



AGENDA

CITY OF AUBURN ARTS COMMISSION

Online Virtual Meeting

4:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 3, 2020

I. Virtual Participation Link

The Auburn Arts Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 3, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. will be held virtually and telephonically. To attend the meeting virtually please click the link or enter the meeting ID into the Zoom app or call into the meeting at the phone number listed below.

Per the Governor's Emergency Proclamation 20-28, the City of Auburn is prohibited from holding an in-person meeting at this time.

City of Auburn Resolution No. 5533, designates City of Auburn meeting locations for all Council, Board and Commission meetings as virtual. All meetings will be held virtually and telephonically until King County enters into Phase 3 of Governor Inslee's Safe Start — Washington's Phased Reopening plan.

The link to the Virtual Meeting or phone number to listen to the Auburn Arts Commission Meeting is:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93388215839>

Meeting ID: 933 8821 5839

One tap mobile

+12532158782,,93388215839# US (Tacoma)

+16699009128,,93388215839# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

888 475 4499 US Toll-free

877 853 5257 US Toll-free

Meeting ID: 933 8821 5839

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/aeiuAMxkJc>

II. Call to Order

Eydie Leighty

- a. Call to Order
- b. Approve October 2020 Minutes

III. 2021 – 2023 Auburn Poet Laureate Nominees

Allison Hyde & Julie Krueger

- a. Presentation and discussion of candidates
- b. Interview with Julie Courey at 5 PM
- c. Interview with James Rodgers at 5:30 PM
- d. Discussion

IV. Arts Commission Positions for 2021

Julie Krueger

V. Updates and News

Allison Hyde

VI. Adjourn

Eydie Leighty

If you are unable to attend this meeting please call 253-804-5043 or ahyde@auburnwa.gov

**City of Auburn Arts Commission
Tuesday, October 6, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Present: Tammy Dwight, John Harris, Pat Judd, Eydie Leighty, Anne Marie Natali, Pam Smith, Kent Sprague

Staff: Arts & Events Manager, Julie Krueger; Arts Coordinator, Allison Hyde

Excused: Kelly Gordon, Sirichanh Sisavatdy

Not Excused: Ana R. Kear, Dinah Rau, Kenneth Greg Watson

I. Call to Order

- a. Call to Order – Chair Leighty called the online zoom meeting to order at 4:34 PM.
- b. Introduction and welcome by Chair Leighty once a quorum was reached in the online meeting.
- c. Approval of minutes – Chair Leighty asked Commissioners to review the minutes. Commissioner Smith moved that the minutes for August 4, 2020 be accepted as written. Commissioner Sprague seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

II. 2021 Project Support Grants

- a. Arts Coordinator Allison Hyde presented the applications from arts organizations and artists for the 2021 Project Support Grants, with requests ranging from \$500-\$2,000. Hyde noted that there were less applications than usual, and even at full funding for all projects there would be remaining funds available for possible future use, to be determined. After thorough discussion of the merits of all projects, the Commissioners discussed awarding full funding to all applicants as follows:
 - Auburn International Farmer's Market: \$1,500
 - Auburn Symphony Orchestra: \$2,000
 - Evergreen City Ballet: \$2,000
 - Interurban Center for the Arts: \$2,000
 - Pacific Ballroom Dance: \$2,000
 - Christina Caravaglio - Artist project - "Four Geese, Four Directions": \$960
- b. Commissioner Smith motioned to approve the 2021 Project Support Grant applications with full requested funding Applications were received from: Commissioner Sprague seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

III. Arts & Culture Center Presentation

- a. Arts & Events Manager Julie Krueger and Arts Coordinator Allison Hyde shared a presentation about the Arts & Culture Center that was recently presented to the Auburn City Council. The presentation showcased the most recent floorplan details, finishes, and interior renderings created by Johnston Architects. The presentation was met with enthusiasm and interest from the Arts Commission.

II. Auburn Arts Alley Presentation

- a. Arts & Events Manager Julie Krueger and Arts Coordinator Hyde shared a presentation about the Auburn Arts Alley project that was recently presented to the Auburn City Council. The presentation highlighted recent artistic developments including: the seating wall with inlaid mosaics and inset text by artist Kathleen Fruge Brown with the help of 4Culture's Creative Consultancy funding; a large-scale mural by artist Will Schlough on the side of the Auburn Avenue Theater, and the simultaneous painting of the theater; and the future hand-carved cedar Welcome Figure, which will be created by Muckleshoot Indian Tribe artists Keith

Stevenson and Tyson Simmons, through the support of another 4Culture Creative Consultancy grant award and collaboration with Kathleen Fruge Brown. Staff noted that additional elements of the alleyway project will include removal of an electrical pole, a new asphalt overlay, finishing elements of Schlough's mural, overhead lighting by Fruge Brown, and a ramp and stage connected to the case concrete sitting wall. The presentation was also met by enthusiasm and excitement by the Arts Commission.

III. Updates and News

- a. Arts Coordinator Hyde informed the Arts Commission that the deadline had been extended to October 14th for the Auburn Poet Laureate nominations, with the review of candidates and possible interviews to take place at the November 2020 Arts Commission meeting.

IV. Adjourn

There being no further business, Commissioner Harris moved to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Dwight seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Allison Hyde

Approved the _____ day of _____, _____.

(Chair)

(Staff)

City of Auburn Poet Laureate Nomination Form 2021-2023

Application Receipt Deadline August 14, 2020

This form must be submitted along with the other required materials. Please review the complete application description and guidelines for both nominees and poets before signing this form.

NOMINATOR Information

Nominator Name: Christina Wenzier

Address: 2911 C Street SE, Auburn, WA 98002

Phone: 253486 8053 Alt Phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: ChristinaLFW2016@gmail.com

POET Information

Nominee (Poet) Name: Julia Courey

Address: 20113 128th AVE SE

Phone: 206-375-8086 Alt Phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: lcourey92014@gmail.com

If selected, I accept full responsibility for meeting all requirements of the City of Auburn to provide all information requested by the Council, Arts Commission, and/or staff. I give my full permission for my name to be placed in nomination for this position by the above nominator. I certify that the nominee information is true and accurate and that the work sample submitted is an accurate representation of my work. If selected, the City of Auburn and the Auburn Arts Commission have my permission to use my work sample, or a portion thereof, for publicity purposes.

Julia Courey 10/11/2020
Signature of Nominee (Poet) Date

The following materials must accompany the nomination form

1. TEN poems (no more than 15 pages). Please see: Application Guidelines for a complete description of required materials and how to apply
2. Poet resume/bio or curriculum vitae

Please see complete application description and guidelines for additional materials you may wish to have considered.

For further information, contact:

Allison Hyde, Arts Coordinator, City of Auburn

253-804-5043 or ahyde@auburnwa.gov

October 13, 2020

RE: Julia Courey, Poet Laureate Nomination 2021-2023

Please accept this nomination for Poet Laureate for Julia Courey (Julie). Julie is a true ambassador of poetry.

From the very start her love to share and promote poetry were the first things I noticed the first time I met Julie at an open mic we were both attending in Maple Valley in 2013. She is dedicated to sharing and inspiring others to learn about and share their own poetry.

It was from Julie, I realized there was a whole community of poets and open mics in the region. She invited me to the Striped Water Poets and Northwest Renaissance Poets open mic which are held the first Monday's in Auburn, WA (pre-covid).

I have personally admired and been with Julie while she has interacted with people at various events where she spreads the word about poetry in our area to whomever will listen and she is positively received. She has also been a fantastic event greeter at the door for the Poets at the Ave event at the Auburn Avenue Theater. .

Julie is a member of the Northwest Renaissance Poets Board and a member of the Striped Water Poets. She has assisted the Northwest Renaissance Poets with the planning of poetry events such as Poets on the Ave and Poets on the Farm and has been a featured reader at the Monday Open mics in Auburn, WA and Poets on the Farm.

Julie is also strong in following through in planning and organizing gathering of people for a common purpose. For example, in 2016, she single handedly successfully organized her high school class reunion. It took logistical planning, food and entertainment coordination, communicating and coordinating with others, and her patience and dedication brought people together for a common shared purpose.

Julie also participates in the "Fun Committee", "Safety Committee", and on the "Influencer and Diversity Committee" at her workplace.

Julie has self published some of her works in a collection titled "Outside the Box, Collective Poems of Life, Love, Nature, of Random Things." She is also published in some collective works (examples will be attached).

Her poetry is heartfelt, and her enthusiasm to promote poetry to anyone and everyone she meets make her a great candidate for Poet Laureate. Thank you for your consideration and time,

Christina Weinzierl, Auburn Resident
2911 C Street, SE, Auburn, WA 98002

Julie Courey
20113 128th Avenue SE
Kent, WA 98031
206-375-8086
jcourey92014@gmail.com

October 11, 2020

To whom this may concern @ Auburn City Arts & Entertainment,

I have been involved in the Auburn Striped Water Poets for 10 years and all the events they have been involved in. I look forward to many more years to be involved in events when they are no longer cancelled due to the pandemic. Thank you for the opportunity to be considered for this position in a community which has meant so much to me .

Sincerely,

Julie Courey

Julie Courey

jcourey92014@gmail.com

Lives in Kent, WA (Born & raised in South King County)

206-375-8086

Narrative/ Rhyming /Spoken Word Artist

Have been an Auburn Striped Water Poet since 2010

Auburn Northwest Reinesance Poets since 2014

**Ambassador for Poetry venturing out to open mic venues to talk about our
open mic in Auburn before pandemic 2014-2019**

Been a greeter/Participant for Auburn Poets at The Auburn Ave Theatre 2017-2019

**Which included going to weekly meetings, worckshops, open mic's around the sound
Everett- Tacoma & The Kitsap Pennesula 2010-2019**

Uniquely Auburn read Poetry 2013

Marched in the Auburn Good ol Days Parade in 2015

I have been a Featured Poet

I have been published in several Anthologies/Compliation:

The Colors of Our Dreams -International Library of Poetry 2001

Best Poets and Poems of 2012-World Poetry Movement

International Who's Who in Poetry -Library of Congress 2012

Stars in our Hearts-World Poetry Movement 2012

Best Poets of 2014- Eber & Wein

Where The Mind Dwells- Library of Congress- Eber & Wein 2016

Professionally :

Work at Amazon in Kent

as an Associate member of the Safety Team 2015-2020 and Social Distancing 2020

Has served as an Associate Trainer 2016-2018

On the fun Committee- Encourage creativity of all kinds and events 2014-2020

Inclusive and Diversity team to welcome all to our building Associates from other Countries and LBGQT , Associates challenged with Disabilities 2020

Other::

VP of PTSA for fundraising 2001-2002

Boy Scout Leader 2003-2005

My hometown, on the map may look like a dot.
One Hour to the mts., hour & half to the sea,
Rains so much, rainbows come here alot.

Auburn, Washington

**There is a town nestled in the Green River Valley,
Of Washington State:**

**Where there are beautifully landscaped parks,
and fields for playing sports.
Fields of pumpkins, a corn maze, and all others sorts**

**Bike trails that connects to nearby communities.
These are only a few of its' amenities.**

**Indoors or outdoors, rain or shine,
there is so much to do here, golf 18 holes or just 9.**

**Take in the arts, the symphony, this town though modern,
has old world charm.
There is history at the museum and The Olson farm,**

**This Community with its' ever growing town, to the Super Mall,
Muckleshoot Casino, to Emerald Down**

**Everything you can think of is here.
Even perhaps in spring, a sighting of someone,
riding a John Deer.**

-Julie Courey 2007

I wrote this as a tribute to a bird being chased by some angry birds ..it did not look good for that bird

If I Were A Bird

**If I were a bird,
I would soar over the ground.
Skim the waters to cool my claws,
my wings carry me through to the mountains**

**Where you land is important too...
But for a while, my wings soar, the flight sustains my
wingspan.
The sun warms me, the wind, ruffles my feathers.
The breeze feels, wonderful as the view, comes full
spectrum..**

**As I search great heights for something to plunder.
A shiny object, from far off in the distance to bring
back to my nest.
As the reflection will keep my nest warm,
as night falls quicker with each passing season.**

**Lavender petals, other flowers of that season,
to line my nest, to find a sweet slumber.**

**Sometimes shade brings comfort.
When the dark corners, become shadows
from those who prey upon me,
So they don't see my shadow or where I go to hide.
Look for a safe place to go,
left in the open none, will be spared.**

Inner Child

Inner Child

I'm letting out my inner child,
the one who loved life on just this side of wild.

The one who had dreams,
world of rainbow ponies, warm golden sun beams.

Who danced in the barn with rake in hand
pretending there was music on a
sandy tropical island.

The chickens cackled and raised thier wings,
we had a fine time those chicks and I,
when the sun was due to rise, the rooster sings.

Time marches on, no more dances,
the moon leaves only shadows.
My inner child rebelling, wanting out,
middle age starts to show.

I say dance anyway, dream wherever you can,
let your inner child out
even if it is to bang a pot,
with a ladel in the kitchen.

Take A Look Around

**She came looking to find,
where the pieces of life once fit.
It has really grown, her hometown,
she no longer recognized it.**

**When in the days of her youth,
they did not even think about,
closing doors,
even on a hot summer night.
Now, when people are at home,
they lock up even in the daylight.**

**She worked long hours, did not realize,
That her childhood was being erased
before her very eyes.
Fields of tall grass, trees for climbing,
running from here to there
Barefoot days in the sunshine,
those are the memories she held with care.**

**It did not seem that long ago since she was here.
It saddened her to know, it was gone,
what she use to hold so dear. .
She thought,
this does not look like the neighborhood at all.
A sign on the fence says, coming soon, a strip mall**

**Progress was no longer just in another city
or a neighborhood nearby.
She grabbed her memories and drove off
with a heavy heart and a sigh.
The places she use to play,
where horses once stood.
Are rows and rows of houses,
made into a new neighborhood**

**She hopes that the young ones
will cherish the new memories they share.
As they watch sunsets from their front stair.
The wind blowing at their backs,
running as fast as they care.**

**She will remember the days,
of watching the running of that chestnut mare.**

First Steps

First Steps

Remembering before I could walk you made me dance
Felt like Cinderella at the ball, your feet , my wiggly stance.
I would step on your shoes , you would lead the way
Twirl me around and around.....
At my wedding you danced with me,
on my own feet that day.

You were the first man to make me smile, laugh
you talked to me while I cried, we ate ice cream
You helped me with my homework mostly Math...
My confidence you would redeem

Today Dad, I carried you in a red box
with a draw string of gold
I turned to twirl you to the bay and said good- bye
remembering all the stories you told...
With a heavy heart I sigh....

Dad, here's your first steps in heaven now.
you asked me not to cry or be too sad....
I have learned more about life and how
the love you gave us, I carry inside
peace be with you till I see you again,
In Heaven is where you now reside...

When All Else Fails

Why can't he sleep?
He lies curled up in a heap,
The visions of all things in his head,
of a day, in a world that he dread.

So much on his mind these days.
It makes him lack feeling,
he becomes crazed.

The more he struggles,
the more wrapped up it will get.
He thinks he is falling endlessly,
into a vast emotional pit.
The regrets seem to pile,
as he soberly attempts to mount fate.
Stops, then starts, then hesitate.

It is hard to be burdened,
with the world on your shoulders.
His thoughts no longer pebbles,
but boulders.

Where are the sands of time,
that flow through the hour glass?
If he didn't get some sleep soon,
these feelings will not pass.

Pull back and start again,
pass around that bottle of dry Gin.
Thus, he may sleep his worries away,
as he waits for his real life to begin.
Is this the answer to his problems,
or where they start?
It pierces through him,
bull's eye,
and darts straight to his heart.

For another night's blown,
that he did not give way to his dreams.
His mental state of mind is coming apart,
at the seams.

What does he care, for all he see's,
there is lots of company for to compare.
"There are bars by the plenty, misery loves company",
he says "Isn't that is why they are there" ?

The fog lifted,
the air, crisp and thin.
The lawn with a thick frost, crackled.

Sunlight,
in the warm days of summer .
The soft fragrances allure.
Breathing is heightened with a soft murmur.

Being content inside.

Things Change

When I was a kid, I really looked forward to the possibility of snow.
Now I see my car covered with ice & snow, it's Oh No!!!

When I was a kid I would wake up in wonder, wonder how my day would unfold?
Now I wonder if I can get everything done in a day sitting there, on hold..

When I was a kid it seemed like there was time to plan for the future ..
Now the future is here and some in the past,
not enough hours to make this day last.....

When I was a kid there seemed to be lots of family around.
Now they live far away and holidays quiet,
some with families of their own,
some without, some homebound.

Somethings really do change, though I'm not really sure at what point it turned
All things in moderation , wise words to behold
for the days to come are lessons in aging, not just about getting old.

The Way I found Algebra in My Life

The sum of all that we are :
is that of the powers that be,
the brackets they put around us.
How they take the x factor,
By how many powers needed to make it equate.
The rulers of thumbs, the unknown factor of x.
The equation,
sometimes not equal for all,
is how they find solutions.
Not everyone gets it.

Majority rules.
Some are not sure,.
they go with what's popular or swayed by other factors.
Not really understanding what has taken place,
Taking for granted that the place holder.
Is just that, you had to do something with it.

In most everything,
finding solutions to the problems.
Not all problems are to be solved equally,
some like to create the problems,
not just the even numbered ones.

International
Who's Who in Poetry



2012

EBER & WEIN
PUBLISHING



**BEST POETS
OF 2014**

Volume 3

**THE COLORS
OF OUR DREAMS**

The International Library of Poetry



**Stars in
Our Hearts**

Tokens



**Where the Mind
Dwells**

Contemplation

Editor's Choice Award

Presented to
Julia Courey
December 2001

For Outstanding Achievement in Poetry
Presented by
poetry.com and the International Library of Poetry



Howard Ely
Howard Ely
Managing Editor





Poetry at the Rainbow Café welcomes the works of Courey and Cook on Monday, Feb. 5

Thursday, February 1, 2018 4:13pm | **LIFE**

Poetry at the Rainbow Café presents the work of Julie Courey and Glenna Cook on Monday, Feb. 5.

The program is from 7 to 9 p.m. at the café, 112 E. Main St.

Coffee and conversation follow readings. It is an open mic opportunity. The public is invited.

Quality local journalism is more important than ever.
SUPPORT OUR WORK »

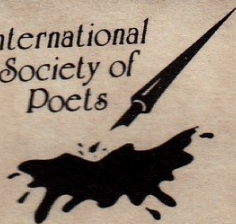
The Rainbow Cafe, Striped Water Poets, the NorthWest Renaissance, Auburn Arts Commission, City of Auburn, and King County 4Culture make the program possible.

Julia Courey

POET

Washington
United States

*International
Society of
Poets*



This will Certify that

Julia Anne Courey

is a member in good standing

International Society of Poets

and has attained the Distinction

Distinguished Member

with all the privileges accorded thereto
and is recognized for support of
the Society's principles of
Peace - Education - Accomplishment
Charity - Equality

Elizabeth Barnes
Elizabeth Barnes
President



City of Auburn Poet Laureate Nomination Form 2021-2023

Application Receipt Deadline August 14, 2020

This form must be submitted along with the other required materials. Please review the complete application description and guidelines for both nominees and poets before signing this form.

NOMINATOR Information

Nominator Name: Nancy Colson

Address: 1214 O St NE Auburn

Cell Phone: 253-670-1191 Landline Alt Phone: 253-833-7828

Fax: N/A Email: ncolson@windermere.com

POET Information

Nominee (Poet) Name: James Rodgers

Address: 438 Pacific Pl. S., Pacific, WA 98047

Phone: 253-887-8073 Alt Phone: N/A

Fax: N/A Email: Jameshera@msn.com

If selected, I accept full responsibility for meeting all requirements of the City of Auburn to provide all information requested by the Council, Arts Commission, and/or staff. I give my full permission for my name to be placed in nomination for this position by the above nominator. I certify that the nominee information is true and accurate and that the work sample submitted is an accurate representation of my work. If selected, the City of Auburn and the Auburn Arts Commission have my permission to use my work sample, or a portion thereof, for publicity purposes.

[Signature] 9/29/20
Signature of Nominee (Poet) Date

The following materials must accompany the nomination form

1. TEN poems (no more than 15 pages). Please see: Application Guidelines for a complete description of required materials and how to apply
2. Poet resume/bio or curriculum vitae

Please see complete application description and guidelines for additional materials you may wish to have considered.

For further information, contact:

Allison Hyde, Arts Coordinator, City of Auburn

253-804-5043 or allison.h@cityofaurn.org

Nancy F. Colson
1214 O Street NE
Auburn WA 98002-3515

October 2, 2020

Mayor Nancy Backus
Auburn Arts Commission
25 West Main Street
Auburn WA 98001

Greetings to you all,

It gives me great pleasure to nominate James Rodgers to be Auburn's next Poet Laureate. I have known James for several years, primarily through seeing and hearing him at Auburn's monthly Monday Poetry Nights.

James is a prolific poet. He brings humor and a critical voice to current events and cultural phenomena. Thoughtful analysis and edgy perspective in his poetry bring both awareness and comic relief to his readers and listeners.

As you can see from his bio, James is active in the local poetry world, publishing and participating in poetry events. His book release party for They Were Called Records, Kids drew an enthusiastic audience from around the region. Recently he has been a regular participant in the Zoom version of Monday Night Poetry during the COVID 19 restrictions on public gatherings.

James is a great voice for poetry in the community and poetry in general. I am delighted to offer his name for your consideration as Poet Laureate.

Yours truly,

Nancy Colson

James Rodgers is a prolific poet living in Pacific, WA for more than two decades, and has been in the Pacific Northwest his entire life. He lives with his very patient wife and two very psychotic cats. While James prefers humor, he writes all kinds of poetry, with a focus on music, humor, kids, travel, and so much more, along with many song lyrics waiting to have music attached to them. He also created his own humorous style of haiku that he calls haikooky, and you can see his blog at jamesrodgershaikooky.blogspot.com.

James has three self-published chapbooks, and has had poems published by *Prism Magazine*, *Ha!*, *Poets of the Kent Canterbury Faire*, *Fly By Night Press*, *WPA Members Anthology*, *Wrist*, *Raven Chronicles*, *Washington English Journal*, and over 30 more. James' first full book of poetry, [*They Were Called Records, Kids*](#) was released by MoonPath Press in 2018. He was also the winner of the WPA Charles Proctor Award for Humor in 2005, and honorable mention on two other occasions.

James is a member of the Auburn Poetry Group, Striped Water Poets, and is a regular reader at the Rainbow Readings held on the first Monday of each month at the Rainbow Café in Auburn, and has been a featured reader there multiple times. He was also featured at the Auburn Theater for April Poetry Month, curated by Marjorie Rommel.

Along with poetry, James is an award-winning photographer, having won multiple prizes in Auburn's annual photo contest. He has had multiple art shows of his work, including at Auburn City Hall, provided the black and white images used in Cindy M. Hutchings book [*Tree Talk*](#), and the tulip portion of the collage cover for Brendan McBreen's book [*Cosmic Egg*](#), both also published by MoonPath Press.

Dedication

For the last week,
I have been struggling,
wanting to write a poem
in honor of
George Floyd,
Ahmaud Arbery,
and Breonna Taylor,
but while my skin tone
gives me plenty
of privileges,
that is not one of them.
I don't know
what they went through
that day
or on a regular basis
due to the color
of their skin.
I don't know
their struggles.
I don't know
the fear of not knowing
if an interaction
with a stranger,
an officer,
a friend
could end my life.
I don't know
their lives,
and now
never will.
But, I do know
violence
will not solve this.
Looting
and the destruction of property
will not solve this.
We
need to solve this.
I do know
love,
sympathy,
empathy,
the willingness to listen
to learn
will get us further
than we've come so far.
I know

we have a long,
long,
long way to go.
So, I did not
write a poem
for George,
Ahmaud,
and Breonna.
I wrote this poem
for all of us
who need to rise
another day.
May we all
keep rising
together.

James Rodgers 06/02/20

How Many Times?

"I can't breathe."
In the last eight minutes
of George Floyd's life,
he repeated that phrase,
"I can't breathe"
more than twenty times,
officer Derek Chauvin's knee
firmly pressed
on George's neck,
all for possibly passing
a counterfeit twenty.
"I can't breathe."
I've written it
just three times,
which feels like
two times too many
for anyone with compassion
to even possibly ignore,
each time I write it
my own lungs getting tight,
forcing the air
into my lungs,
trying to make sense
of the tragedy.
"I can't breathe."
Over twenty times.
He begged.
He pleaded.
He repeatedly
called for his Mama,
and once the pressure
was too much,
too long,
he passed out,
passed away
on that street,
Chauvin's knee
still on George's neck
for another minute,
Derek asked
his fellow officers
if they were okay.
One responded,
"My knee
might be a little scratched,
but I'll survive."

Don't Stop Disbelievin'

Excuse me a moment
for being
a bit obtuse,
but I don't understand
the concept.
Our Commander-in-Thief,
the lightning rod of controversy,
the wholesale fabricator of the truth,
the juggler of facts,
snubs the Speaker of the House,
turns his back
on the other party in the room,
and then boasts
for over eighty minutes
how he has brought
our country together,
united our States,
overcame all adversity,
made America great again,
and we're supposed
to just believe it?
Forget about
the atrocities
of global warming,
his impeachment
over shady dealings
with Ukraine,
blocking aid
until they help
interfere with our elections,
his chumminess
with dictators,
spending most of his weekends
in a Trump Hotel,
playing golf
more than running our country.
This is all
somehow okay?
We're supposed
to now believe?
Pardon me
if I continue to doubt
his speeches,
his tweets,
his actions,
and I apologize
in advance

if I decide to hesitate
when the chamber fills
with chlorine gas,
and our president
tells me
it's okay
to breath.

James Rodgers 02/05/20

Almost Over

Based on the news,
the stories I'm hearing,
it sounds like this illness,
this virus,
this scourge
that has been ravaging our country,
keeping us sick,
keeping us scared,
making us concerned
over strangers,
even our neighbors,
causing financial turmoil,
we might have finally
rounded a corner,
peaked,
be almost over,
folks able to go outside,
celebrate,
party with friends,
but we need to be patient
just a little bit longer,
stay strong,
and hopefully,
if we all continue
to do our part,
this will all be over
after Election Day.

James Rodgers 04/08/20

Diagnosis

Cancer
is defined as
a disease,
an uncontrolled division
of abnormal cells,
a malignant growth,
a tumor,
an action
perceived to be evil,
destructive,
hard to contain,
metastasizing,
spreading,
destroying each area
it invades,
sometimes fatal.
I do believe
our planet
has cancer,
and
it
is
us.

James Rodgers 08/27/19

Quarantine

Another day
unable to escape
trapped inside
only my mind
able to get out,
staring casually out this window,
or as casual as a man
starving for the meals
of nature and fresh air can be,
wishing I could lie
among the grass and mosses,
look up at the clouds,
find the shapes and fairies
hidden in the white
dancing on the blue,
let my imagination loose
headlong towards the horizon
no walls
no barriers,
but no sooner than the moment
I can almost feel
the lush green
beneath my feet,
feast on loaves of bread
baking in some far off oven,
my soul's pulled back
on some invisible tether,
flips through the air
from the velocity
somersaults back through the glass
to return to my body
still in this chair
Lou Reed talk-singing
"European Son (To Delmore Schwartz)"
from the Velvet Underground and Nico album,
wishing I could keep down
more than soda water,
tea,
and a little bit of juice,
my stomach queasy
knowing I'm confined here
inside
until at least Easter,
likely longer,
not wanting to feel
like a victim,
understanding there are those

much worse off than I,
but jealous of the songbirds
flitting about
on the other side of this pane
while I remain
unable to fly.

James Rodgers 03/25/20

Things I've Learned in Quarantine

1. I am not essential, no matter what my Mom thinks.
2. My job can be performed remotely.
3. I eat more chocolate when I work remotely.
4. Two of the laws of motion I learned in Physics class make more sense now: An object at rest stays at rest unless changed by an external force; and For every action in Nature, there is an equal and opposite reaction.
5. Sitting at my dining room table with my laptop is the equal and opposite reaction.
6. Lounge pants are proper work attire.
7. Zoom is fine. Microsoft Teams is fine, but I miss my co-workers.
8. I'm funnier remotely.
9. I miss hugs.
10. Spending all this time in quarantine in a small house with my wife tells me retirement will be a piece of cake.
11. I didn't realize how important toilet paper is for people's state of minds.
12. Everything gets slightly better after chocolate, beer, or a nap.
13. I miss hiking in the woods.
14. I drink more beer in quarantine.
15. I wear more t-shirts in quarantine.
16. Most of my clothes seem to have shrunk while I'm in quarantine.
17. People's tolerance for inconvenience is incredibly low.
18. Besides a very small group, I don't really miss interacting with people too much.
19. I look less cool with long hair than I did when I was twenty.
20. I look less cool than I did when I was twenty.
21. I write more poems about being in quarantine when I am in quarantine.
22. Food delivery services don't deliver food hot or fast. It shows up when it shows up, and you better have a microwave to reheat it.
23. Small acts of kindness are worth more in quarantine.
24. As a society, we complain too much. Inconvenience is not oppression.
25. Nurses, doctors, teachers, delivery folk and anyone in the service industry are underpaid, and most of us don't deserve the sacrifice they are making.
26. I miss hugs. Yeah, I know I already said it. I'm just surprised by that fact, so I'm repeating it.
27. Something we can't see can change our life in a heartbeat.
28. As restrictions lessen, I thought humanity would be more grateful. It isn't.
29. Birthdays during quarantine suck.
30. All those times I said I'd do something when I had more time, I lied.

James Rodgers 05/13/20

One Message, On A Loop

Death
is calling out to me.
I hear it
without listening,
a low hum
on the highest frequency,
an open channel,
bleeding through
whatever else
I may be listening to
at the time,
music,
an audiobook,
a lover's voice.

Death
calls out
to all of us,
most ignoring it
as long as they can.
It starts
as merely a whisper,
so quiet
as to almost be
nonexistent,
but it is there
rising slowly,
steadily
as your end gets nearer,
becoming a roar,
thunder in your ears,
the decibel level
louder than a jet engine,
or a Who concert,
a sound
even Pete Townsend could hear,
a message
to help guide you through,
like instructions,
yet simpler,
just a few steps.

Death
is calling out to me.
I hear it
without listening,
can almost
make out all the words,
trying harder

every day
to not understand
what is being broadcast,
though the volume
keeps increasing,
and while I try
not to hear it,
I'm almost certain
the first step is,
"Keep breathing".

James Rodgers 03/18/20

The Devil Took The 10:13 to Sacramento

Satan bought a train ticket
in Seattle,
heading South
to California,
as South
is the only direction
that ever feels right,
and California
feels like home,
full of tortured souls,
no rain in sight.
Satan loves
to ride the train,
gets up here
at least twice a year,
rides the rails
somewhere in the U.S.,
never crossing borders
as he doesn't have a passport,
the last one expiring
forty years ago.
Satan doesn't have
any hobbies,
any skills
besides eternal damnation,
no fiddle playing
as Charlie
would leave you to believe,
doesn't waste his time
in Washington D.C.
whispering in politician's ears
as they don't need the push.
No,
Satan is a working man,
just a couple vacations a year,
so he spends them on a train,
a long ride,
the rhythm of the tracks
better than any Rock and Roll,
the view
from the windows
of mountains and valleys,
forests and fields,
eyes peeled
for deer, elk and grizzly,
because Satan believes,
though he hates to admit it,

the landscape
when seen from a train,
does tend to be
almost heavenly.

James Rodgers 07/21/20

Bedtime Prayer (Updated Edition)

Now I lay me down to sleep
While the Coronavirus closer creeps
If I die before the dawn
I caught this from my cousin Ron!

James Rodgers 03/06/20