



# Vending Machine:

The Poet's Haven + The Love Initiative present "Vending Machine: Poetry for Change" volume 1



## Poetry For Change

Wish To See

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The world doesn't change in one big sweeping moment.  
It is a continual journey.  
Humanity's awakening.  
This journey starts not with thousands but with one.  
One.

The world of one person can change in an instant.



It just takes a minute.  
This is that minute.



## THE LOVE INITIATIVE

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."  
-- Mahatma Gandhi

"Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine."  
-- Robert C. Gallagher

# VENDING MACHINE: POETRY FOR CHANGE

The Poet's Haven and The Love Initiative present "Vending Machine: Poetry for Change" volume 1, November 2010. Published by The Poet's Haven, Massillon, Ohio. All material contained in this volume is copyright © of its respective author or artist. Printed in the USA. Vertigo Xi'an Xavier, publisher; T.M. Göttl, editor; Jenna Arthur, cover artist. For more information on The Poet's Haven, visit: [www.PoetsHaven.com](http://www.PoetsHaven.com). For more information on The Love Initiative, visit: [www.theloveinitiative.com](http://www.theloveinitiative.com).

# introduction by ZACH

Thank you for contributing to this food drive. Know that this is but one way of infinite ways to help each other. I am greatly humbled at the support this food drive has received from the community. As artists, we have a unique voice and position to shine light on bigger situations and troubles. So thank you for lending your voices, and thank you to Theresa and Vertigo for coming up with the idea for this book - you are creating many ripples from the single stone tossed into the river.

Every year, the Cleveland and Akron-Canton Foodbanks, through several hundred agencies, provide millions of meals to people who would otherwise not have access to food. This service can literally be a life or death situation. With our current economic state, more folks are in need of these services, and at the same time, funding gets tougher to come by.

Music for Meals is a compassionate moment, a step on the continuum of compassion, and a step in the challenging spirit of Love. As the winter approaches, we can easily take a minute to think about people who require these services to survive. But we cannot simply give a couple of cans this week and think we are done. The work of compassion is always needed. By uniting as a creative community for this event, we can make the necessary ties to better help more people who are in need of help. Together, we can achieve anything. I hope this to be the first in many full-community efforts for the betterment of us all. When one of us suffers, we all suffer. When one of us is in need, we are all in need.

If we all do something small, but in collaboration, it will add up to any of the largest goals we can create. You are doing this. You are a piece of this peace we are trying to create.

"We can do no great things, only small things with great love." -- Mother Teresa

I ask you to please keep it up. Join me in being the change we wish to see in the world.

Just one moment can change the world. This is that moment.

Namaste.

# ZACH

Degraded, deprived, and caged  
Abused, murdered, rampaged  
The Earth's fate we will solder  
Through this sentient slaughter  
Unless we stand up and be the change

"Love Initiative Poem" by Bekey Hewit

This is it:  
nothing else you ever did matters  
the place where all your words mean nothing  
doorway to forever.

"Singularity" by Geoffrey A. Landis

The world  
can change  
in a minute.  
We all know that.  
We tiptoe through life  
in fear of that minute.  
That singular  
tragic minute.

We do not fear the  
joyous minute.  
We do not fear the  
collection of minutes  
which initiate change.  
We do not fear it and  
we do not even  
acknowledge it as a  
possibility.

Let this be  
a shot across  
the bow of fear.  
Let this be a  
singular brick in  
the foundation  
of forward  
momentum.  
Let this be  
one of the minutes  
that was set loose  
upon the world  
with its cowlick  
wet down with  
mother's spit  
and ready for  
picture day.

"Wet Down with Mother's Spit" by Steve Brightman

Gather the people  
In the name of culture  
Don't be afraid to call for change  
Sing the songs of compassion  
March on the Capitol  
Abandon the course of war  
Open the hearts of others  
Hear our longing for civility  
Our desire for peace  
Bring justice to our land  
And bring forth a new spirit

"In These Times" by Kay Eaton

In the green beginning,  
    in the morning mist,  
        they emerge from their chrysalis  
of clothes: peel off purses & cells,  
    slacks & Gap sweats, turtle-  
        necks & tanks, Tommy's & Salvation  
Army, platforms & clogs,  
    abandoning bras and lingerie, labels  
        & names, courtesies & shames,  
the emperor's rhetoric of defense,  
    laying it down, their child-  
        stretched or still-taut flesh  
giddy in sudden proximity,  
    onto the cold earth: bodies fetal or supine,  
        as if come-hithering  
or dead, wriggle on the grass to form  
    the shape of a word yet to come, almost  
        embarrassing to name: a word  
thicker, heavier than the rolled rags  
    of their bodies seen from a cockpit:  
        they touch to make  
the word they want to become:  
    it's difficult to get the news  
        from our bodies, yet people die each day  
for lack of what is found there:  
    here: the fifty hold, & still  
        to become a testament, a will,  
embody something outside  
    themselves & themselves: the body,  
        the dreaming disarmed body.

"For the Fifty (Who Made PEACE With Their Bodies)" by Philip Metres

desperate,  
or so she seemed,  
like one who has her head  
held down  
underwater  
too long.

I did not say a word to her;  
better to let people  
rise to the surface, I thought,  
better to let people  
find their own way.

so I enjoyed the transit ride,  
selfish as I am,  
while people in this world  
were suffering.

and as we passed through the valley  
with the sun on the train tracks,  
I turned to find her  
(the gulls flying low to the river,  
the river, a miraculous blue)  
looking out the opposite window,  
a faint, contented  
even joyful  
smile on her face.

and I knew I could never affect a person  
any more than those who have suffered for me,  
who suffered (forgive me) needlessly.

"Surfacing" by Marc Mannheimer

i will light haunt the days you preached, sloshed to wi- dows forced be- neath. i will light blow the dam where you stand frozen stiff w/our lives in check- mate.	i will light phantom limbs mend the sky gashed w/ blows from yr tongue. i will light emipre's tail watch it leap blood& gears from dread maps.	i will light all the eyes staring, glazed that would die just to sleep. i will light halos flung towards the sea for the sake of the rest
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"Torches" by Michael Bernstein

If only  
 it were that simple  
 open the wallet  
 smooth out a greenback  
 guide it to the slot  
 and slide it in  
 like a man into his lover  
 and out pops change  
 political change  
 social change  
 spiritual change  
 ecological change  
 personal change  
 the denominations of the coins  
 being understanding  
 responsibility  
 tolerance  
 the ability to respect  
 and treat with justice  
 I'd pay for that  
 I'd shove those greenbacks in  
 piston-like  
 and catch change  
 in both my hands  
 if only  
 it were that simple  
 a vending machine for change  
 in every lobby  
 on every street corner  
 open 24 hours

but I think the machine is broken  
 the light's not on  
 and the slot does not snatch  
 what I'm offering  
 won't even mouth it  
 when I try to tease it in

if we want change  
 we're going to have to look for it  
 on the sidewalks  
 in the streets  
 on the dresser at home  
 in our pockets  
 we're going to have to pick up  
 change  
 and keep it close  
 for all those times  
 we need it  
 like now

a penny  
 for your thoughts?

"Vending Machine For Change"  
 by Dianne Borsenik

I carry you  
like a witness  
human song  
book child  
can may and  
could did  
was not be  
depart end grow  
in love let night  
knowledge new  
can will you  
always last we you  
new ever singing  
and perhaps can feel  
time move start  
this to you  
a clear crying  
new choice

"Leap of Faith" by William Merricle

I have had red hair  
all of my life  
(A joke in my youth)  
I don't discard  
my friendships  
as easily as I did  
the men  
but these years...  
those that have  
passed through  
have taught me  
too much  
and I stay quiet  
I hide regret in  
extra sizes and  
empty gas tanks  
This is where I  
prefer it now  
This reflection  
sometimes smiling  
mostly looking away  
from the damned mirror

"August of Now" by Cheryl A. Townsend

I look at myself through fun house mirrors  
Distorted vision  
Is this why you never saw me  
Though you were looking right at me  
It's the only way  
I can look at myself

I look at the World through fun house mirrors  
Distorted vision  
All I see is pain  
& I learned long ago I can't change it  
I should be more accepting  
Learn to embrace it  
But I can touch people one at a time  
& they will touch people  
We can spread like a virus  
Fight the man from inside  
We can make beauty  
Out of everyday instances

"Fun House Mirrors" by Michael D. Grover

The last you saw me, I was a baby  
begging at my mother's breast  
as her palm lay bare at your hip  
approaching the touch of coins.  
I was woolen in my blanket,  
my mouth fuzzy with thirst  
as she starved her skin.  
She went so thin, people did not notice.  
She grew so invisible, she disappeared.  
Her eyes became small raccoons,  
her mouth, a broken snake.  
Her body bent and died in the street  
with me as her nucleus,  
still clinging, tasting her belly  
with my tongue: that human ash  
she'd become.  
And then another of you found me,  
said my sucking mouth must release  
those dead balloons gone airless.  
I tried to mouth the word hungry  
in the same way.  
(That woman had gone mute  
wrapping her voice around my flesh.)  
My name was Please-help-her.  
You missed the hush;  
You missed the panic of it.  
You missed the one who grew thick  
in the ash of her embrace.

"Refugee" by Tina Puckett



When we are hungry,  
Disgusted with despair.  
Hating its stench before garbage days,  
Gag. Even vomit overcome by smells of  
Rotting places.  
Rotting language.  
Rotting lives.  
We prepare to toss several bags again.  
Prepare to close another creative vessel in our brains?  
No!

With all our friends of  
Friends' friends friends,  
Promotions, privileges, plastics, and pearls,  
Most are still souls fearing  
Life's most imminent appointments.  
Not made until  
We must.

Ansel, Gordon Parks, Bourke-White, O'Keefe, Picasso  
gazed without limits not seeing the trash,  
Greeted mornings in naked amazement over and over,  
Amazement of happy sad bluez, brownz, purplez. Blackz and  
Whitez.  
Most lived very long feasting on childhood cloudz.  
Wordz and picturez are bubbles. Raising us with them.  
Links forever to sunz and windz.

Sometimes buildings block viewz.  
Sometimes building stops viewz.  
Sometimes parents. Sometimes we all do  
By spending our loud daze saluting paychecks,  
Concrete, strangers, smartphones, shoes, and smog.

Instead of befriending friendz of skiez.  
Like the Bird Men who love feeding sparrowz  
And pigeonz patrolling Tower Cities.

Wonder bread crumbs are  
Cachet from dumpsters at night.  
We award Bird Men pocket change tinged with guilt and pity  
while photographing their plights.  
Maybe one of them will surprise?  
Opening eyes by relocating Southwest like me?  
Maybe hitch hike Route 66?  
Visit Yellowstone to feed themselves? Show others?  
Might stay there. Probably. Probably not.

Too used to policing cities better than policemen.  
Bird Men stay committed to commanding traffic on Public Squares  
And park bench beds.  
These are their homes better than most,  
Taj Mahals unconventional  
Behind Rock Halls near Lake Eriez  
The solace of mountain viewz  
Or other territoriez verdant.  
Thoz in imaginationz always count too.  
Geniuz is not craziness.

We can create Earthly Edenz, not just Five, Ten, or Seven. Infinite  
Places where all should linger long as Bird Men, children, poets,  
all artists often do  
Even when November shivers our urban shoulders  
Burdened with sympathy signs, bills, and other garbage.  
Nine Levels of Hell not Dante's Heaven.  
So we go to man's shelters many times to forget about the dying.  
For a little heat, company, abuse, or care.  
No positives ever compare with God's  
Wisdom residing in park bench beds as  
Regal sparrowz fly assurances over our headz that  
We all can live to plant Sycamores next spring.

"Sparrowz (A November Poem)" by Marlana-Patrice Pugh Hamer

how do you write  
about the power of one  
when the world is so divided  
fractured and fragmented  
torn by war and corruption?  
when suspicions hold sway  
and dissention is the game of the day?

how do you write  
about the power of love  
when hearts are divided  
broken and bleeding  
when only hate and fear pave the way  
and prejudice seems here to stay?

religions are meant to join not divide  
beliefs are meant to support not malign  
who someone loves should be  
a cause for joy not derision  
why is something so easy... love  
made so rigid and hard  
unyielding - a cause for division

maybe it's time to be real, to heal  
to unite and not fight  
begin a new order  
where there are no borders  
no boundaries  
the thinking heart and the feeling mind  
is what we need  
compassion is the road to action  
the pen of choice  
the ever responding voice  
perhaps it is time  
to finally just try to love  
and work to make things right.

A breeze from the west  
scours the night with cold.  
I remain with the river  
to haunt these stones.

The blade of the moon  
harvests smoke from the village.  
Out of their windows, people  
see only clouds and snow.

"Late Autumn" by Joshua Gage

5 p.m. The trees invite blue china clouds  
They forget the sun cannot light the lamp  
5 p.m. You are drinking tea with honey  
Inside a penumbra by the Radhachuda tree  
You can wait, then bring the oil lamp out  
Circumnavigate the non-existent tulaxi  
The Namghar's 5 p.m. silence will soon erupt  
Its tranced kortaal dueting with the khol  
5 p.m. You will know that time has struck  
Gooseberry dreaming the shadow of a home.

"Evening Things" by Nabina Das

The woman grabbed my arm  
a block from my Chicago hotel, Oh!  
I dunno what I'm gonna do! I told her  
calm down, (I'm from Ohio,  
everything will always be fine), tell me  
what happened. Her car, her purse,  
towed away. Security guard at the hotel  
told her to take a bus to the impound lot  
but how can she pay the fare—her purse,  
her car, and Oh! she sobbed her car  
was towed, all the time shaking, sobbing and I

listened to the midnight city sidewalk  
dark between two streetlights. But she shook,  
so I hugged her. Can I pray for you?  
She raised her hands, "Praise the Lord!  
A Jesus follower!" I blushed but she couldn't see,  
I don't think. Oh, courage, peace,  
talk out loud to a god and ask  
how much she thought she needed.  
Two folded bills leave my purse  
and given, walk away. She checked her hand,

let out another cry, clicked her heels  
like Dick Van Dyke in Mary Poppins,  
and I am Jane Banks, deliriously happy  
to keep pretending it is possible to hop  
off city streets into sidewalk chalk parks,  
to believe in floating tea parties  
and the power of tuppence.

"Let's Go Fly a Kite" by Sarah Wells

there are whispers with no sound  
and we lie with greater truths  
than our being  
we cusp with need  
petition in flesh  
speak in shadows  
& harbor sincerity  
the candor of our moments  
our primary casualties  
and though causality demands no servant  
we subsist  
indentured to a barren master  
refracting growth  
ignoring plausibility  
we thrive en mass derision  
simultaneously loathing and worshiping  
the preferential  
a negligent accountability  
and then we wonder  
why

"En Mass" by Michelle 'Mikki' Williams

Men like me, grew from concrete as winter born roses.  
Misplaced scenery, made to stand out.  
Plucked out of our homes until our dirt cried abandoned  
And we stretched back,  
Dropped petals as tears, dropped petals as blood,  
Dropped octaves as baritones because we had to grow regardless,  
Of broken homes, of broken backbones  
No one can question why the male's blood runs red,  
As he tries to rip understanding from in his veins,  
Through us runs Adam, the apple in our throats,  
We dig, for understanding of why fruit,  
hangs between our legs disconnected from our truth,  
We struggle, to grow in tune with our bodies—  
if only our minds could move at the pace of fast twitch muscles  
At the speed of orgasms, we might be able to avoid... mistakes.  
But we appear as monoliths, with closed fists  
Closed minds we have to be taught how to learn,  
As if contradiction were easy to break out of once you let them sink in,  
Pardon my chromosomes,  
Two disjointed siblings of the alphabet, Trying to dominate,  
X before Y, X before Y  
A female is XX, born twice before us...  
no wonder it seems like they are always right,  
The alpha I bet, in this mastered piece of broken abstract speech,  
Piece me together with crooked sewing needles,  
I've been bent out of shape since my shape started twisting.  
Testosterone should be outlawed. Strength shouldn't be celebrated,  
Parade around the mishaps of our mistakes,  
Most of us say sorry... through closed lips—  
And we complain about women expecting us to be psychic.  
I would apologize for my gender...but my mind is never in sync with yours  
Is it... ladies... is it... crazy that I'll sit in silence,  
And try to listen to my own heartbeat,  
wonder what makes our lives so different,  
Insane for me to sit in silence,  
and try to listen to the part of me that makes life,  
Something has to be pure in here, Inside this chest, and broad shoulders,  
Why are we made like we protect things? I've only seen us break them  
Like concrete bones, hold us up, that must be why we are so rigid,

I can see now, with peeled back eye lids, with support beam legs  
That men... aren't made... to be good lovers  
I can see with straightened spines that, we are not born...  
with soft hands, and soft voices.  
None of us is born... mature. And then I stop, look around and I can see...  
That men like me grew from concrete like winter born roses  
Learned to shake snow from our leaves,  
Produced our own heat  
We had to learn not to be cold...  
No child is born man,  
No man is made whole  
We are forever twisted in our own DNA  
To find the balance between the strength of a man  
And the warmth... of a woman...  
That's why... most roses... don't bloom in winter...  
Just a few that the world says have grown wrong  
But these are the ones, with seeds that will sprout  
With dawns that will break through.  
For the others... they will fuck... and wilt... until their death.  
Trying to find  
Completion.

"Men" by Eric Odum

I can't won't make a  
poem food for hungry folk.  
They need cans, not can'ts.

"Can It" by John Burroughs

Love is intangible  
A possible chemical reaction  
But never the less, love can breathe  
And love can see  
Love is the one thing we can not touch but all strive to find  
Because love makes us think blindly  
Often keeping us from seeing the lies that we are believing  
Love is naught but a pleasant dream  
    that veils the unpleasant reality  
And when we wake we find it's nothing more than a memory  
But a pleasant memory not  
For the pleasant memories are the most painful to recall  
Like the bottom of a lake so beautiful  
But dare not dive for thou will not resurface  
But love is so addictive  
Like a sweet poison  
Like Snow White's apple  
So beautiful and tempting  
But deadly  
Love is the only reason people can seem to  
    justify this pointless existence  
A witty response they tell to me  
But from love and lies One of the same  
We will never be free  
Because love is naught but a fading dream  
    in which we grasp at  
to keep the veil over reality

"Love Is" by Arija Lee

Whitman knew  
the stroke of a  
man, as well as a woman.  
He knew no decay  
of either embrace.  
Wilde, across the ocean,  
sang his song,  
one from the mists of Clock bells,  
though leaves in the grass –  
this too was his delight.  
Men's men, women's women  
women's men, men's women –  
only the lonely cancel  
one by the other.  
Girls and boys,  
are only  
boys and girls,  
when playing in the school yard.  
'You're gay!'  
'You're straight!'  
Those afraid of their shadows  
line them up,  
like picking sides for a ball game,  
changing it into a dodge ball suite,  
picking off one by one  
until the winner is the only  
normal one. –  
Losers, one and all,  
stick together, throw our fists into the air,  
there's only one race, one grace, with many faces –  
one people.  
Time to run in the grass' leaves.

"Whitman Knew" by Timothy R. Gates

Distant thunder rolls ever closer and moves  
    into the sacred space around me  
I hear pain in the growling voice of the storm,  
Brooding and angry... so hungry for attention  
The winds whip around in a fury,  
    crashing loudly into all that stands still.

Shifting and bantering in a loud dispute,  
the clouds come alive above me.  
I hear screams of terror once held deep within the earth.  
And I know that the time has come for release.

The residue can no longer be carried  
    for the sins of a sleeping world.  
Pain inflicted has grown so thick it needs clearing.  
Our Mother Earth now throws the heavy energy  
    into the atmosphere.  
The blood of our brothers and sisters long soaked  
    in the soil where we walk.

Cries of anguish and hunger that no one has wanted  
    to hear still ring out.  
Ignorance and time aren't magicians that make it all disappear.  
The energy stays on waiting for acknowledgment.  
So intense now it must rise up for us to see.

Huddled like children and vulnerable  
we look up in fear searching for meaning.  
The message is clear but requires an open mind,  
    an open heart.  
To see we must stop hiding and open our eyes.  
It is time now to open our eyes.

"STORMS (It Is Time Now To Open Our Eyes)" by Leah B. Beck

Mystical measuring  
brings edges together  
and forms an illusion of corners -  
those places where fantasies flourish  
with feelings of privilege  
where we dine  
at our very own tables  
in our very own corners  
of the world

In such a proud place we live  
sipping imported wines  
in our affluent homes  
built only on prized corner lots

We corner the markets  
embargo the efforts of others  
and embellish their faults  
all to keep them  
from joining us  
in our corners

These corners belong to us  
were handed down to us  
by our families who  
lived in these corners

So we send the message  
dare not to cross our borders  
or stow away on our ships

There is no room for you here  
in our imaginary  
inherited  
corners

Words, how you have carried me  
 held me up when I lost my own tongue  
 tip no longer tasting life  
 but bitterness, poison and dirt.  
 Thirsting for something more and you  
 you whet my appetite again.

I stood confused  
 darkness sucking me down  
 sucking my lip  
 hips held with frustrated hands  
 having a Crisis of Lesbian Identity.  
 Thought I was bi  
 but I  
 I was g-a-y.

Remember the crush on my fourth grade teacher  
 how she never wore the same outfit more than once  
 All those skirts and long hair and heels and--  
 Even then I was, Even young I was G-A-Y

Kicking myself out of that  
 dark and dependent closet  
 The door opened by those who did it first  
 Pat Parker  
 Audre Lorde  
 Staceyann Chin  
 seeds of revolution planted within me,  
 {revolution begins within the self}  
 Your words were like sunlight that fed my soul and nourished me.

Closets are for clothes, not human souls.  
 And that closet was like a prison.  
 Solitary confinement. The Soul Breaker.  
 29 years served in fear.  
 No one could understand.  
 I had no words. I had no voice.  
 Felt like I had no choice.  
 Silent suffering. Suffocating. Disappearing.  
 Even then I was, Even young I was  
 G-A-Y

Refused to slowly die  
 To be complicit in a lie  
 I am here, I am queer  
 I am G-A-Y!

Can't hold me down  
 can't pin me down  
 Because I'm binding my breasts.  
 Now your eye is seeing this "I"  
 that says that gender is a lie

Rebelling gender  
 Destruct construction  
 Revolution of the mind  
 Doing drag, going stag  
 Bravado and pompadours  
 Girls, sex, rock n roll  
 Femme hidden by a greaser's strut  
 I become Johnny Angel  
 with a motorcycle screaming between my thighs  
 Making all the girls swoon like Elvis is in the building

Binding my breasts brings Liberation  
 No power in your structure  
 No truth in your categories  
 Buck the system  
 Fuck the system  
 I am a gentleman  
 The staccato of my leopard-print stiletto heels  
 on your assumptions

Words, how you have moved me!  
 Giving me something when I could not speak  
 When I was invisible  
 When I was lost  
 When I was in that dark closet  
 When I found that life was not life  
 When I felt burdened by lying  
 Dying  
 and I could—not—go--on...

And I need my words now  
 have to use my voice because I am a  
 Second-class citizen  
 Denied the American Dream  
 Where all men are created equal  
 Not safe where I live  
 Not safe where I work  
 Not safe in the closet  
 Not protected under the red white and blue  
 Not protected like you

The line to liberty and equality is not always straight and narrow  
 I fought so hard to stand here  
 Fought to be me  
 Fought to be seen  
 Clawed my way out of that closet  
 Don't you dare try to hold me back!  
 I'm fighting still  
 For my right to be  
 For equality

Love is never wrong.  
 Hope is never silent.  
 Don't be silent.  
 Refuse to shut up.  
 Don't be locked up in  
 hang-ups that aren't yours  
 Divorce yourself from  
 oppression  
 Refuse to collaborate  
 Accessory? Not me.  
 Speak up!  
 Use your voice.  
 Start a revolution.

Unleash a battle cry!  
 My voice is a shield  
 My voice is a sword  
 My voice is a banner waving in the wind  
 Carried into the fray  
 My voice screams

Before the sun's last setting hour  
when time and space do cease,  
I'd wish upon the world a flower  
that symbolizes peace

Her stem of velvet, never creased,  
stretched tightly, would stand guard  
in any weather, eyes would feast  
upon it in my yard

her petals would reach out to God  
with fragrance sweet, yet mild,  
soon, frowns would turn to smiles, each pod  
could heal the inner child

just one small breath, our problems piled  
like snow, would melt; we'd pour  
our hearts out, cry a river wild,  
feel free, like never before...

And could the world stop making war  
before the sun's last hour,  
then brotherhood would be the law...  
I wish on all that flower

"A Wish For Peace" by John A. Todras

You are all oomph and spunk directed outwards. You run me in circles, sleep still in our eyes. Energy like light filling curtainless rooms. Today I am six again and digging for gold in the sandbox. Our filthy feet banned from the house. Instead, we dip toes in the river. Secret handshake marks the spot. The language of hands another current. Christians (like you?) imagine God with hands, but I am not so sure. Even monkeys are taught to speak with their hands. Babies discover their hands when they are six weeks old. They ball them into tiny fists, slowly turning them back and forth before their eyes, amazed. My own hands dug and dug and came up with only this: Silt and sediment once buried deep now carried on wind and water. Fast flowing rivers and freshwater lakes. Reminders of home. Chubby clouds in crowded skies. Springtime. The grass lush and lime. Lilacs already browning. But they're still good. Enough to explain a little of the world and life to you and tell you why it should be lived. Like musk. Persistent and penetrating. It is closeness and the memory of closeness.

An aroma that smothers with thickness. It is locker rooms, babies' skin and feet. Sweet smelling, earthy and unctuous. Even now I remember the musk of men I loved and nestled.

Babies do this too—tuckling tight against mothers' necks. I smell you even after you're gone. Life moves on without you and I have only these words to give. Some are sodden. Flimsy balled tissues from Papa's funeral. Bones like silver hidden in the earth. Here, touch the evidence: coins, jewelry, swords. All burdensome to hold. Even the word itself is soft:

~ s i l v e r ~

Shout it and no one runs. But be weary--one could crush all you love with other soft words. Like no. Like yes. Like gone.

Unable to envision tomorrow,  
my dreams so dulled by meaningless work.  
Sleep is only a remembered blessing,  
like a long lost lover's kiss.  
Having no courage to act upon uncertain fate,  
I sell my soul for a weekly paycheck with attached self-loathing.  
The new American dream is to own a home among the  
HOMELESS.  
On a field trip to The Statehouse Rotunda,  
my daughter tells me of an old discarded woman  
walking up and down the entrance steps,  
implanting her history on the venerated marble stair,  
again and again,  
mutterings in constant motion.  
"Glad" trash bags tied around sad feet,  
she retraces her footfalls in exact cadence.  
I imagine her self-imposed penance absolves  
murderous thoughts against elected representatives,  
NONE OF WHOM REPRESENT HER

"Amina's Field Trip" by Judith Fanny Rose

she says

all light is fire  
all fire is light

embrace and drink deep

fade to white

fade to white

"Becoming Light" by J.E. Stanley

pale ribboned sky,  
draped over rooftops,  
that view the sea,  
held at the window  
eyes pointed gray  
absorbed it all  
a heart beat slowed  
a solemn beat  
deflective of the cause,  
closed mouths  
issued no voices,  
as without a whisper  
it came to an end.

"Re Routed" by Chris Lawrence

Hear the clash, clang, cling  
Of the metallic repetitions  
A bird of sorrow in my pocket  
Singing sad lullabies of  
Ignorance, and oppression  
Marooning in the limelight  
of a small child's unselfish love for humanity  
Taking the hand of the colorless  
Singing the song of the voiceless

See the croon, swoon, soon  
revealing the distorted shadows  
Of the once heard voice voice voices  
Ghandi sewing seeds of fate  
In a field of impoverished mouths  
Growing leaves of change  
In the unfortunate lullabies of hidden dreams  
Transforming darkness in to ever voidless light  
One mother lifting her voice  
Above bombs bursting, erupting hatred upon  
innocent eyes  
Hear her song, as she swoons in the nuclear light  
Holding words of peace upon her breast  
Taking in the chemical reaction  
That leaves the heartless unscathed

&gt;&gt;&gt;

Breathe in the sweet, sticky, spice  
Smell the earth between your fingertips  
Smell the brine of heart and hearth wafting through your pores  
Like tears of angels, raining down upon lost souls  
Breathe in the scents of India, and Moraccan Night  
Taste the dew and cinnamon upon your tongue  
Quiet, Unselfish, Moving  
Charity knelt before you as  
A Monk  
Who kneels before the begger  
Washing your feet  
Clothing your body  
Tending your wounds  
Feeding your soul with honey and melon  
Chanting words of love and zen in breathless speech  
That only one may speak

Hear the words of wisdom and peace.  
Feel the pain of the unnamed.  
Taste the hunger in the mouths of the hungry.  
Hear the cries of the motherless child in the night.  
Breathe in the love of the countless many.  
Speak the words of comfort and reform.  
Hear the clatter, clatter, pattern  
Of the shiney metal coins  
As they travel  
Journey, palm to palm  
Love to Need  
Stranger to brother  
As one becomes many  
In this journey of change

"Journey of Change" by Jenna Arthur

and then I sprayed them with lye

for they say in the village  
bury the pickle-in-brine jar  
deep into the earth;

let it be;

till you unearth it  
for all the soaking in,  
for setting it apart like good wine  
the longer the tastier.

They say in the city

that the dearness of wine  
the tenderness of the virgin mango  
increases with the years.

I do this with my poetry  
spray them with memory  
and a little lye, and let them be  
till one day they become candle eyes  
floating on my computer.

"Virgin Mango Pickles" by Sivakami Velliangiri

Oh Love,  
that which You will find  
beyond Your front doorstep,  
that which will enter  
Your circle of existence  
in times of necessity,  
in times of plenty.  
There is no coincidence.  
Life touches Life.

In this vivid day-to-day  
You are not  
the only one who needs,  
but You may be  
the only one  
who has the opportunity  
to fulfill a certain dream.

Each situation,  
each person unique,  
each skill and ability drawn  
from different wells; these separate are fine,  
apart works okay...  
but stir them together  
and The World will change.

"Embrace It" by Jen Pezzo

Let us make unmitigated joy unto the noise  
rising up with offerings from our lungs  
cranking the music louder than lions  
playing unfettered beneath egyptian  
stars and moonbeams bright with bits of  
powdered particles of pyramids  
showering down on sphinx's hint of smile  
holy as any mona lisa's laugh

"Celebration" by Barbara Moore

Who has time for a daydream?  
Or a sun-kiss on the cheek?  
Who has time to smell a flower?  
Or enjoy a small treat?  
Who has time to wonder?  
Or imagine the finer things?  
Who has time for laughter?  
Or to suddenly begin to sing?  
Who has time to think?  
Or drown in a lovers kiss?  
Who has time to be aware?  
Or realize what we've missed?

"Busy" by Elisha Aglioti

Would you walk with me  
if I were hungry?  
Would you have eye contact with me  
if I were hungry?  
Would you listen to what I had to say  
if I were hungry?  
Would you help me spiritually  
if I were hungry?  
Would you share your food with me  
if I were hungry?  
Would you?

"If I Were Hungry" by Peter Hessman

some people say  
love is the answer to everything  
and when I think of it  
I don't see any problem with that  
everyone keeps saying  
just be a better person  
and when I consider it  
I think why not  
If you are just a little better person tomorrow  
the world  
will be just a little better

"Hard to Disagree" by A. Molotkov

She laid there, unfocused eyes  
covers pulled up tight, as dawn  
shrieked through the windows,

that's when weight absorbing motion pressed down on her,

she's just trying to travel the distance across her bed  
to put one foot on the floor, reach out, open the door,

papers in a pile filled with tiny numbers  
grinds down on her smile, makes her bones ache,

no amount of knowledge can change  
the simple math needed for a roof, heat,  
feed her babies,

simple math can't calculate the look  
in her child's eye as no not today  
echos into tomorrow,  
before her toe even touched the wooden floor.

"Solitaire" by Steve Thomas

The road between pain and peace,  
One littered with the potholes of anguish and struggle.  
This road called life, traveled an infinite number of times,  
Worn away by the feet of all of those before and still to come.

Walking, I remember every stone,  
Every rounded, marbled piece of gravel.  
The smallest, and most seemingly inconsequential, I remember the most  
For they are the ones that gave me hope and propelled me  
Out of the holes I fall in,  
Over the hills of struggle  
And toward our desired destination;  
The freedoms to love unequivocally, hope immeasurably  
And the strength and guidance  
To lead even the unable through every road way journeyed  
For it is the journey that makes us who we are;  
More than human, more than soul.

We are the journey; we are every road we travel,  
We are every person we meet; we are every stone and pebble,  
Every blade of grass that is dispersed amongst the cracks we trip in.  
Traveling toward the journey's end looking inside  
Our hearts beating in symphony with the tides,  
Our souls blazing brighter than any supernova.  
Both, heart and soul, knowing the truth  
Of that which we are, always have been and always will be,  
And that is simply:  
We are everything; Past, present, future. We are  
Whole.

"The Road" by Craig Firsdon

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## acknowledgments

"Evening Things" by Nabina Das was previously published in "Durable Goods" #28.

"Singularity" by Geoffrey A. Landis was previously published in "Iron Angels."

"Refugee" by Tina Puckett was previously published in "The Listening Eye."

"Becoming Light" by J.E. Stanley was previously published in "Intrinsic Night."

