

My Poetic Voice

Fall 2015



Mighty Writers
West Philadelphia

To the Reader

I can't say enough about the four marvelous young poets who participated in the Spring 2015 poetry workshop at Mighty Writers West. They saw intriguing possibilities in every suggestion, creating out of their vivid imaginations things I never would have dreamed of. With original imagery and a willingness to take chances, their poems traveled through memories, emotions, relationships, identities, and more. We know you'll enjoy the fruits of their adventures!

Naila G. Schulte, Ed.D.

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1501 Christian St., Philadelphia, PA 19146
(267) 239.0899

Mighty Writers West
3861 Lancaster Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19104
(267) 244-4005

www.mightywriters.org

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Poems By ShiAnne Mack

CHILD'S PLAY

The trees were giants to me.
Their long limbs full of green
made me nervous until I
realized they were too far
to pick me up and
swallow me whole.
There was a bland piece of grass
in my saliva-filling mouth
as I watched the other kids
squealing, laughing,
racing for the swings and the slides.
Soggy grass between my fingers,
I slowly stood up, balancing myself,
wiping wet grass onto my jeans
now decorated with dirt.
My mother will surely be upset.
again. I started running
far behind the kids to get a swing
but the dogs barking around me
encouraged me to keep going and try.
I started laughing uncontrollably,
the wind attacking my face, my cheeks,
which were surely red.
Another child ran towards me,
colliding with me.
We fell down together,
my jeans getting dirt on her jeans,
my laughter mixing in with hers.

you.ghost.heaven.hell.me.light.i.fell

Can you tell your ghost
to stop following me?
I'm sick of having two shadows,
especially when your name
erupts from my chest
and I throw up the
missing pieces
that were once us.
You looked like heaven
and tasted like a creation
God made so holy that
everyone was jealous
of you.
But you ripped the angel wings
off my back
while I was dreaming
and blood
filled the air
along with salty tears
flowing down my cheeks.
The moonlight did not exist
and lightning bugs were long gone.
So were you,
a summer's dream.
They always said
winter was the loneliest of seasons.

SEASHELLS

I am a listener.
Stories told to me through words
hold my attention.
Stories told to me through sounds
hold my attention.
When I sit at the beach
on the sand I listen
to the ocean guiding me home.
Those seashells are you
persuading me, telling me
home is here.
Wrapped in your embrace
I put the seashells I collect
to my ear and hear empty stories
told by someone who isn't you.
These shells are smooth and comfortable
like your hand wrapped over mine.
So I take these shells
and whisper, "I love you Dad" into them
before I put them all in a bucket
to take them home
and give to you,
knowing you'll listen too.

I LIKE TO SLEEP

I like to sleep
in my bed
I like to sleep
under my father's head
I like to sleep
in the middle of class
even if I finish my work last.
Sleeping during lunch is nice
soon I'll have to pay a price.
I'll miss my friends when they're talking
but if they do might start yawning.
I like to sleep
on the bus
on the way home.
It is a must
I always wake up
before my stop
so then I can go home
to sleep a lot.
I like to sleep
in the library
while holding a book
I swore I was reading.
To sleep in the grass
is not exactly hygienic
but I still do it
being a little dramatic.
I like to sleep
everywhere I go
I like to sleep
because the day is slow
ZZZZ . . .

GO-GETTER

His name is Go-Getter
because of
the way the sunlight hits
his green eyes to reveal
layer after layer of raw determination.

He's the boy who won't hang his head
low to the ground when
he realizes the stars are just
out of reach. Instead he jumps a
little higher the next time
to grasp the barely visible sliver of the moon.

His words are soft waves of music
tugging you along, pleading with you
to jump out of your seat and dance
with him because he makes doing the most
complicated tango possible.

The thing about him is,
he doesn't understand the meaning of
No.
He doesn't limit himself to the ideas,
the ideals of others.
He just lets the waves of their harsh words
wash over him, breaking the barrier between
what they deem to be achievable
and what they'll say is impossible.

He lives without limits,
and he might be chasing the pavement of an untraveled road.
But that's the thing about him –
he never backs down, no matter the challenges life throws at him.
His name is Go-Getter and he refuses to give up.

Poems by Portia C. Butler

FLASHLIGHT

You help me go through the darkest times.
When I need you you're always
there.

You're the reason I can walk with light,
because you help me.

You're my flashlight, my mom.
You're always there when I need
you.

You're my flashlight, my mom.
You will
always be locked inside.

You're my flashlight, my mom
Your light fills up
the room.

You're my flashlight, my mom.
You're my helper, my mom.
My sense of direction, my mom.

SCENE

The blue waves that move up and down.
Birds flying in the sky reaching heavens.

The sky is a picture of lines:

some go down to Earth

some go up to the sky.

Close your eyes; it tells
a story of hardship and happiness

It puts me at a place

where I want to live.

It seems like a dream.

MY SWEET GRANDMOM

O, my sweet grandmom
I heard a lot about you.

I wish I could see you
O, my sweet grandmom.

We have a lot of things in common
O, my sweet grandmom.

I feel like we'd have
a good relationship
O, my sweet grandmom.

Your nickname reminds me
of a star in the sky
O, my sweet grandmom.

I hear so many stories about you.
I wish I could see you.

Well, I know you're in heaven
watching me
O, my sweet grandmom.

“BELIEVE”

“Believe” is not just a word that helps you
get around.

You can lock it in your soul and keep it with you
until the day you leave
the world.

People will try to bring you down to the worst,
but all you have to do is believe in yourself and know
they are wrong.

You might fall in some deep hole
or get face-to-face
with the enemy.

You’ll keep climbing to the top if you keep believing
in yourself.

It might be hard to lose people you want in your life,
but they don’t belong
in your group.

You can do it if you keep believing
in yourself.

Poems of Amelia Winger

MEMORY POEM: BONFIRE ON HALLOWEEN

Looking into this bonfire
Rising with terror as children's shoulders tremble in haunted houses
And the flames only lowering when they giggle on the long-lasting
treasure hunt for candy
I sit, in safety, in front of this bonfire
Surrounded by the stories and booming laughter of my friends
As ghost stories are exchanged for secrets
Truths exchanged for dares
And we stay perched around this blazing bonfire
Until midnight comes and goes,
Time no longer being measured in minutes and hours
But by the stories we've told.
And when it's time to say farewell,
I depart from my friends who remain around the fire,
Voices loud enough to wake the dead
And run home to the chime of the ticking clock, trying to
make my curfew, chuckling when I do
And fall asleep smiling as another Halloween says good-bye.

STORM

My name is Storm
Because of the continuous cycle
Of the beads of rain falling
Only to be caught and collected in the gaps
Of empty pavement with a soft
Splash.

My name is Storm
Because of the loud thoughts
Roaring and raging and pounding in my mind
Screaming to all of the heavens
Each individual thought will smatter
The ground below in a rush of color
To highlight the cracks in the sidewalk,
While new thoughts rush around above and
Continue to battle for dominance like
Thunder and lightning.

My name is Storm
Not because of the silver color that borders
The hazy edges of each cloud, giving beauty
To otherwise dreary sights
And showing the bright side
In a dark scene.

My name is Storm
Because of the children dancing
In yellow rain boots and coats,
Jumping and leaping to try to absorb
The water falling above.
My name is Storm because of the happiness
They were able to find in such a bleak day.

AN ODE TO PORK TENDERLOIN – AFTER KEVIN YOUNG

Pork tenderloin
Barbecued to a darkened perfection
Blessed with char marks
Of individual flavor
Glazed in sweet BBQ sauce,
Meat tender and waiting.
Yeah, I've never understood why you hate it so.
The face of absolute disgust and outrage
Tearing at your good nature
And ruining the kind reflection in your green eyes
At so much as a simple thought of the lovely, awful food.
Brother, what makes you hate pork tenderloin?
It's simple and kind and loving:
Simply too delicious to not be enjoyed.
I'm sure it misses the golden old days
When you were home more
And would just enjoy it.
I know you're so happy at college, but please visit soon
It's been three long months, and I'd never thought I'd say it
But I miss you.
And I'm sure the pork tenderloin does too.

RECALL PRACTICE

Your big papery hands encircle mine in burning ice
The warmth gone from them
As winter exhales a jagged breath
In the warring, twinkling skies above

I turn my head to better capture
The roaring swing-dancers and jarring headlines
Forever tangled and preserved
In the flashbacks of your white hair

You greet me with the same crooked grin
That gives the sun the confidence to rise day after day,
That brings warmth to this winding, lonely, lonely ancient road
And together, Grandpa, we walked one last time homebound

USELESS THINGS

Useless things like
A pond without a fish
Shooting stars without a wish
Halloween without a fright
The moon without the night

Useless things, a simple waste of space.
Gaps in the world, leaving shadowed scars on my face
Useless things stealing precious time
Conforming me to rules, making me speak in your runic rhyme

Useless things like
A cowboy without a horse
Star Wars without the Force
A heart unwilling to mend
Elevators that don't ascent

I'm tired of watching the world burn
When I know it can be saved
But who would listen to the useless words of some useless kid
Who's too immature to behave.

PLAYGROUND PRISON

It's been a long time since I've returned to that miserable park of dying willows
and dark ferns.
and blue slides begging to be played with
and harsh games of tag
that push the innocent down onto scraped knees.
Covering young ears from the wars raging between friends
about who could have the coveted jump rope.
Hiding in the camouflage of dark bushes.
Playing hide-and-seek but never being found.
A run-down circus of broken-down fun and nightmares.
Recess monitors parading through this jail yard,
punishing the kindergarten criminals.
Terror radiating off their bodies in putrid smelling waves.
Take me away from this playground prison.

Poem by Breyon Harris

ONE DAY

One day a boy was walking in the city;
His clothes were dirty and no one took pity.
If anyone had just bothered to ask
Maybe his day would not have been so bad.
He went to the market to buy a shoe;
Don't ask me why, it was all he could do.
Why do ya think he bought one and not two?
If you had seen the boy for yourself
You could clearly tell he had no wealth.
I'm telling you he had no money
And don't you laugh! I'm not being funny!
But if yu'd seen it, I won't tell a lie,
I guarantee you'll certainly cry!
Unless you're heartless and won't shed a tear
Or taken aback and stumble in fear.
And don't you go off and tell all his business,
'Cuz ya didn't hear it from me! I'm a witness.
If you saw him yourself, it would give you a fright;
I tell you it's really a terrible sight.
He looks like he had a terrible night.
Like I said, he was walking in the city,
His clothes were dirty and no one took pity.