

How Utterly Astonishingly Improbable it is That I Even Exist

*by Allan Bowers, Rita Bowes, Laura Johnson,
Jim McKinley, Rena Stuter, & Long Trinh*

With birds

crowding the birdfeeder we are saying thank you
with water being poured over our heads we are saying thank you
holding the foot of the boy who is jumping
out the window of the youth detention center, we are saying thank you,
thank you, we say, playing cards
home from the doctor's office we are saying thank you
being greeted by a beautiful gray cat we say thank you, in her eyes
she could wrap her entire spirit around us
letting go of the foot of the boy we are saying thank you
whispering 'silent wing,' the Indian name
for an owl, we say thanks

remembering the policeman locking his gun in a metal box
for safety's sake we are saying thank you
remembering the sari merchants, the smell of cumin and coriander
we are saying thank you, we say thank you remembering
people being born
on a burlap sack and people
dying on a burlap sack, on the sidewalks life and death together
looking down from high places

whispering in each other's ears, not understanding
we are saying thank you
with the shootings coming faster in the classrooms
with the doors closed when someone dies we go on
saying thank you we say thank you
carrying babies in packs, seeing such brilliant colors in fabrics
we are saying thank you
making thirteen quilts we are saying thank you
embroidering flowers on nothing we are saying thank you
in pain we say thanks
in astonishment we say thanks
playing instruments, making sound that goes out into the universe
to become something else entirely different thank you we say

After "Thanks" by W.S. Merwin

This poem was written by members of the Centre Crest Nursing Home BEING HEARD Writing Group, and appears in the autumn 2018 BEING HEARD poetry booklet titled "Friday Afternoons." The writing group is a program of Ridgelines Language Arts and is supported in part by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.