



A BOOK OF POEMS:
Expressions from our Youth



A Book of Poems, Expressions From Our Youth

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Pakistan: Fleeing to Safety ©
UNHCR/H.Caux

DEDICATION

To the refugees of the world, especially to the children

FORWARD

VOICES OF THE FUTURE

For most of my life as a writer I was fascinated and guided by a few poetry lines written by German poet Bertold Brecht in which he asked himself “In the dark times will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times”. As an immigrant to Canada and as a poet who experienced and survived the Bosnian War (1992-1995) I wouldn’t be surprised if many of us forgot the bitter taste of seeing on our television screens, people craving for help, experiencing the horrors of war and genocide. Unfortunately, new wars replace the old ones so soon that we don’t even remember in time, the old ones. The notion of writer Milan Kundera who said “everything will be forgotten and nothing will be changed for better” unfortunately rings the bell on the deaf door. Watching brand new wars, it seems that we constantly lose the sense that we are all human, we are all one nation of the world that belong to the same family. Neighbours should be closer to us than t-shirts we wear.

Compassion for those people who struggle for life and our ability to get into somebody else’s shoes, should be the most valuable inheritance from our ancestors. Young people who submitted their works and thoughts in literary form to this competition are all winners. Some of the pupils who submitted their poetry works won awards, some of them received recognition, but each of them who participated in making this world a better place make me happy. My hats down to their teachers.

Goran Simić, Writer
www.goransimic.com

INTRODUCTION

In 2009 the UNHCR Toronto office (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and COSTI Immigrant Services organized the first Refugees and Human Rights Child and Youth Poetry Contest in commemoration of World Refugee Day, June 20. The purpose of the contest has been to bring human rights education, particularly awareness to the refugee situation, to the Canadian classroom. By asking youth to write poetry about refugees and human rights acts as a tool to encourage Canada's future to think as humanitarian and compassionate leaders towards their brothers and sisters living worldwide.

Additionally, the publication of this book acts as a commemoration piece for the significant anniversaries for both COSTI Immigrant Services and the UNHCR. In 2011 the UNHCR will celebrate its 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 150th anniversary of the birth of Fridtjof Nansen, League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. COSTI Immigrant Services will celebrate its 60th anniversary in 2012. In addition to the wide range of settlement services provided to refugees, it operates the Ralph Chiodo Family Immigrant Reception Centre, which provides accommodation and support services to government assisted refugees in the greater Toronto area. The Centre's operations are funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

This book is a collection of the winning poems and honourable mentions by children and youth from grades 4 to 12 living in the Greater Toronto Area. All entries were judged on originality, creative imagination, characterization, artistic quality, adherence to the topic, and rules established for the contest. We encourage our readers to use this book as a tool for social justice and human rights education. As Jacques Delors, the French politician and economist stated, "We must not just educate our children and youth 'to know' and 'to do,' we must also educate them 'to be' and 'to live together.'"¹

¹ Delors, Jacques et al. Learning: The Treasure Within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission of Education for the Twenty-First CENTURY. UNESCO.



POEMS:
AWARD RECIPIENTS

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Group I (Grades 4 to 6)

The Comparison

I wake up to the short chirps of birds,
He wakes up to gunfire and terror.

I go to school with no fear,
He goes to school in fear of the secret.

I speak my mind freely at recess,
He keeps it quiet hoping not to let anything out.

I think about what my parents are doing,
He is hoping to see his parents when he gets home.

When I get home I start conversation,
When he gets home there is complete silence.

I play X-box to relax with my brother,
He hopes that nobody tells their secret.

I go to bed hoping for an amazing new day,
He goes to sleep hoping to be alive in the morning.

Michael Ciraco

*Pope John Paul II, Grade 6
Age 11*

1st Prize – 2011

Rose in the Garden

I am born, I sprout,
olive stemmed and stout,
my petals like a cool satin,
their flowers starting to fatten.

I feel the bladed edge,
as I'm removed from the sedge.
Earth patted 'round my roots,
as I am planted near the fruits.

I grow and I flower,
more stunning by the hour,
but soon you forget about me,
no watering, no food, nothing from thee.

Footsteps, heavy, boots!
A bang, a gun shoots.
Men of War, I find out,
as I am trampled by scouts.

Guns, blood, killing and more,
I'm shocked by the amount of gore.
I'm so withering and small,
with no care at all.

Where am I? I ask,
in death do I bask?
Has your war killed me.

Or am I still that budding, Rose in the Garden?

Victoria E. Glista

*W.H. Morden Public School, Grade 6
Age 12*

1st Prize – 2010

I'm leaving?

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Gun sounds here Bomb sounds there
I'm not safe I need a place
A place of safety
Where there are no guns, no bombs
I'm leaving...

NO! NO! NO!

I can't leave now
What about my baby chicks?
What about my little puppy?
He woke me up every morning

What about my grand papa?
What about my grand momma?
She always made me fresh tea
What about my straw house it always keeps me warm

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

NOT AGAIN! Guns and bombs everywhere, I have to leave

Leaving all my best buddies
Leaving my grandparents
Leaving all my favourite things
Leaving all my happiness!!

I have no choice but to leave

And I know that I will be safe in the new place
But I will get my happiness back?

Kesidha Rajakesary

*H.A. Halbert Junior Public School, Grade 5
Age 10*

1st Prize – 2009

These Shoes

Here I am again in this hot and lonely place working
Hard and feeling so much pain. I don't have enough
Energy to go on. The day drags, I just can't bare this heat, I
Wish I could eat. As I work here in the dark wondering about
my next attempt to escape my life seems so stark. I start to
think of all the boys and girls who will wear these shoes on
their feet. These shoes they will wear everywhere, just like
the other 100 pairs, I have made. If only I could have my
own. I could skip and play all day, instead, I worry and I am
scared all I need is to eat and to put something on my feet.
Why oh why me I wish I had a voice to speak and the
freedom to run and play. A life like the kids who wear these
shoes. What can I do? What will you do? Do you have a say?

Madeleine Raposo

*Queen of Heaven Public School, Grade 5
Age 10*

2nd Prize – 2011



*The Power of Healing
COSTI Art Therapy Program*

Someone Else's Work

I will grow tomatoes, when you've set me free.
I will live at home in peace, where all will let me be.

I will wake up cheerful, in the morning to the sun.
I will feel at peace a last, once my freedom has won.

All I want is to feel safe –relaxed, calm and free.
I have been good, to fellow men, well, why aren't they good to me?

I try to keep my head up high, imagining the day.
When I will be allowed to fly, when I will go away,

And wrap myself in someone's arms, who knows me as I am.
I try to think about that day, as hard as try I can...

I will wake up smiling, in the morning sun.
I will kiss the one I truly love, once this battle's done...

I will grow tomatoes in my garden in the grass,
And tie my hair behind my head, and when this storm has passed,

I will sit up late at night, with cats and cups of tea,
I will live no more in fright, once I have been set free.

I only want this misery, and fear and pain to end.
I only want a life at peace, surrounded by my friends.

But that will be another day, today I must remain
With in the madness of this place, in fear, hope and pain.

But always, I hold up my head, imagining the day
When I will be allowed to go, when I will fly away...

Not now. It isn't over yet, I must sit out my time,
As I have done, for all these years, for someone else's work.

Niveedhika Kethees

*Roberta Bondar Public School, Grade 6
Age 12*

2nd Prize – 2010

Invisible, Difference

Walking home I saw you
You didn't see me
I passed right in front of your eyes
You could have smelled my
Strawberry, scented hair

I saw the stick
You did too.
But, you didn't see me

I was watching you
not
watching
me

I tripped, fell
The gravel came up too fast
I saw the streams of blood running
down my leg,
in the newly formed gravel crevices
before I felt the searing pain

But, you didn't see me
I could have died and you would not have seen me

Because I was different from you

You would not have seen me.

Eden Schwartz

*Cosburn Middle School, Grade 6
Age 12*

2nd Prize – 2009

My wish

People are lost. People should not hit or hurt anyone.
Those with power hurt those without power. It happens. I hit you, you hit me we hit others. That is the circle of violence. Humans need food, shelter, water, air, space, safety, love, courage, hope, beliefs and to belong. Without rights we become lost. People are lost. But if we can help then maybe no one will be lost. People are mean, they treat others bad. People kill also. But if everyone got together and fought for what they need our world would be peaceful. But things also happen for a reason. Maybe some people don't understand each other, so maybe this is pushing us to find ourselves together. My wish is for all people to be found.

Alejandra Gomez Montejo
St. Stephen's Catholic School, Grade 4
Age 9

3rd Prize – 2011

War V.S. Peace

In Iraq there is war/In Canada there is peace
In Iraq I see blood on streets/ In Canada I see blood on Halloween costumes
In Iraq I see and hear guns/ In Canada I see and hear guns in movies
In Iraq I see rockets blasting/ In Canada I see toy rockets blasting
In Iraq I sleep on the floor / In Canada I sleep on a cozy bed
In Iraq my dream, to stay alive / In Canada my dream, become a scientist
In Iraq there's lots of hating/ In Canada there's lot of loving
In Iraq I hear scream of torture/ In Canada I hear scream of happiness
In Iraq I have a broken shelter / In Canada I have a hard and a safe shelter
In Iraq I walk / In Canada I ride my bike
In Iraq I go to dirty places like streets with blood / In Canada I go to clean places like Niagara Falls
In Iraq they call me enemy / In Canada they call me friend
In Iraq they call me terrorist / In Canada they call me Bishal
In Iraq I see soldiers trying to kill me / In Canada I see soldiers trying to protect me

Bishal Thapa
Nahani Way Public School, Grade 4
Age 9

3rd Prize – 2010

If the World Could Be One

If the world could be one,
Would we make the right choices?
Would we know what the right choices are?

If we made mistakes,
Would we fix them or leave them?
Could we trust each other or will our rivalries from our ancestors interfere?
Would war be over or would it just be starting again?
Would we accept our responsibilities or would we put them off and break the chain?

If the chain broke,
Would we mend it or would we split off into different groups and never rejoin it as one?

Are we on the right road to success?
Or do we need to slow down and think
What is success?

We all do,
Inch by inch, step by step, mile by mile,
Help out on the way,
In order,
For the world to be,
One.

Samantha Riddell
Cosburn Middle School, Grade 5
Age 11

3rd Prize – 2009



60 Years in Photos ©
UNHCR/E.Hockstein/August 2009

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Group II (Grades 7 to 8)

Here I stand

I had a home,
Somewhere far beyond the horizon
Freedom, health and nutrition
Things I had in reach,
Now, it all lies in the ashes below.

There is no space where i stand,
Under the deep holes pierced by bombs,
Hidden between all the people
Soaked in blood and vomit,
Here I stand.

A weary cry comes from below.
A sound which has no hope
I listen carefully,
And I hear it again.
Now the crowd is silently moving.
And the voice whimpers as the people push,
All wanting to be the first, to the promised land.

I have little faith,
In my soul.
Only, I reach out
With my battered hands for the small child
Crying in anguish.
Here I stand; unknown.

Jenny Jeon
German Mills Public School, Grade 8
Age 14

1st Prize – 2011

I Am

I am a child working at the age of five.
I am a human being tortured – in the form of a girl
I am looking for a better life...healthier water...happiness...I am an orphan
I am the death in poor countries...I am the reality of poverty.
I am a slave, thrown into prison for disobeying.
I am an open-minded refugee giving back all that's known.
I am a bomb that falls apart in war...I am sorrow.
I am holding on to the terrible past but letting go of the wonderful future.
I am hiding for shelter just to live and looking for joy to live out the pain.
I am a disgrace for some cultures...and a subject of racism.
I am a mother fighting for her children's rights.
I am a life dropping like a roller coaster.
I am a refugee but no one seems to care.
I am drowning in my own tears.
I am shouts of freedom.
I am dying before I am born.
I am an empty plate for hungry stomachs and a burden in my parents' eyes.
I am sold away to an unknown world.
I am culture after culture being split apart.
I am raising my voice, but then I die... I am discrimination.
I am dirty water in the fresh water pond.
I am alone, growing my own home.
I have suffered enough, and now I deserve joy...but still...
I am a refugee calling out for rights.

Amrit Kaur Babbar
Morning Star Middle School, Grade 7
Age 12

1st Prize – 2010

Escape

I could taste the flavour of our vivid nation on my tongue,
which the hostility and bloodshed managed to dilute.
For I cherished its warmth,
embraced the spirit,
and counselled its youth.

Yet with my entire body trembling,
I laid down on the racked surface I knew as the floor.
Tears streamed down my rueful face,
as the sun's rays beat down on my broken body,
and I yearned to flee through the door.

The aching in my heart simply wanted relief-
for any remedy to chase away the fear.
Each day the tears became greater,
flooding my distressed soul that knew
of the heartless soldiers marching near.

With escape as my only choice,
my heart began to race.
I choked on my breath as sweat trickled down my skin,
and desperately prayed for grace.

My sister and I packed our entire lives,
into a mere few torn up bags.
Kissed the village goodbye,
and grasped each other's shaking hands.

Mercedes Killeen

Christ the King, Grade 8
Age 13

1st Prize – 2009

Just One Word

Doubts and worries run through our heads
We think the same thoughts
Is he okay?

Was coming here right?
Was he afraid?
Could he understand?
Could they understand?
Finally we go

To pick him up from his first day
We wait, tense, for him to tell us how it was
He gives a happy smile and says, simple,
“Good.”

Relief floods over us, as we relax
The teacher tells us how wonderful it was
He fits right in, and for this, we beam
At our son's “good”
Small, but can make all the difference
In the world
Just one word

Caelan Beard

Homelands Senior Public School, Grade 8
Age 13

2nd Prize – 2011

Human Rights: Giving The Issue More Than a Second Thought

Close your eyes, look away.
Turn a blind eye to the hard fact that
855 000 000 people are illiterate
And 70% of those people
Are women.
Think about starving yourself to be skinny,
As 15 million children die each year
Because they can't choose if they want to starve or not.
Don't think about how
For the price of one missile
A school full of hungry children could eat lunch every day
For 5 full years.
Why should we care that in 1991,
Indonesian troops
Shot hundreds of mourners at the Santa Cruz Cemetery
In Dili, East Timor?
After all, it's not happening to us.
Until it does.
Until it's our relatives
Who can't enter America.
Or can't eat because the war drove them from their homes.
Or are killed for no good reason.
Then we care.
Because it turned in to our problem.

Simona Presutto

*St. Monica School, Grade 8
Age 13*

2nd Prize – 2010

Through the Eyes of a Refugee

I hear the fear in her voice,
when my mother tells me.
“It's a new start, a better life”
I should be relieved that I am leaving this place.
That I'm going somewhere “safe”.

It is so hard not knowing where I'm going,
But knowing where I come from feels much worse.

I wonder who I'll be,
or who I'll meet.
How will I communicate?
Will I make any friends?
Where will I sleep?
Why am I so frightened of what is supposed to be
A better life?

It is so hard not knowing where I'm going,
But knowing where I come from feels much worse.

I am a coward, running away from my fears.
I'm running away from the only life I have.
No! I'm not a coward!
I am brave.
I am turning away from wrong.
I am doing what's right.

It is so hard not knowing where I'm going,
But knowing where I come from feels much worse.

Sherubine Tara Thevamarathan

*St. Gabriel Lalemant, Grade 8
Age 14*

2nd Prize – 2009

Why we long for home

Why we long for home?
Why we left the place we roam?
Why we hear, the cries at night?
Why we long, for something in the light?
Why we long for home?

We left a land, the gunshots sounding.
Leapt out of the plane, our hearts now pounding.
Allowed in with ease.
We are now, in peace.
Why we long for home?

Calvin Woo

*Donview Middle School, Grade 7
Age 11*

3rd Prize – 2011

I am a stranger but for that one smile

I am a stranger
In this place
Where my family has run to
They whisper behind us
But I hear them

Why talk, when no one can understand
The language that I speak?
Why learn, when I cannot understand
The language they teach in?
Why try, when they do not know me
When I am alone?

Why not quit?
I almost do
But for that one smile
That is given by the teacher
Who is trying to help
And sometimes succeeds
The one smile
That keeps me in this place
Trying as I can
For that one smile

Caelan Beard

*Homelands Senior Public School, Grade 7
Age 12*

3rd Prize – 2010

Escape

Stepping into feet that aren't my own
I leave barren streets, ransacked homes

Tear streaked faces and calloused hands,
Presently inhibited in unknown, foreign lands,

Living in exile, fleeing from those who discriminate,
Just because I'm different they try to eliminate,

Distinction between races, religion and nationality,
Segregating due to age, gender, views on politics and sociality

Now I'm always depending on others for food, clothing and security
Unable to get recognized as a person with equality –

Made of flesh and bones as a human, I am similar to you,
Why can you only see trivial things but not what's really true

I may be unable to speak for myself but I too have human rights
All this persecution has caused my people plights

Poverty, sickness, traumatic lives
A pain that stabs me with a thousand knives

Constantly escaping and accepting the hate
Why is this the outcome of a refugee's fate?

All the world's burdens are compressed down here
To the oppressed victims who once lived with fear

Ariana Youm

*University of Toronto Schools, Grade 8
Age 13*

3rd Prize – 2009

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Group III (Grades 9 to 12)



*COSTI Art Therapy Program for Children
Where the Healing Process Begins*

Journeys

she was a dancer before they came and
replaced the jingle-jangle of her tambourine with the tom-tom of war drums creating
discordant harmonies against the hoarse voices screaming of divine will as they
burned the straw-thatched house row by blazing row until
nothing was left but charred skills and sated flies doing loop-de-loops under the summer sky
(a picture perfect postcard from hell)

he was a teacher before knowledge was treasonous and
a taste for literature was rewarded with bullets and bayonets piercing
hearts feeble from days spent writhing in torture chambers pressed
to lead more lambs to the slaughter as if the spies installed at every street corner could not
provide enough fuel for the gluttonous bonfires and the murderous mobs
(Both books and bodies become ash in the end)

strangers are safe when friends carry rifles and
family is strewn in pieces across the blood-soaked square so
they come with heads bowed low and hands clasped tight to
disappear into the dizzying rainbow of a nation settled by diaspora this
mosaic of shattered homes and splintered bones
(in time dreams will exist again)

Lily Li Zhang

Don Mills Collegiate Institute, Grade 11

Age 17

1st Prize – 2011

Losing Identity

Look around, miles of flat field
Stretching into the horizon and beyond
Into a world without fence
But I'm here, in a world with no escape.

Trapped.
I speak like a parrot
Obey as a well trained hound
A rotten tomato disguised as a shoe
Out of place
Forced to fit in.

Dream catchers clasp onto my ill thoughts
Giving me tranquil, dreamless nights
Pity, it couldn't catch me
Leaving me in brutal reality

A once comforting current carrying countless colours
Now a mere stream of useless blue
Creamy deer hind, cozy coat
Switched to savvy jeans and t-shirts
Common rituals, giveaways, rolled into
Weekly Sunday prayers

Slowly that Native Brown fades
And from head to toe I feel
A bleach white silently seeping in

Who am I?

Anna Xu

*Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, Grade 10
Age 15*

1st Prize – 2010

Awake Dreaming

I clutched onto my daughter, Snuggled against my chest
Her, warm shallow breath comforting
hunched over, hundreds of us quivered in sync
No doubt, the night became marked with indelible ink

The shooting paused to take an air break I listened.
I don't know
What's scarier; the crackling gunshots' laughter
Or the sucking silence after

In my arms, my daughter slept
Ever so content
Igniting a desire that burned within me
The want to be free

Overwrought of injustice, as the rich flee in search of havens
Buying their freedom
The rest of us trapped, long forgotten, by even the saints
Flowers of zinc corrode away, which no one cares to repaint

Peace, prayed the souls under the tent
In hushed voices
Never dared we, express the truth, our most genuine thoughts
Nor have we ever been to school, been taught

Just as crowds of yellow ants wait under sheets of layered clouds, for the sun to
reappear and warm their tender crisp bodies,
So we long for rights and freedom, to do ourselves just.
Then will I, savour the aroma of free speech
And its aftertaste, in the following silence.

Anna Xu

*Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, Grade 9
Age 14*

1st Prize – 2009

Silent Cries

Reeking of old fish and dried blood, he stands
Alone
Playing tug-of-war with a worn fishing rod,
Its shaped etched into his calloused palm.
His once smooth face, now buried in deep wrinkles,
Gazes at the distant horizon as he waits.

With the jerk of the handle, he begins winding the reel but
Pauses
As he catches a glimpse of his past,
A part of himself he had long tried to forget.
The fish dangles desperately,
Wrigging to unhook itself from the spring pulling it from above.

Like a marionette controlled by a puppeteer, he had been
Manipulated.
He was given no choice but to play the role of a man,
Blind from the propaganda of strong powers
Deaf from the piercing lies of forces so high
But also mute, having no voice.

The flood of memories slowly drowns the fisherman but
Suddenly
He remembers a hand that reached out to him, shining as a his single strand of hope.
Likewise, the man quickly clenches the fish and unhooks it,
Watching it swim away into deep waters,
Coming from its mouth, not an inescapable string but a joyous cry of freedom.

Alice Jeon

*Havergal College, Grade 10
Age 16*

2nd Prize – 2011

My Life in Africa

Yo, Yo, Yo I come from Africa
There's some bad stuff going on in my country, dawg
I wish the government can just leave us alone
I was all dressed ready for school but I keep
forgetting that there is no school
Ah man, Ah man, Ah man
I was really thirsty, I was trying to find some clean
water, but all I can find is dirty water Yuck, Yuck, Yuck
I was really hungry, I got my cash but I keep
forgetting there's no MC, MC, McDonald's or Pizza
Nova, Nova, Nova
So I grabbed my weapons and started heading out, out, out
Then when I came back to my hut, I was tortured
and beaten, beaten, beaten
I jumped on a plane and headed for the Great
White North of Canada where there is good, water
and freedom, freedom, freedom
I now go to school at Cardinal Newman Newman,
Newman but I still get beaten down, beaten down,
beaten down by Mrs. Taylor – she's funny as a hyena
in my hometown, hometown, hometown
So now that you know about my life in Africa, the
good, the bad and the ugly I'm glad to share my
rapping poem with you as Canada is always there for you, you, you.

Joshua Collin-Pereira

*Cardinal Newman Catholic Secondary School, Grade 9
Age 15*

2nd Prize – 2010

He Wept

All alone he stood
Outlined in the shadows of the moon
With the tears only an innocent child could shed
He wept for the world
That had long ago forsaken his destiny
He wept for the mother
That never held him close and called him son
He wept for the father
That those men that called themselves hero had taken
He wept for the sister
They had raped in front of him as if it was a game
He wept for the brother
That had turned his back on him to become one of them
He wept for the grandparents
That were lucky enough to not see the day their family would be torn to pieces
He wept for the friends
That he would never get to tease or laugh with again
He wept for living
And seeing the day they had to leave
He wept for himself
For never again would he have a family
A home
And
Someone to love him as much as they did
He wept because god had forsaken him
And never again would he be
That same little boy

Heena Gahlon

*Emery Collegiate Institute, Grade 11
Age 16*

2nd Prize – 2009

Home

I come from a house of crumbling stone walls
where the ceiling stretches up to the stars in the sky
No windows or doors to speak of
No marble pillars of support
No safety or warmth
Only a place to stay

When I was young I used to long
For a house with four walls and a roof
Glass windows that let in the sunshine
but kept out the wind
wooden doors and marble pillars
and a heater to keep us warm.

But time has passed and I have grown
I no longer seek that futile dream
For though the battles still rage endlessly outside
I am safe

Walls built from bricks of courage
A ceiling laced together with hope
No windows or doors – only my eyes and ears
No marble pillars of support-only mama and papa
No need for heaters, for our love is enough
This is not a just place

It is my home.

Milly Wang

*Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute, Grade 11
Age 17*

3rd Prize – 2011

A Familiar Place

We run, not looking
Back on the place,
The memories, the music of the
Familiar wind through the trees.

Uncertain it is,
Certainly.

In a dark locked room
It is thrown away.

We cannot speak-
No, not a word,
They are coming

One cannot stand up against them.

Do we not deserve?
Look! We have two hands,
Two feet, a heart, a mind.
'Tis the same as you.

We live.

The strange light,
The innocent fingers
Reach for it.
We can speak again.

The beginning of a new life-

Oh, how we miss
The music of the familiar place.

Shraboni Biswas

*Turner Fenton Secondary School, Grade 12
Age 17*

3rd Prize – 2010

Asylum seeker

Asylum seeker
The caption below the picture

Picture that took my breath away for a second
Closed my eyes for another
And in the same second my eyes closed,
A single water drop from my eyes to my chin
The single drop cut like a razor blade

In that tear
In that second of her untold words became so clear
Out of thousands her face jerked
She had a shelter but not a home
Not a shelter for long
This new land was unknown
Forced to this unknown land
Her culture was lost
Her family forgotten
Her baby was ravenous
But she had nothing
But through her eyes she spoke
And she had hope
Hope that this land would be a start and not an end

Yanina Ahumada

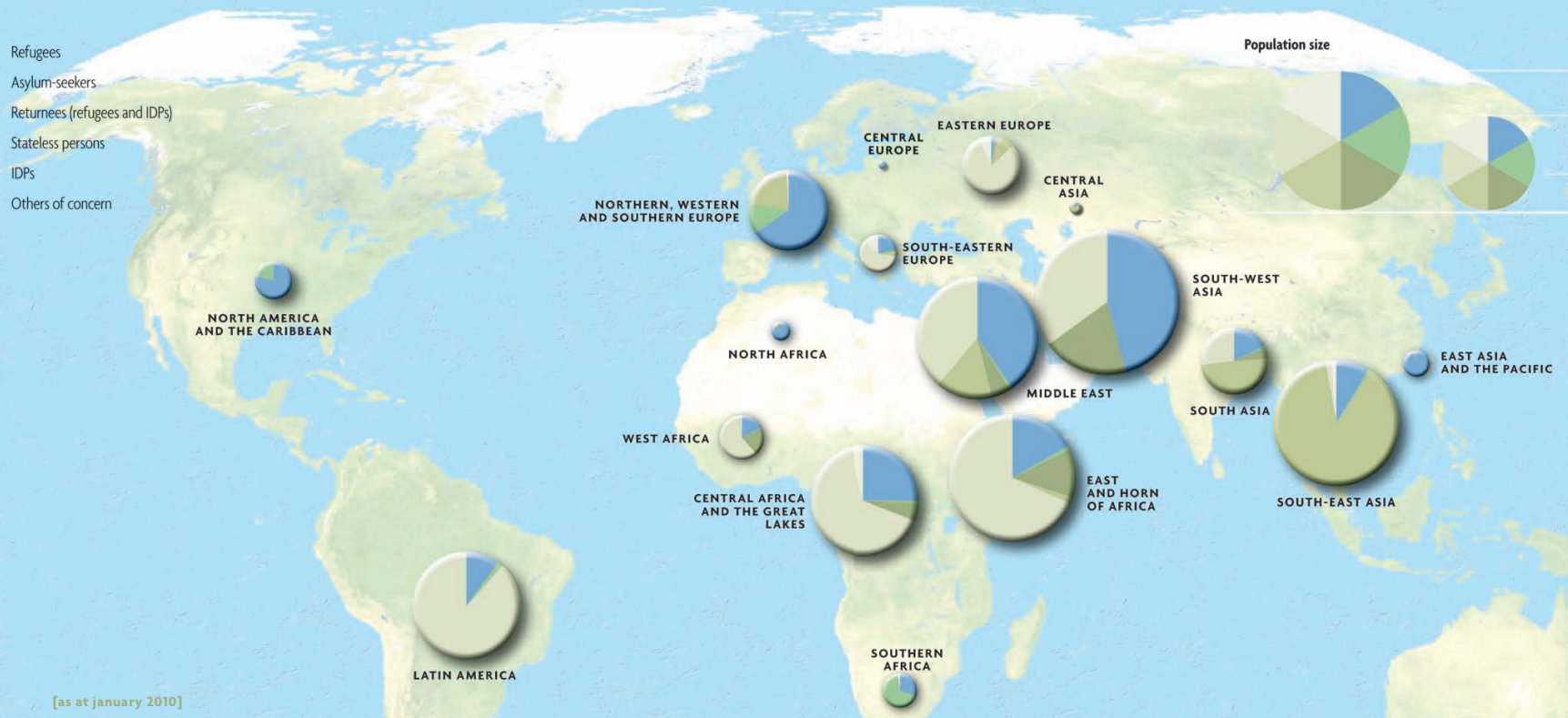
*James Cardinal McGuigan, Grade 10
Age 16*

3rd Prize – 2009



*Children enjoying a walk at the COSTI
Ralph Chiodo Family Immigrant Reception Centre*

POPULATIONS OF CONCERN TO UNHCR



[as at January 2010]

Subregion	Refugees	Persons in refugee-like situations	Total refugees	Of whom assisted by UNHCR	Asylum-seekers	Returned refugees	IDPs protected/assisted by UNHCR	Returned IDPs	Stateless Persons	Various [®]	Total population of concern
Central Africa and Great Lakes	945,180	24,100	969,280	626,820	19,910	99,190	2,520,210	99,630	-	155,060	3,863,280
East and Horn of Africa [®]	779,210	33,920	813,130	718,600	64,630	33,770	3,429,440	579,600	100,000	-	5,020,570
West Africa	149,020	10	149,030	139,660	9,320	2,010	519,140	166,820	-	4,660	850,980
Southern Africa [®]	143,420	-	143,420	62,280	325,690	2,500	-	-	-	14,480	486,090
North Africa [®]	104,800	26,000	130,800	92,220	3,940	12,010	-	-	-	-	146,750
The Middle East [®]	1,857,620	17,490	1,875,120	522,320	30,240	38,040	1,802,000	167,740	694,260	-	4,607,400
South-West Asia [®]	1,829,920	981,320	2,811,240	2,811,240	4,300	57,590	2,191,690	1,113,620	-	-	6,178,440
Central Asia	8,060	-	8,060	3,800	2,140	10	-	-	46,890	-	57,100
South Asia	291,740	2,300	294,040	98,850	6,760	1,490	434,900	94,600	800,000	480	1,632,270
South-East Asia [®]	202,630	200,790	403,410	200,640	22,390	430	67,290	-	4,270,770	61,400	4,825,690
East Asia and the Pacific [®]	334,250	5,000	339,250	3,400	7,030	-	-	-	2,000	-	348,280
Eastern Europe	24,400	5,000	29,400	21,820	9,980	60	1,018,600	6,150	122,810	83,050	1,270,050
South-Eastern Europe	119,720	570	120,280	114,640	520	4,290	340,810	1,380	30,040	74,840	572,160
Central Europe	30,840	-	30,840	6,610	6,240	-	-	-	6,220	60	43,360
Northern, West and Southern Europe	1,466,920	-	1,466,920	70	276,590	-	-	-	-	486,460	2,247,650
North America and the Caribbean	444,960	-	444,960	70	125,200	10	-	-	-	-	570,170
Latin America	74,190	293,180	367,370	89,910	68,560	60	3,303,980	-	120	-	3,740,090
Total	8,806,880	1,589,680	10,396,550	5,512,950	983,440	251,460	15,628,060	2,229,540	6,559,570	411,710	36,460,330

The data are generally provided by Governments, based on their own definitions and a dash (-) indicates that the value is zero, not available or not applicable.

[®] Persons of concern to UNHCR not included in the previous columns but to whom UNHCR extends protection or assistance.

[®] Uganda: The IDP figure represents the remaining IDPs in camps and transit sites. They remain of concern to UNHCR together with the 408,000 who have already returned to their villages.

[®] South Africa: Asylum-seekers refers to an estimated 171,700 undecided cases at first instance at the end of 2009 and 198,100 undecided cases at the end of 2008 (no update available).

[®] According to the Government of Algeria, there are an estimated 165,000 Sahrawi refugees in the Tindouf camps.

[®] Refugee figures for Iraqis in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic are Government estimates.

[®] Refugee figures for Palestinian refugees (2,500) and Afghan refugees (2,500) registered in a "refugee-like" village assisted by UNHCR.

[®] Malaysia: According to lists provided by refugee status determination officers, there are 20,000 unregistered asylum-seekers and 20,000 progressively registered asylum-seekers.

[®] Figures previously cited in this report have been clarified.

[®] China: The 300,000 figure previously cited in this report has been clarified.

[®] China: The 300,000 figure previously cited in this report has been clarified.

CR

4,000,000
2,000,000
400,000



IFIC

itions and methods of data collection.

ures for Pakistan include recognized es (2,800), registered Afghans in ns assisted by UNHCR (756,000), and hams outside refugee villages who are ugee-like" situation (981,000).

According to UNHCR, and based on y refugee communities, there are stered asylum-seekers in Malaysia same profile as the current population ers and refugees and who are being egistered and having their refugee ned.

viously cited for the number of stateless iland are being reviewed according to ia.

300,000 Vietnamese refugees are well In practice receive protection from the f China.

UNHCR's primary role is to ensure international protection for refugees and other displaced persons of concern and to make sure that their fundamental rights are respected. While the main responsibility for safeguarding the rights of refugees and others of concern lies with States, UNHCR assists governments to take the necessary measures to assume responsibility for international protection, starting with asylum and ending with durable solutions. International protection is a dynamic and action-oriented function. It encompasses a range of activities, covering both policy and operational concerns. It is carried out, in cooperation with States and other partners with the goal of enhancing respect for the rights of refugees and others of concern and resolving their problems. The Office's protection role therefore covers a whole spectrum of activities for all populations of its concern, as set out in UNHCR's strategy and workplan.

Refugee

A refugee is any person who, "...owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him [or her]self of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention

or

who is outside his/her country of origin or habitual residence and is unable to return there because of serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order.

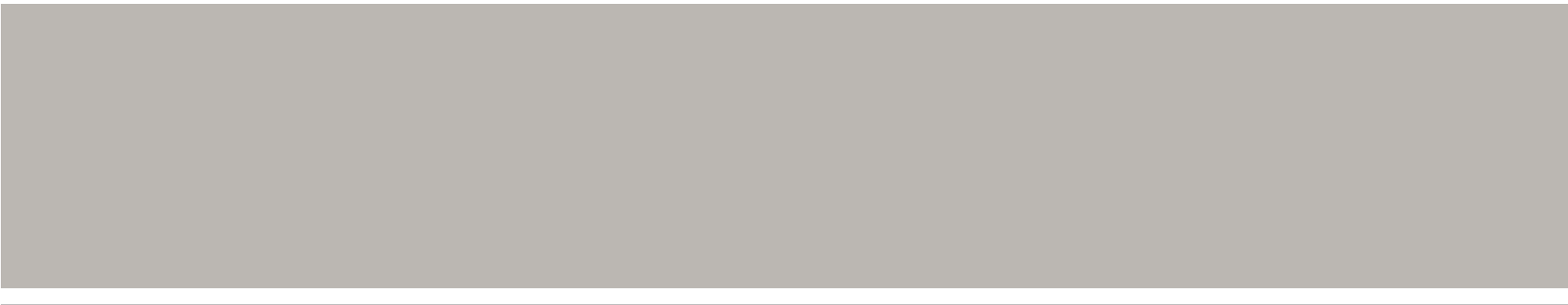
OAU Convention and Cartagena Declaration



Crisis in Libya © UNHCR/A.Duclos



Women in Exile © UNHCR/N.Behring/March 2003



POEMS:
HONOURABLE MENTIONS

POEMS: HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Group I (Grades 4 to 6)

Bullying Stops Now

I hear this happening day by day
People getting bullied in every way
They have no say in what they get
For they are the people who regret what they met

Lonely and sad is what people have felt
Thoughts of pain are the memories they held
Why can't this stop?
This has made a million teardrops

I've heard of people crying to die
From listening to all the hurtful lies
I know it's very hard to stand
But you just the right hand

To help you go on without any worry
Take me with you but not in a hurry
We will talk this through not being scared
This will be finished without us being despaired

The problem is finished
The bully is banished
I will always have your back
No matter what attacks

Khariny Ketheeswaranathan
Roberta Bondar Public School, Grade 6
Age 10

Honourable Mention – 2011

Where are my rights?

I feel like a ghost.
My soul is lost.
My soul is gone.
They took it from me.
Just like how a gun takes away light and brings darkness.
The pain grows with each passing day.
But my hatred for them grows more than the pain.
But what can I do?
I am their slave.
I am a prisoner bound to their chains.
But I am only a child.
Will this be my fate forever?
Don't I have rights?
Shouldn't I have freedom?
But where are my rights?
Where is my freedom?
Is it gone like my soul, taken by them?
If this is so
Than I am truly a ghost.
Just a memory, slowly fading away.
But even if I am just a memory, I will continue to work hard.
For I know that one day someone will come and free me.
So that I may find my soul and rights again.

Kyle Nandlall
Roberta Bondar Public School, Grade 6
Age 11

Honourable Mention – 2010

A Place Where I'll be Free

I am a refugee.
I don't want my country,
But my country wants me.
I want a new life in a place where I'll be free.
It won't be easy,
But giving up is not for me.
I want to live in a place where I'll be free.
My family, my children; they're counting on me.
To make a life for them in a place where they'll be free.
This has been my life-long dream,
But far away does it seem.
Will I ever have a life in the place where I'll be free?
Now, I must wait;
Only time will see.
Will I ever be more than just a refugee?
Will I ever be a citizen in the place where I'll be free?

Danielle Penney

*St. Gabriel Catholic School, Grade 6
Age 11*

Honourable Mention – 2010

The Sand Graveyard

I dug my feet into the ground
Gripping the sand beneath me,
Knowing what would happen next-
Death.
Hearing shrills,
I can taste my death.
The bullet was shot.
Already losing balance,
Dropping like a rock.
Trying to breathe for the last time.
My last sight was my beautiful but now demolished town.

Angelica Dela Cruz

*Sts. Comas and Damiam Catholic School, Grade 4
Age 10*

Honourable Mention – 2010

Unknown Refugee

I was walking in downtown Toronto one day,
When I saw a man with an indescribable frown in my way.
He asked me for some money by pointing to his cup,
I reached in my pocket for some coins I could give up.

When the traffic light stopped cars, he stood and held a sign,
That explained to me that he wasn't doing so fine.
I stared at him and then noticed the scent of pine,
He has a small tree that seemed to be doing just fine?

He has a blow up bed right on the street,
He also had a small set of smelly feet.
He had only one bag full of his stuff,
To me that seemed utterly rough.

When he sat back down, I tried to say something,
He didn't notice he seemed to be fiddling.
Then he started telling me about the doll in his hand,
With great passion, through a language I didn't understand.

I hope his homeland tragedies are done or ending,
and wonder if our country will be his new beginning.
I wonder where he comes from, I wonder what he's like,
So help me please dear Canada, help refugees like Ike.

Julia Healy

*St. Angela's Gifted Centre, Grade 5
Age 10*

Honourable Mention – 2010

Child Rights

In a land where the sky is golden and bright
And the grassy fields sway to the rhythm of the night.
I felt trapped in the view, I can't get out of this sight.
I've tried to escape, I've tried with all my might.
From all four corners, I just hear Kamilo!
You have a duty, you cannot go!
You must help in the farms, no means no!
You must be here, to help the crops grow!
This may be the last letter to you,
My dear pen pal, you have no clue
of the great things you have there,
The schools, the toys and the laughter that you share.
Be grateful for what you have,
I'd do anything to be you.

Pranavy Sivamoorthi
Brisdale Public School, Grade 5
Age 10

Honourable Mention – 2010

A Child's Rights

I am a child, and I have rights,
to do what I want, to play in the lights,
have medical care, and an education,
to never be judged, no matter what nation.
If I am disabled, or an amputee,
I get special care, the kind that I need.
But children are not just for yelling and screaming,
all of children, we have a meaning.
A child's right is to be loved and cared for,
No other kid would ever want more.

Hafza Majid
Brisdale Public School, Grade 5
Age 11

Honourable Mention – 2010



Afghans Return Home ©
UNHCR/R.Arnold

My Dream

I dream of a place
Where people are not judged by their race.
Where people think more of what they can achieve
Instead of the different things that they believe.
Where it doesn't matter whether girl or boy,
And people are always filled with tender joy.
Where trade is fair,
And clothing one doesn't leave another bare.
Where people are not thrown from their homes
And made to live like underground gnomes.
Where there are no fights
And there's always happy light.
I dream of a world
Where bombs are never hurled.
I find it's really lame
When humans are not treated the same.
That is the world I dream of.

Ashton Porter

Castlebridge Public School, Grade 5

Age 11

Honourable Mention – 2010

The Refugees' Escape

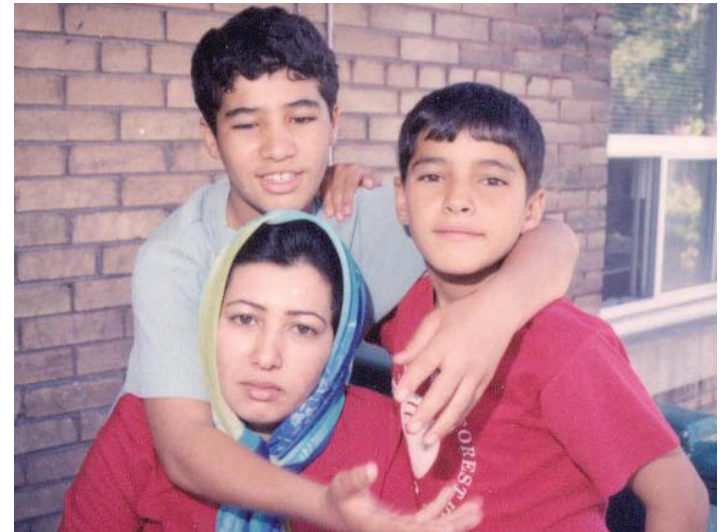
As I walked around the gi-normous, bustling city,
I stopped by a family that didn't look so pretty.
Each of their faces were filled with dismay.
And the glisten in their eyes showed it simply wasn't the way.
So I asked them, "What's wrong, you all look so blue,
Is there a way I can help any of you?"
The bruised father told me the whole story,
It certainly wasn't one that went out in a blaze of glory.
Oh, so horrid the deaths, persecution and war,
It seemed like that they could have took nothing more.
So they came here, this place to find refuge in the country,
Since their leaders really wanted to put them in the sentry.
The family certainly didn't want to get into any fights,
What they wanted most was their freedom and human rights.
The right to have the freedom against discrimination of all kinds,
The right to have religion, thought, and mind.
The right to not be abused is something all should get,
The right of having a nationality is one that should be set.
But most importantly, the right of having peace,
And peace and hope is just what we need.

Aiken Chau

St. Ignatius of Loyola, Grade 5

Age 11

Honourable Mention – 2010



Refugees make the Ralph Chiodo Family Immigrant Reception Centre their first home in Canada.

Am I Important?

I once had to leave because of my religion, I wore a scarf
on my head and that took this position
And then we had to move because we were different
from our country's fashion
I'm not proud to say that I live on the streets, I'm
starving to death I need something to eat.
Will someone please help me and give me a home put me in
a safe place where I cannot be thrown
Now we don't have any money god please don't be mad,
we have no home trust me way more than just sad
No one would accept my culture just cause I'm black, its
sad that skin colour matters all that, the worlds
getting ruined sadder than sad
Poverty is mean it stole all my dreams
My parents don't have jobs due to the fact that they
got stolen by mean nasty jerks that already worked
Someone should speak I think it should be me
Rich people are mean they took all our money, their living
in mansions with a tonne of companions
Racism is rude it should be taken away. Now there's more to say
Now the worlds a safer place for you and I today! June 20 Refugee Day.

Maryam Patel

*Morning Star Middle School, Grade 6
Age 11*

Honourable Mention – 2010

LOST REFUGEES

My body, trembling as I stand in the room,
All eyes on me after the words I just spoke.
The glares, the stares I don't know what to do,
Suddenly, the silence had finally broke.

My wife and I, head straight for the door,
With all the yelling, I know, we are not alone.
We immediately run to our home, hand in hand,
I glance at my wife, a worried face shown.

We hear the footsteps up the stairs,
I'm hoping they won't hear my cries.
Just because the truth came out,
My husband regrets not telling lies.

I think about my thoughtful husband,
While hiding in the smallest place.
All he wanted was a way out
Now if only I could see his face.

They burst open the closet and then they said,
"Take him away," and he was grabbed by 3 men.
The wife tried to stop them, but let's just say,
The husband and wife were never seen again.

Miranda D'Orazio

*Pope John Paul II School, Grade 6
Age 11*

Honourable Mention – 2011

POEMS: HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Group II (Grades 8-10)

On Reserve

Living on the margins, stranded on the reserve
We're tired and fed up but haven't lost our nerve
We disagree with the government because we're neglected
No alternate income, now we're infected
The alcohol and drugs: my Grandchildren want to die
Just like their friends, they drop like flies

You would think we'd be able to quench our thirst with water
But water testing proves it's an Aboriginal slaughter
They contaminated our water up at the power plant
There's nothing we can do, but sing and chant
Here in Canada, water is a "Human Right"
Now we can't turn on the tap and drink without a fright

CAPP. came on to our land and made a mess our soil
Just to get rich and steal our oil
CAPP. didn't even ask, like a disease you invade
We did our best to make our blockade
When we heard about the Oil we were unprepared
We now look into the future and feel pretty scared

The roaming Permafrost is starting to disappear
Hunting and Fishing is getting harder every year
The polar bears and seals have begun migrating
Attention to the environment could be lifesaving
We in the north are trying to cope
Hybrids and energy savers are giving us hope

Drew Doherty

Munns Public School, Grade 8
Age 14

Honourable Mention – 2010

Untitled

What are those lines you are carving?
In what was once my father's banyan tree
What do you mean multiply the profit
And divide equally amongst the ceo's?
Teach me, please
But what I beg of you falls on deaf ears
You turn away
Please
I am human too
Don't torture me this way
Teach me
You turn a blind eye and look the other way
Am I not human too?
Are my requirements meaningless?
So with bloodstained hands from working off my debt
I seek a new way to learn
So I can repurchase my father's farm from you
And re-plant that banyan tree
Just remember this
Your on top now, but the world keeps spinning
And soon it will be my turn
Then when you ask me to teach you too
I will turn the other cheek
You had your chance and now we're done

Sanjana Randhawa

W.H. Morden Public School, Grade 8
Age 13

Honourable Mention – 2010

What do you want?

What do you want?
Because I have nothing to give,
No clothes on my back,
No money in my pockets,
No shoes on my feet
Like a wild animal I am free from individuals like you
People, would you call them people?
They have no purpose,
No dignity,
They sit there and wait like fruit as they rot
I, have dignity
But not to give, not to you
Not to anyone
Because dignity, dignity's mine!
I know what you have
But who cares, all you add up to is ignorance
A beautiful peacock in a pen full of pigs
Astonishing in appearance
But no pure intentions within
What do you want?
You are beautiful,
And all I have is dignity.

Emily Droppo

*W.H. Morden Public School, Grade 8
Age 14*

Honourable Mention – 2010



*Artist Rendition of COSTI Ralph Chiodo
Family Immigrant Reception Centre*

Disbelief to Despair

“Bad news?” said he
“Deportation”
I stood in disbelief
My face calm, my body still
The hole of despair ripping through my insides screamed
-Not Possible!

Everything I had believed about justice and fairness
Was now torn
In two

But we had to try

“Worse news” said he
“No hope”
My disbelief twisted to rage
My face no longer calm,
My body no longer still
My mind cluttered with
Despair and deceit

-Is it fair for paperwork to decide your fate?

Time was against us. It was too late.
His hopes for a future torn away.

James Hogan

*Precious Blood School, Grade 8
Age 13*

Honourable Mention – 2010

The Price to Pay

I huddled among the shrubbery and know that today is the day,
I have one last chance to get my son to safety in a place far, far away.
With my son bundled warmly I can begin on my task,
I need to leave this place, and a safe route is all I ask.

I hear soldiers coming closer and in fear I run,
Oh please do not let them catch me; do not let them take my son!
When their voices fade into the distance, I can finally slow my pace.
I have overcome one of the many challenges that today I must face.

...
I stumble through villages after villages, all filled with despair,
Clutching my son closer I wonder how is this fair?
What if my situation was different...what life could I have led?

I have no food to give him, and no time to spare.
I hurry along quickly, knowing that we are almost there.
Up ahead is my destination; a small sheltered piece of land,
Where the human smuggler is waiting; sitting comfortably in the sand.

He stands as I approach, and I pay his fee,
Tears spring to my eyes as he gently takes my son from me.
I watch them go until they have faded away,
My world is shattered, but it is a price I must pay.

Tanisha Teelucksingh

*Mountain Ash Middle School, Grade 8
Age 14*

Honourable Mention – 2010

Lovely Mother

Can you see me mother, as I play with my new friends?
Can you see me play ball at school and sing a song?
I wish with all my heart and soul that this doesn't end,
And that this happiness stays with you and me for long.
Did you hear me mother, as I read out loud today?
My teacher said I did wonderful, and I was doing a good job at school.
You should have been there to hear me say the words from the book and stay,
For I had done a great job, and you would have smiled a smile as beautiful as a jewel.
Have you heard mother, the thunderous noises at night and the heart-breaking screams?
They seem so un real, all so sudden; I wish that this was just a horrible dream,
In which you could hold me close and sing me to sleep, with your loving, warm eyes being the light.
Oh mother, do I have to leave, the thought of you alone hurts me awfully.
I know that things are getting tough, and the adults are having a hard time fixing their problems,
But I would do anything to be with you here and not somewhere else that you think would be safe for me.
Sure, it's dangerous here but you and I have been through so much with pictures placed into many albums.
Great mother, I miss you dearly, do you miss me too?
This new country seems so strange; it's a whole new world and I feel as if I don't belong here,
These people don't seem like my friends, these words are strange, and great mother, what I say is true.
I pray you were here once more, and my ears and heart ache for your soft voice, a voice so sincere.
Dear mother I keep you here in my heart and your words in my minds, do you still remember me too?
I work so hard that my body cracks, keeping your last words that told me to never give up in my mind, as I do.
This world is hard, and though it's been several years, the adults are still fighting with no care,
But I promise you, lovely mother, that one day I'll take you to a place where its all lovely and fair.

Sana Usman

Lisgar Middle School, Grade 8

Age 13

Honourable Mention – 2010

POEMS: HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Group III (Grades 9-12)

Where is home

Moj dedo constructed his brick-walled home
With all his effort passion and time
But the raging war burned all his dreams
And in the end the enemy made his home
His funeral pyre.

Unable to return home
Moj streko fought for his life
Dodging enemy steal bullets
Until one finally
Sent his soul home to paradise.

With no home to protect us
Mama i tata took us from house to house
Where everyone became family, but every new house, now home
One after another was destroyed.

Sada ja brought us to a new country, its language unknown
With no money, no home, no family just us four
We wondered if God heard our prayers
Would he provide us here
As he provided us there?

The war is over, and the years have passed
But etched in the walls of a home that is ours in name only
I run my fingers along the concrete
And find the holes still mark these walls
And our family.

Moj Dedo - My grandpa
Moj streko - My uncle
Mama i tata – Mom and dad
Sada – Now I

Marina Ajhert

Holy Name of Mary Catholic Secondary School, Grade 12
Age 17

Honourable Mention – 2011

Never Give Up Hope

I heard there are some people,
whose lives are different from my own,
for their lives are full of hardships
that they must suffer all alone.
I heard there are some people,
who don't have the same rights as I,
they work much harder to earn a living
without ever asking why.
I heard there are some people,
who are forced to flee their home.
In order to find a better life,
throughout the world they roam.
I heard there are some people,
who don't ever get the chance
to speak their mind, for when they do,
they just don't receive a glance
I heard there are some people,
who, although they can barely cope,
keep their heads held high amidst all pain
and never give up hope.

Andrea Guljas

Loretto Abbey Catholic Secondary School, Grade 9
Age 14

Honourable Mention – 2010



New Arrivals in Yemen ©
UNHCR/J.Björgvinsson, March 2007

Dare I Complain

Misery had consumed my being, as mound upon mound life's complications heaped.
Though to what depths would my complications lie, when side by side to one who had never reaped?
Do I dare lament at a childhood, too soon forsaken?
Whilst one on the other side hopes it was but a dream mistaken,
For I could reminisce, to a world in which I had no worry,
Nay fretted the other, on how to lay forth a meal in a scurry.
But was I not the same as he, in title both known, as "human being"?
Though with this title had we been distinguished; he but a beggar, I, vain and unseeing.
Dare I grieve at a home, inadequately furnished?
Whereas, roadside rested another, but a bed, slightly tarnished.
Proceed I, to pursue my democracy, on account of benefits that had not been given?
Why benefits seemed but a dream in a place, wherein residents, out had been driven.
Complain could I never, that boredom bore me in a country where I remained stationary,
Whilst a man in another, pleaded to flee, from the chaos brought forth by those revolutionary.
Myself did I pity from time to time, as to my government was I but a mere peasant.
Peasant was king, in the eyes of one, whom to cockroach had been lessened.
Crushed could he be, momentarily, by one who had carried a bezant.
As a child, demand toys did I, with which but I had the right to play,
Though what right possessed a child, when weapon in hand, and ordered was he, to obliterate the stray.
Is he not human, just as I am, by home, by content, by name?
Seemingly not, in a world wherein one was above other despite all being the same.
A pompous boast, we boast of equality, a word with no true value.
For by birth was I born better than you, and of my luxuries, you will never have a clue.
Dare I complain, in a world wherein, one was above other, despite all being the same?

Naveeda Hussain

Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute, Grade 11
Age 17

Honourable Mention – 2011

Ignorant Silence

Flesh burned in the heat of the moment,
and my body was thrust to the ground
while in haste to save the sinned.
A scene so unexpected, yet the effect so profound.
I was fated to be conceived
and become a woman in this world,
to withhold an abundance of sorrow
and ache thinking of another tomorrow.
His lavishing gifts, but neglecting ways,
his words of deceit, his lashes of rage.
Intrigued me, be fooled me, and battered my soul,
shattered me into a broken doll.
Must I be provoked, but tried for being provoked?
Don't I have a right to be heard when spoken?
My oppression needs to be broken,
for society has left it unspoken.
With a right for this trial
in which I can finally speak of a man who abused me,
and a society who induced me.
I am not who society proclaims me to be,
I am a woman of truth and dignity,
but I have been what you should never think to be,
SILENT.

Primiya Sivamoorthi

Fletcher's Meadow Secondary School, Grade 11
Age 17

Honourable Mention – 2010

A Harrowing Silence

I
The tears of an innocent child
falls silently into the abyss.
They run to escape the heat
of heavens eye; who sees all of course,
but leaves us to decide the fate of mankind.
II
The lashing of their voices,
stirs desolation within the innocent.
Inflicting physical and emotional wounds;
the scars still remain.
Stained, like the etching upon their graves.
These memories will always bear witness.
a haunting verse in life's bittersweet song.
III
Ignorance is bliss.
Like death's silent kiss,
we let them slip away.
Our emotions engrossed in trivial concerns,
yet infant still wails in his mother's arms.
She waits for someone to notice; to be alarmed.
Petals of optimism cling to their battered shells,
for one day, the dove will fly high and proud
bearing the olive branch;
dreams are all they have for now.

Kirsten Loritz

Notre Dame Catholic High School, Grade 12
Age 17

Honourable Mention – 2010

Z (dedicated to Zahra 'Zia' Kazemi)

The autumn leaves were born, and so was I.
With artistic integrity running through my veins,
I was ready to capture the world.
First stop, Iran.

My heart travelled with me,
as I went from the fluer-de-lis to the maple leaf.
Passion, attached with a single leather strap,
dangling gently from my neck.
Seeing the world through a sharp lens,
that held no bias, able to see justice.

Colors, skilfully chosen,
mixed to black, support each other.
I preserve their identity
From the sands of war, to the seas of poverty.
Confinement and crowding,
I bring awareness to the suffering human condition
Life a chameleon, I blend with my subjects,
Studying every move.

My journey ended,
as I entered the place that once was an image,
On a reel of devotion.
Broken, I left the world on a cold cement level.
Accident or murder, the choice is yours.
But you can just call me Ziba

Maddie Usher

Oakville Trafalgar High School, Grade 12
Age 17

Honourable Mention – 2010

Someday

The rain poured down as if in mourning.
I feel like pitying myself but held back.
I have to be stronger each day
In order to survive.

I feel the cold seeping into my bones.
The cartons I call my shelter will not last.
I am not homeless you see.
I had a home, a family, a village,
Until they came and took it away.
As my father told me to run. I couldn't help but look back: a burning village

Forever gone.
I walked endlessly,
Until my feet were muddy red.
Aboard a ship, I came to this place.
A foreign land I do not know.

I was 13 then
Constantly struggling in this world.
Where my tears have gone dry,
My cry, now silent gone into darkness.

I have long forgotten what it's like
To feel safe and to belong.
Yet, as I stood waiting for the sun, I smiled.
Someday I will find a place to call my own.

Richel Castaneda

*Georges Vanier Secondary School, Grade 12
Age 18*

Honourable Mention – 2010

At Times, We Are All Refugees

Perhaps this city is crowded with the living
Some live in big houses and others without homes,
Where do we live?

The officer sipped his coffee in dread and said:
“You have a passport, that means you dead”
We are still alive.

At a time we had a country and believed it was good
Review the map, it is visibly there
We cannot go back.

I believe thunder was what I heard, or orchestrated music to my ear
When I saw men in proper outfits and holding guns-“Get them all!”
We were not in hiding, so we flee.

We ran through the woods, saw animals running free
No one to tell them how to be
they were not human, not like you and me.

My skin black or olive tone
Is what I hear people yelling, not alone
We are all together

Thoughts of skyscrapers and high-rises
Many doors and many windows
But no, not mine, or yours, to theirs.
Last and not fair, the children are in scared
Kneeling and bonding in despair, the easiest targets
Lest we forget...

Jocelyn Arcentales

*Cardinal Newman Catholic High School, Grade 12
Age 17*

Honourable Mention – 2010

Hu Jia: One of Many

In Beijing, China a man was born
Out of a womb, into a political battlefield.

This man strives to give voice to those who have none,
And whether charged with subverting state authority, or harming state security,
All false accusations will fall

Even Buddha has opened his eyes and shared his wondrous treasures.
A wisdom unchallenged by any man,
A simple truth,
A free heart.

However, through his heart may be unbound
He is a caged bird, a criminal in the eyes of his own government,
Shunted for his public reports on human injustice,
And jailed. Christmas break. 2008. For 3.5 years.
Under a law that does not exist.

A once strong and proud man, now a gaunt and ghostly shadow.
Hu's health is diminishing, even as we speak.
Amnesty International is the only one to seek justice:
His immediate and unconditional release.
World leaders must speak up.
It is time to act the part and command attention.
If awareness is brought to light there will be nowhere left flee,
Nowhere to scurry,
And nowhere to hide.
Justice will be served.

Jennifer Hall

Oakville Trafalgar High School, Grade 12
Age 17

Honourable Mention – 2010

How soon is now?

On our darkest nights
We can rely on the moonlight
to find our way through,
but can't anybody see we've got a war to fight here?
Somewhere in the heart of a hero
lies a dream dreamt by refugees
globally who don't have a choice in the fact of the matter.

Their lives can only begin with the key
of freedom that is padlocked by a volt protected
by the world's corrupt ways.

Hope hides inside this volt
while fear strikes at those who are left endlessly waiting
and only yearn to start living.

At the end of the day the choice is yours
regardless of what they say
allow the sun to rise and rinse out the darkest hour of our days
and bring enough power to help the hopeless

Justin Guzman-Moniz

Cardinal Newman Catholic High School, Grade 9
Age 15

Honourable Mention – 2010

The Flower of Peace

The city was noisy
Their noises were running through the city
The sky was filled with the black smoke
Tanks were roaring
They were moving as fast as a cheetah
Looking for their prey
Houses were collapsed
Blood was everywhere, making a river, passing
through the middle of the city

Noises were everywhere
Among them was a plangent voice
What was that voice?
Where was it coming from?
Is it a voice from a mother?
Who lost her child in the war
Who is crying like a raining cloud
Or is it a crying voice from a child
Who lost his parents in the war

The voices continued
People were crying
Tanks and guns were roaring
And people were dying
I hate war, you hate war, and everyone hates war
So why war, why violence and why force
So let's get up to plant the flower of PEACE!

Shaghayegh Sepehri

Alexander Mackenzie High School, Grade 10
Age 15

Honourable Mention – 2010

On the Outside Looking In

I can barely hear the news on the small T.V.
Over the din
And all the other people living
In this place worse than any I've ever been
Feeling the same way I'm feeling
Sad and alone, I don't want to hide
I'm stuck on the inside
Just looking in
On the T.V. screen that's so hard to see
I don't understand why this is the way
It has to be
I never thought
That this would be me
Watching my home burn on this broken T.V.
Crowded
With all the other people living with me
All the tears I see being shed
For all the men that have bled
And the women that have tried to mend
The broken hearts of their children to no end
The war on my home seems unwilling to bend
To leave us in peace
For that I pray, at least

Hanaan Alkoka

Rick Hansen Secondary School, Grade 9
Age 15
Honourable Mention – 2010



Pakistan Earthquake: A Race Against the Weather ©
UNHCR/B.Baloch

ABOUT COSTI IMMIGRANT SERVICES

COSTI Immigrant Services is a community-based multicultural agency providing employment, educational, and social services to new Canadians and individuals in need of assistance. Since 1952, COSTI has been helping those in need, assisting newcomer professionals and all individuals looking for employment, providing hope to refugee families, protecting women and children, strengthening families, combating racism and discrimination, and assisting all those who function at a disadvantage in society. With a staff of more than 300 people, speaking over 60 languages, COSTI works with all communities and vulnerable populations in need of assistance.

COSTI is committed to creating a community where there is respect and equity for all and to this end, strives to ensure that all individuals, regardless of language, cultural, or financial barriers, are given the opportunity to use their existing skills, learn new ones, and participate in all aspects of Canadian life. COSTI presently provides support to over 39,000 individuals annually.

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly.

The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country. It also has a mandate to help stateless people.

In more than six decades, the agency has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives. Today, a staff of some 6,123 people in more than 125 countries continues to help some 36.4 million persons.

ABOUT THE POETRY CONTEST

This contest was open to all aspiring poets who are students in Grades 4-12 and attending schools in the Greater Toronto Areas. Poems were requested to be written in English with a maximum of 24 lines. Awards were given based on the following three grade categories for a total of three first prizes: Group I grades 4-5-6, Group II grades 7-8, Group III grades 9-10-11-12. All entries were judged on the basis of originality, creative imagination, characterization, artistic quality, adherence to the topic, and rules established for the contest.

The judging panel consisted of members of COSTI Immigrant Services, the Maytree Foundation, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – Toronto, York University and famous Canadian essayist and poet.

On June 20th each year, the winning poets are invited to the Toronto World Refugee Day celebrations to be honoured and to receive their award.

JUDGES PROFILES

JUDGES PROFILES

Mario J. Calla

Mario J. Calla has a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Toronto. He has served as the Executive Director of COSTI Immigrant Services since 1987.

Mario is involved in his community on a volunteer capacity. He is immediate past-President of the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto and currently serves on the Board of the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto, as well as the Board of TRIEC and Chairs its Board Development Committee. He has served as Chair of the City of York Community and Agency Social Planning Council; Vice-President of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants and Vice-President of International Social Services of Canada, among other activities. Mario has served on the Minister's Roundtable on Fair Access to Regulated Professions and on the Minister's Advisory Group on Mental Health and Addictions for the Province of Ontario.

Tina Edan

Tina Edan is Manager of Leadership Programs at Maytree and a board member with the Toronto Public Library and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries. She holds an MA in communications from Concordia University and has worked with a variety of non profit organizations on issues such as diversity, immigrant and refugee narratives, women's rights, anti-racism and poverty.

Tina's commitment to social change extends to her work as a literary curator and writer. She has served as a juror for the Toronto Book Awards, Ontario Arts Council and Diaspora Dialogues and is an alumnus of the Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation (VONA) at the University of San Francisco. Tina has previously curated the literary stage at Toronto's Masala! Mehndi! Masti! Festival and performed her poetry in Toronto, Vancouver and San Francisco. Her work has been published in TOK: Writing the New Toronto and has appeared in a number of literary installations across Toronto, including the ARCFest Human Rights Festival and Doors Open Toronto. In 2009 she was a finalist in the Toronto Arts Council Foundation's Get Lit! Competition.

Rana Khan

Rana Khan is a human rights lawyer who has worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees since 1994, as Regional Legal Officer for Ontario. In addition to the work she has done for the UNHCR in Canada, Rana has also taken part in some of the organization's international operations for refugee protection and humanitarian assistance serving in Angola and Kosovo. One example of her keen interest in promoting human rights is the initiation of the Child and Youth Poetry Contest on Human Rights and Refugees in partnership with COSTI Immigrant Services.

Goran Simic

Goran Simic (1952) was born in Bosnia-Herzegovina where he published number of volumes of poetry, stories, plays and radio plays including ten puppet plays and three opera librettos that was produced in ex Yugoslavia, UK and Germany. Back in Bosnia he was editor of several literary magazines, newspaper book columnist and book shop owner. After surviving the Bosnian war and siege of Sarajevo (1992-1995) he immigrated to Canada with his two children in 1996. Coming to Canada he was resident of UofT Massey College, Writer-in Exile at the Banff Centre for the Arts and University of Guelph. His poetry books was translated in more than ten languages and his poetry included in several world anthologies such as *Scanning the Century* and numerous anthologies in Canada and former Yugoslavia. He was awarded the Helman-Hammet award, PEN-USA Freedom to Write award, People's Award in Canada, as well as numerous prizes from the former Yugoslavia.

His published books include: *Sprinting from the Graveyard* (Oxford University Press), *Immigrant Blues* (Brick Books), *From Sarajevo with Sorrow* (Biblioasis), *Yesterday's People* (Biblioasis). In 2010 he published short stories *Looking for Tito* (Frog Hollow Press) and poetry collection *Sunrise in the eyes of the Snowman* (Biblioasis). Recently he moved to Edmonton as a Writer in Exile at University of Alberta.

Pricilla Uppal

Priscila Uppal is a poet, novelist and York University English and Graduate Studies professor. Her international publications include *Ontological Necessities* (shortlisted for the \$50,000 Griffin Poetry Prize), *Traumatology*, *Successful Tragedies* (Bloodaxe Books, U.K.), and *Winter Sport: Poems* (written as Canadian Athletes Now poet-in-residence for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games; she will resume the position in London in 2012), the novels *The Divine Economy of Salvation* and *To Whom It May Concern*, and the study *We Are What We Mourn: The Contemporary English-Canadian Elegy*. Her works have been translated into numerous languages including Dutch, Greek, Korean, Latvian, Italian, and Serbo-Croatian. *Time Out London U.K.* recently dubbed her "Canada's coolest poet." For more information visit priscilauppal.ca.

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