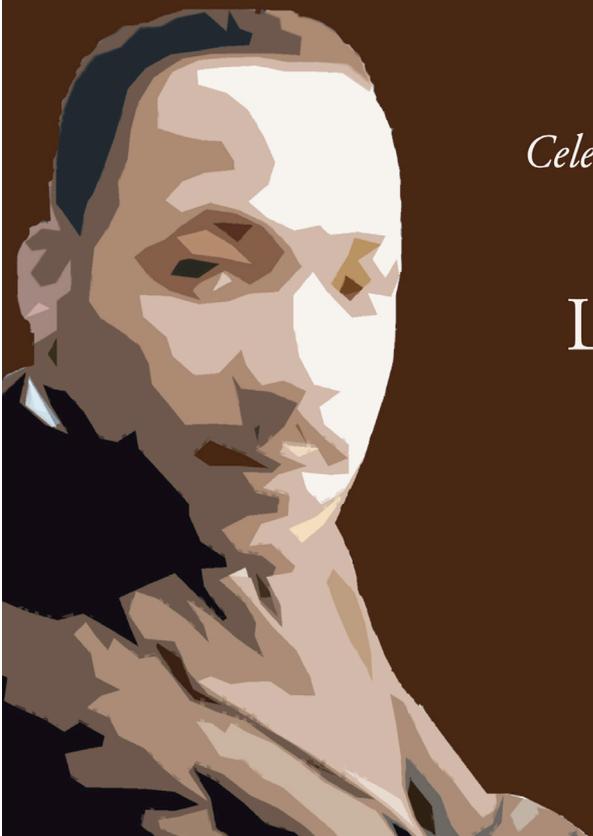




DREAM



Celebrate

Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr.

January 21, 2008

Carnegie Mellon
designed by Neha Tharte '08

2008 MLK CREATIVE WRITING
AWARDS

The Carnegie Mellon University
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gratefully thanks you and the
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HIGH SCHOOL POETRY FIRST PLACE

Madeline Chandler

Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts

Krissy and Chris

My teacher sat him
next to me. I will not
sit next to him. He
dresses so weirdly. I
bet he's in a gang.
I can not sit next to him.

**I can't sit next to that girl.
I hate some teachers. They
think they can put me
wherever they want. I'm not
sitting next to some white girl.**

I won't be able to focus in
class. She hasn't moved me yet.
I won't pass the class. If I don't
pass the class I won't get
into college. If I don't get
into college it will be all his fault.
I bet he doesn't even know what
college is.

**I think she thinks I'm stupid. I have
gotten straight As for my entire life.
I bet she just hangs out
at the mall all the time trying
to figure out if she can
dye her hair any blonder.**

What if he tries to shoot me? We're reading a book about slavery. He glares at me every day. I can't sit next to him anymore. Why can't they move me?

We're reading about slavery. She looks at me every day. We are 200 years past this. We need to learn about it for the common good. Ignorant girls.

He's left-handed. I have never met a person who is left-handed. I wanted to ask him about it. Then I remembered who he is.

Her hair is so straight. It always falls back into one position. Straight and long and down to her shoulders. None of my friends have hair that does that. They usually just pull it back.

The only earrings that anyone I know wears are gauges. He doesn't wear gauges. He wears earrings and they are big and diamonds. I wonder if they're heavy. My earrings aren't, but mine aren't nearly that big. I can't focus in class because of that big diamond. He's gonna make me fail.

She stares at me all of the time. I don't want her staring at me. She's probably trying to find some dumb rumor to start about me. Every day right before the bell rings she does the same thing. She checks her makeup, fixes her hair, and puts lip gloss on. She's probably doing it so when she goes out in the hall she can prove she's the prettiest.

I talked to him today. He asked me "what's good?" I think that means "what's up?" God, he's so weird. I wanted to ask him what he meant but instead I just glared at him. I can't talk to him.

I tried to be nice to her. But she proved to me exactly what I already knew. White girls think they're better than everyone else. I can't believe I thought she was intriguing. She's so predictable.

I am so scared to talk to this person.

HIGH SCHOOL POETRY RUNNER UP:

Luke Rifugiato

Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts

The Terrorist

He has one of those little beards,
the kind that starts at the middle of your neck,
and stops right before the chin like a shoreline.
Little patches of dark hair make up the shells dotting
the sand of his face.

He has the look of a young adult, 18 or so,
his mouth shows rebellion but his wide eyes get white with fear.
The airport crowds part slightly for him, not like Moses,
more like a rock jutting out of a waterfall interrupting everything.
Every time he speaks a world, people jerk their heads to the sounds of
ping-pong vowels in absolute terror.

They see him and avert their stare, looking at some distant
object as if he didn't exist at all.

They can't help it, they are just afraid of him. No one knows
what color warning level they're on today,
but it's always bright and they are supposed to fear orange.
Walking behind the boy, I can just barely see his face as the
crowd parts for the two of us. I can see that he wants to lash out,
to scream, to swing a punch at everyone in front of him.
All he does, however, is sit down and silently cry.

HIGH SCHOOL POETRY RUNNER UP

Olivia Meyer

Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts

The Language of My Face

A voice rings in my ears.
It tells me I'm not American,
speaking words of self-doubt.
It does not speak hate.

People on the streets speak in my native tongue,
not the "Universal Language."
I don't speak in greed or fury,
I speak in heritage and identity.

My language.
Expression through my bright green eyes
and dark tired skin.
Our dictionary needs no letters.

Our words are images,
a woman holding her baby
My husband kissing my cheek.
Happiness is our language.

My country echoes poverty and hunger,
not lies and war.
I do not speak English,
and I am proud.

A poor man in rags on the street,
he is all of us, begging for understanding
From the corporate black suits.
We grasp at the pants of those standing.

A quick message in a coded cloak,
I cannot understand.
I see the letters flash in front of me;
they try to hold me back.

Standing at a endless building,
watching my reflection grimace.
I don't fit in with my background,
I will not step on those below me.

A hospital filled with victims,
each part of my family.
Linked to my veins,
diagnosing themselves as victims of hate.

My language does not define me,
it does not limit me to my country.
Speaking for my past, but not my present,
speaking for my face, but not my heart.

I will not judge other people,
by their nation, speech, or skin.
I will not listen to only one language,
but instead, the heart that beats within.

Where I was born decides my language
but cannot define my brain or my abilities.
You decide what is the "Universal Language"
I decide not to speak in hate.

HIGH SCHOOL POETRY RUNNER UP:

Hannah Tuchin

Pittsburgh High School for the Creative and Performing Arts

88

I was thinking of the time we walked down

Second Avenue with the rusted buildings

surrounding us and you carrying a sign with big

black letters, “Don’t like gay marriage? Don’t get one.”

Do you remember the shouts that rang

from the avenue down to the point

where all three rivers meet, turning into the Ohio

that I’ve always thought ran into the Mississippi?

The shouts of “screw gays” and “ain’t no queers coming here”

rang from the lips of men with shaven heads

that glistened with sweat as we walked in front

of Heinz Hall, parallel to the Allegheny River.

One had a red swastika tattooed on the back of his neck

and the spit that came out of his mouth as he yelled landed

on the pavement next to your feet, and you looked at me,

lowering your sign slightly. I reached for your hand.

HIGH SCHOOL POETRY RUNNER UP:

Mauricia Turner

Schenley High School

THE WEAPON OF LOVE

We must use the weapon of love
So all of us can stand strong
We must use the weapon of love
When others do wrong
We must use the weapon of love
When there is hatred in the world
We must use the weapon of love
Like how Dr. King once did before
We must use the weapon of love
Violence is never the answer to no situation
We must use the weapon of love
Violence only hurt people and yourself
We must use the weapon of love
Hate cannot drive out hate
We must use the weapon of love
Only the power of love can shut out the most hatred
We must use the weapon of love
Dr. King always use the weapon of love
Threw racism, segregation, and hatred
We must use the weapon of love
We need to keep Dr. King's legacy alive
We must use the weapon of love

HIGH SCHOOL POETRY HONORABLE MENTION:

Devin Ghafoor

Pittsburgh Perry High School

We Together

Am I White

Or am I Black

Why is this such an important fact?

Race should not matter you see

I just want to be labeled as me

All that matters is who you are

But people seem to take color too far

My greatness comes within and it

Shouldn't have anything to do with my skin

The world we live in today

Seems to believe racism is ok

I will not pay attention

I will not fight

I will just do what is right

It does not matter if I'm black or white

It only matters that my future is bright

A head start in school, means a head start in life

So what's the difference between black and white?

It's just a color, a race, a familiar face

So why do we discriminate, stereotype and hate?

It's because we're human, we all make mistakes

This one is big and others are small

We all make racial remarks, after all

The white man whose-life is good and great

And then the black man, whose life, is bad and faint

The Indian who can't get a clue or a job

And Italians affiliated with mobs

The Iraqi who you think, has a bomb

All the way to Mexicans, dirty and raw.

So why can't we become one together?

Love one another and cherish each other?

I hope you see, after today
That we together, are one in the same.

HIGH SCHOOL POETRY HONORABLE MENTION:

Markia Purdom

Schenley High School

A Friend and I

A friend and I shop at a store,

The cashier stares at me and ignores her.

A friend and I ate at a restaurant,

The waiter stares at me and ignores her.

A friend and I ride on a bus, the bus driver stares at

me and ignores her.

A friend and I commit a crime,

The police stares at me and ignores her

A friend and I stand in front of the judge,

justice

stares at her and ignores me.

HIGH SCHOOL PROSE FIRST PLACE: “The Definition of Who I Am”

By Adam Saad

Winchester Thurston High School

In the past few years, the threat of terrorism has gone through many color changes. As terror rose, so did fear. America identifies Arab with terrorism. In many forms of popular media, such as movies and television shows, Arab people or people who slightly resemble Arab people, are stereotypically represented as “terrorists,” “AlQaeda,” or “Ahmed.” These portrayals of Arab people have them represented as either antagonists or as a source of comedy. Even I found humor in many of the common stereotypes of Arab people. With my friends, I would jokingly talk in the stereotypical voice of an Arab person, complete with bad grammar, misused words, and a heavy accent. My friends would laugh, and I would laugh along with them. However, the reality of what these seemingly innocuous stereotypes can do is something that I am more than familiar with.

I am half-Egyptian and half-Chinese. My Chinese relatives live in New York, and I used to visit them quite often. However, after 9/11 my father decided that we would no longer travel to New York. When I asked him why, he simply stated that he was afraid of what people might do to us if they found out that we were Middle Eastern, afraid of people that did not know us and would simply pick out our last name and identify us as terrorists. We have not been to New York since.

Even in Pittsburgh, where we have lived for the past thirteen years, my father avoids bringing attention to his Middle Eastern origins. He has adopted the pseudonym of “Sam,” which he derived from his Egyptian name “Essam,” further declining into his false persona, he claims that he is from Greece. This is not a joke. This is the story of a man who left his country to immigrate to America, and now he does not tell people his real name or what country he is actually from. One day a young girl asked me if I had any family in Greece. I had no response. I was completely unprepared for this question because I had never given my father’s

alter-ego any real consideration. I was faced with a moral dilemma: whether I should lie and disavow my heritage or whether I should tell the truth and destroy the image that my dad had built up in our community. I chose to lie. I talked about how I had a family there and how they grew olives, none of which was true. Afterwards, I reflected on what I had just done and what it must feel like for my father to keep up this charade every day. I thought of all of the jokes that I had made about Arabs, and how they no longer seemed funny. It all came down to a question of identity and how I defined myself.

Am I Greek or Arab? I thought about this for a long time and tried to identify what I was. While pondering this question I was engaged in conversation with a man who coincidentally asked me where I was from, guessing that I was Puerto Rican. Still troubled in conflict, I answered that I was Chinese, again supplementing my actual ethnicity with a more commonplace ethnicity. I do not normally see myself as Chinese because, for the past six years, I have had few conversations with my Chinese relatives. Since I had stopped visiting New York, my primary identity of myself was Arab, until now. If I tell people that I am Greek then their perception of me is that I am Greek. This does not make me Greek, but to everyone else, that is what I am. Is my identity based on how I see myself or how other people see me? To many of the people in my community, I am Greek. To my friends, family, and myself, I am Arab.

I found that the definition of myself must be defined by me and that the opinions of others are irrelevant. Let them come with their slurs, their jokes, and their insults. I do not feel anger towards them, only pity. I am Arab, and I neither fear nor care about what repercussions this may have. My jokes towards Arab people now have new meaning. Rather than finding them to be funny, I now find them to be a mockery of what it means to be an Arab person and of the difficulties that many Arab people must endure. It is my opinion that the bias that many people feel towards people of Middle Eastern origins is only a response reaction towards what people have perceived from The War on Terror, the terrorist villains in movies, and the comical Arab foreigners. I hope that people will

move past this and become more understanding. More understanding of what it means to be equal. I quote Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address, "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection." I feel that this is true and that we as a society should have learned from the one hundred plus years that it has been since Lincoln gave this speech. No one should ever have to pretend that they are someone else or change their name because of where they come from, and this applies to all people, regardless of their ethnic background.

HIGH SCHOOL PROSE

FIRST PLACE: "Sunday Morning in the Hill District"

By Morgan Gilbreath

Winchester Thurston School

It was a cool sunny morning on my side of town that particular Sunday. It was early spring, with the gradual homecoming of the singing birds and the slow return of color to the landscape of trees outside of my window. I was normally sluggish every Sunday morning, for it was my only precious time for relaxation. But on this certain Sunday, I did not linger in my bed an extra hour as I normally did, breathing in the deep aroma of brewing coffee that drifted its way throughout my creaking house. On some strange impulse inside of me, I instead woke up quite early, and promptly dressed as the sun outside rose in the sky. On this peculiar whim, I snatched my camera from the corner of my shadowy room, loaded it with black and white film, and made my way to the Hill District. My entire life, the Hill District had always peaked my interest for some reason that I do not know. Every day, my school bus made it's way through the area of town. With my eyes glued to the window, I would admire the freedom and culture brewing within this crumbling neighborhood overflowing with history. I had never in my life seen anywhere so unique, so real in its urban beauty. As I made my way there, the loud rumble of the rushing street beneath my car as I drove began to prepare my still tired and quiet self for the vibrant life I was about to encounter that morning.

When I arrived in there, an energetic environment greeted me. Because it was Sunday, I found myself in a different Hill District that the one I had always admired on my school-bound weekdays. As the bright sky shined down onto the gray sidewalks, people walked down the street, dressed in their Sunday best, on their way to church. They walked down the road, with smiles on their faces, meeting friends and family along the way, greeting them with hugs and kisses and loud laughter. I specifically remember a large woman, her black skin beautifully wrinkled with age, standing on the church steps in a green sequin get-up, singing a church hymn and clapping her hands, smiling with her heart for all

to see. Cars advanced down the road, constantly slowing down to honk their horns at others, greeting both friends and strangers in this lovely hustle and bustle of Sunday morning.

Walking down the cracked pavement, camera in my pale white hand, I felt somewhat out of place in my quiet disposition. I timidly made my way past rather economically suffering homes and streets crowded with smiling faces. I suddenly felt ashamed of my crisp clean clothes, plain blonde hair, and fortunate lifestyle. But nonetheless, I began to snap pictures.

Down the road from the swarming church, I visited a sight familiar to me from my bus route. The New Granada Theater was an old venue in which countless jazz and blues legends first played. Since closed, the rusting art-deco facade of the theater still shone in fading colors. Numerous signs were pasted up on its boarded up doors with messages such as “We will never forget you, August Wilson.”

I could hear the faint church music from down the street as I gradually began to get into my photographer mode, losing consciousness of all of my surroundings, now seeing the world only through my camera’s viewfinder. “The New Granada!” A man behind me on the street suddenly paused beside me, breaking my temporary photographic nirvana. He was a large, round black man with a gray beard, honest brown eyes, and a warm smile. “I remember when this place first opened up,” he began to reminisce. “It was the place to be! I remember coming here every Saturday night, back when I was a young man. Did you know that back then, this was the only place a black man like me could come to dance? Hard to believe, isn’t it?” I smiled, eagerly absorbing every word this man spoke as he continued, telling me about the musical legends that he had the once-in-a-lifetime chance to see at the New Granada. The images I had captured on my film were suddenly brought to life because of this man’s vivid recollections.

I next made my way to a tiny, isolated park situated in an empty lot between some houses. It was not a traditional park, with shining benches, crisp green grass, and neatly trimmed hedges. This park, in all honesty, could be mistaken for a junkyard when seen from afar. But as I entered the park, I realized that it was

all artwork, a tiny urban haven of whimsical magic. Scattered throughout the empty lot were little areas encircled with rocks, containing plywood splattered with paint and old bicycle parts propped up and arranged in a beautiful composition. Hanging off of these sculptures were tiny strings of broken glass that glistened in the sun and tinkled delicately in the soft wind.

With the cool morning dew still adorning the yellow grass of the park, I again snapped my camera every which way, capturing the enchanting world before me. “You’re not taking pictures of us are you?” asked a woman sitting on a rusted white metal bench with an old man. “Oh no I am not,” I replied, “Don’t worry!” The woman smiled, “Alright dear, thank you.” I continued to take pictures around these two people enjoying the day on that bench as they talked together, catching up on the local gossip. Then, the man, with the large tree above him reflected in his dark glasses, began to talk to me, “Do you know the story of this park?” I shook my head. He began to tell me about a man, whose name I regret to say I have since forgotten, who lived across the street from this lot and began to decorate the empty spot with objects, often trash, that he found in the neighborhood. He was a creative spirit, finding joy in the small details of the slowly transforming park. “He was quite clever.” The man told me. “Do you see that big tree branch over there?” He pointed to a large old tree branch, knotted and soft with age, lying on the dry grass. “Look closer.” As I drew nearer, I noticed what the man was talking about. Carved into the wood were a pair of eyes and the pointed mouth of a snake. The branch was not just a tree. It was suddenly transformed before my eyes into a large, hissing snake quietly slithering its way across the Hill. “That is the kind of thing this man did,” The man on the bench added. The woman beside him continued, informing me of how the amazing creator of this park did not technically own the vacant lot that he transformed, and the city wanted to built over the area. “But we are still fighting,” she said with confidence in her eyes. They asked me if I went to the Art Institute, a question often asked of me for reasons I do not understand. I told them no, that I was only in high school but wanted to someday be a photographer. “Good for you! Follow your dreams,” they said to me kindly.

“You are a good kid. You can do it.” I loved the fact that these complete strangers still took the time to talk to and encourage me. Thanking them, I left the tiny magical park. I walked past the fanciful recycled sculptures, out onto the sidewalk where people greeted each other with boisterous laughter, and returned to my car. On my way back to my quiet and plain home, I reflected on my sunny morning of taking photographs. The welcoming and pleasant environment on the Hill District had put me in a positive mood. I realized if we could make every day, every place like Sunday morning in the Hill District, our world would be a much better place. We should greet everyone, both friends and strangers, with equal enthusiasm and friendliness. We must find the courage to find happiness, even when our dilapidated surroundings are crumbling around us. We must honor and take pride in our history, never letting it become forgotten. We should find joy in small details and not fear being our unique selves. We must have the courage to do as we please, whether it be creating a beautiful makeshift park or dancing and singing in the street. Driving away under the brilliant blue sky, I took a little piece of that Sunday morning joy from the Hill District with me forever.

RUNNER UP: “X-Box Live and I”

By Ben Charley

Winchester Thurston High School

I’m not what most people call a gamer. I’m heavily involved in sports, even though it doesn’t feel like that at all right now. Anyway, during the first three months of school, I must’ve played only about four hours of video games total. Probably about 4.8 hours of that time was spent on my first generation Xbox, (that is to say that it is not an Xbox 360). About two of those hours spent playing on my Xbox were spent on Xbox Live, an online platform where gamers can game together in real time. One feature of Xbox Live is that friends can group up and continually play in the same matches as their friends, rather being assigned random people to play against. Another feature is that users can chat via a headset, something that comes in the initial subscription package along with a one-year subscription to Xbox live. It is this feature that perplexed me about six months after I’d bought a year’s subscription to Xbox live.

Ok, so my friends and I played used to play Xbox live for hours on end. During matches there was always some pre-game and post-game talk chatter about, well, about stuff. The topics ranged from intellectual, to relationships, to trash talking players, to accusing others of cheating (which was an issue) but the conversation was usually friendly. If someone (usually sounded to be around ten years old) said they were new and needed tips and or help in anyway, people would respond in a helpful manner. As time wore on, however, I would notice a few players would just be rude for no real reason. They might single someone out, just talking trash, but then they would progress their verbal abuse to lower and lower standards. By that I mean rants that usually involve liberal usage of racial epithets. Over time, I noticed, and I was not the only one: These occurrences happened a more and more frequently, (one in about six games played).

What bothered me the most is that younger and younger kids became the ones throwing racial epithets over the gaming interface and more often. I saw things like this, “if that’s how they’re

going to be, then that's how they're going to be." to tell the truth, I've never run into anyone who used language like that who was good at the game. Besides, I could just mute them the instant they got to be annoying. Even better, the option to walk away, or leave the match was at my fingertips, just the press of a button. One distinct instance that stays in my head is when one time when I heard a kid, calling another a stupid bitch, making threats, -throughout which he must have used the n-word every seven to ten words- and so on and so forth. He sounded young, so I switched on my headset, and said, "Excuse me? How old are you?" He replied that he was ten, and then proceeded to ask why I would want to know; (all of which was interlaced with swears and the like), I proceeded to mute him and continue in the game. I ended up being placed with him on the same team, (where he proceeded to team-kill everyone in the match every chance that he got). Of course, we ended up booting him from the game, but it really made me think. I rather think it disturbed me. I wondered how and I wondered why. My conclusion to this day is really more of an excuse. I'm not the only one who has noticed the decline in civility on Live, of course. Numerous articles have been published asking Microsoft to fix this problem. An independent study, shows the percent of epithets used on Xbox live, the results show that about 9 percent of "bad words" used on Live are racial epithets. Fortunately, Microsoft has upped security, making it a lot easier to permanently ban people from Xbox live for verbally attacking people, (and cheating) another post laments Xbox live's poor state, saying:

"I'm saddened by racial profanity making up 9% of the total. Considering the nature of play, we can assume two types of situations in which someone would use an epithet: after hearing another player and making an assumption about his/her race, and thus making a pointed attempt at racism; or just as a general profanity, which would continue a messed up trend I've noticed of racial epithets becoming just another word in someone's everyday vocabulary. You wouldn't believe the number of times I've heard someone say something like "That dumb nigger..." about anyone, regardless of their race, when they mean "That guy is so stupid." It's despicable

in either use, and the fact that this guy found such comments making up essentially one out of every ten uses of profanity is damning to our culture at large. This isn't about judging gamers on the whole by the actions of a few, but about getting a look at a cross-section of the population without the sort of "make myself look good" bias that would impact a direct survey. I don't know when it happened, why it happened, or how to change it. I just know I'm ashamed to know it's happening in my day and age, and largely from my generation. ?"(by dan, at 02/10/06 11 :46 AM).

One gamer posted on a comment wall on an article about language on Xbox live:

"I used to have the mouth of a sailor, until I just got sick of cursing all the time. I think gamers curse a lot because they're younger and ignorant. It's a fairly new thing to them, and some don't get to do it too often in the home. I know my dad would've beat the hell out of me back in the day if I let one loose." (by BigManZam at 02/10/06 05:50 PM).

What made my particular experience noteworthy, I do not know, I had seen people cussed out on Live before, I had heard racial epithets used on Xbox live before, mostly, and this is the sad part, to get laughs out of other gamers. Most of the older people on Live who used those words I was able to excuse as bigots, under educated people who would never amount to anything or people who just didn't know what wasn't funny and what was. It may have been the way he phrased things without hesitation, without a doubt, truly meaning what he said, it may have been my particular mood that day that made it strike me as disturbing, but I think the real reason was because it had shattered the way that I looked at people. I just thought humans had more chances to be open to new things than that kid did.

RUNNER UP: “Mine Eyes Have Seen the Reality of Dr. King’s Dream: As seen through the eyes of a teen”

By Rasheda Nikole Hosey
Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School

On the eve of a protest march for striking garbage workers in Memphis, Tenn., Dr. King gave this speech, “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” ~ April 3, 1968, on the day before his assassination.:

“Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the promise land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know, that we, as a people will get to the promise land. And I’m happy; I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord!”

I was born in Pennsylvania, in 1990. The majority of the African American History, as I know it, has come from the history books, school and talks with my Mom and Grandmother. Therefore, I would not have been around to see my grandfather being sprayed in the face with mace, by police officers, for refusing to disperse, from a Sanitation Workers Protest March in Memphis, Tennessee. And I definitely would not have been around to be an eye witness to the way my Mom was discriminated against as a young child.

As told by my Mom and Grandmother, my Mom was born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee during the very early sixties, a time when social injustices were very common. One incident, in particular, happened when my mom was in elementary school. One particular school morning, the school Nurse, Mrs. Hill and her assistant, Mrs. Jackson proceeded to load six students into the back of a big, bright and shiny red Chevy Impala. As they drove

through downtown Memphis, the atmosphere in the car was light and cheerful. Suddenly, my mom noticed Mrs. Hills' voice had become nervous, as she tried to speak above the nosey chatter, among the students. "We are going to play game children." My mom could hear the trembling in her voice. "Quickly, on the count of three, everyone put your heads down and close your eyes very tight and don't open them until I tell you to." She quickly begins to count. My mom could feel the car accelerating, as Mrs. Hill sped through the nosey area of town. My mom was a little unhappy about playing this game; she knew something was not right about it. Being the inquisitive and curious child she was, she knew something was about to happen, she felt the fear in Mrs. Hills' voice. She could not remain passive, her curiosity was killing her, so she slightly raised her head just enough to see that the other four students did not have their heads down.

In fact, they were all looking out of the window at the commotion on the street. My mom glanced out the window quickly to see a mob of angry white people, some were standing in the street, while others stood on the side walk holding sticks, bricks, stones or anything that could knock a person out or kill them. She quickly put her head back down, feeling very confused. By now, Mrs. Hill had made it past the mob. She looked into her rearview mirror and cheerfully yelled to the kids to raise their heads. Well, you know my mom; she was not going to just raise her head without asking for an explanation.

As my mom raised her head, her eyes met Mrs. Hill's eyes in the rearview mirror. Mrs. Hill wanted to know if all the kids enjoyed the game. My mom raised her hand, "Yes, Mrs. Hill but I am confused about the game." "What do you mean sweetie didn't you have fun?" asked Mrs. Hill. My mom replied, "Yes, but I would like to know why didn't everyone play the game? Why didn't the other four students play the game too? Why didn't they put their heads down too?" A sheet of silence covered the entire car, as both women seemingly, but carefully searched for a response.

My mom glanced at the other 5 students in the car; 2 of them had blanked looks on their faces, the other 2 looked at her as if to say, "Gee, I can't believe you asked that!" The other kid

that sat next to my mom whispered, “Right on girl!” It had been 30 minutes since my mom asked that question, and now they were pulling up in front of the school. My mom watched Mrs. Hill’s face from the rearview mirror. Neither woman made eye contact with each other or with any of the students. Suddenly, in a morbid but faint voice, Mrs. Hill instructed the students to remove their seat belts and slid out of the car with care. No one ever said another word after that. No one ever answered the question and as far as the two women were concerned, that question would be erased from the little girls’ memory by the end of that day and all else would be forgotten. But neither woman knew much about my mom.

You see, even as a young child, my Mom had an inquisitive mind. She was never the one to remain passive and just stand by and watch something happen, especially when it came to unfair treatment as she knew it. She was very perceptive. She would be the first one to take a stand and challenge the system. She later explained what happened to another black classmate and asked the very same questions. The classmate simply replied, “Because it was dangerous!” “Dangerous!” my mom wondered, “Dangerous for who?” she asked. But the girl rushed off to class. Now my mom was even more curious, this was all she could think about for the rest of the day.

School was finally out and she raced home with a dozen of questions dancing through her head. She would explain the entire story to her mom and ask the very same questions, “Why didn’t the other four students put their heads down too! I asked a friend from school the same question and she only said it was dangerous.” My grandmother would reply, “First of all, yes it was dangerous, dangerous for black people. That was a danger zone. She could have gotten her self and everyone in the car killed. You see during that time in the South, Black people could not be seen in the car with whites, when the whites were protesting.” My grandmother would go on to say that, since the other four students in the back seat were white they were not in much danger, just as long as the black students kept their heads down. “The nurse was only trying to protect the black students. But she could have taken another route.” My grandmother also told me of a time when it was against

the law for black people to look at white people. I thought this was the most insane law I had ever heard of. “So, if you are walking on a street and someone white walks in your path, where do you look?” I asked. My grandmother replied, “You look anywhere else except for in their faces.” I shook my head in disbelief. “Black people would get thrown in jail or worst, they would be lynched.” “Just for looking into the eyes of white people and smiling or just to say hi?” I asked. “Yes, child. Before Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement, living together as human beings, was not so great!” My grandmother replied. Wow! That was so sad, but fascinating I thought! The stories my mom and grandmother told me did not seem real. How could this happen in a place like the United States, the melting pot, the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave?

Now I understand when I hear my mom say, “We have come a long way.” I understand where the journey for African Americans to gain full inclusion begins and I feel that we have made great progress in obtaining full inclusion. Judging the stories told by my mom and grandmother, reading history books and everything I have learned in school concerning Black History up to this point, I know that we have made great progress concerning Dr. King’s dream, I see myself as a perfectly good example. As a young gifted African American girl, I-AM-FREE! And unlike my grandmother and the childhood days of my mom, my race is no longer my stumbling block, but my key to equality. Today, I am an equal citizen. Society no longer judges me by the color of my skin but by the content of my character.

In Dr. King’s speech, “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” he mentioned going to the mountaintop, looking over and seeing the promise land. So far, we have made it to the mountaintop. Looking over, we see the Promise Land, a land that is free for all minorities regardless of their race, color, creed, economic status, disability, orientation, or gender. It is a land that is full of inclusion, a land that has equal opportunities for all. It is a land that is free of the triple evils; racism, violence and poverty. We have evolved, but not enough. We are still making small strides toward

the Promise Land. We may not be where we ought to be, but we are by no means where we use to be! We will get to the promise land with patience and perseverance. Many people fail to realize this, especially when they see or read Newspaper headlines such as these, “Did Race Play Role for Coach Post? and the Jena, Louisiana Incidents. So much has changed, since the days of the Civil Rights Movement and some things have remained the same. African Americans have commanded their rights at every level of society, from the lunch counters, to the college campuses, to the corporate boardrooms. We have upheld the ideals of America, defended our homeland and enriched the American culture and society. Yet, in the New Millennium, we still face racial profiling, racial name calling and off colored jokes. It is incidents such as these that make us feel that Dr. King’s entire dream is just an illusion. Dr. King’s dream is about change and if we are ever going to see his dream become full reality and change this society, we must change! We must change our hearts; we must change our souls and attitudes. For as long as people remain ignorant of racism, we as a people will never treat each other as individual human beings, we as a people will always remain separate, we as a people will never have unity and we as a people will never be fully included into the mainstream of society. Having full inclusion means recognizing that we are “one” even though we are not the “same“. It means that all races, not just African Americans, are entitled to true citizenship, with full dignity to participate equally, in every aspect of society. This is a multi-racial nation where all groups are dependent on each other.

I look forward to the day when all races will be fully included into the mainstream of society, a day where we can truly believe beyond-the-shadow-of -a-doubt; we are ONE-NATION-UNDER-GOD!! That will be the day when our journey for inclusion will be complete, because we would have reached the Promise Land; a place where all races can be treated fairly and equally as human beings, a place without racial hatred and discrimination, a place free of the triple evils; racism, violence and poverty. It would be a place where everyone is judged by the content of their character and not the color of their skin, a place where love is so power-

ful that is will drive out hatred. But most of all, it would be a place much like the one Dr. King had envisioned that we would live in some day.

Personally, I'd like to think that today; Dr. King's dream is alive and well. His dream lives on in my generation. Dr. King's dream of little black boys and black girls joining hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers has become a reality, in my generation. Today, the communities are more diverse than ever! We are learning how to get along with each other, live together and treat each other as human beings. Minorities are leaders at the highest level of the American work industry and for the first time in American history, voters are saying they would consider a minority for President. The schools today are more diverse and unlike my grandmother's era, everyone is entitled to an opportunity to a fair and equal education. Life is definitely, better than it was 40 years ago, "Jim Crow" laws no longer exist and segregation is illegal. No one will be punished for looking at a non-minority. I believe if Dr. King were a live today, he would be elated with all the progress we have made toward his dream.

I am in no way, saying that my generation has not faced any racial or social injustices, that statement would not be true. I have experienced both racial and social injustices, but I have learned to deal with those injustices the same way Dr. King would have wanted all of us to do.

Dr. King's dream is closer today, to becoming a reality than it was just 17 years ago. His dream of one day blacks and whites coming together to work, struggle, pray, stand up for freedom and share America together, has become a reality, it was demonstrated on September 11, 2001. On this day we put our prejudices aside and embraced each other, not as black, white, yellow, or red, but as human beings. We pulled together to hold America together. We stood United! We stood proud and we stood strong! After the dust settled America was still standing and our flag was still there, because we are the-land- of-the-free-and-the-home-of-brave. Sure, there are still some major obstacles we must move and doors we must blow open; but from generation to generation, Dr. King's dream is becoming more vivid as each generation passes. In my

mind, we are actually at that mountaintop today, looking over at the Promise Land. It is up to my generation and the next generation to take us from the mountaintop into the Promise Land.

I am glad to have been born during a time period in which, my generation and the next will get to watch something great unfold. Dr. King's vision of a fair and equal society, thanks to those who have tirelessly fought to keep Dr. King's dream alive. My eyes have seen the reality of Dr. King's dream.

RUNNER UP: “Life”

By Hillary Ramsey

Winchester Thurston High School

9:36 P.M. heart pounding, sweat dripping, muscles pumping, and a sinus rhythm on the monitor. I am straddling a middle-aged man suffering from a heart attack. The sirens are blaring and the lights are flashing. For the first time, I’m performing CPR on a person.

9:39 P.M. A steady rhythm. God has breathed life back into the body on the stretcher.

9:41 P.M. We arrive at the hospital. We jump out and rush to get our patient into the Emergency Department.

9:42 P.M. A mob of family members rushes to the man’s side. We learn that he is 46years-old and as we rush the patient into the trauma bay I hear his wife say, “We have three children and ...” her voice this trails off; the trauma bay doors close.

9:43 P.M. The limp body of the 46-year-old man is lying on the hospital gurney. I am squeezing the life giving air into his lungs.

9:44 P.M. Doctors are rushing around. The noise is immense. All of a sudden a shrill scream pierces the room; the horrible sound is coming from a short woman standing by the wall. She is screaming, “STOP.” Confusion directs our attention to the woman. A doctor coarsely yells, “Who are you?” she responds, “I am his wife. He has a DNR.”

9:45 P.M. The clock ticks, a pen drops, tears flow. The lead doctor says, “If we stop, he will die.” The woman meekly responds. “I understand. This is what he wants.” All eyes turn to me. I am the only one keeping this man alive. Seconds become hours.

9:46 P.M. The wife comes to the side of the bed. She holds her hus-

band's hand, the lead doctor looks directly at me and says, "Stop bagging him."

9:46:33 P.M. The words echo through my ears and bounce around in my head. I begin thinking of all the things we can do to save this man's life, but saving is just not what he would want. It boggles my mind that every squeeze of my hand is providing this gentleman with the vital oxygen he needs to survive. His life is in my hands.

9:47 P.M. The final squeeze of my hand breathes the man's last breath. I stand at the head of the bed and pray for him to take a breath. He doesn't.

9:50 P.M. Flat line on the cardiac monitor. Time of death: 9:50 P.M. August 12, 2007.

This entire experience has weighed heavily on me since that fateful day. At first I was very confused. I could not figure out why someone would refuse medical care that could save his or her life? I struggled to come to terms with letting a man die right in front of me.

What does all of this have to do with race? A lot. For you see, this man was from Iran, and with that he had his own cultural values and beliefs. At the time of the call I never really considered what it means to have a diverse heritage, to be different in America. The race of my patient never entered my head; my primary objective was to keep supplying him with the oxygen that he so desperately needed. It was weeks after his death that I realized that I was trying to force this man and his family to conform to my ways and my thoughts and my beliefs. In my mind, everyone wanted their loved ones to live, in my mind everyone valued life. I can honestly say that I had a very narrow view of race and personal heritage. Race is often simplified to white and black, sometimes in between with brown. We are all taught not to discriminate based solely on race we are indoctrinated with messages of equality however these messages are only skin deep. I have never before been

challenged with acceptance. I have always thought that I accept all people, but in reality no one knows how accepting they are until they are faced with life or death decisions. Respect. Respect is what I learned from a middle-aged-Muslim man.

Through this man, that I never even knew, I learned what it means to respect people, life, and myself. Respect is a quality that human beings must learn. I can honestly say that before this event, I was horrible at respecting people. In reality, I think we all are. Through this one man, however, I have gotten a taste of what true respect really is. True respect is one person's ability to accept another person's actions, thoughts, beliefs, desires, and needs, without imposing one's own personal views or judgments on that person. I learned how to respect people by letting my patient pass away. I did not want him to die; perhaps it was because I don't want that tally on my record, or maybe I didn't want him to die because he was the same age as my dad. I honestly don't know the exact reason I wanted the man to live, but what I wanted was negligible in this situation. It didn't matter what I wanted or what I thought, because this whole situation was not about me.

I don't think most people would call themselves selfish, but the reality is I think most people are. It would have been selfish of me to prolong my patient's life because I, Hillary, seventeen-year-old, still wet behind the ears EMT, wanted him to live. I can honestly say that I realized how selfish I really am. The man who died on August 12, 2007 taught me how to be unselfish and how to respect another person, but most of all this man helped to illuminate my flaws. Now that I know where one of my flaws exists, I can begin to work on it and in the end I will become a better person. It only took one person, who I had never met before, to change my life and outlook of the world.

RUNNER UP: “What a Day”

By Nefertiti Umeh

Winchester Thurston High School

As a student in a predominately white school I have automatically been given the opportunity to experience and or be a first hand witness to minor incidents that clearly show that racism still lives from day to day despite all the efforts of black leaders in our history like Martin Luther King, Jr. As a result of going to WT for a long period, I have grown used to this feeling and have contrived ways to make it clear that the color of my skin is exactly what it is. It is only a genetic shade of pigment; it is not who I am.

Do you know that racism still exists and/or wonder when this issue will stop being silenced? I know I do. Imagine this. It is a bright and sunny day school just let out and you are anxious to chit chat with your friends about what the day has brought- rumors- the talk of the day- how Cindy and Jake broke up- school work/events- boys in general- the upcoming weekend with our favorite group of friends- how we hate Jen, and wish we could buy Lauren a bar of soap because she smells bad. All these and maybe more consist of your conversation with your friends on a beautiful Friday afternoon right when school has let out. After you have gotten your stuff and say goodbye to all your friends, you head out to go home not knowing the most horrible verbally breathe taking event lies in your path about fifteen minutes away. You get off the bus and wait for the light to change so that you can cross. As you are crossing, you see a white elderly man crossing towards where you had just left in the same crosswalk as you. He is about eighty-two years old, or so he looks. He is wearing a light gray sweater, khakis, and carries a walking cane to assist him across. He is hunched backed with crinkly skin and sort of waddles slowly across the crosswalk in your direction. As soon as he comes just a few feet away from being side by side with you, he struggles to lift his weary eyes up and makes direct eye contact with you. His eyes are filled with fear and hate. You then give half smile thinking, maybe what will lighten up his day. After all, despite the fact that he was very old, he also looked like he was lonely and had no one that cared for

him. So because you were always taught to be respectful of the elderly and manner full, you smile. His eyes got bigger than you had ever imagined they could get; fury rose out of him towards you, "Get away from me you nigger; get away from me". That is the response you get. Imagine that. How do you feel now. You are stuck, completely turned down in the most invidious way ever. You are confused not knowing or understanding what just occurred. At the same time a million thoughts are running through your head, the old man stumbles as a result of trying to escape from you over to the other side. You swiftly get to the other side and walk home. Your heart is beating a faster steady beat and tears are boiling up because you are confused, hurt, and furious at the same time. Now that you have imagined this, how do you feel. Well, this is the exact same way I felt when this happened to me. I was lost on the inside and felt like someone had just stuck me one good time to the gut. That's how sick I felt. This incident brought to my realization that racism is still well and alive. I was just the lucky one who had the opportunity to experience something so strong and life impacting. You may ask why do I call myself lucky. I call myself lucky because I have been given the opportunity to tell you and others my story and bring to awareness to everyone of all ages and all races about the racism that still lives and is an issue that needs to be faced today. For if we do not stare this issue straight in the eye, like that old man did to me, then it will continue to live. I would hate for another young person like I was, or anyone for that matter to experience anything just slightly like my incident.

As Martin Luther King said "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Therefore we must act as one race and spread love, maybe as simple as a smile to drive out the darkness that racism brings. We must be aware and share our stories and thoughts with others so that maybe, just maybe, we will overcome this malady named racism.

HONORABLE MENTION: “Just A Joke”

By Helen Bunker

Winchester Thurston High School

Kathy’s hands sliced through the uncomfortably hot air as she punctuated her story. Her lips smiled, then pursed with the words as she delivered the punch line. The others in our sloppy circle laughed, especially Natasha, a pretty black girl from Harlem. She threw her head back with a sharp, loud guffaw. I looked away, my hands trailed through the overgrown grass, plucking at the blades, and pulling them up by the roots.

We’re outside the main building of a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. We are in a residential summer program, a program hosted by colleges all across the United States where we can take courses in a particular class and live in dorms with people from all over the East Coast; the idea is to simulate life in college for a month, so we have little supervision compared to our normal lives. Kathy is my roommate, tall in a pretty way and with very pale skin and constantly wearing a black baseball cap.

It is difficult to explain Kathy, after living with her for a month I still didn’t know her much better than the first day I met her, after the five hour car drive, and unpacking my stuff, her sullenly sitting on the bed, clearly waiting for her mother to leave. Certainly she had some good qualities; she was loyal and funny, and it is impossible to live with someone without establishing a strong bond with them, but telling racist jokes wasn’t a one time thing with her.

In fact, Kathy was known for wandering through the social area that was decorated with haphazardly placed couches and the floor spotted with discarded trash. She would weave through them with Natasha trailing behind and laughing as she delivered the punch line of a racist joke. She would watch people’s reaction, and you could see them wondering if they could laugh, because Natasha laughing acted almost like an endorsement for the jokes, operating under the same law that said only blond girls could tell blond jokes. Her presence made it socially acceptable to laugh, getting rid of the ‘tacit law of society’ not to tell certain types of jokes.

This created the unusual scene of Asians, white people, and black people laughing together over racist jokes.

If asked about her behavior, Kathy would disagree with you, batting the question away with her hand like an irritating fly. She would say something similar to ‘I’m not a racist, I have lots of black mends and they think it’s hilarious.’ So generally I preferred to lie down in the grass, not saying anything because I did not wish to be stared at like a freak by the people in the circle, with snide lips that would say, ‘relax, it’s only a joke.’ I didn’t want to be cast-off, or left behind, or seen as uptight and preppy.

Besides, I would wonder, could they be right? Is it simply a joke? Could it be that they were simply people laughing together in a mocking way about the obsolete beliefs of past generations? Or even something more than that could Natasha and Kathy’s antics be sharp, social criticisms of the times, like Dave Chappelle or other comics whose use of dark humor satirizes our society?

Probably not, though jokes like that are generally just thinly-veiled aggression, sprouting from people’s insecurities of being in a new society, or more likely still, she told them to get attention, to shock people and test their reactions. However, ultimately, it doesn’t really matter what Kathy’s motives were for telling the jokes. In fact, even now I do not believe these jokes were said in a malicious manner, but knowing that doesn’t take away from the hurt that those words could cause someone. Although they have never hurt me personally, a person who had to put up with racial injustice all of his or her life can still be hurt by those jokes even if they weren’t intended to inflict pain, because he or she would only hear the cruel belittling ideas that they represent.

Even as our society grows and develops, and although with every generation we move further away from the intolerant ideas that are tied to our past as a country, words like that can never be ‘just a joke’ as everyone tries to pretend they are. It doesn’t matter how they are said or with what manner they are meant, jokes like that can only separate us, put us into different categories and try to define who we are and how we act as people. Not only that, racist jokes allow people to pretend that what they say is allowed because it comes with a facade or mask of humor.

I didn't stand up to the people then, telling them what I believed. I should have, not only because their actions could offend somebody but also through self-respect because when I allow other people to continue with behavior that I know is morally objectionable. Even if I didn't tell the jokes myself, accepting it as the norm is wrong because it is impossible as a society to move away from prejudice through ideas reinforcing hatred. Or maybe I'm wrong. Maybe sometimes the wound has to crust over before it heals. Maybe I will never be sure, but I don't think I will ever be able to think of that afternoon as people 'just telling some jokes.

HONORABLE MENTION “Your Stereotypical Bi-Racial Child”

By Phallon Depante

Winchester Thurston High School

I am what our society considers to be a bi-racial person, yet with this being said when I am asked on the SAT’s to check the box that best describes my ethnic background I always put “other”. I could check Caucasian, because I am majority white, but by doing that I would be denying my African American background. My dad’s mother always told him that bi-racial children are just “niggers with lighter skin”. Growing up I was always baffled as to why when I went to my dad’s parent’s apartment they would leave the room and never talk to me. To my naïve six-year-old mind I looked just like them, but with maturity came the knowledge of the one drop rule. Even though I looked just like my dad, was ghostly pale and all the trimmings of a perfect little Italian girl, I was still some other little ‘nigger’ child because my mother had given me her black blood. My dad’s mom had told him that I would never amount to anything and that I would be “another nigger walkin’ the streets beggin’ for money”. After hearing things like this said right in front of me, I realized why my mother didn’t allow me to see my dad’s family that often. So I grew up with my mom’s African American family.

My grandmother has been such a huge part of my life. Majority of my childhood was me spending time with her, watching her cook, listening to her sing and joke around with the other members of my family. Although I was content with the relationship I had with my mom’s family, I still wondered why my dad’s family couldn’t accept and love me the same way. Once while I was in the store with my grandmother she ran into one of her friends from “down the bottom”, as she would call it. I was standing there listening to them reminisce and catch up on the latest gossip, and then the women focused her attention on me. She spoke to me and then I asked my grandmother if she was babysitting me. My grandmother explained that I was “Chloe’s daughter by some white man”, all the while she was playing with my then long hair. The women then proceeded to play with my hair and tell

me how beautiful I was. The whole situation was strange to me and I never understood why she was so fascinated with my hair. My grandmother had such a proud look on her face the entire time, and as they continued to talk about me grandmother stated, that I was “the family’s porcelain prize.” As time passed I came to understand why I was considered the “favorite” grandchild.

My African American family, especially my grandmother, was so fixated on skin color and hair texture and length. Although my family was proud of their African American heritage they still had the mentality of white features being better. My mother was no better. In the spring of 2005 I began to stop eating and developed anorexia. My mother hadn’t noticed, maybe because she was in denial, but when she found out she was appalled. Not because I was mentally and physically deteriorating but because, as she had stated, “Black girls don’t get eating disorders, that a white girl thing.” I was confused as to how a disorder had a color. My mother has always done her best with me, she has put me through private schools since fourth grade, given me all of my necessities and more, but I know why she did it. Not only because she has my best interest at heart, but also because she wants to be able to pass as white. My mother would always brag about my friends, and how they live in Squirrel Hill and Fox Chapel. I am very thankful for all of the opportunities that my mother has given me, but when I first entered private school, in fourth grade, I was uncomfortable. Immediately when the other children saw my mother they began to question me about my race, and say little things like Southern accents, as though I was the stereotype of an African American, and that was the only way I could understand what they were saying. I felt lost and confused as how to ask. I didn’t understand how to act. When I came to high school, no one questioned my ethnicity, nor did they seem to care, but I dreaded the day when the question was raised, as to what I was. The other African Americans at my school somehow knew that I was bi-racial; I guess “we” have a certain look. When the other kids found out some were shocked but most didn’t even address it. I was relieved, and then the other African American children began to harass me about why I act so “white”, and why I didn’t sit with them at lunch. I didn’t want to sit at the

black table, because I didn't want to reinforce segregation. I didn't know how to act black or white. I've always strived to remain true to myself, whatever race others consider me to be. I'm Phallon Depante and I am your stereotypical bi-racial child.

CMU POETRY Co-WINNERS

CMU POETRY: Sally Mao

Freedom Poll

Let Freedom Ring, says the windwhipped banner,
the words themselves like grinning teeth
whiter than bone or ash or cigarette paper.

We are confused: what does that ringing
sound like? A telephone? A gong? A cry?
Suspicious, we investigate. We ask the flightless birds

what freedom sounds like, and they respond:
Quite simply, the sashay of falling nuts.
Fruits rolling, windless, an aria of leaves.

We ask the monk burning alive in the forest, and he says:
Freedom doesn't ring. It is soundless, emotionless. It perishes
at the first sign of desire. It leaves the warm body chilled, vapor-
ous.

To a twelve-year-old boy in the thimble factory, freedom
the croaking of cicadas & bullfrogs; To a graffiti
artist in Paris, freedom the sputter of aerosol over tarmac;

To a homesick saxophonist, Miles Davis's
Godchild exhaling on the record player;
To wild horses, freedom the echoes on tall bright grasses;

To my great-grandfather, freedom the radio
before static electricity swallowed all sound
the day each of his sons were murdered.

To my father, freedom the cough of foghorns
parting the river's mouth, the path to Shanghai,

then America, the eyelashes & laughs of strangers.

And he tells me no freedom is a scream, a burning,
a symphony of suffering—No freedom is as eloquent
& absolute as death. How can a whole country kill

for this, when each sound of freedom is as small
& specific as a dewdrop, a particle, a single intonation
in this carnival of noise?

CMU POETRY: Zeb Girouard

Legacy

1673-2007

Layer of ice forms on powder, the green grass
below a shadow, implied. I remember

when field and pasture stretched. Stone walls
cordoned off property and historic nature trails.

Old lady picked one up: trespassers deserve brain hemorrhage.
Death on brilliant grass.
The dandelions hid the secret.

Property values low in the next town over, why live here?
Here we blend in with the snow.

White, black, spots cover nothing but cattle,
raised here among the freshest grass.
Truth is, no one really asked permission.

Beautiful, the grass can stretch for miles. We'll take it.
From you, or you, anyone that stands in our way.

Push everyone out into the snow.
They shiver, rejected, docile, cattle.

Blankets make everything better. Cover the
land with tall grass and stone walls.
Keep out everything but the snow.

CMU POETRY: JOELLA STILL

Six Purple Grapes

Sit
under the white
leaves.

Color
the air.

H
a
n
g

on the vine.

Tomatoes

or raisins
in the sun.

Say goodbye to
Du Bois and
Dr. King
with the swivel
of a pen.

Bic used to be cute.
Blue vs. Black.

Books vs. drugs.

Birth vs. death

Lose testosterone or
get it back on a
\$100,000
bail.

Don't speak.

Let Mr. Gibney,
Mrs. Flower, and the school
nurse feed the judge.

Let the judge
help you
join your brother,
father, uncle, and cousin.
Add to pie
charts and graphs.

Let them
lift every voice
and sing

we got another fruit.