

# NOTES FROM A CHICAGO BOY

Jesse Welch is an 18-year old slam poet from Chicago and a first year student at Tufts. He was a finalist in last year's Louder Than A Bomb poetry slam and will be featured in an upcoming documentary. He has performed across the Midwest, at venues ranging from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago to the Mexican Heritage Cultural Museum to Wendy's. His work has been published in *Say What! Magazine*, *Moe's Cafe*, and the Tufts Literary Magazine, *Outbreath*. He is currently a member of the Berklee College of Music Collegiate Slam Team.

When our Bulls won the championship in 1991

We rioted

Years of frustration pouring from fingers in the form of fire

Torching cop cars and taxis

This was redemption

This was triumph

This was basketball

In 1992, after the repeat

We repeated

The morning after,

The taxis still resting on their hoods

Staring back

Still asleep like last night's bad decision

We slipped away to work

Doing our best to not wake their wreckage

In 1993, we rioted again

Just another championship

Just another riot

In '96 we rioted MJ's return

In '97 the greatest season in history

In '98 the end of an era

We burned victory into our city's memory  
 Came together in masochism  
 We were one in the flames  
 Burning used Camrys just as quickly  
 As Ferraris  
 This is how Chicago comes together  
 We are not a polite city  
 And we don't play well with each other  
 It is only in flames  
 That we find ourselves  
 And only in basketball that we find victory  
 On November 4th  
 As election results rolled in  
 And our native son cruised to victory  
 Every camera in the world focused on us  
 I watched Grant Park in fear  
 This was 1991 and 1968  
 This was Chicago  
 Coming together in victory  
 This was every cop in the city on duty  
 This was our two largest streets being shut down

This was a million Chicagoans lining the lake front  
 This was Southsider standing next to Northsider  
 This  
 Was our time to burn  
 The chants hit my bones like machine guns  
 He came to the stage a messiah  
 And turned fire into water  
 Bringing the city together in its tides  
 I watched as news cameras panned past  
 A kid in baggy jeans and a hoodie  
 Sobbin' on the shoulder of a white man  
 Still dressed in that day's suit  
 I didn't cry because Obama won  
 I cried because  
 Fire crews spent the night with their families  
 And cops cheered with the rest of us  
 We chanted  
 We screamed  
 We cried  
 And we went the fuck home  
 The next morning

Taxis did their job  
 Chicago threw a party  
 And the taxis stayed on their wheels  
 This wasn't change we could believe in  
 This was change  
 I come from a city of flames  
 Windy carrying of sparks into firestorms  
 This is not the first time I'm proud of my president  
 Or of my country  
 But it is the first time I've been proud of my city  
 We did not burn  
 Thank you Obama  
 You may not walk on water  
 But you are a damn-good fireman