

2020 MCC Creative Writing Contest

Second Place - Poetry Category

"Yesterday Yearning, Tolerant Tomorrow" by Emma Skogseth

A yard sign cannot send you to hell,
But damn, I wish it could.
They are ornaments upon tree branches of hate,
Hate for those who love different, pray different, look different,
Hate that is so pervasive there is no telling,
Where it begins or where it ends.
It feels like there's truly no coming together,
For when you pluck that sign out by the legs,
And toss it in the trash,
They come back bigger, louder, stronger,
Doubling down on how they'd like to be seen.
I'm starting to think that my brighter tomorrow,
Is your yearning for yesterday,
And our moving forward may stall the progress,
On your urge to rewind.

A Facebook post cannot send you to hell,
But damn, I wish it could.
Freedom of speech seems to only apply,
When you feel as though no one is listening.
But why would people listen,
To someone seeking to paint our neighbors,
As something less than human,
For the sake of painting themselves,
As a condition to be desired?
I'm starting to think that love thy neighbor,
Only applies when they look like you,
Love like you, worship like you,
Yearn like you for yesterday.

A poem cannot send me to hell,
But damn, I feel like this one should.
There are messages abundant,
Of reaching hands out across the aisle.
But when my hand has been bitten by the teeth of others,
Who hate my friends for who they love,
Who look at me as less for not believing in more,
Who don't see my peers for all they are,
I don't want to reach my hand out across that aisle.

But,
I'm starting to think that we've turned a new leaf,
And before us lie blocks of change, of promise,
Of a better, tolerant tomorrow.
So, to hell with hell and yard signs,
Facebook posts and angry poems,
I will reach my hand out across the aisle,
And I hope that whoever grasps it,
Strips away the anguish,
The pain we've brought each other in the past,
And has turned a leaf of their own,
In favor of a better, tolerant tomorrow.