

Poetry by Lewis Payton

Spotted Paper

Blue
Yellow
White
Soft to the touch
But rough underneath
Like my soul
Fragile
Faded with memory
Wasted shades of colored emotions
Strewn together to form purple
My regal color
My honor
My past
Sewn together with the memories of a lost time
Forgotten
Remembered through tears
Images of lost times
Swinging in the midst
My colors
My family
My life
Laid to paper
With a purpose supreme
A meaning that will be lost to time
Housed in memories
Left for others
Remember me
Remember my colors

I Pray

But you don't hear me
See me
Generations of sightless people
Unheard
Unseen
Screaming to no one
Fists raised
Mouths agape
Teeth clenched
But no one hears us
But I keep praying
Hopes
Baseless
Dreams
Lost
Can you hear us?
Can you hear our prayers?

Family Portrait

My father
My mother
My brother
My sister
Painted in shades of violent strokes
Each brush tearing at the canvas
Tearing at my soul, my heart
Attacking its existence
It's presence
It's reality
Each stroke peeling away the past
Exposing our lives
Our secrets for all to see
Each stroke eating away my memories
My thoughts
My anger
My fear
My hate
My joy
My life

Hope

I see

I feel

I am

I am here

I am nowhere

I am everywhere

At once

At this time

At this moment

I see hope

In the stains of the color

The color of my skin

Of my family

Of my pain

Of our existence

I see hope in color

The pallet of life

The mixture of colors

The colors of our lives

The colors of our loss

The color won't leave us

The color that stays

The color of love

The color of hope

I see the color on the canvas

And it speaks to me

It summons me

I See Inside Myself

Beyond the flesh
Past the meat that covers my body
To my insides
My horror
Into a place where my skeletons lie
The bones tell no truths
And no lies
The missing organs
The missing pieces
The missing truths
Pieces of me I don't see outside
Pieces of me I don't want to see
Pieces of me I need to see
My bones
Without flesh
Bare
Barren
Naked
No skin
No meat
No soul
No shelter
Only me

Leaves

Sweet smell of dead leaves will transform your life anew into a hopeful anticipation of a clear day.

A day like no other day

A day for the living

A day for the dead

The living is the dead

We who live are dead with the leaves wasting away in the dampness of yesterday

The past

The faded past where clouds sit weightlessly in our minds....

No gray clouds

Only fantasy

The color of the leaves brings hope as the dusk does to a sweltering day

Blue leaves

Black leaves

Yellow and purple

The color royal

Regalia abound

Nestled in colorful jewels long lost

To another world

Another culture

In a space reserved for few

The idle ones

The lost one

The damaged

The hopeful

The desolate

The evil

The hurt

The people who made you

The people you know

Notes on a portrait

Looks like family portraits that have been pieced together to form a new meaning.

Dissected. Rearranged.

Pieced back together in a disorderly way to form some sort of order.

What is this order? Meaning? Chaos? Ritual? Violence? Family? Love? Respect? Poverty? Anger?

Remorse? Longing? Hatred?

Meaning of family portraits?

Love, togetherness, memories, history, loss, life, death, gathering, engagement, sharing,

laughter, sadness, ceremony,

Pieces

Fragments

Spotted memories Linked together to form a whole

Remnants of the past

Hope for the future

Strewn together

Faded heroes

Ancestors gone

Ghosts of the past

Shackled in memory

Frozen in time

Removed from this life

Dreaming for another

Faces of my past

Faces of my future

Staring at me

Beckoning me to come

Calling me to them

Breathing

Soothing

Calming

Pictures of my past

Images of myself

Cloaked in sunshine

Cloaked in clouds of blood

Watching me

Wanting me

Looking into me

Pulling me into them

Pulling me apart
Taking me away
Back to a distant life
My past

Skeletons
Bones
Broken
Severed
Dust
Clouds
Pain
Segmented
Released
To nothing
White dust
Black minds
Diseased
Torn apart
Pieced back together
In threads of past
In threads of hope

Random tears of many gone
from us
Distorted images
Strewn together to form my life
My shattered life
Meaningless
Meaningful

Weave together the story
The story of generations
The story of many
The story of me
Of ancestors
Of lives lived
Lost
Deserted
Left to the sun
To bake
Dissolve
Move away
Reform
Take away
Fly!

When I Dream

I see clouds in the sky
I see puffs of hope raining above
Summoning me to them
Beckoning my presence
Asking for me to engage
To come forth
To be

When I dream I long to see my mother
I long to touch her
Smell her scent
Immerse myself in her memory
Of the days I cannot forget
In a time when all seemed innocent
When all seemed good
When the blue sky seemed almost white with spotted clouds
Endless for the eyes to see
I would dream of laying on the clouds and floating throughout the world, seeking, exploring
Now I dream of those clouds in hopes of finding my mother, my past, myself

Long days
Sun beaming
No shadows at hand
No ghosts to haunt
No darkness
Only the light of the heavens above
Sending blueness from the Gods
To me!

And, sometimes the heavens part and I see my mother
Clear as the glaring sun high in the sky
Clear as rain
I see her
I see her full shape
I hear her laughter
Bold and loud
Commanding me to listen
To hear her
To feel her
To know her
But I cannot see her face
The picture of her face seems faded
Distorted
Lost in the past
In a time no longer present

No longer real
But in the mind
Away from reality
Away from me

When I dream of my mother
I am happy
I smile tears of joy
Wrapped within years, centuries of generations' care and love
Wrapped in kindness
They come back to me
And they love me
Protect me
Save me from this vile world of uncaring souls
Who are lost in their own dreams, perhaps nightmares

But when I dream of my mother, the tears flow effortlessly down my face, my skin into my soul
To a kinder place where no malice is found
No heartache
No disease
No pain
No anger
No strife

In my dreams my heart longs for her to show me her face
But she recedes into darkness
Where I cannot see
I cannot do anything but feel her
And the feeling is strong
It is powerful
It is real

When I dream of my mother my life is anew
Replenished with her soft colors but I cannot see her eyes
I cannot peer into her soul
I want to find her
I want see her
I want the comfort from her eyes

So, I look to the paintings, the pictures of my mind
The colors of yesterday, today and tomorrow
The past, the present, and the future displayed in vivid brightness
The colors of life splashed onto canvas to soothe my mind, my soul
A soul lost to so many, my pain and happiness
Mixed emotions
Conflicting in meaning and rash in feelings
These painted pictures form the missing pieces of my world
A world missing bits and pieces

Waiting for fulfillment
A fullness of time
Of joy

In these paintings I see the joy lost to me in my dreams
Her eyes
Full of life
Of hope
Of belief in the unbelievable
Her nose
Red in color
Filled with blood
With life
Perched atop her full face
Complementing her light features
From a dark race
A race long forgotten
But forever remembered
In my mind
In my heart

I see my mother in these paintings
Her face is clear and speaks in many forms
From loving to compassionate to hateful to sassy
The palette invites it all
And the welcome is rejoicing
Moments in time where my mother's face calls me to her
To receive her goodness
Her acceptance
Her love
These colors married with oil and canvas submit her to me
And me only
To sing her name to the world
To the masses of the unknown
To me!