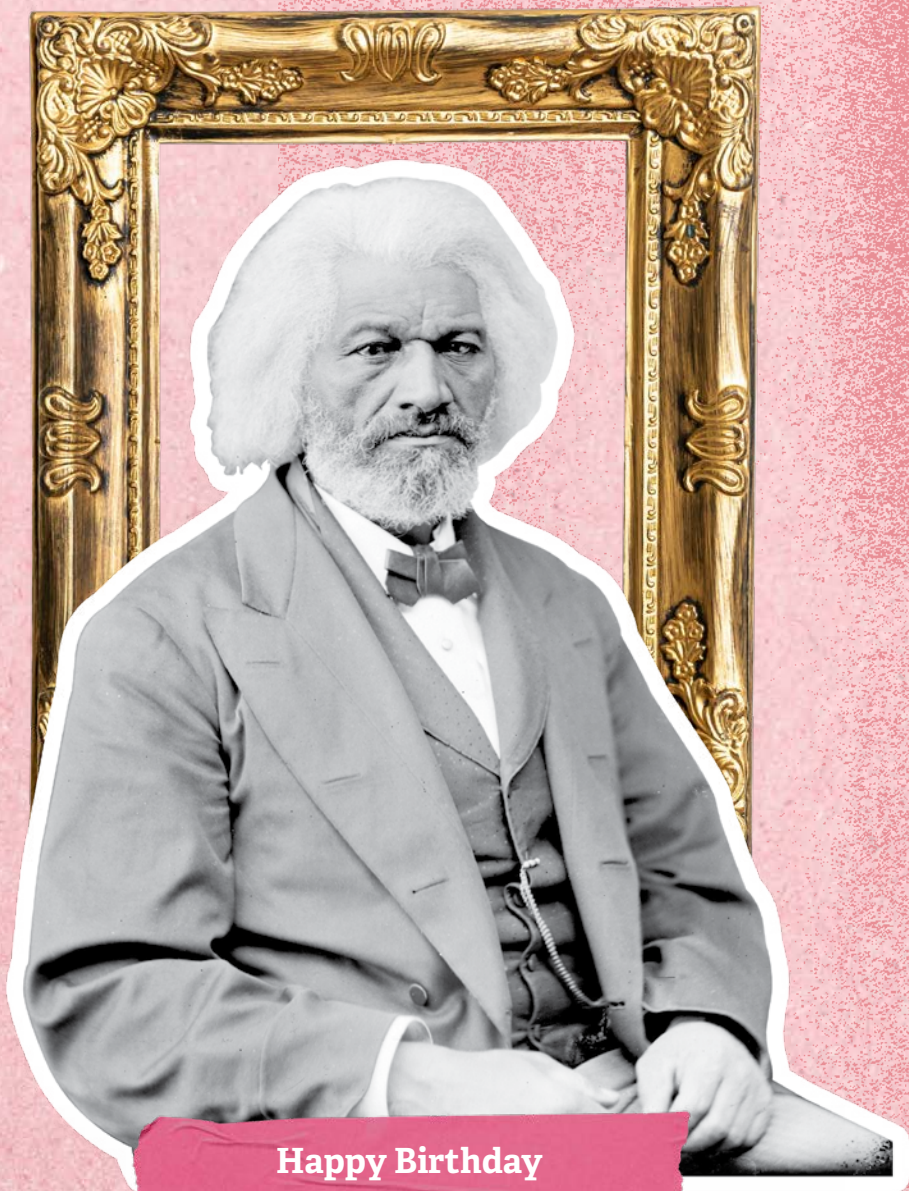


**NORTH  
STAR  
FUND**



**DREAMS** OF A  
**BETTER FUTURE**



**Happy Birthday  
Frederick Douglass!**

Dear community,

Happy Valentine's Day!

We know this day is supposed to be about romance, but organizing is our love language. This year we're thinking about Cornel West's quote "justice is what love looks like in public." Also in February, we honor Frederick Douglass' birthday! He was the founder of The North Star newspaper that we are named for.

We're celebrating and loving organizing, and using the occasion to share with you a gift of art and poetry from us and our community members—to inspire, to hope, to dream of a better future for all of us. For the zine, we asked folks what gave them hope during the pandemic. We're entering the third year of the pandemic and reminding ourselves to use love and hope to propel us into action. In the powerful words of bell hooks, "We still believe in love's promise."

For us, you give us hope. Local grassroots organizers and their supporters—the people building a better world—give us hope.

Thank you for being a part of the North Star Fund community.

-Jenn Ching  
Executive Director

# LAUGHTER

By Aeshah Farrouq

Laughter: wondrously ephemeral, captivating,  
In Peter Pan, from laughter emerged  
One thousand little fairies. I imagine they danced,  
They twinkled, they  
Illuminated, they kissed the moon –  
Our laughter was locked out as we were locked in.  
Or maybe,  
It was siphoned out of us collectively. It was smothered  
Out of us, strangling our love of skinning all ah we teeth  
Of laughing, as my Guyanese call it.  
Just as this virus does:  
It strangles.

My Guyanese people love to gyaf an tell lang time story  
But in the midst of a virus that asphyxiates,  
Anguish that suffocated,  
When could our lungs sustain laughter?  
When could my people buss one laugh?

When death descends,  
Laughter is an antidote. First,  
My grandmother. Then,  
My aunt. Laughter loves,  
It lives when death takes,  
It remembers when we don't want to,  
It reminds us  
To honor the dead,  
And laughter –  
It hopes.



# What Gave Me Hope

By Esther Marcella

The refresh of a blink held,  
red brilliance or cosmic black,  
daydreams and night sleeps.

The call: Whose streets?  
The response: Our streets!

The previously unnoticed, prisms  
in sun stained hair strands.  
Peripheral visions turning head on.

The Third Precinct burned and abandoned.  
Chicago and 38th, a new country without sirens or batons,  
adorned with food shelves, graffiti, flower labyrinth.

Floating galaxies of dust in squared light  
on wooden floor.  
Steps of cold, steady, toes in slippers.

Reclaiming the esoteric wisdom in my pulse.  
Reprising streams of human blood as we marched.

The difference between stillness and stagnation.  
My private revolt melding with public revolution.





Francis Madi



Julie Lemberger

# GOING INTO FOR A CLEAN

by Lucas Dietsche

my quest to go at it alone  
to show social distance to disinfect.  
i am a biorobot  
here to go to a clean,  
a battle against covid.

padded gloves to take my touch away  
over jean overalls, thermal, goes under  
khaki-color high collared cosmonaut suit.  
dealing with the carceral,  
wearing the deep-sea like armor,  
hard to march in.  
iron wrought shoulder pads  
i trudge in heavy galoshes  
the suit is keeping away the anxiety.

going on top is canvas and rubber gas mask  
drawn and pinched goose face,  
safe behind glass for eyes.  
elephant hose pipes in vitamin air.

i brought a canvas knapsack  
of weapons burning with science.  
i have decanters of oxides,  
waters,  
chemicals, and powders.  
to birth control the disease.  
all in killing blowtorch fire soaking flame:  
my terrible and swift sword girded on.





subduing the  
the suburbs of overtly covert  
COVID-19's fuzzy red clingy cells,  
I cry happy behind window eyes to the music  
of cries let loose from  
genderless fog-fire's furry of halting rebreeding  
of the plague,  
and their trail to Hell's Dead End.  
this is my tribute for rectification as a hero  
for defense against the invisible contagion-occupation  
of corona.





Maria Mottola



CREATIVE  
EXPRESSION

connection

KINDNESS

NATIVE

Natalie Cramer

# god food

By Sarah Rohani

I read somewhere that your random cravings are the desires of an ancestor. I never ate the food in the baggies handed out during pujahs, but with the instance of death all around and thus no necessity of the annual religious ritual, i'd wake up with drool at the thought of persad.

persad: a hardened sweet served at religious ceremonies

mixed with orange soda, july concrete and the bottom of grandmother's karahi:

*a mental state experienced by gods, sages and other powerful beings.*

Somewhere down the line someone liquified the mind into brown-tasting sugar-skin, to rest at the bases of what felt and who looked like god.

The chunk of sugar hardens under my recoiling tongue:

milk over cow



green leaf and saliva flowing into Shiva's open palms

I am surrounded by brown bodies, living and dead, in this stretch of time.

It is the homecoming I never asked for, the reckoning I never read about.

I learn what the upright palm feels like this year. To let the tongue roll out--dissolve orange soda into younger gums and ghee mystery, to understand the sacred-making of letting go.

Of unnamings my control and to unremember the girl who swallowed persad whole for fear of throwing out the god food.

The smell was never strong enough to hide our jackets away from,

but i could choke on the mixtures of sweetness

corroding teeth

and the flesh of fruit and fly wings

the distance between me and the altar on my period

the smell of sacrifice.

*Prasada is the emotion Siddhartha felt on encountering the forest sramana: a clear sense of serenity that one has found the way out.*

how many times have you whispered to your skin

the dried cunt

the pooled knees

all the examples of sacrifice you have ever seen,

and thought of the persad already swallowed.

Spirituality spoons into desire when you spend without your mother, being fed at a house in a whole different borough, with other women you meet who have questioned purity the same way you have questioned god.

Spirituality spoons into the older brown women around me who ask me about my quiet strongness: where it comes from, who made me this way. Shows me that this is not the only way.

Spirituality spoons into sacredness that is not quiet, ashamed, or small. i believe in our birthright but i wish to understand death without injustice.

It is the god on earth, it is the forgiving of my body and it is the god of brown bodies who lift me up and pray we see the light that pours from us: whole, desired and protected.



# ancestors in the snow

By Sarah Rohani

i have been praying more recently  
that is--  
i think of it often and imagine gold whispers behind me:  
when i light our kitchen candle  
to use in the center of my sinking floor  
in honor of the survivors i know, the women  
in my family at the hands of violence,  
denied of desire.  
when the mother mary statue falls with snow across the street,  
only i hear that.  
it must have been holy spirits  
to strike in the middle of a day,  
i watched my body rise  
and choose what is divine  
my limbs looked towards me  
before they collapsed  
tension coiled in my hair  
sudden the movement,  
wicked of my fingers to move at this pace, i know.  
I know:  
this body recognizes me  
and when she chooses me:  
i lay my head low  
to listen to the sound of my skin  
crawling its way to my palms  
a prayer of protection  
I count miracles today and have everything to show for it.

熱溫平  
涼寒

甜酸  
苦辣鹹

*Kabocha Squash*



南瓜

Tattfoo Tan



# BIOS

**Aeshah** is a Guyanese-American poet and survivor. She is a warrior trying to spread some light and love, one word at a time.

**Esther Marcella** is the current poet laureate of The Living Earth Center, community gardens, in Mankato, MN. She's passionate about Food Justice and the power of being our own press. She's released a handmaid poetry collection, "Love Note To Gaia."

**Francis Madi** is a queer, immigrant woman with a background in organizing and policy and a creative mindset for theatermaking and storytelling. She spends her time doing an array of activities from consulting and teaching to writing and producing.

**Julie Lemberger** is a photographer, artist, educator and former dancer focusing on dance in New York City for nearly 30 years. Modern Women: 21 Century Dance, a coloring book is her first book. @modernwomen21dance | julielemberger.com

**Lucas Alan Dietsche** is a graduate of Criminology/Criminal Justice and studies prison zines. He is an organizer with the Mankato-St. Peter Zine-Stars. He has published works such as "Word Out," "Elba," "Commies and Zombies," "Since the Oregon Trail," "Kapshida," and others. He has a patreon/blog called "Pilot of Oumuamua."



**Maria Mottola** has worked as a community organizer, nonprofit leader, and social justice grantmaker. She is also an artist and illustrator; her work has appeared in a number of publications most recently for the Chronicle of Philanthropy and the New York Botanical Gardens. She lives in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

**Natalie Cramer** is an artist and graphic designer based in Brooklyn, NY. In addition to making her own art, she is passionate about sharing positivity and helping others rediscover their creative spark.

**Sarah Rohani** is a multidisciplinary artist and producer at the intersection of poetry and documentary to use archival as resistance. They are invested in the visual expression of what is unsaid and the written expression of the sublime. Her work focuses on the history of indentureship, sexual healing and spirituality.

**Tattfoo Tan** is an artist who collaborates with the public on issues relating to ecology, sustainability and healthy living. His work is project-based, ephemeral and educational in nature.

# ARTIST STATEMENTS

**From Francis Madi:** We are personally and collectively living through unprecedented, traumatic times that have shifted our lives on all levels. Hope is understanding that we are all meant to sit with the things that make us feel uncomfortable, because it is during those moments when we experience the most internal growth to break free from pain.

**From Julie Lemberger:** From a project entitled “Modern Women: 21st Century Dance,” features LIVING women dance artists. It celebrates them while the studios and theaters were closed- as a way to show they are still valued artists and that the show must go on – in one way or another, this is another.

**From Maria Mottola:** This image came to me in the weeks after Trump’s 2016 election as people in my South Brooklyn neighborhood gathered to organize a response to his harsh policies and divisive politics. I wanted to convey the hope I felt in how we were taking care of one another and our vulnerable community.

**From Natalie Cramer:** Each of the 4 elements present in my work represents the self and society at large. When you take time to create, connect, share kindness, and appreciate nature you lift your own spirits which leads to an optimistic, hopeful outlook that can be shared with others.



ROSES ARE RED,

VIOLETS ARE BLUE,

SUGAR IS SWEET

AND SO IS THE

COMMUNITY

ORGANIZING

YOU DO.



the 1990s, the number of people with a university degree has increased in all countries, but the increase has been most dramatic in the Netherlands.

As a result of the increase in the number of people with a university degree, the average educational level of the population has risen. The average educational level is defined as the average number of years of schooling completed by the population. The average educational level of the population has risen in all countries, but the increase has been most dramatic in the Netherlands. The average educational level of the population in the Netherlands has risen from 10.5 years in 1980 to 12.5 years in 2000.

The increase in the average educational level of the population has led to a decrease in the number of people with a low educational level. The number of people with a low educational level has decreased in all countries, but the decrease has been most dramatic in the Netherlands. The number of people with a low educational level in the Netherlands has decreased from 15.5 million in 1980 to 10.5 million in 2000.

The decrease in the number of people with a low educational level has led to a decrease in the number of people with a low income. The number of people with a low income has decreased in all countries, but the decrease has been most dramatic in the Netherlands. The number of people with a low income in the Netherlands has decreased from 15.5 million in 1980 to 10.5 million in 2000.

The decrease in the number of people with a low income has led to a decrease in the number of people with a low standard of living. The number of people with a low standard of living has decreased in all countries, but the decrease has been most dramatic in the Netherlands. The number of people with a low standard of living in the Netherlands has decreased from 15.5 million in 1980 to 10.5 million in 2000.

The decrease in the number of people with a low standard of living has led to a decrease in the number of people with a low quality of life. The number of people with a low quality of life has decreased in all countries, but the decrease has been most dramatic in the Netherlands. The number of people with a low quality of life in the Netherlands has decreased from 15.5 million in 1980 to 10.5 million in 2000.

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