Black Ice

Volume 2
Spring 2013

Cover art by Michelle Barreto and Michael Aiyar
Letter from the Editor

*Black Ice* is a brand new publication, started just last year by the previous Black Student Union President, Sandra Rosa Bryant. The purpose of *Black Ice* is to give students of color and their allies a voice on campus. Unfortunately, marginalized groups on campus are not always heard, and this magazine is a great way to promote those voices.

*Black Ice* promotes positive discussion about race and race relations on campus as well as within the broader Tacoma community. I am proud to say that since its first issue, many community members have supported *Black Ice* by contributing pieces or financial support.

I hope that you, reader, enjoy this publication that the Black Student Union has worked hard to produce. I also hope that you will take something away after reading this magazine, whether it be something new that you learned about race relations and identity or a new world view that some of the pieces helped you consider. And finally, I hope you consider submitting next year or stopping by one of our meetings to chat and support the Black Student Union here at the University of Puget Sound.

Danae Smith

Black Student Union President
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My brother is
but his second wife is not,
and if they’d had kids,
the postulated kids would be half
or all, it depends,
it don’t matter,
“their choice.”
Perhaps what I mean is bi-
although we’d have more than
just two involved, I think.

But my brother’s real children are.
Because he is.
And his first wife is since
her daddy was and her mama was,
(although her mama had white skin,
straight hair, and blue eyes)
which may mean my nephews are bi- or multi-
though that’s not what we called them, then,
or what they called themselves, back then
‘cause our family always was what we meant and
mean when we say, or when we said, “we are
black.”

Langston Hughes
(1902-1967)
Hans Ostrom
From *The Coast Starlight: Collected Poems 1976-2006*

In a wilderness of reasons
not to write, he wrote. Just wrote.
Each word was the belief
in the possibility of the next.
He kept it going.

Mostly his days and words talk
quietly, though he could rant and rage.
Mention is what his voices usually do
in a world of self-convinced noise.

Truth mentioned is a sweet brass
note you’ll never forget. Writing,

Langston showed writing to be
an unashamed act, one of the few
in a shameful, shaming world. Words

grin. Words reside. Words throw
a meal together for unexpected friends,
make a garden in front of a brownstone,
come back from long sea voyages
alive. Words aren’t everything,
are not the rent, often
may be only change left from
a last dollar spent in Paris or Reno.

Morning: *Hallelujah.*
The world goes to its terrible work
of silencing souls. Out
of an open window comes a tapping—
the tick, the tack, the click and the clack,
Jack, of writing. And all those sorry rooftops
get red, get glad, get suave, get saved.
May You Always Have
By: Beverly Hofacre Smith
September 25, 2012

The warmth of the sun in your heart,
Peace of a gentle rain,
A walk on a dirt path to ground you,
Love of family and friends.

Stars to sparkle in your eyes,
Worlds of adventures,
Mindfulness of others,
Knowledge to keep you well.

Loving thoughts to tame the anger,
Galaxies of wonder,
Joy in the smallest things,
A breeze to caress you.

In My Own Neighborhood
By Imari Romeo

Every day I walk down this street wondering the
same thing
Am I a stranger or neighbor to them?
Do I wave or walk right by?
If I do wave why don't they wave back?
I'm tired of that.
Fake smiles
Pointy noses
And heads faced down.

Shaken as I walk by the police car.
Neighbor yes he is
Then why am I so afraid?

A home to many
A foreign land to me.

Hidden Curfew.
Warner Street is not safe.

I walk down the street wondering.
Wondering After so long why do I feel like there’s
still Jim Crow
Why are neighborhoods still segregated?
And Why do I feel weird for breaking this
segregation?

Diversity F*ck that.
Post Racism F*ck that too.
Where are my people?
Beautiful Black and Brown faces.
On the other side
Not welcomed here.

My Neighborhood
2509 North Warner Street

Betting on College
Cory Kleber

Today starts the end.
With the fall of leaves.
Next in line, Finals.
I sport a new color, maroon.
Followed by Waiting.
No longer a Titian,

Trailed by Laziness.
I’m an axe wielding Logger.
Bring up the rear, its Anxiety.
Starting over, in a new game.
Who will win the race?
Sky Trees
By: Faith Matthews
Late night filled with Women’s Studies essays, trudging up Capitol Hill towards my house. A tall, male body appears from the alleyway above, moves down towards the sidewalk, towards me. A nearby headlamp catches his face for a moment. Stranger Danger! My mind flashes to crime shows, news reports, novels. I’ve been taught to be cautious around black bodies, to fear difference. I clutch the phone in my front pocket, wallet in back. He flashes a smile, but I don’t return it, instead shuffling forward to disillusionment, one big lie.

He walks beside me as we head to the Rotunda. Marcus, big burly guy, our friendship still fairly new. I’m thankful to have found another queer young person in this new place. Sun’s out, rare Puget Sound weather day, and a horde of students are gathered outside. I feel the shift as we get closer, subtle but still so real. Eyes turn towards us, and faces pinch in. For a split second, I see a glimpse of what it’s like for him to move through this world. Perpetual threat, a criminal.

“What would he be doing on a private college campus, anyway?” Their inner monologues sound all too familiar to me, and I look at him to see any reactions. But it’s his reality, and I, some white boy from small town Montana, won’t ever be mistaken as dangerous.

“Hilltop is ghetto, sketchy,” they say. “I wouldn’t go there.” And I know that ghetto is code for black, poor and sketchy, an excuse to avoid being with people who look different than you. But before I can scoff or judge, I remind myself of where I’ve been, where I’m going. That I still have so much to learn, of my complicity in it all and how easy it is for me to just walk away from the conversation. My white privilege at work. Instead, I take a breath, look them in the eye and say, “Why do you think it’s dangerous?” One tiny step towards a community that actually takes care of itself, rather than relying on fear.
Denver Alley
As I awake in a space too small and tight for me to be in/I try and look around/but all I hear is sound/It’s too dark to see/except for the light through the cracks/It’s smells of bowel and pee/This journey we are on/what seemed like forever has now come to an end/doors open/and like animals we are herded up and out/Branded/then to our new owners we are handed/after a fast-spoken man brings us up one by one and sorts us out/Brought to a place where my name is stripped from me and I’m taught to pick cotton/Where families have been raised, torn apart, bartered off and our native tongue forgotten/I see a fair skinned woman not as dark as I’m used to seeing/This, a new to my reality/A slave next to me calls her a house nigger/I, now being taught the SLAVE MENTALITY/Not used to this term he sees the confusion on my face/Then says she’s a house nigger a product of the slave master and her mother being raped/Oh, by the way don’t ever try running away from here because there’s truly no escape/Just be happy/Masta’s good to us and treats us really great/Just accept your new home and find a wife, but not one from in the field because they all look like apes/and ignore what the elders say, for they are old and don’t know what it is to be young/Too busy talking of the past, Africa and tribes that they are from/So I say am I supposed to just accept this life and forget who I am casually?/He replies, Yes/I think, Oh What a mess/This SLAVE MENTALITY/Time passes We are freed at least that’s the way it seems/With nowhere to go/Some of us stay on the land we help grow/While others move to the north or the mid-west to make dreams/Now they say we are free/but now there are still places I cannot enter or should not be/I think, is this truly freedom?/Then time starts to move fast/A town, rosewood is burned to the ground/4 little girls are burned to death in a church/Some white men run up into a house and take a 14yr old Emmett Till and beat him till he can’t be recognized for whistling at a white woman and get off for doing it/I question, are WE Free/?A man Named Medgar Evers is shot and killed/As the black community/Tries to ignite unity/Are WE Free Yet?/Not free enough to Vote/But there are some trying to prove it/Welcome to the Civil Rights Movement/Where a woman, Rosa Parks is arrested for not moving to the back of the bus/We fight dogs, fire hoses, & cops, aren’t they supposed to protect us/?But they say, welcome to Freedom/The Black Panther party is formed and starts to bring pride to one’s blackness/Malcolm X takes a trip and comes back with a fact that as ONE we can all belong and exist/A KING is Born to lead and Does!! Then the WHOLE world is silenced/The day Martin Luther King closed his eye lids/The Black community is in an uproar/We riot and this furthermore/Separates us as a people/Over the years more riots happen but when they do it’s in our own community/Which are now home to drug dealers and gang bangers/I ask, are we truly Free/Because we seem to still have that SLAVE MENTALITY!!/Now the year is 2011/And we as people/treat each other so evil/ still not looked at as an equal/Even though we now have a black president/Barrack Obama/ Oprah Winfrey the 1st black billionaire/Maddam C.J Walker/rappers turned actors like Will Smith/Beyonce/Jay-Z/Tyler Perry it’s still evident/They can’t wait to see us fail/and we don’t help the perpetuation of the black race with most of us in jail/Why is it other races, communities have no problem coming together/?you have Chinatown and Little Koreas with their own banks and whatever/Even Native Americans have reservations with laws for their own people/Hispanics Have Cinco de Mayo/where they come together as equals/We do have black history month and I’m still trying to understand that/Because either white or black history, we the slaves pick the cotton, cultivated the land and created everything from the cotton gin to the traffic light and that’s World History facts/Yet only a few of us are mentioned in your history books/It seems to me/We should be/Up in arms about this/Yet we’re not and that’s not a good look/We seem to be losing our black leaders to conspiracy theories and them just messing up/Trapped and to our own ignorance we’ve become Casualties/Now ingrained with the SLAVE MENTALITY/Stand up Black People, recognize who we are, where we’ve come from and that we need to come together/Take back our streets, our neighborhoods, our kids, get back to discipline/By disciplining them/and not giving them...
whatever/I wrote this out of frustration in seeing this/now the black persons reality/We've been enslaved, stripped of our identity, taught to not love, respect, or come together as a people/The problem is/After all this/In 2011 we still seem to be stuck in the letters of Willie Lynch and I say this embarrassingly

HOW CAN WE, WHY CAN'T WE ESCAPE THE SLAVE MENTALITY???!!!....Please Let's Wake Up

In Fifth Grade, She Confused “Preserve” With “Persevere” But Nobody Noticed
By: Olivia de Recat

“She fat” she hears.
“Like jelly.”
Like:
“Girl” they say,
“What does Mr. Crabs like on his Crabby Patties?”
And she knows the answer is “jellyfish jelly.”
But she just tunes them out like a cartoon re-run.
Besides, it gets busy in her head holding it together when everybody’s home but nobody’s really home at home
and it’s time for dinner.
And after class when they tease her, smear peanut butter in her weave like:
“Save some for later” like
she’s nothing but spread between their sandwiches, the girl’s like:
“Nothing a little scrubbin’ won’t fix.” And she’s okay.
And she’s okay.
And at the public pool while they shy and shiver in the shallow parts, her swim cap looks like a basket of ripened raspberries. And on her back, smiling between water and sky in the deep end she floats.

Two sides, same coin
By: Cory Kleber

June, alive like summer with energy, motivated. Combative
competitive,
perceptions
in black
and white.

Combative, competitive, perceptions in black and white.
Baby, I Love You

Oh, I am supposed to kick this open, YES!
Landed it!
Yes, baby, I love you!

Really?

I love you, too!
Ok, so I have 3 options. I can:

a) Tell her that I love her, which, let’s be honest, I’m not ready to do that.

b) Tell her I’m talking about the game, break her heart, of course, and probably argue all night...
Or I could c) Fake a seizure...

Baby, you know that I...

Yes?
*Seizes and falls backward

Are you ok??

*grunts*
I think I just shit myself.
That’s ok, I still love you...

Full video found here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pV3V1dC39p0
Directed by: Yusuf Word
Starring: Angelo Adside, Danae Smith
Although I know this word holds so much meaning, for me, it is a word of comfort. When I am called Negro, it is said with affection and love, and I can't help but smile when I hear it. I think about the many times I've come home to my parent's house, shaking off the cold before I call out, "¡Quepasamami! ¡Quepasapapi!" It isn't long before I hear the loud, inaudible responses from the kitchen welcoming me home. As usual, I take off my shoes and head into the kitchen, finding my mother cooking dinner for the family. It's usually after a word or two with her when I find my father sitting in the living room, either watching sports or the news.

"Hey papi," I usually repeat myself, moving in for a hug around his shoulders. As usual, he is completely engrossed in the television program. My dad, with his dark skin, coarse hair, and heavy Spanish accent, is just like any normal father, relaxing in his chair after a hard day at work. When he finally notices me, his warm, green eyes brighten as a smile appears on his face. Although he isn't good with words, his laughter tells me how happy he is to see me. He then moves to place a small kiss on my forehead, replying in his boisterous voice, "QuepasaNegrita."

Negro is such a complex word. On one hand, I am entirely aware of its historical meaning and even offended by its existence. Whether it's discussing the U.S. Census or the Civil Rights Movement, I heavily associate the word "Negro" with something academic, old, and archaic. There is power behind the word Negro. It is meant to exert dominance over another being. It is designed to give biological characteristics to a people oppressed by a social system that favors Whiteness. In the end, Negro is implicitly racist.

Yet here I am finding love within the word. Growing up, the word Negro was nothing but Puerto Rican slang. It is said with a soft roll of the tongue and followed by smiles and hugs. It is a pet name used nowhere else but in Boricua Spanish. It is also a word free of color, used to describe Puerto Ricans whether they are Black, or Brown, or White. Negro is sometimes replaced with "Negrito," or even feminized into "Negrita." It is used with care and respect for the other person, and reserved for only those we hold dearest.

Yet I struggle with the term Negro. While I find so much love and compassion in its Spanish form, that doesn't change its meaning even in translation. To assume that it has no deeper, racialized context in Spanish is absurd. Puerto Rican blood, culture, and heritage are the outcome of institutional racism, colonialism, and slavery. Racism exists within Puerto Rico even today. My own father, who has darker skin than even some U.S.-born Black men, is marked a jibaro, or a hick from the countryside. Puerto Rico is by far not free from its racialized roots.

With all of that being said, Negro in Boricua Spanish still seems devoid of any deeper meaning. It is a word removed of any notion of color. It is used for anyone, by anyone, as long as they are Puerto Rican. What's even more curious is that Negro is not used as some form of reclamation or empowerment, or at least not consciously so. It wasn't a word re-appropriated by us Boricuas to stand against an oppressive system. It does not try to create controversy. It isn't a word meant to do anything, but to show affection to the ones closest to us.

This dynamic only adds to my own discomfort with my using of the word Negro. Can this word truly be removed from its oppressive roots? Or has it evolved into something new? More importantly, can I use it in any context other than within my own identity group?

I suppose in the end, using the word Negro is all about context. Hearing it from my father is entirely different than hearing it from anyone else. Still, I find the entire matter curious. Why this word? Why Negro? Even in the Spanish language, the term Negro carries a lot of weight. Yet somehow, for us Puerto Ricans, it has become something beautiful. I don't know if I'll ever find an answer to this question, but even if I can't, there is something nice in knowing that even the most innocuous words can change into something wonderful. For despite what it might mean to most, I will still find myself smiling every time I hear my father call me "Negrita."
Untitled: By Faith Matthews
“Just dive in” she thinks, inhaling a smooth pint of air. His hand glides sweetly around the curvature of her calf. He sits in front of her, slightly bent towards her leg and stares intently at the toffee colored skin beneath the span of his palm and width of his fingers. He inhales as if taking in a breath of the sweetest air.

“Just dive in,” she says out loud. Mid stroke he pauses, and as if pulled out of a trance, his eyes simply raise and meet hers. In this moment he is perplexed.

“What?” He says with his hand resting gently underneath the bulk of her calf. She had spoken before without thought. She had spoken without preparing for a question. She had spoken out of the passion that rose in her body as his fingers glided atop her skin, creating ripples in her soul. She begins quickly without thought again.

“Your hand…your touch…feels like you are beneath the surface of my skin.” She blushes as her stomach turns over and over like the rolling tides. Her hands are sweaty, and she is trying to control the rapidity of her breath. She marvels at his composure, while his hand rests still inside of her soul.

“What do you mean?” he asks. Her eyes lower from his; she gulps down her anxiety and responds.

“Like a whale in the depths of the ocean or a crab at the bottom of the sea, your caress feels like you are deep inside of me.” Her eyes raise and met his, sternly and devoid of the passion that burns within her.

“Unless you plan on staying submerged forever. You should take your hand off of me.” Her eyes do not shift. She stares him down. He doesn’t look away, but he slowly rolls up and allows his hand to slide off of her skin leaving a rise of unease in both of their souls. He sits back and releases a slow, quiet, deep breath. He understood that he had, for a moment, allowed his desires to get the best of him. He wanted her now more than ever.

She sits back in her chair and smiles sweetly. He smiles in return and considers the depths of her soul.

I Love The Way You Walk
By: Danae Smith

I love the way you walk
Like you know exactly where you’re going
And where you’ve been
You walk with all of the confidence that I lack

I love the way you lean
Against the wall when you stand
Like you don’t have a care in the world
Like nothing matters but this moment

I love the way you look at me and
The way your eyes hold mine
The way they see me
The way they see the good and the bad
They way they see more than I can ever tell you

I love the way your hands hold mine
Steady, strong
They tell me they will always be there.
They tell me they will never leave.
They tell me everything I know is not true.

Because I can never let you in. Because I can’t give myself to you, like you want. Because I’m afraid. Because I don’t want to be hurt again. Because I love you and that scares me. Because I know you will do amazing things and I will hold you back.

I’ll hold your hand. But I’ll keep my distance.
Untitled
By: Faith Matthews
Age
By: Airiel Quintana

I'm old
or maybe not
but tonight with this bottle in my hand
watching the young lovers, I swear I feel at least a
thousand.
My friends say I am a fool
They know I chase you like a cure for this old age
Maybe you could
Keep me here in this place,
'Cause I am so scared to leave
Tonight, your smiles are machinations
And I let myself be caught
In that old familiar trap
My eyes are beautiful
I am beautiful
Did I know that?
Of course.
But I smile like an eighteen-year-old idiot
I know I am smarter than this
Or I should be,
things are hazy
Coo Coo Ca Choo Mrs. Robinson
So I take a walk near smarter folks
and I say things that make sense and we reminisce
but I watch you
I like the way you lean into things
In that way boys do
And soon we're outside and you say
I have cute toes
which makes me smile
because toes are silly things to compliment
But I am barely here these days
And so
the dew on the grass makes me remember
Other boys from ages ago
so our conversation turns dull
I remember my age.
I watch your figure disappear into the dark
I am old
or maybe not
but tonight, watching the young lovers
I swear I feel
at least a
thousand.

Dating Dilemmas of an Educated Woman
By: Tifphanie Wooten

Sometimes I think I am destined to be alone. There is
no man out there who can truly honor my spirit. It is
too much to ask for an honest man who is not afraid
to take a leap with me. You don't have to be on my
level when it comes to education as long has you
have a plan for the future and the big three: Job,
Car, Home. I am not sorry that I am an intelligent,
educated woman. Yes, I have high standards and I
have the right to have them. I have worked damn
hard for what I have and I don't slow down for
anyone.I have goals to meet. I deserve a man who
can respect my innocence because I have enough
respect for myself not to sell short of the best.

So Fellas, stop watching my curves and the swish in
my hips, thinking you know something about me
when you clearly don't. Just because you see me in
the club slow winding to
the music in my sexiest outfit does not mean I am fast
or easy, I just want to dance.
Instead take the time to get to know my intellect.
You might like what you see
or even learn a thing or two about how to treat a
woman. We were not put
here to be the object of your affections but to uplift
you, make you better
versions of yourselves. So the next time you want to
complement a woman don't insult her by commenting
on her shape, but rather discuss the sexiness of her
mind. There is nobigger turnoff then a man who
cannot respect a woman.
Curly Hair Anthem
By: Danae Smith

My hair is like me
wild, beautiful, free.
also unruly
it cannot be tamed
the more you try to shape it, change it
the more it does its own thing
it cannot be confined.

but let it loose.
let it fly in the wind

no perms, no relaxer
no pony tails
no heat
no grease
and it is beautiful the way it is
the way it was
it does not need to be tamed
my hair is like me

KeWenaMang? (Who are you?)
By: Imari Romeo

KeWenaMang? (Who are you?)
Many Botswanan children asked:
“KeWenaMang?” (Who are you?)
I responded:
“Leinaiamekelmarí” (my name is Imari)

“KetswakoAmerika” (I am from America)
Another question:
“Ke Mongo?” (Are we together?)
My answer:
“Eh” (Yes)
Quickie Marts Retirement Homes, and Chinese Restaurants
By: AshaSandhu

I wrote my college admissions essay on the difficulties of being multiracial in the hopes that the color of my skin would appeal to universities seeking a more diverse student body. In reality, having a dark-skinned Indian father and a blonde-haired white mother is not very difficult at all (sorry Puget Sound, I lied a little).

Racism isn’t about the small discomforts of being brown that I mentioned in my admissions essay, it’s about privilege. Whatever racism I’ve encountered in my life has been mild, basically harmless, and sometimes even funny. I don’t tend to think about race very often. And when I do, it’s usually in regards to racism happening to people other than me in places other than the one I live in. I live a privileged life, which includes being admitted to this school, so the small discomforts I wrote about in my admissions essay are never oppressive to me.

For instance, my family once visited my great-grandparents’ retirement home in Illinois, which was full of old white people. We got lots of stares. I guess it’s possible that the stares were because we weren’t old, or because it was exciting to have outsiders at the home, but I suspect it was because they were surprised to see people who weren’t white visiting old white people. Who is this family and why did they bring the owner of the local quickie-mart with them?

On the reverse side of the spectrum, when my family was in India, my mother was the one who always stuck out. At a roadside restaurant once, the waiter asked my father in Punjabi if “the white lady needed some non-spicy noodles instead of Indian food.” My mother, who speaks and understands some Punjabi, replied to the shocked waiter that she would like we everyone else was having thank you very much. How did this European tourist lady accidentally end up with the locals, and how did she manage to learn the local language so quickly?

My family is not always on the receiving end of discrimination and funny looks. Sometimes, we’re on the giving end. My extended Indian family, turns out, is sometimes quite racist. As a child, I complained along with the rest of my cousins about how loud and annoying Mexican parties were (as if Punjabi parties are quiet and refined), and how scandalous it was that one of our cousins ran away with a black man. As I got older, I grew less comfortable around this sort of casual racism. When we all had a layover in Korea together, and my aunt complained about “all of the Chinese people looking the same,” I was old enough to recognize racism. And when she spoke fake Chinese to mimic our waiter at a local Chinese food restaurant as a joke, I found it hard to laugh like I once might have.

But stories like those hardly look like the real racial oppression that affects millions everyday in the U.S. In Arizona, the police are required to stop people driving or walking on the street if they look like they could be “illegal aliens,” which implies that immigrants with documentation look different than ones without. Do you suppose that white people are ever pulled over because they are suspected of being “illegal aliens” from Eastern Europe? I doubt it. In not so well-off neighborhoods in big cities, schools with large populations of black and Latino students have access to much less funding than their counterparts in nearby rich, white neighborhoods. At my high school in wealthy and white Davis, California, there were zero black people in sight in my parent-funded prestigious band program.

Probably, I manage to avoid racist treatment from people in part because it’s hard to tell exactly what race I am. Most of the time, I’m white. I have white friends, I go to a mostly white school, I come from a mostly white town in California, I’m a theater minor (a very white minor), I work at a circus and performing arts summer camp (summer camps are notoriously populated by rich white kids), and I have a white boyfriend. Some of the time, I’m Indian. I worry about covering my arms in front of my Indian grandparents, I think about how I should get married to a nice Indian boy, I decided to major in International Political Economy because it’s more
practical than theater (Indians love practical majors like Engineering and Chemistry), and my closet at home has a section in it devoted only to Indian clothes.

All of the time, my skin is a brownish coffee color. (Well, if we’re being honest, in the dead of winter in the Pacific Northwest, my skin might match pretty well with a sheet of printer paper.) My white friends, who love tanning in the summer, express their jealousy at my inability to sunburn. My Indian cousins, however, who sometimes wear long sleeves as long as they can stand it, then sunscreen thereafter, remark that they wish their skin were light like mine. So basically, it’s a win-win situation.

Unlike my dad, my skin is light enough to prevent me from being stopped at the airport every time I go through security because I look like a terrorist. Unlike some Latinas, I am able to avoid being mistaken for a maid. I don’t get stop and frisked for weapons or drugs when I’m walking down the street. And that’s because I’m privileged enough to be here, in this little bubble. Turns out going to a small liberal arts school in the Pacific Northwest, where my skin gets lighter daily from the lack of sun, has more benefits than a theater minor like myself may ever use.

The Musician
By: Nicci

Not much sound emits from the instrument. It is quietly funneled into his head phones.

But if I listen harder, look closer, what will I see?

He sits at the piano drumming away. I can hear thumps on piano keys, the sound of his deep breaths and the puddle splashing rain, beating down outside the window.

I sit. I listen. The faint sound of his music drowns out the football game on TV, and its’ fans attentive snacking noises, crunch, chomp, crunch, chomp. That is how they used to sound. Now I only hear his thumping fingers. I watch them run the course of the keys and his nimble fingers flow like a stream, lightly trickling over rocks and around watered down boulders.

It is wet inside my ears.

His rhythmic thumps take me into a trance. I see Clydesdales galloping around and around, tapping in time with his fingers, one, tap, one, tap. His fingers are their feet, and they are dancing atop the keys. Ballerinas are dancing too. They jump and leap, and spin around from key to key-black, white, black, white- over and over again. The pace picks up and begins to gallop away. It’s like running in the rain.

I see his breathing, the deep ins and deep outs. His chest pulls in. His chest pushes out. He is focused. His eyes are caught in a strict gaze, rushing through notes, little sixteenths and eighths. Quickly. Quickly. Quickly. Hurry. Hurry. Hurry.

SLOW down.

Oops. A mistake. Just a tiny one.

He turns his lip.

He relaxes and softens his haste, and presses the keys lightly; they are soft pillows that depress into each note. His eyes lull across the page. Tapping, Tapping, Thump, Tha-thump, Th-thump. Sonate, Beethoven. Deep breaths. Light music. Football game. Drip dropping rain.

The Musician.
DANCE:
Street Performers in San Francisco
Two Tongues
By: Airiel Quintana

I hear tell of a woman who speaks with two tongues
Who straddles two worlds
And toes a linedrawn long ago

They parade her about the town
And invite her into gilded cages
A talented spectacle
And so unlike the rest

I hear tell she sings at night
Clicking yesterdays with one tongue
And singing songs of tomorrow with the other

These days, I hear her heart is torn in two pieces
Because she has forgotten the sound of her native tongue
Sing it back to her and it might make her remember
Or so they say

I hear tell of a woman who spoke with two tongues
She speaks to no one, these days
Standing silently outside of two worlds
Feet in the middle of most everything
Where she comes from no one knows
But sometimes at night
She sings.

When Nikki Giovanni Says
By: Faith Matthews

When Nikki Giovanni says she takes her coffee black
When I twist my hair on weekends
When I wear an ankh around my neck
That’s me retaining my identity.
In a white white world
When I listen to r&b
When I read malcolmx’s autobiography
And write research papers on hip hop
When I talk about my family
That’s me
retaining my identity.
When I question why I’m still here

When I wonder where else I could go
When I wish for more black faces
When I wish for a black home
That’s me in a white white world
That’s me,
The black person,
the black girl.
And I feel out of place
And I feel out of touch
Longing for a black girl’s world
Out of my element,
Out of touch with this world
Left wanting for one of my own
Igniting Womanhood
By: Nakisha Renee Jones

Men think they own me
One look and suddenly
I’m theirs.
One wave of my hand
Solidifies my entrapment,
In the mind of a control freak.

I am a woman
I’m the one you put into a box
Locked up and pushed aside
Until you need someone to rock.
I am a woman
Stuck behind the scenes
In a world where the first thing
That matters is what gender you are.
And somehow that means
That you can or cannot be,
As strong as a man.

Men think they’re on top of the world
Yes, fresh clothes, high kicks
They can have any girl
Swag to the fullest
Gonna leave her in a daze
Ain’t no way she could possibly say no.

Men think that just because
Their testosterone overpowers their estrogen
They have a right to overpower women.
Morality slinks behind manhood in the race
For interpersonal relationships.

Men think there’s an excuse
For everything that passes between one head to the other
That somehow it doesn’t matter
So long as your swagger’s on high
Go ahead player, yo girl won’t mind
Just because you don’t have feelings
Doesn’t mean we don’t either!

Men think it’s all about women.
It’s all about women
Yes, women as just objects of sex
Women as the ones who lie
Who connive and change their minds all the time
Women who brought demise unto mankind
Who need to be submissive and stay in their line

Women are the complicated ones
Who just don’t make any sense.
Cast off her words due to ignorance
On the matters of which men have all the importance.
Let her stay at home and watch the kids.

Did I say you could take advantage of me?
Did I say I belonged to you?
Did I say somehow you were entitled to ANY little piece of my innocence?
Didn’t I say no?

I am a woman
Who fights with her eyes
Pleading from the inside out
To love me for all that I am
Not all that I appear to be,
To see me for the jewel I am
And celebrate your prize over a glass of hot chocolate
Sitting on a bench outside, slight wind.

My steps speak volumes
From the length of my thighs
To the curve of my waist, Yes
Movements of thought transpire from
The swing of my hips
And I have to ask myself,
What did I say?

Did I say you could take advantage of me?
Did I say I belonged to you?
Did I say somehow you were entitled to ANY little piece of my innocence?
Didn’t I say no?

I am a woman
Who fights with her eyes
Pleading from the inside out
To love me
For all that I am
Not all that I appear to be.