

poems



thirty seventh
parkmont
poetry
festival

Poems by District of Columbia Students • Grades 6-12
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Jacqui Michel and David Weisman

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Our Poetry Advisory Committee:

Jean Gurman

Cille Kennedy

Judy Lentz

Jacqui Michel

Anne Harding Woodworth

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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 37 years of spotlighting and sharing these students' talents and their unique perspectives on their worlds.

We received nearly 500 poems for this year's Festival from students in grades 6 through 12. Our judges have selected these distinguished poems from the chorus of young voices expressing their spirits and vitality through poetry.

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Poem

Poetry, the art of writing thoughts,
Like school
pencils tapping
Feet clapping
to the sound of poetry,
The smell of freshly baked brownies looking
Bland and crusty on the outside,
but tasting flaky and interesting,
Something new,
a poem saying, come
Read me.

PEPPIN THOMAS, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Instructions to the Artist

This poem was inspired by Billy Collins' 1977 poem, also titled "Instructions to the Artist."

First and foremost: I want no gray, if possible.
If I have any neutral tones on my body,
the space between my fingers
or the dark under my tongue,
make them bubblegum pink.
Make the rest
the color of my teeth beneath a blacklight.

My hands should look like something graceful
sits on the tips of them,
like ballet around the edges.
Do not give me harsh lines,
do not cut my softness apart.

Keep it in the space under my eyes,
murky and purple, squished between two halves of a smile.
I want to look how a clementine tastes,
in the last second before you throw away the peel.

Make me like venus,
but lazy after her day at the beach,
give me freckled shoulders
and eyes the color of marbles,
make my body a paper doll clipped from cardstock,
give the teacup beside me
red lipstick stains.

The viewer will know that I am the youngest sister
because of the way my neck bends
like I am balancing a slip of paper
between my shoulder blades,
like I slept in the smallest bed.

I would like my portrait sent by mail.
I would like a pair of scissors and a new gluestick,
I would like to make it something new.

MARY-KATE WILSON, GRADE 11
WASHINGTON LATIN PCS

Fashionable Poetry

Apostrophe, “To be or not to be”

What a despairing end, to a symphony

Just because Connotation strikes a different meaning

Doesn't mean that Denotation isn't worth hearing

Ekphrasis waxes on about Michelangelo's shameless
works of art

While Epigram, contradicts that thought from the start

Extended figure keeps up the pattern

While Figurative language, tends to discern

Figures of speech contain alliteration and anaphora galore!

Which highlight Juxtaposition even more!

Metaphors, *sneakily*, take toads and make them seem princely

While Metonymies, stick to one detail of the story

Onomatopoeias love to “flip” and “flop” over the tongue

Personification doesn't need a person, to get the job done

Rhythm loves making sound an art

But pure Sentimentality, comes from the heart.

Similes like to compare preachers as goats

While Synecdoche and Metonymies go together like
“a bunch of oats”

Syntax falls in line and leads the charge

These are some of the elements of poetry, at large.

JENNAE WHITTED, GRADE 12
BENJAMIN BANNEKER ACADEMIC HIGH SCHOOL

A Radical Grammatical Rap

Better, but best you best be braced for the weather, that bests
the best, beats them down, nothing better, for besting the rest,
when you mess with the best you aren't getting better, because
I got to confess, you're just like the rest, messing with the best,
I know, a mess to process, but to put a finger on the power I
possess, better yet, being the best, being capable of keeping
up with the same pace as you're able, but you're less, less than
the best, resting arrest, born to the rest, that breaks the label,
obsessed with progress pushing plus the unrest, unexpressed,
un addressed, but the poetry has yet to impress the rest, who
possess the power to address that they're blessed with the best,
I got the label, magnificent maleficent, mythical fable.

However, never have I ever had a successor, you better
remember to remember to surrender, put the pieces together,
intending the impending endeavor, have a refresher, have you
heard what happens when you run into, rendezvous with the
rapping captain? Who, in orders of magnitude, matches, more
surpasses the masses in in more than just gratitude.

Rightfully, righteously, personal dynasty, ironically lifelessly,
privately perched, top of society. Do what you will, but don't try
to deny, I'm the deity that undermines the man who's most high.
Rhyming, with the entitled time of a lullaby, but not that, rhythm
of a rap, for the foot to tap, just that, but I'm bothered by the
fact, that I have to ask: but why does my rhythm chime, when I
rhyme to an ego lie, is this even my lullaby?... but why, do I have
to do that which ignores the facts, because it was assigned to,
write a rhyme to someone else's lullaby?...

Don't assume there's room for the impending doom, well I'll
be damned, defining the gloom from the womb to the tomb,
I'm the one who looms, words that cut deep like swords, words
that don't last, a blur, too fast, in other words, my words hover
with the hummingbirds, discover, the colors, flutter and hover,
your colors come over, overcome the duller, be first and faster to
master to cast your iconoclast.

I'm the kind of person who people perceive as pathetic, but don't believe what you perceive, because you'll regret it, it's unmistakable, many (un-observational) make the mistake of thinking I'm an incapable, but what if I told you I'm intangible, that my radical grammatical magical rap that renders your rhythm laughable and impractical rhymed sending you packed back to the national capital of the grammatically incompatible, I'm the grand unsurpassable god with a radical grammatical lightning rod, all I can make of you is a failed fake to break and overtake, make no mistake, I got them awed, a fraud is no match for a grammatical god. A setback, a backtrack, a shame, really just another pawn in the game in my eyes you're not the same, you're in the past, another pain, you're just another link in the chain, I'm not the one to blame, the timed rhyme and spitting rhythm is the game.

I'm enlightened, I'm the titan, taking my time, rhyming to frighten, but I can't brighten, because my ego, isn't heightened by boasting night and day, kept at bay, the best, laid to rest because, I better not rest when life damns me depressed, but best, an epiphany flow like superconductivity, and blessed, responsibility, be in my capability but, because my productivity apparently meets the standard insufficiently, being efficient, comes at the cost of creativity. People ask me to put pen to paper to answer what problems are tailor made to test my ability, and people are underwhelmed when I'm Overwhelmed, to test my ability.

CASPER CORSELLO, GRADE 8
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Test Anxiety

An empty buzzing fills my ears
I can't think, I can't concentrate
I'm stuck in quicksand with no way out
Sinking,
 Deeper
 And
 Deeper
 Into stress
Worries are shackles bound to my ankles
weighing me down
My breathing becomes rapid
I blink trying to get rid of the tiny lights that spark in front of my
 eyes
I continue to blink as I stare down at my blank paper
But no ideas come
Now even the empty buzzing is gone
There is only silence

OLIVIA CHEN, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Ode to the Jacket That Has Been There Through It All

Through one,
two,
three,
four,
four generations
you offered your thick fabric as
protection.

Your plaid interior exploding
outward.

The dirty brown outer-layer
fighting off the elements that
wish to harm.

Through this and that,
you stood the exam of time.

With a passing grade,
an A+, you persevered.

During the first,
you were untouched by the sin
and dirt of the world.

Perfect still in your youth and
innocence.

With the second,
you matured as an article of
clothing.

Still perfect as a child is.

Yet you make mistakes,
you get your holes and your scuffs,
beaten and torn you still serve your
purpose.

While you were protecting the
third,
you represented years of
protection.

With your experience from past
events,
you learned.

You learned how to protect and
comfort your wearer,
in all circumstances.

Now with me.
your history,
your story,
lives on.

Through the rain and snow,
sleet and hail
you shield me.

Much like you did with the
first,
second,
and third.

WILL HURLEY, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

The Dying Model

inspired by Alice Neel, T.B. Harlem

They wouldn't help me at all they just told me
To sit with all this agonizing pain bottled up in me.
They told me not to smile and not to frown for my elongated
Body was going to be put down
Then hung up on a
Wall.

They laid me down on a blood-ridden bed
With purple sheets on top.
They covered me with dirty white blankets
Though that didn't help because blood was draining
From my frail fluidless body,
I was
Naked.

All I could feel was pain and pain and strain
And all the blood-ridden stains,
And what I felt most was the artist
painting me
and my
Shame.

JORDAN MCNAIR, GRADE 10
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Mindset

Just want you to Listen, want you to pay attention
Listen to my mindset
set set
yeah.

Check out my mindset
if you can't understand me that's a blind check
you can say I can't make it that's a real threat
I'mma take my spot
I'm coming real quick

woah

Going hard showing perseverance
when something blocks my goals that's an interference
uh

Taking off showing no leaves,
having my parents coming back like remember me?
ahh,

Where was you in the beginning?
wanna have me now
You didn't hold me down to the finish.

woah

Now I fall back, got trust issues hope you know that
all my haters that be hatin did you hear that?
I got a lot of aggression
So take a few steps back

When I fall short mom got my back
When I skip a beat dad catch dat.

Uh, yeah, real parents ain't raise me,
been wit my first cousin since a baby
it's a shame and yeah it's crazy
I was born by people who were lazy

uh

bio mother was a drug addict
she was never around such a sad absence

uh

bio father couldn't raise me
he was 50 yrs old, that's crazy

woah.

Just want you to listen, want you to pay attention, listen to my mindset,
set set
yeah.

This is my mindset if you come incorrect
get rite checked people want me to smile I can't do that
if nothing ain't funny then forget that,

uh

blame it all on the past things
my momma left me wit bad dreams
Moms popped pops wit a frying pan I was 4 yrs old
man I shoulda ran

but my real mama don't listen
try to talk to her she don't pay attention
wanna be a mom and friend
know the difference

wish she would pick one and stop all the switchin
mama got it hard cause she don't wanna listen

steady rep the streets rollin blunts
selling some
thinking it's ok if she stay on the run

finally got caught now she sitting in a cell
in jail
Wish ya daughter pay ya bail
calling me up wit a hunnid excuses,

steady running game trynna be so exclusive
I ain't wit the bull
cuz I know she still using

Ain't foolin me knowing what she been doing,
ain't finna speak like it when I'm weak
like it when I cry

man the time went by, growing up fast
still dwelling on the past

oou!

Just want you to listen,
want you to pay attention
listen to my mindset

set set
yeah.

ELLETTA MANLEY, GRADE 12
ANACOSTIA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Old Home

Home is where my cleat sinks into the warm, black turf.

Home is the rocky path leading up to the bright yellow door on
Maple Ave.

Home is the smooth steel strings of my stickered sunburst guitar.

Home is the sweet sound of music ringing in my head.

Home is the crunch of sand in my sandwich.

Home used to be my old school Lowell.

ISAAC WRIGHT, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Missing

I come from DC
I make my home singing
I see myself playing outside
And I wonder about nothingness.
When I am alone, I sleep
I imagine that I can talk to dogs.
Every day, I see class but if I look closely,
I can see a speck of moonlight.
A voice inside me says I have an angel voice
And I want to tell the world that I like pizza.
Right now I am almost happy
But someday I will find my dog.
I wish this was a better place.

DAVID GROSS, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hide From Badges

You can never call 911
If you or *la familia* is here
Illegally.

If MS-13 catches you

In their next raid,
You either support them, die
Or call the police and risk
deportation
Which may be worse than
Death.

The gang also requires your
pledge of allegiance
And blood
If you get caught
In between
Their next shootout.

This savagery
Traumatizes every kid
Who sees this

From a baby crib
And hears
Gun shots
From their best friend's home.

It would be near impossible
For the kids
Growing up
Constantly seeing homicide
Near their homes

To be normal.

While we open our textbooks,
They open their windows
Only able to see the ammo
Spilled the night before.

While we play four square,
They hear cries for help
From the butchering of
Yet another
Familia de cuatro.

CHRISTIAN ATTORRI, GRADE 12
EMERSON PREPARATORY SCHOOL

bitter winds

bitter winds
are not the gentle
breeze you feel at the beach,

bitter winds
are the wild waves you
see crashing onto the shore destroying your sand castle,

bitter winds
like to take up all
the space

bitter winds
make your throat dry
and holler in your face,

hoping for you to move.

GABI GREEN, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

A Daughter's Dream

As a dreamer,
It's only in my nature to dream.
Daydreaming in class—about your past
Having a blast—until you remember that dreams don't ever last.

Or until one day,
You're dreaming and your worst nightmare comes true.
And every thing you asked god to forbid —
comes back to haunt you.

Daydreaming—in my mind
As i talk to the girl who set right behind
I say **“man i miss my father”**
And i didn't really mean to bother her
It's just that i'm kind of a daddy's girl
and seeing my father just lights up my world.

I say **“man i miss my father”**
“You say that as if he's dead”
“What. nah i just miss my father—now you got me feeling scared”
After that moment it kind of raised my suspicions.
Now i'm really on a mission
If my brain was a car i'm quite sure it would be drifting.

Running in the house—
trying to change out of my clothes,
Cause now laying my eyes on my father—
Is my number one goal.

In a hurry to go,
I rush down the stairs.
I bumped into my mama—and notice she looked scared
Her face really puffy and eyes bloodshot red

I asked her what's wrong but
She didn't say much.
The words she let out read—“baby i'm sorry”
And that's when she told me that my father was dead.

Everyone wants to console,
But i refrain because—**they don't really know**
And i'm not in the mood for any of that
so, out the door i go.

I run, and run past the buildings, cars and trees,
I run and pray to lord in the sky.
Lord please—Please don't let this be true
Lord why—why me—why my daddy had to die.

I just got him back— from being behind jail bars
And now i'm losing him to a guy who hides behind the stars.
It's not fair—and at this moment i'm trying to calm down
While also gasping for air.

Something about this situation seems familiar,
Got me wondering and trying to remember
I've seen this scenario —
But i don't know where—i just don't know

**Then that's when it hit me —
I had this same dream a month ago.**

KESHAWNNA NAPPER, GRADE 12
ANACOSTIA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Games

When I see people smoke I think
they are playing freeze tag with air,
and when people play chess they are
going to play hide-and-seek
They see a cocoon
They see a beetle, or a butterfly
In the creek was the stone
Lay down these words
before your mind like rocks
with a torment of fire, and wait
as all things are lost.

TAMONI ONLEY, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

White tile

Water falls
from the nozzle,
like a man made rainstorm

Long day
I wash my worries away.
Steam,
fogs the mirror
but cleanses my mind,
And my soul.
Soaping down my failures
and washing them
down the drain.

White tile never felt so warm,
so homey,
so safe.

ADAM SANIN, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Safe

For the eleven killed at the Tree of Life Synagogue.

Your kippah is placed neatly on your head,
Your synagogue is a place,
To love and to pray,
And you clutch your star of david
As if it were buried treasure in the ocean.

And you dive deep into prayer,
Baruch Atah Adonai, Blessed are you God,
Protect those in danger,
Elohainu Melech Ha Olam, Ruler of the world
Shelter us from harm.

But it was the loudest silence you've ever heard,
A tsunami of shrieks,
And the red stained chairs,
The bloody plague from the torah,
Had been reborn in bullet form,
And you feel God has failed you.

Were you praying hoping he'd listen?
And holding your breath,
Were you asking him to help you?
Was your faith drowning?
"Is it my time?"

A siren howls outside,
Relief,
A sense of hope,
You knew God answered,
When the policemen walked in,
Your fellow Synagogues weave together with yours,
Like the strands of a braided challah.

Like a steady pulse,
Your sense of safety has lost control,
And no longer was the place you loved,
That place of sweet security,
That place you prayed,
That righteous place,
anymore.

MIRIELLE SKOLNICK, GRADE 9
EMERSON PREPARATORY SCHOOL

A Butterfly's Life

Migration

Is a butterfly's life.

There are changes, but we will get through it.

That is what mother says,

trying

to be positive.

But it is not true.

Migration is a colorless page

a veil of darkness.

You don't fly. You fall.

Migration is like a caterpillar in its cocoon,

trying to come out. Trapped. Changing.

I wish I

were a butterfly.

JASMINE SINGH, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

The Light Seeker

Because my country is in darkness
I must shine light upon it
and I must steal light from below,
steal burning fire from the likes of hell.
I will finish this quest even if it takes my life.
I do not care if I disappear or die:
the sun, light, and everything
belongs to us;
The apple trees, grass, and flowers
are ours.
We have fought and planted seeds
to make great trees for this planet.
This very earth is ours;
The wisdom and memories
belong to us forever.

MAURICE JACKSON, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Ain't Nun Peaches and Cream

Ain't Nun Peaches and Cream
A Black and white color scheme
My hands are in the air
A gun which held me to be static
A gun being pointed in my face
A bullet has no name
Dark skin, bright skin what skin is my right skin
Am I really black?
Or is that what I was told and listened to
My life in your hands
The act of demand
Looking real spiffy and clean and realize my shoes are killing me
We wasting time we blaming them but its black on black crime
You breaking the same law and expecting not to pay the same fine
Black dark
White pure
Why do people have to be so insecure?
Black man shot by a white officer
I was just getting my wallet please officer
In the streets of New York City
"I can't breathe"
She can't breathe
We can't breathe
Mexican, African American, Spanish is race all you see
I dare not say the pledge of allegiance because this is not
the land of the free
Eric Garner
Trayvon Martin
Sandra Bland
Amija Coleman
We continue to protest to let our voices be heard
They want us to be silent
I refuse to be quiet
Our justice system is all messed up
They're our voice
I have a voice but it's not being heard
Do I need to yell so y'all can hear me?
I know y'all are thinking why she is angry

Cause my feelings are now starting to escape
My own brothers and sisters putting things together like scotch tape
But we losing too many lives got me thinking and contemplating
Am I next in line?
When I look at the news I swear I be filled with devastation
They taking us out one by one no hesitation
I continue to hear all lives matter
Just because I say “black lives matter”
Doesn't mean yours does not
We need our president to make better decisions
Yes black lives matter 'cause we're the ones being imprisoned
I was put in this very universe to be someone's gift and blessing
No matter what shoes or clothes I have on I don't wanna be flexin'
I just want to be equal
I want the killing to stop it's continuing like a sequel
My skin is not only black but tells a story about our pain in the past and also
The glory
Yes I am black
No I'm not mixed
Some might call me light skinned
Some may call me “Twix”
But why?
Why can't I be me?
Why do I have to be labeled?
If I was to be you, we'll see who changes the fable
Stereotypes and labels are the issue on the table
Why are we not stable?
A crime is committed and what does the perpetrator get notoriety
Man y'all got on blinders
What happened to this society?
Feel like I'm living in fear, doubt and anxiety
Let's stand up 'cause I'm so tired of stressing
BLACK EXCELLENCE
We all stand for different things we something like the scientific elements
LET'S STAND UP TOGETHER AND ALL STOP BEING ARROGANT

AMIJA COLEMAN, GRADE 9
FRIENDSHIP COLLEGIATE ACADEMY

Waves of Happiness

I jump high, a two-legged gazelle
Arching my back, a perfect crescent moon
Kicking my legs up behind me
Throwing my head back
A giant, toothy grin on my face
The wind blowing my hair in every direction
Like Tibetan prayer flags.

I land with a splash in crystal clear waters
Turquoise from the white sand,
A mirror reflecting the cloudless blue sky.
A transparent fish darts between my ankles,
An expert skier slaloming in and out.

As the sun begins to set
I dig my toes in the sand
A radiator giving off the warmth absorbed from the sun.
Quiet all around, nature's Meeting for Worship,
The only sound the soft waves gently kissing the beach.

All that is left to do
Is to pinch myself
To confirm this dream
Is in fact reality.

LILA SAFAVI, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

I Am Rich

I am rich in darkness
I wander in fear with my pride
not a mortal, but a flame.
I'm rich in a window
I quiver in my volcanic image
smooth but violent.
My language is tender;
teach me confidence.
Fear me; I am amber, a wordless truth.
Sleep on my dark pillow
and remember me as I go.

KITANA WILLIAMS, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Saving the Past

Stories,
Flowing like a river,
Generation to generation,
As minds begin to wither.

Letter by letter,
Word by word,
Stories to be read,
Lessons to be learned.

Coming from the wise,
History to maintain
Soothing to the mind
Like the sound of falling rain.

Cultures lost in time,
Stories told in vain,
As tellings fall upon deaf ears,
The past begins to fade.

JAMIE ZIMMERMANN, GRADE 8
GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL

The Living and the Dead

Of men whose hearts or cars have
crashed
Within the cityscape
To stay, they must be burned to ash
And kept within a vase
They must move miles out of town
If they're to keep their head
The living move and settle down
Without room for the dead

The city can't have space for tombs
They need to scrape the sky
And build another office room
That's tens of stories high
Of those who fall, or burn, or drown
The mayor just shrugged and said,
"The living move and settle down
Without room for the dead"

Whatever dead cadavers seen
Spur stories that are told
Of ghosts and poltergeists, so keen
To reach into your soul

Because dead men are seldom found
They must be ghouls instead
The living move and settle down
Without room for the dead

The cemetery's quite a drive
With nothing on the way
Except the gas pumps that survive
Off grieving men, their prey
More urns appear in homes downtown
Than Giza's pyramid
The living move and settle down
Without room for the dead

And after every stop's long gone
Comes our suburban sect
Where graveyards show up on our lawns
And old abodes are wrecked
We need these headstones all around
If we're to win our bread
The living move and settle down
And give us all their dead

HENRY ROSSER, GRADE 11
PARKMONT SCHOOL

Suppose the Sun Leaves the Sky

The emeralds would blow away
The rubies would be a fortune;
On a hill of hurricanes
The poison of the clouds
came from the shadows.
The afternoon came
and it destroyed the poison of the clouds.
The afternoon is mad at the ocean
And the afternoon felt sad
and apologized to the ocean,
and the ocean forgave him.

MAGUS TRUSS, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

My Brother My Brother

UBUNTU

Trying to define unity
Asking a whole community
What exactly does UBUNTU mean
Hoping for a big opportunity

We must stay united
like one big family
We have a future and we are excited
We might leave one by one
But we return reunited

We must never reject anyone; though
they must first be incited
we live in the south side area
Our schools are polluted with bacteria
Drugs, guns and poverty create a
certain hysteria

Taking over the cycles
connecting with my people from
North America to Nigeria

We must stay as one
Remembering the days when
our hood was fun
Before they came and planted
the guns
Now we scream and

run run run...

RAJE FIELDS, GRADE 11
ANACOSTIA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

We never let fear stop us, we have to
get things done
So we can see the next new sun

Our past
a bloody streak that runs through us all

Like deep raspy voices in my head,
constantly they call
So much so, that when I want to sit low
I stand up tall

Together we must never Fall
Apart...

Just like Achebe wrote
We are a community of strong black
Folk

I extend my hand to you
This is what we do

UBUNTU!!!!

And Will They Believe Me?

Down the rabbit hole we go
truth or lie they don't know
did I get the chance to say yes or no?
I know.

But will they believe me
when I say,
he cornered me in
a dark, deserted alley,
and started to take off
his clothes.
Light from the street reflected
across his white chest
And then
he put his mouth on mine,
alcohol in his breath
Put his hand up my skirt
and decided I was his.

And will they believe me
when I say,
I told him to stop
Begged him,
Pleaded with him
and even asked him.
Hopeless, I yelled for help.
"There's no one there, you little girl,"
he slurred.

And then
he laughed.
Foul words came spewing
out of his mouth as
I tried to block
out the pain
that was emanating
From down there.

Down the rabbit hole we go
truth or lie they don't know
did I get the chance to say yes or no?
I know.

But will they believe him
when he testifies,
saying that I lied.
saying that I asked for it.
Lying
was not hard for him,
and
neither was playing
the victim.

And will they believe me
when I testify against him?
Will they think I tell the truth?
I know I do
I know I did
and I know he lied
because I was the victim,
and he raped me.

Down the rabbit hole we go
truth or lie they don't know
did I get the chance to say yes or no?
I know.

But did the public believe me
when I testified?
Because my name is now
in the news.
Now, I face
the consequences of accusing
a white male of rape.
Death threats,
people say I deserved it,
slut shame me,
a whore.

They think I lied.
Because apparently a woman
who claims to have been raped
by a white man
is always lying.

The second trial date was set.
All I did was hope
that the jury believed me,
the judge believed me.
And then they were ready
to decide his fate.
Jail or no jail?
the jury conferred
they made a decision.
No.
Jail.
Time.

Down the rabbit hole we go
truth or lie they don't know
did I get the chance to say yes or no?
I know.

All he did was smile
as he was escorted out.
After,
The public was both
Outraged and satisfied with his fate.
I never knew I had
So many allies,
Both victims and others alike.
They were angry.
They demanded a change.
But others were feeling satisfied,
Those who believed I lied.
And when I got home,
all I could do was
sit and think
About this injustice,
and how to make
those who believed him
realize this
is not okay, and
Never.
Will.
Be.

SABRINA KESTNBAUM-COOK, GRADE 8
SHERIDAN SCHOOL

Elegy to Roy Halladay

In memory of Roy Halladay (1977-2017), Philadelphia Phillies pitcher from 2010-2013.

Atop the 11-inch raised mound,
the 6-foot-6, 225 pound
beast digs in. Metal cleats
rip through the fine dirt
like children opening
presents on Christmas Day.

Righty-righty matchup.
The crowd relentlessly cheers
for their stud.

The 93-mph pitch hurled
at Ruiz who awaits the sting in his mighty leather,
but never caught the ball.

Bat on ball.
Dead silence.
Quiet enough to hear
the deep breath of hustle.
108 stitches fly toward first base,
just in time.

The umpire signals:
out!
No-hitter.
Philadelphia explodes into
a sea of red and white pinstripes.

A rare occurrence—
Roy smiles.

PETER IERARDI, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

Football

Football is fun because
I can run and jump like a zebra.
It's scary though, because
people get hurt really bad.
Football is difficult, because
you have to practice and work hard every day.
Playing football makes me feel incredible,
like when my baby sister was born.

TYRONE MAYO JR, GRADE 6
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Instructions for my Artist

I want to be unrecognizable and blue all over,
The kind of blue that looks black if you tilt your head or close one eye.
I want the blue to ache like the underside of a night sky when it hangs
close enough so we can
feel its pressure, a sky ringed through with lonely sounds from tenements
and forest floors.

I want you to make me a skyline of depth.
A chunk of my lips diced in the corner,
An eyelash riding over the edge of the canvas.
You will not see my picture before you begin.
I will give pieces,
The soft circle of my eye on the screen porch, a fern's leafy tendrils
suspended in the pupil.
The scrunch of my cheek, pressed against my mother's.
My bottom lip in winter, thinly chapped.

I want to be leaking words like blood.
I will provide you a list of quotations to dribble through and
between all the pieces of me.
Do not misspell them.

When you are done, I want you to paint over me again and again,
A sheen of light blue to silvery white,
Dimension on top of dimension.
I want your canvas to be a portal, a looking glass sliced into dazzling
reflections of myself.

Wrap the painting in wallpaper fit for Anne of Green Gables,
Ticked with flowers and willow leaves, charmingly yellow.
Sign my name on the package with a quill pen. Enfolded in history,
I want to unwrap as
something new.

I want you to make me myself again.
I want borrowed colors, dimensions, and words crawling through me,
Becoming mine.

CHLOE CATTANEO, GRADE 12
WASHINGTON LATIN PCS

Welcome To Society

Welcome. I'm your society
I hope you enjoy your stay

I want you to be yourself
Just as long as it fits my way

I don't care about your lifestyle
It's just preferred if you're not gay

You can fall in love with anyone
As long as I approve

On the bright side I'll let you have your opinions
But they must be shaped to my views

I can help you love your body
But not too much or I'll tear you down

I love to bully you for everything
And then wonder why you frown

I'll ask about your problems
But remember I really don't care

Please trust me with your secrets
As I become your greatest nightmare

I'll tell you you look beautiful
But that you shouldn't make a sound

I'll tell you you mean nothing
And then push you further down

I'll push you to the edge of death
'Til you're hanging with a frown

And I promise I'll cry with the others
When you're six feet underground

Welcome. I'm your society
I don't try to deceive

But before I take you in please remember
There is only one way you can leave

CRIS BOCOCK, GRADE 9
THE LAB SCHOOL OF WASHINGTON

Red

Anger
lives in
a hockey
stick.
Everything
is bottled
in the stick
waiting to
explode
like a
tornado.
He wears
all red
like a
stop
sign:
bright
and bold.
When he is
angry
he lets it all go
by hitting something.
HARD.
He hangs out with calm.
For short seconds.
Just to start it all over again
Tomorrow.

FRED BAO, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Being Old

I'll imagine about being old.
Being old must feel dull.
Well, not that kind of dull—
It's windy; It might feel impossible to be old.
If you are old, you might not feel steady,
wondering if your pain will reverse
to when you were a kid, or younger.
This is the trouble about this difference.
But on the other hand...
Old people can do things, too;
There are moments of good in being old.
I don't know about what old people do...
Maybe read the Bible.

MARCUS HILL, GRADE 8
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Bully

My full name is Thomas Terry Travis
But everyone calls me Big Bully Tom
Everyone thinks that I am like a bull
A bull that attacks anyone who comes close
But I think that I am like a bee
A bee that protects itself from everything that tries to attack

Every day
When I get home from school
My big brother Bill
Attacks me with his large sweaty hands
And all I can hear is the pounding of his huge hands
And my mom and dad do not hear
One scream or one holler
All they do is watch game shows and think that we play nice
But every so often when my mom and dad do check on us
Bill stops and pretends that we're playing nice

Every night I go to bed
I go to bed with terrors of my big brother beating me up
 with his maniacal smile
And I wake and I go to school alone
And anyone who gets too close will be stung with my stinger

ALEX HARRY, GRADE 8
PARKMONT SCHOOL

I Hate Fireworks

When I was
-a boy.

I saw black
-stars.

Turn dark.

Cold blues
-fell on

broken feet.

See when I
was- a boy.

I stood tall on
my stoop.

See my wicked
jump shot
is when
pen meets
paper.

But like most
black boys'
Dreams.

Mine started
running
jumping

Silence

See if --
you look
Like me.

Color is
-- your
Name.

I swear
-- that's
Exactly
-- what
happens.

HUNTER STEWART, GRADE 12
GONZAGA COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL

The Burned Branch

For Denise McNair

There were people in my family have witnessed
The greatest changes of America
and lived to tell it. This is about a girl who didn't live
Long enough to truly be helpful in the world but
helped in death. Even today she still lives on in our
hearts.

Denise McNair, the youngest of the group, finally
Had permission to sit with her friends in the middle
Row instead of being in the front. Unlike her Mother,
Maxine McNair, she grew fond of church for its
blind optimism for the world but had no idea
That soon she would be betrayed by it in God's house.

All they remember was a flash of crimson light,
an explosion, and screams.
All Maxine could think was where was her daughter, calling
All through clouds of dust and blood.
All she found, a ballerina shoe scorched in rubble.

The depressing rage she felt was like a tsunami
drowning everything in sight. The riots occurring
after the bombing were on a large scale and earned a
Name that echoed through history,
The Bombing of Birmingham.
That part of our family tree still smolders in anger cause of
The aflame, glowing branch at the foot of the tree.

MILES MCNAIR, GRADE 9
EMERSON PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Someplace in the afternoon

I come from poison
I make my home with candles on a special occasion
I see myself playing in twilight
and I wonder why roses are beautiful
When I am alone, I think about my good fortune
I imagine that I can be unbelievable
Every day, I see towering trees
but if I look closely, I see they have no soul
A voice inside me says go hide in the shadows
and I want to tell the world the wind can talk to you sometimes
Right now I am having memories of Six Flags
but someday I will sleep on the softest pillow
I wish I could fly.

JERMAINE BROWN, GRADE 7
CHARLES HART MIDDLE SCHOOL

Sensation

A star sounds like a jet
A circle smells like burnt tires
White moves in silence
A whisper looks quiet
The texture of purple feels smooth and mellow
The letter C glows the color yellow
Whenever I look at you, I hear drums

DANIEL MINOR, GRADE 12
FRANK W. BALLOU STAY

Sunrise at Sunset

It's 4 am
I roll over in my
Nest of blankets
Uh oh
I heard the telltale squeak
The broken meow

He stalks into my room
an apricot orange fluff
engulfs
wide green eyes
and a
pink rough tongue

He pads over to my
bed, checking to see
If I am awake
he sees my eyelids flutter

a harumph echoes
from the spot I know
he has jumped up
with his arthritic joints

I feel a paw,
they are silky smooth
pink leathery pads
with long sharp nails

He beats and bats
At my head
He meows and meows
In my ear

Until I finally give in
I stroke his mane
and feel
the tangled bumps of his
knotted fur

I know our time together
is coming closer
and closer to an
end
it is still barely dawn
but I know
deep down
that all sunrises
set

EMILY KLEIN, GRADE 6
SIDWELL FRIENDS SCHOOL

Waiting for Matthew Shepard's Funeral Service at the Washington National Cathedral to Begin

Waiting for Matthew Shepard's funeral service at the Washington National Cathedral to begin I stood in place holding my ground and my processional torch and a woman came down to me she cradled half empty an unlocked ziplock half filled with dirt she asked *are you carrying the torch?* I said *yes* cause I thought I was and let me tell you she looked me dead in my eyes and told me *I can put some of this here dirt in your torch's collar it's from his hometown in Wyoming* I said *ok* only right then and there smack in that moment I knew my torch couldn't be a torch anymore it was something like a heaven and she wasn't just a woman cause she hugged me so tight she had to be an angel and the dust wasn't dirt it was Matthew Shepard it was Wyoming it was a little black boy in Mississippi it was e l e v e n jews in Pittsburgh it was Adam it was Eve it was you it was me so how the hell are you gonna tell me that my torch's flame was just a flame. That's where my itch started. I wasn't really carrying a torch before right then and there but if I carry mine and you yours then we could really go somewhere.

CLARK KLITENIC, GRADE 12
ST. ALBANS 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 2019 judges

GREG MCBRIDE is the author of *Porthole* (Liam Rector First Book Prize for Poetry (Briery Creek Press, 2012) and a chapbook, *Back of the Envelope* (Southeast Missouri State University Press, 2009). His work appears in *Boulevard*, *Gettysburg Review*, *River Styx*, *Salmagundi*, and *Southern Poetry Review*. His awards include the *Boulevard* Emerging Poet prize and grants in poetry from the Maryland State Arts Council. A Vietnam veteran and lawyer, he edits the *Innisfree Poetry Journal*.

MARTHA ADDY YOUNG lives and writes in Washington, DC. She holds an MFA in poetry from the University of Maryland, and has worked as a writer/editor and a writing coach. Most recently she was a finalist for the Larry Neal Writers' Award and won Honorable Mention for the Bellevue Literary Review's Marica and Jan Vilcek Prize for Poetry. She has enjoyed participating in this year's Parkmont Poetry Festival!

LOUISA NEWLIN taught English for about 50 years until she retired in a variety of settings: independent schools in Washington, Brussels, and Nice; as an adjunct at American University; at the College of the Atlantic in Maine as a visiting faculty member for 4 years; and at the Folger Shakespeare Library. At the Folger, one of the courses she developed for high school students was "Shakespeare's Sisters," a study of English poetry by women from the 16th through the 20th century. Although not teaching now, she remains committed to all sorts of poetry.

REUBEN JACKSON is an archivist with the University of the District of Columbia's Felix E. Grant Jazz Archives. From 2013 until 2018, he was host of Friday Night Jazz on Vermont Public Radio. His poems have been published in over 40 anthologies, and in a volume entitled *fingering the keys*, which will be reissued with new poems in October by Alan Squire Press. The volume is called *Scattered Clouds*. His music reviews have appeared in The Washington Post, Jazz Times, Downbeat, Jazziz, the Jazz Journalists Association website, and on National Public Radio's All Things Considered. He taught poetry for 11 years at the Writer's Center in Bethesda, Maryland and taught high school for two years in Burlington, Vermont. He was an archivist and creator with the Smithsonian Institution's Duke Ellington Collection from 1989 until 2009.

An additional debt of thanks

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