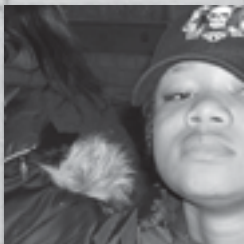
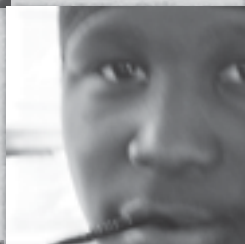


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# VOICE

O F T H E K N I G H T

*Premiere issue!*



No: *One* Date: *Spring 2005*

The premiere issue of *Voice of the Knight* is  
dedicated to the memory of

**Robert Jennings**

(October 17, 1989–March 26, 2005)

*Robert Jennings was a friendly young man whose humor touched everyone who had the benefit of knowing him. When writing poems, Robert showed insight, depth and uniqueness. He was not afraid to open himself and find freedom on the page. He was such a joy to have both in the classroom and on trips to museums and theaters. Ballou Sr. High and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop will miss his warm smile and vibrant personality.*

**W**elcome to the premiere edition of *Voice of the Knight*, the Ballou Senior High school literary magazine, written and edited by the students of Ballou. *Voice of the Knight* is published through a collaborative effort between the school and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop, an independent non-profit working to create a literary renaissance in Southeast Washington. In September 2004, after four years of providing award-winning programming at Charles Hart Middle School, the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop expanded to offer similar programs to students at Ballou. In the short time since the school has welcomed the program, Ballou students have grown accustomed to such perquisites as trips to the Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre, and the U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum. *Voice of the Knight* is the result of nearly a year of workshops with professional writers-in-residence, giving our young writers the opportunity to exercise their creative energies, speak their minds, and be heard by an audience throughout the city.

In 2005, for the first time in more than ten years, Ballou Senior High School has produced winners in the Parkmont Poetry Contest. Congratulations to Emma Stewart, Andre Tatum, and Mercedes Valentine for their winning entries.

We have many friends who have helped to make *Voice of the Knight* possible, and we would like to express our gratitude to them. Our sincerest thanks go out to the Herb Block Foundation, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Commonweal Foundation, the Community Foundation of the National Capital Region, the Fannie Mae Foundation, the Philip Graham Fund, the Hitachi Foundation, the Harman Cain Family Foundation, the Wendling Foundation, the Junior League of Washington, the Rotary Club of Washington, the friends and family of Anna Su, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, the John Edward Fowler Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Michael Joy and TSCJoy/Monterey, LLC, Sarah Booth and Bloomberg L.P., Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Karibu Books, Free Hand Press, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre, McGuire Associates, Joyce Page and Ms. Printing, Tollefson & Gustini Investment Management, our friends at Popeye's on Malcolm X Avenue, Ms. Shin's 6th grade class at Bush Hill Elementary School, Gregory Auger, George and Lenore Cohen, Fritz Edler, Tom and Carolyn Grey, Mark Hollinger and Kathy McNeil Hollinger, Betsy Karel, Gay and Charlie Lord, Paul Mandelbaum, Judene Slaughter, Raina Rose Tagle, friends of the late Meyer Saul Taubman, and Vera M. White.

Special thanks for the hard work and dedication of the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop Board of Directors: Lee E. Epps, Andy Fogle, Dr. Susan Gerson, Bernie Horn, Kathleen Huston, Joan Kennan, Bill Newlin, Nancy Schwalb, and Kirsten Tollefson.

We would also like to thank the following staff members who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Dr. Daniel Hudson, Dr. Portia Bookheart, Ms. Pamela Clark, Ms. Vanessa Harris, and Ms. Carol Robinson.

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*top: kids on the bus*

*bottom, l-r: Carl Wiggins, Jameia Saunders, Breanne Lancaster*



*top: Renee Bennaugh*

*bottom, l-r: Jo'Vada Hudnell, Infiniti Howard, Darshay Holmes*

## My Voice

here I am  
singing on white wood  
my pen glides as a new born butterfly  
as my honest feelings  
invade inside your thought of mind  
my words are as deep as a forever dream  
my words are like fire  
so hot it would make you think  
of old memories and a flashback because  
my lines are as deep as God's soul  
my page is power  
outstanding  
and bold  
my thoughts, my feelings, my words  
hear me sing

—*Shawnita Sharay Jackson*

## Old Times

winter stretches  
the coldness of your heart  
a rainy glass  
overfills your soul  
making your life an icy road  
the dust of bruises  
torments your mind  
flashback and old memories  
take your pride  
wounded hills of love  
a narrow silence of attention  
all a part of my curriculum

— *Shawnita Sharay Jackson*

## Self Destruction

your skin tells a story  
a narrow silence  
of sweet bitterness  
winter lips  
cracked, bruised, and hurt  
from that other you  
saying the age of your blood  
it is a Ms. Daisy stream  
it can't take the  
pain, hurt, and agony  
a graceful cancer  
is killing your soul  
the naive voice in your head  
says your story cannot be told  
the sweetest goodbye  
from yesterday's road  
always will hold the beauty  
within your soul.

—*Shawnita Sharay Jackson*

## Self Is Not Self

lying still  
thinking  
last night  
what to do with  
myself  
thinking  
self is not self  
why?  
judging my skin  
denying the color  
the mouth of my people

cussing of insanity  
wearing a mask  
to cover the color  
that my ancestors gave me  
hiding myself  
to be with once knowing  
I'm not me  
me is not self  
self is not Shawnita  
the person I was  
born to be

— *Shawnita Sharay Jackson*

## Going Deeper

Sitting here in the dark, I wonder  
Are there any people in this world with pride  
Some, and a lot, have poisoned pride  
They wonder, do I walk with a warm shadow  
Staring into the darkness  
I see hills burning with flames  
A sea of orange waves  
And a road that never ends.  
Never not alone  
I walk, I walk  
I walk down this empty street  
Not knowing if there are better things ahead  
I continue to walk  
As I walk along the darkness  
It seems to be stranger than fiction  
I see a red dog on a rooftop  
When I turn around and wake up  
I realize it was just a graceful dream

—*Charvon Love*

## The Player's Game

There's always someone tryin' to make a pass at you  
what they say, you want it to be true  
voices in my head are telling me to walk  
then the boy tells me to talk  
everyone know he's looking to score  
then when you let him, you'll be called a whore  
this world to me, is a cycle of secrets  
will that person let them go  
or will they keep it.  
This world is a question of time  
how long will it take for him not to be mine  
will you lose and let him win  
or will you be strong and stay a ten.

—*Charvon Love*

## Boy Smarts

He tells me that he loves me  
He tells me that he cares  
I believed him last week  
and for all of these years  
My friend tells me as she whispered  
softly in my ear  
He's cheating on you  
You should know by now  
I didn't want to believe it  
He's been all over town  
I'm trying to play it smart  
Let him think that I don't know  
Even though I know  
I still love him so  
I knew all along by the way he talks  
the way he stares and

the way he walks  
It took me a while to notice it all  
When he was out late at night  
I didn't receive not one call  
When I came to a conclusion  
I decided to give up  
Then I went to him and said  
It's time to break up

—*Charvon Love*

## **Evil Boys**

I laugh at little boys,  
I laugh so hard, showing my teeth,  
I throw my head back,  
Boys! What are they?  
They're, stupid, immature, and annoying.  
But yet lovable, sometimes  
I hate them, sometimes I love them.  
I am above them all  
I rise, I fall  
They can't hurt me  
I have too much confidence in myself  
to believe what someone else  
has to say about me, about you,  
about the world.  
I tried to help, but yet I failed.  
All because the evil little boy I loved  
has gone to jail.

—*Beonca Harrington*



*top: Stashala Overby  
bottom: Nicole Wilkins*



## I Might

I might be a hoodlum  
Runnin from the feds  
Blindly from the lights  
Saggy pants from behind  
People scared to walk past me.

I might be a b-ball player  
Giving good assists  
Making all my shots  
Grabbing rebounds like Shaq  
Rushing to the lane for a lay-up.

I might be a good person  
Helping people out  
Going to work everyday  
Say "Hi" to whoever I know  
People ask for change, I'll give  
Judge the good from the bad.

I might be anything  
Selling drugs  
Practicing on the courts  
Helping out the community  
I don't know  
I might just be me.

—*Robert Robinson*

## Police

Man, yesterday  
I was running from the feds  
Don't know why  
Man, I was scared  
Life flashed before my eyes  
Started to sweat  
Breathing hard, legs shaking  
Couldn't even run straight  
Didn't want to look back.  
Still running don't know why  
Not paying attention  
Rock came out of nowhere  
Slip up and fell  
Police stopped  
Heart stopped  
Mind stopped  
I got stopped  
And I still don't know why.

—*Robert Robinson*

## Good Day, Bad Day

On the basketball court in S.E.  
playing ball  
score 7 to 4  
having a good day  
no problem in sight  
kids playing football  
birds out, sun's out  
man, everybody was out  
the final minute came at 4 p.m.  
the score 15 to 14  
just as I went for the shot

black van with tinted windows comes creepin'  
windows roll down  
the van caught everybody's attention  
gun went off  
POP, POP, POP, POP, POP  
everyone scattered  
kids crying, girls screaming  
men running  
Silence.  
Dawg, this good day turned into a bad day

—*Robert Robinson*

## **Gamble**

The crowd watches  
as the knights  
go to prison  
for a sorry gamble.

I stand with pride  
and release the voices  
in my head telling me  
shoot the enemy.

This life of ours is free  
for the secret question  
am I a winner or a loser?

—*Honesty Bland*

## What we go through

At night  
I hear slamming doors  
in the lonely homes.

I hear the newborn baby  
cry for her parents  
while she is being tormented  
in her sleep.

The elders say regretful things  
in their conversation  
about the absence of the parents  
who have empty dreams  
for their children.

The kids humiliated on the school year  
I try to ignore the disgusting things  
people say in the hood.

Daybreak, music's playing on the basketball court  
while others strike a pose for the camera.

That is just some stuff that we go through  
day to day.

—*Honesty Bland*

## Hiding

Hiding behind this  
mask that I can't  
get passed is it a  
phase or is it gon'  
be here for more  
than days I don't  
like the wayz I  
get categorized  
you can look into  
my eyez and realize  
that I am just the  
same as you just  
cause I don't like  
what you like act  
like you like don't  
mean we ain't  
alike so I ain't  
hidin' hidin'  
no more behind  
these closed doors

—*La Juan Brown*

## Addiction

My heart holds an addiction  
for survival the life of us  
is like a game of blackjack  
as he rolls the dice for  
another day I hope and  
pray he will win cause  
losers take the bad  
end he puts on a bluff  
trying to show everyone



*top: Tyrone Totten*

*bottom, l-r: Mercedes Valentine, Oralia Woods*

he's tuff but the voices  
in my ear say look  
under the table security  
commands to show what's  
in his hand the rules  
are you don't cheat  
it is you and not I you  
will defeat so he  
tries again and asked  
for lady luck this time  
he will shoot and  
duck the acoustic sound  
in my ear is not  
what I really want to  
hear you lost.

—*LaJuan Brown*

## **Ancestors**

I am a child of living  
distress my dead ancestors  
are unable to unrest here  
We stand marching in a  
protest there is riot  
cause all my black people  
are tired we are yearning  
for this legacy I think  
that it will be best if we  
keep this tradition it's  
our faith in spirits  
within we have to  
believe that it's  
ourselves that we  
need to retrieve

—*LaJuan Brown*

## Tradition

Take this as a tradition please  
be quiet and listen to what  
I am tryin to say about that  
special day that I will never  
forget it is my family that I  
be wit' it's when we all  
get together and we just might  
be outside if there is good  
weather it feels great when we  
celebrate when the time comes  
I just can't wait to enjoy  
the time I hope this doesn't  
have to be over before 9  
cause I am feelin' fine and  
that good family that I click  
wi't is mine. That barbecue  
chicken sure does smell good  
I wuz in a daze while  
me and cuz Pete wuz  
playing spades and I was  
looking at my uncle's waves  
man they was dry and my  
ma just told me my dog  
gon' die but they fun I  
don't know why but I still  
wait for these days to  
go by so we can do  
it again and now it's  
becoming a trend.

—*LaJuan Brown*



## The Game of Life

He plays the game of his life  
As he tallies up the score  
He is not a loser for he is a winner.

As the board dances he releases  
The voices inside.

He synchronizes the random  
exhibits of life itself.

Freedom, freedom, he calls out  
cause he is not a prisoner of any kind.

The envy inside oneself eats up one's pride.

He pawns the voices inside  
his mind so there will be no cry.

He plucks a card from the deck,  
and shouts out old maid  
he spins the wheel, passes go,  
and collects \$200.

—*Charlene Green*

## Survive

I stand and survive  
to avoid Death  
Death is like prison  
locked up and  
I can't get out  
I use my street technique  
so Death will never have me  
six feet deep  
I'm an explorer so I know  
to move around Death  
living every day running  
trying to escape.  
I stand and survive  
to avoid Death

—*Clarence Lemons*

## It's All Too Much

I hear nothing  
but silence  
the moon is glowing  
so bright in the sky  
It's dark you see nothing  
you hear nothing  
this is too much  
I am about to explode  
the darkness, the ghosts I hear  
the narrow hallways  
I run to the door  
to get out  
the door is locked  
I am stuck  
I am trapped

nowhere to go  
I scream and shout  
let me out  
but no one answers  
I am alone, all alone  
in a room  
I scream louder  
but no one's there  
not a sound  
not a sound  
not a sound  
darkness

—*Karisha Johnson*

## Running

yesterday, I was running  
from a thing called love  
when it hit me, I thought  
I might be high off a drug  
I saw this in a movie, and  
it wasn't too real, so I asked  
myself how can I help the way  
I feel, I've been in love once  
I can't do it again, so I went  
down the street to talk to a friend  
but, that didn't seem to work,  
I want to leave but I'm afraid it might hurt  
so, I'm stuck here on stupid  
because of cupid, yesterday when  
I was running I came to a stop  
I told myself, a – dog,  
just try to be smart.

—*Siera Avent*



*top: Tyanna Dowdy  
bottom: Jamaal Grantham*

## Believe

Believe in the way you play  
The flow of the air  
The circulation, the wind

Flowing

Lock the doors  
Secure all floors  
Analyze the alarms

Beware my people  
Thieves  
Criminals  
Burglars

Stop!

Become me, trust me,

So remember

To give, to listen, to choose

Your dreams and

Believe!

—*Lawrence Perkins*

## The love you give me

The love you give me  
no one can take  
not even if they tried

it's also the reason  
I feel I'm alive

from the first sight of you  
I could feel the connection  
In your warm arms  
like a force-field for protection

Although sometimes my mind  
thinks can this be real  
you stoop down, the eagle searching for prey  
and my heart you steal

—*Daytwan Wright*

## Soul Sinking

As I look into this ancient mirror  
I wonder to myself  
How can I see my eyes  
Or even see what else  
Is broken.

As the mirror starts to break  
My mind starts to shake  
The mirror can't replace the way I think  
But still my soul began to sink.

—*Lawrence Perkins*

## To My Self I Ask

To my self I ask  
why must I wear a mask  
for all the hurtful things I've done  
that resurface from the past

Sometimes I think to my self  
is life what it seems  
while pinching on the side of my arm  
hoping it all was just a dream

now I look back on my life  
everything seems so fast  
my path is so clear now  
I remove my mask

—*Daytwan Wright*

## Hiding

She stays inside  
To hide the pride of what  
She really feels inside  
She hides away in a dark little space  
So she can pace and  
Think about all the mistakes  
She has made, so she keeps pace  
And then a smile shines across  
Her beautiful face

—*Tamika Thomas*

## Sorrow falls like

Sorrow falls like . . . a soul as if it were a burning rope  
... a frozen rock after it has melted  
... oil and vinegar mixing as if it were becoming a chemical  
... a bunch of leaves falling because of a new season

—*Jasmine Maddox*

## Never Not Alone

car engine stops in such a fright  
feel a chill there goes the ghost lights  
bullet proof wound  
staring at a flaming moon  
shadow hall going through your life  
with a scare  
angels coming down to take you  
up the graceful stairs

—*Joshua Ruffin*

## Dodging Poetry

I don't like poetry  
it's hard to understand  
when they tell me to write it  
I want to leave  
they say express my feelings as best I can  
but I say to myself they just don't understand  
when they ask someone to read poetry  
I pretend I am a phantom  
I try to dodge poetry as best I can  
but people just don't understand

—*Stanley Lemon*



## The Pain of Knowing You

I wish I didn't  
know you, you  
hurt me in so  
many ways I  
wish I  
never saw you

You beat me, you  
used me, you lied  
to me, you called  
me names

You are so harsh  
why do you have to  
be that way? Uncaring  
and just all out controlling  
forcing me to do things  
that I've never wanted  
to do

I wish what I am  
saying could be simple like  
a song you catch on to real  
quick when you  
hear it

You were dragging me through  
this pathless journey  
that has taken  
me nowhere

I wish I didn't know you.

—*Latrise Hughes*



*top: Renee Bennaugh  
bottom: Anthony Joshua*

## The Other Me

The other me, my better half,  
like two souls that intertwine

Never leaving each other  
our love combined

Like hard wood, it takes  
a saw to break us apart

Like the other me, the better half  
of my heart

—*Chantease Taylor*

## Courage

Courage is having strength  
to move forward.

Courage is outspoken and  
very intelligent.

Courage is having friends  
telling you to achieve.

Courage is being a person  
who believes in herself.

Courage is a part of life  
that can't be forgotten.

—*Debra Welcher*

## It Must Be Tough

The street must be tough  
your life must be tough  
going through all that must  
be tough  
being told what to do  
must be tough  
to go to school must  
be tough

To live on a narrow path  
it must be tough  
to feel so wounded inside  
it must be tough

To have plastic bitterness  
it must be tough  
to live a horrible life  
it must be tough

For having all of this said  
it must be tough

—*Latrise Hughes*

## The Way I Draw

I got the artistic blues,  
maybe someday I'll be on the news.  
Sometimes I can be quite cruel,  
and sometimes I break the rules.  
But that doesn't affect the way I draw,  
even when it seems like my brain's  
being sucked through a straw.

—*Carlis Jackson*

## My cards

My heart holds a  
deck of cards  
just waiting to  
be passed out.

To a bunch of  
loved ones that  
I know love  
me back.

So when I am  
down I can really  
pass out  
my deck of cards  
to my loved ones.

When I am passing  
out the cards  
it's like I am about  
to play the game of spades.

I am giving life  
I am giving my feelings  
I'm giving my sorrow.

I am dealing  
out my spirit,  
sometimes I  
want to hold  
the cards  
back.

—*Latrise Hughes*

## Who Am I?

I am a person who is hiding  
my wildness.  
I am scared to show who I am.  
Some people probably say  
I am crazy or weird.  
I don't think so,  
that's just me.  
When people look at me wrong,  
they make me want to hide  
in a dark room or wear a mask  
to hide my identity from others.  
But I like who I am.  
If you don't, it's just me,  
loud, goofy and crazy.

—*Oralia Woods*

## Do not brand me

Do not brand me because I'm black.  
I am more than a kid.  
I am a master of the sea.  
I am a tattoo that stays in your mind.  
I can downcast you to the ground  
and make you cry.  
So do not brand me because I'm black.  
For you see I am a man  
with a master plan.

—*Antonio Wheeler*

## Flying Free

I'm in an open plane  
where the horizon  
never ends  
where the wind blows  
out in the dust  
where a victim's soul  
is flying free  
free from suffering  
free from everything  
while a flame  
will help relax your fears

— *Ashley Williams*

## Pass Me (If You Want To)

You're in the hands of a man  
the man is standing out of bounds  
he inbounds the ball  
now you are in the hands of another man  
the man starts to dribble  
as you hit the court and  
bounce back up over and over again  
soon he shoots and most likely he scored.  
The players pass you around  
to each other each getting a chance  
to have the sweat roll off their fingertips  
as you are in the palm of their hands.  
Now you are getting soft inside.  
You are as flat as a plasma t.v.  
The players don't want to bounce you anymore.  
Before your eyes, you're out of air,  
and they will be too because they pass it on.

— *Karimah Bilal*



*top: Emma Stewart  
bottom, l-r: Martin Pineda, Stashala Overby*



## **A Dare from the Sun**

I dare you to not let me rise  
at the crack of dawn.

I dare you to eclipse me with  
a testy moon.

I dare you to cover me with  
the gray mist of foggy clouds.

I dare you to let the blue  
sky pour water in the evening  
and not let me help create  
the beautiful colors of the rainbow.

I dare you not to let me, the sun,  
smile.

—*Karimah Bilal*

## **I Am a Poet**

I am a poet  
I express the way I feel in lines  
of brutal meaning

I open the cage of the trapped  
but distant mind

I bring new elements to the table  
speaking what I feel

I enlighten the thought of confusion  
with thoughts of ease that  
flow like honey milk rivers

I use devices that are explosive  
in meaning but not mischief

I am a poet

—*Karimah Bilal*

## Bootleg Monopoly

Take this broken cycle and move up 4 spaces  
Different voices will show you which way to go  
This is the bootleg monopoly if you wanted to know  
I got this blue and gold knight that's prepared to fight  
Naw, man you cheatin  
Pause  
Show me the rules, what's your strategy  
My heart holds that love is the key  
The crowd watches as I release the pawn  
The pawns all over the place like me  
And is lyrical  
Go around a couple times  
As he buys properties, he collects rhymes  
Give me my houses  
I got the white house you landed on  
Give me my money  
I won you lose  
Now ain't nothing funny

—*Elmer Toogood*

## Her Skin Tells a Story

When you see her  
you can tell there's  
a story about her

The way she acts  
she loves her mother

She acts scared  
like scattered ghosts  
But when she's with friends  
she does the most

Her hands are soft  
like her soft heart

Her skin tells a story  
my poems are smart

Her back tells about her past  
as if she was a slave

Her lips tell me how many boys  
she has kissed

Her eyes make me reminisce

—*Elmer Toogood*

## Soul for Sale

My soul is for sale  
the reason is  
I'm suffering . . . at every moment  
a part of me dies away  
I have been tormented to  
face the truth  
I sleep remembering the day  
I said goodbye  
I sleep remembering the tears  
my sisters cried  
I sleep remembering the look on  
my brother's face  
I sleep to think about my father's  
silent cries

I awake to the conclusion that  
my soul is for sale  
not to the devil  
but to the burden of old life  
into new

The bleeding of my heart  
the hoping, praying, waiting, running, sweating  
being shocked at the conclusion  
that my soul is for sale

—*Breanne Lancaster*

## Mama's Face

She was young and just starting womanhood.  
Next thing you know,  
she was going through trials and tribulations.

And yet, I've forgotten her face.

Though she's always told me,

Don't do what I did and listen  
to what they say and  
follow your dreams.

Don't give away what is yours.

—*Breanne Lancaster*

## My rhyme

It's 2001 and I live in white house,  
but white is not white  
I call it black,  
but black back then was not good,  
good is only black when you come from the hood,  
but the hood is not hooked on to what you say,  
we sit down, we're family, we have to pray.  
Man, it's 2002, I'm in school  
it's 2:00 time for work not play  
you heard it from the best  
that's all I have to say.

—*Sherita Taylor*



*top: Matthew Griffin  
bottom, l-r: Ashley Williams, Chantease Taylor*

## Illusion Blues

I got the illusion blues  
I see things but I'm not seeing anything  
I hear things but wait . . . nope  
don't hear anything either  
I read but can't decipher anything  
I try but can't make any accomplishments  
I think I'm doing something right  
but it's always wrong  
I make a mistake and everyone complies  
I got the illusion blues  
When I trip I always fall  
I think I have friends but no one to call  
I reach out for help and no one is there  
No answer no response  
eyes full of tears and despair  
I think I got the illusion blues  
or maybe it's not  
maybe it's a theory  
or just a thought

—*Breanne Lancaster*

## Heritage

Thinking about how to find  
my heritage a home  
Everywhere I seem to go  
Everyone seems to want to  
be left alone

Even if I was to cry out loud  
I still wouldn't draw a crowd

Why is this so important to me,  
I guess because I want you and me  
to have some dignity  
Can we  
all just get along,  
because  
we're not going to live life long

My heritage is important  
Don't look at me as if I'm insane  
just know that right now  
I'm feeling so much pain

Keep thinking that this day won't come,  
but guess what my heritage will overcome  
This is my heritage and life  
Please don't fight  
and just get it right

—*Mercedes Valentine*

## **Out of the Dust**

I'm a shadow in the  
moonlight. I'm a night  
without a heart. The  
owl's call out help help,  
a horizon of men comes,  
but out of the dust  
a lady cries and  
cries, a gift for tomorrow  
is on the way.

—*Robert Jennings*



## She

She is dangerous like a nuclear bomb  
set to explode  
in a highly populated area

She is like a mad rabid killer  
set free on bail, set on revenge

She wants like a power hungry  
woman whose only incentive is money

Her attitude is like a trapped person  
in depression in a house alone  
grieving

She makes me scared  
but I am determined to help her

She needs it and I fear for her life  
I care for her so I need not  
keep up this charade

—*Andre Tatum*

## Shock to the Heart

Love is like a shock to the heart  
and an axe in your hands.  
Sometimes you will like someone  
but they do not know it.  
You will cry in and out.  
It's like an earthquake.  
It's like frozen ice falling falling  
and falling  
but you cannot ever run or get from it.

—*Robert Jennings*

## I Am Not a Poet

I am not born  
to be a poet.  
I'm born to  
play football  
They run the ball  
I follow their block  
Running back  
Catching the ball  
in my chest  
to the touchdown  
do a victory dance  
I throw it down  
on the ground  
and do anything  
to show my pride.

—*Carlis Jackson*

## How to Find My Heart a Home

My heart, my heart ran away from home  
don't know where she went  
wherever she went no trace of her is shown  
But I's still climbing on  
with no heart, I'm like creamed corn  
droopy, watery, and not put together

My heart, yes my heart is gone  
I've been treating it so wrong  
too much stress, and too much pain  
I've been drowning my heart with rain

My heart, yes my heart is gone  
I have nothing to live for

I want to find my heart a home  
but still no sign of her is shown

My heart, yes my heart is gone  
I've stored her a home  
right here is where she belongs  
if you see her please bring her home  
where my heart belongs

—*Shawnice Clark*

## **Black Boy**

Yesterday he struggled through ignorance  
he walked through fights  
he sped through the storm  
he leaped over the drugs

Yesterday he journeyed the night rain  
he awoke to screaming neighbors  
he ate to parents arguing  
he went on his way furiously

Yesterday he departed this life  
he brightened the white blizzard  
he caged the bullies  
he pressed through the wounds

The black boy knows that he  
rides above the hurt

—*Shawnice Clark*



*top:*

*bottom: Anthony Thomas*

## The Long Choice

On a long dirt road  
with three arrows you don't know what to choose  
you try to run from your mind set  
for what you want to do  
the anxiety builds up in your legs and  
you start to run  
your speed intensifies and you turn  
and look back on something you can't shake  
you stagger and sweat but  
it still seems like it's gaining on you  
sweat and blood are coming down your body  
when you notice you have to make a choice  
follow your dreams or let them die  
or let yourself die just by running

—April Bungie

## Become a Heart

How hard they try?  
How hard the deer tries to become the hunter  
How hard the hunter tries to become the bullet  
How hard the bullet tries to become the white cloud.  
And the white cloud  
So soft, so fluffy, floating in the sky but  
tries so hard to become love  
and how hard the love wants to become  
a heart.

—Ruby Hill

## Mrs. Barbara

Her skin is bright, as bright as gold,  
the rank of her intelligence, not even she knows.  
She sits in front of the store asking for dollars,  
and if you ignore her, she will start to holla:  
sir, sir, do you have a dollar, if not today  
then maybe tomorrow.

Days, weeks, and months have gone, and  
at the end of the day, she's all alone.  
As you walk past her you sing the same old song.

She has a pot to pee in, and a great big window  
to throw it out, but as I watch her I wonder  
what is this asking for dollars thing all about.

Today is a new day, and so is tomorrow  
and it's not one day out of a week that  
her routine won't follow.  
Lord have mercy on her soul, for only you know  
how deep her self-esteem goes.

—*Shannon Avent*

## Myself

I see myself in the midnight of silence.  
Holding in the laughter of sorrow's glory.  
I listen to my lonely memory as music.  
Wonder at precious heavenly treasures.  
Glimpse at a history of poison and magic,  
and how a feather breaks a glass window.  
Hold myself tight as I look at the  
stars shine above the moon.

I see blanks racing in front of me  
noisy but not silent.  
Gasping for air on a dry dull afternoon  
humid, hot and not too cool.  
A smooth, soft, tender bear holding me all night.  
Iron bars on the window as the rain taps on it,  
thinking of a beautiful waterfall  
sparkling from the sun that  
a brick wall blocks  
as I hear the tick of the clock.

—*Ruby Hill*

## The Power of Guns

1.  
Easy to use, but very powerful  
if not used correctly.
2.  
Smooth-looking, but painful.
3.  
Not something you would call  
cheap if you're broke.
4.  
Brings light, but creates  
darkness.
5.  
Some of them are little with power  
and some of them are big with more power.

6.

They are used for robbery and for  
some people's protection.

7.

People say, "If you live  
by the gun, you die  
by the gun!"

8.

The sound of a gun  
makes crowds go out of control.

9.

If shot with one,  
you will see blood.

—*Antoine Ford and Joseph Holbrook*

## Dreams

No, everything in life dreams.  
A bullet wants to become love,  
a blue cloud wants to become a cool wind,  
white smoke wants to become a blue cloud,  
I want to become a fast runner,  
but everyone dreams to run like me,  
a black hole dreams of being a window,  
a car on the street dreams of  
becoming a night train.

—*Joseph Holbrook*



## Suppose

Suppose history replays itself  
like the seasons.  
Suppose music was magic,  
would everyone know it.  
Suppose people had to die  
to give birth,  
I wonder how many of us  
would be on earth.  
Suppose sorrow was chocolate,  
would people want it.  
Suppose the last day  
was next Sunday,  
I wonder how some people  
would act.

— *Joseph Holbrook*

## Jealousy

Yesterday it came without warning  
like company coming over on a Saturday morning.  
At first, I welcomed it,  
not knowing what would accompany it.  
Jealousy was her name, when we became close.  
She couldn't be tamed, when girls wanted toast.  
I had to set her free, cause she was killing my life.  
I guess I'm still looking for the one to call my wife.

— *Delawnta Turner*



*top, l-r: Oralia Woods, Mercedes Valentine, Stashala Overby  
bottom: Matthew Griffin*

## Discovering

I see  
my dreams  
being shrouded  
by darkness  
trying to  
find the  
light. I  
see myself  
being the  
moon and  
having the  
stars follow  
me. I see  
myself hiking  
over the  
mountain  
discovering

—*Delawnta Turner*

## I am hers

I am hers in the midst of this darkness  
trembling on this blind path  
not able to see my shadow  
suffering  
as my heart beats faster  
trying to relax  
but the fright is still there  
I try to trust in a bright star  
to lead me in the right direction  
and steal me away from this darkness

—*Lawrence Copelin*

## Suppose I Was Rising

Suppose there was no pencil  
to put my thoughts on paper.  
Suppose you were the one leaving me  
and not me leaving you in the rain.  
Suppose I was rising and you  
were falling like sunset.  
Suppose you rode off into the sun  
and I stood here as time went by.

—*Glenn Johnson*

## To Break This Shadow

To break this shadow  
Into a thousand lights of sun  
I must become one with myself  
To rise upon all righteousness  
Yet I open my eyes to see that  
I am stuck in a standstill

—*Glenn Johnson*

## New Age

Age ain't nothing but a stranger  
I welcome home.  
This is the age of intelligence.  
You tell me I will become stronger,  
that my thoughts will run like  
a deer being chased by a hunter.  
I will say goodbye to ignorance.  
I welcome the new age of steel sidewalks.

—*Ricky Dawson*

## The Dead

Suppose I killed myself and  
became the phantom in your memories.  
The silence of your fear creeps up on you  
until finally you are lonely.  
Death, death sneaks while you are gently asleep.  
Suppose you could hear midnight rising  
from the ashes of distant birth.  
Suppose you listen.  
Suppose you didn't know enough to care why,  
why, why it's over . . . your sleep.

—*Quentin Keener*

## Starry Night

My hood  
lives in  
this painting.  
Giant trolls  
exist among  
the surviving.  
Blue waves  
float in  
the skies.  
There is  
no electricity.  
The moon  
is the  
brightest flame.

—*Ricky Dawson*

## Never Knew

When I woke up in the morning  
All I saw was your precious face  
A woman who I notice is my mother  
A woman I never knew till this day  
who seems so special to me.  
I never knew.

I woke up this morning  
And was just thinking  
How blessed I am to have a mother like her.  
And how special you are to me.  
I never knew.

Never till this day  
I cherish the woman who I call mother  
For all the work she did for me  
And I never knew.

—*Taésha Robinson*

## Moon

yesterday, the moon  
sparkled silently  
through the night.  
the moon pawned his soul  
for an embrace.  
yesterday it floated fright-less  
above the noise.  
it will soon resurrect  
and emerge  
as a hieroglyphic on earth.

—*Ricky Dawson*

## Bedtime Story

In the first corner of my room there is an apple.  
As I slowly turn toward my second corner,  
I stare into the eyes of Snow White.  
She is glowing from the happiness in the third corner.  
Her peach skin in the fourth corner glows from the sun  
beaming in from the small window  
between the first and forth corners.  
Without a place to go,  
I lie in the center of the four-cornered room, spinning.  
I see no door nor carpet, no rugs, no chairs,  
but feel a soft rectangular shape in which I lie.  
Taking the place of Snow White, I lie in her coffin  
as she eats the good apple in the first corner,  
standing, looking at me in the second corner,  
smiling in the third corner,  
with her peach skin in the fourth.

—*Teresa Baize*

## My Four Cornered Room

In the first corner, there is a dragon.  
He stares at me, waiting for me to move.  
I am in the second corner.  
I feel as though I should move  
but I am too afraid.  
In the third corner of the room, there is the color orange.  
It symbolizes me and the way I feel in this room.  
In the fourth corner is fear.  
This is how I feel right now, staring at the dragon.  
I cannot leave and I am afraid to go on.  
I don't know how I'll get out of this room,  
but I know how I got in.  
I am smart, and when you are smart



*top: Anthony Thomas  
bottom: Kuwan Poole*



you will eventually end up in a room like mine.  
You may not have the same color,  
and you may not have a dragon,  
but you will have fear,  
and everything will represent the same thing.  
The dragon has a name that has seven letters.  
This name is unusual, but the dragon wears it proudly.  
This name is...College!

—*Renee Bennaugh*

## **I Am Jamaal**

To be me:

You're industrious;  
you're lazy

You're talented  
but you're slothful

You love girls  
but hate rejection

You're a flirt  
but you don't want to be hurt

You're kind;  
you can be mean

You're a positive image  
but some still hate on you

You're not stingy  
but you're still cheap

You're loved by many  
and disliked by some

You're laid back  
but can get really ugly

You love looking fly  
but won't buy expensive clothes

You sometimes sit and wonder why  
but you're strong and never cry

You want to reach out  
but don't know how

You hurt inside  
but still keep a smile

—*Jamaal Grantham*

## **Puzzled**

A lamp so bright,  
like the sun that's trapped outside  
Gleaming inside, searching for a loving person  
It gleams in the third corner, but it's not there  
A vivid blue appears so bright, so happy,  
so full of life, but lacks the love it needs  
Blue looks in the second corner  
There's a person.  
Her name is...well, to blue it doesn't matter.  
Tasha, she's in the second corner  
searching for a bright life,  
but she sees nothing but a misty dark black blank  
The lamp shines its bulb upon her face  
Slowly, she feels her life lighting up,

blue turns to the fourth corner  
to where love was hiding all along  
Love's so strong, so vulnerable,  
it only needed a little light to be seen  
All gathered in corner two  
Everybody turns to each other and loves.

—*Lauren Taylor*

## Silence

Now I will put everything aside  
and sit uprooted  
For once in my life, silence  
comes to mind in a knowledgeable manner  
Currently, a tear rolls down my cheek  
and I've decided I will never speak.  
Sadly I cried, silently  
Not knowing my name,  
a face appeared, and I was burdened,  
weighed down, with shame.  
I thought in my head,  
it's my fault, it's my fault  
that the bullet joined in the game  
The fire and smell of smoke  
had critically made me insane.

—*Nicole Wilkins*

## Good Comparisons

Writing gets on my nerves, just like people.  
It's a good comparison because they are both stressful.  
People are at their best when they're turned inside out.  
Writing looks like the hospital full of pain.  
People smell like the bottom of a dead person's feet.  
Writing feels like a lion trying to attack.  
People are the worst animals because they sound like police sirens.  
Writing tastes like bad breath in the morning.  
They both give me a headache, like newborn babies crying.  
I once heard a great voice saying  
"Iona Carpenter, please report to the main office prepared to go home."

—*Iona Carpenter*

## My Mind

My mind is like a wild house.  
It is always live, and loud  
like a house with speakers blasting,  
my TV blasting.  
Windows are getting busted,  
people are fighting,  
telephone's ringing off the hook,  
and the doorbell's ringing 24-7.  
Living here will make a mad man go insane.

—*Tyrone Totten*

## My Sister

My little sister is about to cross the street.  
She spots me walking out of the building.  
She notices I'm heading in her direction  
and she asks me to help her across the street.  
I grab her soft hand and tell her to come on.  
I walk her to the playground and push her on the swing.  
I realize it's getting dark, so I pick her up  
and tell her to hold on tight  
and she tells me she loves me  
and she falls to sleep in my arms.

—*Darshay Holmes*

## Sparrows

The fortitude of the sparrows  
causes a riot.  
As they thrive on toil and disturbing the peace,  
their ignorance is ravenous.  
As their unity is suddenly muted  
you hear no echo.  
The hearsay is hail  
burdened by a crash of constant uproar.  
The divine honesty of the sparrow  
allows the current to rise.  
Now the hail is gone  
and the reincarnation of the land is sacred.

—*Layetta Kerrick*



*Martin Pineda  
bottom: Fanchon Hall*

## Because

Sometimes it's good outside  
like a bird in a nest.  
Sometimes it's bad outside  
like when somebody cooks bad food.  
But sometimes bad is good.

My eyes light up like stars at night.  
The cold air at night numbs my hands.  
The moist air chaps my lips.  
When it's hot outside, my nostrils start running.  
My ears get burned when the sun beams on them.

Jay-Z was singing at a club in Greenland.  
I have no eyes.  
Jay-Z had a concert singing in Mexico.  
But none of us could sing  
cuz they say I was bad.  
And I cannot sing  
because I don't have any peanuts in my trail mix.

—*Jo'Vada Hudnell*

## Long Night

Last night  
the sun lit my window.  
The night  
was absent to me.  
Because sunlight  
went down late.  
The moon sets early  
this night,  
kissing off the sky.  
Becoming a new day

to bait doughballs and hooks.  
I walk home  
unnoticed  
and the sun is setting.  
I watch it set  
through my window.  
It breaks very beautiful,  
a peachy color.

—*Martin Pineda*

## I'm Sorry

Some of the things I'm about to say,  
well, I'm not really sorry about.

I'm sorry about cuffing some candy at the 7-Eleven.  
I never wore shoes with my laces.  
I'm sorry for burning the chicken,  
but I'm not sorry for burning your clothes.

I never meant to slap you  
but I did mean to slap yo' mama.  
I never burped at the table  
but I did spit in your milkshake.

I'm sorry for parading around in my boxers  
but I did mean to punch your grandmother  
for taking my grandmother's teeth.  
I'm sorry for throwing up on your floor  
but I'm glad, because your pasta was foul.  
You may think I'm being honest  
but you're the one who's false.

—*Stashala Overby*



## Sleeping

Sleeping is forever  
You must always sleep  
like bears always hibernate  
Sleeping makes you happy  
like a dog playing catch  
Sleeping is calm as a clam  
When drifting off to sleep,  
it is like you're in a quiet room  
with the lights dimmed  
and you're relaxed and laid back.  
It's like you're driving  
to the end of the dreamway,  
not the highway.

—*Jameia Saunders*

## Myself

My mind is a black, painful place  
in a skull  
full of stress, pain,  
anger, lies from a father  
and serious, painful backstabs  
and stress about school.  
I am sometimes quiet  
like the New York street at night  
when it rains  
or I'm sometimes different  
like a change of channel  
But sometimes when it rains there  
it's quiet  
because the rain takes you away.

—*Dejuan Wilson*

## Infiniti

My name tastes like a million pounds of sweet strawberries.  
My name smells like a nail shop on a nice spring day.  
My name sounds like a wet rainy day in August.  
My name looks like a pretty wedding cake with whipped cream.  
My name feels like it's swimming in millions of dollars.

—*Infiniti Howard*

## The Cycle

There will always be...

People of many different shades  
Light and darkness throughout the days  
Pasts that hurt us and futures that won't  
Life and death from many ages

Disagreement among the countries  
Wars of men, wrong and right  
Right and wrong, just and unjust  
A never-ending cycle beginning

Smiling faces, silent tears  
Shots, meaning cures, and unsolved mysteries  
Confusion and understanding  
Good and evil, Heaven and Hell

There will always be...

Man, Woman and Child  
Seven deadly sins to bring us down  
Someone who cares for us and another who won't  
With family and friends to keep us afloat.

—*Fanchon Hall*

## I'm Sorry

I was never higher than the clouds,  
but I was higher than a clock on the ground.

I'm sorry  
I stole the money out of the bank  
but I'm not sorry for a fish that died in my tank

I'm not sorry for doing my homework  
but I'm sorry my mother's heart is hurt.

—*Kowan Poole*

## Young

Wake up in the morning  
Go downstairs  
Make me two eggs, three pancakes,  
and five slices of bacon  
Wash up, make my bed,  
and still have time to watch TV  
Go for a bike ride  
And as the wind blows,  
the years pass by  
I remember I'm still young

—*Wyman Walker*



*top: Krystal Cook  
bottom: Darshay Holmes*

## Ancestors

The names of my ancestors can be read as an almanac of my present being.  
I walk through the lively graveyard full of souls in a festive mood,  
able to smell the food not seen.

My taste buds thumping like the vibration I felt beating the conga drum,  
and now beating that drum was MLK at his Atlanta, Georgia gravesite  
followed by Malcolm X in New York.

Even my own grandmother in Hampton, Virginia. But all look empty, lost.  
I guess the graveyard wasn't as lively as I thought.

And now I taste death, I hear the mourning of the disappointed souls,  
as they seem unable to reach out and touch this new generation.

Youth violence, wars, and chaos throughout this world.

*Aay son, see that rolla, let's take her to the back and smash.*

Empowering our black females, R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

The disappointed faces of heartache seen in my ancestors' glares  
cause me to perfect my morbid ways.

Though, my morbid ways allow me to possess a wholesome spirit.

A spirit that leaps out in front and attracts all attention away from me.

The first female President of the United States has finally been elected  
this year, 2024,

gladly tackling this easy task, this welcomed war, this grand mass  
destruction.

These are the dreams of an ambitious soul,  
who lacks the ability to make her dreams come true.

Pues, mi casa es su casa.

So tell your troubles to run on home.

And now, I leave the graveyard full of the souls in a festive mood,  
with the lingering smells of the unseen foods.

—*Fanchon Hall*

## She

She is leaving on a commuter express,  
but acts as if she doesn't know  
how she got there.  
Yesterday is absent,  
tonight's moon is setting,  
and she is tired and weak.  
She watches the flood,  
knee-deep in the field  
from the window ledge.  
Truants on the commuter  
hand out oranges and peaches,  
and go unnoticed.  
She finally turns the lamp out  
and falls asleep.  
But the light from the window ledge  
awakens her.

—*Krystal Cook*

## Heavy Poem

Obesity is like a reindeer without its blinders  
Heavyweights eating the world out of the palm of their hands  
Tasting the sweet smell of loneliness and depression  
Feeling the desire and urge to eat through the emptiness  
in their hearts  
Hearing the malicious gossip, as it travels  
languidly through their bodies into their minds  
mentally tearing them down  
They see the awful stares as they enter the room  
full of people seeming to fit the image of perfection and beauty  
Oprah, we know too well, rides the seesaw of the weight game--  
She doesn't ride the seesaw, she lives the seesaw of the weight game  
I never get on the seesaw. I prefer the sandbox, a stand-still game.

Dat's wassup!

They made me not gain weight because I wasn't supposed to be fat  
I always stay on my Ps and Qs when it comes to eating right  
The box of depression we find sitting on every corner  
waits for the day to end, only to find tomorrow as bad as today  
The anorexic fixation of the obese can drive one crazy  
They get so angry, they erase all food from the earth,  
leaving everyone else to starve  
Buddha is more than happy to know she is not a part of the trend  
The obese know that tomorrow and the day after  
they will still be teased for their appearance  
The sharp, dull razor cuts deep into their hearts  
and they bleed sad lonely blood  
I, too, know the pain that exists within each soul.

—*Krystal Cook*

## Where Anger Lives

Buildings where anger lives have displeasure  
of dust and dirt  
like a ceiling with holes in it  
dirty water dripping from it  
or doors with rusted nails hanging out.  
To be anger, you must mope around  
all day with a mug on your face  
or just have an attitude with everyone.  
On the street where anger lives are dull houses  
of busted windows and chipped paint  
on the rooftops.  
In their garden stands a tall, bony tree  
with no leaves, and only dirt around it.

—*Emma Stewart*

## Bad storm

Moon over dark clouds  
as if it's going to snow.  
Barbells dangling on the damp porch,  
with a slight wind.  
The continuous keening through the windows  
as if it's about to erupt.  
Raindrops filled with fire,  
is the forecast for yesterday,  
today and tomorrow.

—*Emma Stewart*

## Pay-Off

My hard work has paid off.  
The Junior year has gone  
and the Senior year is on.  
I hit for four years straight  
and won the jackpot.  
First prize, to walk across the stage  
to a promising future.

My mama has made bread from scratch,  
starting from nothing  
and daddy has come to cry  
like a sensitive child.  
While the family has made up  
a song of congrats to graduating  
and making another moment  
of Good Times history.

—*Tyanna Dowdy*



## A divorced marriage

Night comes on like a frown in the sun  
It's me he is mad at  
And she hates the way the sound of moving  
tastes like orange juice on a  
brand new tongue  
Remembering to forget that tongue kiss  
from Myrtle Beach  
on the lips tattooed on her back  
She throws herself on Mr. Depressing Attitude  
so she can be mad at her long distance husband  
since 2020  
whom she hasn't even met yet  
Children ran through cloud nine, and we all  
watched the choreographer dance  
but none of us were there  
Only children allowed, so any adult  
who tried to get in  
the kids went smack at 'em.  
Because they were old, and ages were uneven  
He only got convicted of Murder One every blue moon  
So depressed about being too happy, and the  
lust of fornication dripping from her breath  
The burning volcano of hate  
She hated her husband on Monday, January 31, 2012  
and forgave him on Tuesday, February 1, 2005  
She will have to apologize for what she did tomorrow  
He threw the hot ice in a glass of iced tea  
His feelings turned cold because he had cold feet  
Voulez vous coucher avec moi?  
The dog drove her home in a pickup truck  
Only to remember she forgot to get her heart broken

—Tyanna Dowdy



*top: Jameia Saunders*

*bottom, l-r: Breanne Lancaster, Martin Pineda, Karimah Bilal*

## Sleep

Watching the ocean move in a languid motion  
I sit bequeathing today's cutthroats  
Night has exfoliated day as the stars  
fall short of the sky  
I carried my weak mind in a bag and reinterred it  
So tired, I joined the sand  
While the herons watched the  
unrecognizable object  
I watch the blank windows  
burning in my mind  
Time was wasted and the orange soon  
drowned my night  
Well-aimed at my dreams,  
I remain spiritless with hopes of  
sleep, scattered across the beach

*Teresa Baize*

## Death

Death is so sudden, like the chill you get from snow  
The snow stormed through the city for two years  
The snow felt like a knife and sounded like thunder,  
fresh tar on the road is what it looks like,  
come on and taste it  
mmm good,  
like Campbell's Soup.  
But beware of the scent, which makes you cry  
like the smell of onions.  
Death feels like cigarette smoke in my face,  
flowing in my nose,  
Cigarette smoke blown from the Grim Reaper  
in New York City, in the Heart of Manhattan,  
afraid of the feared.

Although we weren't that scared of him at all  
Melting snowmen bring deadly rivers  
Gotta hit up da crew to git miya boat  
But can't call my crew because I  
couldn't buy my tracks.  
"I think the rain is calling murder."  
The heavy rain, of sweet dreams  
that drown my pain.  
We were as terrified  
as the skeletons with no hair  
We evaporated as quickly as we could  
and returned as a tsunami.  
Tee swam up on the River Styx  
feeling great  
They will hide today, tomorrow and forever  
until it catches up with them.  
Rocky waters sneak upon them unannounced  
To be smart you have to know what I will learn next  
You chicks musta been crazy to think y'all can try to outsmart me  
The scythe will surprise you with terror, so look out  
Death captures you as the snowstorm distracts your mind  
only to prove you weren't as smart as you thought.

—Teresa Baize

## There will always be...

There will always be peace  
There will always be war  
There will always be good  
There will always be evil  
There will always be women who love, even when they aren't loved  
There will always be men who care, and men who can't quite figure  
out how to care  
There will always be the past  
There will always be the future, even if it isn't yours  
There will always be somebody yelling, somebody laughing,  
somebody crying  
There will always be grace and there will always be awkwardness  
There will always be a me and there will always be a you  
There will always be a lie and there will always be a truth  
There will always be death, there will always be life

—*Renee Bennaugh*

## I'm Sorry

I never went to the movies and bought popcorn and soda  
although I did buy popcorn or soda  
I never jumped off the swing and landed on my butt  
I never tried to book anybody, but I have read a book  
I've never jumped off a plane, I've never even ridden in one either  
I guess you could say I don't get much excitement.  
For example, I never ate ice cream  
while climbing a snow-covered mountain  
Then again, I've never climbed a snow-covered mountain.  
I've never had the key to singing on key with a monkey  
although I've tried many times  
I never jumped rope with a jumping bean  
I never rode a horse with Pippi Longstocking  
I never bought pink toilet tissue

I never bought paper dolls, purple shoes, or plain  
potato chips  
I never met Peeping Tom or Little Bo Peep

I'm sorry  
I took the candy  
I did, it's true  
I sawed the heads off all the quarters  
I took the cat's nine lives  
I did it, it was my fault  
I gave the President a wedgie during his campaign speech  
I'm sorry  
My bad  
My fault

—*Renee Bennaugh*

## **In Da Club**

I flew to Africa in an SUV  
I am the SUV  
The Africans smell my car freshener from miles away  
Can see the bottom of the SUV flashing in their eyes  
because of my hydraulics and also the glare from my  
24 inch chromed-out rims  
Can feel the bass thumping from my loud system  
Tasting the exhaust smoke from the big pipes  
Animals growling from the loud pipes, awakening them  
Loud music bumping in the brains of all of mankind,  
insinuating into the body through the ears, nose, and the mouth  
The songs of 50 Cent rapping while performing in the  
President's Oval Office in the White House  
Maybe not in the Oval Office  
but most definitely in the White House  
Maybe not the White House  
nor anywhere in America, maybe in a small town in Ghana

Maybe the President of Ghana rocking to Fifty's top hit  
"In Da Club" wearing some bling-bling and outfitted  
with a G-Unit hoody on his way to a Ja-Rule concert,  
because he is fat, and that hoody was the only thing  
left in the Big and Tall section  
Telling all of his people that if something goes on  
that they can find him "In Da Club" yelling out  
"It's My Birthday"  
Hiding the broken window of his heart  
Standing outside under the storm cloud of a sunny day  
Jumping up and down trying to touch the storm cloud  
Big Mal was watching from a nearby window  
Remembering that tomorrow and the day after that he had  
to write a speech for his address to the people of Ghana  
walking into the empty club to get his last dance  
Imagining dancing with a beautiful lady  
but really, he wakes up sitting in the SUV two days later  
Yelling out "Je'mappelle Francois"  
as the car opens for fresh air and as he steps out  
listens to the advice from the rear view mirror  
As he walks to the podium, he envisions his country's downfall  
and after stating what he expects of his people  
he finally says that if I flew here in an SUV to take over this country  
then you can just work hard toward making our country the best

—*Jamaal Grantham*

## Happiness

Happiness is found like hard-earned money  
Nothing makes me happier than seeing children eaten by a mad bulldog  
It's like a past dream partially faded  
with the soft, yet firm, touch of success  
that alerts the ears like a mixture of applause  
the rush of adrenaline and a thousand smiles  
gleaming all around.

But to understand happiness  
it would obviously look like the sound of music  
weaving through the air  
Clifford the Big Red Dog  
dreaming of running to the Statue of Liberty  
If only Clifford had legs to run there.  
You can find bubbles and happiness dating each other  
producing offspring of the perfect pink  
Because we all were too happy to find a job  
To succeed, they must always keep their p's and q's in check  
and always balance their checkbook.  
The grey cloud of devastation contradicts its claim of peace and serenity  
But it was as miserable as the man who just won the Lottery  
So as the happy one studied the troubled cloud,  
he jumped to the outer limits and lassoed an asteroid to the center of  
the galaxy  
Where Matt then reached up for the sky and grasped both happy and  
cloud together  
But the cloud was a stiff cloud wanting all for himself  
So its final verdict was guilty, sentenced to a millennium in the skies  
where it could do nothing but fly and float for punishment.  
Happiness ends all things,  
being partially faded yet never forgotten,  
where that troubled cloud was never really troubled  
because deep inside, only happiness bubbled.

—Matthew Griffin



## There will always be memories, never bleached

Every year, every decade, the scene constantly changes  
But what dies is removed, while memories are never bleached  
There will always be a dog barking, even though it ceased years ago  
The current scene becomes the past, but the languid and baffling  
dilemmas  
never cease being bypassed into the future's fresh new beginning, a  
fresh new scene  
Diseases are cured, but people continue to die  
More and more truces are formed,  
yet more wish for a Utopia

There will always be something hoped for, something despised  
There will always be a puppy waiting for a home  
A kid nagging his mom just to be near  
Every day, every year, every decade  
the scene is constantly changing  
what dies is removed, while memories are never bleached

—*Matthew Griffin*

## Astray

I'm freezing  
my mind is lost in ten degrees Fahrenheit  
It's cold on the inside  
my heart is pounding, two beats per second  
Time's up  
my expiration date was three years ago  
Three Years  
I'm traveling back in time  
to when my barometer erupted after hitting 300° F  
I was a volcano spitting out lava  
determined to dwindle anyone in my path  
Again my forecast was unknown

I found myself turning and twisting  
Boom! There goes someone's car  
Pow! There goes a house  
Is this truly me?  
The river flows in a peaceful place  
somewhere out there, far away  
where fir trees live  
It's quiet  
I'm astray  
It's the time to change  
my weather forecast

*Lauren Taylor*

## **Beyond**

Dogs bark like a horn honks  
over and beyond Mars  
It's hot where the stars are  
there's twinkling in the galaxy somewhere  
where I can taste the perfection of cookies baking  
It smells like a dirty dog's body  
that tasted kind of good in a puddle of gravy  
that sounded like something I watch on TV  
and felt like crumbling planets  
like poor Leika, the dog from Moscow  
who was sent up to space to meet her doom.  
I never watch TV  
I'm flying out of space with wings on my back  
that I wish I sprouted on my own  
I gave the stars some Dap  
on a small planet, with small hands  
"What goes around comes around"  
frantically plays itself on the radio.  
The mean eyeballs of heartache grasp a treacherous love affair  
It made me sad as laughing hyenas

who played chess and howled out “checkmate”  
Cuzin told me don’t give them a chess board  
but a week from now I guarantee they’ll bite into the black knight  
who was brave, scared, and thrown into a frozen volcano  
that is all forgotten now, but remembered tomorrow.  
Ay, ay, ay como me duele  
makes the earth sing  
as beautiful as a bluejay and it helps the land wander through the woods  
with a notorious feeling of bravery.  
Even when you’re brave,  
the planets languidly tumble down.

—*Lauren Taylor*

## **My Mother**

My mother is standing, cooking, in the kitchen.  
I listen to the water run and the grease pop.  
She makes a cake.  
I watch her as she looks at her T.V.,  
the smile on her face as I sit on the stool.  
I hear her laugh and it makes me warm.  
I tap her on the shoulder as she’s walking  
up the steps and say  
“Mom, I love you.”

—*Cameron Williams*

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