“Giving Name to the Nameless”

Using Poetry as an Anti-Violence Intervention with Girls and Young Women

By Mariame Kaba (Project NIA)
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Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.


“Giving Name to the Nameless”:
Using Poetry as an Anti-Violence Intervention with Girls and Young Women

By Mariame Kaba, Founder and Director of Project NIA

The use of literature and guided reading has been recognized as a viable option for helping young people address their concerns. In my years of working with girls and young women, I have found that poetry is a particularly wonderful way to discuss sensitive issues (like sexuality, violence, and self-esteem).

Poems are effective tools to produce affective change and promote personality growth and development. I have often used them as a way to help young people solve personal problems and develop skills necessary for success in life. Poems offer young women opportunities to develop insight into the challenges they face as females and as humans. When young women see something of themselves in a piece of literature (books, poetry), identify with the work, reflect on it, and undergo some emotional growth as a result of that reading experience, I consider that to be a successful anti-violence intervention.

Over the years, I have worked with young women to read, understand, and sometimes to write their own poems. I am not a formally trained English teacher nor am I a therapist. I have taught social science courses and I have learned about how to intervene with youth through years of hands-on experience. Additionally, I owe a debt of gratitude to Karen Thomson, founder of Literature for All of Us (www.literatureforallofus.org) who has pioneered bibliotherapy
here in Chicago. Literature for All of Us is a nationally recognized, award-win-
ning literacy organization that brings the rewards of reading and writing to
young people in the Chicago area. I have been privileged to participate in their
train-the-trainer workshops for book discussion facilitators. I am a huge admir-
er of the powerful work that they do with youth and I have learned a lot from
Karen that I have tried to incorporate in my own practice.

This guide is not offered as a “program.” Mainly this is intended to be used as a
resource and as a supplement to programs that you might already be running to
support young women and girls in your communities.

This guide is the result of years of collecting poems about gender-based violence
that I have used with young women in various settings. I am a proponent and a
believer in what some are calling “open source knowledge.” By definition, this
means that I do not subscribe to the concept of proprietary knowledge. It is
my belief that all information and knowledge is to be shared and transferred
to create strong social movements for change and transformation. I share this
information with you in that spirit. I would like to stipulate at the outset that
this guide is NOT intended to be sold for profit. If you use it or any of the poems,
please refrain from using the material for paid trainings or workshops. This ma-
terial is intended to be freely circulated and freely utilized. While this guide has
been created with young women and girls in mind, the information and poems
included can absolutely be used with young men and also with adults. Please
feel free to do that.

Finally, I have always loved the poem “Poetry Should Ride the Bus” by the amaz-
ing Ruth Forman. In just a few lines, she captures what I feel about the utility of
poetry. It can be transformational for many and should be accessible to all.
Poetry Should Ride the Bus
By Ruth Forman

poetry should hopscotch in a polka dot dress
wheel cartwheels
n hold your hand
when you walk past the yellow crackhouse

poetry should wear bright red lipstick
n practice kisses in the mirror
for all the fine young men with fades
shootin craps around the corner

poetry should dress in fine plum linen suits
n not be so educated that it don’t stop in
every now n then to sit on the porch
and talk about the comins and goins of the world

poetry should ride the bus
in a fat woman’s Safeway bag
between the greens n chicken wings
to be served with Tuesday’s dinner

poetry should drop by a sweet potato pie
ask about the grandchildren
n sit through a whole photo album
on a orange plastic covered La-Z Boy with no place to go

poetry should sing red revolution love songs
that massage your scalp
and bring hope to your blood
when you think you’re too old to fight

yeah
poetry should whisper electric blue magic
all the years of your life
never forgettin to look you in the soul
every once in a while
n smile

* We Are the Young Magicians by Ruth Forman (1993)
Acknowledgments...

No project like this is accomplished without a ton of help and support. I would like to acknowledge a few people without whom this poetry guide would not have been completed.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my partner in this project, Caitlin Ostrow Seidler. I met Caitlin last year and since then she has volunteered her considerable talents to working on two major projects with me. She laid out the “Something is Wrong: Exploring the Roots of Youth Violence” curriculum guide in record time and during her Christmas break. Now, she has designed this curriculum guide and contributed a unit to it as well. She taught the unit to art students at Vaughn Occupational High School in Portage Park, Chicago, and their work appears throughout this guide. She has done this while just having moved to a brand new city and starting a new teaching job. Caitlin is the perfect example of someone who embodies the adage by David Viscott that— “The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The meaning of life is giving your gift away.” Thank you Caitlin for having discovered your artistic gift and for consistently and selflessly sharing it with others!

Next, I want to thank Karen Thomson again for inspiring me to continue to work with young women using literature as an integral aspect of our interactions. Thanks also for allowing me to adapt some of Literature for All of Us’s work to share with all of you.

Another thank you goes out to Anna Kolosovsky who spent her summer interning for me this year. Anna proofread the majority of this guide and provided needed encouragement when I was feeling overwhelmed with other projects and almost gave up on this one.

Thank you to all of the young women and girls who I have worked with over the course of the past 18 years. Your passion, energy, humor, compassion, and fierceness have been a gift to me. I want to particularly thank the members of the Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team who have taught me so much about myself in the past 7 years. I feel lucky to know each of you and to watch you grow into powerful and generous women.
Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

A special thank you to every single poet who is featured in this guide. I became interested in the reading and writing of poetry at a young age. My feelings were always best translated through poetry. Many of the poets in this guide have provided me with valuable solace, encouragement, and joy. They continue to do so today.

Finally, I want to thank my mother, Saranfi Kaba, for taking me with her to the library when I was just a baby; for exposing me to the world of literature which has held me in good stead for my entire life; for taking my love of writing poetry seriously as a child and encouraging me to keep doing it. My mother was the first person to publish one of my pieces of writing. She took a poem called “Whatever Happened to Jenny?” that I wrote at 12 years old and submitted it to a contest that I won. She then had a special plaque of that poem made for me which is a treasured item that I still hold on to today. So thanks Mom for being a co-creator of this guide!

For information about this guide, contact Mariame Kaba at niapoetry@gmail.com. For information about Project NIA, visit our website at www.project-nia.org.
Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

Discussing Poetry

According to Literature for All of Us, a reading circle is a space where people come together to have a conversation and exchange ideas about a piece of literature (a book, poem, etc.). They provide a safe place for people to talk openly with each other and respond personally, emotionally and intellectually to literature.

There are four basic elements to a reading circle: an opening; the discussion; a writing exercise (which is optional); and a closing.

Poetry Circle Format (adapted from Literature for All of Us)
Here is our suggested format for the elements to include in your poetry circle:

1. **Introductions** – first names and why you have joined the poetry circle?

2. **Opening Question or Activity**
   This helps bring the group together, to focus and start your group. It also gives the group members a chance to get to know each other. It is usually a short, interactive activity.

3. **Poetry Discussion**
   The sooner you get your group discussing the poem, the better. Ask for volunteers to read the poem aloud. You should know everything that happens in the poem you are asking the group to discuss. Start with general questions about what happens during that section and then move to deeper discussion. You can point out specific lines to read out loud to set up your questions as needed.

4. **Creative Activity (writing or art)**
   After discussion, you may choose to introduce a writing or art exercise/activity to the group. This is another chance for poetry circle members to share their ideas about what’s going on in the poem and what you have talked about in the discussion. Pass out the writing or art activity asking them to write and create from their hearts and, most importantly, to tell the truth. Once circle members have finished, encourage the group to share their writing or art piece with one another. Only positive responses should be encouraged.
5. **Closing**

During the final minutes, you may ask a closing question or recite a quote to end the group. You can ask a question that ties with your opening or you may want to ask people to share one idea that was brought up in discussion that they will continue to think about. Often, your closing quote will relate to what you read that day – you can ask the group to read the quote out loud with you to close your poetry circle.

**Tips for Poetry Circle Facilitators/Leaders (adapted from Literature for All of Us)**

Be prepared to listen closely to the emotional responses of the young women in your group. The goal is for the young women to share their feelings and listen closely to themselves as well as to each other.

A group discussion should bring about the universality of experience – a feeling that “we are in this together.” It is very important to set ground rules at the start of the poetry circle to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

Ask the young women to contribute their favorite poems or lyrics to the group for discussion and consideration.

Make sure to develop a set routine for the group [opening ritual, poetry discussion, follow-up activity, closing ritual]. The consistency of having a routine will settle group participants.

Critical to the success of any poetry circle session is the inclusion of activities following the group’s discussion of the poem. The effect of the poem depends on the group discussion facilitated by the leader who provides follow-up activities such as reflective writing, role-playing, creative problem solving, music and art activities, or self-selected options for students to pursue individually. When presented in this way, poetry circles can be enjoyable while providing a time for solid introspection for young women.

Also critical to the success of a poetry circle session is designing a menu of questions for discussion. Facilitators will want to have a generated list of prepared discussion questions to pursue with the group. Along with a menu of thoughtful questions designed to elucidate the feeling responses of the young women, circle leaders will want to have key passages or lines from the poem as prompts ready for use in the discussion.
Poetry Circle Prep Sheet

**Preparation**
Facilitator:

Which Poem(s) Will Be Discussed?

Where and When:

What are the things you need to bring?

**Circle**
Opening Activity:

Questions for going into guidelines (what you might be able to ask):

Poem Discussion Questions:

Creative Activity (writing prompts or art):

Closing:

What is the follow-up?
Section 1 : Physical Violence
with no immediate cause
by Ntozake Shange

every 3 minutes a woman is beaten
every five minutes a
woman is raped/ every ten minutes
a lil girl is molested
yet i rode the subway today
i sat next to an old man who
may have beaten his old wife
3 minutes ago or 3 days/ 30 years ago
he might have sodomized his
daughter but i sat there
cuz the young men on the train
might beat some young women
later in the day or tomorrow
i might not shut my door fast
enuf/ push hard enuf
every 3 minutes it happens
some woman’s innocence
rushes to her cheeks/ pours from her mouth
like the betsy wetsy dolls have been torn
apart/ their mouths
mensis red & split/ every
three minutes a shoulder
is jammed through plaster & the oven door/
chairs push thru the rib cage/ hot water or
boiling sperm decorate her body
i rode the subway today
& bought a paper from a
man who might
have held his old lady onto
a hot pressing iron/ I don’t know
maybe he catches lil girls in the
park & rips open their behinds
with steel rods/ i cdnt decide
what he might have done i only

In Nappy Edges by Ntozake Shange (1978)
Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

know every 3 minutes
every 5 minutes every 10 minutes/ so
i bought the paper
looking for the announcement
there has to be an announcement
of the women’s bodies found
yesterday/ the missing little girl
i sat in a restaurant with my
paper looking for the announcement
a yng man served me coffee
i wondered did he pour the boiling
coffee/ on the woman cuz she waz stupid/
did he put the infant girl/ in
the coffee pot/ with the boiling coffee/ cuz she cried too much
what exactly did he do with hot coffee
i looked for the announcement
the discovery/ of the dismembered
woman’s body/ the
victims have not all been
identified/ today they are
naked & dead/ refuse to
testify/ one girl out of 10's not
coherent/ i took the coffee
& spit it up/ i found an
announcement/ not the woman’s
bloated body in the river/ floating
not the child bleeding in the
59th street corridor/ not the baby
broken on the floor/
    “there is some concern
    that alleged battered women
    might start to murder their
    husbands & lovers with no
    Immediate cause”
i spit up     i vomit     i am screaming
we all have immediate cause
every 3 minutes
every 5 minutes
Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

every 10 minutes
every day
women’s bodies are found
in alleys & bedrooms/ at the top of the stairs
before i ride the subway/ buy a paper/ drink
coffee/ I must know/
have you hurt a woman today
did you beat a woman today
throw a child cross a room
    are the lil girl’s panties
    in yr pocket
did you hurt a woman today

i have to ask these obscene questions
the authorities require me to
establish
immediate cause

every three minutes
every five minutes
every ten minutes
every day
Love Taps
By Carlotta Smith, 15 (African American)

Provider of life
Beat down to shreds
Because she is
The so-called “weaker sex”
Only to feed your ego
To give you power
Because in reality you are nothing
Like a hyena you prey only on the weak women
The ones who will put up with you
Only to be pounded into a corner
With no way out
You keep your dominion
With heart-wrenching threats
Deepening her fear
She no longer has a voice
Or dignity, or a life
Mistreated and beaten
To fill your satisfaction
Why?
She is a woman
The provider of life
Now you want to take hers away.

Domesticated Brutality
by Hilda Herrera

There underneath the paleness of her skin was the evidence of his abusive nature.
A rainbow of black and blue broken capillaries that bled painfully every time she attempted to smile.
She had a doctorate in cosmetology. Covering up the traces was her expertise.
He was a cop, his insecurities hidden in the same wallet where he kept his shield.
His semiautomatic weapon was the affirmation of his masculinity: the man that he wished his father would have taught him to be.

She used to reminisce of the times before the war.
The times before the touch of his hands created agony.
When they used to love each other
When she would lie by his side, and his divine presence would make her travel the world way before the sun could rise and create a new dawn.
When he was mesmerized by the intensive light of her existence.

Six months into her pregnancy
He placed his hands around her neck and slammed her against the wall,
rationalizing his actions with idiotic statements:
“Look what you made me do to you.”
“If you weren’t so slick at the mouth, I wouldn’t be so quick with the hands.”
She became a victim because that was just what her mother would do.

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*In We Got Issues! A Young Woman’s Guide to a Bold, Courageous and Empowered Life. Edited by Rha Goddess & JLove Calderon (2006)*
He pulled his gun from the closet and shoved it in her face. 
Her taste buds kept regurgitating the lead particles that deposited in her mouth. 
She begged him time and time again to pull the trigger – but he didn’t have the cojones for that. 

When he and the baby fell asleep 
she went into the closet where he hid his gun, and, if not for the sudden cry of her son, 
he would now be a name on a tombstone and she a number in the state pen.
She’s Crying for Many
By Benjamin Zephaniah

She is flesh of me flesh
I am bone of her bone
So please stop kicking her
Beg yu leave her alone,
She is not fighting back
Find de love dat yu lack
Dat’s me sista yu beating upstairs

I am feeling dem punches
I am feeling dem kicks
I see where yu mind is
I check yu as sick,
So yu are ‘De Man,’
Easy man, if yu can,
Dat’s me sista yu beating upstairs.

She’s screaming
An it seems dat yu will not stop,
‘Dis is domestic’, (de words of a cop)
An yu keep repeating, ‘Tell me where you’ve been’,
She’s trying fe tell yu,
Yu not listening,
Downstairs me flat is shaking,
De lights are crazy swaying,
An I can hear loudly each word yu are saying,
I feel dat her body is touching me ceiling,
An I see de man from inside yu revealing.

*In City Psalms by Benjamin Zephaniah (1992)*
Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

She’s crying fe many,
Dere’s many de same,
An don’t try fe tell me de Bible’s to blame,
De colours yu fly outside, carry dem home,
It’s cruel, you’re unhealthy,
Yu should live alone,
Dat problem needs checking,
It seems yu fegetting,
Remember yu mudda
I am your girlfriends bredda
Yu energy’s wasted
Yu bitterness tasted,
An all dat yu stand fa as been demonstrated.

So now yu feel sexy,
Does dat turn yu on?
After yu cum tell me where ave yu gone?
Yu bed’s only playing de riddin of one,
Music direct from de great Babylon,
Who carved de image an space you mus fill?
Is she de enemy dat yu mus kill?
Do yu tell yu friends how yu get yu cheap thrills?
Does yu mudda know dat yu acting so ill?

She is flesh of me flesh
I am bone of her bone,
I cannot help hearing,
I am downstairs alone,
Yu reap what yu sow,
How comes yu don’t know
Dats OUR sister yu beating upstairs.
The Girlfriend’s Train
By Nikki Finney

“You write like a Black woman who’s never been hit before.”

I read poetry in Philly
for the first time ever.
She started walking up,
all the way, from in back
of the room.

From against the wall
she came,
big coat, boots,
eyes soft as candles
in two storms blowing.

Something she could not see
from way back there but
could clearly hear in my voice,
something she needed to know
before pouring herself back out
into the icy city night.

She came close to get a good look,
to ask me something she found
in a strange way missing
from my Black woman poetry.

Sidestepping the crowd
ignoring the book signing line,
she stood there waiting
for everyone to go, waiting
like some kind of Representative.

The World is Round by Nikky Finney (2003)
And when it was just the two of us
she stepped into the shoes of her words:

Hey
   You write real soft.
   Spell it out kind.
   No bullet holes,
   No open wounds,
   In your words.
   How you do that?
   Write like you never been hit before?

But I could hardly speak,
all my breath held ransom
by her question.

I looked at her and knew:
There was a train on pause somewhere,
maybe just outside the back door
where she had stood, listening.

A train with boxcars
that she was escorting somewhere,
when she heard about the reading.

A train with boxcars
carrying broken women’s bodies,
their carved up legs and bullet riddled
stomachs momentarily on pause
from moving cross country.

Women’s bodies;
brown, black and blue,
laying right where coal, cars,
and cattle usually do.
She needed my answer
for herself and for them too.

Hey

We were just wondering
how you made it through
and we didn’t?

I shook my head.
I had never thought about
having never been hit
and what it might have
made me sound like.

You know how many times I been stabbed?

She raised her blouse
all the way above her breasts,
the cuts on her resembling
some kind of grotesque wallpaper.

How many women are there like you?

Then I knew for sure.

She had been sent in from the Philly cold,
by the others on the train,
to listen, stand up close,
to make me out as best she could.

She put my hand overtop hers
asked could we stand up
straight back to straight back,
measure out our differences
right then and there.
She gathered it all up,  
wrote down the things she could,  
remembering the rest to the trainload  
of us waiting out back for answers.  
Full to the brim with every age  
of woman, every neighborhood  
of woman, whose name  
had already been forgotten.

The train blew its whistle,  
she started to hurry.

I moved towards her  
and we stood back to back,  
her hand grazing the top  
of our heads,  
my hand measuring out  
our same widths,  
each of us recognizing  
the brown woman latitudes,  
the Black woman longitudes  
in the other.

I turned around  
held up my shirt  
and brought my smooth belly  
into her scarred one;  
our navels pressing,  
marking out some kind of new  
equatorial line.
You didn’t have to hit me
to be cruel.
I knew the silent, wasting rages
hidden in a glance,
or even
in the way you stood.
It was enough.
I was convinced
of your violence.

Over the years
your methods
had become more effective.

I was careful
not to let my deeds or words slip.
But your rules kept changing
day to day
so that I never knew
why I did wrong.

I used to prepare way before dinner.
Savagely peeling potatoes, my gut grinding
and gearing up to face you.
Frantic inwardly,
watchful as an animal
at your stride
and how you ate, what you spoke,
watching for the sign to breathe.

I didn’t dare
smile.
Sometimes, I got lucky.

The rules hadn’t changed since yesterday.

Broken Teapots (the FREDA Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children).
A Smooth-Talking Guy
By Anonymous, 15, from a city in the Southwest

He’s such a smooth-talking kind of guy
A suave Southern gentleman like
A gallant cowboy riding into guaranteed trouble
He’s kind of a blanket
Who invites you to join him
From a fierce winter cold.
He thinks about you,
And the shapeliness, or unshapeliness
As the case may be
Of your body
And the sweet and sour smell of your
Hair and strawberries.
He’s the one
Touches you in all the right places...
And your thighs –
Makes you forget how mean he can be
When he’s jokingly teaching you
Against your will
Self-defense
And makes it up to you
By touching your thighs
And smiling.

The contributor to the book Ophelia Speaks by Sara Shandler (1999) details her story in this poem. Her poem “A Smooth-Talking Guy” came to Sara Shandler with a note:

This boyfriend I had was a manipulator. He could talk his way out of anything. When we first met, he enchanted me... He led me to think we were perfect for each other. Now I know that no one who makes you feel two inches small is worth caring for. There are wonderful men waiting for wonderful women. I learned not to sell myself short.

In Ophelia Speaks by Sara Shandler (1999).
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Slave Ritual
By Carolyn Rodgers (1971)

when I asked him about
    it
he said he had to do
    that.
Had to
    knock her down, slap her,
beat her up, chastise her . . .
how else
would she know
he loved her?

she understood
it wasn’t nothing serious
nothing, “personal”
    she’d get up knowing
she was going down again
she never would hold the floor
and wait out the count,
somehow
that would have been unfair,
not part
    of it . . .

she never even imagined
    packing her bags and
leaving him.
what you leave a good man fuh?
he paid the rent, went to work everyday
bought groceries,
ocasionally.
why, where would she go?
and to who? who would
love her better? Any “differently”
she knew he would never
kill her
she seldom had a bruise,  
that showed . . .
just a knock here & now
a slap there & then
to ease the pain of
    BEING
together . . .

once, I knocked on their door
and asked if I could help
They BOTH became angry at me
“Go home stupid! Don’t you have any of your own business to mine?”
Sometimes when my neighbors are not
    fighting
they talk to me
They Say,
THEY LOVE EACH OTHER.
hit like A MAN
by georgia me

Hit like a man, let them know you’re a man
put all your power behind that fist
you’re the ruler of this land and as
the sand falls through the hour glass
I hope this love lasts and
all the pain surpasses
tired of the lashes,
bruises I tell others are rashes
oh the sunglasses cover the eye
but baby my lip
I told my mama I stumbled and tripped
she thinks I’m clumsy
or take too many sips of the wine
which inclines me to feel fine
eases the humiliation
of how you beat my behind
I know you’re under pressure
from work and the world
but please watch how you hit me
in front of our little girl
she doesn’t understand this abuse her father
feeds
there’s no believable excuse
the truth in my eyes she reads
in her eyes I see disappointment and confusion
she shed tears over the broken limbs
and severe contusions
I want our family so I choose not to leave
tired of being thrown like a rag doll
by my sleeve
sick by the situation so I constantly heave
I can’t make her believe this is love I receive

In Russell Simmons Def Poetry Jam on Broadway... and More. Edited by Danny Simmons (2005)
It’s a hard pill to swallow
with this program I just can’t follow
I’m starting to believe your heart is hollow
or full of hate
hoping it will get better so I wait
praying stupidity isn’t an inheritable trait
for I don’t want our daughter to live a life
of cover-ups and cries
standing before a judge giving feeble alibi’s.
Loving a man so much she loses herself
hating herself so much
she gives a damn about her health
for who wants to live just to suffer
pain is inevitable, it only makes you tougher
but suffering is optional and I’ve made my choice
for my little girl, I’m her hero
her example, and her voice
I will not allow her future to be a replay
of my existence
I had to break free from this jail,
end my life sentence
I tried to go quietly but you slapped me in my face
kicked me in the stomach, ripped my dress,
and out my mouth you slapped the taste
As I got up from the floor
I stared you in your eyes and realized
the burning hell brewing on the inside
knowing there could be no place I could run and hide
my only escape would be your utter demise
I can’t hit like a man
and I hate to pull the trigger
but let your life be a lesson
for all those pussy ass niggas.
When the Neighbors Fight
By Terrance Hayes

The trumpet’s mouth is apology.
   We sit listening

To *Kind of Blue*. Miles Davis
   Beat his wife. It hurts

To know the music is better
   Than him. The wall

Is damaged skin. Tears can purify
   The heart. Even the soft

Kiss can bite. Miles Davis beat
   His wife. It’s muffled

In the jazz, the struggle
   With good & bad. The wall

Is damaged skin. The horn knows
   A serious fear

Your tongue burns pushing
   Into my ear. Miles Davis

Beat his wife. No one called
   The cops until the music

Stopped. The heart is a muted
   Horn. The horn is a bleeding

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*In Step into A World: A Global Anthology of the New Black Literature. Edited by Kevin Powell (2000).*
Wife. Our neighbors are a score
Of danger. You open
My shirt like doors you want
To enter. I am tender

As regret. Mouth on the nipple
Above my heart.

There is the good pain
Of your bite.
In response to a brother’s question about what he should do when his best friend beats up his woman

By Asha Bandele

Snatch him up by the back of his neck run him into his own fist twice
tell him who the real enemy is show him make him swallow his own teeth do not help when they scratch the inside of his throat tell him it was his fault u did this make his eyes swell up & pus so he looks like a freak make him go to work like that & have to come with excuses to his co-workers & friends tell him the witeman made u do it tell him you’re sorry tell him u love him tell him u didn’t mean to then kick his ass again Question him on why he’s such a cowardInterrogate his ass Make him beg for forgiveness Watch him crawl Put The Word Out In The Streets... THERE’S AN ENEMY IN OUR PRESENCE THERE’S AN ENEMY IN OUR PRESENCE IT DOES NOT THINK IT ONLY ATTACKS IT MAKES WEAK-ASS EXCUSES IT TAKES NO RESPONSIBILITY IT PICKS ON PEOPLE SMALLER THAN ITSELF IT READS SHARAZAD ALI IT WORSHIPS MILES DAVIS IT DESTROYS BLKLIFE IT LIES IT LIES

In Absence in the Palms of My Hands & Other Poems by Asha Bandele (1999)
and if he finally understands
then go to him
find out where it started
search for burn marks beneath his flesh
peel back his pain
be a brother a real good brother
whisper haki madhubuti sonia sanchez in his ear
sing sweet honey songs
let him cry
let him sleep in your arms
stand alone if u have to
this is the right thing to do
let others babble hate while u break centuries of vicious cycles
face the contradictions the bellies sliced open & jaws wired shut
the assholes torn &
the bloodied vaginas
this is what it looks like do not turn away now
babies beat out of wombs spines curved uneven legs that no longer walk
dead eyes that cannot see tomorrow livers imprinted with callused feet –
face the contradictions that looks like u that smells like u
that tastes like u
& push out the violence be unafraid to be a man
who confronts men about women
be unafraid to be a man who confronts big small mean common nasty
everyday men
about women
be unafraid to be a man
who confronts himself.
Some Body Call
(for help)

By Carolyn Rogers

I remember the night
he beat
her
we all heard her scream
him break some glass
her beg
don’t do it
the hit
imagined the cut
heard the door open
her running running running
in the hall way
screaming blood blood
saw bloods
(in my head
would not open my door
the po-lees came (some body called)
say who cut de lady
in de mouth who put her out
wid no coat no shoes

(some body called
some body called
for help)
heard the pigs take her take him a way
beat him, he beat her, beat him down the stairs
heard him call
(for help)

no body opened no door.
next morning
there was
this blood
on the walls
see
little smudges here there
from hand from mouth (no doubt)
running running along the walls in splatters in slobbs
running running
  i could wipe the stains away
  I could do that i could
  but i thought  (surely)
  4 weeks past)
someone (else) would have
why, the janitor
empties the garbage
mops the hall way floors every
day but he don’t touch the blood
  must be because he don’t
  hear her screeeeeeeaaaaaaaaaammmmmmmming
  do he dont he NEED to
  e-erase that blood running still still
  on the walls the second floors the first floors all over

Bloods

running running running
  against the walls

BLOODS
  running running running
  in hall ways
  running running running
  through they world
  CUT-TING into each other
Some Body PLEASE call
  for help
“There are two things I’ve got a right to, and these are death or liberty. One or the other i mean to have.” – Harriet Tubman

Brother

I don’t want to hear about
how my real enemy
is the system.
i’m no genius,
    but I do know
that system
you hit me with
    is called
    a fist.

By Pat Parker
You force me to touch  
the black, rubber flaps  
of the garbage disposal  
that is open like a mouth saying, ah.  
You tell me it’s the last thing I’ll feel  
before I go numb.  
Is it my screaming that finally stops you,  
or is it the fear  
that even you are too near the edge  
of this Niagara to come back from?  
You jerk my hand out  
and give me just enough room  
to stagger around you.  
I lean against the refrigerator,  
not looking at you, or anything  
just staring at a space which you no longer inhabit,  
that you’ve abandoned completely now  
to footsteps receding  
to the next feeding station,  
where a woman will be eaten alive  
after cocktails at five.  
The flowers and chocolates, the kisses,  
the swings and near misses of new love  
will confuse her,  
until you start to abuse her,  
verbally at first.  
As if trying to quench a thirst,  
you’ll drink her  
in small outbursts of rage  
then you’ll whip out your semiautomatic,

_In Vice: New and Selected Poems by Ai (1999)_
make her undress, or listen to hours of radio static as torture for being amazed that the man of her dreams is a nightmare, who only seems happy when he’s making her suffer.

The first time you hit me, I left you, remember? It was December. An icy rain was falling and it froze on the roads, so that driving was unsafe, but not as unsafe as staying with you. I ran outside in my nightgown, while you yelled at me to come back. When you came after me, I was locked in the car. You smashed the window with a crowbar, but I drove off anyway. I was back the next day and we were on the bare mattress, because you’d ripped up the sheets, saying you’d teach me a lesson. You wouldn’t speak except to tell me I needed discipline, needed training in the fine art of remaining still when your fist slammed into my jaw. You taught me how ropes could be tied so I’d strangle myself, how pressure could be applied to old wounds until I cried for mercy, until tonight, when those years of our double exposure end with shot after shot.
How strange it is to be unafraid.
When the police come,
I’m sitting at the table,
the cup of coffee
that I am unable to drink
as cold as your body.
I shot him, I say, he beat me.
I do not tell them how the emancipation from pain
leaves nothing in its place.
MY CALL
By Elaine Griffith

My call
was answered by an old man
who dragged his arthritic legs
through red clay dust
as he marked a path
from his motor scooter to the front porch
where I sat weeping
waiting
trying to block out the smashing
sound of the kitchen window
and my mother’s plea for her husband’s mercy
which had signaled my call.

Inflamed by the scars
embroidering his daughter’s body
he propped himself on crutches
crafted by his own hands
and he gently grabbed mine
to lead me away
not knowing if her body
lay slumped in a corner
swollen from the blows
or bleeding to death
or not.

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In SAGE. Vol. IX, No. 1 (Spring 1995)
My eyes, rubbed red, 
looked into his 
and pleaded with him 
not to judge her 
not to remind me 
that she had once again 
chosen wrong.

He turned and slowly climbed the stairs and 
I sat watching him 
waiting 
as he helped my mother escape.
Section 2 : Sexual Violence
DADDY KEEPS
by Cheyenne Ross “Ellipsis (. . .)”

Daddy keeps having fights with my body and daring me to tell Mommy. He covers the bruises with my T-shirts and the ones inside with pocket change, he keeps saying that it won’t happen if I just act my age. Daddy keeps abusing me the scars keep adding up and Mommy keeps ignoring me like she don’t give a fuck. She has to hear the screams that sing like octaves on a scale. I’ve told that lie a thousand times she can’t still believe it’s the bunk bed rail. Mommy thinks infidelities are near and she thinks it’s her best friend Titi Andy. I like when she’s around cuz only then we feel like family. Mommy always says at home though, “I dare that bitch to mess with my man, I wish she would, I want her to!” but never did she stop to think her man’s cheating with her 10 year old daughter who has brought her to the crime scene only ten thousand times before with the countless cries and the bloody sheets piling high on the laundry room floor. The family’s DNA exposed through dried cum stains on Barbie’s face. “Go, go Power Ranger” sheets the battleground for his adultery. Daddy keeps saying that my private part are just not so to him. He says that it’s ok to touch cuz he helped to make ‘em. Mommy says that it’s not right to but... I hate him. Daddy keeps Peeking at me from behind the TV. Winking cuz he’s sworn me to secrecy. No one knows the games we play at our midnight slumber parties.

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Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

Daddy keeps saying that it won’t hurt as much if I just cooperate and if I can’t learn to keep it down from my mouth he’ll slap the taste.
I wrote in my Dora diary that I wished GOD would take my life from me. 5th grade just ain’t the same since I can’t share stories of pain.
Slide burns and knee scrapes just don’t compare to daddy rape.
The wounds I’m left with won’t heal with peroxide and band-aids.
Scotch tape can’t put back together the things that daddy takes.
Innocence a new vocabulary word I’m just learning how to spell and a gift of mine stolen.
The school’s new social worker’s hopin’ something’s wrong with me so they can get a raise in their salaries but my silence is golden like – the rings and things daddy keeps leavin on my dresser I guess tryna make up for the life he’s made a mess of but for the rest of it I’ll have a stained memory with all the fucked up things daddy keeps doing to me.
gin and juice
By Imani Tolliver

when i was little my father stole my pussy
small, purple and pink
it was mine

he would put his mouth on it and smile
put his fingers in it and sleep

i wonder how he kept from puking some nights
from drink, from himself

so cliché, so stupid
he made it our secret

i will tell you another

it was the softer, more liquid touches i preferred
than the smacks across my face
my bubbled lips
my welted arms and thighs
the kicks in the gut
the chasing around the house

i would tremble in my bed
hooded in my favorite jacket
the same one i wore when i ran away
zipped, tight
a braided, brown bundle
but my father was good at detangling virgins

i was only a girl

it was quiet on nights
when my father asked if i was wearing panties

_In Step into A World: A Global Anthology of the New Black Literature. Edited by Kevin Powell (2000)._
with each new lover
i erase those damn fingers
the grin and tobacco of him
and i do not remember as often as i used to
just when i look in the mirror
and notice his face in mine
his jaw and mouth
his mother's feet

i would like to say that i got it back
but sometimes it is still his fingers
not mine or someone fine
with big promises and a dick

it is him i smell
in an exhausted heap
reaching for a glass of wine,
a cigarette

when i call myself names it is him that i hear

no such thing as easy pussy
especially when you want it back

i wonder
since we don’t talk anymore
if he holds his fingers to his face
to remember.
False Memory Syndrome (or, In the Dream)
By Sapphire

In the dream my father
is a mean man
who is fucking with me up to the
time I am grown
He puts his big finger between
my legs and pushes pushes hard
mean
in the dream my body is good
to me and doesn’t let his horrible
finger in
In the dream I pass thru
the bedroom and pick up a pen
I want to write on the sheets
I get the letter “I”
“n”
then the pen
runs out of ink
In the dream I’m young
in the dream I don’t think
suicide
in the dream there are no roaches
and I’m not all alone
In the dream I pass thru the room
a second time and find a two headed
rooster drawn on the wall

In Black Wings & Blind Angels by Sapphire (1999)
YO HO HO  YOU! YOU! Is written
around the baseboards in red
in the dream I fold the wall and put it
in the pocket
in the dream
I get out
I am a smart girl and go on to college
in the dream I don’t
kill myself and live a lonely life
in the dream I resist
He doesn’t get in
and I fight back.
what are we teaching our daughters
by Allison Joy

he was a bold criminal.
all his offenses took place in the daylight
under the least of suspicions,
his felonies cloaked
by the so-called innocence
of youth.

but behind those bushes
and under the multicolored
tent made of bedsheets,
in the stale air of the basement
they would play games,
and he made the rules.
games are sometimes
one-sided.

There are so many like him,
who escape punishment
because they are supposedly so safe.
fathers, brothers, uncles, and friends –
what a kind and gentle man to insist upon
tucking a child in to sleep,
or taking the day off
to baby-sit.

Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

Girls pretend it’s not happening they close their eyes or stare at the ceiling. Make note of the number of leaves there are on the branch of the tree right outside the window. They concentrate on other things, the smell of lunch cooking downstairs in the kitchen, the chirping of summer tree frogs, sounds of midday traffic.

When it’s done they button up and zip up and tidy up and curl up to sleep.

To escape.

They smile big smiles, play sports, go to church, and do well in school.

To escape.

My, what a beautiful young woman, people say.

Girls always bear the burden of feeling guilty. As if their pristine purity has become stained due to their own accord, led to believe they have dirtied themselves through no one’s fault but their own.
what are we teaching our daughters?
their secrets are strangled by shame
so they suffer in silence.

it is a pity we don’t teach our daughters early
how to fight.
instead of ballet lessons,
perhaps kickboxing is more suited
for them in this world,
where society tells them to lie submissive,
too afraid to cry
or even whisper
what screams in their heads –

no
night vision
by Lucille Clifton

the girl fits her body in
to the space between the bed
and the wall, she is a stalk,
exhausted, she will do some
thing with this, she will
surround these bones with flesh.
she will cultivate night vision.
she will train her tongue
to lie still in her mouth and listen.
the girl slips into sleep.
her dream is red and raging.
she will remember
to build something human with it.

Forced Entry
By Mariahdessa Ekere Tallie

i

He broke into me
stole something
a brazen thief
never charged with forced entry
because “Please don’t” didn’t lead to
blue black marks on the lock
and no one sees the bruise prints
    The scratch marks
on my spirit
these don’t make police reports
the dignity missing from my step
doesn’t qualify as physical evidence.

ii

I shake when I see him
only my homegirls seem to notice
their golden light protective around me
his boys’ mantra is “lying bitch”
they mutter it with sharp machete eyes
occasionally someone rouses himself to say it
“Lying bitch!”
the words weigh down the wings of airborne birds
and for the first time
    I see these men not as men
but as terrorists in training
    camouflaged bombers on the
ground floor of truth
taking dynamite
to its foundation.

*In Listen Up! Spoken Word Poetry. Edited by Zoe Anglesey (1999)*
I see myself as a prisoner of war
in exile
a survivor
I wish this wasn’t my story
but it is
a million times over
and just when I think it has gone away
it reappears at my doorstep
in another woman’s face
or on the 10 o’clock news
and although I have loved men since
maybe another sister can’t
so this is our story
and it will be ours
until we don’t have to claim it anymore
until women from Brooklyn to Oakland to South Africa
can sit back in amazement and say
“I can’t believe such things ever occurred.”
Until the word “rape”
can be wiped out from our vocabularies
removed from the dictionary
until then, this will be our story
and wounded eyes will tell it
even when we don’t.
Dark Romance
By Lucha Corpi

A flavor of vanilla drifts
on the Sunday air.

Melancholy of an orange,
clinging still,
brilliant, seductive
past the promise of its blooming.

Guadalupe was bathing in the river
that Sunday, late,
a promise of milk in her breasts,
vanilla scent in her hair
cinnamon flavor in her eyes,
cocoa-flower between her legs
and in her mouth a daze
of sugarcane.

He came upon her there
surrounded by water
in a flood of evening light.

And on the instant cut the flower
wrung blood from the milk
dashed vanilla on the silence
of the river bank
drained the burning liquid
of her lips

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In The Woman that I Am: the Literature and Culture of Contemporary Women of Color.
Edited by D. Soyini Madison (1994).
and then he was gone,
leaving behind him a trail of shadow
drooping at the water’s edge.

Her mother found her there, and at the sight
took a handful of salt from her pouch
to throw over her shoulder.

A few days later, her father
accepted the gift of a fine mare.

And Guadalupe... Guadalupe hung her life
from the orange tree in the garden,
and stayed there quietly,
her eyes open to the river.

An orange clings to the branch
the promise lost of its blooming.

Ancestral longing
seizes the mind.

A scent of vanilla drifts
on the evening air.

*Translated by Catherine Rodriguez-Nieto (1978)*
MOTHER LOVE
By Dael Orlandersmith

Your belly
swollen
obtrusive
quivers like spastic jellyfish
The grease from your mouth is extracted from 4-day-old food
cooked & recoked which you offer to me slurring and
generously after your weekly intake of scotch
And as you embrace your bottle,
I am to pamper you
to cuddle your bulk
which alternates between sloven women stances &
baby poses sometimes w/a cradle voice to match
In bed when you desire to hold me close and
whisper wife/child confessions in
my ear w/my small head
pinned to your breasts,
I know it is not my
place to bathe you
in maternal/womb hugs
or
massage you with masculine cologne hands
or to give you consent
because
I am not your lover

My name is daughter
I am your child

In Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Café – Edited by Miguel Algarin and Bob Holman (1994)
Section 3 : Institutional & Generalized Violence

(includes Street Harassment, Reproductive Violence, Homophobia, Poverty, etc...)
Some Different Kinda Books*
By Sapphire

I

She asks why we always
Read books about black people.
(I spare her the news she is black.)
She wants something different.
Her own book is written in pencil.
She painstakingly goes back & corrects
the misspelled words.
We write each day.
Each day the words look like
a retarded hand from Mars
wrote them.
Each day she asks me how
do you spell: didn’t, tomorrow, done
husband, son, learning, went, gone...
I can’t think of all the words she can’t spell.
It’s easier to think of what she can spell:
MY NAME IS CARMEN LOPEZ.
I am sorry I was out teacher.
My husband was sick.
You know I never miss school.
In that other program
I wasn’t learning nothing.
Here, I’m learning so I come.
What’s wrong with my husband?
I don’t know. He’s in the hospital. He’s real sick
I was almost out the room
when I hear the nurse ask him.

*In Black Wings & Blind Angels by Sapphire (1999)
Do you do drugs?
He say yes.
I say what?
I don’t know nuthin’ ‘bout no drugs.
I’m going off in the hospital.
He’s sick.
I’m mad.
Nobody tells you nuthin’!
I didn’t hear that nurse
I wouldn’t know
Nuthin’.
Huh?
Condoms? No, teacher.
He’s my husband.
I never been with another man.

I think he got AIDS
he still don’t tell me.
I did teacher. I tried
to read the chart at the hospital
but I couldn’t figure out those words.
Doctor don’t say, he say privacy.
The nurse tell me.
She’s Puerto Rican. She say your husband
got AIDS.
I go off in the hospital.
Nobody tells me nuthin’.
He come home.
He say it’s not true,
he’s fine.
He’s so skinny without his clothes
he try to hide hisself nekkid
don’t want me to look
I say you got to use
one of those things.
He say nuthin’s wrong
with him.
He stop sayin’ that.
Now he just say he’s gonna die
all the time
all the time
dying.
I say STOP that talk,
the doctor say you could
live a long time
my sister-in-law say,
he got it so you got it
it’s like that.
I say, I don’t got it,
My kids don’t got it either.
Teacher, I need a letter for welfare
that I’m coming to school
on a regular basis.

He’s in P.R.,
before that he started messing around
again.
Over the Christmas holidays
he died.
That’s where I was at
in P.R.
I’m fine. Yeah, I’m sure teacher.
What do I wanna do teacher?
I just wanna read some different
kinda books.
Song No. 2
By Sonia Sanchez

(1)

i say. all you young girls waiting to live
i say. all you young girls taking yo pill
i say. all you sisters tired of standing still
i say. all you sisters thinking you won’t, but you will.

don’t let them kill you with their stare
don’t let them closet you with no air
don’t let them feed you sex piecemeal
don’t let them offer you any old deal.

i say. step back sisters. we’re rising from the dead
i say. step back johnnies. we’re dancing on our heads
i say. step back man. no mo hangin by a thread
i say. step back world. can’t let it all go unsaid.

(2)

i say. all you young girls molested at ten
i say. all you young girls giving it up again & again
i say. all you sisters hanging out in every den
i say. all you sisters needing your own oxygen.

don’t let them trap you with their coke
don’t let them treat you like one fat joke
don’t let them bleed you till you broke
don’t let them blind you in masculine smoke.

i say. step back sisters. we’re rising from the dead
i say. step back johnnies. we’re dancing on our heads
i say. step back man. no mo hanging by a thread.
i say. step back world. can’t let it go unsaid.

Shake Loose My Skin: New and Selected Poems by Sonia Sanchez (1999)
saving tanisha
By eninajay

All she had to do was make it through these days she knew
Sixteen years old on the streets – had to learn to write her own blues
To be a heathen – a dirty sin’s not something she would choose
So she shaved her head, pulled jeans down low, got three rainbow tattoos
‘cause who can win a fight when you’re taught it’s a fight you’re born to lose

She grew up in the church with momma – learned to read sanctified faces
they feared what they could sense in her – their touches left dark traces
of discomfort left unanalyzed when warm breasts entered cold embraces
momma never told her Jesus was a rebel who caught, at least, a couple cases
maybe momma didn’t know Jesus at all...

God bless momma... she threw her out that day when tanisha came by
tanisha was hurtin’ and needed somebody to hold her while she cried
she kissed her cheeks and then her lips – she couldn’t save her but she would try
a shadow-filled the doorway – unconditional lovin’ slowly dies
bible in hand, momma listed all the laws she said they had defiled
her daughter stood – survival in her throat – momma taught her to never lie
and she said “but momma... I love her...”

you could sense the begging in her voice though no more words would come
and momma started swinging, screaming, crying and speaking in tongues
threw clothes and dreams out the window – told her “forget where you come from!”
momma said they’d both go to hell – see momma was saved but she was dumb
tanisha slept with her in the park that night – they watched each other come undone

she only wished momma’s god would save her
was it god, the bible or momma that enslaved
where were all them promises that the church gave her
scared of the wilderness but had to make herself braver
was there a space anywhere that could possible crave her? She had to hustle...
Met a man who was smooth and thirty years older
Told her it wasn’t safe on them streets and it was getting colder
She dreamed he was the daddy who never called – coming to hold her
Lost souls are easy pickings – wasn’t hard for him to mold her
Rape her, make her, shake up her mind
Turn her into a hand grenade, roaming herself with little time
He locked all the doors that held some light she might be able to find
Her eyes still pleading with every pulpit that had left her behind
Hard to be seen by loud congregations that are alright with being blind
Like Miss Celie, she was tired with no hope, wanting God to send her a sign
(tanisha, tanisha, tanisha)

She thought about tanisha so she wouldn’t feel the pain
of him tearing her and gouging her tender body again and again
moving over her – smiling down – trying to fill her with his shame
she listened to her soul rip and wished for loud, pouring ghetto rain

eyes closed she tried to remember all them scriptures
tried to remember her first bible with all those pretty pictures
old words and old thoughts folks kept using to diss her
same bible her momma was using to torture, turn and twist her
If God’s love shined on everyone, then how could it miss her?
(tanisha, tanisha, tanisha)

she said her name so silent for all it might relieve
there was a heaviness in the depths of her that never seemed to leave
she’d lost something she couldn’t identify – something she didn’t know to grieve
thought of that prayer momma taught when they knelt down on knees
she needed help – she needed life – she needed somebody – please
that wouldn’t touch her, see her, or treat her like a disease
perhaps this was her punishment, sheer worthlessness without ease
‘cause she was torn in the kinds of places a puffed up preacher never sees
Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

please tell her...
God reaches into cracks and crevices where so many decay
Tell her she can hold her head up high in any church, on any day
And that lightning ain’t gonna strike if she should bow her head to pray
They told her there was no heaven but didn’t admit they didn’t know the way
Can dying boys and broken girls fall on the altar if they are gay?

Is there blood left for the hollowed arms of heroin and crack fiends?
Is there communion for them whose t-cells fall below seventeen?
Will you take that prostitutes money without frowning on her means?
Will you stitch the holes that allow hate to stretch unsecured seams?

Who is gonna feed us?
Will you be too shamed to need us?
We’ll grow if you water and seed us...
I promise

I was one of those children taught grace was somethin’ to be stole
From the tight fists of old time sinners who pour need in gaping holes
An inhabitant of the land where fear and empty faith grows
Tell me, please, that there is hope for wounded and fragile souls

And what of her and tanisha?

They probably in here now leery of the ones who scream and shout
But don’t seem to bend real soft and bring any of what god is all about
Looking for faces that’ll pray with ‘em – without sacrifice without doubt
Perhaps they still on them dirty streets trying to figure this whole thing out

Wondering...

Is there relief for the screaming ones with battered souls?
Is there a dream for the wayward ones with tortured souls?
Is there food for the hungry ones with starving souls?
Is there a home for the abandoned ones with misled souls?
Is there a home for the abandoned ones with misled souls?
Is there a home for the abandoned ones with misled souls?
I’M NOT THAT LONELY
By Cheryl Jones

Hey Mama, Can I go home with you?

What?

Can I go home wit cha?

What did you say??

Can I go home whi-chou?

What!

Never mind.

Could it be that you don’t have a home?
Is it that you wanted to spend a few seconds
between my thighs to get you through the
night?
Have you tried counting sheep?

Here’s a crash course in closeness
With a sweet sister’s love. You only
need sincerity and some vision to
see that you mar me with your crudeness.
I’m not a thing to be gotten with
at any moment’s notice.

Hello sister, how’s the night treating you?
Fine I feel real good tonight.
We both smile.
Which is much better than “Can I come home wit-cha.”
I’ve never been that lonely.

__________
Who’s Afraid of the “Big, Bad, Wolf” in the HOOD
By the Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team and Mariame Kaba

Sometimes walking down the STREET
Feels like an OBSTACLE COURSE.
We are constantly trying to avoid DANGER.
It’s like Lil’ Red Riding Hood
Who was sent into the WOODS
To take food to her sick old grandma and
Was attacked instead by the BIG BAD WOLF.
For us,
the STREETS sometimes seem filled with
BIG BAD WOLVES.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD,
The WOODS are streets with names like
Morse, Howard, Touhy, and Clark.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD,
The wolf WHISTLES
And CALLS like a CAT.
He says:
“Oh what nice LEGS you have.”
“Oh what a beautiful BODY you have.”
He calls us lovely, FAT ASS, sexy, SKANK,
thick, STUCK UP, all that, BITCH, on fire, HO!
We hear the INSULTS – they are like claps of THUNDER.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD,
The wolf INVITES us to “come kick it with him.”
He asks for the DIGITS.
When we say NO, he SPITS OUT
“You ain’t SHIT anyway!”
He offers us a smoke and maybe a drink.
He doesn’t care if we’re 12 or 18.
This wolf is an equal opportunity HARASSER.

In Shout Out: Women of Color Respond to Violence. Edited by Maria Ochoa and Barbara K. Ige (2007)
In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD, 
The wolf makes us believe that 
We are being HARASSED 
Because of the way we LOOK or DRESS or just 
Because “BOYS WILL BE BOYS.” 
Whatever the case, he makes us BELIEVE it is 
OUR FAULT. 
We take the BLAME -- what did YOU do?

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD, 
Lil’ Red FIGHT BACK. 
She refuses to be SWALLOWED whole by the 
BIG BAD WOLF. 
She STANDS on the corner of Morse Ave and 
Demands R-E-S-P-E-C-T. 
She 
Demands An END TO STREET HARASSMENT. 
She prints up thousands of posters with these words 
And HANGS them everywhere in the H-O-O-D.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD, 
Lil’ Red is 
Tan and Mocha 
Caramel and Coffee 
Brown and Black. 
Her name is Shannon and Shauniece, 
Crystal and Christine, 
Renee and Ronnett, 
Jonnae and Jackquette, 
Jasmine and Joyce, 
Emilya and Daphnee, 
Karia and Geri.

In our neighborhood which is THE HOOD, 
Lil’ Red is 
NOT afraid 
of the BIG BAD WOLF.
I realize yesterday that people do not understand the power of their words
Both said and unsaid
Lived and left dead
People do not understand the power of their words
Cuz I was having a great day
A “stop and look at the flowers for a while” day
A “damn I feel again like a child” day
A “can’t nobody bite my style” day
A “I just can’t stop the smiles” day
I can’t stop the smiles day
Hair wet and crazy looking real nice
New shoes, outfit just right
Basically, I was feeling dumb fly
And ready to take on the world
And since I was feeling so confident
I actually looked up when walking down the street
Instead of staring at the cement flowers that grow in concrete
I actually lifted my chin
And saw him
But I guess I’m getting soft ‘cuz my radar didn’t sound
Usually at this point I would have looked back at the ground
And pretended to be invisible
But I kept my chin up
Mind on a thousand topics
I ignored optics and kept it moving
“You got nice hair, shorty”
Thank you
“So you just gonna keep walkin’?”
I thought the question stupid,
I had never given him the impression I was going to stop

So then fuck you
Bitchsluthowhorecunt
So then fuck you
Bitchsluthowhorecunt
On the Turning Up of Unidentified Black Female Corpses
By Toi Derricotte

Mowing his three acres with a tractor, 
a man notices something ahead – a mannequin – 
he thinks someone threw it from a car. Closer 
he sees it is the body of a black woman.

The medics come and turn her with pitchforks. 
Her gaze shoots past him to nothing. Nothing 
is explained. How many black women 
have been turned up to stare at us blankly.

in weedy fields, off highways, 
pushed out in plastic bags, 
shot, knifed, unclothed partially, raped, 
their wounds sealed with a powdery crust.

Last week on TV, a gruesome face, eyes bloated shut. 
No one will say, “She looks like she’s sleeping,” ropes 
of blue-black slashes at the mouth. Does anybody 
know this woman? Will anyone come forth? Silence

like a backwave rushes into that field 
where, just the week before, four other black girls 
had been found. The gritty image hangs in the air 
just a few seconds, but it strikes me,
a black woman, there is a question being asked about my life. How can I protect myself? Even if I lock my doors, walk only in the light, someone wants me dead.

Am I wrong to think if five white women had been stripped, broken, the sirens would wail until someone was named?

Is it any wonder I walk over these bodies pretending they are not mine, that I do not know the killer, that I am just like any woman – if not wanted, at least tolerated.

Part of me wants to disappear, to pull the earth on top of me. Then there is this part that digs me up with this pen and turns my sad black face to the light.
WALK RIGHT
by gloria

She believed that she had figured out how to walk right.
She discovered a walk to lessen the bouncing of her bosom.
Although she was not overly endowed.
She would walk right,
past the “Psst psst, hey baby, you look fine!”
“Oh I like that” calls of men.
She would walk right.
She had mastered a walk to lessen the movement of her behind.
She would walk right.
After some time practicing her techniques
she could still not escape the sounds and approaches as
she tried to walk right.
“Such a pretty thing!...
Why don’t you smile honey?...
Why you walking alone girl?...
She realized she would have to discover another method to help her
walk right

Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Café – Edited by Miguel Algarín and Bob Holman (1994)
References


Facilitator Tools
Giving Name to the Nameless—Project NIA (www.project-nia.org)

The information in this section is designed to help you facilitate poetry circles and discussion. These are simply ideas and you should feel free to adapt them for your particular group.

**Some Ideas to Help Facilitate Group Discussion**

1. Establish an informal atmosphere.

2. Seat everyone in a circle so that there is eye contact for all participants.

3. Agree that each person’s ideas are worth hearing.

4. Everyone should be involved.

5. Give others a chance to react to what you said.


7. Hear each contribution with the intent of understanding.

8. Model your behavior for other group participants.


10. Allow time at the conclusion for evaluation of feelings and productivity – for processing.

11. When a topic has been thoroughly covered move to the next topic.
Discussion Questions

It is always difficult to think about how to craft discussion questions that will elicit the most fruitful information and insights. Below is an example of some discussion questions for Nikky Finney’s poem “the Girlfriend’s Train.” Feel free to use this as a template for developing your own discussion questions for other poems in the guide.

The Girlfriend’s Train—Nikky Finney—Questions you might use for discussion:

- What do you think of this poem? How does it make you feel? Do you like it? Why or why not?

- Are there any lines or stanzas that you can particularly identify with? What are they and why do you feel a connection to them?

- Why do you think Nikky Finney wrote this poem? What’s the message/point of it, if there is one? Who do you think she’s speaking to in this poem?

- Who is the woman who walks up to the poet? Is she real? [Note: As with all points of the discussion, it’s great if there are dissenting opinions, when people can read different things into the context…]

- Nikky Finney opens the poem with “You write like a Black woman who’s never been hit before.” What does this mean to you? How does a woman who’s never been hit before write like? Sound like? Act like?

- What does the poet mean by “eyes soft as candles in two storms blowing”?

- Who are all of the women on the train? Why do you think Finney uses the image/metaphor of a train in her poem?

- Are you able to relate to women who have been victims of violence if you have not been a victim yourself?

- Where do you think the woman is escorting the train to? Where are the women on the train going?

- Does the poet get on the train with the other women? If yes, why? If no, why not? Would you get on the train with the other women?

- Have you ever found yourself in a position where you felt helpless to help someone in need? What did you do?
Resources to Incorporate in Your Poetry Circle

Suggestions for Opening Activities

**ACTIVITY #1: Complete The Phrase**
Go around the room and ask circle participants to complete a couple of the phrases below...

1. Something that I cannot tolerate is...
2. When someone is nice to me, I...
3. I only express my feelings when...
4. The only person who knows the real me is...
5. The biggest risk that I could ever take is...
6. I am really the kind of person who...
7. A time people expected too much of me was...
8. A past experience that will help me in the future was...
9. Things that I like about other people are...
10. My day is happiest when I’m...
11. I show people that I like them...
12. When I receive a compliment, I...
13. I need to improve...
14. I escape from my problems by...
15. What I need most from other people is...
16. What I like about me is...
17. People choose me as a friend because...
18. I made someone feel good about him/herself when...
19. Something I can do that no one else can is...
20. I trust those who...
21. People like me when...
22. My greatest strength is...
23. My best accomplishment is...
24. Compared to others I think I am...
25. Five years from now...
26. Something I like to collect...
**ACTIVITY #2: Totally Me!**


Retype this section and make copies for all participants. Ask them to complete the following sentences. Then you can go around and ask for volunteers who are willing to share what they have written.

My whole, complete, real name is...

But everyone calls me...

Most of the time I feel...

But then I feel...

I’m kind of

___ wild and crazy

___ sweet and shy

___ totally into sports

___ mysterious- nobody really knows who I am

___ better words to describe me are...

**ACTIVITY #3: Mystery Girl**


Retype this section and make copies for all participants. Ask them to complete the following sentences. Then you can go around and ask for volunteers who are willing to share what they have written.

Other people think I am:

My biggest dream is to:
Truth? I am totally scared of:

Something nobody knows about me is:

**ACTIVITY #4: What Out Word, Here I Come!**

Retype this section and make copies for all participants. Ask them to complete the following sentences. Then you can go around and ask for volunteers who are willing to share what they have written.

The thing I do that drives everybody crazy is...

Sometimes when I’m seriously bored I...

When I am out of the house, I just love to...

I am good at playing...

I am fabulously good at...

**ACTIVITY #5: My Brilliant Self**

Retype this section and make copies for all participants. Ask them to complete the following sentences. Then you can go around and ask for volunteers who are willing to share what they have written.

My favorite subject in school is...

My favorite time of day at school is...

My absolute best subject is...

I think it is okay for girls to be smart and show it:

_____ YES  _____ NO  WHY?
**ACTIVITY #6: Absolute Favorites**

*Source: Brave New Girls: Creative Ideas to Help Girls Be Confident, Healthy, and Happy by Jeanette Gadeberg (1997)*

Retype this section and make copies for all participants. Ask them to complete the following sentences. Then you can go around and ask for volunteers who are willing to share what they have written.

My totally favorite snack is...

My all-time favorite stuffed animal is...

When I am by myself, my favorite thing to do is...

My favorite season is...

I would like to take a trip to...

Someday I’m going to...

**ACTIVITY #7: Under a Clear Blue Sky (from Kokology)...**

This is a fun activity that can be used to open a circle and to help participants begin to talk about themselves in a non-threatening way. Read the following out loud to circle participants (be prepared to read this at least twice):

Imagine a clear blue sky without a cloud in sight. Just thinking about it should give your spirits a little lift. Now turn your mind’s eye down to survey the landscape. Which of the following scenes feels most calming and relaxing to you?

A white snowy plain.

A blue seascape.

A green mountain.

A field of yellow flowers.
Handout for Participants  
(from Activity #7)

Key to Under a Clear Blue Sky
The color blue has power to soothe the soul. Even a blue image in the mind can slow the pulse and make you take a deep breath. Other colors have significance, too. The scene you pictured contrasted against that clear blue sky reveals a hidden talent that resides in the depths of your untroubled mind.

1. A white snowy plain.  
   You are blessed with a special sensitivity that allows you to comprehend situations at a glance and decipher complex problems without needing any proof or explanation. You have what it takes to be a clear-sighted decision maker and even something of a visionary. Always trust your first institutions; they will guide you well.

2. A blue seascape.  
   You have a natural talent for interpersonal relations. People respect your ability to communicate with others and the way you help bring diverse groups together. Just by being around, you help others work more smoothly and efficiently, making you an invaluable member of any project or team. When you say: “Nice job. Keep up the good work,” people know you mean it. So it means that much more to them.

3. A green mountain.  
   Your gift is for expressive communication. You always seem to be able to find the words to express the way you feel, and people soon realize it’s exactly how they were feeling, too. They say that joy shared is multiplied, while shared grief is divided. You always seem able to help others find the right side of that equation.

4. A field of yellow flowers.  
   You are a storehouse of knowledge and creativity, bursting with ideas and almost infinite potential. Keep attuned to the feelings of others and never stop working on building your dreams, and there is nothing you cannot achieve.
Suggestions for Creative Activities

If you want to encourage members of your group to write a poem for the first time, the following four activities can be helpful. However before you launch into a creative activity, you may want to introduce it by reading the following poem by Ruth Forman. It can offer a good opportunity to get your group to open up about any trepidation that they might have about writing.

If You Lose Your Pen by Ruth Forman

and all you find is a broken pencil on the floor
and the pencil has no sharpener
and the sharpener is in the store
and your pocket has no money

and if you look again
and all you find is a black Bic
and the Bic you need is green

and if it appears beneath the mattress of your couch
but the couch is dirty and you suddenly want to clean
beneath the pillows
but you have no vacuum and the vacuum is in the store
and your pocket has no money

it is not your pen you are looking for

it is your tongue and those who speak with it
your grandmothers and doves and ebony spiders
hovering the corners of your throat

it is your tongue
and if you cannot find your tongue
do not go looking for the cat
you know you will not find her
she is in the neighbor’s kitchen eating Friskies
she is in the neighbor’s yard making love
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if you cannot find your tongue do not look for it
for you are so busy looking it cannot find you
the doves are getting dizzy and your grandmothers annoyed
be still and let them find you
they will come when they are ready

and when they are
it will not matter if your pockets are empty
if you write with a green Bic or a black Bic
or the blood of your finger
you will write
you will write

ACTIVITY #1
Each participating person needs a sheet of paper and a pen or pencil. On the paper, the participants are first asked to write their first name. Then each person writes three adjectives which they feel describe them. After that, each participant fills in a response to the following four questions:

I am.. [Three adjectives which they feel describe them]
I love...
I fear...
I hate...
I long for...

Finally, each participant then simply writes their last name. An example of how this looks might be.

Latrice,
I am creative, caring, and hardworking;
I love my brothers and friends;
I fear getting cancer like my mother;
I hate tuna fish;
I long for world peace;
Tanner.

This is a creative activity that doesn’t have to take up a lot of time and provides valuable information to group members about each other. This works best when
participants are free to write or not to write so make sure that you let everyone know that they have the right not to write.

**ACTIVITY #2 — 8 Ways to Write a Poem**
1. Make a list of five things you did today, in the order of doing them.
2. Quickly write down three colors.
3. Write down a dream. If you can’t remember one, make it up.
4. Take 15 minutes to write an early childhood memory using language a child would use.
5. Write a forbidden thought, to someone who you would not usually write to.
6. Write down three questions you’d ask if they were the last questions you could ever ask.
7. Write down three things people have said to you in the past 48 hours. Quote them as closely as you can.
8. Write the last extreme pain you had, emotional or physical. If the pain were an animal, what animal would it be? Describe the animal.

What you have just done is generate a lot of material for a poem or several poems. You can stop and write the poem another time, or you can write it now. I suggest you use one of the questions as the first line, each of the colors more than once...

**ACTIVITY #3 — Other prompts...**

I wish...

I think...

I know...

I hear...

I hope...

I want...

I can...
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I will...

I have to...

I need...

I won’t...

ACTIVITY #4 — Instructions for life in the new millennium from the Dalai Lama

Read the following “Instructions for life in the new millennium from the Dalai Lama” out loud to all of the participants or do it round robin style and have each participant read a sentence. Lead a short discussion about the piece: 1. which instruction(s) particularly spoke to participants? 2. Is there an instruction that a participant disagrees with? Why?

Then pass out a sheet of paper and ask everyone to write their own instructions for life in the current millennium...

1. Take into account that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
2. When you lose, don’t lose the lesson.
3. Follow the three R’s: Respect for self, respect for others, responsibility for all your actions.
4. Remember that not getting what you want is sometimes a wonderful stroke of luck.
5. Learn the rules so you know how to break them properly.
6. Don’t let a little dispute injure a great friendship.
7. When you realize you’ve made a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
8. Spend some time alone every day.
9. Open your arms to change, but don’t let go of your values.
10. Remember that silence is sometimes the best answer.
11. Live a good, honorable life. Then when you get older and think back, you’ll be able to enjoy it a second time.
12. A loving atmosphere in your home is the foundation for your life.
13. In disagreements with loved ones, deal only with the current situation. Don’t bring up the past.
14. Share your knowledge. It’s a way to achieve immortality.
15. Be gentle with the earth.
16. Once a year, go someplace you’ve never been before.
17. Remember that the best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.
18. Judge your success by what you had to give up in order to get it.
19. Approach love and cooking with reckless abandon.

**ACTIVITY #5**

Read the following passage by Marianne Williamson out loud to all of the participants or do it round robin style and have each participant read a sentence. This quote is often found on the Internet **incorrectly credited to Nelson Mandela** from his Inauguration Speech, 1994, especially the last sentence of that quote, “As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.” This quote actually comes from *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a Course in Miracles* by Marianne Williamson.

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

Engage participants in a discussion about this quote. You can perhaps go around the circle and ask participants about what their deepest fear is...

Then you can share the poem “Fear” by Raymond Carver with the group. The facilitator should read it out loud first and then ask for volunteers who will each read a sentence of the poem in round robin style. After reading the poem encourage participants to write their own poem about their “fears.” You can suggest that they can follow Carver’s prompt and use ‘Fear of...’ if they would like. My suggestion is that you only use this activity once your group has gotten to know each other. This is not a good activity to do with a group of strangers.
Fear by Raymond Carver

Fear of seeing a police car pull into the drive.
Fear of falling asleep at night.
Fear of not falling asleep.
Fear of the past rising up.
Fear of the present taking flight.
Fear of the telephone that rings in the dead of night.
Fear of electrical storms.
Fear of the cleaning woman who has a spot on her cheek!
Fear of dogs I’ve been told won’t bite.
Fear of anxiety!
Fear of having to identify the body of a dead friend.
Fear of running out of money.
Fear of having too much, though people will not believe this.
Fear of psychological profiles.
Fear of being late and fear of arriving before anyone else.
Fear of my children’s handwriting on envelopes.
Fear they’ll die before I do, and I’ll feel guilty.
Fear of having to live with my mother in her old age, and mine.
Fear of confusion.
Fear this day will end on an unhappy note.
Fear of waking up to find you gone.
Fear of not loving and fear of not loving enough.
Fear that what I love will prove lethal to those I love.
Fear of death.
Fear of living too long.
Fear of death.

I’ve said that.

ACTIVITY #6—Poetry and Painting
Source: Caitlin Ostrow Seidler, Master of Arts in Teaching (2010), School of the Art Institute of Chicago

Participants listen to poetry and music about gender violence and visually render their emotions in textured abstract paintings inspired by the work of contemporary German artist Gerhard Richter, whose Ice series is on display at the Modern Wing of the Art Institute of Chicago. Through this project, participants learn to
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recognize connections between music, poetry, and painting and explore multiple ways of expressing of their emotions. They also have the opportunity to discuss and react to issues surrounding gender violence.

Materials:
- Heavy textured paper, such as watercolor paper (12 x 18)
- Acrylic paint (various colors)
- Palettes
- Paintbrushes (various sizes)
- Sponges cut into small pieces
- Plastic forks
- Other assorted materials for creating textures in paintings (old toothbrushes, sticks, yarn, sand, etc.)

Procedure:
1. Show Gerhard Richter's paintings in his Ice series (on display in the Modern Wing of the Art Institute of Chicago and available for viewing on the museum's website, www.artic.edu). Discuss the following questions: What emotions do these paintings evoke for you? Why? What did the artist do in this painting to make you feel that way?

2. Ask participants how they would express a variety of emotions (happiness, anger, etc.) in an abstract painting. What colors would they use? What would the texture be like?

3. Ask for a volunteer to read a poem from this guide to the group; if no one volunteers, the facilitator can read. Ask participants to note their emotional reactions to the poem as they listen. Discuss reactions after the poem is read.

4. Play a song (preferably one with changes in tempo) and demonstrate painting an entire sheet of paper using brushes, sponges, forks, and various other tools to create layers and textures. Paint along with the beat of the music and respond to the lyrics with your brush and tools as well.

5. Read several more poems and play several songs that address issues of gender violence (see list below). Have participants make paintings along with the beat of the music, using colors and creating textures that express the emotions caused by the poems and songs.
6. Participants share their paintings and discuss their choices: Why did they use certain colors? Why certain tools and textures? What moods and feelings do these colors and textures suggest to other participants?

7. Optional closing discussion #1: Ask participants what they might do in the future when a tough situation arises in their lives. Would they use art to express their feelings? How would they use art? Do they think using art to deal with the situation would help them in some way? Why or why not?

8. Optional closing discussion #2: Ask what the women whose voices were heard in the poems and songs could do to get out of their situations. Why might it be difficult for them to simply leave violent relationships?

Suggested songs: “Better Man” by Pearl Jam; “Brenda’s Got a Baby” by 2Pac; “Rain on Me” by Ashanti; “Polly” by Nirvana; “How Come, How Long” by Babyface and Stevie Wonder; “Ur a Wmn Now” by Otep
Suggestions for Closing Activities

ACTIVITY #1—Quotes
The following are some useful quotes that you can use as a closing for your poetry circle. Read a quote and ask everyone in the circle to respond to it.

“Remember there is no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end.” – Scott Adams

“It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do a little. Do what you can.” – Sydney Smith

“To the world you may be just one person, but to one person you may be the world.” – Source unknown

“Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” – Mother Theresa

“There’s no place like hope.” – Kobi Yamada

“What you want to be eventually, you must be every day. With practice, the quality of your deeds gets down to your soul.” – Frank Crane

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.” – William Arthur Ward

“Get it into your head. Everyone who crosses our path has a message for us. Otherwise they would have taken another path, or left earlier or later.” – James Redfield

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world.” – Mahatma Gandhi

“The most revolutionary act one can commit in our world is to be happy.” – Hunter Patch Adams

“We should not let our fears hold us back from pursuing our hopes.” – John F. Kennedy

“The purpose of life is to discover your gift. The meaning of life is giving your gift away.” – David Viscott
“Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.” – Plato

“We keep moving forward, opening up new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.” – Walt Disney

“You really can change the world if you care enough.” – Marian Wright Edelman

“Doing your best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment.” – Oprah Winfrey

“Every action of our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity.” – Edwin Hubbel Chapin

“It is necessary that I support two or three caterpillars if I want to know the butterflies.” – Antoine de St. Exupery

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” – Aesop

“We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust the sails.” - Source unknown

“You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.” – Christopher Robin

“Think about how happy you would be right now if you lost everything you had... and then got it back again.” – R. Bryan Meeks

“We advance toward our destiny when we encourage others to reach theirs.” – Paul Wesselmann

“There is no one I cannot teach something to, and no one I cannot learn something from.” – Source unknown

“By being grateful, people make themselves deserving of yet another kindness.” – Nigerian Proverb

“Trust your crazy ideas.” – Dan Zadra

“Walk slowly, speak sweetly, and hug tightly. These three things make life amazing.” – Meg Dilworth
“Every blade of grass has its angel that bends over it and whispers, ‘Grow, grow.’” – The Talmud

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.” – Winston Churchill

“You will not be known for the fruit you pick but by the trees you plant.” – Proverb

“When people show you who they are, believe them.” – Maya Angelou

“Everyone has the power for greatness, not for fame but greatness, because greatness is determined by service.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Dare to be yourself.” – Andre Gide

“This thing called ‘failure’ is not the falling down, but the staying down.” – Mary Pickford

“It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult.” – Seneca

“Show me a person who has never made a mistake, and I’ll show you a person who has never achieved much.” – Joan Collins

“We can do no great things, only small things with great love.” – Mother Theresa

“Courage isn’t the absence of fear; it is action in the face of fear.” – S. Kennedy

“Life shrinks and expands in proportion to one’s courage.” – Anais Nin

“What you risk reveals what you value.” – Jeanette Winterson

“All growth is a leap in the dark, a spontaneous unpremeditated act without the benefit of experience.” – Henry Miller

“All appears to change when we change.” – Henri Amiel