

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Michael Bearden: Two Poems

Michael Bearden · Wednesday, June 20th, 2018

It is a great pleasure to share the work of a young man who I have mentored since his Sophomore year. I am proud to see that his poems capture his serious, yet hopeful spirit. Michael Bearden has been a lead member of The Modern Poets and Composer's Club (MPC), the Loyola High School club I moderate, that brings budding poets, MC's, DJ's, and music producers together to make music, make folks dance, and also, make them think.

The MPC is the Loyola student group I have involved in the event, un::fade::able – The Requiem for Sandra Bland. Their commitment to social justice, namely the justice needed to shed light on issues revolved around Black Lives Matter, has been monumental in my life as an educator. It is one thing to make a crowd dance, but is more profound to help them think, and help them learn. Michael, in his last year as the co-president of the MPC club, has led student art forums and DJ classes for middle schoolers.

The selected poems you are about to read were written in my African American Poetry class this Spring semester. These poems capture the legacy of those who have been slain at the hands of those meant to protect ("not wanting/ To be another sudden move/ That flash of gold the last thing I ever see"), as well as the complexity of growing up with one's particular name. In one poem, the speaker admits: "Often it's/hard to accept that my/big bright brain is blemished," as they try to decipher the possibilities for one's names, and/or nicknames.

Here is a youth growing up in an unsettling era, and instead of giving up or giving into the vices we adults assume onto youth (video games, drugs, bad attitudes, entitlement, instant gratification, social media aggrandizement, or antisocial detachment), the speaker's vulnerable stance is a honest statement that there is room for error, and for change. "It's ok to be wrong," the poem concludes, and it is not complacent voice of youth, but a wise triumph, reminiscent of the old adage that grants serenity.

In his deeds, and now his shared words, Michael has become a hero to many, but especially to his teacher who cannot wait to see the grace he unleashes on the world. I hope you enjoy these as much as I have.

— F. Douglas Brown, author of *ICON* and *Zero To Three*

Badges Bop

after Noname

I was a good kid, in the eyes of most people
 To them I'm just another miscreant
 Out a little too late
 Plopping me on the curb
 All my mind can do is race
 Be cool dude – just be cool

I picture your smile, like it was yesterday.

I remember hearing the cries of Eric Garner
 Watching men slouch from bullets everyday on news
 Boom, I can't breathe— who cares
 I'm unarmed— doesn't matter
 The rain don't feel like rain
 Been way too common lately

I picture your smile, like it was yesterday.

I remember bitter hatred in the air
 Fearing for my life, not wanting
 To be another sudden move
 That flash of gold the last thing I ever see
 My beautiful temple
 Crashing into a pile of fear and despair

I picture your smile, like it was yesterday.

*

Imperfect Me: Michael. Mike. Mikey

Michael

The sharp taste of “not knowing”
 Cannot come out of
 My mouth.
 Sour stench of “incorrect”
 Will never be found on me.
 At least that's what
 I hope to be the case
 But it's time to realize
 Wrong is ok.

Mike

They all get it

Wise guy
Trying not to
Like I'm wagging
My tail for teacher.
Sometimes it's better
For me
Mind should be without fear
I should be free

Mikey

Understand no foul stench exists
Sharp taste fades away
That is the case
Often it's
hard to accept that my
big bright brain is blemished
The time might have
already come
It's ok to be wrong.

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