THREE POEMS

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.

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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 transposed 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 documentary 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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