



HARTWORKS

January 2001 • \$1

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine • featuring the work of Henry Taylor



Chakia Chatman

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *hArtworks*, a literary magazine published by the students of Charles Hart Middle School, in southeast Washington, D.C. *hArtworks* gives our young writers the opportunity to exercise their creative energies, speak their minds, and be heard by an audience throughout the city. For the past six years, Hart students have had the opportunity to work with professional writers in a workshop that has brought them widespread acclaim and numerous literary awards. This year, the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop was incorporated as a public-private partnership to provide our students with a full-fledged creative writing magnet program that reaches all of the more than five hundred students who attend Hart. Our students are now writing poems, plays, stories and essays in their classes, and in three specialized weekly writing clubs.

We have many friends who have helped to make the expansion of our writing program possible, and we would like to express our gratitude to them. Our sincerest thanks go out to the Commonwealth Foundation, Borders Books and Music, Free Hand Press, Betsy Holt and Ms. Printing Company, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Arena Stage, Andrew Chin and his colleagues at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, Bernie Horn and the Center for Policy Alternatives, Henry Taylor, Ruth Dickey, and our dedicated volunteer Dennis Collins.

We would also like to thank the following administrators, teachers, and staff who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Lee E. Epps; Assistant Principals Willie Bennett, Yvonne Davis, and Samuel Scudder; Ms. Molly Buckley, Ms. Gloria Fergusson, Ms. Shirley Grooms, Ms. Carolyn Jackson, Ms. Mary Johnson, Ms. Irma Morgan and Ms. Ethel Rivers; Ms. Eleanor Elie and Ms. Lisa Henry

Last, we thank you, the reader, for giving our writers the chance to be heard.

Nancy Schwalb, Executive Director
D.C. Creative Writing Workshop

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Cover photo left to right: Shawntice Patterson, Amani Al-Fatah, Dominic Stover, Terri Davis, Delonte Williams, Kevin Tindle, Aaron Teeter, James Thomas, Antonio Ashford

INSIDE

An interview with special guest Henry Taylor	22
Henry Taylor	
<i>The Jefferson Memorial</i>	25
Our writers-in-residence	
Kerry Danner-McDonald	
<i>The 7th Year</i>	29
<i>In Love with a Passionate God</i>	29
<i>Rainforest Color</i>	30
Andy Fogle	
<i>Epic</i>	26
<i>A Luscious Careening</i>	27
<i>Witness the Self-Protection: A Program</i>	27
<i>Albuquerque Blackjack</i>	28
Our student writers	
Amani Al-Fatah	
<i>Emotions</i>	20
<i>Like This, Like That Are Ladies</i>	36
<i>Connections Aren't Gone Away</i>	37
Antonio Ashford <i>O Thank You, O Father, O God</i>	33
Kiona Bean <i>The Room</i>	32
Rodney Bean <i>Untitled</i>	9
Jeffrey Best <i>My Name Is</i>	9
Yolanda Butler <i>My happiness is important to me</i>	10
Marcus Campbell <i>Untitled</i>	16
Robert Cathcart <i>Untitled</i>	15
Chakia Chatman <i>At 12</i>	12
Monique Covington	
<i>My Life Will Be Like</i>	33
<i>It's This Way With Bookbags</i>	36
Daveeta Ebb <i>If I Could do the Impossible</i>	6
Roland Euell	
<i>An Angel's Window</i>	41
<i>Autobiographia Literaria</i>	42
Gregory Finch <i>Poem of Greg</i>	16

Dominic Garvin	
<i>Kid Bleeding and Shirt</i>	21
<i>You Can Have Everything</i>	40
<i>Untitled</i>	8
Marc Gunter <i>Untitled</i>	13
Thaddeus Holloway	
<i>Untitled I</i>	7
<i>Untitled II</i>	17
Shari Jackson <i>Doing the Impossible</i>	13
Donna James <i>Us & Them</i>	42
Krystal Johnson <i>I See</i>	34
La'Rae Johnson	
<i>Promise?</i>	14
<i>Pitch Black</i>	18
<i>Untitled</i>	34
Ebony Love	
<i>Feelings That Don't Really Feel</i>	33
<i>I Promise</i>	35
Eugene Marshall <i>Darkness</i>	38
Asia Mason <i>Night Time Again</i>	12
Danielle McEachin <i>A Werewolf in Brooklyn</i>	19
Carolyn Mozee <i>Untitled</i>	13
Jamar Myrick <i>Untitled</i>	15
Ronald Nails <i>In This Dark</i>	10
Shawntice Patterson	
<i>No Begging Howl</i>	6
<i>America Suddenly Reflects My Mood</i>	17
<i>Balanced On Its Own Flame</i>	32
Harriet Postell <i>The World Today</i>	8
De'Angelo Reed <i>My Lonely Life</i>	18
Larry Robertson	
<i>Inclined</i>	31
<i>Parental Conviction</i>	39
<i>Two Ulcers</i>	40
DeMario Shaw <i>Alien Nation</i>	21
Markeisha Simms <i>Untitled</i>	16
James Thomas	
<i>If I Could Touch My Name</i>	19
<i>If I could Have the Stars</i>	35
<i>Myself</i>	11
Janay Treadwell	
<i>When I Was a Child</i>	9
<i>It Is This Way With Teachers</i>	21
Pamila Twyman <i>Why</i>	7
Theodora Walker <i>As My Teen Years Fade Away</i>	38
Jessica Young <i>I Am</i>	14
Lorice Young	
<i>Untitled</i>	11
<i>Disappearing Into Air</i>	14

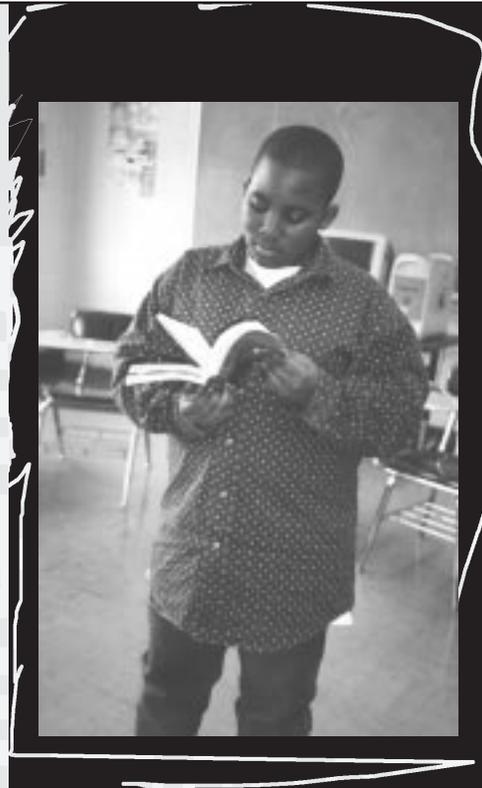
No Begging Howl

I had to find the rest of it. I had to find
the second verse of this poem.
An eerie howl, rising like an ambulance siren
sounded so close behind me, I spun around.
I searched the road and the plastic trash cans,
No one there. No wolf. No human.

Another howl sounded even closer.
Was someone standing beside me?
I held my hands over my eyes
to keep out the frightening sights.
I ran the rest of the way home,

Reaching the narrow front door as another long howl
sent a sin through my veins,
Closer. It's so close.
I grabbed the doorknob. Twist it. Push.
No!
The door didn't budge.
I twisted again. This way. The other way.
Pushed the door. Pulled it.
Locked.

Shawntice Patterson



Roosevelt Jones, Jr.

If I could do the impossible

I would jump off a roof and land running
I would climb the biggest mountain in the world.
I would go ski-diving with no protection.

I would jump off an airplane
and land doing a handstand.
I would eat all of the candy there is
and not throw up.
I would fall on the ground and not hurt myself.
I would turn myself invisible.

I would get to be a professional
cheerleader without going to college.
I would play basketball
even though I don't know how.
I would not be in love on Valentine's Day.

Daveeta Ebb

Untitled

I can do the impossible
I can see the invisible
because I got faith
Oh because I got
faith ha ha
I can climb a mountain
I can see my fate
all because I
got faith

Thaddeus Holloway

Promise?

When I die,
Who knows if I'll come back again?
I'll soar into the skies of heaven
and let the moist air run across my feet;
I'll hold the ill in warm and comforting beds,
which will spread good hopes all over their bodies,
starting with their heads.
Off I'll go into a land afar,
where wonders happen
and peace has begun.

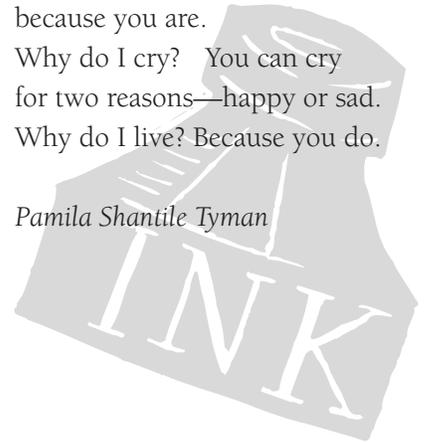
La'Rae Johnson

Why

What is life? What is life to me?
Why am I here? Why do I cry?
Why do I live? Those are the questions
I do not want to hear.

I'm going to tell you my sweet dear,
All the answers you want to hear.
What is life? Life is what you call it.
What is life to me? I might not
be able to answer that but like
I said it's what you call it.
Why am I here? You're here
because you are.
Why do I cry? You can cry
for two reasons—happy or sad.
Why do I live? Because you do.

Pamila Shantile Tyman



The World Today

Today when you walk down some streets
all you see is poverty.
When you sometimes drive by a store, a robbery.
When you drive past a boarded up store,
it's out of business. Looking through the front window,
badtalking. When you aim, a fire starts.
When you hear a cry, someone dies.
When you see a fight, someone's hurt.
When you aim high, you end up low.
When you feel depressed, you want to blow.
When you're on the corner, you just might die.
When you're in the store stealing, you might get caught.
When you are lying, someone ends up dead.
Where there's violence, a child learns to fight.

Harriet Postell



Ebony Love

Untitled

I'm the color red from inside a watermelon.
I'm the circle of a person's head,
the circle of the earth,
the circle of a clock.
I'm the movement of gliding
on the monkey bars on the playground.
I'm gliding when I jump on a pole.
I'm the sound of a cheetah hunting.
I'm the sound of a cheetah sleeping.
I'm the number zero in a three digit number.
I'm the number zero on your watch.
I'm the number zero on your pager and phone.
I'm a piece of pizza, chicken, potatoes
and a piece of candy.
I'm a car that goes fast and can fly.
I'm a car that goes beyond the surface.

Dominic Garvin

Untitled

I am the red, orange and blue of flames
that come out your stove.
I am the fire that comes from a campfire at night.
I am the flames that come from the blowtorch.
I am the heat that comes from the ring.
I am the fire that comes from a burning car.
I am the heat that comes from a burning building.
I am the fire and flames that come from an explosion.
I am the fire, heat, flames, and energy
that come from the soul.

Rodney Bean

When I Was a Child

When I was a child,
I played and was funny.

My favorite dolls
were Barbies which they still are.
And being tickled was the best.

I was very cross-eyed
But I could still see,
How many people cared and loved me.

Janay Treadwell

My Name Is

My name rises from the stars,
it bursts into flame.
My name came from the past, long,
long ago, reaching from the present
seeking the future. My name tastes
like ice cream that melts in your mouth.
My name feels like honey and smells
Like a fresh morning. My name is
Jeffrey Best.

Jeffrey Best



Larry Robertson, Kevin Tindle

In This Dark

In this dark, I rest.
I don't want to see candles
lit outdoors. Straining to sleep
my eyes close—
not seeing anything
but black. I can't
see the light until I
open my eyes.

Ronald Nails

My happiness is important to me

Like the breeze from the sea
My happiness is talking to me
Over the weather and through the sea

Taking control as plain to see
Taking control like a human being
Taking control to do the impossible

To do the impossible like a bee
The impossible is here for me to see
The impossible is believable anyday around my way

Believe in yourself
Believe the clouds are white
Believe the people of the sea

Yolonda Butler

Untitled

Your eyes are so deep and astounding
Your eyes are so dark and kept quiet
Rounded in a circle without a doubt
When you open them they smile and shout
Your eyes are all the same shape and size
Bitterly opened with tender cries
Your eyes leave a wicked sound in your mind
Your eyes are a creepy grave dug deep down
At midnight your eyes begin to bleed
Like a clenched heart going in precious speed
Your eyes are a cough just get ready to sneeze
Your eyes are chunks of the moon just a quick tease
Your eyes are like a sunset going around
Or the hot horizon as it leans down
Your eyes are a stubborn picture
That isn't ready to be heard
Your eyes are a world of a sleepy night
Your eyes are a deep absent sight

Lorice Young

Myself

I'm handsome, intelligent, my life is a fun exciting place, my skin is the color of butterscotch, my shirt is the color of the blue sea, my jeans are the color of pitchblack sky at night, my hair is blond and black and my eyes change color each day, but if I could change to something like an animal I would be a bluejay. My feathers would be blue, black and white and my eyes would be red and my eyes would twinkle like a star.

James Thomas



Night Time Again

Because it was time to get
up in the morning time and I
wanted to go back to sleep
I decided to make it night again.

So I went outside and got
into my spaceship and took off
into outer space and I started
talking to the sun and I asked him
“Can you please go back to sleep?”
so that it would be night time again.
He said he couldn't.

So I went to ask the earth
could he revolve so that it
would be night time on the
west side of the world.
He said he couldn't.

So I went back home
and thought to myself,
“Hey, it's impossible to make it night again,
I will just have to wait until this day is over.”
But it was all just my imagination.

Asia Mason



Theodora Walker, Amani Al-Fatah, Ebony Love, De'Angelo Reed, Monique Covington

At 12

At 12 I believe the trees
could change me if it would

I looked at the trees
as the leaves change colors
winter, summer, spring and fall

I wanted hope so that I can
accomplish something

And as I sleep, the world would
be sunning up a new day for me to use
as I accomplish something day by day.

The trees can change me as I
fulfill my destiny and develop my identity.

As I began to change, I can use
generosity and become a new person.

And not by the beauty of my face
but by the beauty of my heart
and I may change like the trees.

Chakia Chatman

Doing the Impossible

Impossible such a strong word,
a word that can influence you.
Impossible things happen everyday.
Impossible to stay underwater
for three hours with no air.
Impossible to be full of blood
and nothing to cause it.
Impossible to take control of nothing.
It's impossible to ride a no-wheel bike.
Impossible such a mean word
when it's impossible to scream in fear.
Impossible to blow air with no breath.
Impossible to live with no life or soul.
Impossible to die without dying.

Shari Jackson

Untitled

Marc is like heat on a summer day,
my mouth is dry like the desert,
my ears ache everytime I hear my name.
My nose smells my name like a steak
after a nice long bath.
You feel my name like a fluffy housecat.
My eyes see my name like an enemy
charging at my voice just to say my name.

Marc Gunter

Untitled

Father father where are you going?
Down to the corner he ha la
Or down the corner to see what's near
or what is clean in the mind all the time
Take a walk down to see what's new to me
If you go any further you might make me holler
Father Father come back a little

Carolyn Mozee

Disappearing into Air

Lately I have felt myself disappearing
into a confused darkened room,
wandering around to think what I've assumed.

I throw my hair back and listened to the wind,
then dreamt I was a sprinkled star reappearing.

I'm a dizzy top already on her own.
Then stopped, I'm all alone.

In a shining light,
screaming with all my might.

I love it when I'm standing still
full of tenderness, embracing appeal.

Me...I'm let down in a sleep hole.
Just let down and then I played around.

This picture is never what I want to be hearing.
But lately I have felt myself disappearing.

Lorice Young



Theodora Walker

I Am

I am a flower, blooming in the day
I am the sound of wind blowing softly
I am an eagle that flies smoothly through the air
I am a small cottage, with a small little fire
I am the middle of the day, when the sun starts to set
I am the season when sweet things grow
I am the color pink that brings happiness
I am the taste of sweets
I am the memory of a happy day.

Jessica Young

Untitled

I am a raging
thunderstorm striking
down anyone that
makes me mad, getting
more power and
electricity with every
pulse of anger that
flows through my veins.

I am a 1000 foot
tsunami off the coast
of Florida, threatening
to drown everyone that
merely irritates me!
Getting more destructive
with every minute.

I am a 32 billion mile
wide meteor traveling
toward the Earth posing
Armageddon.

I am a sun setting
on the Hawaiian ocean when I am
happy.

I am a waterfall
rushing down the side
of the mountain.

Jamar Myrick

Untitled

If I was a
hot dog I would
run from the hungry
people at the Monument
flying kites

If I was a 100
words I would
be more specific.

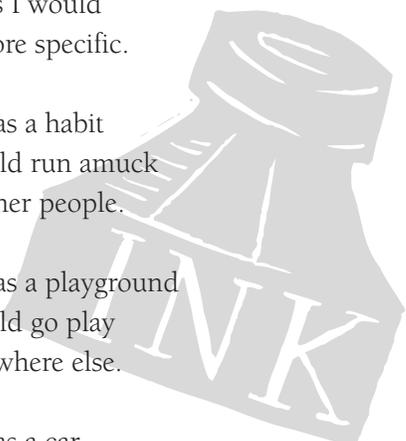
If I was a habit
I would run amuck
on other people.

If I was a playground
I would go play
somewhere else.

If I was a car
I would go places
that do exist.

If I was a river
I would overflow and
go through town recklessly

Robert Cathcart





Theodora Walker

Untitled

The street coughs blood.
People going around shooting, stabbing.
People doing drugs.
People kill kids.
Will they see age 20?
Some stuff happens because of money.

Marcus Campbell

Poem of Greg

My engine is like bird's wings.
My windows go up and down like a kangaroo.
My body sinks when the ocean sinks.
When the sun goes down,
I am right there when the moon rises.

I am in a car when you get tired on a bike.
When I run, you're at home
Watching cartoons.

Gregory Finch

Once upon a time there was a homeless person named Kevin. My family helped him out. I felt scared of him but I got used to him. He was not so mean after I took him out with my family and we all gave him what he needed. He stayed in our house and he lived there and he was never homeless again. He went back to school and he had a good education and he thanked us for helping him out.

Markeisha Simms

America Suddenly Reflects My Mood

Crazy, but not crazy!
Look, God didn't see fit
to give the black man a chance to work hard,

But he did give us children
to make dreams seem
worth a lot;

Political epochs grew
wild as in distance
a full rotation of the view
until America goes blind.

Overhead, a bird whose shadow
never ends,
Or its life-giving wings
brush the reflection of lips.

Tuesday's gone
Autumn is here,
thrashing behind the walls of sleep
in the mood of a daybreaker
with its thorn
from passive resistance.

Shawntice Patterson

Untitled

Summer rain whispers me to sleep
and wakes me up again.
Sometimes I swear i hear it call
my name. Summer rain,
I don't care if it rains
forever rain rain
let it rain

Thaddeus Holloway

Pitch Black

Black is the earth, because all there is
is the night's moon.
People walking around with flashlights,
hoping that the earth will start revolving soon.

The babies are crying, because they can't envision
a thing but black. Black, black black
is all they can see.

The parents are walking around looking desperate,
because they can not see,
blaming the government, the police,
and everybody they can't see.

They're walking around with weapons,
swinging in every way.
What they can not see
is that it's pitch black
and that's that.

La'Rae Johnson



Left to right: Antonio Ashford, Janay Treadwell, Krystal Johnson, Dominic Garvin, James Thomas, Larry Robertson, Crystal Hill, Chakia Chatman

My Lonely Life

My life is like having
no life, being alone
is like being in a dark shadow,
without life or
being on a planet without someone to talk to.
I always talk to myself,
like a dumb kid
and I cry and cry until
I fall asleep, like I fall
as I die of a cry.

DeAngelo Reed

If I Could Touch My Name

If I could touch my name, it would feel bouncy and hard.
If I could feel my name,
I would make a soup of my name,
And take a spoon
And taste my name.
If I could hear my name,
I would stand on a mountain and say my name,
And hear the echo.
And if I could touch my name,
I would decorate my name in gold and silver.

James Thomas

A Werewolf in Brooklyn

A man who only reveals himself
in the night hour.

Who walks the cold, misty
alleys before dawn.

He wonders in foggy woods.
And makes this weird-wolffy sound.

No one fears this half mortal man.
Because this is his mystery life.

You will never see him
in the morning land.

Danielle McEachin



Emotions

Cries of the dark, lonely in the night,
caves caving in, bring the array of light.

Struck in my heart, pounds of my wounds,
power in the future, humming of the saints,
angels rotating around the moon.

Wretched is my hair, shackled is my home,
memories passed away, tears are long gone.
Pleasure in the morning, gloominess in the dawn,
freckles on my face, frogs straying from the pond.

Time in the past, future in the present,
your smile is gone at last
whiling away the pleasant.

Soothing away my fears, stress in the small
callings of my name, springs as our feelings grow.

Showers in the rain, blue in the sky,
trees swaying away. And our human emotions
cast shadows every day.

Pure brown and white are colors that give us strength,
those are reflecting emotions
as our body grows in length.

Amani Al-Fatah



Crystal Hill, Janay Treadwell

Alien Nation

Alien nation,
I come from an alien nation.
I've built an alien nation.
I own an alien nation.

I have a language war
It's called going to the stars.
I have a little dog who likes to fall,
fall on the ground and roll around.
he wants to be picked up—
He doesn't like to walk.

DeMario Shaw

It Is This Way With Teachers

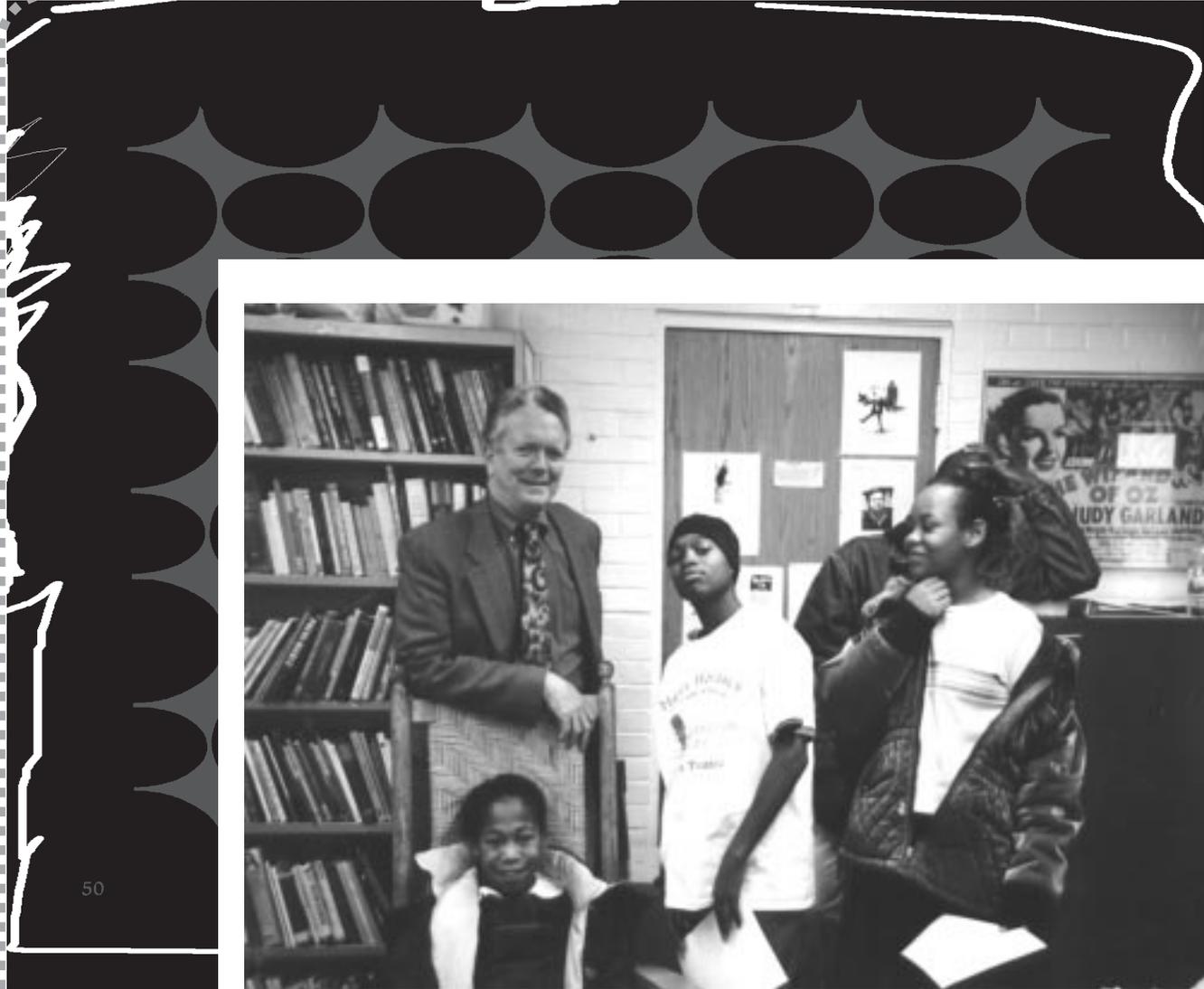
It's like this with teachers:
they teach you
they respect you
they guide you.
Some teachers are mean,
some teachers are nice.
But just remember
they love you.

Janay Treadwell

Kid Bleeding and Shirt

I was a child living normal
I used to get beat up in school
I was bleeding and so was my shirt
My head was hurting
I stayed all alone in the school
I played by myself.

Dominic Garvin



50

Henry Taylor, Amani Al-Fatah, Roland Evell, Theodora Walker, Larry Robertson

HARTWORKS presents
Our special guest

HENRY TAYLOR

Henry Taylor, the first guest writer to be featured in hArtworks, is a Pulitzer prize-winning poet and professor of English at American University. His most recent book, *Brief Candles*, is a collection of short poems called clerihews. On November 20, Hart Middle School students Amani Al-Fatah, Roland Euell, Larry Robertson, and Theodora Walker met with Mr. Taylor in his office to conduct the following interview.

Roland: What was your childhood like, and why do you write about it in your poems?

Henry Taylor: On the whole, my childhood was very good. We lived in the country, not far from here— about fifty miles. I grew up being able to spend a lot of time with horses, and I enjoyed that. I have three younger sisters, and I got along with them very well.

Any time I write about a personal experience, something that I remember, it's usually because I have a feeling that it means something, and I don't know what it is. And so I write the poem to see if I can figure that out. If I knew all about what I was going to write before I wrote it, it would be a terrible chore to actually write. I write because I don't know how it's going to end, and it's exciting to find out.

Larry: Who gave you your big break? What event happened to you that allowed you to become a writer?

Henry Taylor: Actually, there wasn't one moment that was pivotal, but there were two that I could probably mention, that were really significant. One was when I got to college, I ran into some people who wanted to write poetry, and we had something like a club. The leader was a faculty member. It wasn't a course— it didn't give credit, but we met once a week for two years, and did a little poetry seminar, and it was very important to me.

The first poem that I published, outside of school magazines, was a major break. It was a magazine published in England, and the editor came to my school, the University of Virginia, and he was writer-in-residence there for a while. He read a poem of mine, and he liked it, and I asked him if he would consider it for his magazine. His name was Stephen Spender, and he was sort of an important British poet. The other three poets in the issue that it came out in were Donald Hall, Theodore Roethke, and John Berryman, so it was a good start.

Theodora: Do you have any favorite poems?

Henry Taylor: Sure, but what happens with favorite poems is that they change, depending on how I feel, or as I age. One of my very favorite poems is a long, difficult poem called *Lycidas*, by John Milton. You can't just sit down and read it, because it's full of references to mythology, and stuff like that. Now, if you're working with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, then you could take a look at this poem and see what's what. It's a hard poem to read, but once you've gotten it under your skin, and I have... It means a lot to me and I love it.

LOR

Henry Taylor

Roland: What kind of poems do you like to write?

Henry Taylor: I like to write poems that have a real voice. I want my poems to sound like a real person is saying them. It doesn't have to be the same person every time, it doesn't have to be me every time, but it has to be somebody who sounds like a real person. You know how people have voices that make you stop and think, "Oh, I want to hear what that person says..."? I like to try and find a voice like that.

My poems tend to be kind of straightforward. They're not hard to understand on a superficial level. I don't have any philosophical problem with people who do write difficult poems— I'm not against difficult poetry. I just don't happen to write that kind of poetry. It's not a matter of preference; it's a matter of being true to what your temperamental makeup is, or you can't do honest work.

Theodora: Sometimes does your mind go blank, like it's drifting off in space, when you're writing poems?

Henry Taylor: Sure. My mind goes blank under all kinds of situations. It doesn't happen as often when I'm writing poems as it does when I'm just living my daily life.

Amani: What was your long-term endeavor? Was it to be what you are now?

Henry Taylor: When I was in my teens, the thing I wanted most to do was get on the U.S. Olympic team, doing horses. I wanted to be on the equestrian team.

Theodora: What was your favorite color horse?

Henry Taylor: You know, a good horse can be any color.

Amani: If you couldn't be a writer, what would you be?

Henry Taylor: I'd still be a professor, I think. I'm not absolutely certain about that, because I got into college teaching because of the writing. I do know that I let the Olympic dream go because of writing. So if the writing hadn't come along when it did, I might have made the Olympic team, and then things would have been different. I would have had to be a completely different person, though, to be somebody who didn't write.

Larry: When you go out and speak, how much do they pay you?

Henry Taylor: It's tremendously varied. I do some programs for nothing.

Larry: Do they pay you a lot based on your fame?

Henry Taylor: Yes, I think that's fair to say. Fame is a funny word. I mean if I were really famous, more people would have heard of me.

Amani: When you were young, did you go through any obstacles, like peer pressure, when you were coming along as a writer?

Henry Taylor: Not many. I had a few classmates in college who thought it was a little weird to want to be a poet. That's the worst it got.

Amani: How did you deal with it?

Henry Taylor: I just tried to ignore them. I have feelings, and it's possible for them to be hurt. And I've learned that it's okay just to say, "All right my feelings have been hurt, but I'll get over it." And I don't have to get over it right away. I can't get over it right away; I have to give it a few days, sometimes. Even now, you know I'm 58 years old, I've published a lot of books, but if I get a bad review, it takes me a couple of days to get past that. It used to take me longer than that.

Roland: What advice would you give to a young poet like myself?

Henry Taylor: Read all you can.

The Jefferson Memorial

I glance across a lobe of the Tidal Basin
and shift to the right to frame in stone
and light the blue-green bronze whose gaze,
if it had one, would just take in the monument

to Washington, arrayed in brilliant scaffolding.
If it could see, it might hear as well
the languages that rise from heads thrown back
to see the graven words and the outward lift

of the vault and its familiar illusion
of weightless stone. Behind it at sunset
people follow their headlights to Virginia,
where Monticello treasures more of who he was.

Here, the stately quiet puts away
the hobbyist, the restless gadgeteer
whose words on slavery were nobler than his deeds,
and holds aloft the astonishing idea
that even this man was created equal.

Henry Taylor



ANDY FOGLE

Andy Fogle, Antonio Ashford

The four poems printed here got jumpstarted in very different ways. “A Luscious Careening” (a play on the phrase “an illustrious career”) is an assignment we often give to students called “20 Little Poetry Projects.” “Witness the Self-Protection...” is a formal combination of the sonnet and sestina; “Epic” is simply something I saw and thought on the metro one day. “Albuquerque Blackjack” came out of a 1999 trip Nancy Schwalb and I took with six outstanding young poets to the National Teen Poetry Slam in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The “Blackjack” of the title and the reference to gambling (not intended to encourage literal gambling) match up to the poem’s 21 lines and, more importantly, to the sense of risk, chance and courage which I think are central to writing. It’s a little tribute to those six poets and their spirit—they (the poets) and that (the spirit) are what I’m in writing and teaching for: the excitement, the very serious fun, and a serenely deep devotion to the relationships between words and worlds.

Andy Fogle

Epic

a woman asks what the wall
is there for

looks out the window
and covers her ears

when we ride backwards on this train
everything falls away

A Luscious Careening

The sky, an emergency contact, lets all on earth
be what lies behind the eyes.

Here, in the distance, are two hazy fingers,
prints against prints. A tongue tastes

nothing but itself, and the smell of rain insists:

“Look—there are ways in and out
of this.” Bluejays shriek
just beyond insight, and it looks hot outside.

Andy Fogle was born in Norfolk, Virginia,
but it is cold. It is Valentine’s Day,
and tomorrow is my birthday.
Why don’t we just go in and ask

“Where are the singing dogs
and what do they look like?”

The day before I die, it will rain and be beautiful.
These dark blue fragments resist a voice, but the voice does not resist.

The panting rain will be beautiful.
Quiero amor and more
each day, and want the storm to remove
its necklace of lightning, like me.

Witness the Self-Protection: A Program

If you please, I’ll show you my neighborhood:
let us admire this place of entry.
Misbehave? I’ll hide beneath my manhood,
but want you to behold my injury.
It was, and still is, the search for entry
that has me don, then shirk, the dark manhood
and open myself wide to injury.
Watch how I make things leave this neighborhood.

This is where my spirit perpetually falls.
The watch is lone and gone: I haven’t the time.
Beneath the rain is where I understand
how the lost past is unsafe. I don’t understand
how it’s locked away, why darkness swells in the halftime,
why the house disappears, why a strong boy falls.

Albuquerque Blackjack

—for *The Six*: Bernard Best, Michael Billups, Dieanna Brand, Jessica Rawls, Larry Robertson, Shonnell Shelton

Glisten, you got
to slow down, you got
to speak, and speak up, you got
to be
now
and you gotta make the right sounds
sound right

and sound off (one-
two)—glisten, you gotta give it
either enough
or too much, gamble,
keep it dark with revolutions
like a tire, tough
and you gotta such-and-such.

You fight with no one but yourself, so
keep your gale short and sweet, sweat
and glisten to the world.
Bring your camouflage.
Sing the sounds.
Address your wounds.
Hit it, take off, and show on to this town.

Albuquerque NM
April 18, 1999



Kerry Danner-McDonald

KERRY DANNER-MCDONALD

I am delighted to be teaching at Hart again this year. One of the reasons I enjoy working with middle school students is because I started writing in the sixth-grade. A journal became a safe space to write about school, friends—anything that captured my imagination or kept me up at night. Growing up in Hawaii, I was constantly struck by the blue-green beauty of the islands in contrast to the not-so-beautiful tensions in my home life. Writing, and, later, the study of theology became a way for me to search for and build a meaning life.

No matter when you start to write, or why you do, it opens a window into yourself and to the world around you. And though it may be scary, it is always exhilarating. This is why I love to teach and to write—it is a way to speak and to live more deeply, more clearly.

The 7th Year

And on the seventh year of service
set your servants on their path
give them hearty bread, sheeps, and grains
kiss hands, heart, head and feet
and set your servants free

20 years plus 7
seems cause for celebration
indentured servant to incertitude
set me on my path, my God
grant me lighter step,
free heavy burdens of heart and anxious prayer
give me leave into myself
so that I may break forth into fireworks
and light up the dark night of my soul

Take these stones of possibility from my pockets
and transform them into singing birds

In Love with a Passionate God

I have searched for you since I was ten
Catching the hem of your robe,
I feel wholeness.

And I wonder
Do you God feel me?
Do you see me with out seeing?

If you see me without seeing
Hold me without holding
Wash me with out water
Feed me with not food
But love

Rainforest Color

I was too young to ask anything of God
but the singing night
always brought visions and dancing.
The rainforest color
and the banyan trees gave me strong arms,
and this island which was home became earth.

I clung to my mother earth,
she was always quicker with love than God,
and she sat with me at the ocean at night
when the wind started the palm trees dancing.
And in the day, the color
of her face beamed on my browning arms.

When I'd hear the last house light click off, my arms
pushed open the window and feet landed on earth.
I ask forgiveness of God,
as I walked to Ann's house to go dancing
on the golf course, abandoned to night's muted color.

I always knew my skin color
was too fair, and that my arms
would fade, but my roots grew in this earth:
and this new emerging earth-God,
visited me at night,
and taught me my heart's dancing.

When I moved back to the mainland, dancing
space was only in the basement and color
from a can. My strong arms
grew weak, and frozen mother-earth
was two stories down from my window and God
came in doctrines. But I knew the night

held the truth, and the night
was the time of dancing.
I knew that all colors
were no color without the others and that my arms
would get strong again and the earth
contained many people's God,

where God was mother (and father) and in
surrendering to the night and color
the trees become the dancing arms of her earth.

Inclined

In tune to your intergalactic linear notes
Flowing, weaving,
Weaving muted saxophones in my ears

I am into your noise, blackman
cotton-candy-coated appeasing noise,
I am wearing down my muse
Hallucinating a new natural high,
I am strung out

Be-boy styling, staggering steps, tripping
over your D-flats and B-sharps
These drunken lyrics rattle and shake my
kerosene lampshaded mind, while sifting
every pitch like grains of spices, sugarless
sweet, sizzling noise, blackman

Don't Stop!

Never stop blowing your addictions
into my scandalousness. And I am perfect
simplicity, grounded microphones receiving,
shaking me willow,
withering icicling shape.

Knees buckling, collapsing, splitting
pigmentation in two. Blue blood galloping
like stallions
Cease your prophecy, blackman
How karmic can you get?

I'm being ironic.



James Thomas

Abstracted, though rehabilitated
soul cleansed with earphones
Hungry
Thirsty for some rhythmic jasper-
golden, shimmering black harmonious beats.
These Cotton Club patent leather seats
can't hold me down. I gotta
move my blue suedes, which serenades
my urban feats.

Perm-pressed dreadlocks swaying
like hips; I'm in the copascetic motion
hooked to extensions, blundering dimensions
And my inferior domain
retains my eternal life span, therefore I
can't hear it. I can't hear lesions
any more.

I wonder why my ears never
longed so much to listen before. If
I had a choice, I would've died sixty
years ago, then lived three hours later
just to rewind
that musically inclined
noise, blackman.

Larry Robertson

Balanced On Its Own Flame

It stands on its blame
and its howl plays a tune
of its thorn,

Gimme flame it says
balance me There is
no shame.

My emotions are balanced
on its flame,

My mellow mind is nothing
but a truth beneath
the molten universe.

Soul and fire is all I see,
Flame, flame there's
no shame on me.

Shawntice Patterson

SS

The Room

The room with amazing things,
one corner with a boy
who stands with his face behind the wall
in trouble for not cleaning his room,
the dark blue and black,
the color of sorrow,
pain, and unhappiness in another corner.
One corner has a tree growing,
taking a century to become a subject in life,
growing for children to climb,
waiting for rain to soak its leaves,
waiting to go bare in fall,
and waiting for snow to fall in winter.
In one corner, the last of them all,
is the emotion of sadness, sorrow and depression,
tears running down a giant face,
sloping down cheeks, running fast,
plopping on the ground,
like rain, coming out of dark gray clouds.

Kiona Bean

O Thank You, O Father, O God

“O Father, we welcome your words”
as we are here today and everyday.
O Father, I love you and your words
and how you help me. You are so good
to everyone in the world.

You help me by encouraging me to do
things that I can't. Oh Father, you help
me by stopping red and silver cars from
crashing: my mom scared and
thanking you. You help me by helping
my family. O Thank you, O Father,
O God.

Antonio Ashford

My Life Will Be Like

“Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone
oak leaves, horses heals.” My life is
not like a stone, not bronze, not
steal, not oak. My life will be like
a running horse, a branch from a tree.
My life is like a baby being born.
My life is like an eagle soaring out to the wild.

By Monique Covington

Feelings That Don't Really Feel

Cold rain on your finger tip.
Feeling of cold hot snow
in your hair. Darkness on your face,
lights of hope in your hand.
Wings of glory on your feet and
thunder colored eyes on your arms.
The screams of lies that were from black
darkness of life in the hearts of dishonest lives
Those are the feelings that don't really feel.

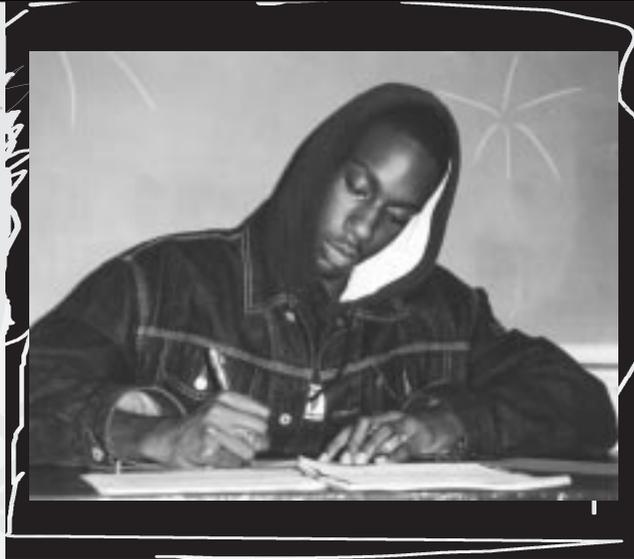
Ebony Love



I See

I see a little red
Robin starring at me.
I see a shiny dime
and it looks neat to me.
I see two red robins
whispering in my ear.
I see a neat dime and its
hanging off a tree.
I see a red robin wishing for me.
All these things are good to see
Now let's find what other things
you can see.

Krystal Johnson



Larry Robertson

Untitled

Hurry! Write it. Write it now.
On black paper. On ordinary paper.
What should I use? A pen. A blue pen.
A black pen. A pencil. No. 2 pencil.
What was it like? Where was it?
Here. Or there.
What was the food like? On a plate. A saucer.
Where did they rest? Home. Shelter.
Stable. Barn. Meadow.
How much space was it? Was it comfy?
Soft. Hard. Or just right.
How did they move? Where did they go?
Here. There. Near. Or far.
Did they go far? Did they get caught?
Did they cry? Laugh? Or yell?
Did they all die?
I don't know.
We now stand in the woods where
there is bones and flesh.
We're. sad.
We're alone.

La'Rae Johnson

I Promise

I promise that one day in the future
I will sprout wings of silver and gold.
And fly to a castle made of diamonds
where my flowers of ruby-colored seeds
will grow as tall as the sun continues to rise.
My crown will be made of rose-colored bushes.
My gown will be made of crystals and violet-colored clouds.
In my castle I will live in the clouds. I would stay on my throne,
I would sit forever.

Ebony Love

If I Could Have the Stars

If I could have the stars,
I would take all the stars
And put them in a bag, then
hang them around my room.

If I could have the stars,
I would keep them as my
brother and sister.

If I could have the stars,
I would make them
brighten my day evermore.

If I could have the stars,
they would brighten
my way at night.

If I could have the stars,
I would give them another color
like gold and silver
with beautiful glitter

If I could have the stars,
my eyes would change colors.
And they would twinkle like
little stars.

James Thomas

Like This, Like That Are Ladies

Designer clothes, cute men, is all or most
of what we think about. We aren't reaching
for the stars, we are reaching for the money.

Tomorrow, today, this, that.
What is it about? Fate, glamor,
that's all we see. Like this
like that is what we say
when we are spicing it up
or spicing each other.

Connections, beepers, I got to have it.
But why do I have to have?
Money ain't a thing when you got diamond rings,
shiny things, bling bling, living it up like
Princess Diana is like this: crowd, glory, fame,
and minorities are the only minor thing.

Rich, average, but all the struggle
you go through, trying to catch a cap
while getting from and to the mall is like that.
Like that is like this,
like this is like beauty,
like beauty are our ladies.

When the girl gets the gossiping,
and the gossiping gets the fight,
then all was
happened like this,
and ended like that.

Amani Al-Fatah



Crystal Hill

It's This Way With Bookbags

It's like this with bookbags,
and they are loaded with books,
paper, pens, and pencils.
They are full of dreams and surprises,
and they are packed with snacks.

They are loaded with
intelligence and colors.

It is very special, and if I lose it
I will be crushed.

Monique Covington

Connections Aren't Gone Away

Momma, my eyes are yours,
my body belongs to you. And even
though we have the same genes,
Grandma, Grandpa, and Dad,
I inherit too.

Dad, you are my ego,
Brother, you're my friend.
We connect in a way, and when I die I'll take
Your attitude in my sin.

Some of my connections are gone now,
and the feelings that you've left me, I repeat
over and over again.
When my soul unwraps,
it won't be in a rebound.

Grandpa, you're my wind,
Grandad, you're my shadow.
Love is my alibi,
and I keep my possessions within me.
When I'm weary, I never get too deep,
I never fall too low.

Aunt Mabel, Cousin Kevin, I know
you're not gone, your spirit is with me,
and your soul is in heaven.

I pray for you at night,
'cause you both shine on me in the day.
Be your own kind,
and take the pain a long way away.

Now go to sleep.
Now keep those spirits high.
Remember, we aren't grieving for you,
because your connections aren't completely
gone away.

Amani Al-Fatah



As My Teen Years Fade Away

As my teen years pass,
I only want to know about the last.
Everything has a beginning and end:
My beginning ends;
My ends begin.

From the first kiss,
To the last dance,
From my 8th grade prom
To my GED
From my college degree
To my big promotion
To my husband,
My loving child.

Tell me, baby,
Tell me where my teen years went.
Staying out on Friday night,
Going to the movies on a date,
Having people whistle as
My hair flew through the wind,
Barking as my hips rock.
Those are not the sounds of dogs,
Not the callings of nature,
But the calling of my teen years.

Theodora Walker



Monique Covington

Darkness

In this darkness,
I rest from a lonely day of school.
I am not ready for college.
I am not ready for high school.
In this dark,
I don't see people, places or buildings.
And when I wake up, I hope I'm ready.
The dark was red and not black
The dark was blue like the sky
And I hope the dark brings peace and
justice.

Eugene Marshall

Parental Conviction

This great bold bountiful Nubian fiend
Full-fledged queen
With vanilla skin
A manilla walk
And a Jezebel attitude,
Having pom pom braids
Atlantic sea pearls laced around her feline wrist of diplomacy
While sporting shimmering suede shoes,

And also roaming with a cocoa butter type of brotha
Blending his caramel pigmentation with his damped eyes
Having bronze and silver around his Hannibal knuckles
And possessing himself with a pharaoh personality.

She, being lured in by his prepackaged smile and million dollar lines
He, being captured by her arched eyebrows and arched hips,
Getting hypnotized by her rotating feminine lips—

I curse every moment.

Conceiving me in the depth of December
Blessing and baring me birth in September
I was dangling at the end of the umbilical cord
Cuz my generation is X
And I'm too young to endure.

Wobbling a beat of roller coaster tracks and tricks
This baby's not balancing your African mix:
This mother's somehow accident prone
And this father's a project gigolo,
Jiggling five other mothers on the highest peak of his ego.

Hoping my mother's life won't become a new dirge in the mist of depression.
Swing me your blues
In a jazzy sort of way
So I can compose it on his withered old grave
While we'll be playing spades on our pharaoh's tomb
Because I regret to say that he's been playing your trust like the alto sax
Shaping and molding you like one of his artifacts,

continued on page 41

Two Ulcers

Did he send typed letters, apologetic and sincere
to the battered fair-skinned negro who accidentally cut him off
in the left lane going 80mph, searching for the HOV lane
even though it was just him?

Did he roam his cell,
foraging and frolicking through pictures of his offspring,
a whole bunch of young diplomats, immune to their cultures,
posing and smiling, cuz perkiness sells?

Did he stress over family burdens?
Eating croutons, cuz his kin were too sweet,
decaying his soul,
long destined to burn.

Is he limping, walking on three legs,
slumped akimbo, eating mashed potatoes
and vanilla pudding for dessert?

Should he gain prosperity playing bingo
and bowling on Wednesdays,
at five o'clock, to be exact?

Is my little grand old English clock
surviving wealthy on his retirement check
and Social Security incomes,
becoming a Republican, congressional
and politically dumb?

At precisely eight on Saturday morning,
he would take a legion of overdoses,
killing him pharmacologically.
We will carry him in a coffin covered with urban graffiti.
He would become a blended shade of soil,
sprouting roses,
so we won't have to lay them on his tombstone.

Larry Robertson



Antonio Ashford

You Can Have Everything

You can have my shoes
You can have my clothes
You can have my house
You can have my T.V.
You can have my games
You can have my pet
You can have everything
I can keep my life

Dominic Garvin

continued from page 39

Cursing me with a three-digit 6
Asking me what could be better than his five-page letters
Which were feeding me legal lies
(So I couldn't sue)
Telling me how he wishes to devour your image
And make lava consume your tribal bones
And how he wants to gnaw on your soul.

You slice and dice his words like sword play
But that just ain't enough.
I challenge his intelligence by asking him the square root of masculinity
His mouth drops like the gravitation of Jupiter has joined his false statements.

I wish I could make peace with his corrupted mind
Mend my mother's bridge of vengeance
I yearn for the omega of this family oppression
Cuz these damaged cobwebs of pain don't get fixed by scarred black widows.

Larry Robertson

An Angel's Window

A window is not a path to
the fiery ground, but an eye opener.
The gleaming light of joy lifts
your spirits to the sky, when
your body is in a tunnel of
darkness and rats,
the cold ground you are under,
then your feet stop working and
you see another light
and you can walk once more.

Roland Euell



Autobiographia Literaria

When I was a small child,
I got everything I wanted or
desired. I had women kissing
or hugging on me.

I hated sores from falling,
I hated to see ruby red
blood on me. I tried to avoid
falling, but was determined
to walk.

My mom considered me
a small soldier. My
father couldn't bear seeing
my eyes drip salty water.
The loving touch of his
hand wiped the tears away
and brought back
the luring and irresistible
smile.

Roland Euell



Delonte Williams

Us & Them

Getting to know us is not hard
I will do my best to explain and represent
my country, my hometown, my home
We eat different foods in different states
but we kids pretty much act the same
We all like to play, joke
and have fun
Most people here eat veggies if
they are vegetarians or
they just like it
Some of us eat meat or
soul food for the body
We wear different colors on our clothing
but we are still the same inside
I've heard things about your country
and your eating food while sitting on the floor
and wearing beautiful robes
and your sliding doors of your paper houses
You wear sandals and have family secrets
You have myths and legends of all time
and we
We are a nation
We stay as one just by thinking
of Us & Them.

Donna James

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HARTWORKS

Clockwise from top: Larry Robertson, Antonio Ashford, Dominic Garvin, James Thomas