



HARTWORKS

Spring 2006 • \$5

FEATURING GUEST AUTHOR **OMÉKONGO DIBINGA**

SPECIAL SECTION REFLECTIONS ON THE HOLOCAUST

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine



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Front cover l-r: James Tindle, Steven Brown, Omékongo Dibinga, Aaron Brooks

INTRODUCTION



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.

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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

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



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

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

At the Holocaust Museum



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

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



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

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



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

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



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



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

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

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.
I make sure your
life doesn't turn dull.
Don't just sit there
and do nothing.

Dontrey Bell

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



Yasmin Jones

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

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



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

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,
never 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



Poetic

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.

Diamonique Campfield



Sleet

sleet is
like rain

shiny
and slippery

watery and
cold

icy
and wet

turning from
sleet to black ice
to water

Nickelly Newman

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

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

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



A few ways to look at broken glass

1. Crushing, shattering,
a great force
2. The way a person
feels after
a spiteful
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



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

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



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 boo's

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

Omékongo Dibinga (www.Omékongo.com) is an activist, educator, spoken word artist and Founder and CEO of Free Your Mind Publishing in Boston. Omékongo is a first generation Congolese-American who writes and performs poetry in English, French and Swahili and has occasionally used Wolof in his writings. In addition to his new rap CD, Bootleg, he has released two spoken word CDs: A Young Black Man's Anthem: Love, Afrika and Revolution Revisited; and Signs of the Time. Omékongo is the recipient of the 2003 Cambridge Poetry Award for best CD. He has performed extensively throughout the United States and in numerous African, European, and South American countries. Omékongo has also performed on stage with Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, and Dennis Brutus and has appeared on television and radio stations broadcast to 30 countries. His first book, "From the Limbs of My Poetree" was released in November 2004. His second book, an anthology of middle school students entitled: "Poems from the Future, Poetic Reflections from the Next Generation," was released in August 2005.

Omékongo visited Charles Hart Middle School on March 8 to discuss his life and work as a writer with Luqman Abdullah, Maryum Abdullah, Aaron Brooks, Steven Brown, James Tindle, and Brittany Watkins. What follows is an excerpt of their discussion.

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,

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 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, Posdnuos, 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 to 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.

ARON: 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 I 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

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



Tiona Wade



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

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

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

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



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

James Tindle at the Peace Corps



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

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



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

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

Marché Shields



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

l-r: Tyshawn Turner, Charles Thompson



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



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



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

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 would it 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



Ice

Ice turns to water
Just like a fly turns to die.
A lily turns to a possum
Like a tiger turns into a striped cat.
Diving turns into swimming;
Jumping turns into leaping.
The sun turns into a sunflower
and
Fighting turns into friendship.

Markela Izlar

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

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



Monae Smith



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



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

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

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

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



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



the creative writing workshop

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