

WEST BALTIMORE REIMAGINING AND REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

I MET

A Poem on West Baltimore



A perfect Sankofa moment between *Gladstone Whitman Fellow* Ednetta Fullmore and Kaleb Tshamba, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Club Historian, the Historic Arch Social Club of West Baltimore.

Artist Note

My poem celebrates the artistic and cultural vibrancy and resilience of West Baltimore's People and Community, whose redevelopment aspiration is rooted in the African concept of SANKOFA – valuing the future by anchoring it to the virtues of its past.

I see in West Baltimore's efforts
aspirational moments
overcoming challenges
being great
sense of agency
capturing reimagining
faith in believing in something great
commitment to recovering addicts and community
Arabbers walking the Avenue as entrepreneurs and economists
a Community determined to achieve the dignity of success through self-development.

Ednetta Fullmore

I Met

I met a **girl from West Baltimore
Rhythms of jazz moved through her feet
Soulful enriching sounds of the blues poured from her mouth
And custom designs stitched by the blessed hands of her Sista draped her brown frame
She had courage like Billie with a voice that shot chills through my bones
The uniqueness of Cab and alluring appeal of Stairmaids
Her infectious laugh bounced off the walls of the comedy club
In her eyes I saw the love of the women who came before her
Mothers, nurses, entrepreneurs carrying themselves with poise and grace
Community builders who birthed generations of greatness on this soil
That blossomed into delicate gardenias with many virtues as Mama Kay would say
She is their strength throughout the days like Gertrude Jackson
She is Queen whose HERstory lives on**

I met a **boy from West Baltimore
He was a fighter
His feet carried the strength of a million men marching in unity
Favorably blessed with the healing spirit of Dr. Kennard
And the wits and skills of an Arabber
A young pharaoh he was
A Black king embraced and uplifted by otherwise kings of the Arch
I saw him in the economist passing down the Avenue
I saw him in Imhotep and every generation of Cameron's exceptional mentees
I saw him in the gentle arms of Margaret with a smile that reassured my belief in love
His wounds remedied by the care of Marion and support of Joseph
A leader he is destined to be for his city and community**

I met **West Baltimore
The city of charm as they say
Home to Jada, Pac, Eubie, and Chick
Prideful Baltimoreans clothed in the finest patterns of their beloved motherland
Their hearts sing the blues and other tunes
Here lie stories of triumph
In a world that refused to see their magnificence
They built a haven celebrating their Blackness in all of its glory
A world that condemns their existence displaying them as criminals and addicts
They stand tall, head faced towards the sky as warriors
Carrying a spirit of resilience
Found in those who chose loyalty instead of exit
The Spirit of continuum
Baked in Hamlin's rolls and encapsulated in his royal theater memorial
The Spirit of Joy
Flowing through the ballroom of the Avenue's jazz clubs and Easter parades
The Spirit of Creativity and Ingenuity
Fueling the younger generation of artists inspired by those before
I met West Baltimore and I look forward to witnessing its evolution**

Ednetta Fullmore '23

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Mama Kaylawal-Muhammad hosting Whitman Fellows and Professor Garey Hyatt at her West Baltimore WombWorks Production Studio and Blackbox Theatre.

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The West Baltimore Reimagining and Redevelopment Project,
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