



# HARTWORKS

Winter 2004 • \$5

FEATURING THE WORK OF OUR WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine



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*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*



# INTRODUCTION

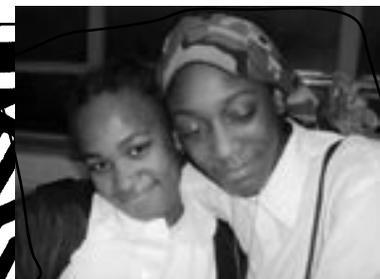
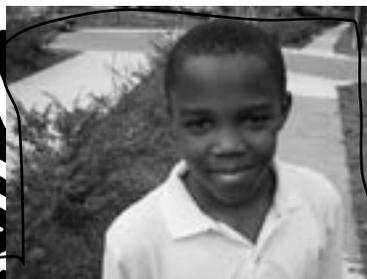
Welcome to *hArtworks*, the nation's only inner-city public middle school literary magazine, written and edited by the students of Charles Hart Middle School. *hArtworks* is published through a collaborative effort between the school and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop, an independent non-profit working to create a literary renaissance in Southeast Washington. Now in its fifth 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 Commonwealth 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 Moorer • middle: Ryequan Middleton • right: l-r Candace McCoy, Jamal Williams*





DeAndre Britten

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## 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*



*Ryequan Middleton*

## Inuyasha

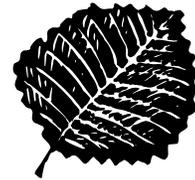
I would like to be a half-demon, named Inuyasha  
to love a teenage girl  
and to have supernatural powers,  
who once was a lover of a woman  
who found me fifty years ago,  
to protect both girls and myself  
but most of all, to fight other demons.  
I would fight demons who make incantations of themselves.  
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*



*l-r Jessica Carpenter, Candace McCoy*

## 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*

## Envy

He drives a green and blue broken-down two-pieces-welded-together Corvette,  
You know, those different colored cars you see on the street?  
I'm talking about a car so messed up it's stuck together with a piece of Bubble Yum.  
His exhaust pipe is so clogged up, when he cuts his car, nightfall comes.  
His engine is so banged up he needs a jump just to listen to the radio.  
He eats your possessions for breakfast because he wishes he had them.  
He lives in your mind, always crying, *oh I hate him*  
*always got more stuff than me, why can't I have that kind of stuff*  
*he ain't nothin' no way*  
He goes on vacation to wherever you are, just to hate.

*Shaquiel Jenkins*

## 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.  
Presto 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*



*l-r Tamika Jackson, Shakia Brockenberry, Tierra Parks*

## Bracekake

I live like a biscuit--  
Sometimes I'm buttered,  
Sometimes I'm burnt.  
I want the jelly but I don't always get it.  
Sequentially, I am buttermilk, or maybe  
I get left in the freezer and freeze over.  
Maybe I am put in the skillet and become a fried biscuit  
or maybe I am a lucrative pizza snack  
cheesy, gooey and full of special surprises  
under layers and layers of lasagna.  
One direction I am not led to:  
I lead a lucrative life of servitude, yet I am on the payroll of joyful bliss  
To be braced to take on a world full of dangerous surprises  
and secret illusions at every corner  
As the texturized puppy howls, my delicate crust bubbles  
until I am a perfect Bracekake.

*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*



*Danny Govan*

## 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*

## 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*

## 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*



*l-r Raekala Middleton, Candace McCoy, Mariah Moore, Jawara Johnson*



## 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*



*Shakia Brockenberry*



## 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*



*Eric Abbey*

## 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*

## Spell to get rid of boys

A boy's toe.  
Put it in the pot and cover the top.  
Boy's clothes.  
A jar of the boy's voice.  
Put it in the pot and cover the top.  
A splash of his blood.  
Boy's head.  
Put it in the pot and cover the top.  
A night of boys together  
I would put it all in the pot  
Let it boil.  
Throw in a piece of paper with the boy's name on it.  
And say, make this boy disappear  
This would make the world a better place.

*Annice Ludd*

## Disappointment

disappointment lives in the eyes of young children  
when dinner isn't served  
disappointment goes to work  
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*



*Tamika Jackson*



## 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*

## 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*



## 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

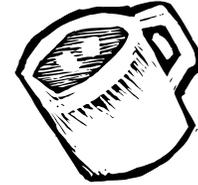
*Jamahl Jenkins*

## 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*



*l-r Candace McCoy, Mariah Moorer*

## 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*

# WRITERS-IN-RESIDENCE



Originally from Glasgow, Scotland, **RUBY McCLANN** 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 SCHWAIB** 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*.

# RUBY MCLANN

## 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

# RUBY MCLANN

## 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: "*Cèum na Còrach*,"\*  
fills the unknown  
air landing  
at the source  
searched for

\**Cèum na Còrach*: Celtic Greeting, the path of  
right, the just or true path

# MARIA MELITO

## 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.

## 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.

# NANCY SCHWALB

## Luxury

I dreamed I could see my mother,  
but only from behind;  
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.

# JAMILA WADE

## 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

# JAMILA WADE

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*



*l-r Eric Abbey, DeAndre Britten, Jawara Johnson, Shannon Donaldson, Davina Smith*

## 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.

*Troi 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*



*Shaquiel Jenkins*

## 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*



*David Brown*

## 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

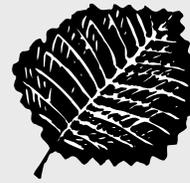
He took good care of me  
He did a lot for me  
He gave me everything

I miss my Granddaddy  
I miss him very much

He's my hero  
that's why I wrote this blues  
poem for him

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*



*Candace McCoy, Joseph Heath*

## 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*

## Shantia

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*



*Rhia Hardman*

## 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*



## 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*

## 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*

## 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*



*Shakia Brockenberry*

## 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  
drown 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.

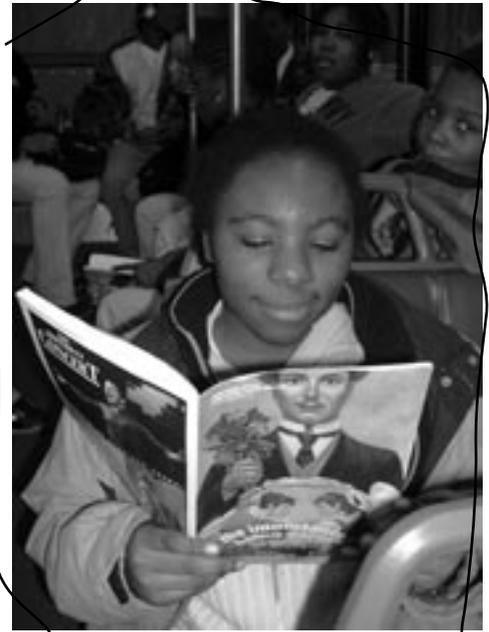
My house is filled with the type of rage and anger from hell.  
I am sitting in my room quietly waiting for it to die down.

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*



*Aneka Cox*

## 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*

## 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*

## 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*



## 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*



## 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*

## 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."

*Brittiney Sweetney*

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