

Mixtapes



COME TOGETHER



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BRENDAN'S LINER NOTES

At the beginning of the pandemic this lady dropped her shopping bag in front of me. I went to help her pick her stuff up and realized: Oh yeah. I can't do that anymore. It's very strange that our main tool for keeping people safe over the last year and a half has been to not go near them.

I've been reflecting – like most of you, probably – on exactly what I miss about others, and what I don't. Humans are totally amazing, and also terrible. At our best, we fight for people who have less, comfort each other when we're distraught, and offer love instead of judgement. At our worst, we hurt each other – often really badly.

I was drawn to the poems in this anthology because they look at both the beauty and the danger in opening ourselves to others. Lara Bozabalian's "The New School" is a vivid reflection on the dangers inherent in coming together, while Jen Sookfong Lee's "Community Garden" reminds us our deepest hurts often come from those we trust. And justice isn't always meted out. Carl Sandburg's "Chicago" tells us: I have seen the gunman kill and go free again.

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Being in a community is also very difficult work. Gregory Scofield's "I'll Teach You Cree" probes the difficulties of communicating with one another, while Lucia Misch's "The Problem with Being a Box Too Small for Its Contents" concludes that grief is always following closely behind love.

But there's also so much to celebrate in one another. Doyali Islam's "Susiya" suggests human connection is central to defeating hardship. Nicole Lachat's "New Year" reminds us of the necessity of being grateful for kindness, while Stuart Ross' "I Have Something to Tell You," suggests no matter how banal an experience might be, it also holds the possibility of transcendence. Similarly, Ulrikka Gernes "K was supposed to come with the key, I was" details an entirely normal interaction that might just turn out to be life changing.

What all these poems have in common is the questions other humans force us to ask about ourselves and the world we live in together. RC Weslowski's "Let's Not Get it Together" leans into this by asking: Who's driving this bus? And since he doesn't know, suggests: why not try on a new shoe and see if it fits?

I hope some of these poems feel like a fit for you, and they lead to continued reading down the line. Dionne Brand's "From Thirsty" says: the touch of everything blushes me. Just as we're all, on some level, interconnected, so are all these poems now, in your mind, as well as all the poems to come.



THE POEMS

CHICAGO

by Carl Sandburg

I'LL TEACH YOU CREE

by Gregory Scofield

LET'S NOT GET IT TOGETHER

by RC Weslowski

THE NEW SCHOOL

by Lara Bozabalain

I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU

by Stuart Ross

K WAS SUPPOSED TO COME WITH THE KEY, I WAS

by Ulrikka Gernes

FROM THIRSTY

by Dionne Brand

SUSIYA

by Doyali Islam

NEW YEAR'S

by Nicole Lachat

COMMUNITY GARDEN

by Jen Sookfong Lee

THE PROBLEM WITH BEING A BOX TOO SMALL FOR ITS CONTENTS

by Lucia Misch