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EQUALITY THROUGH POETRY

Author(s): JOSEPH P. KAHN **Date:** January 16, 2006 **Page:** B7 **Section:** Living

Diversity and inclusiveness, topics much in the nation's consciousness this Martin Luther King Day, inspired more than 100 entries in a recent poetry competition sponsored by Greater Boston Media and **World Unity** Inc., a Boston-based organization dedicated to fighting prejudice and discrimination. Rules for the contest, which was open to all Boston-area schoolchildren, stipulated that poems be no longer than 125 words and be capable of being read aloud in 30 seconds or less. The winning entry in each of three divisions elementary school, middle school, and high school has been recorded by its author for a public-service announcement airing next month on FM radio stations WROR (105.7), WBOS (92.9), WMJX (106.7), and WTTK (96.9).

"What's great about the winners," says **World Unity's** Sara Ting, a former TV reporter and diversity consultant, "is they come from three totally different communities: a Jamaica Plain elementary school, a Belmont middle school, and Medford High School." While the idea behind the contest is a simple one, adds Ting, "The power of what this can do is great. It reminds us adults of how we should be with one another."

William Leetch, a Medford 11th-grader, composed the winning high school entry, titled "Regardless We Die." Leetch, 16, heard about the contest from his English teacher and drew upon a visit to Washington's Holocaust museum for inspiration. The message Leetch hopes to convey, he says, is, "No matter how well we have it, we're all going to die someday. So why mistreat each other?"

Other winners are Juliet Barker, a sixth-grader at W.L. Chenery Middle School in Belmont, and Maribel Soto, a fourth-grader at the James Michael Curley School in JP. Their poems appear on Page B10 . The top three poems from each category are available at boston.com/yourlife.

SIDEBAR:

First place, high school level

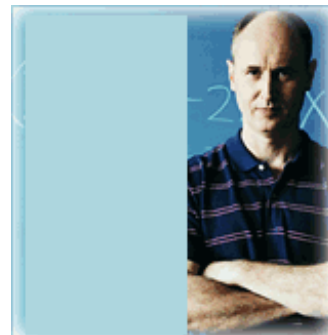
Regardless We Die

By William Leetch, 16,

Medford High School

We speak in tongues

Of different flavors

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We build our societies

On each others' labor

We are dark or light

And rich or poor

We worship different gods

And kneel on the floor

We killed our cousins

Because of their skin

We saw that without

And ignore that within

But regardless we sleep

Regardless we cry

Regardless we leap

And regardless we die

Take a lesson from Death

Treat all the same

Learn from Death

To remain humane

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