

First Place Junior Poetry  
Gillian Gutierrez  
Old Donation School, Mrs. Lisa Kilczewski

### **America's Wildfire**

America; the promised land of the free and home of the brave,  
A land where hearts burn with a passion, a sweet desire to become more than you could imagine.  
But when bad hearts burn too quickly, a sweeping fire of hatred and malice stirs.  
It spreads; a scorching infection that ravages through the towns,  
Sparing not one who might be so unfortunate to end up in its path.  
It is this, the fatal flaw of our country,  
That brings these bad hearts together.

And so two fine men sit upon a wooden bench in a lively park,  
Head on his shoulder, hand in hand, their eyes meet, smiling, and everything is perfect,  
But only for a moment.  
The scoffs and dirty looks of the people walking past,  
Is what engulfs them in the flames at last.

Her parents are immigrants; they worked hard to get here,  
But the words that simply "fall" out of another's mouth makes her forget why culture is so  
valued,  
Thoughtless jokes and subtle remarks, although small, hit her a little harder each time,  
Each a piece of firewood that fuels the oppression, making her forget who she is.

And now a pretty lady walks along, herself in the fire's midst like many others before,  
But nobody stops to admire her, no one turns to smile, no showers of compliments,  
Only the showers of bitter saliva flying from frowning mouths,  
Because she will always be a man to them, and the blaze takes its next victim.

He's just little boy, he can't help pay the bills or bring a hot meal home every night,  
But the other kids don't know he can't afford nice clothes, nice things, not even nice friends,  
They don't know that he's received only battered socks for Christmas three years in a row,  
And that he eats only a small bowl of cold, bland, expired mac and cheese at every meal.  
So in their piercing words and scathing taunts,  
He lights a fire of his own in hopes that the red glow will take him away to somewhere better.

A charming young lady, only 16;  
Her family and friends adore her,  
There she is now in an empty parking garage,  
As two tall, burly men, yank her by the waist, and there she goes,  
Twisting and turning, she now lies still, as they carry her away into the evening gloom,  
Never to be seen again.

Another girl goes to a party with a new "friend", and she's with him in a dim room upstairs,  
But as one thing leads to another, and others yet to more, a once soothing flame leaps,  
Enlarging, scorching, brandishing, it reveals its true identity, and it is just not good.

Her rigid screams and hoarse cries echo in the empty room and through her racing mind,  
But nobody hears her desperate screams and cries through the closed door,  
The music is too loud, the appeal of alcoholic drinks too strong for anyone to notice.  
It hasn't killed her yet, but she is left paralyzed, unable to speak or think,  
Which leaves a horrid scar; this deep, hidden scar that burns to the touch.

And finally a sweet, young woman peacefully lies in her bed that 13th of March,  
When sudden gunfire pierces through the cold night,  
Ten cruel rounds of unjust police force soaring through the air,  
The burning blazes flailing in a fiery prejudice, no mercy was shown,  
And there lies Ms. Taylor and she's **dead**.

Social injustice is real,  
That fire is still creeping, and it still wants yet more,

But all it takes to slow its vicious spread is to speak up.

Find the bravery to **say something** when you are a witness to wrongdoing,  
Search for the kindness in your heart to **help others** that have been wronged,  
And seek the courage to **tell the world your story**.

Change begins with us, and it begins **now**.