

CRW5382: STUDIES IN FORM
THE CONTEMPORARY PERSONA POEM
PROF. SASHA ROQUE PIMENTEL

Fall 2020
(19050)

Course Meetings

Wednesdays, 6:00 - 8:50pm Mountain Daylight Standard Time (MDST, or Universal Coordinated Time -6 or -7, depending on U.S.A. daylight savings), online, through Zoom. The course will meet on these times/dates from August 26, 2020 - December 2, 2020.

Please use this meeting link and password:

- *Meeting link:*
<https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/93145640598?pwd=TjBWWjlrMDNoTEpOMiNlS92NldTQT09>
- *Meeting password:*
Szymborska

All other course texts will be available on this course's space on Blackboard at my.utep.edu.

Course Description

As we shelter in place over a global pandemic in 2020, I'm thinking a lot of Patricia Smith's poem "Practice Standing Unleashed and Clean," about immigrants who arrived at Ellis Island, their chests marked by chalk if judged "unhealthy". "I come with a sickness insistent upon / root in my body, a sickness that may just be a frantic twist / from one's life air to another," Smith writes in persona, ". . . I know that I am freakish, wildly fragrant, curious land [. . .] All I can be is here, stretched / between solace and surrender, terrified of the dusty mark/ that identifies me."

Like Smith, poets turn to the persona poem as a tool to speak about subjects outside of our own lived experience, often to call upon an audience, as Cristina Rivera Garza does in her poem "La reclamante," assembling voices to remind us of a mother's grief about a massacre in Ciudad Juárez. When we slip on a persona's voice, we attempt to speak, with intimacy, about that which we can only imagine as we ask others to *look* at what we are ourselves attempting to see. How can we, when we are writing towards, and out of, something larger than ourselves, take on another voice in sincere and ethical ways? To contour a poetry of empathy rather than a poetry which colonizes experience? We'll read the work of poets from Smith and Garza to Ilya Kaminsky and Najwan Darwish, who have written dramatic monologues and multilogues that speak from the intimate centers of historical racial violence, from war camps, from migration, from cultural mythologies, from femicides, and even from dystopian societies. We'll focus much on cultivating "voice" in verse with respect to language and form.

In addition to our readings and discussions, we'll write our own persona poems in multiple styles, but your final creative project will be a persona poem series (towards a book or a chapbook) on a historical subject, time or moment that you choose to research well. Because this is a literature course, you'll also write a final analytical paper.

Course Objectives

Writing, Creative

- To produce three publishable poems (as part of a larger research investigation) by the end of the semester, culminating in a revised final portfolio.
- To investigate a research topic towards a larger research investigation.
- To receive feedback on those three poems through multiple methods of workshop:
 1. synchronously (professor + peer group),
 2. asynchronously (with a peer group), and
 3. synchronously in midterm and final conferences with the professor.
- Primary poetic objectives: developing concrete imagery, precise language (through rhythm and through syntax), form through line and stanza, and escalated tensions in your poetry.
- Advanced poetic objectives: developing a sense of narrative momentum and lyrical intensity in your own poetry, with attention to perspective, point-of-view and narrative time.
Developing *punctum*.

Writing, Academic

- To produce one professionally presentable (conference-level standard) academic paper by the end of the semester.
- To produce one video lesson presentation about a technique or other point of craft one of our major required course texts, towards preparing for the above academic paper.

Reading/ Discussing

- To participate as a sensitive and conscientious peer responder in three workshops, and in so doing, learn how to sight organic and complex poetic form in developing works of art.
- To read course material to learn the form, concerns and poetics of the persona poem, as addressed through the context of multiple contemporary writers.

Professor's Contact Information

Prof. Sasha Roque Pimentel, MFA
 srpimentel@utep.edu
 (915) 747-6810 (for voicemail only)

Fall 2020 Office Hours

- 11:00am - 1:00pm MDST, and by appointment, through Zoom.
- Please use this meeting link and password:
 - *Meeting link*:
<https://utep-edu.zoom.us/j/85610289456?pwd=V1RrLzVVSsm80RjEvTmptuVlF2SWN1UT09>
 - *Meeting password*:

Szyborska

Please note that I'll use the "waiting room" feature in Zoom, so if I don't answer your attendance right away, it's because I'm with another student, but I'll conference with you and let you into the conference room as soon as I'm done with my other meeting. On days when I have prescheduled appointments during these office hours, I'll list them in the chat function, so you'll know my schedule that day.

Books and Supplies

Required Readings

Please buy the following books by the *week before* the dates we're scheduled to discuss them on our *Course Schedule*, so you'll have enough time to read them.

1. Ilya Kaminsky, *Deaf Republic* (electronic Kindle version available)
2. Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (electronic Kindle version available)
3. Patricia Smith, *Incendiary Art* (electronic Kindle version available)
4. Sara Uribe, *Antígona González* (paperback version only)

You don't need to have a Kindle tablet to read a Kindle text; you only need to download the Kindle app on any computer, tablet or phone.

I will supply all other readings (poems, essays, interviews and essays on craft) via downloadable PDF documents, or as internet links, on Blackboard.

Required Software/Applications

In addition, you'll need to use the following free software/applications:

- 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: <http://get.adobe.com/reader>.
- 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: http://download.cnet.com/PrimoPDF/3000-18497_4-10264577.html?part=dl-10264577&subj=dl&tag=button
- Zoom, a free teleconferencing program.
Zoom can work on a PC, a mac, tablets or cell phones. You can download it here: <https://zoom.us/download>

All course documents will be in .pdf format. You must be able to access this course on Blackboard, through my.utep.edu, and through the internet, on a weekly basis.

Grading and Requirements

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

Poems (20% of your final grade)

You will write three poems in the practical study of poetics.

Each poem should be written as an étude, or artistic study of the assigned readings, towards creative writing prompts that will accompany those readings. Through the process of writing each of these poems, you'll try to master, as all poets at all stages of their career do, musical skills, imagistic precision, and wrestling tension and emotion inside a poem.

These poems are an opportunity for you to push yourself in poetry in ways you may not otherwise try.

To receive feedback on these poems, **please sign up for the three synchronous class workshops** (professor + peers) **that are best for your schedule this semester** (please see the *Course Schedule*).

The sign-in sheet for these sessions will be "first come, first serve," and will be available on Blackboard by 6:00pm MDST on Wednesday, September 2, in Blackboard: [THE LIBRARY > Week 2 > Sign up for your poetry workshops](#)

These workshop sessions will be held during our regular course meetings on Zoom.

Though there will be writing prompts during specific weeks this semester, and the prompts will be intended to move you towards your research investigation, please feel free to choose when to write to these prompts, to workshop when you wish.

Please turn in your poems for each workshop on time (see above) to ensure a class workshop. I can't accept late poems for these workshops, out of consideration to your peers, who need time to be able to read them and prepare before workshop.

Each poem will be graded as simply "Pass" (100 pts.) or "Fail" (0 pts.), for a semester total of 400 pts. If you turn in a poem draft on time, you will receive full credit for that poem, unless in extraordinary rare circumstances (i.e.: you've written very few lines that don't take any of the course's writing prompts into consideration).

Final Research Portfolio (30% of your final grade)

Finally, I'll ask you to revise the three poems you drafted and workshopped this semester, based on your learning of course concepts and feedback, into a final creative submission. Please turn in those revisions as a creative Final Portfolio at the end of the semester. You need only turn in your final drafts of the poems, and such revision should reflect your practical understanding of central concepts such as image, line, language, sound, etc.

I'll also ask you to turn in research items such as a research summary, links, and a bibliography, with more information about this throughout the semester.

This portfolio is due as a PDF document at the end of the semester (please see the *Course Schedule*).

Poetry Video Lesson (10% of your final grade)

As an online version of the kind of "in-class presentations" that we often have in residential classrooms, I'll also ask you to present a lesson on any point of craft, or technique, you'd like to focus on for one of our major texts (listed above).

The video lesson date will determine which book you will present and teach from, and I ask you to format this presentation in the format of a short video lesson (7-10 minutes) that you'll upload to a discussion board in the course. I'll give you more direction on this later, including resources to free recording and editing software.

Your videos can be as simple as complex as you like: it can feature you, or your voice, or someone else's, it can be framed on one talking subject, or a narrator over a playing slide presentation, whatever works best for you, and the ways you think you can best teach the point of craft you're interrogating.

Your videos are due to the appropriate discussion board in **THE LIVING ROOM** by 5:59pm MST, on the date for which you've signed up.

The sign-in sheet for these will be "first come, first serve," and will be available on Blackboard by 6:00pm MDST on Wednesday, September 2, in Blackboard: **THE LIBRARY > Week 2 > Sign up for your video lesson.**

Final Paper (20% of your final grade)

Because this is a literature course and our MFA Program requires that literature courses in your degree program must culminate in a final paper, I will ask you to write a final academic paper analyzing one or two techniques, or thematic concerns, you'd like to focus on, on any part of our discussion about the contemporary persona poem form.

Your final paper should be presentable at an academic conference (for which I would encourage you to apply, to present this paper after the class, since you'll have a paper anyway), and be 10-15 pgs., double-spaced, in MLA style, with a Works Cited Page and a Bibliography page.

You're otherwise free to write your paper on any topic you choose.

Final Conferences (10% of your final grade)

For your final conference, I'd also like to be able to speak to each one of you, privately, over any two poems you wish to talk to me about, or about your research project in general, or a draft of your final paper.

If you submit poems to me, these poems can be poems you've already workshopped which you've revised, they can be poems you haven't yet workshopped, they can be poems from another course or poems you just feel like writing, etc., it doesn't matter to me.

You can even choose poems that you haven't written specifically to course writing prompts, if you want to write more poems than the four I'm requiring from you this semester.

Or you can talk about your intentions, your process, and your struggles with your research project.

Or, you can use your conference times with me to workshop drafts of your final paper.

What matters to me is rather that you use your private conference with me as a way to go over whatever best fits your needs, as a poet, and as a scholar, at that point in time.

Please see the *Course Schedule* for when these conferences are scheduled, and please note the deadline to email me the best times to conference with you.

Grading Scale

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

Turning in Poems

This is a literature course for professional, practicing writers and as such, we'll be conducting some workshops of your creative work. The pieces that you turn in to workshop should not be your "first" draft of that poem or prose piece. You should turn in the best possible piece you can write (having worked on that poem considerably) when a creative work is due from you 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 for workshop, please attach it to the appropriate discussion board in **OUR KITCHEN** as a PDF document. 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).

Formatting Poems

The work should be typed, printed, single-spaced, in a single-column (unless you are purposefully writing a multiple-column poem, or a poem that is explicitly subverting traditional vertical spacing), in a single standard font, 12 pt. size. Please turn in only one poem per workshop, no more.

I ask for a PDF document 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, stanzas and whitespacing—the poem's breath—exactly as you intend. Also, our class is composed of writers from all over the world, working on different electronic devices, and a PDF document ensures compatibility so that all of your colleagues can read your work.

I'm also 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, and also because editors in the profession only accept work in a standard font and standard font size. Please include the following header for each poem:

Your full name

Date

Poem Title

Poem Content

Your prose (such as for your analytical paper) should be typed, double-spaced (unless you're purposefully using vertical and horizontal space in modern ways, as Han Kang does, for example) and justified to the left-hand margin, and in a single standard font like Times New Roman, in 12 pt. size.

Giving Feedback

I ask you to take your role as a poet, and as a poetry critic, with great care, with seriousness and sensitivity. You have a responsibility, as a fellow artist, to your colleagues to not only read their work carefully, but to make constructive comments to help them express their art into a compelling aesthetic to a public audience.

Participating in giving feedback to your classmates' work will help you to read and revise your own work with more fluency and expertise, and there is always something to respond to, technically and formally, in your colleagues' writing: it's your job as a writer to find it. (It's not helpful just to tell a fellow writer that you love or like everything about their/her/his poem, as this is nice, but it isn't intuitive to the writing process, which demands much revision.)

Operating Time Zone

Please take careful note of due dates of assignments on the Course Calendar.

On the date scheduled, **all assignments are due by Mountain Standard Time** (see *Course Schedule*), since the physical University of Texas at El Paso is located in Juárez, México-El Paso, U.S.A.

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

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

Attendance Policy

Come to class! Because of the intensive nature of this graduate class:

- ***You are allowed 2 absences*** from our synchronous course meetings on Zoom, for any reason, whether by necessity or whimsy.
- Any absences above the allotted will lower your final grade by a letter for *each* absence, unless you speak with me, and make arrangements with me, about your situation.
- If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out the work that you've missed, including any activities, homework assignments or copies of your classmates' poems for workshop. (I strongly suggest that you get contact information from your fellow classmates in case you might be absent).

If you feel that circumstances arise so that you cannot be successful in this course at this time, please talk to me first, as I will try to do all that I can to accommodate for technological difficulties and scheduling difficulties during these strange times of global pandemic.

Names and Pronouns

Many people might go by a name other than their legal name. In this class, we seek to refer to people by the names they choose. 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).

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 Cháirez, 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.

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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 Alfonzo 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.