

Philadelphia Stories is excited to share the winning poem in this year's National Prize in Poetry! The poem, "A Song for Anna Mae: an erasure for Tina and those of us who chose to leave" by LaVonna Wright of Lithonia, Georgia was selected by the 2024 judge, Kirwyn Sutherland. Wright will receive a prize of \$1000 and an invitation to read in a reception for our contest winners. About his selection, Sutherland writes:

In "A Song for Anna Mae: an erasure for Tina and those of us who chose to leave," I was taken by not just the narrative that was achieved from this erasure but also the sub or shadow narratives that the author crafted from just a couple of short/quick lines:

A long dress
carried me
I grew out of that
I fell
in love

and

Dreams told me a
Temper was
A story
broken, mean.

These sets of lines are delicately simple but effective in how much heft they carry especially against the backdrop of Tina Turner's story, as well as the stories of other black women domestic violence survivors. This poem allows the reader to linger on these lines/phrases, a further immersion into multiple texts: Tina's words, the constructed poem, and the silences of her/their story/ies.

We are awarding each of three runners up a \$250 prize: "Make Her Dance" by Vincente Perez of Albany, CA; "Control" by Tara A. Elliott of Salisbury, MD; and "Tía rebuilds her house as she snores" by Purvi Shah of Brooklyn, NY.

Sutherland also selected the following poems as honorable mentions: "Flight," by Khalil Elayan of Tunnel Hill, GA and "If the Elevator Tries to Bring You Down, Go Crazy" by Von Wise of Philadelphia. The editor and readers of *Philadelphia Stories* selected the following poems as editor's choices: "Oshouo" by Shin Watanabe of Binghamton, NY; "Painting the Heart" by Alison Hicks of Havertown, PA; "Underground Parking in Tehran, 1984" by Shakiba Hashemi of Aliso Viejo, CA; "Yellow Throat" by Alison Lubar of Cherry Hill, NJ; and "the body remembers everything it has ever been" by Elliott batTzedek of Philadelphia.

Along with LaVonna Wright, the other winners will also be celebrated with a hybrid reading and awards ceremony. This reading will be free, and open to the public on Saturday, April 20 at Thomas Jefferson University's East Falls campus and via Zoom. Visit <https://philadelphiastories.org> for more information.

Judge Kirwyn Sutherland writes that, “The poets who submitted to this year's contest weren't afraid to test the limits of language to create some really unique and at times experimental work.” This year’s poets confront the large and small threats to our bodies, our communities, and our imaginations. Such work helps us grieve and grow. I am forever grateful to the writers who trust us to share their work.

Finally, I must explicitly thank our contest coordinator Eli Aharon for consistent, helpful, and organized communication with our poetry screeners and these poets.

WINNER OF THE 2024 PHILADELPHIA STORIES NATIONAL PRIZE IN POETRY

"A Song for Anna Mae: an erasure for Tina and those of us who chose to leave" by LaVonna Wright (Lithonia, GA)

RUNNERS UP

“Make Her Dance” by Vincente Perez (Albany, CA)

“Control” by Tara A. Elliott of (Salisbury, MD)

“Tía rebuilds her house as she snores” by Purvi Shah (Brooklyn, NY)

HONORABLE MENTIONS

“Flight,” by Khalil Elayan (Tunnel Hill, GA)

“If the Elevator Tries to Bring You Down, Go Crazy” by Von Wise (Philadelphia, PA)

EDITOR’S CHOICES

“Oshouo” by Shin Watanabe (Binghamton, NY)

“Painting the Heart” by Alison Hicks (Havertown, PA)

“Underground Parking in Tehran, 1984” by Shakiba Hashemi (Aliso Viejo, CA)

“Yellow Throat” by Alison Lubar (Cherry Hill, NJ)

“the body remembers everything it has ever been” by Elliott batTzedek (Philadelphia, PA)

FINALISTS

“Sestina for Mothers on Fire” by Amanda Quaid (New York, NY)

“Dogma” by Mary Paulson (Naples, FL)

“An Ode to Bullshit” by Christian Hooper (Ann Arbor, MI)

“I’ve Always Struggled Learning Languages” by Jay Shifman (Philadelphia, PA)

“Like the Atmosphere” by Keren Veisblatt Toledano (Philadelphia, PA)

“Cain Stumbles on Step Eight” by R.G. Evans (Elmer, NJ)

“reporting from the colony on the inside of the empire” by Jay Julio (New York, NY)

“Vespers” by Eleanor Stafford (Narberth, PA)

“despídete (poem from a hospital room)” by Julia Rivera (Philadelphia, PA)

“Monday, the First Bright Day” by Terra Oliveira (Lagunitas, CA)

“Extraction” by Jonathan Greenhouse (Jersey City, NJ)

“Trampoline” by Sheleen McElhinney (Langhorne, PA)

“Apology Poem for Sleeping with Men” by Sara Fetherolf (Long Beach, CA)

“Breadwinner” by Ginger Ayla (Trinidad, CO)

“Rice Poem” by Maya Angelique (Philadelphia, PA)

“grief is a stone in the throat” by Alison Lubar (Cherry Hill, NJ)

“To enter into the body of god” by Elliott batTzedek (Philadelphia, PA)

“Long Emancipation Proclamation” by Vincente Perez (Albany, CA)