



Kintsugi

By Yexandra Diaz

Commissioned by Fairfield County's Community Foundation in celebration of our nonprofit partners. Originally shared at the June 5, 2026 Celebration of Community event in Norwalk, CT.

Kintsugi is the Japanese art
Of repairing broken pottery
By mending cracks with gold

Because what is a seedling
Without a proper foundation
An intact container
Fertile soil
Something willing...

To hold
To nourish
To shelter possibility

And every movement needs that kind of vessel

Before hope becomes headline
It begins as a conversation
In rooms like this one

And should the clay pot crack
Let it crack in gladness

Because cracks mean pressure was endured
Weight was carried
And something inside kept growing

We forget that within every institution
Is an individual
Someone more child than cog

Delusional enough
To still believe
They can change the world

So they show up
Day after day
Meeting after meeting
Testimony after test

And it is the people
With hearts of gold
Who melt themselves
To mend the gaps
The people who understand
That systems do not heal themselves
So they become thought partners
Watering grassroots during brainstorm

And sometimes,
That first yes
Is a seed of hope
Catalyzing change

Because what is kintsugi
if not foraging for faith?
What is gold
But proof
That something survived the fire long enough
To be melted into mercy?

See,
A warrior in a garden
Prunes and protects
But a gardener in a war
kneels on scorched earth
with dirt beneath fingernails
while the world burns
still whispering
grow

Carrying water through neighborhoods dehydrated by disinvestment
Planting orchards where systems salted the soil generations ago
Believing a child can bloom, even when raised between red lines

Some people see broken systems
You see the fragments and gather them carefully
Like shattered pottery

And with hands calloused
From both protest and planting,
You fill the fractures with gold

Because equity is not charity
It is as much cultivation
As it is horticulture

It is learning how to become
Both shelter and sunlight
Both seed and shield

To be incubator
Is to become greenhouse
And advocate

Is to become weather
To thunder in legislative chambers
To rain truth onto policies grown brittle from neglect
To crack open the concrete
So everything living
Has room to rise

Because hunger is not just an empty stomach
It is a field denied rain

Homelessness is not just missing walls
It is a root system forced from the earth

And hopelessness
Is what happens
When people are treated like an eyesore
Instead of an heirloom

But you are the people who know
Every community carries veins of gold beneath the damage

The people willing
To melt themselves down
Just to pour hope into the cracks

Planting despite the drought
Nourishing in spite of need
Making something out of nothing
Tilling and turning over dirt

So that groundwater may flow
Sowing a bountiful harvest

To fight food insecurity
not just with meals,
but with dignity
To confront homelessness
not just with shelter
but with belonging

To stand in the middle of systems
designed to exhaust people
and still insist

We hunger for more than just provision
We thirst for prosperity

Cracking open hearts
Because where better to plant seeds of hope

And maybe that is what courage really is
Not pretending the world isn't at war with the vulnerable
But refusing
To stop gardening anyway..

So today,
We honor the nonprofits
The organizers
The educators
The healers
The bridge-builders
The community leaders
Pounding pavement with tired feet
And spirits that defy defeat

Because nothing beats failure but a try

The ones keeping their ears to the ground
So they can hear the promise of tomorrow
So that the rose may grow from concrete
Mending the cracks with their beauty

The ones transforming funding into futures
The ones proving
That community is not merely a place
It is a practice

And to Fairfield County's Community Foundation

Thank you
For being willing
To hold the container

To pour in the gold

To remind us
That warrior is a misnomer for gardener
That cracks can become constellations

And that when people come together
with courage, compassion and conviction

We do more than repair the world

Together,

We remake it.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Yexandra "Yex" Diaz
New Haven Poet Laureate

Hailing from New Haven by way of Chicago, Yexandra "Yex" Diaz is an award-winning poet and community leader whose work lives at the intersection of art, education, and culture.

A 2x Connecticut Grand Slam Champion (2019 & 2026), Yex helped lead the state's premier adult poetry team to the #1 ranking in the nation, securing the Southeast and, more recently, Southwest Regional Championship titles. She has graced stages from JPAC for a Def Poetry Jam Reunion to the August Wilson Cultural Center, touring and opening for icons such as 2x Grammy Award winner J. Ivy and The Last Poets.

As New Haven Poet Laureate, Yex hosts Elm City Flow, a monthly poetry open mic featuring local and nationally recognized spoken word artists on the last Saturday of every month at The Sandbox in New Haven from 6-8 PM.

Offstage, Yex serves as Artistic Director of THE WORD, Development Manager at the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, and an AIR Collaborative Facilitator with the Connecticut Office of the Arts, working to amplify local creative economies. Her commitment to arts education has led her to serve as a visiting instructor at public and private institutions statewide, such as UConn and Trinity College.