

## **CROSS-OVER AMERICA'S PEOPLE POEMS (4 poems)**

### **DARK AMERICAN FACES IN WHITE AMERICAN SPACES**

(a tribute to Michele and Barack Obama)

God-signed, ebony-etched, sun-loved lady,  
Deeply dark and lovely King Solomon lover,  
More-delightful-than-New-Testament wine  
and public presence blessing,  
Lady from a line worth thousands of priest-held pens  
penning and passing pages thru the centuries,  
Presenting us with statured style,  
Gifting us with grace-filled class,

Herself, uniquely herself, flower of Sharon,  
Beloved lily among thorns of the valley,  
Her elegantly curving long, strong petals  
Along joy-lined, defined, penetrating eyes  
focus and stretch ever upward and away from ugly voices  
which wail yet fail to peel and pronounce her downward;

Her smile, nonplussed, unperturbed, illuminates  
the royally loyal lover's eyes of her courtly gentle man;  
He, foreseen to be sachet of myrrh, cluster of henna,  
A woods-rooted, mountain-framed, refreshing apple tree  
among thousands of fruitless lesser trees,  
And a light-footed gazelle, out of reach of serpents' tongues—  
With her at his side - springing, hill, sky and scripture bound,  
Healing, freedom-seeking, integrity, and brilliance bound.

Because of all this and more, with deepest gratitude to her  
who'd been compelled to stand aside and yield  
seats of honor to beauty-blotting thorns  
and blight-bitten trees:  
To her, our forever First Lady with her kingly President,  
For a moment lost in time, we took our knees.

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### **TRIBUTE TO UNNAMED BROKEN AMERICAN CHILDREN**

Rooms of us, broken, children,  
Inside walls of silencing stones,  
All kinds of holding cells,  
For bruised spirits, lives, and bones:  
A closet, classroom, or cabin,  
A courtroom, or aborting room,  
A detention center cell, or dormitory room,  
A garage, attic, or basement furnace room,  
With commonality of content (muted children)  
alone with unanswered fear-born questions  
echoing room to wall to room:  
What made mothers mad enough to murder?  
What made dads' drive into us,  
Boring deep and then some more?  
Would we be dead if we had squealed  
To trusted others how they'd crushed us in our cores?  
We nothing then?  
We nothing now?  
We nothing no more?  
We nothing but worthless  
shits or whores?

Kindred unvoiced questions  
bounced off bathroom walls in schools,  
Where we, silent, defiant, vigilant,  
while holding ourselves hostages like fools,  
keeping ourselves alone, mental miles apart  
from others, sat down carefully in stalls,  
ever ready for unspeakables,  
and read, wincing, from the taunting walls:  
"Spics, niggers, whores, and scummy slime,  
you know'll do IT anytime, for a nickel or a dime,  
or a quarter overtime."  
And we asked ourselves,  
what if, God forbid, we'd done the awful IT  
for nothin', unawares?  
Were we damned to descend to hells much worse  
than those already known, down darker stairs?  
We dared not ask. We'd exit, one by one (no room  
for two-by-twos), one room and one step at a time,  
away from garaged suicides, closeted mutilations,  
no time for hesitating in our well-torn running shoes  
As we escaped to safe and under-worded spaces  
of un-walled streets and outside places.

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### CANTON OHIO INNER CITY ALL-AMERICAN GIRL'S TALK

1.

Sidewalk cracks, glass shards in toes,  
Aching back and head and bleeding nose,  
Gaping holes in the bathroom floor  
Through which I saw the downstairs door.

2.

The stool din't flush, the sink din't drain,  
Cold winds came through the window panes,  
Bats in the attic partied at night,  
Rats, roaches too, but out of sight.

3.

To shut it all out, each night I'd pray:  
Keep all creepy creatures and devils at bay,  
God, rock me to sleep in your loving arms,  
Safe from glass shards and all earthly harms.

4.

Sadly, deaf evils kept me hostage each night.  
So, I prayed for each morning, thanked God for daylight.

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### AMERICAN TOURIST'S JOURNAL: SOUTH OF PARIS

An abandoned moat foolishly guarded a dying castle. I won't digress there, however.  
This is not that story, not any story. This is a poem, about 13 poetic tennis balls and us.

We are awestruck, mystified, speechless, one hundred miles south of Paris, France.  
These tennis balls are arranged in an earthly constellation  
(divinely inspired resting places of unnamed spirits),  
distanced                    from            each other  
too                    precisely to be                    irrational,  
too                    overwhelming to be            random.  
like crystal balls signifying an  
untimely end.

Each lays suspended in a frozen,  
undrinkable brew of algae and dead water,  
a stagnant pool in iced-over stages of decay.  
They've found their way like elephants  
to their ancient dying grounds,  
guided by mysteries encoded in their fibers,  
a silent understanding passed from one unto the other.

You and I, intruders on this sacred site  
(and/or perhaps pilgrims with prophetic vision),  
Stand witness to this silent ritual, muted,  
unable to discern the crafted from the circumstantial.

A Sunday sky clouds the earthly reclamation underway.  
While we, silent watch-humans, fix our eyes downward.  
With our senses frozen hostages to thirteen iced-over poems,  
resting, precariously, in multiple sequences of decay.