88.9: A Documentary Poem Examining Whiteness at the University of Vermont

Addison Campbell

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88.9

Addison Campbell
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A Documentary Poem Examining Whiteness at the University of Vermont

Addison Campbell
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor Professor Major Jackson, who first introduced me to documentary poetics, for his incredibly keen and critical eye, for his vast and invaluable pool of knowledge and suggestions, and for pushing me when I needed it.

Thank you to the other members of my committee, Professors Loka Losambe and Mildred Beltre, for their participation in this project, and to Professor Jinny Huh, who listened to me ramble in her office junior year when I wasn't sure about writing a thesis until we both realized that I couldn't stop talking about docupoetry. Also to the many other professors and instructors who contributed to my Critical Race and Ethnic Studies education at UVM, and to my English professors for teaching me the art of close reading.

Lastly, thank you to Edil, for her calm genius and sage direction, to Izzy, for asking about my project from afar, and to Alice, who is always ready for conversations about race and whiteness, for her support and unending listening.
For the students and instructors of the fall 2015 *People of Color Counterstorytelling* class, and all others who have begun decolonizing my education while leaning on art.
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I. Northeast Kingdom
“Oh”

It is the sound of the “oh,” soft and bright, escaping the lips of other white people when I tell them I am writing a poem about whiteness, as if they have suddenly discovered themselves as subjects of scrutiny. I, myself, am a subject of scrutiny. Interesting that we are all subjects, already.
To: UVM Community

From: Annie Stevens, Vice Provost for Student Affairs
      Al Turgeon, Chief Risk Officer and Chief Public Safety Officer

RE: Threatening Language on Campus (Indirect)

On October 1, 2017, the University received information from a campus community member who overheard an unidentified person on campus using explicitly racist and threatening language directed toward African Americans and general diversity initiatives at UVM. Such detestable remarks and threats directed to any group or individual are antithetical to our values and commitment to work toward racial equality and greater inclusion.

Our primary concern is always the safety and well-being of our community. The University will address directly these allegations. We are working closely with law enforcement and within established internal procedures and we will make every effort to identify the individual involved and hold that person accountable.

We know that as a University and as a nation, attitudes and issues regarding race, immigration status, gender, and sexual orientation are deeply strained. While we have work to do on our campus, we want to be very clear - the sentiments expressed by this individual have no place in our community.

If you have any information about this matter, please report it to University Police Services. You can access their anonymous tip form here, text your tip to 847411 by including “UVM” in your message, email police@uvm.edu, or call them directly at (802) 656-3473.

We will continue to keep you apprised as we learn more about this on-going investigation. Please know that all campus officials that need to know have been notified and we will provide full support and resources as necessary.

We deeply appreciate the community member who reported this incident. We encourage others to continue to support each other during this time.
Eight weeks into the semester, the white kid in the back of the class who never contributes to reading discussions suddenly decides he will add to our conversation about Black Lives Matter. In a remarkably short time the words *black-on-black crime* and *violent protestors* have left his lips, questionably cited. Just like that, he has announced himself, peeled his walnut-colored, Vermont-style Bieber cut from the rear wall where it usually lives. A probing question from your professor, a woman of color. A weak and muddled response, something vague. The opinion left standing, a smoke.

The young woman sitting against the adjacent wall is one of two black people in the room. She raises her hand, delivers a careful reply like slow rain on a dry field. Some new figures, mentions of the criminalization of black folks. Her own visibility amplified, though our eyes are already everywhere and nowhere on the two dark bodies to his right. A nod from your professor at this corrective narrative, an artful guidance of a fragile subject, a few more hands. You exhale and the moment passes.

At the end of our 50 minutes the white kid from the back approaches your black classmate. *I'm sorry,* he tells her, *I didn't mean to say...* As if to revoke the impact of exactly what he meant to say, perhaps without consciously knowing it. Did he forget she was there? Was this the PC version? You zip your jacket, simultaneously need to leave and cannot. She accepts the apology, as most people would, to maintain a sort of peace in a space shared first by choice and then by obligation. You wonder if he can see her body taking the weight of the meaning so his doesn’t have to.

---

1 “... Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it’s some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don’t know nothin’ but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de n**** man tuh pick it up. He pick in up because he have to, but he don’t tote it. He hand it to his women folks. De n**** woman is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see. Ah been prayin’ fuh it tuh be different wid you. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd!” (Hurston 14).
Whose Life: Vermont Ain’t Flat

when you come here, be sure to bring your pastels and your road bike. please know that not all the roads are paved and that not everyone can get up them on two wheels. where I am from, which is vermont but not burlington, there are young children who grow up near fertile fields and eat entenmann’s for breakfast, or sometimes no breakfast. they do not own bikes with curved handles and thin tires, but they are familiar with thick woods and the uphill battle. when you come here, keep in mind that you will be projected against greens of many shades made to look like one, against the simplicity of a church with a fresh coat of paint.
When Racial Anxiety Arrives Swiftly upon the Back of a Shared Facebook Post

moments like this cut you on the inhale. you are two of those things, but not a kardashian. though you do not think you think of yourself as black, she could definitely be talking to you. though you know you shouldn’t, you are suddenly asking your roommate what she thinks, then your partner, cringing like mosquito bites in the process. suddenly you are brainstorming all the ways you demonstrate that you know you know you are white. this feeling would be one of them.
When a Black Woman in an Atlanta Restaurant Gives You *the Look* as You Follow the Host to Your Table

You get the urge to apologize, to run, to say nothing. It is as if she has pared it all down and suddenly you are a baby carrot shriveled to half-truths under a fluorescent light. Contextually, you understand yourself as someone who reflects this light quite easily, someone who has always taken. You understand that she is adding your partner to the list of what has been taken and this burns your throat when you swallow, even though you know there are ordinarily 1,151 miles between them; you are not a sister.

For all the learning and listening you have done, you are not prepared for this look. You do not know what shape love takes when draped over your kind of taking; BLACKED and lynch mobs exist in the same universe as the fake leather armchair in which you could not stop kissing his forehead, his eyebrows, the soft skin of his ears. The same universe as his tears in the hollow of your throat – a new kind of nakedness – and your lack of words for the impact of this landing. You are worried that the same language you might use to describe love could be taken for objectification, synecdoche with a pallid glow. You want to convey these things to the woman sitting diagonal to you, but you understand that they are better quietly swallowed.
Of the issues available online, approximately 12.5% include some kind of melanin on the cover. The oldest is captioned “World Images.” Brown, it seems, does not go here. 100 minus 12.5 equals 87.5%. According to the UVM FACTS Campus Life and Diversity section at [www.uvm.edu/uvm_facts](http://www.uvm.edu/uvm_facts), 11.1% of undergraduates are students of color; 30.1% of medical students and 6.6% of graduate students. 100 minus 11.1 equals 88.9%. The rest of the math you can do yourself.
Notes on Affirmation Given Before Bedtime

Every night
before bed,

I tell
my son,

‘you can
be anything
you want
to be.’

I keep
my mouth
shut, do
not suggest
his success
may not
just bloom
from words
when there
are roots
in Europe,
and seeds
in the
Big House,
fertile soils
daily fed
red, white,
and blue.
Notes on Other Conversations
When the University Still Needs Tips

On October 1, 2017, the University overheard an unidentified racist threatening African Americans and general diversity initiatives at UVM. Detestable and antithetical to work toward racial equality.

Our concern is the safety of The University. We are working within established procedures to identify the individual and hold accountable a University and a nation deeply strained. We have work to do on our sentiments. Please tip here to police@uvm.edu.

We continue to learn more about the community during this time.
II. Champlain Valley
When Asking for Destitution in a POC Text

The grad student in the socks and Tevas announces to the class that she almost finds the ending of Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* to be too happy. A story of a pregnant Haitian American woman’s suicide and her adult daughter’s unresolved sexual trauma. There is something about the final scene of the now motherless daughter’s destruction of the cane field, that initial site of violence, that is not destitute enough. Not coincidentally, this is the same grad student who announced on the first day that she has a Haitian friend.
Index: The Kiss

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When Asking a Young Black Man From NYC If He Has Ever Kissed Anyone With Dreadlocks Before

You are not embarrassed of the kiss; it does not follow you around like the weight of a hairstyle you never should have worn. Instead, you can't shake the question, which echoes like

You are not embarrassed of the kiss; it does not follow you around like the weight of a hairstyle you never should have worn. Instead, you can't shake the question, which echoes like You

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You are not embarrassed of the kiss; it does not follow you around like the weight of a hairstyle you never should have worn. Instead, you can't shake the question, which echoes like You
Outside, the temperature was well below freezing. There were not many students around. In between South Prospect and University Place, I walked by a blond girl with sharp features who was laughing with a friend. She glanced at me, then continued to giggle. It made me think of the connection between eugenics, the College of Medicine, and me. I could not help but feel I was being aided down some long and winding path that would result in my ritual sterilization. (140)

-Simeon Marsalis, *As Lie Is to Grin*

Of what use is peaceful protest when freedom of speech is exclusive to the privileged? We speak equity, they scream death.

- NoNames for Justice, “Case Closed for White Student at the University of Vermont Who Wants to Shoot ‘N*****s,’” February 1, 2018

During Vermont’s eugenics program, 253 women and men were sterilized, making it the 25th highest in the nation. According to the Wikipedia report on the 1930 U.S. census, Vermont’s population was 359,611, making it 45th in the nation. There is a conversation here about percentages that may or may not matter.

A list of demands.

10. The George Perkins Building must be renamed.

*Flowing through the vessels of structures like the Bailey-Howe Library and Perkins Hall are the carvings of genocide.*

Nor would Sullivan agree to change the name of the George Perkins building, saying it was former UVM Dean Perkin's son Henry who was the proper target of the student's outrage. This is articulated in an email sent too early, another waterlogged promise:

To provide context, George

Perkins was a longtime and distinguished professor, dean, and interim president at UVM.

Perkins Hall is named in his honor. To our knowledge, there is no evidence that George
Perkins was involved in the eugenics movement in any way, nor is there information indicating that the subject of eugenics was taught in what is now Perkins Hall.

We agree that communicating more information and education on the disturbing history and activities of the eugenics movement should be pursued.

More context: Henry F. Perkins led the way for the Vermont eugenics program. He was born in 1877 in Burlington and grew up two blocks from the University of Vermont campus green, where his father was a well known professor (see above for references to the namesake with the same name). In 1927-28, he took a sabbatical to solicit funding and organize a comprehensive survey of rural Vermont, including all aspects of rural life that might explain the causes and effects of rural decline in the state.

What resulted was the Vermont Commission on Country Life which used eugenic ideas to develop a plan for community development in the state. From 1931 to 1934 he was the president of the American Eugenics Society. Here, Perkins pitched Vermont Made to the entire nation, a recipe for purity repeated 253 times over, and I have questions about grade. Were we clean enough, then?

Some argue that the confusion with respect to the Perkins name appearing on a building on campus, as well as the familial relationship between George Perkins and his son Henry, should be sufficient cause to rename the building.

The next 10 years he spent as director of the Fleming Museum. What does it mean to have a eugenicist direct art, condemn alcoholism, conceive twice, die of liver failure? Could George have known? Is the daughter of a eugenicist a eugenicist or a daughter? Is the father?

However, it would not be appropriate to remove Dean George
Perkins’ name from Perkins Hall due to the actions of his son, Henry.

Another sad chapter in U.S. history was the regressive era of Senator Joseph McCarthy, during which mere guilt by association was sufficient to ruin careers and lives of thousands of people. As history has recorded, repeating that approach would be antithetical to our country’s values and individual rights.

Maybe if we asked George, he wouldn’t mind the change of name. Is it disrespectful to ask Tom if he knows George is dead? There is a conversation here about ruining the career of a dead man, about ruining a life that ended in 1933. Asking the Abenaki for imput seems novel, like As Lie Is to Grin. There is a question here at this institution about lives and which ones matter.
Whose Life: Taking Stock

...To “raise the standards of civilization” in the country places, and in this better setting, to rear a finer race, with fewer defectives and reasonably large families of children, sturdy in body and healthy in mind.
- Henry F. Perkins, "Contributory Factors in a Rural State," 1932

You cannot help but notice the reds, the flame orange, the vibrant greens and rolling hills. Little boys swing lunch pails packed with food made by working hands, women’s hands. Cows packed with clean grass, green grass, the first boy’s golden hair. It is a pastoral tradition you cannot help but notice, a robust native stock.
“No,"

I answered, embarrassed. It seems this is how I ran laps with my eyes closed on four separate occasions: I have steeped in pallid Vermont winters all of my life. If this is an excuse, it takes the shape of a bowl of water, temporary, not enough. By the fifth time around, there is a young man to ask the obvious question. Ironically, or more probably not, it is the words leaving darker lips that peel my lids back to what is not there, to who is not there. *Have you ever seen a black person do NBR?* It is how my body blends, though snow reflects light even at midnight. And suddenly this drunken parade becomes a blizzard of its own, ravenously quiet, and my eyes have never been enough.
To: UVM Community

From: Annie Stevens, Vice Provost for Student Affairs
       Al Turgeon, Chief Risk Officer and Chief Public Safety Officer

RE: Threatening Language on Campus - Update

On Monday, October 2, 2017, we informed you of a situation involving an unidentified person on campus allegedly using explicitly racist and threatening language.

UVM Police Services has now identified and is focusing on a single person of interest and is continuing further its investigation. We will send out another communication as soon as the investigation is completed. The University has done everything it can to expedite the investigation and to ensure the safety of all members of the University community.
III. Central Vermont
Danielle Norris was my close friend. She grew up in New Haven, Vermont, attended Mount Abraham Union High School just like I did, took a gap year to work and travel with her then-boyfriend, and then came to UVM. Until this past February, we lived together in an apartment with one other roommate. Danielle is a 22-year-old white, straight female from an upper-middle class family that is very well known in Addison County. Her family members include both very liberal democrats as well as conservative, multi-generational Vermonters. I interviewed Danielle on a Thursday afternoon in the living room of our apartment during the fall of our junior year.
I. A NOD TO OPEN-MINDED WHITE PEOPLE

INTERVIEWER
What kind of racial climate did you grow up in? Describe the demographic of your town and school community, any household attitudes around race, etc.

NORRIS
When you do leave your super white town and have never had a conversation about race, you’re unprepared for conversations elsewhere or with other people.

Then she paused, and I wondered if she was unprepared for this conversation, what it might look like to be prepared for it.

Or you’re just “really open minded,” [there may have been air quotes] but that depends on your own family’s ideas about race.

Then I remembered her father’s joke about Jungle Fever in the kitchen that night, his emptied eyes set wide beneath sandy brows. I did not laugh but said nothing.

If they have strong opinions, but nobody ever really talks about it, I can see bad things happening...
II. TALK ABOUT IT [RACE], OR, THE WHITENESS

INTERVIEWER
How often do you think about your race/racial identity?

NORRIS
I feel like I talk about it in classes and stuff and read about it a lot in general and I feel like I want to say that I think about it.

Then she paused, contemplating the right answer to this question.

I want to say that I’m aware of it all the time but maybe I’m not? I guess it has more to do with the context. Like I think of the whiteness of Burlington, the whiteness of UVM, the whiteness of Vermont...

A year and two seasons later I am in my advisor’s office and he asks, So what, about the whiteness, the 88.9. My mouth opens and closes. I want to point to the art, trying to stand on its own like a foal with knobby knees, a young tomato plant in the wind.
I, too, have questions to contemplate:

1. How does a brown body fit on a mountain covered in snow and laced with double-lined tracks?

2. What does it mean for a brown or black hand to lift a thumb against a backdrop of Green Mountains, to raise a fist and hold it in the air?
III. I THINK I’M MOSTLY AWARE OF MY WHITENESS WHEN I AM...

INTERVIEWER
How often do you think about your race/racial identity?

NORRIS
Sometimes I doubt my own perspective because... because I will never have a nonwhite perspective and a lot of the conversations I have in class are about different narratives to the dominant white dude narrative.

Then she sped up, saying, So we’re a bunch of white kids sitting in class trying to think of alternative narratives and make space for narratives of racial others I guess so then there’s this weird space where it’s like I don’t wanna, I don’t know...

Then she paused, and I sensed a confession of sorts peaking its head over a ridgeline of sorts, a kind of easily fortified place.

I look to... I need to make space because of my whiteness for other perspectives. When I don’t want to take up space.
IV. MASKS

INTERVIEWER
What do you generally believe about race and racism today? In general, do you believe racism still exists today?

NORRIS
I guess there’s this general sense that like we’re super liberal and progressive and all this stuff and we’re... but we’re such a white state and there’s definitely still racial tension and racism in this state.

Then I thought of her dog, who barks at the sight of skin that is darker than “Caucasian” even though she is a dog and does not understand what this means.

And I think – this is really cliché like straight out of an academic journal – but I have a general sense that a lot of Vermonters would claim to be colorblind and that they don’t see race, that racism isn’t an issue in this state.

It is easy to claim allyship when there is hardly anyone to throw against our sharp white background who would not just sharpen the white.
V. A QUESTION OF CLIMATE

INTERVIEWER
At Mount Abe, it seemed that people were very hesitant to publicly acknowledge the race of the few students of color who were there, as if they were nervous that saying, “Asher is black,” was a bad thing to have noticed.

NORRIS
I don’t know who is setting up the racial climate of the school or community but certainly the people with any sort of power are mostly white because everyone is white and I don’t know what kind of...

Then she paused, just for a second, saying, Like what was guiding their decision to say we’re just going to ignore this.

Last month, a multiracial classmate of mine shared that she is from New York City, from the projects, and feels less safe at UVM. Our professor nodded his white head slowly, told her that was maybe the most profound thing he had ever heard.

Maybe it was their own whiteness that made them uncomfortable with having the power to say whether or not we’re going to talk about it but... yeah...
IT'S OKAY TO BE WHITE
When the Posters Deliver Breaking News

It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white. It’s okay to be white.
Whose Life: Sugaring in Woods on a Sunny Day

A power stance. Two
generations, planted side
by side, frame one another
in mustard and plaid.
Here, spring is
for the hearty, the well-
rooted. Fathers teach sons
how to tap maples, navigate
snow, heave sap, boil it down
to sweetness. Whose woods
these are is plain to see.
Are they not lovely,
bright and deep?
To the UVM Community:

As stated in a campus communication on October 2, 2017, the University received information from a UVM community member who overheard a telephone conversation in which a then-unidentified person allegedly used explicitly racist and threatening language directed toward African Americans and general diversity initiatives on campus. UVM Police Services was notified and began an investigation immediately, managing the situation and taking every precaution to ensure the safety of our community.

A subsequent campus communication on October 4 indicated that the investigation had led to the identification of a single person of interest. After consultation with the Chittenden County State’s Attorney, who determined the appropriate charge, UVM Police Services has issued a citation to Wesley Richter, 20, a Continuing Education student, to appear in court on a charge under Vermont Statutes Annotated, Title 13, section 1026 (a) (1). It states that, “A person is guilty of disorderly conduct if he or she, with intent to cause public inconvenience or annoyance, or recklessly creates a risk thereof: engages in fighting or in violent, tumultuous, or threatening behavior.”

UVM Police Services has conducted a thorough investigation and threat assessment. They found no information of an imminent threat to public safety. If there had been an imminent threat of harm to our community or to individuals, including any indications of weapons involved, additional steps and safeguards would have been initiated, including extensive CatAlert messages, instructions, and updates across all email, telephone, and social media.

UVM Police Services has done everything within its authority and discretion to expedite and conclude the investigation, in consultation with the Chittenden County State’s Attorney, who is responsible for determining the charge and who will proceed with the next steps of the legal process.

Lianne Tuomey
Chief, UVM Police Services
In Lieu

A telephone conversation then-allegedly threatening.

African Americans and POCs managing

the situation to ensure
the safety of our community.

A subsequent identification
of a single person. Wesley

Richter, 20, a Continuing Education student, is guilty

if he, with intent, engages in violent or threatening

behavior. UVM Police Services found no imminent

threat to public safety. An imminent threat would

have initiated consultation with POCs.
When You Have Questions for the Chief

Who is *the public*? What is *an imminent threat*? I think I would like to consider the number of seconds it might take for the adjective to arrive at the front of *threat*, consider the definition of *paternalism*. I would like to ask if maybe Lianne Tuomey is fronting.
IV. Southern Vermont
When Google Earth Has Something to Say About the University’s Placement of Its Center for Students of Color
F**k You

*I know a kid who told a cop, “Fuck you!” right to his face*

I do not have to ask about the color of the skin attached to the lips telling the cop, “Fuck you!” right to his face and walking away whole. I do not have to ask about the color of the boy sharing this before class in the Martin Luther King Jr. Room in a voice too loud for telling a story in an otherwise silent space.
"The Real Groovy UV" Music Video

20,905 views
When Having One Area Code & Too Many White Rappers
I, Too, Sing

Does man love Art? Man visits Art, but squirms. 
Art hurts. Art urges voyages—
and it is easier to stay at home,
the nice beer ready.

- Gwendolyn Brooks, “The Chicago Picasso”

Dear Hesitant Members of the University Literary Journal,

Here is a question I have been asking quietly. Now, I will ask a little louder. But first, an observation – I find it interesting that in your fall issue you made space for: “Cover Cropping,” “Things I Learned on Monday, Or What I Know About Being Woman,” “When Shawn Christensen Relies on a Familiar Palette,” “When I Have Stopped Checking For Bedbugs at Two-Star Hotels,” and “The Valedictorian’s Younger Sister Lists What She is Good At,” but not “Dear White America, Dear / Me.”

I do not claim to know your selection process. It is clear you enjoyed my work, found that it qualified as “art that thinks” 80% of the time. This is not a request for a perfect acceptance rate – those other poems are less important. I am just asking a little louder now.

Interesting that you prefer to print my cousin’s womb, two suicide attempts, my feelings for construction workers, and a sonnet about mediocre casual sex to an interrogation of whiteness implicating both structural racism and approximately 88.9% of this campus.

Interesting is a weak word, but I will leave it to you to interpret this adjective. It is, after all, what you do: read words, consider their power, ask art how much it thinks. The man I love, who had initially apologized to me before criticizing white people, read “Dear White America, Dear / Me” and said it was quite potent. I can and cannot understand why it didn’t get published. This is a double-edged understanding, a common disappointment; perhaps the art made you think too hard. All this begs the question: Is he right?
To: UVM Community

From: Annie Stevens, Vice Provost for Student Affairs
     Wanda Heading-Grant, Vice President for Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs

We write to follow-up on Chief Toumey’s statement that was sent yesterday, October 6, 2017.

We want you to be aware that in addition to the criminal process that is underway with the identified student, the campus conduct process is also moving forward. While the campus process and outcomes are confidential as required by federal student privacy laws, please know that we have and will continue to take all precautionary measures to ensure the safety of our campus community.

Please also know that Counseling and Psychiatry Services (CAPS) or Invest EAP are available to assist students and employees respectively. We encourage you to seek out these campus resources and connect with other members (friends, staff, and faculty) in our UVM community for guidance and support.

The University understands that this incident has been difficult for many members in our community, especially students and staff that identify as African American and people of color. In the days and months ahead, our hope is that everyone will take time to care for their personal well-being and find ways to support each other as a collective community.
The worst thing, he tells our class of eight students, is when you are at a basement party full of white kids and a song comes on with the word n*****.

Who sings it, who screams it, who clings to the hard ‘r’ like a parting gift from their mother?

Marshfield Pond and Marshfield Mountain were unfortunately called N*****head Pond and Mountain for many years, and those names have been used only in direct quotations.

Does it occur to us, the white people, The Institution, that unpacking the invisible knapsack is not a neutral activity? In Burlington, black and brown hands rarely unpack. What are their parting gifts?

Ken Goslanlt informs us that the pond was always called Edgewater by Lanesboro residents.

We, the white people, The Institution, like to feel we have summited something. We like to talk about ridgelines and not retainment. New names weigh heavy on our tongues.

I hope that readers will take the time to inform the author or the Marshfield Historical Society of any errors which are found in this volume. It’s never too late to set the record straight.
The central campus green in early September. A trio of loud voices you cannot help but listen to, no matter how hard you squint into your computer screen or contemplate your own sweat. Though you do not look up, a girl you can only describe as flouncy dominates the conversation you cannot help but overhear with stories of herself.

Sitting there in the afternoon sun you begin to wonder if you should relocate and also how long she will continue flirting with her friend’s boyfriend right in front of her. *I have to go shoplift a Redbull but I’ll see you guys later,* she announces, drawing a laugh from the couple, who follow up with questions. She answers like a crow on the wire, unapologetic and proud in the clamour of her own cleverness.

Like the crow, there will be no consequences for the frivolity, for the taking. There is a lightness to her words not unlike your roommate’s friend from Agroecology class, who shows up at your apartment with Aunt Jemima in her reusable bag. You look up. Though you would probably describe yourself as judgemental to begin with, she looks exactly as you are expecting.
Whose Life: The Lust of Snow

Yeah, uh huh, you know what it is.
-Wiz Khalifa, “Black and Yellow”

Leisure leans flirtatiously
on a pole. She is
black and yellow 26 years
before the song she is neither
black nor yellow.
Behind her, the steeple,
the snow, no people; after
all, this is a nature
photograph, not a racial
photograph. What they
do not tell you: it is
always winter here. If you
come, there will be
powder days and hills
wearing pale blankets
that threaten, quietly,
to swallow.
LET'S LOOK AT ANOTHER VERMONT:

- **KAKEWALK AT THE UNIVERSITY – AN 80+ YEAR TRADITION, STEEPED IN RACISM.**

The 1970 Kake Walk Committee has, after much deliberation and discussion, formulated a final and lasting policy concerning the racial question in relation to the Kake Walk Weeken [sic].

It has been decide [sic] that in any future [sic] Kake Walks there will be no use of facial makeup whatsoever.

Ask the students who knows about Kake Walk. Write it on the board, that letter K. Ask them who has heard of “Walking for Dat Cake,” and watch the hands fall, or never rise, watch palms take root in laps; we have let those seeds rot, quietly.

- **N*****HEAD MOUNTAIN ON OFFICIAL STATE MAP, WHAT A FIGHT IT WAS TO ERASE THAT EPITHET IN THE 70’S**

Also deleted from future Kake Walks will be the kinky wig and any Negro dialect. It is our opinion that with the removal of these three items, the nature of Kake Walk will finally change to what it has been, in actuality, an event indigenous to the University of Vermont. I wonder if the Outing Club has been here, what their boots christened it.
• IRASBURG AFFAIR: A NATIONAL EMBARRASSMENT IN WHICH A BLACK MINISTER’S HOUSE WAS SHOT INTO, AND THE PERPETRATOR WAS FINED $500,000 WHILE THE MINISTER WAS JAILED FOR ADULTERY.

What constitutes a hate crime? We have learned from experience what it does not include: stealing the Black Lives Matter flag or talk about stealing black lives. At UVM, it seems we like to toe the line; across the country and the world, parents call students to see if they are still safe here, or have ever been.

Like Vietnam, this is not a legacy we like to brag about, so we are often tight-lipped. My brother ran a half-marathon in Irasburg once. It was a very quaint town with small houses clustered together like chicks under a heat lamp. The green was an expanse of gently rolling hill, the finish line.

• CROSS-BURNINGS ACROSS THE STATE.

To look back in the heritage of the black in America to find basis for Kake Walk is indeed futile, for nowhere in this country, at any time was a dance performed in any way reminiscent of the Kake Walking as done today.

There is no ‘k’ in ‘Vermont’ but the Ku Klux Klan and others are alive here, or at least come to visit. Though we have stopped kake walking, our campuses are not beyond reach of the heat from these kinds of flames.
• PEOPLE OF COLOR... FACING ALL KINDS OF INDIGNITIES; FOLLOWED AROUND STORES BY MANAGERS LEST THEY STEAL SOMETHING; TREATED RUDELY BY CLERKS, ETC.

In the classroom, that double-bind of hypervisibility and invisibility, a representative by default. Jim Crow is no longer, and yet color still flexes its muscles in the body of the learning experience.

Demand 1: We Demand All Faculty, Staff, And Administration Attend Annual Diversity and Inclusion Training Including, But Not Limited To The Following Topics: Ableism, Classism, Gender-Based Violence, Homophobia, Rape Culture, Racism and White Supremacy, Religious-Based Discrimination and Violence, Transphobia And Transmisogyny, Xenophobia and White Nationalism, And Any Other Matters of Equity For Marginalized Peoples.

• PRISON POPULATION – DISPORPORTIONATELY “COLORED”. A STUDY BY PROF. LAURA FISHMAN INDICATED THAT BLACKS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE ARRESTED, MORE LIKELY TO BE ASSIGNED PUBLIC DEFENDERS, AND SERVE LONGER SENTENCES.

I know a man with brown skin who does not drive anymore after an encounter with UVM police. First, he was stopped. Driving While Black with a license one-day expired. The officer called the tow truck, and suddenly he was Walking While Black. It was raining that day. Not enough water to douse the shame.
Demand 4: We Demand Adequate Responses To Bias Incidents Upon Marginalized Communities.

• AND FOR THE UNIVERSITY, A LONG HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION, RACISM, SEXISM. AN OFTEN UNFRIENDLY AND EVEN DANGEROUS CAMPUS; A HISTORY OF BROKEN PROMISES... TO STUDENTS AND FACULTY OF COLOR... INCREDIBLE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE.

1988. We Demand. 1991. We Demand. 2018. We are still here, demanding, many of the same words peeled from 30-year-old documents, reshaped, and pasted seven times over. We are blocking traffic, refusing food, tenting out, occupying spaces for these Demands. Still there is talking, so many words.

Unfortunately, throughout the afternoon and evening, a large group of students chose to disrupt the operations of the University in several buildings including disruption of classes, exams, business operations, and other important functions and campus events.

We regret the significant disruption to the campus. We are prepared to take all appropriate disciplinary and legal steps to address the situation should it continue.
The University remains committed to further dialogue and ongoing progress on the issues, as evidenced by the meetings today. UVM’s primary academic mission must continue uninterrupted.

- **AND PRESENTLY, WHAT I THINK IS VERMONT’S MOST SERIOUS SOCIETAL PROBLEM... THE EGREGIOUS DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN OF COLOR BY THE LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS. HARRASSMENT ALLOWED TO GO UNPUNISHED; LOW TEACHER EXPECTATION; PAUCITY OF DIVERSITY IN TEACHING ROSTER AS WELL AS SUBJECT MATTER. OUR CHILDREN ARE A POPULATION AT RISK.**

If I close my eyes and imagine the schools of my adolescence, I will see a handful of brown faces in a sea of white ones that do not comprehend what this means, because they do not have to. If I open my eyes in a classroom today, I see most of the same.

Demand 2: We Demand For Increased Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Of Faculty Of Color And LGBTQIA+ Faculty On Tenure/Tenure Track.

If I imagine a microaggression as a drop in a bucket, it is a wonder more people are not drowning on this hill.
About the Author

Addy Campbell grew up in Starksboro, Vermont as the second of four children. She has been writing poetry since she was nine years old. More recently, her poem, “Samuel Bak Paints Refugees,” was selected by the Fleming Museum for inclusion in their 2016 collection of ekphrastic poetry as part of The Painted Word Series. Five of her poems were also published by Vantage Point, the University of Vermont’s literary and art magazine in 2017. Addy will be graduating from UVM in May 2018 with a degree in English and minors in Math and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies. This is her first collection of poetry.
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