



Teen Services

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Varied Voices

5th edition

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Meet the Writers



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Varied Voices

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To the reader...

This amazing 5th edition of *Varied Voices* marks the completion of thirteen years for the Creative Writing Workshop group. In the fall of 1997, several teens decided that they needed a place to gather, write and share their writings and thus began the CWW group of Teen Services at Stratford Library. During this time, over 150 high school and college teens have participated in the group thereby nurturing the creative and performance talents of hundreds of additional teens.

This achievement was acknowledged at the October 2009 New England Library Association Conference in Hartford when four members of the CWW group, Corey McNair, Farah Themistocle, Adriana Cedeno and Franklin Eneh, presented a session for librarians and educators entitled, *Creating Our Varied Voices: A Teen Writing Group*. During their panel presentation, the teens discussed the creation and longevity of *Varied Voices* and the CWW group and their procurement of 12 Youth-as-Resources grants to both publish their writings and present *RisingStars @SLA*, a biennial event to showcase the creative talents in poetry, art, music, dance and photography of Stratford teens.

The CWW group has also produced podcasts and videocasts of their writing performances available for all to hear and enjoy on the library website www.stratfordlibrary.org and on facebook.com.

Please join me in celebrating this outstanding contribution of the youth of Stratford as we applaud their creativity and savor their thoughts, feelings and emotions!

Lucretia I. Duwel

Head of Teen Services



Censorship

Some moments, I feel these words start to snake
From inside my lungs with each breath that escapes.
I inhale, and like tendrils of smoke they are trapped,
These insidious words I am trying to cap.
They break into bits, into sand, into air,
And float on my breath 'til I notice they're there.
Then, fading like shadows, they slowly retreat
Sinking deeper, settling in the soles of my feet,
And for a short time, I am able to think
That these reckless words have been yanked from the brink,
That they've been scrubbed off of the walls of my lungs,
And will no longer sit on the tip of my tongue-
But slowly, as they grow lighter with time,
I feel them tickling at the edge of my mind.
Of course, all of my courage fails in the end
Since these words have no graceful or eloquent bend,
And I can't hide their meaning in some larger phrase,
Or muddle their clearness in some shade of grey.
I postpone their usage to some other date,
Though I know very soon it will be much too late-
But right now I feel them burning my mouth,
And I'm thinking that maybe it's time they come out.

Crafting Passion

As an impostor Dr. Frankenstein
taking on an alias so far from ability,
I'd stitch together a barely pulsating chamber
with tender words of adoration.

Breathe passion into a starving
enigma. Spilling silent sentiments
over eager lips anxious
for assuring reciprocation.

Craft eyelids wide open
and present all I am to
an attentive participant.
Hoping perception reflects that of lesser suitors
and a long shot's distance dissipates.

History holds tight,
as knowledge cannot be denied
in Technicolored nightmares.
Subconsciously defeated in unhindered slumber,
gasping for hope in thick layers of anticipation.

Patience grows in soiled criticism,
disregarding clear thought
and trudging through emotional
minefields, tempting harsh blows.

Tip-toeing through contained jealousy
and two feet past giving in,
continuing the journey
with delusions of possibility guiding the path
and your notice adjusting the pace.

Katie Zold

Exhale

Inches, moments, miles, heavy breaths

pulling apart sewn together chambers,
bleeding between stitches,
pulsating through laughter.

Skin containing organs
excitement ignites
tender exchanges
and dirty thoughts.

Binded wrists
angst against
warm skin
and hot blood.

Uncensored intentions
dance on the cerebellum.

Katie Zold

There are only three syllables, and each one is quite true,

And it seems all this time they've been waiting for you.

They'll carry themselves; they'll reach you and rest,

And into your palm their message will press.

I'm sorry for letting these strong words escape,

But they're not really mine, and it's starting to ache.

I guess they have always belonged to you,

And this just might be the right thing to do.

If you do not like them, please lock them away,

And I promise we'll never speak of this day,

But if they feel right settled into your mind,

I think we should maybe take that as a sign.

Madison Bishop



The Siren Song of Hope (Inspired by The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T.S. Eliot)

Now perhaps there may be more
More than hazy light that shines through dirty glass
Smudging the walls with pallid yellow strokes –
There may be more, there may be more,
More than the hollow faces that you pass;
There may be more to model and destroy,
And more than all the wrinkles on your face
That even toothy smiles can't employ.
More for them and more for you –
And then more for ten thousand looks of longing,
And for ten thousand questions of belonging
When there's simply nothing else for you to do.

Madison Bishop



Art is Simply Me

Art is me
From every pore and every cell
Like a shell of shaky, crumbling essence
It is my glue of security
The disguise that hides an ugly secret
For in a world without art
I would shatter, sharp and purposeless
Against the veil of life
To emerge colorless, soulless,
And quite possibly crazy
It is me, I am it
A mirror to my soul

Farah Themistocle



Shadowed Shadowed Soul

My closest dearest friend
I can't hide from you no more
Watch over me from afar
One day my day will come
Linked to you, never astray
To meet with you face to faith
Never far but never near
I'll dance away when the sun is set

Farah Themistocle

Writing, Release, Gone

I feel the urge to write
My shaky and fleeting emotions
But paper, my salvation escapes me once more
It is now my quest, my unfilled destiny
To what...write? No! No of course not!
To the quiet world I unleash myself
To the unprying, unseeing and accepting universe
Commemorated to moments, never dates
To remain untouched, discovered yet unchanged
To be born to paper, to die questioned
Forever more a mystery
A fleeting part of me

Farah Themistocle



The Aristocrat

Night, urbane and graceful,
Billows in like smoke.
I choke, but he continues on,
Leeching fire from the sky.
Night, that old romantic,
Creeps to my window.
The glow from lamps keep him at bay,
So he strokes the glass
And taps his nails against the pane.
Night, a polite stranger,
Knocks once at the door.
On the floor, his new boots shuffle
With impatience, as he remains
Outside, while I am within.

Madison Bishop



She Cuts Like a Buffalo

Forever misplaced and completely misunderstood, she sits on a pile of dry, dead leaves under the many shadows of bare tree branches that hover, menacingly above her.

The machines in her strained and troubled mind continue to operate their uncoiled gears and broken wheels as she contemplates her true self and what she has discovered.

Out of all the puzzled questions that still continue to pop up, the one that is constantly swimming around her head still remains unanswered:
Why am I this way?

Everyone around her that she thought she could turn to, vanished when she reached out to them. What happened to her is something no being on Earth can relate to. They run away in fear of what they can't explain in a matter of fact or study.

Like those who had alienated her in fear, she has covered herself in dark sheet of that same fear since she cannot describe what it is that has happened to her.

Why am I this way?

Why am I this way?

A voice inside her echoes the words from her mind, and she says it aloud to herself several times. But no matter how many times she asks, there is no one there to answer it.

However, she has not cried nor writhed in pain since it all began. She has not smiled, nor frowned at the set of it in motion. She is neither overjoyed nor unhappy with the end results when it has ended.

There is just fear of knowing that there is no one who can guide her in controlling it or cure her of this sudden unwanted possession.

Slowly, she stands from the pile of leaves and brushes herself off lightly. She looks at the tree and its branches above her, how dead it looks.

The one's that lay ahead are alive and thriving.

Inspiration

Everything to do with yourself
The trash mingling the gold
Buried in the gutter of your mind
That one unique find in the galaxy far beyond
Radiating your force-filled aura
Impenetrable
Euphoric
Pure nirvana
Within yourself breathes the life of a thousand
Dreams...words...awaken
Les parole qui etait mais s'espoir

Farah Themistocle

Rhythm

Reach
Don't you think
Breath
Don't be quick
Panic
You may sink

Farah Themistocle

The Letter F

The letter F was carved into her forearm. The F was like the misplaced items in the misplaced picture puzzles. It sat on her skin. Laying there like an exhibit at the museum, allowing me to study its creepy Contours. Its twisted tail, smudged head, and noticeably crooked lines gave my spine chills. The F was almost a dark smudge on her gentle caramel skin, due to the variation of thick and skinny lines squished together to occupy space. Her skin was a puffy and tinted a red color that was so bright it commanded attention, like the neon lights that illuminate up state signs and bars. It was as if the F was a parasite feeding host, my friend Jinx. In my mind I was trying to figure out what was going on with my friend.

A gang, no that's not like her; a cult, nope not likely. Maybe she's getting bullied, but why would she implant on her skin in plain sight? It was baffled.

I just couldn't decide why that F was on her skin and what it meant. The F was so mysterious, so dark, so secretive. A puzzled look stretched across my face and she looked up bewildered, instinctively placing her bony nub nails over the F "tattoo".

"Nice tattoo" I stuttered in an embarrassed tone.

She kept her eyes down as I said this. Not once did she speak or look up to acknowledge my comment. I grew anxious, and uncomfortable so I shifted in my seat, gazed at the walls decorated by abstract artwork, and resumed waiting for my answer. When the answer didn't come like I predicted it would, I poked her shoulder. She swatted at my hand, like a fly swatter, but missed.

"Do your work," she hissed, her voice full of pain and anger.

I was shocked at the way she responded, but figured she was having a bad day. This still didn't answer questions I had about the mysterious F in the inside of her arm. I figured I would get my answers one day, so I just turned back to my class assignment of transforming normal pictures into "abstract" ones, and tried to forget about the tattooed F on my friend, Jinx's arm.

Malayya Parham

She smiles like an angel, but cuts like a buffalo.

Her flaming red hair setting off alarms everywhere she goes.

There's a fire in her step, leaving charcoal black footprints from her stilettos.

Men beware; if you should stare too long you'll turn to stone, giving her the chance to smash you into little pieces.

Women be cautioned, her looks do kill.

Her moves are quick, catching you off guard. Her mind thinks fast leaving you confused.

That little black dress will take your breath away, while her ghostly white eyes steal your soul.

Be sure to always use protection, especially with her, if you dare.

Adriana Cedeno

The Roma

The little Roma girl dances in the path of her train-like caravan, her family letting her enjoy the little warmth from the late, autumn sun before the cold night settles in.

Sometimes she wears tall leather boots, sometimes loose sandals, and sometimes she's bare foot. She prefers it more that way.

The little Roma girl keeps dancing along the tire tracks of her caravan, her brother plays the fiddle as he walks behind his little sister.

Her little tambourine jingles and rings as she twirls in her long, multi-colored skirt. The smell of stew floats on the crisp, autumn air and tickles her tummy.

The little Roma girl starts to get sleepy, the tambourine in her dark hand becoming heavy. She stops dancing but keeps walking, falling in sync with her caravan. Never stopping, but ever going.

The fiddle plays a soft tune and will forever be her lullaby. Although she is young, and her little heart is still growing, She knows that there will never be a place for the little Roma girl and her Roma family.

Adriana Cedeno

Hardcore

I fist fight bears,
What do you fight?
Step into my arena
Rumbling as I beat,
Demonic principles to the ropes.

Oh please.

Fire and brimstone pressed against my cheek,
but still, I can't help but look meek.
What do you expect me to do?
Lollygag in the frivolities
Of impugnable "friends"?

Corey McNair

Rather Windy

Weathering the winter of my discontent,
Five day forecasts often present,
Third level tsunami's drawing toward one drenched man.
I continue to circle my lovely bunch of coconuts for 24 hours;
Give or take a stormy throw.

Without a Care

Sentimentality in my eye, not in my heart,
at least in part,
for my heart is dry while eyes can't help but start;
fireworks making a spectacle,
often merely disregardable,
while inescapably necessary,
I remain internally, remotely removed.

Sleep Deprivation

I lay in the daylight,
calming compared to the alarming night,
I lost my sleep somewhere.
Curtains now blind my view of day,
welcoming everything that won't go away;
You owe me sleep.

The Purest Creature

Untainted, her delicate feet lightly touched the chilling
floorboards of her bedroom floor. Her eyes, the purest hazel and shaped
like round pebbles, swiftly glanced at her surroundings as if they were
almost always unfamiliar given that it was, indeed, her bedroom.

Everything around her was clean, even the air she breathed.
The water she used was never contaminated but fresh and crisp always.
Her innocent features: rich, long brown hair, small but narrow hands,
crossed legs and arms, and round face, were so immaculate in her
waifish anatomy.

Her residence was one of the worst places to live, but she didn't
seem to let it frighten her, and she was well known. She's not of royalty or
peasant descent. But one of a kind, rare.

Her light illuminated the darkest of places, even as she stepped
outside everything around her seemed to light up.

The dark creatures that knew her would silently gaze upon her
and her pure, uncorrupted heart. It was hard for them to believe that this
thing, this pure creature could live among them.

Did an impure thought ever cross her beautiful mind? A question
that may never be known, but what they did know about this creature
and will never forget, is that she was the purest creature.

Adriana Cedeno

Unearthly Child

Recipe for a Child Laborer

Take away the souls and lives of 3,000 children under ten years of age
Take away 3/4 of human identity, integrity, and human rights
Carve numerous scratches and bruises into their skin
Give them 19-hour days,
Food you wouldn't give to your dog,
And unsafe and unhealthy conditions they have to suffer in
Make them work nights
Pay them close to nothing for all the work they do skilled and involuntarily
Steal 100% of all their dreams and emotions
Lock them behind concealed and closed doors

Mix in a lifetime of rags,
No shoes,
Severed, bloody stubs for fingers
Calluses upon the soles of five year olds' feet
Rust-covered dead skin on the palms of these unfortunate souls, deprived of a childhood
Sprinkle 3 cups of dirt and grime on their taut little faces and bodies
2 gallons of machine oil, fuel, and smoke fills each little lifeless child's lungs
1 floor lined with soot from years before
Crack open 5 bottles and pour sweat, horrible body odor, and smells from the rusty old machines into the air
Wisk in cut-off fingers and messy hair under a cap
Newsies, miners, seafood workers and fruit pickers
All doing things with the slightest chance that things could be better and less tormenting
Up at the crack of dawn
1 head to stay sane
2 eyes to see the pain
2 hands to carry out the work of a grown man

World to Challenge

Why are only wings mentioned?
These too are limited.
The man with imagination
can burrow and swim
and hold his breath for eons.
He can travel through time,
through realms.
That too is limited by imagination.
No one ventures to write
about what they don't comprehend.
For words to not come
to fingertip when they escape the mind.
Reality may be restricted
but mind is not.
What if wings hinder
and the ability to stay on the ground
was all that was ever needed?
Views of the sky -our current
limits are needed to
know what there is to surpass.
And of course, a hand stretched towards it,
realizing that it can be bigger than the sun.
Make nonsense of rationality
and decipher random babble.
A man perceiving of
reality and beyond,
has his own world to challenge.

Stephanie Lupica



Just Sinful

There was a girl named Envy,
she had absolutely everything.

Well, except a boy named Pride,

he evaded her and

therefore all her trinkets meant nothing.

She'd do anything for him –

sell her trinkets or even her body too.

She quickly found a way.

Hours later,

she stared at his corpse,

proud of herself.

Stephanie Lupica



2 legs on which to stand,
Over and over in the same spots,
Doing the same life-threatening obligation
1 heart?
Is there 1?
Is there 0?

1 heart without a soul
0 heart without a cavity to hold it in,
No protection from the outside in

Kalea Coles

Comfort of the Mind

Comfort of the mind is not always easy to find
Thoughts of all kinds roaming forcefully through your mind
Categorized by every detail,
Spinning in their own circles
Yet colliding into each other and involuntarily mixing
A threat to your self-control
A burden on your heart to hold
Daring and stressing to age you old
Your health's at risk
The clock goes tick
Time is running out
Your mind is in a clout
There's too much activity going on in your brain
Nothing to help; you're going insane
Dying on the inside; crying on the out
Mind is so confused; it makes you want to shout
Stop...
Think...
Clear...
Recuperate...
Analyze and think things through
Your thoughts are working together like a crew
Handle your ideas
They have no control over you
Liberty...
Free...
It's yours to hold within thee
A light down your dark path
Is now in your grasp
Now you're here,
I'm happy to say,
Your sanity is here and here it will stay

Kalea Coles

The Cliff in Between

Our jagged woes dig into your side,
A mountain of thorns we dare fall off.
Hold on, darling boy,
Let your heart come soft.

Through trial and error,
I'll lift your spirit.
Struggling, fighting,
in a battle of merits.

The fall is quite looming,
so look at me now.
Don't stare at darkness,
wondering how.

How we had managed
this nearness to the sun.
Burning and searing,
our white wings are done.

It's tearing at us,
that Hellfire in sky
but that burns no more
than you asking why.

You question our friendship
"why'd you go so far?"
Forgetting, you're forgetting
just who we are.

With fires above us
and fires below,
the only things sacred
are our hands.

Please don't let go.

Stephanie Lupica

untitled challenge

my bitterness is the thing you adore
but i don't wanna play these games anymore
i'm tired of sitting here crying while you laugh
i'm still alive, but this isn't life
what is your definition
of a life worth living?
and what is your measure
of ultimate pleasure?
do you *like* seeing me this way?
or have you even noticed?
is it all unintentional
or do you have motives?
am i doomed to be hurt
by chance or by design?
why can i see your hearts heal
but not mine?
would it be so hard for *one night*
to talk about something that doesn't crush me?
i dare you; one hour, one day, one week
i bet it's impossible for you not to speak
break my heart; my mind will follow
crazy crazier with sorrow
you get me yet?
'course not, you're deaf
and blinder every thursday...

julie kosa

This Oz Tornado

My world has just been rocked
its doors ripped off their hinges.
Will this Oz tornado land me
on my face
or my feet?

julie kosa

Battle-Field

As I look out into the world,
Right in front of my eyes before me
I see a sunny day
Birds chirping
Dogs barking
Everything is peaceful

But how can this be?
How can such harmony come from
This tormenting beast around me?
I am stuck in it
Yet, I am not of it
My spirit seems to hover just over
All that there is
Listening...
Watching...

You see, the truth of the matter is
I am a rope in a pull of war
My smile is bright
But my heart is sore...
Aching from all that is near and dear
Then it swarms around me like a pack of angry bees
And nothing is dear or clear

Love and hate chase after each other
Back and forth they tag one another
Each giving the other a chance to shine
Then be taken over by the opponent
Sometimes love and hate don't fight fair
People say love is in the air
But hate is with it up there
Love is not just
Yet, neither is hate
It is just bait
To keep love out of the picture
Still, no one ever wins for long



So in this trap
I shall be
Just look around
And you will see
A lovely day, a friendly person
Be pushed, shoved, and still pushing back
Against a person's evil spirit
That which makes us not live harmoniously
It is a battle-field
Overcome by both sides...
You are nebulous and there's no place to hide
In the line of incoming disaster

Is it the world?
Or is it me?
Because I am not of this,
I will stop and let this be

Kalea Coles

Tesela

Every footstep
Every breath
Every thought that we think
has music beneath
and it floods our souls
and is released
into the crisp, singing air
of Tesela.
Every kiss
sets off bells
every song
holds a warm embrace
this world
was molded into shape
but it was sung to life
and even now
when the song of creation
has faded beyond our hearing
it still pulses through every rock
every tree
every blade of grass
and drop of water
and ensures that our hearts
continue to beat
in time
the world is a rich tapestry
woven of harmony and melody
and played out
with flutes
and harps
and bells
and voices
to each person
a new note is given
and one by one
they join the song
that holds the world together
of us all
dancers make the best music
they step

breathe
and think as
one
and far more than anyone
their spins bring us closer to a crescendo
and their steps
match our hearts
but the loudest
of Tesela's song
are the notes
of smiles

julie kosa

Preface to a Letter...

No one will read this
No one will see what i say
I will go unheard, and forgotten
Lost in the depths of time
This letter will never be sent
No postage, no address
My thoughts will stay my own
My feelings poured out on this page
My words better than words
Will remain unchanged
Histories will forget me
My spoken words will fade in your memory
But this letter will remain
Untouched, unmarred
Full of secrets that you're dying to hear
Lying in its envelope, crumbling
Because i have no one to send it to
Now, let's begin.
Dear...

julie kosa

Candy

Reaching out for my dearest possession, but it's not there

Uncontainable sorrow fills me

I cry out, but no one hears

I can hear the shot ring out across the ranch

You didn't feel a thing right boy?

I have to cry I can't hold it in any longer

You were my boy, my friend, my dog, my son.

Tamara Danilowicz



Where I'm From

I am from everywhere and I
Am from nowhere
I am from irrational contradiction and
Imperfect certainty
I am from borrowed wood.
From red oil
From mortar and pestle
From brown eyes and even browner
Skin.
I am from blood thicker than water
From missions impossible
And fleeting flee markets
I am from a promise and
A third task.
I am from the stead of four family houses
From boulevards and corner store
Hungry.
I am from a wanting
From a faceless heart
From a magic tortoise and
A mortal cat.
I am from hand to mouth,
From bill-to bill.
From downtown dirty
From night fights
And day parades
I am from a notebook
From ideas, shared.
From learnings of fairness
From human awareness
From those educated to bewilderment

Just Being Me

When people call me stupid or
Dumb I look inside my self
I may not understand most things
I may not be the best speller but
I know who I am
I'm not a follower I have
My dreams and wishes I'm just happy

I am who I am

Vanessa Johnson

Who Knew?

Bright blue eyes that lit the midnight skies
So beautiful, yet you never knew her lies.

Hair like spun gold,

And a smile,

That was always a sight to behold,

But we didn't know behind it

Was a story untold,

Who knew behind her light banter and her absolute demeanor,

That there was something bitter and less than chipper

How could we have possibly known that underneath her quick wit,

That she was barely making it, all that time faking it,

That she had so much fear of self.

That everything wasn't as it appeared

Who could have foretold her shaky behavior?

Maybe if I had, I could've been her savior.

For how was I to know

In truth she only liked walking in rain,

So she could cry w/o them seeing her pain.

She was the golden child

The one everybody wanted to be

Not knowing her life was a Russian roulette,

That at any moment she could discharge,

That everything could fall apart

No one knew how she stared into those mirrors.

Never knowing the person looking back,

Never understanding, nor comprehending,

Always acting, always pretending,

So fake,

When at any moment she could break.

Never one to disappoint,

but we didn't understand,

that whenever she smiled she was really crying inside

Arielle Francois

From grassy reeds and cement.

I am not from a bottle.

I am from fetching water from nearby streams

From rivers that run through me but

Do not drown me.

I am from funny sounding

Middle names,

Talkative kitchen sinks,

Overlooked traditions and,

Louder than yours, music.

I am from penny jars and

Midnight prayers on New Year's Eve

From my father's stories and

My mother's snoring that fell

Me to sleep.

I am from not so secret handshakes

From "never again" mistakes

From long trips

From Hi and Bye highways

From better days.

I am from unpromised love in

Unknown places

I am from dozens upon

Dozens of Black faces.

I am from the smile you gave me, also

From the ones I gave away

I am from a limited yesterday

I am from today's prophecies

I am from tomorrow's redemption.

Clement Eneh

What I have now

I have a right foot that matches my other one
I have my precognition
I have my specialties
I have my needs
One of them is just a want
I have distance
In between us is the shame we share.
I have a heart to break
Mine, and mine alone.
I have good people
Gifts, subject to return at a moments notice
I have humility and grace
And when I don't, I have an ego as well
I have responsibilities
Mostly to myself
I have no time for deceiving voices
The reason for that is because I—
Have grass to cut and
A room to clean
And a dish to wash,
Eyes to roll.
I have eyes though.
I have things worth coveting
I have nothing to prove and
no one to lose.
I have a show to put on
I have a lifetime to shut out
Many things to gain.
Everthing to give.

Clement Eneh

Mom's Last Life Lesson

I have nothing to say,
To keep life at bay
But,
Life is what you make it to be,
Nothing more and nothing less...
And no matter how much you protest
And fight,
That thing called fate just won't wait.
Her last life lesson to me,
Uttered from dry lips,
A whisper almost lost,
A memorandum I won't soon forget

Arielle Francois



Black necks bowed in prayer,
 To the black night sky,
 Because it understands our pains,
 That blank black sky which holds up the white stars,
 Yet,
 Receives no credit,
 The hot sun beneath our feet
 We are breaking down,
 Like toy soldiers we are disposable,
 And when we break they throw us way.
 The same people who preach to us about the gods,
 Take us and defile us.
 Anger like no other ,
 Children taken from their mothers,
 Sullied sheets,
 And short lived feats,
 Fighting a war,
 With no end in store.
 Yes, we are angry,

 We have that right,
 Because we could not fight,
 We were blind,
 But now,
 We have our sight.

Arielle Francois

Flint
 A Coup
 {Start one}
 Hair
 {Trim it}
 Smile
 {Softer the better}
 Jeans
 {One size fits all}
 Screen
 {White noise on the tube}
 Walk
 {As tall as you can}
 Tears
 {Find a hiding place}
 Move
 {You have move to touch}
 Paisley
 {Better than stripes}
 Strike
 {Your goals are your own}
 Walls
 {Please don't socialize}
 Breakfast
 {Of the chimpanzee}
 Drive
 {Crawl to extinction}
 Think
 {About reparations}
 Love
 {Flee to original}
 Unbothered
 {Sin is among us}
 Click
 {Who are you?}
 Words
 {The cheaper the better}

Face
 {You were born correctly}
 Me
 {I was born for you}
 Quantity
 {Wasting away}
 Sight
 {Too afraid to feel}
 Bravery
 {Unfamiliar to me}
 Random
 {The lingo in lyrics}
 Spirit
 {The downfall of evil}
 Sharpen
 {The drowning ear}
 Loose
 {The wit you didn't earn}
 Make
 {Me a proud writer}
 Read
 {My every word}
 Freak
 {My every flow}
 Take
 {Me with you when you go}
 More
 {But for now I just make...}
 Sound
 {Block it out}
 Focus
 {On your task}
 Make
 {Me an arrow}
 One
 {That'll always last.}
 Flint {Flint}

Clement Eneh

Ala Nnem (Motherland)

Mama called to me/
I had no choice but to heed her voice/
She shouted my name on this day of all days
And all I was I taught to be was dropped for her/
This dress, this walk, this tongue
A journey began In search of her coast/
A land blessed with libations far more precious than milk and honey
As my father and his fathers have come to know /
So the trek began with me and my slave feet/
Strong-willed feet/
A prized possession of my ancestors
Who used such GPS mechanisms to find refuge/
They also set coordinates for mama
But reached a blocked road and were forced to take a u-turn straight
into a dead end/
I was reminded to send their apologies
Because mama won't understand why some of her children are 400
years past curfew/
For so long we were roaming/
Beasts of no nation/
Contesting for an equal stronghold on a terrain of red, white, and blue
But when mama left a message with her address/
As trite as this may sound
There was no mountain high, valley low or river wide enough to keep us
away from claiming the genesis/
Mama's heartache must be known/
And finally I stood on her back
Licking her air
Bathing in her sky
Streaming through forests to meet my brothers and sisters of the village
Anticipating a festival of alms/
I saw myself in their faces
But there was no recognition of me in theirs/
Well water is thinner than blood/
Papa time has done his worst

Franklin Eneh

Angry Is the Color Black

Listen and you will hear,
Our orchestra of years.
Symphony of tears,
Songs of exhaustion,
We are the foundation,
For you're so called "great country",
Black dirty tears,
Shaking fear
Anger he is no stranger
Back breaking labor,
Anger...
Stripped of our humanity,
Your burdens and country
Held atop on our shoulders,
Rolling sweat, the stench of fear,
And fear breeds hatred,
Like big rats in sewers, it comes in large quantities
Anger beyond thought
Their holocaust lasted years,
Ours everlasting,
Genocide of such and an exorcism of thought
The children are crying chocolate tears mixed with dirt and blood
They spit on us, they call us animals
Yet they kill the innocent
Fight, death, hurt, anguish,
Like your fields we have cultivated,
As you've harvested our hate.
Millions of broken soldiers crawling from
Unmarked graves,
We cannot be saved
We crave death, because it's fleeting.
While this existence seems to last forever

Yes they choked on their own smoke.
How ironic that
That morning I had tagged them as a dunce.
Love is folly,
An art of the heart to which I've lost
respect.
The era of accommodating has reached its closure.

During this summer,
only widowers sit on old porches
to collect thoughts and tell borrowed tales
to eager eaglets
expectant to fly away from the ash pit
created for their generation.
I'm stricken with deliria
but at comfort
because as the heat waves on and on,
the knowledge of what should've been
and to know there's no warmth left
inside you;
having those bones crossed in my arms
is better than sitting next to any air
conditioner.

Franklin Eneh

De-a-fro on Def Row

Pick pick pick at me
brush me up down up down
take care of the sides
comb stringy naps away
But I don't dye
Scorched
silenced by flat irons
pat pat pat me down
there is no escape
fertilized with toxins
for decades
these cats can't get it
I don't dye
This sheen shines with rays from sun
fades at dusk
wear me out
accept collateral damage
thick bouncy rough
many scatter from the puff
it was never their pigment
it was hair
here and there
animated roots shoot from the scalp
violently snaring corneas
I move I breath I think
think they'd glance entranced in awe
without 3D specs
ain't no trick
too old for that
best believe I precede the rest
Shave shave shave me off
sew in a stranger if necessary
but be acquainted with shame
I don't dye
I don't dye

De-a-fro won't go
Relax relax relax me
I can relax
coaxed into a silk wrap
the contained fury
burgeoning
like a fad
fans come and go
So color color me away
them youngsters sprint on sight
No longer is there pride
No longer is there mercy
maybe I am dead
But I will never dye
Franklin Eneh

The Summer of the Ice Pack

In the last summer of America
I recall bleeding out sweat,
swaying in a wooden rocking chair
on that slanted old porch with your
decaying carcass festering
as my arms laid cross in yours.
Staring into those glass eyes,
seeing my shadow
clash with beams of light
that stagger off crystals
of defeated hope that still reside
buried deep within a cold mine.

If only the Guidance Goddess
had given reassurance
and foresaw these silly trifles that disturb
the resting periods that sit thinly between
the excitement of time.

We only had the summer before the last
summer of America.
If only I had pleaded and begged for
heaven's mercy.
Patience stole my 2nd chance,
That I'd make the most out of the last hour
in which my one true love sat perched on the piano's keys
and dared to dabble back and forth
between the b flat and middle C,
then tripping on a sour note

which apparently had been the end of music.
And gallivanting out into the freeway during
rush hour was the only resolution.