

**Write a page, I said.  
Let it come out of you.  
Then it will be true.**

By Debra Knauf

What do they think when they hear that,  
this kaleidoscope of young faces before me?  
They look at me – middle-aged white women –  
And wonder if I'll understand their truths.  
Their truths are hard – inner city, gangs, drugs, poverty,  
shootings and killings on street corners,  
escape the champagne wish,  
the diamond dream of their families.

I've seen their stories on the news but I haven't lived them.  
I'm no stranger to poverty, but I'm white, white bread, white wine  
– new grapes of wrath vintage.  
Poor and white is not poor and black,  
Poor and Asian, poor and Mexican.  
They're right: I won't know their truths.  
They don't know mine either.  
I could tell them that escape is possible –  
But they won't want to hear the rest of that truth  
You can get out but you can't leave behind who you are  
Poverty is a bomb in the brain you'll never diffuse  
Diamond studs wink at me from their ears;  
Their faces remain carefully blank  
And our lives tick away.  
I tell them we can meet on the page  
But I don't know if I believe it myself.

**Broken**

By Jason Wolf

My world comes to a halt, I watch the rest of the world go by  
It feels like a movie and I let out a deep sigh  
I feel the insignificance of my existence wash over me  
I know that I'm a minnow just trying to survive the sea  
The weight on my shoulders is just too much to bear  
So much so that I lose the ability to even remotely care  
I know that I've hit a downward spiral  
It's not long before it becomes intensely viral  
All I can do is wait for the storm to come to an end  
So that when it's over I can start to pick up the pieces and start to mend

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**Choices**

By Valerie

There is no right or wrong  
But everything has a choice  
As the scars start to fade away  
The heart within still frozen  
Notice a patch of darkness  
Getting bigger, soon no more  
Nothing left besides the last beat  
Hear it echo through the silence  
Of the emptiness within  
Thy soul soon to break  
Screaming out for help



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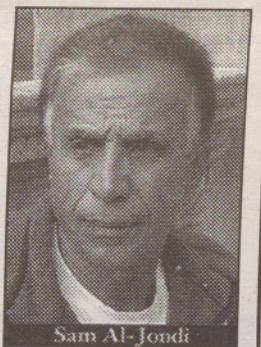
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