

# THEY CALL US MATRONS

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They Call Us is a literary magazine created by powerful women and gender minorities wanting to empower other women and gender minorities. Using media, art, and literature as a means to inspire, They Call Us wants to tell the everyday struggles of women and gender minorities from around the world.

The purpose of art is to create change, so They Call Us works to unite artists to tell the stories of those that are normally silenced. Our goal is to ignite conversation and encourage people of all ages, races, sexualities, genders, nationalities, abilities, and the like to share their stories. They Call Us wishes to diversify the messages we see online and change the dialogue to give credibility to all of us who have felt helpless and lacking a credible voice.

## A NOTE TO OUR READERS

This magazine has content warnings about:

*miscarriage*

*losing a child*

If any of the above are sensitive topics for you, please pay attention to the trigger warnings listed before relevant pieces.

They Call Us seeks to tell the stories of any and all who wish to share them. Sometimes these stories, while important to listen to, can be hard to hear. Above all else, please take care of yourself.

Thank you for reading.

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Artwork by Sandra Seitamaa



# FOREWARD

By Caroline Macon Fleischer

Watching my mother become a grandmother has been transformative. When a mother becomes a grandmother, she becomes capable of both repeating what worked with her children and correcting what didn't work. And, usually, grandmothers are post-menopausal, or at least close to that sacred point. So, when their daughters suffer amidst the hormonal chaos of postpartum, the day-to-day, the children's constant swinging from their limbs like chimpanzees on tree branches, the grandmother is able to keep her cool. And remind her daughter that everyone feels like a bad mom, and so she is most likely not a bad mom.

Still, I cross my fingers and hope I am not a bad mom.

I know a lot of people that hate their moms, and sometimes I've thought I hate my mom, even though I don't, and some people's moms really suck. Oftentimes the hate for moms is warranted but sometimes it's not. And sometimes it is warranted but as we get older and gain new knowledge of our mothers' lives and their girlhoods and their heartaches, the hate withers away, or feels like a drain. It's dark but a little funny what we are willing to let go once we become desperate for support. My mom lovingly but firmly reminds me that my son joined my life and not the other way around.

I'm fascinated by Alcoholics Anonymous and the idea that it's a boys' club. It's interesting since so many women struggle with alcohol use, what with "Mommy Juice" and "Wine O' Clock." Clearly, men aren't the only sex that overdrink. But the pillars of AA may be what alienate women—the 12 steps center on releasing the ego. But what if women drink for other reasons? What if women drink because we have no ego to release? What if we give every waking hour to other people then there is nothing left for us? We must fill that nothingness with alcohol, to force ourselves to rest.

And I don't think it's moms only. As I write this, a list of child-free women I love flash in my mind, each of them also giving every teaspoon of time to somebody else, many times even to acquaintances and strangers.

Lately, I've taken time for rest at King Spa in Niles, where men and women are separated. In the women's room, there are three hot pools of different heat levels and one cold pool, almost like ice water. The icy pool, to my surprise, is my favorite. It's kept away in a quiet corner with a peaceful waterfall flowing down dark stone, and another a three-

stream flow falling from the ceiling. When I brought my friend, she said the ceiling flow on her shoulder blades made her feel like she had wings. Now when I visit, I become mythological, too.

In the icy pool, I pretend I'm a mermaid, residing in a remote cave somewhere serene and awe-inspiring like the Cave of Melissani. I'm far away from my chores and errands and obligations. Without my son, without my husband, without even my beloved dog Annie. Just thoughts and cold water and my mermaid tail.

Looking out my cave at the hot pools, I see generations of naked women congregating together in all their precious bodies, fat and skinny, able and disabled, wrinkly and smooth, tattooed and fresh faced, just resting and talking. There is a senior grandmother, a middle-aged mother, and an adolescent grandchild giggling in one of the tubs. In another, a young woman in obvious distress rests her head on the shoulder of a friend that consoles her. In another, a woman sits alone, neck leaned back on warm stone. Nearby, naked women lie face down and get full body scrubs and their hair freshly combed. The air is thick with conversation and sweat and acceptance. No one wears anything but ponytails and piercings.

I asked my husband what happens on the men's side, and he said it's silent. That there are no children, and no one talks. I wonder if that's the ego.

They don't serve alcohol at King Spa, which is a relief for me as I navigate my ever-evolving relationship with alcohol, and more specifically, alcohol and motherhood. My family, both the family I grew up in and this new one, this one I've created, have worked on sobriety together despite fear. Feelings are hot when children are involved; they make us feel so deeply. Sometimes the only way to cool it off is with a drink. But for the last five years I've asked myself, "Do I want to turn it off, or can I bear it?"

Sometimes I can and sometimes I can't. I'm questioning and exploring and learning and it's complicated, but I think that's alright. I'm so honored to write this forward for They Call Us, in which this writing inside makes me reflect on all the above.

In all the iterations of parenthood—from childbearing to child-losing to choosing to not be a parent or wanting to be one and not being able to for any reason—this zine is making me reflect on how we can bear it, all of it, when we choose to but most importantly when we are forced to. We are capable of enduring so much.

# THEY MISSEAK

By Evie Groch

We don't need a pedestal on which  
to precariously balance.  
Neither do we enjoy being held up  
to ridicule as married women  
of a certain age and a certain bulk  
who are fit to run a prison  
or public institution after having  
mastered running a household.

Hasn't motherhood endowed us  
with skills childless adults lack?  
Motherhood may be valued,  
but it is not supported nor applauded,  
merely expected.  
It has polished us in ways 'Matron'  
ignores, doesn't respect nor honor  
achievements nor contributions.

Patron, a matron without the stigma,  
is seen as a sponsor, a bestower,  
a wealthy philanthropist,  
marital status not in question,  
nor his weight or body type.  
Do we not do the same  
without acknowledgement?

Yiddish names us 'balabostas,'  
perhaps with the 'zaftig' adjective,  
but English, when it calls us Matrons,  
misspeaks. The least we are,  
are Patronesses Plus.



Artwork titled "Quem Nao chora nao mama"  
or "who doesn't cry doesn't breastfeed"  
by Silvana Soriano





# MOTHER MOTH

By Amber Watson

I finally understand  
my mother's heartbreak  
as we watched a female moth  
lay eggs on the maple tree  
in our backyard.

A fat toffee-colored moth  
emerged from the cocoon  
I'd kept safe in an empty soda bottle.  
Her wings, merely stubs—  
chubby angel being born,

dragged her bulbous body  
atop a stick and vibrated until  
they stretched wide across her  
like a magic cloak, shimmering  
silver and cream.

As the sun set, we set her free.  
Her sleek black antennae fingering  
the balmy summer air  
for the first time  
in this strange new form.

Clinging to rigid wrinkles of bark,  
she lay completely still  
until something small, dark, and  
nimble fluttered into view,  
attaching to the tree, then to her.

When the male flew off,  
she dutifully rubbed against  
the roughness, laying her body  
of eggs—and when she was done,  
she would be dead.

Under the pale moonlight,  
drops of evening dew welled up  
in my mother's eyes as we all watched  
the moth's rhythm slow  
then halt altogether.

Fragile wings that never took flight  
pressed firmly like a shield across  
a body that no longer belonged  
to her, but to the hundreds of new lives  
already beginning  
to devour her.

Artwork titled "Pieces"  
by Angel Atkinson



# WHERE IS YOUR MOTHER?

By Mari-Carmen Marin

Like ivy, it grows on you. Your name. Planted at birth, its tendrils creeping and climbing, small roots affixing to your skin every time you make new friends, your teachers take roll from daycare to college, or you write your signature. The greenish petals of its flowers remind you of your father, the yellower ones evoke your mother, covering the whole architecture of your being.

What grows shouldn't be stunted, so you refuse to change your name when you marry someone in another country, say the United States. You have a son, and yet, the fruit of your womb is not supposed to grow part of your name on him. When he is three, you are at the Houston airport waiting to pass security and embark on a plane for a nine-hour flight to Spain to visit your family during the summer. You're holding him in your arms, fresh tears in his eyes after saying goodbye to his father,

your husband. You show his blue and your brown passports to an officer, who flips pages as if looking for clues in the scene of a crime. She looks at you, at your passport, at your son, at his passport, at you and your son again, then asks, *Sweetheart, where is your mom?*

He frowns and nuzzles your neck. You smirk and wish his climbing tendrils carried part of your name.



# IT'S FUNNY WHAT LIFE GIVES YOU

By Kim Hoffman

I became a mom at thirty because it's what I was supposed to do. My clock was ticking. If I want three kids, I need to have those babies before I am 35, that's what they say. I did the research. It was time to conceive. I am supposed to want a family. Supposed to go to college, fall in love, get married, and then have children. My mission, as reported to me by my parents.

Twenties are a season of decadence, self-created busyness, and drama. I had time for only my husband and we filled our weekends and evenings with too many cocktails, long conversations, and friends.

But that nagging force, that pressure, of thirty, was looming. I needed to reproduce. Have kids. Because that is what I am supposed to do.

And then I became a mom.

And my marriage started to fall apart as I stopped the indulgence and the drinking and focused instead on this tiny human whom I love with a feeling that I never knew existed.

Ah... this is why people have kids. This love.

And another kid came along because the marriage was good enough and he needs siblings.

And we were getting along for a minute so one more because children are wonderful and they will all have each other if something happens.

Which it inevitably does because being a mom, wife, homemaker, and having a career comes with a level of stress which no parenting book or blog could have prepared me. If we never had kids, would the marriage have survived on craft beers, travel, self-aggrandizing ideas, and all the things we did together to keep ourselves entertained and distracted from the fact that we chose poorly on each other? Maybe. But what kind of marriage would it have been?

Having three babies so close together eroded any scaffolding supporting our marriage, a marriage that was built out of popsicle sticks and delusions, out of ideas of who we thought we were and what we thought we could handle. Children draw out the realness of who we actually are, our weaknesses, our pain and all those issues we tidily tucked away in the basement when life was just a schedule of socializing.

But being a mom. My God.

Looking at my children as they sleep, watching these little boys live with vigor and enthusiasm for the mundane, to live alongside tiny people who have so much hope and love in their hearts, so much excitement and passion, so much opportunity, is a privilege. And to love them so much. To have my life filled with a level of love that I never understood until these tiny souls showed up, looking at me with love, calling me "Mamma." My God.

The marriage fell apart and now I only get to see my children half the time. It weighs on me. They have another life without me at their dad's. Other bedrooms. Other toys. Another family room and a different bedtime routine.

When I see them, I worry, am I giving them enough attention? Do they know how much I love them? Am I doing an OK job? I want to see them more but I can't. Because they need to see their dad, too.

It hurts. I worry too much. I feel like my hands are gripping and holding on with white knuckles to plans and trips and time with my kids, trying to squeeze out motherhood with only half the time.

So I try to breathe, let go, uncurl my fingers and just let life be.

I try but I am not very good.

It's funny what life gives you.

My life would lack the depth, love, and learning it now has if I chose to ignore societal pressures, ignore my parents, and not have kids.

I didn't plan on getting divorced when I got married. I didn't plan on my children being raised in two homes or being a single mom.

But this is what life gave me. And I am happy.



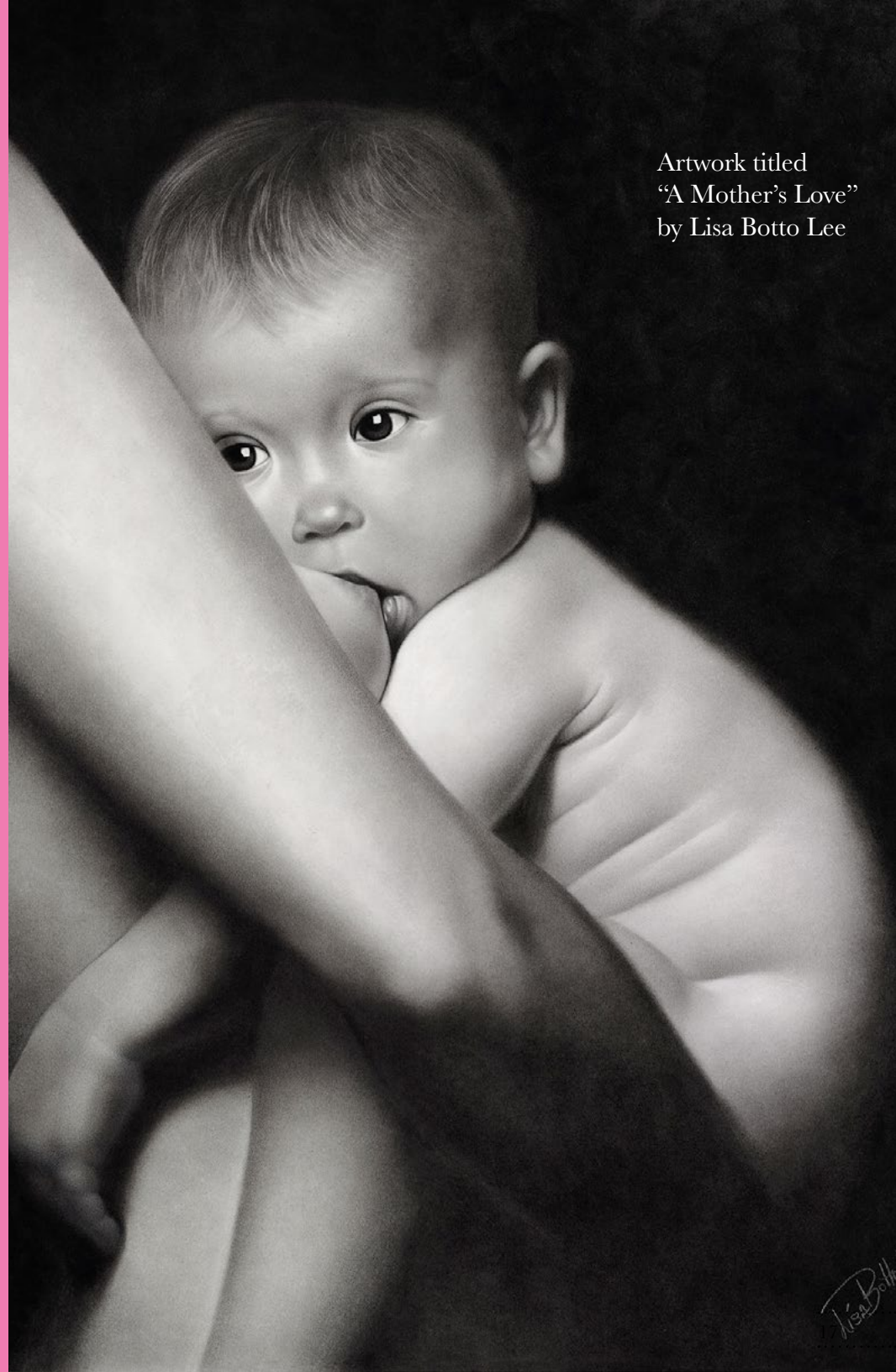
# HOW TO BE A BAD MOTHER

By Elya Braden

Previously published in Tower Journal,  
Spring 2015

Hold your baby girl too tight. Or don't  
hold her at all. Transfer her from bassinet  
to carriage wearing Kevlar gloves, lest your love  
burn through your skin, brand her with your need.  
Leave her in the care of nannies, neighbors,  
the mailman, while you walk the dog. Or never  
leave her alone, take her to school in the morning,  
wait for her before the afternoon bell, hover  
in the hall outside her bedroom, eavesdrop  
on whispered conversations with her friends.  
Let her dress her two-year-old self in stripes and flower prints  
because she's a "Big girl,"  
because she's one "No" away from a tantrum,  
because her baby brother's crying in the next room,  
because you're on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Smile  
when your mother asks, "You're letting her go out in that?"  
Scream at your daughter when you find her crouching  
in a forest of winter coats at Macy's after ten minutes  
of calling her name, plowing through clothing racks,  
shoving aside other shoppers. Threaten to show her naked  
baby pictures to future boyfriends. Always hug her  
as she leaves the house.  
Or never hug her.  
Sing at the top of your lungs  
to your favorite Madonna song on the radio  
while you're driving her and her friends to a party. Demand  
that she apologize to Amanda, the girl she shunned in 5th grade,  
the girl she said she didn't notice, didn't know,  
couldn't care less about. You were once Amanda.  
Don't let your daughter be one of "those girls."  
Force her to wear sunscreen every day; so what  
if she whines about the white streaks on her nose.  
Drag her to mother/daughter classes on the joys  
of puberty, then cry when she hides  
her first bloody panties from you the way you did  
from your mother. Walk out the door, move to another state,  
change your name and leave her with her father, the one  
she always loved more.

Artwork titled  
"A Mother's Love"  
by Lisa Botto Lee





# THE WEIGHT OF BEREAVEMENT

By Shannon Booher

*Content warning: losing a child*

“You know what my least favorite thing  
In the whole entire world is?”  
she asked me one night at bedtime.  
“Saying Goodbye.”

She, strong and dimpled,  
Sweet, and smooth, and magical, and  
Smelling of heaven and hope, was born  
With the grief of goodbye ingrained in her bones.

She pushed into the light singing her sharp, beautiful farewell  
In the first gasping cry  
that softened as she was laid onto the heaving, and proud  
chest of her mother.

Her stunned eyes opened, quietly  
Blinking in every second, as if knowing  
Her mother was about to disappear, as if knowing  
That goodbye was both a greeting and a souvenir.

“It’s nice to see your smile, and smell your sweat, and  
Sense your touch on my skin. I know  
The steady beat of your heart, your gentle  
Voice, and the rhythm of your swaying

And sobbing. You are my mother. And I love you.  
Goodbye.”  
How much does bereavement weigh?  
Seven pounds, five ounces.

Artwork titled “#146151290”  
by Paulina Majewski



By Jacob Budenz

& so what if I married the father  
to get to the son?

& so what if I straddle

the line between healer &  
heretic, weeping

magnanimously

at all the incurable sin—town to  
town, spilling & holy?

I get horny,

Mother, as surely Mary must have—  
hard brown hands

& lily womb,

I too have been touched  
by God the Father

& so what

if I prayed my womb would yield  
not one crop more?

I have dreams,

Mother, of a wedding to a Holy fleshless  
husband, craving instead

Christ's fleshy fingers,

dreams of devils dragging cocks of all shapes  
& religions past my wet

stare & me, a sea

of wanting, & so what if it's not just the sins  
of the world that make me

pour my hot tears like blood  
from the palms?

From *The Book of Margery Kempe*, chapter 66,  
translated by Lynn Staley

## ARTIST STATEMENT

I'm not a mother. I also thought I wanted to be and then I didn't. Then I met my soulmate and the idea of creating some physical manifestation of our love was alluring. But then it wasn't. Then came a momentary glimpse in time when I thought it's now or never, then it faded. We never tried, but we never prevented it; it just never happened. So I wonder, how much of that pull to bring life into this world stems from societal or familial pressures as opposed to one's desire. Then I ask myself if I've missed out on an opportunity to do the "one" thing that only a woman can do: the ultimate creation. Perhaps the answer is both. Perhaps it was never really an option for me.



Artwork titled "There's a Woman in There Somewhere"  
by Marisa S White





Artwork titled "Self-Portrait Surrounded by Nature of the Valley"  
by Jocelyn Torres



# ON GETTING A TATTOO SIX MONTHS AFTER MY SON'S BIRTH

By Jennifer Case

It is and isn't impulsive.

I had stopped in to ask the price, but now I'm leaning forward in the chair, my back bare.

We talk about hometowns. Migrations. Broken marriages. What I do for a living and whether or not I have any kids.

*I could pick up and move anywhere, he says. I like that.*

I hold the tennis ball in my left hand while he bows his shaved head.

A blessing: the way he rests his palm on my shoulder blade and touches each place just before setting the needle to skin.

It's a week past Mother's Day, when the local church announced: EVE WASN'T A PERFECT MOM, BUT GOD STILL FORGAVE HER—as if imperfect motherhood required forgiveness, or there was only one way to be a mother in this world.

My own children are in daycare. I have one more hour.

In a parlor tucked between a bible center and hair salon, we discuss gardening. He grows herbs from seeds, adds fish emulsion every morning.

*I don't fit in a box, he says, smiling. I make my own box. Are you surprised?*

This is what I will think of, later, when my husband asks why I did it. Why he isn't enough.



Artwork titled "Am I doing this right?"  
by Caterina Bragagnolo



# THE HONORARY GUY

By Ann Leamon

I may be a woman. They are the moms.

The lacrosse moms assign tasks – who will cook vats of pasta, bake brownies, get something green for the team dinner. My stepson alone can eat a pound, and there are 15 of them.

The message they leave me requests bread, a tub of butter, perhaps utensils and plates. No one knows my past--a pastry chef, ganache-topped cakes swimming with lemon curd; a short-order cook, turning out sandwiches and fries in minutes.

For the dinner, moms arrive early, beneath tablecloth banners and fluttered napkins in school colors. The food must be warm and the drinks cold, soft. In aproned ranks, they brandish spoons behind the serving line.

I'm a little late.  
I sit with the men.  
We talk about baseball, boating, business. No one quite knows what I do but it involves finance, Harvard. When my husband arrives, we kiss.

The moms urge us to eat. They go last, leftovers on small plates, avoiding desserts, trying to be good.

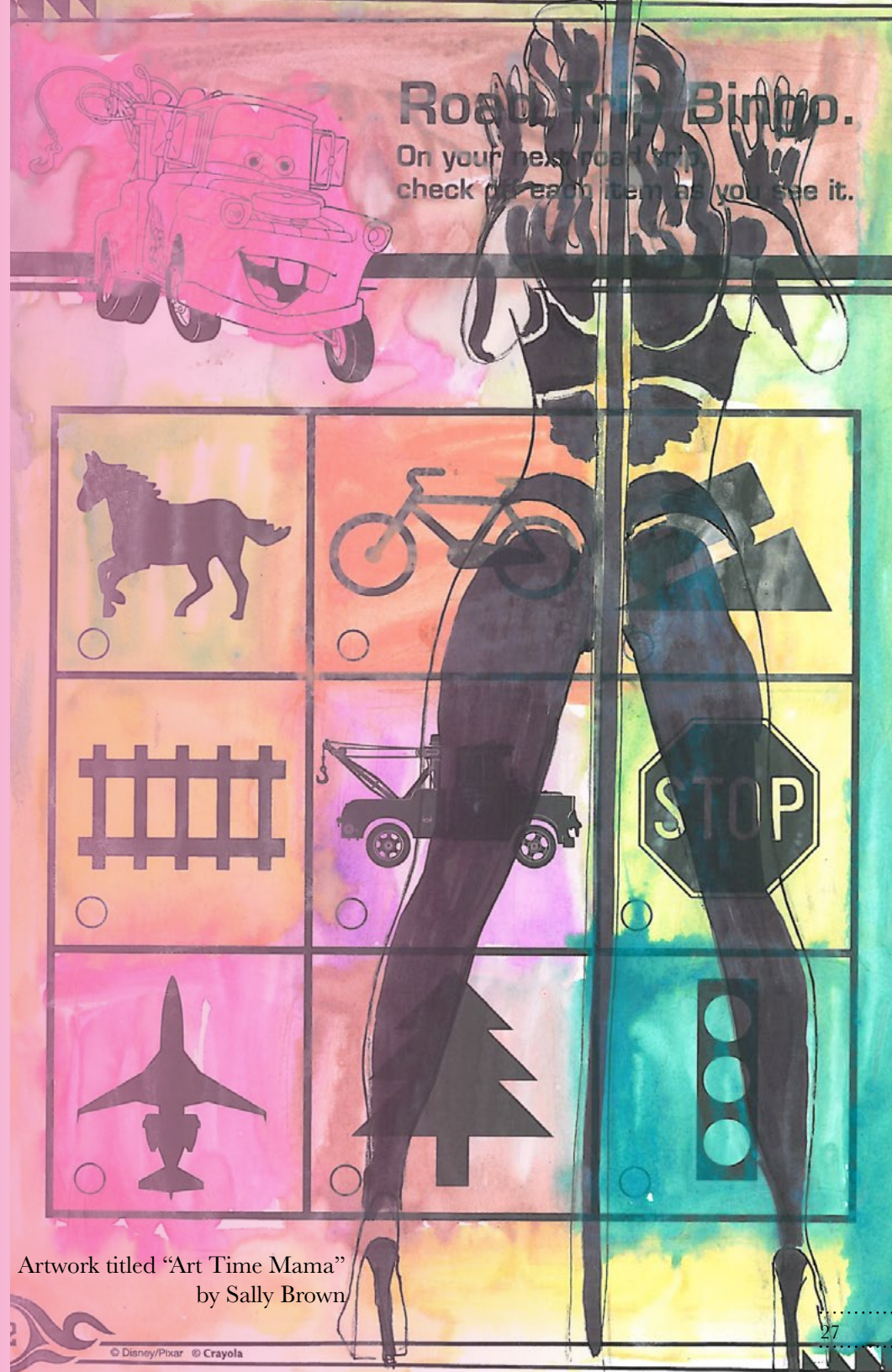
They do not ask me to work the snack bar or take a turn at the "Shake the Can" fundraiser. They do not share their recipes or tell me which store has the special on chicken that week.

I do not sell raffle tickets or t-shirts.  
I only go to games  
in nice weather.

I am a woman. They  
are the moms.

## ARTIST STATEMENT

My drawings of pregnancy and nude forms using children's media bring the sheltered and/or hyper-sexualized female body to an appreciated, non-scrutinized position. The work reveals the inseparability of motherhood and artistry and dichotomies of body image, sexuality, and gender identity as it plays a role in motherhood and youth. At the simplest, they are playful acts of love—for childhood, motherhood, and the female body.



Artwork titled "Art Time Mama"  
by Sally Brown





# GESTATION INTERRUPTED

By Marianne Peel

*Content warning: miscarriage*

I used to dream at night  
nightmare really  
of the embryo inside me  
growing into peculiar oddities.

An encephalitic head,  
disjointed limbs, a gaping spine,  
eyes spaced on the sides of the head  
like some bizarre version of a cockroach.

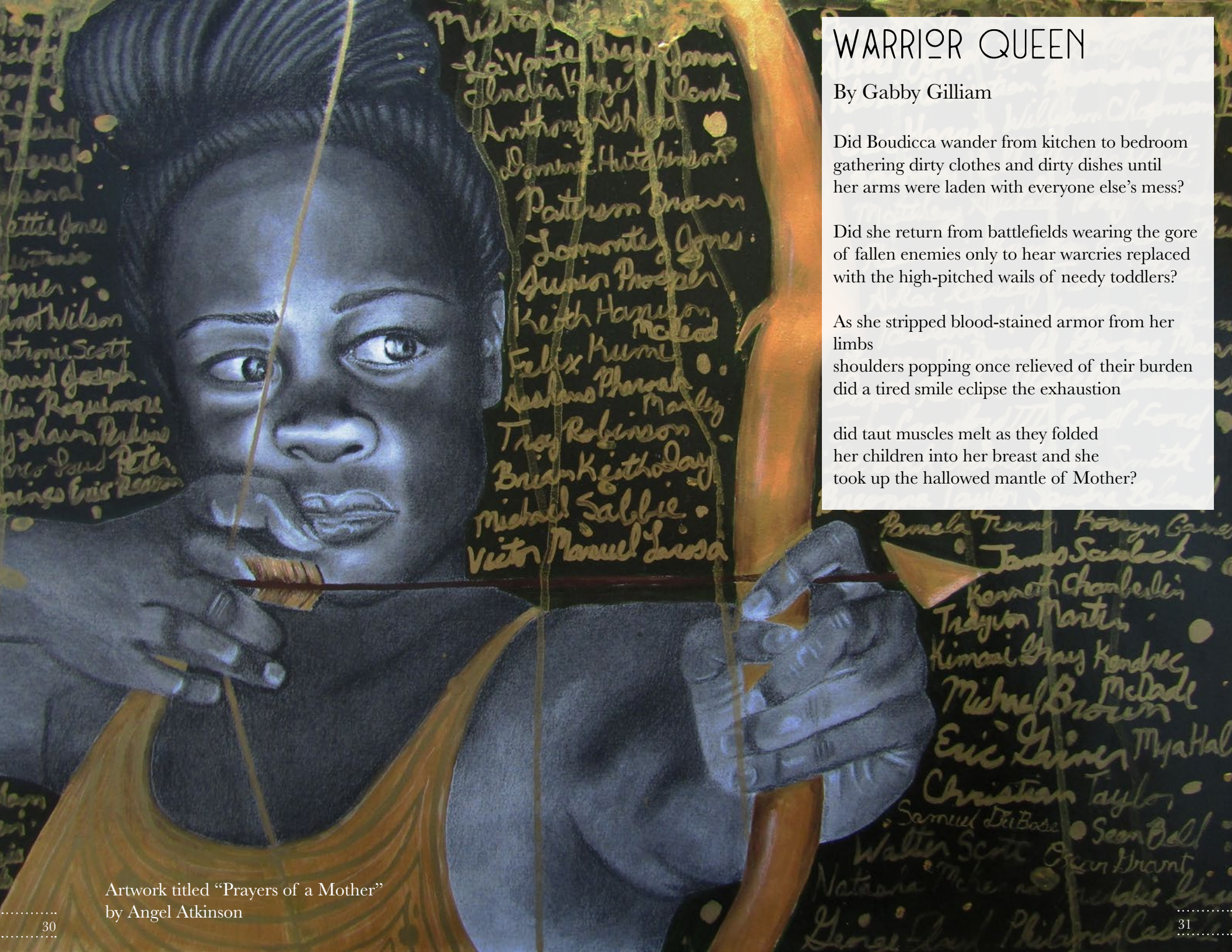
When the fetus was just forming,  
an inkspot in my womb,  
I used to wonder if I would bleed out  
a finger, or an ear, or even a whole hand.

And then the bloodletting  
would begin.  
That wretched redness on panties,  
seeping through jeans. Dead on arrival.

I'd try to decipher the hieroglyphic clots  
knowing they had dislodged themselves  
from some dark place inside me.  
A broken wound on the wall of my prehistoric cave.

Artwork titled "Genesis"  
by Baroque Anarchist





# WARRIOR QUEEN

By Gabby Gilliam

Did Boudicca wander from kitchen to bedroom  
gathering dirty clothes and dirty dishes until  
her arms were laden with everyone else's mess?

Did she return from battlefields wearing the gore  
of fallen enemies only to hear warcries replaced  
with the high-pitched wails of needy toddlers?

As she stripped blood-stained armor from her  
limbs  
shoulders popping once relieved of their burden  
did a tired smile eclipse the exhaustion

did taut muscles melt as they folded  
her children into her breast and she  
took up the hallowed mantle of Mother?

Artwork titled "Prayers of a Mother"  
by Angel Atkinson



# MOTHERING WITHOUT A MAP

By Karen Paul

*Content warning: losing a child*

I was Ari's mother for five days. But he has been my son for 24 years. When we held him as his organs shut down, one by one, and he died in our arms, I didn't realize that our life together was just beginning. That the hold his fingers had on me would last beyond that terrible room on that terrible day. I didn't understand that his brief life would lay claim to the story of my life and not let go.

I have three children now. Young, healthy adults, all with good hearts and a healthy dose of skepticism about this hard world in which they reside. For many years when I was asked how many children I had, I would answer "three." But the voice in my head would scream "four." When someone is making pleasantries, trying to understand if you share the secret handshake to the same motherhood club, you don't want to tell them that in fact, there's another level that requires a different handshake, one that only a few are privy to. So you smile and say "three" and nod knowingly as you share parenting war stories, all the while patting your back pocket, knowing that the other key rests there.

My children know that they had another brother, that another baby had come into this house before two of them were born. The younger ones don't like to think about it because it means they wouldn't be here if he hadn't died. The oldest was two. We didn't know how to calm him when his mother was taken away, to a hospital where she lay for two months, never getting up, never being able to hug him or make a special grilled cheese sandwich for him, cut up into stars and moons.

We didn't know what to say to him when his mother came home from that hospital, but with no festoon of the balloons and baby items that accompany the triumphant return home after childbirth. Instead, I had to grip the rail as I made my way up the front porch steps because my ankles were incapable of holding my weight after atrophying in bed for two months. There was no baby in my arms; he was in an incubator far away in the children's hospital because his lungs didn't work.

Six months earlier a doctor had taken a big needle and plunged it into my belly, seeking to extract the precious amniotic fluid that was going to let us know that our baby was healthy. Instead, the needle came out and was plunged a second time. By the following day there was leaking and a recommendation to stay in a prone position as much as possible, indefinitely. Two months later there was a rupture and then a hospital bed in which I could not sit up, let alone emerge, for two more months.

Ari and I grew together in that bed. We were a team, benched from a normal pregnancy and forfeiting the games of life in order to save his life. By the time there was blood, at 34 weeks, Ari weighed over seven pounds and my belly looked like an Alpine slope, stretch marks etching the journey down. The doctor pronounced it time.

He was cut out of me, like his brother before him, sinew and muscles pushed aside to lift him out of what was left of his fluid-laced home and into the oxygenated air, where we would discover if the lungs that had been compromised by the leak would work. He cried. We breathed. We hoped it would now be a short sprint home.

Five days later we were making the decision to remove him from the machine keeping him alive. We had not yet held him. The nurse unplugged the beeps and buzzers that signaled his life force and placed him in my arms, with the beanie cap and the hard flannel blanket with blue and pink stripes that wrap every baby. We held him as his breath reduced to hiccups, his skin began to mottle and with a wisp we could feel his tiny soul float up around our heads and out of the room.

We buried Ari. I keened and wailed because I could no longer keep my baby warm. My milk came in, hot and white and furious. I went back to work. Our son returned to pre-school. Six months later our daughter implanted her cells in my body and soon we had a family of four. Two years later were five.

But Ari lives beside me every day. The contours of his story are the map that keeps me from believing the world is a safe place. My fourth child. My cautionary story. My heart.

# LIKE A MOTHER

By Kathryn Branch

After Kate Baer, *Like a Wife*

Right before he offered me the promotion, my manager said: just don't get pregnant, like mothers do.

And so I ground my birth control into dust and sprinkled it in his tea. I baked a bun and then another. Hurling my placenta at the ceiling; watched as he dodged shards of smashed glass. So he could see just how successful a mother can be.

Artwork titled "Yue Chuang's Learning at Night Muse"  
by Lynette Charters

## ARTIST STATEMENT

Women's accomplishments are frequently uncompensated, appropriated, unrecorded and unlauded outside the realm of domesticity. I highlight how women are presented but not represented in art, society, the media and documented history. These issues have been exacerbated with the financial insecurity and dependency women suffer created in the current pandemic and the undermining of women's health care and freedom of choice.

女的平等权





ONE BAD MOTHER  
with Biz Ellis and  
Theresa Thorn

PARENTHOOD

MEAN MOMS

MERMAIDS

STEEL MAGNOLIAS

TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

ROOM

BETTER THINGS

WORKIN' MOMS

ODD MOM OUT

OTHERHOOD

MOTHERLAND

WHERE'D YOU GO,  
BERNADETTE

WE CAN DO HARD  
THINGS PODCAST  
with Glennon Doyle

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

VISIBLE CHILD

OUR BABIES MATTER

KIDS EAT IN COLOR

THE FAMILY NUTRITIONIST

EAT THE RAINBOW

FEEDING LITTLES

CURIOUS PARENTING

BOOKS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Artwork by Dakota Corbin

DEAD BLONDES AND BAD  
MOTHERS

by Sady Doyle

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE  
MUSEUM

by Katie Atkinson

ARE YOU MY MOTHER?

by Alison Bechdel

TOUGH MOTHERS: AMAZING  
STORIES OF HISTORY'S  
MIGHTIEST MATRIARCHS

by Jason Porath

CARMELO

by Sandra Cisneros

KNOW THE MOTHER

by Desiree Cooper

THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD

by Buchi Emecheta

NOBODY TOLD ME:  
POETRY AND PARENTHOOD

by Hollie McNish





# COVEN CONGRESS

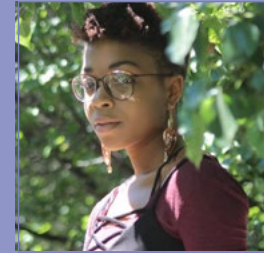
The concept of a witch originated from a societal fear and hatred of independent women. Any woman who dared to challenge societal order, to not have children, to take up work outside the home, to think for herself was tortured and burned. Though the punishment is less explicit, the hatred of the witch remains.

In defiance of this stigma, we are reclaiming the word. We are witches and the Coven Congress is our little sabbath. For each edition, we gather witches from all walks of life to talk about our experiences, opinions, and ideas. Next, we let the discussion inspire content included in They Call Us. Coven Congress allows us to amplify the voices of a variety of women and gender minorities so the world can hear and learn from our tales.

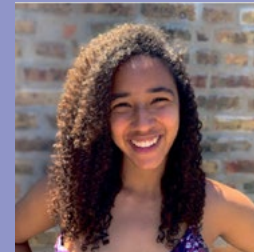
## OUR TEAM



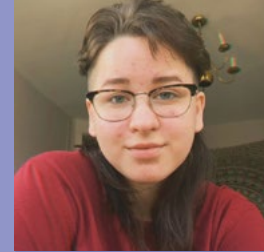
Morgan Kail Ackerman  
Designer



Kailah Peters (KP)  
Editor & Treasurer



Meg Harris  
Social Media



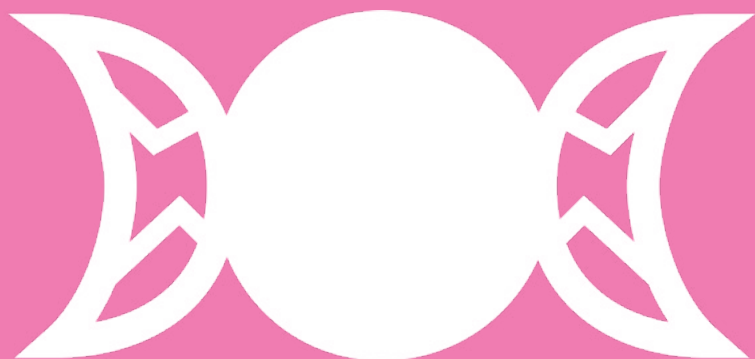
Askó Skladany  
Illustrator

## OUR PATREON

They Call Us is a not-for-profit organization. To fund our magazine, we've created a Patreon page and a merch shop. By donating through Patreon you will receive exclusive invites to Coven Congress, Patreon only merch, sneak peeks into upcoming editions, and access to a feminist only discord group. Please consider donating on our [Patreon](#), purchasing merch [online](#), or just sharing this magazine with friends.

They Call Us is a passion project for our team members and, although we do not make any money through the zine, it helps our organization to host events, donate to other feminist causes, and support our contributing writers and artists.





# THEY CALL US

@they.call.us  
theycallus.com

If you're interested in submitting work for our next edition, please email us at [theycalluszine@gmail.com](mailto:theycalluszine@gmail.com) or visit our website at [theycallus.com](http://theycallus.com).

Thank you for reading!