

Where I'm From

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening
It tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia Bush,
the Dutch elm
whose long limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

I am from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from perk up and pipe down.
I'm from He restoreth my soul
with a cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
to the auger
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.
Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments –
snapped before I budded –
leaf-fall from the family tree.

-George Ella Lyon

I am From Soul Food and Harriet Tubman By Lealonni Blake

I am from get-togethers
and Bar-B-Ques
K-Mart special with matching shoes.
Baseball bats and BB guns,
a violent family is where I'm from.

I am from "get it girl"
and "shake it to the ground."
From a strict dad named Lumb
sayin' "sit yo' fass self down."

I am from the smell of soul of food
cooking in Lelinna's kitchen.
From my Pampa's war stories
to my granny's cotton pickin'.

I am from Kunta Kinte's strength,
Harriet Tubman's escapes,
Phyllis Wheatley's poems
and Sojourner's faith.

If you did family research,
and dug deep into my genes.
You'll find Sylvester and Ora, Geneva and Doc,
My African Kings and Queens.
That's where I'm from.

I am From... By Oretha Storey

I am from bobby pins, doo-rags
and wide toothed combs.
I am from tall grass, basketballs and
slimy slugs in front of my home.
I am from prayer plants that lift
their stems and rejoice every night.

I am from chocolate cakes and deviled
eggs that made afternoon snacks just
right.
I am from older cousins and hand me
downs
to "shut ups" and "sit downs."

I am from Genesis to Exodus
Leviticus too.
Church to church, pew to pew.

I am from a huge family tree,
that begins with dust and ends with me.

In the back of my mind there lies a dream
of good "soul food" and money trees.
In this dream I see me on tap makin'
ham hocks, fried chicken
and smother porkchops.
I am from family roots and blood.
Oh, I forgot to mention love.

I am From Swingsets and Jungle Gyms By Debby Gordon I am from jars for change collections, cards from Grandma, and chocolate milk. I am from swingsets and jungle gyms rusted metal mounted in dirt used by many kids well broken in. I am from the cherry tree, and the pudgy faces climbing out on the branches for a piece of red fruit. I am from tattle-tales, keep-it-froms, and “shut-up and listen to me.” I am from Rice Crispy Treats, and pretty rings, from Melvin and Earline. I’m from Will and Sharon’s long branch, chunky Peanut-Butter and jelly, from the house we lost to fire, and surgeries we all have had.

I am From Pink Tights and Speak Your Mind By Djamila Moore I am from sweaty pink tights encrusted in rosin bobby pins Winnie-the-Pooh and crystals. I am from awapuhi ginger sweet fields of sugar cane green bananas. I am from warm rain cascading over taro leaf umbrellas. Crouching beneath the shield of kalo. I am from poke, brie, cheese, mango, and raspberries, from Marguritte and Auntie Nani. I am from speak your mind it’s o.k. to cry and would you like it if someone did that to you? I am from swimming with the full moon, Saturday at the laundromat, and Easter crepes. I am from Moore and Cackley from sardines and haupia. From Mirana’s lip Djavan split, to the shrunken belly my grandmother could not cure. Seven diaries stashed among Anne of Green Gables. Dreams of promises ending in tears. Solidifying to salted pages. I am from those moments of magic when life remains a fairy tale.
