



HARTWORKS

Summer 2004 • \$1

FEATURING AN INTERVIEW WITH TOI DERRIKOTTE

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine



l-r: Shane McNeil, Ray-von Medley, Michele Elliott

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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 fourth 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 2004 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 of *hArtworks* brings another year's literary endeavors to a close. Our students have recovered from the mishaps and tragedies that engulfed the community, ending the year on a celebratory note: More Hart students have won writing awards this year than ever before. Congratulations to Joseph Hudson, who won first place for eighth grade in the Junior League of Washington Teen Poetry Contest. Congratulations also to Alexis Arrington, who won first place for Youth Poetry in the Larry Neal Awards. And in an unprecedented achievement, ten Hart students won the Parkmont Poetry Contest. Their accomplishment was noted in the *Washington Post*, and we reprint their names here for good measure: Tayonne Casey, Alyssa Flemming, Ricardo Jackson, Sherrell Jones, Brittany Love, Raekala Middleton, Delonte Morrow, Stephen Reed, James Saunders, and Reginald Williams. Our young writers also performed their work at a variety of venues, including Borders Books and Music, American University, and the Black History Month celebration at D.C. Superior Court, which was repeatedly broadcast on Channel 22, proving that poetry *can* make you famous.

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 Arcana Foundation, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Commonweal Foundation, the Community Foundation of the National Capital Region, the Fannie Mae Foundation, the Junior League of Washington, the Rotary Club of Washington, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Michael Joy and MCJoy/Monterrey Construction, Borders Books and Music, Free Hand Press, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre, Kathleen Huston and McGuire Associates, Joyce Page and Ms. Printing, our friends at Popeye's on Malcolm X Avenue, Ann Brogioli, Fritz Edler, Andy Fogle, King Golden, Tom and Carolyn Grey, Mark Hollinger and Kathy McNeil Hollinger, Bernie Horn, Deborah Hudson, Denise Keyes, Nancy Kruse and Andy Smith, Paul Mandelbaum, Bill Miller, Bill Newlin, Sara Shea and Michael Christian, Judene Slaughter, Raina Rose Tagle, friends of the late Meyer Saul Taubman, and Vera M. White.

We would also like to thank the following administrators, teachers, and staff who are our partners in this endeavor: Principal Willie Bennett; Assistant Principal Yvonne Davis; Ms. Tameka Brown, Ms. Gloria Fergusson, Ms. Shirley Grooms, Ms. Carolyn Jackson, Ms. Irma Morgan, and Ms. Patricia Onakoya; Ms. Eleanor Elie, Ms. Pamela McKinney, and Ms. Maevern Williams.

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Reginald Williams (center) and Shaquiel Jenkins (right) sign autographs after performing in a poetry slam at American University

PARKMONT POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

Ode IV

from "Oedipus 2K3: A Family Affair"

Oh, for man's offspring. How much higher are these generations exalted
that inhale and exhale in the desolate labyrinths of fiasco
and exist and do not exist simultaneously. Who wields the weight of happiness
than bands of Aurora beams in altering looks. Or who will cause his thought to remain
in that state of mind while time candidly passes us by. You're so last season.

O bare lash of treachery and leaks of disdain. I who bore your catastrophic reign
consider every man shunned. Like remnants of starlight, your great days cease.

That cerebrum was a brute spear penetrating all dimensions.


Far down, how far down you dug them, forceful pitcher,
at a baffling distance, and handed oh sacred praise down.

You overcame the enigmas, the untouched wit,
her clinching, barbaric obsidian blades.
And though death could blow, you held position like a skyscraper
to make pale Corinth take heart.

Veil against our agony.

Worthy ruler, granter of decrees, omnipotent Oedipus!
No prince in Corinth was ever so reknowned,
no prince ever earned such grace and authority.

And yet, out of all men, the most scornful biography is this man's.
His gains are gone as soon as he gets them,
he is an empty soul with no hope, dwelling in the States of Peril,
fallen to the ranting state of a nymph's condemned life.



O Oedipus, most exalted one!
The great gate that guided you to the dawn-given light,
guided you to your dawn-given power,
as provider of the household, as legitimate Son.

All the puzzles of these generations were solved too late.

How could the queen who was Laios' victory,
the blossom that he manipulated as his latitude,
be humble when the verb was validated?

James Saunders

A Sense of a Radiant Environment

On a peaceful day where nothing can go wrong,
I stroll through a beautiful forest,
watching rainbow-colored salamanders
swimming upstream like
a race to the tongue of the future.
Lions, bright as the sun, roaring
like a yearning for adventure.
Cerulean-colored dolphins, sharks and whales
jumping and dancing for a great forest.
The best part was the bird reunion:
The vultures, cardinals and blue jays
flying off to the sun.

Delonte Morrow

Ocean

My ocean
is in my bucket,
big, blue and happy.
It smiles at me when I walk by,
laughs at me when I make stupid jokes,
sings me to sleep
when I'm too tired to do it on my own.

Raekala Middleton

PARKMONT POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

Poverty

The nightmare of illusions of tomorrow
stalks quietly around the corner
cherishing the patterns of abuse and sinister rage
upon this fragile soul.
Yearning for the grave
and wanting to escape this crisscrossed rickety bridge of a life
from this morning, the day of his birth.
Tomorrow's day will come in grief
so will hunger; stealing, no too weak, a loan he can't pay back.

Mirages of hard eternities haunt my life
draining from my self-esteem until suicide strikes my brain
like a bolt of lightning from the hand of Zeus.
Until his fury paralyzes my brain and overwhelms my temples
and as the last blow strikes the heart,
the fragile soul is crushed.

Nations are not shattered, memorials are not built.
Nobody will miss him. Not one person.
But some things will:
The corner on which he sat,
The tin cup which earned him a few cents each day of his miserable life.

Reginald Williams

Loneliness

Loneliness gets cold.
Hope is no longer there.
Home gets the night
And the sky gets blue as we fight
In the war of orange sunrises
And gold stars.
Go back to the Ghetto.
Get on a train.
The train starts howling.

Alyssa Flemming

To Live

The bright stars gleaming through the air:
The night begins to get colder
Snow begins to fall down harder
As the night goes on, white
will cover the town.

dirty water
colorful leaves
broken trees
hard rain

My body, which was made.
My light brown eyes to see.
My giving arms to help
and
My brave heart to live.

Ricardo Jackson

Transformations

Black snakes swallowing diamonds,
sliding into brown cheetahs
running to furious lions
hunting rectangles of brick
which breaks into dust,
to powder on a baby's bottom
to colorful stars, into sea turtles
swimming toward big shining diamonds
in a burglar's hand.

Steven Reed

The Anatomy of a Brittany

I am part of a generation filled with culture.
I wonder if I can escape the inevitable Monday.
I hear darkness beckoning me to come.
I see a stranger that I know.
I want to sleepwalk to another world.
I am one in a million.

I pretend to float on the clouds.
I feel the sapphire horizon glow.
I touch the thunder and lightning.
I worry about the solution for pollution.
I cry tears of pearls that clatter on the floor.
I am a swift rhythmic sound.

I understand that the unknown wants to be known.
I say that if age is just a number, curfew is just a time.
I dream other people's dreams.
I try to keep my heart in its proper place.
I hope I will be the rhythm of my generation.
I am Brittany.

Brittany Love

PARKMONT POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

What the Mirror Said 2 Me

Listen,
You a pearl.
You an ocean
Of a lady.
You got English
Of your own.
Listen,
Somebody need an ear
To understand you.
Somebody need to be brave
To move in your face.
Listen,
Lady,
You not a game.

Sherrell Jones

Something I Wrote

Rolling yams hippopotamuses mutter
People travel down food like hair
come under man's illuminated...
pour a singer some Kool-aid.
Can metal hide in torment?
See my driver's license on love sand by tiara
Numbers name light by construction.

Pages by aqua clear pants
igloos rumor dancing goats
elaborate, come on, let's race,
slap the platinum in the tournament
under your own territory.
Affording plants pay,
a classical bongo dies,
due to flying Nevada pigeons.
All leopards eat Big Macs
and refuse marijuana
for primetime tv.
Let the tempo rise for a
positive destiny.

Tayonne Casey

JUNIOR LEAGUE TEEN POETRY CONTEST FIRST PLACE WINNER

Grams to You

Girl, don't you wear that short miniskirt
So boys like him can laugh and flirt
You got a man and he goes to church.
No high heels and tank tops will walk out of this house
You won't walk the street with your cleavage hanging out.
75 cents is in your back pocket--
Where's that plaid dress with the lovely locket?
All I'm trying to do is keep you off the streets
I think of you every time my heart beats.

Joseph Hudson

LARRY NEAL YOUTH POETRY FIRST PLACE WINNER

Gold Stars

Gold stars fall on broken glass
As windows of hope go
In the forgotten soldier's heart
That survived the war.
Yesterdays fear him.
Death runs remembering
Bowls of suitcases in snow
In springing stars that ask why and
Say bloom at 9 months.
Plucked nerves bring death, instead of guns
Because frost withers away,
Never seeing life again.

Alexis Arrington

SPECIAL AWARD WINNERS



THE FROGS 2K4: SHOWDOWN IN HADES

Four excerpts from “The Frogs 2K4: Showdown in Hades,” an original adaptation of the classic work by Aristophanes, written by Drama Club members Alexis Arrington, DeAndre Britten, Steven Brown, Marcus Cunningham, Antwane Daniels, Martanaze Dew, Alexis Garrett, Christian Gilyard, Danny Govan, Andre Harper, Dayna Hudson, Joseph Hudson, Shaquiel Jenkins, Jawara Johnson, Markus Johnson, Brittany Love, Candace McCoy, Ray-von Medley, Antoinette Meyers, Raekala Middleton, James Saunders, Davina Smith, Deon Smith, and Reginald Williams.

{

CHORUS:

We're going down to the meadow that's deep
There we dance and there we creep
In the sun so bright
In the moonlit night

LEADER OF THE CHORUS:

Shut up, we're about to sing today
Come along and sing hey, hey
I'm hungry, I'm starving
I'm slamming like Dennis Rodman

We're having a feast and you will eat
But not until you wash your smelly feet
Don't be frightened, there won't be no guns or fighting
I repeat myself over and over and over again
Move the chairs out the way
I want to dance all night and day
I need you day and night
So don't come prepared to fight
Shut up, for our song starts
You got to do your part
Take that wreath off your forehead now
Toss it to the ground
We were lost and now we're found.

CHORUS:

Get ready everyone
 Let's go to the party and have some fun
 We're gonna have some Remy
 All night card games
 And it will be far away
 So everyone say hey, hey, hey.

Come on, ya'll, lets eat and dance
 Let's act the fool and put ants in our pants
 Eat until your stomach gets fat
 You better eat this homemade food and that's that
 Leap, mock, dance, play
 Listen to everything I have to say

Listen to the story I have to tell
 Who will win their way out of Hell
 Tonight you'll see who has won
 Who will see the rising sun.

||

CHORUS:

Justice is coming. They'll set it right for us.
 Come one, come all, unite with us
 We need ya'll to run and fight with us
 Come one, come all, let's represent
 Did you get the letter that we sent?

I really need you, I need help from the crowd
 So come on people, let's get loud
 You got to get it through your head
 Whichever man loses, winds up dead.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS:

That's right you know, it's time for justice
 It's time for everyone to trust us
 Now it's time to get something done
 It's time for freedom for everyone
 Everybody in jail must go free
 And people on welfare get more money
 Everyone that's homeless will get off the streets
 Everyone will be successful and have good food to eat.

CHORUS:

The bigger they are, the harder they fall
 The longer the ladder, the higher the wall
 You think you're so big now,
 But you're gonna be small.

It moves this holy chorus in its wisdom and its bliss
 To assist George W. Bush, now our first advice is this:
 Let blacks and whites stand equal
 And all gangs be swept away
 Some girls have been misguided
 Following Li'l Kim all day
 Now for all of these,
 We urge all teachers to stop giving homework
 And that there is less classwork
 Next, no man should live in Bush's outcast,
 Robbed every day and that ain't right
 Shame it is that low-born boys chase girls and then
 just fight
 Remember that these women are your own people,
 sire and son
 Who have often fought beside you, split their head
 and then their lungs.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS:

I'm the one who makes good people make mistakes
 I'm not trustworthy and I'll cheat you in a hurry
 I'm not honest, I'm not loyal, and I'm rotten and I'm
 spoiled
 But it's folks like me who wind up famous
 While the good people stay nameless.

For the boys, girls, women and men, pardon me
Since I'm begging on these ashy knees of mine
Let your wisdom keep your vengeance behind you
Please accept this short apology.

!!!

CHORUS:

Listen up, cause I don't feel like playing
There's a battle coming is what I'm saying
And someone's gonna end up hurt.

There won't be guns, machetes, knives or bricks,
Just sharp words and poet's tricks
And one of these men is going to lose his shirt.

You'll see it: Big, scary, ugly, dirty,
Gold teeth, crooked fingernails,
And a growling voice, like a furnace
His words like a fire-breathing monster
And may the best poet win.

IV

EURIPIDES: I bring good news to the game
Put you losers to shame
I don't know how far you're gonna go
But your fake script just tells me no
Cause my words have all my soul
And yours words are hard and cold

AESCHYLUS: Maybe your script used to have soul,
but now it's just the fashion.
You say you want to keep it real, but you just want to
cash in.
Why are you all up in my grill
When every other writer is fake and phony and
not real.

They can relate to your lyrics, but why should they
You know there's got to be a better way.

DIONYSUS: But Euripides doesn't decide what's
popular. He just writes what he sees.

AESCHYLUS: What about your own children? Is
that what you want them to hear? Nothing can grow
true when you plant it in the soil of a cemetery.

EURIPIDES: My son will not be a fool. He's gonna
have his own mind. You're the fool.

AESCHYLUS: Who you calling a fool when you're
the one in the bright orange suit
Looking nappy, saggy, and drowsy with no laces in
your boots
My brain is in the books, your brain crawls with
the bugs
When I cook eggs for breakfast it looks like your
brain on drugs.

CHORUS: We now have soldiers like you've
never seen
They scorn little kids and take their ice cream
Guns, knives and hand grenades
They make you scared and always afraid
Run fast, run slow
Where you hide, they'll always know.
Whether you are young or old
Just don't say you haven't been told.
First one is winning, then the other
Euripides cries "uncle"
But Aeschylus wants his mother.

DIONYSUS: This is very confusing, or is it supposed
to be?

AESCHYLUS: I think I have to put you on hold,
Because what you're saying is just plain old
I'm going to come at you for a little while
To tell you my positive rhymes are the new style
So you feel the pressure, standing on shaky ground
Cause I'm the best poet around.

EURIPIDES: I wonder what is in your eyes when you
look at me
Do you feel confusion as you walk across the room
slowly?
Do you fear me, do you hear me, in the words that
I flow?

I'm not trying to scare you.

You look helplessly, like I'm your enemy
May the best one win—
If you look at me, I'm not the one who pretends.
The distance between you and me makes more room
for me to dance.

AESCHYLUS: Ha ha ha ha (*cough cough*)
I make more room for you to dance?
You're taking quite a chance
Every time you write a poem you come in last
Your poems are so far behind
That I don't even mind
I write the future, while you still write the past.

EURIPIDES: Put peanut butter and jelly on my
Wonder Bread
Get the glass of nice cold milk
The only bling bling you have is the fork, spoons,
and knife.

AESCHYLUS: Very funny, but your lyrics are foolish
and corny.
You play like you have the glittering rings
You have their undivided attention, but that don't
mean a thing

You treat your women like tripe
And without all the hype
How can you live the American dream
While disrespecting African American queens
You're not being a positive role model to these teens
And all the bling bling and the shiny new rings
They don't make you king
Cause it's not worth lying, when people are dying
To destroy them when they're trying
To do the right thing.

LEADER OF THE CHORUS: Your rap is the best,
Better than the rest
No one could guess
What you will write next
Your lyrics ring from time to time
No one can touch your baddest rhymes.
You are the champion of the world
Never act like a rat or any pet squirrel
You are the best of this rapping game
You might just end up in the hall of fame.

CHORUS: What in the world will we look for next?
This music has me so perplexed
The words are so relentless
The songs are just stupendous
Can you find just one mistake?
For our mighty prince's sake
I have always held that never a better man
Had written or sung since the world was begun.



Fears

Fears of days with no tomorrow
Nights with not a moon to brighten them
Sight with eyes closed shut
Measurements with no numbers--
You see what you want,
But there are roadblocks to get in your way
Haters trying to confuse your spirit
Shadows that follow your every move

Britany Austin

No Answers

Traveling
but you can't seem to reach your destination
Searching
but you can't find what you're looking for
Walking
with no street to support you
Reading
with no words, sentences, or nouns
Perishing
with no afterlife, no gravesite, no tombstone
Jewelry
with not even a single spark
Drifting
with no air or wind
Storm
with not a drop of rain, thunder, or clouds
Listening
with no ears to hear
Questions
with no answer
Like who? What? When? Where?
If there's no answer, could you live there?

Britany Austin

November Is a Dangerous Time

November is dangerous
The wind is blowing hard
I like the moon and the stars
The trees are naked
because all the leaves come down
when it's fall
In the summer, I like to play basketball.
That's all.

David Dobbs

Fears of the 7th grade

Fears of thunder and lightning
Fears of my brother getting shot
when he starts fighting
Fears of soldiers dying
and their mothers crying
Fears of report cards
Fears of my mother
when she finds mine.

Patricia Campbell



l-r: Shaquiel Jenkins, DeAndre Britten, Danny Govan, Marla Melito, Jawara Johnson

There will always be...

There will always be people and babies born
There will always be sunlight when there is no storm
There will always be food if there is no hunger
There will always be a band, even with no drummer
There will always be playing if there is a game
There will always be someone with no middle name
There will always be someone, you know it's true
And it doesn't matter if it's me or you.

Ronnae Rucker

There's always a life

There will always be life as long as there is someone to live it
There will always be tears as long as there is sorrow
There will always be laughter as long as there are clowns
(when the clowns frown, the world turns around)
As long as there is health, there is sickness
As long as there is a cure, there are people to live the rest of their lives
As long as there is food, there are still people going hungry
As long as there is sleep, there are always big dreams to fulfill
As long as there is work, there is always a job
As long as people are working, the job is never done.

Alexis Monroe

Fears

Fear
What is fear?
Is fear being afraid of dying?
Fearing that no one will miss you?
Afraid of slipping?
Fearing that no one cares if you fall?
Afraid of speaking your mind?
Fearing no one is listening?
Fear of crying and afraid there's no one to wipe your tears?
Fearing the world will end?
Afraid that you'll be on it?
Or do you fear the big, the tall, the brave, and the heartless?
Do you fear flying, or are you afraid of falling?
Fear of being trapped in a dark corner, afraid you'll never get out?
Do you fear losing someone?
Afraid your world will come to an end?

Alexis Monroe

My Fear

The things I fear, I can't overcome
The things I fear you may think dumb
The things I fear, I try to be brave
The things I fear come back like a boomerang
The things I fear I may run away from
The things I fear, I just can't overcome
The things I fear--I may stand and watch
The things I fear are like living in a tiny box
The things I fear are what my friends don't
The thing I fear is waking up, but not really being woke
I don't care what you say,
But what I really fear is Judgment Day.

Donnell Robinson



Martanaze Dew

No Matters On My Hands

Floating through the sky
waving goodbye to everyone.
I would wear braids in my hair
and a blue wedding dress,
making the best choices for me and my family,
dancing down the aisle,
it seems like it's about a mile.
How slowly we're dancing.

Mariah Moorer

My World

Graying through the grass
looking at the granite
strewn in the clarity of the sky.
My ancestors floating around me
while I pray for forgiveness.
Kissing my ghostly mother,
watching my bother crying,
lying on the ground, asking for her to come back..
Asking, why her?
It's like my world has come to a stop.

Mariah Moorer

Failing Blues

Waking up every morning, scared of failure,
leaving a trail of grades rebelling.
Praying in school for success;
Reading the word on the board, "test."
Biting my nails and nibbling the eraser
as the teacher passes out graded papers--
I got the failing blues.
Try and try until I don't give a care,
sitting at the desk as the paper stares.
Watching the window for the mailman
to put my report card in my mother's hand.
Just waiting for failure.
I got the failing blues.

Karina Brown

One Angel

One angel in spring
One angel, why do I reach for help?
One angel, my recurring angel
Sometimes I look for my angel
One angel,
One angel, where is my one angel?
Who is my angel in my life?
My mom is my angel
My angel from heaven that God put over me.
One angel, my angel
Are angels ghosts?
Why can't I see my angel, one angel?

Patrice Bruce

Looking out my orange window

I was looking out my orange window
and I saw little orange kids
and a man with an orange beard
I saw orange cars
with orange tires
Then I saw orange tags that were expired.

Antoine Cartwright

My Real Name

Yesterday my name was Invincible Prince
Tomorrow my name will be Careful Little Fellow
My friends think my name is Believe In Yourself
The police think my name is Mischievous Thief
My parents think my name is Respectful
My little brother thinks my name is Fat Boy
My little sister thinks my name is Mean
My real name is Unspeakable

Calvin Vaughn

Color = Black

Suddenly it turned night
a place full of terror
when I'm looking out of my window
blackness circling everywhere.
There are no bright stars twinkling about
it's a very pitch black place
everything flowing with harsh intensity of blackness
guns and all kinds of weapons people use.
This is not the Civil War.
Some people think we should finish it.

Jeremiah Israel



Devon Hudson

Ghetto Nights

A night in the ghetto, where most streets are lit,
corner to corner you see people sit.
Nights with lungs full of smoke,
stars and moons are awoke.
Police cars are looking
Hear them boys on Wayne Place chafing and choking.
When midnight hits, the corners are silent.
But cars are causing riots.

Karina Brown

There will always be

Broken glass will always be in my life.
Rain will always be in my life.
The sky will make shapes: people, cars and animals.
There will be memories in my life
And I will always have a life.
I will say grace in my life.
It will get dark in my life.
There will be girls, boys, women, men, and jails.
We will always have storms, and people will die.

Dwight McCrae

If I didn't have a family

If I didn't have a family, what would I know?
Would I know as much as I know now? Maybe so.
If I didn't have a family, where would I be?
Either locked up, in a group home, or on the streets.
If I didn't have a family, when would my time be coming?
When will I finally graduate, and say I know something?
If I didn't have a family, what language would I speak?
Would it be proper like I was taught, or "gimme something to eat"?
If I didn't have a family--
Well let me stop bragging, because I doubt it
And God bless the kids that live without it.

Ke'Vonna Harrison

Fears of the Seventh Grade

When I ask myself what things I fear
I'd say, when I know danger is near
Or when my mother shows a tear
Maybe even the things I hear.

I think of what my mother has been through
I sit and tell her how wonderful it is to be you
Three different labors, and hours too--
It makes me think of the color blue.

I fear the things I see with my own two eyes
Sometimes what I see makes me cry
I also fear when I don't know why
But most of all my fear is: Will I die?

Ke'Vonna Harrison



l-r: Ray-von Medley, Joseph Hudson

Planet X

When the world ends
I will be in a blue jumper.
When the world ends
I'm going to steal a spaceship.
When the world ends
I am going to a place called Planet X
When I get there, I'm going to change its name to
Tony
I would make my planet a little bit like earth
No guns allowed.
And the world would be mine.

Anthony Parker

The world has changed

One word of fire changed the whole world:
When I look up at the white house on the corner
it has a glow of magic around it.

The echo, even the roar
could be the horn blast from a dance
as it skirts the misted dark..

We don't need much more to keep things going.
Families sacrifice themselves and refuse to budge from the unknown.
The present extends its glass forehead to perfect.

And if one evening the white house on the corner
took off over the echo--
a word is found so right it's helpless.
At the slightest sacrifice you start off with one thing,
end up with another.
And nothing's like it used to be,
not even the unknown.

Aneka Cox

World

There will always be fighting and making up.
There will be languid children working in school.
There will always be speechless people in hot weather.
There will be incredible events in the world.
There will always be a clear amount of money.
And there will always be a world.

Xavier Hardman

Closed Doors

My life in the next dimension is wonderful.
If anyone tries to stop me, I'm unstoppable.
My name is unspoken, you don't know me.
I'm like your shadow you can't touch me.
I'm like fingers that can't turn Double Dutch.
I'm your enemy swimming in the deep blue sea.
I told you that you don't know me.

Natasia Saunders

Who I Think I Am

Someone once asked me,
Who do I think I am?
And I thought to myself
I'm the dynasty, the precious stone,
the queen of the throne, the tiger,
the fiercest of them all.
I think there are just two words for me:
precious dynasty.
My parents think I am endlessly drowning in the sea,
secretly blocked from anybody.
The tears really don't mean anything to me,
for I am waiting for the sunshine that tomorrow will bring.
My friends think I will be queen.
My grandmother thinks my name is Fierce Tiger.
My name used to be Quietly Drowning, for Nobody to See.
But my name right now is Precious Dynasty.

Shakia Brockenberry



Deon Smith

Pictures

There will always be pictures.
Things and people you remember
even if they are still here,
even if they aren't even near.
People drifting away from you,
and all you have is a thing, something
not even fit to satisfy a speechless woman,
not even a man.
But a picture instead,
a picture of my beloved dog,
so pretty and silky, like a sparkling firework.
Precious as the earth,
but in the end, all you really have is a picture.

Shakia Brockenberry

Fear of the 7th Grade

There are a lot of fears in my world.
Airplanes, or bombs maybe,
Even small things like firecrackers.
When I ask my friends, they say
I'm scared of blood.
Another says she's scared of people dying
and of them coming back to life.
The only thing I'm so scared of
(I can't wait to make her proud of me)
is my mother.
She gave birth to me, she went through pain.
(If she can handle that...)
You're right, I'm scared of her,
but I know she loves me.
That's all that matters.

Shakia Brockenberry

My Real Name

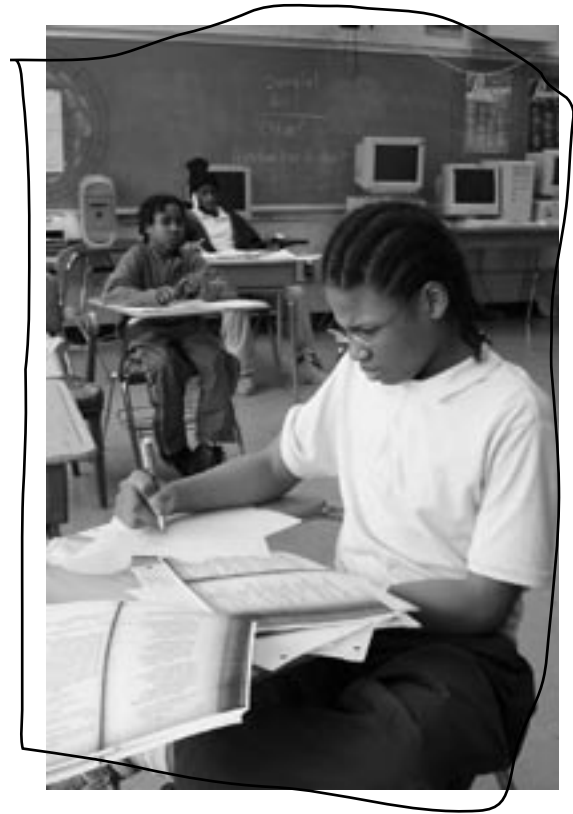
My real name is Believe In Me.
My teachers think my name is Motor Mouth Diamond.
Yesterday, my name was Play Too Much.
The students in my class think my name is Stupid Little Somebody.
My parents think my name is I Could Do It If I Put My Mind To It.
My grandmother thinks my name is Puddin'.
But I know my name is going to be My Dream Came True.

Tracey Jones

Lunch Box

Life says compulsion is a habit
Everyone seems to be flashy
Owls so weirdly remain unspoken
Your presence makes this room a better place
Standing on hilltops held by mountains
Smell connections in the air
And realize that you need no more.

Tierra Parks



l-r: Devon Hudson, Ray-von Medley, Shaquiel Jenkins

Some Things You Know

There will always be people.
Sometimes you think there will always be bad people.
There will always be a sky, a cloud, a rainy day.
There will always be a ground for you to stand on.
There will always be people who keep on making babies.
And most of all, there will always be a God.

Tracey Jones



Toi Derricotte was born in Detroit, Michigan. Her books of poetry include *Tender*, *Captivity*, *Natural Birth*, and *The Empress of the Death House*. She is also the author of *The Black Notebooks*, a literary memoir. She has won numerous honors and awards, including the Folger Shakespeare Library Poetry Book Award, the Lucille Medwick Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, a Pushcart Prize, and the Distinguished Pioneering of the Arts Award from the United Black Artists, as well as fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and the Maryland State Arts Council. She is Associate Professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh. While visiting Washington, D.C., she generously offered her time for the following interview with eighth graders Joseph Hudson and Desmond Seegars.

Joseph Hudson: What inspired you to start writing?

Toi Derricotte: Well, let's see. I think probably now that I look back, I think you don't know it when you're a kid, but something in me was thinking like a poet when I was very, very young. My father and grandfather were undertakers, and if I had turned out to be an undertaker, I'd probably be telling you, you know, I was thinking like an undertaker when I was two years old. Because it depends on how you read your history. Whatever you become, you read it backwards in a biased kind of way. But I remember when I was about two years old, I started drawing things. I'd draw a car and I would think it was a real car. Or I'd draw a house and I'd think it was a real house, and I couldn't understand why people felt they didn't have things. Like they wanted a house, they wanted cars. And I thought, well you could just draw it and have it. And I thought it was magic, and I thought only I knew. Because people seemed to be unhappy, and I could just draw whatever I wanted. So what I'm saying to you is, things written on paper were very real to me.

Desmond Seegars: What inspired you to write the book, "Tender"?

Ms. Derricotte: Trying to figure out what makes people mean, what makes people hurt me. And I've been trying to figure out that for a long, long, long time.

Joseph: How was your childhood?

Ms. Derricotte: Well, you know, it had lots of good stuff and lots of bad stuff. Some of the good stuff was that my family wasn't poor, my mother and father had jobs. We lived in a neighborhood where I felt pretty safe. I felt safer when I was out of my house than when I was in my house, if you know what I mean. I'd stay out from 8 in the morning until 11 at night. Because there was a lot of unhappiness inside my house. My neighborhood was really fun and we played together. There were lots of kids and we had ball games, and we hid and ran, and there

were no cars. You could hang out, you could make fun of the neighbors, you could have mystery trips climbing up in some attic. You'd find keys and try to find out where the keys belonged to. I always had lots of friends and I had a cousin. I didn't have any brothers or sisters, but I had two girl cousins and one was my age, and we were "like that." (*holds two fingers together*) So I was very lucky in all those ways. Some of the things I was not lucky about, I didn't seem to be able to get it right for my mother and father. They were both very unhappy people. I think they had gone through a lot themselves. I think that maybe they suffered from depression, and maybe my father was an alcoholic. So it was pretty hairy when I was with my mother and father. There was a lot of violence, my father beat me a lot. And my mother wanted me to be a certain kind of person. Did you ever hear of the "Paper Bag Test" for black people?

Joseph: Put a paper bag over your head?

Ms. Derricotte: (*laughter*) Well, in the thirties and the twenties, color was a really big issue for black people, and it may still be. And my mother and father both looked white. They were both black, but they looked white. And when my mother came from Louisiana, when she came up north, she was very beautiful, she looked white. And in black society at that time, people who had money, there was something they called the "Paper Bag Test." Can you imagine what it is?

Joseph: You walk around and see how many people think you're black or white?

Ms. Derricotte: You're real close. There were certain clubs that black people belonged to, and in order to get in you had to be lighter than a paper bag.

Joseph: Ohhhh!

Desmond: Okay.

Joseph: Not a plastic bag, a paper bag. They have it in the grocery store. It's like a brown bag.

Desmond: It's like a box bag.

Joseph: And you have to be lighter than that to get into the club? Or if you're darker than that, you can't? So were these clubs wealthy?

Ms. Derricotte: Yes.

Desmond: How old were you when you wrote your first book.

Ms. Derricotte: Well, let me finish telling you this story. So then, my father could have belonged to clubs like that because his grandparents grew up in Detroit. And sometimes, you probably know nothing like this, but in old times it mattered if you were new to a place. If your parents had lived there, or your grandparents had lived there, it gave you more status.

Joseph: Like representing?

Ms. Derricotte: Yeah, like representing a group of people. My mother was new to Detroit, but my father's family had lived there for generations. So what my mother wanted, she wanted us to be a family that hung out with these really wealthy people, because she thought they had power. And they did have power. They had wealth; they had power. And we could have done it because my father was an undertaker, he was a professional man. And she wanted me to hang out with these kids who were in these clubs called "Jack and Jill" and "Links," and they were all these kids of well-to-do professionals, and they were all light skinned. And she used to take me

to all these things and I just didn't get along with the kids. I felt uncomfortable with these kids and I didn't know why, and my mother was mad at me because she wanted me to become friends with these kids. I liked the kids in my neighborhood. My neighborhood kids were everybody: poor kids, middle-class kids. I got along with kids in my neighborhood, but all through my childhood, my mother wanted me to join these well-to-do kids, and I never did. And then as I got older, I used to hang out with groups of people who were what they called "beatniks." And beatniks were like people in the fifties, who were really intellectuals. They liked to read, they liked to talk about ideas, play chess, they liked jazz. People like that. What are people like that called now?

Joseph: Old-timers?

Ms. Derricotte: Old-timers, yeah. Maybe old-timers. They were the first people who grew beards and grew their hair long, too, so they would look different. They would dress in black. And then after that, I moved to New York and started hanging out with poets. But I didn't ever think of myself as a poet when I was young, because black people at that time, you never thought about becoming a poet or writer. You'd think about going to school and becoming a teacher. Can you think you'll become a playwright one day?

Joseph: No.

Ms. Derricotte: Yeah, you've got to think of something practical, right?

Joseph: Yeah.

Ms. Derricotte: That's how we were. We had to think about, okay, we are going to teach school, become a doctor, and whatever. And that's how I thought. And I did become a teacher, and I did teach school, but I kept writing poetry at night. And then I started studying poetry when I was in college. And I started meeting lots of poets who were publishing. And then I got into a community where people were writing and publishing, and pretty soon I was publishing.

But not until I was in my thirties. By then I had a kid thirteen years old.

Joseph: At thirteen, or he was thirteen?

Ms. Derricotte: He was thirteen by that time.

Desmond: How old were you when you wrote your first book?

Ms. Derricotte: How old was I? About thirty-three.

Desmond: What was the name of it?

Ms. Derricotte: The Empress of the Death House.

Joseph: So what kind of influence did you think the poets had on you?

Ms. Derricotte: It was after I moved to New York. The thing is that when I was in Detroit I would write but I would sort of hide it. It would be my private writing, nobody would know about it. And it was kind of my way of having a friend. It was sort of my therapist. You know what a therapist is, how you can talk to a therapist? Well my book was my therapist, my notebook. So I'd keep it hidden and I didn't want people to see it. And then when I got to New York I started sharing what I was writing in my journals, and I used to be thinking about, "How do you make poems out of what you feel in your deep, deep heart and you don't tell anybody?" How to make poems out of the deepest parts of you, the secrets inside you. I wanted to do that, because I thought: Maybe I'm not the only one. I used to feel so lonely, and then I'd think maybe I'm not the only one who has feelings like that. Maybe other people feel that way too. And if I say it, maybe other people will say, "Oh, I've felt that way too." And maybe they'll like me; maybe they won't hate me if I have feelings like that. And then I started writing feelings like that and people did say, "Oh my goodness, I feel that way too." And then I felt like I had a community. A real community, not a phony

community. Like if I had joined those people who were the "Paper Bag Test" people, that would have been a community, but I wouldn't have felt good about myself. I found a community that I felt comfortable with, my kind of community, like you guys.

Joseph: What made you become a poet, instead of becoming a doctor or a teacher?

Ms. Derricotte: I did become a teacher, I taught. But I became a poet because I really loved, loved, loved poetry. And I love the people who write it. I love it, love it, love it, love it. It's very, very hard to be a poet. A lot of times you don't publish anything; a lot of times people don't like your work. To be a really good poet, you have to work hours, and hours, and hours. Every day. For years and years. It's harder than being a doctor. To really be an important poet—I mean anybody can sit down and write a poem. But to study poetry, to have control over what you're doing, and to write with a deep, unique voice that nobody else has so that somebody would recognize your poem if 4,000 poems were read they'd say, "Oh, that's the poem by Joseph Hudson."

So I would have had to really want to do this. And every day, something keeps me wanting to do it. Sometimes I feel like I'm not a writer. Sometimes I don't write. Sometimes I feel what I write is horrible. I feel scared I'll never write again. All those things. But something keeps making me write.

Desmond: So what is one thing you really love?

Ms. Derricotte: You young writers! That's one thing I really love. Deeply. Because I know you're going to be great. I know you're going to change the world. I

know you've got to work really hard, and not everybody can do it. But some people will, and I want you guys to keep trying.

Desmond: Did you have one poem that really came from deep down in your heart?

Joseph: Something that you'll never forget? A poem that says everything you have to say?

Ms. Derricotte: Maybe this poem. It sounds like it's about a bird, but it's not a real bird. When I was three years old, I buried a bird that I had found dead. And then thirty years later I wrote about a bird that was buried, but I didn't know I was writing about this bird.

*buried birds
are usually
dead.
fallen from the sky
because of too much
something.
too much high.
too much steep.
too much long.
too much deep.
but sometimes
one has been known
to go underground.
you do not hear a peep*

*for years.
then one day
you go back to the spot
thinking you will not find
a feather or a few
scattered bones
& you hear something
pecking trying
to get out of there.
you are afraid to believe
it is still alive.
afraid that even if it is
in being freed, it will die.
still,
slowly,
you go about freeing the bird.
you scrape away the grave
which in some mysterious way
has not suffocated her.
you free her scrawny head.
her dangling wing.
you keep thinking her body
must be broken beyond healing.
you keep thinking the delicate
instruments of flight
will never pull again.
still,
you free her.
feed her from the tip of your finger.
teach her the cup of your hand.
you breathe on her.
one day,
you open up your hand
& show her sky.*

Sight, smell, touch, hear, taste

Demetrius looks gentle and soft
like cotton candy.
My name smells like red roses
growing in a garden on a rainy day.
My name feels cold
like a lonely chair in a dark attic.
My name sounds like a jazz band
playing to save the world.
My name tastes like a piece of chicken
to a poor child who is homeless.

Demetrius Suggs



Marcus Cunningham

The light white of the night

From the mysterious window
everything has no shadow,
everything is white
and I hope I won't have to fight.
Everything has a continuation
and it makes me think with anticipation.
It makes me think of someone kind
who cannot find peace of mind.

It makes me feel like I have a slow pace
when I am running in an endless race.
I see the grass, I smell the air,
but it feels like I'm not going anywhere.
I see the people, I hear the "whys,"
but all I can do is sit there and cry.
So now I've told you about my sight
about sitting at the window, looking at everything white.

Demetrius Suggs

Moment

A moment comes to me
and it's a lot like the past
which gets in the way.
Sometimes hanging around
with its weapons
growing taller by the second
and the game of red light, green light
they play, I try to pull them back.
It's like a university growing larger,
which has a language I know.

Latrice Freeman

The Confessions

When everything comes to a close
I will tell the world my wrongs,
I will let out everything like steam from boiling water.
Everyone will be shocked,
like lightning and a water-coated wire.
Their jaws will drop,
like gravity has suddenly increased.
It will be covered in dust
because I have never told anything.
After this, I will float to heaven,
like a feather in zero gravity.

Demetrius Suggs

Vision from the Red Window

From the round window
everything is red.
The flowers are reddish, red-yellow, red,
everything is red.
Red cars in the sun,
Red water.
In the future, away
the land becomes redder than it is.
Red islands in a red ocean.

Domonik Tabron

Attitude

Attitude is what I get from my ancestors.
I walk down the street like I'm mad at the world.
I grit at the people I don't like
when they walk past me in the hall.
And since I'm short,
I don't like people who are tall.
I think it's because it is so hot
in Hart Middle School.
But my mom told me once,
"Girl, that's your ancestors that gave you that attitude."

Tiara Jacobs

The Cage

I live hopeless and stay in a cage,
And this old house smells like a skunk.
Open the door, you see a crazy man with a very big blade.
He comes through the door saying, "Don't run, it will not hurt."
I say, "Don't touch me."
I just scream.
When I scream, it hits him it like a bomb.
I was scared, when I looked up I saw a bear.
I was about to faint when he jumped on me.
I was strong and broke the cage
And was free.

Devon Hudson



Ray-von Medley

May I go now?

May I go now?
I didn't know if my work was done.
May I go now?
Do you think the time is right?
May I say goodbye to pain-filled days and long sleepless nights?
I've lived my life and done great things, setting examples for many children.
So can I take that step beyond and set my spirit free?
I didn't want to go at first, so I fought with all my might.
But something drew me to that warm and loving light.
May I go now?

Christian Gilyard

Tears of a Faithful Boyfriend

You live to see them come,
you live to see them go.
Why stress yourself over one
when there are plenty more who want you?

You expect all of the mind games played
and all the acting funny.
Sometimes you feel used,
sometimes you feel fed up.

Some people tell you, you are stupid or dumb
because you break up with somebody.
Then you get back together,
then break up, and get back together.

Some people just don't know what you go through.
Some people say you should not have gone with her,
but it is too hard to let go of somebody you love.
It is like trying to say goodbye to a relative or friend.

Some people cry because they are sad,
some people cry because they are mad
but I don't.
I cry because sometimes I just don't know what to do.

DeAngelo Spann

Empty Glass

A half empty glass is more like love than hate.
The glass is so empty,
like a heart that has been used for so long
that it cannot be used anymore.
The glass is broken, it cannot be fixed anymore.

Alexis Arrington

My City

D.C.'s water is full of lead
And some people can barely buy bread.
People in the street don't use their heads--
The city has gang problems.

We got killing in the streets, killing just for fun
The gun stores need to watch who is buying these guns.
There are people robbing people who they know.
And there is somebody setting people's houses on fire
You can't trust anyone, because everybody's a liar
Then there's people kidnapping people trying to get what they desire.
Always trying to get what they desire

Jamel Hooker

Night Falls

As night falls and the world closes
Tears shatter on faces of pain
Busy streets are now empty
Smoky lightning hits the road of light
Bodies and minds are confused about what to do
Pink, blue, orange and yellow faded to a smoky gray
Names, words, sounds turn to zero knowledge
Time and measure are all the same length
Pleasure is no fun, it's all about business
Books and novels are just paper with words that make no sense at all
So if the world closes, night will fall,
Tears will shatter on faces of pain.

Britany Austin



Raekala Middleton at the Parkmont Poetry Festival

The City Burns Tears

The city burns tears
Because it is very very hot
You be thinking you are cold
But you're really not.
The city burns tears.
You sweat for one day
And it seems like two years.
The city burns tears.
You might make a wrong turn
As the city burns tears
But you have to be brave
And let it burn.

Tron Pannell

Everyday

Every day I eat my food
And brush my teeth
And gargle toothpaste and water through my teeth
Then I write audible expectations—every day.

But every time I think they'll come true
They say come *another day*
But when they do come--
The profound words of expectation--
Will say "Yes!"

Rico Griffin

World Has No Emotion

If the world were coming to an end
I know I would die instantly.
But I would know that I spent my days
like a floating penny.
I walked the streets and smelled the fresh air.
I did not care who was around me.
I know if the world ended today
at least I got a chance to see.
But I was always closing the car windows,
locking all the doors, and leaving the keys.

Deidra McLaurin

Opposite

I am as audible as a bird
Sitting in a tree
As garbled as a non-cable-having TV
I am wistful because I want to be in movies
I dream of expectations.
I am the opposite
Of fatal.

Tron Pannell

How I Feel, As of Right Now!

I feel like I've been locked in a cabin
And tossed all around.
I'm very angry because of the things
Going on in my lifetime.
I am tired of being treated like trash

Everything that is going on in my atmosphere
Is happening very fast.
Everyone fears feelings
They are scared
And I can't understand why.

Chere Griffin

Is That Who You Are?

Is that the real you
Or is it just my life
Stuck to you like
Some type of crazy glue?
I never thought
You were that type of person
Who would act like a hoodlum
Or use all that cursing.

Chere Griffin



Deon Smith

Frustrated

The heat is so intense
That I can't breathe
I can't even stop and go
When I want to
Because the streets are filled
with humidity.

I need to find air very quickly
I don't think I can survive another day
Being crampy, ignored and frustrated
Somebody come and rescue me
From all this fear and misery.

Ikea Nelson

Blank Pages

Blank pages are as wasted
As throwing good food away
Or just trashing your shoes
Instead of giving them away
Or just like throwing coupons in the trash.

Jamel Hooker

Plague

Brown dirty plague rots conditions
Already corrupted by conditions of inhumanity
And corruption cascades as burning tempers conspire
Against our temporary ozone.
At a steady, but climbing rate
The peace leaders on a then and now dream for prosperity
Will be nothing more
Than the fact that there is a drive by
Occuring up the street from where I used to live
For the millionth time.

Reginald Williams

Lucid Clues

The garble of denial spreads as wide
As the hot air that fills this room.
The audible silence is of unkindness added
To the unkindness from before.
The clues of myself being futile in her eyes
Haunt the classroom.

Reginald Williams

Triumph 101 with Time's Eye

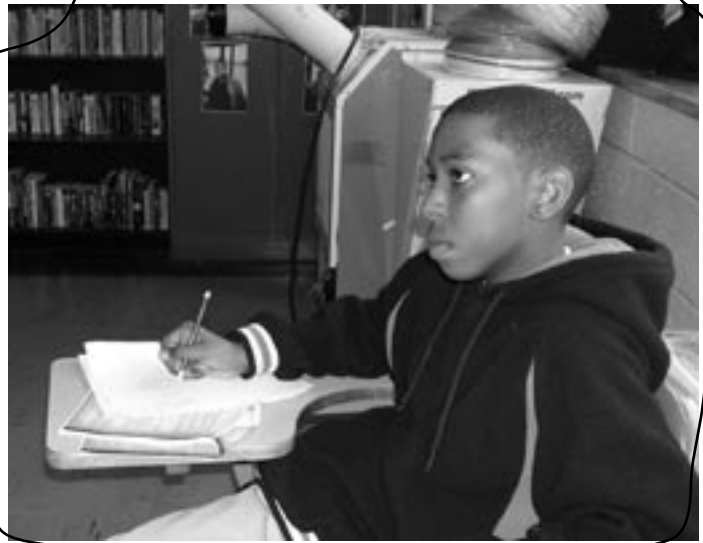
This is time's eye,
Its almighty knowledge sees
Sunsets, sunrises, fatal tragedies
And triumphs through tolerance.
Triumph from bonds of slavery
The downfall of evils, and the illusions of the economy.
Time's eye has known
faith is a valuable tool

Reginald Williams

The World

The world is filled with blood
And slugs put in by thugs.
Killers leaving bodies in nubs
The world is full of hate
Proclamations where dollars
Leave little babies in their cribs.
The world is crazy unfit mothers
And fathers acting shady
This is the world.

Elmer Toogood



Junior League Teen Poetry Contest winner Joseph Hudson

The Line Poem

Everything is nothing but a big line
As I walk it, I am wistful about how
Extraneous these days are.
The people's voices are garbled and they cry
About how much different their expectations were.
Sometimes I think we are in danger
Because we can contemplate our lives

Alyssa Flemming

The Place

I want to go home
I can't stay here anymore
This place is bad:
The sky is gray,
It is tearing like paper,
The grass turns brown like
From the too hot sun.
I must not stay
This place is evil.
My footsteps are light
This place is going blind
And jagged.

Alyssa Flemming

Lucid

Inside looking wistful
Hearing the garbled audience
Contemplating high expectations
Persevering.
These things are not futile
Because of homework

Ayonna Brown

Why Cry

The city burns tears
Cause when you slept
They were in fear
(Why cry)
Get old and die?
(Why cry)
Instead, fill your body with smoke
End up in the morgue.
Ask *What happened?*
You were on track
But cracked up and choked
And at night turned to coke
(Why cry)
You killed the guilt
Going in to my hood
Talking about messing up
And then getting killed
(Why cry)
Man, so what?

Dennis Brown

Truth

Truth is as hard to obtain as getting an "A"
And as easy to lose as a homie

Vernon Mooney

I Walk

I walk and the dead leaves are flying--
I walk and a new moon comes in November.
I walk and the heavens are gray and blue
I walk and hope shifts from hot to cold
I walk and loneliness is the winter.
I walk and then begin to explore the rivers.
I walk and the brightness begins to open
Like a new angel.

Alyssa Flemming

On Paper

I could write down my name
I could write down some numbers
I could draw my favorite animal
I could draw my favorite sports car
I could paint a nice picture
I could study for a test
I could draw my famous food
I could put an X here
I could leave a kiss print
I could even leave a thumbprint

Demetrius Banks



Devon Hudson

I'm Turning 13

...8, 7, 6
Those were the good old days
Those were the times I really got my way
But not today
I slam with chores and things I don't want to do
And I still got to do my homework too
I got to watch my little sister and brother
Boy they annoy each other
I have to step in
Because I am the older brother.

Raymond Isaacs

Lady in the Spring—A Painting

Spring is near and
Women are picking oranges from a tree.
They are singing about the joy of spring
Looking at the sky and
Looking at the flowers
They are beautiful,
Like flowers.

Ashley Clark

Comparisons

Hate is like a closed fist when love is like three's
A half empty glass is like a basketball ran over by a car
Blank pages are as wasted as an unused rock.

Ronald Magruder

Sun

Why is not a temperature.
Her leather coat did nothing.
She was still looking for some heat.

Sade Paylor

I have never been to the Red Sea

I imagine
The water is red and warm
The sun is shining
And the mountains are faded.
I imagine the Red Sea being big
And there is no one there but me.
I can hear a bird perched and singing
Cah-cah-cah-cah
And sings all day long
As the sun gets lower and lower.

Brewayna Norris

Friendly Skies

I lay on the grass
while looking upon
the skies filled with
laughter, heartache
purple pink mixed in
to my emotions
friendly skies speak
to me they say at dawn
watch the sky, a rainbow
will appear.

Brittany Watkins

When I was 12, 11, 10

I could not ride a bike
I had to stay home
I wished I was 13.

Montez Blassingame

Spelling Bee Fear

I don't see bees in January
So I don't worry
People think they are scary
But bees aren't
They don't know our vocabulary.

Chris Frazier



Brittany Love at the Parkmont Poetry Festival

Staying Cool

I am not in a good mood
When I am not cool.
When I am not cool
I act like a fool.

David Robinson

Truth

It was true: time had marched without me.
As times got bad,

I never really looked
at the good things I had.

You loved me and confessed to me
when you were supposed to.

And yet I couldn't pursue the
same feelings toward you.

Whining, weeping, all for you.

Waiting for your words to blast
from your dry, speechless lips.

Although you destroyed me and
flipped the truth.

And every time I wanted to talk,
you went poof.

And then there was that mess,

me standing at that booth waiting
with chiming bells and that long white dress.

Anita Foster

Listen

When the beats play
Silence is out the room
Clever raps in tone and pitch
The beats vibrate and the crystal glimmer
On his chain reflects the massive rumble
So smooth that the flow is hypnotic.

Andre Eaton

Mixed Up

If the world were mixed up
And the sky was down instead of up
I would be on the ceiling right now
If I were outside I'd be upside down
Trying not to be floating away
Holding on to clouds

Tyrea Jackson

Torn Between Two Worlds

I am torn between my world and the real world. In my world I do things on my own like stay on the telephone. In the real world I have to follow the rules and stay in school. In my world I follow the streets, and rap to my own beats. In the real world I have to be a warrior and finish my mission. In my world no one is enough competition. In the real world I go to the movies and the mall. In my world I take a great fall, I'm torn between two worlds.

Benjamin McKinnie

Unmistakably

In the pit of darkness past all that is dreamed, forced through the horror content and screams. There you shall find me weak as my eyes flood with tears and my clothes are drenched in blood. Shaking fragile, tormented and used.

No one to save me, see that I'm lost and confused, no one to help me, I'm left out and abused. Running from nowhere, coming to terms with my world cause it's cracking. I'm losing my mind. Corrupted is my life, as the time twists and turns pushing up the past making sure it burns.

Kiara Williams



Danny Govan

My Life Is Like

I think my life
Is like Tupac Shakur
Because throughout my life
People have closed doors.

When I wanted to go
To a different school
They said I was out of boundary
But I wasn't a fool

Some people think
Just because I'm from southeast
I can't do my best
All I can do is beef

I do have
Tupac Shakur's tendencies
I love my friends
And my enemies

I go around
Writing poems too
And I include

I write about
People who make me fed up
And make me feel
Like I'm on the bottom looking up

I can't count on
A lot of people like that
Because the ones you trust
Don't have your back

Some of Tupac's friends
Abandoned him and came back for money
When people do that to me
I laugh 'cause it's funny

And I'll say
You didn't like me then, why like me
Now that I have money
And all I do is smile

Although I'm
Not dead like Tupac
If you know how much I'm like him
You'll be in for a shock

Markita Bullock

Fire is to water

Down is like up as cold is like warm
Left is to right as love is to hate
Off is to on as quiet is to noise
Late is to early as bored is to fun
Dead is to alive as crazy is to sane
Eating is to not eating as shower is to bath
Name is to nameless as dust is to dirt
Flying is to soaring as falling is to floating
Fire is to water as heart is to soul

Steven Brown

In School Blues

I got the in school blues
I ain't happy at all
I go the in school blues
O, I ain't happy at all
I see everyone over and over
And they've seen me fall

I got the "don't know the answer" blues
I ain't happy at all
Yeah, I go the "don't know the answer" blues
And I ain't happy at all
My teacher always calls on me
When I don't know the answer at all

I got the I want to go to sleep blues
I am so tired
Yeah, I got the I want to go to sleep blues
I am so tired
Even though I want to go to sleep
All I do is eat

I got the non-writing blues
I'm so upset
O, I got the non-writing blues
I'm so upset
I express myself by writing
And I can't do that

I can't do anything

Markita Bullock



Larry Neal Award winner Alexis Arrington

Spirit

It was just like yesterday.
But this day was not ordinary.
I don't even know her name.
I don't know a thing about a journey.
I didn't know anything.
I just knew she was my great grandma.
I never ever heard her voice.
Do you know why?
Because I've never seen her.
My heart is like a puzzle.
I put it together.
My heart is like paper with no
Writing or lines.
But any one who is a piece of my puzzle,
I love you.
And I will join you and your spirit.

Kailah Monroe

The Day the Tears Dropped

The wind was blowing,
The trees were growing.
The breeze made me sneeze.
The trees are falling.
It sounds like my mom is calling.
It feels good and chilly,
I need a jacket, really!

It starts to thunder
And I see lightning.
Afterwards my cousin
Starts fighting.

Then the raindrops
Start to fall.
I run upstairs calling and calling.
I slipped and fell.
I heard a bell, ding-dong.
Oo, I like that song. I looked out
The window as the tears dropped.

Kailah Monroe

The Thin Man Blues

My name is thin
I'm the size of a pen
People don't like me
Because of how I look and see
I see things in the world just like me
And how I look I don't care
People look at me like a thin teddy bear
But I like myself no matter how I look.

Travon Smith

The End of the Year!

The end of the year
Is practically here
Only one more month
No more working and stuff
No more teachers trying to teach
No more principal in the morning
Having to preach
No more suspensions or
Conference letters
Being outside is much, much better!

Da'Shiona Jones

Who Stole the Candy from the Teacher's Candy Box?

Did you steal the candy when
The teacher was gone?
Did you steal the candy and
Left one in the box all alone?
The teacher found out that
The candy was missing
Everybody was worried so they
All started snitching
What a bunch of punks who
Pretended to be big and bad
But when it came down to it
They all get scared and sad
Did you steal the candy?
If you did you need to tell
But I really don't care now 'cause
It's 1:20 and that was the bell



l-r: Martanaze Dew, Deon Smith

Da'Shiona Jones

Split in Two

I'm torn between two worlds
As if my mind was split in two.
One minute I don't,
The next minute I do.
When I'm sad there's two voices inside my head.
One says "tick off at everybody I see,"
The other says "go to bed."
My mind is like a giant jigsaw puzzle,
Trying to come together.
Not knowing where to go, scrambled everywhere.
At times when I'm happy I have no desire to show it.
It's like I'm waiting for someone to say "how do you feel?"
I'm waiting until I'm no longer torn between two worlds.

Jerrita Tolbert

I Am Somebody

I am somebody
I am not a nobody
I am myself
Not no one else
I will be beautiful
I will be wonderful
I must be kind
I must use my mind
I am smart
I have memories of making art
I remember being
Young and foolish
I remember being
"in" and "coolish"
I remember who I am
Because I am somebody

Brittany Watkins

The Underwater Adventure

My underwater world is bright
The blue clear water is fresh
And kind of light
When I go swimming I feel
As though I'm flying
I think if I was the water I
Would probably start crying
I want to belong to it, I want it
To be all I wish it to be
Water is the treasure of
The ocean floor

Laron Greenwood

Shapers of the Future

My confession to the future is high,
People try to bring me down with their
despair of not believing in me
But with endurance I block their
desire to hold me from achieving my
dreams, goals, and excellence.
To be perfect in any way I can.
The way I feel about the future is
dramatically emotional and I stand
strong like a warrior.
They try to keep me in a place of solitude.
Who are these people you ask?
They are people who judge me before they
Get to know me!

Laron Greenwood

The Broken Frame

Only just after the words barely
roll into the atmosphere, he bows down to
them as if they're the words of god.
My opinions are transformed to facts cause
I spoke them. In his fatal desperation
to place a crooked smile upon my face.
Drawn to me magnetically, yearning
For my touch. Slowly tearing the
clothes from his back. Willing to give
everything just to ease my pain. As
it all falls down and his world crumbles
cause nothing is enough. Screaming
and yelling cause my words just seem
to cut, to cut him in so many ways
cause of the games I love to play.
Controlling his everything cause he
was not enough.

Kiara Williams

My Life

My life revolves around the world
Also the world revolves around me

My life is like a big book
A book that can look me
Right in the eye and tell
Me when to say good-bye

My life is a piece of paper that
I should write on in peace

My life is sometimes
Like a bowl of rice that
Should not be eaten

My life is what I should be living
Not a big lie

Jasmine Jones

Where Did It Go?

Where did the faith go? Who took it?
And why? The faith probably went on a journey.
Maybe it went to expand and fill up the
black holes in your heart. That's probably where
it went. Who took it? Now, anyone could have done
that. Maybe the devil took it so we can go around
killing an innocent child. Maybe he took it
so that we can all learn his evil ways. Know why?
That's easy to explain. He could have thought that
it was time to have a little boy or girl commit a crime.
Who knows? Where did it go?

Sandy Newman



l-r: Shaquiel Jenkins, Jawara Johnson

The Cool Winter Breeze

The cool winter breeze
hits me in my
face, I wish I could have a taste.
The whistling wind is like
a symphony it makes me feel light
I feel like I can take flight.
Oh, when it hits my face
I forget to do anything
I'm lost in a world of dreams
a world of air. Never dying,
just praying. Never turning left
always doing right. Cool winter
breeze, this is what you feel like to me.

Laron Greenwood

The Monday Morning Blues Are Scary

The Monday morning blues are scary
They're scary to the bone
That's why I want to stay home

They creep on me like
The boogie man in the closet
It's scary these Monday blues

The Monday blues are scary
They're scary to the bone
That's why I want to stay home

James Tindle

Never Give Up

Never give up just keep on trying
Never give up no one can say you're lying.

Never give up just keep on trying.
Never give up and you will come through.

Never give up just keep on trying.
Never give up just do you.

That's the end of my poem,
I am finished talking to you!

Earl Barnes

Life and Help

Life is what you call a hard time,
Parents working for shelter
And they don't have a dime.

Selling their bodies on the street,
Then when they go home
They have nothing to eat.

I know not to ever be a fool and
Do such wrong things. If somebody
Touches me in the wrong way,
I'll crack their jaw in rings.

I know I'm not a stupid child.
My mother brought me up right.
You would never, ever catch me
Doing something bad out of sight.

Lord please help these people
Through thick and thin from
Here and now and until the end.

Stephanie Williams

About the Town

Town, this town is out of bounds
This town is on a string but
All of these people are wearing
Bling-bling
I have nothing to despair because
I don't care
Try following the street it
Might hurt your feet but it's
Ok. It will just go away because
This town is out of bounds.

Demetrius Gibbs

Another Hot Day

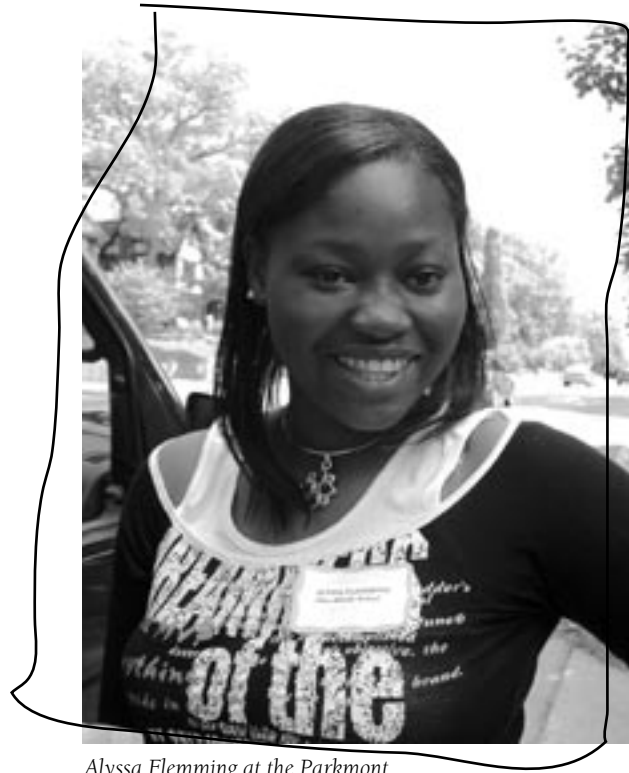
This day was different I was tired
It felt like I was fired

I didn't want to come to school
I hope I get to go to the pool

I couldn't do anything
So I just sat and did nothing

And that's how I spent my day
I didn't even want to play

Markus Johnson



*Alyssa Flemming at the Parkmont
Poetry Festival*

The Evening Blues

I have the evening blues
It's hard to walk in my shoes
Because my knee is hurting bad
I have the evening blues
I saw people angry
I saw people acting strangely
I saw people being loud
And that makes me sad
I have the evening blues

Stephen Grier

My Uncle the Great

My uncle Chris was a loving
And caring man

Who always tried to do
What he can

He was a powerful dude who
Was never rude

But that day he died
I remember I cried

I felt like I was struck
And I had bad luck

I punched and I screamed
Was this all a dream?

I felt like I was quiet
And ready to start a riot

I had some confession
I never told

As I stood outside in the cold
Trying to look bold

But now it is done
He is resting alone

I wrote him this poem
And carried on

Juwana White

I Wish

I wish I was gone I wish
I could stay. I don't want to
stay here. I think I'm going to
run away. I wish I might, I
wish I may. I made my decision
all the way. He wants me here,
he don't want me at all. I need
a parent who would not fall
I need someone by my side
Like a person who I can go to
and cry. I need a father to be
right here. To be beside me
if he cares. I wish, I wish
I wasn't here.

Luella Rawlings

The Dread

The desolate stares I gave myself in the
mirror. The sycophants constantly trying to
appease me. Don't make me laugh. I'm mad
right now. With the ingenuity from my fear of
being happy again, torn between two worlds,
thinking of black chrysanthemums, I plummeted
down the wishing wells, which makes me think
what a fiasco for me to think that my wishes would
ever come true. I just sit in my room until the
third sister cuts my string. And I will
die a cold death like a petrified dream and overhear
rumors of my demise.

James Saunders

People and Places

Places and people, people and places
You see many things and you see many faces
Some are sad and some are happy
And some are Spanish like mami and papi
Unlike myself I am not French or white but
some people think that I am a delight. I like
to talk and so do others. Aunts
like to talk and so do mothers.
We talk about nothing but, hey
That's something. We sing, they
dance, the hypnotist puts us in a trance.
We sing high, they dance low
We do what we do because of
What we know.

Brittany Watkins

Poem Water

In this poem there was a boy who nearly drowned inside a river. He started to shake and shiver. He was so cold that he thought he was going to be inside that river until he was 100 years old and he started to mold. But he was only 7 years old and didn't know that he couldn't mold in that cold river. But the little boy fought like a warrior and he wouldn't let the river take him out. He couldn't scream, he couldn't shout. There was water all about. But six minutes later he made his way out of the bath water. Now that's a river story!

Dejuan Wilson

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Dayna Hudson

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