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Shyla Driver is an African-American student in Nacogdoches, Texas. She is a dual credit student at Nacogdoches High School and Stephen F. Austin. She plays tenor saxophone in her school's marching and concert bands and is an actor in her school's theatre productions. She will graduate in the spring of 2019 and plans to major in Marketing.

A Loud Response to Being Hushed

I've always had the kind of voice that fills a room.
It's perfect for speeches and acting and spoken word.
Not much else though

My voice is filled with glee and anger and dusted with false confidence.
It speaks quotes and jokes and other people's questions.
It sings and rings deep and loves to screech.

It loves repetition and complaints.
It loves repetition and jokes about its embodied entity.
It loves filling up rooms
and must love being shushed too.

It really loves to make me think that my voice is the reason why I'm single
makes me think that if my voice wasn't so
loud
and obnoxious
and abrasive
Someone may call to hear it.

My voice loves to pretend
Likes to use words my brain cannot spell
Hit notes I cannot hit
Pretends 'puedo hablar espanol.'
(That means I can speak Spanish.)
(I can't)
(That's the joke)

My voice loves to fill up rooms because if it doesn't there is silence
And silence lets my brain work
And every part of me fears my brain

My voice loves to speak when there is nothing left to be said
I have nothing left to say, but you are still here.
My voice will run on after my brain has stopped
My voice apparently knows things my brain does not

makes
 every
 possible
 contribution
to
 every
 possible
 conversation

My voice loves repetition
Telling you over and over and over again how I wear braids because my hair fell out
 Tells you I'm on a diet but is hushed by a quarter pounder with cheese
My voice loves to make fun of its embodied entity
 because it is easier on my heart than if it is someone else's voice

My voice loves to apologize for things that are not my fault
 but won't apologize for things that are
My voice loves to turn a joke into something serious
 and make jokes out of something serious

I have nothing else to say, but you are still here.
I have nothing else to say, but my voice still wants to speak.

I've always had the kind of voice that fills up a room
It's good for
 speeches
 and acting
 and spoken word.
Not much else though.

Bless the Butterfly

Bless the butterfly
on that child's arm that made them
put down the razor

Writing Activity

1. In “A Loud Response to Being Hushed,” the writer claims her voice is “good for speeches and acting and spoken word. Not much else though.” If you could speak to the writer, what would be your response to this claim? What are the strengths of your voice?
2. Reread “A Loud Response to Being Hushed,” noting the organizational choices Shyla made. Why do you believe she made these choices? How does the layout contribute to the topic and theme of her poem?
3. In the poem “Bless the Butterfly” the author says the child gained power from the butterfly. Why do you believe that the author chose to use a butterfly? What might the butterfly represent? Is there another animal or creature you would connect with power?