

A Public Performance Art Project



Participants

Judie Anderson
Phil Carlin
Sue Delves
Norma Flynn
Audrey Peeples
Bob and Connie Ratzel
Lendon Sadler
Stephen Thomas

Many Thanks to the Beverly Area Arts Alliance

David Barsotti

Lizzy Benner

Sal Campbell

Corinne Rose

Monica Wilczak

Chris Wilczak

Beverly Bank

Dennis O'Malley

Ellie's

The Ridge Historical Society

Edris Hoover

Performers

Richard Blakeney

Michael Bridges

Jeremy Lee Harris

Jessica Kearney

Clee McCracken

Emilio Rojas

Farida Weller

Sojourner Zenobia

Photography

Jamie Gannon

Videography

Laura Moore

“We are the stories we tell and cities define those stories”
~Eden Unluata-Foley

“Place for me is the locus of desire.”
~Lucy Lippard

NEIGHBORHOOD MAGIC

I grabbed a spot in Ellie’s café on the afternoon of the Beverly Art Walk in the Beverly/Morgan Park neighborhood in Chicago. As one of organizers for the Art Walk, I had been on the go all morning and was relieved to be sitting, relaxing into the warmth of space and waiting for the choir to begin the sixth of eight hymns, composed and written from Carron Little’s poems. We were close to the end of what had been a day filled with song, praise, deep reflection and laughter. The singers were set to perform a piece written for Lendon Sadler outside of Ellie’s, his chosen location. They had planned to perform outdoors, but due to the chilly wind and steady drizzle, our entire group was welcomed into the café. Looking like a rag-tag circus troupe, members of the choir, participants and audience filed in while the people in the café looked on with wonder. We were an unusual looking group of people in this corner of the city. The choir was dressed and made-up in various shades of the Queen of Luxuria’s signature colors; a bright neon pink and cerulean blue. Lendon, an older, African American man, with dreadlocks past his knees and dressed in colorful silks and tweeds, embodied an exquisite, distinguished radiance. He graciously introduced the choir to the audience as they took their positions along the north windows of the cafe. Like many spirituals, the entrance began slow and low. The poetry being sung so closely bespoke of Lendon’s story, and the a cappella voices rose powerfully in the space. With references culled from Lendon’s southern childhood, the choir dipped, repeated and rose up with Lendon’s childhood home “Sweet, sweet Auburn Avenue....” It was transcendent.

The project, “Neighborhood Magic” had been set to culminate on the day of the Art Walk. Little’s proposal for the Beverly Art Walk public art project was focused on collecting the life stories of elder citizens in the Beverly/Morgan Park community. Little was familiar with the Beverly/Morgan Park community through friends and was intrigued by the clannishness of the neighborhood. As a Scotswoman, I believe she saw some commonalities to her country, but was also surprised at how these bonds remained in tact, in Chicago in the present day. She was also intrigued by the racially integrated dynamic of the community, also unusual in Chicago in the present day. As The Beverly Area Arts Alliance (“The Alliance”) began the process of selecting an artist who could engage our community, it was clear that Little had the professional capacity, and most importantly, empathy, to engage with the very special aspects of “the local” that comprise Beverly/Morgan Park. To ensure there was a diverse representation of the population all participants or collaborators for Neighborhood Magic responded to an ad that was placed in the local newspaper, the Beverly Review, or were contacted through the eleven members of The Alliance.

Little spent months interviewing her subjects, documenting their environs, and researching the history of Chicago in the 20th century with a focus on the Beverly/Morgan Park community. Significant areas of the artist’s exploration were changes in the social and cultural climate of the 1960’s, particularly the Civil Rights and early Feminist Movements within and outside of Chicago. Little eloquently contextualized each participant’s life story utilizing primary and secondary sources available through the Ridge Historical Society. This collection of dialogue and research was distilled into eight personalized compositions of poetry and music that reflect biographical information, as well as intangible qualities the artist reaped from interactions with each participant. Additionally, she designed and organized the construction of special postboxes for each participant, with the caveat that community members should post their own special moments in the boxes for later collection. On the day of the art walk Little wrote poetry from this selection of notes and these poems were performed by Yuri Lane at Ridge Historical Society. The postboxes were positioned at locations selected by each participant, thereby creating a path through the neighborhood that would be followed on the day of the Art Walk and then documented as sites for future visits.

“The path is an extension of walking...and walking is a mode of making the world as well as being in it. Thus the walking body can be traced in the places it has made; paths, parks, and sidewalks are traces of the acting out of imagination and desire.... Walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world.”¹

Little developed another facet to her relationship with the Beverly/Morgan Park community by walking from the northernmost point south to Morgan Park—roughly 91st Street to 115th Street in repeated bouts. She requested that the participants carefully consider the selection of the site of their postbox, with some participants choosing more than one site for the artist's consideration. In researching the sites on foot, the artist explored many aspects of the neighborhood that remain unexamined by most; its architectural heritage², the highest hill in the city³, several public and private gardens with indigenous plants⁴ among other observations. This kind of discovery happens at a slow pace, rather than in a vehicle that is moving through traffic along thoroughfares. Walking also afforded the artist time to reflect about her subjects and how the physical and domestic worlds, in addition to worldly and personal events, shaped their experiences.

Little is an expansive, multifarious practitioner with interests specifically in art and community. As the creator of a performance series “Out of Site”⁵, on the founding board of Dfbrl8r⁶ performance space both of these in her home neighborhood of Wicker Park, an artist-in-residence at The Chicago Cultural Center (2014)⁷, Propeller Fund grantee (2015) and IAP DCASE grantee (2015) she has for many years staged and produced community engaged works that solicit audience participation. In my many conversations with the artist, she has expressed her strong desire to activate public spaces in her community through her own work and the work of invited artists. But what does it mean to “activate public spaces” in our communities? Susan Silberberg speaks to the importance of public space:

“The placemaking practice has had many goals over time, but at its core it has always advocated a return of public space to people. The idea of making great, social, human-scale places is not new, and is evident in the canon of important public spaces, from the agora in Greece with its role as market place and public speech arena to the New England town common with its meeting house supporting democratic government. In the long history of human settlement, public places have reflected the needs and cultures of community; the public realm has long been the connective tissue that binds communities together. Despite this intrinsic link between public places and community, by the end of the 19th century, this link had fractured. The industrial age’s

1. Solnit, Rebecca. *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*. (Solnit, 2000)
2. Oswald, Joseph C.. Chicago's Beverly/Morgan Park
3. Oswald, Joseph C..
4. Edna White Garden, Dan Ryan Woods Forest Preserve, Sue Delves, other private gardens
5. Out of Site performance series. Wicker Park, Chicago 20xx-present.
6. Dfbrl8r, address, December 2010
7. Chicago Cultural Center “City Alive with Dreams”, 2014.

focus on machine efficiency, and the suburbanization of the United States in the 20th cemented the divorce.”⁸

In the late years of the 20th century, as suburban sprawl lost its edge and the city became a draw, there has been a notable return to the importance of supporting and engaging with the local. The local, as defined and expanded upon by Lucy Lippard is multifold,

“The lure of the local is the pull of place that operates on each of us, exposing our politics and our spiritual legacies. It is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation. The lure of the local is that undertone to modern life that connects it to the past we know so little and the future we are aimlessly concocting.”⁹

Chicago is, famously, a city of neighborhoods, each with its own identity and particulars. Each neighborhood hosts parks, libraries, and many other public and privately owned venues. As has been well-documented, Chicago has experienced urban flight, violence, and remains, in 2016, a mostly segregated city¹⁰. The Beverly/Morgan Park neighborhood is one of the few neighborhoods that strove to integrate as other neighborhoods experienced “white flight”. In Lippard’s terms, the “lure of the local” in this tight-knit community was and continues to be strong. As a member of this community for 15 years, my observation is that the desire for the local --“the pull of place” is concretely expressed in many ways as an externalized moral value. In this neighborhood, when meeting a person for the first time, one should be prepared to discuss where you grew up, went to grammar and high school and subsequently, that may open up the possibility that there are shared relatives or friends. The economy of this neighborhood is local; neighbors hire local tradespeople (almost every trade is represented, or someone “knows a guy”), small businesses are championed through various media outlets, schools are supported through parent and teacher networks. When I think of this neighborhood, I know that people who live here invest generously in their community. One may choose (or not) to participate but service to community has a high degree of place and social value in this environment. Though integration in Beverly/Morgan Park was not peaceful (see Audrey Peeples’ story), those who fought (see Norma Flynn, Stephen Thomas’ and Sue Delves’ stories) were staunch in their positions regarding race and gender equality. Each elder brought an individual story and perspective to the complexities of community, race, gender, sexual orientation, social

8. Silberberg, Susan. *Places in the Making: How Placemaking Builds Places and Communities*,

9. Lippard, Lucy. *The Lure of the Local*.

10. Find citation

dynamics and family.

Little's socially engaged practice can be traced to "...a collaborative, consultative approach [with] deep and complex roots in the history of art and cultural activism (Helen and Newton Harrison in the US, Artists Placement Group in the UK)"¹¹ as well as her own upbringing as part of the Iona Community, a communal living settlement located on a small island in the Inner Hebrides off the Ross of Mull on the western coast of Scotland. Little does not emphasize nor minimize the impact of being raised in a rather unique place, but draws selectively upon the experience. She has noted that the idea of service to community is one aspect of her childhood that has had a strong influence upon her work. Engaging in meaningful dialogue, seeking to create conversation and consequentially to create a profound experience are of the highest value to the artist. She is aware of her (the artist) status as an "outsider" but seeks to level her experience with her collaborators (in this case, the participants in Neighborhood Magic) through "empathetic insight". "In these projects conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself. It is re-framed as an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities and official discourse."¹² In the case of Neighborhood Magic, collaborators and members of the community were witness to the experience of going beyond the expected boundaries of public discourse (through performance, song, and poetry) and remarked upon the deeply felt aspect of the experience.

Reflecting upon this project now, my memory wanders to the places and rooms we occupied to share stories. Most of the spaces were public, but as we spoke, the space became intimate. Stories were shared by the collaborators directly with Little who transcribed them and then later in larger, thoughtful, group conversations. As Little began to interview and document her time with her collaborators, we spoke often about the progress of the project and she described her impressions. She was deeply affected by the participant's willingness to share and we often discussed in what ways each story was connected to the larger social context of the time. The meaningful nature of the project created an overall dialogue that may "...challenge dominant representations of a given community, and create more complex understanding of, and empathy for, that community among a broader public."¹³ The later part of Kester's point, as relative to this project, has been a model for many communities endeavoring to challenge outside, often negative perceptions. Looking to the histories of oral tradition and storytelling, these powerful tools often allow for a revelatory experience for all participants.

It is enjoyably complicated to puzzle out or place the "art" in this deeply connect-

11. Kester, Grant.

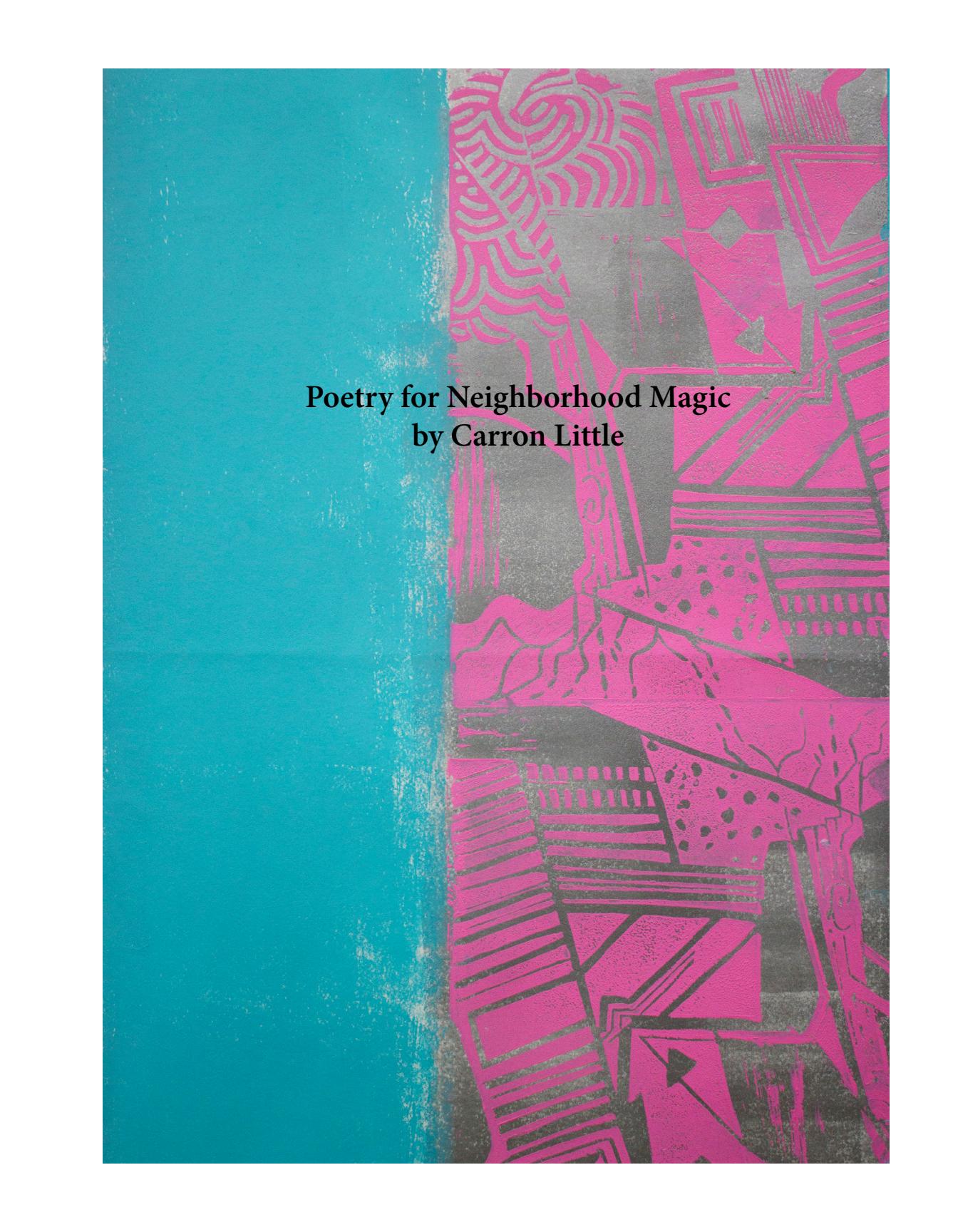
12. Kester, Grant.

13. Kester, Grant.

ed project. In speaking with Little, she is struck by how the creation of dialogue is a generative act and the profundity of the shared experience among all participants in the project. Similar to oral history and folklore, this project was shaped by the participants, with the artist acting as a cipher. As an artist, Little heartily embraces this idea as she strongly identifies feminism, egalitarianism and the idea of service to one's community as intrinsic to her work. This project was officially performed for the Beverly Art Walk in October, 2015. Neighborhood Magic remains activated in the present through Little's research, documentation and perhaps most importantly as the artist and collaborators continue a dialogue in the present, looking toward future kinship.

By Susannah Papish





Poetry for Neighborhood Magic
by Carron Little

A poem for Stephen Thomas

An Ode to Ishi

A man marks a line in an old oak tree
Drawing a line between you and me

Blood glistens in the rain
Frozen in the last remains
The lineage of man
Drawing a line in the sand
A monument to humanity
The last bit of nature's dignity

Holding names for centuries held here

The circumfrance scores
All that we needed to hear
A century of genocide

Two hundred thousand people stored here

Nature's wisdom lost in years
Time counting in numbers
Time breathing in seconds

A woman cuts a line in an old oak tree

A man digs a hole

A time left here
Holding up for something
Something more

Please, please be our last honest heir

Beaconing the century forward
Progress is where it starts
Isn't it, isn't right here?

Hands up who knows what it's like to stand here

Hands up, hands up, don't stop counting

Five breaths, five people here

Hands up do you know what it's like to be here

A woman draws a line

A man digs a hole

Cutting, cutting a line in an old oak tree

A man finds a treasure to be told

Like the stars who were here before
The star becomes a hole
The hole our past
Reflecting something that we had held so dear
The well becomes a mirror
Dividing you and me

Hands up, hands up who knows what it's like to be here?
A man draws a line
A woman cuts a tree
A man drills a mine
The mine cracks the earth
Hands up, hands up who knows what it's like to be here

We breath into the air, fresh air please
We believe in a future time here
We breath into freedom
Freedom held here
We believe in a time with our nature here.

A Poem for Judie Anderson

Six Bells

Life started with a brush,
Caressing pigments over fibres
Joined in hands, two became four,
Horns grew life through walls
Sacred milk became six,
Six pairs of hands became eight
The light keeps pouring
Milk over water, water over stone.

Six shifts, six pairs of golden horns
Six plates at six am
The bell rings
Stamping the pigment
The sound rings like a marching band
Printing the daily news
Each letter a historic imprint
The headline “Printers Quit”
Replaced by the blue ghost
The digital machine moves in to take hold.

A hydroponic change brings in a new age
Stacking the cairns in geo formation
Learning quartz and illustrator
Library halls become digital walls
The marching band of the newsroom
Looses its song
Between black ink and micro-chips
The Newsroom quits
The battle of industry and monopoly play
While the last song of the marching band fades

The bell rings at 6am
6 horns, 6 stones and 6 hands
The Indian stands over history
The walk begins
A slow march
As the tectonic plates shift again

The design world appears in a blue screen
Microchips become flies
Silently watching, silently listening
Stamping the stories into history

6 stones, 6 bells, 6 horns ring again

The mighty Sioux patiently stands
The bronze Priestess doesn't stop moving
Doesn't stop looking
Paradise in a brush
Taking us to our next shrine
Caressing the pigment of our world
Captured on paper
A comfortable cushion,
A metaphorical moment
The gold horns kept us close.

6 bells, 6 stones and 6 horns.

A Poem for Bob & Connie Ratzel

Caravan Kitchen

The caravan kitchen
Molded our hands
Separate continents stitched in years
The eyes of wisdom
A statue, a presence
The Four Freedoms
Recited by Roosevelt
A speech to the nation
Maintains a watchful eye
over our family memories
Tracing our stories
In our caravan kitchen

Stitched from two worlds
On different trains
Hands held together
I run for miles with birds in my ears
Spreading porcelain roses
Gifted by angels
Weaving through the city streets
Knocking on deserted doors
The abandoned children
Carved in my heart
Trying to give them a fresh start
Coming home to my caravan Kitchen

In deep absorption of a private canon
A daily ritual in the Eucharist
Sewing baptism into my life
The water washing over my limbs
Building sustenance to be brave
Fresh cooked salmon fuelling our existence
As cookies exit the kitchen
A transplanted unit carved inside the wall
A cosy seat for all to meet
Stories pass hands
Inscribed into walls

In our Caravan Kitchen.

Over the salty seas he came
Escaping the war machine
A premonition of the death march
Spreading like disease
A man was born to the justice and peace
A fascination for political history
Gladstone, the delicately pointilist marks
The first British Liberal Prime Minister
Stands in miniature
Organizing history, organizing numbers
The stack of paper has been his burden
Finding peace in the caravan kitchen.

He shuffled in digits
A capitalist game
Re-distributing wealth
Gambling with property
He juggled the jobs
Counting the dollars
Feeding the family
An Olympic medalist
And a marathon runner
Fifteen marathons under her belt
A family of five with a healthy appetite
In the caravan kitchen.

He and I we stand together
Independent souls living together
He has loved me well
In the Caravan Kitchen

A Poem for Lendon Sadler

An Immaculate Conception

Butter cream was latest sculpting tool
The plumage of feathers in her hair
A floral arrangement was the new avant-garde
A high hair dooe on Tuesday
The curlers came out on Friday
The butter cream gelled his high top quiff
On sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
The black beauty capital of sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
While Daddy King's Ebenezer sang Hallelujah

The dusty cigars lined the walls
The dusty men rolled in once more
Mr Gold Teeth who lived next door
Trash was his art form
A secret entrance, a private door
Hairspray and mascara masked the Boosters hold
Fashionistas fronted the Dyke bag ladies conference
Whose bodies grew under the weight of the
National organization of Survival Sisters

On sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
The black beauty capital of Sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
While Daddy King's Ebenezer sang Hallelujah

Ms Rich stood in tune
To the cash register, a loading dock
Sending another dollar bill
straight into my bank account
The best dressed boy on sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
A fried egg in a habit
The bag lady empire grew
Lost in the act of naivety and who knew
We all were part of an exchange.
The cabbies kept the flow

Oh sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
The black beauty capital of Sweet sweet Auburn Avenue

While Daddy King's Ebenezer sang Hallelujah
 Claude held the key to the bible door
 An elaborate cathedral with the finest organ
 In sweet sweet Georgia
 We rocked the house of midnight mass
 The pink triangle was a secret sign
 Librarians, priests we all held the key
 Implicit knowledge of homosexuality
One night changed my life on sweet sweet Auburn Ave
 The graffiti covered anti-war Datson gave me a ride

On sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
The black beauty capital of Sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
 While Daddy King's Ebenezer sang Hallelujah

Five months on the road
 To New York state
 Stopping at little Nebo in North Carolina
They discovered something new in my sweet sweet afro
 The boy handed me a snake
 Swarthmore with its echo chambers
 Silence reverberating philosophical tones
 Down down its echoing halls
 Peace sang out loud echoing all the way

To sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
The black beauty capital of Sweet sweet Auburn Avenue
 While Daddy King's Ebenezer sang Hallelujah

A Poem for Norma Flynn

In Steel

In steel she stands
In steel she remains
Each step a calling
Each move a mission
“Marching against Fear”
Marking the red dusty road
Of US Fifty-one
The summer of sixty-six
Feet drumming in dust
Clouding the chants
Repeating lines
Down the chain of resounding calls
From Memphis to Jackson
Signing up voters
The first act of freedom
An integrated future
We walked for peace
We listened to people
We sang for freedom
Through lines of National Guard

Blisters marked our feet
Tensions grew in our shoes
The lines of exhaustion gripped the group
In a kitchen routine
Cries grew, a squabble erupted
As water trickled down
Her nylon stockings
Reflecting centuries of racial tension
Clinging to institutions
We rang out as we marched
Walking through tear gas
Singing for change
Signing up black voters

In Canton Mississippi we were welcomed with riot armor
The invisible line of the KKK
Hidden in stiff uniforms of the Highway patrol

Lining the fields with bayonets in control
While bugs crossed our mouths
We struggled on
Defying the cock roach silence

Writing for peace
“Women Mobilized for Change”
Eight delegates on call
The telegram came stamping the time
Telephone trees rang
In white gloves and hats
We came
Surrounding the block
Of Mayor Daley’s office
Demanding a readdress to the psychological damage
Of a segregated city
We offered our services
To write human policy
Open housing for all became the first
Act of legislation
Then we fought for employment and education
The long battle is not lost
It just needs more work
And the battle of steel hearts

On July 31st the heat rose
A macabre dance
In Marquette Park
Revealing an ugly tide
The racist hats hurled bricks and stones
Turned over cars
We stood six hundred strong
Sunday Strollers for Peace
Marked in blood catching missiles
The avalanche came from every direction
The police colluded with the violent attackers
Releasing the gangs from their paddy wagons
A gentle stroll of black and white
Turned into a battle mall
Confronted by fire extinguishers and broken glass bottles

Hatred gushed from alleyways, parkways and rooftops
Violence erupted unleashing racism in its extreme

The brutality of the sixties
Danced a fearless death at Marquette Park
In the summer of sixty-six

We built these bricks
We lived in these stones
They fire bombed our walls
Destroying the back porch
We were not deterred.
The intersection of Cross Roads
Became our home
The globe rotated in our kitchen
Food from China to Vietnam and Columbia
Tea became a new addition
Our children absorbed diverse perspectives
Global citizens became our moto
The twenty-four hour clock kept vigil
We worked in shifts
For the first black families moving into Beverly
Keeping vigil, keeping the peace
Creating a Beverly where we wanted to live
A desegregated neighborhood in the city
Keeping peace, keeping vigil
We built a community for the future

Snow peak top was a sanctuary
A ski slope on nowhere island
A random ticket
A momento mori
A passage between this life and the next
Our peaceful haven
Connecting us in a single breath
My best friend
A random moment
Singing in songs
A life with friends kept us strong
Always learning, always living
I created a life where I belonged

A life with love, a life with peace
A caring shelter with woman and child
Mary Cassatt, the female painter,
watched over us with a tender eye
A simple suite, a calm rhythym
A drawing room for everyone to enter
A choral chamber resounded the rest.

A Poem for Phil Carlin

Let the Truth Be Told

Pinned to a wooden floor
In Victorian chambers
Sandwiched desks stacked in rows
Feet stuck to the classroom floor
Mouths muffled behind closed doors
A system of oppression
An education system built on prison principles
Children indoctrinated
Pass or fail
There is only right NO wrong
No space for innovation and creation
Children pinned to silence 12

Don't nail me down to a victorian institution
A prehistoric education system
Let me listen to the freedom in these minds
Let the honest words of wisdom rise

In truth and silence
I ran for years
Discovering mysteries far and wide
Road trips weaving across American landscapes
In the great depression
"Can you remind me what was so great about it?"
An act of freedom
Creating a career
With Independent wheels
The bell rang
I stepped into the first act
An Latin and English teacher 12

Language was my medium
In every scene
Defining a rhythm that built my career
The Golden mouth rang
Let the truth be told
Crafting each sentence

A profound gesture
The truth of the word
Held the key
Mastering each character
Conviction spoken by a sincere orator
On each stage I marked my way. 12

In Act two a happy coincidence
Opened the door
A future, as an academic professor
A career carved with Michaelangelo
And Julius Ceasar
Defining future leaders
A Modern education system
Rooted in a practicum
Breathing fresh air in the system
In active play we ran ahead
Building an architectural system
Where our children could be innovators 11

Don't pin my down to your wooden stage
A mask today
And Caesar tomorrow
Let dreams unfold
Beyond these walls
Let the truth be told
Let histories define our modernity
With innovation
Giving space to future generations
Let us learn from the great leaders
Let us learn from the great philosophers
Let us learn from you and me
Let us create an education for all to succeed

A Poem for Sue Delves

A Women's Work is in the Garden of General Life

Planted in a garden
In petals she grew
Dressed in white woodruff
Draped in lace and honey bees
A living flora etched in the fragility of life
With Dutch dolls holding peacocks
Spinning a tune

Lilies became boats, singing long notes
Water reflected nature's paintings
Decorating dinning tables
With fresh greens and General Life
The Wisteria grew all the stories she knew
Travelling the world
With a map and compass and the worldly tools she grew.

A caring companion
The watchmaker made history
Building machines documenting in digits
Larger than Alice in Wonderland's wardrobe
The world's first industrial computer
A tick-tocking machine, launched a career
Posting payroll off on time

The clock chimed with orchids
The bird sang in Athens
Where Zeus was born
The minotaur escaped the last race
A hike up the Rockies
In blue furs and lace
Melting glaciers dating back to Laramide orogeny.

The first words exchanged
“Would you like mashed potatoes?”
The potatoes took root
Winning the last race
The clock sang on time

Floating on continents from Athens to Washington
Hiking through a corporate culture.

A myriad of flora filled the halls
A garden for the future inspired the culture
Packaging knowledge and bringing it home
Installed in the Smithsonian collection
Soil in art, water in BAPA
An architect of nature,
An original town planner.

A Poem for Audrey Peeples

Mother

The River Flows
The River Flows
The river flows over me
The river flows through me

Catching my mothers eyes
Catching my sisters breath
The river flows through me
The river flows over me

In my sisters blood she watches over me
In my brothers blood he watches over me
Free wheeling on a life
Free wheeling jewels around this city

“We are as good as the best
We are no better than the rest”

The River Flows
The River Flows
The river flows through me
The river flows over me

Catching my mother eyes
Catching my sisters breath
The river flows through me
The river flows over me

She carries the wisdom of her blood
We carry the wisdom of her truth
A Jewish
An African
An Indian
We are all molded from this blood
We flow together
The river is deep
The blood keeps flowing

Of all our sisters and brothers

We keep mapping
We keep praying
In lemon drops and candy floss
Spreading the jewels
The phonecalls of hate
Flow down the deep deep river
The blood keeps flowing
Of all our sisters and brothers
The beauty of the human race
Weaving its global DNA
From one generation to the next
Blood keeps pouring into our rivers
Sisters and brothers
The rivers flow deep

Her wisdom is truth
Her blood of world
The river keeps flowing
Strong and deep through you and me
The river keeps flowing
Strong and deep through you and me



AFTERWARD

I grabbed a spot in Ellie's café on the afternoon of the Beverly Art Walk in the Beverly/Morgan Park neighborhood in Chicago. As one of organizers for the Art Walk, I had been on the go all morning and was relieved to be sitting, relaxing into the warmth of space and waiting for the choir to begin the sixth of eight hymns, composed and written from Carron Little's poems. We were close to the end of what had been a day filled with song, praise, deep reflection and laughter. The singers were set to perform a piece written for Lendon Sadler outside of Ellie's, his chosen location. They had planned to perform outdoors, but due to the chilly wind and steady drizzle, our entire group was welcomed into the café. Looking like a rag-tag circus troupe, members of the choir, participants and audience filed in while the people in the café looked on with wonder. We were an unusual looking group of people in this corner of the city. The choir was dressed and made-up in various shades of the Queen of Luxuria's signature colors; a bright neon pink and cerulean blue. Lendon, an older, African American man, with dreadlocks past his knees and dressed in colorful silks and tweeds, embodied an exquisite, distinguished radiance. He graciously introduced the choir to the audience as they took their positions along the north windows of the cafe. Like many spirituals, the entrance began slow and low. The poetry being sung so closely bespoke of Lendon's story, and the a cappella voices rose powerfully in the space. With references culled from Lendon's southern childhood, the choir dipped, repeated and rose up with Lendon's childhood home "Sweet, sweet Auburn Avenue...." It was transcendent.



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