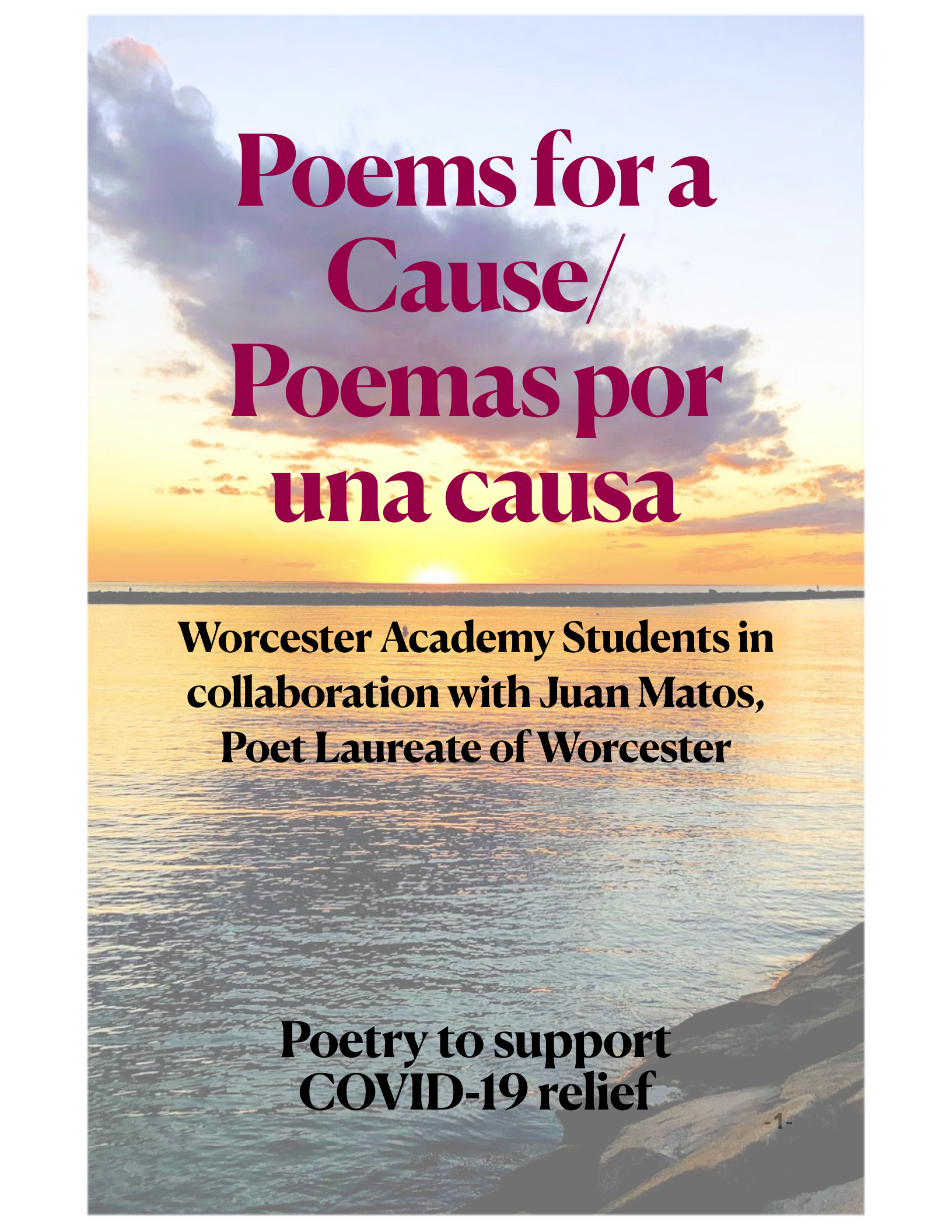




Poems for a Cause/ Poemas por una causa

**Worcester Academy Students in
collaboration with Juan Matos,
Poet Laureate of Worcester**

**Poetry to support
COVID-19 relief**

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Introduction

This project is the result of a special collaboration between my Spanish students at Worcester Academy and the Poet Laureate of the city of Worcester, Juan Matos. We first became acquainted with Juan in my AP class, which is a community-based course that has been helping transcribe and translate oral histories for the Worcester Latino History Project as one of our regular activities. In order to do this kind of work you must listen deeply and repeatedly to a recorded interview. In Juan's case we were instantly transfixed by his rich retelling of the lost way of life in the Bateys (traditional sugar cane growing area) in his native Dominican Republic and his stories of immigration and building a new life as an educator in the United States.

If you are interested in hearing his story, you may follow these links to see the entire interview by clicking here:

[Transcription \(Spanish\)](#)

[Translation \(English\)](#)

We dove deeper by using one of his books of poetry as our text, "El hombre que se fue/ The Man Who Left," analyzing his language and technique, which produced evocative and relatable poems. During the month of April, I tend to do a unit on poetry to honor National Poetry Month. It seemed the perfect time to bring Juan into the classroom so began to coordinate of class visits...then the COVID crisis threw everything up in the air, as it has done to all facets of our lives. However, we decided to push

forward because we felt that this unprecedented time calls out for the balm and the microscope/telescope that only poetry can provide. Poetry is a way to explore emotions, thoughts, and observations about the universe and to reflect on our place in it.

It may be helpful to know that at the start the poems you see here were essentially a regular homework assignment. Neither the students nor I knew what it would turn into. The AP class was given a free hand to write about whatever they chose in whatever poet voice they wanted, informed by their reading and analysis of Juan's poetry. The Spanish 3 Honors students were asked to write an ode as they had studied Pablo Neruda, his life and his poetry. Neruda, a Nobel Prize winning Chilean poet, was famous for his odes to common everyday objects. He wrote odes to french fries and to his socks among many other objects which generally pass unobserved and unappreciated. Students also did artwork to accompany their poetry which you will see in the following pages. There are gorgeous photos, drawings, collages and paintings to complement their words.

As I saw the quality and playfulness in these poems, it occurred to me that we could do something good with all of this beautiful art, especially in the midst of such a disorienting and difficult event in our community. That was when the idea of putting together an anthology of the work and asking for donations in exchange to support COVID relief in the city. We all want to be part of the solution, so

this is our way of helping out. We hope that you enjoy the work and can give back, even if it is a small amount.

Because poetry and art are so profoundly important at this time, we are sharing our work instead of selling this collection in the traditional way. However, we do ask that if you are able, to make a donation to the page linked here. All money raised will be split evenly between the Worcester Together Fund (Great Worcester Foundation and United Way of Central Mass) and Net of Compassion. Net of Compassion is a vital organization working with the homeless of the city. We choose them in part because we had already developed a relationship with its director, Richie Gonzalez. We did an oral history of him in our AP classes. His story of going from an abusive childhood, drugs, and incarceration, to a life of service is one of the most inspiring that I have ever heard. If you are interested in it, you can read it by clicking here:

[Transcription \(Spanish\)](#)

[Translation \(English\)](#)

In addition to donating yourself, if able, the most helpful thing that you can do to help the cause would be to circulate this anthology in all of your networks, so that we can expose it to the greatest number of people.

Click here to donate:

<http://www.plumfund.com/charity-fundraising/poems-for-a-cause>

Finally, I wanted to offer some thanks and acknowledgments. First and foremost, I want to thank the students who made this project possible by their hard work and generosity. In addition, I wish to thank Juan Matos, poet laureate of the city of Worcester, for his invaluable help in making this collection a reality. Not only did he visit classes (virtually) to inspire and instruct us, he also edited each poem with care and precision. I hope work with him again in the future. Finally there is YOU. Thank you for taking the time to engage in our project. Stay safe, healthy, and creative!

Aaron Stephenson
Spanish Teacher and Community

Prólogo

Celebrando “Poemas por una causa” Antología de los estudiantes de Worcester Academy

La experiencia de compartir, leer y escribir poesía en el aula es siempre edificante. Es impresionante constatar cómo la poesía no solamente es aceptada por los jóvenes, sino que éstos, impulsados por la buena influencia de la lírica, de las imágenes y las temáticas a las cuales han sido expuestos; responden con poemas de apreciada calidad.

Tal es el caso de este compendio de poemas escritos por los estudiantes de **Worcester Academy**, como resultado de sus lecturas en las clases de Español AP y Español 3 del Profesor Aaron Stephenson, en las cuales he tenido el honor de participar como invitado, en calidad de educador y Poeta Laureado de Worcester.

Tras varias secciones de lectura y análisis de poemas, la escritura pasó a ser, más que una asignación, un festival de creatividad, de expresión poética emocionante. Se destaca la espontaneidad con que han sido escritos, la autenticidad de las ideas, el uso adecuado de la lengua

—teniendo en cuenta que los jóvenes escriben en una segunda y/o tercera lengua.

En esta breve antología sobresale el recurso de la introspección por parte de los jóvenes escritores. Reflexiones bien enunciadas ya en descripciones de experiencias o bien como resultado de la observación a la naturaleza. En poemas como *“El orden natural del universo”*; *“Nostalgia”*; odas como *“Oda a la montaña nevada”*; *“Oda a la carretera”*; *“Oda a la luna”*; *“El dilema de la gente”*; *“Oda a las felices pequeñeces”* recrean las impresiones estéticas con versos apacibles.

Propio de las reflexiones personales y de la observación las voces poéticas presentan anáforas en creaciones caracterizadas por la musicalidad, a saber: *“La línea”*; *“La batalla”*; *“En la búsqueda”*; *“Oda a mis Jordans”*; *“Oda al amor”*; y *“Oda al trabajo”*.

La fuerza poética se evidencia no solamente en la calidad de la lírica sino en las temáticas tratadas con exquisito tacto pues no quedan en una evocación simple de sus memorias personales, sino que las hacen plurales, las multiplican en su entrega al lector.

De corte intimista:

“Bellos momentos”; “La oscuridad”; “Cualquier cosa, menos yo”; “Momentos”; “Mi propia desconocida”; “Oda a mi infancia” —poemas de aparente sencillez pero en los cuales los autores dejan la puerta abierta para que el lector entre a la casa de la imaginación, con los zapatos de ellos, quienes con madurez, retan a que reflexionemos ante el espejo del prójimo.

Del Carpe Diem:

Considerando el tiempo histórico en que nos encontramos, bueno es celebrar la vida, en medio de lo que sacude al mundo. Así, en poemas como: *“Es más que una playa”; “Cuando el tiempo se detiene”; “Una vida diferente”; “En la búsqueda”; La tragedia del mundo”; “Cuarentena”; El dilema de la gente”; “Oda al granero”; “Oda a la montaña”; “Oda a la guitarra”* —las voces poéticas cantan, enumeran, sacan a la luz esa esperanza necesaria y que se encuentra en la valoración de las cosas simples: *“a ventana”; la carretera, “las gafas de natación”, “los zapatos”; “la pulsera”; “los trenes”; “los mocasines; “los dedos”; la cuchara roja”; “al perro” “la hormiga”; “la pelota de fútbol”; hasta “un amor roto”: o simplemente, lo que es “normal”; como la experiencia de “un pescado quemado”; todo, todo encuentra en estas voces poéticas juveniles un sentido estético. De hecho,*

varios de los autores, además de sus versos, nos han brindado sus dibujos como manifestación artística de sus objetos tratados.

También —y de importancia vital— hay poemas que cantan con el debido respeto a la dignidad humana. Los autores cumplen, de ese modo con uno de los roles de la poesía: levantar, construir la condición de los que sirven, de los que son inadvertidos, de los que, sencillamente, deben ser apreciados. En ese tenor, los jóvenes escritores nos brindan *“Oda a la mujer de color”*; *“Oda a los doctores”* e inclusive lo que aparentemente es inanimado: *“Oda al trabajo”* y *“Oda a la tecnología”*; *“Oda a los lentes de contacto”*.

Celebremos pues, esta entrega de los estudiantes en este “accidentado” año escolar; en el cual, ellos —de la mano de la poesía— descubren caminos, los iluminan y nos llaman a disfrutarlos.

Reitero mi inmensa y sincera gratitud a Worcester Academy por invitarme a compartir poesía con los estudiantes, lo cual me deja la gran satisfacción de uno de mis sueños, ser puente entre generaciones para el aprecio de las artes.

-Juan Matos, Worcester Poet Laureate

Prologue

In Celebration of “Poems for a Cause” Anthology by students of Worcester Academy

The experience of sharing, reading, and writing poetry in the context of the classroom is always an enlightening one. It is impressive to note how poetry is not only accepted by young people, but rather, with preparation in form, image, and themes to which they have been exposed, they respond with poems of such quality.

Such is the case with this compendium of poems written by the students at Worcester Academy as a result of their studies in both AP Spanish and Spanish 3 Honors with their teacher, Aaron Stephenson, with whom I have had the honor of participating in my role as a teacher and Poet Laureate of Worcester.

Through selected readings and analysis of poems, the writing assignment became, more than a simple homework, a festival of creativity, of an exciting poetic

expression. Notable is the spontaneity with which they were written, the authenticity of the ideas, and the correct use of language — keeping in mind that these students are writing in their second or third language.

In this anthology the use of introspection is frequent by these young writers in well-crafted reflections both in description of experiences or as the result the observation of nature. En poems such as “The Natural Order of the Universe”; “Nostalgia”; in odes like “Ode to the Snowy Mountain”; “Ode to the Road”; “Ode to the Moon”; “The People’s Dilemma”; “Ode to Small Pleasures” recreate aesthetic impression with gentle verses.

The power of poets is seen not only in the lyric quality of the work but also in their themes which go beyond a simple evocation of personal memory, making them plural and inclusive of the reader.

Self Reflective Poems:

“Beautiful Moments”; “The Darkness”; “Anything but Myself”; “Moments”; “My Own Stranger”; “Ode to Childhood” —apparently simple poems in which the author leave open the door for the reader to enter into the house of imagination, with their shoes, who with

maturity, challenge us to reflect on the mirror of the other.

Poems of Carpe Diem:

In light of the historic times in which we find ourselves, it is a pleasure to celebrate life, in the midst of what is occurring on the outside. In poems like “It is More than a Beach”; “When Time Stops”; “A Different Life”; “On the Hunt”; “The Tragedy of the World”; “Quarantine”; “Ode to a Barn”; “Ode to a Mountain”; “Ode to my Guitar” — the poetic voice sings, enumerates, and brings forth hope that is found in common things through odes: “to a Window”; “to my Swim Google”; “to Shoes”; “to a Bracelet”; “to Trains”; “to Slippers”; “to fingers”; “to the Red Spoon”; “to My Dog”; “to Ants”; “to a Soccer Balls”; even to “a Broken Love”; or simple to what is “normal”; like in the experience of “Burnt Fish”. In these young poetic voices everything finds an aesthetic sensibility. In fact, many of the authors, in addition to their verses, have shared their artwork as a manifestation of the subjects of their work.

Also— and of vital importance— there are poems that celebrate human dignity with respect. In this, the authors fulfill one of the roles of poetry: to lift those who serve, those who are ignored, or simply those who should be appreciated.

In this vein, the students have written “Ode to a Woman of Color”; “Ode to Doctors”; even what appears to be inanimate: “Ode to Work” and “Ode to Technology”; “Ode to Contact Lenses”

Let us celebrate this collection from our students in this “odd” school year; in which, they — with the help of poetry — find new paths, show them to us and call us to enjoy them together.

I want to reiterate my immense and sincere gratitude to Worcester Academy for inviting me to share poetry with the student, which gives me great satisfaction and helps me to fulfill one of dreams, to be a bridge between generations for the appreciation of the arts.

-Juan Matos, Worcester Poet Laureate

ALFOMBRAS AZULES PARA HEROES AZULES - Juan Matos

La tarde de los óscares y de los premios Grammy
extraña a los ídolos con sonrisas triunfantes.
No hay filas de fanáticos ni barras protectoras
ni angustiados periodistas suplicando entrevistas.
Reporteros incrédulos revisan sus lentes
—no encuentran objetivos. No hay destellos de fotos
ni estrellas relucientes posando sus trajes onerosos
de marca registrada y de diseños únicos.
Hoy no hay diseñadores ni divas ni modelos.

Las siluetas ausentes caminan presurosas
con sus azules prisas por azules alfombras
con sus máscaras blancas, o azules, sudorosas
batallan por la vida que se pierde en las sombras

Los héroes sin nombre, sin maquillaje, sin joyas
solo con voluntad y amor desmesurado
sirven horas continuas de espaldas al pasado
en cuartos de emergencia que se visten de gloria.

Son bravías enfermeras sin regreso a la casa
Son bravíos enfermeros sin regreso a la casa
Son doctores audaces sin hambre ni descanso
Son simples empleados sin tiempo para abrazos.

Son ellos, servidores de pueblos y ciudades,
que merecen la lluvia del aplauso
mil alfombras azules cubiertas de bondades,
el cielo azul poblado de eterna gratitud.

-Juan Matos, Worcester Poet Laureate

A BLUE CARPET FOR HEROES IN BLUE

The Oscar and the Grammy nights
are missing the idols with their triumphant smiles.
There is no line of fans nor protective bars
nor stressed reporters begging for interviews.
Camera crews—in shock, double check their lenses,
they can't find anyone to shoot. There are no flashes
nor shining stars posing in their luxurious dresses
from big fashion houses and unique designs.
Today, there are no designers, nor divas, nor models.

Absent silhouettes walk with hasty steps
with hurried blue blurs on blue carpets
with their white masks or sweaty blue ones
fighting for lives that are lost in the shadows.

Unnamed heroes, without make up or jewels
with will alone and with unyielding love,
serving countless hours—without looking back
in emergency rooms that are dressed in glory.

They are brave nurses who never go back home.
They are heroes who will never go back home.
Courageous, tireless doctors...
They are simple staff members with no time for a hug.

It is they who server counties and cities
who deserve the music of palms, the rains of cheers
thousands of blue carpets full of goodness,
the blue sky inhabited by our eternal gratitude.

-Juan Matos, Worcester Poet Laureate

EL ORDEN NATURAL DEL UNIVERSO- Angelina Mancini

Estoy de pie en la arena fría
mirando,
respirando,
sintiendo.

Una voz me dice:

“Suelta.”

Una lágrima cae por mi cara;
exhalo profundamente.

Caigo.

Cuando abro mis ojos,
el sol brilla intensamente y la arena está caliente.

El sonido de las olas habla del mar en calma.

Veo un cangrejo que se arrastra a través del hierva de la duna.

Entonces, una gaviota desciende y toma su presa.

Este es el orden natural del universo.

Camino hacia el mar y sumerjo mis pies.

Un pez flota a la superficie y
noto una marca en él, ha sido mordido.

Está muerto.

Este es el orden natural del universo.

De repente,

la tierra tiembla y las nubes cubren el cielo,
un relámpago brilla ante mis ojos,
el trueno estalla, es ensordecedor.

Mi paraíso se ha ido.

No era algo que podría tener

porque este es el orden natural del universo.

Y no es mi tiempo ahora...

THE NATURAL ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE

I am standing in the cold sand
watching,
breathing,
feeling.

A voice says to me,
“Let go.”

A tear rolls down my face;
I exhale deeply.
I fall.

When I open my eyes,
the sun shines brightly and the sand is hot.
The sound of the waves is calming.
I see a crab crawling through the dune grass.
Then, a seagull swoops down and claims its prey.
This is the natural order of the universe.

I walk to the ocean and submerge my feet.
A fish floats to the surface and
I notice that there is a bite mark.
It's dead.

This is the natural order of the universe.
Suddenly,
the ground shook and clouds covered the sky.
lightning flashed before my eyes.
the thunder was deafening.

My paradise was gone.
It was not something I could have
Because this is the natural order of the universe;
And now is not my time...



NOSTALGIA- Angela Scumaci

Nostalgia.

Es un sentimiento que pesa
en mis manos.

Un lago.

Un increíble atardecer.

Dos sentimientos:

mis manos contra
la intensidad del agua.

Hay una sensación de claridad y tranquilidad
en vez del miedo.

Tengo un remo en mis manos.

Puedo sentir la textura debajo de mis dedos.

La canoa
debajo de mi cuerpo.

Un sistema de apoyo.

El sonido de los insectos.

Un zumbido constante en mis oídos.

Un lago vidrioso.

Un espejo del presente
ahora es un reflejo del pasado.

Silencio.

Aún en este momento,
recuerdo que pensé:

“No quiero olvidar este momento”.

Y no lo olvidé, porque lo recuerdo ahora.

Recuerdo mis emociones;

NOSTALGIA

Nostalgia

A feeling that is weighted

In my hands.

A lake,

An amazing sunset.

Two feelings:

My hands against

the intensity of the water.

There is a sensation of clarity and calmness
instead of fear.

A paddle in my hands

I can feel the texture under my fingers

The canoe

beneath my body.

A support system.

The sound of bugs.

A constant buzzing in my ear.

A lake of glass.

A reflection of the present,

And now a mirror to the past.

Silence.

Even at this moment

I remember thinking

“I don’t want to forget this moment”

It is not forgotten because I remember it now.

I remember my emotions;

el viento sobre mi cara,
el calor del sol
cuando se va hacia otro día.
El agua se mueve como las nubes, en el cielo;
lenta, pero constantemente.
tranquila, pero con urgencia.
No me muevo aún.
El sol se está yendo
detrás de los árboles.
Me dice adiós con sus débiles rayos.
Le digo adiós y salgo del lago,
con anhelos de sentir lo mismo
la próxima noche.

the wind on my face,
the heat of the sun,
when he left for another day.
The water moves like the clouds in the sky;
slow, but constant.
calm, but urgent.
I don't move yet.
The sun is leaving
Behind the trees.
It tells me goodbye with its rays.
I say goodbye, and emerge from the lake,
with desire to feel the same way
the next night.



BELLOS MOMENTOS- Grace Hillis

Parece que hace solo un segundo que jugábamos
Juntos, al aire libre
Nuestras vidas estaban conectadas.
El mundo era pequeño y éramos el centro del universo.

Pasábamos los días jugando fútbol y baloncesto
sentíamos el viento calmado y el sol brillante en las caras
íbamos a la escuela juntos, en el autobús amarillo...
La vida era simple y perfecta
solo éramos niños y no sabíamos lo que significaba todo
aquello.

Y ahora, somos independientes
tenemos vidas separadas y completas
somos grandes
puedo ver que nunca nada será igual
como cuando éramos jóvenes.

Pronto, me iré a la universidad
estoy emocionada, pero es un poquito amargo.
Nos separaremos
las memorias se perderán con la distancia

Como las estaciones, la vida está en ciclos siempre.
La felicidad es lo que he encontrado...
Anhelo que el futuro llegue con bendiciones
y más bellos momentos.

BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS

It seems like only one second ago that we played
Outside together.
Our lives were connected.
The world was small, and we were the center of the universe.

We spent our days playing football and basketball
we felt the calm wind and the bright sun in our faces
we went to school together in the yellow bus...
Life was simple and perfect
We were only children and we did not know what it all
meant.

And now, we are independent
we have separate and complete lives
we are grown
I can see that nothing will be the same
As it was when we were young

Soon, I will go away to college
I am excited but it is slightly bitter.
We are going to separate
the memories lost with the distance

Like the seasons, life is constantly in cycles.
Happiness is what I found...
I hope that the future comes with blessings
and more beautiful moments.



LA OSCURIDAD- Karen Morales

Un cuarto oscuro puede
ser desalentador
La oscuridad te indica
que te acerques y que mires su rostro.

Pero tienes miedo
miedo a que si miras
verás un monstruo debajo del sofá.
Verás un vislumbre de la cordura que habías perdido
caerás al suelo por miedo que te entra.

Entras rápidamente al cuarto
tus sentimientos inundan tu corazón
Tratas de calmarte, listo para correr
esperas poder escapar.

Escapar ha sido algo en lo que tú sobresales
es lo único que haces.
Estás de pie en medio del cuarto
sintiendo el jalón de las cadenas
envuelto en el cuello del monstruo.

Te quedas allí
te da cuentas que no hay monstruos.
La criatura peluda en la esquina del cuarto
es una lámpara
te das cuenta que no hay nada.

THE DARKNESS

A dark room can be
daunting
the darkness beckons you
to come closer and look at its face.

But you're afraid
Afraid that if you look
You'll see a monster underneath the sofa.
You'll see a glimpse of the sanity you lost
You'll fall to the floor from the fear that enters you

You enter the room quickly
your feelings flood your heart
you try to calm down, ready to run
you hope you can escape.

Escaping has been something you excel at
It's the only thing you do
You stand in the middle of the room
feeling the chains pull
around the monster's neck.

You stay there
and realize there are no monsters
The furry creature in the corner
turns to a lamp
You realize that there is nothing.

Te quedas allí

Nada. No hay nada.

Pero no suspiras de alivio
El silencio es ensordecedor
comparando al miedo anterior.
La luz que había estado allí,
ya no está.
Deseas encenderla otra vez.

Saliendo del cuarto decides mantener
el silencio en la oscuridad
no le haces caso por ahora
pero quizás
quizás puedes encender la lámpara una vez más.

You stay there.

Nothing. There is nothing.

But you don't breath a sigh of relief
The silence is deafening
compared to the fear before.
The light that was once there,
is no longer.
You wish to turn it on again.

Leaving the room you decide
to keep the silence in the darkness
You pay it no attention for now
But maybe
just maybe you can turn on the light once more.



CUALQUIER COSA, MENOS YO- Vipusha Chandrapu

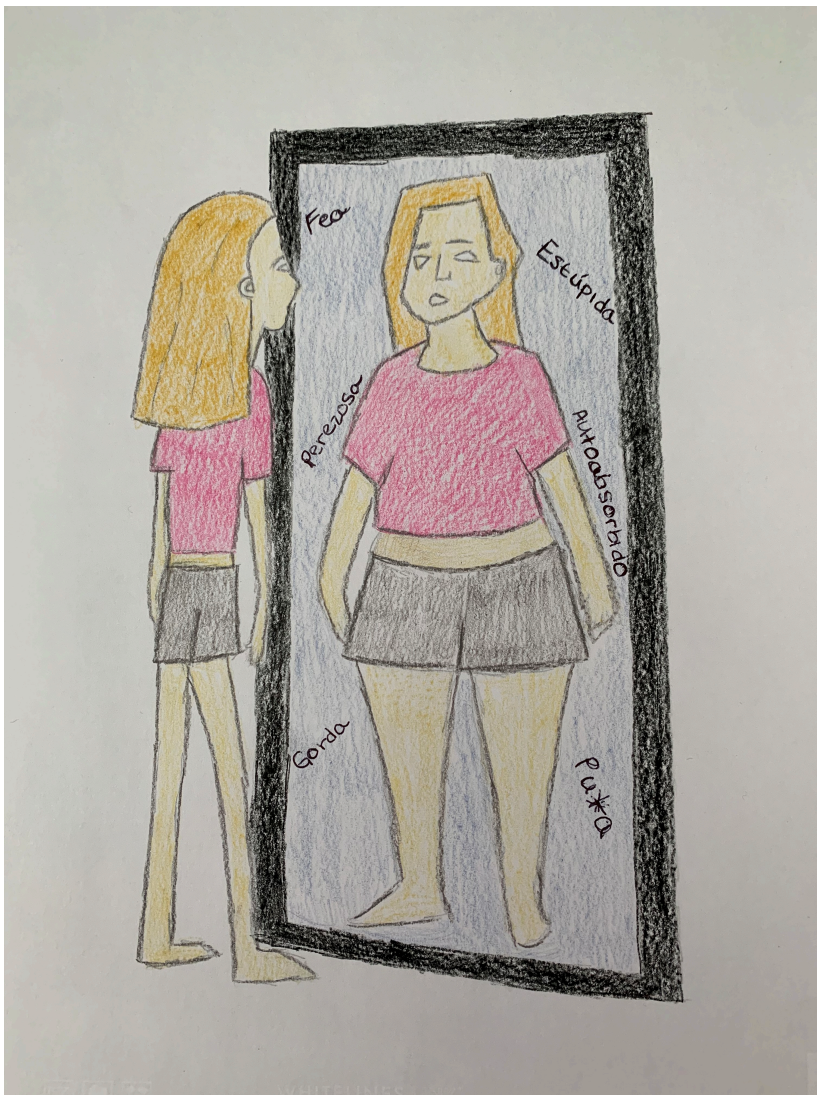
Corriendo, mi corazón late,
Pienso en mí
la definición de perfección:
el pelo rubio, los ojos azules,
la cintura pequeña,
una talla cero, la nariz pequeña,
el pelo lacio,
la piel clara, una cara simétrica...
No tengo ninguna estas características.
Tengo que ser perfecta.
Cada paso que yo doy es
un recordatorio de que no soy
lo suficientemente buena.
Cada día me maquillo,
me arreglo me pelo, me visto de
cierta manera con la esperanza
de ser la idea de perfección.
Por muchos años he cambiado
mi apariencia para parecer la chica
perfecta de la sociedad.
Pero cuando me veo en el espejo,
no me reconozco.
Me veo a mí misma
y, sin embargo, me siento como
cualquier cosa, menos yo.
La gente dice que soy hermosa,

ANYTHING BUT MYSELF

Running, my heart beats,
I think to myself,
the definition of perfection:
blonde hair, blue eyes,
small waist,
size zero, small nose,
straight hair,
light skin, a symmetrical face...
I do not have any of these characteristics.
I have to be perfect.
Every step I take is
a reminder that I am
not good enough.
Every day, I put on makeup,
I fix my hair, I dress
in a certain way with the hope that
I can be the definition of perfection.
For many years I have changed
my appearance to seem like the
perfect girl of society.
But when I look at myself in the mirror,
I do not recognize myself.
I see myself
However, I feel like
anything but myself.
People tell me I'm pretty,

Pero ¿qué significa esto cuando
cada espectáculo,
cada canción,
cada celebridad que veo
dice lo contrario?
Me siento sola
pero luego me pregunto a mí misma,
¿estoy contando
la historia de todas las chicas?
¿Soy yo quien está rota
o es la sociedad?

but what does that mean when
every show,
every song,
every celebrity that I see
says otherwise?
I feel alone
but then I ask myself:
Am I telling
the story of all girls?
Am I the one that is broken
or is it society?



MOMENTOS- Lily Mikolajczak

Nueve de abril. El sol anuncia su despedida final,
y esconde detrás de los árboles en el patio.
Las nubes moradas y amarillas bailan y colorean el cielo
mezclándose con los tonos azulados.
Lentamente, la paleta del cielo se oscurece.
Los árboles se tornan oscuros
son solo simples sombras.
Desde el porche observo
como cambia el día.
Siento
que este momento es sagrado.

Día tras día
siento no tener la energía
ni el tiempo para notar y disfrutar,
estos momentos pequeños.
Momentos hermosos,
comunes de la naturaleza
mas, al mismo tiempo, no son comunes
Siempre, siempre estoy
trabajando
pensando
haciendo planes.
Olvido
los momentos pequeños que me pasan
sin verlos otra vez.