

Mission Statement

Tony Brown

Our mission is

to act up at public gatherings
toss stones at the comfortable
sneer at the television
and afflict the generic

to dance naked in the clean laundry in the great steam room
of the world

to get LAID / to get LOVE / to get NOTICED
to waltz against the knives of war and greed
as they try to cut us loose from the church of our freedom

to look each other in the eyes at 2 AM
speaking like flowers and acting like idiots
to write rants missives novels novellas epistles
and advertisements for our huge and tender egos

to find a child crying alone and offer a hand
to get an old woman up from her electric rocker
and hear stories of the holocaust in her lonely patriarchal days
to stop bullets with a single line and make them over into
pencil leads

Our mission (should we choose to accept it)
involves us—all of us—even Bill Gates
(in theory)
in a mass chain improvisation
leading a dance of tongue and cheek and bump and grind
Amos Andy Sacco Vanzetti

skatepunks riot grrls and anyone else
hurling epics and haiku into the face of bland conformity
rap snapped like a chalkline
double time straight from the street to the stage
a whisper of erotica sliding us home
end rhyme as tightly matched as lips
the right words cut and shaped to fit
into white hot bursts
of short sharp verse
and the longline wasted pseudo Beat nonetheless pure at heart
stories of pain and gargantuan gothic gallows laughter

Our mission friends is
poetry
and we are on a mission only we can define

so dig, daddy-o—

poets in other places and times have died
doing what we do here tonight so casually
They stand at our elbows every time we pick up that pen
step to the mike or
(God Forbid!) listen to one another
so: do not let anyone define your voice
and if you want a leader then lead—
you lead
And many voices will come together in one mission
The way storm clouds come together to make lightning
And when lightning passes it leaves thunder
And one day
they will say the same
about us

Tony Brown is a forty-seven-year-old poet, freelance writer, and training and development consultant from Worcester, Massachusetts. He has been writing, performing, and publishing for over thirty years and has been involved with slam since the early 1990s in the Worcester area. He currently performs most frequently with a bass player / guitarist in the performance-poetry duo "Duende." He is also a site administrator and regular columnist at www.gotpoetry.com, a large website devoted to all things poetic. His work has been published in the anthologies *100 Poets Against the War* (Salt Publishing) and *In Our Own Voices: A Generation of Poets* (MWC Press). "Mission Statement" was first published in *From Page to Stage: Poems from the National Poetry Slam*, 2003 (Wordsmith Press).