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# POWER IN POETRY

A Poetry Anthology

October 2019

Written by students in the Spring-Fall 2019  
Poetry Class at Rountree Correctional Facility, Watsonville,  
California.

Assembled and edited by poetry teacher,  
Barbara Leon.

Cover art by Antonio Acevedo

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generous gift helped make this  
Anthology possible.



## Preface

The poems in this anthology were written by men incarcerated at Rountree Correctional facility during the Spring through Fall of 2019. My Power in Poetry sessions consist of weekly classes facilitated by myself and open to all, regardless of their level of reading or writing experience. Spanish speakers are encouraged to write in the language that is most comfortable to them.

Each class consists of 45 minutes reading and discussing a poem written by an established poet, followed by 45 minutes of participants writing and sharing their work. The poems I bring in are chosen to express themes that are relevant to the students' personal experience. While the course, as I facilitate it, strongly emphasizes subject matter, we also talk about the ways poets use their craft to increase the emotional power and beauty of their poems. The only rule for the class is that the students show respect for themselves and one another, in this way contributing to a safe space for all.

I am indebted to Ellen Bass, founder of the Poetry Project, and to our hard-working coordinator, Nancy Gomez Miller. I also appreciate the support and efforts of jail personnel, including Rountree Programs Coordinator Ed Greene. As always, I am grateful to my students, who courageously open up in their writing about the details of their often

difficult and stressful lives, and who encourage and support one another in sharing their work.

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## **Chasing Dragons**

*by Antonio Acevedo*

Chasing dragons sounds like some sci-fi movie or book

loved by people who love the fantasy world.

Chasing dragons was something I found myself doing day and night.

These crazy dragons turned my life upside down and inside out.

They don't want me to be happy or clean & sober.

I know these dragons are waiting for me around every corner,

waiting for me to put them in a glass pipe or piece of foil.

10-2 are their favorite numbers once heated, inhaled then released in a cloud of smoke.

They know they gained another victim.

Nothing good becomes of chasing these dragons just misery and possibly another prison term.

These dragons stole my childhood,

lots of fond memories with the people I love.

Even though I'm free from these crazy dragons right now

they still have a hold of the love of my life.

These dragons /don't care about your age or race, what you look like or how much you weigh.

I'm so tired of these dragons.

Time for me to put them out of my life forever and become the person I was born to be.

## **Deeper In My Heart**

*by Antonio Acevedo*

Thinking back on when I was free  
With other wolf packs against me  
Had me terrorizing what we called jungles.  
They just wouldn't let us be,  
always trying to take you away from me.  
It was a never-ending battle  
I fought day and night  
for what's mine and just let us be.  
Only when I thought I had them beat  
they threw a case on me, eventually ended up  
having law enforcement agencies looking for me.  
They ended up taking me away from you.  
Arrested for something I didn't do  
and now trying to beat. I will not claim defeat.  
We are meant to be, our love is too strong  
for anyone or anything to break us apart.  
So please stay strong next to me.  
Just know you're not going "Nowhere"  
but deeper into my heart.  
Thank you for sticking by my side.  
Can't wait for the day you become my wife.  
So I ask you again, my love  
Don't give up on us.  
Something I would never do.  
Remember that I will always love you.  
Soon I will be set free and we can live our life  
the way it was meant to be.  
You. me and our kids.  
I will always love you.

## **Now I Kill This Negative**

*by Anonymous*

Now the necessity for society's sick to be in power.

To break their own laws and rules.

Their thugs, politicians, judges, lawyers, court  
cronies, police, guards,

the military in flux

From mainstream misinformation to chemicals in  
air, water, food,

recreational drugs, medical drugs, alcohol, even  
smoking tobacco,

pure or treated

The people have and are being fucked

The land of opportunity?

The land of the brave?

The land of the proud?

People with pride, proud

of what cronies give to them?

The land of illusions

The land of lies

**YOU ARE DEAD TO ME NOW**

## **She Has a Hole in her Soul**

*by Anonymous*

I met this girl at the beach.  
She looked so sweet on the beach,  
I fell hard for her.  
I would do anything for her.  
I gave her dope, I gave her money,  
even a battery for her car.  
I never did her wrong,  
Just all the good things you would do  
for a person you cared about.  
Then the unthinkable went down.  
She stole the extra key to my new Explorer  
and gave it to a punk thief.  
And she had my Explorer stolen while  
I was in Hell, oh, I mean jail.  
I thought of her for 120 days, every day,  
to bring great vengeance on her.  
But that's not how I roll.  
God will show her the way  
to the valley of Hell for sure, amen.  
And why did I buy her a new 4-Runner?  
Because love is blind.  
I did not see the hole in her soul.  
I ask myself time to time  
what makes a person like that.  
It just baffles me, blows me away,  
scares me away, far away!  
All the way to the stars.  
And I don't even want to tell  
the stunt she pulled at Sunny Cove Hotel.

It just makes her look like a kook, nothing less,  
when she fell through the roof.  
She hit her head hard, harder than I thought,  
in her birthday suit.  
That was a red flag,

### **Respect Me**

*by Luis Miguel Arredondo*

Respect my life  
So I can walk my future  
on a good path  
So people can respect my behavior.

### **Untitled**

*by Luis Miguel Arredondo*

Glory to you, Oh Lord  
Who was made manifest this day  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit  
unto everlasting ages,  
Upon you no evil shall fall,  
no plague approach where you dwell.  
For you has He commanded his angels.  
To keep you in all your ways,  
Glory to humanity.  
Amen.

Behold the wise daughter  
who has built her house in  
the Park of Watsonville.  
She feared her American dream  
in the right path.  
Amen.

### **Freedom**

*by Luis Miguel Arredondo*

I lost my freedom  
for being mad all the time,  
and for being selfish all the time,  
and for my addiction to drugs,  
and I didn't control my use.

### **The Devil is my Father-in-law**

*by Luis Miguel Arredondo*

The devil is my Father-in-law  
In Hell with charm in the devil's domain.  
He's always calling me.  
Where is the man I'm looking for?  
The angel of Hell is back.  
Upon you no evil shall fall,  
no plague approach where you dwell.  
For you has He commanded his angels.  
To keep you in all your ways,  
Glory to humanity.



## **Once**

*by Luis Miguel Arredondo*

Once upon a time the little prince got lost  
and after five thousand years  
he found his way home  
His father was happy that his son  
was home with his family  
and we get puppy hugs all the time.

## **Three Poems**

*by Kenneth Atkins*

### **A Nature's Tail**

As I walk through a forest on a quiet trail  
I find a feather from a quail's tail  
I wonder if it was a struggle from a death trial.

### **Falling of a Friend**

As I stand here with my heart in my hands  
With the thoughtless loss of a close friend  
I look up to guidance from Him  
Again and again.

### **I've Learned**

I always remember where I've been  
The lessons I've learned I can share  
with a close friend.

**de la Peña**

*by Jess Avila*

The heart wants  
what the heart wants  
The sorrow haunts  
even the deepest gaunts

The spirit wanders the forest  
of the symbolic mind,  
Seeking out the dearest blind

Rivers of tears fill  
the waking heart with fire.  
Hollow the boy has become,  
lost  
Traversing oceans of time  
Until united again with his heart's desire

## **Carrot Snatch**

*by Joshua John Bacci*

On the rough cliffs overlooking  
the beautiful ocean was the donkey's plight.  
He was riding with a cruel little goblin on his back,  
dangling a carrot so the donkey would keep going.  
Mile after mile, as night fell so did the carrot stick  
and the donkey claimed victory,  
stomping and smashing that goblin over & over,

then casually going to get that carrot  
only to find it was a make-believe carrot  
and him a donkey with a sealed fate ...

## **Factory-side Gangsters**

*by Joshua John Bacci*

There was a time and place called  
the dusty hall of Ave-in-All,  
or maybe it was the dusty hell  
of Vall-hal-in-all. I saw it as a place  
where cheap particle board furniture  
was mass produced and sold to those  
who signed checks that tallied to pennies  
and the labor was next to forced...  
What does it mean? It means broom side.  
We used to push the hardest line you ever did see.  
With a push broom and a dust mop  
You understand me!!  
Then came the day of drunk on machine pee.

Passed out and got banished  
to the hospital for an observation period  
and one more casualty  
of the “Factory side gangster war”  
way back ‘round ‘84 ... yet no more!

### **Fatherland**

*by Joshua John Bacci*

In a time and place far away from this one  
exists a land of fathers.  
It was cast away and stays separate  
from the rest of creation  
due to the scorn of womankind  
and their inability to forgive and forget.  
These fathers wait and endure their banishment  
with patience and loving compassion,  
as all they know is that one day  
they will be needed and welcomed back  
to protect and provide for their lost families  
... Fatherland

### **Why?**

*by Joshua John Bacci*

Heartfelt yells resound off the abyss  
like confines of my shattered mind/heart/body/soul  
and the complexities of calm confusion  
as I watch the pieces rattle on the floor of  
nothingness.

“Where are you!!” I yell again  
and wait for an answer,  
only getting more echoes and more confusion  
“Who” is yelling and why won’t I answer?  
Frustration builds as I try once more  
“Can you hear me?!”  
Echoes and nothingness once more resound  
off the damaged boundaries of my broken psyche  
“Why” I ask myself, “Why?” won’t they help me  
Who are they? ... Will I ever wake up? ...  
Will they ever pull the plug?  
Is this Heaven, oblivion or something else ...?  
Why won’t the seraphim deliver me?  
Why ...?

## **America, Land of the Free**

*by Tyler Bunnell*

America, land of the free  
California, land of the three ...  
strikes  
But this is not a game  
This is people’s lives  
This is my struggle  
A ghost of my past resurfacing  
at the worst possible times.  
Again and again and again, I’ve paid for these sins.  
A decade ago, I swung and missed twice.  
If I swing again and miss, I will lose my life.  
No, this is not my favorite game,  
played in my youth

It's a way for California to earn revenue.  
A game for the Judge, Public Pretenders, the D.A.  
No, this is not a game, and I don't want to play.

## **I Love Her, I Hate Her**

*by Tyler Bunnell*

In every relationship I've been in  
I've loved her, I've hated her, until its end.  
A paradox I've yet to solve  
For these crimes shall I ever be absolved?  
I love her, she makes me feel no longer alone.  
I hate how much she talks and texts on her phone.  
I love her eyes, her voice, her beauty.  
I hate how taking care of her somehow  
became my duty.  
I love to wake in the morning with her in my arms.  
I hate her, she blames me for all her harms.  
I love to protect her, be her knight in shining armor.  
I hate how much I seem to harm her.  
I love her so much I'd die for her.  
I hate her so much, I contemplate murder.  
Is this worth it, what some call love?  
It doesn't seem to matter, I can't help myself,  
it must be destroyed from above.

## **Miami Beach**

*by David Calderon*

I fell in love with a gorgeous lady  
named Miami Elizabeth  
I don't really get what white supremacy means but  
her nose is just so cute  
and her personality,  
especially when she gets emotive  
But don't underestimate her  
she could be the Devil.

## **To Be Free**

*by Juan José Carmona Torres*

Longing to see my family  
as I endure the consequences of my actions.  
Jail is where I am found,  
waiting for my family's reactions.

I wonder what they will think  
when I tell them I'm at the brink  
of feeling some satisfaction

Sitting in jail, waiting to be free  
I think of the reasons  
that can help me be me.  
I realize that nobody is perfect.

Rules are meant to be broken,  
so I'll just keep on jokin'  
until time runs out on me.

## **Baby's First Word**

*by Juan Jose Carmona Torres*

Spanked on the backside as I take my first breath.  
Crying and squinting, wondering  
if the world I entered is full of torment.  
The gaze of a beautiful woman soothes my  
confusion.  
Her warm embrace calms my delusions.  
My vision is blurry as my cries are eased by her  
delicate voice.  
Who could she be?  
It looks as if I don't have a choice.  
The woman must be a part of me,  
or am I a part of her?  
Days turn to weeks, weeks turn to months,  
months turn to years.  
I finally understand who this woman could be.  
My tongue and lips are formulating sounds.  
The first word I speak is Mommy.

## **Life is Nature**

*by Juan José Carmona Torres*

Dark, dim is the morning sky  
Birds awake, ready to fly  
Roosters belch their loud sounding cry

The day is new for exquisite adventure  
Teens to young children arise for school and lecture



Dimness turns to sunlight exposing  
the worms in the dirt

Nature provides for those flying birds  
It's funny how the world sometimes stenches like  
turds

Especially when you feel like a piece of shit.  
But don't forget to smoke some weed and take a big  
hit.

The world is cruel and laughs as you cry.  
But it's ok, because one day  
we will all die.

## **Sea Survival**

*by Alex Demy*

I've had two dreams this week  
in which I'm under water  
Each dream was very different.

First I was dreaming  
my home is full of water  
Maybe it's because of the smothering  
from the sounds and walls of this place.

Hard to breathe and float here  
Feeling alone even though there's 45 of us  
Learning to adapt.

Last night I could breathe despite being submerged,  
surrounded by sea creatures  
Was I one of them?  
Did I just learn to fit in?  
Things are different now  
I can survive here  
Maybe next time I will be above ground.

**Untitled**

*by Alex Demy*

A crime sparks a discussion  
Women hurt, used, taken advantage of  
Blame shifted toward the victim  
Blame shifted toward circumstance  
Maybe it's the way she dressed  
Maybe it's because she hung out with the wrong  
crowd  
Maybe we might not think this way  
if they were our sisters and daughters

How do we change this way of thinking?  
How do we do things differently?  
A crime sparked a discussion  
The discussion sparked a change  
A change can shift the future.

## **Alone**

*by Peter Donahue*

Anticipation in my fingers  
as I dial your number  
over and over, time and again  
Just ringing on the other end ... to no avail

I remember when all my calls were answered  
never left to voicemail  
I was too important, I meant too much to you.  
Now it's just ringing on the other end ... to no avail

In the not too distant past, we talked until dawn  
Making plans for the future  
A future without this place in it  
A place apart from each other  
Now it's just ringing on the other end ... to no avail

Are you okay? Sleeping soundly?  
Are you even home or out busy with your day  
from place to place, things to do, without me.  
Now it's just ringing on the other end ... to no avail  
It's now been hours, hours to no avail  
When will my calls be answered?  
When will my prayers be heard?  
When will I see you again?  
If ever ...  
Will it be the same? Can it be the same?  
Just ringing on the other end ... to no avail.

## **Human Touch**

*by Pete Donahue*

You and me, we were the pretenders  
We let it all slip away  
In the end what you don't surrender  
Well, the world just strips away

No kindness in the face of strangers  
Ain't gonna find no miracle here  
Ain't no blessing from heavenly skies  
But I got a deal for you right here

I'm not looking for praise or pity  
I'm not walking around looking for a crutch  
I just need someone to talk to  
And a little of that human touch

## **Rain on the River**

*by Peter Donahue*

We were like rain falling on a river  
a river that eternally flows  
We were like rain falling down on a river  
Like two lost souls with nowhere to go.

We followed the river with no direction  
following the path of the swift running current  
Struggling to stay afloat

Where will the river take us?  
Where will we reach the sea?  
Will we be there together  
or will we cease to be?

Can the rain fall down on the same river?  
How hard can that be?  
We can't make it rain on the same river  
no matter how hard we try.  
No time can be repeated  
No need to wonder why.

### **Best Thing I've Ever Done**

*by Peter Donahue*

Days turn to months and months turn to years  
Absence makes the soul wonder  
Doubt creeps in, into what was sure  
This destiny was unplanned

I never thought I would be that kind of father  
Do you ever think about me? Where I've wandered?  
I think about the days gone past  
But nothing good is meant to last

I remember days filled with laughter  
You and I walked in the sun  
Do you remember that I love you?  
You're the best thing I've ever done.

## **Keep Me in Your Heart for Awhile**

*by Peter Donahue*

Keep me in your heart for awhile  
Keep me in your heart for awhile  
When you're working around the house  
and busy with your day  
Keep me in your heart for awhile

Keep me in your thoughts for awhile  
Keep me in your thoughts for awhile  
When you're driving down the road, please  
think of me and smile  
Keep me in your thoughts for awhile

Keep me in your soul for awhile  
Keep me in your soul for awhile  
And when the day is done  
beyond the setting sun  
Keep me in your soul for awhile

## **Swindle Me Again**

*by James Eason*

Cookies are very sweet  
When you wake up you're bound hands and feet  
Then you say to yourself  
I think I've been had by a rat fink  
It's all blurry when you blink  
Then you hear a voice unknown say  
It puts the lotion on its skin

Rin Tin Tin, time to own some sin  
over and over again  
Then you think:  
that damn free cookie in a stranger's tin  
Welcome to the darkest part of the jungle  
stuck in a twisted cage  
Forced in a line  
the dull isn't mine  
set me free so I can shine  
I need to get mine!  
I hope I'm not fucked this time

### **What You Need**

*by James Eason*

All you need to make money is  
a decent-running truck  
and some good tools, is part of what Dad taught me  
For what it's worth, I found it to be true  
He still worries about me when I don't call for a  
long time.  
I'll never get why, OK that was a partial lie  
I suppose you gotta look life in the eyes  
and whoop it if it tells you lies  
To thine own self stay true  
Less you don't try  
I been past death three fuckin' times  
I hope I get cut loose in the morning  
so thunder can go, lightning storming  
with my laces tight  
I hope to march into the free night

## **Unblurred Lines**

*by James T. Eason*

Walking the line,  
thinking of a grind,  
remembering what's my shine,  
being upstanding in an upside down  
place, feeling removed from the human race,  
trying to not catch another case  
among sharks I swim seeking food,  
wishing I was sedated like a lude,  
I love my haters so they  
become my motivators

## **No Longer Needing Denial, So I Can Cope**

*by Dan Feeley*

As the Man in the mirror looked back at me,  
I dreaded what I saw  
All I could see reflected no goodness, but every  
blemish & every flaw

Thoughts of so many failed attempts, the mountain  
grew so very high  
In denial my main coping mechanism grew  
with every lie

Raised by the state with no father,  
I never matured into a man  
Unsteady like the wave tossed in the ocean,  
I lived life without a plan



For so long my life has been this way,  
this life of mine has been so insane  
Then in my darkness I saw a ray of light,  
I no longer focused on my pain

The light led me to the mercy of God, for the first  
time I have hope  
Finding the strength to face my flaws, no longer  
needing denial so I can cope

Looking in the mirror today, I no longer hate  
what it is I see  
Looking back is no longer a man in spiritual  
bondage but one who is free.

### **Kneel & Repent**

*by Dan Feely*

You defiantly refuse to accept My Son, who is My  
eternal will  
Now you have no way to pay the price & I'm here  
to collect the bill  
Selfishly you served yourself in life,  
making it your final choice  
Believing it's only you who cares about you,  
you're deceived by the liar's voice.

Then on the appointed hour the time comes  
& you breathe your last breath  
Fear grips your heart as you realize,  
it's the arrival of your death

Then it all gets so very dark,  
it's the shadow of forever gloom  
As the angels of darkness are here to escort you to  
your forever doom  
They grab & tear at you, at the sound of the final  
justice bell  
Dragging you to your Master, "The Father of Lies"  
in eternal Hell.

Then open your eyes, was it a dream or were you  
returned where you were sent?  
Don't be wise in your own understanding, kneel &  
repent  
Thank the Lord for he is merciful, proving it at the  
Cross  
He is Love & he died for you, saving you from  
eternal loss.

**Ronnie Van Zant RIP**

*by Kurt Fisher*

Lord I made a mistake.  
The farm, it's just like Hell.  
All that smell, I cry for the bad man  
Walking through the swamp  
Step on a snake, it screws you  
Waiting for the train to go upstate  
Train roll on, Tuesday gone  
My baby's gone.

Drinking poison whiskey, train roll on  
Now she on the hunt, double trouble now!  
Lord if I leave here tomorrow  
Will she remember me, Lord?  
I can't change  
Oak tree got in my way.

## **My Life**

*by Kurt Fisher*

As I walk down this life's road  
From my President's shot to the Vietnam war  
to the moon landing  
to dark days of helter skelter & Charlie,  
then Altamont Speedway Concert  
to Hendrix to Janis to Morrison  
But when Kurt Cobain shot himself  
I thought I'd seen it all.  
But it did not stop there,  
The gifted Chris Cornell hanged himself  
as I watched with the whites of my eyes  
It just keeps rolling on  
like the Gilroy massacre  
to the El Paso Texas mall  
to a night out in Ohio.  
I thought I'd seen it all.

## **Fish Gone**

*by Kurt Fisher*

My Grandfather fished till he was 93  
He died @103  
I only went fishing once in 1973  
Now I look back  
I wish fishes were wishes  
I would have fished with him  
on the Cement Boat  
But now he's gone  
& the Cement Boat's crumbled  
As time crumbles

## **Wrongly Accused**

*by Lealand Greenspan*

In the end my words mean nothing  
That's why I watch what your feet are doing  
Now I'm locked in a cage awaiting trial  
Because a thief with a pretty smile  
Talks to cops but she's a liar  
I've been wrongly accused even though they  
attacked me  
These perpetrators tried to flip the script  
That's the art of deception  
Ain't that a bitch  
I'll be surprised if I'm not acquitted  
The word of two drug addict thieves isn't enough  
evidence  
I'm guilty till proven innocent

They took my money, kicked my dog  
and made me work for free  
This isn't funny  
Please God set us free

**This Poem Sucks**

*by Lealand Greenspan*

My poem sucks  
it's like a hoover  
or a shopvac  
This poem could suck  
a golf ball through a garden hose  
It's like a black hole swallowing the universe  
It sucks so bad it hurts  
This poem is like breaking  
a window on an airplane  
A fat kid drinking  
a milkshake through a straw  
A puppy nursing  
or a suckling baby  
Chupa chupa  
Es el chupakabra  
Tootsie Pop

## **A Value to Sum, to Some I Have Value**

*by Arthur Hershey*

To gain me isn't easy  
& constant toil is required  
But if I am not listed as a virtue  
I must say I'm still desired.  
By most of not all  
who've ever known my sweet embrace.  
Beware though 'cause a fraction of my loss  
could cost you the entire taste  
And forever will it take  
for the restoration of my value  
And you can only destroy me  
just as far as I allow you  
Can't you guess yet  
what I'm called from birth to dust?  
If not, hear this answer's value,  
a value based on trust

## **Time**

*by Kenneth Hower*

Time waits for no one  
yet it keeps great track of all around it.  
We lose a lot in the way of time  
yet time never loses track of itself.  
Why ask why keep track?  
If you don't time will keep passing  
no matter what.

## **Negative Zero**

*by Jeremiah Johnson*

The cuckoo sets the requiem for the dark horse that comes from the flapjack empire. The fiat stated is a head scratcher that equates to an irrational number ...

## **No, I don't need yur help! Thank you! or "I don't know what yur talking about"**

*by Jeremiah Johnson*

Walking down the alleyway, bubble gum stuck to my shoe. The disks come ashambled as the moon peeks over the building, lighting the paper in my hand so I may see what ever in the heck I am doing. Gosh!

Pulling the flame from the sparks created by the chipping and crushing of stone flecks, for that I may smoke upon the plant material encased within the twisted remnants o' the blunt wraps.

Tossed into the darkness as the bitch ass overseer comes within the circle of light. Sheesh!.

## **My Motorcycle**

*by Jeremiah Johnson*

As I fly so low in the sky  
like a fighter jet just scraping by  
Lest I die and my ride explode  
Rest assured  
I was in the mode.

## **Twisted**

*by Jeremiah Johnson*

Catching the bucket and rolling around  
See them rocks up on the ground?  
Dallas fo' dallas and pound fo' pound  
Thumping ass music, yup thas the saund  
Schmokin' like a chiminy all through town  
Some stay up whilest othas stay down

## **What the Hell You Say?**

*by Jeremiah Johnson*

This is the routine  
Preempt mind set as they methodize  
Heart sickness causes fever  
notably from the  
granddam hussy ...  
forked when it's swell



**Official Jack Presents**

*by Jeremiah Johnson*

Right now over there  
Richer sweat I must admit  
Over the great table  
If you wish to be wed  
then you too must fall into  
the enchanted love.

**These Damned Matterdaddys!**

*by Jeremiah Johnson*

They fly around inconspicuous  
and tend to bite you and make you bleed  
causing irritation and confusion  
You may ask “what’s a matterdaddy?”  
I must say, “Nothing, Son!”

## **American Hardcore**

*by Josh King*

*“America, Land of the Free,  
Freedom and Power to the People in Uniform.”*

When I was a kid  
skateboarding the only sport  
that could get you arrested.  
Delinquents on the streets.  
Rippers on the ramps  
draining nearby pools.  
Any and all  
surfaces that facilitated  
anti-generational action.  
When I rode the street  
I flirted with danger.

Getting hit by cars  
Broken bones  
The motherfuckin’ cops  
with their ticket books.  
Trespassing, loitering and reckless endangerment.  
Skateboard in hand  
spoke volumes about who you were.  
Most importantly said “Fuck you”  
and fuck you to you all led by.  
The galvanizing force of hardcore.  
An enemy of the arts, minorities, women,  
gays, liberals, the homeless, the working man,  
inner city, etc.  
That’s American hardcore.

## **Middle Fingers**

*by Josh King*

I don't need no credit rating  
Mass production, market slaving.  
Because I spend my life misbehaving.  
All I want is to be free.

Every day I get a little less civilized  
with the name and mere life of the criminalized  
It's a lot of work to dig this hole.  
And when I lie right to your fuckin' face  
It's not because I want to or have to.  
It's because you fuckin' made me.

Someone help me, I think I'm white.  
Too old to work and too young to fight.  
Tired of all the bullshit in my way.  
Sick of being pissed all goddamned day.  
Distrust & mistrust are all I can see.  
They are always trying to pull  
something over on me.

## **Tears of the Black Rose**

*by Josh King*

As they fell into  
the wounded heart  
she licked my wounds  
cleaned my hands  
as I fell apart once more

Black and cold  
dark as day  
tears of the black rose  
will not fade away

Tears that will stain my soul  
my soul  
smoothed as silk  
dripping and spinning

She wore black  
her milk was white  
blood was red  
even at night

Tears of the black rose  
guide my fright  
all alone  
I'm yours tonight

## **Stranger**

*by Cory Lutrell*

Running blindly  
Knowing not where I'll end up  
Been so long  
to call somewhere home

Chasing addiction  
that temporary fix  
to forget my past  
and clog my mind  
Never really trusting  
or knowing for sure  
Everything's a gamble  
living this way

Playing my part  
in this never-ending game  
Being someone  
that I really don't know

Can't seem to shake  
this fog I'm in  
Just want to see  
clearly again

One day I'll get it, hopefully sooner than later  
This choice is surely a death sentence  
Or maybe a chance for me to wrong my rights

Something I've been given  
to strengthen my being  
and come to peace  
with the life I've been given.

**Lynyrd Skynyrd**

*by Cory Lutrell*

Awaiting the day  
that can't come soon enough  
Some might say  
that my road ahead will be rough

Knowing for sure  
that I'm not in right mind  
Still in this blur  
not ready to stay on my grind

The day will come surely  
sooner than later  
Not really in a hurry  
still got to straighten up things  
Can't wait to be a free bird  
& be able to sing

## **Other People's Money, Round #2**

*by Mateo Marquis*

It's not my plan to work for another man's silver or  
gold

when other people's money is a full scam.

I'm here to rip the system down

& tear my money from the scams I fold.

Other people's money is living the dream.

My plan is simple:

Get money & pop like a pimple

while leaving dents like dimples

& holding down simple minds as rentals

Only to return to an active grind

of subliminal signals.

Other people's money is one of a kind

Collecting dollar signs eases my mind

Other people's money

will get a big house with 2 car garage

with multiple rooms to house and lodge

Pool & tubs for bubbly & suds

while lights distract my eyes

from girls that pop

and dunk DJ booth with plenty of drinks and food

while girls run wild

from thugs that may want to be a lil rude

Other people's money is fully paid, fully laid

Everything set so nicely

Bud to pass, grass to smash

full of icy, all on a majesty

Other people's money is my motto

All I need to make my plan a reality

... is a caramel frappe macchiato  
an a lil whip cream  
Other people's money is a true king.

## **Stay Asleep**

*by Mateo Marquis*

Am I awake?  
Still breathing but can't seem to wake in time.  
My breath is consistent but yet can't escape my own  
mind.  
Confined to my body so sleep takes me out of this  
shell  
that often feels like Hell.  
I toss & turn and fall deeper into my cocoon.  
Only noises I hear, all muffled to a low tune.  
I cannot see as dark engulfs me like a typhoon.  
One minute passes as my mind runs rampant  
My only way to hide from my own reality  
is to bundle up & hide from my own mental sanity.  
Time's only gone till the light hits my eyes.  
Then all these damn problems come back to haunt  
me alive.  
To think this is what life's got in store.  
I close my eyes & try to drift off some more.  
As dreams of my past, of what brought me to this  
shore.  
A shipwreck of broken pieces & treasures  
are all that's left of my dearest endeavors,  
Are all the haunting my dreams, I won't know till I  
awake. Until then I'll stay asleep.



## **Osama Ben Llama**

*by Mateo Marquis*

I'd rather be a llama than sitting here  
waiting to find out my sentence or fate.  
I'd rather be a llama, stuck behind a chain link or a  
gate,  
for heaven's sake.  
At least a llama can run wild & free  
At least a llama can spaz out  
& spit in your eye and leave.  
If I do it, I might catch a case  
If a llama does it, it just intimidates our race  
& gets away with no charge.  
I'd rather be locked up behind a fence on a farm  
or do my time secluded, stuck in a barn  
than here at Rountree, cooped like a chicken.  
I'd rather be a llama than something that's fried  
and sooo finger-licking ...

*-Words from the dolly llama.*

## **To Be Free**

*by Mateo Marquis*

Freedom can be lost as fast as it's gained.  
Like clocking into work to maintain in this game.  
If your freedom is gone then you're stuck in a ruff  
time with no freedom can surely be tuff.  
What some called to be free  
like a fresh breath of air or shade from a tree.  
Freedom can only come at a cost.  
If it was free then I'd be a boss.  
Telling my captors to let me go  
so I can go free and return to my home.  
A place with no walls to hold me down.  
I wish I was free to roam around ...  
THE MIDTOWN

## **Dead or Alive**

*by Mateo Marquis*

I can tell what you're thinking  
and can pick up on your thoughts.  
Like a robber or graves I can hear spirit's talk  
deep in a hole with nowhere to go,  
I continue to walk face first through valleys of gold.  
I rest in the fog, oxygen from trees doesn't allow  
me to breathe  
Voices in the distance, another fallen enemy  
I love so freely to hate.  
A candle holds light but only temporarily in fate.  
Bats fly freely through the air, defying gravity.

I can tell what you're thinking.  
Is this truly sanity?  
I'm barely trying, writing this so easily,  
wandering aimlessly, seeking for imagery.  
Like dirt and gravel that cover graves of the  
majesty.  
Dead or alive, thoughts of a memory unforeseen  
still inside of me wake me, when dreams come to  
reality.

### **Lost Boy**

*by Mateo Marquis*

I am a lost boy  
usually hanging out in tha midtown  
There was a time when I was all alone  
and no place to call home  
nowhere to go, nowhere to be found  
My only friend was my spray can  
and these walls leaving my ink in tha midtown  
carved like stone on bathroom stalls.  
I promise when I died  
you would remember my tag on these walls,  
another fallen star above the town  
as I sit back and laugh  
The town that never showed me how  
locked up quick, sent to the penitentiary  
is where I am now  
I realized fast I was alone, with no friends or family  
no father to lean on for my own moral sanity  
I stayed to my grind and played hard to catch

lost in a system, I pressed hard, full court, as I  
passed  
Soon enough I reached reality and forever got paid  
and ever since that day, I've gained my strategy  
to overcome my demise like the lost boy's reality  
So I run wild and free as I sit back an' blaze  
in a land of wizards & thugs in Galilee, I'm stuck in  
a haze  
Neverland is my home trapped out full of thugs  
to a lost boy like me I'm lucky to not be addicted to  
drugs  
Even captains with hooks like grim reaper can see  
me run, run, lost boy or you'll forever be shook  
I'm forever lost, rolling blunts  
sitting under a tree, writing this book  
never mind that as I snap back to reality  
lost boys like me are free as can be  
I'm forever lost sitting under a spell  
writing my words to forever be well  
cursed by my town from the past that's been done  
Ever since that day I will forever be young.  
I've gained my insight and can see a lot from here  
Lost in a system I'm stuck and can't escape my  
fears.  
I'm wishing on a star that God changes my fate  
to overcome my outcome is damn near impossible  
I fear it's too late for my own satisfactory  
I press hard full court press as I pray and stay to my  
grind  
I'm a lost boy behind these gates redefying my time  
by changing my lost boy mind.

## **Over the Sun**

*by Mateo Marquis*

Hot humidity, desolate,  
so dry even a lizard felt lazy.  
We finally pulled the big bus  
to the final destination, off to the side.  
All I could see was a tower.  
Reminded me where I'd be  
till the day I got to leave free.  
A man in the tower held his rifle in hand,  
patiently in anticipation, waiting for takers.  
I could feel my mouth turn dry  
and anxiety run rampant.  
I could tell this was a bad dream  
and I wasn't gonna be waking up soon enough.  
Escorted to the cells where our time would be spent:  
desolate, isolated and depressing  
is where my mind went.  
Now I felt my reality close in.  
My final destination was a prison.  
I knew my time was well deserved.  
Sometimes I'm lost,  
trying to put the puzzle pieces together,  
to make sense of what got me to this point.  
It was the third day of Spring,  
and I remember lighting up a joint.  
Years went by, and me  
and some of the homies got high.  
And the story got told  
of how a day in the streets  
uncovered and unraveled its hold.

## **Time Will Tell**

*by Mateo Marquis*

Don't stop believing ...

Someone loves you.

A family ... their children.

They need you ... You're like an uncle  
just cuz you are where you are.

This won't be forever ... Keep faith.

Time will tell what God has in store.

Don't lose hope.

Many days have passed.

He's there to help you get through some more.

I know things are hard.

And life seems unworthy & unfair.

A good friend told me recently  
to keep your chin up and try to care.

To me that means to keep moving forward  
even when things are hopeless  
and you don't think life's worth living.

As long as you keep a good attitude of gratitude  
and continue to be grateful  
even though things are falling apart,  
some way, somehow

you will get to press the button to restart.

Keep your dreams alive.

Continue to push & strive.

Finally give thanks to the sky  
that keeps the sun from falling.

Do your art & keep drawing.

## **Ruthless Attire**

*by Mateo Marquis*

You do not know me.  
So fuck what you heard and blow me.  
I grew up fast ducking K-9 & ghetto bird to hide my  
stash  
Turned down streets that curve and bend  
You've never seen me smile to a fallen friend  
I've lived life only some would dream  
Only true kings can feel how I feel  
Paid in full in a scheme  
and to seal the final debt

Only blood, sweat & tears can describe my life's  
regrets  
A collection of bones in my closet can close off the  
scene  
Duct tape from homicide can describe my last  
theme.  
Take a deep breath. Air is a façade.  
I only want to pillage and rob.  
I'll sing you a song and trust it's the blues  
Like the color of prison attire  
I'm here to light you on fire  
And piss on your grave  
Stuck in a system where all we are, are slaves  
So I'll trade you a day and you can walk in my  
shoes.  
Grew up fast and refuse to lose.  
So fuck you and what you may think to judge

Rule #1 I'll hold a grudge to the end  
And pour you down the sink and watch you drain  
Wait, take a moment to think  
Now you know I'm insane.

## **Either Way**

*by Mateo Marquis*

The world could be looked at upside down.  
You are stupid to think otherwise.  
If you're not from here  
you are not welcome to our town.  
I see you for who you really are.  
Go back to where you came from afar.  
You cannot share our turf or swim our surf.  
Skate our streets or stare at her cheeks.  
Better yet, when you see the Highway 17 sign,  
Your contracts don't scare my kind.  
We should warn you, maybe we've got bombs up  
our sleeves  
and most are cutthroats and thieves.  
We're not lames and dweebs.  
So listen here  
You're haggard, your cakes are beat.  
You're a meat, it's not okay to say?  
They have no need.  
I won't help, so don't tell me to.



## **What a Shame**

*by Mateo Marquis*

It's a shame they snitched  
And took me out of the game  
All for switching down the lane  
And spitting propane  
What a shame ... I'm holding it down once again  
Putting in work with a pen  
Living life in the system  
It's a shame.  
What a shame I put in the time for a crime  
And got no response on a line  
It's a shame ... to think they were a friend of mine  
What a shame, I'm so hard to hold down  
Came up from underground  
And can't stop all this heat  
While trying to sleep  
It's a shame I can't eat  
And unless smoking bomb weed  
It's a shame.  
I can't fix what I have done  
Since I was so young  
I've been glued and so stuck  
It's a shame  
Life's so unfair and so tuff  
So I take another puff  
It's a shame  
But I can't get enough  
All I think is what can I do?  
And nothing comes new  
But I keep it so true.  
It's a shame.

If only I was a bird I'd fly away.  
But of course I'm left to think more today.  
With no tally or score  
What could I do different to start over once more ...  
If I had everything to go with it  
But the shame is too explicit.  
So I walk in the rain  
And hold the flick to the flame  
Spit bars of propane  
And hold weight for my name.  
What a shame  
I shine light to the dark  
And hold keys to my heart  
So closed off from the start  
And still I glow in the dark  
What a shame.

**Dear My Love, Iris Plascencia**  
*by Patrick McGrath*

I long for her familiar face  
Sober in this godforsaken place  
Thoughts of her clutter my mind  
Longing to turn back the hands of time  
Resignation sets in  
Knowing there isn't even a relationship  
Muster up some will I must  
While I sit in limbo and disgust  
My ears tearing up, they slowly close  
Deep breaths, anxiety, suicidal thoughts  
Tomorrow a new day will surely come

Hope, faith, aspirations, a new life  
My prayers echo until the rising sun  
Good bye my love  
Good bye the night  
Good bye forever  
Forever lost in time

### **Three Poems**

*by Marty McKemie*

#### **Love, What Is It?**

A place, a person  
Maybe a season or a time  
remembered with sweet lament  
How do we choose,  
or is the choice made for us  
without malice or forethought?  
Can you hate love or love hate?  
Is there a true answer to this question?  
Does your heart feel it  
or your mind think it?  
Love, a many splendored thing

#### **Touched**

Something soft, something hard  
A feeling I had  
A subject I thought  
My mind, my heart, my soul, my life  
My world  
She has

## **Existence**

A day in the death of  
A night in the life of  
People I see but will never know  
Conversations I hear and don't understand  
Disconnected, alone, afraid  
The world moves while I stay in the same place  
Hold fast, my beliefs  
The End

## **Two Poems**

*by Alberto Moreno*

One love to my homies locked up.  
Two fingers up to the boys putting us in cuffs.  
Always keep your head up, remember,  
things could always be a million times worse.  
Don't be scared to use your words.  
The road never ends  
be careful who you call your friends.  
You never know who's going to stab you in your  
back.  
Always seems like someone's looking for revenge.  
When will all the bullshit ever end?

## **Obstacles**

Life is hard.  
Sometimes you feel like you're in the dark.  
But your light is your heart.  
Losses are lessons and growing from what you go  
thru

is the most important message.  
Watch out for mind games  
giving you mixed messages.  
Practicing is the only way to get better.

### **Getting to 109**

*by Christopher Mullin*

I'm 5 years old  
here I sit  
on the boulder  
by the dam  
Dad yells "Let's go"  
I get up and trip  
from my slumber  
and get  
simple, easy, and at peace  
innocent  
I'm 19  
graduated late  
but that's okay  
College and life coming my way  
I'm 35  
pulling out my hair  
kids screaming  
jumping down the stairs  
I'm 54  
my life is here and now  
how much can I bear?  
My wife says to me  
Honey, come now. It's time

Let them go, they'll be alright  
I'm 72  
feeling like the end of my life  
not much longer till I meet my maker  
Playing with my grandchildren  
They ask, Grandpa, how'd God  
make your eyes so handsome?  
I blink  
thanking God for my time  
I'm 73  
without telling find my secret  
and live to be 109  
Thoughts become things  
6 generations passed by

**The Song Remains the Same, Happy Birthday**  
*by Robert Plant*

Taking my chances on a big jet airplane  
The sky was red, the sea was gray  
Smoked my stuff, drank my wine  
With my woman, she was so kind  
So there I go in the depth of my soul  
Nobody's fault but mine  
Over hills & far away to misty mountains  
Trampled under foot at the battle of evermore  
I lost a whole lotta love, deep down inside  
Heartbreaker, living loving, she just a woman!  
Hey, hey, my, my  
What can I do with a woman like you?

## **Rising Early Morning - Summer Sunshine**

*by Steven Plummer*

Still clean air - bright sunshine  
Tents on short green grass  
Large green leafy vines growing  
Up the myriad of tall, healthy trees  
Moving river water - clear - clean - quiet  
The smells of early morning cooking  
Close to the one you love  
Life is good

## **The Song of Life**

*by Steven Plummer*

Maybe it's a good thing  
a nation is on notice about racism and war.  
It keeps us on our toes.  
Makes one think! - don't you know?  
What's going on? What can you do?  
Where do we sit?  
In spite of this all?  
Let's do something! Good!  
Against no one - Good!  
What will you do to calm this one's fear?

When the song of wind in the trees  
fills my ears with the song of life  
I rejoice! Earth-Wind-Fire  
have brought us here.  
I am free to hear - The Song of Life.

## **Expectations**

*by Steven Plummer*

What do they expect?

What do I expect?

Where do expectations come from?

How do people form expectations?

Why do people form expectations?

Why do people try to live up to expectations?

Where do expectations take us?

Can there be no expectations?

I expect to live with respect.

## **Building the Redwood Deck**

*by Steven Plummer*

The smell of fresh clean redwood,

cut with a fine tooth saw

on a bright clear morning.

Measuring twice and cutting it once.

Making it right the first time.

Building the future, a redwood deck

for rest and relaxation.

Sleeping outside, BBQ and parties

with friends and family

for the special one you love.

The chimney fire burning

on our redwood deck.



## **Life**

*by Steven Plummer*

Life, what is it?  
The senses, feelings, thoughts  
Where do we get them?  
Where do they go?  
Life's instructions, life's directions  
Life's obstacles, life's results  
What is this life!  
What controls our life?  
What do you do with your life?

I have to resource myself through exercising  
what I can, both physically and mentally!  
Remember the breathing.

## **Hot Wheels**

aft

*by Steven T. Plummer*

The nickname for my McKesson wheelchair is Hot  
Wheels. More to do with my full Metal McKesson  
attitude: in the Wheel Chair

I remember being able to walk.  
Just before I was incarcerated with a fresh crack on  
my hip,  
Now six months ago and the Santa Cruz cops took  
my crutches away.

After about a month the x-ray confirmed the  
Emeline doctor: Ya, it's now broken.  
Still incarcerated and the doctor recommends  
surgery! But they can't acquire a doctor to operate?  
Now six months later, on aspirin and Tylenol  
and still needing surgery on the now broken hip.  
Still awoken with severe pains  
Still Hot Wheels in a McKesson.  
Look at my legs now?

## **Freedom**

*by Giovanni Puga-Rodriguez*

Freedom, it's about getting on the way  
to Watsonville or Santa Cruz

Either way it's an automotive form of transit  
that is cheap and usually full in the mornings  
and slow the rest of the day.

I had to take this bus a lot in my life  
and I was getting used to the ride which lasts  
an hour and a half.

I'll miss some things and the rest of the route.  
The thing that I noticed was the back side of these  
hills - they were long and stretched out the side of  
the outskirts of the town of Watsonville.

The road is Freedom and it's where I spent most  
of my time before losing it.

Perhaps it's a good thing, maybe it's a great  
thing,

I don't know, to be honest but I have more faith  
now than before.

I know I will be free and I'll go to Santa Cruz  
and back to Watsonville just to see all these views,  
just because of my freedom.

**Free Will**

*by Giovanni Puga-Rodriguez*

Not enough free will  
My own choices aren't even mine to own  
Until I clear my head and nose  
Should I stand up for myself when I want?  
It would be a shame to worry  
about things that are limited  
Like the materialistic specifics  
I cannot get to details.  
I shall not give in anymore  
to my shameful insecurity

**Power in Poetry**

*by Carl Ratliffe*

A little Jewish lady who comes in every week  
Bushy grey blonde hair  
with a smile that's oh so sweet  
Behind those little glasses, her beady eyes that greet  
every single person who sits in every seat  
Each and every Tuesday for 90 minutes every week  
Sits so patiently, waiting for every poem for each to  
complete.  
Sitting in her seat, signing every single sheet  
Standing up she glides across the carpet  
on her tiny little feet

Handing back our poems that she types every single  
week  
Keeping every convict grounded in every seat  
And every word they write she thinks is oh, so neat  
Here's to Barbara, for each one every week  
Every class every week  
Barbara, little short and sweet  
Thank you, Barbara  
See you all next week  
Power in Poetry she'll meet

### **Ride or Die**

*by Carl Ratliff*

I write these poems that spit out like raps  
If people like them or not, I don't give a crap  
But if I don't release these words, I know I will  
snap  
Not like a tree branch, more like someone's back  
Don't ask me no questions and I won't tell you no  
lies  
But if I'm your homeboy, I ride till I die  
I'll swallow my pride and continue this ride.

### **Gandhi's Test**

*by Carl Ratliff*

If at first you don't succeed  
try, try again.  
Quotes on the wall,

said by some guy named Gandhi.  
And yet of all these quotes, this is just one note  
that I've ever written.  
I take it to heart cuz  
Gandhi is no joke.  
Failing is not an option  
for it is just a lack of success,  
a hurdle left unhurdled  
because drugs make you a mess.  
Now behind bars, you're held back from the rest.  
down at the bottom in the cesspool.  
Don't trip on this glitch,  
it was only a test.  
Just like a video game, just push the reset.  
Just believe in yourself.  
You are your own worst enemy,  
so fuck the rest.  
I believe in me, cuz  
if at first you don't succeed  
try, try again.  
A quote from the best.

### **My 19th Time**

*by Carl Ratliff*

Shut the fuck up  
you stupid fuckin' truck.  
Just admit you trucked it  
and fucked everything up.  
In day or night  
shit never went right.

Everywhere we went  
just red and blue lights.  
Locked up again, unless bail goes right.  
Now back to F-Unit  
for a cell I will fight.  
I roll up my sleeves.  
Now my fists they take flight.  
A quick jab on left  
and then my big right.  
Racoon-sized black eyes  
and now he sleeps tight.  
Cell 16 now home  
where I'll sleep every night.  
Now ready for court  
I stand in this line.  
But again I'm let down  
one more damn time.  
Back to the phone  
for a co-signer to find.  
Thank God for Mike  
and the papers he signed.  
Goodbye? I'll now leave this fucked up place.  
One last ?  
My 19th fuckin' time.

### **My Black DC'S**

*by Carl Ratliff*

Out here at Rountree  
here I sit  
my black pair of DC's

that perfectly fit  
I walk down the halls  
then out of these walls  
with my new shoe-beruz  
the streets I shall cruz  
there's this J-cat named James  
for my shoes he was aimed  
fuck you compost  
you fuckin' lame  
you peeled my shit  
and you think it's a lick  
now I wait on the clock  
that goes tick-tock  
I'll jack your whip  
now that is a lick  
it's a 2013, the color is cream  
I now wear reeboks  
and now I am the king.

### **Naked Upon Thee**

*by Carl Ratliff*

How do I love thee? let me count the ways  
I love thee past the depth of 10,000 leagues in the  
sea

Our souls grasp to one another, bonded so tight  
More than the moon beith connected to thy earth

Our bodies in bare skin, melting together connected  
we're sewn

Like mangroves intertwined, connected to the earth  
below  
Our love flows like the river that feeds the  
mangroves that grow  
And the sun that feeds our leaves of love that shade  
the earth below  
The sex so blissful as our souls will flow  
Like melting snow making the river for our valley  
of love below

### **Judgment Day**

*by Terrell Richardson*

Most of what I'll state is of my own inflicted  
injustice.

Inquiries of someone else's innocence shouldn't be  
be too far from me.

It's possible to sit and pick apart all the contributing  
factors of an action.

Solemnly the opinion is requested nullifying what's  
been done on my part.

Upholding to validate a singular position offers  
reassurance.

That it's not me whose character needs alteration.

Yet the proposition continuously reflects evenly  
onto the deliverance.



It my heart were pure I'd whistle a tune each  
attende should hear

The principles to uphold are crucified not on a hill  
but in front of an altar, colder than a magic box  
yet inflamed enough for 9-1-1.

Cognition that something needs be done is a  
genesis.

This trait most definitely is one sought by others.

So much is one to exercise itself

To give it is not to say I've freed myself from it

To give it is to say I need it so much that its clarity  
may be a solution.

## **Gag Me With a Spoon**

*by Rydon Ropaneager*

Your televisions sold you lies.

Strobed your minds and hypnotized.

All you wanted was a shiny prize.

Elsewhere people starved and died.

You're going to Hell.

You're gonna fry

for eternity for sitting by.

When they asked you to pass the plate

you thought it was for tribute

not to distribute.

At least your valley girl hairdos look cute

even if your attitudes make me want to puke.

## **You Can't Always Get What You Want**

*by Rydon Ropaneager*

You said you'd meet me here for breakfast  
I've been waiting since past brunch  
You said you've got some Cracker Jack  
You bring me crunch and munch.  
You're goin' up the creek without a paddle  
like Sleepless in Seattle.  
Next time bring the Cracker Jack  
Don't bring me Fiddle Faddle.

## **KIDCOOL The Prayer"**

**plain pat what up?**

*by Jesus Ruiz*

My heart thumps not from being nervous  
sometimes I'm thinking God made me special here  
on purpose  
so all the while 'til I'm gone make my words  
important,  
so if I slip away. if I die today, the last thing you  
remember  
won't be about some apple bottom jeans  
with the boots, with the fur  
maybe how I dreamed of being free since my birth  
cursed out the demons I confronted would disperse  
have you ever heard of some shit so real  
beyond from the heart, from the soul you can feel

But please don't cry, just know that I have made  
these songs for you  
and if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul  
to take  
so please don't cry, just know that I have made  
these songs for you  
'cause I'm ready for a funeral  
I'm ready for a funeral  
I'm ready for a funeral

## **Fuk Fake Friends**

*by Jesus Ruiz*

Fuk a thousand fake friends.  
I'd rather have one that's real.  
And if they all fake  
I'd rather have none 4 real.  
Shady ass suckas.  
Y'all some shady motherfuckas.  
Don't let the sun hit you.  
Cause you just might burn.  
Born in Hell from lonely boy I learn.  
You think that you're a player.  
Sad to see reality.  
All the homies said it.  
But they don't give a fuck tho.  
Fucking with some killers.  
Cause all my homies cut throat

## **Untitled**

*by Jesus Ruiz*

Money ain't an issue  
A rat is a worst  
No problem with a witness  
as long as they don't tell.  
And you could say you slang  
but we all know you don't sell.  
I kik it with the real.  
Fuk you and fuk your side  
That's the fuking way I feel.

## **Shit Changes**

*by Jesus Ruiz*

Shit changes, people change to alot of sukas  
change and try to do the things we do  
I'm number 1, you're number 2  
I'd rather be a G cause I ain't tryna be a u.  
I roll with a few cause I know they're down to ride  
I'm original I come up with my own shit  
I don't like the ohh shit I rather own shit  
and I'm talking money every time you hear my  
phone click.  
I stay loyal to the ones that stay loyal to me.  
If you ask my homies I know they would agree.  
I stay rappin that's my fucking team  
It ain't about the streets  
It's about the ones that risk their life for me.

## **Occur**

*by Peter Seda*

There once was a thought  
That thought was in mind  
There once was a dot  
That dot was in lines  
In time the thought  
became a rhyme  
And in time the dot  
Went up high  
It was like the sky  
had opened up an eye.

## **The Lost**

*by Marshall L. Taylor*

At the blackest of night different animals venture  
out.  
The skunk team up like possums, all searching for  
food and water,  
only being seen by the moon shadows that bring  
them out to see.  
Also the many deer, fighting and sharpening their  
horns on tree branches.  
It's a two-way street, they all have predators like the  
owl and mice.

The night also brings the homeless in their  
environment at night,

some hiding to do their drugs and alcohol. They  
also die or overdose  
and become predators just like the animals at night.  
Each one looking to survive another day or night.  
Hoping they all can live together, but both being  
afraid all the time.  
Becoming robbers and enemies in their own way.

### **Farmhands**

*by Marshall L. Taylor*

Remembering, as a young boy of six,  
my Mother getting up early to go to work.  
There's a loud knock at the door.  
Mom's gone to the field in front of the house.  
Open up the door to say goodbye and there's lots of  
people  
getting out of cars to do the same,  
each taking large brown sacks  
to pick all the white stuff off the stalks.  
There's three women carrying coolers of water  
for whoever's thirsty,  
so the sun won't get too hot on them.  
Then there's lunch; everyone shares  
whatever each one has, a big lunch  
made for everyone.

There's chicken, beans, biscuits, etc.,  
more than enough for everyone.  
Oh, then the whistle blows  
and everyone hurries to their cars  
at the finish of another long, hot day,  
only happy to go home  
and rest for tomorrow.  
Mom's home and I'm happy again.

### **Thoughts**

*by Marshall L. Taylor*

Woke up this morning feeling confused.  
Only because of my dream, seemed so real.  
I was falling from the sky, so high up above.  
Straight through a cloud and into the sea.  
Now, if only a boat would come by.  
There goes a dolphin jumping, jumping over me.  
Then a jelly fish floats alongside me, its tentacles  
hurt a lot.  
Did I wake up yet?  
Trying hard to forget and return to now.  
Sounds all around me shake me back to present day.  
Now I remember, I'm still in jail,  
and not at home, but alone!!!

## **Passing Time**

*by Marshall Taylor*

Walking down the levee, behind Johnny taking a drink.

A Mom and her baby flies by on a bright bike,  
ringing her bike bell in lookout mode.

Ducks fly by quacking loudly at the food  
being thrown in the water close by.

The day is getting hotter which makes us take our  
shirts off

to get the little breeze that blows by.

Oh! look, a surprised snake slithers by  
getting us in a startled mode.

I just wished I had stayed home  
and watched the day on television instead.

Johnny still gargling down the drink he so, so  
enjoys.

Only the sky's sunny colors remind me  
where and why we were out and about.

Hoping this day brings many surprises  
to talk about at home.



## **Court**

*by Marshall L. Taylor*

Riding in the back of a white van.

Hitting, it seems, every bump in the road.

Oh, my hands and ankles feel the hard steel  
pinching nerves.

Somehow it's small compared to the big, giant  
building coming into view.

Now, out of the van, upstairs, to another hole in the  
wall they call the Combs; somehow reminds me of  
a graveyard.

The guards call out everyone's name to go to  
different rooms to be punished for all different rules  
that's been broken.

Now I hear my name.

I go to court only to hear what I don't want to hear,  
come back on another date.

So it starts all over again.

Oh, how I wished it was a dream but it's reality.

Now I want to go home!!!

## **From the Ground 2 the Skies**

*by Brian Thomas.*

These people try and tell us  
that they are familia premro  
but they ain't cause I see no stars  
that shine in the sky at night  
I see bombs dropping during daylight  
putting fear way out of sight  
Who knows if that's right  
that's why our crews shine so bright.

## **Father's Steps**

*by Isaac Valdivia*

I was gone down this dark path.  
I was ashamed and hurt.  
Tired of being broken hearted.  
Miserable of choices and people.  
Broken of words and lies.  
Feels like you're searching for missing pieces.  
So many sad and sleepless nights.  
Nobody seems to listen to your heart.  
Everybody seems to find joy in your sadness.  
No friend seems to be by your side.  
No family, no friend around,  
only darkness, worries and endless nights.  
The door is open wide to destruction.  
Seems like you're headed to a Lake of Fire.  
I can only imagine and see the roar of this Lake,  
internal hurting, screams and pain.

I see the darkness, I see the death around me  
like a big ocean wave crashing down on me.  
Scared of how this night is so dark.  
You hear the screams of your voice  
as if you're drowning in the ocean.  
You have no one to listen to you  
so you scream for help, for the hope  
that your Father comes to save you  
You remember your Father's voice  
because he always stands by your side.  
As a boy you remember the love of your Father  
holding you  
so you scream for your Father's love.  
Only happy thoughts and joy come to your mind  
when you think of your Father.  
So your fear is gone in the darkness  
because your Father brings joy, light and happiness  
when you thought you were lost  
and you feel his presence next to you.  
You feel warmth, happiness and protection  
when you call for your Father.  
Now all your darkness and shame are gone  
because we serve an awesome God.

## **County Jail**

*by Isaac Valdivia*

Gang life do you go active or dropout?  
Which pod do you want to spend your life at?  
Does it matter, really matter, behind County walls?  
The jail has a free cell room just for you.  
Lockdown sometimes 24 hours a day,  
all by your lonesome self.  
No shower, no TV, nowhere to go.  
Feeling sad and hurt, full of anger.  
Nothing to do except keep the hope.  
One day you'll get out from behind the walls.  
Only patient hope, faith & trusting God.  
Surrounded by a bunch of wolves.  
Feel like you're in a dark pit with wolves.  
Nobody has any regard for your life,  
if you live or die.  
You homies want to ruin your lives.  
If you stay active or drop out.  
It's a battle behind the walls with these demons.  
Fighting with hate is what the Devil wants.  
You so-called homies, careless about your Mom and  
Dad.  
The County walls are really tough.  
The concrete walls never move.  
You start to give up hope in County.  
So I turn to Bible for hope.  
I belong to Jesus Christ.  
I choose to fight against the Devil,  
looking for answers in my Bible of the word.  
Prayer, fasting, asking for strength.

God surrounds me around my enemies.  
He loves me when I don't love myself.  
Now this poem is for someone else.  
To see God can help you behind any concrete wall,  
no matter how tough things may seem.  
Thank the Lord for your strength.  
Peace 'n love behind these County walls.

### **Surf Justice**

*by James Wesley*

Terribly cold, I broke a window in the dead of night.  
Now sanctimonious courtroom preparing for a fight.  
Look at that D.A. in Armani suit & tie.  
He wasn't stripped for inspection, most be a  
trustworthy guy.  
There upon the bench in pompous robe is Judge  
Unfair.  
He's ruled once in my favor, so I believe he must  
care.  
On the jury is a woman I turned down for a date  
And every cop that's arrested me comes to see my  
fate.  
Blonde extraordinaire sat on me awhile.  
She's the only tormentor who somewhat suits my  
style.  
Then there's the journalist by day.  
She represented me so well, my sentence has been  
stayed.  
Now I sit in jail, over the stolen jacket.  
Justifying bunk space for the criminal justice racket

Next will be appeals attorneys vying for the case.  
I play a vital function in the American economic  
race.  
It's super important, to China we lose no face.  
Lock up all us homeless so there will be no  
disgrace.

### **Nova Complexity**

*by James Wesley*

A mist of water vapor altitude unknown.  
A hiss of sunlight photons defines each cloud  
shown.  
These beams of incandescent brilliance representing  
thought  
would, as Nicolas Tesla, change reality sought  
with phantasmagoric colors this world becomes  
surreal.

Then flash lightning bolt, ions rising from the  
ground  
making equilibrium, but were those photons found?  
For the source of each reality here  
seems locked by perspective thermonuclear.

Alchemists of antiquity sought rosetta stone of old  
to change lead holistically into bars of gold.  
Though far greater wonders await humanity  
when cerebral girth is nova complexity.

## **Terra Firma Body**

*by James Wesley*

Skeleton cage of calcium  
Protects heart in sac pericardium  
Pendulum arms swinging wide  
Jiggling innards ebbing slick tide  
Cauliflower brain bouncing like jello  
Vocal chords echoing hello

A molecular mish mosh of parts  
Salvage from broccoli to candy hearts  
Ecologically recycling the bits  
From green grass into bovine tritips

Given such terrestrial interface  
To work, to see, to have grace  
Stuck in this biological box  
Luck having such moxie in vox

## **I'm in the Process**

*by Oscar Zamora*

I'm in the process of letting go of unworthy thoughts

I'm in the process of filling my mind with thoughts that will serve me in a positive way.

Lots can happen when we use our time wisely.

Lots can happen when you pick up a book, read it, dissect it & apply your new knowledge.

I continue to pray for good health, peace of mind & continuous improvement to overcome all obstacles.

I love the feeling of having supreme faith in God.

I love the feeling of being wrapped in God's love.

When I need to vent, when I need to cry, God is by my side.

## **Perspective, Perception, Perceive**

*by Oscar Zamora*

**Perspective:** The aspect to which a subject or its parts are mentally viewed, esp. a view of things (as objects or events), angle, outlook, point of view, standpoint, viewpoint

**Perception:** Awareness of one's environment through physical sensation, ability to understand



**Perceive:** To attain awareness or understanding of,  
to become aware of through the senses

**Perspective**

Life is good

It only gets better, like wine, with time it gets better

That is, of course, on your perspective/perception

Looking at your cup as half empty or half full.

Appreciate your health, the ability to think/make  
choices thankful for having a lot of freedom here in  
this jail

In short, this would be looking at life as your cup  
being half full

In the process of becoming one of the best poets  
I love knowing this is something I can share with  
my daughter

The thought of her smiling brings me joy  
“Love to Dad, I made my love poems”

**The Pac Man**

*by Oscar Zamora*

Recently I earned a new name

The Pac Man

Because I pac everyone on the basketball court.

We call it the Octagon

The place where we take out all of our anger

The favorite part of my day

Is packing someone in the court

Squad Up!

Means get your team ready

## **Rehabilitated & Released**

*by Oscar Zamora*

It's ok she doesn't care about it right now.  
I know she has a lot on her mind.  
Her little lonely boy is getting out.  
That's all she's thinking about.  
She keeps on telling me  
that her latest relationship is down the drain.  
Thoughts of her & I dancing in the rain.  
It would be nice to have a job, a car, our own place  
to stay.  
The thought of it brings joy to our hearts.  
Rehabilitated & reformed  
Staying true to the gangsta norm.  
"Do everything to reach your mainline status".  
is what I'm doing. The real mainline, the streets.  
To have a safe place to raise our kids, go to school  
& work.  
With God by our side, everything's possible.

## **Two Poems**

*by Oscar Zamora*

### **Reconnected**

She heard I'm coming home.  
She said she wants me all alone.  
The thought of her and I  
just feels so right.  
She calls me her little lonely boy.

### **My Time to Shine**

Excited about going home this year.  
Made some choices along the way.  
Sacrifices must be made,  
for the greater good is what they say.  
My mainline status is inevitable.  
The real mainline? The streets.

### **When I See Her**

*by Oscar Zamora*

The feelings are unexplainable  
the most beautiful woman/girl  
I would love to believe she thought that  
the 1 that keeps me up at night  
that thought that motivates me  
and energizes me through my day  
that thought of loving myself  
unconditionally and in so doing  
I am loving her cause we are one  
I wake up feeling loved and accepted and cheerful  
knowing we are always together in prayer  
I smile  
we are always together.