

SAN MATEO COUNTY POET LAUREATE



Poetry Reading *by* Chyanne Robinson

Introduction *by* San Mateo County Poet Laureate Aileen Cassinetta

Tuesday, October 22, 2019

About the poet:

Chyanne Robinson, a student at Oxford Day Academy in East Palo Alto, is the grand prize winner of the First Menlo Park Youth Poetry Competition co-sponsored by the City of Menlo Park and the Menlo Park Library Foundation in May 2019. The contest celebrated youth literacy and creative expression with original works of poetry on the theme, "If I were a book..." A total of 188 entries were received from young people throughout Menlo Park. San Mateo County Poet Laureate Aileen Cassinetta was one of four judges.

If I were a book

by Chyanne Robinson

If I were a book, I wouldn't invite you in just yet

I fear that if I let you in—you may hurt me in an instance

If I were a book, my main character would struggle with trusting people, because people started breaking her trust at an early age

If I were a book, I would fear that if I were to trust you, you would simply walk out of my life, so instead, I keep the pages closed

If I were a book, I would tell you about family separation, about a mother leaving her family, and her children not knowing why.

If I were a book, I would tell you about my older sister having to surrender her childhood, because she had to take care of me

If I were a book, I would empathize with someone who may feel alone and worthless—because I KNOW what that feels like

If I were a book, I would tell you about feeling alone, about a cloudy mindset making it impossible to think straight as dark thoughts build up

If I were a book, I would struggle with capturing a happy memory, because it is elusive—disappearing before I can write it

If I were a book, I would tell you about multiple deaths and a child who blames herself for the death of her grandma, her uncle, her cousins

If I were a book, I would tell you about not wanting to go to school, not wanting to have friends, blocking myself from the world because being alone allowed me to hide my sadness

If I were a book, my tattered pages would resist being straightened—no I do not want to go to a shrink, no I am not going through a phase, no, I am not too young to feel this pain

If I were a book, I would tell you about being bullied because I did not look like the other girls, or because I chose to follow the rules

If I were a book, I would tell you about being bullied because I was Black and called ugly, or that my hair did not flow like white or Latina girls

If I were a book, I would fade away ... like my depression.