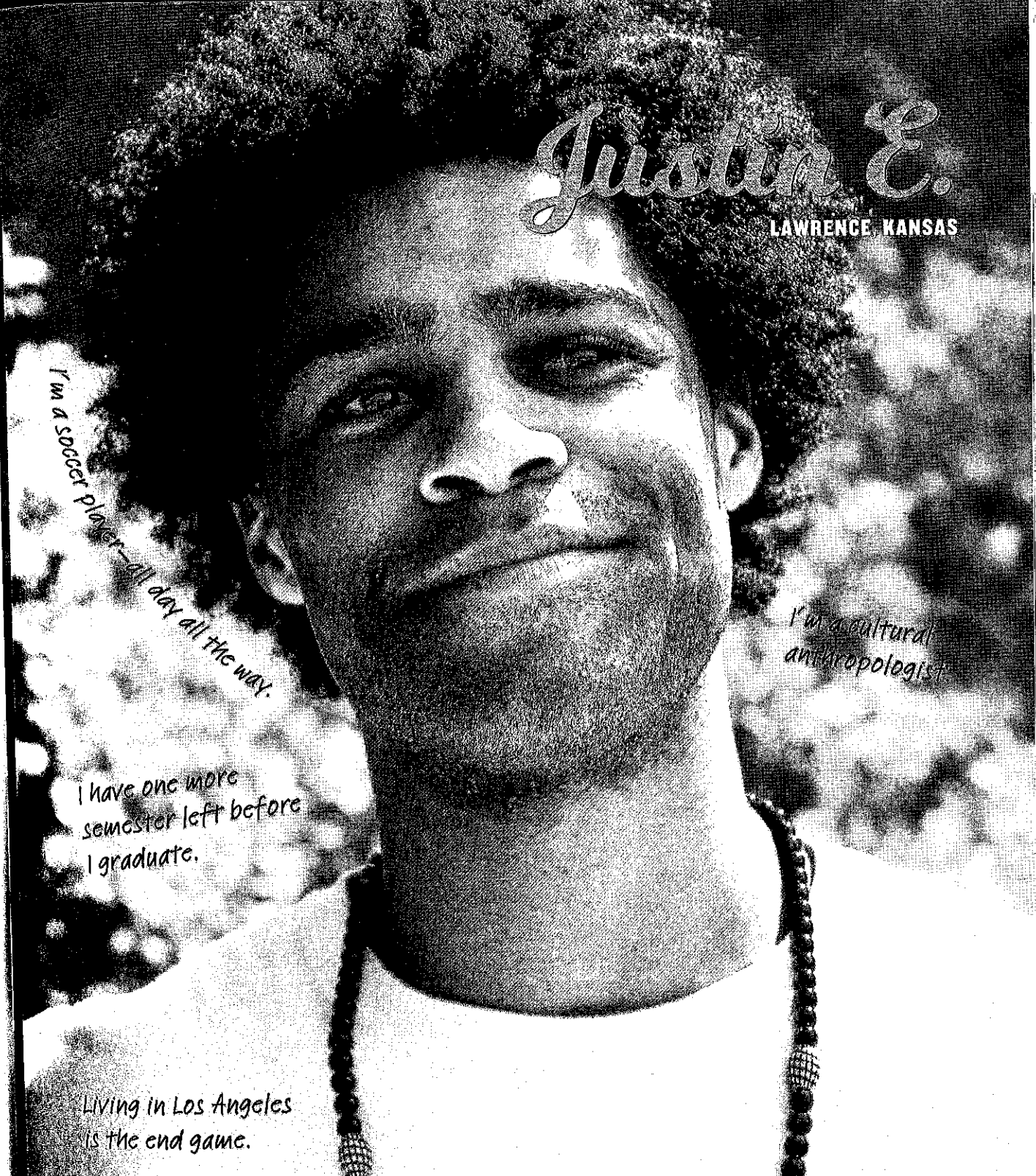


they can't stop playing, is the African blues-based tradition. It just happens to be a White guy playing instead of a Black person.

I don't think that people understand what the African captives did, what slavery meant, how pervasive and all-encompassing it was, and how it established America's first-world status. This country wouldn't be what it is without my ancestors. This country's music would not exist. This country in and of itself would not exist. That's the biggest takeaway of all, and I don't know how to explain the enormity of that. It's something as simple as: You owe Black people for everything.



Justin E.
LAWRENCE, KANSAS

I'm a soccer player - all day all the way.

I have one more semester left before I graduate.

I'm a cultural anthropologist.

Living in Los Angeles is the end game.

The first time I realized who I was, was in middle school. I was wrestling in the yard with a friend in my predominantly White neighborhood. A White person drove by, lowered his window, and called me "nigger." So, being Black has defined me. I grew up knowing my ancestors were part of the slave trade, and that defined me too.

But I saw a different way when I went to Senegal, West Africa,* to study for a bit. Senegal has an island which was one of the last slave ports. They'd keep slaves on islands off the coast of Africa so they couldn't run away back to their homeland. What was interesting was viewing some Africans' perspectives on slavery and who they now are. It seemed, when I was

talking to them, that the whole slave trade was something that happened in their history. It wasn't something that *defined* them now.

In the United States, on the other hand, Black people are only introduced in our history as slaves. That's all we are.** When White people first see me, I realize that they're only gonna see a Black face. That is, until I open my mouth. Once I start talking, I crush all stereotypes.

I could talk forever about this stuff. I can talk with my grandma, because she's my grandma. But with older employees at work? I'm talking, and they say they get me, but I look at their faces and know they don't get it. White students need to know about the experiences of students of color, but the

* Notice how Justin didn't just say "Africa," as if it's a country (it's a continent). There is more genetic and physical variation within all populations of sub-Saharan Africa than there are among any other populations on the globe. This means that, biologically, it is likely that a woman from the Congo would have more in common with a woman from Germany than she would with a woman from Botswana. The false idea that race is instead biological has led to abuses like the U.S. eugenics movement in the early 1900s, which sought to eliminate "undesirable" traits (largely in poor, disabled, uneducated, or minority populations) through forced sterilization.

** Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, coined and developed by Joy DeGruy, "is a theory that explains the etiology of many of the adaptive survival behaviors in African American communities throughout the United States and the Diaspora. It is a condition that exists as a consequence of multigenerational oppression of Africans and their descendants resulting from centuries of chattel slavery. A form of slavery which was predicated on the belief that African Americans were inherently/genetically inferior to Whites."

people who aren't gonna listen are the ones who need to be changed. Only a White person, I've learned, can talk to another White person and get farther than I can get. Because either they're gonna stop listening to me, I'm gonna get angry, or both.

Sometimes, it's easy just to think about giving up, telling them to fuck themselves and to stay away from you. But you can't

do that because they run the world. So you just gotta keep telling them and keep waking them up. It's all baby steps, you know?

The oppressed shouldn't have to do it all. The oppressor needs to help out. White people need to talk to other White people about what is what. Y'all gotta teach each other—like, *right now*.

dream is not real because it is built on our backs and integrated in our land. Most Americans today have no understanding of that. Most think, "The Indians just *went away*." Like, *poof*. To me, this is the final stage of colonization, when people say that it never happened. I think that's how racism is perpetuated. Every Native person has to end up being a *historian* and constantly remind people, but why is that our responsibility? This is the *shared* history of this country.

All people of color have a shared history of struggle. I don't believe in the pure sovereignty of indigenous communities unless it also has an equity lens, just as I don't believe in the sovereignty of the African-American people or the Asian-American community if it doesn't have an equity lens. Without the equity lens,** we will continue to be divided, we will continue to divide our struggles from the whole. We have much more to gain when we work together toward a more equitable world.

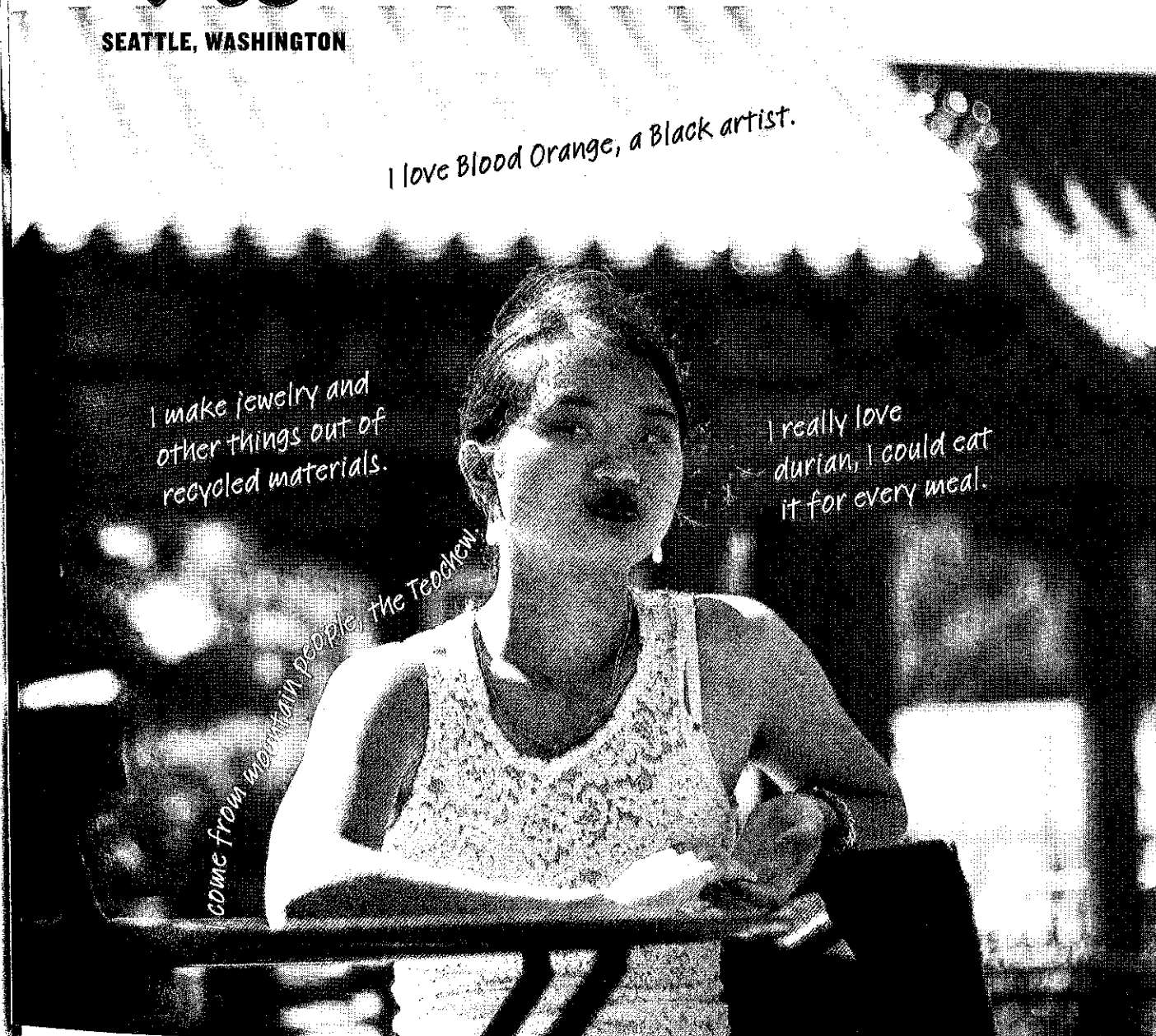
↑ ** One definition: "Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares."

Just remember, every piece of ground that you walk on was at one time occupied by indigenous people, whether you're on the East Coast or the West Coast or wherever. Acknowledgment of that is important. You should also acknowledge that there are millions of Native people left, and they need your help. You need to ask yourself, "Is it morally, ethically right for us as Americans to be so prosperous when the first people of this country are in such poverty? Are we really about justice, democracy, and equity if we don't collectively start dealing with the challenges that exist in Native communities? Are those only Indian people's challenges, or are they our collective responsibility?"

We Indian people are not going anywhere. We've already been to the bottom. You've tried to murder every one of our people, sterilize our women, take away our land, remove our children from our homes. No matter what you try, you're never going to get rid of us. Indigenous people are part of the past and present of this country, and damn right we're part of the future.

Vic

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON



My optimism about White people is part of my privilege. In high school, I knew how to be respectable, eloquent, do the right things, and say the right things at the right times. I was very careful, very nervous. I was always well spoken.

I've faced a lot of denial of my experience as a woman of color. When White people meet me—I think because I'm an Asian cis woman—they think, "Oh, this one is safe. This one will be my sidekick."

I wonder if gentrification is happening in Beacon Hill—a neighborhood just south of Chinatown*—because White people are more comfortable with Asians than they are with Black people. Jazz was at the center of the central district here. There were a ton of artists, like Duke Ellington and Langston Hughes and Ernestine Anderson, but they weren't allowed to perform, live in, or stay in a hotel in certain areas, so they would stay here, in Chinatown. Do y'all know

↑ • Chinese people were "prohibited by law to testify in court, to own property, to vote, to have families join them, to marry non-Chinese, and to work in institutional agencies." To survive, they banded together in communities that we today call "Chinatowns." While Chinatowns are mostly made up of Chinese Americans, Vietnamese Americans and other Asian ethnic groups also reside there.

about single resident occupancy rooms, SROs? These hotels were designed specifically for immigrants, people who arrived in the United States and couldn't afford to live elsewhere, so they crowded together in one room. It was all men, because immigration from China only allowed men,** so it was like a little bachelor hang pad. There's a history of many people of color, of different ethnic backgrounds, concentrated in this one area because of blatant segregation. A lot of people have poured love into this area.

Anyways, I was really grappling. I had no clue about positionality,*** about where

→ ** America's very first immigration law banned females from China. When Chinese men came to the West Coast to build U.S. railroads, most voluntarily but some kidnapped, their wives couldn't come with them. The reason was that if Chinese women came, then there would be Chinese-American babies and families—and by that time, the Constitution extended citizenship to anyone born in the States. White Americans only wanted Chinese immigrants for their labor, not to welcome them as citizens.

*** The concept of positionality was introduced by philosopher Linda Alcoff in 1988. It discusses how gender, race, class, and other important parts of our identity are "markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities."

to find my voice. I didn't want to be anyone's sidekick! I wanted to be loud! I wanted to be heard!

I realized I had to stop sugarcoating things for White people. My framework shifted. I used to see it as my responsibility to educate everyone, and then I realized that it's my right to speak truth, but not my responsibility to educate. For example, we had to analyze *Apocalypse Now* in class; it's a film about the Vietnamese-American War, and it's *ugly*. In the film, I felt like the Americans were treating Vietnam like a Disneyland for killing people. But the White people in my class didn't even *flinch* when a Vietnamese person was being shot. Didn't. Even. Flinch. However, when a pig died in the

film, all the White girls were like "gasp" oh my god, I can't look at this!" Later, when I wrote my essay analyzing all of the film's racism, my teacher called it a "rant," so I just slid back into my shell.

You see, I was caught in White respectability politics. I think that's something a lot of Asian people fall into. They think they can change things through academia, through being respectable, by being extra compassionate to White people. I now realize it's based on policing the emotions of Black people, mainly, and other people of color. I now think that the real change comes from organizing the community. Research papers and big words aside, what are you *doing* to shake things up?