

THEY'LL CALL ME LIGHTNING BOLT

SARABANDE WRITING LABS, VOL. 15

SARABANDE WRITING LABS

An Arts Education Program from Sarabande Books

Sarabande Writing Labs is an arts education initiative created by Louisville-based nonprofit publisher Sarabande Books. We partner with social service organizations to promote writers in under-resourced communities through free workshops and literary events.

Visit our website for photos, updates, and upcoming events:
www.sarabandebooks.org/swl

ABOUT THIS VOLUME'S COMMUNITY PARTNER:

Americana World Community Center is bridging the gap from surviving to thriving for Louisville's refugee, immigrant and underserved populations through education, family support, youth achievement, and career and financial development.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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INTRODUCTION

by Hannah Drake

“I am from a place where Picasso never could have painted.”
–Magan K.

This quote is a line from one of the poems the young people wrote over the summer at Americana Community Center. The line hit me hard as I wondered how it was to be a young person from a place where you inherently know that your dreams may never be realized. Many of the young people I worked with over the summer are Youth of Color and have parents who are immigrants. They navigate the world searching for their voice in a climate that is constantly demanding that they be silent. But they have a voice and thoughts and words that need to be expressed about who they are.

Poetry allowed them a medium to fully express themselves, Raw, uncut, real. There were no right or wrong poems. I wanted them to speak their truth because that is the role of an artist—to speak the truth even when it is difficult, even if they are afraid. And many of them were fearful as they wondered about their lives in America, how people viewed them, and what their future would look like, not in a few years but just tomorrow?

Through their work, I saw pain, but I also saw the promise of what America can be when we allow people to be everything they desire.

Let us be a nation
Let us be happy
Let us be what we desire
Let us be . . .everything
(Magan K.)

That is who we can be as a nation—one that welcomes and embraces our differences knowing that our differences are indeed what makes America great.

I BE'S HUMBLE

After "Who I am (I Be)" by Hannah Drake

Magan K.

I be's humble

I be's trees

I be's strong, tempted, and always remain calm

I be's free

I be's kneeling on my knees

I be's the man who wants the end of police brutality

I be's athletic

I be's fast

They'll call me lightning bolt

a.k.a. The flash

All I ever wanted to be is track runner

Soccer player, anything but not a hater

So, let me be focused

Let me and my dreams

be aggressive

be ambitious

forever brave

Let us be a nation
Let us be happy
Let us be what we desire

Let us be . . . everything

WALK ONE MILE

Nicolette J.

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes.
I want you to see how you can hurt me,
I want you to see what goes on behind my masks

I want you to know what it's like
When a person is alone

I want you to know how I feel
When I'm sad

I want you to understand my pain
When heartbroken

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes.
I want you to see what happens when I pick myself up,
I want you to see the beauty in my life.

I want you to know how I express myself.
My words are loud

I want you to know what I am capable of
My strength is like a rose growing

I want you to know my heart

My love is like a lion

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes.

I BE'S POWERFUL

After "Who I am (I Be)" by Hannah Drake

Aabas K.

I be's powerful

I be's Mother's Nature

I be's hyped, thoughtful, and strong

I be's The Phoenix that rises in the ashes

I be's the phoenix in the sun

I be's the Ronaldo in basketball

I be's humble

I be's Kyrie Irving's three point shots

I be's LeBron's dunks

I be's Ronaldo's shots in soccer

All I ever wanted to be is and athlete,
a superstar, a god at what I do

So, let me be who I want to be

Let me and my friends be

Hyped

Humble

Peaceful

Let us be hoopers
Let us be athletes

Let us be . . . everything

THIS IS AMERICA

Bahabolom W.

This is America
niggas beating you
they wanna see you dead
they don't care about your life
as long as they get to see you gone

This is America
a place with perfect and imperfection
a place with violence and peace
a place with love and hate
a place with rich and poor
a place with eternal and death

This is America
if you're lucky, you live
If you're unlucky, you die

This is America
a place where you have no say in what you wanna do
because there's a weapon with your name on it
And ready to take your life no matter what you say

DREAMS ARE LIES

Zo Z.

Dreams, dreams are lies, dreams don't shine,
dreams fall apart, dreams are big but can be
stepped on. Dreams are lies that's why people
cry, what pleases me are dreams that I dream
every night when resting. Dreams are like promises.
Don't nobody keep promises just like dreams.

I BE'S WISE

After "Who I am (I Be)" by Hannah Drake

Radwan A.

I be's wise

I be's water

I be's hope, love, and happy

I be's African

I be's male

I be's Somalian

I be's nice

I be's Africa's Drumbeat

Odell's one hand catch

Malcom X smartness

All I ever wanted to be is rich

Football player, famous

So, let me be happy

Let me and family

Be peaceful

Lovable

Let us be a hope

Let us breathe
Let us be great

Let us be . . . everything

WALK ONE MILE

Safiyo D.

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes.
I want you to see how you can hurt me,
I want you to see what goes on behind my masks

I want you to know what it's like
When a person is lonely

I want you to know how I feel
When I am angry

I want you to understand my pain
When I am alone

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes.
I want you to see what happens when I pick myself up,
I want you to see the beauty in my life.

I want you to know how I express myself.
My words are like gentle breath

I want you to know what I am capable of
My strength is like a tree

I want you to know my heart

My love is like cool ice

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes.

I BE'S DEPRESSED

After "Who I am (I Be)" by Hannah Drake
Julio M.

I be's depressed

I be's water

I be's love, sad, and lonely

I be's Cuban

I be's male

I be's it

I be's strong

I be's gold at the end of a rainbow

I be's needle in a haystack

I be's grass is greener on the other side

All I ever wanted to be is love

Joy, happiness

So, let me be loved

Let me and my crush

Happy

Alone

Intimate

Let us be together

Let us be in love

Let us be one

Let us be . . . everything

WHAT IS AMERICA

Abdul Ghafar Q.

People who want to be free
They can't be people who want to have
A good life they can't

Living it's too hard some people can't
get their dreams Police kick in your
door at 12:00 am but you can't get enough sleep
wow this is America kids

Getting shot but who cares man this
Is America

DEAR PRESIDENT

Khadijetou K.

Do you remember when you first arrive in the US some peoples have been hurt, you being sending Africans back where they came from they country. Some people get killed cuz of americans and you're watching them do it. Dear president are known that you hate Africans that why you're sending them back, we remember when you said you going to make America better, but you're making it worse.

I BE'S LOVE

After "Who I am (I Be)" by Hannah Drake
Mohamed F.

I be's love

I be's strong
I be's messi, I hope I be, and
Messi shut

I be's a soccer player one day
I be's free
I hope I be one of this players

I be's African forever

I be's somebody nigga nobody this
People they be talking about
Me but they don't know bout me

All I ever wanted to be is a soccer player
And I hope I be me

So, let me be who I am

Let me and somebody

Let us be free
Let us be happy

Let us be who we are
Let us be. . .everything

(UNTITLED)

Abdullahi A.

This is America where people shoot each other.

Let the sun shine again off the

Four corners in the world.

This is America.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT

Penelope K.

Dear Mr. President,
why'd you mess it all up
why do you keep crushing all these dreams
why you gotta go and make everyone leave

They deserve to be here too
Just like me and you!
You're the one causing war
Are you not satisfied with the USA?
It's like you're begging for more.

I BE'S AMAZING

After "Who I am (I Be)" by Hannah Drake
Wehazit G.

I be's amazing

I be's water

I be's love, hope, sad

I be's sweet as candy

I be's lost hope

I be's sad

I be's nice

I be's smooth as a flute

I am enough

I am beautiful

All I ever wanted to be is a singer

So, let me sing aloud

Let me and mom

be loved

Happy

live in peace

Let us be light as sun

Let us be happy
Let us be proud
Let us be . . . everything

THIS IS AMERICA

Humam M. and Aabas K.

This is america where people are always dying
This is america where loved ones are always crying
This is america where people are getting shot
This is america where kids are smoking pot
This is america where homeless people are treated
As a joke this is america where parents work
Day in and day out because they are broke
This is america where rich and poor are
Separated from each other this is america
Where people aren't sister and brothers

As life goes on you have to accomplish
Your dreams and goals. because this
Is america where kids adapt to the
Streets this is america where now
The police are our enemies. This is
Our home this is our world this
Is america

LAST TIME I CHECKED

Bahabolom W. and Abdul Ghafar Q.

last time that I checked
I was broke and lonely
last time that I checked
I was lame and corny
last time that I checked
I was weak and worthless
last time that I checked
I sucked at everything and had no talent
last time that I checked
I had no friends and everybody hated me
last time that I checked
I was scared and couldn't play soccer
nowadays everything is fine and
everything is possible for me to do

Last time I checked
I had nobody by my side
Last time I checked
I didn't have no ride or die
Last time I checked
My people's dying left to right
Last time I checked
Man I finally tried

I BE'S LONELY

After "Who I am (I Be)" by Hannah Drake

Nensaw O.

I be's lonely

I be's wind

I be's my own hope, myself, and my own world

I be's Asian

I be's lady

I be's 11

I be's calm

I be's my dream

Army

All I ever wanted to be is me

Hopeful loner

So, let me be a person that can dream

Let me and my besties

Let us be us

Let us be calm

Let us be what we want

Let us be . . . everything

I BE'S CURIOUS

After Who I am (I Be) by Hannah Drake

DJ3x

I be's curious

I be's cloudy

I be's in my mind thinking about the world, and
the things I be going through

I be's African American

I be's a nation

I be's worrying about the future of our beautiful nation

I be's thinking about the worthy

I be's thinking about the doomed

I be's having crazy thoughts

But I keep those thoughts locked in a room

WALK ONE MILE

Mebale T.

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes.
I want you to see how you can hurt me,
I want you to see what goes on behind my masks

I want you to know what it's like
When a person is lonely

I want you to know how I feel
When I am alone

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes.
I want you to see what happens when I pick myself up,
I want you to see the beauty in my life.

I want you to know how I express myself.
My words are like a loud firework

I want you to know what I am capable of
My strength is like Iron man 2x

I want you to know my heart
My love is like ice cream on a sunny day

I want you to walk one mile,
Just one, in my shoes

