

100  
Thousand

Poets  
for Change

~ OPEN MIC ~

**“POSITIVE CHANGE: RISING FROM UNPRECEDENTED TIMES”**

**September 9, 2020 On-line Zoom Event**

**NORTH FLORIDA POETRY HUB**

I want to welcome everyone to our open mic event celebrating the 10th anniversary of the 100,000 Poets for a Change, organized by the North Florida Poetry Hub here in Jacksonville, Florida. For ten years 100,000 Poets For a Change have seen poets and artists around the world bringing attention to political and social issues, the topics of war, violation of human rights, racism, genocide, gender inequality, poverty, animal cruelty, political and social issues, environmental, the human condition, oppression, exploitative practices, biases, and abuses of many kinds. 100 Thousand Poets for Change stands in solidarity with African Americans and the “Black Lives Matter” movement in The United States fighting individual and systemic oppression and racial injustice.

This year the concerns are also joined by the COVID-19 pandemic, the healthcare crisis, homelessness, police brutality and relative topics that we hope to bring our words with the intent to focus on a positive narrative, with insight, and lessons, in the hope of unfolding inspiration for positive change with our words.

May this be a night for standing up and putting voice to what we've seen, and perhaps, by doing so, effect change for our future.

**Reader Bio's - order of Appearance:**

**Sally Wahl-Constain - Ponte Vedra, FL**



Sally Wahl Constain of Ponte Vedra, an elementary school teacher and librarian in NYC for more than 30 years. She is a valued member of the local literary scene, holding the position of president of the Writers Group at Del Webb, Ponte Vedra and author of "The Keys to Fanny", a work of historical fiction, and two poetry chapbooks, "Sometimes I Wonder", and "Random Reflections".

**Persistence:**

“She was warned, and yet  
she persisted.”

Not always political, but always  
uttered by a person in power.

Bullying words, put-downs, words meant  
to dismay, defeat, discourage. Destroy.  
Sometimes spoken by domestic abusers  
used against accusers, used as excuses.

Pouncing on the spirit of the (mostly) women  
What will we do with these withering warnings  
Lower our heads? Be still, calm down, bury  
our thoughts and desires? Our goals?

Question our right to speak truth out loud?  
We could do that—but what about  
Susan B. Anthony, and all those suffragettes  
who were warned and jailed and persisted.

Harriet Tubman, wracked by a blow to her head  
to stop seeking. And the lanky lad in a log cabin,  
self-taught, who walked miles to return a book.  
Or the seventh-grade girl in 1950s New York

who was counseled that being a lawyer  
was not a woman’s career. Or our ancestors  
from all those oppressive lands,  
just yearning to be free.

Had they not persisted,  
where would we be?

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Sally Wahl-Constain

**Perfect Timing:**

This evening on a random ride, we spy,  
peaceful protestors holding up picket signs  
along four corners on Racetrack Road,  
We are not racing, but my heart  
skips a few hopeful beats on this  
quiet street.  
Folks standing up, standing proud,  
quiet, not loud.  
Their placards promote  
the true American claims to fame.  
justice and fairness, kindness, and peace.  
I am reminded of Gandhi  
and Dr. Martin Luther King.  
Leaning out the side window, I thank them with a wave.  
They welcome me to join them.  
I would if I could.  
The aches and pains of advancing age hold me back.

But my spirit is young, and it soars  
in union with their sacred pleas.

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Sally Wahl-Constain

**Pat Krause - Ponte Vedra, FL**



Pat Krause is originally from Pennsylvania, before retiring to sunny Ponte Vedra, Florida with her husband of 50+ years. She is a member of the Del Webb Writer's Club and has contributed to the club anthology. Faith, nature and relationships inspire her writing. She finds creative writing, especially poetry, to be very therapeutic. She often combines her love of photography with her writing using her photos to enhance her poetry.

**Desperation**

Until we hear their story  
How can we be their judge?  
Until we see the blistered feet  
Which traipsed for miles in blazing heat  
Traveling dusty, lonely roads  
A sleeping child their heavy load  
How can we be their judge?  
Or jumped into a swirling river  
Trying desperately to get across  
Risking life and limb  
And then to suffer tragic loss.  
When did we last know hunger  
Our bed a wooden floor  
Or stood in line for hours  
Only to be turned away and told  
' your story doesn't matter'.  
Even as we see their pain  
their sadness and fatigue  
We avert our eyes  
and criticize  
as hope for safety  
slowly dies  
As long as hearts refuse to see  
their hunger, pain and fear  
.... a door is slammed on hope  
When safety seemed so near.  
As hardened minds and hearts  
close borders and build walls  
Our best selves surely die

Our capacity for goodness stalls  
If we look upon the stranger  
Equating them with danger  
We become a world  
Where kindness and compassion  
Are sadly out of fashion.

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Patricia Krause

**Loretta Leto – St Augustine, FL All Rights Reserved** on poetry presented on video – Bio, poem read and photo not available

**Laura Dill – Jacksonville, FL**



Laura Dill is a talented emerging international visual artist and published writer in Jacksonville, Florida. Throughout her life art has been healing and words transformative. Currently, she is working on Resilience Project: ONE, a collection of works across mediums inspired by these sweeping and challenging times and she shares her journey and invites you to share yours. Connect with her via [LauraDillArt.com](http://LauraDillArt.com), [Facebook.com LauraDillArt](https://www.facebook.com/LauraDillArt) or on Instagram [@Perspectvz](https://www.instagram.com/Perspectvz).

"I am an Artist, a Poet, a Survivor, an ever-evolving woman and voice for change. Throughout my life Art has been healing and words transformative. Behind me you see my painting "Resilience". I painted this as a kind of self-portrait for my first Solo Art Gallery. Exhibition at Players by the Sea in February and March, but it has taken on greater meaning since then and become the inspiration for my Resilience Project; a collection of works across mediums including the short poems I will be reading.

"Resilience" interweaves messages of courage and love wrapped in the protective beauty of nature that I find centers the soul, calling upon us all to act from that place of peace and filled with love as we keep moving forward. I began by carving into the base layer of paint: Bottom: "I will not stand by in the presence of evil" Top: "Humanity" Center: "ACT" These are sacred mantras that have guided me through the traumas of my life enabling me to become a driver of positive change and influence within the community. The bright flora and fauna of our neighborhoods in Northeast Florida offer punches of color. Throughout the piece you find hints of the sea breeze bending grasses on the dunes and gently fluttering through the leaves. There are wheels of change and a feeling of sweeping movement that comes with action. I included subtle hearts to ensure that all

action flows from that place in our souls that is grounded in love. "Resilience" is me. It is us. It is a gift and a challenge. It lights the path to our future. This painting has bold splashes of bright reds, blues, purples, and greens on a field of softest peach and titanium white. "Resilience" is a large gallery wrapped canvas painting that will be an engaging centerpiece of any venue. It is ready to hang with D-Rings and 30lb coated wire. Figure 1 Resilience Painting & Photo by Laura Dill, 2020 **All Rights Reserved**

## **Lotus**

Fall into my hands  
Souls gathering, respite found  
Gaia whispers: "Rise"

by Laura Dill  
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## **One more Breath**

Don't.  
Do this.  
The body cries  
Don't do this to me  
DON'T  
Defy  
Deny  
Decry  
Cry!  
CRY OUT For Me  
Be We!  
BE  
One more breath  
Cried She  
Cried He  
Cried We  
Cried Me  
Cried.  
We  
Be.  
(One more breath.)

By Laura Dill  
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## **Panacea**

Promise mother's womb  
Progeny capitulates  
Panacea's lie

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**Goliath Flores - Jacksonville, FL**



Goliath Flores - Musician - Making and performing music for a living has been extraordinarily challenging in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. For a musician who once thrived in my region, and a single father of two small children, this pandemic has changed just about every aspect of my family's lives. For the past twenty years I've performed weekly, from public places to settings as intimate as the bedsides of hospital patients. Playing and teaching music is how I serve humanity best.

Sang untitled song -

## Shutta Crum - Ann Arbor, Michigan



Shutta Crum's poems have appeared in AAR2, ArtAscent, Blue Mountain Review, Typehouse, Stoneboat, Orchards Poetry Journal, Better Than Starbucks, and Nostos. She has forthcoming poems in Main Street Rag and the Southern Poetry Review. Her chapbook *When You Get Here* (Kelsay Books) came out in 2020.

[www.shutta.com](http://www.shutta.com) [twitter.com/Shutta/](https://twitter.com/Shutta/) [www.facebook.com/ShuttaCrum](https://www.facebook.com/ShuttaCrum)

### **Zora and the Word**

—after Zora Neale Hurston / for Kamala Harris

And she saw the word  
that had come from Heaven.  
Saw it sprung tight as light  
shining from the faces of the supplicants.  
Saw it burst from the mouths of the choir.  
Saw it flame in the reverend's hands.  
Saw it curl into a blessing for beginnings,  
and the promise of everlastings.

Yes! The people were ablaze—  
the voices of women praising,  
the eyes of men lifting,  
the hands of children opening.  
Oh, yes. There was a word—a word  
that soothed those heavy with living,  
and choked the disbelievers.

A word kindled with possibility,  
and worn by each body like a badge  
from Heaven.

That word was *rise*.  
And the people rose.

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Shutta Crum

### **What You Were Born to Do**

The moment you were born  
you knew to breathe deeply.  
You knew to raise your voice  
and clench your tiny fists,

and push out with your small feet.

Later, you learned  
to control your breath,  
to modulate your voice,  
to slip hands and feet  
into whatever space  
felt comfortable.

But I tell you now:  
breathe deeply  
against sour injustice.  
Raise your voice above  
placating quiet.  
Lift your fists, and your feet.  
Push out against constriction.

Rage!  
Use that beautiful body  
you were born with, and  
the sensibilities you needed  
from the very first.  
You were born knowing how.

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Shutta Crum

### **I Am a Woman**

I am a *woman*. Full-bodied, flavorful, oaky. Not a *ma'am*, with need for genteel distancing—a way not to be seen. And when you wait on me at the deli counter, I'm not a *honey*, or a *miss*. Did you miss the gray hair? The way I hold a grandchild as my mother and grandmother did? Did you miss the hours spent by my father's side as he died? And I'm certainly not a *gal* or *chick* unless you're a square dance caller. And really, how many square dance callers does one meet in a lifetime? I'm no longer a *babe*, or *girl*. Not since size 14 mom jeans and a triple D cup. What I am is a woman—a solid reckoning.

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Shutta Crum

## Wendy Thornton - Gainesville, FL



Wendy Thornton has been published nationally and internationally; *Riverteeth*, *Epiphany*, *MacGuffin* to name a few. *Sounding the Depths*, May 2018, *Bear Trapped: Blowback* 2019. Her memoir, *Dear Oprah: How I Beat Cancer and Learned to Love Daytime TV*, published in 2013. She teaches writing courses at Santa Fe College, was nominated for Gainesville Poet Laureate in 2020 and nominated for a Pushcart Prize, has won many literary awards, and started the Writers Alliance ([www.writersalliance.org](http://www.writersalliance.org)).

### Turnaround Poems By Wendy Thornton

#### Just When you Think

Just when you think things can't get worse,  
you come down with the corona virus  
and can't get out of bed for weeks.  
You think the damn thing will never go away  
and then it peaks and you are free,  
free to go about your days the way did before,  
sit there staring at the always closed door  
you shouldn't go out of anymore.  
waiting for your boredom to smash you to the floor.  
Thanks to a few libations and some iterations  
of anything you have hanging around the house,  
You finally jump up and start working in the yard,  
because, let's face it, life inside is so freaking hard.

Exhausted, concerned, tired before your time,  
you climb into bed, a dehydrated lime,  
and then the sun comes up in your bedroom window  
and the rain becomes liquid sunshine,  
just a touch, a tap of the earth, god's paintbrush  
touching up the watercolor that is your yard.

#### Okay Boomer

The young kid says, "Don't tell me things will improve.  
I don't wanna hear your pathetic Platitudes.  
You don't know what it's like to be me. Download your bromides,  
you don't know what it's like to miss the swing of a future.  
Working for years and then cut like a suture  
at the end of a hopeless operation. Take your little clichés  
and drop them off at the railway station – you know

that place where you used to go when you wanted to travel.  
'cause I can't go there, Boomer.  
Trains don't run no more, let alone on time.  
And all the planes are out of my range.  
So I sit in this town where there are no jobs  
and I'm just one of thousands of losers.  
Maybe if there weren't so many of you,  
There wouldn't be so many of me."

The old woman nods. "I understand.  
We have no way of seeing what the universe plans.  
We just have to go with it, but think of this –  
survival is more than just making a list  
of all the things you have to do.  
Survival is endurance, pulling through,  
lasting in the face of doubt and saying  
Universe – when you screw me, fuck you.  
It's preserving the environment and living  
the way you imagine your elders lived every day.  
It's holding on when things are tough  
and staying tough when things all blow,  
and huddling in the fetal position  
waiting for the hard times to go.  
Been there, baby. Done that.  
Didn't get the t-shirt.  
But that's okay. 'Cause I've lived  
to make it through another day."

### **trace homeless**

You're getting fewer bills and your curs - ed corners  
hold fewer possessions, corroded lawn chairs,  
empty baggies, no cigarettes, no sleeping mats.  
You've given it all away, traded stuff to make it  
through the day and nothing is coming back.  
You think you'll find someplace else to stay  
but nothing is on the horizon. Nothing is what it's all about  
when you have no home and you're all alone  
because no one wants to be with you  
when you smell like Death coming down the road.

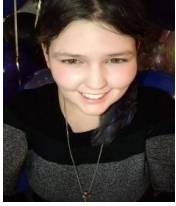
Coming down the road, the middle-aged lady  
with the light brown hair and the bags sounds great,  
singing a song about a night on some Lake  
taking us all away from the overheated cement,  
sidewalk dangling our only rent.  
She hands me coffee and a bag of food,  
wants nothing in return. She's just being good.

At first, we are all suspicious.

What does she get out of this,  
where did the money come from,  
how did she know that we'd show up right here,  
close enough to drag all those plastic bags  
and cardboard cup holders in her illustrious hands.  
And she was bolder than most who passed by,  
those who looked away when we asked for funds,  
or looked guilty, select, when we asked for help.  
She didn't act afraid, shying away from rape,  
robbery or vandalism. She didn't look away  
from crazy, crying, softly sighing non-talkers.  
She offered the coffee strongly,  
left the food fearlessly, asked for nothing in return.  
Oh, how we pray she will return each day.  
Boy, howdy, that lady makes us pray.

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**Wendy Thornton**

## Victoria Mullins - Ormond Beach, FL



Victoria Mullins was born and raised in a low-income home in Ormond Beach, Florida; however, she was inspired by teachers to pursue making the world a more equitable place through reading and writing. Victoria now uses her position as a teacher at Friendship Elementary to give the love of reading and writing to students who are also economically disadvantaged.

### God Bless the Broken Houses

God bless the broken houses,  
from the wrong side of the tracks.  
The ones with the brown grass,  
dirty shoes on the telephone wires.

God bless the broken people,  
with the worst hand in the deck,  
the last on the team,  
the first one out.  
Always doing the right thing,  
at just the wrong time.

God bless the broken houses,  
waiting for Mother to come back.  
School uniforms sewn together with rope,  
fitted by a duct-taped tailor.

God bless the broken people,  
that hear they can't do something,  
and do it anyway.  
Especially when the reasons they can't,  
are statistically and logically sound.  
It's not biases and hate,  
saying they'll never match up.  
It's the very laws of nature,  
the very structure of space and time.

God bless the broken houses,  
tin roof and four cardboard walls,  
trying so hard to be homes.

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Victoria Mullins

**Chris Kastle - Musician St Augustine, FL**



Chris Kastle is an award winning singer, storyteller, songsmith, author, artist and educator from St. Augustine, Florida. Chris was presented with the Annette J. Bruce Lifetime Achievement Award by the Florida Storytelling Association and is the author of the critically acclaimed book of short stories, "From the Icy Fingers of the Deep," as well as three CDs of music and spoken word. <http://www.chriskastle.com>

Sang the song "A Little Hug" [A Little Hug](#)

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Chris Kastle



**Shani Hall – Jacksonville, FL All Rights Reserved** on poetry presented on video – Bio, poem read and photo not available

**Ruth Van Alstine & Art - Jacksonville, FL**



Ruth Van Alstine has been writing poetry since a young age and has seriously pursued a writing career for the past thirty years. Author of two poetry books, *Fairies & Fantasies*, 1996 and *Shattered Moonbeams* 2017, published in *Cadence*, *Parnassus of World Poets*, and various other anthologies. President of North Florida Poetry Hub, the local chapter for the Florida State Poets Association and an active poet of the Ancient City Poets of St Augustine, FL. [www.thefloridafairy.com](http://www.thefloridafairy.com)



**LISTEN**

there are  
those before us  
and  
those among us  
who still

embrace supremacy  
feign ignorance  
plead innocence  
resist admission  
refuse restitution  
demand tradition

there are those who;  
drive home at night in  
fear of being pulled over  
because they are of color,

live in red-lined city districts,  
no trees and concrete at 100 degrees,

have to use "green books" to find  
safe hotels in travel,

whites are unconscious  
of the systemic racism  
built into our society  
by leaders of the country.

**We can:**

change  
educate  
raise up  
give hope  
have peace,

a new world  
of equality

**listen**

with open eyes.

**equality**

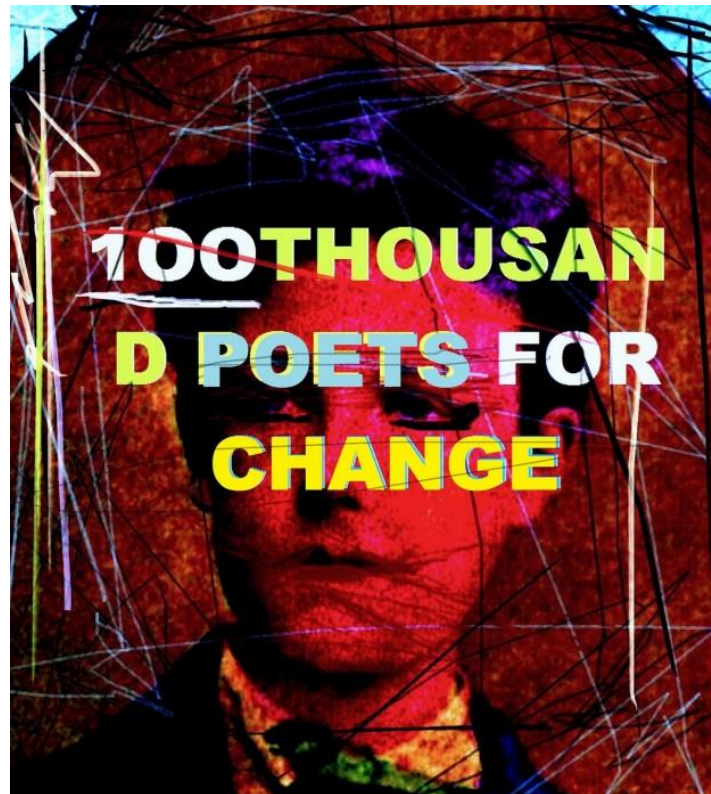
can happen.

This concludes our Open Mic evening. Thank you to all who participated in this 100,000 Poets 4 a Change 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event!

I would like to give a big thank you to Hope At Hand, our sponsors. North Florida Poetry Hub is a chapter of the Florida State Poets Association and was created by the local nonprofit Hope at Hand, Inc. to support and help the arts flourish for poets, writers and lovers of all things poetic and artistic in the North Florida region.

“POETRY. WELLNESS. HOPE ~ Hope At Hand is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides art and poetry sessions to vulnerable and at-risk youth populations. Using creativity, language, art and therapeutic approaches, we facilitate healing and personal growth for children and adolescents.” [Hope At Hand](#)

This event has been recorded and will be available on the [Hope At Hand YouTube channel page](#) and on the 100,000 Poets 4 a Change archival project. Have a great evening!



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North Florida Poetry Hub is sponsored by Hope-At-Hand, a local non-profit organization providing art and poetry therapy sessions to vulnerable and at-risk youth populations to facilitate healing and personal growth for children and adolescents in the Northeast Florida area.

