

Helping Children Find And Unwrap Their Gifts Of Poetry

Interview With Poet Clement Mallory

By Frank Frontis



I'd like to say something about the things we call "gifts."

But if in so many words it sounds like I may as well be saying "Bah Humbug!" ... excuse me. I'm going to go ahead and say it anyway:

Some of the greatest gifts do not come in gaudy-wrapped boxes sporting exquisitely crafted bows. Actually, the one's I'm speaking of do not come inside boxes at all. Further, they're not even offered by or received from a human hand.

Poetry is such a Gift!

Sudden wondrous words, harmonized in heart, memorized by mind, and soaring through soul makes poetry a gift naturally and uniquely inherent in each of us.

Often neglected, commonly unacknowledged, too frequently, however, it is one that remains deeply obscured and "unopened."

Thanks to the likes of Clement Mallory, a Brooklyn-born poet, residing in Greensboro, who has discovered and opened his gift. Now, he's **Helping Children Find And Unwrap Their Gifts Of Poetry**.

A recent interview with Clement Mallory examines how he's doing this.

Interview:

FF: Clement, let's start by you sharing with the readers of SimplyElevate Magazine something about yourself and how you came about "opening up" your gift of poetry for yourself and others.

CM: I am from Brooklyn-NY, and was influenced by the Hip-Hop culture. As a young man, I followed Hip-Hop artists like

Rakim who said R.A.P. is Rhythm and Poetry. From that point on, I fell in love with Poetry. I first started expressing myself on trains as a graffiti artist. It wasn't until years later as a college student (SUNY Oneonta-upstate New York) that I began expressing my thoughts on paper. Upon graduation and returning back to Brooklyn, I really got serious

with my writing after realizing that I really had a gift in writing poems. I then began reciting my poems at as many open-mics [events] that I could attend. It was during those sessions that I truly recognized that my gift of poetry was to heal and speak for others—to, be their voices!

FF: Describe your style of poetry.

CM: I am considered by many as a "spoken word" artist because of the way I "**Display**" my poetry. My style is who I am. **100% realism!** I agree with Ms. Nikki Giovanni when she said in her poem "Poetry"— "A poem is pure Energy....." As a spoken word artist, we express our words by the use of body movements/gestures. So when a person witnesses a spoken word artist, what they are seeing is the poet's words being told through their body action.

FF: Can you give me a demonstration of a piece of your "spoken word" poetry?

CM: Water! It's the Water that I am that makes me what I am... [Clement recites his poem "Water" as he gestures with both hands, flexing them outward, turning them inward, arching them up-ward, angling them downward, thrusting them forward, yanking them back, all the while, shimmying his shoulders, rocking his head side-to-side and animating his eyes as the whole of him falls into sync with the live "spoken word poetry" flying off his rapping tongue]... I have no begin-

ning nor ending, I'm just a constant flow of motion, I'm water..."

FF: Totally Amazing—Woeeee! Man, that was awesome!

CM: [Clement chuckles before breaking into a short laughter] "It's the water that I am that makes me what I am," he repeats.

FF: I want to ask him for an encore, but if I do I'm afraid I'll ask for an encore², so wisely, I continue on. ... Clement, what do you think about the idea that poetry is inherent in all of us in various ways—and that it's simply a matter of us finding and opening up to it?

CM: O yeah! Poetry is Life and Life is what a person thinks, feels and experiences in Life. We express what we think, feel and experience in many forms, such a written words, spoken words, art, music, dance, and even listening [appreciation]. Once we realize this fact, it's then that we All realize that we are All poets.

FF: You've founded and developed a unique program called "KidsPoetryBasketball" (www.kidspoetrybasketball.com) for children. Tell the readers of SimplyElevate Magazine something about this program and how poetry is a part of it.

CM: Well, KidsPoetryBasketball is a literacy program designed for kids aged 4-13. Kids learn how to read, spell and identify poetic words while playing basketball games. Presented for the first time in 2010, our goal is to have kids look at reading in a more fun way! Because participants are engaged in a number of poetry exercises and health discussions, KidsPoetry Basketball also focuses on combating childhood obesity. Our sponsors consist of the City Of Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department, Unity In Greensboro, The Greensboro Public Library (Poetry GSO), Guilford County School Parent Academy, City Arts, Colgate, Costco, Motivations Barbershop, King's English, Earthfare Supermarket, Deep Roots Market, Schneider Stone Inc., CEEJ, Africa and More, Greenbean Coffee House, BlackPages USA and the Greensboro Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, INC.

FF: In working with children, have you had any observations suggesting that, innately, poetry is an ability they all possess naturally? Explain.

CM: As I mentioned already—Poetry Is Life—so if you are living—you are expressing Poetry in some form or fashion.

FF: Explain some of the ways in which "KidsPoetryBasketball" help children to find and "unwrap" their gifts of poetry.

CM: KidsPoetryBasketball allows kids to express themselves through the many reading and writing activities that they have fun doing. It's funny to see the amount of confidence a child gains after making one basket [scoring a basket] or learning a song that

their peers are learning—all at the same time! KidsPoetryBasketball has proven to allow a child to express their gift of expression!

FF: From what you're witnessing, what are some of the major benefits children are receiving through their involvement in poetry?

CM: They start to appreciate poetry more, become interested in learning and begin to appreciate different languages. They fall in love with reading due to poetry because poetry allows them to express themselves. It helps them to build character and be who they feel that they are. It helps them to think-outside-of-the-box! Because poetry allows them to express their own thoughts the way they want to express them—Without Being Booed!—It's Liberating For Them!

FF: Great for them! Sounds like the kids are receiving tremendous benefits through poetry. Clement, it's been a pleasure talking with you about your background as a poet and the program you've developed, KidsPoetryBasketball. Thank you and I wish you continued success in "Helping Children Find And Unwrap Their Gifts Of Poetry."

CM: And thank you Frank for doing an interview with me. Hopefully, we'll be able to meet again somewhere near our favorite



Photo by R. Huntley of 7545 Photography

gift shop.



Kids poetry class courtesy of Clement Mallory

About the Author:



Frank Frontis has a background as a professional feature article writer, having worked for several publishing companies in Memphis, TN where he wrote pieces related to art, health and wellness. Currently he's focused on fiction, working to compile and complete an anthology.