



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **10 Local Students Earn Cash, Kudos in Poetry Contest** Free Events, Celebration of Winners Coming in April at Highline College

DES MOINES, Wash. — “Accent” earned Yasmine Leland first place in Highline College’s 2018 Student Poetry Contest. Leland was one of 88 writers who submitted 187 poems during the contest, a prelude to Highline’s sixth annual celebration of National Poetry Month in April.

Leland said her heritage was the inspiration for her poem, which focuses on her mother’s accent.

“I’m half Korean on my mom’s side and half white on my dad’s. I thought a lot about the different ways me and my dad get treated in comparison to my mother,” said Leland, who earned \$200 for winning the contest.

A resident of Federal Way, Leland is studying in Highline’s Pathway to College program to earn a high school diploma.

“The message of Yasmine’s poem really spoke to the poetry contest judges, and that message came across most strongly when we read it out loud. The connection of language and culture across generations, the sensitivity and strength embedded in the poem was a true pleasure to discover,” said Susan Rich, one of the contest judges.

Rich teaches creative writing and film studies at Highline. She is the author of four books of poetry, including “Cloud Pharmacy” (White Pine Press, 2014).

Two other Federal Way residents round out the top three contest winners:

— Second place, with a prize of \$150, went to Carlynn Newhouse for her poem “Tonight.” She is a high school senior in her second year at Highline as a Running Start student.

— Third place and \$100 went to second-year student Brandon Cramer for “Reimagined Self.”

Honorable mention, along with a cash prize of \$75 each, went to seven students (listed in alphabetical order):

- Angela Huai, SeaTac: “Rain”
- Alyssa Konopaski, Des Moines: “forgive me if I do not care to be a gardener”
- Serina Lopez, Seattle: “Poem of a Ho”
- Tamar Manuel, Normandy Park: “A Gambler’s Mouth”
- Isabella Stewart, Federal Way: “The Cool Kids Use T-Shirts Instead of the Yearbook Autograph Page”
- Harper S. Villani, Federal Way: “Universal Secrets”
- Angeline Watkinson, Kent: “Stargazing”

The contest required students to submit poems that were no more than 20 lines and could fit onto an 8 1/2-by-11-inch piece of paper. The winning poems will be displayed as broadsides during the months of April and May in the Highline Library Exhibits and Art Gallery.

Broadsides are loosely defined as single sheets of paper printed on one side. They were the most diverse form of brief, single-occasion publishing before the Civil War.

Although broadsides were first introduced in England, they became a prime means of communication in the United States. They were often posted in town squares.

Later, Harlem Renaissance, Concrete, and Beat writers claimed the broadside as a below-the-radar way to get their words out onto the streets.

Highline will honor contest winners and finalists with a reception and poetry reading April 10, 1:30 p.m., in the Library Exhibits and Art Gallery. The students’ poems will be on display alongside those of published poets Claudia Castro Luna, Aimee Nezhukumatathil, and Lena Khalaf Tuffaha, all of whom will give readings during the month-long celebration.

All events are free and open to the public:

**April 1–May 31**

Poetry Exhibit

Highline Library, Building 25, 4th floor

**April 9–30: Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays**

1:30–4 p.m.

Art Display: “Poetic Visions: Artwork Inspired by Poetry”

Highline Student Art Gallery, Building 16, Room 115

**April 10**

1:30–3 p.m.

Student Contest Winners: Poetry Reading and Reception

Highline Library Exhibits and Art Gallery, Building 25, 4th floor

**April 12**

11 a.m.–3 p.m.

Opening Reception: “Poetic Visions: Artwork Inspired by Poetry”  
Highline Student Art Gallery, Building 16, Room 115

**April 12**

11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Lena Khalaf Tuffaha: Poetry Reading and Writing Workshop  
Building 2

**April 18**

11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Aimee Nezhukumatathil: Poetry Reading and Writing Workshop  
Building 2

**April 20**

11 a.m.–12 p.m.

Nikkita Oliver: Poetry Reading  
Building 7

**April 25**

11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Claudia Castro Luna: Poetry Reading and Writing Workshop  
Building 2

**April 27**

11 a.m.–1 p.m.

Highline Student Workshop: “Poetry Across Cultures”  
Building 2

[Highline’s main campus](#) is located midway between Seattle and Tacoma at South 240th Street and Pacific Highway South (Highway 99). The Highline Library Exhibits and Art Gallery (Building 25, 4th floor) is open Monday–Friday, 7 a.m.–9 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.; and Sunday, 2–9 p.m.

The college’s annual celebration of National Poetry Month is sponsored by the Highline Humanities department, Highline Communications and Marketing department, Highline Library, Highline Print Services, the Vice President’s Office, Visual Communications program, and the Writing Center.

For more information, visit [Highline’s National Poetry Month blog](#).

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**Attachment:** Photo of Yasmine Leland

## Winning Poem:

### Accent

By Yasmine Leland

My mother says to me, “Yasmine, can you please talk to the bank lady on the phone for me?” I always do, but never understand why

she asks because to my ears, her English is perfect. She cuts through any silence like a knife. She’s sharp, but they call her dull. I’m

one whole of two halves and when he and I speak, they listen, but when she speaks, they turn away. And I know her blood, that it

runs through mine and that it’s thousands and thousands of years of ancestry and tradition and war and family and famine and

survival, diluted down to an accent they call funny.

### Links within this release:

- Highline’s main campus: <https://www.highline.edu/campus-guide/locations-and-directions/>
- Highline’s National Poetry Month blog: <https://npm.blogs.highline.edu/>

*Founded in 1961 as the first community college in King County, Highline College annually serves more than 17,000 students. With over 70 percent students of color, Highline is the most diverse higher education institution in the state. The college offers a wide range of academic transfer, professional-technical education, basic skills and applied bachelor’s degree programs. Alumni include former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, entrepreneur Junki Yoshida and former Washington state poet laureate Sam Green.*