

Voices of Compton
Compton Literary / Arts Journal



2008-2009

Cover: Student Artwork
Publisher: Southern California Graphics®

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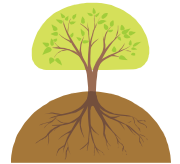
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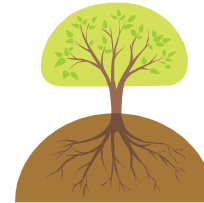
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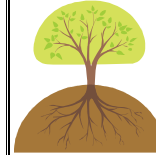
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Prefatory Note

The time has come for a literary / arts journal, a literary and artistic magazine, for the voices of Compton students. Like their academic peers on other campuses, students on this campus can benefit professionally, academically, and personally from this publication. We hope readers will enjoy this first volume of many to come. This volume examines nature, culture, racism, and modern life. We think this volume shows that this campus is surging with life; students are alive to their world, alive to their academic explorations.

Humanities Division

Nature



When Nature Yells
by Corwin McCammon

Nature speaks to us all the time. It speaks to us as we head off to work and are greeted by the warmth of the morning sun. It whispers tales of wind through brown maple leaves letting us know that fall is quickly approaching. The faint smell of roses in bloom lets us know that spring is near and that summer is just around the corner. We get used to the melody of nature talking, sometimes singing to us in harmony with the world around us. Its voice becomes an indistinct mantra in our ears that we silently ignore. So what happens when nature wants to get our attention to teach us a lesson? It yells and catastrophe, destruction, and death are sure to be our sentence. When nature wants to send us a message its roar can awaken the world, and everything in its path is forced to listen. It can be the growl illustrated in David Helvarg's account of Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans or the howl I will never forget during the catastrophic Northridge Earthquake. When nature wants to get our attention, its voice is loud, distinct, and unforgettable.

To illustrate this point, journalist and environmental activist David Helvarg documented the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's death and destruction in his essay, "The Storm This Time." Helvarg writes, "The Gulf Region is now very

much like a war zone, only with fewer deaths" (108). All he could see around him were homes, warehouses, and hotels with the roofs torn off and the walls caved in. Trees and electrical towers were down with electrical lines lying in the street. Streets turned into canals with water from the levees that broke. This scene reminds me of walking on campus at Cal State University Northridge on January 20, 1994, after the 6.7 earthquake rocked the San Fernando Valley. It truly looked like the city of Northridge was under attack. The library where I had spent many hours studying had glass windows blown out with glass and debris spread everywhere. The science building that housed my biology lab was reduced to rubble. Most of the parking structures had collapsed and countless cars were crushed under the weight of the concrete. Many of the old dorms had collapsed with my fellow students trapped under the ruins, and I could hear people calling out for help. We had received nature's message and were experiencing its wrath.



Furthermore, Helvarg describes the noise and chaos that enveloped the region as rescue personnel and news media rushed in to figure out the level of damage nature had inflicted on the poor city of New Orleans. Helvarg further writes, “it looks like a Woodstock for first responders with Red Cross and media satellite trucks, tents, and RVs pulled up” (104). Much like Helvarg’s experience, I can remember hearing fire trucks and police sirens fill the air as they rush to aid the people trapped in buildings. Cries of people mourning the dead and yelling for help for the wounded grew rampant in the streets. Just as Helvarg heard the guttural cries of pain and loss on the streets of New Orleans as people realized their earthly possessions were surrendered to Hurricane Katrina, the streets of Northridge were filled with people weeping as the last of their homes collapsed under the weight of their roofs. Nature had spoken, and the message was heard loud and clear.

Similarly, the smell that arose from the city of Northridge was intense. With gas mains busted, sewage lines cracked, and buildings on fire there was a smell that overtook the city. With debris blocking the streets, it was days before the city garbage men could pick up trash. This coupled with the infamous valley heat created quite an aroma. Helvarg describes this smell of destruction as the “smell of a dead city, like dried cow pies and mold with a stinging chemical aftertaste” (104). In New Orleans, that smell was mostly caused by dead animals and people that were rotting under the wreckage baking in the Louisiana sun. When the

levees broke many cemeteries were unearthed causing previously dead and buried bodies to float around in the stagnant water. This coupled with dead livestock and fish created an almost unbearable smell. The photos that accompany Helvarg’s report show that people had to wear masks to handle the immense odor that permeated the area.

Collage created by Corwin McCammon



In closing, nature’s voice can be as soft as a gentle mid summer breeze or as destructive as a Tsunami hitting the coast of Thailand. Just as it speaks to us daily to make us aware of the changes in seasons, we must also listen to what it tells us about how we live our lives on the earth. There are many lessons to be learned from both the destruction of Hurricane Katrina and the Northridge Earthquake. Helvarg writes:

Still, destruction on a biblical scale also offers Noah-like opportunities to for restoration after the flood. There are practical solutions to the dangers we confront, along with models of how to live safely by the sea. Things can be done right in terms of building wisely along the coasts, and advancing social and environmental equity. (Helvarg 108)

The Northridge quake brought about many tangible changes to the way Californians live day to day in the ring of fire. Building construction now requires retrofitting of all new buildings so that they can survive earthquakes larger than 8.0. City emergency plans were updated and made more responsive. People began keeping earthquake kits in their homes to provide them enough food and water for their families to survive during a natural disaster. Nature is always sharing life lessons to us on a daily basis. It's our responsibility to listen now so that we don't have to feel the effects when it yells.

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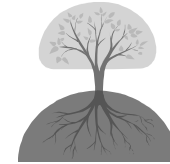
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Untitled

by Jenny Zuniga

The silence in the air, the sound of the conch being blown, who are these people of whom so little is known. They are the ancient ones, the ones who came before me, the ones who lived in peace and fought only to be free. The feathers of an eagle's wing, the shells on their feet, incense in the air, as the four winds they greet. The intensity of the drum pounding, I hear it in my ears, they mark the steps of time, the passage of the years. It is a tradition, one that must be kept alive, it is what must be done or we shall not survive.



The Rocky Mountains

by Ahmed Alfalahi

An exploratory trip to the Rocky Mountains in Colorado turned to a relaxing holiday and a treat for my senses. This trip was my first to these majestic mountains, where nature, geography, and geology combined together in perfect harmony to create one of this country's most splendid national reserves.

My friends and I had long wanted to explore the American wildlife and nature reserves, so we decided to fly out from Los Angeles to the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado. We landed in Denver International Airport at around noon, and from there we drove for three hours to get to Estes Park at the foothills of the mountains. We immediately relished the clean air around us and wondered at the wonderful scenery all the way up the winding roads until we reached the Aspen Lodge in Estes Park. We spent the night there and the next morning, bright and early, we headed out to the Rocky Mountain National Park.

The first thing we noticed as we drove up the mountain trails was the chill in the air that kept getting colder as we climbed up, despite the fact that it was a sunny June day. Looking up at the tops of the mountains, we could see the snow-tipped peaks that would remain white all year round. Just looking at the snow from afar had all of us shivering to the bone from the cold, yet we drove on. It

seemed that summer came to the Rockies in a very mild manner, and traces of winter and spring were all around us. As Gary Kamiya described in his essay, “But the winter rains and snows were not long past, and everything was still green, that deep, fragile green that you wish could last forever, but that fades almost as you look at it” (Kamiya, par. 10). Similarly, the mountains were bursting with Evergreens and Aspens, their color a deep emerald green.

One of our stops was at a volcanic rock formation, the black jutting rocks a stark contrast to the white snow around them. These rocks were the result of lava build-up from volcanic eruptions millions of years ago. The red, hot molten lava gradually hardened over time to create monstrous, black formations that had preserved so many animal carcasses buried deep within.

We saw signs along the road cautioning drivers to watch for moose and elk crossings, and we were anxious for such a sight. Finally, luck was on our side, and we were able to see a lone elk grazing in the meadow just across from us. It seemed so unaware of the hundreds of cameras flashing at it; instead, the elk remained focused on its nutritional forage. The only activity we saw was the elk chasing away a bothersome prairie dog, a furry little creature that looks like a squirrel. We left the elk to graze in peace and drove on, until we reached the next bend in the road; we were awestruck! Right there was a rocky overhang that overlooked the entire park. Below were the rolling meadows full of colorful flowers in bloom, flocks of birds enjoying

the breezes, and herds of big-horn sheep lounging in the warmth of the sun. But the breathtaking sight was that of the thick, billowy clouds at our feet. We were at such a high altitude that some of the clouds seemed unable to reach us.

It was not until we reached the middle of the mountainous trail that we realized the significance of the Rockies in the geography of this nation. There, amidst rivers on either side, stood a tiny little pass, Milner’s pass, that contained the Continental Divide. From this divide, at an altitude of 10,759 ft., all rivers to the west flowed down to the Pacific, and all rivers to the east flowed to the Atlantic. This divide stands in the middle of the entire continent and guides the flowing waters to their ultimate destination. We felt so helpless in front of this natural display of power, and in the words of Kamiya, “For the first time in my life I was put emphatically and finally in my species [sic] place” (Kamiya, par. 16). We stopped to take pictures, and all of a sudden we stopped talking and just listened to the natural soundtrack around us. It was a cacophony of sounds, the rushing waters of the rivers, the trickling streams dripping from the melting snow, and the intermittent squeaks of hawks looking for prey.

We decided to have lunch right there next to the parting rivers, and we were adamant about enjoying the relaxing sounds around us. There were a few Aspen trees whose leaves kept rustling in the wind, sweet and soft like a whisper or a caress. We had never experienced anything remotely close to the serenity around us, definitely not in Los Angeles.

“Too many buildings, too many people, too many streetlights changing mechanically, too many thoughts changing just as mechanically” Kamiya said, and he was right (Kamiya, par. 4). All these city sounds drown out your own.

It was now almost five in the afternoon, and we still needed another hour to drive down the mountain. We were very reluctant to leave our relaxing environment, but we vowed to return another day and explore it all more fully. We could not get enough of the clean, fresh air that had us taking in deep, long drags of air. The air had a smell that empowers and cleanses you at the same time, a smell that made you want to bottle it and take it back home with you. It’s funny how people caution you about the low levels of oxygen at these heights, that low atmospheric pressure may harm you, but I would never believe that air that smelled that clean could ever do anyone harm.

As we drove down, a little subdued, each in his own peaceful and happy state of mind, we couldn’t help but lower the music in the car and roll down the windows despite the growing cold. The meadows were filled with grass, a bright and lively green that swayed with the gusts of wind, their earthy smell carried on to us by the generous breezes. Yes, we were all sorry to leave, and we wanted to indulge our senses as long as we could.

It was the trip of a lifetime, not just because I learned that such a place existed, but because I discovered just how much the beauty of this place affected me and my friends. The Rocky Mountains National Park is a testament to the splendor of this

country and is also a reminder to us to protect and preserve this magical gift. The park provides a natural habitat to many species of herding animals, birds, and rodents as well as a place to admire the geological evolution of the Earth. A day spent in those mountains filled me with a sense of contentment and awe of the greatness of nature. It relaxed me in a way like no man-made oil, scent, or massage could ever do. The American people should be proud of this natural reserve just as much as they are of their beaches or their architectural achievements.

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The Schubarum Park by Houjun Hu

I have been to many places in California since I came to America. These places have different meanings to me. I'm fond of these beautiful sceneries in California. If you want me to choose one place I like most, it should be the Schubarum Park, which gives me profound peace. I enjoy every minute while walking in it. The trees, flowers, animals, and people seem to be a part of the colorful picture.

The Schubarum Park is near my house. In every season, I can see various kinds of flowers, which decorate the green grass and gray hills. In the sunshine, these lovely flowers look like smiling faces of kids. Each "face" has a different color and gives me a different feeling. While standing by them, I can feel the fragrance of these beautiful flowers, which make me recall my hometown. I can still see the happy time that I had with my childhood friends.

I also like the trees there. I enjoy the various shapes and colors of tree leaves. In the spring, the white and pink flowers fall down to the trails, just like colorful carpet. In the fall, the yellow and red leaves of maple cover the trails and the lake. Some little girls like to shake the pear trees and these falling flowers just like snow. It is full of romance,

and the little girls sing and dance under the falling peach flowers. When I see this, I am always pulled back to my childhood dream. In my childhood dream, I was playing ball under the flowering tree and waiting for my grandpa's coming back. It seems quite peaceful and full of love.

In the park, every season has its own beautiful living picture. However, Mr. Kamiya gives us the picture that the whole ranch seems to meet the coming death. Even in the spring, many trees still find it hard to leaf out. Mr. Kamiya writes: "the apple trees had barely begun to leaf out, the ferns had not yet started their scarily fast growth, and only a few modest wildflowers had begun to appeal" (Kamiya 114). Although the ranching is coming to its death, he still loved it and wanted to devote his soul to it.

If we consider the flowers and trees are the static sceneries of the park, the animals shall be the moving sceneries of it. They are really cute. If you pay attention to them, you will find they are just beside you. When you hear some voices in the trees, the naughty squirrels should be the main "criminals". They are running and playing all the time. The park seems to be the paradise for these little creatures. In it, they have no worry about their enemies and food, and they are the kings of themselves. When I see them, I am always envious of their freedom, which can only be got in the park. Not only the squirrels, but also many birds consider the park as their house. They enjoy flying in the sky of the park or just jump on the grass to search some seeds they need. I like to hear their happy voice in

the forest, and see they are jumping together on the ground. These are quite simple actions, but our humans still cannot follow in the real life. Sometimes, we are just like beautiful birds, which are kept in the cage. The cage could be big or small, but it really exists in our life. However, when I stay in the park, the cage seems to disappear. I can hear the songs of nature, smell the aroma of nature, and see the fantastic picture made by nature. I enjoy looking upon the sky and also seeing others' behaviors.

The people are also the most important components of the park. In the morning, I can see many old people doing exercises and dancing. Little kids are riding bicycles while their parents are always protecting and helping them. This made me think of my childhood. When I began to ride a bicycle, my father always protected me behind. Many young people also prefer to choose the park to have fun. I can smell some aroma from their food and hear their loud laugh.

I like the park, which gives me great pleasure and profound peace. I enjoy considering my own business on the trails and the swing. I also enjoy standing on the hill, which is in the park, to look down on the whole park; or just walk on the trail to see some living things of it. It makes me think a lot and gives me more fresh air. Just like Kamiya's love for his own ranch, I also consider the Schubarum Park as an important part of my life. I enjoy the amazing hand of nature.

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Culture



Timeless Latino and Latina Dance

by Everilda Valerio

How beautiful it is to be there
So powerful and meaningful the way they dance.
The spirit of strength flowing into their bodies
As they dedicated themselves in praising and dancing.

There is a good way to ask favor
To the one who created us.
Asking for the right direction
From east to the south and north to west.
Just like our ancestors did before
They dance gracefully and harmoniously.

So be bold and be strong,
While people need assurance.
To have one hope, one race, and one nation
And welcoming those new generations.

Do not be discouraged when somebody puts you down
At the end those oppressors will suffer.
Just as you offer yourself to commitment
At the end you will rise and be free at last.

Believe that timeless dancing is the only way,
To show our cultural and social understanding in our
society.
The past and present will lead us to commitment
That everybody will enjoy and discourage
discrimination.
Throughout the community
We need to encourage everyone in unity.



A Border Dividing My Family

by Juana Sandoval

On Fridays no latter than six o'clock in the afternoon I will turn on the engine of my Honda Accord '97. The almost every weekend trip from Compton to the city of Ensenada, Baja California, that Dennise and I did, took around five hours if inconvenience didn't occur. Everything was exciting except when the time of returning home arrived.

Every family member waited with anxiety the arriving of the very short weekends, but the most excited was Dennise. Since the middle of the week, she used to get prepared for the marvelous trip. She packed her favorite clothing, shoes, and her special toy, a piano that I bought her in a yard sale for three dollars (because the lady didn't want to reduce the price), and, of course, she could not forget her pale pink blanket with a beautiful unicorn in the center. Along with all this stuff, she will pack a lovely picture she drew in school for her daddy who was living in Mexico – in this work she expresses her dream and love for her family. A nice pictured house big enough for all three of us with a colorful front yard with one tree on each corner of the house, with young grass and lots of different kinds of flowers and colors, but most purple, her

favorite ones. And under the leafy tree we were there, her daddy, she, and I, sitting on a bench holding each other's hands and happy for being together in the house of her dreams. Flavio and Dennise wished their lives were different. Dennise dreamed most for the reunion of her family and Flavio for a place where he could live his childhood as many other children of his age. Parks describes Flavio's words, "Someday I want to live in a real house on a real street with good pots and pans and a bed with sheets" (Parks 88).

The drive to Ensenada was just perfect. Once we cross the border San Diego-Tijuana, we felt closer to Manuel. By the time we reached Rosarito Beach, we were just one hour from our destiny. The scenery was spectacular. Driving along the coast with its incredible greenish mountains and the blue water sea made pleasant and shortened the tiring trip.

Even though our stay was for a couple of days, we experience emotive moments. Manuel was waiting for his family at the door of his residence, and once Dennise saw him started calling him. Then she will run out of the car to hug him telling how much she loved and missed him for those five days. The brightness on everybody's eyes was inevitable to notice. We shared our experiences about the week days and expressed the love we felt for each other.

On Sunday the magical moments were gone. We had to face our reality; there was a big border between Dennise and me and my husband. We had to say goodbye with a pain on the heart and some

times tears in our eyes. We wanted no more good-bye's, I wanted my husband back to this country, but most of all no border dividing my family.

The worst moment of the trip was when I tried to re-enter the United States. The port Tijuana-San Diego was always jammed with traffic. Sometimes I had to wait up to two and a half hours begging immigration, "do not send me to revision"; otherwise, I will wait for one more hour. The stubborn vendors trying to sell their merchandise as much as they could—fruit, ice cream, snacks, and different home items—were really annoying. Also every car playing its favorite music, rancheras, rock, pop, romantics, and, of course, La Paquita del Barrio could not be absent with her famous phrase "me estás oyendo inútil." She sings against men and I imploring my husband could come back.

On Monday, we will start an ordinary week. As soon as Dennise came from school, she will check everyday the mail box hoping that the immigration office would send a notice of my husband's case, a letter that tells us when Manuel will obtain the famous "Green Card". Mondays were the beginning of the week and the beginning of the long wait.

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#3
by Michelle Molina

Boom Boom Boom

Boom Boom Boom
the drums go
with pride

Boom Boom Boom
they go
welcoming friends

Boom Boom Boom
guns with
betrayal in mind

Boom Boom Boom
entire empires fall
... silenced

Boom Boom Boom
our drums go with pride
as we remember what we were.



Rap and Roc the Vote

By Everilda Valerio

Common everybody let us rap and rock the boat
Today is a great day and experience how to vote
It is freedom of choice who is great and devoted
The young ones and old people are excited
To see the result just to make it sure
About their decision if it is right or wrong
Just to have a good administration.
Voting is free and it is easy to write
Just do whatever your heart's desire
But be on time as they require
Do not wait until everybody's in the line
Be ready to do the rap and roc the vote
It is now the time for us to speak and pick
As they say, youth a hope for our future
Common participate and express your choice
Everybody is accepted to rap and roc the vote



The Guatemalan Brothers and Marimba

by Everilda Valerio

For the first time in my life
I have seen them face to face
These Guatemalan brothers are fantastic!
Wearing brightly colorful suits.
Everybody loves them and so dearly
When they play the marimba instrument
That's made of pine or cedar wood
Just to proclaim their faith through music.
And can sing sweet songs for everyone,
While continuously playing a cuache marimbas.
Over and over again producing various melodies
These Guatemalan brothers giving us inspiration
The truth, all of them love their homeland
Each of them play different roles in music
Whatever color you are want to share with you
The talents they received from their ancestor
With their lovely and terrific voice
Just to express themselves as they journey
No matter what they went through from the past
The earth will sing and everyone's hearts rejoice!
By just knowing them will teach us good deeds
And learn to adapt their own culture
While it echoes through the land
From Guatemala, Mexico, Indonesia, Africa and
The whole wide world will listen to their Marimba music
That is the way they spread their traditions in every nation.

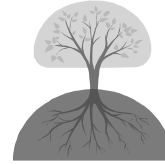


My Inspiration
by Tufaafatiaga Fitiao

Parepa Salupe Halafa, hundred six years old remarkable woman. She is my great-grandmother, and she played a big part in my life. She raised me to become who I am today. Back then, she cooked for me and put clothes on my back. She sat with me and talked to me about life and told me how good God was in her life. She taught me so many things that I can never forget. She was there when I needed her, and she prayed for me three times a day. Growing up with this woman is a mission. She puts a smile on my face everyday.

Now that she's getting old and barely moves around, I cook for her and provide for myself. After hearing my great-grandmother's lecture about life, it made me realize, anything is possible with God. I'm so thankful that I'm able to see her everyday, and I get to spend time with her. Everything she taught me, I can teach my little cousins or nieces. Prayer is still the number one thing in her life, and that's something I'm grateful for.

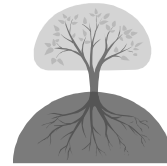
In the future, I will continue to cook and make sure everything is going to be alright. I will carry on her duty, sharing a peace of mind from what my great-grandmother taught me and so on about life with my girl cousins or my nieces. I will encourage them to strive on and how I'm becoming a success in life. Finally, I will always keep them in my prayers, just as my great-grandmother did.



Danza Mexica Cauhtemoc
by Fredwill Hernandez

They burned their incense, they did the four corner prayer
They talked about their customs and the smoke was in the air.
They Played their percussions, and then they danced
When it was all over, then the questions began?
I really enjoyed it, the dancing was sweet
The tribe of Izachar, really came with heat.

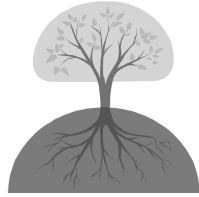
Racism



Constitution Day

By Fredwill Hernandez

The Bill of Rights, were not in the first draft
Freedom of speech it later came with that?
So in what year, do you think it was written?
1791 do you think that i'm kidding
not Just Press and the right to protest
Like the Iran Contra Scandal what you think is next
I can go on but you really won't understand
that HA MASHAYACH YAHAWASI is really the
man...!



Racism: My First Experience
by Brent Blount

The summer of 1973 was a carefree time for me. My only concerns were playing baseball and swimming in the family pool. I remember the smell of the freshly cut grass as our team took the field to play and the rush of cool water across my sweaty skin as I jumped into our pool after baseball practice. This was also a time of enlightenment for me as I was introduced to the meaning of racism. I had the displeasure of learning what racial discrimination was from my father. My lesson was not one of those sit down father to son things. Unfortunately, it was more like the realization that for some unknown reason my father was a racist.

My first year playing on a baseball team was a great experience. Our team quickly became the league leader and went on to become the league champions. There was a strong bond between everyone on the team, and I became close friends with a boy named Reggie. Reggie and I would always warm up together before practice or a game. We had our spot on the bench where we would always sit together. We started getting together outside of the game and soon were the best of friends. Reggie liked all the same things that I did. We drank the same soda and always got the same thing from the snack bar. You could say we were just like two peas in a pod. The two of us never had a problem finding something to do that we both liked, and it seemed we spent every day together.

My father seemed to disapprove of my friendship with Reggie for no apparent reason and

always wanted me to play anywhere but our house. This was distressing as we had a pool, and it was a hot summer. I was confused by this rule because my other friends were allowed to come over to play and also use our pool. When I asked my father why Reggie could not go swimming, he only said that Reggie was not allowed and would not give me a reason. As in Audre Lorde's story "The Fourth of July," "I was supposed to know without being told" (138). I asked him again and again until he finally told me he did not want Reggie dirtying up our pool and leaving a greasy ring around it. But how could this be? Reggie always appeared clean, and I had never seen him in anything but clean pressed clothes. His baseball uniform even had creases in the sleeves where his mother had ironed it. I sat next to him almost every day and had never seen any signs of this dirt or grease my father talked about. I felt there must be some other reason, or my father was just not seeing how neat Reggie was. He was my best friend and should be allowed to swim like all my other friends. It really upset me that Reggie could not swim with me because he was black. I knew this was wrong, and I struggled to understand why the man I revered as my hero could think this way. His point of view made no sense to me.

I did not know what to say to Reggie when he asked to come over and go swimming one very hot summer day. There was no way I could repeat what my father had said. I decided to sneak Reggie over to go swimming when my parents were at work. We were not allowed to go swimming when my parents were not at home, and I would have got a beating if discovered, but I would rather take a beating than tell my best friend he was not welcome at my house. We swam several times that summer. My mother worked part time, and I would invite Reggie to go swimming on the days no one was there.

I couldn't make sense of why my friend was excluded just because of the color of his skin; it just made no sense to me. What I did know was that this mistreatment of my friend was wrong, but how does a child tell his father, his hero, he is wrong. At the time I really didn't understand racism. Years later when I was in high school, I started dating an African American girl, and I am ashamed to say my father told me, "don't bring that girl to the house and for God's sake don't make any black babies." I sure understood my father's racism then. To this day he still uses the N word to describe African Americans.

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Untitled

by Metu Ogadinma

In Nigeria, West Africa, there is a social malady called the osu caste system. The osu caste system is a societal discrimination against a group of people or families based on an age long belief that such people have ancestors dedicated to some oracles or gods. A person becomes an osu if he or she is a descendant of the community considered ward of the gods. These people are therefore viewed as belonging to these gods. Their families are barred from interacting in any form with other families; they are discriminated against by the rest of the community in terms of marriage, traditional events, land ownerships, and general interactions. Why is this practice still surviving? The experiences of these families, some of whom are my friends, are very much like that experienced by Andre Lorde in "The Fourth of July." One day, on a visit to one of my friends, I saw this form of discrimination firsthand.

During my college days, I had a friend, Nkechi, from a neighbouring town. Her town, Obosi, practiced the caste system. One summer, Nkechi finally invited me to the "ijele" festival in her village. The event symbolizes the celebration of the new yam festival and had dance performances by the town's youth. This is a major summer event and everyone in and around the town looked forward to this event. Nkechi had always eluded my

requests to come to the event on her invitation. Anytime I questioned her about not extending an invitation to me, she would become moody and be close to tears. I continued to put pressure on her, and I was eventually invited. I went over to visit Nkechi on the morning of the ijele day with my sister. Her family graciously hosted us to a good lunch and chatted with us about the ijele festival. When it was getting close to the time for the festival, none of Nkechi's family was getting dressed or applying the traditional makeup for the event. They seemed laidback and not exhibiting any of the excitement I expected to see. I could not ask why because I was not sure of what was going on, but I kept on observing them.

Finally, after what seemed like forever, we went to the event. Three sides of the arena were occupied by colorfully attired people with their invited guests dancing to different songs. The king of the town, with his cabinet, in their breathtaking regalia, was seated there along with the local politicians and the police. On one corner where we were, there were people who appeared to be bonded together, calm, regularly dressed and just observing. "Why are we standing over here?" I asked. "I feel like dancing with the rest, let's go," I continued. Before I could get an answer, one of the traditional rulers came over and in a very loud voice asked us to make sure we did not mix with rest of the villagers. That did not make any sense to me, so I turned towards my friend and saw her bend her head with tears in her eyes. "Please follow me," Nkechi said, crying, "I have something I should

have told you a long time ago.” We followed her out of the arena, and she told us her family were osu and were not allowed to participate in the festivities. She went on to apologize for not telling me; this was because she was scared of people in school knowing and taunting her. I was very heartbroken when I heard this. I left the festival sad and angry. The anger I felt was so similar to what the author of “The Fourth of July” felt when she was told by the waitress that they could not be served inside the ice cream parlor because they were black (Lorde 140). All the excitement I felt going to the festival was crushed just by that single act of discrimination.

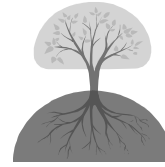
I had heard and read about this system, but I thought it was no longer in existence. I talked to my father about this, and he told me that this practice had been abolished a long time ago, but that it had been kept alive out of fear of a possible ancestral retribution to anyone who acted otherwise. He told me that some of the people, including the educated and enlightened argued against the abolishment stating, among other reasons, that it is an ancestral curse that should be left to linger. They argued further that the ancestors of the osu voluntarily sought refuge with the gods. They said that any abolishment would bring a curse on the whole town from the gods. The people for the abolishment argued that this discrimination was a result of what happened hundreds of years ago and that the current and future generations were not involved. The church members preached hell fire, the politicians went to court, and the moralists appealed to the community’s consciences. My father

said after all the arguments for and against were made, it was abolished and proclamation was made abolishing the practice. The combined influence of Christian religion, civilization, and morality as well as the government made the abolishment of this barbaric system possible.

My attendance to the ijele festival showed me that the system still thrived despite the proclamation. Despite all efforts by the government and religious groups to stop this form of discrimination, it still thrives. People pay lip service to all government efforts to stop this type of discrimination. It is hard for the government to regulate people’s lifestyles and beliefs. Religion has not been able to help either because people still hold on to old beliefs. They are scared of the wrath of the gods. Audre Lorde in “The Fourth of July” was discriminated against by white people (140). My friend and her family experienced discrimination by fellow black men, which to some might be more painful, but discrimination of any form is wrong and should be fought.

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Who is foe?

by Gerald Ranser

Who am I?
Just another black guy?
Some things that I see,
look back and truly despise me.
Blacks in the past
have suffered and sacrificed
by the mass.
They stood fast and endured
through the crass.
Was it done for naught,
their hopes and dreams to rot.
You can wish
You can scream,
at those
Who fulfilled their dreams.
Weed smoking and guns blasting,
I see many young black lives
fly right past me,
but do they know,
that they are they're our
destructive foe.



Can Racism Keep Your Dreams Dormant?

by LaTonia Smith

One morning as I drove my daughter to school, she asked me why was she the only Black girl in her kindergarten class? Thoughts of when I was a child being the minority and how I felt rose to the surface. Is she being mistreated? Was she feeling alone? Was she being made to feel inadequate? Is she feeling as though she does not belong? How do I explain to my five year old daughter the reality of racism without it crushing her dreams? Do I continue to ignore when injustices are presented to me? As a child being told that I can become anything in life, but deep down truly still feeling inadequate because of my life experiences with racism. Lorde writes of a similar experience to “protect their children from the realities of race in america [sic] and the fact of american [sic] racism by never giving them name, much less discussing their nature” (Lorde 138).

Two years prior to that drive to school, my daughter came to me and told me that one of her classmates told her that she could never be a princess. I was shocked and upset. I spoke with her and, of course, explained to her that what she was told was untrue and she, too, could be a princess.

Not long after, she was then told that she could not play with a group of girls because of the color of her skin. I was outraged! I knew that racism would eventually soar its ugly head. My initial thought was why at such a young age? As though I accept the racism, but just not right now at this age, “not because they [her parents] had contributed to it, but because they felt they should have anticipated it and avoided it” (Lorde 140).

I, too, as in Lorde’s piece “The Fourth of July,” am guilty of that silence given to racism. Mentally thinking if I do not give it (the act of racism) any energy, it will eventually fade away. Not wanting to make a scene every time I feel an injustice had been done to me. As I think of my childhood and going to school, as the minority, my parents never spoke directly to me in regards of racism. Lorde states: “Like so many other vital pieces of information in my childhood, I was supposed to know without being told” (Lorde 138). But now that my daughter is facing the same issues, I feel as though I only hurt myself more not learning how to face it head-on at an early age.

Racism should never be acceptable. It doesn’t matter at any age. I went to the director and expressed to her my concerns. I then reassured my daughter that there was nothing wrong with being different than others. I told her that she was smart and beautiful, and she could become anything in life. Right? This was the same thing I was told as a child. What I didn’t do was go back to my daughter

and explain to her what I did, why I did it, and what actions would be taken after speaking with the director. Again being silent. You can be anything in life. All parents seem to say this, but with little conviction. Did I really believe that then? Why am I telling my daughter something that I sometimes doubt?

It is November 4, 2008, and Barack Obama has just become the projected winner and President of the United States of America. As I sit in my home amongst my children, family, and friends, I begin to cry. Every person who was humiliated, degraded, made to feel inadequate, sacrificed himself or herself for the good of tomorrow, stood up for what was right and killed, did not die in vain. I can say with conviction to my children that, “Yes, you can be anything in life.” This day was a day of reckoning.

Modern Life



Young Americans Morality Deterioration: What Are Some of the Causes and Effects?

by Dakota McMahand

Introduction

Often Americans question a person's character once that person has stolen something, murdered someone, or committed suicide. All too often Americans forget that character is built and developed, not inborn. Both internal and external forces play a significant role in shaping personal character. Focusing directly on America's young culture, one can see the development of a self-indulgent, rebellious society. The moral deterioration of young Americans is sweeping the nation. This essay will discuss the development of the "I-Deserve-Its" mentality, the evaporation of constructive role models, and the lack of enough proper parental guidance.

Role Models

Role models help shape the character of their admirers. A role model provides a pattern for one to follow and aspire to. Presently teachers have not been stressing the importance of "studying historical role models like Benjamin Franklin, Florence Nightingale, and George Washington-whose stories were used to provide objective lessons in inventiveness, character, compassion, curiosity, and truthfulness" (Sykes, p.186). Author

Charles Sykes brings up a valid point. I cannot recall, in middle school or elementary school, studying the aforementioned historical figures in-depth and evaluating the constructive qualities of each. Moreover, the current role models, for example, Miley Cyrus, is not what a young person should want to aspire to become. Although Miss Cyrus is a self-made millionaire, it has become evident that she has abused her stardom. Miley Cyrus has posed in very risqué photos, and she is not even seventeen years old.

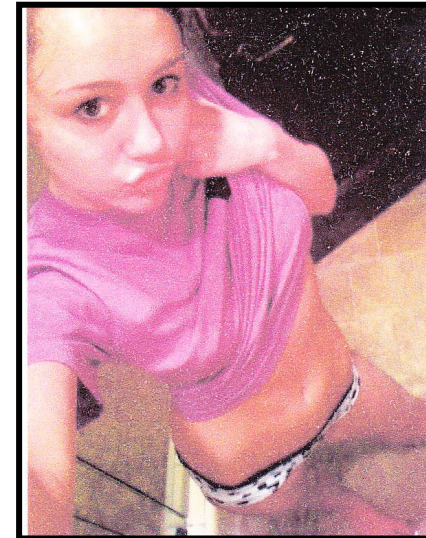


Figure 1 Photo of Miley Cyrus (Risqué Picture)

Little girls admire her, and it should be her job to make sure that she provides a decent example for young children to follow. Unfortunately, that is not the case. America is producing too many "Paris

Hilton want-a-be's" which in turn is creating a self-indulgent culture.

IDI Culture

In Charles Sykes' short essay entitled "The 'Values' Wasteland," he discusses "the growing population of the 'I-Deserve-Its.'" He proceeds to state that, "Their IDI-ology is exceptionally and dangerously self-centered, preoccupied with personal needs, wants, don't -wants and rights" (p.185). Here is one of the major effects of not having proper role models; it sweeps a nation into an unconscious moral state. I have a personal friend, and for the purpose of this paper, she shall be called Jane. Jane embodies some of these characteristics. I was completely shocked to find out that Jane's mother picks her up from college and drops her off everyday, that Jane's mother makes her lunch, and that Jane does not work. Whenever Jane wants something, within the next month Jane's parents will end up purchasing it for her. Jane clearly embodies the complete characteristics of the IDI culture. Both Jane and I have several disagreements about what it means to take care of oneself, but ultimately it boils down to a child's main representation of character: the parent.

Parental Guidance

Parents play a massive role in molding their children. Children follow example. One is mostly influenced by how their parents raised them and the actions of the parent. As both parents go to work, children come home to an empty house and are deprived of the attention and guidance needed to succeed in life. Therefore, the influence of their

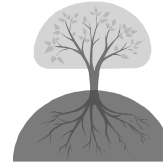
peers as well as television play a more massive role in a child's development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the moral deterioration of today's youth in America is a combination of the lack of proper role models, the self-indulgent culture, and lack of parental contact. These are just a few factors that seem to have contributed to the low moral standards of young Americans today.

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Culture Report 2 by Ricky Smith

We went from zute suits to plain business suits

We were slipt between non violent and by any means

We went from trauma to tragedy

We went from united front to vs one another

We went from african americans to black

We went from crispy clean to baggy jeans

We went from baggy jeans to gangsta leans

We went from gangsta leans to saggy jeans

The point is we seem to degrade as time roles on



A Day at the Mall
by Na'Chelle Catron

On any given day in America, thousands of teenagers flock to the local malls as an escape from our mundane lives. We dress up pretty, text our friends to see who is going to be there as we head for the door. To this day, whenever I go to the mall I am transformed back to my high school years from the sights and sounds that surround me. Even though I am not that far removed from my days of glory hanging out at the mall with my friends, I feel like it was ions ago. Most adults go to the mall for one purpose, to shop. For the young, however, it is so much more, a virtual wonderland of sights, smells, and sounds that can keep you entertained for hours.

One of my strongest memories from one of my many mall adventures dates to my senior year in high school. My friends and I made plans to meet at the food court by 5:00 o'clock sharp, so we could have matching t-shirts made for our upcoming CIF basketball game. We all scurried home from school because we knew time was of the essence. I entered the huge front doors to the mall that open automatically as soon as they sense your steps. You can hear the swoosh of the big doors opening as you enter into another world. The next sound you hear is the swoosh as they close behind you closing out the

silence of the outside world and opening up a world of children laughing and people bustling from store to store.

Once inside, I am hit with the familiar smell of a hot baked Cinnabun, and even though I was not hungry five minutes ago, all of a sudden I want a Cinnabun. I know, however, I am on a time schedule and must meet up with my friends, so we can get the shirts made in time for our big game. As I am walking towards our meeting place, I notice a group of teenagers standing by the food court. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, laughing and pointing in my direction. I continued on my journey avoiding a toddler who was running amuck with his mother in hot pursuit. As I looked over my shoulder, I saw one of the teenagers walking towards me. He was tall and slender, and he had kind of a swagger to his walk. I was standing next to the Nike store and I remember the smell from brand new tennis shoes as he walked up to me and asked me my name.

I noticed he kept looking back at his friends, and they were giving him the thumbs up. While he was talking to me, I totally forgot why I was at the mall; my friends were a distant memory as I was totally engrossed with his smile. Much like Judith Cofer where she shares Mama's power to command everyone's attention, John had mine at "hello"; his mere presence commanded my full and uninterrupted attention (115). His name was John, and he played baseball for a rival high school. We talked for what seemed like hours; all the noise that

surrounded me was extinguished by my intense focus on his every word.

Suddenly, the silence was broken when I heard a female's voice shout "John, John!" As I turned to look, an obviously angry girl started cussing us out. I was called about every name in the book, her home girls started to run up on me, and I found myself scanning through the crowds for my home girls. None were to be found, and I began to shake because I just knew what was about to happen. One of her friends slapped me in the back of the head, and as I felt the vibration from my head slinging forward all I could think was survival. If I ran I would look like a coward, but if I stayed I was sure to get the beat down. Luckily, by this time mall security had grabbed the girl who was doing all the screaming; she was crying and screaming at the same time. I watched an abundance of tears fall down her face, and I kind of felt sorry for her because I could tell from one female to another she was really hurt over this guy.

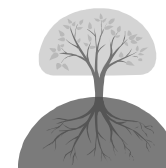
Once I knew security had things safely in check, I began to get brave and shout back at the girls. I think it was just a way to express my extreme relief that I was going to survive to live another day. I can relate to Kamiya in "Life, Death, and Spring" when he recalls his run-in with a mountain lion and says, "It was not a relaxing walk back to the cabin." I walked away from the immediate scene and once out of sight ran towards the safety of the food court and my friends. I could see the scowls on their faces as I finally approached them. Even though I can't say it was a positive

memory, I still think back to those days at the mall as some of my fondest. To this day when I go to the mall and catch the smells from a fresh baked Cinnabun, I travel back in time. The smell of the Nike store still makes me think about good old John and his womanizing ways.

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My Place of Profound Peace

by Luis Paredes

My father's hometown of Ballesteros, Mexico, is a very tranquil and slow-paced place to live that provides me with a sense of profound peace every time I visit. Ballesteros is a small village with few sidewalks, rocky dirt roads, and no traffic lights. The trip that I make to Ballesteros every year is similar in some ways to the descriptive essay, "Once More to the Lake" by Elwyn Brooks White.

Stepping off the plane in Queretaro, Mexico, I am hit with the strong aroma of burning corn fields. Making my way to the village of Ballesteros in a green taxi, I am traveling about eighty kilometers per hour observing the flourishing farm lands, high mountain ranges, and small villages cuddled up underneath the hills. Most people in Ballesteros are warmhearted, but like everywhere else on earth there are a few bad apples there as well. Because I visit Ballesteros in December, there are quinceñeras and weddings just about every weekend. Going to these parties, I see beautiful girls dressed in their fancy shoes and short dresses that reach the top of their knees. From anywhere in the village you can hear the band playing the typical Mexican music. I can smell the scent of a pig being cooked—which in Mexico they call "carnitas"—

that was recently killed that day. After I eat my tasty meal, I greet some of my aunts, uncles, and cousins that I haven't seen for a year. When I am not hung over and I wake up early in the morning, I can hear the birds chirping a pleasant tune as they mingle cheerfully in the trees, and I breathe fresh air that is cool and satisfying to my lungs. Taking a walk to the nearest store for some coca-cola, I observe the new sidewalks that were not constructed the year before. People have also been putting money into their homes; thus, the houses start to make the village seem more inviting to visitors. New brick and metal fencing surrounds some of the freshly painted homes. Taking a walk down to the soccer field with my cousins is very easy going and comforting. The lush green grass of the soccer field brings pleasure to my eyes. We build up a sweat that immediately chills our bodies with the cool afternoon breeze.

Elwyn White's essay, "Once More to the Lake," is similar to my place of profound peace in a few ways. Just as Elwyn Brooks White writes, "The only thing that was wrong now, really, was the sound of the place, an unfamiliar nervous sound of the outboard motors" (White 110), I find that some changes, which are not necessarily negative, occur in Ballesteros every time I visit. This last time I visited there were new sidewalks neatly constructed to blend in with the surroundings. White continues, "There had always been three tracks to choose from in choosing which track to walk in; now the choice was narrowed down to two" (White109). This is similar to my experience where newly paved roads

allow vehicles to travel more efficiently through the village. The lake was a place of peace, comfort, and reminiscence. That is what Mexico is to me because I have been traveling there ever since I was a child.

In Mexico, the visitors have to be informed and careful not to get into any altercations with the residents. Avoiding conflict with someone else is definitely one of my high priorities. Unlike the U.S., a lot of people in Mexico walk around with guns strapped to the back of their belts. I also have to make sure I don't eat too much of the delicious food my grandmother dishes up because I might put on a few extra pounds. Elwyn Brooks White writes, "When the older boys played their mandolins and the girls sang and we ate doughnuts dipped in sugar" (White 111). Just as the father enjoyed eating doughnuts dipped in sugar when he was a kid, one of my preferred dishes every time I visit Mexico would be "carne apache" which translates into apache meat. It's ground beef cooked only with freshly squeezed lime juice and mixed with diced tomatoes, onions, jalapenos, and cilantro. It is then served on a tostada with avocado slices laid on top. Maintaining my weight is always on my mind when I visit Mexico.

Being in Mexico and meeting new people usually brings up some very interesting conversations, especially with the ladies! Going to parties with my male cousins I usually find myself conversing and dancing the night away with beautiful ladies. We engage in the usual conversations between two strangers. Where are you from? How old are you? What do you plan to

do with your life? That's the type of dialogue we exchange to get to know one another a little better.

My point of view to these short annual vacations are to get new ideas of what to do the next time I visit, and what beaches or cities to visit. Maybe next time I'll attend a professional soccer game or maybe visit one of the popular lakes or tourist attractions; these activities would give people the opportunity to learn something new about this place of profound peace. Other people as well as my cousins encourage me to go more often. Of course, I cannot because of school and work, but it sure makes me feel welcomed.

Seeing my family every year brings me a great sense of joy. Seeing them, hugging them, and hanging out with them fills my chest with a great sense of warmth and amour. Though these sensibilities I bring back with me across the border fade away like a black cotton shirt after a few washes, I still appreciate my family for having me every year; moreover, I anticipate a visit from them one of these days here in California.

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Comfort Zone
by Jessica Medrano

At times, we go off into our own quiet places where we can be our own selves. A place we care less about what people are thinking towards our selected outfit for the day, and why we don't change our hairstyle frequently enough to their taste. Every morning I wake up, I dread the thought of leaving my silky smooth sheets that seem to grip me at my feet and won't let me leave. The sun rises, and its rays beam through my window and greet my face with its warmth. I hear the birds calling the sun and the clouds whispering through the sky. This is the one place I find relief, where no one is watching me and analyzing every little detail. My room is my sweet escape, a place I can express my character.

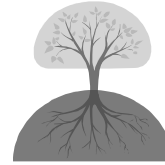
Of course, there are other elements that combine with a single room. There is a sequence of rooms in a home. The living room is where we hold family meetings and movie nights. We all know that when you smell the aroma of butter popcorn tickling your nose, a movie is about to come on. The kitchen, hands down, is my grandmother's holy ground. "Why?" you might ask. Try waking up every morning to a full cooked hearty breakfast, mountains of flour tortillas, fresh brewed coffee, and eggs as fluffy as clouds. The garage is my dad's shrine, with his murder type tools and endless dots of oil stains as far the as the eye can see. The garden is where my mom does her Martha Stewart like

projects. If she were to add anymore pots and trees in our yard, you might mistake my home for a jungle. There is no place in my home that is left untouched.

My room, on the other hand, is a mystery itself. Things have a way of vanishing and never being found when needed. I leave something on my dresser one day, and it's gone the next. If I could describe my room in one word it would be, Treasure Island. There, I have a pet dog, her name is Princess, and I've had her since she was a puppy. They say every dog looks just like its owner. I agree. I have curly hair, and I'm not that tall (I am only five feet three inches). Princess isn't even two feet tall; and her hair is extremely curly as mine, her coat reminds me of a fresh batch of curly fries from Jack-in-the-Box. Luckily, I don't need to share my room with my sister; that would be like WWII all over again.

My mother's room is like a palace, a huge luxurious exotic canopy bed, with white linens and silky white sheets. Her bathroom is like the size of my bedroom itself. Her closet has piles and piles of shoes that look like candy bars of all colors and shapes in a candy store, each one different, styled in order from season and style. Of course, less than half of that closet is my father's wardrobe. Of course, men never really did mind having the smallest section after all. My grandmother's room, it's so peaceful and full of warmth. Photos and frames everywhere as if it was her own gallery, pictures of the past and leading to the future.

A home is where I feel that we can express ourselves and don't have to worry about what other people are thinking. We can do and go as we please, wake up each day with curlers in our hair, and even if we walk in our pajamas. Our homes are our comfort zones, although they might not be the most modern or upgraded mansions. We take pride in saying, yes, that is my home and that is where I live.



Celebrate

by Christopher Miller

Today i watched as the past visited our campus

He had no face to speak of
like he was wearing a mask
yet we still knew who he was
many people were excited like a celebrity was near
like a wayward son
he had done some bad things
but like a good soldier
people were glad to see him come home
he is only in town for today
by tomorrow he'll be gone
so let's party and celebrate
the past in our presence

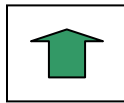
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1. Go to www.turnitin.com
2. Select “**New User**” and “**Create Profile**”

OR (if returning user of www.turnitin.com)
“**Login**” and select “**Add Class**”

3. **Access Code:** 2877409
4. **Password:** writing
5. Select **Poetry, Essays, Short Stories,**
or **Plays**, and then *green upward arrow*
to “**Browse**” your computer desktop or
flash drive, “**Upload,**” and “**Submit**” file.



*Send **photography** and **artwork** (preferably in a digital format) to the Humanities Division at the address on the back cover or as an email attachment to roach@elcamino.edu or roach_r@compton.edu.

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To send poetry, spoken word art, song lyrics, essays, short stories, plays, artwork, sketches, and photography, see inside back cover.