

Clinton Ricks

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English 463

Stolen

my mother cries with  
you two beautiful women  
who lost sons by  
sidewalk altars inside  
this shrine of constant malice we  
call the ghetto  
i will never know this pain, you lost your creation, mold  
of your soul broken

let your memories  
phoenix wings lift  
you above your  
sea of hurt

Jamie Holt

Certain Words

I heard the story

We all did

I heard the story so many times

That certain words were stuck

In my mind for days

“Courageous”

“Brave”

“A true hero”

No one will ever hear the name

Zaevion Dobson

Without also thinking those words

But as a mother of a son

I can't help but wonder if

That's enough

So please know

That on the night it happened

I watched my son as he slept

I placed my hand on his chest

And I hoped for him to grow

To be the kind of man

That your son was.

**Zaevion, Savior**

Taylor Olson

I hear your name, everywhere I go—downtown streets,  
campus sidewalks, bright screen in my living room,  
that Starbucks on Kingston. They talked about you  
in church on Sunday—how brave you were, how  
incredible the sacrifice you made. The whole  
sermon called for more people to be like  
you.

I wonder—did you know what would happen?

When you made your choice? When you  
threw yourself over those three girls,  
did you know the people would be  
shouting your name in the streets?

“Zaevion.  
Savior.”

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

— *President Obama's speech for Zaevion Dobson, John 15:13*

Brother, son,  
growing man —  
gave your  
heart beat  
to shield  
metallic hate  
which sprayed  
from those,  
who did  
not know  
the beauty  
sown  
from you.

Nick Bendeck

**Dear Zenobia,**

When I was seven years old I broke my mother's lamp. She heard the commotion and rushed in from the kitchen to see if I was safe. I was, but she wept. She told me the lamp was an heirloom; an anniversary gift from my dad's parents. I didn't know what an heirloom was, so she explained that it was a "one of one." I collected as many of the porcelain pieces as I could fit in my sweaty palms and took them to my room. They stayed hidden by quilts during the day, but, under the covers of night, I meticulously glued those pieces back to the base of her lamp. It grew uglier with every addition. Nothing I did could revitalize the priceless symbol of the love in her life.

She discovered the monstrosity while cleaning under my bed one spring afternoon. She sat me down at the kitchen table and told me that some things cannot be fixed; cannot be replaced. The more you try, the more broken they become. You must lose the physical connection, but cherish the memory.

Nick Bendeck

Kelli Frawley

## The Living Hours

*For Zenobia Dobson*

The plaque they gave you  
to replace him is cold.  
Does not smile the way he did,  
flickers with light from  
the static television.

Your boy was no reflection.  
Candlelight eyes,  
he sparked.

He walked with  
sermons in his blood.  
Let God speak through  
his laughter.

*Most children his age  
would have run.  
He didn't*

They declare him a hero  
for his death.  
You remember the living hours  
he spent burning hope  
until the wick ran  
short.

Marina Waters

*All The Way*

I can only gloss over that photo.

You in hero's maroon,

stone faced road dog.

Ready.

That ain't my brother.

Nah, more like a

stranger you get in a picture frame,

someone else's graduation.

I'll be at yours,

Brother.

You were my Friday night superman.

I loved you

right there

on the heels of angels,

soaring down an emerald runway

forever.

That ain't my kryptonite though,

Brother.

No.

I can't

fathom

setting into  
mahogany eyes  
even  
in glossy magazine print.

Sun streaming over  
Alabama crimson like  
bumpy leather on that  
October game ball—the one  
where you went all the way.

Then the look.  
We're gonna make it,  
you'd say.

You did.

I'll go all the way  
one day,  
Brother.

And look you  
in the eyes.

Tom Gaetjens

What Lives On

*For Zaevion*

All his days come back in threes  
we wake, freshly blinded, new  
hole in the flag, another boy steps  
emptyhanded, classroom to conflict.  
Time can't teach to float barefoot  
above broken memory –  
we walk.

Put your fingers to the wounds to  
quiet you doubt:  
some things, bullets  
can't take.

## Ode to Silence

In Absolute Awe and Honor of Zae

By Carlee Clark

There's a quiet that surrounds us in a moment of uncertainty.  
A peaceful abundancy overflowing—a reminder of who we have been  
In our past, as well as those who have been before us.

A gasp of air, a breath no longer taken for more than what it is:  
An opportunity, a newfound hope of tomorrow.  
A perseverance of living largely and loudly, even with no words.

Perspective makes all the difference in this moment of stillness.  
An impact of a soul ripples the norm of a country,  
Serves as a weapon of mass destruction--

Breaking barriers of race and gender,  
A fight worth fighting through a life worth living.  
Warriors find rest in tranquility.

## **Too Soon, Zaevion**

A fifteen-year old should be

Dreaming about prom,

Whom to invite,

About football,

Number 24, sprinting

To the end line,

About classes

And colleges,

About anything.

But Zaevion Dobson

Hurled his strong

Young body

In the way of bullets.

His body was too human

To shatter metal.

His body proved

Strong enough to stop bullets

From killing three friends,

Young women who will

Embody his memory  
Long as they live.

Maybe they will name  
A son  
Zaezion, and tell him,

“You are named for  
a man who was not too young  
to do the right thing. A hero.”

Yes, yes, we know,  
teens will sigh.  
President Obama invoked him,

The young man who  
Sacrificed himself  
Without doubt.

But I am thinking now of Mrs. Dobson,  
His mother, who taught him  
To think first

Of others,  
Thinking of the ache,  
The emptiness,

Her loved son  
Shattered by cold metal

Fired from the hands

Of twenty-somethings:

“barrage of bullets”

“senseless shooting spree”—

As if there could be

A meaningful shooting

spree—

Zaevion is a beautiful name,

Now more beautiful,

His mother’s consolation.

A Tenth Grader,

He should have been

Studying biology

And playing ball.

He should have been

Home with family.

Aren’t I a mother too?

So I lay my heart on the page

For Mrs. Dobson.

I want to kill the bullet that

Killed your son, Zenobia.

Want to stop this madness.

Would I throw myself in the way?

I am a professor,

But Zae is my teacher now.

Marilyn Kallet