



# Pruned Roses

Poems 2005

**Umoja Mentoring Program**  
New Jersey City University  
Black, Administrators, Alumni, Faculty,  
Staff and Student Organization



Roses are known for their amazing beauty and are even held in high regard above other flowers. They represent love, friendship and commitment and can be found in a variety of colors.

However, they should be handled with care, due to the thorns that naturally emanate from their stems.

The best and biggest roses are often pruned. This process entails cutting away at old layers and preparing for what will be a new and stronger growth. This pruning produces the best roses.

The young people that belong to us, as a part of BAAFSSO's Umoja Mentoring Program, are such roses. They are strong and intelligent yet delicate and impressionable.

To those roses, we say that through out life you will be tested, you will be pruned by your parents, teachers as well as all of life's challenges. This process will enable you to grow into the best and brightest person you can be in life. Your attitude towards that challenge will help shape the destiny you will create for yourself.

We hope that you will take away from our interactions and discussions a positive outlook on life and a determination to succeed in your chosen careers.

Have a fun and safe summer.

Monica Almonor, BAAFSSO, Umoja Coordinator



**Awesome Wonders**

Soft summers breeze on my cheek  
A warm summer day  
Drinking cool water on a hot  
afternoon  
Watching the sea and the sunlight  
play together  
These are some of the awesome  
things of life

One person positively influencing  
another  
Watching a playful child and a  
doting parent  
The loving gaze of two people in  
love  
A problem truly solved  
These are the awesome things in  
life

Coming into maturity  
A repented heart  
The Spirit of God in your presence  
When God's purpose come to  
fruition  
Gods grace and mercy evident in a  
situation  
These are the most awesome  
wonders in life

*Monica Almonor*

**Don't hate me**

Why do you despise me?  
Is it because I look better than you  
and your friends  
Or is it because I become more  
successful than you in the end  
Do you hate me because I'm me?  
Because when you fall down  
I stand strong like an oak tree  
I'm confident, smart, beautiful, and  
kind  
Please don't hate me because of  
my individual mind  
So don't hate me because i'm not  
you  
Hate me because im me

Because in the end, when you fall  
and become self slaved  
I'm here to let you know that I'M  
FREE!

*Katrina*

**I AM**  
**Katrina Edwards**

I am the brown, chocolate servant  
that comes to you in your need  
Or maybe I am your expensive gift  
in the family deed  
You may not know who I am  
because you do not see  
The truth and honesty that's deep  
within me  
This is who I am....

I am  
I am the star that shines in your  
night  
I am your helper all day and all  
night  
Now do you know who I am?  
Or are you still confused  
Why should you..... How could you  
know?  
When I'm the one being used  
Is that who I am?  
Someone who does your dirty  
work  
Or someone who sits here and  
continues to get hurt  
Is this who I am?  
Or is this who you want me to be  
Because as far as I know  
I'm just being me; and being me  
means being FREE  
So despise me because I'm not like  
you  
Because all my days of not being  
me are through  
So now you should know who I am  
Because what I say is not a lie  
And I will no longer cry, but lift my  
head up high  
And be proud to be me, as you all  
can see  
This is who I am  
I've finally found me

All this time I've been living a lie  
And always did deny  
The way I felt about myself  
And now I'm happy that I'm not  
cripple or blind or deaf  
I'm happy to be here today  
So this is what I say  
I am who I am  
And this is me  
You can either like it  
Or just let me be.

**Over the Sun**

want to be like Billie Holiday  
want to be like Nina some day  
want to be like Whitney, i pray  
she makes it over the sun some  
day  
she makes it over the sun-  
  
these women sang lullabies to  
me  
that sounded like they were crying  
for me  
as i wondered why  
girls interrupted  
still found peace in g-cleffed  
sounds of music  
with the myriad of abuses  
that push women to  
lose it-  
these are our  
heroines  
our addicts  
the mothers of our generations  
the supremes of dreams-  
must this always  
be the life of a diva?  
is it that the women are  
just needier-  
wanting to be held  
and touched and  
sang to-  
is it that people  
just want a song  
or  
a right to belong  
or  
is it that music is just so strong



because the artists are so weak?

...grew up in the church  
as women  
God blessing the child  
in baptismal services  
down in Jesus name  
that  
two decades  
later  
meant  
absolutely nothing  
but that they  
were  
ashamed-  
praying to  
porcelain priests  
on their knees  
in bar bathrooms  
i was there too...  
grown women hiding  
behind their  
microphones  
but belting out their souls-  
exposed  
the world saw them  
alone  
with only  
music.

i heard them  
i heard the echo  
travel in space and time  
through cassette tapes  
lp and cd  
players-  
women  
giving up lyrical gifts  
to make a change-  
changing lyrics to  
make others understand-  
standing alone  
to demand the right to sing  
and smoke  
and drink  
and sniff  
in peace-  
piecing together that they  
were the genesis  
before they exited

and back then  
i didn't know anything  
about the blues,  
but in their lines,  
i didn't have to  
i  
rewinded their tapes  
kept their voices on repeat  
in  
my bedroom space  
my memory was  
my journal  
their music filled  
my pages  
the patience in  
their music  
made understanding  
contagious  
my soul courageous  
I could have  
read between the lines  
blind  
I could have heard the music best  
deaf  
i celebrated their music  
their passion  
their mess  
i've requested their voice  
"here comes the sun, little darling,  
here comes the sun"  
upon my death...

and even so,  
I need them to know that-  
every song they wrote high  
made me not want to die...  
and  
every time they hit the  
right note at the right time  
made me feel alive...  
and  
i've heard it said that  
most of us go to our graves  
with the music still  
inside  
and if i still have music  
then  
i don't want to die  
  
and every song they sang  
i sang  
and every song they wrote

i wish I had written  
because  
i  
wanted to be like Billie Holiday  
wanted to be like Nina some day  
want to be like Whitney, I pray  
she makes it over the sun some  
day  
she makes it over the sun.

*Tamara Tertulien*

.....  
**The difference between you and me**

There is a difference between the  
ocean and the sea  
The difference can be the same as  
the difference between you and me  
The way I feel about you is like the  
ocean  
The ocean is vast and deep with  
no motion...or....  
Maybe my love is like the sea  
smelly and weak

When I looked inside myself I saw  
the ocean  
I realized the way I feel about you  
will never be the same  
Because when I looked into the  
ocean, I saw that your love is just  
a game  
Then after the ocean I looked into  
the sea  
Then it hit me that the way I felt  
about you, you felt the same about  
me

So now I'm confused and I dint  
know what to do  
Because I don't know if you love me  
like I love you  
So now I sit in silence waiting for  
an answer from that special me  
Because when I was your fool out  
by the setting sun  
It comes to me that my situation  
wasn't done



Well if I didn't see it by now  
That it wasn't the ocean or the sea  
that turned my world upside down  
Maybe I'm blind and just can't see  
That me and you were never  
meant to be  
Just like the ocean and the sea

.....

**What is religion?**

Is it the difference in opinions?  
Who celebrates religion?  
Is it the boy, girl, men and women  
Or maybe it could be  
The souls that lies within you and  
me  
Why do we share religion?  
Why should we share religion?  
Why should one want to be  
different?  
Why don't we understand the  
lessons?  
What is supposed to be meant?  
What is being taught?  
What decisions do we make?  
Are these feelings we share and  
gain real or fake/  
Or do our spirits lie at the bottom  
of a black lake  
Are we in a deep sleep called life?  
Where it doesn't matter if you  
walk the streets with a bible,  
glock, cross or knife  
We're still all the same  
Living this unknown life to me is  
real  
But to some they treat it like a  
game  
Can religion hide you from your  
fate?  
Or is it something that those who  
disbelieve just hate  
Are we really the same?  
And if so, why are we the same  
but with different names  
I wish I understood how this  
religion....  
Belief process comes to be  
I wish that I could only open my  
eyes up to see

How everything would work out  
for me  
Should I have a religion?  
Or should I just be plain  
But regardless of my choice to  
what I would like to be  
I will still remain the same  
So should I believe in religion or  
myself?  
I need someone to guide, to show  
me the way....  
So then I think about it, and I  
realize  
That I should open my eyes to  
GOD.  
The one they say could help all  
who need  
And I am in need.... Yes indeed  
So I open my heart and give it unto  
thee  
And now I can say that my soul is  
finally free  
Now everyday I lift up to GOD  
And give him all that I can  
So this is where my heart belongs  
So if you want you may not  
Choose a religion  
And your life will no longer be of  
sin and shame  
But of glory and fame  
This isn't a game this is life  
So before you make your decision  
Take my advice and just think  
twice.

.....

**Against All Odds**

I can look a man dead in his eyes  
As he burns within my soul,  
I can make myself the weaker  
Yet I can make myself the goal.  
  
I have fought wars and still fighting  
Battered, bruised and scared, and  
I've  
Climbed the highest mountain  
Creating a way, but it was hard.  
  
I still have a long way to the top  
And not a sight above yet is seen,

Not sunshine or light  
Not even the harmony of nature's  
green.

My strength builds by blood  
Yet my muscles get tightened at  
times,  
And my legs shatter for rest  
But I never give in my line.

I take naps from days to nights  
But God said "never rest a life that  
is young,  
cause with this very life each  
measurement  
and growth You have brung."

He told me to reach the point  
of the mountain, to touch his hand  
and angel's wings,  
I have to force the soul within and  
with this  
My blood and bone I bring.

So he gave me a bag  
to carry everything inside  
and told me, "if you wont don't...  
Let your soul take the ride.

And even though my soul felt  
The same way, I did before, God  
gave me the  
integrity to get on my feet for  
more.  
Yet living the years of my days and  
still  
I'm here and gone,  
I build to maintain mind, soul and  
heart to life  
And still my life goes on.....  
Against All Odds!!!

*By Edward Nicholson*

.....

## A Race for Religion

Stay strong my black brother  
Fight for what you stand,  
Cause by God and all above  
You are equal to every man.

.....

Oh wait, I spoke of God  
But for religion  
What is worth,  
Was I Christian, was I muslim  
What was my religion given at  
birth?

Guess I'm muslim though  
My God is "Allah" from my  
understanding,  
Cause I can't eat pork  
Always gotta pray  
And getting beat was demanding.

Every night I open my "Karon"  
As I pray to the heavens of above  
But I didn't know that having more  
than one  
Wife was a way to the religion of  
love.  
Besides all of that  
I don't feel that I'm my born  
religion,  
Because I thought to myself  
Must that be my decision?

Muslims don't celebrate Christmas  
Yet my family do,  
In fact holidays are out  
But we celebrate them too.

I mean, I know I look for the truth  
In which god could be the Sir or  
Ma'am  
Because even though I've been  
muslin religion,  
I don't know what religion  
I really am.

*Edward Nicholson*

## I AM

I am not what I am  
I am the unlikely to the like,  
I am the wheels of a car  
I am the tires of a bike.

I am the writing of a poet  
I am the knob that opens the door,  
I am described as unknown  
an unknown sky that rains into the  
shore  
I am what you see but what you  
don't  
I am the darkness of the light,  
I am the magician with the wand  
I am the dark that covers the  
night.

I am the sharpness of a knife  
I am the bullet from the gun,  
I am the love and the pain  
I am known as the one.

I am spring nature Gemini  
I am the month of May  
I am the touch you feel from love  
I am the everyday  
I am all emotions and feelings  
I am the book that teaches and  
learns,  
I am the ice of a glacier  
I am the fire that burns.  
I am the gold that shines from  
your soul  
Something people are bound to  
treasure,  
I am the enjoyment of its variety  
I am the enchantment of sensual  
pleasure.

I am the glow of the eyes  
I am the breeze of the winds,  
I am the pain of the death  
I am the helping hands that lends.

I am the sounds of a storm  
I am the sound of rain  
I am the blossom of a rose  
I am the angel that came  
I am the reaching point of life  
I am the music of the tune,

I am the meadows of the whispers  
I am the caterpillar stuck in the  
cocoon.

I am the shadow behind you  
That does everything you show  
I am the tears from the crys  
When someone you love has to go.

I am the qualities of all animals  
I am the design of life itself  
I am the wonders and dreams  
I am everything you thought or  
felt.

I am the backbone of a spine  
I am the rib that makes you stand  
I am reality  
I am nature  
I am not the average man.

I am what is not  
Yet what could lead into sham,  
I am none of that, really  
Cause I really don't know what I  
am.

*Edwards Nicholson*

.....

## The truth about faith

A question  
I ask myself  
A question,  
That people have wondered about  
Since the dawn of time.

A question that haunted me.

Does he exist?  
God, does he exist?  
On one hand, I believe,  
On the other  
I'm a skeptic  
Does that make me a sinner?  
What is real, what is true?  
Is it faith or is it hate,  
Where is God?  
Is he here, is he there?



Some people say he's everywhere.  
But I am not aware.

When I leave, I will know  
What is there and If I'll go  
For now, still a question  
And the answer, I don't know.

*Ted Simon*

.....  
**I am**

Who am I?  
I am not sure  
I know that I breathe,  
But am I alive?

I know I can think,  
But are these my thoughts?  
If people see me,  
Can they see my faults?  
What am I really?  
If not a wander.

Tripping down this  
Jagged road call life.

Having the wind of deceived  
Throwing me off course  
Having the ice cold rain of  
Doubt burning through my back.  
What defines who I am?  
Is it what I do everyday?  
What people see me as?  
Or what I do in one moment.

*Ted Simon*

.....  
**Things Will Never Be the Same**

I wake up everyday  
And wonder about change  
Is it really there?  
Because things seem the same

I go back to a time  
Where I wasn't my own  
I look back on a place

Where I will never go  
And then I go to my mother  
And ask her to help me please  
Help me understand  
How we as a people overcame

She said "My child,  
It's deeper than it seems.  
No one have or will ever  
Meet the pain and hurt we've seen.  
We share a history  
Of pain and suffering,  
Of struggles and joy,  
We overcame,  
By names.  
No longer a nigger,  
No longer a boy.  
It's deeper than the thought,  
We once were priced to be  
brought.  
But now things have drastically  
changed  
Now you know my child,  
Things will never be the same."

But how will I know change has  
come?  
Will it be a time that I may not  
live?

"Listen My Child,  
Change is gonna come  
When we all play our part and  
give!!"

*Maleika Bruce*

.....  
**If...Then**

If pain is pleasure  
Then pleasure is pain  
This applies to me because  
From my pleasure comes rain  
Not necessarily the rain  
From the sky  
I'm talking of the clear tears  
That flows from my brown eyes  
Yes this is true I cry at times  
Not 4 nothing but 4 the things I  
can't find

I can't find the reason of me  
I can't find the person I'm supposed  
to be  
My life starts and stops  
Everyday  
I wonder will there ever be  
A way  
4 me  
2 be  
The person I should and must  
become  
Or will I loose it and become One  
One of the females that becomes  
apart of statistics  
And began to loose and fall short  
of my uniqueness and specifics  
If pain is pleasure  
Then pleasure is pain  
Therefore, I will never see my  
sunshine with all my rain  
Not necessarily from the sky  
But the sorrowful, lonely, crazed  
and dried  
Abandoned neglected pitiful  
Tears  
From my lustful eyes  
PAIN IS PLEASURE

*Maleika Bruce*



The Umoja Mentoring Program was created by BAAFSSO to provide support for NJCU freshman, sophomores and transfer students of African descent.

In 1992 we added a new component to Umoja, the mentoring of the University Charter High School students. We are dedicated to providing mentorship through one-on-one mentorship, programs and activities.

*Layout/Design: Allison Thornton*

.....