

College Guild

P.O. Box 6448, Brunswick, ME 04011

POETRY CLUB III

Unit 2 of 7

Poems by Michael Owens

Michael L. Owens, has been a College Guild student. He writes from northern California. "...*he is a loving father who most likely will die in prison.*"* Some of his poems from *FOREIGN CURRENCY* have appeared in "Conceit" magazine; "Paper Thin Walls; "One Year Later;" "Beatlick News" and "The Haight Ashbury Literary Journal." *FOREIGN CURRENCY* is dedicated to those who choose to struggle against the tides of this world. *Both prisoner and free people will easily appreciate Mike's candor as he shares with us an insight fought for in the streets, the prison yard, the cell, the mind, the heart, and the soul.*"*

*From Trey Tyler's foreword in Michael L. Owens's book of poetry *FOREIGN CURRENCY*

FOREIGN CURRENCY is more than just entertainment. It's a thought provoking collection that draws the reader into a place of personal investment. Unflinching, yet compassionate, *FOREIGN CURRENCY* invites people to be mindful of our continuing need for a united struggle to fulfill the promises of our country.

FORMING THE EYE

There is life in tension
between who we are and who we want to be.
And we should be at peace with that,

by now should be comfortable with the journey in
into that friction, but the trip from here
to there still makes us nervous.

Maybe that's because there is no compromise
in a compass. Just a trembling finger
pointing true north toward responsibility,

and a better view in the morning mirror.
It takes courage to look

at the selves we birth with our choices
in those moments between everything.

WHEN ASKED WHY I WRITE POETRY I SAID

Words cannot be crushed

But fragile flesh can be
Surveillance program-ed

Locked away for life or
Just outright murdered

Words are more reliable

Than people who can lose
Their passion for struggle

& then become disloyal

Words won't commit perjury
Under threat of prosecution

Poems can't be deputized &
Will never be intimidated

I write because I believe
In the art of agitation &

Powerful words like these.

UNLOVELY AND TRUE

*In his poem 'Musee des Beaux Arts' W. H. Auden
wrote that the world "turns away quite
leisurely from the disaster,"*

She thinks she'll never see
a poem as lovely as a tree

and nothing pisses me off more
than the audacity of the poets.

I'm open to the possibility that
the fault is mine alone, after all

I'm a 70's baby, child of struggle
Grandchild of the black migration.

I've been told of midnight terrors,
takers coming with rifle and rope.

The Tennessee backwoods were not
a place of inspiration for my kin.

So maybe it's only natural that
some are compelled to sing of trees

and I'm moved to sing of the people
who were too often hung from them.

KARL MARX: AN APOLOGIA

If, in your opinion, religion is the opium
of the people.
then I must advocate for a further surrender
To our addictions.

Leave us in this beautiful stupor of belief,
that with vain hope we are supernaturally aided
by the pseudo-God of our drunken imagining.

Leave us our small escapes into fantasy worlds,
hallucinated heavens
where we may rest with our ancestors,
where those who once were and then were no more,
go to be re-made and become once again.

Leave us the cravings of faith, those longings
that inspired
the passivity of the preacher man Nat Turner,
the cheek-turning timidity of St. Marcus Garvey,
the compromised convictions of old John Brown.
Partakers
of the Prophet's poison, each and every one.

Leave us our silly supplications,
those pointless prayers
offered up to The Non-existent Un-eternal One,
those rambling requests
for strength that's unavailable and does not come.

If, as you say, religion is the opiate
of the masses,
please leave us the kindness of that crutch,
even if only to support us in our weakness,
our ridiculous resolve and misguided motivations.

Do this, and you may then have the pleasure
comrade Marx, of watching
from the comfortable safety of your theories,
as we give even our lives to the movement.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes