



*"We make magic when we open—
saving our souls together
with words."*

The Phoenix Rising Poetry Program at The Spot

During the years of 2005/2006, Art from Ashes provided twice weekly, 2-hour therapeutic poetry and spoken word workshops at The Spot thanks to a YouthReach grant provided by the Colorado Council on the Arts. From the more than 1,200 submitted poems that we typed, we had the difficult job of narrowing it down to the 100 found in this compilation. A dozen participating youth, several volunteers and myself read aloud from the collection and chose those we felt best articulated the process of healing. The result was more than 1,200 heartfelt, honest and beautiful poems created by more than 200 youth participants. This compilation represents a mere fraction of those poems eloquently represent the process of healing and self-discovery facilitated by these workshops.

Each two-hour workshop incorporates three vital aspects:

- Expression – facilitating a safe way for youth participants to tell their stories and release their pain;
- Connection – providing the opportunity for young people to come out of isolation and share their stories, allowing understanding and a bond to develop between guest poets and artists, the authors of the poetry, the facilitators, and each other;
- Healing – using writing prompts that help young people create poetry that recognizes their value and their ability to choose a healthy and productive life.

Consequently some of these poems describe painful moments or memories in a young person's life. You also will read the results of writing prompts that encourage young people to think of themselves as creative geniuses and as self-determined individuals, no longer identifying themselves as victims of life circumstances, but as creators of their own futures.

Each of these candid poems was written in three minutes or less—yet another indication of the innate creative power we all possess. These young people have discovered that they are capable of creating identities based on that awareness, rather than on their sometimes horrifying experiences and circumstances. Although most are in chronological order of the workshops, some are together by author, so that you can see the transformative process in the poetry.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to their hearts.

With gratitude,



Catherine O'Neill Thorn
Executive Director, Art from Ashes Inc.

*These poems are therapeutic in nature and therefore **are not censored**. Please contact us for more information on any of these young poets or the writing prompts used to inspire the poems.*



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01.12.05

Choose an affirmation and write for three minutes about why it is true for you.

Affirmation

by Leticia Guzman, 22

I step, I fall, I rise above
The pattern of perfection
Running through my lines
Wanting life to be so perfect
But is it really worth it?
I would say so,
For my life will show in time
I have grown and learned to love
what has been shown
And know with every step and every fall
Will be another lesson to be learned
and practice makes perfect
So yeah, it's more than worth it
For I have persistence



Jan. 27, 2005

Finish the following lines, writing as many as you can in three minutes: "I seem to be..., but really I am..."

by Rueben Pulce, 15

I seem to be the sharp sound of silence,
but really I am the praise from someone who loves.

I seem to be bread,
but really I am black-eyed peas.

I seem to be rough,
but really I'm air.

I seem to be unknown,
but really I'm the smell of your grandmother's perfume.

I seem slow,
but really I'm fast.



Maria Left Hand Bull, 18

Dull

In this time when you ignore me...and I
...I take it.
In this place where you held me...and you
...you were thinking of her.
In this way you make me feel...I feel
...I wish you well.
In this life (if life is what you call it)...I
...I miss your smile.
In this dream you were the air...and I
...I suffocate, trying to live without it.
In this night...I'm the darkness...
And you...you are my brightest star.
In this face...I...I'm blind...and you
...you're the light that I will never see.
In this heart you are my blood...and I
...I cut myself and I'm dying.
In this poem...you
...you are my words...so I
...I'm ending it.



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Feb. 3, 2005

Choose a word from the previous writing exercise that you think best describes you; use all your senses to communicate that word (Synesthesia).

Beautiful

by Alana Taylor, 19

I am beautiful.
My color cascades of blue.
I'm seen in different shades of hue.
I smell like the snow-capped mountains—
 crisp and clear.
I sound like a sweet breeze
through the garden.
I feel like clouds through your hair.
I move like sand under the sea.



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Feb. 28, 2005

After hearing the Autobiography in Five Short Chapters, describe how you walk through your life. Begin each line with the words, "I walk..."

by Phenon

I walk on eggshells, trying not to hurt you,
because I know one wrong step will kill you.

I walk on unsavable, unrepentant souls,
and they comfort me, knowing that I'm above them,
because I chose to pick myself up.

I walk with my head high,
because the makeup of queens resides in me.

I walk on the land of milk and honey,
with the streets paved with gold in my dreams.

and I walk to high aspirations and dreams;
I can't be outdone, because no one
can add beauty and loyalty and still get the makeup of me.



What have you lost? What would you hate to lose? Start a poem with the words "I will never lose..." followed by the things you would hate to lose.

If Only

Stephanie Treviño, age 18

If I was to see you
I would say that you're a part of my heart.
If only we didn't get separated from each other
we would be having fun creating pictures.
If I was to be around you all the time
we would know each other more.
If only our mom wasn't a fuck up we would see each other everyday.
If I was to see you,
I would explain to you how our mom was fucked up,
and why you're where you are today.
If only mom did what she said she was going to do,
we wouldn't be in this situation.

Never Losing

I'm never going to lose the positive things that are happening in my life.
Because it's positive things that are happening,
and positive always wins over negative things.



A Weapon**by Harold Packer, 14**

I have a weapon to protect me,
it is a bomb of love,
and once I give it to you,
you can't get enough.
You could try to be buff,
but it's tough not to fall in love
you see, with the voice inside of me.
It's quiet as a den,
but like Mike Tyson, it's mean.
It's not something you could discard,
because it leaves you
physically and emotionally scarred.

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by Daysha Touchstone, 21

Look back at the black black abyss where
you were created only to be dismissed
from the pink flesh of a goddess
who fell from grace flat on her face
and you who followed her footsteps
misplaced your judgments and
side by side your junkie remnants
tangled you in vines of crippling
temperaments. Remember? Remember
the rage gained and lost as you aged?
When the shit caught up and
suddenly you were caged in your
own prison disengaged from everything
and everyone admired all you
wanted was higher goddamn it higher!
Now you're coming down again,
don't forget where the fuck you've been
cause where you are comparatively
speaking has got to be some
form of Zen. This is now, that was then
the future is now so
I'ma keep on kickin'.



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Truth

by Derrick Jones

The truth is what you have to realize
you can only be as much as you are able.
Standing on solid ground in the place
You have found.
Some really don't want it
if you gave it to them they'd ask you
to take it back. But once you've told
the truth there's no taking it back.
Some say truth is like building a block.
Strong, solid, and hard. To move
forward I have to realize that ignoring the
past leaves me no future. Bound by an absence
of truth I am destined to repeat the past. Constantly
convincing myself that this is the best things
have ever been. Oh yes, I am my best friend.



Start your poem with “Early in the morning of my childhood...” and write about who you were before you were born.

Early in the morning of my childhood...

by Abby Templeton, 23

Early in the morning of my childhood, I was
the sound my sister’s baby makes,
bubbling, tripled with laughter,
expressing only what he sees,
“ay”s and “ooh”s and “ahh”s
coming out simultaneously—
slow at first, and gurgling,
tripping at other times.

I was like rain,
always arriving or almost gone.
I was an idea,
the silence between then and now...



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Start your poem with “Early in the morning of my childhood...” and write about who you were before you were born.

Early in the morning of my childhood...

by Demetrious Jenkins

I am a child who was conceptually, creatively
built upon strong ethical values!
I am a child who GOD will give
to a man and a woman,
who will then make a promise to guide,
protect & love
until death do us part.

I am the child like many,
who was chosen to lead others,
which will ensure a better life 4 others to follow.
I, like many others, will be chosen
to experience many trials & tribulations–
these experiences will strengthen me,
in a way that others will identify,
with strength and wisdom.

And now I am a man,
without a father or mother–
I’m still strong from my experiences,
but instead of leading at all times,
I find myself following–
when at times I feel leading
is the only true option!



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A letter to my parents**by Ketha Johnson, 19**

What is it that a child can do
to be dismissed, and disowned by both of
their parents? Was it that I didn't try hard
enough? Did I not clean good enough?
Or was it that you just stopped loving me?
When you left me I felt lost, alone and
abandoned. I wish I knew what it was that
I did. I would change, I can change, I will change
Just to hear you say you love me once more.
So what is it that a child can possibly do
to make both of their parents do something
like this to them? Well I will let you know
when they let me know.

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by Ketha Johnson, 19

A wise woman once told me
that you can only show as much love as
you are given. Well in my situation I would
say that isn't true. I love many people
very much. But not many give me love.
Many people ask "Well, if that's true
where do you get all your love?" And this
is what I tell them. "My love is from within.
I think of all the love I should be given
And it all adds up to more than anyone
could ever receive." They tell me I am strong
but it is all a front. Inside I am afraid
and weak but you will never see it.



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Feb. 14, 2005

Start your poem with "Early in the morning of my childhood..." and write about who you were before you were born.

by Helaman Lucero, 19

Before I came out of my mom,
 I was an innocent soul,
 not knowing what was to come next.
 My eyes were closed to a peaceful darkness.
 Darkness—not to be afraid.
 Hoping that some day I will see light,
 light of Hell,
 Hell, the day I was born.

Why?
 Because I am a different soul,
 a soul that was not in the darkness,
 a soul from Hell!

But I know the soul of darkness will come back
 when the words are said,
 when my eyes are closed:
 "Game over"

and that's when I will be
 the soul of darkness.



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March 30, 2006

You have the power to transform your past wounds into jewels by choosing forgiveness. How would you respond with forgiveness to someone who has wounded you?

Forgiveness

by Helaman Lucero, 19

Yes I am gay
And I say that proudly
You can call me whatever
But trust and believe
Never judge me for what you see
I'm a good person
Let me be me
If I had a choice of sexuality
Trust and believe I would be straight
I didn't ask for this lifestyle
And the name calling
But I know I'm here for a reason
A reason to live life
To the fullest
And make people laugh
God made me who I am
No he does not hate me
He loves me
Cause I'm his child
God loves me for me



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May 15, 2006

Read Marianne Williamson's "A Return to Love." What would your life be like if you could truly "shine" in the light of who you are?

My Life With Shine

by Helaman Lucero, 19

The stage is my shine
I want to express myself to the world
Through my past emotions
Making tears roll down the eyes of audiences
Showing them my shine of emotions
I want them to laugh
And forget their worries
I want my shine to erase their reality
And step into the reality of my character
My shine is your limelight



by GlendaRika Garcia, 24

I wrote something to say how much
I wished you'd die.
I wrote it, I read it over and over again,
and then I cried.
I never thought I'd be able
to get over feeling so sad,
But I did, I wrote it down, and then
I no longer felt bad.
My pages were full of hurtful words...
I murdered you with adjectives and verbs,
and you never even read it.
But you didn't deserve it anyway.



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by GlendaRika Garcia, 24

Okay God...
if you're even real,
Can you hear me now?
Should I pay your Verizon bill
so you have time to listen?
Are you deaf?
'Cuz I've been talkin' and talkin'
and all of this unanswered babbling
is making me think I need some medication.
Or are you trying to teach me to shut up?
Have my minutes run out?
Or did you?
'Cuz I beg for help
and no fucking "Let's save Rika ambulance"
has arrived yet.



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05.05.05**by GlendaRika Garcia, 24**

She's a criminal.
She's a convict.
She's a really bad mom, too.
She's single.
She's foreign.
And oh shit...she's sittin' next to you!
But you know what she's not...
She's not deaf you fool.
That's right, I'm not...
I hear what you say, but I'm short on words.
All I can think of is...
take your opinions and shove 'em!
I am giving an eviction notice
to the anger that runs through my veins.
It runs hate through my heart
creating barriers for little else to come through.
I'm reclaiming my being...
my blood, my heart, and my feelings.
I will breathe strength and patience into my body.
I will project peace and love.
I will breathe.

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You are a sacred temple. Imagine that you have placed the rocks into a cauldron and that they are set fire by your anger. If you were in training to be a Shaolin monk, your last trial would be to carry a cauldron full of hot coals outside by pressing your forearms against the sides of the cauldron. On the cauldron would be the raised relief of symbolic animals, which would be branded onto the forearms of the Shaolin disciple as a reminder to them of their trials. The cauldron has a dragon on one side and a phoenix on the other. Write a poem in which you take the cauldron of anger outside of your temple and burn the images of the dragon and the phoenix into your forearms as a reminder of your strength and transcendence.

03.23.06

I am the Phoenix

by GlendaRika Garcia, 24

My arms are engulfed in flames –
sadness raw and untamed.
My temple walls have all burned down
to nothing but ashes;
the only thing left of me is a thought.
I am the Phoenix.
My ashes have all blown away;
I have risen.



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Feb. 7, 2005

Somatic Therapy exercise: Start the poem with several lines of "I breathe _____ into my body" and end it with the line "and now I am _____."

I Breathe

by Ashley P., 15

I breathe passion into my body
and now I am filled with emotions
all types of emotion
hate, love, lust, anger and determination
to find my way in the dark without a flashlight
bare with nothing but the voice
of the one I love whispering in my ear
and the voices of my enemies
so I am with nothing
bare with nothing but the moon and stars
to guide me through the dark
I feel lonely, alone and bare
with no one to love, no one to touch
so I breathe passion
hoping that I will feel the passion
and now I breathe passion into my body.



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April 18, 2005

Write about a childhood experience that changed the way you felt about yourself. Rewrite the same poem from the perspective that the experience empowered you to become the person you are today.

Childhood Identity

by Qui'Anna Ray, 24

Part 1

There were no fears of darkness.
 No tears of pleading.
 No expectations of good times or tomorrow.
 There was no borrowed inadequacy.
 No denying the buoyancy of Black Spirit.
 There were no alarms. No lights switched on.
 No prayers of surrender.
 There was no movement or flow. There existed only no.
 The light of refusing to die.
 There were sunlight teardrops and a throne—Goddess crafted.
 There is rain & heavenly laughter. Memory of future her-after
 the storm. There is a promise of home. There was synchronicity.
 The coming awake of symphonies. An orchestra of colors,
 river running thru me.
 There was loud silence in refusing violence.
 I remove self from the fire.

Part 2

I slither sin into the pen of divinity.
 Inking on stages with security.
 Moving my soul thru cylinder boundaries.
 Focusing my spirit 2 shoot straight into my poetry.
 I am a free spirited broken beat.
 Triangle chaotic entity. A glowing me,
 Gestating my spirit on this earthly plain.
 I beautiful, black body quotable majesty,
 Maharani Red Jazz empress, stroking
 Journals with messages and trance.
 I prance the weight of my antiquity down my throat,
 Past my lips flows ritual soaked in liqueur. I kiss her
 reflection every time I touch myself,
 ground this spell of self 2 the earth
 with magic. Soft woman of the pyramids,
 this beauty & strength.
 I am a marble story, strong sense 7th Ms.



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Write a poem about the role your culture has played in your identity. Begin each of your lines with the words, "I am what I am," and in between your lines, write a line in the voice of your ancestor, describing his/her cultural experience.

April 25, 2005

Mike Lynch, 21

I am what I am...

one of the purple people,
you call them African.

I am what I am...
I'm Indian, and I don't drive a Cherokee.

And yet I speak neither language.

I am what I am...
I'm cocajim, but in America, I'm black.

Sometimes Black stand for struggle,
but sometimes my Black stand for mutt.
Why can't we all just stand for Human?
We all bleed red, and we don't all think the same.

I'm hurt because people judge people,
limiting their self worth.
I look at all you, my brothers and sisters.
Some may look around and see me as a nigga.
I am my Father's son.
I love you all.
Peace, my brothers and my sisters.

April 25, 2005

I am what I am...

by Adonis Ursery, 24

a bastard wrapped in a blanket of memories by my widowed mother,
still cold and missing something without him.

I am what I am...
pushed in with hate, no wonder it's always rush hour.

I am what I am...
aching to know, and hurt the know-how was limited.
So close, but too far to touch.

I am what I am...
engulfed? in the ideal of possibility
that don't even exist yet.

I am what I am...
a story I created, somehow hoping to find fault,
because the idea of no excuse will only make me look harder.

I am what I am...
confused and broken, confessing to learn how I fix me.

I am Adonai, in His image,
hurting when the cross has been carried.



by Aite-annes Benson, 17

I am that of God's creation
of his imagination
the speech of his music
which my soul holds for
my soul is bold and rich like pure gold
which I would be without
riches...because me soul is righteous
with the rich light of God
which my soul is just like
that part of the land of milk and honey
with green grass and rose petals...
my soul is not a materialistic thing...
my soul is love.



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by Itef Hotep Vita, 18

African melodies, field hollers, work songs, spirituals, blues, ragtime, jazz, gospel, rhythm & blues, rock & roll, and rap...thank us black people 4 music.



Reflections in the Mirror

by La’Kita Williams, 15

When I look into a mirror I see my soul.

My soul is the only thing that makes me who I am,
who I will be and what I will become,
what I do, what I have done, and what I will do.

My soul is a window, a window in which I can see for miles,
and miles more, and more miles of nothing but me,
nothing but my words, my thoughts, and my actions.

My actions take me places like to an unknown world, filled with unknown things, unknown
beautiful things, things of sparkle, things of gold,
things that my heart desires.

What my heart desires is love, love that is unconditional,
unconditional love to mend my sorrowed mind,
my sorrowed mind is what holds me back.

Back deep in a forest, a forest of my deepest thoughts,
my deepest thoughts hide forever,
forever is a long time.

A long time to conceal
what I know is true.
What is truth, you ask?

Truth is to live freely,
free in my forest,
in my sorrowed mind,
in my desires,
in my unknown world,
in my actions,
in my miles,
in my window,
in my soul,
in my reflection in the mirror.



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by Jade

My ocean, my power, my energy
flows all around me,
as if in continuous motion,
it carries me, envelopes me,
moves through me.
The nature of our relationship is symbolic.
For it fits me like a glove, a snug fit,
at the same time loose,
infinite in its spaciousness
it is a paradox,
it is my balance,
it is my energy,
it is my power.



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Judgment of Me?

By Jamal Miles

Why did that little girl say that I had worms in my head?
My spirit is not dead.
How could you look at my black & not look any further—
that's murder.
My spirit is not dead.
Because I am young, I am dumb?
Unwise, inexperienced, not knowing peace.
As you judge me in your over-extravagant car.
My spirit is not dead.
Oh, you have missed so much.
Because I am male I have to fit your image
of who you think I should be.
My spirit is not dead.
I am not the man you may think...
Come along for a ride and you will see
that there is oh so much more to me.
My spirit comes alive as you look into my eyes
You still can't see me.
I will say it again.
I am Black & White,
Country & Hood
Business & Street
Poor & Rich
Beaten by the world
But still blessed.
I am not a victim
nor do I owe any explanation
To any person who does not
Take the time to walk with me.
I will leave you with one thing, though.
The stars don't even limit me.
Come & see.
My spirit is not dead.



Untitled**by Day Acoli, 20**

I am the most beautiful poet,
beautiful and natural living supermodel
staining the billboards of your mind
I am a powerful poet, Gandhi, Buddha, Malcolm X, Hannibal,
George W. Bush, Martin Luther King, Tupac
Changing the world as I go, powerful

I am excellent like Art from Ashes classes
newborn babies raised to change status
perfect sunsets rainfall the madness
excellent like the world I've created

I am a king like Meleanik Cesar, Sir Aaron the Great
exercising power, making right decisions that change
future Kings to bring about peaceful kingdoms

I am the truth as is the living god true and living
erase all fraud, fallacies and misconceptions
from the truth as in my world.



Aite-annes Benson, 17

a rebel is my mind when I write and recite I...
am the truth in my own way
every day officially premature thoughts
being born on this white piece of paper
that my words turn
into a beautiful masterpiece
digging deep into my mind
like a shovel in the dirt of intelligence
creating art that comes from the heart
eat at thoughts
like a sweet piece of extraordinary mind...
let me reach into your heart
with my words and do
very emotional damage so you
can feel what is real
I would like to present to you...
my...
pure devotion



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by Sammie Eakins, 21

Oh Daddy! Oh Daddy!
Why did you have to die?
We tried to save you,
With your stubbornness,
Who would even try?
Oh Daddy! Oh Daddy!
Don't you know how much you meant to me?
I tried to tell you,
But you wouldn't believe me!
I love you daddy!
This is true!
If only this is what you knew,
You would have let us save you.
Instead, I have spent many days feeling blue,
I realize now that I have to go on,
And in God's hands alone
Is where I belong.
I love Daddy!
I'll never forget what you taught me!
I will always be the best I can be.
As for all those fond memories of you,
I'll always hold them proud and true.
Though we had our days of suffering, pain, and strife,
I'll never forget the one man who changed my life!
I love you daddy!
I'll never forget you!
This is something very true.



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What grade would you give your Higher Power in the role of love, friend, protector and healer?

God is

by Sammie Eakins, 21

God is the only one I exalt above all others.
He is my friend, father and brother.
God is in heaven with angels around His throne.
They are worshipping Him, as the nations will some day.
I ask you God, "Do you really answer prayer?
If you do, then why didn't you answer it over my dad or cousin?"
That's all I would say.

I do not grade God, but if I did,
for healing me, He would get an A.
This is because He healed me of seizures.
I'll never forget that day.
I would give him an F for protection, though.
My dad told me once when he heard me cry out to Him,
"Cry out to God, just see if He saves you!"
He didn't, so is the phrase that says "God will save you"
really so true?



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by Day Acoli, 21

I saw God's angry mouth open
but he didn't consume me.
And for the first time
I opened my eyes and really
LOOKED.
He's trying 2 swallow my pain
& I want not 2 cry
so I touch my womb
& fall backwards
trust he'll catch me
haven't landed yet
& it's been 238 weeks
since I jumped.
Sometimes of words
I have none
but I love you enough
2 speak through the silence
& you love me enough
2 hear.



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God
by Day Acoli, 21

God
sits alongside brown people
at the bus stop.
All of them have nothing,
Silently pray for each other
until the tears of fallen angels
shatter on sidewalks
become shards of dreams
lodged in his feet.
He is homeless
but we all touch him
like it doesn't matter
and put our fingers
to our lips.
Sing with air between kisses
left our wishes
at the bottom of the well
it still makes sense to miss
warm hands of the ocean
sometimes at night,
I pray blues.

Common on street corners
in Chicago
black beret and leather jacket
before the backdrop of the liquor store
speaking to God in rhymes.
Heart pounds against
trash cans and sidewalks
young men beat box
answers to questions
over the melody of traffic
horns honking
when God acknowledges him
pray blues.

If God blessed Iraq
thousands of praying citizens
descended upon the gates of Heaven
upon the backs of gold camels
walking the blue sky
like clouds of rubble

hanging above their decimated homes.
Beckoning their families out to the streets
to dance on their remains
and sing God's name
in sync with hysteria
choke on the screams of their children
brothers and sisters explode
between the debris
explode
deafening rumbles drown out their
heartbeats
lives freeze
shatter before their eyes
holding their breaking hands
in front of them
praying the blues.

The world crumbles to pieces
In His Hands.
Like losing a lover to HIV
God watches what's left
bleed between His fingers.
Maybe He's praying.
Rubbing Nicaraguan angst
like silk between his fingertips
collecting tears
drops of sweat
skin sweltering jungles
of Vietnam
children with guns to their heads
cry first for Mother's
squeeze eyes then call
for Heavenly Fathers
but what if God heard them
when they pray blues?



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by Jessica Toro

To tell you the truth I have no faith.
The ability to get through the day
is all on my own.
The things I have gone through
they could be considered horrible.
The need for faith is not here
for I only need myself.

Some say faith can not be lived without.
Then tell me how I am breathing.
In the future I may need faith.
I may choose it on my deathbed.
I may be in prison and choose it,
but for now
there is only me and the will to survive.



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by Shawn Irizarry, 24

I don't consider myself to be religious, but
I do consider myself to be spiritual. Back
When I was religious, whenever I left the
Mosque or the churches I would feel
All juiced up, but you know what? When I
Leave our little poetry gatherings, I feel
Juiced up twice as much as that.



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March 14, 2005

Find an image that represents sacredness to you. Paste it into your journal and describe the image and what about it that moves you. Now rewrite your poem and use the words "I am" before each description, to describe your own sacredness.

unknown author

I am Sacred

I am sacred.

I am a dancer of fire and water.



TRANSFORMATION**March 17, 2005**

*Write a poem about something that causes you pain: a circumstance from your past or in your present.
Exercise your ability to tell your story from a different perspective: choose the perspective that this
circumstance has motivated you to move into your future with confidence and power.*

Joseph Shields, 15

Jeffrey Shieldz
 A man in his world,
 A mouse I'd like to poison...
 Asshole—
 He calls when he thinkz I've done wrong.
 He crawlz into his mouse hole
 when it'z time to write that check.
 Son of a Bitch
 If that guy, Jeff Shields was here,
 I'd probably be like him
 when that time to pay up comes around.
 Fuck Him.

Jeffrey Shields
 A man who taught me to care about others,
 A mouse who taught me to be a lion.
 His calls taught me to know the truth.
 He taught me to take responsibility for my actions.
 If that guy Jeff Shields was here,
 I'd probably shake his hand and smile.
 Thank you.



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What would your life be like, if you could live without fear?

Without Fear

by Chigozia Echeozo aka Syras, 21

We danced in the high grass of our backyards
and worried not about the insect and beetles
We danced closer to the sunlight
as it touched the tips of home fences
Without fear, joy became same with I
and flavors of spice and everything nice
Dandelions no longer appear weird like weeds
and eyes that glow green call others home
in the spirit of the clouds and remain
as messengers from the moon.

The dusk becomes twilight
and the dance feels like jasmine in the winter
or chamomile in spring
lull me to rest in the grandmother's arms
moving about the sky
speaking to angels
even when their wings
are tucked away



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My Future**by Chigozia Echeozo aka Syras, 21**

The days of sunlight and mint-covered valleys,
the sound of babies laughing behind me,
the way I would speak with such conviction
about the proof of life
and the secrets rebirthed in the now-born body.

Now we know that in this journey
you must keep your heart light
are the words I would leave
to a new understanding.

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by Antonio

Deep within my mind I ride the escalator to
the temple in search for understanding against
my heart each throb echoes my soul grows
with impatience for I tell you I like your
style, grace, face, lips, and god how I watch
your thighs and feet cute enough to
to touch my lip for this is lust and if
lusting was wrong let me be wrong for
wanting you has become more and more
enthusiastic to the tongue screaming, pulling my
hair, with the finger tips of your hands you
touch my face like the way roses touch
the air in the morning mist it's your love
I've miss but I haven't had you yet
With grace she moves me, makes me feel good
Like my favorite movie.



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by Ebony, 22

I want to be me, me myself
I am that I am
from sir to yes, thank you ma'am.
Come and whisper the Earth's secrets
and wallow in thy dream,
Because I am meant to be
all that I allow to flow through the water
that gave me life.
Like wrong and right
I am like that wrong that makes you wanna do right.



June 30, 2005
by Inetta Walker

Inspiration comes from life poetry's the
script that just feels right when physical
sensations brings words to mind I find paper
and pen quick cause it makes me sick
thinking my words will be lost never heard
absurd or not I'm leaving them around
hoping someone will feel the same coping
with the fact that life has fucked others
before and there will be more brothers will
die mothers will cry and still I write
cause these words might inspire more than
me life fires after I'm gone inspiration
comes from the day how the sun lights
across the sky in new ways and the brightness
fades away to black simply enjoying the
basic facts of life birth death trees the
ocean breathing brings out emotion so
I'm coasting from coast to coast floating
on hope coping with the ecstasy that
living brings.



Untitled**by Derrick Jones**

I am the image you see in the mirror at 5 am
rough but beautiful
I am the insect you swat into darkness
expecting but not willing to let you let me go
I am the first reaction you have to everything
the one you *would* have said if you trusted me
I am the person who when you ask how are you?
answered for 30 minutes because I thought you
really wanted to know.

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01.09.06**by Tony Walters, 21**

What was I thinking
Becoming another victim of society's thing?
Who do I need to impress?
From the way I dress,
Will women love a fake?
The day I wake
And realize my life was all a lie.
Life, love and passion,
Well with that I'm old fashioned.
"Fuck that bitch, slut, tramp"—
All that gangsta shit in today's society.
I'm the last of a dying breed,
A gentleman in a society of evil seeds
That will never be true men—
To fight, shoot, kill...
Do I fight? Yes,
But for only things I deem worthy to me:
Life, love, respect
And being good to my family.
"Fuck that bitch"?? she's my queen!
Who means everything to my child to be.
This lesson I teach to you young,
Trying to impress someone,
Thinking you'll never love anyone,
Falling to society's oppression.
There will come a day
When what you say
And believe about yourself
Will come to stay.
And if it's bad, I'll feel sad,
Because you will have to mend
A life of broken memories,
But it will take more than a year to repair Life's beautiful song.



01.09.06

by Tony Walters, 21

I am made of light
I am made of stars
I am set apart in society
I make the way for the day
I say fuck all those who reject me
Fuck whoever tries to stop me
Don't judge
Live your life, not mine
All you are is mere suggestion



by Ben Dugan

Time isn't just my enemy

In my mind I'm withering within time
Blind to the fact I'm dying with each breath
I try with all my might to continue in success
Fall short in the glory of God each day
Why pray?
My knees hurt from kneeling in the dirt
On a search for a spiritual healing
Concealing the devil inside a rebel
Yet why must I abide by the rules these fools abide by?
I try and try
Wipe these tears from my eyes
Swallow my pride and just live my life
And let time live.



Anger

by alicia leonardi

Your red hair burns into my mind
 And if I could I'd scorch
 It off your body with
 A blowtorch, your needs your
 Wants your desires and your perfect
 Willingness to discard me, dismiss
 Who I was and turn me into
 What you thought I needed to
 Be. Your inability to listen
 Greedy for love and affection
 Inability to escape, it's no big
 Deal, but I can't deal with it. This life,
 This stress, this rejection and this
 Incredible loneliness. It's sad, it's
 Me and it's something I never shared
 Until now. Now that I'm me, now that
 I'm free and I'm more than what I eat.
 The anxiety fades, the pressures and
 Expectations and sins all bestowed
 Upon me, the crap I took and
 Accepted and even thanked you
 For because I thought you'd
 Like me more for it. The harsh
 Judgments of self and feelings
 Of failure shift, zoom out and
 Refocus into reality because
 Tore at me until somehow I
 Felt so sorry for you that
 I stayed and screamed—but
 Not too land before the
 Argument evaporated and your
 Supposed sweet love supposedly
 Made it all better, but I was empty
 Inside, now I'm still here and I'm
 Alone, I may be desperate but
 I'm certainly not desperate
 To be getting with you.
 Your views and your mouth
 And your self can just
 Stay that way because I don't want
 Any part of it. Not anymore

No longer will I suppress myself
 In order to become that which
 You want me to be. This power
 This fulfillment and this joy
 Is mine because I brought it,
 I worked for it and I made
 It happen for me. You used to give
 Me chills and ecstasy but now
 I'm addicted to me.



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by A.T.

Power stands tall
Fists in the air
Dark faces at rallies
Acne scars and memories
Power is on the platform
In the bathroom mirror
Power drives to work every morning
Tasting like coffee beans
Tasting like sex
Tasting like women in the board room
Control tastes like metal
Ripping into the insides of my cheeks
Power smells like once a month
Drip, drip – you're not pregnant
Drip, drop – you can continue your life
Control is stinking up the work place
Third grade Bio and toilets clogged
Sticking to the inside of my brain
Crawling under my skin
Power opened the door
Delivered me a singing telegram
Power walked all the six floors
To lullaby and pep talk me
And hand me the cold microphone
And turn up the volume – all the way
So I can whisper, yell, and spit
All the way
So my thoughts and vocal chords and insides screech
Louder than the control
Box me in or out or anyway
Knobs and scaly things
Manila folders and paper cuts
I'll take my power to the office everyday
Walking on tightropes
Power rumbling the stage
Power her red dress and lipstick
While control was watching from high heights



Was it love?**by Belove**

We were homeless
And was high on green leaf lullabies
Entering the room as they unexpectedly awaited my plea
The mic with the words
We homeless and are in need I sang
And traveled away...deep
To come back to tears and warm arms
To receive home

by Belove

A graceful maiden glides her magic hands
To create art with Heavens custom made
Reds, yellows, white and green, gold sizzle when they meet
With soft full kisses
Mmmm...smells so good
I can taste the Cajun, cayenne, onion, bell pepper, and garlic
Move the air like saucy sweet dreams
Of you my love



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My Rock

by **Brian, 23** (homeless)

I stood still, looked down, and there before me was a rock.
I bent down, reached out and grabbed the little rock,
Thinking to myself, this is like me...
Alone, insignificant, but a little shiny.
Holding my rock in the palm of my hand,
My rock—so small, but yet life is so grand.
I carried my rock and walked away,
remembering how much my life has changed from then to today.
Holding on to something solid that hasn't changed,
My little rock that I still hold to this day.



THE PROGRESSION OF FORGIVENESS

Transforming the pain of past wounds

Word poem (Rainbow)

by Chainz, 19 (Goth, homeless)

Yesterday is a rainbow, but mine is not full of color and happy.
 Mine goes from blood red to black with acid rain and consistent pain,
 burning like the light and blinding like the sun.
 When light comes, I dwell in my dark room waiting for my time to come
 when I can walk the night and feel safe
 from this burning hell called the light...

My Rock

by Chainz

My rock is big and smooth, much like my pain that I bear
 The I carry stands for my betrayed heartbreak
 Dishonesty—not only that I have done, but has been done unto me.
 So go ahead, pick up my rock and drop it... let's hope it shatters...
 Like I once did...

Forgiveness

by Chainz

Thank you for this pain.
 Thank you for this hurt.
 It has only shown me what life can contain,
 whether it's acid rain, playing a head game, or simply loving me.
 But no matter what we both do, we knew it wasn't true.
 So I thank you for showing me my life,
 sharing it from me to you, through and through
 saving me.

Although my words have hurt me as deep as the shining sea,
 it made me realize what I can stand—why I am here, where I can go.
 When I suffer it's not hard to see, because it's crystal clear,
 But when I emerge from this burning fire... I am just me.



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El Camino**by Abby Templeton, 23**

The man I love thinks
el camino is the name of a car.
I try to teach him the truth,
that my camino, my way, my path
has nothing to do with
Ford, V8 engines, 15 miles to the gallon.
My camino got a bit overgrown—
can't see the trailhead
from last night's blizzard
and autumn's strong winds.
Winds of doubt
distracting me,
telling me
no
no
how?
no
aren't you scared?
You'll need to save more money.
But the full moon
is different.
She begs me,
beckons me to
step, dance,
drink from my goblets
into the night,
follow me, follow me.
All you need is you.

My own footprints
were the sweetest gift
and only proof.
Role models of the past,
gas for my tank.
The man I love thinks
el camino is the name of a car.
I think if we rode,
he in his car,
me on my carpet of wind travel,
he would win.
I would be at the starting line
or lost in the Candy Cane Forest.
I would have forgotten the race,
blue ribbon at my back,
maps at my feet,
calloused and sweet.

by Gilberto

One who is unique and wise,
one who has been hurt inside.
One who makes mistakes,
one who accepts others regardless
of origin, sex, religion, or race.
One who is understanding,
one who is disciplined but undemanding.
One who is nothing but a human being,
one who sees him/her as being everything.
One who helps others combine,
and last but not least,
One who provides.
This is who I am.



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02.06.06
by Gloria

In the pit of my stomach,
I felt my colors rise.
Like a rainbow
from the misty skies.
The moon shines after words
like clockwork...
it's madness.



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03.02.06**by Phoenix, 23**

Goddess—celestial body—
raped on the alter in her temple
as the temple women watched.
Went crazy, forgot, and fell,
and walked around like people.
The temple women couldn't cry,
couldn't rip out their eyes for witnessing.
Couldn't slit their wrists and die.
Couldn't understand why
she didn't come back,
couldn't accept offerings...
didn't know how anymore.
Absently wandered into the temple,
knelt at her altar, and began to pray.
Temple women looked puzzled.
Couldn't understand why she was praying to herself.
Couldn't understand how she was able
to touch the place where he violated her
but not accept the offerings.
Forgot and went crazy – wasn't able to see.
Forgot, went crazy – walked around like people.
The temple women watch her.
Bloody still, tear-stained, and thin,
compulsion to take each of them;
baptize them in temple waters again...
but didn't remember when our first time was.
Instead lit a candle on the altar, turned and left.
Forgot, went crazy, and walked around like people.

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03.13.06
by Irish

I accept your disrespect and I choose honor
Don't trifle my time with judgment and hate
You did wrong; it's done.
I said my peace—now leave me alone.
Bringing it up is not respectful
Now two strikes you're under.
One more time—you're done,
and your grudge against me is unheard of.



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03.23.06

I Will

by Antwon

I will speak metaphors
that would make female presidents.
I will rap to the hip-hop beat in my head
to clear away all things that hurt.
I will caress the cancer cells, and HIV, and STD's
out of the back of Mother Nature .
I will dance till my feet hurt
so that my people would not suffer.



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03.23.06

by Shatera Sanders, 17

I carried it out with anger in my heart
not knowing that my worries
would be gone if I won't look back
To start, God is my symbol
As I said to myself
guidance is the key
so be patient and be one with him
and soon he will answer you...
someday



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03.27.06

by Maximillian, 18

I try to see the sense in hate
while pressured to live my life for fate.
Whether or not I choose to stop,
time will pass,
a life will stop.
To live without a struggle
is to die without a cause.
Cursed to represent the shit
but birthed like a king legit?.
Remember me?
You better do,
Because my game
can hunt through crews.
Damage three and leave one rich;
the rest lost to evil myth.
From wicked players
and souls that drift.
But if I can play whatever role
just to touch a soul...
they'll never get me with their eyes
and never touch me with their words.



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3.30.06**by Niq Jawnsion**

Every time we share lines
 Non sublime or undivine
 words as siq as overripe wine
 slice ur hear words to absurd
 burned and flamed like an upstart
 u cant feel me I cant C U
 But we both do what we can do
 I assume that your vicious vibe
 brings doom is not and the tune
 of harmony cuz rage consumes
 out iniquities cant be right and
 b polite with u or me even though
 we're both angry

here we are again
 here in the same old rain
 words splash face first in to the fray
 hurt seeks the familiar wounds
 rage engulfs the slender participants
 Fearing what is found wanting
 hold the sides of my shattered vision
 playing against the shards of my heart
 we go like this always
 constant in our pain

revitalize rectify revolutionary
 with open eyes surgical dissect
 problem+ solution = logical discovery
 maybe ur not good for me
 given too much time and not space
 maybe myself is good for me



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3.30.06

Forgiveness**by Nissa, 24**

The first time something happened to wound me—
the moment of impurity...

In the first grade I was oblivious.
I remember more stupid things I said in Ms. Schleiger's class
than any other.
I remember being scolded harshly for "miscounting"
(or so she thought)
the teeth I'd lost to date.
I remember the frustration of everyone getting
the flashcards before I did,
finishing tests last for daydreaming,
and being called on my stupidity,
confused when I was subtracting 7 from 8,
with the wrong fingers left up;
sent to the principal's office, but not for that...for lice.

Ms. Schleiger, you're stupid.
I'm supposed to forgive you now,
and I can because you're stupid.
How you became a teacher
not realizing that everything you say
to a child at such an impressionable age
lasts—I don't know.
The only explanation I have is that you're stupid.
But like all who I've allowed to hurt me,
you actually managed to teach me something,
and I take it with me to every class I substitute—
every child I speak with.

I try to become me again at first grade
and imagine what you could have said to me
to give me confidence.



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Guilt can be a powerful motivator for change. It's important to listen to your guilt, because if ignored it can result in shame, which causes destruction. Describe guilt as an attempt by your heart to reach you.

04.03.06

Guilty: Missing my Mother's Funeral by Brian Anderson, 23

Mama,
I really tried to be there.
Maybe I should have accepted
that death was inevitable sooner.
I was so lost in strength;
losing my best friend...
maybe I should have distanced myself—
moved so it wouldn't break my heart so much.
At the last moment
I mustered up the confidence to see you,
but it was just too late.
Maybe I just should have died first.
Momma!
I did the best I could.
Maybe it would have been better
if I never existed in the first place.
Dealing with this
I just lost my mind.
I did the best I could...
considering the situation.
I just wanted to have the last memory of you
be the time when I was a kid,
and you showed me how to ride a bike,
or fly a kite,
and not...well you know...
seeing you not moving or talking to me anymore
I know that you would have done the same.

You know that you were my best friend.
You know that even though I wasn't there in body—
I was there in your heart.
I had too much on my plate; too much at once.
I could only do the best I could do.
I had to make sure that I survived,
so that you can survive with me.
Now you are always with me
wherever I go.



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Guilt can be a powerful motivator for change. It's important to listen to your guilt, because if ignored it can result in shame, which causes destruction. Describe guilt as an attempt by your heart to reach you.

Guilt is...

by alicia leonardi

Too much sugar, like cotton candy on top
 Of milk chocolate strawberry margaritas
 Juice from bodies entwined in selfish
 Togetherness scream from those
 Wronged crying out motionless in
 Need of help. The tearing tickle of
 Long fingernails tantalizing only
 Because they can cut you. Pale
 Pink charging into red and churning
 Away at itself before boiling
 Down into pure black
 Like a killer flying fox swooping out
 With teeth from behind trees
 In the forbidden forest
 I crammed it all in everything I
 Saw and wanted and thought it
 Would simply be pointless to
 Turn away from. It was sad
 And pathetic and completely
 My own doing iced creamy
 Peanut butter whipped fatty
 Chunky chocolate chips and
 No room to breathe. I suffocate
 Under the weight of my own
 Inadequacy and my supposed
 Imagined but still oh so real
 Now there's more than just me,
 A whole world of life and love
 And second chances to see
 If it all works out.



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Elias**by Elisha, 18**

The way he looks at me...
No matter the chains—
my soul feels free.
Especially when he says mommy.
I've never been in love like this.
He wakes me in the morning
with his gentle kiss.
Without him, some days,
I couldn't go on.
My heart sings a song,
and no matter what we go through
he keeps me grounded and strong.
Young king, never compromise.

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05.01.06**Rob Stowater (Jade)**

Tonight I stand alone
wishing I had a home.
Morbidly cold
and still I roam...
remaining unknown...
even being in the city I am from.

Wanting a friend that'll stay till the end;
a real friend that doesn't want me dead.
With love I try and provide,
and for some reason they still throw me
and act like they don't know me.
And now the cliff just might destroy me.

Want an angel to come down faithful.
Walk by my side
and never reside nor say a lie.
Give me faith,
Take away all my hate,
Break these gates,
And prove that you'll never be fake.

Crisis intervention
with a doomed perception.
Lost in a world—
a dark world of deception.
Looking for redemption.
God are you still there
sitting in the heavens?

Disgraced the light.
Impossibility left behind.
Feeling like a single grain,
feeling such pain.
Soul soaked with an eternal rain,
deranged by hate,
feeling the insanity so great.
Please tell me my fate.
And I promise not to desecrate
people's Godly faith.

Walking backwards into a knife
seems it likes to corrupt my life.
Still tormented by the nights strife.
Forever and always
this time I'll cry.

I feel mentally caged.
I'm in the most horrid of a place.
I'm so sick of this rugged disgrace
that's in people
way too much these days.
Fuck your day of striving!
I'd rather sit here—
wait for ya'll to disappear.
Depriving with a shameful fear
I will not be here always my dear.

Coldly pitiful, pitifully cold.
So sick and tired.
Sick and tired of standing alone.
Always walking down
a morbidly old road.
Where am I now,
and where have I been?
Looking at my life lately—
will it ever end?
With crucifying sin
I see your sadistic grin.
My pain yet again begins...
feeling the end draw all so near
for all the pain you've made me endure.

I am like a brick on the wall,
so strong, yet feeling so small.
I have a heart as big as Mars.
I am dark inside—
lost by your insight.
This time
I'm on my death sentence.

Me against the world so cold,
because i was never told:
Honesty sucks—
no one believes or even trusts.



Again I'm in the ruts,
because I gave you trust.

My mind is morbidly divine,
saying things
that are always out of line.
That is why I am writing this fucked up
rhyme—
trying to walk on this straight and narrow
line.
I hope you stay by my side
until the end when I die

Selling drugs again;
same day stealing crown from my dad.
Never understanding the damage it has,
I turn around—
see a clown with a nine bullet clip
hangin' off his hip.
He reaches down while saying,
"You're taking each round!"
I turn with the piece
but suddenly I feel the heat.
Just because I was young
selling drugs on the street.

Undeniably blind
with a killer's destructive mind.
Stop your breathing sighs—
horrified for the second time.
Makes me laugh
'cause you're out of line
Deathly grotesque my heart will be
for all time.
In a black hole of hatred
my body is vanquished,
for this time I doubt I'll be missed—
instead just a problem dismissed.

Wretched demons drag me
under a black sheet again.
Down the darkest path—
hearing the cruel intentional laugh.
Splat! There goes my gat.
My face all over the place.
I race to find help—

lost, no help throughout this fucking
place.
Lost the faith that once graced,
All because the cruelty
hammered in my face.

Let us walk hand in hand—
yes, bare feet in the sand.
And people can watch us
search the uncharted lands,
but we will remain hand in hand.

Cut veins, bleeding heart
deranged mind—a schitzo in the dark.
Soul without a heart—
terrorizing killer's spark.
Grotesquely torn apart
by the role of people's part.
Still lost in the dark
while death moves me.

Sleep into your mouth
with sky-blue words.

Freedom would smell like pie,
but on the other hand
people theorize true freedom
we would all die.
To me freedom be
the greatest gift of all the time.
Freedom is the government's words
they tell us so we confide in them
each and every night.
Funny thing is... it's the great lie
just so that we comply.
Freedom is complete anarchy.
Freedom though, these days,
tells you nothing but lies—
And yet you still comply.

Chronically depressed—
insanely down for the count.
Constant sadomasochism
suffering a horrid negligence
of a self-righteous hatred.
Closed in a box of anti-socialism—
frightened to open up inside.



05.01.06

Stephanie Trevino

Prompt #1

Remember the first moment in your childhood that you remember being at peace and happy.

In the early morning of my childhood
I remember lying on the grass making clouds into pretty pictures
And telling people how wonderful the sky was
It was like I forgot how my day was with my family

Prompt #2

Remember the first moment in your childhood that changed how you felt about yourself and your world.

Um...a day where I was just blank minded. I don't know when just quite yet. Oh yeah! I do, it was when my mom was getting taken away to the hospital, and the cops were coming to take us to the Crisis Center. I didn't know what to think or what to do—If I should trust the cops on where they are taking us or try to break us away from them.



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05.01.06

by Robin Alaniz, 20

I was 13 living with my dad
I remember it like it was yesterday
I had my own phone
The hospital called at 4 in the morning sounding so cruel
Words spoken cut like knives
We are sorry to inform you Mr. Alaniz
I picked up the receiver
Your wife died 2 minutes ago.

Madness confusion depression denial
I think that I'll just sit for awhile
and think about life
as it passes me by all I can
do is sit here and cry the
pain so intense after all
these years. It's getting harder
to face my fears. I am
sick of all the pain and
strife it hurts so bad
pass me a knife
it's trembling in my hand
then I let it go
you were not here to tell me no
I died alone in this little
white room because I
love you and you left
too soon.



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05.29.06

by Annalicia Chavez, 16

R.I.P. Jasena Rose Titus: 07/31/02 – 05/29/04

I am the heart of my eternity
I am the soul of my life
I am the puddle when it's done raining
I am the color of the rainbows
I am the ink in this pen
I am the paper, which I write on
And I am who I am



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Stone In My Shoe
by **Mariah Bascus**

You've walked for oh so long
Your feet are starting to ache
In your shoe you feel something sharp
And painful
Not knowing what it is
You don't bother looking
Continuing to walk on your journey
Not knowing what lies
Underneath your feet
Not caring for you are strong
Pain means nothing to you
So you keep on walking
The pain now overwhelming



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06.01.06**Mariah Bascus**

If myself came to tell me about my future
She would tell me that when I'm 25
I will give birth to a child
That my husband and I made it
That through all the drug problems I've had
I still managed to make it
That there were temptations along the way
But my husband was there to help me
Look the other way
She would tell me
That when I turned 27
My mother and I finally made peace
That my step-father and I
Finally shook hands
She would tell me that my life perspective
Was changed after I went to college
All that is what I would say
If I visited myself from the future



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Stealing My Sunlight
by Aaron N. Williams

Epigraphically speaking seeking
the highest level of truth
one must first find the root
the cause to pursue the mind
state that apex you affect the
world around you bountiful
plentyness can be granted thru
meditation or changing I'm ranting
positively to the people alter
the life of those demanding
alter-stances of weak advances
tryin' to steal my sunlight the
attitude of done right sun light
lit the match inside your
mind to find time to conquer
timeless entity my levity is
consciousness the pure remedy
to all the troubles
you change your mind
change your life
think first and the more right
you do right by
you affect the outcome
of the whole crew
so think first
that's what you do



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I Am**by Giovanni Lopez**

I am a music poet through people's ears and mind
I am determined poet four things in life that's it's worth it
I am an open-minded person who sees things different point of view
therefore will show not only black and white paint but with all colors
I am red poet, cause that's what flows through my vein and physical pain
I am willing to learn, I am a curious person
through music I show who I am
through understanding there's hope and wisdom
I am a king through my own world
I am a man cause I don't lie 2 myself
I am a man of few words cause they are two combined as one

woke up in the morning
reason for why I am happy
the darkness has past on
now I see the light. . . so so bright!
happy cause I finally won the battle
It's time 2 put my shield away
It's time to put the sword away
It's time to let those who care bout you get close too
I've been scared and wounded
now the wounds are healed
can't be mad at the world
life's too short
so it's time to quit fighting,
let go.

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by Arjumand, 21

Arjumand is now living her dream.
Open to the sky
inline and in sync
with heart beats beating–
wings growing.
Stretching, spread across her back,
flying with the light's decision
to live the dream.



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by Ietef Hotep Vita

The most heart
Jah light in dark.
In blind sight I walk,
open thought of mind,
in search of my black goddess
of lost tribes.
That one and only
of my past lives in my head.
The one who I see inside,
dead or alive,
I'll swim or fly
to I and I.
Be happy and cry,
try and try 'til I die.
You can see me
in the sky,
I soar.
And if I give knowledge as you walk...
I will dive down as man transformed from hawk.
Dark skin and black locks,
with Jah Heart.

Poem of forgiveness to self:

I know that not everybody is perfect,
but never give up on your dreams.
I forgive you now,
do your things.
Strive to be perfect.
Admit your mistakes,
then teach others.
That's all it takes.



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James McDonald, 21

I accept your sacrifice,
and now I choose to succeed.
I remember reluctantly running errands
to the corner store
for what everyday progressively became
rations.
Our money is brown as my complexion.
Perfectly rolling fugasy bills onto the
Korean man's counter
lest the neighborhood girls see my
shopping with funny money...
much to my chagrin.
And me wondering where all the green
goes.
My siblings remained warm
with their bellies filled—
Not hanging in the chow line...good
times.

I came to understand there was no
shame in our thrift store threads.
All and all the ends were met,
and I love you for it.
Hopefully my children will know,
understand, and love me the same
Brown chips and mayo sandwiches;
tattered rags and tribulation.
I love you and your sacrifice,
and God willing I'll rise.

...And so the boy in the bubble grew to
manhood
having spent his entire life within its
fragile confinement.
Yet somehow he's content with his
transparent vessel
floating on the winds of change.
The man in the bubble feared not the
blade of grass
now surface sharp...that'd end his epic
journey
into-ahem-pop culture!

My mother taught me black
but not the basic or common black,
or the ignorant black.
Not even the pitch black
or white and black.
No, she taught me the new black
being as mod as she was.
Deep beauty in natural simplicity;
a black that I encountered in all peoples.
Peoples on the wavelength.
That cool French beatnik black
at the Poetry Cafe in Paris.
Licorice jellybean black,
or even Mediterranean sand black.
Black as the volume of the universe
before the dawn of time.
So in essence, my mother taught me
the new black consciousness.

My father taught me a dance of war;
singing in the hour of peril.
Like barefooted Sioux at Wounded-
Knee.
Both praising the Great Spirit
and rebuking the dragons in its steps,
and I'll invite them to dance my father's
dance
because today is a good day to die.

My Achilles tendon—in reverence to
Greek legend
plants its appendage
to it's enemy extended a thunderous
stomp
intent of vengeance.
my knees are bended...I'm lotus still.
My foe looks for my soul to steal

The thunder footed urban boxer
with a lightning glance
plants himself to the ground.



by Leticia Guzman, 22

Inside I am love
I am humble
I am that rose that grew
from nothing but my own soil
the soil that makes me
nurturing, beautiful, caring
an everlasting fragrance
that tingles your nose with freshness
I am a rose
I am myself
but you see nothing
for you do not look beneath the skin or clothes
or under the exterior to know
a special person grows
you see none of these
so away with you and your evil words
and ways to bring me down
I will not fail or fall
you know nothing of me
nothing at all
you just see
one day you'll remember me
the little girl with tears in her eyes
because of your words

oh yes, you'll remember me
for this ugly duckling is now a swan
for your words hurt then
but my survival will hurt you worse
I am still here



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Poetry**by Abby Templeton, 23**

In an upstairs
sheltered room
behind night sirens
on Denver streets
12 of us unfold ourselves.

Musa cut his heart in two
and passed it around
so we could pick out
pomegranate seeds
and what we call
truth.

A man named John cried,
wishing for family—
the four of them lying together
on the kitchen floor.

Big-eyed Latina to my left whispers,
“Angel, rest in peace,”
the date carried on her shoulder—
only a month fresh.

We make magic when we open—
saving our souls together
with words.

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