

Poems written and performed by poets of color

1) [Hair](#) by Elizabeth Acevedo

“They say Dominicans can do the best hair. I mean they wash, set, flatten the spring in any loc – but what they mean is we’re the best at swallowing amnesia, in a cup of morisoñando, die dreaming because we’d rather do that than live in this reality, caught between orange juice and milk, between reflections of the sun and whiteness. What they mean is, “Why would you date a black man?” What they mean is, “a prieto cocolo” What they mean is, “Why would two oppressed people come together? It’s two times the trouble.” What they really mean is, “Have you thought of your daughter’s hair?” And I don’t tell them that we love like sugar cane, brown skin, pale flesh, meshed in pure sweetness.”

Books by Elizabeth Acevedo: [The Poet X](#) , [Clap When You Land](#)

2) [The Heart and the Fist](#) by Rudy Francisco

“The word repurpose,
It means to take an object and give it amnesia.
It means to make something forget what it’s been trained to do so you can use it for a better reason.
I am learning that this body is not a shotgun.
I am learning that this body is not a pistol.
I am learning that a man is not defined by what he can destroy. *I am learning that a person who only knows how to fight can only communicate in violence,*
And that shouldn’t be anyone’s first language.
I’m learning that the only difference between a garden and a graveyard is what you choose to put in the ground.
You see, once, I came across a picture of a strange-looking violin.
The caption said that it was made out of a rifle.
I thought to myself, ‘Someday that could be me’.”

Books by Rudy Francisco: [Helium](#), [I’ll Fly Away](#)

3) [The Introvert’s Banter](#) by Rabia Kapoor

“I don’t really have anything to say that hasn’t been said before
I don’t have any claims to make that haven’t been claimed before
I don’t have any movements to organize that haven’t been moved before
But I like to write, and I like people to listen
and I’ve never really been heard before.”

4) [How to Love Your Introvert](#) by Kevin Yang

“There will be many times when you will be uncomfortable in my silence unsure of how I am feeling. Understand that just because I don’t wear my heart on my sleeve for everyone to see does not mean it beats any softer than yours. Do not confuse the stillness of lips with rhythm of apathy. Do not confuse the sound of words rounding off 80 beats per minute with the music of an actual conversation just because I cannot commit the act of small talk does not mean I don’t have huge things to say. Just because I find peace within myself does not mean that I could ever stop wanting to love so hard.”

5) **He/She** by Paul Tran

“I’m not here to obey your binary, I’m not here to make you comfortable. I’m here to free myself. I am surrendering my body to the desert wind. I surrender my body to the fire. I burn everything I touch as I race to freedom. I mean gender queer. Gender queer makes me nobody’s son or daughter. Being gender queer makes me nobody’s lover. Everyone I know and love is gone. Everyone I have known and loved has disowned me. That’s why I must own myself. I own myself. I am the sky burning red and scorched with heat. I am the Sun swallowing this entire galaxy and I am the failure of his imagination when God made me in His image. I’m God giving himself a second chance. I’m God starting over and saying saying let there be light so these fools can see me for who I am.”

6) [won’t you celebrate with me](#) by Lucille Clifton

“won’t you celebrate with me
what i have shaped into
a kind of life? i had no model.
born in *babylon*
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge *between*
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.”

Books by Lucille Clifton: [The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton 1965–2010](#),