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Reflections

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Reflections Essie P. Graham

Poetic Grit An Interview with 2010 Texas Poet Laureate Karla Morton
Dallie Clark

Gifted. Fighter. Sensitive. Humorous. Survivor. Kick-butt – all words that describe the 2010 Texas Poet Laureate Karla Morton, a woman of astonishing diversity and strength. This Fort Worth-born poet and Texas A&M graduate wasn't even afraid to veer away from her Texas roots to create an epic, rhyming poem about a Scottish pirate – and then solicit an award-winning Canadian composer she'd never met to write a musical score for the piece. She also wasn't afraid to be photographed vulnerably bald for her recent 2009 book *Redesigning Beauty* that chronicles her struggle and subsequent survival from breast cancer. In the interview below, Karla Morton generously shares her insights, wisdom, and hope for sharing not just poetry with her fellow Texans, but the grit and spirit of life itself.

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Dallie Clark: I've read that you had longed to be the Texas Poet Laureate since your middle school days! When did you first realize you had a love for words and language? Was poetry an initial part of that love - or did that come later?

Karla Morton: For as long as I can remember, I have been in love with words, with phrases, cutting out quotes and pinning them to corkboards, pasting them to my paper book jacket. I used to think I was crazy (and, okay, maybe I still am!), but words would spin in my head like unpolished agates until I wrote them down, arranged and rearranged them until they looked right, until they sounded right. There was a night I distinctly remember, however, going to Casa Mañana when I was in the ninth grade, and seeing *Man of La Mancha*...it brought me to tears. I wanted to be that good, to put a lump in a throat, to bring out those emotions inside of me and pass them on.