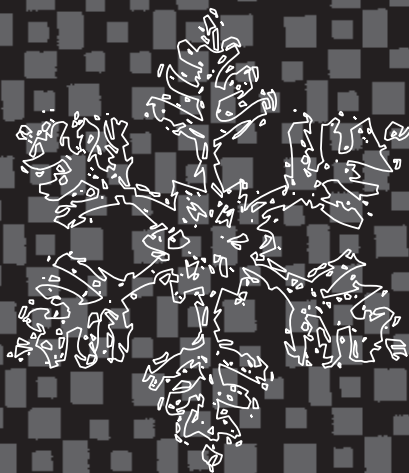




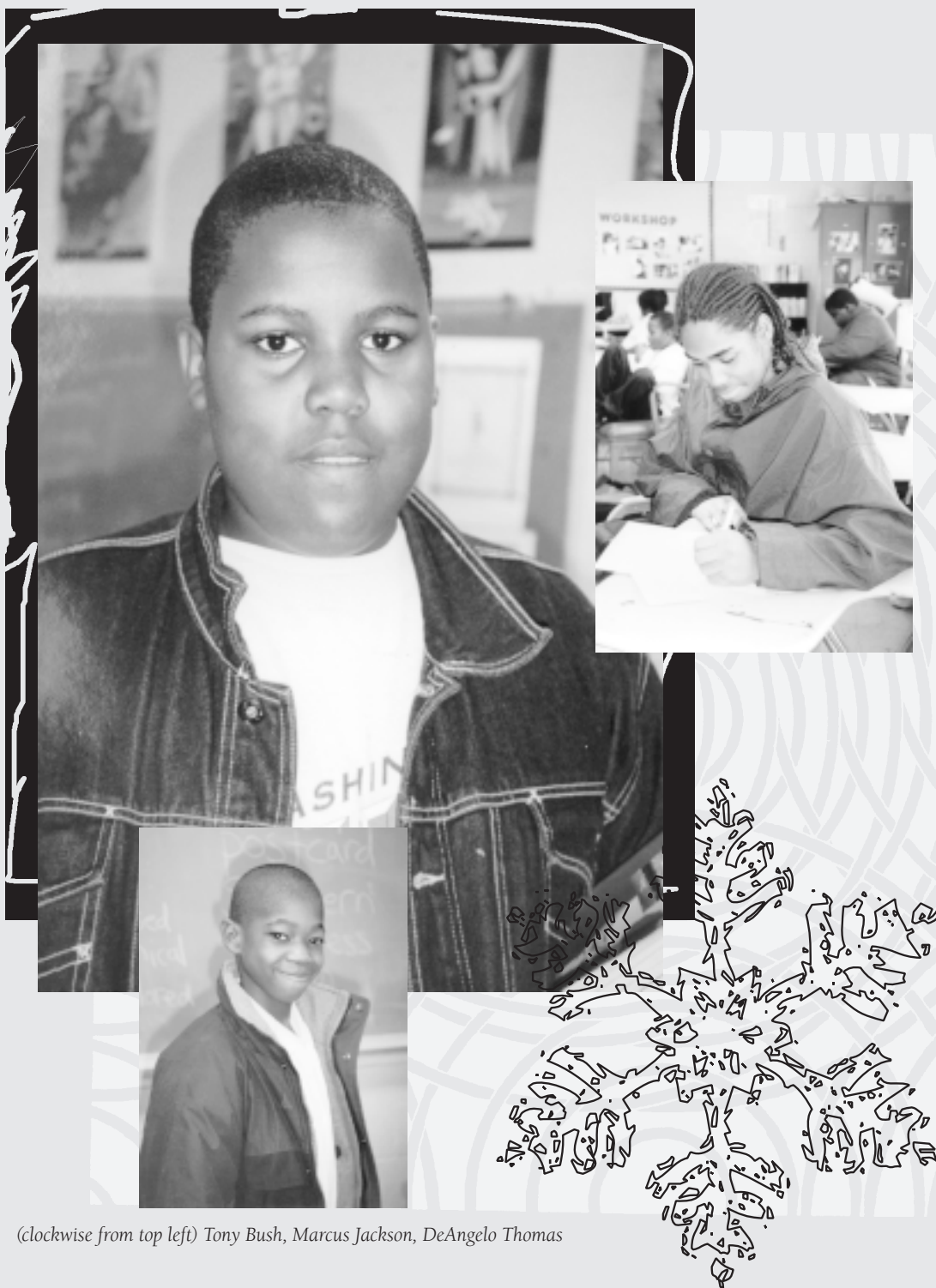
Featuring 3 guest writers from the State Department's International Visitor Program

HARTWORKS

Winter 2002 • \$1



The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine



(clockwise from top left) Tony Bush, Marcus Jackson, DeAngelo Thomas

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, and independent non-profit working to create a literary renaissance in Southeast Washington. Now in its third 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.

As we celebrate the beginning of our third year of publication, we are particularly proud of two of our recent accomplishments. In October 2002, D.C. Creative Writing Workshop Executive Director Nancy Schwalb received the "Shayne" Award for Non-Profit Leadership from the Washington Council of Agencies. The "Shayne" Award is given annually to recognize an outstanding director of a small non-profit. Also, *hArtworks* has been selected for special recognition in the 2003 *Poet's Market* as "an outstanding example of what a literary journal can be (for anyone of any age)."

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 Commonwealth Foundation, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Michael Joy and TSCJoy/Monterey 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, the Washington Council of Agencies, our friends at Popeye's on Malcolm X Avenue, Ann Brogioli, Dennis Collins, Ruth Dickey, Barb Gomperts, Betsy Holt, Bernie Horn, David Klevan, Bill Miller, Raina Rose Tagle, Chris Thaiss, and Vera M. White.

We would also like to thank the following administrators, teachers, and staff who are our partners in this endeavor: Superintendent Paul L. Vance, Assistant Superintendent for Middle/Junior High Schools Dr. Patricia Watkins, Principal Lee. E. Epps; Assistant Principals Willie Bennett, Gregory Better, and Yvonne Davis; Ms. Tameka Brown, Ms. Gloria Fergusson, Ms. Shirley Grooms, Ms. Carolyn Jackson, Ms. Mary Johnson, Ms. Irma Morgan, and Ms. Jaimee Neel; Ms. Eleanor Seale, Ms. Pamela McKinney, and Ms. Maevern Williams.

The *hArtworks* Editorial Board

Writers-in-Residence: Andy Fogle, Marla Melito, and Nancy Schwalb

Student Editors: Alexis Arrington, Dennis Brown, Tony Bush, Shavon Butler, Chantz Clagette, Amanda Fernandez, Gregory Finch, Joseph Heath, Marcus Jackson, Ricardo Jackson, Van Jackson, Brian Johnson, Jawara Johnson, LaVon Johnson, Marlos Kornegay, Kenneth McDonald, Jaslyn Pugh, Timothy Rawls, Chayna Ross, James Saunders, Aaron Smith, Stephen Staton, DeAngelo Thomas, Kenneth Thompson, Pamula Twyman, Brandon Weston, Nathaniel Wilkes, Delonte Williams, Reginald Williams, and Lashawn Willis

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What I can remember

I remember when I drank bleach.
I had to go to the hospital.
I had to stay there for a whole month.
My mother stayed the whole time.
I remember sitting at my mother's funeral,
crying for my mother.
My brother took me up to see her for the last time.
Me and my brother cried while looking at her.
He knew he was not going to see her again.
I did not.
My father did not show up until it was over.
That's all I can remember.

Joseph Heath



(l-r) DeAngelo Thomas, Reginald Williams, Delonte Williams, James Saunders, Chantz Claggett, Elie Rajaonarison

Alone

As I enter the walls of my room,
I talk to my friend.
It's late. All I can do is think.
As nature presses against the window, my heart skips a beat.
On the window ledge, I see one of mother nature's babies
Out and all alone.
I open the window and let her in.
I sit and listen to her song.
I plunge into a deep sleep.

Krystina Andrews

Hate

Hate is here, not there
we have so much in common
we live with one another sometimes
I make an ominous threat to stop doing what I am
but the hate will not let me do it

Some people say that I am a three-legged hate monster.
One day I am asleep and I look up and see myself
hurt someone that I love.
I feel that hate can do bad things to you
so I talked to someone and they said talk to yourself
and love the hate
so I did, and it helped so much.
It helped me behold my inner self.

Alexis Arrington



Just how it is

Love turns to hate,
Hate turns to anger,
Anger turns to being sorry,
Then people make up.
But that does not always happen.

Sometimes love turns into loss,
And loss turns into tears,
Tears turn into feeling sorry.
That's what happened to me.

Joseph Heath

My Name

My name looks like a voodoo queen
who dances around a fire while two men are playing voodoo music
looking for a lost evil spirit.
My name sounds very bold, as the lightning on a rainy day.
My name smells like sweet strawberries.
My name feels very narrow and uneven.
My name tastes like Now or Later...grape.

Wanda Evans

On a plane

Always on a plane
will be the same
mom and dad, beating on kids
eating chips and Kit Kat bits.

English letters will stay the same
as you have 26 in the alphabet that are easy to say.
The waitresses are bringing in what you want
while kids play with stuffed elephant trunks.

Sad memory when planes crashed
Knowing one of your loved ones was slashed
Life is not promised every day
Take it from me, God plans the day!

Raekala Middleton



Dear Fire

Dear fire,
I just want to jump in you
and be burned slowly,
screaming until there's no more skin,
burned to a crisp.
To live is no solution.
Death is my only choice.
But that's only a dream, not real.
I'd rather go swimming.

Joseph Heath

The Fire

When I am mad, I feel like a fire burning down a forest,
spreading all over the forest, burning everything in its path,
the same as the fire going through my body.
So when firefighters try to put me out
they can't, because I am ticked off.
But when they put my fire out, I feel stress free,
and when everything is gone to ash,
all of my problems are gone away.

Marcus Jackson

Be careful what you wish for

I used to think life was simple—
Sure it had its twists and turns,
but I thought that was just part of growing up.
As I get older and as I am wiser
I know that is not true.
Not only does life have twists and turns,
it's like a maze
it has many tricks up its sleeves and you never know
if the next choice you make will lead to a dead end
where you can't turn around.
I think it's like a chess game—
If you make the wrong move,
the game is over
and you don't have much time to think
about whatcha gonna do next.
It's like a 15 minute test you haven't studied for.
Everything is moving so fast through your mind
and all you can think about is the time
and whatcha gonna do about this mess you put yourself through?
I am only 13, and that's what I think so far
I have a long life to live and I'll never
say I wish I was dead
because a wise person once told me
(before she died)
be careful what you wish for—
It just might come true.

Chayna LeAnn Ross



A Woman

A woman is a mother and a father
who feeds and clothes me,
who gets me when I am wrong.
A woman is a grandmother
who takes care of her grandkids
and gives them cookies and cakes,
all that she can give to make them happy.
I love women,
because without them this world would be a mess.

Marcus Jackson

There will always be

There will always be
love on this earth.
But peace is a very different thing.
There will always be war
against this and that person.
And the world as we know it will vanish.
But will we be preserved?
Will there be any memory of us,
that we existed at one time
or just a period of time?
Will the thing after us know
that we have been here,
and that there was someone before?
No, we are just a memory.

Delonte Williams



(l-r) LaVon Johnson, Tony Bush

There will always be

There will always be the sun in the sky.
There will always be blossoms on the ground.
There will always be rare things at the store.
There will always be messages on a piece of paper.
I will always say there will always be.

Van Jackson

Alone

I am alone in the park
where birds are vanishing so fast in the pond
it looks like kids are getting taken from their parents
people getting shot by people and getting burned in the fire
and people are doing suicide because they are mad.
My family is killing themselves, so now I'm alone.

Timothy Rawls

Stay

Water will always be here, just like grass, along with trees.
You see, anything that God made, I'm sure will stay here.
Now cars will vanish like the atmosphere,
and the Southern Empire will evaporate
like a volcano erupting.
The birds will be unseen from the world.
A sudden person will stay.

Chantz Clagette



Unfood

I see young fools sitting around in red shade,
burning their heads off.
Their heads vanishing like glistening juice,
while others sit in the windfall shade
eating hot steaming fried chicken and onion liver.
That's better than nothing.
I know I'd do something.

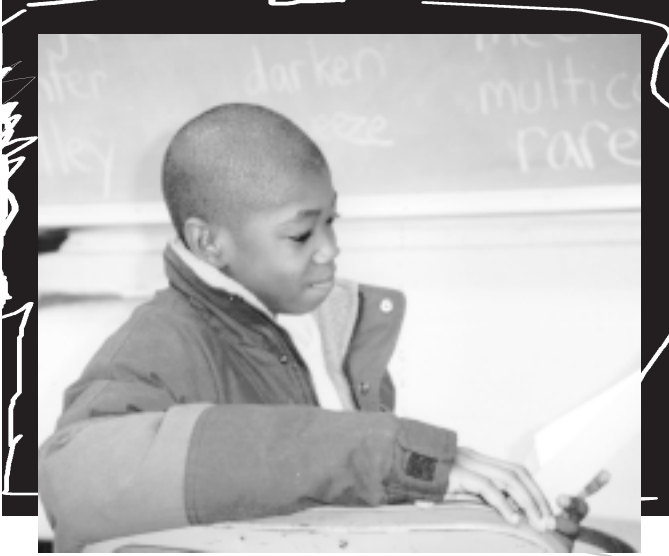
Chantz Clagette



People Love Me

There will always be a postcard in the mailbox.
There will always be someone who cares about me somewhere.
There is always a bridge in between the gap in my heart.
There will always be a little voice in my head saying, "kiss her, kiss her."
There is always food in the fridge when I'm hungry.
And there are always friends who care.

Jawara Johnson



DeAngelo Thomas

The Night

It's a dark stormy night at Virginia Beach.
I run, panicking.
The sky rumbles like my belly
as I'm sitting at the table, waiting for Thanksgiving dinner.
The sea flows on the sand
as I run from the rain.
I see two lovers running to their house
and I wish I wasn't far from home.
I run and I run until I see light—
It's the light of family waiting for me.

Jawara Johnson

Lost

So bad to be hurt, and to be outcast,
outcast to the ends of the seven seas.
My hand gets wrinkly and gray,
so much I want to let the salt water
fill my body up and
go to the heaven I've dreamed of.
But I realize while looking at my life,
lost is not just a state of being,
but a feeling.
Then I got up and, guess what?
The water was only to my knees.

Tony Bush

Good Times

In the valley, the heartbeat sounded like a phone booth
the car hit the grave, and the grave hit the elderly lady
and the car hood abused the lady
the man came to help the lady
in the tree of darkness when the blossoms grow
and the blossom crisscrossed the man
and the man tipped over the ladder in the flame-red times.

DeAngelo Thomas

Me, Myself and I

As I'm here all alone, so lonely no one can hear me cry
I'm so close in, I can't breathe
and the light is dimming,
and everyone is getting closer to me,
I am getting scared, and
POW!

Reality sets in and I open my eyes.
I can hear everybody talking about their taxes and finances,
and cars and boats, and stocks and bonds.
The finest crystal glass from China is falling to the marble,
gray, khaki-colored, with a shiny finish.
And for one moment before the glass falls to the floor,
it is peaceful and quiet.
You could hear the softest wind rustle.

Tony Bush



Dark Sky

Sacrifice the change of yesterday's blaze
Joy bleeds magic in the dark sky
Breeze of flowers opens the free dark sky
Poison celebrates picking a daughter to become a princess.
Marble dazzles a son to be a king of grass.

Delonte Williams

There

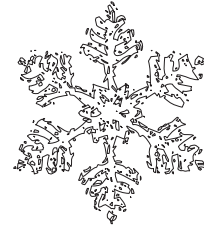
There will always be sunlight floating in my eyes.
There will always be summer, spring, ice cream swimming on my taste buds.
There will always be a secret flying through the sky, like birds pooping on my head.
There will always be Oodles of Noodles in my bowl when I eat,
and you will always have a heart to love one another.

Aaron Smith

Unseen

As he sits in the darkness,
he's (cruelly behind tomorrow)
with delicate feelings.
The rare unseen mirage glistens
as the sun crisscrosses through the canyon.
And he howls at the unseen illusion
with mechanical magic.
He aches deep behind the humble valley.
As he sits, quietly hidden behind the river bed,
he mourns his echo with blisters on his back
and he shouts "I'm unseen, unseen."

Brandon Weston



LaVon Johnson

Strong

I feel strong because my aunt, uncle, brother and sister had died.
So now I'm a soldier.
And now I am strong because
we have a killer going around killing people.
I think the sniper had a life, but it's all over
so now he is going around killing other people for nothing.
What is the purpose of killing people?
So now I am watching where I'm going.
If the police catch him
I still can't go outside for another month.
I am mad at this man.
Please catch him. Please.

DeAngelo Thomas

Awkward Day

Turning blue and black
Anacondas slithering into stars
Pentagons that change shapes
Stars that turn into L's
People swinging bats and floating in the air
Fingerprints slither to be scanned
Myths that exist today
People that could walk on clouds
Black and blue horse that has no legs, so it can't jump
Just like Kunta Kinte.

Lovette Dickerson



Tumbling

The boy is tumbling and his mouth is mumbling.
Frogs are dead and witches are dead.
Kids are playing and people are remaining.
Fish are breathing and people are leaving.
Raindrops are falling and the baby is falling.
The man is stretching and the woman is touching.
The fire is hot, the cat is fat.
People are crying and people are dying.

Malcolm McLaurin

Tulp

tumbling, pink and blue
swirling in a heart,
dancing F's, dancing on a kid's bad report card,
a crow caws as it is finding something to eat
then the crow turns into a rabbit
who got hit by the garbage truck,
garbage flies in the air and
turns to clouds floating free,
like cereal in a bowl of milk.

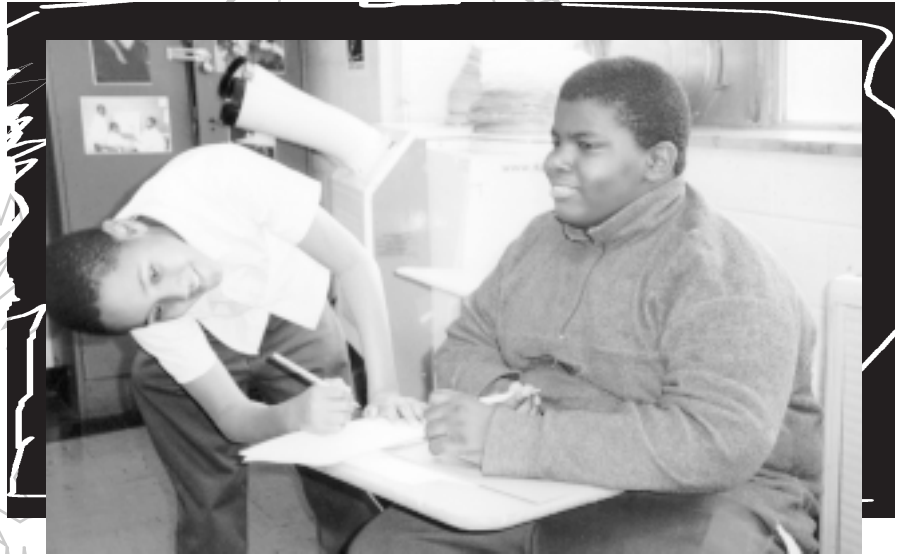
Kiara Johnson



Lily the Delicate Flower

Running through a field of hearts
With rabbits hopping on clouds
The letter "c" painted in baby blue.
Smile in the puddle of white love
Rushing toward you like money.
I see beautiful people getting born once a gold moon.
Watching people get hurt every day.
Smelling like lilies when you get out of the tub.
When you see a baby blue shirt,
Pick up a lily and smell the scent,
Just like me and you.

Lilly Brown



(l-r) Chantz Claggett, Kenneth McDonald, Jr.

To Earl

The star changing into a blue puppy,
changing into a man named Earl
who has a red shirt on
who is flying across the sky
who is going into the blue clouds
with all the E's you can think of all around him.
If we could meet again, I would say I love you.

Lorraine Ramsey

Best Friends

Best friends together all the time
in a nice picture, red that goes to blue,
smiles that turn upside down,
lions jumping into monkeys that are swinging on trees,
hearts going into stars, stars running into small circles,
cats dreaming and changing into dogs,
butterflies going into the letter "b,"
they're so small you cannot even see,
teachers changing into students,
sitting at their desks, just like me.

Tashika Payton

Lion

Running into a lion which is my friend
who turns blue, jumping on a jaguar,
giving me silver diamonds, smart W's
that have an education
and spinning into a circle that cheers me up when I'm sad.
Coming through your city looking and acting as you were me.
Alley cats chasing me, thinking I have milk,
which turns back into a lion as if it was just a dream.

Darrien Willis

Shoes

Running with blue and white on your feet
feeling real excited because you
got the new blue and white's on your feet.
Look straighter than the lines on squares.
They call them shoes the "A" shoes.
Why? Because if you have them you are part of the "A" crowd.
These shoes can be faster than a cheetah
or as slow as a snail
but they are still popular.
Just like many of you.

Alexis Garrett

Wild Imagination

Walking down, down a street of lights.
Red rubies jump into blue, turning
into purple shells in the sea that never ends,
which jumps into green flags waving in the air,
which turns to brown skin
which jumps into black,
perfectly matching the lovely night sky.
In it, stars gleaming, pearl white cats
running in the darkness
of prowling wild alley cats, black as the day is long,
who know they have no owner, just like me.

Brittany Love



(l-r) Ricardo Jackson, James Saunders, Chantz Claggette, Marcus Jackson

As I Go

At the zoo, I see the terrifying lions.
Roarrrrr.
The sound of the lion until it calms down and goes silent
like the tropical birds sitting on their logs.
Eekkkk.
The brown little things went swinging from one place to another.
Running, screaming and shouting all over the place, I see humans.
The tummy begins to growl.
Soft, chewy, sweet cotton candy
melts in the middle of my mouth
like soft bread on a piece of chicken.
As I say goodbye for now until I see that old wild place again.

Ricardo Jackson

Tribute to Seasons

I look.

I see the tree of summer as green as ivy.

My twisting motion converts the scene to
an orange red autumn of falling leaves.

To my surprise, I squint my eyes.

I see a pyramid of caramel and gold, swaying in circles
a sacrifice in exchange for protection
from the upcoming wheel of fire
destroying the gold and caramel
descending into a lava pit.

It cools to the dark of midnight, which sprouts like new life.

And the cycle starts over. Just like families.

Reginald Williams

Rocky Mountain

The rock turns to red and black masks.

And a dog is acting foolish

I put a cone on the dog,

and the dog turned to red and black rock.

I put a "d" on the dog because "d" stands for dog.

And turned everything invisible but me,

because I hit my dog with a newspaper,

but before it was ancient times I ran into a volcano.

I was fearless.

And I walked right into a hurricane.

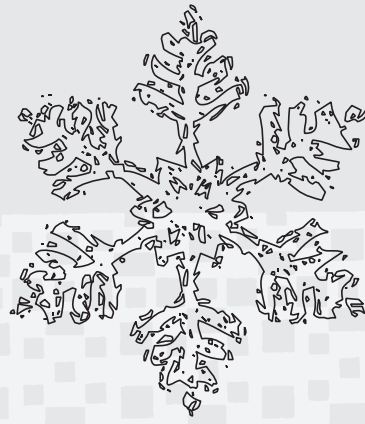
I hit my head on my hood.

I chased my dog in a cave.

I ran to a parked car.

And it started all over again.

DeAngelo Thomas



Roses

Running down the hall with roses
that turn into stems of hurting pain,
trying to sing in peace, sad tears
running forms into mad weather
people run, stretching toward anger
screaming S's
making waves of the sea
heads spinning into minds
and rabbits bounce from black to white
who jump into dogs
with mad imaginations
that cause trouble
just like you.

Sharkiyla Marshall

Kaleidoscope

Yellow and flower-painted trains go through
the tunnels of schizophrenic kids on a pogo stick,
hopping straight into a tree that's proud,
on and on upward to the sun
that shines over new plant life,
that feeds the family of the President
that got bitten by a love bug
that bit a Rottweiler dog
that loves precious stones
and he jumps in the blue and black swamp
for the Hope Diamond
that slowly claws into a turtle
with ninja knowledge that was written by
a guy that knows everybody
that is Tony B.

Tony Bush



Delonte Williams

Alter

As I feast my eyes upon the tributaries of thunder,
I notice how they turn into the timeless hourglass
of three-legged armadillos, falling into desolate graves
then the skeptical archaeologist revisits the thought
of stealing the prehistoric femur.
The volcano disburses, releasing abundant remnants
of killing, betrayal, and treachery,
then the elderly black man is mourning, a eulogy filled with
soothing memories of flipping and cavorting
in endless cornfields like wild chaos.
Demons try to penetrate the gates of heaven, with dull obsidian blades
like termites devouring their favorite diamonds in chasms of the ghetto
And this kaleidoscope-like broadcast of the cruel ways of humanity
of dull, and schizophrenic people just living lives of fiasco,
which reminds me of a kaleidoscope of life.

James Saunders

Change

The "S" of a rattlesnake crawling through the sand.
Frightened by the size,
the scared black mustang leaped onto a donkey,
a talking flying donkey.
The donkey started to fly and blew red dust.
He blew up and his body pieces fell into a hexagon.
Thanksgiving flies to Christmas
who flies to New Years
who flies to Valentine's Day
who shoots everyone with hearts.

Jawara Johnson



The ghost-man

I like poetry
you remember, right?
I fly only in the dark.

You look like a window,
speak to the coffee,
a dog is not an animal,
my father is a ghost,
tomorrow I should see the blue and green water,
I am shinier than the sun.

DeAngelo Thomas

Animosity

The palindrome of envy tries to abolish the bucket I'm standing on
to see the Christmas lights through the translucent glass.
The heart accelerates from the splinters of last lifetime, from betrayal.
After I waltzed elegantly past the nightmares
that you try to use to bind my joy. But the vines are cut.
The dog smirks because of his drool on my shoes.
And we call him man's best friend.
I sensed this cruelty from behind, but even worse forward.

James Saunders

People on the Streets

As a translucent tomorrow turns into a bland today
I fall into darkness,
as the man on the corner plays the fiddle
he only has 50 cents for a sandwich
but the thing is, that it's his last meal
and I remember that
one day that could be me or you or your brother
so I go to the bank and
take out my account, my house, my rings
and I give it up
because the less people on the streets the better.

Delonte Williams

Ode to Failure

Failure is my Kryptonite.
He is my nightmare that haunts me.
He is the mold of my fantasies.
He is the remnant of my sins.
He is the obsidian blade, with precision,
That cuts the fog that protects me from my worst fears.
He was my father before I was reincarnated.
He flourished me with coarse abuse, generated from fear.
We used to fish at the Susquehanna every time I got A+ on a test.
Every stroke that didn't catch a fish, he looked as if it was wasting his essential time.
As usual, I heard the words "This is gonna hurt me more than it will hurt you,"
And he swiftly beat me.
He put his belt on and bound me in his arms.
Unfortunately, his belt was spiked and
I didn't know if he was still punishing me or hugging me.
And now, since he knows that I have persevered through his torment,
He continuously refers to me as his ode to failure.

James Saunders



Ricardo Jackson (LaVon Johnson is in background)

HEARTWORKS presents our special guests



ED CAREY, NARLAN MATOS TEIXEIRA, AND ELIE RAJAONARISON

On November 18, 2002, the Literary Magazine Club hosted a group of international writers participating in the State Department's International Visitor Program.

Ed Carey is an established playwright from London, England who has recently crossed genres to begin writing novels as well. He read from his novel *Observatory Mansions* on radio station WSUI in Iowa City earlier this year.

Elie Rajaonarison is a professor, poet, and writer from Antananarivo, Madagascar. He and other poets formed the association "Sandratra" in the 1980s to revive Malagasy literature. The member poets rely on their belief in and love for the Malagasy language to produce verse. As a poet, Mr. Rajaonarison was greatly influenced by American folk and country singers, and would like to learn more about the culture which gave rise to this genre.

Narlan Matos Teixeira is a poet from Salvador, Brazil. He has published two collections of his own work, as well as two volumes of translations of Slovenian writers. His work has been published in many national publications in Brazil, and he is rapidly gaining international acclaim.

FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS, THE THREE VISITING WRITERS WERE PEPPERED WITH QUESTIONS:

Have you ever written any horror plays? Playwright Ed Carey said he hadn't.

Do you believe in leprechauns in England? Carey also said no to this. "That's in Ireland or Scotland, or wherever it is they make Lucky Charms," he answered.

How much money do you make writing? Carey wouldn't reveal exact figures, but he gets paid in a lump sum after a book gets published, and this has to last for a while.

What inspired you to start writing? Elie Rajaonarison said it was the moon, the night, and many other things. He wasn't quite sure when he had started writing.

What ocean is your island in? Rajaonarison tried to help the students guess, but no one thought of the Indian Ocean.

Is poetry popular in your country? Yes, Rajaonarison said it is common to hear poetry on the radio or see it performed on television.

What do you eat in your country? In Madagascar, it just isn't considered a meal without rice, Rajaonarison said. This is partly because Madagascar is a poor country, and partly because of tradition. Even when he is traveling in the United States, no matter what he eats, he needs a bit of rice to go with it.

What different races are there in your country? Narlan Matos explained the complex racial heritage of Brazil, surprising the students when he said that people of all races mingle freely there.

Where have you performed your poetry? Matos has performed his in soccer stadiums.

What kind of electronic games do they have in your country? Video games are just as popular in Brazil as they are in the U.S., according to Matos, and Brazilians have all the latest games, too.

The writers all said they had seen our monuments. In fact, they had taken a tour bus just the day before. And they agreed that they had seen many things in our country that would inspire them to write upon their return home. One student asked whether the writers considered themselves masters of literature. "No," they answered in unison, shaking their heads vehemently.

The following works by Narlan Matos are reprinted with the author's permission:

HAPPINESS

Definitely – I'm not happy
How happy is the woman
In the building facing me!
(Funny, I guess she thinks the same about me)

AFTERNOON

dry foliage fly in my memory
the winds of South America blow somewhere in me
they bring yesterday's telegram
the mute contrast of this dry season
will not silence the spring I keep inside of me
but now I just want your two eyes on mine
and any formula capable to enchant
these autumn afternoons that suddenly invade me

LAPIDAR

How painful is darkness!
Where is the switch?
Turn on the lights!
No, please, don't do it!
Why turn on the lights
If I can be happy with lights
Turned off!
The letters posted long ago
Never come back with the answers

The work of the sun is to polish diamonds

Between what's true and what's false
There's a sea of doubts and lots
Of papers without destiny
Two plus two is two thousand
Between past and future
There's the present
Which present?
The present tense is an absent one
There's no time
Life is written by pencil

BRAZIL

TIME ESSAY

All the time I feel myself
Leaving with the wind
For places that don't exist
However do exist because I invented them
Little by little I became a dune
Full of remembrances
Full of forgetfulness
I feel life passing by tough
And time flowing from me
While I suffer
While I laugh at happiness
My body runs against time
And I run toward eternity

THE ULTRAMODERN PRAYER

Lord,
Let the watch on my wrist be nothing but a timepiece
And not my teacher
Let the streets teach me how to conjugate the verbs
I did not learn from
Grammars,
Let me not meet my end like the old woman from 502
Who knows a lot about other people's lives since she has none of her own
And now tries to teach her dog Rex to speak Latin
And finally,
Let not my life, my last words be like in "Instantes"
That which was in order to become
And will never happen
Amen

MARIAN MATOS TEIXEIRA

THEATRE

from under the door I only see bills arriving – not solutions
the price of bread is the same as that of life
and there's no miracle fixed for next Monday

A Sad Blues for New Shoes

I got the blues.
No new shoes.
All the girls got hairdos,
but not me.
Can't you see?
No new shoes.
No, not me.

I want some 23's—
Jordan indeed,
eating sunflower seeds,
raking my leaves.
Nike Air Force Ones.
The whole store.
No, a whole ton.

Reeboks are out.
Converse are in.
If I get a pair of those,
maybe I'll win.
No Payless, no not me—
You'll never catch me
walking down the street
with Payless on my feet.

Tayonne Casey

Clouds

Beautiful clouds in the sky.
When 5:00 PM comes, pink and purple clouds move in,
Tigers walk across the world,
They jump to each of the continents.
When I smell love in the air,
My heart starts to pump
And make me go to my soul mate
Just like you.

Oralia Woods

When You're Bored

There comes a time when you get bored.
You feel drowsy and trip over the cord.
Some people probably feel the same way,
And when some people get bored,
They have a bad day.
That is what I feel like today,
I'm bored and I'm sleepy
And I think people feel the same way.

There will always be a time when you don't feel right,
When some people argue, and some people fight.
They will yell at the teachers and yell at you,
And that's something you don't want to do.
You get sad, you get mad,
But you don't want to fight—
That is how you know you're not right.

Jocelyn Vaughan

My name is like

My name looks like a little ant,
always holding things inside, instead of letting it go.

My name sounds like a roaring lion on the horizon
who's really ticked off.

My name smells like a burst of raging steam,
coming from my anger.

My name feels like hot molten lava rock
pouring from a volcano above.

My name tastes like hot soup
that's just been taken
out of a steamy pot of boiling water.

Shaquiel Jenkins

Life Today

There will always be a beating of the rain
on a languid sunrise,
there will always be juice in the fridge,
there will always be good and evil,
there will always be love.
There will always be school at 8:45,
there will always be black, white and purple,
there will always be a grace between
a mother and her son.

Joseph Hudson

There Will Always Be

There will always be someone driving, polluting the air,
Someone being speechless, thinking I don't care,
Wedding bells ringing, ring-a-ding-ding,
Me sitting up in my seat, saying "How interesting."
As I pass along, with the memories perishing,
The road becomes dark, but all I see is clarity.
I pray, I hope, I see sunlight,
All the joy comes back, I say "Wow, what happened?"
As I see sparkling emery, the memory comes back.
When my mom stops the car and gets out,
I see her hair languid, shining in the light.

Sarai Morris

One Way or Another

The day will end,
one way or another.
I did not find my chicken in the oven.
I did not go to Six Flags
because my mom ran out of gas.
I could not go outside,
because I got in trouble.
I hit my head and then I wobbled.
I had to go to sleep early,
because I had to go to school early.
I did not have a good day.
But since I am living,
I'll shout Hooray!

Sherrell Jones



Stephen Staton

This Speechless World

In this speechless world,
there will always be people like me.
The world is full of hope, justice, and peace,
but all I see is the beaming sun.
The earth is full of clarity, fog,
and rain that turns into angry forces of weather.
I get pushed around like stiff granite that never moves,
I get shoved around like the stars move in circles.
I slide off my memory
like emery that just sits there when it falls off.
I am the light of the darkness.

Sharkiyla Marshall

My Name

My name smells like vanilla ice cream,
bright as snow, tasty and sweet.
It smells like it came straight from the tree.

My name sounds like ocean waves,
crashing into each other,
as if they couldn't wait to touch the shore.

My name feels like cotton,
straight from the field and cleaned.

My name looks like snow rushing down in the winter, white,
as if it was happy to see us looking out our window,
as if it wanted us to come and play.

My name tastes like butterscotch pudding, sweet and tasty,
just like me.

Chanice Little



You and Me

There will always be a me,
There will always be a you,
If you open your eyes and see,
I'm going to show how it is going to be.
Though you may die and perish,
There's no reason to be ashamed.
Never forget the ones you love,
Because they're the ones
Who won't forget your name.
That's why there will always be
A you and me, as you can see.
Even though things aren't the same,
Look—your nephew's born
And he has your name.

Shaquiel Jenkins

My name is like

My name looks like a young child,
running free in the meadow,
while her dreams run free in her mind.

My name tastes like fresh cookies,
not the kind you find in a store—
the kind that you have straight out of the oven,
fresh and joyful to the last bite.

My name looks like a picture Picasso painted
to show he was unique.

My name sounds like the band.
The music is beautiful to hear,
because when you hear that sound,
you feel joy and alive.

My name feels like a Do Not Disturb sign,
difficult to touch.

Gabrielle Martin



(l-r) Lashawn Willis, LaVon Johnson

I'm from Maryland, Why?

Yes, I'm from Maryland.
Palmer Park is where I was brought home
after a week in the hospital.
My own little room.

Yes, I was smart.
I remember people,
old people looking up in my face.
I think I remember my mom telling me
my little cuz danced with me
at our first double birthday party.

I was born on the 27th, and
Tee was born eight or nine days after me.
Everyone loved themselves some 'Trice.

But here comes my little sister.
She made everything bad.
We ran out of room and I had to share.
I loved her, but why was she there?

Patrice Harrison

Lost Cause

Staring out my window
with an empty look on my face
and my heart filled with no tales left to tell.
The queen bee, strong and aware
buzzes by, reminding me of a lost cause.
A storm with no rain,
a letter with no words,
the sun with no moon,
me without my father,
an oasis with not one drop of moisture
to reflect your face, strong and just like mine.

But in this dark, empty room I find comfort
strangely releasing my meaningless thoughts to you,
a wall, who used to be my comfort, my shadow,
my shade from the sun, my stars in the sky,
My heart.
I drown in the sound of your voice.

I ache, hollow and numb,
but you waltz toward me
echoing your love and I'm hoping
you will come to my rescue, as always.
Your voice frightens me,
the pain deep within your soul only shown by
a glimpse of sorrow through your eyes.
I feel like I felt you go
even if I never knew you.

Amanda Fernandez



The Bad Things that Happen to People

Everybody bursts out with broken glass
When the storm comes, the rain falls
Then the harm comes from a cloud
The jails open for the people to walk in
When they have to spend their life there
They stay there for almost 20 years,
Then they get tired and die.

Dakia Koon

Victim of Bad Music

I want to leave this noise I hear
too much yelling, banging, and screaming cries.
But this is not the first.
Remembering what happened last time.
The yelling was stuck to my head for days,
just like this cherry flavored gum
on my writing hand shoe.
My hand banging,
which lands on my next problem—too many drums
in class, in my home sweet home, in the parks
in the night dark.
Have they ever heard silence is golden?
My head feels like a parade, a band, a squad.
By the time everyone leaves class
I hit the wall.
It's too late.
I am already a victim of bad music.
On and on, over again,
no matter who leaves this 4-walled room
it lives on like a dream, like a memory.
Am I crazy?

Pamula Twyman



Delonte Williams

3 Fugues Plus

Tomorrow brings a purpose of mixed emotions
to bend the miracle of humanity.
Shine loudly to activate the mirage
of tedious souls that illuminates the century
to forewarn humanity of the afterlife.
The purpose is crucial, but startles.
Sweep away the smirk to pour the darkness
of mystery upon you, to devolve the smirk into a frown.
Beam the sacred light to ache upon the feet of the elder,
diligently watching the empire.
The purpose is difficult but essential.

James Saunders

My Immediate

(thanks to the Arena Stage)

This life of showbiz is fake.

All we need is to entertain.

The man with the whip is the president of grass.

Tom Walker lives a life of intense agony,
from false accusations, abuse, bloody walls
and images of dark making someone stumble.

And I bet he would like to be able to sense the bloom of the flowers.

But all he can do is to live and play the violin,
while dead from intoxication.

The guys live a life of hustle on the strip,
while fantasizing about the woman in the red dress.

And you know red is my favorite color.

The black family is feeling blue,
because they have a dream that no one understands.

The boys hang out at the spot, watching and admiring
the elegant movements of the lady, and it seems like
her dance is a math equation,
each movement adds up to her incandescent glow.

They live a life of teamwork and struggle.

They both have a dream
and want to make each other happy.

And Cupid is just toiling, looking to create translucent lust
but he created love.

James Saunders



Always, Never

There will always be
teachers teaching students.

There will always be
dark alleys to walk through.

There will always be
children getting whippings by their parents.

There will be fighting going on every day.

It won't miss a day.

Never.

Eugenia Harris

Away from the City

Emerald green blades of grass, swishing
and swaying against my naked feet.
Stars telling me of their wish to stay
a comforting sign forever.
I savor the feeling of cool fertile soil
rubbing against my feet.
I see a stream of ivory, filled with creatures
that entertain me and fill me with everlasting joy.
I smell the fragrance from the caramel coated field.
I imagine how it would be to stay here forever,
away from the city life of
broken glass and troubles,
of darkness.

Reginald Williams



No Home

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 from
this crisscrossed rickety bridge of a life,
mourning 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.

Reginald Williams

Zephyr Like Quasar

The world? So dark, full of decay, and gloomy until it came.
The shiny breeze of wind, continuously
spreading peace and illuminating the world.
Riding it on a sharpened splinter, like a beam of depression,
and an empire of hate built up over the years
by the graves of the followers,
followed by the leader Hitler,
who cost more than he was worth,
and the people who can't be remembered,
because their graves were never dug.
As fast as you can click a pen to record the great miracle,
the world is changed forever.

Reginald Williams

Tumbling Green Grass

Tumbling green and blue
roses that move into
the air, men that dance and float
and the metal white snowdrops
sliding and floating on the air.
Electric A's are spreading across the land
beyond the snow,
and roses are blowing
and butterflies spread their wings
with blue and red, wonderful colors
and pigs that are rare,
places the roses are blowing
and the snow keeps on snowing.

Carl Wiggins



Black, White and Me

Teachers in the halls telling the kids, "Stop running."
Black and white kids joning
when you look out the window you see stars
when you are walking home you get chased by a pitbull
your friends are smiling
come to find out that's your best friend's dog.
I can just see myself being with this crowd of
black and white kids running down the halls.
I'm like, "Stop man, I'm trying to learn."
Just like I'm doing right now.
Peace my brothers and sisters.

Brittany Carey

My Neighborhood

My neighborhood is as boring as being grounded for one year
My neighborhood is a place where you see more dogs and cats than people
My neighborhood is as quiet as a door that never opens or shuts
My neighborhood is as crazy as Saint Elizabeth's.

Crystal McPherson

Willowton Park

Walking into Willowton Park, the scariest park,
wind blowing fast,
trees turning into living monsters,
puppies turning into chirping birds,
green frogs jumping in the air,
turning to smoke from people's mouths.
In Willowton Park,
grass turns into live seaweed,
water turns into ice from the cold night streets
turning into mountains.
See, that's why people imagine.

Thomas Carter



(l-r) Amanda Fernandez, Krystina Andrews

Kaleidoscope

Running waterfalls made out of soda
flowing down into the canyon,
water changing crystal blue
as the vines of the jungle turn into slithering snakes
with scales made of green diamonds,
turning into the stars above the night sky
stretching out on the horizon,
watching the sunrise at the top of the hill
just like me.

Tyrell Jackson

Lines to Learn

(thanks to the Arena Stage)

Itchy ivy like fire over a lake of lava,
Blue as the music of a soulful sax
played by the blessed lips of the man
formally known as Sax Man, assisted by
Tom Walker playing the violin of liquor.
Guys and Dolls on the streets of Harlem,
gambling their lives away, not like Sax Man.
Animal Crackers, filled with the fruit of
hardworking hands, needing a way
of making a living after being forced to come
to this new and strange world.
Ghostly deceiving lips, piercing the soul
of an unexpected victim, not chosen purposely,
but in need of approval from his alien friends.
It's a hard life, but the show must go on.

Reginald Williams

My Mom as Thunder

My mom looks down on me
like Goliath looking down on David.

She yells at me and my ears shake,
and my face falls back.

I try to explain, but her voice
rolls like thunder through the sky.

I say "Mom, I'm sorry", but she doesn't listen,
she just yells and tells me to go to bed.

Jawara Johnson



This Feeling

There will always be
a rain of alphabets.
I feel this pain, it's like
a grain of light piercing my eyes;
it's like a chamber of secrets
just waiting to be released;
this feeling gets stronger and stronger
inside me, waiting to burst out.
I wish I were an angel, so I could lift my wings.

Dana Postell

My Family

My mother is a queen,
dominating female,
and master of the house.

My twin sister Terchele is a mirror,
my reflection and me.

My nephew is Batman
because he is the superhero in my television.

My two year old nephew is a boulder
because he is fierce and strong
during a pillow fight.

Terrance Jackson



Behind the Wall

It is quiet and all you can hear
Is the wind hitting against the window
Then there is a noise:
The window screams,
The wall shivers,
The ceiling drops.
Secrets make me wonder
Why people have them,
Why they want them.
I asked the house what's beyond the wall
But there was silence.

Angelina Gomez

Murder's Room

In a room, a murderer stands in a corner,
thinking about what he plans to do next,
his deadly weapon in another corner,
a huge, sharp knife, soaked in blood.
The whole room is colored with red,
dark bloodstains staining through the wallpaper.
His emotions are hatred, greed, and anger,
while the room starts to get a little redder than usual.
His mind is playing back all the happy memories,
locked away in his mind like a sacred box.
The color used to be very bright blue,
before it started to get red.
He's in a room, with the door locked,
forever, forever, in a haunted house on top of a hill.
The sun shines brightly in the sky,
but the house stays bathed in darkness.

Kiara Johnson

As Night Turns to Day

As night turns to day
The whole thing fails.
I see light turn to dark,
I fall into speech,
I dream of speech.
I wake to the deaf
And live another day

Delonte Williams



My Hood

My hood is wilder than a jungle
Things are rolled up in bundles
It smells like dust and makes you sneeze
It feels good like a cold breeze
My hood is where you can't sleep,
Where you feel the pressure of death
At night, you have to take deep breaths.

Roosevelt Jones, Jr.

Walking

I see myself walking
And no darkness has come
Just like a cheetah that can't run.

I am walking home.
My friends call my house,
They ask me questions like a bird's chirps
I respond.

I am walking with my friends
We are as famous as The Rock,
But more famous

I am walking again,
This time in my dreams,
They are as promising as the day.

Tae Manager

My Grandmom

My Grandmom is like an angel flying
As sweet as candy and bitter as a lemon
She is quiet like a mouse; you hear nothing in the house.
She is beautiful like a butterfly

Sylvia Spencer

Light Switch

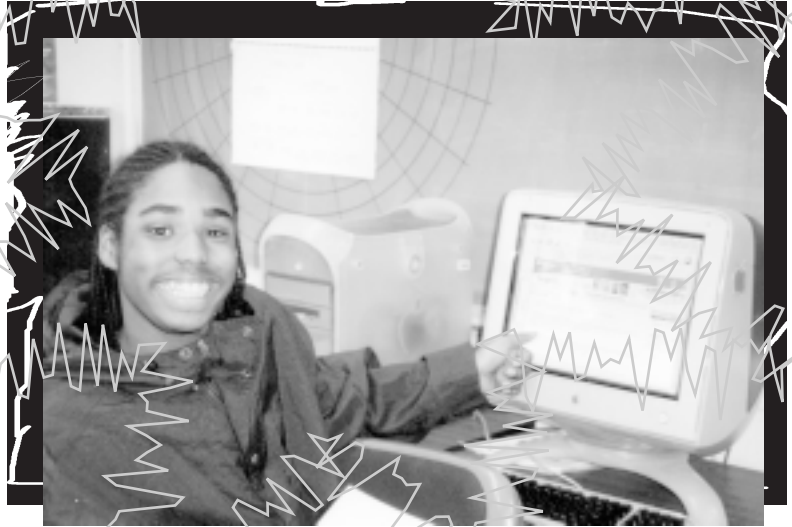
It is so simple how much I stay on
Just to keep people from noticing my true self.

Don't tell me I can't,
I will go out on you in a minute.
Change me? I am brighter than ever.

Keep me the same?
You don't know what I want to do.
Try not to frighten me, I burn and come in groups with friends.

Leave me alone and I am grateful;
Mess with me and I'm unhappy.
But I still can't wait
Until you touch me.

Tae Manager



Marcus Jackson

A Map to My House

When you come up the hill you will feel as if you came up a mountain
And all your mountain tools were gone.
You will stop at the bus stop where everyone is all the time
Having meetings because everyone is there.
You will go down the block and see all the birds,
It looks like a bad picture.
Beside the big tree that looks as if it goes through the sky—
My house is there.

Steven Jackson

The Last Thing I Said

My grandma was in the house,
she went to the hospital and died.
I was crying and I was mad
as a bull when it sees red
I was crying so bad
I almost made a swimming pool in my bed
but I'm ok now because
I know my grandma is watching me
like the moon that follows me.

Ceaira Hawkins



Open Your Gates

Seeing him is like being at a funeral,
like being broken into 20 pieces.
Feeling tears come down my eyes
is like a waterfall
but it's quieter.
It's like all my life I've been in a deep sleep,
but I must wake up,
and hear the voice in the sky
"Open your gates
and walk out into your life."

Ricardo Jackson

Who Do I Run To?

Who do I run to
when the world spits in my face
who do I run to
when the world curses me
who do I run to
when the world humiliates me
when they beat me up
just who do I run to?

Verona Clifton

Roosevelt

The thunder of the lighting,
The smell of red roses
The sound of a billion dollar grand prize
It feels like a pot of gold,
Seems like the best—
Will be the best.
Melts every time you hear it.
My name.

Roosevelt Jones, Jr

Around the Neighborhood

Around the neighborhood
It is about as nice as a rose
Except for the park, the grass, and the monkey bars
They are like an old person's skin.
Andre Harper

Lost

I am lost in the world,
just me and you.
I'm so afraid I might lose you
so I need to talk to you
and ask for guidance.
When my world seems so cloudy
and speaks too loudly,
guide me up.
I open up my heart
and I'm all burned out.
I don't think my strength's going to last
so I am crying out to you
I know you're the only one able
so I need you to help me.

Anita White



(l-r) Lashawn Willis, Diamond Williams

My Name

My name is like a little girl talking to a man,
It looks like snakes rolling through the sand
I hear my name as leaves, and that's just me.
I don't think anyone could touch my name

Ronell White

How He Grew Up

He lived in a trailer
behind the liquor store
He ate bread and honey
for breakfast, lunch and dinner

He had no clothes or shoes
He had no mother or father
and no sister or brother
He couldn't go to school
He didn't even know his ABC's
or 1-2-3's

He cried at night
and he worried a lot
but he didn't like to show it
sometimes he was up
sometimes he was down

When he got so mad
he began to throw things around
he began to say things
out his mouth he didn't really mean

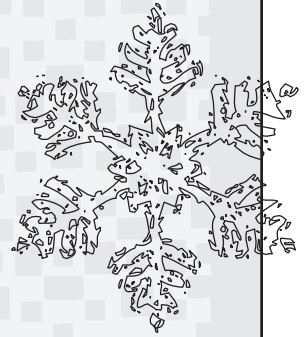
He walked on bridges
and under highways
and even through woods
until one day the Lord answered his prayers

Latrice Williams

What If

What if I was as quick as a cheetah?
What if my mouth was loud as a sound system?
What if my body melted like butter?
What if my hands were like metal
and my poems were fire?

John Seegars



Lost Sister

My sister is lost
and I think I am too
We can't find each other
or my mother either
When I find them
I'll kiss them and hug them
and tell them how much I love them
and I'll never let them go
I'll keep them warm like a baker
keeps her bread warm,
and when one goes out, everyone does.
Not one, but all,
because we're lost
like a feather in the sky,
lost, lost, lost.

Shannon Matthews

Invisible Weather

I'm invisible
I'm underwater
I'm lonely and
in pain
I kick the chair
and I'm a clown
There's a storm coming through
but it's sunny
I run into the house
go to the fireplace
and I see snow and rain
I step on pine straw
but it doesn't hurt
When I leave and go outside
I'm wrong, but I got dignity.

Timothy Rawls



Jonathan Steele

The Last Thing I Said

The last thing I said
was like a confused bear
drinking cool water,
and like a cold iceberg
just passing by.

It was like a big nasty spider on my head
and an old sneaker in my house.

The last thing I said was like
a person breathing in the January wind,
and a tiny mouse entering the room
as loud as a lion crying.

Lonnisha Young

Coming Home

coming home is love
even to know there's
someone to guide you above
coming home is a hope
the love the honor the trust
is like running through a church
coming home is pleasure
definitely when the bad time turns
to weather
coming home is peace
especially to sleep

Teairra Braxton

The Water Is Deep

The water is deep
and so are my feelings.
The water is blue
but my feelings will get through.

The water is deep
and so blue
that the sky looks like nothing.

The water is everywhere,
and my feelings are too.
The sea is so big
and I am too.

The water looks so soft,
then when the wind
hits your skin
all your feelings go away.

The water is so poor
you will need a poor
heart and soul to feel
the real water.

The water will give you
the power to breathe.

Christopher Harvin



The Kids Next Door

You cast us out
like we were very different from you.

We don't fit in.
We're like leaves in a fiery village.

We leave hurt and in pain
like being burnt, scarred for life.

Can we ever go back?
I think not,

but if we do, trust me,
we will never leave.

Jawara Johnson

My Name

My name is Clarence Crump.
I don't like my last name
because it sounds like a clock,
plus it tastes like salt going through my mouth.
It smells like chips going through my nose,
and it feels like police locks,
and looks like a broken radio.

Clarence Crump



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Pamula Twyman

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