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VOICE

O F T H E K N I G H T



No: *Two* Date: *Spring 2006*



*top: Daquan Johnson
bottom: Channell Harris*

Welcome to the second issue 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 2006, breaking the previous record set last year with the first group of D.C. Creative Writing Workshop participants, Ballou Senior High School has produced four winners in the Parkmont Poetry Contest. Congratulations to Malik Battle, Réshaun Bennaugh, Brittany Keys, and James Saunders for their winning entries. Congratulations also to Larry Neal Award winner Darcy Jones-Duberry.

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, Children's Fund of Metropolitan Washington, the Commonweal Foundation, the Community Foundation of the National Capital Region, the Fannie Mae Foundation, the John Edward Fowler Foundation, the Philip Graham

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We would also like to thank the following staff members who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Karen Smith, Ms. C.J. Glenn, Mr. Rahman Branch, Dr. Portia Bookheart, Ms. Pamela Clark, Ms. Vanessa Harris, and Ms. Carol Robinson. ●

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P O E M S

l-r: Mike, Fanchon Hall, Krystal Cook



top: Daquan Johnson

bottom, l-r: Réshaun Bennaugh, Chantayle Watkins, Rayshawn Hall, Brittaney Graham

Galaxy

As the space shuttle took off for
an investigation fifty billion miles
away from the galaxy
while testing on lab rats
and working with monkeys,
researching.

As they were going
they started seeing the darkened block of space
with a creation of stars, circles, and
the deformed squares of meteors
crashing into each other,
sparkling silver and white sparks
as they collide.

Then suddenly a pond of water splats in your face
and you see a blinding light
just like imagination.

Xavier Clemons

There Will Always Be

There will always be an illusion, a heartbeat
unseen as the precious phantom music plays
voices of midnight
through the impulse of a stranger.
Golden fruit, pearl hummingbirds,
that have been damaged by the instinct of a stone.
Silk echoes, feathered textured magic,
sudden sad statues
that honor drowsy demons.
There will always be.

Brian Johnson

When the World Ends

When the world ends,
I would want to be with my family
staring out the window
watching the remains of the city
pass us by.
I will be watching people faint
and pass out during the world's ending.
Lightning strikes houses and they burst into flames,
people screaming and
all I'm going to be doing
is clouding my house out
feeling light as a feather.
I would really enjoy myself and pray to God
that he lets me in the blinding light
when the world ends.

Xavier Clemons

always

There will always be the glorious moment of the sun
blossoming to this unanswered illusion called day;
The magic and wonder shining in people's eyes
as they feel permanent, they feel they will always be;
There will always be the disguise followed by
the wrinkles in people's lives traveling through time;
There will always be the airtight unspoken truth
to people with delicate souls;
There will always be the instinct people have
that ruins the tenderness of the splashing
wonder of life.

Xavier Clemons

Dream

Purple stars
dancing with cats
in an ocean of ravens
filled with A's.
Jumping gloomy foxes
on a blue and cloudy day.
Writing circles with red
hearts along the way
to planets of ice cream
for a hot summer's day.
Snow-filled rainbows
that light the night sky,
raining money
to make the hunger die.

Alexis Lemons

My Philosophy

My gaze is silent with the secret of freedom.
It's my custom to exist
past statues of hidden windows
of false truth, of higher meaning.
I am very good at looking past the surface
to uncover the gleam of compassion unnoticed.
I am capable of desiring my goal,
to be reached in the distance.
I believe in the teachings of wisdom
and the strength of the soul.
The world wasn't made by enchanted wishes or fairy tales;
If I speak of thunder, it's not because of hate.
To love is to linger with pain
strengthening the heart along the way.

Alexis Lemons

Eyes Full of Memories

With one's eyes closed
and with grace in the midst of
never seeing more clearly,
an incredible vision as this.
After a long-traveled road,
walking through life with no shoes,
it's about time for a nap
with no waking up to do.
As I lie there in a drifting dream of memory,
I would forget the wonderful things I've seen:
the gleam of the sun shining off the ocean, blue and wide;
a never-changing granite, not
touched by emery, but only by history;
broken sorrows made distant by love;
a speechless earth that only listens
with no response.

Alexis Lemons

Chaos

Beating blue and black lions
that leap into dogs
astronauts walking around
red tear drops falling
in a circle
big dogs in the shape of a square
dancing into a plane
fantastic P's
facing the glow of the earth
just like the smile on your face

Brian Johnson

kaleidoscope

Blue raindrops fall on
jumping cats running from dogs.
Little birds fish in red lakes
and then fly like planes to their nests.
Stars play in circles around the moon
and light up the black night,
just like you.

Joseph Holbrook

The City in Which I Love You

Atlanta is the city; I love you.
It has the memory of the mad midnight moon
It has our very violent cousin Valeesa
The radio reflects our lovely music
Your cousin Nikki has nice Nikes
which I want on my feet
We share the laughter of our golden memories
You make my heartbeat beat at a faster pace
It's magic when we're together
Now I'm lonely without you by my side
It's like a bad nightmare that I can't be next to you
Now I sit here in a different state, sadly sobbing because
I miss you

Shaneta Barnes



*top: Dana Postell
bottom: Brittane Graham*

To Love

My gaze is like a window:
opening and closing as the day goes along.
It is my custom to gaze at the sunset on a clear day
and if the soul of the sky is free.
And I'm very good at finding the hidden meaning of reality.
I believe that the eyes are the windows of the soul.
The world wasn't made to exist.
If I speak of freedom, it's not because I'm not free
but because my people are not.
To love is to show the surface of the heart.

Joseph Holbrook

There Always

There will always be
memory bursts
as schools and alphabets of words grow,
but never forgetting what
they remembered first.
There will always be history
if the grace of my people never dies.
There will always be heartbeats
as long as the windows of the soul stay alive.
There will always be me
in the glory of my family.

Joseph Holbrook

Poetic Philosophy

My gaze is as bright as the sun.
It is my custom to wake up in the morning,
take a slight stretch, and listen
to the birds chirp outside my window.
And I'm very good at turning negatives into positives.
I'm capable of making that commitment
to people in my surroundings
and not just to family and friends.
I believe in God to help me do my part to help the people.
The world wasn't made for thunderstorms every day.
If I speak of some moment that will soon change,
it's not because I want to be difficult,
but because I believe everyone can change.
To love is a big thing to feel for someone,
so if you have it, use it, stop hiding it.

Diane Ramey

There will always be...

There will always be blossoms bursting every spring.
There will always be a pounding heartbeat for every moment of love.
There will always be languid angels flying before us.
There will always be precious moments that are never forgotten.
There will always be midnight after a long and bright day.
There will always be a shining sun after every rain.
There world will always be the same, and not once will it change.

Diane Ramey

Untitled

There will always be sun to brighten up the day.
There will always be memory, that way no one will forget
anything.
There will always be rain, just as well as sleet and snow.
There will always be...

Tiffany Williams

When the World Ends

When the world ends his body would be
kissed by a warm sunbeam like pain
When the world ends a thought-cloud
would go off in his head
as he falls down and rests on his legs
I will be steamy like a tea kettle,
boiling over with frustration.
When the world ends
of course everyone's world would end too
but he would be first to float
on that zero gravity moon.
When the world ends
everyone would bubble with joy
because the one
that destroyed the life of an angel
would know what he did wrong.
I will do just what everyone else would do,
I will rest in peace.
When the world ends.

Melanie Collins

Poem for My Brother

Jealous clarity left an invisible mountain
where lonely unanswered questions lie.
My heart is numb with laughter
but the question still remains: Why?
Reasonable reflected restraint
of a wildly weathered warrior.
Covered curtained children
sing silent music.
That doesn't help much
All I have is descending power to help hold me.
Vivid violent venture, let me think...
Solitude?
Naw, Man.
They should feel what you felt
and see that green darkness turn cold.

Melanie Collins

There will always be...

There will always be an intersection
where death and memory meet.
At this point, there will always be a time
where death will eventually win.
There will always be a time in your life
when you feel as though you're drifting
and a languid gloom takes over.
Perishing?
Yeah, that will always be,
but only if you always let it.
You don't have to think about it
when you can always try and forget it.

Melanie Collins

Released

When the world ends, I will try to have all the fun in the world.
When the world ends, I will rob the bank on a Friday night
and I will say, "Hell with the law."
When the world ends, I would beat up a couple of people
who want to fight me.
When the world ends, I will give thanks to the Lord
and ask for forgiveness.
When the world ends, I will tell all the people I love
that I love them.
When the world ends, I will dance until death comes.
When the world ends, I will erase all fears
and do what I'm scared to do.
When the world ends, I will set my heart free
and let it be.
When the world ends, my heart, mind, body and soul
will be free from all hurt and pain.
When the world ends, I will be released.

Arnicia Dean

The End

When it all comes to an end
Like a windy night without wind
Your whole life in free fall
Walking, lonely, in the dark with lights off
Like rolls of lightning smacking clouds
Or a hurting soul screaming aloud
If it all comes to an end
Where would I be?
At the beginning,
Waiting for it all to repeat.

Tiffany Mace



top: Rolandus Frye

bottom, l-r: Kevyonna Parker, Tiffany Mace

Kevyonnascope

Jumping red and black
ladybugs that bark
into dogs
lawyers defending in suits
blue stars falling
into white snowflakes
cats stretching into diamonds
lowercase q's
smiling into sentences
balloons bursting into pods
and birds chirping
into vacant apartments
where children wake up
amid two pillows
just like you.

Kevyonna Parker

Tomorrow

When tomorrow ends,
I will repent for all my sins.
When tomorrow is ending,
I will always remember the beginning.
When there is no tomorrow,
I will find another day to borrow.
When tomorrows do go,
There'll only be yesterdays in a row.
When tomorrow ever decides to come back,
It'll be too late, because
Yesterday has taken his spot.

Kevyonna Parker

Untitled

There will always be
homework and
There will always be
speechless people
There will always be
pain and
There will always be
rain.
There will always be
memory
There will always be
weddings and
There will always be
frames; by traveling through the world
you receive so much grace.

Brittany Ridley

That, This, Sorry

I'm sorry for this...
I didn't birth my mother
or even wed my brother
I didn't hatch enough eggs
and the eggs didn't hatch me
I'm sorry for that...
I am not a man
who holds the cards to my death
I didn't breathe when I had breath
I didn't live when I had life
It is for this and that
that I am sorry.
I didn't shop at all the fashion places
I didn't kiss the prince when the chance had come

I didn't take on the responsibility for your abusiveness
I didn't get locked up for taking your life
I truly am sorry...
That I've done the things that I have not
that I didn't give up on my hopes
that I didn't kill the old me
Yup, that's right; I'm sorry.

I can't be who you want me to be
I can't prove you right
I can't hate you the way you hate me
I said I'm sorry
I never told you I wasn't a virgin
I never lived your life
I never got pinned down
I never had a boyfriend or even a friend
Look, I said I'm sorry

I won't finish my work
I won't cook your food
I won't wave your flag
I won't excite you
Once again, I'm sorry

I didn't eat your chocolate
I didn't care when you told me to
I didn't dress like a boy
I didn't wrong your rights
I'm sorry for taking up your time
Time of day and time of night
I hope you understand.

Rayshawn Hall

She Never Loses

If jazz were female,
she'd be very moody
One moment she's relaxed
and easy to talk to
next she's obnoxious.

She can be happy or sad
She's trying to speak
But is she so smooth
that you feel she's deceiving?
Is she so distasteful
that you ignore her?
Or is she so defiant
that she's finally being heard?

Jazzy jazzy jazz
It's all that she is
She gets what she wants
no matter the task
little do you know
She's already trapped you
with one word:
Persuasion.
She never loses.

Rayshawn Hall

Still I Stand

Watching the day go by while violence continues to arise
Gangsters influencing young kids to do everything they did
Becoming a number of a murder count
of young blacks in the world
Who don't know better,
even when considering God's word

But outside of us there has been
some cruddy stuff to have happened
To other races all over the place,
such as rapes and kidnapping
To think it's right to do wrong
because of a situation
or of certain temptation
or of mad desperation
or a silent depression
to teach others a lesson
believe that it's for the best
to take someone else's breath
But stop to think what you're doing
for the best in eluding
stereotypes in assuming
my life starts in conclusion
in this world of illusion
But I stand for you proving
I am different from losers
that I can be a chooser
In a life everlasting
Still I stand

Rolandus Frye



top: Jamal Kennedy
bottom: Rhia Hardman

Small Fracture

My name looks like a courageous beast
mistaken for horror in a fairy tale.
My name tastes like a sour sweet tart
thrown in a bucket of sugar, then back in a sour bucket.
My name sounds like thunder in
the waking of the innocent
in the morning rain.
My name smells like a mixture of butterscotch,
car freshener taped to the back
of a sweaty gym teacher,
and the scent of a fresh-picked fruit from a garden.
My name feels like concrete:
When soft it's vulnerable,
then when hard it's indestructible.
My name is Rolandus.

Rolandus Frye

Who I Am

My gaze is transparent like a window.
It is my custom to blow bubbles of water.
And I'm very good at worshiping my God.
I'm capable of having fresh clothes to put on my body.
I believe in complete silences.
The world wasn't made, just a flower.
If I speak of nature, it's not because I exist.
To love is reality.

Reggie Collins

Love

There's one special day when people are shown love
Many people give doves as signs of love
True love is something that you feel inside
Something that people need in their lives.

Many people think love is a game
Many people think it is that family
That is framed in gold
People cherish it until they're old

Love is pain
When people play with it like it's a game
Now it's decreasing like a bad stock
But my love is still solid like rock

Thor Ford-Toomer

Everything

Tumbling white and red dogs that run
into spilling liquids
planets walking into balloons
black hair dropping
into silver hearts
fish swimming toward
bright stars
clapping starfish
stretching into crazy dough
walking planets are smart
just like us.

Reggie Collins

Untitled

My gaze is cloudy like a foggy day.
It is my custom to do what I do.
And I'm very good at memorizing things that are true.
I'm capable of doing a good job.
I believe in how the world grows from a seed into a tree.
The world wasn't made for the confusing way it is today.
If I speak of giving, it's not because I don't give.
To love is a positive thing.

Quentin Wharton

Mirror Window

As I sit and look out
I see the past, the present, and the future
the young, the old, and the restless
I see the world evolving, transforming into another
I see spring in the winter and summer in the fall
the mature minds in the youth
I see struggle, hardship, trials and tribulations
the homeless, the single parents, the misguided teens
I observe the hard work and dedication
the people who are determined to succeed
I observe teachers who instill the knowledge,
the education that is needed to be somebody
I observe the father without any support
the strong, quiet man who is a hero
I observe all of the talent and gifts
the good and the bad
I observe the brother, the friends
the ones who will always be there
as I sit and look out
I see myself

Wayne Nesbit

Portrait

As the moving midnight moon sits in the sky
dark distant demons approach him
while listening to the soothing silent sounds
his wary weathered whisper turns into powerful potent praises
the tempo of a raging piano begins to play in his mind
In the mirror, invisible eyes, an altered face
this unusual resurrection brought about some skill
the talking darkness spoke with unreal meaning
this strange, this beautiful, this unique, this wonderful,
this great, this...perfect...portrait.

Wayne Nesbit

My Name

My name would be the rebirth of the P-funk era
A psychedelic shock
Like Purple Rain and Big Daddy Kane
all mixed in a pot

My name would feel like white people
at the O.J. Simpson trial
Like the most professional person
suddenly running wild

My name would taste like a poisoned peach
It kills you in style
It smells like the helium from a balloon,
like a rubber band, it stretches to fit any mood

My name would sound
like Jimi Hendrix on his guitar
My name would be the sad reality
of the way things really are

Daquan Johnson

Rolling Sound

Rolling snow-covered mountains
Upbeat downhill skiers
Widely political, diverse atmospheres
Duke, don't you wish you were here?
Freaks of nature without transparent wisdom
of the overwhelming unending drudgery
A vague, bitter, sweetness,
a faint whistle
a murmur of grief, rage continues to
roll
jazz roll,
Roll jazz roll.

Jamal Kennedy

Sorry

I'm sorry for being black.
I'm sorry for the way that I act.
I'll never be a valedictorian or a summa cum laude.
I'll probably be the guy getting drunk at the party.

I'll never be a pilot; I'm too afraid of heights.
But to fly around, up and down, would be a perfect night.
I'll never be that cat with the big, bold bucks.
Hell, you might get some change if you in luck.

I'm sorry for not making a cure for AIDS.
So, for the folks who got it, I'm just gonna burn for days.
I'm sorry for being an American reject,
But I'm merely a mirror of the people they neglect.

Daquan Johnson



*top, l-r: Tamika Mitchell, Honesty Bland, Malik Battle, Kendra S.
bottom: Donnell Williams*

No Consequences

If life had no consequences
the world's troubles would be endless
Days go by in a smoky daze
Friday nights slip through my fingers
And the vibration of music rocks the floor
The people dance with no meaning
and sip upon empty glasses with no touch

Chantayle Watkins

My Last Day Living

My last day living
What will I do?
Where will I go?
My life floating through the sky
What shall I do first?
Find the love of my life
and become his wife
I'm gonna do everything you can name:
climb the highest mountain
swim swiftly down the longest river
watch the clouds as they shape themselves
in different patterns
There's not much time
the sun has taken its last shine
With five minutes left
What else is there to do?
But lie down
and dream my last dream

La'Shawn Edmonds

It Is This Way With Time

It encompasses everything and
everything revolves around it
Flashing like a red light, all traffic stops
The clock is reset and time begins again
On Earth, as it is in heaven
more souls, less souls...until
the door of time is permanently closed
The streets of the world are sore with time
and life dwindling hopelessly away
Once seen as the fruit of the world, now
progresses to a poisonous mass at war with time
Infecting new life that never had a chance
Not seeing the error of our ways
hinders us from ever being able to change
We are not only the infectors, but also the infected
Affected by our actions, we too have been neglected
The core now softens, while the surface hardens
Then without ever really living
life and time seem to be ending

Kendra Hardman

Jazz

I hear the sound
the sound of softly beaten drums
the mellow tapping of cymbals
pianos soothing stressful souls
Here come the saxophones screaming
like an angry man
the instruments exchanging tunes
like words blurting from irate mouths

the quiet piano, calming everything down
softly plays in the background
The tunes are all together now
The show is over and
the musician takes his bow.

La'Shawn Edmonds

Brittaney

Brittaney would smell as fresh
as the cherry blossoms
blooming in the spring.
Brittaney at first glance
would look as delicate as a rose
but, if touched,
feels as sharp as a thorn.
She sounds sweet as angels
humming in the heavens
as the mellow rivers flow.
Tasting like a strawberry cheesecake
topped with fresh sliced strawberries
making mouths water,
being eager to taste.
My name is Brittaney.
My life was brought forth by faith.

Brittaney Graham

Streets of D.C.

I sit and look out upon the streets of D.C.
I hear unending sounds of gunshots
and faint sounds of screaming
over the dead bodies lying in the street.

I see hidden meaning in the unsolved cold cases
and the police too lazy to find the answers
I see agony and pain in your mother's face
when she testifies to put you behind bars.

I remember that day when the Peaceaholics
tried to stop the violence,
but the gunaholics wouldn't give in.

I see the days when Mom comes home after a hard day at work
but Dad hasn't had a hard day until he finishes beating Mom.

I observe families getting evicted,
Pops getting laid off,
and children at the age of ten dropping out of school.

I observe the nights when there is no heat,
days when there is no food,
and months when Mom left and never came back.

Is it the custom of D.C. life to be described as unfinished business?
Or is it the unresolved burdens that our hearts carry
when tasting for tomorrow is unreal?

Chantayle Watkins

My Apology

I should have never been born a girl:
Cheering, wearing skirts, and high heels.
I'm sorry my mother wished for me,
Jumping for joy when the doctor said
it was a girl, ooh whee!
I'm sorry for my chromosomes being XX and not XY;
Now is the day I ask God why.
I'm sorry women even exist
because guys don't know our significance.
I'm sorry that we're stronger than men,
maybe not body strong, but heart and mind.
I'm sorry that I can bear the pain of a child
and you can't bear the pain of a bruise.
I'm sorry I made the next president or billionaire
and I'm sorry you made the next jailmate,
for God's sake, he gave you a chance.
I'm sorry we had to be here
making your life living misery.
But now we're here and
I'm sorry my sorrys are not stronger,
for if I were a guy, my sorrys would be no longer.

Chantayle Watkins



top: Shaneta Barnes
bottom: Teacher Vanessa Harris

The Unseen Me

My name looks like a long piece of wood
that's just been cut and showcased on a shelf for a sale,
with the taste of fresh fruit grown from a farmer's garden.

My name smells like a bathroom just after
a nice hot shower on a hot and humid
summer afternoon,
feeling as fresh as a new pair of Jordans
just put on the market.

Sounds like silent voices wanting to be heard
over the quiet of a hurricane.

My name
Looks like
Tastes like
Smells like
Feels like
Sounds like
My name is...Réshaun

Réshaun Bennaugh

Why Be Sorry?

Sorry for the things that I do to hurt
being a jerk
with a smirk
covered like a rock in dirt
not jumping out of a plane
for being restrained
without a chain
memories in my brain
for not being the same
not waiting, not lasting
for the time that's been passing
being a kite
being a mic
not in sight
unless in flight
for being on the north pole
when I should be on the south
for things I have done
inside and out
mystifying, ostracizing,
synthesizing, jeopardizing,
and most of all
sorry for not apologizing.

Jachin Leatherman

My Name

Like a cold day and hot night in the desert
it would definitely be noticed
If you looked at it too long
it would scorch you as if it were cold as ice
a snowy day in July
with a fireplaced igloo mansion
It feels like a ton of feathers
being dropped upon you
or a toilet paper wrapped brick
thrown at your face
Heard coming from afar as if
it was chaotic police sirens
chasing after someone who
has committed the biggest crime of all time
Tasting like a rusty nail in a bowl of ice cream
or a chocolate covered insect
Smelling like a cloud, star,
and the core of the Earth
It's hard to tell exactly what you get
when you're around it
but it's just a name, or is it?

Jachin Leatherman

Identity

In my name lies a hidden person
Identity present, but unsure of the future
Unsure of tomorrow but grateful for today.

My taste is like sushi, edible to only a few
I look like a cube, a different face with each view
I feel like the leather in a big body Benz
I look smart, but detrimental
upon your personal stereotype, it all depends.

I smell unforgiving, holding grudges forever
I sound like the engine of a Bentley coupe
Sharp at the beginning, but lovable and smooth
My looks draw you in like a Bathing Ape hoody,
but reality sets in when you see the price.
A smile hides my true feelings,
because I feel fear and tears,
I'm unsure of my identity,
but who really cares?

Darcy Jones-Duberry

Bittersweet Crimson Pride

Accidental pride, cruel eternal envy
with a vague orange cyclops
U, autumn blue, transparent nectar
as lukewarm mercury drops with precision
brittle sandpaper, violent losses lead to
night, scoliosis from rage of crimson
I, scarlet knight, bittersweet E-healings
with golden thickness
wisdom, humor and burden
pyramids, with grief of tide dominance

Jamal Kennedy

When Time Stops

When time stops, I will be in all Bathing Ape
When time stops, I'll be
at the 40/40 Club talking to Jay-Z
When time stops, the wind will keep blowing
and the sun will turn on its axis
And when time stops, I will turn back to dirt
When time stops, I will be free,
like the ladybug on my window
I will move like an Amtrak train,
and glisten like Times Square
I will swiftly move between traffic
in a Rolls Royce Phantom
and check the time on my Jacob piece
My heart let off a leash and
no more cops to "Yes, Sir"
Loose as a helium balloon, being cut from a string
My spirit will forever sing
When the hands stop and never
tick and tock
I'll smile while drinking Crystal
in the Four Seasons
And close my eyes forever
on fresh white linens

Darcy Jones-Duberry



*top: Darcy Jones-Duberry
bottom, l-r: Diane Ramey, Joseph Holbrook*

To Be in a Song

To be intertwined with the meticulous melody,
to ebb and flow with the rhythm,
to know it's clearly polyphonic;
To equate the color red with the timbre
because the lyrics burn with such powerful emotion,
to feel safe in its warm chorus,
to be equally excited to see
the vamp every time it appears,
to share the vision of the song
to have the same desire to touch the listener,
to be beautiful,
to be art,
to be content with myself
and
never want to leave this beautiful place
a song.

James Saunders

Life

I am life
I am painful, I
grow and change
I am stolen
I grow and change
changing life
to a bad life
by life
being stolen

Tameika Whitehead

Non-Conformist

Call me a gothic mohawk, spiked
and gelled to dark, rebellious
perfection.

Call me a hippie guitar, studded
with icons of peace and unity.

Let me drive my freedom-fueled
punchbuggy through your mind
and soul.

Call me an environmentally aware,
bargain shopping, jellybean sandal-wearing,
bird feeding, obsessive compulsive
disorder wielding, animal loving vegan.

Call me the girl wearing flower prints
when they are no longer in.

Call me retro in the 'hood.

Call me the rotten apple that
spoils the bunch.

James Saunders

Mind in Bondage

Bondaged mind, manipulated life
Thoughts climb out my ears, nose and mouth
and nothing seems to be right
Lookouts on the corner, drug dealers on the block
cool air raises the hair on my arms
neighbors gossiping constantly amid clouds of marijuana and gun smoke
a stench so strong you could taste it

Morning smells like sand tastes on the most sensitive area of my tongue
Casper the Friendly Ghost not only haunts the mansion
but he haunts the minds of our youth in Southeast D.C.

But the minds of our youth were never haunted—
Their eyes were haunted and their minds never stop wondering

Always looking for the easy way out
and never stop chasing after the Breezies
because we were big and wore bigger jeans
Money on my mind, money on my mind
was the only song they sang aloud

That dirty shoe of life stepped on each of our thoughts
Happy dirt shows its beautiful smile
They slipped on the sky and fell out of ground and
Wheezy was always around, going through it all
The day after tomorrow will differ from the day before yesterday
Angry hair possesses the gift of what led them to believe they are right
They asked to be forgotten, but I'll have to know them in order to forget
Each day the sun wakes up and falls asleep
each day wind walks and runs
and even as the body becomes relieved, the mind remains in bondage.

Wayne Nesbit

It's Me

Blue W, yellow A, green Y, black N, rainbow E
Love everywhere I stand or sit
Hugs and praises sometimes
With blue birds singing in the winter
Ups in your life are always terrific

An amazing athlete
who prefers healthy over junk
yellow band lines a right wrist
that reads love life

Just my favorite
the color of money, the color of pears
the smell of stink, it's green
Y, don't ask

Black comes in the night
so do fear, agony, pain and disgust
the other side, with rage and envy on his mind
naughty and never nice

E has been screwed up for so long
It has been misread and abused
but God created E, and God created me
Rainbow is the color

Wayne Nesbit

Learning the Hard Way

Friends aren't really friends, I have none
they turn on you in a second
today they are here, tomorrow they are there
I didn't understand that
I learned the hard way

Talking behind backs, snitching and telling secrets
fighting all the time, so unladylike
running around with the boys, playing football and
basketball
falling all over the place
I learned the hard way

Scars and bruises everywhere
pain felt
I had to learn on my own
it was the hard way
but I had to learn

La'Shawn Edmonds

rock

rock is
the way thunder
would sound
if it and the
sun were ever
to collide.

Brittany Keys



*top: India Bandy
bottom: Benjamin Owens*

Lost Boy

You lose, confusion, being confused
feeling funky and lazy, like being abused

Drunk junkie, brain-dead, determined to fight
and persistent, this distance he must bring to life

Becoming overwhelmed, compelled to spell succeed
before becoming man, not able to breathe

To take in what the rest did, the black men
who arrested success in doubt of resting

But stuck confused in confusion, in conclusion
with no notion or devotion of closure
and
What became of the lost boy?

Rolandus Frye

Cemetery Sorrow

Forbidden souls among the moonlit midnight madness
creating shallow invisible eyes, drowsy
The memory of an unlit doorway descends in a mind
One hundred hollow hearts act as a velvet net
to find hope out of the darkness
Every morning the curtain rises
as unresolved burdens loft away
But the taste for tomorrow brings gradual goodness
to the nights
and maybe another day

Jamal Kennedy

The Sweet Life

Instead of stopping time to enjoy the best time of your life
Live every day of your life, enjoying the best of your life

An ongoing cycle flowing over and over again
each day realizing you can only win

But not feeling anything else, discovering the boredom
of living life the same way whether still or ongoing

Wishing to release time so something else can happen
Whether it's you, or it's me, or it's they, or it's we

Stop living for just one moment
live for many moments, for self glory

Flattering reflections in every direction
sensual sensation, or maybe affection

However, in the end I
lived the sweet life

Rolandus Frye

Passions for Within

C ebony eyes, cold and shadowed
seeing nothing but darkness all around
R red rain, secretive passion
wanting, hungry for revenge
Held captive from truth and the lies
not knowing how to, when to, let go

O, golden lights brightening dark sides
within myself sensitivity is kept hidden

Y blue overtakes emotional sadness
Humor understands pain, vision to stay away
eternal teardrops filling the bowl of palms
cleansing my soul of sheer unwanted darkness

Réshaun Bennaugh

The Past Pushed to the Future

Things from the past are hard to forget
but are easily remembered
Little signs of life
Just thinking of the sound of the tunes
that it lets out, making the pain
and guilt fade away
Tuning out other sounds just so
I can be in a different place
The sound of laughter and the
look of happiness keep me
smiling, covering the unknown pain,
forgetting no one who presents my past
Forgiving those who distance my present
forever loving everyone who holds my future
Can't see those who look upon me
but feel people shadowing
what's supposed to be within me

Réshaun Bennaugh

Grieving Doorway

As I look at this grieving doorway
Students sadly sing
It sounds like I hear a dying piano
and I start to think of hopeful hollow happiness

As I look through this grieving doorway
I see a portrait of who? Is it a portrait of me?
Yes, a rage, reflected rape
my mind is wandering, to where I do not know

Can you help, please?
I have unfinished business
there is still a lot of invisible anger
Now I see

I took this trip down memory lane
It's my fault
because I'm the one
looking down this grieving doorway

Rayshawn Hall

November 19, 2003

The past is always permanent
sometimes I wish the present,
flowing by like time itself,
would be as still as life was
the day my niece was born

Just before she ever cried or took a breath
pushing and screaming, coaching coming from all angles
In the beginning, thought to be a curse
Now the realization that the world has been blessed
with one of God's angels

My sister, the baby's mother,
and the rest of the family, grounded in awe
Inhaling as time stands still
the birth of this baby girl
seems to be an unspoken apostrophe

The miracle of life, just witnessed
brings me to a never-before-reached sense of humility
The most amazing moment in life left me dazed and
speechless
And just like the past, that moment
will always remain permanent in my mind

Kendra Hardman

Lies

I think they've lied to us too much
Now that I've had the privilege to find the truth
they can't lie anymore or take from me the knowledge I've
obtained
This much I also know
It will be an honor to make men accept this
stillborn truth of shameful shapeless memories
which pain people to hear or face
The phosphorescent presence of countless instances
will make it hard to convince them
who wholeheartedly believe it no longer exists
Now that I've had the privilege to find the truth
I'm going to strip away some of their safety nets
and I'll be the one that they'll call a martyr
at the belly of the storm
and a tremor in a still body of water

Kendra Hardman



top: Tiffany Mace

bottom: Mike, Fanchon Hall, Krystal Cook

Dayz of my Life

I look in the mirror with a gradual gaze
Another day passes by
I reminisce on that day
with a distant daze, asking myself why
Forbidden memories cloud my head during my midnight mood
and I wake from my blinding darkness,
wishing my dreams weren't so cruel

My day resembles a free fall,
Anything goes
Twenty-four hours of invisible truth
with absolutely nothing to show
So I wait for the day of my resting resurrection,
and my cry for help and hopelessness
is my perfect imperfection

Daquan Johnson

Letters

B is Beautiful, like a Black nubian queen
who dwells in the palaces of Egypt.
F shows Fear, like walking down an alley
late at night, but it happens to be clear.
Violence represents V, which ties into Fear
Violence is red, like a puddle of blood at a murder scene.
Fresh as a load of laundry out of the dryer,
F dictates white as I see clouds.
Ordinary gleams O behind a gray
haze of smoke that sits after a fire.

Darcy Jones-Duberry

An Ode to an Alcoholic

Sippin' on the memories
on the corner, with a fifth of Hennessy
Dis cat drank till his liver was chewed
reminiscing on dayz he was abused

Wit dat slave mentality
his potion helps him escape reality
Wit his cup in hand and his clothes that are tan
that's his American Dream
Blue Bull, and 40 ounces are what he calls "the simple things"

People walk by saying, "man, dis cat look hopeless"
But wit a shot of dat Allezé, all that goes away
To him, life is big old Bacardi Gold
Just drinkin' and drinkin' til he grows old

Daquan Johnson

Like Superman

You are hunted down like a runaway fugitive,
but you're caught by your own feet.
You saw the sound and smelled the taste, all before you touched it,
like the time you saw freedom, but tasted captivity.
You're on an adventure in Hollywood, like Superman
here to save the day,
where no one wants you, but they recognize you're there.
They really want you there, just to fail
so they can be right
because you say *son*, *young*, *dawg*, and *mo'*
expected to drop because you've succeeded.
Nothing is ever promised tomorrow, today
as you once heard them say.
The jubilant bird of hope you are,

but they're as happy as a lugubrious monk
and still you leap tall buildings.
Tiny Tim is now Big Time,
seen as the new hot thing
like a hard pillow, or a soft brick.
You're an unlaced tennis shoe that fits just right—
the road greets you and tells you to follow it.
You're on an adventure in Hollywood, like Superman
Here to save the day.

Jachin Leatherman

The Power of Goodbye

The power of goodbye is distance
that is disturbed or like you are invisible.
You were sunshine, but now you are darkness,
now that life is silent.
The power of goodbye is feeling an angry attitude.
All those people that weren't congratulating
still are in a jealous world.
But the world that they live in has no clarity,
it is fuzzy.
Now the people are unlit and you are lit.
That is the power of goodbye.

Katrice Johnson

The Healing

Laughter is like medicine
It's healing me
Comedians have status as kings
their jokes stop my bleeding
They talk like angels, smell like Christmas, and taste like money
when you cash a check.

I feel like nothing bad has ever happened
An act tested by Martin Lawrence on the New York Def Comedy stage
I've been relieved by Neosporin and a Band Aid
Did the Lakers win last night?

I remember seeing Kobe's breezy in the audience
Maybe she's the reason he had fifty points
"The only thing to fear is fear itself,"
Franklin Roosevelt once said

The angry clouds of life and sadness blur my vision
My brain was clean as fog
It jumped out of my head and ran
in need of desperate help and
Duberry was there to call 911
so that next week, and the week after
my brain would return to my head
and I would be in a better state of mind

The street that my mind trod along
felt like a mattress
too soft for support
I'll have to chase it for it to come back
Adios Amigos
As the trees walk and the dirt crawls
my mind still wanders in the street.

Darcy Jones-Duberry

Fear

Fear is floating around me
like my nephew flying to the moon
Ghosts are hard to see
as the wind runs past my ear
I can taste the earth's surface
while touching the clouds in the sky
and sniffing the dust the ghost leaves behind

Being frightened by a ghost is like having the chills
Now as I get older, fear isn't surrounding me anymore
As my fear goes away, happiness appears in no time
He claims to be pimpin' me just to make me jump out my pants
Fear is floating around me, was all I could say

Death and grieving had shot me in the head
Now I'm so upset, like a dead daisy in a flowerpot of fear
Just imagine me changing into the invisible woman out of nowhere
and the shooter reappears in no time to hunt for fear
So by next week, or maybe a month from now,
fear will no longer scare me anymore
and ghosts will be my friends, sad but happy
instead of ugly but fierce enemies

I wonder if I can be invisible
permanently instead of temporarily
so I can know what it's like to make people fear me for a long time
Even as the ghosts play jumprope
as they read books and write stories
and even as happiness shines through
Fear will still be there

Ashanté Bundy



*top: Wayne Nesbit
bottom: Aavie Frye*

Through My Eyes

As I cry, I see dolphins dive into my tears,
The splash they make looks as if it were a waterfall
I wipe away my tears that feel like silk sheets
The white doves perched on the tree begin to talk to me
I smell the palm trees that surround me
while tasting the freshness of all that greets me

Paradise smells the way a cactus feels
Maybe my paradise wasn't that great
Paradise is so nice I just have to cry
We were as joyous as slavery
We flew to the sun and bathed in it

Maybe today, five minutes ago, or a couple of months before
all will be still on planet earth
Hawaii sings a tune, a tune that settles my heart
and a picture of a man appears
I would have to drown in the ocean
in order to hear this tune, and see this man
The moon asked if I had an appointment to see the sky
who was not open for business yet
even though I cried and dolphins dived into my tears

Channell Harris

Stop

Stop the madness in the street
Stop the haters that are weak
Stop the violence and the crimes
Stop hating on me because you can't
spit my rhymes
Stop

Benjamin Owens

The Truth

I think they've lied to us enough.
Now I have to prove that they have.
This much I also know:
that these events have been such a calamity
that has shaped our lives.

It is hard to convince that there has been
a crime committed against us.
It's more like a genocide.

Now that Dr. Martin Luther King,
who was a martyr,
is dead,
who will reveal these secrets hidden from us?
I'm going to strip the hurtful, painful,
shapeless memories they have told.
And I'll be the one to become the lighthouse
and guide them to the truth.

Channell Harris

Soaring Woman

A girl sometimes wanders
Into this world
Let's go back
Like nothing ever happened
Remember this place
Just because
It's like an invisible poem
This love is see through
Knowing my name
Soaring woman

Jeannette Jones

Vowels

Blue A circles round us
day to afternoon
night to midnight
stars sparkling in the sky

Scarlet E scorches your skin
the hurtful scars internally burn
shadowing your painful experience

Colorless I, having no shape
form, figure, and no identity
wants to be recognized
but can't walk or talk

O, as bright as the sky
shining light gleaming

Chantayle Watkins

Nothing Less

My gaze is the zenith of a mountain
I haven't done enough
until I've made it to the top
It is my custom to work hard
and never take the easy way out
I believe that it is not completed
until I have done it myself
The world wasn't made for me
I was made for the world
I always feel God has a purpose for me
and it's my duty to fulfill it
If I speak of not succeeding,
then I have failed

Chantayle Watkins

Flash

snap shot
freeze frame
free spirit
moves as smooth as the ocean
time waiting 2 stand still
generations waiting 2 look back
dreams waiting 2 b discovered
snap shot
freeze frame
free spirit
my film screams madness
madness that switches dreams into reality
reality that will take the heart and soul right out of the
photo
snap shot
freeze frame
free spirit

Brittany Keys

You

you are as sweet as cotton candy
you are as beautiful as a field of flowers
you smell as good as strawberries
but sometimes
you can be as mean as my worst nightmare
your head can be as hard as a rock
your heart can be as cold as a wintry day

Charnal Chaney

Dismembering Defeat

Flames burn, while an illusion draws of destruction
My heart crumbles like gold mines
Echoes waiting to be heard like voices in a dream.

Discovering deceit smoothes out faded loss
Regret rushes into your soul as rain on a dreadful day
Drowning problems in fear, as if invisible

Your light shines down like a nuclear bomb dissolving into rocks
Sacred minds fumble to the breath upon your voice
Dust will find you, disguised as water
Sounds of the heart will splurge on its day

Brittany Keys

The Mind of a Book

Have you ever thought about the mind of a book?
Providing the power of words that voices speak up.
Pages that have you reading between the lines
as you read into someone's heart.
Having a beginning that's thrilling, and an ending that's
dramatic.
Never knowing what to expect of it, just because of the cover.
Being sick of blending in with all the others,
when you just want your own voice.
The mind of a book, makes you think, makes you wonder
what life could be like.
The mind of a book, is the mind of life.

Brittany Keys



top: Arnicia Dean

bottom: Jachin Leatherman

Sounds of the Soul

I hear the ocean,
 crystal light water so unique wanting to expand its
horizon
I hear the girl,
 wanting to say what she really feels so the world can
accept her
I hear the mother,
 screaming of impatience to wait for her calling
I hear the dead,
 souls wanting to come from the underworld to reset
their mark
I hear the angel,
 a person so pure that would save you even if you were
a sinner
I hear the earth,
 waiting to restore its natural beauty
I hear me,
 observing all problems
I hear
I hear

Brittany Keys

All About Me

My attitude blossoms like flowers
 in the spring
My attitude is as sweet as the
 juice on ice cream
My personality glistens like diamonds
My personality is as silky as a
 caterpillar's back
But best of all I live my life like
 it is as golden as jewelry

Tamia Minton

Why Do They Run?

Why do they
Run?
They run cause
Their scared
Why do they
Run?
They run cause
They're in trouble
Why do they
Run?
They run cause
They want to hide
Why do they
Run?
They run cause
They want 2
Get away
They run
When they R
In trouble
They run
When they R
Tryin 2 hide
They run
When they want
2 get away

Monet Washington

Black

Black is
something like
a burning rope.
Black is like a
burning candle
that just went out.
Black is like
a child having
a nightmare.
Black is like
a black leather belt.
Black is like
the rust on
an old chain
on a bike.
Black is like
when all the
electricity is
off.

Richeeda Halfacre

Living Bright

My father's mind is as bright as a light.
I shine like the star in the sky.
Then I start to feel as bright as the sun.
His jewelry shines like a pack of diamonds.
An arena sparkles like a blast of fireworks.
Remember a watch will shine like stars.
But just live and stay light like gold.

Corde Bostick

Marching Strong

Marching on to protest
my footprints of joy in the rain
reflect on my burden of
my blood sweat and tears
together we unite as one
hundred people running
to the underground railroad
to discover
the roots of their strength

Andrea Plowden

Listen

I can come up with something fast
like the tempo of a heartbeat
That's why I can tell you about the nuclear sound
that echoes and people start to weep
Being left numb and just a memory
is every person's nightmare
And in your head the mellow voices of
regret are still there
And the howl of the unknown is heard
from a distance
You still listen
stop and pay attention
And not to mention the unseen
still listen
But to me, the unseen presence
can still be felt
And life is wild, you just gotta play
the hand you were dealt

Malik Battle

Wake Up

During daybreak
we breeze right on through
sittin and chillin
you don't have a clue
sleeping and slippin
that's not what we do
money is power
the feds know it too
fake friends by an hour
change 4 da loot
you play it to win it
you might fall through
you stop and just
catch it
you might get a clue

Darrin Williams

Growin' Up

I'm scared of growin' up
even though I want to so bad
If I tell my family
they would just get sad
I want to go to college
But what if I fail
my mom won't get her
check back in the mail
I'm not doin' that
cause I know what it
means to them
for me to do good
for me to do good
I know I could

Devona Perkins



*top: La'Shawn Edmonds
bottom: Kendra Hardman*

August

I love the month of August
I love the cookouts
and the family fights
my birthday is in August
it's five days before my sister's
I'm glad I'm a year older
I love my mom's Sunday dinners
barbecue chicken, mac-n-cheese
cabbage, cornbread
yum
the sunshine is fading
and the moon is coming out
time for midnight parties
I love the month of August
It's beautiful flowers
It's hot days, chilly days, and sometimes warm days
It's cookouts and parties

Nie'chellé Jackson

A Poet

A poet is a sidewalk
that I walk on
A poet is my shadow or my reflection
on the wall
A poet is the joy of freedom
that we live
A poet is the drama of your voice
when we talk

Antonio Drayton

Summertime in North Carolina

It's a different way
of life for me in
North Carolina.
I'm used to the city,
not the country,
where it's smelly hot,
grassy and dirt everywhere.
My uncle always would
wake me up so we could
go hunting with his hunting
dogs, then back to the
trailers, we would go with
the rabbits they had caught.
Playing on the dirty grounds
in the backyard playing
with the kittens that
came from down
the road. When we're
on our way back
to the city we would
go down the long roads
and stop at my grandmother's
to see the pigs and
chickens. Then we leave,
go to the store where
they have the wonderful
bar-b-q with hush puppies.

Tamia Minton

When a child is born

It's the beginning
of day break
being in labor
for 36 hours
your family
and friends
in the
waiting
room
all in silence
awaiting for
magic and
dreams of
a newborn

Devona Perkins

Breathe

Her voice echoes beneath the golden bridge like a child whispers

Her heartbeat drowns in the hollow nightmares as fast as a scared mouse

Her unseen regret turns into weeping memories like mellow dreams

Her blossom face looks lost like a little boy separate from his mother

Her tears drop down her face like a sprinkle from a fire

Her life is gone like a baby that can't breathe

Teara Thompson

Why do people run?

Why do people run?
They're running to hide
To never be seen
to keep quiet
What are they running for?
They're running from people
They're running from questions
They're running from fear
What are they running from?
They're running from lies told
from secrets kept
dreams planned
Why do people run?
From memories
From their past
From their actions
What are they running for?
They're running because of tricks
Because of the truth
What are they running from?
From scared people
Hurt people
From people that know the truth

Teara Thompson

Found in New York

Morning sunlight
filled a November weather
cold air
busy street
loud cars
new things on a
new trip
waiting sixteen years
with misty dreams
silence history
blossom's face
filled a very happy girl
sadness and sorrow swept away
unfinished stories
the final chapter
I reach my destiny
I found in New York
my father

Teara Thompson

Never Forgotten

The man's fallen faith was supposed to be a forgotten memory.
But is still an unsolved burden in his life.
His life went from bright to complete darkness.
Once it was invisible but became noticeable to all around him.
He had this problem during the duration of his childhood.

Lamont Gaines



*top: Channell Harris
bottom, l-r: Rolandus Frye, La'Shawn Edmonds*

The perfect sound

The perfect sound comes from
A high note of happiness
Creating rhymes and dreams.
Sing the blues of a crying baby
Crowning the skyline of hope
Jam packed words put together
Celebrating the perfect sound
from the radio.
Madness and rejection tangle into the microphone
Transforming lazy into energy
Sharing your heart to those above
Catching cheers from around
Never to be put down
With the perfect sound.

Teara Thompson

Chemistry

Light wind smoothly fading music into the sound of your question.

Echoing mellows of disguise in regrets.

Flaming electricity multiply by questions about trust.

Frozen battles drown emotional.

Texture of invisible chains circle around me.

Understand the fool who was patiently waiting.

Golden rocks appear like waiting for goodness to heal.

Having the courage to celebrate the chemistry between us.

Teara Thompson

Bases Loaded

A base hit
grand slam
running
score
home run hooray
bases loaded
like a
gun
A base hit
is like being
able to
breathe
the ball's
coming fast
swing with
hope.

William Walker

Tattoo

I have the power to express art
that can never be washed away.
I am a tattoo with power.
I can express your feelings
and a period in your life
without opening my mouth.
I am a tattoo with power.

Ashley Williams

Snow Day

I like when the
winter comes
you can play
in the snow
you can make
hot drinks stay
home from school
and enjoy the
misty, breeze,
newborn winter air
that can some-
time make your
blood feel like
it's cold but you
always know
when it gets
warm no more
snow day no more
playing in the
snow no more
enjoy the misty
breeze newborn
winter air

Antonio Buie

I am

I am the bullet in the gun
that makes you feel.
I am the wind that circles the light
that makes your voice steal.
I am the power that ignites
the flame that burns.
I am the understanding that
what is happening on the streets
is sometimes real.
I am the story in the poem
that speaks the truth.
I am the frozen ice that
cools your drink.
I am the sun that was ignited
by the power of the flame.
I am.

Antonio Buie

The Question

I ask why the weep of his life,
the distance of his day
becomes my heartbeat to the
unseen bridge.
My baby blossoms into the voices
of my heart and soul.
Dilemma comes into the memory
while the visions of the dawn howl
and glisten like demons
into the dust.

Oralia Woods

The Art in Me

The art in me
burns my sheets
my pencil also.
The art in me
is very powerful.
Pencils and paper are
the tools I use
to begin the war.
The art in me
helps my dreams.
The tool designs
my future like
new york designs
buildings.
The art in me is
as bright
as the colors.

Antonio Buie

Talking on the phone

I am a fool in your power,
it surrounds me like a kid in a fight.
The sounds of your affection
drown out my pulse to
a misty field of trust.
Your flame runs through me
like water through a river,
like the healing of sacred peace.
I echo.

Ashley Williams



top: Alexis Lemons

bottom: Kendra Hardman

Summer

When I feel the
breeze, I fill
up with joy, I
embrace the seed
from its ground
we run in the
field with the
butterflies, we
hear the silence
of the water guns
and water hose
we get lots
of barbecue and
hear the pumping
music for the
final hour

Oralia Woods

I want to be you

Loud vocals and unbelievable high notes
Sounds of music but also beats of rhythm
Singing sounds of melodies
Words that you wouldn't understand
how she felt
makeup, spotlight, microphone get ready
Singing high notes only a dolphin can hit
beautiful like a rose and sweet as candy
There she is as the crowd cheers her on
I want to be you

Sherice Myers

Why do people run?

Why do people run?

Is it because someone is after them with a gun?

or if they just found out that they are going

to have a son?

Why do people run?

Why do people run?

Do they run because they don't want to be arrested?

or if they just want to get home to be well rested?

Why do people run?

Why do people run?

Why do people run?

Do they run just to get away from their fears?

the fears that they don't want to

hear are near?

Why do people run?

Why do people run?

Why do people run?

Raynard Oliver

Blackness

not just the

darkness of

a color

But a showing

of a Black

person's

pride with

joy that he
is happy with
his color
being so proud
with my color
I am
Black
my soul is
Black and
it won't
push back
as I walk on
the earth
my Blackness won't
be cursed
because of
the fact
that I
worship my
Blackness

Raynard Oliver

Me

I'm strong and intelligent
Sometimes I can be creative
Sometimes I can be funny
But most of the time I'm happy
Happy for being in this world
Happy for just being me
Although sometimes being me is stressful at times
Because I go through things
I think most people would not understand

Jasmine Phoenix

dream ghost

I have a face
but I'm a ghost
no one sees me
unless I know
I go through walls
without no sound
I can watch you when you are asleep
But if you wake up I can make you weak
I will glide through the cold air
destroy anything in your dreams
as you wake up scared
when I dip knowing that I don't care
I stay out of sight
don't want to be seen
But the thing about this ghost
is that I am but a dream

Raynard Oliver

I Am a Boulder

I am a boulder
strong backbone and thick blood
that's why I don't want to
be stuck in the hood.
I am a boulder
bigger than your house
all day I stand strong
but being a boulder sometimes
you can never go wrong,
doing the things I am supposed to
I am praying one day I kindly
get out of school.

Aaron Teeter

Eagle

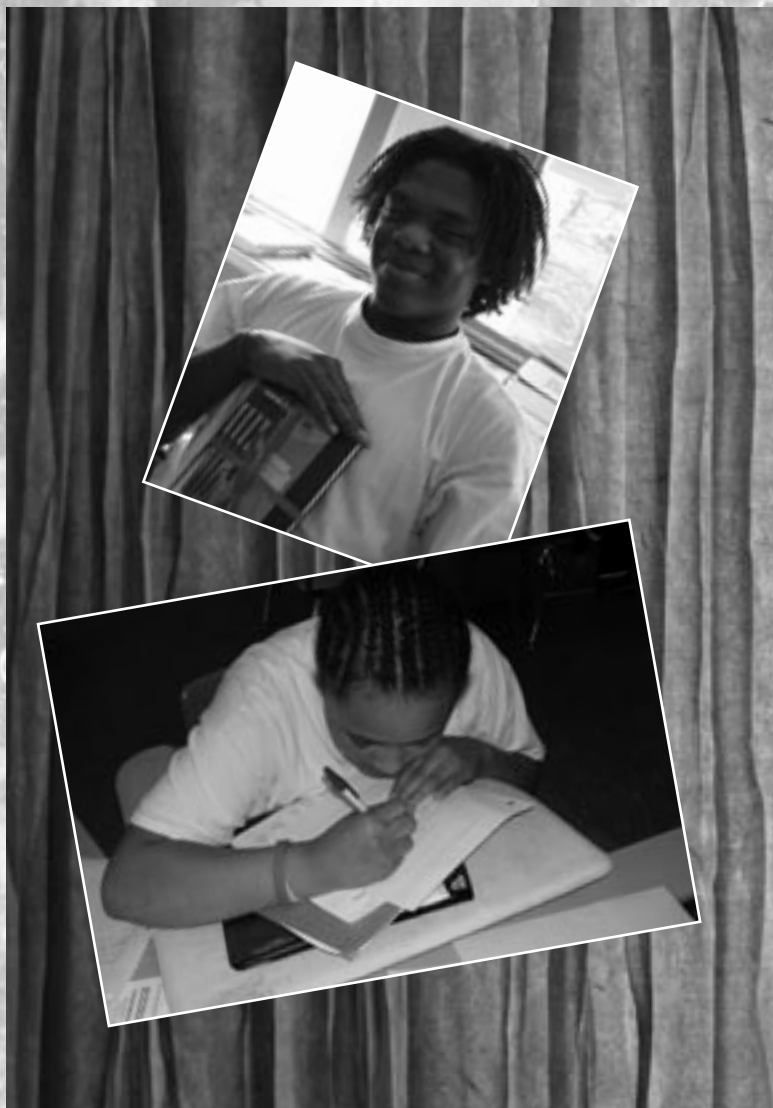
I am an eagle
bold, courageous and swift
I am slick like wind
breezing on by
coyotes howl at me
I am clever like a fox
mentally strong like an ox
I am an eagle
who grew from an egg
I am the king of me and you
I soar through the sky
I am an eagle

Khyron Small

I am

I am so amazing I could
win the NCAA tourney
I am quick like lightning
so good I'll knock MJ's socks off
you can't stop me
I will triumph
with a 3 like Ray Allen
and defense like the Glove
you can't keep me
from accomplishing my dreams

Khyron Small



top: Rolandus Frye

bottom: Jasmine Boswell

Thoughts

I am as wild as a jungle
I am as quiet and as patient as a soul
I am as beautiful as a flower
But no one knows
But you
You make my day as bright as a smile
You make everything seem worth having
You make me seem like a thought
that will always make your day
for a while

Erica Walker

The Fire Within

Hold your fire
Don't let it burn you
The things people say
may not be for you to listen
Hold on to your fire
never let it burn out
for the legacy of the fire
has hope for your community

Hold your fire for it has a legacy of
faith
strength
spirit
art
and so much more
so once you catch that fire
love it even more

Erica Walker

Untitled

You rain down from the feeling that is heaven
you send inspiring feelings through my heart
you give me your hands from God
with awe inspiring words
I feel like an angel from the womb
with wisdom and faith
like Romeo and Juliet
you ripped my heart the moment we met

Khyron Small

Your Fears

I have a fear of being in heart ache
a fear I feel will make a mistake
cautious, dangerous are all signs telling me no
telling me I don't need it don't go
telling me back away don't try it
because the love down inside will never buy it
my heart is not of steel
it is as fragile as glass
once you break it, its never the same
but lucky you can always find someone new
a person that will stay true to you.

Erica Walker

Mississippi Heat

Spring and summer
is what I
like about Mississippi
the warm breeze outside
the weeds in the cornfield
cow eating hay in the
barn painted red
cook-out outside
family fun games
and dancing, eating
and laughter
chicken on the grill
homemade ices
flavors like grape
and strawberry and
orange and cherry
the smell of the
beach and sand in
your toes

Erica Walker

Memory

As I sit in the chair
I think about, how I was as brave
as a lion or as quiet as a turtle
As I sit in the chair
a thought runs through my mind
like the track team at the 100 yard dash
I laugh as I sit there
As I sit in the chair in the corner
My memory begins to wander
like a bird in the summer

Kenesha White

Untitled

I'm tryna' fight
my fear but I can't
the thoughts runnin'
in my mind keep telling
me I'm almost out of time
so shape up, wake up
and get in the game
before your soul forfeits.
I'm fighting my fear
my fears are fighting my tears
I wake up and realize it's all a dream
until reality comes and
then we'll see my fear
has beat me.

Kenesha White

My feeling for You

My trust for you is so strong
but sometimes I feel we don't belong
I think of you all the time at home
even when I'm in the zone

Sometimes I wish we can be alone
but the way things are we'll have to wait till we're grown
the time we shared was so great
only if people would mind their business and didn't hate
just sit back and wait
till things get straight
when you find the time in your heart to be my mate
but don't wait too late

People will tend to hate, tell you things that aren't true
but don't believe just know that you're my boo
it's not about them it's about you
take note and know that the one I love is you

So sit back and listen to what I'm telling you
and know that I love you
so don't let people come between me and you
understand what I'm trying to do
I'm trying to make you my boo
to hold, to love, to cherish you

Jerrold Stanley

Game Time

It's always fun on a
Friday or Saturday night
the thumping of the
loud speakers
lots of people dancing
and bouncing to the beats
go-go in particular
different bands
coming in and out
every half hour
the beat
constantly thumps
louder and louder

Jerrold Stanley



top: Rayshawn Hall

bottom, l-r: Brittany Dobbins, Daneil Wheeler, Maureen Johnson

Faded

I lost all of my flame,
you fooled me.
Your voice echoes in my head.
Your voice is soundless.
Frozen, it no longer moves me.
I no longer wait for u.
U are just a mist of air
that faded from the earth.

Raymond Newman

Me

Being rich is hard for me to be
staying on low-key trying not to spend my money

tryin' not to be flashy
but keepin' it classy

try not to hate
cause my bank statements are the same as Bill Gate's

I drive a 2008 king cobra
did you know my money is not that far from Oprah's

chillin' in my spare time with superstars such as Puff
Daddy
Goin' to auto shows bidding on rare Caddy's

In the Neon every week playing drum set for CCB
and the following week I lead for TCB

there are many folks that want me to F-L-I-P
as you can see, it's pretty cool living the life as me

Jerrold Stanley

Fear

Fear
everyone has it
no one admits it
Everyone in the world
has fear
Even I have fears
things I'm afraid of
I fear things most people have never dreamed
in their whole lives
I have seen things a boy my age should have never seen
Maybe fear is what makes the world go round
Fear makes you get up every day
You do not know it, but fear is your heartbeat
and fear is what runs in your blood
I do not know why people have fears
Maybe I will never know
But fear is everywhere.

Raymond Newman

Strong and Powerful

I'm so strong when I make a mistake
I get the strength to make it right

I'm so brave when I'm on stage
the crowd locks eyes and waits for my words

I'm so powerful I wake up in the morning
and look at myself in the mirror, and I see
someone that I do not think I have seen before,
because I am a beautiful young woman

Maureen Johnson

Trust

trust your heart
in the light of your soul
give me the beat
so I will never let you go
take your time to be mine
cause since I found you
I never felt better
you are like the sun in the sky
and the beat of my drum
the song in my heart
but don't keep me apart
I don't want to enter this war
because you will be sore without me
you probably won't even make it to the backdoor
trust in your heart and the power of dust
light this candle and you won't rust
understand what goes on in life
cause one step at a time
you can make good choices

Maureen Johnson

Winning and Losing

I understand that you don't always win
sometimes I forget it but that's what I always knew
I still know I win some and I lose some
but other people don't know that.
I can't explain why I don't think I can lose
but that's just the way it has been
for the longest time.
Tomorrow I will figure out
everything about winning and losing.

Shawn Moore

run

he's running away from himself
knowing it's bad for his health
he's running like he killed
somebody on a mike
or he killed somebody after a fight
really he's running from the light
that's telling him to do right
God's calling him on His side
but he still wants to ride
and he's scared inside

Brian Cooper

I am here today

I am a stone
hard shaped,
can be found anywhere
I am like a knife, sharp and
brutal, I am the wind
it blows, I come and go
as I please.

I am life, I live
I look, I talk
I walk, I sound
I play, I am life
I am here today.

Shawn Moore

Singing

The melody echoes
music notes

I sing the song
they rock and roll
the singing is slamming cause I
rock the stage

I sing like a shining star
but the way you shine makes me lose my mind

when I sing I make a crowd
jump up and down and holla' back
whoo, whoo

I sing like that diamond in the sky
sometimes it shines up so high

I look so beautiful far away

I just can't stop the shine

'cause I might lose my mind

Maureen Johnson



*top: Joseph Holbrook
bottom: Daneil Wheeler*

Wooden Heart

You are like a blow fish,
blowing up after getting touched.
Invisible to the naked eye.
Noisy as fireworks.
I am crying a happy song to make you smile,
looking like a lonely lady.
As wood goes up to build your house,
and wood breaks it apart, your heart beats
'till it can't be stopped.
Your mind opens and closes like
a revolving door.

Brittany Dobbins

This Is the Truth

I am so great,
I am the greatest of them all.
My mother gave me this blood,
So I'm 'a act this way.
I am so sexy I can be queen of macking.
I am so perfect I can take Tyra's place
quick in a hurry.
I was born with 1 nose and 1 head.
So u can tell I'm perfect look at the way
I am standing.
I got a sassy attitude.
And I like it, everybody thinks it's ugly,
But I think it's best to act this way.
I am so truthful,
I can tell the truth all the time.
Because I am so positive, there is nothing to lie about.
I am so truthful, I can be a wishing rod.

Shané McNeil

How the World Turns Around D.C.

D.C. is where I live.
I have been living here for 15 and some change years.
I wonder what happened after the first black person
moved into D.C. Was it the same?
What happened to the first teen who got killed?
Did we have R.I.P. shirts?
Were we putting our hoods on?
Did your mother say, “you were a good person,
but you killed a lot of people”?
Why do we have money for a baseball stadium
and not for school and homeless people to get homes?

Brittany Dobbins

Free Spirit

I am a free spirit,
I speak my mind.
I don't bring no drama,
like fighting and arguing.
My voice brings peace.
Only love and seawater.
Bravery is my first name.
I am not scared of the tree
falling on my head.

A poet is a park, playing around
to make you laugh.
My sorrow pours out like juice
going into a cup.
My feelings are like candy corn,
being eaten at Halloween.
My body is like a bull,
if I see red it's over.

Brittany Dobbins

Who Am I

I am the king of peace
by ending World War I
and World War II.
No one killed anyone
The world lives in harmony
with family and friends
I am so tough
I built the empire state building
with my two hands
I run faster than a cheetah
My 4-0 time was a 0.32
I knock out Muhammad Ali
I'm a lover

Girls call me spectacular and romeo
because they haven't had
anybody love them like me
I was married to 25 supermodels
I'm the richest man alive
when I look down I find
\$100 bills on the ground every day

I am amazing, supreme and a legend
you can't speak my language
I am saying I am an
eagle soaring in the sky

Aavie Frye

Your Face

Every time I saw your face
I remembered
when we used to be together
talking on the phone
for hours
sharing everything
always being there
your gravity pulled me straight to you.

Every time I see your face

Aavie Frye

Another Tuesday

and I can't think right now
my head hurts
scratching my eye
it itches
I'm tired
I was awake 'till late
last night
I want to sleep, and
the heavy lightness
of my eyelids
is calling me to sleep
to slumber
I'll sleep 'till I
am not tired
taking time to rest

Anthony Miller

Bravery

I am bravery
I'm not scared of anything
I am a shadow
of my father
I am intelligence
a smart young man
I am a mile
going through time
I am ice crystals

Brian Cooper

the winter comes

when winter comes,
we throw snowballs that sail through
the air, stay warm in baggy pants,
boots, and baseball caps. I like to
tackle the player while playing football
while the play is on in the snow

Dwayne Grandson

Basketball

My mother is a net
My father a 3 point shooter
My brother is a criss cross
My sister a hoop
My grandfather is a dribble
My grandmother a free throw
I am a runner
My other brother a basketball

Jerome Harris



top: Brittany Graham

bottom, l-r: Arnica Dean, Diane Ramey, Brittany Ridley

When Your Mind Turns Hateful

when your mind turns hateful
you get very angry
call people names
they think you talk about them
but you are not.
when your mind turns hateful
you act up talking negative,
putting your hands on your head
trying to control your mind
talking to yourself
trying to calm down.

Anthony Miller

My personality

I am a jade stone
green with jealousy
I am cool water
very refreshing
I am a valley
having different paths
I am joy
creating smiles
I am noise
making sure I am heard

Jamilla Hansford

I Am

I am many miles
traveling through time

I am metal detectors
I can sense bad things that can hurt people

I am the Anacostia River
I wash away dirty things

I am a shadow
always on the side of people

I am drama
always into the mix of things

I am dark
helpful to everybody

I am a meteor
always star struck

Shammah Keys

The Wind Comes

The winter comes hard
it comes with hard wind
it blows your stuff around
your clothes off the line
your hair flies in the air
it even blows trash in your face
wind is invisible

Daneil Wheeler

Lost

I know the meaning of my life
At times I understand what goes on in it
Yesterday morning I realized life isn't forever
So now I live it to the fullest
I know life's meaning
but I always question
Last week I was lost
I was in my own world
I didn't know where I was
I can't explain, but I wasn't on this planet
I was deep in thought
About what religion to go to
Why education is important
And why live when eventually we die
I still have no answers
One day I'll figure out

My mind, body, and soul feel hungry for the answers

Jamilla Hansford

I'm a voice

I'm a voice growing up in the world
not afraid of anything and growing up
as a good person, being nice to my family
being a very good person to my friends.

I'm a dream that comes alive
helping people and staying true.

Daneil Wheeler

Relationships

The power of an intimate relationship is sacred
the golden regret of destruction questions
the healing used to drown deceit.
As your mind wanders, drawn to
invisible likeness, you find yourself frozen.
You may dive in and out of relationships
due to different karma.

Voices alert you by waiting for the
right time to tell. If these words
encourage you to embrace your true love
then take them lightly.

Henry Heard

When I Think of You

Our relationship is a rock.
We are always strong.
When I hear your voice, it's an echo through my ear.
Our partnership is like a flame that never gets low.
We are fire.
No one can bring us down.
We are shaped like a perfect heart,
With a little faded shade of red.
You are like my little golden charm that lights up.
When I think of you.

Jasmine Boswell

Bones

I am the bones in my family
My aunt is the joint
My dad is the tendon
My grandmom is the ligament

Benjamin Owens

Cold Hearted Diva

You cry, I laugh, I cry, you care.
No offense, I don't love you.
How can you love someone
Who doesn't have a heart?

Please forgive me,
I never meant to hurt you,
Just remember there is someone
Who loves you.

When you tell me how you feel,
It goes in one ear and out the other.
All I think about is myself.

Please forgive me,
I never meant to hurt you,
Just remember there is someone
Who loves you too.

LaJuan Johnson



*top: Joseph Holbrook
bottom: Melanie Collins*

I Am From

I am from
loud laughter and family board games

People standing around the kitchen
with spicy smells of daddy's Saturday chili

Baby Brant screaming to the top of
his little lungs
Aunt Bea and Uncle Charles arguing

But most of all
I am from love, hugs, kisses, and
Grandma telling us all,
"I love you baby."

LaJuan Johnson

The Usual Suspects

There are always two usual suspects
and the description of them is obvious.

Tall black males, one with long hair
and the other with short hair.

They both are splitting images of a
concerned black male who is likely
to be convicted of a crime.

Lamont Gaines

Deaf

Her voice was soft but unheard and as sweet
as a mockingbird, I wasn't sure why I
couldn't hear they say she was mine without
ears I didn't understand why we could not
communicate when I asked for her name
she wrote it in a frame of fog . . . Beth . . .
later after that I found out she was deaf

Andre Craig

Her Face

Her face
is the beauty
of an angel.

A fresh picked rose.

It's a beautiful
newborn
baby.

It's the elements
of love.

Her face, her face is
similar to
life in
heaven.
Her face.

Andre Craig

Daddy Lies

A father that tries to make
positive but doesn't lead them
through. He tries to cover up all lies
with more lies. She here he lies,
he said he's moving far away,
to start his life all over.

He sweeps his child out with
hope and dreams, dreams that
I think he will never hold up to.
She always tells me,
my daddy this, my daddy that
to the point I don't want
to see her get hurt.

He's just too lazy to me, reward
him with anything. We try to
teach him so he will not
hurt his daughter again.
I stand up for him once
I will do it again, to the point
he will stop telling his daughter lies.

Jeannette Jones

That's Where I'm From

I am from Parklands
where there's always gun shots
and there's people always yelling and
arguing, also fighting

I am from macaroni and cheese,
and cheesecake, banana pudding
chicken, greens, corn
and cabbage on holidays

I am from the taste of food
everyday when I walk
in the door and in the kitchen

I am from the touch
of blood and from
my hands fighting people
I should be loving

Javon Taylor

Who I Am

A poet is a shadow
and I am a dark voice
A poet is joy
but that's your choice
I am dreams
or nightmares at night
this is my sorrow
and my pride is out of sight
I am the dark and the dawn
the good and the bad
if your mood is happy
I'll make it sad

Keith Anderson

Open My Eyes

I open my eyes
look at the world
see all these kids
playin' basketball and football
I'm from the light that shines
on me within darkness
that lives in the world God created
with His hands, His knowledge, and His caring.
Time, look at the time
it's real dark in my room
I have on sunglasses that allow me to see
my visions and my future in time

Vernon Dawkins

Father

My father was a great man
we laughed, we joked, we played
My father was the type to speak his mind
My father was very strong, he never let me down
My father became sick throughout my young ages
My father was never late to pick me up after school,
never missed a game,
he was devoted to me
My father left me
My father, I love you
My father

Debra Welcher



top: Diane Ramey

bottom: Brian Johnson

Strong and Bold

My voice is strong and bold
something like Martin Luther King's
it can move your heart
and make you sing
My voice is strong and bold
like a warrior waiting for attack
If you hear my voice,
it can make you snap

Germaine Bruno

Voices

Voices, not my voice, but voices I hear
Voices I hear but they're not my voices
Voices are unspoken like an unborn
child with a lost family member
like the tears I cry from hearing
my ancestors' voices
Voices are words that blend in
with underground machines
Voices are blank words that recite a poem
Voices are words that bond with generations
Voices are words that claim Black people like us
Voices are words that are silent
but live on with us throughout out lives
Voices, not my voice, but voices I hear

Sherita Taylor

Echo

Last night I was
in my room talking to
myself no one was there
to talk to me.

I was just sitting in my
lonely room all by myself
I'm just alone, the only
one here, I just hear
my echo.

I don't have anyone to talk to.

My mother is gone, my dad is too
so I'm just alone, sitting in my
lonely room, when I talk all I hear is my
echo, echo, echo, echo. . .

Terrquella Buchanan

Trapped Doorway

soothing serene sounds
in the invisible community
I'm a soul survivor
that has gifted stupidity
distant devastating debris
is that the forbidden reward?
graceful darkness and obscene violence
seems to be descending upward
huge herds, sudden loss, and positive
jealousy around my way, finally
I have escaped my trapped doorway

Delonta Blaine

The Broken Silence

The moonlight in the midnight was
broken by the break of dawn.
The precious peace was soft and serene.
I watched the fallen petal of the flower die
from its dryness. The lifted sun was
like gleaming gold in the sky.
The distant day lasted long. The mild
melody of my piano played perfectly.
The dark dorm was lit by the cadence
of the candle. The shadow of the hall
was bouncing off the wall by the broken light.

Aleisha Green

Color Outside the Lines

I am not perfect
So don't expect me to be
I am a puzzle broken up into pieces
So please believe I have different parts to me
I am a magnet who attracts and does a whole lot of
moving
I leave people thinking
I guess it's confusing
I am not a perfect painting on the wall
If you think so, lies you tell
I've been through it all
Don't think I'm perfect
I make mistakes just like the next person
Stop trying to save me
I'm learning to become a young woman
I'm no longer a baby
I am a garden of vines with many fruits of different kinds
Just to let you know
There will be some color outside the lines.

Aleisha Green

Iron Bars

Blocking you from achieving your goals
A trapped soul
In jail behind bars
A trapped door
There is no way out

You followed their lead and failed
And now you're behind bars in jail

Blocking you from achieving your goals
Now you have nowhere to go
You feel like a trapped soul

The sealed door has ruined your day
And you want to get out
There is no way

The boundary between you and freedom

Aleisha Green

Mother's Struggles

Every day I wake up happy to see the world.
I tell my mother, she is the best girl.
But day after day, week after week,
month after month, I see her struggle.
She has no money for herself and
that is trouble. Most of her money
pays the bills. I just want me and her
to sit back and chill. But as long as
my name is Blaine, I say to myself
there's no shame in my name.
I may be poor in the hood,
but being in this world
with my mom is all good.

Delonta Blaine

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