

# AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006  
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## American Life in Poetry: Column 198

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

This column has had the privilege of publishing a number of poems by young people, but this is the first we've published by a young person who is also a political refugee. The poet, Zozan Hawez, is from Iraq, and goes to Foster High School in Tukwila, Washington. Seattle Arts & Lectures sponsors a Writers in the Schools program, and Zozan's poem was encouraged by that initiative.

### Self-Portrait

Born in a safe family  
But a dangerous area, Iraq,  
I heard guns at a young age, so young  
They made a decision to raise us safe  
So packed our things  
And went far away.

Now, in the city of rain,  
I try to forget my past,  
But memories never fade.

This is my life,  
It happened for a reason,  
I happened for a reason.

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