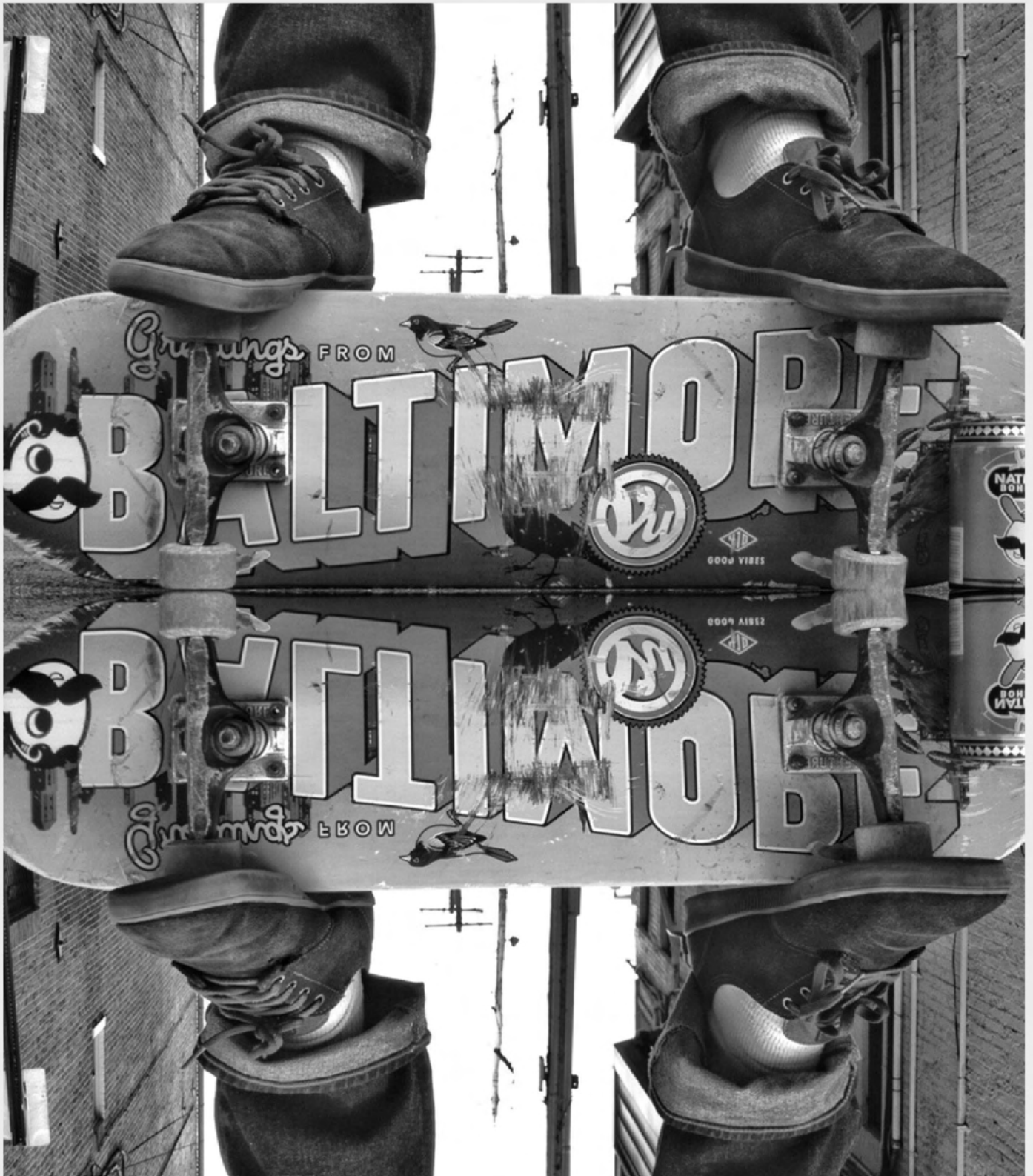


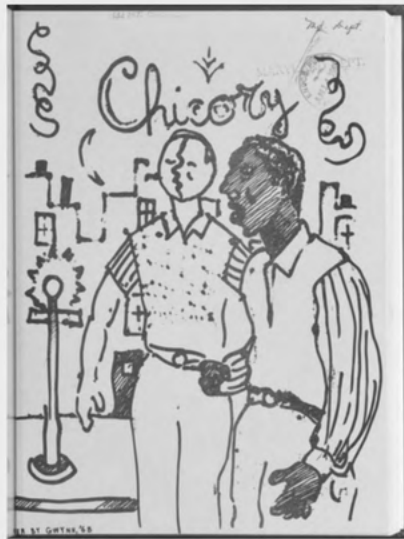
CHICORY



APRIL 2024

True justice is a manifestation of
both love + mercy.

A NOTE FROM THE LONGEST SERVING EDITOR OF CHICORY MAGAZINE



“What Chicory would look like today, if it had continued, is a very curious question. The direct answer to that question is that Chicory would be what today's artists feel it needs to be, at a time like this in Baltimore-- Just as long as it continued to give voice to any and all marginalized communities. Chicory, the magazine, existed from 1966 until 1983. I can't over emphasize that. Consider this: Chicory's last issue was printed before the Hip-hop movement began; before Rap became an art, before cell phones, before the internet and social media, before the crack epidemic began, before the onset of black displacement and gentrification, and before Baltimore had its first Black mayor.

That is the context.

As far as the connection between activism and black literature, it's worth noting that Chicory came into existence during the Black Arts Movement, when the hyphenated term Artists-Activists, to my knowledge, was first coined. In many ways, that was such a different time; yet in many other ways, things have remained the same for poor Black inner city working people. As far as themes, as you know, most issues of Chicory were pretty eclectic; but some issues were devoted to Senior centers, prison inmates, pregnant adolescents, etc.

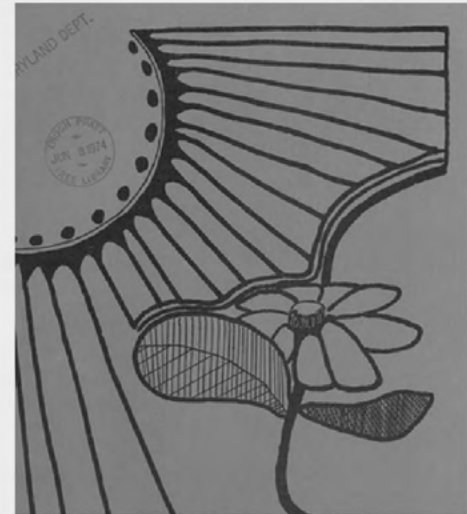
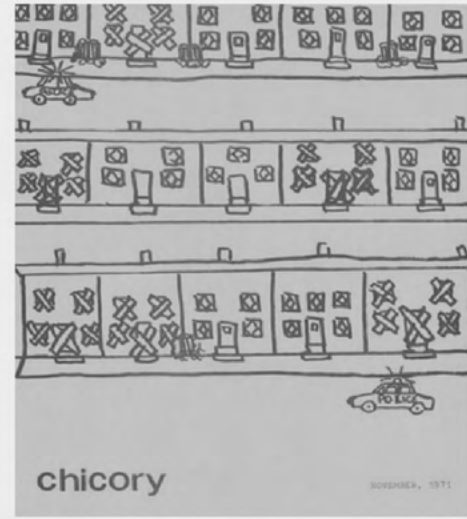
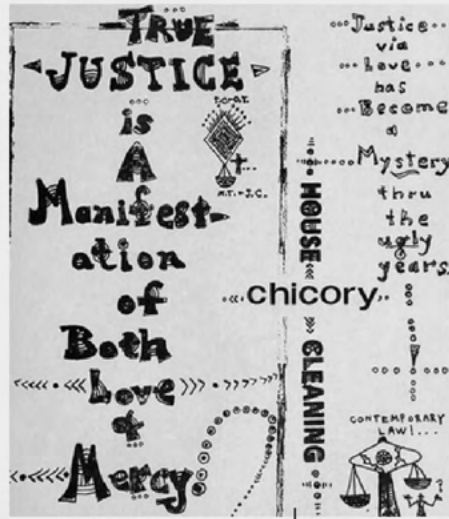
Today, if I were editing Chicory I would definitely want to go to black communities like Brooklyn or anywhere in the city where gun violence is a daily threat and do an issue featuring folks thoughts and feelings about the proliferation of guns. I would also do an issue devoted to the writings from members of the LGBTQ community to highlight their physical, societal and family struggles.

As for a quote, I think that the quote "What happens to a dream deferred?" from Langston's poem would be appropriate. I think to a large extent the city's potential and promise is still a "dream deferred" for too many Baltimoreans.

But that's just me.”

- Melvin Brown

ABOUT CHICORY



zine cover photograph taken by:
@shots.on.ice on instagram

Learn more about Chicory at our website:
www.thechicoryproject.org

“The purpose of this magazine is to publish work overheard by the editor which reflect the music of language in the inner city; to encourage more spoken and written comment by people in the community action area; and to inform those other people and agencies within the area of our ways of living.”

-- *Chicory, November 1969*

“The mission of Chicory is to amplify the resonant voices and diverse narratives of the city, capturing the dynamic music of language that thrives within its heart. Embracing modern media platforms, we aim to foster an inclusive dialogue, both spoken and written, among community members. We are committed to integrating cutting-edge digital mediums with our traditional roots, creating an engaging multi-platform experience that not only informs but also connects generations. In doing so, we offer you an opportunity to be part of a transformative media initiative that bridges the rich legacy of the past with the vibrant pulse of today's communities.”

-- *Chicory, April 2024*





bullet casings
scatter,
like fallen stars
on Baltimore's skin,
telling stories
in languages of loss
and resilience,
etched
in the grooves
of pavements
that have known
too many goodbyes.

authored & collages by: k.johnson



The interviewer

D.E. WADDELL



The conversation

In an illuminating exchange, D.E. Waddell delves into the depths of personal growth, community dynamics, and the enduring value of traditions through a heartfelt interview with Lois Mayo. From the streets of Baltimore to the quiet moments of self-reflection, Mayo unravels the threads of her life as a lover, healer, gardener, meditator, supporter, researcher, and resource, offering a mosaic of insights that span the personal to the collective.

Central to the discussion is the theme of resilience—a quality that Mayo embodies and emphasizes through tales of family dynamics and the power of community gatherings. The interview not only explores the significance of practical knowledge, like map reading and cooking from scratch, but also the profound impact of effective communication and the healing potential of words.



The focus

LOIS MAYO

ON NAVIGATING TRADITIONS, COMMUNITY, AND SELF-REFLECTION IN THE MODERN AGE

DEW: So I'm going to start off really simply. I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself in whatever way feels comfortable.

LM: Okay. My name is Lois Mayo. I prefer to be called Lo. I'm a lover, I'm a healer, I'm a gardener, I'm a meditator, I'm a supporter, I'm a researcher, I'm a resource. I have a lot of different titles and experiences. So when I say I'm Lo, I'm Lo.



DEW: I can dig it. Are you from Baltimore?

LM: Yes, born and raised.

DEW: Okay.. So why are you still here?

LM: I have belief that Baltimore is going to return to what I remember. Things have changed. But my memory is so strong and great. That no matter where I move, it's never going to fit.

DEW: So thank you for that answer because it sets up the follow up perfectly. Tell me about one of your favorite memories from your youth in Baltimore.

LM: I have quite a few, but I will say living in a community we had a block - and in that block we had two women that would wake up in the morning and take the children in the neighborhood to two different schools. In that same block, we had a woman named Miss Butch that would come out with a pillow, sit on the steps, and watched all the children in the block play - make sure they safe. While the other parents, the other mothers would go shopping for the block or take kids on events or... We always had something to do. We used to put tables at the end and have little block parties. And at 8:00 the children went in the house and looked out the window while the parents stood out dancing, playing cards, listening to Marvin Gay. I learned how to hand dance by watching them out the windows. I learned about loving and having fun while they hugged each other and talked to each other. I learned that from the example that they showed.

DEW: What part of town are you from? You know that's a thing.

LM: I'm west side... and I still feel it's definitely a different feel from west side to east side

DEW: It is. I think part of it is that sense of community though. That's where you're most comfortable and most rooted. Like we're from different generations. But that story you told about your favorite memories is my story as well. Except the dancing happened in my grandmother's house. I would sit on the steps and watch the old people grind. So I think we get so attached to our memories and part of our memories is that place. So people see east versus west as an adversarial thing, where I feel like maybe it's more about what we know and what feels good to us, what home is. Right? And you always automatically ride for home like.. these are my people.





DEW: So I don't think it's nearly as territorial as folk like to make out when they do the east versus west thing. But it is definitely, I think, a *thing*.

LM: I think it's bigger than that. The east side was built prior to the west side. And so when the west side come.. it was more grass and more, because remember the east side, the houses and everything, that's for the military. When they came out of military, they had a place to stay. East side started on that side before west side was even come together.. cultivated. So it's a totally different energy, and I think it's rooted in the soil. You think about industrializing and all these things that was there. Now, I lived east side before, but I still came back home. So you're right. Half the people that were home are not there, but it's still my home, and I still. Yeah, I still want to be there. So did you have the house parties, the rent parties?



DEW: I don't know if they charge, but they definitely have parties regular. One of the funniest stories is there was this woman, Miss Emma. She had the most huggable bosom.

LM: (laughter) Of course you would remember that!



DEW: She was also one of the loud ones, right? In my grandmother's age. So one of my mother's or aunt or uncle's friends or something, because it wasn't really BYOB... But you brought something to the party, right? Whether it was food or bottle or something. But apparently, she bought an empty bottle and she was trying to refill it, and the wrong person caught her. If anybody had caught her but Ms. Emma, it probably wouldn't have been as embarrassing as it was for her. But I'm like, maybe six, and I remember it like it was yesterday. There are a couple of other things that we'll talk about once we stop recording that I remember.

But certainly that sense of community started for me, like in my grandmother's house and also my mother having three sons our house was the one where all the young men from the neighborhood hung out or spent the night. So I always grew up with a house full of people. Or if there was a young mother who didn't have anywhere to go, chances are she would be staying with us for a while. So that's sort of the foundation for how I approach community. So, yeah, we definitely had them. I don't know if they were doing it to pay the rent or. Honestly, it was pre church, if you ask me, because I believe that church's primary focus is to undergird you for the week to come. I feel like those parties did the same thing.

Like, all right, well, that was some bullshit. *But it's Friday night.*

LM: Yes, but, you know, it was so great. Pennsylvania Avenue and the clothes that we stayed at home and sewed and iron and pieced together from this curtain or this pillowcase - and we made a style, and we did each other's hair. You don't let nobody else do your hair, man.

DEW: The smell of a hot comb, I actually enjoy it, which is probably a little bit crazy, but that is certainly a nostalgic smell for me. But, yeah, I lost my thought.



LM: Well, I'm just continuing because you got me started.. Cooking a pot of greens and everyone around the table, cleaning, cutting, shredding, and this one peeling sweet potatoes. Talking and having community at the table. And it's so good, those smells and the music. So you got the smells and you hear the music and people touching you. *'Hey, baby.'* And hugging you. All your senses was enlightened and engulfed. And that's why I can remember them. I can't let them go. I don't want to.

DEW: Right. I stood behind my grandmother when she was in the kitchen for as long as I could. And I would help a little bit or help my uncle a little bit when he got high, started smoke a little weed. He think he could make anything. He was a good cook, though. I just talked all the trash when I was getting to know my wife about how well I cooked. I had never really cooked anything until that point. But when we got our first place and I started cooking, I am making the things my grandmother made. I am remembering the ingredients, the seasonings that my uncle used for his fried chicken, because it was a little bit different from my grandmother's. And then also the idea that if Luther Vandross was playing through our apartment door, we knew not to go in the house because my mother was moving furniture around. She might try to get us to participate. Oh, no. I'm going back outside.

LM: Yes. Did you jump roofs?

DEW: Yeah. So there were a couple abandoned houses at the end of the block that we used to climb through, but never like roof to roof.

LM: Yes, were crazy. We jumped roofs and were on the hill. So we stop at the top of the house on the hill and jump and get down to the end. And if somebody didn't make it, we're like *'Ha ha'*, right? We didn't even know. (laughter) Somebody could have died.



DEW: The worst example of that for me, playing tackle football with no equipment, like different neighborhoods would play each other. And we actually were pretty well out of our neighborhood. But one of our guys went down hard, like unconscious. So we dragged him. I'm not going to say we. They dragged him off the field next to the building and we kept playing,

LM: Poor baby had concussion. Probably suffering to this day from that action. (laughter)

DEW: Listen, I think he alive. (laughter)

LM: See, back then, they really believe God took care of them. Let them kids go out there, they'll be all right. (laughter)

Listen to the rest of this conversation online at the Chicory Project website, under Chicory Presents: The Oral Histories Project.



photograph taken by: @shots.on.ice on instagram

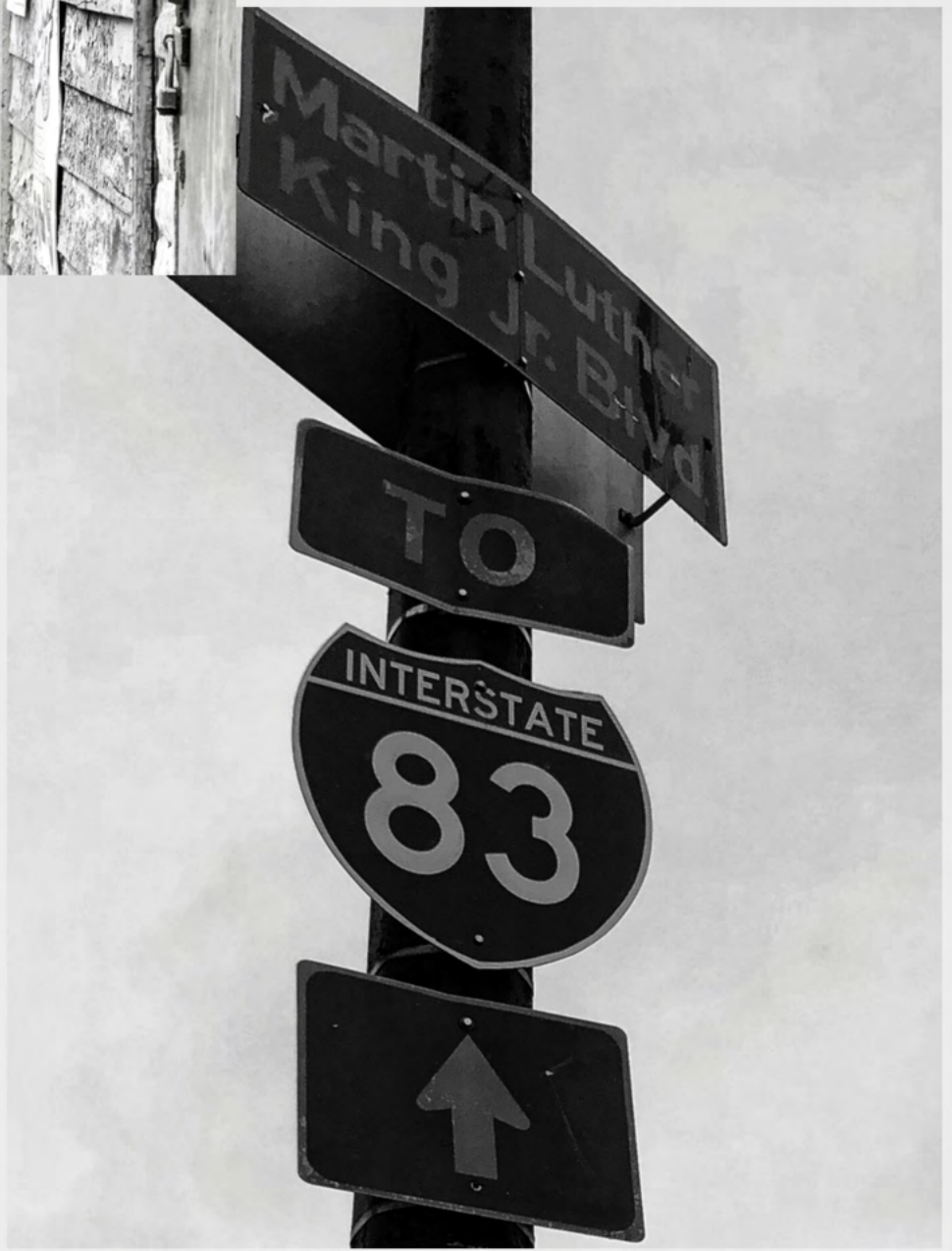




photographs taken by:
@shots.on.ice on instagram

Old men on porches
tell tales
in the smoke
of their cigars,
wisdom floating
on the breeze,
lessons
in the lines
of their faces,
maps
to futures
they pray
will be kinder
than the pasts
they've survived.

authored by:
k.johnson



A POOR MAN'S DREAM

this city is an angry bitch who
 sits on dreams like prayers carved into porcelain
 shitting out nightmares, cause poverty stinks
 reeks of rotten children and steaming piles of decomposing regrets
 decaying carcasses cradled too violently in the sobering embrace of
 madness
 like the murdered bodies of dead possibilities feeding the trees like
 demented photosynthesis
 like snapped photos of sins with a focused synthesis on death

dead flesh feeding the fertile soil of futures like fertilizer
 for a city that endlessly imitates the imagery of cemeteries
 skyscrapers like tombstones
 blades to veins bleeding out poetry
 prophets praying while we write hoping that we might profit from
 her pain and save souls
 eulogies encrypted in the concretes bones
 cracks filled with crack where childhoods grow
 to spite
 the odds of heroin laced legacies

decayed sacs of water and notebook paper
 walking through tunnels without light
 dead poets trying to write ourselves back to life

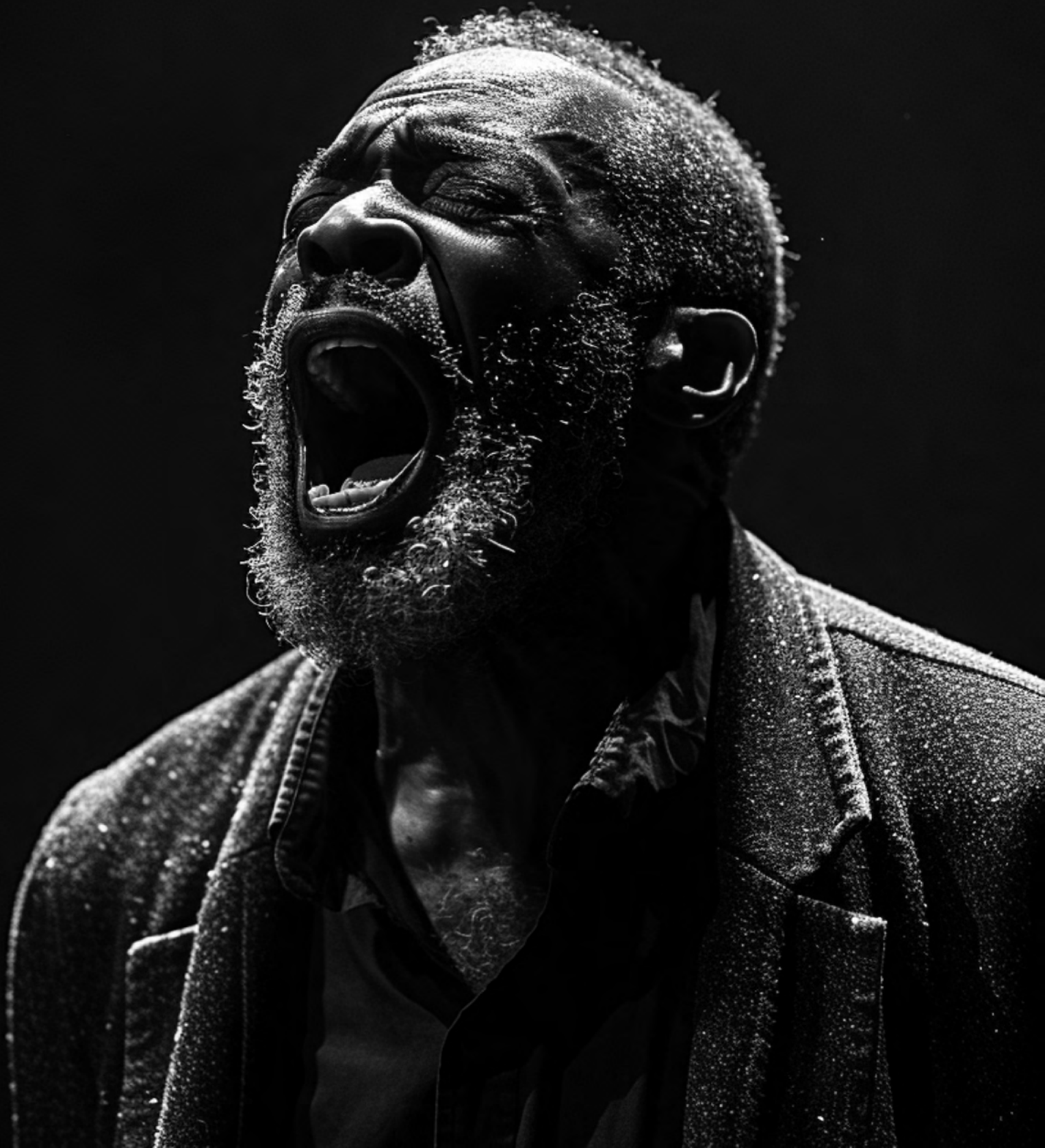
the wire in her chest
 the birds feeding off her flesh
 exploding from beneath the wrinkles
 in old black ladies faces

I watched a tired teary eyed mother gazing
 At a skyline made of one act stage-plays and instruments
 Meant to double in double time as the drug of life
 Dripping from the heaven laced veins of an angel
 disguised as a solar system
 With permed hair, gentrification spreading like cancer across her
 epidermis
 The ice queen of death and invisible purpose

But we call her
 Baltimore

authored by:
 Slangston Hughes

ovation
image by: k.johnson





photograph taken by:
@shots.on.ice on instagram

authored by: Allyson
Washington

THE LAST PEACOCK IN PARADISE

You can kill yourself with a tank of helium. Two, if you want to make sure you get the job done without the risk of living with permanent brain damage. Standing in the balloon aisle at Party City, I thought of the exit bag instructional video. I could hear the bright instrumentals playing as a tiny elderly British woman neatly folded a taped oven bag over tubing connected to a helium tank. Her accent was lithe and unassuming. She would bake brownies from scratch as you wrote out your suicide note, and then she would gently tuck you in before kindly helping you tighten the bag over your head. She'd read your favorite fairy tale as she turned the knobs of the helium tanks.

I looked at the price listed on the side of the box, "I can get it cheaper at Walmart."

I left the store and sat in my car, staring at the steering wheel for a good fifteen minutes. Sure, you might think, what would it matter if I spent the extra cash for the tank if I was just going to kill myself? But I wanted to make sure I had enough money to leave to my sister, and shorting her fifty bucks wouldn't be fair, especially because she would have to find me when she brought back my dog. Fifty dollars was enough for the co-pay for roughly two therapy sessions.

I had a few weeks to think about this, and it wasn't really set in stone until I got the breakup text message over the phone. Just to be clear, I didn't want to kill myself because of a breakup. I wanted to kill myself because two weeks before I was dumped, my car was stolen with all of my lighting equipment and my roller derby gear in the trunk. Two weeks before my car was stolen, a man held me at knifepoint, tried to rape me, and stole my camera. Before that, my grandmother died. Before that, I lived through an abusive relationship. Before that, I had my first breakdown and was forced by my mother to commit myself to a mental institution for a month and a half. Before that, I was molested as a child. Twice.

Well, three times because I was only fifteen when I walked to pick up my final check from the pancake restaurant. My boss, Tyrone, greasy and sweaty with cornrows so tight and short that his scalp bulged against every braid. He pushed me up on his desk, and he got between my legs while I was wearing a skirt. After years of only wanting to wear pants, I had just started feeling confident and pretty wearing skirts. I still wore sweatshirts or baggy shirts with skirts, but I was getting closer to loving my body, and it started with my legs.

Everything in his office appears grey in my mind. I can see the kid I was when I walked in there fade into someone who has to pretend to be okay with being violated as he blames me for "coming up there in that skirt." And how he declared he had to stop himself before it went too far. But it had been going too far since the first time he made comments about my body when I would lean over the counter. Or when he would come up behind me and massage my back or neck while I was waiting for orders. I was falling in love with my coworker, LaShawna. I try to hold on to the memories of quiet kisses in her bedroom to stop her from saying, "I do believe in fairies," while her grandmother slept one thin apartment wall away.

I keep that memory close because I can't protect the memories of us folding silverware together in a back corner booth before the restaurant closes. It was a safe memory until the time Tyrone found out that I was into LaShawna. That night, he came over to our corner with a group of other guy coworkers ranging from an easy age of coercion to old enough to know this was a crime.

They wouldn't leave us alone until we kissed in front of them, and LaShawna wasn't out about her sexuality yet. I replay it from the third person perspective, like all of my traumatic memories, as if it were a scene in a film. But every time I want to hold on to the happy feeling from when LaShawna and I were alone, I can see the struggle braids on the back of Tyrone's head in the corner of the first frame. I can feel LaShawna become small.

I ran into her about a decade later after she had a baby and was trying to leave an abusive relationship. That was the last time I heard from her, and I haven't been able to find her since.

I forget that back then, I was a child because, at that restaurant, I was taught that as long as my body was viewed as an adult, then I would be seen as an adult. In those moments, I had to fade from being a scared teenage girl and mask into a woman who wanted to be touched. I learned at eight that no one would believe me if I spoke out. But Tyrone taught me that I should expect, allow, and enjoy this from men in power. And to do this, I had to temporarily let myself become someone unlike me. I learned what it meant to really mask.

So, I kept quiet when I got out of the hospital, and they tried to get me to file a report against Tyrone because I brought it up in session. My first job out of the hospital was at a seafood restaurant with a boss who threw soup at me and "laid me off" for two weeks because I put too much crab meat in it. My reward for coming back was being trapped in his office while he jerked off in front of me and crammed two hundred dollars in my apron. My final night there was the night a pro football player tipped me \$400 after a big win while pulling me close and calling me wifey material in front of his friends and...his wife.

My next job was at a coastal restaurant that started branching out closer to Baltimore. I wasn't much older, but I was becoming more aware. So when my manager commented on the cut of my shorts and loudly joked twice about how no one wanted to see my black and pink underwear, I felt anger instead of fear. I was fired over those shorts, even though they weren't any shorter than the white girls who worked there.

But his wife was white and plain, and my coworkers were white and beautiful. And, other than him, I was the only entirely Black person who worked there. I learned quickly that there was a particular aesthetic of what he wanted to see when he came to work. So I didn't fight it; I just left.

Anyway, I found out that when you make it through trauma and you don't address it, it starts to sit with you. Sure, you might think you are fine after, but then little neuroses and anxieties begin to form. After I was molested, my body formed a literal wall. Therapists call it vaginismus, but for me, it was what kept me from feeling like I was worth someone loving me.

"What good is a pretty girl who can't fuck."

It's what my abuser said to me, and that thought, as toxic and ugly as it reads, was what kept me there. People would tell me all of the time that I was pretty, but pretty means nothing when your body clamps down in fear every time a man comes near. So when I found someone I thought loved me, I held on to that. I held on to it no matter who it was or why. Because I felt lucky that I found someone who would be okay with me.

For a while, my biggest fear was being raped because I never knew how my body would react to forced penetration. Fortunately, before it happened, I discovered that my body would disassociate and become something I wish I could be to save me. It would become that woman I thought I was when I was molested as a teen. But she had also matured, and she had enough strength to terrify my attacker with a police baton that was gifted to me by a friend that I kept hidden in my purse.

And even though I wanted to collapse inside, she would pick me up off of the ground and run down the dark alley to my friend Jake's house. And that she would wait until I was safe inside and the blood was being washed off of my hands to let me come back a little. Once I realized Jake's hands were shaking as he cleaned my hands, she let go of my body and let me shake, too. And she would release all of me to cry while Jake, who had been there for me many times before, held me until the police showed up. But because she was gone, I had no voice. I was just there with men in power around me, trying to make sense of the crime and use threats of violence toward my attacker in the best way they felt would show support.

I remember my car under the streetlight, with darkness around it, and my underwear on the ground next to the open rear passenger door. Then, there were moments of giving a statement to a detective at the police station. After that, it was a silent walk through the station with my now ex as I held my underwear evidence in the Dunkin Donuts bag I had used to pick it up at the scene. So much after that was just gone.

I hadn't realized I made it home from Party City because nothing seemed to fit a typical timeline. I found myself spacing out a lot more, and daydreams would last for entire events. My thoughts would take over, and before I knew it, I had reached a destination, had a full conversation, or completed an entire task. Everything scared me, but at the same time, I was afraid of nothing. I wasn't present, and nothing seemed real, but not in a manic sense. There was no hyper-sexualization or increased urgency with highs and lows. Just a comfortable fog where time no longer existed the way I remembered it. I had felt this way before after I left my abuser. There was a time when-

"Allyson?"

I hadn't remembered calling my sister. Apparently, we had been on the phone since I got home.

"I'm sorry, can you watch Lou for a bit? I'm gonna be out of town, and I need someone to watch him for a few days."

"Where are you going?"

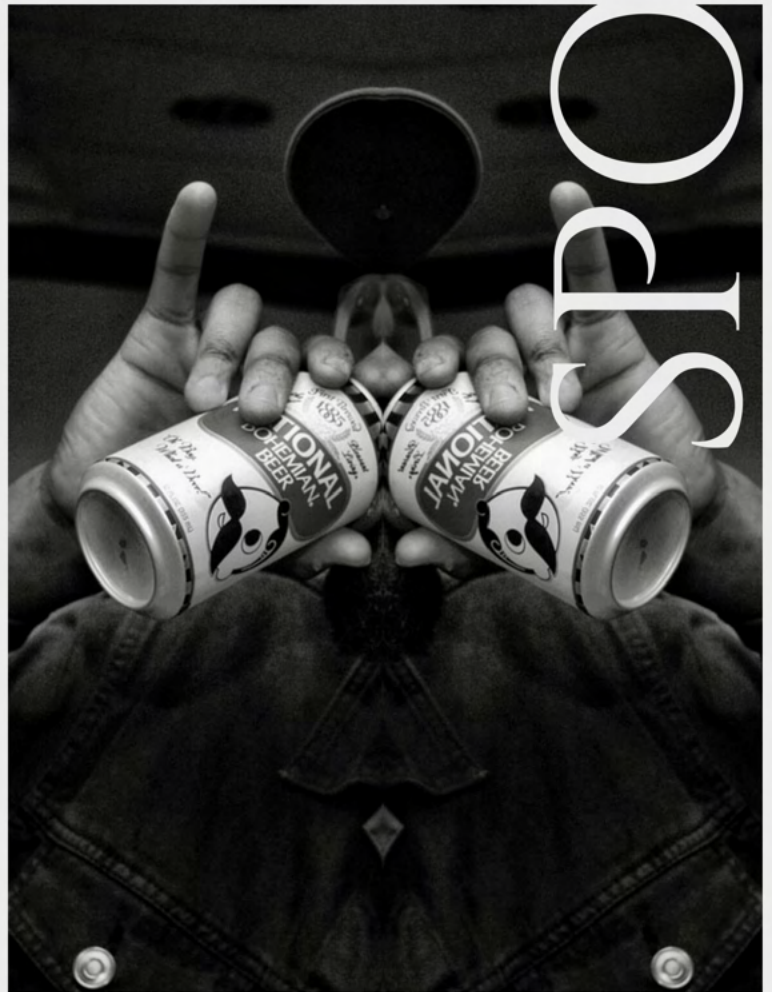
I'm no good at lying. And as an actor, people will try to tell me that lying and acting are the same, but they really aren't. It's an entirely different frame of mind because, in one sense, you are pretending to be something you are not while convincing yourself you are the person or thing you are pretending to be. In a lie, you are convincing someone of something that isn't true, and if you can convince yourself it's true, then, congratulations, you are a pathological liar.

"I just need to get away for a while."



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PHOTO

the Belvedere



photograph taken by:
@shots.on.ice on instagram



But for what remains in place of the fight
 Bloodstained asphalt razed memory's virtue
 Transitory hope found faith forgotten
 And we cannot find the wings to take flight

This baltimore stagnates she, he & child
 A whore's limbs spread wide for her pimps pockets
 While he, her pimp, does spit game, delicate
 Child, voiceless, screams bloody fucking murder

Of what comes the day of reckoning;
 When crippling fear reigns no longer?

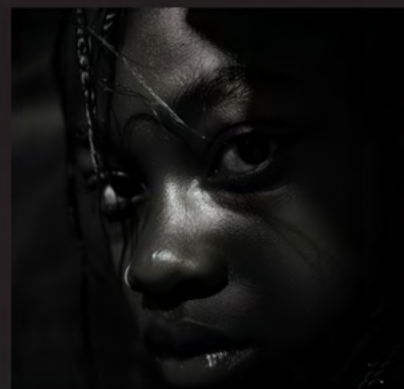
Woe unto he who has brought such tumult
 Envable shall our quintessence remain
 Recompense for this cowardice must come
 And we await, breathless, devine consult

THIS BALTIMORE

authored by: D.E. Waddell

WE [DO NOT] EXIST

authored and images by: k.johnson



NOBODY YOU SEE ON THIS PAGE IS [REAL].



EACH IMAGE WAS [CREATED] USING AI SOFTWARE.



WE [DO NOT] EXIST.

WE [DO NOT] EXIST

authored and images by: k.johnson



In the digital haze, between bytes and beliefs, we craft faces from the ether—faces that speak without voices, gaze without eyes, and breathe without lungs. These faces, rendered from the vast nothingness, tell tales of existence without living, whisper stories of being without birth. These images peer into the realm of created identities, a phantasmagoria of digital souls birthed by lines of code rather than lines of ancestry.

In this eerie expanse, we confront an unsettling truth: the power to create new people, new histories, and new narratives, entwined with the legacy of being historically unseen and unheard. Here, in this digital mirage, Black figures emerge, not from the womb of human experience but from the imagination of algorithms.

They stand before us, echoing the centuries-long cry for recognition, for visibility, that has been both a battle cry and a lament for Black people around the globe.

Yet, these AI-crafted visages underscore a profound irony. In a world where the existence of Black people has been systematically marginalized, where their voices have been drowned out by the cacophony of indifference and hostility, we now possess the eerie ability to conjure Blackness from the void. But these digital specters, no matter how meticulously rendered, cannot laugh, cannot cry, cannot rage against the machine of oppression.

They are but shadows on the wall, a simulacrum of life, mimicking what it means to be seen yet remaining inherently invisible.

This is a meditation on the simulacra of existence, a reflection on the disembodied faces that stare back at us, challenging us to reconsider the essence of being and visibility. This is a journey where the specter of digital creation forces us to confront the ghosts of erasure and the haunting presence of those who, despite everything, refuse to be ignored.

This is not just an exhibition of images; it's an exploration of the paradox of visibility in the age of digital omnipresence. It's a critique of the ways in which technological advancements offer the promise of representation yet often reinforce the very erasure they seek to overcome.

Gaze into the digital abyss and ponder what stares back.

Misheard
 Misrepresented
 Misplaced
 Misunderstood
 is the city without walls
 long roads, big world
 big dreamers
 colorful tapestry of goals
 in this city without walls
 distinctive voices
 echoing through the underground
 making murals without pain
 in this city without walls
 We fly
 We jump high
 We're immaculate from the womb
 We resilient
 We sarcastic
 We aim higher than that cow who jumped
 over the moon
 In this city without walls
 that's sometimes compared to a barrel
 But we still pack so much flavor
 crustaceans can't help but claw at our plate
 We so bold
 every move we make is a highlight reel
 In this city without walls
 we climb past misconceptions
 projections
 and every biased headline
 that says, we know no better
 Which is true
 We sure know how to thrive

A BALTIMORE POEM

authored by:
 LaTraia 'Lady Trai' Price



photograph taken by: @shots.on.ice on instagram



Supporting The Chicory Project is an investment in the voices and stories that make Baltimore vibrant and unique.

By visiting our website at www.thechicoryproject.org, you can dive deeper into the legacy and future of Chicory Magazine, explore our initiatives, and discover how we're championing community engagement, inclusivity, and artistic expression.

Sharing our mission and stories with friends, family, and on social media helps amplify the voices we strive to uplift. For those who are able, financial donations are incredibly impactful. Your support enables us to continue our work, expand our reach, and create more opportunities for artists and writers within our community.

Every contribution, no matter the size, plays a crucial role in sustaining this vital platform for creativity and dialogue. Join us in nurturing the roots and growth of The Chicory Project—where every story matters, and every voice is heard.

CHICORY

“the most authentic microphone of black people talking ever devised”

-- Baltimore Afro-American newspaper on Chicory, 1969