

So, What Are You Doing  
To Make the World a Better Place?

100 Thousand Poets for Change

2016 Kingston, ON Canada

Anthology

A Copyleft Anthology

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Thee Hellbox Press

Kingston, ON



## Poets Included in this Anthology

(Alphabetically by First Name)

Akin Jeje, Alyssa Cooper, Anne Graham, Bānoo Zan, Bethmarie Michalska, Bob MacKenzie, Boris But, Bruce Kauffman, Christine Jacobs, Cori Mayhew, Czandra, Donna Langevin, Elizabeth Greene, Eugene Cornacchia, Florence Chikumba, Geoff Travis Canadien, Georgia Wilder, Hugh Walter Barclay, Josh Colenda, Kate Rogers, Kathy Figueroa, Kathy Keenan, Meg Freer, Michelle K. Allan, Nathalie Sorensen, Paola Caronni, Pat Connors, Robin Gillespie, Rose DeShaw, Sana Towheed, Sandra Davies, Shasheen Bagha, Susan McMaster, Tara Kainer, Tim Duncan, and Winona Linn.



## Preface

100 Thousand Poets for Change, conceived by Michael Rothenberg and Terri Carrion, began in early 2011 in San Francisco with a mission to create a ‘voice’ for poets and other artists to help advocate social justice, peace, diversity, and create a greater awareness of and for environmental concern and sustainability. An annual event held on a specific day in September each year since, it has indeed become a locally-coordinated, global movement with venues for readings and other forms of artistic expression around these themes in hundreds of cities and places all over the world each year.

The absence of our city, Kingston, in that now 5-year-old global effort was to me glaring. We had never once been part of this initiative, and I was determined this year that we needed to be.

In early August, I began to put together what would be Kingston’s entrance into that global event. Knowing the date, September 24<sup>th</sup> 2016, I put out a call for participation. I had no idea on the day I sent out the email what the response would be. I could not include any information in that call other than the core themes of 100 TPC, and ‘September 24’, even without a time of day because I did not yet know how many might want to be included. Nor did I have a location of where it would be.

It was one of those ‘build it and they will come’ sort of things. And come they did. Response was beautifully overwhelming. So many who were aware of it wanted to be part of Kingston’s inaugural appearance in this global event. Still looking for a suitable location and well into the second week of searching, Donald Mitchell of the Sydenham Street United Church approached me and offered up their space as a venue for it. A beautiful location, perfect for this, and having attended other theatrical and artistic performances there, I was overjoyed at the opportunity to hold it in that space.

Shortly after securing a venue, Hugh Walter Barclay, book artist and publisher of Thee Hellbox Press in Kingston, also excited about the event, approached me with an idea to produce and publish an anthology of poetry focused around these themes. A call for submissions was sent out. Immediately, submissions began to arrive. Not only from Kingston, but from other places around the world as well. Many, knowing about the local event here and wishing they could participate – this was their way of ‘being here in spirit’. I was impressed with both the quality and volume of all work received.

My heartfelt thanks to all 36 poets who contributed to this anthology. It was truly a pleasure communicating and working with you on these selections within.

An equal heartfelt thanks to the 37 poets and musicians who did participate in what turned out to be two 3-hour sessions of readings and music performed on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September.

Each poem in this anthology also hung on the walls of the venue that day and allowed all who attended a first look at what lies within. So, the poetry in this anthology did in fact, as well, attend in spirit.

As I look forward to next year’s event, my utmost humble thanks to everyone who made this year’s inaugural event, both then and here in this, so wonderfully joyous and full.



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## **attacks**

Each strike against the body is uniquely terrifying. Each is a swiftly swung spiked mace onto bare skin. Each wound, spraying shivering shock upwards, is meant to be unhealable.

The battleground is social media. Some rally to the flag, others decry it as a battle standard when other flags have no mast to fly on. Some corpses mean more than others, pale figures over carcasses of colour, demise of the rich more painful than the putrid passing of paupers born to be birthed, born to die, invisible unremarkable lives.

These are not separate entities, discrete identities, but a single body that strikes itself incessantly. Terrorism is less a crime than a degenerative disease. Backs, buttocks and legs are stroked with appalling frequency, but a purplish eye, a broken nose, a slap-broke oozing mouth are easier to perceive. The bloodied brow of Paris is easier to witness, as was London's, New York's, and Madrid's.

Beirut, Baghdad, Syria, Yemen, Kenya, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, caned regularly, seep lifeblood so copiously, that the gauze and cotton of intermittent sympathy can no longer staunch anguish. The only tears left are jagged, crossed and crusty pink. They dried in the desert of sere faces, barren, stripped of every blade or brush. Those scourged daily feel only awful thuds on fractured bone and open flesh matted. Fatalism is the only refuge of the chronically battered.

Light candles that become bonfires that immolates poison, warm the world in pure, clear illumination. Perceive a singular humanity above a group of nations.

Otherwise, in life as online, snippets and snarls will fly as to whose deaths mattered more, a continual litany of what this world lacks. Divided, a severed body falls from its own attacks.

## **Akin Jeje**

## **Riverbanks**

I once saw a boy on the banks of a river,  
where salmon - raw, half-dead, and gasping  
for life -  
had drifted ashore.

He moved with purpose, with desperation,  
lifting slippery silver bodies and  
easing them  
back into the current.

And my father, he told me,  
“He’s wasting his time;  
they’ve already spawned - they’re already  
dead.”

But mine is a generation built  
on hope,  
and I couldn’t listen.

I ran to the river; I joined the boy in the shallows.  
I took hold of the cool, smooth scales,  
and I slipped my hands into  
the cold, clear  
water.

**Alyssa Cooper**

## **Democracy**

Democracy – majority election  
sounded fine to me, until I realized  
the odds were set in one direction.  
Money helped the campaigns be actualized.

Conglomerates and the millionaires  
may have an open field to steal the day.  
They think they can easily buy their shares  
in Canada; to get their own sweet way.

Laws can be bought and sold for a fee.  
When we look at justice, this so appears.  
Astute lawyers let the guilty rich go free,  
while minorities and the poor pay their arrears.

We need to get involved, get out and vote  
for real Democracy to make things right.  
Test the talk before you jump on the boat,  
or join in *any* group, take up the fight.

**Anne Graham**

**This poem is bombarded—**

does not live in peace—  
tries to start itself a number of times  
and falls martyred on my grave

Freedom invades its Iraq and Afghanistan  
like the US army and leaves them in ruins

It denies its Vietnam and Hiroshima  
and accuse me of its past and present—

turns its back on my Syria and lets me kill myself

It lays siege to my Gaza  
and denies me water and sky

It is the democracy it isn't

It has lost count of its figures of mass illusion—  
is used to critics' gaze at its nude similes and metaphors

The broken hymen of its syntax  
is guilty of the orgasm of Sufis

It is a synecdoche of massacres  
that claim resistance is terrorism

Poem,  
When you look into your mirror  
what do you see?

**Bānoo Zan**

## **Love While You Can**

Dream an olympics of social stewardship  
Where even the very young train  
for the 'slow leap' -  
an event that requires you to show that you see the other's view -  
listening,  
trials of empathic effort -  
before you ever express.

Where jumping to conclusions disqualifies,  
Yet reflecting someone else's mind gains bonus points.

Imagine a long deceleration into understanding,  
mirror neurons playing catch in different brains,  
gaining shared ground.

Where asking for, or offering, help is still a choice.

Design a decathlon of diverse means to a common culture,  
and don't forget the song & dance!

Aspire to create plenteous peace.

**Bethmarie Michalska**

## **Across the Water**

Is this the land of the golden highways;  
Is this the city of the jewelled dreams?  
And what fire! What fire burns still brightly here?  
Does the fire burn with heat or only light?

The sun from the water seems to ascend  
The sky dripping with water and with fire,  
While across the water silver towers shine  
With their own cold fire against the heavens.

In the west is a dark rainbow some climb  
Into that dark place across the water  
To find only death in fading buildings,  
Decaying fallen life outside the light.

And further east the earth swallows masses  
Who follow the Prince of Darkness blindly  
Into his dark world like Persephone,  
All the while holding her torch high for light.

Where is the ferryman? Where the wild dog  
With three heads, waiting to cross the water?  
Over there, are there life giving flowers  
Or only the dark across the water?

**Bob MacKenzie**

## **A Butcher in North Point Market**

My mind swapped places with the carcass of what was  
once a pig, swallowing a baited and rusty hook,  
swaying gracefully in the summer stench,  
an eerie reflection of what life it might still hold.  
How could the dead look so alive? I wondered,  
transfixed as the butcher quartered life from its flesh,  
a toothpick hanging between the man's teeth with  
consummate ease and his carving knife slicing up  
tendon and ligament with perfect precision, his blade  
etching its mark without any hint of measure. Without warning,  
he drew a sickle and beheaded the creature in a  
public execution. I expected a scream of heart wrenching  
convulsion, a reply to the nonchalant cruelty of an  
undertaker. But I was met only by my own silence.

## **Boris But**

## legacies

in our western culture and our endless  
quest to conquer, leave our mark, our legacy  
and fill the world with monuments and pieces  
of ourselves destined still to crumble or burn

the ancients, the indigenous - their goal  
in honour and praise to earth  
was to live a life full and leave  
no trace in their journeys -  
their legacy, simply to have lived  
in earth's rhythm, to have passed down  
to their children wisdom and heart,  
to have become then air, leaving no structure

our legacies will vanish with us  
as we perish each  
    along with our souls

theirs, both legacy and spirit, still found in  
the gentle hum of the soil, the rock, and tree,  
in the singing waters of lake, river and stream,  
and in the almost silent soft morning  
    whispers of dew

**Bruce Kauffman**

## **Memo Mixup**

There must be a mixup!  
Let me assure you I never sent that memo!  
But yet soft lullabies of bullshit are fed to me, as if requested,  
Stuffed down my throat, willing me to swallow their lies whole  
I resist the Koolaid, even with a vodka splash and a catchy cocktail name  
I will die before I am a good little cult follower like they expect me to be

It will be a slow death though  
Damaged in meeting after meeting  
Then gaslighting by all with spectacular acts of confusion  
Denying the silencing as if power is only a figment of my imagination  
Yet I never hope to throw out the Koolaid or convince them otherwise  
I just want the questions stopped when my honest answers are rejected

I no longer believe that education is all it takes  
Not when you keep your power by denying it exists  
But let me keep my autonomy too, let me do the good I can do  
Do not make me fight losing battles while you doubt the politics  
Let me save my strength please, what little is left on my brown skin  
After the othering sucks me bone dry then asks for unwanted feedback

**Christine Jacobs**

## **The Warning**

“Where are you from B’y?”

“The Pier,” he said, and  
stood a little taller,  
stood a little straighter.

He is tough,  
tough as the work  
they do there.

His family lives in  
half a company house,  
owned lock, stock and barrel.

He has a job up top.  
Shift work and the heat  
of the ovens has seared him  
to a thin piece of grizzle.  
Coke dust blackened his  
lungs, breath comes in a rhythm  
of short, light spurts.

Talking is an effort for us.

His wispy hair flutters  
in the breeze, reminding me  
of a downy, small bird.

Black eyes stare out  
of his face, vigilant.

A week later, he died sleeping  
in his own bed, like the tiny canary  
at the bottom of the cage,  
warning the others.

## **Cori Mayhew**

## **Penal colony**

*(What's the place of woman in a penal colony?)*

And maybe Earth is a penal colony  
of exiles from the planet of Grey Aliens,  
first sent here, guardians with tall skulls,  
in chariots of fire,  
who built pyramids in grids around Earth  
to find us again or us them,  
then left us to fend for ourselves:  
misformed with half a brain and no high self,  
and no helmet, sent to breed together  
and prolong the gene deformed that, healthy,  
would have led to peace and good self-  
governance. Abandoned us  
hankering after the memory of better things,  
built-in criss-crossing grid-line  
genes from past cross-breeding with  
healthy stock, like the  
blind groping after colour,  
feeling it just within reach  
but out of sight.

## **Czandra**

## **HANDS OF PEACE**

*after a sculpture by Shane Gilmore, Ennis, Ireland 2008*

May  
my hands  
    reach out  
to those  
    fleeing  
    their homes  
like  
    these  
hands  
    with branched  
    fingers  
    where  
    migrating  
goldfinches  
    rest.

**Donna Langevin**

## Household Gods

These are my household gods:  
golden head of Hathor, Minoan snake goddess  
from Crete, small head of Buddha, a magic wand,  
bronze rider on a bronze wheeled horse.

There are many ways to enter eternity.

Outside, the lake, unbound, laps  
in pearly freedom under grey spring sky;  
green shoots paused under icy film,  
are poised to surge into crocus, iris, daffodils.

All's well, except tumours of violence explode  
unpredictably in random cities  
snatching lives, sending parents, lovers, friends  
jaggedly into eternity.

Household gods, none of you warriors,  
can't you spread your golden net beyond the street?  
Or simply weep for those who died too soon,  
send them clumps of purple crocus.

**Elizabeth Greene**

## **With Gentle Step**

wounded mother earth shook off her slumber long  
and cleansed herself of the infection - man

and those few of the species that remained  
found themselves colour-blind to skin  
white skin or black skin or yellow or brown  
and all were as family once again

and they embraced all of life  
of the land of the air of the waters  
to be their brothers and sisters

and they could listen to the murmur of the trees  
while mushrooms nodded their rain-bow capped heads  
to mother earth's slumbering heartbeat

and they walked gentle upon their mother earth

**Eugene Cornacchia**

8th September 2016

## **A CRY FOR JUSTICE!**

I hear the cry of an innocent soul  
in stebonch vineyards.

You announce my ways are wanton,  
that I fly from soul to soul.

But if I'm just a shadow to you,  
could you ever understand?

The secret of your dark powers creep behind the  
curtains.

Shadow of truth surfacing in the spotting.  
Please hear the tempo so compelling,  
hear the blood throbbing in my veins.

Is it the case that our hearts are not big enough and  
our minds not so wide-open to enfold all mankind?

Listen to me, my brethren,  
it is up to us to change this world  
we have inherited with its:  
Virtues and vices,  
Dignity and humanity,  
Love and respect,

And try to make it a better and more lovely caring world for all.

**Florence Chikumba**

## **Our Standing Family**

A flock of Geese is a Gaggle, Crows a Murder, and  
Any more than a dozen Ravens a Conspiracy,  
In Indigenous Teachings, Trees are Our Standing Family,  
Our Brothers and Sisters,  
Who Teach us Patience and Wisdom, and Require Our Stewardship.

The Eldest of Our Family need to be Honoured,  
Not seen as so many Beams,  
Beams, which build houses of Consumer Dreams,  
Developments that Tar, and Scar, the Land,  
As they spur Demand, for More and More.

Land which Nobody Owns, rather Shares with ALL Life.

Our Standing Family, Cleans the Air for all the Creatures,  
Listen to the exchange of Breaths, As we commune in an Ancient Shorthand...  
A Dialog which Our Actions no longer Honour.

Under the Freezing Moon, I Witness the Trees in a strong breeze,  
Arms and Fingers reaching and missing each other,  
Longing for the close embrace of the Leaves in Summer,  
Indigenize your Mind, See the Forest holding Hands...

**Geoff Travis Canadien**

### **The City Noise Blues: A Villanelle**

Got a voice way down on the bottom of my boot,  
I shout to the worms in their underground thunder  
And I whisper to the city where the noises take root

In our marble towered kingdom, there's a real estate dispute:  
A homeless man and a hegemonic plunder  
Got a voice way down on the bottom of my boot

In billiard halls where the pool-players shoot  
The young cocks crow, till the junk slakes their hunger,  
And they whisper to the city where the noises take root

Now the whispers in the system, in the smog and the soot  
Make the train tracks rumble out a beat for each drummer  
Got a voice way down on the bottom of my boot

When the wise women sing for the sister who is mute  
The nightingales gather and the swallows weave a wonder  
And they whisper to the city where the noises take root

In Discordia-concordance, in our daily commute  
Some words will rise and some are pulled under  
Got a voice way down on the bottom of my boot  
And I whisper to the city where the noises take root

**Georgia Wilder**

**So, What Are You Doing to Make  
the World a Better Place?**

You there! Mr. Politician,  
Democrat, Republican, Liberal, Conservative, NDP,  
Communist.  
So what are you doing to make the world a better place?

You there! Religious leader,  
Christian, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu.  
So what are you doing to make the world a better place?

You there! Rich fellow,  
Investor, business man, with inheritance,  
So what are you doing to make the world a better place?

You there! Poet,

**Hugh Walter Barclay**

## **Home**

In my country in my home,  
I light my pipe and smoke alone.

Warfare, love, natural phenomena:  
The books that I own,  
Above my flowers, my armor, my  
tools.

Simple food, simple drink,  
Simply everything I'll ever need.

The flowers smell sweet but can prick you,  
Their defense to preserve their sweet sweetness.

The tools are useful but worn,  
There's only so much they can do, I can do.

The armor is dented and scratched,  
A testament to battles passed.

In my pipe is the first, the greatest: nostalgia.

In my country in my home,  
I light my pipe and smoke alone,  
Until my wife comes home to join me.

**Josh Colenda**

## **The Bird, Waiting**

The adhan<sup>1</sup> praises the stars,  
strings points of light  
on a necklace of prayers.

Awe awakes before dawn,  
before sun gilds the palm tree,  
before the strangler fig,  
trunk twisted by struggle,  
wears a crown of gold leaf.

The adhan calls to the bird  
waiting in silent silhouette:

*Your colours will return,  
light will find you waiting  
on that high branch.  
Your song will  
stroll the garden  
on the arm of the breeze.*

**Kate Rogers**

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<sup>1</sup> Moslem call to prayer, praising God.

## **Poets Prevail**

Poets prevail  
When politicians fail  
Bards rhapsodize  
While warmongers wail  
A surer aim was never had  
But with a pen  
It's a time when poetry  
Fills the land, again...

**Kathy Figueroa**

## **If I Could Speak**

*for Christopher*

If I could speak, I'd tell you, "I'm having a bad week." If I had a way, I'd say, "I need to go back to bed today." If I could speak, I'd tell you "My legs are weak. I'm not hungry and don't feel I can eat." If I could speak, I'd tell you "My brain's in a fog and I need your help to find my frog. Please, pour me another glass of eggnog." I could say, "I **want to go home. I want to be left alone.**" If I could speak, I'd say, "*I love you.* Don't be blue. We'll get through."

If I could speak, I wouldn't have to yell. I'd be out of this hell. I would be able to call. Not have to **BANG** on this wall. I might feel, seven feet tall. Catch me, catch me, catch me, when I fall. If I could speak, I'd say, "I need to sleep. In my bed with my blanket pulled over my head." Oh... Oh, if only I could say, "I don't want to take those pills another day."

If I could speak you'd understand when I can't and when I can. Inside I'm a little boy, outside I'm a man.

If I could speak, I'd say "Don't mess with my stuff or my night could get really rough." I need everything in order and in its place to keep a frowned look off my face. I need to know you are there and that you care. I smile when everything is all right and you *kiss* me goodnight. I would say, "*I love you.* Don't be blue. We'll get through." If, if only, if only I could speak.

## **Kathy Keenan**

*My son Christopher inspired this poem. Chris had medically uncontrolled seizures all his life and as a result lost his ability to speak. He graduated from this life 3 years ago when he was 29 years old. He had a collection of Kermit the Frogs which he adored and became very anxious if one was missing, and his most favourite drink was eggnog.*

## Rare Interactions

There were pine trees growing underground,  
roots growing deeper than ever roots grew,  
hope buried—*viriditas*, greenness—planted  
amid the search for cosmic dark matter.

A nickel mine was deep enough to detect  
neutrinos, remote enough for deep contemplation—  
the natural root of the mind—where scientists  
descended in the dark on an open platform,  
depriving their souls of divine radiance for a time.

The warm, humid air is good for growing  
plants rooted in opposition, for there is no sun  
underground. But brightness shines everywhere.

Twenty years later, Jupiter is bright, as if  
a divine pin pricked the darkening fabric  
of the sky to let light from above shine  
on those still searching below.

The pine saplings thrive above ground.  
But wood has memory, as well as a soul,  
and their roots persist in the depths of the earth,  
wondering what riches are yet to be found.

## Meg Freer

*\* The first pine trees were in the original Sudbury Neutrino Observatory lab (now SNOLAB) in the Vale Creighton mine near Sudbury, Ontario. Work done there resulted in a share of the 2015 Nobel Prize in Physics being awarded to Dr. Arthur B. McDonald, the leader of the Canadian scientific team. Occasionally, non-scientists are invited to visit the lab, and there is still a pine tree nursery, where 50,000 red pine and jack pine seedlings are grown and then planted on and around Inco property to fulfill its obligation to reclaim the barren land after years of wear and tear from mining, smelting and refining. Some trees are donated to the City of Sudbury.*

## **The End of the World**

I have heard many laments that "Political Correctness" is ruining society  
if this is true  
so be it  
let people be brainwashed into being nice to each other  
let cities be laid to waste by basic human decency  
no one will be free from a scourge of empathy while today's teens fall victim  
to the dangerous trend of treating people like human beings  
we will face a kindness apocalypse  
if compassion is what ends the world  
I will gladly watch the earth  
crumble into the sea

**Michelle K. Allan**

## Medicine and Sickness

*Medicine and sickness heal each other. The whole world is medicine.  
Where do you find your self?  
Zen Master Yunmen, ninth-century China*

Her mind is shooting stars and small birds dreaming,  
her body floats over mountains, crawls into beehives,  
sound of groaning glaciers, scent of ancient ice.  
She dives into grassland asters on blue dragonflies,  
glare of yellow sun melting on her tongue.

Human beings flee from Syria, from Honduras  
from Guatemala, and from El Salvador.  
In Iraq, they blow up the Mosque of Jonah.  
That whale borne prophet of Nineveh now preaches  
forbearance and fierce compassion in the streets of Mosul.

Old forests levelled, disputed cities crumbling, fields  
on life support: she rides the bounding tiger of difficulty,  
engaged with the workings of medicine and sickness.  
Trees are planted on injured fields, crops seeded in small holdings,  
errant hearts acknowledge the one that kills –

and even now, free flying bees caress soft petals,  
chipmunks leap over violets, and fragrance of birdsong fills the air.

**Nathalie Sorensen**

## **Bottleneck**

They've just cast their vote.  
"Good," they said,  
"Democracy has won."  
"Slap in the face for the Mainland,"  
Titled the press, especially the foreign press.

"But alas, there will be still no change for us  
Stuck in this enclave of wealth and stealth,  
High-rises and high prices."  
*"We'll stagnate, economy will stagnate  
Those guys will veto  
Whatever proposed by their adversaries."*

"And we'll wait in dismay  
To emerge from this limbo  
While dreaming of social justice and equality  
For all."  
*"Even of INDEPENDENCE, if we can say the word."*

"Shall we go and play golf  
At the Club tomorrow? It'll be a nice day."

Life goes on, unattended to.

## **Paola Caronni**

## Baltimore

A man has been treated as vermin to be squashed, like an afterthought of an afterthought, without regard to his essential humanity.

All because of a long rapsheet, a system lacking proven checks and balances, and the colour of his skin.

Because of this repeated, systemic injustice, people are rising up.

You're damn right it's dangerous and scary in Baltimore.

It seems it has been for a little while.

## Pat Connors

*“Baltimore” was originally published in Part-Time Contemplative.*

*What happened in Baltimore on April 12, 2015, cannot be forgotten. It has happened many times since. It could be happening even as you read this.*

*It's very easy as Canadians to say this doesn't affect us. However, “No Man is an Island”, as the bard has said.*

*Furthermore, Black men routinely get carded while walking down the street in Toronto. A close friend of mine was asked to present his front row bleacher ticket to the usher when we were at a Blue Jay game. I was not asked to produce mine.*

*Systemic racism is a part of the reality of Canadian life. Any injustice committed with a gun or a pen or a smile, inflicted on someone because of their creed, sexuality, or the colour of their skin, is an affront to basic human dignity.*

## **Right Next Door**

Sad house full of scarecrows  
Displaced and faceless Disgraced and Homeless  
Waiting for Justice?  
Ambulance removals every couple of days  
Disposable people  
No one will miss them  
Motherless and fatherless ones  
Then it occurs: Would anyone miss me?  
We are even in this way In what other ways  
Choices have been dwindling lately  
What we will do about it is not clear  
We are giving the scarecrows cups of coffee  
On mornings while they  
Wait for nothing to happen  
Afternoons, popsicles because their house  
Has no fans or air  
One said "thank you I said "you're welcome"

**Robin Gillespie**

## **LET US SAY SISTER**

The streets of lower Vancouver  
weren't exactly lousy with choice  
when they were out there  
raking in the nickels in the night.

Sing songs for them,  
Sing of their faintest chances,  
last stubborn hopes

Let them remain persons  
not moral tales  
in some grey book  
recited by ghouls.

Cry how the pain of  
memory ground them  
down to city dust

As The Inquiry begins, before it lengthens  
To lawyers, letters, all the suits and ties,  
Let us bow our heads and let us say  
'Sister,' when we speak their names.

**Rose DeShaw**

*September 7, 2016*

*Concerning the inquiry into the murders of Aboriginal Women in Canada*

## **the sound of love**

There is music on earth for those who listen,  
Shakespeare scribed.

And so I wandered the earth and heard the draughty sighs of flutes, the  
waved strings of harps, and the cries of violins  
in the sigh and whisper and laughter of the people.

Each human being has within the walls of their heart  
a song, dancing out its own tale,

and yet,  
my beloved when will you understand that  
we are the Wind of breath in the same worldly flute  
the Current of fingers caressing the same divine harp  
and the Showers of tears wept by the same spiritual violin  
and that we are all singing the melody of Love  
in one long breath,  
originating from the One Heart  
that we all possess?

**Sana Towheed**

## Beppe Speaks

I waited always for the knock. We women had to answer and we slept with pistols under our pillows— rifles were hard to get and were carried only by the men. Motherhood came second, you see, our babies weaned on boiled turnip, left with *tantes* who filled them up with more turnip, *omkes* who carved them toys from turnip. Our men were fighters, but we were only couriers, and had to be the first to sacrifice. We could not question my husband Hendrick who was *kommandant* of our group. Once we had to get the hidden *Jewish kinderen* off the houseboat where we lived – move them to a safer place – and Hendrick hid them under blankets in the truck. He had to shoot the German officer who tried to stop them but he never told me this until we came to Canada. To tell you true I think he thought that Jesus wouldn't save him from hell if he knew he had killed a man. (So often you remember he prayed the *Onzse Vader*). Another time there was a drop – you know a “drop”? An army plane – food supplies, guns, soldiers. We all ran to the airfield with the flares. And there was silence on the ground and silence from the soldiers, no stars or moon is why they chose that night. That silence – flares and parachutes, the smell of fear, and I thought about my baby, my empty breasts. Running fast and low we carried everything, soldiers, guns, food, ghosts. They came so silently, those German gunboats – how they slipped unseen into the canal to hunt us down we did not know. Secrets are never safe among the occupied, but gates into the sea were tended by trust. We ran the motor, stole away, we lived. I see me now, a girl of twenty, riding on my bicycle, carrying documents, carrying a pistol – for Christiaan, my bright-eyed baby boy. That he should live in peace.

## Sandra Davies

*“Beppe” means “Grandma” in Friesian, the language of the former Kingdom of Friesland, now a province in the north of Holland. This piece is about my late mother-in-law’s experience fighting beside her husband in the Dutch underground in Nazi occupied Holland during WW2, and written by me to honour both her unwavering belief in the power of resistance, and her astonishing displays of courage. This is as close as I can come to the actual words of her story, told to me in musical, accented English. I read it both as a plea for hope and as a lament for peace which never seems to last.*

## **The Lightning Tree**

Blackened and burned,  
Gnarled and twisted,  
It stood upon the bare hill  
Like a withered ruptured artery.  
Naked branches clawing against the heavens,  
In protest of its desecration.  
Lightning struck at least a few times each year,  
Leaving blackened marks like obscene love-bites,  
Proof of Fate's attentions.  
Every year, that tree burned.  
Every year it broke.  
And every year it withered a little more.  
Centuries came and went  
Yet it stood its ground upon that hill  
Resisting, surviving, and waiting for that final strike.

**Shaheen Bagha**

## **It Worries Me**

That the world will end, whether in my time  
or sixty billion years. Each particle, leaf,  
of the whispering bush, the supine curve  
of the opposite shore.

I know we're no more than a shimmer façade,  
Know our libraries will turn to dust,  
pavements decay, cockroaches rise  
to feed on our graves.

What I can't bear is that due to our blind  
pride and rage, this too may go  
in a button's push:

lace of light through flickering trees –  
loon calypso on the midnight lake.

**Susan McMaster**

## **Mother's News**

Each day, when I bring her the paper, she tells me  
there's no more war, that the world, united,  
sends food to the starving, drops bags of water  
wherever there's drought. I don't contradict her.  
Tv, radio, the battling web don't enter her room  
full of dahlias, sun, an orange tree in fruit.

She still reads, though: "cozies", where each death  
is a shock, demands resolution. I like them too,  
we share them back and forth. But not the front pages.  
They're blocked from her view by her own defences,  
censor's black in a letter home.

But something lingers through her haze: all the children  
she couldn't save, her own brood soon to be left  
without a shield. So she's made a better tale.  
In my lifetime, she says, so much has changed.  
At last, we have peace.

Yes, I answer. Peace is coming. Not a lie: in time  
we will either save or destroy this blue haven.  
Emptiness. Death. Peace of a kind.

I open the paper to the comics page.

**Susan McMaster**

## Peace

In my garden  
on my knees planting seeds

fingers digging deep into the earth,  
sun soaking into my clothes

the back of my neck,  
and wind teasing my hair

That tree over there, gently  
tossing its branches

like the swish of a long, full skirt,  
that crow cradled

into silence on the uppermost bough,  
cat curled beneath the rhubarb leaves

When the moon rises  
above the horizon

as a liquid, lopsided  
wobbling amber ball,

stars emerging like  
fireflies into the night

**Tara Kainer**

## **I didn't write the history, but I'll own it**

I wish it could have been different,  
a history to be proud of,  
a history they could shout out loud of  
and feel the essence of all that their ancestors felt:  
blood, sweat, tears, anger, rage.  
A past that was taken from them,  
and yet, one they dug back up to celebrate.  
I wish that I could have made sacrifices  
that meant life and death, given and taken breath.  
One with a struggle that would go down  
through the ages, no regrets.  
Instead,  
I have to accept the history of my birth.  
Not my doing, but my hurt,  
that was delivered before my time.  
Racist filth, legal crimes,  
that I must own if I hope to change it.  
It's my responsibility to rearrange it  
and all the deep seeded hatred that guided the weak and jaded.  
It's up to me; it's up to you.

**Tim Duncan**

## From Here

Cut my feet at the beach again,  
sliced them up on stripey things that pump poison into my lake.  
It is *my* lake.  
I am *from* here. You are not *from* here,  
*they* are not from here.

Zebra mussels come from Russia  
the Ural valleys and the Volga watershed.  
What a silly profession! A traveling bivalve.  
I imagine them with tiny legs and I wonder,  
when they walk the shores of my Great Lake do their feet bleed too  
upon their gluttonous daughters?

Sick seagulls, who cares  
they're a nuisance anyway  
with their french fry addictions and cackling gulps  
*so a couple ducks died*  
*come on,*  
*it's not like we're gonna run out of ducks.*

*Oh, you can almost see the bottom.*  
*Oh the water looks nice today so clear,*  
*nothing green at all.*

## Winona Linn

## Author Bios

Canadian poet **Akin Jeje** lives in Hong Kong. Jeje's works have been featured in Canada and Hong Kong. His first collection *Smoked Pearl* was published in 2010. Jeje's most recent publication was in Hong Kong's Chameleon Press anthology *Quixotica; Poems East of La Mancha* in July 2016.

**Alyssa Cooper** is an author, poet, and artist currently living in Kingston, Ontario with her partner, two cats, and a Boston Terrier. She was first published in 2008, and has since authored three novels, a short story collection, and a poetry collection, as well as having had her short stories and poetry included in a number of magazines and journals. She is currently writing her fourth novel, titled 'Twisted', and compiling her second poetry collection, titled 'Fevered Ramblings'.

**Anne Graham**, [annegenator@gmail.com](mailto:annegenator@gmail.com), lives in Kingston, Ontario and describes herself as a Life Traveler. Now retired, she has been given the gift of more time to write and share her perspectives. Anne says she feels privileged to have been published after daring to share her work only five years ago. She says "This is a great way to express my feelings about diverse subjects, not being a great conversationalist."

**Bānoo Zan** has published more than 120 pieces, as well as two books. She immigrated from Iran to Canada in 2010. Her poetry collection, *Songs of Exile*, captures her experiences of self and others. She is the founder of Shab-e She'r (Poetry Night), the most diverse poetry reading and open mic series in Toronto.

**Bethmarie Michalska**, born in the Maritimes; resides in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. From her working as therapist & writer, she provides expression that offers others a chance to extend themselves in time, consciousness, & space. First poetry book is *North Superior Bardo* (2014).

**Bob Mackenzie** lives in Kingston, Ontario.

Bio: The Creation of Bob MacKenzie

R. D. MacKenzie appeared from nowhere and was published, poems published by the hundreds across the Americas, wavered as a wisp of smoke borne on a breeze and vanished, ashen poet Bob MacKenzie took form made smoke-words poems.

**Boris But**'s work is informed by the silently remarkable. He currently resides in Hong Kong, China. He writes when he is busy and procrastinates when there is nothing to do. He does the dishes, sings and plays the ukulele, and takes long walks in the Montreal winter which he instantly regrets.

**Bruce Kauffman** lives in Kingston, ON and is a poet, editor, workshop facilitator, and radio show host. He has been published in journals and anthologies, and has had 3 collections of poetry published – the latest of which was *The Silence Before the Whisper Comes* (Hidden Brook Press, 2013).

**Christine Jacobs** is a West Indian woman, attempting to successfully navigate life in North America. Her writing style of comfort is prose, but she has been experimenting with poetry recently. She makes every effort to prioritize time with scattered chosen family members in her loved ones whose bonds have conclusively withstood the tests of time, adversity, and distance. Her writing communities vary substantially between a local group that meets monthly, which developed out of a memoir writing workshop, and an online group, on which, she serves as an admin, alongside other women of colour, to promote writing interests without reinforcing widespread systems of oppression.

**Cori Mayhew** lives in Kingston where her poetry has reflected her interest in ecology. Combined with art using recycled materials, interactive learning workshops provide community education, promoting stewardship and fun along the way.

**Czandra - Sandra Stephenson** writes poetry as Czandra, and edits other writers' work under her given name. She hosted [Poetsagainstwar.ca](http://Poetsagainstwar.ca) for eight years, and has been publishing poems of all kinds for ten.

**Donna Langevin's** most recent book of poetry is *The Laundress of Time*, Aeolus House, 2014. In 2014 she won the second prize for the GritLIT Poetry Competition. Her plays *The Dinner* and *Bargains in the New World* won first prizes for script at the Eden Mills Festival in 2014 and 2015. She lives in Toronto, Ontario.

**Elizabeth Greene** has published three books of poetry, *The Iron Shoes* (Hidden Brook, 2007), *Moving* (Inanna, 2010) and *Understories* (Inanna 2014). Her novel, *A Season Among Psychics*, is forthcoming from Inanna in 2018. She lives in Kingston, Ontario.

**Eugene Cornacchia** has spent the last forty years in Kingston, Ontario, Canada dabbling in various arts-related fields including photography, graphic arts, musical instrument design and music production. Having stared the Basilisk in-the-eye he now fancies himself a Poet and is working on a book of poetry & lyric-prose titled "Pebbles, Mountains & the Universe".

**Florence Chikumba** is a 19-year-old girl completing her A-level courses for International Students. She is from the city of Harare in Zimbabwe and she has, among others locally, had two international published poems in softcopy form.

**Geoff Travis Canadien** says "I am an Urban Native, my Ancestors Nation and Culture stolen from Me by Residential Schools/Orphanages.

I am Remembering My Mohawk Teachings, and the more I absorb the more in Love I fall.

I Am Mohawk, Turtle Clan, My Nation is Kahnawake, Six Nations, Keepers of the Eastern Door."

**Georgia Wilder**, lives in Toronto, ON, runs the monthly poetry salon Wild Writers, and teaches English at the University of Toronto. Her writing has appeared in *Descant* (2015), *The Journey Prize* (2015), *The Humber Literary Review* (2016), and *Dovetails: A Journal of Peace* (2016).

**Hugh Walter Barclay** is an 81-year-old addicted to letterpress printing and Thee Hellbox Press. He has published a couple of books of poems and seems to produce a few more sporadically. He believes that we can all do something to make the world a better place. He lives in Kingston, ON.

**Josh Colenda** lives in Angel Fire, New Mexico. He studied Sustainable Development at Appalachian State University. He is a Private First Class in the United States Army National Guard. When he has time to sit and reflect, he likes to write poetry.

**Kate Rogers'** latest poetry collection is *Foreign Skin* (Aeolus House 2015). In the summer of 2016 Kate was a featured reader for the Toronto poetry reading series, Hot Sauced Words and the Aeolus House-Quattro event in Toronto. Kate was also featured at Poets @ Artfest in Kingston, Ontario. Currently living and working in Hong Kong, her work has appeared in literary journals and anthologies in six countries.

**Kathy Figueroa's** poems have frequently appeared in the Bancroft, Ontario newspapers and can also be found in dozens of anthologies, as well as on numerous websites and blogs, many of which originate in other countries. In addition to prolific versifying, she's contributed numerous articles and photographs to a wide variety of publications. She happily resides in the lovely Bancroft area, in northern Hastings County.

**Kathy Keenan**, living in Belleville, Ontario, has an art background in the field of advertising and graphic design, and worked in her field of study in the Toronto area before she devoted herself to the care of her family. She was the primary care giver to her eldest child, Christopher, (1984-2013) who had medically uncontrolled epilepsy with autistic type tendencies. As a mature student, she graduated from Loyalist college in their Public Relations Program (2015). Kathy has rediscovered her love for singing, songwriting, photography, poetry and children's stories. With a passion for people and her community, she finds great joy in sharing her songs and poetry that come from her heart.

**Meg Freer** lives with her husband and children in Kingston, Ontario. She has worked as a scholarly editor and currently teaches piano, music history and theory, and enjoys the outdoors year-round. Her passions are playing the piano, running and reading, and she has recently added writing to that list.

**Michelle K Allan** is a twenty-year-old poet, English literature student at Queen's University, Kingston, and a naive believer in humanity's inherent good. Her likes include rabbits, intersectional feminism, and house parties. Her dislikes include heteronormativity, the elderly, and Dr. Who.

**Nathalie Sorensen** has been writing poetry for most of the last decade after a lifetime of reading it. She taught English at St. Lawrence College and studied English literature and education. She lives in Kingston and enjoys gardening, taking photographs, and spending time with her family at their weekend house on the Salmon River.

**Paola Caronni** is from Milan, Italy and has been living in Asia since 1995. She is a freelance translator and tutor of Italian language, a writer and a poet. She holds an MA in English Language and Literature from the University in Milan and she is currently pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Hong Kong. Paola's poems have been included in two poetry collections: *'Desde Hong Kong: Poets in Conversation with Octavio Paz'* and *'Quixotica: Poems East of La Mancha'* and appeared on *'Cha, an Asian Literary Journal'*.

**Pat Connors'** chapbook, *Scarborough Songs*, was published by Lyricalmyrical Press in 2013, and charted on the Toronto Poetry Map. He recently published in: Canadian Stories; Big Pond Rumours; and *Sharing Spaces. Part-Time Contemplative* was released by Lyricalmyrical Press this year.

**Robin Gillespie** is a retired Secure Mental Health Nurse who lives by choice in the Ghettoized and scandalous North end of Kingston, Ontario. She makes better mental health the education for and the living path of her quest and uses poetry as a means to conquer stress with positive addiction but actually also loves to play with words.

**Rose DeShaw** is a Metis poet, escaped from Alaska, retired bookseller, still hopefully teachable and listening to what's out there. She lives in Kingston, Ontario.

**Sana Towheed** is a Kingston resident with a deep reverence for the literary arts. An occasional writer of poetry herself, her inspiration is largely drawn from her spiritual tradition; she often quotes the utterances of Sufi Muslim mystics and saints in her writings. Central to her are the ideas of Divine Love, nature, and of her own inward musings.

**Sandra Davies** is a retired palliative care nurse who has been entertaining herself by writing poetry since she was a kid. She has had poems published twice in *The New Quarterly*, in *CV2* and in *A Kingston Poets' Gallery*, and she has a manuscript entitled *The Tell*, currently looking (and looking, and looking...) for a home. Sandra lives in Kingston with her dog Jordie.

**Shaheen Bagha** was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. She immigrated to Toronto before starting her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto. She completed her PhD in the impacts of climate change on crop yields, and is passionate about environmental and social justice issues. Her love-affair with poetry goes back 18 years when she was inspired by an anthology titled "Touched with Fire". Her poetry deals with themes of love, loss, resilience and the divine.

Poet **Susan McMaster** lives in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. She is author of a dozen books and wordmusic recordings, and editor of such projects as *Waging Peace: Poetry & Political Action*; *Silence: Poets on Women, Violence & Silence*; and Canada's first national feminist magazine, *Branching Out*. She's a past president of the League of Canadian Poets.

**Tara Kainer** grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee and Regina, Saskatchewan. She attended the University of Regina and Queen's University, Kingston. In 2011 Hidden Brook Press published a book of her poems, *When I Think On Your Lives*. Tara has three grown sons, and currently works in the social justice office of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul.

**Tim Duncan** is an elementary teacher who lives in Kingston, Ontario, with his wife and two children. An avid people watcher and eavesdropper, Tim enjoys writing poetry that reflects upon and narrates the human experience. The observations he makes are certainly biased, but his intention is to provide the reader with thought provoking verse that forces them to reflect upon their own lives and decisions they've made.

**Winona Linn** is an award-winning artist, teacher, poet, and performer. She has performed her poetry all over the world. Currently, she lives in Paris, where she is the director of Paris Lit Up's Slam Project, and is working on her fourth book, a graphic novel.

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