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skadugi:  
an anthology



raelee fourkiller

Skadugi in Cherokee is roughly translated to the place where your people come from and where you find safety. In spaces I have felt most comfortable and have felt that every ounce of energy I offered would have been met with reciprocity and patience was with people who practiced intentionality. For this project, I wanted to create this sort of place for my loved ones on Brown campus. I wanted to hold time to write together and critically think about our places in the world.

I knew before asking any question, I needed to prioritize being with other low-income, queer, people of color. Just from my own time on this campus, I have seen, time and time again, how our voices are muddled and suffocated by dollar signs and bureaucracy.

By studying education from a low-income queer Cherokee lens, I have analyzed how research so drastically fails to encompass experiences that matter for actually changing institutions and the discipline, by regurgitating ethics and praxis that aligns itself with colonialist ideals. I have never been interested in appeasing white people or amassing success generated from ideas of capital and oppression.

I began by asking: how does creative writing serve as a vehicle for radical hope and change for BIPOC students? In my communities across campus. I was thinking about how to center experience and commitment to care as foregrounding principles for pedagogy, something that is understood in Cherokee and many other Native spaces of teaching and learning. I was interested in answering how asking communities to reflect on their identities, bodies, and places of home can help locate autonomy and sovereignty within themselves. Really, thinking about how the inter/intrapersonal are intertwined and cannot be severed, for the sake of our wellbeing in the future.

Gadugi.

Meaning: if we all work together for the good of everyone, we will be taken care of as a whole

I invited my friends to gather for two days, thinking thorough our bodies and souls.



I started by brewing coffee. My entire life, my elders have shown me that table talk, or sitting down with others and drinking a cup of coffee while gathering information and sharing stories is one of the homiest ways to connect with your people. It's something about the ritual, the smell, the warmth slowly making its way through bodies and drawing everyone together. As people started coming in, I welcomed them with hugs, offerings of food and warm drinks, and a calm atmosphere. I know that curating a safe space is an imperative first step in honoring people's bodies and thoughts, while engaging in thoughtful and critical conversation.

The first lesson and thought process was abyss.



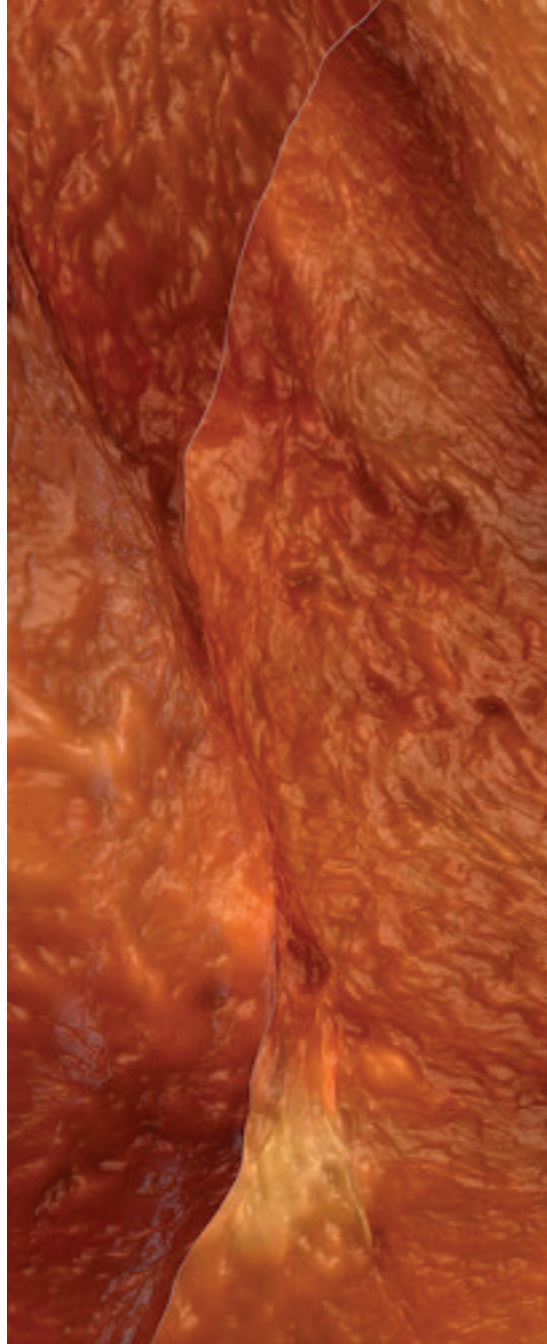
Laney Day

[abyss]how do you feel at home in your body? how do you form words to describe what make your soul become alive? what does it mean to live in despair while loving, ultimately recognizing that in order to grieve it requires having loved. taking from Ocean Vuong, describe a feeling, an emotion, a knowing that is situated in your flesh and create a pocket for this to fall into the body, by using metaphor and descriptive language. what happens on the page? do you use image to convey deeper to a reader? and by being responsive to Sondra Perry, think of how to zoom into the flesh, thinking about how looking so close into your being does to your story: of being flesh, being body, and how this might change your sense of being home. what does it mean to belong to yourself? do you have to separate each aspect of yourself in order to stitch yourself back together? looking at Ana Mendieta's work, what mark do our souls leave in the world? how are they communicating a relationship to land and being? wander and wonder. what forms might our bodies take as we grow to know ourselves?

“Days I feel like a human being, while other days I feel more like a sound. I touch the world not as myself but as an echo of who I was.”

— **Ocean Vuong**, from *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*

Ocean Vuong



FLESH WALL, Sondra Perry



SILUETAS, Ana Mendieta

This is what our community created/birthed/stitched:



How do we tell a story that cannot be told?

# PAE'S WRITING WORKSHOP



The story that is in between the lines - understanding that it might mean more than you'd initially written.



When I cannot speak it feels physical literally. it is not just that I don't have the words, but that they can't come out, that I can't begin to form them on my tongue in my mouth + eventually release a sound. that takes effort. sometimes it's too much effort.

when I can't speak I've reached my limit for what I can take in + ~~put~~ out - not only can I not respond, but I can't know what I'm supposed to be responding to in the first place. like I'm in a big, oppressive ~~but~~ bubble, I can somewhat make out my environment but processing it is physically impossible. speaking is an insurmountable task. I can't even cry, I can't shout, I can't make any sonic release when I can't speak. I am just stuck. it is everywhere and it's scary.

Iman Cochu



Handwritten text in Hebrew script, appearing to be a dense manuscript or letter. The text is written in a cursive style and covers the entire page. The paper is aged and slightly yellowed. The handwriting is consistent throughout, suggesting a single scribe. The text is arranged in approximately 25 horizontal lines, with some variations in line length and spacing. The overall appearance is that of a historical document or a personal letter from a past era.

Davi Sapiro-Gheller

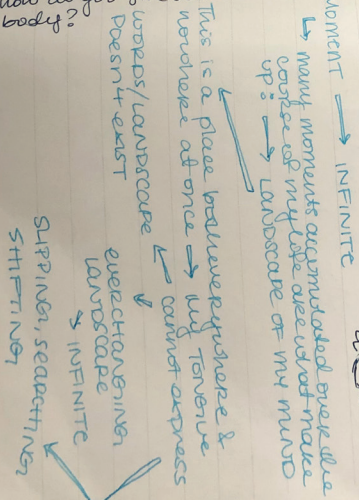




When I cannot speak, it is not that I lack the words but rather that the words that hold the nuanced meanings I need do not exist. At least with this tongue of mine, one severed from generations of Igbo people, one constantly slipping & searching & slipping. When I cannot speak it feels like a convergence - my mind becomes stained in memories, soiled in lost moments where I took for granted my mouth gaped & eerily empty despite my buzzing mind. During these moments my mind takes on the vision of an ever-changing prism - reflecting thoughts like sparks of light each spark leaving me more disoriented than the last.

THOUGHTS FROM ECELEOS!  
 (UPHOLDING TIME EVENT?)  
 "The page as a body of words"

moments exist w/ & in the body  
 how do you give voice to the body?



that space to me is everjusthere & that space simultaneously because we give the landscape of my mind it fills with images that I cannot will or control small that cannot will or control. is it a moment? is it defined grasp it for more than a moment. For what is a moment? is it defined by time? can a thing that can be condensed so many times, be condensed over & over be so small? I feel that it is infinite yet the mind w/ lack of a better choice has learned how to contain these infinities.

“I feel most at home in my body when I forget I have a body. Sometimes it the people I’m with, sometimes it’s the music, or the atmosphere. I’ve been told awareness is good for your mind. And maybe it is. But my best moments are when I forget my physical ties to emotions, to people, and at times, to place. Knowing. Am I ever knowing? The things that make me feel loved and comfortable are things I don’t really know until I’m experiencing them. I feel like I forgot what makes me feel at home, just because things are so chaotic constantly, so the small reminds, maybe the smell of smoke while walking back to my apartment, maybe the warmth of hot coco and tea, maybe the feeling of a warm cotton long sleeved shirt on my back and arms, maybe the feeling of string between my fingers. Being at home in my body is being reminded of the things I forgot, and now recognize every now and then. Abyss. I think this goes back to knowing. There are too many small reminder, small things, forgotten things, that make me feel at home.”

Danielle Emerson

Fingers stained crimson  
metallic specks hang in the air

Give me passage  
into myself or yourself  
Wanna feel held



rising stomach  
crescents ~~filling~~ mirroring moon

crescents  
nails  
moon

moon of nails  
blood moon

breaking <sup>10</sup> moons from  
their roots

stunning 10 more red

trailing moons

Jimmy Richmond

cl am a  
d i  
s p  
l a  
c  
e  
d  
s  
Unlocatable entity.  
Thousands of miles from the bones  
of my kūpuna.  
of my ancestors.  
Thousands more from  
myse  
cl - no. Kaliko resides in my lungs,  
but nowhere else.  
Kaliko is merely an utterance, letters  
ASSEMBLED & CONDUCTED  
by my lips.  
My tongue dictates Their shape, tone, physicality.  
My vocal cords constrict Their fullness,  
collapsing Their existence to three syllables,

Kalikoonaupūna Kalahiki

During this time of reflection, I felt amazed and honored to be with my friends who would take their time to intentionally hold space with me. I was overwhelmed with the feeling of support I was being offered. Most of the hour was spent in silence, never empty. I would pose a question and then we'd let our bodies sit with it. As if, the words were being absorbed and ruminated on, stewing in a body soup and then when the pen hit the page/fingers touched keys, all the language, sound, color, and emotion was swimming in the water of the page.

our second space was focused on refraction.



[refraction]



[refraction] what happens to our words when we say something without it being said? where does this story go? does it sit within the page, being soaked through a reader's fingers as they interact with our piece? how do we speak with nothing to say? are our tongues cut out? do we have no sounds to make?

heavily influenced by M. NourbeSe's work in the craft sense, Zong!, how do we tell a story that cannot be told? what does it mean to reflect on a work that is not our story and weave our own response out of it? write for five/seven minutes on the feelings your body responds to most proactively, the way you feel when you cannot speak, what are those thoughts looking like? write where this takes place, whether in what time, what space, is it somewhere or no where or everywhere or between? do you exist? imagine what it means to not speak and to say everything and nothing at all.



then we will refract. we will spend time noticing  
our words on the page and how they sit together.  
who calls out to you? does a word have a voice?  
what are they saying that they are not? commit  
to working with them and understanding what else  
needs to be said by placing them onto another  
page. continue to do this, drawing out as many  
or as little as your gut tells you so. are you  
listening to the ghosts in the room? the words'  
ghosts of being used before?

Listen.

as we draw our language out, begin to  
construct a story that does not tell,  
that screams, that sings.

with e  
yes close  
d he waits  
for his bo  
dy to do  
the sam  
e, a fistful of g  
rains, rice let go fr  
om the hand of a cy  
mbalist; first the rains  
form then trio of cric  
kets, a stream then a tr  
ickle like someone who  
has the hands of a mo  
ther or father to gui  
de him but the hou  
se is empty, he is e  
mptying out ever  
y hour, all hours  
before his death h  
e is dangerously cl  
ose to living, his bo  
dy is warm his mind  
cool; what are the tr  
icks for warming; he  
no longer feels the w  
atch against his wrist  
he no longer feels a  
wrist he no longer

GHOST OF, Diana Khoi Nguyen



~~this is what~~ our community created:

languages, I switch writing styles,  
I switch chairs, rooms, background  
music but I can't even scream  
correctly. To save myself I'll do.

restful  
energy together

~~Speak~~  
~~scream~~

fall apart f a l

exhausting  
ed

want to be loud

be a NOT  
yell yell

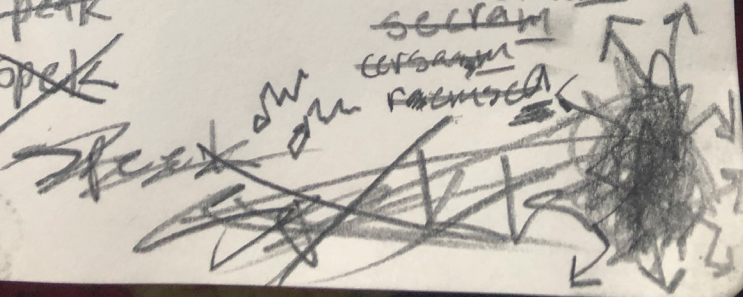
yell  
starkly  
awake

everything falls  
away

~~speak~~  
~~speak~~

~~scream~~  
~~scream~~  
~~scream~~

02/20



Jared Cetz





Davi Sapiro-Gheller



Laney Day

How I feel when I cannot speak  
Damn, that brings up such intense fear,  
thinking about my mother.. Sigh... lol...  
the way my body shuts down, my  
fingers and toes tingling and clammy,  
my stomach in my throat,  
I sometimes find myself scratching  
at my ~~nose~~ nails, sometimes  
until I bleed.

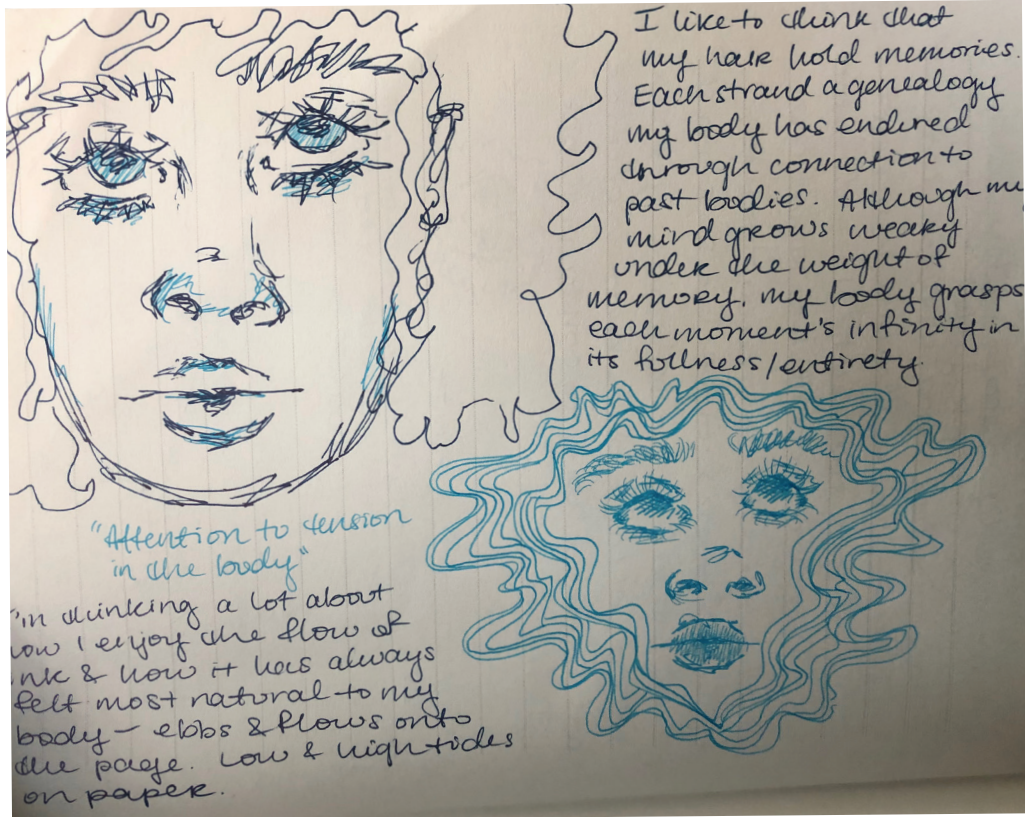
Tryna get those words and feelings  
out through another passage, red, warm,  
metallic passage. written in blood

Hm, but I've been tryna reclaim silence.  
Been recently practicing silence. Where I'll  
set an hour where I won't say a word at  
home, even if others are talking. My  
roomies are supportive.

Those unspoken words feel sooo  
expansive, like they really have  
time to sit in my tongue and  
soak up my saliva like a sponge

Jimmy Richmond





I like to think that my hair hold memories. Each strand a genealogy my body has endured through connection to past bodies. Although my mind grows weak under the weight of memory, my body grasps each moment's infinity in its fullness/entirety.

"Attention to tension in the body"

I'm thinking a lot about how I enjoy the flow of ink & how it has always felt most natural to my body - ebbs & flows onto the page. low & high tides on paper.

Caitlin Anasi

and lies. The deepest of anxieties  
in my hair when the moon is full  
there are echoes. but these  
voices, I don't hear them.  
they bounce off my body  
reverberating in my finger tips  
I drum impatiently hopeful  
that anger won't consume my  
voice again. RED RED black all  
dark now the moon isn't show  
me the path anymore.  
but they're here! They are  
each time I bleed I hear the s  
it wouldn't be fair to drag th  
out without seeing however

Raelee Fourkiller

On this second day, some more friends came and some friends chose rest instead. There was certainly a different dynamic, but neither better or worse. We gathered again, with the smell of coffee and jasmine tea and a soft light in our hearts.

The emphasis of this project was to explore the connection between decolonial pedagogies, Cherokee epistemology, and creative writing as a vehicle for critical thought, radical hope, and establishing a space that served to position each participant as both a teacher and learner. I was hopeful in studying the connection between circle-keeping, poetry, and student engagement--aimed at creating a dynamism that gives way towards decolonial ideals in classrooms.

I was really asking: How does one create work that speaks to land as ancestors? How does one write as if emotion, soul-being, and energy is tethered to the page so that each reader can feel it? How might one tell stories throughout time and space, marking the page as a liminal body? In asking these questions, I was seeking to create space with other writers and learners of color, while looking at artists and poets who work in embodied practices-- within their interpersonal systems, through their ancestry, and with land + water bodies.

Learning from the works of Black and Native and poc writers and artists to explore how our identities intersect and influence our capacities to reconnect with meaning/belonging, in way of cultivating imaginings for an otherwise world is the groundwork for anything I do now.

As Cherokee customs have taught me, to give knowledge, for it to be passed throughout our loved ones in order to build a good-minded and loving world.

Wado to all my friends and found family for helping hold space for vulnerability, reflection, truth-keeping, hope holding and care.

I'm grateful to know what love is and to share my heart with you all.



