

# Twenty-Sixth Annual Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Awards

Sunday, April 25, 2004 2 p.m.  
Evanston Public Library  
Community Meeting Room

## Program

Welcome: **Neal J. Ney**, Library Director

Introductory Remarks: **John R. Sagan**, Library Board President

Remarks by 2004 Poetry **Dr. Haki R. Madhubuti**

Presentation of the 2004 Awards and Prize Money

Elementary Age Students  
High School Students  
Unpublished Adults

Poetry Reading **Dr. Haki R. Madhubuti**

*Meet the Award Winners*

*Refreshments Immediately Following the Program*

## Past Judges

1979 Eloise Fink Lisel Mueller	1991 Angela Jackson
1980 Mark Perlberg	1992 Richard W. Calish
1981 Mark Perlberg	1993 Beatriz Badikian
1982 Daryl Hine	1994 Maxine Chernoff
1983 Eleanor Gordon	1995 Martha Modena Vertreace
1984 Mark Perlberg	1996 Effie Mihopoulos
1985 Dennis Brutus	1997 Mark Turcotte
1986 Lisel Mueller	1998 Mark Turcotte
1987 John Dickson	1999 Allison Joseph
1988 Eloise Fink	2000 Sterling Plumpp
1989 Gertrude Rubin	2001 Richard Jones
1990 Reginald Gibbons	2002 Susan Hahn
	2003 Julie Parson-Nesbitt

# Elementary Age Students

## *First Place*

**By Robin Saywitz**

Haven Middle School, Seventh grade

## **Untitled**

The meadow is an ocean of green  
Dotted with islands of flowers  
The bees are the sailors.  
Flying from flower to flower  
Rowing from island to island.

## *Second Place*

**Emmy Jones**

Haven Middle School, Eighth grade

## **Future**

If you close the door  
on imagination  
and dreams  
you too will become  
just an image in a book  
or a word on a page  
or a pebble in a stream  
or a drop in an ocean  
and nothing more

so open the door  
of your mind  
to dreams  
and imagine  
a future  
for yourself

***Third Place***

**Carly Callans**

St. Athanasius School, Third grade

**Socks**

Oh the cotton on my toes  
Brings such odor to my nose  
Black and white blue and red  
Where is your buddy another said  
Lost in the hamper, under my bed,  
In the wash or caught in the bedspread  
Tumbling and turning in a mound  
Now the little lost sock is found

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**High School Students**

***First Place***

**Jaclyn Cwick**

Buffalo Grove High School

**Saturdays**

Remember Saturdays and  
how they used to crunch your  
toes with rigid black soles?  
The days when you had no  
wardrobe underneath needle  
stuck name tags that nobody read.  
The black ribbon-tied apron  
that wrapped your waist  
like green and red bows and  
waited for the manager to call:  
*Merry Christmas. 9:00.*  
It came every Saturday but  
never all at once. Always creeping  
from the distance like faint silver  
bells until the digital letters would  
sweetly jingle nine. Like determining  
the first weightless snowflake to fall  
and touch without melting to air  
far before the weatherman puts on  
his winter boots and fuzzy red hat to report  
delayed plows and interview the cold.

I'd watch you unwrap in a march to  
your car. I envisioned the sugarplums  
dancing around your smile and  
could hear your mind sigh beneath  
the slam of tall wooden doors.  
And then I'd slowly clock out hitting  
each key like fragile xylophone notes.  
I'd pick up the office phone crossing  
my fingers and the corners of my eyes.  
Listening to rings that I can't hear well anymore.  
Maybe Mom will be on the other end.  
Her voice will be soft and I will already  
understand. Dad's gone again.  
Off to see a world through thick  
snow with no ride for me.  
It's the kind of snow that doesn't come  
to touch the top of your hat but deliberately  
hits at the side to gouge at open eyes  
along with the wind. I hold the phone in  
my left and untie tired shoes with the right.  
All I can think is that it can't be his  
fault, but the blinding snow.

### *Second Place*

**Erin Diamond**

Wheeling High School

### **Pocks**

i can't stop scratching  
my whole body itches  
and I feel like I'm in kindergarten again  
i feel like I'm five and I'm covered with itchy, red scabs  
but I'm not  
i'm not five  
and I have no chick pocks—no rash  
just an overwhelming feeling of being unclean

Jeff Downcy huffs and puffs as he fiddles with the buttons on my jeans  
he fantastically sucks at my neck and grabs at my chest as if he's afraid this will end  
he's afraid that we'll stop forgetting who we are and realize that this is all too weird  
i stare at his hands as they slide down my underwear  
when did he become a man?

i know those hands  
those hands drew chalk people on my driveway

two bumps on the chest to show they were girls  
two bumps on the arms to show they were boys  
those hands left red marks on my back  
he always gave the best five stars  
i know those hands

he closes his eyes and bites down on his lip and I stare up at him  
i try to remember what he looked like at seven—what i looked like at seven  
all I can remember are our hands when we counted the chicken pocks on my legs

### *Third Place*

**Amy Farnsworth**

Buffalo Grove High School

### **Afterlife**

Vacancy insisted we stay  
to watch lightning climb up telephone poles  
and rearrange letters on neon signs promising  
paradise,  
but I saw no ocean view  
from this opaque window  
only road kill  
on the night when headlights collided with antlers  
and suddenly I thought maybe we should have stopped  
back in St. Louis  
for a sense of direction.

When I entered the narrow hallway  
I rang the service bell as my fingers tapped against  
the front desk waiting for luxury  
but no bell hop helped me  
carry my baggage  
to room 412  
where a man would touch the door knob with nubby fingers  
the same fingers that discovered narcotics in the night stand drawer  
that replaced a priest's daily sermon.  
"I stopped believing in God today," I said.  
And you worried  
so you apologized when they didn't put mints on my pillow  
and muttered "sorry" when the rattling of the ice machine  
kept me up all night  
when cubes were forced to commit soft drink suicide.

He told me it was paradise  
but maybe concussions lead to lies

that make us believe in good looks like  
the air brushed Tyra Banks  
that promotes cleavage  
enhanced by a black push up bra  
as her skin gleams light  
on the middle of the highway  
only to see more signs that make us purchase  
the fresh brewed Folgers  
and make us listen to  
the local radio station  
that plays the top twenty hits  
only to drive us to distraction  
when we turn the radio dial  
and change the song  
that forces us to  
believe in life, before room service.

*Honorable Mention*

**Avery Ucker**

Evanston Township High School

**Hot Night**

When the night air is your generously sized Aunt Martha  
squashing you between her breasts  
and you climb between those crisp white sheets only to find  
that they have melted  
                  somehow,  
you know its going to be a while  
before your lids are glued for the night.

Soon the freshly brushed mass of brown  
becomes a damp tangle pressed against your flushed cheek,  
the arm beneath your pillow spasms  
every muscle bursting to relax.  
Frustrated.  
the blanket pillow has transformed so that  
                  somehow  
you're trapped in the middle of it, and now it's concrete,  
and you can't move anymore.

You can only lie there  
and let your blood rimmed eyes  
watch the wall  
and watch  
                  and watch

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# ADULTS

*First Place*

**Patricia McMillen**

Oak Park

## He who has ears

### I.

Once upon a time all the world spoke and the whole earth was of one language,

*that daily, mundane, abused, that ill-prized medium,*

of once speech,

*that instrument of deception and revelation—*

used the same (Or: few) words—

*that material thing, that knife, rag, boat/*

Then “Come,” they said to one another, “come,” they said, Go to,

*reed become pipe/tree trunk become drum/*

Let us bake bricks, and let us burn them thoroughly

*mud become clay flute/*

Let us build a tower whose top may reach up unto heaven

*conch shell become summons to freedom/*

and YHWH said “Here they are, one people with a single language,

*that old, material utensil,*

and this they begin to do. Now nothing will be impossible for them.

*What poetry is made of,*

Let us go down then and confound their language.”

*What poetry is*

Therefore is its name called Babel,

*What poetry is made of is so old*

[that is Babylon],

*so familiar, that it's easy to forget*

because the Lord there confounded the language of the world

*it's not just the words*

### II.

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven,

*not just the words,*

like the rush of strong wind,

*but sounds,*

and there appeared tongues as of fire. And they began to speak in other tongues,

*sounds, speech in its first endeavors*

as the Spirit gave them utterance. At this crowds gathered,

*(every poem breaks silence that had to be overcome)*

bewildered as each one heard them in his own language

## Notes

The above poem combines various translations of Genesis 11:1-9 and of Acts 2:2-6 [King James Version (1611), Revised Standard Version and New English Bible version] with portions of Adrienne Rich's essay, "Someone is writing a poem", in What is Found There (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1993). The Holy bible: Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1976) is copyright 1952 (Old Testament) and 1976 (New Testament) by Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. The New English Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970) is copyright 1970 by The Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press.

### *Second Place*

**Constance Vogel**

Glenview

### **Melancholy Girl**

-- Chapungu Sculpture Exhibit, Chicago Botanic Garden

You turn your face to hide  
behind the curtain of your hair,  
close your eyes against the sun  
that has no right to shine.  
It rains inside your soul.

You have been melancholy a long time,  
sadness ingrained in your opal stone  
before the spirit of the carver  
took up his handmade tools,  
before the gardeners made a spot  
among the ferns for you.

Melancholy Girl, are you sad  
because your sisters leave the well  
with jugs empty as air?  
Because young ears ignore the elders  
who teach your ancient culture?  
Or do you fear the eagle-god  
shelters the last egg between his talons?

Maybe melancholy runs through your veins  
intrinsic as blood,  
casts a shadow deep within your stone,  
a shadow as large as the one that falls

from the sun today,  
the one in which I take comfort.

***Third Place***

**Patricia McMillen**

Oak Park

**Allori's 'Judith With the Head of Holofernes'**

Filling a Medici commission, love-  
sick Cristofano fits his oval face  
on Holofernes' head, on Judith's lips

his lover's pout. That aged nurse who peers  
from canvas right with dumb concern is meant,  
no doubt, to be me, centuries later—

mere witness to the sheen of satin robes  
rose-glow of flesh, music of light and dark—  
but I'd be Judith here, and you, my Love,

my painter-prey. Think if I could but learn,  
from looking, how it feels to love Woman!  
--is it like being dangled by the hair,

one more humiliated general  
whose downfall will inspire his enemies  
to victory over his beloved King?

Or may I not shudder along with you  
as day after day, from my desktop, cool  
Judith gazes in postcard-sized triumph,

Allori's swollen eyes, even reduced,  
dark with misery—not share with you this  
self-portrait as decapitated head?

***Honorable Mention***

**Wendy Anderson**

Highland Park

**Blossoming**

A hunter found her suit  
in some leaves, way back in the woods.

This was many months after she went missing  
minutes from home, in broad daylight.  
She was sixteen, and blonde,  
on her way for a swim.  
He'd walked by the suit before, but thought nothing—  
kids had gone to the pond for years  
to skinny-dip, maybe drink a bit, or hang with friends.  
Then he heard the one she was wearing that day  
was blue, and told someone.

Teams from miles around  
set to work with dogs.  
An anxious blue-tick hound,  
good at his job,  
found her leg bone.

Her parents, on television, cried.  
Her mother said she was both  
deeply sad and relieved.  
You could see in her soft, plump face  
that she was still a good person  
who grocery-shopped and carried on.  
She still loved her husband  
and the child she had left.  
She wasn't quite real anymore,  
but she was kind.

That happened in Massachusetts,  
far enough away.  
But they never caught who did it.  
They found her pieces,  
but not the whole, freaky awfulness of him.

This morning, my girl,  
eleven, and blonde,  
asked to ride her bike to school  
She had to be there early,  
earlier than most kids  
would be walking.  
As she lifted her face,  
still blossoming into who she might be,  
my heart lurched.  
I don't know how I'd stand it, I thought.  
I'd have to be drugged forever  
or taken behind the barn and shot.

When a bomb falls in a war zone,  
a mother lifts her arms  
to cover her child—  
the instinct is always there.  
This crime disallowed instinct.  
And not the immense arms of husband and family  
and the thousand comforting arms of friends,  
could ever dim that worst and final grief:  
I couldn't protect her; I wasn't there.

This morning, anyway,  
I drove my girl to school.

## Poetry Judge

**Dr. Haki R. Madhubuti** is founder and publisher of Third World Press, a well-respected, 35 year old independent publishing house dedicated primarily to Black thought and literature. Dr. Madhubuti, poet, educator, essayist and editor, has written *Don't Cry, Scream* and *Groundwork: New And Selected Poems Don L. Lee / Haki R. Madhubuti from 1966 - 1996*, and many other works. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including recognition from the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Book Award and the Gwendolyn Brooks Distinguished Poets Award.

## Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to contributors to this year's awards.

Hope Arthur  
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Marg and Herm Eisenberg

Mitchell and Yetta Frank  
Ruth Golden  
Debra Klein  
June Lubin

With special thanks to Mrs. Sara Busch and the late Dr. Robert C. Busch for their continuing support and generosity.

**The prizes in poetry this year are awarded in remembrance of:**

**Robert C. Busch  
Brian Garrick  
Jules Echelman  
Melva and Merle Kingman**

## **Contributions**

Contributions to the Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Fund are welcomed,  
and will enable this program to continue.

Gifts may be forwarded to:  
Library Director  
Evanston Public Library  
1703 Orrington Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60201

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In loving memory of

**Jo-Anne Hirshfield**  
who found pleasure and delight in poetry

Her family has dedicated funds entrusted to the Evanston Public Library  
to award prizes for outstanding new poetry writing.

It is our hope that poets of all ages  
will be inspired and encouraged,  
and that the funds will serve  
to reward excellence in poetry writing  
as a memorial to Jo-Anne.

Dr. and Mrs. Hyman Hirsfield  
daughters, Laura, Leslie, and Deborah,  
and grandson Justin Garrick