

BUT NOT YET RESTING

A COLLECTION OF
NANCY B. JEFFERSON
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
STUDENT WRITING



BUT NOT YET RESTING

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--- Dr. Diane Salmon and Dr. Peter Fisher, Project
Directors

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Young Chicago Authors is a nonprofit writing organization devoted to promoting literacy and literature among Chicago's youth.

Student writing is published in magazines and edited by our talented staff. Young Chicago Authors also creates individual chapbooks for some of its young writers. All youth can participate and attend the FREE Worldwide writing workshop, open mic readings, poetry slams and special guest performances. The events start at 4:30p.m. every Tuesday at Square One, an all-ages/no smoking/alcohol-free space, located at 1561 N. Milwaukee Avenue, near the Damen blue line "el" stop. Also, students can attend field trips to theatres, literary events, and college campuses. During the summer, you can do community volunteer work and employment, such as teacher aides at local elementary schools. For more info contact:

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Praise for ~~BUZ~~ ~~NOZ~~ ~~YUZ~~ ~~RESTING~~

"How does one measure the price of freedom? This is poetry, the kind that screams from your consciousness in the middle of the night. When instead of a gun or a fight, it's the poem that becomes the weapon of choice. These poems are candid, heartfelt Polaroid's from young men and women who question faith, or is it faith that questions them?"

--- Marvin Tate - Author, Performer, and Curator of
"Voices of the New Black Millennium."

"The students of the Nancy B. Jefferson Alternative School are also members of the Cook County Prison System. This book serves as more than a book of poetry, it's an open window into the lives of young people who are under the gun everyday. Mumia Abu Jamal once said ! . . the greatest love we can show our children is the attention we pay them! Perhaps these children through their words will make us pay the attention that they are due."

--- Mario - Chicago Poet, Activist, and Radio Personality

"From behind bars fiery words sizzle and mourn, escape from confinement to leap off the page in search of attentive minds and listening ears. These young Chicago authors, all incarcerated adolescents, are also students, artists, daughters and sons, courageous, frightened, imaginative and anticipating. Their dazzling range and fierce writing at the Nancy B. Jefferson School, awaiting trial, compels us to pause. There is talent here. We adults can learn; assuredly, we fail to listen at our peril."

--- Bernadine Dohrn - Director of the Children & Family
Justice Center, Northwestern University School
of Law

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Introduction

"Poetry means taking control of the language of your life."

--June Jordan, Poetry for the People

As I spent most of Spring 2002 with the students of Nancy B. Jefferson Alternative School, I thought about the late Ms. Jordan's Poetry for the People often. I kept asking myself what do words really mean when students at this school face lives that are full of "drama" all types of physical violence, racism, poverty, death, drugs, alcohol abuse, babies and relatives waiting for the release date and sometimes no one waiting at all. How is a poem or a story going to change any of those problems? Let's not even assume that putting a pen to the page will solve anything. Let's look at words as a beginning.

I remember reading all the time when I was growing up, not just because my mother read to me, but because when my parents were fighting, I could hide and escape inside of a story. I tried to find stories with characters that looked like me, thought what I thought and did things that I did. That's how I found poets like Ruth Forman, Patricia Smith and Sonia Sanchez. That's why I read The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Sapphire's Push and Always Running by Luis Rodriguez.

The words of these writers mattered in my life and have mattered to some of the students found in this book. Students took risks by writing and reading some difficult poems and sharing those poems with each other. Some students told stories about their friends and families that they had not told people before. Some students started to notice little things. The smell of a car, whatever a parent always says, the last meal they ate before arriving at the detention center, what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes.

I often tell young people that writing has kept me from slapping people in the face. Writing makes me think about what I could do to solve a problem, instead of making more problems for myself. Writing is a way to play, to pretend sometimes, the way little kids would if the world wasn't so dangerous. Writing can be a blueprint, a way to plan your way

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out of a bad situation.

Sometimes, the words of an Assata Shakur poem remind me of why writing is important for me and for any student. The poem is called "Leftovers What Is Left?"

"I mean, after the chains that get entangled/in the grey of one's matter, /After the bars get stuck/in the hearts of men and women, / What is left?"

What Shakur (no relation to Tupac) says here makes me ask you, are your thoughts imprisoned?

You can change your thoughts about something that irritates you. View it as a challenge or a lesson you have not learned yet. You can find a creative way to solve a problem. Can you find ways to think your way out of a situation? Most of the time, students at Nancy B. Jefferson would tell me yes. They could think of a better way to solve a problem or notice something valuable in this hectic world.

That's why I say writing is a beginning because nobody can lock up your mind. People can tell you what to wear, take your money and your food and anything else, but nobody can take your mind A.K.A. your grey matter unless you let them do it. Keep thinking, keep writing, keep reading and you can start here by turning the page. Look into the hearts and stories of young people writing inside the walls of the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center. Read and move forward

Tara Betts
August 4, 2002

"BUT NOT YET RESTING"

A Day in My Life



but not yet resting

What's it Like to be a Young Teenage Mother

What's it Like to be a young teenage mother? It's very hard being a teenage mom with two adorable, loving children. Even though they're four years apart, it's still kind of hard, but I have help from my kids' father cause he is currently working for the Secretary of State, and I also have help from my mom and his mom. Also, they are currently taking care of them while I'm incarcerated in this Audy Home Detention Center, but now I know when I get out I need to stay out of trouble and not do nothing to get in here and spend more time with my children.

JOCELYN C.

A DAY in MY LIFE

WASHROOM

USE me up. Don't hush me. Don't wash
YOUR hands, go head touch the door,
YOU KNOW YOU WANT TO. Don't bring
YOUR NASTY SELF back here no more.
HERE COMES another, this time with
a child. Go ahead, LET him aim his PEE
ALL OVER me. Fine. Then don't WIPE
me off. LEAVE the stain on the
SEAT. I UNDERSTAND YOU DON'T LIKE
being NEAT. DRAG the TISSUE ALL
OVER THE FLOOR and then THE NEXT
day I HAVE TO ENDURE MORE.

Rhonda J.

but no, yes, resting

THE WORLD NEW

THERE'S STILL FRESH THINGS
IN THE WORLD
LIKE FLOWERS

THERE'S A LOT OF DIFFERENT
TYPES OF FLOWERS
SMELL GOOD

THE WORLD SMELL LIKE FRESH
THE WORLD SMELL COME BACK AROUND
THE WORLD ALWAYS SMELL FRESH

ROBERT R.

A DAY IN MY LIFE

A Lifetime

BLACK WOMEN
THEY ARE AROUND MY NEIGHBORHOOD
BLACK WOMEN
THEY ARE EVERYWHERE I GO
PEOPLE EVERYTIME I SEE THEM
EVERYWHERE I GO
LIFETIME
IS A DREAM TO ME
A GRIEVANCE
IN A PLACE NOT TO BE
COOK COUNTY'S JUVENILE
IS A BAD PLACE TO BE
KIDS
EVERY DAY
EXPRESSING THEMSELVES
THAT'S HOW IT IS
SLAVE
OLD TIME STINK
IT HAPPEN AGAIN I WOULDN'T BE HERE
LET THE SLAVES FREE
THAT BE ME
EVERY TIME UP IN THIS PLACE
COOK COUNTY JUVENILE CENTER
THIS WHERE I SHOULD NEVER BE
IN THE TIME OF A LIFETIME
FEELING LONELY INSIDE
THINKING ABOUT MY DAD
THAT DIED YEARS AGO
YOU WOULDN'T THINK HOW SAD THAT WOULD BE
LIVING IN A LIFETIME OF GOD

BARDERIS W.

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REALITY

I'm in a dark place like
the universe
A place where time
seems not to exist
A place where sorrow
and tears exist

A place where the wrong word could get
you killed
A place where your feelings could be
your downfall

A place where friendship seems not to exist

A place where you are surrounded by
knives

A place where there's always tension in the
air

A place where you wake up hoping that
it all was a nightmare
This is not a nightmare, but reality

CURTIS P.

A DAY in MY LIFE

The Life of a Man That Died!

HE WAS ONE OF THE MOST RESPECTED
BUT HIS LIFE WAS VERY HECTIC.
HE HAD FOUR GIRLS
BUT WHEN HE CAME HOME HE
WAS ALWAYS SEARLED.

ONE NIGHT HE CAME HOME LATE
HIS WIFE COULD ALWAYS RELATE
TO THE HARD TIMES
WHEN HE ONLY HAD ABOUT FIVE DIMES.
HIS LIFE WAS BURNING LIKE THE
GREAT CHICAGO FIRE.

ALL HE WANTED WAS TO BE RESPECTED.
ONE DAY HE DIDN'T COME HOME
BECAUSE HE WAS TOO TIRED TO LIVE.
HIS CHILDREN ALL CRIED
WHEN THEY TOLD OF THE LIFE OF THE
MAN THAT DIED!

RICHARD T.

BUT NOW HE'S RESTING

What it's LIKE TO BE Gothic

it's TO BE made fun of, and
mocked, PEOPLE saying I'm going
TO KILL YOU WITH MY SKATEBOARD.

it's TO BE TEASED, and TO HAVE PEOPLE
LAUGH AT YOU. BEING CALLED ALL
TYPES OF B's and ho's.

IT IS TO BE CALLED CRAZY, and WEIRD
it's ALSO TO BE CALLED a dope fiend.

it's TO GET BEATEN up by THE
bigger Kids at school. TO BE
STUCK in LOCKERS CAUSE I WAS
in the 4th grade.

TO BE made THE LAUGH OF
THE CENTURY AT THE AUDY HOME.

IT IS PEOPLE CALLING YOU NAMES
and ALWAYS GET PEOPLE PUTTING
ME DOWN.

Shauna G.

A DAY in MY LIFE

Life and Dream

LIFE IS VERY COOL
but dream or not
you will go to bed
drifting at night
all the way you go

down the hill

dreaming

all the way.

BARDERIS W.

but not yet resting

A Day in My Life

I Woke up 6:00 in the morning my ma is banging on the f----- door LIKE she's crazy but I can't sleep with the door unlocked. I'm scared. Scared of what she'll do to me or my brother so I check on my brother. She's gone to work now. I wash up. I don't eat. Breakfast makes me want to throw up. 6:30 wake up my brother. Tell him it's time for school he don't want to wake up so I argue with him about it. It's too late now I run to the bus stop. Bus comes. I go all the way to the back, b----- staring at me LIKE it's someone they ain't never seen before. Sit LOOK out the f----- window. Get to school, get in line, go in, do my D.O.L., do my work. People always got something to say to me. I ignore it. It hurts though. When I go home I go to my room and cry. Do my f----- chores and try to tell my brother to help, instead he beats my a-- and curses at me so I leave it alone. My ma comes home, screams at me. She ain't satisfied. She beats on me and drags me to my room then beats on me some more. I cry myself to sleep, wake up, watch TV, eat. Take a bath, go to my room, listen to music and do my homework. Around 8:00 my mom's friends come over. I listen to them talk about me and my brother while I'm locked in my room. I go to bed but can't go to sleep. I think, I cry, and ask God why?

e.M.O.

A Day in My Life

My Life Time on a Rainy Day

My Life Time on a Rainy
Day is Like being
FAKE but when rain drip and drip
From the edge of my face
The rain fall in the
SUITCASE and LET'S GET a
UMBRELLA and ROLL around
TOWN that is when i find my
LOVE and that is in the
LOST and found and when
i LOOK at the BLUE SKY
That make me TRY and TRY and
That was my Life
Time
On a Rainy day

Nathan G.

but not yet resting

eshak

It was a cold November night, the 16th on a Thursday. I was walking with my three friends. Troy, eshak and crystal. eshak was walking with me, Tena. We were talking about how we're gonna live together when we grow up! Troy and crystal were busy kissing in a cut. I told crystal to get out of the cut. Let's break out and get to the crib. So crystal and I walked home together. Troy walked eshak to Adam's basement. Adam is Tanya's boyfriend. Tanya is my ex-best friend. Well, I got home a half-hour later cuz I stayed over crystal's 16 minutes. So by the time I got home it was 12:00 midnight. So I departed from eshak and Troy's at 11:30 p.m. Well to the next day now.

November 17, 2000, Friday, 1:30 p.m. I was coming back from school. I came over to Ana's house. After 16 minutes of talking in her house, Tanya knocked on the door. She was terrified. I could tell by the way she looked at Ana and me. She told me not to go outside and that eshak hung himself. I told her to shut up and quit lying on him. If this is an excuse to talk to us, get a life. She said the police are gonna kill her if anyone finds out. I pushed her aside and ran down the block towards Adam's house. There were about 10-20 police cars over there. Everything got blurry. I wanted to cry. I still didn't believe it! I still don't.

Well hours later a patty wagon came around and everything started to go in slow motion like some kind of movie. I hated the thought of seeing eshak hanging and a letter taped to his chest. All of a sudden, I saw his body bag being pulled out of the building. I fell to my knees and started crying and punching the ground, swearing to God. How come he didn't help him? How come someone didn't get him down and help him? I wanted to die. Everything was spinning. The police lights were brighter. Cuz it feels like the night and the thought of eshak hurt and that everything won't be the same. That's my story of eshak!

Tena 2.

A Day in My Life

My Life

My Life

My Life has been hell
ever since the age of 6
My ma turned tricks I
ended up getting sexually
molested by my uncle
who's now in jail

My Life

My ma didn't believe
me when I told her
so I told Dad. Dad took
me to the hospital to get
looked at then my Ma
found out I was not

fibbing

My Life

At the age of 7
I smoked my first square
I shot my first gun
I lost my first friend

My Life

At the age of 8
I had my first hundred dollar bill
I had sex with a 16 year old
I survived my first shoot out

My Life

At the age of 9-10-11
I shot my first enemy
Had my first gang
Fight watched a nigga
get his head completely
blown off with a 12-gauge

My Life

My Life

At the age of 12
I got my first a-- whuppin
By a gang of brothas
I was stabbed, shot,
hit in the face with
bats, poles, chains
and threw in front of a

C.T.A bus

My Life

After bed rest for a year
I started back where
I left off had a son
At the age of 13
I lost my best friend
over something stupid

My Life

At the age of 14
I settled down started
thinking about my future
I woke up from what
was blind to me
that I could not see

My Life

At the age of 16
well I don't have
much to say
I was imprisoned
at J.T.D.C. now I am
sitting here writing
poems. Whoa.

CURTIS P.

but now yes resting

I KNEW Somebody

I KNEW somebody that was going to school. She wasn't smart or dumb. She was an average person. When she was going to 7th grade, she stopped going. It was weird to everybody cuz she missed a whole year of school. When she came back she was the same, but nobody KNEW that what was weird was that she had a baby. She came back LIKE it was nothing. She went back to school, was into boys and denied her baby.

She was my cousin. I LOVED her very much, but she disappointed me for a minute. It was good she went to school, but she was afraid to LET PEOPLE KNOW. She had her boyfriend. She drank. She smoked. She got carried away for a minute. When she used to hang with me, she hung with the wrong people. I used to take her to parties and get FXXXed up. I NEVER gave her good advice on taking care of her baby, but I gave her credit cuz she stopped and she LIVES with her boyfriend and TAKES care of her baby. Her baby is two years old now.

She changed cuz she's a wife now and got the responsibility of cleaning, cooking and taking care of a baby. I'm happy she chilled down.

Jessica Me.

MY PEOPLE IT'S NOT REALLY WORTH IT

PEOPLE ARE KILLING PEOPLE FOR NOTHING
BUT EVERYBODY GOT TO DIE SOMETIMES
TIMES IS HARD FOR EVERYBODY SEEING GHETTO
BOYZ AND GIRLZ DROPPING TEARS
LIFE IS HARD FOR EVERYBODY BECAUSE SOMEBODY
IN THEY FAMILY GOT KILLED ON THE TRAIN
BUT IT'S COOL CAUSE THE LORD GOING TO BE THERE
FOR MY PEOPLE NO MATTER
WHAT ANYBODY SAY
I'M NOT A MURDERER BUT THAT'S BAD SEEING MY
PEOPLE DIE FROM SLUGS

Jonathon P.

but noz yez resting

Life is

Life is LIKE a MYSTERY BALL.
You NEVER KNOW what's waiting for you down that
Long BLACK HALL.

My LIFE right now is LIKE a TEAR. I NEVER KNOW
What bad NEWS in COURT I WILL FEAR OR HEAR.

My LIFE is so OUT of PLACE
When am I gonna SEE a happy FACE?

I WANT to do what's RIGHT
But WHY is THERE ALWAYS a FIGHT?

I'm ALWAYS crying about my TROUBLES.
When I LOOK for answers ALL I HEAR is MUMBLES.

I HOPE TO GET OUT of HERE SOON so I can go back TO
SCHOOL, But how can I GET on with my LIFE if THEY'RE
holding me back in this FACILITY? I'm TIRED of having to
ASK staff TO USE the WASHROOM, TO STEP in and out and
EATING the nasty food, wondering how my NEXT meal's gonna
LOOK, waiting for the time to go by so the NEXT day WILL
COME so I can be CLOSER TO getting home, WEARING the same
CLOTHES for TWO OR THREE days wishing I can change EVERY
day, Having to DEAL with the staff nasty attitude. If they
don't LIKE their job, they should quit.

VALERIE G.

A DAY in MY LIFE

My Body

My body RUNS a hundred-METER dash.
My body SITS and OBSERVES this PLACE
called a home.
My body EATS and TASTES this
so-called food.
My body CRIES at night because i
KNOW WHERE i'll be
on my birthday.
My body CONTROLS my anger
because i'm in HERE
for something i didn't do.

Jessica R.

but not yet resting

MY STEREO

MY STEREO TAKES ME TO A BETTER WORLD,
and my STATE OF mind is HOWEVER I WANT IT
TO BE and VERY Kind.
DIFFERENT SONGS FOR DIFFERENT TIMES.
When I HEAR MY STEREO, I GET LOST in RHYMES.
WITHOUT MY STEREO, THIS IS A SAD PLACE,
And YOU WOULD SEE IT WRITTEN ALL OVER MY FACE.
IT'S ONLY A BOX THAT PLAYS TUNES, BUT TO ME,
IT'S THE SUN, THE STARS and THE MOONS.
MY SONGS TO ME ARE LIKE A TEMPORARY DREAM.
In MY OWN WORLD as it sings BEAUTIFUL THEMES.
MY BLACK BOX UNDERNEATH A WHITE LIGHT.
THE LAMP IS PART OF MY DREAM WORLD as I DREAM
WITH MY SONGS, THE LIGHT SHOWS ME
THERE ARE NO WRONGS.

BRITENNY S.

A DAY in MY LIFE

TORTURED SOUL

1. SMACK ME AROUND RAPE ME IF YOU PLEASE. I'm a nobody. EVERYONE HATES ME.

2. KICK ME DOWN THE STAIRS. MAKE ME LOSE A CHILD, NEVER EDUCATE ME, JUST CHASTISE ME.

3. NEVER FEED ME, LEAVE ME IN THE COLD. DO WHAT YOU DO, BE BOLD. THIS IS A STORY OF A TORTURED BOLD. THIS IS A STORY OF A TORTURED SOUL.

Rhonda J.

but not yet resting

DIE FAST

WE die fast,
LIKE time past
AS the sun glow,
WE die SLOW
WE die soon,
as a FULL moon
Thinking of a gun,
WHILE LOOKING AT
THE sun

Shondrell M.

A DAY in MY LIFE

I Stand Inside



but not yet resting

Man Being In Here

Man being in here
makes being bad, tryin to grow up fast
a big mistake because of how I'm doing
the time for the consequences that I really
was scared to take.

Man being in here made me appreciate
the food my mom used to make cause
I sho miss my mother's pork chops and
steak. I even miss seein my little sister's
Tweety Bird plate.

Being in here makes my relationship with
my mom even stronger because now I know
all that stuff I was doing on the block will happen
no longer.

I'm finished trying to be grown cause when
I came to a place like this I realized
I'm not on my own and my mother will always
be there no matter what happens at home.

Even though being in here
was so bad I refuse to let
it bring me down because
what's to come is better than
what's been.

Portia G.

I Stand Inside

I Stand Inside

I stand inside a room with different faces
Where people look confused and a lot of
Them acting racist.

I stand inside a little room where children
Have been abused.

I stand inside a cold room where I see
Young kids not being able to move, shackled
Down on a bench and waiting to be removed.

I stand inside this world where white and black
Hate each other, instead of singing the blues together
They sing about killing each other.

But now in my mind I see things completely different
Because we all came a long way and we trying to
Love each other.

Sherene F.

but not yet resting

Real Deal

Nothing but time
Thinking about the crime
No way I'll last thinking about the past.

It's haunting me, scaring me, teasing me.

Can't eat, can't drink, can't sleep, can't think
Nightmares day and night.

Sending me into fright
I'm shaking, trembling, fidgeting
Can't keep control, can't clear my mind.

It's a hell of a mess, I'm in a bind locked away
thrown out the key,
Key to my mind
Key to sanity
feeling lazy, hazy, crazy.

Punching the walls, kicking the bars
Lost all feeling, floating on Mars
The nightmares finally ending
The steel bars are bending
I must be mistaking, pretending, hallucinating
It's all over now
My fate is sealed
On a steel cart I'll be wheeled
The needle in my arm,
No worry for infection
I got the "real deal"
Lethal injection
Gone.
My life
My crime
My past
My time

Curtis P.

I Stand Inside

So-called Friends

Feel my pain, how can you feel my pain
when the world's trying to call me insane?
Being locked up, trying to maintain.
I been through so much,
Had so many problems
it's hard to explain.
Smokin, drinkin, kickin it was too fun to complain,
but when you locked up your feelings seem to change,
but you have only your self to blame.
When I was out in the world
I used to hang with them so-called friends
doing all the wrong things
and not thinking about the consequences.
Making that fast money was love.
It came so fast that I didn't even care.
My so-called friends said they had my back,
but when the 5-0 came, they all split the block.
And now I'm locked up, trying to overview my life
and how I'm going to make a change.
To become something in life and forget about them so-called friends
that turned their back on me when I was running from the heat.
So when I get out, I'm going to learn from my mistakes
to never depend on what I call so-called friends.

Sherene F.

but noz yez resting

The Audy Home

I ask myself why I came
back here?

Was it that I just didn't
care.

Or I wanted to be one
of them cool niggas on the
block that showed no
fear.

I ask myself why I came
back here.

When I finally realize I'm
locked up again it makes my
eyes want to tear.

The court probably don't
want to let me go home to my
family.

Because the state's attorney
and all them think they can't
handle me.

But I been locked up so long

all I feel is all wrong.

I think it's about time I go
home.

I hope the lord gives me
one more chance

So I could go home and take
off Audy home pants.

But I tell you what, if they
do let me out of court
I'm gonna start to dance.

Jonathan P.

I Stand Inside

Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder if life is what it is.
Is it true you really have no friends?
Muffins, greazy, greazy ass food,
tastes as if it was dipped in a gym shoe.
Some foods here taste all right,
but I've had better.
Sleepin in this bed,
it's hard
really.
That's because I miss my comfortable room
with a comfortable bed,
a place so comfortable I will never forget.
I miss doing my own thang
in here wishing and hoping for a big change
letting life pass for itself
but never rushing.
I've messed up as far as I'm concerned.
I've thrown away everything I've earned.
I've seen it getting better
but once again.
I let it get worse
paining, burning in my heart.
I'm scared
frightened
because of what's to come.
How? What happened? Is or was that me?
I couldn't have did what I did
standing in front of the judge
just listening
not understanding.

Whitney S.

but not yet resting

The Day

The Day
The day I was accused
Accused of a crime
A crime I didn't commit

The Day
The day I became
A Victim
A victim of circumstance

The Day
The day I regret
Regret not running
Running from a crime
A crime I didn't commit

The Day
The day the police were corrupt.

The Day
The day they were looking
Looking for a victim

The Day
The day I became a Victim

Jermaine L.

I Stand Inside

Butterfly

I see myself as a butterfly.
Why? Cause before a butterfly
is a butterfly
It's stuck in a cocoon & can't
Get out till the time is right.
When I come out
I'll be fresh & a new start
As different butterfly.
So, beautiful, strong.

Nastassja W.

The Air of a Balloon

Why should the air of a balloon
be released
when it's just going to lay flat
with no life?

How come the color of the sky
turns pink, purple
then blue? Why?

When the clock ticks do the hands
go on the
numbers to let us know the time
or does the clock tick
to make a difference?

Is a smile an action or word?
Can a smile
change the way the book opens
and closes?
Is a smile identical or deniable?
Please answer my smile???

Whitney S.

I Stand Inside

Locked Up

Being locked up is not the place to be
Even though this place is only temporary.
I don't want to be here.
I want to be there.
I want to be at home with my mother.
I also want to be at home with my brother.
I love them so much I can't even count.
I sit in this room that they lock me in.
I can't get out, not even with a pen.
They tell us when to wake up and go to bed
They tell us when to eat and when to
 sharpen our lead.
We talk to girls in here that
 we don't even know.
We tell them about us, and where we gonna go.
This is my first time n here and
 the last time for me.
I'm gonna change as you can see.
This is why being locked up is not
 the place to be.

Brittini C.

but no, yes, resting

I'm Making a Call

Lawyers, Defenders please help a brother
out. I'm sitting here crying not knowing
what it's all about.

"I'm making a call please hear me out"

My pretty sisters please pick up the pace.
Grab your clothes and leave this place.
All y'all sisters are pretty as hell,
but this pretty beauty shouldn't be locked in a cell.

"I'm making a call please hear me out"

My lonesome mothers I can feel your pain
I too cry tears that flow like rain. I know you
are strong and can bear this pain, but don't
let this drive you insane.

"I'm making a call please hear me out"

My powerful brothers stop the madness
because all it does is lead to sadness. Help
each other to do things better then one
day we shall be together.

"I made my call, it's up to you to hear me out"

Walter B.

I Stand Inside

Downfall

Brick walls cannot be my downfall
If I stand tall instead of being stupid
and write my name on the wall.
God will not hate everybody he will love
all of y'all
Keeping it real is better than being two
men of steel
Making a deal with the devil my mind
will never be at level

Karl J.

but not yet resting

As I be Alone

As I be alone
As I lie alone
As I see alone
As I cry alone
As I get with a crowd
As I do wrong
Now you see
That they was the wrong crowd for me
As I sit here more and more
As they call my name
Mel do wrong
Mel see wrong
Mel be wrong

Melvin N.

I Stand Inside

Young Girls on Lockdown

Have you ever seen a lot of Black girls on lockdown? If not, let me inform you how it feels and how it is to be locked up. My name is Shanna S. and I'm a young girl on lockdown. I feel as though you don't have any freedom like you're on punishment, which you are because you did something you didn't have any business doing. In the Juvenile, you have people telling you where you're going. People tell you when to eat, when to go to sleep and most of all our Black girls are locked up. Nowadays, more Blacks are locked up than any other races. Some girls come here during pregnancy and stress at the same time, and it's even more stressful because these people's mothers don't want them. Sometimes kids have their kids in here and it's real messed up and physically their whole soul is too f----- up to be able to deal with the real world.

Shanna S.

but not yet resting

I Think You
Should Know



but not yet resting

Untitled

How can I be a better man
When men are fighting
over land?

How can I be a better man
When caught up in the System
leaves a man with no chance?

How can I be a better man
when my days are long and cold?

How can I be a better man
When I could be locked up until
I'm old?

How can I be a better man
With little guidance from adults?

How can I be a better man
When being locked down I have
little hope?

How can I be a better man
When the man inside of me
feels it can't get no better?

Unknown

but no getting lessing

?WHY?

Why are you expected to respect
when it is not returned?

Why are you expected to change
what you've learned?

Why do people judge by how you look?

Why do people expect you to be
an open book?

Why do people blame
others for what they do?

Why do people block others out
like they always knew?

Why are you expected to behave
when you were never punished?

Why are there always things
in the way of getting
what you wished?

Why are you expected to achieve
when things can bring you down?

Why are you expected to smile
when things make you frown?

Why do people say things without
meaning?

Why do people give you their
shoulder and don't like
you leaning?

Kelli K.

I Think You Should Know

How I Feel

I feel like a bird inside a cage,
I'm fueled with hidden rage.
I feel like a lion trapped
in the zoo,
I wander around and don't
know what to do.
I feel like a fish swimming
in the ocean,
I see the boats (days) go by
in slow motion.
I feel like a dummie
going to school,
But I still try to be cool.
I feel like no one can
help me succeed,
Now I wonder why did I
smoke weed.
I feel like writing more
on how I feel,
But when I write my poems
I keep it real.

Walter B.

HOW Am I

I am like a vacuum
on and off
Suck up dirt.
Don't understand why
Segregation back again
Not understanding the life
of me.

I am like a rose.
Don't have nowhere
to grow.

I am like a prickly pear
Whoever touches me gets hurt.

I am like a lion,
the power to kill.

I'm like I'm in hell
where the evil people
are punishing me on earth.

Now I look back and
ask myself how am I?
I'm not the child God
wants me to be.

Ashley W.

I Think You Should Know

How to try to become a Better Man

How can I become a better man
if the land is filled with quicksand
But I try to help the kids
But they always curse me out
I shake my head without a doubt
Then I pray to God asking for
his help
But he never seems to deliver
Then I shake with a quiver
Finally the lord helped my block
By cutting down on the selling
of rocks.
But if there were no more
drugs to sell
The kids would be living in a
man made hell.
I maintain to try to become
a better man.

Richard T.

but not yet resting

Haiku

Trees are in all of us
Branches made into switches
Make an impact on us all.

Slowly time goes.
Fast is how time comes.
Makes you wonder what time it is.

Don't look at me.
I don't like how you open me.
I am a book with a pride.

Some wear me freely.
Some try to tame me.
Love & nurture me because I am your hair.

I am not property.
You can't trade or sell me.
Purchase me as I am.

Don't let me fall
I'm not ready to drown in the fire.
Don't let my soul sink into the pit
of desire.

Don't look for me when you want to
use me.
Don't grip me too tight and don't
abuse me.
This teddy bear deserves respect.

Britney R.

I Think You Should Know

It's Not Right

I don't think it's right in juvenile
The most people you see is Hispanics and African-
Americans
I think the government is racist

I pray
I dream
I wish
I hope
I cry

Don't know when I'm getting out
I think about my life every day
I cry to God everyday
Think about my family
and I cry at night
Don't know how I'm gonna change my life
Don't know how to get out of ...
Sometimes I think how to get out
don't know how
When it comes down to the time
I'm there for my guy
I don't want to look like no b****
I think after when I do the crime
I feel sad in my heart
Like if I go shoot a mug I feel sorry
for that person
then I cry to God to forgive my sins

Sometimes I don't know what to say to people
Sometimes I am just trying to make a
living like
everybody else
like that saying "laugh now cry later"

The End.

Robert R.

but not yet resting

I Believe

I believe that the reasons most Black children are incarcerated because we damn near all live in a struggle. It's not just one reason, but plenty. Like girls not getting along with their mothers. It's financial problems. They need money and drug deal, but most of all doing drugs. I think most females are less violent because of certain reasons, reasons I don't know. Speaking for myself I am violent so it's probably anger cause things aren't going the way they should. I can't speak for all females but I can speak for myself. From how things look in my perspective, I believe the percentage of jail house chicks will increase because we have our own issues, but we just want to be grown, even though we are teenagers. Hopefully they might decrease as time goes on and live our lives and find God.

Whitney S.

I Think You Should Know

Ignorance

your walls...my freedom
your pleasure...my pain
your laws...my crime
your pride...my Shame

your grin...my Snare
your keys...my cage
your gun...my Silence
your peace...my Rage

your rights...my wrongs
your ease...my Strife
your wealth...my poverty
your job...my life

Why?

Curtis P.

but not yet resting

I Think You Should Know

I think you should know
I'm a nice person and have
respect for everyone.

I think you should know
you should look at me like
you look at people outside.

I think you should know
I hate feelings and I don't like
to get them hurt.

I think you should know
everyone should be treated
fairly.

I think you should know
I'm going to be who I
want to be and say
what I feel.

Claudia C.

I Think You Should Know

Proverb

Excuses
are
tools
of
incompetence
used
to
build
monuments
of
nothingness.

Larry I.

If poetry were a person, it would be...

A smart, sexy person
big in personality like an Excursion
driving through town
catching everyone's attention
with a name even the president
loves to mention.

Plugged down from the start,
has an incredible gift to steal
people's hearts.
Poetry would have a beautiful body
with long hair.
A glance at poetry, you couldn't help
but stare.

Pretty, bold with class and wise.
It would be a privilege to look in its eyes.
Taking all the words we say and putting
it to sense,
Massaging my mind with poetry makes
me feel less tense.

Everything I need and more,
someone I will never ignore.
Like when she comes around,
everybody will follow her.
She'll have a sexy-a" name,
like Claudia.

La'wanda W.

I Think You Should Know

Law is Twisted

First Law set these rules for us to follow.
He felt it would keep us all under control.
Some of them are good, but Law
refuses to understand youth.
Law acts like parents are perfect and youth can't
be right. Parents kick their youth
out of the house, left to take care of herself.
A smart youth will survive.
The parent gets angry because youth
isn't suffering so they call the Law.
Law puts out a warrant on youth.
Youth comes to court prepared to show
Law all the good she has done and is doing.
Youth says Law, I am in school,
working part time, going to night school so I
can graduate on time, living on my own with
my fiancée of 4 years. Despite all this good,
Law says one of my rules are stay at home
with your parent no matter what till 18.
Then Law throws youth in juvenile jail.
So my conclusion is Law is twisted,
But youth is determined to be all she can be.
Law may have put an obstacle in youth's way,
But youth's determination will rise above
Law's obstacle. Youth will not let Law stop her
future, despite the fact that Law is twisted.

Stephanie H.

but not yet resting

Things I Have to Tell you

Things I have to tell you
I am faithful and smart.

Things I have to tell you
I am a very smart person
and
I am a bright young lady.

Things I have to tell you
I am a playful person
and I love kids.

Things I have to tell you
I am not a bogus person
and I am
not a phoney person.
That's what you think I am.

Dominique L.

I think you should know

Thinking

I be thinking
you be thinking
But the United States
IS Sinking I work
you work
But some things
is made out of dirt
and some men like
to flirt. But when
you think of love look
above.
Some Be thinking.

Nathan G.

but noz yez resting

The Equation

The equation is divided by
chaos of this world.
Multiply by the ratio of our stay.
Subtract by the lack of love
we need.
The equation divided by
the misunderstanding we
have for our rights.
Things we can't control
in our life.
The equation multiplied by
the brotha who show
no love for the sista.
Add a little of y'all sistas
who have no self respect.
Cuz the equation times
this division of this world
has no subtraction...

Jennifer H.

I Think You Should Know

Untitled

Why do I see darkness?
Is it because my life
is over?
Or, is my life
just started?
I saw many things,
been a lot of places
But things will never
be the same.
Now it seems it is
darkness or
did God just open
my eyes?

Virgil

Survive

I'm trying to survive
not knowing what's
my tribe.
Letting people let
me down!
Making me always
keep a frown.
Willing I should be
wearing a crown.
See I'm trying my best
to survive.

Shondrell M.

I Think You Should Know

What's Happening?

I'm in a class filled with
I don't know what?
I asked to be here, but should
have kept my mouth shut.

Beating pens, opened mouths,
Teachers pissed and
filled with shouts.

They can't control the room even if
they armed themselves with brooms.

The youth keep committing crimes which
the government wants.

They don't want us to be smart,
can't wait to see us on street corners
pushing our homes in a shopping cart.

I plan to beat the system before
it beats me like a drum.

So I can be the one with knowledge
And say u (The System) are the one
who is dumb.

Anastasio T.

but not yet resting

My Body

My body hides.
It gets emotional
Sometimes.
It feels like running
but it couldn't
never move
It just stands still
and takes control.
My body sleeps when
it gets real tired.
While my body sleeps,
it dreams about
dancing
and singing that will
blow people's minds.

Sherene F.

I Think You Should Know

Loud Voices

Loud voices corrupting my soul
Vulgar language destroys
my mind
Violence blinds my eyes
Hatred deafens me

Why do you hurt me?
Why do you judge me?
I never said anything to you
I never yelled at you

When I walk you snicker
When I talk you laugh
How do I explain myself to you?
How do I change your thinking?

X.T.C.

but not yet resting

Do You Feel the Pain I Feel

Do you feel the pain that I feel,
wishing that the pain I feel
will one day heal.

Wondering or not knowing the pain,
I feel is strong enough to kill.

This pain, it feels as heavy as steel
or heavy as a bill.

The pain that I gain continuously
pours down on me like rain.

Wishing that it will go away and
I could have some happy days.

Thinking, wondering and dreaming,
this pain inside has me screaming.

Pain here and pain there, pain around me
everywhere. In the mirror I look to see
that pain continuously stares at me.

Pain saying hi and also bye. Pain having
you, also wanting to cry.

The smell of pain is evil when you look into its eyes.
You ask yourself and wonder why is pain near and by.

Pain is not black or white
fat or skinny. Pain is not tall or small,
hairy or bald.

Pain is not a circle or square.
It's not a moose or a bear.

Pain is not dark or light.
Pain is not loose or tight.

Pain is something that hurts you.
It can make you sad or even mad.

Pain has no shape or form.

Pain is pain which drives me insane.

I Think You Should Know

LaQueta S.

When you Look

When you look me in the eye
Is it like looking at a butterfly?
Tell me what do you see.
Am I just the same old me
Or just one of your
 little fantasies?
What do you see?
Just because I am called
 Lil Twin
doesn't mean I have
 a lot of friends.
You know I'm not the best,
but I'm like the rest,
until this poem
 touches your chest
to deep inside to those who know
the Lil Sherry gone keep it real.

Sherry L.

Love Is



but not yet resting

Where Have You Gone?

Where have you gone?
With your confident walk
With your crooked smile
Why did you leave me?

When you took your laughter
And departed
Are you aware
That with you
Went the sunlight
And what few stars there were?

Where have you gone?
With your confident walk
Your crooked smile
The rent money
In your pocket
And my heart in the other.

Malik J.

Afraid of Love

I don't really know too much love
because I'm filled with hate
So I'm trapped and afraid
of common faith
my mom told me love all
but Trust none
but these cats get
at my head
every night I'm waking up
thinking
I'm in a death bed
so there isn't too much
love in me
because I'm afraid
And niggaz don't know me

Keith C.

Love Is

A Delicate Love Letter/Poem

I hope you can bear with me as I read this poem
because I'm sitting here thinking,
not knowing where I belong. This poem I'm saying
is on the threshold of my tongue.
And it goes To whom it may concern

Dear My Love

I'm sitting here dreaming, heart aching and thinking
Water, milk, and juice is the only thing I'm drinking
Being away from you makes this pain everlasting
I lay down in my bed but yet I'm not resting
I sit back and ask the lord for a blessing
Mom and Pops at home mad, still stressing
When I get out we will still be together
Because I bring roses, love, and candy
signing songs forever
A letter slash poem might not fit the title
But to keep your love I will put up a battle
I've been running for your love, but I'm not tired
It's like getting on a bus with a transfer over-expired
I want to tell you three words and see what you do
The three words is a phrase that says
I love you.

Walter B.

but not yet resting

Dr. Love

I have a funny feeling
in my stomach,
And I think I am sick.
I better call the doctor,
like now and real quick.

Dr. Love, Dr. Love,
how have you been?
Can you come see me,
oh long-time friend?

My stomach is woosie,
and my heart aches.
It feels like I just ate
50 pounds of steak.

Dr. Love, Dr. Love,
will you help me, I need a cure,
but this feeling that I have
is so natural and pure.

Andrea S.

Love Is

I Once Knew A Girl

I once knew a girl
who played the clarinet
she practiced day and night
until her hands began to sweat

That sound from the
clarinet made me start to wonder
why do every song she
play come out like thunder?

Thunder lightning and rain
all remains the same
but they judged her by
music and said she was insane

But I had a certain
feeling when she was near
so I went and whispered
something sweet in her ear

From then on we
began to talk
I would pick her
up from her house and take a walk

I found out she
was an over-achiever
she went to church
but was not a believer.

I had feelings for
this girl til she moved away
now I think about her
each and every day.

Harvard was her goal
Mind body and soul
She went to Kennedy King
but still stories are told.

Walter B.

but now yes resting

Haiku Poems

Who are you?
Tell me what you believe.
I believe that life without love
is no way to live.
What do you believe?

The furious bees
are going for the honey
which is far away.

420 is what they say.
Life is grand if you got
the hydro reefer, but
I disagree life is not grand,
you're just too blown to see.

I love the idea
of being in love so much
I know no real love.

Amy K.

Love Is

I Know You Broke My Heart

I know you broke my heart
I should have known your games
Right from the start
The games you played
I played them too.
So laugh MF
The joke's on you.
I gave you love.
You gave me hell.
So look here B.
You have nothing to tell.
I hate to treat you like a stamp,
But you shouldn't have treated me
like a tramp.
Your time is up. My time is now!
But you'll be back like a cat crying MEOW.
So, now you know you make me sick.
You low-down-dirty-son-of-a...

Tena Z.

but noez resting

Looking For A Man

I am looking for a man that's suppose to be there for me. He could be there for me when I go to prom, graduate, get married have a baby. He could have black, brown, blond, red hair. He could have green, blue brown or hazel eyes. He could be tall or short he could be fat or skinny. He could be mean or nice. He could love me only on the weekends. He could be there for me. He could be handsome or ugly. He could look like me. He is a part of me I've never had. Who are you and where are you dad?

Nastassaja W.

Love Is

Just In Case

This is just in case
I don't get to see your beautiful face.
It's been a while
Since I made you smile

It feels like years
Since you wiped away my tears
If I only had one more chance
To hold your hand and let you dance

I have dreams with only you and I
Makes me wanna sleep and not
open up my eyes.
But instead I just sit here and wait
Till the day these people give me a date

All the time I think about what I'm missing
And your beautiful lips that I
could be kissing
Will I ever get to show you my love
Or do I have to wait till we get above?

Ernesto

but not yet kissing

HE LIED, HE LIED

He told me he would always love me.
He told me he would never leave me.
He told me he would always save me.
He Lied,
He Lied

He told me he would come to see me.
He told me he would give me anything.
He told me anything that I'd believe.
He Lied,
He Lied

He told me that I would stay in his heart.
He told me that he would never put his
hands on me.
But daddy you,
Lied and Lied...

Sylvia J.

Love Is

9:10 to 9:15

The time is 9:10 and all I can think of
is your pretty lips.

The time is still 9:10 and all I can picture
is your thick hips.

The time is 9:11 and I hope you are thinking
of me.

The time is still 9:11 and I'm searchin' for you
far as my eyes can see.

The time is 9:12 and I feel a deep
pain in my heart.

The time is still 9:12 and I hurt
because me and you are so far apart.

The time is 9:13 and thing to write
are slipping from my mind.

The time is still 9:13 and I'm searching
my heart to see what I may find.

The time is 9:14 and I just realized
the love I have for you cannot be
expressed by the words in this poem.

The time is still 9:14 and I just
decided to tell you how I feel when
I get back home.

The time is 9:15 and I just finished
writing this poem to you.

The time is still 9:15 and I just
had to let you know I love you.

Walter B.

but now yes resting

When I See You

When I see you it make my
heart grow like a little baby
and I want to hold you
so tight and so tight
and that my love would bloom
into the sunlight, a light that
shines over the world. Without
the sun there would be no light
without the light there would
not be no world.

Melvin N.

Love Is

My Loved Ones



but not yet resting

Ashantique and Loretta

Ashantanique:

Where is my mommy? I miss my mommy. I love my mommy. I cry every night because I miss my mommy. I hope that my mommy comes home soon to be with me all through the night and through the morning. I know my mommy misses me too, just like I miss her too. But when she comes home, I hope she hugs me so tight and gives me a big kiss on my head. I will be so happy to see my mommy again. God, please let my mommy come home soon. I hope you hear my prayer, God. Amen.

Loretta:

I pray that I will go home to my baby and my family. I miss my baby. I love her so much. I pray to God that I get out of jail and go home with her. I pray that she remembers me. I pray that I stay out of jail and get my life together. I love my sister and cousins. I love my grandma and aunt Robin. I love my daddy and Derrick, but I will keep on praying that I go home to Ashantanique because she misses me just like I miss her. God, I pray I come home to my baby soon. God, I hope you heard my prayer, God. Amen.

Loretta M.

My Loved One

Do my family forgive me?

Will my family forget me
or forgive me? My name
Nathan. I do not know. But
sitting in here I see boys
getting stamped in the
floor. I know this boy
name Igor, he like
to talk about me. I
just ignore but when
I go to court they
going to open the
door. Will my people
cheat or will my
family forgive me?

Nathan G.

My Loved Ones

I am the great granddaughter of
Medea Smith.

The granddaughter Adiar Smith.

The daughter of Carolyn Smith,

The sister Tamesia Smith

The sister of Delisha Smith

The big sister of Carolyn Smith

The aunt of Donnell Smith

The aunt of Jeffery Spencer

The aunt of Samuel Hopkins and

Mykayla Smith

I am the friend of Kendra Carter and

Kewana Jackson

Clezella Blair, Ray and Morris Jones.

The godmother of Marshawn Carter.

The sister of Bobby Davis and

Sam Hopkins

The sister-in-law of my brother's

girlfriend Nee-Nee.

Sheena S.

My Loved Ones

Don't Cry For Me

Don't cry for me
Mom, please dry your eyes
It makes my heart
 burn eternally
To see the tears fall from
 your face
It hurts you as bad as it
 hurts me
As I look at the judge, as I
 look back at you
See the tissue soaked like a rag
Don't cry

Melvin N.

Sorry Lil Sister

It really upsets me that my little sister had
to come here to see me.

My little sis actually had to come to jail to see me.
She had to walk through this plastic and
Brick wall place to see her big sister.

I should be at home showing her right from wrong.
She had to see me go one way and she go another.
She had to see me in PROPERTY OF.

My littler sister shouldn't have ever experienced
Seeing me in jail locked away, not knowing of the
day that I will get away from this place.

I cry when I think about it and I get pissed
when people find stupid reasons to replace
my tears for what they feel.

Now I sit in here prayin to God she don't
follow in my footsteps cause this place ain't right.
Here is a big catch-up. It catches you in your footsteps
And slows your life down.

So I say sorry lil sis cause I should be
At home with you, havin no fuss.

Portia G.

My Loved One

The Lake St. Bomb

the drug addicted
every time she talked all I hear is static
She be leaving the house selling my clothes
but when she come in she be wiping her nose
I still love and respect my mom
but I see her as a Lake St. bomb
When she try to do good
but she always go back to the hood
never to see her child again
but still trying to start at the begin
But that's my mom
She still a Lake St. Bomb.

Richard T.

but now yez resting

The Story of Wayne

This story is about a man that has been through good, bad and worse situations. He has 3 children. That's the ages 12, 14, 18. He's a good man. He has made a big change from then til now.

Well, how are you Wayne? I'm good.
Would you wash my car for 15 dollars? Yeah, when?
When I come back. OK.

That was how people would approach the human being I'm talkin about and he would never refuse the offer. That's when he was down and out and everybody stopped trusting him because he did drugs. He let the drugs take him to the lowest position he could ever be in, but he was always my father. He has me. I'm Whitney, Gerald his son and Ashley his daughter. He only had me, but he didn't know I loved him, but I did. Still to this day I do. I understand things I never understood then but my feelins never changed for my father. At times, he was an embarrassment but now he's not. He's been clean from drugs for at least 2 years at the most or more. He's healthy and still on track and he's keeping his self together for the better not the worse.

Whitney S.

My Loved One

When I Look In the Sky

I think about you
it makes me want to cry
People say who I'm talking
about when I say you
I say why but then
I say my mom
anyway when I look in
the sky I think about God
I say to myself am I
going to hell or heaven
people say it's good in
heaven some people say
in hell I will burn
for ever and ever
Some people say if
you don't believe in
heaven or hell
you will have a lost
soul

Cordarryl S.

but now yes resting

As I Lay

As I lay in my cold, dark room
wishing I was home with you
to help you raise my little man
Trimell, that is
my lovable, wonderful child
who shines as bright as the sun
my son my son my son
Trimell, that is
How is life without your
daddy there?

Melvin N.

My Loved One

You Call Her Sonia

You call her Sonia I call her Mama
it's her crib
She solves the drama
Jamaica raised Her
America grazed Her
they call her Sonia I call her Mama
Spankings
Beatings
She solves the drama
feeds me when I'm hungry
needy
gives me extras when I'm greedy
you call her Sonia but I call her Mama
fights
Arguments
She solves the drama
love
passionate
you call her Sonia I call her Mama
and she solves the drama

Jamalah C.

but noz yez resting

The Present Missing The Past



but not yet resting

Greens

Greens

**They are like trees,
shaped like flowers.
Cornbread on the side.**

**Cleaned in water.
Hot and spice make you need
pieces.**

Laura M.

The Present Missing the Past

Lord help me fight my fears,
Remove these voices from my ears.
I know my mom is cryin' tears,
cause I'm facin' 6 to 30 years.

My life is like a piece of snow,
It's falling fast and melting slow.
I don't know where to go,
So would you tell me what you know?
I'm sittin' in this Audy Home,
Writin' cause I'm all alone.
I know I'm not fully grown,
But I really miss being at home.

Walter B.

The Present Missing the Past

Jennifer

Remember how we used to be? When we used to kick it on 51st Street? It was fun back then, but our friendship is coming to an end. Remember how we used to run the streets until you got pregnant and had your baby? Times got bad because I had no other friend. Remember how we used to argue over things that didn't even matter? Remember how we didn't even like each other because I went with your brother and we didn't consider ourselves friends because I got pregnant and you were mad because you were used to getting everything from your brother?

Remember how things changed and you thought everything was going to remain the same? Things didn't. 9 months. 3 1/2 years. What do we have here? Your first nephew. Remember, I know you remember how we used to be, but that was petty. Since we're all grown now and have babies to look after all I can say is I remember and I reminisce, but after all you're still my best friend.

Whykeisha H.

but now we're resting

Home

As I walk
through the front
door I smell a
scent like
homemade cooking
the aroma of chicken
baking, greens boiling,
cornbread rising
in the oven and
my mom stirring a pot
of hot peas
That is
what you smell
when you
walk through
my door

Anthony T.

The Present Missing The Past

Looking Back I Realize

Looking Back I Realize
That once I was a baby and
Grew my way out of Pampers

Looking back I realize
That I did some strange things
Back in the days but now I got
To accept the consequences that come
Behind that

Looking back I realize
That I was the only child and
Getting any and everything
That I want but now since I
Got two more sisters and one
Brother. Things have slowed
Down

Looking back I realize
Back when I was a little girl
Things was really bad and out
Of control.

By me changing my friends,
Changing my attitude by
minding my own business.

Looking back I realize
That this boy had a name plate
chain that had the name gangster
Written on it but had Ms. Bleek.

Darrenique

but now yes resting

Tamale

Looks like a baby in a blanket
White with chicken stuffed and bloody
Sometimes it's green that
looks all grassy.

It's good and yummy that makes
my tummy want more tamales.

Make it boil until they're ready
Put la masa on the leaf and
roll it until you have the baby
all covered.

Jessica Me.

Warning to Self



but not yet resting

Misery Loves Company

Madd females and males,
Ms. Misery looks for company.
She doesn't have any friends.
She walks around and runs into Depressed.
Both of them become the best of friends.
The chicks r not always using their minds.

Snappin on Putt, Misery trips on DownLow
and breaks her face. Ms. Misery gets sticky.
Ms. Depressed and Ms. Misery get
involved with the law. The 2 were
sentenced to life for shootin Happy 12 times.

The two got into jail and flipped it out.
I mean if they really cared about life,
The two would get their act together
so they would get out of prison.
Both of 'em need
to get their mind right.

Tashana S.

Warning to Self

Master Mind

(rap)

a mind that is smart

a mind that has heart

Master Mind

a mind that is tough

a mind that could take some stuff

Master Mind

a mind that care

a mind that's gonna get somewhere

Master Mind

(poem)

a mind that has a heart

a mind that's alone in it's own part

Master Mind

I'm alone in this because I don't

have to use a gun

I can use my fist

Master Mind

But that is the wrong way

Instead of fighting I'm

gonna talk my way out of this

I don't have to use my fist

I could use this,

Master Mind

P.S. For Shizzou my nizzou!

Jonathon P.

but no yez resting

ODE TO HEROIN

It's white or beige and is sold in grams,
then it's passed along into drug dealers' hands.

The users snort the dope or blow it up.
Some addicts even shoot it into their blood.

They could get sick if they don't use everyday,
or even overdose if they use too much or the wrong way.

It brings fast money and phony friends.
It brings jail time and lives to dead ends.

It will turn your family against you.
It will also make you look like a fool.

Little kids will get hooked and maybe get buck
but when it's all said and done, they all are stuck.

Some will lie, cheat and steal for the blow
and will travel through rain, hail, sleet or snow.

The dope would be so bomb that it will make you nod
or even hit someone with a hot iron rod.

Dope is not good for the body or soul.
After awhile you'll feel like you're in a black hole.

I hope my words will inspire you to do right
So u won't cry during a lonely night.

Jessica M.

Warning to Self

Warning To Self

Look at the spark
before you blast
it ain't my
fault his hollow
put a hole in your
Soul.

Your mouth got you
in trouble like
a tongue on
the double
time to zip
down your bag
and give your
toe a tag

As the mortician breaks
the spine
family members
choose
oak or pine
And the streets
move on the grime
without you one more
time.

Jamalah C.

but not yet resting

A Lesson

February 2, 2000 walking down the block
1713 was my house 158 was the street
and South Holland was my city.
What's up shorty is what I hear
I turn around and what do I
see lightskinned, long braids, hazel
eyes, 5'7", Tims on his feet and
Iceberg is what he's wearing.
O.K. I say to myself. I den
hit a lick, black navigator say
what!
Shorty come here he says, so
I come, then I say hmmm how
old is you? 18 he replies, how
old is you? 14 I replied.
About a year later we still together
Kickin it hard, so now we're
serious. One day I sneak him
in my crib and we do
a month later I'm pregnant.
Boo guess what I'm pregnant. I
don't know what to do, don't
tell your mama yet wait till
6 months.
Now I tell my mom she can't
believe it, "What about school,
what about you wanting to
be a doctor, wanting a better
life!" she says.
Whatever I say. She just
don't like my boyfriend I
don't care, so I pack my stuff
and go.

Warning to Self

I'm living with him and he takes
care of me anything I want.
October 18, 2001 K-Shaun Demarcus Jones
is born, can't nobody tell me nothing.

I was wrong, Boo I need some
money. That's all you hear in our
house now.

Having a shorty ain't no joke
sure I love my son till the
day I die, but sometimes, I
ask myself why, why didn't
I listen to my mom's advice
when she said when having
sex use your head, use
protection, no I chose to
use affection.

Many nights I sat up and cried
thinking about my family and
how I missed them, but no
I don't need them. I can
show them.

My Boo got sent to jail, oh
hell, we might as well be dead
because I don't know how
we're going to get fed.

So I fought and stole and ran away.
3 weeks is what the judge said
to me, so I sit here now telling
you my story and the lesson I
learned was to slow down, enjoy
the one life I have.

Rhonda J.

but not yet resting

The First Answer

When you lie so bad
You think I was born yesterday?
Let the teachers teach
Stop bringing guns to school
People don't think
You gotta live in a lifetime of this
Then you think outfits is all that
It ain't better than your respect
See I think in my room
I ain't going to the big house
Why you respect?
Think about this hard
The first answer come
That will be the question
Winning money in dice games
Or live off it real honesty is the truth
Do you wanna live off dice money for the
rest of your life?
and a boy live like me
Telling you honestly
If you commit a crime
You got to think about your answers
Questions is hard
Peace out kids
That's the end of me.

Bardneris W.

Warning to Self

Life in the City

Life in the city
has very little pity
on you or on me
but to have ice
like the North and South Pole
you must keep your ace in the hole
stay in school
then you will be cool
and will not be a fool
lesson learned
do not get burned
when will you discern
how life is turned
in and out, up and down
tears will pour
if you fail the test
like the rest who went that way
college for some
the rest on the run
from 5-0 or getting poor
so for sure make the right choice
or be forced to rob, steal, and kill
it's on you
Life is what you make it in the city

Jerry D.

but not yet resting

Parts

Part 1.

Time to listen
and get on a new
Track
Straighten up
like a brace
on my back.
No time for
smoking squares or drinking.
No weed to get high
hung with the wrong
niggaz, those who
were ride or die
Soul taker, Maddogg
Smoke, Lil Ox, and
Crew. I'm a changed
man now. What else
can I do?

Part 2.

Read books, play
games, act my age
or maybe someday
read part one on a
stage pretend to be a
rapper in front
of a sold out crowd.
Maybe girls grabbing at
me screaming real loud
(Back to the poem)
Make money the legal
way, no rocks, no
blows, no green, no
ex, but finally
get paid by a boss
handing me a check.
I'm a clean man
now, I have no
regrets. Or maybe wear
a suit and sit behind
a desk. Or maybe someday
learn the game of chess
instead of laying in a morgue
with a hole in my chest.

Jamalah C.

Warning to Self

Lord, Why Am I Here?

Forced in with no escape
Just because of our mistake
Simply waiting upon a date
in which men decide our fate
We say

Lord, why am I here

After the gang we served over Christ
and all the crimes like the heist
After people we jumped, like opposition
and the property damage on our endless mission
We say

Lord, why am I here

After the drugs we sold to whom no care
And the fight started simply from stare
After getting high everyday
And the devil we invited in our heart to stay
We say

Lord, why am I here

After denying face to our son
the burden we caused our mother weighing a ton
After our family and home that we destroyed
And after all the women that we toyed
We say

Lord, why am I here

but not yet resting

After school expulsion all our fault
And the youngsters be like us, we taught
After the name we gave our neighborhood
And doing everything except what we should
We say

Lord, why am I here

After the hope of others, we happily
crushed their lives to us not much
After all the people we put to shame
And playing with the life as if a game
We say

Lord, why am I here

After the second or third time being here
and the thought of jail brings no fear
After all and everything we have done wrong
And even though deep down we know we belong
we say

Lord, why am I here

Marcus

Warning to Self

Because

All I can think about
is how I got
in this predicament.
Because I just think about
What my mother said to me
Before I went to do what I did.

Because I had to have more
money for my little
brother's birthday.
Because I wanted it to be
special for him.
I just think over and over again
Because.

Deon

but no, yet resting

What time is it?

It's time to raise up and do some growing up.
It's time to respect life and the morals of
human beings,
time to stop stealing and dealing
before the
funeral home be wheeling you
to your grave.
It's time to stay out of jail and
try not to go to hell.
It's time to chill and stop
killing the innocent
people living in the hood.
It's time to stop shooting A.K. spraying at
anybody way.
Time to wake up see the light because
life too short to take time outs
in a place where you don't have a face.
Only a number.
D.O.C. 2256978 inmate seventeen

Bill B.

Warning to Self

Young Thugs

To my young thugs
 runnin' the block
stop putting rocks
 in your socks
start going to school
and read books
and dodge them cops.

Keith C.

but no, yez resting

Where I'm From



but not yet resting

Where I'm From

Because I look like I'm from Puerto Rico
and have hair like I'm mixed, people
asks me where I'm from.

If I say I'm Black but I'm really
Black and white would they understand me
or would they not want to talk to me.

If I say I'm from a family that
everyone gangbangs and sells drugs,
will she want to be my friend
or will she think I'm the same as them?

Because of where I live
People fight and kill, does that mean I do not keep it real?
Or I'm just out to kill?

Just because I have or do not want a friend
Does that have something to do with where I live,
or is it just because of where I'm from?

Well, where I live is just like
where you live. It's pretty, clean in its way
and it's where I will always be.

Where I'm From.

Laura M.

but not yet resting

Ghetto Block

5 kids are outside in front of their building
3 little girls are jumping
rope and they are having fun
5 kids are alone on a ghetto block
anything could happen they all
are dressed up neat lots of buildings
and there is no grass on the block
and actually a nice day

it is a corner store down the street
lots of gang bangers on the corner
Mom and Dad are behind the door
arguing something could happen ghetto
block kids are dressed up doesn't
they know what's going on in
the house mother and father told the oldest
one to watch them while they are
all in the hallway and in the place
doing drugs, drinking, having a party
while gang bangers walk down the block
kids could get killed or either raped
gang bangers across the street calling
the girl that's playing rope she says
wait but who will watch them my
guys

5 kids
3 jumping rope
having fun
ghetto block
don't have supervision
kids can get raped
they're dressed up nice
lots of buildings
have no grass
nice day

Jesse B.

Where I'm From

Where I Live is Crazy

I live on 42376 W. Wilcott & Kildare where the bad boys are.
My block is so loud that people cannot go to sleep.
They have to call the police on our block.
When the police come, they be like LIGHTS OUT
They all run from the police.

So when Lackie and Man walk past they be like Rocks and Blows.
Every girl walk down my block, they be trying to go with them.
The block is crazy selling weed.

They go to parties every weekend and every day. People be
fighting every day for no reason.

I be in the house. Sometimes we be outside because they
be shooting for no reason.
People be getting killed. They be gangbanging.
Killing each other and they family be going crazy.

This is all I have to
say about my block.

You will never want
to come on my block.

Nina W.

but not yet resting

My Hood

My hood
weed smoke gun shots plenty cops
drugz and thugz
My hood
It's right from wrong
doing good is hard
people sell drugz for years
trying to get cars
My hood
kidz having kidz
My hood
everybody did time
I'm doing mine

Montay W.

Where I'm From

Where I'm From

Where I'm from people are huddling in the small doorway to hide from the white racist police.

Where I'm from young negro kids stand on the freezing corner huddled up in many jackets trying to get their last boys off. Always hoping a dope fiend will walk by and say, "You cool?"

Where I'm from gangbangers are always driving by trying to shoot my building up to flames, the sounds of gunshots ring in my ears while I hide on my living room floor.

Where I live is in the Calumet building on 63rd and Calumet. There are rats running in the dirty stinky smelly hallways.

Where I'm from you cannot walk down the halls without someone saying, "Pst. pst. hey shorty how much?"

Where I live nobody obeys the law because they say they need to make their money to buy some shoes. Nowadays always trying to keep in style.

Where I'm from the smell of marijuana seeps through the holes in our doors from where the police kicked in my door looking for drugs.

Where I'm from if you're not in a certain gang you will get jumped, or even if you are not in any gang you will be pressured by the gang members to join.

Where I'm from, from 8:00am until whenever there are always people trying to sell drugs to young kids, even when it's 30 below.

Where I'm from all our doors look like termites ate through them and left a lot of holes.

Where I'm from the smell of dirty clothes and nasty hypes stays in the hallway, while you hear them crying for another rock.

Where I'm from nobody needs to live there.

Kristana B.

but not yet resting

Cabrini Green's like this

When 1015 and 1017, everyday they used to shoot. Every day. And you couldn't go to the mall, couldn't go to the liquor store. They used to be on the roofs, sniping people. You couldn't go to school without thinking about them shooting. When they would shoot in the school, they would pull everyone out of the classroom and make them lie down in the hall because they'd be shooting in the windows. People try to be inside by 7 or 8 because people would be downstairs tryin' to rob and kill people. And if they tryin' to kill someone, they'll kill you too.

These boys had whupped this other boy, they swole his face up. It's a game; they call themselves outlaws and they go around beating people up for no reason. They scraped this kid and he went back and shot one of them in the leg. When he first got away from the boys, he went and got his brother and did a drive-by and shot him in the leg. He wanted to kill him and he thought he had killed him when he got hit.

One day we was sitting on the block. Everyone was sitting out there just selling and stuff. Dude walked up and said, "Y'all got some out here?" and we said, "Yeah, Joe." And then he upped the pistol, he pulled out that arm. It said click, but it didn't shoot, like it was jammed or something. By the time I was running, I heard shots go off... All I was thinking in my head was that my friend must have got killed. When I ran, I was running and didn't know it. All I could feel was my feet moving. I jumped that black gate where they used to sell candy at, I just threw myself over it and I felt like I was flying. When I got to the crib I just went to the bathroom and leaned over the sink. When I looked up I saw in the mirror I was scratched on my arms, my legs, my shoe was missing. I didn't care about any of that, though. I just cared about being alive.

Donald

Where I'm From

Where I'm From

Where I'm from everyone wakes
up at 6 am. to post the block
up

Where I'm from if you mess up \$100
that's your a** Mr. Postman

Where I'm from every car that rides
past you will hear the music of that
car 3 blocks away

Where I'm from there is a restaurant
or store on every corner

Where I'm from every person belongs
to a gang or are gang affiliated

Where I'm from little kids ask the drug
dealers for dollars before and after school

Where I'm from the elderly call the
police if you even look like you want to
sell drugs in front of their home

Where I'm from females fight
over petty little things like boys

Where I'm from family will go against
family without thinking twice

Now you know about where I'm from
tell me would you like to visit me? I
know I wouldn't!

Jessica M.

but not yet resting

Fullerton Bleeds

One metal pole sticking out the
concrete floor
two main streets
where blood runs side to side
of a cold dark neighborhood
car parked with 50 shots of a Mack II
2 gang members remain dead
watching people crying
in front of a Chevy Caprice
windows shattered up with blood

Slanging and banging in front
of a liquor store running the spot
cluckers buying drugs
smoking money meant to put food
in their broken refrigerators
putting mouths
in danger of life

Train tracks
home to bodies
blood running through rusty boards
tracks licking red
onto peoples' shoe shine
screaming and running away from their fear
scared to face their challenge

Mom is crying
having her 2 kids behind bars
leaving nothing but memories
in our homes

Francisco V.

Where I'm From

Cabrini Green

I was 5 years old
they shoot every night
one night they shot through
the window by my bed
the bullet curved up to the ceiling
and it missed
the hole was little and black with
smoke coming out
now they dont shoot every day
like they used to

Every time I go to school all I smell
is piss in the hallways
I always have to walk up the stairs
because the elevator don't never work
we live on the twelfth floor
In my house it smell good
my mom always cleans up
sprays air freshener and burns incense
Even in the hallways you can still smell
the chicken after the janitor cleans the piss
They cook on the ramp in front of their door
ids run by and snatch it
as soon as you walk inside, your food is gone

when I was 10 years old I started
getting in trouble
I started smoking, selling drugs, shooting at people
I was not coming in the house on time no more
me and my friends
go places like Navy Pier, stealing bikes
then sell them to buy us weed
Sometimes my heart would beat fast
I'd see police and we'd hop off the bikes
and run home
try again a few hours later

Valentino M.

but now yez resting