

# Dakotah Jennifer

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## Dakotah Jennifer

6515 Wydown Blvd. # 4478

Saint Louis, MO 63105

[443-641-4853](tel:443-641-4853)

[dakotahjennifer@gmail.com](mailto:dakotahjennifer@gmail.com)

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## Skills

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Creative writing, directing, film & audio editing (Final Cut Pro, Logic), Microsoft Word & Excel, Adobe Acrobat.

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## Work Experience

### Employment

#### Vice — *Shadowing*

July 2019

Shadowed Digital Production, Post Production, Culture Editorial, GARAGE team, and Munchies Test Kitchen

*Responsibilities:* Research for Culture Editorial and GARAGE team, interview transcription for Insights.

#### JMWW — *Freelance*

May 2019 - July 2019

Freelance book reviews and submission assessment.

#### JMWW — *Internship*

May 2018 - 6 Week, Part-Time

Part-Time Internship with Local Baltimore Literary Journal, [JMWW](#).

*Responsibilities:* solicit writers, post on Twitter, write a book review, conduct an interview (both are published on the site).

### Volunteering

#### Reginald F. Lewis Museum — *Volunteer*

May 2019 - July 2019

Participated and oversaw multiple group tours, assisted in distribution of literature at events, maintained the booth at 2019 Artscape.

### Journalism

#### Why I don't believe in 'solidarity' anymore — *StudLife*

September 11th, 2019

"The concept of solidarity, to me, has always meant helping others fight, but being alone when it came to issues that affected me." Article linked [here](#).

## **A case against playing the devil's advocate — StudLife**

September 23rd, 2018

"The term "devil's advocate" now disguises people's real intentions. Instead of creating better arguments and discussions, this term is used by people wanting to say problematic things and see where the arguments lead as entertainment." Article linked [here](#).

## **Creative Works**

### **Safe Passage — Radical Paper Press**

Forthcoming in December/January, 2019/2020

Poetry Chapbook/Zine forthcoming in 2019/2020. [Non-Profit publication](#).

### **Smother — Paintbucket.page**

Oct 6, 2019

A poem published, [Smother](#).

### **Portrait in March 2019, before i go, Origin (After Dante Collins) — The Confessionalist Zine**

July 2019

Three poems published in their first issue, [Beside the Clocks Loneliness](#).

### **Lights — Protean Magazine**

June 6, 2019

A poem published, [Lights](#).

### **Metaphor at 12:47 am — Apartment Poetry**

April 2019, 10th Issue

A poem published in their [10th issue](#).

### **Fog — Bloof Books**

Forthcoming in April 2019

Poetry Chapbook forthcoming in the 2019-2020 chapbook series. [Youngest ever poet to be published at Bloof](#).

### **Five Stages of Grief — The Grief Diaries**

May 1 2017- May 30 2017

A [short fiction submission](#) for their May issue.

## **Self-Publications**

### **System — Createspace**

Published: MAY 2018

A short collection of abstract poetry. [On Amazon](#). "We are all a part of the systems. We are put in boxes that we never knew we were in. system explores the realization and reality of the world we live in, and how it changes as Jennifer discovers it. The system manifests in many ways, and as Jennifer learns, she finds barriers at every turn. She examines institutions, race,

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## Film, Theater & Media Experience

### Theater

- **Playwright** for Washington University's Black Anthology Production, “Masquerade” (2019-2020)
  - Selected out of multiple applicants to be the playwright for Black Anthology's annual Culture Show at Washington University in St. Louis. Play (full length, 2 acts) written during summer of 2019
- **Director** of “A Casual Evening at a Fine Dining Establishment” - 10mn short student-written play, for *Day of Shame - 24-Hour Theater Festival* with Thyrs theater collective (Sept 6-7, 2019)
  - Selected out of multiple applicants to shadow and assist executive board members of interest. Organized and cataloged costumes and attended every rehearsal
- **Freshman Intern** for Washington University's Black Anthology Production, “The Creation.” (2018-2019)
  - Interned with Directing and Costuming teams (2018-2019)
- **Director** of “Dollar Menu” - 10mn student-written, one-woman play, for *Day of Shame - 24-Hour Theater Festival* with Thyrs theater collective (Sept 8-9, 2018), [Article Written About Event](#)
- **Director** of “Equilibrium” by Sheri Wilner for the Park School of Baltimore's Annual Student-Directed Play festival, (2018)

### Film

#### Written, Directed & Filmed

- **Boys' Cross Country Film**  
A short documentary/recruitment video with interviews, footage of races, and quotes from members of the team. I was solicited to produce the film by a member of the Park School faculty.
- **Sam Stevens is the Worst**  
A short fictional teen comedy, written, directed, filmed, and starred in.
- **Lights**  
A short film about the fear of police.

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## Education

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### **William H. Danforth Scholar at Washington University in St. Louis - B.A.**

AUG 2018 - Present

First-Year, **English Literature** with a concentration in **Creative Writing**, and double-minor in **American Culture Studies** and **Sociology**. 3.93 GPA

- Student Life Newspaper - Staff Writer
- Black Anthology - Member
- WUSLam - Performance Crew Member
- RIZE (Black Newsletter) - Writing Executive Member

### **Pratt Institute, New York - Pre-College Summer Program**

JULY 2018 - AUG 2018

Summer Pre-College Program with Credit, Creative Writing, Art History, and Portfolio Development, 4 Weeks

### **The Park School of Baltimore, Maryland - High School Diploma**

SEPT 2005 - JUNE 2018

Writer & Section Editor (2 Years) for the High School Newspaper, *The Postscript*

### **Columbia University in New York City, New York - Pre-College Program**

JULY 2017 - AUG 2017

*Advanced Creative Writing Workshop, 3 Weeks*

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## Awards

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### **Harriet Schwenk Kluver Award, "Black, Loved" (2019)**

*As encouragement to excellence in writing, Mrs. Kluver, a Washington University alumna, established prizes of \$1000 to be awarded to each of two freshmen winners for a single piece of fiction, creative non-fiction, or critical prose composed in any of his or her classes, not simply in Freshman Composition.*

### **Gold Key for Personal Essay/Memoir, "A Murder" (2018)**

# **Chapbooks**



Dakotah J &lt;authordakotahjennifer@gmail.com&gt;

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**A Submission!**

22 messages

**Dakotah J** <authordakotahjennifer@gmail.com>

Sat, Aug 31, 2019 at 12:59 AM

To: radicalpaperweight@gmail.com

Hello!

I've been working on a sort of short hybrid chapbook thing and I'd like to submit it. My concept was to illustrate my growth & understanding of race between the beginning of my consciousness of race-- my middle school days through now (my second year of college) in a super abstract and segmented way through poetry and prose/memoir! Please, let me know what you think! I hope this is sort of what you guys are looking for!

I also included my bio below!

Bio: Dakotah Jennifer is an eighteen-year-old black writer currently attending Washington University in St. Louis. She started writing at eight and has loved it ever since. She has been published in Protean Mag, Apartment Poetry, the Grief Diaries, The Confessionnalist Zine, and Ripple Zine. She has also interned for the JMWJ literary magazine and recently won Washington University's Harriet Schwenk Kluver award for the 2018-2019 year. Her first chapbook, Fog, was recently published by Bloof Books.

I hope you enjoy! Thank you so much!

--

Dakotah Jennifer

**Radical paper hybrid chapbook (1).pdf**

130K

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**radical paper press radical paper press**

&lt;radicalpaperweight@gmail.com&gt;

Sat, Sep 14, 2019 at 7:40

PM

To: Dakotah J &lt;authordakotahjennifer@gmail.com&gt;

Hi Dakotah,

Thank you for sending us this strong set of poems and prose pieces. We actually first discovered your work when we saw "Lights" in Protean - and happy to see it included here. We think this would make a great fit for RPP. Is the chapbook still available?

Best,

Joe Rathgeber

[Quoted text hidden]

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**Dakotah J** <authordakotahjennifer@gmail.com>

Mon, Sep 16, 2019 at 4:59 PM

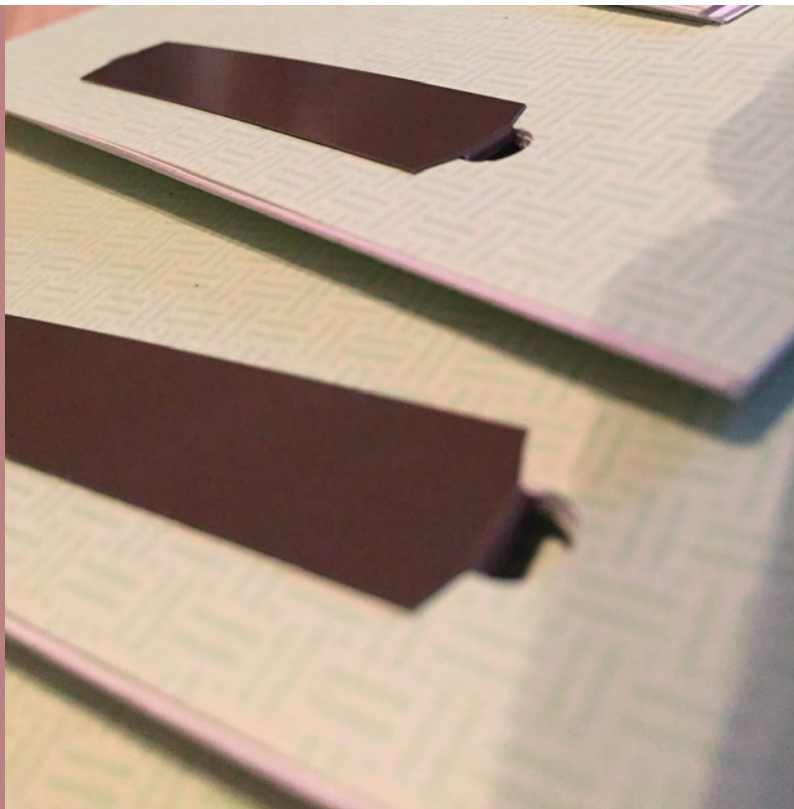
To: radical paper press radical paper press &lt;radicalpaperweight@gmail.com&gt;

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*Safe Passage* by Dakotah Jennifer is out there for the taking!

Our first chapbook with metal folder fastener bindings. Our first chapbook with these dimensions.

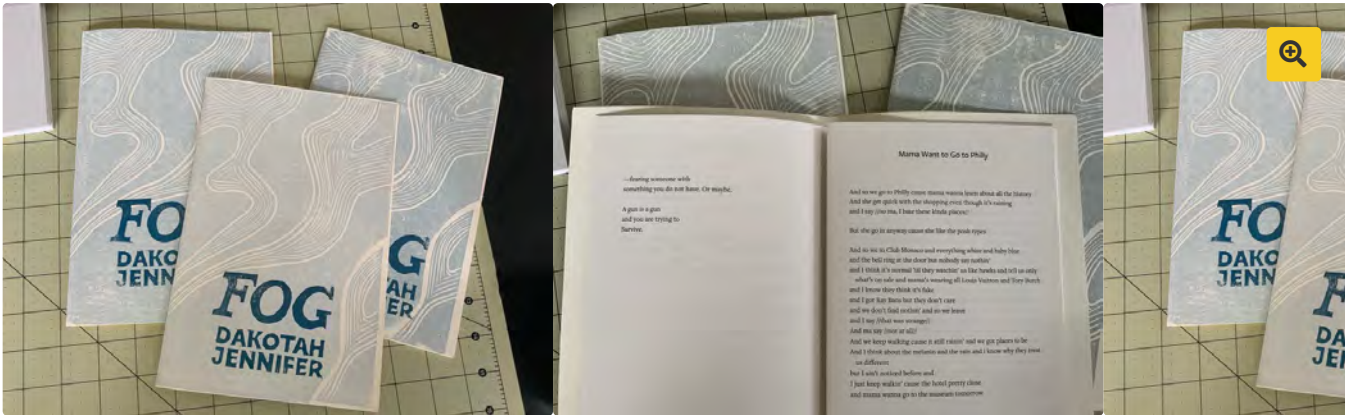
11TH OCT 2019







Home > Books > FOG Dakotah Jennifer



# FOG Dakotah Jennifer

\$10.00

PREORDER  
May 2019  
6 x 9 | 32 pages

Handprinted linocut cover  
Caligo Safe-Wash Relief Ink on cream 80 lb cover  
Digitally printed interior on natural white 60 lb text  
Hand sewn in natural twine

*Note: Individually printed by hand in small batches, no two covers will be exactly alike. Expect minor variations in color across the edition.*



Volume 4: Issue 2 (2019)  
ISSN 2373-163X

*FOG* is the debut chapbook by Dakotah Jennifer, a remarkable young poet who cites influences ranging from Lucie Brock-Broido to Sam Sax, while coming through loud and clear in her own voice, in a series of poems tinged with the heart’s “violent living and scarlet song.”

**Dakotah Jennifer** is an eighteen-year-old black writer currently attending Washington University in St. Louis. She started writing at eight and has loved it ever since. While working on self-publishing her poetry and an essay collection, she has been published in the *Grief Diaries*, interned for the *JMWW* literary magazine, and was on the Long List in the Fish Publishing Flash Fiction contest. Jennifer writes about race, class, and gender, stretching her emotions into tangible things. She strives to write things that grow. *Fog* is her first chapbook.

1

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[Reviews \(1\)](#)

## Description

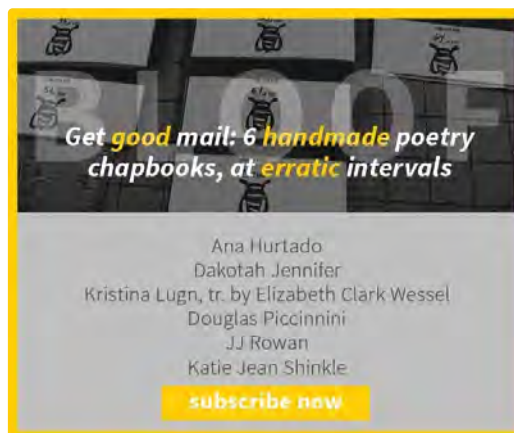
### Excerpt

How many stars are on the confederate flag.  
Where, in the south, is it illegal to be black.

Do you know what the paper bag test is. Do you approve.  
Where is the line between north and south.  
What is the 13th amendment. What does it mean.  
How many were added to the population once 3/5 became 1.  
Who invented the filament.  
Who invented the mailbox.  
Who invented the blood bank.  
Who invented the traffic light.  
Why did explorers travel to Africa.  
How many were killed by hoses.  
How many were killed by trees.  
How many are still hanging from ropes.  
How many were under 20.

—from “*The American Protection Against Black Violence Act*”

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2019 Chapbook Subscription

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# **Single Publications**

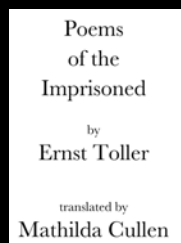
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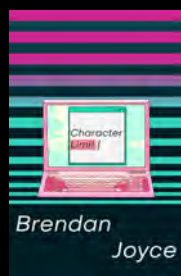
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by Ernst Toller  
translated by Mathilda Cullen  
Pay what you'd like

[Character Limit](#)

by Brendan Joyce

## Smother

Dakotah Jennifer

Smother

Verb.

To stamp out, to choke, to stifle, to control, to suffocate, to quell

Antonyms include:

Allow, encourage, free, release

watch carefully

how the thesaurus is better than a riot.

They say officers in riot gear arrived in buses and armored vehicles to quell the demonstration

And I think

officers in riot gear arrived in buses and armored vehicles to suffocate the demonstration

Demonstration

Noun.

Brown &amp; black peoples of a city trying to breathe

watch carefully

how the words chosen pretend to be what they are not.

They say the president remains an unpredictable character, with no intention of stifling his opinions

And I hear

the president remains an unpredictable character, with no intention of controlling his opinions

President

Proper Noun.

Usually a man of integrity, now a man wearing a white sheet

watch carefully

how everything turns to dust.

how everything they say is what it is supposed to be, but buried under relief.

They say he never sought to choke Garner to death, or even injure him. He was

doing his job, taking a resisting man to the ground

And you know they mean

He never sought to smother, control, suffocate Garner to death, or even injure him. He was doing his job, taking a resisting man to the ground

Resisting

Conj. Verb.

black, brown, not white

Job

Noun.

Government approved, god given right.

He never sought to kill eric garner to death. Or even injure him. He was using his god-given right, taking a black man to the ground.

Smother

Verb.

A black state of being in a blue state.

Dakotah Jennifer is a nineteen-year-old black writer. Jennifer has been published in Protean Mag, Apartment Poetry, the Grief Diaries, The Confessionalist Zine, and Ripple Zine. She won Washington University's Harriet Schwenk Kluver award for the 2018-2019 year and her chapbook, Fog, was recently published by Bloof Books.

[bird ig](#)[/live-ammo-round/](#)



## The Confessionalist Zine

≡ MENU

### Issue 1: Beside the Clock's Loneliness

A graphic for the 'Editor's Note' section. It consists of a white speech bubble with a black outline and a drop shadow, containing the text 'Editor's Note' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The bubble is positioned on a light purple rectangular background.

#### Editor's Note

The theme for Issue 1 of *The Confessionalist* was left open to interpretation, and we were surprised and delighted to receive so many poems that deciphered our theme in various ways.

Our writers entrusted us with their poems written in the loneliest hours of the night, poems that call on memory and experience, and those that reveal personal secrets and troubles.

We dug deep to find the connection between these topics and our theme, and we were not disappointed with what we uncovered.

We hope you love these poems as much as we do.

• • •

*"I imagine this midnight moment's forest:*

*Something else is alive*

*Beside the clock's loneliness*

*And this blank page where my fingers move.*

*Through the window I see no star:*

*Something more near*

*though deeper within darkness*

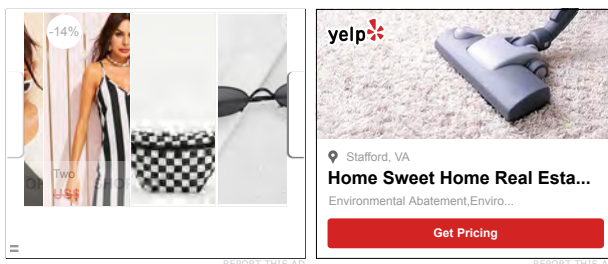
*Is entering the loneliness..."*

*"The Thought Fox" by Ted Hughes*



#### MY LIFE IN PICTURES

Jeffrey Zable



So my father takes a photo of me with a smile on my face, seemingly a happy baby. Then I'm walking into a room and he perfectly captures my surprised expression. Then another time my father takes a photo of my cousin and me. She looks as if she's twice my size, even though she's only a few years older than I am. Years later, he takes a photo of my two best high school friends and me, the three of us with long hair, mine being the longest. None of us are smiling, and other than that I have no idea where we went after we left my parents' house. Not too many years later, I'm back from college with a B.S. in psychology and staying temporarily with my parents. My father takes a photo of me, and though I'm smiling, I'm worried inside, wondering what I'm going to do with a degree in psychology. Then I decide to go to graduate school and become a teacher, and on and off while visiting my parents my father takes more photos, which sometimes include one of my girlfriends. Several years go by and my father passes away, which makes me feel sadder than I ever remember feeling. We sell the house that I grew up in since I was eight years old and I help my mother find an apartment, but after a few years she can no longer take care of herself so I move her into a care facility that's not far from my house. After two years of dating my most recent girlfriend, who's 20 years younger than me, we become husband and wife. We both visit my mother often and have a special celebration for her 100th birthday. The woman who organizes social activities at my mother's facility takes photos at the



Do This to "End" Toenail Fungus (Try Today)

[REPORT THIS AD](#)

because every  
time I need a friend I  
turn there he sleeps

like a big lug, with button snaps  
for big love eyes  
Mommy glued on. Daddy

texted me last night and said he  
was moving to Texas and this was good-bye.  
I wonder if he also cries before he sleeps.  
Ginger, watch over my daddy.

Portrait in March 2019  
Dakotah Jennifer

My stomach is a sink.  
My feet are drains,  
My organs, muddy water.  
Sometimes, I can feel everything leaving me  
My kidneys and spleen slipping through my left leg and my pancreas creeping  
down my right.  
I am an old, dysfunctional machine. I come and I go, but don't notice the leaks or  
the broken  
windows.  
I don't feel the frigid air until it is in my cavernous lungs.  
I don't sleep, I rest.  
I do not inhale, only exhale.  
I give and give and never stop and now  
I am a sad, empty thing.  
I am the ghost of myself inside a metal shell.  
I am the tin man who has always needed a heart, but has never asked for it.  
I am not vacant,  
but filled with a mindless, murky slosh.  
*lonely*, I think,  
But less—  
not even  
there.

Dan Collins Could Have Written This Better  
(A Villanelle.)



what, brought you this time, for Marc,  
oh, tears, Marc remembers you—

he and I a soul split in two  
when the last Great Knife left its mark  
and you like lead came leaking hotly through

more than just my eyes, for skin weeps too  
when even bone goes blue, the beaten cage sick.  
Oh, broken build of body clamming up— you  
dry up my once wet words, and I'm through.

before i go  
Dakotah Jennifer

REPORT THIS AD

REPORT THIS AD

before i go  
i want to tell you that i feel alone in every room  
and that i'm afraid that i've grown too dependent on the people i fear do not love  
me.  
i want to tell you that i think i have to watch tv or i feel lonely.  
i want to tell you that i'm afraid of losing all of my friends to other people  
ever since i lost my first best friend to no one.  
i want to tell you that i feel like i'm losing everyone all the time  
and that  
often  
i feel as if  
my best friend is somewhere else  
with someone else  
unless i am the only entertainment in the room.  
i want to tell you that i'm afraid my happiness will always be dependent on other  
people  
because it always has been.  
i want to tell you that i'm scared of always suffering like this.  
i want to tell you that i'm hopeless  
and i really want to tell you that i'm not sure it will ever end.  
but i also want to tell you that somewhere  
deep deep inside  
my heart believes there will be a day  
when i am not lonely anymore.

An Ode to the Ones We lost  
Tori A. Hernandez



Do This to "End" Toenail Fungus (Try Today)

REPORT THIS AD

i should be fine.  
i won't be alive.)

there is always something where there seems to be nothing.  
matter cannot exist without dark.  
i cannot exist without the pain.

is there anything  
in this nothing?

Origin (After Dante Collins)  
Dakotah Jennifer

You ask for origin,

I speak of opposites brought together at birth and oceans spitting up fire. There  
was a child given  
a name she chose, decades between loves, centuries between respect and self.  
There was a happy  
movie, romance novel beginning, middle but no happily ever after end.  
There was a transfer, funds and feuds, lively hoods, blame.

You want me more detailed,

I say three to four parents, erasure, revelation, hidden bodies and skeletons I  
knew nothing of.  
Doors swinging shut, smiles, handshakes, nothing too dangerous. Rentals,  
adventures, late notes  
and absences, scoldings, families wedged against a rock and this predicament.  
Suffocation,  
drowning, bleeding out, slow revival.

You say less death, less hurt.

I say but how in this bleeding life can death not be the most prominent co-star?

You say ok, more family, more ground.

I say everything doubled, all blood and water  
Only gravel and filth between homes.  
No frowns until you see everything in just the right way. Constant flight, not the  
good kind.  
Accompaniment, symphonies, lost bags, lost motives, lost tears. There was a  
plan, made into a  
mistake, spiraled out of control, lost its footing, fell into the sea, never to be  
found.

You say no more, tell me of it simply.

I say simply is not an answer as much as it is taking the knob off of a door.  
Removing the boat  
from the sea, leaving the car parked in the spot.

You stop speaking,

I laugh, having all of the answers does not float me like a boat as I thought it  
would. Does not  
take me by the hand and lead me to the water, makes me drink the wrong kind of  
salvation, gives  
me enough to keep me gasping.

You stay quiet in the corner now, afraid of asking questions I can answer.

And I think of how nice it must be  
To go home and not worry about where that is  
Who wants you there and who doesn't  
And if those are the same people  
Or if they were both you all along.

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**Dakotah Jennifer** is an eighteen-year-old black writer currently attending Washington University in St. Louis. She started writing at eight and has loved it ever since. She has been published in *Protean Mag*, *Apartment Poetry*, *the Grief Diaries*, and *Ripple Zine*. She has also interned for the *JMWW literary magazine* and recently won Washington University's Harriet Schwenk Kluver award for the 2018-2019 year. Her first chapbook, *Fog*, was recently published by Bloof Books.

[Instagram](#) | [Twitter](#)

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**Daniel Romo** is the author of *Apologies in Reverse* (FutureCycle Press 2019), *When Kerosene's Involved* (Mojave River Press, 2014), and *Romancing Gravity* (Silver Birch Press, 2013). His poetry can be found in *The Los Angeles Review*, *PANK*, *Barrelhouse*, and elsewhere. He has an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Queens University of Charlotte, and he is an Associate Poetry Editor at *Backbone Press*. He lives and teaches in Long Beach, CA. More at [danielromo.net](http://danielromo.net).

[Twitter](#)

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**DS Maolalai** has been nominated for Best of the Web and twice for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016) and "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019)

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**Elodie Rose Barnes** is a writer, reader & traveler, originally from the UK. She has tried her hand at a number of things across the globe, from legal secretary to yoga teacher in the Bahamas, before settling on the job titles of 'wordsmith in training' and 'planetary explorer'. She now splits her time between England, France, and Spain. More of her work is published or forthcoming in *Rose Quartz*, *Down in the Dirt*, *Crêpe & Penn*, and *the Purple Breakfast Review* (Wordsmith HQ).

[Instagram](#) | [Tumblr](#) | [Twitter](#)

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**Gerard Sarnat** is a physician who's built and staffed homeless and prison clinics as well as a Stanford professor and healthcare CEO. He won the Poetry in the Arts First Place Award plus the Dorfman Prize, and has been nominated for Pushcarts plus Best of the Net Awards. Gerry is published in academic-related journals including University of Chicago, Stanford, Oberlin, Brown, Columbia, Virginia Commonwealth, Arkansas, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Wesleyan, Slippery Rock, Appalachian State, Grinnell, American Jewish University, Sichuan University, University of Edinburgh and University of Canberra. Gerry's writing has also appeared widely including recently in such U.S. outlets as *Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*, *Gargoyle*, *Main Street Rag*, *New Delta Review*, *MiPOesias*, *poetica*, *American Journal Of Poetry*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Poetry Circle*, *Every Day Poems*, *Clementine*, *Tiferet*, *Foliate Oak*, *Failed Haiku*, *New Verse News*,

By: Protean Magazine June 5, 2019 Poetry

# Lights



by Dakotah Jennifer

1. I am painfully aware of how alive I am... or am not. I am painfully aware of things ending & beginning. I am painfully aware of tiptoeing down the hall at night. There is no hall. There is no night. Those back roads are the hall. The highway is the hall. Life is the hall. I am still tiptoeing.
2. I haven't gotten to the point yet. I'm sorry. There's no way to do this easily. It's too easy. I'm sorry.
3. Everything is red & blue now. No matter where or when, everything could be danger. Or more like, no matter where, I could be danger. Everything is red or blue or both. I swear this will make sense. I swear.
4. Here. Maybe this will make it easier to understand: almost everyday, I see red & blue lights flashing in my rearview mirror even when there are none. It started after I was pulled over, and now, I am afraid of the odds. 1/1. 1/2. 1/4 people killed by them last year were my shade of other, and I might be on 1/4 borrowed time.
5. It's not like I see ghosts. I see spirits. One red car and a flash of the high beams brings a nightmare that will never jolt me awake. One blue car slowing to a stop morphs into wrongness. Into possible crime.
6. I don't have to commit one. I don't have to commit a crime to be gone. We don't have to commit a crime to be gone. And every time I think they're coming, I start to disappear in the mirror.
7. I haven't yet gotten good at playing off death like a game. I haven't yet found a way to not change everything about me in order to seem ordinary or not ordinary for my color or just normal. I haven't yet found a way not to be afraid of myself or my skin. I haven't yet found a way to stop being this shaking thing so people could stop worrying or not worrying about me.
8. I confess: I am not afraid of the lights. Or the cars. I am afraid of what lies within them. I'm afraid of their fear. I'm afraid I've already committed the crime. Or that it doesn't matter. I'm afraid that sound crazy. That I am crazy. I'm afraid. I'm afraid of so much more than this, but all I remember from that night is bright flashes of red & blue.

*Dakotah Jennifer is an eighteen-year-old black writer currently attending Washington University in St. Louis. She has published a chapbook, "Fog," with Bloof Books, and has also published with Grief Diaries, Ripple Zine, and Apartment Poetry. She is the winner of Washington University's 2018-2019 Harriet Schwenk Kluver Award.*

Share:



*May 1, 2017*

## Fiction by Dakotah Jennifer

### Stages of Grief

It was the one thing he coveted the most. That one memory. He needed nothing but that. He had no valuables, nothing else mattered. When she left, he cried. At first he hit the bars, drank himself into a stupor, told himself it wasn't his fault. Told himself she hadn't left, that when he walked through the door that night she'd be in the kitchen cooking supper. Every night he would come home to discover she wasn't cooking supper, she wasn't in the shower and she wasn't sound asleep in their bed. Some nights he would call her, leaving 2, 4, 10 messages, just screaming her name, telling her she was worthless, that she never should've been born, telling her she made a mistake by leaving him. Other nights he'd wreck the whole house, throwing things, breaking mirrors, glasses, their wedding china. Bad luck was already in his archives, more would do nothing. At late hours of the night he'd write letters, hundreds of letters telling her he'd change, that she was hurting the kids. In the morning he'd lay in bed, not moving, not eating, the curtains drawn, he felt hopeless. He waited for the sun to set and started all over.

The memory he valued started to slip away, every night he remembered it less and less until one day it was gone. But when he realized it was slipping away it was too late. He wanted it back, he needed it to keep on moving everyday, to give him a reason to live. He called her, to get it back but it wasn't there. The memory that he needed wasn't there. He didn't recognize the voice on the other end of the line. He didn't recognize it at all. It wasn't the one he was used to. His memory was forever gone. But he knew how to get it back. With one last effort, one last idea. He left at 10, earlier than he had gotten up in years. He walked along the wet pavement, he was unshaven and dirty, he hadn't changed his clothes in five months. He crossed the crosswalk, went to the store on the corner and got it. Got what he needed to find his memory again. He wrote another letter, this time not to her, to his kids. He shaved, changed into his suit, and drank. This time water, not liquor. Then he lay down and went to find the memory that he coveted so.

They found him smiling. An OD of acetaminophen. All dressed up, 'he was just trying to find her' they said, 'he wanted to be closer to her' they said. She had died four years prior to his death. They were happily married until then. She was hit by a car, never saw it coming. But I guess that's how it always is. You never see it coming until it is there with you. And he never did.

**Dakotah Jennifer** is a 16-year-old poet from Baltimore, MD. She started writing at a very young age and has always loved poetry. Working on self-publishing currently, Jennifer just wants to keep writing and show people her work. Through divorced parents, boys, and being black in America, Jennifer keeps writing.

# **Journalism**

# Student Life

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## FORUM

# Why I don't believe in 'solidarity' anymore

Dakotah Jennifer | Staff Writer    September 11, 2019



When you imagine the word “solidarity,” what comes to mind? A circle of diverse-looking teens, all on the front lines of an ambiguous protest, supporting each other? A multiracial crowd of people uplifting a disenfranchised minority? A circle of multicolored hands?

For me, it's a scenario or, rather, a series of scenarios — I go to a march and meet my friends. People are smiling (for some reason); I have a poster board with meticulous block letters and it's the perfect, aesthetically pleasing version of protest, like the Kendall Jenner Pepsi ad. Then, I cut to another type of protest, I'm solemn, scared, and nearly alone. This one doesn't have a specific setting though — it can be anywhere, and that's a part of the fear. In the second protest, another Black boy has died, or another police officer hasn't been indicted or another law has been made to kill us faster and when I look around, no one is there.

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*The concept of solidarity, to me, has always meant helping others fight, but being alone when it came to issues that affected me.*

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The concept of solidarity, to me, has always meant helping others fight, but being alone when it came to issues that affected me. I fear this constant disappointment has made me cynical and selfish. I do not make an effort to go to protests anymore unless they are for Brown and Black people. I walk past rallies and lectures about women's issues and push down the part of me that says it's wrong to ignore them. I am, indeed, both Black and a woman, and though both of those identities are marginalized and could bring me harm, only one, I fear, would get justice. That, I guess, is where I decided long ago to draw the line. It doesn't feel right. It doesn't feel fair, but it's the way I have now chosen to live, and I'm sorry it has to be this way. The idea of solidarity is one I'd like to live by, but so far in life it has failed me.

Attending a predominantly white institution since I was five years old has affected me in many ways. I learned slowly that I was not just a person but a Black person, and that would mean something for the rest of my life. Once I had discovered, albeit somewhat slowly and not quite fully, that I was Black and what that meant, I began to fight. I debated, I wrote, I argued, I drew posters for one of many Baltimore protests against police brutality — but I found, quickly, that I was one of very few. It hurt me, but I felt that I was one of the only people

who could fight those battles within my school, so I kept doing it, no matter how much it hurt, and I never saw anything wrong with that. Sure, I knew it was painful and difficult and made me want to cry too often, but I was the one who had the heart to do it, and therefore, I had to. For the good of everyone.

Around the middle of my senior year, some students started to discover the sexism and misogyny that inevitably affected the math and science departments at our school, and some of them began planning a small protest to happen on our school's front steps. This was all very much a secret, but two teachers brought it up to me and told me I should join the cause and help with preparations. The leader of this movement, a friend of mine, invited me to make posters with some of the other girls. I didn't go.

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*It was just me, my voice and all of the strength I could muster before my fight-or-flight response kicked in and I couldn't think anymore.*

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When a couple of counselors put out a call to create posters for a protest in honor of Freddie Grey, I was there, but I was one of 5 people, including students and faculty. When I spoke out against problematic teachers or got into arguments with friends about white supremacy, those girls weren't there – no one was. It was just me, my voice and all of the strength I could muster before my fight-or-flight response kicked in and I couldn't think anymore. I was tired when high school ended – I still am, but I had also given up on helping everybody else with their movement and having no one show up for mine.

I'd spent four years trying to make my issues matter to people, and all that got me was tears, stress and ruined friendships. I continued to speak up, attended lectures and assemblies, fought for issues that mattered, and at the end of the day when it came to issues that affected Black people, most of my white friends and some of my Brown friends forgot, went home, or hadn't paid attention.

Ultimately, I believe that all oppressed people deserve to not be oppressed – I believe in fighting against all wrongs, no matter if they affect me or not. But I'm not sure if that notion will survive. I'm burnt out, and the more I fight, the more it hurts when I show up to a nearly empty classroom, lecture or protest.

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## A case against playing devil's advocate

Dakotah Jennifer | Contributing Writer    September 23, 2018

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I am tired of the devil's advocate.

Though the idea of the "devil's advocate" is supposed to foster deeper and more extensive conversation, a new connotation for the term has emerged. The term "devil's advocate" now disguises people's real intentions. Instead of creating better arguments and discussions, this term is used by people wanting to say problematic things and see where the arguments lead as entertainment.

Imagine this: A student raises his hand in a history class and says something problematic like, "Wait, let me be the devil's advocate here. Maybe that country wanted to be colonized because Europe had more advanced technology?"

Now, this opinion could foster a conversation in which all parties learn something and perhaps someone augments their previous belief. But when the devil's advocate doesn't believe the statements said, they aren't really learning anything, and often the students who respond are the most affected and have to discuss something that could be harmful to them. This doesn't help anyone. I'm tired of this situation constantly happening to me in social and academic settings.

Often, through discussion-based courses like in Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and even most history classes, sensitive topics come up and the devil's advocate is arguing controversial and aggravating opinions. Though disagreeing is valid and people should never be silenced, they create unsafe and uncomfortable spaces for underrepresented communities, and, at their worst, make learning and thinking more difficult. For myself and many others, there's a fight-or-flight response when these tense and uncomfortable conversations escalate, and the only options are to fight or to leave. Both of these options aren't as viable in the classroom, and they hinder learning for both parties.

In social settings, these situations can be even worse. Without the formality of the classroom and the professor as a guide, the devil's advocate flourishes and, in some ways, becomes even more harmful. Discussion can be a great bonding and learning experience in social spaces, but when interjections of

counter-opinions on race, gender and politics are brought into these dialogues, the damage of playing “devil’s advocate” is more personal.

Asking things like, “Aren’t women technically weaker than men?” or “Wasn’t the colonial education system beneficial to the native people because they became more successful in the end?” aren’t helpful to heated and sensitive discussions. These ideas are also harmful to people who are very close to the issues. Most black women do not enjoy arguing with you about the “upside” of the Trump presidency, in the same way most LGBTQIA\* people don’t like to explain to you why they should be allowed to get married or buy a wedding cake from any baker.

Discussions can be fun, riveting and deeply educational, but they become pointless once people begin drawing out arguments for entertainment purposes. Potentially jeopardizing the mental and emotional safety of our peers—especially in class—is unnecessary, and only adds to the struggles these students already face.

This is not all to say that we should not discuss anything controversial. Discussions between people with opposing views are vital but arguing with someone who does not even believe what they are saying—especially if it may cause mental and emotional harm—is not helpful or healthy for the defending party. It is often damaging. Members of oppressed communities continuously fight for and validate their identities each day—and adding to that struggle just makes each day that much harder.

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