

HARLEM RISING

BY

KURT BOONE

INTRODUCTION BY RENEE ASHMEADE

PREFACE

Harlem Rising is a collection of poems that I have dedicated to my generation tribute to the community of past and community now present. The current renaissance of hip-hop music, art, dance, film, fashion and intellect occurring in Harlem today should be noted by it's poets and journalists. The inhabitants of the community of Harlem, New York are not only descendents of the greatest tribes of Africa, but are part of making America what it is today. If American culture drives the world that we live in then Harlem is it's rhythm. For America back bone is capitalism that once denied that capitalism to it's African citizens. For this generation of Harlem residents our culture will be owned and control by us.

Although my generation of poets are currently facing a renaissance we are still primarily neglected by publishers and booksellers. Thus many poets are using spoken word as away to constantly read or perform in front of an audience. In reading Harlem Rising you see a young man addressing and reflecting on the experiences of his generation. The million youth march of 1998 in Harlem and Atlanta, Ga. exemplified the current crises myself and my peers face. As I continue to go to church in Harlem at The Abyssinian Baptist Church. I decided this collection of verse would be my salute to Harlem.

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I met Kurt Boone at a New York Association of Black Journalist meeting. He was marketing his first poetry book, *Looking for Myself*. I found that book quite interesting and did a review. Now I have the pleasure of introducing *Harlem Rising*, a product of this up and coming talent.

Rarely does a poet come along that places what's going on the community into his poetry in such a unique way. Boone addresses the problems and the progress in Harlem in his book *Harlem Rising* with humor and in a relaxed reflective way. He also delves into current events and sports through his poems.

Boone's book of poetry shows life in a unique way. It leads readers into a territory where words of everyday activity intertwine to give them a break from the crass and sometimes blunt facets of life. Kurt Boone has really written a collection of poems that dives into many facets of life. Not only is sports and current events highlighted but a love, education, hip-hop music, art and the individual is addressed as well. The words come alive on the page with conviction and realism. This isn't watered down poetry, but poetry that truly moves your soul and takes you on a journey.

Boone's poetry also highlights African American talent. He also looks into the heart of the community. The poems exhibit the changing face of Harlem. Harlem is growing and so are the people in the community. They are extending their vision and themselves to achieve greatness. The major theme is the growth of Harlem. His poetry gives Harlem the face of a proverbial phoenix rising from the ash that it once was and being transformed into a new diverse entity with outspread wings that touch the outer boundaries of America. *Harlem Rising* reflects a vision of the author for his community, for the country in which he lives. There is also a vision for

the men, women and youth of the community and country. There is a sense of patriotism that echo softly through the book. History and self realization is imbedded in Boone's book as well. *Harlem Rising* doesn't simply address the concerns of the poet. The concerns that his poems address are universal. These ideas are brought forth in an artistic and philosophical way.

Still, *Harlem Rising* isn't simply about hip-hop, sports, events, love and race relations. It is about a man and his environment and how he sees it. It is about how he sees himself and the people around him. It is also about the changing dynamics of the country that he lives in. This book of poetry is about unbiased introspection into the poetry of all our lives. This is what I see in the form of Boone's poetry. This is what we see day to day. However, it is as if we don't see our environment, our community, events, people around us and what occurs in the day to day as the poetry and music of our lives.

Poetry is a part of life whether we notice it or not. Kurt Boone has captured many aspects of life in his poetry. It is a book to read to reconnect to the self and what is going on from a past to present perspective. This book of verse is truly a salute to Harlem and to the past, present and the future and to the poetry of our lives.

Mother Nature

Invincible I am
darkskin African warrior
breaking walls down
in America.
Dodging bullets on the streets
blocking drugs from
going into my veins
keeping my family strong
Running through the
streets of Manhattan
I see Mother Nature
threatening to take me
down in my tracks.
Lighting
 Rain
 Snow
 Hurricane
 Tornado
 Heatwave

I say who is
this African American warrior
does he claim to be
greater than Mother Nature
or is he gone with the wind.
For this wind
is congering all
life on earth.
Is racism greater
than Mother Nature?
Does God see me out there
or am I looking for myself.
Can richest man out do Mother Nature?
Can poorest man out do MOther Nature?
The wind is too strong
The water encompassing
Can I see the Lear Jet.
Can I see the internet.

HARLEM ON THE RISE

Hometown rappers
Sean Puffy Combs
and Mase
rap about Harlem on the rise.
I decided to cash in myself.
The history of Harlem
is worth billions of dollars.
As it's residents
and it's community at large.
The new Harlem Renaissance.
You know Harlem on the rise
Magic Johnson theatre
The Disney Store
and Blockbuster Video are coming.
The fight over the
Appollo Theatre is no joke.
As the old guard retires
the new guard begin.
Lead by Reverend Calvin O. Butts, III
as one of many
is marching forward.

Central Park West

125th Street

The Abyssinian Baptist Church

Canaan Baptist Church

Sylvia's Resturant

Harlem on the Rise

Luther Vandross sings

A night in Harlem

new business are opening everyday

For Harlem will soon

be the home again

of the black elite.

Harlem on the rise.

HOME RUN

It's out of here
going, going gone
a home run.

Will it be Mark McGwire
or big Sammy Sosa.

America's sports jewel
baseball home run record

Roger Maris, 61

Babe Ruth, 60

History is being made
in the home run derby
between Mark McGwire and
Sammy Sosa.

Can Ken Griffey, Jr. hang in.

This is the summer of 98.

One from Chicago

One from St. Louis

Who will be America's
baseball home run king
crack, the sound of the bat.

You know it's gone

You know it's gone

a Home Run.