

Editor's Note

Cholla Needles Issue 102 is a tribute to soft power. In the words of Joseph Nye, "Soft power is when you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what you want... Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive." USAID is soft power in building good will by globally providing food, clean water, medicine, and disease prevention. But the abrupt reduction and elimination of our help was fierce and tragic. I have friends who have shared heartbreaking stories on how the immediate loss has impacted people they know.

As the artist, Ginger Galloway and I talked about this issue she showed me sketches of stamps. This sparked the idea of having twelve sketches of vintage stamps crafted to honor twelve out of the many countries that USAID traditionally supported. Since the stamps are printed and have been recreated in their native language, for clarity, here are the twelve countries: Afghanistan, Bolivia, Brazil, Congo, Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan, Vietnam, Yemen, and Zambia. The detailed stamp sketches, by Marcus Muscato, are in black and white to symbolize the withdrawal or reduction of USAID, despite the fact that the people in these countries are still very much in need of assistance.

The diverse cultural roots and histories of the writers in this issue, Chicana, Black American, Caribbean, Hungarian, Israeli, Scottish are bonded in the human condition. They are not pushing up against stereotypes or railing against power constructs. They are a soft power rooted in love, empathy, and hope.

Another organization that flexes soft power is Women Who Submit (WWS). The word submit is key here because it refers to women encouraging women to submit writing for publication. The co-curator of this issue, Angela Franklin, is a member. As I talked about this project, she decided to help and quickly crafted and sent an email to WWS members and friends. It was a natural occurrence that this issue carries solely the soft power of women's voices.

While there have been edicts to narrow diversity and limit inclusion, I am grateful for Rich Soos and independent publishers who nurture creatives and provide a platform. I am certain you will enjoy and be inspired by the women in this issue. I am honored to have their poetry, artwork, and prose in *Cholla Needles 102 – The Soft Power Edition*.

If you love what you're reading here and wish to share your creative work, there is an open submission call, and you are welcome to send your best work to editor@chollanneedles.com.

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- Romaine Washington