

Senior Poetry
Honorable Mention
Micah Baum
Norfolk Academy
Mr. Dennis Manning

Speak

In my social life, I notice words blackened by bigotry, subtle attacks of hatred

And I hear only silence.

I look at the news I see faces screaming, guns firing, mobs marching

But still I just hear that silence.

Around America I watch people hurting, people grieving, people wondering when will it stop,
met with thundering, blistering, soul-breaking *silence*.

Here, in the land of the frightened and the home of the broken

Where terror waltzes into the Capitol and dances atop our freedom

We watch on in fear, we dare not make a sound.

The louder people yell with hatred, the stronger that silence becomes

A blanket, suffocating a species already rent with strife

And we are running out of air.

I can't breathe.

But we must.

For to tear through the silence we must talk

Speak up, speak out, educate, inform, say something

Fight back with words of our own

Words for us all

Words of love, words of peace, words of unity.

We must break the silence and push back against hatred

If love must conquer all, then we are its captains in this fight for justice.

To create a future unburdened with intolerance

We must vanquish indifference first

Sing songs of freedom, sing loud, sing proud, sing as one

And let silence never smother us again.

The time is now.

So, take in a breath

A breath for those in suffering, those victims of hate

A breath for the ones forced to fear for their lives in this free country

Inhale for those who can't inhale anymore

George, Vincent, Matthew, Anne

All the hundreds, thousands, millions killed cold-heartedly by hatred

Those who can never enjoy the pleasure of another breath

Breathe in for every attack, every microaggression, every hateful act you've seen

Every one you've stood and watched

Take a breath to steady yourself

Because you are about to alter the world for the better

Take a breath—

And speak.