

home is where the heart is. any dollar-store door mat will tell you that.

it's where families come together around an open fire, a steaming meal, a warm television screen.  
it's where brothers and sisters play together, driving one another up the walls.  
it's where mothers and fathers are given a life to nurture, where sons and daughters are born,

taught to love each other,  
raised to support each other.  
empowered to protect each other,

my home is rarely described without laughter.

my home is where "the residents are kindly referred to as Cheeseheads,"

where there are more crops being grown and cattle being herded than there are actual citizens,

where emerald green and agate blue walk alongside one another for miles at a time,

extending down the line of the horizon like lovers descending down the aisle.

my home is used to being overlooked, a land of few notable accomplishments.

my home is used to being overlooked. i'm used to my home being overlooked.

August 23, 2020.

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**Jacob S. Blake**, a 29-year-old black man, was shot and seriously injured by police officer Rusten Sheskey in [Kenosha, Wisconsin](#).<sup>[2]</sup> Sheskey shot Blake in the back four times and the side three times<sup>[3]</sup> after Blake opened the driver's door of an [SUV](#) belonging to the mother of his children, and attempted to reach inside.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

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a spark.

August 25, 2020.

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On August 25, 2020, when he was 17, [REDACTED] shot three men during the [civil unrest in Kenosha, Wisconsin](#) that followed the [shooting of Jacob Blake](#) by a police officer. [REDACTED] was armed with an [AR-15 style rifle](#) and had joined a group of armed citizens in Kenosha who had said they were there to protect local businesses.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

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a flame.

**2 shot dead and 1 injured in Kenosha during protests; police looking for man armed with a long gun**

**Graphic videos capture tense moment that led to deadly shootings in Kenosha**

**What's happening in Kenosha, Wisconsin?**

**17-Year-Old Arrested After 2 Killed During Unrest in Kenosha**

***Justice Dept. to Open Investigation Into Kenosha Shooting***

**Trump Defends Kenosha Shooting Suspect**  
**Kenosha shooting suspect called a friend to say he 'killed somebody,' police say, and then shot two others**

**17-year-old charged with homicide after shooting during Kenosha protests, authorities say**

home is a stage, a theatre for people, police and politicians alike to prance about like a playground.

home is a battlefield, complete with men in uniforms, military-grade vehicles,  
and weapons made to kill.

home is where the sound of popping fills the air, where the pavement bleeds a ruby red,  
where gravestones are planted down the full length of Sheridan Road  
like footsteps leading up to Heaven's Door.

you would think technology has replaced the need for it all.  
we think that the future is utopian, that a smartphone is the cure to all conflict.

but when a boy picks up a gun and thinks himself a god,  
when a foot soldier declares himself a captain,  
when a guardian angel closes its eyes.

when every second is recorded,  
fitted into a frame that would be broadcasted to from sea to sea,  
a digital circus where people are shot and allowed to get up again.

when headlines flood our doorsteps like death tolls,  
when church bells ring and no one answers,  
when a boy picks up a gun and becomes your God.

and you forget what's real.

you forget their names.

Adam's ribs are pried from his chest,  
Eve is the first to be born.

Cain kills Abel with the jawbone of an ass,  
Abel is the first to ever die.

David kills Goliath with a stone,  
Goliath is the first fear to be faced.

they are written into eternity.

a police officer shoots Jacob Blake.  
seven times in the back.

a boy shoots

Joseph Rosenbaum.  
four times, twice in the front, once in the back, once along the side of the head, once to the back.

Anthony Huber.  
once to the chest.

and Gaige Grosskreutz.  
once to the arm.

what makes a mythos?

when the word “murderer” becomes subjective to a court of law.  
when that officer is told that his safety supersedes a civilian’s.  
and that boy, now a man, is told that the blood on his hands is the mark of a hero.

their history is written for them.



home is a forgotten melody, an unfinished tune.

home is where families mourn the dead air that sends chills up the spine.  
where siblings look to someone who's no longer there.  
where parents reckon with the reality that not everyone gets back up again.

home is where the heart is.

but when that heart is crafted by a hateful God's hands,

when it's made to pump poisoned blood through our veins,

when the taste of iron fills our mouths and chokes our cries,

how is Man meant to live?

I want to say, first and foremost, that I'm incredibly sorry if I went too far over the page limit. There are those few pages that are barely a few sentences long, and I thought it'd be silly to put those to the overall count. I did my best to create a full body of work that would amount to around five pages of original writing in one way or another, so I hope that's okay.

I went with the second Creative option for this final assignment, where I was to write a poem from the perspective of a "witness," so I chose a tragedy that I felt I was better equipped to speak on. I'm from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is only about a thirty minute drive away from Kenosha. I remember watching the Black Lives Matter movement explode across the United States, stuck inside my house after months and months of quarantine. Whenever national events happen, Wisconsin is among the last to be mentioned, and although Milwaukee is a pretty fairly populated city, anything that happens there is often lumped in with the ongoings of Chicago. I remember when Kyle Rittenhouse's name became a national topic of discussion and suddenly everyone's eyes were on *us*, and it felt like the world was closing in. I remember the shock of seeing my home being finally recognized across the nation, and the depression I felt realizing that the home I had grown to love so much was as infested with just as much evil as everywhere else.

The page of headlines were all published within a month of the shooting, and were included to represent what felt like a pure tidal wave of attention, panic, and pain that was arising because of this situation. The two excerpts from Wikipedia that I included just before it, however, are meant to represent the exact experience I had doing research for this project: the simplification of two horrific tragedies which are now remembered by most average onlookers as a mere summary found in a search result. It pains me to know that the journey of anyone nowadays who wants to know more about what happened that day will likely start and end with a five-minute Google search. I talk about this event as if it happened decades ago, and I realize the irony in doing that, but in the age of technology that's

how it's come to feel. Crimes too horrible to comprehend can be committed all across our country as many times as you like, but in a few months they are forgotten and put to the side in favor of the newest and greatest tragedy.

Part of the reason I chose to write about the shooting in Kenosha was because it's something I still think about to this day. I am appalled that any amalgamation of people could come together as a jury and decide to acquit a murder of all chargers, and even more so that he is allowed to walk free as if he's a fucking *celebrity*. I would see his name everywhere, watching him being flown first-class all across the country, and feeling a burning resentment that a vile man like that is being remembered for what he did to my home. While poking around the internet to do research for this assignment, I found his Twitter account and saw that not only is he making appearances on college campuses and buddying up to several right-wing figures, but that he was just recently featured in a high production commercial of a custom bundle of AR500 armor being sold bearing his name.

This is why his name is censored throughout this entire poem, because somehow he has become the most beloved and famed person to walk out of this entire mess. Instead, I wanted to focus on the names of the victims whose names have already largely been forgotten. This is also why there's some of the only words to be capitalized in the entire piece; Wadud was obviously very careful about when and where she chose to use capital letters, and I wanted to do the same not only in an attempt to mimic her style even closer, but to make those names stand out more than anything else. I also chose to capitalize Sheridan Road, less for any outstanding purpose but more to cement it in any readers' mind as a *real* place. The last thing I wanted was for this story to feel like fiction as many tend to do, which is also where the line: "a digital circus where people are shot and allowed to get back up" came from. In part it was meant to act as a starting point for this entire narrative, representing the comfortability we often resign ourselves to when an event only exists as far as our phone screens begin

and end. In a movie or a TV show, characters are killed off all the time without reservation. What I was trying to articulate was that, until a death permeates that barrier and takes on a more tangible shape in our eyes, it can be difficult to tell the difference between fiction and reality. That is why that verse in particular is referenced on the very last page, when a family is forced to reckon that “not everybody gets back up again.” That is also why the first page about what it means to have a home is recreated, as the definition of a home shifts after we lose someone we care about so deeply. Instead, it becomes a ghost of what it used to be rather than a place of genuine comfort and joy, drained of all its color as well as the life (both literal and metaphorical) that used to exist there.

All in all, I just hope that this poem was able to at least somewhat serve as a worthwhile artistic archive of what happened those four years ago. I did my best to do my research and represent the sentiments of those who were affected, and I hope that comes across in my final draft.

Either way, thank you for such a wonderful semester, and I hope you have a great spring break!