

CRW3375 POETICS

KEEPING OUR BELONGING



Fall 2023
CRN 13014

Prof. Sasha Roque Pimentel
The Department of Creative Writing
The University of Texas at El Paso

COURSE MEETINGS

- Tuesdays 1:30pm - 2:50pm (Mountain Standard Time)
- Education Building, Room 110

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Poetics

The United States as a collective identity was “born in genocide” (Martin Luther King, Jr.), its structural powers asymmetric and forged through slavery, imperialism, state-sponsored massacre, and racial subjugation. How do contemporary Black poets, Indigenous poets, and poets of color sing from such history into our present, a time of heightened white supremacist propaganda and racialized violence? How to speak, as poets, of our own known histories if they have been turned from popular cultural narratives into erased ahistories? How to write through how our bodies become entangled with the impositions that racialization makes on

sex and gender, and how our geographies are nationalized and boundaried? How do poets, who write in song, and with the democratic impulses of poetry, write against racism, linguistic supremacy and provisional belonging? How to claim, and reclaim, through the plasticity of poetic form, a language of rights, a language of self-seen history, and a language of belonging?

In this course, we'll survey the recent poetic works of writers such as Raquel Salas Rivera, Natalie Diaz, Carl Philips, Sonia Sanchez, Deborah A. Miranda, Claudia Rankine, Danez Smith, Jake Skeets, Aracelis Girmay, Monica Youn, Layli Long Soldier, Rick Barot, Patricia Smith, Franny Choi, Michael Torres, and more poets. We'll listen to their calls of sight and song, how these poets respond to racism in the United States, and how in poetry we can flex the form to stretch perception and understanding.

Because this is a Poetics course, a study of the theories, techniques, and methods of making poetry, we'll study the poetic techniques and methods of the poets above, in addition to nonfiction readings of theory, criticism, and historical context. Throughout the course, we'll also practice the techniques these poets employ ourselves, into our own poems, through exercises of poetic études, and workshops. Finally, students in this course will also be asked to attend virtual/physical poetry readings, and to create a group-based community intervention that uses poetry as an act of service for our community.

Keeping Our Belonging

This semester, our creative work and our readings will revolve the following subjects:

- I. *Opening Into, and Out From, Our Unspoken Places*
- II. *To Make Seen*
- III. *To Sing and Make Heard*
- IV. *To Make Home*
- V. *Who We Call Our Own*

While we won't be able to write a poem for each of the above subjects, we will read through each subject, and we'll write poems that stem from these subjects.

PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Prof. Sasha Roque Pimentel

srpimentel@utep.edu

(915) 747-6810 (for voicemail, or during at-office hours only, please see below)

Fall 2023 Office Hours

- Fridays, 11:00am - 1:00pm MST, at University Towers 510G
- Please use [this link](#), or the QR code below, to book a meeting with me during my office hours.



- Please use [this meeting link](#) and password for virtual appointments through my Zoom Office. (Password: Poetry1!).

BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

Required Readings

This is a zero-cost course, meaning I will supply all readings (essays, and supplemental readings like poems, interviews, craft pieces) via downloadable PDF documents or as internet links on Blackboard, or (more rarely) sometime as physical handouts in class.

Please feel free to bring your own computers/tablets/phones on which to view course documents, or please use [UTEP's Mobile Print app](#) or UTEP's other printing resources [here](#) if you prefer to bring printed documents for your own use.

Required Software/Applications

In addition, you'll need to use the following free software/applications to read course readings, and to upload your own creative work for workshop:

- *A PDF reader:*
You'll use this to view course materials. If you don't have one already, you can download Adobe Reader for free [here](#).
- *A PDF writer:*
Most word processing programs can save documents directly to PDF format (save as > PDF). But if you don't have one already, you can download Primo PDF for free [here](#).

UTEP Laptop Rentals

All currently enrolled students can checkout a UTEP laptop for the entire semester. There is no application required; you simply need to go to the library, Room 300, with your UTEP ID, to do so. I do encourage you to go as soon as possible in case supplies are limited.

For other equipment, such as wi-fi hotspots, cameras, cables or hard drives, please visit UTEP's Equipment Checkout page [here](#).

GRADING AND REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will be dependent on your successful completion of the following course requirements:

Your final grade will be dependent on your successful completion of the following course requirements:

A Multimedia Poetic Investigative History (70% of your final grade)

Like the poets we'll study this semester, I'll ask you to investigate a part of U.S. history in such a way that it turns you towards a multimedia poetics.

I'll give more details on this throughout the semester, but as part of this project, I will ask you to: conduct oral histories; research a topic of raciality or ethnicity that interests you in the United States, or in another country or place with which you identify; gather historical documents in various media supporting this topic, and present these to the class; write a preface in prose examining the possibilities and the limitations of this topic; and compose and workshop (in groups and in-class) and revise a longer "working" poetic piece that interrogates your topic.

Poems - 10%

As part of this project, you will write 4-6 prompted poems.

Sometimes the poems will be workshopped in small groups, and sometimes they'll be workshopped in whole-class workshops. You are also always welcome to workshop poems with me individually; just schedule a meeting during my office hours (see QR code to schedule meetings with me in the Professor's Contact Information portion of this syllabus).

We will read, and critique, and through each of our own contexts and our course's context understand your poems through these workshop sessions during our regular course meetings. Your active participation in the class workshops of your peers' work is also part of this course requirement. I ask you to please respond, during class, verbally to each of your classmates' work.

I also ask you to please give notes on your peers' poems. Please turn these in to your classmates after their/her/his poem is workshopped, as handwritten notes, as printed and typed notes, or in any electronic form, to your classmate on the day of that workshop.

I'll list the deadlines for drafts in each writing prompt, and the deadlines for these prompted pieces are in our Course Schedule. Please turn in your drafts for these poems on time, or you may not be guaranteed a workshop.

Research

I will also ask you to conduct research towards this project, some of which you'll be able to discuss in groups in class, but most of which you'll be investigating on your own, as you engage your chosen subject as deeply as possible.

While you will be conducting research throughout the semester, and while you will be submitting this to the class and in peer groups at various points of the semester, I will grade your research as a collected whole only in your Final Portfolio.

Midterm Poetry Video - 10%

You will create a short video poetic presentation that stems from your investigative project, which you'll present to the class at the midpoint of the semester. I

'll distribute more information, including information about free UTEP equipment rentals and software access, for this later this semester, and you will have a week off from scheduled course meetings in order to put together this video before it is due.

We'll watch, and respond to, these videos in class after your submission.

Final Portfolio (including a Statement of Research & Developing Aesthetics) - 50%

Finally, I'll ask you to gather all of the materials and components above as a comprehensive Final Portfolio. This portfolio is due as a PDF document at the end of the semester, to the appropriate forum on Blackboard.

I. Creative Revisions - 10%

Please revise the poems you drafted and workshopped this semester based on your learning of course concepts and feedback, into a final creative submission.

Please turn in both your final drafts and the original drafts that you submitted to workshop. Your revisions should reflect your practical understanding of central concepts from class.

I. Statement of Research & Developing Aesthetics - 20%

In addition, I will also ask you to turn a statement of reflection about your research, and your chosen subject, that reflects your learned and ongoing aesthetics in poetry.

This statement is intended to give you a chance to construct a kind of draft of your aesthetics and writing process for the kind of work you will be asked to do in a career in professional writing. More importantly, it's an opportunity for you to define your developing aesthetics in creative writing (within the context of your research subject), as artistry should be a deliberate, careful and

conscious venture. I am also asking you to consider how, as artists, you “take place” in larger and ongoing literary and artistic conversations.

This should be a text of **6-12 pages**, in a standard 11-12 pt. font, double-spaced. Please use MLA Style for in-text citations, for your required Bibliography, and your required Works Cited page.

Your Statement of Research & Developing Aesthetics should include considered responses to the bullet points below, writ in any way that you want to approach it:

- A thoughtful and sustained reflection of what was, and what is, important to you to in *writing* these poems, and why.
- A discussion of how your process, and how you are approaching your subjects, has changed throughout your writing process this semester.
- A reflection of how you have wrestled the difficulties of this subject in poetry, including: 1) the risks you have asked yourself to take in your pieces, from the technical to the emotional, 2) the risks you sight you may yet still need to take in writing each piece, but perhaps are not ready for yet right now, and 5) any further work or research that you need to do for each piece.
- A thoughtful proposal and discussion of what is important to you in general in poetry, including an analysis of how your own writing and your aesthetics are grounded in the philosophies and practices-of-craft of published writers, philosophers and other artists. (Please use MLA in-text citations and add an MLA-style Works Cited page for the writers and artists you quote).
- A thoughtful proposal and discussion on the relationship between form and what you find possible or not possible in language given the technical and emotional parameters of your chosen research subject. (How, for example, did you work creatively through limitations of memory, access to oral histories or primary sources, and/or how did you reflect these contours in your creative work?)
- An analysis of the kind of writing you have been producing, or trying to produce in this project, with regards to your larger aesthetic goals. Please include as examples work you've specifically produced in this class.

I. Compiled Research - 15%

The various components will be due throughout the semester, but I will also ask you for a final online portfolio, with links to your research media, at the end of the semester.

This research should be visible and prefaced in the Bibliography yo'll turn in with your Statement of Research & Developing Aesthetics.

I. Midterm Poetry Video -5%

I will also ask you to include a link to your Midterm Poetry Video in your Final Portfolio.

Final Exam (25% of your final grade)

During finals week, I will give you a "take home" Final Exam that will be available on Blackboard.

You will have two weeks to work on, and to submit, the Final Exam, including a week off from scheduled course meetings so you can work on your exam. This Final Exam will be based off course concepts, our readings, and our in-class discussions during Lecture Days.

It will be in short essay format, and you will take it through Blackboard.

Attendance of a Literary or Creative Event (5% of your final grade)

We are writers; thus, we are members of community. Please attend any virtual or physical event that centers any form of literature or art (including the visual arts, music, dance, etc.). As I hear of any events, I'll announce them in class. Please feel free to also let the class know if you know of any literary and/or creative events this fall.

To receive credit for this course requirement, simply email me at the end of the semester to let me know what event you attended.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This Schedule is subject to change according to my discretion as I gauge the ongoing needs of the class. I will only reduce readings or extend deadlines; I will never move up deadlines or add more required work than is listed in this Syllabus and Schedule. In the event of any changes to the Schedule, I will either announce those in class, or through email.

Fall 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All readings will be available through Blackboard by the class session <u>before</u> it needs to be read. • You should be prepared to discuss readings by the beginning of each class. • All poems for workshop are due to Blackboard on the class date before it is scheduled for workshop. Please be aware of your workshop submission deadline; so that your peers can have enough time to read, and to prepare for workshop over your piece, I cannot accept late submissions for class workshops. <u>If you turn in your poem</u>

for workshop late, we will not be able to workshop it in class.

Key

- = Lecture/Reading Discussion Days (**required attendance**).
- = Professor-Guided Group Workshop Days (you must attend the **three** dates that you are scheduled to workshop your own poems + **five** more dates).
- = Peer Workshop (**required attendance**).
- = no class meeting (due to holiday or exams)

Date

Weekly Work

Deadlines

*Because I am waiting to see how this course's enrollment changes through the add/drop period,
I will distribute the Course Schedule in class on **Thursday, August 30.***

GRADING SCALE

- A: 90-100%
- B: 89-80%
- C: 79-70%
- D: 69-60%
- F: 59% and below

FORMATTING & TURNING IN POEMS (on Blackboard)

This is a literature course for professional, practicing writers and as such, we'll be conducting whole-class and small-group workshops of your creative work. The pieces that you turn in to workshop should not be your "first" draft of that piece.

You should turn in the best possible piece you can write (having worked on that poem considerably, and through multiple drafts and revisions on your own, until you feel you can absolutely do no better) when a creative work is due, because you'll get more advanced feedback. As in any form of artistry, the harder you work at each stage of the writing process, the faster and better you will learn your craft.

When I ask you to turn in a poem, please attach it to your thread in the discussion board as a .pdf document. The work should be typed and in a single-column (unless you are purposefully writing a multiple-column poem), in a single standard font, 11-12 pt. size. Turn in only one poem per workshop submission, no more.

Please use the North American standard of single-spaced text if you are writing in English, or the HispanoAmericanx/Latin American standard of double-spacing if you are writing in Spanish, unless you are specifically playing with space. (Poems writ in both languages are welcome in this classroom.)

The point here is that you're being deliberate: please don't let Microsoft Word, or Apple Pages, determine your spacing—spacing is breath and rhythm and time to us as poets, important things!

I ask for a .pdf format because how a poem appears on the page matters as much as what it says. A .pdf copy means that we'll be able to read your line lengths, lines and stanzas exactly as you'd intended. And I'm asking you to standardize the font and font size because that appearance must be intrinsic to the poem's form, not just through font stylization. Please include the following header for each poem:

Full Name
Title
Poem Text

To post your poem or other work, first please create a new thread in the discussion board, using your first and last name(s) and the piece's title as the thread's title (e.g.: "Federico García Lorca, Romance Sonámbulo"). Please write any prefatory contextual comments you'd like for us to know about your work, or anything that you'd like the workshop to address (optional). Then please attach your PDF document to your thread.

GIVING FEEDBACK

I ask you to take your role as a poetry critic with seriousness and sensitivity.

This is an advanced course in the arts, wherein much of the learning occurs through your articulation of the subject.

Participating in giving feedback to your classmates' work will help you to read and revise your own work with more fluency and expertise. There is always something to critique. It's your job as a writer to find it. It is unacceptable to tell a fellow writer that you love or like everything about his/her poem, as this is quite unhelpful to your peers and is non-intuitive to the writing process, which demands profound revision.

During workshop, you have a responsibility to your classmates to not only read their work carefully, but to make constructive and useful comments to help them express their feelings, thoughts, and emotions into a compelling aesthetic. In the beginning I may lead discussion more, but as the course progresses, I'll expect you to take more of a lead in shaping the conversation. In respect of your peers, I expect that you will have read your colleagues' poems beforehand, that you will have made careful notes on the poems, and that you will be vocal during workshop.

On the other hand, because we are working in the field of poetry, which can often seed from an authors' autobiography, or about painfully historical topics of cultural experience, please practice care with how you talk about subjects during our workshops, especially if the topics are sensitive.

While as writers we work on the technical aspects of form, we may not always be wholly prepared for the emotions that accompany the experiences from where we are writing. While I ask you as writers to try your best to listen to the craft that your peers are recommending, as readers, I ask you to remember that behind each written piece is a human being who may have experienced that poem's content, and sometimes those experiences have been, and continue to be, painful.

COOKIE POLICY

If your phone rings while class is in session, or if your electronic materials are disruptive to the class during workshop or lecture, I'll ask you to bring cookies for the entire class for the following week.

EMAILING & COMMUNICATION OUTSIDE OF CLASS

When I contact you via email, I will do so by sending an email to your official UTEP student email.

To access your email through a phone or tablet, please [click here](#) for Mac ios and [here](#) for Android ios. If you prefer to receive email through a non-UTEP email account, please set up email forwarding. Please visit UTEP's Technology Support page for email [here](#).

Please feel free to call me anytime at 915-747-6810 to leave a voicemail message, and I'll get back to you the next time that I hold office hours.

You may also email me at srpimentel@utep.edu. I will try my best to get back to you within two days of your email during weekdays, though it may take longer over the weekend, depending on when you send your email. If at any time I anticipate an extended period in which I won't have access to email (e.g.: travel, conference, etc.), I will announce this.

WITHDRAWING FROM THE COURSE

If you feel that circumstances arise so you cannot be successful in this course this semester, please withdraw from this course officially (on Goldmine) by the university's course drop deadline of November 3, 2023 so that you can receive a "W" for a grade.

But please do write/talk to me first? I will try my best to find alternative or makeup methods for you for coursework where possible.

NAMES AND PRONOUNS

This is a course, and a space, in which writers should be able to be identified by the pronouns that they choose. This is also an LGBTQIA+/allied space. Many people might go by a name other than

their legal name. Pronouns may affirm someone's gender identity, but they could also be unrelated to a person's identity.

In this class, you are invited to share what pronouns you go by, and we seek to respect, and to refer to, people using the pronouns that they share (e.g. "he" or "she" or "they" or "ze" or any form you choose).

Please, please be respectful of everyone's chosen identities, and use only the pronouns for your peers by which they identify. In this class, we respect the power of language to name, and to know.

CENTER FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) aspires to provide students with disabilities, accommodations and support services to help them pursue their academic, graduation, and career goals. Please contact CASS at cass@utep.edu or by phone at (915) 747-5148 if you will need any accommodations for this class.

Once you contact CASS, their office will send me a letter of your needs, and I will respect all CASS-mandated accommodations.

Please note that the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) uses a software system called AIM (Accessible Information Management system). This portal provides you with access to letters of notification and the ability to fill out your CASS Alternative Testing Agreement form. This portal is available [here](#).

THE DEPARTMENT OF CREATIVE WRITING'S STATEMENT IN SOLIDARITY AGAINST RACIAL VIOLENCE (June 15, 2020)

The Department of Creative Writing at the University of Texas at El Paso stands in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and issues the following statement:

In April 1963, during the eleven days of solitary confinement for protesting for civil rights in Alabama, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, 34, began writing in the margins of a newspaper what would later be known as his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." He continued on paper towels, scraps of yellow paper, and, eventually, a writing pad his lawyers were allowed to leave with him.

"Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait.' Dr. King Jr. wrote, "[b]ut when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six-year-old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television . . . and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward

white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five-year-old son who is asking: 'Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?'; . . .when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of 'nobodiness' — then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait."

Released just days ago, through the fisheye lens of a shaky body camera worn by the police officer who chased him, we see in Oklahoma on May 20, 2019, Mr. Derrick Scott, 42, imploring the limbs choking him, "I can't breathe, I can't breathe, please!" *Give me your hand*, a voice says, as multiple knees pin him to the grass, *don't resist, you're fine*, before he dies in their custody.

On May 25, 2020 in Minnesota, Mr. George Floyd, 46, is asking for his own breath on East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue. "Please, please, please, I can't breathe. Please, man," he asks. He is being murdered by a police officer whose knee is on Floyd's neck for five minutes while a bystander begs him and the other three officers there, "No, bro, look at him, he's not responsive right now." The word bro, brother, is an invocation of kinship, that one man on a street can be tied to another man on that street, but the murderer keeps pressing his knee against Mr. Floyd, who is restrained, unarmed and unconscious, for another three minutes and 46 seconds.

In Kentucky on March 13, 2020, Ms. Breonna Taylor, 26, is sleeping in her own apartment between shifts as an EMT when police batter her front-door with a no-knock warrant after midnight, searching for two people who were already in their custody. Ms. Taylor, in her bed, unarmed, is shot eight times. They never find the drugs for which their warrant was signed, though they charge Ms. Taylor's boyfriend, Mr. Kenneth Walker, who, woken from his sleep, thinking the plainclothes officers were criminals, tried to defend himself from his bed with his licensed firearm. The officers charge him with first-degree assault and the attempted murder of a police officer. They fire over 20 shots. Ms. Taylor was studying to be a nurse while a pandemic surged across the globe, everywhere people's lungs filling with fluid, swelling for air. She was hoping to help them breathe.

On February 23, 2020, Mr. Ahmaud Arbery, 25, is jogging in a t-shirt and shorts, unarmed. He is exercising in his own neighborhood when the angle of the camera closes in on the long, grey curve of the road, then another truck and Mr. Arbery. The camera whizzes and shakes, but we can see a father and son raise their shotgun, handgun, and voices while Mr. Arbery struggles against his murderers, fighting not to be felled.

In our own Juárez-El Paso, on August 4, 2019, one summer ago, a man drives across the whole of Texas with a semi-automatic rifle. He leaves a manifesto saying he is shooting us by the rhetoric and command of the U.S. nation-state. Mr. Leonardo Campos Jr, 41; Mrs. Maribel Campos, 56; Mr. David Alvah Johnson, 63; Mr. Ivan Filiberto Manzano, newly 41; Mrs. Jordan Anchondo, 25; Mr. Andre Pablo Anchondo, 23; Mr. Arturo Benavidez, 59; Mr. Javier Amir Rodriguez, 15; Ms. Sara Esther Regalado Moriel, 66; Mr. Adolfo Cerros Hernández, 68; Ms. Gloria Irma Márquez, 61; Mrs. María Eugenia Legarreta Rothe, 60; Mrs. Elsa Mendoza de la Mora Márquez, 57; Mr. Juan de Dios Velázquez Chairez, 77; Mrs. Maria Flores, 77; Mr. Raul Flores, 83; Ms. Margie Reckard, 63; Mr. Alexander Gerhard Hoffman, 66; Ms. Teresa Sanchez, 82; Ms. Angelina Silva Engelsbee, 86; Mr. Jorge Calvillo Garcia, 61; and Mr. Luis Alfonzo Juarez, 90 die shopping for a wheelchair, composition books, loose-leaf paper, highlighters, bread, beans, soap. On April 25, 2020, Mr. Guillermo Garcia, 36, who had been at Walmart to raise money for his daughter's soccer team, dies

after fighting to breathe in the hospital for nine months. On May 25, 2020, Paul Gilbert Anchondo, whose parents Jordan and Andre had shielded him, turns one year old.

The Department of Creative Writing at the University of Texas at El Paso sees the loss of these lives—as well as those lives lost who are not yet known—as extrajudicial killings of systemic racial violence. These are deaths caused enforcing a border, shooting a gun, pressing a knee, executing a policy, uttering language, by someone who feels entitled to it, whether it be an official, officer, or a citizen. We condemn these murders; we name them among the tyrannies of the caging of our own from across the Americas who seek and have sought refuge here; of the disproportional deaths, for lack of healthcare or economic access, of communities of color across the Americas from COVID-19; of the documented femicides of hundreds of our daughters; of the ICE raids across our streets, our high schools, and our university campus; and of the theft of the unceded territory of our Indigenous Tigua and Mescalero peoples; among other acts, visible and hidden, wrought from the racism of our countries, rended and founded in genocide, slavery and imperialism.

We stand in solidarity with the African American Studies Program and our Black own in this profound Black Lives Matter movement, who dignify those who have fought and died, who are still fighting; and with the Chicano Studies Program and the Institute of Oral History, who surface the lived experiences of, and in so doing, call dignity to, our Indigenous and Latinx own. We are aware of the very many for whom the cause of equality has already been their lives' work, and we pledge to see it, attend to it, and to continue the cause ourselves in our own teaching, community service, and in the poems, stories, essays, memoirs and novels we will write.

We will scrutinize the ways that racial, ethnic and LGBTQIA+ discrimination persists in our department, from our students and our faculty to our programmatic goals, and each of our projects, and we commit and recommit to dismantling the inequities of Black, AfroLatinx, Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ representation in our department.

We will continue to teach our students a writing that is informed by a rich multitude of literatures driven by, and not just tokenly inclusive of, the stories and verses of traditionally underrepresented communities. We will examine where we lack that, and we will correct it. We refuse to perpetuate a white, heteronormative, monolingual or patriarchal literary canon. We are a bilingual department and a multilingual community; our students and faculty are from Juárez-El Paso and from across the globe. So we acknowledge the veracity of each of our students' cultural knowledge, and that ours is a collectively-constructed and living literature: one which knows and speaks of rivers, can reimagine dreams from what dreams have been deferred.

We renew our perspective that the term "America" is the *Americas* for our students, staff and faculty, that our identities and our missions cross borders and oceans. We commit to cry out, again and again in language, the power of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's words, 57 years ago, when he beckons us to be "cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states." We still grasp for, through our communal sorrow, his wisdom that "[i]njustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

We stand in solidarity for true civil rights, and we ask you too, to name now through the power of language our terrors and our loves swirling around us, what is our history flooding our present. We

ask you to help us to uncover, with clarity: a promise—on newspapers, paper towels, all your scraps of paper—of our collective ache for a social change that can succor and sustain.

—

En abril de 1963, durante los once días de confinamiento por protestar por los derechos civiles en Alabama, el reverendo Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, entonces de 34 años, comenzó a escribir al margen de un periódico lo que luego se conocería como su "Carta de la cárcel de Birmingham ". Continuó escribiendo en toallas de papel, hojas amarillas y, finalmente, en el bloc de notas que sus abogados pudieron dejarle.

"Tal vez sea fácil para aquellos que nunca han sentido los punzantes dardos de la segregación decir: " Esperen ". El Dr. King Jr. escribió:" [b] pero cuando has visto a turbas salvajes linchar a tus madres y padres por voluntad propia y ahogar a tus hermanas y hermanos a su antojo; cuando has visto a policías llenos de odio maldecir, patear e incluso matar a tus hermanos y hermanas negros; cuando ves a la gran mayoría de tus veinte millones de hermanos negros asfixiados en la hermética jaula de la pobreza en medio de una sociedad acomodada; cuando de repente tu lengua titubea y tartamudea al intentar explicarle a tu hija de seis años por qué no puede ir al parque de diversiones público que acaba de anunciarse en la televisión. . . y observas las ominosas nubes de inferioridad que comienzan a formarse en su pequeño cielo mental, y observas que comienza a distorsionarse su personalidad y a desarrollar una amargura inconsciente hacia los blancos; cuando tienes que inventar una respuesta para tu hijo de cinco años que pregunta: "Papi, ¿por qué las personas blancas tratan a las personas de color tan mal?"; . . .cuando te acosan de día y te atormentan de noche por el hecho de ser negro, cuando vives constantemente de puntillas, sin saber exactamente qué esperar a continuación, y plagado de miedos internos y resentimientos externos; cuando siempre luchas contra una sensación de degeneración de 'no-cuerpo', entonces entenderás por qué nos resulta difícil esperar ".

Compartido hace poco, vemos a través del lente de la inestable cámara que llevaba en su cuerpo el oficial de policía que lo persigue, cómo en Oklahoma el 20 de mayo de 2019, el Sr. Derrick Scott, de 42 años, implora a las piernas que lo ahogan, "No puedo respirar, no puedo respirar, por favor!" *Dame tu mano*, dice una voz, mientras varias rodillas lo sujetan al pasto, *no te resistas, estás bien*, le dicen antes de que muera bajo su custodia.

El 25 de mayo de 2020 en Minnesota, George Floyd, de 46 años, está pidiendo su propio aliento en la calle 38th y la avenida Chicago. "Por favor, por favor, por favor, no puedo respirar. Por favor, hombre", ruega. Está siendo asesinado por un oficial de policía cuya rodilla se mantiene en el cuello de Floyd durante cinco minutos, mientras que un espectador le ruega a él y a los otros tres oficiales allí: "No, mano, míralo, ya no responde ". La palabra mano, hermano, es una invocación de parentesco, una palabra que nos dice que cualquier hombre puede estar ligado a otro hombre en esa calle, pero el asesino sigue presionando su rodilla contra el Sr. Floyd, quien está inmóvil, desarmado e inconsciente, por otros tres minutos y 46 segundos.

En Kentucky, el 13 de marzo de 2020, la Sra. Breonna Taylor, de 26 años, está durmiendo en su propio apartamento entre sus turnos de EMT cuando la policía golpea su puerta con una orden de no tocar después de la medianoche, en busca de dos personas que ya estaban en su custodia. La Sra. Taylor, en su cama, desarmada, recibe ocho disparos. Nunca encuentran las drogas por las cuales se firmó su orden judicial, aunque acusan al novio de la Sra. Taylor, el Sr. Kenneth Walker, quien, arrancado de su sueño, pensó que los oficiales vestidos de civiles eran criminales, trató de defenderse de su cama con su arma de fuego autorizada. Los oficiales lo acusan por asalto en primer grado y

por el intento de asesinato a un oficial de policía. Disparan más de 20 veces. La Sra. Taylor estaba estudiando para ser enfermera mientras una pandemia se extendía por todo el mundo, mientras los pulmones de las personas se llenaban de líquido y se hinchaban por aire, ella anhelaba poderlos ayudar a respirar.

El 23 de febrero de 2020, el Sr. Ahmaud Arbery, de 25 años, corre vestido con una camiseta y pantalones cortos, desarmado. Está haciendo ejercicio en su propio vecindario cuando el ángulo de la cámara se acerca a la curva larga y gris de la carretera, luego se ve otro camión y al Sr. Arbery. La cámara zumba y tiembla, pero podemos ver a un padre y a su hijo levantar escopeta, pistola y sus voces mientras que el Sr. Arbery lucha contra sus asesinos, luchando por no ser derribado.

En nuestra propia frontera Juárez-El Paso, el 4 de agosto de 2019, hace apenas un verano, un hombre maneja por todo Texas con un rifle semiautomático. Él comparte un manifiesto en el que plantea que nos dispara por la retórica y el comando del estado-nación de EE. UU. Mueren así: Leonardo Campos Jr, de 41 años. Maribel Campos, de 56; David Alvah Johnson, de 63; Ivan Filiberto Manzano, quien recién cumplía 41; Jordan Anchondo, de 25 años; Andre Pablo Anchondo, de 23; Arturo Benavidez, de 59; Javier Amir Rodríguez, de 15 años; Sara Esther Regalado Moriel, de 66; Adolfo Cerros Hernández, de 68; Gloria Irma Márquez, de 61; María Eugenia Legarreta Rothe, de 60; dElsa Mendoza de la Mora Márquez, de 57; Juan de Dios Velázquez Chairez, de 77; María Flores, de 77; Raúl Flores, de 83; Margie Reckard, de 63; Alexander Gerhard Hoffman, de 66; Teresa Sánchez, de 82; Angelina Silva Engelsbee, de 86; Jorge Calvillo García, de 61; y Luis Alfonso Juárez, de 90. Todos ellos murieron comprando una silla de ruedas, cuadernos, papel de hojas sueltas, marcadores, pan, frijoles, jabón. El 25 de abril de 2020, Guillermo García, de 36 años, quien había estado en Walmart recaudando dinero para el equipo de fútbol de su hija, muere en el hospital después de pasar nueve meses tratando de volver a respirar. El 25 de mayo de 2020, Paul Gilbert Anchondo, cuyos padres Jordan y Andre murieron protegiéndolo, cumple un año.

El Departamento de Escritura Creativa de la Universidad de Texas en El Paso reconoce estas vidas como nuestras, como parte de esos reconocidos—dentro de los cuales hay quienes han muerto y aún lo ignoramos—asesinatos y asaltos extrajudiciales de violencia racial sistémica. Estas son muertes ejercidas por fronteras, armas, rodillas, hisopos, políticas, idiomas, por funcionarios, oficiales o ciudadanos. Nosotros condenamos estos asesinatos; los nombramos entre las tiranías de enjaular a los nuestros que vienen de todo el continente americano y que buscan y han buscado refugio aquí; condenamos el número desproporcionado de muertes que por falta de atención médica o de recursos económicos han enfrentado las comunidades de color en todo el continente americano por COVID-19; condenamos los feminicidios documentados de cientos de nuestras hijas; de las redadas de ICE en nuestras calles, en nuestras escuelas secundarias y en nuestro campus universitario; y condenamos el robo de Tigua y Mescalero territorio de nuestros pueblos Indígenas; entre otros actos que, visibles y ocultos, son el resultado del racismo de países concebidos y fundados desde el genocidio, la esclavitud y el imperialismo.

Nos solidarizamos con el Programa de Estudios Afroamericanos y con la profundidad del movimiento Black Lives Matter, que dignifica a quienes han luchado y muerto, y que todavía están luchando; también con el Programa de Estudios Chicanos y el Instituto de Historia Oral, que muestran las experiencias vividas y, al hacerlo, dignifican a nuestros Indígenas y latinos. Somos conscientes de todos aquellos que han hecho de la igualdad su causa y el trabajo de sus vidas, y nos comprometemos a verla, atenderla y alimentar esta causa nosotros mismos en nuestra práctica

docente, servicio comunitario y en los poemas, cuentos, ensayos, memorias y novelas que escribiremos.

Examinaremos las formas en que la discriminación racial, étnica y LGBTQIA + persiste en nuestro departamento, desde nuestros estudiantes y nuestra facultad hasta nuestros objetivos programáticos y cada uno de nuestros proyectos, y nos comprometemos y volveremos a comprometer en desmantelar las desigualdades de representación de negros, Afrolatinos, Indígenas y de la comunidad LGBTQIA + en nuestro departamento.

Continuaremos enseñando a nuestros estudiantes a construir una escritura informada desde la rica diversidad de literatura impulsada por, y no solo simbólicamente inclusiva, las historias y versos de comunidades tradicionalmente subrepresentadas. Examinaremos qué es lo que nos ha faltado y lo corregiremos. Nos negamos a perpetuar un canon literario blanco, heteronormativo, monolingüe o patriarcal. Somos un departamento bilingüe y una comunidad multilingüe; Nuestros estudiantes y profesores son de Juárez-El Paso y de todo el mundo. Por lo tanto, reconocemos la veracidad del conocimiento cultural de cada uno de nuestros estudiantes y que la nuestra es una literatura viva y construida colectivamente: una literatura que sabe y habla de ríos, que puede reimaginar esos sueños desde los sueños que se han aplazado.

Renovamos nuestra perspectiva de que el término "América" es Las Américas en honor a nuestros estudiantes, personal y facultad, porque nuestras identidades y nuestras misiones cruzan fronteras y océanos. Nos comprometemos a gritar y a demandar, a través del lenguaje, el poder de las palabras del reverendo Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, hace 57 años, cuando nos llamaba a ser "conscientes de la interrelación de todas las comunidades y estados". Aún entendemos, a través de nuestra tristeza colectiva, su sabiduría de que "[la] injusticia en cualquier lugar es una amenaza para la justicia en todas partes. Estamos atrapados en una inevitable red de mutualidad, atados en una sola prenda de destino".

Nos solidarizamos con los verdaderos derechos civiles y te pedimos también que señales a través del poder del lenguaje esos terrores y pasiones que nos rodean, lo que llamamos nuestra historia y que inunda nuestro presente. Te pedimos que nos ayudes a descubrir, con claridad: una promesa, en periódicos, toallas de papel, en todo trozo de papel, nuestro llamado colectivo por un cambio social que nos socorra y sostenga.