

Toyon: Multilingual Literary Magazine

Volume 68
Issue 1 *Volume 68: Hope and Healing*

Article 30

2021

Darnella

Patricia K. McCutcheon Ms.
California State University, Los Angeles

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Recommended Citation

McCutcheon, Patricia K. Ms. (2021) "Darnella," *Toyon: Multilingual Literary Magazine*: Vol. 68: Iss. 1, Article 30.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/toyon/vol68/iss1/30>

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Darnella

Patricia K. McCutcheon

Only seventeen,
she changed the world
when she heard a man begging
for his life and hit RECORD.
In him she recognized
her dad, her brothers, friends,
saw immediately
it wasn't right. Struggling,
to breathe, he lay there.

Dauntless as a black Athena,
her weapon not a spear
but a cell phone,
she stood her ground
when the cops
threatened to mace her.
She filmed ten minutes, shaking
this country and beyond.

Enraged by a bogus
press release claiming
the man died "after a medical incident
during police involvement,"
Darnella posted her video,

put a match to kindling,
wildfire erupting
as the video went viral:
Chauvin grinding his knee
into George Floyd's neck
for nine minutes and
twenty-nine seconds.

A steely-eyed witness,
she exposed a cop
snuffing out his life,
a helpless, handcuffed, dying man,
at the end
calling out for his mother
went viral to millions,
including me,
including those twelve jurors
in Hennepin County Courthouse.

And now Darnella tries
to sleep at night, tries
to put aside
her feelings—
heartsick, enraged, powerless.
Instead she cries,
apologizing over and over to George
for not doing more,
for not intervening,
for not saving his life.

I too try to sleep at night,
having seen the gruesome video,
listened to the trial

for weeks, heard the verdict.
I too try to put aside
my feelings—
angry, sad, relieved.

Struggle with my white entitlement,
know I'd have never
had her Athena courage,
search for what more
I can do
than apologize.