

In a New Voice

Poems of University City High School ESOL Students
No. 5 June 1995

FOR THE CHILD OF MY DREAMS

Someday, somehow
I will hold you with all my
heart. Someday, somehow
I will be there when you need
that warmest hug.
Somewhere, somehow I will be
the air you need and
the food you're fed with.
Oh, child of my dreams,
I will make the air cool
and I will change this world
for you.
Someday, somehow
I will make you the richest kid
in the world.

**Kedija Abdella
Ethiopia**

WILDERNESS

After
you were gone
My heart turned
into stone.

Every night
in my dreams
I heard myself
Like the river
drift in the
wilderness.

The wound in
my heart still
drifts inside
of me.

**Ngan Le
Vietnam**

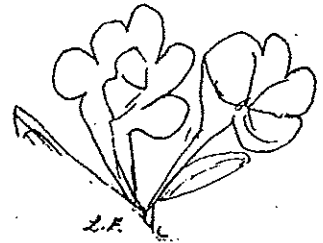
TOMORROW

Tomorrow
We'll be gone
from each other
I would like
to give you
a strand of yarn
The color that
I love.

Someday
You'll walk
into the store
You'll see something
that's purple
Remember
That is my
Favorite color.

The color that
I loved
The first true love.

**Ngan Le
Vietnam**



UNTITLED

It rains
when the sun is bright.
I watched the moon
fighting the sun,
what a crazy idea;
while the stars,
looking like a dark leopard,
were there whistling
to each other.

**Rufus Weyeah
Liberia**

TEEN

Teen comes out looking good
Strong body, full of energy
Time for joining, doing exciting things
Also known as a trouble-maker
They're hot, fresh and sweet
Teen likes to take risks
Hide secrets behind
parents' back
Sometimes they lie a lot
On the street
They wish to be popular
They do stupid stuff
As long as it's fun

Phuong Kim Nguyen
Vietnam

SILENT NIGHT

Tonight tonight
I can't sleep
I wake up
And turn on my lamp
I look through the window
The sky is very dark
Stars begin to shine
But then, it's a pity,
The dark clouds cover them

Sometimes the flickering
Light of an aplane
Flying over with a terrible noise
Spoils the night, makes it not perfect
It makes my mind
Crazy and mad
But it passes really quickly
And my mind turns normal
Continues enjoying my silent night
Then time goes fast
I feel tired and fall asleep...

Phuong Kim Nguyen
Vietnam

BACK TO OUR COUNTRY

I remember when I was
In Vietnam
Just ten years of age
My aunt and I
Every evening we went to the beach
To see a sunset
Walked alone among the pine trees
To see the waves so calm
Until night came
We saw a sky full of stars
The lovers hand in hand
Looking for a quiet place
To confide their love

Phuong Kim Nguyen
Vietnam

SUMMER

I always like summer best
sunshine and hot air
Summer time I can pick blueberries
and other fruits in the field,
getting paid for playing.
Oh, Summer!
You came and now you're leaving.
When you came I saw the world of money
in my pocket.
We can eat fresh food in the summer
but not in other seasons..
Summer, you're living a healthy life
and having fun.
On vacation, making trips, making parties,
hearing birds sing so softly and clearly.
At night when the sun went down
you could see the moon and stars
up in the sky. Looking at them,
you wonder what will come.
Oh, Summer!
I can hear it
I can hear it. Never leave.
I can touch it. You just came
but now you're leaving.
Oh, Summer, don't leave,
Please.

Hoa Van Nguyen
Vietnam

BENTRE

I left five years ago
But my mind's still in my country,
In Bentre
The long rivers, coconut trees
They call it the coconut city

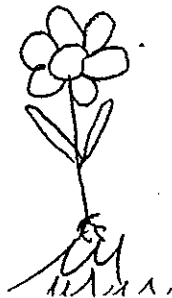
When the sun comes down on the rivers
The fishing boats are too crowded
The noise of people never stops
They work harder and harder
Sunrise to sunset
But they always keep a happy face
On holidays they organize dancing and
singing clubs
To make the holiday famous
Sometimes they come together
To make griddle cakes
To share with each other for fun

The people in my village
Aren't rich in money but
They're rich in their hearts
I think that's why
My native country
Is really, really hard to forget

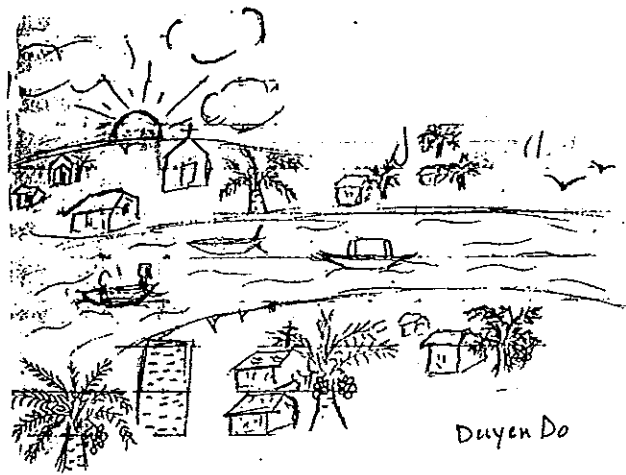
**Duyen Do
Vietnam**

DAISY

I'm of a kind with them
But not beautiful
My lips not red like a red Rose
My face not like an Orchid
I'm not cute like the Petunia
Iris and Lily
In the garden
I live a lonely life
Everyone tells me I'm plain
I know that
But I'm never sad
That's what God
Gave to me



**Phuong Kim Nguyen
Vietnam**



BACK TO VIETNAM

Five years ago I left Vietnam
When I came back my house was gone
Today the sun wasn't shining
I felt so sad, my heart was trembling.
Five years ago I left Vietnam
The old ways are not the same
My school, trees were destroyed
They built a factory
The noise from the factory is too loud
People moved to another place to live.
I felt so sad when I came back
The people moving, the things that were left..

**Phuong Kim Nguyen
Vietnam**

SUMMER

I remember last summer
when I went to Phoenix
the sun was very hot
the earth got very dry
not even water made it
come alive
the trees standing
like wood about
to burn.
The summer was like
the Sahara on the surface
of Africa.
I hoped for rain
to bring the trees to life
And for cool, cool air.



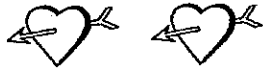
**Kedija Abdella
Ethiopia**

I REMEMBER

My country fought with Ethiopia
for 30 years. There were
dead bodies everywhere.
There was no food. Some people
died from hunger, some people
died from people, some people
killed themselves before someone
killed them. They knew they were
gonna die. There was
no way to run away.
And the soldiers
they killed fathers,
mothers, sisters, brothers,
old or young, they just
killed them like
animals.

Yordanos Matusent
Eritrea

LOVE



Love, Oh, Love!
It looks easy when
I say it
but it's hard
when I feel it.
She always comes
into my dreams
and this is what happened
last night.

I was walking alone
beside the river;
I heard her voice
calling me to stop.

When I looked through the water
she started to read me
a love poem.

All day long
sitting beside the river
I fell asleep
listening to her sweet voice.

Anonymous

MEMORY

I still remember
though eight years
have passed.
The sun had almost set.
I was trying to gather straw
to burn it.

A group of soldiers
came into the village
to arrest my uncle.
They carried daggers, guns, other weapons;
they looked very shiny.

I was surprised.
My uncle tried to run away.
They shot up into the air -- bang!
I stood near them. It sounded
like thunder in my ears.

Timmy (Hung-Thi) Le
Vietnam

THE BIRDS

While sitting on the chair
near the window
I see a bird fly
over the houses
and then

and then

and then

two, three, four, five more.
I remember
there was a boy,
my brother,
who was shooting the birds
for meat
when he was in
our homeland.

Trang Phuong Nguyen
Vietnam

YOU'RE EVERYTHING

Everything you say
seems so right
You make my night
like the start of morning.
You touch my heart,
take my soul away.
You're everything I own, my love
You're everything I want, my love
You're everything I dream and long for.
Everything you say
seems so right,
everything you do;
I'm still in love with you.

Hoang-Anh Nguyen
Vietnam

MIDAUTUMN

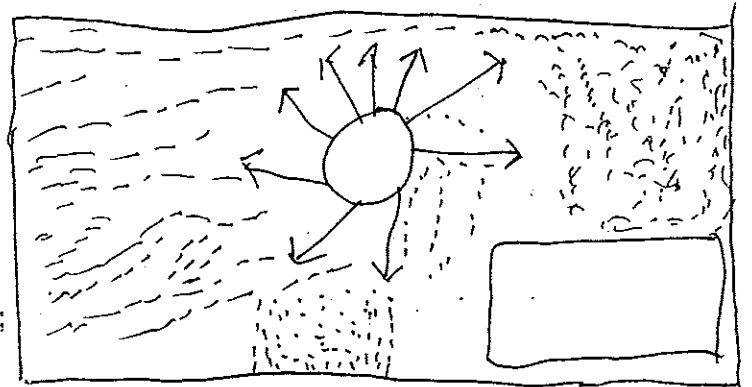
Today is the fifteenth day
of the eighth lunar month;
It's Midautumn Day in Vietnam.
I look out the window to enjoy the full moon;
It's so beautiful but I feel so lonely
because I remember the happy and funny
days
of Midautumn Day in Vietnam.
My family, together, enjoyed the full moon
with 'moon' cake and candy preserves.
The children in my town played 'lantern,'
a kind of lamp you play with
with a candle. There are star lanterns,
rabbit and moon lanterns.
They played under moonlight;
There was singing, dancing and fire.
Such beautiful and wonderful times
my family enjoyed, having fun together.
But now that time stays no longer
in my life and my family;
I enjoy moonlight by myself.
Around me, no laughing, no dancing!
I just hear the insects singing
and the noise of moving cars.

Duyen Do
Vietnam

WAR

I remember the day War started.
People were getting killed
by guns and fires,
the people were screaming and running
for their lives;
they ran from the place where blood was
born
and cried for their children and family.
Thousands and thousands of people
were lying on the ground.
They prayed to God to let the day be over.

Bunren Thong
Cambodia



I HAD A FRIEND

I had a friend
I had a friend
A friend I can't forget.
You're always on my mind
You're the one I trust
The best friend I've ever seen.
When any problem came
like those guys attacking us
carrying weapons,
guns, knives and other stuff,
You would just stick to my side.
I'll be there when you need me too;
Just call my name.
I'm a friend you can count on
and trust.

Hoa Van Nguyen
Vietnam

ABDITA H. Man

SAD

Sad, like a full glass of wine.
With nobody to share it with.
Sad, like a glass with
no more wine to drink.

Sad, like we don't see
each other during the day.
Sad, like we see each other,
with no story to share.

The two of only pretend to step
beyond sorrow as the year passes;
Our love is not enough,
there is only the gall of our life,
and the hurt of our love.

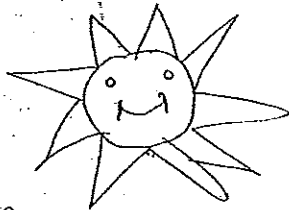
Our love is very sad,
like the roses opening late.
Our love is less than whole;
Sadness will become agony....

**Ngan Le
Vietnam**

TREE

Being a tree.
So lonely.
I need a friend to talk to.
O birdy, stop by my hand.
Can you stay and play with me?
Don't go away
The winter's about to come
I'm so cold and lonely,
I need a friend.
Snow, you are my friend
But you make me feel so cold.
What a nice thing
It would be to feel warm
But if I did
You wouldn't be here.

**Duc Pham
Vietnam**



SUMMER

Summer is coming, friend
be ready to leave,
say good-bye to school
like the tree in the fall, its leaves
about to fall and leave
the branches lonely,
ready for the new and young leaves
to start in the spring,
like we prepare for school
in September

**Duc Pham
Vietnam**

HOPE

I hope I'll go to college
And learn many things there
I'll study hard with my friends
And become a good student
After those times have driven me crazy
I imagine I'll have a lot of fun
My friends and I will sit in the park
With many flowers around
We'll have a conversation
About the future and the past.

**Trang Tran
Vietnam**

APARTMENT HOUSE

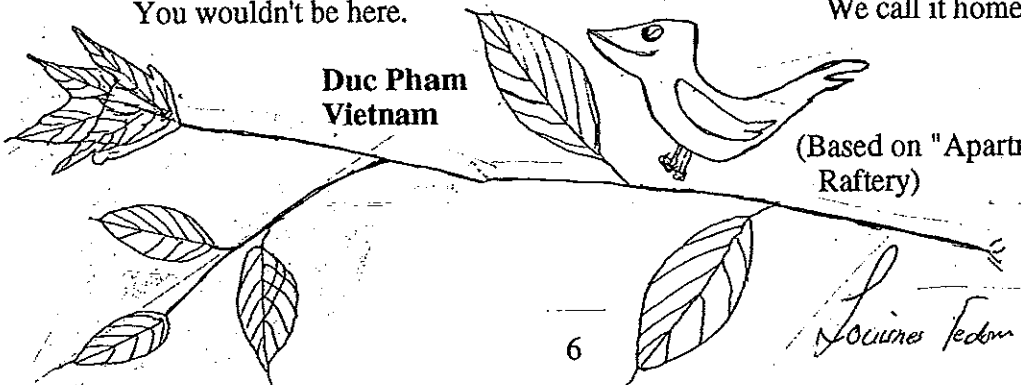
A lot of humans live in a square box.
When we open the square door
and come out from the square box,
then we know we belong in a ball
which is a world.

A human starts to have a square-shaped face,
and a square-shaped heart.

We call it home.

**Eunah Park
Korea**

(Based on "Apartment House" by Gerald Raftery)



DEATH

When a human is dead
it's just like a piece of dirt
blown by the strong wind.
No one knows where
it's going to be passing by
or flowing to. Oh Death,
it makes me scared of dying.
Death doesn't know anything.
Can it be a new life
like the old man said,
Or are the Dead disappeared?

Hoa Van Nguyen
Vietnam

DON'T HAVE THE MONEY

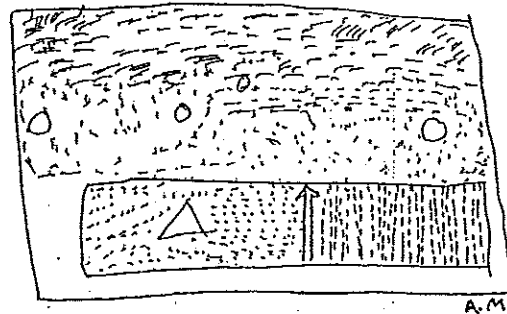
Look at things
I look at things
but I don't have the money to buy them.
I sometimes walk in the street
seeing people wear things I like
but I don't have the money to buy them.
I sometimes go in the shop
where food is sold
but don't have the money to buy it.
I went to a shop where I saw
this Beautiful dress
but didn't have the money to buy it.
It looked so nice,
like it was made for me
but I didn't have the money to buy it.
I went to my mother, she told me
she didn't have money.
I asked my father, he said the same;
and I told myself I must have that dress,
but there wasn't any money.
I knew the dress was in the shop,
just waiting for someone to buy it.
I begged and begged,
but no one had money to give.
I thought of taking it without paying for it,
but my conscience wouldn't let me.

Edna Tarley
Liberia

RAINY DAY

Sitting all alone
next to the old gray windows.
Suddenly, it starts to rain.
So hard, so deeply
that I almost cry out.
Seeing the water drop
so sadly, and wondering....
Maybe he is sad just
like me.

Thu Vu
Vietnam



WHEN I WAS YOUNG

I remember when I was young
I couldn't count to ten
But now time has gone fast
I can count to ten

I remember when I was young
I couldn't read alone
But now time has gone fast
I can read alone

I remember when I was young
I couldn't work alone
But now time has gone fast
I can work on my own

I remember when I was young
I couldn't write alone
But now time has gone fast
I can write a poem

Duyen Do
Vietnam

SAD

It was sad to remember.
I miss my friend.
He went away from me
After we left Portugal.

There's nothing more to say.
The poem ends
Softly as it began.
It's sad to remember.

Timmy Le
Vietnam

TEARS

Tears fall from the sky as raindrops
They fall to the grass as dew
But when they fall from us it is a cry
A cry of surprise
A cry of sorrow
The pain inside
Hurt and anger
The happiness of doing your best
These are the reasons
We have tears

Timmy Le
Vietnam

INVITATION

Why are you sitting
so sad, with tears
in your eyes? Why
can't you join us,
share your sorrow
with us?

We're going to the
beach. It would be
a nice idea for you
to go with us. We'll have
fun; that will help you
with your problem
even though it's hard to forget
when you're in sorrow.

We'll have lots of games
to play. We'll run after
one another in the water
and jump from trees
into the water.

Olive Debleye
Liberia

THERE'S NO ONE LIKE MOM

When you say "I am cold"
she covers you

When you say "I am hungry"
she gives you food

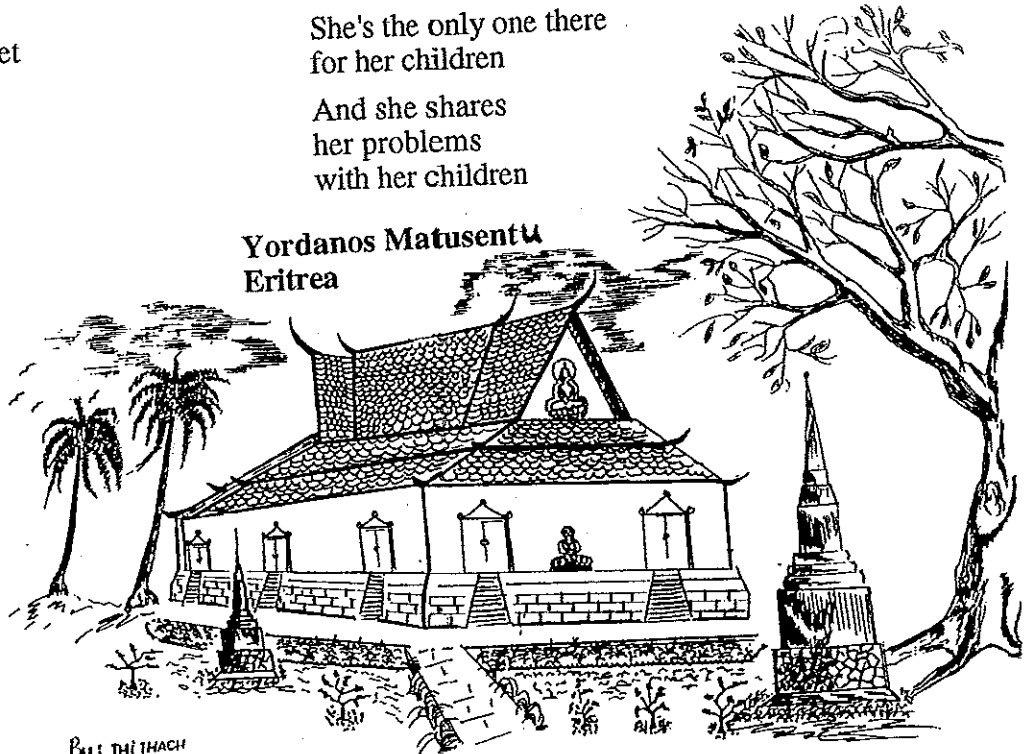
When you say "I am sick"
she gives you medicine

When you cry
she cries with you

She's the only one there
for her children

And she shares
her problems
with her children

Yordanos Matusentia
Eritrea



In A New Voice

Poems of John Bartram High School ESOL Students

No. 6

June 1996

MY GRANDMA

She is now quite old.
She used to lie on the hammock
and tell us legends;
Her voice as sweet as guava
easily hypnotized children
back into the past:
There was Miss Cam standing for justice,
Mrs. Trung Truc, our founder,
Queen and King.

She carried the audience with her
until the full moon appeared,
hanging lightly in the sky.
She was not exhausted;
She smiled, smiled like a smiling moon.
With the rhythmic rocking of hammock
and laughter,
We destroyed the silent nights
of the village.

Lan Vu, Vietnam



THE SEA

The sea always sings a beautiful song.
For who?
Though nobody hears the sea song,
The sea sings a song without them.
If my mind were bigger than the sea,
I could always sing a beautiful song.

The sea keeps silent all the time.
For who?
Though nobody visits the sea
The sea stays on.
If my mind were more silent than the sea,
I could keep silent all the time.

Saemi Park, Korea

THAT LAST NIGHT

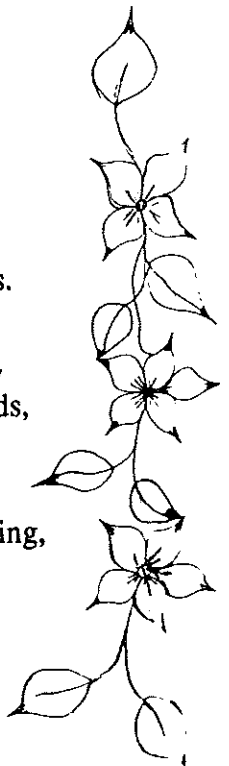
I remember that night
which was my last:
saying good-bye to all of you
and looking disoriented,
thinking the house was moving
and the people were sitting upside-down,
looking around and trying to get back
to where I was,
saying "I am going to miss you,"
asking myself why
I am going out of my country
and my mind answering,
"I don't know."

Samrawit Tessema, Ethiopia

THE FORESTS OF LIBERIA

On a Cloudy Day
of Rainy Season
in the forests of Liberia
stand you and some friends,
talking, laughing, and crying at
the same time
When all of a sudden come
creatures from nowhere:
snakes, rabbits, deer, snails, birds.
Oh, how I wished there were
people to rescue us,
especially that fine, handsome boy
with long hair, flowers in his hands,
fruits in his mouth, standing
by a tree full of wine.
Birds singing, people talking,
animals crying or talking, and saying,
Oh look, how beautiful they are!
On a Cloudy Day
of Rainy Season
in the forests of Liberia.

Korto Korlewala, Liberia



MEMORIES

I remember the house
where I was born.
The house had little windows,
where the sun came to shine.
When the sun just woke up,
I saw how beautiful it was.
I listened to the lovely sound of the birds
and other animals singing.
I woke up; first thing I did was
go to the backyard.
There in the graceful garden
the trees were happy
and shook their leaves up in the air.
The flowers were fresh, and exquisite.
The best part, that I'll never forget,
was when my grandmother treated me
like a little princess every morning.
When I went back into the house
I saw and smelled hot fresh bread
and coffee on the table.
My dress was warm and soft on the bed.
On Sunday afternoon everyone wore
their nice clothes.
The sun was hot, everyone was happy.
Some went to parties, some went to games,
and some stayed in their neighborhood
to play, talk, and sing.
Sometimes when it was very hot we went
to the river to swim.
We drummed on the river, making music
by slapping our hands on the water.
That's the house where I was born.

Rose Eugene, Haiti

ON THAT NIGHT

On that day,
I can remember.
My parents went outside
And forgot the keys in the house.
I was alone
With the television screen.
It was boring.
The sound was calming.
The picture was not clear.
I fell asleep slowly. . . slowly. . .
My parents called me. . . called me. . .
But I was still sleeping. . . sleeping. . .

Tram Tran, Vietnam

MAN

Who are you?
Sun or strong wind
Tiger or lion
Jungle or desert
Hot and hard, you are.
Mountain or ocean
Dangerous and terrible, you are.
But you are fascinating:
Soft, cool
Romantic, proud,
You are sacred.
You are secret.
You are best or you are worst.
You are highest or you are lowest.
You are strongest or you are weakest.
You are:
The liar
The wild
Honey fills your mouth.

Tram Tran, Vietnam



BLACK WOMEN

Black women
don't play with them, man

'cause they play they enemies
like a game of chess
even though you was a homeless
they'll make you strengthless
by talking how you dress
and this and that

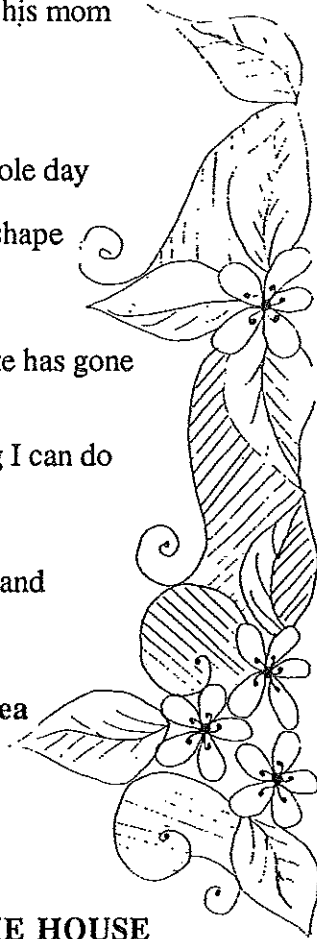
That's why you have to watch you back
recognize that you are man,
not woman
and prove to them that man
can be the funniest
and the best
I say in the name of Jesus
I have the right
to say amen
'cause I am a man

Jean-Renel Marquis, French Guiana

STAR-SHAPED CHOCOLATE

I saw a boy
he got a chocolate from his mom
star-shaped
small as his hand
he starts to eat it
little by little
so he can eat it for a whole day
carefully
so he can keep the star shape
it's getting smaller
and smaller
and smaller. . .
the star-shaped chocolate has gone
he starts to cry
and runs to his mom
"mom, is there anything I can do
to help you?"
next day
I saw him again
holding a candy in his hand
star-shaped
small as his hand. . .

Wonjin Suh, Korea



THE GOD OF THE HOUSE

I will never forget
that time with my cousin in New York
When I close my eyes and
think about this time
I think I am in the new world. . .
especially when I remember
the night his decorated bird broke down
and he picked it up saying,
"The God of the house broke down,"
and said to me, "It broke because
you looked at it too much."
Then everyone in the house made jokes.
When something happened they would say,
"The God of the house made it break or fall
What a God!"

Samrawit Tessema, Ethiopia

NEW YEAR IN ETHIOPIA

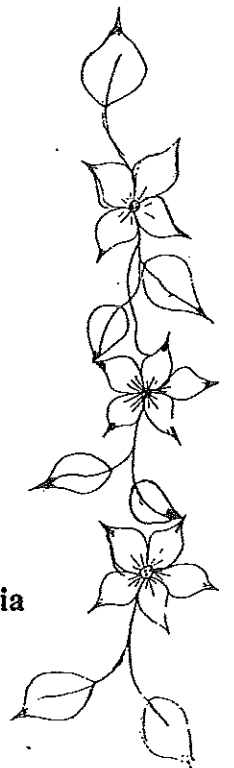
On New Years Eve the moon is bright like a
sun
and the stars are bright like the moon
Children and men will stay outside
waiting for the New Year by dancing and
playing
Mothers and their big daughters will stay in
the house, getting the food ready.
On New Years Eve
everyone who has something to eat
will give to the people who have nothing to
celebrate the holiday with
At midnight the fire will start
Every church will ring its bell
The people from everywhere
will say Happy New Year at the same time
I wish I could be there

Samrawit Tessema, Ethiopia

MAN

I like a man
with those little tiny pants
I like a man
with tight leather jacket
I like a man
with high leather shoes
I like a man
who is silly
I like a man
who's a liar
I like a man
who walks like a ball
I like a man
that talks with cats and dogs
I like a man
who tries to be a god
I like a man
who has curly hair
I like a man
who has one-pound lips
I like a man
who has clipped ears
I like a man
who can be everything to me

Samrawit Tessema, Ethiopia



MEMORY OF HAITI

It was fun
when I was growing up.
I used to go to Campaign
in the summer;
My grandfather's farm
had corn and sugar cane;
I used to swing in the back yard
and when I yelled my mother said,
"You have been a naughty girl."

Sometimes I got scared of voodoo,
because what you hear is the sound
of the evil one;
it sounds just like thunder.
My mother said, "No need
to be scared.
God almighty is always
with us."

Naomi Carrie, Haiti



TO SOMEONE I HATE

Think you're all that,
dress fancy, put on some makeup
and hide those pimples. Go on,
live your life, but don't regret.

She thinks she's all that,
tries to steal someone's man
who's not hers. Tell me, is that how
you want to live your life?
Go and live your life,
but don't regret.

You've been to model agents;
they turn you down, and do you
know why? It's not because
you're short or skinny; the reason is
you're ugly in and out.

You've just ruined
our friendship, so go
and live your life, but
don't you dare regret.

Korto Korlewala, Liberia

THE LIFE OF THE LIFE

How to be Human:
To live, yell
To live, discuss
To live, hate
To live, love.

How to be Human:
Learn to live,
Do to live,
Think to live,
Work to live.

How to be Human:
To live, laugh
To live, cry
To live, talk
To live, see.

The way to live. . .

Tu Tran, Vietnam



UNTITLED

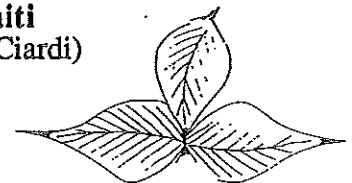
I.

I saw this man who could not see;
I saw him walking with his dog.
When I approached him, he knew I was lost.
When I asked for directions, he said,
"I don't know. Ask the dog."
"But the dog cannot speak," I said.
He said, "This dog can."
I asked the dog for directions and the dog
told me everything I wanted to know.
That's when I realized I was in dreamland.

II.

I met a man who had three eyes and still
couldn't see.
He had nothing but eyes in his head.
I took off my shoes; he said, "Put them
back on."
When I asked how he knew my shoes
were off,
he said, "A wise man does not need
any eyes or nose to see or smell."

Jean Carrie, Haiti
(inspired by John Ciardi)



MY COUNTRY

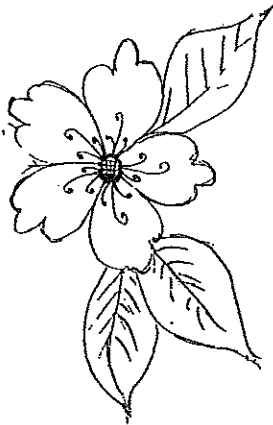
My father was a bird's wing
Lifting me up and down the hill.
From here, I watched the surrounding
scenes.
Looking up into the sky
My father's kite was flying.
Birds gave a jubilant song for
afternoon villagers.
There were women weeding grasses
in the rice field.
There were buffaloes bathing in the river.
There were children playing hide-and-seek,
urging their fathers into the jungle
to hunt animals.
Some of them were carrying full bags
of sweet potatoes or corn from the
plantation.
Even if my shirt's color fades with time,
These scenes of my country
could never fade away.

Lan Vu, Vietnam

MEMORIES

I love the
Friday night
smell of
Mammie baking
my breakfast
bread creeping up
to me in bed
And when I fall
asleep before I even
get a bite
I know for sure when
morning comes the
kitchen table will be
laden with bread
sweet bread, crisp
and brown and best of
all coconut buns
make me love the
Friday night smell of
Mammie baking bread
putting me to bed
to sleep
dreaming

Jean-Renel Marquis
French Guiana



MY NEIGHBOR

He always sits
in front of his house,
just to say "Hi" to anyone
who passes on the street.

He never does
anything else but sit down
in an old chair to say
"Hello".

Sometimes he stays
in the corner
in front of his door;
you think he's not there
but he is still there.
So, I want to say
something to you, neighbor:
"Please get a job."

Louiza Gilbert, Haiti

A LOVE

The sun shone down
It was too hot
But I still had
Shade from the trees

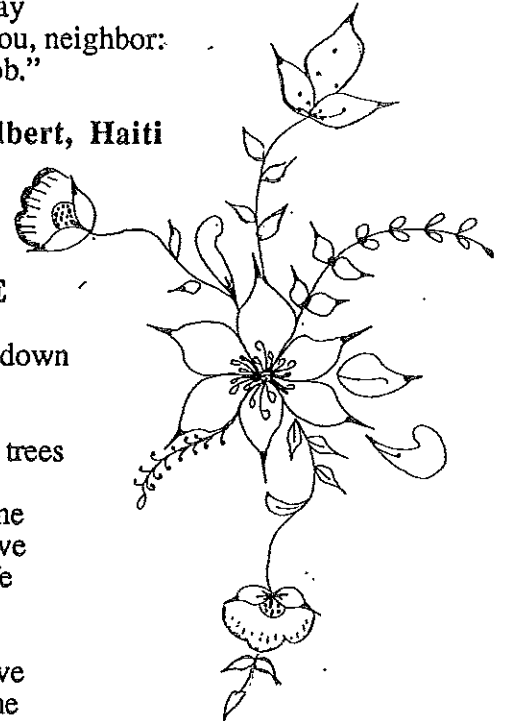
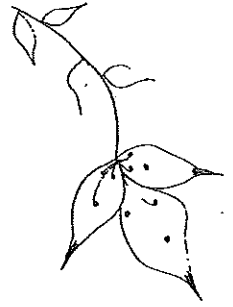
Which helped me
Grow up and live
A wonderful life

Who taught me
How I could love
When around me
So many things
Could attract me.

The moon still shone;
The trees still shaded me
From the sun
And I still lived.

Thank you to God
Who created that tree,
The mother who helped me
Know how to live.

Thao Pham, Vietnam



BEAUTIFUL DAY TODAY

Today babies are taking their first steps
Sun and moon combine
Stars double their lights
Today everyone becomes an angel
Birds are singing
Ladies are happy
Dogs are barking
Kids are running
Flowers are multicolored
People are smiling
Girls are partying
Dead are resurrected with joy
God comes back
Weak and Strong
Rich and Poor
Black and White
don't matter anymore
In this new world
Dreams come true
Today is a beautiful
day

Jean-Renel Marquis, French Guiana



DRY SEASON KNOWN AS SUMMER

Dry season was a warm,
God-given season with sunshine
from six in the morning to eight at night.
Dry season was also a time for kids
to stay home and play all day;
but for some kids like me, from the day
school closed all I could think of was
going to visit Grandmother Sissy.

Oh, I loved going there; she let me do
whatever I wanted, bought me anything
I wanted, all I had to do was say the name.
Grandmother had a big house with a barn
in back that had chickens, cows and sheep.
Every dry season my grandmother
gave me a hen to take care of on my own.

Nyawoh Jengo, Sierra Leone

THE BROKEN JAR

In the living room
there was a beautiful jar
that was my grandpa's.
He bought it in 1920 in Japan.
He liked it the best
of all his stuff.

One day I was cleaning the living room;
the sun was bright,
twittering of birds in the trees.
I was careless

And
the jar broke into small pieces.
I was scared and ran up to my room.

My sister heard the sound.
She ran into the living room
and picked up
the small pieces.

My grandpa saw that.
He thought she did it;
he was angry and
blamed it on her.

She cried for two days.
Her eyes were swollen
and she had to say
sorry to my grandpa.

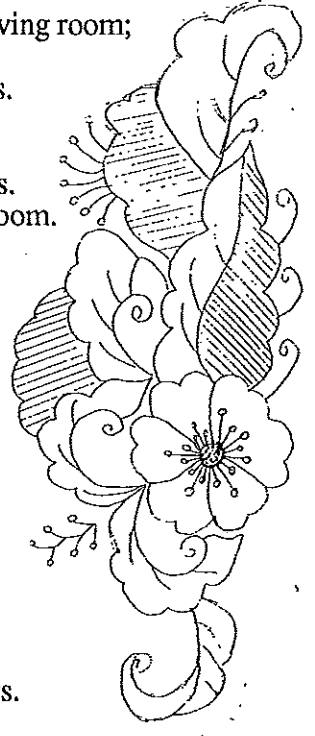
That was my fault, it wasn't hers.
I felt guilty and despicable;
I wanted to tell Grandpa the truth
but I was scared of being punished.
Sorry, Grandpa,
especially to my dear sister
who was treated unjustly
for what I did.
Sorry, my dear sister
from my heart,
from my soul.

Vy Nguyen, Vietnam

IN THE MIDDLE OF OCTOBER

the sky becomes
more clear,
the leaves begin
to wear new red dresses,
the colors of the fruits become darker,
and the men
start to feel lonely

Wonjin Suh, Korea



RAIN

Rain, rain. . .
Please, come down some more!
Don't worry that you wet me.
Don't you know?
With your water:
 Roads are cleaned
 Vegetables will grow faster
 Rice plants will burst into flower
 and soon be decked with grains.

My young cousin will not cry in the night;
Her mother won't have to leave her sleep at
midnight to get water for the rice fields,
water that has held the moon's reflection.

Rain, you are my uncle's wish
in his night dreams.

Lan Vu, Vietnam

A PERSON I KNEW

From time to time I met a guy;
He had on fancy clothes,
Showing off, talking like a gangster.
I used to hate him
But now I just feel sorry for him .

One day when he was walking around
the block
He wore rings and gold around his neck;
One ear was pierced.
Some people walked over and spoke to him,
Then he walked away toward the gangsters;
They beat him up for the things he wore.

The next day
I heard he was in the hospital,
In a wheelchair.
I felt sorry for him, and I will always.

Being all that is not having a life.
Being friends and helping each other
And getting your education is life.
To all the friends I've had, I say:
Stay away from the gangsters.

John Bunren Thong, Cambodia

JOURNAL

Have you ever thought Journal is your friend
Or someone you can talk with?
Maybe it's gonna be a bad guy
Who will tell everything you wrote to others;
Or maybe it's a good guy
Who will help you keep your secret forever.

Have you ever thought Journal is yourself
Or someone who has the same feelings
as you?
It could be a good guy or bad guy like
you are;
Or maybe it's gonna do its duty
And tell everything you did.

But everything I wrote is imagined!
Journal is just something to write in.

Tuan Tran, Vietnam

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

I can't understand
why my life is like this.

The rain falls down slowly, slowly.
Me, I'm sad every day
and no part of my body has happiness,
except when I play with my baby cousin.

The sun wakes up, darkness sleeps.
When the sun goes to sleep,
that's when darkness wakes up.
When it's time to sleep, everyone sleeps
with peace.
But me, my eyes cannot close;
I cannot have the sound of peace.

I'm cold, I need to be warm.
I sleep where darkness sleeps.
Why can't I sleep where light sleeps?

The darkness is killing me, piece by piece.
I ask myself where I am.
When I see people in one place,
I'm always in the other.

Rose Eugene, Haiti



THE VISIT

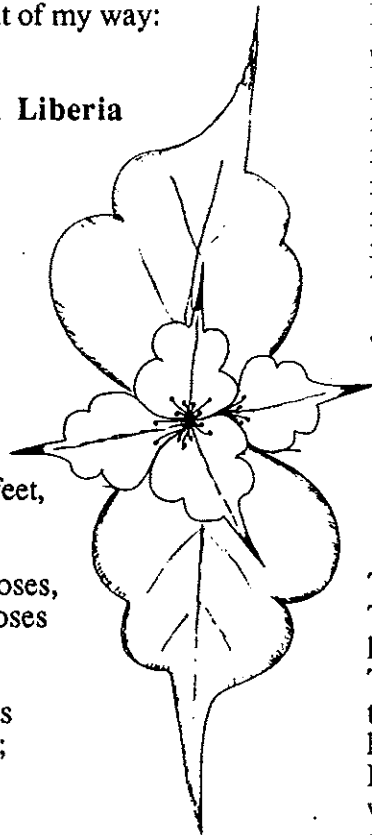
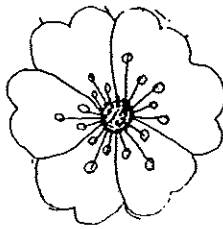
When I was sitting in my chair
I felt somebody touching me.
I felt somebody putting
my hands to the lights.
I felt the person's hands
but I couldn't see that person.
It was like a dream to me.
This person said something
that I will never forget.
This person said something
that made me feel proud of myself.
This person said something
that will lead me into life
and move temptation out of my way:
"Be yourself."

Moore Verdier, Liberia

CATS

I like cats
little cats
tiny slow violent cats
black cats
green, blue, red, yellow
and white cats
that have brown eyes
that have big feet, little feet,
large ears
small ears, pink tongue
I like them with black noses,
brown, red and white noses
cats that dress up
cats that wear chains
I love poor cats, rich cats
I like cats and love them;
loving and liking are
not the same thing
I like cats
that play with people
I like cats
that can cry
I like short cats
tall cats
small cute cats
I like cats

Louiza Gilbert and
Guerda Tisoit, Haiti



BROTHER

Brother likes to wear all the new clothes
that just came.
Brother likes to wear all the new shoes.
But Brother doesn't know anything.
He doesn't know how to read or write.
Brother thinks he's all cool.
But all the good things Brother gets,
He'll always use them in stupid ways.

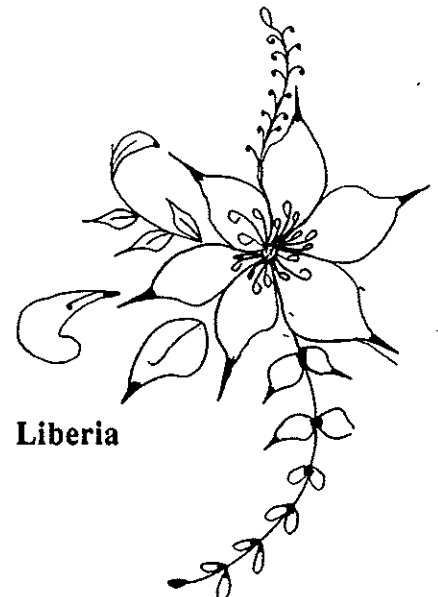
All the money Brother got to buy his clothes
Came from drugs.
Brother was living by selling drugs and
Killing people for their money.
Brother didn't like going to school;
Sometimes he'd go just to sell drugs.
Brother used to go to good places.
Brother used to get the best cars.
Brother had the best house.
But without education Brother was
Innocent to the world.
Brother didn't know \$5 from \$10.
Brother got shot because he took someone's
money
And didn't give it back.

Moore Verdier, Liberia

THE CHILD

The child ran and ran;
The people didn't know what
he was running for.
The child cried and cried;
the people thought
he was stupid.
But he knew
why he was running
and crying.
He said,
leave me alone.
Let me take
my long road.
One day my dream
will come true
and my long road
will be short.

Moore Verdier, Liberia



QUIET NIGHT

Have you ever awakened at night?
Sit on the bed without light
You will not hear any noise
or voice

Have you ever looked at the moon?
Come and gone very soon
It's just like a big light
at night

Have you ever been alone at night?
On the street without light
You have nowhere to stay
or lay

Tuan Tran, Vietnam

TO A BROTHER

Hi, what's up?
I am sorry to tell you this
but the clothes you put in the basement
that you needed to be washed
were eaten by the mice.
I know those were your favorites
but I couldn't help it.
"I would be happy to be there and
eat it with them."
Sorry. That was for fun.

Samrawit Tessema, Ethiopia
(Inspired by W.C. Williams)

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

Mothers are like the colors
of our skins, no matter how hard
we try to cover them with make-up,
they are always showing.
Daughters are the mothers' right hands,
they fight, abuse one another,
but still miss each other.
Mothers and daughters are
to be friends for life; nothing
should ever come between them.
Daughters, get all the boys that
come your way, but always have
enough room for the mothers.

Korto Korlewala, Liberia



ONLY AT NIGHT

Late at night while
sleeping, while having
dreams, dreams of love,
hate, and fear. Dreams of
evil and good, dreams bitter
and sweet.
They all happen at night.
Only at night the villages
come to life, only at night
the dead come to life,
only at night animals like
owls, bats, mosquitoes, frogs
and others get to live
their lives. Only at night things
happen. They all happen at night.

Korto Korlewala, Liberia

BABY IN THE WAR

Baby born
When war is on
Lived alone
When parents gone
Baby gone
When war still on
Nobody knows
What happened to a baby
Born
When war is going on

Tuan Tran, Vietnam

TO YOU

you are as beautiful
as a butterfly
landing on a flower
you are as sweet
as a bee's honey
you have a smile
that says
I am a wonderful person
you touch my heart
and soul in places
that have never been touched
plainly, you are special

Khadija Hassan, Somalia



SCHOOL MEMORIES

When I was young
I liked to go barefoot to school
not because I didn't have shoes to wear,
but 'cause I liked it.
My mom asked me,
"Why don't you wear the shoes
I just bought for you?"
I said, "It's 90 degrees out there.
It's too hot."
That day I met a pretty girl in my class
and fell in love with her.
She asked me, "Why aren't you wearing
shoes to school?"
I answered, "Don't like to."
She said, "If you don't wear your shoes,
your feet will get dirty."
So from that day I started to wear my shoes
to school.
My mom was surprised.
She said "good" and asked me
who could make me wear my shoes
to school.
I said, "a girl I liked."

Hai Luu, Vietnam

I TOLD YOU

I told you not to call me
but you just didn't listen
don't bother any of my friends
don't ask them for my number

tomorrow I'm going to come over your
house
when your mom sees me she'll be glad
then I'll sit and tell her everything
since you don't listen you'll learn the
hard way
I just love to see your mom yell and
shame you
besides, if you had listened in the first place
it would be just fine now

I told you but you wouldn't listen
and don't say I didn't tell you so
'cause I did

Comfort Dahn, Liberia

TIME

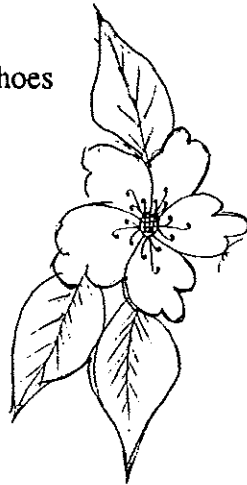
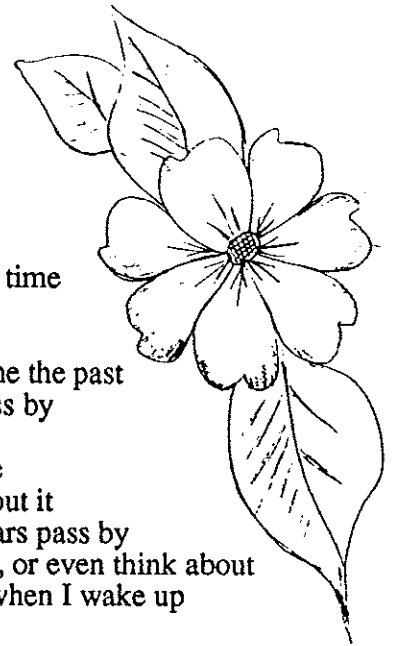
Time!
I always ask!
I'm scared of counting time
It frightened me
It went very fast
The days would become the past
Two or three years pass by
Like only yesterday
I can't think about time
While I'm thinking about it
Three or four more years pass by
That I don't remember, or even think about
I'm afraid to turn old when I wake up
Life is just for a time
Time!
I wish it would never end

Hoa V. Nguyen, Vietnam

WHY WE CRY

Sometimes when we're depressed
we cry
Some people don't like expressing
themselves
we cry
When they don't pay any attention to us
we cry
When we choose a path, and it doesn't
turn out the way we planned
we cry
Crying is a good thing
When something is bothering us
we cry
When we destroy something
we cry
We varnigh the woodwork, somebody
messes it up
we cry
When we lose someone
we cry
Life doesn't turn out the way we
want it to
we cry
When we sock someone, we feel bad
we cry
When they break our hearts
we cry

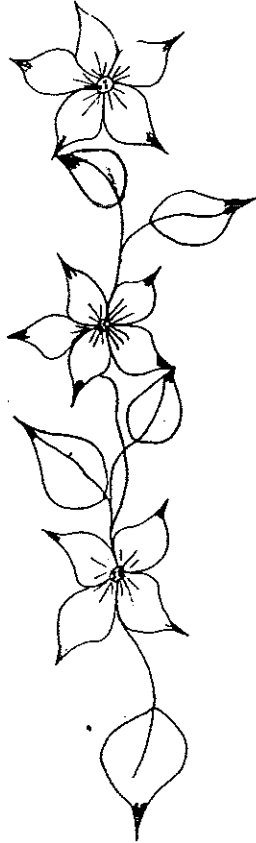
Naomi Carrie, Haiti



HOPE

When the moon, sun,
earth connect
the dark side of the universe
appears and takes over,
making confusion
in everyone's mind.
Is it God's return or the
end of the world?
People be terrified
just thinking about it.
When dark disappears
the beautiful sun's light
makes its entrance,
making hopefulness in
people's hearts, that
it's not the end.

**Jean-Renel Marquis,
French Guiana**



MATERIALS

Money, clothes
jewelry, cars
houses, shoes
are all materials;
they can let you down,
make you do things
you're not supposed to do.

Men and women
can sometimes act like materials:
selling drugs, killing one another,
black hating white,
white hating black;
it all comes down to materials.

Crimes are caused
by materials too:
children being kidnapped or killed,
kids killing one another
and parents on drugs
are all caused by materials.

Stop being greedy
and live in peace.

Korto Korlewala, Liberia

WHY SHOULD I FORGET?

Should I only
remember today
and forget about my past?
I still remember Grandmother
making us sweet mashed potatoes
with butter, and telling us
get up and eat, you have to
get ready for school.

Why should I forget
about my grandmother's
rap banana bread
and some sweet rootup to drink
every now and then.
So why should I forget?

Grandmother did me nothing wrong,
but to keep me strong.

Tutu Suah, Liberia

THIS IS JUST TO SAY

To black African and American women:

Why do you feel embarrassed
about the color of your skin?
It is not because the Lord
doesn't love you!

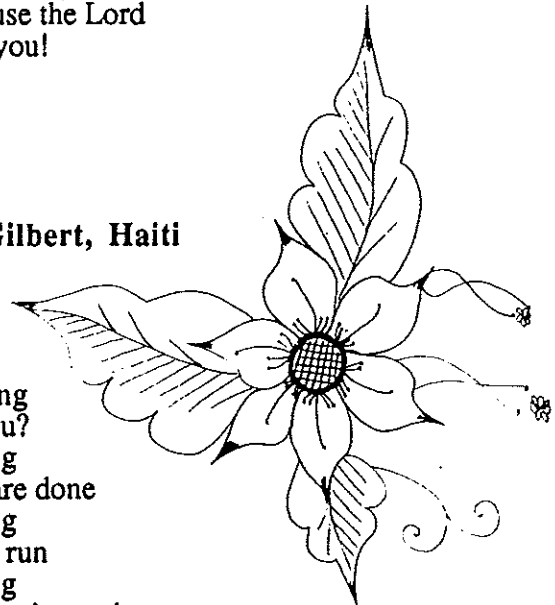
It's because
he wants you
to be brave.

Louiza Gilbert, Haiti

TIME

Time is running
how about you?
time is running
when things are done
time is running
as fast as you run
time is running
even if you aren't running
time is running
how about you?

Samrawit Tessema, Ethiopia



HOW BLIND WAS I

so blind
so blind that I couldn't
tell the difference between
wrong and right.
so blind that I always bothered
myself for others' problems.
I was so blind
so blind, I couldn't even tell
who loved me and who hated me.
so blind
so blind that I always believed
in taking others' pain.
I was so blind that
I could hurt myself to make
others happy.
How blind was I
how blind
so blind, so blind.

Tutu Suah, Liberia

I LIKE BOYS

I like boys that are cute
boys that dress neat
with dress-to-impress feet
boys that are clean
look like a love machine
beautiful boys that I can see
tall boys, short boys, fat boys
and thin boys
boys that love meat
that are sweet
boys who are afraid of shame,
to be in the rain.
I like boys
boys that have money
that make me melt like honey
boys that can work
and not be a jerk

Odessa Morris, Guinea

A DOG DREAM

I like a dog
I like a big dog
Black, white, brown
I like a very silent dog
I like a very intelligent dog
Dogs interest me
I like dogs because they
can save people in a bad position
A dog can guide me
through danger from my enemies
Some dogs are very smart
Dog, dog is my favorite animal
Oh, God blessed me with a good dog
I like a pretty dog
I like a dog with a pointed nose
red lips
medium in size
nice shaped
with medium feet
gap between his teeth
a very huge dog

Christiana Korngor, Sierra Leone

HAITI

Haiti is a small country;
it's a poor country
but it is my country.

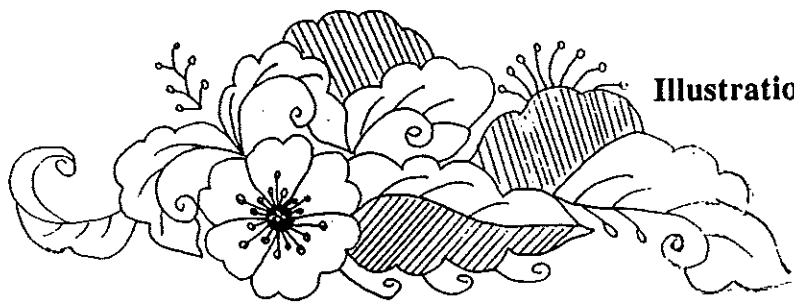
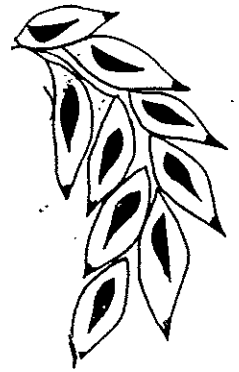
I used to go to the river with my friends
or play in the ocean.

Sometimes we went to someone's garden;
we made a fireplace and cooked some corn.

At night when you sat outside
you might see the stars and the moon in the
sky, just like a Christmas tree.

I love Haiti.
I'll never forget what you've done for me

Louiza Gilbert, Haiti



Illustrations by Giang Dang
(Vietnam)

In A New Voice

Poems of John Bartram High School ESOL Students
No. 7 June 1997

TO MY FRIEND

Though a long time has passed,
a shadow still exists in my memory.

When the Spring came
you and I enjoyed
pretty, coquettish nature.
We caught butterflies
on the hill;
we caught tadpoles
in the field.



When the Summer came
you and I enjoyed
the fresh and cool climate.
We caught cicadas
on the tree;
we reached for wild fruits
in the mountains.



When the Fall came
you and I enjoyed
a delightful bumper harvest.
We cut rice
in the field;
we caught frogs
in the water.



When the Winter came
you and I enjoyed
the bustling atmosphere.
We went to the theater
in our village;
we played hide and seek
in the yard.

But one day you
emigrated to Hong Kong.
I wished I could see you again
the rest of the seasons,
but you were gone.

Su Li
China

THE DARKNESS

Until now I never knew why I was here.
Walking in a dark night alone.
What is this dark night?
I suddenly heard a whisper.
The whisper told me, look up in the sky,
count all the stars,
stars of hopes and dreams.

It was a cold night;
the wind was shifting against the leaves
and across my ears.

My eyes were all watery, with tears
falling in every corner of my eyes.

Until then I never knew why.

"Why count these stars?" I asked
the whisper of the darkness.

These stars lit up the sky so high
against the clouds, every star shaped
like a diamond across the sky.

Then the wind said,
"Every star you count tonight
is a blessing for you
and your family."

Onesimus Koilor
Liberia



RAIN

the ground is crying for rain
the place is like a desert
the plants are crying for rain

the rice, potatoes, carrots
in the field start to droop
the sun is burning your skin

the wind sounds like it's angry
everybody's wondering,
where's the rain?

Magdalena Jeancharles
Haiti



THE WAY SHE LOOKS

She is beautiful.
She is brushing her hair.
She stands to dress
and walks to the hall.
Always what she wears in the evening
pleases her: green shirt,
a skirt to have a drink in.
She has smooth memories
shaping the woman she
will be tomorrow.
Her hair falls before you;
her broad eyes are coals burning
like a full jungle moon.
My lovely princess
dancing in slow grace
My love wants to park
in front of your house.
It's been driving me crazy,
going around and around the block.

Anwar Ahmeddin
Eritrea



MOVEMENT OF YESTERDAY

Yesterday was a beautiful day
The sun shone in the morning
The birds danced, and the cocks fought

In the afternoon, when the fresh morning air
was gone
The river was full of children
The water turned warm for them
Playing and working time was done

Then the sun came down so quietly
The sky so dark at night
The wind began to blow
The weather turned cool
The dogs were yelling somewhere

Yesterday is gone now
Tomorrow morning will turn again
Into the movement of yesterday

Vinh Nguyen
Vietnam

AFRICA

The green land and the beautiful flowers
The fresh air and the hot weather
The birds, the trees
The call of the wild
Birch oak and chewing stick feed
my people, red berries
color of the bloodshed
for this vast land of Africa.
Ivory tusks, the crowning glory
of the silver-gray elephants.
This is the land I came from
The land of myself and my parents
Africa pure and true
Strange to some, but home to me.
Freedom is here
the time is now
to praise God Allah
for this wondrous grassland
these sand-filled acres called
The deserts, Egypt, Liberia, South Africa,
Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria --
All are my nature, the powerful blood that
runs through my veins as the rushing water.
This is the land that I love
This is the land that gave me birth.

Khadija Hassan
Somalia

THE OLD COUNTRY

The old village of peace and quiet
where no one visited
covered by trees and grasses.
A brown wheel chair, old style,
with an old lady sitting on it.
The lady was old,
but strong like the storm.
Gray-white hair,
but knowledge filled her mind
and many duties filled her hands.
Only one love she cared about,
her only hope, but lost.

Hoa V. Nguyen
Vietnam

I'LL TRY

I'll try to always smile
even when I'm feeling sad;
Maybe my smile will help me
to forget the sadness.

I'll try always to understand
Whatever someone says.
I'll try to always speak English
better than the others,
even if I can't.
I'll try to think while
I am learning,
and not just answer "yes."
I can't become truly smart
if I think I'm lazy.

I'll try always to read English words
that I can't read.

I'll try to get the idea from someone else
to understand something I don't.

I'll try always to dress up,
even if I can't afford it.

I'll try always to be a kind
and lovely girl.

I'll try hard, and try my best.

I'll try always,
try and try.

Khadija Hassan
Somalia

TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER

Mom, your hair is made with gold and
diamonds
Your hair is so bright it lights up all the room
Your hair doesn't have to be long to look
beautiful
It's short, black and soft

Mom, what do you put in your hair that
makes it look like this?
Nothing, sweetheart,
I just cut my hair and washed it, that's all

Mom, about your face
Your face is the most beautiful of all things
in the world
Your face is smooth, soft and fresh
The Lord knows with what he made you

Rose Eugene
Haiti

NIGHT TIME IN LIBERIA

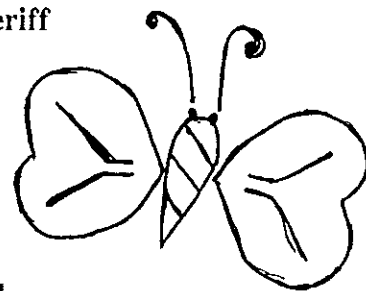
There was a night time,
a time nobody can forget
a time when the sky was bright,
bright from the stars and moonlight
a time when everybody enjoyed
fresh air, stories, songs and dance
in a land called Liberia.
There was a time,
a night time
Everybody thought of it
as a fun time.
Fun to be in a land so free
free do do what you think
is right for you
to live on a land
you think is good for you
To live around lakes, rivers, sea,
waterfalls, valleys, flowers,
trees, mountains, and villages.
There was a time
a night time
a time to spend with your
family, friends and loved ones
A night time to think of the past
and walk about in the present and future.
A time to make sure all families
are under their own trees
and can think about a future
without fighting.
There was a time, a night time.
There was a really good time.

Mawa Sheriff
Liberia

MY BEST FRIEND

When days are long
and nights never end
I remember I have a friend.
When many things
come into my mind
and no one seems to really care
and I feel like giving up,
when all my plans are gone
I don't give up. I have a friend,
my book.

Meseret Degife
Ethiopia



MY TRAVELLING SENSES

Moving from day into day
I don't know how
eating these plums now
this morning for breakfast,
tasting of childhood's
mouth-puckering tartness,
watching the broad sunlight
on young faces like unsprouted seeds;
honey of barley,
gold ocean, grasses,
as the tunnel of summer,
of nothing but summer
opens again
in my travelling senses.

Anwar Ahmeddin
Eritrea

MY CHILDHOOD

I remember a childhood
simple and pure
sand and water
a sun-drenched shore.
My family so happy
simple and free
surrounded by the love
they all gave to me.
I remember my mother
I love her so
but there was a place where
God wanted her to go.
My dad was my strength
my grandparents were too;
my life changed so suddenly
I didn't know what to do.

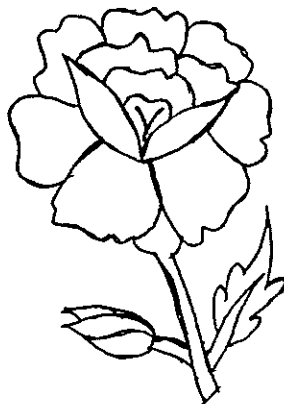
Now I'm here, in the States
going to a new school
which isn't so great.
I remember things like
the morning dawn
the smell of the beautiful flowers
and the taste of the fruits.
It seems like it was yesterday;
I can still smell the flowers
and hear the slow songs
I used to hear in the morning.

Regine Geffrard
Haiti

TO MY FATHER

So long ago, so far away
the time I saw you in the Sudan. . .
Please remember me.
So far away I saw you,
When I was a child I didn't see you. . .
Please remember me.
When I turned five years old
I asked my mother about my father.
She said to me, "He married another woman
and he forgot about you". . .
Please, my father, remember me.
Remember your child about thirteen years
old; he never sees you. . .
Please, my father, remember me.

Waddah Hammad
Sudan



SENSE MEMORIES

Just 5 o'clock
In the morning,
Around me are
All kinds of noises
Yelling, shouting, talking,
With all kinds of people:
Crazy children, wild teens,
Old, kind people.

And the sun
Which doesn't want to be inferior
Shines down with
All the energy it can.
All of these
Mixed with the noises
Of the sea,
Created my childhood.

Thao Pham
Vietnam

TIME OF WAR

Small country and old
Small pieces of land
But many invasions.
Education is locked.
Land, property, economies,
Businesses were damaged.
Sunset, the day was gone,
Nightmare's begun.
Dig a hole!
Hide under the ground!
Run away and never return
Or you'll be executed.
"Look out for the French!"
"Look out for the Japanese!"
"Look out for the Soviet Union soldiers!"
"Look out for the Communists at night!"
"Look out, and hide for your life!"
So many dead soldiers,
 enough for a river of blood
Large enough for all the dead soldiers
 to lie on.
On the top hill of Truong Son Mountain,
Go to the top of the mountain
Where the Buddha's temple is and pray!
"Pray for those dead soldiers' bodies."
"Pray for their forgiveness!"
"Pray to the God of time!"
Go back to your family!
It's dreadful! Go back to rest!
Your wife's waiting!
You've had too much hurt and pain!

Hoa V. Nguyen
Vietnam

TIME IN MY DREAM

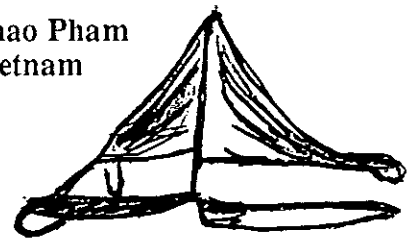
Time in my imagination
 is
too long for waiting
too slow for observing
too long for considering
too short for reaching
 but
plenty of time
 for loving

Regine Geffrard
Haiti

ESOL CLASS, MIDDLE SCHOOL

Studying or playing,
Nobody knows.
Teacher sleeping,
Students playing.
Some join with the teacher
In a good dream.
Some fight over movie stars
Like a volcano waiting to blow.
Some talk lazily to their friends
Like wind blowing through your ear.
Some make up their body,
Their face, their clothes, again.
But they never wonder
When they look in that mirror
What other people think about them,
Whether they're a prince or a beast.
Bell rings, teacher wakes up.
Students huddle out of the class
Just like a broken beehive.

Thao Pham
Vietnam



MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

I remember the smell of the ocean;
it smelled so fresh and lovely.
When you just woke up in the morning
you took a nice little walk by the ocean;
it put a beautiful smile on your face
that lasted all the rest of the day.
I remember a hole with fresh water
coming up from the ground.
The water had nothing in it,
nothing to make you sick;
it could get get dirty, then become
sparkling clear again.
The water tasted sweet and fresh;
I always wanted more.
Coming home from school I could hear a
whole chorus of birds singing
And when the roosters began to crow
it was such a happy sound.

Rose Eugene
Haiti

HEARING

I hear someone's voice talking to me
In the morning star and in the evening star
I hear the words the person said to me
I think about it every little minute
I say to myself, what shall I do about it?
Dear God, God
I hear my grandma's voice, the way she
used to sing to me and tell a story to me
Her voice did all that in the evening, and
in the morning the birds used to sing a song
I used to listen to their voice
I always imagined for myself
that I wanted to be a musician but
I don't have a voice to sing a song
Grandma would always love
to hear my voice
when I was singing

Christiana Korngor
Liberia



BIRDS

In the morning and in the evening
I used to listen to the birds
when they were singing a nice song
that touched my soul.
Some birds sing like a human being.

Thinking about birds is a good idea
and is not a good idea.

Every morning my mother used to
wake me up early in the morning
because she knew I liked to
listen to the birds.
I listened to the sound of birds
until it was time for me to take a shower
and get dressed for school.
When school was over
I always fought to come home early
to eat and do my homework.
Then I started to listen to my evening
bird songs and watch them
flying around the trees.

Christiana Korngor
Liberia

APOLOGY

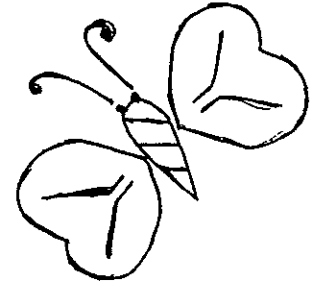
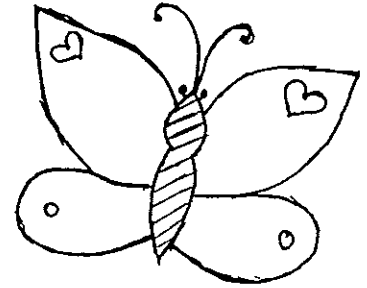
Hey, Sis
You have a
new boyfriend,
Right?

Oops, I didn't
mean to spy
on you
But

It was an
exciting thing
to go through
someone's diary

Please, hide it
somewhere where
I can reach it
Again, dear Sis
Forgive me

Vy Nguyen
Vietnam



LONELY DAY

One day when I was walking
through the park
I saw the tree
where we sat together
and talked about love.
Suddenly, the tree started blowing wildly
and I felt lonely.
I started thinking of my dear friend
who I love and miss.
I remember her soft, laughing voice
and I still remember
a book of souvenir postcards
we bought together in Washington.
We laughed at all the presidents:
Andrew Jackson was muscular,
wearing gym shorts;
Another one was bald.
We shared our happiness,
our sadness and our secrets
with each other.

Jalal Uddin
Bangladesh

BIRDS

I like birds
flying birds, playing birds
sleeping birds, crying birds
smiling birds, sad birds
I like a bird who always plays with people
a bird who always sings on the ocean
a bird who always stays in the tops of
the trees
I like a bird with a pretty nose
nice face, long beak
four main body parts
I like jumping birds
running birds
stupid birds
ugly birds
crazy birds.
I like birds.



Syllionet Cesaire
Haiti

QUIET DAY

It was a quiet day
I was walking along the path
It was autumn, and the air smelled of leaves
which were floating gently to the ground

That moment reminded me of when
we were walking along the path together
The wind was blowing through your soft hair
the sunlight shone on your face
and your eyes looked gentle and full of love

As I continued walking
I heard the leaves crunch beneath my feet
just the way it was with us
only now I was alone

Then I sat down on the bench
I moved my fingers across the letters
that spelled out our names
and the heart that contained them
My eyes became blind with salty tears

Oh!! My beloved friend
When can I see you
again?

Mai Lang Ngo
Cambodia

WHAT WAR DOES

It was a beautiful country
people lived a good life
plants were growing well
animals were adapted to their environment

When the war broke out in the country
you saw people running from their homes
they looked like they were dead
food was hard to find
water was brown
from the pollution of the bullets and bombs

People were dying of hunger
children cried in the middle of the streets
nobody looked at them
wild animals began to leave the country
most of the people ran to other countries
and became refugees

People kept dying
and instead of burying them
they got thrown away like trash
dogs and cats were eating the bodies of
dead people on the streets
ladies were raped like animals
Life was in big trouble

Abbas Omar
Somalia

THE GREEN LIGHT OF LIFE

I hold your hands
as we cross the river
The green light on your eyes
shines like a tree weaving in the breeze.
Lovely, shining
it's the light in your life.
What is it that makes you waver
and wonder what could happen to
the green light, source of life,
life shared by me and you.

Dawit Degife
Ethiopia

FRIENDS

Who's my friend, you my friend?
Then act like a friend.
Don't look in my face and smile,
then when I turn my back
you be talking behind my back
like a little fool. I thought
friends could always be there
for each other. I thought
we were the best friends
ever. But now
I feel that life has changed.
We don't do things together
like we used to.
But I don't care. I know
life goes on.

Moore Verdier
Liberia



REMEMBER ME

Remember me when I am gone away,
gone far away into another land,
When you can no more hold me by the hand
and tell me about our future that we planned.

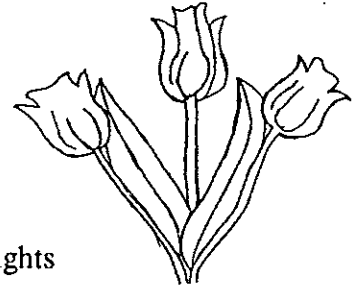
Now I am half turned to go, yet turning
to stay. Remember me night after night,
remember that I told you you have a secret
garden no one knows about.

Only remember that there is someone
at the end of your secret garden that
loves you and understands you.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
and after life remember,
do not cry. If the love and hopes leave
the thoughts that I once had,
remember me and be sad,
and say to yourself
love has gotten away.

Onesimus Koilor
Liberia

THANKS, LORD

Thank you Lord
I would like to say
thank you to you.
And I don't have to
explain why.
All the days and the nights
I have to say
thanks to you.
I want to thank you, Lord
for life and all that's in it.
Thank you for the day
and for the hours
and for the minutes.
I know, God, many are gone
and I'm still living on.
Thank you God!
Thank you.



Dieudonnat Cesaire
Haiti

SPECIAL STAR TO ME

When we met on a beautiful night;
You gave me a special star.
You know in the sky they have lots of stars,
But I only love the star you gave me.
This star brings me luck.
Every night I look at the star thinking of you.
This star brings me luck and love.
Every day I look at the star as I think of you.
Some day the stars may disappear.
But the star you gave to me will never
disappear.
I love this star more than any other star;
I love this star the same as I love you.

Duy Nguyen
Vietnam

MOONLIGHT

The moon's radiance
is as white as a diamond
outside my window

Solomon Tekie
Eritrea

THE PICTURE OF MY HOME TOWN

Oh, my home town
that was a marvelous place
There were age-old legends and
strong Buddhist faith
The people who live there
are hospitable and honest

I stood on the mountaintop
looking downward
The waterfall came down
in torrents

Far away
my vantage point reflected
in the river
the grandeur of the temple
that stood erect
in the middle of the village
I could see
many people going there
to pray for today, tomorrow. . .
The cars ran in the road
like beetles creeping

A shoal of fish
played in the stream
The growing dense trees
like troops stood guard for people
The flowers in full blossom
were competing for
which was the most beautiful

I was intoxicated by
the beauty of nature

Sha Li
China

SOUND MEMORY

At the top of White Mountain
There were lots of wolves.
I went there;
I didn't see any wolves.
When I left
I heard their voice.
I wondered why,
What was that?
It was a ghost.

Phuoc Lam
Vietnam

I WISH I COULD FLY

I wish I could fly
like the birds fly,
over the ocean;
fly on the top
of the mountain
fly through trenches
so nobody can see me.
I wish I could fly.
When I get older
I will sit on the tree
at night and watch the sky
until I die.
I'll never know what will happen
in the next life;
Maybe God will
make me into a bird.

Phuoc Lam
Vietnam



POEM: I DID? IS THAT RIGHT?

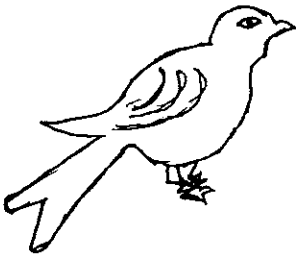
Huh! I don't even know
how to write,
but I love to do it.
I can say whatever I want to
like about my family
my lover. . .
my class also.
And some things that
happened in front of my face,
like with *him*.
Hey! I really hate that guy.
Every day my teacher put hm
out of my class
because he was always
talking, laughing
and joking around.
I felt so sorry for him.
His English was very good
but he didn't use it well.
Why?
I don't know.
Let's ask him.

Vinh Nguyen
Vietnam

FOR MY BIRDS

I remember birds
I liked birds.
They had brown, green,
red wings.
They had blue eyes
They had little feet,
small ears, pink tongues.
I liked their brown faces,
red and white faces.
They had long fingers.
They lived in beautiful cages.
I liked the two birds
that played with me. '
I could always sing
a beautiful song with them.

Lul Omar
Somalia



MY SECOND HOME

My second home is school.
Leaving my first school,
coming into my second home,
it feels like my first home.
Every morning we eat breakfast;
I run to class very fast
I try to learn mentally
as well as physically.

That feeds me in full
with sweet knowledge
from childhood to adulthood,
and from illiterate to literate.
Oh, my second home,
my lovely school.

Meseret Degife
Ethiopia

NEW YEAR

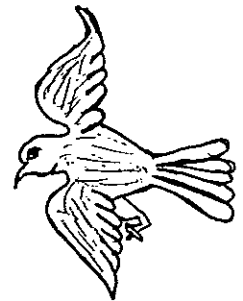
New Year was important in Cambodia.
Everybody could make friends.
People put on new clothes before they went
to the temple.
I remember last year:
On April 13 the New Year began.
I wanted to go inside the temple
but I couldn't,
because only monks could go.
The next day I sneaked in there, and finally
I saw it.
They had waterfalls and lots of animals.
It looked like the real God coming down.

Soeuth Seun
Cambodia

TIME

Time passes and comes;
time comes and goes,
and goes, goes forever. . .
and doesn't wait for who?
Time makes people cheerful.
But sometimes
people do feel sad.
Time makes people meet,
and also makes people separate.
And time
makes people meet again.
I hate time,
but I love time too.

Ut Nguyen
Vietnam



BIRDS

I like little birds,
birds that can sing a song.
When I see birds
I think of the two I used to have;
I named them Lylah and Nahara,
which in Arabic means
Day and Night.
I like little birds
that wake me up early
in the morning with a song:
"Wake up, little princess."

Yurub Hassan
Somalia

AN OLD WOMAN

She was there sitting
on a chair
singing and sewing

When she wasn't
doing these things she still
sat on that same chair

Which was very old
though it didn't look old

Because every time it
started looking old she
repaired it

At last
it was a Wednesday morning
she died sitting

On that same little
chair

Louiza Gilbert
Haiti

TEACHERS

They were tender seedlings
under the soil
The sun shone on them
the gardeners grew them
At last
they became strong trees

Teachers are like gardeners
they are knowledge spreaders
From ancient times to today
every great person
can't do without a teacher's lessons
Because the world
has teachers,
civilization still exists

One day
when we become
our country's pillars and beams
don't forget your teachers
They're still at their duty
offering their knowledge

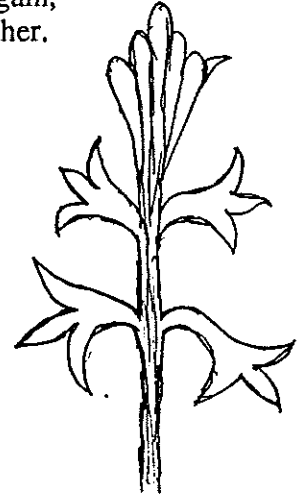
Sha Li
China

TO CHILEN

I remember when
we were under the tree,
how our birds used to sing
beautiful songs.

Please forgive me;
you know two mountains
can never meet each other again,
but two people can be together.
One day we'll see
how we can live
happily, forever.

Fenet Gilbert
Haiti



LIFE'S NOT EASY

Life's going on
Life's going on
Don't think everything
Will be all right
Do it now
We don't have a long time
To do it,
Just do it
Please don't take a long time
To do it
Do it, do it

Dieudonnat Cesaire
Haiti

LITTLE BROTHER

My six-year old little brother,
I remember when my mom
was pregnant; I used to put my hand
on her stomach, to feel the baby moving
and breathing like a little angel
inside of her. I remember asking my mom
how a little baby could breathe
inside a body. She said every baby
is a gift and blessing given by God.
They breathe by what you feed them.

Josué Fils-Aimé
Haiti

KITTEN

My kitten
my black and brown kitten
with bright blue eyes
makes beautiful sounds.
At night her bright blue eyes
look like sapphires.
When she's hungry
she runs behind me
saying meow, meow.
I like when
she's jumping around
playing with me
with my books
with my pens;
She's dancing like
a baby girl.

Aquillah Shahalemi
Afghanistan

I MISS YOU, MOM

I miss you, Mom
in the morning
in the evening
and when the
sun is shining

Even though I didn't
know you well
still I love you

You gave me
a great gift
which is life

Every day I wish
you were still living
I would give
the world
for you to
come back
but it's impossible

I love you, Mom
I miss you

Regine Geffrard
Haiti

I CAN'T WAIT

When I was a child
I always waited
I waited for good grades
I waited for a good life
Silly me, believing they would come

But I was wrong
I waited for so long
I got nothing done
Nothing comes to me
I have to work
Nothing will happen without working
I can't wait any longer
I've already waited too long

Shuang Tang
China

RABBITS

I like rabbits
big and small rabbits
rabbits with all my favorite colors:
blue, yellow, green, orange,
purple, red, and sky blue
I love playing with rabbits
I love seeing them hop
I love touching their soft skin
smooth like silk
I like playing with their
ears and noses
touching their legs and their hair
Their eyes look like stars
in the sky when the moonlight is bright
I like seeing them run fast
They look like birds flying

Mawa Sheriff
Liberia

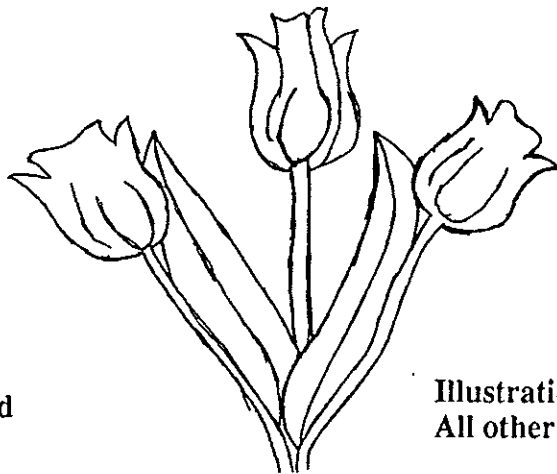


Illustration on p. 5 : Montegbosh Hassan
All other illustrations: Hargewin Abera

In A New Voice

Poems of John Bartram H.S. ESOL Students

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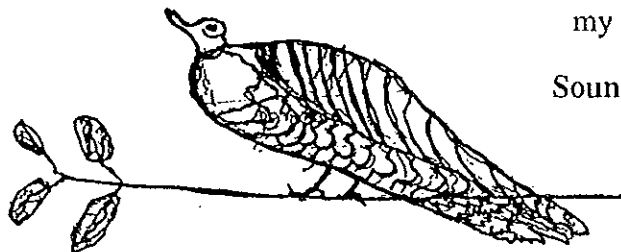
Volume 8

June 1998

IN MEMORY OF DONALD RICHMOND

Teaching is a gift
that God gave to you
and I'll always remember
your shining face
and the jokes that you
used to tell us.
I still can't believe that
you passed.
My heart couldn't rest
and my mind was thinking
how easily we can lose
a great person like you;
but we don't know
what is going to happen
to our life.
Nothing we can do;
we know you will never
be back.
Everyone on this earth,
when their time comes,
nothing we can do.
But we should pray for you.
My heart is with you always.
May God take you to heaven.
Amin.

Khadija Hassan (Somalia)



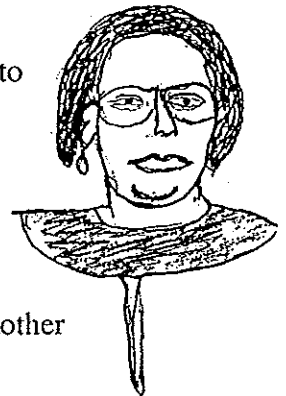
MOTHER

In my mother's eyes is
where I saw light.
A kiss from her lips is what
opened my mouth.
Her first call is what
opened my ears.
I'll love this good mother
my whole life.

She taught me how to
crawl and walk.
Her fingers became
my toys.
Her back became
my bed.
Her lap became
my seat.
I'll love this great mother
my whole life.

She gave me life.
She taught me how to
live it.
She gave me love and
I loved everyone with it.
She taught me friendship;
I'll love this best friend
my whole life.

Sounkaro Camara (Guinea)



WHAT IF?

What if I hadn't been born?
What if the world were flat?
What if vampires exist?
What if time stops?
What if I were a witch?
What if I were a chicken?
What if Love didn't exist?
What if I didn't have a sister?
What if I were abnormal?
What if I became the richest
person in the world?
What if I were an angel?
What if I were Chinese?
What if my father were alive?
What if I were a goddess?
What if I don't go to college?
What if there's another world?

Soukaro Camara (Guinea)

REMEMBERING MY CLASSMATE

My heart is a small bank
that stores past stories,
smiling faces. . .

The sun sprinkles leaping shadows.
The wind and rain weave friendly sentiments.
Why was the past valuable?
Because we were growing at the same time.

Classmate times were tasty delicacies
for my whole life
Using it to satisfy hunger
along the journey.
Using it to quench thirst
while we were lonely.
Using it to flavor meals
while we were young.
Using it to savor wine
while we are old.
Wanting to bicker with you again
though we left apart.
Though tomorrow is senseless
we press the button of memory.
It's a kind of comfort.

Su Li (China)

TO A FRIEND

I miss a friend
who always helped me and
who always held my hand
gave me a new direction
excited me and
woke me up
made me brave
and calm
made me love
the bright future.

Time after time
year after year
I still miss you
dear friend
Is your face still round and red
like an apple?
Is your sound
still like a little bird
singing spring's song?
Is your hair
still long and black?
Is your body
still small and thin?

Every day
the sun rises.
Every day
I look to the eastern sky
and say, How are you?
I wish you could hear
the earth's other side.

Sha Li (China)

LOVE OF A MAN

Love of a man.
What does he do with love?
Does he throw it away like trash to a dump,
or does he keep it like a kiss?
What does he do with love?
Does he smell it like a fresh-baked cookie
from the oven,
Or does he exhale it like smoke in a lounge?

Phirom Sovann (Cambodia)



Bernardo
Duarte

MY GONE STRANGER

Note: My father died when I was two years old. I never got a chance to know him. Therefore, I dedicate this poem to him, Mohamed Mara Camara. I also dedicate it to anyone who lost one or both parents and never got the chance to know him, her, or them.

They say I look just like him
Beautiful brown eyes like his
"So sure of himself"
"Always smiling," they say.
He's a stranger
Then again, so familiar for a stranger.

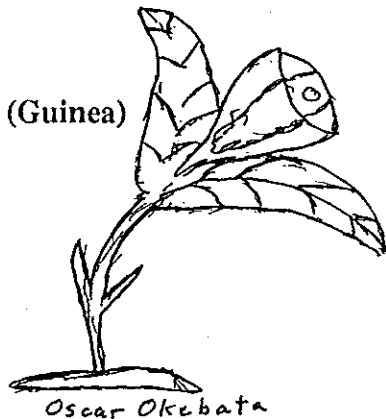
The things they say about him
The way they talk about him
It feels like I know him so well.
He's still a stranger
Then again, too familiar for a stranger.

A stranger so familiar
All his ways are so familiar
Just as I'm part of him
He's part of me.

A stranger I never knew
A stranger I'll never know
"Six feet below"
"Gone"
"Forever gone," they say.
Yes, my stranger is gone
Never coming back.

Gone
Yes, my stranger is gone
Forever gone with the wind.
He's still a stranger
Then again, so very familiar
for a stranger.

Suonkaro Camara (Guinea)



TO MY FRIEND

Don't love easily
and don't even hate easily.
Let yourself live relaxed.
Let youth leave some beautiful
impressions.
You are joyful
because you are very simple.
You are pretty
because you have a lenient heart.
Let friendship become the prairie's song.
Let hostility be like a passing cloud;
take only a glance.
Let us stretch out our hands.
Let us hug our futures.

Su Li (China)

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

Jealousy drives you insane.
Exult, you're not bound by a chain
And your love is not in vain.
Love is what I desire. Trust is what I require.
Obsession is giving you depression.
Unexplainable things happen;
Sorry does not explain.
Yes, you love me. Why don't you trust me?
Trust me before I fade
And disappear like a mirage.

Regine Geffrard (Haiti)

FRIENDSHIP

I remember the time when you and I
were together at night time.
We enjoyed looking at the full moon
and counted the stars together.
In the daytime,
We enjoyed catching butterflies
and grew plants in our back yard together.
Even now, I still can feel
how much fun we had in those times.
My dear friend,
do you still remember me?
A friend who went through childhood
with you
My dear friend,
Do you still miss me and love me?

Mai-Lang Ngo (Cambodia)

SUNSET

Birds are making their nests
the ocean is floating
the trees are dancing
Behind mountains
there are other mountains
Birds are singing
fish are swimming
My aunt is cooking for the party
the smell is telling me another story.

Children are playing around
learning that the world is round
An old woman is sitting under a tree
contemplating that she is free
The old man painting modern art
leads me to the true secrets in my heart.

The night is young
I feel like singing a song
about the smell of the beautiful flowers,
which words alone can't explain.

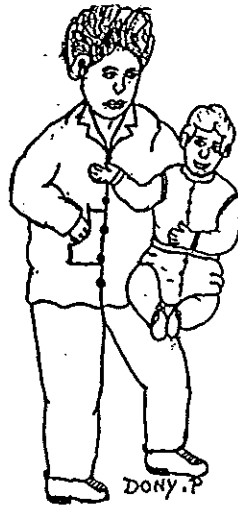
Whatever. . . Looking at the moon
makes me wish the night won't end too soon.

Regine Geffrard (Haiti)

THE RIVER

The smell of this
beautiful river. It
was warm and clear.
My grandfather always
took me there when
my birthday came.
This beautiful river
made you want
to stay there forever.
The smell. It smelled
like a sweet fruit.
The smell made you
never want to leave.
The touch. When
you put your
hand in it, you
could feel the
warm water.

Moore Verdier (Liberia)



IN MEMORY OF MY BROTHER

I'm a lonely girl
no sister, no brother
who lost my grandmother

and lost a little boy who I never saw.
I just heard what my mom said:
he was very cute, and his name was Mossie.

Is this true or a dream,
or does it sound like an explosion?
I wish I could see or touch him.

Oh my God, that reminds me of something:
He was a baby, was just saying 'Mom';
He didn't know what people were saying.

I wasn't born yet when he died.
To live and talk with him would be fantastic.
He was my brother. Here, I'm crying.

Aden Abraha (Eritrea)



LITTLE NEPHEW

I see his beautiful smile
I hear him cry like an angel
I touch his soft skin
I can taste the love I have for him

He smells fresh and nice
Like a rose pollenated at night.
I'm thankful for my baby nephew
I love him more every day
With his giggles and smile

Whenever I see him smile
I would love to die for him
I love him more than anything in the world
I pray God that I could live with him
forever

Aden Abraha (Eritrea)

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

I always like family gatherings
To see long-time-no-seen family;
You hear babies crying, kids playing,
adults laughing.

Mom and big sisters go to the kitchen
and bring out what they made:
whatever you like,
meatballs on top of spaghetti
that you are dying to eat.

Everyone says their prayers
and starts to eat;
you feel good inside
seeing your family and saying,
"Pass this, pass that."

The bread Mom baked is so good
you will melt like ice.
I wish this happened
every day of the year.

Hanna Tessema (Ethiopia)

WILL YOU MAKE IT?

Will you make it?
I will make it.
I will make it because of my mother
I will make it because of my father
I will make it because my family didn't have
the chance, the opportunity that I have.
I will make it 'cause of Mrs. Bolden
I will make it 'cause of Mr. Dowell.
I will make it because of all the teachers
that pushed me further than I could go.
I will make it 'cause I don't want to be a
failure.
Do you want to be a failure?
Do you want to go farther like me?
I will make it because of my best friends.
I will make it mostly for myself.
I don't want to be a Loser with a Capital "L".
Who pushed you farther? Did you take the
opportunity?
I will make it. Will you make it?
I know I will.

Rachelle Carrie (Haiti)

ALL BECAUSE OF YOU!

Everything
comes and goes
like the wind blowing the flowers;
mighty, strong as a tree
weak as water
love comes, and shows who you are.

My heart is strong,
my mind is weak;
whenever I see you
I feel so still.

Walking a thousand miles,
I met true love.
What's your name?
How can I get it?

Soeuth Seun (Cambodia)

MEMORIES

Sitting on top of the mountain
seeing the ocean moving below
Hearing the birds talking,
touching the water
It's cold deep inside my heart.

Walking next to the river
the air blows my hair.
Smelling the flowers on
the mountain top;
feeling good, and warm.

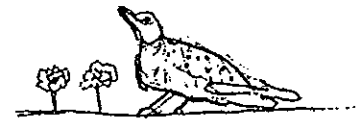
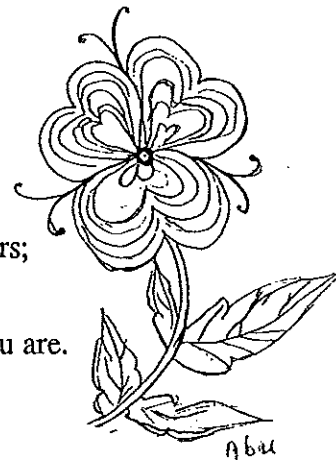
Soeuth Seun (Cambodia)

HERE SHE IS

My friend?
She's the best dressed,
but some say she
does no good.

Some say she looks good
and she's so strong,
but she feels alone.
Why is that?

Kim Tarley (Liberia)



A PICTURE OF MY GIRLFRIEND

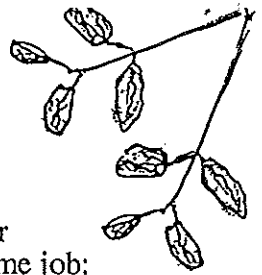
It stands on the wall of my room,
keeps watching me when I'm sleeping.
When I look at the picture,
her face looks so nice to me
and I imagine as I see the picture
that she will come to kiss me.
Her eyes look shiny like the stars
that come in the sky,
like the moon that shines round the world,
to make everyone see very clearly.
Her beautiful mouth and her smile
always make me feel joyful
and bring me a lot of hope.
She makes me feel even more lovely
when I see her walking
in the backyard of my house
with a bouquet of roses in her hand.

Syllionet Cesaire (Haiti)

FATHER AND MOTHER IN THOSE DAYS

The boy who later became my father
woke up every morning with the same job:
clean and sweep floors,
wash glasses, dishes, clothes;
watch small brothers and sisters.
But still he came to school
and got a bachelor's degree,
as he told me.
Same thing with my mother
in those days:
clean, sweep the floor,
wash glasses, dishes, clothes;
watch small brothers and sisters,
cook and go to the market;
feel tired, but happy.
One day my father came and
asked her to be his wife.

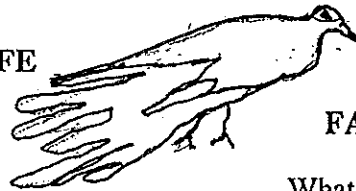
Duy Lam (Vietnam)
(based on a poem by Julia Kasdorf)



MEMORY FROM MY LIFE

I remember the time when
my girlfriend and I
were looking out of the door
to see if there was anyone coming.
But there wasn't anyone outside,
just the birds, flying from the sky.
And my girlfriend and I
were sitting by the door watching
the birds flying faster and faster,
flying so greatly that my eyes
were fixing on my girlfriend,
eyes filled with happiness.
I really don't know why
my eyes were fixing on her eyes.

Syllionet Cesaire (Haiti)

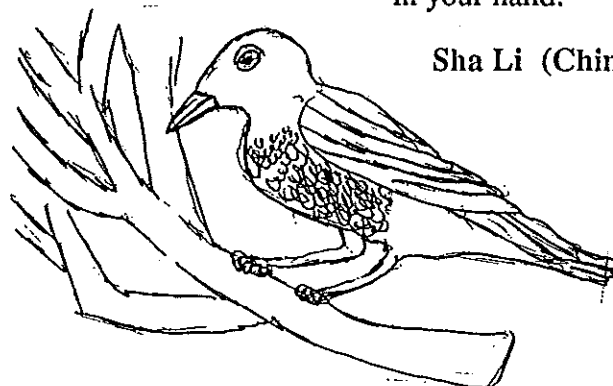


FAIL-TEST GIRL

What makes you feel sad
and close your eyes,
Girl?
It's only from failing a test,
and
only from your hopes broken
in a moment.

Books, pens, papers
should be put outside?
Open your eyes
and pick them up.
Yesterday is past.
Today's hope is
in your hand.

Sha Li (China)



A GIRL I KNOW

She think she all that
but to me, she just another
girl from around the way.
She so ugly she can make
a baby cry. Wear makeup
to look good. Oh my God,
that's what people
say when she walk
down the street, short skirt,
high heels like a hooker,
men calling oh baby,
yes that her, always
think she all that,
Oh yes, that her.

Comfort Dahn (Liberia)

IN THE VILLAGE

I always loved my grandpa's farm.
Early in the morning Grandma
always woke us up and cooked for us.
Just the smell of the foods
woke me up every morning.
We went to the rice farm
most days after school.

In Grandma's garden
you can eat fruits all day if you want;
you can eat cucumbers, watermelon,
grapes, apples, and oranges.
You can pick okra, greens and cabbage.

When Grandma cooked,
the smell of rice was always in the air.
The birds were always singing.
You could hear the crickets;
you could see the rabbits hopping.
You could see the deer running,
and you could always hear waterfalls
running down into the lakes and ponds.

When the sun goes down
it makes you want to stay
in the forest forever.

I always loved Grandpa's farm.
At the end of the evening
the sound of animals and creatures
made you not want to leave.

Mawa Sheriff (Liberia)



IN MEMORY

My brother Clifford was a strong man;
he was the tallest of
my parents' kids.

He was dark-skinned,
he had brown eyes
and nice curly hair.
His color was like milk
mixed with coffee.
He didn't like to smile,
but when he did
he filled the room with his gentle face.

He named me Regine,
which means Queen.

At night, he would sit
on top of the house's roof
looking at the stars,
wondering which one was his.

Every star has its purpose;
some say that each stands for a living
human being.

Regine Geffrard (Haiti)

ONE GOOD DAY

I remember one day
when I was little
I sat on my grandpa's lap
on the porch
and a dog and a cat
sat beside the chair,
and the vines covered
the front of my house
where all the flowers were growing.
He told me a scary story.
I was looking at him
and he just went on and on
about once upon a time;
that was the title of the story.
He told me about where
all people come from.
Now he's too old;
he can't tell any stories,
but I'll always remember
the ones he told me.
This was really one good day
of my life.

Khoa Pham (Vietnam)

TELL HIM (Song)

Verse 1:

Oh baby; I feel your pain
And it hurts me that I have to see you this
way
He don't deserve you, please let him go
You need love in your life, and that's
something I will show

Chorus:

So baby, tell him that you're leaving him
He hurt you too long
So will you come with me, girl?
I promise you
That my love will last long

Verse 2:

How many times did he kick you out
And had you thinking and wondering what it
was about
He disrespected you in every possible way
Girl, you know it's the truth, and there's
something you gotta say

Chorus:

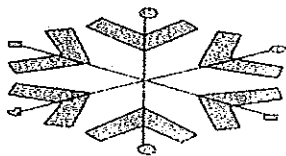
So baby, tell him that you're leaving him
He hurt you too long
So will you come with me, girl?
I promise you
That my love will last long

Bridge:

He knows he's hurting you
But he still does it anyway
Know it's up to you, to tell him
You're not taking it anymore, you're not
going to stay

(Repeat Chorus 2 times)

Seydou Konake (Mali)



MY FIRST CHRISTMAS EVE IN THE U.S.A

It's a beautiful night
On the way everything looks bright
Oh! My church is beautiful tonight
Many sounds and many lights.
What I see is a creche,
little lights go up and down
Welcome! Jesus Christ will be born
tonight.

Outside it's very cold
The snow starts falling
like little flowers of ice.
In the winter time, at night,
I can't believe my eyes
It's the first time I've seen it
Oh! It's so soft and white.

I'm so happy tonight
'cause I have a gift from my parents:
A little snowman,
with a small candy cane
My parents always think of me as small,
like this little snowman they gave me.

Oh! It's so sweet and nice
I dreamed of it so long ago
With the mind of a little kid
Thank you, Mom and Dad
You made my dream come true.

Dear God! You gave me a lot:
Love, gifts and my family.
May I have one more wish?
For the people around me,
make their wishes come true tonight.
From the bottom of my little heart
I just say THANK YOU to God.
Oh! it's a bell from the church
I fall asleep to its ringing.

This was my Christmas Eve.

Loan Nguyen (Vietnam)

