

Written Poems - Age 12-15 Category
Honorable Mention

Legacy

By Julia Illana

Age 15 - Durham School of the Arts

When my mother was four
my mother's mother told her
to hide her favorite record.

When my father was seventeen
he packed into a bus with a hundred other teenagers
and sang a song called "Not to say I didn't speak of flowers."
There are rumors about the one who wrote it,
that the military snapped his mind
like a guitar string.

And the reason is that our freedom fighters were musicians
coded revolution into songs of flowers and wineglasses
because calice can be a goblet filled with liquid red as blood
but it can also mean to keep your revolutionary lips shut—

Viva Brasil!

My uncle played ping-pong with a rebel
wanted dead or alive.

My mother's college
had a student body president
who only stopped breathing
after he was buried.

Because when speaking is against the law
people pick up microphones
instead of machine guns,
guitars instead of grenades,

lay down a beat
instead of a bomb.

But when music is against the law
suddenly everyone is a criminal.

Viva Brasil!

The reason
for my mother's perfect English

is because when she was my age
my military grandfather decided he
didn't want to play prison guard
for a nation of millions.

And I am lucky,
because her perfect accent
is the reason I
grew up blending in
with the red and the blue
and the white, white, white.

But I never forget
that I am first-generation freedom.

If you want my heritage
you may not see it in my skin
but I have a cello on my back
that's as heavy as a loaded coffin

My voice has the double tone
of language learned twice
and every time I read a note
I'm reading in between the lines.