

***NAMI NJ Expressive Arts - Poetry Showcase - October 2018***

**All or Nothing**

**by Patricia Urban Korsak**

My mind is like an open door.  
Letting too much in,  
Letting too much touch me.  
I feel the emotions, the sadness, the loss.  
Your sorrow touches my soul and tears form in my eyes.  
"Let me in," you say.  
And I do.  
I cannot deny your pain.  
I cannot avoid empathy.  
I cannot protect myself at this moment.  
So I slowly begin to build a wall to shield my heart.  
Brick by brick it encircles my soul.  
It blocks the rain.  
It blocks the cold.  
It blocks the fear  
And everything that makes me hurt.  
But it also blocks the sun  
And the laughter  
And the beauty  
And everything I love.  
So I knock it down.  
For I would rather feel all than nothing.

**Enslaved In The Name  
by Ethel Mack**

There comes a time when one wants to be freed. Trapped inside from birth, you were born to this earth. Tell me, show me, help me to unlock this chain of hurt, and who holds the key? Is it really me? I have sat in a tub filled with blood, and a tear finds its way down my cheek. As it hits the water it enlarges itself from a dime, to a penny then a nickel, to a quarter. I'm left speechless as I search for a cut on my butt, and as it starts to appear I find myself stuck.

As I grow why do many people feel the need to holler, and scream at me for reasons none do I recall. I find myself at a standstill wondering about the empty change. Other siblings are happy, but I feel locked away filled with shame. Still growing never understanding their misery, and why am I to blame? Basketball was my escape, but not having acknowledgement of who I was made me miss my calling to fame. Trying to break away from my mind, and wanting to let go of so many years of pain had left me searching for answers no one would give me, so I began to change. I finally found out how to regain a piece of document that everyone had proclaimed.

No questions asked, just a look at my name sends up red flags, which makes sense. No wonder I'm an outcast. In color I'm just a child who you all know has no ambitions, no style, no morals, no class. But if you were to talk to me as if I were all of the above, I'd might tell you to kiss my ass.

I'm now a woman who understands herself, and what change of command I had to endure because of my name. Where does it end? When does it end? How long must I be a pawn in your chess game? No child should be made to look like a stain (You do understand that the colors are black and white) because that child didn't ask to be conceived nor born to not know the value of their name.

Come on people grow up people grow up, and live life as you want for yourself, not others. Start being happy, try having some fun, maybe you'll be able to overlook the name game, ah but which one?

What's done is done some have one, some may have two or three, but be thankful because some don't remember which one. I tried both and they both are slave names used in different ways; One is a poor man slave who business is everybody business. The other is a rich slave for whom life is all about greed, deceit, which in the long run they wind up punishing or hurting themselves.

**My Soundtrack of You**  
**by Tony Ciavolella**

I awoke scared one night,  
to the same terrifying dream.  
A relentless return,  
to those sorrowful strings,  
plucking my heart,  
strumming an image of you.

For me, a repeat performance,  
the same old song,  
full of sadness and glee,  
choruses singing,  
“You and me, we’re not meant to be.”

My dreams are graced by what if?  
An endless symphony, a melodic riff.  
Bittersweet harmony all sung in key,  
an echoing refrain, waking me, shaking me,  
“You and me, we’re not meant to be.”

Every night it’s my soundtrack,  
haunting me, as I collapse into bed.  
Not only your actions,  
not just what you said.

The memory, the sound,  
of your song that they sing,  
with each painful note, how I struggle to cling,  
to that harmonious song that so tortures me,  
“You and me, we’re not meant to be.”

**Prosper/Moi**  
**by Shannah Beckett**

With age there comes fear  
Fear of not being enough  
Enough for your family, your boss, friends  
Not being worthy enough to be loved

I know, I know  
That it all starts with me  
But sometimes, it's like,  
Who am I to want to be the real me?

One part says the ones who love you won't care.  
Be judgmental? They wouldn't dare  
But at the end of MY day  
I don't want them to be scared

My vices and the anti's are opposites  
They clash with each other  
It seems intentionally done  
But I need to be responsible, I have a son

I know I need to improve  
And be not afraid of who I become  
I know I need to do better  
This means I need to love moi

**The Fiery Soul that Leads You Home**  
**by Shari Fridman**

My mind is like a never-ending, Ferris wheel ride  
Wheeling and wheeling  
Circling and circling  
Nonstop at super speed inside

When I try to sleep at night  
I shut both of my pupils closed  
Attempting to remain composed  
Even stitching the blinds of my shutters tight

My nocturnal pupils spring open again to keep me awake  
That's the signal and the cue, for my savior  
Like a sailor lost out at sea needing the light and anchor  
For a vampire- it's the wooden stake

In my case- the stake is my paper and pen  
Writing whatever I keep trapped in my mind  
Something and anything  
Until the slumber begins

Since writer's block is a bitch  
I'm like a drug addict with an annoying itch  
Because once I'm locked and in, I get in love with the high  
The high of the writing and flying across the page.

I'm left with just waiting  
Because usually the slumber never comes  
But when I'm writing  
Or at least trying

I'm trying to hopefully  
Ignite that fire  
That will get me going  
That will get me inspired

The fire that I feel  
Deep inside of my soul  
It's such a great feeling  
I hope that will never leave me  
Because it's my own and it brings me home.