

wildflower



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PROOFREADING and CREATIVE DIRECTION by NaBeela Washington

PROOFREADING by Nia Brass

COVER ART by Nick Komarnitsky

GUEST EDITING by Xochitl Frausto

INTRODUCTION by Akilah Cain

A Black writer and art collector, NaBeela Washington holds a Master's in Creative Writing and English from Southern New Hampshire University and a Bachelor's in Visual Advertising from The University of Alabama at Birmingham. She is the Founder of *Lucky Jefferson*.

Nick Komarnitsky is a 21 year old illustrator from Boston, Massachusetts, his work focuses on detail and having lots of color. He draws from imagination to create psychedelic visuals that draws the viewer in. Learn more nickkomarnit.myportfolio.com/work.

Xochitl Frausto is a queer autistic Xicanx from South Central Los Angeles, currently living in Oakland. With experience in editing, translating, and grant writing, Xochitl works at the Cultural District in San Francisco's Mission District. They are committed to supporting BIPOC writers and marginalized communities, with aspirations to pursue full-time editing and translating.

Akilah Cain holds an Associates degree in Cosmetology from Lawson State College and is currently a student at University of Montevallo to achieve her Bachelors in Social Work to be able to help children, adolescents, and those with disabilities of all ages. In her free time she enjoys going to church, spending time with family and friends, hiking, and researching.

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Donate or submit to *Lucky Jefferson* on our website: luckyjefferson.com.

Foreword

We are not people with autism, we are autistic people. We experience the world through our autistic perspective. I believe that autistic people have unique perspectives and experiences to share with the world, experiences historically marginalized and erased due to ableism. At the same time I received an autism diagnosis, I discovered creators sharing, evaluating, and processing autism and the experience of living as an autistic person. It became clear that the dominant white faces and white voices of autism did not share the same experiences of surviving through ableism in addition to racism, sexism, and homophobia.

As a queer Chicana growing up in the historically marginalized community of Watts in South Central Los Angeles, an environment that lacked access to resources and education on autism, I grew up without the proper accommodations to address my struggles. Even today I cannot properly account for them, since I learned quickly to blend with my environment by functioning as a high-performing student this was further cemented in my traditional Mexican home where girls were expected to behave in conventional ways. In the context of my community, I was seen as one of the “good” kids who did not need to be looked after. As I learned to mask, I became virtually invisible, and I struggled internally to reach the milestones of my peers.

In public school, a place often riddled with violence and social confusion, I found comfort in literature, escaping to the many worlds books provided me. Through the imagination of writing and art, I was opened to the possibilities of otherness, alternatives, and differences that I found fascinating and stimulating. And since then I have dedicated much of my life to literature, education, and social justice. The truth is that there are many opportunities for artists and writers but they cater to neurotypical and allistic norms. Networking, interviews, and large gatherings are not accessible to most of us. But still, these are the dominant structures of human interaction. This social isolation is exacerbated by the structural inequities that we experience coupled with the general lack of education on autism and ableism.

I contacted Lucky Jefferson with the idea of gathering a collection of autistic artistry for publication. I quickly realized there was an urgent need for our community to shed light on Black, Brown, and Indigenous autistic voices and artistry. Many autistic people experience difficulties with the conventions of communication and socializing, I realized that this was even more profound in conversations with ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic realities. Ableism is a frontier within the framework of social justice that needs further engagement and development and through this, we can find ways to garner disability justice methodologies to build a better world for everyone. Through the tools of art and writing, we can continue to build towards this goal.

Wildflower calls on autistic writers and artists to submit work that embraces their inner wildflowers and how autists experience life, introversion, and sexuality through the medium of poetry, fiction, and visual art. We intentionally curated these themes because they reflect lived experiences often neglected in literature and art. *Wildflower* recognizes and celebrates the autistic writer, the autistic artist, and the autistic mind; for us by us.

Xochitl A. Frausto

Xochitl Alicia Frausto
Guest Editor

Introduction

I was first diagnosed with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) at the age of 3 years old, along with ADHD, expressive language disorder.

I love anything with numbers, whether it's math, sudoku, etc., listening to music on blast, being in my own space is a must, going for a good walk at the park, blue is my favorite color, and I also love chocolate, etc.

I don't really like going out in public because it can be overstimulating, and others using their "baby voices" when communicating with me. I'm also a picky eater and dislike certain textures of foods, like for example: salsa, etc.

My overall experience of being on the spectrum as an African-American female is a rollercoaster. Some days are fun, some are challenging, and there are others where you just want to leave this rollercoaster because it's too overwhelming, physically and mentally. All my life, I've worked twice as hard to get to where I am today.

Being on the spectrum has taught me a lot about how to be more understanding and compassionate with others being on the spectrum and other disabilities.

It's okay to be different because being different is being unique in our own way, allowing us to really embrace our inner beauty.

Just because we're diagnosed with autism doesn't mean it defines us. Many individuals with autism are extremely talented, whether it's through art, poetry, etc. We may be different from the "average person," but we are unique and thriving every day, and that's what we want you to see: that we're not just the diagnosis, we're more than that.

Remember, you are beautiful and worth it. Don't give up; keep pushing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Akilah Cain". The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'A' and a cursive 'Cain'.

Akilah Cain

Wildflowers

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hyperlexia is to différance as restrictive
interest is to positive obsession



Untangling Bindweed

J. D. Harlock

hands in the dirt, head in the sun,
I pull — its trailed habit, binding
the stems, its cordate leaves, suffocating
the grape, untangling
this binding weed, this possession vine,
from the soil — only to return
again and
again and
again

for cultivating has
no beginning, no end

its season
extends & slows
infusing patience

no matter

what returns us
to the motions
of nature is
a mindful presence



Diasporic Gardener's Blues

Shel Moring

I chaos garden my way out of amnesia
Green thumbed and flower tongued
Each seed a portal into my surrogate diaspora
Roots that carry song that carry instructions

Green thumbed and flower tongued plant specialist
Can I pick your brain? I swear I kill everything
You lost this one to root rot, your ears closed to their song
I can't infodump you into relation with your body

Can I pick your brain? How do you mourn a microcosm?
Each seed is a portal the shape of your before and after
I can't infodump you into composting your grief
Just know that I chaos garden my way into remembering

Gallery Viewing

Greta McGee



Homesick

Jessica Roushander

I walked to the store unsure of sidewalk. I listened
to an audiobook unsure of ears or words. The sounds
supposedly. My weather app said it was seventy seven
out -- I felt nothing for the old man Fahrenheit, unclear
if the sun clouds or crayons sky or how far
does it reach until the warmth is cool again. I have no clue
if it's *bright daylight or broad*, and if I squinted because
I forgot my sunglasses or if I had eyes of moon. I can't remember
if I wore clothes. Or a body. I have no idea
if there was skin involved. Arms maybe shoulders
that shoulder all of this. I have no idea if there was blood
and in what direction of sky it flowed
above or below and if its dry knee
was watered, was wondered. Not a clue
where I am in the universe and
I am all leg I am pretty sure and insured
in case anything happens to them while I am lost
in space, found myself on this planet one day
when I left wormhole of womb. I need to know
how does it end and if I find my way home.

Love for Parts Most Vulnerable

Tier 1 Taylor

At 1 my nephew runs
into my mother's house
flinging
his clothes off.
I hear stimming sounds
as he climbs up the stairs.
The shutters of my mind
open and close and
I remember special education
classes at NYU,
and ask the impending question
curiously and empathetically,
Is he Autistic?

He's not that Autistic,
he's not bad, my grandmother
promises me.

If Rowan is not bad, then what am I?
6 hours in the dark in my sound
canceling headphones butt naked
under smooth white sheets.
I spend all of my time naked.
Clothes are a prison.
Am I bad enough?

God forbid I exist.
God forbid I am different.
God forbid I am human to you.

I turn up the classical music
because the cello can never be too loud
and I bounce my apple pencil
between my fingers
am I bad enough?

I stretch fruit rolls Eat for texture
Don't eat
Eat for comfort
Can't brush my teeth Mouth too minty
Can't wash my hands with cold water
It hurts so bad Can't wear jeans Need bare feet
No socks in my bed That's a violation That's a
violation No socks in my bed
I count the seconds in my head
whenever someone hugs me
waiting for it to be over
Force myself to eat
opposing textures
Move over
No socks in my bed
That's a violation!

Force myself to be around people counting
the seconds until I am horizontal

It burns when people touch me,
sometimes when I touch myself,
I touched my left jaw line—it is still burning

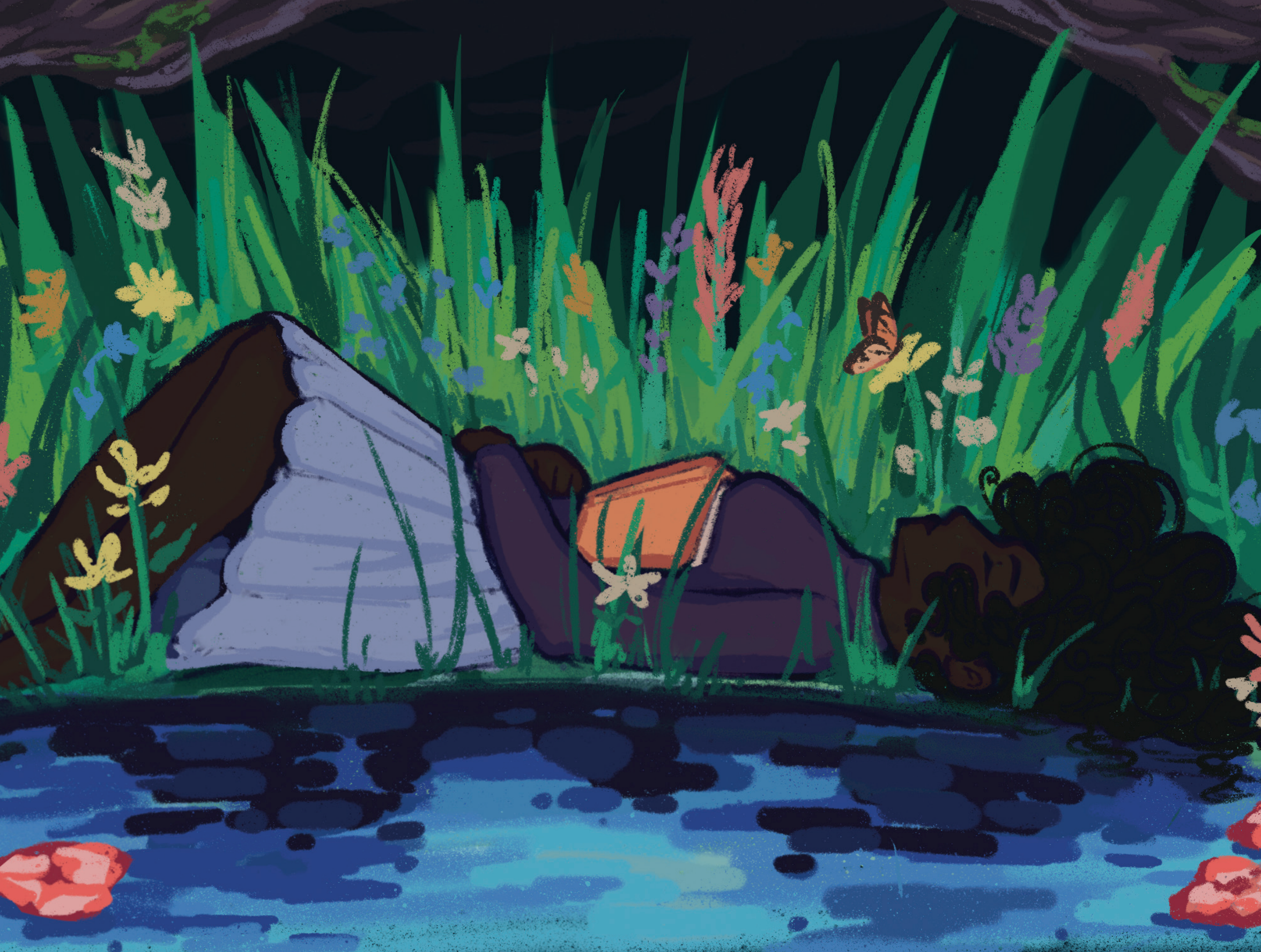
At 3 my nephew runs to me
at full speed and unleashes
a long series of powerful hits,
each increasingly painful
and enthusiastic.

Only Rowan's touch is
welcoming in all its forms.
I want to be his punching bag,
if this is how he shows love.
I tell him I will kiss him more
for each punch he lands.
I cling to him tightly,
knowing this world is often
too harsh for comfort.
I brace my body for impact,
saddened by the truth that police
kill Autistic boys of color
who do not yield to their authority.

When Rowan is grown,
will carpet feel like death too?
Even if he doesn't learn to be gentle,
he will never be too much for me to love him.

May we grow to love our autism together.
May we always be ourselves.
May we forever live unashamed.
May we stay safe.

I love you, Ro.



When I Was a Starseed

To my strange 12 year old self

Cecilia Caballero

When I was a starseed
I saw rose petals fall from the sky
Into the backyard, where the earth devoured them
When I was a starseed
I watched *The X-Files* every Sunday
Agent Mulder asked, "Do you think I'm spooky?"
And I said, yes, and *I'm spooky too*.
I am not a white man.
But I still knew that I was a starseed
And I read the entire shelf of the
Paranormal section at the library
Searching for myself in every galaxy
Because I belonged to the sky
A starseed that is my own.

Palilalia

Derek Yen

[redacted] unknowable [redacted]
 whims of a capricious god [redacted] orders arrived
 [redacted]
 [redacted] through my lungs and
 traced lines in [redacted] thoughts racing [redacted]
 colliding [redacted] repeating [redacted] with my reflection to try to get
 it right. [redacted] burning of shame [redacted] a stutter [redacted]
 [redacted] an involuntary repetition [redacted]
 [redacted] electricity
 flows from some other [redacted] mirror. [redacted]
 [redacted]
 [redacted] name the difference, the divergence [redacted] to
 claim a name. [redacted]
 [redacted]
 [redacted] false significance [redacted]
 [redacted] stuck in the ineffable – [redacted] rising, rising, [redacted]
 [redacted] to taste ashes in my throat. But [redacted] I know a name.

hyperlexia is to
différance, as
restrictive interest
is to positive obsession

Leslie McIntosh

When I was very young, I refused the picture books my mother tried to read me at bed-time. I was afraid of the awful illustrations, their garish colors overwhelmed me. My eyes never knew where to settle. I preferred the books from my grandfather's bookshelf; heavy and grounding like anchors. Books of safari jaunts and medieval wars. Books of botany and Greek myth. Books of cosmic dust and ladybug lifespan. One full of taffy recipes. Books of quiet, small print, and books of gold-gilded edges. Their softness slowed my mind into a peaceful journey across oceanic pages. I drowned in their deep context, but at least I could grasp the surface of the words, was able to see the map of them as I decoded their alphabetic mysteries into phonemes, then syllables, then words, and syntax. Their sounds spilled from me until my mother was the one sleeping, a gentle snore whistling loose as my small body gently leaned against her belly. My grandfather's recliner held us there, under the light of his old, brass floor lamp. Beneath its glow, I persisted, while the rest, faded; the living room floor checkered with my sister's baby toys, the television news flickering by the window, the East Orange ramrousal of neighbors drinking into the night. I never truly understood where the books took me, or why, but I trusted the recliner that held us those nights. Eventually, I would leave my sleeping mother to find my own way to the pullout sofa bed in the den. So, I suppose I was never really lost.

My mother didn't understand this; how a child of three, maybe four, could choose books that didn't assume the reader was helpless—that didn't offer to see for me. Even now, I love her for not fearing her own confusion.

INTERIOR ARTWORK by Hannah Grable and Madison Goetsch (page 13), Abby Downes and Ati Gor (page 16), Nia Brass (pages 26-27).

Hannah Grable is an Illustrator and graduate of Kansas City Art Institute.

Madison Goetsch is an Illustrator and graduate of Grand Valley State University.

Abby Downes is a recent Virginia Commonwealth University graduate and character designer based in Richmond, Virginia.

Ati Gor is an Illustrator and graduate of Ringling College of Art and Design.

Nia Brass is an illustrator and writer attending the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. As a painter, she focuses on visual arts and storytelling. In 2022, she won a student award for her research paper and continues to write for her fictional worlds. Learn more at niabrass.crd.co or @niabrass (IG).

SUBMIT TO LUCKY JEFFERSON

***Lucky Jefferson's* mission is simple:
we publish social change.**

And our vision is to see books reimagined to
center the modern reader.

Founded in 2018, *Lucky Jefferson* is an award-winning nonprofit, literary journal, and publisher that reimagines books by creating interactive and collaborative community experiences that center the writer and artist and cultivate inclusion and representation in contemporary literature.


Lucky Jefferson is proud to feature poets and writers who have never been published, marginalized perspectives, and those who sought to pursue writing later in life.

Learn more + consider submitting at: **luckyjefferson.com**



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STRIKE A POSE

take a selfie
with your copy of
Wildflower and tag us!

HASHTAGSSSS

use #Wildflower,
or #LJSQUAD to
follow the convo

