The Staff

President, Co-Editor-In-Chief: Shane Kalb
Treasurer, Co-Editor-In-Chief, Layout Design: Erin Barlow
Advisor: Rob Scott, Director of CPEP
Editors:
Evelyn Murphy
Mimi Manigar
Kimberly Wiggins

Special Thanks To:
Cornell Prison Education Program (CPEP)
Cayuga and Auburn Correctional Facility Staff
Cornell University Student Assembly Finance Commission (SAFC)

Like the publication? Get involved!
Check out our website:
http://cpep.cornell.edu/writersbloc/
Or email us:
Shane Kalb: sk833@cornell.edu
Erin Barlow: emb363@cornell.edu
## Table of Contents

- Letter from the Editor ................................................................. 1
- The Staff ...................................................................................... 2
- The Persecuted Posy by Reggie Bell .............................................. 3
- Conscious by Steve Green .............................................................. 4
- Who Am I... by Khalib Gould ......................................................... 5
- Snowflakes Become Avalanches by Leroy Taylor ......................... 7
- Distinctive by Quentin Lewis ......................................................... 8
- Jacob’s Gambit by Michael Shane Hale ......................................... 9
- The Machine by Lucas Whaley ........................................................ 10
- A Single Golden Thread by Paris E. Whitfield ............................. 12
- For C. and his Brother by Shane Deitch ....................................... 13
- Art by Diego Deleon ...................................................................... 14
Letter from the Editor

Every semester for the past five years, Writer’s Bloc has published works from across Cornell’s diverse student body—from the Ithaca campus, from the students in Cayuga and Auburn prisons, and even sometimes from students abroad. Every publication has been special–unique–like the authors who contribute their works. The theme of this semester’s publication is uniqueness, and what it means to so many wonderfully different people. Thanks to all the authors who submitted their work–you’re awesome!

-Erin Barlow, Co-Editor-In-Chief
My name is Taraxacum and I am a descendant of immigrants from across the Atlantic. My roots have long been established in this country therefore I consider myself a native of America. Nonetheless, the descendants of those who escorted my ancestors to this new land seek to destroy me because I have been considered troublesome and difficult to control.

Painstaking research is being conducted for which to develop formulas that will metabolize in my system and render me manageable. Perhaps, this is due to my behavior in being found posing in residential areas as an unwelcomed guest and, oftentimes, in the middle of the street fixated on and fascinated by fissures in the foundation, which clearly speaks to fragility of our world; it is all just so utterly temporary. In so far, if you should ever find me alone that is because I am an orphan, even though it has been ascertained that I have a couple distant relatives in cousin Daisy and aunt Aster whom want nothing to do with me as a result of my class distinction. Still, I am not ashamed. There are many of my sort and together we are a beautiful bunch wearing crowns fit for kings and queens.

As far as appearances are concerned, I am as appealing as any, although I have been referred to in a derogatory term denoting scrawny. That which many aspire to attain, I am. I am delicate in design and slender in stature. I neither indulge in excess nor in growth hormones to obtain mass but, instead, solely sustain on a modest supply of nutrients as nature intended. Yet, I have been accused of smothering the existence of others. I am now aware that that is due to my not being accepted.

However, in the past, I have been invited for dinner – to complement the occasion where there were those who became drunk with joy from my embrace. And I have, also, been employed to adorn the presence of others who would later wish I would simply “get out of their hair”. The aforementioned formalities, to say the least, are somewhat bewildering when sought as a comforter in one hand and thought as a nuisance on the other. Thus, is the paradox of my reality.

Throughout my life, there will be those who will either pluck me from sight or mow down any progress I make, but these attempts against my development only encourage me to flourish in spite of them. And when I reach maturity, I will proudly stand with the sun upon my face and the wind at my back while my fuzzy white locks dance upon a gentle breeze as a sign of posterity. If perchance, while strolling along a sidewalk, you encounter me within your midst I would appreciate a courteous nod in acknowledgment of my right to exist and I too will bid you a “good day”!

An Afterword

Taraxacum Officinale, commonly known as the dandelion, was originally brought to America from Europe by colonists. Its name comes from the French words Dent de Lion meaning lion’s tooth, as a result of its smooth leaves with coarse notches. Its golden yellow head is really a cluster of flowers that sits on a smooth, straight, hollow stem which contains a white milky liquid. Generally tasting better while young, before the plant blossoms, dandelion leaves can be used in salads, cooked, and are sometimes used to make wine. The dandelion differs from most other plants in the way it reproduces. Its ovaries form fertile seeds without having to be pollinated. The flowers, when they mature, form feathered, cottony seeds that the wind carries far and wide. The dandelion is considered a troublesome weed that is difficult to control; its roots grow 3 feet long akin to long, thick, hairlike branches and slicing it close beneath the surface only encourages the plant to grow.
I am conscious
Of America and its lies.
Selling a dream a tout a piece of pie
I’ll die for what seems social
Designed to go slow’mo
Contracts that hold me tack
Theory of fact, what they lack is truth
But I am proof
Of the trials and tribulations
Of a lost nation.
No language
No dialect just
Blatant disrespect!
What you expect, I’ll never detect
Seems like neglect
You feed me your scriptures since
Birth.
To justify the curse and stolen turf.
I surf on the knowledge you provide
From the truth we can’t
Hide.
I am sure we’re all
-Conscious-
Who Am I…

By Khalib Gould

Who Am I
Are we all born into
Sterile societies where, we
craft our own identities from, the
cradle to the grave...

Who Am I
Are we more unique than, or
more implicit than, or
more individual than,
those who have come before us...

Who Am I
Have the roads we’ve walked, not
already been paved, or are they
simply finishing touches, on
choices already made...

Who Am I
Are we, really free to be,
Who we truly want to be,
uncorrupted, unobstructed,
and uninterrupted...

Who Am I
Am I the hate you hear about, or
the hate you read about,
or the hate you speak about, or
the LOVE you fantasize about...

Who Am I
Am I the light within, or
the darkness without, or
the peaceful journey, or
the calm before the storm...

Who Am I
Do we all not strive, for
peace and harmony, and
balance and tranquility, and
clarity through reflection...

As I study my reflection is it
me that EYE see? Are we who we’re
told we are? Or are we deeper beings...

Who Am I
Is this identity not my own, or
not mine to change, am I
not shaped by my education, am I
not a product of my environment...

Who Am I
Am I not, crafted from,
bits and pieces of,
those that are admired, and
some less appreciated...

Who Am I
Are these things not, the
facets of our character, that
frays the fabric of our forefathers, or
links the loops of our lineages...

Who Am I
Am I… Right or Wrong, or
Black or White, or
Male or Female, or
other...

Who Am I
Am I Introvert or Extrovert, or
Covert or Subvert
Pervert or Expert, or
Other…
Who Am I
Am I not the – Present Moment, or
the Eastern Sky, or
the Moving Energy, or
the Mindfulness of life...

Who Am I
Am I not the – Piece of the Dream, in
the “I Have a Dream”, or
the New Jim Crow, or
the Pedagogy of the Oppressed...

Who Am I
Do I not represent – the Ghettos in Soweto, or
the Ivory Coast, or
the Caribbean Isles, or
the Black Star Line...

Who Am I
Could I have not been – Barack Obama, or
Malcolm X, or
Medgar Evers, or
Martin Luther...

Who Am I
Did I not – open your doors, and
clean your floors, and
heal your sores, and
fight your wars...

Who Am I
Did you not – also clean floors,
feel hungry and poor, and
fought the same wars, when
your ancestors docked these shores...

Who Am I
Do we all not sing,
lift every voice and sing, or
the Star Spangled Banner, whether
Bruce, Beyoncé, or MC Hammer...

Who Am I
Do we all not share space, on
this place we all embrace, or
will we kill each other off, because
propaganda says there’s not enough...

Who Am I
So, what will you say, come
judgment day, will it be
I’ve become a new man, or
I-am-only-human... who are you
Snowflakes Become Avalanches

By Leroy Lebron Taylor

Each snowflake that falls through the sky forms into its
Own unique, intricate-crystalline design-no two snowflakes are
Alike.

A snowflake’s unique design is displayed most clearly during
Its short free fall towards its landing place where its uniqueness
Is mixed together with many other snowflakes. Snowflakes can and
Usually do become part of something larger than themselves in, perhaps, a
snowball, a snow bank, some dirty slush, or perhaps a huge avalanche
That can change the landscape of the mountain it falls down upon.
Trees can be uprooted to make room for new trees to grow in the
Coming seasons.

The unification of snowflakes displays a collective force
To be reckoned with, similar to the collective force of a college
Campus full of many unique students and faculty members. Just
Like a snowball is formed from a group of absolutely unique
Snowflakes; each classroom, lecture hall, and lab is comprised
Of its own unique members united through what they learn.

Cornell University is in the midst of forming a great avalanche
Of education that is changing the landscape of long rooted opposition
Toward higher learning in prisons. Each student and faculty member
That participates is one more needed piece of uniqueness to edge us
Closer to a full fledged avalanche that cannot be stopped.
Distinctive

By Quentin Lewis

It’s all about unity
Cornellians never truancy
Learning ‘til we die
Say we wise in our eulogies
Speaking fluently
In different languages
Even Ebonics
Because in Auburn
Ignorance is dangerous
Everybody is unique
Like Rob when he speaks
Everybody is missing Marge
But Shane Kalb is in the streets
I got the eye of a tiger
Cause graduation coming soon
I’m thinking higher
Through the education
I consumed
Feeling like I’m being purged by fire
Knowledge is light
Darkness is the soul of a liar
I want to thank Doris Buffet
For giving me a higher learning
Plus Doc Weatherbee
For teaching us without an earning
I won’t fail
As above so below
Because life really starts within a cell
Tom know
Jacob’s Gambit

By Michael Shane Hale

The windows indicated that the boys’ home was being plunged into another snow storm. The crystal clear window panes, polished within an inch of their lives, were frosting. Jacob’s nose, inches away, smelled the cold and confusion on the glass. The crystals and their symmetrical fractals couldn’t be appreciated. His lips formed a circle and he hummed from the back of his throat until the fog showed. Looking quickly over his shoulder, his fingers darted onto the glass like a fly doing a jig, leaving a heart and three letters—smudges of oil, water, and bacteria pressing against melted sand. He licked his upper lip, sighing, before running away.

The cold snap persisted against the spring dates. “It is not supposed to be here,” he thought as poverty dressed them all the same in thicker fabric while the cold chowed down at the holes. It was exhausting. The rod, not spared here, beat everything into conformity. Steps to maturity taken in formation wearing puberty like crisp, dress blues with shiny buttons; golden irises, bulging and all-seeing. He deeply drank an extra glass of water—the only extravagance—spying the window.

The darkness of the institution called everyone to their beds; shivering, pulling sheets and threadbare blankets up to their chins. He waited for the shadows to take away the reformatory, his dreams, his consciousness.

The pang of a full bladder called him from sleep. His eyes flitted open with hands sliding glasses into place. Resisting the cold, he scurried along the floor like a mouse on a peanut butter trail. He skidded to a stop, barely avoiding the steel trap that would give away his presence. He hadn’t thought of an explanation, what with his extravagance already slurped down and the sole bathroom being at the other end of the corridor. His eyes grew as he saw the boy in front of the glass. He chose this pane because it was always left last and usually forgotten amidst incessant cleaning activities. Cleanliness and godliness were the philosophy that hid the pragmatic surviving of government inspections. The neglect provided him a safe space.

The boy’s nose was backing away as he released the hum of breath from the back of his throat. Jacob noticed his lips parted, but didn’t round. The fog brought back the oily, parasitic markings. Jacob could see the MOM in a heart from where he stood. His shoulders slumped as he turned to go. Tears sprang and swelled, but he held them in with the strength of a boy who hadn’t been held by his mom in a long time.

It was a game. His first memories were dazzled by his mom creating the disappearance and reappearance of heart he loved her at that moment, teaching him to round his lips. He didn’t know she taught him to distract him from the cold. She must have known he’d be cold a lot. A beautiful drunk, she ran away.

Crawling in between the sheets, he felt for the familiar indentation. His eyes squinted as he made out the moving body. Alert, breathing sparsely, eyes narrowed, he discerned the rhythm: one body left, another arrived. It went on this way for some time and then settled. He scuttled out again. His glass pane stood inches away. He hummed with rounded lips. The warmth fogged the window. His heart had replicated, a virus with other three letter words: DAD, SIS, BRO, GOD, DOG, CAT, WHY. Jacob kissed each heart just as they faded into a frosted pane of darkness.
The Machine

By Lucas Whaley

He awakens. His eyes unclench and open. Sleep falls away from him. He awakens.

He blinks. This is not the world of dreams. This is not the Place of delusions and the deluded. This is not reality. The Landscape around him is endless. Forever in all directions. A Playing field checkered in gray and green, the uniform of All great institutions.

“What?” His voice echoes the color of deepening red. It creates and incessant buzz which turns inward gripping the roots of his widening eyes.

Forms appear across his visions. People, or perhaps Something very much like them. Half-seen as though they are The shadows of reflections. The barely perceptible holographs Of ghosts. These images stand, sleep, eat, the mime the Dances of life. He peers closer. What at first looks to be a crowd aligns itself in his sight. It is actually a well-ordered line. A line moving slowly, inevitably, towards the horizon.

Behold the horizon!


How had it ever gone unnoticed?

The line shuffles forward as he watches in terrified Awe. Each person disappearing into the distance adds a Splash of crimson to the Machine’s rusted armor plating. The Crunch of bone and being crash together to create a Hideous heartbeat whose palpitations cannot be borne by Sane bodies. White noise forcing its way into consciousness. Over, under, and around mental barriers

It barrages the senses driving before it unfathomable tides Of madness.
He gazes upward. The heaves are absent. Devoid of all
But vapor and grinding sounds. There is no source. The Machine
Leers down from everywhere. There is an appalling beauty about
Its countenance; a face which works tirelessly. Lives and
Dreams torn mercilessly to construct something grander.
Something larger. Something less personal. Its name is
Sacrifice for The Many. Its name is Redistribution of Destiny.
The line moves forward. No one screams. No one notices.
Somewhere stars sparkle unseen. The glittering dreams
Of an insomniac. The sleepless are more aware. It gives
Them no rest.
Enfolded in the loneliness his eyelids slip closed. To stand
apart in ceaseless struggle or to surrender
To the music of the sightless?
Whether society or one’s self, always is scorn the hero’s portion.
A Single Golden Thread of Determination
By Paris E. Whitfield

A quiet rage courses through my veins.
While bones, my body houses, ache with a pain only injustice can cause, and claim.
Still, I dream in freedom.
And I life my head with what little esteem I have kept hidden.
Looking to the sky, I see butterflies fluttering wildly to escape the razor sharp talons of Ravens.
And I venture to rename those things endless, different, meanings.
Staring up there is where I find solace.

My mind sings with the orchestra of unknowns and soars to that place that the sun’s beams begin, sending its delicious rays to distant shores...
Way up there is where all travesties end and possibilities can begin.

I breathe through my hopes.
Clenching my throat, where it has been cut, innocence bleeds vivid flames of tired rings, vased in almond shaped beams.
Beads of doubt devil dance into the deep recesses of my head... as I lie in the lap of merely existing.

Remnants of what has passed causes me to cling feverishly to the promise, unseen. It restores me back to the arms of the Living.
Seeking paths unchained propels me to reach further into those murky waters, still uncharted.
Feeding on the belief that I am one day closer.

Cool mist caresses my face, as I donate bloody fingertips to the air feeling for fragments of faith, that surely must somehow still be there.

Unbowed, bruised, but not broken--
translucent fears kissing at my consciousness...

And the years work to deplete me of my last few tears --
Still, I manage to dream-- in freedom.

And I walk in it as if I am already there.
And if I am ever asked: How I dared?

I’ll simply reply, I believed in the path provided, as the road I should take.
Although this journey has entered its twelfth chapter, it has always remained my choice to create what comes after...
For C. and his Brother

By Shane Deitch

A thousand candles
Lit and spread about on a flat field
Separated, each from each,
within reach distance
All bow to the same winds
That threaten to extinguish
Their fragile flames
Existing alone and frail,
Though, admirably distinguished
Each is too weak on its own
To withstand even the most modest vale
So the slightest breeze or the kindest breath
That sways the trees
May also promise death
Which leaves in its wake
Only ember on an empty plain.

But then again,
Maybe these few glittering remains
Of quiet little flickers can sustain
Just enough spirit to trigger a spark
And renew a form
That when ignited,
Should set the whole field aflame
In one fire, united and reborn
As if a thousand lonely candles could link in arms
And stand together
To weather the storm.
Art by Diego Deleon