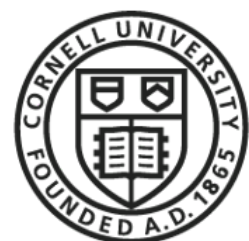


# HIGHROAD FELLOWSHIP REPORTS

## TO REJECT THE REQUIEM

July 2017

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**Arts & Sciences '19**  
**from Williamsville, NY**  
**2017 High Road Fellow**  
**With Young Audiences of WNY**



**ILR Buffalo Co-Lab**

The ILR Buffalo Co-Lab advances an equitable economy and democratic community, collaboratively integrating scholarly and practical understanding to strengthen civic action.

Since 1946, Cornell ILR has played a vital role in Western New York, working in partnership with businesses, unions, government, education and community organizations to build an economy that works for all.

High Road Fellowships were launched in 2009, in collaboration with community-based think-tank Partnership for the Public Good. They connect Cornell undergraduates with practitioners and creative community leaders who are driving change in the local economy.

Fellows are in Buffalo, NY for eight weeks in the summer, working on projects through their host organization.



## **To Reject the Requiem**

By Rachel Whalen

For the High Roads Class of 2017

At the edge of ourselves we began looking  
for a quiet rescue.

You see, this was long after we began to feel  
we had woken up on the wrong side of the sunrise  
that the daytime air was too thick  
with rhetoric copied and pasted from  
a past we wanted no part of.

We had many of us long since  
pushed past those feelings numberless  
of hopelessness, under this  
edge of ourselves we were spilling into nowhere.

But we did not fall into the requiem.

We knew the music we wanted to make.

We had heard it somewhere from that music box wound by the best hands of history.

And then

our quiet rescue

in a place perhaps unexpected.

A place where there dwell shark girls

where there dwell segresauruses

where there dwell sprawling octopi that can swallow cities whole. We knew the  
music we wanted to make, and Buffalo, you

with all your artists and your anchors

you tasted like an answer.

Buffalo, you

with your electric lights strung across centuries

you

taught us what it is to be a many-faceted thing

a kaleidoscope ever-shifting in our hands.

Before your Queen light we saw your vibrant colors and we tried to become them.

We stroked your streets, combed your silos –

from innovation to engagement

trust, art, impact, community – we

spelled these words out loud in your air.

We rejected the requiem.

We knew the music we wanted to make and

we had to learn that sometimes when you approach the piano

there are broken keys.  
And while we did not accept it  
sometimes we could only sound a certain policy brief or phone call  
and hope for the best  
and sometimes it was all out of tune.

But we knew the music we wanted to make  
and with guiding hands strung across the city we  
opened the piano.

We saw its underbelly, its hammers and its nuts and bolts  
its partnerships and its murals, its  
newest citizens and its brilliant children  
and its high road to  
somewhere.

We opened the piano and saw in every vibrating string a map of you, Buffalo, and there  
we found our melody.

So now, each of us  
our own quiet rescue (perhaps not so quiet)  
sung across the Queen city, strung across  
the universe – So now, each of us

our own piano string  
plucked across the night.

And as we say farewell for now to you, dear Buffalo, we promise  
we will not forget your light.