

# PLAYBILL

THE *East Harlem School*  
PRESENTS THE

**2011 SPRING POETRY SLAM**

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 2011

6:00 PM - 9:30 PM

B.B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL • 237 WEST 42ND STREET

*Featuring*

ORIGINAL STUDENT  
POETRY

CELEBRITY JUDGES

DRINKS AND  
REFRESHMENTS



**The East Harlem School's**  
12th Annual Spring

# Poetry Slam

May 5, 2011  
B.B. King Blues Club & Grill

Evening Program

6:00 PM Cocktail Reception  
7:00 PM Student Poetry—Act 1  
8:00 PM Intermission  
8:15 PM Student Poetry—Act 2  
9:20 PM Slam Winners Announced

Emcee

Jordin Ruderman

DJ

Kevin "Sugar" Shand

# Student Poetry

## Act 1

**Hillary**—*Goddess of the Track*

**Taurean**—*Shape Shifter*

**Bryan**—*Horizon*

**Brieanna**—*Flow*

**Destiny**—*Snow Day*

**Armando**—*Joy*

**Ayana**—*From the Top*

**Christian**—*I Always Repeat Myself*

**Carmina**—*Crossing the Border*

**Odalys**—*That Man*

**Ruben**—*The American Dream*

**Diamonae**—*My Middle Name*

**Jaleel**—*A Father's Expectations*

**Arlene**—*The Last Minute of Fortune*

## Act 2

**Gabrielle**—*I Am A Dreamer*

**Sokhna**—*I Hate, Now I Love*

**Donaldo**—*Spanglish*

**Victoria**—*In the Name of Victory*

**Gregory**—*The Subway*

**Janice**—*When Moments Seem Misplaced*

**Sulaiman**—*Broken*

**Julissa**—*Trinidad*

**Nana**—*Riddles*

**Tululola**—*The Blue Broken Plate*

**Fanta**—*Birdie*

**Iliana**—*The City*

**Cynthia**—*Because She Walked*

**Maki**—*A Tribute to Barucca*

# The East Harlem School at Exodus House

## Small school. BIG impact.

**Our mission:** The East Harlem School at Exodus House is an independent middle school that serves students in grades 5-8 from low-income families in Harlem who exhibit an earnest desire to rise to their academic potential. EHS targets children from underserved families and then helps them develop academic excellence, moral integrity, courtesy, and an unshakeable commitment to their future and the fate of their community. EHS provides an intensive year-round academic program over an extended school day (8:00AM-5:00PM) and offers a comprehensive learning experience for students through a challenging and cohesive combination of academic, extracurricular, summer, travel, and alumni programs.

**Our history:** Exodus House has been an anchoring and iconic institution in Harlem since its founding in 1963 by Reverend Dr. Lynn and Mrs. Leola Hageman as a drug rehabilitation center. Due to a heightened concern for the welfare and well-being of the community's many underserved, at-risk children, Exodus House was converted in 1984 to an after-school and summer program facility. Then, in the fall of 1993, inspired by the steadfast commitment of the Hagemans to the East Harlem community, the couple's sons, Hans and Ivan, opened an independent year-round middle school on the original Exodus House site to better address the critical needs of these children and their families. Today, EHS is chartered by the New York State Department of Education and accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The East Harlem School is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

## About the Poetry Slam

Poetry, prose, and public speaking are key features of the EHS curriculum. Every year, students (grades 5-8) at The East Harlem School share their original works of poetry at a school-wide contest before the entire School community. Faculty and friends of EHS critique both poetic content and performance and select a handful of finalists to advance to the School's annual spring Poetry Slam. At the Slam, a panel of special guests and celebrity judges then chooses the ultimate winner from among the 30 finalists. For over a decade, The East Harlem School has hosted this annual spring fundraising event to celebrate the fantastic poetic achievements of its students. In the words of EHS co-founder and Head of School, Ivan Hageman, "the Slam is *what we do.*"

# Ways to Support the Slam

## **Sponsor-A-Poem**

Following the Spring Slam, our finalists' poems will be featured in The East Harlem School's annual literary arts magazine, *INK*. Sponsors will receive a copy of *INK* where they will be acknowledged with their name listed prominently as the poem's sponsor. Sponsorships vary in amount. The suggested minimum donation is \$50 per poem. Sponsorships are available for purchase at the Sponsor-A-Poem table by the room entrance.

## **Poetry Flags**

Adorning the stage at this year's Slam are Poetry Flags created by each of our finalists. Inspired by traditional prayer flags, each young poet reflected on his/her poem and then transformed it into a work of art by incorporating text from their poems into drawings, patterns, and colors that represent the poem as an artistic whole. These one-of-a-kind pieces are \$250 each and will come framed. Flags can be purchased and reserved at the Slam Swag table to the right of the bar.

## ***INK***

*INK* is The East Harlem School's annual literary arts magazine. Featuring the student poems performed at the 2011 Spring Poetry Slam alongside student artwork, this unique publication reflects the scholarly and creative work that come together through the EHS Poetry curriculum. The 2011 issue of *INK* is available for pre-order for \$50, and editions from past years are available for \$25 at the Slam Swag table to the right of the bar.

## Meet the Judges



### Thalia DaCosta

is a choreographer, make-up artist, associate producer, actress, and TV personality. DaCosta grew up in Florida, where she attended a performing arts middle and high school. In 1999 she won MTV's "Wanna Be a VJ Too" competition to be a VJ on "Total Request Live", and was voted Favorite VJ by *People* magazine online. As a make-up artist she has worked with many celebrities including Tyrese Gibson, Tara Reid, Julie Brown, Carmen Electra, Deneice Williams, and jazz legend, Gloria Lynn.



### Carmen de Lavallade

is a famed dancer and choreographer. She has danced with the Lester Horton Dance Theater, Metropolitan Opera, John Butler company, New York City Opera, Yale Repertory Theater, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Co., and Alvin Ailey, including a co-headlined European tour in 1962, among others. De Lavallade has appeared in numerous film, television, Broadway, and off-Broadway productions. In 1962 she was awarded the *Dance Magazine* award for her contribution to the art of dance. From 1970-1980, de Lavallade was a choreographer, performer-in-residence, and professor at the prestigious Yale School of Drama. She is married to dancer and actor Geoffrey Holder.



### Kristoffer Diaz

is a playwright and educator, living and working in Brooklyn, NY. Full-length titles include *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* (finalist for the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in Drama; 2011 Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Play), *Welcome to Arroyo's*, *Guernica*, and *#therevolution*. His work has been produced and developed at Center Theatre Group, The Goodman, Second Stage, Victory Gardens, American Theatre Company, The Atlantic, InterAct, *Mixed Blood*, The Orchard Project, Hip-Hop Theater Festival, The Lark, Summer Play Festival, Donmar Warehouse, and South Coast Repertory. His self-published poetry book *Fly Girls and Other Poems* is available on [lulu.com](http://lulu.com).

## Meet the Judges



### Lisa Maria Falcone

is a producer and philanthropist devoted to the creative arts. Falcone grew up in Spanish Harlem and drew upon her love of film, television and ballet as a way of escaping her surroundings. In 2008, Falcone founded Everest Entertainment, a New York City based production and financing company committed to developing high-quality film, television and music projects that address important and sometimes difficult issues. In keeping with Falcone's philosophy of giving back, she has made a commitment to donate proceeds from Everest's projects to philanthropic causes that are consistent with the themes of each artistic endeavor. Falcone resides in New York City with her husband Philip and their twin daughters.



### Jon Patricof

Jon Patricof is Chief Operating Officer and a member of the Board of Directors of Tribeca Enterprises, the parent company of the Tribeca Film Festival and related entities. The 2011 Tribeca Film Festival, which just concluded Sunday, included 93 feature and 60 short films from over 40 countries. Over 10 years the Festival has had over 2 million attendees. Jon lives in New York City with his wife and three children. He has proudly served on the EHS Board of Directors for 8 years.



# Student Poetry

## Goddess of the Track

By Hillary, Grade 5

When I walk into the stadium,  
I always think of gladiators,  
Battling in the Coliseum.  
The first Olympic Games,  
People racing each other since the  
beginning of time.  
All you need is a pair of legs.

I warm my muscles.  
I calm my mind.  
You can do it, I say to myself.  
You're fast.  
You're strong.  
You are the goddess of the track.  
Soon they'll all be looking at my  
back.

On the starting line,  
Everyone looks tall.  
Everyone looks fast.  
The gun goes off with a blast.  
Nike,  
Goddess of victory.  
Artemis,  
Goddess of the hunt.  
Athena,  
Goddess of wisdom.  
Give me your speed!  
Give me your courage!  
Give me your strength!

My feet barely touch the track.  
My head is still, I look straight  
ahead.  
I breathe deep.  
I stand straight.  
I am tall.  
I am fast.  
I look for the finish line.  
No one in front of me!  
Today is my day, to break that  
tape.  
I am the goddess of the track.

## Shape Shifter

By Taurean, Grade 8

You can figure out my age  
By looking at the sun in the sky  
Or by watching sand fall  
Grain by grain.

I decide if you're late or early  
(Depending on what type of mood  
I'm in.)

I can morph into different forms,  
Have three arms  
When I'm not feeling digital.

I hang on walls, and  
I grip on wrists.

I am twelve, but an hour later,  
I am only one.

In Los Angeles, I'm known as  
Monday.  
But in Shanghai, my nickname is  
Tuesday.

Some of my seconds are so  
famous,  
They are in the hall of fame as  
buzzer beaters.

Some of my hours are so long,  
You think study hall will never end.

I'm everywhere at once.  
Yet different in each place.  
But TRUST ME,  
I'll always be around.

Yours truly,  
Always ticking,  
TIME.

**Horizon**

By Bryan, Grade 8

Your calm absurd waves.  
The sun glows on your blue face.  
Bring me the sunset.

**Flow**

By Brianna, Grade 8

The stillness in you  
The tranquility in you  
A window  
To the soul  
The silence in you  
All together when people look  
From the earth you come  
Something to grow  
Your flow  
Back and forth  
Push and pull  
The stillness  
The silence  
A window to  
The stillness  
The stillness in you

## Snow Day

By Destiny, Grade 5

The wind is blowing, blowing,  
blowing.

Bushy flakes fall on a slant.

No school and I'm not  
complaining.

I snuggle back into bed,  
Imagining snowmen and hot  
chocolate.

But then I hear Grandma  
coughing, coughing, coughing,

Like lungs compressing.

On go my boots.

On goes my hat.

On goes my big, black, bundling  
coat.

On we go to the hospital.

My stomach begins rumbling,  
grumbling,

But I don't want Grandma to hear.

Her chest hurts,

Worse than it has in years.

I can control my words, but not my  
thoughts.

Will she be okay?

When will I eat?

Will she be okay?

When will I eat?

In the waiting room, we watch the  
news.

All anyone can talk about is the  
storm.

I hold her hand,

Worrying, waiting, wounded in my  
heart,

Still hungry in my belly.

My stomach cries to me,

While Grandma writes her name  
on the list.

But I do not cry to Grandma.

When they call her name,  
I try not to sound scared.

"Good luck," I say,

"Feed me," says my belly.

A kind nurse with her hair in a bun,  
Sees me watching the news of the  
storm.

I don't even have to ask,

She gives me a turkey sandwich.

A tall doctor with a deep voice

Tells me Grandma can go home.

Thank you nurse.

Thank you doctor.

We trek through the falling snow,

Pick up the prescription,

And go home.

I make hot chocolate for us to  
share.

## Joy

By Armando, Grade 5

This is just to say,  
I know you really wanted the  
trophy.

But I wanted it more.  
That trophy,  
Taller than a two year old,  
Shiny as the stars,  
That trophy,  
Would bring me joy.

I'm sorry, my friend,  
That for me to win,  
You had to lose.  
You shouldn't cry.  
At least you won  
Second place.

In my karate gear,  
yellow—golden yellow,  
I beat you,  
You in the blue.  
With my hands in tiger-dragon,  
I bowed to you.  
You bowed to me.  
Together we bowed to the judges.  
We waited for the word:  
Fight.

I carefully kicked.  
I planned my punches.  
I faked and I focused.  
I didn't care that everyone said  
you would win.  
I thought of my family.  
I thought of my sensei.  
I thought of how much bigger  
The first place trophy was  
Than the second place trophy.

This is just to say,  
I know you really wanted the  
trophy.  
But I wanted it more.  
And now I have it.  
Taller than a two year old, shiny as  
the stars.  
Blue and red with my name on it.  
Sitting beside the window  
That looks out to a brick wall.  
It brings me joy.  
That trophy.

## **From the Top**

By Ayana, Grade 8

The curtains are closing,  
The lights are coming on,  
This play, starring me, in my  
beginning  
Is already ending.

Each scene  
A development of habit,  
A layering of memory,  
The read through and  
Final performance.

An empty stage,  
I alone stand  
Awaiting my next role:  
Villainous or heroic,  
Dramatic, fantastic,  
Comedic or tragic.

I write.  
I act.  
I tell the story and  
Set the genre,  
The twists and turns  
And can only hope  
I cast the right cast of characters.

Oh, to live the scene  
As the lead!  
My voice warms  
As do the lights.  
As the curtains rise  
I call out,  
"Scene!"

## **I Always Repeat Myself**

By Christian, Grade 7

Hi,  
My name is Christian and my  
poem is entitled,  
"I Always Repeat Myself."  
Wait a second...  
Did I already say that?

I always repeat myself!

With friends...  
In class...  
At the Poetry Slam!  
At the Poetry Slam!

I always repeat myself!

It's my nerves...  
Yes, that's it,  
It's my nerves.  
Or, my memory...  
Yes, that's it,  
It's my memory.  
Or my nerves...  
Or my memory...  
I did it again!  
Gosh,  
I always repeat myself!

## **Crossing the Border**

By Carmina, Grade 5

My mother told me there was once  
a man,  
Who crossed the desert without  
any shoes.  
Walking across the hot sand,  
To get to America.

I saw a movie about a little boy,  
Killed by the venom of a scorpion.  
His sister went on alone,  
To get to America.

Some people hide under seats of  
cars.  
I hid safely in my mother's  
stomach.  
I imagine it like being in a water  
balloon—no gravity.

The Border Patrol caught my  
mother crossing.  
I was hiding, but she could not  
hide.  
I wonder how her fear felt. Was I  
scared too?

They saw her belly, full with me.  
They did not hurt her, they did not  
hurt us.  
Together we carried on,  
To get to America.

I saved my mother's life that day.  
Did she cry then?  
For happiness, for safety, for  
freedom? Did I cry?  
To get to America.

## **That Man**

By Odalys, Grade 6

Everything I do,  
It's all for him.

That man with  
Chocolate eyes

And hair as dark  
As night.

That man who  
Works so hard,  
Cracked hands  
Like broken glass.

To feel his skin,  
It's like touching  
The dark.

That man with  
A shadow  
Above his smiling lips  
And a voice  
As low as a  
Tiger's purr.

That man with the  
Coffee-stained  
Trousers  
Wearing one of  
Many black hats.

I try for he,  
As he for me,  
That man with  
Broken glass  
Hands.

## **The American Dream**

By Ruben, Grade 8

They crawl through tunnels  
Bundled, silent, undetected.  
“Si se puede.”

They climb up the division,  
The long border mocks them as  
they go.  
A rusted reminder  
That they are not wanted.  
“Si se puede.”

They swim across rivers,  
Against the downstream pull,  
Whose waters lie even deeper  
than  
The roots of their Aztec ancestors.  
“Si se puede.”

They bear this motto,  
Through the barren desert,  
A mirage of promise,  
Fierce coyotes.  
“Si se puede.”

They work here now  
Bundled, silent, unseen.  
Still high hopes, still low wages.  
“No you cannot,” they are told.  
“No se puede.”

A new generation,  
Your American generation,  
Ones who struggled.  
“Si se pudo.”  
Yes, we did.

## **My Middle Name**

By Diamonae Miracle, Grade 5

I was born, a miracle, into a room  
full of women.

I was born into a month full of cold.  
Thanksgiving, orange leaves,  
swirling trees.  
Three months early.  
Three pounds only.  
A miracle.

I was born under the sign of  
Scorpio.  
Under the yellow stone of topaz.  
Tough, proud, wise.  
A miracle.

I was born in the year of  
The Chinese Golden Dragon.  
The luckiest of all, they say.  
Full of fire, full of life.  
A miracle.

So in this city of craziness,  
This city of sometimes sadness,  
This city of my birth,  
I survive – more than survive.  
A miracle.

## **A Father's Expectations**

By Jaleel, Grade 7

My legs are not made for  
Sprinting to the end-zone,  
They are the pivots  
And plies of  
My dance steps.

My lungs aren't made for  
Shouting "Touchdown!"  
They are the forte and adagio  
Of my choral crescendos.

My hands aren't made for  
Throwing a football,  
They are the brushstrokes  
Of the first painting  
You never saw.

You always wanted me to be  
On the other side to catch,  
But some boys aren't made  
For end-zones,  
Touchdowns or football

Some boys are made  
For dancing,  
And singing,  
And painting

Some boys  
Are me.

## **The Last Minute of Fortune**

By Arlene, Grade 7

J.E.T.S  
Jets, Jets, Jets!

Fourth Quarter  
9 minutes and 15 seconds

14

13

SNAP!

Sanchez controls the fate of the  
fortune

Woosh

(You can almost hear the spiral  
splitting the air)

10

9

8

"Nooooo!"

The mighty green giant is down,  
Cursed with the color of envy.

"How could he have missed that!"

"You idiot, catch the ball!"

(We hope our screams are heard  
in Pittsburgh)

6

5

The black and yellow shadow runs  
after its prey

Fortune in hands of another man.

"Touchdown!"

3

2

1

It's over.

## **I Am A Dreamer**

By Gabrielle, Grade 8

What do you see when you look at me?

A dreamer?

I dream of a future

With endless possibilities.

Yet, I awake daily to a cruel reality.

A disease running rampant in my community,

I see the billboards at the bus stops

And the commercials on TV.

I see that those most infected are sun kissed and look like me.

Have you seen her?

She stands before you with her world bulging from beneath her shirt.

Hoping and praying the cocktail works.

Her heart is heavy

With the secret she conceals.

Never did she expect

What her test revealed.

**POSITIVE**

Scared to be brutalized – Bam-you got what!!!

Scared to be stigmatized – Girl, you know she got...What! How?

And scared to be penalized – Get out! No one will ever want you!

AIDS or HIV,

A disease with many faces

Impacting all the races.

Yet, still so many new cases.

Despite the many organizations trying,

There continue to be too many

Men, woman, and children dying.

What do you see when you look at me?

A dreamer?

I dream of a future

With endless possibilities.

I dream of a day when that battle within

Will no longer leave you

Susceptible and defenseless.

I dream of a cure being in sight

And the day you win your deadly fight.

## I Hate, Now I Love

By Sokhna, Grade 6

*Sama xarit, sama xarit.*

Africa, Africa, Africa,

Why did you make my mom take  
me to you?

When I woke up in the morning, I  
was in Senegal.

I sat all night, crying and crying.

I heard different music,

Different languages,

Even different clothes.

Mama, Mama, Mama,

I don't want to stay in this place no  
more.

I want to go to New York, to my  
American shore.

Friend, Friend, Friend,

You make me like Africa.

When I met you, I was afraid.

You became a sister to me.

We play, play all the time.

You helped me, always do.

You make me feel like I belong.

You give me reason to stay.

I think my heart could just break  
Into two halves: one in Africa, one  
in New York.

I wish I could have one foot here  
and one foot there.

Oh my, I need longer legs.

*Sama xarit, sama xarit.*

## Spanglish

By Donald, Grade 6

*Es muy confusing,*  
*pero* then it's fixed.

*Asi, rapido,* not long lasting  
*Pasa* because you get mixed.

I hate you *por que* you're not  
exact.

*Que eres?* *Ingles* or Spanish?

*Explicate por favor!* Or make an  
act

*O si no,* just vanish!

*Por que eres* like that

*O a lo mejor* you just hate me

*Tu! Tu me quieres hacer sufrir*  
when I chat

*Si quieres* I'll help you, Just tell  
me,

what's your magic key?

*Quienes son?*

Tell me, *mis latin*os,

Tell from your *alma y corazon*

From the bottom of your heart!

*Quienes son?*

*La semilla* that started it all  
that grew and blossomed  
planted in your heart.

*La flor que crecio in ti,*

*La flor* growing without knowing  
what to be.

*Que ser?* A daisy or *la rosa*?

A daisy: your *cultura Americana*

La rosa: your Latin culture.

But still trying to *abrir su capullo*

What to be?

Be *orgullos*o.

## **In the Name of Victory**

By Victoria, Grade 8

Victoria  
Victoria  
My name, a burden  
A reminder of someone else's  
struggle.

Victoria  
Victoria  
The words he repeated to me  
As the sun went down  
And when I rose in the morning.

Victoria  
Victoria  
Pancho Villa, Zapata, y Che  
He'd say.  
Los que murieron por nosotros,  
In that deep voice of his that  
sounded almost ancient.

Victoria  
Victoria  
When I forget to make my bed  
When I don't take the trash out  
And when our patriots bled.  
My destiny  
Their destiny  
It rests in me.  
Victory  
Victoria!

## **The Subway**

By Gregory, Grade 6

My grandpa smiles while he and I  
walk to the subway.  
His eyes are as brown and as soft  
As the smooth surface of the  
Brooklyn Bridge.  
His hair is the moonlight,  
Covered with small dark patches,  
Round like subway tunnels.  
We sit on the long silver bullet  
With seats the color of the sky.

I look at him with wondering eyes,  
Seeing what secrets lay in his  
past.  
His hands are wrinkled  
Like a warm, crackling fire  
With a bending and darkening,  
Burning paper in it.

We go up the Manhattan Bridge.  
The sun,  
Playing a game,  
Hiding behind the tall enormous  
pillars  
That people rest in.

I look at him again.  
I knew that he was the sun,  
Commanding with his mild eyes  
And lips,  
Insuring of my safety.  
But still I wonder:  
Who is he?

## **When Moments Seem Misplaced**

By Janice, Grade 8

If you ask me what I am to you,  
I wouldn't know what to say.

Together when the day  
Seems like a lone castaway  
Ship-wrecked on a foreign island

So you don't get lost  
When moments seem misplaced

Holding your thoughts  
Wide open on an empty shelf

Listening to stories never told  
My curiosity caught by the wind.

I do know what to say.  
When moments are misplaced.

## **Broken**

By Sulaiman, Grade 8

You and I walked a fragile line  
Such a heavy burden placed on  
me  
You once said, "You'll always be  
mine."  
Yet you always made my heart  
bleed.

Then the story you once told  
shattered.  
You were willing to give me up.  
My whole heart was battered  
You turned me against my  
dreams.

I stuck to your dark twisted game,  
You telling me that I could never  
change.  
Now I know I was not to blame.  
Now I see you made me weak.

I could never speak with our voice  
You don't even know who I've  
become  
Because I never had a choice  
To shed the pain from me.

You and I walked a fragile line,  
Tangling my life like a twisted vine.  
Never thought I'd see it break.  
You never knew what was at  
stake.

I do remember when I let go  
When for the first time, I said "No."

Now I alone walk a fragile line,  
A thin line, a fine line, my line.

## **Trinidad**

By Julissa, Grade 6

You are hot, strong, healthy,  
And fearful.  
The gun shots  
May scare others away.

But not me.

I come to hear your song.  
You are a sweet sounding melody.  
If the guns are there,  
They are solely percussion,

And I come because  
I know  
The sun loves you,  
And always wants to stay,  
If not for the moon pushing  
You away.

## **Riddles**

By Nana, Grade 6

You always trick me!  
Like a jealous snake,  
Your jokes bite real hard  
And rattle and irritate.  
You slither into me nasty  
With words as slick as scales,  
The information's feisty,  
So my mind is full of silly details.

"Why is baseball the first sport in  
the Bible?"

"What's a sailboat with a  
discount?"

"How can you tell that A is similar  
to---"

I just can't get it right!  
But the questions keep hissing  
despite!

The snake slides into my mind!  
GAH! I just can't get you out!

"Knock, Knock."

"Who's there?"

To be honest,  
I no longer care.

## **The Blue Broken Plate**

By Tululola, Grade 6

On the counter next to the stove,  
Is a beautiful, blue, broken plate.  
My mother's memory of her father.

I have never been to Nigeria.  
I never got to meet my  
grandfather.  
My mom says he was strict.  
My granny says he was soft.  
Everyone says he liked his food  
hot.  
Spicy hot and steaming hot.  
I wonder how his voice would  
sound  
Calling my name.  
Tululola--everyone says it  
differently.

When my mother left Lagos,  
He gave her the plate.  
It wasn't broken then.  
It was a piece of her home.  
She used it over and over.  
For rice, for beans, for Chinese  
takeout.  
For plantains, for yams, for agusi  
stew.  
Food from here. Food from there.  
And eventually the plate cracked.  
And my grandfather died.  
So my mother kept the plate  
With its crack down the middle.

When I help my mother cook,  
I look at it.  
I wonder about my grandfather.  
I wonder about Nigeria.  
On the counter next to the stove,  
Is a beautiful, blue, broken plate.

## **Birdie**

By Fanta, Grade 6

One and two and three and four  
Birdie, Birdie, around, around,  
around, and stop.

My feet are impatient.  
I want to move fast.  
It's almost like my wings are  
starting to flap.

Don't forget the count,  
Like eggs, the numbers crack,  
It's a fact! Never going to look  
back.

Five and six and seven and eight  
Shimmy, Shimmy, clap, clap, clap,  
clap, clap.

The flock does it together.  
My hair dances like feathers.  
Pop, sing, and do the thing!

I know I can do it.  
I got this by heart.  
Just. Got to. Start.

## The City

By Iliana, Grade 8

Bright lights  
Fast pace  
All day! All night!

Secretary turned model.  
Taxi driver turned student.

We're all here  
7 million.

Comin' from all over  
Union Square to Times Square  
Soho to the Village.

We are your diverse d.j.s  
Old favorites, new tunes  
Each neighborhood is its own  
song  
The drumbeats of Chinatown's  
Lunar New Year Parade,  
The unequivocal sounds of The  
Roots,  
And the crackling of confetti in  
Little Italy.

Dance the night away  
Or stay at home and make your  
own mix.  
From the record store rhapsodies  
of Brooklyn  
To the corner store rhymes of  
Jamaica, Queens.

Yet, you know one when you see  
one:

Always crazy  
Never star struck  
As tough as the cement that burns  
our feet  
Cool as the graffiti covering the  
metal that surrounds us.

We tempt you with deals,  
encouraging you to splurge,  
We'll let you get lost,  
But then give you directions.

You'll discover secrets big and  
small  
(We are always the first to know,  
after all.)

This is us.  
This is our city.

Bright lights  
Fast pace  
All day! All night!

## **Because She Walked**

By Cynthia, Grade 5

My mother left Ecuador walking.  
She started in El Campo,  
And she walked and walked and  
walked.  
She left behind the dolls that sat  
on her bed.  
She left behind her farm,  
And the pigs and guinea pigs who  
lived there.  
She left behind her mother,  
Her father,  
Her three sisters,  
Her three brothers.  
She did not look back.

In Azoques, she boarded a bus.  
Then a plane to Panama.  
In Guatemala she walked again.  
She crossed fresh, blue rivers,  
And magical mountains like  
nothing she had seen before.  
Through cities and countries she  
walked.  
It was beautiful, she says.

The desert in Mexico was like  
boiling water.  
And she was fearless.  
It was an adventure, she says.  
For days and night she walked.  
She walked and walked and  
walked.  
In Texas she rested.  
She ate.  
She gained strength again.

Today my mother walks and walks  
and walks.  
And she works and works and  
works.  
She cleans houses for those who  
do not know  
How she walked.  
For those who do not know  
How brave she was.  
And is.

Now I walk and walk and walk to  
school.  
And I work and work and work to  
learn.  
I will be a doctor.  
I will walk the hospital halls,  
helping children.  
All because she walked.

## **Tribute to Barucca**

By Maki, Grade 8

This poem is my poem.  
This poem is your poem.  
This poem will shake and quake your brain,  
Shock your membrane.  
This poem shatters bedrock,  
Cures disease,  
Lulls you to sleep,  
Wakes you up.  
This poem crumbles mountains,  
kills kings,  
Spins the world.  
This poem is everywhere.  
This poem is now.

This poem is exploding.  
This poem is imploding.  
This poem boils your blood,  
Freezes your bones,  
Rots your skull,  
Opens your soul.  
This poem drowns in shadows.  
This poem is bathed in light.  
This poem howls with wolves,  
Roars with lions,  
Chases comets,  
Shoots stars,  
Fuels the sun.  
This poem ebbs and flows with the tides.  
This poem goes on forever.  
This poem ends here.

# Special thanks to...

## Emcee



**Jordin Ruderman** is an actor, an interior designer, and a teaching artist.

She is one of the creators and original cast members of the off-Broadway hit *The Donkey Show*. Other theatrical credits include *Swimming With Watermelons*, *The Karaoke Show*, *Golden Prospects*, and *Museum*. Jordin also acted in the film *Day Zero* alongside Elijah Wood, Chris Klein, and Ginnifer Goodwin. She has hosted segments for Time Out New York, ivillage, and Taxi TV. Jordin is also the voice of many national TV and radio commercials. She has an M.F.A. in acting from Columbia University. As an interior designer, Jordin can be seen on *Trading Spaces Boys vs Girls* on the Discovery Kids channel.

For over a decade, Jordin has worked closely with the students of The East Harlem School as a poetry coach and drama teacher. Highlights from her years at EHS include some original pieces that she created for and with the students: a living museum in the school based on the paintings of Jacob Lawrence, a WWF version of the opera *Turandot*, and a collaboration with Epic Theatre Center in a production of *Antigone*. Jordin's latest role, is as a mother to her beautiful 10 month old daughter Twyla!

## DJ



**Kevin "Sugar" Shand** is pleased to be DJing The EHS Poetry Slam again this year! Kevin has been a DJ in New York, Las Vegas, London, Edinburgh, Dublin and France. You may have seen and heard him as the DJ in *Beacher's Madhouse*, *The Donkey Show*, and *The Bombitty of Errors*.

After years of working for record labels Nervous and Rawkus, Kevin now runs his own independent record label called Hard Boiled. Their group, The Foreign Exchange, was nominated for a 2010 Grammy award.

Kevin also started a music licensing company that offers music from producers and DJ's for use in TV and film. Check it out at [sugar-break.com](http://sugar-break.com). Lately, Kevin has been composing music and doing sound design for children's iPad App's--he must have been inspired by Twyla!

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