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Poems by David Keiser

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The Possibilities of Eggs

By David Keiser

Eggs cracked open mean one of two things:
Someone will make an omelet, or
Something will enter the world raw and alone.

Discarded plastic garbage bags sliced open like skin peeled
Off a chicken breast mean one of two things:
Either a tenant discarded a sharp object, which pierced the plastic,
Or a hungry can collector found it.

When doors slam shut
When phones ring unanswered
When letters crumple under fist
We strand our children like rice farmers without hats
We leave them in the sun to burn, to sear their flesh into adulthood. Alone.

Alone our offspring sleep outside
Alone our seeds lie unfertilized
Alone our minors court major problems.

Visible lesions lash out at annoyed shoppers
Feces smear our pristine landscape
As God's children wait out the day to retake their turf.

When eggs crack open we brace ourselves:
Will the chicks click in the world?
Will they flourish like flowers or
Flounder like fish dying slow deaths
Over and over?

American Disability

By David Keiser

My dad sleeps in a tool shed behind our house off Fruitvale Avenue
Sometimes he comes in to eat or to pee
But then he has to leave at least until he stops drinking
And stinking up our whole house

He used to work a long time ago
Now he gets checks in the mail

Last year a car hit him
He was drunk in the street
In front of our house

He went to the hospital and got a pin in his leg
Now when he drinks we wheel him to the shed

My dad's so funny when he gets drunk
Makes me laugh cuz he so dumb
Like being hit by a car and acting a fool
Now he sleeps in the shed with all the tools

Energetic Elizabeth

By David Keiser

Energetic Elizabeth
Writes with a rigor
While attending college
And living with vigor

Energetic Elizabeth
Wheels herself to class
Every week she prepares
Stories to amass

Energetic Elizabeth
Keeps her head high
Can't help but notice
How hard she tries

Energetic Elizabeth
Can't walk skate or run
But she reminds us all
She still has fun

I wonder if she knows
How she inspires
Those with working legs
But tepid desires

No Notebook

By David Keiser

Cuz it's not cool to bring to school
And you think it's a waste of money you don't have anyway

Maybe you bring paper/yellow and folded pocketsize
Or twirled up your sleeve/or maybe
You borrow white frilly filler paper from friends

Or maybe the pencil lead smudges your assignment
Or you say you hate what you wrote anyway
That you'd rather just talk it out

But your resistance is not about the paper or the pencil lead
But about some doubting demons inside your head

You ask why even try to write
What you so easily can say aloud?

Maybe you think
You can't write
At all

Well, what if notebooks were cool and didn't cost you money
And the teacher accepted folded and twirled and smudged work
And you could just dictate your words

Would you write then?
Would you write then?

Ugly Blues

By David Keiser

I look in the mirror still see my old face
no matter what still see my same old face
when will it be that I age into grace

all through high school people said I too ugly
friends and enemies: both said I real ugly
took til adulthood to find someone to hug me

would I have fared different if I had felt cute
didn't nobody back then tell me I was cute
and when I tried to rap, my voice fell mute

I look in the mirror see a gap toothed smile
like Esther Rolle, a big ole gappy smile
cuz when fine women ask, you know I grin awhile

see ugly too in the eyes of beholders
me ugly? got to be the eyes of beholders
cuz tellin god's chillun wrong: can't get no colder

I look in the mirror see a good-lookin dude
between fine sisters and my mirror- see a good lookin dude
'sides, callin people ugly red devils kind of rude

so don't call me ugly least not to my face
even if you think I ugly, then look away from my face
cuz I if was-which I'm not-still ain't no disgrace!

Principal poem

By David Keiser

I try to convey
to students

The importance the ancestry
of roots and trees
of knowing what we grew from

I try to stoke the fire/stroke genius into sculpted bright light
illuminate future possibilities of hope

Possibilities of revolutions in consciousness/in desire in need
for green greed in
the absolute essentials for survival

And you, guardian of horizons
hammer and sickle strict like lines

And you, responsible to parents, to suits, to staff, and to students

And you, holed up, close to the front lines behind the action

Under girding it all with tough love strong as plywood and fair
as a butcher's scale

And you, postmaster general, commander in chief, dean by default, and overall Jill of all trades

And you, with all the lists and jobs and stress and signatures,
you still manage
to ask how
I am