

# BETWEEN THE LINES



## NATIONAL YOUTH POET LAUREATE KARA JACKSON

Becoming a U.S. Poet Laureate is a big honor that comes with a big responsibility: to bring poetry to everyone. Now, thanks to an arts and writing group called Urban Word, there's also a National Youth Poet Laureate. Kara Jackson, a 19-year-old from Oak Park, Illinois, is the third person to be honored with this title. She's written us an ode, a poem that celebrates something—in this case, the speaker's body. She starts by blessing "patient bones," but then shifts to a larger, national body. Why do you think she writes that "America needs a massage"? There's not one simple answer. Sometimes you need to stretch your legs, and sometimes you need to stretch your mind.

ILLUSTRATION BY  
RAQUEL APARICIO TORINOS

### ODE TO STRETCHING MY LEGS

bless my patient bones,  
 the tendons tough from time  
 muscles making their way through the midwest  
 trains that test our toes for hours  
 seven, eight, nine. america is in need of a massage,  
 a backrub, an ice pack. we live in a country  
 that gets sore, sometimes. all of us ache.  
 everyone has suffered from sitting too long,  
 frustrated feet from falling asleep.  
 praise the palms that press into our necks.  
 thank the shoulders that are forgiving,  
 who suffer the traveling day. worship the mothers  
 who move the kinks out of their children's backs.  
 praise the yoga pose practiced after a long trip.  
 we have earned the right to bend, to expand.  
 we can take a little pain, if it gives us plains,  
 windows to point out of, landscapes for our games.  
 we can be a little sore if it means seeing the world,  
 rattling before us, bringing us closer  
 to something we've never seen.

