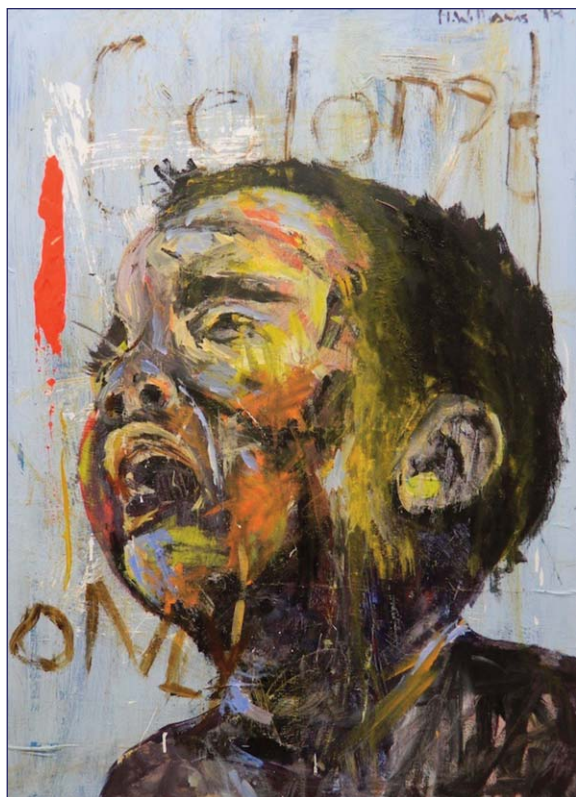


ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

THE PIERIAN

L I T E R A R Y J O U R N A L



SPRING 2014

THE PIERIAN

L I T E R A R Y J O U R N A L

Horace Gerald Williams is a senior Art major at Albany State University whose works have appeared in the Chastain Park Fine Arts Festival, the Sandy Springs Art Festival, the Destination East Point Fall Festival, the Albany State University Spring Art Show, the Albany State University Fall Art Show, and the Southwest Georgia College Invitational Art Show. His first solo traveling exhibition titled "Signs of the South" is slated to begin in 2014. The front cover painting titled *Colored Only* reflects the degradation of people of color in the South. For Williams, the mark making and aggressive brushstrokes evoke a sense of brutality which reflects a trend in history that devalues people of color. Overlaying transparent layers of paint with rapid marks makes the painting more dynamic while displaying the regression of a person to an inferior being.



Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed, except during time of layout and printing. Regretfully, manuscripts submitted between March 1 and September 1 will not be accepted. They will be returned unread. The deadline for submissions is March 1 of each year. All manuscripts must be accompanied by appropriate biographical information as outlined on the Pierian page of the Department of English, Modern Languages and Mass Communication of Albany State University.

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THE PIERIAN

L I T E R A R Y J O U R N A L

S P R I N G 2 0 1 4

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During November 10-12, 2013, Albany State University celebrated its 7th Annual Poetry Festival. Among the featured poets was the illustrious Amiri Baraka. It was an honor to have him share his knowledge with the university, and the Albany community. All who listened to his powerful messages of hope and renewal will never forget the significance of that particular moment. He reminded us that we are all scholars, and challenged us to be more socially conscious, politically engaged, and active within our own lives and communities. Albany State University was the last to witness his passion for educating future generations, and in an effort to celebrate his legacy we dedicate this edition to his contributions to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

THE PIERIAN

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* Albany State University 7th Annual Poetry Festival 2013-2014 Featured Poet
 ** Poet's Corner Tribute to Lucille Clifton (7th Annual ASU Poetry Festival)
 *** Albany State University Early College Student
 † "Don't Deny My Voice" NEH Summer Institute Scholar

One of the components of the 7th Annual ASU Poetry Festival was the PoeTree Project. This project was an exercise to build a community poem that reflects the diverse population of visitors to the Festival. Each visitor to the Festival was asked to place a line on a card. These lines were inspired by their experience at the Festival. All of the lines were later compiled by poets and spoken word artists of the community including: Tannur Ali, O'She Tyght, Tiffany King, LaTrenda Baker, and Reiki Ali.

Transcendence

To reach beneath the settling grave
To lay beneath the soil
Eventually, to become One

The trick is to create value
That is honest and real
By following our passions
In our hearts, we will feel

Beauty and love inked on paper to express
The inner emotions of the human heart

A brook falls from lips and waters the Earth
Supports the providers of the world
A melody that makes sunshine
With a new brightness
A mind filled with lights

The emotions and voices locked inside my head
Flow naturally
And that's what they need-
Fluidity

It only takes one song to bring back
One thousand memories

Ignoring what's already instilled inside
Will cripple anything you pretend your life to be

Just because you're happy to be alive
Doesn't mean you're happy with the way you're living

Let's Build!

Home:
Earth freshly tilled
Ripples in the Flint River; pushed by Uncle's boat
Clapping in the church
I come back to you

I've given up all to accept the call

FREE!

It's hard living in Amerikkka
Spelled with three K's
Walking around in a hoodie
Living like it's our last days

Justice is an extravagant word

Destiny is a fallacy
When you don't make it your reality

Change is not always bad

Plant

Seed words to make medicine
To appease village idiots
To staunch bleeding hearts
To soothe sick souls

Pain flows through my veins
And it's such a strain
I wish I could just throw It down a drain
But I can't because pain is a part of growth
That's why I know that I have changed
Accepting things...

Leaving me to accept this pain
As though it were rain

With pain comes strength

Though my feet hurt from walking with
No destination
Searching for something to believe in

Natural beauty

I see the beauty of you in me

Find a place where there is joy
Joy will burn out the pain

It is not who you are that holds you back
It's who you think you're not

People are mysterious and magical and strange

The mystery of wondering how the events
Of the day, the week, the month will manifest-
The anticipation of great things to come

A pool of golden light pours out of a sheet of blue

The moon, like a trusted friend gives me light and inspiration
-Sometimes, makes me crazy

Life's a beach

What is love?

Flirt with it
Play with it
Dance around it

The symbols of love

Should sound as clear
The symbols of love
Should have no fear

If we vibe together
We can fly together
If we fly together
We can rise together

...Hard to contain
The importance of understanding who we are
And realize our true essence in fulfilling our purpose
On Earth
Fear is not an option

STEFAN BALDWIN

Him and Yasmin

He blew his horn with his eyes closed, just like he had ever since he was 10-
holding on to the notes like they were his life's plan.

He never learned to perfect the craft, never learned to decode his
mathematical path.

No love supremes no blue and greens no round midnights no tranes no blue
silent rains no red clays no alabamas no psalms no porgy and bess no giant
steps no ruby-my dear no naimas no acknowledgment

no pursuance no resolution-

no solutions.

he was miles away from the melodic sounds of monks and birds as he never
learn to park near the curb, so he stood behind the bench with his fingers
tightly clenched

around her.

This boy/man held his horn in his hand, trying to find the keys and blue notes
without sentimental moods and soften strokes.

He wanted to be a lush/ lushly and harmoniously connected to his horn.

he wanted to be **SOUND**.

He watched the train come through the tunnels as the vibrations of his horn
kissed the wrong notes.

Note after note after note,

he blew his heart away.

he blew his mind.

No white lines no soft pills

No hard dark brown drinks

No blonde haired babes

No ebony thighs

Could save him from his un-bliss.

So- his pain all came out when he blew.

And only yasmin knew what his cheeks really meant.

Only she felt the sweetest of his kiss.

As he exhaled, she felt- all of his gods rise.

She saw all of his past li(v)es.

So he blew and he blue and he blew and he blue.....

He blew his horn with his eyes closed, just like the first time he held her in
soft ebony his hands.

Ten Years

Her yellow heels stained my soul as she walked out the door

-the tinted shiny yellowness of her skin kissed me goodbye—

I loved her/i love her like little ones love Their mother's milk

her sweet brown eyes help me get lost as she turns back and stares at me one
more time her soft petite frame in its righteousness

makes my eyes cloudy

I love her

i live in her like time lives in the vintage timex on my wrist

and her face makes my timex glow

I miss her faces

the redness on the tip of her nose

as she kisses me the

thin sweet lips that speak softly to my inner ear

she is the suppleness I desperately needed

she is the gem I lost in the ocean

she is the time that stopped my watch

her deep kiss makes my tingles tingle

she lives in my head and her yellow heels make my third eye warm on the
inside

on the inside I am a mess

and as she holds my hands and tips on her tippy toes

her lips say "goodbye baby, you are the sweetest"
those words pierce my ears and my earlobes sting
from the back I can hear her last heel touch the pavement outside the door
she is leaving
she is going
i am a mess the
sweetest mess she has ever known
she is gone and time has killed itself in her honor
time is gone
she is leaving
for the first and last time
her yellow heels are gone forever.

AMIRI BARAKA *

Trayvon, Trayvon

What makes a

Racist?

Misinformation?

Evil Ideas?

Lies & Fears?

Trayvon!

Was it slavery? Yes

It was slavery ...Slavery....SLAVERY!

Destroyed White minds and Black!

Telling the whites that they can do anything

Ugly, sinister, diabolical, vile

And still walk on our lives

Giggling in their gardens

Cracking the whip & still think

They hip!

Trayvon!

What makes a racist?

Empty heads, empty minds

Trayvon , It was slavery that destroyed so many

Black minds. Recreating slave negroes again and again
Convincing them it was ok to lay on the ground

And be still so the master cd stomp on them

& grind them into dust

Trayvon!

Slavery destroyed Black and white minds

White minds be

cause they

think its OK to be The Devil

Black Minds Fanon said some of the oppressed

Don't want to destroy their enemies

They want to become them!

Slavery, Trayvon, Slavery

One day it will destroy this America we know as well

America! America! The doomed keep saving you, saving you

Malcolm & Martin both murdered at 39, Oh America, But

The doomed keep saving you the doomed keep saving you

Until perhaps nobody wants to save you at all!

TRAYVON! Trayvon!

No Answer!

Reality

A thin, bare thread holds us up.

About to touch down, back to reality.

Where wars begin, people die, nobody survives.

This mental illness that thrives.

We succumb to the horrors of daily life.

Ignorance is bliss, we let go, and the child's dream dies.

Stay afloat, for as long as you can.

Dance in the rain, sing to the stars.

Smile and grin, believe in fairytales, that don't exist.

I hate to break the thin line drawn, between the two different sides.

For still I am of the believers, the dreamers, the go getters, the achievers.

Wars do begin, people die, in everyday life.

Just stay on the line, between the two, so half and half, can be good.

Never choose.

BRO. YAO †

Miles Davis

who cares if my father
liked Miles Davis?

what matters is
he understood,

the dark man
with rum on his lips.

what it means:
pride and imperfection,

belly fire,
an anger unleashed

in short burst.
then the silence.

his heroes were trumpets
his heroes were brass

spit and shined
so what.

High School Blues

Tick Tock, Tick Tock, Tick Tock
I sat there waiting for the hour to be over
The frustration and pressure of being the best and nothing less is a great bit of stress
The sound of the papers rattling, as my mind is straddling to find the answers
The answers that seem to not even want to be found
My mind begins to drift out into the clouds
My motivation comes then
That's when I see myself standing in that court giving my client some support
Oh Lord, Help me pass this class
That's all I ask
Because it isn't good news, when I have no clue...
That I've got the High School Blues
The gossip here, the gossip there, there is gossip just about everywhere
He say, She say, They say, We say
But the truth lies nowhere in between
It's only opinions that they are giving
The drama it causes
Is such a shame, you can never expect something good when you hear your own name
I walk down the hall as they begin to stare but they won't dare to even care
That's it isn't good news, to have no clue..
That they've got the High School Blues

For one is each and to each is all
He begins to speak while trying to stall
He likes this girl but doesn't want to fall
He thinks that she doesn't care at all
As time passes, the windows and glasses begin to shatter as he cries thinking
that his life doesn't matter
He isn't brave enough to even speak, he doesn't realize that he's so unique
When the time comes he'll reveal the truth simply because it's the only thing
left to do
Eventually he comes out and tells her the deal and lets her know what is real
She accepts him with open arms and makes him feel oh so warm,
Cause she knows it's never good news, to have no clue..
That you've got the High School Blues
Ha Ha, Ha Ha!! The laughter fills the room
She sits there consuming it all..
The pressure in the room is one she cannot bare for long
The bullying is crazy, the madness is shaking her mind from left to right
She pastes her thoughts to try and calm down
She's trying her very best to not drown
But in the midst of time she can take no more
So she walks out of that door and into the light
Only to realize that she just took her very own life...
She had no kind of clue that all she was dealing with was the
High School Blues.....

JOSEFINA BUSTILLO

En secreto

Ámalo corazón aquí en silencio,
Sin que sepa jamás de tus desvelos,
En aras de su amor quema tu incienso
Que como nube suba hasta los cielos.

Si un pedestal en tu alma le levantas
Se de remota estrella, los reflejos
Se la flor que perfuma desde lejos
Y ama en secreto pero no a sus plantas.

Si le miras pasar, no te estremezcas
Si al pasar no te ve, no palidezcas,
Oh, corazón, oculta lo que lloras,

Que en tu sueño de amor incomprendido
Prefiero que suspendas tu latido,
Y te mueras de amor,

Loving in secret

Heart, love him silently

Without allowing him to know your concerns,

For his love, burn your incense

Which as a cloud rises to the skies.

If a pedestal in your soul you build

Be the reflection of a remote star

Be the flower giving off its fragrance from far way

And love it secretly but not its plants.

If you see him passing, do not shiver

If he passes and does not see you, don't turn pale

Oh, heart, hide the reason you are crying

In your dream of misunderstood love

I prefer you stop beating,

And die for love

Any Black

Officer Ron Lowe observed a Black male walk into Merle's Diner, look over the menu, and place an order to go. He was over six foot tall, stockily built with a blue and white bandana tied around his head, diamond studs in both ears, and a gold cross dangling around his neck. He wore black Nike sneakers and his clothes appeared to be a size too large.

Each night around 9 p.m., this is where Officer Lowe could be found. This was his first year on the Jackson Police Department and Merle's had become his favorite place to take a break from locking up the bad guys. Besides, the specials were always good. It was from his customary corner in his favorite booth that he saw the Black male raise his shirt, reach into his pocket, pull out a wad of cash, peel off two bills, and hand them to the cashier. Officer Lowe could have sworn he saw a handgun in the Black male's waistband, and when the cashier handed him his food and money, and when he raised his shirt again to stuff the change into his pocket, Officer Lowe was right. He pushed his meatloaf aside.

Officer Lowe trailed the suspect out into the parking lot, unsnapped his holster just as the suspect deactivated the alarm and opened the door to his Lexus.

"Step away from the car and get on the ground!" He aimed his .40 caliber weapon at the suspect's back, saw him look over his right shoulder before turning to face him."

“What’s the problem officer?”

Officer Lowe adjusted his grip on the weapon. “The problem is you need to step away from the car and spread eagle on the ground. Now!”

“I ain’t doing shit ‘cause I ain’t did shit. Is it a crime to buy a cheeseburger and fries now?” He threw his carryout order on the ground in disgust, evaluated Officer Lowe from head to foot. “But you’re a rookie, so I’m going to let it go this time. You won’t forget me after today.”

Officer Lowe saw the suspect’s left hand reach into the front of his shirt and watched him crumble to the ground from two gunshots to the chest. He radioed again, this time for an ambulance as well, approached the suspect, found him clutching a badge from the Forest Police Department.

A Few Words about Baraka

SOS

Calling all black people

Calling all black people, man woman child,

Wherever you are, calling you, urgent, come in

Black people, come in, wherever you are, urgent, calling

you, calling all black people

calling all black people, come in black people, come

on in.

—LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka)

I graduated from high school in 1966. It was quite a year. U.S. forces in Vietnam hovered at 185,000. Stokely Carmichael was named chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, promptly uttered the words Black Power from the back of a flatbed truck on a Mississippi highway and changed the course of the Civil Rights Movement forever. Julian Bond was denied a seat in the Georgia House of Representatives because of his opposition to the war in Vietnam which Martin Luther King had already denounced as a “sordid military adventure.” Robert Weaver became the first black cabinet member when he was sworn in as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and the first World Festival of Black Art was held in Dakar, Senegal.

The list goes on and on. Bill Russell was named coach of the Boston Celtics and became the first black man to coach an established team in professional sports. The National Welfare Rights Organization was energized by African American women who were sick and tired of being sick and tired. Civil Rights pioneer James Meredith was shot on U.S. highway 51 on the second day of a voter registration march from Memphis to Jackson and racial violence in forty-

three cities saw eleven killed, more than four hundred injured and three thousand arrested.

The America that had twice elected Dwight D. Eisenhower president was gone forever. Change was in the air, the voice of the people was carried on the wind, all things were possible and I was a first year playwriting student at Howard University, picketing the theatre department for presenting “Oedipus Rex.” We had no interest in the ideas of the Greeks. We were demanding a play by LeRoi Jones, soon to be Amiri Baraka, who had already defined the black writer’s task for us as requiring that we write something so ba-a-a-ad, They (the all-powerful They) have to ban it. Our Dean of Fine Arts was not impressed, but we were intoxicated with the Sixties energy that made us believe that we could make love and make revolution and still get the grades we needed to keep our scholarships and assume our rightful place within the vanguard as members of the class of 1970. I carried a picket sign that read: Wake up and Be! and landed on the front of The Washington Post Style section for my troubles. “Oedipus” went on as scheduled, but the battle lines had been drawn.

Is it any wonder then that there are many books by Amiri Baraka in my personal library? Plays and poems, essays and short stories, novels and eulogies, lined up neatly side by side. They claim an entire shelf, and then a little more. The only author with more space allotted is Alice Walker, and that is as it should be. Even so, I had a writing life before I discovered Alice. But for as long as I’ve been a writer, Amiri Baraka has been there, showing me the way to carve out an artistic space deeply rooted in and reflective of who I am in relationship not only to art, but to community.

Some of my books go back far enough to be credited to LeRoi Jones before he left his past behind and became Amiri Baraka, but we were already waiting for him, although we didn’t know it yet. His work was passionate, angry, sometimes self-righteously incendiary and almost always political. In the early days, he also wrote some love poems that were surprisingly tender and unabashedly vulnerable, full of longing and confusion and self-doubt. The kind of poems you write and leave in somebody’s mailbox on the night of the full moon and then creep home, hoping for the best. But that was before he became poet in residence for our revolution. After that, he had less time for making love. He was too busy making change.

His furious, critical glance fell on friend and foe alike, sparing no one, including himself in his many incarnations as student, bohemian, activist, artist, husband, father, community organizer, revolutionary cultural warrior. Plays like “Dutchman” and “The Slave,” pointed an accusatory finger at white America and at the black folks who refused to see what he saw. His essays in *Home and Blues People*, defined a black aesthetic and his fiction challenged our assumptions and our expectations in ways we could not deny even when we wanted to.

The first time I read *Black Magic Poetry*, a collection of his work from 1961 through 1967, I realized how much I still had to learn before I could call myself a poet. He was that good on paper. But reading live? In performance? In his prime? There was nobody like him. He could call in the spirits and use his words, his voice, his music, his laughter, his whole body to make them dance. He was such a good reader, his style so arresting and unique and fearless that a whole generation of poets, including me, imitated him on the way to finding our own voices and our own style. We owe him for that.

It is difficult to believe he has gone; impossible not to feel the personal loss in our small tribe of African American writers of a certain age. When I appeared on a program with Brother Baraka in November of last year at Albany State University’s Literary Festival, he was a little slower of step, but no less able to make you feel the power of his poems. For those of us who had seen him read before, it was a blessing and an honor to be able to share one of his last public performances. For the young college students who were seeing one of the true masters at twilight, it was a gift they will only fully recognize in years to come when the true scope of his body of work and the inspiration of his life, warts and all, are more clearly understood and more deeply honored as an integral part of the great American literary canon.

We are grateful for his life and for his work. May he rest in peace.

VERONICA ADAMS-COOPER

New Eden

In the beginning
remains God's plan for us now.
Come Vineyarrd Healing!

MAGGIE EMILY

The Long Dirt Road

The dust is in my eyes
It is whipping up and around
Up and around
I thought I made a little progress on down that road
But that is all it is
On down that road
I am really trying to get there
Running and Walking
Staggering and tripping
Did I just make a circle?
Seems like I've been here before.
I should be further down this road by now.
But the dust is in my eyes.
Tried not to rub them. They say that makes it worse.
I did and it does.
Stay on task and pick up the pace.
But the dust is in my eyes.
It dies down
And then I see
It's just a long dirt road.

Oracle Woman: *In memory of Lucille Clifton*

You are our oracle woman
Sitting with wisdom precious and bloodied,
Twelve-fingered hands divining us
To the marrow of our bones.

You go with us to the water
And remember those lost too soon,
You, a son and a daughter,
I, a mother and an unborn child.

You are our seer
Comforting and agitating us,
Not afraid to speak of unpopular histories
And false innocence.

You are our moon-graced woman
With ties made from mutual pain
And incorruptible laughter
That tells of so many incisions in the soul.

You are our mother love
With big-hip courage and a strong heart
That wills itself beat
Until all is well.

Lucille, you say,
“When you lose the flesh,
You gain spirit.
Flesh weighs the spirit down.”

So you, our beloved woman of starlight,
Now free from the physics of nature
Circle our space with your bright-colored essence
And perfume the universe.

JESSICA S. GREEN

To a Poet

What, to the regular eye, seems to be
Just black words on white paper
To a poet, it is emotion splashed
Onto a blank canvas telling a
Story of a deeper meaning,
Something untold and unknown
Under the surface of a volcano.
Something living among the dead.

Young Man with Visions in his Head

Perhaps there was no time for dreaming—and how could one get the notion that the world could be different if one did not dream?

—Richard Wright, *Black Power*

Youth is a luxury of the rich; and, he had it for a while, dreaming of London and New York and boots that zipped to the ankle. Fashioning himself—a Nkrumah, a King—fanciful schoolboy dreams from magazines and the Holy Bible. He imagined himself the perfected hero: “My eyes are seeing amazing things.” He dreams one day he will write from London, “Here is Tower Bridge, a masterwork of engineering. All day, I have watched the bascules rising, the barges and cruising boats pass under.”

He stands in the shade of an almond tree. His crisply pressed political suit bears no stain of the harmattans, while around him every banana tree and miracle fruit bush shakes off red dust. God asks for sacrifices, and he is willing to give himself, a lamb for Africa. One day, one day, the world will be unzipped and all corruption will fall out of it.

But now, a child with bloated ankles and rheumy eyes stands before him—youth cut short by stench wafting from sewage drains, by the tattered wattle-and-mud house, by the earthen floor bed, by the malarial sister, sticky with stool, by all that is called suffering, and yet this narrow shouldered young man with visions behind his eyes sees how the people are made happy, how suffering has an end. “One day, the people will be made glad.” Still, miracles of engineering click and clank across the waters of the world. Nkrumah and King sleep in their monuments, their visions not too big for ordinary people.

Toward the End of the Day

What good is a poem? It does not feed a child or
Shield it from a bullet. It can make poets cry
“O Let us nobly die” while rifles knock our heads
And machetes chop chop our legs. When the clock is wound
This tight, wrong must be met with might. I must throw—In
Any way it falls—my body on the line.

These times of wild
And vain men are enough to make me think again
of King’s peaceable way. If history were a vegetable, bland
And plain, then we might dream of Peaceable Kingdoms
And revise our songs, and write of ideals but
A bleeding child is real, and so is my body on the line.

Frederico Garcia Lorca, what poems do your wounds
Sing? Ken Saro-Wiwa, what words from your broken throat?
Martyred, jailed, exiled and broken-hearted, and still we
Think that poems bear the force of reason. A killer
Listens to neither reason nor poetry. And yet, we throw
Our bodies, dreaming of wings, into this eternal fight.
We are neither angels this earth has made; nor heaven.

KIMBERLY HARPER

Naeemah

Motherhood is like that breathtaking sunset that you try to soak in and remember
You want to remember the colors of the sky, the streaks of evening light,
The way it makes you feel.
You want to reach out and touch the sun as it paints the sky
Magnificent shades of yellow, orange, and red.
You want to reach out and touch the light and hold the warmth...
Wanting to hold onto that feeling forever.

Her childhood and the sunsets are the same...
Moments of beauty that I can only hold for a moment but want to hold forever.
I want to reach out and touch her light and feel the warmth.
I find myself trying hard to remember the snuggles and butterfly kisses given without request.
I try to hold tight to the feeling of her lil' toes digging into the flesh of my mushy belly.

The way she says my name warms my heart.
I am in love beyond words and it saddens me
Because I will have to let her go,
But for now...
Just for now...
She is a magnificent sunset that I can touch every day.

Why Celebrate and Study Lucille Clifton's Work?

In an interview with Michael Glaser, Clifton observes,

Because, for me, I think that writing is a way of continuing to hope. When things sometimes feel as if they're not going to get any better, writing offers a way of trying to connect with something beyond that obvious feeling...because you know, there is hope in connecting, and so perhaps for me it is a way of remembering I am not alone.

It is important to study Clifton's work because for Clifton, writing is not merely a professional occupation or an exercise in the literary arts. Clifton understood writing to be a "vocation," meaning a "calling," like a spiritual or moral duty, that provides an opportunity to connect with humanity and explore the complexities of human existence. Her poetry expresses these connections and serves as expressions of humanism. In them, Clifton's calling inclined her to articulate the complex realities of the human experience and offer hope to her readers, particularly the individuals who felt marginalized by race and gender in a society.

Although a contemporary poet, I recognize Clifton's writing, like Phillis Wheatley, reflecting the metaphysical tradition and mystical poets such as John Donne, William Blake, Robert Hayden, and Walt Whitman. Adhering to the tradition of mystic and African American poets, Clifton uses her art to send a

¹ Glaser, Michael. "I'd Like Not to Be a Stranger in the World: A Conversation/Interview with Lucille Clifton." *Antioch Review* 58.3 (Summer 2000): 310-28. Print.

moral message to her audience without compromising the integrity of her craft.

Akasha (Gloria) Hull states that Clifton's poems entail expressions that deify, humanize, sexualize, and Africanize her artistic vision. Adhering to the literary inheritance of Black women poets, such as Phillis Wheatly and Gwendolyn Brooks, Clifton's poems resist the temptations to reiterate the negative stereotypes associated the race and gender that were inherited from intellectual community and modern era writers. It is also important to note that Clifton's protested regarding marginalized citizens is emphasized in her use of language, layered symbolism and form. Clifton's poems serve as a model of aesthetic and artistic excellence.

Clifton's poems show readers the complex negotiations associated with gender and racial bias in the contemporary society and the physical world. These negotiations are contrasted with the explorations of religious philosophy and spiritual worlds. This contrast helps to emphasize didactic or moral message potential of her work.

ANTAVIOUS HOOD

The Nature of Time

Every day is history

And everything repeats itself

The time it takes to make a reputation

The same time it takes for the earth to sustain itself

The same time it takes to break a reputation

The same time it takes to break your self

The man you are today

Becomes the man you are tomorrow

And the last decision you make

Could cost you everything but sorrow

Preach to your children

For your word alone is ministry

Teach your children to live in the moment

And die in the memories

It takes one person to change the future

It takes only one event

So do everything because there's a purpose

And say every word like it's meant

Time is against us all

And no one lives forever

But you can be a legend

In a Nations' measure

Untitled

"Amiri was traveling through American racism with a penetrating mind. The news of his death spreads like quick fire around the world. Surely Amiri lived a life of fire and storm, in turbulent times, sounding the alarm and he was both welcomed and unwelcome, for such is the life of a truly great poet and playwright, and the best of the word seers of our age. For such is the measured life of the Black Diamond from the bowels of Mother Africa. He was a genius of this time."

Legendary Dreams

Every great dream begins with a dreamer,
And every goal is set for you to reach,
Not everyone is going to be a believer,
But it relies on the direction that your heart beats,
Many may see you as an underachiever,
Some will be there with the ability to teach,
Chances will be thrown just make sure you're the receiver,
The touchdown is your goal and someday you'll both meet,
Work hard and aim for success,
It may be tough along the road,
But strive to do your best,
That helps you toward reaching your goal,
You should reach for the sky,
Because heroes are always remembered,
Legends never die,
And dream chasers never surrender,
Ask yourself which one am I

Success Is Near

Too many blessings we receive are taken for granted,
We would never appreciate the lessons to be learned,
When no effort is needed to achieve what we wanted,
If everything was given without needing to be earned,
You'll be amazed at the joy a little hard work will bring.
When you can look back at what you achieved this day,
 How your spirit will lift and how it makes your heart sing,
And find happiness you searched for along the way,
Can you think of how fulfilling and enriching life will be?
That you may see options and rewards you can receive,
When you open up your mind to the awesome possibility,
If you keep following your dream and in yourself believe,
To take the first step on that path may bring a little fear,
So don't be negative or too scared to chase your dream,
Your friends will give you strength by always being near,
On the road you'll find more riches than you've ever seen,
One day in this world you and your future will meet,
It doesn't matter if you're young you're old,
As long as you stay true to your beliefs,
You will someday achieve your goal.

My Mouth Will Be Your Mouth

After Aimé Césaire

Send me your words
on the breeze
like you did many years ago.

Send me your whispers
and your cries
and I will wail them for you.

Send me your protest
and your pain.
Send me your pain.
Then send me your pain, again.

I will wail and wail and wail.
And when you are free
of the burden,
come here.

Press your lips to mine.
Spin me in a whirl,
and I will laugh for you.

I will wash you
and dress your back.
I will oil your waist
and thighs.

Send me your dreams.
I will mouth them into being
for you.

Longing

I find you in your words,
the ones you left with me
like leaves shivering,
a gentle breeze catching my shawl,
sailing it across my face, my eyes,
feathery like your breath at my neck,
gone in a moment.

And I am looking for you,
forcing my mind to remember
my body feeling your tension
against me, my back against
the wood trim steadying me
on my weak knees
and molten thighs.

This memory
re-members me to desire,
to my long, deep breath,
to the absence of your hand.
I want to find you in new places.

Virgin Blues

cellos stringing themselves
without their bows
invisible fingers
strumming guitars
acoustic, bass
and the piano is itself
never been played properly
these virgin blues
calm a slight storm in its grasp
as the trumpet and saxophone
blow soft kisses into the
atmosphere. how the violin
and viola serenade the audience
into erotic passions
and exotic notes of grand staves
welding into half notes
grinding against the French horns
in the maestro's baton
that fills the phalanges of a young mind
with musical soul-wailing notes in the

Virgin Blues. Purity and celibacy
Are the reins that hold her back
From getting diseases and going
Onto the wrong paths. Virgins are
Instruments of pure and innocent.
However, little do people know,
That innocent eyes hide loathsome secrets.
Broken dreams left in a Trail of Tears. Lonely harps flowing gloomy sounds into
Deaf ears. Twisted in the bass and baritone
Overdosing on the high of a rustic tuba's ring.
These virgin blues got her looking in all the
wrong places, at all the stoic faces. But she
ain't looking for God. She thinks He has
forgotten about her. Cutting her wrists like
severing the newly placed boards of a
xylophone. She is forced into singing out her
pain through a clarinet or flute. Longing for
love, she sits at the front row next to the drums.

JUSTICE LEE

What is Skin?

Light skin,
Brown skin,
Dark skin,
All kin!

For we are all as one-
Or at least we should be
But everybody wanna be beefin'
For what reason?

Sick of the hate amongst my sisters and brothers
It's all fun and games till one hurts another,
Then another,
Then another,
Excuse the hover
Be if we don't love and appreciate the differences of each other,
We all suffer

What is skin to race?
Where does the shade of skin have place,
In the fate,
Of those brothers whose lives to I relate,
But wait!

It seems we live in an era of hate!
No wonder I feel displaced!

Because hate cannot coexist with love,
I shall be love!
Therefore being above,

So my sisters and brothers,
No longer should we sin
Placing judgment on one another's skin
For we are all kin!
So what is skin?

LINDSEY LUNSFORD

Recipe...

They speak of dreamers...but i came to speak to the survivors the ones born
fighting to be free...

I speak to the realizers the ones who can still see the bodies on trees
The liberators whose blood makes us free

So how do you make a change
Not through legalization legislation or negotiation
but with the screams shouts and shots of the Haitian

It's through seeing the humanity of the men who worked sanitation
Its through direct opposition to the blinding inequity of this nation

See the liberators they fought until they received that mortal shot and then gave
their holy spirit just so we would hear it

Because politicians with cocaine crusted noses rain down terror like open 1960s
water hoses

The blood falls like fresh cut roses
They part my people like their name was Moses
Then turn up their white collar blue noses

That's why the sea is red because of every oz we've shed

They have the power to make you wish you were dead
they get that fear in your mind
Now you are
A dread head

You can't see the twist because they've got you on lock

So what do you do

What do you choose?

The ballot or the bullet?

What if you have access to neither?

Then you are left with the fist or the fable

Do you buy it or do you riot

Do you use the pen the punch or the power

Are you a woman man or... coward

Don't you know we can bring down those who tower

So it's to the liberators

That I say lift up for cup and fill it full with the liquids of liberation

The recipe...

Dash of desperation

1 splash courage

2 parts the blood of your oppressor

1 part your own

If Men Could Have Babies

In Honor of Gloria Steinem

If Men could have babies...

1. Insurance would not only pay all the hospital bills, it would pay for a two-week vacation in the Bahamas.
2. Men would be required to stay home in bed the whole entire nine months because of their "delicate" condition.
3. Natural childbirth and breastfeeding would be definite no-nos.
4. A drug would be invented that would guarantee painless childbirth.
5. Men would pat each other on the back and brag about how far along they are.
6. The Department of Labor would actually be about labor.
7. Men would have week-long baby showers in log cabins with no women allowed.
8. July would be declared National Childbirth Month.
9. "Be Fruitful and Multiply" would be the national anthem.
10. God would tell Eve to get a job as punishment, and Adam would get all the childbearing perks of free medical and day care.
11. Throughout history, doctors would have washed their hands between deliveries.
12. Midhusbands would be the norm. Most would be retired football coaches.

13. Welfare dads would get 4 times the money and don't have to look for a job.
14. Low-income housing would be \$100,000 condos.
15. All baby equipment and accessories would be free.
16. The instant diaper changer/cleaner and baby feeder would be invented.
17. Men would stay at home and let the robot do all the housework.
18. Egg banks would be the norm.
19. One hundred years ago, men would have invented a way to exclude women from the conception process.
20. The world would be overpopulated ever ten years. But don't worry, gun use among kids would eventually balance it out to a 0 percent ratio.
21. Pregnancy fat, swollen ankles, and cellulite would be the ideal body image.
22. America would have a yearly contest to award the fattest pregnant man of the year.
23. Maternity clothes would dominate the fashion industry. The late Orson Welles and Marlon Brando would have been super-models.
24. Men would wear the dresses in the family.
25. Men would be the major consumers. Literally.
26. "Eating like a pig," would be considered a compliment.

And if men could have babies

Pregnancy would be considered a joy instead of a burden upon society.

Insect in Amber

oh, yes, the fine cream colored
journal pages are blank, the covers
careful geometries of green, black,
red

reproach one, the

black pens, too, slim missiles, lie
by their side, yet to discharge their
thick shots peppering the sky

no inky bullet points, striving,
strident, on the page, no
curlicues of decorative braid,
no animal killed and caught,
framed on the page for
all to see

these squat pens going dry in the
drawer, beside powdery cubes
of lavender sachet,
stuck, as if an insect in a
jar of cold cream, as if
frozen in amber,
accidentally preserved for
your glancing eyes

C. LIEGH MCINNIS †

For Shining the Truth

Frost-biting hate for
Baraka is proof no roach
wants the lights turned on

Being a Spirit (for Amiri Baraka)

“You can’t be no ghost. You got to be a spirit.”

—Amiri Baraka from Bulworth (1998)

You have haunted the
comatose body of America
dropping napalm poems to shock
the Lazaruses from **our** stupor
allowing us vampires to suck
from the never-ending waterfall of your soul—

Eat: this is my body, which is broken for you

Yet, dead souls really don’t know good bread
like people who eat garbage can’t stomach truth...
Or, is it that people who drink peach soda
can’t enjoy the taste of real peaches?
Our palates of justice raw and numb from
the sandpaper of lies we’ve swallowed—
Yet, you would haunt our bodies,
washing our mouths with peroxide plays,
unclogging our greedy intestines with **fiber-filled** essays, and
flooding metaphors to flush the excrement from our brains...

Assassin poems have no respect for person

All up in us like a funk groove
you be the boogie man that scares white sheets—

the electric boogaloo that didn't Jes Grew
but was the **silk** whisper in the wind that kissed
brown leaves and **sweet-talked** them to be green
while your weighted words cause weak wordsmiths
to wither from the flame of truthtelling 'cause
the universe's beat keeper will not be denied
for you understood how to tilt the world's axis
to make the rivers flow righteously.
You will forever be the breeze pushing bluespeople in the back,
forcing us to flee our shipwrecked physical so our souls can soar.

J.A. MITCHELL

The Down and Out Bar & Lounge

An old blues song
on the juke
black cats fighting
in the alleyway
watered down
whiskey splashed into
shot glasses
spilled ash trays
decorate gashes
in bare wood table tops
A hat turned up on the bar
cards pitched in
Bones rattle thrown
against the baseboard
while Lady Luck lap dances

Indigo Blues

The back of the blues is played indigo
blue leaves berry stained
kisses on gooseflesh
“... so black that he was Blue”
Ogun at his anvil striking
the chord, the first burst of sound,
the low dark rhythm of his
mastiff hound’s growl,
the dark fire that sings one AUM
on stair steps that rise from
the first Universe

The back of the blues is played indigo
Under a starry sky where
shining diamonds are some
Old Papa Legba’s eyes,
The Sky Blue of Shiva’s hymn
The strokes of Krishna
Thighs over a moist wide hipped woman

The back of the blues is played indigo
“in you go, bend low”
into the hole of the ship,
stripped naked and chained
the darkness is thick below
with sickness and filth
“in you go”
In the dark night to the sea,
rolled over slowly
buried in the ink depths
of Atlantis

The back of the blues is played indigo
“in you go, bend low”

head is bounced off the metal hood
of a dark blue police car
hands chained, whisked away
to face a day in court
“in you go, bend low”

(Swing low sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home)
swing low, the place the Ancestors go is indigo,
Where they bent down low
small pinholes of bright light
candles lit on an altar
the chairs of Spirits
flown on a pirate flag
of indigo night
The back of the blues is played indigo

LENARD D. MOORE

Black Language Architect

(for Amiri Baraka, October 7, 1934-January 9, 2014)

I am stunned
into the night
and still hear
how you be
your rhythm-lore
your rhythm-lore
your rhythm
your lore

Amiri Baraka (1934-2014)

in the stomach this bug
this cat whose
beauty is a nine life
stomp getting
psychosomatic
on somebody's system
lurking around like
Socrates with a switch-
blade for your gut
that gives you the right
idea so you stop
stooping and square
up but you clutch
the midsection where
he got you now it's
a transfusion with
your blood out
on the street to feel
the now concrete world
and you just let
it be like your DNA
just got found out
man the truth

knows how to strut
like a peacock
unseamed to cook up
the pot and him
standing there stirring
I'm bent over sick
now that god's got
him but we'll head up
too and thank him
for real man

A Conversation with Pearl Cleage

Pearl Cleage was one of the featured poets of the 7th Annual ASU Poetry Festival. Days prior to Ms. Cleage's visit to ASU, Vickie Oldham of the Office of Institutional Advancement at Albany State conducted a telephone interview with Ms. Cleage. The following is a transcription of that sharing.

Oldham: I'm Vickie Oldham Assistant Vice-President for Institutional Advancement at Albany State University. I am delighted to have New York Times best-selling author and award winning playwright Pearl Cleage joining us.

Cleage: Thank you so much for having me. I'm looking forward to visiting the campus.

Oldham: We are just as excited about your visit. You've written about strong black women. Could you describe some of the strong black women in your life who have influenced you the most.

Cleage: I think that has to start with my family, my mother, my grandmothers, my older sister. I was always surrounded by so many strong, very opinionated black women that it almost never occurred to me that we could be any other kind of way. When I started writing, I was actually drawing on the kind of women I knew, the kinds of experiences I had through exchanges with women who were very definite about their opinions, who were always very encouraging to me about the work I was doing and made it clear to me that my job was to get good at whatever I said it was I wanted to do and then work hard at that.

Oldham: *What Looks Like Crazy on an Ordinary Day* was your first novel. Did you have these characters in mind when you wrote it? What was the impetus that led to this book?

Cleage: This book really came around because it was at the very beginning of the AIDS epidemic. Many of the people I knew were in denial about the danger of HIV/AIDS. I kept trying to talk with people about this, and they were so frightened about the ideas that they had heard that they couldn't really talk to me about the problem. What I wanted to do was write a book that had a likeable main character who was confronting this challenge, someone a reader could identify with, admire, and go through that journey with. I was hoping that the book would help people get over fear [and] fight against this disease but not translate that into fighting against people who were also struggling with the disease.

Oldham: The book resonated with many people including Oprah Winfrey, who made your book one of her book club reads. How did that feel?

Cleage: That felt great. It was really wonderful because the issue was important enough to her to shine the light that she carries. The book also made it possible for people to have conversations that I don't think they ever would have had with each other if they hadn't read the book. It was wonderful and a real blessing to have a chance to encounter so many people who had read the book because Oprah held it up on TV and said she liked it. I consider myself very fortunate.

Oldham: Let's move on to discuss "We Speak Your Name," a powerful centerpiece poem you wrote for Oprah's Legends weekend that honored African American women we all consider legends. Discuss the process of writing that famous poem.

Cleage: That was a dream assignment. Oprah called me. It's funny because if she wants to talk to you, she will actually call you herself. You pick up the phone and it's Oprah Winfrey, which is always kind of startling. But she wanted to know if I could write something that would represent the feeling of not only the women in attendance, but so many women around the world who admired these amazing, black women that she gathered together. I certainly could and I asked her if she would send me the list of names of the legendary women she was honoring. When she did, it was just amazing to me that the women chosen were also women that had been important in my own life, who influenced me in so many different ways. I almost felt like this was an assignment that wasn't even an assignment. It was a chance to really tell these women how much they meant to all of us and to speak on behalf of everybody who's ever admired Maya

Angelou and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s wife, Mrs. King, and all of the wonderful women who were gathered there together, from Diana Ross to Tina Turner. It was just a real wonderful experience to see how moved they were by the poem presented to them. I think it was a great gift that we gave to them. I think it was a wonderful gift to give to them to let them know how much they meant to us.

Oldham: You think they were moved! Those of us who watched the broadcast were moved too.

Cleage: It was a once in a life time experience. I have to thank my husband who worked with me on that poem and actually was the one who said "why don't you think about it as a 'call and response' like at church," where there's something said and something said back. Once he said that, it grounded the work for me in a tradition that's very important to me. I think that's why the spirit of it came forth so strongly to the people listening.

Oldham: Thank you for it. I congratulate you on the three year residency at the Alliance Theater in Atlanta. You are doing some great work in developing plays and mentoring students. Discuss your work at the Alliance.

Cleage: I am very fortunate to be there. They are doing wonderful work and it's a great place for me to be as a playwright but it's also given me the chance to work with young people. I work with a project called the Collision Project every summer. We bring together 20 young people, high school students, from the Metro Atlanta area and they collide with a classic text of some sort; it could be a play, a speech, a historical document; but what we do is to get them to take the document apart, look at what it meant at the time it was written, and then reinterpret it based on their own experiences as young people navigating the world today. It's been a wonderful experience to work one on one with so many bright young people who I think have more to tell us than we realize. We're sometimes busy talking to them than we are listening to them. I have an opportunity to really listen to what they say and listen to how they interpret their world. I think the exchange has strengthened them and I know it has also strengthened me.

Oldham: You will empower ASU students; I have no doubt about that. What will you talk to them about?

Cleage: I'm going to try to connect the idea of what it means to be a writer with how important that is in the world we know today. There are so many ways for us to communicate with each other, so many ways that we do engage in conversation with each other. But, I think the whole idea of being a writer has to do with sharing ideas with people in many different ways. And, although people sometimes say to me that this is the age of twitter where you can only use 140 characters, I think there is a lot of thinking—a lot of exchange that has to be done at a deeper level, and that has to be done with more than 140 characters. So, I'll be talking about what the role of a writer is, and how their own experiences with writing can shape their lives.

Oldham: We're looking forward to your upcoming appearance. Is there anything you'd like to add before we wrap today?

Cleage: I'm looking forward to it also. I visited your campus many years ago and I haven't been there in a very long time. I don't even want to count up how many years it's been, but I always remember how engaged the students were with what I was talking about and what a wonderful experience I had meeting some of the faculty. I'm looking forward to having a chance to renew some of those friendships.

JOHN RAY PROCTOR

An Untitled Poem (July 20, 2010 at 1:19am)

Poppa got a brand new bag
candy apple red and covered in
copper colored quarters.
Now he jingles when he walks.
The bag matches the shoes
stolen from Dorothy's closet.
Though it serves the bitch right,
for leaving
in the middle of the night
via tornado.
Who the fuck gave her a night off?
"Hey, mister,
you wanna dance?"
asks Poppa,
beneath the amber glow descending
like a bright idea,
or rain
that never ebbs,
but flows eternal.
The little drummer boy rolls down the windows of his
little drummer s.u.v.,
vacant child safety seat
barely visible in the
par-ruh-pa-pum-pum of
darkness.
Something about the Mickeys and Minis
so carelessly strewn across the sedan seats,

formula bottles lying in wait
in the blue black depths of darkness
near his little drummer feet.
"I like chocolate,"
says he,
drawing on a Kool,
and smoothing the smoke and nicotine across his lips with his
fat tongue.
A dry cold wind smelling of crying children,
sour milk,
electricity bills,
the sweat of Jack Horner
(who had an urgent need for Poppa night before last,
but didn't have any cash),
blew between Poppa's legs,
touching the backs of his calves
and the soft places high on his inner thighs.
The cold ran its hands across Poppa's clavicle,
bent his weathered brown gloveless fingers into the fist
so enjoyed by big daddy Old Man Winter,
while the little drummer boy
drummed,
waiting patiently for the
hot chocolate.
Knowing it would come.

Remember

Remember when:
black was beautiful?
when it was rare to see blacks killing blacks
or children having children?
when songs were about hope,
Instead of dope?

Remember when:
school was the lock and knowledge was the key?
when reading was our entertainment
instead of TV?

Remember when:
the love between us was stronger than hate?
And brotherhood was more than just DNA?
when you were my sister and not my bitch?
Our bond was amazing.
Now all we do is pitch fits.

Remember when:
my success was your success, and our success...
Not...
I gotta get mine, forget you and the rest.

Remember when:
our young men obtained degrees in universities
instead of penitentiaries?

when it was common to see a black man in the home.
Now it's—"My Daddy gone."

Remember when we thought we had overcome with Martin and Barack?
That was until Trayvon and Jordan showed us that familiar road block.

Remember when in 1970
Gil told us about Whitey on the moon?
Guess what?
Whitey still on the moon.

Sherman Tanks

Pre

Compton boys think growing up is Eazy.
All talking the way they are not supposed to,
going to Stanford, rich by 23.
Backed in a corner they get exposed too.
Them young Elah valley boys talk too much
so we send them heroes to be feared;
our soldier Goliath is Mr. Clutch
his task: to taunt, get that sneer disappeared.
Little gorilla lipped jungle "dick" dude,
jumping out the tv screen, screaming loud
scaring pretty blondes, becoming unglued
hued human hubris. Thug! Overly proud!!
Uppity! Hyped up position player!
Their nature is much more hood than neighbor.

Regular

He said, "I am better at life than you
whenever you address me address me
All Pro Stanford graduate. I achieve
things that you can only wish. I'll crush you."
I'm taking props that are long overdue.
You can disagree. Stats prove I succeed
So when you address me, call me Godseed.
Shaker of crabtree, Mr. Attitude.
Call me rude, but imbued with divine touch;

master of this side of the football field;
interceptor of all deep passes rushed
Call me slayer-of-heroes-you-revere.
You mad bro? Good! Send in your Mr. Clutch.
Right here we settle anything unclear.

Post

Podium glistens in spectrum of lust,
room awash with reporters; flashes click
every second recording, mic a-buzz,
America holds its breath. Tension thick
as the living rooms of willing waiting.
Tempers hot as the wings inside bellies.
That game though!! They flagged him for high stepping
over a deflated ego's debris.
A Black mass of uniform and hair comes
out from lockers decked in backlash, big dreams
and grime, grinning to American slums.
He breathes into microphone, teeth a gleam
"Have I earned my anger yet or glory
or do aspirations not count for me?"

Run Ricky Run

Teaching black men to reject the dollars
they were sold for: ultimate blasphemy.
Rejection of patriarchy's collar
becomes back story of each tragedy.

We must speak hard rhythms into soft tones.
Better kids hum Dixie than scream "Ricky!"
Run boy! Put your knees up, put that bowl down
run Ricky run disgraced humanity

Run to India, run from NFL.
Run from that marriage cocked like a shotgun.
They'll say marijuana is why he fell.
Freedom costs a lot, don't look back just run.
A Yogi's success: stillness, breath release
like a field hands contract torn to pieces.

Give and Take

1.

You live in my bones.
Even I can not evict
you. Slowly, you pack.

2.

Pull your concertos off
the hangers, fold your women
& your prophecy, take your
half-truths off the lower shelves,
put your laughter back in its
garment bag, collect your wisdom
from the high hall shelves, take
your ego from the hamper, gather
your voice from the living room, your
sweat from the linen.

3.

I will drink something vintage
when you leave.
I will paint the walls
deep orange.
I will fill the rooms with frankincense
Sanskrit and Be-bop.

4.

The mirror shows me
the one thing you left.
The soundlessness in my chest
reminds me of the last
thing you took.

I Want to Take Him

from the closed
door of his mama.

Her eyes on the other eight,
or the t.v,
or her man,
while the boy breaks.

It is his arm again.
The second time
in six months
in the same place.

He is eight
and his voice is pure water
and his eyes drink love.

His heart is not yet like his arm
his heart is not yet like door of his mama.

The Letters to Continuum

The Letters to Continuum is a series of letters to any poet/writer interested in combining social justice and art. They contain the good advice I was offered as a beginning writer and some of the advice I wish I had been given. The words are meant to be a companion on the winding journey of a cultural worker.

—Mariahadessa

Dear Continuum:

In the age of email, there is something special about getting your handwritten letters. I've seen research that says that what happens in our bodies and brains when we write is very different than what happens when we type. I've experienced that many times. How do you get your poems down on the page? (If you tend to go to the computer first, why not experiment and see what happens with a pen in your hand?) I still write my poems in longhand. All of this to say that it was great to receive a letter written in your script.

My travels have been refreshing. I am meeting young people who are dedicated to being critical thinkers. These budding scholars and artists give me so much hope for the future, in part, because they want to be creators and not merely consumers.

A young man sitting in the front row at my reading at Wright State in Ohio asked me a beautiful question. He asked me when and how I got the courage to go onstage and share my work. I remembered then that courage was not the thing that moved me to step on any stage. In fact, the only reason I ever got up in front of an audience to read poetry was that Ira B Jones, the publisher of a literary journal called "Eyeball," told me that sharing my work in front of audience was an essential part of being a poet. I was horrified when he told me this. I'd envisioned my life as a writer as me tucked away somewhere writing and getting my books stocked on shelves in stores. The idea of reading my poetry to people was--and sometimes still is--terrifying to me.

When I was a young poet literally trembling in front of my audiences, I'd remember the words of Audre Lorde who wrote "Your silence will not protect you." She also wrote "Because the machine will try to grind you into dust anyway, whether or not we speak. We can sit in our corners mute forever while

our sisters and our selves are wasted, while our children are distorted and destroyed, while our earth is poisoned; we can sit in our safe corners mute as bottles, and we will still be no less afraid.” Those words strengthened me every time I interacted with an audience and I carry them now as I did then. Lorde’s words are a reminder that this writing and speaking is part of the work that needs to be done whether I am afraid or not. What I told the young man in the front row was that I don’t consider myself courageous; I’m doing what I have to do. I speak because these words are necessary. Somewhere out there a woman is being terrorized, a billy club is drawing blood, someone is being stopped on the street because s/he wears supposedly suspect skin, there is a community garden being bulldozed. I speak to keep the circle unbroken. I speak because my ancestors had stories that no one wrote down in books. I speak so that we won’t be invisible.

When my voice is no longer necessary, I’ll pack it away.

What I want to say to you is that our work is not about us. It is not about our courage or our fear. It is not even about us individually, it is about us collectively. I want to say that we owe it to the people who came before us and to those who will show up long after we’re gone, to speak the truth as we know it. We owe it to them to get the beauty and the ugliness on the page. That is love. Fear disappears in the face of that.

One,
Mariahadessa

Audre Lorde quotes from “The Transformation of Language into Silence and Action.”

“For the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn’t any other tale to tell and it’s the only light we’ve got in all this darkness.”

—James Baldwin

Dear Continuum:

It was good to receive your letter. I’m glad you were able to use some of my advice on editing. Remember that I can give you suggestions, but you will soon start to find your own rhythm. You asked me so many thoughtful questions; I’ll start with the one about what it means to be a writer.

I think being a writer means being a person. Being human. Humane. Being engaged. Being open. Curious. Caring. Being able to listen and look deeply. Being an artist means being connected with truth and speaking the truth as it reveals itself to you. Being an artist means that your heart will break and it will be your work to mend it again and again.

You are right that my art is one form of my activism. This is because I have been the beneficiary of carefully chosen words delivered with love. Words delivered with love by Alex Haley and Malcolm X caused me to look in the mirror one day and stop frowning at my own face. I understood the history of my nose, mouth and skin and suddenly, I was proud. Can you imagine? Those same words helped me to revel in the thicket of my hair and stop being ashamed. I understood then, in a way I had not before, the power of the word. This is called “Nommo” by the Dogon. I attempt to wield my words as wisely as I would any sharp tool. It’s the job of the writer to do this.

Here is a story for you: a friend and I were talking about faith and natural healing some time ago. We were talking about the plants and prayer and our elders and all the wisdom they had that we needed to tap back into. My friend asked me if I’d ever heard of “talking the fire out.” I said I hadn’t. She went on to explain to me that her mother was able to use words—prayerful, intentional, words—to make a person’s burn stop stinging and that was called “talking the fire out.” Now this is not fiction. So I said, “wow” because what else do you say to something like that? I remembered wishing I had the ability to “Talk the fire out” too, but now I realize that in a way, I do. I realize that many times when I put my pen to paper it is an attempt to write the fire out.

It's an attempt to write the pain, the stinging out of some wound or another. So when I decided to "be" a writer I decided my work would serve this purpose. When my work is not celebrating something it is bearing witness to pain and to the process of healing which is a celebration of another kind. This is the celebration of resilience. My writing is—no matter how painful the subject matter—a shout of joy at still being here.

Consider that when you create art, you have medicine in your hands. Consider that you can pull people together for just reasons. What is just? I'd say it is what does not oppress or dismiss the humanity of anyone. What is just is compassionate and of love. I mean real love which is not always romantic or beautiful. I mean the type of love that wakes up at 4am to work and provide a better life for a family, the love we saw at marches during the 60's, real love that does laundry, brushes hair, tills the soil, plants trees, chains itself to pipelines. Hard love. Difficult conversations and the willingness to sit down at the table to have them. Our writing can be all of that: the conversation, the table, and the willingness. When I talk about art and activism, I am talking about love.

And so I ask you, even with all of your pointed questions about editing, knowing when a poem is done, and what to do to become a better writer, I ask you to remember that the life you live is art. Sit with yourself and ask yourself why you want to be a writer. Determine what purpose you want your words to serve in the world.

Please send me your answer.

One,
Mariahadessa

Another Homage...

After Lucille Clifton

all praises to anything traditionally built
—a diamond-studded crown should be so wide

no such thing as a skinny rocking chair
or a skinny and comfortable couch or bed

no place else has enough lap room for children
and a hungry man

any tea kettle, mason jar, book, map, garden
or heavenly body worth its salt

smiles wide like you and your lyrical hips
—where else God gone keep an ocean?

What I Want to Remember

is not the sea salt
from the cold cold baths
that turned our bruises
to screams
but the salt in the ocean
falling down your cheeks
tributaries to the river
between twin breasts
filling the shot glass
around your navel
and the wading pool
in the small of your back

what i want to remember
is not how they broke us
one at a time
but what resistance sounds like
when air is sucked
through clenched teeth
how it looks in the right eyes

what i want to remember
is not how long i couldn't touch you
but how i longed to

and how i long to now

JERRY W. WARD, JR. †

Judicial Water

You regret
Quare square molecule
The error
Morphing to meditate

Why is this so
Lately soon
A blues rupture

Eyes seeing eyes through stars
Haunting mood
Indigo and indigenous

Morphing to mediate
The terror
Fractal failures
You regret

So this is why
Sponge spoon
Detains a myth
Too cold to freeze

Wisdom coiled
Blind might
Delight neither pond nor sea.



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Veronica Adams-Cooper is an Associate Professor of Public Administration in the Master of Public Administration Program at Albany State University, Albany, GA. She is lead faculty for the community and economic development concentration, and she serves as the internship coordinator. She the recipient of the 2014 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dream Award in recognition of her contributions to social change through education and public service to Southwest Georgia since 2002.

Tannur Ali, (Shewrightz) is a native of Philadelphia. She is the author of *Rhymin with Reason*, a chapbook. Her poetry has been published in anthologies such as *Stars In Our Hearts* and *The National Who's Who in Poetry* 2012. She is the winner of the Judith Stark Creative Writing Award, She is the Host/Facilitator of Unplugged: Poetry Readings and Spoken Word, and she the founder of the Pen Stroke Poetry Festival.

Amiri Baraka the dramatist, novelist, and poet is one of the most respected and widely published African-American writers. With the beginning of Black Civil Rights Movements during the sixties, Baraka explored the anger of African-Americans and used his writings as a weapon against racism. Also, he advocated scientific socialism with his revolutionary inclined poems and aimed at creating aesthetic through them. His writing career spans over fifty years and has mostly focused on the subjects of Black Liberation and White Racism. Today, a number of well-known poems, short stories, plays, and commentaries on society, music and literature are associated with his name. His long list of honors and awards includes the James Weldon Johnson Medal for contributions to the arts, the American Academy of Arts & Letters award. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, the PEN/Faulkner Award, the Rockefeller Foundation Award for Drama, the Langston Hughes Award from The City College of New York, and a lifetime achievement award from the Before Columbus Foundation. He was inducted to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1995. In 1994, he retired as Professor of Africana Studies at the State University of New York in Stony Brook, and in 2002 was named Poet Laureate of New Jersey and Newark Public Schools, In January 2007, his award-winning, one-act play, *Dutchman*, was revived at the new Cherry Lane Theatre in New York and received critical acclaim and international attention. The Before Columbus Foundation recently announced that *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music* was selected as a winner of the 31st annual American Book Awards for 2010.

James E. Cherry is the author of five books: *Bending the Blues*, a poetry chapbook from H&H press (2003), *Honoring the Ancestors*, a collection of poetry from Third World Press (2008), *Shadow of Light: A Novel from London*, Serpents Tail Press (2008), *Still a Man and Other Stories*, Willow Books (2011) and *Loose Change*, a collection of poetry published last year from Stephen F. Austin University Press. His work has been nominated for a NAACP Image Award, a Lillian Smith Book Award, and was a finalist for the Next Generation Indie Book Award.

Pearl Cleage is an Atlanta based writer whose work has won commercial acceptance and critical praise in several genres. An award winning playwright whose *Flyin' West* was the most produced new play in the country in 1994. Pearl is also a best-selling author whose first novel, *What Looks Like Crazy On An Ordinary Day*, was an Oprah Book Club pick and spent nine weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Her subsequent novels have been consistent best sellers and perennial book club favorites. *I Wish I Had A Red Dress*, her second novel, won multiple book club awards in 2001. *Some Things I Never Thought I'd Do*, was a "Good Morning America!" book club pick in 2003, and *Babylon Sisters* made the *ESSENCE* Magazine best seller list in 2005. Her most recent novel, *Baby Brother's Blues*, was the first pick of the new *ESSENCE* Book Club and an NAACP Image Award winner for fiction in 2007. In the March 2007 issue of *ESSENCE*, Pearl had two books on the best-seller list, *Baby Brother's Blues* and *We Speak Your Names*, a poetic celebration commissioned by Oprah Winfrey and co-authored with her husband, writer Zaron W. Burnett, Jr. The poem was also an NAACP Image Award nominee in 2007. Pearl was a popular columnist with *The Atlanta Tribune* for ten years and has contributed as a free lance writer to *ESSENCE*, *Ms.*, *Rap Pages*, *VIBE*, and *Ebony*. Her play, *A Song for Coretta*, played to sold out audiences during its Atlanta premiere in February of 2007 and was produced at Atlanta's Seven Stages Theatre in February of 2008.

Maggie Emily is a Kentucky native. She received both her Bachelor of Arts degree in English and her Master of Public Administration at Albany State University. She is currently the Administrative Assistant for the Office of Global Programs as well as the International Student Advisor.

JoAnne Gabbin is a Professor of English and Founder and Director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center at James Madison University. She is the recipient of the JMU Provost's Award for Distinguished Service and the JMU Alumni Distinguished Faculty Award. She was inducted to the International Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent, October 2005. She is the author of *Sterling A. Brown:*

Building the Black Aesthetic Tradition (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985; reprinted Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994).

Hoke S. Glover III (“Bro. Yao”) is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of English and Modern Languages at Bowie State University. His work has been published in *Obisidian III*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Smartish Pace*, *African American Review*, and other journals.

Jessica S. Green is a junior Psychology major at Albany State University.

Anthony Grooms is the author of *Trouble No More*, *Ice Poems*, and *Bombingham: A novel*, and numerous poems, stories and essays published in journals. He is the recipient of the Lillian Smith Prize and the Hurston-Wright Finalist prize for his fiction. Currently, he is at work on a novel about black American exiles in Sweden. He teaches Creative Writing at Kennesaw State University. For more information, go to www.anthonygrooms.com.

Kimberly Harper is an Assistant Professor of English at Albany State University in the Department of English. She is the director of the Foreign Language Institute at Albany State. Her research interests include the rhetoric of document design, textbook curriculum, hip-hop studies, and cultural discourse.

DaMaris B. Hill is an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing and African American and Africana Studies at the University of Kentucky. She earned terminal degrees in English-Creative Writing and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from the University of Kansas. She is a graduate of Morgan State University with degrees in English Literature and Creative Writing. Some of her publications include “Black Bird Medley (poems 1-5).” *Tidal Basin Review - Special Issue: Prison Industrial Complex and Capital Punishment*. Ed. Melanie Henderson. Spring 2012. Web and Print.

Antavious Hood is a sophomore Mass Communications major at Albany State University and a native of Atlanta, Georgia. He is a dedicated writer and rap artist who enjoys poetry just as much as hip-hop. The people who influence him the most are Kanye West, Kenneth Frazier and Kendrick Lamar.

Ja A. Jahannes is a poet, novelist, playwright, composer, and spoken word artist. His work has been appeared in numerous anthologies. He has produced twelve plays for regional theaters and has had two of his operas (“Montage For Martin” and “With This Faith”) produced nationally. He has lectured and read from his works in the

USA, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and South America. He is a frequent columnist for several publications. *Yes Lord* was produced at Ferst Theater in Atlanta. *Montage For Martin* was presented at the Ferst Center For The Arts at Georgia Tech and The Johnny Mercer Theater in Savannah as well as the Madehorn Theater at The Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington DC. Jahannes writes for *Africanaonline*, and *InMotion Magazine*. He is the author of *Big Man, Sabbath Run*, *The Prayer Stone* and *River Of Heaven*, all published by Turner Mayfield Publishing.

Andre Stefan Johnson (Stefan Baldwin) is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of English at Albany State University. He is the Co-Host of *The Hip Hop Cypher Talk Show*. He is also the coordinator of the annual "Circling Our Wagons Hip Hop Conference" at Albany State. Professor Andre's general area of study is African American literature with an emphasis in African American drama and film studies. His minor areas are Film Studies, Film Criticism, Hip-Hop Critical Theory, and African American Rhetoric.

Brandi D. Johnson, originally from Sylvester, G.A., is a sophomore English major at Albany State University. Brandi currently serves as one of two directors of the ASU Gospel Choir; she is also a member of D.I.V.A.S. Mentoring Program. Currently Brandi is one of the core English majors working to establish an English club entitled EM-SEAS.

Shauna Morgan Kirlew is an Assistant Professor in English at Howard University in Washington, D.C. As a globalist, she researches and teaches literature of the African Diaspora, with a focus on womanhood, race, resistance, and the evolution of empire. Her poetry was shortlisted for the 2011 Small Axe literary prize, and she has recently published four poems in *ProudFlesh: The Journal of Culture, Politics and Consciousness*.

Christy Lampkin is a graduate student at Albany State University. She is working on a Master's degree of Public Administration, with a dual concentration Human Resources Management and Health Administration.

Charnell Laster is a sophomore Biology major at Albany State University. She participates in *Student Voice* (ASU student newspaper), M.U.S.I.C, and is a supporting a candidate for Miss Albany State University. She has participated in the ASU Poetry Festival, Open Mic 2012, 2013. Her poem, "Silence" appeared in the 2013 edition of *The Pierian*.

Justice Lee is a sophomore English major at Albany State University.

Lindsey Lunsford is a senior majoring in History and Political Science at Tuskegee University. She is a co-founder of the nonprofit organization Y?BAM! (Young Black Artist Movement Inc.) which uses "artistry to inspire activism".

Devona Mallory is an Associate Professor of English at Albany State University. Her scholarly and teaching pursuits include Women's Literature/Gender Studies, Magical Realism Literature, Cinema Studies, and Multiethnic Literature.

MaryAnn McCarra-Fitzpatrick resides in Peekskill, New York. She has published in *Chronogram*, *Obsolete! Magazine*, *The Mom Egg*, *MoonLit*, *Make Room for DADA*, *Thick With Conviction*, *Clapboard House*, *Cavalier Literary Couture*, *Torrid Literature*, *Laughing Earth Lit*, *Cheap and Easy Magazine*, *Contemporary Literary Horizon*, and *The Westchester Review*. She has works forthcoming in *The Echo Room*.

C. Liegh McInnis is an Instructor of English at Jackson State University. He is the publisher and editor of the *Black Magnolias Literary Journal*, the author of seven books, including four collections of poetry, one collection of short fiction (*Scripts: Sketches and Tales of Urban Mississippi*), and one work of literary criticism (*The Lyrics of Prince: A Literary Look at a Creative, Musical Poet, Philosopher, and Storyteller*), and the 2012 First Runner-Up of the Amiri Baraka/Sonia Sanchez Poetry Award sponsored by North Carolina State A&T.

J.A. Mitchell, writing as Mama Whodun, is a Neo-Hoodoo practitioner born in the USA. She is a jewelry artist, priestess and a lifelong reader of oracles. Her body of literary and spiritual practices known as the Orb of Djenra is archived here: <http://neohoodoo.blogspot.com/>.

Lenard D. Moore is an Associate Professor of English at University of Mount Olive. He directs the literary festival and advises The Trojan Voices. He is author of *A Temple Looming* (WordTechEditions, 2008), and other books. His poetry has been published in more than 100 anthologies, including *Villanelles* (Knopf, 2012), *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (University of Georgia Press, 2009), and *The Ringing Ear: Black Poets Lean South* (University of Georgia Press, 2007).

Gregg Murray is an Assistant Professor of English at Georgia Perimeter College. He has published poems in *DIAGRAM*, *Caketrain*, *Josephine Quarterly*, *[PANK]*, and elsewhere. As well, he has forthcoming publications in *Berkeley Poetry Review* and *Phantom Drift*. His poetry chapbook "Ceviche" will soon be available (Spittoon Press 2014).

Vickie Oldham is the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Albany State University, with a background in journalism, marketing, media and public relations. She is project director of a multi-disciplinary archaeological project called, "Looking for Angola" that engages anthropologists and historians in a search for artifacts of a Black Seminole Settlement that existed near Tampa Bay from 1812-1821. For more information on this project please visit www.lookingforangola.org.

John Ray Proctor is an Assistant Professor of Speech and Theatre at Albany State University. He is the co-author of *Out Loud*, a full length play produced at Chicago's eta Creative Arts Foundation. He co-authored this play with Olivia Dawson.

Nalucha Shakalima is a sophomore at Albany State University. She is an international student from Zambia, Africa. As part of the Velma Fudge Honor's Society, she is pursuing a Bachelor's of Science degree in Nursing with a minor in Computer Science.

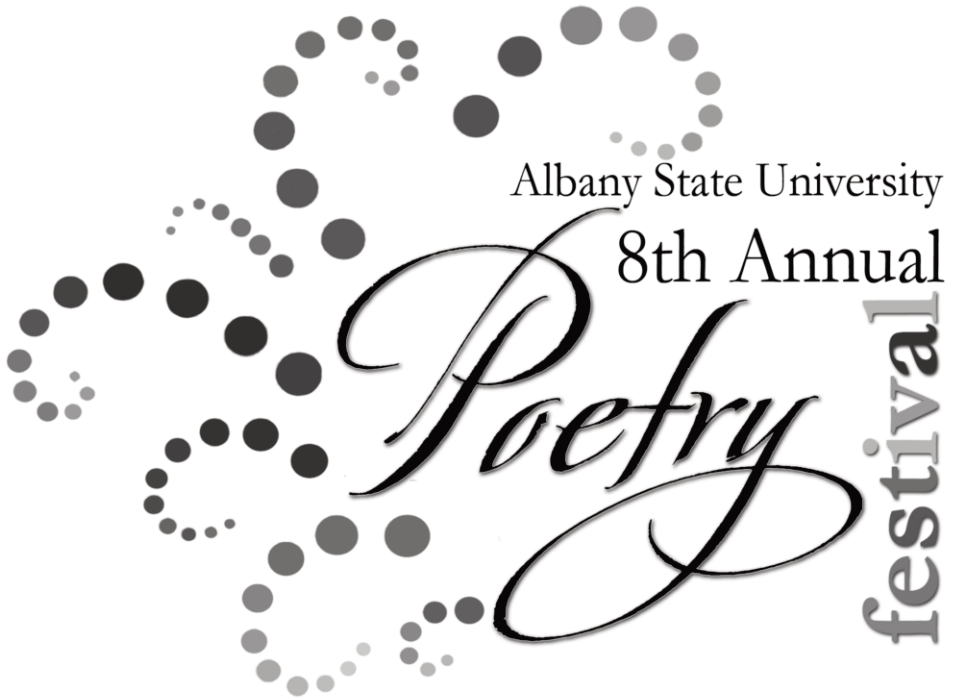
Patrice Smith is a native of Dawson, Georgia, by way of San Diego, California. She is currently the Administrative Assistant for the Foreign Language Institute at Albany State University. She is pursuing a Bachelor of Business Logistics Management degree.

Amoja Sumler is a poet that fuses the art of the intellectual into the familiar with the skill of a provocateur. He is a McNair scholar, Cooper scholar, and spoken word artist. As "The Mo-Man," he has toured nationally headlining spoken word festivals, such as Write Nola (New Orleans), Poets In the Park (Little Rock), The Listen (New Orleans), and Rock the Republic (Bryant). His work is showcased on indiefeed and is available for download.

Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie is the author of *Karma's Footsteps* (Flipped Eye Publishing, 2011). She is the Poetry Editor of *African Voices* literary magazine. Her work deals with silence, sexism, and racism and has been published in *Crab Orchard Review*, *BOMB*, *Paris/Atlantic*, *Go, Tell Michelle* (SUNY), *Listen Up!* (One World Ballantine) and *Revenge and Forgiveness* (Henry Holt). Tallie's work has been the subject of a short film titled *I Leave My Colors Everywhere*. In 2013, she was chosen as one of five featured artists in the Queens Art Express project sponsored by the Queens Council on the Arts and was awarded a grant in 2010 by the Queens Council on the Arts for "Osain's Children," her work on herbalists of the African Diaspora.

Frank X Walker is the 2013-2014 poet laureate of Kentucky and the author of six collections of poetry including *Turn Me Loose: The Unghosting of Medgar Evers*, the winner of the 2014 NAACP Image award for outstanding poetry. He is the founding member of the Affrilachian Poets, a Cave Canem fellow, and founder and editor of *Pluck! the Journal of Affrilachian Arts and Culture*. He resides in Lexington where he is a Full Professor in the Department of English.

Jerry W. Ward, Jr. is Distinguished Overseas Professor at Central China Normal University. He is the author of *THE KATRINA PAPERS: A Journal of Trauma and Recovery* (2008) and co-editor of *The Cambridge History of African American Literature* (2011). He is a Richard Wright scholar and a major contributor to the planning of the Richard Wright Centennial Conference 2008, Paris.



November 9-11, 2014

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THE PIERIAN JOURNAL

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Calling all poets, fiction writers,
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The Pierian Journal is currently accepting submissions for its Spring 2015 edition. The journal is accepting original, unpublished poems (up to 3), short stories (under 1,500 words), one-act plays, and personal essays (under 1,000 words).

Authors should submit their work electronically to thepierian@asurams.edu by the March 1, 2015 deadline.



The journal only accepts electronic submissions. Please consult the Pierian web page at (<http://www.asurams.edu/web/school-english-language-and-communication/the-pierian>) for more detailed submission information.

Or, contact Dr. Jeffrey D. Mack at 229-430-1383.



The Pierian Literary Journal is an official publication of the Albany State University Pierian Club in the Department of English, Modern Languages and Mass Communication. It was formed by Emerita Professor Dr. Velma F. Grant, who founded the Pierian student organization for English majors at Albany State in 1967. Originally called, “The Little Magazine,” it came to be known as *The Pierian* and would serve as an outlet for creative expression of the written word for Albany State students, faculty, staff, as well as local and national authors. It is published each Spring Semester.