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VOICE

O F T H E K N I G H T



No: *Three* Date: *Spring 2007*



top: Shannon Donaldson
bottom: Aaron Montel Smith



Squares, Black dogs
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Welcome to the third 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 2007, breaking the previous record set last year with the second group of D.C. Creative Writing Workshop participants, Ballou Senior High School has produced five winners in the Parkmont Poetry Contest. Congratulations to Maryum Abdullah, Ashley Barber, Damon Kee, James Saunders and Renita Williams 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, Sarah Booth and Bloomberg L.P., Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Children's Fund of Metropolitan Washington, Commonweal Foundation, Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, Fannie Mae Foundation, John Edward Fowler Foundation,

Rita Susswein Gottesman Fund of the Alexandria Community Trust, Harman Family Foundation, Hitachi Foundation, International Monetary Fund, Marpat Foundation, Mattel Children's Foundation, Moran Family Fund, Meyer Foundation, Project My Time, The Tom Lane Fund, Spirit of Giving Guide, Wachovia Foundation, Wendling Foundation, Weissberg Foundation, The World Bank, Anonymous, Borders Books and Music, Michael Joy and TSCJoy/Monterey, LLC, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Karibu Books, Holly Mansfield and GO! Creative, 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, Gregory Auger, George and Lenore Cohen, Lee E. Epps, Tom and Carolyn Grey, Mark Hollinger and Kathy McNeil Hollinger, Frances Horn, Lynne and Joseph Horning, Betsy Karel and the Lodestar Fund, Gay and Charlie Lord, Judine Slaughter, Mr. and Mrs. Ladislaus Von Hoffman, Richard Thompson, Juanita Wade, Vera M. White, and Martin Youmans.

Special thanks for the hard work and dedication of the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop Board of Directors: Dr. Susan Gerson, Sandra Hardman, Bernie Horn, Kathleen Huston, Michael Joy, Joan Kennan, Bill Newlin, Raina Rose Tagle, Nancy Schwalb, Kirsten Tollefson and Jamila Wade.

We would also like to thank the following staff members who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Karen Smith, Dr. Portia Bookheart, Ms. Vanessa Harris, Mr. Howard, and Ms. Alex Skoog. ●

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with real hearts
Braha moving the
dandy lions. Cra
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Monkies in old
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No
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the morning
year in my
Eyelids are hurting
Strange feelings
mysterious heat, and a
sky to see its
hide. The sun
bright
birds

P O E M S



l-r: Shiquida Smith, Laquietta Wright, Shakiyla Harris, Latonya Williams

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I can make elt
to
Shape punches
back where they
past and truck
staring your
champion



top: Maryum Abdullah
bottom, l-r: Gabrielle Martin, Brittany Watkin

He Was Lucky

Farewell, he said to the darkness
For out of millions of children
he was a survivor
Never again will he be
in hollow, empty rooms
The voices and marching boots
Blindness of the dark
Fear of what might happen
if the door opens
Barbed wire on every window
and painted blue-black
They thought he was forgotten
Listen!
He said, I'm gonna get out
and he did
barefoot,
for he broke the glass
Crawled out with cuts
and new scars

—*Asia Barber*

As Seasons Come

I

Spring

As the sun glows, and wind blows
and kids scream and joy rings throughout the air
I wonder how anyone can come to hate such a time
where one can eat ice cream without rushing
so it won't melt
and leaves shine and trees smell
letting everyone know that spring is here

II

Winter

There's really not much to say to you,
besides the occasional
laugh of someone falling in snow
School being out and being able to stay in the house
and eat till I'm stuffed
watch and listen to music
You bruise me with frozen hands and feet
Until we meet again I'll be as friendly as you
Goodbye for now, winter

III

Fall

The season of mystery and love,
the smell of cinnamon buns
The season of song and dance,
you touch me when I'm not at my best
with the occasional sun which
always makes me smile, if only you could
stay longer than just a while

IV

Summer

The time of shorts, skirts games and laughter
Out of all the seasons
you seem to last the longest
Not only in days, but in my mind
You bring so many different times
There is no way one can not enjoy you
even though you make it hard to breathe at times
When you let down your guard
you're so comfortable I almost
can't live without you

Spring, winter, fall, and summer—
you guys bring so much to the table
Laughs, cries, joy, scares
It would be wrong to pick just one

—*Alexis Jenkins*

When All Meets

Pink roses whisper in the air
Black snake slithers through the night
Cars drive in circles
Bears cry to the sky
Red daisies jump in the air
Tires become squares
A frog stops and makes a triangle
While blue and green monkeys throw rings
Into the air
And a donkey swallows them and screams

—*Alexis Jenkins*

Spring

I
My blindness from the sun
as it's looking at me
I am dreaming of the cloud
as it rises

II
I almost feel the wind
as it passes through me,
the feathers on the bird
as it flies across the sky

III
The glow of the sun
like a huge candle
I can feel a shadow coming near me,
a memory that all is lost

IV
I can hear the soft wind,
the evening of the sun

—*Christina Washington*

A Life with Purpose

My gaze is overflowing
and I'm in fear,
the world is darkness
and I can't see.

Every day is a mystery
and I wonder what it is,
I open up a window
to look outside.

My shadow is present
and it doesn't go away,
the afternoon is beautiful
the change of the area unknown.

The arrival of friends
the sunset is gone,
I wonder what difference
I can make.

The world is distant
and so am I,
the triumph of victory,
the injustice of people.

The farewell of peoples' death is scary,
the unexpected is near,
and I don't know what it is.
The world is where I live,
and I'm proud of it.

—*Christina Washington*

Olethea

My name is Olethea
and my name sounds like
lots of cats fighting for food.
My name tastes like olives.
My name feels like a big high wave
trying to get back into the ocean.
My name looks like ABC soup
working to get itself back into order.
My name smells like a dirty garbage can
hoping to get clean.

—*Olethea Thompson*



top: James Saunders

bottom: Nefertearia Crawley

Flowing Into a New Year

I am flowing into a new year
and the old year's spinning back
like a windy wind
that I catch in my black hair,
like heavy fingers,
like all my good promises.
And it would be easy to let go:
thinking what I said to myself,
starving myself, freeing myself,
thinking what I would do
with the New Year

—*Olethea Thompson*

Kaleidoscope

Jumping and dancing
gold bees are flying into hearts
I'm running into the house to
get my keys
silver cars are driving
in a formation
laughing at dogs trying
to get a bone
electric O's
turning into blue and white flags
hearts and triangles
trying to turn themselves
back into shapes, and
diamonds look like daisies
houses filled with hamsters and rabbits
just like sunflowers and roses
growing in the sun

—*Olethea Thompson*

Strange Dream

talking green birds
sat on round trees
cheering as the
dolphin skipped to
the beat of the pool,
as the butterflies jumped
on the orange ape,
asking for the diamond tulips;
the blue eagles fly across
the sea of A's,
the pink convertible
drove around the
heart-shaped playground
as the orange-yellow
roses blossomed—
I smiled.

—*Ashley Barber*

My father

My gaze is sadness, full of tears
hate, anger, frustration,
and, just maybe
sometimes happiness.

It is my custom to hide
these feelings of suffering and darkness.

And sometimes I may cry when
I'm not alone.

And what I see is nothing,
no image, no face,
as he slowly fades
from my mind and heart.

And I'm very good at forgetting,
But I will never forgive.

The world wasn't made
to be stuck in the past,
but to move on and live life.
I have no regrets—
I think everything happens for a reason.

If I speak of him,
it is in hate and anger.
It's not because of what he did,
but because of what he didn't do.

To love is not easy,
but I will never love.

—*Asia Barber*

June

I
June—
the shine, the glory
school is out, pools are open,
kids' laughter brightens the day.
The sun is out, the cold is gone,
Whew! Those are the days.

II

The birds singing, rabbits hopping,
searching for a bite to eat;
flowers shining bright, flowing
to the rhythm of the beat.
Forgotten the time, forgotten the way
June is so good, I'll be happy all day.

III

June smells so sweet,
makes you want to eat the
cool breeze, air as
it surrounds you,
just want to give up.
The crayon box open,
so you can see all the beauty
when June is alive.

IV

June, full of secrets
and good memories
and neon streets,
mystery sounds,
dreaming of flying
with the air.

—*Ashley Barber*

The Eyes of Thunder

My gaze is rainy, full of thunder.
It is my custom to create happiness,
Deleting all the bad things that happen
And sometimes I close my eyes
And what I see amazes me—
Things I've never seen before.

And I'm very good at seeing things before me;
I'm capable of having happiness,
Like I won the lottery
Having all the money I need.

I believe in good times
Because I can feel it inside,
But the sadness is what
I see when I close my eyes.
The world wasn't made for me to see
(just to live a lie).

I have no good memories; I have nightmares.
If I speak of snakes, it's not because I'm bad,
But because of my life, and family past.
All I have is sadness, full of tears and anger,
No love.

To love is forbidden,
and only to hate is allowed.

—*Ashley Barber*

No longer existing

My gaze is distant and blurry.
It is my custom to slowly observe
and think it through;
and what I see is sometimes golden.
I'm capable of conquering the suffering
that exists in the outside world.

I believe in spiraling out of control
because of overflowing happiness.
The world wasn't made for an unknown presence;
it was made for change and new arrivals.



top: Damon Kee



bottom: Tyesha Smith

If I speak of the past, it's not because I'm sorry
but because it is golden and full of love.

To love is to unwittingly live
and not regret a thing.

—*Jerrita Tolbert*

Spinning Into a New Year

I am spinning into a New Year,
but the past keeps peeping around the corner
like a nosy child.

All of my past mistakes are
starving for more trouble; but
all of the fighting and stomping
is driving away.

They make a u-turn,
but I manage to skate away.

—*Jerrita Tolbert*

May

I
May—
it rises, it shines
like the sun
rising at dawn
almost forgotten
like a faint memory

II
Laughter is breezing
and shining
like the glow of

a warm smile,
just as smooth
as a newborn child

III

The salty fragrance
of the ocean shore
a slight blindness
as moonlight occurs
fading away only
until daylight comes

IV

No random sorrow
only filled with glee
like that exotic feather
flying free
No huge blankness
that is beyond me

—*Jerrita Tolbert*

Kaleidoscope

Jumping pink and orange bats
that dance with the birds,
monkeys skipping
in the green rose field,
clothes shaped as stars,
ladybugs crawling to the money,
heart-shaped tulips
in a yellow lake,
a baby blue giraffe named J
running in circles
toward the jewelry
just like a gold-digger.

—*Jerrita Tolbert*

Philosophy

My philosophy is to exist.
My gaze is clear, but
my future is a mystery.
My way of thinking is:
my destiny is suffering.
Unknown obstacles don't scare me—
The thought of one of those obstacles
offing me
is what I hate to see.

Farewell to the people closest to me,
I'll see you soon, cause death seems
to hunger for me.
Being swallowed by darkness is a scary thing,
boulevard of shattered dreams,
never to become king.

—*Michael West*

Summer Time

Summer's my favorite season,
and of course it's for good reason—
memories of joy flow to me
like a river stream;
I'm still trying to uncover the
definition of a dream.
Summer's great,
but the heat's tricky,
under the moonlight
I think of my blessings,
each one just as significant
as the other, like when I'm down,
I still chill with my mother.

Summer shows the most beauty:
the women, the flowers,
the never-ending affection of the sunlight;
the air has a certain fragrance,
making me think miracles can happen,
hanging with family, friends
and just laughing.

—*Michael West*

My Kaleidoscope

Dashing pandas,
fur as black as night;
ice turning solid,
now that's a pretty sight.
The importance of A
exchanging for gold,
not too soon after turning old.

A pyramid turns to dust;
minorities learn to trust.
Stars brighter than the night before,
every obstacle means another door.
Choices, choices,
those are the thoughts in my head.
The results from them
leave me wondering.

Mountains high in altitude,
the female lion carefully chooses her dude.
Life brings joy, but also pain—
this was my way of
allowing others into my brain.

—*Michael West*

When I am like the world

Ironically, it is when I'm most self-conscious;
it is when I care what everyone else says.
When fatigue is festering
and I won't die until I'm gently burned
by the gracious sun in the morning.

Lying in the bed, fresh out of the shower
my belly is filled with food, my homework is done.
I'm in my PJs, and these late-night re-runs effectively sedate me.
I'm ready.

Lying in the bed, I fight this impending darkness.
I have the world to blame for this fear.
It's their fault.
Every night it comes.
And when it comes, I am like them.
I am then concerned with their humanist notions of life.
I am then fearful of going to sleep,
to die, and not to wake in the morning.

I'm no longer this outcast, rebel-type of guy
but I'm one of them.
I'm scared, just like them.

—*James Saunders*



top: Renita Williams
bottom: Wayne Harris



Squares, Black dogs
with red hearts
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Paine
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Strange feelings coming
mysterious heat, and a
sky to see its
hide.

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year in my sig

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the
With a
purchases of
back where they be
past and turn
staring young
champion.

His Future

He comes from bologna and government cheese sandwiches,
and juice, just juice.

He comes from corruption.

He has been blinded by the myths that promise him
dope boy status

if he is true about gettin' this money.

Senile senior hood-rich celebrities
tied the blindfold real tight, didn't they?

Ironically, he's otherwise insouciant, until he's filling his mind
with false dreams of hood stardom.

Corrupted, thoughtful, consumed, anxious.

He thinks of his future;
it's like he's reading his palm.

And the doom that he experienced left him in awe.

Now he has this moment to choose:

Life, or death.

—*James Saunders*

Slave Haikus

I

Fettered together
Packaged with malevolence
like fresh frivolous sardines

II

Barefoot and bound tight
This great peregrination
was far from the end

III

Alienated

In this inhuman hospice
my fear can't be tamed

IV

I sat and pondered
Fathoming what my crime was
and couldn't find one

—*James Saunders*

Haunted Haikus

Landmines

The kids cry and fall
They are hurt by it all, bombs
the missing leg gone.

HIV

Young women, young men
Hop to bed and then again
the clinic sees HIV.

Death

Heartbreak burns softly
Sorrow screams loudly, pain aches
death of human cries.

Holocaust

Stuffed up train reeks, smells
Shower filled with gases, burned ashes
cries out for help, scream.

—*Renita Williams*

Dreamer

Beautiful, peaceful
Mother sleeping in the universe
my best friend
so soft and gentle
the open eye
unity in the world
a lovely home sits there thinking,
dreaming.

Her people scream with terror
They yell out Stop! Stop!
The blood sinks through the soil in the tree roots
All you hear now is pow, pow, boom!
I wake up and see a man lying there
not opening one eye,
but he is fading in the sky
a future father is gone, Bye bye.

—*Renita Williams*

I am, I am

I am the footsteps of tomorrow.
I am the legend of morning trumpets.
I am the secret, grave voyage.
I am departed caution.

I am the breath of a 2 month fetus.
I am a coral forbidden backpack.
also opaque eyes.

I am the bang of a souvenir drum.
I am a decent speech of a breathless man.
I am ancient flutes during summertime.

I am... who I am... I am the woman
who stands above us, who breathes everyone's air
I am, I am Renita Williams.

—*Renita Williams*

Angry Mood Days

Open, mined heart; broken glass burning,
so deep, cold hearted, driven to destruction
on earth's core, tarnish;
firefly burns, splinters
in memory, tempests raining rage.
Sores upon their faces,
the arrival of the evening star,
dissonance, self-defeating liars,
toxins mellow, hurting the inner soul
Please stop the madness.

—*Renita Williams*

Ode to the Trees

Sister of the planthood
Why do they treat you that way?
Growing above peoples' graves.
You are so strong, you can
knock down anything in your way.

Cut into millions of pieces,
blood dripping so much it can make a puddle,
So heavy, it burns. It's almost like magic.
Don't you feel like the world is invading your space?
But we need you to make paper
we need wood for fireplaces.

You are a sunrise,
you keep it cool when it's hot
You can get elderly
to the point you have to get cut down.
Don't you feel invisible?
Nobody knows your name, nobody cares about you.
But the world need you so much that
If you did not exist, there would be nothing to touch.

—*Renita Williams*

Beware

My life is a silver dagger
used by a madman
bent on killing and destroying mankind.
It is darkness in a golden light.

The knife of danger tells you to back up.
The blade of power, overthrowing everything
the handle of speed stabs very quickly.
My silver dagger of despair will obliterate and annihilate
every human and animal that tries to stop, hurt,
or make me eat brussels sprouts.
My one-way ticket to death dagger is very powerful.
The thing you need to watch for is not the dagger, but me.

—*Damon Kee*

My World

My world will consist of everyone
and no violence, no killing
and every person will have a soul mate.
The world we live in is unstable,



top, l-r: Rhia Hardman, Shannon Donaldson
bottom: Demetrius Walker

unfit for the universe.
A big blanket of sorrow over a planet
that does not belong.
The earth's people are unfair and unjust.
We need to create a perfect world
and I know they say everyone is not perfect,
but let's prove them wrong.
Just one can change the world and that one is me,
so listen up and follow my rules so this world
can be what it's supposed to be.
But this is only the beginning of my greatest dream ever.

—*Damon Kee*

From One to Another

My unhappy world turns
From misery and woe to just plain awful
The grief I share with my soul—
If you tempt it, the cup will tip over
And the broken glass will turn to anger
The fierce emotion shall come to grips with reality
My horrible rage with its massive energy
The hatred for the world will turn to
A burning infinite flame of decision
My fury will subside into a tiny flame and eventually extinguish
A happy feeling will come
From a candle as bright as a gold star
Shining in the age of darkness
Then with a shimmering tear in the eye of the people
I say, the world is actually a cool place to live

—*Damon Kee*

Gone

Some things are better left unsaid
The reason for this is that my dream
that was supposed to be real
didn't appear in front of me
My dream did not become a reality

The flight of a bird is a beautiful sight
I wish I could fly
The sight of a beautiful young animal is great
I wish I was there

Basically, I'm saying
I can't do things that people expect me to do
I can't fly. I can't be a beautiful young animal,
or even an astronaut.
But the life I live is a boring one
full of things that I can't do

I'm supposed to be a great person
I'm just not there yet
A dark past is revealed and forgiven
Forgotten, gone

—*Damon Kee*

Writing Poetry

Books are better than bowling
Love is like lined paper
Words are like falling winter snow
Writing is like a speeding cheetah
Reading is like frozen ice
Lined paper is like a kiss of the sun
It burns like words crawling in my fingertips

—*Renita Williams*

Trustworthy

I am bursting with faith
open soothing heart that's covered with weakness
I strut down these hallways like a Supreme
I worry about tragic things going on
I get very exhausted thinking of death
Something is haunting me that's called love
I'm scared

Blood flowing through my bones
telling me stop worrying about amorous feelings falling apart
If I open my soul to you, will you crush it?
My sorrow's tears filled with cement
so heavy it pulls my neck forward
so my tears can break it

—*Renita Williams*

My Place

The injured animal crackers poster burned from stress
That blackboard freezes from torture
That unloved book remains rotten, pity.
Look to the left—
Don't you see an unheard stillness from computers?
The flotsam words and kids jetsam into seats
Look to the right, what do you see?
Cherubs giggling and seraphim nod with a smile
The dictionary religion is recovering from lullabies
So if you dare to come in my poetic room
Without poetic thoughts
You'll be sorry.

—*Renita Williams*

The Journey of My Dreams

This mesmerizing thought of a private pastime,
a path that leads to a world undiscovered.
These ideas linger into someone's twisted fantasy,
which somehow messes up mine completely.

As I speed on to what I'm doing,
trying to pursue things unimaginable,
things that frighten them to think about,
but make me brave enough to be about it.

My fascination with this weird fantasyland
is like a vacation from reality,
some sort of acquired taste
that takes long to get used to.

—*Maryum Abdullah*

Being 19 years old

I don't know what it is like to be 19.
But I really want to be 19.
I mean, it's the best.
You're not underage, old enough
to live by yourself. You're able to drive,
get a job, have privacy, no curfew.
You would have your own rules. But, I'm not
gonna say everything is gonna be perfect.

—*Markus Johnson*

Eye of the Tiger

To the sound of the crowd
as they cheer or boo at your
reign as champion
you've trained hard, you've fought hard
You've been beaten, battered and bruised
you have given all your heart
and still have the guts to keep fighting
But you've lost it
the hunger, the thrill, the eye
You must train harder
You must fight harder
You will be beaten, battered and bruised
worse than ever before
but you must get up
to keep what's yours
to keep the
eye of the tiger

—*Aaron Montel Brooks*

My Name

Dontaye tastes like a bucket of mild fried chicken.
Dontaye smells like a nice day in the summer.
Dontaye feels like running around in Six Flags.
Dontaye sounds like a crowd at the gogo.
Dontaye looks like a brand new Caddy—blue.

—*Dontaye Jackson*



top: Deon Smith
bottom: Rashida Wills

Golden Life

My gaze is golden, like my rings.
It is my custom to have valuable things,
and sometimes, when I think about it
make people feel less fortunate.
And what I see is: I can get more than others
because I have the value,
and I'm very good at creation.
I'm capable of defeat;
I believe in destiny.
The world wasn't made for me to suffer.
I have no unexpected visits.
If I speak of your arrival,
you will come and visit me,
but because of kinship I allowed you to.
To love is to change
and to change is to have the unknown.

—*Shanay Turner*

Racing through the Day

I am racing into a new day
and the old day catches up
like a cheetah.
I am forcing my way up
and trying not to think
about falling.
Once I am far away
I am smiling, skipping, and dancing.
Now I am back to the future,
sleeping through the night
so I can start another new day.

—*Kanika Anderson*

My name

My name smells like fresh baby spitup.
It feels like the last touch from your fallen loved one.
My name sounds like a dead person yelling.
My name looks like an angel reserving his wings,
and it tastes like a mouth full of heaven.

—*Harry Spencer*

My Fight

I'm fighting my way into the New Year
because everywhere I go
there's a new obstacle
and a new person to fight.
I'm gonna fight for my right to fight harder,
but the people that I fight seem to come back
and try to bite me in the behind.
I know with a couple of sharp punches, and
I can put them back where they belong—
in the past,
and turn this traveling starving young fighter
into a champion

—*Antonio Nwozo*

In me and in you

In me there is a heart of gold
in you there is cold
I've seen our flaws
and all your darkness
and I've seen it fall
Having you is learning you
but the red window is falling on me

and you are invisible
In me there is a heart of gold
in you there is too
I hope that you will look up
at the man playing the saxophone,
and the sunlight in the window.

—*Marcus Sharpe*

Life

Sweet July—
its laughter
birds have fallen feathers
lots of family gatherings
all of the family comes together
This is when people love the weather

We are blinded by the sun
showered by violence and guns
It seems as if it's a dream
Looking through the window
at my beautiful shadow
I think I'll go lie on my pillow

Life is full of sorrow
blankness because the good die young
everybody is looking for a dollar
to spend under the sun
We need help
Everybody is wearing and saying
in loving memory of the loved one
who lost their life under the sun

—*Michelle Bowman*

Another Chance

Bouncing into the new year
trying to avoid negativity
I'll bounce myself positive
surrounded by my enemies
I leave behind the worst
and bounce to reach the top
never to look back, I will try
once it starts, begin to fly
Begin to fly high in the skies
glide with my mate
try not to hate
and dismiss all mistakes
entering the new year early, not late

—*Jasmyne Jamison*

July

July is sunny and warm
full of laughter and joy.
The moonlight shines brightly at night,
leaves in the morning, sacred in my sight.

Eyelids are hurting, body is not.
Strange feelings coming from the back
mysterious heat
and a ghost in the sky to see
it's the sun trying to hide.

The 14th day arrived bright, so yellow.
The sounds of the birds were mellow.
To dream of loneliness tastes sour and strong.
The dream of company is exotic and stays longer.

I wonder, I wonder, I wonder
why the sun so beautiful tries to hide,
but once the truth is revealed
the sun escapes the clouds and enters the hills
way up there I want to go
to dream all night, never hope.
Once I awake, I'm back my way
On July 14, my 18th birthday.

—*Jasmyne Jamison*

Seasons

Kids swimming through the blue water
looking for starfish.
Raindrops falling down on a sunny day
Kids trying to escape the endangered dinosaurs
English bulldogs playing with red roses
on the first day of spring.

White tigers running through snowflakes
on the first day of winter.
Frogs leaping on the green leaves in the water
Two flower girls walking
down the aisle of a wedding
tossing red roses.

—*Crystal McPherson*

New Year's Resolution

I was fighting in the old year.
I am killing people with kindness this year.
In the old year, I wasn't focused,
seems like I kind of slept my year away.



top: Marcus Sharpe
bottom, l-r: Latonya Williams, Teashia Yate

This year, I will even take vitamin pills
to stay awake and focused.
No matter what the issue is
I promise to handle my biz.
I am now new and improved,
no more late night “06” blues.
I will accomplish my goals in many ways.
I will do whatever it takes to fix my mistakes.
“07” here I come, running to you.

—*Crystal McPherson*

Racing to the new year

I am racing to the new year
but it seems as if everyone is ahead of me
I am running my fastest, but I just can't seem to catch up
It's as if everyone is against me
and I am the only one on my team
I can keep going, I say to myself
but everyone else is yelling that
I am not going to make it
I should drop out now
I say, no I can do it
I am going to make it
I start running even faster
I am catching up and now I am ahead of everyone
I made it, I won the race
when everyone thought I was going to lose
I proved them wrong
I am the best
I just have to put my mind to it
I can make it through the new year.

—*Candice Hines*

Clifton

My name is Clifton.
It feels like a football after a football game.
It smells like fresh money.
It tastes like chicken on a Sunday.
I looks like a newborn child
It sounds like a penny dropped on the floor
in the middle of the night.

—*Clifton Burgess*

My Kaleidoscope

Jumping over blue squares
Black dogs with red hearts
Rattlesnake moving through dandelions
Crawling through K-Mart
Wearing purple shoes.
Monkey in Old Navy
Pink stars flowing through the water
Skip around Payless
Raindrops look like stars.
Roses in the air
Ks dancing all around
Why settle at Last Stop?
Foot Locker for me and you.

—*Briana Battle*

Comeback

I am skipping into the new year because I am happy.
I am happy because last year went bad, but I am leaving
all of that behind me so that I can start off fresh.
I am trying to start my year off

with getting out of English One.
But first I have to believe that I can make it.
It seems if I was fighting one person,
but there is a difference,
and that is, I have more than one opponent.
I am on my way, I can make it.
These are the words I am saying to myself
as I am fighting my opponents.

—*Deon Smith*

December

I see Christmas lights
I see snow
I smell love and joy
I hear laughter
I taste the same food from a month ago,
but fresher
I feel the love of my mother
and at the same time, the cold snow.

—*Deon Smith*

Lost and Alone

Hidden between dreams and reality
there is a lost soul
waiting for the darkness to end
to search for a love which just doesn't exist.
Weeping in silence
because she can't take the truth
that her scars and wounds
can never be healed.
Her hopes have been buried

and all dreams are crushed
as a sickness of emptiness
sweeps over her lonely heart.

—*Jerrita Tolbert*

My Dream

My dream flies
it soars so high
the grace, heart and will
of the suffering stars
have fallen

But, as it flies
a yawn of a gust of wind
whistles my dream to the ground
thrust into the horizon
with a jolt of thunder and lighting behind me

I hear an owl's call
that lights an infinite flame in my soul
to the point where fear's absent
I will flap my wings
I will achieve my dream

—*Aaron Montel Brooks*

Linda Reads Her Own Palm

Life is blind.
This may be a myth to you
but true to me. Doomed like a
carrot in a salad, as if everyone looks
insouciant while I struggle for relief

empty as a juice box, which lies in my
future. I am now senile, I don't
remember the smell of cheese.

Life is blind because you don't know
what's going to happen. Doomed like a
carrot. This phrase knows how it feels
to be in debt. Insouciant eyes, look
but don't help. I'm thirsty for wealth
that can fit in my hand. I feel old
like I can't do it myself. My
senses are gone left without any help.

—*Ashley Cooper*

Colorful

When bananas go rotten
they sit and turn black
just like I have
my world was gray at once
not knowing the difference between
black, white, yellow, brown.
But now its colorful
I can see now
I must take what I deserve
the color of my skin
does not, does not make me a fool
and the others who fell into
this colorful world of yours
let them fall but me,
you will not make a fool of me.

—*Aaron Montel Brooks*



top: Lamont Gaynor
bottom, l-r: Maryum Abdullah, Damon Kee

John Reads His Own Palm

John is doomed to a life of boredom,
problems and trouble.

He finds out his life's a myth
and his future is not what he wants it to be.
No matter how much he tries, he can't change it

He is blind to the "whatever" comes next
because his palm wants fate to take place.

John becomes insouciant
and lets life take its course.
Unlike cheese and salad, he now knows
things are best left alone.

—*Maryum Abdullah*

The Rain

My dream is as strong as lightening and thunder
but it is not raining so there is no lightning or thunder
so I have to make it rain
I have to have a wingspan
but there won't be any rain for another four years

In order to do that I have to finish school
so I have to put the pen to the paper
and make it rain
the rain is hiding from me now

Not only do I have to make it rain
but I have to make it thunder and lightning
but it still doesn't happen for another four years

As I am getting older it is starting
to rain more
so I am like
rain more!
now thunder!
now lightning!
and before I know it, it will be here
I can tell that it is coming

—*Johnathan Muse*

My Eyes Tell Lies

My eyes tell luxurious lies
I have fallen fatally
but my violent visual mind is malevolent
my eyes stay awake
they are gullible on a good day
my eyes can see the baboon go boom
they can tell a tall tale one at a time
I can see you
they can see the whole terrain
they tell me to have some adaptation
sometimes they see badly

—*Johnathan Muse*

Football: *a two voice poem*

I am
Roy Williams.
I wear number
31.

I am
Clinton Portis.
26.

I play with
the Cowboys.

I play with
the Redskins.

I

run fast.

hit hard.

I was in the playoffs in
2006.

2006.

Were you in the pro bowl?

Yes.

Were you in the pro bowl?

Nah.

I play
strong safety.

I play
running back.

Our record was
the best
in our league.
Football is

Our record was
the worst

great,

outstanding,

better than

wonderful,

soccer
softball

basketball

basically
all sports.

boxing

I can't wait 'till
next year.

all sports.

I can't wait 'till
next year.

—Antonio Caldwell and Johnathan Muse

Birds to the Sun

I am a bird.
I want to
reach my goals
and become an “A” student
and go to college.
I think I am a sun
because somebody
thinks that I am not smart
but to myself I am
a sun. Bright,
because I will burn
them when they look
because I am bright,
and I can be some-
thing in life.
Birds to the sun.

—*Arthur Richardson*

Mask

I wear the mask
that gets judged
by many others
but I can't believe
they are not
even my own
brothers. I feel
sad, but when I
see everybody else
wearing a mask
I am proud because
with this mask I am
over the clouds.

I wear the mask
that I get judged by
many others. But
I can't believe
it's even my own brothers.

—*Arthur Richardson*

The Road to Glory

Since he was in elementary school,
he had a huge dream.
It was as bright as fire.

It was his goal!

It was a dream like throwing rocks in a pond.

Then the dream got blocked by people
that walked past as he attempted to throw the rock.

The boy never had a chance to get the rock off.
Until one day he said, I am bigger than this.

Then he finally got to throw the rock
and people thought highly of him.

—*Arthur Richardson*

The Community Has Changed

The community has changed
it has been betrayed
like the crimson temple
daydreaming for forgiveness
the twin gangs have been exposed to the young PG-13.



top: Aaron Montel Smith
bottom: Maryum Abdullah

This community has changed
it sheds so many tears for emancipation
like an emerald fortress
it's trying not to frown, surviving through it all.
The destruction of this community needs justice
to keep us rising to the top.
This community has changed
it's balled up with anger asking for release.
Open up your eyes and smell the pheromones.
If you haven't, you will see how
this community has changed.

—*Brittiney Sweetney*

Wisdom

I know that I have wisdom
but what I don't know is what's next.
I thought I knew what life was about
but I understand why God put us here
and why we have to serve our purpose.
But I don't understand why we have to die,
but I know the meaning of school –
to get an education and to learn
respect and much more.

—*Brittiney Sweetney*

The Power of Dreams

My dreams are powerful
so powerful you couldn't stand to see
the power and the glory of my dreams
they're greater than a heart beating
loud as thunder, sweeter than a whistle

The harmony and grace of my dreams
my dreams are so strong the sun can't
even melt them away
relax, the pastime in paradise has come
my dreams have blossomed

The shining of my new world water
my dreams are like a night without stars
a 1 out of 100 chance that it
couldn't happen
out of the dust and into the light
the shining blinded my eyes
my dreams just steal away.

—*Brittiney Sweetney*

The Road to My Dream

The road to my dream
was very difficult. It was
rough and tricky. It was
imperative that I get to it.
I had to go through
thorns, water, animals and people.

More and more people came,
more water, more thorns and
more animals. My dream was
as visible as an HDTV and
then it got blurrier and blurrier
until I couldn't see it.

—*Larry Pinkard*

My Reign

The earth had better be prepared for my reign.
When you see me, you will see rain.
I am going to rule the earth, I'm taking over.
I am going to end all sleepovers.
No one is going to be there at my arrival.
But everybody is going to be at my revival.
I'm the evening star in the sky.
When I die everybody will cry.

—Larry Pinkard

My eyes

My eyes make a gruesome grimace
The turn turbulent
My eyes recover resiliently
My eyes make people respect me
My eyes are able to adapt to anything
My eyes are able to sense danger
My two eyes tell me what kind of terrain I am on
My eyes rebuff the ignorant ones
My eyes show greatness

—Larry Pinkard

Life Again

Red racing mysterious octagon shapes
facing the life of
dangerous lions that
run in the wind
with strong maple trees standing tall
until darkness arrives
then the movement changes

different shapes appear
it turns blue and cold
ferns, fungi and orchids die
bears pray for food
everything spins, turns, twirls and
jumps in the night
until morning finally comes
orange fills the sky
clouds wave on by
now everything that
died or suffered
has
new life
and will not be destroyed again.

—*Jermaine Harris*

Letters from My Broken Mind

The powers in my eyes are
as complicated as my soul.
Love is seen through
the words written on my bones.
The anger of my life is like
sadness of the world.
A baby cries to the
destruction of the world.
Letters from my broken mind
are as painful as
the madness of the world.

—*Cinthy A. Proctor*

The Pain of Wearing the Mask

The pain of a mask
is similar to death
they act unseen and unheard
but they are really waiting to be discovered
they act like they are just like you
but they are not
they really think that there is nothing wrong
that they have no problem
but in the end
everything is wrong
but there is no one to help them
because they are too shallow to tell anyone who they really are

—*Cynthia A. Proctor*

Darkness of Life

Darkness of life
you are the baby's cry.
You stole the life that was once mine.
Why must you kill and feel this way,
when it is all because of satan's rage?
When the stroke of life hits you are always
there for the absent pride.
You've starved and forgotten the life of the dead.
You never think, you always fly to the one that is about to die.
The souls are always screaming
but you never want to listen.
But then the final life or death will always find a way.
You make life a fiery death
and screams of danger you never fear.
Darkness, why are you not here?
You bring the chain of rage.
Your life will always be in the valley of death.

—*Cynthia A. Proctor*



top: Damon Kee
bottom: Steven Coleman

A Beautiful Day at the Fair Inside My Kaleidoscope

Dangling peach butter ponies
that float in the air
dolphins flip inside the
aquamarine Potomac river
cheetahs with exotic flowers chase
red robins
purple balloon tulips float
through the air
this reminds me of spring time
at the city fair

—*Shamella Williams*

Two Men

Two men stare into the eyes
of one another to see who's more bold
A man who sees his reflection
differently than another's
He's aging right before his eyes
He's looking at himself from both sides.
Could it be his soul growing old?
Or could it be man vs. man
angry and bold?

—*Shamella Williams*

Visions of Secret Life

Sweet pride of visions of
dark halos are like
the bloody waves from
scarlet winters of a
warm mountain that
sits in a rainy pothole
on a side street that sits
on a boulevard moon.
The youth season is coming up,
kids there have elastic hallucinations
of silent phantoms in that
brick sand.
Spark the lights.

—*Vernon Mooney*

The Infinite Pastime Paradise

My dream is private like
a night without stars being
sealed away in the darkness
saying goodnight moon

Out of the dust, it's back
thunder harmony and fright
my dream is so far away,
you have to look with
a telescope towards that horizon

Bam, like that I found my
dream without fantastic damage
done to it. The twisted window is
unwinding the truth,
it's a bright star

—*Antonio Caldwell*

So Cool

I am fourteen.
I am so young, I can barely
get into a pg-13 movie.
I am so powerful,
they called the army
to stop my destruction.
I am so cool, you can't
tell me what to do.
I am fourteen.
My fist lies balled up
as I smacked a man
into the dreamland,
but still I am so cool.
You can't tell me what to do.
No man or woman can
tell me where my community
can lead me to or I will
abhor them. But still,
I am so cool, you can't
tell me what to do.
No man or woman can
rule me because I am
so cool. They can't tell me
what to do.

—Antonio Caldwell

Perhaps the Earth Can Teach You

Now we will count to ten and I will mute you
so I can deliver this message with an echo.

The sweet toil over the crossfire is a husky
grudge match. There was a riot in a collage
that constantly screams unity.

After the riot, you hear the confession
of the sparrow. He said this with openness,
before I deliver this message I will tell
you that it will be burned in the
back of your mind. You will be blessed
with the instrumental sacred seed.
Perhaps the earth can teach you about
being whole-hearted.

—*Antonio Caldwell*

My Eyes

My eyes are abrasive
and sometimes they are the beauty of the beast
like a malicious monkey
My eyes are horrible weapons and useless hands
They are killer birds and abrasive words
My eyes tell me about violent things
and recognize important things
They glow like stars
sometimes they stop

—*Chris Ledbetter*

Sadness and Joy:
a two-voice poem

I am sadness
I am destruction

I am war

on the streets

I am
gun powder

with a golden bullet
that kills with force

in peace

I am bad emotions

we are

in the heart

—*Chris Ledbetter*

I am joy

I am delight

I am peace
on the streets

I am

sunlight

with golden rays
that heal with warmth
in peace

I am good emotions

we are

in the heart

The Big Mountains Inside Me

Inside me

is like a field of snow.

The sky is like my soul

a bluish color.

The trees are like me standing
on one leg.

The snow is like me when I first
get out of the shower wet and cold.

—*Christopher Ashton*



top: Aaron Montel Smith
bottom: Wayne Harris

Squares, Black dogs
with red hearts
Braha moving th
dandy lions. Cra
k-Nart, wear
Monhe
Flou
water
Paine
Poses
all d
at L
F. C

eyelids are hurting body
Strange feelings coming
mysterious heat, and a
sky to see its
hide.

The morning
in my sig
sun

Bright sug
eds wer
stes sou
exotic

I am
New
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nt. I'm
to Figh
e that
back
the
With a
punches O
back where they be
past and turn
staring young
champion.

to
But
Shage
back
past
staring
champion.

The Eye of the Storm

The eye of the storm makes people run
it causes houses to break
it makes the skies go dark
it spreads like a disease throughout.
The eye of the storm makes people mad.
Some storms seem very calm,
but not the eye.

—*Christopher Ashton*

I Am From

I am from a long line of
happy, funny, friendly people
that act funny in their own way
who laugh at one another who
act silly and just play to say
that's where I'm from.
I am from the big country house
drinking lemonade in the hot sun
with the white wood fence keeping
the dog from a good run.
When dad comes home he has this
big bag with fresh lemonade cake
straight out the oven for dessert. He says,
“if you are good, you will always have
the best from me. Just make something for yourself,
But never forget where you came from.”

—*Jermaine Harris*

Lightning

The strength of lightning that separates . . .
life from death
pain from sorrow
happiness from fearfulness
and discovers the differences of the two
but mixes together and creates one
love and
peace

—*Jermaine Harris*

The hunted

My education is hunting me
It is hard to stay away
I want my education
But I don't want to die for it
The homework is like a shotgun
The classes kill like knives
It is hard to stay alive
The teachers are killing me
It's hard to sleep at night
I wake up in the middle of the night
Thinking about being killed
School is hunting me night and day
Everyone says that's okay
I don't believe them
Because it's killing me inside

—*Kwah-Preme Mitchell*

Poetry Is . . .

Poetry is stupid
Poetry is dumb
Poetry is not even fun
Poetry is crazy
When I do poetry, I get lazy
Poetry is hateful
Poetry is boring
I would hate to wake up to poetry
in the morning.

—*Benjamin McKinnie*

Sidewalk

1.
You step on a crack
you break your mama's
back
2.
You see all those cool shoes
But when you look at your shoes
you feel the blues
3.
When you walk to your job
some sidewalks are people's homes
4.
You look up and the sun is up
you look down and there is gum
on your shoe

5.

Days when you want to run away
the sidewalk can be your journey
to somewhere

6.

Sometimes the sidewalks are
broken,
the same place your
heart was broken

—*Symone Wrice*

If I was a hunter

If I was a hunter
I would hunt for a dream
a dream that would help me succeed in life

If I was a hunter
I would hunt for all good and positive things
so that I could stay out of trouble

What's hunting me?
Trouble is hunting me
trying to keep me from doing good
things and tryin' to keep me from being
a positive person

—*Calvin Vaughn*

My Real Name

Today my name is righteousness
Yesterday my name was helpfulness
Tomorrow my name will be dangerous

My friends think my name is hilarious
My parents think my name is intelligent
Secretly I know my name is Black soulful
saxophone jazz player

—*Calvin Vaughn*

Ode to . . .

Ode to a mirror
A mirror can tell what's wrong
You can watch your talk in a mirror
In your mirror, you can see your reflection
A picture can mean a lot
so a mirror can tell you a lot of things
Also it is made out of tiny pieces of sand
that is why I made this poem,
ode to a mirror

—*Cierra Gibson*

The Secret Life of Silent Hearts

She has a silent heart
She has so many lonely tears
She is lonely in this world
Her heart is a halo of sweet birth
filled with sad dreams and tears
She wants her birth to fade away
No more birth dance
No more sweet birth memories,
life filled with starved lilies
lonely

—*Delonte Gorman*



top: Anthony Gales
bottom: Jasmine Boswell



Squares, Black dogs
with red hearts
Brahe moving the
dandylions. Cra
k-Nart, wear
Monhe
Flou
water
Paine
Poses
all d
at L
F. C

the morning
in my sig
eyelids are hurting body
Strange feelings coming
mysterious heat, and a
sky to see its
hide. The sun
The

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back
the
With a
purches
back where they be
past and turn
staring young
champion.

Life

Life is hunting me
not knowing if you
will make it another day
not knowing if
someone you care about
will make it
not knowing if you
will make your goal
the streets are what hunts
me everyday
the drugs, my brothers, family,
clothes, killers
I'm going to make my goals in life

—*LaTanya Carter*

Hunted by Time

Being hunted by time
I'm losing my mind
second after second
minute after minute
hour after hour
Where am I going to go?
What do you want to be?
What do you want to do in life?
How are you going to get there?
Maybe it's me
trying not to be
what I know I can
but can I beat time
like the beat of drums
Do I know how much time I have?
Just a thought

that keeps running
like a world sprinter
or track star
feels like there is just no end
But the ends of the world
I'm losing my mind
Being hunted by time, thoughts,
myself, and more.

—*Lewis Franklin*

My Real Name

Today my name is beautiful
Yesterday my name was babyface
Tomorrow my name will be respect me
My friends think my name is La-La
The police think my name is sneaky
My parents think my name is crazy
Secretly I know my name is whatever
I want it to be

—*Termeshia Miller*

Grades

My grades are hunting
me and I'm the target
I can't get it straight
but it's very easy to do
I gotta think quick
before I lose it
It takes a lot of mind
to get my grades straight
but I just don't know

how I gotta do what
I gotta do, my intentions
are to focus everything
on my grades!

—*London Davis*

High School Blues

I am a high school student
my report card is not
bad or good.
School is like temptation,
you try to be perfect.
Gangs, surviving, lies, and
those cute twins you have
a crush on, but they don't know
you exist. My girlfriend has a lot of anger.

In school, you refuse things that people think
are cool like weed and gangs.
It's hard to have emancipation
when you're popular, it's cool but
you need a break here and there.
I'm black and have time
to grow in my future. My girlfriend has a lot of anger.

My life is basically PG-13,
everything you want to do you
can't because you have to be 18
and older to do it.
It's impossible to tell the
truth because you want to shine
but you are as dark as the ocean floor.
If today is a bad day, than tomorrow,
you think about – should I do this or that so

today won't be like yesterday, and again
my girlfriend has a lot of anger and I think
I made her mad.

—*Michael Jordan*

Knights

1.
Soldiers who
survive a
battle.
2.
Royal soldiers
of the high school
battlefield.
3.
Defenders of
the blue & gold
pride.
4.
Football soldiers
battle to get
another victory.
5.
Blue & gold
prevail,
all is safe.
6.
Knights of the
football field

battle in
blue & gold
to survive
in high school.
Football defenders
of the Knight
and kingdom
of Ballou.

—*James Lewter*

My Life

I am fifteen
I live in a negative community
Justice is violated every day
People frown every day from murders
Anger is expressed violently
and still my smile shines like the sun.

I'm the future
The change waiting to happen
I am the fortress built with brick
My report card grades are great
I don't know if I may live tomorrow
and still my smile shines like the sun.

It is impossible to hold my tears
The truth must be told
I refuse to accept the government's lies
I don't know how to blend in with others
I am the tempest causing disruption
and still my smile shines like the sun.

Soon I have to play against the
Crimson Tide of Dunbar



top: Anthony Gales
bottom, l-r: Jamard Smith, Brittany Plight

Our fans are going to flood Eastern's stadium
I grow more anxious as days go by
Surviving in the hood is all I can do
Once I leave the hood I won't be staring
down the line of defeat
and still my smile shines like the sun.

Gangs brutally beat people everyday
Trying not to get exposed by the media
I should try to benefit from what
I learn in school
I will try to stay cool and not lose it
I suppose it's because I'm a student athlete from Ballou
and still my smile shines like the sun.

—*James Lewter*

Who is the Lion?

Have u heard about the lion?
The lion is the bravest one out of them all
The lion has feelings he is not scared to show
The lion kills at will
The lion protects what's his
The lion has the biggest heart
The lion is a man or ready to be the man
The lion is
me.

—*Carl O'Brien*

Poetry is

Poetry is
the expression of one person's mind
the unspoken words of body language,
feelings.
The words of inner life and who you are,
not who you wanna be.

—*Donnell Robinson*

Death

As I'm being surrounded by it
I'm shadowed by when it's coming for me
Why I live life free as a stray bullet
I'll never know when it's gonna hit me
strong as an ox
but light as a feather
I'm only human
Death can come whenever
Unwarned like a heart attack
And I'm the victim
Am I the hunter or
am I being hunted?

—*Donnell Robinson*

Name

Today my name is sleepy
Yesterday my name was excited
Tomorrow my name will be joyful
My friends think my name is nice
But my parents think my name is careless
But when it all boils down,
my name is beautiful

—*Kiara Ross*

Ode to Cleats

Sister of boots, Nikes
Jordans, and Vans
Opposite of gloves
that go on your hands

The view of the diamond
shaped field, filled with dirt and grass
They give you leverage and traction
So you can run really fast

They may not be worn often
to school everyday
But they are worn in softball
My favorite sport to play

Jackie Robinson wore them
when he made history
The ladies at UCLA wore them
while they cheered in victory

We often take advantage
of what we wear on our feet
that's why I am writing
Ode to the cleats

—*Markita Bullock*

When Your Day Turns Bad

When your day turns bad,
nothing anyone says matters
Your mind revolves around the thing
that made it turn bad
Friends try to cheer you up, but they can't
the situation is just too strong

You want to fight and listen to “tear the club up” music
Sometimes you may hurt the ones you love
and all they want to do is help you get through
Then, it seems like one bad situation after another
It’s kind of like the domino theory
One thing falls then another falls, then another.
It seems like you’re always trying to live good
when your day turns bad

—*Markita Bullock*

Sir Stupid

You’ve fooled me with your plastic tears
I didn’t know you had a pothole heart
I would’ve believed you if you said there was a magenta moon
Or a light bulb shining in your pockets
You left me breathless, screaming for oxygen on Torn Boulevard
Waiting on your yesterday’s absence and tomorrow’s sweaty palms
I let you in my stainless steel heart
And you left it a shattered, blistered, wounded bloody balloon
Oh, but don’t worry, I won’t be left singing the classic blues
Just know I am strong as brick and twice as sweet
These leather hips will keep swaying
Never looking back

—*Markita Bullock*

Time

1.
Sometimes fast
sometimes slow
2.
There is the past
present and the future

Time travel can
create alternate realities

4.
They say it took
a billion years for
humans to evolve

5.
60 is the key to make
time keep moving on a clock

—*Adrian Addison*

When Your Light Turns Dark

When your light
turns dark you
become evil
like someone
who kills people
just for fun.
You may feel like
you're untouchable and
start trouble just because
you can beat old
people, robbing, looting,
shooting, stabbing, and
killing without
feeling any remorse.
All this happens when
your light
turns
dark.

—*Adrian Addison*



top, l-r: Breona Carpenter, Keyvonna Parker
bottom: Markus Johnson

More than you think

My brain is this bridge with deep thoughts
My heart is the trees, used a lot
The water is my eyes, farther than you can see
Saying, "There is more to me than you think."
The water's reflections are my soul.
The black sky is dark emotions I show
And the little land is what's hidden about me
Saying, "You don't know that much about me."

—*Maryum Abdullah*

Ode to the Moon

The brightness that lights up the stars
centered in the middle with ostentation

Vivid as it is exquisite, surrounded by
its azure admirers. The night sky.

It is a sculpture of brilliance,
created by no human.

The way it glows, blinds us, it cannot be
reached. For it is an untouchable beauty.

The moon remains young, and still pretty,
notorious and wondrous every night.

—*Maryum Abdullah*

Where I wanna be

I'm stuck at the bottom, but I want to be at the top
It feels as though there's no way
so I guess I should stop everything
It's so cold and rocky, I wonder if I get there
will they like me?
It's such an emotional whirlwind
wondering if I'll ever fit in
I don't care about them, that's the thing
It's who I wanna be
that makes me wanna scream
I wanna be at the top of the mountain
without getting trapped in an avalanche
Will I make it? I don't know.
I'm so scared and it's so cold.
I'm scared to face them at the top
I wish I could put my life on hold.

—*Nefertearia Crawley*

The Great Life

Well, mom,
Let me tell you
Life for me has been like a sunset on the beach.
Sometimes it's hard, but I'll just keep on going.
My life had some dark times, but as I turned around
the morning light hit me.
All of the roses and daisies are blooming,
and the rain is coming down so fast,
but pure, and the satin sheets cover my heart
as I think about you at night

The love I have for other people is bare
My love for you will last for a lifetime
There's only one way you can go, and that's up,
looking at the sky.

—*Renita Williams*

Think

Explore your mind, not just your brain
take the time to think of the things you can gain
when you think...
about the things in the back
the back of your mind where
you wrapped your thoughts in a box
a box with chains set on fire
never to be set free.

Think so that you can smell your mind burning
in the back of your mind,
smoking so much you can see it out your ears.
Think so much that it becomes
a rollercoaster of a natural high
taking you high, higher, highest...
until it gets you to the point
where all you want to do is...
Think.

—*Aaron Montel Brooks*

Montel Reads His Own Palm

Blinded to his own future
doomed within his own life
growing old, impatient, and senile
as he wanders into the galaxy of nothingness

His talents are growing old
the cheese has gone bad
and the leaves have gone purple
in the salad that he calls his life

Beaten down and stomped on
and trampled and choked
till the point where he wants to end it all
by the slit of his arm

—*Aaron Montel Brooks*

Winter

Winter—
It's the time for me
watching the snow fall
having the miraculous feeling
of just knowing that it's coming

Feeling—
The snow in my hand
bringing kids joy across the world
laughter and happiness
moonlit rooms watching movies with hot chocolate

Hearing—

The wind behind your ear
following up with an ice cold snowball
to chill your mind and body
listening to your mother yell at you
at 8 o'clock in the morning
Montel, get outside and shovel that daggone snow!

Smelling—

The cold sweat of
when you're outside playing snow football
smelling cookies in the oven
and hot chocolate on the stove
Smelling love from families and friends
that care for you
I wonder how that feels.

—*Aaron Montel Brooks*

Sleep

Now I'd lay me down to sleep
but no one's there for my soul to keep
within the blackness and the light of the candle
in the back of my mind
resembling the life of a fragile fragment of flesh
I have left burning the rose of my mind
petal by petal
as an angel hovers above
that rose quivering and wondering
as the darkness in the cloudless sky takes over

—*Aaron Montel Brooks*



top: Maurice Nowlin
bottom: Rhia Hardman

Prince

Arrogance beyond belief, the child of greatness
Royalty among degeneracy,
Instead of the shiny gold and silver
He wilds out with a color of his choosing
Puts his power to use in sinful ways
Kiss the royal rings, as he says
Besides all hail him, it's
Awww man, it's him
A crown of thorns, robe of fire
and advisors twenty deep
He never fights his own battle,
but his people bring that heat
Strength of a million
within a whisper of his voice
His father will pass down
the prize of his choice

—*Aaron Montel Brooks*

The Dark

A dark destructive time is at hand
An illusion of a scarlet end of being
The tempest destroys all
The earth's core, driven to destruction
Thunder is crashing through the air
Mankind is going down
Into the burning fire of a firefly
Driven down into the abyss,
Where death is certain, the biggest fear
Of all fears is ourselves
The destruction of earth is now
Fear the darkness.

—*Damon Kee*

Sleep

Before I sleep, I think of
What will happen the next day
Light is what I see,
The burning candle,
Guarding a cloudless sky
The royal corners of my room,
Providing endless darkness
And a secret door filled with amazing things
Outcropping of shadows on my window
Trees are scarce for the time being
My eyes close and I drift into dreamland

—*Damon Kee*

Destruction

I am a cup of death
Filled to the top with hatred
The anger boiling inside of me
Like a kettle of hot water
It rages like a black tornado
Destroying everything in its path
My red hot angry knife
Slices the last bit of light and love
The darkness covers everything
And chokes the life out of life itself
Red and black covers all the earth
With slaughter and murder
Destruction is my name and
That is what I am

—*Damon Kee*

Unfinished

July is a heated summer month.
I feel the heat radiating on my skin.
It burns my body like a volcano.

I don't hear a silent moonlight
when the sun goes down into a secret
almost secluded place

Evening is a neon eyelid
filled with the sounds of an empire
I see a child...

—*Damon Kee*

What did I say?

My world is monochromatic
In black I see an abyss of anonymous thirst
A pack of newborn prophecies to be revealed
My universe is a legacy of wisdom where I am king
My cursed world is a gift for people
Who understand what life is all about
The things are complicated, so
Now
What did I say?

—*Damon Kee*

About Anger

The first thing anger does in the morning
is throw pots and pans.
Then she goes upstairs and throws hot water
on her brother and sister,
and runs back downstairs
to fix her bowl of nails.
She decides to leave for school,
breaking the wooden door in half.
(She catches the bus to school.)
On the bus, she takes all the kids' lunches
and jacks them all up in one spot.
Now she's at school;
she's walking to class, and
as the kids walk by her, she
throws real old Froot Loops.
She gets to her classroom and begins throwing
the desks and chalkboards.
She gets put out of class and sent to the principal,
who asks her "What's wrong?"
and she swings on him, so you know she's expelled.
But anger doesn't care. As she gets even madder,
she's turning purple and her hair is turning green.
Back at home, her mother says, "Hi, how was your day?"
She stares real hard, so hard that her eyes
pop out and hang.
She says Hi, and keeps heading to her room.

—Danielle Rice

Voice of the Knight was made possible by funding from

The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation

Children's Fund of Metropolitan Washington

Fannie Mae Foundation

John Edward Fowler Foundation

Marpat Foundation

Mattel Children's Foundation

Meyer Foundation

Moran Family Fund

International Monetary Fund

The Tom Lane Fund

Wachovia Foundation

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