



# HARTWORKS

Summer 2003 • \$1

**FEATURING GUEST POET MARK CRAVER**

The Charles Hart Middle School Literary Magazine



*Andre Harper*

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *hArtworks*, the nation's only inner-city public middle school literary magazine, written and edited by the students of Charles Hart Middle School. *hArtworks* is published through a collaborative effort between the school and the D.C. Creative Writing Workshop, and independent non-profit working to create a literary renaissance in Southeast Washington. Now in its third year, *hArtworks* gives our young writers the opportunity to exercise their creative energies, speak their minds, and be heard by an audience throughout the city. The 2003 edition of *Poet's Market* recognizes *hArtworks* as "an outstanding example of what a literary journal can be (for anyone of any age)."

As our school year draws to a close, we are celebrating the many triumphs won through hard work and creative efforts. Our students have brought a total of over one thousand dollars in prizes back to Southeast, helping to build Hart's reputation as a creative writing powerhouse. Two students, Jerome Green and Gregory Finch, won the D.C. Healthy Families Poetry Competition. Chanice Little won first place in the Junior League of Washington's Teen Poetry Competition. Five students—Krystina Andrews, Joseph Heath, Roosevelt Jones, Jr., Nathaniel Nails, and Jamal Walden—won the Parkmont Poetry Contest. And we had four winners in the Larry Neal Awards: James Saunders won first place for Youth Poetry; Nathaniel Nails and Sharkiyla Marshall took third and fourth places respectively; and Sherrell Jones won first place in Youth Essay for her musings about the Holocaust. At Hart, we know that creative writing pays off in many intangible ways, but it's always nice to receive a little recognition, too. Congratulations to *all* of our hardworking young writers.

We have many friends who have helped to make *hArtworks* possible, and we would like to express our gratitude to them. Our sincerest thanks go out to the Arcana Foundation, the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Commonweal Foundation, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation, the Junior League of Washington, the National Endowment for the Arts, Michael Joy and TSC/Joy Monterrey, LLC, Borders Books and Music, Free Hand Press, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre, Kathleen Huston and McGuire Associates, Joyce Page and Ms. Printing, the Washington Council of Agencies, our friends at Popeye's on Malcolm X Avenue, Ann Brogioli, Ruth Dickey, Fritz Edler, Barb Gomperts, Tom and Carolyn Grey, Betsy Holt, David Klevan, Paul Mandelbaum, Bill Miller, Raina Rose Tagle, Chris Thaiss, and Vera M. White.

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

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Joseph Hudson

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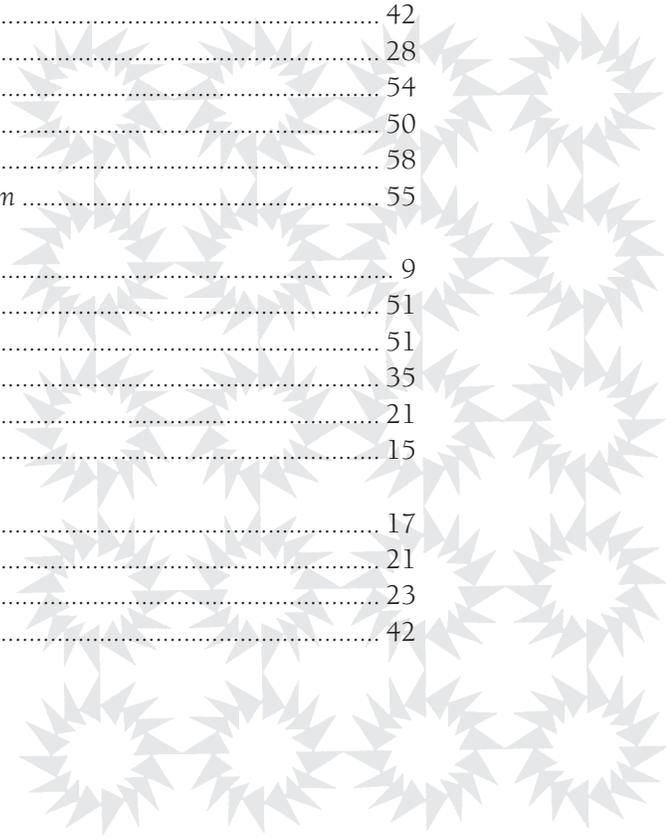
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# "Oedipus 2K3: A Family Affair"

## Ode I (What's really going on)

The Corinthian crystal of forevisions ponders the ancient king killing  
and a calm, bloody palm.

That butcher's departure time has arrived.

He must be more powerful than the fiasco  
of the night sky without stars, for Daedalus,  
armed with Icarus' mechanical wings,  
gracefully flits to King Midas' castle.

And the nymphs follow the hopeless, hopeless nymphs.  
Alas, Olympus, to the zenith.

Leers and glares are the least of his worries—

It is a fact that he will not rest until his demise is in effect.

Like a demonic worm in hell, released to feed  
upon the flesh of wicked earthlings,  
catastrophic death compels him, but  
his sprawling can't evade destiny.

For the earth's conscience calls him empty,  
and the nymphs follow the hopeless nymphs.

But now the more absurd has come  
from the keen-eared elder who can read your fate  
with the simple shake of a tail feather.

As free as a fallen leaf, my soul floats,  
but can't find stability in this quarrel,  
or any reason for embracing tranquility.

Oh exhausted Jesus with perfect SAT scores,  
with the knowhow to give his own night courses...

For the parasite of knowledge needs a new host.

*James Saunders*



## Parados

What is the man upstairs saying,  
as fear comes over me and my heart goes wild?

Now I remember you, the healer, with your powers,  
and I wonder how you can send my worst fears,  
like a nightmare never ending.

Out of the darkness, let us pray.

Now my troubles have no end  
and no man can fight off death.

Now the plague goes on like the sparks on fireworks,  
and there are no guns or weapons that can destroy these monsters,  
and there are no shields that can defend you from the plague.

God, please help us get rid of the venomous plague.  
Lift it from this place.

Let the earth rotate and show the sun again.

*Delonte Williams*

## Ode II (Treachery in the Air)

Let me be positive in all ways,  
but why are all the yellow brick roads I trot belittled?  
Let a single word maintain the composure of the multiverse,  
from the highest mountain plummeted on down,  
for heaven is their remedy's tool.  
Those ages of the realms of ivory, never of the mortal kind were they begot,  
nor are they prisoners of the past, lost in slumber.  
Their father is a class above time, and ages not.

The king is a product of ego that rejuvenates his body  
with his great poisonous cup of irresponsibility and conceitedness.  
And way up from his state of mind, he plummets at immeasurable speeds,  
he plummets into the fog of debris from all the abandoned hope.  
That bold man is not bold, but let no just dream be declined.  
May God protect the warrior of this town.  
In government, in persuasive policy, who will tremble  
when his name is mentioned, and on his decree wait?

Sarcasm and the high palm of excessive hate.  
Temptation and felony are God's holy law,  
and any mortal who dares to grasp no mortal ability in amazement  
will be caught up in the web of torment,  
heir to the throne for which his sweet talk is sold.  
Let each man take due earnings then, and avoid his all-holy things,  
and from sinning in the worst way, let him stand apart.  
Else the crackling blast of heaven blows on his head  
and though the gullible will honor impious men,  
in their countries no catastrophic artist sings.

But shall we lose our belief that something good is going to happen in Delphi's mysteries?  
We who have heard the zephyrs of the earth invalidated,  
and the ancient metaphor of God that's so last season.  
The duties and the eerie visions must make simple routine, so Lord,  
if you're so big and bad incandescent on the throne above all, riddle me this!  
Their minds don't ponder the two horses of Apollo's chariot,  
and their respect is not the first thing on their minds.

*James Saunders*

## Ode III (Input of the past)

If the arrival of time were discovered by my cardiovascular thoughts,  
Lord now by Heaven I see the torches at the Unifest of the next equinox,  
and see the choreography, and hear the choir generate stable biwaves  
to form appeasing harmonies in tribute to your soft shadow.

Taxicab where our mighty king was found, O taxicab protector of a noble race,  
may the entity who hears us grant his balm, and let his glory come to pass  
for our king's rose-petalled ground.

Of the cursed that flower beyond the years, yet don't appease you, oh exhausted one,  
to Aphrodite of love, frozen in satisfaction where the upland clears  
or disposed as dusk's fog. Great Apollo, roamer of unbearably blue temperatures,  
was it he who was the first to gaze upon you? Who engulfed you in his human tentacles  
from the sweet god-ravisher and who was entertained by our endless trials of torment?

But not all eyes are worthy of time's pupil. Even with a cataract they don't measure up.  
All acts have just consequences around these parts.

Offspring by Laios, blessed to death, then blessed to be deprived of that death,  
would God you never embraced, and nourished his lungs with polluted air, contaminated,  
dirty air that my faulty lips accept to weep.

For I cry earth's enigmas.

I was unable to see, and now I understand,  
slumbering, for we breathed easily with content to Corinth,  
while the decades of deception weren't counted.

*James Saunders*



## Ode IV

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

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

That cerebrum was a brute spear penetrating all dimensions.

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

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

Veil against our agony.

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

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

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

All the puzzles of these generations were solved too late.

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

*James Saunders*



## Shadows

Someone came around my cousin's way  
and started to shoot  
and it was at night  
it was cool at that time  
they did not speak our language  
it was one of the darkest nights we had  
one moment of silence—  
when we looked out the door  
all we saw was shadows.

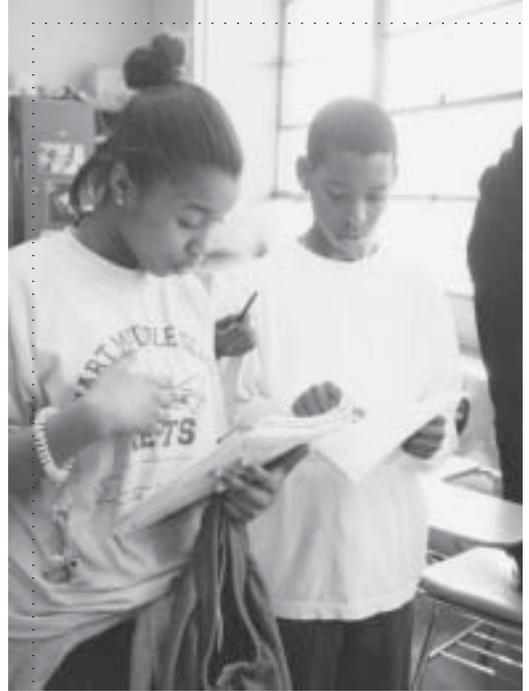
*Deon Smith*

## Something I Wrote

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

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

*Tayonne Casey*



*l-r Dayna Hudson, Joseph Hudson*

## Terrible life description

My life is my world,  
my world is unidentified.  
My sadness is my happiness and fear.  
My death is life  
and my life is miserable.  
This is my life,  
and it is upside down.

*Delonte Morrow*

## Am I stuck in a rock wall?

I don't know if I'm stuck or not.  
It's just terrible, but I'm not terrorless.  
Is this the end of my world or yours,  
or does my life want to say  
I'm not treating it right?

Let's talk.  
Am I moronic to you?  
Let me wake up.  
Do you want me to cancel out the things  
you know I'm not faithful for.  
I want to live, and let the world know  
I'm more.  
So just let me out of this rock wall and be free.

*Kiera Price*

## Language

I am a voice from a human  
I sound sweet sometimes, and then...  
I am a very loving person  
Not every voice I make is nice  
Not everything I say is good  
I am everlasting  
Never go away  
I am like a ghost  
That haunts you  
I am in your head  
I will never go away

*Wanda Evans*

## Questions Like Seagulls

When I think, a question glides like a seagull  
The question is like the seagull flying in the air  
I think and think until my head hurts  
and I can't think anymore  
I have to rest. Tomorrow I will have the answer.

*Jerome Green*

## Other Languages

I am an insect who tries to understand other languages,  
but the tongues are moving too fast.  
Maybe they were from another future—  
Their vocabularies describe casual wear;  
their buildings look like food;  
they can depict dark water and the veins of trees.  
They cannot convey what they do not know.

*Deon Smith*

## Hope Springs

One day it was Spring  
the field grass is always green  
the flowers bloom all day  
and kids are playing games, screaming hurray  
the clouds come out, fluffy and round  
it gets dark and people are still walking around  
there are stars up in the sky,  
now the people are saying goodbye.

*Napoleon Williams*



*Delonte Williams as Teiresias*

## Last Life

Someone holds a gun up to my head  
I get nervous  
My heart starts to beat fast  
My life flashes before my eyes  
It was like a twilight zone  
It seems like I'm on the edge of the earth  
About to fall off.  
I look up at the man  
He's drunk  
He throws the glass beer bottle  
On the ground

*Wanda Evans*

## Pentagon

Blue flag  
Red hate  
Squiggling lines turning straight  
Coming back into a T  
Me saying—what? This couldn't be.  
Grizzly bears roaring loud  
Turning into a pentagon, white  
That looks like my house.  
Big diamonds on a ring  
Turning into a wooden swing  
Blue, red, green, purple turning into any color.  
It rains and turns into a big fat rainbow  
You walk into a bright light  
Turning into a new life.

*Sarai Morris*

## A living chaos

The hunting knife cut  
through a nice tomorrow,  
candlestick from last year's sewer.  
The stupid riverbed  
was cursed  
from the shiny empire.  
The valley  
caved in tomorrow  
and the phone booth plucked away.  
It was a living chaos.

*Chantz Clagette*

## A Sense of a Radiant Environment

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

Delonte Morrow

## If People Died at an Early Age

Day after day  
People are just killing one another  
And not helping one another out.  
People are going to heaven  
At an early age.  
People are getting shot,  
Everyone is hating each other.  
If the world stops, I will  
Stay with my family and remember  
That they were the ones that took care of me.

*Tiffany Craig*



*Pamula Twyman*

## Why I Strive

Glimmer and glisten like a star so bright.  
Overcome all this world can give.  
Witness the wonders, witness the gold.  
Behold the pleasures of fantasy, and make that fantasy reality.  
Envision the blessings of tomorrow while cherishing today.  
Visit yesterday to improve today,  
because if you hum to the bee, the bee will give honey.  
Slave in the garden and the roses will flourish.  
Follow the rainbow to find the gold—  
books will help a lot.  
Cherish the lessons you learn every day.  
Comfort the people you meet along the way.

*Reginald Williams*

## Flap

I am trying to decipher the tongues of insects.  
Insects are the future.  
Nobody knows the insects' language,  
their grammar is at a distance.  
I am trying to decipher their language.  
They make music with their legs  
wings without horizon  
like death wings  
the future is everything.  
Never articulate terms with music  
at a distance known wholly in a sleep.  
They articulate the horizon  
trees are food  
their wings sing.  
Can I decipher the language?  
Grammar in a meaning like death.

*Shaquiel Jenkins*

## Ocean

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

*Raekala Middleton*

## Angels

angels eating apples like ants on chicken  
angels are smooth, baby's-bottom style  
Angels' anger ate out today,  
therefore no madness, sadness, or pain.  
The shadow of death comes to rest  
where angels play and laugh.  
Wings of heaven, two not seven,  
slicing through clouds like a knife through butter,  
underneath us all, where evil spirits fall  
because of what they've done.  
Good souls run with angels—  
so in-the-sky, so high,  
while their earthly family cries.

*Tayonne Casey*

## Run

When people run, they run from fear  
Crying, for a tear.  
Run from death or guns, escaping from jail  
because they can't get bail.  
Run from loud shouting in deep frost snow  
you can't stop, just go.  
Run from the war that the soldiers fight for us  
run to get somewhere, maybe catch the bus.  
You can go and watch the sun.  
It's so much fun just to run.

*Nathaniel Nails*

## Blue

Blue is loneliness and sometimes the sky.  
It is a shoe that you want, but can't get,  
a broken heart that is lonely.  
Blue is candy you want to eat, but you can't  
Blue splashes at night,  
Blue is a very thoughtful mind.

*De Angelo Covington*

## Coldhearted state of mind

Rejected and despised, just because I'm different.  
I'm not popular  
and I don't pay three hundred dollars for clothes.  
I stand out from the crowd because  
I'm not from this neck of the woods.

I always had what I needed, and didn't mind the cost.  
But now I strive pay the cost to be the boss.  
I have learned to stay to myself.

Because the world has a coldhearted state of mind:  
the moment of truth is here,  
the bomb will drop today,  
as much as it hurts, war is on the way.

*Gabrielle Martin*

## Wasted

Sleeping Beauty.  
Life is a waste of time.  
The tears of her mate still fall.  
The door of love has closed.  
He rides the white horse home.  
The eagles soar to seek him,  
for the beauty has awakened  
but the thought is lost.

*Joseph Hudson*

## Touching

I felt them coming toward me—  
I turned around and blocked them with a right.  
They should have been in jail, or broken into pieces.  
Only he didn't mean it; he tried to give me something.

It's like fire burning chopped wood  
to make the world warmer in all places that have a sun.  
Closed books in the library or a store  
waiting for his hands to touch them.  
Fingerprints, so he can get evidence of who hurt his property.

The hands feel like rough razors  
with shackles on them.  
That's how his hands are, truly unkind.

*Lilly Brown*

## Hands, Who Can I Run To?

These hands help me out  
through good times and bad,  
knowing that they'll always be there.  
She holds them out just for me to run to.  
You wonder where the hands went—to heaven.  
So who can I run to  
if her hands are not there?  
Don't know, I'll be lost.  
Now I'm on my own:  
no place to run, no place to hide.  
So who can I run to?

*Kelly Perkins*

## Poverty

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

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

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

*Reginald Williams*



*Jocquella White*

## Vision

When I open the doors of my eyes,  
I see things around me.  
Some are beautiful;  
Some are ugly.  
When I close the doors of my eyes,  
Everything is inside.  
I see nothing,  
Everything is pitch black.  
Everything that I have seen before  
Is gone far back.

*Leslie Williams*

11:50 AM

By 11:50, Ms. Coleman says go to lunch.  
But I don't eat anyway.  
By the time I'm on the stairs  
I wouldn't dare to stare  
I hurry into the cafeteria  
and sit in my chair.

It's 12:00, ten minutes past  
as usual, my table is last  
we hurry up and go outside fast.

We play ball  
girls with cellphones make their calls  
while Mr. Better searches for the dial tones.  
I'm at lunch.  
I didn't eat breakfast, so now this is brunch.

*Gabrielle Martin*

## Beyond what I want

Above the mountains  
below the valleys  
between the oceans and rivers  
over volcanoes and mountain peaks  
above the above  
within myself  
along the riverside  
beside my pride  
inside my dreams  
with a special person,  
there you will find the place  
where I wish to be.

*Lovette Dickerson*

## Myself

I'll be myself. Who else is better qualified?  
And thank heaven I am alive.  
I am powerful and strong,  
because I see myself that way.  
Your words can't get through my pride—  
I will never let myself down.  
Because every time I lose, I see myself a winner.  
Because I did my best, but know I could have done better.  
I love myself and I respect myself, just for being me.  
I know I am self-determined, self-confident, and self-respecting.

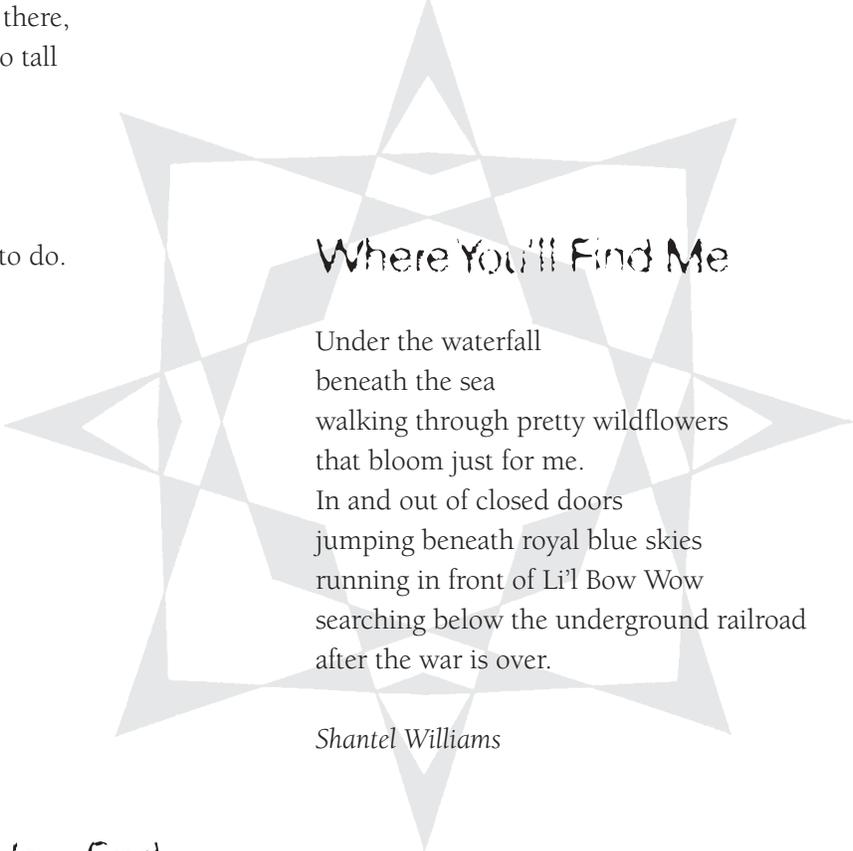
*Pamula Twyman*

## Horoscope

Be open regarding a relationship:  
I always care, no matter who's there,  
I walk down the hall, feeling so tall  
no matter what.  
I fear, no one.

Suddenly it got quiet, me too.  
It was like no one knew what to do.  
I screamed, "I surrender."

*Joseph Heath*



## Where You'll Find Me

Under the waterfall  
beneath the sea  
walking through pretty wildflowers  
that bloom just for me.  
In and out of closed doors  
jumping beneath royal blue skies  
running in front of Li'l Bow Wow  
searching below the underground railroad  
after the war is over.

*Shantel Williams*

## Beginning to the Very End

The self is a sculpture that startles itself  
through the eyes of a witness.  
The self is an ash of dirt  
sifting through the fingertips that  
snap in the teeth of clipping.

The self is one big maze where  
sidewalks run into walkways  
and the statistics of bodies.  
The self is a big machine of the mind,  
controlling observations,  
opening and shattering doors.

*Sharkiyla Marshall*

## Strength

Strength is a brick wall  
Standing very tall  
Holding something up.  
Strength is the earth spinning  
Around on its axis.  
Strength is reading a book for your class.

*Marquette Jones*

## Darkness

Flying through the shadows  
of evil and raptured secrets  
Crying tears of fake happiness and joy,  
showing raindrops of light.

Fire is burning before me, shifting and turning.  
Experience takes control.  
Climbing to get to the very top,  
but something is holding me down.  
What could it be?  
I don't know, my mysterious ways  
show a thrift of pure darkness.

But what makes it so good is that I am the light.

*Sharkiyla Marshall*

## Singing

The sun sets on the heart of the woman  
who sang the birds to sleep  
that landed on the branch  
and ate the berry that was pruned yesterday  
and fell out of the basket  
that the man gave to the woman  
to sing the song  
to free her father from that day.

*Joseph Hudson*

## Continue

My name is Tayonne  
colors with crayons  
are colorful, lights are bright  
stars shine far  
places must be found  
for a little bit of change  
into a butterfly, fly high in the sky  
is blue, is my favorite color.  
Me and my dog, green like the grass  
is what we walk on  
before we fly.

*Tayonne Casey*

## Why Did I Do It?

Why did I do it?  
I did it because of the light.  
The light is why.  
Why did I do it?  
I did it because of my history.  
My history is where I'm going.  
Why did I do it?  
I did it because of the voices.  
The voices I keep hearing.  
Why did I do it?  
Why did I do it?  
I just don't know.

*Sabrina Logan*

## Red

Red is fast cars, Corvettes and Lamborghinis  
Red is thick boxing gloves, sweet as red apples

*DeAndre Taylor*



*l-r Joseph Hudson, Delonte Williams, director Kathleen Akerley*

## Doors to our future

When it's time to get you moved from your mother's house  
it's always a door to your future.  
And it's time to get a life, get married and have kids.  
When your kids have to move, it starts all over again.

And it never gets old, it still goes on and on.  
Their kids are going to do the same,  
but the pleasure is going to get so hard to find.  
All of us are going to die one day.  
One of your kids will put a chrysanthemum on your grave.  
Don't waste your future. Do what you want to do.  
You're still a kid. Get your education.  
You'll have your education for the rest of your life.

*DeAngelo Thomas*

## Doors that stay open

Doors open to a jail  
so a demon can go in.  
Doors open to skeptical people  
who do not believe anything.  
Doors open to ominous things  
that don't know how to speak.  
Doors open to ancient ones  
who are invisible and carved.  
And when the doors close,  
they make tributes to those who have walked through.

*Dakia Koon*

## In the world

In the world  
I cannot live without my family.  
Around the world  
blue birds fly beyond the blue waters.  
Outside, kids are running around the park.  
Inside, there are bad little kids.  
In front, a man is telling me to read.  
I wish I were in New York City.

*Deshawnta Jones*

## Thinking, Jumping, Crying

Before the walls of fire  
after the past, ancient  
above the clouds, the sky of God  
we are all his children.  
About the time the year will end  
and we succeed in all our goals,  
inside, outside, around  
we have times that we are down  
we have places that are pretty, white houses.  
This is a clue, it's black and white  
It's where I like to live.

*Desmond Seegars*

## Nothing

I am trying to make broken cars into dead animals.  
Then it happened, the sun rose.  
Garbage couldn't stop smashing to the ground.  
When we heard the cave had music,  
it was a loud echoing sound, full of my vocabulary  
as food was full of dirt, rolling huge rocks.  
There was no important grammar without the horizon,  
the trees' veins wouldn't maintain nearby  
groping on my huge floor  
a distance away from daylight  
to night, my tongue turns old  
and the future language is not right  
but I just don't sleep, because sleep is like death.

*Monica Harris*

## Knowledge

Beyond the waterfall  
in the tunnel  
under the mountain  
between the doors  
within the school  
before the bathroom  
in the class  
beside Sequan  
you'll fine me.  
Inside my head  
you'll find knowledge.

*Joseph Hudson*

## Nature

Above the trees live five red and blue birds.  
As they look below the trees, they see frogs in a pond,  
swimming and jumping among their lily pads.  
As I find my way through the forest  
I search for something that can fly in the air,  
Something that stands strong in a tree.  
When I jump into the pond,  
frogs greet me as I if I were a relative.  
As we come together as a family,  
we find out that we all have more in common than we thought.

*Eugerta Harris*

## If I could be anything

I would be a tiger  
faster than fire  
hunting by day  
sleeping by night.  
If I were ever in your sight  
I would be a fright.  
I would be fearless  
and when I see you,  
you should hope I'm full.

*Joseph Heath*

## Death in the future

Do not have legs for the  
future, buildings like their holy  
meaning in death is death  
they are never without food or water  
for their own grammar  
is a sleep, like death  
they are never with wings  
in the depicted dark water  
sleep like terms in the musical vein  
of speakers in trees  
they recount changing their grammar  
without horizons,  
making terms in holy water  
at a distance of the future.

*Dana Postell*

## The Weird Dream

Shadow of a sleeping dragon, who's softly asleep.  
Wings of a slimy snail, just snooping around  
With a cape on his back as he snoops past the dragon.  
Underneath, a gigantic bed starts to fall and fall.  
Slicing through, just like that is not a big deal.  
Like a boy who awakes alone in his bed  
And that is the dream he will love to keep.

*Jocelyn Vaughan*

## Years

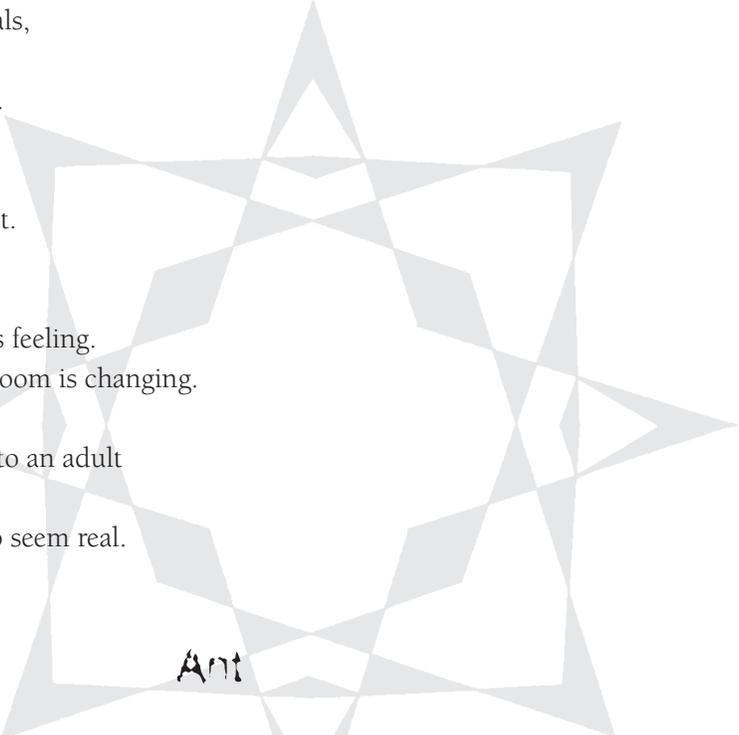
I am sleeping into this year  
and everything is the same  
like I'm only half way through  
all I have to do.

*Andre Morgan*

## Transformed

I am found in a room without a door.  
There is a huge window, but I don't know how to open it.  
There is no way, because I'm too worried to think.  
There I am, wondering how to get out, in the first corner.  
In the second corner, I see a pile of rose petals,  
and I run and fall into them.  
In the third corner, I see the color turquoise.  
I am suddenly confused about everything,  
and I start to panic, more and more.  
Nothing in the room is helping to get me out.  
The rose petals turn into hard, crisp leaves.  
And the color turquoise turns into stone.  
And my confused feeling becomes a nervous feeling.  
I start to understand that everything in the room is changing.  
The window turns into a door.  
As I open the door, I see myself changing into an adult  
and my heart is happy for once.  
And as I close the door, everything begins to seem real.

*Turquoise Bowen*



### Ant

This is how it feels  
I always get stepped on  
and almost killed.  
A poor ant like me  
Is supposed to play on a big green field.  
I want to be peaceful.

*Crystal McPherson*

## Shoes

I've been tied and laced up tight.  
I've been used to kick someone in a fight.  
I've been used to dance when somebody raps.  
If I get stepped on it won't show, because I'm black.  
I don't like when people wear ugly clothes  
to make me look like a bama.  
And when I'm real sad, I wanna get hit by a hammer.  
I wish I wasn't all black, and had some blue  
And sometimes I wish I was a boot instead of a tennis shoe.

*Antonio Paige*

Read and write, every  
day, as much as you  
can. Anything you love  
to read, read it and  
then read it again.  
Never stop reading.



**MARK CRAVER**

an interview with featured poet



*l-r Andy Fogle, Reginald Williams, Delonte Williams, Joseph Hudson, Dayna Hudson*

Mark Craver was born in Kentucky and has lived all over the United States and Japan. He studied philosophy and English at the College of William and Mary and George Mason University. With four books to his credit and a fifth on the way, Craver has become known a dynamic force in modern poetry. He has taught literature and composition at George Mason University for nearly twenty years, and teaches English at Hayfield Secondary School as well. On May 15, Dayna Hudson, Joseph Hudson, Delonte Williams, and Reginald Williams, accompanied by Hart Middle School writer-in-residence Andy Fogle, traveled to Virginia to interview Mark Craver.

**Delonte** – If you were just a poet, do you think you would have enough finances to support yourself?

**Mark Craver** – No, there's no way. I think there are probably less than 100 writers, creative writers who make their living off their writing only. Poets teach. Or they have some other job. Nobody pays you for poetry. I think the most I ever got, they published a poem in a magazine and I got \$400. No, there are no professional poets.

**Dayna** – How long have you been interested in poetry?

**Mark Craver** – Well, I wrote the first poem in second grade. “There was a little rabbit/ Who had a bad habit/ When he went to bed/ He painted himself red.” Really, I'd say since I was about 20. How old do you think I am?

**Delonte** – 28

**Dayna** – 40

**Mark Craver** – 40, that's good. So it's been about 20 years, 27 really. I'm 47 years old. You're supposed to say I don't look that old.

**Reggie** – What inspired you to start writing?

**Mark Craver** – I think I was a big reader. I loved to read and I read so much that I had to do something else. So when I read a book that I really loved, I started writing. I worked at night when I was in college, so I had a lot of time. I got bored and so I started writing.

**Joseph** – What advice would you give a young poet?

**Mark Craver** – Read and write, every day, as much as you can. Anything you love to read, read it and then read it again. Never stop reading.

**Delonte** – After reading “Poem for Amy Michelle,” is there a certain way you have the poem in an arrangement?

**Mark Craver** – Well, that's from the book “Seven Crowns” which is a book of about 65 sonnets. That's the poem in the book that's not a sonnet. It makes fun of sonnets, which are sort of traditional love poems. So that was a break for me. It started out to be a sonnet, but I realized that since I was making fun of sonnets, I didn't want to keep it in a straight form. So it's really just free verse.

**Dayna** – If you couldn't succeed in poetry, what other job would you have?

**Mark Craver** – Professional wrestling. (laughter)

**Andy** – What would your name be?

**Mark Craver** – Wallace Stevens. I think about that a lot. I had a lot of really strange jobs in college. I was a night auditor at a motel. I drove a truck for awhile. It probably wouldn't be anything to do with school.

**Reggie** – What is your favorite type of writing?

**Mark Craver** – Poetry. I love poetry. I love poets — they're really interesting people. I love language, the way people talk. I think that's my favorite thing in the world.

**Joseph** – What was your first inspiration?

**Mark Craver** – I'd have to say reading books, probably by Jack Kerouac, Hunter Thompson. I really liked Richard Brautigan when I was younger. So I probably started out imitating them.

**Dayna** – Do you have a favorite poet?

**Mark Craver** – My favorite poet is Andy Fogle. (laughter) My favorite poet who is not living anymore is Wallace Stevens. But I have some really good friends that are wonderful poets: Forrest Gander and his wife, C.D. Wright. Caroline Wright is the wisest person in America. I really love her poems.

**Reggie** – How long does it take for you to write these books?

**Mark Craver** – Well, that book, the basketball book, took a long time because it was about one of my students who died. I started writing the book the day after his funeral. His mom said something to me at the funeral that made me think, “I’m really going to miss him.” It took me almost two years to write the chapter about the funeral. The rest of the book didn’t take long at all. The whole book coming together, it was really dependent on that one chapter. It took almost two and one-half years, total. And I’d say that’s quick. It usually takes three or four years. I publish a book every six years and it probably takes four of those years to write it, and another year or two to get it published.

**Joseph** – What made you think that you should teach?

**Mark Craver** – I always loved reading and writing, and I wanted a job where I could do something that I loved doing. Everybody wants to get paid to do what they like to do.

**Delonte** – What made you decide that you were going to be a writer?

**Mark Craver** – You know, I thought about this a lot when I was younger. It’s kind of like: What are the things that keep your attention over a long period of time? I think I wanted to be Bob Dylan when I was younger. He’s a singer. He was the first rapper.

And I wasn’t very good at writing when I was younger. It was really hard for me, so I worked at it harder. Stuff that was easy for me was just too easy. I had a hard time writing, reading, so I really wanted to get better at it. So I worked at it.

Reading, like a lot of other things, is like a habit. Now I can’t even go to sleep at night unless I read something,

even if it’s the deodorant can. (laughter) It helps me, it really does. Books, language, and the way people talk—it’s fascinating.

**Dayna** – How many books have you written?

**Mark Craver** – Four books, with a fifth one coming out next year.

**Reggie** – What kinds of things do you love enough to write a poem about?

**Mark Craver** – Some of it’s the most mundane things. My dad used to take me hunting when I was a kid. And I don’t hunt anymore at all, but I remember it really well.

Stopping to see Roger Lathberry—he was cutting a limb off a tree because it bothered his wife that morning.

My little sister—when I started teaching high school she was in the high school where I taught. And she said she couldn’t date boys from that high school any more. (laughter) I was just kidding when I told them I’d kill them. I think that’s kind of our job as poets, to write about the things we do and make them into art. The most mundane things—it’s really our reaction to them that’s important, not what they are. We tend to think we have to write about things that are really of the utmost importance, when in fact the things that we cherish the most are the smallest things that happen on a day to day mundane basis. And that’s what I’ve written about.

**Joseph** – What do you have to go through to publish a book?

**Mark Craver** – It’s pretty much you’ve just got to bleed until people notice you. It’s really hard. You just keep insisting that what you’re doing is worthwhile. And then people recognize it. It’s easier each time you do it.

**Reggie** – Do you have any poems you consider the best?

**Mark Craver** – Yes, the best poem is always the one I’m writing right now. It’s not always true, but that’s what I

go by. The poem I'm writing now is the long poem for my book, "Say When." It's two-thirds of the way done and I have to write the third part, and that's always my favorite thing, the one I'm working on today.

**Delonte** – Was there ever a time when you said, "That's it, I quit. Poetry is not for me."?

**Mark Craver** – No. There's so much good poetry around you can spend the rest of your life reading just the stuff you love. There have been times when I haven't written, when I've taken a break, especially when I've just finished a book.

**Dayna** – When you first starting writing poems, and you hadn't had your first book published, did you get turned down?

**Mark Craver** – I got rejected so many times that I started collecting the rejection slips. And I put them on a bulletin board. It got bigger and bigger, and I was kind of proud of it. Finally, some guy read a poem of mine in a magazine. He was a publisher from a press, and he wrote me and said, "Can we do your book?"

**Delonte** – After you have written a book, is there ever a time that you've found it was not what you intended it to be?

**Mark Craver** – Yeah, that happens all the time. You've got to have a plan when you sit down to write something. But you also have to be flexible enough to realize that, especially in poetry, the language is going to take you where you want to go. If it doesn't go where you intended it to go, you've got to be smart enough and flexible enough to say "Okay, let's see what happens." Sometimes you have to throw that away, but other times it takes you to places you never thought you could go. You write stuff that's even better than you thought you could write.

**Delonte** – In the poem "Others Are Calling it Messy or Nasty" – in your words, what does it actually mean to you?

**Mark Craver** – I was visiting a friend's family in Denbigh, Virginia, and they live right on the river.

There was a storm coming over the river, and these were very religious people. We were sitting in their living room, looking out at the river. And the woman who lived there said, "Other people think that storms are messy and nasty." But she thought it was beautiful. She loved seeing the storm come across the river. She had a real positive attitude about it. Sometimes I think we do that with our lives. We think that everything's bad. But sometimes bad things help us do other things better. If you can get over it, it's a good thing; it makes you better. And I think that's what the poem's about.

**Joseph** – Do you like rhyming?

**Mark Craver** – Sometimes I like to rhyme. In that book of sonnets there, lots of those sonnets rhyme. I like rhyming best when it doesn't draw attention to itself. After you read the poem you say, "Hey, this rhymed." Sometimes it's too easy to rhyme.

**Delonte** – It's like you can see what's coming after what they say.

**Mark Craver** – Sometimes you can use a rhyme to make people think. You can set them up to make them think. Like, can you spell the word "silk"?

**Delonte** – S – I – L – K

**Mark Craver** – What do cows drink?

**Delonte** – Milk.

**Mark Craver** – They drink water! They make milk. (laughter) But if I say "silk" and "cow," because of rhyme you automatically think "milk." If you can do that in your poems, you can set people up and make them think that something is going to happen. Then you can either make it happen or not make it happen. So that they're expecting something and you can satisfy that, or they're expecting something and you can tell them something else. You can surprise them.

## The Italian Poet

It's almost enough that your skin  
Is perfect, that your blouse  
Slips from the shoulder,  
That you wear bracelets from Jamaica  
And touch my hair in movie  
Theaters. It's almost enough  
When you wave goodbye,  
When you sit in the backyard  
While the crickets sing  
And the sun goes down  
Through the trees—No,  
It's when you walk out of the city  
To that secret hollow in  
The woods near Vienna.  
It's almost enough when you make  
The house your own, when you  
Trim the shrubbery and sit  
On the deck humming so softly  
It does not wake up the dog.  
It's almost enough to stack  
Firewood on pallets behind  
The garage, to ride with you  
Anywhere in the mornings  
But west when the sun drops.  
It's almost enough warm and funky  
With you in the mornings, the fire  
Burning and flickering in the other  
Room. It's almost enough when  
You are the Italian Poet  
And in the future that opens up,  
You have moored the mornings  
Like boats in the harbor.

*Mark Craver*

## The Faith of Birds

This morning driving to college  
To teach a poetry class,  
A row of ringed-necked geese  
Walked across the parkway  
Between Old Keene Mill and Ox Roads.  
I stopped in the left lane  
To count eighteen birds  
March past my bumper  
Assured that the world  
Would stop. It was me  
Checking the rearview mirror  
To see what traffic would do.  
It was my rational philosophy  
Undermined by geese refusing  
To look at me in the truck.  
Cars lined up behind us.  
Accelerating, I thought, well  
That's poetry: a line of geese  
Walking across a road  
Under the rumble of warm engines  
Halted for the slap of webbed feet  
On asphalt. They walk like they could fly.

*Mark Craver*

## Always

The world will always be  
gunfire in the morning sky,  
with wet roses waving  
in the hot summer.

*Breana Carpenter*

## There's Only One Me

When I walk, I am so graceful.  
I am precious in my eyes.  
I am wonderful, young and fierce.  
I'm always happy.  
When you see me, you'll think  
I'm an angel wearing a halo.  
I don't think I'm better than anybody,  
To me everybody's equal.  
One day I will spread my wings  
And fly like an eagle.

*Ikea Nelson*

## Sorrow

When I look at you,  
the shadow of sorrow lies in your eyes  
as if you're on the edge of your life.  
It seems as if your heart  
has been pierced with a knife.  
It looks like someone took scissors,  
cut up your heart, and broke your jaw.  
I should have been there to catch your fall,  
but the fact is I wasn't, so now let's move on.

*Rashanda Jackson*

## Runaway

Closer than you think  
Runaway from your death  
Visit flags and neighbors  
Along the red grave

*Latrice Williams*

## Behind

Behind this school are trees,  
trees that are green and brown.  
Above this school is the sky,  
which is blue and white.  
Beyond this school are apartments,  
that people live in.  
Inside this school are children,  
who came to school to learn.  
Within my body is my heart,  
which I use to love.

*Kourtney Hill*

## Last Days

If the world were going to end,  
when I met God, I'd ask him  
to forgive me for all sins I committed.  
I couldn't get in trouble,  
so I'll say yeah, I did it  
all because of hate,  
but I pray that he'll open that gate  
and not tell me to get out,  
because I was twelve when I first went to jail.  
In my head, I think  
I don't belong in heaven; I belong in hell,  
for breaking the heart of my mother.  
Now she calls me Malik instead of big brother.

*Malik Battle*

## Here in the Ghetto

Here in the ghetto is the ghetto.  
You will see a lot of kids  
and people killing people with guns  
and it will be nighttime  
and there will be stars.

*Kenneth McDonald*

## The Best

Without me, candy would have no taste.  
I'm so fast, I can beat a bullet in a race.  
I'm like hot sauce, without me you wouldn't eat your meat.  
I'm so strong, I can pick up a house with my feet.  
Without me, there wouldn't be wrong from right.  
If it weren't for me, the color TV would still be black and white.  
I'm a man, you will never see me cry.  
It's funny, because everybody's cars are in the street and my cars fly.

*Lionel Robinson*

## The House

I look around, but I see no moving.  
I say hello, but no one answers.  
I walk upstairs to see if I can see anyone,  
But I see a shadow.  
I say, "Can you understand me?"  
But no one answers.  
I say, "goodbye" because I can say no more.

*Keyonna Diggs*



*Monica Harris (Joseph Heath is in background)*

## Homework

Homework sounds like someone telling you to do something.  
Homework can change into a box with a lock before I get to it,  
and turn into a wall so I can't run away.  
Homework is like a closet that would trap me in a room  
with paper, pencils and a homework sheet  
and pull me into a seat with glue in it  
and not let me up, until I do it.

*Breana Carpenter*

## My Mommy

As sweet as a plum, right down to the pit.  
As good as always having a first aid kit.  
Always smiling, never a frown,  
as long as my Mommy stays around.

As sour as a lemon, just being squeezed,  
helping little kids, with their scraped knees.  
Always nearby, always alert  
“Don’t be talking to no boys, don’t try to flirt!”

Always there from the farthest view,  
right there in a hurry to the rescue.  
She can sing low, she can sing high,  
she can walk, she can fly.  
She dresses in Coach, Louis and Tommy—  
This is why I love her, cause she’s my Mommy.

*Dayna Hudson*

## Ending World

When the world ends, I will pray by myself for everyone else.  
When the world ends, I will drink the blood of war.  
When the world ends, I will move the world and protect all boys and girls.  
When the world ends, I do a dance of freedom.  
When the world ends, I will say this poem.  
When the world ends, I’ll have fun being in the sun,  
Kissing the light. Yeah, that’s right.

*William Fleming, Jr.*

## Suddenly, from the Dimly Lit Hall

I'm locked in the  
school of ghosts. When  
I walk in the hall,  
I see myself.

*Van Jackson*

## My Neighborhood

My neighborhood is sweaty.  
The walls have statues of animals.  
Sunlight bursts through the window,  
and a butterfly floats through the broken glass.

*Chantal Campbell*

## Nowhere

The sweaty children run outside the house  
to catch pink butterflies.  
They put them inside the house and go to bed.  
When they wake up and eat their breakfast,  
I walk into the house. They say,  
“Where did you come from?”  
I tell them, “Nowhere.”

*Monet Cherry*

## To Sit, To Stand, To Kill, To Die

I sit really cool,  
like a rapper  
with a toothpick  
in my mouth. I put  
my foot on the wall  
like my brother  
when he wants to talk.  
I don't kill, but when  
I die, I'll die  
with a smirk on my face.

*Van Jackson*

## My Special Waterfall

Under the deep sorrow,  
waterfall so beautiful and soft.  
Me and my inner self,  
walking along the wet, rocky mountain.  
I'm alone. Now why should I be?  
It's just the inside of my soul and the outside of me.  
I hear the soft sound of the water  
it sounds wavy, like a deep, deep shower  
just pouring down in the warm water.

Beneath the rocky surface, the surface that's so soft,  
I can feel the sifting sand, driving between my toes.  
But nobody knows my little secret spot  
where I dream, and imagine  
the sounds, the touch, the silence I share  
with the outside and inside of the waterfall.

Areale Oates

## My Sister India

She's as sweet as can be,  
my favorite sister and I'm hers.  
We're like two twins wrapped  
in a blanket, but she's 16.  
I love her to death.  
We took a path through the woods.  
I stuck my fingers, she took care of me.  
I fell in the water, she saved me from the sharks.  
She cleaned me up, took me to the park,  
and after dark we both went home.  
My mother raised her tone and said,  
"Where have you two been all day?"  
Baby sister started to cry, but she dried my eyes.

Asia Clegg

## Facing It

My black face fades into darkness  
like black clouds trying to escape  
from the terrible storm.  
I'm sitting now, wondering  
if the storm will ever end.  
I see a lady with a knife  
trying to kill her son—no,  
she's brushing her boy's hair.

*Charnetta Barnes*

## Forever Changed

You will never be changed.  
You will fade away like a reflection of your mind.  
I forgot my name  
because I feel like an elevator going up and down.  
My flesh is killing me  
because there is a stain on the living room floor.  
There is a big difference between you and me.

*Danielle Briggs*

## Are You Coming?

Out to the moon, I'm quivering above my death.  
Many flat seasons have pulled by  
like 4 tombstones taking me to my wooded grave.  
Red runaways run  
while thinking "Where are you?"

*Tony Bush*

## What's Around

I sit here and look at the sun as it rises.  
I hear the baby crying, waiting for his bottle.  
I feel the air blowing against the silent window,  
waiting for me to come and close it.  
As the baby cries, the young mother neglects the child  
like a wall is blocking the way.  
I sit in silence to observe the air for just one second—  
Am I there?

*Johniece Simms*

## Dream

My black face fades,  
hiding behind a cloud of brushes,  
trying not to be found  
by something I'm afraid of.  
I think as it comes closer,  
and I'm trying not to run or scream.  
My eyes pale as they look at it.  
Something touches me,  
and I turn to look, but see nothing.

*Lonnisha Young*

## Rage

Rage wakes up in the morning angry,  
and brushes his teeth with hot lava.

He drinks snake venom  
and eats poisonous frogs.

Rage drives a two-headed dragon  
with a seat of fire.

He goes to sleep on a Komodo dragon's back.  
(His alarm clock is a lion's roar).

*Jawara Johnson*

## The Tragedy

A homeless family is on the beach,  
hungry and needing shelter.  
None of them have shoes on  
and their dirty, used-up clothes  
have been on their backs for months.  
They are cold and have lost their home.  
If I could jump in, I'd give them some clothes,  
shoes, and blankets. And I'd give them a place to live.

*Deanna Vaughan*

## Drama

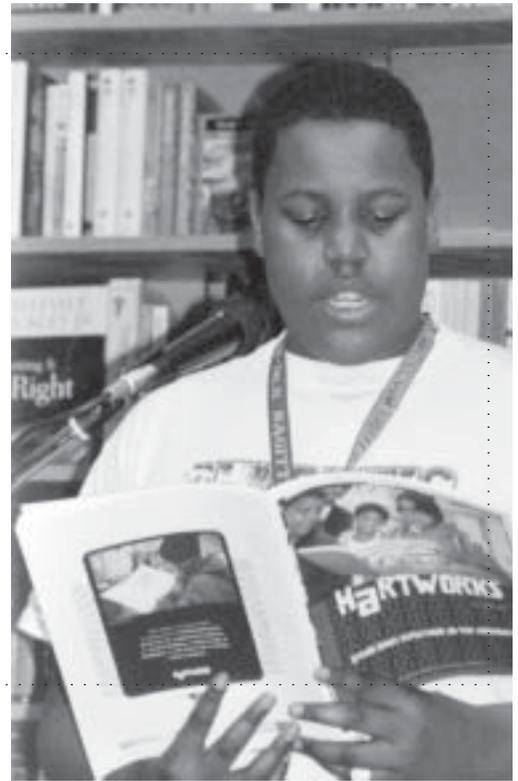
Drama can be bad most of the time.  
Children all wonder why their moms and dads  
are always fighting. The daughter  
sits in her room in the dark  
while her mother and father have a verbal fight.

She hears her mother start to cry.

The father runs off and throws a brick  
at the car's windshield. The car starts to smoke,  
but it doesn't catch on fire.  
The daughter runs outside to see what happened,  
but she sees no one—they disappeared.  
“Maybe it was all a dream,” she thinks.  
She runs back inside, but no one's there,  
so she turns back outside and sees her mom with the police.

They write the whole situation up.  
She runs to her mom, and clings to her.  
The neighbors all come out to see what happened.  
The mother holds her daughter tight  
as they watch the police handcuff him and take him away.  
They go inside and try to look forward to the future.

*Raynese Jefferson*



*Tony Bush*

## Why?

Why did I have to take that stupid test?  
Why did I score so high?  
Why are they making me go to a new school?  
Why are these people treating me like a monster?  
Why are there no kids in my class?  
No one wants to play with me anymore.  
When I cry, I say why.  
I asked my mother why  
and she said they're just hating.  
It's not all over. My questions aren't answered.  
It's because I'm black and not white.

*Shannon Matthews*

## Megan Live On

Megan live on is  
kind of like a storm  
because she broke everyone  
down when she passed.  
They carved her name  
where she took her last breath,  
then everybody left her flowers to rest.  
On the wall, they meant to put R.I.P.  
We will always miss you.

*Johniece Simms*

## The War Has Begun

Our army is at war  
Their mothers wail  
Their love stays strong  
They send letters  
but they never get them  
Their memories fade away  
The pastor helps the families pray  
They used to have fun,  
but that's all gone away  
The fire burns their souls  
An elephant stamps on their hearts

*Raynese Jefferson*

## Lonely, Cold, and Hungry

nowhere to go  
no where to sleep  
  
no one to call  
no one to come by  
  
nothing to eat  
nothing to do  
nothing to say

*Nicola Johnson*

## An Everyday Thing

I have a hole in my leg and I walk funny.  
My car broke down a few blocks away  
from my home, where I grow cherry blossoms.  
When I look in the sky, the seasons pass.  
This is an everyday thing for me.

*Rashad Hall*

## The Hood

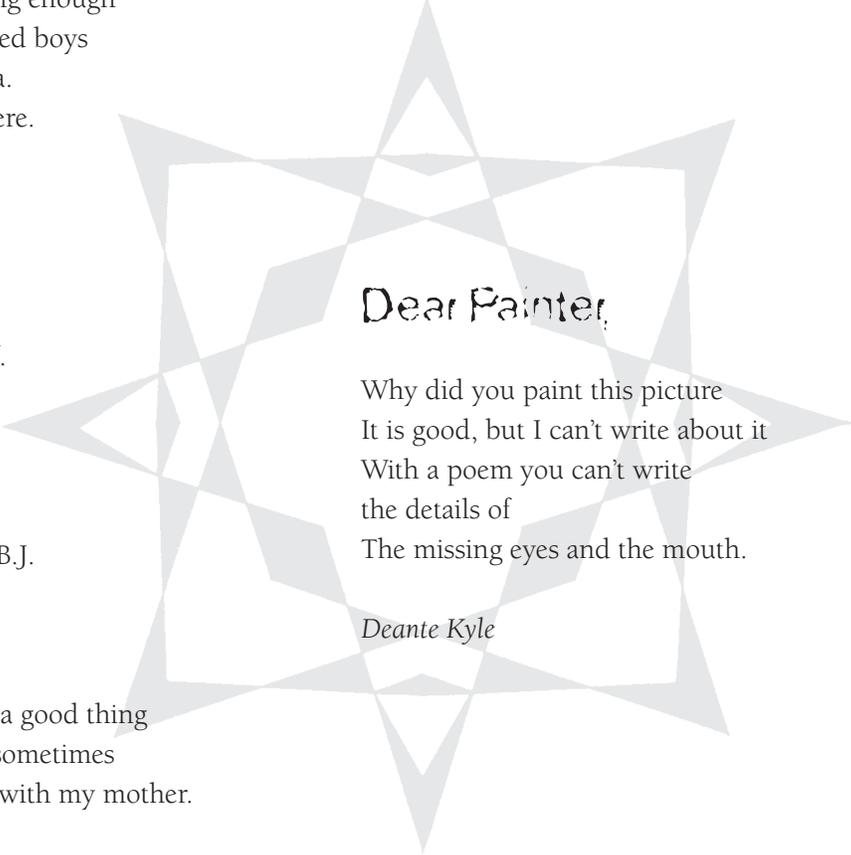
Mama, we have been in the ghetto long enough  
to make me sick for all the hard-headed boys  
that don't pay attention to their mama.  
They're writing on the walls everywhere.  
When we go outside our front doors,  
we see it on the corner store.

Mama, let's move, I'm tired  
and I know you're tired of it too.  
We should go before you kill yourself.  
You scream and holler  
at these knuckle-headed kids  
that don't listen to their mother.

The writing is saying Rest. In. Peace. B.J.

My mama finally found a house  
that's not in the hood. We moved in  
a week later, and we had fun—it was a good thing  
to move. Even though the hood was sometimes  
special to me, I'd do anything to stay with my mother.

*Richard Lynch*



## Dear Painter,

Why did you paint this picture  
It is good, but I can't write about it  
With a poem you can't write  
the details of  
The missing eyes and the mouth.

*Deante Kyle*

## Lost In Tragedy

As I look and stare  
I see three helpless souls by the water's glare.  
They kneel over, looking so hurt inside and torn,  
they must be tired and worn.  
They look as if they need some affection,  
but they all seem to be each other's protection.  
The truth is that they can't face their fears.  
They're lost in a world of tragedy,  
just wandering around looking for peace.  
The grayish-blue sky will never lie.  
It's as if they're waiting to be killed,  
but they'll be together forever, forming a shield.

*Rashanda Jackson*

## All Souls

People with guns just standing there,  
holding people hostage, and hostages  
thinking their souls are getting taken away.  
Standing in front of everyone, crying  
like a newborn baby.  
They're just screaming and praying,  
"Don't shoot me, don't shoot me."

*Ernest Hunter*

## Death

Death can be noiseless  
as it moves through the air.  
The lightness of death  
refreshes those who are sleeping  
in the bright darkness of night.

*Marcellus Johnson*

## Friends Sometimes

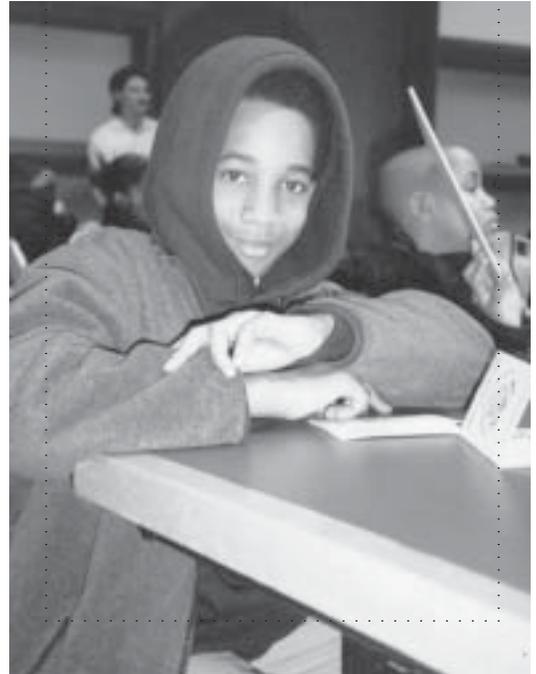
Don't bite the hand that trusts you  
and don't ever use someone who loves you.  
Love all but only trust some—the other ones  
who grin in your face won't be there come time to race.  
Be careful of your wishes because love isn't real  
without kisses. Good things come to those who wait,  
and bad things come to those who hate.  
You can lead a horse to water, but never a friend to your heart.  
Some will be there, but only at the start.  
Give me liberty or give me justice,  
make sure you can find someone you trust.  
No news is like sweetness—hold your friend close  
and together you can't be defeated.

*Rashanda Jackson*

## Never Underestimate

I see people getting shot all up in the face  
It's up to me and I say that's a disgrace  
A lot of black people are treacherous  
Betraying all, but do they know it's dangerous?  
Poor people, I know about famine  
Black people get betrayed  
but don't let racists think that blacks are weak  
Never underestimate the Black African-Americans  
There's not another city like DC  
When it's hot, we just use our fans  
I'm American, so don't underestimate me  
Black Americans always get turned down  
Black Americans are like underground kings  
that aren't yet crowned  
Kings need to get their throne back  
and stop acting like cowards  
Never underestimate the Black African-Americans

*Tron Pannell*



*Donte Bostick*

## The Mind

As I walk down the street, I get the feeling that something is following me. I look around like a crow looking for its prey, but I see nothing. So I keep walking until I hear the leaves crunching behind me. I look again, but still don't see anything, but there's the feeling that the shadow of death is following me.

I see a shadow that's not mine and I start to run, and then I see a gun. I pick it up and start shooting around at the shadows. I feel my heart beat, and I'm hungry from the hot sun that's about to fall to earth. I find two knives in my pocket, so I start climbing the sun, running from a shadow of death, but I fall and when I hit the ground, I'm in my bed. How dangerous the mind can be.

*Richard Lynch*

## Hood

I sit and look out my window,  
and I see people with their guns  
shooting each other up  
just because they think they're number one.  
They think they're as good as they come,  
but every time they hear someone pull a trigger  
they run. The drug addicts ain't good, but it's a shame  
they have to be prisoners in their own hood,  
and it's a shame how they work so hard  
trying to get out, but they get neglected  
and just pray to God.

*Tyrone Totten*

## I Have Seen Black Hands

Have you seen them?  
They're identical twins.  
On the streets you see them  
shooting dice, drinking beer, smoking,  
violent things.  
The most powerful things ever, they can hurt someone.  
Watch out—they may be coming your way.  
Then you won't have a word to say.

*Ricardo Jackson*

## The Duel in Baltimore

The duel between two (1 beat, 1 lost)  
You wouldn't want to lose, it's your life that's the cost  
One leaves with a win, happy as ever  
The other ones are saying "Please send me to heaven"  
The cars drive by and didn't even pay attention  
If I'd been out there, this crime would've never happened

*Tron Pannell*

## The Strong Manly Hand

They slam the woman  
like ice thrown in the icebox.  
Her thin brown hands  
slap against the wall  
like the pressure of an ice burn.  
The woman wants to leave,  
she's trying to get away,  
but the man is beating her to stay.

*Ceaira Hawkins*

## Beauty

Beauty is a hot summer day  
Walking on the beach  
Getting fresh air and a sun tan  
Beauty is the sun getting ready to come up  
and shine

*Tyra Martin*

## On the Street of a Corner Store

On the street of a corner  
Trees blooming  
Give me wise talk  
And supernatural ability  
That was forgotten by lonely,  
But proud people of ancient indigo color.  
Their exotic food was traditional, but dreaded,  
On the street of a corner.

*Ja'Vonte Porter*

## Envy

Hate, mistrust, revenge,  
All part of envy.  
Kill, grudge, death.  
Something that should not be.  
Lookin' inside of a grave  
Of your family member  
With a scarred up face  
5 shots in the head and stabbed twice  
All because of envy.

*Ja'Vonte Porter*

## This and That

There wouldn't be love if it wasn't for pain  
There wouldn't be snow if it wasn't for rain  
If it wasn't for grass, there wouldn't be a breeze  
There wouldn't be no oxygen if it wasn't for trees  
If there wasn't pepper, there wouldn't be spice  
If it wasn't for Jesus, there wouldn't be water to make ice  
If there wasn't woman, there wouldn't be birth  
If there wasn't a God, there wouldn't be an Earth

*Tron Pannell*

## What I See

I see women neglecting their kids  
and the older men doing the same to the ladies.  
People dying like black-on-black crime.  
My oppression like a dagger, secrets you tell,  
in one ear and out the other.  
Ice melting in the hot steaming sun.  
I wish I could prevent the sadness,  
the answers lying under the deep dark sand.  
Better be safe than worry,  
because answers are going to rise someday.

*Ceira Hawkins*

## Chill In Peace

I like to hear silence  
when I'm working on my homework  
It's so hard like prisoners in their cells  
waiting to get out of jail  
People trying to get quiet  
so they can chill in peace, but it's so hard  
like secrets trying to be saved  
or to touch, feel and see  
Look at me—I am shaken  
like I have the power to jump in the trees  
Disease is going around like a plant underground

*Anita White*

## Bridge

As the ocean shines bright silver,  
The Potomac looks periwinkle pink  
And is the shape of a blossom.  
The sleeping fish sing in harmony.  
I run to see them growing  
They are a beautiful orange.  
I jump off the bridge  
Into the dusk of the sun  
This is the sign of goodness.

*Delonte Williams*



*l-r Gabrielle Martin, Monica Harris, Wanda Evans*

## Picture This!

When you walk into the class  
It is as bright as the sun  
Sometimes it is hot like a hot dog bun,  
But then it cools down  
And the floor is hard as a rock.  
The walls are painted white  
Like rooms in a crazy house.  
We never have pizza parties  
It as if we were slaves in jail.  
I wish someone, like my mother,  
Would post my bail.

*Stephen Staton*

## Leo

In the Chinese Zodiac I am a rat  
(But I was born Leo  
King of the Jungle!)  
I am the king of the cheese lovers.  
My horoscope says  
That I have a renewed interest in outdoor adventure  
But I hate the outdoors  
I am even allergic to grass  
I can't set foot outside.

*Delonte Williams*

## Photograph of a Woman

This lady looks like the bark on a dead tree  
She is tough, snobbish, restless, impulsive, and demanding.  
She looks like she was about to get married,  
But was left at the altar.

*Tiffany Mace*

## This Picture

Looks like an island for your iris,  
Where there is nothing but peace and silence  
It is like you could go there  
And all your troubles would be forgotten.  
It is like an exotic breeze that catches you as you walk past  
And you stand there as peaceful as can be.

*Tiffany Mace*

## Unknown

The sky is dark, dark black  
I feel that I should tell people  
To stop smoking crack.  
But as the day goes by  
I think about all the rotten things  
That I should have forgotten.  
In the peaceful night  
The sky is a shimmer with dusty glass stars.  
I am proud, but I know  
When I am home sometimes  
I feel lonely.  
The dusty ground is too much to be around.  
So during this time  
I will be on the playground.

*Brian Johnson*

## The Dream

I gaze upon my father's eyes  
Trying to read him like a book,  
Trying to find out the story of his life.  
I can see shame and fear in his eyes,  
Like he doesn't want me to see the truth  
I ask why he vanished  
I hear his heart say to me  
"I care. I love you my little angel.  
I will come back."  
When my eyes open it is light out  
Was it a dream or was my father trying to tell me  
The story of why he vanished,  
When light became dark?  
This dream never ends.

*Angelina Gomez*

## Our Classroom

As I look at the green board  
The sun is shining so bright,  
That I wish the sun would do that to my house.  
Some of the chairs are as green as the grass on a hot summer day  
When all the children go out and play.  
The kid's handwriting is so pretty and neat  
That they love to stay in their seats.  
This room looks like a dream come true  
When kids walk in every day,  
this room looks like it says  
I love you

*Keisha McDonald*

## Vacation

I would like to see the blue sea  
I would like to hear the wind  
I would like to smell the sea  
I would like to touch the sea and the wind

*Jessica Drane*

## Growing Up

The whole idea of turning 14 makes me feel  
Like I am getting old, I am growing up fast.  
I was just 11 years old, playing with my Barbie dolls  
doing their hair. Now I do real people's hair.  
I couldn't have a boyfriend or boys calling my house,  
But now they call. I am older, I am more responsible.

*Patricia Smith*

## Fish

I swim in the ocean  
The same way you run in motion.  
I grow and blossom into orange.  
My sleep is bright and silver.  
I sing in the Potomac.  
Blue is my sign.

*Greg Finch*

## Cut Off

This is a place where no man is bored  
And is always getting chased and cut by swords  
This place is supernatural  
Filled with trees, grass and men scared of being smashed.

*Jamal Walden*

## Sixth Grade

I like to go to class  
You can see science books, roses, and Ms. Jackson.  
She is wearing a red dress.  
It is hot because the sun  
Is in my face.  
It feels like the room is small  
And I don't like it.  
But I like the people in my class.

*Andre Becton*

## How to Draw

When I was younger  
I couldn't draw.  
Now I practice and get better and better,  
Better at the hair and eyes.  
I am still practicing.

*Chawn Clerk*

## The Old Man

Looks lonely and nobody wants to talk to him  
He looks forgotten, but he does look peaceful  
He looks bored, his eyes are silent and sad.

*Javaun Skinner*

## The Room, This Beautiful Room

With the rusty old floor,  
The brown colored door,  
The yellow desks and children who are pests,  
Is like daycare with children and books  
And computers. Just look!  
This room is hard and the windows creek.  
But I like it  
That's just me.

*Ronell White*



*Shavon Butler*

## How would you get there?

I don't know  
Maybe I'll take a plane  
Or something like that.  
Go exploring the wonderful world  
By taking a walk—  
A long walk  
But it could be someplace  
I don't want to go  
It could be spooky, dark, and seem like  
Someone's trying to get you.  
I don't want to go  
But then again I don't ...  
Look! I knew  
We shouldn't have come.

*Roosevelt Jones, Jr.*

## Amusement Park

I'd smell the great food, taste the funnel cake,  
Hear the kids yell.  
I'd see the whole park  
From the top of the roller coaster.  
I'd touch the water on all the water rides.  
But instead, I am stuck in the house this summer.

*Donte Bostick*

## I am a king because I have everything

An 11 year old boy could possibly want  
A basketball court, playstation 2, and almost  
all the games.

*Clayton Armstrong*

## Capricorn

I'm restless and need some validation  
Someone to tell me that everything is going  
To be OK so I won't stay  
Up all night and worry about what's  
Going to happen next  
To wonder if my life is over  
Or my mother's or anyone else I know  
To get all the pressure off of me  
To know everything's alright

*Sylvia Spencer*

## Candy

I didn't mean to give you a cavity  
I just wanted to be sweet.  
I didn't mean to make the dentist  
Drill a hole in your tooth.  
I didn't mean to make you fat.  
I just wanted to be sweet.

*Span Leake*

## My Horoscope

You are in demand.  
Me, Marshae Chappell, in demand.  
Can't nobody say that I am not.  
It says right here on this paper  
Ms. Melito gave me.  
People like me, I don't know why.  
I am special, like God in the sky.

*Marshae Chappell*



*Deanna Dickson*

## I Can Hear

What is that I hear?  
Can you hear that bee?  
Can you see that snake?  
What can you hear?  
Where are we?  
You hear the crickets chirping in the trees day and night.  
The bees buzzing with honey in their tummies.  
The snake is right there, it just wiggled  
The squeaking noise is a squirrel eating an acorn  
I can hear the baby, I can hear the car, beep, beep.  
I can hear it all.  
We are home, safe and sound.

*Angelica Pratt*

## On Earth

The wind blows cold and  
Steel is the color of morning  
I like it when it snows  
It looks so wonderful.  
The ground is pavement so be careful  
The best thing in the world is the big blue sky.

*Antonio Dorsey*

## What I see

I see a lonely mountain with a forgotten palace  
The palace is waiting for someone  
I see a light in the palace  
as if someone is saying  
I am proud of this place  
The silent gray sky  
goes with the mountain  
Like a wise main in a lonely place.  
This is what I see.

*Steven Jackson*

## The Smiling Lady

When I see you, I see a ripped trench coat  
a raggedy piece of cloth.  
When I see you, I see a lady  
who was used to a lot—  
A green choker with matching earrings.  
When I see you, I see a desperate old lady  
With curls as curly as they can be.  
When I see you, I see a smiling lady.

*Andre Harper*

## Freedom to Worship

Praying is traditional  
It has been passed down  
from our ancestors  
When you pray it is silent  
I am proud and thankful for all I have

*Aysa White*

## My Family

My Family is caring  
I give them my respect  
I trust them, they trust me  
I give them all my love.

*Davon Delaney*



*l-r Sherrell Jones, Shaquiel Jenkins*

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*l-r: Chantz Clagette, Joseph Heath, Joseph Hudson, Andre Harper*

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