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American Gun: A Poem by 100 Chicagoans

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AMERICAN GUN



*A Poem by
100 Chicagoans*

Edited by Chris Green

AMERICAN GUN

***A Poem by
100 Chicagoans***

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Published by Big Shoulders Books
DePaul University
Chicago, Illinois

ISBN: 978-0-578-64836-1

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020933924



ABOUT BIG SHOULDERS

Big Shoulders Books aims to produce books that engage intimately with the Chicago community and, in the process, give graduate and undergraduate creative-writing students at DePaul University hands-on, practical experience in book publishing. The goal of Big Shoulders Books is to disseminate, free of charge, quality anthologies of writing by and about Chicagoans whose voices might not otherwise be shared. Big Shoulders Books hopes to make meaningful contributions to discussions of injustice and inequality in Chicago, as well as to celebrate the tremendous resilience and creativity found in all areas of the city.

The views and opinions expressed in this book do not necessarily reflect those of DePaul University or the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, and should not be considered an endorsement by DePaul for any purpose.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

THIS BOOK IS FREE. The editors ask that by taking a copy, you agree to support groups working on anti-violence efforts in Chicago. Please donate money—or your time—to one of the organizations listed at the end of this volume. When you're done, pass along the book to someone else (for free of course), so that they can give. It adds up.

ABOUT OUR FUNDERS

This book was made possible by the William and Irene Beck Charitable Trust.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Chicago Police Department, 2,611 people were shot in Chicago in 2019. By contrast, NYC and LA totaled just over 1,800 shooting victims combined, far fewer than Chicago by itself.

(Chicago Tribune, January 2, 2020)

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE'S CRIME TEAM tracks shootings by day and month. There are various graphs; for instance, you can toggle to “Fatal” in red circles or “Non-fatal” in blue circles. There’s also a section titled, “The 50 most recent victims of shootings”:

12:30 PM, Dec 31, 20-Year-Old Male
2:11 AM, Dec 31, 22-Year-Old Male
1:04 AM, Dec 31, 44-Year-Old Male
9:55 PM, Dec 30, 34-Year-Old Male
5:15 PM, Dec 30, 6-Year-Old Male
5:55 PM, Dec 30, 24-Year-Old Male
11:23 AM, Dec 30, 45-Year-Old Male
11:23 AM, Dec 30, 23-Year-Old Male
3:22 PM, Dec 30, 29-Year-Old Male
7:26 AM, Dec 30, 28-Year-Old Male
11:15 PM, Dec 29, 41-Year-Old Male
6:50 PM, Dec 29, 23-Year-Old Male

This list goes on and on . . . and is a stark poem itself. In just these few days, victims range from a 45-year-old to a 6-year-old.

American Gun: A Poem by 100 Chicagoans is a collective response to the individual suffering behind the statistics. I asked one-hundred poets from across the city to take turns writing a communal poem about Chicago's gun violence. The poets range in age, gender, race, ethnicity, and poetic experience. Such well-known poets as Ed Hirsch, Haki R. Madhubuti, Ed Roberson, Marc Smith, Ana Castillo, and Kevin Coval write with teen poets from the South and West Sides . . . many from the group Young Chicago Authors, but also young poets from Chicago's alternative high schools, where statistically, students experience the most gun violence in the city.

The poem is a pantoum, a poetic form where every line is repeated twice. I chose this form because its structure of repeating lines mirrors the semi-automatic firing of a weapon and also the seemingly endless cycle of shootings in Chicago.

This poem is much more than the anonymous news bites that feature only the most superficial facts about gun deaths. At times, the poem personalizes what might otherwise feel distant:

*look over yo shoulder
takya(s) deep dimple(s) disappear in de plush & pink of her casket
yes dis really happen(d)
her classmate(s) unravelin in pew(s) confirm(s) her absence on monday mornin
[& ever mo(re)]*

(33. avery r. young)

*Takya's deep dimples disappear in the plush, pink casket,
satin bright as the girlhood lost before it fully began.
Classmates unraveled confirm her absence on Monday & ever more,
a loose thread torn from the rest of their fabric.*

(34. Tara Betts)

In general, the poem feels unearthed, like a slab of marble memorializing an important battle. It harkens back to poetry's ancient role—to give voice to a civilization's living and dying:

*the silence of the dead continues, eerily accurate
insisting that poets, the freest of creative artists recognize
there is the will to fight and the written will of death
is refused, revised life-messages for children, insects; the planet*

(74. Haki R. Madhubuti)

*Poets, the freest of creative artists recognize
guns are not creative nor art and pollute the hand from its devise of all it can.
Death is refused, revising life messages for children, insects; the planet
stilling its bullets will hear the living chorus from that silence.*

(75. Ed Roberson)

The last quarter of the poem relies on the voices of its youngest poets. In these final lines, we hear violence embodied in their lives on the South and West Sides. And, as in the poem's final stanza, there is a clear picture of despair:

*Tried to go to the police and start singing
Dropped out of school start slinging
He went to jail and turned to the beast
There are guns in the streets, there will never be peace*

(100. James Lofton)

In 2019, Chicago police seized over 10,000 guns—an average of one gun every 48 minutes, which gives you a sense of how many weapons are on the streets. However, the main title of this poem, *American Gun*, points to the gun epidemic as not simply a Chicago problem, but an American one. Despite the rhetoric of conservative political and corporate interests, most Americans (including NRA members) want more sensible gun laws. Our country needs more truth, more collaboration—something like this poem where diverse people sing together in sanity and beauty. When politics fail us, poetry tells us we are not alone in our outrage and hope.

Chris Green

WRITING THE POEM

I ASKED ONE-HUNDRED POETS from across Chicago to take turns writing a communal poem about gun violence in the city. The poets range in age, gender, race, ethnicity, and poetic experience. The poem is a *pantoum*, a poetic form where every line repeats twice. Though a pantoum isn't necessarily intended to be written by a group, I assigned each poet a day to construct a four-line stanza that incorporates the rules of the pantoum where lines 2 and 4 of the previous stanza become lines 1 and 3 of the next stanza. Thus, each poet created two new lines based on the sense and sound of two lines inherited from the previous person. The poem's recurring lines twine in and out of one another, and the result is a surprising song, a call and response, written both by its individual singers and the chorus.

echo



1 Many by now are dead again, the boy-men.
Their lives echo from the sidewalks.
Somewhere near the black river & bare trees
sirens are converging.

2 Their lives echo from the sidewalks
uncontainable by poetry, as
sirens are converging
like spring in the branches.

3 Uncontainable by poetry,
automatic rounds bloom red
like spring in the branches
when they puncture the skin.

4 Automatic, round blooms. Red
crescents in our palms from nails
when they puncture the skin.
Leaves of paper blow across the schoolyard.

5 Crescents in our palms from nails
sunk deep into the vestiges of young saints.
Leaves of paper blow across the school yard,
mini-cyclones of spilled ink.



10

To be separate from the list, living means we must keep them alive by revisiting their names, places, dates, ages like tombstones filed into a field of memory.

6 Sunk deep into the vestiges of young saints (what purpose, what season, what glory?), mini-cyclones of spilled ink raze youth's precious mind to revolution.

7 What purpose, what season, what glory may gun aficionados achieve in killing hallways that raze youth's precious mind to revolution, that promotes kill as the mantra of this rage-quit mind hive?

8 May gun aficionados achieve in killing hallways a halt. A seizure of their desire to promote kill as the mantra of this rage-quit mind hive razed in its own stopped tracks.

9 A halt. A seizure of their desire to be separate from the list living and razed—in its stopped tracks—names, places, dates, ages.

- what cannot be undone

- father
- mother
- sister
- brother

- 11** We must keep them alive by revisiting the moments before they expired. Tombstones filed into a field of memory, the rising and falling.
- 12** The moments before they expired awash now in expiration. The rising and falling, what cannot be undone.
- 13** Awash now in expiration. The close of a hope and future; born an affliction. What cannot be undone the undoing of father, mother, sister, brother.
- 14** The close of a hope and future; born an affliction. What unspeakable folly! The undoing of father, mother, sister, brother. How shall the living keep faith in such a world?
- 15** What unspeakable folly! To leave before having been extravagantly kissed. How shall the living keep faith in such a world? How shall we respond to those plucked before dawn?

like snowfall



- 21** Metallic rain falls in a shining sheet,
tinplate sheared with offset jaws.
Unanswered prayers pepper the ground like snowfall
A thousand pieces to pick up, or scatter.
- 22** Tinplate sheared with offset jaws,
a hundred fireworks absent splendor upon release.
A thousand pieces to pick up, or scatter,
or mistake for bare, hard words.
- 23** A hundred fireworks absent splendor upon release.
A routine round of cracking applause
or mistake for bare, hard words.
The sound shreds skin and night.
- 24** A routine round of cracking applause.
A muzzled report, Encore! Encore!
The sound shreds skin and night
Of sirens howling like canned laughter.

25 A muzzled report, Encore! *Again*,
we have survived. This is the decibel of dreams on the South Side:
Sirens howling. A canned laughter
every weekend's soundtrack. How many more?

26 We have survived. This is the decibel of dreams on the South Side:
the shriek of youth matching a mother's howl. This is
every weekend's soundtrack. How many more
until we speak without fear?

27 The shriek of youth matching a mother's howl. This is
 what mourning sounds like. For some reason, the world is still here.
 Until she can speak without fear,
 when you ask her, she says she's fine.

28 What mourning sounds like? For some reason, the world is still here;
 wails silenced.
 When you ask her, she says she's fine.
 Broken yet hopeful.

29 Wails silenced
 by the lilt of a morning's birdsong.
 She's broken yet hopeful
 till the next howl of sirens.

30 By the lilt of morning's birdsong
 thought stagnates
 until the next howl of sirens—
 a death reel waking.

31 Thoughts stagnate.
 A world turned upside down turns again—
 a death reel waking;
 the aftermath of silent stares.

32 A world turned upside down turns again—
 Look over your shoulder,
 the aftermath of silent stares.
 Yes, this really happens.

look over yo shoulder
 takya(s) deep dimple(s) disappear in de plush & pink of her casket
33 yes dis really happen(d)
 her classmate(s) unravelin in pew(s) confirm(s) her absence on monday mornin
 [& ever mo(re)]

every i. young

Takya's deep dimples disappear in the plush, pink casket,
 satin bright as the girlhood lost before it fully began.
34 Classmates unraveled confirm her absence on Monday & ever more,
 a loose thread torn from the rest of their fabric.

Tara Betts

Help me solve this—how hard can it be



- 35** Satin bright as girlhood lost as a mother,
a father here evermore dimmed
the thread loosed and torn now drifts—
the byways of semiautomatic shards
- 36** a father here evermore dimmed
like a bulb, its toggle-switch flicked by
the byways of semiautomatic shards.
Help me solve this—how hard can it be
- 37** Like a bulb, its toggle-switch flicked by
Fingers that had once held another's hand, now lit less by love.
Help me solve this. How hard can it be
To surrender heavenwards recalling the hands this hand once held?
- 38** Fingers that held a mother's hand, now lit less by love,
Clumsier, sweat-slippery, emit staticky sense,
Surrender heavenwards recalling those sweet hands once held,
and for a moment hesitate, lose resolve,
- 39** Clumsier, sweat-slippery, emitting static sense:
Let us pretend this summer sun's a safety switch.
For a moment hesitating, losing resolve,
the buyer leaves his wares behind.

Let us pretend this summer sun's a safety switch.
Eyes upward choosing not to thumb the lever
The buyer leaves his wares behind.
The cost a payment on the future.

41 Eyes upward choosing not to thumb the lever
On the ground, ants crawl.
The cost a payment on the future.
Unknown; though, they live but once.

42 On this ground ants crawl
Weary warriors sense scattered violent vibration
Unknown; they live but once
Legs refuse to run . . . rhythm cages spirits born to fly

43 Weary warriors scatter, sensing violent vibration
Rocking from soles of feet through frozen mind
Legs refuse to run . . . caged in rhythm, spirits fly
Beyond summer street corner sirens, beyond this time

44 Rocking from soles of feet through frozen mind.
Eyes glossed over, sulfur in the air.
Beyond summer street corner sirens, beyond this time
anti-fireworks echo the street, ringing ears.

40
41
42
43
44

echo the street

wholly unholy

America

45 Eyes glossed over, sulfur in the air—
each heart-beat timed against the ricochet
as anti-fireworks echo the street, ringing ears.
It's hard to breathe. Take cover? Bolt away.

46 Each heart-beat timed, a ricochet,
a holy echo. It's hard to remember our names,
hard to breathe, take cover, bolt away
from what's said of us through unfamiliar lips.

47 A holy echo. It's hard to remember our names
drowned by lead's loud whispering
from what's said of us through unfamiliar lips.
Run, hide, fight the false equivalents

48 drowned by lead's loud whispering
whispering a holy echo wholly unholy.
Run, hide, fight the false equivalents
to God, unholy god, who has withdrawn

49 Whispering a holy echo wholly unholy,
the device reverberates from human cochlea
to God, unholy god, who has withdrawn
his sinuous heavens far from America.

50 The device reverberates from human cochlea,
recoils as it pierces the bone labyrinth.
Our sinuous heavens far from America,
we fire, assault, rifle, silenc(h)er.

51 Recoiling as it pierces the bone labyrinth,
We call it freedom and practice our aim.
We fire, assault, rifle, silenc(h)er
This is America.

52 We call it freedom and practice our aim.
Cheap gods, our shiny choices.
This is America.
Pistol, rifle, shotgun, this.

53 Cheap gods, our shiny choices,
climbing the country's rung to ruin.
Pistol, rifle, shotgun, all croaking
a hoarse refrain: trigger, bullet, body.

54 Climbing the country's rung to ruin
on ropes twisted with a sugared past,
a sour refrain—trigger, bullet, body,
dead—when we fall, do we fall silent?

Brenda Canales

Bary Slesky

Ann Fuchs Sanford

Shane Mackin

Jackie White

when we fall, do we fall silent?

55 Against ropes twisted with a sugared past,
the latest body staggers, crumples,
dead. When we fall, do we fall silent?
Or will an outcry echo through the stadium?

56 The latest body staggers, crumples
beneath red ash of asphalt
outcries echo through stadiums
cracking through the silent stains of a city

57 Above the red ash of asphalt,
a mother mourns & holds a heart-shaped balloon
crackling through the silence. Stains of the city
reveal themselves beneath grieving flowers.

58 a mother mourns and holds a heart-shaped balloon
dreams she once hoped for
reveal themselves beneath grieving flowers
take more than anyone deserves to lose

59 Dreams she once hoped for
like gardens and unruly trees
take more than anyone deserves to lose.
We try to stay our children in the green, but the wind comes.

more than anyone deserves to lose

the wind comes

Anna Cullen

Arthur Ade Anaker

Jacob Saenz

Chane Pascher

Tina Boyer Brown

60 Like gardens and unruly trees,
whose roots cling to the deep earth,
we try to stay. Our children in the green—but wind comes
to claim them.

62 Above asphalt, train tracks, viaducts and overpasses,
our tears turn to rivers of voices that rise
for the defenseless. From Chicago to Gaza,
we grieve for unfinished lives.

63 our tears turn to rivers of voices that rise
drumming and quaking, thundering earth
we grieve for those unfinished lives
too many, too long the wreaths of bullets

64 drumming and quaking, thundering earth.
And the earth here should radish, there is a leak
somewhere too many, too long the wreaths of bullets
hanging on doors, splitting a heart like a red line.

61 Our sons and our daughters, whose roots cling to the deep earth
beneath asphalt, under train tracks, viaducts and overpasses.
Violence claims them, casualties of an undeclared war
against the defenseless—from Chicago to Gaza.

- we could be alive to something better

65 Here, the earth should radish. There is a leak
polluting front porches & severing safety,
hanging on doors, splitting hearts like a red line.
We virtuosos of grief & grind, premature shrines.

66 Polluting front porches & severing safety,
which seems as distant as a foreign country,
virtuosos of premature grief grind their teeth
while waiting out another summer

67 that seems as distant as a foreign country,
a paradise, a garden, a verdant grove,
where while waiting out another summer,
we could be alive to something better.

68 a paradise, a garden, a verdant grove, even
a no-combat zone. St. Francis, believing
we could be alive to something better,
crossed Crusader & Muslim lines—and lived.

69 A no-combat zone. St. Francis, believing
fewer brown angels would wait at his gates, so he
crossed Crusader & Muslim lines—and lived
to tell the story, of an urban ghost town.

Ann Lansara

Dawn Welch

Cecilia Pinta

Larry Janowski

Ann Lansara



70 Brown angels awaiting, and he
forlorn that heaven is helping
the haunted stories of the ghosted town.
Still, he heaves his heavenly blessing.

71 Forlorn that heaven is helping
he sweeps his gaze over moonless streets
heaving his heavenly blessing
on wakeful mothers and babes who sleep

72 he sweeps his gaze over moonless streets
blood hung like truth from blocks of brick
on wakeful mothers and babes who sleep
women chamber their bullets, willing to kill back

73 blood hung like truth from blocks of brick
the silence of the dead continues, eerily accurate
women chamber their bullets, willing to kill back
there is the will to fight and the written will of death

74 the silence of the dead continues, eerily accurate
insisting that poets, the freest of creative artists recognize
there is the will to fight and the written will of death
is refused, revised life-messages for children, insects; the planet

75 Poets, the freest of creative artists recognize
guns are not creative nor art and pollute the hand from its devise of all it can.
Death is refused, revising life messages for children, insects; the planet
stilling its bullets will hear the living chorus from that silence.

Ed Roberson

76 guns aren't creative, aren't art and pollute the hand from its devised can
control; the craft is off, the safety sprung. the color of chalk lines
still hear bullets hear the living chorus. that silence
is the north side of the city, tuning the 10 o'clock news to gated prison condos.

Kevin Coval

77 Control; the craft is off, the safety sprung. the color of chalk lines.
Dividing communities, children torn from families, gunshots sound like lullabies . . .
the north side of the city turning the 10 o'clock news to gated prison condos.
Broken systems keep preventing folks of brown and black skin from seeing change.

Luis Carranza

**guns are not creative
nor art**



78 communities' children torn like lullabies,
a choir of cacophonous coffins. a tune or tomb everyone carries.
broken brown and blk skin,
named and turned funeral, homes lost to the hood.

79 a choir of cacophonous coffins. a tune or tomb everyone carries.
our muscles marked into music, bodies broken into bass,
named and turned funeral, homes lost to the hood.
returned to our mothers. resting' repertoires we make.

80 our muscles marked into music, bodies broken into bass
until the rhythm of rounds turns to white noise and the beat of blood
returns to our mothers, resting' repertoires we make.
eyes fill with fog. we choke on the smoke, yet raise our torches to further the fire.

80 79 78

Kate Jackson
M'non Lauren

Slam our forks and knives onto the table.

84 We've had enough . . . boom . . . boom but they won't stop
Gusts of wind carry thoughts to prayers.
Stomp our feet and sing our hopes but those bullets just won't stop.

Maya Wilhelmy

85 We've had enough but they won't stop
We pray to ancestors now cause god's line is always too busy
Stomp our feet and sing our hopes but those bullets just won't stop
And when it's our time we sit with hollow point shoulders ready for our last supper

Talsam Levi

86 We pray to ancestors because God's line is too busy.
My love will always live here despite *plata o plomo*,
And when it is our time, we sit with hollow point shoulders ready for our last supper.
I want my city to be beyond the taste of bullet, to dance in the veins of neighborhood lines careless.

Sara Salgado

87 my love will always be here despite *plata o ploma*.
i'll wash his shirt when he comes home. i'll wait when he doesn't.
i want my city to go beyond the taste of bullet, to dance in the lines of neighborhood lines careless.
give me a god who will love my city back back to life.

Keo Stein

● give me a god who will
love my city back back to life

I'll wash his shirt when he comes home. I'll wait when he doesn't.

88

Instead of flowers, we placed tears on top of the fresh dirt, hoping something would sprout.

Give me a god that will love my city back to life,

Let the heat from my cousin's gap be the only black hole melting away at us, calling us home.

Anaya Frazier

Instead of flowers, we placed tears on top of the fresh dirt, hoping something would sprout.

89

Though we come from water, it is in my hopes that it could also bring us back.

Let the heat from my cousin's gap be the only black hole melting away at us, calling us home.

I've heard tales of hollow hearts with bullet finger tips that could make casket contents out of a body.

Alliah Foster

Though we come from water, it is in my hopes that it could also bring us back.

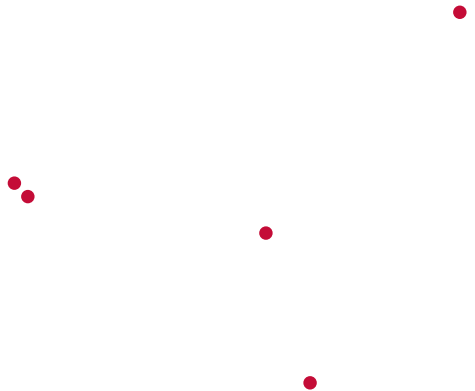
90

Back to the sight of God, away from the sniper's eye.

I've heard tales of hollow hearts with bullet finger tips that could make casket contents out of a body.

Through the night terrors, children call to the heavens for comfort.

Trinity Simmons-Bricks





91 Sight of God, away from the sniper's eye.
In coin we trust and keep it moving.
Children call to heaven for comfort—
a church hymn falls flat.

92 In coin we trust and keep it moving . . .
manpower has always been the greatest currency.
A church hymn falls flat
when halos head hollow bodies.

93 Man's power has always been great,
yet so has indifference.
When halos head hollow bodies,
it's tragic, part of being human.

94 Indifference.
Bullets fly that have no names—
it's tragic being human.
Bodies drop, lie six feet below.



95 Bullets fly that have no names
I pray for my city because it's not the same
Bodies drop six feet below
People are dead because the way bullets flow



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I pray for my city because it's not the same.
96 Mamma's cry screaming her son nowhere near the scene.
People are dead because the way bullets flow
Her son lies cold . . . why so deep?

Mamma's cry screaming her son nowhere the scene.
97 They caught him down bad stretched out in jeans.
Her son lies cold . . . so deep.
His mamma thought he was in school, but he was the streets.

They caught him down bad stretched out in jeans
98 Bullets holes in his body watch him bleed
His mamma thought he was in school but really the streets
Life can be taken so fast without even a blink

Bullets holes in his body watch him bleed,
99 Tried to go to the police and start singing.
Life can be taken so fast without even a blink,
He went to jail and turned to the beast in these streets.

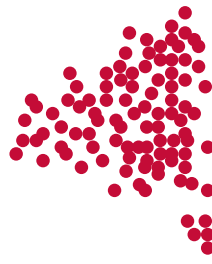
Tried to go to the police and start singing
100 Dropped out of school start slinging
He went to jail and turned to the beast
There are guns in the streets, there will never be peace



Dropped out of school start slinging

There are guns in the streets, there will never be

PEACE



THE POETS

1. CHRIS GREEN. I teach in the English Department at DePaul University. My most recent book of poetry is *Everywhere West* (Mayapple Press, 2019). I'm a founding editor of Big Shoulders Books and edited the press's second anthology, *I Remember: Chicago Veterans of War* (2015). I moved to Chicago over 20 years ago. I love the city's lyrical side, but this love comes with a steep price. The violence on the South and West Sides is madness. The norm is madness.

2. cin salach. Poet of page and stage, Illinois Arts Council recipient, four-time Ragdale fellow and Emmy nominee for voice-over and on-screen narration of the PBS documentary "From Schoolboy to Showgirl", cin has collaborated with musicians, video artists, dancers, photographers, and most recently chefs and scientists, for over 30 years. She has published two books of poetry and though she always thought she would move at some point to Colorado, Canada or Hawaii, Chicago keeps introducing her to the most amazing artists and collaborators and so she is still here, living in Andersonville with her son, where her love of poetry and the belief that it can change lives has led her to create her business poemgown, helping people mark the most important occasions in their lives with poetry.

3. TONY TRIGILIO. Tony Trigilio's most recent book is *Ghosts of the Upper Floor* (BlazeVOX Books, 2019), the third installment in his multivolume poem,

The Complete "Dark Shadows" (of My Childhood). His selected poems, *Fuera del Taller del Cosmos*, was published in Guatemala in 2018 by Editorial Poe (translated by Bony Hernández). Trigilio coedits the journal *Court Green* and is an associate editor for *Tupelo Quarterly*. He lives in Chicago, where he is a Professor of English and Creative Writing at Columbia College.

4. JAN BOTTIGLIERI lives and writes in suburban Chicago, where she also grew up. She holds an MFA in Poetry from Pacific University and is a managing editor with the poetry annual *RHINO*, an independent journal based in Evanston now in its 43rd year of publication. Jan's poems have appeared in a variety of local and national journals and anthologies.

5. MARGARET BRADY. Margaret is a retired journalist and PR writer. She has lived in Chicago's southern suburbs for most of her life with husband Alan and various kitty cats. At the age of 50, she enrolled in Columbia College's MFA program in poetry. Her favorite poetry teacher, David Trinidad, says "All poets are useful and necessary." I try to be.

6. MAUREEN SEATON. Maureen Seaton's new poetry collection, *Sweet World*, is recently out from CavanKerry Press (2019). She lived and worked happily in Chicago for over a decade, distributing books to school libraries and classrooms and serving as Artist-in-Residence at Columbia College Chicago. She may have moved to other cities since, but her heart still rides the Brown line. She's thrilled to be a part of this important work.

7. JOE ELDRIDGE. I've lived in Boystown for 40 years. In 1981 on a Sunday afternoon outside of a gay bar called the Gold Coast, a cop shoved a gun into my forehead and threatened to arrest me because, as he said, he could. Since then lots has changed and yet nothing has changed so I'm a black belt in Seido karate and write and publish poetry.

8. CAROL H. EDING lived in Northern Virginia, Southeastern Michigan, and New York before coming to Chicago. Currently she is very happy to be an associate editor on *RHINO*. The City of Big Shoulders has been good to her, also in offering the MFA in Poetry opportunity at Columbia College. Fellow contributors to the group pantoum "American Gun" are admired and deeply appreciated, one and all.

9. VALERIE WALLACE is the author of *House of McQueen*, winner of the Four Way Books Intro Prize in Poetry and named one of Chicago's Best Books of Poetry in 2019 by the *Chicago Review of Books*. She was named a Writer to Watch by the Guild Complex and has lived in Chicago for nearly 30 years, most of it on Chicago's storied South Side.

10. JOHN McCARTHY is the author of *Scared Violent Like Horses* (Milkweed Editions, 2019), which won the Jake Adam York Prize. His work has appeared in *Best New Poets 2015*, *Copper Nickel*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Sycamore Review*, and *TriQuarterly*, among others. He received his MFA from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. He works in Chicago's West Loop and lives in Evanston.

11. MADELYN FUNK is pursuing a Master of Arts degree in English at DePaul University. She also serves as the Associate Editor of *Poetry East*, an international literary magazine based in Chicago, Illinois. Though she is not a city dweller at heart, Madelyn appreciates the architecture and diversity of Chicago.

12. SARAH CARSON is the author of the poetry collections *Poems in which You Die* and *Buick City*. Her poetry and other writing have appeared in *Diagram*, *Guernica*, *the Minnesota Review*, *the Nashville Review* and *New Ohio Review*, among others. She was born and raised in Michigan, but grew up in Chicago before returning to her home state to raise her daughter and two dogs.

13. MARK ARENDT teaches literature and creative writing at DePaul University. His family, on both his father's and mother's side, are lifelong East Side Chicago residents."

14. RICHARD JONES teaches at DePaul University in Chicago, where he edits the literary journal *Poetry East*. He's lived in Chicago since the eighties and misses the days of Michael Jordan's Bulls.

15. MIKE PUICAN. In August, Mike Puican's debut book of poetry, *Central Air*, will be released by Northwestern Press. He has had poems in *Poetry*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *New England Review*, and he won the 2004 Tia Chucha

Press Chapbook Contest for his chapbook, *30 Seconds*. Mike was a member of the 1996 Chicago Slam Team, and is past president and long-time board member of the Guild Literary Complex in Chicago. Currently, he teaches poetry to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals at the MCC Federal Prison and St. Leonard's House.

16. KATIE LaTOUR is a writer and editor living with one human and three cats in the Windy City. She moved to Chicago from her hometown of Columbus, Ohio in 2016 and earned her M.A. in Writing & Publishing from DePaul in 2018. The poem haunting her at the moment is Maggie Nelson's "Something Bright, Then Holes."

17. ANN HUDSON grew up in Charlottesville, Virginia, but has lived in the Chicago area for the last twenty years. She is an associate editor for *RHINO Poetry*, and teaches at a Montessori school in Evanston, Illinois. Her first book, *The Armillary Sphere*, was published by Ohio University Press.

18. CHRIS WATKINS is a poet and student in DePaul University's MFA program. He has lived in Chicago for three years and currently resides in Rogers Park.

19. ANNE M. TERASHIMA lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. Her work has appeared in *Poetry East* and *Red Rock Stories: Three Generations of Writers Speak on Behalf of Utah's Public Lands*. She holds an MA in Writing and Publishing from DePaul University.

20. PAULINA FREEDMAN is a graduate of the Masters in Writing and Publishing program at DePaul University. She discovered poetry at the age of 11 and has been writing it ever since. She has lived in the greater Chicago area most of her life. She hopes this book will shed light on the all-important issue of gun violence in the city.

21. JESSICA TERSON was born and raised in the Chicagoland area. Her work has appeared in *Beloit Fiction Journal*, *The Georgia Review*, *New Orleans Review* (Online), *River Styx*, *River Teeth Journal*, and other publications. She is an associate editor for *RHINO Poetry*.

22. MEREDITH BOE is a writer and editor based in Chicago. She received an MA in Writing and Publishing from DePaul University in 2013. Her chapbook *What City* was a winner of the 2018 Debut Contest Series from Paper Nautilus, and her work has appeared in *Midwestern Gothic*, the *Chicago Reader*, and *Mud Season Review*. Meredith is currently a contributor to the *Chicago Review of Books*.

23. KENDALL STEINLE hails from Akron, Ohio, but has stomped around Chicago for roughly eight years now. She obtained her Master's in Writing and Publishing from DePaul University. Chicago continues to hold her attention and fill her with a sense of belonging and hope while delivering staggering blows of rejection and cold, cold air. She has a one-eared cat named Bronx and he's, plainly put, the best.

24. MAX BARRY. I am a native Chicagooan turned Evanstonian who has returned to Chicago. During the day, I teach data science and during the evening, I write poetry and fold origami. For two years, I studied Emily Dickinson, and wrote about the importance of her epistolary correspondence to hermeneutics. I pronounce legs and eggs with a vowel like bay's.

25. CRYSTAL S. RUDDS taught at Malcolm X College in Chicago for eight years and received her PhD from the University of Illinois. An emerging poet, her work has appeared in *Obsidian* and NightBallet Press. She has lost two students to gun violence since beginning her teaching career.

26. LAYNE RUDA is a poet and a graduate student of Writing and Publishing at DePaul University. She was born and raised in Alsip, a south suburb of Chicago. When she's not writing, she can be found in the poetry section of local bookstore or indulging in young adult novels. Her favorite thing about living in Chicago is the eclecticism and spectrum of creative energy in each neighborhood.

27. RACHEL SLOTNICK-ROBBINS is an assistant professor at Malcolm X College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago. Rachel is a hybrid artist, weaving together text, paint, and fabric to create murals and installations in public spaces around the city of Chicago. She has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize, and most recently won the Illinois Arts Council Agency Literary Award in 2019 for an

excerpt from her forthcoming novel, *A World Without Blue*. She is the author of *In Lieu of Flowers*, available through Tortoise Books.

28. ALETHA OSBORNE-COLE is a tenured English professor at Malcolm X College in Chicago, IL. An Oklahoma native, Aletha completed her undergraduate studies at Tennessee State University in Nashville, TN before earning her M.A. in English at DePaul University in 2009. She has a strong background in developmental education and currently teaches composition, argument and research, and literature courses.

29. MARY HAWLEY is a poet, fiction writer, and translator. Her poems and short stories have been widely published, and her poetry collection *Double Tongues* was published by Tia Chucha Press. She has performed at many of Chicago's literary venues and is the recipient of a 2019 Illinois Arts Council Literary Award.

30. BECKY HARRISON is a recent graduate from DePaul University. She is an avid poetry lover & is passionate about social equity.

31. DINA ELENBOGEN is a widely published and award winning poet and prose writer, author of the poetry collection, *Apples of the Earth* and the memoir *Drawn from Water*. She has a poetry MFA from the Iowa Writer's Workshop and teaches at the University of Chicago Writer's Studio. She grew up on the shores of Lake Michigan and the city flows through her poems.

32. PAUL O'NEILL. I'm a die-hard Ohioan, still an alien to the make; even so, I know what I see. Chicago is a city that knows itself, and that's an inspiring thing to behold. The L running, the river running, the cars going on and on, and floods, floods of people—this is an undeniable collective life. To live and breathe as a part of that is an honor.

33. avery r. young. Interdisciplinary artist and educator avery r. young is a 3Arts Awardee and one of four executives for The Floating Museum. His poetry and prose are featured in several anthologies and periodicals including *Berkeley Poetry Review* 49, *Poetry Magazine* and photographer Cecil McDonald Jr's *In The Company of Black*. He is the featured vocalist on flautist Nicole Mitchell's *Mandorla Awakening* (FPE Records) and is currently touring with her

Black Earth Ensemble and his funk/soul band de deacon board. young's latest full length recording *tubman* (FPE Records) is the soundtrack to his first collection of poems, *neckbone: visual verses* (Northwestern University Press).

34. TARA BETTS is the author of *Break the Habit* and *Arc & Hue*. She is the Lit Editor at *Newcity*, as well as the Poetry Editor at *Another Chicago Magazine* and *The Langston Hughes Review*. Tara considers Chicago to be the place where she came of age as a poet, started teaching writing, and publishing as a freelance journalist in the 1990s.

35. DAVE BELECKIS. I am a South-side Chicagoan and offer my poetic recall of the smell of the stockyards on my way to work as proof of this authenticity; as well as a myriad of crazy street-dangers I lived through and therefore I have successfully evolved into a Hospital Chaplain and a Poet with a wealth of urban, often scary adventures to write about. I love Chicago and I love poetry; and I deplore the American infatuation with firearms.

36. VIRGINIA BELL is the author of *From the Belly* (Sibling Rivalry Press 2012) and has published poems and essays in numerous journals and anthologies, with work forthcoming in *RiverSedge* and *NELLE* in 2020. Originally from Pennsylvania, Bell now lives in the Chicago area with her family. She is an adjunct Professor of English at Loyola University Chicago, an editor with *RHINO Poetry*, and freelance grantwriter, content editor, and instructional designer.

37. LIAM HENEGHAN is professor of environmental science and studies at DePaul University. He most recent book is *Beasts at Bedtime: Revealing the Environmental Wisdom in Children's Literature* (University of Chicago Press, 2018)

38. PATRICIA McMILLEN. Born at the old St. Luke's hospital on S. Michigan Ave. in July 1952, I've been singing and playing with words almost from the start. Author, *Knife Lake Anthology* (Columbus, OH: Puddinghouse Press, 2006), a chapbook about capital punishment and its effect on the mythical prison town of Knife Lake Falls. MA in English (Program for Writers) 2005, UIC. Recently relocated to the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, cause, you know, Chicago just doesn't have enough snow for me.

39. DYLAN WEIR is a poet currently teaching at Columbia College in Chicago. A graduate of the MFA program at University of Wisconsin–Madison, he's received support from the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference and has poems in *Meridian*, *Ninth Letter*, *North American Review*, *Passages North*, *Salt Hill*, *Sycamore Review*, and others.

40. MARC SMITH. Chicago born Marc Kelly Smith is the founder of the International Poetry Slam movement and host of the Green Mill Uptown Poetry Slam, the original slam show, now in its 34th year playing to capacity audiences every Sunday night.

41. NAKO FUJIMOTO was born and raised in Japan. Recent work appears or is forthcoming in *POETRY*, *Kenyon Review*, *Quarterly West*, *North American Review*, and *PANK*. Her poetry collections include *Where I Was Born* (Willow Books 2019), *Glyph:Graphic Poetry=Trans. Sensory* (Tupelo 2020), and three chapbooks. She is a *RHINO Poetry* associate editor.

42. EMILY HOOPER LANSANA is a cultural worker, arts administrator and performing artist. As a performing artist, she is known for her work with Performance Duo: In the Spirit. For more than twenty years, she has performed as a storyteller throughout Chicago and across the country. She works as Director of Community Arts at the Logan Center for the Arts. Emily has lived in Chicago for more than thirty years and is a proud mom of four amazing young black men.

43. JULIE PARSON NESBITT is author of the poetry collection *Finders* (West End Press) and received the Gwendolyn Brooks "Significant Illinois Poet" award from Ms. Brooks. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing (University of Pittsburgh) and is working on an Ed.D. (DePaul University). A Chicago poet and lifelong Chicagoan, she performed in the first Green Mill Poetry Slams, helped develop and served as Executive Director of the Guild Literary Complex, and was Development Director for Young Chicago Authors, home of Louder Than A Bomb. Her poetry often comes out of Chicago streets and experiences.

44. WHITNEY RAUENHORST. I moved to Chicago about four and half years ago, attended DePaul University's Writing and Publishing masters program,

and am now the Intellectual Property Associate at the University of Chicago Press. Beyond Chicago's spectacular skyline and food scene, its people, history, culture, art, and passion have allowed myself to call this place home.

45. ELISE PASCHEN, an enrolled member of the Osage Nation, is the author of *The Nightlife*, *Bestiary*, *Infidelities* (winner of the Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize), and *Houses: Coasts*. She has edited or co-edited many anthologies, including *The New York Times* best-selling *Poetry Speaks* and, most recently, *The Eloquent Poem*. Former Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America, Paschen teaches in the MFA Writing Program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She was born and raised in Chicago and returned to her hometown to raise her children.

46. MARTY McCONNELL is the author of "Gathering Voices: Creating a Community-Based Poetry Workshop," (YesYes Books, 2018) and "when they say you can't go home again, what they mean is you were never there," which won the Michael Waters Poetry Prize. Her first poetry collection, *wine for a shotgun*, was published by EM Press in 2013. She is the co-founder and co-editor of *underbelly*, an online magazine focused on the art and magic of poetry revision. She lives in Chicago with her wife, visual artist Lindsey Dorr-Niro.

47. JOSHUA COREY is a poet, critic, novelist, and translator who lives in Evanston and teaches English at Lake Forest College. His paternal grandparents moved to Chicago in the 1940s and his father grew up on the South Side and in Skokie. He sincerely likes deep-dish pizza.

48. EDWARD HIRSCH is a MacArthur Fellow who was born and raised in Chicago. He has published ten books of poems and five books of prose about poetry. He serves as President of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation in New York, but his heart still beats for the Cubs.

49. CHRISTINA PUGH is the author of five books of poems including *Stardust Media* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2020), winner of the Juniper Prize in Poetry. She is the recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship in poetry,

as well as fellowships and awards from the Poetry Society of America, the Illinois Arts Council, and the Bogliasco Foundation, among others. Christina is a professor in the Program for Writers at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and consulting editor for *Poetry* magazine. She lives in Evanston, Illinois.

50. BRENDA CÁRDENAS is the author of *Boomerang* (Bilingual Press) and the chapbooks *Bread of the Earth/The Last Colors* with Roberto Harrison (Decentralized Publications); *Achiote Seeds/Semillas de Achiote* with Cristina García, Emmy Pérez, and Gabriela Erandi Rico (Achiote Seeds); and *From the Tongues of Brick and Stone* (Momotombo Press). She also co-edited *Resist Much/Obey Little: Inaugural Poems to the Resistance* (Spuyten Duyvil Press) and *Between the Heart and the Land: Latina Poets in the Midwest* (MARCH/Abrazo Press). Cárdenas lived in Chicago for eight years during which she worked as the Youth Initiatives Coordinator at the National Museum of Mexican Art and later taught English at Wilbur Wright College. She now lives in Milwaukee, WI where she has served as city's Poet Laureate and teaches Creative Writing and U.S. Latinx Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

51. BARRY SILESKY. I've lived in Chicago since 1967. I've written biographies of Lawrence Ferlinghetti (Warner Books) and John Gardener (Algonquin Books). I've also written books of poetry, *The New Tenants* and *One Thing that can Save Us* (Coffee House Books).

52. ANN FOLWELL STANFORD recently retired as a Vincent DePaul Professor of Literary and Inter-Disciplinary Studies at DePaul University. She has published poems and articles in many literary magazines and academic journals. She moved to Chicago from Chapel Hill, NC and said, "I give this place five years, max," due to the cold weather. Thirty years later, she is still here. Happily so.

53. SIMONE MUENCH has authored six full-length books including *Wolf Centos* (Sarabande, 2014). Her recent, *Suture* (BLP, 2017), is a collection of sonnets written with Dean Rader. She also edited *They Said: A Multi-Genre Anthology of Contemporary Collaborative Writing* (BLP, 2018). She serves as chief faculty advisor for *Jet Fuel Review*, a poetry editor for *Tupelo Quarterly*, and creator of the HB Sunday Reading Series. She's been living in Chicago since 1994.

54. JACKIE K. WHITE, fortunate to have experienced Chicago's vibrancy during graduate school, is a devoted Sox fan and native Illinoisan of the suburbs who thrives on regular visits to Chicago and thrills to play tour guide for family and friends. She is the author of three chapbooks and has recent collaborative poems (with Simone Muench) appearing in *Posit*, *Pleiades*, and *Bennington Review*. She is a professor of English at Lewis University where she helps to advise *The Jet Fuel Review*.

55. NINA CORWIN. Nina Corwin's most recent collections are *The Uncertainty of Maps* and *Dear Future*. Published in *Harvard Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *New Ohio Review* and *Rhino*, Corwin, a 2 time Pushcart nominee, curates the literary series at Woman Made Gallery. In daytime hours, she is a psychotherapist known for her work on behalf of victims of violence.

56. ARTHUR ADE AMAKER is a writer, poet and professor originally from Evanston, IL who has resided in the City of Chicago since 2003 and has taught in Chicago Public Schools as well as at Chicago State University. He is currently working on two books—a historical/anthropological book on the culture and history of maroons in the U.S. and Brazil and a novel about The Great Migration to Chicago.

57. JACOB SAENZ was born in Chicago and raised in Cicero, IL. He is the author of *Throwing the Crown*, winner of the 2018 APR/Honickman First Book Prize. His work has been anthologized in *The Open Door: 100 Poems, 100 Years of Poetry Magazine* and *The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop*. His poetry has appeared in *Memorious*, *PANK*, *Poetry*, *Tammy* and other journals. A CantoMundo fellow, he's been the recipient of a Letras Latinas Residency, a Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship and a 2019 Latinx Scholarship from the Frost Place. He serves as an associate editor for *RHINO*.

58. CHARLIE ROSSITER, NEA Fellowship recipient, hosts the podcast series at PoetrySpokenHere.com. He is among the handful of poets to ever read at the Chicago Blues Festival. After 20 years in the Chicago area he now lives and writes in Bennington, VT. His latest book is *Green Mountain Meditations*.

59. TINA BOYER BROWN has lived in the Chicago area for more than 20 years. Her work has appeared in *RHINO*, *POETRY Magazine*, *The Journal of Education*, and *Jet Fuel Review*. She is the Managing Director for the Arts Conservatories and Creative Writing Department Head at the Chicago High School for the Arts.

60. RICHIE HOFMANN is the author of a collection of poems, *Second Empire*, and his poems appear in *The New Yorker* and *Poetry*. He currently teaches poetry at Stanford University. He has been a Chicago resident for nearly eight years.

61. ANA CASTILLO is a celebrated and distinguished poet, novelist, short story writer, essayist, editor, playwright, translator and independent scholar. Castillo was born and raised in Chicago. She has contributed to periodicals and on-line venues (*Salon* and *Oxygen*) and national magazines, including *More* and the *Sunday New York Times*. Among her award winning, best selling titles: novels include *So Far From God*, *The Guardians* and *Peel My Love like an Onion*, among other poetry: *I Ask the Impossible*. Her novel, *Sapogonia* was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. She is editor of *La Tolteca*, an arts and literary 'zine dedicated to the advancement of a world without borders and censorship'.

62. EMILY THORNTON CALVO, born and raised in Chicago, is an artist, author, and poet. She's performed at Loyola University, Women and Children First, and the Art Institute of Chicago through the Poetry Foundation's Pop-up Poetry program. Her poems have appeared in print and online journals as well as Chicago's website. *Lending Color to the Otherwise Absurd*, her first book of poems was released with a grant from the Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. As a visual artist, Calvo often includes her poems in her paintings, which can be seen at emilycalvo.com.

63. ALBERT DeGENOVA is an award-winning poet, publisher, teacher, and blues saxophonist. He is the author of four books of poetry and two chapbooks. DeGenova is the founder and co-editor of *After Hours* magazine, a journal of Chicago writing and art, which launched in June of 2000. He hosts the monthly Traveling Mollys reading series (Oak Park, IL), which is now in its 22nd year.

64. KENYATTA ROGERS is a Cave Canem Fellow and has been awarded multiple scholarships from the Breadloaf Writers' Conference. He has also been nominated multiple times for both Pushcart and Best of the Net prizes. His work has been previously published in or is forthcoming from *Jubilat*, *Vinyl*, *Bat City Review*, *The Volta*, *PANK*, *MAKE* Magazine among others. He is as a co-host of the Sunday Reading Series with Simone Muench, an Associate Editor with *RHINO Poetry* and currently serves on the Creative Writing Faculty at the Chicago High School for the Arts. I have a really complicated relationship with the City of Chicago, there's many things I enjoy and also many things that drive me crazy. It's weird to me I've been here this long and it doesn't really feel like home, but I for sure have made a very large connection with this city that I can't deny and have to appreciate. The arts can live here and that in and of itself means a lot.

65. NILE LANSANA is a writer from the South Side of Chicago. He is a recipient of the First Wave scholarship program and an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, double majoring in Journalism and Creative Writing. He won the Gwendolyn Brooks Open Mic Award in 2018. His work as a poet, journalist, and teaching artist are centered around empowering youth and sharing important narratives of the people and principles he holds dear, many of which come from his Chicago upbringing.

66. DAVID WELCH is the author of a collection of poems, *Everyone Who Is Dead*, and has published work in Chicago-based venues including *Court Green* and *TriQuarterly* as well as on the Chicago Public Library website, www.chipublib.org. He currently teaches at DePaul University, where he is Assistant Director of Publications & Outreach. Raised in the south and western suburbs, he lives in Chicago.

67. CECILIA PINTO is a writer who has spent her adult life in the city of Chicago. Sometimes she forgets that at the edge of the city there's a vast lake but its always there.

68. LARRY JANOWSKI is a South Side Chicago native, a former teacher at local colleges and universities, a poet and a member of the Franciscan Order. "Although I no longer live in Chicago, I always miss it, and I am profoundly

grateful to have this opportunity to join other artists and writers trying to effect healing to counter the anger and violence which tear at the heart of our hometown."

69. ONAM LANSANA is from the Southside of Chicago. His work is heavily influenced by his experience coming of age on Chicago's Southside.

70. CAROLYN S. AGUILA is a native Chicagoan, and the author of *Flirting with Rhyme and Reason* (EM Press, Joliet). She is an accomplished performance poet, who has read at the Green Mill, the Chicago Cultural Center, and a range of other venues. Aguila is currently working on her second book, *The Last Autumn*.

71. ANGELA NARCISO TORRES. Angela Narciso Torres's book, *Blood Orange* won the Willow Books Award and a second collection, *What Happens Is Neither*, is forthcoming from Four Way Books. Recent work appears in *POETRY*, *TriQuarterly* and *Missouri Review*. Born in Brooklyn and raised in Manila, she considers Chicago one of her literary homes, being the city in which she birthed her first book while raising three sons. An editor for the Chicago-based independent poetry journal *RHINO* for nearly a decade, Angela has received fellowships from Ragdale Foundation and Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. www.angelanarcisotorres.com

72. PAUL MARTINEZ-POMPA is the author of *My Kill Adore Him* and currently edits for *Packingtown Review*. He has lived in and around Chicago for most of his life and teaches Rhetoric and Creative Writing at Triton College.

73. TARFIA FAIZULLAH was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Bangladeshi immigrants and raised in Texas. She is the author of two poetry collections, *Registers of Illuminated Villages* (Graywolf, 2018) and *Seam* (SIU, 2014). Her writing has appeared widely in the US and abroad. In 2016, Harvard Law School included Faizullah in their list of 50 Women Inspiring Change. She has taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago as a visiting artist-in-residence and thinks of Chicago as one of America's great cities of the future.

74. HAKI R. MADHUBUTI is an award-winning poet, one of the architects of the Black Arts Movement, an essayist, educator, founder and publisher of

Third World Press and Third World Press Foundation. He is the author of over thirty books of poetry and nonfiction including *YellowBlack: The First Twenty-One Years of a Poet's Life*; *Liberation Narratives: New and Collected Poems 1967–2009*; *Honoring Genius, Gwendolyn Brooks: The Narrative of Craft, Art, Kindness and Justice*; and the best-selling *BlackMen: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous? The African American Family in Transition*. A long-time community activist and institution builder, Madhubuti is a co-founder of the Institute of Positive Education and the co-founder of four schools in Chicago. He retired in 2011 after a distinguished teaching career that included Chicago State University and DePaul University where he served as the Ida B. Wells-Barnett University Professor. Madhubuti's most recent books are, *Taking Bullets: Terrorism and Black Life in Twenty-First Century America* (2016), *Not Our President: New Directions From the Pushed Out, the Others, and the Clear Majority in Trump's Stolen America* (2017).

75. ED ROBERSON was born December 26, 1939 in Pittsburgh, PA. The author of ten books of poetry, his work has earned The Ruth Lilly Award from the Poetry Foundation, The Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America, The Lila Wallace Writers Award, the PEN Voelker Award, and others. He is a Guggenheim Fellow, and a Cave Canem Fellow. He's lived in Bronzeville 15 years, wouldn't live anyplace else.

76. KEVIN COVAL is the poet & author of *Everything Must Go: The Life & Death of an American Neighborhood*, *A People's History of Chicago* & over ten other full-length collections, anthologies & chapbooks. He is the founding editor of The BreakBeat Poets imprint on Haymarket Books, Artistic Director of Young Chicago Authors, & founder of Louder Than a Bomb: The Chicago Youth Poetry Festival. He hosts the podcast, *The Cornerstore*, on WGN Radio, cuz he loves to listen to the stories of working people & working artists. He knows Chicago is the greatest & most horrific city in the world.

77. LUIS CARRANZA is a poet, teaching artist, and organizer from the Little Village community. Luis aims to provide an array of spaces for folks to feel connected to their communities in the city. Co-founder of Line Break an artistic collective that promotes arts and culture through an intergenerational experience while prioritizing the work of folx of color in Chicago.

78. E'MON LAUREN is a queer Scorpio, from the West and South side of Chicago. She was named Chicago's first Youth Poet Laureate. E'mon is the producer and host of her new podcast, *The Real Hoodwives of Chicago*. Her first chapbook of poems, *COMMANDO*, was published by Haymarket Books, Fall of 2017.

79. KARA JACKSON is the daughter of country folks. She is the author of *BLOODSTONE COWBOY* (Haymarket Books). She is the 2019 National Youth Poet Laureate and the 2018 Youth Poet Laureate of Chicago. Through a multidisciplinary approach, Jackson attempts to document her lineage of divine womanhood in a country that demands its erasure. Her EP "A Song for Every Chamber of the Heart" is out now on all streaming platforms.

80. SAFA ABDULLAH is a Muslim person of colour. Born and raised in the city, she hopes to spend her entire life between New York and Chicago. She is heavily influenced by the segregation of people in the city and often writes about the black-versus-white mentality that's present in Chicago. One day, she hopes to publish a collection of her works.

81. DANIELA MORALES is a sixteen year old writer, who currently attends the Chicago High School for the Arts. She moved from Colombia in late 2014 and has since made Chicago her home. She likes to explore different parts of the city with her family and friends, always learning new things about it. One day, she hopes to know everything there is to know about the city.

82. LYDIA WILBON currently attends The Chicago High School for the Arts. She studies Creative Writing and majors in poetry. She has won both silver and gold keys for work submitted to The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. When she's not writing, she's most likely at home playing with her dog, Zippo, and rabbit, T.J.

83. HENRY CARLSON is a Chicago born writer. He has been writing poetry for a number of years and is the proud claimant to several honorable mentions. Carlson also happens to live in Chicago.

84. MAYA WILHELMY I was born here in Chicago, it's always been my home. My dad is Irish and mom is Cuban. As I grew up in a bilingual school and my

friends came from all around the world, I've learned many things amongst our society. The things I've learned are truly dreadful as I cannot believe our humanity is going down such a rough road. I've always loved this Earth, and starting with Chicago, as my home, I want to save it or do something to help it and the people within.

85. TAISAUN LEVI is a 18 year old poet, dancer, photographer, and visual artist from Englewood on the south side of Chicago. Her work explores surrealism and uses this in an attempt to illustrate her life in Chicago, black struggles, black mental health, and black living. Her poems are a lineage of women in her family along with the multitude of stories that may have been projected on to her from each of them.

86. SARA SALGADO is a student and poet from Chicago's neighborhood of Hermosa. She has appeared in several publications of *Rookie Magazine*, and you can find her in *The End of Chiraq: A Literary Mixtape*. She is a Kenwood Academy alum but really graduated from her grandmother's house and now attends Harold Washington college. Her poetry delves into the scary truths and beautiful lessons from Latinidad, her neighborhood, feminity in family, her achy breaky heart, and more.

87. KEE STEIN currently resides in the Back of the Yards, Chicago and works toward finishing her first poetry chapbook through Haymarket, an exploration and celebration of the intersections that cradle her: Womxnhood. Blackness. Queerness. Survivorhood. She is a co-founder of Line Break Chicago, an artistic collective that promotes arts and culture through an intergenerational experience while prioritizing the work of marginalized folk.

88. ANAYA FRAZIER is an imaginer from the south side of Chicago, who seeks to manifest a better hood through her poetry. She is currently a senior at Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep where she, like the school's namesake, writes and performs her poetry. Her work is in the legacy of the women in her family and it aims to make space for all of her identities so that girls like her can see themselves in it.

89. NILAH FOSTER was raised by her city and knows nothing else.

90. TRINITY SIMMONS-BROOKS. My name is Trinity Simmons-Brooks. I'm sixteen years old and I attend the Chicago High School for the Arts where I am now a junior. I grew up on the west side of Chicago in the North Lawndale community.

91. SAMMY ORTEGA comes from a Mexican immigrant family and believes in how Chicago has greatly influenced his background. They are constantly loving and exploring their femininity within poetry. They are currently enrolled in Columbia College Chicago as a Creative writing major with a concentration in poetry. They believe the norm must be pushed at all costs, even if it means change.

92. JEROME KELLY. Jerome "the postman" Kelly also known by his stage name Jay Post is a poet, songwriter and rapper. This eclectic youth artist is a south side native hailing from the Chatham neighborhood. He is a 2018 and 2019 louder than a bomb slam poetry champion. He is a Grand slam 2018 and 2019 finalist. As well as an Open Mike spotlight recipient.

93. MICHAEL O'DANIEL. I was born and raised in Chicago. I've lived in the Roseland community my entire life. Being in South Chicago for so long, I am aware of the gun violence that has plagued this area. My relationship with Chicago isn't the best, due to this violence.

94. EPIPHANY COLLINS. My name is Epiphany. I am 16 years old, and I have a passion for writing, rapping and poetry. I wanted to participate in this program because I had family members that died from gun violence. However, knowing my city is what it is, I love my city and my city loves me back.

95. ALISHA THURMAN. My name is Alisha Thurman, and I am Chicago. I love my city because I attend great schools and have an opportunity to explore beautiful areas in the city. What I hate about Chicago is the violence.

96. JOHNTRELL MULLEN. I am Johnntrell Mullen. I live on the west side of Chicago, North Lawndale community. Even though my city is full of violence, we have other good things to see and do in the city, such as food and fun.

97. JOSEPH YOUNG. My name is Joseph Young, a high school student at CCA Academy. I love my beautiful city, Chicago. I live on the Westside of Chicago. I enjoy reading and writing poetry. I take advantage of the beauty of the city by appreciating lake activities and biking. This is my city!

98. JOHNEL OWENS. My name is Johnel Owens. I enjoy Chicago because of its culture and diversity. Chicago is beautiful but the gun violence is terrible. Chicago offers a lot of opportunities including great protection by law enforcement.

99. ERIC OWENS. My name is Eric Owens. I am 16 years old and have a twin sister. I enjoy playing video games and listening to music. I wanted to be a part of this program because I like writing rap lyrics. Chicago is my home that I truly enjoy. It has a lot to offer and amazing places to see.

100. JAMES LOFTON. I am James Lofton and I am 17 years old. I love Chicago (you feel me)! I am very brilliant and respectful. My goal is to graduate and advance in my career.

THE CREATIVE TEAM

CHRIS GREEN (Editor) is the author of four books of poetry: *The Sky Over Walgreens*, *Epiphany School*, *Résumé*, and *Everywhere West* (Mayapple Press, 2019). His poetry has appeared in such publications as *Poetry*, *The New York Times*, *Court Green*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Poetry East*. He's edited four anthologies including *I Remember: Chicago Veterans of War* (Big Shoulders Books, 2015). He teaches in the English Department at DePaul University. More information can be found at www.chrisgreenpoetry.com.

NATALIE MILLS BONTUMASI (Book Designer) was born in Chicago and has been a designer here for over 20 years. Her company, Good Thomas Design, is focused on nonprofit organizations and small businesses. For Big Shoulders Books, she also designed *I Remember: Chicago Veterans of War*, *Write Your Heart Out*, and *The Garcia Boy*. Her work is included in the Chicago Design Archive.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE BOOK WAS MANAGED in its various phases by graduate students in the DePaul English Department's Big Shoulders Books two-course sequence in the Masters in Writing and Publishing program. The following students in the Editing class worked collaboratively to make this book a reality: Emmanuel Bara-Hart, Eric Canan, Ana Carolina Da Silva Moreira Jorge, Paulina Freedman, Madelyn Funk, Amy Jesnionowski, Rebecca Harrison, Mina Kalkatechi, Eva Lopez Benedi, Miranda Malinowski, Clare McKittrick, Caitlin Pierson, Anne Redd, Layne Ruda, Caitlin Stout, and Emily Winkler.

Special thanks to Charnell Thomas, Academic Advisor at Community Christian Alternative Academy, for her dedication and help with the CCA students who end the poem. I would like to acknowledge the exceptional effort and innovative thinking of Eric Canan, the Graduate Assistant for Big Shoulders Books. I'd also like to thank Julia Borcherts for her expertise in promoting the book and her instruction of the Big Shoulders Books' Publicity course.

American Gun: A Poem by 100 Chicagoans is the sixth book from Big Shoulders Books, a press from DePaul University's English Department that aims to feature Chicagoans and Chicago issues that need a voice. We give all copies away for free and try to distribute them as widely as possible. I would like to thank my

co-founders of Big Shoulders Books—Miles Harvey, whose assistance throughout this project was invaluable; also, Michele Morano for her constant guidance and support. I would also like to thank David Welch, the Managing Editor of Big Shoulders, for his tremendous help throughout the making of this book.

Lastly, I want to offer special thanks to Natalie Bontumasi, the designer of this book. Her creativity and expertise transformed *American Gun* into a visual poem.

STUDY GUIDE

WHAT FOLLOWS ARE some discussion questions that teachers might use to help their students process the poem.

1.

Why do you think a pantoum structure was chosen for this specific poem?

2.

Which images or ideas show up throughout the poem? Knowing that each poet only saw one stanza of the poem at a time, why do you think some ideas return again and again unintentionally?

3.

Choose a few of your favorite stanzas from the poem and read the bio of each poet. Does the poet's bio change how you see each stanza? Why or why not?

4.

Choose one favorite stanza and write your own version of a stanza to follow it using the rules of the pantoum. How different is your new stanza than the original stanza that followed? How might your new stanza have changed the rest of the poem?

5.

Find one stanza whose meaning you are having trouble understanding. Ask a friend what that stanza means to them. Does your friend's perspective help you understand the stanza better or differently? Why or why not?

6.

Write down any five words that describe gun violence to you. Do any of these words show up in the poem? How did the poets use your words to talk about gun violence. What would you have done differently with your words?

7.

Are any solutions to gun violence hinted at in the poem? What are they? Do you think these solutions will help to solve gun violence? Why or why not?

8.

What are the deeper connotations of stanza 52 about gun violence in the US? What does the author criticize when she writes, "This is America. Pistol, rifle, shotgun, this"?

9.

Have you or anyone you know been affected by gun violence?

10.

How has this poem affected your view on gun violence? What do you think is at the core of this issue? Why do you think this problem is hard to resolve?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS POEM?

Any reader, or class full of readers, can add stanzas digitally to the end of this book's poem. The poem can be found under the *American Gun* section of The Big Shoulders Books website at www.bigshouldersbooks.com. You'll find instructions on the site for how to follow the pantoum rules and add new stanzas.

RESOURCE GUIDE

THE FOLLOWING GROUPS are some national and local anti-violence organizations based in Chicago that provide information, youth programs, advocacy, and survivor support.

Build (Broader Urban Involvement & Leadership Development)

5100 W. Harrison St.
Chicago, IL 60644
773.227.2880
buildchicago.org

BUILD works within violence ridden neighborhoods in Chicago to provide gang intervention, violence prevention, and youth development organizations. The organization provides safe and constructive alternatives for at-risk youth involved in gangs and other risky behaviors by providing individualized and community-based programming.

Chicago Area Project

55 E. Jackson Blvd # 900
Chicago, IL 60604
312.663.3574
chicagoareaproject.org
info@chicagoareaproject.org

The Chicago Area Project focuses on delinquency prevention and services in disadvantaged Chicago communities. Through special projects and on-going advocacy efforts, CAP has helped improve juvenile justice, workforce development, welfare, and other needs for communities that are affected by violence.

Chicago Survivors

1010 W. 35th Street., Suite 510
Chicago, IL 60609
312.488.9222
chicagosurvivors.org
office@chicagosurvivors.org

Chicago Survivors offers crisis intervention, supportive counseling, and comprehensive referral services to surviving family members of Chicago homicide victims. They work collaboratively to provide training in sensitive and effective communication and treatment of victims' families. Chicago Survivors also fosters a Community of Survivors that promotes peer-to-peer support, education, healing, and advocacy through their collective voice and experience.

Cure Violence

227 West Monroe Street, Suite 1025
Chicago, IL 60606
312.756.8632
cvg.org
cransford@cvg.org

Cure Violence is a global organization that approaches violence with methods similar to that of disease control. The first Chicago chapter was started in the West Garfield Park neighborhood in 2000 and within the first year shootings dropped by 67%. They work to detect and interrupt conflicts, identify and treat high-risk individuals, and to change social norms surrounding violence.

Gun Violence Prevention PAC (GPAC)

126 E Wing Street, #205
Arlington Heights, IL 60004
gpacillinois.com

The Gun Violence Prevention Political Action Committee (G-PAC) was founded in 2013 and works to counter the political influence of the gun industry and their lobby in Springfield, IL. It is a non-partisan political action committee that raises necessary resources to protect and elect public officials with the courage to stand up to the gun lobby.

Get In Chicago

225 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 2200
Chicago, IL 60601
312.616.8000 ext. 261
getinchicago.org
info@getinchicago.org

Founded in 2013, Get In Chicago concentrates on helping high-risk youths (ages 13–18) in communities that are most effected by gun violence. Get In focuses on preventive services to help these kids by combining private resources and social policy to identify, fund, and evaluate anti-violence strategies.

Illinois Council for Handgun Violence

222 S. Morgan Street, Suite 4A
Chicago, IL 60607
312.243.4248
ichv.org
info@ichv.org

ICHV organizes lobby days, legislative meetings, and rallies to lead the conversation in support of the Fix the FOIL bill that would close the loopholes in the Illinois permitting system and expand background checks. They also started the Speak for Safety LK campaign that engages law enforcement, health professionals, and advocates to educate others about the Firearm Restraining Order.

Kids Off the Block, Inc.

11623 S. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60628
773.941.6864
kidsofftheblock.us
info@kidsofftheblock.us

Kids Off the Block, founded by Diane Latiker in 2003, is a nonprofit that helps at-risk low-income youth in the community. The organization works to provide positive alternatives to gangs, drugs, truancy, and violence for kids by focusing on good health, educational achievement, and personal/social growth.

Live Free, Chicago

644 E. 70th Street,
Chicago, IL 60619
livefreechicago.org
info@livefreechicago.org

Live Free Chicago is part of a national faith-based organization known as LIVE FREE USA that works to overcome all violence in black communities through their model of the body (gun violence), the ballot (organizing), and the buck (community development). Live Free addresses gun violence by strengthening relationships with the Church and community. They also partner with local service providers to listen and connect victims of violence to resources.

MASK (Mothers Against Senseless Killing)

M.A.S.K., P.O. Box 368755
Chicago, IL 60636
(888)4-MASKCHI
ontheblock.org
info@ontheblock.org

Established in 2015, MASK is currently active in the Englewood, Hyde Park, and Lawndale neighborhoods. Their mission is to create stronger communities through violence prevention, food security, and housing.

Parents of Murdered Children, Inc. (POMC)

Little Company of Mary Hospital and Health Care Centers
2800 West 95th Street
West Pavilion: Room 8536
Evergreen, Park IL 60805
708.720.6104
pomc.com/chapters/chicago_area_chapter.html
mel.nick@comcast.net

Parents of Murdered Children is a national organization that holds monthly meetings, provides support, advocacy, and court accompaniment. The Chicago area chapter is run by Melvin and Patricia Nichols and they meet the first Thursday of every month (unless the date falls on a holiday) from 7pm–9pm.

Purpose Over Pain

773.234.8117

purposeoverpain.net

purposeoverpain@gmail.com

Purpose Over Pain was founded in 2007 by Chicago area parents who had lost children to gun violence. The group provides activities for Chicago youth, advocates for safer communities, and provides crisis support to parents/guardians of gun violence victims.

Strides for Peace

207 East Ohio Street #437

Chicago, IL 60611

773.690.0588

stridesforpeace.org

info@stridesforpeace.org

Founded in 2014 by Margaret Bazckowski, Strides for Peace hosts the Race Against Gun Violence. This yearly 5k raises money and awareness of gun violence and what is being done within the community to combat the issue.

UCAN

3605 W. Filmore

Chicago, IL 60624

773.588.0180

ucanchicago.org

info@ucanchicago.org

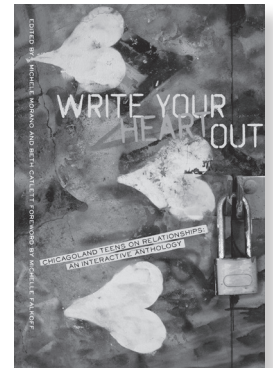
UCAN works to prevent violence, gun or otherwise, by teaching youth non-violent conflict resolution strategies and by providing opportunities for youth leadership and empowerment. They promote anti-violent solutions through their Violence Intervention and Prevention Services while also striving to help youth attain their academic and career goals.

ABOUT OUR BOOKS

If you liked *American Gun*, please consider ordering one of the other extraordinary titles from Big Shoulders Books.

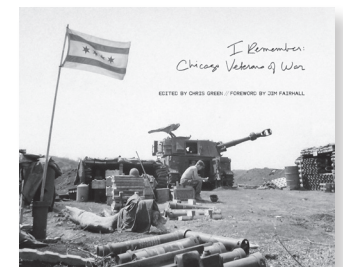
WRITE YOUR HEART OUT

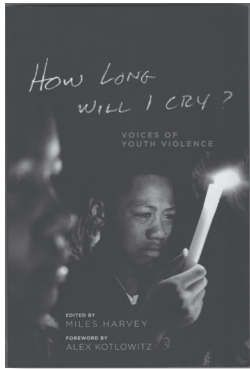
If you are, or have ever been, a teen or interested in relationships or inspired to write by something you've read, this is the book for you. By turns moving, funny, sweet and painful, the 44 personal stories of *Write Your Heart Out* capture teen life as it really is. From crushes to heartbreak to the complexities of family love, teen writers offer insights into how we learn to negotiate relationships and what it means to reflect on experience. *Write Your Heart Out* includes writing prompts and blank pages, so grab a pen and get ready to tell your own stories!



I REMEMBER

I Remember: Chicago Veterans of War weaves together the memories of 50 veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan. Using “I remember” statements that capture the small and large details of firsthand experience, this book illustrates both the constant and ever-changing nature of war and its aftermath.





HOW LONG WILL I CRY?

In 2011 and 2012, while more than 900 people were being murdered on the streets of Chicago, creative-writing students from DePaul University fanned out across the city to interview people whose lives have been changed by the bloodshed. The result is *How Long Will I Cry?: Voices of Youth Violence*, an extraordinary and eye-opening oral history. Told by real people in their own words, the stories in this book are harrowing, heartbreaking and full of hope.



THE GARCIA BOY

In 2011, the brilliant, award-winning essayist Rafael Torch died from a rare form of cancer at age 36, just as his career was beginning to take off. The son of an undocumented Mexican immigrant, Torch struggled with addiction before becoming a teacher at a high school in a largely Latino community in Chicago. His gripping and poetic memoir focuses on the murder of a student that impacted him deeply. The life and death of the student become intertwined with Torch's own identity and his father's as he examines the many layers of what it means to be an American.

HOW TO ORDER

Our books are FREE. The editors ask that by taking a copy, you agree to donate money or time to a group working to make Chicago or your own community a better place. We also ask that you tell us a story about why you want the book.

To order copies or learn more: bigshouldersbooks.com

The editors welcome requests from teachers, community activists, librarians and members of the clergy. We reserve the right to refuse requests that we find inappropriate or impractical.



American Gun is haunting, filled with a sense of profound loss and formidable hope. I urge you to pick up this poem, and read and read again. It'll leave you longing for a city that can and should do better by its young people.

— **Alex Kotlowitz**

Author, An American Summer: Love and Death in Chicago

Each element in this reverberating communal poem—from the hypnotic repetition of lines to the entwinement of diverse voices to the exquisite corpse construction—creates both pattern and ambush, mirroring the interconnectivity of city lives beneath a façade of divisions and echoing the perpetual shock and horror of gun violence. 100 Chicago poets have built an elegy of rare synergistic and compassionate imagination and profound resonance.

— **Donna Seaman**

Editor, Booklist

