

What Does  
Justice  
Look Like to You?



**Texas After Violence**  
**Winter 2022**

All throughout 2021, we asked our interviewees variations of the question, “What does justice look like to you?” Our two main documentation projects for the year, Sheltering Justice and Reimagining Public Safety, collected the stories of people directly harmed by state violence and the work being done to end its use. Since 2020, our Sheltering Justice Project has sought to document the intersection between mass incarceration and the COVID pandemic, while the latter project was part of the City of Austin’s Reimagining Public Safety Initiative, a “holistic approach to assessing and evolving public safety systems to meet current and future community needs equitably and efficiently for all Austinites.” Both, it seemed to us, offered the opportunity — for our interviewees as well as those who might watch or read their oral histories in the future — to evaluate the meanings of oft-used terms like “violence,” “safety,” and “justice.” Although the term “justice” has frequently been used synonymously with “punishment” and “retribution,” we believe that the rise of concepts like restorative and transformative justice is a sign that our culture is ready to question such connotations. We believe that justice can look like regeneration.

This year, thanks to the support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Institute for Museum and Library Services, we are lucky to be able to expand our work, our impact, and our team. We look forward to discovering how our new team members — our Community Advisors Dr. Susannah Bannon and Jennifer Toon; our Visions After Violence Fellows Alexa Garza, Lovinah Igbani-Perkins, and Juania Sueños; and our Writer-in-Residence Faylita Hicks — will interpret our mission in their own archival and creative work. This small zine is designed to provide a bit of inspiration and insight into our visions of justice as we ask you to share yours. You’ll find an answer to the question from one of our storytellers, as well as two poems from our writers in residence that imagine more just futures.

In solidarity,  
*Texas After Violence*

# Tandera Louie

*teacher and community organizer  
Austin, Texas*



*How do you define justice? What would a just Austin or a just world look like to you?*

**"A just world is where we're all able to exist how we want to be as long as we're not harming others and we're living in a world that's not constantly trying to punish all of us for just existing."**

*-from a June 26, 2021 interview with  
Texas After Violence*

# Take Me to Paradise

A Poem for the 2021 People's Response Act  
with Civil Rights Corps

**Faylita Hicks**



*Take me to Paradise  
Where I always shine  
Where the light is mine*

*Take me to Paradise  
To the tip of the mountain  
Let my light climb*

Paradise: Where I am, first, a person. Second, a dream—  
the wildest one of my ancestors—and I'm thriving.

Paradise: Where I am recognized as someone who is loved  
before I am recognized as someone's lesson to be learned.

Paradise: Where I am more than my mistakes,  
more than my bad days and my hard times. Where I am  
not confined  
by the outlines of this country's bad dreams.

Paradise: Where every fresh season, the clean streets  
bloom,  
fill with the laughter and unfettered joy of the young, old,  
and dreamy.

Paradise: Where I get to live long enough  
to see the young awake from their dreaming—and make it  
all a reality.

Paradise: Where the jobs run free and wide like waterfalls.  
Our wages more than enough to feed us, clothes us, shelter  
us, heal us—  
Give us free reign of our days and nights and years and life.

Paradise: Where I see first the face of a healer  
Before I see the face of a holster.

Paradise: Where the blessed silence of sirens and the songs  
of the Blue Jays  
Interrupt the violent haze of misplaced anger in trivial  
trespasses. In other words—



Paradise: Where my pain isn't buried beneath  
doubt. Where I am believed  
Where I am heard. Where I am protected.

Paradise: Where I can come up out of a cage,  
where I already done paid for my mistakes,  
and find myself welcomed. Given a chance to  
improve. Given a chance to build.  
Given a chance to try again at this difficult and  
confusing thing called life. Where none of us get  
everything right?

Paradise: Where it's easier to find a roof to put  
over my head  
than it is to find a bullet.

Paradise: Where I can fall asleep and know that  
no one—no one—is going to wake me up  
to kill me. Where I can sleep in peace the whole  
night.

Paradise: Where I can lay my many burdens  
down. Be held. Be forgiven. Be uplifted. Be  
encouraged. Be seen. Be heard. Be healed. Be  
trusted. Be loved. Be fed. Be happy, without  
worrying what comes next, for once.

Paradise: Where I can breathe. I can breathe.  
Where I am alive and protected.  
And like I said—thriving.

Paradise. Somebody take me to paradise because  
it's time. For all us.

*Take me to Paradise  
Where I always shine  
Where the light is mine*

*Take me to Paradise  
To the tip of the mountain  
Let my light climb*

Unmute Yourself

**Jorge Antonio Renaud**





Unmute  
Urself  
And unwind the gag  
They have placed over your lips  
And don't listen to those  
Who try to relegate your existence  
To a hashtag  
Some rhythmic rhapsodic  
Historically  
Sweet soundbite  
That reduces  
Their  
Her  
His  
stories

To a citation in somebody else's  
Textbook.

Unmute  
Urself  
fling away  
the muzzle they have  
tied around your mouth  
and proceed to violently  
sing and screech  
(ain't no calm preaching  
Here, no beseeching.  
We've had enough of that begging  
Believing in the system  
Being nice shit)

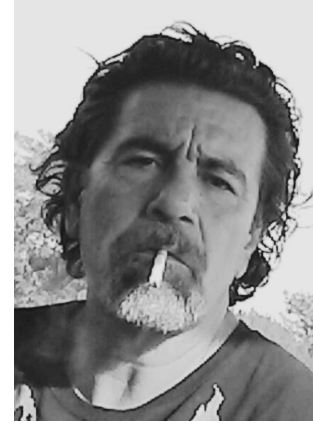
Unmute  
Urself  
And claw away  
The laws they shoved  
Down your throat  
Trying to limit  
when and where and how  
You can vote in their  
Desire to reignite the cooling  
embers of the dying fires  
of their exclusivity, of their  
Members-only clubs built  
Upon the wretched whiteness  
Of their bewigged judgments  
Of all that right and just.

Unmute  
Urself.  
Clear away the fog

The doubt  
The fright  
The fear  
That they might  
Have to hear  
And Be offended by  
some  
Less-than-humble  
demands come tumbling out  
Straight from your gut  
Up through your unclogged throat  
And finally, finally  
Loosen your  
Unmuted voice  
after centuries  
of strangulation.



FAYLITA HICKS (she/they) is the 2022 Texas After Violence Writer in Residence. Faylita is a queer Afro-Latinx activist, writer, and interdisciplinary artist. Born in South Central California and raised in Central Texas, they use their intersectional experiences to advocate for the rights of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ people. They are the author of *Hood Witch* (Acre Books, 2019), a finalist for the 2020 Lambda Literary Award for Bisexual Poetry. They are the Editor-in-Chief of Black Femme Collective and a new voting member of the Recording Academy.



There are in fact musty copies of *The America's Review*, *Tonantzín*, *The Texas Observer*, *Revista Chicana-Riqueña*, and other 'zines with the poetry of JORGE ANTONIO RENAUD, although he stopped submitting a long time ago. Y no pregunten por un libro. Jorge just celebrated 13 years of freedom and welcomes you to reach out and talk about poetry, writing in general, chicanx history, and prison abolition. Jorge was the 2021 Texas After Violence Writer in Residence.

Art and design *Amy Kamp*

Layout and formatting *Murphy Anne Carter and Amy Kamp*

Introductory text *Amy Kamp*

Portrait of Tandra Louie *Frankie Chigozie*

Author photos *Courtesy of the authors*



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