

¡ESCRIBA! ¡WRITE!

A BI-LINGUAL JOURNAL OF STUDENT ART AND WRITING



VOLUME 4, JUNE 2006

EUGENIO MARÍA DE HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

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PUBLISHED BY:

Library Department
Hostos Community College
The City University of New York
475 Grand Concourse
The Bronx, Ny 10451



A CAT'S MEOW PRODUCTION

COVER: Andreina Martinez Hiraldo, "Untitled"
BACK COVER: Joseph LaMonica, "Back from Iraq"

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You hold in your hands our fourth annual issue of Hostos Community College's *¡Escriba! ¡Write!*, a bilingual student literary and art journal. With the support of Hostos faculty and staff, we offer an outstanding collection of essays, short prose pieces, poetry and art. Hostos students love to write, and in this edition you will find diverse but also universal themes, from love and other connections, to life—the good, the bad and the ugly. The artwork and photography included in this issue embody the global perspectives our artists bring to their creations, and express the multilayered, multilingual and diverse cultures we live, work, study and raise our families in.

This volume also includes essays submitted to two writing contests. In February, we celebrated Black History month. As part of the month's events, the Hostos Black Student Union sponsored an essay contest whose theme was "The Civil Rights Movement: Then and Now." We include the 1st place winner and two other winning essayists. We also celebrated Women's History Month and once again an essay contest was a part of the month-long festivities. Hostos English faculty sponsored the essay contest which was open to first-time college writers. The essays were in the form of letters to a (fictional) New York City History Council and the essayists explained why they support an award either for Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz or Wilma Rudolph, basing their arguments on the lives and contributions these women made to the goal of equality for all women. We proudly publish the winners and runners up of these two contests.

The idea for *¡Escriba! ¡Write!* has always been to showcase the creativity and diversity of Hostos students. Although most of our writing is in English, we urge students to submit pieces in Spanish or any other language. We give thanks to this year's contributors; to the students who helped to edit and produce this year's journal, to the many faculty members and also staff who are so supportive of the work and the creations of our students.



Nicole Goodwin, "Silent Song"



Nicole Goodwin, "Distant Waterways"

INTRODUCTORY SPEECH FOR WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH ☆

When I was a young girl growing up, I used to watch my mother get dressed for work every day and I would watch her put on her make-up, perfume and pretty dresses. I didn't understand why she would go through this ritual and so one day I decided to ask her why. She simply said, "because I am beautiful, sexy and strong." I didn't understand what this meant so I never asked her again. Then, as my older sister started to grow, I noticed that she too would perform the same exact ritual and so I thought that this was how it was supposed to be. I thought that a woman must perform this ritual in order to prove that she is a woman. As my other sister began getting older, I saw that she didn't do the same things as my mother and my oldest sister did; instead, she would walk around in jeans, no make-up, her hair pulled back in a ponytail, under a baseball cap. Now, I was the youngest of my sisters and I was trying to figure out where I fit into all of this; I was watching my mother and sister do the same exact things and then watching my other sister who did not and so I grew increasingly confused. When I asked my sister why she wasn't doing what my mother and other sisters had done, she told me, "you do not have to walk around with dresses on, make-up on, smelling pretty, and high heel shoes to prove you are a woman." Now I was really confused, caught between the two worlds and so I decided that what my sister told me about wearing jeans and baseball caps would better suit me because I was a tomboy. I thought, I can play hard like boys and do all the things that boys do and better, and still be a girl and still maintain my feminine ways. Wow! this would really work out for me and so I lived by that belief for a very long time.

Then, after having children and raising them, I made the decision to go back to school and so I entered into Hostos in the spring of 2004. While signing up for classes,

I saw that the school was offering a class on the study of women and I thought that this class would be very interesting. I took the class, being offered by Professor Fisher. Little did I know that taking this class would bring such an awareness about women into my life and little did Professor Fisher know that she would light a fire inside of me that will never go out. Listening to all of the struggles that women had to endure to bring us to our present state, listening to what women had to fight for in terms of education and the right to vote left me feeling empowered and eternally grateful. Just think! There was a time when women could not be educated; when we were looked at as inferior or less than. There was a time when women were not important and had no voice. We were just faces on this earth that were here for the sole purpose of making babies and taking care of our husbands and our homes.

Well, women, I'm here to tell you that whoever put that awful stigma on women was wrong! We do serve a purpose here on this earth and we belong everywhere and anywhere. And yes, we are very important and very necessary. Women are productive on this earth. We are the fruit of the earth and always have been since the beginning and we will not take a back seat or be made to feel inferior to anybody. We demand respect and we're going to get it, even if it means that we must fight for it. We are equipped and ready to do battle. But here is the magical thing about women: no matter what anyone does to try to keep us down, at the end of the war we may be bruised and battered but we are coming out and are coming out victorious. The worth and the power of a woman should never be underestimated, but rather embraced and respected and we should be looked at not as a threat, but as a gift to our male counterparts.

Women should not be looked at as just human machines who only have the capability of making babies and caring for others and though, in some of us these qualities are intrinsic, it is not our only design here on earth. Women are and always have been brilliant leaders, educators, doctors, lawyers and the list goes on. If there is any question about that, just look at who is in charge and runs Hostos—a woman, Dr. Dolores Fernandez, and our Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, an African-American woman. So there should never be a question about the types of positions that we can hold or what it takes to get there. We have the right to anything that a man holds rights to and we can do anything that a man can do. Sometimes I think that we do it better because women are not impulsive; we're thinkers, planners and we're methodical. We never go into any situation blind. We always think about the things we're going to do before we do them. Even if we have thought of it for a quick second, we still play it out in our minds before we act upon it.

So, my sisters, while you're here at school, be certain to get the education that you are entitled to and deserve. To quote Adrienne Rich, "You cannot afford to think of being here to receive an education; you will do much better to think of yourselves as being here to claim one." Do your absolute best, find your voice and shout at the top of your lungs because you will be heard and noticed. Don't be afraid to go against the grain and never be afraid to stand alone, but always remember to stand for something because if you don't you will fall for anything. Assert yourselves. Take pride in your work and your lives. Respect yourselves and most importantly, love yourselves. If you have daughters, teach them to respect themselves and to demand respect, teach them to walk with their heads high and don't take "no" for an answer. Teach them the

power of self love; it will be the single most important gift that you can impart to them. If you have sons, teach them how to respect women, how to show affection and how to love women and let them know that it is all right to cry and be sensitive. Show your sons that women are not what they see on TV. Help them understand that the images they see are stigmas placed on women by society and it doesn't mean that those images are true nor do they speak for all women in the world.

In closing, I wish you all the best and congratulations to the winners of this contest. You have done a fabulous job on your essays and remember: even if you didn't win, you are still winners. I would like to close this speech with what I thought were pretty good quotes to compliment this speech:

*“Whatever women do they must do twice
as well as men to be thought half as good.
Luckily, this is not difficult.”*

Charlotte Whitton (1896-1975)

*“Women in this country must become
revolutionaries, we must refuse to accept the
traditional roles and stereotypes.”*

Shirley Chisholm (1924-2005)

*“To be or not to be is not a question of
compromise. Either you be or you don't be.”*

Golda Meir (1898-1978)

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: FIRST PLACE ESSAY ☆

Dear New York City History Council,

My name is Adeola Koiki and I have recently received your letter asking who I feel should win the award between Wilma Rudolph and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz to celebrate Women's History Month this year. To me, Wilma Rudolph's life story and accomplishments would best inspire girls to persevere against the odds. Wilma Rudolph was born against the odds.

She was born a premature baby into an African-American family and in those days black "babies were denied access to the best doctors and hospitals." Wilma was also born a very sick baby, with diseases such as pneumonia and scarlet fever, "which left her leg partially deformed." In short, Wilma was born with enough diseases to make a young girl lose hope, feel like an outcast and curse the day of her birth. But Wilma was strong, stronger than many - maybe not physically because of her sick condition, but in her heart and mind she was determined to help herself. The knowledge of Wilma's accomplishments will inspire any girl or any child on the face of this earth since she was "born with the odds stacked against her" but she strived and "grew to achieve a list of accomplishments longer than the list of her childhood ailments."

Wilma Rudolph's life could inspire anyone. She could barely walk, but with her family's encouragement, Wilma—at the age of nine—took off the braces she used to help her get around and started walking on her own. At the age of eleven, Wilma played basketball at her school, "where her coach gave her the nickname 'skeeter' because, as he said, "You're little and fast and always in my way." Wilma became a basketball star who set the state record for having the most points scored in a high school game. This is even more astonishing to me because I am a col-

lege basketball player and as good as I am, setting some school and AAU records, never up to now have I set a state record. Looking up to Wilma's achievements, I guess I have some work to do. Wilma also ran track (as I also ran the same races as Wilma) and she never lost a track meet in her high school career.

At the age of sixteen, Wilma competed in the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne, Australia, running the 4x100 meter relay and winning a bronze medal. So at the age of sixteen, she was already an Olympic winner, despite the fact that she could barely walk seven years earlier.

At the age of twenty, Wilma competed in the Olympics in Rome, Italy, where she was a star, breaking not a state record that I have yet to break, but by being the first American woman to win three gold medals in one Olympics. She won the 100 and 200 meter races and the 4x100 meter relay. These are all sprinting races, so the little girl born with a handful of diseases, who could barely walk was at that time, and still considered to this day, the fastest woman ever to live.

Another reason Wilma is so inspiring is because, despite all of her amazing achievements, her biggest achievement was at a time of racial inequality, racial discrimination, and white authority. The Governor of her home state, Tennessee, wanted to have a victory parade in her honor. But Wilma would agree to attend the parade on one condition: if both blacks and whites could go together. Wilma's parade was the first integrated event held in her hometown of Clarksville, Tennessee.

In conclusion, the New York City History Council would have to honor Wilma Rudolph because of her breathtaking achievements. You can give her the award knowing that young girls, young boys and even myself as an adult, are inspired to believe we can do whatever we

want with our lives with hard work and dedication. Another reason she can and should be given this award is because you, the Council, can make up for her not receiving a Noble Peace prize for bringing blacks and whites together in harmony to celebrate. Wilma's life story and accomplishments will and can inspire any and everyone and that is why we should teach young kids about her life and the things she did. Wilma Rudolph is the right choice and I hope this letter can help you to make the right decision.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Adeola Koiki



Grisel Lebron-Soto, "Self Portrait"

★ **WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: RUNNER-UP ESSAY**

Dear New York City History Council,

I am writing to you today about a young woman whose name is Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. Sor Juana stood up for what she believed in. “She defended her right to knowledge and she made sure that her ideas were made known to everyone.” In a world where women lived a life of servitude and silence, she had a major impact on everyone throughout the world.

Born in Mexico in 1648, Sor Juana was born to a mother who ran her own plantation and was illiterate. As for her father, he was completely gone from her life. The only person who encouraged her to seek education was her grandfather. Before the age of three, she learned how to read. One time, Sor Juana begged her mother to dress her up like a boy and allow her to attend the University of Mexico. However, her mother refused. As a result, she taught herself Latin in twenty lessons.

Word spread about Sor Juana’s immense intelligence. There was an invitation for her to go to the Court of the Marquis de Mancera. When she arrived there, she was “tested” by forty philosophers, theologians and scholars. All these men were astounded by Juana’s great intelligence. Everyone finally recognized a female intellectual in a world where women were looked down upon. Juana was asked to stay with the Marquis of Mancera. Also, they asked if she would write poetry for political and social events. Naturally, this would attract attention from enemies, because Juana lived in a world that associated intelligence with men.

In 1667, she joined the Convent of the Barefoot Carmelites. But Juana was only there for roughly a year and a half and then joined the Convent of the Order of Saint Jerome. Sor Juana wanted to join the convent so that she

could escape marriage. Here, she would spend the rest of her days. Sor Juana published a book called *La Respuesta* (The Response) defending her rights as a woman, including the right to an education. Because of this book, her career ended and she was forced to stop writing. She never wrote again and lived her life helping to care for others. Time and time again, she was threatened but managed to break the silence which women were forced to keep.

I feel that Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz's determination and strength is such an inspiration for girls to persevere against the odds. Her mentality of never giving up and defending what she believed in would motivate all girls around the world.



Chamene McCants, "The Eyes of March"

★ **WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: RUNNER-UP ESSAY**

Dear New York City History Council,

You have really chosen two very exceptional women in Wilma Rudolph and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, to represent women during Women's History month of 2006. Both women have made astounding contributions to society. I think that you should really consider Wilma Rudolph as your honoree.

Wilma Glodean Rudolph, born in 1940 during segregation, came into this world at a disadvantage from day one. Born prematurely at four pounds and five ounces, she literally came into this world fighting for her life. She was unable to be born in a hospital due to segregation. This was a privilege reserved for Whites only. This caused Wilma to suffer through all kinds of illnesses, such as measles, mumps, chickenpox and scarlet fever. All these illnesses were treated by her mother. However, nothing could have prepared Wilma for what was to come, when she contracted polio.

Wilma did eventually have to be taken to a doctor when it was found that her left leg and foot had become weak. The doctor informed Wilma's mother that Wilma had polio and would never walk again. Her mother found treatment for her at an African-American college hospital, 50 miles from their home. So twice a week for two years they made that trek to the hospital so Wilma could get treatment. Eventually, she was able to walk with the help of a metal leg brace. When Wilma could walk again, I guess she decided to go one better than that. She became an athlete, a track star. While playing basketball in high school, she was spotted by the track coach of Tennessee State University, who offered her a track scholarship. She then went on to become one of the most celebrated female athletes ever. She won three gold medals in the 1960

Olympics as well as a host of other awards and achievements, some of them humanitarian awards for her help with the Civil Rights Movement. She received her Bachelor's degree in Education, which she later used to return to her hometown to teach. Wilma married in 1963 and went on to have four kids of her own.

In closing, I think that Wilma Rudolph is the best role model for women who are trying to persevere against the odds. She could have easily given up when told that she had polio and would never walk again. Instead, she ran, ran all the way to three gold medals in the Olympics, the biggest athletic stage in the world.

Sincerely,
Jacob Nelson



Angel de Jesus, "Faceless Angel"

★ **WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: RUNNER-UP ESSAY**

Dear New York City History Council:

I have learned that the New York City History Council would like to recognize a woman whose life story and accomplishments best represent a woman's triumph over barriers. For this recognition, two women were given to us to research: Wilma Rudolph and Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. Though Wilma Rudolph was recognized for her Olympic medals in running races and, later, and through classes illustrating her persistence and commitment, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz was considered the first feminist—in the 1600s—when a woman had two options, either wed or join a convent of nuns.

In her early years, Juana Ines was considered a very bright child, learning to read by age three. She fought in favor of women's rights. Her struggle to help women be recognized made her stand out as a leader. She became the first woman to lecture and teach others her knowledge of education. Juana Inez wrote poems, plays, stories, and letters addressed to the Pope at the time, criticizing his theories.

When the time came for Juana to enter womanhood, she chose not to marry and depend on a man, who would not support her educational goals. In the 1600s in Mexico, where she lived, women were not allowed to learn or teach. She joined a nuns' convent to support her knowledge in education.

In my opinion, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz made the road clear for many women to accomplish much more than what was expected at the time. She made it clear that, as women, we have the right to be educated. Her joining a convent made me realize that she would rather live a spiritual and educated life than have to assume a role she did not feel strongly about. In a letter to the Pope, she told

him this was her calling from God, and she expressed her strong opinion on women's rights.

In conclusion, those who have never heard of her have the opportunity to know that she deserves the recognition this year, and our admiration for a lifetime. Please take my point of view into consideration when you make your final decision.

Sincerely,
Ana Torres



Sally Bines, "Mother Theresa"

★ **WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH: RUNNER-UP ESSAY**

Dear New York City History Council:

Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, born as Juana Ramirez in Mexico in 1648, faced discrimination for being a woman of studies. In a society where the men were the dictators of the women's rights, the women were taken in consideration as sexual partners only. This made the women think that the only expectation they could have was to make a "good marriage," but Juana Ramirez did not accept this in resignation, and she learned to read through the books that her grandfather had at home. Her thirst for knowledge did not stop here. Since women were not accepted in the schools, she dressed in men's clothing to be accepted. Later, a defiant Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz achieved her success fighting any obstacle that would stop her in the effort to nurture her intellect.

From the year of 1664 until her death in 1695, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz - the name that she adopted when she joined the Convent of San Jeronimo in Mexico City—left us a vast collection of her works, which includes poems such as "Los Empenos" and musical plays such as "El Cetro de Jose" just to mention two.

At the center of a misogynist society, where sexism took the first place, Juana Ramirez, or Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, was famous for her beauty, but it was her intellect that helped her to gain a place in the society, and to get the respect of men in power. The possibilities for women were so limited in her generation, yet, she was admired for her works. Far from all selfishness, she thought about generations of women to come. Women! Aren't we the source of her inspiration? Let us, then, follow the example of this admirable woman of letters. Let us continue the work that she started.

Today, we are privileged with more opportunities for women. This is the time to brighten our intellects. We are great mothers, wives and daughters, and we fulfill our roles with great success, but let us cross any barrier to expand our knowledge. We women should not stop from getting an education. Let's go ahead, because the fountain of knowledge is infinite, and "Knowledge is power!"

Nowadays, all across the globe women are expected to be a productive part of society. We must demand to become involved in public affairs, in technology, in medicine, in the arts. This proves that in our generation men and women are considered equal intellectually. What good would Juana Ines de la Cruz have done, if she had lived in our time!



Miguelina Rueda, "Colorful World"

★ **BLACK HISTORY MONTH: FIRST PLACE ESSAY**

CIVIL RIGHTS: THEN AND NOW

It's seemingly possible to believe that the American Civil Rights Movement has made massive progress from 1865 to the present. The Emancipation Proclamation, the Fourteenth Amendment, desegregation and Affirmative Action have all been major steps towards the goal of equality. Although much progress has been made, it is still frightfully disturbing how much change has not occurred in the past 145 years.

It is difficult to believe that the same violent acts that occurred circa 1865 to “niggers,” and occurred circa 1965 to “coloreds,” are still occurring today to African Americans. The only obvious changes are the excuses and justifications for these “lynchings,” or in modern terminology, “hate crimes.” It's not only acts of violence that keep the current American Civil Rights Movement alive, but also the constant struggle for equality.

In a small town in rural Georgia, racial tensions about integration arose at a public high school event—a prom. It flared into a national debate in the 60's shortly after *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, which declared “Separate is NOT equal.” This debate occurred again almost 50 years later, in 2003. Not only was a high school brought to light for debating the integration of their high school prom, but because the nation learned that these segregated proms had been going on for the past thirty-one years, better known to the locals as the “white prom” and the “black prom.” The supporters for the segregated proms stated that these proms were in place to circumvent interracial dating. Reading about this in 2003 seems more like reading an article from 1957 and the integration of Little Rock Central High School. Although no fatalities occurred in the 2003 prom desegregation, it was a loud

message to the nation and the world that civil rights in America still has a long way to go.

Some may say that this is just an attitude of the U.S. South and this isn't something that is prevalent all over our nation, but they would be wrong. The need for Civil Rights is stronger and more alive than ever. This isn't just an isolated incident that occurred in a small rural southern town; this extends even to the major cities in the North and West. For instance, the murder of Timothy Stansbury in comparison to the murder of Emmett Till is equally as tragic and senseless. Neither of these young men did anything to provoke or incite their murders. Emmett Till was a young man of fourteen, born and raised in Chicago. While visiting family in Alabama, this teen, for the crime of whistling at a white woman, was brutally beaten and tortured to death. The two men who committed the crime were tried by a jury of their "peers," (peers = married white racist men from the same county) who drank beer during the one day trial, and consequently were found innocent of the crimes in 1955. Similarly, Timothy Stansbury was murdered on the rooftop of his home in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, New York City in 2004. Timothy was cutting across the rooftop of his building to the apartment of his friend in the next building when was shot and killed by an NYPD officer who claimed that he thought Timothy was reaching for a gun. Just 19, Timothy was found to have no weapon, was breaking no law, and had no criminal record or history of police altercations in his short life. Yet he was shot and killed by those charged to protect and serve him. What makes this crime even more horrendous is that the officer who shot and killed Timothy was neither tried, nor even indicted for any crime. This is often the case for modern day hate crimes.

An even more blatant case of police brutality is the case of Amadou Diallo. When Mr. Diallo reached for his wallet to show the NYPD when they pulled up outside his apartment building, the NYPD shot at him 41 times, hitting him 19. Mr. Diallo consequently died in the entryway of his own home. Mr. Diallo was shot so many times that some of the bullets hitting him entered through the bottoms of his feet, meaning he was already down while NYPD proceeded to shoot at him. A man with no criminal record, no gun or weapon, was shot and killed in his own home. The four white officers involved in the shooting of Amadou Diallo, were found innocent of any wrongdoing or excessive use of force.

The public outcry for change is still prevalent and should be louder than ever. Our nation must stand up and face these problems head on. Our most nefarious adversary in our battle towards equality is a justice system that is not blind. Our justice system and our government are not run by law and the idea that “all men are created equal.” The justice system is run simply by money. Manifest destiny is still a very prevalent concept, however politically incorrect it may be to say aloud. Equality has always been for those of the right complexion who can afford it. Even though Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X are no longer the ones giving the speeches, their messages have been heard and carried on by new leaders in this battle. One example is a Brooklyn-based group known as the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. This is a group of young people who track and record police officers in action. It is a right of every citizen in the U.S. to observe officers in the course of their duties. This is theoretically a system of checks and balances, similar to our government branches. Angry officers often take this right away from us as citizens. In one incident, a group of cop watchers

were pushed and shoved by the NYPD and then consequently arrested and their video camera and tape somehow disappeared in the melee.

The past 145 years have been the most progressive and “enlightened” period of the American Civil Rights movement. It’s true that progress has been made; however, there are great lapses in what has been accomplished and what still needs to still be accomplished. We must continue to progress and have our voices heard through all means: including voting, non-violent protest, and positive action. Civil Rights will always be an issue and the only thing ever consistent in this world is change. It is through positive and productive means that we can change the current status of our Civil Rights and eliminate violence, racism, and inequality.



Ptah Miller, “Art”

★ **BLACK HISTORY MONTH: RUNNER-UP ESSAY**

CIVIL RIGHTS

The Civil Rights Movement took place during the years 1946-1966, in southern states such as Alabama (Birmingham, Montgomery). Civil Rights were a demand of one's rights or privileges. Civil Rights consists of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, the right to vote, freedom against involuntary servitude and the right to equality in public places. When people are denied their Civil Rights because of their association with a certain group, it is known as discrimination. Through the years of this movement, Blacks faced discrimination on numerous accounts.

Blacks protected themselves by forming organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Black Panthers. The SCLC was formed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and other Black ministers. The purpose of this organization was to end segregation non-violently. The SNCC's purpose was also to end segregation. They participated in non-violent sit-ins, freedom rides, interstate trips to challenge the segregation of restrooms, restaurants and waiting rooms of bus stations. The SCLC and SNCC were in conflict because SNCC did not feel the effectiveness of non-violence.

The Black Panthers were co-founded by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton in Oakland, California. The Black Panthers did not preach non-violence. They preached self-defense. The Black Panthers voiced their opinion and gave Blacks a feeling of "black power." They based their ideology on the U.S. Constitution. They said, "We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our black community. We believe that black people will not

be free until we are able to determine our destiny.” Black Panthers dressed in black jackets, black berets and were armed with weapons.

These types of movements allowed many of us Blacks today to enjoy a free education, to play sports, to work jobs with equal pay, to ride public transportation, along with many more freedoms. Unfortunately, that was when Blacks had a backbone. Blacks stood together and refused to stand alone to achieve their goal to end segregation. They stood together in times of difficulty, standing tall as trees, with firm branches with flourishing leaves. Slowly, Whites tried to cut the trees down; they struck once with the Birmingham Church Bombing, struck again killing Emmett Till, struck again assassinating our leaders Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and struck at the trees once more by lynching Blacks. No matter how the trees were struck, we still rose to black power in 1966, and held hands in unity- all shades of black.

Today, Blacks are not united. In my opinion, we do not stand together. There is always a fight for anything within the Black community. This is a drastic change that took place from when we had no rights to when we were given rights. Blacks—or African Americans as we are called today—are so rich in heritage and yet we cannot unite as one. It seems as though our Civil Rights are trampled upon by our own people. The struggle is not only against White political institutions but brothers and sisters in high places. Too many times we destroy what we so diligently fought for and achieved. The bond of unity has weakened links in today’s society.

Our lack of knowledge about our own history has stagnated our fight for civil rights and encouraged negative ambitions. In the 21st century, we might be seemingly enjoying rights and making progress, but we are still in a

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position of little or no voice. Things are not really free and equal. The Black leaders are no longer highly visible in our communities. It seems more or less that we have leaderless communities; hence, we see a lack of motivation and self-esteem amongst our people.



Ptah Miller, "Miles a Head"

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: RUNNER-UP ESSAY ☆

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: THEN AND NOW

Civil Rights are the protections and privileges of personal liberty given to all citizens by law. They are distinguished from “human rights” or “natural rights.” Civil Rights are rights that persons *do* have, while natural or human rights are rights that many scholars think that people *should* have. The philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) argued that the natural rights of life, liberty, and property should be converted into civil rights and protected by the sovereign state as an aspect of the social contract. Others have argued that people acquire rights as inalienable gifts from a god or at a time of nature before governments were formed. In the United States, as well as many other countries abroad, civil rights have been written for the protection of the people. There was a time when these rights, afforded to all today, were given to only a few.

Why were only a few chosen to receive these rights? In the Declaration of Independence, our Founding Fathers stated, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Did this mean all men were created equal? The answers to both of these questions stem from the concept of slavery. Slavery is a condition when one person, referred to as a slave, is under the control of another. When the “New World” was discovered by the explorers of the 15th and 16th century, they also embarked on a new venture—the transportation and trade of slaves. Now, to answer the questions previously asked, slaves were not given those rights because they were not equal to their masters. This is a cruel

concept to accept, but at one time in history, this was seen as just.

The Civil Rights Movement was unquestionably one of the most important times in our nation's history. It marked the change from a conservative mentality that had lasted from before this country's inception. Most believe that this movement lasted from about 1954 to 1968. But this movement, more like an era, started long before then and is still gradually continuing in our present time. The Civil Rights era goes as far back as the years that led up to the Civil War. From slave revolts on plantations to escaped slaves heading towards the part of the U.S. that recognized them as free, the movement to fight for rights afforded to them as human beings from birth had begun. The Civil War ended with the liberation of the slaves and then began an all new horror—racism and discrimination.

Racism and discrimination was fought by several individuals, by those being oppressed and those who sympathized with them, but our greatest victories came with what is traditionally known as the Civil Rights Movement, which took place between 1954 and 1968. Some noted events include *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the 1963 March on Washington. These events and others during this time demonstrated the will of a people to unite towards the common good of all. These actions led to reform of not only governmental views, but also of societal views, affecting millions upon millions of citizens.

The Civil Rights Movement does not end there. This movement will continue so long as discrimination of any kind exists. And since 1968, there have been a few advances. On November 22, 1991, after two years of debates, vetoes, and threatened vetoes, President Bush reversed

himself and signed the Civil Rights Act of 1991, strengthening existing civil rights laws and providing for damages in cases of intentional employment discrimination. Our latest victory comes with the conviction on June 21, 2005, of Edgar Ray Killen, believed to be the ringleader of the Mississippi civil rights murders of Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney, for manslaughter. This was on the 41st anniversary of the crimes! We continue to look forward to the future where a movement such as this is no longer needed and tranquility prevails over the land.



Raul Olavarrio, "Emancipation"

★ I AM A SPIC

For as long as I can remember, it's always been one big hurry to get somewhere, to see someone, to try and get 'help' from wherever it came. New York City was the place to get started in life. New York City seemed an ideal place to live, work and raise a family. Everyone had a saying I would remember over and over again, "If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere." New York City is a fast-paced city with a life of its own. So many different people rushing back and forth, from here to there; and you may never see the same people twice. Now that's a lot of people! I can recall finding out I was Latino in Long Island City, Queens around 1977. I know what you may be thinking; how can someone not know his ethnicity? I asked myself that same question later on in life, especially when I realized I still had no idea where I was from.

One day in 1977, I was walking along the Queensborough Bridge's elevated train tracks towards the Queensborough Housing Projects where my grandparents lived. I was crossing the street when all of a sudden a yellow cab almost ran me over. I was startled and jumped back towards the curb. I remember thinking this may be one of my grandpa's friends, as he was also a yellow cab driver. I was naïve at the time and was not ready for the next words to come out of the taxi driver's mouth. He said, "Get out of the way, ya spic!" I was not offended at first, but I was concerned. Why did the taxi driver say something to me in the way I have seen and heard other people refer to each other when they were angry? Why would the cab driver be upset at me for walking? Wasn't the cab driver just like my grandpa? I mean he wore a driver's cap, had a big mustache, and a cigar hanging from the end of his lips. In fact, when he yelled at me from his cab, he reminded me of grandpa even more, because grandpa was always yelling at the top of his lungs at someone or something. I thought

that was part of being a cab driver, part of being a New Yorker. If the cab driver was indeed angry, that left me with one more important question? What is a spic?

I am a spic. It took a lot of asking around, but according to the people I asked, I was a good for nothing spic who would get on welfare and do nothing but rob and steal from good hard working people. I disagreed. This can't be all that I am. Can one word describe everything that makes me, me?

The big idea spreading amongst the poorest living in New York City was to "get over" on the "gobierno" and "el welfea." Puerto Rican people seemed to stick together and share ideas and ventures, even negative ones. Especially negative ones. Puerto Ricans were wise business people who opened up "bodegas", restaurants and social clubs all around the poorest neighborhoods, our neighborhoods. We listened to FM and AM radio stations like KISS FM, WBLS, 'KTU, 1010 WINS, 'KDM and Super KQ, we went to church services in the neighborhood Pentecostal Church and we waited for "el cartero" to deliver "el cheke, los cupones y el Medicaid." As a student in the public school system, it was particularly difficult to fit in. Everyone in the school was either Black or White; the Spanish speaking students were categorized as Hispanics and placed in bilingual programs and were not easily accepted. My mother would tell me terrible stories of going to school and having her long, beautiful hair pulled by Black girls who didn't understand how her hair could grow so long and pretty and not break.

My mother says she had it hard. I couldn't understand why it was so difficult for us. My mom would let me know that we were very lucky and were not the only ones to have it bad in history. I learned a lot more about this in school and I couldn't disagree more. After all, I can't trace

my roots back in a land that was taken by Spain, and eventually became a prize to be won by America. I can only forge a new path in this land that has given me a home and a chance to earn my success in a highly competitive arena. I love school, reading, writing, eating, dancing, singing, working, and most of all, I love my people. Who are my people? Why, everyone in this world that has had it hard and has a dream to make their situation better and acts on it!

I am a spic who is related to everyone who comes to America looking for the better opportunity for their children and their children's children. I am American, born in NY Hospital in the greatest city in the world and I can only trace my roots back to modern day Puerto Rico. I am a Boricuan, a Puerto Rican, a NuYorican and most of all, I am an American. I am a son, a brother, a college student, a father with his own family who works very hard to teach them about the lessons we can't learn in school. How we were poor in assets, but rich in hope, spirit and love.

I have to admit it, my mom was right: we were truly lucky. I only hope all people who come to this country in search of their dream will fight every obstacle that presents itself and never give up!



George Ruiz, "Anchors Manor"

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THIS WOMAN'S JOURNEY ☆

- 7 AM She gets her three kids up for school.
7:15 She is still calling her eldest son.
7:30 She threatens her eldest son and he gets up.
8:00 She takes the kids to school.
8:00— She attends Hostos Community College. She
tries to stay focused on her
3:15 PM dream of becoming a nurse.
4:00 She is back at home.
She starts dinner and maybe a load of clothes.
5:30 Time to pick up the kids from the after school
program.
6:15 They are back at home.
She has everybody change out of their school
clothes and start their homework.
7:00 Dinner is served while they watch a movie.
7:30 She lets the kids have free time while she folds
the laundry and puts their clothes away.
8:00 She gets the kids bathed and ready for bed.
9:00 The kids are in bed.
She gets their clothes ready for tomorrow,
cleans the dishes, and puts the leftovers away.
10 PM Her husband has been waiting in the
bedroom, watching television, waiting for her
to finish. He's been waiting for the past three
nights.
He tells her he wants her to make time
for him, the same way she makes time for
everything else.
She misses him badly.
Damn, she's tired. She'll study tomorrow.
She remembers her dream of becoming a
nurse.
7AM It starts all over again.

★ THE DESK

It was placed in an empty room, with no company at all... not even the pleasure of having a chair near. There were no windows in the room. How nice it would have been to have the companionship of the sun's golden rays.

The silence was eerie. It had never been around such stillness before. Lifetimes of sheer enjoyment had always been expressed around it. It was a symbol of stability and support. Now there it stood, alone, with no one to sit on it, to bang, scribble, and scratch little notches on it. Why did they lock it away from life and all that life symbolized? It would have been better just to destroy it. After all, its main purpose of creation was to serve those who were alive.

Days led into weeks, followed by months that turned into years without a single sound being heard. Eventually It went to sleep. It held strong and attached itself to the floor on which it stood. Time helped in creating a bond in which it and the floor became one.

Bump! Thump! Thump! Bump! Suddenly there was a sound, like an alarm clock ringing out of control. It awoke. A few minutes passed by before It became oriented. It recognized the sound of footsteps walking down the hall. The footsteps stopped a foot away from the door. Then there was silence, yet again. The silence was broken by the jingling of keys, followed by the squeaky sound of the hinges as the door opened.

Two men entered the room. As they walked towards It, Its anticipation and excitement increased. Were they finally going to let It out or perhaps give it some kind of companion? Tension grew. They stood directly in front of it. The two men were huge. Their heads nearly touched the ceiling and their bodies were almost as wide as the room. "Hey Clyde! You got a match?" asked one of the men as he flopped on It.

The dull light from the main hallway, in combination with the lit cigarette, gave the room a peculiar glow. Clyde joined his buddy and sat on It. The two men smoked and talked. They ate their lunch while sitting on It. They spilled soda and coffee on It. They tapped their fingers on It when they sang. They banged their hands and fists on it as they expressed facts they deemed important in their conversation.

It had never been so happy, and was fearful that this would be over all too soon. All of a sudden, the two men jumped off It and smeared their cigarettes out on it. They gathered their things and swiftly left the room with a sudden Bang! The door slammed closed, followed by the jingle of keys. Bump! Thump! Bump! Thump! Silence again.

It was happy for a short while. It didn't mind that they had banged, nicked, and scratched It. All that It longed for was companionship, to feel the touch of a human hand again, to hear voices around it once more. Suddenly It began to feel unstable and the legs that had carried the weight of so many before became wobbly. Crash! It crumbled to the floor. It had traveled all over this world as a writing table for dignitaries, then a school desk for orphans in a Mission school. It was used as a counter in the foyer of a famous movie star. Before its final resting place, it was a receptionist's desk at the Forte's antiques shop. But now, the redwood desk and the oak wood floor are truly one.

★ A LADY'S ADVICE

One night of pleasure,
Nine months of pain,
Three days in the hospital,
And a baby to name.

Sex is the sensation of the human relation
To increase the generation
Of the younger population.

Take a girl up in a room
And take away her reputation.
Do you understand the situation?
Or do you need a demonstration?

He tells you he loves you,
You think it's true.
He looks at your tummy
And says, "baby we're through."
You call him a bastard,
He calls you a whore.
And this never would have happened
If you didn't give in before.

And just one more thing.
It's a lady's advice:
Don't let him make you a mother
Before he makes you a wife!

Another hour has gone by. It is 3 AM, and she still can't sleep. Those painful words constantly keep running through her mind. Tears run down her soft cheeks. The more she remembers, the more the tears flow. Her eyes are red and her face is burning with anger; damaging thoughts fill her head. It is all tearing her apart. (*A door slams in the distance*). She washes and dries her face and turns on the TV. She enters the hall to greet her sister. "How was your day?" the sister asks. She smiles and replies, "Great."

I feel that too many people cover up what they really feel inside. Although at times I do it myself, I understand that it is not good for my health. As the saying goes, "Anger turned inward is depression." When you keep so much hurt, anger and pain bottled up inside you, are creating the depression you end up feeling later. Many people are hurting so badly yet they smile and keep on as if nothing had happened. You may look at me and see smiles, joy and laughter on the outside, but on the inside, even my heart is crying. I have grown to learn that it helps to cry and to talk to someone and lean on them for comfort. You are just hurting yourself more by keeping it in. We all need to learn to let out so we can live a little.



Wynter Watson, "Butterfly"

★ A SILLY MEMORY

I am out on the town with my sisters. It is such a beautiful day to go out for a walk. The squirrels are running and jumping from tree to tree, the birds are chirping, the people come and go in their own very pleasant moods. My sisters and I giggle as we walk down the pathway singing a song. Out of the blue, an old man crosses paths with us. He stops dead in his tracks and points straight at me, mumbling “You... you...” as he moves closer.

After he approaches me, he takes a deep breath before he speaks again. “Don’t you know? They’re going to get you!”

I am confused, yet I remain still to hear more. “They’re going to come after you. They’re coming to get you now!”

Finally I ask him, “Who?”

The seriousness on his face turns into a smile. “The squirrels are, because you’ve gone nuts!” We both laugh and go on in our own directions.

One of my sisters asks me, “What was that all about?”

Still smiling I tell her “I really don’t know.” And we enjoy the rest of our lovely day.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: THE AMERICAN SYSTEM ☆

It is held and said in the whole world that America is a land of opportunity. Whether this saying is true or otherwise, I believe will be answered differently to some extent by those who live in this nation. As a matter of fact, the answers would vary depending on age, color, race and financial status. The answer is deeper rooted than it seems, and tackling it is but the tip of the iceberg.

The word “opportunity” is defined in the *American Heritage* dictionary as “a favorable or advantageous circumstance or combination of circumstances.” The above definition in itself answers the question of whether all people in this country have the same opportunities to become educated, get good jobs and share the nation’s wealth. It is a naked fact that not everybody in this nation has a favorable circumstance. Favorable circumstances as experienced by people also vary from one degree to another.

The poor will always be among any population on earth. As long as this truth exists, there will be nothing like equal opportunity. The children of the poor can enjoy compulsory public primary education. Situations and circumstances prevailing in the homes and surroundings of the poor will not allow the offspring of a poverty-stricken family to have the same conducive situations or circumstance prevail as the children of the affluent and perhaps the average income earners’ surroundings, to help these kids unearth their capabilities, abilities and potentials. The extra tools necessary and the help available in the households of the rich are not available to the poor. The extra-curricular activities and facilities in private schools—like international exchange programs and swimming pools just to mention a few, designed to broaden the scope and enlighten the ideas and ideals of these students, are not available in public schools, let alone a public school in a poor neighborhood.

The number of students in a public school classroom is not proportionate to the number of students in a private school classroom. Students in public schools therefore do not have the one-on-one attention they might need from a teacher. Needless to say, most of these students from poor families are troubled children from troubled homes. According to statistics, these troubled students have a higher school dropout rate or are not even able to enter into colleges, let alone enter into the best high-class prestigious schools. More often than not, these school dropouts are found to be engaged in all the social vices and as a result, end up in prisons.

Furthermore, subjects like religion taught in the public schools to sustain and build the inner strength and outward personalities of these kids are being yanked out of the public school system and are being replaced by the so-called freedom of speech and freedom of religion “syllabus.” The majority of these students come out of school to face the world; their speech and attitudes alone betray and distinguish them from the elite, “polished” rich kids who have the opportunity to attend good schools.

To broaden the scope a little further, what happens to the students of non-status residents who are not qualified for any provisions of the state? In situations that they can afford, they do not have an “American Accent” to be accepted into the “core group” even though they might be the best qualified.

In the case of the elderly, the least said about their circumstances when they have to retire and have nothing to return to, the better. Most of them live on meager social security benefits that are not enough to feed a cat for a week in a rich man’s home. It is even unimaginable what these elderly, who contributed to the economy of this na-

tion, have to endure when they cannot afford medical bills that are not covered by their insurance, if any.

In conclusion, the only way the poor and the disadvantaged can have equal opportunity is when the minorities, blacks, undocumented and elderly brace themselves to attain the same educational level of the favored citizens and outsmart them. The only option perhaps to have equal opportunity is to break the barrier and prevail against all odds and challenges, disregarding any beliefs and notions that are unproductive to attain their goals. This is dependent on the individual's mindset. The trend of alienation can only change if the "minority" groups stand together, combine forces and develop strategies to change this chronic system. For equal opportunity to come to the disadvantaged and the unfavored, people must believe in themselves, be willing to push past their pain and circumstances whatever they might be, and become who they want to become.

PROFESSOR SUSAN ANTON, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

★ NASA PRE-SERVICE TEACHER CONFERENCE

It was a privilege to accompany three Hostos Community College students as faculty advisor to the NASA Pre-Service Teacher Conference in Alexandria, Virginia from February 16-18, 2006. Hostos students Kim Mitchell, Tiffany Collins and Mercedes Gonzales were able to attend the conference, which focused on giving pre-service teachers opportunities to increase their knowledge in science, mathematics and technology skills. To that end, the students attended workshops that focused on various classroom techniques and knowledge in these fields. The students also had the opportunity to meet and interact with students from over seventy colleges across the country. It was truly inspiring to see so many future teachers in one place!

Faculty also were able to attend focused workshops that included science and math techniques and content to be included in this often-neglected field, especially for women. This conference also opened up opportunities for students to apply to schools in various parts of the country for employment when they graduate, as the conference hosted a job fair as well. I was proud that Hostos Community College could be part of this exciting and informative event.

NASA PRE-SERVICE TEACHER CONFERENCE ☆

The 11th Annual NASA/NIA Pre-Service Teacher Conference held in Alexandria Virginia on February 16-18, 2006, was a conference well worth attending. There were 66 different workshops to choose from. Workshops offered ranged from “How to be a Successful and Effective Teacher” to “What’s Really Happening on Mars?” The “How to be a Successful and Effective Teacher” workshop was a high energy, practical session that showed you how you can be a success as a teacher. Dr. Harry Wong shared resources that will help us become effective teachers on our very first day. Along with Dr. Wong, Mrs. Chelonnda Seroyer, a first year teacher who followed Dr. Harry Wong’s advice, showed us classroom and teaching strategies that helped her to be a successful teacher.

“What’s Really Happening on Mars?” was presented by Sheri L. Klug of ASU. She showed how teachers get excited about learning and using science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. NASA’s Mars Student Imaging Project and other classroom activities provide immersive, low-cost, technologically friendly ways for students to experience and understand real-world examples of these important disciplines. This workshop demonstrated how to guide land rovers on Mars from the commands plugged into them on earth and how they look through scopes to identify objects as you fly in your spacecraft.

There were some exciting guest speakers during lunch and dinner. Among them were educational consultant Mr. Jaime Escalante (the movie “Stand and Deliver” is about him), Mr. Michael Jetty, the Native American education specialist of the Montana Office of Public Instruction, Dr. Iris Mack, CEO of Phat Math, Inc., and educational consultant Dr. Alfred “Coach” Powell. Dr. Powell gave a compelling speech on preparing teachers for today’s generation. His speech was about how Hip-Hop’s influence

affects the behavior and attitude of students and he provided suggested solutions on how to make Hip-Hop work for, rather than against, classroom instruction.

Between workshops, keynote speakers, panel discussions, meeting and greeting with other Pre-Service Teachers (old and new) and eating meals, each Pre-Service Teacher received the opportunity to introduce themselves to dozens of public school representatives and college recruiters to gain information about teaching in schools in states other than your own and colleges that will prepare you to do so. Applications were taken, resumes were submitted and hundreds of pre-service teachers registered for instructional training days, interviews and a NASA summer of educational experiences that will help you with further growth and advancement and give you skills you can't learn anywhere else.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity given to me to experience this wonderful event for the second time and I wish to attend next year as well.



Prof. Susan Anton, Tiffany Collins, Dr. Alfred “Coach” Powell, and Kim Mitchell at the 2006 NASA Pre-Service Teacher Conference

NASA PRE-SERVICE TEACHER CONFERENCE ☆

On February 16-18th 2006, I was given the opportunity, along with two other students and Professor Susan Anton of the Early Childhood Education Department, to attend the NASA Pre-Service Teacher's Conference in Alexandria, Virginia. About seventy colleges sent students from all over the nation. The conference gave me a chance to view the world of education along with its significance and to meet others who have the same passion to become the next generation of educators.

I was most impressed with the guest speakers, who made me realize that teachers have a powerful impact on the lives of children. During the conference, we were engaged in a series of workshops and on Friday I attended one on the topic of how to become an effective teacher. This workshop was so powerful that it literally brought me to tears along with others who attended. Chelonda Sawyer, a high school English teacher from Madison, Alabama, shared her story of being a student herself and coming to school and telling how she would always fall asleep in class. But she had this one teacher who always encouraged her to stay awake because that teacher saw that she had potential. The reason for Miss Sawyer's tiredness was that she was caring for her mother who had cancer and her younger sister and by the time she would get to bed it was time for school again. At the age of seventeen, Miss Sawyer's mother lost her battle with cancer and it was then that she decided to go to college and later become a teacher. She was inspired by the same teacher who believed that she was capable of anything because she recognized her fullest potential.

The lesson for me is that teachers help build tomorrow's dreams and one day I hope that I will be able to do the same. I would like to say thank you to Hostos Community College and the Early Childhood Education De-

TIFFANY COLLINS

partment for making this trip possible. After I graduate, I am prepared to make a difference in the lives of the students who will enter my classroom. Teachers prepare the leaders of tomorrow!



Daisy Diaz, "Daisy and a Diaz"

Somewhere between
Modern-day electrical wiring
And
Over used and abused emotional transpiring,
We made a connection.

In between the smooth, charming lines,
A façade was placed over my eyes
And I
Opened up.
The currents ran through every part of every thing
That longed to be irrigated,
And my thirst
Was quenched.

Somewhere along the lines of flirtation and simply
providing information,
I became relieved
Assured by an unknown force
Called faith,
That everything that my ears are receiving
Is true
And my new feelings
Real.

Only inspiring me
To open
Up
Providing electric sparks in my eyes
And my lips anxious
For that first initial meeting

★ **SOME REBEL, SOME HERO (A POEM IN TWO PARTS)**

Part I: Some Rebel

The day that I was filled with her spirit
I was so full that I exploded into a thousand lights

And she reached out of my body
And took her first breath.

There and then I saw that there would be problems.

These troubles I saw were because I chose to listen
To no one other than my heart.

So with rolled eyes and disgust
I was abandoned by everyone

Except for she, I & God.

Till this day, we walk a path unknown
A road less traveled
With secrets yet to be revealed.

For these moments I am grateful
I am lucky
I am glad.

Part II: Some Hero

I made deep tracks in the desert sand
In search of a better life for her and me.

He said this was too much to take in
And so we parted ways.

I cannot say I bothered to love him
My mind won't let my mouth speak of the tale

How a brief encounter changed our lives
Making history, and headlines on the evening news.

But for me it was approximately
106 days of heat, hell, heaven, loneliness

Yet I regret nothing
I would have taken on the world
If I had to.



Nicole Goodwin, "Concrete Chasm"

TANDREA WALTERS

★ TO YOU, LOVE

This is the path that I have chosen
I say this
With an open mind.

If ever I need to define love
Your name would to come to mind
I'd tell them all how great you are
The greatest one could find.

Your solemn sexy ways
Set my inner being on fire
I hunger for your every touch
Your kiss my dreamy desire.

I need to know that this is forever
I will place my trust within your hands
And give you all my love
I only pray, that if this is a dream
I'll stay asleep much longer.

I just want to believe it's love this time
And my heart won't tell me a lie
Love will take a new beginning
And you will give it a new meaning.



Benila Alexander, "Land of Love"

HOW I LOVE YOU ☆

To the love of my life, Darren

I love you completely, unconditionally, always.
I love you with my heart that holds you dear.
I love with my soul that keeps you near.
I love you with my mind,
Keeping your memory living on forever.
I love you through my body
For which you have given your strength.
I love you for our children who hold our future.
I love you for myself.
Because without you, there is no me.
That is how I love you.



James Beuzile, "Afro Caribbean Femininity"

★ THE OFFICIAL NOTICE: A POEM FOR PINK



Andreina Martinez Hiraldo, "¡Soy una Fosforera!"

I don't know if maybe it's because I'm so used to the
average routine
But something about you
stands out
Maybe it's the gap in your smile
Or your slight variation on the average style
But
I do think you're kinda cute
And at first
I figured you to be just another chickenhead ball player
Wrapped up in superficial layers
So imagine my surprise once I discovered
You actually possessed intelligent thought.
And, please
Don't take my words as disrespectful
Or as if filled with malicious intent
I just figured I'd tell you
That you are a surprisingly cool dude

And I'm not gonna try and get next to you
Or start rocking pink more than red or blue
Hell, I aint even soft on you
But take this poem as an official notice

That I noticed you.

And by the time we are done sharing studies of the mind
We may not even speak anymore
But as the person that I am
I accept it as my duty to shout out my brothers
whenever I see them doing their thing
And in case no one has told you as of lately
You are special

And even if all your hopes and dreams don't come true
Or you never get to play as a professional
You can be content in knowing
That out of the crowd
Filled with chickenheads and ball players
And all those wrapped up in superficial layers
You were noticed, Mr. Pink
You were noticed.

✧ MY GRANDMOTHER

“Bendicion ‘wela”
“Que Dios Te Bendiga”

In her face, I see beauty that has matured over the years
In her eyes, I see a lifetime of experiences, love and pain
In her smile, I see unconditional love and peace
In her voice, I hear kindness and wisdom
In her touch, I feel warm silk that lingers on
In her scent, I smell the most beautiful flowers
In her heart, I feel at home



Kiyasha Spencer, “Panther”

There once was a beautiful poet who said:
Black love is black wealth
And if this is indeed true,
Then to be honest
You just can't afford me right now.

Somewhere between pool cubes and Corona bottles
I slid you a discount
You opted for a lay-away plan.
But my love
Required a little more that you could fit into your budget
(Returned phone calls, considerate gestures, etc)

And the perfect,
Most beautiful gift that Man could ever receive
You watch slowly get up and leave.
Happy?
You got to save a few dollars
Until the next sale.



Sandra Santos, "Never Take Another Woman's Man"

✧ PLEASE COME BACK HOME

Dedicated to my 6 children

Please come back home, I miss you a lot.
Please come back home, I am lonely without you.
Please come back home, It's been too long.
Please come back home, I can't live without you.
Please come back home, to me, to Mommy.
Please come back home to me.



Sandra Santos, "Mother's Feelings"

SCENES FROM A HURRICANE ☆

Scene One

Chest Deep in liquid Death
Arms Clenching
Teeth Chattering.
Headline Reads
“Young Boy Loots Store for Soda.”

Scene Two

Four white hands
Clench soggy, limp bread
Grip much needed refreshment
For freezing mouths.
Headlines Read
“Survivors Find Nourishment.”

Scene Three

Waters crush and crash
Without eyes.
Sees nothing worth fearing
In its path.
I suppose in the end
It chose not to discriminate.

NICOLE GOODWIN

✧ **GONE TOMORROW**

To see the world through the sturdy trees
To behold beginnings in the cut of leaves
To witness the bright shining sun
What joy it brings!

Oh what horror,
What despair
What death tomorrow springs
Now the flowing water has ended everything.



Anthony Newman, "Hot Summer"

For years I had wondered,
When will the sun appear.
The foggy days, the apprehension
Is smothering my soul.
My mind is like a maze
Trying to find a strategic way out.

When I feel like I'm getting closer,
I'm yet to find out I'm miles away
Of crossing the outside.
Although terrified of the agonizing void that
Is implanted in me
What do I do to make myself complete?

Shadows all around me.
The devil has a hold on me.
I can't find my soul
Alone in this world.
The inevitable voices of torment and
Pain that controls every bit of my
Entity and shatters the epitome of
My strength to grasp life.

I'm in between worlds trying to
Understand why?
It's so dreadful to struggle with emotional
Contradictions.

★ **SPEAKING CLEARLY / *HABLANDO CLARO***

I see the sky so dark,
And feel the pain within my heart.
For the fame, I lose my sleep and
 soon the killing game starts.
I'm just an anxious desperado
With no one by my side
My goal is to survive.
Buddha smoke gets me by
My choices of employment
Bring funds stained with blood
From the smallest to the biggest fallen
 father and son
So poor be the man without a name
Who won't reach one moment of peace
Until the day he's deceased.



Osaretin Charles Ogiagbe, "Inner"

HABLANDO CLARO / SPEAKING CLEARLY ☆

Take precautions, they're illusions.
 God willing, one day
 You'll find a way out of this nightmare
 I keep living.

*Yo veo el cielo muy oscuro
 Y siento pena en mi alma
 Por la fama pierdo calma en este juego
 muchos matan
 Soy ansioso y desesperado
 Nadie a mi lado
 El mal hecho es mi vida
 Y la yerba es mi trago
 Mi trabajo me trae pago
 Manchado de sangre
 Del caído que era grande
 Hasta el más pobre que era nadie
 Pobre de ese hombre que sin nombre
 No alcanzaría
 Descansar en paz hasta
 El final de sus días
 Ilusiones, con precauciones
 Te lo digo
 Que pesadillas son la realidad de lo que
 vivo.*

★ **MY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE**

My college experience is fun,
Very Stressful,
Very hard,
Friendly.

I get to meet new people,
Make new friends,
Experience life differently.
I get to explore life
However it may be.

Sometimes I want to get up and quit.
I have to say to myself everyday
Don't quit.

Yes it is hard right now,
But things could get even worse.
College is not for every one

But you still have to keep your head up and
Try to finish what you started
In life

Answer questions,
Satisfy curiosity
Using animosity
To cause many atrocities
It's Pure Hypocrisy
A false state of democracy
Ghetto man Philosophy
Do or die Policy.

Presidential diaries
Contain historic fallacies
Monumental tragedies
That shatter all reality
Exposing your fatality
While my personality
Slowly and ever gradually
Can change the pull of gravity...
And still the world is mad at me?

Boys, wanna be bad as me?
Challenging, wasting those
High times imagining
The scales soon balancing,
Knowing it's never happening to me.
The world's Rhyiming Scheme
My Puerto Rican nappy dream.

Is satisfaction guaranteed?
Philosophically
My diversified mentality
Can bring the revolution
My solution
Is Reality

★ THE HARDEST TIMES IN LIFE

The nights that I've cried for help and I feel life,
I'm screaming for someone to hear
Or even acknowledge that I'm trying to reach out
For a hand.
I'm asking questions
And full of frustration and eagerness
On how to find the answers that I'm looking for.
I lost my way within myself and within the lord.
I don't know who I can run to for support and love.
But when I accepted Jesus Christ as my redeemer
I realized he is all that I have and need in my life.

After all these years of anger and despair, everyone
Around me walked away, but Jesus was the only one
Who's stuck with me.
I'll never forget what he's done for me and
Despite what happens he will never leave me,
He will always help me through my hardest times.

Love is what makes a difference in the world and
without his love,
I won't be able to go on.
I keep him with me and always
Welcome him in my heart.
I know I'm not perfect and
Who am I to judge—
But I know with the Lord, I can
Be set free.



Joseph LaMonica, "Floating Breath"

To Life

The wind blows through my window,
The sun is upon me today.
My thoughts are heard by all ears,
Everybody knows of them now.
There is no turning back now for me,
My life is all gone now.
I am only flesh and bones to you,
For me... I am the wind.
Life is all gone now for I live
Only as a spirit. A spirit waiting,
For it all to be gone.

★ RESPECT

Lost in the dream
In the same scene
Caught up in the mix
In the game
In the screams
In the heart of all
Crime scenes
Respect for a past unseen.

Done deeds
Lonely seeds
What's life supposed to be?
You
Tell
Me.

Life's irresistible
Unpredictable
A picture full
A thousand words
A thought becomes visible.

It's typical
To wander through this earth
Without a principle.

Tell me
Is it true
That all we can do
Is tolerate
The unacceptable?

Please don't be vague.
Say it straight.
Who's accountable?
Clarify, Illuminate
The mind and the mental

If fate is not my guide,
My God!

Well
Then Who?



Giovanni Hernandez "Giovanni the Man"

ROBERTO MORALES

★ 57 AND MAD

Look into the eyes
Realize it's time
To enterprise.
Sadness multiplied
From those who won't die,
But multiply.
Lonely is the city
These NY streets
On the same page
bear witness to me.
Unique in every way and I
Won't get lost in the maze,
On a gore-tex patrol,
On a Day by Day basis.
No traces of existence
All posts remain secure.

I assure you
Resistance is futile.
Oooh child, what we goin' do?
Put 'em all together
For some clever type of voodoo.



Yudelka Cleto, "Lost Love (Admiring the Big Apple)"

PAIN, SORROW, AND DELIVERANCE ☆

Take me in your heart and love me
Take me under your wing and shelter me
Through my hardest times you've
Comforted me.
When I felt I couldn't go on, you
Strengthened me.

All trials and tribulations that I'm
Going through will come to pass, it
Will never last and all the love you've
Given me will make me see it through
Because I have you on my side to lead
Me on.

The sacrifices you have made reassured me.
That there is no other like you that will save me.
You are the savior of my life forever and you
Will always come first, my father.

You are my way through my hardest times
And only you can deliver me.
All I need is your
Grace and mercy to help me gain the strength,
The courage to face the storm.
And whatever lies ahead
I know with you by my side
I can conquer anything
That comes my way.

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