

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Youth Poets of Detroit: Our Pulse is in the Rhythm

Samuel Taylor · Friday, August 16th, 2013

Three Youth Poets of Detroit



Samuel Taylor is a 17 year old poet. He attends Martin Luther King Jr. Sr. High School in Detroit. He plans on going to UCLA to major in education. Samuel has been writing poetry since 6th grade. Poetry, he believes, is a story that's worth telling. He has participated in many slams around Michigan and won quite a few of them. Samuel is an activist who is trying to spread good words and make a difference.

Moments to Judge

by Samuel Taylor

Demetrius showed me
 how the titles we take
 can decide our fates.
 Decisions manifest futures
 and his was obvious.
 He was fourteen, critiquing
 our grammar better than
 the teachers that doubted us.
 Demetrius, with short dreads,
 stocky. Black-eyed, hawkish.
 Never ran from a fight.
 We gamed high school hallways
 for pretty women willing
 to learn our names.
 but back then
 he focused on backs,
 not faces. Face it:
 girls with respect
 got neglected.
 I never told him
 how girls in tight skirts
 are not escorts.
 His pants sunk to floor,
 ego to sky. Still
 in school uniform

but Demetrius dropped out.
 Last time we kicked it
 was back of the room
 during English class.
 He dealt hands of Tonk
 for cash, money in pockets.
 To him, money was progress
 and stacking books
 didn't keep the lights on.
 He traded wings and bullets flew
 but that can't make him a soldier.
 Teachers don't teach streets;
 high school standards never meet.
 Demetrius, the book worm
 transcript all-star; role model.
 Now, throwing rich boy sets
 up on East Lafayette
 Confused, he was given
 broken tools. Told to try college,
 applied for jail scholarship.
 Can't face truth, but chases lies.
 Scared of succeeding, ask
 and he'll show the scars
 to prove it.



Briana Sanders is a 2013 grad of Renaissance High School in Detroit. She will attend Howard University in the fall. She enjoys long walks on the beach, books and chocolate. She has been writing since the 4th grade.

Detroit for the 1%

By Briana Sanders

We sprouted like rose bushes
 in the backyards of homes off seven mile.
 We traipsed across bridges of other counties
 and smelled distant incinerators.
 The smell of asthma and adultery cling to us like the sound
 of Aretha and Diana and Otis running down West Grand Boulevard.
 Our Act scores are higher than most cars' MPG's and our weighted GPA lay nestled between three
 and four like
 the Joe Louis fist on Woodward and Jefferson.
 We are why the city seems to be reviving.
 We aren't murderers and the only thing we've ever shot down is stereotypes.
 There are some people in this city who actually keep their heads in books for fun.
 We put on dance recitals for our moms instead of playing outside, found comfort on hardwood
 floors, tile, grass and concrete.
 We have mastered the English language and French and German and Japanese and we have an aura

of green, green like Belle Isle, green like the oxidize spirit of Detroit, green like the Cass Technicians and green like the money the state owes our city.



Justin Rogers is a poet and educator from Detroit, MI, committed to magnifying the voice of young artists. He attends Wayne State University where he studies Art Education and English. His accomplishments include helping Detroit's 2011 Brave New Voices team rank 4th in the world, publications in Wayne State University's literary journal, Wayne Literary Review, and Henry Ford Community College's literary journal Michigan Ave. He received the Skillman Scholars award from the Coleman A. Young Foundation – a scholarship of \$20,000 – for his vision for an artistic future for Detroit. Justin recently returned from the Rhymes and Revolutions poetry tour with poet Deonte Osayande, and published his first poetry chapbook "Sound Off." Most recently, Justin has become a part of the collective known as Detroit Witness, a collective of artists and writers traveling, educating, and artistically uplifting others in and around their community.

Small town City

By Justin Rogers

I remember always wanting to move to a small town
 next to a coffee house-
 where I could enjoy sliding wooden chair legs
 and clinking china releasing steam
 Tethered together by the flowing voice
 Of a traveling poet,
 And I remember the day I realized
 I couldn't leave my city
 No matter how many flaws it has.
 Every day I contemplate the best way to fit
 Personal theories about why my neighborhood
 Is filled with overgrown vacant fields
 Into 3 minutes and 10 seconds.
 Slam is easy, saying something important is hard.
 Drawing memories of my city's forgotten pulse,
 Turning it into something worth finding again is hard,
 Like realizing my city is still beautiful
 When the people around me
 Toss Molotov cocktails through windows
 during 3 AM street fights,
 hold dirty looks as if I took their freedom,
 I wake up to 9mm shells in my front yard.
 Welcome to my city.
 Beauty isn't obvious,
 But anger beats at our front doors
 Like police giving a last warning.
 I scream hatred over city limits
 Hoping lost residents will hear me.
 I am one of the faithful citizens
 rooted like flag poles
 writing love poems to my city

No matter how many
Dark alleys we tread through
Or potholes we damn near swim in.
Detroit is ranked the angriest city in America.
We should be angry-
Our communities are isolated.
Our unity dissected by freeways.
We cant be linked together by overpasses
So Artists –
Graffiti turbulence
Against abandoned walls
And hope it'll lead someone
To see our gaping wounds.
Poets –
Spill blood on stage
And wage war!
We are a militia
Crushing myths outsiders created.
We're not only riots and bankrupt car companies
But America thinks Detroit
Is just another city on the map,
Believes our potential is buried
Forgetting everything that grows
Starts underground.
We are not fighting each other,
We are fighting to be the first ones to sprout
Like palm trees in the dead of winter,
To be something extraordinary.
We became Detroit
When we learned mountainous skylines
And upper class neighborhoods
Aren't what make our city thrive-
Our pulse is in the rhythm of summer festivals.
throbs from sub woofers
Loud enough to set off car alarms.
We swap business suits and brief cases
For R.I.P shirts and dog chains.
We don't need to be Hollywood
Or some quiet suburb
To take pride in the streets we have built.
When we unite,
you will remember
we have been waiting patiently
in the corner of your palm.
This is more than just a poem,
These are words toward a better Detroit.
A reason to believe that my fury

Will never burn in vain.

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