

# Contemporary Afro-Mississippi Poetry

Published in *Oxford American* October 5 2009



This selection of Afro-Mississippi poems (audio files and text versions) has been compiled by C. Liegh McInnis as a supplement to his article “Penning the Revolution,” which was also published in *Oxford America*. The above pictured poets are Charlie Braxton, Skipp Coon, Keno Davis, Mariama Gibbs, C. Liegh McInnis, Jonathon Thomas, and Kanika Welch aka The Poet of Truth. The only poet not pictured is Tori Thompson aka Scarlette. A special thank you to Tibbet Music and especially DJ Mr. Nick for their kind assistance. Following the poems are bios for each poet.

---

## “Mississippi Courage (for Medgar, Fannie Lou, and Ms. Annie Devine)” by C. Liegh McInnis

Courage is a lighthouse guiding ships to salvation.  
Courage is a fire that burns down the dead weeds of racism  
that rise to suffocate the voices of liberty.  
Courage is an antibiotic that kills the bacteria of hatred.  
Courage was the nucleus of the Mississippi Trinity.  
Three lamps full of freedom oil that shined  
the path to the dirt and gravel roads of liberation:  
an insurance salesman, a sharecropper, and a teacher.  
Three instructors of liberation, teaching that  
righteous knees only bow before God and that  
the children of God have an unyielding, organic duty  
to protect the meek like umbrellas shielding us  
from the acid showers of colonialism or overcoats  
shielding us from the frozen winds of prejudice.  
Three bucking broncos, railing against  
pale cowboys who lurk in the dark of the night  
armed with the silver bullets of white supremacy.  
Three lambs of justice who boldly walked into  
the snake pit of the South and the lion’s den of America  
to snatch their freedom from Ross “Nebuchadnezzar” Barnett,  
Pharaoh Bilbo, and his side-winding, salamandering scribes,  
the *Jackson Daily News*.  
The insurance salesman, the sharecropper,  
and the teacher bore the cross of change.  
They were the fertile soil in which we planted our seeds of hope,

as they petitioned us to invest the collateral of our talents  
into the mutual fund of the movement.

That's why we must be tired of paper-tiger intellectuals  
and playboy revolutionaries who care more about their  
Cadillac payments than tilling the soil of ebony education  
as they are standing on the backs and trampling the fruits  
of Medgar, Fannie Lou, and Ms. Annie Devine.

These three midwived and nurtured the germination  
of the movement, which caused a rippling of  
flowers and trees sprouting through  
the winter of racism into the spring of transformation.

Like Shaka they were the pounding  
tom-tom heart of a militant movement,  
like Jesus they came to heal the sick, and like Mohammed  
they laid the blueprint for their people.

Still everyday people fighting for everyday concerns.  
Speaking volumes with their actions, this trinity shook  
the fibers of the universe.

Through intellectual guerrilla warfare with the spirit of  
Jomo Kenyatta, they showed that leaders can't teach people  
to stand as tall as mighty magnolia trees if they are  
weeping willows bowing on their knees to the winds of wrongdoers;  
they embraced the sword of justice and the fires of protest  
becoming ministers for justice and preachers of the gospel of freedom,  
teaching us to be the engine of organizations  
rather than be driven or plowed over by them.

With little possessions, they fought for the dispossessed,  
each one crying 900,000 jubilee tears for 900,000 of Wright and Walker's citizens  
at the mercy of cowardly chicken teachers and chicken eating preachers,  
all the while refusing to fight the forest fire of evil with evil,  
believing love to be the only antidote for hate—

for when held to the light of Truth courage

is the mirrored reflection of love, and no greater love than a man  
who would lay down his chivalric cashmere coat of life for another  
so that we may walk unblemished over the cesspool of struggle—

his payment to be beaten, kicked, sprayed, spit on, spied on, lied on, bombed, and tuned out by  
his own for a few crumbs of token positions and jus' enough money to move cross the tracks into  
the homes that pale people abandoned to preserve the marmalade of Mississippi tradition.

In the blood-stained name of emancipation, equality, and liberty  
the thick sweet potato aroma of their lingering legacy demands  
that we heed the call to explode this corrupt cocoon  
into a Capital city of concrete citizens.

So, [i] don't know if [i]'m going to heaven or hell,  
but wherever [i]'m going, [i]'m going for Mississippi.  
[i]'m going for Mississippi.

## **For Keisha, Ora, and Brittany” by Kanika Welch aka The Poet of Truth**

I have seen Small Brown Girls in puffy pigtails  
Round tattered home-made bases with tremendous force and speed  
Skillfully waiting for the perfect moment to run  
Embody both potential and kinetic energy  
While playing kick ball with the boys  
Cotton soft hair painted by the night  
Scruffy and fraying and the ends  
As a result of losing their  
Tiny / Plastic / Multi-colored barrettes

I have seen Small Brown Girls dance  
*Punch-a-nella punch-a-nella*  
Their agile bodies rippling by some unseen cosmic force  
That is their laugh  
Dashing out into the rain  
Only to return to cold  
Fragile houses  
Sniffling sick and snotty  
Yet happier than  
Sunday morning's aroma of hot buttered biscuits  
And maple smoked bacon

These Small Brown Girls that I have seen

Silently fading away like analog television sets  
With no digital converter box to come and save them  
Angry with cold brown eyes  
Expanding in all dimensions of  
Mind / Body / And thought  
Cursing God for this growth  
And the inevitable Black curse  
Of growing too damn fast  
Still pausing to praise the mothers who left them only in death  
Black Mama's who do not cease life to die!  
They reschedule death  
To finish dinner / Hem dresses Kiss wounds

I have stood watching as these Small Brown Girls  
Were hemmed up against graffiti adorned concrete walls  
And violently searched  
Innocence seized from all five pockets  
Of their Levi Strauss jeans

Brown girls turning dreadfully gray at small ages  
Too much weed  
Too much liquor  
Too much sex

And no one to read them “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks  
And no one to give them Malcolm’s autobiography as their first real book  
And no one to tell them they’re beautiful but to never rely solely on their looks  
And no one to tell them that if he respects you he’ll wait until you’re ready  
And no one to tell them that God sometimes creates storms to show you he can calm them  
And no one to tell them about God  
And no one to tell them  
And no one to tell  
And no one

Yes  
I have seen  
Small  
Black  
Girls  
Swept underneath midnight currents  
Comprised of their solid, gold tears  
Because when they stared into the mirrors image  
They saw the reflection of a woman  
And knew not  
Who she was

© 2008 Kanika Welch aka “Poet of Truth

### **“Concrete” by Skipp Coon**

Beyond the poverty and pistols where children die for colors and initials  
We stack they bodies next to the negligence from them officials  
Elected to serve the state and oppress us  
So campaign promises they making don’t impress us  
The policies they crafting in they offices address us  
The drug trade, liquor stores and mothers that caress us  
see it in our eyes and they start feeling the pressures  
making diamonds and busting pipes in the words that express us  
we fed by the junk food and raised in the church  
suffer for 353 and live for the 12 firsts  
potential in the stroller never realize it before we in the hearse  
never miss the sunshine til cell blocks or the dirt  
the goods that we purchase give us purpose on the earth  
and the deck we playing with is stacked against us at our birth  
the pennies that we purchase give us purpose on the earth  
and race and class is the isms that combine to make it worse

© 2008 Skipp Coon

### **“Color Complex” by Skipp Coon**

Between her hair texture her skin color her videos her big brothers  
She don't think nobody loving her but her grandmother  
Her resources is limited so its hard to discover  
How to rate beauty that's not on top of a disc cover  
Since she's not matching it she's flawed and theyre immaculate  
Her beauty's skin deep but she got acne she aint happy with  
She gotta get something to influence her appearance  
Cause she's tired of backing it up and being an object in the lyrics  
They keep bruising her spirit; they breaking her heart  
They set her value off the size of her parts  
And how does she start to heal knowing all they want is her womb  
She prays for mammaries as soon as puberty loom  
Cause if she flat chested and they big breasted  
She gets rejected ostracized or just neglected  
so now she at this doctor to get Gods errors corrected  
cause her daddy didn't stay to see that she was protected

she wanna be / she wanna wake up and be light skinned

Now its fashion beyond her years to get acceptance from her peers  
And extra make up that cover up the tracks behind her tears  
And its magic 'cause once she give it up they disappear  
But even the sex is hustle cause love aint living there  
So in between every in out / every moan that she let out  
Every car that she get out / every night that she set out  
Its nothing but the hurt she tries to reroute  
The pain she wants to block out  
But cant because we claiming it's a cop out  
But the heartache is real and the heartbreak cant heal  
But it's the inside void the outside cant heal  
And that's the pain that the sex cant kill  
But as long as they lusting she ignore it  
cause at least they give something inside that they cant steal  
and for that second of pleasure  
she feel like she got a reason to live  
so she bed hop it hurts more when she sit still  
and pray to God that death his will

she wanna be / she wanna wake up and be light skinned

© 2008 Skipp Coon

## **“Intro” to *Women, Revolution, and Tennis Shoes* by Skipp Coon**

heavenly father please order my steps  
im trying to write right songs, but they keep on pushing me left  
im on the verge of just saving my breath  
cause it looks like now heckler and koch are willing to help

im praying im saved, but heaven will wait  
my folk got bit im in the field lord im looking for snakes  
and i dont know how much more i can take  
between the tears on my cheeks and both my sweaty palms starting to shake  
put enough straws on a camel back it will probably break  
put enough water in a puddle, you can make it a lake  
i cant run, i wont hide, i will stay in one place  
please know that the gun aint safe  
come push me  
see we gon be on the news  
you for losing your life and me for losing my cool  
i aint a killa but they keep on telling me choose  
and i aint marching but they keep on telling me move  
king said peace--he got shot  
malcolm said fight back --he got dropped  
im trying to pen the revolution--i aint built to be pop  
i been looking for something better since medgar got got  
im in a fight for liberation til my heartbeat stop  
until my blood on the concrete and the last shell drop  
until the hammer stop moving  
and the trigger wont budge  
til i see dolly white lights and im coughing up blood  
lord i know

© 2008 Skipp Coon

### **“Jazzy Street Walk” by Charlie Braxton**

Hip hitting riffs  
Split my brain beyond  
The sullen refrain  
Trane’s free jazz movement

Going on & on & on & on & on & on

And now  
Even though I don’t know exactly  
Where it all begins or ends  
I do know that I have spent  
Decades untold doing an  
Old blues walk//dance down  
Mean & empty streets  
Sweating between the sheets  
Of satin dolls & Minnie moochers  
Singing good night Irene  
Cause poppa’s got a brand new bag  
Of rhythm & blues  
Rocking & rolling all the way live  
Down main st. Harlem

By way of Muddy Spring Mississippi  
You see contrary to the all popular belief  
Jazz ain't no kind of music  
It's an artful way of life  
Spiced like pickled pig feet  
Steaming on a peppermint twist stick  
Yeah I say I do walk alone along  
These rough rugged robust roads of jazz  
The same damn way  
I walked the dirty dusty  
Rows of cotton way back down  
In the deep

Deep

Deep

South

You see you don't know  
What's it's like to live  
The lyricless life of a poet in exile  
Lost without vision  
with only the bittersweet rutta begga memories  
Of life back home

Home

where the heart beats tom tom  
Voodoo chants

Home

Where a small pin in the bottom  
Homemade rag doll is a

sudden

Sharp pain in the ass of

mass

jack

Home

Where shango's hammer swings  
Hammer swings like

Basie's

Big band on a one night

stand

In a funky joint north of  
Gutbucket USA

Yeah I do walk alone  
Along these rough rugged robust  
Roads of jazz  
Praying for ancestors holy wisdom  
To close the gaping hole in my soul  
Before I expose too much too quick  
For these old mean and empty streets  
Are too mean to seen

Without an axe to grind behind  
If you dig my meaning

© 1990 Charlie Braxton

## **“Apocalypse” by Charlie Braxton**

## **“Untitled” by Charlie Braxton**

## **“Manhood” by C. Liegh McInnis**

Between the first Adam and the last Adam  
our clay must be sculpted by the Supreme Potter.  
For if you are what you eat, then be fed by  
the seeds of scripture and not merely by man’s meat  
and know that only the trees planted in His soil  
can withstand the winds of wicked weather.  
To be a Man is to be a Gardner of God’s Green Garden  
is to be the levee refusing to break when  
the hurricanes of life threaten to engulf your Earthly essence.  
Yet, your strength does not come from  
lifting weights or doing push ups or sit ups.  
The muscles in your mind are more powerful  
than the rivers that run through your legs and arms and backs  
for the word of God lays a foundation that cannot be cracked.  
And if you stand on God’s word, then  
the floods of Noah will not drown you and  
this crashing economy will not take you under  
for Jehovah is an anchor that has proven  
to be stronger than the gangrene greed of mankind.

Being a leader is not about being wrapped  
in the phony praise of people.  
Being a leader is not about cat-daddying  
in a Cadillac chasing concubines.  
Being a leader is washing the feet of the filthy  
and filling empty stomachs with the Bread of Life  
while making yourself a carbon copy of Jesus’ blueprint.  
To be a protector is to cover your children with hugs and kisses  
while arming them with bows and arrows of righteousness.  
To be a husband is to wrap your wife in the light of Jehovah  
which shines more brightly than furs and diamonds.  
To be a father is teaching your children how to fish  
while sowing within them the seeds of Solomon and self-love.  
To be an educator is to know that calculus is a concept  
created in *Genesis* and affirmed in *Revelation*.  
To be a man is to know that love is the antidote  
to weapons of mass destruction,



and that faith is facing your fears with the assurance  
that roses can burst through concrete.  
You are a legacy of miracles.  
Your hands are stained with the calluses  
that once picked cotton that today pick cabinets.  
Yet even in our successes, a man never forgets to  
thank the heavenly clouds for the righteous rain  
that fertilizes our flowers of peace and prosperity.

To be a man is to be a lighthouse,  
standing on a solemn shore,  
like the tree that could not be moved,  
shining so that the wayward ships of mankind  
can be led back to the Creator.  
You are a lighthouse in these desperately dark days.  
Let Jesus be your brilliantly blazing light bulb so that the world can see the Truth.

© 2009 C. Liegh McInnis

### **“For Chocolate Babies with Glass Hearts” by C. Liegh McInnis**

There are shoes and crayons and baby dolls and barrettes and broken  
pieces of candy and colored pencils and balled-up pieces of paper  
and I wade through the disaster area of Hurricane Deja  
my eyes closing, my head throbbing, my mind spinning,  
and she is a two foot imp or half of a chocolate angel  
who is buried somewhere beneath the destruction of my living room-  
her laugh bounding and exploding through the debris, bouncing off  
the ceiling and returning to me in waves of carnival music and cotton candy.  
Her laugh massages my heart, a building I thought was condemned years ago.

I pick up her artifacts off the floor; I am the appointed garbage man,  
but Deja does not like empty floors so the artist that she is-  
she paints the empty spaces of the floor with books and more crayons  
and beads and sippie cups and baby chairs and blocks and  
I follow behind her like the thirteenth disciple waiting on more to fall  
to be picked up, and she looks over her shoulder-her eyes  
innocent as the first lamb to look upon nature created just for her  
and I drown even as I fight against the currents of pleading looks  
to allow the floor to remain a comfortable mess as she  
is Dora exploring more rooms that need more mess.

And there are other moments when lambs learn of other creatures  
that break the covenant and sink their fanged teeth into innocent wool skin  
and her back and legs and arms are littered like my floor  
littered with spots where someone too lazy to find an ash tray  
put out a cigarette on that back, burned holes into caramel silk,  
created ashy holes to match the now fossilized scabs on her legs and arms  
that litter her body as if it were an abandoned neighborhood with

paper and empty cans and dead roaches and rats and scars that litter her body  
as her eyes are the same broken glass that peers back at you  
from buildings that once had life are now buildings that stare  
into the suburbs waiting for the mercy of a wrecking ball to bowl it over.

And there are round knobs and plastic buttons and levers and  
other pieces of games and toys that no longer belong to anything  
as my floor becomes a toddler's junkyard for nude broken crayons  
with their wrappings pulled off after being snapped into pieces  
and dolls lay like they have stepped on bombs-their limbs scattered,  
the head of black Barbie discarded in the corner of the room,  
the face facing the wall while the left arm is under the couch,  
the hand barely exposing its location while a leg is propped against  
stuffed animals with their stuffing snatched from them by Deja  
who is merely a sick kitten passing the virus while she seeks  
some sweet solace from the killing fields were baby dreams go to die.

When she is with us, I am a drained battery, a flat tire, an empty hooptie;  
To chase her around the house is to catch greased chickens on marble floors,  
and her moods are a Mississippi spring:  
morning sunshine surrendering to evening thunderstorms-tornados are  
always just over the levee because wire hangers bruise the heart's inner skin.  
Yet, when she is gone, it is a long and lonely winter of gray depression  
as we are suffocated by the thick weighty air of silence,  
her laughter sucked into the recesses of a taunting black hole while our hearts  
reach for fading flashes of her light against the freezer burn of absence  
A Raven's "never more" joins in haunting harmony with the sobs of Brooks' "Mother"  
and Deja's return is fresh as the first flower  
that pushes its head through the corpse of January grass

I sit in the middle of the disaster area,  
wondering where is black Barbie's other leg  
I pull Deja's limp Raggedy Ann body from the floor and  
she is a condemned building collapsing into me-  
her four-year old frame never feather light.  
Weighted with the wet sand bags of someone else's neurosis,  
she is already a sprinter with worn legs, a running back having been  
tackled too many times, a boxer that's taken too many punches to the head  
she looks up at me with her shattered pearls for eyes  
and in one swoop I thrush her into the air above my head  
and she becomes a bird who is reclaiming her wings.  
Up and down I toss her little bean bag body,  
and a smile begins to creep across her face like a late sunrise  
and by the third toss she forgets the cigarette burns and the scars,  
and we are baptized in her laughter as we soar into the sunshine

© 2009 C. Liegh McInnis

**"Mayor Misfit" by C. Liegh McInnis**

“Ain’t no love in the heart of the city  
Ain’t no love in the heart of town  
Ain’t no love and it’s sure nuff a pity  
Ain’t no love ‘cause you [tearin’ the city down]”  
Bobby “Blue” Bland

The bigheaded bully on the playground  
this time you have grabbed the wrong tiger’s tail.  
You are a one-man minstrel show,  
having turned city hall into a certified cuckoo chamber.  
You can tear down nightclubs, but you can’t construct an economic plan?  
You can bulldoze the city planning department,  
and then play Houdini and hocus pocus the budget into thin air?  
Mr. Mayor, are those lost funds bulging in your pocket,  
or are you just really happy to see me?  
You can stop a school bus to hug children,  
but you can’t stop suffocating the school budget with bloated administrators  
while skinny teachers try to feed starving students on an anorexic curriculum?  
This city has become an inferno of ineptitude.  
The night continues to cry for your chamber of children.  
Your tongue is a field ripe with lies  
as you suck on the financial phallus of Colonel Pappy Speed  
your poisoned policies strangle this city into submission,  
allowing the vultures who fund your foolishness to raid the pantry bare,  
while you spit seeds of chaos that sprout into a forest of failure.  
Your past is a graveyard littered with midnight bones and pasty gifts.  
Your drug policy is a poorly written play which stars  
the wolf wearing a wool two-piece suit guarding the colored chicken coop,  
for the frosty powder on your fingers fools no one.  
Your tenure is a plague on the progress of poor people  
while each day you murder the memory of Medgar,  
sitting in a seat woven with the fabric of Fannie Lou’s struggle  
you wipe your anal retentive ideologies on the Civil Rights Act,  
giving the middle finger to the ghosts whose blood paves the road which you walk.  
They voted for Frank the Freedom Fighter and got Frank the Liar.  
They voted for Frank the Protector and got Frank the Freebasing Fascist.  
They voted for Frank the liberator and got Frank Lucus.  
The King Edwards Hotel is the Kilimanjaro of your failures  
while Farish Street is a fantastical testament to your fraudulent fame  
as you are unable to exit your office in Battlefield Park,  
allowing Colonel Pappy and the other confederates  
to tip-toe into the city’s boudoir and rape it for all its worth.

© 2009 C. Liegh McInnis

## **“The Deception: Judas’ Seduction and Fall” by Jonathon Thomas**

Come here Judas  
Let me holler at you

I picked you-the ignorant weed among eleven grape vines-  
Because the prophecy to you is a galactic ether  
Yet to be discovered by your cerebellum  
No you won't need your Bible  
So if you could leave it on the table  
Listen I got a proposition  
You a hustler right?  
And still, Jesus picked you  
Peter is a fisherman  
And Jesus let Peter keep his boat, dude  
So therefore it must be okay to be hustling and serve Jesus on the side  
Stop fidgeting you'll get used to the brimstone trust me  
Listen to me, hold on  
Let me turn down the hell fire in my biceps  
So when I put my arm around you  
Your forsaken soul will mistake it for a soothing warmth  
Besides if you wrong for this  
I'm sure you'll get forgiveness  
Because once saved always saved, right?  
Plus Jesus knows your heart  
This plan is a guaranteed money maker from the start  
Look at the dirty ransacked money bag  
Tell me the fact that the Son of God is poor isn't sad  
Even a dishonor worth weeping for  
Maybe that's the real reason Jesus was shedding tears  
Since He knew that Lazarus wasn't really done for.  
How many times has Jesus escaped the Pharisees?  
What if you started turning Jesus in for the bounty?  
If Jesus is who He say He is  
You guaranteed thirty pieces of silver every week  
Jesus been treating the Pharisees like he worked in Victoria's Secret  
Giving them the slip as if their robes were translucent...  
Nevermind, that's after your suicide...I mean time  
Instead envision this  
How much more could Jesus do if  
You could get Him rich?  
He could buy His army  
Could even purchase the poor food  
Because God forbid  
What if Jesus run out of miracles?  
So go ahead and use a kiss when you do this  
Just to let Jesus know this is just business

*A couple of days later*

Judas what you crying for?  
You got the money  
What you mean you didn't know that they would kill the Savior  
Don't come crying to me

I don't do forgiveness  
I heard the disciples won't speak to you either  
Why don't you use the money to holler at Mary Magdalene  
And let her do what it do for you  
Oh... she done changed on you too?!?  
Well there's always that tree  
Here's just enough rope on me  
I don't think Jesus would forgive you  
Don't even wait the three days  
Because even if He does come back  
He ain't forgiving you  
Don't you feel so stupid  
Plus if He did come back  
You the one He mad at  
So rather than face Him next week  
Just kill yourself  
I'm telling you man...this here seems to be the perfect tree  
Once God is mad at you there's nothing else to do  
Believe me it is better to die on your feet than live on your knees  
That's my personal testimony

*Judas hangs himself*

Now it's time  
To play my favorite children's game  
With my lieutenant demons  
Come on kids lets form these hellish lines  
Look at God cry  
Oh Your Holiness, Your Holiness  
Send Judas' soul right over

© 2008 Jonathon Thomas

**“Love” by Jonathon Thomas**

Love is God's smiling face  
A warm wind that can't be seen  
Love is the way a golden retriever  
Happily bounds to fetches his owner's duck  
On an stomach that has been barren for a day  
Because in order to love  
Two juke joint blues notes must become one melodious choir harmony  
This sacrificial melody doesn't require the chord of freedom to be muted  
But love makes itself a metronome steady soloist  
To provide a psychological bedrock  
The lack of understanding this principle  
Signifies that one is maturity tank is significantly destitute  
Meaning any relationship is destined to stall out on the highway to Selfish  
Love isn't the rose

Love is the manure in which the rose grows  
Love isn't the love song  
But the years spent in voice class  
In order to hit the legendary note guaranteed  
To leave goose bumps in its majestic sonic peacock's tail wake  
Love isn't found in choosing the perfect wine  
To complement the anniversary dinner.  
Love is the willingness  
To weed, to shovel, and to rake  
Through a temperature range that both yetis and cactus would find equally oppressive  
No matter the blisters  
In order to cultivate  
The cluster of red grapes  
The entire Napa Valley would disintegrate  
in jealousy green hued mini explosions over  
Love is not symbolized by the wedding ring's carats or purity  
However it can be witnessed through unadulterated marriage testimonies  
Love's life blood is trust  
Love is the Northern Lights in an eternal twilight  
An unfading miracle  
Love is made of God's adamantium  
It's easy to be friends  
When the lotto ticket hits  
A true friend  
is still a friend  
when you drive their car  
when you then wreck that car  
then eventually laugh about it together  
Love is counterfeited  
A four dollar billed printed with kisses and gifts  
Necklaces and embraces  
Locketts and watches  
Make no mistake  
Love is more like concrete  
Immovably there  
For us to witness its presence  
To bind all together in the walls of God's castle throughout generations  
God in His Gregory Hines dancing with helium filled taps grace  
Put a wisdom that is older than time hence beyond its years here  
Put a living copperprint archetype on this earth for us to follow  
Love has been in this world,  
Fleshed out in a gentle straightforward earthen hue  
Love endured emotional and verbal avalanches of barb-wire  
Love was the social worker who reconciled the spiritually moribund  
Love was the plastic surgeon who regenerated the physically grotesque  
Love made free and took death's keys  
Love's reward was scars and pierced hands  
Love died on Cavalry so that all tired horses  
Have the opportunity to drink plenty

From the gentle, natural, antibiotic stream called freedom  
Only to ascend through life's spectrum backwards  
The length of seventy times seven universes  
All the way back to the land of the living in three days  
But those who walk on this heavily starched cashmere road of love  
Understand that love lives through out the four corners of the earth  
Like a Holy Spirited wind that drives our sails to Righteous  
No matter where evil has slipped a dirty magnet into our spiritual GPS  
Love is always fighting in a dirty hospital robe  
to bring warm soup to someone else's sick soul  
But...most importantly  
Will you answer the soul cleansing,  
Warm whisper that's quiet,  
But yet a deaf man can hear it in a thunder storm, call of Love?  
For if you do  
Love will be the elephant on which your burdens and sins lay  
Love will end your strife and enhance your life in a hell shattering instant  
That is the magnificence of Love

© 2008 Jonathon Thomas

### **“Hea’m (Heaven)” by Keno Davis**

Remember that Tupac song “I wonder if heaven gotta ghetto?”  
If that were true, would your mama still send you to borrow four slices  
of bread from the lady next door?!?

I wonder what do people in Heaven eat since Jesus and ‘nem ate the last supper.  
Or do they just have breakfast and lunch now with jelly and peanut butter?!

I bet they eat clouds. & that's why thunder is made ‘cause  
when they finish they all burp at the same time real loud.

I wonder if God looks & sounds like Morgan Freeman, Oprah, or Denzel.  
What if there's a different God in Heaven for every nationality like:  
Chinese, French, & even people from Brazil.

I wonder if black Jesus & white Jesus arm wrestle to see whose turn it  
is to answer a prayer...  
Or does black Jesus answer black people's prayers, white Jesus answer white  
people's prayers, and there's a generic Jesus that answers other races' prayers.

Man, I wonder what they sell in the mall of Heaven & I damn sho' hope  
it northing like the Metro.  
I bet God has every pair of J's. Yes Man... Even the retro.

Is God a virgin? Wait that's a stupid question... ‘cause we all know  
the answer to that...right?!?  
& I wonder if there's a Hooters in Heaven ‘cause I'm gonna need

something to do on Monday nights.

Well I'm off to think about more random things about Heaven,  
So I'll see you when I get there... Well, at least I hope there's a  
SEVEN in Heaven...

© 2009 Keno Davis

## **“Vacancies Available” by Mariama Gibbs**

There are no residents at this address  
But once there were two.

Ms. Love Me was here, and she never wanted to live alone,  
so every week there were visitors.  
Hate was Monday  
Sex was Tuesday  
Cry was Wednesday  
Pain was Thursday  
Sex again on Friday then  
Saturday and Sunday touch was there.  
She couldn't keep up with them all  
so she began to get confused,  
verbally abused and sexually misused  
she decided to move.

The next resident, I could never forget.  
Ms. Marry Thee.  
She wasn't one for much company,  
always with that man bundled in pseudo harmony.  
They remodeled the place and turned it into sin,  
because Mr. Thee became too careless with his friends.  
She attempted to paint and buy new furniture for the interior,  
thought this would make him stay,  
So he continued to give her money  
and throw it all in her face.  
Mrs. Thee changed dramatically,  
size 8 couldn't fit her waist, so almost 16 it replaced.  
Unhappy and unfaithful he was,  
nevertheless, separation became the new buzz.

Now this space can be rented again,  
and only if one decides that self hate is the new trend.  
See, this can be your home.  
Love and disparity, not allowing  
Jesus to take a seat at his thrown.  
It will be the beginning of an endless end,  
if one doesn't realize that without Him  
you only exist, and will never live.



© 2009 Mariama Gibbs

## **“You Don't Know Me” by Mariama Gibbs**

I'm the reason you wake up in a cold sweat,  
With your heart beating out of your chest,  
Wishing you had a stiff drink to get your femininity erect,  
Because to have sex with me...  
Is like the closest you'll ever get to knowing what's in my head.

I'm the reason for THE revolution,  
Ties within ties of Masonic restitution,  
And you envy me because your ignorance is  
non-more than environmental pollution.

You don't know me

I've given birth to not only a beautiful eve,  
destined to be queen, who at her early teens  
would be half of the woman that you've prayed to be  
And not because of He who answers all things,  
But thee can't seem to get passed adolescence  
I'm the spirit that haunts you more than your conscience.  
And the reason your relationships are nothing more than  
selfish deeds too boost your low self-esteem,  
and men aren't minutely appeased.  
See my words can't even be processed in your dreams.

I'm the reason flowers bloom.  
My grace is as undefined as the way nature moves  
And my nectar is so sweet,  
Bees get angry when I'm removed.

You don't know me

I'm going to rise and make some star bucks with CREAM but  
Cash will never Rule Everything Around Me-class can't be bought,  
But I'm the reason you should stay hidden beneath your degrees

I ish bull backwards, because backwards bulls ish is timeless,  
I'm the reason why your heart is aging quicker than your mind is,  
Stoned eyed worthless of speaking intelligence,  
Hope you find inner eloquence,  
To compensate for your lack of tactfulness

I said you don't know me...

I'm the reason that when you look in your mirror,

your reflection is as distorted as Bush politics,  
As crazy as remembering slavery as history's common sense,  
And as dumb as the Europeans claiming that they founded this.  
I once had to loose myself too find myself so...

People get lost  
I'm done being nice

© 2009 Mariama Gibbs

### **“Be not our Love: A Sonnet” by Scarlette**

Be not our love the green-limbed sapling tree  
who gave her buds, unfurled, to early rains  
and gave her blossoms' fragrance to the banes  
of spring's first exhalations. Aft agley!  
The frost had yet but respite! So the rime  
had chilled quite thoroughly its tender wood.  
The fiery light trapped in her crystals could  
not warm her soul to save her soul in time.  
Thus, by and by, her green limbs turned to beige  
and, one by one, her buds fell to the earth.  
About her, to the Fates warped sense of mirth,  
lay tattered blossoms on her dying stage.

Bid our love courage to stay unadorned  
'til come both frostless night and balmy morn.

© 2009 Tori Thompson aka Scarlette

### **“Memo # 13: There Are no Thugs in College” by Scarlette**

The administrative board would like to clear up a rumor that has been circulating around campus.  
Though looks may be deceiving, there are NO THUGS in college!

For everyone who is sick of people claiming their sets from high school  
fighting over colors like they invented the hues  
bragging about guns and talking noise about who they will pop if they feel offended,  
but in the next breath speak extemporaneously about  
cellular division  
and must PLAN to make it rain in the club 'cause if he DO  
he'll  
have to budget the rest of the week and eat Ramen Noodles.  
For  
everyone sick of dudes threatening professors who give them bad grades and  
“threw some D's on that”  
from the refund check they got from Financial Aid  
Who

every pair of jeans they own, the bottom's frayed and dirty  
'cause they're sized 40x36 and dude is 26x30  
Believe their cocky and brash attitudes are a display of their supposed power  
but don't realize that, even if they are  
Jordan brand  
real thugs don't wear slippers to the shower  
rolling round the block and saw this shorty that was cute  
but can't get wit her tonight cause he has a study group  
sayin' he push that work, with a 9 and 45 like T I that stay cocked  
but  
all he REALLY pushing  
at work-study  
is the  
TI-83 calculator in his pocket  
THERE ARE NO THUGS IN COLLEGE!

Real thugs deal with hardship on the daily  
realize tomorrows a maybe  
and don't have time to watch MTV 'cause  
real thugs sell drugs to feed their family  
they don't fear death because they're living in hell  
and most importantly  
they don't go around TELLING everybody they a thug  
cause runnin' one's mouth often land's one in jail  
they don't base their worth on their jewel encrusted letters  
because REAL THUGS  
quit thuggin'  
when they find somethin' better.  
So don't let baggy clothes  
and bravado deceive you, keeping it real  
whatever they call it  
scare you from attending class because  
they turned in their thug card when they filled out their FAFSA

I repeat, THERE ARE NO THUGS IN COLLEGE!

© 2006 Tori Thompson aka Scarlette

## Contributors Bios

**Charlie Braxton**, a McComb Mississippi native and Jackson State University graduate, is a poet, playwright, and music and cultural critic. He has written the plays *Blues Man* and *Artist Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and the critically acclaimed collection of poetry *Ascension from the Ashes*. Braxton's works have been published in the *African American Review*, *The Washington Post*, *The Black Nation*, *Catalyst*, *Crossroads*, *Candle*, *Drum Voices Review*, *CutBank*, *Minnesota Review*, *San Fernando Poetry Journal*, *EyeBall*, *Sepia Poetry Review*, and *Black Magnolias Literary Journal*. Additionally, his poems have been anthologized in *Word Up: Black Poetry from the Deep South*, *In the Tradition*, *Soulfires*, *Step Into A World*, *Bum Rush*

*the Page*, and *Role Call*. As a hip hop scholar, Braxton's work has appeared in numerous publications including *The Source*, *Vibe*, *Murder Dog*, and *Doula*.

**Keno Davis** is a Jackson State University Graduate and former college track athlete who has gained notoriety for his word play, satire, and controversial themes. He is currently finishing his BA in Education, enrolled in his student teaching course at Poindexter Elementary.

**Mariama Gibbs-Guice** attended Lanier High School and Jackson State University, where she received the Fannie Lou Hamer Award for Citizenship and Democracy. She is a favorite of the local Jackson, Mississippi open mic scene because of her ability to display the entire spectrum of what it means to be black and female in Mississippi.

**Scarlette** is the founder and former president of the JSU Poetry Club OutSpoken and is currently the coordinator for the 2009 Poetry Slam Series in Jackson, Mississippi. Along with being a dynamic poet, she is a senior music education major and Presidential Scholar at Jackson State University, was a member of the world famous Jackson State University Marching Band, "The Sonic Boom of the South," and she has performed with several University ensembles, including the Chamber Orchestra's performance at the 2009 Inauguration festivities in Washington, DC. Under her leadership OutSpoken became the perfect example of artistic activism as they held readings that were fundraisers for domestic abuse centers, an orphanage in Haiti that was destroyed by a hurricane, and for the Lanier High School music department. Along with the fundraisers, she also used OutSpoken to coordinate campus and community forums where poetry was used to introduce the topics of each panel discussion. She has plans to publish a compilation of her poetry, *Scarlette's Letters*, in November 2009. For more information, she can be contacted at [PoetryIsMusic@hotmail.com](mailto:PoetryIsMusic@hotmail.com) or (614) 937-4091.

**Skip Coon** is a poet, emcee, Jackson, Mississippi native, and graduate of Jackson State University who is currently pursuing a MA in History, writing his thesis on how commercialism has affected hip hop in a negative manner. As one half of Tibbit Music, his CD *Women, Revolution, and Tennis Shoes* is a favorite of the Jackson, Mississippi underground, which has caused him to become one of the most sought after emcees in the area.

**Jonathan Thomas** is a twenty-four year old married aspiring poet, playwright, author, and regularly performing poet in Jackson, Mississippi, whose poetry has been published in *Black Magnolias Literary Journal*. He has a degree in physics, and he uses his writing "to free minds and to receive peace within mine." A common theme in Thomas' work is his ability to display old conflicts and observations in a new light. Though he reads at various events, he is a mainstay and central artist in the Gospoetry scene.

**Kanika Welch "Poet of Truth,"** an Alcorn University Graduate, is the Jackson Music Awards 2008 and 2009 Poet/Spoken Word Artist of the Year. She has served as a third grade teacher and tutor of all subjects for students grades K-6. For nearly ten years she has been writing and performing poetry throughout the state of Mississippi and is writing her first collection of original work titled *to the YOU that you are*, a compilation of poems and letters expressing the various emotions experienced in a relationship. She co-founded the Stop for Poetry Campaign at Alcorn State University in 2006. This campus-wide initiative offered open-forums, workshops, and performance opportunities for student artists. It was also the first organization on campus to join the faculty and staff into its artistic efforts. Poet of Truth has presented at Delta State University, Jackson State University, and Alcorn State University. She has also performed at the

Mississippi Obama for Change rally and Swing the Vote, and her poetry has been published in *Black Magnolias Literary Journal*. Truth can be contacted at (601) 668-9321 and [nika27\\_85@yahoo.com](mailto:nika27_85@yahoo.com). For more information go to <https://www.kanikawelch.com/home.html>.

**C. Liegh McInnis** is an instructor of English at Jackson State University, the publisher and editor of *Black Magnolias Literary Journal*, and the author of seven books, including four collections of poetry, one collection of short fiction (*Scripts: Sketches and Tales of Urban Mississippi*), and one work of literary criticism (*The Lyrics of Prince: A Literary Look at a Creative, Musical Poet, Philosopher, and Storyteller*). He has presented papers at national conferences, such as College Language Association and the Neo-Griot Conference, and his work has appeared in *Bum Rush the Page: A Def Poetry Jam*, *Sable*, *New Delta Review*, *The Black World Today*, *In Motion Magazine*, *MultiCultural Review*, *A Deeper Shade*, *New Laurel Review*, *ChickenBones*, and the *Oxford American*. In January of 2009, C. Liegh, along with eight other poets, was invited to read poetry in Washington, DC by the NAACP for their Inaugural Poetry Reading celebrating the election of President Barack Obama. He has also been invited by colleges and libraries all over the country to read his poetry and fiction and to lecture on various topics, such creative writing and various aspects of African American literature, music, and history. McInnis can be contacted through Psychedelic Literature, 203 Lynn Lane, Clinton, MS 39056, (601) 925-1281, [psychedeliclit@bellsouth.net](mailto:psychedeliclit@bellsouth.net). For more information, checkout his website [www.psychedelicliterature.com](http://www.psychedelicliterature.com).

Many thanks to **Tibbit Music**, especially to **DJ Mr. Nick** for all the work you did to make this page a reality at the last minute.

And a final thanks to **Dora and Candace Brown** (owners of **Cultural Expression**), **Cocky McFly** (host/coordinator of the Sunday night open mic night, **Big V.** (host/coordinator of **Gospoetry**), and **Alexis Spencer-Byers** (owner of **Koinonia Coffee House**) for all you guys do to keep poetry alive in the Jackson-Metro area.