

## Poetic Medicine for Health, Dignity & Social Justice Supplementary Materials

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#### **4. Selected Poems**

##### **A Woman Speaks'**

*By Audre Lorde*

Moon marked and touched by sun  
my magic is unwritten  
but when the sea turns back  
it will leave my shape behind.  
I seek no favor  
untouched by blood  
unrelenting as the curse of love  
permanent as my errors  
or my pride  
I do not mix  
love with pity  
nor hate with scorn  
and if you would know me  
look into the entrails of Uranus  
where the restless oceans pound.  
I do not dwell  
within my birth nor my divinities  
who am ageless and half-grown  
and still seeking  
my sisters  
witches in Dahomey  
wear me inside their coiled cloths  
as our mother did  
mourning.

I have been woman  
for a long time  
beware my smile  
I am treacherous with old magic  
and the noon's new fury  
with all your wide futures  
promised  
I am  
woman  
and not white.

##### **Before you knew you owned it**

*By Alice Walker*

Expect nothing. Live frugally  
On surprise.

become a stranger  
To need of pity  
Or, if compassion be freely  
Given out  
Take only enough  
Stop short of urge to plead  
Then purge away the need.  
Wish for nothing larger  
Than your own small heart  
Or greater than a star;  
Tame wild disappointment  
With caress unmoved and cold  
Make of it a parka  
For your soul.  
Discover the reason why  
So tiny human midget  
Exists at all  
So scared unwise  
But expect nothing. Live frugally  
On surprise.

***When Someone Deeply Listens to You***

by John Fox

When someone deeply listens to you  
it is like holding out a dented cup you have had since childhood  
and watching it fill up with cold fresh water.

When it balances on the top of the rim  
you're understood.

When it overflows and touches your skin  
you are loved.

When someone deeply listens to you  
the room where you stay starts a new life  
and the place where you wrote your first poem  
begins to blow in your mind's eye.  
It's as if gold has been discovered.

When someone deeply listens to you  
your bare feet are on the earth  
and the beloved land that seemed distant  
is now at home within you.

***Please Call Me by My True Names***

*By Thich Nhat Hanh*

Don't say that I will depart tomorrow --  
even today I am still arriving.

Look deeply: every second I am arriving  
to be a bud on a Spring branch,  
to be a tiny bird, with still-fragile wings,  
learning to sing in my new nest,  
to be a caterpillar in the heart of a flower,  
to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry,  
to fear and to hope.

The rhythm of my heart is the birth and death  
of all that is alive.

I am the mayfly metamorphosing  
on the surface of the river.  
And I am the bird  
that swoops down to swallow the mayfly.

I am the frog swimming happily  
in the clear water of a pond.  
And I am the grass-snake  
that silently feeds itself on the frog.

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones,  
my legs as thin as bamboo sticks.  
And I am the arms merchant,  
selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old girl,  
refugee on a small boat,  
who throws herself into the ocean  
after being raped by a sea pirate.  
And I am the pirate,  
my heart not yet capable  
of seeing and loving.

I am a member of the politburo,  
with plenty of power in my hands.  
And I am the man who has to pay  
his "debt of blood" to my people  
dying slowly in a forced-labor camp.

My joy is like Spring, so warm

it makes flowers bloom all over the Earth.  
My pain is like a river of tears,  
so vast it fills the four oceans.

Please call me by my true names,  
so I can hear all my cries and my laughter at once,  
so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names,  
so I can wake up,  
and so the door of my heart  
can be left open,  
the door of compassion.

**Between What I See and What I Say...**

*By Octavio Paz*

*for Roman Jakobson*

1

Between what I see and what I say,  
Between what I say and what I keep silent,  
Between what I keep silent and what I dream,  
Between what I dream and what I forget:  
poetry.

    It slips  
between yes and no,  
                    says  
what I keep silent,  
                    keeps silent  
what I say,  
                    dreams  
what I forget.

    It is not speech:  
it is an act.  
    It is an act  
of speech.

    Poetry  
speaks and listens:  
                    it is real.  
And as soon as I say  
                    *it is real,*

it vanishes.  
    Is it then more real?

2



Tangible idea,  
                  intangible  
word:  
      poetry  
comes and goes  
                  between what is  
and what is not.  
                  It weaves  
and unweaves reflections.  
                          Poetry  
scatters eyes on a page,  
scatters words on our eyes.  
Eyes speak,  
                  words look,  
looks think.  
                  To hear  
thoughts,  
                  see  
what we say,  
                  touch  
the body of an idea.  
                          Eyes close,  
the words open.

***Poetry as Insurgent Art [I am signaling you through the flames]***

*By Lawrence Ferlinghetti*

I am signaling you through the flames.  
The North Pole is not where it used to be.  
Manifest Destiny is no longer manifest.  
Civilization self-destructs.  
Nemesis is knocking at the door.  
What are poets for, in such an age?  
What is the use of poetry?  
The state of the world calls out for poetry to save it.  
If you would be a poet, create works capable of answering the challenge of apocalyptic times, even if  
this meaning sounds apocalyptic.  
You are Whitman, you are Poe, you are Mark Twain, you are Emily Dickinson and Edna St. Vincent  
Millay, you are Neruda and Mayakovsky and Pasolini, you are an American or a non-American, you can  
conquer the conquerors with words....

**8.**

*by Bell Hooks*

snow-covered earth  
such silence  
still divine presence  
echoes immortal migrants  
all life sustained  
darkness comes  
suffering touches us  
again and again  
there is pain  
there in the midst of  
such harsh barrenness  
a cardinal framed in the glass  
red light  
calling away despair  
eternal promise  
everything changes and ends