

— *first degree*

*We can't catch a breath.*

*Police. Power courses through your veins and empties into your mind.*

*In our living room, there's a mother training her son in hopes of one day saving his life.*

*Holstered up and bolstering your power around our streets. Our homes. Our lives.*

*You're safe behind that bulletproof vest. Our hands are up. Back against the wall but*

*we stand tall against the institution; against you. You break training.*

*Your solution is clear; there it is sitting anxiously in the holster of your belt.*

*"Innocently" as a child on the playground you*

*Point your finger*

*pull the trigger*

*You kill us.*

*Silenced. —LLR*

— *illuminations*

*Where do we go from here?*

*We've been exiled.*

*We must persevere.*

*Heresy and Activism shall breed*

*Acceptance*

*We must persevere.*

*Scrawl our stories on the marble  
and glass of their towers until  
our voices are heard*

*Reject the institution that  
houses hatred and ignorance  
till we see the other side.*

*I'll meet you on the other side. —LLR*

*Living Air, Silencer, and Illuminations* combine **Lumen Lugo-Roman's** poetic form with his historical overview of the Reimagining Conference and Voices of Sophia documents – words of encouraging empowerment and patriarchal condemnation. Last summer's police violence against Black Americans also informs Lumen's verse, *First Degree*.