

## **Black Student Union: High School Poets Continue the Conversation**

Special Poetry Compilation by *ONYX* Club

### **Overview**

Gonzaga College High School celebrated its 2020 Black History Month through month-long programming hosted by a Black Student Union, *ONYX* Club. Four student poets read their original work at the annual Black History Month Assembly at Gonzaga College High School to introduce keynote speaker Dr. Eddie Moore. Dr. Moore then provided a thought-provoking talk on the long and ongoing fight for civil rights and justice, culminating with an invitation to participate in an action plan to continue the conversation and work toward a more inclusive community. In response to this invitation, Mr. Devon Leary, Gonzaga's Director of Diversity, encouraged the student poets to contribute their work to the journal.

### **Featured Poems:**

"A Letter to White America" by Kevin Donalson, Class of 2021

"I am Sable ... After Phillis Wheatley" by Drew Duff, Class of 2021

"Reluctant to Love" by Kadari Machen, Class of 2022

"Prayer for Change" by Richard Scott, Class of 2022

"2020" by Richard Scott, Class of 2022

The following five creative pieces are poetry authored by four student poets of Color in the Gonzaga Poets and Writers Club and Black Student Union, *ONYX*, at Gonzaga College High School. These creative pieces were published, in part, to show how #BlackLivesMatter includes our youth, but also to inspire other student task forces and diversity leaders in secondary schools to make a similar commitment to fostering the creative expression of young men of Color as they reflect upon the fight for social justice.

**A Letter to White America**

Kevin Donalson

Feel my pain.

Feel the pain of a nine-year-old,  
Watching someone who eats the same snacks as you,  
And plays the same sport as you,  
And wears the same clothes as you,  
Lay dead in a blood-stained hoodie because he looks just like me.

You say you love me, then criticize me for kneeling,  
Blackmail me for fighting back,  
And kill me for being peaceful.  
Do you love me when it's convenient?  
Am I a pawn in an eternal game? I can't win.  
Used as the missing piece of the puzzle  
When deafening proclamations of  
"I'm not racist" hang in the air,  
While you conceal the inability to accept me like a deathbed secret?

I'm tired of being scared.  
We are tired of being scared.

The whispers of my dead unarmed brothers and sisters assault my ears,  
Relaying maddening chills down my spine,  
While visions of a dead son,  
Drenched with lawless  
Law induced blood,  
Blanketing the cold, hard bed of pavement  
Intrude upon my mother's thoughts,  
And my father dances with the heinous idea of burying his only son.

But listen now, White America.  
Listen with love.

My peoples four hundred years are over,  
And it's time for me to leave the kitchen,  
And sit at the table,  
Where you will bask in amazement at my beauty.

My people have sung, and we are truly America.

Sincerely,

A thug.

**I Am Sable ... After Phillis Wheatley**

Drew Duff

I am sable

like the beautiful midnight sky  
flaunting the skin, I was once clowned for  
admiring the melanin, I once doubted.

I am sable

just as my ancestors once were  
before the lashes of oppression scarred them to the bone  
before the tides of freedom carried them ashore.

I am sable

yet to be liberated  
still facing despair because of the color of my skin  
with the noose of bigotry squeezing tighter around my neck.

I am sable

## **Reluctant to Love**

Kadari Machen

Who are we?  
Are we thugs, gangsters, outlaws?  
Or are we heroes ...  
Always fighting for a country that doesn't love us back?

A country that has yet to face its history,  
A country that is destined to repeat its mistakes ...  
If nothing changes.

We are commonly created,  
One country, one body, with many parts,  
When one part is in pain, the whole body suffers.

We are needed more than ever,  
In a nation split by race and hatred.

Hatred for the other side,  
Believing that their opinions must be lies.  
Hatred for the opposition,  
Saying it must be wrong if it's not my opinion.

Hatred for opposing views,  
Claiming I can't agree, I must refuse.  
So quick to hate,  
But so reluctant to love.

Reluctant to love the black on my skin.  
Resistant to acknowledge the pain we've been through.  
What if we were quicker to listen and slower to judge?  
Maybe we could get a little closer to each other—and a lot better at love.

**Prayer for Change**

Richard Scott

I pray for healing in Ferguson  
I pray for healing in Minneapolis  
I pray for healing in New York  
I pray for healing in Baltimore

I pray that we will continue to run for Ahmaud  
I pray that we will blast our music for Jordan  
I pray that we will continue to kneel with Kap  
I pray that the police stop killing us

I pray that 911 is a beacon of safety, not death  
I pray the next time my hands are raised; it's in a classroom  
I pray that the voices of the unheard are amplified  
I pray that the color of my skin won't get me killed

I pray that Martin's dream doesn't become a nightmare  
I pray that Rosa's bravery isn't blinded by cowards  
I pray that Maya's words are never erased  
I pray for change

**2020**

Richard Scott

Channels quickly turn to CNN  
As the numbers of each state increase  
As red hopes for another four again  
And blue hopes the antics cease

Each side holds its breath as the night advances  
And their lifesaver or life-changer is chosen when they wake  
And the whole country ponders red's slim chances  
And days later, blue takes the cake

Eyebrows furrow in fury  
And breaths are taken in relief  
Red can't accept the verdict of the jury  
As they watch the dethroning of their Commander-In-Chief

That night, doubt fills my head as I close my eyes  
Yet, I feel relief as we prepare to dismiss our greatest threat  
Even though the grass isn't always greener on the other side,  
How much browner can it get?

This is the start of a future we have been trying to arrange  
But I wonder, in these next four years, will we ever get the change?