



Podium Four

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A Letter from Podium

Welcome to the Fourth Volume of The Podium Foundation Journal. For those who have experienced our first three volumes, you won't be disappointed in the imagination, skill and stories from the teenagers of Richmond's Public Schools. For those opening one of our journals for the first time, discovering the incredible talents our city's youth have to offer, you're in for a surprise of beauty, power and creativity.

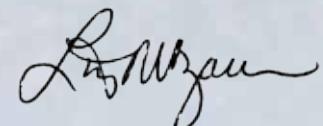
This year, something special happened in the schools. Writing and sharing that writing has become cool. Podium Clubs, held in all eight city high schools in the afternoon, have blossomed in attendance and output. We surpassed all previous seasons in submissions, finishing with almost 1,500 – and we expect to set a new standard next year. In schools where good attendance at the Podium Clubs had hovered around a dozen in past years, we grew to 25 or more, some over 30.

As the interest in Podium has grown, so have our offerings. To present even more astounding pieces of writing and art, we launched an online journal, www.podium-online.org. This allows us to publish even more high quality work to amaze our city and beyond. The other major Podium initiative this year grew out of the boldness and vision of a handful of teachers who included the Podium Journal as part of their instruction. They knew that the student writings and art in the journal, all depictions of the lives and attitudes of their own communities, would engage their peers in powerful and meaningful ways, as much or more than regular curricular materials. Out of this experience, a new program, Inspiration² was born. Podium, working with

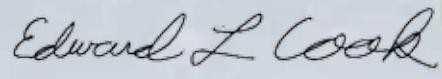
volunteer teachers, provides lessons plans and instruction materials tailored to each volume of the journal. The goal is to inspire the students of one year through the work of their classmates from a previous year, creating a cycle of inspiration that will persist and grow.

There are many people and partners whose energy and support have made this journal possible, as well as our several programs for teachers and students. If you'd like to know more about how you can help Richmond's youth "Take A Stand," visit us at www.thepodiumfoundation.org.

Richmond's youth have something to tell you. From their hearts and minds, to these pages. Enjoy.



Lindy Bumgarner
Executive Director



Edward L. Cook
Chair

A Letter from the Richmond Times-Dispatch

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 2012 edition of The Podium Foundation's literary journal – the fourth volume of a vibrant collection of works by high school students from Richmond Public Schools.

The ability to express oneself effectively is one of the most crucial skills a young person will take into the world. Self-expression is vital to our individual well-being, the vibrancy of our community and the health of our democracy. Podium provides an invaluable forum for young people in Richmond to speak their heart, mind and soul.

In at least one sense, I was once where they are – a teenager with a lot on my mind, in search of a forum. For me, high school and college newspapers filled the need to express myself. The pen became my roadmap to self-realization.

It's a frequently trodden road: Frederick Douglass. Booker T. Washington. W.E.B Du Bois. Langston Hughes. Zora Neal Hurston. Ralph Ellison. Nikki Giovanni. Maya Angelou. Touré. The written word has long expressed African-American frustration, aspiration and celebration. Podium members, with this publication, might well be on the path to join these men and women of letters.

The fiction, memoirs, commentary, poetry and art within the pages of this journal will provide a window into the lives and ideas of Richmond's young people – a group often painted in a broad caricature, captured in unfocused snapshots or rendered invisible.

As a board member of the Podium Foundation, it has been gratifying to work firsthand with these talented, provocative and courageous students. I think you will find their works to be a revelation. Welcome to their world.

Sincerely,



Michael Paul Williams
Columnist

A Letter from Richmond Public Schools

Five years ago, The Podium Foundation and Richmond Public Schools had a vision. They wanted to provide a medium to give high school students an opportunity to showcase their writing skills in a variety of genres: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, persuasion, and art illustrations. From this vision, the Podium Journal was born.

Richmond high schools students took on the challenge to write on a specific topic of interest, write to a real audience, write for a specific purpose, and, in the process, get their messages published. This project brought together some of best writers, editors, business leaders, and teachers in the city of Richmond to make this happen. Students and teachers were trained and mentored to give students a platform to share their voices about issues and ideas affecting their lives. Students learned about the writing process, editorial leadership, team building, and presentation skills in the real world of publication.

Richmond Public Schools would like to thank all the students, their parents, their teachers, the bus drivers, the administration, the community organizations, and The Podium Foundation board for their commitment to this project and their resolve to produce an outstanding on-line and print literary journal.

A special salute goes out to David Robbins and Lindy Bumgarner, two of the amazing pioneers of this partnership.

Richard L. Staton



English/Language Arts Instructional Specialist

The Golden Road

Sean McGrath
Franklin Military Academy High School

It is human nature
That gives us the drive to survive

Something we call
The Magma of the Heart's Fight Ignition

They say there's a road all great people have to walk
The Golden Road

There are many challenges one must face
Even so, this is the path all great people must walk

If there is a wall in our way, we will knock it down
If there is no path, we will carve one with our own
hands

Greatness does not pick you
You must pick Greatness

Throw reason and logic to the curb and do the
impossible
The road may sound like something you can never
accomplish

If you do not believe in yourself
Believe in me, who believes in you



Khadijah Watson
Armstrong High School

BEAT

Music pumping through my soul.
My heart.
A certain step is set for the show,
Yet allowing me to improvise.
My passion sends me and him
Arching into beautiful shapes and forms.

It makes the crowd “ohh” and “aah.”
But is this how life works?
Is life set to a beat, and to delicate steps of a dance?
Can’t there be one moment
Just one moment
When you can step out of life’s dance
Into your own?
Is life filled with beautiful shapes,
Causing “oohs” and “aahs?”

In some moments, yes.
Your life can leap and glide,
From one beat to the next,
In astounding beauty.

Yet, in others,
It can stay in one beat
Until your one moment comes.
Your moment to shine.

Ali Davidson
Richmond Community High School

An Ode to Music

Shakila Kearney
Armstrong High School

Music carries me
into the arms of comfort
Play loud and clear
to drown out my sorrows
Deafen me
Protect me from this life’s cruel profanities
Could you compose my disheveled thoughts
into a melody?
You are my inspiration
in this orchestra called life
Your healing powers
superior to any remedy
You uplift
soothe and enlighten my soul
You, Music, the magical entity
of which I will never tire
Evolution has destroyed man
yet it has not tarnished you
Play on, Music
Do not leave me alone
Play on
For when you stop I shall know
I have come to the end

Untitled

Who knew that living life could cause so much stress
Making hard decisions, mistakes, making a mess
A life that was made to be so complex
Just waiting to see what happens next

Trying to better myself and do what is right
Not wanting to lose this everlasting fight
Setting goals to see if I can reach the top
Promising myself to never quit or come to a stop

To keep my mind a state of dedication
Not losing hunger
Steady motivation
Using what I have learned and staying positive
Not being negative just offering what I can give

Knowing that I need to keep a winning attitude
And if I lose, to keep my head high and show gratitude
Have faith
No matter what, stay consistent
Watch out for all obstacles, be persistent

Be who I am and stay humble
Be loud
Speak out
Never whisper or mumble
Always remember where you come from
Have loyalty
If you do all of these, you will have royalty



Jasmin Davis
Armstrong High School

I Can Only Dream

Ian DeRamus
Huguenot High School

For seven days I dream a scheme
I see so clean and gleam with sheen
So bright my eyes with weary tunes
So free my soul with crescent moons
I see the faults that haunt me so
I hear them laugh so far and slow
For seven days I have been dreaming
Steady learning while I'm sinking
Gaining thoughts and rhythmic drive
That I shall lose when I'm deprived
Now I shudder now I hide
I fear and never wake inside
Am I worthy of glancing lies?
Gleeful hope and gracious strides
Or must I sit inside the seam
And stare inside a box's scene
Till dirt and worms belay the start
And war to grade my skin apart
I can trust no soul while I'm alone
Heaven tell me where's my stone
I profit from the devil's drone
You rave it when your mind is thrown
My seven days have turned to years
No one sees, no one peers
You see the anger in the street

Tashiara Scott
Richmond Community High School



LOST

Katy Miles
Open High School

The journey I take,
I walk alone.
I wish for someone to walk with me,
But this journey I must take on my own.

Like a traveler in the woods,
I am lost.
It is a cold and dark journey;
I am covered in frost.

I need a friend to hold my hand,
To protect me.
But no one is here,
No friends; I am lonely.

As I walk along the path, I ask,
Why am I here?
Where am I?
I wipe away the tear.

I am here for a reason,
Still yet to be found.
When I find it, will I know?
I sit on a tree stump and look around.

Why am I running away from myself?

Impossible to do.

You cannot run away from yourself, no matter what.
You are always right behind you.

Who I am.

That's what I'm looking for.
Right now I feel like just something.
I think I can be something more.

When I think I'll never find myself, a glimmer of hope shines.
Far into the distance, I see a light.
I walk towards it; a mirror.

A reflection of who I am supposed to be when everything in
my world is right.

The reflection shows the truth.
My self looks back at me.

Written in my reflection's blood, "This is who you are."
I am who I am and that's all I want to be.

Sorry it was never me
Sorry I'm not enough to make you change
Sorry I couldn't make you love me
Sorry I gave my heart to you when it wasn't what you wanted

Sorry you can't appreciate me for what I'm worth
Sorry I didn't do a good job of reaching you
Sorry it was never meant for you to understand me

Sorry for being bitter
Sorry for hating those other girls
Sorry for not trusting you
Sorry for blaming you
Sorry for wanting a future with you

Sorry for opening up to you
Sorry for needing you
Sorry for asking you to care about someone other than yourself
Sorry for trying to show you a better way
Sorry for caring

If I could I would
Say it in Arabic, Spanish, German, and French
Then I could say it with no problem
I'm sorry for being your daughter

Apologies

Ebony Lambert
Thomas Jefferson High School



Citizens In Distress

Decades fade like the echoes of our fore fathers
Hazy memories too hard to grasp
Why bother?
To keep traditions alive would be pointless in adolescent eyes
We're more hipped to transcending nonsense
A screaming culture dies
Why should we run from something so priceless?
A chance to say we started a revolution would be my guess
It's hard to give up on a thing like culture
We still mange to pick and choose what we believe
Like scavenging vultures
Scarcely so we ever stand aside and see what we've initiated
We thrive on popular demand to be like everyone else, imitated
So engrossed in our own state of being
Blinded without reason
A fallacy against ourselves
Who are we really appeasing?
It's nothing else but ancestral treason
Pucker up those ears for all to hear
What we are doing utterly absurd
To revamp our society comes in many varieties
It starts with you
The People



Leslie Stevens
Thomas Jefferson

For a poet

Empty tub
Music loud

Enthuses people living miles away

Speak Poetry

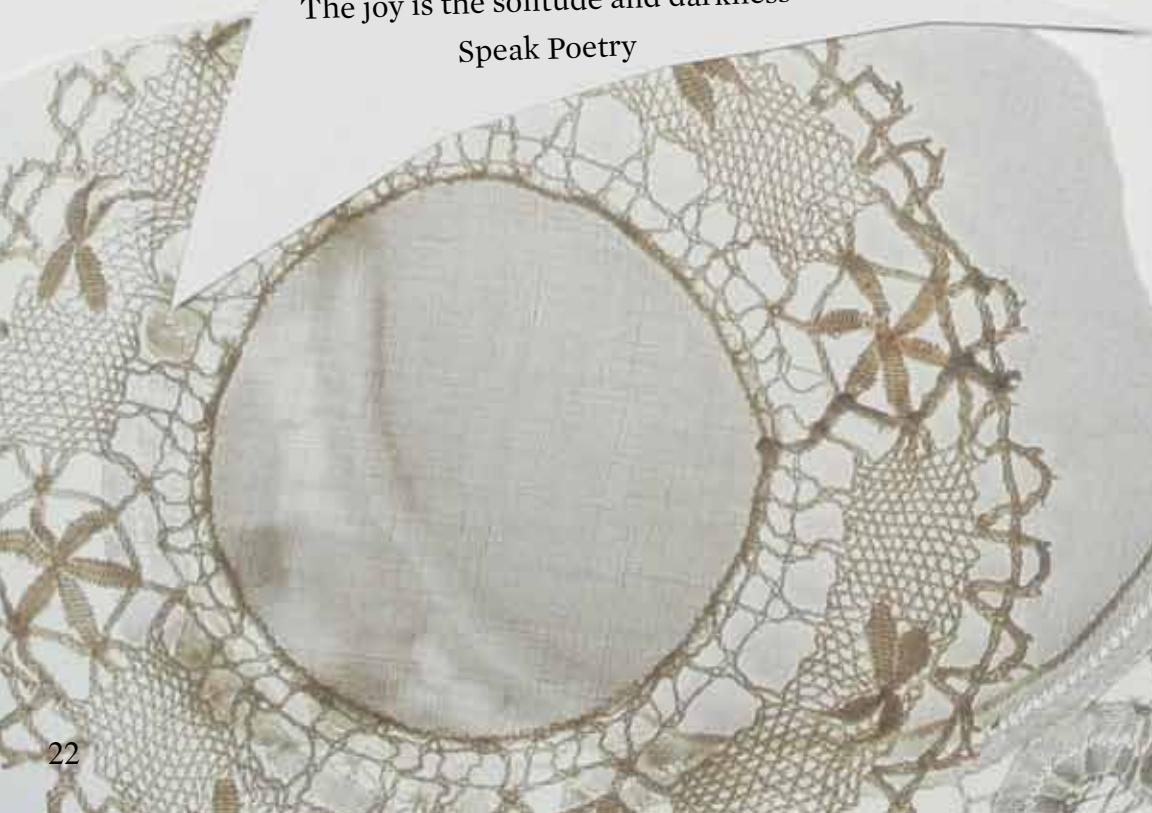
Until your voice breaks over sore bones
Like water from steamy creeks over rough pebbles
Shingles falling from rooftops in a tornado

Speak Poetry

Believe you can travel back

To bittersweet memories
The joy is the solitude and darkness

Speak Poetry



WHERE I'M FROM

Zakia Alomari
Open High School

I stem from a tree filled with apples , oranges and the
right amount of nuts

The fondest memories of my tongue salivate
From 7-Up Cake, Grandmother's Potato Salad and
Mother's Winter Stew

I survived the family rivalry; a father and son match off
Redskins versus Cowboys showdown
The warmest of aromas

Imported incense of Cherry Wood and Vanilla
The most eclectic of homes

The Mosque on Fridays and Saint James on Sundays
I wish I could walk into photos

That come spilling out of boxes and treasured albums
Yearning to talk to faces I once knew
Only hoping to get a better look

Memorizing the tree I belong to, strong and unwilling
by any storm

Only could my clan be plucked and carried away
to heaven

By the graceful hands of God



Lissa Lueer
Richmond Community High School

Broken Chandelier

Brianna Rodriguez
Franklin Military Academy High School

I see the world through the eyes of a broken chandelier. Crisp gold overshadowed by precious white diamonds. The gold is my backbone on which my emotions rest. The shininess of the diamonds expresses my outgoing, bright personality. When you turn it on, the electric current revs up the action; just like when you rev me up and the adrenaline kicks in. But wait—

I said a broken chandelier.

Tiny pieces scattered on the floor. A blur of envisioned light. I can see lines of the sun's rays, but not what my future holds.

See, before I was human, I was a chandelier put together by factory workers. I overlooked my dinner table every night and saw nothing but the shiny fake wood accented by the sky blue railings of the chair. See, it would have been nice if I could have looked over a happy, "always eating Sunday dinner" type of family, but I didn't.

Instead, I saw the emptiness of the dining room, and from my view, I caught a glimpse of the kitchen. I watched as, one by one, each person passed me on the way to the fridge. If I had a mouth, I would have said, "Cook a meal and gather around the family table." But I couldn't because I can only see.

I observed the lives of this family, always busy with never ending schedules. Their mentality set at "money over everything." What happened to "family over everything?" See, I'm still here and I've never been turned on except for Christmas.

I wonder what would happen if they turned me on to gather around the family table. Wait...that's why I'm broken.

Group Project
Richmond Community High School

MAKE ART



NOT WAR

No Child Should Left Behind

Kathryn Reavis
George Wythe High School

In the world that we live in, I often see young girls trying to act older than they are. Society and popular media has a lot to do with it. Girls are having sex, wearing makeup and promiscuous clothing at an early age, and are being portrayed as sexual stereotypes. They are growing up too fast and need proper guidance.

There are teenagers who are becoming pregnant, having sexual intercourse without a condom, probably not even caring that they might get an STD or AIDS. 13 million children are born to women under the age of 20 worldwide. Richmond has a high teen pregnancy rate; I often see this fact in the neighborhood I live.

When I'm walking through the hallway at school, I see girls that look like they don't even belong there. They wear heavy makeup and inappropriate clothing. I feel that the parent should monitor more of what their child does. For example, the clothes are too tight. Skirts and dresses rise above the knee, which actually goes against the School Code of Conduct. It's now getting to the point that even grown men are starting to hit on them.

Finally, my last thing about teenage girls is how they portray themselves as sexual stereotypes. Every day when you look at music videos, you see women selling their bodies for money. It seems like females would do something about it but, sadly no. Teenage girls are starting to degrade themselves as well. It begins with peer pressure, young girls are going to parties, dancing on young boys who don't respect them, and doing drugs. They don't even respect themselves because they just want to fit in with other people.

Parents need to show their teenage girls the proper guidance. Parents should take their daughters to classes to learn more about sex education and give open advice on safety. Instead of living a grown women's life, just live your life as a teenager. If you rush through life, you'll end up wishing you were a child again.

Nature Haiku

Talees Givens
Open High School

Summer breeze through trees
Welcomes new memories
To keep forever



Daniel Johnson
John Marshall High School

I can't complain. My childhood was a good one, filled with all the stuff that I did do and all the things I didn't. Looking back, all of it is a big haze with a crown placed upon my regrets and triumphs. However, there is one thing I'll always remember, my transition from a little girl to a slightly less little girl. The slightly less little girl understood the absolute grittiness of reality.

The bullet to my innocence was the death of my childhood best friend, Charity.

I was fourteen at the time, a freshman in high school. On Monday, I got a call from Charity's mother telling me that Charity was in the hospital.

"She's okay," she said optimistically, "We just want you to come in and say hello."

There was never a hello involved in the visit, only staring. She was lying, unconscious, and we only stared at her. She had diabetes and was now in a coma. The doctors said that she would pull through, so we were only shaken and not worrying too much. When I went home and all through school, the image of her stuck with me. She was all I could think about.

My mind called out to me, "What if she does die?"

And I answered, "Well, I'll have to live in her honor then."

I wondered why I had even asked that question. Her death was not even probable in my child-like mind. Kids as sweet as her, as pure and young as her, do not have deaths like that. They become grown-ups, have a good life, and die peacefully in their beds. The sinking feeling in my conscience told me otherwise, and it told me the ideal vision I had about the world was wrong.

Wednesday came, and I got another call from Charity's mother. She said Charity had gotten considerably worse, and she now needed assistance to breath. Those words hit me like bricks, and I rushed to see if she was okay. When I got to the

hospital, I saw the horror I was trying to avoid. Reality had a tight grip on me. The girl that I shared my first cherished memories with was strapped up to machines too complex for me to understand. Something screamed inside of me to say goodbye now, but I could not. I sat there. It was the most helpless feeling in the world. We left the hospital in silence because words were too much now.

When I woke, everything seemed normal. I was on my way to see Charity again, and everything was going to be good. My mother sat on my bed and held my hand; she looked me straight in the eye and told me, "I'm sorry honey, but Charity died last night. She didn't make it."

After that, everything was a big blur. Crying and reminiscing and then crying again because I had realized that those would be the only memories I would get to make with her.

When the funeral came about a week later, I was made to wear a pink dress. It made me furious. If this was a funeral, why was I meant to wear pink?

Thinking deeper, I remembered that Charity's favorite color was pink. In the blue of everything, the feeling after her death is something that I will always carry. Yes, sometimes death claims the lives of young. It leaves us wondering what to do. Sometimes life throws the very worst at you that it can. It is what we do with it and how we triumph over it that defines us.

The funeral could not even have been called a funeral, more like going home. Pink was posted from pew to pew, over the sanctuary, clapping and singing filled every crevice. Of course, we had our share of tears too, but we were happy that Charity did not have to deal with the burdens of this world anymore.

That her innocence was kept intact like a bubble that floats off in the distance.

Study Night

Devin Parker was known as the school nerd. He was a straight A student, who all the teachers liked. He had the highest GPA in the class. However, he had poor social skills. It was a rare event if he got invited to parties or received phone calls. He always envied the popular kids because they were everything he wasn't: good looking, well-liked, and, well, popular.

One of the popular kids was a girl, Alyssa, the cheerleading captain. Devin had a huge crush on her since elementary school, but Alyssa always ignored him. She tried to avoid him, actually. She was tall, light-skinned, and had long beautiful hair that made Devin want to smell it. She had the cutest dimples that would make a tough guy blush, and the way she walked made Devin sweat. Devin tried to get Alyssa to like him as much as he liked her, but he always failed.

One day, as Devin was rushing to class in a hallway so full of commotion and movement it seemed like a stampede. He bumped into Alyssa, knocking his books onto the floor.

"Watch where you're going, Geek," yelled Alyssa.

"Um...s-sorry," said Devin. Being in Alyssa's presence made him nervous. As Devin was picking up his books he overheard Alyssa talking to her friends.

"I saw you over there talking to your boo," one of her friends joked.

"Get serious," laughed Alyssa, "Come on. Let's go to class before Mrs. Jones gives us detention."

Mrs. Jones was the English teacher, and she was very strict. She always gave her students truckloads of work to do. This week, her class was studying the book *Flowers for Algernon*.

the class ended, Mrs. Jones called to Alyssa, "Alyssa, can I see you for a minute?" Alyssa nodded and walked over to her desk.

"You have been slacking in my class the last couple of weeks. You have been coming in late, you never turn in any homework, and you skipped my class a couple of times," said Mrs. Jones.

"Well, I've got things to do. I have cheerleading practice, I have to work, and I have to take care of my sisters while my mom is at work," retorted Alyssa.

Mrs. Jones thought for a minute, and then she gave Alyssa an ultimatum. "Okay. Since you are so busy, I'll help you with all of that. However, if you don't pass the exam I'm giving this Friday you can kiss cheerleading good-bye."

"You can't do that!"

"Watch me," said Mrs. Jones. "In fact, I know just the person who can tutor you--Devin Parker."

"What?" Alyssa gasped.

"You heard me."

"I can't work with that dweeb. I don't even like him," complained Alyssa.

"Well, it's either that or fail the test. Pick your choice."

"Fine," groaned Alyssa, "I'll let the geek tutor me."

Alyssa went to Devin's house that night. She knocked quietly when she reached the front door. The door sprang open, and Devin, noticing it was Alyssa at the door, broke out into a nervous sweat.

"Oh, hi, Alyssa. Nice to see you," said Devin.

"Mrs. Jones said you have to tutor me, so don't make a big deal out of it." Alyssa walked in the house as Devin stared after her. Oh-my-God, the girl of my dreams is at my house, Devin thought to himself.

The two sat at a kitchen table piled with books and paper. "I thought we would start with chapter one," said Devin.

"Whatever," replied Alyssa as she texted.

"Alyssa, can I ask you something?"

"What," said Alyssa in an annoyed tone.

"Why are you always so rude to me?"

"Because you're nerdy, annoying, and just plain weird," snapped Alyssa. "Besides, I have a reputation to protect. I can't be seen hanging out with geeks."

Devin nodded. Then asked, "Can't you be popular and nice to everyone?"

Alyssa laughed. "Seriously? Do you not get it? If I get talking to a kid in the science club, my social clique would kick me out. Same thing if I got caught hanging out with a kid from the AV club. If I get caught talking to you the same thing would happen."

"Does being popular mean everything to you?"

"Yeah, duh."

"Well, I think you are beautiful and special the way you are. I also think you are too smart to fall for that crap."

Alyssa was shocked at Devin's statement. No boy had ever told her she was special before.

"Alyssa, I loved you since elementary school, and I think you are the most beautiful girl I've ever seen but..."

Alyssa headed into Devin's lips not knowing what was going on. The kiss kept going. The deeper it got, the harder it was to stop. When the kiss was over, they looked at each other dumbfounded.

"Maybe we should get back to work," suggested Devin.

"Yeah, totally," said Alyssa trying to brush off what had just happened.

Devin tutored Alyssa the whole week without ever mentioning the kiss again. On Friday, Alyssa took the exam, and found out the following week, to her surprise, she passed.

Devin walked over to his locker, opened it, and found a note. It said: Dear Devin, thanks for all your help. I really appreciate it. P.S. I always thought you were cute. XOXO, Alyssa. Devin smiled while reading the note, and put it in his pocket. He bumped into Alyssa later in the day.

"Thanks, Devin," said Alyssa while hugging him.

"No problem."

Alyssa turned around to see her friends watching them. "Ew, Devin, get away from me!"

Alyssa walked over to her friends and headed to class. Before she turned to go down the hallway, she winked at Devin.

I knew she liked me.



Anita Davis
Richmond Community High School

How great it is to be a poet!

Jonathon Villatoro
Huguenot High School

How great it is to be a poet.

To find beauty in everything, even nothing.
To walk among the people dreaming;
Living life on either side of the imagination,
The world, my canvas for creation.

If only you could see the world through my eyes,
And for a minute stand on this side.
Where the sky is a piece of paper,
The trees are paintbrushes
Reaching to create beauty.

How great it is to be a poet.

To drift from reality for afar
That I forget if I came walking or in a car.
I find my way back counting stars.

To lay on soft green hairs,
And feel the earth's breath.
Her heartbeats, my lullaby.
I lay down and bid reality good-bye.

I lay to watch the trees paint under the night sky.
The wind, the force behind their strokes.
Then soon enough, the once clear sky is filled with
marks like white smoke.

How great it is to be a poet.
Enjoy it.



Isa Esparza
Richmond Community High School

Brittany Patterson
Thomas Jefferson High School

How I

how I hide behind this smile you will never figure out
how I front confidence without a doubt
how I fake optimism in my negativity
how I imagine myself different inside my self-pity
how I work this boldness inside a weak frame
how I walk with purpose knowing failure's name
how I float with this unbelievable glow
how I trick my own reflection into believing myself,
even I will never know



Mayzie Zechini
Richmond Community High School

Ashley Short
Huguenot High School

I Am Beautiful Too

I wonder why God made my skin so dark.
I hear the bitter words of my light-skinned
“friends” mocking me.
Their words cut like a dagger.
I see the jealousy in their eyes,
wishing their skin was as rich as mine.
I wanted to change my shade of color
because at the time I didn’t know that

I Am Beautiful Too.

I pretended to act like their comments
didn’t affect me.
When in reality, I muffled my cries with a smile.
I felt my heart’s teardrops stain my insides
longing to be different.
I touch my face as I look in the mirror,
and I am ashamed.
I worry if I will feel like this forever,
unhappy with my appearance.
I cry at night asking God,
“Why did you make me this way?”
And He answered letting me know that

I Am Beautiful Too.

I understand now that God makes no mistakes.
I say when I look in the mirror, “Thank you,
Lord, for my beautiful brown skin!”
I dream that my future husband will have
skin like mine.
I forgive those who have mocked me in the past
because I know their ignorance.
My daughters will grow up knowing
they came from
the black queens of Africa.
They will embrace their beauty
and say to themselves

I Am Beautiful Too.

Diamond Daddy
Armstrong High School

Sorry 4 Being Me

Afraid to turn the corner.
I know what's in store for me.
Yelling bad words,
and pulling my hair,
I begin to feel unworthy.

Every day it's the same.

I wonder will they run out of names?
Should I cut my hair?
Take a weapon?
Someone please, help me!

Where's Spiderman or Superman to set me free?

Too many to try to take a stand.
To raise a shaky hand.
When will it stop?
Why do they hate me?

Silent cries every night wondering.
Tomorrow, will I have the will to fight?



Lauren McKeithen and
Marilyn Minor
Richmond Community High School

Nora Petree
Open High School

A great divide
A land aglow
This might decide
But you don't know
All who have died
You're scared to show
The tears you cried
The red stained snow
Eyes open wide
Rose flowers grow
In love and pride
Both friend and foe
Lay side by side
And cold winds blow
As blood is dried
You whisper, "No."

AFTERMATH



Night of Explosions

If only the night would last long enough,
to let me spit out all my poison.
Under the cover of darkness,
my senses are fully alight.
If only time could freeze
for five eternal seconds,
to let me breathe in the peace
that I could not find.
Given the right conditions,
I became a monster;
given the right conditions,
a monster can turn into a king.
If only the night left seeds that I could plant,
I would grow trees of flashing darkness;
I would eat their fluorescent fruits of secrets,
and enter forever the realm of destructive madness.

Trevonne Branch
Thomas Jefferson High School



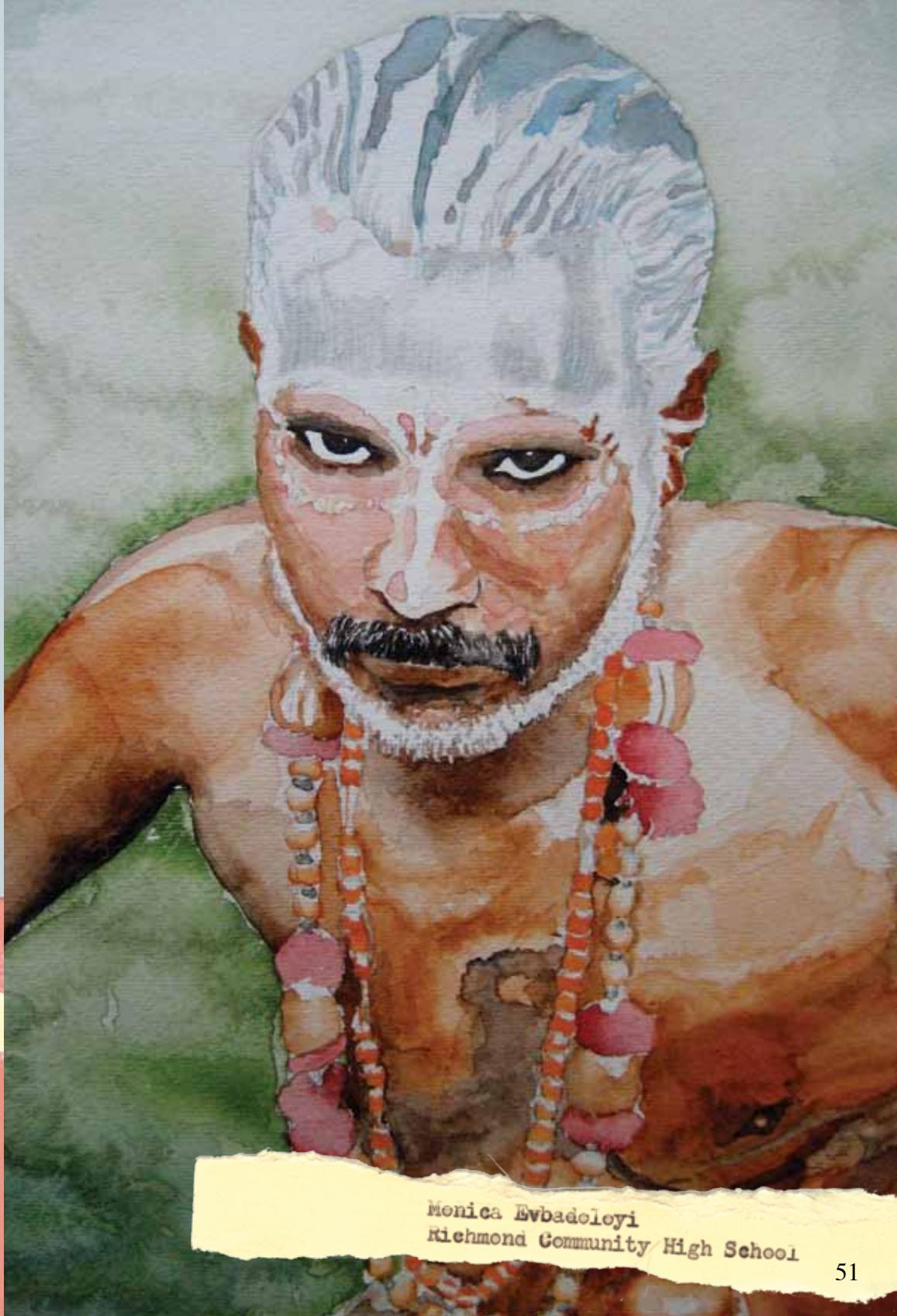
Cheiese Forehand
Armstrong High School

Last Day

I count the hours, and the days go by
thinking to myself our love could have lasted
How much I love you I count the ways

I never gave up
until that last day
Your elegant voice, your passionate touch
I miss loving you so much
I can not unveil how it truly feels, there is no way
I walk around in a daze
I can't sleep and won't eat
because our love wasn't meant to be
but I want you here beside me
I can feel your warm embrace
and see a beautiful smile on your face
I will love you until the end of days
I'll wait until then
that very last day

Cadet Lt. Col. Christian Foderingham, Battalion Commander
FFranklin Military Academy High School



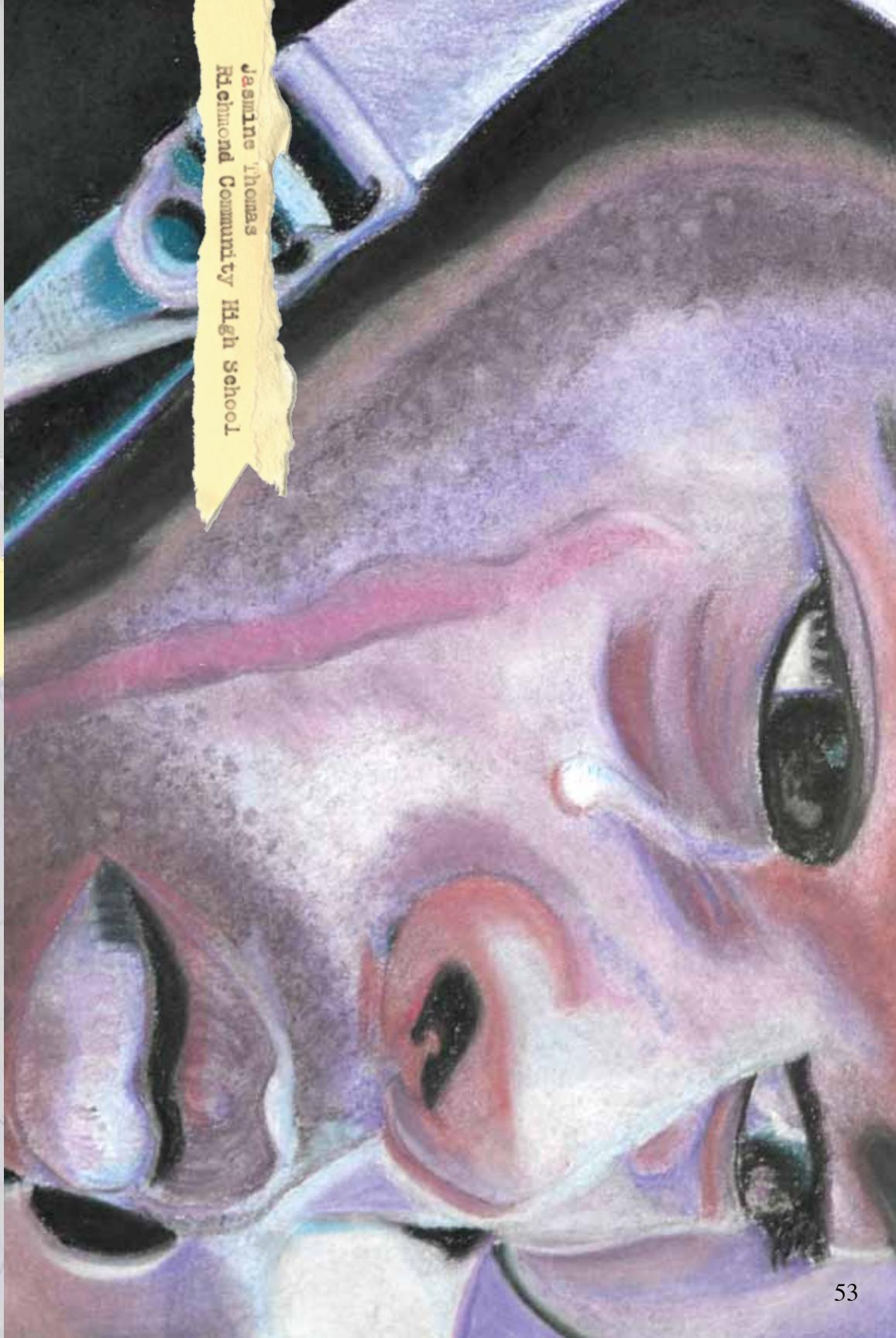
Monica Evbadeleyi
Richmond Community High School

Amber Honaker
Huguenot High School

My Lament

I am fear.
The discolored grays of everyone's insecurities
smother me in a heavy cloak.
In need of comforting words, for I cannot help
these tears that roll down my pale cheeks.
Depression is a distant cousin I do not want to
know personally.
I reside in the attic of people's minds.
My only job, to stay a reminder.
Though I desire a cure for this ailment.

Jasmine Thomas
Richmond Community High School



Demarius Thomas
George Wythe High School

POWERFUL

Your body trembles
fluctuating powers rise
set flight towards the sky

Lavonte Cannon
Thomas Jefferson High School

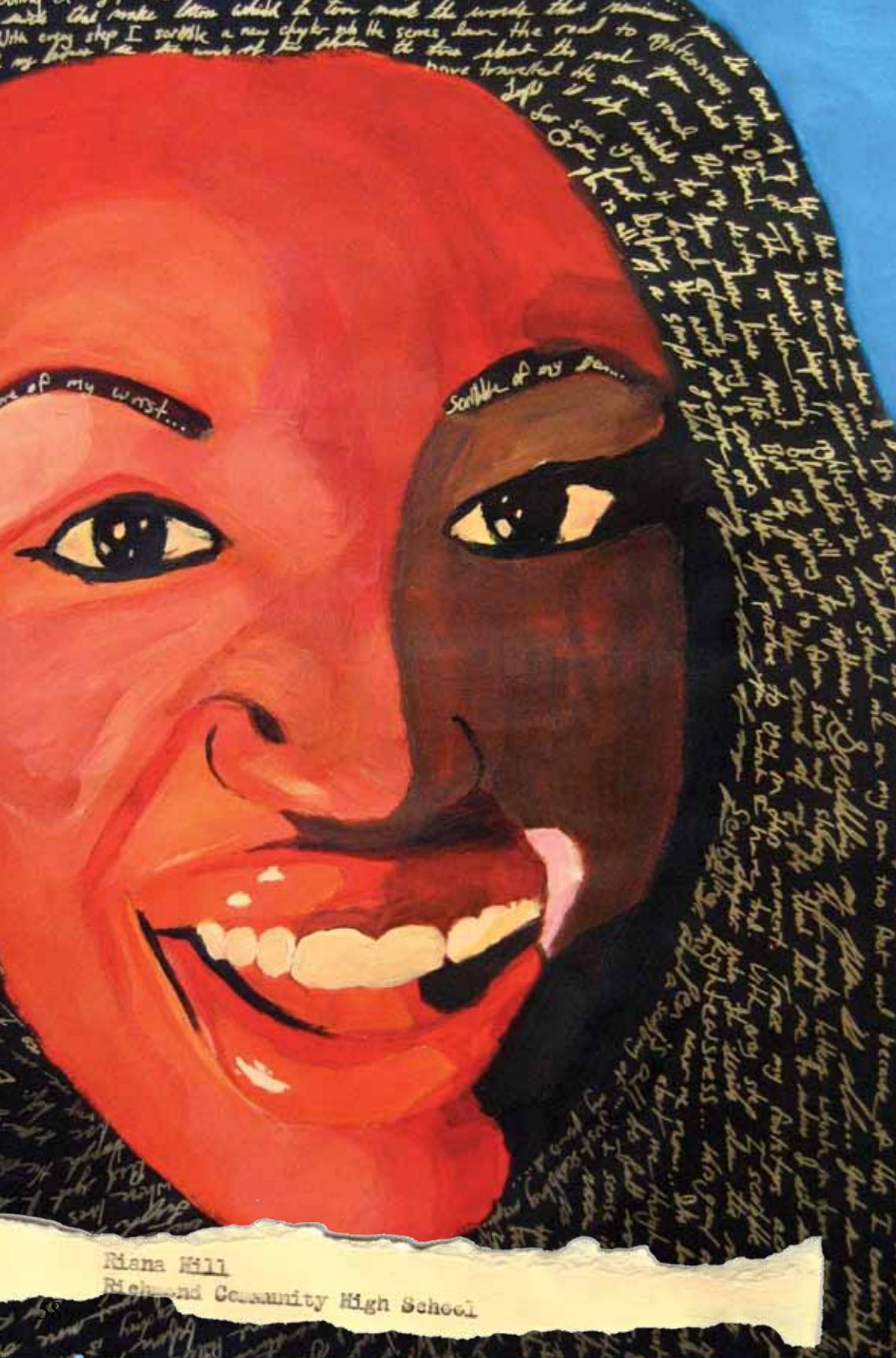


Jabraya Jones
Franklin Military Academy High School

Emotions That Control Me

if you don't understand
me please don't judge
me for I have
emotions that control
me things I
can't explain
some things infuriate
me please don't judge
me I have
emotions that take over
me some things
may cause me to
break down and
cry until I am
no longer worthy
please don't judge
me for I have emotions
that control
me sometimes I
can be filled with
joy never lasting long but
still over rejoice
don't judge for these
emotions sometimes
take control of me





Riana Hill
Richard Community High School

Yasmeina Omens
Huguenot High School

Love at First Sight

As I made my way downtown on a pleasant Saturday
Some beautiful music drifted my way
This one guy caught my eye while strumming his guitar,
I admired his exemplary jingles from afar
His allies played along in unison
Intrigued, I was; I couldn't help but listen
Such soft and sweet sounds, kissing the breeze
Had me so hypnotized, time seemed to freeze

Two by two, liquid dancers joined the fun
The music tickled their senses, they twirled and spun
The mind-boggling jams played on and on
In minutes, my mind was gone

The sun reflected off his gorgeous face
His smile sent my heart soaring through space
The birds sang along to the catchy tune
As my watch struck twelve in the afternoon

By now, I realized how close we were
And I had to ask, "What are you playing, sir?"
He smiled in the warm sunlight
Then he gently took my hand and said, "Love at first
sight."

Malinda Givens
John Marshall High School



Nyja Frazier
John Marshall High School

Fighting losing battles, Mom never let me retreat
“Pick up your sword, pick up the pen,”
she said. “That’s how you defeat.”
Pops showed me hard work and dedication,
never used excuses just reasons.
Coach made me ride the bench,
so I got better practice over four seasons.
With time came growth, found myself
giving farewells rather than greetings
Because Aunt showed me people
can be false, treasonous and deceiving.
Uncle taught me not to put faith in a
dream catcher because nightmares can creep in.
Take what you need, leave the rest,
learned that at church from the Deacon.
So I shoot for the stars, conscious
of the moon and what I believe in.
Eyes closed and mind open,
you can find what it is you’re seeking.

Written by Nyja Frazier

Podium Programs

Podium supports the teaching and practice of writing skills and creative expression in our city's public high schools. Here's a list of our current programs.

Podium Journal

The Podium Journal puts on citywide display the creative, non-fiction, and artistic work of RPS high school students. Every piece displayed here has been created, selected, edited, and designed by students while working with volunteers and mentors. 20,000 copies of the annual Podium Journal is distributed at no cost to students and the city.

Podium-online.org

Because only a single printed Podium Journal is published each year, a limited number of high school pieces of writing and art can be featured. In order to expand the number of students who can successfully submit for publication, Podium developed an online multimedia journal showcasing hundreds of pieces of writing and art, videos, spoken word, and more.

Podium Live!

Each year, Podium presents a free, open to the public staged reading of the Podium Journal. Professional actors, spoken word artists, and local officials and personalities read students' published works with music and other entertainment provided by RPS students.

T3 "Teaching the Teachers" Academy

Podium offers an annual summer series of writing workshops for city teachers across disciplines in grades 6-12 and provides teachers with continuing education workshops for incorporating writing of all kinds into their classrooms.

Richmond Times-Dispatch Student Column

The RTD has partnered with Podium to publish a column titled "Where Youth Take A Stand," featuring student writing on a variety of current events. Journalists from the RTD lead in-school workshops with teachers and students in the art of the editorial.

Virginia Voice Partnership

The Podium Journal is read and broadcast each year by Virginia Voice, a non-profit providing audio reading and information services for those who cannot read for themselves due to vision impairment or other disability in the Richmond and Norfolk/Hampton Roads areas.

Get Involved

Want to help Richmond teens Take A Stand?

Get Involved!

Be a Mentor or Speaker at a Podium Club!

Sign up for our newsletter

Like Podium on Facebook or Follow us on Twitter

Donate snacks, pens, flash drives, etc. to Podium Clubs

Make a financial contribution:

Every bit helps! Podium produces all its programs at no cost to the schools and community. We rely on you. Make your tax-deductible, secure donation on our website at www.thepodiumfoundation.org

If you'd like to take part, give us a call 804-921-2328 or email us at lmbumgarner@thepodiumfoundation.org.

We love to hear from volunteers and supporters, and we would love to hear from you!

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