

Clive Jackson

by Joyce Wycoff

Clive Jackson is 14 and worried.
Worried about going to college,
Getting a basketball scholarship,
Finding classrooms, paying for textbooks.

Clive Jackson is 14 and anxious.
Writes a letter pouring out his questions
And concerns. Asks for help;
Asks for guidance; carefully folds the letter
And tucks it in the envelope. Addresses
It to UCLA and drops
It into a mailbox of hope.

Clive Jackson is 14 and hungry.
Standing outside a donut shop, hanging
With friends, reliving golden jump shots
And shy glances, not seeing the dark car
Or silver flash, not hearing the sharp retort,
Not feeling the hot metal deep in his heart.

Clive Jackson is 14 and no longer worried,
No longer anxious, no longer hungry.
Clive Jackson is 14 and dead.

Note: Clive Jackson, Jr., was killed by another teenager, a member of a local gang, three weeks after writing to UCLA about how to prepare himself for attending college there. Clive is now a statistic of gang violence: 300 mostly young people dead in one year in one city.

