

Philadelphia High School

By Kelsey Threatte

Mornings smell like neon pink
Sickly sweet strawberry puke in splatters
Unicorn bile and honey buns
Scent of body odor and bubble gum
Constitution of Twizzlers and Hot Fries,
Free Lunch in the birthplace of Independence

Chapped, cracked hands from chalk dust
Covering my clothes like a messy coke dealer
Calcium sulfate addict craving one more pack
One more box of pencils that won't walk away
One more ream of paper like smuggled cigarettes
One more second to choose my words
Student screams "retard!" force I to retort
"You think you're the shit?" Oh no...

Neither rebels nor revolutionaries
Systemic perpetuation of the system
Dismisses them, expels them, pass/fail jail cells them
Pink slips, words, warnings, threats, and calls home

Wild West rules these halls
Tumble weaves and showdowns
Sheriff's abandoned post, security's my body
Wedge between aggressors, words like water
Doused on chemical burns do not dissipate
Chemistry lesson's drama as catalyst

Subjective objectives that "we will know when..."
Word walls and timelines, art's freedom denied
This text at that time, student achievement jargon
Back-mapped, scripted, and modified daily from above

Emptied and dulled, straight-forward stare
Musings of demon's and the bus fare
"Life's unfair" and "Miss get me outta here"
I teach and vainly reach for one place I can't touch
So I dole pats on the back, snack packs, and fun facts
Steadfast hope to beguile not smirk, but smile
Greater than data and numbers fed to the files

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