

ENVIRONMENTAL ANXIETY,  
SELF-ACTUALIZATION,  
ACTIVISM

# EACH STEP IN.

A poetry book by Kayla Carrington

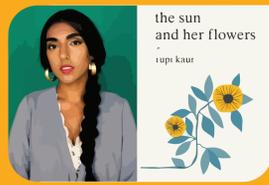


## PROJECT STATEMENT

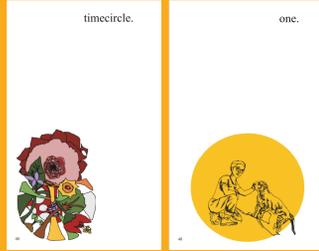
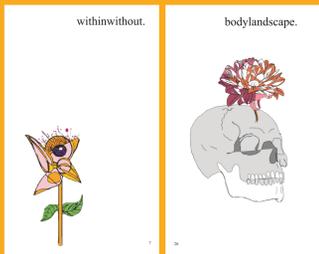
The term "activist" is often associated with aggression, extreme radicalism, and forcefulness rendering it ineffective and polarizing. Given the unstable state of the earth's ecosystems today, environmental activism needs to be as effective as possible in creating change. My senior project investigated where art and ecopsychology fit in to activism and how poetry can inspire action. To explore this, I immersed myself in the world of activist poetry. I read through dozens of published modern and historical artistic initiatives in addition to research on poetics, writing, and storytelling. I self-selected three books for their environmental and emotional relevance. Together, Rupi Kaur, Innosanto Nagara, and Christopher Poindexter demonstrated a power in language that articulates personal and emotional human-nature experiences.

## METHODS

I drew inspiration from three main poets: Rupi Kaur, Innosanto Nagara, and Christopher Poindexter. I looked for ways that they employed literary form and structure, illustration, design, storytelling, and chapter sectioning to inform my own book.



## FINDINGS



In **Rupi's** book, the sun and her flowers, she breaks each chapter up to tell a story of Wilting, Falling, Rooting, Rising, and Blooming. I reflected this simplicity and storytelling in my chapter titling (see left). To me, they all mean the same thing, but the phrasing of each chapter allowed me to tell my story of this ongoing personal transition from ego, to universal. From my own environmental anxiety, to a recognition of (and comfort with) my role in this a collective whole.

**Innosanto** wrote a (technically) children's book called "A is for Activist" where he goes through the alphabet rhyming his way through social, political, and environmental matters. Nearly all of the poems in my book rhyme, so it was important that I analyzed an example of where that is done alongside environmental action. The words that rhyme speak to one another.

I dissected **Christopher's** work to learn about the fusion of storytelling and poetry, particularly how a stand alone poem can tell a full story. Storytelling in poetry surreptitiously invites the reader to explore their own feelings— those past, present, and future— on overwhelming issues like environmental and social injustice.

Learn more and get a copy at [www.kaylacarrington.com](http://www.kaylacarrington.com)

Show me the angst of my generation.

"It's not my place," she went on.  
Her voice caught in the wind  
carried so quickly away from her lips  
away from the women that stood before her  
so that soon  
it was as if she said nothing,  
as if she touched no one,  
as if she were no where  
near  
home.

~ Disquiet

abolitionist; admirer; advocate; aggressor; agitator; ally; anarchist; anti-capitalist; artist; asker; aspirant; backer; believer; busy-bee; candidate; caretaker; catalyst; chain-breaker; change-maker; collaborator; community-builder; creative; critic; decolonizer; demonstrator; devotee; disruptor; dissident; doer; dogmatist; educator; entertainer; enthusiast; expresser; extremist; facilitator; fanatic; fighter; friend; front-liner; game-changer; go-getter; healer; helper; idealist; innovator; insurgent; integrator; intercessor; intervenor; leader; liquidator; lobbyist; lover; mediator; militant; mother; motivator; mover; networker; objector; organizer; pain-in-the-ass, negative-Nancy; party-planner; party-pooper; peacemaker; persuader; petitioner; progressivist; promoter; propagandist; protester, net-rooter; provocateur, campaigner; public-speaker; punk; rabble-rouser; radical; realist; reformist; revolutionary; road-blocker; romanticist; rule-breaker; shaker; snowflake; socialist; solicitor; storyteller; student; trail-blazer; tree-hugger; troublemaker; truth-tosser; upholder; visionary; wonderer; zealot

~ 100 words for 'activist'

*Karla Carrington*  
Put it in the box that's mine, check it off.  
Let me get lost inside of  
wire framed thoughts.  
I wake up on rocks  
under a blue duvet with grey dots.  
I knew I couldn't stay long, yet  
I couldn't find a thing wrong with  
the blue on the blanket or the hue of the 'clouds,' so  
I saw no reason to leave now.  
Breathe in,  
breathe— "Ow!"  
I couldn't see beneath me, just the dreams far out  
I couldn't see the screams because they only made a sound  
I couldn't see the bleeding till the blanket turned brown.  
~ Undetected Discomfort

*Each Step In.*  
I lay my heart out in the cold  
hoping it will dry.  
"It's my only option," I say  
"I have to try."  
Three days go by and I'm inside  
heartless.  
I've set aside  
darkness  
to be a resting carcass  
ingesting catharsis.



Sweetheart,  
I'm weak in parts  
I speak in scars  
my technique's been barred  
my work week's gone bleak  
my checks taste antique  
I critique my physique  
till I remember  
the outside,  
and how dry now  
my heart is.  
I try it on,  
it's cold.  
I try again,  
~ Bold

Is that tree dead or sleeping?  
Are the bees here also weeping?  
Do those cows ever stop their eating?

What's the loudest season  
what's the proudest treason  
what reason explains blue birds & ferns  
as tall as I.

I—

How many words we have for 'I':  
"Me, mine, myself," I  
identify  
with

you.

~ Tasmania

I douse myself in lavender  
hoping I too  
can show that I am thriving.  
A fragrance that attracts.  
A desire amongst the birds and bees,  
deciduous like my sporadic sadness  
intercepted with springtime perfection.  
Every now and then,  
I bloom.  
I am the moon, too  
I have phases  
applicable only to the way I am perceived,  
not to the way that I am.  
I am myself, doused in lavender.



Every morning I pick a flower  
and carry it in my pocket  
so through the day  
I visualize  
how fast it dies  
reminded inside  
that time

that time

time flies.

You.

As a concept:  
a committed project, prospect of potential  
exponentially influential,  
venture-full whilst very still, stone-like will  
to only feel  
like growing real,  
glowing teal,  
pulsing with an ego ideal.

Suddenly.  
The song of the sun  
was filling them up  
as quickly  
as it had departed.  
They started to dance,  
their hands amongst the plants,

nothing.

was static.

I think back to the time  
when once you were mine.  
I picked peas from your vine  
and ate them, slowly  
rewind,  
slowly,  
mental.

I wish I could see you breathe;  
see you think; see you grieve. See,  
sometimes I can just make out the loudest sounds:  
from the leaves whispering in an autumn breeze  
to the trees rooting beneath my feet,  
aloud they speak.

"Please make noise. Please spread joy.  
Please employ my virtue."

Somewhere between the earth and you, blue-sky-hue,  
I stay.  
I may  
sway  
differently but, better believe  
my lips can bleed  
the same sweet sap.  
Overlap your canopy with my baseball cap.  
I won't unstrap until I know you're safe.  
I won't look back because I won't see my fate.  
I won't wait for greatness,  
I won't take the same shit,

I won't be discouraged by the lateness of effort  
when I can shepherd  
my attention  
to the blessed.

