

Contemporary Afro-Mississippi Poetry

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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

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***“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.

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“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

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"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.

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“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.

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“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

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“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.

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“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!

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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 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. 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. For more information, checkout his website www.psychedelicliterature.com.

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