

Louisiana, My Home

I appreciate my neighborhood for its quietness, but sometimes it can get out of hand. I live right across the street from the police station, and all day long I hear sirens, which always give me a reason to believe they are just doing it for the hell of it. I see the police at night too, riding on their bikes with their high shorts on saying good night. And when it's dark in the sky, the stars shine so bright and so beautiful that sometimes I sit on my porch and hope for a shooting star, knowing one will never come .

Everyone in my neighborhood doesn't watch your back or anything. I guess they're too busy dealing with their own crazy agendas. Ms. Ella Rose, who's lived there since I have, lives in a double house next to her daughter and grandchild. Ms. Ella Rose is nice, well when she wants to be. It's like she has two personalities. She speaks one day, and when she and the rest of the old ladies sit and rock on the porch, I think they talk about everybody. Her daughter Cheryl is the same way. She has a cat for a daughter. Sneaky as the day is long. I often wonder if she knows her daughter has an exposed reputation or dislikes me because every now and then I get harassed by the boys who work at the rental service parallel to my house. 19, 20, and 21 year olds wasting their time hoping to catch a glimpse of me walking in or out of my house.

I like my other neighbors. They are young. They always invite us over when they barbecue and stuff and always put up our garbage cans when the workers leave them in the street. And when theirs are laying out, we always return the favor. Every time I come from school, I see the children at the sweetshop getting impatient, because the old lady is taking too long to

answer the door and the rest of them are playing football in front of the church, trying to catch the ball and pull their pants up at the same time. I love the innocence I see in the little girls playing double-dutch with their white bows in their hair. Sometimes I want so badly to say, “Can I have a turn?” But the other part of me says, “Girl, don’t interrupt those children.”

Seventeen years I lived in my neighborhood, and recently I lived through gun shots going off and my mother’s tears of fear. When I heard them, I knew it had to be the small house on the corner where all the boys linger around for only one thing. But I love passing through that block just to see Ms. Harrison’s beautiful flowers blooming in the sun, and I always say I’m going to make me some roses, but never do. I love when it rains in my neighborhood. My porch is made just right, so I can stand on my red stairs and let the rain just fall on my face. The rain hits the grass that everyone keeps cut, and when it gets dark, the big trees look like giants in the night.

If my streets could talk, I wonder what they would whisper besides the pain as we trample over them. If they could listen, I wonder would they be able to experience the quietness or the chaos behind it.

Keva Carr, Follow Your Own Star

Douglass Students at the Center and Douglass Academy of Creative Arts,
November, 2004