ARTWORKS

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Featuring Guest Author Omékongo DiBinga
Special Section Reflections on the Holocaust

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine
The hArtworks Editorial Board

Writers-in-Residence: Bomani Armah, Ruby McCann, James Saunders, Nancy Schwalb, and Jamila Wade


Front cover l-r: James Tindle, Steven Brown, Omekongo Dibinga, Aaron Brooks
Welcome to hArtworks, the nation's only inner-city public middle school literary magazine, written and edited by the students of Charles Hart Middle School. hArtworks 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. Now in its sixth year, hArtworks gives our young writers the opportunity to exercise their creative energies, speak their minds, and be heard by an audience throughout the city. The 2006 edition of Poet's Market recognizes hArtworks as “an outstanding example of what a literary journal can be (for anyone of any age).”

This issue features our students’ reflections on the Holocaust, culminating our study of that period, including two visits to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and a talk with a Holocaust survivor.

We have many friends who have helped to make hArtworks possible, and we would like to express our gratitude to them. Our sincerest thanks go out to the Banyan Tree Foundation, Herb Block Foundation, Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Children's Fund of Metropolitan Washington, Commonweal Foundation, Community Foundation of the National Capital Region, D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, Fannie Mae Foundation, John Edward Fowler Foundation, Philip Graham Fund, Harman Family Foundation, Hitachi Foundation, International Monetary Fund, Junior League of Washington, Moran Family Fund, Meyer Foundation, Rotary Club of Washington, Wachovia Foundation, Wendling Foundation, Weissberg Foundation, the friends and family of Anna Su, Michael Joy and TSCJoy/Monterey, LLC, Sarah Booth and Bloomberg L.P., Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, Karibu Books, 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, Ms. Shin’s 6th grade class at Bush Hill Elementary School, Gregory Auger, George and Lenore Cohen, Fritz Edler, Tom and Carolyn Grey, Mark Hollinger and Kathy McNeil Hollinger, Frances Horn, Betsy Karel, Gay and Charlie Lord, Paul Mandelbaum, Judene Slaughter, Raina Rose Tagle, friends of the late Meyer Saul Taubman, Juanita Wade; Vera M. White, and Martin Youmans.

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We would also like to thank the following administrators, teachers, and staff who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Willie Bennett; Assistant Principals Yvonne Davis and Shelton Wilson; Ms. Randa Alhegelan, Ms. Katherine Buchholtz, Ms. Gloria Fergusson, Ms. Carolyn Jackson, Mr. Jarvis Massenberg, Ms. Gina McKinney; Ms. Megan Merklinger; Ms. Eleanor Seale, Ms. Pamela McKinney, Ms. Ann Brogioli, and Ms. Maevern Williams.
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The Holocaust

When humanity was at its best
and hate was well left alone
When one man’s madness left to struggle
as all tranquility was broken piece by piece

As the peace is gone and all that was believed was lost
the families that were separated as children were killed
As the little girl cries to know what’s going on
The rain that falls washes the spilled blood on the ground
The boy’s hope that he would some day find his diary

As many people’s freedoms were stolen
As many people resisted
the barbed wire that keeps them from the sun
The bitter silence that spread through the camps

The fear of saying what’s true
The memory that brings misery
The healing that takes a long time to heal
And the question that leaves us hanging
Why?

Maryum Abdullah

Liberation

Hands, east, legacy
spiritual diary
People will stay with you
Mirror, trial, burn
All students should learn
Liberation, shadow, gray
It is a good day today
Rain, ghetto, blood
We are all loved

Martanisha Dew

Bless the Memories

Bless the memories, fear
don’t be afraid to die
but you will still survive
Bless your hope and don’t forget
your forgotten parents
Bring the stars that were in your memories
let your fear fly away
and don’t forget to have a nighttime day

Dai’Juna Gales

A Question About Truth

written with a pen
sealed with a kiss
if you are my friend please tell me this
are we friends or are we not?
you told me once but I forgot
so tell me now and tell me true
so I can say I’m here for you
and if I die before you do
I’ll go to heaven and wait for you

Jasper Hicks
Broken Body and Broken Souls

Put away the broken glass
fear, hate, guns, death
Put all that away and bring
clouds, kids, and memories
stars, hope, spring
And that’s my story
of broken bodies and broken souls

India Bell

Memory

In my hands, I feel madness.
I look east, I look west
knowing I’m blessed.
All the stress that I had at night,
all the secrets I kept in my diary,
I’m still waiting for my heart to heal.
And I will never steal or kill,
feeling all the colors of the rainbow
to glow orange,
gray to bring peace,
love and harmony
and don’t forget my dignity,
my memory through my journey.

Bnyonka Simpkins

Strawberries

strawberries, strawberries they are so sweet
strawberries, strawberries they are so good to eat
bursting like a cloud on my tongue
they are red and sweet each and every one
ravenous and sugary they are rooted in the ground
and when they grow they make no sound.

Simone Lovett Craig

The Holocaust

It’s all madness
The glass of peace
shattered to pieces
Blood everywhere
Hope is barely alive
Don’t cry
Be tough, friends buried in dust
Dignity, memory and pride
all stolen
Their fevers and burns, bruises and bumps
won’t be healing so soon
Believe and conquer
Keep hope alive
For their triumph is a legacy
and they will be passed as legends

Aaron Brooks
My feelings

When I wake up, I see the horizon
from my great view in my hand
I feel madness, I feel blessed, I feel the legacy
I say I’m not indifferent,
I see through the books that are buried under barbed wire
I witness sadness, madness
I hear thunder, I watch slavery
hearing people saying burn baby burn
breaking down, killing, stealing and fearing
The policy made millions filled with terror
Seeing that man causing murder and desolation
I cry and say I don’t want to cry, but I just cry
want to sacrifice but I need my life

Monae Smith

Steppin’ to the Left

as the world turns
as we all hold hands
we step to the left
going farther in life
because if we step to the right
it’s like every thing stops your heart and
every thing you desire.
It’s like when you move
to the right you
start to fail like you’ve fallen and can’t touch
your feet. But when
you go to the left
you go faster and faster
till you can’t catch your
breath. You go faster and faster
steppin’ to the left
steppin’ to the left
I am alive and full
of life accomplishing what
I see in sight and then
I stop, pause and think
steppin’ to the left
that’s all it has to be.

Brandie Keys

Dancing Rhythm

Dancing to the rhythm
moving to the beat
as I watch my feet
move across the floor
I wonder is the beat your beat
my beat, his beat, her beat
still I am moving to the rhythm
jumping, bumping, thumping, sliding
across the floor still I want to
feel it hear it I want to think
of it, I see people dancing but
why am I still standing here
I need to start feeling the beat

Erika Stephens
The Remembrance

We remember the time when they were sent to the ghetto
We remember all the secrets that were untold
We remember the time when the Jews were selected
When the bystander watched them bleed
Everyone remembers the legacy of how Jews were treated
When the Nazis thought they could conquer everyone and everything
But the Jews had some triumphs
They found a few ways to emancipate and escape
Millions were dust to death, dead bodies reigning everywhere
Can you believe the memory?
Can you believe the remembrance?
Always remember every treasure left behind
Everybody gone to heaven
Remember all the perpetrators
All the cries of the children raining everywhere
They made a sacrifice, hoping that their family is not taken away from them
Always remember the blizzard of fear and conquest
Remember the despair, remember the stolen bodies that were killed
Remember always remember.

Reginald Conway

Welcome to Whee Town

you can come to Whee Town
where wheeing is fun, you can ride my truck
it’s full of honey buns, we are tiny people
we stand on stuff, sometimes it’s churches
and sometimes it’s steeples
we run around saying, whee! whee! whee!
some of us are happy and run in a little line
our friends they join us with glee all the time
some of us like to sing and when our phones ring
we the tiny people of Whee Town
sing whee! whee! whee!

Davon Rawlings
A Poem

I am a shadow walking on the sidewalk thinking about yesterday’s mistakes.
I am at the Anacostia River looking at ice crystals.
I hear their voices with my sorrow.
A poet makes a touchdown when a meteor strikes.
A poet needs freedom so that they can get bravery and have their own style.
The intelligence in a poet is just humanity.
My drama struts when I walk through the metal detectors in the valley of innocence.

Shawn Flanagan

My Voice

My voice is clear like looking at water coming out of the drain.
My voice is precious like it was made for me to sing.
My voice is powerful and strong so I can speak what’s on my mind and say it out my mouth.
My voice is fearless and protects me when something is going on.
My voice is clear, precious, powerful, strong, and fearless.

Shaina Jones

Dancin’

the other day I was dancin’ in my soul it was so fast I couldn’t stop.
I was tryin’ to talk but nothin’ would come out
dancin’ with myself dancin’ with myself dancin’ with myself spinnin’ so fast tryin’ to catch myself 10 miles 5 revolutions to go back to rebuild my strength and dignity.

Shawn Flanagan

Peaceful

can you be peaceful?
yes. use unity to be peaceful.
being Peaceful is worth more than gold take that burden off your back, don’t listen to the cave of loudness constantly echoing in your ear, being loud, shouting, screaming at you, if you choose not to listen to it you’ll be tranquil and serene but most of all you’ll be Peaceful.

Lance Slaughter
Talking

Every day
I talk and
I play
every day I
talk about
boys, girls,
food and lots
of things.
Every day there's something
new to talk about,
every day I see myself talking
about my family or
talking about other people.
Every day somebody talks.
Every day somebody talks.
Why talk negative instead
of talking positive?

Why talk?
Why listen?
Why? Because . . .
every day I talk.

Dawn Lewis

Thinking

Today
When I was writing
I was thinking
Thinking about everything
My thoughts
My friends
What will happen when the
World ends?
Runnin' from my soul
Deep inside I felt cold

Janine Green

Hip Hop Makes Ya' Jump Jump

Hip hop makes ya' jump jump
You can hear the sound
go bump bump
You jump
You jump
so high so high
Yeah, the music makes you fly and fly
it's like the sound of
the drum, you get happy
You even start acting like a bum
Run to the beat
Run run like you're crazy
get up and jump, don't be lazy
You jump
You jump
You bump
You bump
feel the music and just dump
hip hop makes ya' jump jump

David Martin
Pumping

Yesterday
My heart was pumping
When I heard five bullets
Go through the windows
I try to duck
But I’m not fast
Enough then I’m
Hit, my heart
Starts pumping
I hear my mom call the police
In fear, then all I can
Hear is the blood drop on
The floor, then I hear
My mom’s heart start
Pumping. My mom smacks me on
My face so I could
Stay up. But it is
Too late, my heart just
stopped pumping

Xavier Leake

A New Me

I am soaring right through the New Year,
also running like a wild panther.
I make better decisions than I did in the old year.
I haven’t fought in three years—Let’s make it four!
Flying, bouncing, skipping and spinning
into the New Year.

Terry Bennett

Life

when your life turns dull
it seems as if there’s
no reason in living
any more. It will
become boring soon
to you too.
When your life turns dull
life doesn’t have
any meaning anymore.
2 make sure your
life doesn’t turn dull.
Don’t just sit there
and do nothing.

Dontrey Bell

I Am From

I am from the land of swords
From the blood of people
I am from the city of lights
The place of money
From where things grow
to where they rot.

Marcus Johnson
His Cry

1
His cry talks
to anyone who listens

2
anyone who takes
the time to realize
that he is alone, all
by himself

3
sitting in the corner
thinking about his life, and
how no one cares enough
to look his way

4
the fear in his eyes, count
the many times they have
seen blue crystal tears

5
one minute is all it takes
for a boy to go stir crazy

6
everyone else has the courage
to be free, independent,
and victorious

7
cowardly, he stands on ground
locked up, locked down
it doesn’t matter.
as long as you can see his eyes

Brittany Watkins

Walkin’ away from runnin’

i was walkin’ away
from runnin’ how
so? too slow. the rhythm
that flows inside me
has walked away from
runnin’ runnin’ away
from heaven, hell, and in between is myself
walkin’ away from runnin’
was the best thing to happen
to me. a while ago not too
long ago a year or two
ago i ran away from
being a young woman
being a teenager
being an adult female
success I had no less
of a better way to run
but to walk
to walk away from runnin’

Brittany Watkins
A Poet

a poet
is drama

when people
fuss and fight

a poet
is a shadow

that follows
you around

everywhere you go
while you touch
the ground

a poet
is an ice crystal

that sparkles
and shines

Edward Lytle

Where I’d Like To Go

I’d like to go to New York
it’s my favorite place
I’d like to see the city at night
when all the pretty lights shine bright
I’ve never been to New York
I’ve only seen her in pictures or on TV
I wish I could go right now
when I sleep I dream of New York
I dream I’ll live there
and climb the Statue of Liberty
and look down upon the beauty
of the city of my dreams.

Lexus Singley

My Personality

The dawn began when I woke up
my smile was the sun
my breath was the wind
my eyes were god
and my mind was a closed door
black with vengeance
a threat
my nails
it shuts aloud to anyone willing to help me wake up
I didn’t know how much I can be until I saw my rare image
in the glass mirror.
I ran like I was in the Olympics.
I screamed like a battered woman in a horror movie
My door opened as my dream evolved into a nightmare.
I awoke.
My black door was wooden and broken like me.

Brittany Watkins
Thoughts in the Dark

My love reconciles life itself. A graduate in the art of lost souls yet found in my wanderless mind. I now know what my goal is in life to live through eternity to be loved, to have a lifelong love right here by my side. I have no more begun to listen to the demands in the grand green grass that blows alone in the wind. My thoughts are what my heart doesn’t need. They are deadly in many possible ways. The noise from the attic is all of souls. I must get free. I am not alone in the night always. But tonight, I am all alone.

Brittany Watkins

My right hand

My right hand is used for carrying things.

My right hand is used to keep safe.

My right hand helps to stop the guns from shooting.

My right hand is used to stop the marching war.

My right hand will rise to the top.

My right hand will bring peace in life.

My right hand is my strong hand.

Antoinette Better

Skylights

In the morning I like to look up at the pretty blue skylights when you can smell the fresh and wonderful air with all of the birds and bees flying in the pretty blue sky, skylights skylights are so wonderful in the pretty blue sky

Saviya Brown
Lava

A poet
is lava
not to be
touched
rushing down
the sidewalk strutting her skills
her voice
is a flame
deep in the valley
burning
her voice gives people
bravery
like a hero
Ashley Cooper

Open Hand

I am an open hand
I display no anger
I am the open hand
I have a good heart
I am an open hand
I never have anything bad to say
I am an open hand
a step away from being
a tight fist man
Chris Beckham

What A Lost Soul Is

1.
A stray cat
A clock that doesn’t tell time
but watches it fly by

2.
A drum that misses a beat
A broken piece of glass

3.
A flower trying to blossom
A trapped hostage
Life after death

4.
A black soldier in a white army
A torn piece of lined paper

5.
A child without her parents
A person or animal left to starve

6.
A person gasping for air
A car accident
A space that just can’t be filled
Sherelle Barnes
Many ways to look at a pen

1. a start, beginning, a voice

2. manufactured once, but used many, many times

3. the difference between your wildest hopes and dreams and your actions

4. I would like to know, does it know my thoughts scribble . . .

5. I feel the sleekness of my metal pen . . . encouraging

6. heavy but light at the same time it has many ways of being itself

7. blue black red green many colors

8. letters poems dreams events the ability to write

Diamond Mitchell

A smile

A smile is a shadow showing a face of innocence demonstrating the strut of her thoughts. A smile is a voice speaking no words, hiding yesterday's mistakes and drowning all sorrows. A smile is a breath of fresh air after a bad event. A smile is a jade stone waiting to be found. A smile is all the colors that show happiness. A smile is such an antique but so new. A smile is freedom, bravery, confidence. A smile is the dawn of a new morning.

Diamond Mitchell
A poet is the Anacostia River

a poet
is a voice
for a face
of innocence
I am brave
to express
my freedom
A poet is
the Anacostia River
flowing like
cornrows
I am
a metal detector
ready to uncover
hidden objects
a poet is
a family reunion
always having
drama
I am growing up
doing daily
chores
a poet is
a confession
making an apology
I am a progress report
always improving
a poet is
a marching band
marching on
the sidewalk

Parris Robertson

A Lion’s Soul

A lion on a block trusting nobody
trying to survive and eat.
Never to rest staying on its feet.
Never knowing if I go to sleep,
if it’s the last air I’ll ever breathe.
Quick glances, no daydreams,
ever a long conversation,
trying to make friends it seems.
An old dirty lion
hey, that’s what I think.
Kicked aside and I don’t even stink.
Before I go tossed like a bundle,
long as everybody knows I was the king of the jungle.

Chris Beckham
I am a poet with style and drama that flows like the Atlantic Ocean.

My yesterday’s mistakes aren’t tomorrow’s disasters.

My intelligence makes my words come to life. My words are solid and can’t be broken, but at the same time, I’m gentle as a kitten.

A poet is a monument that rises.

*Diamoniqué Campfield*

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**Sleet**

sleet is like rain

shiny and slippery

watery and cold

icy and wet

turning from sleet to black ice to water

*Nickelly Newman*

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**Music**

Music is anything.

Anything can make music.

Drum on a desk with a pen or pencil.

Music is instantly created by you.

Boom boom boom goes the thunder and ahhh screams the little girl to her parents.

The thunder crashes and goes crackle-boom and a bolt of lightning splits the sky open.

*Damon Kee*
A Soul

a soul
is the wind
blowing through
the air
a fragile gift getting
shipped with much care
a soul is
the marrow
inside of a bone
the noise or
sound of music
ringing from a phone
the shadow of
a lion and
a baby cub
the voice of
the angels
singing from above

Troi Stevenson

Life

1.
Breath, clocks, batteries,
hearts, life, you can’t
make them start again

2.
Your breath stops
you can’t breathe

3.
A clock breaks you
can’t fix it

4.
Your battery runs out
of energy, you have
no charger

5.
Once your heart stops
you die

6.
Matches, once you strike one
it cannot be struck again

7.
Life, once you die
you’re gone forever

Troi Stevenson
The full moon at a glance

1. The moon, shining in its glory
   lights up the night.

2. Every night the moon comes
   out, mad at the sun for
   taking the day.
   But it’s better at night.

3. What time will it come out?
   Will it be a full moon or a crescent?
   How long is it going to stay?

4. The moon sometimes gets
   covered by clouds. But it stays
   there waiting and wondering.
   When is it my turn to shine?

5. Why is it so bright at night?
   When does it stop shining?

6. Life starts with the moon
   and ends with the darkness.
   Damon Kee

My Mother’s Smile

1. It brightens the room just
   like the sun.

2. Makes me feel as if
   I could never ever go
   wrong when I’m around her.

3. It’s everlasting like
   time, never fades away.

4. A waterfall of different
   expressions that are with
   saving in your memories.

5. Sometimes her frown is just
   as beautiful as her smile.

6. A smile that makes me
   warm inside like my grandma’s
   hot chocolate.

7. Her smile is everywhere I am
   school, sleep, or just
   being with my friends.

Shavon Osborne
What is Love?

What is love?
love is undefined
a style that’s unknown
love is the break of dawn,
how it feels for something new
a voice unheard
it’s a giant rainbow
an invisible rainbow
no one knows the code
the code to crack love

love is an antique
shattered in tiny pieces
the last breath of a person,
a lung gone bad
the lung went blue
so has the heart.

Aaron Brooks

Iron Bars

1. Young dreams
that should be real

2. Iron bars shoot
your dreams
It is your downfall

3. A small boundary hurts
your soul when
you see it

4. They box
you up like a cage

5. The force field blocks
your chance
of greatness

6. The years you have
to stay in bars destroy your life

7. You may never see
your family again

Charles Thompson

The Love in My Heart

you’re the love in my heart
you’re a pleasing person who is gentle and fine
we laugh loud together, so loud our laughter
is the wonderful coffee brown of your eyes.

Shantice Matthews
A few ways to look at broken glass

1. Crushing, shattering, a great force

2. The way a person feels after a despiteful loss

3. A thin line between love and hate, once broken, who knows what will happen

4. It’s like a relationship once something goes wrong it’s over like that

5. To break through, to go through all the way from one side to another

J.C. Morrow

The Rose

The rose is still, says nothing, thinks nothing. It’s like a calm killer smiling in your face waiting for you to turn your back to stab you. It symbolizes death, you won’t see it coming. It strikes like a tiger hungry and thirsty for blood. The red liquid that surrounds it symbolizes blood. The rose is black, Satan planted it, it kills you if you touch it. It calls you forth and confronts you. It’s coming, you better run. It reminds you of one other person, strong, attractive, mean. If you take a good look at it, the rose reminds you of me.

Aaron Brooks
The Ears of the Silent Fire

1
Fire bright as light
the steam burned
the closed lid of my
eyes

2
It’s blue-flamed ego

3
The embers of the plane works with
the blaze of the sun,
it burns brightly

4
The puberty of a forest
burned by an arsenal of flame

5
The end. The wind blows
ash into the eyes of
a stranger

6
The shadow
of the blood red
sun

7
The rising of a fiery sun

8
The wind blows
with an orange flame

9
Lava from a crater
flows into a
bowl of flame,
combusts
into the beautiful
silent ear of a phoenix

10
The phoenix’s ear
hears life,
its soul connects
with the essence of life

James Tindle

Miracle

How could an orange grow in an apple tree?
What went wrong?
How did it happen?
It’s too different! It doesn’t fit! Get rid of it!
The apples are bright, colorful, and shapely.
The orange is so dull and round.
It doesn’t make sense! It’s so odd!
It’s still growing, but it will never fit.
It’s mysterious, it’s beautiful, it’s a miracle.

Mercedé Monroe
**blue shadow**

I'm slowly deteriorating
my shadow stalks me
my loneliness rocks my mood
a labyrinth conceals my thoughts
I'm lost in my own mind
in a hole of darkness
my loneliness reflects madness
in solitary, in my corner of light
my loneliness breaks the picture
my mind is isolated
I think light
my loneliness littered the floor
a hole of confinement
it kills me slowly
it’s words are singing my soul
to sleep
a slow wind blows hope
from my hand
my hair moves with the wind
loneliness scars me
a promise of joy fades from my eyes
soft music rings the bells of faith
loneliness flows over the horizon

*James Tindle*

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**Love at First Touch**

Her eyes blocked my vision
Her smile clouded my own
I could not talk as if
someone sealed my mouth
Lost in her eyes, I stared into
the back of her thoughts and
I knew what she was thinking
I stared at her features
I was afraid of being rebuffed
her body was beautiful but deadly
in its own way
her fist and mine had a lethal battle
she and I stared down into
each other’s worlds, we had chemistry
when she didn’t show another time
my cheeks watered and my tears
littered the floor
my volcano erupted
I was angry, she wasn’t there to see me
and when she was back
it was the end of my anger
but she stared at me
the glare in her eyes paralyzed me
but I was in love

*James Tindle*
I am a tennis ball played in the game called life

I am yesterday’s mistakes where only getting two questions right was a lifetime supply of F’s
I am a tree, stale, yet alive
I am my mother’s fingertips always changing everyday’s new plans
I am a sea flowing through a wide open valley with style and voiceless waves
I am a marching band, loud, energetic and full of life
I am a valley wide and open
I am a cave, ice crystals seek within the shadows of a new dawn
I am a face of innocence no guilt, no shame,
a hopeful smile of courageous bravery slips across the sweet face of hers
I am a jade stone sparkling bright but strong, a breath that will always remain an antique

James Tindle

Queen Monae

I'm Queen Monae
the one and only
I’m Queen Monae
can somebody tell me where’s my money
I’m all about fun and games never had to say hey
I’m having a great day
When I say hey
You better say
Hi Queen Monae
I am the one
who carries herself with maturity and loyalty
that’s why I’m not a princess
I’m a queen
and my name is Monae

Monae Smith

Vowels

A is black, like a T-shirt and the man of steel is wearing it.
E is white, like the clouds making an eagle.
I is red, like flames burning a house down.
U is green, like fresh grass.
O is blue, like the clean blue sea.

Ronnard Williams
Where I’m From

I’m from long johns and wife beaters of both materials

I come from God made dirt and that wasn’t me grandma

I’m from fifty cent for the truck where profanity was the promised language

from hot chocolate and cookies fresh from the oven

When bullets are alarm clocks and like birds flying all day

I’m from new balances and half of my hair done from band aids but no boo boos

I come from too many kids in the house I’m from birthdays ending with whipping

From no shoes and socks outside and playing in the fire hydrant on hot summer days

From ashy knees, ankles, and elbows From those two big cornrows grandma did

Mercedé Monroe

The Shadow

The shadow is like a leader, it always has something different about it, like our own whispers, one sounds different from the rest. Like Martin Luther King Jr. said in his speech, “People should not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” Like the mighty shadow small or tall, people’s colors should not affect them from yearning for the places that they want to go. We shouldn’t let acres of land or sea stop us in our quest for freedom. Like Dr. King said, “I Have A Dream,” like a shadow nothing will get in our way

Bruce Brown
hArtworks presents guest artist

Omékongo Dibinga

top: Omékongo Dibinga; middle l-r: Luqman Abdullah, Omékongo Dibinga, James Tindle, Maryum Abdullah; bottom l-r: Aaron Brooks, Steven Brown, James Tindle, Omékongo Dibinga
Maryum: Do you have an emotional attachment to any aspect of your writing?

Omékongo: Well, I have emotional attachments to all of the poems and the rhymes that I write. I try to write about as many different topics as possible. I feel, as a Black male in this field of entertainment, sometimes we get typecast. People think we can only write about certain things—drugs, rap, sex, or whatever—but I’ve had so many different experiences traveling the world that I try to write about as many different things as possible, but all things that I have personal experiences with. I’ll write a poem about living in the ‘hood, but then I’ll also write poems dealing with issues of AIDS on the African continent, or people’s fast food diets, or people’s experiences in prison. Or people living in countries where they are experiencing war, because I’ve been to those places as well. So I’m very passionate about that, yes.

Brittany: What inspired you to become an author?

Omékongo: Well, I’ve been inspired by lots of things. As you can tell by my name, my family is from the African continent, specifically a country called Congo. And growing up in Boston, Massachusetts I was disrespected a lot by African Americans who didn’t understand that we’re all the same people. So growing up, I was always writing. As I got older I told myself, well, I can either hate the people who have hated me or I can, through my writing, try to show them that we are all the same people and try to get them to appreciate not only my culture, but get people, particularly African Americans, to appreciate and respect their own culture as well. My influences came from my parents who taught me about that. They also came from growing up in extremely poor circumstances in Massachusetts in the 80s, which was a very violent time. And also my inspiration comes from young people like yourselves looking for ways to get their work out there. My work has been on TV in over 130 countries, and I don’t have a record
deal or anything. I just work hard and I believe in getting my message heard. I've shared the stage with great rappers: the Wyclefs, the OutKasts, the Bone Crushers, just by believing in my work. That's what inspires me. Seeing folks like you all, who are looking for a different direction than the ignorant stuff we see on BET or MTV, you might be looking for different types of options. You can have your own businesses, your own companies, your own T-shirts. It can be done without embarrassing your own people.

**James:** What are your favorite books that you’ve read?

**Omékongo:** My favorite books. Well, my older brother’s an artist, so I grew up reading a lot of comic books to fuel my imagination on things, X-Men, Spiderman, I liked Marvel better than D.C. I’ve read books like “The African Origin of Civilization,” and “Myth or Reality” because many people are taught that Africa didn’t contribute toward civilization. When you learn the truth, you find that Africa was the beginning of civilization. So those books inspired me, “The Invisible Man” by Ralph Ellison. Poetically, I’ve been inspired a lot by Maya Angelou and Nikki Giovanni. They really got me interested in writing at a young age, because my family is from the Congo, as I said, and they were mentioning the Congo in their poetry. So that really inspired me. “The Autobiography of Malcolm X,” I definitely learned a lot from that. Books by Carter G. Woodson, I’ve read a lot about African history and Black history.

**James:** How long does it take you to write a poem?

**Omékongo:** When I’m in my zone it will take me about two hours to write a poem. I’ll think about it for a while and I’ll write some things down in my Palm Pilot. And then I’ll sit down and sometimes I’ll just get into my zone. If I can’t write it in two hours or so, it doesn’t feel right. It could be a 30 second poem, it could be a 5 minute poem. If I can’t put it down right there, it doesn’t really feel right. Everybody’s different. Some people will take weeks to write one poem. People have to do what works for them.

**Luqman:** What got you started doing poems?

**Omékongo:** I was writing probably since the fourth or fifth grade, classroom assignments and stuff. My parents are political activists in the community, so we would have rallies or shows for Kwanzaa, and I would memorize poems by Maya Angelou and Nikki Giovanni and perform them. And then as I got older I started writing my own. The next thing I knew, I was at a rally or community protest and people would be, like, “Get up there and do a poem.” I would get up and do an original poem and I was thinking, “People really like to hear what I have to say, so let me just put it down and see if I can keep writing about different topics. And that led to me traveling and putting out my first CD in 2001, my second CD in 2003, my first book and DVD in 2005. I started my own company; Free Your Mind Publishing; I put out a rap CD mix tape—I took a bunch of songs by Jay-Z and Biggie and Fifty and Tupac and re-mixed them—I just started taking it from there. Like I said, Free Your Mind Publishing is my company; our motto is “Opening eyes one mind at a time.” That’s pretty much how I do my thing, and how I got started doing it.

**Aaron:** What is the first thought in your mind when you begin to write?

**Omékongo:** The first thought? These are all great questions! The first thing that comes to my mind when I begin to write, the first thing I ask myself is: “Am I being original?” One of the tracks from my next album is called “Maybe If I,” and it goes pretty much: Maybe if I told ya’ll I was a stone cold killa—Got three bodies on me, ‘cause they
owed me skrilla. Maybe if I told ya'll I have to fling every day, 'cause I have to feed my daughter in this hustling way.

Maybe so on and so forth... It’s like, maybe if I talk about all these things, I’ll get you all to listen to me—when I don’t live any of that stuff. That’s pretty much how the song ends. So I think, “Am I being original to myself? Am I lying?” The hook goes: Maybe if I told ya’ll about this fantasy, would ya’ll be a hater and wish death on me?/ Maybe if I told ya’ll this was my life be, could I make ya’ll go out and buy my CD?

So it’s basically asking myself, am I being true and original? Am I writing about my real life experiences? And if I feel like I’m doing that, then whatever I put down, people are going to understand. Some one will—not everybody—but someone will understand it, because they can identify with what I’m talking about. So if it’s true to me, then I have to put it down.

**Maryum:** Is observing life giving you ideas for writing?

**Omékongo:** Oh, absolutely. I’ve lived and worked in sixteen countries, grown up in Boston, Massachusetts, I’ve gone to some of the best schools in the world—Harvard, Princeton, Morehouse, Georgetown, Tufts, I’m doing my PhD at the University of Maryland, and I live right here in Southeast. Being all over the place, it definitely inspires me. I’ve been in African countries where there are people who are richer than me, who drive Mercedes Benzes, have big houses, and are richer than anybody I know. I feel like I have to let people know about that experience, because everyone thinks that Africa is poor.

At the same time, I’ve been to places in African countries where people have been poor. I’ve watched my cousin die from a common cold, from lack of medicine, and things like that. So, the more I travel, the more I see Black people all around the world, I see folks in Congo are the same as people in Southeast. Same as folks in Boston, Massachusetts, or whatever. I have to put that down, because I get to see things that you all may not see, so hopefully you all will want to see those things when you get older. Because TV teaches us to think inside the box, to think that we can’t leave our ‘hood, to think that we can’t have great aspirations and great dreams. I’m trying to show people that I come from the same place that you all come from and, just because I believed in myself—I didn’t grow up rich—I’ve been able to see the world, just by my work alone.

**Steven:** Where have you traveled to?

**Omékongo:** I’ve been all across the country, New York to California, so I won’t go into all of the states. Countries that I’ve visited and performed in, I’ve been to Cuba, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Congo, Togo, Benin, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Gambia, Senegal, Canada, France, England, and there are two that I’m missing...it has to be two others on the continent, because I don’t think I’ve been to any other European countries...I hate when I forget. But you get the idea.

**Brittany:** Are you all the way African or African American?

**Omékongo:** That’s a great question, because some of my poetry deals with that. I actually have a book here that I’m going to donate to your library,
and I have a poem in there called “The African, The American” that talks about the differences. It depends on who you ask. Both my parents were born in Congo. I was born in the States, so technically that makes me an African American. If people want to call me that, that’s fine. I have no problem with that. If people ask me who I am, I tend to call myself an African first, because I grew up in an African household, in terms of the discipline that I grew up with. Whenever I go to an African country, I feel like I’m at home, no matter where I go, even if it’s a country that I’ve never been to before. Wherever I travel, I feel like I’m at home. So you can call me an African, you can call me Black, you can call me an African American, to me it’s all the same—we’re all the same people.

Brittany: Who influenced you musically?

Omékongo: I’m inspired by all types of music. I grew up on rap, so I’m thoroughly inspired by that—Jay-Z, Biggie, Posdnous, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, I’ve been influenced by all types of rap. African music, reggae music, I’ve been inspired by everything. If it sounds good, you know I’m going to put it in.

Brittany: Have you heard of Green Day?

Omékongo: Yes, I’ve definitely listened to some Green Day as well. I think that it’s important to diversify. Music is music. Do I have to sit here and talk about stereotypes and rap about random girls, you know, just lie about doing that type of stuff in order for you to say that I’m keeping it real. “Keeping it real” is keeping it real dumb. It’s keeping it real uncreative. It’s real ignorant. Rap about what you live. I’ve never been in jail, I’ve never been shot. I feel like my story is real enough, that what I’ve experienced—having my father almost killed by an African country president, having his head bashed in...

Brittany: Is that true?

Omékongo: Absolutely. Both my parents have degrees from Harvard—my mother was beat down by cops in Massachusetts because a white girl lied and said she tried to sell her drugs. That’s one of the tracks on my album. It’s called “Dibinga,” that’s my family’s last name. It goes: We supposed to be the soldiers who never blow our composure/ Even though we hold the weight of the world on our shoulders/ But we never s’posed to show it, students ain’t s’posed to know it/ But you all don’t know our struggle, so let me flow it/ Worked hard to get here and did what we had to/ My parents told us we had to set an example/ We need to be leaders, the youth want us to guide ‘em/ But ya’ll should try to understand, when we arrived from the Congo/ Folks kicked out with sis in Mom’s stomach/ Crossed the line to C.A.R., barely got crossed it/ came to America and settled down in Boston/ Dealt with all kinds of racists, had fights often...Ya’ll don’t know about our struggles, our life ain’t been roses/ And Black Americans were some of our biggest opponents/ That’s why we give back, so folks understand/ You shouldn’t hate your brother—we all Africans...

I feel like that story is just as interesting to you all as Fifty getting shot nine times, you know? That’s going to be on my next CD that I’m working on.

Aaron: You said you were going to give us some demos.

Omékongo: Yeah, basically what I did is, I’m trying to show young people that you can rap and sound like your favorite artist without swearing and without disrespecting women. It’s called “Bootleg.” (Kids laugh, crowd around him for CDs.) Don’t worry, I’ve got extras.

I want to show young people that you can talk about different issues in our community that rappers aren’t talking about, because I believe that there are different stories to tell.
Pulse of the Motherland

They say you can’t judge a book by its cover
But it has become appallingly clear
That you can judge an entire continent
By its media coverage

You can color a whole continent dark
With the paint of poorly placed perception
When you rely on the media
To teach you your Africa lessons

Because I come from a continent,
That the world thinks is a country
And to put it bluntly,
We’re all HIV positive
Until proven negative
In the eyes of the media

It’s like Africa is either one big safari
Or Kalahari with seethin’ heathens
With no sense of religion
And home to animals and animism

Because TV renditions of African afflictions
Have created a depiction
Of a land of savages
Where the world’s most dreadful diseases

Exceed the law of averages
And since American TV
Only shows the ravages of a select few nations
Most Americans juxtapose the mother of civilization
With phrases like “damnation” and “starvation”

So if we don’t control our own images,
We can’t expect to see
A true representation of our beauty

Most non-Africans believe that the most
Africa has given to the world
Are phrases like “Hakuna mtata”
And “Asante sana squash banana”
Along with exotic vacations in remote locations
‘Cause I’ve never heard an American TV news station
Even say we’re made up of 54 nations

In the eyes of the media,
We’re just underdeveloped wannabe Caucasians
Still searching for civilization
Of who we are
But am I taking this too far?

Because to me,
The real problem be the WB, ABC, & NBC
which are the real WMD:
Weapons of Mind Destruction
Because too many people
Including many Africans
See what they see
Through the smart bombs they call TV
And it's not just the newscasts,
It starts at age 3

Because I grew up
Watching images of Bugs Bunny
Dressed in grass skirts and black face
Speaking in “African dialects”
And every 10 years,
There's a new version of Tarzan on the TV set

And I don’t knew about y'all
But recall seeing gorillas pass for Africans
In those “Tin-Tin” cartoons
And if you remove
Marvin Martians’ helmet from Looney Tunes
He's probably an African illegal alien
Or a fallen, faithless, famine-stricken African child
With his stomach protruded

And it's these convoluted characterizations
That have helped in creating grown-up policy makers
Who partially base their opinions of our homeland
From films such as “Congo”,
“Gorillas in the Midst” and “The Air up There”

And we can't forget “Tears of the Sun”
Which left too many tears on the sons and daughters of Africa,
Searching for a beautiful representation
Of our native land

But that won't happen until we Africans
Take responsibility for our portrayal
Because the betrayal of our friends
From FOX, CBS, and CNN
Means we will never see-an-end
To caricatures of the continent of human creation
Which has been made to look
Like she's on her deathbed
And ready for cremation

But we will show the world
That our Mother Africa is strong, vibrant and defiant
Because the pulse of nearly a billion people can never die
When WE control what the world sees,
So we must never comply
To pictures painted by pessimists on TV of our homeland
For we are the pulse of Africa
And we will now show the world
How proudly we will stand!
Perfect Concepts

Concepts are everything
Freedom is to feel like you are not stuck in a cage.
Silence is to feel like you’re alone and no one is there
I feel as if you are alone in this world.
Reality means to come to life like you were just born over.
Hope is to see a smile on someone’s face.
Fantasy is to feel as if you are on an imaginary cloud filled with beautiful wishes.
Memory is to reunite with your past.
Trust is knowing that something or someone will always be with you.
Vision is to recognize that the sun has gone down and the beautiful moon has come up, or like when November is the past and December is the present.
Language is to recognize someone or something’s voice, or know someone’s identity.

Reginald Conway

Just My Grandfather and Me

My grandfather and I are two birds flying south
He always used to watch me like a cat and a mouse
He stood like a statue with a confident pose
Everything he did was a mysterious lesson
His voice is like no other person’s
When he talks he is like a tiger searching for his food
His hands had a tightly closable movement
When he touched me I felt warmth like when the sun came up in the morning
I learned everything he taught me step by step
He never gave up on people because he wasn’t a quitter
I always loved his laugh and smile
It made me want to be like him
He always had a back up plan
With him being so amazing
I never thought he would go so quickly
I always went to visit him
But the last time I saw him
He was lying in a casket
I’ll never forget my memories with my grandfather
He will always stay on my mind.

Reginald Conway
Sip the Cup of Peace

Sip the cup. Drink it don't look at it.
Just sip and pass
and it won't take so long 'til
everyone takes a sip of that cup.
It will never run out.
It will sweep the whole world.
It will never be too long
until everyone sips that cup.
Day or night, rain or shine,
it will still go on and on.
And when everyone drinks
that cup, they will look
as if they were just born over again.
This cup will be carrying around the blood of
peace, it will be extraordinary.
it will notify everyone as if it
was a tornado watch.
It would sweep the world like a sun
and moon searching for
one another.
When everyone takes a sip, they will
scream out amen and everyone will be walking
to the beat of their own music.
So just take a sip from the cup.

Reginald Conway

A Beautiful Flower

This flower shines like the sun.
This flower is yellow and brown.
This flower is in good shape.
This flower is like a dream.
Your roots in the ground give you
all the stuff you need to be in good shape.
Your colors are so beautiful.
In the night time anybody can spot
you because you are so bright.
Your smile is so beautiful I can’t resist it.

Markus Johnson

The Blue Jeans

My grandmother wore blue jeans
that reminded me of waves of water.
I always liked the way she dressed
because she made me smile.
My grandmother took me places
and the waves of water of her blue jeans moved side to side.

Terence Patterson
The World

The world is like the meadow on a beautiful sunny day. The world is like the Atlantic Ocean when the moon shines on it. The world is like a forest when it rained the day before. The world is like the desert on a very hot day. The world is like the Rocky Mountains with snow at the top. The world is like the plains where farmers live.

Markus Johnson

My Mystery Is My Mission

If I speak of mystery
I speak of destruction and I
speak of secrets, which show my lab
that desires to destroy everything.
My mystery is my mission
to silence the world of people turning good.
I fly through the soul and sky
of the hearts of my family.
My mother has compassion for me,
but no compassion for me to conquer the universe.
I gleam through light like the darkness in space.
This is a reality, but people think it is hidden behind the sun.

Steven Brown

Coming Home

The sky is red and orange
the clouds are white with red and
orange words that say dream and believe
I like the sky because it is pretty
and colorful
I think it's mean when it rains
it is icy and steel and when
it turns into a river
I like to call it the twisted river

Cherish Gaines

The World
love

love is like a flower
it is a nice thing to be
if you have someone you love
go at it, don't stare at it
it is a moment of truth
for you and others

love is like a flower
it is a lively thing to be
if you have someone you love
go at it, don't stare at it
it is a moment of truth
for you and others
to be in love is like
living in the sky
sitting on a cloud

Cherish Gaines

loneliness

loneliness is sitting in a dark room
with no one to talk to
as I sit in the dark room
I think, if I had one friend
who would talk and not skip
the subject when someone else
is talking
I would be happy

loneliness is a forest
it is like you can't
see anything
you hear sounds
an owl saying whoo whoo
you see a full moon
and tall trees
you see a deer run
past and you
get scared, you jump
and start shaking
you look around
and see nothing
but loneliness

Cherish Gaines

My Amazing Wisdom

I know the meaning of sunshine
I don't know everything that happens in my family
I know how to jump for the sky
I know how to write, I know how to dance
Sometimes I don't know how to feel
I also don't know everything that happens in space
But I know some astronauts visited there
I can't describe how I feel sometimes
I really can't picture that there will be a tomorrow
I can't predict what will happen next
I just realized that I am supposed to come to school to learn
Mostly, I don't know what I am supposed to say

And, sometimes I feel like I am not real

Reginald Conway
**Broken Glass**

1
The glass fell off
the table, it almost
hits the ground

2
It shattered like
miniature people
running away from
life

3
A man strikes
with a broken
beer bottle almost
hitting a 3 year-old child

4
Frozen like icicles
a book hits the table
icicles fall
scary huh?

5
Little children frozen
from fear touch their
glasses and they break
in too many pieces

6
My teacher collects
sea glass, they are really
pretty and smooth

7
A glass book is
difficult to read because
there are no words

8
Cinderella lost a
glass shoe and
the prince found it
and put it on her foot

9
Stuck in a glass
house, I never could
find a way out

**Renita Williams**

**QUANICE**

Q is brown, the color of my skin.
U is red, for the color of my blood.
A is blue, the color of the water I bathe in.
N is black, the color of my pretty eyes.
I is green, the color of my money I will make in
the future
C is yellow, the color of the shining sun.
E is every color that stands out for me.

**Quanice Walters**
Doors

A door is like a bittersweet chocolate candy bar
it's good then nasty
The future is a door, the past closes
and the future opens.
A door is like a birth canal
when a baby is on the way to earth
A wooden door always makes
an irritating sound.
My eyes are doors when
I close my eyes to sleep
A dog's tail wags like a door
when it's happy.
Renita Williams

Kaleidoscope

Purple, blue and red daisy flowers
with elephants swimming and standing by
the ocean making circles and squares in the water
with birds and ducks flying over their heads
and kids scream and yell, sounds
like they are having fun
with more sea turtles floating in the water
looks like Mars, which is a planet
looks like something that you see
when you go out into space.
Martanisha Dew

Praise Renita

I am as fast as a cheetah
I made Africa
I cried my eyes so much
I made the Pacific Ocean
I am so strong I beat up the Hulk
He started to cry
I am very tall, I can touch
the tallest mountain in the sky

I am so smart, the whole world
bowed down and called me brilliant

The steps from my feet made the sidewalk
an emerald colored jewel

I am so little, I can float on a fountain

I am the greatest, I am the greatest

Renita Williams

New Way

I am skating into a new year
as the old year slides right by
and the old is as new as
winning the Nobel Prize.
I'm sleeping my memory away
while driving the success train,
diving into a new day.

Jerry Martin
Confrontation

No sudden movements.
Silent as a mouse.
No offensive looks, as the canine
stares me down trying to sense my fear.
But I don’t show it.
He looks at my facial expression.
I look at his.
He growls loudly, I grin.
I try to make friends.
He wants to make enemies.
My heart pounds hard,
I hope he can hear it.
His back leg is trying to back up.
He hopes I can’t see it.
He makes an evil glare,
I make one too.
He makes a questionable look and walks
away as if he knew my intention was not harmful.
As he walks, my adrenaline slowly cools down
and my body is at ease.
I go about my business and so does he.

Maryum Abdullah

When I See You

I see you walk out of the house
every morning for school, looking like
everything is fine.
But your scars show you’re not.

I watch as you walk to school
frowning and trying to wipe away
your bruised face that I see was
blessed with severe burdens, and as
I walk up to confront you, you
put a fake smile on your face
to smooth your pain. But your eyes
still look red, and I can see
the fountain of tears still rolling
from your eyes. You tell me
they’re tears of happiness.

Maryum Abdullah

Relation

Hate is to closed fist
as love is like a trap,
which means love is hard to obtain.
Trust me, I know
which means everything is different now
after losing someone special.
Now it is getting dark;
I am starting to lose my mind
and forget everything else.
Truth is as hard to obtain as lies
and as easy to lose as friends.

Demetrius Gibbs
If I had the power to...

If I had the power to be a child again
I would see my father one last time
before he leaves me.
I would not even be mad about him leaving.
People keep telling me that I look exactly like my father
but I don’t know what to say because
I don’t know what he looks like.
I really want to see my father.

Johnathan Richardson

The Power of the World

If I had the power to make the world better,
I would take the guns off the street
and everyone would get along with each other.
I would make sure people have a house to live in
and no one would be homeless.
If I could be God, everyone would be alive still
because I don’t like hearing about someone getting shot.
If I could bring one person back it would be my brother, Boo-man
because ever since he died nobody acts the same in my family.
If I could turn back time, I would be the one that took
the bullet that my brother took in the head
then my family would feel the same way they feel about him,
but if it was me, I wouldn’t have to worry about
my brother not being here.
But I can’t do any of this because
I don’t have the power to make the world a better place
and I can’t be God
but I do wish I could bring my brother back alive.

Tamekica Heckstall

Kamikaze

Have you seen
a silver rose
growing inside a star?

I have seen a jet
turn into an ice cube.

But no silver rose
grows inside a star.

Bruce Brown
Legacy

I see the stars at night glowing all over the sky.
I hear the owls hooting at the crack of dawn.
I feel the pain every night when people are dying
and getting hurt on the street.
I also feel bad for people who starve and can’t eat.
In the future, I hope all of that gets left behind.
People are dying and crying over people
who shouldn’t die so young.

Shanice Parker

Inside the Beautiful Sun

If I were to go inside the sun
I would bathe in its burning flames
It would feel like I was in a boiling pot of soup
If I were to look out of the sun
I would see every planet and meteor in the universe
I would jump on every comet that comes pass the sun
And every time I jump back into the sun, it would
rotate faster and faster than it usually does
After, I would grab the tail of the milky way
and ride it like a roller coaster until I get tired
I would see red fiery pits, then every planet
in the solar system will form around the sun
in different places, until I say, “back into place.”
That is what I would do if I went inside the sun.

Reginald Conway

SHANICE

S – bloody red puddle running the side of someone’s body.
H – the color black that everyone sees when their lives are taken away.
A – the deep blue ocean that people have been dying in.
N – the bright yellow sun that shines when the rain goes away.
I – ice pink that reminds me of the flowers like blossoms that bloom outside.
C – orange sunset that shimmers the sky when it gets dark.
E – the white color you see when you are an angel in heaven.

Shanice Parker
Struggling into the New Year

I am struggling into a new year
and the old years are stuck to me.
Stuck like a strong glue
or a wad of gum
that I found under my shoe.
It's going to be hard
to let go of my childhood memories,
but I know I have to do it.
How? I don't know,
but I'll find a way to get through it—
I always do.
How? I will do it by thinking
what a twelve-year-old middle schooler
should be thinking about.
I'll think about the things I'll do this year,
I'll think about the future,
cause it's a New Year.

Jasmine Murray

My Name

Yesterday, my name was nightmare,
because I didn't go outside until it was dark.
Today, my name is magic,
because when I am on the basketball court,
people say that I make most everything
like it is magic.
But I think tomorrow
that my name is going to be lonely,
because there will be nothing to do
but go to school and then come home
and go to sleep.
My secret name is baby AI.

Kenith Curtis

My Real Name

My real name sounds like music
Yesterday my name was sweetie
Tomorrow my name will be unbelievable
My friends think that my name is an echo in the valley
The police think my name sounds like a wrinkle
My parents think my name is blue blossom
My grandmother thinks it sounds like history
Secretly I know my name is moment of silence

Ashley Stevenson
Vowels

A, red, the thickest glass in the room has a bright shadow
E, brown, the sweetness from the seagull that’s wearing a uniform
I, purple, hurtful things that banshees and cyclops were saying to each other
O, pink. Pink has teardrops rolling down on the gypsy sandpaper
U, green, a mahogany pyramid with things inside of it

Ashley Stevenson

Pain

Pain has taught me to protect myself
on the dark streets of D.C.
Pain has taught me the meaning of reality
and that there are limits to what you can do.
Pain has taught me how to live independently
and fend for myself alone.
Pain can teach you lessons
that help you in life,
and don’t.

Luqman Abdullah

Truth

A half-empty glass is more like an empty heart than it is like love.
Hate is to a closed fist as love is like a kiss.
Down is like up when open is like closed.
The sails on the ship moved like a bird’s feather.
My life is like blank pages, as wasted as a plate with no food.
Truth is as hard to obtain as a good cheesecake
and as easy to lose as your life.

Tamekica Heckstall

A Poet

A poet is a meteor
blazing past others
without being noticed
A poet is a shadow
that is unnoticed
by people because it only comes out when light is on one side

Dontrey Bell
Philosophy

I am a very shy butterfly.
I believe that unknown places can be scary at midnight.
It’s not my fault that water gets frozen when it rains.
I wonder if I will ever get a chance to go to Paris.
When I grow up, I want to have a beautiful castle.
There is no one who doesn’t have a heart like glowing lights.
Why should people be sad when they can be happy?
I hope that shy people like me will show their true feelings.
I want to be remembered as a blue heartbeat.
I am afraid of tornados, but not of crazy people.

Quaniesha Holmes

Name

My real name is a silver moment of glory.
Yesterday my name was an echo, a splash of music.
Tomorrow my name will be misty memory, blossoming laughter.
My friends call me smiley junior,
They think my name means happiness.
Unknown people think my name is a magical shining star at night.
My parents know my name is glistening heaven that voices call.
Secretly, I know my name is a silk feather at midnight.

Alicia Williams

What Is My Name?

My name is Franzel.
My Grandma calls me sugar-honey-baby.
My sister calls me immature.
Yesterday my name was Willoby.
Today it is Johnny Bravo.
Some girls call me
Will you be my Willoby?
It’s an illusion, so I call one girl the goose
For now, I don’t know what is my name.

Franzel Willoby
My Real Name

My real name is silent laughter.
Yesterday my name was illusion of glory.
Tomorrow my name will be precious memory.
My friends think my name is shining wonder.
The police think my name is heartbreak.
My parents think my name is delicate music.
Secretly, I know my name is history.

DeJon Tucker

I Am

I am like a black Jaguar
that is running past a white rose.
I am like a white tiger
racing through the rain.
I am like a dragon
falling faster than a meteor.
I am like a dark blue dragonfly
driving an automobile through the snow.

Shawn Murchison

About Me

I am a soaring butterfly
I believe in long relationships and glowing friendships
It’s not my fault that we are falling girls and fearless boys
I wonder if someone will build me a princess palace in Rome
When I am outside, I play in the snow
There is no explaining to powder-pink cheetahs and lime green hearts
Why are people sad?
And why aren’t people invisible?
I hope that the lit candle never dies
I want to be remembered as a loved sunset
I am afraid of unknown places but not of bright windows
And I’ve never been in severe darkness
If you want to understand me you must go east of light blue street

Shambriel Metts
Colored Vowels

Shiny red A, like an apple, and before I even take a bite I can smell the sweetness and taste it as well.

Blue E, like my warm sweater; E is for emptiness, like clear.

I, black like smoke in the air. I is for in control.

O, glittery and silver, Outstanding as it can be.

U is brown like my skin. Smooth and round, U stands for unicorn; Royal it will be.

Kiauna Hamilton

I learned from it

I learned going out in the snow and coming in the house and resting your hands in hot water will really hurt. But I learned from it.

Putting on other people’s glasses, I learned from it.

Touching wet paint? Learned from it.

Disrespecting teachers—learned from it.

Fake friends, learned from them. I’ve been there and done that, but I did not learn it all.

Kiauna Hamilton

The Real Me

I am a tornado in the shape of a cylinder, and very silver. I believe that an unknown story could bring sadness and madness. It’s not my fault that I am a south-side chick from the east.

I wonder how it would taste to eat frozen yogurt in the winter. When I eat lunch at home, I feel good and it’s yummy in my tummy.

There is no meaning to an unknown story. Why can’t invisible people be made known? I hope that one day, people will realize that I am in a twilight candle.

I want to be remembered as a fearless person. I am afraid of spiders, but not of people. And I never knew that a glowing glass shoe could break so easily.

If you want to understand me, you must find out who the real me really is.

Regina Abraham
Life is Unfair

Life is so unfair.
It’s like being trapped in a closet;
It’s like screaming out with no remorse.
Going around trying to make a friend
and you try and try, but you can’t hide it.
You try to walk away, but you argue and say
I’m tired of being pushed around.
You just go out and scream
Life is unfair! Life is unfair!
But you gotta be a soldier
and you make a friend
and before she makes the wrong choice
you tell her life is unfair

Tanisha Wright

Diary Entry

yesterday the sun didn’t come out
instead it rained all day
so I didn’t go to see a movie at Rivertowne
they were not showing Bad Boyz, Scary Movie
or Hostage, I didn’t pay for a ticket and I
didn’t buy popcorn or soda.

I didn’t go outside, I didn’t run from a dog
and I didn’t eat chicken.

Joseph Woodard

Why?

Why kick my shin?
When you know it’s a sin
Why you knock my knee?
Let’s sit down and drink tea
Why carry a gun?
When playing and getting along
With each other is much more fun?

John Brunson

Strange Day

one day we got a new table
the next thing I know we had no cable
it was a bad day it felt like my heart was falling
I went home and started calling
though no one answered
I was home alone
I got in the house
I looked in the fridge
fixed me a sandwich
I sat in a chair and
then scratched my hair

Isiah Jackson
My True Name

My real name is heartbeat, because I’m alive.
I wonder if there’s something out in the world for me.
I believe that I could travel, heavenly in silence.
I want my name to go down in history,
like America’s Bandstand.
When I was born, my mother gave me a name
that will blossom forever.
My Grandmom wept for days when she heard
that she brought a new soul to this earth.
There was a moment of glory
when I opened my eyes for the first time.
To me, my name is like rough music, just listen to me talk.
I hear voices in my head
saying take a walk across that magic bridge.
My name to people is an unseen thing, like it’s private.
Laughter is all around the room when I walk in.
Today my name is lonely,
like a splash of fluttering in my nightmare.
To me, the mirror shows a texture of growth.
I will rise and worship my name forever.

Shamia House

Belief

Pain is in my grandmother’s body, said the doctor.
The night lengthens through the months of cold weather.
What I live for is my dreams coming true.
Who I love is always with me.
What I hope for is my family to succeed.
But I say to myself, we will always
be together no matter what.
Then toward morning, I think of
will my grandmom, mom, and my family make it today?
Yet as one, we reunite

Shamia House
**My Name**

My name is a sweet name.
It's just like candy.
Yesterday, my name was like a blossom, like a flower.
Today, my name is precious because of the things I did.
Tomorrow, my name will be magic,
like a wizard pulling me out of a hat.
The voice that echoes through me
tells me that I can do wondrous things.
My friends think that I'm unseen
because they don't see the real me.
My parents think I'm delicate for my personality.
Secretly, my name is silence, for my unknown voice.

*Danielle Blake*

**Thinking About the People In New Orleans**

I am thinking about what I am going to do
I hear my pencil moving in the stillness of the silence on paper
I'm thinking of people in New Orleans
Did they come back to the city or are they still in shelters?
I wish I could help
I am thinking about what I could do to help
the people of New Orleans
This only makes me think of my loved ones and how protective
I am. I am very hurt because of those left behind.
I am just thinking and now I have an idea
That's what thinking can do for you.

*Diamond Bedney*

**Definitions**

Memory, the smell of my mother's sweet potato pie on Thanksgiving Day.
Failure, the look on my face when I got a C on my test.
Autumn, the way the pink, orange and brown fall to the ground
Generation, the way my grandmother followed her dreams and made her own business

*Marché Shields*
Keep the Peace

I don't like violence
I don't see the point
too many guns
in the joint
it's a neighborhood
for families not a war zone
we just want peace
and no more guns because
laughter is much more fun
don't stick me up
I don't have much
I only have my smile, my tone,
my space, my family and
a nice place
keep the peace
loose the guns, we don't need
more in the world
we just want to have fun

I only have my smile, my tone,
my space, my family and
a nice place
keep the peace
loose the guns, we don't need
more in the world
we just want to have fun

Joseph Woodard

The Boogeyman

he is creepy, he is sneaky
he makes boys and girls scared
can you bear to hear this
oh dear! His eyes are
red he creeps under your bed
he has one more on the top of his head
if you scream you'll think you're in a dream
it will feel so real that's why some people
take sleeping pills.

Anthony Sterling

The Confusion of a Backward Witch

The witch didn't fly on her broom
She didn't put a spell on anyone
She didn't take anything from anybody
She didn't sleep when the sun came out
She didn't even kidnap children for dinner
She wasn't ever mean to anyone.

Ashley Walker

Color of Vowels

A. Scarlet mercury. You are hungry means red light, red oceans.
E. Silver, the color of money. Cents the color of the silver midnight sky.
I. Golden, the color of a just-baked cake.
O. Green, which is the color of a uniform.
U. Pink, the color of jealousy when you are cheating.

Tanisha King
My PS2

PS2 you’re like a rose
a cherry wild rose
you are a diamond shining
in the darkness of my bedroom
you shine with love
you give me a hug
you’re sweet like candy
dancing around me

when I walk to school
I think about flying with you
you look at me and say,
“hey” and as I’m walking
down the street I look
down and see my feet
and I listen to the sound of
the beat on the street
then I go home and
I eat, eat, eat.

Malik Kenney

Oranges Everywhere

I woke up this morning with an orange on my bed. I looked out the window, there were oranges everywhere. From tree to tree and house to house there were oranges all about. I raced down the stairs to tell my Mom but she already knew, in fact she had an orange head with an orangey nose. She ran up to me and said, “Help me, there are orange heads everywhere, just look and see.” I looked outside and everybody had an orange head. I walked to my friend’s house and I knocked on her door. She told me to, “Taste the oranges there so sweet and sour.” I told her I didn’t have time I had to be back in an hour and she stuffed an orange in my mouth. I made a face then swallowed it down and climbed the orange tree to pick some more. I went into the house to get a basket to hold the oranges then we both went back to my house. My Mom told us what had happened. She said, “Don’t eat the oranges, there is something wrong with them, if you eat them they will turn you into orange heads.” We looked at each other, my friend and I, and she screamed, “Your face is orange.” We ran to the bathroom and tried to wash it off but then my head grew bigger and bigger and bigger. Soon our heads looked like oranges, we both started screaming louder and louder and louder. Then I woke up and realized it was all just a dream.

Crishauna Gay
**Sapphire**

Sapphire you’re so cool  
you’re so blue like the sky  
Sapphire you’re so bright  
you bring me light  
Sapphire you come in all  
shapes like a triangle or  
a blue grape  
Sapphire you’re so beautiful  
and great I love your color  
you’re as soft as the kisses  
from my mother you  
have the hue of a blueberry  
and to me you smell sweeter  
than cherries  

*Jasper Hicks*

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**Orange Grove**

there is an orange grove growing  
in my garden. The oranges growing  
from those branches are sweeter  
than my young Zeyla out there on the  
back porch. So sweet the juice makes my  
mouth water when I think of my orange grove.

*Gregory Sam*

---

**My Sport**

I’m Keyonna  
Baroness of Basketball  
I’ll show you how to jump  
high in the air like  
an emergency flair  
reach for the stars  
bounce a ball  
from the moon to mars  
you see for me basketball is the sport I love  
like a dove in the sky I fly high  
when I play my game they sing my name  
the crowd shouts it out loud  
as I walk real proud with  
my head held high as they shout,  
“Keyonna Baroness of Basketball”  

*Keyonna Plowden*

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**What I Didn’t see Him Do**

I didn’t see my cousin walking  
I didn’t see him talking  
I didn’t see him coming  
I didn’t see him running  
I didn’t see him looking  
I didn’t see him cooking  
I also didn’t see him hooking  
class at Charles Hart Middle School  

*Stanisha Gaskins*
Las Vegas

come with me to Las Vegas
see all the pretty lights
put on your sunglasses or you will lose your sight
if you stay with me I promise you that you’ll have lots of fun
you’ll have so much fun you won’t believe what can be done
we’ll go and play all day and you’ll surely want to stay
if you’re with me you won’t want to leave
there’s lots of games just sitting there waiting to be played
and so that we can win.

Rico Sanchez

Right the Wrongs

let your voice be heard
stand up for what you believe in
don’t let no one treat you wrong
if you must, sing a song
let your voice be heard
don’t let them judge us!
we’ve got to stick together
it’s like World War II
all over again, fighting for our rights
they cannot judge us,
we gotta scream,
holler and shout
our voices are loud
like a dogs bark,
a babies cry, a mothers scream
let your voice be heard
we are strong
we can right the wrongs.

Qediah Chaplin

Sweet Pie

sweet pie eh!
all kinds I love to try
the crust is so crunchy it makes me sigh
for sweet pie, pie that makes the birds go tweet
some people say that is neat I like to heat mine
up but I don’t like it in a cup
I will not eat it with a bat
but you don’t want to eat all that
or you will get fat,
you eat it with a fork, spoon and
by hand, I think you cook it
in a pan

Anthony Sterling
What If Pizzas Grew On Trees?

what if pizza grew on trees?
upon the branches upon the leaves
oh, I like its special taste
I’d eat so much not one piece would go to waste
when I pick one everyone would stop
and look at me their mouths would drop
the best tree would be mine
‘cause pepperoni is most divine
when it’s gone I’ll plant a seed
and wait for people to observe with greed.

Lance Slaughter

A Strange Day

One cold day the snow came heavy
as I walked the mountain
I almost fell but didn’t
I made it to the top of the mountain
and I saw a little cabin
I drank some cocoa and
ate oodles of noodles
I watched TV then I drifted off to sleep
when I woke up the sun was shining
there were palm trees everywhere
things seemed different from what I remembered
I was floating in a pool and there was a Jacuzzi
bubbling on the other side of the pool, I was wearing
swimming trunks and the next thing I was sleeping again
the next time I woke up I was home in my bed
so I got up and got ready for school.

Angelo Martin

The Hood

come to the hood
where the ghetto be
come with me to MLK
or come on your own
you’ll find your way
we play at the play ground
throughout the day
we in the hood
we do what we can
we got each other’s back
and stick together
like thumb tacks
come with me to MLK
or come on your own
you’ll find your own way
I don’t know how, or when
or why, but trust me your
heart will be your guide.

Qediah Chaplin

I Dream

some day I dream
of going to San Francisco
seeing the Golden Gate Bridge
with the water rolling underneath
when I go I want to jog across the bridge
and sail across that water
that is my dream

Anthony Bullock
Why My Feet Are Important to Me

Let me tell you why I like shoes
Echo: They stop me from having the blues
I like high heels to make me tall
Echo: Normally I am very small
Sometimes I run with sneakers on
Echo: If someone chases me I am gone
I wear Mary Jane’s
Echo: Sometimes they give me foot pain
I love Girl Timberland
Echo: They make me feel oh so grand

Ceshelle Evans

Blue Baby

you taste sweet like blueberries
you sound charming like a melody
you smell like the sweet aroma of apple pie
you feel like the velvet petals on red roses
Blue baby you make me feel good
on this a catastrophic day.

Richard Mitchell

My Open Heart

My heart is open to you
You can take it but please don’t break it
You can choose it but please don’t lose it
You can keep it, please it, even tease it
My heart is as open as the outside it’s as wide
as an ocean and
that’s because my heart is
open only to you,
you and you only.

Quanita Jackson

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Quanita Jackson
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