

Summer 2020

Editor's Note

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers of *Yalobusha Review*,

Welcome to *Yalobusha Review's* inaugural summer issue dedicated to the young, Black, and vibrant voices of Mississippi! In this issue, you'll find everything from a re-imagined travel review to reflections on a mother's unwavering love to a rhapsody on the strange business of body parts.

The poems and essays here contain a self-possessed and curious "I." They ask questions of the world and bend effortlessly towards the sweetest parts of Mississippi as a state, summer, and legacy of justice. They retool and reject the language of totalizing narratives. Here are Black girls who are unafraid to sing, who want all the smoke, all the sunshine, and all the time in the world to tell stories that dazzle.

As we made art together during a pandemic, we learned that Black Girl Magic is a tangible life force that transforms space, both digital and analog. We learned too that young folks, when given the opportunity to make a poem, tell a story, or paint a picture, will take what they are given and gift the world something even more extraordinary: themselves.

The Catherine Coleman Literary Arts and Justice Initiative made possible a summer workshop that centered the imagination, lived experiences, and artistic expression of Black youth in Mississippi. The initiative, which connects high schoolers to graduate students from the University of Mississippi's MFA program in Creative Writing, aims to expand access to the literary arts for youth by exploring the state's "rich history of arts and justice while modeling intellectual and artistic curiosity."

We want to thank Professors Kiese Laymon, Derrick Harriell, and Ivo Kamps for clearing the way for art when we most needed it. The initiative, dedicated to Professor Layman's beloved grandmother, Ms. Catherine Coleman of Scotts County, seeks "to honor and extend the tradition of Black women like Catherine Coleman who, given the choice to leave Mississippi for dreams of northern freedom, chose to stay in Mississippi and make life better for the state's children."

Ms. Coleman believed she and the children of Mississippi had a right to a dignified life and so, organized church-based summer arts programs in Forest, Mississippi as an active member of the Concord Missionary Baptist Church while working as a domestic and chicken plant line worker to support her family.

We honor the legacy of Ms. Coleman and Black women alike in this incredible issue featuring the art of the Delta's own Leonard Maiden. We at *Yalobusha Review* are honored to be featuring the work of Mississippi's youth, and present to you the first of many summer issues.

Love to you and yours,

Ida Harris and Sadia Hassan
Guest Editors, Summer Issue