2018 Gwendolyn Brooks Youth Poetry Awards

Winning Poems

presented Saturday, August 25, 2018

by

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#GBYPA2018

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#Poetry
I Like...

I like my Mom. I do not like broccoli.
I like my Dad. I do not like tape.
I like brownies. I do not like spiders.
I like chocolate chip cookies. I do not like poisonous frogs.
I like my dog Remmy. I do not like sausage.
I like my kittens. I do not like knives.

“I Like…” by Emily Kleckner (Kindergarten) – Stockton Elementary School, Stockton
Tissue paper flower poem

Sea creature
I hope I get some kids when I get older
Love you

Never no
I want to be a mermaid
You know

The best flower in the world
Shell flower
Mermaid flower

Cold heart of the sea
Love of my life
Heart of my soul

“Tissue paper flower poem” by Sally Weinberg (1st Grade) – Washington Elementary School, Evanston
Lemonade, sweeter than pie,
But also as sour as a lime.
Yellow like the sun,
Cold like the snow.
I would drink it all the time.
It’s refreshing on a summer day,
It gives me the energy to play,
Ode to lemonade.
I wish

The leaves blow
The river flows
I wish I was a fish

The wind howls
The wolves growl
I wish I was the moon

See at night
Wings take flight
I wish I was an owl

I walk
I talk
My life is fun
I wish to be myself

“I wish” by Maggie Phelps (2nd Grade) – Carlinville Primary School, Carlinville
A Jaguar

A Jaguar sits in the grass
And rests.
Breathing quietly.
Sleeping.
Waiting for his meal to come.
Green

A Color Poem

Green.

Green is grass and nature and frogs.

Green tastes like greatness.

Green smells like outside.

Green feels like smooth leaves.

Green looks like Spring.

Green makes me feel energized.

Green is healthy.

“Green” by Weston Haas (2nd Grade) – Stockton Elementary School, Stockton
Skipping in my yard
It solves all my mysteries
No fears and no stress
I am finally free now
In the hot sun of summer

“Untitled” by Miles Gardner (3rd Grade) – Francis W. Parker School, Chicago
Ancient, rusty cars
Drive down the rolling ally
Some Cars play swoon toons
Unsteady as ten speed bumps
And bumpy as waves

“Untitled” by Sascha Keller (3rd Grade) – Francis W. Parker School, Chicago
Deming

Soft breezes push me
Flowers brushing my fingers
A small wonderland
Creatures swimming in the pond
Luscious green grass fills my eyes

“Deming” by Maddy Lehman (3rd Grade) – Francis W. Parker School, Chicago
“Tiny Chicago”

Soaring high in the sky, I looked down at the tiny Chicago. I watched little cars drive on the what seemed to be shrinking roads.
I stared at the flickering lights. And in some way, somehow, I felt like crying. I don’t know why. Maybe it was because I was finally looking at Chicago a different, BEAUTIFUL new point of view. Or maybe I was finally realizing how beautiful the world can be.
I’ll never know.
I looked on.
I swear, I must’ve seen a thousand lights. As we flew up higher, I looked at what was left of Chicago. As far as the human eye can see. I saw clouds, covering tiny lights and buildings. Chicago was gone. I looked up again and saw a bright, full moon. I blinked once, and saw clouds. I blinked again, and once more, saw the moon. It reminded me of how fast something could come, leave, and come back.
“Don’t worry.” I said to myself. “Chicago will be back. Soon.”

“Tiny Chicago” by Abby Ortman (4th Grade) – St. Symphorosa, Chicago
Sleep

Snooze, dream, rest
Doze, catnap, slumber
Sleep all day

“Sleep” by Hailey Broshous (4th Grade) – Stockton Elementary School, Stockton
Setting suns can sparkle,
with dazzling light like no other.
But My Sun always sparkles,
with dazzling light like no other.

My Sun fades from yellow to orange,
as my hands freeze like winter ice.
Softening rays illuminate forgotten clouds,
as My Sun dips lower.

Rays peel off My Sun,
as my vibrant peach drops lower.
My Sun drifts from circle to aura,
as leaves twirl down like helpless parachutists in front of my sunstruck eyes.

A gentle chimney of light,
streaks into view to wish me goodnight.
The hillside tucks the soft rays in,
after My Sun’s journey is done.

Setting suns can sparkle,
with dazzling light like no other.
But My Sun always sparkles,
with dazzling light like no other.

“My Sun” by Lincoln Hamid (5th Grade) – Francis W. Parker School, Chicago
Ashes, remains of another world
Where children would laugh and play

Ashes, my passageway to the past
Exposing what had happened

Ashes, I hold them in my hand
And let the wind blow them away

And just like that they're gone
The past world blown away

And just like that
There's another one to discover

“Ashes” by Amanda Feinberg (5th Grade) – Science and Arts Academy, Des Plaines
America

America known as the land of the free.
America, the land of the not so free.
America, she sees what she wants to see.

America, do you see the systematic inequality that is displayed throughout the justice system?
America, do you see the manipulation of the 2nd amendment; the right to bear arms, and how it is plaguing our communities because of ineffective gun laws?
America, do you see how the police are utilizing these same guns and are killing, black men, black women, and black children freely? When no threat is posed.
America, do you see that Black men are more likely to receive harsher punishment for the same offense than their White counterparts?
America, do you see how women are treated like second class citizens?
America, do you see that over 13 million children experience hunger daily?
America, do you know that you are the land of the free? However, your liberation is not fair and equitable.
America do you see me?

“America” by Kiera Wilson (5th Grade) – UChicago Charter School North Kenwood/Oakland (NKO) Campus, Chicago
Broken Bridge

It was a dark and foggy night,
The hooting of the owls awakened me.
I noticed my father missing,
I went out to search for him.
Instead I found a bridge, plain wooden bridge,
Though it was dark and foggy,
I went on the bridge in search of him
Almost every step creaked….
The bridge was high and when I looked down,
It was a bottomless pit of darkness.
Knowing if I’m not careful, I’ll fall and die.
It was then I realized I never had a father.
The bridge shook violent, it was an earthquake,
I ran.
A board beneath my feet broke, causing me to fall.
I held on to the board next to me,
I tried to pull myself up.
I was too weak….
As I fell, I saw a bright light.
The light was too bright so I blinked.
Next thing I knew, I’m back on the bridge.
I stood up and continued walking while the shaking settled.
I walked to the end of the bridge and the light had disappeared.
I woke up in my extremely comfortable bed as the sun shined on me.
I walked out of the house,
Seeing a broken bridge, an old broken bridge.

“Broken Bridge” by Jacky Liu (6th Grade) – John C Haines Elementary School, Chicago
The Baton

As the conductor starts
to move the stick-like baton,
the musicians get into place
Like a huge wave.

The baton is a wand
that controls all of the instruments.
As we start to play,
the conductor waves the baton,
giving everyone a signal to start
and the music spreads
throughout the entire world.

As the performance nears its end,
the instruments start getting louder and louder
and finally the last note rings in the massive chamber.
We began to stand and move off the stage
like a huge wave.

“The Baton” by Cathy Ye (6th Grade) – John C Haines Elementary School, Chicago
My Desk- The Mess

I look in my desk and what do I find,
A chewed up eraser,
Some cheese on rye,
A stub of a pencil,
An old math quiz,
That got a B minus,
I’m not a whiz.

An old plastic baggie,
A couple post-it notes,
More crumpled up paper,
Last quarters science notes.

Melted chocolate,
Oh what a mess,
A note from the teacher--

CLEAN UP THIS DESK!

“My Desk, The Mess” by Kiana Pan (6th Grade) – Gregory Middle School, Naperville
Dreams at Dusk

Clouds dim
Thunder hymns
Cicadas shout
Children pout
Light fades
Sun betrayed
Sparks fly
Reeds sigh
Wind stills
just until…
Gold dances
Night advances
It's nigh-time
for fireflies

“Dreams at Dusk” by Annika Geiersbach (7th Grade) – The Avery Coonley School, Downers Grove
“6,814,692 Seconds”

Summer is something so familiar to us all. Summer is the taste of the luscious tropical fruit that gratifies our taste buds with each bite. Summer is what motivates us to get through those frigid winters. Summer is cookouts with friends and family to celebrate who knows what, but it gives an excuse to throw a party. Summer is the glutinous sensation of melted popsicles dripping down your arms. Summer is the adjustment between sleeping in silence, to sleeping with the sound of the boisterous air conditioner, humming in the back. Summer is long nights, and late mornings. Summer is deep and well deserved sleep. Summer is the repugnance of inhaling mosquito spray, while you set up the tent in the center of the humid campgrounds. Summer is the burning, peeling skin between your shoulder blades after you get home from the beach and swear that you applied sunscreen every two hours just like it said on the bottle. Summer is the thing that is always approaching but never seems to get here soon enough. Summer is painting your nails so you can finally wear open toed sandals. Summer is ignoring your moms advice to bring sunglasses. Summer is a short escape for adults to travel back to their youth for two and a half months. Summer is listening to the same song on repeat over and over again just because you can. Summer is setting high expectations then slowly drifting further and further away from them, you’re becoming a realist. Summer is the wave of confidence that rushes over you whenever you try something new. Summer can be like Pandora’s Box if you think about it too much.
Summer is that sinking feeling in your stomach when you remember the book report due in three days that you have yet to begin. Summer is 6,814,692 seconds where there will be no news of school shootings. Summer is a breath of fresh air after being underwater for 24,710,400 seconds. Summer was the best 6,814,692 seconds of my life.

“6,814,692 Seconds” by Ava Gates (7th Grade) – William Howard Taft High School, Chicago
The Play

Ball resting on the midfield line,
Awaiting a play.
Hands join together,
The players emerge from the huddle.
The receiver approaches the invisible line,
Creating the barrier between him and the enemy.
Suddenly an energy erupts on the field,
Post route,
Covered,
Audible,
Sprints,
Step by step gaining speed,
Stutter,
Chop,
Past the defender,
Into the end zone,
Anticipating the speeding ball,
Barreling in with wicked speed,
Position the feet,
Leaping up,
Overthrown,
Two hands?
One hand,
Falling back,
Absorbs in hands,
Grasp the pigskin,
Securing the ball,
End zone,
Touchdown.

“The Play” by Owen McGarry (7th Grade) – The Avery Coonley School, Downers Grove
The Life of a Leaf

All year long I watch and pray that summer stays.
I watch as the children grow and play
as the days ease away.

But soon of course summer ends and fall begins.
I can still hear the winds shouting and laughing
at my cruel dispens.

I hate the winds.
I hate the way the soul shaking cold winds bends my limbs.
The ember sun above me shines to warm on a bed of grass.

For now I have no place to call a home;
So I shall continue to go where the seasons roam.
I dance and prance along the lost sea of souls.
We all cry and mourn loudly praying someone hears our crippled voices.

But it's too late, out like a candle here comes a bag.
Like a empty house without a soul to tell the tale.

We are sucked in like a vacuum, into the suffocating darkness.
It surrounds and drowns us in its never ending hollowness.

This
is
the
life
of
a
leaf.

“The life of a leaf” by Clinesha Toliver (8th Grade) – Ball Charter School, Springfield
Flying Free

Just because life
Seems fleeting to another
Doesn't change the fact
That the wind isn't a straight path
And I can take myself anywhere
My deepest desire
Is to make my swift flight bearable
To be one remembered
Who beat their wings against mortality
Who didn't shelter themselves in their wings
And dreamed
Life away

I will live for the sake of flying
In lieu of falling
And no higher being
No outsider of our kind
No god
Or immortal
Who sees us as insignificant
Can change that

So go and fly,
My beautiful birds of a wing
Before you fall into the water of the ocean and drown
Before you become entangled in the wires of humanity
And fall
Before you lose
What could have been yours
Freedom

Fly free

Go

“Flying Free” by Marcos Rodriguez (8th Grade) – The Avery Coonley School, Downers Grove
The Voice

So much depends
Upon
One individual
Voice
Standing outside of
The box
Waiting to be
Heard.

“The Voice” by Libby Dilley (8th Grade) – Franklin Middle School, Springfield
glorious life; first words.
she has stories in her. she has a world of adventures and trials and triumphs and trickling rivers and ticking time bombs and twinkling stars.
she has life inside her. a riveting, beautiful, glorious life.
one where she travels,
feels free,
is accepting of herself, is in love,
and can bear whatever is ahead. she knows she’s a book of life
but she’s really,
very scared
to pick up the pen and start writing.
and yet,
even still,
here she is
writing her first words.

“glorious life; first words” by Jaela McPherson (9th Grad) – South Elgin High School, South Elgin
My colored hair is a mask.

It hides all of my feelings that I have managed to push down to the darkest parts of my thoughts.

This mask hides all of the comments that are made from men in the street.

One strand of blue hair hides your unwanted hand touching my knee.

One strand of purple hair hides the feeling of fear as you hold my arm tighter.

It is hard to run in combat boots and a skirt and you know that.

One strand of pink hair hides your undesirable arm around my shoulder as I try to get away.

This hair is a mask that I need to hide these feelings of invasion.
Another strand of blue hair to mask the feeling of your words as they pass through my thoughts.

As your hand grabs my waist and I try to push away you tell me not to scream.

You look at me like an object.

I try to get away but your grip just tightens.

I want to give up but I know I shouldn't.

My screams are muffled by a hand belonging to a monster.

I blame myself.

My skirt was too short.

I had to much makeup on.

I shouldn't have been alone.
I need this mask to hide the fact that this wasn't my fault.

“My Colored Hair” by Kylie Hinshaw (9th Grade) – Pontiac Township High School, Pontiac
Students who were victims from a school shooting say they don't want to be scared anymore.

“I don't want to think that, at any moment, someone with a gun could walk in and hurt us all.” says, Alessia Mojarrad, a high school senior and student activist.

School shootings are too awful to think about carefully. They make you fall into a trapdoor of depression while thinking about all the innocent lives being taken.

The clap of an AR-15 style rifle is as loud as the applause for the cops getting most of the kids safely out the school.

“Gun Control Laws in America” by Nayzeth Herrera (9th Grade) – George Washington High School, Chicago
When I am asked where my home is, I hesitate.  
I was born in Liverpool  
a city in the northwest of England.  
I was partially raised there.  
I’ve lived in a tiny town called Kidderminster  
and I was raised there too;  
but not long enough for me to consider it home.

I now live in Aurora,  
and though it’s the closest I’ve ever gotten  
to calling a city home,  
can someone truly find home after sixteen years of living?  
Is home where I was born? Where I was raised?  
Or where I choose it to be?  
I’ve been told different things and I haven’t made my mind up.

Every time that I question my belonging,  
I bring myself back to this:  
I’m in my English classroom.  
We’re studying exile  
and we’re reading this passage from Edward Said.  
He says I have an “unhealable rift”  
between myself and my native place  
but if I go back it won’t feel the same  
and I’m being told I won’t ever feel like I have a home.

And maybe it’s true.  
Because I have a house and I have a body that I inhabit  
but some days I feel like a stranger in my own house  
and some days I feel like a ghost in my own skin  
and those are the days when I say “I want to go home”

And for most of my life,  
I’ve tried to make a home out of wherever I’ve planted my feet,  
no matter how shaky or stable the ground has been.  
I’ve tried to make homes out of apartments  
and people / and hotels / and theaters.  
For most of my life,  
I’ve been told that home was wherever I inhabited  
but home also had to be my native place  
but home also had to be somewhere that I was happy.
When I am asked where my home is
I hesitate to give a one word answer.
Because between my stuttered explanations
and my moments of self doubt
I face the fact that everyday I defy what I was told.
I chose where my home was.
I chose Stage Left of the theater I work in,
I chose my mother, I chose Aurora.
I’m making a lovely home out of my own flesh and bone
slowly but surely.

Today, if I question my belonging, I bring myself back to this:
Make homes out of more than houses;
make homes out of the things you love.

“More Than Houses” by Elle Morson (10th Grade) – Waubonsie Valley High School, Aurora
Coal in a Hamper

My mother tells me to be careful with electricity. She had just come back from inspecting a mine when she told me that coal is precious. She had seen its wide face still in the earth. Said the soot seemed to sparkle around it.
The size of the coal was bigger than her arms.
I almost drop the chip of it she brought home.

I see none of my flaws in this unreflective rock but the weight of it lasts in my shoulders forcing me to push them back.
This rock does not tell me that the weight of being a daughter is stacked in laundry baskets.

One time when I was small enough not to make sounds on the floorboard I saw my mother put her folded secrets into the rinse cycle. Washing them clean of memories that stuck like soot to coal.
I wonder, as a daughter, am I supposed to learn how to bury my problems?

My mother and I have a different idea of how daughters should act Even if she wishes I learned to do laundry like she does could she recognize that she wants her own secrets strong enough to take the shock of the dryer

I hear my mother tell me, the secrets she had whispered into the washing machine:
*Kyla, you won’t ever be strong enough to face the world if you won’t tell yourself, that being nice won’t stop people from taking advantage of you. That avoiding conflict won’t stop you from inviting toxic people in your life, because you have a constant need to fix things.*
I look at her, my arms static-ed to my sides telling her everything she needed to know.
*And how do I fix that?*

“Coal in a Hamper” by Kyla Pereles-Strickler (10th Grade)– Oak Park and River Forest High School, Oak Park
Violence
It grips us with hands that are soothing and cold
It comes over us abruptly with no remorse
A first responder that fans the flames instead of
putting them out
It is a relief and a terror for both the possessor and
the beholder
It separates monsters from men, and men from God
The check on humanity and its power, but the bane
of its existence
The driving force behind the fight for equality,
and the exact reason it will not be obtained
The solver of issues, and instigator of more
A world without violence is a world without sin;
But these are both fairy tales until the ultimate
change is upon us
Until then we’ll continue to pursue the light,
while unwittingly leaving darkness in our wake

“Violence” by Sam Abbey (10th Grade) – East Peoria Community High School, East Peoria
Hail to the janitor!
Who unfalteringly aims his weapon at our invisible enemy,
The one that cursed humanity for centuries, scrubs him away
As if it was nothing, nothing at all, and after
The celebration is over, the confetti and soda cans left
In the bleachers
Disappear
(Thanks to him.)

Hail to the janitor!
Nobody has seen him take a break, he might as well stay-
Only a tiny room is there to greet him- along with his aching back
And he sighs, justifying the hollow promises he was told
That made him cross the roaring seas
He can't go back to embrace them-his passport was seized
For his wife, his son, his daughter,
He sings through the storms
(Every day).

Hail to the janitor!
The uniformed hero who protects everyone is hidden away in
The plain sight of day, and the whispers he hears- insults
Standing alone in the grocery line, and the television screen
The faceless company who took him away, thankless pay,
Yet, he still somehow smiles!
As if it was nothing, nothing at all, and after
The day is over he can't sleep
Stares at the ceiling
(And dreams).

“The Toil of Honor” by Zoe Becker (11th Grade) – Streamwood High School, Streamwood
The Linden Purple Line

There’s a platform between us and-
All I have to do is cross but-
I can’t find the will
To leave the train
To move my body from the blue seats covered in crumbs
To make that small jump from me to you

Linden and Howard
The doors always close,
Just as you run up to them
The trains never wait for you to get on
Get on

They just leave you there
On the platform
In the cold
Trying to get what warmth you can
From the heat lamp above your head
That feels like a hairdryer on full blast
Concentrated at the center of your head

Noyes Foster … Main South Boulevard
At Howard all passengers must exit the train

Somehow it’s so much easier to leave
The train is always waiting for me
On the other side of the platform
Loop Red Line
North/Clybourn

“The Linden Purple Line” by Kara Kowalski (11th Grade) – Lincoln Park High School, Chicago
if i were to write a poem about my grandmother
i wouldn't need to inject it with meter and structure to give it a beat
because she is already full with the rhythm of the heart
through the numbingly cool pads of a stethoscope

she is the midnight run on a westbound train
she is the culture tucked away between the folds of her immigration papers
she is the reticence she observes to mask her accent
so neighbors' tongues won't lash too harshly

she is the cold cream she lathers on her skin like a prayer
to fool the Lord into thinking she's young, or at least herself
she is the soft probing hands on my stomachache
"where does it hurt?"
and the listening ear when the pain's location isn't physical

she is lithuania, she is america, she is chicago, south side
she is the poetry inherent in a kiss on the cheek
she is the memory that burns warm as five winters slip us by
she is the love that neither death nor time has stolen from me

“No Need For a Eulogy” by Gina Wiste (11th Grade) – Benet Academy, Lisle
I am 8 years old
Zipping through the 2nd grade like a hummingbird hovering over my harvest
Filled with daisy chains and dandelion crowns because even weeds can be beautiful in the sunshine
That wraps its warmth around me like a baby blanket
8 years old is day camp and block parties
8 years old is a storybook
Gabriel Taye was 8 years old
Flittering through the 2nd grade like a canary with its wings clipped
Locked in an ivory cage
Slamming against it’s confines walls over and over and over again
Like being thrown down on that ivory white bathroom tile
Like laying there unconscious
For 20 minutes
Gabriel Taye did not get to reap his harvest
He will never craft daisy chains or dandelion crowns or crave the mustard sun
He didn’t get tie dye
Or kiddie pools in the front yard
He will never be there to retell his supposed to be storybook 2nd grade
Or
See…
I am 10 years old
Frolicking through the 5th grade like a foal in a vacant valley
Just spelling tests and multiplication tables
10 years old is keeping in crushes and quitting piano lessons
10 years old is fiction
Ashawnty Davis was 10 years old
Limping through the 5th grade like a horse with a broken leg
And the ground is gravel and the gravel is rough and hot and scratching up her feet
Alienation feeling like damnation
Like ‘get out’
‘no seriously’
Like a video
Of a fight
Lost
Leading to a belt and a closet and a chair and a snap and two weeks of life support and
She didn’t get soft
Or fiction
Or...
I am 12 years old
Searching for a lick of guidance in the wilderness of 7th grade
Like a bunny who lingered too long and now is lost from its fluffle
And middle schoolers are vultures
Waiting for a waft of weakness so they can feed their wake
But I find my flopping hopping escape when the green grass touches my toes
Because 12 years old is the escape
12 years old is the sandpapersoft of a kits tongue
12 years old is based on a true story
Mckenzie Philpot was 12 years old
Crying out for her forgotten family on the concrete
And the vultures are present
Feasting on her being like hits and kicks and cracks against fences in our school playground
Where her swing sang sorrowful things
Like “Would you miss me?”
“Would your heart drop when you heard it was suicide?”
She never found the sweet that follows bitter
She will never know her based on a true story life
Like she should have
Like
I am 17 years old
Jetting through the 12th grade like an airplane trying to land in a blizzard
But
The snow is sparkling, brilliant
With late nights and cast off confessions
17 years old is the bittersweet melody of just one last song
17 years old is non-fiction
These kids will never know 17
They will never hear the haunting hummmm of their airship’s engines indecisiveness
They will never understand what’s stranger than fiction
They kicked that to the dust
With a rope
Or some pills
Just for the pain
Because…
Bunnies, or foals, or hummingbirds can’t fly planes
They would have succumbed under the pressure of the air whipping around them
So instead they stayed stuck whimpering under their weeping willows
I am
You are 17 years old
And you are going to land this plane
And dust the snow off your collar
You will land this plane

“Never Non – Fiction” by Cleo Shine (12th Grade) – Senn High School, Chicago
An Ocean Away

My grandfather’s remains sit an ocean away from us, perhaps in a jar waiting to be buried. Tidal waves swell in my stomach to the orbit of the moon, and I am just another puppet in its show of grief.

I do not know my grandfather’s voice. All I know is the quiet of my own father’s lips in his absence to see his father again in his final form of nature: black smoke and ashes.

We are so far away from homeland, grasping at single threads to keep us bound keep us from drifting too far.

Maybe if they sprinkle bits of my grandfather into the saltwater, thousands of aquatic miles away, it will find its way to me one day. In a brewing tsunami, he is waiting for me. An ocean between me and home; I want to go home.

“An Ocean Away” by Haley Cao (12th Grade) – The Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts), Chicago
My City

Skittles taste the rainbow of my city lines...
red,
   blue,
   green,
   brown,
   pink,
   purple & yellow

The L' Train
my city segregated
my city is both love
   and hate
you shouldn't mix the two but somehow they mate
my city Chicago
my city Chiraq
young niggas on the block out there sellin' crack
my city bold
my city cold
my city chicago
my county cook
my city cops
my city crooks
my city skyline
my city sexy....
my city is into it with my city
my city's hurt and bruised,
abused
my city only looks out for my city
my city streets
Lake,
   Halsted,
Western, Madison, Stony,
Exchange
my city winters
my city blisters
my city summers
my city purge
my city moves
my city grooves
my city schools
my city tools
my city mass incarcerates
they perpetrate,
    annihilate
my city gangbangs
my city capone,
my city larry hoover,
my city chief malik,
my city bobby gore
my city chief keef
my city raps
my city storms
my city can't blink,
your city snores.

“My City” by Denzel B. (12th Grade) – Nancy B. Jefferson Alternative School / Free Write Arts & Literacy, Chicago
Ode To Bouncy Balls

Your luxurious colors swirl from your surface,
Staining my fingertips with the paint of everything you are,
Making me, Everything I am.
Your mark leaves acrylic stains,
On the ends of everything I touch,
Dripping slowly off the ends of my paintbrush fingers,
Dying the world in hues unnatural to their canvas,
and running down in watery drips,
From generation to generation.
Pigmented splatters splash from the bottom of your everlasting shape,
Onto wrinkled and cracked hands,
Dried out and brittle bristles,
And rejuvenate artists who forgot who they are.

“Ode to Bouncy Balls” by Marliese Ruch (12th Grade) – Oswego High School, Oswego
For more information and to submit an entry for next year, visit https://www.ilhumanities.org/poetry.