

The Caribbean Writer

The Literary Gem of the Caribbean

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

APRIL 13, 2011

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Featured 1
Virgin
Islander
Noreen
Michael

Famous 2
Poetry
Quote

Chilean Poet 3
Pablo
Neruda

Poems by 3,
UVI Students 4

Poem by 4
High School
Student

Test your 4
poetic know-
ledge



“I See Myself as a Fledgling Writer of Poetry” - Noreen Michael



Noreen Michael, Chief of Staff for President Hall, is no new comer to poetry. As a child she loved reading and going to school. Although she is not certain at what age she was introduced to poetry, she thinks it was in middle school, and the poem that lingers in the back of her mind is “Lochinvar,” by Sir Walter Scott. She had to memorize and recite the poem, and recalls with fondness that she enjoyed the entire process and was pleased with the outcome of the poem, which she understood.

The real Lochinvar who inspired Sir Walter Scott to write the poem was James Montgom-

ery, who along with his three brothers, were exiled from Scotland for their religious beliefs. They found safe haven in Ireland, until the time of the American Revolution, when they were again subjected to persecution owing to their religion. Consequently, they felt the best recourse was to travel to the USA and hide out in the wilds of America. Once in America they joined the struggle for Liberty, and although James was just a youth, he went into the battle field with his father to fight and bore his musket like a veteran.

Although Dr. Michael majored in English as an undergraduate student, she confesses, “I was not very fond of poetry, so I don’t really have a favorite poet.” Yet, the names of several poets are familiar to her and she adds, “There are some poems, however, that have had an impact on me, to include Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 116;” Rudyard Kipling’s “If;” Robert Frost’s “The Road Not

Taken;” and Maya Angelou’s, “Still I Rise.” Busy with her role as Chief of Staff at UVI, Dr. Michael found the rhythm and emotional sentiments of poetry luring her, so she remarks: “In the last few years I have developed a greater appreciation for poetry and really relate to the poetry of our own local poet, Attorney Trenzgenza A. Roach – his poem, ‘Sugar Song,’ being one of my favorites.”

A long time advocate of the humanities, Dr. Michael firmly believes in this discipline as a transformative tool. When pressed about the role of poetry she has this to say, “I feel that poetry can serve as a means of helping students with self expression; helping our students really appreciate varying perspectives on the human condition; demonstrating both the power and beauty of words, and understanding peoples and the times in which they lived or live.”



*"I see poetry,
within the context
of the humanities,
as a bridge
between students,
faculty and
administrators
because, at its
core, poetry
focuses on the
human condition."
Noreen Michael*

National
**POETRY
MONTH**
April

Often, poetry incorporates people's personal history. Knowledgeable about a seminal work that documents and showcases Virgin Islands poetic development, Dr. Michael offers her own spin on the interconnectedness between poetry and history. "Much of the poetry in *Yellow Cedars Blooming* (edited by Marvin E. Williams), for example, can provide a perspective of the Virgin Islands and its history from a literary perspective, which provides quite a different flavor from simply reading "history" books. I view poetry as providing an alternate lens through which to view life, the human condition; history, and culture, and as such, is a powerful tool for enriching all of our lives."

As academic institutions, such as UVI, seek to find more humanistic and less hierarchal ways to bridge the gap between students, faculty and administrators, they often turn to the humanities as a level playing field. Dr. Michael adds to this deliberation. "I see poetry, within the context of the humanities, as a bridge between students, faculty and administrators because, at its core, poetry focuses on the human condition. Whether poets are writing about inner conflicts; love; nature; relationships; the life cycle; the social milieu, or the numerous other aspects of life, students, faculty and administrators can engage in a discourse about poems that speaks to one or more of these aspects of life and not be constricted because of a particular role that they have within the institution to express how a particular poem moves them. At its core, poetry reaches out to our affect, and affect transcends scripted roles that society imposes on persons."

Close to her Dad before his passing, Dr. Michael offers the tribute be-

low to him, and by so doing, allows each of us to step into that space of daughter or son and reflect on the memories of our father that is waiting pen to swim to the surface.

My Dad

by Noreen Michael

I look at my Dad
Lean and jovial
Hard working and carefree
Answering to no one but himself

I look at my Dad
Content and satisfied
He lived his life by his choices
Answering to no one but himself

I look at my Dad
At rest at long last
Peaceful at rest
He had answered his Maker's call.

In memory of my father, John F. Michel, June 1917 – March 2008

When asked if she is considering writing a collection of poems, Dr. Michael says, "I haven't thought that far into the future. It is certainly something to which to aspire."

FAMOUS POETRY QUOTE:

"And I believe that the best learning process of any kind of craft is just to look at the work of others. But the ultimate lesson is just sit down and write. That's all."

Wole Soyinka
(1934-present)
Nigeria

Introducing you to Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) Chilean

"I grew up in this town, my poetry was born between the hill and the river, it took its voice from the rain, and like the timber, it steeped itself in the forests." Pablo Neruda



Pablo Neruda's birth certificate reads Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto. He was born in Parral in Chile where his father was an employee of the railway and his mother, who was a teacher, died shortly after his birth. Neruda's father moved and remarried so he spent his childhood and youth in Temuco, where he also got to know Gabriela Mistral, the poet and head of the girls' secondary school, who obviously says the germ of greatness in Pablo Neruda.

At the tender age of thirteen, Neruda's first poem, "Entusiasmo y Perseverancia," was published in the daily *La Mañana*. At the age of sixteen, he became a contributor to the literary journal *Selva Austral* under the pen name of Pablo Neruda, which he adopted in memory of the Czechoslovak poet Jan Neruda.

In 1939, Neruda was appointed consul for the Spanish emigration, and he resided in Paris; then shortly afterwards, he was chosen as Consul General to Mexico where he rewrote his *Canto General de Chile*. In 1943, Neruda returned to Chile, and in 1945 he was elected senator of the Republic, and joined the Communist Party of Chile. As a result of his strident protests against President González Videla's repressive policy against striking miners in 1947, he was forced to live underground for two years until he managed to leave Chile in 1949. After living in different European countries he returned home in 1952.

Pablo Neruda won The Nobel Prize in Literature in 1971 and was a prolific writer.

Most Recent Publications:

The Essential Neruda: selected poems (edited by Mark Eisner), 2004.

Memoirs / (translated from the Spanish by Hardie St. Martin), 2004.

The Poetry of Pablo Neruda (edited and with an introduction by Ilan Stavans), 2003.

Love by Pablo Neruda

What's wrong with you, with us,
what's happening to us?
Ah our love is a harsh cord
that binds us wounding us
and if we want
to leave our wound,
to separate,
it makes a new knot for us and condemns us
to drain our blood and burn together.

What's wrong with you? I look at you
and I find nothing in you but two eyes
like all eyes, a mouth
lost among a thousand mouths that I have
kissed, more beautiful,
a body just like those that have slipped
beneath my body without leaving any memory.

And how empty you went through the world
like a wheat-colored jar
without air, without sound, without substance!
I vainly sought in you
depth for my arms
that dig, without cease, beneath the earth:
beneath your skin, beneath your eyes,
nothing,
beneath your double breast scarcely
raised
a current of crystalline order
that does not know why it flows singing.
Why, why, why,
my love, why?

Bibi Sabrina Donaie

English Major, STX Campus

Favorite Poet: Emily Dickinson

"Poetry means stealing a moment to become enraptured with words. It edifies my soul—well the thought provoking ones."

Moon Dance

The moon dances with clouds
Waltzing cumulus into shapes
To the tunes of dreamers
Sky gazers and wishful believers

The moon twirls with the clouds
In graceful unison
Like synchronize swimmers
As it twirls with fluffs of snow
A haze of rainbow colors circles

Shawanna Tenisha Myers

Biology Major, STT Campus

Favorite Poet: Maya Angelou

“Poetry is putting your emotions, ideas, and experiences in a beautiful art form to express yourself to others. Poetry is the language of our soul, the art of our hearts, and the production of our imaginations. It's a way to express my feelings when I don't know how to clearly express them to others. It is a way for someone to look into my soul and see the real me. Sometimes, I think my poetry can explain things better than I can.”

Human Destruction

The sea was still,
the water like a piece of glass
Until the human emerged from it,
and shattered the silence.

The soil a concrete block,
solid and compact.
Until the human trampled the soil,
and pounded the clay.

The grass stood robust,
its green armor glowing in the sun.
Until the human, when learning to run,
ripped the grass right out of its roots.

The trees were statuesque,
majestic, decorated warriors of old.
Until the human needed shelter,
and hacked the tree from ear to ear.

The wildlife used to thrive
the jungle a kingdom to behold.
Until the human needed land to grow his food,
and scorched the forest alive.

The marine life was bustling,
free to swim where they desired
Until the human needed a place to dump his waste,
and smothered the oceans with poison.

TEST YOUR POETIC KNOWLEDGE

- (1) What is the Negritude Movement?
- (2) When and where did it start?
- (3) Name a Caribbean poet who is associated with this movement?



The first person to respond will win *The Caribbean Writer's* 2011 Calendar—12 Months of Art & Poetry.
Email your answers to qmars@uvi.edu.

The sky was an abundant shield,
a suit of armor in the air.
Until the human needed transport,
suffocating the clouds until they choked.

The arctic mammals lived in peace,
resting and feeding on the ice.
Until the human made it warm,
the mammals now drown into a watery grave.

From the sea came the tidal wave and crushed some
of them,
from the soil came the earthquake and demolished
some of them,
from the grass came the barren droughts and starved
some of them,
from the trees came the carbon dioxide and suffocated
some of them,
from the forest came the wildfires and burnt some of
them,
from the skies came the thunderstorm and struck
some of them,
from the ice came the blizzard and froze some of them,
and from the humans came destruction that eradicated
all of them.

Idrees M. Donaie

9th Grade, St. Croix Educational Complex,

Favorite poem: “Metaphors” by Sylvia Plath.

“Writing poems make me feel relaxed. When a poem comes to me, it flows like water going down a waterfall.”

My Love

My love for her grows every day
Her smile wakes me up every morning
Her voice is music to my ears
Her eyes glare with a passion
Her hair, long and silky
Her laugh, adorable
Her personality, unforgettable
Her height, unreachable
My love for her grows day by day.

For those of you who saw the Bathroom Poems on St. Croix campus before they were removed and told us how much you enjoyed and appreciated them, thanks for your support. Their removal was out of our hands.

the Caribbean Writer
The Literary Gem of the Caribbean

University of the Virgin Islands • RR 1, Box 10,000 • Kingshell,
St. Croix • USVI 00850 • Phone: 340-692-4152

E-mail: info@thecaribbeanwriter.org

www.thecaribbeanwriter.org