

SOUTH SIDE WEEKLY

Hey there! April is **National Poetry Month**, and poets all around the world are celebrating by writing a poem a day. Any and everyone is encouraged to join along! Poetry's a great way to process our emotions and focus on how we feel while flexing our creative muscles.

This month, South Side Weekly will be taking part in National Poetry Month with its own **30 for 30!** Each day, we'll put out prompts that can get our minds jogging and anyone who wants to join can come along and share their work here by requesting edit access. Your entries into the doc don't have to follow the prompt, and you don't have to put your work in here at all! This running Google Doc will serve as a record for our progress over the month and double up as a source of inspiration when it gets tough to write. Additionally, you can share your work and see the work of others using our hashtag **#SSWPoetry** on social media. Be sure to tag us at **@SouthSideWeekly** too!

This doc will be monitored by South Side Weekly's literature editor, Davon Clark. You can contact him at davon.clark@southsideweekly.com with any questions, comments, or concerns!

Few ground rules:

1. **No oppressive or derogatory language!** Nothing racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, ableist or otherwise hurtful will be tolerated. If you think something in your writing is questionable but you still want to include it, ask a homie or ask the lit editor to give it a look.
2. **No plagiarism**, which is the copying of someone else's work without proper credit given. You can be inspired by someone else's work, but make something new out of it.
3. **Before sharing any work besides yours**, proper consent must be given by the original artist/writer. This means reaching out to them, telling them what you want to do with it, and getting their OK before sharing!

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The South Side Weekly is a nonprofit newspaper dedicated to supporting cultural and civic engagement on the South Side, and to developing emerging journalists, writers, and artists. [Find out more about us on our website by clicking here.](#) You can also check out our new **People's Media initiative** highlighting art that showcases how you're experiencing life during the coronavirus pandemic. It can be art that directly speaks to your situation or anything that you've been making during this time. Submissions are reviewed on a rolling basis and published weekly. [Find out more by clicking here.](#)

#SSWPOETRY DAILY PROMPTS

Remember, you don't *have* to write about whatever the prompt is, they're just there if you need something to help you get going. Feel free to find prompts from poets and journals elsewhere to help you write! For some free resources on poetry, head over to the [Poetry Foundation's website](#)!

4/1: April Fools! Play a practical joke in your poem and write a completely made up story that could be true.

- Inspiration: [Substitute Teacher - Skit by Key & Peele](#)

4/2: It's a miracle - Chicago is having its third sunny day in a row! Write about some sunshine in your life and tell us about something that has been giving you joy lately.

- ["Miracle" - song by Nico Segal & The Social Experiment](#)

4/3: In honor of blues singer Bill Withers, write about a time you had someone to lean on; write about a friend that helped you carry on, or maybe when you were that somebody to lean on!

- Inspiration: ["Lean on Me," song by Bill Withers](#)

4/4: We made it to the first weekend in April! Take some time to feel out the week and describe how it feels to make it to the end of it.

- Inspiration: ["The Weekend", song by Post n Jimmi](#)

4/5: Mondays are never any fun, but that's okay. Vent about some things you dread about your week! Since we can't always shout them out, write with as loud of a voice as possible about what you hate about Mondays.

- Inspiration: ["Mondays", poem by Toaster](#)

4/6: Comfort food is one thing, and a favorite food is another. Write a poem, song or story for your favorite meal! Give us all the details; I want to sit next to you at the table and smell the spices and maybe even taste a bite.

- [Inspiration: "Ode to Whataburger", poem by Amir Safi](#)

4/7: Sometimes, the little things can feel really big, and something monumental can feel so small. Scale your life a bit: write a full poem about something you normally overlook in your life! Put a microscope on the details of your day-to-day.

- Inspiration: ["Star Size Comparison 2", Video by morn1415](#)

4/8: What's your cup of coffee? Everyone doesn't start their day with caffeine, but everyone has something that gets them going. Describe a main motivator in your life, or maybe write about the many things that keep pushing you!

- Inspiration: ["Hammond B3 Organ Cistern", poem by Gabriel Calvocoressi](#)

4/9: Smoothly slide into the weekend by collecting yourself. Write about some things in your life that help ground you, be it a certain song, or a yoga routine, or someone to call.

- Inspiration: [HOUSE¹ \(Lo-Fi House Mix\), music mix by Kiffen Beats](#)

4/10: Reclaim the hurtful things that are sent your way! Write a boastful poem around an insult that someone has said to you. Turn their hate into your power!

- Inspiration: [Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen, poem by Imani Davis](#)

4/11: What's a good day look like to you? Write it out for us step by step and take us from waking up on the right side of the bed to falling asleep!

- Inspiration: ["Lovely Day", song by Vic Mensa](#)

4/12: In honor of Easter and Passover this weekend, what are some ways that you're celebrating virtually? How have you been connecting to your community and celebrating them?

- Inspiration: ["Trees", poem by Danez Smith](#)

4/13: This past weekend, the 61st Street Farmer's Market happened virtually; usually, it's hosted on Saturdays at the Experimental Station where the South Side Weekly also lives. It's a beautiful and bustling marketplace full of colors, scents and conversation. If you've been, write about some moments you remember from it! If not, make a poem out of your grocery list!

- Inspiration: ["No Room For Doubt", song by Lianne La Havas](#)

4/14: Did you know that South Side Weekly is still publishing physical copies that you can pick up around Chicago? We finalize them on Tuesdays! Write a poem in response to a recent article you've read in the paper or on our website, [southsideweekly.com](#)!

- Inspiration: ["Arts at a Distance", article by Kyle Oleksiuk](#)

4/15: How has your quarantined life this April still continued per usual? Maybe you have more time to play the video games you've been playing, or a creaky floorboard in your house still won't get fixed just because you're stepping on it more now. Write about how life is moving for you.

- Inspiration: [Haikus from George Washington Elementary School](#)

4/16: Spring is in full swing! We're seeing the environment around us transition from the cold weather to the warm, bringing along all kinds of plants and animals out from hiding all winter. What are some of the new sights and sounds you're seeing this Spring?

- Inspiration: ["The Wild Iris", poem by Louise Glück](#)

4/17: ... and just like that, it's snowing again in Chicago. Shocker. Nature consistently shows us how little control we have and how wrong we can be in our presumptions. Today, write about the unexpected twists and turns in your life. Maybe look at the meal you made when you realized you were missing an ingredient, or the socks you wore to a job interview because your favorite ones were nowhere to be found!

- Inspiration: ["Sometimes It Snows in April", song by Prince](#)

4/18: Chicago Public Schools resumed classes this week! Students and educators across the city are learning new ways to “go to school” amidst social distancing. Write a poem that brings us into your classroom - teach us how to do something we may not know how to do, or teach us about something unique!

- Inspiration: [“What Teachers Make”, poem by Taylor Mali](#)

4/19: Today marks the last full week of April! As we round the corner into the last stretch of the month, how have expectations for your April changed? Is this the month you thought it was going to be? Are things going how you want them to?

- Inspiration: [“Buss Down Spookiana”, poem by RJ, Tima Ally & Cleo](#)

4/20: Continuing April’s theme of transition, and riffing off the **4/16** prompt - write about some of the things that let you know that spring has begun and winter has ended. Maybe it’s the first tree to bloom on your block, or a holiday that comes around!

- Inspiration [“Maybe I Need You,” poem by Andrea Gibson](#)

4/21: What are some questions that you need answered? Today, either lay out those questions or look to answer them yourself.

- Inspiration: [“Questions”, song by Nico Segal & The Social Experiment ft. Jamila Woods](#)

4/22: Amidst social distancing, where do you find yourself “meeting” nowadays? Tell us how you’re staying socially connected, be it over Zoom calls with co-workers, booming group chats with family, or talking from porch-to-porch with neighbors!

- Inspiration: [“Take Care”, poem by Tasha](#)

4/23: Talk about your lineage! Write a poem that speaks to the things that have been passed down to you. It could be an heirloom, a talent, a habit, or pastime - anything!

- Inspiration: [“Ode to Thrift Stores”, poem by Ariana Brown](#)

4/24: Write a poem about the things that have saved you and how they did it! Think through some things in your life that motivate you in different ways.

Inspiration: [Come Back to Earth, song by Mac Miller](#)

4/25: How have you felt conflicted lately? What are some things in your life that give you mixed signals or contrasting thoughts?

Inspiration: [Home is Where the Hatred Is, song by Gil-Scott Heron](#)

4/26: Think back to the beginnings of an emotional, spiritual, or physical journey that you’re on currently. Take us from the starting point to where you are right now!

[Inspiration: ‘94 Camry Music, song by Femdot](#)

When submissions begin, the doc will be divided **by date** and anyone who wants to join can hop on in by contacting Davon Clark at davon.clark@southsideweekly.com or by DM at [@daybydavon on Instagram](#). Only share things that you'd be comfortable with anyone reading, as this doc will be open for anyone to see until further notice. Have fun!

Scroll down a bit to whatever day you want to see what the SSW community has written so far.

THE POEMS

***4/1:** April Fools! Play a practical joke in your poem and write a completely made up story that could be true.*

***4/2:** It's a miracle - Chicago is having its third sunny day in a row! Write about some sunshine in your life and tell us about something that has been giving you joy lately.*

***4/3:** In honor of blues singer Bill Withers, write about a time you had someone to lean on; write about a friend that helped you carry on, or maybe when you were that somebody to lean on!*

Davon:

Bill collectors be so cordial
Like they ain't got nothin' but time.
Say they can take however long you need
To come down. To catch up
On reading each digit on the balance due.
Like they know money move fast.
Bill collectors talk to me
Like they wanna make me feel bad
For buying groceries. Like they know
About the dollar.09 you spent after work.
My bill collector wants all the smoke.

Talks to me calm like she don't always call
Right after I spark up. Knows I be burning
Through cash if no one threatens to ice my bank account.
Rhonda be talking straight to me.
I be talking sideways when I lie about it.
Tell my grandparents I'm doing great
When they know I'm not.
Tell my landlord I'll have a check on time
When she know I'll have cash a day late.
Tell my girl we'll go anywhere
When she already been everywhere.
My bill collector can't call during quarantine.
My bill still collects interest.
My bill collector the most reliable
Person I know.

4/4: We made it to the first weekend in April! Take some time to feel out the week and describe how it feels to make it to the end of it.

4/5: Mondays are never any fun, but that's okay. Vent about some things you dread about your week! Since we can't always shout them out, write with as loud of a voice as possible about what you hate about Mondays.

4/6: Comfort food is one thing, and a favorite food is another. Write a poem, song or story for your favorite meal! Give us all the details; I want to sit next to you at the table and smell the spices and maybe even taste a bite.

Davon:
My last glimpse into heaven was in the glimmer
At the bottom of a clean pot. Rice is cooked its best
When it wipes away easily. A buttery firm goo.
Sticky but sturdy. Full of whatever flavor I simmered.

4/7: Sometimes, the little things can feel really big, and something monumental can feel so small. Scale your life a bit: write a full poem about something you normally overlook in your life! Put a microscope on the details of your day-to-day.

Davon:

How much lighter is the air when it is filled with water?
On the days I walk outside and can feel the beach
In the humidity, my heart wants nothing more
Than to dive in and take it for a swim.
How lovely to be of a people of the sun:
To hear them sing of days where we shine
Like we know best. Today, I heard Tuesday morning
Sing at the top of its lungs and wake up the whole
Neighborhood. My 6:34AM morning alarm clock sounds
Like a got damn train or something. If that don't do it, let it be
The echo of the lake bellowing a rattle into the jewelry on my windowsill.
Let it be the sunshine this time. Let it be a good day I can't sleep on.
Today, I can't ask for much else: It's a Tuesday morning,
The open window has a sunrise hue, and I get to see it.

4/8: *What's your cup of coffee? Everyone doesn't start their day with caffeine, but everyone has something that gets them going. Describe a main motivator in your life, or maybe write about the many things that keep pushing you!*

Davon:

They got oat milk at the corner store, now! Let me tell you of the miracles my people have done: shelves stay stocked, music stay loud, cashier stay Black, poultry & meat stay halal, doors stay open twenty four hours, and now folks don't even gotta go to Target for some oat milk? Been had lactaid because we all been lactose intolerant, but now, we got the blessing of options. My community doesn't *feel like home* because it *is home*. Got me feelin' spoiled like I never left my city. Got Goya on deck just one aisle away from boxes of Uncle Ben's rice. Got a meal for me and a feast for a family.

4/10: Reclaim the hurtful things that are sent your way! Write a boastful poem around an insult that someone has said to you. Turn their hate into your power!

- Inspiration: [Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen, poem by Imani Davis](#)

Clare:

To See A Thing Clearly, You Must Forget What It Is Called

I came upon a crossroads once -
a place where paths diverge -
and when I reached its point of intersection
something strange came over
and enveloped all my senses

i was, both
about to begin

and already ended
captive of the crossroads
in suspension.

it's dangerous to live here
this no place time collapse
there are things that you can't see
unless you've looked from between cracks
and see what things can only happen
in the place you're meant to forget.

what were you called before you were born
in the time out of time
between this world and the next
who was the you
you could only be
while in the pass through place
of suspended indeterminate?

Jibril

All I can do right now is smile.

Nothing else, just smile.

It's like, stuck.

I know that there's a lot of headache that comes with it, but, it all cancels out because of you.

Smile, you know that feeling when words are actually not enough and that's all that needs to be said? That's how you make me feel.

Most times I'm trying to figure out how to cry but you, somehow you, make my tear ducts swell like an oasis.

I never knew I could show a love like this.

It gotta be special for me to write this.

The first time we lock eyes you'll know you forever hold the key to my soul.

Nothing, not even God can pick this lock, naw I'm playing, but fr, your big, round, brown eyes, your smile that can even make the devil smile, your face, your smooth brown skin that gives anyone that touches you a feeling of peace, and that beautiful honey coconut scent that blooms out of you.

It all seems to trigger that switch in me, like the hulk I can't seem to control the feeling in me.

My heart beats a little faster, breathing gets heavier, the hug a little tighter, and the passion, just a little deeper.

You don't even gotta do nothin, just sitting with me while I read up on ya savings fund could get me into form.

Im watching you, as you take that first step, as you put that basket on your head and say lookout, I'm coming dad.

And I say 'you can't catch me' but I let you anyway.

Then you hug me and say I love you always.

Smile, cuz still, in this moment I couldn't stop if you was paying me.

Sunday night, watching movies till we fade away.

On the couch, tucked under my arm with a bear and a blanket, and a few high C's momma said you wasn't supposed to have and like my mother did to me, I'll carry you to bed and make sure you're all tucked in.

And when you cry for no reason, I'll be there to tell you, stern love, ain't no sympathy.

Smile, when your hand is buried in mine, as we walk through the kids events at the park.

You ask a million questions including how David killed Goliath with a sling and some thing called faith.

Its hot as satans toe nails and you wanna ask me a question like that, I'll reply.

But i wouldn't have it any other way.

I wanna show you how a father loves his family.

Smile, cuz even as hard as it is for a black man to be, I'll always be there to spell with you queen bee.

Sometime in the future, I can't wait to run this earth with you.
Until then, I'm marathoning through life, prepping the baton for you.