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Illinois Wesleyan Sophomore Publishes Book, Starts Registered Student Organization

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Few people can say that a single flower has greatly impacted their life. However, for sophomore Kamaya Thompson, she was truly inspired by a blue rose that her mother purchased for her on an outing together when she was in high school. The rose motivated Thompson to write a poem titled “Blue Rose,” and she later used the same title for her first book. Paying homage to this rose in more ways than one, the blue rose is also used as the book’s cover art.

Published by McClure Publishing, Inc. in July of 2009, *Blue Rose* focuses on the feelings and emotions of Thompson as she goes through transitions in her life. “To me, my book symbolizes life and, therefore, death. To me, *Blue Rose* reflects us as humans. I preserved the life of the blue rose my mother gave me through my poem, and that’s something I try to do with my memories and relationships,” said Thompson.

Thompson has been writing the poetry for *Blue Rose* since she was 15 years old, keeping all of her work in a drawer at home that she calls her “sanctuary of poems.” She chose pieces from this sanctuary, from her journals and wrote new pieces when compiling this book.

Blue Rose was not her first introduction to the world of writing, however. Last year she won a scholarship from *Essence* magazine through her essay on leadership. She also won third place in a *Gumbo* magazine poetry contest. Thompson’s winning works were included in both magazines. “These were national competitions, so I didn’t think I would win. But it happened, and that was kind of amazing,” said Thompson.

In addition to poetry, family plays a large role in Thompson’s life. She dedicated *Blue Rose* to her brother, Kentrell Jackson, and her two God-sisters, Nova Henry and Ava Curry, who lost their lives due to gun violence. “Their deaths served as ammunition for me to finish *Blue Rose*,” said Thompson. Following is an excerpt from her poem “Dysfunction,” through which Thompson states her beliefs on gun violence.

“Still, I believe
even for the greatest
mastermind it is too much.
Death is not math.
Murder can never be solved.
Senseless matter – why
should it exist at all?”

In addition to dedicating *Blue Rose* to the memory of her family members, Thompson has started the anti-gun violence group Only Punks Pull Triggers on Illinois Wesleyan’s campus to encourage the prevention of violent acts. The group is comprised of 12 students who give theatrical performances to show that gun violence does not solve problems. “You could sit in a class listening to a list of statistics about gun violence, but I feel that a student wouldn’t remember them. If you make a song about [anti-gun violence], the song will stick with you. It will make a difference,” said Thompson.

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