

Diverse Expressions

July 2010

Thank You

On behalf of everyone involved in the *Diverse Expressions* project we would like to thank the following participants for their excellent contributions:

Carine

Isabelle

Jody

Mariam

Nora

Sherrise

Diverse Expressions

*A Collection Of Poems
By The Women Of
Les Maisons Transitionnelles O3*

July 2010

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DEAR BROTHER

I remember the days it was just you and I
And no one could rip us apart.
You were my brother and my best friend
I always felt like we were one.
When you were to cry
I could feel your pain.
It was too much to bear.
But now that we are older and doing own thing it seems
Like you don't even care.
Why did you have to go that way?
Letting your friends lead you astray.
Leading you to live a life full of darkness,
Where death can be one step away.
You are my brother I will still love you.
It's time for you to come back home.
We will help through the ups and downs you will never be alone.
I remember the days it was just you and I
And no one could rip us apart.
Until the day you wake back up, you will always be in my heart.

Sherrise Ettienne

FREE

I want to be fully liberated
I want to be truly free.
This word is binding me down
With chains not allowing me to be me.
The world that we live in is so tuff
Acceptance is number one.
Letting people twist and turn us
Into someone we do not want to become.
Emancipation of your mind and soul!
How great that must feel.
To think freely without others to influence you
Not knowing what is really real.
To be fully liberated how great that will be!
Now it's time to push others aside.
Yes!
Now I am free!

Sherrise Ettienne

THE GREATEST LOVE

I knew I loved you before I met you.
No words can explain the feeling.
When I met you
Your smile
Your laugh
Your beautiful big eyes inspired me each day.
You are my inspiration
You are the greatest love
This love will always be mine.
I will love you over and over until the end of time.
God has given me two little angels
The greatest love of all.
With these two precious gifts I know I will never fall.

Sherrise Ettienne

The one that I want or the one that wants me.....

The one that I want or
The one that wants me.
Neither is a choice I can justify, freely.
Right now, I am focused on me
But I long to be in the arms
Of someone who understands me.
I am not that complicated,
At least I don't believe I am
After all it's my beliefs that count.
But those that claim to know me
Describe me as such.
The one that I want or
The one that wants me.
Both have given me reason to be wary
Both have a way of tugging at my heart
Both have a way of tearing me apart.
Both have accepted me, for who I am
Both have no idea of what commitment is about.
I cannot choose
For two people I cannot lose.
The one that, I want or
The one that wants me.

Nora Jean-Baptiste

I AM BEAUTIFUL

I am beautiful.

I now feel beautiful every day,

I believe this because it's true.

Especially after all I have gone through

I no longer look to others

For them to tell me how I look.

Whether I look good or bad

I will always be me and

I am beautiful.

Gone are the days where I would turn to a man

Allow him to play me and faze me

Just to hear him say

“You're cute but...”

Too many men, too many empty words

Gone are the days when I would surround myself with “friends”

That would squeal

“You're so pretty, but...”

I am beautiful because of my resilient spirit,

My kind heart

And the endless amount of love

That I am always willing to share.

No buts....

I am beautiful and this I know.

No man

No friends

No others

Can tell me otherwise

Because now I know.

Nora Jean-Baptiste

HELLO

You approached me and then you spoke.
The words came out of your mouth
But I could not hear.
All I could do was stare at your lips moving.
I know the words were
Travelling the short distance to my ears
Your lips pulled into a smile.
All the while you spoke
And I could not hear.
I look away
I smile then sway, blushing
Then suddenly I hear an audible sound.
I stand tall, finally feeling solid ground.
Strong, deep, seductive
So sweet it made me moist.
I take a deep breath
Stare into your eyes and smile.
The words have registered
And I can speak
“Hello, my name is Nora
It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Nora Jean-Baptiste

PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD

Feeling sick every day
I feel so sick I can't even pray.
Wondering why this world is sad
When I think about it, it makes me mad.
I think about people who hate
I wonder why I'm always late.
It makes me cry when I think
And makes me angry I turn pink
This world is bad and stinks.
People die and live a sad life
Some people get killed by the knife.
Life is not to be this way
It's supposed to be happy every day.
Rejection, depression, no love and no hugs
No wonder people become thugs.
Heart aches and sadness
This world's full of madness.
Abuse and too much pain
People are going insane.
Someone hear the world's cry
Help someone before they die.
Too much problems too much trouble
Please stop the pain don't make it double.

Carine Rose

BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

Sometimes when I look into the mirror
I just want to see my beauty shining off the reflection.
I want to be like "yes that's a beautiful woman".
I hate when you look at me in disgust,
I just want you to think I'm pretty
Just like Precious in the movie.
People always say I'm cute,
Kind of like I'm a teddy bear.
I like to be beautiful not only on the outside,
But also the in.
However
Sometimes people take advantage of that beauty.
I want to be like a beautiful flower, one that you just look at in awe.
I like to wear cute things.
Like sparkly pink shoes, with the matching clothes
I want to be flawless.
Pretty, Beautiful, and gorgeous
It's what I see for me.
I have to make all this work for me
I shouldn't conform to what society thinks.
I just want the beauty.
A beauty like an angel
Flying in the sky.
A pretty girl trying to get by.
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.
If I could block people out then I can believe it.
Why does the pretty/beautiful one's gotta look the same?
Does me looking different takes me out of the cute
pretty, beautiful categories?
It shouldn't be a shame
To look different
Different should be beautiful

Different should be pretty.
Beautiful, pretty women
Maybe when I look in the mirror
And wake up I should say "yes that's a beautiful women".

Carine Rose

FINDING MY VOICE

It's a man's world they say,
But I am a woman, finding her voice.
Standing tall and strong
I will blow them away
Because I'm a woman, finding her voice.
One day I will shine
One day, this world will be mine
Because I'm a woman, finding her voice.
It won't be long for you to see
That I am invincible.
I am a woman
Finding her voice.
The sun will shine and light my way
You will finally look up, as I say
"I am a woman who's found her voice".

Isabelle Reignier

BEAUTIFUL

I always felt the need to pretend I'm someone else
I was lying to my friends, and myself.
It was a dangerous game.
And I was soon defeated, and felt the shame
I realized that it's a game I'll never win.
The mirror had become my worst enemy, a reflection of my sin.
My true reflection had become foreign to me
It was never what I wanted to see.
When I looked in it, I was face to face with my fears
I couldn't help but to notice the tears.
I always felt ashamed
My insecurities grew bigger due to the pain.
They soon started taking control
I felt the need to look outside myself for acceptance and approval.
I was like a puzzle left undone.
At last, the final piece has been found
I am now complete.
I hold my head high and stay strong
As I say, "I am beautiful".
And I don't care what *they* say.
This world is mine
This world is yours
This world is ours
You should know, you are beautiful.
Find a path that is your own
Don't be scared, spread your wings and fly alone.
At the end of it all
Only you can love yourself for you
So say it with me
"I am beautiful".

Isabelle Reignier

MOTHERHOOD

It's hard to stay organized with three kids.
Kids screaming, kids fighting,
Kids pulling at me in every which way...
Sometimes I wish I was a little bird so I can fly, fly away
But I am glad I don't...
I'm glad I stay and I understand that to grow I must.
I love them so much
I praise God for them...
I am blessed to have them.
Motherhood is a challenge
It is sometimes hard
But it is an honor to have the most important role in a child's life.

Mariam Guzman

SLEEPY LITTLE SARAH

Sleepy little Sarah

Close your eyes.

Is time for you to dream tonight...

Sleepy little Haley riding a unicorn

Isn't it nice how your dreams come true.

Sleepy little Hannah

Chasing rainbows across a beautiful coloured sky.

Sleepy little darlings never forget that

Mom will always

Love you.

Mariam Guzman

HANNAH

Little Hannah go to sleep
Close your eyes
And you will see all your dreams
Reality.

Little Hannah go to sleep

Little Hannah close your eyes
There is no need to cry
I'll be here every night to sing you a lullaby

Little Hannah go to sleep.

Mariam Guzman

BEAUTIFUL DAY

Thank God for this beautiful day.
By continuing doing good deeds
And helping others strive in each of their own way.
All I want is to be loved and be respected,
But will I get it?
Probably not.
We all live but never forget.
You are closer to your goal, time is near,
Gotta stay focused... Mind is clear.
Oh, I miss my brother, but I hate him at the same time,
What he did to me is considered a crime.
More tired than ever can't sleep cause of what you did to me.
What I have lost I won't get back...
Never...
Never.
Don't be afraid of fear,
There will be days like that
Living day to day is like battling in combat.
Sometimes we give speeches like when we were old,
Contradict what we say,
But being bold.
Help me!
To help myself.
Time is running out,
Nowhere to hide.
But I know someone is gonna find me.
Underneath all this cloth wrapped up like a butterfly ready to bloom,
From its cocoon.
I love the smell of clean Laundry in my house.

Can't you smell it...?

"Egyptian cotton" flowing from the wind blowing,

Mind ever going.

There will be an end; laundry will pile up again, and again!

But you have to deal with each pile one by one.

Take your time... be calm

Till it's all done!

Jody Boisson

HOODED

What do you see when you look at me
Do you see someone limited, or someone free?
All some people can do is just look and stare
Simply because they can't see my hair.
Others think I am controlled and uneducated
They think that I am limited and un-liberated.
They are so thankful that they are not me
Because they would like to remain "free".
Well free isn't exactly the word I would've used
Describing women who are cheated on and abused.
They think that I do not have opinions or voice
They think that being hooded isn't my choice.
They think that the hood makes me look caged
That my husband or dad are totally outraged.
All they can do is look at me in fear
And in my eye there is a tear.
Not because I have been stared at or made fun of
But because people are ignoring the One up Above.
On the Day of Judgment they will be the fools
Because they were too ashamed to play by their own rules.
Maybe the guys won't think I am a cutie
But at least I am filled with more inner beauty.
See I have declined from being a guy's toy
Because I won't let myself be controlled by a boy.
Real men are able to appreciate my mind
And aren't busy looking at my behind.
Hooded girls are the ones really helping the Muslim cause
The role that we play definitely deserves applause.
I will be recognized because I am smart and bright
And because some people are inspired by my sight.
The smart ones are attracted by my tranquility
In the back of their mind they wish they were me.

We have the strength to do what we think is right
Even if it means putting up a life-long fight.
You see we are not controlled by a miniskirt and tight shirt
We are given only respect, and never treated like dirt.
So you see, we are the ones that are free and liberated
We are not the ones that are sexually terrorized and violated.
We are the ones that are free and pure
We're free of STD's that have no cure.
So when people ask you how you feel about the hood
Just sum it up and say “Baby its all good”!

Anonymous

Courtesy of

Ummat Al-mu'minin – “Community Of The Believers”

Autographs

My O3 Experience

Once a week, over an eight week period beginning on May 31, 2010, Odessa “Queen” Thornhill and I had the extreme pleasure of leading poetry workshops with young ladies from “*Les Maisons Transitionnelles O3*”. We would meet on Mondays at 6pm and initiate our time together with a meal. Once we had all eaten and reconvened, the writing would commence. As a group they participated in many different writing exercises, wrote poems and more importantly, shared. They shared a lot. They spoke their minds, shared their opinions and gave us a little window into their lives.

As much as Ms. Thornhill and I would hope that we taught the group much and instilled in them the joys of writing, we know that the group instilled in us the worth of something just as significant. We grew to appreciate the value of their thoughts, their life experiences and most importantly their testimony. With every week they gave us a little bit more of who they were. We watched, we shared and we listened. And as much as we gave of ourselves we also received.

What you have before you, is the culmination of the eight weeks we spent together. *Diverse Expressions* is a collection of poems by some of the young women from O3 during this time, written during their weekly workshops. It is a glimpse into their collective experience and an occasion to listen attentively to their distinct voices. As facilitators we have been immensely inspired by their energy and their writing. As you make your way through this collection it is our hope that you will come away with some of that same inspiration.

Jason Selman

Co-facilitator of the *Diverse Expressions* Poetry Workshops

To The Women of Diverse Expressions

*Let ur thoughts create their words
Hear their stories see them run
Freedom come comes from piece of mind.
Troubles, worries, I hv none
Once my thoughts begin to run,
Freedom comes from piece of mind.*

Odessa "Queen" Thornhill
Co-facilitator of the *Diverse Expressions* Poetry Workshops

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