



T H R E E P O E M S

Jillian Hanesworth

The Poetry Collection is proud to celebrate National Poetry Month with the publication of Jillian Hanesworth's *Three Poems*, the eighteenth in a series featuring the work of poets living in Buffalo.

2009	Bernhard Frank
2010	Ansie Baird
2011	Jorge Guitart
2012	Ross Runfola
2013	Norma Kassirer
2013	William Sylvester
2014	Robert Giannetti
2015	Sally Cook
2016	Ann Goldsmith
2016	Max Wickert
2017	ryki zuckerman
2018	Geoffrey Gatza
2019	Irving Feldman
2020	Sherry Robbins
2021	Annette Daniels Taylor
2022	David Lampe
2023	Michael Basinski

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THREE POEMS

Jillian Hanesworth

GIVE ME JAZZ

Give me something designed to rebuild and restore my soul
Something so uplifting that it boosts my eyes and raises the
pallet of my ear

Something that will make even my own name sound like music
to me

And make even my mistakes as interesting and forgivable as
improv

Give me love so supreme that it could have only been trans-
posed in the mind of Miles Davis

Give me music

As loud and as sure as freedom itself

A spiritual experience that takes my mind on a journey I'll never
want to return from

Both a major and a minor masterpiece

Educating us all through the art of storytelling dating back to
the motherland

Give me big band

The telling of our history through the lows of the trombone

And the smooth sounds of the saxophone

The narration of an image both abstract and reality

Because life is funny like that sometimes

It scatters and scatts without losing direction

It riffs and it runs without forgetting the moral of the story

Give me something that will transform my people until our
harmonies turn to unison

Uniting us through a shared language only understood by the
descendants of slaves

Give me jazz

As hypnotic as Abbey Lincoln belting out “Afro-blue” from the
depths of her soul

Allow it to take a hold of me and keep me going and lead me on

Let it act as a shield to my rhythm protecting me from my blues

But still offering permission to be a little sad every now and
then

And as I wander through the dark days, let it remind me of
Betty Carter

Who exploited the darkness to learn what moonlight can do

Give me something that will educate me even when I don’t
realize it

That will teach me that no matter where I go, there will always
be a bridge leading me back to my refrain

Give me Coltrane after the rain

A melodic reminder that better days are always on the way

Give me life and love disguised as a perfect fifth or a major sixth
With weaknesses so syncopated that they could be confused as
strengths

Give me confident singing accompanied by powerful chords

Give my people freedom in the form of jazz

Who could ask for anything more?

THE REVOLUTION WILL RHYME

The revolution will not be televised

The revolution will not be streamed live on Facebook, Twitter,
or IG TV

You will not be able to start it over if you missed a part

And you won't need to tap it twice to see its heart

The revolution will not be brought to you by Nike, the NFL, or
Jay-z

We will watch it succeed in HD without taking a knee

The revolution will not be televised

The revolution will be live

The revolution will thrive

And the revolution will rhyme

The revolution will be led by black women who are just tired
enough to do it ourselves

It will be rhythmic enough for us to follow the beat

Using drums and tambourines focusing on the two and four
beats

Like a secret language that comes naturally

It will get louder when it's calling for the people's attention

And quieter when it wants the people to listen

People listen

The revolution will be direct and unwavering without concern
of being looked at as angry

It will be as big and natural as a black panther's afro without
worrying about opportunity

It will be as interwoven as locs but there will be nothing
dreadful about it

And when light shines on the revolution it will create a halo
around it

The revolution will rhyme

It will be syncopated

It will harmonize

It will be call and repeat

The revolution will rhyme

The revolution will leave no man behind

It will not be developed just to be displaced

Its focus will not be extracted and refocused or repurposed

And the burden of education and comfort will not be placed on
the oppressed

While understanding and tolerance is gifted to the oppressor

You will not be able to binge watch the revolution

Rewinding the comfortable triumphs and fast forwarding
through the hurt

You will not be able to DVR the revolution or avoid spoiler
alerts

Or save it for a day that you choose to see its worth

You will not be able to mute the revolution for it will be loud

And you will not be able to shame the revolution for it will be
proud

The revolution will rhyme

It will hold your attention and retain your momentum

It will float like a butterfly and sting like a bee

It will hit even harder than Muhammad Ali

It will stand on the shoulders of those who died on their knees

Screaming “You can take me from my freedom but you can’t
take my freedom from me”

The revolution will hold this country accountable forcing it to
keep its promises

Promises that guarantee life liberty and the pursuit of happiness

It will be something to behold

It will be so cinematic that Ava Duvernay will create a docu-
mentary about it

It will be a complete overhaul not just a quick fix

The revolution will rhyme

It will not always be politically correct and it will not be
required to forgive and forget

The revolution will remember all those who crosses its path
With a message fierce enough to make opposition fear its wrath
It will march through the valley of the shadow of death without
regret of its path

And it's coming for what it's owed refusing to settle for half

The revolution will not be televised

The revolution will be live

The revolution will thrive

And the revolution will rhyme

WE REMEMBER

How do we remember something we never can forget?

Do we pick up all the broken fragments like they're
something to collect?

Just a bunch of puzzle pieces with no box to look at

And a pain in our hearts that only time can combat

We now know what we know and we know how heavy it can be

Thoughts and prayers rang through the city as tears flowed
through the East

Some grappled with loss and fear while others figured out how
to eat

That's not a blueprint on what it means to be "Buffalo strong"
to me

But being strong is something that together we can achieve

If we choose to build our strength on a foundation of honesty

And when we choose a posture of love beyond what our eyes
can see

We'll suddenly find that we're all playing for the same team

So, how do we remember something we never can forget?

We build a culture with so much light shining on it that hate
simply cannot live

We challenge those who seek to divide us and expel harmful

ideas

All to do our part to make sure it never happens again

And so, we remember

And we heal

And we inevitably adjust

And we speak life into all the places that still hurt

And we continue to choose love

And we keep our commitment to being good neighbors both in

Buffalo and beyond

As our honesty, strength and collective power redefines what it

means to be strong

We remember...

About the Author

Jillian Hanesworth is an Emmy-winning spoken word artist, the Poet Laureate Emeritus of Buffalo, New York, and a community organizer and activist. Jillian was born and raised on the east side of Buffalo where she developed a vision to use art and advocacy to help her community reimagine justice and work together to create a system where all people can thrive.

Currently, Jillian travels the country performing poetry and speaking on various topics, including art for activism, the impacts of storytelling, and the importance of honest and critical social and political conversations. In addition, Jillian oversees “Buffalo Books,” a nationally recognized program which aims to improve access to culturally relevant books for residents of the east side of Buffalo with the hopes of helping to increase literacy rates among Black and brown communities.

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