

Reader Views

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Expressions of a Reflective Soul

By Kimberley Stokes

Authorhouse (2006)

Reviewed by Cherie Burbach for Reader Views (3/06)

“Expressions of a Reflective Soul” is a beautiful book of free verse poetry, with bold colors and original artwork throughout. The book’s cover and engagingly designed pages invite you to pick it up and see what this work is about. Even the table of contents is creative, using large blocks of color to divide the contents into five separate chapters.

“Expressions of a Reflective Soul” features poetry by author Kimberly Stokes, with several poems accompanied by magnificent artwork by her father and husband. I found myself going back over some of the pages over and over to review the splendid artwork alone.

The book is divided into five chapters, each beginning with an essay from the author with poems to follow on each of the five “themes” of the work. Chapter 1 is entitled “Empty Feeling” and begins with the author’s thoughts on relationships. Frequently she offers encouragement to make the changes one needs to make to improve their life and interaction with others. All the poems have a rhythm that could quite easily have success in a spoken word format. Each poem builds on the themes of loneliness and the search for true love. Poems such as “A Soulful Cry” ring out clearly with an expressive voice that tries to understand the deeper meaning of life. In “Suicide” the struggle and fascination with death when times seem insurmountable is underscored by a bluesy writing style. In this poem the author uses dark paper background, white lettering, and a haunting graphic:

“A face with no expression
a mind racing with aggression
a spirit of depression
a soul lost
finding its way through deception
masked by independence”

This sentiment is many women especially will relate to – feeling that no one sees their pain because they put up a strong front.

Chapter 2, entitled “Manifesting Love, A New Beginning,” starts with an essay about finding your soul mate, and is accompanied by the image of a woman lying on her back and open to life’s lessons. The poems go on as evidence that soulful love does indeed exist. “Me... You... Us... We – His and Her Essence” gives us a clear picture of two souls destined to be together by God:

“Angels watching our enchanting bond
God planned us for each other
before we were even born
suddenly, we were blessed with a physical form”

The poem is coupled with a sweet picture of two children, the boy holding a small bouquet of flowers out for the girl while the quiet presence of God watches from behind them – the total combination of words and images is one of the strongest in “Expressions of a Reflective Soul.” The poem “Our Love” dives into the bliss of finding true love and souls meant for each other:

“You are the bone from my ribs
God made you for me
We are one soul
When I see you smile
When I hold your hand while driving to nowhere”

Chapter 3 of the book, “A Father’s Love,” begins with a black and white etching that is both haunting and brilliant. The author’s essay to this chapter urges women to not use the parental bond as manipulation but freely encourage children to love both parents. It speaks of putting aside differences for the sake of the children – a message we can’t, as readers, hear enough.

Chapter 4’s “Trials and Tribulations” begins with a note on everyday challenges, and once again offers encouragement. The poem “Strong Personality” speaks of those women we know that try and overpower us to feed their ego:

“Come down off your high horse
earn our respect
strong personality should be your presence
and not by what is said”

In “Rebirth” we understand the milestone of reaching 30, and feeling comfortable at last in our own skin:

“I know who I am
Layer by layer
As the shell cracks and breaks
Layer by layer
As this change will take”

I felt this was also one of the strongest in the book, with the feminine spirit strong and reaching.

The book is completed with Chapter 5 and a series of “Zodiac Poetry” depicting the elements of fire, earth, air, and water.

The essays in “Expressions of a Reflective Soul” are thought provoking and honest, and I was as impressed by these as I was the other parts of the work. The author’s voice clearly comes through in each set of prose, and the poetry that follows helps reinforce the message of each chapter. Each page of this book is filled with unique designs, vibrant colors, and varying designs and fonts. The total effect is quite original and wonderful.