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 **CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY** | WILKINSON COLLEGE
of Humanities and Social Sciences

THE CENTER FOR POETRY AT CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
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T A B

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Space before text and...

the last word.



Photographed by Keenan Miller



Photographed by Keenan Miller



Photographed by Violet Gude



the design

In April 2026, the especially ambitious poetry exhibit issue entitled “the last word” marked the final volume of *Tab Journal*. Inspired by Tracy K. Smith’s “Declaration,” the exhibit included erasures of Thomas Jefferson’s *Declaration of Independence* and Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* by nine additional poets. Each erasure was reimagined as

a visual installation. This culminating volume continues *Tab Journal*’s tradition of exploring what constitutes a poem, how a reading experience is designed, and what it means to live in this world. In all their iterations—the *Tab Journal* three-dimensional exhibit issue, the photograph versions of those pieces for the website, the poets’ typed versions, the versions



read aloud, the buried versions in the source texts—these poems are necessary and valid. So, why is Volume 14 the end—sort of?

As part of Tabula Poetica: The Poetry Center at Chapman University, *Tab Journal* was founded by Dr. Anna Leahy (Creative Writing) and Prof. Claudine Jaenichen (Design) as a collaboration using design thinking and the guiding principle of “space before text.” Launched in 2013, each volume year is curated and designed as an innovative print issue followed by distinct online issues that explore the design opportunities and constraints of different modes of literary cultural production. Over the years, *Tab Journal* has drawn from reference points across disciplines; the annual design statements document our decision-making. We’ve aimed to create an increasingly inclusive and accessible reading experience both in print and on screen.

From its inception, this project has drawn inspiration from artist and architect Maya Lin, who wrote, “Some artists want to confront. Some want to invoke thought. They’re all necessary and they’re all valid.”

With work that represents a variety of aesthetics and stages of career, some *Tab Journal* poems confront, and some invoke thought, some feeling. We remain grateful for every contributor who sent their work our way and who entrusted us with experimentation and vision that pushed back on the traditional concept of the page.

Over the last fourteen years, we embraced constraints and consciously evolved our policies and practices. Since the project’s inception, *Tab Journal* has depended on the university support established for Tabula Poetica and, along the way, benefitted from small internal and external grants—but never a budget increase—to experiment with new approaches to literary cultural production. Ultimately, the lack of a budget increase, obstacles to project fundraising, uncertainty of appointment renewal, and the rest of our workloads led us to make the difficult decision to put *Tab Journal* on what’s likely a permanent hiatus. This last issue—this in-person exhibition—reinvented what a literary journal issue could be with the tightest budget and

Photo of Anna Leahy (left) and Claudine Jaenichen (right)



Photographed by Claudine Jaenichen



the greatest time commitment we’ve ever had.

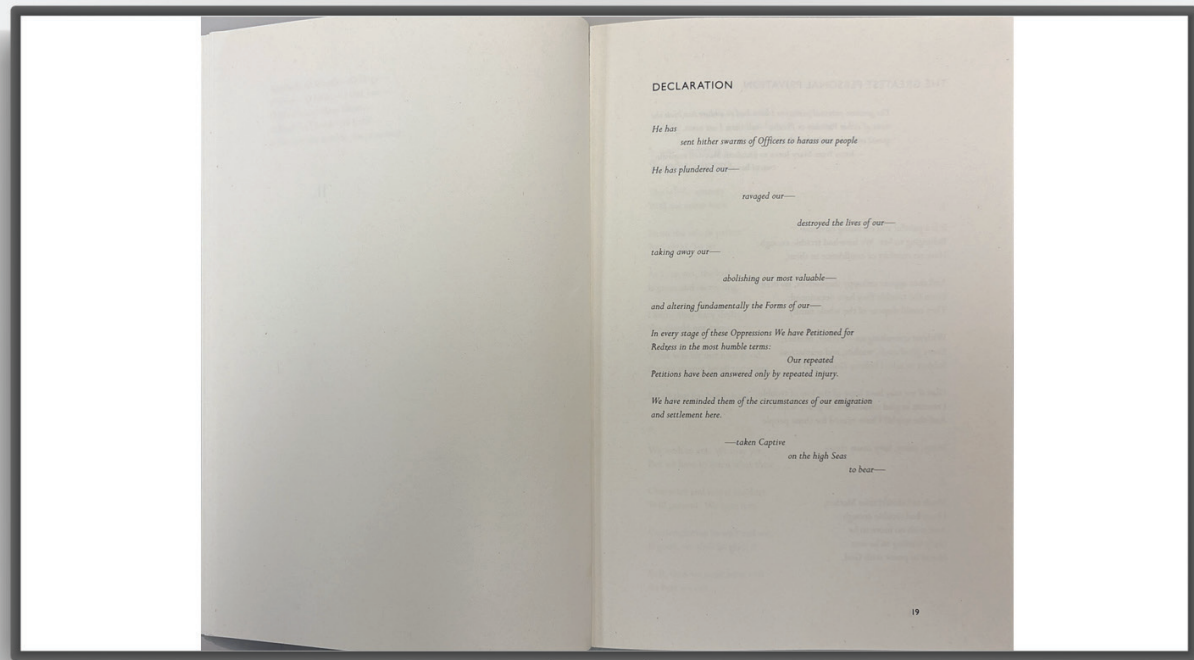
Tab Journal will not disappear. For the foreseeable future, the archives will remain available on the website. Copies of print issues will be distributed at no cost at the 2027 Association of Writers & Writing Programs in Chicago. Copies are also available for class use; email the Editor with your postal address, class title, and number of students. And importantly, the budget for Tabula Poetica can now be focused entirely on events.

Tab Journal has shaped our career trajectories, and we will continue to build on what we’ve learned together. Anna’s “Page as Space, Poet as Designer” recently appeared in AWP’s *The Writer’s Chronicle*, and Claudine’s book *In Case*

of Emergency: The Design of Safety Culture and Evacuation Equity in America will be published by MIT Press next year. This coming fall, funded by Chapman University’s Co-Teaching Award, we will bring our “space before text” approach into the classroom; “Texts & Designs in Literary Culture” will gather undergraduate and graduate students in creative writing and design to build on the *Tab Journal* legacy.

We’re proud of what we’ve accomplished together and with poets across the world. We look forward to what’s next.

WITH GRATITUDE AND LOOKING FORWARD,
Anna & Claudine (April 2026)



Tracy K. Smith, "Declaration" from *Such Color: New and Selected Poems*. Originally from *The New Yorker* (November 6, 2017). Copyright © 2017, 2018 by Tracy K. Smith. Reprinted with the permission of The Permissions Company, LLC on behalf of Graywolf Press.

the poet

"Declaration" by Tracy K. Smith

Tracy K. Smith (she/her) served as the 22nd Poet Laureate of the United States from 2017-19 and is the author of five poetry collections, including *Such Color: New and Selected Poems*, which won the 2022 New England Book Award; *Wade in the Water*, which was awarded the 2018 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and in which "Declaration" appears; and *Life on Mars*, which won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize. See more at tracyksmithpoet.com.

the installation

To comply with the permission to reprint Smith's poem, the exhibit kept the formatting consistent with the published work in *Wade in the Water*. We took a high-quality photo of the book page itself and displayed it on a large 65.9" x 37.9" monitor. Smith's poem sits at the beginning of the exhibit on the left wall as one enters the gallery.

Declaration

by Tracy K. Smith (she/her)

source text: *Declaration of Independence*

He has
sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people

He has plundered our—

ravaged our—

destroyed the lives of our—

taking away our—

abolishing our most valuable—

and altering fundamentally the Forms of our—

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for
Redress in the most humble terms:

Our repeated

Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury.

We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration
and settlement here.

—taken Captive

on the high Seas

to bear—



Scan the QR Code to listen to the poet's reading of this poem.



Photographed by Claudine Jaenichen

the poet

“The Last Three Words” by Shonda Buchanan

Dr. Shonda Buchanan (she/her) is the author of *Black Indian*, chosen by PBS NewsHour as a “Top 20 books to read” to learn about institutional racism. She is the author of the poetry collection *The Lost Songs of Nina Simone* and the essay collection *Children of the Mixed Blood Trail*. See more at shondabuchanan.com.

the installation

Buchanan savors the last three words of every line from the *Declaration of Independence*, which lends to the space that comes before the text. We explored the inundation of current events captured on printed newspaper reflecting vicious day-to-day news cycles and the speed in which we consume and succumb to death scrolling. Crumpled newspaper from the Iran War were used with the poem printed on a parchment textured image.

The Last Three Words

by *Shonda Buchanan* (she/her)

source text: *Declaration of Independence*

our sacred Honor
in Peace Friends.
a free people.
sexes and conditions.
by their Hands.
a civilized nation.
of our people.
War against us.
all cases whatsoever.
of our Governments:
into these Colonies:
for pretended offences:
Trial by Jury:
without our Consent:
of the world:
of these States:
troops among us:
of pretended Legislation:
the Civil power.
of our legislatures.
out their substance.
of their salaries.
establishing Judiciary powers.
Appropriations of Lands.
and convulsions within.
of the people.
with his measures.
to tyrants only.
attend to them.
the public good.

to the separation.
a candid world.



Scan the QR Code to listen to the poem read by Amber Lee, *Tab Journal* staff.



Photographed by Keenan Miller (left two images) and Claudine Jaenichen (right)

the poet

“Reversing the common order of nature” by Roger Camp

Roger Camp (he/him) is a former Marine NCO whose poetry has appeared in journals such as *The Southern Poetry Review*, *Nimrod*, *Pank*, *North American Review*, *Grey’s Sporting Journal*, and *Scientific American*.

the installation

Using paper lanterns as a relational system in this installation shifted how light, language, and attention are organized. The lanterns hung at uneven heights to micked the format of the original poem, disrupting the expectation of reading on “a page.” Words printed across their surfaces required viewers to move through the space to piece words and meaning together.

Reversing the common order of nature

by Roger Camp (he/him)

source text: *Common Sense*

Islands

capable

are

something

absurd

a continent governed an island

nature made

its primary planet

America

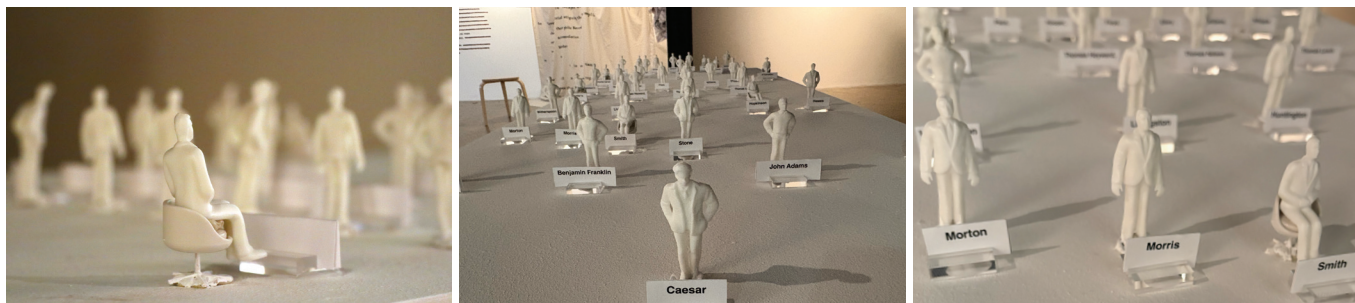
reverses the common

order

of nature



Scan the QR Code to listen to the poet’s reading of this poem.



Photographed by Keenan Miller (top and bottom left) and Claudine Jaenichen (middle and right)

We the Men, Hold

by Hilary King (she/her)

source text: *Declaration of Independence*

Lyman Samuel Elbridge Benjamin Robert John Matthew
 Josiah Abraham
 Button
 Charles Carroll of Carrollton
 William's: Paca, Hooper, Floyd, Ellery, Williams, Whipple
 Junior's: Thomas Heyward, Thomas Nelson, Thomas Lynch
 Witherspoon Livingston Huntington Hopkinson Hewes
 Morton
 Morris
 Smith
 Stone
 John Hancock Benjamin Franklin John Adams Samuel Adams
 Caesar

The poet

“We These Men” by Hilary King

Hilary King’s (she/her) poems appear in *Ploughshares*, *One Art*, *Salamander*, *Fourth River*, and others. She is an editor for *DMQ Review* and the author of *Stitched on Me* from Riot in Your Throat Press. See more at hilarykingwriting.com.

about the installation

Using rows of identical miniature male figures—poised in one of three stiff, authoritative stances and labeled with a name from the source text—the image becomes a visual metaphor. The uniformity and lack of individuality among the figures reflect how traditional ideals of masculinity can feel imposed, repetitive, and disconnected from lived experience.



Scan the QR Code to listen to the poet’s reading of this poem.



Photographed by Keenan Miller (left) and Violet Gude (right)

the poet

“Declaration” by Ellen Kombiyil

Ellen Kombiyil (she/her) is the author of *Love as Invasive Species* from Cornerstone. Her art and poetry appear at Emerge Gallery and in *Action Spectacle*, *DIAGRAM*, *NELLE*, and others. She has won two BRIO Awards (Bronx Recognizes Its Own) and teaches writing at Hunter College. See more at ellenkombiyil.com.

the installation

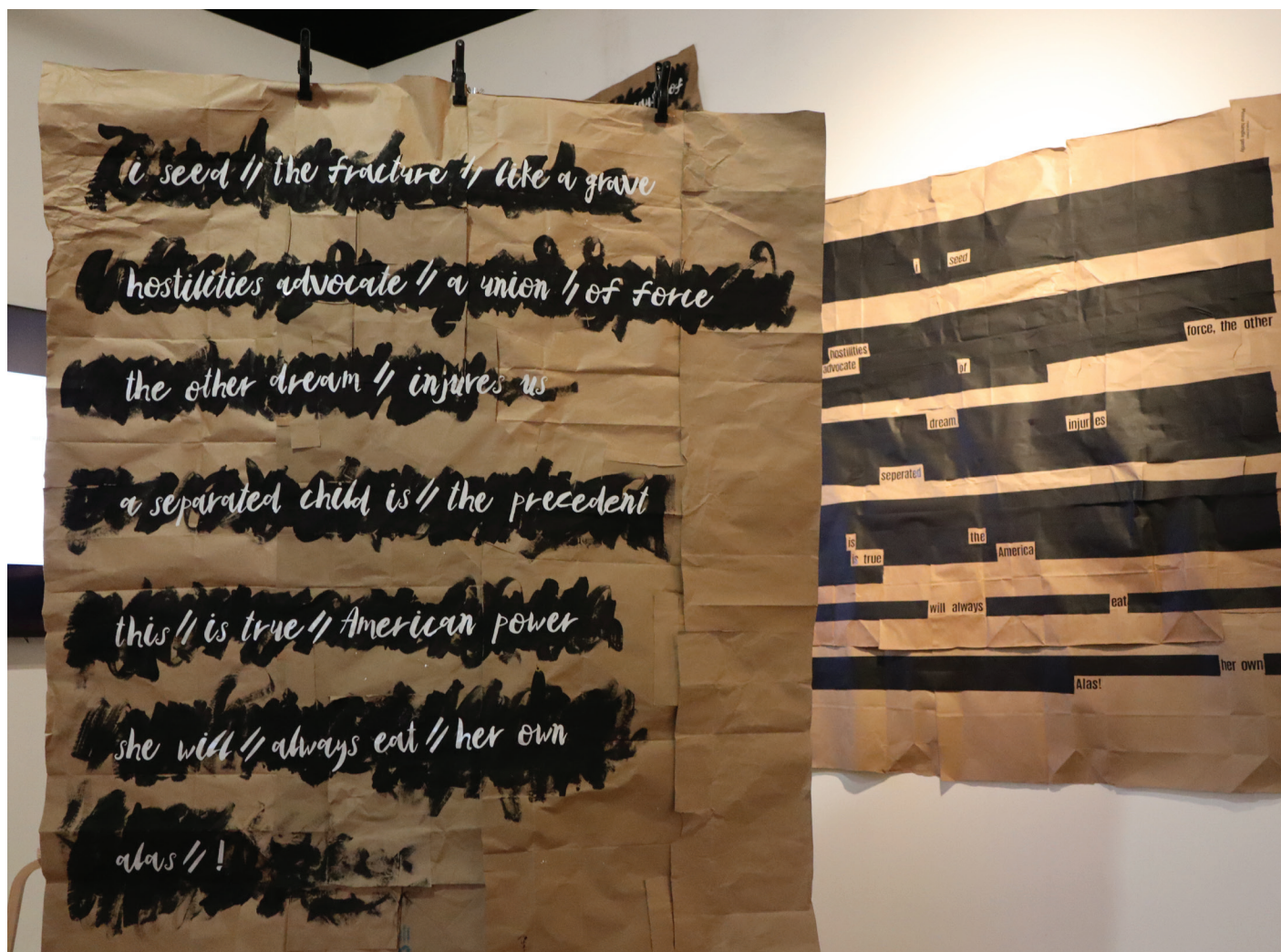
We collected used tote bags—swag from various places and events—and reassembled them into a quilt-like surface. Handmade buttons were placed on the totes in the poem’s cadence. As viewers followed the row of totes and buttons from the wall to the floor, meaning was created through accumulation and proximity rather than a single sentence or statement. The materiality of the installation translated the poem into something collective.

Declaration: a lament after M. NourbeSe Philip

by Ellen Kombiyil (she/her)

source text: *Declaration of Independence*

a la me n t
 wh o wh
 We o we
 we whe e
 we ho w
 w e | w e o
 o o O o ow
 o w ow e
 o w o w n
 o w n un
 o w e un
 un un o
 w e



Photographed by Violet Gude

the poet

“The Sun never sided on a cause of greater worth.” by Alison Lubar

Alison Lubar (they/themme) is a biracial Nikkei author of two full-length poetry books, *The Other Tree*, winner of Harbor Editions Laureate Prize, and *METAMOURPHOSIS* from fifth wheel press, as well as four chapbooks. She is a board member for Philadelphia’s Blue Stoop. See more at alisonlubar.com.

the installation

The poem was applied using paint and stick-on letters to create the finished poem shown in the foreground. This two-piece, layered, installation was made with tiled brown paper shopping bags connected with duct tape and masking tape to create a tapestry of ephemeral material used in consumer culture. Gaffer tape and sans serif letters were used to create the original redaction in the background.

“The Sun never shined on a cause of greater worth.”

by *Alison Lubar* (they/themme)

source text: *Common Sense*

i seed // the fracture // like a grave

hostilities advocate // a union // of force

the other dream // injures us

a separated child is // the precedent

this // is true // American power

she will // always eat // her own

alas // !



Scan the QR Code to listen to the poet’s reading of this poem.



Photographed by Claudine Jaenichen

self-evident

by Julia Ross (she/her)

source text: *Declaration of Independence*

trans bodies are self-evident
 are created for Safety and Happiness
 are incapable of Annihilation
 the Government tried fatiguing them into compliance
 changed their public Records
 refused accommodation
 endeavored Murder
 we declare no not in our Name
 we disavow all who harrass our people
 we refuse to become the executioners of friends and Brethren
 we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor

the poet

“Self-Evident” by Julia Ross

Julia Ross (she/her) is a public special education professional and the author of the chapbook *Sacred Beetle Contemplates the Funding Freeze* from Ghost City Press. Her poetry appears in *2River View*, *About Place Journal*, *Rise Up Review*, *The Marbled Sigh*, and elsewhere.

the installation

The poem appears on a simple painter’s canvas used to protect things of value from paint and construction debris. The text appears in stencil lettering using black acrylic paint. The draping of the canvas cast light and shadow with an organic movement that a static page does not have. The oversized cloth could be imagined as a moment ready to reveal or decades of cover where the valued things underneath are hidden from view.



Scan the QR Code to listen to the poet’s reading of this poem.



Photographed by Claudine Jaenichen (left and top right) and Keenan Miller (bottom right)

a clear idea

by Patty Seyburn (she/her)

source text: *Common Sense*

the nicest construction that words are capable of,
will be words of sound only

Words need

not be more explicit;

the poet

“a clear idea” by Patty Seyburn

Patty Seyburn’s (she/her) sixth book of poems is *Jukebox* from What Books Press. She is a professor at California State University, Long Beach, and was recently a Fulbright Scholar in Iasi, Romania.

the installation

Five layers of 24” x 32” plexiglass plates each carry a single line of Seyburn’s poem, lettered by hand using black gel pen and stencil. Cinder blocks form the foundation while bricks serve as spacers between the plates, creating a layered structure in which the shadows of each line of text fall onto the plate below—producing an echo effect that cascades all the way to the ground. This architectural sculpture gives the poem a dimension that a static page cannot.



Scan the QR Code to listen to the poet’s reading of this poem.



Scan the QR Code to view the video by Lashai Dowl.
Sound edited by Claudine Jaenichen

the poet

“Thirteen” and “Ours” by Kenton K. Yee

Kenton K. Yee’s (he/him) poems appear in *Kenyon Review*, *Threepenny Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *RHINO*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Electric Literature*, *Columbia Journal*, *Rattle*, and others. He holds graduate degrees in economics, law, and business from Stanford and has taught at Columbia University.

the installation

A looping video cycles between Yee’s two poems. Words appear in a consistent rhythm across white cards against a black background, each phrase gradually appearing. Interspersed are images of two historic American documents: Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* and the *Declaration of Independence*. The ambient soundscape transitions from wind to the noise of a crowd. The poems and documents loop continuously.

Thirteen

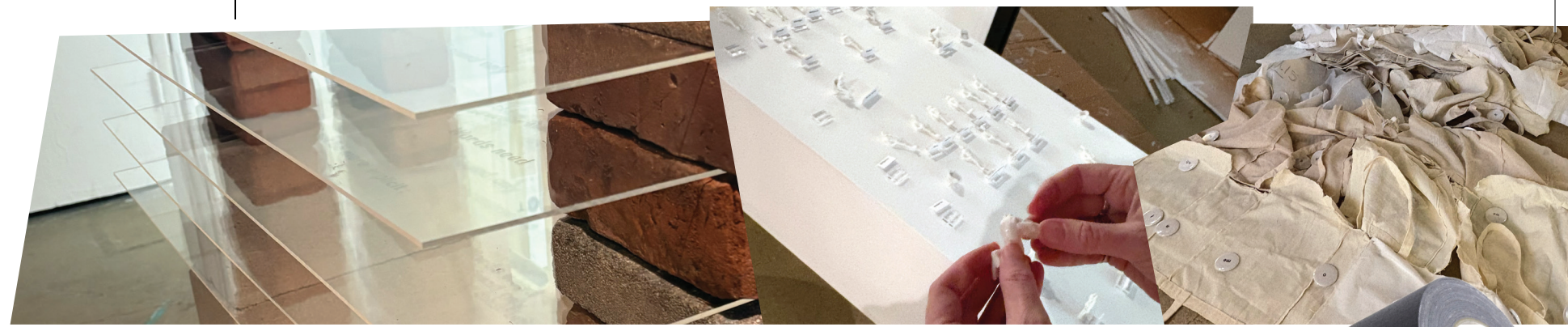
by *Kenton K. Yee* (he/him)

source text: *Declaration of Independence*

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|------------|
| to cause | to throw off | to alter |
| | to prove | to disavow |
| to fall | to bring | to provide |
| | to right | to secure |
| to them | to our | to each |
| | to be | to them |
| to render | to their | to time |
| | to our | to each |
| to bring | to be | to all |
| | to be | to their |
| to time | to the | to do |
| | to secure | to time |
| to be | to do | into |



Scan the QR Code to listen to the poet’s reading of this poem.



Ours

by *Kenton K. Yee* (he/him)

source text: *Common Sense*

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------|------------------|
| our circumstances | our present | our private |
| | our ears | our eyes |
| our wills | our trade | our vices |
| | our delaying | our backwardness |
| our eyes | our wants | our country |

our gratitude

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Scan the QR Code to listen to the poet's reading of this poem.