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I'm Nobody! Who are you? (260)

Emily Dickinson

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

I AM TOO PRETTY FOR SOME 'UGLY LAWS'

Lateef McLeod

I am not suppose to be here
in this body,
here
speaking to you.
My mere presence
of erratic moving limbs
and drooling smile
used to be scrubbed
off the public pavement.
Ugly laws used to be
on many U.S. cities' law books,
beginning in Chicago in 1867,
stating that "any person who is
diseased, maimed, mutilated,
or in any way deformed
so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object,
or an improper person to be allowed
in or on the streets, highways, thoroughfares,
or public places in this city,
shall not therein or thereon
expose himself to public view,
under the penalty of \$1 for each offense."
Any person who looked like me
was deemed disgusting
and was locked away
from the eyes of the upstanding citizens.
I am too pretty for some Ugly Laws,
Too smooth to be shut in.
Too smart and eclectic
for any box you put me in.
My swagger is too bold
to be swept up in these public streets.
You can stare at me all you want.
No cop will buss in my head
and carry me away to an institution.
No doctor will diagnose me
a helpless invalid with an incurable disease.
No angry mob with clubs and torches
will try to run me out of town.
Whatever you do,
my roots are rigid
like a hundred-year-old tree.
I will stay right here
to glare at your ugly face too.

SO MUCH

Lateef McLeod

I hear their painful cries jut up from cracks on the street.
The block is a scorching frying pan,
frying my brothers on the pavement.
Our bodies are etched on the concrete,
blood drenched as permanent ink.
Chalk should not outline our death bed
or a body bag be our first casket.
Bullets lurch out of guns,
slice the air, and
pierce the thin borders of our black skin.
Eat away at our muscle and bones,
borough through sinews and blood vessels,
until it reaches and stops our hearts.
It is not just the gang member on the corner
whose aim we have to dodge,
but also police on the beat
whose itchy trigger fingers
leave us with our brain matter
splattered on the concrete.
Now we have to watch out for the neighborhood watchmen.
The wanna-be-cops who think we are foreign to our own neighborhood.
Trayvon had a hoodie on to protect him from the rain,
but it didn't protect him from the bullet from Zimmerman's gun.
Old George just couldn't help being a deadly Don Quixote,
and shoot at every black boy,
claiming he was a hardened criminal.
My coco skin is not a target for your gun.
It is the sacred encasing of God's masterpiece
that gives warmth and joy to every loved one it touches.
No bullet will destroy what God has made immortal.
We will all rise again one day to walk under the sun.

THE MAGIC WAND

Lynn Manning

Quick-change artist extraordinaire,
I whip out my folded cane
and change from black man to blind man
with a flick of my wrist.
It is a profound metamorphosis—
From God gifted wizard of roundball
dominating backboards across America,
To God-gifted idiot savant composer
pounding out chart-busters on a cockeyed whim;
From sociopathic gangbanger with death for eyes
to all-seeing soul with saintly spirit;
From rape deranged misogynist
to poor motherless child;
From welfare-rich pimp
to disability-rich gimp;
And from 'white man's burden'
to every man's burden.
It is always a profound metamorphosis.
Whether from cursed by man to cursed by God;
or from scriptures condemned to God ordained,
My final form is never of my choosing;
I only wield the wand;
You are the magicians.

to make use of water
Safia Elhillo

dilute

i forget the arabic word for economy i forget
the english word for غسل forget the arabic
word for incense & english word for مسكين
arabic word for sandwich english for وله &
صيدلية & مطعم & safia
/stupid girl, atlantic got your tongue/

quench

i think i can take care of myself because i
only broke one plate the day wael died left it
in the sink for hours watched water fill the
seams of the mosaic & only let myself think
once of the crossed ocean how we thought it
was enough to keep us safe

blur

back home we are plagued by a politeness
so dense even the doctors cannot call things
what they are
my grandfather's left eye
swirled thick with smoke
what my new mouth can call glaucoma
while the arabic still translates to
the white water

wash

i think i can take care of myself
a stranger's sour mouth scraped
the name off my body but i keep quiet
i am last in the shower line
i let it remain a household joke
how i finish all the hot water

swim

i want to go home

dissolve

i want to go home

drown

half don't even make it out or across you get to be ungrateful you get to be homesick
from safe inside the folds of your blue american passport do you even understand what
was lost to bring you here.

Afro-Latina
Elizabeth Acavedo

Afro-Latina,
Camina conmigo.
Salsa swagger
anywhere she go
como
'ila negra tiene tumbao!
¡Azúcar!
Dance to the rhythm.
Beat the drums of my skin.
Afrodescendant,
the rhythms within.
The first language
I spoke was Spanish.
Learned from lullabies
whispered in my ear.
My parents' tongue
was a gift
which I quickly forgot
after realizing
my peers did not understand it.
They did not understand me.
So I rejected
habichuela y mangú,
much preferring Happy Meals
and Big Macs.
Straightening my hair
in imitation of Barbie.
I was embarrassed
by my grandmother's
colorful skirts
and my mother's
eh brokee inglee
which cracked my pride
when she spoke.
So, shit, I would poke fun
at her myself,
hoping to lessen
the humiliation.
Proud to call myself
American,
a citizen
of this nation,
I hated
Caramel-color skin.

Cursed God
I'd been born
the color of cinnamon.
How quickly we forget
where we come from.
So remind me,
remind me
that I come from
the Taínos of the río
the Aztec,
the Mayan,
Los Incas,
los Españoles
con sus fincas
buscando oro,
and the Yoruba Africanos
que con sus manos
built a mundo
nunca imaginado.
I know I come
from stolen gold.
From cocoa,
from sugarcane,
the children
of slaves
and slave masters.
A beautifully tragic mixture,
a sancocho
of a race history.
And my memory
can't seem to escape
the thought
of lost lives
and indigenous rape.
Of bittersweet bitterness,
of feeling innate,
the soul of a people,
past, present and fate,
our stories cannot
be checked into boxes.
They are in the forgotten.
The undocumented,
the passed-down spoonfuls
of arroz con dulce
a la abuela's knee.
They're the way our hips
skip

to the beat of cumbia,
merengue
y salsa.
They're in the bending
and blending
of backbones.
We are deformed
and reformed
beings.
It's in the sway
of our song,
the landscapes
of our skirts,
the azúcar
beneath our tongues.
We are
the unforeseen children.
We're not a cultural wedlock,
hair too kinky for Spain,
too wavy for dreadlocks.
So our palms

tell the cuentos
of many tierras.
Read our lifeline,
birth of intertwine,
moonbeams
and starshine.
We are every
ocean crossed.
North Star navigates
our waters.
Our bodies
have been bridges.
We are the sons
and daughters,
el destino de mi gente,
black
brown
beautiful.
Viviremos para siempre
Afro-Latinos
hasta la muerte.

Disorder Chris Loos

I have ADHD
And ADD
And OCD
And a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,I,j,k,l,m,n,o,p,o,p,o,p,
Oh my God I'm doing it again,
That was so fun!
Let's try it again backwards.
Maybe,
Just maybe,
I'll remember it
the first time,
Because last time
The world said I was mentally disabled.
Am I disabled?
An I disabled?
Am I disabled because I'm not able to be
stable sitting at the labeled table.
Oooooohhhhhjh that rhymed.
Am I bipolar to?
Or am I just funny? Because everybody
else is laughing.
HAHAHAHAHA HILARIOUS.
Laughing because mom was in the
hospital
And I forgot to take my medicine.
I've had all kinds of medication,
Antidepressants,
anti anxiety medication,
Ritalin,
straterra,
vyvance,
concerta,
adderall,
add em all up,
60 milligrams
Used to be
80 milligrams.
I'm hungry!
I haven't ate ALL day!
Can we go to McDonald's?
I want a large sprite
And a bigmack
Bigmack
Bigmack

Big stack of prescriptions that aren't
telling me
the side effects are worse
than the disorder.
OH MY GOD!!! SHE IS CUTE.
Sometimes I shout
the most obvious things,
Sometimes I can't sit still,
Sometimes I daydream,
Sometimes I,
Sometimes I,
All the time they give me pills
Filled with the daily routine of
not eating
Not sleeping,
Not talking,
No distractions what so ever.
And everyday I'm faced with the
decision
Of taking these pills,
Small capsules injected with who knows
what,
And shoving them down my throat.
It's like
It's like
It's like
"My mind is telling me no.
But by mommy, my mommy is telling
me yes" and so are my doctors,
Brothers,
Sisters,
Family,
Friends,
And I'm crazy because
I'd rather let my mind temple run
through time
Back to 99
When I became a statistic.
Back when I was
1 in every 4 boys taking medicine every
morning.
But now.
Now,
The medicines we take are

Nationally classified with cocaine and
meth.
Now,
2.7 million children like me take mind
altering drugs
Every morning.
Now,
Strattera and antidepressants
Are linked to thoughts of death,
0 to 5 year olds
taking these medicines
could fill 6 football stadiums,
1 out of every 5 high school boys are
diagnosed with ADHD
And 67% of them take medication,
Medication,
Medication.
Are we there yet?
I like that movie!
The acting was

Flawless.
His daughter was.
Ok ok, stay on task.
I know I have a lot of disorders,
Yes, I do.
But I'm still taking
AP and IB classes.
I'm on honor roll again.
I can control my ADHD,
I write poetry
Poetry
Poetry
baby,
Courtesy of disorders,
Courtesy of statistics,
Compliments of months alone sitting in
my bedroom
Thinking of ways to be normal,
Because apparently.
I'm mentally disabled.