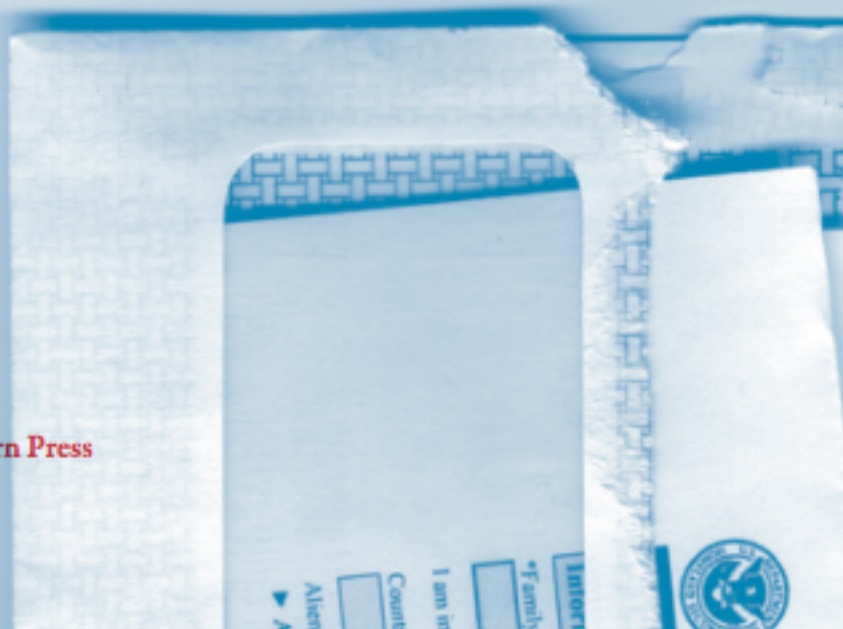


On Civil Disobedience vol. 3
Jennif(f)er Tamayo

to kill the future in the present



Green Lantern Press



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Founded in 2005, The Green Lantern Press is an artist-run, nonprofit organization dedicated to the support, production, and dissemination of contemporary art, poetry, and philosophy. Headquartered at Sector 2337—a storefront bookstore, bar, and performance space—the GLP produces eclectic cross-disciplinary programming including experimental art exhibits, critical print publications, and free public programs designed to facilitate collaborative discussions between artists, writers, and the general public. In a world where the humanities must often defend their practical application, the GLP platforms creative endeavors, demonstrating the intrinsic benefit artistic and intellectual pursuits have on public life and community.

there are two stories i want to tell you that i don't have all the words for

in the beginning of the story i look up images of *cenotes* on the internet at 5 a.m. in a Best Western in Amarillo, Texas. *cenotes*, as Gloria Anzaldúa theorizes them, are about cosmic depth experienced through the natural world. a belly or “womb” hidden within the land’s surface. cavernous and wet. i want to see how the earth breaks. how it betrays itself. its form. i want to betray the thing that keeps me from writing these stories. stories that themselves have everything to do with disobedience and rupture. the stories are about breaking the law. the story is about breaking the geography of how we tell stories. for example, the belly of my story from rupture to rupture is 746 miles long.

i want the *cenote* to swallow my fear whole. i want it to give me my
 words back. to break my mouth O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O O
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 O O p e n

my mother and i escaped from prison. when i was too little to be
 little, my mother and i escaped from prison. when i was too little to
 be little, my mother and i escaped from prison to go make life in
 another kind of prisOn.

when i was too little to be little, my mother and i escaped from prison
 to go make life in another kind of prison, or so i am told. or so i tell
 myself. i write it down over and over again so i don't forget that i am
 part of the mass of bodies subject to the U.S. carceral system. i have
 been one of the "undesirables"¹ that fuels the ideological work of the
 prison system. as a non-Black person, i am not the target of this sys-
 tem. global anti-Blackness forms the epistemological grounds of the
 U.S. criminal justice system—what many know to be an extension and
 transformation of chattel slavery so that the violence could continue
 in new form. so that the whitened imaginary could remain intact
 and undisturbed. its present-day incarnations continue to function
 through injustice systematically targeting Black people in distinctly
 different ways than non-Black people. to sustain itself, however, the
 ideological work of the carceral system needs bodies, masses of bod-
 ies, as many deviant bodies as it can get. these bodies are what propel
 its gravity. these bodies are what populate the narrative of carceral
 spaces.

the story of my and my mother's incarceration is a complicated one.
 it is also not unusual. it is typical. it is everyday. many mothers have
 crossed the U.S./Mexico border. many mothers have crossed the U.S./
 Caribbean border. many mothers holding their children by the arm

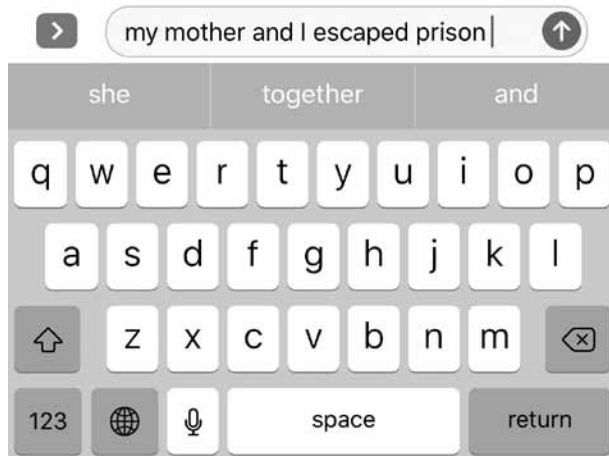
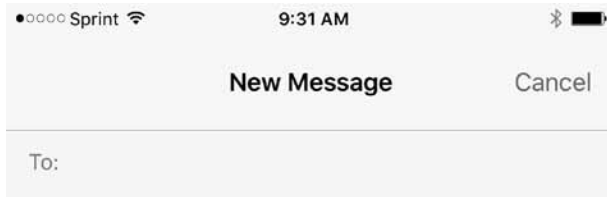
have tried to cross the border, the ungeographic border. the border at the nape of the neck. the border that starts at the tongue. some of them make it across to various degrees. many children have crossed without mothers. without anyone.

i didn't learn about my crossing until i was in my late twenties. one afternoon, i pressed my mother. i asked her to tell me, to braid our memories back together. i remember sitting on her bed on a comforter with red and black patches. with my index finger i followed the stitching around the patches. i remember feeling out of my body when the memories came into my body.

i remember myself trying hard to remember to map the story onto my body.

no one in my family talks about this. what happened. our imprisonment. no one uses the word "prison." no one uses any words at all.

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NOTE: An asterisk (*) indicates a mandatory field that must be completed.		
Information About You		
*Family Name (Last Name) DEAR BABY-	*Given Name (First Name)	Middle Name (if applicable)
I am in the United States as a: ☐ Visitor ☐ Student ☐ Permanent Resident ☐ Other (Specify)		
Country of Citizenship		
WHERE WILL THE COES EXIST		
Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if any) ▶ A-		
Information About Your Address		
*Present Physical Address (No PO Boxes)		
*Street Number and Name INSIDE OF YOU	Apt. Ste. Flr.	Number



in a text message to a friend, when i'm trying to consolidate my complex feelings about DACA, the program for "██████" childhood arrivals that favors non-Black latinx peoples, the non-queer, the non-poor, i hesitate writing this out into text: *my mother and I escaped prison—*

i type it out. i erase it. i type again. erase again. a thing swirls near my throat. i've never written this down. never strung the words together like this. this phrase has dwelled in a *cenote*. untouched. mulling itself over until it is shiny. sharp. it wasn't until i read Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?* that i made the connection between my mother's and my detention in an immigration facility and systems of mass incarceration.

i also hesitate because i know i am being watched. this private message to a personal friend is neither private nor personal. in 11 months i will need to complete an important immigration form. and 6 months after that i will need to go into an office at 825 Riverside Pkwy #100, West Sacramento, CA 95605 to get my fingerprints taken and i need to make sure my hands have no cuts and that i don't submit the important form, form I-90 *Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card*, either too early or too late. and i need to make sure that i don't misspell my name again or something bad will happen again.

the last time i submitted the important form and went into the fingerprint office, the woman with an appointment ahead of me was turned away because she had a deep scratch on her finger. it was her cat, she

told me. but the Officers didn't care. the cut was interfering with her biometrics and she'd have to wait until the scratch fully healed. one, maybe two, months. then she could reschedule. one, maybe two, months without authorization to work. her employer would fire her, she worried. one, maybe two, months without work.

to have been undocumented in this country—at one point or another—to have been an illegal alien means the forever feeling of someone coming to get you. to get your family. no matter what the future circumstances, being labeled an *illegal* means becoming an illegal. that fear becomes part of your bones. to this day, unexpected knocks on doors give me anxiety. *they have changed their minds; they don't want me. they've discovered what we've done. how we escaped. they have come to get us. finally.*

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I am in the United States as a: ☐ Visitor ☐ Student ☐ Permanent Resident ☐ Other (Specify)		
Country of Citizenship		
WILL YOU BE A WHITE PERSON IN TRAINING		
Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if any) ▶ A-		
Information About Your Address		
*Present Physical Address (No PO Boxes)		
Street Number and Name		
Apt. Ste. Flr. Number		

i want to tell you the story about our escape. i want to tell you that our existence in this country is based on lying, on law breaking, on being uncivil.

;Chale! That is a very low standard!! Why be that "human" if that human is mediocre, if that human is what created dehumanization? I don't wanna be "human". I want to be más que human. I don't want to be civil... Or uncivil... I want to be a different civility, a different civility that we do not even yet know, that we have no word or name for. So we should not accept this idea of civility as only tied to colonial power. On the contrary, colonialism decivilizes and to tie ourselves to that logic of civility-incivility is to accept that low standard. It is to accept that mediocrity for ourselves. Instead I want to think of something different.

Robert D. Hernandez in
 "The World Turned on Its Head:
 Coloniality, Civility and the Decolonial Imperative"

the *cenote* is her throat. her gut, a collection of murky wells.

NOTES I TAKE WHILE I ASK MY MOTHER FOR DETAILS
ABOUT OUR CROSSING

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

without writing it all down. without giving away the details, which are both disturbing and typical, i'll say that the story of our imprisonment is a hard one to write out. my mother says it was one of the lowest points of her life, and, when she talks about it, the words come together like little bits of glass.



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Information About You

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DEAR BABY

I am in the United States as a: ☐ Visitor ☐ Student ☐ Permanent Resident ☐ Other (Specify)

Country of Citizenship

STAIN THOSE EYES THE COLOR OF NIGHT

*Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if any)
 ▶ A-

Information About Your Address

*Present Physical Address (No PO Boxes)

*Street Number and Name

Apt. Ste. Flr. Number

YOU WILL SEE

i write on Patwin land
 i work and organize on Ohlone land
 i was born on Muisca land
 today we sit on _____

before i go any further, “whose land are you on, dear reader?”²
 as Qwo-Li Driskill asks...

this doesn't fit the pattern of what i've been writing. unless the pattern is territory. and land. and violence. but this writing is about disobedience as a necessary betrayal. i betray forms. forms. order. if form is a geography of an existing system of knowledge, how do we undo a form. and

“ARE YOU READY TO SMASH WHITE THINGS?”³

in her last writings, her dissertation material for *Lloronas*, Gloria Anzaldúa writing about *cenotes* reminds us of their importance to indigenous cosmologies and traditions of the sacred. this “dream pool” is both a place to make an offering and a place of gathering knowledge. she says this commitment to writing, as a way of decolonizing our realities, is an imperative. “Knowledge is relative, and reality is a composition.” we write and reconstruct and heal, moving from fragments to wholeness. Coyolxauhqui dismembered and flung into the air in pieces, phases of the moon, yearns for fullness.

i worry about healing. every day i worry about the grounds that healing solidifies. who will be the last to heal? who will be forgotten in this healing process? i am not sure how healing is anything but a greater commitment to this very world before us. i want to resist the imperative to heal. and stay in the *cenote*. the space of imaging. the moon in broken phases. the space the crack creates.

i have a feeling i am not getting it. i am not with Anzaldúa right now.

some of us live in constant and continual rupture. some of us are in the *cenote* as a permanent way.

in other words, i don't want to live forever
 i want new ways of living
 like, no, to this fucking air

one of Anzaldúa's interventions in her dissertation is a call toward dream writing, dream editing. "The next morning you stay in bed. Eyes closed, you lie quietly. With blankets and pillows, you make a womb-cave of night..."⁴ a guide for writing in your sleep—because *this* is the nightmare. the days. and the other thing, the other thing—that darkness—might be a way.

there are days when my dream writing is so intense i wake up feeling full, nauseous. one night, before writing up the notes about the experience my mother and i had "██████████" i have a dream about stepping carefully into a hot spring, the water, bubbling and murky, is covered with little pink flowers that writhe upon the ripples. they cover the surface of the water like a skin. once i am in the water, the hot spring becomes acrid. my skin stings and the flowers are now small worms. prickling. ill. to see them better, i submerge my body in the springs. head dunked, my face flush, i see little legs on the flower-worms. they get smaller and smaller before my eyes. pink specs.

this dream, this fear of violence. of entry. it terrifies me. this dream is not about rape, it is not about the fear of contamination. it's about a fear of purity. of remaining as i am now. this dream is about enlightenment. to become lighter.

i google "dream meaning worms biting" and "hot spring worms dream."

because at the end of the dream, i extracted a long, pink fleshy worm from my ear, i also google, "worm in ear dream" and "worm in head." i google "what does it mean to remove a pink fleshy thing from my head in my dream. it felt good."

PULLING WORM OUT OF MY HEAD DREAM INTERPRETATIONS

Are you ready to uncover hidden and forbidden meanings of your dream about pulling worm out of my head? Click and reveal mysterious and secret meanings of dreaming about pulling worm out of my head by interpretations of the dream's symbolisms in various cultures.⁵

"To dream of a worm is an indication of negativity and general weakness. You have a poor self-image or a low opinion of a family member or friend.

To see a worm crawling on some part of your body is an indication that someone in your waking life is taking advantage of you and your kindness.”⁶

Worms in dreams often appear crawling either underneath or out from the skin. They can reflect concerns about a health problem. They may also reflect a “slimy” person or situation in waking life that has gotten “under your skin.”⁷

in 2016, around 200 miles north of where my mother and i were imprisoned, the Karnes County family detention center restricts detained children’s use of crayons in their visiting area.⁸ according to the center’s staff, the children were causing property damage with their crayons, while their mothers received legal counsel in an adjacent room.⁹ with crayons in hand, the little children, too little to be little, took to the walls like it was nothing.

i love these little children. fucking up walls. fucking up desks. fucking up floors. fucking each other up. their little fingers gripping the crayons. putting it to the walls—probably the color white or beige or some institutional green or grey. and then colors. and scribbles. nonsense flowers. stick figures. gangly animals. the sun big and yellow and unruly. someone’s name in shaky letters. and maybe a long green field with a few fish taking a stroll. sad faces. happy faces. slices of pizza. worms with mouths like a dash. stars taking the shape of little blue spiders. swirls in every color. a moon slice sharp edged. phased. *ma*

i think of the set of eyes that saw these markings. and how gorgeous that sting must have been. for these little children had fucked up their white walls, on a tuesday afternoon, giving no fucks. these shitty little disobedient children defacing everything to such an extent that it warranted a new policy: NO MORE CRAYON ACCESS! CRAYON ACCESS RESTRICTED HERE! CRAYON USE PROHIBITED. Did a staff member take to a google doc to type up the words: MADRES, NO CRAYOLAS AQUI. SE PROHIBIT.

their marks like a stain across the world. one long screech held in their little fists. how gorgeous. how gorgeous. how everything in these shitty misbehaving kids. in this stain, i sense an urgency toward what Katherine McKittrick charts as “demonic grounds.”¹⁰

or, what does it mean to fuck something from the inside out?

or, what does it mean to undo your body from the inside out. to be undone by something living inside of you(r)... something disobedient and gross. to be eaten up by worms from the inside out



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DEAR BABY

I am in the United States as a: ☐ Visitor ☐ Student ☐ Permanent Resident ☐ Other (Specify)

Country of Citizenship

I WANT 400 YEARS OF WHITE SILENCE

*Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if any)
 ▶ A-

Information About Your Address

*Present Physical Address (No PO Boxes)

Street Number and Name

Apt. Ste. Flr. Number

No. TO

for Caribbean scholar and critic Sylvia Wynter, existing and current constructions of what we have come to understand as “Man” or the capital-*h* Human are based on centuries of knowledge systems: Darwinian “survival of the fittest” regimes, Age of Enlightenment philosophies of reason, Hegelian dialectics, and so on. “Man” as a particular genre of the human seeks to maintain delineations between “the selected and dysselected,” or “the haves and have-nots.”¹¹ in different but similar words: some of us are included in/part of/defined by the category “Man,” and many, if not most of us, are not. these systems seek to secure categories of Man “...as white-heterosexual-breadwinner-and-measuring-stick-of-human-normalcy-, or-Man-as-human.”¹² understanding Man as the primary and most represented genre of the human begins to explain the unequal power and material relations experienced historically and globally by those of us less-than-Man. to be part of the “selected” means both allowing and insisting on the unequal lived realities so that the “selected” (the only true Humans!) can prevail. this definition of Man, as he stands above, in rule of his less-than-human counterparts (the non-whites, the non-straight, the non-nons... etc.) generates lawful violences and brutalities that simultaneously inscribe and reify our limited imaginations of what the human is and can be. these violences impact us, the less-than-human, in disproportionate ways because, in fact, some of us are so far off the spectrum that we do not register as Human/Man at all. categories of “Man” as we’ve come to understand him—his biology, his psyche, his imagination, his cosmology—are the things we must contend with if we are to (un)fuck ourselves towards something else.

one of the most powerful myths of the genre of Man is that we are exclusively biological beings, that we evolve primarily and almost exclusively biologically. the process of inscription is central to Wynter’s understandings of Man, because, she argues, “with being human, *everything is praxis*. For we are not purely biological beings!”¹³ for Wynter however, the human (no capital *h*) being, as evidenced by the modern and limited constructions of “Man,” is a hybrid species developing through the process of storytelling and myth-making as it responds to and acts upon biological systems: we are *bios* and we are *mythois*. we must recode the way we understand science and the way we understand stories, mythology. to this end, Wynter has studied and theorized the connectivities between neuroscience and jazz music. how does jazz music fuck up theories of brain activity and how does brain activity reveal something about how jazz acts upon the body? particular forms of Black art making are, for Wynter, portals toward contesting categories of Man.

unruliness feels like part of everything here. betrayal too. disorder. disobedience. the disavowal of the Human form. DISAVOWAL OF FORMATIONS. the urge towards a way out that means a negation of the present. we must say no while we say yes. and it makes me think of the little children in the immigrant detention facilities putting their crayons to the walls. saying yes to something while making a no too. what are the potentialities in seeing a wall, both as a site of containment and a site for creation. what do these little bad kids make more obvious to me? they are not resisting—or, better, not primarily resisting—but recoding, rewriting, lunging, literally writing over and

through walls. making them canvas. making them the very opposite of what they are constructed to be.

or what about my worm dream. here the lesson feels less like: get the contaminant out of me. but, rather, get me out of the contaminant. the Human body, a toxic shell for a thing, another kind of thing. multiple, alive, vibrant. the dream here is the “viscous”¹⁴ membrane pulled from my ear. the possibilities of coiled hot pink flesh resting by the hot spring.



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DEAR BABY

I am in the United States as a: ☐ Visitor ☐ Student ☐ Permanent Resident ☐ Other (Specify)

Country of Citizenship

WHAT IMAGINATION IS POSSIBLE

*Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy)

Alien Registration Number (A-Number) (if any)
 ▶ A-

Information About Your Address

*Present Physical Address (No PO Boxes)
 *Street Number and Name Apt. Ste. Flr. Number

IN THE SPACE OF YOUR RUIN

the murder of Afro-Colombiano José Jair Cortés on October 2nd of 2017 marks the 52nd killing of a human rights leader in Colombia, the country where i was born. one of the spaces that forms an imaginary of escape in my personal history.

my mother and i escaped from prison, i tell myself. but what are the conditions of my body, my mothers' body, our skin, for this scene of partial escape. the geographies of our body make this escape more possible for us. for Black and Indigenous people fighting for racial and environmental justice in Colombia, these killings feel inescapable, even as they continuously escape. are in process of escaping. "You don't ever get escaped," Fred Moten reminds us. "Escape is an activity, it is not an achievement."¹⁵

the various material and abstract enclosures that organize life within violence—children in a jail cell—feel unending. there's a line between you reading this sentence right now, and children living in jail. the line is _____ miles long. the line stretches in every direction. it outlines the depths of the *cenote*. how do you dig out from this Human form. how do you scratch at walls forever

how do you kill the future in the present.

how do you kill the future in the present.

how do you kill the future in the present.

how do yOu kill the future in the present.

how do y O u kill the future in the present.

how do y O u kill the future in the present.

how do y O u kill the future in the present.

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Jennif(f)er Tamayo is a queer, migrant, formerly undocumented poet, essayist, and performer. JT is the daughter of Nancy, Flora, Leonor, Sol, and Ana. Her book collections include [*Red Missed Aches*] (Switchback, 2011), *Poems are the Only Real Bodies* (Bloof Books 2013), *DORA/ANA/GUATAVIT@* (RSH 2016) and *YOU DA ONE* (2017 Noemi Books, The Akrilica Series). Additional writing and art can be found at www.jennifertamayo.com.

On Civil Disobedience is a monthly pamphlet series where writers from a range of professional backgrounds—poetry, law, economics, activism, art, ecology, engineering, and more—address the series title. The series recalls historical precedents set by Thoreau, Gandhi, King, Arendt, and others while also considering the pamphlet's important role in American revolutionary history. Filtering civic responsibility through the combined awareness of histories and disciplines, these pamphlets ask how citizenship and resistance intersect within the pledge of democratic ideals. www.thegreenlantern.org