

A Love Supreme

Professor Arturo

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Second Line

(to Jayne Cortez and Amiri Baraka)

I *Dirge*

Death's door opens...
We are bereaved indeed
when perchance a soul whom we encountered leaves
-just as certain as we all must
face our destiny and return to dust

And in the midst of such despair
when mournful departure permeates the air
we ask ourselves of the whys and whens
of the stillness and their silent pens...

Though chance or choice might play a part
in our lives and loves and art
we are here but for a second's pace
in lieu of time and unbounded space

Their words have healed and steered the way
in our screams and dreams throughout the day
to guide us forward in the night
and enfold us with unearthly light

In risqué verse or genteel rhyme
where life is such a crucial climb
We rise to heights from these poets' hearts
from the faraway gates of their shrouded parts

We wail and mourn and shed our tears
and revamp our hopes for future years
their vision endures to soothe our sadness
from a celestial fount of eternal gladness

We howl and yowl and question why
such blessed essence should bid goodbye
But prideful death just cannot smile
because the poets trod that further mile
for the future holds we know not what
when death's door closes so abruptly shut...

II

Dance

To the poets...
to the weavers of words and makers of rhyme
(word warriors)
to the jazz poets and the jizz poets
(battenin' down the hatches and waterin' the cannon)
for the poets
for the scribes
the vernal fire-spitters and Ancient-Agers
(Blessed be their hearts and jingly parts)
to the tone and tenor of their universe
(from the people, to the people, for the people)
for the poets...
for the poets of the people
(Where they at-where they at-where they at?)
Poets just in from the rain
Poets from the storm
Poets from the Ninth Ward (doing a heck of a job)
Poets from Poughkeepsie
Poets from Ma-ha'-in'
Poets who be hay-in' (No he di-'in'...)
Poets who be abomination to all creation
Poets who mouthspout "Yes we can"
-change we can believe in (chump change)
Poets with Ph.D.'s
Poets that be sittin' 'round sayin' stuff like "WORD...WORD UP..."
Poets who be sayin' "Habari Gani...OOGA BOOGA...Where y'at?!..."

Poets with exotic-sounding African and Islamic names (who still act like kneegroes)

Poets who believe everything they're taught

Poets who play it like they so intellectually astute (and they just as ign'ant as me)

Poets that talk about knowns and unknowns and the things that they knew that they knew (which were the known unknowns) which is to say that there were things that they knew they didn't know.

But there were also unknown unknowns that they didn't know they didn't know (DUH-UH-UH-uh-uh-uh...)

Poets who sing the praises of the beautiful black women in Nation Time (cliché)

Poets on Open Mic Night: My Nubian Ki-i-i-i-ing...

My Nubian Quee-ee-ee-eeen... (cliché)

Poets who be red, black and blue in green all by themselves in the heat of the night (cliché)

the poets of our blood, blood (with some exceptions)

Poets where dead lecturers live who rise, rise and raise rays

to the political poets and the greeting card poets (Tender is the night...)

Academic poets polemic poets

to those polished and proper pundits and punsters

-the unholy grail of their shallow solutions (and rudimentary renditions)

to the poets at the readings who always goin' overtime and bogartin' the mic (Oops! My ba-a-a-a-a-a-ad)

To the poets around us, within us, and us in them (the people's poets)

Poets in the tradition:

“I got ba-na-nas, watermell-on, sweet pato-oo-oo-oo-oo-tee!

I got ba-na-nas, watermell-on rade to dee rind! –so goo-oo-oo-ood it keep the ba-a-a-a-aby from cryin'...!”

Poets like Aunt Sweet and Momma Rachel: “The Lawd don't like ugly...

Everybody happy on weddin' day...Take one to know one...take care'

be better than 'beg pardon'...Don't rock the boat—'specially when you sittin' in it...Some folks don't know what's good 'til it's gone...If they

wasn't no losin' they couldn't be no winnin'... A hard haid make a soft behind...Keep on doin' what you doin'; keep gittin' what you gittin'...

It ain't what people call you; it's what you answer to...The dog that bring

tail—take tale...Some days you the pigeon; some days you the statue...Show me who you hang with and I'll show you what you is...Don't let yo' right hand know what yo' left hand doin'...Don't throw away the baby with the bathwater...Figures don't lie, but liars figure...Ign'ance is its own reward...Don't shoot all the dogs 'cause one of 'em got fleas...Never give a white man all yo' money...Every goodbye ain't gone...You find yo' bottom when you stop diggin'...Don't pray too hard for what you want—you just might git it...Don't put all yo' eggs in one basket...White meat don't eat white meat...When you lays down with dogs you gits fleas...Never compare yo' insides to somebody else's outsides...Father don't always know best – 'less he Father Time...If you wanta see a rainbow you gotta put up with a lil' rain...Just 'cuz yo' shoes is polished don't mean you ain't got no holes in the sole...Now git out my face boy...I gots washin' to do..."

-DEM kinda poets, pirates, prophets, and partners...

-liberation's libation to future generations

from the edge of death's highway (the road we all must travel)

Blessed be those who harken to the tragedies and triumphs of their brief breadth of life

as we bury our dead, wipe away our tears

and continue the memory of their sacrifice in our struggle...

Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2014 10:51 PM

Stamford, CT

Mysterioso

Father,

Grant me the grace to bid You greetings this morning
and the strength to burst into song in homage to Your perfection...
for my beloved mirrors the artistry of Your masterstroke of conception
Her likeness replicates the mystery of our journey in the carnival of life...
I believe in Your creations, so wide and wonderful
The communion I feel with Your eternal skyscape is awe-inspiring
My consciousness arises and I am mindful of Your power
as I reach for her light in the darkness...
You are made manifest in the communion of our merging
Your Word is made flesh in the poetry of our intensity
The unbending magic of your mercy divulges unhindered tidings
of our temporal beginning and transformation to the celestial...
Your truth resonates the air, water and fires of our journey
Although I am but flesh and blood, Your guardian spirit
speaks with grandiloquent precision
I am disconcerted and stunned by the inception of these words
but trust that You guide my hand in embodying Your grandeur
in this effortless portrait of Your preeminent work...
For it is within woman that we reside until we emerge into the world
Within woman, all saints have come
Within woman, the mystery of all creation is anchored...
I pray that You continue to endow me with mortal life
if only to capture the amazement of our dawning
through these humble words as I attempt to portray the depths and mystery
of this now-breathing spirit
lying next to me

in the darkness...

*Sunday, December 30, 2012 6:22 AM
Stamford, CT*

I'm a Hater

(to all the haters in the house)

Yeah...

I'm a hater

I hate when people use the word "hater"

I hate havin' to get up early to go to work

I hate runnin' outa beer

I hate Sunday "blue laws"

I hate \$20 lap dances

I hate prophylactics that break

I hate people who call rubbers "prophylactics"

I hate designer clothes (I ain't no walkin' billboard)

I hate people who cherrypick their sins

I hate cafeteria Christians who choose their transgressions
from immoral menus

I hate havin' herb (and no rollin' papers)

I hate havin' rollin' papers (and no herb)

I hate not havin' no lighter when I *got* the papers *and* the herb
(and I *really* hate not havin' 'nair one)

I hate poems that's too short (if there is such a thing)

I hate poems that's too long (if there is such a thing)

I hate wimmins that's too pretty (if there is such a thing)

I hate wimmins that's too fine (if there is such a thing)

I hate pussy that's too good (if there is such a thing)

I hate titties that's too titillating (if there is such a thing)

I hate havin' too much money and too much honey (if there
is such a thing)

I hate people who don't like the Three Stooges and cowboy movies

I hate people who talk about their "ancestors" when they
don't even know they paw

I hate people who ask poets to do free gigs when they have budgets
(*we* gotta eat too)

I hate so-called poets who think Amiri Baraka is a character
in *Mortal Kombat*

I hate when poets use clichés like "my Nubian Ki-i-ying...
my Nubian Quee-ee-een"

I hate sour cream on tacos (I don't eat nuthin' sour—
I just eat sweet thangs)

I hate people who spend \$100 on a concert ticket, but cain't pay \$5
 for the Spoken Word set
 I'm a hater...
 I hate people who call you a hater
 I hate people who say "playa hater"
 I hate people who use the phrase "but I digress"
 I hate people who use the cinematically-generated phrase
 "keepin' it real"
 I hate people who use the corporately-generated slogan "real talk"
 I hate radio stations that claim to be 'bout community but have
 playlists using the very gobbidge and filth doing so much damage
 to the consciousness of the people
 I hate characters in movies where they see someone flying through
 the air after an explosion and they yell "No-O-O-O-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o..."
 I hate lil' white lies (and BIG BLACK LIES)
 I hate CD packaging that scratches the disc when you open it
 (keep it simple, stupid)
 I hate people who have tag sales—with department store prices
 I hate people in public places who share their conversation
 (with the who-o-o-ole world)
 I hate people who use the word "hater" (cuz I'm a hater)
 I hate people who wait 'til they get on the bus—*then* begin gittin'
 their fare together
 I hate seein' Christmas trees in the gobbidge
 I hate people who call every person of Latino descent a "Mexican"
 I hate New Orleans restaurants that ain't in New Orleans
 I hate people who move to the French Quarter – and wanna ban live music
 I hate people who call tourists "visitors"
 I hate people who call chitlins "chitterlings"
 I hate people who call milleton "merliton" (when they been callin' it
 "milleton" all along)
 I hate people who drop by the crib and assume they can recharge
 their phones without asking
 I hate people who borrow your food containers and (ahem)
 forget to return them

I hate people who are so cheap that they complain about people
 not returning their food containers
 I hate people who talk about “the good-old days”
 (but ignore segregation)
 I hate people who never had to buy their drinks “out the wall”
 never used a separate water fountain
 never sat behind the sign in the back of the bus
 never attended segregated schools
 -and think they have a clearer perspective than me on
 race relations
 (they ain’t thinkin’)

I hate people who have their own opinions and make them their
 own facts
 (they ain’t thinkin’)

I hate people who think there’s such a thing as a “post-racial society”
 (they ain’t thinkin’)

I hate people who think whoever’s in the White House gon’ really
 make a difference
 (they ain’t thinkin’)

I hate people who just ain’t thinkin’ (they ain’t thinkin’)

I hate politicians—*all* politicians and their lies-lies-lies

I hate government institutions that promise Paradise and deliver Hell

I hate people who don’t vote (then complain)

I hate people who hate you if you didn’t vote for a Democrat

I hate people who hate you if you didn’t vote for a Republican

I hate people who hate you if you didn’t vote

I hate people who hate you if you *did*

I hate people who call themselves “kings and queens”
 cuz Nixon, Reagan, the Bushes, and Jimmy Carter were kings
 (and queens)

I hate educational institutions with diverse student bodies and faculties
 that look like the Daughters of the Confederacy

I hate people who teach Creative Writing and don’t publish anything
 (Teach by *doing*)

I hate white women (that benefited the most from Affirmative Action
 policies) who claim they’re so “underrepresented in the workforce”

I hate institutions of higher education that boast of their diverse
 student populations but have only 2 out of 102 fulltime African
 American professors (like Norwalk Community College)
 I hate businesses that open late and wanta rush you out the door on time
 I hate gittin' ripped off
 I hate high cable prices
 I hate hidden fees
 I hate companies that charge fees to send you a bill
 I hate bank fees levied for cashing checks (written on they own bank)
 I hate insurance companies that annually raise their premium "just
 because"
 I hate electronic products that happen to come out just before Christmas
 I hate hundred dollar tickets to see two-dollar talent
 I hate entertainers who stage "wardrobe malfunctions"
 I hate people who go to every Second Line in history
 but don't make it to *one* parent-teacher meeting
 (and wonder why they chirrens is treated so bad)
 I hate gobbidge that passes for music
 I hate cooning and buffooning by multi-millionaire artists
 (who don't *have* to be coons and buffoons)
 I hate people who look at dead, bullet-riddled gangsta rappers as heroes
 rather than ministers of modern minstrelry
 I hate people who say something (then repeat it)
 I hate people who say something (then repeat it)
 I hate people who say something (then repeat it)
 I hate bands that play too loud over the poetry
 I HATE POETS THAT READ TOO LOUD
 I HATE POETS THAT READ TOO LOUD
 I HATE POETS THAT READ TOO LOUD
 I hate wimmins who want me to read to them on the phone all night
 -and don't buy 'nair book (talkin' 'bout "I like yo' voice")
 I hate people who wanta treat what *they* do for *you* like business
 (but what *you* do for *them* like friendship)
 I hate people who owe me and don't clear their phone's mailbox
 I hate people you go find and pay back on time
 (but *you* gotta look for *them* when *they* owe *you*)

I hate photographers at poetry readings who take pitches of me –
and don't send me a copy (present company excepted)

I hate people who collect all kinda money at the door for poetry
readings but don't give anything to the poets who're reading
(present company excepted)

I hate people who start the gig late (when the performer arrives on time)
(present company excepted)

I hate people who write a half-dozen poems
(that their friends or significant others give the claps for at the readings)
and they think they're the second coming of Nikki Giovanni...

I hate seeing plants, paintings and books in the trash

I hate poverty, war and want

I hate people who think that history started with their date of birth
("Dat was befo' my time...")

I hate people who started out in life on third base (and think they
hit a home run)

I hate people with exotic-sounding African names
(who still act like negroes)

I hate people who believe everything they're taught

I hate people who play it like they *so-o-o-o* intellectual
(and they be just as ign'ant as me)

I hate people who refer to Malcolm as a "civil rights leader"

I hate people who confuse the Black Liberation Movement
with the Civil Rights Movement

I hate people who fart on crowded elevators
(and act like they didn't do it)

I hate people who think they a expert on everything imaginable
cuz they got a Facebook page

I hate people who post duck-lipped pitches on Facebook

I hate people on Facebook who present an illogical argument
and you address it and they write, "That's not the point
nor the topic of this thread."

I hate people who wax poetic about the most challenging issues of our
(or any other) time
–and cain't spell

I hate people who write "Have a bless day" (and leave off the 'ed')

I hate old people who think all young people are dumb
 I hate young people who think all old people are dumb
 I hate young people who think they hip (just cuz they young)
 I hate old people who think they wise (just cuz they old)
 I hate people who don't pronounce their t's
 —'Manha-in'...'Mar-in'...Hillary 'Clin-in'...'Hay-in' (No he di-in')
 I hate women who wanta be a man one minute then fall back into that
 “tortured female” role the next (“*I’ma call the police...*”)
 I hate women who claim they're so independent and liberated
 (but still expect the man to pay)
 I hate walkin' through MACY's cosmetics department and being
 greeted by phony saleslady smiles (I don't need nuthin' here)
 I hate *dumb* wimmins (and cain't *stand* they girlfriends)
 I hate people who ask for J-PEGS (instead a just sayin' “pitchas”)
 I hate people who use abbreviations and acronyms
 (when merely typing or saying the entire word or phrase
 would suffice)
 I hate when companies send me an envelope in the mail designed
 to make it look like a check is inside
 I hate paintings with Malcolm, Martin and Obama
 (as though he belong in that company)
 I hate people who hate “ObamaCare” but support
 the Affordable Care Act (duh-uh-uh...)
 I hate people who leave the lint in the filter after dryin' they clothes
 I hate people who got jobs as bank tellers
 (and front like they runnin' the Federal Reserve)
 I hate doo-doo, bugars and snot
 I hate people who measure their worth by what possessions they got
 I hate people who measure their worth by how many Facebook pages
 they got
 I hate people who see history only through their particular group's
 perspective
 I hate people who condemn police violence and ignore thug violence
 I hate people who condemn thug violence and ignore police violence

I hate people who think that no young, black males should be in the jails
What about the grandma killers and the baby rapers?
or the grandma rapers and the baby killers? (Everybody ain't Trayvon)
I hate wigs and weaves and people's pet peeves
I hate Watergate and people who constantly show up late
(or never wanta go "Dutch" on a date)
I hate the word "hate"
and I especially, 'specially, 'specially
hate people
who write long poems
about "haters"...

Sunday, August 25, 2013 8:29 PM
Stamford, CT

Senior Moments

hoping that an old friend you've been trying to contact isn't dead
looking for a spatula...in the refrigerator
looking in the refrigerator for a spoon
looking for a can of peas...in the freezer
forgetting what you were looking for and staring in a drawer
 until you realize you're just standing there staring in a drawer
picking up the cell phone and thinking it's the computer mouse
confusing DVDs with BVDs
putting the William Tell Overture on your phone
buying your first bike for \$35
(and discovering that the same basic bike is \$350)
grabbing your toothbrush rather than your razor
accidentally brushing your teeth with Preparation H
putting something in a safe place so you can find it then forgetting
 where the safe place was
blaming those "terrible young folks" for all the evil in the world
enjoying an outing with your grandkids more than you do
 with your spouse
seeing "institutes" and "colleges" renamed as "universities"
being told you're a grouchy old man
being a grouchy old man
enjoying being a grouchy, old man
going to bed instead a going to the club
convincing yourself that pacing the floor at 3:30 in the morning
 is exercise
not panicking when a problem arises
using a store cart for your purchases when a handbasket would do
taking the elevator to the second floor
mailing holiday cards
knowing what holiday cards are
eating all the Halloween candy you want to
beginning sentences with, "Them youngsters out there nowadays..."
having pain in places where you didn't know you had places
coming to the realization that your bald spot is where you used
 to spray chemicals on your Afro
being surprised you still have hair

realizing how much time and energy you've wasted
on Facebook arguments
asking someone to repeat what was said
purchasing a DVD collection of old TV commercials
being more concerned about your penny stocks than your cash on hand
telling a 45-year-old woman she's a fine, young thing
fussing out loud when no one's around
being mistaken for Morgan Freeman
having time for a hobby
cooking a gourmet meal...for yourself
purchasing footwear that's more comfortable than stylish
not buying a product merely because of the way it's marketed
plugging the phone charger into the TV remote
talking to yourself
knowing who Hopalong Cassidy was
being told you look like Frederick Douglass
listening to talk radio rather than Top 40
referring to contemporary radio as "Top 40"
asking yourself if people you knew who had died were really here
laughing at your own jokes
perceiving that money can't buy love (but it sure can rent it)
seeing how old your childhood friends look
realizing how old *you* look
trying to open the office door with the car door opener
hearing your former students talking about "the good-old days"
recognizing that aging is an achievement that beats the alternative
being thankful that you're still alive to write a poem
about senior moments...

Thursday, October 16, 2014 6:32 PM
Stamford, CT