

September 27, 2019

To: Karin Wolf

From: Caitlin McGahan

Greetings Ms. Wolf,

I am writing to submit my nomination for Poet Laureate of Madison.

In your selection criteria, you indicate you're looking for someone with an established presence as a productive poet, someone who has a large body of work, and has also established relationships in the community. I am that person and here are some of my accomplishments.

I have been a part of Urban Spoken Word Poetry Collective for the past 12 years. It is a place that I call home and I love creating a welcoming space for people who would otherwise not have a place to share, from first time poets to poets who think they won't ever fit in. Everyone fits in at Urban Spoken Word because we encourage everyone to come as they are.

Through Urban Spoken Word Poetry Collective, I have competed in 8 National Poetry Slam competitions and have been the Grand Slam Champion 3 times, and I have also participated in tri-state/regional competitions and I have performed in the neighboring towns of Oregon and Portage. I have helped to organize Spoken For local events, Poetry Unplugged events right here in Madison and I have also co-facilitated both child and adult writing workshops.

I am the Co-founder of the Harlem Renaissance Museum that we created in 2015. We pride ourselves on celebrating the living history of the Harlem Renaissance. I have helped organize events ranging from 300 people to 30 people, providing education and events about jazz, visual art, dance and creative writing and poetry. I helped to orchestrate a Duke Ellington presentation by the Verona Band teacher who taught to the children of Frank Alice and Wingra Elementary School.

I have participated with the Read Your Heart Out campaign at Lakeview Elementary, as I understand the importance of developing a love of reading at an early age. I have helped create curriculum for children's writing and performance workshops. I helped to co-facilitate the writing workshop that we had with the Northport Community Center. I have also participated in children's writing workshops at St. James Elementary, and participated in a poetry education performance at Lindbergh Elementary.

I have published two chapbooks and a few articles, as well as performing my poems on social media. I am also working on a children's book. I appreciate the importance of being able to get my message out and helping people to see things on a more accessible platform.

I encourage you to consider my application and know that I am someone who can see the big picture and also understand the importance the necessary details. I am someone who is looking towards the future and understands the importance and the power of the written word.

Thank you so much for your consideration,

Caitlin McGahan

Becky

You only want me when I'm not there, you better call Becky with the good hair...

Becky, I can't stand you. I can't stand you even more than Queen B, and for me, that's really saying something, as she is holding a pitcher of animosity and is doling out drinks of lemonade for the world to see, and for you to choke on.

Becky, I hate you because you cloak yourself in white privilege and the power that comes with it, and think that since you are protected, you don't have to worry about anyone else, but yourself. Damn the rest of humanity, forget the genocide of our black brothers and sisters dying on our front yards on the daily.

Tell me again that you're doing the right thing, that you are a good person. I wanna hear you say to me, what you tell your friends as dinner parties, "Oh yes, I volunteered at this place for less fortunate children, oh how it hurt my heart, but it was a rewarding day." Which means that you and your white privilege friends pat each other on the back for taking the time out of your "busy schedules" to give back to the "poor communities." I guess kudos are in order, so you say.

But, I know that what you mean by less fortunate is the black community and what you mean is that you would never associate with "those people" outside of your good white liberal duties, because why would you want to. Why would you want to chance white privilege being called out, to actually have to look at black folks as human beings, as being equals, since that would mean that you would have to "make do" like everyone else, and to you that means that times would be tough because the idea of equal to you is not the same, it is less, which sickens me something fierce, but I digress.

So, sorry I'm not sorry, is what you say when you jump in on discussions that really have nothing to do with you specifically and yet you feel that folks should be privy to whatever bullshit you feel like saying that day, "Why do talks always have to be about race?"

Remember guys, all lives matter." If that were the case, then we wouldn't have black men and women dying faster that we can honor their memory, faster than we can hashtag their name. But, you gon on ahead and keep talking bout that reverse racism bullshit, and remember to get offended for folks getting offended, so that you can be the victim once again. White women are real good at playing the victim, after they have manipulated the game.

You fancy yourself a snow-kissed miss congeniality sprinkled with a little bit of basic bitch, so that you can sound cool to your friends. But, the fact is you have become so basic, you're molecular sodium carbonate, which makes you salty about the situation that you don't want to see yourself in. You don't understand what everyone's problem is with Taylor Swift who continues to try to copyright her cultural appropriations.

You think "Boxer Braids" just came out for this season's fashion craze, not bothering to realize that they are cornrows and have been around forever. You use words like "dope" and "word" during your Friends DVD marathon from your vintage box set, because squad goals, right?

You want to be able to strip the "good parts" of being black without wanting to help change things, without wanting to get to know black culture and people, refusing to acknowledge the struggle. About being harassed by cops for no reason, being followed in stores, being accused of stealing, to have folks cursing your very existence, your very being. Nope, you said you don't want no part of that, and because you are you, you don't have to.

Becky, you are the living, breathing metaphor for first world bullshit, your ignorant, self righteous is running rampant, and you are making it hard for me to be me. You see, we may have the same skin color, but I am the anti-Becky

At first glance, Black folks understandably think that I am you. I have to prove that I am something different, that I will not use my privilege to whitewash everything around me.

That I will use my privilege to help bring truth to power, to call people out, to let them know that this is the witching hour for equality. At first glance, Becky, I could be you, but I am not. I am me, the anti-Becky.

WELCOME SPRING

March twentieth twenty nineteenth is the first day of Spring

Thoughts of milder days ahead make my heart sing

Spring produces greenery and sights of butterflies around

Also, welcome return of hostas, tulips and other spring bulbs from the ground

Children playing baseball and soccer at the park we'll see

Little ones on the slide bring a smile to you and me

We're pleased to put our winter coats and hats away

Walks on snow and ice-free roads lessen stress from our day

Last week I saw a cardinal on my backyard shrub

Its bright red color was like a medicinal healing rub

Spring, you're like a lover whose visit I've been awaiting

Now you're here butterflies in my heart are dancing

By Jolieth McIntosh

SHINE

When bullies laugh at you and call you mean names

Stand up and SHINE

Do not let them trample on your self esteem

That will give them their power

You will have no confidence

Sing draw paint sew read write

Whatever you love to do

Use it to find your inner strength

Share whatever you're good at to bring smiles to others

Be proud of who you are

When bullies laugh at you and call you mean names

Hold your head up

Stand up and SHINE

Walk on your road of confidence and SHINE

MY GRANDMOTHER'S DREAM

Grandmother, you had your dream

You could not achieve your dream

Your culture did not allow you to

A girl's place is in the home

A girl's place is not in the classroom

learning

A girl's place is not in the classroom

teaching

A girl's role is to be a good wife and mother

Grandmother, I had my dream

My parents paved the road for my dream

I got to achieve my dream

Women of our family, born after your generation

got to achieve their dream

Grandmother, we are your dream

I LOVE JELLY COCONUT

Leaving the parish of St Elizabeth in Jamaica

On my way to the hot city of Kingston

Buying jelly coconut from a roadside vendor

Holding the honeydew melon sized coconut in the palms of my hands

Tilting my head backwards while drinking the refreshing coconut water

Watching the coconut vendor making a spoon for me from the coconut husk

Using the coconut husk spoon to eat the soft white semi-sweet jelly from the coconut shell

That was good! I love jelly coconut!

COTTON BALL CLOUDS

Cotton balls dabbed in white paint

on blue paper

Dabbed freely

Dabbed over a vast expanse

Like sponge painting by a free-spirited child

Yet it's the clouds

Painted by the omnipotent creator

A unique work of art

Varied in its display

Free for all to see

If we take the time to look up

Her very, very first love
was Jesus, and Jesus was
delicious.

On Sundays, he rode
past her brownstone
in a vicious two-door
cream colored El Dorado
with walls whiter
than his teeth
were supposed to be

He wasn't real
noted on her block but
to her, he was the epitome
of masculine
beauty.

He was beautifully simple
simply amazing
he was a god to her and so
she spent her days
fixed on the stoop
of her brownstone
in her nightgown praising
and savoring everything he did
because everything he did
was circular, universal

like him solving the 47th problem
of Euclid with the slapping of
dominoes on rickety picnic
tables at cookouts in July
or using
the intersection
of two sidewalks
to calculate the circumference
of her scoop of ice cream

He had a team, a whole team of disciples,
because on the block,
every man had disciples,
and he had 11 that he could trust
and that was plenty

and his disciples were sun-kissed
like summer solstice
but they struggled to exist

on her block
because despite this fact
they were constantly mistaken
for long haired hippie
freaks
with beards who lived in
the Village and read
heroin-fueled poetry

and so, it was just like
everything they had ever
done or seen or visualized
things to be,

which meant
them spending
nights bathing in cologne
that was strong like Old Spice
but was the scent of
compassion drunk with
promise

and going out to heal the
sick, raise the dead
to adulthood and teach
the wrestlers to catch fish
that was free of mercury

and then returning to the
block to be unseen to the
naked eye.

Which made Jesus want
to cry. Actually, Jesus wept.

He wept for the block.
He wept
for the people who couldn't
see him or hear him
He wept for the ones
he healed and the ones
that were waiting on the
world to change.

He wept for her
and for her future
He wept because he loved her.
He wept that because he loved her, he could not be in love with her

And he wept because he couldn't
Hold her and make her feel like everything was going to be alright
He wept
for how her second and subsequent
loves would
hold her tight enough
to make her feel she mattered
but not tight enough to make
her believe she could save the world

But mostly, he just wept.
And while this made him soft
to some on the block,
to her, it made him amazing.
It made him Jesus.

and he was her very, very first love.

By David Hart

If there were two Americas,
she lived in the dingy one
that resembled a two-bedroom flat
on the wrong side of the tracks
in the lower east side quadrant of the northern hemisphere

the one where her tears and broken dreams mixed
with John Cougar Mellencamp ballads to protect her
from this stone-cold sober reality
the way the ozone layer protects the earth's atmosphere

the America where she had no fears of terrorists,
refugees or illegal aliens because in her America, there were borders,
and they were made of plaster and asbestos
and to minimize external pity and pathos
from outside countries
her America had an unspoken motto
that went something like if anyone, anywhere
could handle the huddled masses
of rats that occasionally gnawed their way
through the borders for sustenance
and occasionally warmth, then they deserved
to be there like anybody else, deserved to be a citizen.
On occasion, on her way to work
as a certified nursing assistant
in the same hospice her gram gram died in,
she would quietly confide in with head nods and smiles,
the ambassadors and diplomats of her country,
peacemakers
who sat on the porches of their embassies, their United Nations,
their Camp David's their Wall Streets, brokering the release of hostage ether
and cannabis
with gregarious chants
and even persuasive pleas
about how her union with herself
would
be more perfect, more better,
more healthy even
if she would just have their
babies

and occasionally,
because
she was the president
of her own America
and she could in it as she pleased

do as she pleased,
and because they
were mere interns
in her White House,
which was actually
an acceptable
bronze thanks to

her riding next to the
window on the subway,
she would

but she ultimately
understood that her
body was two sizes
past their beautiful,
two sizes too big too
introduce to the fam
but just right
and sturdy enough
to breed with

Which is why she laughed
at the myth that it was better
to organize her love life according
to skin color, and not
the level of appreciation
and patriotism they had
for the way she existed in the here
and now, and she existed in the
here and now.

She, was no sucker for
this kind of theorizing
about genetic predisposition,
instead she was a
a health care professional
a part time physician,
an American dream hustler
who came up with a
comprehensive health care plan
and economic stimulus package
that would allow
her to both cop enough weed to
keep her mind right during
the week and, pay her bills
on the first of the month,

that was her kind of America

and she was her kind of American
to the core,
she was a perpetual warrior
and therefore, was always at war
with herself, another country
or even her own America,

and so, she almost always donned
the standard-issued battle gear
of her America:
jump boots, a kaki jacket
with her country's flag
on the sleeve
and blood red lipstick,

Because she never knew
when she'd be called to
action, called to respond
with blinding force to some

dictator
posing as a benevolent
statesman
making tours through her country
and declaring that there was another
America that existed
that was better
than hers,
because it had secret handshakes,
and mortgages,
and soccer moms
who drove SUVs
and front yards with actual
blades of grass and not just dirt

This was her country, her
purple mountain
majesties,
where the cops hustle
late because the
good days are outweighed
by the tragedies,

where there are no
soccer moms, no hot dogs
no chevys

or
apple pies,
but nobody starves because
they get by on whatever's
in the cupboard

It wasn't perfect,
but in her mind there
was only one America,
not two; this was the
only America she ever
knew and she
loved it
just as it was.

For us,
the Spring was birthed
under the glow of the soft,
mystified astrological discuss
For us, it came without shallow game
prophetically phonetic pickup lines
or eternal kisses it came viscous
the way a young goddess'
first menstrual cycle recycles
infinite feminine materialized
into existence when Hatshepsut
stood for forever and a day
and took Senemut as her lover,
under the deep purple canopied cover
we watched our futures hover above us
like so many motherless sheep sheparded
by our minds to keep the confines insanity numb
as we drifted to sleep swaddled tightly in each others's auras'
emotions locked tight inside boxes architected by Pandora
we believed that we could keep
the horrors of ceiling-soaked sentiments,
vocational discontent and starving countries,
race wars and mis-raised children
and prison industrial complexes
on the convexes of barges a million miles
and 10 years away as we promised to spend
every waking day in this spot,
this hollow playground holding hands
trading strands of innocence
like Black Malibu Barbies
or baseball cards

We batted around the idea of
procreating a forever,
where we could sever our ties
from this reality,
and based on a procedural
legal technicality,
the sole aristocracy
of our togetherness
could not be described
with words like "like"
or "love" and it couldn't
be measured
in terms of convention,

but conventionally, it seemed
to go on for yards,

Our perpetually
Emotional safeguards
Of silence and cynicism
Sarcasm and individualism
were supremely
superfluous,
actively meaningless,

as we lie prostrate
prone, spotless sharing
a brief kiss
under the spring
as we waited for the summer.

Captain

He looks at her.

His gaze is tense and piercing,

And as her busy, drifting eyes meet his, they halt and become locked with his.

And she can see that behind his piercing eyes, was a story.

A story she would never know nor care to find out because today, she had a mission

Not unlike any other time.

But, this time, this guy, this mark, he was different.

She's confident in her street smarts, confident that he sees nothing coming.

The look on his face was a look of innocence, a look of naivety.

But, the look in his eyes, it bugged her.

Like though she had no idea of his story, she felt like he was reading her like an open book.

And why was it that every time she allowed her drifting, dancing eyes to rest on his, they got stuck.

Time would freeze, as he scanned her soul for the light of truth.

She has the heart of a good woman.

Strong, loving, nurturing of her baby girl, who only has a year and a half of life, but already looks just like her.

A baby girl, who her sister is currently watching, and from the proceeds of this interaction, her baby will finally be able to get fresh diapers.

Any maybe a new stroller.

She's been getting too heavy to carry.

But, he keeps looking at her, and every time she allows her drifting, dancing eyes to stop on his, she gets stuck.

And time would freeze, as he scans her soul for the light of truth.

But, only he can see a soul darkened by the presence of deception.

Though she has the heart of a good woman, it has been taken advantage of countless times

By guys who later turned out to be nothing than sociopathic sadists

And this cause her to line her heart with hatred for people and resentment for men

Men like him

With a humble confidence, but for what reason

She's seen guys better looking than him, seen guys better dressed than him.

But, never before has anyone made her feel this way, with nothing more than a look.

And, as the interaction begins, and the first words are spoken,

She notices that she is off her game.

See, she is looking beautiful, as usual,

But, she feels somehow less attractive, in his presence.

Plus, this guy was different.

The whole time, his eyes never wander to her cleavage,

Nor traced the shape of her figure.

But, the whole time, he keeps looking with the intensity of ocular precision,

Into her eyes.

And, after countless attempts to avoid his gaze, after all the shifting and eye dancing,

She can no longer resist the urge, that is welled up deep inside.

Compelling her to simply submit, just simply submit.

And, as she submits her gaze, and the two of them lock eyes, she realizes what he already knows.

The gig is up.

She can't possibly hide anymore.

But, she is shocked to find out that he is unfazed by her attempts at treachery.

And, it sends barrier breaking shockwaves to her heart when he only reciprocates with

love.

Love.

Love.

Love in all forms, in every way she needs it.

Even love for her baby girl.

Love.

And, as she embraces his abundant love.

All the hatred and resentment flee from her heart, and now

She is liberated and freed.

All the hatred and resentment flee from her heart.

And, now she is liberated and freed.

And now, when he looks at her, his gaze is no longer too intense for her.

And when he scans her soul, for the light of truth,

Her soul reflects a light so bright, and so brilliant, that he is forced to avert

His eyes.

By Tony Fudge

Clinging To Memories

Why is it so easy for me to say goodbye to everything I desperately want to cling to?

What is it about a timeless bond that's so hard for me to form and sustain?

Why is it the more beautiful things are the more pain they bring?

Was it your beauty that made me feel like I had eaten razor blade after razor blade,

My insides sliced and cut.

I've heard people say that they cut themselves to turn the pain on the inside into actual physical pain.

If you cut my heart from my chest, could you see the callous? Could you trace the scar tissue?

It's true I wear a smile, but if you could trace the tracks of my tears, they would lead straight to you.

And you left no bread crumb trail, no intentions of ever coming back.

At night, I lay alone with a vacancy between my arm and my chest, it leaves me with this gripping pain in the back of my throat.

Usually, I swallow, but occasionally I PUHHH

And that results in me curled into the fetal position,

Weeping my soul into my pillow

My pillows are super saturated with memories of you.

And what's worse, is that every memory is a fond one only further reminding me of what I'm missing.

I close my eyes and it's like a mental photo album of happy times.

Like the time we went to Disney Land.

I told you it was going to be hot. You wore short shorts and a bikini top, let your hair blow in the breeze.

Made sure we had sunscreen.

You were the most beautiful woman in the entire park, you made all the fairytale princesses jealous.

And, as we walked through the happiest place on Earth, everyone could see that we were in love.

They could see the joy splashed across our sun kissed faces.

And as we kissed, I thought it was my happily ever after.

And I sit in my room reminiscing about all this love and joy and beauty.

I open my eyes to my solitude, and I'm reminded of the feeling of a coil of barbed wire, churning around in my gut, I have nails for tonsils.

But, I take comfort in my faith, and the fact that with every yin, there's a yang.

And these two feelings, they must be polar opposites, unable to exist without each other, that or this is just karma's way of punching me in the chest.

Because before her, my heart was agoraphobic.

Many women would try to coax it, but it would never come out of its den.

But, you turned my heart into a dove, and you were the hand that lifted the gate on the cage and set me free.

So, now I will chase love, and not be afraid of heartbreak.

Because even if it happens, I'll still have my memories to cling to.

For This I Write

For this I write.

To get things off my chest.

To experience the therapeutic paradox of pen to pad, because all through the day and into the night, my mind never stops.

Winding and whirling.

Thinking about my past, considering my present, and projecting my future, contemplating concepts so complex, I can barely put them into words.

For this I write.

To document the pain inside, to record the struggle of life, to journal the journey of being a sojourner.

Because in a dry and thirsty land, I am a stranger in this body of flesh.

So, if you want to know how I got these scars...

For this I write.

To etch in history a legacy, to guarantee you remember me.

So that long after this point in time, you can still remember the way you felt after every line in every poem.

To imprint my fingerprints into your life story.

To something so epic that when your children reminisce about their childhood, they will laugh as they recall all the stories about the night they walked into a spoken word venue.

For this I write.

To inspire.

To pass down an art form to future wordsmiths, who take pen and pad and hammer out weapons of mass destruction.

Because the pen is mightier than the sword.

So, I hope to inspire others to wield it wisely.

For this I write.

For the haters.

The ones that despise me and often criticize me,

Cuz every time I open my mouth and speak, they wanna critique.

But, what can they do when everything out of my mouth is fresh, innovative, and unique.

For this I write.

To get closer to divinity-because in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

So, in the quiet times of contemplation and mediation,

I can still hear his still, small voice, saying I created you in my image, so write the vision and make it plain.

Because the word was made of flesh and dwelt among us.

For this, I write.

Frances Bean

I'm so happy, cause today I found my friends

Dad? Can you hear me? It's me, your daughter, Francis

I love you, but I hate that song.

I might be Gothic pink but

I understand the blues real well

Because if it wasn't for bad luck

I wouldn't have no luck at all

You know that I was born under a bad sign in the fall of 92

to star crossed lovers

Who loved each other's flaws

More than they cared to admit

You were survivors because that was all you'd ever known

Not limber like pine trees, but more like dried rose petals

Powerful to look at, full of memories gone by,

But it was only a matter of time until you crumbled to dust

Til you snapped only leaving the thorns behind

Fate and circumstance

Stamped me rock royalty

I am the puzzle pieces of a musical genius

Submerged in heroin addiction

And laced with a mother's insanity and smack

Smack removed me from her care

2 weeks into this world and the authorities said I couldn't be there

Couldn't be with the unanointed son of grunge and his mistress of

Strife

But so, goes the life of the child offered

The story of King Solomon and the child. 2 women claimed to be its

Mother

Cut the child in half was his order

But the true mother sacrificed it all to save the one that she had

Carried in her womb

But, my mother

My mother and the world fought over me, no King

Solomon to breathe truth into my mother

And Daddy

Was a genius who

Spent so much time with heroin your fingers were pruned and you

Could see the residue in your wrinkled fingerprints

And stunted lifeline

Daddy left me with Lamia, the goddess who eats her young.

I am spinning from the unwanted attention

And overplayed songs of grunge

I dress up in your pajamas that you married Courtney in for a

Photo shoot

I have a suicide themed 16th birthday party. How does that

Celebrate me?

I am the ice queen, modeling the eerie looks of my father, which I

Try desperately to try to cover with tattoos and dye

I have no boundaries, no foundation

I allow my voice to be mix with 100s of others for a single song
I am afraid to let my own voice be heard alone
But the camera, the camera catches the stories in my eyes so well
That I feel safe there
I feel home
I buy myself a home, a mansion paved in dollars that still reek of
Despair
I can still hear you daddy choking on your guitar strings
You said that lyrics were harder to write that melodies
Yet, your story has been told more times that I care to count
And Courtney, cuz that's all she is to me now, Dad, tries to retell and
Rewrite my life story
But, I am rebuilding my life in a mansion far from her
Here we are now, entertainers....
Is a phrase that's been used far too often, and I will not be
Entertaining them any more

By Caitlin McGahan

For Zion
Unsure of what the balance held
I touched my belly overwhelmed
By what I had been chosen to perform
But then an angel came one day
And told me to kneel down and pray
For unto me a man child would be born
Ironically, often times being chosen
Does not include the word choice
In the most common sense
But it does allow one to be
Extraordinary within the ordinary
Life that one may lead
Without the trouble of ego that
Can plague those famous
Mortals who turned
Themselves into wanna be deities
Peddling hollow promises and false hope
Should I really be considered
To be more courageous than
My pregnant sisters because of who I carry
We all carry miraculous beings
That have a path that they must follow
United in blood and light
We are expected to carry the
Expectations of grace and virtue
Along our journey of expecting
But like many things in life

Things are not always what they seem
Seemingly innocuous, it's preposterous
That one could compare miracles
As me being better than she
She is only carrying a baby
Not the son of God, but in actuality
We are all carrying the sons and daughters of God
And isn't it odd that they would try to put
A value on a baby
We should all wear our bellies proudly
This gift that we were chosen to receive is remarkable
Now let me pray to keep you from
The perils that will surely come
See life from you my prince has just begun
Beautiful beautiful Zion

Sally Hemings

I'm here to remind you of the mess you left when you went away
It's not fair to deny me
Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You you you oughta know
Did you forget about me Mr. Duplicity, I mean Mr. Jefferson?
Did you?
I am the intersection of your public persona and your pedophilia
A showcase for your whore memorabilia
Branded by you and history at 14
Then promptly forgotten about
Just another section of history that white people have tried to "blackout"
Paraded around for you, I was never the belle of any ball
I was expected to wait on your every beck and call,
Seen as nothing more than a piece of property
That you raped on the daily, you stole my innocence
You stole my childhood plainly in sight
with the secret of my horrors sealed tight with a pacifier,
or you pacified me with pacifiers I should say
You purged 6 children from my body, you forced me to stand mute as
Your white privilege had long curdled my tongue
And when all this came to light, they issued you a pardon
I was a 14-year-old child you a 44-year-old man
This was never supposed to be in the equation
And yet, your weight like the night laid heavy on me as you climbed on
Top of where you mistakenly thought you had a right to be
Which makes it even more wrong
More wrong than even if you had tried to take me as your child bride to-be
At least there would have been some witnesses to try to stop this atrocity
But you had too much certainty in yourself and your skin color
Who would run tattle since the rest of your white brothers were doing the same
Instead you handed out flowery lies
as you shook the hands of those around me
Somehow manage to get them to think you were a swell dude
who was concerned about the importance of humanity
While you jack knifed my childhood across dirty bedsheets
I never wanted this
I closed my eyes, but I couldn't block out how your dry lips sounded
As you scrape them across my baby skin
I couldn't force my ears stop listening, so I split my soul
To show a false portrayal of submission
because I knew that I had to survive
So, I counted the cracks on the ceiling while I waited for you to be done
You were never seen as a rapist
I was never seen as the victim
This was somehow considered your birthright with some sick boys will be boys idiom

When the world uncovered me,

they made it seem like what we had was a consensual
They dubbed me your mistress, trying to whitesplain the rape away
Because things are not always what they seem until they are, apparently
And, how a child can give consent is beyond me
Somehow that got lost in the shuffle,
somehow, they made it seem like a young slave girl had rights
Just to sell more pages to get paper
More paper made on the back of my history
My history that you couldn't even keep intact, couldn't be accurate, so you made it up
With a view through a white lens,
because somehow the white way
is the only right way still to this day
Damn the truth
And you, Mr. Jefferson, how ironic
That you wrote the declaration of the independence,
but never penned my independence til the very end,
which should have always been mine from the beginning.
So quick to purchase a people that were stolen from their homes,
you worked them mercilessly
While touting liberty and justice "for all" to those white faces
as you stole into my room and raped me.
You, who they said was a Founding Father,
established nothing, but the continuation of a vicious cycle
that haunts the descendants of Black women today.
They tried to soil my name. Mistress, Whore, Slave all to protect you.
You can't sweep me under the rug, I am here and I will be heard
My name is Sally, I am a survivor,
a woman who is stronger than anyone will ever know.
You won't bury me under your self-righteousness and privilege
People will know the real story about you and what you've done.
And I'm here to remind you

For Sally Hemings

I'm here to remind you of the mess you left when you went away
It's not fair to deny me
Of the cross I bear that you gave to me
You you you oughta know
Did you forget about me Mr. Duplicity, I mean Mr. Jefferson?
Did you?
I am the intersection of your public persona and your pedophilia
A showcase for your whore memorabilia
Branded by you and history at 14
Then promptly forgotten about
Just another section of history that white people have tried to "blackout"
Paraded around for you, I was never the belle of any ball
I was expected to wait on your every beck and call,
Seen as nothing more than a piece of property
That you raped on the daily, you stole my innocence
You stole my childhood plainly in sight
with the secret of my horrors sealed tight with a pacifier,
or you pacified me with pacifiers I should say
You purged 6 children from my body, you forced me to stand mute as
Your white privilege had long curdled my tongue
And when all this came to light, they issued you a pardon
I was a 14-year-old child you a 44-year-old man
This was never supposed to be in the equation
And yet, your weight like the night laid heavy on me as you climbed on
Top of where you mistakenly thought you had a right to be
Which makes it even more wrong
More wrong than even if you had tried to take me as your child bride to-be
At least there would have been some witnesses to try to stop this atrocity
But you had too much certainty in yourself and your skin color
Who would run tattle since the rest of your white brothers were doing the same
Instead you handed out flowery lies
as you shook the hands of those around me
Somehow manage to get them to think you were a swell dude
who was concerned about the importance of humanity
While you jack knifed my childhood across dirty bedsheets
I never wanted this
I closed my eyes, but I couldn't block out how your dry lips sounded
As you scrape them across my baby skin
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People will know the real story about you and what you've done.
And I'm here to remind you

September 27, 2019

I, Caitlin McGahan, if offered the Poet Laureate position, do state that I would accept the offer and would reside in Madison, WI for the two year term.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a horizontal line that tapers to the right.

Caitlin McGahan

September 27, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write a letter on behalf of Caitlin McGahan to recommend her for Poet Laureate of Madison. I have known Caitlin for most of her life and have had the pleasure of watching Caitlin grow into a strong and independent woman. Her strength and tenacity shine through and overflow into her work as a poet. Caitlin has flourished both personally and as a member of her community. Caitlin continues to encourage and nurture other poets as she practices and perfects her art at the Harlem Renaissance Museum. Caitlin has an incredible gift for modernizing poetry in a closed-minded society. She can reach a very diverse audience with her words and passion for literature and poetry.

Caitlin would be an enormous asset for Madison in her role as Poet Laureate. As Caitlin continues to cultivate her love of poetry, the surrounding community will benefit from Caitlin's focus, leadership and dedication. I am confident that Caitlin's strong values and work ethic will enable her to excel in any position she pursues.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Weidner

To: Karin Wolf
From: Claire McGahan-Schuler

Ms. Wolf,

Caitlin has always been incredibly gifted with words and passion for helping others.

She has innate ability to connect with people in such a way that truly resonates with everyone.

It's been an honor to see Caitlin grow as an artist and as an activist. From her participation in the Urban Spoken Word community, national poetry slam competitions or being published...to her contribution to those in the community. Caitlin was instrumental in the inception of the Harlem Renaissance Museum, supporting new artists and educating patrons about the history of this influential period. Caitlin has spent many years mentoring up-and-coming poets entering the Urban Spoke Word world and helping them find their voice. Not to mention her work with grant writing and community activism, helping those in need.

I would highly recommend and nominate Caitlin McGahan as your next Poet Laureate. There is no better heart, spirit or voice to represent the people of Madison and the creative spirit of this city.

Thank you,
Claire McGahan-Schuler

Committee Members:

I write to support Caitlin McGahan's application to become the city's next poet laureate.

On your application materials, I observed that you desire to select a candidate that has an established and demonstrated commitment to the use of poetry the impoverished and inform humanity.

Caitlin is that candidate. For the last 12 years, Caitlin has been the organizer of Urban Spoken Word—a poetry organization that provides a safe space for marginalized voices to be heard. As the organizer, Caitlin has competed in and performed capably in eight national poetry slams as well.

Caitlin uses her craft to improve humanity. She frequently tackles gritty, tough themes like incest, body shaming, racism and sexism. She has performed her work regionally and it has resonated with young and old alike.

I recommend Caitlin for this office, and ask that she be given the highest consideration.

Rev. David Hart, Esq.

To: Karin Wolf

Date: September 27, 2019

Re: Caitlin McGahan

Dear Ms. Wolf:

I want to recommend Caitlin McGahan for Poet Laureate of the City of Madison. I can't think of an individual more deserving of this honor than Caitlin. She is an incredible poet, a true wordsmith who understands the power and sweep of the spoken word – but more than that, her words are used in the service of justice and empathy for her fellow citizens. Caitlin has been instrumental in the forward progress of the Harlem Renaissance Museum, and has mentored new artists on the spoken word scene, and participated in numerous national slam competitions. She is generous with her talent and time, patient in her assistance, and has the true heart of an activist. Caitlin is proficient in grant-writing and has participated in writing workshops for elementary school children. Caitlin is a citizen of the global community and brings her passion and social consciousness to bear on behalf of her fellow citizens.

Evelyn Gildrie-Voyles

████████████████████
Madison, Wi 53705

Pronouns: She, Her, Hers

Dear Karin Wolf,

I am writing to recommend Caitlin McGahan for Madison's poet laureate. I met Caitlin about 10 years at the Urban Spoken Word poetry slams and open mic. I was impressed by her eagerness to absorb as much as she could about the art of writing poems, her boundless courage, and her dedication to growth both artistic and personal. Her work challenges norms of feminine beauty and power and current racial hierarchies.

I have watched her encourage fledgling poets at the open mics, poetry slams and writing workshops she gives through the Harlem Renaissance Museum, and other local organizations. Caitlin is an open and giving person as well as a talented teacher and poet. She would be a wonderful choice to serve Madison as its poet laureate.

Sincerely,
Evelyn Gildrie-Voyles

Dear Ms. Karen Wolf:

I am writing to recommend Caitlin McGahan for Madison's poet laureate.

I have attended church with Caitlin for three years. In that time, she has shared her poetry both at worship services as well as in workshops. It was quite moving and inspirational!

In service, she uses poetry to make the biblical scriptures relevant and applicable to salient issues. For instance, she used Jesus' birth to discuss what it must feel like to be a young mother of color attempting to succeed in this world.

What is more, she has recently led a writing and poetry workshop for Northside youth that was fun and well-attended.

I had the occasion to attend one of her poetry slams with Urban Spoken Word. It was also well-attended and a good time.

Please give Caitlin due consideration.

Sincerely,



John Litweiler

Sherman Avenue United Methodist Church - Trustees
Chair, Financial Secretary and SPRC Chair

Phone: 608-334-9525

Address: 5705 Oxbow Bend, Madison, WI 53716

Email: buddhaslove@hotmail.com

To: Karin Wolf

From: Kathleen McGahan

Date: 9/27/19

Ms. Wolf,

I am writing to recommend Caitlin McGahan for the honor of Poet Laureate for the City of Madison.

Caitlin began performing locally at the Urban Spoken Word Slam in 2008. In that over a decade of work, she has honed her craft and shared her art and mentored new artists. Her words are powerful and her poetry soars. She illuminates issues of abuse, discrimination, self empowerment, richly, with song and sorrow and humor. Her words open minds and soothe souls.

Working with young people in Madison (St. James Elementary, Lakeview Elementary, Mendota and Lindbergh grade schools), Caitlin shares her passion for words and their power through workshops. She teaches children that words can inform and discover self in the midst of everyday chaos. At her church, she lyrically retells bible stories.

Additionally, Caitlin has worked tirelessly to establish the Harlem Renaissance Museum here in Madison. The Museum curates the artwork and authors and music reflected in that riotously creative age. That is the Museum's great gift to the community.

I cannot endorse Caitlin more emphatically for this position. Her life is poetry shared.

Thank you.