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Feature: Found Poems

Matthew Ingram
DC's Friendship Collegiate Academy

Zahyr Canty
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Kristian Edwards
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Alayah Boothe
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Feature: Found Poems

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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.

MATTHEW INGRAM

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.

KRISTIAN EDWARDS

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.

shooting scene
shooting scene
shooting scene

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.

No Violence Needed

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.
Contee said he hoped
the community demands
“accountability.”