

An abstract painting featuring a central spiral of red and white, surrounded by dark, expressive brushstrokes in shades of grey, black, and purple. The background is filled with vertical, textured strokes in yellow, orange, and red, creating a sense of movement and depth.

RESPOND

Human Rights Poetry Award

UHRSN

THE REFUGEES' PLIGHT IN 50 POEMS

RESPOND

Refugees and their message to Europe

Human Rights
Poetry Award
2015/2016

FORE WORD

UHRSN is honored to conduct the Human Rights Poetry Competition "Respond" 2015/2016

With more than **700 poems from 93 countries** the "RESPOND" poetry competition set a powerful sign regarding the plights refugees are facing all over the world.

The poems we received are a moving compilation of personal stories and an emphatic reminder that human rights belong to everyone, everywhere. Emerging from one of the worst years for refugees that the world has ever seen, the submitted poems are documents of historic relevance.

Every line of more than 100.000 words we have received is an urgent and implicit call to action.

It's our time to show responsibility in society and stand up for refugees through all available means.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UHRSN thanks everyone who took part in the Human Rights Poetry Competition "Respond" 2015/2016.

Your contribution in one way or another is what made the Human Rights Poetry Competition "Respond" 2015/2016 successful.

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M-moments

by Lind Grant-Oyeye

Silvery hair, bones thinned in-out, of life the silver screen speaks.
Letter M, embossed in audacious colors. It had begun long before her time....

time when clay pots were sanded out to shimmer.
It starts by falling- falling in love. Minute carts tenderly packed
full of moments, full of memories delicately loosely tied together.

It flows with fantasies of prized certificates, a desire for a stamp-the majestic seal of approval.
It flows to the stage of self- journey through dark subways, tunnels to the unfamiliar...
untested promise lands. She heard some had swam bellied-up in wavy pools,
Chillin' to the historic tempest.

Others swim to "bien venue" cat-calls, to honeymoons filled with French kisses,
flowers and fresh caresses, beauty and beautiful feet planted on cozy carpets,
romance lasting into wintery and the hurricane hugging days.

On strange lands were some feet planted. They kissed strangers
and slept with enemies -red juices pressed against their lips,
with the firm force of a heavy weight boxer's strength,
kissing Judas' doppelgänger

to the sweet sound of the language from Babel, spoken
with a lover's passion.

Faint memories show M in the alphabet song, is for
Migration, for marriage.

Biography

Lind was born in Nigeria. Her poetry is a voice in social justice, gender and human right issues. She has work published in several international literary magazines and contributed to the Cultural aspect of the Greek economic crisis. She is currently working on her first book length collection of poetry.

Not My Child by Lindsay Oliver

Not my child
Laying limp in the sand
Face down in the sea

Not my child
Huddled unbreathing
In a cargo container

Not my child
Stranded alone
Dead on a beach

Not my child
The curl of his fingers
The curve of his cheek

Not my child
Hair soft as thistle-down
On the nape of his neck

Biography

Lindsay Oliver lives in Leith. After losing her job due to illness and disability, she took a writing course at the local community centre and fell in love with writing. She writes poetry, short stories and longer fiction. She regularly takes part in open mic nights. Her writing has appeared in two anthologies, and an online journal. She recently had a poem in the Doric dialect accepted for publication by the Scots Language Society.

Suitcase of life by Esmā Dziho

I see A woman in black walking, looking down
I know what is in it, in her suitcase
Because I, myself wore it
When I was forced to leave my home
No clothes inside
But one life, a book of her life
printed
There are her dreams, sadness, happiness
Tears in it
love and the first apprehension
Suitcase of life traveling with her
Where it will take her
She does not know
It may be dust on the suitcases forever
Or some new love will come

They call her a refugee
What the horrible word!
She left her home because she had to do it
And suitcase of travels
Maybe she will be back home
Maybe to see the grass , to touch it
When the madness of the war stops

Until then
Suitcase and the woman in black are Refugees
Travel on the road
Refugee from meaninglessness
Not from her country
Maybe she will awake in her house one day and tell to
somebody

There is one country said her Welcome
There is one face smiling to her
Where she and her suitcase finally found the peace

Biography

My name is Esmā Dziho I am a teacher of Bosnian language. I live in Mostar and I work at school. I like reading books in my free time. During the war in Bosnia I was a refugee. I lived the horrible moment during the war and many members of my family were killed. Because of that I have written this poem that I devote to all refugees of the world. Now I live in Mostar . I am married I have two daughters.

For Aylan by Laura Taylor

I just wanted you to know
your lovely bones have not been wasted,
that your tiny little body in a picture on a beach
made the world sit up and notice that you're there

and I know it's much too late
and you'll never be a father or a lover or a man
but your passing in the tide has helped the families
who follow in your wake

and this will never make your mother feel better,
feel at peace, but I wanted you to know
that your tiny little body in a picture on a beach
forced the powers of the world to rally round

and babies shouldn't die in plastic dinghies in the night
while their parents flee the trouble that we caused
and the people selling arms to the Middle Eastern maniacs
should not be leading countries
telling lies
making wars

and I just wanted you to know
your lovely bones have not been wasted
that your tiny little body in a picture on a beach
made the world sit up and notice that you're there
night night
sleep tight
take care

Biography

Laura Taylor has been writing and performing poetry for the last five years, and will continue to do so whilst injustices are wreaked against the poor and vulnerable.

The Crossing by Marion Osieyo

He heard stories about people,
in capsized boats,
swallowing small cups of salty water and
'father, help us'
on their tongues.
Their aging photographs,
torn and worn out,
with the desperate hands
of children
back home,
wives lulled to sleep
by the hunger of no news,
palms clasped in silent prayers,
wailing to creased memories.

He became the story about people,
in capsized boats,
swallowing small cups of salty water and
'father, help us'
on their tongues.
Fear and solitude,
lining the helm of his forehead
as the Sea looked on,
ever so graceful,
grateful, for his visit,
her belly soon to be bloated
with limbs
and lungs,
full of unfinished goodbyes to God.

Biography

I am a young professional working to advance women's empowerment and youth rights. I volunteered with a local women's organization in the UK for four years supporting women and girls from refugee and migrant backgrounds, In 2015, I was selected by the European Commission as a 'Future Leader' of international co-operation and development.

Osmosis

by Priscilla Takondwa Semphere

When they perished under ocean waves
we built our walls of stone
as they whimpered in the twilight
we tossed in bed at dawn.

we sauntered off, unbothered
by chalkings on the ground-
the names of murdered brothers
and sisters heaped in mounds.

Their mourning was our silence
we never heard their cries
and when we did their broken shrieks
became our lullabies.

Our anger was a scoffing
that echoed in their skies
our hashtags an illusion
our sympathy a guise.

We battled with our demons
they wrestled for their land
our long rants blotted out their names
"we lent a helping hand".

They listened in the silence
as fingers danced on screens
they gazed at heaps of rubble where
their hopes and dreams had been.

We settled in our silence
we prayed on bended knees

we blamed the money and the men
who hold the large brass keys.

And so it stands, we sit here
with theories in our head
we sit, we grieve and we forget
these roads we'll never tread

and so it stands, they're running
with terror in their wake
into the grasp of wringing hands
who lie in wait to take.

Biography

Born in Lilongwe, Malawi, Priscilla Takondwa is a college student in the USA. She is a storyteller, and has written and self-published a children's book which is the first of a series that seeks to promote tolerance and the celebration of culture on the African continent. She is also an independent contractor for the Huffington Post.

Silence noise by Safoora Masood

I am haunted by the past
Uncertain of the future
I know the journey
I have made
I know the trauma
I have endured
My body is tired
My legs ache
My tummy is hungry
My eyes are tired in need of sleep
Inside me
The rage lingers on
My silence speaks volume
I will speak
When I am ready
I will speak
When I can make sense of it all
I will speak
When I can process what has happened
I will speak
When I feel safe

Biography

Life is precious

A welcome distraction

by Kauser Parveen

They are young girls running across a dusty pitch
Kicking up dust
Screaming with joy
Screaming with hope
As they chase the football
They ignore the afternoon heat
They carry on playing
These traumatised children
Have overcome many obstacles
In their short lives
War, leaving their homes, bereavement and crossing
borders
Now refugees
Football has become
A welcome distraction
From their grim reality
Their shouts, smiles, hopes, dreams
Bring home
That they are alive
Have a spirit
A determination
A resilience
A heart beat
Of striving forward
Just one smile
Brings hope
This is priceless

Biography

It is the start not the ending.

Taking A Break by Fiona D. Kelly

We leave our woes
for warmer climes,
to tour bus trip
and culture-soak.
To cocktail drink
and sunscreen dab,
to nightclub hop
while pool-side clad.

We leave our woes
for warmer climes
To snapchat sand
on flip-flopped-feet.
To selfie-take
our sunburn peels
and Instagram
our five star meals.

We leave our woes
for warmer climes.
Bikini-waxed
and fake-tanned thighs.
To read our books
and prop up bars;
shop for sarongs
in Turk bazaars.

We leave our woes
for warmer climes.
For maids to clean
our hotel rooms.
Escape the hum-

drum nine to five,
to make us feel
like we're alive.

We leave our woes
for warmer climes
To break the year
and ease the mind.
To take a dip
in the iron red,
Syrian blood of
the eastern Med.

Biography

My name is Fiona Kelly, living in Dublin, Ireland. On September 3rd, 2015, I woke to the distressing images of a young Syrian refugee washed ashore on a Turkish beach and felt compelled to write this, to share it with my fiends, my family, my colleagues, to show them how truly lucky we are, and how blinded we are to the plight of others. We holiday on the beaches of Europe while refugees risk everything they have, just for a chance to live somewhere without bombs, without persecution, without fear. How lucky we truly are.

Refugees Rescued by Stanley Arumugam

Like so many hundreds that day
He eventually reached his destination
The European shores of refuge

We stood by with our global media
to welcome him at the water's edge
but he would not speak as usual
his mum said he was a shy boy
Still we clicked our cameras
beamed our global images
moved on to the next story

He lay there alone – black and blue
watched by a policeman – unsure
how to handle this crime scene
a foreign child washed up
on the water's edge

The meticulous autopsy revealed
he had a swollen head
still full of grandiose stories and lies
told by his mum every night
fantasy stories that kept him warm
as she dragged him
walking mile after mile
after mile like weary soldiers

I see a Syrian child – head held high
Moses-like walking
out of the icy Mediterranean
leading a band of desperate children
exhausted, broken, scared, starving

smiling with renewed hope
walking to the Promised Land

No Pharaohs chariots in chase
I see instead a hundred trucks and tanks
barbed wire makeshift border posts
box cars packed to camps of death
overflowing in the Promised land
of milk and honey

Biography

Dr Stanley Arumugam Works at ActionAid International – a global human rights organisation fighting poverty. He is Senior Head of Governance, Leadership and Accountability. Stanley has a PhD in Community Psychology. He lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The Wonderwalls

by Sashenka Lleshaj

Farewell Grandmother
Dad is taking me to Wonderland

There is the moon
We are hiding, we are running, mom is crying
And a man shows up; not a man, "the Wonderland's fairy
ship sailor" dad says,

There is the sea
We are running, we are begging, dad is paying
And a boat shows up; not a boat, "the Wonderland's
balloon orange ship" dad says,

There is a lot of water
We are shouting, we are shaking, mom is drowning
And a ship shows up; not a ship, "the Wonderland's
envoys" dad says,

There is the land again
We are running, we are shivering, dad is crying
And police shows up; not police, "the Wonderland's
clowns" dad says,

There is a crowd of people, and smoke and blood
We are hugggggging
And a wall shows up; "a wall...", dad lies to me

And there is silence
My childhood just ended at the walls of Wonderland
Where my dad first lied to me

Biography

I remember when Kosovo refugees came in my small town when I was 8. We would play together, but they always refused to play what we called "to play wars". My mom said it was because the war took their childhood. I never played war again!

Show and Tell by Glen Wilson

It's been forty one nights since
I was in my own bed and Aleppo
feels like another person's film.
We were two doors away
from where the first bombs spoke;
one demon summons others,
saints are chased from holy places,
forgotten altars are blooded again.
When I was a child I needed stitches
from banging my head against a wall,
it is no longer there.

We drove to the next town
then the next town,
as they fell like dominoes
our numbers grew but thinned as well.
I got seperated from my father,
A rebel soldier told me to run
for they would be here soon.
I left a message for father
head towards Germany,
my hand shook as I chalked my name.
I had been training to be a teacher.

Biography

Glen Wilson lives in Portadown, Co Armagh with his wife Rhonda and children Sian and Cain. He has been widely published having work in The Honest Ulsterman, Foliate Oak, Iota, Boyne Berries, A New Ulster and The Interpreters House amongst others.

In 2014 he won the Poetry Space competition and was shortlisted for the Wasafiri New Writing Prize.

His work also appeared in the Making Memories Anthology and he has work forthcoming in The Stony Thursday Book. He is currently working on his first collection of poetry.

Dehumanised by Safoora Masood

I wake up
To be dehumanised
I wake up
To be processed
I wake up
With little regard for my human rights
I wake up
To be told that my fingerprints will be taken within days
I wake up
Distressed and confused by the process
I wake up
To be photographed for a database, to be tracked down
Wherever I go
I wake up
To be numbered in red pen on my arm
I wake up
To be detained for up to 18 months without charge
I wake up
To another nightmare

Biography

I am a mother with 3 children and recognize everybody is precious.

Ostensibly White by Maida Salkanović

My skin is white
So you don't see
My hidden black identity beneath.
You cannot fathom the oppression
Denial of the right to be.
All those times
Mighty White People
Looked down on me
My passport
My accent
My existence.
The time a border agent
Stripped me down and searched my bags
My body
For a hidden weapon
Because he heard me say a word
Of a wrong language.
Foreign is forbidden
Foreign is unwanted
Foreign is exotic
But only if you're beautiful and rich.
I was sixteen
And powerless
The mighty border officer
Looked at me with a smirk.
Did you find my bomb
I asked sarcastically
No, but I still haven't searched your backpack
Said he, reaching for it.
I was sixteen
And already a threat to humanity
Already ostracized

My white skin did not help me
Oppression is not about color
It is about power.
I was born in a wrong place
That was all it mattered.
I was told to go home
But there was no home for me.
Sometimes I imagine
What such place would look like.
Utopia
Of tortured souls
Where no one knows
Of passports and borders.

Biography

Maida Salkanović is a writer and an award-winning journalist from Bosnia-Herzegovina. She has spent her formative years and most of her adult life outside of her homeland.

I wonder if leaving home made me this way

by Masinga Nkateko

I am childless and wondering if I should raise my children here,

Or even have them at all

If they will grow up wishing their skin was disposable;

With a label that reads:

“To be peeled off when blackness becomes too heavy.

Caution: This world needs you to be lighter

Than the brown you inherited from the soil back home

And the luggage you left behind when escaping the war.”

In art class I was taught

That brown is a mixture of

Red (for the blood of those who died on their way here)

Yellow (for the sun that also shines on those we left behind)

And blue (for the sky we all raise our eyes to).

In art class I was taught

That my body is

Death,

Sunshine

And prayer.

I am preparing for motherhood in this new home

That calls me a foreigner,

My mother a refugee

My sister an asylum seeker

My uncle an illegal immigrant.

But my children will be called

Beautiful;

With skin like mahogany,

Like wooden floorboards creaking beneath their mother’s feet before the war sent her running

and running

and running.

Biography

Nkateko Masinga is a 23 year old student, poet and writer who was born and raised in South Africa. She is a medical student at the University of Pretoria and hopes to specialise in paediatrics (child medicine) on completion of her undergraduate degree. She writes poetry in her spare time and has had her work published in poetry journals and anthologies.

Where to, sir? Life, please by Jana Gajic

I see Him passing by.
I don't ask Him for his age.
Though I wonder.
I see His eyes,
Sunbathed grey once,
now are those of an aging warrior.
He stole them from a callous fight dog
He doesn't beg, He grabs,
rightfully, for life that was ripped from his possessions.

He's thirteen years old
And the colour of His eyes is a fresh-painted,
Chirascuro, masterpiece of an unjust world.

The morning His older brother was beaten till he saw his
own Sun rising,
He became His own older brother.
Mother and sister, uncle, father that he'd never had.

For a slipping moment,
The vivid scene flies before my eyes.
He is sitting in a classroom,
Gazing at that same girl He always does.
But then she's gone,
Swallowed,
Crushed by epiglotus,
Choking Aegeus.

He knew no border,
But today His only hobby is crossing one.
Reminiscence of a shooter video game,

But these guns are loaded,
And bullets do kill.

I pronounce His name,
But He doesn't answer.
The name is long vanished.
Out of inhumane frost and vicious waves
He grew a new one.

Biography

A High-school student from Belgrade, a witness of sadness and cruelty.

Night Terror (for Alan Kurdi) by Colm Ward

You wake in a fury
of tears, skin fever-red,
barely aware of who
or where you are;

I switch on the lamp
to scare away the dark
but the nightmare won't
let go, its current pulling

you away from me still:
a powerful undertow
dragging you back out
into the depths of fear.

I pull you closer,
stroke your sweat-soaked hair,
shush you back to sleep
as your sobs subside,

and slowly the terror ebbs,
eyelids start to droop,
head sinks onto the pillow,
your breathing deepens.

In the morning you'll wake
and remember nothing
of this swell of terror.
But I'll remember and remember

too your brother, curled up –
like you now – on the wet sand,

lost to a cold sea and
a terror that won't recede.

Biography

Colm Ward is a poet and journalist based in Limerick, Ireland.

Helpless

by Tina Pisco

I am wasting water, Soraya
Let the dogs' bowl overflow
Watch the hose whip like an angry snake
Gushing water across the yard
Splashing the dogs, spraying a river of rainbows
I am wasting water Soraya
I am wasting it for you

I am wasting water, Malinka
I press the shower at the pool again and again
Let hot water cascade over my head
Like a halo, a waterfall, the Virgin's mantle
Until my skin is rosy red, my body wet and warm, smelling
of coconut
I am wasting water Malinka
I am wasting it for you

I am wasting water Amal
I fill the bath to the brim,
Pour perfumed oils, blue bubbles, scented salts
Light candles and soak, pull the plug when it gets
lukewarm,
Add more hot water for you, Malinka
I am wasting water for you

I am wasting water Rhina
Like the water wasted you, flung you up out of the boat
Wrapped you in its waves, tore your children from your

arms

Entered your nose, your mouth, your lungs until you
became one with the sea.

Helpless

I feel helpless

So I am wasting water for you,

It's all that I can do

Let the tap run, run and run

Icy cold or burning hot

just to watch it flow

Biography

Tina Pisco is a professional writer living in Ireland. She has a multi-cultural background and considers herself an Earthling. She has published novels, non-fiction, short stories and a collection of poetry

Can' t You See?

by Maja Bajric

Though I now am only four, the world's wisdom lays in my eyes.

Emotions I have yet not known are an unwelcome surprise.

For how am I to comprehend

Things I wasn't asking for,

How am I to understand ?

Look into my eyes and see, look deeply, come closer to me.

Look and try to feel the fear from a place you'll never be,

You luckily will never see.

`Cause you are free.

Biography

Maja Bajric was born in 1982 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Sarajevo in 2007, as a Professor of Fine Arts. She spent four years as a refugee in Austria during the Balkan war. (1992- 1996) Currently, she is working as a freelance artist in various fields of fine and applied arts.

Ode to the free willing helpers in Austria/an die freiwillige helferinnen oesterreichs

by Genevieve Diamant

Do not despair.

Do not forget to sleep, and to eat. Know that everything
and anything you do
is enough and you are loved from beyond. Carry on.

I have heard professionals and people from the news say
the chaos is caused by the helpers themselves. Laugh at
that lunacy.

If professionals had bought blankets and homes
instead of tents in May that would be useless by
September,
we would all sleep better now. All.

The chaos was caused long ago by bombs that none of us
bought, so

let us work together, somehow.

Our task is to empty the ocean of its tears,
one teaspoon at a time.

Do not despair.

Each of us can help two, five, maybe ten people if we are
lucky.

Look to your own teaspoon.

Scoop it out of the ocean with care.

Carry it straight to the gates of hell, mindful not to spill a
drop, and do not despair.

Throw it as best you can.

We will empty the ocean of its tears.

We will put out that fire.

One teaspoon at a time.

Biography

I was born in New York City into a family with members who themselves were refugees forced to leave Vienna at the outbreak of World War 2. I moved to Vienna in 1996 and studied at the academy of fine art (Akademie der Bildenden Kunst). I have worked in Vienna as a researcher, writer, and editor for various NGOs and international corporations. I also write fiction and poetry and volunteer, as circumstances permit, for people such as those who have passed through Vienna recently.

My best friend is a social worker.

by Valeriia Pishchanska

My best friend is a social worker.
We never had fights before
Her Syrian client was pregnant.
"A toddler's body on a Turkish shore

Hasn't she seen?" I demanded.
The silence between us was fraught.
...My own family fled from Tajikistan.
How can the memory be so short?

I was a newborn when we came to Ukraine
With its piece as round as its bread.
I was an adult when I have forgotten –
No human should live in dread.

Whether Eastern Ukrainian border,
or Syria – why should it matter?
People have their right to live,
love, give birth and hope for better.

Biography

I was born in Tadjikistan and grown up in Ukraine, I am currently living in Germany. My family fled from the civil war in Tadjikistan in 1992. The best friend I write about is a fascinating young Ukrainian woman and a social worker, who taught me and many other people to judge the refugees drama with our hearts instead of our heads.

I am here, Europe!
by Sowjeya Joseph

I am here, Europe!
I left my home,
my friends,
my family,
even a part of myself

to escape violence, destruction and death.

I am here, Europe!

I have nothing left,
no home,
no belongings,
not even a picture of me

but I have hope
to find peace, acceptance and a little happiness.

I am here, Europe!

Please let me be here, help me to overcome my pain and
loss and to find a new part of myself in you.

I am here!

Biography

Born in Sri Lanka, parents escaped the war with me being a baby that time in 1985 and sought refugee in Germany. Now a German citizen and German Qualified Lawyer with a LL.M from UK focusing on "R2P and Sri Lanka 2009". Currently living and working in London, UK. I am a human rights defender and have been to the Human Rights Council Sessions and submitted reports to the HRC as well as Treaty Bodies making aware of Human Rights Issues in Sri Lanka. Growing up as a migrant and refugee in the 80s and 90s in Germany, I put my experience and hopes to be construed in today's light into this poem.

Far Away From Home

by Christos Kariotis

As the sun goes down
your heart is bleeding
An endless journey
far away from home

The seeds of hope
now are growing
inside you tortured soul
As you sail across the seas
of sadness

A new dawn
A new morning
Without tears
Without rage

You're free
You're safe
But still... so far away from home

Biography

My name is Christos Kariotis and I am from Greece. I am 47 years old. I started writing poems since I was 17 years old. I have written two poetry books in Greek language so far. I'm also a musician and composer

This is the world we stand
by Jason Ang Wei Lung

This is the world we stand;
"Human Rights" is the word we defend.
We are all the same;
We grow and we die;
Human rights will be the remain;
It's the rights we sustain;
It's the principle we retain;

We are not alone;
Nobody knows;
What happens tomorrow;
Future is unknown;
But we never let go;

For our dream;
We never die;
For our home;
We never cry;
We look up, We stand up;
We never give up;

Life has unlucky number;
Life has hazardous angle;
From spring to summer;
We hold hands closer;
From autumn to winter;
We stand up together;

We are civilized people;
Life is an adventure;

This is our desire;
Looking forward to a better future;

Let say a little prayer;
With a heart of sincere;
Wish us a peace of world;
Living peacefully ever after.

Stay strong when thing goes wrong;
It is not wrong to stay strong.

Overseas and coast to coast;
To find the place we love the most;
Over years and at all cost;
To build the home we ever lost.

We are not refugees but HUMANS.
We just fight for our RIGHTS.

Biography

I grew up in a fish village and currently studying Bachelor of Aeronautical Engineering in Malaysia. I had bad childhood of nearly depressive disorder, blind, drown, bitten by poisonous snake. Thus, I believe it is a destiny that I was born to make a difference in this world. I have traveled to 12 countries, won over 6 awards, 160 certificates/trophies/medals, 120 competitions' experience, spoke 7 languages and created 400 poems/sayings. Consistently striving to achieve what I believe.

I choose!
by Citius (Tadiwanashe Muganyi)

I choose to forget ,
Not that i do not remember.
I remember all too well,
The fear , death and despair.

I choose to forget ,
Not as a sign of inner weakness.
But a symbol of mental fortitude.
For my strength is not in what i hold on to,
But what i can let go.

I choose to forget,
Not that i desire to forgive,
But i have to so i may live,
Free of hatred and resentment

I choose to forgive,
For the past has nothing for me.
The future a mystery ,
But one i march to with hope.

I choose to progress,
To create a brighter future .
Not only for the infant on my back ,
But for my nation.

Accept Me,
Embrace Me ,
Choose to forget , to forgive,
To progress ..Choose life.

Biography

I am a young development practitioner passionate about youth empowerment and human rights awareness. I believe the multitudes on Europe's borders today are our brothers and sisters before they are migrants or refugees. Let's embrace them . We all have the right to choose our own destiny.

We Have Come Home by Ikeubabo, N.H.

To unsung praises of ferocious tales
From tomorrows struggles and
Yesterdays lust, bearing tales
Of lands seven seas untold

From silent arguments, screaming
God's name upon bloodied hands
From pridefull wars, persecution and poverty;
Embroidering permutations willing to
Let us lay

Yes! We have; Minstrels,
frenzied voyages like bees
Swarming on a pile of sugar.
"Our light is come" clearly spelt out
On faces of spent out 'guests'

We have come from agelong prophesies
Weaving through time,
Bending futures as the spirits taught.
From the Alps to Bavaria
From Milan to Kiev, Moscow and Madrid

'Guests' from all over clan
Sufferings smeared with that smile
Deception is the greatest miracle!
Heads held high, we bow
Not for papas gains, posterity
Assures of fairer biddings.

Faces crowned with laughter
Masked in rejection, but do we know

What fate lies beneath the hour?
What lies ahead, we

Do not know, but for
The lowly crow of a disturbed cock
Heralding an unending dawn....

Nightingales sweet eulogy,
Merrymaking on tombs meant for us,
We conquer, if You stand with us
In the end, we call.

Biography

I was born in Nigerian, in 1994. I am a final year student at the Department of Foreign Languages French/German), University of Benin.

If We Could Unzip Ourselves

by David Canning

If we could unzip ourselves,
Starting behind the head,
Take off our bodies like removing a coat,
What of us would be left?

Beneath shirt and tie or blouse and skirt
Once we have peeled away
Skin, sinew, bone and brain,
What of us remains?

Is it fat or thin or in between,
Beautiful, ugly or plain?
Is it short or tall, is it big or is it small, or
Are we all the same?

Is it young or old – does it have an age?
Is it male or female or neither?
Does it even have a human face?
Does it have a colour?

Can what is left be owned?
Can it be held or treasured?
Can it be valued, priced or traded?
Can it be weighed, counted or measured?

Can it hate or be hated?
Can it be hunted, caught or caged?
Does it hope, or pray for justice?
Can it be rescued, delivered or saved?

Can it be taught, deceived or indoctrinated?
Is it blind or can it see?

Can it be misled or misguided?
Can it be freed or is it free?

Biography

David Canning is a poet from Colchester in the UK, who has just published his debut collection, 'An Essex Parish'. He has performed his poetry locally and further afield and has been published in poetry magazines and in an anthology on the theme of conflict, commemorating the centenary of the First World War, called 'So Too Have the Doves Gone.' He is the grandson and great grandson of migrants to the UK, who were escaping war and persecution in different parts of Europe. He has written many poems on conflict and its inter-generational effects. His collection, an Essex Parish explores this theme including those of cycles of violence and redemption

Farfalla
by Morgan Downie

migration season
the trade winds turn
blowing north

up across
the blue eye'd
mediterranean

that middle passage
whose depths are
seeded with bones

ship graves
their hulls stream
with tidal veils

as on rescue boats
uniformed sailors oil
their gun sights

a closed
blue door
to meet them

the old greeting
for returning
ghosts

Biography

Morgan Downie is a visual artist, short story writer and poet. He is a keen collaborationist and cross disciplinary practitioner and this underpins many of the themes of translocation in his practice. His published work includes stone and sea and distances, a Romanian- English photo poetry collection. He lives in Scotland

A Refugee Song

By FC Buciu

My country is my mother's womb
That nourished me
And now
Rejects me.
I wear my country, for lack of a better way
To hang on to my umbilical cord.
I wear my country like a second skin
That I can never shed,
I wear my country inside out.
Inside,
She's my imaginary friend,
Outside she's a tattoo seared in my hide,
That other people use
For and against me,
I am a category.
If I'm a category, they can deal with me.
I'm too much to deal with, you can't cope with me,
You've got your own problems,
Why would you need mine,
Why would you need me
To remind you of your own humanity,
For you, I am a human E.T,
An alien,
Someone else's son,
Someone else's daughter,
Someone else's problem,
No category can save me,
No womb can save me,
No umbilical cord can save me,
No hand out,
No smile,
No seat at the table,

No category can wash away my country,
No country can wash away my iron seared skin,
No acceptance,
No rejection,
I am a refugee,
I am your face in a broken mirror,
I am your original sin.

Biography

I am a PhD candidate in Creative Writing at Brunel University. I work for an international humanitarian organization that works with refugees among other vulnerable populations.

Safe Soil

By Claudia Carles

How many worlds are there?
More, I hope, for this one is divided.
We are all children!
The children of nature,
of the earth,
growing as its very own tender buds,
yet we do not form one garden.
Why?
When violent winds sweep
and seeds are forced to flee,
we do not embrace them with our own soil.
Why?
When the secuteurs come
and clip at their children
we to not open our fronds and catch them.
What?
What difference is there between the seed of a daisy,
of a cedar,
of a vegetable?
None –
all need soil
and all need sun.
And so we must unite
to plant every displaced seed.
All arms – open.
Every leaf – broaden.
All water – quench them.
Together creating a place
where the wind cannot crush.
And we watch, petals beaming, as “them”
becomes “us”.
And what happens, with every seed we plant?
The soil is richer.

The air is cleaner.
The plants are safer.
And the garden is more glorious and beautiful than ever.
We welcome you to this garden.
We welcome refugees.

Biography

I am a 15 year old high school student from Fremantle, Western Australia. Right now I'm in Italy as an exchange student for the rest of the year. In Australia, and in Europe, people seem to need constant reminding that refugees are people too.

Remind us of love

By Luke Banda

You and i share the same sky,
and we both know it is beautiful,
you and i share the same earth,
and we both know it is lovely,
but you and i do not share
the same experience, because
i am a refugee.

The war divided my people,
hate took the lives of my family,
pride destroyed the bricks
that made my home, Selfishness left
my people hungry, ignorance
destroyed our monuments,
power corrupted our political system.

We have no home left,
we have lost our dignity and
respect, we have forgotten love,

So we are on our way
to your home, some of us
have arrived already,
please show us compassion.

leave your gates opened for us,
give us shelter to remind us of peace,
give us food to remind us of happiness,
give us clothes to remind us of dignity,
give us medicine to remind us of good health, give us
motivation to remind us of hope, give our children
education, remind us that we have a future,
remind us of love.

Biography

Luke went to Mzuzu University where he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Arts Education. Luke is currently volunteering at One Child Africa. Luke recently volunteered with Children of The Nations as a grant manager. Luke has also previously worked as a research assistant for millennium challenge account, Christian Aid International and WASAA.

Poem from an asylum seeker to the assimilated western economic migrant

By Becky Swinn

You gave up a life in sunny shores
I bear the scars of endless wars
They let you in
But keep me out
And you refuse my plea, beyond all doubt
That I might have an equal claim
To the safety you enjoy in Great Britain.
It seems to me you've changed your tune.
It's fine for you; you've got a home,
And implicit trust from your middle-class neighbours;
They'll never ask for your 'right to work' papers.
They don't scorn you on TV or to your face,
Call you a scrounger, an utter disgrace,
depriving England's born and bred
of a steady income to earn their bread.
So the £36 I live on,
Does this look fun?
If I work, I'm an outlaw
If I don't, I'm a bum.
Do you think this is steady? Is this my choice?
That's what the papers tell you, but I'm deprived a voice,
So a newsflash now, to you from me:
You're an economic migrant
It's something I can't be.
Ten years now I've been waiting to live legally;
Count yourself so lucky,
And don't go changing your tune with me.

Biography

I wrote this several years ago to someone very close to me. They're married to an economic migrant and don't contribute financially to the economy, yet also believe that refugees are here to leech off the system. At university I was involved with the local refugee forum and was president of Nottingham Student Action for Refugees. I currently work marketing green businesses but this issue stays close to my heart.

Empathise

By Anna Grant

Ethnic
Majority
Please
Accept
These
Helpless
Impoverished
Souls
Equally.

Biography

I am a second year law student at the University of Manchester, human rights law is one of my main areas of interest and I hope to study it next year as a chosen module.

I have been to Uganda with a charity to help local communities in many ways and I hope to go on more trips of this nature in the near future.

Her freedom

By Vineela

Wild,
Untamed,
She was running.
Foot after foot
Bare.
Landing with a fierce
Defiant thud.
Only to spring back up
And hit some more.
The deep brown soil
A battered victim
To the unyielding blows.
A helpless witness
To sporadic fits of anger,
And frustration.
Cuts, grazes, blisters
Scarring each sole
Simply spurring her on.
The fire of muscles in her legs
Beneath the sweat-stained skin
Moving smoothly, effectively
Shooting impulses of pain.
Piercing through her body
With each step forwards.
Past the naked branches
That offered neither warmth not shelter,
And past the barren fields,
Void of hope,
Full of seedless dreams.
As recklessly as her heart beat
So did her aim go –
A wanton, desperate scramble
Here, there

And everywhere...
A left turn past the bushes,
A jerky right turn
To face yet another curve
In the path...
Round droplets of tears
Racing down her cheeks
Being shaken away
By the stampede
Of her ferocious footsteps.
Gasping for breath,
She continued running.
She wanted this.
To feel the pain.
The cold winter air
A tangible reflection
Of the storm
Raging inside her.
Of going crazy
Within.
"Helplessness needs neither pity
Nor love,"
She thought.
The setting sun
The dusky stars
The night's clouds
All a silent witness
To her moment.
Her freedom.

No biography was submitted.

Refugees and their message to Europe

By Elma Čavčić

Days of wandering away from home
Tired, hungry, wet, alone
I wander seeking safety
My burden is heavy
Days of meeting people without faces
While waiting for changes
I have no character, they say
I have no right to be on this way
Days of calling for help
I pray not to lose myself
They never bother to learn my name
I am just number according to them
Days of walking through Europe
I am putting my last letter in the envelope
I am asking for the forgiveness of my unborn son
I promised something that had never begun
Days of madness in my head
I wonder what have I ever done to them
Is it my fault for running away?
Should I choose to stay?
Days of looking for the peace
Surrounded by the police
I feel severe pain in my legs
A little patience, he begs
Days of getting acquainted with Europe
I am losing all my hope
I wake up chained in barbed wire
I will finally close my eyes on the petals of this brier
... And I thought it was a scent of the freedom

Biography

Elma Čavčić is a Sarajevo-born human rights activist and political scientist with an MA degree in international relations and diplomacy. A follower of feminist scholarship, Elma is also an alumna of NGO Balkans Let's Get Up!, Humanity in Action, and the International MitOst Network. As a student assistant, she pursued a short term career as a faculty member in the political sciences department at her university. So far, Elma has been participating in many regional and international projects concerning topics such as discrimination, minority rights and gender-based violence. Elma is a rising academic researcher and essayist, covering stories of post-conflict society such as obtaining stable peace, transitional justice, peace building and reconciliation. In her spare time she likes to question various identities such as religious, cultural, national and ethnic ones and conduct different identity analyses. As a winner of the Turkish Institute for Science and Technologies grant for the most successful international students, she plans to pursue a PhD in conflict management.

Hypocrisy

By Ivana Peric

We don't do body counts
The general says
Until it's our blood and flesh
Then we'll put in on billboards
Travel across the ocean
Yes
You can cross oceans and sea
When you're carrying weapons
But when you're running from them
You're not welcome
Carrying dead bodies
On your back
In your eyes
In the way you speak
The voice of broken china
I saw a photo of a man
Selling flowers in Damascus
They bought bouquets of violets from him
Say he's romantic and takes time to make good displays
I don't know where he is now
Maybe among those 120 dead during Eid al Fitr
Or those millions that had to leave their homes
Soaking wet on a border crossing
Flowers nowhere to be seen
Who will give you a chance to grow
When the world doesn't care for you
Not even when you're reduced to numbers
I met Awuda from Yemen
Her name means
„come back“
But names do not bring people back
The generals say they don't do body counts

But remember
Somebody keeps on counting
Somebody appreciates
Life in all
Life for all
And justice above the dirty games
Flowers growing
In Syria and Europe

Biography

Ivana Perić is a Croatian journalist and an activist. In her writing, she focuses on the conflicts in the Middle East, Croatian foreign policy and refugee and asylum seekers issues.

Carpetbags
By Frank Murphy

Carpetbags are different now
Only a few loose ends
And the colours change
In the marketplace
It's all up for grabs
Dealers holding a watching brief
And the new order's in
Hawking their wares.
Attache cases;
And the rules the same
Buy cheap sell dear
And no compartments now
For missing files
Not like the old ones
Everything carefully stitched
Except a few pockets of resistance
Taking a morality cheque
Just for the the present
And everyone's waiting
for a white Christmas.

Biography

Winner of The Jonathan Swift Creative Writing Award 2009. Most recent, third in the Oliver Goldsmith Poetry Competition 2015. Highly Commended and Shortlisted in many others.

Breath

By Daniel Wade

On a talon-cragged hot spring shore,
the steel kiss of a daybreak wave lasts too long
for hard-won judgment, threats and curtains
of rain snarl under a loud August wind, away
from tourists charter-fishing aboard a varnished gulet.
The surf cradles your limbs like ballast.
I can see the tide massaging your back
as if such a barnacled simulation of mercy
could deliver you from the whitecaps
that tossed the raft you crouched in over
before pressing you face-down to the sand,
the channel's cold slop brimming
to your marrowbones, gutting your spongy
life vest, draining suds from your mouth,
profuse and unaided as smoke.
You are becalmed now, in your dampest zone –
cool is the water, and sick to the pit of its stomach
for exempting you from its mercy,
unalert to the glib tears which will anoint you
now that the world witnesses your sinking.
All is on the hook. The brine buffs shaded stone,
deckchairs take cover under parasols at water's edge.
You lie in still-warm state, respiring for a pocket of air
that can no longer grant you the mercy of breath.

Biography

Daniel Wade is a 24-year-old poet and author from Dublin, Republic of Ireland, where he still lives. He is a graduate of the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT), where he studied English and Journalism. His poetry has been published in *Optic*, *Limerick Revival*, *Wordlegs* (e-publication), *The Stony Thursday Book* (ed. Paddy Bushe), *HeadSpace Magazine*, the *Seven Towers 2014 Census*, the *Bray Arts Journal*, *The Sea* (charity anthology in aid of the RNLi), *Sixteen Magazine* (e-publication) and the Hennessey New Irish Writers' page of the *Irish Times*.

The Distance

By Devin Sommer

Have you ever seen the distance in the eyes of an immigrant?
Then you've never seen resistance or examined why they're militant
Strangers pass with looks of disgust and distrust
Disposed to thinking it's just them versus us
Where's the justice for those trying to survive on a slave wage
with a third world diploma not even worth the weight of it's page?
We could change this! But we can't learn the lessons
Question EU foreign policy, past imperial transgressions
We promise hope and freedom when we know it's just a lie
Our sympathy is with you but "visa request denied".
Politicians claim they want solutions and peace?
These self-proclaimed leaders only pirates and thieves
Building new walls and limits on freedom of speech
Scheming pipelines to tighten Middle Asia's leash
When they bite back blame it on Islamic Belief's
and the women and children of every terror-ridden country
Where 15 percent are fed while the rest remain hungry
Let's close the distance between the kids and their families
the distance between the place we live and reality
Let's close the distance that's keeping us apart
like the distance between the mind, soul and the heart.

Biography

Devin Sommer is a Graduate of the Evergreen State College in Washington State U.S.A. He is a former Fulbright Scholar and currently works at Canakkale 18 Mart University in Canakkale Turkey where he has been living for the past 5 years. Devin is the English Language Coordinator for the faculty of tourism, and a consultant for the international office arranging events and courses for students in the Erasmus Student Network, Fulbright program, and AEGEE. Though Devin's background is in Diplomacy and Linguistics, he is also an accomplished writer in the domain of international relations and humanitarian issue's. Some of his past awards include: The Benjamin A Gilman scholarship for volunteer work in Argentina, The Jessica Kelso Memorial Scholarship for volunteer work in Turkey, and the William Winden "Achievement in the Arts" award for slam poetry. He has also received awards for pieces submitted to The Voice of Democracy Essay Contest and A Celebration of Young Poets (New Jersey).

Under the flightpath

By Emma Harding

The man who landed carries a face
of mooncalf surprise at his new talent
to curve a leg behind an ear, reverse
his head in uncommon direction;
it's news to him that one can drop
two miles and still look like a man.
Residents who woke to this spreadeagle,
to blood on cars and cloth on the hedge,
all said they did not hear it, this betrayal
of human faith in flight, but the scream
of fuselage would like have drowned it,
final chord of a heart-stopped dream.
A life away from this suburban road,
a slender woman sweeps her house,
murmurs along to a radio ballad.

Biography

Emma Harding lived for several years in Hounslow, west London, UK, directly under the Heathrow flight path. Her poems have been published in a number of magazines and anthologies including *The Poetry Review*, *The North*, *Poetry Salzburg Review* and *Magma*.

Death of a Refugee

By Ciaran O'Rourke

List me down when I am dead,
and may the list include
the bird that fled,
the bomb that flew,
the avenues buckled
and blit with dust –
mourn if you must,
but let no elegist
intrude, to bury
the words you knew
for murder, the laws
you wrote to kill,
the years you watched
me trammelled,
and the broken book
my body filled...
Have history inhere
in the border singing
through my head,
in the blood
that bled
at the tick of your pen,
in the bullet, the brick,
the burning air,
in the char you made
of children,
the cartographers you trained
to map my eyes
with shrapnel, to wrap
my hands in flame...
Poetry is feverish,
memory an art,

so say
that I kept living,
though you ripped
my world apart,
and remember me
as human, in your
hardly human heart.

Biography

Ciarán O' Rourke was born in 1991, and lives in Dublin. He was winner of the Lena Maguire/Cúirt New Irish Writing Award 2009, and his pocket-pamphlet "Some Poems" was published as a Moth Edition in 2011. He completed his Masters in English and American Studies in Oxford University in 2014.

The Lampedusa Line

By Mark Fiddes

Ladies and Gentlemen
on behalf of the crew
can I ask that you direct your attention
to our semi-automatic handguns
as we review emergency procedures?
There are no exits on this craft.
In the unlikely event of a landing
leave all your carry-on items behind.
Life jackets are not available
even for small children.
We will be travelling at a speed of 10kph
and conditions in Europe are poor
currently with a high risk of internment.
I wish you a pleasant onward journey
and hope to see you on-board again
in the near future.

Biography

Mark Fiddes lives in London. His first collection "The Chelsea Flower Show Massacre" was published by Templar Poetry this March and was shortlisted in the Saboteur Awards as well as being a Lovereading.co.uk pick of the month. He was recently runner up in the international Bridport Prize and won Ireland's Dromineer Festival Prize.

The path to citizenship

By Lee Patton

A footpath

in my grandfather's village led from woodlot
to road, then to the port of Rijeka. The Empire
of Austro-Hungary claimed it, along with
everything Grandpa ever knew. I never
knew him, but learned how he'd be drafted
into the Emperor's army if he didn't dodge
the province he was born to.

So Deet paid

for space in steerage on a ship crossing
three seas to the New World. One cousin
went to Argentina, another to Australia. Deet?
Ended up in America. Lucky for me, they sped
him through Ellis Island, checking for lice (none,
thanks) and sending him West—no papers,
undocumented—merely free.

Deet possessed

what America needed. He worked cheap. My folks
grew up glad in WOP (With-Out-Papers) Town,
thanks to the gumption of one Croatian teenaged
draft dodger. Wish I could've known you, Deet,
and wish you could've known me, spoiled
child of the striving, easy dreamers
your audacity unleashed.

Biography

A native of California's Mendocino Coast, Lee Patton has enjoyed life in Colorado since college. His fiction and poetry have been widely published and his plays produced nationwide. Recent poems appear in *Going Down Grand*, *Weatherings*, and *Poetry Quarterly*. More at leepatton.net.

Don't I belong here?

By Charlotte Brown

Dont

I

Belong here?

I dont

Feel alone

I

Am fine

Im tired of saying,

Im tired of repeating

My story

You dont know

How greatful i am but

I cant tell you

How much to me

It means.

(Please now read backwards)

Biography

I am 15 years old, I have a huge passion for poetry and I am also an activist for equality. I hope you enjoy my poem!

Ballad for Aylan Kurdi

By Audrey Wells

Amid the surf on Bodrum's shore
He lies face down, abandoned doll,
His little head is lapped by foam,
His left arm down, but hand uprolled,
As if slumbering in his cot
To the lullaby of gulls.
His family fled from Syria's war
Their boat capsized, the night sea rose
And seized the toddler terrified
As water poured into his mouth and nose,
He choked amid the freezing waves,
Above his head dark waters closed.
At dawn waves bore him to the shore.
A shocked policeman found him there
Still clad in shorts, red T-shirt, shoes,
And picked him up with tender care,
Pieta-like. This touched the world
Which soon ignored the migrants' prayer.

Biography

Retired academic

Whispering waves

By Katerina Skiada

Whispering waves are lulling me gently.
I heard a scream or it is just a dream?
I heard some steps on the muddy coast.
My balcony is far i must go closer, i have to go to the
seaside.

It's just a child, wet, crying but the only thing i m hearing
is the rhythm of a bleeding flute.

It carries his home on his little shoulders and from his eyes
stories are jumping out.

Stories about ruins, about lives under dust, about a human
train crossing Europe's heart.

About fences and walls rapidly raising their height.
At the news of eight someone is saying that this child is
my new enemy and that i m in danger.

And u are leaving me my little friend , you are fendng off,
you disappear.

I have to reach u , is unbearable to watch you walking
barefoot on top of these hostiles flags.

Suddenly my chest starts to crack and thousands hands
are coming out.

My little friend i close you in my arms, i offer you my heart
, your old home, your mother's hug , your sisters smile.
Please hug me , offer me my salvation.

Biography

I was born in 1980, currently living in Athens, Greek. I am married with Moroccan citizen 2005-2010. I am working at the University of Athens, department of communication, media and culture.

Refugees and Rescuers

By Eithne Reynolds

I'm sure you tasted the joy of expectation
I'm sure you tasted salt on your lips
I'm sure your heart swelled with anticipation
as the boat lifted on the crest of a blue Mediterranean
wave.
I'm sure your arms were as full as your heart
as you strapped your infant tight to your breast
And gripped tiny hands to keep them close, because
there's overcrowding on the boat and chaos all about.
I know your emotions must have been as turbulent as the
sea,
leaving your home for a land unknown.
I know this, for I am a mother like you and
I would want my children to live free too.
I am sure your soul was swamped with terror
Just as the boat was swamped with waves, and
I'm sure you looked at your children
Determined not to make a choice
Which ones to take
Which one to leave
Three children
Two hands
One sinking dinghy
No life jacket.
I know you must have cried out to your God, and
He must have heard your desperate plea
As strong arms lifted you to safety
From that stormy sea

Biography

Eithne writes short stories, poetry and flash fiction. She was the Irish winner of The Fermoy International Poetry Competition 2014. She was awarded 2nd place in North West Words International Poetry awards 2013. Her short stories have been published in The Bohemyth; Woman's Way Magazine and in The Swift Edition of Literary Orphans the e-magazine. Her short story Lily was long-listed for the Doire Press 2nd Annual International Chapbook and she was short-listed for the Ó Bhéal poetry competition. Her work has been published in Gods and Monsters of Tomorrow anthology; The Galway Review anthology; Skylight 47 Literary Magazine; and The Blue Max Review and The Ó Bhéal Anthology. She has been long-listed for the Fish Poetry Competition 2013. She was the featured poet on The Creative Flow The Dundalk FM Arts programme in 2015.

Thunderhead

By Michelle Chen

Once Thunderhead laid an egg.
It wasn't a nest egg or
anything like that, and
not hardboiled since you could
crack it and something liquid
would spill out. From that fact
you could infer that it wasn't
scrambled or sunny-side up
either, and you would be right.
Maybe it was the tendrils of egg
drop soup, or egg pudding, but that
wasn't the word for it, no, because
that brings to mind the sweet filling of
an egg tart, and the only word Thunderhead knows
for it is 鸡蛋羹*, which, while it might make
no sense to you, rings clear for Thunderhead and
this kind of nostalgia Thunderhead can never convey,
this culture is just what Thunderhead shirks from
writing about,
so Thunderhead just writes about the Greek
mythology and Biblical implications
behind laying this very real egg,
this solid jewel that grew out of some god's brain,
or the Virgin Mary's child if he were laid
in an egg that, only to Thunderhead,
comes from a further shore,
that only to Thunderhead is both
a bed and a suitcase.

*Jī dàn gēng, or egg custard

Biography

Michelle Chen is a poet, writer, and artist who lives for paper mail, warm zephyrs, and fried noodles, and who takes inspiration for her writing from the events that occur in and around her home, New York City, though her birthplace is Singapore and she hopes to return and visit someday.

Michelle Chen is the first-prize winner of the 2015 Knopf Poetry prize and the Norm Strung Youth Writing Competition, the recipient of The Critical Junior Poet's Award, been commended as a Foyle Young Poet of the Year, and has performed at Lincoln Center. Her work has been honored both regionally and nationally in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and has appeared in the Sharkpack Poetry Review, The Critical Pass Review, Across the Margin, Transcendence, Alexandria Quarterly, Ember, and elsewhere.

My dream

By Yvonne Britty

I pictured myself making it past high school to college,
I lived, dreamt, visualized my dream,
In a courtroom, in a well~pressed suit,
That dream is as stale as stale bread now.
Blinding lights woke me up the other day,
Dad was panicking and mom was sobbing,
Our once comfortable home disappeared in the distance,
So did my dream, school and friends.
Pushing, pulling, falling, trampled over,
The throng doesn't seem to lessen in size,
Uniformed police ferrying people all around us,
Surrounded by unfamiliar faces and a bleak future.
We are on every social media page and newspaper,
Pleading for food aid and medical aid,
Memories of my home tear me apart,
We're lost in this jungle called refugee camp.
My heart cries out to the government,
Save our bright futures and dreams,
The nights are cold and full of terror,
The days unbearable.

Biography

I'm just a girl trying to find my way in life. I am filled with passion for humanity.

Portrait of a Somali Woman

by Allan Persinger

One foot
perched on the upper
rim of the curb
the other thrust
out into the passing street
humped over like a potato
long brown arms
thin as fence rails
sweep bright tan grain
from out the gutter

Her green dress
dull with the silica
of passing cars
desert wind
& the whisper of poverty
rotted teeth
industrial discharge
presses tight
against her stork legs

Her fingers
nimble as bird beaks
pick out stones
the shiny curled
lips of soda pull tabs
the wrinkled
dog's bottoms of pruned cigarette butts
from out the golden wheat spilled
from the indifference of trucks

A left-over Hadji
not here

for the dizzying heights of Mecca
but for the more spiritual
clink of coin
this became her final
destination fitted into place
as easily as a light bulb
a rubber band
a razor slicing wrists
her face is long
oval
peering out
the canary yellow scarf
bleached with sun
pounding upon
sea wet rocks
& darned precisely
with bits of mismatched
thread
twilled together from button holes
dead pants
and frayed shirt labels
& the midnight circles
of her eyes
are as silent as windows
in abandoned stores

Biography

I have a graduate degree in English and have published poetry in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan. Furthermore, I have won several awards including the American Poets' Prize and the Cole Younger Poets' Award. Currently I am teaching English at Madison College and at Concordia University Wisconsin.