

diverse  
Youth  
2011

ANTHOLOGY Austin International Poetry Festival

edited by Deborah A. Akers





Austin Poets International  
Presents:

# **DIVERSE YOUTH**

**2011**

**Editor**  
**Deborah A. Akers**

**Judges**  
**Ken Fontenot**

**Mary Dallas**

**Jo Virgil**

**Guest Judge**  
**karla k. morton**

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**Deborah A. Akers**  
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**Christine Gilbert**

**Cover Layout and Design:**  
**Glynn Monroe Irby**

## About the Judges...

### Guest Judge: karla k. morton

karla k. morton, the 2010 Texas Poet Laureate, is a graduate of Texas A&M University, and a Board Member of the Greater Denton Arts Council. A Betsy Colquitt Award Winner, and an Indie National Book Award Winner, she has been widely published in literary journals, and is the author of six books of poetry: *Wee Cowrin' Timorous Beastie*, *Redefining Beauty*, *Becoming Superman*, *Stirring Goldfish*, *Karla K. Morton: New and Selected Works*, and *Names We've Never Known*. She has been featured on television, radio (NPR) and newspapers across the US. A native Texan, Morton has trekked thousands of miles in her Little Town, Texas Tour, bringing poetry and the arts into schools, colleges, universities, civic groups, cancer support groups, and festivals in communities across her beloved Texas.

### Elementary School Judge: Ken Fontenot

Ken Fontenot has a Master's Degree in German Language and Literature from the University of Texas and has published two books of poems, the most recent having won the Austin Book Award in 1988. He earns his living as a printing services technician for the Texas Department of Transportation in Austin. In 2010 Slough Press brought out his first novel, *For Mr. Raindrinker: A Novel of New Orleans*.

### Middle School Judge: Mary Dallas

Mary Dallas is active in the Austin poetry scene; her poetry has appeared in the Texas Poetry Calendar and in *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*. Her art work (combining visual arts and poetry) has been sold in Austin art galleries and bookstores. She has been teaching college-level English at Austin Community College for 20 years and she also taught middle school and high school in the Austin Independent School District for five years.

### High School Judge: Jo Virgil

Jo Virgil is the Community Outreach and Information Specialist for the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. She has worked as a feature writer, reporter, and columnist for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, and loves to dabble in any kind of writing, fiction and non-fiction. She has a Master of Journalism degree with a minor in Environmental Science, reflecting her love of writing as well as her deep appreciation of and respect for nature. She is an avid and eclectic reader. She serves on the Board of the Central Texas Storytelling Guild.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### *Elementary School*

- 6 Isabella Taylor (*Ephemera: Trout Lily*)
- 7 Catherine Moy (*My Shadow... My Friend*)
- 7 Keaton McCullough (*When It Rains*)
- 8 David Winslett (*Fall*)
- 8 Madison Blossman (*Kittens*)
- 9 Audrey Blair (*The Rain Forest*)
- 9 Darius Moody (*Northern Lights*)
- 10 Maris Alford (*World Peace*)
- 10 Julia Breedon (*Spring Dance*)
- 11 Sophie Fuselier (*The Plains of Texas*)
- 11 Emily Robinett (*Rainy Day*)
- 12 Liam Santa Cruz (*Sailing*)
- 13 Emma Lussier (*Memory Lane*)
- 14 Nihal Jayant Jere (*Why?*)
- 14 Sofia Hutton (*All About Me*)
- 15 Karen Munoz (*The Great Day at the Beach*)
- 15 Lauren Blossman (*My Sisters*)
- 16 Jimmy Garcia (*School's Out*)
- 16 Trey Estrada (*Playing with Cats*)
- 17 Emily Jewell Schlegel (*My Baby Sister*)
- 17 Sarah Staten (*Hummingbird Haiku*)
- 18 Brenham Palmer (*Soft Munching*)
- 18 Camille Fuselier (*Shark!*)

### *Middle School*

- 19 Miranda Jackson (*Summer*)
- 19 Marshall Stepp (*The Water*)
- 20 Ari Tolany (*insomnia*)
- 22 Alyssa Lavender (*I Am Not Alone Anymore*)
- 23 Victor Lee Floyd (*Bullies Don't Frighten Me At All*)
- 24 Haley Kehoe (*The Mile*)
- 24 Anna Schaal (*Describe*)
- 25 Tyler Bills (*Snow*)
- 25 Bradley Wolosin (*The Bathroom Party*)

- 26 Claudia Chibib (*The Predator of the Night*)  
 27 Ashley Gallagher (*untitled*)  
 28 Max Cooley (*Cranky Clouds*)  
 28 Cameron Wenzel (*Sand*)  
 29 Alyssa Uribe (*Serenity*)  
 29 Chloe Schonfeld (*Spring Rain Drops*)  
 30 Madeleine Montgomery (*Children of the World*)  
 31 Nathan May (*Flying on Land*)  
 32 Eugene Miravete (*The Horrors of Time*)  
 33 Kollin Bilski (*The Ultimate Challenge*)  
 34 Maxwell Nichols (*And Darkness Reigns*)  
 35 Nicole Cravey (*Elisabeth*)  
 36 Parker Ausley (*A Tritina: Never Coming Back*)  
 36 Sarah Hildreth (*Tiger Storm*)  
 37 Peyton Randolph (*My World*)  
 38 Saarila Kenkare (*Friends for Peace*)  
 39 Selina Eshraghi (*Ready to Write?*)

### **High School**

- 40 Jasmine C. Bell (*I Could Not Answer*)  
 41 Nia Renee Thomas (*Shadows*)  
 42 Holly Jackson (*Red: A Sonnet*)  
 43 McCoy Genfan (*The Sun*)  
 44 Abby Marshall (*Life of a Leaf*)  
 45 Ben Koons (*Carpenter's Craft*)  
 46 Katie Fullerton (*Let Me Drive You to the Hospital*)  
 48 Hannah Elizabeth Huffman (*Undecided*)  
 50 Therese Celeste DeSaussure (*Plato's Apple Pie*)  
 51 Monica Herrera (*Keys to Nowhere*)  
 52 Luisa Venegoni (*Losing Yourself, Me, and I*)  
 53 Sharran Sukumaran (*Help Us Ma(fia)*)  
 54 Allyese Marie Goodwin (*Up*)  
 56 Kristal Cheyenne Jackson (*My Web*)  
 57 Solomon Riggins (*Hated*)  
 57 Stryker Kelly-Thompson (*I Am Not a Mirror*)  
 58 Yury Salavatovich Aglyamov (*End*)  
 60 Sofia Dyer (*I Dreamt About Her Past*)  
 61 Raven Moreno (*Snowfall*)

## Ephemera: Trout Lily

Upon the day  
you  
live  
along with the ephemera  
in your dark and glooming wood  
that you brighten  
In the gloaming  
your stem slenderly arched in a “U” of uncertainty  
of unearthly  
transient petals peeled back  
as if  
afraid to show the world your abundance  
which will last a day  
only a day  
and facing down from where you came  
Down into the rich nurturing loam  
as you  
fall  
and  
break  
and  
die  
But did it ever even matter?  
That you never saw the sanctum of the sun  
or  
the trees cloaked in a mossy green  
or  
your livid petals floating off and into  
the hair of some child laughing and spinning  
in the air  
lips stained with strawberries  
that you will never know  
but  
did it ever matter?  
Did you ever matter?

*Isabella Taylor*  
*homeschool*

## My Shadow... My Friend

I walk on the sand,  
Where not only my feet land,  
But my shadow,  
Who is always with me as I walk  
under the burning sun ...  
Always following my sandy tracks...  
A friend.

Every morning I coax him out of the night,  
But I carry a secret of his...  
...he is afraid of the dark.

*Catherine Moy*  
*Forest Trail Elementary*

## When It Rains

Rain is my favorite thing,  
It makes me want to dance and sing.  
I hate for it to go away,  
But most people don't want it to stay.  
Although it seems dark and wooshy,  
It also feels soft and squishy.  
I think rain is such a joy,  
I like it even more than my toys.  
Since it makes me dance and sing,  
Rain, to me, means everything.

*Keaton McCullough*  
*Lakeway Elementary*

## Fall

The fresh smell of trees is in the air  
and the birds squawk.  
Fall is coming  
and it can't be stopped  
Leaves turning red  
Leaves turning brown  
Leaves turning all sorts of colors  
before they hit the ground.  
The cool fall breeze sways all the trees.  
Fall is made to please.

*David Winslett*  
*St. Francis School*

## Kittens

Kittens are cuddly and cute  
Even when they crawl in your boot.  
On a sunny day,  
They like to go out and play.

Kittens like to play with yarn,  
And sleep all day in the barn  
I like to watch them all day long.  
Even if they do something wrong.

One day they will become cats.  
And they will want to chase rats.  
And if you try to cuddle you might get bitten  
But I will always remember them as kittens.

*Madison Blossman*  
*Lakeway Elementary*

## The Rain Forest

What a wonderful day to be in the rain forest  
The air is so smooth and light  
As I swing through the trees,  
I hear a near buzz of the birds and the bugs  
My eyes look around me,  
I see the sleeping, resting animals  
and the tropical flowers in their best color.  
The rain forest, the rain forest,  
just so nice and peaceful  
I slowly swing on a branch,  
feeling the soft, velvety, damp leaf against my fur.  
The air smells of mango and dew.  
A slight mist is around me,  
like a blanket being pulled over the sky and the trees.  
As I shift my weight from side to side, I lounge  
and grab the branch just in time!

My eyes open I am still in my glass dome stuck in there  
gnawing on plastic flavored pellets.  
People staring and laughing at me,  
wanting me to copy them  
I sit there so bored and sick of all this.  
I wish I was,  
I wish I was back in my rain forest,  
my lovely, wonderful rain forest.

*Audrey Blair*  
*Forest Trail Elementary*

## Northern Lights

As I gaze at the spontaneous Colors in the water  
All my emotions burst like a popping bubble,  
While still looking like an aurora borealis.

*Darius Moody*  
*Forest Trail Elementary*

## World Peace

Will the dove  
And her olive branch,  
Bring peace to the world?  
Or will it be  
Music  
With her beautiful rhythm and tranquility?

Will it be  
Love  
Holding her laurel wreath,  
as queen of trees and sky?  
Or will it be  
Dance  
With her beauty and grace?

*Maris Alford*  
*Austin International School*

## Spring Dance

The grass dances in the wind  
Like a light butterfly  
Flying through the blue sky  
Brown leaves hang onto the trees,  
just by a thread  
Afraid to let go...  
For winter is in the past now

*Julia Breeden*  
*Forest Trail Elementary*

## The Plains of Texas

The stars shine steadily in the night sky,  
The tall grass waves below,  
Across the plains of Texas.

The owl is hunting,  
While the prairie dog settles in his burrow below,  
Across the plains of Texas.

The ranch house is quiet,  
And the hills stretch for miles,  
Across the plains of Texas.

All is peaceful,  
All is calm,  
Across the plains of Texas.

*Sophie Fuselier  
Cedar Creek Elementary*

## Rainy Day

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap,  
The sound of rain; thunder's joyous strain,  
Tapping against my window pane.  
Thunder's heart beating,  
Wakes me up from my sleeping  
So I try to doze off and dream again.

A flash of lightning  
Is very much frightening,  
For I think that she and thunder are fighting.  
The sky was blue, the clouds are gray,  
But the rain is starting to go away.  
Tap, tap, tap, tap the sound of rain is going away,  
Leaving the presence of my window pane.

*Emily Robinett  
Clayton Elementary*

## Sailing

As I run up to our thin slip I hear a faint jingling of  
the halyard lines rapping softly against the elegant mast  
As I step on the boat she rocks slowly from side to side  
as I move carefully around the deck

I slowly putter her out of the slip as I take the tiller  
a slight breeze blows tickling my arms  
When I come out of the delta the vast blue ocean  
sparkles in front of me I hear the faint sound  
of the waves brushing against the fine grains  
of the golden sand

I raise the sails and the boom sways slightly.  
Before I knew it, the hull was cutting through the water,  
the sail swayed proudly I could smell the fresh saltwater  
as it splashed my face  
When I carefully push the tiller starboard the boat sways  
on the port hull a glistening dolphin flies out of the water  
soaring like a shooting star

It's time to tack, the sail gets one more puff of air  
and I pull the tiller, the sail starts to ruffle.  
We are windward, the boom swings furiously  
over my head missing me by inches.  
Off the port bow, a small stingray plays  
in the silky sand with some brown horseshoe crabs

I can see my rundown slip up ahead. As I venture closer  
I hear the parrots chirp, hiding behind the dense curtains  
of green jungle,  
I throw the bumpers of the port and starboard sides.  
As I jump off, the boat shakes adjusting to the weight  
difference as I walk away.

I look back once more and think  
Sailing is great!

*Liam Santa Cruz  
Clayton Elementary*

## Memory Lane

Huge waves dash up on the shore  
and swallow the beach whole,  
like a king claiming his kingdom.  
Then the water rushes back to sea, hoping no buckets  
will come to carry it away.  
I inhale the salty sea air and exhale with a calming smile.  
Ah! So peaceful.

My dad and I go for a walk on the beach in search of  
unique seashells.  
Wet, silky, velvet sand squishes between my toes  
as we trek together.  
Roaring laughter and joyous cries are heard  
from every vacationer on the beach.  
The salty ocean spray touches my lips;  
I love the way it tastes.

At night, the sun sets and fireworks lift off  
as far as the eye can see.  
The black sky is lit up with dazzling streams of colorful  
light for hours at a time.  
Glowing bonfires warm every heart and bring families  
and friends together.  
My creamy, hot chocolate and book in hand, keep me  
happy on this beautiful star lit night.  
I shiver as a shrill breeze blows through the stars  
and sends a quick chill down my back.

Moonlight shimmers across the ocean.  
All is quiet and night has fallen.  
As my mind travels down "Memory Lane."

*Emma Lussier*  
*Clayton Elementary*

## Why?

Why can't my room just be private to me?  
Why can't my dad let me drive with a tee?  
Why can't I wear shorts all year around?  
Why can't I just stay and stand my own ground?  
    Why can't I fly off of a cliff?  
    Why can't my wrists not be as stiff?  
    Why can't I be a wizard or king?

Then I could change all of those things.

*Nihal Jayant Jere*  
*Oak Hill Elementary*

## All About Me

I pumped blood into my wings for the very first time  
and slowly saw my new gorgeous wings inflate.  
    They were orange with black stripes  
    and I felt so free.  
    I tried to fly but I just kept falling.  
As I finally took to the sky I felt so quick and wild.  
I saw my brother still hanging in a silent cocoon,  
    under a wilting stalk of milkweed.  
The sky was big and blue and full of opportunities.  
I stopped at a colorful patch of marigolds.  
    I let down my new long tongue  
    and took a sip of nectar.  
    I felt like a piece of art  
but felt even better in my heart.  
    I found a comfy place to rest  
    and slept and slept and slept.

*Sofia Hutton*  
*Clayton Elementary*

## The Great Day at the Beach

As I get out of the car, sand and rocks  
    rattle through my feet  
A cold breeze blows in my face  
Screaming, playing, splashing freezing water,  
Volleyball playing, dog paddling  
    into the lime-green water  
Tangerine soda and spicy Cheetos  
Dripping and crackling in my mouth  
Flavorful, juicy hot dogs and cheesy hamburgers grilling  
Salome swimming,  
Passing into the dark green seaweed  
Flowing through the aquamarine water  
Crabs crawling through the slippery floor  
Walking into the prickly yellow-green grass  
    sticking to your feet  
Smoke, sausage, meat on old rusty tables and grills  
Seagulls fighting for a rosy crab, chriping to each other  
Waves, floaties moving away in the dark green water  
Sundown, calm water, cars driving away, empty tables  
Wow! I had a great fun time with my family  
At the Beach!

*Karen Munoz*  
*Clayton Elementary*

## My Sisters

My sisters are nice and kind  
Even when they start to sigh  
They make me feel good and bad  
Sometimes happy  
Sometimes sad  
I always know they'll make me laugh  
Which leaves my troubles far behind  
My sisters are with me wherever I go  
My sisters how I love them so

*Lauren Blossman*  
*Lakeway Elementary*

## School's Out

The deafening beep from the bell  
    echoed through the halls.

I couldn't believe my eyes  
    I was out of the dungeon for summer.

Every kid screamed, it blew the roof off the place.

My eardrums were about to explode.

The feeling of my desk was so cold

It turned my hand blue.

The last couple of minutes in school

Seemed like hours, days, and years.

I finally got out

It was a miracle!

*Jimmy Garcia*  
*Clayton Elementary*

## Playing with Cats

Cats are fun,  
Cats bite some.

Cats have claws,  
Some have pink paws.

Cats have wiggly tails,  
Cats claws are like nails.

*Trey Estrada*  
*Lakeway Elementary*

## My Baby Sister

My baby sister is so sweet

She is such a treat!

She loves to giggle and wiggle all day long.

Sometimes she'll even try to sing a song.

She loves her doll and her ball.

She loves to crawl but sometimes she takes a fall.

My sister is growing up so fast.

I can't believe how much time has passed.

My sister is so curious and clever.

Oh, how I wish she could stay little forever!

*Emily Jewell Schlegel*  
*Lakeway Elementary*

## Hummingbird Haiku

See a hummingbird  
It flaps its wings so quickly  
As it drinks nectar

*Sarah Staten*  
*Lakeway Elementary*

## Soft Munching

Soft munching,

Like a butterfly's wings flapping.

A gopher,

As brown as tree bark.

Soft munching,

Eating berries blue like the ocean.

There is still work to be done.

But yet,

I wait.

*Brenham Palmer  
Forest Trail Elementary*

## Shark!

Sharks are my favorite,  
but leave them alone,  
or there will be no sharks.  
I will feel so sad if there are no sharks.  
Sharks are my favorite animal.  
I love them a lot  
and so does my sister.  
And that's it.

*Camille Fuselier  
Cedar Creek Elementary*

## Summer

splashing, laughing, and  
having fun  
O how much  
I love the sun.

cool blue water O  
how cold  
makes me feel O  
so bold.

no more school  
for a while  
O how the children  
smile.

*Miranda Jackson*  
*St. Francis School*

## The Water

Blue as the sky,  
Wavy as a prairie.  
I see many fish people  
By day and night, yet  
I only have two friends  
The moon and sky.  
I rise and fall because  
Of my friend the moon,

For I'm the ocean.

*Marshall Stepp*  
*Forbes Middle School*

## insomnia

hypnos is a fickle lord  
faithless in his favor  
lovely is his gentle blessing -  
the sweetest of fantasies to be savored.

a rush of honey  
and lavender  
and you're gone,  
to a land of cotton candy majesty;  
set to drift  
on a sea of feathery pillows

sometimes there is nothing  
no quirky thoughts: just deep  
left to the purest midnight  
willingly caught in a cage of sleep

then there are the sleepless times  
when he won't come  
and you lie there, staring into space  
closing your eyes, covering your face  
but to no avail -  
the sweet relief will not come  
hypnos is with another one.

and then there are the blurring faces  
lurid colors and waves of fear  
images whirling in everlasting cyclones  
utterly nonsensical creations wave and leer  
you're perfectly aware that none of this is real  
it doesn't matter, morning isn't here

and the pony attacks  
and you're back in a place you can never be  
and the twisted, sick monster looms below  
you're trapped by the sea.  
You know you're dreaming  
you can't wake up  
your face is in grass and mud  
flash to carousel  
then -  
then the blare of Spanish screeches from the radio  
and sunlight is streaming through the window  
and you're left, lying there in a tangle of sweaty sheets  
wondering which is preferable  
insomnia + safety?  
nightmare + sleep?

*Ari Tolany*  
*St. Francis School*

## I Am Not Alone Anymore

I am not alone anymore  
I change diapers,  
make bottles,  
rock in a chair,  
I am not alone anymore

I wake up in the middle of the night  
to the sound of cries for hunger  
I am not alone anymore.

I put another person  
to bed at night  
I get myself dressed  
and another person dressed  
I am not alone anymore

I get to go shopping  
for someone new...  
a baby brother  
oh trust me  
I am not alone anymore

*Alyssa Lavender*  
*Canyon Ridge Middle School*

## Bullies Don't Frighten Me At All

Making fun of people all day  
Doing it in a different way  
Bullies don't frighten me at all

Take my money  
Think they're so funny  
Bullies don't frighten me at all

They get in trouble at school  
They think they're so cool  
Bullies don't frighten me at all

They laugh at my friends  
The abuse never ends  
Bullies don't frighten me at all

Punch my face  
A disgrace  
Think they're cool  
But they're fools  
They make fun  
Make me run  
Make me cry  
I want to die

Bullies don't frighten me at all

*Victor Lee Floyd  
Canyon Ridge Middle School*

## The Mile

Today I had to run the mile.  
It wasn't fun. I didn't smile.  
It was the teeth of a crocodile  
Biting my legs as I ran the length of the Nile.

I wished there had been rain in the forecast.  
Ms. Perry said, "Go," and everyone ran past.  
They were cheetahs; they were so fast.  
I was just trying not to be last.

I ran forever, but it was only a lap.  
Between me and the others was an enormous gap.  
I was trying so hard, but my legs were going to snap.  
For my running time, no one would clap.

I really don't like doing the fitness gram.  
I'd rather be taking a final exam.  
"Are you bad at running?" Yes, I am.  
"Do you want to do it again?" No, ma'am.

*Haley Kehoe*  
*Cedar Park Middle School*

## Describe

How do you describe  
What is indescribable?  
Simple, you do not

*Anna Schaal*  
*Canyon Ridge Middle School*

## Snow

Freezing, but warms the heart  
come outside the snow's gonna start.  
We can build snowmen, we can play  
We can throw snowballs, come join the fray.  
When it gets too cold and the snow starts seeming old,  
we'll go inside and miss the snow  
but eventually everything has to go

*Tyler Bills*  
*St. Francis School*

## The Bathroom Party

In the hallways are some strange stuff.  
Especially on Fridays.  
Things get tough and rough.  
Of course it's going to be on a Friday.

Within the hallway is a bathroom.  
It is big and stinky as well.  
But we have to get back to the math room.  
Just make sure you're back by the bell.

Only the boy's room is a party.  
Somehow there is music.  
And maybe we will be tardy.  
But maybe the teachers won't mind it.

*Bradley Wolosin*  
*Canyon Ridge Middle School*

## The Predator of the Night

Hides behind a paper wall  
May look weak and small  
But if it pushes you, YOU WILL FALL!  
For it's the Predator of the Night!

Nice and quiet in the light,  
In the evening it's quite a fright,  
Always clever and always right,  
For it's the Predator of the Night.

Skin made of dark cowhide,  
If it tells you something, it probably lied.  
Dare to approach it and you might be fried.  
For it's the Predator of the Night.

Feeds off of barnyard lives,  
With K-9 teeth sharp as knives,  
When you least expect it, it arrives  
For it's the Predator of the Night.

*Claudia Chibib*  
*St. Francis School*

She's leaving my mom said  
She's gone my mom said  
I've heard it 3 times  
The heart's a funny thing it tricks you  
That's what mine was doing tricking me  
Of love  
Of a friend  
Dance is the air I breathe  
I mean it  
It  
Ticks  
Booms  
And flows  
You left me  
Made me want to stop  
Stop loving  
Stop the  
Ticks  
Booms  
And flowing  
Stop breathing  
So stop holding me back  
Stop telling me I can't  
I  
Will  
I  
Will  
Be the best I can be and you will not keep me from it  
But  
I love you  
I love you  
I love you

*Ashley Gallagher  
Canyon Ridge Middle School*

## Cranky Clouds

The sun rises and the moon falls.  
The waves crash and the mist crawls.  
The tide gets higher as the surfers crowd.  
But out of nowhere there is a dark cloud.

The surfers yell and the cloud rumbles.  
The sun shines and the waves tumble.  
The cloud floats away in the arms of the air,  
But the surfers seem not to care.

They would have been surfing no matter what.  
They still would have been surfing even if the cloud  
struck!

They go out and surf high tide and low  
Surfers on your mark,  
ready-set-go!

*Max Cooley  
Canyon Rdige Middle School*

## Sand

Cold or Hot  
Wet or Dry  
Free flowing  
Always Moving  
Shifting and Grating  
Hugging Your Feet  
Comforting Your Soles  
Warming Your Hearts  
Growing High as You Sculpt Me

I am Sand

*Cameron Wenzel  
Forbes Middle School*

## Serenity

The light over the horizon was so peaceful  
As I looked out to the shimmering blue ocean  
And all my worries faded away  
As the cool salty water flowed over my sandy feet  
And it seemed as if everything bad in the world  
Just floated away in the tide beyond me.  
Nothing mattered except that moment.

*Alyssa Uribe*  
*Forbes Middle School*

## Spring Rain Drops

It falls hard yet soft  
with a gentleness that washes all away  
with one little touch

It pelts  
it pours  
and the clouds soar

It makes mud  
it makes a mess  
yet pure beauty is next

The sun shines through  
giving the world an endless blue  
Life thrives  
and a dark world says goodbye

Buds burst  
bees buzz  
blue birds sing

All it takes is a breath of rain  
to create all these wonderful things

*Chloe Schonfeld*  
*Forbes Middle School*

## Children of the World

He runs  
Green dewy field  
Cleats pushing and kicking  
Checkerboard ball  
He is soccer

She moves  
Dim empty room  
Tall, spotless mirror  
Firm pink shoes  
She is dance

He waits  
Small round table  
No one but his opponent  
Army of black and white men  
He is chess

She stands  
Vast wooden stage  
Audience eagerly waiting  
Tall black microphone  
She is song

He breathes  
Clear crystalline water  
Arms and legs slicing  
Pair of goggles  
He is swim

She thinks  
Small cluttered desk  
Hand scribbling in black ink  
Thin, lined paper  
She is word

He looks  
Vast close-cut course  
Hands gripping and swinging  
Small white ball  
He is golf

She stirs  
Granite counter top concealed  
Wire whisk beating  
Thin eggshells and creamy milk  
She is food

They smile  
Green grass and salty water  
Hands clasping and grins forming  
Round happy world  
They are children.

*Madeleine Montgomery*  
*West Ridge Middle School*

## Flying on Land

When you're flying on land you feel so free  
you never want to stop.  
Flying on land comforts me, with the feel  
of my skateboard under my feet.  
No one really wants to do what I do  
because they might get hurt.  
For me, it's worth it to be going so fast  
with no brakes, and slow to a stop  
when I run out of hill.

*Nathan May*  
*Forbes Middles School*

## The Horrors of Time

Before, I laughed and played with them,  
Now I deny them.

Before, I slept for hours and hours,  
Now I have restless nights.

Before, I had no freedom,  
Now I have no protection.

Before, I enchanted everyone with my voice,  
Now it croaks and groans.

Before, I had no worries,  
Now life is a struggle at every encounter.

Before, they read to me,  
Now we don't talk.

Before, we were so close,  
Now they are gone.

Before this I didn't know,  
The Horrors of Time

*Eugene Miravete*  
*West Ridge Middle School*

## The Ultimate Challenge

The laughing gas,  
to the just plain medicine.  
The comfy beds,  
to rock hard beds.  
I've had it all.

The hundreds of stitches,  
the red iodine,  
and of course the scrumptious  
popsicles,  
and bed to bed service.

My life  
as I go through the painful agony  
of thinking  
if I'm going to wake up or not.

That's my life,  
my ultimate challenge as  
I go through the heart surgeries  
every few years.

The surgeries that  
made me who I am now.  
All that just to stay alive.

*Kollin Bilski  
Canyon Ridge Middle School*

## And Darkness Reigns

On the soil  
In the seas  
In the air  
Darkness reigns

On the soil  
blood seeps into  
the Earth, mother of all,  
turns her dirt to mud  
and her rocks to red,  
as eyes close  
and darkness reigns.

In the sea  
holes grow in the sides of ships  
like mold on damp bread.  
Sailors sink to the  
black bottom,  
their bleached white bones  
creating a Picasso of horror  
as ships burn  
and darkness reigns.

In the air  
limbs are ripped off machines  
and men alike,  
and as the newly dead  
begin to fall,  
the hearts of lovers  
and family  
are torn from the lifeless bodies  
as men fall limp  
and darkness reigns

*Maxwell Nichols  
Park Hill Junior High  
Dallas*

## Elisabeth

Elisabeth is a girl  
who loves to read,  
but she is made fun of because  
she is different, yes, different indeed.

She was made fun of,  
every break, every lunch, every class.  
She wished the year  
would just go on and pass.

That year is now gone  
and they all forgot,  
about little Elisabeth's feelings  
that they tied in a knot.

To them now she  
does declare,  
telling them of the girl  
that they put in despair.

Even to this day  
they still deny,  
all the things they did  
to make Elisabeth cry.

But to her,  
she knows it's true.  
I just hope this  
never happens to you.

*Nicole Cravey*  
*St. Francis School*

## A Tritina: Never Coming Back

I sit and wait by the door  
all packed and ready to go  
my dad is coming back

my dad, my hero, my guardian is coming back  
time ticks as I wait by the door  
I wait to go

Tears start to fill my eyes as I wait to go  
My hero is not coming back  
He won't be coming back through this door

"Dad won't be coming back."  
I sit and wait to go for a dad  
who won't walk through that door

*Parker Ausley  
Canyon Ridge Middle School*

## Tiger Storm

Black and orange lightning  
Claws of steel so frightening  
Stealing back the lives once taken  
Scaring souls whose hearts are shaken

Living to give a hopeful birth  
Killed by those who share this earth  
A storm of raging malice forms  
Inside the eyes of the tiger

*Sarah Hildreth  
West Ridge Middle School*

## My World

In my world there would be  
Peace,  
No Fighting,  
No Yelling,  
Nothing to Regret,

There would be kids  
    who didn't have to hear parents fighting.  
Parents who wouldn't have to worry  
    about losing their jobs.  
If they did how could they provide for their kids?

There would be no wars,  
Nobody having to leave their families,  
Worrying about them being safe,

There would be more kids playing outside,  
Spending more time with their families.

There would be no hurt,  
only happiness and loving care.

That would be my world.

*Peyton Randolph  
Forbes Middle School*

## Friends for Peace

If nobody would ever hate,  
The world would be a peaceful place.

No violence, no fights, no knives, no guns,  
It would be better for everyone.

Feelings of anger, sadness and pressure inside  
Make important rules to get defied.

Trivial arguments turn into raging wars,  
For reasons that are just too bizarre.

How do we put an end to this meaningless violence?  
It always creates an atmosphere  
of repugnance and abhorrence.

Massive onslaught on our freedom we must berate,  
We must take action before it's too late.

Nobody would ever senselessly deace,  
If we could all just establish –PEACE.

Then nobody would ever need to be irascible,  
Instead we all would be quite affable.

Sentiments of war and violence would hightail,  
Everywhere just peace would prevail.

If violence were to unanimously end,  
The world would be a family of friends.

*Saarila Kenkare*  
*Hill Country Middle School*

## Ready to Write?

I stare at an empty page,  
A marshmallow white screen,  
The vertical line flashes impatiently back at me,  
A tiny streak of lead on the egg white,  
Appearing and then leaving for a short vacation.

“Are you ready yet?”

I sigh certainly,  
I let my fingers tap dance,  
The keyboard as their stage,  
Soon the page is occupied with memories,  
All written in a bland Times New Roman font,  
Even though, the stroke repetitively flashes,  
More secrets spill like tears,  
When I feel as empty as a cloud,  
A rainbow of fulfillment lets me hit 'File,'

Then 'Save.'

*Selina Eshraghi*  
*West Ridge Middle School*

## I Could Not Answer

Then the blind girl asked me,  
“What is color?  
It's supposed to be wonderful...”  
And I could not answer.

The deaf girl asked me,  
“What is music?  
It's supposed to be wonderful.”  
And I could not answer.

So the hungry man asked me,  
What it was to be full  
And the woman  
In the wheelchair  
Asked what it was to dance.

And to all,  
I could not answer.

*Jasmine C. Bell*  
*McCallum High School*

## Shadows

Sometimes

I care more for my shadow than I do my own reflection  
There's something about its graceful gloom  
The way it bends and flows  
Effortlessly off the sides of buildings,  
Striking flawless in its facelessness

The way it stretches and thins stumpy, plump bodies  
The way it forever holds a perfect poker face,  
betraying nothing to the eager world  
All its secrets, latent, swallowed  
by the billowing darkness

The way it has freedom leaking from its fingertips  
Its owner envious of its free will  
Freedom to soar  
Freedom to escape  
Judgements and criticism belonging no where  
Among its mysterious world

*Nia Renee Thomas*  
*Ann Richards School*

## Red: A Sonnet

As harsh as burgundy, ice cold vermilion  
As sweet as juiced grapes and raspberry pulp,  
As dark as a sinner's thought, so wrong, reptilian,  
As fine as aged red wine's long awaited first gulp,  
As bold as a new, maroon ruby stone,  
As old as iron gates, all frosted with rust,  
As good as sanguine berries, fully grown,  
As bright as Mars, a scarlet ocean of dust,  
As crisp as garnet hidden in piles of trash,  
As big as giant Ayer's Rock, Australia,  
As small as ladybugs buried in green grass,  
As strong as the king boasting his regalia,  
From rufescent beets to midnight fuchias and brick,  
Red varies from light pink to dark oil slick.

*Holly Jackson*  
*Ann Richards School*

## The Sun

The sun.

Without it, plants can't grow.

Our feelings are based on judgement.

Judgement is based on our mind.

Our mind is based on love.

Love is based on our mind.

Our mind feels cold,

While our love is hot.

While our love is hot,

Our mind feels cold.

When our mind feels cold,

The sun is there.

To warm it up.

So we can once again,

Have fierce minds,

So we can grow plants that feel our love.

The sun grows that which is our love for the plants,  
which feeds our love for the sun.

*McCoy Genfan  
Katherine Anne Porter School  
Wimberley*

## Life of a Leaf

Once upon a time we lived together,  
in a tree house: except we were the walls,  
floor, ceiling, and spaces in between.  
Birds sang of new beginnings,  
violets were born, and all of us were happy,  
as we learned how to feel alive.  
But something greater than us  
was coming.

It was summer, and we saw it  
as a false happy ending. Scarce breezes  
taught us the trifles of love,  
as we blazed on with the reckless abandon  
of adolescence. Spring passed and we matured  
into the summer youths we were;  
the taste of brief life  
in our veins.

Our childhood became an elegy  
penned for lost youth, as the inevitable  
autumn came borne on the whispers of winter.  
In these bitter days, we learned to doubt  
everything we had come to believe in;  
we saw the holes in all that was beautiful; and  
we learned  
to fall.

*Abby Marshall*  
*Westwood High School*

## Carpenter's Craft

At the Child Protective Services office again, Jimmy  
mashing Legos under flickering fluorescent lights,  
    case workers eulogize  
for the boy un-mitered by a finisher's hands.

Jimmy, black walnut hardwood hair untussled  
by caring hands, hums lewd songs he's overheard --  
unscoured, unsmoothed, unpolished.

Flipping through his decade-long file as old as him,  
bureaucrats chattering about the boy's tragedy,  
    abandoned  
before the framers could plumb crooked lines --

On Christmas Eve, too, the last fosters sick of tireless  
and thankless days dealing with a child  
with joints poorly fitted by alcoholic laborers.

And the CPS woman white and all smiles  
doesn't know anything about the young soul's  
    measurements,  
a journeyman all lift and carry but no craft.

So Jimmy plays in the waiting room for a  
    carpenter of boys  
to come and to install cabinetry and casings  
    and mahogany love,  
to split the pencil line of the troubled past with a saw

from a future of rosettes and plinth blocks  
and a chance to play with his own Legos  
and for a craftsman to complete the punch list  
    of Jimmy's life.

*Ben Koons*  
*Westwood High School*

## Let Me Drive You to the Hospital

Hoping seems so trivial, so meaningless  
but often, as right now, it is all that I can do.  
Just hours ago we never would have guessed  
that hoping would seem so trivial, so meaningless.  
Normalcy cracked and collapsed and amid this mess  
our hopes are the flotsam we must cling to  
and hoping seems so trivial, so meaningless  
but often, as right now, it is all that we can do.

It astounds me that just hours ago,  
we were bickering over what to make for dinner.  
I am no longer hungry. People keep asking though.  
It astounds me that just hours ago,  
you complained that I was working too slow,  
and you told me again to roll the dough thinner.  
It astounds me that just hours ago,  
we were bickering over what to make for dinner.

Now I am imagining all the casseroles  
    we will be brought,  
each baked in a different family's kitchen,  
    by their mother,  
each made in the way their mother taught.

Now I am imagining all the casseroles  
    we will be brought.

Their mothers will use more cheese than they ought,  
yet they have reason to bring one after another  
now. I am imagining all the casseroles  
    we will be brought,  
each baked in a different family's kitchen,  
    by their mother.

Collapsed in a metal chair opposite the double doors  
to which my eyes are glued,

    I am lamenting all the things  
you need your left side for.

I, as you were wheeled across the floor,  
collapsed in a metal chair opposite the double doors  
through which they rolled you.

    Hours ago, you tried to ignore  
how your limbs went numb before you,  
    as your ears begin to ring,  
collapsed. In a metal chair opposite the double doors  
to which my eyes are glued, I am lamenting  
    all these things.

*Katie Fullerton*  
*Liberal Arts And Science Academy*

## Undecided

The right side of my brain,  
got burnt.

I can not grasp,  
the euphoria others  
find in poetry.

I cope by realism.

My words are not  
urbane, symphonic,  
melodious.

I am a futile poet.

Harmonious my words  
are not.

Eloquent are the words  
of others.

The bliss of life  
represented to me not by  
way of poems.

I need to detoxify my soul.

Need to search.

Let the derisive words of  
poetry,  
soar above me.

Let the flurry of others,  
go unnoticed.

I need to find some form  
of elation.

A place to go,  
and bury myself,  
elude from the flippant  
outside world  
that surrounds me.

I need to seduce myself  
in rich culture,  
experiences,  
memories.

Find comfort in that  
that scares me.  
Take the equitable out of my life.  
I need word of the grammatical solitude.  
My heart and life  
to converge,  
come together;  
two puzzle pieces  
expertly crafted to fit together  
perfectly.

I'm ready for the  
supercilious attitudes to evaporate,  
and be replaced,  
instead,  
by open,  
oxygenated,  
breaths,  
of fresh air.

My left brain yearns,  
to stay in use,  
not be replaced, by the crisply burnt  
right  
side.

*Hannah Elizabeth Huffman  
Ann Richards School*

## Plato's Apple Pie

I am a fighter,  
A rambler,  
Never stopping, why should I?  
I live down under and way out:  
People saying move on or get out.

I am a wannabe outlaw  
Screaming at infinity  
Because lying down in front of a car  
Still makes me feel alive.

Will they forget me?  
That girl who was always singing.  
To you I'm already forgotten.  
So why shouldn't I scream?  
Or trespass just to laugh at the people watching me?

I live for tomorrow and the next day.  
Because  
What else is there to live for?  
I live for myself. And no one else.  
To laugh at you in your tower  
As you play god of the people.

I live for rules.  
I live to break them.  
I am a fighter,  
A rambler,  
Never stopping  
Should I?

*Therese Celeste DeSaussure*  
*Austin Waldorf School*

## Keys to Nowhere

Change myself  
for sovereignty  
and there will only be a  
way to lose

No one knows me  
not even you  
I'm a tight box  
sealed with no air  
filled with ennui

Swirls collect around me  
my ominous box  
of tension  
collects the sorrows of others

But I can see  
even through my  
gnarled mind

Cloud my thoughts  
clear the toxic  
I can see through  
a key hole  
leading to nothing  
a hiatus nonexistent

Unlock what is to not  
be found  
and wait with  
zealous fear

*Monica Herrera*  
*Ann Richards School*

## Losing Yourself, Me and I

You is gone.  
Disappeared, evaporated, run off from Me and I.  
They run, but can't stay together without You.  
In the darkness I runs off,  
Leaving Me alone in pain.  
Me sits in a corner, crying,  
Blinded.  
Nothing without You and I.  
Me tries to escape,  
But the room tightens its hold on the only one left.  
Trapped in the room in the silent darkness,  
Me bangs on the walls.  
A tremor shakes through from the floor to the ceiling.  
Quickly, quietly, as not to raise alarm, Me bounds away  
Towards You and I,  
Someplace far off.  
Now no Me, I, or You is left.  
The room is quiet.  
It strains for a sound.  
Any sound.  
A whisper?  
A rustle?  
Nothing.  
The room recoils, shrinking  
From a cavernous hall  
To a blank little cell.  
It craves sound.  
Unable to take it,  
The room twists in agony.  
For without You, Me, and I,  
It is nothing.  
An empty soul, a wasted mind.  
In the absence of its inhabitants,  
The room  
Cries  
Itself  
To sleep.

*Luisa Venegoni*  
*Liberal Arts & Science Academy*

## Help us Ma(fia)

Blinding lights streak the streets,  
saturated with drooling drunk druggies  
(or teens) too rich, too chic,  
too BA to get a BA, laugh at the MBA.

Red buildings masked  
in powder? Paint? Precursors,  
bringers of blood maybe? What's the difference, right?

Inside and through the doors,  
walls embrace the blue like the ocean,  
of margaritas maybe or, lasers, strobes, make-up.  
"I thought this was India?"

Sorry, but women don't dance and sing  
Like the movies to show the hero her love.  
They dance for the money.

No more sweet doves.

Sorry, but it's much more  
than just elephants, saris and the Taj Majal.

The western wave plagues like the undead.

They are coming...  
before long every third-world country will plunge  
into clubs, raves and mafias.  
They may start small,

but they rise as quick as they fall.  
I'm out, I got a job to do,  
Sorry, not at some outsourced firm.

I may not have a BA or an MBA,  
I may not say "Thank you, come again!" but,  
I deal in Western sin

And my people are buying.

*Sharran Sukumaran*  
*Westwood High School*

## Up

Twisted up  
In my own melodrama  
I wanted to be Cinderella  
Or Wendy,  
From *Peter Pan*.  
Hoping I would go to the magic Castle  
“where dreams come true”  
Wishing, the boy who never  
Grew up  
Would take me away  
So I didn't have to either.

The  
    Innocence  
                    Is  
                            Fading.

And suddenly, you can't call mom and dad anymore.  
Like, Cinderella  
Ever so lost,  
Trapped in her small  
Room of  
Which seems like eternity.

Get over it,  
Everyone must grow  
Up  
They say.  
I wish time could stop  
And rewind 'til I was three again.  
The golden care free days  
Where I had  
No worries.  
But as we all know,  
Time won't stop  
Ticking  
Not for you,  
Not for me.

We are all expected to grow and have  
moreandmore responsibilities  
As we do.  
Take me, take me  
Away.  
So I will never  
Ever be grown  
Up.  
No sign of a blue castle  
And no Peter Pan.

*Allyese Marie Goodwin  
Ann Richards School*

## My Web

It murmurs your name.  
Every skipped beat is a reply to the butterflies,  
Fluttering passionately at the sound of your name.  
But between thuds of its thunderous pumping in my  
                  chest,  
It's beating out of a false truth.

Not a lie; I wouldn't call it that.  
I adore you, and it's true.  
Or maybe I just adore what you stand for.  
I love the idea of love.  
How can you love someone and in the same breath,  
Lust for so many things above him?

No, it's not a lie at all.  
I do crave you, I do want you,  
And above all I need you for this moment.  
Until I find something else, and I'll be done.  
I'll add you to my collection of broken hearts.  
They're piled high in a corner somewhere, forgotten.

You'll see that you're nothing more  
                  than a pawn in my games.  
You're nothing more than temporary.  
But oh, how I'll long for you  
                  when you wise up and leave.  
I'll miss you after you back down from this challenge  
                  I've forced upon you.

I have been there, love.  
My heart is long gone, battered, and bruised.  
It would take a miracle to bring me back.  
Forgive me for taking it out on you.  
But I know you don't mind, because you love me.  
And I love you too... for now.

*Kristal Cheyenne Jackson*  
*Reagan High School*

## Hated

Born with wings,  
Black as night.  
Because I am different,  
I fight the hate inside me,  
Growing more and more.  
I'm so hollow...  
Lonely,  
And sore.  
I face the skies,  
As I fall, names of demons I am called.  
Bruised and cut they beat me again,  
They'll always hate me 'til the end!  
I've given up my dreams,  
All because I was born with wings.

*Solomon Riggins  
Ozen High School (Beaumont)*

## I am not a mirror

trapped in a maze of preconceptions  
tangled syllables,  
slip through,  
writhing.  
waiting to be picked apart

Categorized?

meshed together coherently -  
a mess of utopian introspection,  
typical,

synapses misfiring  
not firing.  
nothing fits like it should

*Stryker Kelly-Thompson  
Ann Richards School*

## End

Hope lifted him above the soil,  
The muddy earth impeding flight,  
And still the ancient tried to toil,  
He tried to run across a land  
That wasn't made for rush at all,  
His small ability and might  
Was not his chasers' and would fall  
At the approaching soldiers' hand.

He didn't think of mercy - none  
The forces close behind would give.  
The legs he owned would have to run  
In speed, as the Bithynians closed.  
The tiny gap - the spear flew by -  
Unseen, a burst of speed to live,  
The open door, and some black fly  
Was smashed apart from where it posed.

He entered home, and left his ruin  
Behind by seconds, walls, and air.  
A scream outside: "What is he doing?"  
"It's clear," another said, "he's hid.  
He can't, however, hide from Rome.  
Whatever is his fate, it's fair."  
Inside, below a wooden dome,  
The exile thought about his bid.

With little choice, the man sat down.  
The soldiers didn't search his house:  
Instead they rested with a frown  
And looked outside for secret paths.  
The general would not escape,  
Could not unless he was a mouse,  
And chose to let the hunters gape  
And let increase their fading wraths.

There still was time before the men  
Of Rome would come, and break, and kill.

There weren't many - even ten  
Could easily collapse the hut.  
He'd live until their coming – life  
was precious, and he'd have his fill.  
So much of it had been in strife!  
Now, it completed, all was shut.

He picked at bread, this last of meals.  
It seemed more aged than he, the taste  
Was diminished - time! "How it steals!"  
He stopped consumption: sans a need,  
Without an appetite, the throat  
Could not let in the softest paste.  
There was no saving now, no moat,  
So he increased again his speed.

He took the poison, gazing out  
Where Legion ranks grew, marching in.  
Again he opened doors, a bout  
Suggesting to the Roman force -  
He didn't fight, but just declared:  
"Is killing ancient men a sin?  
They'd die soon anyway - who cared?  
I'll save you the trouble, end the source."

Before he could be stopped, he brought  
The cup of venom to his mouth.  
A few Bithynians were distraught,  
Those that would take it hard to cope.  
Still, Hannibal of Barca drank.  
It acted. Turning to the south,  
A single heart that moment sank,  
And with it died an empire's hope.

*Yury Salavatovich Aglyamov*  
*Liberal Arts and Science Academy*

## I Dreamt About Her Past

A dream is a distorted memory,  
just like the one that brought me to my knees.  
Trapped within the walls of a messy

prison where in my hands I had the key,  
but not the courage to escape her wrath.  
Even the blind clearly could go see.

Her opulence that held her in a bath  
of kindness and affection as a friend.  
But beneath the muscle is a path

troubling and abusive to one's mind.  
It's like that dream that stemmed from the syndrome.  
I broke into a sweat when it did end.

I stood outside a lavish stucco home.  
Its marble columns showed its radiance.  
But within its walls was nothing but chrome,

from the rooms' perfect light and brilliance.  
I found a garden spread behind the house.  
And crowds of poppies blooming at such potency.

Then I saw a woman that was doused  
With a limpid soul for charity.  
Never in her could anger be aroused.

A memory flashed and in clarity,  
I saw her sit among her children's love  
and tenderness was all that I could see.

Then without any warning from above,  
a wall of flames came smashing from either side.  
And there I was trapped with the horror of

the sound of the lost family as they cried  
and flames kept scaling walls in their rejoice  
and once the smoke dispersed and flames did die

I heard no voices. I could escape at last  
And as I woke, I thought of traces from her past.

*Sofia Dyer*  
*Liberal Arts and Science Academy*

## Snowfall

Smooth icy blankets of pearly snow  
Cover the grass and the red brick chimney tops.

Everything turns clear,  
Even the leaves on a tree.  
Its bark becomes a rich transparent white  
Blended in with everything else.

Each snowflake drops  
with a  
Gentle,  
soothing glide.  
It drops like  
it has an eternity.  
Each snowflake  
A treasured shape and design.

The sun soars and  
Away  
The  
Snow  
Goes  
Until  
Next winter  
You  
will  
see it  
Again.

*Raven Moreno*  
*Ann Richards School*

## About the Artists...

**Christine Gilbert** (cover art) paints in watercolors and acrylics and is developing her photography and Photoshop skills. Her studio is with the Art Space Co-op at 2309 Thornton Road, Studio J. She is a member of the Waterloo Watercolor Group and the Austin Visual Arts Association. A writer and editor, she has had poems published in the AIPF anthologies. She has a website at:  
<http://www.weirdiswonderful.com>

**Glynn Monroe Irby** has been published in previous AIPF anthologies as well as the Houston Poetry Fest anthologies, The Spiky Palm, Sol Magazine, Galaxy Journal, Poetz e-zine, Curbside Review, and others; Irby has been an invited poet for many reading venues in Texas; is a member of the Galveston Poets' Roundtable, the Poetry Society of Texas, and selected as one of the "Bards of the Bayou." Irby is the co-author and designer of the book, 3 Savanna Blue; the cover designer for nineteen other books, and has marketed and displayed photographic art in galleries, homes, and offices. He is a Professional Member of the American Society of Interior Designers, has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in history from the University of Texas, Austin, including previous studies at the University of Houston, Brazosport College, and Edinburgh University, Scotland, with subsequent graduate studies in architecture at the University of Houston.

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## Editor's note...

The editor wishes to thank all the hundreds of students who bravely shared their work with us. For without their willingness to share their personal vision and creative insights, there would be no anthology. Another thank you goes to the teachers and parents who nurture our next generation of poets.

Writer, poet, editor, venue host Deb Akers has been a long time volunteer with the Austin International Poetry Festival and served as its 2008 chairman. She is on the board of directors of *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review* where she also serves as its managing editor. She is a member of the Austin Poetry Society and the Writer's League of Texas.

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