XPRESSION AGAINST OPPRESSION ZINE
Xpression Against Oppression is campaign aimed at providing various platforms for marginalized identities to speak about their identities and experiences that come with it.

SCSU has facilitated XAO initiatives centered on police brutality toward Black bodies, as well as a space called the Trans* Inclusive Vagina Monologues.

Resistance looks different to the multitude of intersecting identities, which is why submissions for the Zine were not limited to any particular theme.

As marginalized identities, the powers of our voices unsilenced & intentionally break physical, social and metaphysical barriers.

Xpression Against Oppression Zine 2016
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## CONTRIBUTORS

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### POETRY

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i am glowing.
i am glowing without your permission.
i am growing.
i am growing without your permission.
i am loving self.
i am loving self without your permission.

i dress
i laugh
i express
i mourn
i talk
i embrace
i resist
i rise
i live

and exist
without your permission.

- black girl, black woman

as a Black woman,
and as a Black woman who writes
my body is always being
read.

- body of self / body of work

i have camped outside
your expectations
for too long,
waiting to be invited in
like i wasn't crafted
from the thread of
a divine bloodline.

- mediating self-worth

• shharine •
I DON'T KNOW WHICH WAY TO GO.
He called out “Baby”
and she stopped in her tracks.
She turned around slowly because she was scared to fall.
She was scared that if she fell he wouldn’t catch her.
she knew that by turning and facing him will allow her to fall deep.
Deep deep into his lust
Deep deep into his touch.
Deep deep into his words.
She felt secure because she was independent as a woman, but she lacked trust because it had been broken for her many many times.
Many many times she tricked herself into this “Baby.”
Many many times she fell deep deep for many.
She hesitates to turn.
She hesitates to look at his dark brown eyes with the black dot staring her down.
Curiosity creeps up her spine as she wants to turn--as she wants to be this “Baby”--as she wants to fall for him.
She wouldn’t know if she is his “Baby” forever unless she agrees to turn.
Unless she agrees to turn and stare back into his dark brown eyes with the black dot staring her down.

– minushi gomes
My mama told me I was pretty and I believed her because my uncle always look at my legs long and hard. I’m black but my lips don’t look swollen. He said I’ve got real good tits that sit all high and mighty on chest and my waist is very thin. I’ve got good thighs too, that’s what he said. They’re big and strong, but not more then they should be, which looks real nice with my small hips, I heard him whisper. This doesn’t make me pretty at all—someone should tell my mama. This just means I can be fucked real good and real easy too. I look like I got a tight cunt, I heard him say. It doesn’t help that my eyes are too small and too dark and show no sign of intelligence, or interest. Mama told me pretty girls do as they are told, and pretty girls don’t ever get told to do anything they don’t want to do. That’s what’s so goddamned good about being pretty, mama said. I told my mama the uncle down the street told me he had something to show me. Mama says the uncle man down the street is a good man who loves his children and his wife. The good man-uncle drinks beers with my daddy sometimes. He likes to take me in his hands and kiss my face long and hard. Once, he told me to sit down next to him and mama says pretty girls always do as they are told, and pretty girls don’t ever get told to do anything they don’t wanna do. The uncle-man down the street took my hands in his hands and placed them between my legs—he said I ought to stay real quiet and he’ll be real quick. I told my mama the uncle man down the street did real bad things to me and my mama told me if I didn’t want real bad things to be done to me, I ought not be so goddamn pretty, my mama said. Mama said I ought to not tell lies like that—my mama said that’s how pretty girls become a pretty woman, that’s what she said.

I wonder sometimes if my mama was a pretty girl too.

– tea mutonji
Being your friend’s “black friend”
Used to sound pretty cool
But it’s a little bit concerning
Once you think it through.

“You’re not even black” they say.
They say with subtle relief,
They find my people deplorable
But accept my friendship with lief.

Do I look like a thug because of my tattoos?
Or because I’m a black male?
I am frowned upon for flirting with girls
Whose skin happens to be pale.

Why do you seem so shocked
That I don’t speak with slang,
That I’m bad at basketball,
Or don’t belong to a gang?

I’m offended because as black man
I supposedly love chicken.
When there isn’t a damn omnivore
Who feels any different.

It’s funny how “acting” my skin color
Is automatically comical
But when black people do it
It’s ghetto and abominable.

So because I’m black
You think that I’m likely to steal?
You say it as a joke

But how much better should that make me feel?
Why is it such a shock
That I enjoy works by Bach?
Who says I must limited
To Lil Wayne and 2Pac?

As a black man it hurts me
How many times “nigga” is heard.
Carelessly whipped around
As if it were “just” another word.

Look, a word is something more
Than sounds you say
When it’s used as an excuse
To take one’s history/humanity/family away.

An “a” or an “er”
Don’t make the roots different.
“My nigga” shouldn’t make you feel endear
It should make you feel indignant.

Though not usually said with hate
It still reeks of degradation.
Now everyone can say “nigga!”
Congrats, we’ve ended segregation!

I rarely bring it up.
It feels like it’s just become the norm.
Racism hasn’t gone away
It’s taken on a different form.

But you’re not racist you tell me:
“I have a friend that’s black.”
But, if you didn’t know them
Would it change the way you act?

– marcus roi
Breaking news!
What baby name did Will and Kate select?
Did Tom Brady pay-off the refs?
We’ve got traffic and weather coming up next
And in other news
Another brother was shot to death.
We have scenes from (insert name of American city here) where streets have erupted with riots
And unrest.
The chief of police released a statement this week saying
He didn’t mean to shoot the nigga six times in the chest.

And don’t you dare tell me I’m over reactin’
If it’s not something you have to worry could happen.
For fuck sakes,
I feel like a wooly-haired negro
Just trying to survive this white man’s world.
But how can I reassure little black boys and little black girls when I can’t even get on the bloody metro?
You act like being black is something I should be grateful you stand,
Fuck you man,
I never asked to be brought to this land.

Boo who, you can’t say or do anything that you choose,
Don’t be confused, there isn’t anything special about you.
So to hell with your backwards views
And your “impartial” news.
I hope you choke on your hate speech,
This is Marcus Medford,
Breaking the noose.

– marcus roi
I woke up today, so sure of this moment.
No mistakes, I know this now.
Just notions and signs I finally stopped to ask for... and recognize.
Once upon a time this “insecure” thing you called a daughter imagined herself as a, “deeply rooted oak, immersed in the foundation put in place for her.”
And when I woke up today, God knows I believed it.
Destroyed?
I guess that’s what they call it when my heart is 17, but decisions start to age me.
Another victim to the growing pains of youth that came all too swiftly.

She woke up today so ready for this moment.
Mistakes, she sees this now.
No signs.
But today was different because today, she broke their heart.
It didn’t take much,
Just a few words that told them that she wasn’t doing what they, “thought she was doing.”
She told herself that those late nights didn’t hurt as much because she was doing it for the dream that she had made up for herself.
For a while her future had become a type of sweet song, her own rhythmic tune with the soft melodic tones of certainty.
That dream.
She told herself that her aspirations would be supported with more than just a cheque and side glances that formed regret from across the coast.
She could have sworn they told her to choose, so she chose.
Peace in her decision once lived in her heart, she swears it did.
But now?
It’s preoccupied.
Preoccupied with the realization that when she chose, it broke her heart too.

– nana frimpong
PHOTO SERIES BY CREE BALLAH
CONSUMPTION

I don’t want to become a monkey, propped up for performance.

I don’t want to exist to please others.

I am not made to fit into someone else’s mouth;
I am not edible.

My skin is made from the glittering coal of the earth’s core—I am bitter to the tongue.

In this world, I do not want to flow like honey.
In this world, to be sweet means to stand on street corners selling parts of you, branded, manufactured, exposed.

And I don’t have anything that this world would want to sell.

Because in this world, all mouths are hungry and consuming,
and I do no want to be consumed.

– ena ganguly
HANDS

I remember feeling scared of my body
As a child whose curves were sprouting
Outwards and upwards
In ways that could attract the wrong set
Of hands
The wrong set of
Intents

I remember growing up in ways that
Involved both lushness and razor edges
When darkness would mean as quick
And swift a touch
That was neither wanted nor invited in
But came to make a home out of my body
Any way

I remember laying my body out
In the dark
For years and
Years
Willing myself to understand
The difference between what is
Light and what is Void
A task I still have not completed

I remember being touched and wanting
To touch
But the deep river of fear flowed
Through my blood even then
Even when
I felt so safe in your arms
I still felt like a freight truck turning on its head.

– ena ganguly
The world will hate you before you even get the chance to yourself
Educate you on certain things so you do not educate yourself in others
Tell you to fall in love with a stranger, before ever getting the chance to love you
Remind you that your body is an equation they have solved long ago
Tell you that God is an idea that we have created out of fear
They’ll have you thinking death is the worst thing that could ever happen to you
At least Death is promised, honest, quiet and expected
Not broken, dishonest, loud and unexpected like this capitalistic system we call home
So speak my love, understand my love, educate yourself my love, never stop talking my love, please
scream my love
Let them hear you until they wish God did not equip them with ear canals
With your voice travelling down their throat, your anguish travelling up their spine
Until it reaches the brain you now question if God even gave them
Let your voice be the reason their eyes produce tears, let your vocals be accused of paralyzing them
with truth so help me God
I have mentioned God 5 times in less than 30 seconds, that was another so 6
Because you will draw strength from him my love
He will show you your light after their attempts to dim it
And your brightness will blaze a path you once thought to be impossible
So scream my love. Until you can no longer stand the sound of your own voice. Because a lost voice is
better than a stolen one.
They will feed you lies, fill your stomach with guilt until you vomit out your insides
Giving up your identity and uniqueness. So scream my love, and do not take another mouth full of this
world. For it will leave your body full but soul empty.
If they ask if you are hungry say yes my love
But not for the money they hold in their greedy hands
Lord knows they ripped it off the backs of hungry children, helpless mothers and tired fathers, say no
my love
You are hungry for something entirely different, you starve for love
For the embrace God has allowed your mother to bury you in
The strength God has allowed your father to lift you up with
You crave something bigger and more life changing than the heavy, desperate coin
They tried to strap to your back to replace the wings that were meant to be there

– euphoria
I'm beginning to learn to unlearn things I presumed to be definite. I struggle with consistency. I break commitments without so much as a thought. I don't have it “together.” I like to be alone, but I'm never lonely. My best friend is my God. And I'm kind.
The habits we craft now are the habits we engrave later. We are the architects of our destiny. Build your dreams on sturdy foundations. Show up.

– nana frimpong
NO SURRENDER

you’ll try to fit me into a box
and then throw away the key
before you can ever even try to get to know me

i am the product of a land
that you call “foreign”
a place so resilient—in ruins yet still standing

while yours are a people guilty
of crimes against humanity so grand
one cannot fathom the amount of blood still
stained on your hands

keep striving to lock me into your box of stereo-
types
stay searching for the non-existent key

because these eyes are still looking forward and
can clearly see
a future in which we will
all
be
free

– nooria alam
MENTAL HEALTH IN SOUTH ASIAN CULTURE

“MENTAL HEALTH IS REAL, THE STRUGGLE TO DISMIS
AND OVERCOME THE STIGMA IS JUST ONE BATTLE. BUT IT’S UNDENIABLE THAT MENTAL HEALTH IS REAL. SO THANK U FOR BREAKING US DOWN TO THE POINT WHERE WE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO FIND THE STRENGTH TO SAVE OURSELVES.”

“What kind of drama is this?”

by sana jaffery
Words that We Share
How can I make you hear?
It seems there are no words that we share.
How can I make you hear?
I’m only asking for you to be aware.
How can I make you hear?
You think I aim to find imagined slights.
How can I make you hear?
Voicing my cares seems impolite.
How can I make you hear?
You presume I mean to blame.
To shame
How can I make you hear?
You feel safer cocooned in fear.
How can I make you hear?
More for me is not less for you.
How can I make you hear?
You think the dream has long since been built.
How can I make you hear?
You’re asking me to let things be.
But that’s only because you don’t see
The fetters still fitted on us both.
Those before us toiled to create today
In their memory and for those to come
I speak with you
So we can make tomorrow.
You are kind, and together we can grow
So how do I make you hear?
There must be some words that we share.

– eva chu
when your non black poc friend says nigga

DW's favorite past time is bathing in white tears

when a white feminist takes over the convo

DW calls on her ladies to get in formation

I want to destroy the white devil

walking into class ready to fight the system

DW is a care free black girl