American Life in Poetry
It seems clear enough that Quincy Troupe wants his poem, “Picking a Dandelion”, to achieve the coveted status of “timelessness” while being rooted in a historical moment. Here are Joe and Jill, two people with commonly available American names, enacting an ordinary gesture of affection. Yet this instructive love is heightened by the context: love, in other words, in a time of hate (borrowing from Gabriel Garcia Marquez) is the theme and the optimism lacing this poem.

Picking a Dandelion

for Joe and Jill Biden, Cheryl and Charles Ward, and for Margaret

By Quincy Troupe

walking along together
in the nation’s capital
Joe stopped, stooped, picked a flower—
a dandelion to be exact—
then he handed it to Jill—
who smiled in her white summer,
dress full of pretty flowers,
and someone snapped a picture
of this sweet, simple gesture,
it revealed something deeper,
profound, beautiful about
their love for each other here,
that taught all of us watching,
how to reach across time, space,
with a tender touch, a kiss
for one another here, now
in this moment of hatred
before time on earth runs out