

YUBA SUTTER arts RAGGED CLAUSTRATED

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*I should have been a pair of ragged
claws scuttling across the floors
of silent seas.
— T.S. Eliot*

DAUGHTER OF THE THIRD GENERATION

Mirette Ochsner :: Scholastic Gold Key Award Winner,
and American Voices Nominee. Visions in Education.

Where am I supposed to fit?
Just far enough from immigration to be old news,
still close enough to arrival to feel some pull to a country I was not born in.
I land somewhere in that grey area of a cultural foster child,
an unclaimed tradition that I have not yet heard of.
The roots of my family tree still wrap around my ankles,
growing from some seed of personal worry for the country
that should have been my grandfather's birthright.

I do not know how it felt to start over,
always secretly hoping that good news would come from far away;
that the motherland would call back her children.
All the while teaching their own children to name this new country "home."
I know my privilege and check it;
check it so many times it looks like passport stamps.
Like this noncommittal relationship with my ancestry.

I do not know how it felt to start over,
but what I do know is that fresh baked kuchen tastes like custard Christmas.
I know that I got my nose from my grandmother,
and that I share a love of pancakes with my great grandfather.
I know the words that we have prayed for generations,
the tie that binds our hearts as one.
An identity too deep to shake off.
I know that between my proud shoulders is a tether to a country my family once loved.
A never-ending tug to a place that I do not have the right to call home.

“DO I DARE...” EDITOR’S NOTE



Welcome to the first edition of “Ragged Clause,” a new, quarterly literary and art journal published by Yuba Sutter Arts. We are excited to introduce some new voices in this inaugural edition. YSA has just completed its first year as a Regional Affiliate of the National Scholastic Writing Awards program for middle and high school students. A selection of the works we received are included in this quarter’s publication.

The submitted entries were very thoughtful, provocative, insightful and often quite moving. We hope you’ll agree and look forward to your feedback.

“Good words to you,”

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Read". The signature is fluid and cursive.

David Read

Executive Director, Yuba Sutter Arts

HEAVENLY BODIES

Esther Myers :: Scholastic Gold Key Award Winner and American Voices Nominee. Winters High School, Winters.

I wish acne scars would be seen as battle scars
Pocked cheeks a souvenir of a tackle with hormones
Thin lines of rubbery skin peppered with the faded red bumps:
Yeah, puberty fights dirty.

Stretch marks should be marveled with a sigh of reverence
Skin pulled taut where stars tried to escape your body
Isn't that where babies come from?
Now I know why they call galaxies heavenly bodies.

These veins stick out like plump lines of blue ink
Leading like roads on maps to dots of cities
Every vein leads to the heart
Mine like to make pit stops on the way.

The dust on my legs and arms are forests of good omens
Does the hair on my lip make me any less
Of a woman?
It keeps me warm when kisses won't do
A winter coat I'll never grow out of

This skin is a child:
It cries in the heat,
It cracks in the cold
Maybe that is why dragons
With their rough scales and fiery tongues
Hide in caves to protect their gold.

You tell me,
Stop glorifying war.
And don't you know—
Forests catch fire,
Cars crash, stars implode, your dragons
Were never real.

But see—this body is a battleground
And you have never wrapped your arms around a redwood
taller than a skyscraper
Driven on a country backroad when the sky is full
Of ink, and stars, and
If I look closely enough
and with enough love
to coax out the warmth of the fire
Draco is watching over me.

THE “DIVINE” DIVIDE

Andrew Yung :: Scholastic Silver Key Award Winner. Granite Bay High School, Granite Bay. Andrew is also a Scholastic Gold Key Award and American Voices Nominee in the Short Story Category.

Closed are the gates that
you shall overcome
And far is the distance you will traverse.

For though its fences may be
presently shut
And the path will be narrow,
and the work will be hard,
The gates will provide many adversity
And the many you will overcome

What is it exactly between you and me?
We do not know anything except the
boundaries in our way.
Are there aliens? Are there monsters?
And how are we to ensure my
side is the right side?
For the only indication of which
side is right
Is that mine has won, and your
side has not.

Instead, you are left to find
your own path
And I am instructed to obstruct you.
But I shall not abide by these codes,
for I am just a child;
A child who does not understand
our differences;
A child who does not understand
the authority
For though I lack experience and
though I lack the knowledge
I know that something is wrong here;
and that something must be fixed.

The Mute
You speak.
Yet you chose not to.
Because you want to.
No, because you want to speak
But there are people here.
Judge, people here do,
And so we sit here with our tongues in
socket

And guns in pocket.
But of course, not an actual gun.
The gun of “What if...?”
What if we speak out
What if we chose to speak out
Because really, it is our choice.
They may say that we are not allowed
to speak
But they control not our lungs
Not our voice, not our minds
And we may use whichever we please
Whenever we want.
So let them come at us,
With actual guns, with threats
With discrimination, with racism.
But we will stand strong.
For they do not understand.
We hold the gun of power.
We hold the gun that is our voice and
opinion.
And they cannot stop our gun of voice
and opinion.
We hold the gun of hope.
And they cannot take away our gun of
hope.
We hold the gun with confidence.
And fire when and where we tell
ourselves to aim.

Argument
I speak.
You listen.
For we do not bicker
Like those people.
Those people believe they are right
Not because of facts
Not because of proof,
But because of opinion.
Who is to say that your opinion trumps
mine,
For though you may disagree
And though you may scoff
I am a person.
I am a person with feelings.
I am a person with opinions.
And they need to be heard.
So stop trying to stop me from talking
Before I stop trying to stop me from
arguing.

Put It In Your Pocket
Your phone is out
And though it may seem
That you need to have it
You
Don't.

For the people on your phone
Are not the people around you.
Look at them,
Look at their faces,
They sparkle not from
The reflection of their phones
But from the actual happiness they feel.
Yes, you can be happy without your
phone.
And no, I will not confiscate it.
Just,
Put it in your pocket.

DOES SOMEONE IN OUTER-SPACE HAVE MY YELLOW BALLOON?

Emma Mathews :: Scholastic Gold Key Award Winner,
and American Voices Nominee.
Western Sierra Collegiate Academy, Rocklin.

I found myself lip-locked and landlocked in a standoff between what is easy,
and what is right.

I like remaining comfortably numb,
But this is criminal love,
And darling I just don't know if I have what it takes.

I wish I had a guidebook for living.
Like what do you do when the mountains you moved make a blockade?
And what happens when you love the wrong person too hard
and you shatter like stained glass?
And what about the tick ticking of a clock that won't
stop counting down even after reaching zero?

And why is this champagne bitter on my tongue put these pills taste so sweet?

And yes, it was the fall that killed me but you were the branch
that snapped beneath my fingers.

...

Excuse me, sir
You have mistaken me for a doormat,
But I'll have you know every day I scream at the universe so it knows I exist.
I exist.

And I matter.
I matter more than the dirt scraped from the soles of your shoes,
And she matters more than your worn truncheon,
And he matters more than convulsive therapy.
And they matter more than bricks through windows and burning crosses.
We exist.

And maybe the universe doesn't acknowledge us yet,
But you have too,
Because like it or not we exist together.

But you have too,
Because like it or not we exist together.

ODE TO FREEDOM

Angelica Fox, Scholastic Silver Key Award Winner. Live Oak High School, Live Oak.

Freedom.
To be in possession,
Of such an altruistic service,
A miracle in itself.
Like a god,
So graceful
And charitable to the less fortunate,
That is praised,
Honored,
And worshipped.

Freedom.
How grateful,
To be in possession
Of a crown jewel,
Found as common as rocks
Amongst those whom hold it.
But a rarity,
Amongst those whom have never
Had even the chance,
To see its welcoming light.

Freedom.
Many,
So accustomed to its presence,
Forget its worth.
And aren't aware
Of the struggle,
Other lands go through,
Because of its absence.
The sadness,
And pain in their eyes.
Deprived of their rights,
You can see the desperation
They have for freedom.
Pining, yearning, and longing for its arrival.
To save them,
From the sin of control.

Freedom.
A gift bestowed upon only the lucky few...

THE JOURNEY

Ashley Yung :: Scholastic Gold Key Award Winner, and American Voices Nominee. Granite Bay High School, Granite Bay.

The dawning of the red sun
Rising brilliantly on today
These moments burst with color
And fill my eyes with vivid pictures
Everything so bright before
The road easy to view from up here
I pursue the paths confidently

The wear of hours are nothing
My feet build stamina from the journey
I learn to sing with the birds
A melodious tune with no reason
I tread till dark and then I rest
My soul and mind are renewed

But a calling urges me on
It pulls me forward day and night
And the sky pours a heavy rainfall
It drenches my clothes
The coldness chills my bones
My initial calculations are wrong
I re-evaluate

Somewhere I find peace in the scenery
The ocean and grass distract me
Beauty calls my name
Every direction is gloriously unique
I stand by the water and wash myself
Responsibilities are forgotten
It seems hardship has passed

But then comes that terrible day
I look before at unfamiliar lands
I panic because I am lost
Circling to find my way
Over and over my voice echoes
Desperation fills my face

These hardships that I face
Make the journey's end more meaningful
And everything I once despised
I see as something conquered

DECAYING PROMISES, WRITTEN IN ROT

Jillian Allen :: Scholastic Gold Key Award Winner.
River Valley High School, Yuba City.

Their tree was planted ten years ago,
before the cancer in the bark,
before the cancer near her heart.

They made promises under those boughs,
kissed under those leaves.
Souls laid bare, they whispered secrets,
hands pressed up against rough and brutal bark,
laughing in their youthfulness,
carving paper hearts.

They watched it grow up from a stick,
needing support, needing a start.
They watched it as it flowered for the first time,
as it's leaves turned to green,
to orange,
to green again,
and, finally,
to brown.

Dead leaves,
hanging on to something,
anything,
pretending that there's still a chance,
pretending that there's life in those limbs,
pretending that rotten apples don't have to fall,
pretending.

And now the stump stares out at him,
the remnants of the young leaves strewn about the garden;
he can't bear to pick them up.
If he picks them up he can no longer pretend
that if he wishes hard enough
she'll be brought back to life through them—
reincarnation through rot.

That tree was supposed to witness lifetimes,
love and hate and life and death.
But it's brown leaves are ghosts now,
and he can't let them go.

GET RAGGED CLAUSE PUBLISHED

A quarterly literary and art journal for students and others interested in the literary and visual arts.

Submit your entries for the **JUNE EDITION** of Ragged Clause via email to: david@yubasutterarts.org.

For literary works, Word documents are preferred.
For visual art, please send .jpegs.

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WHO WE ARE

Yuba Sutter Arts is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide arts programming, education, advocacy, assistance and service to artists, organizations and all residents of Yuba and Sutter Counties.

**The official local agency of the California Arts Council,
its programs include:**

- Arts in Education
- Arts in Corrections
- Murals of Live Oak
- Veterans Initiative in the Arts
- Art Everywhere with 9 satellite galleries
- Applause Concerts
- World Music and Culture Series
- Cover It! Utility Box Murals
- Scholastic Writing Awards
- Poetry Out Loud
- "Ragged Clause" Journal
- Shakespeare Readers Theater
- Press Play Art & Culture Lectures
- Women's Creative Circle
- 3rd Sunday Jazz Jams
- Singer/Songwriter Series
- "Stand As 1" Open Mic Series
- Yuba Sutter Youth Choir
- Veridian String Quartet
- Shakespeare Film Series
- Families Learning in Play

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