The rhythm of remembrance in health and healing

Contributed by Larry Jaffe
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Time makes a short necktie. Don’t let it be a noose. Choose your partner carefully to dance the river heart away.

Music and dance have been used throughout history for the purpose of healing the body and the spirit. Larry Jaffe’s “Dance in the River of Dreams” and “Castaways” vibrate with the healing power of both music and dance. “Ivory Addiction” throbs with an unhealthy tattoo that shows one woman's legacy of addiction to the remembering of pain -- how the drum of remembrance can become an instrument of pain played with drumsticks of bone. --Annette Marie Hyder

Dance in the River of Dreams

Time makes a short necktie

Don’t let it be a noose

Choose your partner carefully

To dance the river heart away

Rhythms cook like gumbo

Spicy as it goes down

Dance in the river of dreams

Don’t catalog those nightmares

They belong to the devil

Not to hoochie-koochie mama

Working to be brave

Dance with courage

The conviction of your footsteps

Beating on bathroom walls

Spiritual graffiti feel it

Between the scrawls

So dance little tango

Make like butterfly wings

Samba to your eccentricity

Salsa your mind from the mundane

There is nothing vanilla

About the river

Its flavor destined Milky Way

Moon so close it burns the night

Your smile beckons

Come hither light

Dance little tango

Dance the river of dreams

Castaways

I listen to your search

for ancestral music

the rhythms that

make your heart dance.

The sound

removes the scar tissue

from my forehead

rules of transcendence

etched into the soul.

This is not a guitar

that your spirit plays

it is the bones of

your childhood

singing for freedom.

And I come to you

on these shabby knees

awaiting your charm.

Ivory Addiction

It is you mother
who has
mistaken my bones
for my heart
thinking that
breaks can heal
if you treat them
and place them
in a cast
suspending
isolating.

Crippled by ivory addiction
my heart still breaks
my limbs are no longer
protected by truth
it has not set me
free.

Instead I
remain encompassed
in these ivory chains
a free spirit no more.

I am waiting for my body
to disinherit me
so I can cast my fate
to indifferent winds
and purge the foolhardy
from the steps of anal deployment
a missile crisis in mockery

that you wear like a cheap suit

stolen from vaudeville vestiges

that clamor at your heart.

Yes it is you mother that

chambered my life

with soliloquy

and mocked my birth

with death like chants

as you and your friends

cheered for revenge.

It is time to take stock of

this broth you concocted

and savor the nectar

of retribution.

Yes it is you mother

who wore disguise every Halloween

so we would not know

who doled out treats.

You beat on my dreams

with an Instamatic camera

hoping to capture

whatever I lost in my childhood.

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Larry Jaffe's new book, One Child Sold (Salmon Poetry, 2010), is about human rights and trafficking, and as such addresses the sickness and depravity of human trafficking and the necessity of cleansing such wounds for societal health. This book would seem to be filled with horror and sadness in dealing with such a depressing subject.However,

the poems in this book can't seem to help themselves from believing in love and hope. Scars are touched gently and given the honor they deserve but atthe same time the human spirit is shown with all its courage along with flags and drums and fifes of forgiveness for a hopeful future.

The poem, Sub urban, from Larry Jaffe's new book, One Child Sold, was first published in InTheFray Magazine. You can read it here.

Here is an excerpt from One Child Sold.

From the section “Speaking of Human Trafficking”

Caravan to Nowhere

Once they were through

processing the women

girls no bigger than your thumb

tiny girls looking for work

and a way out

not so smart girls

and brilliant girls

young women

really

but more like

girls

they were put to work.

They were promised

the big time

the show

how they could

make lots of money

be famous

drink whiskey

and drive

huge automobiles.

They wanted

that western

fame & fortune

thing

more than they wanted

life

so they were put to work

sacrificing

everything

getting nothing.

They danced

with the merry-men

sang them songs

and did other things

that were not to their

heart’s delight

nor any other

part of them.

The freedom

the life

they had before

was no more

there is a difference

between

a hard life

and one

that is cruel

tainted with the taste

of metal

and the feel

of barbwire.

All because of the
Promise
when they
climbed into that van
scampered on to that boat
leaped into the abyss
of poisoned pledge
of fatuous riches
and private glory.

They found themselves
puppets of subjugation
slaves of the 21st century
landlocked captivity
without escape
—Bondage
a caravan to nowhere.

Some say they are gullible
some say they are naive
whatever they are
they are no more
ground into human
snowflakes
precipitating the heat
that destroys them
dispersed with the wind
they wished
the caravan had wings.

Rifles

Rifles are not made

for 10 year old hands

Nor triggers for

10 years old fingers

Pistols are too

damn heavy

Dynamite fits

neatly in backpacks

Making

human bombs

Another childhood

memory…

From the section “Dreams Are Not Enough”

Wearing Tragedy

Her face is painted the color of heartbreak.

She wears the tragedy of mothers of dead children.

She dresses in the color of mothers of the lost.

Milk spills from her full breasts.

She is nondenominational.

Emptiness

the chair sits

empty

alone

four legs

gripping the floor

From the section: “Speaking of Terezin”

“I said before that I want to give hope because where there is life there is hope. I compose this book with fingers that touched the walls, the gates and the poor souls who suffered there. I will not let them be forgotten. I will write of their love and passion. I will work with my friends to prevent it from happening again.”

The Children of Terezin

When I visited Camp Terezin

the children called to me

they left ethereal homes

dropped blankets

and held out their tiny hands

for me to lift them up

and hold them close.

I hugged every one of them

as they told me

of Terezin and how

their fairy-tales kept them

alive until story time was over.

I hugged every one of them

as they told me how

they painted pictures

with their fingers

dipped in their mothers’ blood.

I hugged every one of them
as they sang songs
and told me nursery rhymes.

I hugged every one of them
as they told me about
the playground of graves
how they played hopscotch
over tombstones
and ring around a rosey
was truth

ashes ashes
all fall down

only when they fell down
they never got up.

I hugged every one of them
even the lost soul
who crossed himself
like a gentile
when he cried.

I hugged every one of them
because the children of Terezin
no longer wait for their mothers
to call them home.

Today they have been set free.

From the section “Speaking of Freedom”

Anthem

Listen closely

you can still hear the sound

of the third Reich marching

Listen as

boots jackhammer

across pavements and boardrooms

Listen as

crowds shout in streets

as terror rises from

asphalt paved with bones

Listen as

Hitler’s screams

rise from the tombs

hear the death rattle

Sieg Heil

(jackhammer boots march on asphalt)

Sieg Heil

(arms goose step)

Sieg Heil

(boots click heels)

Sieg Heil

(arms shoot up)

Sieg Heil

(boots click heels)

—There is challenge to the darkness

as serenity forms

and understanding

no longer takes

a back seat.

Grief stricken relatives

should no longer hold hands

they should shun excuses

and build fists

of understanding

as

one being stands up

then another

and another…

L'Chaim

(arms pump fists)

L'Chaim

(arms never waver)

L'Chaim

(we never give up)

L'Chaim

L'Chaim

L'Chaim

Editor's note: L'Chaim (lecha'im) means to life.

Dummies.com explains that: L'Chaim reveals a lot about the Jewish approach to life. The phrase is not to a good life, to a healthy life, or even to a long life. It is simply to life, recognizing that life is indeed good and precious and should always be celebrated and savored.

Rabbi Mendel Bluming of Potomac, Maryland says that use of the term l'chaim stems from longstanding Jewish tradition. According to Rabbi Mendel Bluming, in the Torah, wine is often associated with death and destruction. In the Bible, Noah drinks after the flood and is taken advantage of by his son Ham. "In the Megilah, Achashverosh kills his wife after a long night of drinking," he says. "We say l'chaim to clarify that we are drinking to life, not death. We say the plural chaim instead of chai because, though the two words have the same meaning, we must clarify that one should never drink alone."