THE SILENT FIGHT
CARMEN DELA CRUZ

I feel like we are all underwater, waiting for permission to come up, and breathe again, some of us didn’t stay down for long, they’ve been splashing, and doing tricks in the water, like not a damn thing has changed, but I can’t breathe right, being Black, in a world of maskless, careless people, every day I step out of the water, and into the world, feels like an act of courage, because I fight to protect my body, to protect my vessel for human life, black and brown baby, I don’t march, because my fight is mine, and ours at home,
it’s ours alone,
his and mine,
we must cocoon ourselves inside,
for our shot,
my shots,
once,
thenn twice,
sometimes three shots a day,

I will hide the bruising again,
first the stomach,
then the thigh,
when it’s too raw,
we’ll find another subcutaneous prick,

no one knows or sees this,
I wear the mask daily,
I stand with my people,
but you cannot find me in the crowd,
I do not march,

But I fight,
I fight like hell,
To bring a child,
Black,
Filipino,
and all the shades in between us,
into this underwater world?
Carmen dela Cruz is a Black Southern writer who lives in Spokane, Washington with her husband and son. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from Chatham University and is currently enrolled in Gonzaga University’s Doctorate in Leadership Studies program. Her essay Selma: An Exploration of the Womanist Lens and the Servant-Leader was first included in the 2020 edition of the *International Journal of Servant-Leadership* and was more recently included in the *Servant-Leadership, Feminism, and Gender Well-Being* book published in September of 2022 by SUNY Press.