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Feature: Found Poems

Matthew Ingram  
*DC’s Friendship Collegiate Academy*

Zahyr Canty  
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Kristian Edwards  
*DC’s Friendship Collegiate Academy*

Alayah Boothe  
*DC’s Friendship Collegiate Academy*

Antywon Cosby  
*DC’s Friendship Collegiate Academy*

*See next page for additional authors*

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Authors
Matthew Ingram, Zahyr Canty, Kristian Edwards, Alayah Boothe, Antywon Cosby, and Gregory Simon

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Feature:
Found Poems

Gandy Dancer’s mission has always been about connection. As the literary journal of the SUNY system, we feature art and writing from all over the state, from Fredonia to Plattsburgh, from Suffolk County Community College to Brockport. Our goal is to bring together readers and writers and artists. For a special section in this issue, we reach farther, beyond the state borders, even.

We are delighted to bring you six poems by young writers, students at Friendship Collegiate Academy in Washington, DC. In their language arts class with teacher Donna Lewis Johnson, herself a writer, these students wrote the following “found” poems; that is, they composed poems drawing language from a newspaper article reporting a recent shooting. We encountered these poems and Lewis Johnson’s article about them in The Washington Post (“D.C. students’ ‘found’ poems reveal their weariness with gun violence, January 31, 2023.”)

While they are not SUNY students, we want to publish their work and honor it, as it says so much about gun violence, an epidemic that threatens us all. These poems don’t look away from what is difficult or upsetting, and they don’t let us look away, either. With understatement and grace, they demand accountability, action, response.
Gunfire

Gunfire killed one man.
Gunfire injured three others.
Gunfire injured an 8-year-old child.
Pow Pow

A grim ritual repeated often accountability for those involved, turning to a word used frequently as gunfire.
A Wounded Community

Chief stood behind crime-scene tape
across four lanes of Georgia Avenue
rush hour brought to a halt
Gunfire killed a man
and injured a child

He recited the details
and expressed anger
He did so again
and again
and again
A grim ritual
he often repeated

He hoped the community demands
“accountability”
as gunfire generated headlines
and claimed children’s lives
turning said community
to a wounded community
Bloody Violence

January 3rd shooting expressed anger.

Stood behind crime-scene tape across four lanes of Georgia Avenue.

An 8-year-old child, including one man killed in the gunfire.

Gunfire has generated headlines and claimed children’s lives.

behind the scene of Georgia Avenue
End Gun Violence

Stood behind crime-scene tape draped across four lanes Georgia Avenue the evening rush hour brought to an abrupt halt
Gunfire that killed one man, injuring three others including an 8-year-old child
He recalled sparse details of the January 3 shooting and expressed anger
Grim ritual he has repeated often in his two years
Wednesday after two children and a man were shot and wounded exiting a metrobus in Northeast D.C.
Contee said he hoped the community demands accountability for those involved.
The evening rush hour brought to an abrupt halt by the hail of gunfire that killed one man, injured three others including an 8-year-old. Conte said he hoped the community demands “accountability.”