



## **Claudia Castro Luna, State Poet Laureate**

Opening day of the Washington State Senate

January 16, 2019 – Remarks and Poem

Introduction by Lt. Governor Cyril Habib

Thank you Mr. President:

Honorable Members of the Washington State Senate...

Fellow Washingtonians...

It is my great honor to stand before you and share a poem on the opening day of the Senate.

It has been my great privilege this past year to serve as Washington State Poet Laureate, to crisscross our beautiful state, to build appreciation for the power of words to unveil things yet unconsidered or to re-consider notions held, to stir the deepest parts of ourselves, to invite folks who have never written a poem in their lives to try their hand at it, to nurture young writers and to connect those already writing to each other.

This poem I share with you today is titled Summer Sparks. It is an invitation, a beginning to imagine a more just, inclusive future.

## Summer Sparks

In New York a colossal woman raises  
a burning torch, a promise to harbor  
*the tired, the poor, the homeless, the tempest-tossed.*  
In Seattle another woman fades,  
*homeless in a park*, with the racing butterfly  
of her child's heart her only compass.  
A pendulum swings, all over the land,  
from the luscious forests of generous imaginations  
to the ruinous bigotry that clipped  
Emmett Till's wings. Echoes of yesteryear's  
Ghost Dance over Wounded Knee,  
that sideway shuffle call for ancestors' aid,  
beats time before us again and again.  
Fruit plump on summer's light  
in a New England vale ripens  
alongside Southwestern's border  
bruised and battered fruit.  
4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks bravado,  
the feeling of loosing yourself in the jubilee  
of the crowd after winning, collapses  
under the crushing evidence  
of the country that we've never been.  
The sparks lighting up the sky then falling,  
folding back into night,  
are they a celebration, *the best part of summer*,  
or more of a weeping?  
Love and pain don't strike  
some over others with different strength.  
We are equally susceptible to kindness  
and to cold, and board together  
the destiny of our shared country.  
*On an occasion like this,*  
*from sea to shining sea,*  
is a good place to begin not end.