

From a Big B.A.M. Theory of Creation

We have broken free
of imposed forms, from
the outrages of being bound
in formal and informal cages. "Sympathy's"*
caged broken-winged song
birds now fly more freely than even
Bird's bop. They broke bad
with break-
dancing and hip/hop all over

spoken word's poetry perches
and beyond the lovely, dark, and deep
paper woods and pulp trees some think
they shall never see as lovely
as freed people's
poetry. Free
to be whatever

it wants to be,
what it is or is be-
coming. And what we have been
through entitles us to
tell it like it
tiz of thee
and say "it be's
that way" if that is what we want.

What makes a poem
Black with a capital B
among those of us in the U.S.
descended from ancestors who
used to *be* the capital in capitalism's
centuries of "free market" slavery
and share-
cropping? History!

What makes a poem Black?
it ain't no mystery: ancestry, legacy,
politics, class, culture,
style. Confluence
of the mass mixed
things that come to mind out
of a "consciousness of kind."

Mixed-in out of mouth things
like ring shouts, refrains, signifying, jive,
blues, jazz songs, scat, the dozens, r&b, break-
beats, rap. *All* that
black mouth evolved
north, east, west,
first hybrid down
south of what
we used to say is
where it's at. Free

poetry, free
of the slave ship's choke hold,
free of the slave-breakers' silencing
iron bit. Freed
from verse cages of poesy.
Free to be what comes out
of its own history.
Be it penned declaration

or improvised oration
as affirmation of its own
nation within
a nation. Recite it,
or write it, or hear it,
or read it like holy writ
because it
is. So
be it.

*Paul Dunbar's poem, "Sympathy"
by Everett Hoagland

Everett Hoagland's poetry has been regularly published in prominent periodicals and anthologies since the late 1960's. He has given poetry readings all over the USA and in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and his most recent books are ... *HERE ... New & Selected Poems*, and *JUST WORDS?*. Hoagland lives in New Bedford, MA, and was recently inducted into The International Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent.

Investigation of insects on Marion Hayden's beattle
boggled bass.

By Charles Curtis Blackwell

Thump sat lonely bass string in lonely cry of lonely caterpillar
crawling
Lawd ham mercy string
Maddening to the likes of Mingus
Scream for Rum, at the ½ note
Rum-Thump-Bum-Bop and run some more
But she is hunting for a cricket
To blend in with that ½ note craze
Lady bug hang on
Spiders crawling on that string
Squeel
On the back of Roaches you smell em too.
The antenas picking up the sound
Negro flavor to blues me silky
They can gas the joint
Oh say can you see
Theres's an army of ants
Up and down the neck
She gives em love
What jazz is in need of is
A signafying monkey to gobble down all thee above notes
The exterminator
Dance to then 1b notes
Maybe lindy hop
Turn out the lights
And bring forth the Black Flag, Roach Hotel
On demand
Call the law
Max Roach
echoing

From One Border to the Next

From one border to the next
My feet graze, eating the soil.
Red, sticky mud
Sandy grains
Stone pebbles
My toes curl, digging deep
My eyes to the horizon
As the equator draws her line
A taunt.
Trying to force me to make a decision,
To make a claim.
Though my heart is free
To wander from border to border with my feet
Its heaviness keeps me rooted.
My roots from the grassroots
Kilimanjaro cries, with arched back
Calling me back.
And I hear her, even through the heavy dialect
The voice of my mother
Sing song speaking.
Not every word is clear to me
But somehow I know she's directing me,
And I sing song back.
Though not my mother
Her tongue extends through me.
I carry her voice across each border
Over each horizon
Across each shore
Until I know that I am home.

Jacqueline Kibacha (2010)

Jacqueline Kibacha has a passion for the power of words. Born in the ‘haven of peace’ Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, this poet enjoyed and excelled in creative writing from a young age, choosing it as her course of study. Gaining star grades in literature was just part of it. Jacqueline discovered a talent for performing the written word and so she studied to gain awards in speech and poetry presentation as well as gracing the stage in plays and musicals.

A fine arts graduate who spent much of her university life involved with music, she began to experiment with sounds and words in the form of poetry. Drawing on her experiences and observations of growing up in 3 continents, Africa, Asia and Europe, and exploring the dynamics of relationships, with self and others she began to put together a collection of works - both poetry and prose. She was recently featured on BBC World Service and is currently working on an album of poetry with French producer Dominique Lepine.

Voices

i've read
the dead white ones:
Chaucer, Milton, John Keats,
poems by Emily D.
learned 'less is more'
from suicidal Hemingway –
hungered for voices
sounding like mine.

i'm fed by
soulful voices:
Langston, Baldwin, Maya,
poems by Gwendolyn B.
learned eloquence
from Ralph Ellison -
i'm an invisible man
no more.

Black at the Altar

Allow me to introduce myself,
I'm in love with you.
The antiquated kind,
love at first sight.
I see your eyes
and want to take care of you,
anticipate your desires,
be your shining black warrior,
be love's every cliché'.

My plan so simple;
to own your eyes
to grow a flower in
your favorite color;
My plan to frame
your first gray hair,
to rub hot oil on
your first wrinkle.

My fantasy's fulfilled;
You're at the altar. Tall
and regal in a silk gown,
a golden headpiece
on your curly black hair.
You're at the altar alone.
Tears soak your chocolate cheeks
as blood spills from my body
to a bewildered floor.

Allow me to introduce myself,
I'm in love with you,
the antiquated kind,
love at first sight.
Allow me to apologize.
Today you won't be
Mrs. Diallo.
We've lost our lives
of dreams together; dreams
shot dead by four cowards in blue.

In memory of Amadou Diallo, killed by the New York City
Police Department, February 4, 1999.

Freedom Blues

From the blood of ol' Nat Turner sprang Pegasus
From the blood of ol' Nat Turner sprang Pegasus
On his majestic back to liberty, he'll fly us.

His wings'll fly my people to the stars and back
His wings'll fly my people to the stars and back
I'm talkin' about my Pegasus, stately and black.

Legend has it in Virginia, Nat Turner said
Legend has it in Virginia, Nat Turner said
You're gonna see a winged horse put my bondage to bed.

He's gonna fly to the plantations, 'bout high noon
He's gonna fly to the plantations, 'bout high noon
Won't be a minute too late, or a minute too soon.

Black people are gonna meet at the whippin' post
Black people are gonna meet at the whippin' post
and ride Pegasus to freedom, Nat'll be the host.

From the blood of ol' Nat Turner sprang Pegasus
From the blood of ol' Nat Turner sprang Pegasus
On his majestic back to liberty, he'll fly us!

We See, and Do Nothing

We saw slave ships
in a port in
Africa.
Slave traders disembarking,
to go who-knows-where
to steal boys and girls
to trade useless beads and
broken firearms
for a human soul.

We see shiny cars
in a ghetto in
America.
Suburban junkies disembarking
to go who-knows-where
to help a nation pimp boys and girls
out of school and into prison
by trading money
and family jewelry
for heroin and crack cocaine.

Clipper ships sailed from
Africa,
floated away
on the Atlantic's warm waves.
On slave ships
the freedom of families
sank beneath
the Atlantic's cold waves.

New cars sail away from
ghettos,
roll home on freeways
like smoke rolls through a
glass pipe. Thicker, then thinner,
then empty. Cars
return from the plantation
where the harvest is heroin and crack,
where the harvest knows no season,
and the despair of Black boys and girls,
grows strong and tall, like trees.

Sitting

A man was sitting in a row of chairs
in a Greyhound station
when he was joined by
a young mother
and two small children
their combined ages
maybe four
a boy and a girl.

Both stared at him
with huge convicting eyes
with huge probing eyes
wide open brown eyes
that seemed to ask

What do you plan to do today
to stop
selfish politicians
from stealing money
from a school I will attend
when I turn five?

What did you do yesterday
to stop
an insurance company
from charging me double
because they bought a politician
and my skin is brown?

What do you plan to do tomorrow
to break
the gears of injustice
that threaten to close my library,
and replace it with a prison?

the boy and the girl stared at him
as if to say,
“we’re counting on you -
to help my mommy help us
in unseen ways
in unseen places
to keep our voices from being silenced.”

Black Lights

I remember Detroit,
and a DJ named Tiger Dan,
who kept Detroit's soul on the radio
in the daytime,
and in the Blue Chateau lounge
at night.

when a bad neighborhood meant
you might get your bicycle stolen
but not lose your life because of it.

I remember
a destination of desire,
where the blackness
of transplanted southerners
glowed like the gems they were.
where older boys taught younger boys
Lorenzo Wright's stride
during relays at after-school recreation.

I wonder if Detroit
will again be our promised land,
where lumps of African coal
reveal their true character as gems.
Precious, coveted
one-of-a-kind gems.

Lorenzo Wright, from Detroit, was a 1948 Olympic Gold Medalist.

Winter

Thinking about my
soul; America's snowing
on my sweet blackness.

Spring

Spring mist nurturing
my soul sister. Klansmen stomp
her dead and shout, "wine!"

Summer

July 4th. Stars and
stripes of black men fertilize
America's lawns.

Fall

Discolored leaves of
autumn, like the slave owner's
mulatto children.

John Reynolds III's poems are from his manuscript entitled *Freedom Blues*. He has a Master's degree in English from Marygrove College in Detroit, MI, and he is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Howard University in Washington, D.C., also in English. He is a longtime supporter of the Broadside Poets Theatre in Detroit, which is affiliated with Broadside Press, an early Black-owned publisher and thus at the forefront of the Black Arts Movement.

For Want of Harvest

men cry freely and others
claim the power of prophecy:
i saw it coming believe it a
well deserved beatdown for the bully with
a big stick who keeps them limboing
at the bottom rung. they promise blistered palms
for the weak teary torn between red,
black, green or just red.

bully hobbles a pimp on his crutch. they, too, trying
too hard, slit the sides of their lips
like quickly devoured potato chips their
claims fine lines
sign their unraveling
ribbons of a bootleg soundtrack.

not one adjusted bass nor treble for the first
sonic blast chromatic harmony driving
day-to-day martial law in siren choruses,
percussive whirs of ghetto birds keeping
watch over the flock by night.
makes people craft a frantic
dance, throwing limbs, body sailing into ashy
air bumping with the bully. prophets
watch, wash down with ferrous cold in the pit
of their stomachs the hardest
pill to swallow.

--Darlene Scott

Darlene Anita Scott likes to laugh but doesn't do it often as she should. Her poetry has appeared in anthologies including *Homegirls Make Some Noise*, *Growing Up Girl*, and *Role Call: An Intergenerational Anthology of Social and Political Black Literature and Art* and has also been featured in literary journals including *Diode*, *Warpland*, *Dialogue*, *Torch*, *Bloodroot*, and *California Quarterly*. She is a native of Delaware, and has received grants from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and has been a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the Hurston Wright Foundation, the Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop, and the Julia and David White Artists' Colony in Ciudad Colon, Costa Rica.

Make-Up

It seems to me that the media
does more masquerading and not
enough appreciating when it comes
to respecting a woman.

How much longer will they continue
to be the artist that paints a
bloody foundation all over her face?

How many more times can the media
watch this woman apply tainted
mascara over her own-self afflictions?

And when will she be able to stop
using eye shadow to cover her eyes
so she can stop masking herself
behind a tinted vision?

If only the media would abandon their
assumptions, uncover the silhouette
that makes this woman believe that
she has to be glamorous in order
to feel beautiful and stop making
her hide behind mirrors full of tragedies;

Can we ever find the decency
to realize that we also
have flaws? Can we ever accept Africa
for who she is; a naturally elegant woman
who just wants to be loved.

Untitled

The last time I saw Africa,
she was so healthy and strong
with a smile that
shimmered in the sunset
whenever it touched her face.

But lately, she's been depressed.
She feels like an unfit mother
because there is not enough
food and education for her children
to receive.

She tried her best to provide for them,
but her blood pressure was high
enough to give her a stroke.
The same heart that used to beat
for strength and unity, now skips
and beats irregularly; for it cannot
take anymore bloodshed and
corruption.

Africa's kidneys failed when AIDS
and poverty attacked them and
her liver gave out when she couldn't
replenish her body with clean water.

She wants to go to the doctor, but
she can't afford it and what European
physician is willing to save her?

Africa still fights death to her last pulse,
hoping, praying and waiting for her
children to revive her by coming together
in love and unity, then she can enjoy
the sunlight once again.

--Jimmy Smith, Jr.

Jimmie Smith, Jr. is a second year MFA student at Chicago State University. He has two Bachelors' degrees from Michigan State University (Journalism and English). He was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan.



All We Ask

(For our brothers and sisters in Somalia, Palestine, Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan)

we want very little

a sip of fresh water, a small piece of bread,

perhaps an olive again, if the trees have not been smashed,

just a little peace,

a door my key will fit, so I can go home,

quiet, so there are no more drones, no rockets,
and when you come by, in your heavily laden uniforms,
every now and then

a smile, and from Allah,

a bit of sunshine, even some rain to help our parched trees,

rain as fresh water for our children,

just small things, not much

a bit of fresh air, without the smell of gunfire, rockets or phosphorous,

just a sky clear of jets and rockets, so that we may see
a sun that wanders off late in the afternoon
and a moon that whispers,
we shall sleep now,
praying, tomorrow will be a better day

c: sam hamod, oct.2,2010

Mourning Muezzin: Mogadishu

Each day
Afternoon
Gives us hot sun and
Mogadishu— trees we've cut
Return, ghosts we wish still were green,
Each day centuries of barren
Afternoons hot
Sun dry mouth
Drying
Our skin
Burns in slash of wind whipping sand
Out of the dry eddies and dry
River beds— here we have built our
Houses thick against the sun
Here we have found ways
To make music
From our old
Skins empty pots and
Left over gut — lean
Air even the pliant sounds

Of our mourning muezzin
Is no less painful, even his voice calling
For Allah is no
Balm I remember
A Palestinian woman, a
Wrinkled desert
Woman, sitting in her mottled clay
Hut
Without windows
Without water
Without.....
Saying, "Sometimes
I think even Allah
Has forgotten us" sometimes here
In Mogadishu when blowing wind harshes
Against the few remaining trees, when
Wheat parches white against brown earth shredding,
when
Aideed's men rattle streets
With 50 calibre shells when
Even those who
Came to save us
Explode flares and rockets into our

Night — even then, the burn of

Phosphorus

Is nothing

Compared to the burning

Dryness

In our hearts

c: sam hamod

No Words Left

(for Ali Abunamieh and the dead in Gaza from the Israeli slaughter in Gaza, December 27,28 and onward, "There are not words left...")

Without words,
Children screaming,
Mothers wailing,
Men cussing,
Imam's praying,
Israeli bombs splaying blood,
F16s ratcheting missiles everywhere,
Buildings exploding,
Hospitals shredded,
University splintered,
Shrapnel flying everywhere,
No words from Bush,
No words from Brown,
No words from Obama,
No words from Rice,
No words from Biden,
No words from Clinton,
No words from anyone in the U.S. media,
No words,

No care,
No hearts,
No words, no care, no hearts
Nothing
Nothing
No, nothing at all

--: sam hamod

Sam Hamod is one of the fathers of Muslim American literature. He received a Ph.D. from the Writer's Workshop of the University of Iowa, and is currently director of the National Communications Institute in Washington, D.C. He has published eight books of poetry, including *Dying with the Wrong Name* (1980), from which "Leaves" is selected.

Transformation



now that the guns are silent
now that the rains have beaten the blood
into the soil that nurtures our food
now that children are orphaned
now that wives are widowed
now that men whose mind have been destroyed
return with limbs missing
eyes glazed over
thoughts erratic

now that cousins have forgiven cousins
and brothers are shaking hands
now that women are strolling in the market
and stopping to talk and laugh with each other
now that buildings have been destroyed
and whole lives made empty
now that what was is no longer
and what could have been requires a miracle
now that our eyes are no longer blurry
and we cannot remember why we were
fighting in the first place
now that forgetting will take several generations
and memory must be constant as breath

now that we have a chance to change
the future and treat the past as a persistent sore
now that we have to think out of the box
and spell conflict as lack of trust
the ego running on its own course
now that we understand fear and love
in a different light and appreciate the cost
now that a woman can dream again
of having her son in her old age
now that a man can smile at the idea
of reaching to enfold his wife with his arthritic hands
now that we are truly ready hopefully
to sit at the table and listen with our hearts
and the lives of our children
now that
now that
now that
now when we must stare into each other's eyes
now when we must massage each other's soul
now when we must learn the abc of forgiveness
now when we must actively practice love

practice love
practice love
until it guides our feet to dancing
until it pumices away our anger
until it lights the lamp of our generosity
until it raises our arms in flight
until it washes us with joy

now that we know love
now that love enfolds us
now that we are love

now finally
finally
now we are human beings again

--Opal Palmer Adisa

Possibility

by Opal Palmer Adisa

what if instead of war
we collaborated

what if rather than engaging
in combat we supported one another

what if to prevent battles
we worked as a team

what if we disavowed conflict
in favor of resolution

what if we erased antagonism
and inserted agreement instead

imagine living without rivalry
that's replaced with cooperation

hostility softened by agreement
altercation squashed by partnership

what might it mean if
struggle converted into support

are you willing to imagine
the far-reaching possibility

what if you could just
step into that peaceful reality

What Emmett Till Might Have Said?

by Opal Palmer Adisa

i am bobo mamie's boy
i know from what direction
the sun rises every morning
not gonna let nobody
chain my feet
or gag my mouth

1 - to his friends/cousins

you'll must be crazy
and scared too
I gots me a white girlfriend
back home and I ain't afraid
of no one specially not no white woman
these crackers got you thinking
they be god
but they just be like us
except their skins be pale
just watch me
i'm gonna show you all
how a man talks to a woman

2 - to the murderers

you can beat me all you want
but you ain't never gonna
make me lie and say
i was rude to that white woman
i ain't saying sorry
cause i ain't done nothing
i'm sorry for and ain't nothing
you can do to make me say sorry
to your sorry ass
i ain't your nigger
and i ain't no fool

3- to his mother

i love you mama
you always been so good to me

don't be too sad mama
i ain't done nothing
to make you shame
i love you mama
mama mama
I love your smile mama
wish you were hugging me now
like you always do
even when I shrugged you off
mama mama
i love our life together
these cracker sure be crazy
you knew what you were talking about
but you'd be proud of me
i handled myself like the man
your raised me to be mama
mama mama
i love you ma...

Thinking About Maime, Emmett Till's Mother

by Opal Palmer Adisa

although you left
when you were two years old
you knew the ways
of the south

still you wanted
your son to know
his people
what harm in a few weeks
staying with his great uncle
hanging with his cousins
his daddy's ring
was to have been a talisman
your gift to him
before he departed

you warned
mind your manners
white folks down there
mighty peculiar
not same as white folks in chicago

you could never
have foreseen
no more than any of us
that the unpredictability of life
would test your motherhood
would ask you
to demonstrate infinite faith and love
would invite the world
into your grief
to bear witness
to the bestiality
of white supremacy

you made us aware
that a mother's love
is a son's only salvation
a mother's love
can and did galvanize
the whole world

you mamie
made a stand for justice
you debunked the
lie that we don't care
about our children
you championed
for all of us

Ode to Emmett

by Opal Palmer Adisa

you photograph
names you handsome

some might even say
you seemed arrogant dressed
in the fashion of the day
hat cocked on your head
you appeared strapping
someone accustomed
to be complimented
someone familiar
with the grace of love
you eyes frame joy
scent each day a blessing

did you at fourteen
believed yourself a man
spoke you mind
accepted challenges
fait accompli
did you slow groove
to the platters'
only you
or sang along with ray charles'
fool for you
perhaps on Sundays
your mama played mahalia jackson
her voice a triumphant spiritual
perhaps you cheered at the
brown vs board of education decision
enjoyed basketball or football
and shared a good laugh with your buddies

i was not even a year old
when you died
but at fourteen
i knew everything
there was to know i thought
was confident of my smartness
could and did make decisions
for myself defying my mother
even lying at times
to go and do and be with friends
whenever I choose

when i was fourteen
i planned to be a lawyer
marry a fast-bowler
cricket player
have six children
and travel the world
i played lawn tennis
and badminton
had my first boyfriend
and met him at the 10 a.m.
matinee movies and we kissed
in the dim lit room

fourteen emmett
just fourteen years old
did you visualize your manhood
reflect on what you'd become
who you'd marry
the children you'd have
the places you'd travel
the contribution you'd make
what were your thoughts
emmettfourteen years old
when life should have been
ahead of you

Opal Palmer Adisa is poet, essayist, playwright, mother and professor of creative writing and literature at California College of the Arts. She has two masters degrees from San Francisco State University, and a Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. She has previously taught undergraduate and graduate courses at California College of the Arts, Stanford University, University of California at Berkeley, and San Francisco State University. In November, 2009 she became a member of the teaching staff at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), St. Croix Campus. She has joined the UVI faculty as a part-time instructor, and has also been appointed the new editor of *The Caribbean Writer*, UVI's famous anthology of Caribbean literature. Her current play Bathroom Graffiti Queen will be performed in Oakland at the Eastside Arts Center, along with Marvin X's classic Flowers for the Trashman, produced by the Lower Bottom Playaz, under the direction of Ayodele Nzingha. Her poetry, stories, essays and articles on a wide range of subjects have been collected in over 200 journals, anthologies and other publications, including *Essence Magazine* (December 2005 & February 2006) She has also conducted workshops in elementary through high school, museums, churches and community centers, as well as in prison and juvenile centers.



Birth of Aimstar

you left me..
fertilized
with unhatched dreams
full of your broken promises

i wanted to burst
run
hide
sleep for a long time

i even wanted to die

but god, life, and the ancestors wouldn't let me
they had great plans for me

so with bleeding heart & burnt fuses
i cried
in vain
in awe of our deconsumated union
handslapped bruises was all that was left behind
of this fingerpainted we...
and baby fertilized me

so i walked home separated
mind mad
body weak
my heart with you

and exasperated was i
with trying to force myself to meditate
contemplate
tweak the trivialities of us fools
so i could possibly move on without u?

still impregnated
and in 4 months due
spirit began to wrestle
cuz home wanted to make me brand new

whole.

home.

free from hell on some neverending story type shit
hatched unbroken circles
no more cracked eggshells
and finally met myself in the mirror of unattainable miracles

reflecting thoughts of unmet heroes
i ached for you
and i bellowed...
my heart bellowed

and i gave birth
with my hate subdued.

barely aware of my great victory
my tremendous dream unblurred
i arose
fully awake in consciousness

yes, i remembered..
the smells,
the sounds,
the tastes,
the nostalgia overcame me when i gave birth to she

i remembered breathing.
i remembered life.
i remembered me.

And thank you for leaving.
Peace

by aimstar 4/4/02

Little Debbie

Debbie Downer died today
Downed a molotov cocktail straight to the head.
So no more crying, bitching or, remorse to come later
Just dried blood-laced tears that once trickled down her face.
Cause Debbie was the sucker
Feeding her soul off of half-shaped hearts
While beating her chest to rebellious drums.
Too bad Debbie couldn't see herself...the black widow she was.
Always mourning her death before it arrived
With her own iron fisted gloves to blame.

I said, Debbie Downer died today!
She downed a molotov cocktail straight to the head.
So no more yelling, running/hiding or, regret to come later
Just charred pieces of her fragmented selves were left behind.
Cause Debbie was too afraid to just be...
Hoping one day that she'd just be found
While pounding pain beat away.
Too bad Debbie ain't leave no suicide note, before burning the candle at both ends.
Maybe I would have saved her...
Or found just enough material to write her eulogy.

© Amy "Aimstar" Andrieux, 2007
aimstar 5/17/02

What do goddesses do when they get lonely...

They remember justice
They imagine victory
They work
Sow
Reap the benefits of being god
... by sharing their talents with others

Some goddesses delve deep...
And purge their sins
Some purge their pain...
But most engulf self whole-heartedly
Selfishly tasting the sweet buds of what it is to live

They build
They create
They envision better worlds
Plan
Execute game strategies with love
... until their dreams come to fruition

when goddesses get lonely
goddesses actualize themselves
reaffirm themselves
they get focused...
most of all goddesses get centered
spiritually balancing their feet on higher ground

goddesses explore, when they get lonely...
pray
meditate
confirm... that life is worth living
.....because they're human.

Amy "Aimstar" Andrieux

Having recently left *The Source* in the summer of 2010, Amy “Aimstar” Andrieux served as the general manager and executive editor appointed by prominent entertainment attorney and *The Source* executive publisher L. Londell McMillan, she is currently keeping urban culture alive via her own creative pursuits via AIMSTAR Media (AM), a multi-media and development company she founded in 2004. Amy is also the former managing editor of *TRACE Magazine* where she spent five years in various capacities building an international lifestyle entity, which housed TRACE TV, and magazines TRACE US, TRACE FRANCE and TRACE UK that she oversaw; writing cutting-edge editorial features from fashion, music, travel, lifestyle and politics centered on the global metropolitan tastemaker, for all three editions. At age 26, she became the youngest publisher in NYC, managing the finance, marketing, and sales departments of the TRACE brand.

As an entertainment journalist, she has interviewed several key figures in the arts including Kobe Bryant, Pharrell Williams, Spike Lee, Snoop Dogg, Outkast, Queen Latifah, T.I., Jesse Jackson, Ice Cube, Jamel Shabazz, Damon Dash, Shepard Fairey, Michael Eric Dyson, Mister Cartoon, Patricia Field, Jonathan Mannion, Raekwon, and others. Her essays have been featured in *Transculturalism: How the World is Coming Together* (Powerhouse Books, 2003); *Ten Years of Trace* (Booth Clibborn, 2006); and *EyeJammie’s Hip Hop Encyclopedia* (MTV Books/Simon & Schuster).



Chase The Wind!

The only way to live is to leave
Never stop leaving
Wherever you find yourself
Chase the wind!
Pretend it is a beautiful woman or a beautiful man
Glimpsed in an exotic city
That you must find again
Make your life depend on leaving
Wandering the world to find a place
Beautiful enough to die!
Chase the wind!

2008: Philadelphia, PA.

Hipness and Sorcery

I had to become a man
Marinate in the Black Experience
Bitch slap myself
Out of pre-conceived notions
Of who and what
Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong
Was all about
Begin to dig his genius and brilliance
His warrior hipness and sorcery of struggle
The rage behind the mask
The burning plantations in his eyes
The scarlet blood and screams of the lynched
That wavered in the sonic museum of his trumpet wails
The man cast spells wove curses in sonic cloth
Wiped his sweating brow with the blood of Jesus
While letting Shango electrify his soul
Scatted growled screamed with voice and horn
While remembering New Orleans where he was born
Another broke Black genius getting his due
How’d you escape the traps they set for you?
Congo Square was in your bones African Ancestors had your back
Hipness and Sorcery con...
Lifted you high on history’s throne
Where you rule in rhythm before and now
With each screech you teach with each growl you plow
You mute walk miles with your style
You needed your “smoke” to keep you going mad
You needed your “high” to keep your eye on the sky
They made you a star in spite of themselves
In spite of the evil they cast like a net
Across this planet called earth
They couldn’t read the code of your love and rage
Only saw the mask as you performed on the stage
What time I got left I’m going to spend with you
Take you in my ipod back to Timbuctou!

--Lamont B. Steptoe

Lamont B. Steptoe was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and is a graduate of Temple University's School of Communications and Theater. He is the author of twelve collections of poetry which include *Uncle's South China Sea Blue Nightmare*, *A Long Movie of Shadows*, *Crowns and Halos* and *Oracular Rumbblings & Stiltwalking*. Steptoe has also edited two collections of poetry by the late South African Poet, Dennis Brutus. Steptoe is a Vietnam veteran, a father, publisher, photographer and globetrotter. In 2005 he was awarded an American Book award for his collection *A Long Movie of Shadows*. In 2006, he was awarded a Pew Fellowship in the Arts and inducted into the International Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent by the Gwendolyn Brooks Center at Chicago State University. Steptoe has been featured in poetry readings in Managua, Nicaragua, Paris, France, Den Hague, Netherlands and Mumbai, India. His work is included in over one hundred poetry anthologies and he has read at schools, colleges and universities throughout the United States.



Cosmic Soul Mates

FOR ALICIA PIERCE, ELEO POMARE, SYLVIA DEL VILLARD,
PEARL PRIMUS, GREGORY HINES & KATHERINE DUNHAM
WHOSE TRUTHS ARE CLOTHED IN DANCE

Time
Is a Dancer
Moving
Shamelessly
Through the Cosmos
The wise
Hear the call
In their bones
&
Become willing partners
Trying
Always to follow the lead
Of
The inexplicable forces
Which propel

The mystical beauty
Of its truth on its journey
Time
Is a Dancer
Moving
Proudly moving
Flowing
Eternally cognizant
That the alternative is
A guaranteed voyage
Into
The annals of obscurity
A nowhere land
Where
Even time forgets to dance

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I'm Waiting

DEDICATED TO THE DEDICATION OF CHEYENNE BELL, KEARNY STREET WORKSHOP,
USTADI KADERI, INTERTRIBAL FRIENDSHIP HOUSE, ARNOLDO GARCIA & MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

I watch ... sadly
As beautiful little Babies of color
Are forced to transform
Into merciless street monsters
Just to conform
To perverse unrealistic standards
That can neither see nor appreciate their beauty
And won't even admit they exist
'Til these pissed off Kids
Get sick of being ignored & explode &
Burn down the tree that we're all sitting on

I watch ... sadly ... painfully
My heart bleeding
A hemorrhage of imposed frustration
The water from these eyes, my only sacrament
And pray one day they'll feel my tears
Enough to taste the unnecessary devastation
And realize,
I still see all those beautiful little Babies
All those forgotten little Babies
Those sweet cute affectionate tiny Babies
Hidden behind the cold boldness of their masks
My arms are open
Waiting for our Children to come home

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Sanctuary

Screaming gently comes the Night
And again I face my Soul & laugh
I weave Musical webs to trap the Stars
Casting nets of Doo Wop & Cool Bop, Bomba, Jazz & Blues
A determined seeker of your mix of sweetness
An uncaged Night Bird flying freely
Ascending ... Blending ... Reveling
In the amazing acceptance of your Black bliss
Free ... like the Wind is free to catch the Moon
And I am drunk on tunes of darkness
And drunk with Songs of you

Screaming softly creeps the night
Softly ... gently ... like the cat
And I am free of daylights' terrors
Free to be me exploring a galaxy of you
Finally me ... finally free
Free of the faceless toxicity of "workaholic" horrors
God, please don't make Morning come too soon
Cause Daylight always brings down the sorrow
Of urban Sun shining on the coldness of me
Buried in concrete, a plastic covered world without you

And crawling loudly comes the Dawn
The Sun withers me just like a Weed
The work place lights outshine your beauty
The smell of Morning garbage kidnaps the scent of you
Once more that same old "9 to 5" horror
Yells, "Heifer, you ain't nobody!" ... "You ain't no good!!!"
'Til the Sun gives up its shameless fight
And Nighttime speaks the blue-black truth
At Night I ride its healing naked power
Intoxicated on the promise of your presence
Into the warm darkness of your bluest Blues

I know tomorrow may outshine this evening
The Morning madness shrieks its cruel alarm
Daybreak's just a ruthless clock
An inescapable Bomb delivering gloom & doom
But soon ... screaming gently comes the Night
Softly ... screaming ... comes the night
When the light of chocolate heaven again descends
And just thinking of you is enough to keep me high
Drunk on the thought of the taste of your touch
Grinning from ear to ear & living for one more dose
Of the liberating security of your rejuvenating darkness
And I'm free! ... Home again
Finally really free to be me
& drunk on Songs of you

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Graveyards for The Living Dead

(INSPIRED BY CONVERSATIONS WITH SURVIVORS OF HURRICANE KATRINA IN MISSISSIPPI, NEW ORLEANS & MOBILE, ALABAMA SEPTEMBER 2005)

The answer is as obvious as it is confusing
Hidden ... Ignored ... Scared
'Til the levees crumbled & washed away the camouflage
Snatched off the sheets
Publicly exposed all the terrible ugliness to the light
And the whole world finally witnessed the sickness
The unbelievable inhumanity of a corrupt system
Stripped down to the nude & on display & reluctantly
Swimming with us in the unholy mess of putrid waters
Contaminated by the smelly stench of the dead & the dying
But it's there
The truth was always out there
And we always knew that ugly truth
A racist truth
That the world is just beginning to allow themselves to know
As they watch all the horror of our every day life unfold
As the waters continue to rise
And we're overwhelmed
Engulfed in inexplicable madness
A sadness made manifest
When the Delta was flipped & turned into Atlantis
And was completely surrounded by a lost & crazed multitude
A whacked out world gone out of balance
And even The Second Line stood still & all the Music was silenced
As the waters continued to rise
Everybody & everywhere terrified
The taste of fear hung heavy in the air
An unreal reality ... a crowded chaos
But oh so alone ... horrified
All control ... like the truth ... sinking like a stone
In a river that once was the Big Easy
The truth is out there somewhere
I think I just saw it

Saw it floating by in some soiled babyless diaper
Some floating houseless foundation
Some dazed, glassy eyed, traumatized, terrified alligator
Or was it that hand?
A desperate hand ... a hand I saw reaching
Reaching up ... reaching out for the unreachable
Before the waters rose again
And I, helpless to do anything, had to stand there
Stand there on that roof
Stand there & watch as that hand disappeared
Got swallowed, unmercifully gobbled & dragged
Deep inside the diabolical quagmire of Katrina's insatiable fury
And me???

Half crazy ... no food ... no water ... frozen in horror
Defenseless as a little child
Stuck up here on this roof ... alone
A lonely witness
Surrounded by a parade of empty floating coffins & Ghosts &
Unbreakable spirits & displays of unimaginable heroism's
Living on a razor's edge in a graveyard for the living dead
As the waters keep rising
And there's nothing I can do, but keep watching
Watching & hoping
While I'm force-fed the horrible drama of this nightmare
A scenario so cruel it had the devil crying for their Mama
Even made the Prince of Death fall out weeping
And gave the angels in heaven a double dose of the Blues
And I can't do anything but stand here
I don't really have any choice, but to stand here or jump
So I'm stuck ... I just keep on waiting
Watching & waiting ... waiting & waiting & wondering
What's the world really going to do with this?
What's it gonna do with the awful magnitude of this truth??
Will the waters keep rising & rising & rising???
Will I ever get out of this thing alive??????
Or will the next body seen floating by be mine???????

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Avotcja Jiltoniro is a poet/playwright/multi-percussionist/photographer/teacher published in English, Spanish & Spanglish in the USA, Mexico & Europe & leader of the jazz/blues/poetry group Avotcja & Modupue. She is an award winning poet & multi-instrumentalist who has opened for Betty Carter in New York City & Peru's Susana Baca at San Francisco's Encuentro Popular, played with Rahsaan Roland Kirk, John Handy, Sonido Afro Latina, Dimensions Dance Theater, Kamau Daaóod, etc. Her poetry &/or music has been recorded by Piri Thomas, Famadou Don Moye (of The Art Ensemble Of Chicago), Bobby Matos Latin Jazz Ensemble, & performed by The Purple Moon Dance Project, and was the 1st Poetry performed by New York's Dance Mobile. Avotcja is a popular Bay Area DJ & radio personality, and founder/director of "The Clean Scene Theater Project (AKA) Proyecto Teatral De La Escena Sobria". She continues to teach creative writing, storytelling & drama thanks to the California Arts Council.



The Coldest Double Standard

There's a plague in the land,
And it's killin' like cancer,
I've searched high and low,
Haven't found an answer,
After all we've been through,
I deserve an answer,
Why do we hold our own people to
The Coldest Double Standard?

How they *make* us "do" us?
What's that-a lame excuse?
"How they *make* us "do" us?
It's psychological abuse-
What's the use?
Where's the proof,
That we can't stand up against it?

We fall for the okey-doke
Time and time again,
You laugh at their nigger jokes,
And still want to be their friend,
Where's it end?
How can we win-goin' out like that?
They treat us like rats without cages,
Don't need no traps,
I'm a poet, but I wish I could rap,
Cause I'd probably save more people,
If I could, I'd holla',
Make em' open wide and swalla'
Make them pop their collas' and dance,
But this is how I do it,
I'm takin this chance.

Big incentives for a brutha
To do business with the utha,
Not with his own folks,
Who put a hot one in hope's head?
Drug him to a ditch,
And left him there for dead?
You heard what I said,
No use tryin' to save him,
Cause bruthas' been warned,
Like we were born foreign,
In the very place we call home-
Yo, leave me alone,
While I try to clear my head,
Meanwhile, hope is nearly dead,
From what they called "a misunderstanding,"
He refused to be misled.

While the children of light sleep,
They're up plottin' and plannin',
Doin' you rotten, chillin' and tannin'
Mom's a nervous wreck,
She knows what they'll do,
To keep you in check,
To keep you in pocket,
Why you tryin' that door?
I told you-they locked it,
Now you're in the open,
It'll take more than soap 'n'
Water to make their hands clean,
Don't jump in front of that car
Like a dope fiend,
You're makin' it too easy,
For them to finish you off,
You can scoff
At this game if you want to.
(But I wouldn't if I were you)

See, I tried walking through the door,
But somebody locked it on me too,
How you gonna' do me worse,
Than they do you?
Than you would treat an enemy,
You even charge higher interest,
When you lend to me,
Just like they do,
No, you do me worse,
A multi-generational curse,
Of underestimation,
But I thought it was us who built this nation?
We're dying from cultural starvation,
Deadlier than his promises
or his invisible, poisonous chains,
But you know they lookout for their own-
I'm makin' it as plain as I can-
You manage the bank

Won't give me a loan,
Left me out here on my own,
If you can't do me right-
Just leave me alone,
I'll make it without you,
But I wish we'd collabo-
Let me holla at you, bro,
We'd go farther together,
Ever been on a team?
I have a scheme,
I want it to sound positive,
But I have nightmares-not dreams,
It's been this way from jump,
But now it's more diabolical,
I wasn't put on this earth to get chumped
Down by those who would put me to sleep.

See, the deck's been stacked against us,
From the first day they saw us,
Saw our Motherland,
Saw us kickin' it in the tropical sands,
Our beaches, our Pyramids,
Our glorious African ports,
They came and built forts...
Where we shipped Civilization to all mankind,
Somebody said, "No Child gets left behind,"
Well, I'm grown,
So how about me?
What's the plan to "give me free?"

We give them mad respect and more,
Assuming I work for him,
Not knowing the score,
Couldn't he work for me?
I may not be free,
But I can sign a check,
And make sure that it's good,
Just because I'm from the hood,
Don't knock my hustle, pimpin',
Don't disrespect my gansta,

The dap we give him,
Let's give to each other,
You know me,
I'm your brother,
But it don't seem to matter,
We stayin' lean,
They straight gettin' fatter,
Cause we put them first,
Before our own,
I know I just told you to leave me alone,
I know I just told you, "you Negro, I'm grown!"
But I still need my people,
I'd rather deal with my own,
I still need my blood-
Gotta stop draggin' our family,
Through somebody else's mud.

There's a famine in the land,
And it's killin' like cancer,
I've searched high and low,
Haven't found an answer,
After all we've been through,
I deserve an answer,
Why we hold our own people to
The Coldest Double Standard?

© Anthony D. Spires aka Phruishun 12/10/06

Anthony D. Spires is a graduate of San Francisco State University, he is a filmmaker, longtime theatre artist, award-winning playwright, critically acclaimed director and co-writer of the NAACP Award nominated, "Ali: The Man, The Myth, The Peoples' Champion. Tony's feature films include: The Pan African Film Festival's Best Feature nominated "Tears Of A Clown," starring Don "D.C." Curry and the gritty, urban crime drama "Two Degrees." He's the founder/executive producer of The Bay Area Black Comedy Competition & Festival and founder/creative force behind Oakland, CA-based youth performing arts organization, Full Vision Arts Foundation. His poetry has been published nationally and has been performed in numerous professional stage plays and musical productions. He's a self-taught musician and a long-time live event producer and personal manager to some of comedy's brightest talents. He's also the featured columnist for *Humor Mill* magazine.



No Whammies No Whammies

..... Pt1
No Mommy No Mommy

I am home by myself
Older sister isn't home yet
I am 8 or 9 or so
Me being home must be illegal
Must be a crime
Must be bad for Mommy
The police sure don't like it
The neighbors sure don't like it
I sure don't like it
Mommy going to the boat
With cash in hand
The dollars go afloat in the currents of C

A
S
I
N
O

Mommy sailing away
Mommy stranded on her island of chance
Chances are I won't see her till morning
I Am 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20...
I am still home waiting
Her Boat of No whammies No whammies
This house of No Mommy No Mommy

No Whammies No Whammies

..... Pt2
No Mommy No Mommy

It's just a release
I'm free when I'm there
It's only me when I'm there
No responsibilities
No two girls
No two little girls
No two grown girls
I don't need them on my back
I don't need them checking my pockets
I need money in my pockets
Cha-Ching another hit on the slot Machine
This is my Fulfillment
This is my new void
This is my no worries
This is my no stress
This is my no tears till later
This is my destruction
This is my no Husband
This is my bankruptcy
This is my moving
This is my eviction notice
This my single parenting
This is my two daughters
This is my vulnerability

This is my bills to pay
This is my debt to make
This is my escape from life
This is my problem to solve
This is my addiction to crack
These are some reasons to go
These are some excuses to make
These are some issues I know
Gambling
Gambling
Gambling
Can take

“After Faces of My People by Dr. Margaret Burroughs”

1.

My skin is Black, like my auntie's
Whose skin is like that of Waianapanapa and Punaluu
Black sand beaches on islands
Volcanic rocks broken down that shine like obsidian
And black colored girls on summer days
Walking out of churches with fresh coats of baby oil

Aficionados admire my aunt from a far
She is big and beautiful and trimmed by the sea
Has a texture that they've never seen before
They walk on her and over her and ignore her
Seaweed and driftwood
She wraps around and caters to strangers bare feet
They sink into her, like her melanin seeped into me

2.

My brown body is tall like Sequoias in forests
My neck long and slender and head up like heaven
The lineage of brown paper bag tests
I am in between times

I wish to show my great grandma, when I am a lawyer
That the law doesn't only have room for the “penile system”
And penal systems for brown little girls and boys
I am in between shades
In between dreams spoken from different colored hues
Create
A way to choose
To be Awake
And dreams are more like news

3.

La Fleur de Muerto defines my mother and orchids my father
Almonds for eyes
Cut open oranges for grins
Uncle always said we were all a bowl of fruit, some riper than others in colors
“You sweet, sweet thing”
Brothers from other mothers
I am unclothed shoulders

And heavy pails of water
Redden like pomegranates
In far away orchards

Benicia Blue is a Chicago native and class of 2011 undergraduate at Columbia College Chicago, with a major in Poetry. Her work has been published by *Girlspeak Webzine* and *Mad Licks Zine*. Her poetry has also been featured on Young Chicago Authors website and Chicago Public Radio.

Capture and Exile

Ahmed Baba's capture and exile languish
like a diseased metonym for loss,
of mind and limb, for the amnesia
of a fragmented continent, for the loss
of his books, a million books

buried in the cities along the Joliba,
the Nile's western sister, cities singing
djeli songs beneath the sand/soil of the
river's valley.

Where are the Soninke revanchists
her English paymaster

--Neil Callender

Clamoring for the blood of Morocco and Horemhab

Tides becalmed themselves with the boy king's demise.
Akhetaten, the apostate's folly, lies in ruins under Aten's rays.

I, Horemhab, now possess the crook and flail.
I am Heru, the power of Good Speech rests
upon my tongue. The Beloved Land breathes
in the palm of my hand. May MAAT visit my dreams.
May MAAT reside in my heart.

May my deeds live for eternity

Incarceration

Slave ship womb, public housing tomb
Prison bars row upon row
Sambo, Tom, jungle bunny role.
Daughter's for master's pleasure,
sons sold down river,
traditions in the hands of pimps

crazy crazy cut cut limp
cool cool too cool

survive?

that old African will not die

--Neil Callender

Praise Poem For Lilly

You are dazzling

and bedazzling.

You astonish

as the churches of Lalibela carved from bedrock astonish,

inspire as triumph at Adowa inspires.

You are precious as the obelisks of Aksum, liberated from exile,

voluptuous as the Blue Nile bending from Lake Tana,

falling,

falling toward the White Nile's waiting arms.

The Maroon is Dead! Long Live the Maroon!

On the night Malcolm died, tough men, hewn from

Louisiana's woodlands and paper mills, and from

the battlefields of Europe and Korea gathered in their

town of Bogalusa. Our Maroon King, our Zumbi, lay cut down

in Harlem as these Maroons of the Sword, these Deacons for Defense,

accepted the quest to slay the Klu Klux dragon.

Weeks later, Maroons of the Pen, ascended

to Harlem, the crown city of Afro-modernity, to feed Africans

words of resistance and self-knowledge, to feed Africans

the manna of their own greatness, reconnect the African body
to the African mind and the African soul, quilt together what was
ripped apart in coffles, and in pest houses off Charelston, and in the barracoons
of Savannah.

From the wastelands of the Maafa--these barren and humiliating centuries,
precincts of death and apathy, the Maroon arises as redeemer.

He is opener of the way, she is the destroyer of illusions-- invincibility
of the Klan, superiority of Greece, The Maroon is
keeper and maker of memory, the link between Imhotep and Lewis Latimer,
Queen Tiye and Ella Baker, between what was and what must be.

Neil Callender is a poet who is committed in his work to the rebirth of African civilization. He believes that the erasure and falsification of the African past is integral to the project of oppressing African people and denying their humanity. Thus, the terrain of culture is central to telling the truth about the drama of the African story. He lives in the Boston area and teaches writing at Roxbury Community College. He is published in the antiwar anthology, *Poets Against the Killing Fields*.



Songs from Across the Ocean Divide

1

There
you watch *African Magic*
an hourly addiction for many
or *Super Story*
on Thursday nights with light

here
I am racked in fantasies
of the interdependence of men and women
and the complementarity of light and dark
a human narrative

and when you switch channels
to Chelsea or Real Madrid
scoring fabulous goals
with hat tricks

I will still be staring at your photo
an untiring sport
waiting for you medicine-woman
to turn here your magical attention.

2

Over here, it's neither dream nor vision
the sort in which the *sokugo* possesses you
to be a wanderer on an unending road
nor the sort in which the more water you throw
at the fire-engulfed the more irate the flames;
no, it's not launching into a compulsive storm
that the rest of the world sees as a suicidal venture
but to you proffers only solace rather than peril.
It's not the warring waves into which the swimmer
hurls himself to be helplessly lost in cosmic rage;
what transpires here is neither dream nor vision
of a fantasy that belies life as one knows it
in which in protest for denial of one's desire
one takes the inevitable path to self-immolation—
either all or nothing; supreme peace or total war.
This is not a dream or vision of flight
on the back of a falcon coasting the skies
over a shark-infested ocean and singing
a lullaby for unborn virtues to come to life.

This is a spell of unknown proportion whose
words only the medicine woman can chant
to bring the world to the normalcy of ecstasy;
only she possesses the power to calm the waves,
put out the voluptuous flames, bring to an end
the civil war that ravages the entire polity,
and make love a dividend of freedom fighters.
This is not magical realism in which a man bleeds
out of love, a woman holds a man on a leash;
residence in an island of light or dark
in which it is forbidden to sneeze and throw
greetings across a fence to a neighbor;
a colony of mute parrots, even signs banished
with tongues and eyes sick from disuse.

A minstrel cries from a devastating fever
to the medicine woman out there gathering
her chants from weeds, forest herbs, garden
and daring to heal one not given a chance
and so cocksure of her curative craft.

On My Birthday

1

On my birthday I see ghosts of colleagues
once strutting Marxist peacocks

out everywhere to create a spectacle
of their plumes, a proletarian costume

still living but dead from shame of turncoat
after suffering the fatal stroke of charlatans

who had brandished firebrands at every march
and carried the standard for credulous folks

but soon diverted into the ambush of cash
and now stifled silent by the weight of greed.

Unmentionable names nobody wants to hear,
no parent allows the children access to their stale rhetoric;

vultures that hover over every corridor of power,
nobody sees them without spitting in revulsion.

These living dead are already buried deeper
than the true dead that are remembered;

they won't ever be ancestors of anybody
but forever remain outcasts of humanity

those scholars arguing in defense of *ABC*,
the half-literate butcher of Abuja;

those griots kissing the feet of the Beast
and stoking fires of torture blazing in Aso Rock;

those experts who for pay prepared racks
to silence freedom fighters and reward robbers;

those teachers who for lust broke the coffers
that ruined the republic's fortune of oil;

those doctors who volunteered their services
of lethal injection to please a mass murderer;

they are the living condemned to holes
in which they lie buried in infamy.

On my birthday, let me fly away
from the bacchanalia of Asaba,

let me not stop at the debauchery of Abuja
that makes mockery of fifty years of adulthood;

let me live far away from theatres and museums,
turn from the seductions and mints of the capital;

let me not be a heart-beat away from executives,
ritual masters who turn democracy into a coven;

let me remain the vagabond walking my way
singing in the streets of love and friendship

& let me be friends with those who shun
the wayward fraternity of the living dead.

On my birthday I celebrate with friends
whose love more than makes up for capital.

2

And I know close those who died, buried
with love, pageantry, and tears of the people

and today I canonize into saints of a new faith
whose straightforward paths are lit with signs.

I know those who said no to thunder of corrupt gods,
closed ears to songs of the sirens in Abuja and Asaba;

they walked straight in the crooked lanes of the country
and left nothing in their course to be ashamed of—

they came and left with the pride of pious ones,
bright in medals and attire with prayers of multitudes

and proclaimed ancestors whose population diminishes
with the mass stampede to loot unguarded coffers;

I remember those whose names I sing:
Ezekiel Okpan and Joseph Ewubare;

they redeem the generation of its losses,
they make my birthday a day of promise

to look to the stars that guide to the temple
and keep away from the sordid bacchanalia.

I live for life of love and friendship, renounce
the living dead, the unmentionable names.

On my birthday I take flowers to the dead
whose days are always lit in noble splendor

and shun those living whose self-inflicted lust
already buried them alive and made them ghosts;

on my birthday I choose life of light on earth
and wish for a seat in the assembly of ancestors.

3

On my birthday I find my way to the temple
and receive the flowers and bananas of prayers,

I share the communion at home
and stretch my hand across oceans

to hold hands with a lone figure,
one buffeted in a raging storm.

On my birthday it's not years that count;
feathers of the bird are not heavier with time;

love mounts me and frees the heart of
the burden that's easily shared with joy;

a nest to which the sunbird returns,
perched in a refuge the iroko covers.

It's not years that leave marks on the body
but the good wishes that transform others

from beggars to self-providers of needs;
the path of life from Eshu's crossroads.

My heart assembles family and friends
to toast this day of promise—

give out more to than take from love;
grow big in many others than yourself!

I have learned from the truly dead
to hold to my chest every day as a gift

without bowing to the king of vultures,
closing ears to the sirens of the PDP.

I celebrate this day free of well-wishing
commissioners, ministers, and sinators;

none from the clan of big ones, the cabal
that carouses Asaba and Abuja to death.

I celebrate in the company of small ones;
the love deep and makes me live a full life.

(April 24, 2010)

Exile Island

And here in Amassoma, hundreds of years later,
I come for inspiration for songs not yet sung
to the town whose name excoriates my people's
conscience; I come to research into trunks of stumps.
To Amassoma, exile island of helpless forebears,
I come with a heavy heart for rites of atonement.

Exile island raised above water, Amassoma still
stands; concrete roads over once muddy waterways.
The dark hole now lit with industry charms more
than cities enjoying budgets squandered in sloth;
Amassoma revives despite the years of rampage;
there's no disease that wipes truth from the earth.

Amassoma has been and remains the exile island—
island where suspects of fabricated crimes had been
transported to rot but flourished beyond the pale of justice.
They came not in named boats, heralded by darkness
or stars and moon that witnessed the perjury of power;
they came as stolen cargoes to a preordained fate.

In the population that trickled into exile island
all suspects and women trivialized by patriarchy,
the demon of society that survives in different shapes.
The culprit covers the monstrous head with a swath
of sanctimonious costumes stolen into the culture;
surely the gendered assault reels of premeditation.

And so from the young ladies were purged witches,
from the voiceless gender the pretty ones who would
not be sluts to chiefly or cash-robed men pronounced
witches; the not-so-pretty but mannered not giving in
got labeled witches and freighted overnight into exile
while inglorious men lived free to further perjure more.

Of accused women, none stood trial to be condemned.
Of the thousands of exiles, most victims of trial by ordeal;
those who failed to qualify for innocence before superstitious
and ignorant minds that ruled in the name of being men.
They had no tears to weep in the widening rivers that took
the selected band into exile after secret marriage contracts.

Now a diaspora has sprung up of my kinsfolk in Amassoma—
traditions kept of forgotten practices but only of women's
prideful heritage and none of the many men's travesties;
songs no longer sung, proverbs now unknown at home
still kept in the vaults of memory because they forget not
whose innocence is a shield; the evil lose bearings fast.

The memories of pain rule offspring of exiles in Amassoma
but out of the shame flourish flowers of new growth.
They tell me they speak Urhobo in Amassoma, but who
now remembers the travesties of justice, boat trails covered
by immeasurable sheets of waters that stunned every victim
until rising from night willed tears away from life ahead?

Who remembers the beauties stigmatized at home
to avenge the refusal of a chief's marriage proposal
or dalliance to which the virtuous ones would not succumb?
Who remembers the Miss Bayelsa of mixed stocks came
from centuries of injustice perpetrated by patriarchal lords
acting as guards of sacred virtues they violated without end?

Amassoma is not only Wilberforce Island, the booty
of white discoverers transported there by poor porters
whose home was renamed for the glory of England;
it is the home of coerced ones who were caught running
through thorns rather than be caught and bow without
sacrificing themselves to truth strangled by elderly leaders.

And so into servitude of concubinage or marriage my shame-
shackled fathers of old sold the cream of their wives' wombs
to the Izon who offered foreigners refuge and damned beliefs
of the evil of beauty they could harness into good fortune.
What marriage without dowry paid to compensate the family;
what relationship that was supposed to nurse love in waters?

May the spirit of my kinsfolk, women smudged with accusations
by patriarchal oppression, live their afterlives triumphant
in the pardon and reprieve the posthumous song grants the innocent.
Now they speak Urhobo in Wilberforce Island, Izon heartland
and Amassoma thrives as testimony of the undying legacy
of past lawlessness. Today all need redemption collectively.

For those perjured for speaking back against falsehood,
for the hordes of ghosts stubborn to death denying guilt
for those beauties, virtuous ones, and lone nightly boaters
of generations that now flower in the rain-flushed sun
I lead this procession asking for forgiveness for the violations.
To the wronged ones, dead or alive, I sing this sad song.

Tanure Ojaide is a Fellow in Writing at the University of Iowa. He was educated at the University of Ibadan, where he received a bachelor's degree in English, and at Syracuse University, where he received both M.A. in Creative Writing and Ph.D. in English. He has published sixteen collections of poetry, two collections of short stories, a memoir, three novels, and scholarly work. His literary awards include the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Africa Region (1987), the All-Africa Okigbo Prize for Poetry (1988, 1997), the BBC Arts and Africa Poetry Award (1988), and the Association of Nigerian Authors Poetry Award (1988, 1994, and 2003). Ojaide taught for many years at the University of Maiduguri (Nigeria), and is currently The Frank Porter Graham Professor of Africana Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He received a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship in 1999, a Fulbright Senior Scholar Award in 2002/2003, and the University of North Carolina's First Citizens Bank Scholar Medal Award for 2005.

Conflicts

Futility of hostility
Is always the song
Players fear to heed
Wherever oil is found
For around the world
Few are the conflicts
Oil has not caused
Like excreta attracts
A fight of green flies
All seeking a spot
To set their proboscis
For drilling
Oil wherever found
Attracts conflicts
Do not be fooled
By the name callings
And songs of the pipers
The conflicts
May seem unconnected
To oil
But are highly connected
Like the right and left hands
Of one man

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Dialogue

When the wind blows
The hen's anus is revealed
Trees take a bow
Muffle cracking laughter
While the leaves whistle
The woodpecker
Holds his peace
Saying his beak is all sore
While the congregation
Of weaver birds
Without a chief chides
The choice of silence
In times like this
Is not an option
But the aged owl
With ringed lenses
Clears his throat
"When the sky is draped
In dark linen
I will speak"

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Strangely, We Wait

Sermon on the mount
For those with ears to hear

Look closely at the spill pill
And, you see the devastation

Look closely at the pump
And, you see the gun

Look closely at the trigger
And, you see the lost time

Look closely at the people
And, you see misery

Look closely at who is laughing
And, you see the oil companies

Strangely, we seem to await
The crack of fireworks

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I, Too, Am A Brother

I plead to be heard
I too am a brother
The one, who was spared
The sea experience
But made it to the land
By air, not scared of heights
The brother oft interrupted
With the question
Where are you from?
Oft complimented by others
With words that are pregnant
I like your accent
And from the ones not schooled
Can you speak English?
I am the brother
Still holding on to his name
After everyone has dropped theirs
Sentenced to the same question
Over and again
How do you pronounce your name?

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Pious Okoro is a poet, art illustrator, a 1998 Gwendolyn Brooks poetry award winner, and an educator with the Chicago public school, whose works have been published in journals and newspapers in the USA, Europe and Nigeria.



On Laura Schlessinger and Her N-Word Rant

I

If she would've
Said nigger
One more time
She would've had

An orgasm

It would've been
Her first
In 90 years—
The old battle axe

Her wrinkles would've
Bunched up in her
Throat like a
Gag order

II

nigger
nigger

Dr. Laura Schlessinger rinsing her mouth in the morning.

Everything You Wanted to Know about Hip Hop But Were Afraid to Be Hipped for Fear of Being Hopped

Hip Hop Halitosis Hip Hop Hosiery Hip Hop Haberdashery Hip Hop Hollandaise Sauce Hip Hop Alupent Inhaler Hip Hop Hysterectomy Hip Hop Viagra Hip Hop Lamborghini Hip Hop Chanclettas Hip Hop Unemployment Hip Hop Fortune Cookie Hip Hop Auction Block Hip Hop Umbrella Hip Hop Rocking Chair Hip Hop Chandelier Hip Hop Hool-a-Hoop Hip Hop Hooray Hip Hop Hurricane Hip Hop Quagmire Hip Hop Radial Tire Hip Hop Earth Wind & Fire Hip Hop Muck & Mire Hip Hop Hotwire Hip Hop Perspire Hip Hop Fire & Desire Hip Hop Murder for Hire Hip Hop Liar Hip Hop Sire Hip Hop Retirement Plan Hip Hop and the Man Hip Hop Hoolihan Hip Hop Bogey Man Hip Hop Sanitation Truck Hip Hop Don't Give a Fuck Hip Hop Can You Spare a Buck Hip Hop Desperation Hip Hop Inflation Hip Hop Hives Hip Hop Urtication Hip Hop Meditation Hip Hop Medication Hip Hop Tokyo Rose Hip Hop Potato Chips Hip Hop Stovetop Stuffing Hip Hop Putrefaction Hip Hop Pepto Bismal Hip Hop Pundit Hip Hop Fund It Hip Hop Brothel Hip Hop Silverware Hip Hop Crystal Stair Hip Hop Buyer Beware Hip Hop Nuclear Scare Hip Hop Dental Care Hip Hop Fred Astair Hip Hop Flair Hip Hop Nightmare Hip Hop Tupperware Hip Hop Hair Hip Hop Stare Hip Hop Chair Hip Hop Bear Hip Hop Share Hip Hop Glare Hip Hop Air Hip Hop Where Hip Hop Heir Hip Hop Dare Hip Hop Holocaust Hip Hop Hucklebuck Hip Hop Helium Hip Hop Delirium Hip Hop Landing Hip Hop Scanning Hip Hop Canning Hip Hop Fanning Hip Hop Tanning Salon Hip Hop Rayon Hip Hop Ding Dong Hip Hop Donkey Kong Hip Hop Churning Hip Hop Is Burning Hip Hop Earning Hip Hop Learning Hip Hop Discerning Hip Hop Ham Sandwich Hip Hop Pork Rinds Hip Hop Spare Ribs Hip Hop Ham on Rye Hip Hop Lady Di Hip Hop High Five Hip Hop Hard Drive Hip Hop Wanted Dead or Alive Hip Hop Beehive Hip Hop Jive Hip Hop Sour Cream and Chives Hip Hop Dives Hip Hop Wives Hip Hop Friendly Skies Hip Hop Handle Hip Hop Scandal Hip Hop Cross Your Heart Bra Hip Hop Crossword Puzzle Hip Hop Crossing Hip Hop Bossing Hip Hop Salad Tossing Hip Hop Dental Floss Hip Hop Hobby Horse Hip Hop Mister Ed Hip Hop Mr. Potato Head Hip Hop Freddy's Dead Hip Hop Pro Keds Hip Hop Giving Head Hip Hop Lead Hip Hop Better Dead Than Red Hip Hop Shed Hip Hop Dread Hip Hop Sled Hip Hop Feds Hip Hop Rorschach Test Hip Hop Rutabaga Hip Hop Scapular Hip Hop Spatula Hip Hop Ambiguity Hip Hop Anxiety Hip Hop Quadruped Hip Hop Acumen Hip Hop Chihuahua Hip Hop Stockpile Hip Hop Projectile Hip Hop Cake with File Hip Hop Gomer Pile Hip Hop Dream Weaver Hip Hop Dumb Beaver Hip Hop Back Alley Hip Hop Rally Hip Hop White Trash Hip Hop Monster Mash Hip Hop Moroccan Hash Hip Hop Pipes Hip Hop Swipes Hip Hop Baby Wipes Hip Hop Snipes Hip Hop Gripes Hip Hop Stereotypes Hip Hop Dukes of Hazard Hip Hop Old Dirty Bastards Hip Hop Hotel Hip Hop Motel Hip Hop Holiday Inn Hip Hop Constipation Hip Hop Chia Pet Hip Hop Seeing Eye Dog Hip Hop Kermit the Frog Hip Hop Closed Captions Hip Hop Subtitles Hip Hop

Country Club Hip Hop City Hip Hop Boo Boo Kitty Hip Hop Itty Bitty Titty Committee Hip Hop Pity Hip Hop Diddy Hip Hop Eponymy Hip Hop Economy Hip Hop Sunlight Hip Hop Ultra Bright Hip Hop Out of Sight Hip Hop Fly By Night Hip Hop Fly a Kite Hip Hop Despite Hip Hop Drawers Hip Hop Hog Maws Hip Hop Tattoo Paws Hip Hop Broken Jaws Hip Hop Flaws Hip Hop Crawls Hip Hop Shores Hip Hop Snores Hip Hop Bronchitis Hip Hop Meningitis Hip Hop Gold Tooth Gingivitis Hip Hop Grammar Book Hip Hop Graham Crackers Hip Hop Quarterback Sackers Hip Hop Weed Whackers Hip Hop Dunkin Donut Snackers Hip Hop Crumb Snatchers Hip Hop Booty Smackers Hip Hop Asthma Attack Hip Hop Comeback Hip Hop Hooligan Hip Hop Stool Pigeon Hip Hop Incision Hip Hop Derision Hip Hop Precision Hip Hop Aneurysm Hip Hop Harvey Wall Banger Hip Hop No More Wire Hangers Hip Hop Apologia Hip Hop Mama Mia Hip Hop Candy Yams Hip Hop Credit Card Scams Hip Hop Winnebago Hip Hop Let My People Go Hip Hop Let Go My Eggo Hip Hop Shake 'N' Bake Hip Hop Frosted Flakes Hip Hop Earthquakes Hip Hop On a Plane with Snakes Hip Hop These Are the Breaks Hip Hop Jewelry Fakes Hip Hop Wakes Hip Hop Makes Mistakes Hip Hop Morphine Drip Hip Hop Liposuction Hip Hop Face Lift Hip Hop Temper Tantrum Hip Hop Prenup Hip Hop D-Up Hip Hop Lay Up Hip Hop Layoff Hip Hop Pink Slip Hip Hop Sinking Ship Hip Hop Chocolate Chip Hip Hop Dip Hip Hop Trip Hip Hop Sip Hip Hop Similac Hip Hop Stevedore Hip Hop I Adore Hip Hop Mi Amor Hip Hop Fundamentalist Hip Hop Insanity Hip Hop Payola Hip Hop Crayola Hip Hop Barbie Hip Hop Stretch-marks Hip Hop Robitussin High Hip Hop Epidemic Hip Hop Epidural Hip Hop Pandemic Hip Hop Pandora's Box Hip Hop Pancake Mix Hip Hop Panic Button Hip Hop Pedantic Hip Hop Eye Tic Hip Hop Puritanical Hip Hop Botanical Hip Hop Purist Hip Hop Fingerprints Hip Hop Nation Hip Hop Escalation Hip Hop Exclamation Mark Hip Hop After Dark Hip Hop Orthopedic Shoes Hip Hop Hebrews Hip Hop EKG Machine Hip Hop Hydroplane Hip Hop Crash Test Dummies Hip Hop Down the Drain

Slam-A-Lot

Shit Slam Squat & Pee Slam Bacon & Eggs Slam Ham on Rye Slam Shit on Shinola Slam Spit & Drool Slam Vomit Slam Back Alley Wino Piss Slam Maggots Crawling Out An Open Skull Slam Backstabbing Slam Eviction Slam Ass on Pavement Slam Prescription Slam Hungry Man Slam Starvation Slam Bombs Bursting in Air Slam Dead Roach in Spaghetti Slam Dumb Motherfuckers Can't Think for Self Slam Reading is Detrimental Slam Cain & Able Slam Gentrification Slam Globalization Slam Hull of a Slaveship Slam Middle Passage Slam Ku Klux Klan Slam Goosestep Heil Hitler Nazi Slam Gas Chamber Slam Sodomy Slam Full Frontal Lobotomy Slam One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest Slam I Don't Give a Damn Slam Genocide Slam Smallpox in Blankets for Indians Slam Thanksgiving Day Slam Resurrection Slam Dead Cock Forklift Viagra Slam Stank Ho Slam Auction Block Slam Kill Whitey Slam Maroon Slam Macheteros Slam Boukman Slam Toussant L'Overture Slam Jean Jacques Dessaline Slam Che Slam Fidel Slam Nat Turner Slam John Brown Slam Sandinista Slam Al Queda Slam Weapons of Mass Destruction Slam HIV Slam AIDS Slam Anthrax Slam Ebola Soup Slam UN Troops Slam Avian Flu Slam Agent Orange Slam Muscatel Slam Mad Dog Slam Ripple Slam Gut Bucket Blues Slam Rot Gut slam Cocaine Slam Crack Slam Crystal Meth Slam Preemptive Slam Slam National Security Slam Defense Department Manufacture AIDS Slam Bush Administration Bomb the World Trade Center & the Pentagon to Go to War with the Middle East & Snatch Up Oil Wells & Undermine the Euro Slam Your Mother's a Two-Face Slam Poppa Was a Rolling Stone Slam 40 Acres & a Mule Slam Reparations Slam Zionism Slam Gaza Strip Slam Infitada Slam Suicide Bomber Slam Stolen Land Slam Son of Sam Slam I Am What I Yam Slam Green Eggs & Ham Slam High Blood Pressure Slam Sugar Slam Booger Slam Bling Bling Slam Sing Sing Slam Sick & Demented Slam Jimmy Superfly Snucka Slam Spanish Fly Slam Spanish Inquisition Slam Conquistador Slam Christopher Columbus Slam Cuttie Sark Slam Buffalo Soldier Slam Dredlock Rasta Slam Philistine Slam Afro Sheen Slam Colgate & Listerine Slam Robin Island Slam Apartheid Slam Free Winnie Mandela Slam Negroes with Guns Slam Pedophile Priests & Mean Nuns with Big Rulers Slam James Brown Don't Want None Won't Be None Slam We Bombed in Baghdad Slam Iraq Cradle of Civilization Reduced to Barney & Betty Rubble Slam Israelis Genociding Palestinians Slam Scentless Bombs Slam Wailing Wall Slam Tears for Fears Slam Blood for Oil Slam Human Cargo Slam NY Life Slave Insurance Slam Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Globalization Slam Goree Island Slam Elmira Slave Castle Slam Exxon Mobile Slam Watergate Slam Iran Contra Slam Guatemalan Genocide Slam Forced Migration Slam Media Manipulation Slam Embedded Journalists Slam Church & State Slam State & Corporate Slam Eleanor Bumpers Slam Underdevelopment Slam Internment Camp Slam Concentration Camp Slam Reservation Blues Slam Whites Only Slam COINTELPRO Slam FBI Slam CIA Slam Ton Ton Macoute Slam Das Boot Slam Il Duce Slam Antonio Gramsci Slam Skull & Crossbones Illuminati Slam Kiss My Black Ass Slam Bitch Better Have My Money

Slam Punks Jump Up to Get Beat Down Slam Capitalism & Christianity Slam The Marriage of Hell & Hell Slam Abu Grab Slam Torture Slam Right Wing Reactionary Sociopath Slam Population Control Slam War Crimes Slam I Ain't Gonna Study War No More Slam O Slam My Best Friend Gayle Slam Stedman & I Slam O Sam I Am Slam Spam Slam Astispumante Slam Hey, You Got Your Chocolate in My Peanut Butter Broke Back Mountain Slam Sperm Juleps Slam Chunky Phlegm Slam Taxation without Representation Slam Santeria Slam Shango Elegba Slam Crayola Slam Payola Slam The Grassy Knoll Slam The Blown Out Skull of Jack Kennedy Slam Ethnic Cleansing Slam Police Brutality Slam All-White Juries Exonerating White Cops Slam Coup de tat Slam Regime Change Slam Bitter Fruit Slam Black Reconstruction Slam Bay of Pigs Slam Anti-American Activities Slam Collateral Damage Slam Electric Chair Slam Shock & Awe Slam Scar Tissue Slam Eczema Slam INS Slam Accelerated Sharing Slam World Bank Slam IMF Slam Another World is Possible Slam Planetary Protest Against War Slam DeBeers Diamond Miners Slam A Piece of the Action Slam Petite Bourgeois Slam Genetic Engineering Slam Petro Dollars Slam Idi Amin Dada Slam Mobutu Slam Shanty Town Slam The G-8 Slam Riot Gear Slam Privatization Slam Neo-con Slam Neo-liberalism Slam Driving Down Wages Slam Tax Write-Off for Corporations Slam Good Governance Slam Obey the IMF Slam Sweatshop Slam Say Hello to My Little Friend Slam Carpet Bagging Slam Carpet Bombing Slam Carpet Cleaning Slam Carpet Cutting Slam Carpet Burns Slam Carpet Munching Slam Carpe Diem Slam Corporate Takeover Slam Corpus Christi Slam Carpal Tunnel Slam Constitutions That Stipulate Only Whites Are Human Beings Slam WTO Slam Extra Virgin Olive Oil Slam Sugarless Slam Fat-free Slam Anorexic Slam Bulimic Slam Regurgitation Slam Vomiting on the Side of a Ship Slam Tedious Extended Metaphor Slam Everything in This Motherfucker but the Kitchen Sink Slam The Kitchen Sink Slam

Tony Medina, two-time winner of the Paterson Prize, is the author of fifteen books, including *Committed to Breathing*; *Follow-up Letters to Santa from Kids who Never Got a Response*; *I and I*, *Bob Marley*; *My Old Man Was Always on the Lam*; *Broke on Ice*; and *An Onion of Wars*. Associate Professor of creative writing at Howard University, Medina's poetry, fiction and essays appear in over ninety anthologies and publications.



African Communion

On the altar
memories bejewel my history,
some bright dreamscapes,
the defiant brilliance of my early creation -
not only the monumental wonders,
 blocked huts to vanity's kings,
 obelisks piercing redolent skies;
memories of round circles
 where griots sifted history
 before books stole remembrance.
memories of the gathered family
 huddled, protecting
 generations of treasures
 woven into time-
 no rituals recall their magnificence
 purity's simple majesty.
the movement of my feet
sings in the movement of my hips
the drum rises from my stomach
to my signifying ear
speaking colors of words
with new vocabularies
borrowed from my distant memory
mixed with my cadence

an echoing symphony of my old self in my new self.
my memories dare to talk to God
like a familiar house guest.
I wear dark jewels, too -
screaming depths of bone and blood
where my children dance voodoo
drowning the people snatchers
who uprooted me.
the altar is made of strange wood,
broken branches
tossed about the white currents,
reaching through the treacherous terror
of separation;
bearing hybrid fruit in hard earth,
invoking again the sap of creation
in dark city neighborhoods
off dusky country roads.
again memory
renews my sassy strut
(even while invisible chains cut my wrists)
spinning, weaving, sewing, digging, casting words
humming funky melodies;
calling the drum
drums
fathers
mothers
old souls
restless cousins
ever present,
back to self;
shoo fly don't you bother me.
Memories
of a million feet
since the first mother
sang her first lullaby
at the base of the mountain
of the immortals.
Memories
of a million songs
since the first father
lobbed his net into the sea.

Memories of night skies
since the first elders
plotted the course of destiny
and wrote the paths in the sacred words.
Now, when I set my table
I bless the present
creation, consecration, communion;
when I set my table
I bless the memories;
they cannot be removed
for I collect them for my children.

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My Brother Antonio

(A thank you note to the late Ieda Santos of the University of Bahia)

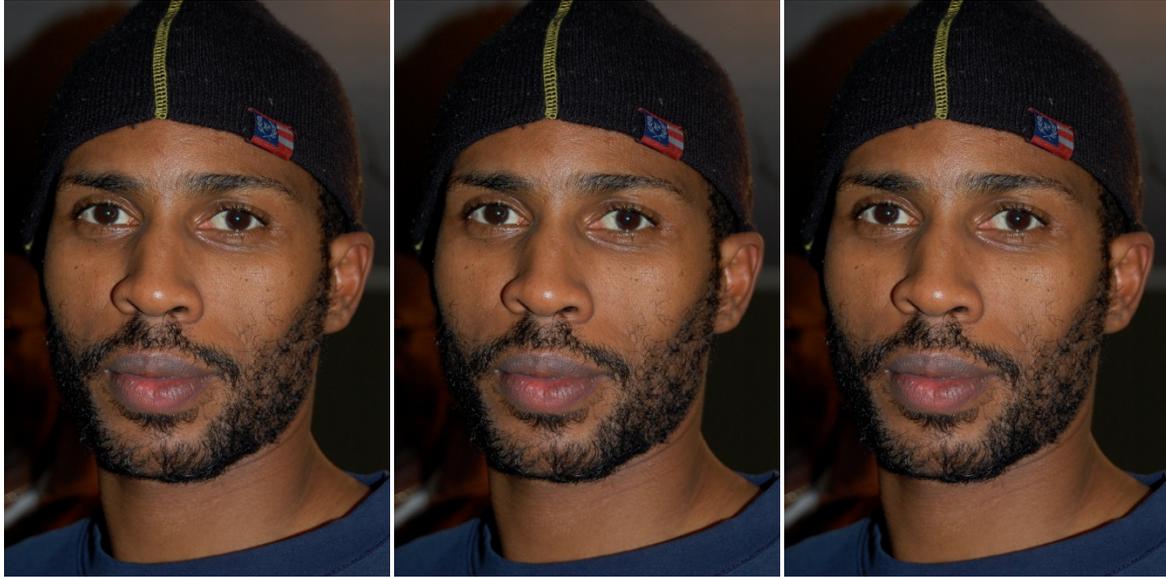
My brother Antonio,
dark poet of Brazil
dead before I knew you,
how we could have spent our days together;
Singing word songs of Bahia's hills
Dancing verbs
Running skies along Salvador's sensuous coast
Laughing
because we are alive
Because nothing could/can kill us.
But I am not sure I can breathe your brilliance.
Feeling free when I think
You are wrestled back to life
for the beauty of your verses,
in the courtyards,
under the trees,
in lazy libraries where we still find them.
You are a mirror to a dark world
That makes us cry,
Antonio, my young eternal.
How did you find your soul
when generations after you forgot Africa
And today they only whisper Congo and Niger.
Antonio, we are held hostage in our ignorance
of gourds, palm wines, sacred rituals
and gods a plenty.
We are ignorant still.
But you, Antonio -
you called out our torturers
By name and by number
From all the corners of infamy.
Why must I discover you anew
in the homage of a scholar

When you so early sang the song of freedom,
the song of reclamation,
the song of the journey back through me to you
and on to tomorrow in the anthills of Africa.
Hail poet!
Death is uncomfortable in your arms
for I live in you.
Now I am witness, Antonio;
And the abominable horror of slavery,
the filling, suffocating, nauseating horror;
the kidnapping of kingdoms, the transporting of dark human gold,
the ghosts of drummers in the sky over the ocean graves,
the suffering mothers and terrified children,
warriors stewing in their own slops,
this horror you catalogued
built a new monarchy on the shores of an island called America.
You catalogued long centuries of suffering rape,
hunger, lynching, inventories of infinite evil
birthing a god more terrible than slave ships -
A god called Whiteness.
It chained the bodies and the minds
Men bowed down to this god
Antonio, I gather up my weapons.
At my feet I weave miracles of voodoo.
We must call the god to the ground
and crush it under our harden soles.
Antonio
bear with me
I am leaning on your voice
and the voices of thousand poets of prophetic light
to save a world.

(Antonio Castro Alves¹, March 14, 1847-July 6, 1871)
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(Antônio Frederico de Castro Alves (March 14, 1847 — July 6, 1871) was an Afro Brazilian poet and playwright, famous for his Abolitionist and Republican poems. One of the most famous poets of the "Condorism," he won the epithet of "O Poeta dos Escravos" ("Slaves' Poet"). The name "Condorism" derivates from the condor, a bird of lonely and high flight, said to be able of seeing things from a great distance. Condorist poets believed they had this same ability, and should use it to educate people in the ways of justice and freedom. His best-known work, O navio negreiro [the slave ship], was instrumental in the abolition of slavery in Brazil and earned him the reputation as the "poet of the slaves." In Antônio Frederico de Castro Alves day over 40% of the population of Brazil was of African blood; today that estimate is 80%).

Dr. Ja A. Jahannes is a poet, psychologist, educator, writer of fiction and nonfiction, and a social critic. He is a frequent columnist, and his work has appeared in diverse publications and anthologies. He has lectured throughout the U. S., in Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East and Europe.



Some Other South To Sadden Me

1.

i could claim the magnolias
my mother grew up with

their sweet smell
outside the back door
where she was born

and I could claim
cumberland river
up under the bridge

where my uncles
dipped their hands
and pulled up catfish

2.

muddy world and the alleys
my mama says Nashville
is a sad town

people staring
through the steel columns
of a prison
nobody lives on the street
across from Meherry anymore
and the memory is like wine
somebody turn up
a brown paper bag
drinks that wine
sagg'n head

3.
dust rising from toppled bricks
jubilee hall and jefferson street
they moan history
go
to the river
take off your clothes
skinny dip
bathe in the scent
of magnolias

They Make a Wall Against Armegeddon

they was talk'n all night long
tell'n ole stories, evaporat'n
sweat. liquor. laugh.
painting the face of their mother
between them, gospel
crisp and old

all the action in a straightjacket
in that room, old brother cain,
old sin, the black work, shame,
reworked into art, strung story
history
my father and his brothers
men growing fat and tired
their walk becoming slow and certain
like the train long snake of freight
engine

inertia
*bet you wouldn't know
when they was young
big fun*
sometimes the eldest would get the car
and drive into town slow
whitewalls and paints creased
to pick up his date- a woman
so beautiful

*you would swear
someone was crying in the distance
when you saw her or her shoulders
bare in the sun*

life would mean something then
there was more to philosophy
than how to make it look like your sweat
was work and not the sun staring
down on your back
the hot grease of Georgia

could find itself on a brother's back
at any time muscle could explode
world could suddenly change
and you could afford to smile
anywhere, anytime
anyday, anything
can happen
you could get stung by a bee
or find yourself on the edge
of the road, cold, jacking
up the car, somebody could
ask you why in the cold, spotlight
why? fog breathe into the night
the possibilities are endless, why?
you could be kissed by a billyclub
or asked where the fuck are you going?
even when
you are right

even when
you're where you are sposed to be

what my uncles and daddy
knew inside

as they laughed

and turned their breathe
into the brewery
made their eyes glossy

like tears
like roads
in the black night
with just a little rain
just a little rain

Questions #1

Who are the gods of fire?

What was my grandfather's name?

Where is the deep blue sea?

Who is that singing in the night?

When they fight who?

Who are they fighting against?

When they dance

With their shoulders pulled up

Who are they dancing with?

Do they float across the room?

When the wind blows late

At night and the trees rustle

Whose name is being sung?

When the trees blow down

Whose monument has crumbled?

When they talk of freedom and democracy

Is it hunger, amnesia or the scream muffled

Into the duffle bag the soldier carries

Because he brought the war home

Because he brought the war home

Maybe madness is an organ within man

A delicate glass bridge over the swamps

Where he would sink and die if he

Stomped or wore the wrong shoes.

That sewer running through the city

That place under the bridge

Where a man played his trumpet

And it echoed in our souls.

Alejandro (Iraq)

you say she
had a baby
being born in her
when she
walked towards
you, you said
stop, you said
you must stop
your soldiers
and you, with
your mouths,
your guns
pointed
at her, her
belly with born
with a bomb
she did not
stop, she exploded.

Bro. Yao (Hoke S.Glover III) is a poet, professor, businessman and father. In 1992 with an initial investment of \$500, Bro. Yao (Hoke S.Glover III) with his wife Karla and business partner Simba Sana began Karibu Books as a vending operation while he was a student at Bowie State University. Over the next fifteen years, Karibu Books went on to become one of the nations largest African American bookstores with 6 locations, over 40 employees and 3.7 million dollars in gross sales. Over the fifteen years of the company, it distributed hundreds of thousands of books about African American people and their culture to residents of Prince George's County and the country as a whole.

He received his M.F.A. from University of Maryland College Park in Poetry in 1997. His poetry and writings have been published in *African American Review*, *Soulfires*, *Testimony*, *Mosaic* and other journals and anthologies. Over the last 20 years he has focused most of his work on promoting reading and history in the Prince George's Country area in particular. He has also performed as a poet over the last twenty years at a variety of venues primarily in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Currently, he serves as an Associate Professor at Bowie State University in the English Department where he teaches composition and poetry. He resides in Lanham, MD with his wife and three children.

Amazin Grace (for the late lucius walker)

*“Amazin grace...How sweet the sound...
That saved a soul like me...
I was once was lost...
Now I’m fighting to be free...
Only struggle
Will save you and me... ”**

*“Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death;
I fear no evil; For thou art with me
Thy rod and Thy staff
They comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies.
Thou anointest me with oil;
My cup runneth over...
Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me
All the days of my life; And I shall dwell
in the house of the Lord forever...” Psalm 23*

the time has come
the trumpet has sounded
that miles as in davis muted trumpet has sounded
his name has been called
Luuuuucius!
Lucius Walker!
The gateway has been presented
and this man
this modest samaritan man
this man
this fearless mount of courage and faith of a man
this daniel audacious amazin grace of a man
he has ascended that stairway to heaven
received by the God he so valiantly served
to the ultimate delightful chorus
'job well done, my son...job well done...'

and for us still here in the land of the living
and for those coming behind us
for this man
for this heroic humanitarian
we must monumentally mark his place in this time
to radiate the lessons of light of his enormous example...
so give me a truckload of bibles
in english spanish creole and french
give me a bushel of the ripest olive branches
give me crates upon crates upon crates
of medicines and medical supplies
so we can make a late 20th century
early 21st century balm in gilead...
give me a caseload of bloodied bonebroken bullets and shrapnel
as evidence of the evil of oppression
made in the usa
give me a column Zapatistas covering the rear
as surrogate angels...

“Thy road and Thy staff, they comfort me...”

give me prime photos of his wife children and grandchildren
give me a chessboard dominated by battling bishops
and a line of willing volunteers to be sacrificed
give me a hemispheric huge harvest
of yams corn apples lentils leeks
of oranges mangoes pineapples
yucca and beets
give me fish and loaves of bread
and give me flour yeast and hearth ovens
to bake our own
give me enuf righteous roasted lamb
to feed all the villages he served
that had been denied the fruits of their sacred labor...

“...Thou prepares for me a table in the presence of mine enemies...”

for his chocolate eyed charm
for his awesome absence of ego and vanity
for his che' like capacity to lead without commanding
for this man

for this peoples redeemer
this shining samaritan
this humble heroic humanitarian
we need huge broken tablets of unjust laws
broken by armies of the faithful that he led
we need a tall rugged cross
stained with the blood of martyrs
like camilo cienfuegos, martin luther king and bishop romero
we need all those made missing by the death squads to be found
we need david walker's appeal
martin's letter from a birmingham jail
che's socialism and man
we need fidel-full analyses
of all the political minefields and crosscurrents
we still must confront
we need broadcasts of insurgent commentary by mumia abujamal
we need a huge toilet and flushing of the waste of the blockade
we need mumia free...
we must enshrine that little yellow school bus
with the wheelchairs of the fasters
we need video footage of baffled abusive overseers at the borders
we need doctors without borders
willing to dance with the patients they treat
we need a huge cup runneth over with faith courage love and hope
and we need lots and lots of witnesses
organized to continue...
for this man
this daniel audacious man
this marvelous mount of courage and faith
this shining samaritan
this heroic humble humanitarian
this chocolate eyed charming amazin grace of man
we need commitment
we need commitment
we need commitment
*congalleros!***
to the front!..

“The Lord is my shepard; I shall not want...”
“We refuse to back down
We will fight to the end
Revolution
Revolution
is near...”

*lyrics from Yasmin Adeigbola’s poetic retake on Amazin’ Grace
**conalleros...spanish for conga players

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‘bro.zayid’

A Force for Good

(for John Coltrane and Ahmed Obafemi)

“...I wanna be a force for good...”

-John Coltrane

...there was a man...

a very brave, enchanted man...

and he spoke of many things...

peace and change

this, he said to me...

he wanted to be

a force to help set us free

so we all

could truly have

our dignity...

in those backstraightening

eyeopening times...

times of cities burning

times of black churches bombbursting

times of black and brown babies

sacrificed in fire!...

hot times! hard times! heroic times!...

times of civil rights workers

black and white

but waaaay mostly black

maimed shot lynched

and made to disappear

the way fascists have a way

of making people disappear...

dangerous and courageous times...

times of music changing

times of art changing

times of laws changing

and even some people changing...

changing times...

times of young people challenging

elders about facing the limits

of some of their ways and their times...

questioning times...
times demanding real answers...
critical times...
times of malcolm hurling his flesh
and his incendiary commitment
headlong into the whirlwind!...
times of black workers
bankrupting racist alabama bus companies
feetfirst...
sick and tired times
of fannie lou krashin lbj's
big ol' undemocratic
false show house party...
magic times...tragic times...
dreamy times...nightmarish times...
times of brothers comin back
from 'nam in pieces
times of cia capsizin lumumba
and others like him
and instituting the genocide
of low intensity warfare in its place...
blessed times...cursed times?...
martin's roughside mountainclimbin
tough times...
times of fidel and che
comin down from the mountains
to make peoples power real
after first makin peoples war rt!...
rough times...reckless times...
revolutionary times...
times of wild pigs and troopers
shootin at emptyarmed black mothers
after shootin at their sons
whether they were runnin or not
or resistin or not...
times of a whole lotta funerals...
times of this nat'l order
feasting off flesh and famine
and hard as hell on the rest of humanity...
insane times...bloodstained times...

times of people movin and marchin
to stop the madness...
times at times romantic
but often nasty like napalm times...
times at times so evil
it made eric dolphy's brokenheart stop
somewhere between his 'be' and his 'bop'
at 30 something
even though he was far away
in a safe place at the time...
tearing times...tearing times...
thunderous and wonderous times
like elvin and philly jo jones times...
tryin times...cryin times...
high flyin times...
hot hard heavy and heroic times...
in those times
under those conditions
upon the ghostly shoulders
of underground gone ancestors
this man
this lone bold loving soul of a man...
this man
this gentle man
of the soft ankhified electric eyes...
this man
obsessed with peace
like the drum major for justice
was obsessed with peace...
this man
this *very brave enchanted man*
seeking to be a force for real good...
this man
took those times
by the bell of his tenor
and burrowed laserlike
thru the pain and love and fury of it all...
this man
took those times

those hot hard heavy and heroic times
by the smoke of his searing soprano
and wiped the blood from the face
of the stars falling from the sky
of those times
and he poured and he poured and he poured
andpouredandpouredandpouredandpoured
from wells ancient deep within him
onto the forever of our ears
and the eternal of our eyes
until
there was nothing left
nothing
but the voluminous print
of him
trying to cradle those times
to make them better...

*...he wanted to be
a force to help set us free
so we all
cd truly have
our dignity...*

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'bro. zayid'

Bro. Zayid Muhammad is a social activist and minister in the New Black Panther Party in Newark, New Jersey.

If I had one wish it wouldn't be for the skies to always to be blue,

It wouldn't be for all the homeless people to have shelter,

And it wouldn't be for all the little boys and girls to have shoes on there lil feet.

Excuse me for my lines, the next few might be harsh. If my wish would come true I'll let you all see the stars,

If I had 1 wish it wouldn't be for peace on earth because life is what it is

It wouldn't be to fit in where I didn't because its not all about me.

I wouldn't wish that everything was perfect because the nature of perfection is imperfection

To make an ideal, item, man, woman, child or thing its always based off another model; some thing failed but already created.

If I had 1 wish it wouldn't be for all the innocent people killed to be living again as sad as that may seem.

In my mind I might be digging a little to deep for you 2 see,

It wouldn't be a cure for all the diseased minds or bodies,

It wouldn't be for wealth and for certain not for love.

If I had 1 wish it wouldn't be to have superpowers, guns or drugs,

My material needs are only needs to please the outer me.

If I had 1 wish it wouldn't be for all the women for miles to see,

Or even my mom doing her own better things.

I say this here because the end is near and yes this is deep and for you to not understand is what I most fear,

If I had 1 wish it wouldn't be to live in immortality or experience my wildest dreams.

If there was one wish it would be to meet Our Creator and I say Our because I'm not the only flesh and bone being.

If I had this wish it would put my mind at ease.

Then I could ask em why life was really meant to be.

--Nykimbe Broussard, youth poet

His Locks

by Kilola Maisha, a youth poet

His Locks
 have the vibration
His Locks
 tell a story
I feel
 when I'm near him
His Locks
 His Locks
 His Locks
Nubian Locks
 Black African Locks
Conscious Locks Race Man Locks
 tells Our Story
in each curl
 locked into another curl
Linked up
 Like we used to do
 in Unity
 no more
His Locks Alive and Conscious
 never forget the past
 Our History
Locks hold it all
 Our Locks hold it all
Tells the Story
 Our Story
Tied up all in our Hair

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I'm Living

Im living life to the FULL-e-s-t
Maintaining without the streets
But they keep call in me...
My Bruh said the money was guaranteed
I'ma have what I need
4 Racks in about a week
Sound like he stacking
I'm macking
No need for acting
I'm Real
No need for packing...
I rely on G-O-D
Like Lauryn Hill
everything is every thing...
(That thing) that thing (that thiiiiinnng.....)

--Niyah

Niyah is a young rapper in Oakland, California. She is the daughter of Askari X, Oakland's rap genius.

Capitalization

(a quintet's tribute to Miles Davis on his birthday)

a quintet, all white
plays Kind of Blue
for green harmon(e)y
as rich as Miles's
skin tone emotes the
blandness of their own.

Adrienne N. Wartts received her M.A. in American Culture Studies from Washington University in St Louis. She is the recipient of the 2009 and 2010 Norman Mailer Writers Colony Fellowship. Her poetry has appeared in journals such as *Black Magnolias*, *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, *Kweli*, *Poetry Explosion Newsletter*, and *Reverie: Midwest African American Literature* and is scheduled to appear in a forthcoming Skinner House Books title.



Poem # 1:

A Poem for Stayers

I want to stay
Squat, full, immense
Full of the broad wealth of age and joy and
Ripe, Sweet Life.

I want to leak
All over the space I occupy
Squishy, syrupy flood
Oozing out of every pore and
Onto everything in sight
Liquid, solid
Life

I want to be the thing you love
More than you love yourself

So that when you are gone
I am still here
Your memory stuck to me and
Leaving the stain
Deeply on the land

Poem # 2: Do Not Concede

Your self
Exists
Do Not Concede it
Then tune your ear
To hear
Your self
Over the din
Under the chorus
Around the edges
Just outside the point of focus

Unfix your sight
Do not concede the
Frame of Reference
Regain your perspective
By blurring the one you inherited
From your Masters
Do Not Concede
Your self

The familiar
Is not the thing you have been forced
To accommodate
Do Not Concede It
To the practical, sensible thing
Listen to your Self
It is old beyond age
And longer than length
It is your lasting, essential tie
To God

Do Not Concede

--Greg Carr

Greg E. Carr, Ph.D., J.D. is associate professor of Africana Studies and chair of the Department of Afro-American Studies at Howard University in Washington, DC.



BAM Baptized

Considering the impact of the
Black Arts Movement (BAM)
Words filter'd through bluesy, jazzy and gospely
truths, flowed like lava from radical tongues
of born again scribes. Loosed from bowin'
heads or steppin' back, BAM poets rose
as bold, black lights show-casing our
thangs and gains, blowin' open doors to
let our real-nest come oozin' out.

Darlene Roy
©February 12, 2010

No Ordinary Woman

From Dahomey bones and shade of grand
mama Lucille, lynched in Virginia for avengin'
both sons' murders, this two headed crafts
woman drew on keen images set in
quiet colors, like ebony granite into mortar,
formin' linear, freely open verse helpin' us
defy myths and uncork bottled up wrath.

Darlene Roy
July 11, 2004
Revised © August 2, 2005

Darlene Roy is a mother, retired social service administrator, East St. Louis native, Eugene B. Redmond Writers Club's co-founder and president, an associate editor of *Drumvoices Revue*; and designer/co-convener of literary programming. Her poetry has appeared in numerous publications, with two poems featured on Metro Link, she has authored one chapbook, *Soon One Morning and Other Poems*. She has also performed on radio, television, at universities and conferences throughout the United States.

Please Stay Strong

got laid off
got babies
got a man
but still ain't got no honey

got laid off
got babies
got a loving man
but still ain't got much money
guess i'm gonna have
to call uncle sam
get a little help from the man
to help me pay my dues

momma's old and
poppa's still cold from 'nam
us living together
sharing bread and
the blues 'cause
everybody needs a little something
and sister's young enough
to earn a little something
so i guess i'm gonna
call uncle sam
get a little help from the man
to help me pay my dues

little ones learning,
eating, playing and growing
watching us cry, standing on line
cutting corn bread to the nines
counting dimes for birthdays gifts
and a little wine

with us singing the blues by the stove
'cause we all know
i'm gonna call uncle sam tomorrow
'cause i'm young and strong and
willing to sell whatever i can to the man
to help me pay my dues

the checks will come
to heat 'em up

so they can eat
when i'm on my knees
counting my time

like a faceless clock
on the auction block

the kids will play
and momma's still old
and poppa's freezing cold
my loving man
holding it down
putting it down
feeling a little low
'cause i ain't 'round
'cause i got laid
on the unemployment line
now i'm standing strong on the front line
with uncle sam and his crew
singing the i love

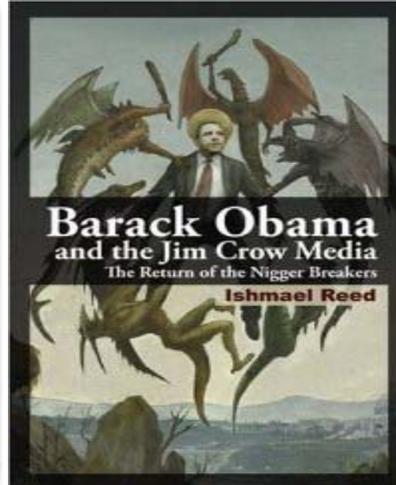
I love

I love my country

blues

lifepoetry by Tantra-zawadi
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Tantra's recent appearances include the New York Public Library of Performance Arts at Lincoln Center, Badilisha Poetry X-Change Festival in Cape Town, South Africa and the Montserrat Poetry Festival. Tantra is also a recipient of the Kings County District Attorney's Office Award for Women's History Month for her artistic contributions to the borough of Brooklyn. Tantra's latest release, "*Gathered at Her Sky*" from Poets Wear Prada Publishing, is available at Amazon and LULU.com (June 2010). Tantra, a mentor for Girl-Child Network Worldwide (GCN), will donate partial proceeds from *Gathered at Her Sky* to GCN to provide education, personal items and empowerment for girls in Zimbabwe. Tantra is also the author of "alifepoeminprogress" by Chuma Spirit Books, and her poetry was featured in *Essence Magazine* and in spoken word publications such as *Redeye*, *Spoken Visions* (www.spokenvisions.com), defpoetryjam.com, *Platinum Poets*, *Sunpiper Press*, *Souled Up* and poetswearprada.com.



Bay Area artists celebrate the release of Reed's *Obama, Jim Crow Media and the Nigger Breakers*: Painters Dewey Crumpler, Arthur Monroe; poets Ishmael Reed, Conyus, Marvin X, Al Young (photo by Tennessee Reed).

Night Rider

I don't look like no
Klansman but I think like
One
Though I still wear a Dashiki
My heart is covered with
A white sheet
I have fantasies involving
Lillian Gish
I struggle with these
Me and my white hooded
Friends share the same
Obsession
You know the one
I don't look like no slave
But I think like one
I hold Caucasians to
Higher standards than I
Hold myself
I'm incapable of
Reaching such moral
Heights.
I call them bigots
But what have I
begotten?
In my soul there
Are cross burnings
desecrated cemeteries
in Prague
I'm hip to the
Protocols
But to the public
I'm holier than thou
Blacker than thou
Blacker than even
Myself

I scare myself with
My Blackness
I know the theory
Of Kawaida backwards
Wussy cowardly
Negroes tolerate
My hatred
Too chicken to object
wolves have a pack
lions have a lair
I have a claque
they clap at my
every word
They give me plaques
Celebrate my birthdate
Three times a year
Name rooms in black
Studies departments after
Me
I make them sweat
If I asked
They would lick the
fungi between my toes
If I asked they would
push a peanut with their noses
When I cursed the O'Hara's
They gave me a buck
Brought me to Tara
And fed me wild duck
Had me stay over
For a long leisurely sleep over
I swam in their heated pool
Even though I linked
them to Yacub
(How did they know about
My cravings for strawberries
And ice cream).
They gave me donations
So I could further
Their Damnation

They gave me a down
Payment on their trip
To hell
Guilt sells better than
Cheap hair gel
During the day I
Was critical of the “traitors”
Downtown
But when nobody
Was looking
I was downtown too
Heh heh
You might call me
A night rider

Ishmael Reed
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Ishmael Reed, together with Toni Morrison, is one of today's pre-eminent African American literary figures - perhaps the most widely reviewed since Ralph Ellison, and, along with Samuel Delany and Amiri Baraka, probably the most controversial. In 1995, the University of Buffalo (now the State University of New York at Buffalo) awarded him an honorary Doctorate in Letters. He recently retired from teaching at the University of California, Berkeley, where he taught for thirty-five years. He currently lives in Oakland, California.

Quake

What is this Haiti?
Who are these Haitians?
Where is this Haiti?
I'm an American, can't find no map.

What is this island without any trees?
Who are these Taino? These Arawak?
Who is this Columbus?
Who discovered a land
So rich and lush
He said "this must be India
And if not, it must be Eden
And if not, it must be Heaven?"
And Nino said
"this cracker must be crazy
I'm going make myself some money off this..."

What is this Spanish empire?
What is this French colony?
This Triangle Trade
That drops the trouble-makers off first?

What are these breaker-island horrors
More horrible than history books?
Who is the black pearl?
What's in Jack Sparrow's ship?

What is the Haitian Revolution?
Who are these people
That had Napoleon
Screaming "Mein! Mein!"
And got Jefferson
Saying "Hey , shorty,

Heard them Negroes getting
The best of you
Tell you what, sell us the southwest
With the ocean view
And U.S.A., we'll see what we can do...?"

Hence the Missouri, the Mississippi,
The New Orleans, too.
All with machetes and voodoo
"you want a rifle?"
"naw, I got voodoo."

What is this voodoo?
(most the island Christian)
And who is this Toussaint?

Why does everyone scream Toussaint?
Who is this black man
That said
"Let's fight the power
Then
Let's be the power
Then
Let's share the power with those formerly powerful
Otherwise a revolution is
One brutal killing
Then another brutal killing
Then another brutal killing
And a killing after that
Is killing to no avail"?

Starting talking that peace
They throw his ass in jail.

Who is this Emperor Jacque the First?
Who is this King Charles?
What is this invisible nation
Who Woodrow Wilson saw fit
For invasion
And U.S. marines
Stormed the sea
And took the trees?

What is this Democracy?
Who are these people
Who said “we want
Democracy!” and we said
“Yes!” and they said
“We want this leader!”
And we said “ Naw,”
BANG BANG
“you don’t want him”?

Who is this guy?
Who is this Citibank
That bought the Haitian Economy
and took 40% of the nation’s
profits and pretty much
the rest of the trees?

What is this rainy season?
Cause *when it rains, we get mud*
When we get mud, we get sick
And when we get sick, we don’t get no
Medicine.

What is this place Josephine sings about?
Who are these people
Who through twist and dread
Kept their African roots?
Why are they so poor?

Who is this Pappa Doc?
This Baby Doc?
These Doctors without Borders?
Doctors without medicine?
Doctors without equipment?
Doctors with patients?
Doctors with plenty of patients
Patients around the block
Or where the block used to be.

Who are these people that speak at least three
Language?
Little English
Little Spanish
Little French
(a little Swahili on the side)
And say it all in the same word?
avec qui sont-elles ces personnes que nous devons nous tenir ?
okay, i don't speak French
no, i don't speak French
only French I know
is a little bit of Creole
i learned from my ex-girlfriend
who near the end
could be a real pain-in-the-*bunda*
but she was beautiful, though
she was beautiful, though
And I never told her so

Which goes to show
You never know
Till it's not there no mo.

--Quincy Scott

Quincy Scott Jones earned a Bachelor's degree from Brown University, a Master's degree from Temple University, and \$100 once working as supermarket clown. His first book, *The T-Bone Series* was recently published by Whirlwind Press. He currently he writes, teaches, and performs in the Philadelphia area.

Versified Youth

(an excerpt)

He was raised at the Hudson River
With a firm Earth Sign—
A promising limb on an African tree—
And The Thinker, his archetype,
Sat beneath his unburdened brow.

24 seasons later,
The child scrutinized
This Mecca for new Nubians,
Colors' Capital—Harlem.
And Like East 127th Street's Shakespeare,
Langston Hughes,
The boy embraced his race.

At 54 seasons,
He became a knowledge-consuming entity
Learning about African-rhythmic prose, odes,
Bantu, Zulu, Malinke, Yoruba,
South of the Sahara songs.
The boy traveled
The geography of his mentality
With David Diop, Dadie, Césaire and Senghor,
Poets who generated
Illumination greater than the solar system.

He knew these books were keys
Out of clockwork-constant existence.
By plying those keys,
He opened doors to vistas abroad
Where Black people were birthing
A glory-fortified future.

Eluding adult's brimstone-sizzling stress,
Beneath a dirt-antiquated tree,
He studied comfortably
And saw the spirits of the pundits.

At 55 seasons,
Wherever there was a pencil and paper,
He was runner-in-a-race-inspired—
Those were his keys
Out of clockwork-constant existence.
By plying those keys,
He opened doors to a galaxy of abilities
Where he replenished his pen
With daylight's well.

Then the writer arose aware
Of what his soul had to declare.

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by Bob McNeil

Ode to Swag

This is for the men in ties selling lies
To the rappers producing hot beats and weak lines
This is for the incarcerated
The accused
The exploited and the abused
For those who don't know who they should be
Looking to the media and the TV
This is for the inmate with no belt
Pants sagging and drawers showing
To the young man imitating the inmate
For the trend that keeps on growing
And not they sag their skinny jeans?
For those who don't know who they should be
Looking to the media and the TV
This is for what white women call extensions
And black women call tracks
For #teamberry, #iPhone, #teammac
This is for twitter personas and facebook pictures
For collagen injections and eating disorders
For the girl throwing up her dinner
Because she thinks she's too round
For loose girls at wild parties touching the ground
For those who don't know who they should be
Looking to the media and the TV
This is for Asian kids with emo hair
For white skateboarders who just don't care
This is for teardrop tattoos and hiphop heads
For white women with perms and teens with dreads
For those who don't know who they should be
Looking to the media and the TV
This is for self-conscious insecurity
For Howard Girl snobbery
This is for the oversexed representation of women
For the blatant disregard of intelligent black men
For the concept of swag and all it includes
This is for all of those that swag has screwed.

To My Abuser

i saw you fall from heaven to earth
in a flash
on assignment for my life
you laid in wait for my birth

you raked the eath
of my ancestors' grave
planting buds of poison
to bloom in me

you penetrated my
mothers' womb
and ejaculated
disease
discord
dissension
their breasts now hang
from sycamore trees
in the backyard of our minds.

you slithered into my bedroom
groping through darkness
you found my bed

interrupting little girl dreams
invading a little girl's world
you sought to peel off my faded pink panties

wordlessly I cried
kicking I fought
I should have screamed
I should have screamed
I did not.

your hands
lifted my red nightgown
and you fondled the hope
you suckled the future
you sucked my life dry.

you planned this prom the beginning.

you bore the sin
planted the seed
prodded the thought
enslaved my thoughts
arrested my future
molested my mind.

yet you have no victory .

and I in triumphant forgiveness
I in triumphant forgiveness
I in triumphant forgiveness
I in triumphant forgiveness
Release you.

--Ariel Pierson

Ariel Pierson is a student in English at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Love Her Again

His words were cold and strained as he began to speak of the black woman
You would not think this is where this black man was born
In her womb
She held
Cacao
Honey
And chocolate dreams
However, his words were wrapped in impurity and hate instead of love for her
Leaving her with stone eyes and ceremonious cries as she digs beneath the earth for answers
And there she found
The power of
Harriet Tubman
Marian Wright Edelman
Sojourner Truth
The spirit of
Queen Nzinga
Nefertiti and
Makeda in her bones
The passions of
Michelle Obama
Lauren hill and
The rhythm of Nina Simone in her blood
And the question remains
Why won't he cradle this black woman in his arms?
Instead of making dreams weep with indifference
Pounding the hate and sexism that has permeated through history
Untruthfulness, uncleanness, avarice are her faults
Act with caution with fire, water and women
"Every woman ought to be filled with shame at the thought that she is a woman"
A Black woman
To kill a woman is not a sin
Written by the slave masters in the dust
Where she stood on the auction block
Clothes torn to expose supple breast
And round ancestral buttocks
Where she stood on display
As if in a museum to be touched and probed

And called less than human
Then sold and raped
To create new slaves
How could you not love her through the pain Black man
I understand that this action was a symbolic castration of you
But black man it is time to inspire a new song
Erase the bitter clay of bondage
That attempts to separate and silence
And Instead
Love her again

--Marie Rice

Not Every Soldier

Not every soldier killed
in combat
comes home in a
flag-draped coffin.
Some come walking.
Talking too.
Looking like the living.

Can't tell they're dead.
They don't know it.
You don't know it.
Nobody but the spirits
know.

Happened to my brother.
He came home
to a grateful wife
a relieved mother.
All of us
so happy
the war had spared
his life.

We were wrong.
He died in Vietnam.
We buried him
forty-three years
later.

--Yvonne Hilton
New York City



Reparations

When we get our reparations
It's gonna be a sight to see
All the wannabees gon come back home
And the bootlickers gonna change their song
Mulatto Pride gon dissolution
And the Creole tribe gon change their mantra
Time to marry dark, marry dark, marry dark now
Time to change the plan
marry dark now
Disappearing into Blaaaackness

Lawdy Miss Clawdy!
It's gonna be a sight to see
Won't be no ships for sailing
And no vacations on the plane
Cause all the wannabees gon come back home
When we get our reparations

Note: In the early 1980's an organization called Mulatto Pride announced its formation to the press expressing their pride in their status as Mulattos.

--Bolade Akintolayo

Bolade Akintolayo is an author whose genres include poetry, children's literature, and journalism. And additionally, a dramatist, youth mentor, tutor, editor and co-founder of the Universal Arts Movement in CT and member of the Louis Reyes Rivera Writers Workshop.

bendiciones

thank you madre
our Lady of Atocha
our orphanage, our safe haven, our foundation
since 1603
we are brown babes you are conflicted to take in
you must or they'll find you inhumane

gracias muchos gracias

Our Lady of Atocha
You take us in
You teach us until we are boys of fourteen
You work us hard soon after
And send us off at 20
To work and give offerings till we die

Thank you Señora de Atocha
We are girls
Ñoqayku kayku sipakuna
We are your convent servants
From 9 on
Our wages will find their way into your baskets

You find us qella phiñakuna later in life
Who bed us savagely by night
Under the rags of tuta p'unchayri
May you bless us,
May our babies
Be born just a shade lighter
Than our origins

ñoqayku kayku sipakuna, we are young women; qella phiñakuna, lazy husbands;
tuta p'unchayri, rags of night

un momentu

2

The sumaq zamba abandoned home and became black.
It was easier this way. Easier to be free;
to locate herself. But easy is too easy to explain her situation.

All this talk over crimes of passion...
How lovely it was to have her sisters,
zambo and mulata, as bed flesh.

There is no word in Quechua for a black person.

(It's said they fuck like jackrabbits.)

1574. No black woman shall wear silk pearls gold or mantillas.
1622. No black woman shall bring a rug or cushion to sit on in church. 1623. No
black woman shall wear silver bells on their slippers.

No black woman shall wear slippers.

There is no word in Quechua for a black person.

No black woman shall have a canopied bed.
The fruits of prostitution. Tanqay

away

memory.

So says the Crown.
Says the municipal authorities
when they seized her pretty jewels.

Having been married to a Spaniard
these past two years meant nothing.

sumaq, pretty; zamba, a person of Indian and African blood; tanqay, to push

black herman's last asrah levitation at magic city, atlanta 2010

"This exclusive shit I don't share with the world." 50 Cent

I, Herman made medicinal - cocked up potions in ways my former's was hearsay.
turned palomas christened Zora on to formulas for husbands to roll over n mitzvah,

I, a black lad, proud Virginian, selling out Liberty Hall n pinched w/ stick pins in Woodlawn, do
bequeath my next to last oratory:

my roots subverted the man
who dared interfered with your midsection
my cluster of tricks made the man seek out meaning

look at my magic stick
not my clavicles but my magic stick

ain't no lightness of hand
but of bounce player
constraints imposed by a corvid named Jim
could not interpret my remedies

he wasn't much of a MacGyver:
not one skill in therapeutic thaumaturgy.
prescribed cowlicks for the heartsick;
I mean, really...

but let me tell you something...

I am that brother who knows
how to arise n revolve

n my suspended distortion know when to arise n eviscerate

now you see me. now you don't nigga.
sing up the joy cruise shorty.
Mars is where the republic of new Afrika resides.

I am the other.

wanna ride?

in 1918, I told Quanah Parker,
“Jack, Jesus is Peyote!
said so in the cards,
say it ain’t so?
hit it straight cause the planets were so aligned

sho nuf heard these arcane words precise

I am the other.

ain’t I pretty?

Sing Sing couldn’t hold me down
I come to compliment n shatter
what I cook allows communion
w/ God n the dead

in Kentucky I discovered the elixir Cisco.
you may have heard of it?
comes in Georgia Peach flavor.
too much will turn your guts like entheogen

patented ‘PooTang’ every morning for breakfast

18-ounce glass
½ Tang
½ Vodka

it’s good for clairvoyance.
that one is on the house.

dare to transpose any other root tonics sookie?
this exhumation bears no map
on the next interment there shall be no other

I am on some other shit.

how delightful you could *come*

I come with black cat bones, Van Van oil, n' goofer dust

lucky numbers, banjo, torches, shells, dice, bottles caps n' twigs
hoodoo muthafucka

always to arise on the fourth day;
every seven years.

no. you see me. now you don't.

PERFORMA 2009

señor, the boom box barely eclipses within the great chuckle patch

en la selva no hay estrellas en Harlem¹

will you paint me a gold leaf today? O mañana?

shall I have it appraised?

there is a hot air balloon over a tide of sand dunes

they reflect god's bonanza and I fear the heat will melt us

yesterday Anna Luisa received a bikini wax with scotch tape

David Hammon photographed the event

to later be exhibited at

The Institute for the Preservation of Performance Art in Ithaca New York

señor tupa the aliens have landed cut off the TV

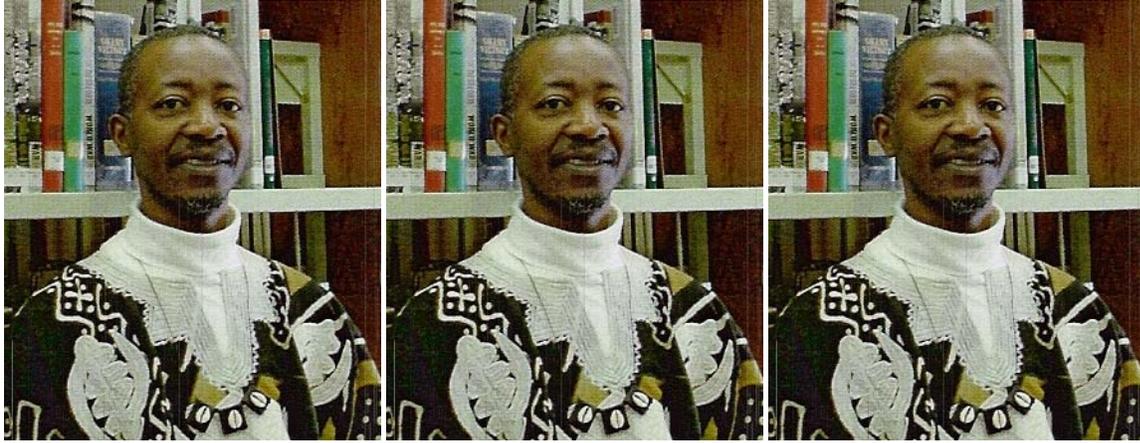
look for the blood mind the ache of grit caught deep under your fingernails

it is impolite to wear worn shoes Tupa the santero says so

sincerely

señora tochtli tekpatl

Writer, vocalist, and sound artist, Latasha N. Nevada Diggs is the author of three chapbooks which include *Ichi-Ban* and *Ni-Ban* (MOH Press), *Manuel is destroying my bathroom* (Belladonna Press), and the album, *Televisión*. Her work has been published in *Rattapallax*, *Black Renaissance Noir*, *Nocturnes*, *Spoken Word Revolution Redux*, *The Black Scholar*, *P.M.S*, *Jubilat*, *Everything But the Burden*, *Tea Party Magazine*, and *Muck Works* to name a few. She has received awards from *Cave Canem*, *Harvestworks Digital Media Arts Center*, *New York Foundation for the Arts*, *Harlem Community Arts Fund*, *Barbara Deming Memorial Grant for Women and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council*. A native of Harlem, LaTasha is a 2010 *Pocantico Writer in Residence*, a *VCCA Writer in Residence* and a *Jerome Foundation Travel and Study Grant* recipient. She is a native of Harlem.



Sweetgrass Baskets Come Back Home

Mrs. Rosalee lives a long lineage of African artistry
along the shimmering coastline of South Carolina
aqua-blue Atlantic waves splash a monotonous refrain;
her smooth dark hands break bulrush and crop sweetgrass
like a well-oiled machine
like the lapping vibration essence, she endures
slowly drifting she is white foam breaking
against shifting sandy shores of
Mt. Pleasant where she was born
half a century ago.

Mrs. Rosalee's mama, seagrass basket weaver
sewed complex palmetto leaf patterns
her father and MaRose before her
shared mixed variations
coiling rhythms of Sierra Leone
passed down through
metal stitching tools called bones
nimble fingers plucked bones
twirling through blades of grass
fashioning baskets for roadside stands:
for the wheat and potatoes
for crawfish and tomatoes

for the corn and cotton
each ancestor, in passing, bequeathed weaving tools:
flattened nails or silver spoon handles
worn smooth by long hours.

Mrs. Rosalee talks to her grandchildren
about the old days when they keep still
they sew with tinted green
or beige strands pinched and pulled between
brown fingers plucking silver handles
weaving empty flower pots
and place mats, mixing in long leaf pine needles
slithers of green upon brown strands,
strips symmetrically coiled into identical braids;
fanner baskets for the rice so when
children are grown they'll understand
and without pause winnow the chaff.

In the 30s, a white man propelled Highway 17 sales
North Charleston with roadside basket stands . . .
Now they say "De Internet is de hot ticket!
sweetgrass done gone international,
Gullah too, you know, sailed from West Africa
then back home again on the world market
at prices you wouldn't believe."

"*Shut yo' mouf!*"

Felton Eaddy, author of *Bending Over To Pick Up a Snake*, is a poet, vocalist, literary artist and an instructor at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta. He earned a M.A. in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University.

Alla Our Stuff

(A Found Poem for Sistas Who Have Considered Slapping Tyler Perry Because His Shallowness is Enuuff)

by

B. Sharise Moore

somebody almost walked off wit alla our stuff

not our brow pencils or ovaries or our favorite
pair of knee high boots bought for 40% off last fall
not the orbital roll of our hips
when we rock to an uneven groove of circumstance

but somebody almost walked off wit alla our stuff

like a looter or a petty thief taking advantage
of the velveteen cloaked darkness
in our fatherless homes/ our lint-lined pockets/
our slumbering minds

somebody almost walked off wit alla our stuff

like a cat burglar in silk stockinged mask
tip-toeing ominous through our treasured chest of drawers
didn't care enough to make us more than
college-ruled script/ on life support line/
fleeting and forced pause/ scribbled-in stage direction.
we are ad-libs and improv in a co-opted choreopoem
shoplifted from the corner store of our off-centered souls

did you make billions from our things?
hey man, where you goin wit alla our stuff?

makin our satin thongs a coarse knock-off of corduroy.
we see you hidin behind our laughs,
twisting them into scars
as we sit wit our legs open

to give our crotch some sunlight.
this is the crooked riff of a sista's song
and you can't hum it
yours is a cacophony of note/a tone deaf tumble
ours is juke joint jazz and subtle hymn.
the 90 year old church mother
frail and wise praising with closed eyes/single tear/and whisper.

somebody almost ran away wit alla our stuff

made us tough when we shoulda been tenderized
left overnight in the fridge so the seasoning
could seep through
somebody shaved the gristle from our loin
made us fat-free
when we are calorie-buster cholesterol/
addendum/ A+ more/draped in allegory rich.
our experience is thick.
ain't neatly tied in a bow easy/
ain't plastic toddler pool shallow
our wholeness can't squeeze inside your teeny tiny
teaspoon of character depth.

somebody almost walked off wit alla our stuff

there goes the angst of our sighs
the scabs under the hairline where the relaxer
was left in too long
the callous clinging to the underside of our pinky toes
the renegade stretch mark skating the length of our thighs

Hey Tyler/Mr. Perry/Mr. Madea Goes to Hell/
we want our stuff back

our hieroglyph pyramids of honesty/ our flowered shawls and
polished nails/ our four dimensional truths.
this is our balled up fist punching holes
in the tissue paper you call our story.

now you can't have us less we give us away
who is this you left us wit?
some simple broad wit a tear streaked face
and a hijacked diary.

we want our things
our itty bitty black dresses kept captive in your cross-dressing closet
we want our sling-backed heels/ our crumbs from the dining room
table of our fears/ we want what you've made shrinky dink
in an easy bake oven/ we want the thousand personalities of
colored girls you haven't met yet/ haven't cast yet/ haven't portrayed yet
we want the crux of our memories
the diagonal/the cater-corner/ the jigsaw of our goals
how we were when we waz there
you can't write them or do nothing wit them
stealin our shit from us don't make it yours
it makes it stolen

somebody almost ran off wit alla our stuff

and we want our stuff back/ and we want Madea to go to jail/
and stay there...

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**A found poem is created by taking words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages from other sources and reframing them as poetry by making changes in spacing and/or lines (and consequently meaning), or by altering the text by additions and/or deletions.

B. Sharise Moore (www.bsharisemoore.com) is a published author, certified English teacher, classical pianist, editor, and performance. She is a New Jersey native, graduate of Rutgers University, and for the past eight years she has taught courses in English, Drama, French, and Journalism. She stormed the world of performance poetry in 1998 and quickly became a slam champion, featured poet, and member of the New Jersey National Slam Team in 2002. Since then, she has shared the stage with HBO Def Poets Lamont Carey and Sonya Renee while performing at venues nationwide. Moore's poetry has been published in *The Journal of Black Poetry* and *The Mas Tequila Review*, among others. She is also the coordinator of the poetry workshop: The Fluid in the DC metro area.