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The Community

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Spera: The Community

THE COMMUNITY



**GABRIEL
SPERA**

Someone heard a car pull up the drive,
so they hurried her out the back door
and through the woods to an abandoned
trailer home. And there it continued.
No lights, but dusk was still hours away
even in late Autumn. The carcass
of a burned-out toaster oven filled
the counter, and a Christmas tree, still
tintseled, stood tilted in a corner.
The smell of cigarettes and decay
rose from the cushionless couch as trucks
whined down the featureless interstate.
Some boys left, others came, one at least
for each of her eleven small years
on earth. Someone flipped out a cellphone
and started filming, compelled, no doubt,
by the same vague sense of history,
of moment, that moves the young soldier
told of the enemy's surrender
to shove a piece of the bombed-out mosque
into his pants. The community
voiced shock and regret when the details
were made public, when those that could paid
the bailbonds and slunk home and the news
rippled out, and did not, not at first,
blame the girl, the child of Mexicans,
for dressing like a high-school senior,

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the car door swung wide, for sliding in
and ruining the lives of all their boys
who were just kids, after all, and who,
being black in a town known only
for its prison and refinery,
would always bear the burden of proof.
There were meetings—at the church, school gym,
clapsed hands, tears, scripture, a microphone.
Somebody asked where was the mother?
Someone nodded, someone nudged, and soon
everyone was asking the same thing—
not asking, just saying because
really, did they need to ask, was there
really anyone who didn't know?