



thirty sixth

**parkmont
poetry
festival**

Poems by District of Columbia Students • Grades 6-12
SPONSORED BY PARKMONT SCHOOL, APRIL 28, 2018

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Jacqui Michel and David Weisman

for their passionate support of the Parkmont Poetry Festival

Sincere thanks to our Poetry Advisory Committee
for their hard work and dedication:

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and Anne Harding Woodworth

Thank you to **Zion Baptist Church** for hosting our Festival Reading.

Preface

We are pleased to share with you in this booklet the poems of Washington, DC's young writers. The Parkmont Poetry Festival was founded in 1982 to encourage and celebrate the voices and verse of student poets in public, private, and charter schools from all eight wards of the District of Columbia. We honor the promise of diverse young writers, the importance of reflection, the value of community, and the beauty of language. This year we proudly celebrate 36 years of spotlighting and sharing these students' talents and their unique perspectives on their worlds.

We received nearly 400 poems for this year's Festival from students in grades 6 through 12. Our judges have selected these 40 distinguished poems from the chorus of young voices expressing their spirits and vitality through poetry.

2018 Poetry Award Winners

Phillip Williams	Unafraid	1
Aaron Douguih	A Love Song for the Others	2
William Aitken	2005	4
Inna Tintchev	Warhol's Cow	5
Olivia Dietrich	The Voice Inside One's Head	6
Zion Keen	Private Times	7
Lucas Scheider Galinanes	Desert(ed)	8
Erica Bell	Big Sister Blues	9
Clara Zou	Loneliness	10
Casper Corsello	You Don't Remember	11
Julius Boxer-Cooper	Mountain	12
George Bankoff	Seeing Feelings	13
Conor Kelly	The Man, the Woman, and the Painting	14
Maggie Wang	Twenty-four Hours in Henan Province	16
Na'jee Ferguson	Synesthesia	18
Keya Krishna	Chains	19
Sune Hamparian	Keyless Cage	20
Graham Velsey	I was Raised by Family	21
Winston Leslie	Monday Mornings: Me and Mom	22
Jax Weymouth	The Elder and the Child	23
Hannah Hoffman	Cookies	24
Emma Kay	Hope	25
Katherine Salmeron	My People	26
Shanay Lesane	January	28
Zachary Farrington	The Silence	29
Octavia Johnson	Struggle	30
Sawyer Beveridge	Echoes	31
Myniah Sweetney	Introduction	32
Sam Rhee	senseless	33
Maya Clancy	Boundless	34
Cameron Deboise	No I Never	35
Courtney Pine	Flying	36
Jefferson Ascencio	Elegy for Forgotten Memories	37
Ian Makle	I'm From	38
Alexander Castel	The Puppy Curled Into a Ball	39
Ava Partridge	A Cut Down to Bone	40
Christina Cook	I'm Invincible	42
Marta Maliszewska	Weeds	43
Vincent Wingfield	The Night Is Bright	44
Gwyneth Field	I Dream a World	45

Unafraid

I'm flowing, like
I'm gliding into New Year's.
I'm tiptoeing
like I'm dancing.
When I was 8
I was scared of gunshots;
Now I am 11 and
I'm not scared of gunshots.

PHILLIP WILLIAMS, GRADE 6
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Love Song for the Others: On T.S. Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

Do not let your hair grow gray with questions.
With mud on your sleeves and elbows scraped to the bone
fill your mind with answers.
Give notice to the fog and breathe it in yellow.

What good is an unopened window?

There is time, there is t—
My face is prepared and has glanced through window panes.
I've killed my time and created times.
At one point, long ago
I screamed there will be time,
time for unity and time for division
but no time for indecision.

At first, inside, I know not who I am.
From outside, I watch the women enter the room; I am Michelangelo.

I dare
I dare
I dare use time and disturb this universe
No minutes
No seconds
Only an instant to know that which I do not.
I wake in the morning to know the morning.
No sunrise is familiar.
I say, "Goodmorning"
but a sunrise does not know if the morning is good,
for it has not seen morning.
So far removed,
the sun rises with someone else's coffee spoon,
not mine.
I look into the eye of the universe and
I dare.

I've drunk from cups some sweet and bitter teas.
Halls of used napkins have a graveyard to themselves.
I've tossed out coins

Yes, sometimes foolishly, but other times not.

I've sprawled myself on a pin and wriggled off the wall.
I've already begun to muddy my shoes and have taken many, many falls.
My claws have scraped the sand of seas tirelessly
and worn themselves into nothing more than rounded edges
filled with a substance I can call my own.

My hair is thick, my muscles toned.
Why should I wait until I'm old and grown?
To round off my spears or
jump into colder water,
To eat a peach and walk with white trousers on the beach.
To put my fist up and hail my alma mater.

I've had doubts on whether to play,
Instead I started my scene.
I finally understood what it meant to be the answer to my own question.
I had a good day.

No,
the day is not mine. I live by its code
even if that means I have to grow old.

I do not hear the mermaids yet, no two sing together.
If my course remains west, my sun will not set.
I have time, I have time
to lie under the starry sky for my eternal rest.
But now,
now I go,
as my soul follows my shoes.

I watch the women enter the room; I am Michelangelo.

I sing, I sing, I am immune
but I cannot sing a song I do not know.

AARON DOUGUIH, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

2005

Such a thing, the face and eyes, stuck there on paper, next to the rest. He danced for the camera, getting down on film strips, cassette tapes, boxed up and kept forever, dust and a coat of wear. A swing, a white tint, the sun coming down lovely. His mother stopped and stared through the lens, moved it slightly. Street bustle and the sound of horns. Obelisk and grand cathedral. Booming, concrete and pillared, with the blossoms, pink, white in the bend, landing on the water and floating across. Paddleboats with his father, bald and a cap, shorts and a t. Pushing, punching out the pedals, the District in spring.

WILLIAM AITKEN, GRADE 12
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Warhol's Cow

Your pleasant purple and pretty pink
pixels pour from your teated horn
and into my cup of conscience;
they bathe me in memories of
nighttime drives guided by capering
flames of lamplight and hours spent
ruminating fields of information that
coalesce into a pasture of knowledge.
Your reclusive reds and bellicose yellows swing
like a stoplight on an unknown street.

The celestial light switch turns
on and off in an endless cycle, but
your portrait radiates a constant boldness.
As I accelerate toward fresh, faraway
fields of uncut grass, the silent, strong,
steady stream of your nectar flows through
the caverns of my consciousness, supporting
my sprouting stem as I drive toward
the red, yellow, pink and purple horizon.

INNA TINTCHEV, GRADE 12
NATIONAL CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

The Voice Inside One's Head

A poem
is the tiny voice inside one's head
That cries to be let out
But does not leave when told to.
A dog that cannot make up its mind.

Poems are found everywhere,
In the dirty brown snail climbing up a tall tree.
Or in the fluffy white cloud seen yesterday that was not there
today.

Maybe poems are behind the creaky closet door that refuses
to open
Or inside the soft lush flowers that open in the beginning of
May.

Poems are
Covered by doubt,
Self-consciousness,
and are shut away

Open the door and let words flow
Free

Or keep the poem hidden from view.
Put thoughts inside a chest and throw away
the key.

OLIVIA DIETRICH, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Private Times

Laying, quiet, if to speak my heart will leap from my throat.

Heaven's gates have been opened, a man, mine.

Whispers his tongue of arts.

He wants to paint my skies pink and blue and white, and all the pearly colors to make my heart pound.

My stature of confidence begins to shatter. Butterflies have landed softly, and the feeling foreign.

His voice fills the room,

reassurance,

consent,

need.

My heart, crouches, prepares to leap. Jump. Stuck in my mouth, behind my teeth and on the tip of my tongue.

I feel my sight water, a storm, boiling, ready to explode.

I see his face again, and I see the truth.

But the truth makes me even more quiet, the devil is coming for his claim.

ZION KEEN, GRADE 11
CAPITAL CITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Desert(ed)

The elements mix as
a balmy breeze
brings a fresh coat of boiling ice.
My bottle stares back
one vacant socket,
no refreshing coolant,
only a light coat of dusty grit.
All around stinging, scratched
eyes
take in
a panorama of desolation
where there is
nowhere.
Only the fiery sun remains to listen to my pleas.
I have forgotten
why I have lost myself,
raw, stripped, bare.
Inside
sand dunes morph into eager tombs,
patiently lying in wait
for my seeming demise.

LUCAS SCHEIDER GALINANES, GRADE 11
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Big Sister Blues

She's irritating,
always telling me
to straighten up the bed;
she's annoying,
playing her guitar
until midnight.
Her forgotten memory—
when she left me at the mall
(I remember).
I wish she would change
her bossy ways.
I regret doing what my sister says.
She wastes my time on the TV.
All the time she
makes me bitter,
but I'm lonely
when she's not here.

ERICA BELL, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Loneliness

He lives in
a ghost town
in an apartment with no furniture,
and no one else there.
He wanders around
to see other cities
but the gates are shut tight.
He wears a long gray coat,
and his hat has holes in it.
He is like this
until the gates are
opened.

CLARA ZOU, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

You Don't Remember

The running waterfall dampens the scriptures,
and language is made anew,
a word is as dirt,
and as dirt is as a phoenix,
it dies and rises from the ashes and flew,
but the knowledge is left behind and neglected,
almost guarded by Cerberus, as left an enigma,
forgotten and stored in shadowing archives,
archives of the mind, only revisited by those
when the topic is relevant,
a thought is an unreliable tool.
It needs sharpening to stay useful,
but, this is hard.
And the dirt is deep,
and with this the phoenix sleeps.
Because you can't remember, the bird its burning ember,
to the icy cold the fire surrenders.
You don't remember.

CASPER CORSELLO, GRADE 7
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Mountain

As I lift a white sheet of printer paper from the printer I begin to think.
Think about what I will scratch and stab into the paper.
I lie down on the floor with the paper in front of me.
I get up and pace.
And then I roll around on the ground.
And then I pace some more.
And then I roll some more.
All the while jabbing my head with the eraser side of the pencil.
My mind is a void.
I cannot think.
I struggle with the limits of my mind, and the possibility that those limits
may not actually exist.
Finally, I quit pacing, rattling, and rolling.
I have come to a decision.
I streak lines across the page.
Then I draw a “W” at the top of the shape I have just drawn.
I dig my pencil into the fibers of the paper.
And I scratch as if my life depends on it.
All the while I know that because of my pressure on the paper,
I will have pencils to go before I cease.
At long last, I have finished.
I have drawn what is intended as a mountain,
but as others have told me resembles “a triangle with a ‘W’ at the top.”
I have drawn, and I have climbed.
And in telling this story I haven’t yet rhymed.

JULIUS BOXER-COOPER, GRADE 8
GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL

Seeing Feelings

I see *Anger*
At a coffee shop.

He is yelling
At the cashier,

His face
Red.

Now he throws his coffee across the room.
It is burning *Sadness's* laptop, the smell resembles burnt rubber.

Some coffee flows over to me, and I feel it burn my foot.
I step outside and still hear *Anger* yelling.

As I walk away, *Satisfaction* picks the remnants of the boiling drink up
and tries to drink it.

I hear her say that it tastes
Good enough.

I choose another coffee shop to go to.

GEORGE BANKOFF, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

The Man, the Woman, and the Painting

A balding man stood on the sidewalk, his periwinkle eyes closed.
He had just gotten back from church
 since he was a very religious man.
However, he had stolen \$20 from the donation box
 and his mouth tasted bitter due to the shame he felt.
He shut his eyes because he felt lost and tormented
 looking at the good people walking by.
Even the sidewalk seemed to be disgusted by him,
 screaming at the man and ranting about his thievery.
Suddenly a woman walked up, wearing a dress that smelled
 like the sweetest candy and showed her bare knees.
The woman had a painting up to her face that smelled
 like it had been rotting for a thousand years, in hopes
 of people seeing the painting she had worked so hard on.
The woman, being just as adventurous as Indiana Jones,
 tapped the man on the shoulder trying to get him
 to look at her painting but he ignored her.
The subtle approach failed. The woman decided to be flattering.
“Hey, handsome, you seem like an amazing person.
 Would you care to look at my painting?”
The man, seeing nothing better to do, looked at the painting.

At first it merely looked like a woman in blue, but the guilt
punched him in the face and it felt like he had been beaten
with a rock when he realized the painting looked like
his ex-girlfriend, who had seen the goodness in him.
The painting cried out to him, and this caused him to feel
even worse and he fell on the ground crying.
The woman decided to back away awkwardly, thinking this man
was acting a bit creepily, but the painting told her
to comfort him, like a mother comforting a crying child.
The woman walked up to the man and began hugging him
and telling him it would be all right.
Once the man calmed down he asked the woman if she
had painted anything else, and she said she wanted to
but she didn't have enough money for art supplies.
The man, realizing he could use the money for good, gave the money
to the woman and told her to use it to buy art supplies.
The woman left while the man continued to stay on the sidewalk,
both happier than they had been before.

CONOR KELLY, GRADE 9
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Twenty-Four Hours in Henan Province

awoken, where I am
six hours, the highways different because
I am halfway around the world, bricks
simultaneously red and grey, let me sleep
no, come in—they are all waiting
I have never been here, clouds grey overhead too
come in, yes, I am too foreign, only the eyes are the same
but even they are different. where are we, they ask

we squat over ditches in the ground
humanized only by grey tiles laid around them
covered in pools of liquid—is it water or something else
I ask. yet I go anyway, because there is nowhere else
cousins cleaned it, mother tells, but still uncertain
glad I don't have such chores, or wishing
I were less privileged, unsure, in a new place still
only a few minutes ago

we sit
around a low table, adults and children alike
because there is no more room but we are all
here, the tofu with vegetables, steam
rising from the only warmth that can be afforded
the chairs in front of thick plastic curtains, dyed yellow
by the monotonous and monumental passing
of years—there is never room for new

at night, only one bed
per family, I doze off
not knowing where I am, but in this room
mother sat, decades ago, spilling ink into the wee
hours of the morning, one new shirt every year
the sleeve, pure orange of sunrise, dyed black in fury
pain of loss, for there will only be one, still resonates
in the air, from the high window—but they have light bulbs now
and a whirling fan that I want to be afraid of
but can't because it feels wrong
to fear

they give me water to drink, tell me
my dialect is too mandarin. I listen to
their provincial accents, embarrassed
that I am different, yet I know
that to them I am still child, beloved, allow me
everything, more than I deserve
before farewells, take this with you
you'll never find it in Beijing—no, you are
too generous, wish you best of luck
I will be back in years, but no one fills in the number because
some wiser than me know I am still foreign
even in love

space passes, time passes, then
through wires strung beneath the sea
and reflections into space, hear their voices again
chickens, a garden, fields of untranslatable crop names
unsold harvests, grains stacked on the
roof, waiting, but the uncles know
it will never be sold
another year, no money, no hope. do you need money
we ask, but we do not know if they are
afraid to say yes, or afraid to say no
and all is gone anyway—where?
the children went to the city, and now
only a single red lantern
left

MAGGIE WANG, GRADE 11
NATIONAL CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

Synesthesia

A star sounds like a whisper in your ear.
A circle smells like a freshly cooked pancake
from the best of places.
White moves in a slow movement of depreciation.
A whisper looks like a shooting star.
The texture of purple feels
like smooth, but bumpy skin.
The letter “K” glows the color red that
reminds me of a special someone.
Whenever I look at you I hear words that
make me feel like I am something.

NA'JEE FERGUSON, GRADE 8
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Chains

Beaten and trained in chains.
Sorry is never enough when you suffer the pain of chains.

The lifeless stomps and cries of the animals.
Never forgotten by the victims of the pain of chains.

Lying on the floor, coiled up.
Nothing to see but the pain of chains.

Locked in a cold, dark, and gloomy cell.
All alone except for them and the pain of chains.

Cuts on their legs and scars on their faces.
All that is left is the pain of chains.

Used for our pleasure, never appreciated.
We used the force of the pain of chains.

Always in the shadow of their masters.
Never let out of the pain of chains.

Never loved to the fullest.
But liked because of the pain of chains.

KEYA KRISHNA, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Keyless Cage

Am I a shovel digging into the dirt
with the muck sticking to the sides
the sweat gripping the top

Or

Am I a butterfly seeking the light
Its wings high in the air a pallet of colors

All

that I seem to know about myself is caught in cage
the words endlessly thumping against the sides of its metal walls

Armenia,

faith,

religion

waiting to be

released

waiting for the memories to rush out

waiting for the truth to be unveiled

to the 12-year-old girl I know so well, who is still waiting

SUNE HAMPARIAN, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

I Was Raised by Family

I was raised by a
Tea drinking
No nonsense
Highly stressing
Vegetarian cooking
TV is a waste of your brainpower
Kind of mother

A high standard setting
Onerous tasking
Over protecting
Let me just call their parents
Kind of mother

Some old-fashioned
Flip phone using
Pet owning
Music is our *LIFE*, get used to it
Go ask your mother
Go ask your father
Type of parents

A nerf gun toting
Kindle fire carrying
Homeschooling
Minecraft playing
Sibling fighting
Oversleeping
I defeated the ender dragon
Type of brother

A list making
Looney Tunes quoting
Classical music listening
Student teaching
Cello playing
“Tonight’s a school night, so, no”
Google maps to get to the grocery store
Kind of dad

Some ’30s reminiscing
Bird watching
New Yorker reading
Quietly observing
Jazz listening
Steinway playing
Life goes by too fast
Type of grandparents

I was raised by family.

GRAHAM VELSEY, GRADE 10
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Monday Mornings: Me and Mom

dew-covered
cobblestones
reach for toes as

wood is pecked
over our extended roof,
and the cry of daybreak
creeps through my slitted shades.

i embrace the fur of a beast
as a barrage of musty-scented kisses
fill my rusty face.

my mom,
her love lost like the wood off that one oak,
calls “breakfast!”

13 steps,
my nose leads me down.
there lies a feast undeservingly
for me.

cakes, bacon, eggs.
smell comparable to taste.
my plate,
a cornucopia of
compassion.

WINSTON LESLIE, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

The Elder and the Child

The Elder's voice, a quiet sound,
Of rusted years and somber truth,
Had bade the Child, "Speak to me,
Remember me the days of youth.

"For years have stripped my bones of time.
And withered grey my heart of gold
Obscured my mind and rid my ghost
Of times when I was not so old."

The Child took the Elder's hands
And whispered of the twilit sky,
The morning blues, still tinged by night
Where early birds and daydreams fly.

"O, tell me more!" the Elder cried,
"Of endless hopes that pass the dawn
Of morning sighs and sleepy dreams,
Where empty streets and passways yawn."

The Child spoke of silent dew,
Of light that creeps on padded toes,
Forgiving skies and grateful lights
That paint the world in morning glows.

The Elder bade the Child, "More!
For in this fickle life of earth,
The withered mind of time gone by
Remembers more of death than birth."

The Child spoke of sunlit minds,
Of spirits drunk on earnest glee
Of bluer skies and better times
And thoughts that soar, alive and free.

The Elder said with grim delight,
"O Child, speak a while more.
I hang upon your clever words.
Remember me a time before!"

Again the Child spoke of skies,
The sated dusk of shadow-grey,
The blackened soot of leafless trees,
The midnight of the dying day.

"Again!" the Elder cried, "Again!
O speak of stars in darkened skies,
Of diamonds set in velvet night,
Ablaze in dreams and hopeful eyes!"

The Child breathed a heavy sigh,
And sorrow weighed in every hair,
The silence stretched an endless void
The Elder slung to empty air.

"So, speak!" the Elder cried again,
"For through your eyes I see the truth,
Pray, tell me of the twilit skies,
The morning blues and birds of youth!"

"The skies are black," the Child said,
"The twilight droops with time gone by,
The morning glows are dull with life,
The daydreams have forgot to fly.

"The life's been lived, the war's been fought
And dust must take the heart of gold.
The years have sunk to grime and rust,
The Child's youth too soon grows old."

What pair they were, those fallen two,
To share the other's wishing core!
The youthful Elder loves regret,
The ancient Child longs for more.

JAX WEYMOUTH, GRADE 11
NATIONAL CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

Cookies

This is a poem inspired by my mother's experience immigrating from Russia, and starting kindergarten.

Walking into kindergarten
I look around carefully
Clutching my grandmother's arm.
She mutters soothing words in
Russian
My language.
Listening to the
Words
They say
Looking at the
Toys
They play with
Sniffing the
Air
They breathe.
Autumn leaves are starting
To change.
So am I.
The teacher smiles.
Says something
I don't understand.
I look at her,
Puzzled.
She smiles and
Repeats it.
I don't like this.
Not yet
At least.
I try to smile
More like a grimace.
"Good-bye," I say.
She laughs and
Says something else.
I want to cry
I blink back tears,
Try to compose myself.
I say, "Hello, you."
She keeps talking

Babbling on
And on
And on
And on.
I look around.
Other children are
Coming in.
They know each other.
Not me.
The teacher still
Talks.
Her voice has changed.
It's louder and slower.
I hear my name
Or something like it.
She puts her hand
On my shoulder
And pushes me
Into the classroom.
The tears come now
Pouring out.
I look around.
Someone else
Is handing out
Cookies.
I've never had this kind—
Oatmeal chocolate chip.
And cups of chocolate milk.
I take one
The tears still pouring out.
I taste the cookie.
The tears slow
Coming to a stop.
It's sweet
And full of hope.

HANNAH HOFFMAN, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Hope

Her fingers sail the channels in the oak's bark
and when they meet yours, also seeking, they clasp
and find a sanctuary to wait out the dark
and hide another night from melancholy's grasp.

At last on the highest branch leaves uncurl
and, still delicate, rise to meet a new sun
and, just below, hearts start to unfurl
dreaming the flat grey nights have finally passed.

EMMA KAY, GRADE 11
GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL

My People

Si, se puede!

Dreamers,
Dancers,
Doctors,
Senators,
Scholars,
Singers,
Lawyers,
Legislators,
Librarians,
Teachers,
Businessmen and women,
But somehow, still unknown.

Like the knight in shining armor
We come through.

We love
To fall in love,
And tell a few tales.

We make the violin cry,
And play the piano,
Weaving a wonderful lie,
Noting that the black keys
Make some type of noise too.
Life, like guitar strings,
Like a song we've learned to play,
We're trying to stay in tune.

La musica,

Our bachata,
Our cumbia,
Our salsa,
Our merengue,
Oh trust me, our hips move!

Our food,
Full of tradition,
Passed down through every abuela

I know,
Cooked in huge pots,
Boiled in water,
Tamales,
Frijoles,
And so much more.

Pero tambien asamos,

Cocinamos,

Y comemos

pupusas, carne asada, frijoles,
empanadas de pollo,
y tamales de pollo y de elote hasta
mole poblano,
Yes, chicken in chocolate!

We cook

We eat

We season

We don't play with food!

Our kids,
We teach
To dance like us.
We teach
our Latin roots,
Though some of us
Tuck it away like
A secret to be kept,
While we attempt assimilation.

We've had to pretend
We're something we're not.
We've had to live out in the streets,
Learning an unknown language.
We've had to sell drugs, do crime
To get by.

We've learned to speak,
Received our degrees,
Worked triple hard,
We've had to wait too long
For falsely promised dreams.

Our blue flag,
Our red flag,
Our green flag,
Our different flags
All make us one.

We are the story of a rollercoaster.
A woman with a musical voice
And the man she met,
How they craved a kid
Had him here, in this country
Hoping he would become their
dreams.

We are the story of the boy
Who would grow and one day have a
degree,
A lawyer defending his parents' rights
His dreams becoming their dreams.

The children, the dreamers,
We know the harsh truth
Of how our parents are unseen.
The children, we unite and show
That the Spanish language
Is a powerful storm—
Our songs
Our people
Our food, make us who we are.
We, my people, are the hardest suns
to break!

KATHERINE SALMERON, GRADE 11
PARKMONT SCHOOL

January

I

My blue coat keeps me cozy and warm when it's cold in my room.
I get under the covers. Looking out the window I see snow on the ground;
getting my gloves to make snowballs
I tell my nephew to get out of the way, but he gets hit.

II

Smells of fried chicken and pizza,
snow and ice, hot apple cider, sore throats and fevers,
staying home from school in bed and missing Bunny, who left me.

III

In the evening it gets dark; my nephew is scared.
We sleep with flashlights, the street lights,
and my shadow looks shy.

IV

My heart is crying. I am dead like the day, and my shadow
is talking for me, because
January broke my heart.

SHANAY LESANE, GRADE 10
BALLOU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The Silence

The silence is itself a season, and almost unbearable.
No birds chirp in the cracked, barren trees.
No greenery springs out of the loud silence.
It's almost as if the smooth, white coating creates the silence
that only breaks with the ache of a tree
or some unbearable
noise—the deep dinging of a microwave, the unbearable
sipping of hot cocoa outside, watching for a sliver of movement in the trees
or bushes. The barren bushes with little to no critters breaking this loud silence
that can only be heard by creating more silence
that everything attempts to listen to—the trees:
the towering but desolate oaks.
The birds: the chilled blue jays and nesting cardinals.
The animals: hidden squirrels and rabbits.
All listening carefully to this deafening, unbearable,
smooth, white silence.

ZACHARY FARRINGTON, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Struggle

Lay down these words
before your mind like smoke
placed before the moon
by your eyes in your own state of mind
before the struggle is never forgotten
struggle is hard for a lot of people
the stones that are your eyes
are not going to change
the hide and seek where nobody is going to find you
the freeze tag that you play outside
with the people you've been around
the words are the games y'all play
on TV or on y'all's phones
the struggle is fire to me
the pain I face every day
I wake up and put a smile on my face
to tell people
I'm good

OCTAVIA JOHNSON, GRADE 12
BALLOU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Echoes

My home is doubt, lined with
crystals of anger.

My temple of mistakes.

My stepping stones of
sadness.

My castle of alone.

My empty castle. Smelling
of lies that have been
whispered in the street.

Looking like broken glass,
shattered in the sky.

Feeling of rough pebbles, on
the rocky roads.

And if you care to listen, you

Might just hear the

Wailing of the demons,
knowing

End is near.

The end.

And yet again, if
You dare to get close,

You would be able to

Taste

The misery,

Floating through the air.

But then again

You don't really

Care. You'll never,

Ever,

Get close enough

To even see me.

But maybe,

Just maybe, if you

Listen close enough

You'll hear me

Screaming, in the

Dark.

The echoes of my

Despair,

Floating through the

Twilight-coated

Midnight.

SAWYER BEVERIDGE, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Introduction

May I introduce myself:

My heart doesn't
exist, someone threw
a brick at it and it
suddenly was crushed.

Not even hope can come
from Pandora's box.

My heart must be
that common carpet
that is always trashed
after so long.

Sometimes crying
can't mask someone
who's broken.
They won't like how
soon they
will be longing to know
the old kid with a
smile plastered on her
face.

Let her cry, is
what everyone
says, but I say
hold it in 'til
later.

. . . The hurt can't
say much, when
they're hurt.

MYNIAH SWEETNEY, GRADE 11
RICHARD WRIGHT PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

senseless

if you asked me my name
i didn't hear, deaf as a
sunflower to anything but
rattling storm.

if you looked at me, really looked at me,
i didn't see, blind as a
sunflower staring dumb at the sky.

if you smelled like salt and cotton
i didn't notice, as a
sunflower holds its breath against the acrid
cleansing wind.

if you tasted my secrets
i didn't mean it, blithe as a
sunflower grown solely for salty seed.

and if you felt something
when we were over
i don't care
a sunflower only remembers
only lives for
the sun.

SAM RHEE, GRADE 9
SAINT ALBANS SCHOOL

Boundless

Poetry, for me, is
the waves,
and the warm water, lapping at your feet.
It's the sand between your toes.

The sun on your face,
even when it hurts,
because you don't know the difference, until that night,
when your skin's red and peeling.
It's the things you don't know you'll miss until they're gone.

It strolls down the sunny streets
in flip-flops,
walks barefoot through the
beach at night.

Poetry knows no bounds
because it,
like you,
is drunk,
on freedom.

MAYA CLANCY, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

No I Never

No, I never felt the rumble in my belly,
I never cut corners and ended up
running into a she-bear that farts powder,
the thickening air closing in;
and never have I seen a musk-ox
with ox-pockets—How will the lion
pride's roar echo through the winds
and sky? I'm nervous, but never have I ever
seen God as a mistress or an ape,
the shadow that calls Satan and God to battle,
a canoe-footed barbarian with no eyes
but can still see me cheating at poker,
the withered witch that makes the sky
lethally rumble, no,
I've never seen them.

CAMERON DEBOISE, GRADE 9
BALLOU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Flying

One breath in is all that I need
A second one, with cool air to stifle the greed
The anger
And
The jealousy
I wish they could take it all away from me
So I could be:
All alone in a room flying
With air that feels like silk pushing me towards trees
And blue birds taking flight
All throughout the night
That is what happens in my dreams

Only in my dreams
It can never be
I will always seem
Stuck with anxiety
Trapped inside a box
Running out of air
The only way to escape is one I'd never dare
Sweat pouring down my face
How did I get into this cage in the first place?

For now I will just try another breath
Like a butterfly wing hovering on my cheek
Takes me to another dream of
. . . Flying . . .

COURTNEY PINE, GRADE 7
MARET SCHOOL

Elegy for Forgotten Memories

I do not remember you,
sometimes I do not remember
myself.

You slipped away.
Maybe it was for the best.

I try to recall,
but my mind fogs.

My brain tilts his head
puzzled at the sight of you.

Who are you?

You, the steam on the mirror
after a hot bath.

You, a question unanswered,
one I try to decipher.

I hope to crack
the hard-headed surface of
my subconscious with a spoon.

I hope to break through,

chest full of jewels,
and remember you,

me.

JEFFERSON ASCENCIO, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

I'm From

I'm from buttery crescent rolls, mini hot dogs and spicy jerk
chicken

Hot as Carolina Reapers.

I'm from "Yes, indeed."

From Ian and Amir, from Kathy and Stephen.

They love me to the moon and back.

I'm from baseball with the crack of the bat

From Paw Patrol like soft dogs

From Disney magic, United States, France and the UK.

I'm from New Orleans

And the French Quarter, jazz music alive in my ears.

And Cane's chicken fingers, each bite is a piece of heaven.

I'm from Mardi Gras, throwing beads of every color in parades

From jazz bands on every street.

I'm from music town

From awesome food like

Gumbo, sweet and spicy, and fried chicken.

IAN MAKLE, GRADE 6
PARKMONT SCHOOL

The Puppy Curled into a Ball

There is a small brown dog bed.
It's round and old just like its inhabitant
Chewed up like a shark attacked it with no mercy whatsoever.
But still the small brown dog
Refuses to sleep anywhere else.
He curls up into a ball every night
A ball so tight it could be used as a basketball
But it is a living thing
That has fur nice and soft
And long chocolate hair
That flows through fingers,
With no problems at all,
Like a hand moving through the soft waves of the blue ocean.

ALEXANDER CASTEL, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

A Cut Down to Bone

Daisy Dardon. Ten years old.

Molested by her uncle?

Reah Bravo.

Leigh Corfman.

Jeanette Morelan.

Katie

Sharon

Kassie

Jessica.

These women and millions,

Violated, abused, and then blamed.

Now their stories are coming out, but are they?

Hashtag ME TOO.

Advocacy websites.

The media.

The stories come to us.

And we thank God, everyone is speaking up! . . .

But for every assault reported, for every assault story
suffered and told,

Four remain silent.

A grand total of 3 percent of rapists spend a second in a cell.

The other 97 percent are left for society to endure.

And yes, they might not comprehend what they inflicted,

That the absence of a yes counts.

Any sexual coercion **counts**.

And if the perpetrators don't know what they did,
they will do it again and again.

And not even know they are making someone hurt.

Words are thrown around like they don't pierce flesh.
Each bitch, slut, whore
is more blood poured from the veins of women.
Is a knife in a heart.
Is a cut down to bone.

These words, a handful of letters, are screamed after a refusal.
Are only used to make a man feel powerful, with no regard of the cost.
These words fuel anger, fuel the want of power.
And if men see an object in front of them, instead of a human being,
They will see themselves as greater. More.

And we have fire.
We will fight back,
but when a hand you don't trust
is grabbing your breast,
You can hardly breathe.
You feel small.
You feel worthless.
And you feel what the man sees.

But we are more than that. There are people,
Men and women rising up helping the hurt and tortured.
We will keep fighting until we don't need the hashtags.
More and more women will speak out, accuse, and be believed.
We will see a day when women aren't suffocated.

Martin Luther King Jr. once had a dream.
Today, this is mine.

AVA PARTRIDGE, GRADE 8
SHERIDAN SCHOOL

I'm Invincible

I'm underneath the graves of sorrow;
I'm above you all in the lineup,
or call it the pipeline.
I come over you like a shadow
I can't be touched, I'm like a wildflower
I'm soft on the inside, hard on the outside of the line.
I go behind a door, like a window on a balcony
I come between you like ham and cheese on a Sunday.
Within 5 miles, I'd be there, up
to your level of alignment
when it's called.
I'm a ghost going through your nightmares
but I'll be stuck in your mind
like a wishbone, or thoughts and sorrow.

CHRISTINA COOK, GRADE 11
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE PREPARATORY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Weeds

I daydreamed a shattered girl—sleeping
With her arms twisted around her knees
Bare feet crushing strands
Of neon, golden grass
The midnight dark as her hair
Pooling into shadows
Entrapped in her pearl arms.

Neat, crisp sugar dress
Untouched by the tangled seeds
That blinded the night—
Like cerulean fireflies
Tumbling through choking wind
From a phosphorescent dandelion field.
And the breeze was a brilliant blue

The weeds chewed
A stormy sea of smoke
As it curled around the grassland—
Acrid, sticky, syrupy
Charging to change the night's color
To a pounded purple and grey
Only to be devoured.

I daydreamed a shattered girl—sleeping
In a plain of vivid-
Coiling golds and blues
And the shimmering air encircled her lungs
Planting brittle leaves
Vines snaking through her veins
While the shadows looked on.

MARTA MALISZEWSKA, GRADE 11
WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

The Night Is Bright

Every night the light is like a sea breeze
shining into the sky on a full moon.
The brilliant idea of it
feels like a surprise
burst into the bright light,
flying like a kite.
The light that makes a harp turn gold
is a blossom in a rainbow.
The night is bright, like ice skating on light.

VINCENT WINGFIELD, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

I Dream a World

I dream of a country where
we care about every person,
and we share with every person
beyond a toy or piece of cake.

Where we take the action
and don't just say the words.

I dream of a country where
profit goes to those who work,
just as it does to CEOs.

Where the worker is a person,
not a number nor a contract.

Where the tax cuts go to not just the
corporations, but the families too.

I dream of a country where
landlords can sell but also
support those on the streets,
before the rent money.

I dream of a country where
a home is not a privilege.

I dream of a country where
it is not just 1%
against the rest of the world,
but all of us, united.

Where elite is not exclusive.

I dream of a country where
income is not your worth.

A country where the numbers
don't describe the person.

Of such I dream, my country, my world.

GWYNETH FIELD, GRADE 7
SHERIDAN SCHOOL

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Ron McClain, Head of Parkmont School, for his ongoing support of the Parkmont Poetry Festival.

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Judges

The Parkmont Poetry Festival extends sincere thanks to our 2018 judges

ELIZABETH ACEVEDO is the New York Times-bestselling author of *The Poet X*. She holds a BA in Performing Arts from the George Washington University and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Maryland. She is a National Poetry Slam Champion and her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *POETRY*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *Callaloo*, and others. She lives in Washington, D.C. with her partner.

MICHAEL GUSHUE is co-publisher of the nanopress Poetry Mutual, and co-curates Poetry at the Watergate. His books are *Gathering Down Women*, *Conrad*, *Pachinko Mouth*, and—in collaboration with CL Bledsoe—*I Never Promised You A Sea Monkey*.

PATRICK WASHINGTON has been published in the anthology “Life Through Black Eyes” alongside the great Nikki Giovanni, in *Emerge* magazine’s “Strength of a Woman” issue and online in the *Beltway Quarterly*. He is the Washington DC Def Poetry Slam Champion and was a semi-regular on the HBO series of the same name. He is one half of the mighty hip-hop/poetry duo *POEM-CEES*, and he owes it all to U Street.

ANNE HARDING WOODWORTH is the author of six books of poetry and four chapbooks. Her most recent book, *The Eyes Have It*, was published in March of this year. Her chapbook, *The Last Gun* — in the voice of the last gun on earth — was published in April of 2016, and an excerpt from it won the 2016 COG Poetry Award, judged by A. Van Jordan and animated at Cogswell Polytechnical College. Harding Woodworth’s poetry, essays, and reviews are published in literary journals, in the U.S. and abroad, in print and online. She is co-chair of the Poetry Board at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C.

An additional debt of thanks

to **Ron McClain**, Head of Parkmont School and Founder of the Parkmont Poetry Festival; **Judy Lentz**, Coordinator of the Festival for 25 years and tireless supporter, the **Parkmont staff, student and parent volunteers**; and **Sharan Strange**, Festival Master of Ceremonies. Sharan's recent work has been included in *Bearden's Odyssey: An Anthology of Poems Responding to the Art of Romare Bearden* and *Revise the Psalm: Work Celebrating the Writing of Gwendolyn Brooks*; in the exhibitions Let's Play, at the Pro Arts Gallery in Oakland, and Black Imagination: The States of Matter, at Core Gallery in Seattle; and, in concert with the American Modern Ensemble (with composer Robert Paterson). She also collaborated with composer Courtney Bryan on two commissioned works—Yet Unheard, for The Dream Unfinished Orchestra's Sing Her Name concert, and Benediction, for recital performance by vocalist Davóne Tines.

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Finally we wish to thank our 2018 Parkmont School Board of Trustees

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