



**THE RECORD**

**2022**



## THE RECORD 2022

**The Record**, Trinity Washington University's literary journal, is a collection of work by Trinity students, alumnae, and staff. *The Record* holds first publication rights only to all work herein.

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**Front cover:** detail from *Maelstrom*, Katie Wanschura



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## Remembering Wendy Bilen



Wendy Bilen was faculty sponsor to THE RECORD from 2011 to 2021. In July she passed away after a brave battle against cancer.

She was a daughter, sister, teacher, believer, survivor. She was a writer of great honesty and optimism – finding joy in the world again and again after tragedy, finding the love to adopt a wonderful pair of daughters after she beat cancer the first time, finding beauty and

importance – in resilience after setbacks, and in the daily labor of ordinary lives. Her book *Finding Josie* shows Wendy's patience, faith, curiosity and persistence, profiling a grandmother who

wielded no magic wand, no anointed apron, no book of spells. Instead, she crafted finest hours from typewriters and prayers, pasted families together with plays and pancakes, and loved folks with vegetables and letters and bedpans until they died. She embraced monotony, accepted obscurity, and worked with what most would consider small change. It was a choice on her part; she'd wanted greatness, too. But in her imperfection and disappointment, she welcomed the ordinary, and the extraordinary came to her. (260)

Wendy made the extraordinary out of the ordinary. Present, listening, reliable, a hungry reader and traveler, asking everybody how they were. Wendy often showed up carrying a pan of brownies, even when it wasn't required – not some spectacular gourmet brownies with flavors and sprinkles. They were straight-up ordinary brownies like they make in Illinois. But she brought

them again and again, and her brownies made every discussion better, made everyone draw their chairs up close. Something about a fresh pan of brownies says *Let's go, let's do this.*

To the staff of THE RECORD, which has changed annually, Wendy was the thread that always held – the one whose steadiness and sense of purpose held our groups together. She challenged student staffers at the end of a long school day to find themselves as editors: to state what they liked, to discover their principles. She asked hard questions, she changed minds, she taught lessons even outside class. She was highly empathetic, and she'd share the worst moments of deepest failure or despair with others, and still a minute later find the brightness and hope of morning. We miss all of this about her – her brightness, her hope, her laugh, her contentiousness, her purpose, her love. We miss her.

And her brownies.

## **Esmeralda Paez / To Professor Wendy Bilen**

Thank you, may your soul rest in peace. With love, from your student and co-editor Esmeralda Paez.

I met Professor Wendy Bilen my first year at Trinity. I was nervous but excited about being a first-generation student and far from home. I had always done well in school, especially in my English classes, but that was not the case during my second semester. Professor Bilen's class was the first class I struggled with immensely to the point that I had to withdraw. Though I knew how to write, I struggled to finish my papers. Nothing could break my nasty perfectionist habit.

Before withdrawing from the class, I would visit Professor Bilen's office, and we would talk about ENGL 107, my interests, our shared love for stories and writing and life. Professor Bilen was always very encouraging about my writing but gave me the criticism I needed to hear. I was hesitant to withdraw from the course, but Professor Bilen reminded me of the courage it takes to step back and work on yourself. She also introduced me to *The Record*. I had participated in literary groups in high school but rarely shared my writing, and my first submissions for *The Record* were just works of art. Although I was pushed and encouraged to share my written work, I was not ready to share what I had to say, and I was using perfectionism as a crutch. Professor Bilen's first lesson in ENGL 107 covered getting through a first draft. I did not

make it to the end of the class, but eventually, I understood the significance of her first class. Just write.

During the pandemic, I fell into a deep depression. I could no longer find comfort in words. I stopped writing. I have always kept some semblance of a journal that I would fill with poetry, streams of thoughts and rambles, the overwhelming feelings, and my deepest fears that I held within me. Slowly, I stopped making art solely based on illustrations or the style I am known for and transitioned into collage art. The words I once lost started to find themselves in the empty spaces of my sketches. I learned a new style of art that combined the words I needed to finish my story that worked with the image I had already painted of myself.

I was on a leave of absence from school when I heard of Professor Bilen's passing. It was devastating to hear. I have dealt with grief from a young age, which though unfortunate, has held me together a lot better during the pandemic, but even in my long journey with grief, it was not easy accepting the death of my professor. I owe a lot of my confidence to the time I spent sharing my thoughts, comments, and ideas with her. Slowly she helped me chip at my perfectionist tendencies by encouraging me to share with others.



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**Daniela Romualdo-Castro / Untitled I**



## **Tara Davis-Rama / Whispers in My Ear: A Love Poem**

I sit, I think, and I am thankful unto God, the Creator of Heaven and  
earth

For allowing me to see another day

To see the beautiful leaves fall from the trees

Unto the earth that house my ancestors whose shoulders I'm  
standing on

To see children playing so joyfully

To feel the omnipotence of the wind

I am truly grateful and I ask

What could be more beautiful and blessed?

Softly, softly, the whisper in my ear replies:

The connection, the power from the energy that exudes from our  
very being

even with the mere thought or mention of the other

The plethora of joy felt and received when I'm in your presence

The oneness, becoming as one but not one

Indulging in the Spirit that created our souls

For our paths not crossing, but instead being placed on the others'  
path

I am truly grateful and I ask, “What could be more beautiful, what  
could be more blessed?”

Softly, softly the whisper in my ear replies:

The intellectual and spiritual profundity of our union.

## Irene Salazar / *Casita*

*Arepas* are the indulging pleasure of Medellin,

Sweet or savory depending on your taste;

Bolivia enjoys them too at times.

The sweet smell fills the air,

Café con leche goes well with them at night.

During the time people are the most vulnerable,

Dariana enjoys them fried with extra olive oil;

She has this odd thought of being an Italian gal.

Eliseo prefers baked *arepas*, extra crispy;

It gives him a nice homelike feeling.

For Mimi, cooking is never a bother;

It gives her a sense of gratification to care for her  
grandchildren.

Gee. If only there was a well-lit place to enjoy the meal,

Sometimes being in the sun can be uncomfortable

But that's what happens when you live day by day.

Happiness overfills our home

With home-cooked meals and laughter all around.

Ignoring the children's cry,

They will be okay.

Journeys must come to an end,

Taking us back home again,

Keeping *arepas* as a reminder of casita

Not perfect but just right.

Like sitting in a balcony in Madrid

And experiencing love for the very first time,

Making *casita* a little warmer.

**Katheryn Najarro / Untitled**



## **Timmia Devine / Ain't I My Ancestors**

'Cuz before I was aware of what was deemed academic writing  
I for sho had the audacity to add a lil of me

I guess it's not pleasing to the scholars in the room that believes  
that what I'm saying is invalid.

'Cuz my words move mountains  
An' hold hymns of the past

Cuz I neva forgot  
The bold folktales my great great great great grandma sang to her  
yungin bout holdin on

So I left off a letter or two  
And  
You upset that my voice is rhythmic  
That foreshadows tomorrow, hums songs of today, and shouts out  
loud the heartbeats of yesterday

Cuz before I was in my mother's womb



I was planned  
I heard and felt those songs, those traumas  
That I, now know  
That I, still experience  
And I, will neva forget

So yes, in academia, maybe my commas aren't in the right place. I am often grammatically incorrect. Perhaps I fail to use an extensive vocabulary to reiterate and emphasize an idea that was previously expressed. I fall short of their academic standards because my voice has no bounds. And who gave them the authority to tell me otherwise. Catch the beat, immerse yourself in the story.

Cuz 'fore I am anythin'  
I am the women that created me  
God, that breathe musical life into me  
And  
At the end of the day  
Ain't I my ancestors

**Andrea Portillo / Journey**



## **Fozia Jafar / My Summer 2019 in the UK**

Before the COVID-19 took over the world in late 2019, I was lucky to have had the opportunity to study abroad in the summer of my freshmen year which was just few months before the pandemic. My experience included excursions to several places, mainly in London, England and Cardiff, Wales. I thank CIEE (Center for International Educational Exchange) and Trinity Washington University for this wonderful opportunity. I have shared original images from my excursions to inspire other students to consider studying abroad post pandemic or even during the pandemic (with careful planning).



The London Eye observation wheel is located on the South Bank of the River Thames. A ride on the wheel takes 30 minutes.



Buckingham Palace is a royal residence with over 700 rooms.  
Queen Victoria was the first English royal to reside in the palace.





Cardiff Castle (South Gate), Cardiff, Wales: the castle features mainly Norman style, as it was originally built by Norman invaders, and also has Roman and Gothic Victorian parts. It has become one of the top tourist attractions in Wales.



These Neolithic houses (made of chalk and straw) were recreated based on the archeological remains found not too far away from Stonehenge and Salisbury.

## The Pandemic, Continued

2022 is the third spring to bloom under the worldwide rampage of COVID-19.

*THE RECORD* asked Trinity what they'd been up to during the pandemic.



Esmeralda Paez / Release



## **P.W. Baker / A First Year of Marriage in a Global Pandemic: 2020**

For New Year's we enjoyed the hospitality  
of the medical community in the ER as  
I fought to breathe without conscious thought and effort.  
The mysterious nature of my ailment  
prevented us from naming it  
but not from sharing it. Like the  
chest rub and humidified air of our bedroom,  
the virus was slippery and easily passed to you.  
We barked and slept and healed,  
each keeping an ear out for  
changes in the other which might signal disaster.  
It would take until Valentine's Day  
for us to be sure each breath would  
come and all four lungs coughed out easily  
collected fluids.

Others struggled with illness and  
patterns developed. But  
we continued in our daily duties  
of work and parenting and

loving each other. And  
then the world shut down.  
School is closed through the weekend.  
Then for 2 weeks until after  
the return of Christ.  
And then for the year.  
We worked from home,  
on laptops and established connections,  
safe without masking,  
but removed from human contact.

In April  
we walked in the evenings  
through a long gone past.  
Providing us comfort and ease  
letting us know that the disease  
wasn't coming for us quite yet.  
We found each other and family and kinship  
Hope in the future generations,  
sitting quietly next to us in the evenings  
over the dinner table, reading books,

watching the flowers grow,  
tending the garden hoping.

By July

we had grown bold  
reveling in The Heat we thought so  
deadly and dodging  
THE FLAMES, using water as  
currency for hands and throats  
lubricating systems  
recovering from disuse and feeling brave  
is our freedom to remain in place and still connect.

We completed our studies  
put down our thoughts  
and enjoyed long sleepy days.

We hid our fears with covered smiles  
and focused on how we could  
help the people in the wildfires,  
the people in the protests,  
the families of the Fallen.

Too close to home through the various

media screens  
were the cries of the dying,  
“I can’t breathe,”  
“Momma,”  
“Please don’t shoot,”  
“I’m trying to comply...”  
Tears were the new currency,  
traded for little but  
filling the ocean of loss and struggle  
til its tidal waved us butt up against  
the wall of our experience and  
WE HAD HAD ENOUGH.  
The violence of summer riots  
pepper-sprayed with bullets from police.  
Screams of pain and terror as  
injustice deep as bone marrow  
leaked through the pale thin skin  
of our beleaguered country.

August returned our fears  
watching numbers climb

in places and economies crash in others.

We wondered about food and close-knit communities  
while we yearned to (re?) establish connected  
circles of sameness  
and to safely create new ones.

We looked at our children,  
seemingly so immune to  
the terrors and potentially the cause  
of it for others in our lives  
- not a new idea but one now  
turned on its side as  
everything else had been  
and writing itself anew  
before deciding on educational outcomes.

We felt we had failed them  
and worked to counter  
the deadly potential of  
return for our investments.

And still,  
the world cried out in pain and for justice.

We focused on the coming holidays,  
clinging to hope as swimmers clutch  
the water about them lest the tide should turn

The two live humans  
staring blankly skyward  
while lying on cold ground  
near the intersection  
scared us. Reminded us  
of how personal morality is.

How precise.  
We waited for help to come  
knowing we were not it,  
able to offer no comfort  
but our voices, our footsteps, our presence.

The officer thanked us before  
sending us away to get our lunch.

Our heads tilted  
sideways,  
we prepared to end this year.

## **Andy Flore Golli / The Hospital Can't Help My Illness**

Sleep, online school, eat, poop and pee, repeat. My routine was the same every day, and the only thing that changed was the uncertainty of what tomorrow would bring.

My two-hour commute to school now didn't feel nearly as bad as having to worry constantly about where my next meal would come from or would I have Wi-Fi tomorrow to hop on zoom.

The world was on fire, yet the sun shone as if everything was fine. My school had told us to stay home not too long before we had spring break. Little did I know that my Wi-Fi would extend my vacation to two weeks. I had no way of contacting my professors to let them know, and the closest library was closed and too far from my house on foot.

I spent that week taking care of the house, while my parents found ways to turn the Wi-Fi back on. Uber, which didn't pay that much anyways, was one of those jobs that was not needed because we knew little about the transmission of COVID, and everyone was in quarantine. Financially, my family was on their own.

That weight fell on me, often being the eldest daughter of the family, having to help my mom in the kitchen, brainstorming meals



out of nothing, helping my brothers mentally and emotionally through their own online school, and trying to apply for financial assistance anywhere I could.

The news always talked about the people who died because of this disease. It seemed to never get better, and my hope to go back outside was always met with opposition. I couldn't escape my reality even if I wanted to. Hospitals were full with patients that fought every day to breathe for a better tomorrow; people lost their jobs, and the government was debating whether or not to send financial help, and others like myself were just so freaking sad.

The rest of the semester was a rollercoaster. I did everything I could to turn in assignments, but this time hoping that maybe my accomplishment would lighten my mood. It did not. I felt almost guilty that I had locked myself in my room trying to work through this pile of work and my brothers were on their own, struggling through the same thing; but I just couldn't muster up the words to comfort anyone, not even myself.

I smiled throughout the day when I was with my family and stressed myself to sleep whenever I retreated to my room. This had become my new reality.

As bad as it might sound, it was almost easier to have COVID, rather than wake up every day and fight against something that was almost not there. My own thoughts attacked me, and my circumstances provided no comfort. All I knew was that a hospital could not help my illness.

## Ruth Blessing / Tomorrow the Future

I wonder what tomorrow holds for the world

Tomorrow isn't promised to anyone

From COVID to depression to weird random deaths tomorrow isn't  
promised

But hey, I'm planning my tomorrow

My tomorrow has promise

Does yours

My tomorrow has black excellence and generational wealth and  
reparations

My tomorrow has a new black Wall Street

My tomorrow has a black Jesus on TV

My tomorrow has historically accurate Egyptian movies

Cause today right now, if you were to speak to me, I would tell you  
my today has pain, death

I stopped watching the news really in July 2020; I got tired of  
seeing my people dying

Got tired of the mistreatment, the system prevailing time and time  
again

Got tired of seeing the school-to-prison pipeline at work

“the strong black woman” trope taking us out

Got tired of seeing black women screaming for help and getting

told we got to figure it out you don’t need help you’re a  
strong black woman y’all don’t need help

We died at the hands of the system; our people, we’re dying, but I

guess we got us

But hey, my tomorrow looks good

I have hope because I took a peek

My tomorrow has women that killed their aggressors walking free

My tomorrow has African people united and free from our  
colonizers

In my tomorrow African isn’t a 3rd world continent

In my tomorrow we have statues and memorials from all the poc  
we lost in 2020

My tomorrow has respect for Native American culture my

tomorrow has taken down the government and capitalism  
my tomorrow is run by communists and socialists

My tomorrow isn't even promised, nobody's tomorrow is, but my  
tomorrow isn't just for me; it's for a little black girl that got  
pepper sprayed at a Black Lives Matter protest or at the  
Capitol

It's for mothers that buried their children

It's for the sex workers struggling to make ends meet

It's for the white people that don't see colors but call cops on  
black teens at the park

My tomorrow is for the kids whose grades plummeted during  
quarantine; it's for the kids with mental illness that you  
can't see and for the kids that you can

It's for the people that think box braids is just hair

My tomorrow is the only thing I'm clinging to; it's the reason I wake  
up and choose to live another day

My tomorrow brings me peace; my tomorrow isn't for me, it's for  
my kids, it's for my little brother, my god daughter

My tomorrow is the promised land; it's liberation for all my people.  
for all black lives, for everyone; I just hope I live long enough  
that I also may see it that I too get to experience the  
promise land  
I pray that I don't end up like Moses that I don't die on my Mountain  
on my hill

My tomorrow is Neverland  
Except Peter said everyone is welcome no matter your gender age  
or race and ethnicity; don't you wanna come? Wendy  
already took down the patriarchy and we forgave all  
student loan debt

My tomorrow is the new Garden of Eden, my tomorrow is  
Alkebulan  
Mother of mankind, mother to all  
She welcomes you with open arms; do not take her for granted,  
she is not as forgiving as she once was  
Still she loves unconditionally so come if you want, come when  
you need to

My tomorrow is not everlasting; it will have to be rebuilt and  
redone, but as a forefather I leave that to my future  
But for now, my tomorrow is up and running, welcome to anyone  
Won't you come

## Cindy Reyes / The End

A friendship like no other.

True love but not smothered.

We gave each other peace,  
while others released the worse of us.

Teenage moms we were, but grown women we became.

I learned from you, and you learned from me.

Missing your smile that covered your whole face,  
closing my eyes to see every trace, to not forget any piece.... of  
you.

My heart destroyed once the news of your existence was gone.

The worse of it was the no tag along.

Always by each other's side, and now I ask myself, would there be  
another.

I don't want it; I avoid it.

Only you hold that space of true love, true friendship.

Soulmate you are, and now I don't know how to survive this world  
without you.

I can go on and on with the way you made me laugh, the way you  
made me grow.

Remember that time we almost eloped?



Silly us but serious thoughts. We would have looked cute in our  
wedding dresses.

We lingered in each other's sensual space. We enjoyed the climax.

Others would see best friends, but we saw significant other.

No one would truly understand but I hold on to every strand I  
possibly can.... of you.

COVID took you away, but here I stay to relay a sense of potential  
help.

To help others, not to go away to this horrible thing that I hate with  
such passion.

Hate is powerful, and that is true in my heart.

Thinking of you relaxes that... not completely.

I know you are somewhere finding a way to get to me.

I can feel you around. Your prankster's ways frighten me as I lie in  
bed

Thinking you will pull the sheets as you giggle to see me weep.

Our last moments were brief, but the trip was a heck of a run.

The end to our touch but the beginning to our eternal love.

The immense pain of missing you trickles down to remembering  
you.

The feeling, the butterflies in my stomach.

The sharp knot stuck in my throat when I try to say your name.  
I shiver immediately. I can't. I won't accept, the end.

*Dedicated to my best friend Rosie*

*RIP*

Esmeralda Paez / True Identity



**Katie Wanschura / Grieving You**



## **Anonymous / 14 Weeks**

Today is the day.

The sun peeks through the bedroom window.

It shines on her face.

She grabs her keys as she goes out the door.

Coffee for a three-hour drive.

Promptly, she arrives.

Posters and signs hang from the black fence surrounding the  
building.

Save your baby, yell the pro-life protestors.

She observes escorts in a bright pink color.

Rapidly they approach her car to walk her inside.

A receptionist hides behind a pink desk with dimmed windows.

Women are scattered in the waiting area.

The only sound you hear is the flipping of pages,

legs shaking nervously,

and the tapping of fingers on the chairs.

Finally her name is called.

The nurse walks her to a cold, white room.

Politely, she asks for a urine sample.

Fourteen weeks, announces the nurse.

The procedure will begin shortly.

Nervously, she undresses.

The mint, cloth gown touches her tan skin.

Goosebumps arise all over her body.

She places her hands on her stomach as she lays on the cold bed.

Take a deep breath.

It is done.

**Daniela Romualdo-Castro / Untitled I**



## **Esmeralda Paez / Untitled**

Sometimes the air around me feels too heavy.  
It enters my body and weighs me down.  
It settles within my lungs and builds a tower along my throat,  
Leaving me itching to release a single breath.

Sometimes the air around me feels too distant.  
It escapes my body in hurried breaths.  
It leaves me rushing forward, attempting and failing to catch it.

Sometimes the air around me feels too warm.  
A tiny flame that suffocates my throat.  
It burns my nerves and scorches my lungs.  
It swirls within me, leaving me breathless.

Sometimes I can't seem to feel the air around me.  
There's no frigid wind or damning heat.  
In those moments, I can't seem to remember  
If I forgot how to breathe or  
If my breath has restored my life.



**Katheryn Najarro / Untitled**



## **Rohanna Robinson / Mr Sun**

Hey there, Mr Sun, will you smile down on me today?

For you're the only warmth I look for in the morning,  
the rest of my day is sad and gray.

I'll sit and wait for you, please come out and stay.

OK, maybe not the whole day, because at some point you must  
be on your way.

You can scorch and burn me, I'll sit and feel the rays,  
for as long as that warmth will supply me for when I meet a rainy day.

**Katie Wanschura / Sunflowers Still**



## **Mariana Bermudez / Girl in the Mirror**

I'm sorry I never noticed  
how much it bothered you  
to place comparisons and balances  
where they were not needed

I'm sorry I made you restrict yourself  
to achieve that "perfect body,"  
when it was clear that a twelve-year-old  
shouldn't be going through that

I'm sorry I made you write down  
everything that tormented you,  
tainting useless black ink  
on an intact paper,  
when you could easily let go  
of the heavy tears that wanted to caress  
your soft, pale skin

I'm sorry for pushing you too much  
when you were just trying

to live life one day at a time  
and let your petals blossom correctly

I'm sorry for giving you a hard time,  
for leaving you sleepless nights,  
for planting frustrating thoughts,  
for simmering down your light

I'm sorry for making you believe  
your dreams didn't matter,  
for almost convincing you  
that maybe living a regular life  
was the best after all,  
being so close to burying  
what is meant to be yours

I'm sorry I never complimented  
the beautiful gift that lived inside of you,  
I guess I was caught up trying to change  
everything you weren't on the outside

I'm sorry for never hugging you,  
comforting you,  
kissing you,  
loving you

I'm sorry,  
and I hope you can forgive me,  
girl in the mirror

Amyah Gregory / Untitled



## THE RECORD 2022 staff and thanks

### *Student staff*

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See you again in fall 2022!





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