:01 AM. It calls us forward with the unmistakable pull of Mother Nature. A table for three of Sergeant Pepper’s lonely hearts acoustic trombone folk troupe? I’ve often listened to Phillip Glass as the rain falls on my skylight, so I too may exercise my right of poetic license. Next to us: a female POC (person of code) stands solitary with a plate of onion rings and sangria, and a pilot and his stewardess shelter themselves on their midnight stopover. We must visualize ourselves in Nighthawks, because what else are we to do with this God-paid-for education, being the broken crates folded from 1998 yellowing paper, which we never chose to be.

“One chamomile tea, and the remedy for the subprime lending of souls in mid-September please?”

“Coming your way, but cash only.”

Remember the rule of threes: 3 weeks without food, 3 days without water. 3 seconds between conception and imitation, or perhaps many eons in the grayish pond of Hieronymus Bosch’s garden of Eden, where salamander bugs crawl from the petri dish of absurdity-infused fiction.

Mother nature, with its accomplice- the multiverse theory, would assure us that we were not meant to decipher the stars. Halfway through our train ride, my anonymous female companion realizes that we’ve taken the E train towards Queens, instead of the A train. No, we were not en route to the notorious Silvana’s, the site of my first half-lived dream of singing stadium, many light years (6 months) ago, but were situated on the train to Long Island City, where the only images one could conjure were industrial wine pipes and futuristic work songs of Mechanized rain for the coastal-dislated elite.
Breaking the Glass Ceiling is a 3D photo mage of illustrating how women of color, specifically South Asian women like myself and women in my family have broken gender norms and chosen to be vocal. The explosive fires represent the woman’s vocal or loud personality that breaks the barrier behind and above her. However, after creating this piece, I realized there is a secondary interpretation to my 3D photo mage. The effects that climate change has impacted countries in the Global South has revealed how the fast fashion industry as shown by the woman’s attire has an ecological impact on our planet. Our consumption as consumers makes us question the worth in abiding to eco-fascism and question authoritative figures like the government, fossil fuel companies, the fast fashion industry, and essentially the 1% or bourgeoisie to re-think their positionality in sustaining eco-fascism.

The world in her hands; a snake at her lap

This self-portrait pays a defiant homage to Atlas and perverts our understanding of this myth of endurance. It is my personal confrontation against the actors of violence and power who dictate our narratives, identities, and systems of life, and go on to shape the fate of our future. The painting captures the simultaneous feelings of vulnerability and strength that I derive from my femininity, as well as the solidarity that exists between the state of our world and our bodies. Both are subject to the same mechanisms of power, which objectify them and exploit their ability to produce, protect, and create.

The birds sit perched in her hands as symbols of land and water. Naturally, they are free to fly away, yet they remain transfixed with her as she eyes the menacing, never-ending snake. Its sinister presence alludes to the ever-lasting frameworks of capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy - which threaten all life. She carries the burden of the world on her palms; light as a feather, heavy with the weight of her life. In the end, this standoff pokes at illusions of power and the paralyzing balance of life and death.
Our flesh, like roots, are all products of the Earth, yet some of humanity seems to forget this connection, and forget even the relationship we share with the land around us (other than ownership). This time of human isolation has pushed many to forge new connections with ourselves and with the natural world around us, some of the few things we do not have to experience completely on screen. I hope to reclaim my own face as “land” to create from rather than exploit in some colonial tradition. Trying to recreate the layers, shades, and textures of the natural world encourage a reflection I have not spent enough time with. The transformations above allow me to rebuild the bridge between myself and the gesture of flora and fauna in a very simple way.
MY NEGRITUDE IS NOT A STONE, ITS DEAFNESS HURLED AGAINST THE CLAMOR OF THE DAY
MY NEGRITUDE IS NOT A LEUKOMA OF DEAD LIQUID OVER THE EARTH’S DEAD EYE
MY NEGRITUDE IS NEITHER TOWER NOR CATHEDRAL
IT TAKES ROOT IN THE RED FLESH OF THE SOIL
IT TAKES ROOT IN THE ARDENT FLESH OF THE SKY
IT BREAKS THROUGH OPAQUE PROSTRATION
WITH ITS UPRIGHT PATIENCE.
—AIMÉ CÉSAIRE
MITALI SHARMA
Homecoming is a set of two linoleum block prints. I was thinking through common scenes that occur when I come home from college and actions or situations that are familiar and make me feel simultaneously rooted and isolated. The first is my father and I in a car - this is the site where our relationship developed when I was growing up. When I come home and my father picks me up from the airport, I am reminded of our intimate conversations in this space but also the new gaps and spaces in our relationship. The second is my mother and I performing a pooja together - Hinduism informed a large part of my home life and relationship with my mother and womanhood. However, it now occupies a more fraught space, as I question belief and religion and performative tradition in general.
A SPECIAL THANK YOU

EDITORS
AISHAH B BOSTANI ’21
AKASH J SINGH ’20
PRIYA PAI ’20
SIRI KETHA ’23
MARYAM RAHAMAN ’22
SAHANA NARAYANAN ’20

CONTRIBUTORS
KETAKI KRISHNAN ’23
PARIMA KADIKAR ’20
DIPASHREYA SUR ’23
NIVITA ARORA ’19
MARYAM RAHAMAN ’22
IBRAHIM KHAN ’20
SAHANA NARAYANAN ’20
AISHAH B BOSTANI ’21
NISHAT AKHTAR ’22
SIRI KETHA ’23
AKASH J SINGH ’20
MITALI SHARMA ’22
PRIYA PAI ’20