

kevin m. derrig



First Period

half way through first period
dust accumulated on the sweaty palm of my
 raised hand
must be a centimeter thick by now
as the chicken-legged teacher goes around the
 room
defacing students homework from last night
with red pen graffiti
that focuses more on missed commas than the
 content of the sentences

he finally decides to acknowledge me

“Mr. Derrig, why do I have a feeling that this is
 another one of your dumb
comments. You constantly waste my time. Why
 don’t you just drop out or something?”

why don’t I just drop out
why don’t I just drop out!

and it was at that moment that all statistics
 began to make sense to me
statistics of children whose mouths water more
 for the many taste of
society corner slanged penicillins
than the cardboard textures of diplomas
with pipes more important to fill
than class requirements
statistics of classes cut
to avoid battlefields full of aggravated shrapnel
from teachers with exploding tempers
teachers with magnifying glasses at the end of
 pointers
who feed off the brightness of surrounding
 students

to singe holes in the esteems of those who need
just a little more help
than
others

I wanted to turn my shot-down hand into a fist
I wanted to hit him 'til he was incapable of
speaking anymore
but I didn't want to become another number in
overflowing manila folders
of children arrested in school

and we wonder why a gun seems to fit perfectly
in the hands of this generation's adolescents

ladies and gentlemen

I'm writing this poem to highlight that which has
been stuck like gum
underneath wobbly desks
free from parental eyes
only to mess the hand of those who have to sit
there

I'm writing this poem to speak for all the rows of
children before me
who remained voiceless in the cracks of school
and its sound proof text books

I'm writing this poem for all the children who
have not yet been named
the ones that will one day have to fill these rows
I've been struggling in
only to enter classrooms where they'll be shot
down for what they feel

ladies and gentlemen
the future of America is being crushed between
the molars
of power-hungry tyrants who think class rooms
are boot camps

and if we have any teachers in the audience
I urge you to understand that the hand you grab
the chalk with

the hand you grab those red pens with
the voices you speak with
are oversized chisels
and you must proceed to teach with caution
for what you say and what you do is written in
stone

and if you chisel too hard these minds can crack
"So what don't you understand now, Mr. Derrig?"
I just wanted to know if I could go to the
bathroom

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