Featuring the work of our writers-in-residence

HartWorks

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Featuring the work of our writers-in-residence

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine
Writers-in-Residence: Ruby McCann, Marla Melito, Nancy Schwalb, and Jamila Wade


*top: National Book Award-winning author Polly Horvath visits with the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop*

*middle: Taking the bus back from the Arena Stage*

*bottom: l-r Markus Johnson, Shaquiel Jenkins*
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 fifteenth 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 year we welcome two new writers-in-residence, Ruby McCann and Jamila Wade, who join veteran writers Marla Melito and Nancy Schwalb as we embark on an exciting new phase in D.C. Creative Writing Workshop history with our expansion to Ballou High School and Simon Elementary. If this issue of *hArtworks* intrigues you, be on the lookout in June 2005 for two new publications featuring the work of students in our satellite programs at Ballou and Simon.

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 Herb Block 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 friends and family of Anna Su, the Wendling Foundation, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Michael Joy and TSCjoy/Monterey, LLC, Sarah Booth and Bloomberg L.P., Olsson’s Books, 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, Ms. Shin’s 6th grade class at Bush Hill Elementary School, Gregory Auger, George and Lenore Cohen, 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 Principals Yvonne Davis and Shelton Wilson; Ms. Randa Alhegelan, Ms. Tameka Brown, Ms. Gloria Fergusson, Ms. Carolyn Jackson, Mr. Jarvis Massenberg, Ms. Megan Merklinger, Ms. Gina McKinney; Ms. Eleanor Elie, Ms. Pamela McKinney, Ms. Ann Brogioli, and Ms. Maevern Williams.

*left: l-r Raekala Middleton, Joseph Heath, Rhia Hardman, Mariah Moore • middle: Ryequan Middleton • right: l-r Candace McCoy, Jamal Williams*
hArtworks presents D.C. Creative Writing Workshop writers-in-residence……. 26

Ruby McCann
A Ceremonial Goodbye................................................................. 27
mine is the strength of a celtic woman......................................... 27
Ode To My Mathair (mother)......................................................... 28

Marla Melito
Translation.................................................................................. 29
Veiled........................................................................................... 29
Tu Fu’s Cats................................................................................. 29

Nancy Schwalb
Luxury......................................................................................... 30
Here, nobody surrenders............................................................. 30
Ephemeral Art/Femoral Artery...................................................... 30

Jamila Wade
undefeated.................................................................................... 31
dear sister.................................................................................... 32

Our Student Writers
Britany Austin
How to Control a Nightmare ......................................................... 46
Silent Eyes.................................................................................. 46

Shandale Barnes
I Cannot Go To School Today ...................................................... 42
I Am America.............................................................................. 49

Nia Barry
My World.................................................................................... 37

Christopher Beckham
Washington 2004...................................................................... 25

DeAndre Britten
Overpower................................................................................... 17
Illusions....................................................................................... 18
Away............................................................................................ 19
Me............................................................................................... 19
Tim.............................................................................................. 20
Blues........................................................................................... 44
Bitter Darkness........................................................................... 45
Wind............................................................................................ 49

Shakia Brockenberry
Dance of My Dreams .................................................................. 9
Spell of Our Hate........................................................................ 43
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Brown</td>
<td><em>My Poem</em></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Delicate</em></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>This letter is about me</em></td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Prepare</em></td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Brown</td>
<td><em>Night Outside</em></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven Brown, Jr.</td>
<td><em>Inuyasha</em></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik Butler</td>
<td><em>Yeah, Right</em></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Carpenter</td>
<td><em>Joy is Sadness When it Is Love</em></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyonia Childs</td>
<td><em>Anger</em></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Clark</td>
<td><em>Photo Poem</em></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shavelle Cooper</td>
<td><em>If you dream</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aneka Cox</td>
<td><em>Death</em></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Come Memories</em></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martanaze Dew</td>
<td><em>My Favorites</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Moving Forward</em></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicola Diggs</td>
<td><em>My Poetry</em></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanisha Gamble</td>
<td><em>Why I Missed The Mail</em></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny Govan</td>
<td><em>How I Live</em></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Two Girls</em></td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andre Green</td>
<td><em>Blue</em></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamekica Hackstall</td>
<td><em>Wish I Was Grown</em></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhia Hardman</td>
<td><em>The Park</em></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Pain Is You</em></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Black Dress</em></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Running from My Soul</em></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>In My House</em></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Family Photograph</em></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Heath</td>
<td><em>My Favorite Place</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Spell for making me smile</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Tomorrow</em></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>River of Words</em></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayna Hudson</td>
<td><em>Good Advice</em></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Disappointment</em></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>One Night</em></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamika Jackson</td>
<td><em>Runnin from Fear</em></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Peace</em></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamahl Jenkins</td>
<td>Picture That</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Southeast '04</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merci Jenkins</td>
<td>Dream Interpretations</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaquiel Jenkins</td>
<td>Envy</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sippo Drippo</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brackake</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Matters</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>River in a pod</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rule</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promtononology</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgette Johnson</td>
<td>That girl is in trouble</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jawara Johnson</td>
<td>The Rush of Changes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The life of a teenager</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rage &amp; Flames</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hatred</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaneka Jones</td>
<td>Eight Ways to Look at the Playground</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherrell Jones</td>
<td>My Momma Told Me</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Kelley</td>
<td>My Blues</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Ledbetter</td>
<td>My Name</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremy Lesane</td>
<td>Me and My Brother</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn Lewis</td>
<td>Roots</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annice Ludd</td>
<td>Spell to get rid of boys</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodnika Matthews</td>
<td>Talking to the Moon</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald McCann</td>
<td>Excuses</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candace McCoy</td>
<td>Spell to make money</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pulse</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javon McPherson</td>
<td>The Hulk</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raekala Middleton</td>
<td>Things Wanting to Become Things</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spell for Singing Real, Real Good</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryequan Middleton</td>
<td>Age from 5 to 10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond Monroe</td>
<td>Colors on my Mind</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariah Moorer</td>
<td>In my house</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany Nelson</td>
<td>Tiffany Twelve Years Old</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tierra Parks</td>
<td>Night Sleep</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Favorite Place

My favorite place to go is sleep,
to get away from life itself.
No worries, just a dream.
It’s fun, but in my dreams
nothing’s what it seems.
It’s always dark;
I’m always mean,
the scariest things happen in my dreams.
The one and only place where I can be alone,
I go to sleep to leave my problems alone
but somehow they always appear
as clear as day.

Joseph Heath

In my house

I live full of jealousy and go nowhere.
My house is shaped like a heart,
and when my grandmother gets mad
everyone becomes heartbroken.
The rooms are filled with a token of her love.
The doors are red, to help the heart keep beating.
The windows are blue, to show how she feels.
The attic is like hell, gloomy and hot.
The basement is cold and wet,
like my breathless shame.
The kitchen is like a musical passage
going through my head.
I live a nightmare, unseen and unheard.

Mariah Moorer

This person

This person runs from fear.
This person runs from bread
and stinky socks.
This person is scared of getting old
and moving on.
Could this person be me
or you?
Could it be the sky?
Or couldn’t it just be someone?

Jamal Williams

The Rush of Changes

People turn to sleep;
Sleep turns to animals.
Animals, the life of the earth,
the night of the jungle,
the cry of the day.

Why are day and night changing?
Why is change so scary?
Why is scary so mysterious?
Do you make noise,
And do you show light?
What do you think?

Jawara Johnson
Inuyasha

I would like to be a half-demon, named Inuyasha
to love a teenage girl
and to have supernatural powers,
who once was a lover of a woman
who found me fifty years ago,
to protect both girls and myself
but most of all, to fight other demons.
I would fight demons who make incantations of themselves.
My lifelong dream is to become a full-fledged demon.
and have a sword named Tetsigua
which, if I say (I don't need Tetsigua)
will turn me into a full-fledged demon
with red eyes, long nails, and pumped muscles.
But the only way to turn into a half-demon (again)
is for the teenage girl to say sit.
That's how I want it to be.

Steven Brown, Jr.

Dance of My Dreams

When I go to sleep, I think of dancing
In the dust of a mirror, reflecting my fears.
My pain is like a cat; you never can figure them out.
My fear is like a mole in a dark, deep hole.
My mind is asking me why I am hurting with no cuts or bruises.
When I figured it out, it was like a bitter taste of peanut butter.
It was because I was dancing from my dreams
Going into an endless valley of dark shadows.
People I loved flooded my mind, dead or alive.
They came, but when I woke up it was over.
I was in the comfort of my house, away from the dancing
and away from my dreams.
I dread when the day will come that my dreams come true.
But I'm not scared of the people, I'm scared of the dance of my dreams.

Shakia Brockenberry
Spell for making me smile
Start with letting me go live with my brother
A couple of pictures to remind me of my mother
Never to have to deal with the system again
Child and Family Services could just leave me alone
A brand new pit bull puppy to make me smile
A poem to teach people how.

Joseph Heath

Tomorrow
Today I’m here; tomorrow I might not be.
But in the event of my demise, I ask that no one cries.
A reason to want to live,
Death, a reason to cry.
There is no reason to want to die,
So why all the death?
Shootings, killings, soon there will be no one left
So have fun now
There might not be a tomorrow.

Joseph Heath

If you dream
If you dream of shadow
It means that you have come to an early-ending life.
If you dream about song
It means that you will come to a well-known career.
If you dream about an island
It means your life will be filled with flowers and exotic fruits.
If you dream about poetry
It means you will be successful in wellbeing.
If you dream about books
It means you will wake up with knowledge.
If you dream about knowledge
You will wake up dumb.

Shavelle Cooper
Age from 5 to 10

I had a birthday party when I turned ten. It’s different from me turning five because when I was five, I didn’t have a birthday party. When I was five, my sister was teaching me how to ride a bike, but now that I’m ten I know how to ride a bike. My age changed from five to ten. When I first turned two, I was happy that I was getting older. It happens at different ages.

Ryequan Middleton

My Favorites

My favorite food is chicken, because when you bite into it, it tastes sweeter than it sounds.

My favorite seasoning is salt, because the more you sprinkle, the better it gets.

My favorite shoes are Nike, because the looks are deceiving.

My favorite drink is Sprite, because as it goes down it wishes and washes and hits your bladder.

My favorite rapper is JayZ, because as he rhymes it seems like my world can be fine. That would be my favorite.

Martanaze Dew

Moving Forward

When I was little, my mom gave me candy, juice, chips, chocolate, and now I feel like a victim. I feel like the sickest person I feel like a garage shut on my head and garbage dumped on me. My voice got deeper, I’m jumping like a frog, leaping. I hate moving forward it’s like I’ve got an illness I feel like a single parent.

Martanaze Dew
The life of a teenager

We go to school worried we don’t fit in
always getting in trouble
cause we are fighting about how
we live and look.

Every day you are ridiculed and idolized
at the same time, because of
being smart. They call you nerd and geek
and many more names.

You have new responsibilities and chores
almost, or already in high school.
You start to get curious about working,
what schools you’ll go to, and music.

This is the point in time when you
mature and learn to respect others
so they will give you respect.
You act older. You might even get in more trouble.

That is why the life of a teenager is so very difficult.
I wonder, though, if our parents were in our place
how would they feel? If we get in trouble or in a fight
they might not be happy, but they shouldn’t be mad either,
You didn’t start the fight. That is the life of a teenager.

Jawara Johnson

Rage & Flames

Rage symbolizes flames
the heat of anger
the evilness at heart.

Flames are also symbols
of rage, they grow also
as rage does when it is teased.

Rage and flames, the
ultimate weapon
against love and water.

Jawara Johnson

Spell of Darkness

A bat’s fang
A crow’s wing
A lion’s tail with a spot on it
A blue bird’s claw
A black wolf with a line on its right eye
Last, a heart that has been swallowed by darkness.

Jamal Williams
**Sippo Drippo**

Crass balloons and rainbow underwear,
I run through the ivy tree with my
Can’t attitude of seemingly sour proportions.
Masses of drippity, droppity and
sippo, sipping, spilling on the ground,
rigorously ripping and spoiling it.
The ribbon of society is broken
into pieces of candy canes.
The sweet aura of a pepper shaker
makes you feel like a sausage in a skillet
frying to perfection.
Tacos growing off the tree
saving me from my hunger, my starvation
that lingering sensation that I long to be
filled in the pit of my blistering stomach.
Pristo presto, I’m full,
like a stuffed turkey on that oh-so-special day of thanks.
The colorful ground that changes brown,
sinking ship of wonderful spectacular simplification
as I eat my meal I reach for a season
which one should I choose?
I contemplate between my multiple personas
until finally I say why have one
when I can have all?
Then it came to me: pass the season.

*Shaquiel Jenkins*
Matters

Change better be ready for change:
a shattering bone crushing statement,
because if a change is made, then
something around it changes.
It creeps up on you, and it doesn’t leave
To try to change back will be futile
and your effort will be blown away like a tempest wind.
To prevent change is but to bring about another change
It’s the celestial order.
Change can be like a lethal toxin
hurling another change into a deep dark abyss of oblivion
Embracing the inevitable, you leap forward into
a shattered time zone of nonexistence, and as its reign over
time continues
captivating through every moment and makes you to be
driven to destruction by its likewise gravitational pull
As change changes, one thing’s for sure
A moment in time never changes, but was a change before.

Shaquiel Jenkins
**River in a pod**

Joy and sorrow are one and the same
One not existing without the other
That doesn’t mean they are both to be alike
Joy is like a river of relief
Sorrow is what you’re being relieved of
Yet they find a way to coexist
They feed from each other
Each thrives on the other being successful
A power made couple that consumes your life
They control
They’re like a mosquito—you just want to destroy them
But you know you can’t
Like sweet sugary caramel dessert—may be good now
But it gets you back later
Like a brittle piece of chalk—breakable, but never seems to break
Like an endless maze, except with an end
Their showboating bigamist
Ain’t got nothin, but brags about it to anyone
With their one-rules-over-all agenda
A broken wound in time and space, they’re immortal
You know you can’t have one without the other
But oh, how you wish you could
How I wish I could have simple joy without sorrow or pain
I suffer a most unmerciful un-death
Double patricians on a power trip for disaster
A shiny glimmer of lustering light
Despite the dark pit of shadowy despair that will soon follow
A dark wall through a weeping forest of willows
Crying for help
Raging rivers of good, forsaken pain, shaken pain
A brush of sweet doom with a sour taste of victory
But when you think about it, what else is there?

**Shaquiel Jenkins**

---

**I live sloppy**

I live sloppy
and eat sloppy
sometimes,
my room is sloppy
play sloppy
fight sloppy
sleep sloppy
talk sloppy;
sometimes,
I wish the world was sloppy too.

**Jamal Williams**
**Rule**

As I walk to the end of the road
I see a bowl of light at the dark streetlight
A streak of butterflies go across my spine
As I prepare to meet the long inevitable person.
Going down the road I think about my uncle Willy
Gone from me, long gone, won't be back
but I'll meet him.
Summing up things to make things possibly possible
My anxious goal: to go, but to stay will make my day
as in, to give this person internal joy
until our paths cross once more beyond the horizon.
Greatness inherits greatness, and sadness can be conquered by joy
in this brief moment in time, seeming to be the end
the clock keeps turning, as time pauses for no one
I keep my title as reigning co-champion of this world of lust and deception
I've always had many kinds of support, much love
My desire for designation is only overpowered
by my fear of deep dark happiness.
As I stand alone at the crossroads, I am not alone, Uncle.

*Shaquiel Jenkins*

**Things Wanting to Become Things**

When I was born, I wanted to be a cell again.
My cell wanted to disappear and not come back.
At the age of 4 or 5, when I saw my first waterfall,
I wanted to be that, but the waterfall wanted to become a tree.
Not knowing this, the tree wanted to become the wind.
Knowingly, the wind wanted to become its brother, the air.
The air wanted to take a trip to the galaxy;
All the galaxy wanted to become one planet, like Saturn.
Saturn wanted to become Earth
But all along, the earth wanted to become me!

*Raekala Middleton*
Promtononology

I remember this one still moment in time
like a breath of wind through a slender piece of hair
As I stand in front of the hollow house
with people of whom the origin I know
and of those whose origin I have come from
The biography without any written words or known language
This vague description of my life pacing me for a laugh in time
My immortality sealed in, which gives me reason to give it up
with my own will
pieces in which you can fit a different story,
longing to know the truth
A single frozen memory, seized in time
with change it makes you remember
from which the change occurred
A reason to breathe in the sweet aroma of a musty industrial site
of bad dreams and dark illusions
Songs of cheering, a chorus of angels sing
This is not quite my story, nor is it my picture
It's my promtononology.

Shaquiel Jenkins

Overpower

It's that feeling
The way you feel when you're around it
It makes you feel happy, but also hurt
The morning sun burns what's inside
This person makes you feel a certain way
You can't explain it
It feels good when you both are around
But when you separate, it's another story
Which overpowers which?
Happy or hurt
It's not butterflies, but something else
Happy and hurt combined
Like a hapurt
So it's like neither is overpowering the other
But more of a hapurt
Happy and hurt combined.

DeAndre Britten
Illusions
I live alone and go to the illusion of my mind
As I walk to the unseen mist
Of the darkness
Of the valley
Of the shadow
Of death
I hear the delicate
Voices of the heartbeat
Of the numb, silky, unseen nightmare
I can see the echo
Of the sweaty
Cardboard
The transparent bridge
Howls with the splinter
Of the texture
Of the humble
Unknown king
Which is me
Some will worship
Some will weep
In the tortured mind
Of my own
As the nuclear weapon
Soon sounds off
You will see
The new mind
The mind of light
Blossom out of the mouths
Of my worshippers

DeAndre Britten

My Name
My name will look like earth
round and big.
It will taste like sand
on the beach.
Smell like rain
in a forest.
It will sound like birds
in the morning.
It will feel very soft
like lined paper.

Christopher Ledbetter

How I Live
I live actively
and go to the basketball court
and go to the carryout
and go to the gym.
And my house is made out of brick
because it’s solid.
My family believes
because we trust.
If something sad happens
our hearts are crushed.
My house is loving
because it protects us
from rain, snow, burglars
and homeless people
and it feels good to live in that house
because there’s nothing to worry about.

Danny Govan
Away

Tonight the moon is silver
The way I feel
Makes me sweaty
The stars stand out
Tonight must be special
I keep yearning for
The chance just to touch your
Hand
Tonight is as silent as a child in a closet
Sometimes I feel like
I just want to thrust myself into
Your arms
This confined
Question glides through my mind
Like a frisbee on a warm spring day
The times come and go
I guess that is their consequence
The preciousness in your eyes
Makes them leak
Like water dripping from the faucet
The big and beautiful moon
Makes the water sparkle on the horizon
This special event for tonight
Makes me breathless with each
Unknown moment
The way I feel tonight makes me think that
My insides are boiling
You are my victim
For all time
It makes me feel
Away from here.

DeAndre Britten

Me

I can't keep my ground
It's pulling me under
Like the anchor and the ship
Going down into the darkness of my heart
Feeling as the raging wind against the trees
As it called me
I walked over
It grabbed my feet and pulled me
Under I went to the darkness
It consumed my heart
Every day I'm getting pulled under
Like a bird on a string
It hurts
It's painful.

DeAndre Britten
Tim

My father
Timmy
We don’t see each other that much
But he never leaves me out of the picture
We share everything
Same barber
Almost everything
The tempo of the summer
We go to all the cookouts
Even all the family reunions
I like to call him Tim
Or something of that sort
We are family
He takes me places
He taught me how to drive
I look like him sometimes, when I’m having fun
Or when I’m serious
He’s in-between, not perfect, but not imperfect
Just Tim
Not too smart, but not dumb
Tim
Only time will tell if he will stay the same
During the rest of his years
But for right now he’s just
Tim
My father

DeAndre Britten

Pain Is You

Pain is you, whether you like it or not
Pain is everyone
Pain is pain
It’s what’s inside
Pain drives you crazy deep inside
Pain has long and short hair
Pain has no race
Pain is pain, no matter what.

Rhia Hardman

The Park

I stand in the sunlight, which is soon to go down.
I stand waiting at the park, waiting to be picked.
I stare at the clouds
as pictures form in the evening sky
as the light raindrops land on my face
and I lie in the mist of the playground
I see a beautiful face
stare at me from above
This beautiful woman
who gave birth to me
Picks me up and gives me
the best hug I ever had
I always remember that day at the park
As the light red rays flash back in my mind.

Rhia Hardman
The Black Dress

My mother wore a sparkly black dress that revealed all her curves. I loved the way she smiled at me, showing all her white teeth. My mother painted my nails, did my hair. I love that she cared. My mother really smoked a lot, but I never expected her to die.

I'll always remember that dress, with her dark red lipstick, black heels and stockings. The way she walked made all the men smile. She kissed me goodnight in that flashy black dress. The black dress took me by surprise.

Rhia Hardman

Spell to make money

To get rich with green all you have to do is listen to me: get eight pounds of leaves all colors will do real well get three serpents make sure they won’t bite Now all you need is something green When all that is done, put it in a bowl and mix real well Then say these words: Benjamin, George Washington, and all the rest Give me green because I am a teen By the time you’re finished, reach inside Don’t start counting You will be wasting your time.

Candace McCoy

River of Words

When I write it's like a river My ideas just keep flowing The fish in the river represent my thoughts Ideas come in schools like fish, but none of my fish are the same.

Joseph Heath
My Poem

A potion to possess people:
You take some trash in it
put shoes in it
put stinky socks in it
a rat
stir in all the nasty things
tuna fish, spoiled milk, stinky sweat, stinky breath
Put them in some water in a big pot and boil it
until it smells, and then put it in a small glass
and give it to a bad person
To drink to possess them.

David Brown

Death

How hard they try
How hard the pig tries to be a zebra
How hard the cat wants to be a dog
How hard lions try to be elephants
What a sharp knife squeezes from the drawer
What an ashen spoon rising from its grave
and the knife, what a fight it puts up
knotted in the drawer and knife holder
What dreams it has in its cemetery
what a sky without stars
what shines through the sky and sparkles sent out
I’m dancing on the roof
What a guardian I’m looking for, but the plastic knife
How sharp, how shiny,
every minute without being washed.

Aneka Cox

Good Advice

“Spend your money wisely”
is what my mother said.
“Don’t ever cheat in school,
just simply use your head.”
Do not discriminate against people
by race or things they wear.
Respect your elders and your friends
plus always remember to share.
I followed my mom’s advice
and what did I see?
The advice was obviously good
because I turned out as me.

Dayna Hudson
Disappointment

disappointment lives in the eyes of young children when dinner isn’t served
when a reward is being deserved
disappointment doesn’t drive
it walks and runs into strangers along the way
disappointment interrupts the teacher
and encourages students to play
disappointment feeds on guilty souls and never gets full
disappointment comes to a wife after listening to a cheating man’s bull
disappointment is the feeling of going to the grocery store to get some soft bread
and there is no more
disappointment is a mood very hard to kill
disappointment is the perfect word to describe the way I feel.

Dayna Hudson

Delicate

I was raised delicately and sometimes I lived in a nightmare.
Sometimes when I go to sleep
I have a nightmare of a lot of things.
I have a nightmare of me fighting a ninja, and sometimes I win.
Sometimes I leave my TV on because I fall asleep.

David Brown
Picture That

A Desert Eagle and a bullet flying
Three people got hit, and now they’re dying
Can you picture your life going by on a boat?
A young thug with a Glock always wants to gloat
Now look where it got you, bleeding on the ground
Smoke flowing out of your shoes
Can you picture your life going by before your eyes?
He was a good kid. Why’d he have to die?

Jamahl Jenkins

Southeast '04

Guns and bullets everywhere I look
People going into shock because they’re shook
Walking in the door to mom’s home cooked dinner
Li’l sis spelling words and she’s only a beginner
Misery and pain
Like walking out your door and feeling acid rain
Love, hate, misery and pain

Jamahl Jenkins

Tiffany Twelve Years Old

Every day is a happy day
that can be written only in a poem
In my life, I only feel the happiness
but when tears come down
that’s when the sadness starts kicking in.

You can only tell when I am happy
because I don’t like sharing when I am down
But in my life, I’m happy all the time
because you will never know when I’m down.

Tiffany Nelson
Photograph

I was two when my uncle was on this ride
screaming at the top of his lungs at Six Flags
I was watching the ride go up and down and in circles
it also went upside-down and then back rightside-up

My mother and I sit back in the chairs
in our black clothing and we cry
as we watch the casket go six feet deep
He's died, from something positive,
and such a horrible disease it is
But I will always remember that he looks like Prince
and I will remember his beautiful smile.

Lisa Walker

That girl is in trouble

That girl is in trouble
I listen to the voices yelling out loud
She comes to me and holds my hand
She always wanted to help
That girl looks old for her age
Sometimes people want to fight her
Especially people who don't like her
My friends say she's always in trouble
I am happy when someone says
She's not in trouble
She looks like she's scared
My friends remind me to help her
Every second I get
That girl is always in trouble
I hope she gets out of it.

Bridgette Johnson

Washington 2004

Sometimes pain and joy can become as one
or it may become nothing.
Sometimes life can bring you down
and bring water from your eyes.
Or life can bring a big surprise.
Pain is not what any human wants.
Sadness is not the key to the sun.
It's life which brings joy and sadness.
It is love which brings pain and happiness.

Christopher Beckham
Originally from Glasgow, Scotland, **Ruby McCann** has been teaching creative writing in the Washington, D.C. area for nearly a decade. She has worked with children at Lincoln Multicultural Middle School, the Sitar Center for the Arts, the Corcoran Museum’s ArtReach program, the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind, and SNAP (Seeing Necessary Alternatives Through Photography).

**Marla Melito** is a longtime writer and teacher whose work has been published in *Phoebe* and *5th Gear*. As an Assistant Professor, she has taught Composition, Creative Writing, and Advanced Poetry to students at George Mason University, from which she also received her MFA degree in creative writing. During a stint with World Teach, she taught English to children and adults in Costa Rica. She has also taught creative writing to students at Ron Brown Middle School and at Hart Middle School, where she is now in her fourth year.

**Nancy Schwalb** is the founder of the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop and the Youth Poetry Slam League. She has an MFA in creative writing from George Mason University and has been teaching creative writing at Hart Middle School since 1995. Her work has been published in the *GW Review*, the Washington *City Paper*, *Vanity Fair*, *Barragua*, and *Argus*. She has served as a teaching fellow for the Kennedy Center and is a three-time Larry Neal Award winner.

A newcomer to Washington, D.C., **Jamila Wade** is a certified English teacher who taught high school students in Boston for three years. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Spelman College and holds a Masters of Education from Harvard University. She is an artist with a theatrical background, as well as a writer whose work has been published in the *Roxbury Literary Journal* and *bum rush the page: a def poetry jam*. 
A Ceremonial Goodbye

yesterday
i showered you
with time daisies
sitting on a rain
soaked bench
under a blood
red moon

we waited
until dawn
and watched
the sea scatter
as clouds burst
open above us

your wore your
birthday suit
i put on my
black veil

together
we closed our
blue world

it was the
sweetest goodbye
i cried so many
happy tears
they evaporated
and became clouds
on my tongue

as the sun rises
burnt orange
keeping sailors
delight I watch
you roll away
on your sea tree
on waves that
slam silver stars
on the shore
that sparkle the
same pitch as
our laughter
our years together

mine is the strength of a celtic woman
i wear torcs for decoration, i have oral
traditions in which to wrap myself,
golden song to greet the day, chants that
softly murmur the sounds of the sea,
while I dance with the wind amongst the
trees where my elders gather mistletoe
from the oak on the sixth day of the moon

mine is the strength that lingers in between,
timeless, past, present and future, carved
on burning birch bark, answered in a dream

my offering is the homage of silence, quiet
awe for the highland women who have walked
this land before me, women who’s battered skulls
were barter for land rights in the crofters’ wars
Ode To My Mathair (mother)

she stands tall
as the ngetal,
a reed,
topped
with silver
tips, like her
hair, arrows
that fly,
weapons
for her
journey

she stands thin
and slender,
in clumps
with other
mothers at the
edge of the river,
spreading into
a fourth time,
in another land
that doesn’t speak
her tongue

she stands talking
in her thin-ness,
the thickness of her
guttural words
echoing: “Ceum na Corach,”*
fills the unknown
air landing
at the source
searched for

*Ceum na Corach: Celtic Greeting, the path of
right, the just or true path
Tu Fu’s Cats

At midnight, coming home, I passed a tiger.
Odd I thought, but kept walking

On the next corner, a tiger
Different tiger? Didn’t ask.
I walked faster.

At 12:06 I passed a cougar
Different cat, different corner
I walked faster.

Thought:
Cats chase things that run
Walk slower, walk slower.
I walked faster.

By 12:15 I had passed
19 tigers, 3 cougars, 1 jaguar
and an old pair of shoes
Shoes minus the person—
I walked faster.

At 12:17 I walked up the steps (fast),
Unlocked the door
Ran into the living room to tell you…
But you were asleep.

Translation

Silk sleeves fall silent,
Dust covers the jade courtyard,
Rooms now cold and still.

Leaves rot on closed doors
Waiting for you, beautiful moon.
Feel my heart breaking.

Veiled

She stands, a pillar of black
Back against the gray tide—
One toe to the world,
One toe in defiance.

Further up the sea
Somewhere in Kabul,
The same girl, or a different girl
Bleeds through her veil.
Bleeds red onto black.

For showing her eyes,
They dragged her to the stadium
And beat her until her head bobbed like a snapped tulip
Wrapped in black.

At the hospital for women there was nothing
To stop the pooling black on black.
Behind the painted windows and sealed doors
A mother’s veil pours over black and white photos.

The living, shrouded as the dead,
The dead walk among the living.
Up this river, there is no wind—
Only the hush of black.
Luxury

I dreamed I could see my mother,
but only from behind;
er her shoulders were graceful as tulips
elegant as a simile.
When words fail us,
there is always silence.
Why is language not enough?
My mother pauses, holding the plum
to her mouth. It becomes
a suburb of her lips.
In my dream, she is falling
away from me.
We haven’t much time.
Poetry is a luxury
we can not afford.

Here, nobody surrenders

A man delivers an impassioned
speech to his reflection. Behind the
mirror are doctors, studying his
every move. The man knows this, but
his speech is meant for the reflection alone.

Ephemeral Art/Femoral Artery

I would sleep better in a hammock
suspended between your tallest sighs.
Desire is an internal itch
that longs to be a flesh wound.
**undefeated**

i believe
my grandmother
was a grand
woman
undefeated
and happy
her laughs, rolling wisdom
that rumbled
even my tummy
while in my mother’s womb

at bedtime
grand mother
never tucked
me in stories
instead, the magic
and beauty she owned
found second homes
in my fingertips
as i braided
her silver hair on Saturday morns
while Ella mourned
for lovers

undefeated
my grand mother is
still laughing
i believe
her palm
against my grandfather’s cheek
her left foot
stomping
to resurrection’s rhythm
never missing a beat
dear sister,

i saw you crying the other day, saw you hiding behind veiled lids
i saw you scratching at your skin, even though your colors continued to burn
i watched and i could not move my hands to hug you
because i could not speak your name
because i did not know you and i were one
i did not even recognize myself

and so i watched, and like you
my pain collected like a rippled pond in my lap
my eyes were in shadow
my skin – torn – anger revealed beneath its layers

i am sorry i did not help you
like you, my sister, they did not teach me how to heal

we are of a different time and place
you once traveled on waves when i could not swim
i once danced to the sun when your feet were bound
you move in dreams, i sail in song
though, we are of a different time and place
we stand in the same circle on the same earth

with a forgiving heart
you are here, unfolded and accepting like a grandmother's quilt
with raw hands, open to heal me
and i thank you, sister
This letter is about me

Sometimes
I can't wait until 3:15
to get to writing club.
Some people
just come for the snack.
But I don't.
I come to write,
to get some stuff out of my head
and release some things
that I got mad off of
and just write.
I want sometimes to get it off my chest
and let loose some stuff.

David Brown

Eight Ways to Look at the Playground

When I'm bored, I can play on the playground
Then I see the colors, which are blue and white.
I've seen kids on the playground, so that's where I go.
When I go outside, I play on the playground.
I see girls playing double dutch.
When I see my friend, I ask her
Does she want to go to the playground.
I see boys playing ball all day.
When I think of the playground, that's where I go.
I hear birds singing.
After I swing on the swings,
I see the metal poles.
When I'm sad, I go on the playground.
When I'm getting chased, I run on the playground.
I hear music being played by men.

Shaneka Jones
Me and My Brother

My brother and I were out on the playground
We were playing football
He said, when we grow up
He wants to be just like me, playing sports
People say we look alike
When I do something, he just has to do it too
Like when I play the game,
Play on the court, talk to my friends
And when I tell my father that I am hungry
He tells my father that he is hungry too
But I still love my brother and I’m glad
Somebody
Thinks that I’m a good role model.

Jeremy Lesane

Life and Death

The joy of life and growing pains
are two things that remain the same.
You can’t escape the joy of life
or sadness of death, so you’ll think to yourself
why care, why bother, and why stress?

Two things you know you can’t express,
you can’t explain
but you can do your best.
The difference between life and death
it’s so far
Two things you know are so far apart.

Traci Stevenson

My Mother and I

My mother and I get along good
Together we’re spies all in the hood
We have a great relationship
Together we get splashed by pop
we share some chips and dip,
and together we shop
I would die for my mom
because she’s the ying to my yang
I love her so much
she hit me with a big, bang bang.

Jonte Tucker

Night Outside

A cold breeze.
Cars riding slowly through the alley.
Cats and dogs trying to find food.
People heading home from a night job.
But in the morning, outside
There’s a pretty, free, sun smell.

Michelle Brown
Joy is Sadness When it Is Love

I’m in love and I’m full of joy
and also sadness.
The joy that I feel when I look in his eyes
causes me pain instead of butterflies.
But when I’m sad, I feel joy.
Joy comes in the morning,
isn’t true for me.
It’s joy comes in my sadness.
Joy is sadness.

Jessica Carpenter

Yeah, Right

My father loves to fish
I do too
He thinks he’s better than me
but I doubt it
Last summer he caught one fish
and I caught ten
He says I am a bum
and I laugh and say
You’re just mad I caught ten and you caught one.

Erik Butler

Hatred

Hatred wakes up in the morning and slaps his pet.
He cooks tacks and jellied hot sauce for breakfast.
His car is flaming red with red seats and no seat belts.

Hatred’s job is to make sure people don’t become friends.
After work, he goes to his enemies’ houses
And they torture happiness and passion.
When hatred goes home, he falls asleep
On a bed of electric eels, and that’s his life.

Jawara Johnson
My Momma Told Me...

My momma told me I can't always get what I want.
She also told me that every single thing I get,
it is a blessing from God.
My momma told me that an education is better than everything
because if you finish school and go to college
you will have a great life, and make very good money.

My momma told me that I could be anything I want to be
but you got to work hard for it because it won't come to you.
My momma told me that a teenager
choosing an education over drugs is a miracle.
My momma told me as a child, if I really needed something,
that if I believe in God, he will give it to me.
My momma also told me to never get pressed and obsessed over a boy
because that may lead to getting pregnant and that would also
probably ruin my life, if it isn't the right time.

Sherrell Jones

Colors on my Mind

in Maryland
they have fields
of bright yellow
while the moon in
Texas is a pretty
bright shining blue

Diamond Monroe

My Poetry

slither lights are in the country
there are nine sea stars in the sea
blue corn looks inedible
but moon corn is good to me
when you look at this poem
then you will know this poem
was made by me.

Nicola Diggs
Ten Ways of Looking at My Mother

I
She looks like a queen.

II
Her skin is very lucid and brown.

III
She pantomimes some
of the words she has to say.

IV
Her smile is very pretty.

V
She's a kind and loving parent.

VI
She sounds
as if she were trying
to practice a musical tune.

VII
She plays with her children.

VIII
But when she gets mad,
she steams up like a pot of boiling water.

IX
She leads us
to the right passage.

X
She is a single parent.

Deon Smith

My World

Chickens sitting dead
on the porch of blue
where I wear my
married silver ring and
plant yellow corn on
my farm drinking sea blast
soda while watching the blue
flowers grow

I never did see a
yellow star before I do
see yellow lights round
my way and would love
to see a fruit tree so
that I could eat her fruit
I think that there is such
a thing as rough seas in
fairy tales

Nia Barry
Granddaddy Blues
I miss my Granddaddy
I miss him very much

He took good care of me
He did a lot for me
He gave me everything

I miss my Granddaddy
I miss him very much

Evelynn Thompson

Roots
last week I carved some trees
and with magic yellow lights
refused to slam our freedom
because flowers are not so blue
when you help within your own
community and fruit trees
represent who I am
an African American

Dawn Lewis

Moon Wishing
I wish the moon was
pink and blue every
weekend

I think the
moon would say
“wish granted” if you
promised to have
the most fun

Patrice Rouse

My Blues
Ah got the no paper blues
Ah got the you’re not going outside blues
Ah got the mom is sick blues
Ah got the homework blues
Ah got the I would like to go home blues
Ah got the I can’t go to my father’s home blues
Ah got the I wish everything would go away blues
Ah got the I like talking blues blues
Ah got my own blues
Ah got the blues baby
Ah got the blues baby

Michael Kelley
Partying Blues

Up all night long
   Y'all don't wanna know
Dancing all night long
   Y'all don't wanna know
Dancing with my friends
   Y'all don't wanna know

No time for school
No time for moons

Up all night long
   Y'all don't wanna know
Dancing all night long
   Y'all don't wanna know
Dancing with my friends
   Y'all don't wanna know

No time for school
No time for moons

Erika Stephens

Blue

I am so blue, there is nothing to do
When you have no toys and you have the flu
My brother pokes me
And my mom worries
But it beats going to school for a day.
But when I get better
I am going back to school
For now, I am blue
There is nothing to do.

Andre Green

Dream Interpretations

If you dream of a fox
You will marry a goat
who will eat all the cheese
and milk from your icebox
If you dream of apples
You will eat applesauce
until your stomach is a balloon that bursts
If you dream of a pen
You will write a five hundred page novel
with a pencil
If you dream of a dog
you will meow like a cat
and eat mice all day long
If you dream of a car
You will drive a yellow truck
with no windows
If you dream of her
Please please tell her

Merci Jenkins
The Hulk

My name is Hulk
I will tear you apart
I’m going to save a lady
That got her heart broken.
I am going to go to Iraq
To save the world
I am a man, I am super strong
I am mean, green, and a big fighting machine.

Javon Mcpherson

Why I Missed The Mail

I tripped and fell and broke a nail
I looked up and saw a boy who looked like a snail.
I ran and ran until my eyes got as big as a well
And I couldn’t tell where I was.
I got chased by a rat, who came out of a funny hat
I started to sweat as I looked around the corner
And saw the post man
Then I felt ants in my pants
And I started to dance.
I felt like I was in a child’s hell!
Mommy, that explains why I missed the mail

Tanisha Gamble

Excuses

I didn’t take out the trash
Because my stomach hurt
I didn’t feed my dog
Because I ate the food
I couldn’t go to school
Because the dog ate my homework
I couldn’t write
Because my hand was poisoned
I couldn’t go to the store
Because the car broke down
I couldn’t pick up my little sister
Because my leg broke

Donald McCann

Anger

I am anger
I work on the street
But no one likes me
I talk about everyone
I kick dogs
I wear holey clothes
Wherever I go
I always fight with people
I even pick on kids
And their mothers don’t know

Keyonia Childs
The Reasons I Don't Like to Write

It makes my hand hurt and I write 24/7
The stuff we write has to be long
We never have any time to play or talk
Because we are always writing
We write at home and write at school
We write to the point where our hands will fall off
And when we want to talk on the phone
Or do anything fun
We can't, because we always have homework.

LaJean Pratt

My Name is Emotion

My name is emotion, I change every minute
Happy, sad, bored, or mad
I can make it pass
I am glad when I am in class
People say I am weird
But that just encourages me
I work here
I work there
People like me
People hate me
I just hope no one will suffocate me.

Chris Willis

My Name Smells like a Rose

My name smells just like a rose that just bloomed in the spring
My name feels like soft fuzzy pillows filled with clouds
My name tastes like my favorite ice cream, chocolate.
My name sounds like a waterfall in the jungle or
A person singing a sweet song
My name looks like a sports car that is out of control
And my name tia, stands for my aunt.

Shantia Pannell

Jasline Phoenix

Photo Poem

I go to school every day
When my whole house is just waking up.
I walk down a hill and cross a bridge.
This is a photo
Me and my friend going to school
I am wearing my uniform
My green pants and white shirt
My friend has to wear a uniform too
Tan pants and a white shirt.

Ashley Clark
Runnin from Fear

Yesterday
I was runnin
from my fear
goin so fast
I could trip
tryin to leave
all of it
behind me
it seems to
follow me like
my shadow
like a 3-D ghost
that does not leave.
It haunts you.
It’s there
and never goes away.
Every time you try to
defeat it, it seems to
defeat you.
It traps you in a corner
that you can’t get out.
But the only thing
you can try to do
is let your soul run.

Tamika Jackson

Talking to the Moon

I ask the moon
to fill the world with
flowers and to give me
a pretty puppy dog

Rodnika Matthews

I Cannot Go To School Today

“Mom”
“Yes Baby”
I cannot go to school (why?) because
My stomach aches
I stayed up too late
I counted my days that I have been in bed
Thinking I am turning red
I have the mumps
They are turning into big fat bumps
I am weak
I’ll be glad when the weekend comes
So I can beat my feet
I am hungry and I need to eat
I can’t feel my feet!
O my, I lost my hair
I am getting scared
Mom? What day is it?
Friday?
I am not sick no more
I have to hit the door.

Shandale Barnes
I Wish I Was Grown

Some times when it is cold I think
I need a car,
because that is how to get out of the cold
If you have a car
You can go anywhere
Because you are grown
When I am grown
My job is going to be good
I am going to be a business person
And business people get lots of money
Like those singers
Last but not least
I would want a big house
So I can live my life large
When I am grown.

Tamekica Hackstall

Spell of Our Hate

a glass of a half empty bottle of spoiled cow's milk
a pinch of a night full of argument
a splash of a frown
a voice that is full of jealousy
1 boiling point, your mouth writes a check your body can't cash
50 pounds of fat, 30 pounds of bones, 6 pounds of flesh, and 8 pounds of skin
make a person really hard to fight
and the key ingredient, a once empty room
makes a night full of hate.

Shakia Brockenberry
Peace

I live peacefully
In a place with jealousy
Wishing to live like a blossomed flower
In a delicate field

I worship the one
Who controls the holy valley
The one who sends the voices to your head
The one who is humble

I live in a house
It is the heartbeat of the block
It glistens like the sun

I live this way because I am unseen

Tamika Jackson

Blues

Now I’m wrestling with sleep
The summer has passed
My madam is gone
I’m not loving my life
She has left
The woman in my heart
The murmur of her voice
Is just a breathless wish
Now I’m riding the waves of steel
It’s not perfect
This can’t be
My darkness sounds like water dripping
She is confined
Within the darkness of my mind
This harsh condition
Fires me off
Now, blindly I’m looking
In the eve of the noon
I’m boiling
I might be hot
I might be jealous
But I don’t care
This passage is the consequence
Of my dark ways
These blues are like a serpent
Waiting to attack
Never again will I feel this illness
These blues
Man, these blues.

DeAndre Britten

I need my space

Two rooms, four kids
you do the math
Little brother and sister all about
I want to scream and shout
I can’t think
Get out of my face
I am sorry
I need my space
I need the space.

Renita Williams
Bitter Darkness

Here they come
The jealous part
Of my bitter dark inside
Sometimes the fires
To my eyes
Will change
Destruction will come to all
But then
It comes
The confined passage
Blindly holds me
The swarming speckle of this
Single hundred illness
Of water dripping
Yellow bells
Helping me wrestle with
My inner self
The thrust of sweaty
Palms upon my face
Hurt
Until it comes
The certain place
The bitter serpent of my darkness
Will control my ways
But until then. . .

DeAndre Britten

Running from My Soul

I run from my soul that sinks deep inside
running from my soul that captures my mind
running from my soul that hides from my conscience.

My soul is confused from bitter torture.
I wonder if my soul has a soul
because it sometimes runs from me.
My soul has heavy color
but at most times it can be very pale.
I feel as if my soul is swarming in on me
advancing to my mind.
I'm yearning for my freedom
as I'm running from my soul
as I'm running forward blindly
not noticing what is ahead of me.
My single tear sends my soul running.

Running from my soul
as I'm wrestling with myself
I no longer have to run from my soul
we're on the same side
so I stand with my soul all and all.

Rhia Hardman
Freedom

Running from the fears
can you help me?
Why can't you?
Do not trap yourself
in the confines
of a title.
Can you be helped?
That is why
I'm running from
the fears.
Fear the absence
of courage, yet the
honor of sadness
so you are not
running from being
scared, but running
from the absence
of honor.
This is also
known as freedom.
The time you escape
all other worries, except
the one at hand
that is
running from the fears.

Jawara Johnson

Silent Eyes

Silent eyes weep
like quiet cries aren't heard.
Tired wishes are dull
like magnets that do not attract.
Troubled envy has stopped
as flat tires that have lost every strand of air.
A splitting head is like a pulse
with heavy gravity in your mind.

Britany Austin

How to Control a Nightmare

I'm going to close my eyes
like a lifeless dead man
on my bed in the third room.
I will let the texture of my humble bed calm me.
I'm not going to drown in my unseen or unclear cries.
The illusion of the echoing howls
will glisten in an empty mistless valley.
I'm going to ignore the weeping voices and numb heartbeat.
I'm going to let the waltz of the flowers
don me out of my broken memories
and splinter hopes.
I'm going to control my nightmare to keep life positive.

Britany Austin
In My House

I live in an active house and go many places
my house is not a nightmare
nor a dream.

I live unseen when I feel lonely.
I live in an illusion
which I hope will some day go away.
Living in a memory that I once had
when I was little.
Living like a splinter
that is constantly poked at.

My house has many voices
as it howls in the midst of it all.
Soon I will blossom
and become a young woman with a house of her own
unaware of my feelings toward my house.

My room duplicates my feelings.
My windows humble the house
in a warm setting.
The kitchen's texture completes the room.
The heavy color of my living room
makes me feel cozy and warm.

My house is filled with the type of rage and anger from hell.
I am sitting in my room quietly waiting for it to die down.

The color black fills my house
as the thunder and lightning surrounds.
Yellow lights fill my room
as if telling me to slow down, to calm my nerves.

As the tears from my mother roll down my face,
as the red from the rage of my house, fills my eyes with fear,
the beauty of a swan covers my pillow
my eyes close slowly as I drift slowly to sleep
and dream of how I want my house to be.

I live happily and love my house.
I live silently and like a queen
but only in my dream.

Rhia Hardman

Night Sleep

No lights.
Just quiet.
I get in the shower
so I can feel clean inside.
Sleep time, dreaming of
people being tired out from work
Night sleep.
I'm tired, I want to go to sleep.
I need something to eat, drink.
I look outside, I see nothing
hear nothing but crickets jumping
from one spot to another
I feel comfort
I'm snuggled too tight.

Tierra Parks
Come Memories

As the falling rain
trickles among the rocks
memories come bubbling out.
It's as if the snow
had pierced my temples
streaming
streaming chaotically.
Come memories,
the ready victim
of the servant
telling me tales
of summer.
They sat beside me
the ghosts
and the bed breaking
that pitch black afternoon
When I learned you were
gone forever a gleaming
speckle
from a constant voice.

Aneka Cox

Pulse

You must get ready
to rejuvenate my pulse.
The gravitational pull will not let go.
My scarlet sky is semi-precious,
It will reign in a disguise.
The evening star is going dim
forewarn my mom
I am coming soon.
My pulse will soon be silent.
All my triumph is about to tarnish.
Do not mourn.

Candace McCoy

The Future

An evening star was born in her eyes.
She was living in the earth's core.
She was self-defeating the toxins inside.
She's angry because her love was tarnished.
Her life is sad and dark.
She someday hopes to find a love,
someone who will stay with her forever.
But the one thing that keeps her from giving up hope
is a child’s cry.

Jamal Williams

Two Girls

I listen to them argue over a boy
Wasting their friendship
They are getting ready to rumble
I always hear girls arguing
The girls are too young
To be thinking about a boy
This is something people don’t need to fight over.

Danny Govan
Wind

Through the illness
Of the victim
I have my emotions
Like the wind
They come and go
Sometimes I’m sad
And happy
At one moment
I could be like the bitter serpent
That lives in the field
At other times I can be
As the deceiving fox changing the minds of the good.
I can be as the loving person
As the voice of the breathless ocean
Sometimes I can be as the waves of steel
At other times I can be as the
Confined pantomime
My emotions can ride on the wind
Sometimes I can be as playful
As a little child
I can tell a joke
Then it can change
It can change
Like the tides of the wind.

DeAndre Britten

I Am America

I am America
I am strong, I let nobody steer me wrong
People like
Me. Some other countries want
To be like me.
I love my self, every thing about me
Who am I? That is what you ask
I am black and white
Can’t you see
I am
America
And proud to be.

Shandale Barnes

Prepare

I had better be prepared for earth’s core
because if I don’t get ready
I will die and the earth will blow up,
go to an end, and no one will be on the world itself
except in Texas, and all of that
because they are like countries
in different parts of the earth
and Washington, D.C. is not like a country.
Other people can go hide under rocks
but that’s no way
because no one can go under himself

David Brown
**One Night**

Walking down the street one night when no one else is there. All the stores closed at nine but you didn’t have money to spare. A car drives by with tinted windows and 20 inch rims; A man rolls down the window and says “I got Prada purses and Tims.” You are real scared, because saying no wasn’t enough. He stops the car and calls you over then it’s time to act tough. Instead of listening to him you do something smart: create an imaginary race and you get a head start. You jet around the corner and run into your house, running past everything a cat, a dog, a mouse. Trying to explain to your family is hard and you don’t know what to say, but all of this would have been prevented if you were walking one day.

*Dayna Hudson*

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**Reminiscing**

Reminiscing about the good old days when me and my friend T used to hang out and play video games and basketball, football, just doing things our own way I thought it would be for forever until his life was taken away and up until this day I still can’t believe it was my friend T.

*Dana Postell*

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**Family Photograph**

I look at that photograph, I was four and sassy. Looking at this photograph: my yellow skin and my brown eyes shone from the daylight. My grandmother sitting in her old rocker reading me a story of how my grandfather fought in the war. Playing with my Barbies as my sister sits chopping off their heads. Looking out the window as the sparkle from the river glows in my eyes. I put the photo back in its place as a tear falls from my eye. I’ll remember this photo forever as long as I live as its ragged edges give me a paper cut.

*Rhia Hardman*
Spell for Singing Real, Real Good

For my vocal chords to exhale
Let go all the non-singing vocals
Breathe the forest air only
Now I have singing vocals

My tongue refills the song
The taste of ocean water, dirty or clean
Wash the taste buds on my tongue
Now I can truly reveal the song

My teeth are the cage of my mouth
A toothbrush with baking soda
Cleanse and bring the whiteness
Now my cage is clean and ready to unlock

My system of singing has a spell
These things will take place tonight
At exactly 12:33 am
The time I appeared on earth
Now my vocals are ready for the state of the world.

Raekala Middleton

My poem about anything

My mom sometimes treats me mean
She tells me I think I’m all that, always wanting bling
She told me get out of the mirror, go sit down somewhere
“Take those old plaits out of your hair.”
Most of the time she is as sweet as they come
Always sending me to the store telling me,
“Brit, buy me some bubble gum.”
Dang, why do I always have to do things around here?
“Girl, shut up and go then”
I just say alright, okay
“Stop talking back to me—just do what I say.”

Brittney Sweetney
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