

Contributor Bios

Guest Editors

Ashley Rogers

Ashley Rogers (she/her/hers) is a senior from Chicago, Illinois, majoring in Ecology, Evolution, and Organismal Biology with a minor in African American Diaspora Studies. She has always enjoyed writing and gaining a better understanding of Black representation in mainstream media. Ashley aims to think critically about these pieces and better understand how Black women are characterized in mainstream art. She is also interested in exploring the narratives created around Black womanhood. Ashley constantly seeks ways to explore Black womanhood and challenge how Black women have been represented historically in mainstream media.

Lesleigh Taylor

Lesleigh Taylor (she/they) is a junior majoring in African American Diaspora Studies and Anthropology. Born in New Orleans, LA, but raised in Dallas, TX, Lesleigh has a deep love for the South and the Black people who call it home. She is extremely passionate about the work of the Black anthropologists who have come before her, particularly ones in the womanist tradition. She believes in the power of a good story, even more in the power of a great storyteller, and hopes to center Black women in her daily pursuits as an academic and creative.

Contributors

Viana Biscoe

Viana Biscoe is a first-year student from St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. She is studying Mechanical Engineering at Vanderbilt University. She began writing poetry and doing spoken word out of a desire to be understood and communicate ideas or feelings that someone can deeply resonate with. As a Black girl, there are several daily routines we cycle through daily that, when observed by people of other ethnicities, seem niche or even crazy. Her hair's condition encapsulates an ever-changing fashion 'accessory' and an entire lifestyle.

Taliyah Bradberry

Taliyah Bradberry is a first-year student at Vanderbilt University. She is a prospective Art and Human Organization and Development double major. She was born in Memphis,

Tennessee, but was raised all over the country as a military child. Ever since she was little, she has been creative in all aspects of her life. Currently, the work she loves doing is portraits or abstract mixed media pieces that comment on the reality of life in America.

Makayla Donald

Makayla Donald is a junior majoring in Medicine, Health, and Society and minoring in African American and Diaspora Studies. While growing up in Stone Mountain, Georgia, she fostered an appreciation for the Black women in her community. Throughout her academic journey, she has reflected on how these women and other Black women have shaped her into who she is today. These experiences have informed her academic interests, and she enjoys reading and writing pieces that uplift the stories of Black women. Fun fact: Her favorite author is Toni Morrison.

Sydney Featherstone

Sydney Featherstone is a multimedia artist with a ceramics focus from the Washington DC metro area who uses materials to illuminate social justice issues through the lens of the Black perspective. Her creative journey is driven by a deep connection to and appreciation of the natural and supernatural realms, and her art is a love letter to the world. Currently studying Art and History at Vanderbilt University, she hopes to expose and capture the world's beauty through her artistry. She is deeply committed to fostering empathy, community, and increased engagement with art.

Raychael Gross

Raychael Gross is a third-year student at Vanderbilt University majoring in Psychology and minoring in African American and Diaspora Studies. She is from Memphis, TN, and enjoys writing poetry. Her journey with poetry started during her sophomore year at Vanderbilt. She noticed that she enjoyed writing poetry more than reading it. She didn't enjoy reading poetry because she could never understand the unspoken message, and that frustrated her. However, when she chose to write poetry for herself, she noticed that she was in control and could choose the message she wanted the reader to receive.

Sonji Hargrove

Sonji Hargrove, a Vanderbilt sophomore hailing from Moultrie, GA, channels her passion for artistic expression through the written word. Her love for writing is rooted in its ability to articulate emotions and experiences that spoken language may struggle to capture. Whether crafting pieces for academic assignments, personal journaling, or professional development, Sonji embraces writing as a limitless medium that mirrors the evolving stages of her life. The privilege of indulging in this daily labor of love brings her immense joy, allowing her to navigate and convey the intricacies of her life through the rich tapestry of language.

Danait Issac

Danait Issac (she/her/hers) is a senior majoring in Medicine, Health, & Society and Gender & Sexuality Studies with a minor in Environmental & Sustainability Studies. Originally from Metro Atlanta, also known as the Black Mecca, Danait's passion for environmental justice and health equity stems from seeing firsthand how the lasting effects of discriminatory policies like redlining have economically disadvantaged and disproportionately burdened communities of color with environmental hazards. She believes in the transformative power of local, community-led work and hopes to leverage her passions and skills to advocate for a just, sustainable future for the places she calls home.

Jeanne d'Arc Koffi

Jeanne d'Arc Koffi (she/her/hers) is a senior from Abidjan, Ivory Coast, majoring in Human and Organizational Development studies. She has always been interested in migration pathways and community/organizational mechanisms that support care. Additionally, she is deeply passionate about storytelling and seeks to use photography as a medium to contribute to shared information about the individuals impacted along these routes.

Kousy Louis

Kousy Louis (she/they) is (thankfully) a graduating senior from Lansing, Michigan, majoring in African American and Diaspora Studies and Psychology, with a minor in Creative Writing. Her favorite coping mechanism is playing Pokémon, and she loves her partner, Tunde, and her cats, Mango and Violet, to death! At the moment, a large part of the purpose behind their poetry is utilizing the art to process trauma, pain, and change in her life.

Taina Monegro

Taína Monegro, born and raised in New York City, is an aspiring writer who has loved poetry and stories from a very young age. Her relationship with writing transformed over time from a mere fascination with words and phonetics in childhood to an irrepressible passion for the beauty and rawness of storytelling. In her work, Taína typically addresses themes related to queerness, womanhood, and Latinidad. The poem "Her" is a short creative piece meant to highlight the melancholy and multifaceted nature of love—both romantic and platonic—while also weaving in elements of queer joy and pride.

Helena Spigner

Helena Spigner is a third-year, first-generation, undergraduate student at Vanderbilt University. She is studying African American and Diaspora Studies alongside Educational Studies with a concentration in Elementary. Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, she finished high school in the small town of Buffalo, Missouri. Helena is dedicated to honestly uplifting the stories and experiences of Black women, as she hopes that her work provides a mirror for little girls and

women like her. *The Beauty in Femininity* is a photo essay highlighting Helena's continuous journey into womanhood as she defines it.

Alexander Ward

Alexander Ward (he/him/his) is a self-taught photographer from St. Louis, Missouri. His portrait work highlights themes of Black joy and grace, and he seeks to portray those around him as their most authentic, comfortable selves. He sees contentment as a thing of beauty often overlooked in the representation of Black people and hopes to create change. Additionally, his personal experiences with community and passion for introspection guide his current artistic interests. Alex constantly seeks to explore the many faces of humanity, and these experiences are what shape his work.

Joidyn Wester

Joidyn Wester (she/her/hers), hailing from the Metro Atlanta area, is a visionary creative who combines her interest in social impact with her identity as a Black woman in art. As an individual deeply passionate about innovation and social action, Joidyn Wester embodies a relentless pursuit of excellence. With a background in political science, Joidyn blends creativity with analytical prowess and consistently delivers remarkable results. Her innate curiosity drives her to explore diverse perspectives, fostering collaboration and progress.