On behalf of the Junior League of Washington (JLW), we are pleased to host the 21st Annual Youth Poetry Contest for Washington, DC, public and charter school students in grades 4 through 8.

The purpose of the contest is to encourage young authors to explore reading and writing poetry by submitting original work on any topic of personal significance. With the JLW’s focus on helping children develop and improve their literacy skills, it is truly inspiring to read the collection of poems on the pages that follow.

We would like to thank all of the students and teachers who participated in the contest this year and congratulate our winners.

Best regards,
Community Outreach Committee
Junior League of Washington
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 4th Grade
- Overcoming.....4
- Be Yourself.....5
- Being Strong.....6

## 5th Grade
- Background.....7
- Please Hear Me.....8
- Vermilion.....11

## 6th Grade
- I Am.....14

## 8th Grade
- 3129.....16
- Light Always Finds Its Way.....18
- Nothing.....20

*Bold indicates first place winner*
OVERCOMING

BY KOMLA ATTIOGBE

Oh no! Do you see him?
He is here!
And you know that we will be in fear.
But not him. But not him.
He is in a straight tower.
I know he has the power.

He told the bully to go away
and said that bulling is not okay.
He wanted bullying to stop today,
so we can have peace.

All of them were just wishing
that the bully will just listen.
For the good old days, they were missing,
but he refused to listen.

Oh no! He is coming again
but nobody is afraid of him.
Let’s talk so he can understand.
We know inside he is a friendly man
and let our friendship start all over again!
BE YOURSELF

BY NICOLE VASQUEZ

Offer the sunshine inside your heart and therefore the comfort behind your smile. Listen empathetically before judgement and let compassion rise above. Share passion and knowledge, gratitude and appreciation. Help others to be authentic and encourage change. Support others to grow and rise with them.
**BEING STRONG**

BY REBECA VEGA

I am strong.
I have the power.
I have knowledge because I want to go to college.
It takes time to get powerful like
it takes a baby to learn how to talk.
It takes time to succeed.
You might say, “Are you serious because
you look mysterious?”
You are strong
We are strong

To became STRONG
it takes time,
it takes persistence,
it takes pushing yourself,
it takes doing something again and again.

I am strong.
I have the power.
As a flower in the background blooms
Some empty feeling looms,
A feeling that you could have done better
When the world turns their back on you.

When you’re walking down a path
Terrible and full of trash,
A feeling that they could have done better
When the world turns their back on you.

Down the busy city street
Seeing someone being beat,
A feeling that we could have done better
When you turn your back on the world.

You are in the background.
PLEASE HEAR ME
BY SARAH LYDIA MCCOYER

I march
and I march
and I march
and I march
but
nobody cares

I speak out
and I speak out
and I speak out
and I speak out
but
nobody hears

I write
and I write
and I write
and I write
but
nobody reads
So now,
I have nothing to do
but
plead

I plead
and I plead
and I plead
and I plead
for
someone
to hear me

Please
hear me

Please
recognize me

Please let me
be
seen as equal

Please let me
take off
my mask
Please let me escape
the shadows of silence
that I live in

Please
somebody
please
someone
hear me
In a meadow of green
NoWhere to be seen
Lived Vermillion the fox
Slender and lean

He smelled of old books
Was crimson in looks
And had legend powers
With visions of crooks

One day In his bed
He saw in his head
A hidden old cape
With a ruby of red

His friends wished him the best
As he headed Toward the west
With a map to the ruby
On his noble quest

He was quite tirEd and boney
When he found a field rather stoney
He picked up the foam ruby
“Alas! It’s a phoney!”
He walked through the fog
Tripped over a log
Then in the distance
A bark! A Dog!

Up ahead was a cliff
His muscles went stiff
But the dogs kept going
So he fell, nothing keeping him alight

He lay broken in vain
And looked up at the rain
When he recalled another vision
Hoping he was still sane

He saw a new light
He used all his might
He knew he must keep going
He had to win this fight

He tried to be brave
As he limped to a cave
Then he saw a gemstone glittering
And he knew he was saved

He slipped on his find

and saw in his mind
His family was happy and waiting
His eyes really shined
So Vermillion the fox  
Lived in a meadow with rocks  
And his family was there too  
And they all had

**WHITE SOCKS.**
I am with
The wind,
Yet I have not swayed,
As others have.
I have not fell
For the gust of the wind,
Yet I cry
For those who have.

I thrive
At the top of the tree,
Overlooking
The ones still climbing.
May others pull me down,
I’ll always get back up.

Eventually,
I will fall,
I will sway,
And I will lose,
But
I will always cry,
Always climb,
And always step out of line.
3129
BY CHOSAUN RIDLEY

3129 pulled the trigger
The world stands still
His girlfriend is screaming and crying
She’s angry and wants to kill
Him

3129
He walked away without looking behind
Talked to his radio "we have a situation"
I’m frozen as a statue but begin to tear up without hesitation
When he was shot his body was left open
For me I remember everything… in slow motion
I memorized the officer's face. long nose, pale skin and slanted eyes but his badge number was most important

3129
He shot him so quickly, to stop him… I didn’t have enough time

3 years later, my cousin is buried in the dirt…, decaying and alone
It’s so quiet and empty without him at home
Auntie says because I saw what had happened, I’m scarred for life.
She’s probably right because I’m terrified to close my eyes

Afraid to walk outside
Afraid to look at a neighborhood officer and say hi
I can’t stand to look at his room door across the hall
Even when I open it, my thoughts will go crazy, I lose my balance, so I can’t stand tall

10 year old black girl sees her cousin shot by a white man
By a cop
By someone who ran
When the gun made its shot
imagine that, 3129
You damaged a 10 year old’s black girl mind
You murdered her best friend, you damaged his lover
Is this a new trend
Maybe not because you didn’t face any chargers nor did u break your cover
Sisters.. heartbroken
His mother.. mournful but no words spoken
His Girlfriend won't stop crying and refuses to move on
You took him away from his family, which is the strongest bond

3129 I hope you hear and this gets to you
Because forgiveness is something I will never do
Nor will I act in ignorance and come for you

Two years later. Now I’m 15
I still have nightmares of the horror I’d seen
My mom is struggling
My dad can hardly sleep
Thankfully my little brother is still care free
But Auntie still cries at night
When I look at her eyes, they no longer shine
Over the years I’ve realized the justice system is unfit
Fred hamton, Rekia Boyd, Tamir rice, my cousin
The more I think about it, I slowly lose it
If I protest, I get shot
If I let things slide, i’ll have heated thoughts
So what do I do?
The only thing promised in life is death right?
But i have too much ahead of me to die out of spite
So my cousin J can watch over me, and be proud of his baby girl.
I’ll make a difference. Change the world
LIGHT ALWAYS FINDS ITS WAY
BY KAYA RICHARDS-ALLEYNE

The world in the back of my mind has a night and day
Passed by the sun was a blue jay
Soon the moon glooms over
And the blue jay leading, sped forward
To the light that has hidden
Inside the feathers forbidden
The Phoenix revealed
The light appealed
Made day again
So I know my mind is at zen

There’s a river that flows
It appears when I doze
It’s only there on good days
When my thoughts aren’t filled with haze
When they are nice and calm
And they haven’t been bombed
Though that flow can change in an instant
And could make me very distant
I listen to the melodies in my head
And they calm the riverbeds
So the tides aren’t high
And the waves haven’t dried
So I can smile to my friends
And be happy again

The clouds are purple and pink
They match what I think
My thoughts are usually bright
and contour out the night
But the clouds are sometimes blue
It depends on my mood
Because they can become very dark
As quick as a light of a spark
That spark burns bright
And brings light back into the night
So my mind is beaming once more
And I don’t have to worry about a storm

The world in the back of my mind has a night and day
It’s a joyful world but sometimes that joy goes away
Sometimes night comes by
And the day waves goodbye
But the light always comes back
So I never feel like I lack
The happiness in my life that I need
To show how happy I can truly be
With my heart heavy in my mind
And my thoughts not going blind
The day is welcomed again
And I wave hi to my old friend
NOTHING
BY DARJAE LUCAS

Here, today I say nothing
Because when I say something
I get’s mistaken for something else
Or Twisted
And misconstrued
So saying nothing just seems easier
Then to say anything
But when I don’t say
I’m a punk or pushover
When I don’t
I’m a mute or weird
I will never understand this lose lose situation
So I will be neither
No mute nor a misspoken individual
I not going to let fear of being mis heard or being different
Take away my freedom of speech
No i’m not and I will never
Mission Statement

The Junior League of Washington is an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.