

Conflict Resolution Through Soup
By Colleen Michaels

When the political poet comes to my school
I make him soup, a vegan miracle
of organic carrots and ancient grains,
and he hugs me. I dodge his appetite
for a third-party debate, labor unions, the sweat shop talk.
My compassion is measured out in kitchen tools;
this soup is brimming with opinion.

My soup shifts shape in the cauldron.
I sagely puree the unsavory and sour
into palatable luxury. Shoe stringed onions
coated in ale and cheddar cling to my spoons.
Third graders unknowingly eat kale at my table.
My soup turns battles into cook-offs, whisking
aggression into bisques and soft broths.

Down to a simmer, I turn the dry cough
of neighbors no longer warm to pot lucks
with my chicken stock and generous doughy elbows.
I slip ginger in the pockets of my enemy
and fill the lean bellies of burglars at night.

For my father I serve something milky
to calm an ulcer from daughters who over salt.
My mother, I give her enough pepper to occupy her tongue.
Now all happily digging for clams. All floating oyster crackers.

On nights when my love moves to his far side of our bed
his bones no longer against my belly – I serve mulligatawny.
Like silk and fire in the mouth, he comes back to me hungry.

When we are poor and at the end,
I'll take those saffron threads from the cupboard,
drown them deep in an old family stew,
take one last viking stance in steam.

Colleen Michaels' work has been published in Barrelhouse, The Paterson Literary Review, The Museum of Americana, Mom Egg Review, Roar, Stoneboat, Meat for Tea, Hawai'i Review and others. Her most recent poetry installation, Line Break, with sculptor Lillian Harden, was at the Peabody Essex Museum for the 2014 Massachusetts Poetry Festival. She directs the Writing Studio at Montserrat College of Art in Beverly, Massachusetts