

Dear Fellow Poets,

Thank you for sharing your gift of poetry with me. I have been privileged to be a judge for over 22 years with the WriteNow! program. I have read over 1000 poems expressing pain, disappointment, heart break, confusion - all the angst of being a teenager. I honor your struggle.

I also have read powerful poems expressing opinions on wars, the political landscape and international turmoil. Very thought provoking, caring, humanity focused verses. This impresses me and gives me hope that you as future leaders will be ethical, diligently concerned for the poor and oppressed.

The sweet poems of love and admiration for grandmas and grandpas who have passed, for love of romantic partners, for appreciation of parents - this encourages me. These poems are about the strongest connections and purest expressions of love. Loving others is what makes the world a better place.

I look forward to every Spring and reading your poems. Keep writing!

As simple a statement but nonetheless true:

The greatest oak was once a little nut who held its ground.

Hold your ground, write your truth.

Best to you all.

Mary Kolles