

**WORLD REFUGEE DAY**  
**Refugee and Human Rights**  
**Child and Youth Poetry Contest**



**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés



**1<sup>st</sup> Prize Award Recipient**  
**Group III: Grades 9 to 12**

**ANNA XU**

**14 Years Old, Grade 9**

**Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute**

## **Awake Dreaming**

I clutched onto my daughter, Snuggled against my chest  
Her, warm shallow breath comforting  
hunched over, hundreds of us quivered in sync  
No doubt, the night became marked with indelible ink

The shooting paused to take an air break      I listened.  
I don't know  
What's scarier; the crackling gunshots' laughter  
Or the sucking silence after

In my arms, my daughter slept  
Ever so content  
Igniting a desire that burned within me  
The want to be free

Overwrought of injustice, as the rich flee in search of havens  
Buying their freedom  
The rest of us trapped, long forgotten, by even the saints  
Flowers of zinc corrode away, which no one cares to repaint

Peace, prayed the souls under the tent  
In hushed voices  
Never dared we, express the truth, our most genuine thoughts  
Nor have we ever been to school, been taught

Just as crowds of yellow ants wait under sheets of layered clouds, for the sun to  
reappear and warm their tender crisp bodies,  
So we long for rights and freedom, to do ourselves just.  
Then will I, savour the aroma of free speech  
And its aftertaste, in the following silence.