

Seattle City Council

Culture, Civil Rights, Health and Personnel Committee Meeting

2:00 p.m. Wednesday, March 11th, 2009

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Donna Miscolta**

Today's poet is **Peggy Sturdivant**

Peggy Sturdivant was a 2002 Jack Straw Writer. She writes a weekly column for the Ballard News-Tribune, At Large in Ballard, and a blog of the same name for SeattlePI.com. She facilitates writing groups for Cancer Lifeline and is a contributor to CrossCut.com writing on neighborhood issues.

A response to Naomi Shihab Nye's poem "So Much Happiness."

The Wait

by Peggy Sturdivant

It is difficult to know what to do with so much sadness.
It is a weight - heavier than the oldest quilt.

Amazing that the invisible has so much gravity.
We try to move it off our chests.
Place the sadness in a handmade urn on the fireplace mantel,
in hands around a paper cup sheltering a cheap white candle,
flowers propped between sidewalk and light pole.
Even though the bloodstains are in the street.
Handwritten notes and bundled flowers
Allow us to shift the sadness a bit
Juggle it from hand to hand
hot potato distracting us with pain
oh for a burn that can be cooled by ice
sadness is not so easily deterred.

We are choking on it.
There is nothing to do but try to endure.
Note a pulse of pleasure at the orange of sunrise
despite yourself.
Draw warmth from the person next to you
appreciate that your own heart still pushes blood.

It's hard to survive when someone else does not.
But the heart's work shouldn't go to waste.
One morning the smell of coffee brewing will be pleasant.
The shower will not just be the best place to cry.

Most of us do recover from sadness.
The grief doesn't float downstream
with the ashes and rose petals.
It doesn't stay nailed to the light pole, ink fading.
Sadness walks us home, sits on our chest.
It's not a matter of knowing what to do...
but how to keep breathing
while we wait.

-- *end* --