

Seattle City Council

Public Safety, Government Relations, and Arts Committee Meeting

Tuesday, 2:00 PM, March 7, 2006

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Jeannette Allée**

Today's poet is **Koon Woon**

Koon Woon has been a quiet advocate of poetry in Seattle since 1985 when he studied with Nelson Bentley. He is the founder and editor of *Chrysanthemum* literary magazine and has worked with *Real Change News* for the empowerment of the homeless. His first book of poems, *The Truth in Rented Rooms*, won the Pen Oakland Josephine Miles Award for literary excellence and was a finalist in the Norma Farber first book award. It has been used as a text in several colleges and universities including Bard College, Sarah Lawrence, and U.C. Santa Cruz. Presently Koon is a student at Antioch University Seattle.

Cityscape with Solitary Figure

by Koon Woon

Not a sparrow is yet up, nor the milk trucks.

Even to malign him, the street lamp is frugal.

He who is under the shadow of the building a deeper shadow.

He who hauls his house on his back.

Must we avoid acknowledging him?

He whose going does not make an arriving.

In the darkness he is white, brown, or black;

no one can tell or would tell.

He knows the various grids of the city and how far
into the morning before he can get a free cup of coffee.

The park benches are partitioned
and signs say no camping. What a life!

Formerly there was shelter from the rain
beneath the bridge, but the stench of graffiti
forced him to bright-lit doorways before dawn.
Merchant-hired security sweeps him
up in the morning and he goes as a lump
of coal in the snow, going just for the sake of go.

-- *end* --