

School of Social Work
308 North Hall
Iowa City, IA 52242
<http://clas.uiowa.edu/socialwork/>

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA School of Social Work

National Poetry Contest for Social Workers



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The judges for the 2015 contest were:

-Ellen Szabo, M.Ed., founder and director of *Write Now*, www.writenow.bz, a veteran writer, writing coach, instructor, and facilitator of creative writing workshops including the annual *Creative Writing Seminar for Helping Professionals* in Iowa City;

-Justin Jannise, a graduate of Yale University and the Iowa Writers' Workshop is the Provost's Visiting Writer-in-Residence for Poetry and a creative writing instructor at the University of Iowa. Justin is an experienced teacher, tutor, editor and journalist;

-Tiffany Flowers MA, LMHC, IADC is a Chicago inner city native. She received her BA from Wartburg College and Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling with a specialty in mental health from the University of Iowa. She is the founder of Future Focus Life : Forward Living with a Sparkle, empowering others through spoken word, coaching, and other creative outlets in obtainment of their life goals. She also is the founding therapist of Pathway Counseling Center;

-Jennifer Adrian Leeney, currently attends the Iowa Writer's Workshop for Fiction and is slated to graduate in 2016. Jennifer received her BASW and MSW degrees from Iowa, and plans to continue her clinical work when her MFA concludes.

About the National Poetry Contest for Social Workers

Iowa City is the home of the world-renowned Iowa Writer's Workshop, the International Writing Program, the annual Iowa Summer Writing Festival, The Patient Voice Project, the Iowa City Book Festival and the Iowa Youth Writing Project. On November 20, 2009, UNESCO designated Iowa City, Iowa, the world's third City of Literature, making the community part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

Our annual *Creative Writing Seminar for Helping Professionals* began in the early ninety's when then director Tom Walz hired a Writers Workshop graduate to teach creative writing to social workers. Today, the seminar teaches both writing skills and applications of writing for healing and social change.

The National Poetry Contest for Social Workers was started in 2013 by Development Coordinator Jefri Palermo, and faculty member Mercedes Bern-Klug with support from Ed Saunders, Director of the School of Social Work.

Questions about the contest or creative writing at the School of Social Work can be made by calling 319-335-3750 or by email at jefri-palermo@uiowa.edu.

For those interested in participating in the 2015-16 Poetry Contest, online submissions can be made at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/socialwork>

If you would like to make a donation to the School to provide scholarships for Creative Writing Seminar students or to support the poetry contest, you can do so online at

<http://www.givetoioowa.org/socialwork>

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60	Gregory Nooney	22	Amanda C Symmes
99	Erin O'Connor	7	Marjorie Thomsen
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20	Annie Laurie Ormsbee	112	Mia Tyree Thornton
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57	Chris Petr	34	Elizabeth Tubito
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Jeanne Higgs, University of Houston

Street session

Once I walked with a man who told me
no one had ever considered
he might like to walk away the
pain as he talked,
tears in his eyes
his heart in my hands.
Is there any greater gift
than a shared sorrow,
than a trust you didn't think you had?
Together we considered the vast space
between what we do
and who we are,
and knew it for what it was
that hidden connection
our common humanity.

**About The University of Iowa and the
School of Social Work**

Griselda Williams, University of Missouri, Columbia

To Be A Social Worker

When you come to be a social worker, come with your respect for the child who is different than the rest; see in that child her special gifts.

Come with your compassion for the child who did not sleep last night because in his home was yet another fight.

Come with your empathy for the child who was put to bed with hits and kicks instead of hugs and kisses.

Do not judge the child who appears angry and unattached for that is what happens when she is removed from her home in the middle of the night.

Understand that when he does not get along well with others, it isn't because he does not want to; he has not had someone like you to show him the way.

Know that though his father, and his father, and his father before him are imprisoned there is always hope with the child who stands before you.

When you come to be a social worker, bring your code of ethics but be sure they include your flexible way, your accepting nature, and your understanding spirit.

The University of Iowa is a major national research university located on a 1,900-acre campus in Iowa City in southeast Iowa, on the Iowa River near the intersection of U.S. Interstate Highways 80 and 380.

Iowa is composed of 11 colleges, the largest of which is the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, enrolling most of Iowa's undergraduates. More than 30,500 students enroll at Iowa each year. The University both provides and attracts a wide variety of cultural opportunities, Big Ten athletic events, and a number of business endeavors resulting from scientific and educational research that originated at Iowa. All year major poets, writers, artists, historians, scientists, and others speak or perform in University venues or read at local bookstores. Excellent public schools, close, safe, and comfortable neighborhoods, and a highly educated population mean that Iowa City frequently appears high on "best-place-to-live" listings in national magazines.

Established in 1847, Iowa has won international recognition for its wealth of achievements in the arts, sciences, and humanities. Iowa was the first U.S. public university to admit men and women on an equal basis and the first institution of higher education in the nation to accept creative work in theater, writing, music, and art as theses for advanced degrees. It established the first law school and the first educational radio station west of the Mississippi, broadcast the world's first educational television programs, and developed and continues to hold preeminence in educational testing.

The University of Iowa **School of Social Work** in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, is the oldest and largest school of social work in Iowa. The school is noted for providing programs that serve the entire state through distance education, part-time programs to facilitate the education of employed social workers, the professionalization of undergraduate social work education, and the origination of in-home family preservation services.

Our MSW program has been continuously accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) since 1951. The undergraduate major in social work became available in 1962, was recognized in 1970 when CSWE began regulating undergraduate social work curriculum and received full accreditation in 1974. The UI PhD program is the only social work doctoral program in the state of Iowa. It admitted the first cohort of students in 1998 and graduated its first PhD in 2004. Fifty-two percent of our 6,000+ alumni live and work in Iowa.

After 21 years of hosting the Creative Writing Seminar for Helping Professionals, in 2012 the School expanded its efforts to reach social workers and showcase their creativity through a national poetry competition. For more information about creative writing at Iowa, please go to page 118.

Michael C. Wright, Barry University

My Key Desire

Have you seen the children who cry from abuse, whose innocence
has all but been broken?
Observed the face of the returning soldier whose anguish remains
unspoken?
Did you notice the feelings that stirred in you as you visited the
prison that day?
Listening to rapists and abusers of children, did your resolve begin
to sway?
You love social work, that is why you came, believing you might
make a difference.
But now you've seen things so shocking to you, that it's hard to de-
scribe them in sentence.
I thought my key desire was that of mending some broken hearts
in time;
Nor did I think that my bias would sit as a judge because of a
crime.
Yet now I must needs dig deep to assure this path that I have
chosen;
Does not cool my desire to help others out until it becomes too
frozen.
I'm heartened by seeing the children who hurt, retain within them
resilience.
Likewise the elders who despite life's unfairness, share stories of
wisdom and brilliance.
So I think no matter the field of endeavor, our goals must always
be higher;
To "walk in their shoes", if just for a moment, embodies my key
desire.

Jessica Nobile, University of Georgia

Social Work Manifesto:

An adaption of Marinetti's (1909) Manifesto of Futurism

1. We want to sing, dance, and perform our love of justice, self-determination, solidarity, empowerment, and resilience.
2. The essential element of our social work is service inflamed by love of all humankind, courage, compassion, & liberty.
3. Now is the time to activate social equality. We want to exalt movements of compassion, impervious unity, peaceful protest, the perilous leap into change, the strike of lightning, a profound awakening into a new and better reality.
4. We declare that the glory of society has been enriched by diversity and tarnished by divides. We move to attack stagnation caused by oppression and ignite progress through solidarity, equality, and social justice.
5. We want to hurl humankind into harmony with the hemisphere of plant earth.
6. Those with and without privilege must love each other as one impermeable movement.
7. The struggle is beautiful. It illuminates the star-speckled power of courage and strength. From the threads of struggle we will weave a universal blanket of comfort to suffocate oppression and the pain it inflicts.
8. We are winged with infiniteness. Everlasting and free when unified as one human race.
9. We want to glorify community, the only cure for the world; destruction of ego, power, bigotry, segregation, & greed.
10. We sing, dance, & perform unity, a feverish desire to exist in synchronization, dignity and worth of all; multi-colored, multi-faceted elements of human nature. Adventurously we social workers embark on a new and better future.

1st Place Winner

Marjorie Thomsen, The Catholic University of America

With Mrs. Nguyen at the Senior Center

She'll bring you rice paper wrapped around soft pork and noodle. Her land and water intact inside the tight, foolproof rolls. For years you'll chew her mayhem, fresh-picked mint leaf tucked in your empathy, fragrant in the space between you. She'll describe the dark palette of war, various tints of loving a husband, children in a new country. One day she'll wear a silk tunic and you'll guess someone once called her hazel eyes *Aura, Tree Wind, Waterborne*. The language impasse with the local butcher is charcoal with no moonlight to guide the way when describing how to cut meat off the bone. One day she'll look out the window and see how colors change when the world tilts. She'll tell you to always knock with your elbows when visiting another's home—knuckles unavailable, your hands so laden with gifts. You'll both begin to carry an umbrella from the family of mango when there's a chance of rain.

2nd Place Winner

Nahomi Martinez, University of Texas at El Paso

Friendly Fire

She wore the uniform but she might as well have worn camo
between her legs.

She smiled and told me that maybe that would've hidden her
better.

Her smile transitioned to a state of flat affect, depressed mood with
tearfulness.

Or so I was supposed to document.

Nobody was willing to say what happened but it was echoing loudly
in my head.

She was a soldier and she was losing the war.

Someone had stripped her from her gear, rank and her body.

She was a soldier yet the cameo after her service was wilting from
her face and heart.

She was a one-woman army and her perpetrator had hit her with
friendly fire.

She couldn't bring herself to say it aloud but her records said
MST.

The four walls were enclosing around her, leaving her naked to the
world.

Her shame hung over her head where once her beret was neatly
placed and worn proudly.

I was supposed to give her a diagnosis when I knew what she
needed was justice.

Friendly fire had hit her and she was being blamed for bleeding.
She was a wounded warrior but nobody called her hero.

Rachel Ann McCroy, New York University

excerpt from "Circles"

I know the world deserves better

The circles end here

The poverty of our lives

When we were born and unwanted

When we lived and were taken too soon

Others may have loved you because you are beautiful

They may loved you because you are smart

But I have loved you because you are kind

You have always known in your heart what is true

It will be harder to pursue wisdom and virtue

Don't let them take the good away in you

3rd Place Winner

Mia Tyree Thornton, New York University

Owed To Black Mothers

Don't insult my intelligence with alternative narratives and insidious lies

If your actions were inwrought with negligence it's imperative you look me in the eyes

Don't speak of your suspicion, his might or his scorn

Tell me of the imprudent bullets that left his body torn

I am consumed with nagging questions so draft your story well

His humanity you try to lessen but I damn you all to hell

I ask not for your pity or promise of new policy

I join the ranks of brown women who cry the same as me

You gather our sons in masses by bullet and by book

But I challenge all the classes brave enough to look

Our pain you ignore and our pleas you reject

Reminds me of the Judge who told Dred Scott to recollect

"Black men have no right, a white man ought respect"

Your actions I despise but if you intend to tell me lies

The least you could do is look me in the eyes

Joel Izlar, University of Georgia

Social Welfare Politics in Four Haikus:

Soup

Ladles clang on pots,
"Pay attention, sir, your turn for soup."
It's all your fault.

Shelter

The laughter of children,
Comforts hearts of mothers.
A shelter safe from hate.

Bridge

Life under the bridge,
is better when it's warm out.
Winter is coming.

Late Shift

The fluorescent lights gleam,
Onto third-shift shelves.
Rent is due in the morning.

4th Place

Bridget Rohan Garrity, The University of Iowa

Case Note

This writer will note that
The Identified Patient asked about grief again.
The I.P. perseverates on this question.
Affect: bereft, disoriented...where in the DSM, again?
Writer will note concern about rumination.
Content: What? And Why? And How? i.e.:
What is this, around me in glinting bits
Why is it laid at my feet
How do I remake a thing when I can't remember what it was?
What do you have to say, the I.P. asks. Please answer me.
Writer, of course, won't tell her that she is left in dismay, too.
We don't have time,
The hour is almost up,
She must remember to breathe
Her inner tide the one true thing.

Laura Thornton, Humboldt State University

Beautiful Souls

If they grab your arm don't keep your paces
Turn around and look at their faces
You'll see wrinkles, and knowledge, and beautiful souls
Wondering what's left after they've carried out their roles
Eyes twinkle brightly with uncertainty and longing
Wondering where they can get a sense of belonging
Why I am here, I don't understand
When I go upstairs I'm gonna question the man
Don't shuffle around us, we want your attention
One kind work means more than can be mentioned
Try eating your food with a blindfold in place
They you'll see why the food is still stacked on my plate
Notice me please, I need help with eating
My hands are shaky, my eyesight is fleeting
I may be opinionated and a bit outspoken, but my heart is quite
fragile and often it's broken

Renna Wirchin, University of Pennsylvania

Hands of service
Hearts of compassion
Actions through integrity in dignified fashion
Hands of hope
Hearts of grace
Addressing limitations from culture and race
Hands of comfort
Hearts of kindness
Becoming a voice for vulnerable blindness
Hands that hold other hands
Hearts that protect other hearts
Guiding and supporting even our weakest parts
And through these challenges, adversities, and fights
We as social workers, advocates, and agents of change
Are committed to providing a glimmer of light.

Faith Breisblatt, Boston University

A Kind of Metamorphosis

From a chair adjacent my own, you talk of progress
for the first time, the 735 glass panels that
construct the wall of the Moakley Courthouse
where you now work—without one, the others
would surely collapse in black hole fashion—and this, you say
is interdependence, attempting to live in congruence with others,
seeking community for belonging's sake. Ten months ago
your eyes did not meet mine, even in calloused
gesture. Ten months ago, you did not want this life—
of people of places of what, to you, manifested as contrived
connection. And then suddenly, as if the teeth of your life
hardened into place, in hunger, in bargain
I don't want to be stagnant. I want something else
and those eyes, no longer in orbit,
did not look away.

Mary Finucane, University of Pennsylvania

Travelers: In Session

In flight, we sit buckled into blue seats, traveling 560 miles per hour. Drinking coffee. Eating peanuts. Reading. As though at this moment, none of us were catapulting through the atmosphere at 560 miles per hour. As though the light reflecting in that blinding way off rivers and shiny roof tops were not miracle enough. We sit and leaf through Sky magazine, reading about baby wipe warmers and ultimate shoe organizers. Keeping cool or too friendly with the one whose arm rests beside ours. We yawn to pop our ears, check watches and reapply lipstick. Preparing for the moment of landing when we will be standing still again.

She says, “I want to be better. I want this to end.” But she is traveling at 560 miles per hour, and subtle change surrounds her. She checks her watch and reapplies lipstick. “I’m ready for all this growing to be done, so I can get on with my life.” She started in Detroit and wants to be in New Orleans. She took a detour through the Badlands, considered fleeing to Mexico.

The plane shakes as it descends. The collective stomach drops. A baby cries, his mother tries to comfort him. “Shhh, there. Almost home. We’re almost home.”

Mery Diaz, University of Pennsylvania

A Recusant Road

Where do I begin?

This vertiginous state of affairs disables my thoughts, opaques my view, confuses my aim

What I do know, however, is that my sisters are denied their value still

and that, just the same, my brothers’ lives are disdained

What I do see, however, is my mother squandered by esurient frills

and my children’s minds commodified for gains

What I do feel, is a fear of the potency of my own impotence which remains untilled

and hope that the search for justice is never in vain

I suppose that if I played my cards right I could easily abscond, be anodyne, no duty to claim

I can shut out the plight of many, I can be still, I can close my eyes to the pain

But so can others, and in the end, where does that leave us all?

So I choose to repugn what hinders

and I choose a recusant road, and in spite of the tide

With my words, and with my fists, and with my feet, and with my choices, and with the others

I will fight until the end.

Aisha L. Faulkner, University of Pittsburgh

The Man Within

Here I am, I stand hindered by the bars separating me
The bars that are a reflection or rather the mirror of the choices of
my past
Yes, I am here, but within I do not know how
I do not know how I got here. How *I* ended up here
Deceived by one. Deceived by the one I trusted. The only one....
Me
But how? How could I deceive MYSELF? How could I have let
myself end up here? But
Here I am
And now I will, no I must, make a change
But how?
If I change, who will trust me, who will call me anything different
than what they once did? A CRIMINAL!
My God forgave me. But does anybody else? Does it even matter?
I don't know, but I don't want to go around judged, unforgiven,
ashamed.
I want to live free once again, and I hope one person, just one will
give me a chance
Will one person see the man, not this mirror image of the
past....but the man, the true man within?

Rainer Goldberg, Florida Atlantic University

When I grow up

I want to be Just
I want to leave my footprints on the stand, to lay
the common ground
with forward movement, Addams' construction
of Settlement, but a house is not a Home--
People are the bricks, the anchors, the deck
where Opportunity dresses, and Judgment can rest
I want to be Fair conditions,
not unearned privilege, or the
dirty secrets of my forefathers
I want to be Hope, like the crowning of a newborn
with the first coat of air.

Rosa M. Rios, Hunter College, CUNY

this work

with its layers and layers and layers

on any given day

can feel hopeless

like a box of assorted dark chocolate during

mandatory needed breaks

you never know what you are going to get

pressing on these keys and these cases while connecting to

humanity

mindfulness keeps me from feeling numb and disconnected

this work is you, me, us

copied with life experiences, changes, and challenges

and on any given day, permission to listen and help you

which helps me

and helps we

in harmonious advocacy.

Ashley Zeleznik, Humboldt State University

Alive and what is more than one could ever guess,

at peace and at the mercy of the crown.

Whose light shone a paddle,

delivered and freshly pressed,

but it was the motion of the concord that turned that fate around.

It swoon, that being

a lust it went seething,

it divided that oar,

and left it in two.

To cover, to tip, to remove,

and then sift.

A timid recollection of future and past,

I can paste this existence into that,

and make anything I want so true.

Emma Wolford Hager, The University of Iowa

Haven

Rainbow on the door
Cross in the window
Church bells over campus
Nervous feet on the carpet
Multicolored Converse
Chairs squeak in the silence
Pizza and Skittles
Hands reach out
Eyes meet around the circle
Sudden laughter, all at once
Sharing names, connections
"Guess I'm not the only one"
"Can't believe I almost didn't come"

Dorothy M. Lifka, The University of Iowa

Guide to a Successful Life

Begin
with one task and
finish it. Start one more
and continue until done.
Repeat.

Cherra Mathis, University of Pennsylvania

Of all four fingers and her thumb
two are missing, stumps still bandaged.
I'm not sure why, and I feel dumb
Asking - perhaps it's something she would rather forget,
Until, glancing down, she sees the covered wounds.
But on her other remaining digits
Shines deliberately applied and well-manicured
Red nail polish. She may lose the fingers but
She will NOT rescind her hand.

Joseanna Moseby, Gallaudet University

We Carry

We carry your pain and sorrow
We carry your joy and growth
We listen with our hearts
We give with our minds
We understand with our sight
We carry a safe place
We carry...so you can fly

Travis W. Cronin, Arizona State University

Zombie Social Work Pragmatism

Who will the social worker serve in the zombie apocalypse?
Will she convince the rich to provide just enough to stem the tide
of new zombies?
Will she convince the poor not to revolt as a strategy to avoid the
utter destruction of humanity?
Will she lead the revolt against the rich because inequality has
destroyed humanity?
Will she unite the rich and the poor in a quest for shared survival?
Will she extend an olive branch to the zombies?
Will she save the world?
Zombies take heed!
She does
!

Ritika Chand-Bergfeld, University of Missouri, St. Louis

Social workers ever strive
to make ours a better land.
We aim for what is just
and endeavor to understand.
Social workers give voice to the voiceless and appreciate their need.
We bring change where it's needed
and are often called to lead.
Our tasks, sometimes daunting, can be big or small.
There is much that social workers do.
We research, lobby, counsel
teach and case manage too.
Steadfast that with each positive step
the future is brighter
for me, and for you.

Karineh Mahdessian, University of South Carolina

warriors embodied

we come from fathers' calloused sorrows &
great-grandmothers' razor-blade sharp stories of survival
compassion courses through our veins, forms our words, wraps
around our wet tongues

we see light in the darkest of places where memory too afraid to
reside

we believe in possibility where chaos haunts dreams

we know justice dances inside our mouths

we hold space with arms, sweat, lungs, feet, eyes

we inhale hurt & exhale prayer

we matches, igniting

everyday revolutions

we stand, we rise, we fall, we break

we indigo bruise & yellow hope

we no longer afraid

we ready

Andrew Reynolds, Asbury University

The Least

Helping those that society finds unnerving, we plead out loud,
"They too are deserving,
of an opinion, our ears, yes, even our sympathy, why do we take so
long to care for the least of these?"

What can I accomplish with so much working against me? Could it
be that I'm seen so insignificantly?

Who will stand up? Who even has a voice? Not me, not I, the one
who has never, ever, had that choice.

Only to give up, I'd throw in the towel if I had one. What other
options do I have? Absolutely none.

People making judgments asking, "who is deserving?" That's the
wrong question; rather, whom am I serving?

But who is this? That is so patient and so caring. Who would have
thought that love could be so honest, so daring?

I've never been respected. It's been forever since I've seen it. That's
never what I expected, how do I know that they mean it?

Helping those that society finds unnerving, we scream out loud,
"They too are deserving,
of an opinion, our ears, yes, even our sympathy, why do we take so
long to care for

you, us,

the least of these?"

Pamela A. Correll, The University of Iowa

The Therapist's Goodbye

Broken hearts and broken lives
Tears of shame and lost goodbyes
Are they yours or are they mine?
Woven together over time
The mosaic blends and breaks and shines
You gave me more than I gave you
Your stories sacred birds that flew
Together we gave them wings -- when not
I pray we both learned something new.
When it began, I was broken too
You healed me as much as I healed you

Kathryn D. Arnett, University of Pennsylvania

Of all the days
You picked today
Spread your arms
Ready
Filled your lungs with cool air
The wind pushing past
Your unfastened red coat
Did you think of me?
How long did you hold
That deep cleansing breath
Before you exhaled

Done
And stepped
To your end?
Of all the days...

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Julie Dominy Endres, The University of Iowa

Recession

Bent beneath the weight of his world
In need of peace of mind. Peace of heart.
No longer the life he planned to have; once had.
Taken in a moment. Gone.
Swept up, no more than detritus in the flood.
Swept up and left somewhere not planned.
One step more and he's down, on the ground, with a load he can't
bear.
Lifting his eyes to see about him, prostrate all,
Those he once blindly passed. Or judged.
But also
Among the invisible, the broken, the burdened
Those who gather them up, bolster them.
Who know the gossamer line between life planned and life
interrupted.
Who become the buttress to shore up the burdened life.

Betsy Zmuda-Swanson, The University of Iowa

My Dad
Was a superb
Fine craftsman
What he couldn't do
With children
He could do with
Wood
Lead pipes
Listen
Respect
Respond
Make the finest tunings
Impossible And imperceptible
To Others

Annie L. Ormsbee, University of Kentucky

Refrain from the Burnout

Phoenix rising. Or are we empowering clay pigeons?

Society's expendable menaces; untidy targets of abuse.

Icarus descending. Too many years. Too many clients. Too too
much.

Monday's mail is a hum of the usual.

Insurance papers, a Conference on Poverty & PTSD, Sallie Mae.

And then this:

I finally got a job! Thanks for the tip. Depression not as
bad either. Just thought I'd send you a Christmas card
along with everyone else. You kinda feel like my family
now. Thanks for everything. -Sam.

I remember Sam's account of the suicide attempt. Was it just six
months ago?

A voice breaking and chirping with a hauntingly familiar cadence.

The caged bird sings to be heard, I suppose.

To fight against an imprisoning System, to be sure. But when the
fighting doesn't Break the cage. When the mythology refuses to
materialize,

To listen. To hear. And to realize:

Perhaps we all have cages from which we need to be rescued.

Shawndaya Sabrina Thrasher, University of Georgia

Mirror

Who knew what the Jews would go through, likewise no guidelines
could define the experience lived with the Slaves, many graves.

The horror it brings to recall the names that fought so dearly
within, singing let freedom ring.

But the steady pace to fight for equality continues to be the face of
our time, an inexcusable pace.

Not oblivious or blind...Mmm, I mimic the in between lines that
are not solely defined by the bold capitalizations on color, race,
and power fueled by money.

How funny the things we chose to idealize...A materialistic world
mistakes we can't ignore, but many of us are walking around below
poverty level, poor.

Built on a foundation of greed never mind who or what's in need,
to take precedence over the important things.

I sigh in disbelief, YOU see, the concrete of humankind is being
dragged right underneath our feet.

Not a time for text or tweet rather a true reflection of WE, YOU,
and I...no time for pity, cries, or lies.

The needed future is nowhere near, I dare all to look within and
recognize that absent change creates a society constructed on true
failure, hazardous...Doom for Error.

Linda Slayton, The University of Iowa

Ring around the Rosie

In Columbine fields lay lives beyond broken
Everyone talks, but no truths are spoken
Among Hazard cities and in the Newtowns
The Sandy Hooks grab us, more lives are laid down
Trapped in the classrooms of innocence lost
We barter our children with ultimate cost
In dark Nickel Mines we share the Cold Spring
Platitudes promised that don't mean a thing
Amid the Red Lakes and in Burgs of Black
We've gotten too good at turning our backs
We seek Pearls of wisdom for Jonesboro pains
Hold onto our horses, let go of the reigns
We're starving the drought and feeding the flood
Our children lay dying - We battle for blood

Kevin Jones, Portland State University

The Trip

I drove—she sat beside me, intent.
This was not silence.
I understand, I said, to make conversation.
She spat on the window, let it drip down.
She could have been my mother
at that moment—
I could have reached out and touched her.
Instead I just drove her
to pack her kids' things.
I held the steering wheel firmly,
and with extraordinary care.

Rhonda J. Mash, University of Missouri, Columbia

Social Work

So you want to change things,
Only to realize sometimes you
Cannot.
Is
All
Lost?

Wonderful things can happen.
Open your heart.
Reach for your
Kismet and believe.

Amanda C. Symmes, Boston University

Keepers of the Truth

Mapless, she is entrusted to navigate a world
Created with the conditioned mind: blind and bleak
Blasting blame and shame, never a name; a gritty snapshot, always
the same.
A black and white tundra where meaning is seldom made from
“just do it” and “work harder” and “you aren’t trying hard enough”
Awakened, she pushes through this rusty system of broken people
breaking people
Past worn faces, full of promise
Complicated lives, worth living
Elaborate stories, begging to be told
Until she arrives at the light of the Truth, a beacon and guidepost
Golden and brilliant, this Truth weaves itself into the fabric of each
day
So that together we may march on, holding the hands of children,
Carrying the hearts of the homeless,
Protecting the purpose of those cast aside and dismissed...
We hold it all deep in our bones, for we are the Keepers of the
Truth.

Erin O’Connor, Wayne State University

Brushstrokes

Connecting. A tongue, skin tone, and ears that differ from my
own...
He fled his homeland, only to hear silence in a crowded room
The two of us are *able*, but in diverse ways
Communicating through gestures and written words, with smiles
that require no translation
Empowering. A web of pain, poverty, and injustice...
She slaved on urban streets during starless nights
The two of us find different means of survival
Working toward self-acceptance with endurance that never runs
dry
Hopeful. A childhood marked by anger and grief...
He struggled with change far beyond his years
The two of us are shaped by unique memories
Seeking solace and reflection in an afternoon game
I grow, learn, reach, and strive...
With my many brushstrokes, they paint their lives
Works of art that color my days.

Enid Midley, Loma Linda University

i was never here please

it was a random day. he didn't know. she wouldn't say.
STOP! was never on the table.
he held her but she couldn't stay. it was out of their control. it was.
out of their control.
she slipped. into a memory. as it pulled her in she fought.
she traced a line on his face searched his eyes with hers for
something to hold on to. something to anchor her to this reality.
he didn't know. she wouldn't say. STOP! was never on the table.
he held her, but.. it felt good. but the memory was not.
juxtaposed they formed a fog over her.
he didn't know. she wouldn't say. STOP! was never on the table.
he smiled.. he spoke.. he held her, but..
it felt good, but the memory was not. they juxtaposed.
he didn't know. she wouldn't say. STOP! was never on the table.
she wiped her tear. i was never here.
it was a random day.
he didn't know. STOP! i was never here please.

Sameer Rao, Bryn Mawr

Oppression Is

Oppression is when social structures keep society unequal.
Oppression is when people aren't taught that that's important.
When black and brown kids learn to hate cops and social workers
more than inequality.
When white kids learn to hate black and brown ones more than
inequality.

Oppression is not knowing the solutions to fixing the world.
Oppression is the delusion that you even think you know.
Oppression is lack of agency or perception of that.
Or anger at perception of lack of agency to fix anything.

Oppression is me writing this poem or thinking I should.
Oppression is me doubting my own voice because brown boys
don't write poems.
Or me not feeling connected to anyone at all, even other social
workers
Because social workers help people, they don't fix problems

Oppression is grad school being necessary to advance
Oppression is social work programs needing to exist
Oppression is social work needing to exist

Toni Mandelbaum, Bryn Mawr

Contrast

Heart is pounding, blood is coursing, eyes will whisper tears;
Searing burning, disbelieving, concretizing fears.
People beating, children starving, others walking by;
Beggars begging, rich collecting, as the denigrated die.
Pictures marking, never leaving, feeling full of weak;
Skin is thinning, disintegrating, humanity seems bleak.
As she's reading, those are laughing, inflicting constant hurt;
Callous damage, angry jeering, throwing mounds of dirt.
Self-important, narcissistic, vane beyond repair;
Justifying, righteous acting, thinking it's all fair.
Some are born empathic brothers shouldering all pains,
While others cause it, perpetrating, leaving bloody stains.
What separates those who feel from those who can impose?
A silent strength, a simple choice, lifting others from their foes.

Kenneth Meisel, Wayne State University

15 Lines on Reconciliation

The lonesome, shrieking bird that cries at night in the juniper tree
outside your window is no bird at all. This you've come to know.
You cannot help those who walk within that shrieking sound,
for it is the way that dejection steals back those lost, who wander.
My wife has a saying which goes like this: make every out-come
a happy one. The woman at the clinic crashed her car, intoxicated.
They tried to re-salvage her cello strings, but she's post-op now.
I visited her at her bedside, but her eyes were pepper and glory.
The world is made of those who either love or will not love
the design that calls them back to a lone stool with a waiting cello.
We borrow a soul that is a cello. We learn to play it. That's all.
The melody we play is the joyful incantation inside the strings.
All our days, everything, live for being exhumed in the strings.
That's just the rule, that, & the self is made of fool's gold & valor.
The purpose of the cello, in us, is to transfigure the self, bs & all.

Joshua Ihnen, Colorado State University

This priest, my friend, warned lenity is a sea
and he, afflicted with benign spirit,
might someday drown under waves of dearest-
held compassion. Awash with misery,
wretchedness, gloom. And, tempest-tossed, said he
“The sea is nice—in summer—to visit,
but endless tides erode without limit.”
All this I heard, Father, but disagree.
Though charity is an ocean, it’s true,
I trust it is a place to live beside,
upon, within. Longing as I so do
to slip into the cold, unyielding tide
and watch the rising sun turn gray to blue.
Submerged in woes, I help them to subside.

Sara Martinez, University of Minnesota

Progressions

Forgotten in a sea of similarity.

Beliefs, practices, ambitions, past,

Goals.

What potential is not read when it comes to matters of the heart?

How to not forget the purpose, and the dream?

How to not let go of the dream among the dream snatchers?

In a broken system;

a breaking system.

Breaking of self

without recreation.

We prove them wrong. We persevere. Because we are the same.

Linda Deyo, The University of Iowa

Black

They say "black is beautiful"

But when I was young I thought of it differently; Black was dirty,
like mud or grease.

Black was confusing, like people I didn't understand, people who
acted differently.

Black was dark and scary, like a ghost in the night.

But as grew older I learned I need not fear, for those black people
were just the same as me.

So now when I see myself as beautiful, I see black is beautiful too.

Michael Gregory, The University of Iowa

Grin and Bear It..

A cold sweat glistens on the brow

Abuse and neglect haunt sleepless nights
Tears and screams of past atrocities, flood sleepless dreams

Self-care...ha! only for those with time
New cases fill the days, family goes forgotten
On to the next case, no time for the weary
Social work...it's not for the faint of heart
Grin and bear it..

Matthew G. Barnes, Humboldt State University

Light Blue Hue

I awoke in a roundhouse surrounded by a light blue hue,
The old ones called me to the open space around the fire,
I understood the ancient language of the Sioux,
I was told I wasn't the chosen one, but one who had chosen,
To serve a chosen people who had been broken and re-broken,
I drifted to sleep, still 21 years old with a life plan as far as my arm
reached,

Not knowing I took with me a coal, with a light blue hue used to
teach,

Every step I made since then lead me to contact with Native
people,

Every time I make a difference I recall the light blue coal,
Even more-so when I don't,

Did I miss my opportunity when the boy ended his journey?
Did I say enough? Did I say too much?

Did I make up for it when the girl graduated and began her
journey?

I was told I wasn't the chosen one, but one who had chosen,
To serve a chosen people who had been broken and re-broken.

Adnan Noor Munshi, Monmouth University

A Tale of a Survivor

It was a few years ago... when he crept and crawled into his caged
dungeon of darkness.

Where no light flickered, and the spark of possibility non-existent,
while the ice, freezing, cold blanket of hopelessness en-
meshed his matching black heartless soul.

The brush he had used to paint the bright yellow and red colors
somehow dipped into the black puddle of guilt. *But who
was he to blame but himself?*

He was once the artist... Now it seemed that his passion melt down
like clay, leaving him to be another empty figure in space;
without obvious purpose, without vibrant life.

Some things changed though... sometime later... an unanticipated
turn in time.

He stood up, smiled, proud of his shining teeth, warmly accepting
the glitches in his perfection.

There was no need to escape. His room was a beautiful temple of
peace and joy, and delight.

He found purpose and place in others' happiness; he found his
dream he would live for.

He thanked his family, and he thanked his friends. He loved them
oh so much.

He was happy. He was smart. He was confident. He was loved.

He was a survivor of his own mental warfares. And...

He writes for you today; stronger, more motivated, more powerful,
more passionate *than ever*.

Lena Moore, Loyola University of Chicago

The Calling of a Social Worker

We answer the call, when their hearts cry out in need

Through pain and through suffering, their souls we try to feed

The fears they face, while we work to help make them whole

A lifetime of uncertainty, their story starts to unfold

With compassion we serve and sometimes we can relate

As they dream of a better future and no more hopelessness they

have to face

As a test turns into a testimony and the meek becomes more strong

The resilience they've been searching for, we help them discover,

was deep inside all along

Nothing more noble than the calling, social worker is just our name

We are motivators, transformers, and healers just the same

We don't claim to be angels, we just answer the call of service when

it rings

But somehow when it's all said and done, I know we too, will get

our wings

Carla Couch, Eastern Kentucky University

To Have Met You

To me, nothing in life is coincidental.
When our paths met it was sentimental.
You showed me understanding and offered me a safe place.
Along with retrieving my little saving grace (my son).
You had given me a special gift that seemed so surreal.
The gift of a new life and you assisted me in making that real.
Through your support and sharing of wise words.
My eye's opened to see a new world.
A world without inflicted pain or demeaning slander.
Instead, a place with only love and laughter.
You will never truly understand how thankful I am to have met
you.
I am, who I am today because of meeting you.

Tricia Dove, University of Maryland-Baltimore County

Promises

I promise to find you a family and a place to call home
I promise to never abandon you and let you make it all alone
I promise that I'll help your parents so they won't get a divorce
I promise that your classmates will never make you feel forced
I promise to make the nightmares end and the good dreams start
I promise to help you find hope and a loving heart
To make all these promises you ask
What did you give up?
And I reply with the truth
That I gave up a promise to me
To take care of myself
And never ever stop

Angela Evans, The University of Iowa

Too Soon

She had always been like a sponge,
soaking up bits of information.
She worried about losing all of this...
and then she actually did.
She could tell by the puzzled looks
She got from him.
She tried to answer his questions and
wanted to stop his furrowed brow.
She knew he was important but
could not tell anyone the reason.

Melinda D. Ray, Gallaudet University

One and The Other

Solemn eyes peered from the entryway, uncertain if anybody
would help.

One stood up and welcomed them with her hand.

*The Other rolled her eyes,
wishing she could bury her head in the sand.*

With a glimmer of hope, they optimistically drew near.

With anxiety in their hearts, they trembled with fear.

Smiling, she asked, "How can I help you today?"

Scowling, she harrumphed, much to their dismay.

With open hearts, they revealed their tale.

With empty emotions, they looked around to no avail.

Spirits lifted, they walked out with a plan.

Souls deflated, it was over before it began.

One made a difference and not The Other.

Kamala E-M Jackson, Adelphi University

A Universal Struggle

Rough, stagnant,

Anesthetized hearts

Permanently

Ensconced by martyrs everywhere

Jodi Kane, Adelphi University

Toys in the Attic

The hateful words of a parent, stored in the back of my mind- like
so many toys in the attic.

Sometimes I take them out and play with them when I feel
defeated.

I hear the voices saying "You can't!"

"You won't!"

"You are not good enough!"

Don't they know what their words can do?

The only way I know how to go on is to put them back on the
shelf.

I will never forget the toys of my childhood but they will not define
me.

I put them back on the shelf, away in the attic- and play with them
no more

Kelsey Marie Stout, University of Pennsylvania

Waiting

“Come, get to know me,”
Is the deepest cry of my heart.
“Explore the halls of my soul,
As our voices vibrate in harmony
Let me lift you with my laughter
And wait with me in reverent silence
As my waves of sorrow lap the shore.
I may not be that ‘special someone’
The puzzle of my perspectives may not match yours
Yet I am no less a song
Longing for the applause of a deaf crowd
Nor do I desire less
The warm embrace and the melding of hearts.”

Darnell Jackie Strong, Portland State University

A Black Male labeled as a Criminal

At the grocery store looking for stuff hurriedly...cause time is
minimal.
Followed by a security guard because I’m a Black man, I must look
like a *Criminal!*
I leave the store angry, upset and feeling *confrontational*.
Only to be stopped by the police for driving while Black, again la-
belled as a *Criminal!*
Finally home to safety but am upset, traumatized and feeling
irrational.
Turn on TV to relax but all I see are Black males on the news,
Cops and Americas most wanted, maybe I am a *Criminal!*
Finally to bed, eyes closed and praying to hopefully rid the
subliminal.
While thinking about my sons, grandsons and other Black males
hoping in the future they won’t be labeled as a *Criminal!*
Up in the morning shirt and tie, off to school and work, really
professional.
But as I step out the door I begin to tremble” why”?
Because today’s another day I might be labeled as a Black male
who is a *Criminal!*

Stephanie Little, Minnesota State University

The Essence of Social Work

In a state of despair, I sat on the hospital floor, too tired to stand.
My heart broke while I held onto my sister-in-laws cold hand.

The ICU was quiet as the doctor unplugged the monitor, sans our
hysterical cries.

What do you do when someone you love (your family, your
friend) dies?

Our family felt damaged and shattered because it was missing a
prominent piece.

We were unsure of how to move on, but then came a worker that
promised us peace.

She facilitated us through the heartache and provided us with the
tools to endure.

When we thought we could not continue, she stood with us to help
us feel secure.

With her words that brought us comfort and a sense of fellow
feeling,

Our family began the extensive process of acceptance and healing.

Being supportive to help the broken is not an easy task to
undertake.

It requires compassion and patience to ease another person's
soulful ache.

This act of selfless service provides hope to those caught in a
desolate sea.

And that is, in essence, what being a social worker means to me.

Lou Storey, Monmouth University

Socratic Expedition

We dialogue change.

Beginning from what is known,

hazarding through blind spots, secrets,

venturing bravely forward into occupied darkness.

We fashion a knack for waiting, delaying, pausing, postponing,
holding back flames, keeping time with inhospitable memories.

Tracking new pathways fresh lands revel themselves.

Impenetrable ancient outlawed grottos

Open to birthright commands.

Riddles transmute to verse,

radiant crescents restore,

diamonds astonish.

Gretchen Scheffel, University of Minnesota

Geriatric Social Work

Gray hair,
Pain is there,
Help is needed,
But where?

Social workers come,
Help for some,
Pain goes numb.

Hope for the old,
Families are told,
Emotions like gold.

End of life to celebrate,
People to elevate,
To social work I dedicate.

Florence A. Francis, Rutgers University

I Am An Addict

I am an addict; do you know my name?
Have you seen my face? Are we all the same?

I am an addict. I hold so much pain.

I ran from my father, but I couldn't hide.
And then my uncle, and a cousin too...
Finally, a boyfriend left me black and blue.

I am an addict; I hurt all inside.
The drugs don't help me...they just let me hide.
The drugs try to numb me. They don't last very long.
And little by little...I see, it's all wrong.

But now I'm an addict.

Do you know my name?
Have you seen my face?
Are we all the same?

Maria A. Reyna, University of Houston

The Heart of Social Work

Social worker's put out several crises every day
We often go unthanked, undervalued, and underpaid
Every person we meet is a chance for change, to instill new hope
and opportunity
We work countless hours because we believe in this notion whole
heartedly
We chose this profession because we believe in the power of One
One individual can make all the difference for someone
While we may never see the positive effects of our casework
We do believe that somewhere along the line we have impacted
someone, and that in its essence is
The Heart of Social Work

Sharon A. Lacay, SUNY, Stony Brook

With You

with a patient heart I hear your pain
for you, things may never be the same
I wish I could say what my heart wants to speak
but I know deep down that is not what you seek
an empathetic ear and a companion as you sink
I see your resilience, despite what you think
pick up the pieces and I will hold your hand
the pain is real, I understand
the story is yours, and yours alone
but you had the strength to pick up the phone
I'm glad I answered
it shows how much I care
to be with you in the moments
That are just too much to bear

Elizabeth Tubito, University of Pittsburgh

A Voice of the Vacant

Mind your step - Past my bowing staircase and dodge the broken
doll lying on my dusty floor.

**Careful where placing a breath - You know, I cannot support any
more.**

I only house the mummified memories now that you disturbed
with those prying keys.

Excuse the stare of my window sockets - I am suspicious, you see.
Within me an abandoned life has fallen to disease so, tell me, are
you just here to pity me?

**Respect the shelter made a tumbled tomb - My only offense is to
have stood my ground.**

You say your job is to help and grieve? You know I lost my hearts
to the paper greed?

**Come in, but do not run from my dark and creaking - Won't you
listen to my crying?**

Paper caused my hearts to leave and with no paper they could not
remain.

**Today, I serve no other purpose - I only house crime and decay in
vain.**

Do not judge my fallen face as I pass time molding the air around.
**With hearts again, I could be better - Do not let paper keep them
away.**

Fix me and I will stand for more than those who beat for home
one day.

Aileen Holthaus, The University of Iowa

"This is Julie"
perky voice announces,
"leave a message."

But now,
Julie isn't taking messages
or breaths.

Decided to stop
dialysis,
sick so long.

Probably
won't be
new message.

But possibly,
"I'm not here."
Have a good day."

Arryel L. Womble, University of Central Missouri

All people are created equal
And in essence we are
It is a beautiful imaginative thought
It could also be a realistic thought but
Power comes in and demolishes all that beauty and imagination
Power confuses and separates people
Something as beautiful as the brown of my skin suddenly makes
 me ugly
Less than
Power perpetuates violence and hate
Love goes on the back burner, with all its beauty and imagination
Hope seems to be all we have left,
However, Power is working on destroying that too...

Samantha Garguilo, Adelphi University

The Storm

I live among the few who find comfort in the freezing cold, in the bolts of lightning and in the pouring rain.
I'm one of the few who love the sights of lightning and the sound of thunder and the calming of the storm.
Watching the rain come down and seeing the lightning strike and hearing the thunder roar gives me peace.
Peace in a world where not many things can be calming.
I believe that the perfect rain storm, with all the lighting and all the thunder can be magical and special and like nothing you've ever seen before.
One storm is not like another, you will never find yourself watching the same scene over again, each one is unique and different from all the rest.
And you'll find yourself still sitting out there when the rain seems to subside, when the thunder seems to end and when the lightning seems to have stopped.
You will still be out there trying to catch one last glimpse of the beauty that is the lightning, the wonder that is the rain, the calming that is the thunder and the magic that is in the storm.
You'll still be sitting, watching what seems to be nothing because you don't want it to end hoping for one last roar of thunder, one more bolt of lightning and one more drop of rain.
When you find yourself watching a storm and it seems to have ended just wait a bit longer because you never know what you may see.
You will know when the storm really passes, when the beauty and wonder and magic really ends.
You may find yourself out there with no rain, and no thunder, and no lightning, but you will feel inside your heart when it's all over, when it ends for you.
When you are ready to go back inside and leave the storm behind, you will feel ready because you know that the next one will be just as incredible as the last.

Elizabeth Budd, Washington University, St. Louis

Race Day

Cheeks blushed by the November morning chill.
Eyes widen in awe of the growing crowd
gathering at the start line.
Lips flutter in exchange among sisters.
Clothes fitted for energetic movement
layered and bold in color.
Hands clap in praise of others and themselves.
Feet fixed snugly into cushioned sneakers anxious and ready to
bound!
Horns echo as they charge forth without pause.
Ponytails wave goodbye in grand concert
to the walls that were once home.

Lixia Zhang, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

I see you, a little girl sitting in a dark corner, lonely
Your silent tears and wounds tell me your sadness and helplessness
My heart is aching and trembling for you
How can they hurt a beautiful angle like you
I walk to you and hug you, gently but firmly
You, desperately tell me you can never fly again
No, that is no true Listen, I will never give you up
I will help you fly again
Fly like an angle, happily and fearlessly

Sheryl Hoye, The University of Iowa

Emotional Turbulence

Healing begins before the fog clears,
Clarity is in the stratosphere,
Covered by a cold grey shroud of darkness,
Radiant rays restore hope,
The landscape changes with brightness

Healing begins before the storm passes,
Thunderheads swelling with turbulence,
Welcome peace is on the horizon,
The landscape changes with cleansing rain.

Healing begins with a disturbance
Resilience created as we weather each event,
Tempest moves on
The forecast is brighter
Landscapes are forever changing.

Megan Ponte, Washington University, St. Louis

On Trauma and Self-Care

Where did you go when you left your body?
You were alone when I found you; were you looking to be free?
I was your advocate, but I never understood
How you could hide in the darkened corners of your mind.
A disappearing act, an amazing sleight of hand.
Now, I look in the mirror and find
We are not so different,
Though I'm not sure which one of us was the one to survive.
I was your advocate, but I couldn't save you.
Looking back, I'm not sure how hard I tried.
I became the one numbing and running away,
Then I'd find you in the night and tell you I'm sorry.
I'd alter the details of that day to make it earlier inside.
When I wake, I see the advocate I need to be now is mine.

Lloyd H. Sidwell, The University of Iowa

Losing Me

Thankful for those memories past -
It's there in comfort they last.
Now, concern and worry -
Not as planned for ending this journey.

It was always clear -
Directions, and how to get there.
Now an increasingly clouded lens as one tries to see
What is too soon to be.

Losing one's way, yet so wanting to stay.
What can one do to be as always with you.

But it appears quiet there - a solitude, peace -
When my search is to cease.
Oh why not now as it used to be?
Sad to be losing me.

Christa Orfitelli, The University of Iowa

Apprehension, heartbeat, sweat
Entering for the first time ever.

Will I have to bare my soul
Or talk about 'how does that make you feel?'

Like you see in movies,
My only reference.

But by the end,
That wasn't so bad.

I felt listened to,
Heard.

I trust this person
It will be okay, I am okay.

Therapy, counseling
Social Work.

Sandra Blackburn, University of Pennsylvania

Our journey

long before you came my way I prepared for you
empathy, theories, practice
to be present for you
to hear you
to support you
my space became our space ...
and for a while we tended to some things
we untangled some things
we walked on the rocks, not around them
tears cleansed, truth resonated, laughter punctuated
the sun dappled our space as we talked
we always found your strengths
your path, our journey, my honor & joy
to see you grow
to see you whole

Heather Rose Burcham, University of Michigan

Hands and Feet

Is my heart big enough to hold you? Your past, your pain, your fears.

Will I burst, cry, or break? Will you crush under my tears?

Are my eyes clear enough to see you? Behind the guarded smile.

Am I insightful to understand? Will I make this time worthwhile?

Are my hands strong enough to reach you? To touch a stranger's wound.

Will their trembling alarm you? Will they be empty, or intrude?

Are my feet fast enough to catch you? Steady to ground us both.

Will they lead you astray? Will they be too paralyzed for growth?

My heart is big enough to hold you, though I may cry, or ache your pain.

My eyes are clear enough to see you, though I may have to look again.

My hands are strong enough to reach you, to connect us hand-in-hand.

My feet are fast and steady, to walk together down your path.

I am here to be your witness; that is my gift to you.

With an open heart I receive, your story, long and true.

Together we move; hands and feet.

Carolyn Sue Lukrofka, The University of Iowa

Honoree

First breath—— gasp—: wa! wa!

daughter

student

wife

mother

grandmother kids on laps

I do not know you

Open window - freedom to walk home

Eat, eat, please eat.

Last breath ——gasp —— w h o o s h

Lori Culbertson Harris, The University of Iowa

**Disabilities Parking Space Rights
Placard Hanging from My Rearview Mirror**

I was so low
on milk. You pointed, your head shook.
I was so low,
the magical loupe at your brow.
Pain, madam, hides deep in backrooms
where thee shan't judge cover or book.
I *was* so low.

Marisol Lado, Rutgers University

Longing

The memories of you flow through my mind as a dandelion pedals
through the air.
Sadness begins to seep out of my pores.
A tumor has formed in my heart competing with its beat.
Emptiness vibrates throughout my body, wants to explode out the
seams of my veins.
I cry invisible tears because you're not here to comfort them.
A simple glimpse of you will put me back together.

Robert Wallace, Western Michigan University

In The Wake of the End of Things

I don't know how long this particular high-rise has been here,
or the dozens of other high-rises, assisted-living facilities,
nursing homes,
and other places where I visit the elderly.
I imagine as one person dies and the next person moves in,
only for that person to also die,
the accumulation of dust; of time ephemeral.
By its very nature, dust eludes us.
It collects in corners, underneath beds, along baseboards
like gravel beside a road,
tiny particles of skin and hair.
I imagine, too, a scientist from the future,
scooping from an unclean spot years of debris,
placing the cells of numerous older persons under the
microscope—the gray hairs, bits of lipstick, eyelashes,
fragments of nail—and this pile of DNA, this coagulation of life,
speaking to this scientist, telling him about everything she knows,
everything he doesn't.

Jessica Gray, Grand Valley State University

Define Social Work

Define me

We are guides, sounding boards, and confidants

I change, we change, the work changes

To bring comfort to those who feel alone

We are teachers, advocates, and supporters

I change, we change, the work changes

To meet another where they're at

We are connectors, leaders, and mouth pieces

I change, we change, the work changes

To build community where there is none

We are present, we are strong, we are hopeful

I change, we change, the work changes

Us

Alexandra Pappas, Barry University

Grateful

So many cries from deep within
to find answers for my own addiction.

Letting my life go by year after year
driven by the relentless craving and fear.

Dreading the sun's morning light
to be awakened by a vicious fight.

Sick and tired of this cowardly life

I choose to get help and end the strife.

A social worker reached out their hand
and motivated me to take a firm stand.

Every day I got better and grew to love
myself and the man or woman above.

Eventually I grew emotionally and spiritually
and dared to begin a new life fearlessly

A second chance and a grateful social worker I am.

Mercedes Samudio, University of Southern California

Light and Darkness

I came to your fragile darkness

With the light given to me

By learning and training.

The swell of pride and motivation

Overpowered the struggle and fear

From the damages you experienced

With trepidation and guilt, you fled.

And with righteousness and sorrow, I followed -

Attempting to hand you my light.

As a result, your harsh edges softened,

My resolved shifted into understanding,

And we each parted with a little more light and darkness

Ngozi Ijeoma Eke, University of Michigan

Don't Laugh (Poem about bullying)

Don't laugh at me

I'm you and you're me

Don't you know?

We are entwined

Two halves of one

You, me

I, you

Don't laugh at yourself, please.

Jeffrey Sharlein, Hunter College, CUNY

Person in Environment: 3 Haikus on Political Economy

- i. "Fundamental . . . is
attention to the envi-
ronmental forces . . ."
(from the NASW Code of Ethics preamble)
- ii. Funding foundations
and governments pay us to
help people adjust.
- iii. neighborhood: there are
no jobs. Ex-cons can't vote. Cop
cars on pot-holed streets.

Martha Schut, The University of Iowa

s. w. repartee

civil elbow grease
considerate sweat
neighborly muscle
accessible mission
communal walk
nimble-witted day job
big eared diligence
skillful calling for fancy footwork
street smart best shot
(more than nine to five)
not born yesterday way of life

Aaron Braverman, Columbia University

Ambassadors of Hope

It is our commission to invoke hope
Agents of promise must understand
Without prospect of possibility wishes dissolve
Optimism is a referendum on despair
Relief from adversity and misfortune
Faith shakes off the specter of poverty
Dreams persuade to forge ahead
Possibility fights the tribulations of illness
Ambassadors of hope recognize
No false promises or expectations
Tomorrow can be different

Virginia Carol Brewster, Concord University

Retirement Not Me

R - Reminiscing About Days of Old
E - Early I would rise
T - To work I would go
I - Infants were my concern
R - Recall all of their abuse and neglect
E - Elderly were my concern
M - Memories of them being lonely and abused
E - Eager to assist those in Need
N - Never shirking my social work duty
T - Teenagers were my concern

N - Noting the challenges they faced each day
O - Opting to be there for them all
T - Telling them all is well

M - My success derived from protecting them
E - Enforcing the law was my duty

Jessica Dean, Barry University

How are the children?

My children are proverbs
spitting fire.

I want to be brave like them
confronting violence.

There are things I want to teach them
but they'll have to learn on their own.

It's a warrior's journey
they take with a child's face.

Some will sell their potential
to false dreams.

Others will reach beyond limitations
grasping for what is rightfully theirs.

Our children are reflections
showing us what needs to be healed.

The children are not well.

Scott E. Provost, University of Pennsylvania

A Brave New World

Social work practice in the trenches

Brief treatments and interventions are the new clinical conventions

Interviewing clients in homes, clinics, hospitals, jails, and park
benches

Maintaining public safety

Remaining unruffled under pressure in the community

Respecting autonomy

Confronting ethical quandaries

Mitigating risks and danger, deescalating anger

Sleepless nights

Second guessing and uncertainty, leaving palms sweaty

Believing everything was done within legal rights

Checking and re-checking clinical progress notes, trying to cope

If it is not documented, it wasn't done!

Wait, there is room for hope

Learn from mistakes but do not admit fault!!

Rebecca Price, Mount Mercy University

Does anyone have a pen I can borrow?

Writing opinions, recommendations and plans.

No time in between to watch the ink dry.

Our signature, our words written as black and white.

These pens should writes in circles not strokes.

A way back to the beginning.

To erase worry, depict a journey.

Write positivity, leak encouragement and draft hope.

This pen can be found in every office, every home.

It might be lost.

Or it might be needing a refill.

This happens from time to time

No pen has infinite ink.

It's OK to put it down, take a break, watch the ink dry.

When it's picked up again, delete the strokes.

And watch circles fill page, after page, after page.

*Martin Booth Tracy, University of Illinois at
Champaign-Urbana*

Roma Child

*There was a child went forth every day, and the first object he looked upon and
received with wonder or pity or loss or dread, that object he became.*

Walt Whitman

A diminutive, dark Roma child sits sedately

on a crudely torn piece of cardboard

in the middle of a busy sidewalk

under the hot summer sun of a bustling Balkan city.

She cuddles a doll. Gently caressing it as she rocks slowly,

rhythmically to the strains of a melody only she can hear

amid the din of horns and heavy traffic.

Throngs of people stream by staring straight ahead,

impassive save for a sporadic toss of a coin

or piece of fruit onto the cardboard.

Hours pass. She does not move from the position

to which she is riveted by mindless devotion to the mother

who hovers hidden behind the trees,

across the street, warily watching, waiting to take her home,

Until she returns tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow.

*Alexandra McKnight, University of North Carolina,
Chapel Hill*

generational curse

he had years and weight
behind his fists
and daily did she pay
for her transgressions—real or imagined
he said, without doubt there can be no faith
his mantra, the crux of his power
without doubt, there can be no faith
and while she took her lashings
believing his glory in each one
curled up, tonka truck fists
hid in the shadows
watching and learning from
The Father

*Tammice Twinette Johnson, University of Central
Missouri*

I was blind
Wow I can't believe how blind I been
Even though I wear glasses or have my contacts in
It took me losing you to finally see
How much you really really meant to me
Someone please hand me sunglasses and a cane
So I can maybe get some humor out of this pain

Jesse Wateman, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Group

They gather filtering through the cold and smoke, scented
Like the half-smoked and saved Newport 100
Collecting against the oil stains
Of 2005 Target rack Dickies
Circled they roar crudities, obscenities spoken to
Guffaws and cackles; mumbles vibrating stubble of
Chins, cheeks, and chairs-whispering warnings
To the fretful new, still searching eyes for a new home
Some can't sit, and pace in front of the percolator
Draining sugar and cream, or leaving it tarred black
Thick and soulful, sipping softly.
But then they sing, in soft soprano, slicing through the eerie
Calm of the room; carrying over all of Neuve Chapelle to bless
another fearful soldier- tears dropping into the chimes of black
coffee

Laura Riddle Parry, University of Utah

Finished Product

The social worker's heart is bent and stretched
 Expanding enough to hold the sorrow
 Like clay, is molded by tears and toils
The artist's masterpiece hangs in a gallery
 A colorful display of time and talent
 Each brushstroke, drawing admirers
The scientist's data published in a journal!
 Discovering cures and uncovering clues
 Helping humanity stamp out disease
The reporter's story put on paper
 Researched, rewritten, and received
 A mark forever left in ink and on readers
The social worker carries their work with them,
 in their bent, stretched, open, hopeful
 heart.

Amber Rose, The University of Iowa

Fortune Cookie

Somewhere between the egg drop soup
and sweet and sour chicken
you leaned across the table, as you began to whisper
"You're still lookin' for Daddy..."
you took my breath away
bursting into tears I knew I'd never forget that day

We cried because we missed him
I sobbed because you cared
your words they meant the world to me, an intimacy shared

Finding a man like Daddy, it seemed a bit too late
but knowing that you understood
made it worth the wait

I'm glad you lived to see, my fortune did come true
I am so very grateful
I owe it all to you

Jamie Downs, West Virginia University

Corners of the world,
boundary of the space,
placement of the stars,
features of the face.

Fingers on the hand,
memories of the mind,
direction of the sun,
obstacles that will bind.

Richness of the earth,
emotions of a child,
signals on a sign,
blackness of a mine.

Out of the corners and what we see there,
We can plant a seed of hope and care.

Jamie Murphy, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay

The Journey

A little girl trapped in darkness,
With her beating heart full of light,
It was the hope inside her soul that helped her fight and take off in
flight.

Always longing and never fulfilled within herself,
Addiction reached out and grabbed her, trapping her inside a cage,
It felt like shame, remorse, fear, loneliness, and rage.

Then something magical happened that would change her heart
forever,

A child was born and a mother she became,
With this she saw light again and would never be the same.

She realized that life wasn't about her anymore nor had it ever
been,

As a single mother on welfare, she put herself through school,
She became a social worker, using her pain as an empowerment
tool.

My journey was needed, purposeful, and great,
But this story isn't just mine nor yours or a client's-but it's the
reality of everyone,
That it is only by helping others that we get warm by letting in the
sun.

Chelsie Wohlers, Luther College

To See the Change

A flicker of crimson and gold breaks the endless sea of midnight
A thin tendril of curling iridescent smoke floats gently to the stars
The small burning flame slowly creeps towards the end of its life
 source
Knowing that although it's being sustained, it's flickering out
 rapidly
Knowing that the harder it works, the faster it will go out
To be slowing burning out by the very thing giving strength is a
 terrifying thing
But the sensation can never be felt if the flame is never lit
The help cannot be given if the helper never tries
Because there is always another cigarette in the pack
There is always another reason to keep trying
To help others, we move past the things that hold us back
And cling to the things that propel us further
Because the satisfying feeling of being fueled is worth the short
 lifespan of the flame
And to see the change in another is worth the little bit that we give
 away

Sharon Lynn Simmons, University of Kentucky

'Twas the Night before Finals

'Twas the night before finals and all through my house,
The emails were arriving by the click of a mouse.

While I was grading papers and preparing for the day,
The excuses were pouring in with a colorful array.

I opened my inbox while the alert was still sounding,
To read about their mishaps, some of them were astounding!

It seemed there were plagues of all kinds about,
One student had Cholera, another, the gout!

There were several dead grandmas, car accidents and the flu,
Lost zip drives and computer crashes, with students asking what to do.

I considered my options and drew up my chair,
I opened each email and responded with care....
The final is tomorrow, I hope to see you there!

Ayrin L. Hnosko, Widener University

It is you and I
In this room.
Your fears, your worries, your life.
Your history, your future.
The troubles of present that keep you awake each night
And prevent you from living each day.
Let me hold those barriers for just this time.
Let me hold them, reframe them and
Present them back to you at the end
In a way that gives you strength to move forward
And make small changes that add up to growth
That you will tell me all about when next you return
To this room
With you and I.

Fred Franck, The University of Iowa

The Journey

We share a journey on an uncertain road,
The sign posts faintly lettered and misplaced,
The pain “a thinly wrapped enigma”
Escape barely visible through the mists of the mind,
Let us find courage as we walk together,
Burdens lightened as we make our way,
No longer alone, take my hand.

Abigail Dembo, University of California, Berkeley

To Everyone Who Has Stood in Line

Six o'clock in the morning.
The mothers have the welfare office surrounded.
They sway and bob.
When, tick-tock,
The gateway brays its opening.
The men begin to pitch and sway.
They've undergone a loss of vigor,
And an attendant physical change.
The powerful force made its way.
Regularly unrestrained.
A hundred babies rode that day.
See men to the left of them.
See men to the right of them.
Put out to sea on the shoulders of they that bore them.

Jean Filsaime Pierre, Rutgers University

Social workers are open-minded to suggestions,
Outstanding characteristics, skills, and passion.
Considerate discussions illuminate resolutions,
Inspire others to develop successful motivation.
Acceptance ears lead to long-term associations,
Legal threats do not intimidate their actions.
We, as one, fight for our students and family,
Outpouring our heart and soul in our community.
Respecting and loving our diverse areas daily,
Kneeling and praying for our own “call” of duty.
Empathize with the have and have-not respectfully,
Resourceful against many challenges with humility,
Social Workers are essential life-changers in Society.

Ralph V. Muzny Jr., University of Missouri Saint Louis

Abused and Neglected Children

Somewhere off in the dark of night I hear faint screams of children
being neglected and abused,
It is so sad why modern day society let children be neglected and
abused while many adults act as if they either bewildered or
just downright confused.
Morning comes and somewhere close to my home I see a couple
of little children getting onto a yellow school bus with un
washed clothes,
The children’s’ unkempt situation is something I loathe.

How these lonely kids are fed and dressed differently is hardly a
fault of their own,
In this same world people make time to feed a dog a nice looking
bone.
The abused and neglected children are huddled together to stave
off the cold of the day,
Hoping someone will help show them what they believe is their
best hope for an alternative means of living a safe and
comfortable day.

Ana Francis, Adelphi University

The Fabric of a Social Worker

Movements produce awareness and create history.
Equality and justice are embedded in the schemes of our existence.
The fabric that makes up a social worker is composed of many
 shaded threads of love, genuineness, empathy and
 compassion.
A social worker is not just a voice or a mere echo, it is a
 movement!
One who is courageous by being a change agent. So, who am I ?
I am one who takes the roles of initiator, mediator, negotiator,
 counselor, educator and advocate.
One who conquers obstacles and challenges in a fierce fight against
 oppression.
Refusing to give up effortlessly for the cause of others.
One who promotes self-efficacy and resiliency throughout all
 boundaries and ethnicity.
A restorer of hope, strength, dignity, resiliency and empowerment.
An individual of inner commitment, compassion and confidence,
 who is willing to extract the best from the worst.
A social worker stands influential not only in the now, but the
 future, to be the change.
I am an abundance of extraordinary wealth to enrich the many
 lives of those I will encounter.

Shaina Smith, University of Missouri, Columbia

The Box

I have been put in a box, cast aside on a shelf;
as you build up your power and wealth.
A living thing needs space to grow; in this cage there is no room to
 sow.
Your mantra is, "Out of sight, out of mind."
Do you know those with perfect vision can be the most blind...
Like the Sun behind a cloud, I struggle to shine;
 while you continue to reign over me and mine.
Put me in a box, if you must; take away my strength, my trust.
But you will never gain my will to live, to see there is more that I
 have to give.
One day the lid will be lift'd away; then you will hear all I have
been trying to say.
Absconding your shame, to your own box you will flee;
 and I will know how it feels to be free...

Arielle Lee Bair, Marywood University

Setting Fire

I have enough heart for a crowd.
My voice is loud, my steps are quick
I run to help; I light the wick.
A fire was lit and I'm going to burn -
Learn. Yearn to teach. And reach
The city, the state, the coast, the country, the world.

Just one person, one voice -
A conscious choice, a drop in the ocean
For a greater good, I'm set in motion.
And why do we keep on keeping on
And sing this song, even when it feels so hard?
The windows barred, the beauty scarred
The world so marred, and all on guard...

To be the flame. To set the fire.
To give the tools. To go forth and inspire.

Ryan Burton, Washington University, St. Louis

The Deep Freeze

Dark times of fear, dark times of waning dreams.
He lived to learn that even stars have trouble shimmering.
Those broken mornings wore down a steady soul.
He longed for help where the good men met through haze and city
roads.

He loved like truth under those purple nights.
Blind to the clouds around him by the promise of moonlight.
The winter screamed into the tired heights. Without any reverie
and the trails of lesser times.

There he smiled. Without any walls he smiled.
Through shrieks and shivers he smiled.
The deep freeze melted goodbye and the light came in time to see
his clear eyes.

Bright times of joy, bright times of waxing dreams.
He lived to learn that even fate is not unwavering.
Those broken mornings, strengthened a stretching soul.
He found truth where the deep freeze melted and made those
streets a home.

Emilie Lewandowski, The University of Chicago

listening

thanks for listening to me
for not being afraid, not being angry
you don't know how long it's been
since somebody let me in
it's so lonely, lonely, lonely
thanks for standing up for me
for hearing my voice, for helping me speak
you don't know how hard I've tried
to help them see things from this side
It's so lonely, lonely, lonely
hurry up there's not much time
there's so many beautiful things on the line
if you open up your heart, open up your eyes
but hurry up, hurry up, hurry up
there's not much time.

Joshua Sarnecky, University of Pennsylvania

The Blind Leading the Blind

I've heard it often chimed that the blind are leading the blind.
Yet still some claim they know the way
With skills well-honed and theories intoned.
And so they come to ease the load of those bent, burdened, and
 lowed
By years of fears that pierce like spears and lions' sneers and
 wolves' harsh leers.
So though they may be not know the light, they still flight the
 others' blight
And lead the lost, whatever the cost,
To doors once hid by winding floors and bitter wars.
Thus, with fates entwined and talents refined, let the blind lead the
 blind.

Sherry Lynn Warren, University of Kansas

Mending

A sock hangs off the rocker arm, needle and thread still dangling
from the toe.

Dishes with breakfast drying to a granite crust wait in the sink for
godliness.

Bright red geraniums wilt in the morning heat on the windowsill.
A color so startling that only a whore would wear it.

She smears on scarlet veneer - a blend of crushed insects and wax -
not to attract the attention of pleasure-seekers, but to call
out a smile for those who need one.

To brighten the gray lives that have forgotten the vibrancy of joy,
those that know the subtle shades of diversity and
difference.

She heads out into the sunshine, whose rays of scorch and bright
do not reach between the buildings.

She steps behind the skyscrapers where the deals are made into the
shady alleys where life really takes place.

There, she coaxes forth resources from rust, abundance from
ashes, resiliency from wrong-doing.

Every day she sees the disenfranchised, the unsteady, lives
permanently stained by circumstance or choice.

Does it matter which? It doesn't. Free will is an illusion created for
those with the privilege and means to use it.

She is a social worker, and this is the sermon she spreads. A dream
of hope, of possibilities.

A dream from which one wakes, comes out from the shadows, and
feels the sun kissing your forehead.

Michael Arends Alksnis, University of Maryland

From the day I was born I gasped for air,
the vapors of prejudice thick in my chest and
the weight of judgment heavy on my eyelids
as the righteous piteously laid me to rest

My path was set before I awoke
in a world carved
in the shape of a funnel by
invisible hands who no one claims to possess

Slipping steadily toward the center,
uttering inaudible cries of distress
as shoppers shop and workers work and
everyone says they are doing their best

I close my eyes as I fall
They claim to know, but I truly see

Mine is the voice of poverty

Danielle Aubin, Humboldt State University

One Thousand Disguises

Then said a student, "Speak to us of Social Work."
And her eyes brightened and filled with tears, with a soft, delicate voice she began to speak:

How can the moon ever thank the sun for illuminating her surface so that she may gaze upon the earth and reflect the world's sorrow and happiness?

Those who seek to give thanks for serving others show us their hearts that reflect the love and grace behind the disguises of characters, roles and stigma that hide us from ourselves,

Jung once said we meet ourselves again and again in thousands of different disguises on the path of life,

If we focus only on the moon's reflections, we may drown ourselves in the waters of despair, forgetting that we seek what is behind the reflections, the source of the light which unites us all,

We can only realize this when we see ourselves in each community,

When we see ourselves in every child, every person and every thing,

We will know this only when we feel each bomb, each pang of hunger, each cold night on the street as our own pain, our own experience and as our own call to serve.

John Dennis McBride, The University of Iowa

Never Forget

On December 6, 1941 Nazi soldiers made them slaves until they were lost to us, became a chilling, dehumanized number in the ghastly Final Solution wherein six million Jews died.

Now outside their home what does the passer-by see?

Four brass plaques embedded in the sidewalk,

Inscribed with names and death-dates of that entire family.

Forever they bear witness in that place to the shoah, the immolation-

Of all the world's shameful genocides, the unspeakably worst.

Gunter Demnig started this program,

Called his brass markers "stolpersteine," "stumbling stones,"

Neighbors went to court, denounced them as despicable objects,

Acts of abject surrender, devaluing their homes.

"Didn't their boots kick us before, and wasn't that enough?"

A rabbi asks, "will they walk again all over our bones?"

Exactly. Yes.

Weidi Qin, Washington University, St. Louis

In search of beacon

The poor, the unsheltered
The vulnerable, the unprotected
The colored, the unaccepted
In search of beacon, in the ocean of darkness
Each man - part of the entire -
Reminds me constantly, the mission
To listen, to understand
To plant the flowers of hope

Chris Petr, University of Kansas

Scared of the Light

Can you turn on the light?
 No man, I don't want to.
Please turn on the light.
 No way. It's too scary.
What? Come on, just do it.
 I really don't want the light on.
But it's not scary.
 Easy for you to say, man. Easy for you to say.

Thom Schramm, Case Western Reserve University

The Carpenter

I remember when I fell from that rafter
sunlight hung on an angle through the window
and a strip of lead broke the light
into two sheets divided by a rod of shade.
In my falling I tried to grab the shade, as if
that thin ghost of a frame would save me
simply because my hand could fit around it.
The wide and hardly graspable light
blinded me as I dropped to the marble floor.
Later, the same light woke me and was a comfort
when the shade only chilled me
with a memory of my body.

Amy Correia, The University of Iowa

A Transgender Journey

why do people think i'm a boy she asks from the back seat of the
car
i think carefully and want to respond thoughtfully i believe the way
I answer is important
she is a girl who feels like a boy inside
a dysmorphia hard to understand
do you worry about his future
i wish he could have remained a girl who was a tomboy
a state of being unimaginable to many
difficult to accept
desire to protect him so strong it hurts
hormone therapy new name surgery
a daughter now a son a sister now a brother
I look back and see the signs of his life pointing in this direction
and that comforts me
finding the boyhood within the girlhood of his childhood

Honor Heindl, Washington University, St. Louis

for the mater dolorosa of the gugulethu seven

the calloused heart of a black south african man
does not vindicate causing another's blossoming lungs to
prematurely wilt, but
mbelo, "my child, my son"
this perpetual rhythm of suffering must end

i know you have felt the imprint of the white man's shoe upon your
skull
our people's blood has crossbred minerals
sown along the indian to the atlantic
but they did not pass in vain

history cautions hope on this side of the grave,
but no longer must we let stone encapsulate our organs,
while God has painted our canvases in different hues,
our veins all pump a tenacious, vibrant red through weapons the
size of our fists
we must keep fighting, keep loving

behold, oh cape town, here comes the sun

Victoria Goebel, University of Georgia

Reach for the Light

Sometimes you don't see a way out, a way forward.

Do not despair.

Lean and stretch and reach for the light.

Feel your way through the darkness if you must.

Go down to the earth and crawl

You hear it off in the distance...

Your name is being called.

Move that way if you can.

If you cannot, it is enough to open your eyes a little.

Do you feel something different?

I think it is a dot of light that way.

Head toward that glimmer.

You start to notice beautiful things again.

Your eyes are open now.

Someone is there.

Anna Santaga, The University of Iowa

I love what I am going to be

A pillar of strength drenched in every color

Every shape of hand will imprint itself on me

I will bend my mold for its impression

But I will always be a pillar

The beautiful things that hearts are made of

Are all different textures

Shall they unravel at my feet

I will kneel

You cannot know

I have a bird in my chest

And she flits with delight at the idea

That I can hold diamonds

Where the world sees only dirt.

Greg Nooney, Loyola University

Therapist

First the top of the iceberg
Burning through this drama and that,
But can you feel inner water bubbling up?
No, it is coming from out there.
I'm sure of it.

What if the river turned to steam?
Or if the iceberg turned upside down?
Snowing me, or snowing the self,
Frozen, liquid, or steam, it's still water.
Let it flow.

Mama pain, father pain, violation, betrayal,
Fragmentation.
How can I listen hour after hour?
No vessel big enough to hold all that water.
Only the breath, only the breath.

Dawn E. Freeman Schulte, University of Missouri, St. Louis

Meet me here. In this place.

This place where time is irrelevant. No minutes... No hours... No days... Measureless and relentless.

This place where yesterday is strange and memories of last week no longer call. Last week - the time I lived in Ordinary. But time is irrelevant.

This place where panic thrives -
In my chest, allowed only shallow breaths under the weighted shroud of dread.

In my heart, keeping rapid pace with manic thoughts.

This place where my thoughts revolt, holding me hostage in a story I never penned. A biography against my will.

This place where no one knows what to say or how to help...to reach...to rescue. Banalities send me further into this place, and they further away. Into Ordinary.

This place where grief cloaks me in obscurity as I will the rest of me to fade away completely.

I don't live in Ordinary anymore.

Please meet me here instead; so I'm not alone. So I'm not afraid.