

# POEMS AGAINST WAR

*A Journal of Poetry and Action*



## 4 Sample Poems

*from*

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Volunteer Army  
by Jerome Julius

Shanghaied by color,  
Shanghaied by lack of economic choices,  
Shanghaied by social class,  
Clubbed by neo-impressors,  
Lured by promises of liberation  
But bounded by new constraints, they  
Agree to swear allegiance  
Seeking clarification of life,  
Facing death.

American Guitar  
by Sam Schmidt

This wood was a gift  
from the Iroquois; the strings  
are enlightenment thought.

*We hold these truths  
the guitar says.  
Four score and seven  
angels of our better  
nature have a dream.*

Jefferson that rock star;  
after the revolution and war,  
smoke around him clears.  
He strums the American hymn:  
All men are created  
equal, the guitar sings.

High school students  
can be so dense sometimes, or  
too young. *It's for happy tunes, right?*  
A girl tries it. A boy adds,  
*It sure is old.* I turn  
the guitar over; blood flows out. . . .

At the first chord you strum,  
the men who talk for money  
open their eyes; they finger  
the knives in their pockets,  
and somewhere, the barrel  
of a gun appears from a window.

Sight  
by Gregg Mosson

Image seen through a photographer's still, mute frame:  
An Iraqi Sunni grandmother, granddaughters flocked  
    around her, grins—  
her rooted teeth healthy and  
glinting in the flinty light against  
tan summer dust and her own purple headscarf;  
Local Shiite militia were rebuffed  
from confiscating her family's house.

Such tales of tribal tug-of-war shall not end well:  
Tomorrow walking back from market  
assassins' guns crater her robed body  
in red clatter. None witnessed the incident,  
notes an American soldier to the photographer.  
Her Sunni heritage is not discernable  
in the upper set of dentures  
still on the dusty ground.

*Poets Against the War*  
by Reginald Harris

*University of Baltimore*  
*February 13, 2003*

Afterwards, all smiles,  
greetings, hugs, plans,  
the shared music of Walt

Whitman in our ears, singing  
in our souls, translating  
drumbeat to heartbeat.

It doesn't stop, it does  
not stop, the insistent  
martial clatter, the cold wind  
blowing in from the Capital,  
calculation hiding behind  
the mask of inevitability

We do not stop. Together  
we bundle up against the weather,  
our prayers flickering candles

against the encroaching night,  
wrap ourselves in a weave of words  
binding us to the other,

holding us together, holding us  
to the world. And we don't  
Stop. We do not stop.

We  
Do not  
Stop

## Contributors' Notes

**Reginald Harris'** book *10 Tongues* (Three Conditions Press, 2001) was a Finalist for a Lambda Literary Award and ForeWord Book of the Year. He has received grants from the Maryland State Arts Council for poetry and fiction, and works at Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland. Recent work has appeared in the anthologies [Voices Rising: Celebrating 20 Years of Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Writing](#) and [The Ringing Ear: Black Poets Lean South](#).

**Jerome Julius** is the pen name of Jerome D. Julius, a retired military officer who served in Vietnam from June 1970 to July 1971.

**Gregg Mosson** is editor of this journal and author of *Season of Flowers and Dust* (Goose River Press, 2007), a book of nature poetry. His criticism and poetry have appeared in *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Z Magazine*, *The Futurist*, *Loch Raven Review*, and *The Baltimore Sun*. For more, visit [www.greggmossion.com](http://www.greggmossion.com). His poem "Sight" published here is based on the true story of Suaada Saadoun—reported by Ashley and Joanna Gilbertson in "Last Photographs," *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Summer 2007, pp. 27-49).

**Sam Schmidt's** poetry has appeared in *Maryland Poetry Review*, *Potomac Review*, *Gargoyle*, and *Black Moon*. He edited the Baltimore writers' newsletter *WordHouse* from 1993-2004, and co-edited the anthology *Poetry Baltimore: Poems About a City* (WordHouse, 1997). He works as a copy editor in Maryland.

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