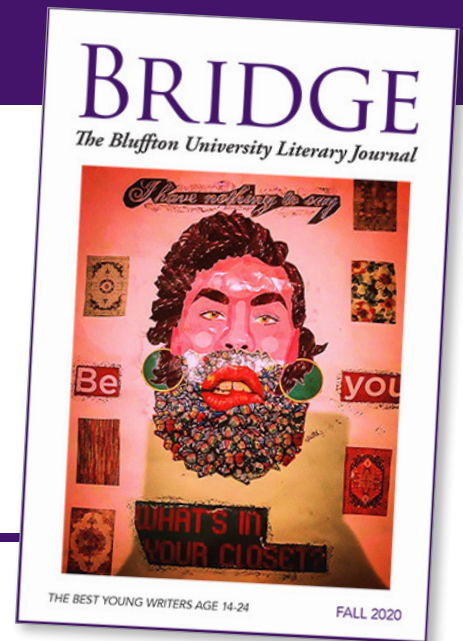


# BRIDGE

*The Bluffton University Literary Journal*



## AUBADE IN THE INNER CITY: 1973

**Raki Jordan**

I lay awake and watched the twinkling of light come twirling past the dirty glass of the window, and witnessed how it danced across the complexion of your skin.

I always noticed how perfect your afro looks in the morning's rays. The swirl of curls, upon curls—crawling on top of one another, circulating and perfecting a style carved and chiseled by the teeth of wooden picks.

The affirmations of the ghetto became our morning lullabies—our jazz instrumentals, our rhythmic saxophone tunes, our pounding heart blues,

our peace—which are then disrupted by the wailing tongues of apparitions from across the street, dangling *malt liquor* between their fingers—lurking in the cracks of *Harlem's* sidewalks and in the soles of sneakers hanging from street lights.

The spellbound voices of *The Delfonics* smooth taunting tongues, can't mute the sounds of wailers screeching through the sea of project windows. Even among the

smell of opened johnny pumps seeping through from outside, and the scent of chicken cooking in lard from the kitchen; and the smell of old sweat from the night before; I still caught

a whiff of beauty lingering in the air—the smell of black castor oil, black ginger, black vanilla conditioner,

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freshly applied cocoa butter and peace—smothered  
in the smoke of the incense, I had burned, before watching you leave.