



The Inglewood Poetry Project Anthology

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A City of Inglewood Growing Artists Project  
(I-GAP 2013)



The Inglewood Poetry Project  
Anthology

Edited with an Introduction by  
J. Malaika Beckford



AlterDestiny Press  
Inglewood, CA

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## Introduction

I have always loved the City of Inglewood. This city is the setting of my earliest and sweetest memories. I can remember how, as a child, my bedroom faced west and I would sit for hours listening to music as the ever blowing breeze caused my cartoon covered curtains to rise and fall like a slow and steady breath. I recall the warm feeling I would get from watching the long lines of evergreens whisk past me as my mother and I drove up Crenshaw Boulevard. It is also the place where I learned the importance of community. Precious were the days when I wandered around the Inglewood Library judging books by their cover and falling in love with poetry and art. I cherish my elementary days at Bennett-Kew elementary school where my teachers noticed my talent for language early on and encouraged me whole-heartedly.

As a child growing up in the late 80's and 90's I saw gang wars ravage the heart and sidelines of Inglewood. Quickly, the sense of peace I held was shattered by stories I'd heard and things I'd seen. I wondered. Why all the violence in this beautiful place? Could they not see what I see? Could they not see our city was beautiful? I knew in my heart that we were more than this. At the strong advice of my mother, I left California to attend college at Howard University in

Washington D.C. Appreciation for Inglewood grew each time I came home for a visit.

There is a calm in this city that is rare for cities. Living other places made me hypersensitive to this fact. However, the popular Mack-10 rap chant, “Inglewood, always up to no good” echoed a soiled reputation though out the world. Wherever I went, as I told people where I was from, this is the refrain that would be sung back to me. It has been sung to me in rural West African villages and in gritty Brooklyn streets all the same. I would always interrupt the culprit and say “actually, life in Inglewood is pretty good” after explaining that we were a community of hard working middle class families, blue collar workers, people with dreams. They couldn’t believe there was another side to the story.

The Inglewood Poetry Project Anthology is here to present that other side. These poems will show you the human side of our city that is not reported about on the ten o’clock news.

It was my pleasure to conduct workshops with Inglewood residents around the city. I started out in the Darby Park playhouse where I, and a handful of writers, used the park and various writing prompts about home and family as inspiration. I continued on to work with the participants of the Darby Park Be Well group. This vibrant group of women



and men were focused on turning around their health and staying healthy. In this anthology, you will find a poem I wrote after sitting with them for a few Thursday mornings. I also wrote with a group of women from the Senior Center at Vincent Park. With these women, I found stories of journeys from other places with all roads leading to Inglewood, as well as a few good old fashioned life lessons. I sat with the Inglewood Historical Society and listened to stories behind the interesting architecture that one can find all around the city. The workshops held at the Inglewood Library delivered the bright eyed and confident Joshua Apparicio, a 9 year old boy with an old soul and a knack for writing poems. I was able to connect with the youth of Crozier Middle School while conducting workshops at the Inglewood Youth Center and they brought me into their vibrant land of imaginary sword fights and anime. I wrapped up the Inglewood Poetry Project at Callie Rose Literary Café where I wrote with seasoned writers and new writers alike.

What I have always known and has become more solidified during my time with this project is that we are a city of concerned, proactive, community oriented citizens who cherish and care for our hometown. We are far from being a perfect city, but we are improving and I feel that we are headed in the right direction.



**Sweet City**  
~ *J. Malaika Beckford*

On Florence Avenue  
heat holograms rise

from parched sidewalks  
palm trees paused

on a mid-century catwalk  
all around the spice of

fresh cut lawns  
laced with sunshine

Ice cream truck boom  
box spins sugar symphonies

up the street and  
around the corner

children fly & zip  
wheels of candied laughter down

hills of sweet  
Inglewood

hummingbirds sip  
nectar from flowered succulents

cactus in perfect stance  
posed for a pic

jacaranda blooms stain  
the sidewalk Blow Pop purple

birds of paradise burst  
resilient in this desert soil

bougainvillea petals glow  
in dusty places

city of gardener & bumble  
bee buzzing birdsong

popsicle blue daylight  
Inglewood

unwrap these vacant  
lots are smoke screens

a cloak over  
our Kool-Aid gazes

our faces dot the walls of color  
swirled in this metropolis mural

below a streak of airplanes  
reveal bellies we can't touch

but try, each day we rise  
& stretch toward the highs

honey reflection in the mirror  
of the futures eyes

a neighbors rose garden  
perfumes the atmosphere

find me there floating  
on a donut in the air

## **My City, My Love**

~ *Joshua Apparicio*

Love is all I could remember,  
though not born in September

This is all I could ponder  
as I sit here & wonder

The love is what's going to last much longer  
The warmth you feel in December

is certainly a month to remember  
beautiful because of its destiny

You're part of this City's History  
I love living in this productive city

in it's entirety  
Seniors carefully & kindly cared for

as dedicated volunteers open their doors  
Delightful memories of your childhood

simply displayed in every neighborhood  
Lengthy Town Hall discussions

emerge with positive instructions  
Communication of long awaited change

sometimes seems extremely strange  
With the residents will to proceed

in order for the city to succeed  
The gentle smiles on everyone's face

you feel the love & not disgrace  
The richness of the city's knowledge

as they prepare every child for college  
This is the city of special privilege

as your child is raised by the Village  
If all I could remember

though not born in September  
Is that the city's love

is as gentle as a dove  
Let's all sit around & ponder

& envision this city as the 8<sup>th</sup> Wonder

# **A Fabulous Night at The Forum**

~ *Thalia Clarke*

Michael Jackson & his brothers  
they were at the Forum  
people stood in their seats  
the crowd went wild  
people dancing in the aisles

## Inglewood Memories

~ *Alisa Orduna*

Swimming in the pool  
to have tea parties  
with imaginary mermaids

Riding big wheels  
to the corner of the block  
not one inch around it

Black baby dolls  
sent from grandma  
in Omaha

The smell of  
California Christmas trees  
in pink, blue, chartreuse green

Holding my first puppy "Lady"  
when she got lost we all  
searched for her down Manchester

Drinking Cisco in the parking lot  
after a football game  
trying to be cool & fit in

Getting a speeding ticket  
from the red light camera  
for the first time

Pink roses for  
grandma in Chicago  
each petal picture perfect



the fresh cut grass  
the pollen dust  
the hibiscus stem

## **Pool Time Memories**

~ *Doris K. Reed*

Swimming at the local pool  
the smell of chlorine

while the latest R&B hits  
blasted from giant speakers

rolling up our towels  
carrying them under our arms

suits under our clothes  
prepared for our dip

clothes folded neatly to be checked  
in behind the long green counter

then, given a big safety pin with a  
numbered slot to attach to your suit

showers ran constantly as a reminder  
to rinse off before jumping in

Two pools--one for kids  
the other for teens & above

Just beyond the swings & merry-go-round  
our pool, so blue & welcoming

What a wonderful time  
when each day seemed a lifetime

# Inglewood

~ *Donald Bakeer*

It's all good in my 'hood  
Inglewood!!  
Ladera Park! Hollywood Park! Darby Park  
& the Fabulous Forum!  
Ladera Heights! Morningside Park,  
Carlton Square & Briarwood.  
It's all Inglewood!  
& It's all good!

Take a bike ride  
down Lafitte Pincay Drive  
Past Kareem Abdul Jabbar Court  
& reflect on the number of baskets he scored-  
& how he, Magic, Kobe, Shaq & Jerry West  
ruled the sport

The Fabulous Forum saw more  
of Kareem's scoring  
than any other arena  
& no player has ever scored more  
It's in the heart of Inglewood!  
& those memories are  
ALL GOOD!

Crenshaw Blvd! Century Blvd!  
La Brea, Manchester  
& all the avenues with Jacaranda trees purpling  
In the spring-Bling! Bling!  
Even Inglewood Park, where seniors  
feel safe strolling  
kidding & cajoling, although knowing  
these lush verdant surroundings  
will be their home soon

Inglewood!

Life is  
was  
& will continue to be  
good in our beloved  
Inglewood!

# Just Another Day in Fairview Heights

~ *Eddy James*

The tamale lady tolls her bell  
my Latino brethren heed the smell  
palm trees blow my way to greet me

The chirp of seasonal birds  
in my field of backyard  
my organic garden gazes back at me

Unpicked avocado trees  
feed all the squirrels  
hummingbirds lead with their beaks  
to get a closer look

Wind instruments add space  
to weekend soundscapes  
lush green foliage  
encompasses my vision

The ocean breeze  
creates a beat  
along with my neighbors  
wind chime

In the park children laugh in surround sound  
little league parents cheer for the best team  
tennis players are perfecting  
their backhand

At 5pm, the heat dips twenty degrees  
burnt fire logs fragrance the air  
my neighbors hose drenches the lawn

**I'm From...**  
~ *Jayla Williams*

I'm from the sweet nectar  
of the Sakura tree

I'm from Unicorns  
& sword fights with Dad

I'm from Inglewood  
the 24<sup>th</sup> opening

I'm from Rock songs  
& anime

I'm from x-box  
& a friendly cat

I'm from the sound  
of car wheels rolling

## I Remember

~ *J. Malaika Beckford*

I remember 4th of July watermelon  
fireworks with ice cream

I remember barbeques  
at noon sun licks our faces  
sweat dots the brow of our rainbow

I remember being a guppy  
then a barracuda in the pool  
afraid to jump off the diving board

I remember my mother waiting for me, light  
reflecting on her glasses meant let's go

I remember playing until the streetlights first flicker  
jumping in the sand until it filled my ears  
metal slides too hot to slide down  
Seesaws & running the merry go round  
someone always got hurt, but kept playing

& I laughed at the funny shaped trees  
& I played bloody Mary & hide & go seek  
my small feet running on hot concrete  
the first bee sting, walking from the hill  
where I fell from the pain

I remember playing kitchen,  
all the pine needles as spaghetti  
& pinecones for drumsticks

I remember summer day camp  
covering my hands with paint & pressing  
into white t-shirts, signing my name

I remember running for the ice cream truck  
field trips on a yellow bus  
lunch boxes of Hi-C fruit punch & Octo cooler

I remember the talent show,  
the boys sang The Humpty Dance, the girls  
mimicked En Vogue

I remember the smell of wood on the stage  
the walk from Bennett to Kew Elementary school  
the house that looked like a mushroom  
the single tree that stood center field  
the concrete mote around it

I remember Leonard teaching us about Broadway  
teacher pausing for the roar of airplanes

I remember when Century Blvd. was all  
vacant lots & car wash  
going to Hollywood Park  
playing in snow shipped in brown boxes  
the icy shards cut my curious young hands

I remember long lines at Costco  
when Costco was called Price Club  
& Big Lots was Pic & Save  
watching horses lap around the racetrack  
the announcers radioed voice spills into everything

I remember walking through Inglewood Park  
looking for my grandfather's grave  
but finding my cousins

I remember my first concert at the Forum  
M.C. Hammer, TLC, Jodeci  
Apple hats, hammer pants, Forever My Lady



I remember being hall monitor  
the Bennett-bear patch on my sash  
playing Karaoke on the front porch  
our neighbors watched our every move

I remember the quick drive  
to the Hawthorne Mall  
charm school at Montgomery Ward  
buying Maxi Tapes from Sam Goody

I remember pet spiders in 3rd grade  
blocks bursting with Christmas lights  
mistaking the pigeon coo for an owl  
fake owls on roofs

I remember Saturday morning dance class  
where mother's feet floated over the wood floor

I remember the breeze always blowing

# The Laughter of Children

~ *Doris K. Reed*

A joyous sound indeed  
carried by the wind  
beyond the tops of trees

Inglewood  
a lovely  
place to live

full of creative people  
who only want to give

## **Inglewood**

*~ Doris K. Reed*

Airplanes passing by  
like wild parrots noisy as they fly

Smells of the city tickle my nose  
fried chicken, BBQ, donuts  
the subtle scent of a rose

An old woman on the corner  
selling her wares  
tamales, carnitas, corn cobs cut in squares

A night at the Forum  
where one might see some stars

Inglewood Cemetery the resting place  
of many not far from

Hollywood Park where  
gamblers lost a plenty

## Childhood

~ *Krishna Fitzsimmons*

I remember  
going to the park to swim  
summer brown bag lunches  
going to Sunday school  
playing with friends all morning long

Spending time at Grandma's house  
& not wanting to go back home  
Following my older Aunt everywhere  
she went when I was 2 years old

I remember getting baptized

Meeting my younger sister  
for the first time when I was 12  
Wanting to know who I came from  
Wanting to know my father  
Meeting his mother, my grandmother  
when I was 19 years old  
I already had 2 sons of my own

I remember being shot at 16  
& living to tell  
hospitalized for 3 months  
wishing just to breathe fresh air  
Thinking & wishing to escape  
this bed, seeing death all around  
not knowing if I'm coming or going

Seeing that white light at the end  
consoling the EMT letting him know  
I will be okay while watching  
tears run down his face

# The Wrong Red Shirt

~ *Hiram Sims*

In high school, round about 15 years old,  
round Western & Exposition Boulevard  
I ran across a busy, South Central street  
with a Red Hawaiian shirt tied around my waist  
on my way to get my momma a hamburger.

I am not Hawaiian. Never been there.  
Never smelled there. Never seen there.  
But because it was red, a very noticeable red  
Someone noticed me.

I bought the red shirt to fit in. To blend in.  
To never be noticed.  
But it didn't work.  
That boy, dressed in a grown man's aggression  
noticed me.  
Ran over to me, hand under shirt, and said  
in a tone that meant I might die today,  
"Where you from?" I knew what he meant.

If I was sarcastic, I would have said, Hawaii.  
If I was conscious, I would have said, West Africa.  
If I was deep, I would have said, God's fingers.  
But I was smart, & very afraid  
& I said what I should have said to a young Crip  
looking for trouble.

"Nowhere."

He let me go, & to this day I never wear red  
Nor do I want to be noticed  
by anyone.

## When I Grow Up

~ *Eloy Jara*

I want to be an engineer  
in technology  
a scientist  
make a camera that won't fail  
send it through a  
wormhole & find  
another earth

## **Darby Park in Late March**

*~ Donald Bakeer*

Fear free young swingers  
swing skyward-  
dreams will come true!

Serenity swarming  
warm breezes blowing  
America & California flags flowing

Over there  
my family's fingerprints  
on the tennis courts & sliding doors

Our countries promises come into being

## **I'm the Man!**

*~ Ethan Hohl*

I'm the new J's everyday man  
I'm the running, swimming, football  
playing, eating everything kind of man  
I'm the man that loves warm days  
I'm the man who hates hurricanes  
I'm the man that sneaks into Hollywood Park  
Casino & comes out with billions!

I'm the color blue lovin' kind of man  
I'm the tsunami that rains down on your parade  
I'm the red panda lovin' kind of man  
I'm the man that runs  
so fast I can go around the world in  
3 minutes kind of man  
yes, I am the man!



## **I Live**

~ *Catherine Henderson*

I had a stroke

I don't remember much

Family reunions, traditions  
greens & chicken

Respect your elders  
play jacks

I live

## **Grandmother's Rules**

*~ Agatha Gay Jones*

I'm from grandmother's comfort & serenity

I'm from gardens of Indian playmates

I'm from grandmother's three & four layer cakes

I'm from big watermelons & baby chicks

I'm from one radio to listen to-no TV's

I'm from church mission meetings

I'm from grandmother's rules

-no baseball, no games with boys, no fun

# I Remember Inglewood

~ *Shirley Simmons*

I remember 1972  
taking the flight to Cali

flying over the flight path  
which led to LAX

looking down at the small houses  
& the street & small cars  
from up above

not knowing  
that this would eventually be  
my new home

we moved to  
the busiest street in the city

Century Blvd.  
1972

there was a migration going on

the whites were moving out  
the color scene was changing

it was a joy for me to move  
to this warm new city  
& leave behind cold PA

I fell in love with the yard  
the fence & various trees  
fruits of avocado, lemons, figs, peaches  
this was a treat  
instead of a yard of  
just dirt

we would listen at night  
to the planes coming in for landing  
close real close overhead  
traveling down the flight path

we would sit out on the front porch  
& watch the jet stream  
& wave at the people

this was our adventure  
& it was one of new found joy

## Inglewood Changing

~ *Shirley Simmons*

It seems like every 10 to 20 years  
the color scene changes  
from White to Black  
from Black to Hispanic

downtown Inglewood changed  
from a lot of busy stores  
to loosing a lot of stores  
to a lot of Spanish stores  
& many stores close again  
& then being not so busy

now, stores are opening up again  
& are doing well

## **Akron, Ohio**

*~ Linda Rogers*

In Akron  
my bedroom had  
a record player  
& storage in chairs

In Akron  
we would pick up  
daisies hold them  
under our chins

In Akron  
I was the silly  
kid always flipping  
my eyelid

In Akron  
family photos are  
required to live at  
my brother's house

In Akron  
the weather is  
seasonal & nice  
all year around

I know I am home  
when I see snow  
the blimp, tall buildings  
& friendliness

## Memories

~ *Jeanetta McKnight*

I remember the old ringer washer on the back porch  
I remember living in the basement apartment with cold  
concrete tiled floors

I remember holiday dinners with Morgan David wine  
I remember how the sunflowers grew tall & wild in the empty  
field behind the cleaners

I remember green Jell-O with fruit & cream cheese  
I remember Aunt Honey stealing family photos whenever  
she looked through an album

I remember loving hot summers  
I remember the clean smell of pine sol & aero-waxed floors

## **Little Rock**

~ *Belinda Johnson*

I'm from a rock collection  
in a special room  
red, brown, black & white rocks  
a collection of big & small & beautiful

the special room was fathers  
office, always very busy

he was a house mover  
he was gone a lot

he went from state to state  
moving houses  
but always returned to his rocks



## Miss Estrella

~ *A. Maboghanne Wordsmyth*

The beige linoleum  
though it was Compton  
-The Ghetto-  
shone at a high gloss

The table was set  
only one bowl  
until she would be here  
& would say  
“all right”  
& you could get yours  
you see...

Miss Estrella was coming

The huge & piping tureen  
of gumbo  
-her recipe-  
untweaked by anyone  
else's upstart opinions of  
what should be in it this time

Shrimp & Crab legs  
hugging & fighting  
in it's crowded insides  
sat at one side  
the pot of coffee on the other

Twelve long-stemmed red  
American Beauties sedately  
commandeered the central position  
because...

Miss Estrella was coming

The seven of us had somehow become nine  
as a couple of strays found themselves onto  
the sofa  
lost among us  
heads down, bare feet still  
waiting for the pineapple coconut cake  
they knew Mama would share with  
anyone present  
Miss Estrella was on her way

Like a big circular black dinosaur  
a 78bpm record played  
“I’ve Got a Woman”  
(way over town)  
by Ray Charles  
at a volume noticeably below the usual

To that sound  
the long shiny Pontiac  
with silver stars  
up it’s rear sides slid into the  
driveway where it sat at the  
center of the space meant on  
ordinary days for four  
tenants’ parking needs  
All others had moved to the street

In the doorway within a halo of  
Estee Lauder’s youth dew  
appeared from the floor up

a tall pair of brown leather boots  
underneath a pair of tweed gauchos  
a puff-sleeved silk shirt topped by  
a perfectly coiffed regal head  
All was silent-  
Miss Estrella was here

# Sambucas Negra

~ DJ Watson

*Elder*  
*Be Ye Lady's tree*  
*Burn it not, or*  
*curs'd you'll be*

Sure as spring ripens into summer  
she is coming Sunday morning  
as the elderberry blossoms begin to bulge  
armed with her secret recipe for making vintage wine

The sun's pink-eye shimmies above the horizon  
as truck tires crunch the gaveled road  
a minefield of potholes negotiate  
the bump & grind of Oak Lane's colored margins

Aunt Goldie's cream-colored skin  
burnished alabaster of age-old Negro's reaping  
in a field of unkempt promises  
she is bringing in the sheaves

A woman of few words  
I read everything she does not say  
in ornamental crow's feet  
surrounding home-made eyes

We walk down the lane  
through cedar groves beside the rushing stream  
re-casting fragments of gelded shadows  
under heaven's canopy

She shows me blue-black clusters  
of sweetness  
hand picked inside  
deciduous velvet skin

We tug the ripe ones  
hidden beneath leafy camouflage  
gently coaxing their reluctance  
from a coven of tawdry vines

If picked too soon  
the berries may be toxic  
stained erections of poisoned pulp  
in unremarkable decrees of royal purple

“Timing is everything,” she says  
since the beginning when medicine  
women worked magical liqueurs  
their formulas blueprinted  
below the moon’s innocuous glow  
a frenzied bacchanal  
they soiree naked & barefoot  
dancing among towering birch & cedar  
whose pale blueberries are forbidden fruit

Extracted generations of fingertips  
make marmalade from malady  
the bramble block of auction pens  
blistered skin leftover inquisition of invisible scars

Chinese dwarf reds dangle from branches  
carved into Fujara lutes long long ago  
a mashing rake & beggars cloak  
benedicted vinters, who cork life’s lusciousness

I watch the up and down of her rosehips  
two plaits parted in the middle  
untangled waterfall of gray roots  
exalted from her crown

She who knows the secrets of when to plant  
by touching two fingers to the west wind’s moxie

she almanacs the harvest  
earth's orbit falling into summer solstice

Her white V-neck decorated with diaper pins  
jam canner, untutored knower of thermodynamics  
flame fanner,  
stealing the put up sweetness in

Elderberries mushroom like stratus clouds  
patched full of the very thing you need  
doctor's orders: the indescribable tannin of lover's breath  
quick sanding crestfallen waves as passion disintegrates

We pick & peck composting blackness inside quart jars  
nestled in gunnysacks, her voice clears thick-spit  
as she damns the sparrows--fierce competitors  
whose eye-on has yet to fly south for another season's  
watching

I lean in to her shadow's half-past  
Ask, "Do you ever miss..."  
wishing I could backtalk my mouth's clumsy pithing  
words lip-synched to an unrelenting hymn

She looks at me sideways, the creases of her eyes softening  
like plaster perplexed before setting  
the unsealed apotheosis of gapped teeth  
truth slip-stitched by another woman's name spoken in dream

The bitter elements of wild yeast  
can overwhelm the wines' enzymes  
pectin extracting the deep rich color  
from unbitter fruit

She picks up a branch fettering the path before us  
burn marks of a freak lightning storm

marrying its twisted contours  
just enough crush to mash up the broken in

Cold soaked by any means necessary  
churning the top of the juice  
fixing it just so  
requires mathematics

Target sugar levels on a scale of Brix  
during the night the levels always increase  
all over the map, balance  
pointing me in the right direction

She nods, rejoicing the hydrometer  
although there is no need  
to measure fermented gravity times the potential to age well  
to withstand the test of time & stormy weathers

Tartaric acid high enough to sublime  
science evolving within the art of a five-gallon bucket  
*Sambucas negra*, love right in the next uncharted thicket  
staining your skin for days.

## **We Came**

*~ Jimmy Lee Worther*

We came in 1950  
from Arkansas to Los Angeles  
cuz all they had was cotton  
& we can't do nuthin' with no cotton!



## Sports

~ *Barbra McDowell*

I'm from the YMCA  
where I played basketball

I ran & ran up & down the court  
hopping as a foreword would

to catch the ball to make  
a basket or two

I played for two years  
from 16 to 18

at 18 I was married  
to a football player  
a hero

He played & played  
straight into alcoholism

I got a divorce.

**This City**  
~ *Esmeralda Thompson*

This city of  
orange trees  
lemon trees  
avocado trees  
beautiful sunshine  
& Jim Dandy fried chicken

In this city  
I have struggled  
not making  
much money

Coming to this  
city has made  
a big difference  
in my life

**Home**  
~ *Dora Mata*

Airplanes  
my one tree  
children going  
to school  
tiny noises  
birds sing

**Thanksgiving at the Espys, for Ameer**  
~ *Hiram Sims*

Jesus is usually in the kitchen at Black family gatherings  
mixed in with the two whole sticks of butter in the cornbread.  
The savior boils over the pot of greens in there with the  
seasoned saints  
as they wait for the rapture & sweet potatoes  
to come out the oven.

The young people eat in the back where the TV is  
& avoid Jesus like the plague. Drown out  
the sound of salvation with Jay-Z & Tupac comparisons.  
We navigate away from Calvary Hill as LeBron and Kobe  
Go at it again.

But in the kitchen, where you must be at least 55 to get a  
good seat,  
John the revelator baptizes the Son of Man a hundred times  
before the collard greens are finished boiling down.  
& young people need to get their act together  
& young people need to find good jobs  
& young people need to stop listening to rap music  
& young people need to stop havin' babies fo' dey married  
& young people need to come back to church

& then...the food is ready, finally  
& generations pour out of their respective rooms  
& we all pray to God for blessing our  
family to come together  
& we eat the spoonful of Jesus mixed in with the potato salad  
While Ameer tells me,

Welcome to the Family.

## Growing Up

~ *Hiram Sims*

When our family got broke  
I mean really, really broke  
my pops would take our last twenty dollars  
& buy a 5-gallon bucket of pancake mix  
Tall. White. Few Words.

Bent metal carryin' handle swingin'.  
He would lift in into the kitchen  
& slam it in the counter like a drum of paint.

“Here Baby. Now work your magic, wicho fineass.”  
& my momma, who knew what to do  
made filet mignon with that powder  
black and crispy on the top  
golden brown on the bottom

& we ate good. Nuthin' but that  
14 days in a row sometimes  
All five of us together  
in a one bedroom with plenty of flapjacks  
& love to go around.

When you & I almost run out  
we prefer dollar fifty Costco hotdogs  
& that chili you make  
with the cornbread baked on top  
& we struggle sometimes  
that feel like all the times  
while making memories  
for our own children to remember  
on full bellies.

## **In the Neighborhood**

*~ Thalia Clarke*

Cars race down  
the street  
dogs always  
barking  
children play ball  
in the neighborhood

I know I'm home  
when I see Dulan's  
on Manchester  
or Sizzler's &  
the Fabulous Forum

## GRACE

~ *Michael Wimbish*

Black spider  
crawling  
above my head  
catches my attention.

Crawling upside down or is it down  
side up? Suddenly free falls, down, down,  
down, catching itself spinning a web grasping desperately to  
crawl back  
up, crawling back up, crawling back up, & stopping, resting,  
& starting again crawling back up quickly, frantically,  
gratefully back to  
the top or is it to the bottom? Gathering his footing,  
crawling again above my head right side up or upside  
down moving forward gratefully, gracefully,  
*thankfully*  
on toward its  
next  
destination.

# Marching Band

*for the Inglewood High School band*

*~ J. Malaika Beckford*

We form one body  
each sound, a cell  
of one great being  
beating, breathing

We are one heart beating  
one lung breathing  
one eye watching  
the crowd go wild!

We are in tune  
we are in line  
down to the gold button  
& white shoeshine

Our inner thoughts  
we hear out loud  
a bullhorn heard  
by all the crowd

To the left flank...hut!

Watch this line become the sun  
tall flags spin & turn  
sticks snap the snare  
taps out the metronome  
our sound fills the air

Roll out green & white  
drums are rolling, the tempo is right!  
We're ready to play!  
We're ready to fight!



## Be Well

~ *J. Malaika Beckford*

Early mornings  
Darby Park  
dew still on the grass  
walkers walk the track  
go around & come back

Check your blood pressure  
watch your weight  
be mindful of your dinner plate

Beautiful smiles  
a room full of friends  
decades long citizens  
we're here to get better!  
we're here to be well!

We breathe the fresh air  
delight in the smell  
of pine trees & roses  
that tickle our noses!

Each day we rise  
& become more wise  
with an hour of exercise

We are grateful for this time  
strengthening our bodies  
& building our minds!

Be Well!  
Be Well!

That's what we say

bright & early on Thursday  
with our dumbbells in our hands  
were making healthy future plans

Be Well!  
Be Well!  
In body and mind

You only get one  
so please, be kind

## Montego Bay

~ *Esmeralda Thompson*

The big family photograph  
the big planter alive & green  
hibiscus trees, lovely flowers & leaves  
family dinner together on Sunday  
rice, spinach, beans

Mother's famous meat pies  
she always loved to bake  
my sisters & I would help her  
grind meat in the grinder then

we'd go outside to play  
inside a giant bush  
where we'd laugh the day away

## While Sitting in the Park

~ *Thalia Clarke*

A man passes by  
walking his dog  
asks me how I'm doing

I reply  
I feel fine

Sitting at the table  
eating healthy snacks  
watching the people  
trees rustling in the wind

Sound of airplanes above

## **I Am**

*~ Devyn Nettles*

I'm the black gamer  
an entertainer  
mixer of elixir  
my style a mystery  
as well as my psychology

# **I Know I'm Home**

~ *Ethel Mosby*

The green lawn  
my house  
my family  
the school across the street  
all the students & the noise  
the sound of sirens

## **Inglewood**

*~ Kay Beauford*

Blue columns on Century Blvd.  
along with palm trees  
billboards at their feet  
nice cars buzz underneath  
with sirens

**Southern Boy**  
~ *Michael Wimbish*

LA-I can bathe in your air & like  
cleopatra never grow old  
here black is ebony & brown gold  
too tall palms bend & lean on the shore  
icy cold waters stretch eternal & every color  
intermingling under the Sun  
reminds me-  
so far from home



*iii.*

*~ Michael Wimbish*

*You left souvenir  
never to forget embrace  
I "Heart" Hollywood*

*vi.*  
~*Michael Wimbish*

*Todos los niños  
Bailando a música  
Es que guitarra?*

## **My City, My Home - Inglewood**

*~ Joshua Apparicio*

My first breath  
outside of my mother's womb  
was in Inglewood  
my new home, my city & truly  
The City of Champions.

My birth in the City of Champions  
meant I'd have to  
think like,  
be a part of  
& become  
a Champion.

My journey to becoming a Champion  
began extremely early.  
I attended school in this great city  
in preparation of such a feat  
which I thought was quite neat.

My hard work & desire to learn  
paid off when I began public speaking  
at the tender age of 5.

Acknowledged for accelerated academic  
excellence at Inglewood Unified School District  
was a great start. Yes,  
this began in my city, my home,  
The City of Champions!

My desire & inspiration increased my confidence  
every time I spoke publicly, whether it was at Churches,  
the park, community center, or school.  
In my heart I knew  
I was becoming one of the cities champions.

My Mayor, Mr. Butts, the City of Champions best,  
took the time to embrace me with Love,  
kindness & encouragement  
I couldn't have asked for any more from a leader.  
Being a leader means you must have a dream team  
with excellence in mind.  
We do, our crew of District Reps,  
Council & Assembly members  
who care for their communities.

What a city!  
What a home!  
What a place to be, to grow  
to become a Champion  
in Inglewood  
the City of Champions!

**When I Was a Little Girl,  
I Saw a Tiger in My Backyard**  
*- J. Malaika Beckford*

something woke me  
pulled me out of bed to  
float a slow & quiet  
tip toe across cork floors

beyond walls of fuzzy bears  
& cabbage patch dolls  
toward the glow  
down a midnight hall  
where I pressed my  
hands & face  
against the glass wall  
gazed into the yard

fuchsia vines twist  
around tree limbs  
a curtain of leaves  
float below  
garden angels  
wearing halos of  
leftover starlight

reflecting on my little girl white  
nightgown of wide pink bows

wishful fingers  
then, I see her  
laying on the grass  
arms tucked in like resting wings  
her body mounts the lawn  
slow breaths hum & on exhale

cast black orange stripes  
on the moon

I feel the glass thinning  
my heart wants to follow

walls melt like ice cream down  
the seam of a summer cone  
dew surrounds my feet  
flowers swirl their sweet  
the sky glows velveteen

we share breaths of sparkling air now  
she turns her face to see me

the green glow of her eyes wrinkled time  
& now I stand by her side on  
the patch of grass where I once played  
kitchen & jacks, where tables of friends ate  
flowers & sticks for snacks  
I hop onto her back  
& we fly over the shingles on rooftops  
& into the sky

## Untitled

~ *Karineh Mahdessian*

I am shards of hope  
& despair as warrior blood  
courses through blue veins

My mouth full of song,  
I howl rage into shame &  
dance with memory

I bear arms with words  
birth revolutionary  
love---this, where home is

## Poet Biographies

**Joshua Apparicio** is a student at Cowan Avenue Magnet Elementary School and participated in workshops at the Main Library.

**Donald Bakeer** is a poet, author of “Bloods and Crips” and a longtime Inglewood resident.

**Kay Beauford** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**J. Malaika Beckford** is a poet, born and raised in Inglewood and creator of The Inglewood Poetry Project.

**Thalia Clarke** is an educator and longtime Inglewood resident who participated in the Darby Park workshops.

**Krishna Fitzsimmons** participated in workshops at Callie Rose Literary Arts Café.

**Catherine Henderson** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**Ethan Hohl** is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Crozier Middle School.

**Eloy Jara** is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Crozier Middle School.

**Eddy James** is a Brooklyn transplant currently living in (and loving) Inglewood!

**Belinda Johnson** is an Inglewood transplant via Pasadena.

**Agatha Gay Jones** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**Karineh Mahdessian** is a poet and host of monthly a poetry series at “La Palabra” in Highland Park.



**Dora Mata** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**Barbra McDowell** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**Jenetta McKnight** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**Ethel Mosby** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**Devyn Nettles** is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Crozier Middle School.

**Alisa Orduna** is an Inglewood raised writer, world traveler and founder of Callie Rose Literary Arts Café.

**Doris K. Reed** is an Inglewood based poet who participated in workshops at Callie Rose Literary Arts Café.

**Linda Rogers** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**Hiram Sims** is a poet and founder of the Community Literature Initiative.

**Shirley Simmons** is a published author and Inglewood resident who participated in workshops at Callie Rose Literary Arts Café.

**Esmeralda Thompson** participated in the workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

**DJ Watson** is a published poet who participated in Darby Park workshops.

**Jayla Williams** is an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Crozier Middle School.

**Michael Wimbish** is a Los Angeles based poet and author.

**A. Mohoganne Wordsmyth** is poet who participated in workshops at Callie Rose Literary Arts Café and Darby Park.

**Jimmy Lee Worther** participated in workshops at the Vincent Park Senior Center.

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