

Look Deeper

Speak Up, Inspire Change 2016 Poetry Competition

Speak Up, Inspire Change Finalists

Choose to Tell – Cat Abenstein (Regina, SK)

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Dear My Child - Nathaniel Athian Deng (Regina, SK)

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Phase 2 Finalists

Oranges and Pomegranates - dee Hobsbawn-Smith, (Saskatoon, SK)

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Before I Teach English 100 - Cassidy McFadzean (Regina, SK)

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Phase 1 Finalists

A Whole World - Amanda Castilleja (Regina, SK)

Full Potential - Angeline Chia (Regina, SK)

Indian River - Martha Kashap (Saskatoon, SK / Huntsville, ON)

These People - Johnny Trinh (Regina SK)

Thinking Hope - Natasha Urkow (Regina, SK)

Finding Peace - Kyla Wendell McIntyre (Regina, SK)

Honourable Mentions

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Speak Up, Inspire Change Finalists

Choose to Tell

We bear witness to millions of stories by the time we can tell our own.

We do not question them.

What do they teach us? To whom do they belong?

Which do we then teach again?

Who listens?

What if your every thought was tattooed on your skin?

You would wear your story

You would be the telling

“Greatness will often come from necessity.”

When unlearning is as important as learning,

We must choose the great act

Are you breaking down, or building?

Are you ending or creating?

We are more than what we are told.

We are what we choose to tell.

- *Cat Abenstein, Regina, SK*

Dear my child:

Learning begins when you realize there are things you cannot control.

Like, will you grow up in your country of birth?

I was born in South Sudan; I grew up in a Kenyan refugee camp;

Now I live and write this note in Canada.

Despite living without the care of my family,

I faced the challenges with what I like to think is courage

like many of the world's lost children

Resilience is my bragging right.

Listen! When life's great changes occur, be proud

because in changing, you will have learned.

Respect your past, keep friendship with your present

foster peace in the country you now call home.

The world longs for coexistence

Your loving parent

- *Nathaniel Athian Deng, Regina, SK*

Phase 2 Finalists

Before I Teach English 100

Let me feel that student's hunger,
He puts in twice the effort,
 cupboards half bare
"foreign" tuition three times the cost
--and there's still the rent.

Let me see the tears of the woman
outside the chapel
on her phone, speaking
in Arabic, family back home.
When I ask, she's embarrassed,
Cries become whispers as I walk away
but still, chooses here, on her own

Let me hear that each voice
tells a story and I don't know the end.
Or the beginning.
Once upon a time...
he fled a war,
and she fought to read.
They made do
Made out
Somehow
made it through
Because it matters

Before I teach English 100
Let me feel
what they are teaching me.

- *Cassidy McFadzean (Regina, SK)*

Oranges and Pomegranates

In the Canadian restaurant, she scoops up her food
with her hands and bits of bread –
The moon looks smaller here, distant.

There, it hung like an orange in her father's orchard,
waiting to be plucked. Spring is unfurling:
a few orange blossoms might still hang over the fence,
drifting their prayers amid the rubble.

In the camp on the sand dunes beside the sea,
the moon was a pomegranate, red
with the blood of children.

In the restaurant, under winter's moon,
when she meets the eye of a blonde woman –
the only other person eating lentils and rice with her hands –
the scent of orange blossoms hangs like a new moon
between them.

- *dee Hobsbawn-Smith, Saskatoon, SK*

Phase 1 Finalists

A Whole World

Until every tear is wiped away
Until there is no more pain
Until these things are gone forever
We will all live to be made whole again

We will bring healing to the aches of loneliness
Healing to the injuries of betrayal
Healing to the pain of injustice
Healing to the infection of hatred

We will bravely apply the balm of compassion
Carefully dress wounds with grace
Lavishly pour the ointment of courage
Mend with Love, the most powerful medicine

This is the desire of every soul
The heartbeat of each community
The sole hope of our world
For Love to make us whole again

- *Amanda Castilleja, Regina, SK*

Full Potential

Bright smiles, nimble minds
Sweet little faces upturned
Ready for learning
Hungry for knowledge
Empty stomachs aching
Wandering listless out of school
Begging on street corners
Minding their baby siblings
Sweat-shop candidates on factory floors
Not college graduates in study halls
Fertile minds lying dormant
Like secret gardens untended
Weeds of resentment taking root
Anger and anxiety creeping
Bodies and brains stunted
Healthy growth arrested
What chances we miss
What truths we disavow
When we mire in indifference
Until the world is filled with the tyranny of ignorance
For wealth we have at our disposal:
Knowledge to share
Skills to apply
Compassion to drive ambition
So, re-direct the wealth
Feed the children
Nourish their minds
Attend to the girls
Support their inclusion
Promote their value
Kindle the fire of curiosity
Nurture the desire for success
Waste not the gift of potential
Want not the blessing to humanity
Preserve our collective future.

- *Angeline Chia, Regina SK*

Indian River

Along its shores
The Ojibwe people
Caught their fish
And made their camps
Long before
White settlers came
And moved them off
Lives lived long ago
Spirits, buried here,
In a place they never
Wanted to leave
Green wavy water
Grasses slide beneath
My silent canoe
The voices of the First Peoples
Call to me from the depths

- *Martha Kashap, Saskatoon, SK / Huntsville, ON*

These People

Get 'em outta here!
These people, they're not good people.
These people, steal our jobs, living it up for free.
These people, can't stand the cold? Go home.
These people, rape our women- bomb our peace.
These people, they're not good people.
These people are not white.

Every time a man with power says "these people."
Our people end up dead.

We people end up with less than we started with, and we never started equal.

You the Rabble Rousers' Demagogues' Beacons' for those who would trouble children,
You the Saviors for those who fear losing their right to live in privilege without conscience, compassion, consequence, or the truth.
Face of the disenfranchised who believe the easiest lies.
The hegemony who point fingers, and place blame - because you failed to lead us right the first time.

When all you want is a Wall that divides us
No Party on Earth will make a difference.
When all you believe is in the purity of your wounded skin
You become these people.
These people who are not good people.

These people
You become

These people
We become

These people
You become
These people

So keep saying "these people"
Until there's no people left.

Wondering
What if we were just people?

- *Johnny Trinh, Regina, SK*

Thinking Hope

Without having hope,
How will the planet cope?

Humanity is flawed,
People have stripped and clawed,
The natural world is in danger,
If vegetation could speak it would screech in anger!
Animal rights have been jaded,
Our bond and respect, faded.
Blood shed for money and greed,
Bank accounts fed to those who do not need.
Future generations pay,
For the mistakes and ill treatment done onto earth today.
The innocent made to suffer,
As rejuvenation gets tougher.

Without having hope,
How will the planet cope?

Is what they say true?
There is barley anything we can do,
If we continue to suck the earth dry,
There will be nothing to say, but good bye?
Wait, what if we could,
Make people act as they should?
Would we fix history's mistakes?
If we do whatever it takes?

There is really no right or easy answer.
People drain earth like a deadly cancer.
Nature, who was once our mother,
Is now referred to as other.

Resources our ancient ancestors planted,
Are simply taken for granted.

Without having hope,
How will the planet cope?

We cannot reverse pollution, patriarchy, and slaughter,
However, to leave promise for our sons and daughters,
People can commit to caring,
Learn the power of sharing.
Let's regrow our world together,
rebuild a new forever
To make sure the hungry can eat and the thirsty can drink.
Now, all I'm asking is for society to think.

- *Natasha Urkow, Regina, SK*

Finding Peace

We fight every battle
We struggle to win
We look outside
But never within

We know the world is sick
But we don't know how to heal
We know the world needs change
But we've forgotten how to feel

The time is now
The place is here
Make the shift
The view is clear

Embrace the stillness
Discover the space
Go within

Notice the firmness of the ground beneath your feet
Notice a bird that sees you as you see it
Notice a child's carefree laughter

Open to generosity and kindness
Open to joy and love

Allow compassion to arise
Allow wisdom to bloom

Look deeply
Listen deeply

Find peace
It's within

- *Kyla Wendell McIntyre, Regina SK*

Honourable Mentions

Darkest night is menacing

Darkest night is menacing.
Rain pouring bullets from
polluted skies.
I remember feeling high.
My faith is a lost child,
calling for her father.
A god of which I shouldn't speak.
He listens.
My body cavernous, my soul within
awakening visions of the past.

My father is a slave to the fields.
Once brawny and fervid. Now frail.
"The crop will feed, just one more seed."
He is witnessing a spiraling into space. Silence.
Weeping with the rising sun,
another day has just begun.

I fight to save the burning sun,
to purify the precious water
that drowns my spirit in spiteful slander.
My wounds, they bleed, aching body surrendering
to pain. The natural world, a music box.
For I am a glass ballerina with a broken leg.
Crying is in vain, the sound of guns is deafening.

"Please don't forget me.... I'm young"

Mother flower, bloom. Your garden is invaded with weeds.
Reach out to me. Sing me the song of my youth, home country hymn.
Desperate as I am to grow, my mother tongue, a murmur.
Swollen as I choke on the words, I fail to understand.

My hand a different colour. unlatched.
Wrapping my neighbours in love's embrace,
as a mother lion to her cubs. Grace.
Our pulse is the sound of the universe,
this energy, rising as a crescendo.
Worship of a different belief, still ringing,
floating in the breeze.
Our lives are connected by an invisible thread,
a greater good will foster.

I'm producing ideas, bearing my heart to the cities.
Kindness and justice are developing shapes, taking steps.
I desire this dream of mine to come alive.
Exploring possibilities in my restless mind.
My cavernous body is drained. Shadow, the one we call night,
the thief will come to claim his prize.

My eternal slumber is beckoning and a colourful horizon lies ahead.
Goodnight dear mother, for I have tried. Goodnight dear father,
for you may thrive. Goodbye and please remember me.
Save the mortal world from crumbling.

- *Rachel Bastiaanse, Regina, SK*

Add Radical to the 3 R's

Began teaching thirty years ago

Few classroom rules . . .

“Respect yourself, Respect others and Respect your environment.”

“3 “R’s?”

Today, add another “R,” “Radical,” to school curriculum.

Simply caring about the environment

Deemed a radical

Environmentally conscious

Logical behaviour

Respecting one’s environment

Not always been regarded as radical.

Recent consumer culture.

Mother, Sophie, recycled before recycling buzz word

Survivor of the Great Depression

Washed every plastic bag, reused, saved every box, tin or plastic container

Recycled over, over and over again.

Washed disposable plastic forks and spoons

Plastic cottage cheese containers were “Ukrainian Tupperware,” or so we would joke.

No fancy Tupperware for our family.

"My father, August, walked daily

Picked up every piece of garbage around town, every bottle from beer or pop . . . broken or not,

Recycled, reused every bit of thread, wire, screw or nail.

Workshop full of treasures he found

Repaired our shoes

Fine shoemaker

Grew out, passed on.

Screen door repaired white, thick, reused thread

Hand-me-downs, family of ten

No new clothes for me, number nine out of ten,

Seventh daughter, seven girls

Reuse, recycle, repair, never wasting

Norm for pioneers

Having little, appreciated all

Today, world of consumerism, as technology changes . . .

Quickly something cooler evolves

“Why don’t you just get a new phone?”

“Throw it away,” my children say.

“This phone still works,” I reply,

Not wanting to trash, fill our landfills, extra waste, and slightly old, new technology

Kids roll their eyes at me

Laptop ancient too

Radical to some, to conserve like my parents

Keen for a green, I am

Care about Canada and entire world’s natural environment.

Radical maybe...

Choose to judge

Take a moment to consider what actually condemning, and supporting, when you make such a judgement

- *Marion Mutala, Saskatoon, SK*

Cries Unheard

How long, how long, the people cry;
Our homes are bombed; our children die.
Hunger, terror, our lands do stalk.
We have no choice; we have to walk.

Cross the desert; cross the waters;
Try to hold our sons and daughters.
At journey's end what will await?
Welcome or a grimmer fate?

Meanwhile leaders plot on high
Preserving power is their cry.
Hold one's resources, plunder others'.
Oil, riches bought with children, fathers, mothers.

In privileged nations we, unthinking, sit idly by;
It touches us not, so don't ask why.
Enjoy our abundance, our cheaply bought goods.
So what if others struggle for life-sustaining goods?

How long, how long the people cry?
How long, how long can indifference let people die?

- *Mary E. Nordick, Saskatoon, SK*

Rant

I want to stop the bus, get off and walk
wherever you're walking, talk
whatever you're talking because I'm so hot-
damn interested in what you're saying about

the possibility of us making a difference in this
world, on this planet where the largest
enterprise in our history as a species spills
and kills trees and fish and people,

births two-headed moose calves, toxicifies
birds and communities and families left
to swim in the aftermath of the path ploughed
by the drill baby drill creed called

progress, a progress that profits the already
wealthy in a country corporatized,
its people monopolized by the language
of luxury and tyrannized by an illegitimate

government, robocalled into office by
an electorate living in the fear of reprisal,
a state ruled by capital and a system
gone rotten, like Denmark when

Shakespeare penned plays for the people.
Will this melancholic nation ever
collect midnight weeds from the field
and invoke Hecate's storm?

- *Bernadette Wagner, Regina, SK*