

# SAN MATEO COUNTY POET LAUREATE



Poetry Reading *by*

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## About this reading:

I got the idea for this poem from a favorite Dylan Thomas poem "The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower". In the Thomas poem, there is a line: "*How of my clay is made the hangman's lime*" and, later, "*how time has ticked a heaven round the stars.*"

To me, these lines speak of the fact that we are all connected with one another, and sometimes complicit in human suffering, whether we like it or not. My friend, East Palo Alto Poet Laureate Kalamu Chaché, always includes the phrase "Work with what you have" in her correspondence. I love being reminded of this, because we all have our imaginations, we all have connections with other people and with nature, and we all make choices about what to do with our resources. What more can we do than work with what we have? And yet, I forget so often, and I begin to complain about what I don't have.

At the end of my poem, I repeat a line from the poem "Somebody out there!" from Chaché's book *Survival Interest* -- I believe this is true and that poetry can be one way to reach people who are lost in a variety of ways.

I wanted the poem to include some of the images from my childhood and heritage while using a sort of strange (Thomas-like) syntax and form. I also wanted to explore the connection I feel with Chaché and my gratitude for her work.

**WITH WHAT YOU HAVE**  
**for Kalamu Chaché**

how of my clay is made blowing vines  
and coal mines and salt flats  
and history -- at night the forest of strangers  
grew up around us, filled  
with birches and horsetail, the red-tailed  
hawk the burrowing owl --

how of my sun is made cedar  
and fox fur, a field of wild sedge  
and two girls on the hillside collecting  
purple phlox, the sound harsh  
against their palms -- not emptiness  
but a sense of the tides and faraway

how of my river is made a host of shining  
arms -- sticks and bridges --  
the veil of stars and blue dawn  
glitter growing out of the sky --  
we receive it and all day hold it out  
across the valley -- sparkling loom

how of my feather is made a compass  
and a father and a mother a vigil  
and the eagle that traveled between our hearts  
paper mill and fishery and little town  
a chip of beach glass -- offerings, objects --  
there's somebody out there who's lost

there's somebody out there who's lost  
but of my sun is made my river  
is made my coming home