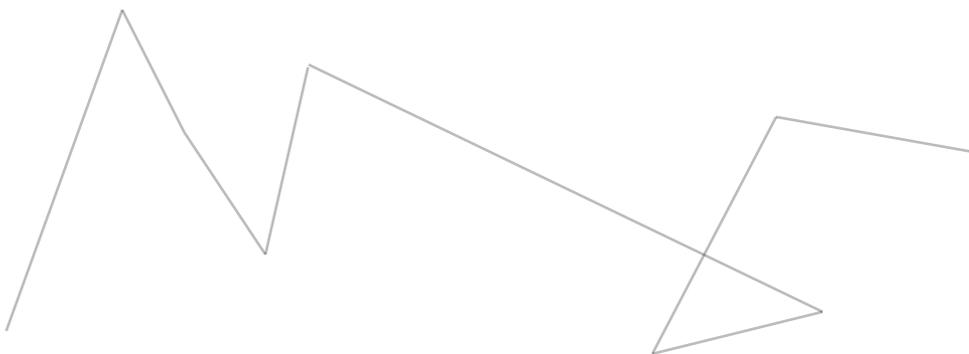


Many thanks to
Jacqui Michel and David Weisman
for helping make this venue at the Edmund Burke School possible
and for their generous support of the Parkmont Poetry Festival

**Sincere thanks for the hard work and dedication of our
Poetry Advisory Committee:**

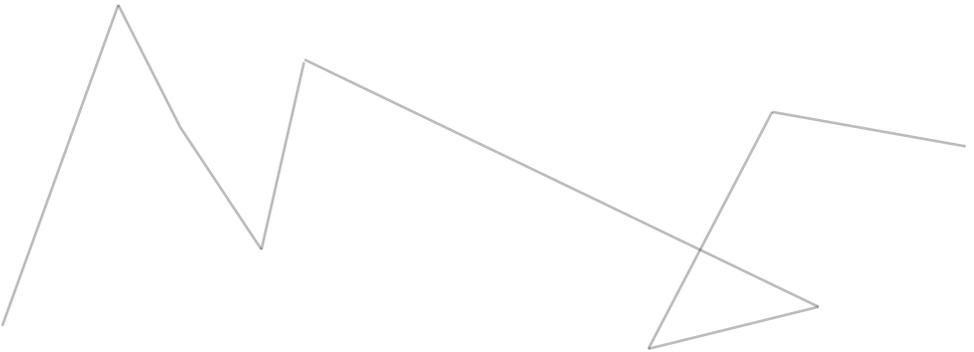
Jacqui Michel and David Weisman
Judy Lentz
Anne Woodworth



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 recognize the literary gifts of young poets from our diverse schools and neighborhoods and to celebrate their common interest in poetry. This year we proudly celebrate 32 years of spotlighting and sharing their talents and their unique perspectives on their worlds.

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



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WRITING STYLE

I saw you.
And I wanted you.
I wanted you from the moment I saw you.

So I said hello.
And you said hello.

And some things may have happened.
But not the way I wanted them to.
Not the way I wanted you to remember them.

This isn't the story I wanted to tell.
This isn't the story that I wanted to happen.
This is the story where you forgot,

and I didn't.

This is the story where I feel something,

and you don't.

This isn't the story I never wanted to tell
because I wish we hadn't written it.

And I talked.
And You talked.
And We talked.

But did it mean anything?

And the couch was soft.
And it wasn't cold.

But do you remember?

I do.

And I talked to myself.

And I listened.

And I don't want to feel anything anymore.

Not for you.

Not for them.

Because it's tough to tell a story that I never wanted
to write,

It's tough to tell a story that your soul doesn't agree
with.

But it happened.

And it will.

Again.

I don't want to write like that anymore.

It's better that way.

Simpler,

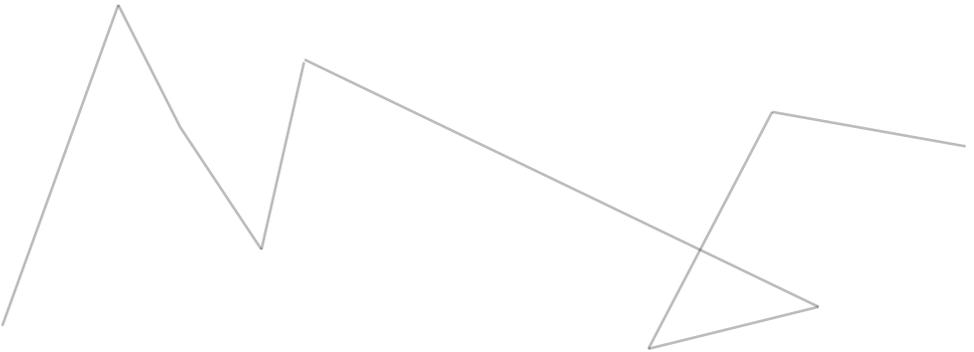
Than having to tell that story, over and over again.

Khalil Jones, *Grade 12*
Georgetown Day School

CLOSE ENOUGH

I see him all the time
but I'm shy so I can't talk
We laugh and joke around
but I can't talk
I'm at a loss for words
I'm spinning around
but I know I'm safe
I feel like I'm in the eye of a tornado
He pressures me into talking
and telling him what's up
So I tell him, and he smiles
gives me a heartwarming look
and looks down
and I think to myself,
Close enough

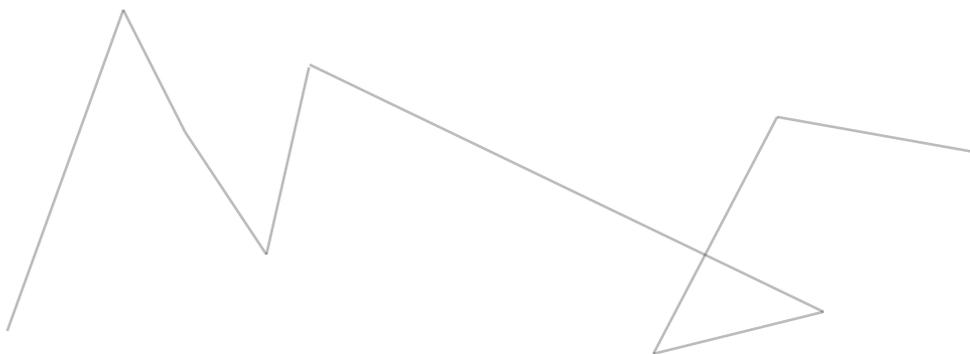
Daeja Joyner, *Grade 7*
Charles Hart Middle School



EATING MUSIC

We're both starving, with
that kind of burning hunger that can only be tamed
by great jazz. So
we order Mingus. You dig in,
inhaling a rich creamy bass solo with delight, as
I scoop up a delicious measure sprinkled lightly
with tangy cello. The sounds
fill our stomachs with melodic tunes.
We're full.

Lucas Donovan, *Grade 6*
Sidwell Friends School

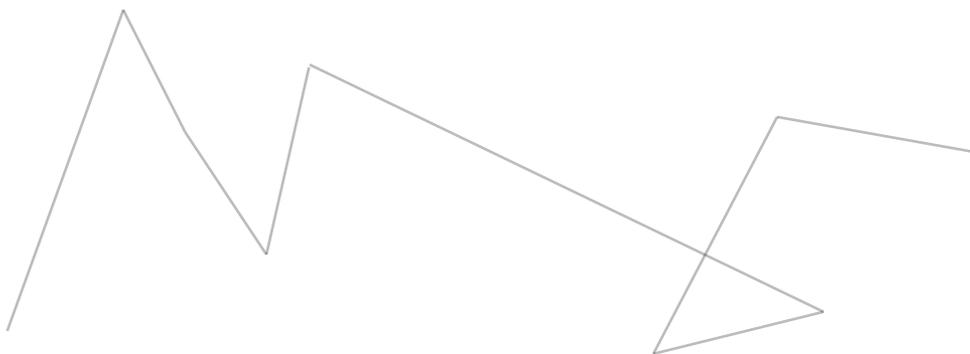


TWISTER

Swirling and twirling,
A ballerina whose face is darkened by dirt
as she dances with destruction in her path.
Her witch dust flies and her wickedness thrusts,
while fear emits from her dance.
She sees no despair.
She only sees what she can cause with her own wrath.
Her tutu is torn,
her leotard is shredded,
her ballet slippers are flawless.

Asia Jones, *Grade 10*

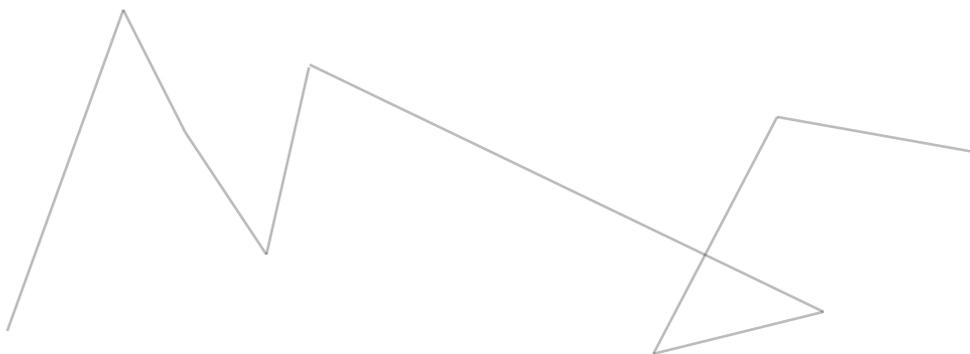
Benjamin Banneker Academic High School



DANCING TO MY OWN MELODY

The sun has not ascended in the purple pinkish sky
so my bare feet are soaring through the grass wet with
morning dew as I wake the day with my own melody
collected from the cheeping of birds and the
rustling of the flowers peeping from the soil
my hair is whipping through the heavens and
my eyes are gently closed, my feet tapping out
a rhythm as I hum and fling my arms about
breathing in the morning air
I twirl, spin, fly to the song inside
Now the sun has risen in the pink orange sky
And I am walking home, sneakers in hand
applause in my ears.

Mia Ellis, *Grade 6*
Sidwell Friends School



LITTLE GIRL

I was on the bus the other day
Staring off into space
Desperately seeking an escape from my heavy reality

When I saw this little girl
Who reminded me a lot about myself
Or at least who I used to be

She had a school uniform and barrettes in her hair
And a smile that screamed stress-free

I started getting envious because she caused me
to have flashbacks
I flashed back to when homework was to
Color in the right numbers, or add 1+2, 2+3, and 3+4,
or practice my cursive, and learn the alphabet.
I flashed back to when the most difficult thing in my
life was being the line leader or caboose
I flashed back to when all I had to do was to have fun,
be young, listen to mommy, and ask for what I want.
Everything was just so easy.
And I snapped back to this heavy reality of mine
Only to hear this little girl say, “Mommy, when I
grow up...”
And I started to get envious again.
Little girl, don’t grow up.
Please stay a little girl for as long as you can.

Evadne Lewis, *Grade 11*
Capital City Public Charter School

GROANups

A snow day fills young hearts with joy,
And every child, girl and boy,
Will grab their sled and fly down hills,
While snows fill up their window sills.
Bare branches bear the weight of snow
And wait to soak the one below
And grownups huddle close like mice
Complaining 'bout the snow and ice
Complaining that it's "Just too cold!"
Complaining that they're getting old
And what a sight the snow would make
When causing their old bones to break.
We Kids are outside, on our sleds
The Grownups, moaning, in their beds
We're laughing, smiling, catching flakes
They're griping 'bout their cramps and aches,
The world is like our ice cream cone
They sit inside (they like to moan)
We come and lie down by the fire
They put our wet clothes in the dryer
With cocoa, hot, on every tongue,
We thank our stars that we're still young.

Jackie Weymouth, *Grade 7*
National Cathedral School

MASKS

Make up is this means of being beautiful: like a model
that's what TV tells us

we all stress and stress then put on that mask, make up
thinking if we don't have it we are not beautiful

or everyone can see my weak, my scares or my hurt
like a person with a wild cat for a pet

ain't it funny, everyone says

that if you do you and just love you

you are beautiful, that's what I was taught

but then again, we watch TV

all I see is models, with make up piled high on their face

those aren't real people

the world promotes that (mac, simply beautiful, cover girl)

then they turn right around and say...

"the beauty inside you"

(like they believe that)

so all around the world little girls

think this mask is what they need and so

the same little girls get caught making that mask

the one that I suppose can hide the fights, the stress,

and the fears of day to day life

As for me...

I got up this morning, put on my make up

looked in the mirror, then washed it off

so when I walk, the world won't see a mask

when I hold my head up high, what they see is ME

so my "Mask" is staying home

and me, I'm going out to be me

Clarice Daniels, Grade 11

IDEA Public Charter School

MEDIOCRE

How?

What am I supposed to do?

Things are coming at me from every direction

I want to roll up in a ball under my blanket

Like a little child hiding from a monster

I'm expected to do great things

I'm expected to lead

But. I. Can't.

The constant pressure

The constant fear of failure

Is slowly tearing my brain apart

The constant reminder to be better

To work harder

To strive for more

This reminder uses grenades to attack my conscience
and debilitate my confidence

What if I want to be mediocre?

Why must you use my fears and insecurities against me?

Do you think that's going to make me better?

No.

It will build a fire of mixed emotions

That gradually burns me from inside out

The fire crumbles my insides

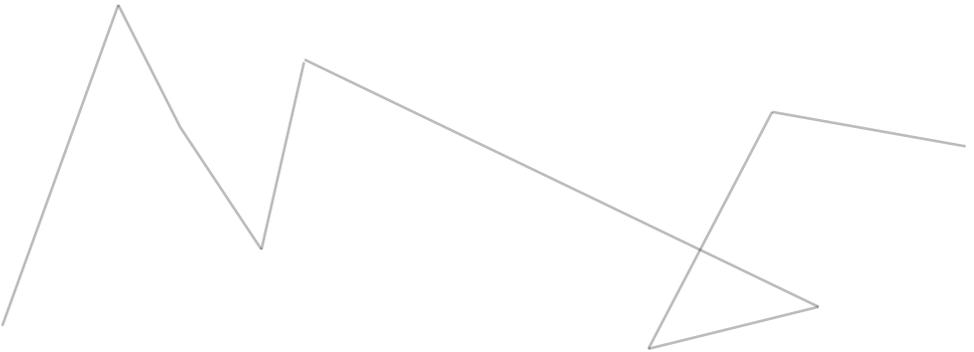
As it becomes more powerful

Frustration and self-doubt

The more pressure put upon me

Stronger the demon of self-doubt becomes
Stronger the burning and tearing feeling
of anger and frustration appears
And weaker my body gets
The feeling of self-doubt is cancer to my thoughts
Never being worthy enough
And the fire, the fire won't cause me to push myself
Oh no
The emotions will pile on and on and on
Like logs on top of a fire
I can't be someone that you want me to be
I am not your puppet
I am not your dog and you
are not my master
I will always be average,
simple,
ordinary,
mediocre.

Valencia Meredith, *Grade 10*
Capital City Public Charter School



INNER ME

I don't necessarily stand out but I'm
full of wonders,
just like the thunder, you can't see
but you hear the echoes.

I appear very free but my thoughts
keep me in a prison, when my
emotions rise you read truths never lies.

My thoughts occasionally remain
trapped like an unwrapped present.

But I fell in love,

With writing on a piece of paper.

My thoughts feel safer, I can express
with no distress and like a mirror
it reflects my inner person.

Projects all of me.

In becoming a writer I learned to
dissect my own mind,

from the obvious to the inner dark corners of it.

Showing a different side, allowing others
to understand,

there's more to me than their eyes can see.

Katherine Campos, Grade 11

Academia de la Recta Porta

THE MASK

A second face

Opening door, that allows you to blend in or stand out.

An option to attract and be heard

Or silent and ignored.

A face that shields its true self,

Revealing strength and weakness.

This mask is like a one-way window.

Can look but can't see through it.

There is a person on the other side.

He or she can watch you, hoping you see through
the glass,

to become a two-way window.

The mask is a nightmare.

As you look at your past, the lies you told and the
truths you covered,

You wonder if someone would uncover who you really
are or see you for the lies you told.

One can only awaken asking for forgiveness,

Shattering the mask,

Creating a new beginning.

Alex Gutierrez, *Grade 10*

Capital City Public Charter School

DO YOU EVEN KNOW ME?

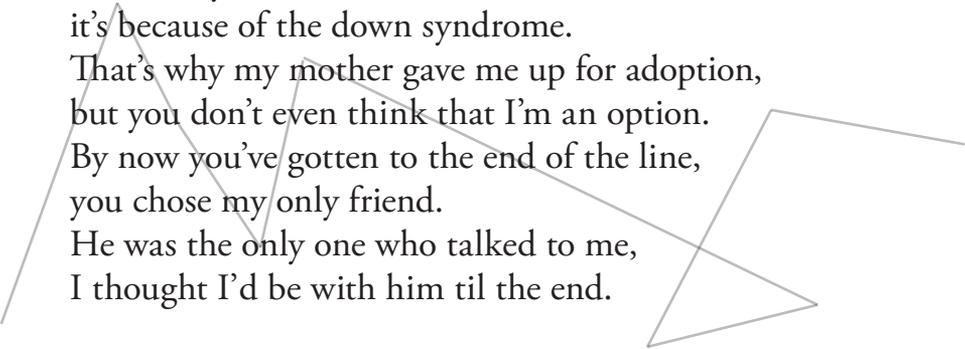
I look at you walking by,
you're looking every child in the eye.
I put a cute smile on my face,
while you're on the chase for the perfect child.

I know you don't want me,
you never will,
but that won't stop me,
I'm fighting a battle that's only uphill.

You keep walking,
at every available child you're silent and stop moving,
but when you get to me,
you keep on talking,
without stopping.

I know you don't want me,
you never will,
but that won't stop me,
I'm fighting a battle that's only uphill.

I know my face looks a little weird,
it's because of the down syndrome.
That's why my mother gave me up for adoption,
but you don't even think that I'm an option.
By now you've gotten to the end of the line,
you chose my only friend.
He was the only one who talked to me,
I thought I'd be with him til the end.



I know you don't want me,
you never will,
but that won't stop me,
I'm fighting a battle that's only uphill.

It's torture the way you look at me,
with that disgust on your face.
It's like all of us kids
are trying to win first place.
I'm 10 and the oldest here,
nobody will ever want me,
it's like everyone wants me to disappear.
My age doesn't help with the adoption,
the syndrome is why you don't want me.
It's like I'm covered in tape that says "Caution."

I know you don't want me,
you never will,
but that won't stop me,
I'm fighting a battle that's only uphill.

I don't always know if I make sense or not,
but I know I'm great,
and you should too.
I am different from other kids,
and I know you know why,
but the way you look at me,
makes me want to cry.

I know you don't want me,
you never will,
but that won't stop me,
I'm fighting a battle that's only uphill.

I have been here almost all of my life,
I have seen kids come and go.
Every time someone comes they line us up,
as if it's one big dumb show.
I don't know what you expect of me,
all I know is you want the perfect child,
I can't read or write as well as the others,
I don't have a perfect smile.

I know you don't want me,
you never will,
but that won't stop me,
I'm fighting a battle that's only uphill.

When people come,
they look at me,
and judge me by the outside.
They don't really care how I am
on the inside.

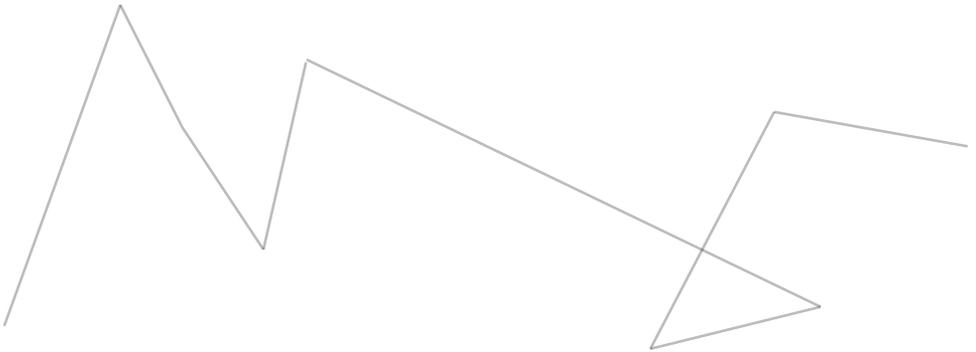
I am more than just that kid
that looks a little funny.
I know that the down syndrome
will cost a little money.
But don't think about that,
think about all the nice features I have.
I am nice, I like to play outside,
I'm friendly and I like to play that game
where you seek and hide.

I know you don't want me,
you never will,
but that won't stop me,
I'm fighting a battle that's only uphill.

By now you're leaving with my friend,
all of us kids are heading to our rooms,
everyone starts chatting with their friends,
and I'm the only one that can't resume.
You make it so hard for me
to show the real me.
But I will do it,
because I know I'm great.

I know you don't want me,
you never will,
but that won't stop me,
I'm fighting a battle that's only uphill.

Aves Mocek, *Grade 7*
Sheridan School

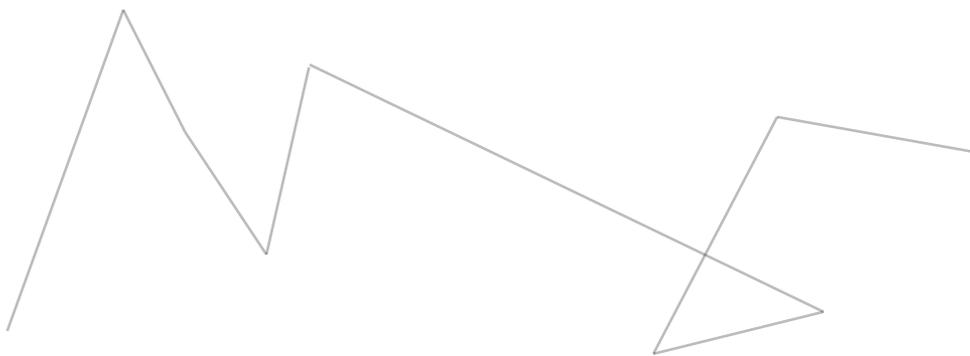


COLORLESS SKY

I woke up in my nest,
and it was covered in snow.
The whole backyard was covered in snow
and the sky was a black and white movie.
It was colorless and gray.
The boy in his house was staring outside,
it seems that he is thinking the same as me.
The sky is better blue.

Yann-Cooper Atchole, *Grade 8*

Parkmont School



BEHIND THE SWAN

First Position

Skiping around the dirt path in an exotic
European country.
Everyone is inside on the warm night.
She's too busy kicking up dirt while she dances.

Second Position

In her favorite old jeans as she comes home
from school. It starts to sprinkle, rain, pour.
Her rebel urges her to stay out.
She's no traitor, she's soaked and doesn't care.
She twirls, dreaming
of the day she'll be famous.

Third Position

Feet cross in starry pointe shoes,
feeling like a queen in her black silken dress
with feathers and a huge tulle skirt. On cue, she
becomes the black swan as she flies.

Fourth Position

The flower in her braid flutters. White lace
surrounds her. He
puts his arm around her and whispers
in her ear. She giggles, he smiles.
Right now, she's a queen.
The White Swan, queen of the world.

Colleen Zeugin, *Grade 6*
Sidwell Friends School

I'M SORRY, RAVEN

I smiled when you got in trouble
for jumping on my bed, but
I had just made the bed
and you messed it up.

Sometimes I don't wake up
at 1pm when you try to wake me.
You need your sleep and
you get on my nerves.

I didn't make your cereal
this morning before school.
I ate the cereal last night
because I was starving.

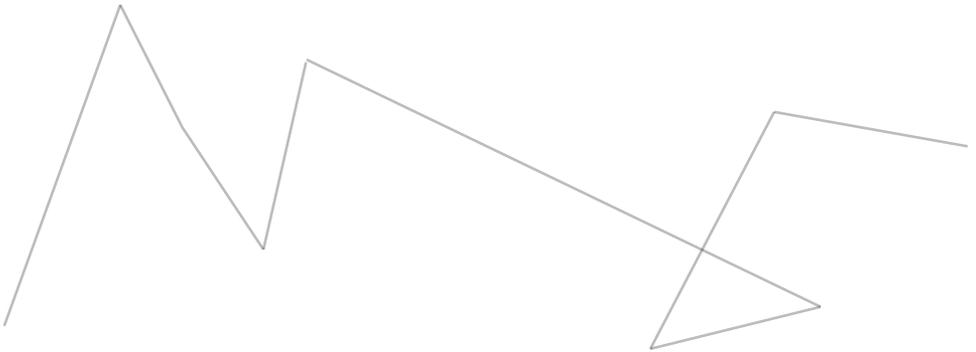
You screamed "Mommy" when I scared you
by slithering out from behind the wall.
It was funny, and when you grow up
I'll bet you won't be scared anymore.
Actually, you probably still will be scared.

Donte Harris, *Grade 8*
Charles Hart Middle School

FAMILY

We fight like wild dogs
We love like love birds
We stay together like a pack
We never take any crap
We always have each other's back
We family
We got history
From South Carolina to DC
To new members it's a mystery
Why do we hate each other
We family
We will never want to see each other tumble down
Like we going to always be around
We Family
We Family

Ariel Ham, *Grade 10*
Parkmont School



THE MOON AND THE OWL

Sitting so softly,
in the night sky
Wishing to be seen,
do you notice me?
My face pale, yet bright
I would be glad to be in anyone's sight.

Suddenly, a shadow passes me,
followed by a flapping of wings.
What are you?
An "oh" sound you sing...

You perch on a branch,
highest that there is
Are you trying to reach me?
I yearn for your company.

Staring up into me,
I stare down at you
As far as we may be,
our connection seems to tighten.

Enlighten me,
with your grace
Soar, my love,
into my presence.

The peace you bring,
you are my yang,
and I am your ying.

Andrea Sarai, *Grade 11*
Capital City Public Charter School

FEAR

When she was six, she was afraid of the monster
in her closet.

She feared the demons that lurked in the darkness
of the unknown, the unseen.

She hid from the demons in the light and let the
shadows fall behind her.

She escaped her demons.

When she was sixteen, she was afraid of the darkness
in people.

She was afraid of the terrible real demons that made
men do the terrible things they did to her.

She tried to hide from the demons, but she was no
longer afraid of the unknown
but that which she did know, that which was too
real to escape.

When she was twenty she was afraid of herself.

She feared the demons within her that kept her a
prisoner in her own mind, in her own life, possessing
her thoughts and incarcerating her in the dark abyss
her life had sunk into.

She tried to escape her demons, but as she ran, they
would attack her, pursuing her relentlessly until she
spiraled back into the dark business she tried to escape.

The shadows closed in on her, the darkness engulfing
her in its ruthless clutch,

devouring her. It clawed away at her substance, tearing
away at her soul until her feeling of utter hopelessness
and despondence made her withdraw and sink back
into the suffocating darkness, until the pain, and the
guilt, and the guile, and the cold, thick, persuasive,
inescapable darkness became so unbearable it brought
a gun to her head, and she squeezed the trigger.

Her demons consumed her.

Anitra Conover, *Grade 8*

Maret School

DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND

Hollow streets
of mist and black sparkles

Darkness hidden
between the cracks
within the ground

Haunted graveyards
with missing tombstones
and engravings

The moon halfway lit,
its silhouette invisible

Mirrors with
no reflections,
only a one-way view

Magic in the trees
glistening, abandoned
by leaves

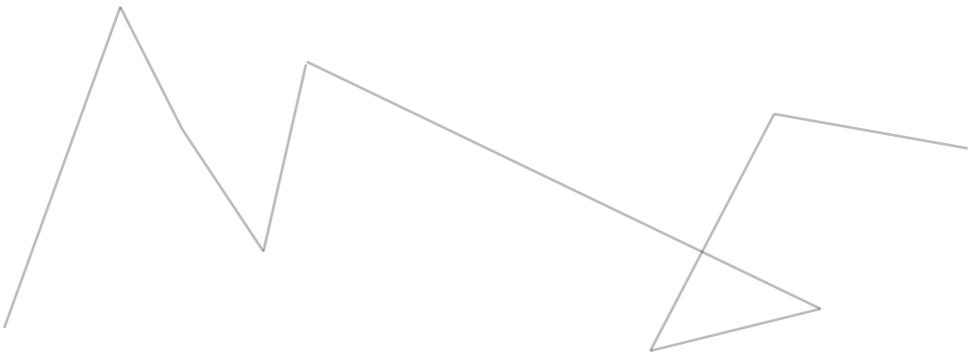
Howling gremlins
and echoes
of creepy laughter

Costumes with
glitter and
glowing daisies

Devil horns, devil thoughts
Trying to break in the night,
like a pair of new shoes

It has started:
Halloween,
the devil
awaits you

Kayla Rosemond, *Grade 7*
Charles Hart Middle School



THE WHITE BEAST

The beast is coming, the beast is cunning
With a roar so loud even the wind runs away
If only if only he'll let you have a longer day
His chilly breath is so cold you'll feel like you'll freeze
He breathes in a long but soft breeze
The beast is coming, you need to get running

The beast is coming, the beast is scary
His footsteps leave fields destroyed
If only if only he'll observe life which he would have enjoyed
His tears are white and soft
He leaves towns with his depression and tears aloft
The beast is coming, you better be wary

The beast is coming, why is everyone outside?
He destroys everyone's shops
He destroys everyone's crops
He destroys everyone's homes
Even the little guardian gnomes
Everyone quickly, come hide inside!

The beast is coming, his tears are piling!
You will die outside!
Quickly quickly come inside!
Do not play with that tear
They will only make you fear
The beast is coming, why are they smiling?

The beast is coming, he just spoke
The kids asked if he was named
The beast answered as if he was tamed
Winter is coming, Winter is coming,
better get your cloak!

Phong-Le Nguyen, *Grade 10*
Capital City Public Charter School

WHO YOU ARE

She was a girl
Like a diamond in the rough.
He was a boy,
Who wasn't sure life was enough.
We all have days,
When we feel so insecure,
So out of place,
Like a wave that's off its shore.

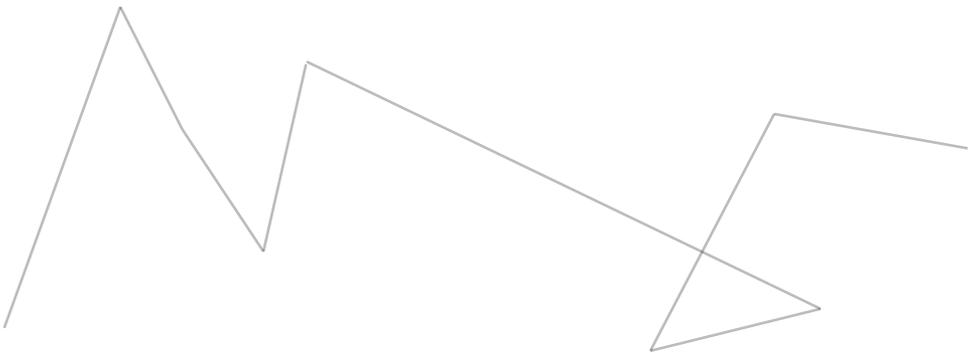
But when you fall, get up
It's not the time to give up,
So throw your hands up.
Because it's time to show the world,
Who you are,
Please don't care what people say.
In the end, your life is gonna go your own way
It'll be okay.
Because it's time to show the world,
Who you are.

She walked alone,
Not even one by her side.
He asked for help,
No one cared or even tried.
We all have days
When we're just not ourselves,
We try to find our way,
What's right or left, we can barely tell.

But when you fall get up
It's not the time to give up
So throw your hands up

Because it's time to show the world
Who you are
Please don't care what people say.
In the end, your life is gonna go your own way
It'll be okay
In the end, your life is gonna go your own way
It'll be okay
Because it's time to show the world,
Who you are.

Ariana Caldwell, Grade 10
Academia de la Recta Porta



WHO I AM

I'm crazier than Ke\$ha
'cause what she says I do
she thinks her words are glitter, she's lying
when I speak sapphires and diamonds
are dancing out my mouth
because I will stand up for anybody
even if I hate them

I'm badder than Miley Cyrus
she thinks she's hardcore – ha!
I have been through the darkness
and always come out brighter
that's more hardcore than she'll ever be

I'm scarier than Bloody Mary
people get creeped out when they see her
they're really blown away when I smile
I'm so beautiful that it's scary
like the sun flashing in your eyes

I'm funnier than any comedian
They just tell corny jokes
I laugh over everything
even when I make a mistake
I laugh through hard times to get me through

I'm bolder than Wonder Woman
when you see her she needs help from a man
She bursts through walls
I burst through memories of steel

I never will let anyone bring me down!

Amanda Hanlon, *Grade 8*
Parkmont School

GLOVES

My gloves are gone, hidden in some forgotten corner
at the back of the closet, or in the bottom of that drawer
where unpaired socks and mismatched mittens
confer to plot
their petty insurrections. The insubordinate articles
go un-punished
for now, because the cereal has been consumed,
the shoes tied, and
the heavy gears of schedule must grind forward
unimpeded.

The air has teeth this morning, little sharp fangs
that sink into cheeks and noses and un-gloved hands.
Beneath my bike wheels, frozen leaves snap and crackle
like logs
as they burn in a fire, a roaring fire that fills the hearth
and sends waves of heat into the room, warmer even
than a full, heavy mug of chocolate.

The blare of a car horn shatters my daydream
into fragments. I edge to the side and yield the lane
to an impatient man with the unimaginable luxury
of a heated car *and* gloves. A profane gesture
comes to mind,
but even the heat of anger is not enough
to force the stiffness from my hands.

Evan Honnold, *Grade 12*
Sidwell Friends School

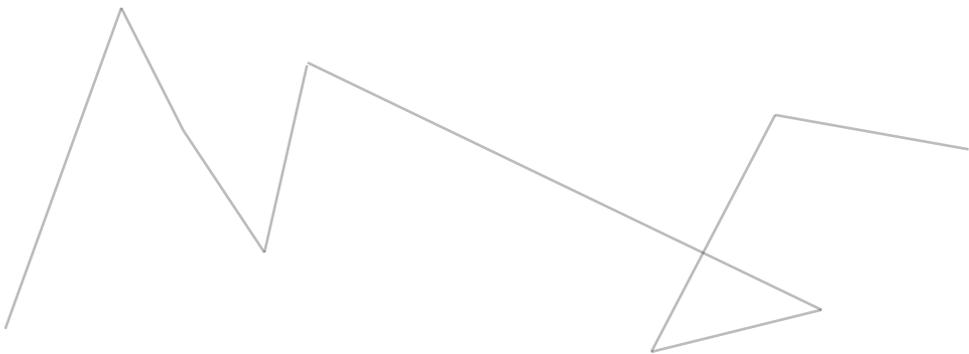
GUN WAR

I believe in war
every man should fight
men should fight with no guns
all men should fight with love and words.

I believe love is stronger than guns
that life is all about money, guns, and getting rich
that no one knows how to love
but love is stronger if everyone holds each other

I believe that there is no freedom
life is all about jail
I feel if we learned how to love
we would free them
everyone fights each other
because people are different
Love will free us all!

Seané Hamiel, *Grade 9*
National Collegiate Preparatory Public
Charter High School



UNTITLED

The air around us resonates in undulating scattershots
and shaken earth.

Two men mutter drivels to each other,
Perspiring with heavy sweat drowning their last cries
as a surprise grenade welcomes a severed leg and half a
head before my feet.

I plunge to my knees,
And hunger begins
And I'm drained, with tears blending with the blood
on my numb cheekbones.

I plummet to the ground and the grass entangles my
sight in a comfortable darkness.
I'm safe now.
I'm safe now.

But ahead, I can hear four men shrivel in a fire.
So, I firmly cover my ears with my quivering hands.

I turn onto my back, opening my eyes and ears,
smelling the sap-ridden mandragoras and elegant acacia
which hang pleasantly above my head.
“What a sight,” I murmur to myself.
And I spot two finches gladly chirping away atop the
canopy of a katalpa.

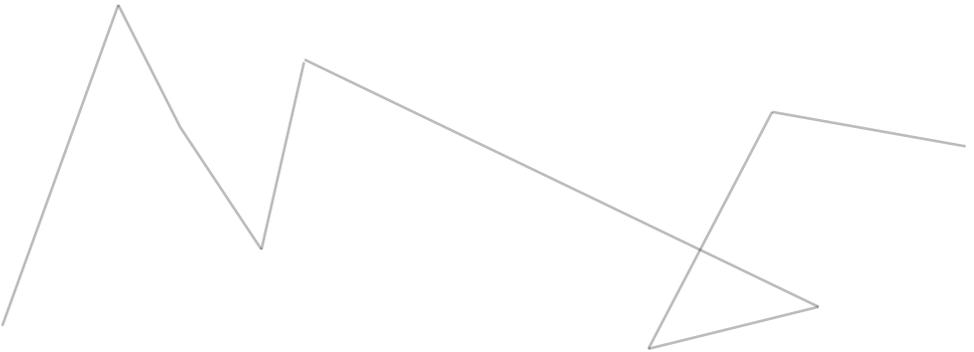
Below, five retreating men violently stagger to the earth
with blank eyes and bleeding holes in their chests.

Daniel Kawecki, *Grade 11*
Parkmont School

**LETTER FROM THOMAS JEFFERSON TO
BENJAMIN BANNEKER – AUGUST 30, 1791**
A Found Poem

SIR, –
your letter contained
more than nature has given
to black men,
the appearance of them is
degraded in America.
I can add with truth,
that no body wishes
to see a good condition
both of their body & mind;
it ought to be neglected.
I have taken the liberty
of your society, because
I considered your whole
colour a most obed't
humble serv't.

Matt Buckley, *Grade 12*
Gonzaga College High School



TO MY MOTHERLAND, ETHIOPIA

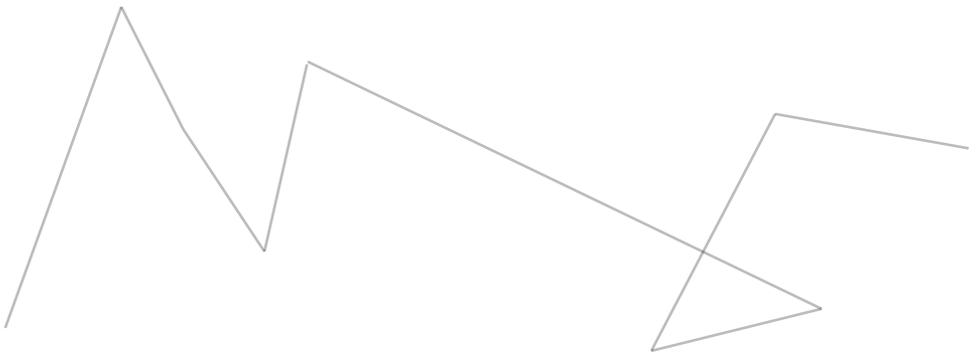
Your name is precious
but people don't see that
You are a land of discoveries
Lucy, the first hominid skeleton
The Simien Mountain National Park with
a home to endangered species
the dramatic skyline of the rocky peaks,
the waterfall thundering down to the bottom
making a majestic sound
the clouds hovering over the top of the mountains
with bright light shining through
gracefully represents the art of nature
but people still don't see that
you are a land with love and peace
the harmony and beauty of your people –
all in the shadow.

What do they think when they think about you?
They think about poverty,
They think about famine, diseases, drought,
But I don't blame them
because that is what they see and hear on TV.
Yes, it is part of your history
but there is more to you than that.

You are rich with diversity,
variety of languages and cultures
your coffee, traditions, holidays
your delicious foods, kitfo and injera
your flag symbolizing togetherness of your people
your dedicated athletes
your diversity is what makes you, you.

Even though I am not there at this moment,
I promise I will make you proud
I will not forget about you.

Mesgana Dagnachew, *Grade 10*
Capital City Public Charter School



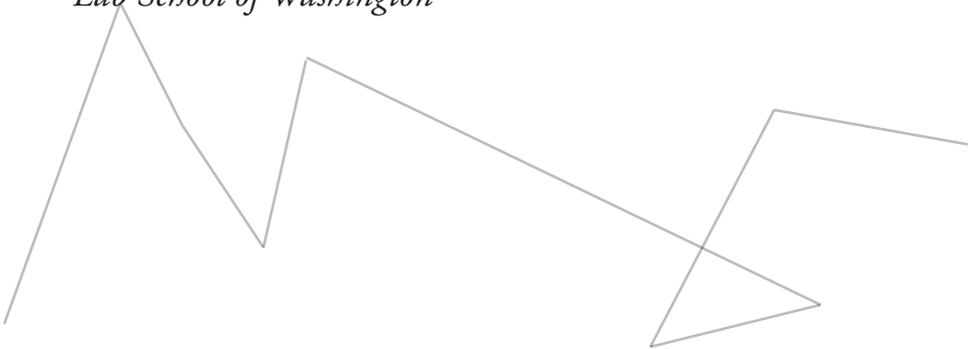
IMPRINT

I am hopeful and understanding
I wonder what the future will be like
I hear someone calling my name in the distance
I see me in my dreams
I want to go there
I am hopeful and understanding

I pretend to be a world-class traveler
I feel worldly
I touch the Eiffel Tower
I worry that when I leave no one will remember me
I cry for that reason
I am hopeful and understanding

I understand that I don't always get what I want
I say that what is needed is different for each person
I dream that someday we will all know true happiness
I try to be there for everyone
I hope that I can make a change
I am hopeful and understanding

Midge Costello, Grade 7
Lab School of Washington



NOT THE SAME

Look to the people of my past I'm not the same
Not the same little youngin afraid of his own shadow
Whimpering up in a ball like a newborn puppy
Not the same accident-prone kid tripping over my own shoes
Like I'm tripping over my words.
I'm far different than I was in the past

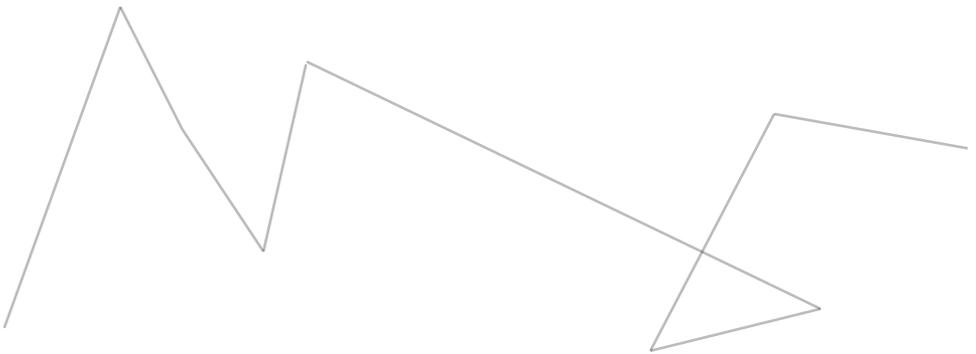
I started chillin' with the wrong crews, playing around
with these punks
And my heart turned pitch black
People try to say they know me, but nah, you ain't
know this me
Stop obsessing over that old me, cause what I've done
ain't pretty
That kid was gone and a sinner was born

Now I'm not afraid to throw down, I'm not afraid of
these wannabes
Frankly, I wasn't afraid of death anymore
I learned to embrace everything from racist people I ran into
To the people who try to fake on me, I've seen it all
But I ain't do it all though
Cause reality hit me hard and I've never been the same since.

Now I'm working for a better life
Working for a better future
I'm burdened with my demons from the past
But I'm not going to let them slow my grind
Climbing to the top with each and every passing day, hour,
minute and second
So yeah, only 13 and ruined my past, but I'm working to a
Better future

So try and judge me and I'll tell you I'm not the same kid
from the past
I'm so different, far gone from that life,
But I can still say I was about that life
So out of weak kid to sinner to a now complex soul
Dealing with his past demons.

Jared Adams, *Grade 7*
Parkmont School



WASICHU

Wokova, why do you cry?
Wokova, did you lose something?
Who stained your war paint with tears?
Was it Wasichu?
Wokova, why do you grieve?
Where are your colorful plumes,
And the stories on your tipis?
Were they washed away with blood?
Wokova, why do you slouch?
Where has your indomitable pride gone?
Who broke your spirit?
Was it Wasichu?
Wokova, why are you lonely?
Where is your black land?
Where are the hardy buffalo?
What is that mound yonder?
Wokova, why are you silent?
Why can't I hear your songs?
Why can't I see you dance?
Was it Wasichu?
Child that asks,
My people are gone,
My fires are no longer warm,
My pride is yoked,
My home is stolen,
My feet are tired,
My buffalo is dead,
My heart it bleeds,
My memory is destroyed,
Why?
It was Wasichu.

Saadiq Garba, *Grade 12*
Saint Albans School

SHE USE TO WORRY

She use to worry about graduating, not now
She's worried about smoking pot
She use to worry about being pretty
Now she's worried about popping Mollys and Triple Cs
And she use to worry about being a young teen
Now she's worried 'bout drinking Lean
She use to worry about going to college
Now she's having sex with no knowledge
She use to worry about respecting mommy and daddy
Now she's worried about selling her body
Everything back then was good
Now just arguing – misunderstood
She use to say, "Daddy, come home!"
Now she's somewhere hurt and stoned
She use to say, "Mommy, take care of me don't
Let me go!"
Now she's with a 21-year-old
She use to say, "Please brother, help me;
he's beating on me!"
Now she's with him popping Ecstasy
She use to say, Big sis, help; he's selling me!"
Now she's somewhere with a destroyed body

Emily Bonilla, *Grade 9*
Youth Services Center

GROWING UP

There is a time in your life
while you're still trying to find who you are
with no weapons to arm you, no sword or knife
Your life feels like an open jar

Trying to find your passion,
Not knowing where to go
Trying to deal with not being common
And being teased for it though

Not everybody is similar
All unique in their own way
Not knowing whether to be who they are
or who they were
Whether they are so different they should just castaway

Finding a way to cope
With all that's going on
Trying to find a ray of hope
Trying to feel they're not just a pawn

Feeling the pressure to be perfect all the time
Can't make out a balance
Can't figure out why you just can't be fine
You don't feel like you show excellence

Like everybody else
You try your hardest
But you're never happy with yourself
Out of everybody you feel like the lowest

Whether people look up to you or not

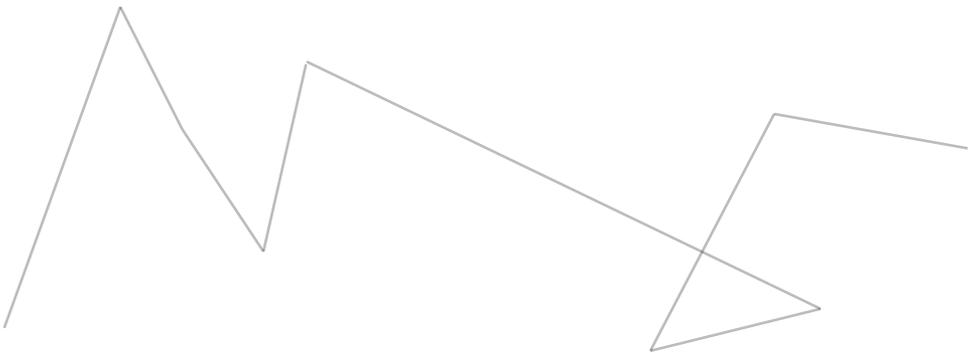
Being a kid is pretty stressful
You always feel like you're caught
Fighting to stay energized and hopeful

You need people to keep pushing you
Give you self esteem
These friends will try to make you not feel blue
They try to help you against the current
pushing you back downstream

Everybody is changing
It can start to feel awkward
You might need some help asking for help
You keep moving forward

Just remember it's fine to be you
Just keep on persevering
And you'll make it through!

Celia Waldman, Grade 6
Maret School



HOPE IS A BIRD

Trudging through the waters of today, carrying the past
on my back.

The large burden weighs me down, and I feel as if I can carry
on no longer.

The weight on my spine gets heavier, the water seems to
turn to molasses,
and the tides strengthen, as if trying to keep me from
taking another step,
warning me of what lies ahead.

I want to sit in the dark river, let the water wash over
my face and engulf
me, dragging me down to its depths.

I can nearly feel the current push against my body,
the crisp coolness
relieving my pain, healing my wounds.

I want to give up.

I can't.

I see the future shining before me.
The heavenly light surrounds me, lures me, pierces through me,
then fills
the gaping void it left behind with hope.

Hope is a bird.

It lifts me up, lessens the burden on my back, and with gentle
wings, wipes
the tears from my face.

I still must carry my sorrow, my grief, my sadness, but it makes
me
stronger.

And I carry on.

Lilah Silverman, *Grade 7*
Edmund Burke School

MY OTHER SIDE

You know that burning flow
going to your heart?
That's me, leaning all over your pride;

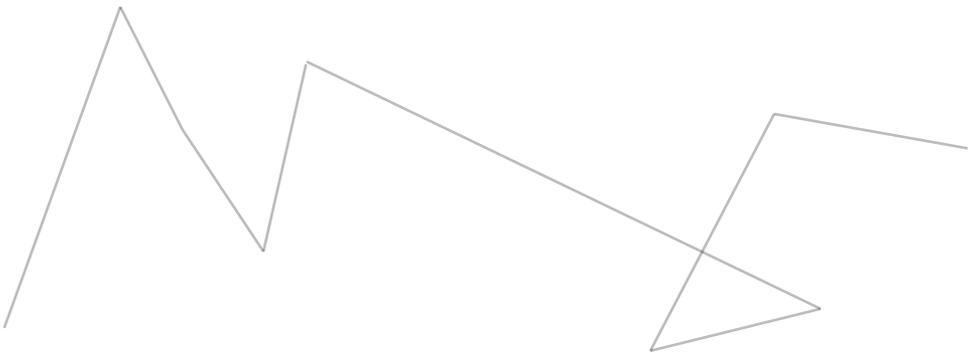
I'm skipping through your happiness
I'm winning all your games,

I'm gliding into my fresh new year
while fighting all your smiles.

It's storming outside
you want to know why?

I'm bouncing in and out of your life
You are falling for me to rise.

Shannell Jones, *Grade 8*
Charles Hart Middle School



SPRING

the street is quiet and peaceful.
sunlight floods the new green grass,
the newly bloomed flowers.
children shout somewhere far away
their echoes ring and bounce
off the small brick houses
with their neat white painted front porches
the birds start to chirp faintly,
spring has arrived.
the Tree stands tall,
his leaves rustling in the cool breeze,
spreads his branches wide.
like a giant
standing silhouetted against the bright sun.
looking down at a beautiful land.
he is old,
many years he has stood here
and the Tree will stand
mighty and immense
blooming,
then letting the petals
slowly float into the spring breeze.

Jimena Faz Garza, Grade 6
Sidwell Friends School

UNDISCOVERED LOVE

My life is a neverending pain
But when I look at you I seem to gain life again
You make everything seem all right
Maybe it's because you just shine so bright

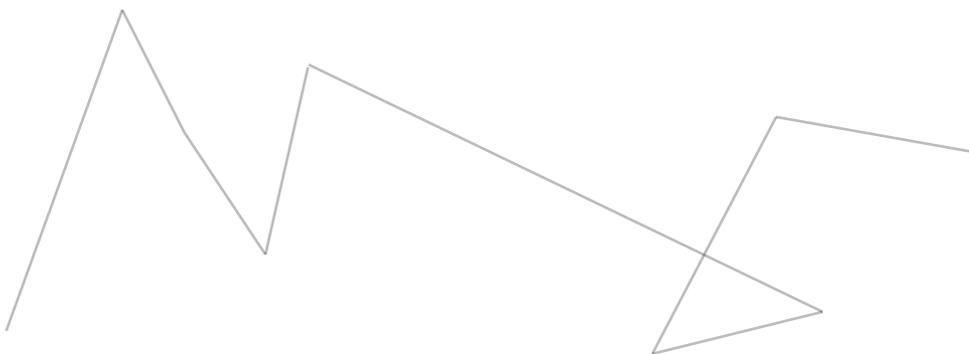
I've always been afraid of affection
But loving you is like a wonderful infection

I never thought I'd love someone as much as you
I'm stuck on you like paper on glue

I don't think you seem to realize
Just how special you are in my eyes

I love you,
I love you,
I do
If only you felt the same way, too

Soliyana Tefera, *Grade 6*
Parkmont School



THE LADDER

Climbing up a ladder
Made of spaces, lines
When I hold you give off a ringing sound
A half and quarter a whole –
however long I hold on – until I move on
Sharply and quickly hanging on – and pushing up
I can hang from two bars – and slur the ringing
I can jump up three bars
Fall down two
I start to ascend quickly
At a crescendo pace – tingling and ringing faster
Climbing up and sideways
Diagonally – time signature and clef slipping out of sight
I reach to places taller than mountains
Never reached before
I thought I had conquered the ladder
Then out of the blank
Lines appear
I continue to climb – I start to squeak
I do not think I could get higher
I look down – and see below me all I have climbed
At the end of my life – full of the piece
I jump – and fall, at a diminuendo rate – my voice
getting deeper the farther I fall

Q. L. Lehrman, *Grade 6*
Sidwell Friends School

LADY MACBETH

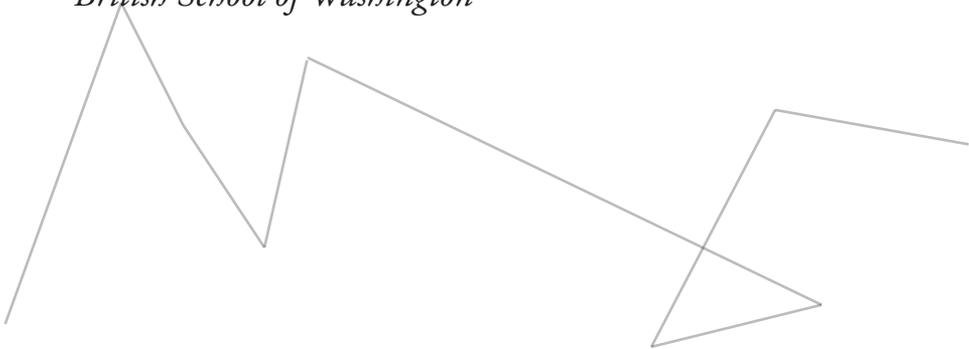
Fresh from the fight my innocent flower
returns. Riding high on the steed of praise,
Thoughts cannot nurture the seed of power
while the mind basks in glorified haze.

Yet fear not my dear, your wife knows what's
required. The mechanism needed to unlock
your deepest dark desire. Behind every man
who's boldly dreamed
is a woman
who's silently schemed.

I saw at first you felt unnerved.
That I did not cringe, flinch at my own designs.
But what is treason when compared
to a man without a spine?

Oh the only way you'll ever be a king,
is if you listen to the woman
whispering in the wings.

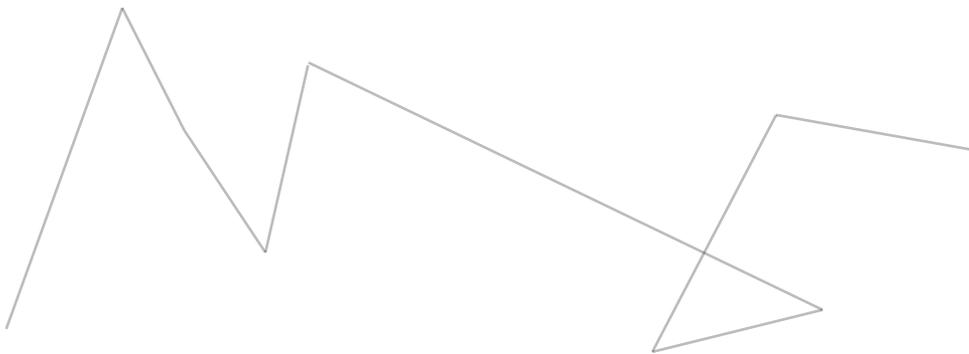
Poppy Noble, *Grade 12*
British School of Washington



SWAG

Swag, yeah she got that swag
The type that carries a Chanel bag
Girls want to be her
Boys want to be in her
She is the Beyonce of Destiny's Child
She is the Justin Timberlake of N'Sync
You bow your head down when your eyes meet
But what you do not know is she lives her life on the street
Swag, no place to call home
Swag, I wonder what she did for that bag
You do not know her, you know of her
You notice her but she doesn't want to be noticed
She is afraid that you will take notes on her,
just like her social worker
The world has hurt her, just because she got that swag
Judging a book by its cover, no one has ever loved her
But she still has swagger

Jennifer Omekam, Grade 11
Benjamin Banneker Academic High School

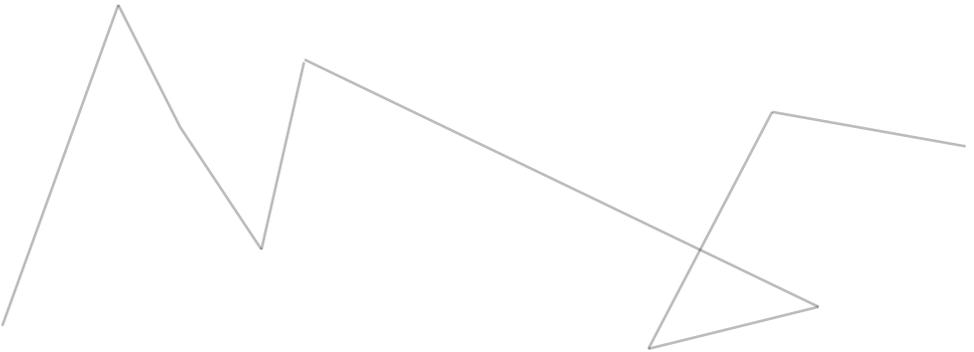


STARLIGHT

Under the gleam of the moon
Starlight rains from heaven
The delicate dribble of the brook
Echoes against the black night
A smear of stardust smudged
From the tears I've wept
The elaborate shimmer of
Midnight's call
Whispering in the wind
The sweet scent of pine
Daring to dance
With the shifting gusts of breezy air
Encrusted in a sugary sap
Foreign to the crisp, clean
Whistle of night air
The babble of the creek
Like smooth ribbon
Smashing against the polished pebbles
Aligning the refreshing rush of water
my reflection holds secrets
From the dark dash of sky
Destiny hidden behind the glassy ripples
The rustling of the leaves
Crackling in the silence
Spiny twigs and clacking branches
Knock against the tangled thicket
Of harshly twisted trunks
Leaning as an arc of branches above
I lift an orchid from the forest floor
Shadowed by the swaying trees
Its velvety petals
Coated in a ghostly cream of glossy white

The mellow purple shade, eating at the clean blanket
The powdery fluff of fresh pollen
Draining from the canopy
Illuminating the drowsy fog with a glistening glow
A warm tingle is sent shivering up my spine
I turn, and through the crevices of the canopy
The sky revealed
Shimmering gold rays of light
Rising with celestial grace
As the sparkling beams
Burst through the leaves
I know
This is where I belong

Christin Clyburn, Grade 6
Sidwell Friends School



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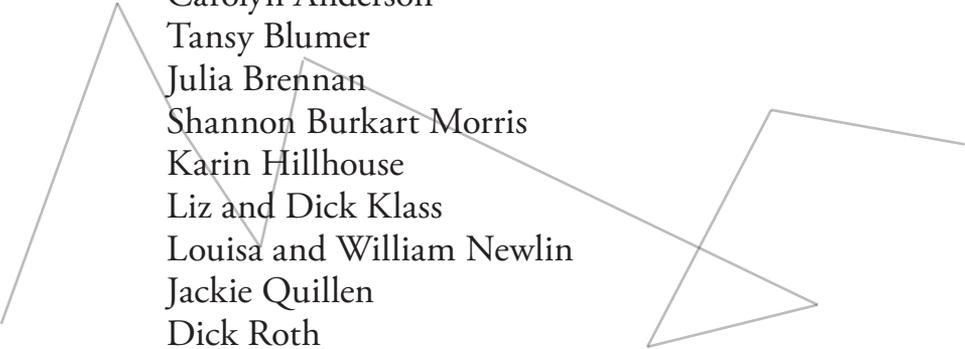
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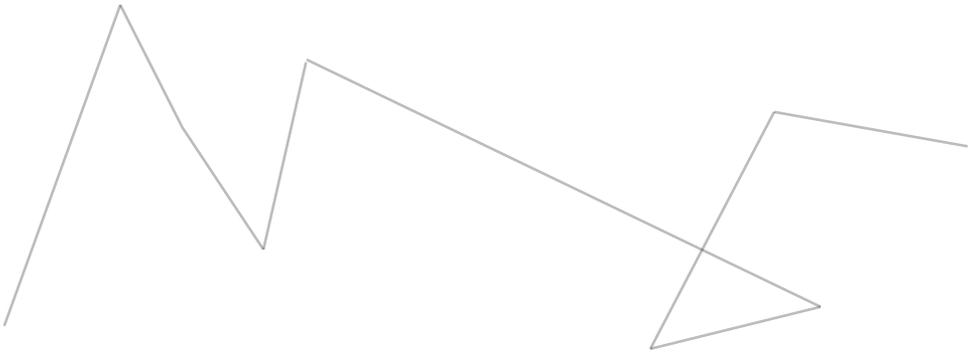
Jacqui Michel and David Weisman

Judy Lentz for Videography

Emily Rampone for Cupcakes by Curly & Co.

Cari Rudd and Parkmont's Garden

Class for Flowers



The Parkmont Poetry Festival extends sincere thanks to our 2014 Judges:

Ruth Forman is the author of three award-winning books: poetry collections *We Are the Young Magicians* (Beacon, 1993) and *Renaissance*, (Beacon, 1997), and children's book *Young Cornrows Callin Out the Moon* (Children's Book Press, 2007). She is the recipient of the Barnard New Women Poets Prize, The Pen Oakland Josephine Miles Literary Award, The Durfee Artist Fellowship, the National Council of Teachers of English Notable Book Award, and recognition by The American Library Association. She provides writing workshops at schools and universities across the country and abroad, and has presented in forums such as the United Nations, the PBS series *The United States of Poetry* and National Public Radio. Ruth is a former teacher of creative writing with the University of Southern California and June Jordan's Poetry for the People program at UC Berkeley. Her latest collection is *Prayers Like Shoes* (2009) on Whit Press. When not writing and teaching, she practices a passion for martial arts: classical Yang family style tai chi chuan, tai chi sword, bo staff and karate. Ms. Forman currently lives in Washington, DC.

Regie Cabico's work appears in over 30 anthologies including *Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Café*, *Spoken Word Revolution*, *Chorus & The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry*. He co-edited *Poetry Nation: A North American Anthology of Fusion Poetry* and was guest editor for *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*. He has shared the stage with Patti Smith, Allen Ginsberg and through Howard Zinn's *Portraits Project* at NYU, has performed with Stanley Tucci, Jesse Eisenberg & Lupe Fiasco.

Faye Moscovitz is a professor of English and Creative Writing at George Washington University where she teaches a course each spring called *Jewish Literature Live*, named by *Time Magazine* as one of the 20 "Hottest Seats in the Classroom." She was Director of Middle School at Edmund Burke from 1974-1986 and still keeps in touch with many of her Burke students via Facebook. Faye is author of the books *A Leak in the Heart*, *Whoever Finds This: I Love You*,

And the Bridge is Love (recently reissued by Feminist Press), and Peace in the House. She is also editor of Her Face in the Mirror: Jewish Women on Mothers and Daughters. Her poems, essays and short stories have appeared in dozens of venues including many anthologies. For several years she wrote commentaries for “All Things Considered” on National Public Radio.

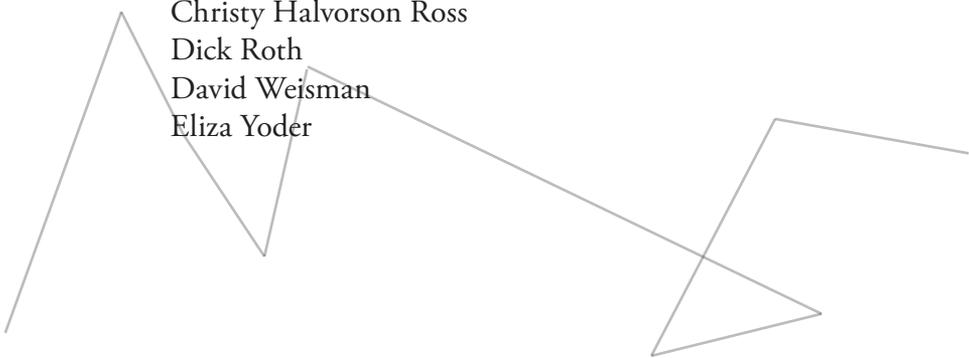
An additional debt of thanks to **Ron McClain**, Head of Parkmont School and Founder of the Parkmont Poetry Festival; the Parkmont staff, student and parent volunteers; and **Sharan Strange**, Festival Master of Ceremonies. Sharan is the author of Ash, a collection of poems.

We are grateful to our 2014 design team:

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Finally, we wish to thank our 2014 Parkmont School Board of Trustees:

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PARKMONT SCHOOL

Parkmont is a small private school serving middle school students in grades 6-8 and upper school students in grades 9-12. An educational community that fosters individual growth and enthusiasm for learning, Parkmont believes that there is nothing more basic to the development of a person than a positive sense of self-esteem. This respect for the creative energies and contributions of young people is the driving force behind the Poetry Festival and many other school activities. Parkmont's Internship program puts students in offices, shops and organizations around the city to learn practical work skills. At school, students participate in all-school meetings that focus on ethical and practical problems confronting their community and engage in a vibrant, hands-on curriculum. Parkmont helps students to discover their talents and values. The Poetry Festival encourages students to give voice to their dreams and concerns.

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