

Standing on the Berkeley Hills

By Michelaina Johnson

I look down on the Bay
Oakland is a laminated postcard
Shining, blinding light
Reflecting off a glassy surface
Boats, barges
Beacons of humanity,
Our ties to the outside world

Hills surround a bathtub with one drain
The delta is the freshwater faucet
Piping water through the Carquinez strait

Bright shiny lights
Dark across
An urban canvas
Like orderly ants
Confined to asphalt paths

Paths of freeways, highways, and byways
Bart bustles across the living canvas
Carrying hundreds of people to places
Planned ahead of time or spontaneously
Too many to count live out their days
Beneath these hills
I will never know them
And neither will the mountain

But we form one another
The mountains are the Bay
The embrace of the water and cities below
They may this place what it is
A blue oval on a map
The bustling, hilly cities of California
The heart of life in the state

Mist covers the mountains across the clear, shiny blue
I'm on the sunnier side above Berkeley
Where more cities and streets
Decorate once grassy hillsides

I'm exploring a tamed landscape
Wild to me in a concrete jungle
An apartment building
Full of people I don't know

These people hiking up here, too
I do not know
And probably never will

The Bay is alive
Leaving reflection and nostalgia
For my small town
Known to me and my community

I see bright lights amid the fog
The light that draws all
Something we all focus on and see
I'm not sure how to feel about this
Walking, hiking, rambling, writing
But am at peace and pensive
Looking at the view
Standing on the Berkeley Hills

