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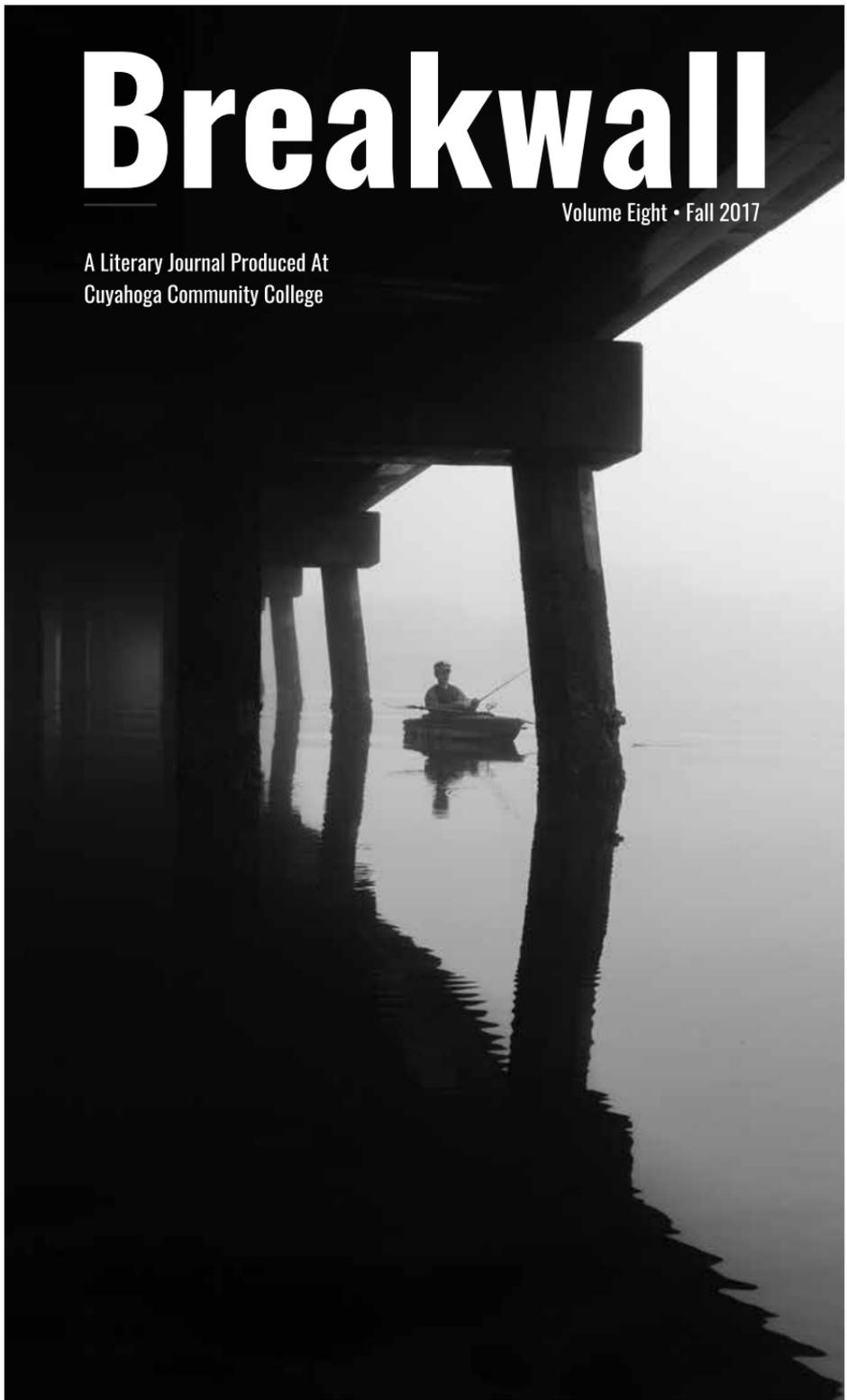
The 7th volume of Breakwall is dedicated to Jack Hagan, retired Tri-C Student Media Coordinator and champion of all things Breakwall.

Breakwall assumes all responsibility for the content of this magazine.

Breakwall

Volume Eight • Fall 2017

A Literary Journal Produced At
Cuyahoga Community College





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Breakwall

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Breakwall is a title that will call up personal images and memories for the many people familiar with a Lake Erie breakwall. Metaphorically and symbolically, this title also connotes a need for people to break down the barriers, or walls, of separation, ignorance, fear, and so on. Breakwalls are strong objects that are meant to withstand storms and the furies of nature, and they help keep the calm and rough waters separated; in fact, they help create the calm water on the shore, provide safe harbor for boats, and breakwall lighthouses were once beacons of light providing safe passage for ships. In a community as diverse as Cleveland and its surrounding areas, these metaphors and symbolic images certainly apply.



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CHOICES
UNBREAKABLE

I am by Eric Odum

*I am pollen,
Born on the winds of long beached boats and ocean currents.
Drifted north,
To a little city called Cleveland, maybe you've heard of it?
Potholed and cold,
All lake effect and humid,
Bout big as a snap and two shakes,
Divided like a split heart dangling from ribs,
Like a coconut cracked in half,
Like a compass rose,
North and South saying, "I ain't got shit to do with this one."
I was born here,
In the fall,
When the trees slept.
Diaspora blended skin,
Thick tongued, hazel eyed and loud.
An island culture in a city setting.
A potted plant in a 5 story walk up,
A grow house in a hemp field.
I have tried to tell my story before,
Sounded like a ransom letter, words cut and pasted from magazines, Fox News, the mouths of
others who mean well, but never called my body home.
Trapped inside chapters of unsteady narrative, dialogue that sounds like your car ain't got
enough cold crankin' amps in another polar vortex,
Like "Fuck me" when the tire got a slow leak.
A voice that's been trying to give birth to a story.
I am that story,
Chapters to a small novel, filled with long monologues, trying to love the sound of myself,
I am Libra.
Son.
One night stand.
I am apologies, temper and trying to pull myself together,
Trying to remember.
The shape of me.
I am a work in progress,
A collection of revisions.
I am this, the page, written and read,
Created by the shape I hold in the third eye of lovers and family.
I am.*

Metamorphosis

 by Grace Roberson

I was ten.

*I was holding a pencil as yellow as the sun,
praying for the courage to press down
on the piece of paper in front of me.*

In fourth grade, my teacher ordered a class set of larva.

That was the year I learned about metamorphosis.

*By definition, it's the process
of transformation from an immature form to adult
in two or more stages.*

*But I thought of it as
the promise of being something else.*

*I know how much time we spend
wondering if someone will run
their fingers down our spines
and like what they read when they open us.*

*We can have the tragedy,
we can have the happy ending,
and we can survive both,
even if that means we have to
find our way out of the chapter where we got lost.*

I was not a child the last time I felt small.

*I was not at a museum
the last time I looked at art;
he was the mountain in a landscape
I had to tear my eyes away from too soon.*

*I don't need the Weather Channel
to tell me that my temper can put them out of business,
Because if you press a stethoscope to my chest,
you can hear thunder.*

*And I am learning that people are storms
in the sense that sometimes
you have to cross an ocean to get to them.*

*But maybe the quickest way
to facing our own storms
is coming clean through that ocean,
filling the ache in the empty,
not caring if we sink or swim, but if we*

*still have lightning in us
by the time we reach the shore.*

*There's always going to be a devil and an angel
standing on our shoulders,
reminding us that the truth isn't black or white,
but the color of the sky
after the last shot of a war has been fired.*

And we can love ourselves among the wreckage.

*This is how I got here:
a long thread of words unraveling
in a moment where I forgot
what it felt like to breathe.
Every poem is a destination,
every poem is telling me that I've got miles left to go.
But the end is where we start from.*

Mirror Me *by Hope Beck*

*Mirror mirror, on the wall
Who's the fairest of them all?*

*Little Lotte floats in
Negative Space
Thoughts of others flitting, fluttering
Indecisive, she flies
Through the open black space*

Run

Hide

*Little Lotte gets lost in the forest of thoughts
Deeper and deeper –
- Caught*

*The Huntsman
Overtaken by beauty
Sees what others chose not to*

He whispers words of solace, of wisdom and warn

Once again she is tumbling through the thick foliage of her mind

*You draw her mind
Painting poetry of unreachable dreams
Streams and oceans of you*

Her

Me

Them

*Finally a safe bubble
Seven Sins
Tempting her, encouraging her, welcoming her
Into the false interpretations of who she thinks she is*

*Then they depart
Heigh Ho, we're off to go!*

Little Lotte dreads the vacant home

*Creaking with torn decisions
Howling with tormented thoughts*

*Boom!
Boom! Boom!*

Pulse. Beat. Bea –

*A kindly hag stands at the door
Her smile is a dried wrinkled grape
Lifting a shriveled hand, holding a most ripe apple*

*Little Lotte places the apple in her palm, gazing imploringly
She knows what this apple will do
Yet she willingly bites deeply
The juices ambrosial and stimulate her taste buds
Only seconds later does she collapse
Falling slowly to the ground in a heap*

She sleeps, dreaming dreamless dreams

*Hating her pulse because it still thinks she's alive
Fairest pale skin corrugating into a frown
A fetus
Curled into the tiniest ball
Slipping softly into a decorated frame*

*“Mirror mirror, look at me
Who am I supposed to be?”*

*Ambivalent,
Or is she?*

*Staring in the darkness of many sunken eyes
Out of reach, yet so near*

Who am I? Really?

*Reflecting them, we twine closer
And closer, the roots of an old oak*

*Bleeding tears of denial
Pounding fists
Shattering image*

Free. She's finally free.

*All that's left is to pick the pieces away
Discover the unborn fetus
Recover it from the glass box*

2 Sides 2 Every Story *by Indya Powell*

*Some say poetry is only
words and metaphors neatly arranged on paper
to try and convince readers to give it a chance*

*With little or no meaning
Words being a waste of time to look at
Read*

*Or pay attention to
I let people know that poetry is
organized thoughts neatly arranged on paper
Only so readers will be intrigued by its design*

*Poetry is feelings that belong to the writer
Feelings necessary to share with the world
A true masterpiece that only a real artist could
Imagine creating
Then before your eyes it's decoded by all*

*Some say poetry is for the privacy of one's own home
Not something that's supposed to be shared with the world
More for preservation
Reminder of past
To be kept as a keep sake for future reference*

*Poetry is more than what's seen to the naked eye
It's a puzzle
Every word you read
gets you one step closer
to finishing it entirely*

*The language many creative writers
speak fluently
broken down into stanzas like thoughts
brought to you by the brain herself
then translated on paper*

'Un-Stereotype-able' by Isa Moore –Muhammed

*I am... everything they said I was and wouldn't be;
Silly them telling a Black man what he could and couldn't be.
I am...a dropout, a graduate--Muslim, Christian, and a fool;
I am... Black, Asian, Hispanic, and a little bit of you.
I am ignorant and intelligent, obedient and negligent, a thug and a president;
I am the one they shoot for walking through gated residences.
I am whatever you say I am 'cuz if I wasn't, then why would I say I am?
I-am not cat food, but I am food for thought;
I am the classroom clown who can't be taught.
I am two people, not the same but equal;
I can kill with kindness or I can be lethal.
I am the scholar, the rare miracle from my projects;
I am going to flight school with goals to learn how to fly jets.
I am the detective and the suspect, the scientist and the subject;
I am interested in hip hop and dubstep.
I am many things, but not always do I fit "requirements"
I am a Black man...A product of my circumstance and my environment.*

Pride by Jay Everett

Best way to improve yourself is to grow a spine.

Don't be a push over all the time.

Don't be the one to always want to compromise, to give up or to give in or someone that's always giving but not receiving.

Feel appreciated but not at your expense.

Demand respect without having to say, "No offense."

Stand your ground and stand with your feet planted, and keep your head high with a confidence as big as each planet in our solar system, and if there's someone with low self-esteem, just know I'm listening because I was once that person with dreams and a whole bowl of wishes just filled with goals and missions. With all due respect, I do respect you enough to expect you to respect yourself. Never regret your worth because you have yet to show your best work. Just give it time, and everything will come in given time. Just do right and be guided by your intuition. Be the one to go and get it yourself if you're not into wishing.

Follow your heart and keep it in mint condition

A Childish Level of Beautiful by Larae Nevels

*My hair is a rainbow to a thunderstorm.
A frizzy fuss frustration is a must,
But it defines me.
We oppose gravity.
Insecure cause it started off itty-bitty
Drawing attention not to mention
The ones starring replied it's very pretty.*

*I could go on for days about my flaws
But what's the point of counting them all?
I've built myself high, uniqueness through my eyes
Embrace your beauty, in every size
Where do you think your beauty belies?
Deep inside, outside too
I love the way I look, how about you?
You should hear this often, but since your reading
I thought this would be a good time to say
Your pretty last more than one season
So be the reason you smile so nice,
Let's keep this poem very concise, I think you
Should take my advice, join the committee I think we're all pretty.*

CHOICES

by Lore Chandler Smith

*Don't want to get out of bed,
All of the things to tend to just hurts my head.
Don't want to study today,
Outside forces causes me to sway.
Don't want to smile,
The effort is just not tactile.
Hangout with friends, go shopping, a movie or spoken word event to give my voice,
Every decision in life, we have to make a choice.*

UNBREAKABLE *by Lore Chandler Smith*

**Resilient, but not stiff,
Loving, but not weak,
Smart, but not yet brilliant,
Powerful, but not dangerous,
Survival...existing in a world being misunderstood,
Invisible, but seen.**

**Dreamer, yet turning dreams into reality,
Unapologetically, have the strength of a sequoia tree,
Tenacious, like a ladybug going after its garden prey,
Nurturing like a deer taking care of her young fawn,
I am who I am...I admire who I am...I love who I am
I AM A BLACK WOMAN.**

Stages

by Indya Powell & Elizabeth Fokes-El

*Tears in my eyes
As I look in the mirror
Hard times clearing glass of fog
To see my reflection clearer
To see me*

Cause see me

I've never seen me

Broke my bones to fit in tiny box

Where they say, I need be

Relaxed hair follicles

Was everything but relaxing

Lifetime scars left in head

Cause the said,

Black girl keep from scratching.

The surface of self

So nervous I felt

So worthless a shell

But as long as I was straight

I should never be pressed

They could never understand

All the wounds that were left

Finding new ways to numb the pain

Cause it has never been addressed

Can't depend on truth from those

Who benefit from keeping me oppressed

Questioning now everything that was taught about our story

Abandoned libraries hold the keys

to our ancestors' true glory

there was greatness in these roots

of those who come before me

where does the truth begin?

Lost girl

But now I'm up studying

Unlearning programs

That are inside my head

Retaining wisdom

From the pages of the books I have read

I was a queen, you were a king

And it was together we lead*So my brothas**Please understand that we love you**Black love is a beautiful love like no other**Just shedding light to the fact that we**Share the same struggles**When it comes to this daily fight**I am by your side, and on the frontline**Black man,**The pain you experience is also mine***When they take you away me and your children also do time****This system isn't designed for preserving our lives****Women and children get it too****Sandra Bland****Tamir Rice***They ask why I'm always mad**And why I'm always blaming**Willie Lynch had the formula for our separation**So we succumbed to negativity**Our love turn to hatred**Now I'm the angry black women**You turn and run away from**Unless I fit societies norms**And become complacent**Saying you want me to be natural**But not too Angela Davis**I hope one day, you love me**Like I love you**So we can turn the pages**Angry women***In the mirror, again****Eyes open****All three of them****Fully naked I stand****But I don't only see my skin****I see black magic formulating****A new queens begin***Destined for greatness**Can't waste time on no more fake shit*

Rise above all the things that have kept me only basic

Taking off those blurry glasses

That had me living in the matrix

It's time that I realized this

I am a goddess

Inside me lies all the power

So deep

It dumfounds all the so-called scholars

Who are constantly stealing culture that is ours

But see, I know the secret now

That will help me keep my crown

My internal balance

Is the strongest bullet

That will keep them down

Awakened queen

FORGETTING *by Sarah Halko*

**WE KISSED UNDER NECTARINE SKIES
THINGS WERE HAZY
MY SOUL MELTED INTO THE SOIL
AND GREW A ROSE
BUT FLOWERS WILT OVER TIME
NOW YOUR EYES HURT LIKE NEEDLES IN FLESH
AND YOUR VOICE STRINGS LIKE SALT IN A CUT
THEY SAY LOVE IS SHORT AND FORGETTING IS ENDLESS
I THINK I BELIEVE THAT
BECAUSE NOW MY SHEETS ARE A BARREN WASTELAND
AND EVERY NIGHT I SLIP INTO THE ABYSS**

SKINNY LOVE by Sarah Halko

LOVE CAN COME AND GO
THERE'S AN ACHING IN MY SOUL
YOU'VE GONE AWAY NOW
EVEN THOUGH I LOVE YOU SO
MAYBE WE WERE ALWAYS DOOMED
A SKINNY LOVE, I ASSUME
THE STRINGS THAT HELD US TOGETHER
BEGAN TO TEAR AND WEATHER
WE'VE BECOME NO MORE THAN STRANGERS
BUT I WANT TO PROTECT YOU FROM THE DANGERS
I'LL CONTINUE TO SHEILD YOU FROM THE DARK
EVEN WHEN WE'RE FAR APART
I CARE FOR YOU I SWEAR I DO
I'LL LOVE YOU FAR BEYOND FIFTY-TWO
BECAUSE A RELATIONSHIP CAN END
BUT LOVE NEVER DOES BEND
I'LL BE HERE
YOU'LL BE THERE
BUT I'LL LOVE YOU
LIKE I ALWAYS DO

ARTIFICIAL BEAUTY

 by Sarah Halko

I DO NOT WANT TO
KEEP BRINGING YOU
BACK TO LIFE WITH MY WORDS
I AM PAINTING YOU AS
A BEAUTIFUL
SOFT
ENDLESS
SUNSET
WHEN YOU WERE ONLY
A SCRIBBLE ON CANVAS
I MADE YOU BEAUTIFUL
ON YOUR OWN YOU
ARE A MESS OF
MANIPULATION AND
HATE AND
ANGER
I HOPE YOU HOLD ONTO
THE BEAUTY I GAVE YOU
ALTHOUGH FOR NOW
I NEED TO REMIND MYSELF OF
THE UGLY IN YOU
SO I CAN
SEE THE BEAUTY IN ME.

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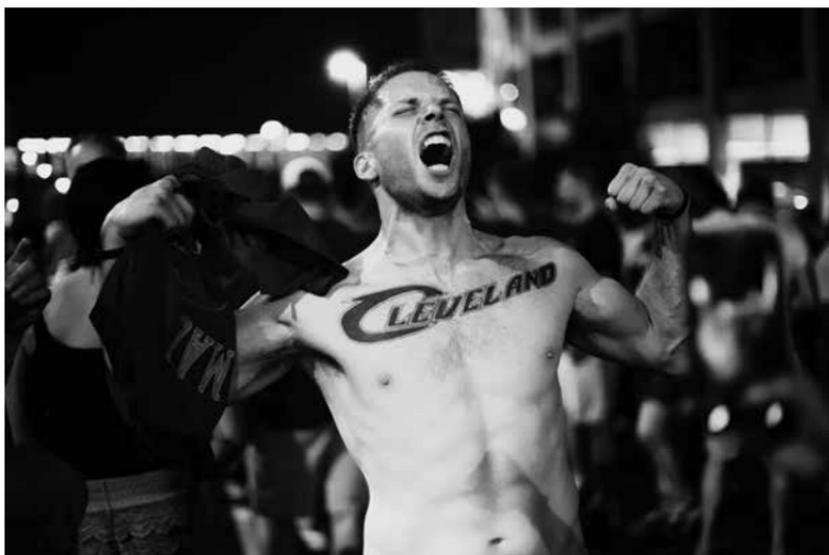
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Danny Murtaugh



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Jonathan Chiarle



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Jenna Kapinski



Kari Weiner



Dashaunae Jackson



Amanda Specht



Britany Pabon



Paula DiFrancesco



Andrew Cari



Amanda Gill



Colin Bledsoe



Megan Fisher



Joshua Foster



Prose

Danny Cuellar

You're Not Missing Much

Debra Gipson

Redlining

Grace Roberson

Next Sunday

Lore C. Smith

Love Never Fails

You're Not Missing Much by Danny Cuellar

I'm laying down listening and feeling the harmonies and vibrations coming out of my stereo. My eyes are closed, painting a picture of a planet as a goddess with blue eyes and wavy blonde hair as the surface. She is the ground, grass and trees; her beauty encompasses the whole surface of the planet. Here I am walking on her land with my four string, feeling as if it's a privilege to be there. I can see the vibrations and waves making complex patterns that send off each note I pluck. It's magic, like a wizard with his wand; the energy is far beyond me. I'm not the one creating the music because it's already been created. I open my eyes to my white textured ceiling and look at my hands to reassure that wasn't me playing just because it felt so real. I start singing along with the song "going against your mind, going against your miiiiindddd," and start playing air guitar to the solo.

My step dad peeps into the room and sees me playing nothing like it's something. "You playing at the bar tonight?" he asks, totally ignoring the fact that I'm playing air guitar.

"Ya, I'm leaving at 8 to go up there, don't worry about coming though, I don't even know what time I'll be playing."

"Okay, well good luck man, I still want to see you play!"

"Thanks man but you're not missing much," I laugh. He gives me a funny smile like I'm lying to him and shuts my door.

I get out of my bed and look at my phone. It's 4:30 in the evening. I turn off the music that's still playing on my mac and grab my bass that rests on its stand. It's a black and sunburst blue bass, my first love. I sit on my black bed stand and start fiddling around on it. It's weird; I always feel like I can never come up with any good basslines when I'm by myself. Even when I do, I feel like I'm playing the same thing, just at a different key. I close my eyes and start visualizing that I'm walking on the goddess's land once again. As my eyes are closed, I start playing a jazzy bassline I learned the other day. I start singing random words while imagining myself on the tiny planet where only I can hear and feel the pulsations coming from my fingers. Only when I'm playing do I feel that I'm able to tap into other people's minds like the bass gives me some sort of awakening power.

Some hours pass before I realize I haven't eaten all day. This happens all too often; I get so caught up in the music that I lose track of time. I'm able to focus on music for long periods of time which is weird because I have a small attention span. I like to stay moving, but music keeps me going without having to keep moving every minute. I start walking towards the kitchen as I am tapping my fingers on my thighs. I could already smell the rice and chicken my mother made earlier in the day. Her music is cooking; she makes it seem like an art. Her meals are always good like an album with no mediocre tracks. Today, she made rice, beans, and veggies with chicken, my favorite. I make myself a plate and start devouring.

Eight o'clock rolled around and it was time to head to the bar in my old hometown. Although it's about a twenty-minute drive, I love it because it's enough time for me to clear my mind. It also gives me time to listen to at least half of an album. I always get so nervous before I play in front of people. That's probably why I like it when there are not a lot of people at the bar, probably because there's less of an audience to try to impress. Well, I guess I shouldn't say impress because that's not what I'm trying to do, I just want to play.

The bar looks like a red house. It's on the top of a hill right in front of a railroad track, but it's honestly not a big bother. I pull up and see people standing in front of the bar; I can already tell it's going to be full tonight. I parked in the back parking lot that is almost filled. I get out of my Corolla, and I can already hear the jams. I walk into the bar trying not to act like an awkward human being as I'm tapping another rhythm on my thigh. Dave, a long haired friendly guy who hosts the open mic, is playing his twelve string and quickly notices me.

"Danny my boy! Welcome back. Want to jam next with Bam-bam and I?" He talks into the mic as he's still strumming.

"Of course!" I respond, "Let me go grab my bass." I walk out the back door and into the parking lot to my car. As I'm walking back up, I can hear my friend Eric up in the front of the bar. Eric plays guitar in my friend David's band, Sundazed. He's honestly one of the best guitarists I know. I walk up to him as he's having a conversation with this middle aged man who seems pretty drunk. The man has on a Budweiser hat to cover his balding head and is wearing a blue shirt and jeans. He stops talking to Eric as soon as he notices me. I think I have a sign on my head or something because he seems so shocked to see me.

"Whoa, look at this kid, I wish I was staying to watch you play but I'm too drunk," he says. Oh great, now someone thinks I'm good just because I got an afro, even though Eric is right next to me and is much more talented.

So I respond kindly, "You're not missing much man, but you should really want to see him play," I point to Eric and walk into the bar.

I take my bass out and plug into the bass amp. I look up at Dave and he seems to be waiting for me to play something. Gore, whose first name I don't know, hops on the drums. This is my cue, but I don't know what to play. Whatever, I say to myself, so I just start playing this funky bass line that I want to turn into a song.

I look at the drummer, who already has the stank face. Then I hear the guitar come in with this funky sounding wah effect to it. We fall into a groove and I can hear the crowd getting into it. Some people start to dance as others start recording us, and I can feel my nerves leaving my body. It's the best feeling in the world, because we are expressing ourselves through these abstract sounds. I can get into someone's mind and change their mood, making me feel like a wizard once again. I slow down my bassline to allow room for the guitarist to solo; it's a team effort so I can't just be shredding the whole time. The guitarist starts hitting all the pretty notes and I can't help but close my eyes. I go back into my tiny planet but this time, others are with me and we are one. I feel at ease; this is my home.

Redlining

by Debra Gipson

In 2000, on a crisp, cool Fall day, I walked out of my office overlooking the Pittsburgh skyline and stepped up to my Administrative Assistant's desk to tell her that I was going home early to study for the Bar Exam. She called me 'lucky.' I have often wondered why I hadn't simply thanked her and continued walking. Instead, I stopped to explain that I agreed, before describing my life as 'perfect.'

There was no reason for me to think otherwise. I had racially integrated a prestigious law firm and though the contracts I drafted returned to me stamped with red lettering indicating that I should have selected different wording or with notes asking questions my work needed to answer, I understood that the edits did not convey anger. The redlining conveyed potential. The kind of potential which got me appointed to boards and requested as a keynote speaker at a Black History Month celebration.

My ruggedly handsome live-in boyfriend and I had already begun to plan our wedding. My eleven-year-old son, from a previous relationship, would walk me down the aisle. My blond haired, precocious toddler, just a few days shy of turning fifteen months old, would carry our rings. I earned so much money that I worried my paychecks represented accounting errors. This was it. I had awakened to my dream: the one in which I was going to retire from practicing law and spend the next forty years writing screenplays and intentionally annoying the neighbors by sharing photos of my grandchildren.

It would have hurt a lot less if my secretary hadn't described me as 'lucky' or if I hadn't stopped to reply. It wasn't her fault. There was absolutely no way she could know that a storm was coming. Besides, she hadn't intended any malice or jealousy. She said it because that one word accurately described my rise from the poverty and violence of my childhood to the hallowed halls of that law firm. Besides, when I have redlined that day it isn't the word 'lucky' I edit. It is the unimaginable pain and anger and heart break which accompany the story that cause me to Sisyphus-like rewrite it again and again and again.

Two hours after hearing my life described as 'lucky' I would find my beautiful toddler in a coma on the floor of my private sitter's living room. He died two hours later, and with him the dream that I would ever be a lawyer or marry my fiancé. All the board appointments and the paychecks with commas and the speaking engagements... gone.

The Coroner said that he died from acute myocarditis, which is a fancy way of saying that a virus decided to rent space in his heart and reproduce. For twenty-nine days, I descended into madness. Seventeen years later, I do not have the language to adequately describe my anguish. On the thirtieth day, I got up, dressed and stepped onto a stage to deliver the keynote address I'd written hours before my Administrative Assistant called me 'lucky.'

Each time I apply for a job and my resume gets examined I am inevitably asked, “Why aren’t you barred?” In that moment, right before I silently scream inside where only God can hear me, and right before I hear myself say, “My son died a few weeks before I was scheduled to take the exam.” I watch the interviewer drop his head to silently survey his life before deciding that he is ‘lucky’ before whispering, “I’m sorry.” He doesn’t know that I wish with everything in my soul that I could redline that day and that question.

I was once asked to describe my greatest challenge in two pages. In truth, I didn’t need two pages. I needed two words: I live. I chose those two words because the sentence ‘I live,’ is ‘perfect.’ There is no need for it to be redlined.

Next Sunday *by Grace Roberson*

A soft wind blows through Central Park and the leaves above me rustle, creating a song. Spring has arrived in New York, but there's still a faint chill in the air. Nonetheless, I roll my shoulders back and open up my fresh copy of *The New York Times*. The date at the top may be different each week, but the content is always the same. What have I missed since last Sunday? A politician lied, a Hollywood starlet came all the way to New York to be on Broadway, scientists discovered a new breed of bird or reptile. In other words, not much. As usual, I skip all the way to the obituaries.

I'm about to read the words of the recently departed when I hear a sharp thud. A battered backpack attached to the hand of a girl has just made itself comfortable on the other side of my bench. The girl sits down, makes a big fuss of pulling a paperback out of her bag, and slumps comfortably into the bench. She peeks over at me through her bangs. I tip my hat at her out of courtesy, but of course I'm annoyed. I direct my attention back to the *Times*.

Some of the passages include pictures, which I don't like. I prefer anonymity - I like to imagine what these people might have looked like based on the words that describe them and what they left behind. Did their smile light up a room whenever they walked in? Or did their eyes have a look of prolonged sadness to them? Pictures gave away the air of mystery. But I always paid attention to their age. If someone died in their sixties I would still consider them a kid. Oh, they were so young, I'd think to myself with a sigh.

"Why are you reading the obituaries?" a voice asked. I looked up, startled. The girl with the bangs was eyeing me. I raised my eyebrows at her. I could already tell there was something particularly odd about her. I tried to think of an answer to her question.

Because I'm looking for **her**, I wanted to say.

"Ah, it's just been a habit of mine since my wife died." My voice wavered. My wife died. My wife died. My wife died. Hearing myself say those three words out loud still sent a chill down my spine, even after ten years.

The girl's mouth formed a small O and she pressed her back all the way against the bench in shame. "I'm sorry," she whispered. Her bangs acted as a curtain on her face; I could no longer see her eyes.

"Oh, it's quite alright. How were you supposed to know?" I said.

"I guess you're right. I still am sorry, though." she replied, her tone more relaxed.

I shrugged and diverted my eyes back to the small black typeface, assuming our exchange was over. I was, of course, wrong.

"When did she die?" Her voice cut through the air like glass.

“June 4th, 2005.” Saying the date was like swallowing a bullet. Maria was sixty-three. Just a kid.

“Oh...wow.” The girl said. Oh wow was right. I was supposed to go first. Maria was supposed to write my eulogy, not the other way around. When the time came for me to prepare my remarks I didn’t want to be generous. I was selfish. How could I put someone like Maria into words without giving too much away to everyone else who dared to listen? I had every right to be selfish. So I was. I was selfish, and vague.

“She certainly was something.” I said, opting for vagueness again. I couldn’t help it.

The girl was silent for a while. I gave up on the paper. Any other efforts I would make to pick it back up at this point would surely be thwarted.

“I’m Claire, by the way,” the girl said, pushing her bangs off her face.

“Tom.” I offered a small smile. She reciprocated. “What brings you to the park today?”

“Peace of mind?” She said, holding up her book, Fahrenheit 451.

“Bradbury. Good choice.”

“This is my third time reading it.”

We sat there like that for a while, in silence on the bench, as the city’s roar died down for the day. Couples walked by, dogs excitedly got tangled in their leashes, and outside the park the horns of the taxi cabs grew fainter with the end of rush hour. Soon enough, the sky transitioned from aqua to cerulean, and the lamps in the park turned on. Claire looked at her watch, and haphazardly placed Fahrenheit back into her bag. She stood up, about to say something - an awkward goodbye, perhaps. I cut her off.

“So, Claire,” I said, “Next Sunday?”

“Next Sunday.” She smiled, then turned and walked away in the opposite direction, until her silhouette became unrecognizable, fading into the rest of the city.

LOVE NEVER FAILS

by Lore Chandler Smith

As soon as I walked in their house, there was a medicinal smell meshed with the aroma of something sweet baking. The odor was the Bengay rub for his frail body and a pound cake in the oven. It was the home of my great-grandfather and great-grandmother's house. There was such an atmosphere of peace in their home. The only television program watched in their home was Billy Graham. While my mother worked, my grandmother babysat my two sisters and myself. She would prepare a tea party for my sisters and me on their enclosed back porch and bring us homemade lemonade, her delicious, delectable cakes, or some oatmeal raisin cookies. Her cooking always pleased our palate, but more interestingly, she gave particular detail in preparing the tea party. She made sure we had tablecloths and fresh cut flowers from her yard which she would tie together and pin on the back of our chairs.

My grandfather was the pastor of a small Pentecostal church in North Carolina. During the week he was a sanitation worker. My grandmother was the state Sunday School Superintendent for our North Carolina district. She did not work outside the home. She had one son (my mother's father) who died in the military at the age of 24. My grandmother was a very short and round woman. She was about 5'3" with very fair skin and had jet black shiny long hair. Her attire was that of a traditional Pentecostal woman who never wore pants and always wore hats. She was very humble and soft spoken. As a matter of fact, when she spoke, it was the sound of soft chimes with a gentle wind.

My mother went to church, but she would go to a Baptist church and send us to church with my grandmother who learned to drive at the age of 65 due to my grandfather's health. She would pick up my sisters and me every Sunday. Grandmother drove 25 miles per hour as she sat her round frame upon 3 pillows to see over the steering wheel. As kids we didn't care about that as we looked forward with much anticipation seeing some of the ladies falling out on the floor as the church musician prompted the shout, striking particular chords on the organ and sometimes the piano. My sisters and I also looked forward to our Sunday school class as we were eager learners and were rewarded with prizes for answering the teacher's questions about the lesson.

Grandmother was a sweet and gentle soul who was often the target of abuse from people in the church. Once Sunday school was over, all of the classes would gather in the fellowship hall for a quick review in which grandmother facilitated. As she was speaking, a woman was rude and disrespectful to her as if she wanted to facilitate. Grandmother ignored her and continued to proceed. The woman did this at least three times during the Sunday school recap. I remember thinking, I wish she would shut up and let Grandmother finish. Why is she being so rude to her?

Our church would periodically have an evening service and the old mothers of the church would prepare dinner in the fellowship hall and stay until the service began. I would hold onto my grandmother's apron as she whisked around in the kitchen not wanting to leave her site. There were two women who would continuously bump into my grandmother and never apologized. One of them bumped her while she was holding a bowl of gravy and it fell and broke on the kitchen floor. I looked at my grandmother's face, waiting for her to say something, but she did not. She got a bucket and mop and got up the mess while she sung the old spiritual hymn "At the Cross." I was so mad at the woman that caused grandmother to drop the bowl because she didn't help her get up the mess. I wanted to throw gravy at her, but there was nothing I could do. I did not understand why my grandmother was singing after such a terrible incident. Grandmother proceeded to clean the kitchen as I sat at a table coloring until she finished. Poor Grandmother: there was no one to help her do the dishes. Everyone went to the sanctuary for the evening service. The service had been well underway by the time Grandmother and I got there. I looked at the ladies who had caused her undue duress on many different occasions with such detestation. I wanted to stop the service and tell everyone who the evil women were and their actions toward my grandmother. I looked over at my grandmother who had jumped right in participating and praising God as if nothing had happened in the kitchen or during the Sunday school recap.

Once everyone left the church, my grandfather locked the door and Grandmother, my sisters, and I piled into the car for the ride home. As she drove her usual speed of 25 miles per hour the car was quiet. All of a sudden my grandmother says to my grandfather, "Pastor, it sho wuz a good service. God did whut he needed to do." I wondered why she didn't tell him about the lady who was rude during the Sunday school recap or the ladies pushing her in the kitchen causing her to drop the gravy bowl.

My grandfather and grandmother are now in heaven. The lesson I learned from my grandmother was that it wasn't about what she felt at the time. She knew she represented her husband, the reputation of the church, but most of all Jesus Christ. She was the total personification of love and patience. Her favorite scripture comes to mind often: "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous and does not sing its own praises. It isn't arrogant and rude. It doesn't think about itself. It isn't irritable. It doesn't keep track of wrongs. Love never stops being patient, never stops believing, never stops hoping never gives up. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

At my grandmother's funeral, the eulogy was about the love she exemplified to everyone during her life of Christian service. To love is a choice and she made a conscious effort not to react when situations presented its ugly face. My grandmother taught me that it takes great effort to love when one has been targeted by the unlovable.

This is the poem I had printed in her obituary:

My Guardian Angel

By Susan Perry

Are there guardian angels? I believe so, for God gave me a beautiful lady to help watch me grow

A lady so beautiful inside and out, She had to be an angel God let slip out

This lady's a blessing from the Lord up above, who taught me life's lessons through and love

A lady to protect me from all of my fears, and love me and hold me and wipe all my tears

A lady so special she's touched lives of many, and keeps us together at all cost, if any

This lady is my Grandma, to her I do owe all the joy life can bring wherever she goes

I love you, Grandma; thanks for being you.

Since I have been an adult, I have been in churches where women are very disrespectful and mean to the Pastor's wife. Is it because they covet her position? Is it because they like the charisma of the pastor and desire to be with him? Whatever the reason, I have a special heart for spiritual first ladies as I have experienced the cruelty of church women. I too realize that love never fails.

Biographies

About the Contributors

Ryan Abshire is a Tri-C student majoring in photography. After learning about studio lighting, he began to experiment with different techniques and found a passion for it. This is his first time being published and he is very pleased to be featured along with his classmates.

Just a hometown girl, living in a lonely world, **Hope Beck** started writing at the age of nine. What might have sparked this, you may ask? In books, she could escape to other worlds, be another person, and go on adventures she could only dream of! She grew tired of the clichés, so she took it to the next level.

Colin Bledsoe is currently studying photography at Cuyahoga Community College. He believes photography is still one of the most important mediums for communicating information. "A powerful photograph or image can rewrite a narrative or reinforce an existing one, open a closed mind or simply change a made up one."

Andrew Cari is a graduate of the Tri-C photography program. His interests include landscape, environmental portraiture, street, and studio photography. He has explored 19th century photographic technology, combining it with that of the current century. Life style exploration and documentation of personal artifacts is a recent focus.

Jonathan Chiarle is a filmmaker and photographer currently residing in Ohio. Forever the student, his work is largely ambiguous and usually explores the gloomier side of the human condition. He is currently developing a feature length film as well as planning different photo projects.

Danny Cuellar is a 20-year-old Tri-C student who plans on getting an associate's degree for Recording Arts Technology. He attended Olmsted Falls High School and graduated in 2015. He is a bass player and singer who plans on pursuing a career in music. He likes to write and play music with his friends when he is not working or at school. He just started his first band, *Collective Conscious*.

Paula DiFrancesco was born in Fortaleza, Brazil and is married with two children. She has been living in Cleveland since October of 2005. She decided to study Photography at Cuyahoga Community College in the year of 2014 when she got her first DSLR camera. Her favorite type of photography is documentary and portraits using natural and studio lighting. One of her goals as a photographer is using her passion for documentary and portraits to make a photography book focusing on children in the autism spectrum.

Jay Everett is a 19 year old student from Twinsburg, OH who writes poetry and song lyrics in his spare time. Jay enjoys writing his lyrics from a relatable perspective so the

readers and listeners can have a better feeling and understanding of what is being said. He is in his first year of college and plans to major in audio engineering.

Megan Fisher first discovered her love for photography while taking a film photography class in high school. She began college for graphic design, but her drug addiction took hold of her life and dropped out. After getting sober, she decided to go back to school to pursue her love for photography. She began at Cuyahoga Community College in 2015 and is anticipating to graduate December 2017. Her dream job is to document different social issues to bring awareness and educate the world.

Elizabeth Fokes-El graduated from Tri-C in Fall 2016 with her Associate of Arts degree and is currently at Cleveland State University to obtain her degree in Social Work. Elizabeth wears many hats, including writer and mother. It is her children whom inspire her to write and finish school.

Joshua Foster is a native of northeastern Ohio. He graduated from Mount Union College in 1999 with a BA in Philosophy and Psychology. After years as a hobbyist photographer, Joshua followed his passion and left his career as a draftsman in the steel industry to pursue a photography degree from Tri-C.

Debra Gipson is from East Cleveland. After successful careers in the law and military she decided to become a professional screenwriter. She is currently taking classes at Tri-C while she awaits decisions from film schools. Her goal is to win an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay.

Amanda Gill was born in Cleveland, Ohio on September 27, 1993. She graduated from Brunswick High School in Brunswick, Ohio in June of 2012 and attended college at Baldwin Wallace University and Cuyahoga Community College. In 2017, she graduated from Tri-C, where she earned an Associate of Arts degree. Amanda plans to return and complete the photo program to earn an Associate of Business and Visual Communications Design degree.

Sarah Halko is a freshman at Tri-C and a 2016 graduate from Brecksville-Broadview Heights High School. She enjoys writing and painting in her free time and uses art as an emotional outlet. You can find some of her work on her Instagram page: [Instagram.com/sarahhalko](https://www.instagram.com/sarahhalko).

DaShaunae Jackson is a photographer of many subjects and is a student at Tri-C. Her passion for photography was born in high school when she joined yearbook. She studied graphic design at Kent State University. Her interest has since returned to photography and she uses the same principles of design to create her photos. She enjoys portraiture and street photography. She loves capturing people in their natural form and documenting people of all cultures. She is currently working on a personal project on public transportation. DaShaunae Jackson resides in Garfield Heights, Ohio.

Jenna Kapinski is a 21-year-old photography student at Tri-C. She enjoys landscape and portrait photography and hopes to eventually pursue a career as a nature photographer after graduating. Jenna also enjoys urban exploring and showcasing these decaying landscapes in a new light not previously seen before.

Since retiring from public school teaching, **Judith Khaner** has focused on her love of people and places through photography. She is a Tri-C Photography student and a Photography/Digital Photobook instructor. Her photographs have been in magazines, juried exhibitions and in a NE Ohio hospital.

Isa Muhammad is a 19 year-old writer, activist, poet, and hip-hop artist. He has enjoyed writing since the 6th grade. In his free-time he finds time to relax somewhere, preferably warm and green; the fresh air frees his thoughts for him to put in his electronic journal.

Danny Murtaugh is a lifestyle commercial photographer and VC&D student at Cuyahoga Community College. Danny enjoys exploring Ohio with his camera to capture the beauty that God has created. He loves being outdoors, often hiking and adventuring in the Cleveland Metroparks with friends and his dog.

Larae Nevels is a student at Cuyahoga Community College.

Eric Odum is a graduate of Cleveland School of the Arts in the disciplines of Creative Writing and Dramatic Arts. He was a 3-time member of the Cleveland Youth Slam Poetry team. He currently runs a youth org called One Mic Open, in partnership with Twelve Literary Arts.

Britany Pabon is always creating with a back-story in mind. Her work usually consists of deeper concepts than what is seen. Her goal is to eventually become an art director, working to be creative as a community. She'll be graduating in spring 2017 with a photography and arts degree.

Jim Pojman has lived overseas for 22 years. During that time he developed an interest in environmental portrait photography as a way to document life outside of the U.S. Since returning to the States three years ago he has explored photography as a medium to investigate social and political topics.

Indya Powell is a journalism major who loves to write about everything around her. She is most inspired by life's journeys, love and happiness. Indya has graduated from Tri-C and plans on continuing her education at Cleveland State University. When taking a break from writing, she enjoys reading, cooking, and spending time with loved ones.

Grace Roberson is currently a sophomore and will be transferring to Cleveland State University in the fall to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in English. She has been writing since she was nine years old. Grace is a blogger, avid reader, and journals frequently. Some of her biggest influences are Sylvia Plath and Cheryl Strayed.

Lore Smith is a North Carolina native who will never get used to Cleveland's extreme winter temperatures. She is a Human Resource Management major at Eastern Campus and is a staff writer for The Voice. She plans to transfer to Cleveland State University. She has always loved self-expression through writing adhering to the words of Anne Frank, "I can shake off everything as I write, my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn."

Amanda Specht is a fine art photographer based out of Cleveland, Ohio. She is currently attending Tri-C to further her skills in visual arts and will transfer to Cleveland State to graduate with a degree in art therapy. She spends most of her time creating conceptual portraits, along with researching and photographing decaying structures. In

addition to two photographs inside *Breakwall*, Amanda's work is featured on the cover.

Kari Weiner is a Fall 2016 graduate of Cuyahoga Community College, majoring in Photography. She plans on continuing her education in Fall 2017 to pursue a Bachelor of Arts. She's the mother of two girls, who have starred in many of her photography projects. She also enjoys photographing events and outdoor activities. When she's not behind the camera, she loves spending time with her kids, reading, and cooking.

About the Selection Committee

Melanie Costanzo is a 22-year-old visual artist who channels her heart through songwriting, photography, and film. She aspires to be a director one day. If it involves new thrills, adventure, people, places, or food, find her there! She seeks to change the world by spreading kindness wherever life takes her.

Joanne Ferrone worked for slightly over thirty years prior to enrolling at Tri-C. In December 2016, she graduated from Tri-C, Summa Cum Laude, with an Associate of Arts degree. Currently, she attends Baldwin Wallace University majoring in English. In her spare time, Joanne enjoys volunteering her time working with rescued horses.

Tracy Hudson is pursuing her Associate of Arts degree at Cuyahoga Community College. She serves as the editor-in-chief of *The Voice*, Tri-C's award-winning student newspaper.

2017-2018

Call for Literature Submissions

Breakwall is Cuyahoga Community College's creative and literary arts publication. This publication is a high quality, easily accessible creative outlet for students to showcase their talents in the arts (poetry, fiction, drama, essays, feature articles, photography, graphic art). All Tri-C students, current and former, are encouraged to submit.

Each contributor may submit up to three pieces, in any combination of genres:

Prose/Drama/Feature Articles: 3,000 words maximum per piece; one-act plays are appropriate for the size constraints of the publication. Please double-space submissions.

Poetry: 1,000 words maximum per piece; please submit in the page layout you intend.

Artwork and Photography: Only black and white submissions will be accepted. Please save as .jpg file (quality of 8) with a resolution of 300 ppi. The image size must be 11" as its highest or widest dimension. Save each photograph as "Last_First_number_email address.jpg"

All pieces must be submitted in electronic format. Save all text files as .rtf, .doc, or .docx and all visual images as .jpg files on a flash drive or CD-ROM. The drive/CD must contain all submissions plus a 50-word biography of the contributor, written in third-person point of view. Submissions will also be accepted through e-mail.

Only submissions that are complete and follow all guidelines will be forwarded to the selection committee. Selected works reflect the aesthetic judgment of the selection committee and no work is guaranteed publication.

Please double-check for grammatical and typographical errors prior to submitting your work. The editors are not responsible for publishing errors contained in submitted items.

The editors use a blind submissions process. Therefore, **do not include your name on the submitted entries**-include it only on the Submission Form where you list the title(s) of your work(s) and your contact information. In early spring 2018, selected contributors will be notified of the intent to publish their work(s). Anticipated publication date is late spring 2018.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018

You may submit your drive/CD in one of two ways:

MAIL/IN PERSON:

Breakwall, c/o Lindsay Milam
MLA 223-S
2900 Community College Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115

VIA EMAIL:

Lindsay.Milam@tri-c.edu

If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Milam at Lindsay.Milam@tri-c.edu or at 216.987.4544.

2017-2018

Literature Submission Form

Please answer all questions on this form. To submit your work, follow the directions on the Call for Submissions.

NAME	
MAILING ADDRESS, CITY, STATE & ZIP CODE	_____ _____
PHONE#	
EMAIL	
WHICH TRI-C CAMPUS DO YOU ATTEND?	<input type="checkbox"/> METRO CAMPUS <input type="checkbox"/> WEST CAMPUS <input type="checkbox"/> EAST CAMPUS <input type="checkbox"/> WESTSHORE/CC CAMPUS

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

List the title(s) and genre(s) of your submission(s). Please be sure that only the titles of your submissions appear on the copies you are submitting to the editorial committee. There is a maximum of 3 total submissions per contributor, regardless of genre. Genres include prose, poetry, drama, essay, art, or photography.

Title of Submission Item (if submitting artwork, indicate the medium used, such as digital photography, acrylic paint, etc.)	Genre
SUBMISSION 1	
SUBMISSION 2	
SUBMISSION 3	

BIOGRAPHY:

Please include a 50-word biography with your submission. If your work(s) are accepted, this biography will be featured on the Contributor list. If you do not include a biography and your work(s) are accepted, your name will not be listed on the Contributor list. Use third-person point of view when composing your biography.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL WORK:

I hereby state that all works submitted are my own and previously unpublished. I grant the editorial committee permission to use my works for publication and promotion of Breakwall, which may include publication on the future Breakwall website.

CONTRIBUTOR SIGNATURE

DATE

2017-2018

Call for Photography Submissions

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All pieces must be submitted in electronic format. If your photograph is selected, you will be required to write a 50-word biography of the contributor, written in third-person point of view.

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SUBMISSION DEADLINE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018

SUBMIT YOUR FILES VIA:

WESTERN CAMPUS:

Drop your files in the Breakwall folder of the Student Drop in the VisCom labs

EASTERN CAMPUS:

Drop your files in the Breakwall folder in MacWork in the VisCom labs

METRO CAMPUS:

Drop your files in the Breakwall folder of the Student Drop in the VisCom labs

FILE NAMING:

Last_First_1_email address.jpg
Last_First_2_email address.jpg
Last_First_3_email address.jpg

SUBMISSION FORM NAMING:

Last_First_BreakwallForm_email address.jpg
The Breakwall form should be photographed or scanned once it is signed and should be submitted as a JPG

MAIL/IN PERSON:

Breakwall, c/o Lindsay Milam
MLA 223-S 2900 Community College Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115

If you have any questions, please contact Lindsay Milam at Lindsay.Milam@tri-c.edu or at 216.987.4544.

2017-2018

Photography Submission Form

Please answer all questions on this form. To submit your work, follow the directions on the Call for Submissions.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018

NAME	
MAILING ADDRESS, CITY, STATE & ZIP CODE	_____ _____
PHONE#	
EMAIL	
WHICH TRI-C CAMPUS DO YOU ATTEND?	<input type="checkbox"/> METRO CAMPUS <input type="checkbox"/> WEST CAMPUS <input type="checkbox"/> EAST CAMPUS <input type="checkbox"/> WESTSHORE/CC CAMPUS

File Name: Instructions on Call for Submissions form	Genre
SUBMISSION 1	Photography
SUBMISSION 2	Photography
SUBMISSION 3	Photography

BIOGRAPHY:

If a photograph of yours is selected, you will be required to write a 50-word biography of the contributor, written in a third-person point of view. This biography will be featured on the Contributor list. If you do not include a biography and your work(s) are accepted, your name will not be listed on the Contributor list. Use third-person point of view when composing your biography.

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CONTRIBUTOR SIGNATURE	REQUIRED	CONTRIBUTOR PRINT NAME	REQUIRED
PHONE#		DATE	

