

At the Crossroads
A Sestina Written and Performed by Jane Ellen Ibur

We gathered in St. Louis to talk about social change through art.
A cross section of creative minds we did attract
From as far away as British Columbia, Lithuania, Iowa, Denver, North Carolina, Ohio,
New Orleans, Maine, Kansas, Atlanta, D.C., Minnesota, Chicago and Bill,
Cleveland.
As usual, St. Louis weather came pouring through with rain
Which at first our desire for sunshine and spring could not animate.
Damn the rain. We moved forward at the crossroads.

Lois Ingram snapped visual notes at the crossroads.
The rooms palpated with passions and heart.
We don't accept the status quo. We animate
The world through partnerships and collaborations. We don't sit quietly. We act
By infiltrating our community with art and culture; we train
Artists to work within the parameters of standards, like Bill Cleveland

Said. While some concentrated on those standards with Bill Cleveland
Others of us learned about historical civil rights' crossroads
While we sewed, or discussed dance, theater, . Sun waved goodbye to the rain.
We were off to a bright and energetic start.
We all had so much to say, to respond to, react
To. How do we utilize the arts, ignite passion, animate

Ideas? Theory is great, but we must animate,
Ideas, make visible practices, actualize dreams, document outcomes, like Bill Cleveland.
Today we theorize, tomorrow we make our impact.
Some of us in our lives, our careers, stand truly at the crossroads.
Some days I'd sell my soul to the devil for my part.
This life can be too much stress and strain.

The idea of ability and dis-ability starts in the brain.
Even if we can't, for instance, walk, we can animate,
We can move with and through the creative process of art.
A small act of creation can make you fly, or grow as tall as Bill Cleveland.
We're promoting health care through art here at the crossroads.
Engaging in art-making is healing and life-affirming, that's a fact.

A new paradigm shift we're trying to enact.
We're never turning back, we will never unsee. Renewed, we won't be drained.
We value art and culture and each other here at the crossroads.
We appreciate, thank, and need our funders to animate
Our dreams and projects, to afford the likes of Bill Cleveland.
We are not at the end of our convening; we are at the start.

We need activists and artists to act together to animate
Our community, to sing the refrain of Bill Cleveland;
At the crossroads, out falls a ticket; one side says love, the other, art.

Jane Ellen Ibur