



In A New Voice

Poems of John Bartram High School ESOL Students

June 2007

Tracy

To The Reader

Fact or myth? Students with spotty educational backgrounds and low literacy skills are not capable of writing powerful, sophisticated poetry that expresses a vast range of experiences and feelings in totally unique ways.

If you believe this is true, get ready to have your preconceptions shattered. The students whose work fills these pages have a long way to go in mastering the intricacies of English. Some read on a second- or third-grade level. Yet all of them know the power of speaking in their own voice, choosing just the right word, trusting the truth of their imagination, and using detailed imagery that sparkles and bursts with life. They've used these tools to transcend linguistic limitations with style and imagination. They've harnessed the power of humor, and learned to make friends with feelings both pleasant and painful in order to create something beautiful. Editing, in most cases, involved only a few mechanical points. "Everyone has a story to tell," says our poster, and they're discovering the rich rewards of sharing theirs. The results will far surpass your expectations.

The poems in this book were written during the '06 – '07 school year in my Intermediate ESOL classes, and in the poetry class (for both ESOL and regular students) that just concluded its second year at Bartram. I'm deeply grateful for the support of Peter Exarhoulakos, our coordinator who initiated the course last year, and our principal Constance McAlister, who encourages and takes delight in everything we do. I'd also like to thank Lamont "Napalm" Dixon, who inspired us with an amazing performance, and Steve Danowitz, who facilitated four trips to the "Rock the Pen!" sessions at the Painted Bride Arts Center. In this excellent program, our students got to hear both recognized poets and "happening" student poets from area schools. Some had the valuable experience of reading their own work to an enthusiastic audience.

I've always felt that poetry writing is one of the best ways to learn and enrich one's spoken and written English in both the first and second language. It's not at all difficult to get good results, because in most young people the floodgates are waiting to be opened. I've found the essential elements to be (1) opening up one's natural voice, (2) constant practice in recognizing and writing detailed sensory imagery, and (3) awareness and acceptance of feelings. Lots of brainstorming helps enormously, along with exposure to a wide variety of poems. Reading aloud to one another should be part of the routine.

Please feel free to contact me by e-mail if you would like a copy of my published article, which contains helpful activities along with a list of some of the specific benefits poetry writing holds for English language learners.

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John Bartram High School
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[Note: Poems are arranged alphabetically by author's last name.]

Flowers

I like flowers

- big flowers
- little flowers
- long flowers
- skinny flowers
- short flowers

Flowers with colors

- red gold white
- yellow pink purple
- green brown black

Any kind of flowers

- flowers with eyes
- flowers that kill people
- flowers that talk

I like flowers that

- sing
- joke
- cry
- are cute
- are ruthless

I like flowers

- lonely flowers
- happy flowers
- bad flowers
- weird flowers
- scary flowers
- spooky flowers

I LIKE FLOWERS

Mercy Beakoi
Liberia



This Is Just To Say I'm Sorry

I have done something very bad.
I went out with your boyfriend
last summer.
I know you
love him. He's very
cute and he knows
how to take good care
of a woman, too.
I don't know if he told you
but he met my family
and they all love him.

Forgive me; he is very nice:
so sweet
so outgoing
so respectful,
and he got me a cell phone
too.

Mercy Beakoi
Liberia

* * *

[Note: This poem was based on the following poem by William Carlos Williams. Watch for others in this book!]

THIS IS JUST TO SAY

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

HAIKU

High heels black and white
with black bag and long black
hair
walking down the road

The morning report
on the bright and big TV:
people were dying

Mercy Beakoi
Liberia

WAR AND PEACE

I don't want to
go back to that
life where all the
time I have to
think about what is
going to happen tomorrow.

I have already
seen enough: people
getting killed. . .hands, legs
and fingers, human body
parts being cut off.

Mothers crying and yelling,
asking people about
their sons and daughters.
Too much killing, too
many guns, too many
dead people.

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone

Roses

I like red roses
that mean something.
Something like love,
wisdom. . .things like that.

I like the way
they open up in
the morning.

I like pink roses,
red roses, white roses.
Roses that smell good.
Roses that light you
up, make you feel
good about yourself.

I like roses that
you will take and
give to someone,
and show them how
much you really care
about them. That's
the kind of roses
I like.

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone



THIS IS JUST TO SAY

I miss Sierra Leone.
I miss eating
this juice-assed
apple that would
get all over me
like a kid eating
ice cream.

Oh, sweet Sierra
Leone, I miss
playing soccer till
my toes popped out
of my shoes.

Oh, fun, sweet
Sierra Leone, the
mother land of
all lands, sweet
Sierra Leone. No
place like you.

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone

THE MAN

**I am the ghost with
no light. I am the
ghost that comes
with the moon
and the stars.
Can't you feel that?**

**I am the wind,
the mightiest wind
of them all, the
wind that nobody
can see coming.**

**Can you believe
that the step
of my foot is
the cause of
earthquakes,
volcanoes and
floods?**

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone

STUPID DOG

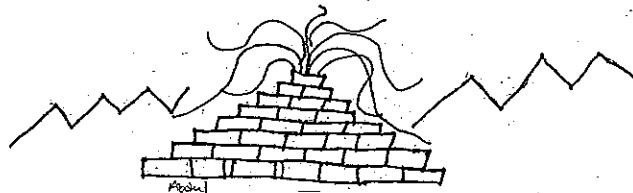
How could you
eat my cat?
I liked that
cat.

I even named
him Tom. Tom
was the best.
I can't
believe it.

Did you know
how long I
had him
before you came
and ate him?

Bad dog. Very
bad dog.

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone



For My Mother

I miss the way she did her hair -- sometimes she took it and put it up, and it would look like a bird house. I miss the way she peeled oranges with the knife so nice and clean.

I miss the one red shirt she had -- it was bright like the big red apple on the tree that nobody can miss. I miss the way she packed my food for school, putting in every little bit of food she had to give.

I miss the way she tied my shoelaces -- when she finished they looked like two bunny ears. I miss her smiling face when she woke up in the morning. Her smile is like the moon when it's full and really bright, for everyone to see.

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone

TO MY AUNT,
WHOSE SON IS IN IRAQ

Don't cry. He will be coming home soon.

Don't cry. Your arms are still wrapped around him.

Don't think about it too much.

Don't be stressed over him, 'cause he will be coming home soon.

Don't cry, my aunt, don't cry.

The Lord is watching over you. Don't cry.

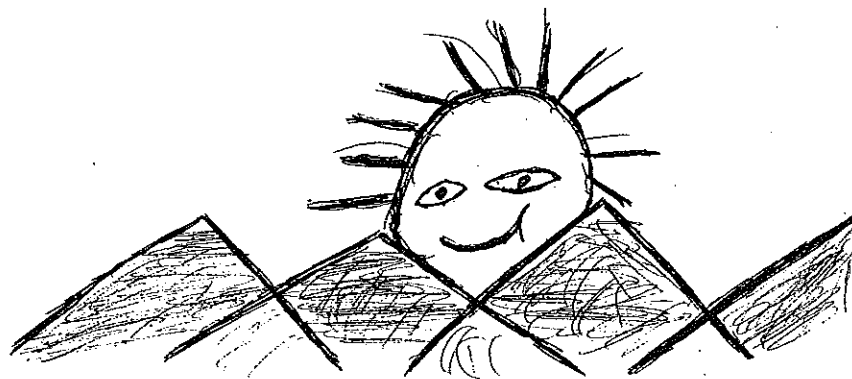
I say don't cry.

Aunt, don't cry.

The Lord is watching.

Don't cry. I don't cry.

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone



Abdul Conteh

THE
RAIN MAKERS'
POEM

We give, we take.
We take, we give.
We plant, they
grow. They grow,
they die.

If it rains today,
tomorrow it will
be sunny. So don't
let the rain make you
feel bad or sad.

Remember like I say:
We are the rain
makers. Wherever
we are, big things
happen as we move
with the Earth.

Remember
the
Rain
Makers.

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone

I Remember

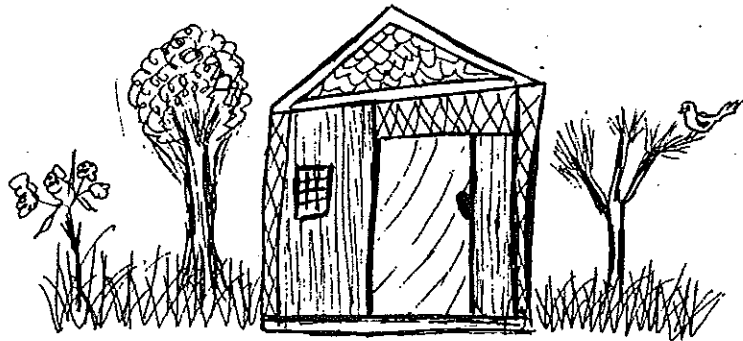
I remember, I remember
when I was just a little boy
and my friends and I used to go out
and find these tiny rocks and
make things we could hang around
our bodies.

I remember myself jumping
in mud when it rained. I remember
myself climbing trees like a monkey.
I remember myself running around
naked like a newborn baby.
I remember when I was a young boy
making a sling shot to kill birds.

I remember myself doing things
that I can do no more. I remember
cutting school in Africa and my
teacher running behind me.
I remember the first time
I rode a bike; it was like
a baby trying to walk.

I remember,
I remember.

Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone



MR. POLICEMAN

I did it, yes, and
it felt good. Not that
I meant to do it;
it's just that I felt
good doing it.

Yes, Mr. Policeman,
I hit him. I also
made him cry
and bleed through
his nose. He
sounded like a baby
asking for help..

Even when I looked
him right in his eyes,
hitting him,
I still didn't feel
sorry for him.

But still, Mr. Policeman,
I'm sorry.

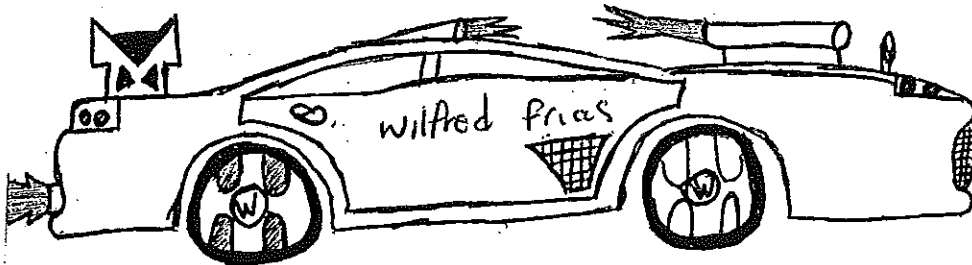
Abdul Conteh
Sierra Leone

Peace

I see people crying and lying in the
streets,
bullets flying past their heads and
there are cops with handguns, and
there's a little girl
calling out "Mommy" from the
curb. I see shadows of watch dogs
and old abandoned cars and houses
burned up. There are cats
crying for a home and looking for
their owner.

I was lonely with a messed-up leg
and arm, with no hospital to go to.
The streets were full of blood and
old sneakers and underwear.
There was no help
around.

Terrill Davis
(non-ESOL)



My Mother is Not Dead



THE MYSTERY

Your words are always touching me.
How can I let this pain go in time?
How can I get peace without you?
How can I be fine again?
My love for you doesn't obey
the rule of time.

How can I ever live in this world
when there is no one to call Mom?
There's nobody to talk to about my
errors. Mama, I'm left without
your love and care.

How can a man forget his mom
who gives him birth?

Should I sit in the sand
and weep like a baby?

Should I cover my head with
dust? How should I live now
how? how? I'm too old
cry like a baby. You have left
the world on my shoulders.

All I have now are memories
of our past. Your face is my
world; you taught me all that
I know today. I'll never forget
your hard work and love for me.

Mother didn't die.

Mother mustn't die.

Mother cannot die.

Good night, Mother, see you in the
next world. I won't forget the love
and respect you taught me. I love
you, sweet mother. I will never forget
you. Why did you have to go,
leaving me alone? You promised to
take care of me, be there for me.
But now you are a wind. How can I
go on without you? You were
always there for me. You lifted me
up when I was down.

You were everything to me,
Mother.

Ansu M. Dolley
Liberia

You attempted to rape
my sister in the dark room
with blue curtains and
a red light flashing through
the window.

You were supposed to be my
friend.

Without my knowing you were
a devil and a ghost,
you brought hatred into
my heart.

You promised to take care
of her, but you made me
hate you.

Why! Why!

Why did you have to
do this?

You made her cry when
she didn't want to.

I should never forgive
you. I didn't know
you were a devil with a
mirror in your eyes and
the spirit of darkness.
You made my happiness
go away and brought my
sister the indignity of sorrow.

How will her wound be
healed?

Sister, GOD will heal your
wound.

I love you, sister.

Ansu M. Dolley
Liberia

HAIKU

She is my woman
I am the soul of her life
her life is in me

Why don't you tell me
your heart belongs to
someone?
I give you my heart

Ansu M. Dolley
Liberia

* * *

HAVE YOU EVER FALLEN IN LOVE WITH THE WRONG GUY?

Now listen to me
and listen carefully:
It happened to me once:
one day when I was
walking this handsome
guy came to me. He
was shining like a
diamond, his teeth
white as snow.
He smelled like
a strawberry and he
smiled like a baby.
He knows love, but
he is ruthless as a
dog. He is evil as the
devil. I was brighter,
but now I'm a frighter,
before he harms me.

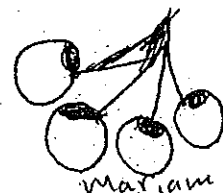
Mae-Tenneh Fahnbulleh
Liberia

THIS IS JUST TO SAY

I have stolen
the money you
needed to pay your bills.
You needed it much
more than I did, but
I just wanted to take
it because I needed some
candy. I played with the
balance money
and I lost it all.
I'm happy
that I did that,
but I'm very sorry
because you will
have no water and
light.

Man, that candy
was too delicious!
I only have a penny
left -- do you want that?
Forgive me, but I
enjoyed buying the
candy with the money,
and I had fun.

Mae-Tenneh Fahnbulleh
Liberia



I LIKE TEACHERS

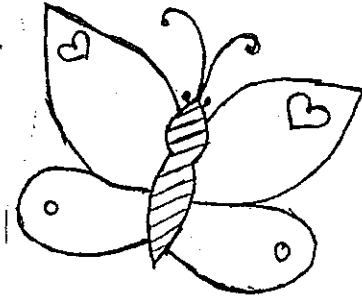
I like teachers
handsome teachers
ugly teachers
pretty teachers
teachers with hair
growing out of their nose.
I like teachers that
play with students
I like teachers
bland teachers
playful teachers
bad teachers
teachers that give
wrong advice
teachers that take
students to their houses
I like teachers
funky teachers
sexy teachers
lovely teachers
dancing teachers
dangerous teachers

I like teachers that allow
only girls to their houses.
I like teachers that
give good advice
I like teachers that
play music in class

I like fat teachers
skinny teachers
huge teachers
black teachers
white teachers
pink teachers
all color teachers

I like teachers that
smoke
drink
kiss
smell bad
sing
model

I like teachers that
do horrible things
I don't know why
I like them, but I
just like teachers



Mae-Tenneh Fahnbulleh
Liberia

I LIKE BUTTERFLIES

I like butterflies
gentle butterflies
fluttering butterflies
colorful butterflies
talking butterflies
shining butterflies

I like butterflies that
sing
dance
rap
teach
play

I like butterflies that
tell stories
ugly butterflies
flowery butterflies
crazy butterflies
baby butterflies
diamond butterflies
sparkling butterflies

butterflies that cry
delicious butterflies
dirty butterflies
hoop butterflies
pumpkin butterflies
roasted butterflies
beautiful butterflies
African butterflies

Mae-Tenneh Fahnbulleh
Liberia

WHEN I WAS IN HEAVEN

(In memory of my brother, Anthony Fahnbulleh
1989-2007)

I say today
I was in heaven
seeing my brother,
showing my brother
around the palace.
He took me to his
room where all
those little angels
were singing and sitting
on his bed, soft
as a baby's hair.
I was in heaven.
God said, "My
child, do you
want to see
all those bad
people?" God took
me there. I saw
people crying
for water. The
fire was bigger
than the earth,
but I was
in heaven.

Mae-Tenneh Fahnbulleh
Liberia

I DON'T LIKE YOU

I said I don't like you,
because you act up,
you're always mad
and your face is sad
every time. You say that
you're fat, but you know
that's not right.

You always cry like a
river in hurricane season.
But the thing is, you
never look to the sky
even for a little while.
Maybe you'd see the
stars in the night like
the sun brightening in
the daylight.

But as a matter of fact --
nah, never mind.

Raulin Frias
Dominican Republic

My Self

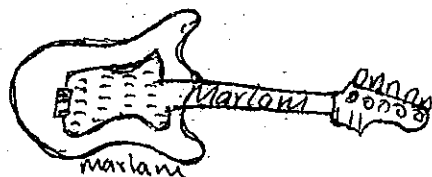
My self is a
kind of toy that
I think somebody
is playing with
but that is my self.

My life is like
a wheel from a
junk car, never knowing
when it's going to stop working
but that is my life.

I'm a good person
but sometimes I know
I act like a bad person.
But that is not my self.

The only thing
I know in this world
is that nobody is
perfect.

Raulin Frias
Dominican Republic



Poetic Generation

The poem is my mother.
Haiku is my father.
All these metaphors,
personification,
and similies are part of my
memories. I'm the son of
Cinquain and the father of
Quatrain. The couplet and limeric
are a gift from me to you.
I'm the song you sing and the
journal you write.
I'm the sensory imagery you
find in your mind.

Jorgen Geleplay
Liberia

DON T BOTHER

Don't bother loving me.
The heck with the love.
This is a cold world;
we need love from above.

Don't try kissing my lips.
First I want you feeling my hand.
When the time comes,
I'll show you a real man.

I was really feeling you,
but not today.
I saw you acting freaky. . .
that was yesterday.

Jorgen Geleplay
Liberia

The Song

She sang me a song,
a very meaningful song,
a song that brought healing to
the soul. As she sang I could
see I was trapped in my own
nightmare full of gruesome,
horrible memories of my past.
Finding one way just led me to
another dead end. As she sang
I came to realize that I had
a choice in life.

I began to understand that
no matter what, we are not
alone, and we always have a
choice. The song she sang
taught me the beginning of life.
She made me understand that
a true lover loves everybody,
both good and bad, righteous
and unrighteous, poor and rich,
fat or skinny, white or black.

The song she sang released me
from my nightmare.

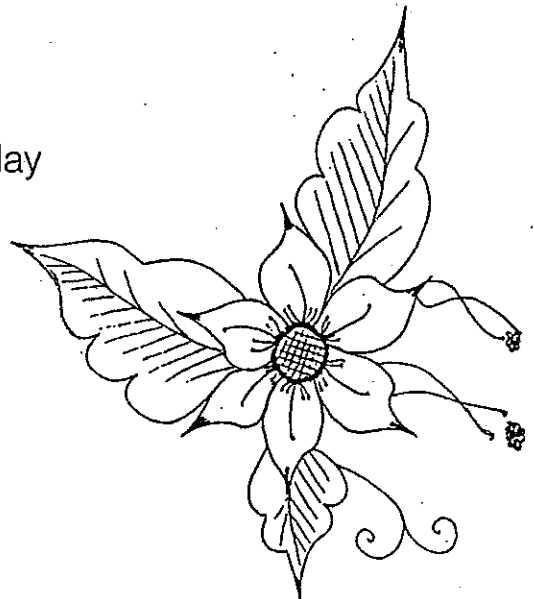
Jorgen Geleplay
Liberia

THE EYES OF REALITY AND TRUTH

She said when she looked into my eyes
she saw light. She said when she
looked into my eyes she saw no fear
or hate, no happiness or sadness.
She said when she looked into my eyes
she saw no emotions or feeling. She
said I was like a newborn baby that
has no idea of what was going on in
the world.

She said when she looked into my eyes
she saw a young tree that kept on growing
with no sunlight or water. She said
when she looked into my eyes
she saw a boy walking on the path
of loneliness and sorrow. She said
when she looked into my eyes she saw
reality and truth.

Jorgen Geleplay
Liberia



TO BE A MAN

**Being a man is not about
sweetness;
it's about bitterness and hardship.
It's like lifting weights without
food. It's also like running four
hours without water.
Being a man is like taking a test
you know nothing about.**

**Listen, my dear friends.
Life is not about Money, Power or
Respect.
It's all about caring, love, kindness
and honesty.
My dear friend, don't rush about
getting money. They say first
seek the glory of God and all
other things
shall be added unto you.**

**Take my advice, dear friend.
A word to the wise is enough.
Being a man is all about bitterness,
hardship, and love.**

**Jorgen Geleplay
Liberia**

The Boundary Between Us

**We used to be more like twins.
We used to be more like car tires.
We used to be more like pen
and paper. We used to be more like
fish and water. We used to be like
the moon and the stars, but now
we're like the moon and sun.
Now we're like fire and water.
Now there's a boundary between us.**

**You used to call me your pathfinder,
but now you call me your obstacle.
Our love was getting bigger per
minute,
but now it's getting smaller per
second.
Now there's a great wall of China
between us. We used to be like
Sleeping Beauty and the prince,
but now we're like Mr. and Mrs.
Smith.**

**You used to call me your savior. But
now there's a blazing heat between us,
so you call me your killer.**

**Jorgen Geleplay
Liberia**

Nature



Being on the beach with
my mother and sisters is
what I call nature.
Sitting on the beach,
swimming in the salty, fresh,
cold water, with the sunlight
flashing on you, giving your skin
a golden-looking color.

Where you can feel
this soft breeze
rubbing against your skin.
Sitting down on the sand,
making the castle of your dreams.
Watching the water go back
and forth as it washes away
your castle and footprints.

Where you see people of all
colors and creeds, swimming
together in the same sea.
Now this is what I call nature!
Seeing the birds flying in the
sky. Doing nothing but
lifting your head high.

Jorgen Geleplay
Liberia

POEM

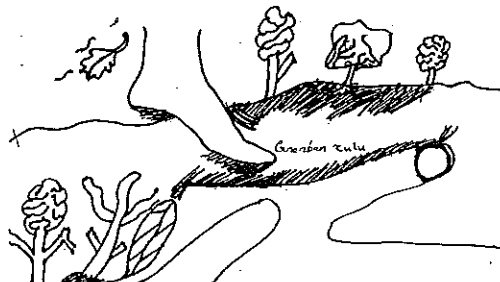
I wish you were around me,
touching and kissing me,
loving and playing with me.
When you were around me
my wings were spreading out.
My heart was growing healthy
and strong, like a weight lifter
feeling his muscles grow.

But now you are gone.
My wings have folded into me
again.

My heart is now growing old
and useless. Without you my
heart
is like an old car forgotten
in the garage.

Please come back. I really
need you back.

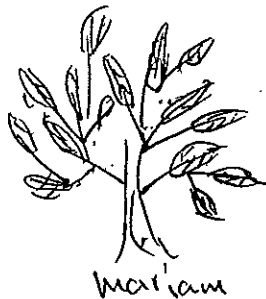
Jorgen Geleplay
Liberia



PEACE POEM

It was a day
just like today.
When we all were quiet
and we were still,
sitting alone,
I heard my breath,
its pace, its beat,
like it has been
for years and years,
without a change.
Sometimes it fluttered,
but did not stray.
No tall stories,
no big dreams.
The goal was with us,
clean and between us,
the same in every man.
No changes
No thoughts
In peace it stands.

Bobby Horton
Liberia



Within My Dream Land

Within my dream land
waving, hopping and dodging
like a beast with
blue and red eyes, all
within my dream land.

Within my dream land
walking five miles a minute,
singing like a bird
in the sky, all
within my dream land.

Within my dream land
looking at a prince, with
blue eyes, red lips and
white skin, walking within
my dream garden,
full of green leaves,
roses with red colors
and beautiful music. . .
all within my dream land.

My dream land, a land
full of love and beauty.

Lauretta Kieh
Liberia

My Sweet Little Brother

My little brother is a doodler;
he simply loves to scrawl. Oh,
what a brother I have. So sweet.

My little brother is so kind.
He knows how to make people
feel good around him; he's so
helpful and caring. What a dear
brother I have. So sweet to me.

My little brother is fishing; he
loves fishing. Sometimes he says,
"Oh, please take me fishing. . .
please, pretty please. So sweet.

My little brother always says,
"When I grow up, I think that I
may pilot rockets through the
sky. I'd like to be the captain
of a ship at sea, an architect, a
clown or cook. . .so many things
I want to do." How great you are,
my sweet little brother.

All I can say is that I love you, my
sweet little lovely brother.

Lauretta Kieh
Liberia

Who Is He?

I saw a man this morning
with legs like a duck and
feet like a goat. Oh,
what kind of thing is this?
I wondered.

I saw a man this morning
with blue and red eyes.
His mouth was very red.
I wondered what kind of a
man he could be.

I saw a man this morning
with blue hair and a long
nose, with ten toes and
two fingers. I wondered
what kind of man
he could be.

Walking toward a
beautiful house full of
roses and flowers,
there within I felt I knew
who this man was,
and I was right.
He was the Beast
getting roses for
Beauty.

Lauretta Kieh
Liberia



Welcome to the Universe

Welcome to this world,
full of roses and flowers,
full of happiness and sadness.
Now that you've entered this
universe of honey and sugar,

may all your days here be good.
May you shine among people.
May you always be the head and
not the tail. May everything you
do be bright. May your journey
on earth be good.

May you be the yellow flower
among your family; may they see
you as an angel sent from God.
May all you do and say
be special and peaceful to you
and your entire family.

Lauretta Kieh
Liberia

GBAGBU

Ho, Gbagbo
Ho, President
Ho, my President
Ho, our President
Ho, President, strong, big,
Scared of nothing.
We love you. That's why
we love you.
Somebody loves you like we love
our country, like our daddy.
Scared of nothing.
Ho, President
Warrior, warrior
Like a soldier,
Our Protector.
Ho, President, we love you.
Protect your country always.
Yes, always protect your country.
Good luck, P.
Good luck, President.

Alain Kpokpa
Ivory Coast

Women-Lover

(Name Poem)

I gave him the name
Women-Lover.
Women-Lover, Women-Lover
is my friend.
So good and beautiful,
everywhere he goes he's got
all the women he wants.
I don't know why every
single woman loves him.
What's he got? I don't know.
I keep telling him, let me
have your secret, let me
have your secret, let me
have your secret.
And he tells me, no secret
involved. She loves me
as I am. As I am.
I was born like this: I'm not
special. They love me
because they love me.
I'm not as beautiful as you are.
I don't put my pants down.
I don't have a car, or clothes.
I am as I am.
I am simple.
This is why they like me:
I am simple.

Alain Kpokpa
Ivory Coast

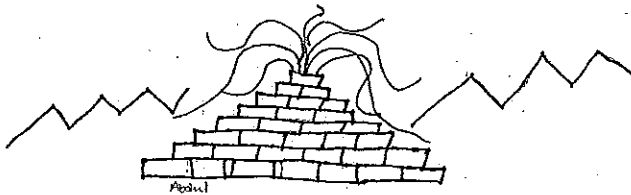
LOSING HER VOICE*

THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE

My eyes were red, too red
but when I saw the sunshine
on the water, giving this
beautiful color that I never saw
in my life, so beautiful. . .
that made me feel happy,
so happy, because I'd been
crying about my girlfriend.

I was so happy I fell down
and broke the beautiful glass
of my uncle. I tried to hide it,
but then he saw me.
Aha! Aha! Aha!
So angry, furious, and his eyes
were red, too red.
He was fingering, punching,
smashing me, like he was
trying to kill me.

Alain Kpokpa
Ivory Coast



This is my teacher,
my beautiful teacher
Dr. Schulte, Dr. Schulte.
She's my teacher, the teacher
I like; she's my favorite teacher.
She's old, old, but not too old.
She cares about her health;
health, health, health is the
only thing we care about.
She keeps talking every day
in the classroom, but some kids
don't listen, don't listen to her.
She really loses her voice.
That's why she says, "I've got
no voice, my voice is going,
my voice is going." She's going
to be retired, retired. She doesn't
want to be retired with no voice.
She cares about her voice, we
care about your voice, everybody
really cares about your voice.
Do not lose your voice, do not
lose your voice. We love you,
we love you.

Alain Kpokpa
Raulin Frias

[*referring to the vocal nodules Dr. Schulte
suffered from this year!]

Phenomenal Me

Pretty girls wanna know my secret.
When I walk
when I twist my hips
when I rock my body
they be like, she wants my man.
I be like, Phenomenal Me.
When I walk into a store, people
wonder what am I doing with
my PHENOMENAL ME.

I'm not a pretty girl, but
I have a body that kills.
I have a body that calls men
and boys. My mom always asking,
why boys always running behind
you? I be like PHENOMENAL ME,
Mom.

Some say they like my
baby-talking. When I'm doing
my baby talking people fall
in with it, pretty girls wanna
know the secret of my great
body. People wonder, which
planet am I from? I be like
PHENOMENAL ME, pretty girls.

When I'm walking, people
ask me if I'm a model. I'll be
like no, I was but I'm not
now. It's the secret of my
PHENOMENAL ME. My
breasts are the size of apples.
When I pass by a group of boys
one of them just has to call me.

Sometimes I wonder about
myself too.

Augustina Monpleh
Liberia

GIRLS

Girls, girls
girls

small
fat
short
large
big

girls, they are
all the same.
Big girls always
think they can
do everything,
but small girls
say no to them
because big girls
always like to
make the short girls
be afraid of them.
Sometimes they make
short girls think
they are not
beautiful. But it's
not true, big girls.

Augustina Monpleh
Liberia

Sweet Mother Land Liberia

I miss our culture back home
and miss running down that
hill that our forefathers
played on and found our
foremothers. They fell in love
and had our great-grandmom
and dad. When I am sitting
with nothing to do, I think of
my grandma feeding me with
soft rice. When I didn't want to
eat, she would try to make me
laugh all day long. When I'm
sitting and close my eyes, I see
my fore brother showing me
a way to go, a way where
I found my best friend Tennah
sitting there under a golden
waterfall with white foam and
white rocks. When you stand
on it you will see others on
the other side of the deep
blue sea that God created.
I pray one day I will
go to see my mother
land, Liberia.

Augustina Monpleh
Liberia



ATTEMPTED RAPE

Lying with that little white towel around my body in a deep sleep where I was in peace, but back in reality it was night and I was alone in the room, in that soft and smooth bed, where a guy came in, my cousin's boyfriend came in, looked at me, putting that kinda hard hand on my body. It was like hell. I think hell is better than that, but it was like your soul burning in hell, where there is no one to be with you, to fight for you. You are already scared and wake up in the real world hearing people talking about sex, seeing them having it too. It's like sentencing you to death, like a rose falling that was growing for a thousand years without any harm coming around it.

I pray that attempted rape should not see my face. I pray that attempted rape should stay away from all humans. When a person gets raped by someone they don't like or know, it's like butter melting in the 90-degree sun, it's like a nail jutting into your body, like a laser hurting your eyes, without asking for it, and you a person of pride and reason. People who rape are not human.

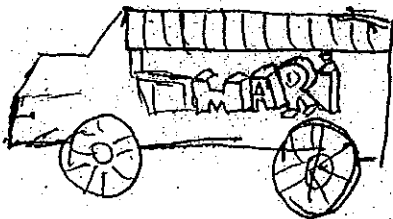
Augustina Monpleh
Liberia

PHENOMENAL BOY

Pretty boy, think
where his life lies.
I'm cute and a little built to fit
a model size.
When I start to tell them,
they think I'm telling lies.
I think
it's in the length of my leg,
the span in my leg,
the brightness of my teeth,
the curl of my tongue.
I'm a boy,
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal Boy,
that's me.

Sharif Nelson
(non-ESOL)

[based on "Phenomenal Woman" by
Maya Angelou]



Remember

I remember when I was
younger I stole money from
my mom and I hung the
cat out the window and
dropped it. I remember I put
a rope on its tail and
went down the stairs and
pulled it. I remember
I was playing my first year
of football and I played
cornerback. They threw
the ball and I caught it
and ran it back for a
touchdown and won
the game. I remember.
I got jumped by Wilson in the
summer time. I remember
when my cousin died when
someone shot him in the
head. My cousin Raul
got shot up and died
in the car. He died
in his sleep dreaming.

Sharif Nelson
(non-ESOL)

DREAM POEM

I have a dream.
My brothers and sisters
back home, I'm sure
that God will bring you to
the United States.

I had a dream today.
In my dream I saw
my father God. He said,
"My son, look at me.
Decide where I came from,

And what I want you
to do." I said, "You're
my father God, and you
came from heaven.
You came to save me!"

I had a dream
that he said, "I want
you to go back to
your country Liberia,
and save your brothers
and sisters." And after
that my brothers and
sisters were saved at
last. Thank God we
are safe again.

Prince Saydoway
Liberia

THIS IS JUST TO SAY (1)

Mom, I have
taken your cell
phone from your
room,

and it wasn't your
free-time minutes
yet.

Please forgive me.
It was nice talking
on your phone.
I talked for forty
minutes.

THIS IS JUST TO SAY (2)

I have taken your
clothes from your
room.

I have clothes
to wear, but I
want to wear
yours.

Your clothes
look nice on me,
and they're so
pretty.

I know you
really wanted to
wear your clothes
to that party.
I'm sorry you
can't.

Mariam Saysay
Liberia



POEM

One night my dad
really made me mad.
I went in my room,
opened the window,
put the curtains to one side,
and just lay down on my bed.
I started thinking of when
I was little and my dad
used to hold my hand and
walk me down the park.
My dad didn't used to like
anybody hitting me. I
used to love him and he
used to love me, but now
he doesn't love me anymore.
Now I feel I look like a
fire in his flesh. I don't know
why he doesn't love me
anymore. All he does now is
talk badly to me and hit me.
I start crying and lose
confidence in him, but a
strong wind blows from
my window and a feeling
comes over me:
Mariam, don't give up.
Life can change anytime.
One day you and your dad
will be like before.
Don't cry. Life is still
going on. This is not
the end of the world.

Mariam Saysay
Liberia



WHEN I CRY

When I cry
who will comfort
me? Who will share my
misery? Who do I see?
Who do I run to? Who
will wipe my tears
when I cry?

When I cry
no one knows my feelings.
It's hard to be heard.
There's no one to cling to,
no one to comfort
me. There's no one to
hold me and say it's OK
when I cry.

When I cry
It's hard to be strong.
It's hard to see the sun.
It's hard to carry it home.
There isn't any home
when I cry.

Mariam Saysay
Liberia



I HATE YOU

I really hate you.
You make me clean my room.
I hate you, I hate you so much.
You make me study all the time.
I hate you, I hate you so bad.
You turned off and locked the TV.
I hate you, I really hate you.
You broke my video games.
I hate you. Oh, I hate you so much!
You grounded me for a week.
I hate you, I really hate you.
But one day I'll be
thanking you!

Mehariab Tekle
Ethiopia

FEELIN' OLD IN A NEW SCHOOL

Feelin' creepy, feelin' alone
makes me wish to be all gone.
Feelin' not OK, feelin' uncool
makes me really, really hate school.
Feelin' bored, feelin' lazy
makes me think I'm kinda crazy.
Feelin' sleepy, feelin' dizzy,
not taking anything easy.
Feelin' like giving up, feelin' tired
makes me feel I'll never get inspired.
Feelin' no good, feelin' punk
Makes me wanna...wanna get drunk.

Mehariab Tekle
Ethiopia

STUDENT DRUG DEALERS IN L.A.

drivin' a fancy car
sittin' beside a bar
smokin' a smelly cigar:
does this make you a super star?

robbin', stealin'
shootin', killin',
drug dealin':
does this make you a super star?

putting some pain
right in your brain
by using cocaine:
does this make you a super star?

being punk
gettin' drunk
eating junk:
does this make you a super star?

thinkin' it's cool
to sneak outta school
and disrespect the rules:
does this make you a super star?

Mehariab Tekle
Ethiopia

I Promise

I promise
to work hard all my life
and make other people work hard for this world.

I promise
to not get myself in trouble
and warn other people not to get in trouble.

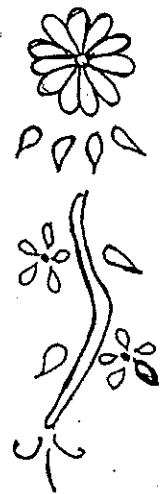
I promise
to be honest and polite
and teach other people to be honest and polite.

I promise
to love myself
and let other people love themselves.

I promise
to not be selfish
and teach other people how not to be selfish.

I promise
to love my education
and let others love their education.

I promise
to learn something new
and let others learn something new.



Mehariab Tekle
Ethiopia

CHANGE

My heart is rushing and broken
like a wild river.
My heart, my feelings
are like the moving clouds,
always changing with
no place to rest.
My beloved, is there any way
we will meet again?

Saminatu Tholley
Liberia



Abdul

FOR LIBERIA

Why can't Liberians
look at Guinea?
They hold their citizens'
hands in their hands.

Why can't we do that
for our old women, men,
babies and youth?
They're all crying for
peace and they need our
attention

To help stop the rebels
from raping
our little children,
opening pregnant women's
stomachs.

We need to cry on
the Americans for
peace and development
for this tiny little country.

Our children and elders
are dying from disease
and gunpowder.
We need to come together
and rebuild our country.

If we can't bring peace,
this sweet land of liberty
will cry sorry tears.

Nanette S. Tokpawhiea
Liberia

ACROSTIC POEM:
JOHN BARTRAM HIGH SCHOOL

Join the people for their
Open house of guests
Hold yourself together strong
Never let the fear trouble you

Back to school for a fight
Allow the people to talk
Renew your life with good things
Treat each other with love and peace
Run into the hands of a lion
Acept the reward with strength
Make Bartram your home and playground

Hug yourself against evil men
Interesting stories are told here
Going to the best place of courage
Hold Bartram as you hold your family

Spend your time in learning
Courage is from those who need it
Happiness is what we need
Over the hill of Mount Zion
Open your heart with friends
Love others as you love your school

Nina Tokpawhiea
Liberia

To My Friend

Hey, Queeta,
do you remember
how we used to go
to the movies, and
we'd get all the boys'
numbers and you'd
tell them that you'd
call them, then you
wouldn't do it?
Then sometimes we'd
go to the pool and
we'd see them
and you'd walk right
up to them and start
talking to them in a
bad way so they wouldn't
bother us.
I really mean this:
good for you, Queeta!
I write this to you
to make you happy.
When anyone bothers me,
I'll call you
to help me, Queeta.

Weata Vah
Liberia

GIRLS



I like girls.
Girls that know
how to talk to
people. Girls that
know how to
dress.
I love girls that
have long hair,
girls that like
school, girls that
know how to
write.
Girls that love
to work,
girls that come
to school every day,
girls that help
their people to
do something.
Girls that
don't like to
fight.
Girls that love
everybody.

Saa Williams
Jamaica

MY DOG AND CAT

Do you know that I
had a dog that looked
like a cat? The dog
had long ears and
brown eyes. Do you
know that my cat
likes to play soccer?
My cat likes to play
soccer with my little
brother. Do you
know that my
brother loves the
cat because the
cat loves him?
Do you know
that my cat had
babies? My cat's
babies look like
baby tigers.
Do you know that
my cat has lived for
nineteen years?
My cat loves
everybody.

Saa Williams
Jamaica

F E A R

Hey, have you
looked around when
you're walking?
Have you seen
the darkness
of light through
the thunder?
Have you thought
about ghosts
or spirits?
Have you ever
been sad or
worried about
what will happen?
Have you ever
heard a gun shot
and run?
I know you have.

On my way
home I heard
a gun shot. I ran
and looked around
like a sick dog.
I saw the darkness
of light in my dream.
There was a ghost
that looked like a
devil. I saw young
people dying and
screaming, trembling
like little girls.

Saa Williams
Jamaica

WHO AM I?

I am the one that you
hit and sit with at the lake.
I am the one that you
took to the park when
it was dark at the mark.
I am the one you miss
and kiss, and list that
kiss that you never miss.
I am the one you heat
and eat as a meat that
was beat. I am the one
that you long been lying
and dying for. I am
the one you open your
heart to. I am the one you
ate when it was too late
to hate that bait.
I am the one that came
all the same,
as a game.

Patience Wright
Liberia

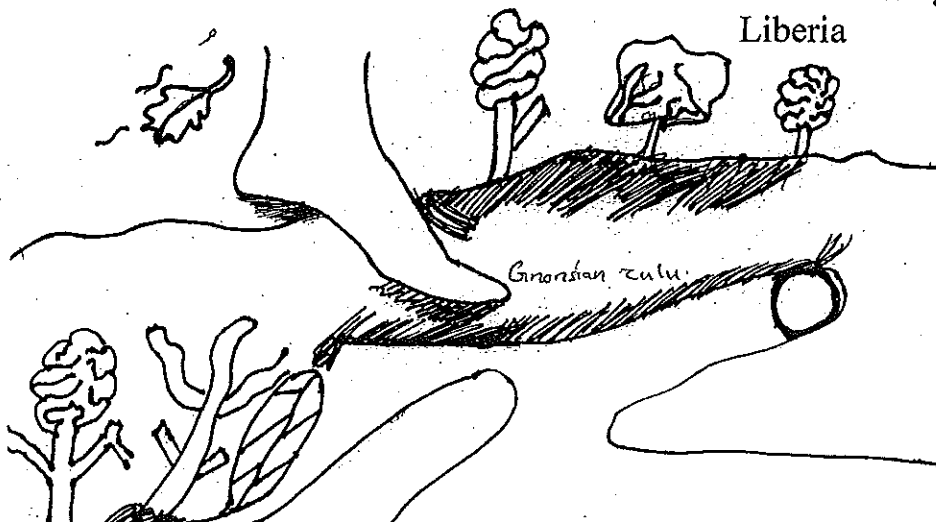
Friend to Friend

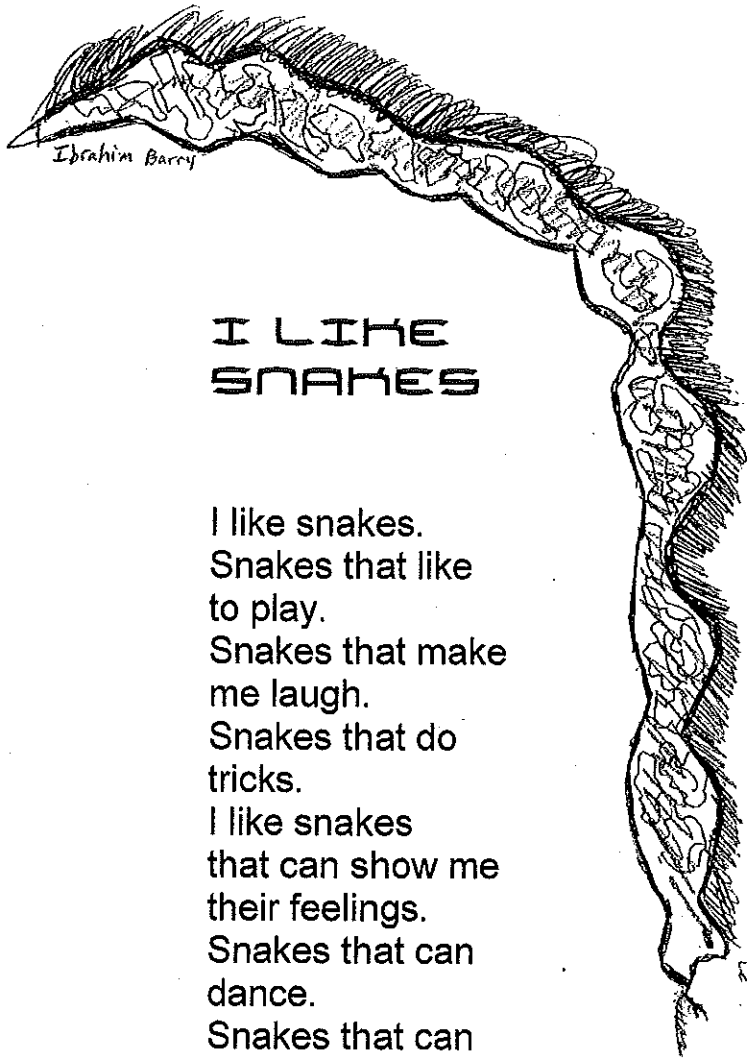
You, my friend, I
like how friendly you
are and how you joke
with everybody. I like
how smart you are and
how well you are doing in

school. I like how
you ring and swish your
lips like a singing bird
singing for peace,
how you smile like
a baby goat crying

for its mother's milk, and
how you laugh like a
baby cow kissing
a baby sheep.

Patience Wright
Liberia

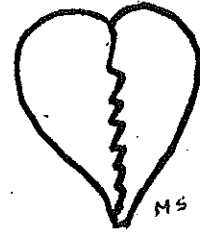




I LIKE SNAKES

I like snakes.
Snakes that like
to play.
Snakes that make
me laugh.
Snakes that do
tricks.
I like snakes
that can show me
their feelings.
Snakes that can
dance.
Snakes that can
make shapes with
their body.
I love snakes.
Do you?

Mohamed Yillah
Sierra Leone



CRY

I CRY WHEN I'M READY
TO GO TO SLEEP.
I CRY WHEN I THINK
ABOUT MY MOM.
I CRY WHEN I AM LONELY.
I CRY WHEN MY HEART
LEAVES ME.
I CRY WHEN MY HEART
COMES BACK.
I CRY WHEN I LISTEN TO
SAD MUSIC.
I CRY WHEN I GO TO
SCHOOL.
I CRY WHEN I DON'T HAVE
ANY FRIENDS.
I CRY INSIDE MY HEART
WHEN I FEEL LIKE A FAILURE.
WHEN AM I GONNA STOP
CRYING?

MOHAMED YILLAH
SIERRA LEONE

WHATEVER

"Whatever, Mom. I'll do it if I feel like it."

"Whatever, Mom. It wasn't my fault when I cut school."

"Whatever, Mom. I don't feel like going to school."

"Whatever, Mom. I'm going to the park."

"Whatever, Mom. I ate the cookies in the jar"

"Whatever, Mom. I'm coming home at 10:00 at night."

"Whatever, Mom. I don't care what you said -- I still love her, Mom."

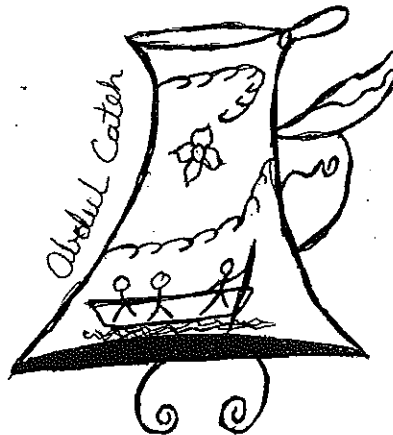
"Whatever, Mom. I'm gonna hang around with my friends."

"Whatever, Mom. I'm not gonna wear my uniform today."

"Mom, do you hear me? I said 'whatever' like a million times."

"Whatever."

Mohamed Yillah
Sierra Leone



I FORGIVE YOU, MOM

I forgive you, Mom.

I forgive you for when you yelled at me.

I forgive you, Mom, even when you didn't make my birthday party.

I forgive you, Mom, for when you embarrassed me in front of my friends.

I forgive you, Mom, for when you and Dad didn't make my graduation party.

I even forgive you for when you and Dad were fighting.

I forgive you, Mom.
Now come be my mom.

Mohammed Yillah
Sierra Leone

DIALOGUE POEM

Can you give me the last kiss on the last date?

Yes.

Can you be there when I need you?

Yes.

Would you dance with me at the prom?

No.

Would you go to jail because of the love
we have for each other?

No.

Will you marry me?

No.

Would you be the mother of my three kids?

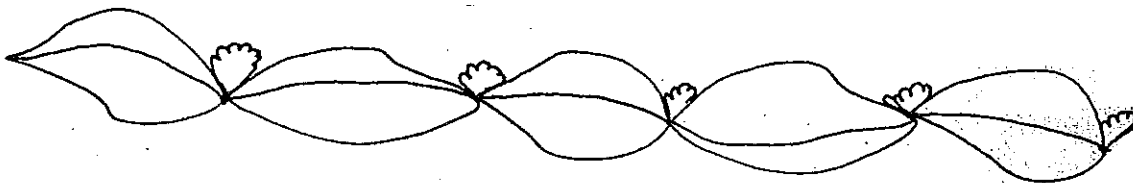
No.

Would you keep me company at the party tonight?

Yes.

Mohamed Yillah

Ansu Dolley



"HEY, CUZ"

"Hey, Cuz," how things going?

"Hey, Cuz," why didn't you reply back
when I wrote you letters?

"Hey, Cuz," where are you gonna be
this Saturday?

"Hey, Cuz," why don't you come down
to visit no more?

"Hey, Cuz," is something wrong?
What's going on? Is there something
you're not telling me?

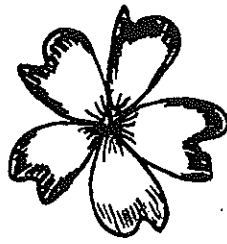
"Hey, Cuz," we used to be cool,
telling each other everything.

"Hey, Cuz," are we gonna play soccer today,
or basketball? 'Cause I know they're
your favorite sports.

"Hey, Cuz," do you like it when
I call you "Cuz"?
I can change it, Cuz.
Oops -- I'm sorry, Cuz.

Mohamed Yillah
Sierra Leone

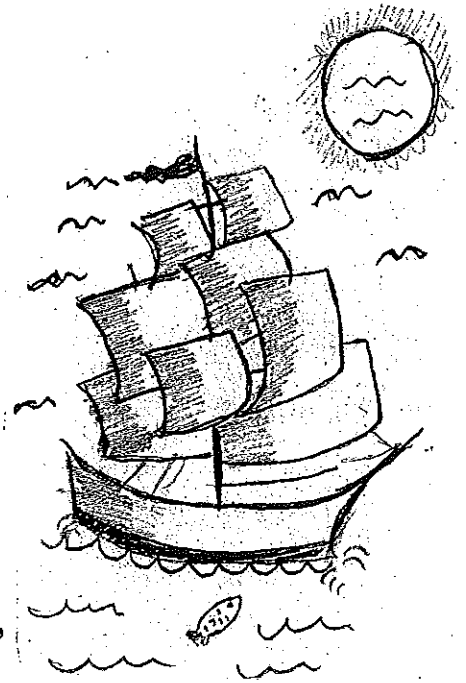
Meet the . . .



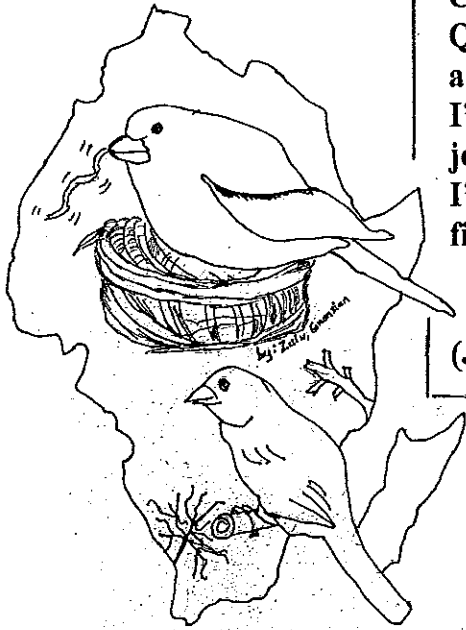
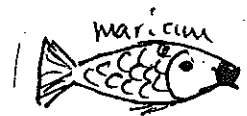
Poetic Generation

The poem is my mother.
Haiku is my father.
All these metaphors, personification,
and similies are part of my
memories. I'm the son of
Cinquain and the father of
Quatrain. The couplet and limerick
are a gift from me to you.
I'm the song you sing and the
journal you write.
I'm the sensory imagery you
find in your mind.

(Jorgen Geleplay, Liberia, p. 12)



Jeharrah Gele



Set sail with us and get a glimpse into the hearts,
minds, and dreams of our emerging visionaries.
They are the world!

