

thirty  **fifth**

parkmont
poetry
festival

Poems by District of Columbia Students • Grades 6-12
SPONSORED BY PARKMONT SCHOOL, APRIL 29, 2017



“Thanks, thanks, and ever thanks,”

— WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

JUDY LENTZ spans the glorious 35-year life of the Parkmont Poetry Festival. In 1982 she and Ron McClain birthed the idea for this celebration of young voices in verse, and she tirelessly proceeded to tend it and enrich it since that day. For 25 years she served as Coordinator of the Festival, drawing in the finest poets in the region to judge the work, organizing student poetry readings at the long-gone but much-missed Olsson’s Bookstores, documenting the Festival on film, and transforming everyone she met with her infectious passion for young writers opening their minds and hearts onto the page. Judy has not ceased to shepherd and shape the event since she stepped down as Festival Coordinator after 25 illustrious years. As part of the Advisory Committee for the Friends of the Parkmont Poetry Festival, she continues to nurture and sustain this venture. We are awash in gratitude and love for her zealous efforts that keep these Festivals happening. We hope for another 35 years. At least.

Many thanks to

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:

Angela Ganey

Jean Gurman

Cille Kennedy

Judy Lentz

Jacqui Michel

Amy Waldrop

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 35 years of spotlighting and sharing these students' talents and their unique perspectives on their worlds. We received over 500 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.

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Immigrant Song

My Great Grandfather and namesake, along with his siblings, was forced to leave his home in Ukraine on a day's notice in order to escape religious persecution. He would never see his parents again. Eventually, he came to America (as an immigrant) and started a family, as well as a successful business in Buffalo, New York.

I fled home
as a chorus of God's wrath rumbled closer,
bellowing their hymn of fissured families
My song
became rhythmic migration.

I longed for a breath of freedom
beneath the light of a golden lamp.

It is here,
where the refuse take refuge,
that my symphony
begins.

SAM GONSON, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Learning

He taught me to enjoy
The crunchy flakiness of pretzels,
the squishy insides of bratwurst,
The moistness and texture of Bundt cake.
He gave me the power to sneeze

Very

Very

Loud.

He made me half and half,
not only one culture and heritage
The first thing I saw was his face,
and even at a very young age I could see that he needed
a long nap.

The first thing I touched was his large fingers
The first thing I heard were his smooth, rhythmic lullabies
that he learned from his father.

Most of the senses I learned from him
He made me appreciate classical music,
When all my pals just yawned at it.

But he has learned from me too.
He now watches *Star Wars*,
and thoroughly immerses himself into the movies
Even though up until five years ago,
he couldn't stand the shooting and explosions.
When he wants to make a point,
He makes it with a stern face,
But always leaves room at the end for an ironic remark.
And when he does,
I smile a big toothy grin,
Knowing I have passed on my personality,
Attitude,
Generation,
To my father.

NICHOLAS DAUM, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Portrait of Eternity

Walking through a darkened hallway
with nothing but multiplied shadows
There lies a portrait framed with nothing
but enchanted sterling silver.
A portrait of vibrant rainbow flowers,
stained with a bitter ink
overflowing the petals.
It is the fragment of an eternity of misery
lasting forever.
Grabbing a candle illuminating the portrait
I burn it.
It's blazing but I walk away,
unfocused on the fact that it's on fire
and not damaged,
unfocused on the massive flames
consuming the shadows,
only focused on walking away
as a puppet who controls her ventriloquist.
As I exit, I turn around
to the burning mansion.
I leave a rose in front of the door
wilting itself away.
“End your suffering, little rose...
This burning house ended mine...”

CHRISTA MADIKAEGBU, GRADE 6
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

The House Where I Was Born

The house where I was born
Is the sweetest place ever
It's amazing that I still live there too
It's sad when you receive the news
that you will be moving soon
The memories in that house like
When you took your first steps
and your first word too!!
My twelve years in that house
was the best. Like having cookouts
and going to the pool. Can't you
believe that I learned how to swim
there too! I will never forget of
how many funny memories and the
bloody ones too. Oh Lord and the
times when the police came too.
It's a loving house, and almost
most of the family has lived there
So it's going to be really sad when
we move from the
house where I
was born.

ESTER VENTURA, GRADE 7
CALVARY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

An Elegy to Innocence

I remember
the days of freedom when
the only times I knew
were breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
The sun was
the only clock we needed.

I remember
dangerous journeys down the stairs
intrigued by the glow of a screen
that my parents watched,
and confused by the beeps, not yet
knowing
the Morse Code of censorship.

I remember
I trusted my friends
because *why* wouldn't I?
I was what they were,
and they were what I was.
A kid.

Now I try
to remember clear skied summer days,
but they are clouded with time.
A schedule crams my head,
forcing out times
too simple.

Now I try
to remember the taste of soap
when I hear those
words.
But my tongue is numb
to the words I never heard.

Now I try
To remember all the friends
that are no longer.
Years weigh me down, and I forget
faces, places. The times when I was
A kid.

BRIAN DOOLAN, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Doctor

It's like I'm five again.

That's how you're treating me.

I may be quiet,

but that isn't always a good thing.

You wouldn't listen to someone

if they constantly yell orders.

Nor would you listen to someone

who tells you how to live your life.

I know I'm being hypocritical.

It hurts me to say that

and it's not something physical.

Hear me out though, before you chat.

I think you're amazing

but you don't know me.

I don't want the judgments

that come out of your mouth in thought out phrasing.

I don't want the pity stare.

The one you use to show you understand.

I don't want the butterfly touch.

The one you use to prevent me from shattering.

I'm not in Elsewhere

and I'm not aging backwards.

I'm not five again

although I wish I was four.

ARSEMA GOSSAYE, GRADE 8
CENTER CITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL,
BRIGHTWOOD CAMPUS

My Eyes

I love my eyes.
Without them
I wouldn't be
able to see
where I am
going, like the
store, out to
eat, or amusement
parks. They look
at people and make
me hungry.

AMIR GREEN, GRADE 6
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Smile

Grandfather loved his
Family but it was hard
To tell, he was always
Serious and his aged
Face frowned constantly.

But sometimes when
My mother laughed at
My sister's joke or when
He spoke to grandmother,
He would smile.

His smile was one of pure
Love and adoration towards
Those he cherished and it filled
Them with warmth and comfort.
It's a shame he never smiled at me.

JEFF DJOYADHININGRAT, GRADE 12
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Am I alone?

Am I alone?
Or are there others somewhere?
The only noises I hear
Are the creaks and squeaks of my chair.

Am I alone?
I see shadows on the wall
The only movement I see while I'm
Waiting for someone to call.

Am I alone?
As I feel the floor
Shivers go up and down my spine
As I see the slightly open door.

Am I alone?
Or must I mend
But through this small crack
Is someone to call...friend.

FLETCHER CASSON, GRADE 11
CAPITAL CITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Worms

Why do you slither through the dirt
while it's raining?
Worms live in darkness.
They are not thrilling, just hardworking.
Why don't you have feathers to fly?
Smooth and slimy, through
the hook on a fishing rod, used as bait.
Little teeth bite through the organic material.
Why do you slither through the dirt
while it's raining?
The softness of your body
is fierce to my finger.
If the sun dries you up,
your innocence is gone forever.

TOMMY FRIDIE, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

bumblebees

Angry aubades

Heavy

Loud

They tower above me and I can't seem to hold my breath
to let them pass

My stomach feels sick

The noise gets louder

My chest can't stop beating and buzzing long enough for
me to breathe

The sunshine feels hot on my back but the water would
pull me down

So I settle for the sun

I'm feeling the sky on my bare skin

and the trees have more depth than a blanket of leaves
and bark

The trees are towers

mountains

And coliseums built and caving in together

The ground is made of stars if you pick the right pieces

If you follow lights and let your eyes weave through seas
of brown and green to find something that shines
under pressure

I don't pack pain in my punches
I am soft and forgiving
Flowers grow under my fingertips but
All you see is a weapon
Give me daisies in my hair and let me sleep
Let me murmur to the dawn
Melting syrup of a skyline
Sharp bodies and light air
Something soft
Something hated
Something helpful

Beds of pink and blue
Yellow blankets are warm in late morning sun
I'm drowning myself in pillows and sunlight
The hum of my movement sending vibration in the air
Tiers of green are all the same until you're small enough
to see them closely
I am soft
And light
But when bumblebees are only bumblebees
And men feel fury in their fingers
Sometimes bumblebees end up under boots

MARY KATE WILSON, GRADE 9
WASHINGTON LATIN PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Garden of Music

Butterflies flitter and flutter
At the light skip of the piano,
Making their way over the Amazon in search
Of Bromeliad nectar.

On the clouds command,
The trumpet and trombone perform their duet.
Rumbling thunder reverberating Qualibou over
The crystal Saint. Lucia Caribbean.

But the violin wails with such agony that the ground
Floods with tears into Bangladesh,
Washing El Niño inside out
Before it returns to a soft melodic hum.

A final flourish, the harp strums a minor scale
Notes rushing down Niagara Falls,
In a blur of harmony,
And culminating with rephrase
Of plucking
Like the wingbeats of a bluebird.

With melody of water scales, the
Kalimba
Udukkai,
Didjeridu,
Perform in one swaying symphony.

ANNA BRODY, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Humming Bird

A blur goes past my head
Its joyful colors flashing
Its tiny wings beating
Its up and down motions enchanting
The light catches its feathers
Lighting them up like fire
Changing colors from blue to magenta
Shimmering around my head
Stopping for nectar here and there
Pausing at nearby flowers
Then flies off again
Flashing fearlessly into the foliage

ELIZA OPPENHEIMER, GRADE 6
MARET SCHOOL

November

When the cold air blows in
Leaves age slowly exposing their colors
Gravity claiming life that earth produced
Animals nesting resting blemishing in the tree
Does the tree fall asleep with anticipation or with fear
Does it dream throughout its month long slumber
Does it tickle when baby squirrels learn how to walk along its
 strong branches
Does it want to be alone or in a grove
Trees dream of sunlight piping down on their rich leaves
Things we may never know

CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL, GRADE 8
PARKMONT SCHOOL

What it means to be latina

“Estadounidense?”

“Salvadorian?”

The first language I spoke was spanish

I dance to the beat of cumbia, bachata, merengue y salsa.

My hips move to the rhythm of

esa negra tiene tumbao ... Azucar!

A melody through my head

Because we're latinos

A mixture of una mujer poderosa

Y un hombre trabajador.

En mi sangre yo cargo darkness y anger

Mi anger comes from mi abuela

Anger because I wanna be loved

Anger because I wanna be known.

We come from Central America

Journeys of those who walked por los desiertos

Looking por una nueva vida.

Somos hispanos

Los que vienen de arroz con pollo

Y pupusas de frijol y queso

A mixture of color, language y culture.

Somos los indocumentados

Pero proud.

ESTEFANY HERNANDEZ, GRADE 11
CAPITAL CITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Dear Mr. White Man

Why do you hate me?
Is it because my skin's a couple shades darker?
Or is it because I am what you think is wrong?

You walk around living a privileged life
While we, minorities, work as many as three jobs to live.

You wake, stretch, dress in the morning without a care.
I wake up thinking, "How will my family get by?"
Money walks around with you, Mr. White Man
While my empty wallet cries.
I dream a dream dull with struggle.
What I wouldn't do to trade lives with you.
But though you know my struggle
You still call me out of my name.
You don't want me in your school, your neighborhood.
You don't want me drinking your water, safe water.

How dare you treat me like I'm less than you?
You and I bleed the same blood,
Breathe the same air,
Walk the same earth.

But you know what?
Though it's true my life has been harder,
It's you I feel sorry for.
'Cause this society has left you blind.

JASON LEIVA MARTINEZ, GRADE 8
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Anger

Anger had fiery red hair
And obsidian black eyes
That were filled
with hot,
red
sparks.

A single word,
Could light a fire
And that would burn down
an entire forest.

She wore a black leather jacket
And a pair of ripped-up jeans.
They kept her locked away
Never
to be seen.

Anger could make people do things,
Things they wouldn't normally do.
But once she got inside their heads,
She could control them.

Anger was always hidden,
But you notice her right away
She was the elephant in the room
That her hot rage
Burned down.

Anger was born from Sadness and Hate,
Who betrayed her.
And her sisters, Revenge and Passion,
Just left her behind.

NOUR BURIK, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Beauty

Beauty used to smile and include and be carefree
That is until smiling gave you wrinkles so it stopped.
Now beauty is only obtainable from sizes 0-2
And beauty is pain, hair removing, fat removing
Until the only thing left for losing is money and damn energy
With the magazine we've been perusing it's no wonder
There's girls that "don't know they're beautiful,"
More than girls that do
Never satisfied
Always competing for an unattainable prize
Contentedness has vanished
And insecurities have arrived
Now all we have is eyelash glue
To piece together our confidence
The money they've been making
With girls feeling degraded
How much longer can advertisements teach us how to live our lives?

ALEXA COHEN, GRADE 8
MARET SCHOOL

She is only a mirror

I am the mirror
They hate my personality
My skin, my hair, my body
America says I have to be pretty
I have to get perfect grades
That when I look in the mirror
I have to hate what I see
But I try to turn away
To fight for the people
To worry about what matters
America pushes my head back
And I stare at my reflection
Because who cares about the women
The children, the men who aren't allowed to
Come here.
Because who cares about the earth,
The only place we have to live
Because who cares about the people
who just want to love
Who are forced to hide who they are
For the sake of your comfort.
They say I'm the mirror
That's all I'll ever be
No matter how hard I try to look away
They shove me back
But America
I will see past my own reflection
I will see the blood
I will fight for my people
I will be powerful
I will be beautiful
Because I am not your mirror.

EMMA SCHENBAUM, GRADE 10
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Speaking in Dragon Breath

On June 10th 1963, Buddhist monk Thích Quang Duc burned himself alive to protest the Diem regime in Vietnam, his act portrayed in Malcolm Browne's Pulitzer prize-winning photograph.

He lifts himself from the car
Sucking in the air he can
before fate leaves him
breathless
He is about to speak
without his own words
but the words of the dragon.
He remains silent.

A young monk offers himself instead,
but it was old men who shackled them.
A Christian tradition preaching mercy,
now preaching tyranny of the minority.
But this old man will set them free.

He sits on the pillow,
assumes his final position,
and a rain of gasoline slithers
down his body.

He remains silent
even as the match is struck
even as it falls to the ground
even as the flames snake on the ground
even as they climb up his body
even as the heat sinks into his bones.

As he is engulfed the city
finds, for once, silence.
The only sound heard
is a dragon breathing.

He remains silent.

The tongues of fire
now lapping upon his flesh
cry out his protest
for the world over to hear

The dispersed crowd
now joins with the police
in a prostration honoring
his struggle, and wishing him
goodbye.

He remains silent,
but has spoken more in minutes
than many do in a lifetime.

THOMAS VASQUEZ, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Words

You may burn us
You may whip us
You may unleash the hounds on us
Our flesh is forfeit
But you may not extinguish our spirit
For it is invincible
We are like an army, endless columns of battle hardened
soldiers
We raise our fists for the lord and for freedom
Our bodies are naked against the assault, for we have no
armor
We have no guns, no knives, and no bombs, we never lay a
finger on the enemy
We have our words
And they are the most powerful thing on earth.

ANTONIO SMITH-PINELO, GRADE 8
PARKMONT SCHOOL

The Puck Drop

I smell the ice
Cold and hard,
I hear the whistle blow
Loud like sharp needles
I see the referee
Dressed like a zebra
Drop the puck,
I touch and hold
The hockey stick tight,
I taste the mouth guard
Rubbery and hard,
The play starts and I know
I'm home.

MATT EATON, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Chess

The world as I see it is divided like a chess board,
There are black pieces on one side and white pieces on the
other side,
Each side of pieces wants to be better than each other
instead of being equal,
Every accident is a sequel of the pieces being divided and
not equal,
We thought that freedom would make us equal but one side
had a different plan,
Hands up to one side means shoot him up and I can't
breathe means send him six feet underneath,
All we want to do is live in perfect unity but all we get is
being killed because we are darker than the people on
the other side we see,
One man had a dream for us to work as a team, but we are
being treated like we are not human beings,
A mother and father whose children are alive end up seeing
their children dead on Fox Five,
Why is this happening? I don't know, I can't seem to figure
out why we can't be equal, why can't we all just enjoy
this world that god has given us?
We will go on to try and find the answer to this mystery that
we call diversity and the solution is equality.

AMAURI COWAN, GRADE 8
CENTER CITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL,
PETWORTH CAMPUS

Unfortunately

Unfortunately, I am sick of being nice
People using me as their prey
to get something out of me, the
thought makes me quiver
and it injects a fair amount
of hate into my soul.

The only thing I want is to yell
at everyone and get away with it.
Unfortunately, I am sick of
being told what to do.
Every time someone gives me a task
it's like my heart slowly turns into rust
and irritation fills my brain.

I would rather lie in my bed
watching Youtube on my phone
than be bothered at all.
Unfortunately, I am sick of
unfinished poems.
It makes me feel like I ran out
of imagination.
I would rather end this poem now,
so that my imagination can run on.
Unfortunately for you,
This poem is over.

TATIANA PIERCE, GRADE 10
NATIONAL COLLEGIATE PREPARATORY
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

I Love NY

rotten newspaper is greeted by a
dying cigarette butt, an ashy kiss on the asphalt as
a penny dives Down from the pockets of pedestrians
into the gutter Below
slipping out of the fingers of those desperate

black rubber casually strolls Down main street
raindrops race Down buildings, Giants held firm in storm
the wet Ground a haven for rats amongst men

a half-eaten sandwich Drops into trash

a man will eat
today

the city that never sleeps is a city that knows
hunger
bright lights on broadway, on rockefeller not the
bronx
skyscrapers gaze Down with a judgmental eye
rain turns to snow, most joyed
some cry freezing as death Overlooks
brooklyn bridge
glooming
raindrops torpedo Down
in the Depths of homeless homes

I love New York

PATRICK KELLY, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Palmeras Beach

Beautiful landscape that illuminates
my life, my black hair moving
in the wind, the green color
of the palms that inspire me.

The relaxing sound of the sea
waves, make me think of nature.
The green of the leaves of the tree,
in the harmony of colors.

What would happen if green didn't exist?
There would be no harmony in the colors?
It would be strange to see this beach
without the green palm trees.

The beautiful reflection of the sun's yellow
and the beautiful sunset, with that orange
and red in the sky, the night comes on there is
darkness, but know that the next day I will see
these colors, the colors of the beach palms.

YOVAN DIAZ, GRADE 9
ROOSEVELT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Untitled

Hey, black child, do you know who you are?

Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair

Who you really are?

14 and 11 years old.

Do you know you can be what you want to be?

If you try to be, what you can be?

They never got a chance.

Standing in the mirror, admiring their immaculate natural skin
It glowed in the light, a child blessed with happiness from their mother
sun kissed and bathed
Kinky curls and best church dresses,
Giggly laughter and high pitched voices.

The moon in your eyes,

Mind higher than the stars in the skies.

Intelligent and innocent.

Your blackness is greatness,

They could have learned.

{breathe}

But the ground shook underneath their feet,

The fire crept up, engulfing their souls.

Like the moon in the sky before the sun sets.

Like the wind in the night, slipping under your door.

Like a spider on its web, prey trapped.

Innocence taken from them,

A lifetime of love and adventure,

Pain and healing,

Vanished before they could blink.

The last breath stolen from their mouths.
As soon as I make it into heaven, I'll paint pictures of you in the sky

Hey, black child, do you know who you are?

Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair

Who you really are?

14 and 11 years old.

Do you know you can be what you want to be?

If you try to be, what you can be?

They never got a chance.

Do you know you can learn? What you want to learn?

If you try to learn what you can learn!

Learn that, it was two years before they had a suspect.

And 37 years to finally arrest the last suspect.

Hey, black child, do you know who you are?

Bobby Frank Cherry, Thomas Blanton, and Robert Chambliss.

Italicized lines taken from "Hey, Black Child" by Countee Cullen

ZION KEEN, GRADE 10
CAPITAL CITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

The winter inside of me

The winter inside of me is a snowy season
made out of a mountain road.
The mountain road has magic and diamonds;
It has heaven and earth on the other side.
When the snow gets tough, you get caught
in the wilderness,
with black rivers and kindness like a door
with wolves howling in the dark streets;
Broken light bulbs in the dry night.
Born dead in the cold season in the threat attic
Bent nails, glowing with love in the air
Wood smoke is like an avalanche in flame.

JULIO BOUKNIGHT, GRADE 9
BALLOU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Mother Africa

I'm from the dirt roads of
West Africa where people and animals
of all ages run free.

I'm from my warm house in Frafraha
Where not a single flake of snow will fall.

I'm from the small green hair salon,
Where my sister and I drink freezing cold
Super malt and pineapple Avaro
as braiders twist our hair,
I run my fingers through 'feels like rope.'

I'm from the rough grey tyre swing
Spinning around and around.

I'm from the sound of feet jumping rope.

I'm from the land where my ancestors
Once walked.

I'm from the country of gold.

I'm from the small store with
Sweet smell of Toogbee floating in the air.

I'm from Mother Africa.

AYORKOR LARYEA, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Backpack

he sits
Slouched

a home
to memorized mathematics
and forgotten fiction

weathered water bottles
reside in his grasp

an overdue lunch
reminds me
of his mandatory maintenance

he is Thrown
Dropped
Slung
and Shaken

but he does not retaliate

he sees what I see
and hears what I hear

I carry him
unbothered by the weight

for into this
productive parasite
I pour my livelihood

IGNACIO MATA CORDERO, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Fly

I fly so high the angels can't even touch me
I'm so hot I'm sweating like herbal tea
In the winter time, reciting what I heard
When I go outside, I'm so cold I look like a frozen bird
My poem is lit – it's like fire
Knowing no one can surpass me, because I'm higher
I'm so cool everybody likes me
So cool that nobody wants to fight
Closing this poem, because poetry's my life
My skills are so sharp I'm like a pocket knife

JAILYN SMITH, GRADE 10
KUUMBA ACADEMY

Power of the Art

Music frees us
It's used to decorate time
But why does music nowadays fill our minds with
Gangs, drugs and hood violence
Silence!
Stop encouraging the youth that violence is the truth
Making them think that everyone can make money
 spittin bars in the booth
Sickening their minds making them believe
 that females are bitches
And lust is a must and that she's not worthy
 if she don't let you bust
Don't stay out in these streets cause you ain't
 the only one packing heat
So much cruelty your closest ones would sweep
 you off your feet,
Put you in that everlasting sleep and that sorrow
 forever your loved ones would keep
Don't allow anyone to impact your decisions
Cause when things get real, those people don't
 have to deal with your conditions
As the beats get better the less we listen...to the lyrics
And we missin the whole meaning
If we not listening to the lyrics might as well
 hear some instrumentals
At least this way we wouldn't be messin up
 our mental...
Stability
Making us believe that we all don't have the ability
We are all the same
Knowledge is not a gift it is something that is gained

JULISSA ORTIZ-RAMOS, GRADE 11
ROOSEVELT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

I Stand On

I stand on belief
A hard ground on which a young boy was shot dead
and his mother screamed *My baby*
I stand in a hood where it's
be about it or turn your back on it
but no one makes it out alive
I stand in the doorway of what your future is made to be
and what you make it
To be or not to be
Believe or don't believe me
But the world is held on the shoulders
of every elder caring for a helpless soul...
I stand here...

SHANNELL JONES, GRADE 11
BALLOU SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Violence

I am Violence
Violence is slow motion,
far, far away in North Carolina.
I drive a white van, and
I wake up with anger
and scare people.
I eat dirt and drink polluted water.
I do not have a job.
I lose my temper and break things,
because of my bad habit of smoking.
I love wearing cloudy clothes.
Before bed, Violence
brushes her teeth.
Hard.

FAITH THOMAS, GRADE 8
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

As I Walk

As I walk I wonder, how do I do me?

As I walk, I think about what will I achieve?

As I walk, I think about the good ties and bad.

As I walk, I think about who to really call my friends and depend on.

As I walk, I know how big my friend circle is, but I only hang with a few.

As I walk, at the end of the day I only have certain friends.

As I walk, I think about how I'm missing a few.

Ty, Keyshaun, Grandma.

Keyshaun died because he was trying to protect his mother

Ty in jail, still holding on.

Grandma died, but was it just her time?

As I walk, I remember the picture of Shaun laying there in that hospital bed.

I keep hearing that sound, beep, beep

Hoping it wasn't his time.

Beep, beeeeeeeep, beeeeeeeep. Beeeeeeeep.

As I walk, I think about my movement.

As I walk, I think about my future.

As I walk I think and also talk.

As I walk.

As I walk.

As I walk.

CHATAEAH FREDERICK, GRADE 6
JEFFERSON ACADEMY

Marching for Change

A crowd of people so big each person looked like a piece of grass on a football field
I don't see the point of having so many people march if we are all the same
The same pink hats with cat ears. The same signs with the same phrases.

But then I see a 91 year old woman and a baby no more than 10 months both marching
Walking or being carried doesn't matter
Because they are there
The baby will hear stories about it, The old woman will tell stories about it
She will tell her kids about climbing up onto a pile of wood
With 20 year olds and holding a sign unaware of the words written on it
How she led a chant saying
"Tell me what a feminist looks like, this is what a feminist looks like!"
How when she saw her sign she yelled "my kids will love this!"
How she marched for hours in hope a change would be made.

The baby will hear stories about the sign she made
How she scribbled with markers on a piece of cardboard
The meaning unclear to her parents, to the world
But to her it was clear that the scribbles meant so much
And how she didn't cry the whole time
And how she was carried for hours with no breaks
And how she got her picture taken by so many people
Wanting to document why they marched and why she marched
Scribbles on a piece of cardboard were her way of hoping a change would be made.

LUCY RAIBMAN, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

The Runner

I run because I'm afraid.

I run to think.

I run because I cannot stop.

I run for fun.

I run because this is my choice.

I run because this is who I am.

I am the runner.

I run for freedom.

MCKAYLA CARTER, GRADE 9
THE LAB SCHOOL OF WASHINGTON

Matter. Black. Lives.

Have you ever heard
And saw
The truths we have made
Yet you call it absurd

Have you ever heard
And saw
The dark rings on our wrists
Redder than the wine you sip until you slur

Have you ever heard
And saw
Our screams in the street
While you ignore us listening to an ignorant speech

Have you ever heard
And saw
That it's not our lives matter more
It's just that it "matters, too"

*Song lyrics taken from "Lift Every Voice and Sing"
by James Weldon Johnson*

KIARA ACCAD, GRADE 10
CAPITAL CITY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Lost Ones

for every child born
There's no guarantee

for every blessing
There's a storm

for every backwood in Mississippi
There's a monument in Washington

for every black male
There's a bullet chasing his future

for every Medgar Evers
There's a byron de la beckwith

for every boonie in the heart of the bigoted south
There's a shattered echo of freedom

for every MLK
There's a james earl ray

for every Bloody Sunday in Alabama
There's a sacred place

for every Abraham Lincoln
There's a john wilkes booth

for every dylann roof
There's a St Aloysius church

for every newspaper published
There's a tragedy in the fine print

for every Trayvon Martin
There's a mother

for every Anthem
There's a soldier ready to kneel

for every segregation today, tomorrow, and, forever
There's a Civil Rights Act

For every John F. Kennedy
For every Emmett Till
For every Civil Rights martyr

There's an America
whose declarations left you
Broken.

JIRHE LOVE, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Let it Be

Let it be a car
like a blood vein.
Let it be a train,
seasoned with curry
on the way to the bus stop of hope.
Carry me to the shadow game
where I can play
and spend time with my family.
Let it be my dreams that come true.

SAQUAN SHORT, GRADE 8
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Acknowledgments

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

Many thanks to the Friends of the Parkmont Poetry Festival and to those of you who contribute today!

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Judges

The Parkmont Poetry Festival extends sincere thanks to our 2016 judges

SUSAN SCHEID is the author of *After Enchantment*. Her poetry has appeared in *Truth to Power*, *Beltway Quarterly*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *The Sligo Journal*, *Silver Birch Press*, *Tidal Basin Review*, and other journals. Her work is included in the chapbook anthology, *Poetic Art*. Susan serves on the Board of Directors for Split This Rock. She lives in the Brookland neighborhood with her family and two cats, who more often than not find themselves as subjects of her work.

AILISH HOPPER is the author of *Dark Sky Society* (2014) and the chapbook *Bird in the Head* (2005). Individual poems have appeared in *Agni*, *APR*, *Blackbird*, *Harvard Review Online*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry*, *Tidal Basin Review*, and other places. In addition to page poetry, she performed with the band Heroes are Gang Leaders, along with poets Thomas Sayers Ellis and Randall Horton, and saxophonist James Brandon Lewis. She teaches at Goucher College.

HIRAM LAREW'S poems have appeared most recently in *The Echo World*, *vox poetica*, *Every Day Poems*, *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Honest Ulsterman*, *Viator*, *Shot Glass* and *Seminary Ridge Review*. He is a global food security specialist, and lives in Upper Marlboro, MD.

SARAH BROWNING is co-founder and Executive Director of Split This Rock. Author of *Killing Summer* (Sibling Rivalry Press, forthcoming 2017) and *Whiskey in the Garden of Eden* (The Word Works, 2007), and coeditor of *D.C. Poets Against the War: An Anthology* (Argonne House Press, 2004), she is the recipient of artist fellowships from the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, a Creative Communities Initiative grant, and the People Before Profits Poetry Prize. Since 2006, she has co-hosted the Sunday Kind of Love poetry series at Busboys and Poets in Washington, DC.

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We are grateful to our 2017 design team

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Finally, we wish to thank our 2017 Parkmont School Board of Trustees:

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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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