

Beyond War: Causes of Conflict, Prospects for Peace Conference
June 2, Dinner Program Speakers

Kem Sawyer Remarks

Thank you, Indigo. And thank you also to Ekep, Issayah, Jasmine and Jillian.

Throughout the day, we have heard a lot about how to prevent conflict and promote peace throughout the world. “Hands Up Don’t Shoot” reminds us that we have a lot of work to do at home.

Building peace begins here.

As part of our Beyond War initiative this spring, we held an international reporting fellowship competition for our Campus Consortium students and recent alums.

We received 50 applications, many of them outstanding. The two winners are with us tonight. Please stand when you hear your name.

Julia Canney, a 2016 William & Mary graduate, with a masters in human rights from University College Dublin, will be reporting on the Troubles in Northern Ireland, the period of violence that ended 20 years ago, with a special emphasis on the role of women peacemakers in their own communities.

Julia writes, “The tide is changing, but too often women are reduced to victims in a conflict, rather than viewed as whole people with their own sentiments and autonomy,”

Sarah Hoenicke, a UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism student, will be reporting on the aftermath of the 25-year conflict in Sri Lanka, focusing on the healing power of narrative and the Write to Reconcile movement. That’s W R I T E to reconcile.

Sarah says, “I don’t believe, from my initial reporting and research or from my own lived experience, that reconciliation is a magic, one-and-done thing. It’s a process, and one that needs to be engaged in repeatedly, widely, and in many contexts.”

We also held a Fighting Words Poetry contest to encourage students in K through 12 to reflect on peace and conflict in Pulitzer Center reporting and to then write poems based on that reporting.

I’d like to thank our education coordinator Hannah Berk for spearheading this. Our Pulitzer Center education team led more than 30 workshops for over 800 students in the area.

We received 450 submissions from students. Of those 16 were chosen as winners or finalists—Three of our winners are here this evening. Please stand when you hear your name.

Alex Holland, 11th grade, Montgomery Blair High School, MD, wrote “Sickness of the Sprawling City.”

Our second-place winner is Beatrice Stone, 6th grade, Alice Deal Middle School, DC., who wrote a poem titled “Surf.”

In third place is Isabel Brosseau Gray, 7th grade, French Broad River Academy for Girls, NC. Her poem is titled “When It’s Gone.”

Many of you may have heard them perform their poems earlier in the day during the panels.

Also tied for 3rd place is a poet who could not be with us: Miranda Rodriguez, 9th grade, Staples High School, CT, who wrote “Ayudame.”

You will find all the poems on our website and I encourage you to read them. They are very special.

I want to congratulate the poets and also the Beyond War student fellows. And I want to thank you for using words to prevent conflict and build peace. Our future is in your hands.