

Where I'm From

Clifton Hudson, Bullitt County

I am from "Ola! Coma esta"
and Torjan Air Base, Madrid.
from Semboch Air Base, Germany
and the Auto-Bahn.
"Niin Niin Baby No Drive"
And Veese Boddin Air Base.

I am from Muscular Dystrophy
and constant pain,
from "You can't do that" and
"Don't tell me what I can't do."

I am from Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado.
Dwarf, Kentucky, fried potato cakes,
Roberta Hudson and the warmth
of her handmade quilts.
I am from Hazard, Kentucky,
and the Mother Goose,
from punchboards and Coca-Cola
with peanuts at the bottom.
I am from Kentucky mines and
the roar of coal trucks.

I am from kickball in the basement
and a pig's head in a box.
From loving you more than I love myself.
From Carvon and Pearl
And Big Grandma's loving embrace.

I am from the Greatest Love,
Nikki and Landon
from "Poppy, I love you" and
"I love you a whole sky-full."

Where I'm From

Lyndsey Hewitt, Bullitt County

I am from blazing sunrises behind horizons of trees
From early morning beds of grass
When I would stay awake until the light came through my window
From bobby pins falling from my hair as I slept

I am from the blooming trees towering over an unmarked cemetery
I'm from the grass stains on my school uniform
From "you'll never make it to next year"
and the sweet mints given during tests

I am from excited trembles and soft giggles
From the swing set that stained my hands with rust
The freedom that overwhelmed me on a Spring Saturday
And the fabric softener coming through the window

I am from soft sounds and violent screams
From harsh words from burned bridges
I'm from being tripped at school and scolded at home
From not knowing what I did wrong

I am from crying in bathroom stalls
From screaming through hot tears when I was home alone
From my mother's sadness and my Father's anger
From self harm and tires stares in the mirror

I am from manic anxiety and depressive episodes
From "I'm tired of your shit" and "nothing's that bad"
From all the friends who said I wasn't good enough
From the crying embarrassment in some shrink's office

I am from the shrinking light and hopeless nights
From fantasizing about death and razorblades
From never having to hear those sick words from peers and parents alike
From wanting to end it all

I am from Imogene and Jade and Katherine and Callie
And their love and nice words trying to heal me
From my grandmother's hugs and my face buried in her winter coat
From the kindness of strangers

I am from shaking anger and and unbreakable determination
From the power in the wind and the words I write
From my undying love for music and art and the roar of laughter
From "I will never end up like him"

I am from fast heartbeats and slow songs
From the love that was too much and not enough
From the small corner of my mind that says "I will try again tomorrow"
And from "I am never giving up."

Where I'm From

Donna Caudill, Bullitt County

I am from Raymond's Old Spice,
Anna Catherine's Estee' Lauder.
I am from their greasy clothes,
from bitter coffee brewing,
from the sweet smell of fresh mown grass.

I am from cast iron skillets
filled with onion fried potatoes and oven baked
southern yellow cornbread (I picked the onions out)

I am from the train whistle in the distance
and horses whinnying in the field behind my house.

I'm from no locks on my doors,
no boundaries in my home.
The stale smell of beer, cigarette butts
and Jack Daniel's left overnight in her glass.

I'm from a feeling of being abandoned and left behind
I'm from strength and acceptance
from all of these.

Where I'm From

Jordan Reid, Bullitt County

I am from Marboro Ultra Light 100's
The aroma of French roast,
Hours before the sun rises just to say goodbye
Followed by a child's excitement of a hardworking father
Coming home after weeks away in sweat and Carhart clothing

I am from summers of sunshine and lemonade
Pocahontas trees and playing make-believe
"Fighting evil by moonlight, winning love by daylight"
My sister and I took on the world

I am from acceptance
A home brimming with bodies both in blood and adoption
Brokenhearted and lost A youthful acceptance of strays
I am the temper of my father
Mashed potatoes slung to the wall
I am the short-circuited screaming turned inward
With self-inflicted scars and bleeding cuticles

I am from 'Animal Crackers' and 'The Yellow Submarine'
Booming Bose speakers and nights frozen in time
With momma's sweet tea and homey casseroles
over politically driven family dinners
Never a peep of the financial struggle to stay afloat

I am from love,
A family who believed I could do anything
With hands always reaching out to help me back up when I fall

Where I'm From

Cory Reid, Bullitt County

I am from Brocks and Reids and Cooks,
from Rileys and Englands.
I am from the country... and the country...
and way farther down in the country.
I am from family trees in scattered orchards,
branches now woven together.

I am from Saturday nights, breakfast for dinner
Chocolate gravy, buttered biscuits, crispy bacon;
from Homegrown, flourishing under
watchful eyes and overflowing stomachs.

I am from intramural all-star sports leagues
creating outfield explosions from dandelions.
I am from learning to be aggressive... or maybe defensive?
from adapting both to meet my needs.

I am from the deep sun-kissed Cumberland lake,
from shale rock campgrounds, fresh fired fish food,
I am from sea legs taking dock walks, preparing to ski on
smooth green glass untouched by waves.

I am from late night local music
Women on the trashy side, and hearts made achy breaky.
From standing loud in household karaoke,
cheered by both the ashes and the stars at night.

I am from a dozen happy families,
Chosen, earned, lost, and won,
Relatively relative, and content
to be where I'm from.

WHERE I'M FROM

Cynthia Jennings Parker

I am from grass stains, cold mud, and the wet-dog stench of a hard play's sweat
I am from home building projects and saw dust shavings,
fresh cut woods aroma in my father's hug.

I am from an elderly piano teacher's cold keyed Kimball,
The stale dust of her home, rotting teeth, coffee breath.
I am from city streets painted in summer rains,
bouquets of oil, heat, and steam embracing my daydreams,
From stomping my brown feet in the rainbow-swirl of chemical puddles.

I am from thin peeled skin of Slim Jims from the neighborhood liquor store
where my father and I were known and greeted,
From green walnuts rotting in an Easter Basket, gathering maggots
in my mother's sanitized home.
I am from a mustard yellow coffee cup at Granny Gaines'
when I wasn't allowed to have coffee;
"It's mostly milk" she would tell Mom.

I am from the clicking hands, the cranking key, and the hammer-striking gong of Mamaw
Harps clock.
I am from the gnaw of Skil saw, the exhaust fumes, the lumber's sweet musk, epoxy's breath
theft.
From, "Hold this still while I cut it.", "Grab that ratchet, and quarter inch socket",
"You've got to raise those blades or the yard will look horrible."
From the yard and garage that Glenn built.
I am from Terri's solos, piano, sweet voice, and guitar,
"Then sings my soul, my savior God to thee"
From Loretta Lynn and Patsy Cline
band practice after dinner.
From my lullabies, Dad's bass lines.

I am from my mother's distress,
"MY SOCKS HURT MY FEET".
from jumping fences and boundaries,
From Twin Spires, the fastest two minutes in sports,
from the VFW on Longfield, buying gum with change dug out from a hole in my pocket.
I am from smooth pink plastic,
handlebar grips of Rambling Rose,
scars on knees, hips, hands, and chin.

I am from the answered prayer of a blue-eyed baby brother, my savior from solitude,
whose chubby cheeks I squeezed, squished, and stretched into funny characters while
adlibbing humorous commentary.
From pushing him fast in his walker
"You'll break that babies feet off"

"He loves it Granny, can't you see?"

I am from three sons and calling Mary at the beauty shop
for ways to remove shaving cream, Vaseline, and bubble gum from hair,
from trips to Dr. Arla to remove dry beans and hair beads lost in noses and ears.

I am from ice water in a tall pink Tupperware cup
Fudge rounds and star crunch Little Debbie cakes
meant for Papaws lunch box, but I could have "One."

I am from Kit's orange salad, Sharon's vegetarian Lasagna,
Laverne's pierogi, Marians Christmas spaghetti.

I am from chips and salsa stained shirts

From caring more about my one true love's voice, hands, lips and eyes.

I am from crying over a See and Say left in the rain,
the last Christmas gift from my great great- grandparents.

From praying for my enemy and God IS my enemy,

"Don't EVER knock on my hearts door again if this is how you are!"

I am from "THE BIRTHDAY SONG" shared with Aunt Debbie.

From yellow jacket stingers in my feet,

five and a half acres on a hill,

From sitting on a half-filled natural gas tank waiting for Jimmy

From building a clubhouse by the pond,

From washing my parents cars as an excuse to drive around the yard.

I am from scale cuts and slime, the lingering stench of worms and fish

I am from sitting on the banks of The Ohio,

Floyds Fork, back waters of Fort Knox, The Belvedere,

Greenwood Boat Docks, West Point Park, Wilson Creek,

Taylorville and Nolin Lakes, anywhere near water so I can find inner peace.

I am from the Harp Farm, Antioch Rd, Todds Point, KY,
where 5 generations ago pennies were pinched and hidden

I am from mechanics, nurses, alcoholics, manic depressives,

and musicians who spanned Owenton, Frankfort, Shelbyville, Todds Point, LaGrange.

I am from the city, South Louisville, Sale Avenue off Taylor Blvd where boys used to play,

I am from the country, South Bullitt, Lebanon Junction, Belmont Road, where boys bailed
hay.

Where I'm From

Bobbi Buchanan, Bullitt County

I am from big, loud, rowdy and raucous
a conspiracy of ravens, those dark birds
from family secrets and shadows and closets
messy drawers and tangled hair.

I am from my father's silence and my mother's regret
from something sad and some kind of trouble
a grandfather shot down by police at Sixth and Bingham
a grandmother who took her own life.

I'm from a sailor who did hard time
fresh off the boat,
who tried to escape,
feet that marched through prison yards

from a daughter who vanished
for a year that was erased from history
a barefoot girl, a girl in heels,
feet shod with the gospel of peace.

I'm from ponies and puppies and stray cats
potatoes and cabbage, handmade and homemade
from oaks and elms and persimmon trees
from love that comes easy,
love that survives,
love that's real.

I'm from prayers and miracles and weeping hearts
from quarrels and commotion, from constant motion.
I'm from running, fleeing, leaving behind.
I'm running from running.
I'm running from
what I'm from.

Following are poems written by men in the Bullitt County Detention Center. They are enrolled in the Substance Abuse Program, for which Bobbi Buchanan serves as a volunteer teaching a "creative writing as therapy" component as part of Color Your City's Art for Inmates in Recovery Program. These poems will appear in THIS IS W.A.R., Words and Art on Recovery, Volume II, which will be published this spring by Color Your City and the Bullitt County Detention Center.

Where I'm From

Dusty Roby

I'm from Brut Cologne and White Diamonds perfume
The smell of fresh cut cherrywood from the nearby sawmill
From down yonder and y'all come back now, hear.
where southern hospitality still exists.

I'm from Turn the antenna 'cause the TV is fuzzy
and parents who work from daylight to dark so I can have more
Little league baseball, a dream that I can do anything.
Only one store for miles, Grandpa's junkyard where you can pay later.

I'm from horseplay, and I don't know who broke it
To Quit hitting him in the head, you're gonna make him retarded
From sittin on laps learnin to drive
To mismatched sheets, and boxsprings on the floor

I'm from Garth Brooks blaring out of the radio
To Milwaukee's Best and alcoholics living in the past
From a small town called Indian Mound
That place I miss the most when my bad choices keep me away

Where I'm From

Samuel Parisaca

I'm from crack whores and dope fiends,
from "I'm going to get this money by any means."
I'm from streets paved in urine and busted crack pipes
"I spent my paycheck on crack, how am I gonna tell my wife?"

I'm from Carne Asada and rice and beans,
from "I think that's a man"—yup, South Beach drag queens.
I'm from, "My brother Alan, you're dumb, man, so stupid.
How much money you got? I bet I can do it."

I'm from Latin Kings on Third Avenue selling cocaine,
Latin Queens on the corner doing something strange for change.
I'm from the Magic City, but no magicians here.
The only magic going on is making kilos disappear.

I'm from salsa music and hip hop,
from R&B, rock, with a twist of pop.
I'm from "No speaky Eengleesh" and "Grandma don't fuss."
I'm from two old ladies fist fighting for a seat on the bus.
I'm from bad news and bad attitudes
to "What's up, girl? I'm not trying to be rude."

I'm from, "You better be inside before the streetlights come on,"
to South Beach girls wearing that thong, thong, thong, thong, thong.
I'm from the home of the Dolphins and the Heat,
from "Don't do that or your butt will get beat!"
I'm from I'll tell you how it is and talking back,
but Grandma always told me,
"It aint where you're from, but where you're at."

Where I'm From

Randel Burr

I am from a big Indian family
from a small Indian town,
from the beautiful Carolina skies
to the beachfront tides.

I am from that country life and that city life
where they say *What up Bo?* or *How y'all doing down yonder?*
From rugged blacktop to them sandy dirt roads.

I am from where we turned that
moonshine running into Nascar racing,
from that Carolina Tarheel basketball rooting
family to them country Indian cousins having
that Clemson Tiger tailgating backyard party.

I am from that state where you can
smell the beach for miles, taste the
saltwater taffy and smell the dogwoods,
where you can pick from the plum trees and
eat from the pecan trees.
The Carolinas is where I'm from.