



African American Read-In

Saint Mary's School's
10th Annual Celebration
Thursday, February 1, 2018

ENJOYING THE VOICES
AND CELEBRATING
THE POWER OF
AFRICAN AMERICAN
LITERATURE

Ms. Virginia Boyd: Welcome and "Writing #1"
Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson

It's easier to make up stories
than it is to write them down. When I speak,
the words come pouring out of me. The story
wakes up and walks all over the room. Sits in a chair,
crosses one leg over the other, says,
Let me introduce myself. Then just starts going on and on.
But as I bend over my composition notebook,
only my name...

"Writing #1" (continued)

...comes quickly. Each letter, neatly printed between the pale blue lines. Then white space and air and me wondering, How do I spell introduce? Trying again and again until there is nothing but pink bits of eraser and a hole now where a story should be.

Ms. Reagan Massey:

"#SayHerName" by Aja Monet

I am a woman carrying other women
in my mouth
behold a sister
a daughter
a mother
dear friend
spirits demystify
on my tongue

they gather to breath
and exhale a dance with the death we know
is not the end all these nameless
bodies haunted by pellet wounds in their chests
listen for them and the saying of a name you cannot pronounce

#SayHerName by Aja Monet (continued)

black and woman is a sort of magic
you cannot hash tag
the mere weight
of it too vast to be held

we hold ourselves
an inheritance felt between the hips
womb of soft darkness portal of light
watch them envy the revolution of our movement
how we break open to give life flow

while the terror of our tears the torment of our taste
my rage...

#SayHerName by Aja Monet (continued)

is righteous my love is righteous
my name
be righteous here what I am not here to say
we too have died we know we are dying too

I am not here to say look at me how I died
so brutal a death I deserve a name to fit all the horror in
I am here to tell you how if they mentioned me
in their protest and their rallies
they would have to face their role in it too
my beauty too

#SayHerName by Aja Monet (continued)

I have died many times before
the blow to the body
I have bled
many months before the bullet to the flesh we know
the body is not the end
call it what you will
but for all the handcuffed wrists of us the shackled
ankles of us
the bend over to make room for you
of us how dare we speak anything less
then I love you

#SayHerName by Aja Monet (continued)

we who love just as loudly in the thunderous
rain as when the Sun shines golden on our skin
and the world kisses us unapologetically we
be so beautiful when we be- how you gonna be free
without me

your freedom tied up
with mine at the nappy edge of my soul
singing for all my sisters watch them stretch their
arms and my voice how they fly open chested
toward your ear

#SayHerName by Aja Monet (continued)

listen for

Rekia Boyd, Tanisha Anderson Yvette Smith

Aiyana Jones

Caleb Moore Shelly Frey

Miriam Carey Kendra James

Alberto Spruill, Tarika Wilson,

Shereese Francis

Shantel Davis, Malissa Williams

Darnisha Harris Michelle Cassell

Pearlie Golden, Kathryn Johnston

Eleanor Bumpers, Natasha McKenna

Sheneque Proctor

We

#SayHerName by Aja Monet (continued)

we will not vanish
and the baited breath of our brothers
show me show me
a man willing to fight beside me
my hand in his the color of courage

there is no mountaintop worth
seeing without us
meet me
in the trenches where we lay our bodies down
in the valley of a voice
say her name

Ms. Alison Chernin: "Dear Martin (AKA Dr. King)"

Excerpt from *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone

August 25

DEAR MARTIN (AKA DR. KING),

First and foremost, please know I mean you no disrespect with the whole "Martin" thing. I studied you and your teachings for a project in tenth grade, so it feels most natural to interact with you as a homie. Hope you don't mind that.

Quick intro: My name is Justyce McAllister. I'm a 17-year-old high school senior and full-scholarship student at Braselton Preparatory Academy in Atlanta, Georgia. I'm ranked fourth in my graduating class of 83, I'm the captain of the debate team, I scored a 1560 and a 34 on my SATs and ACTs respectively, and despite growing up in a "bad" area (not too far from your old stomping grounds), I have a future ahead of me that will likely include an Ivy League education, an eventual law degree, and a career in public policy.

Sadly, during the wee hours of this morning, literally none of that mattered.

Long story short, I tried to do a good deed and wound up on the ground in handcuffs. And despite the fact that my ex-girl was visibly drunk off her ass, excuse my language, I apparently looked so menacing in my prep school hoodie, the cop who cuffed me called for backup.

The craziest part is while I thought everything would be cool as soon as her parents got there, no matter what they told the cops, these dudes *would not* release me. Mr. Taylor offered to call my mom, but the cops made it clear that since I'm 17, I'm considered an adult when placed under arrest—aka there was nothing Mama could do.

Mr. Taylor wound up calling my friend SJ's mom, Mrs. Friedman—an attorney—and she had to come bark a bunch of legal hoo-ha in the cops' faces before they'd undo the cuffs. By the time they finally let me go, the sun was coming up.

It'd been hours, Martin.

Mrs. F didn't say a whole lot as she drove me to my dorm, but she made me promise to go by the infirmary and get some cold packs for my swollen wrists. I called my mama to tell her what happened, and she said she'll file a complaint first thing in the morning. But I doubt it'll do any good.

Frankly, I'm not real sure what to feel. Never thought I'd be in this kind of situation. There was this kid, Shemar Carson . . . black dude, my age, shot and killed in Nevada by this white cop back in June. The details are hazy since there weren't any witnesses, but what's clear is this cop shot an unarmed kid. Four times. Even fishier, according to the medical examiners, there was a two-hour gap between the estimated time of death and when the cop called it in.

Before The Incident last night, I hadn't really thought much about it. There's a lot of conflicting information, so

"Dear Martin (AKA Dr. King)" (continued)

it's hard to know what to believe. Shemar's family and friends say he was a good dude, headed to college, active in his youth group . . . but the cop claims he caught Shemar trying to steal a car. A scuffle ensued (allegedly), and according to the police report, Shemar tried to grab the cop's gun, so the cop shot Shemar in self-defense.

I dunno. I've seen some pictures of Shemar Carson, and he did have kind of a thuggish appearance. In a way, I guess I thought I didn't really need to concern myself with this type of thing because compared to him, I don't come across as "threatening," you know? I don't sag my pants or wear my clothes super big. I go to a good school, and have goals and vision and "a great head on my shoulders," as Mama likes to say.

Yeah, I grew up in a rough area, but I know I'm a good dude, Martin. I thought if I made sure to be an upstanding member of society, I'd be exempt from the stuff THOSE black guys deal with, you know? Really hard to swallow that I was wrong.

All I can think now is "How different would things have gone had I not been a black guy?" I know initially the cop could only go by what he saw (which prolly did seem a little sketchy), but I've never had my character challenged like that before.

Last night changed me. I don't wanna walk around all pissed off and looking for problems, but I know I can't continue to pretend nothing's wrong. Yeah, there are no more "colored" water fountains, and it's supposed to be illegal to discriminate, but if I can be forced to sit on the

concrete in too-tight cuffs when I've done nothing wrong, it's clear there's an issue. That things aren't as equal as folks say they are.

I need to pay more attention, Martin. Start really seeing stuff and writing it down. Figure out what to do with it. That's why I'm writing to you. You faced way worse shi—I mean stuff than sitting in handcuffs for a few hours, but you stuck to your guns . . . Well, your lack thereof, actually.

I wanna try to live like you. Do what you would do. See where it gets me.

My wrist is killing me, so I have to stop writing now, but thanks for hearing me out.

Sincerely,
Justyce McAllister

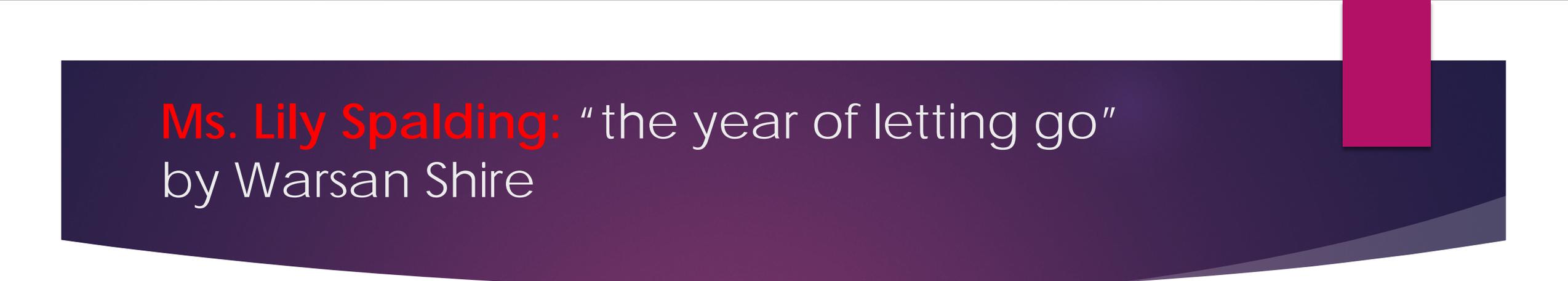
Chaplain Ann Bonner-Stewart:

Between the World and Me excerpt by Ta-Nehisi Coates

But I know that I had love for this boy, Prince Jones, which is to say I would smile whenever I saw him, for I felt the warmth when I was around him and was slightly sad when the time came to trade dap and for one of us to go. The thing to understand about Prince Jones is that he exhibited the whole of his given name. He was handsome. He was tall and brown, built thin and powerful like a wide receiver. He was the son of a prominent doctor. He was a born-again, a state I did not share but respected. He was kind. Generosity radiated off of him, and he seemed to have a facility with everyone and everything. This can never be true, but there are people who pull the illusion off without effort, and Princes was one of them. I can only say what I saw, what I felt. There are people whom we do not fully know, and yet they live in a warm place within us, and when they are plundered, when they lose their bodies and the dark energy disperses, that places becomes a wound (page 43).

Between the World and Me excerpt by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Prince Jones was the superlative of all my fears. And if he, good Christian, scion of a striving class, patron saint of the twice as good, could be forever bound, who then could not? And the plunder was not just of Prince alone. Think of all the love poured into him. Think of the tuitions for Montessori and music lessons. Think of the gasoline expended, the treads worn carting him to football games, basketball tournaments, and Little League. Think of the time spent regulating sleepovers. Think of the surprise birthday parties, the daycare, and the reference checks on babysitters. Think of World Book and Childcraft. Think of checks written for family photos. Think of credit cards charged for vacation. Think of soccer balls, science kits, chemistry sets, racetracks, and model trains. Think of all the embraces, all the private jokes, customs, greetings, names, dreams, all the shared knowledge and capacity of a black family injected into that vessel of flesh and bone. And think of how that vessel was taken, shattered on the concrete, and all its holy contents, all that had gone into him, sent flowing back to the earth (Page 53).



Ms. Lily Spalding: “the year of letting go”
by Warsan Shire

the year of letting go
of understanding loss, grace of the word ‘no’
and also being able to say ‘you are not kind’
the year of humanity/humility
when the whole world couldn’t get out of bed
everyone i’ve met this year says the same thing
‘you are so easy to be around, how do you do that?’
the year i broke open and dug out all the rot with own hands
the year i learnt small talk
and how to smile at strangers

“the year of letting go” by Warsan Shire (continued)

the year i understood that i am my best when i reach out and ask ‘do you want to be my friend?’

the year of sugar, everywhere

softness. sweetness. honey honey.

the year of being alone

and learning how much i like it

the year of hugging people i don’t know because i want to know them

the year i made peace and love

right here

Ms. Monica Pan: Dance

Beyonce Ft. Maya Angelou Flawless REMIX (Phenomenal Woman)

Wake up 'bout it,
Post up 'bout it.
Ride round in it.

Many people wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's
size

When I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.

I woke up like this.
I woke up like this.

I say, It's in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
Because I'm a woman
Phenomenally.

Then rock 'bout it.
I rock 'bout it.
I woke up like this.
I woke up like this.

I'm a woman
Phenomenally.



Dr. John Hall: “When Mahalia Sings”
by Quandra Prettyman

We used to gather in the high window of the holiness church and, tip-toe, look in and laugh at the dresses, too small on the ladies, and how wretched they all looked-an old garage for a church, for pews, old wooden chairs.

It seemed a lame excuse for a church. Not solemn or grand, with no real robed choir, but a loose jazz band, or so it sounded to our mocking ears.

So we responded to their hymns with jeers.

Sometimes those holiness people would dance, and this we knew sprang from deep ignorance of how to rightly worship God, who after all was pleased not by such foolish laughter but by the stiffly still hands in our church where we saw no one jump or shout or lurch or weep.

“When Mahalia Sings” by Quandra Prettyman (continued)

We laughed to hear those holiness rhythms making a church a song fest: we heard this music as the road to sin, down which they traveled toward that end.

I, since then, have heard the gospel singing of one who says I worship with clapping hands and my whole body, God, whom we must thank for all this richness raised from dust.

Seeing her high-thrown head reminded me of those holiness high-spirited, who like angels, like saints, worshiped as whole men with rhythm, with dance, with singing soul.

Since then, I've learned of my familiar God - He finds no worship alien or odd.....

Ms. Olivia Hodge: “Cosmopolitan Woman” by Alicia Keyes

I don't want to be
No cosmopolitan woman
With big ol' city sophistication
And a façade of perfection
Every page of the story
Filled with predictability
Of a lost soul

A hole in your heart
Only filled up temporarily
By clothes
And money
And 101 ways to find Mr. Right
By sex and superficiality
Cause we've all lost sight.

“Cosmopolitan Woman” by Alicia Keyes (continued)

No, I don't wanna be
A cosmopolitan woman
I just wanna be myself
I may not be perfect
But I am brave
May have pimples on my skin
But my glow is from within
I sho ain't cosmopolitan
And you won't find me on the cover.

Pages of a magazine rip and tear
With time the people are forgotten

Stories are outdated
But you'll never find a hole in my soul
And my story keeps growing
And only gets better
I have real skin that's tough like leather
I'm a go'getter
And I'm gonna win
Who cares about cosmopolitan
Even only in my beginning stages

“Cosmopolitan Woman” by Alicia Keyes (continued)

I'm more than just a silent woman
Frozen on white pages
Sick of these cages
But I am a lion

In my differences I am defiant
And that is more beautiful
Than any photo shoot
Than any cover story
Fixed with Photoshop

It's gotta stop
This image of beauty
Is all wrong
But It's been going on too long to realize
The prize is down inside the deepest region
Of your available soul
Behold
Read the story
And let it be told
Even in my beginning stages
I am more than just a silent woman
Frozen on white pages.

Black Statue of Liberty by Jessica Care Moore

▶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XQVYo3yG_c

Ise Grace Thomas: "America In 4 Minutes"

by Branden Wellington

Of the people, By the people, For the people
Those are words that we put in our nation's creed
But only right here in America do we feed foreign
countries
while some starve on our streets

Only right here, at age eighteen, can you qualify to
die in a war with bombs and guns
But you can't have your first bottle of rum if until you
turn twenty-one...

This is America, Home of the Brave
Home of the wealthy, rich, home of the paid

It's also home of the homeless, the hurt, the
deceived and
Home of natural disasters that left families in need

Some say, that this is the home of hatred and the
home of greed
But in Philadelphia, there's "The City of Brotherly
Love" and
America is home of the highly achieved

This place...this nation.. it's home of the children
with a bright future
It's also home of videogames that could teach
those same kids
to be carjackers and shooters

"America In 4 Minutes" by Branden Wellington (continued)

Robbers, mobsters, gangsters, or murderers

This is our America and the whole free world
has heard of us

We're home of the proud, and we're home of a
lot of inventions

Sad to say, we are also home of babies that
are born with a cocaine addiction

This is home of "The Red, The White, and The
Blue"

Where at times you seem to be hated by many
and loved by few

It's home of the green grass, the blue shutters
and the white picket fence that we talk
about

It's also home of people with bad credit
that can't afford the American dream house

In our America, a vast majority of us go into
debt

Because we go to work, we get our checks,
we spend what's left

Because in American school systems most
aren't taught how to properly invest

"America In 4 Minutes" by Branden Wellington (continued)

And because of it the national debt and the student loan crisis are bubblin'

Meanwhile we can't find common lines of agreements between democrats and republicans

But even if they did agree, I wouldn't jump to give a round of applause

Because in our America we tend to put bandages over the problems

Without really fixing the cause

But this is America, a place where outsiders find it difficult to become a resident

This is the place where our ball players can potentially earn more than our president

This is the home of top models, T.V shows, and actors

The place where cable is flooded with violence, rock bands, and rappers

A place where we're created equal but we use racial slurs for practice

This is home where almost everything is done backwards

This is where 36.3% of our kids are born bastards

But I tell you to forget that number because every year it grows faster

So, welcome to America where you are free
You're free to have religion or be religious free

"America In 4 Minutes" by Branden Wellington (continued)

You can watch God on television
Or turn that off and put in a DVD
The ins, the outs, the good, the bad...it's all
America and I'm proud of it
Even though in our past we've started
barbaric, belligerent battles
Where nothing good can come out of it
But you gotta take pride; you gotta take
pride in being an American
Many people dream of being in this great
nation because they have never been
They have never been in a state that is part of a
very fortunate country

Here we can drink when we're thirsty and
there's an excess of food when we're hungry
We can do whatever we so choose, but
some many abuse their privileges
And we can become whatever we want,
but we make excuses for the conditions
we're living in
Well I say...It's time out for excuses and time
in for execution
There's no more playing the middle, either
you're educated or you're relegated

"America In 4 Minutes" by Branden Wellington (continued)

Either you're gonna make something happen, or you simply will not
In America, you can stare at the ladder of success
Or get the courage and climb to the top

Right here, In America, you can do it because you have that
opportunity

But it's going to take a collection of all of us to change what is in our
American communities

What will you do?

Ms. Ashleigh Henry: "r/evolution is love"

by assata shakur

"this is the 21st century and we need to redefine r/evolution. this planet needs a people's r/evolution. a humanist r/evolution. r/evolution is not about bloodshed or about going to the mountains and fighting. we will fight if we are forced to but the fundamental goal of r/evolution must be peace.

we need a r/evolution of the mind. we need a r/evolution of the heart. we need a r/evolution of the spirit. the power of the people is stronger than any weapon. a people's r/evolution can't be stopped. we need to be weapons of mass construction. weapons of mass love. it's not enough just to change the system. we need to change ourselves. we have got to make this world user friendly. user friendly.

“r/evolution is love” by assata shakur (continued)

are you ready to sacrifice to end world hunger. to sacrifice to end colonialism. to end neo-colonialism. to end racism. to end sexism.

r/evolution means the end of exploitation. r/evolution means respecting people from other cultures. r/evolution is creative.

r/evolution means treating your mate as a friend and an equal. r/evolution is sexy.

r/evolution means respecting and learning from your children. r/evolution is beautiful.

r/evolution means protecting the people. the plants. the animals. the air. the water.
r/evolution means saving this planet.

r/evolution is love.”

To Continue the Conversation ...

Join our pop up book club for the month of February. Titles include:

