

# "LIKE FISHING POLES AND MACHINE GUNS"

Jesse Welch is a sophomore majoring in Computer Science at Tufts. A slam poet from Chicago, he has performed across the Midwest at venues ranging from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago to the Mexican Heritage Cultural Museum to Wendy's. His work will be featured in an upcoming documentary. This summer, he competed in the 2009 National Poetry Slam with a team from Chicago. His work has been published in *Say What!* Magazine, *Moe's Cafe*, and Tufts' own *Outbreath*.

JESSE WELCH

They were raised as Gods  
 Turning water into food  
 Creating fish from nothing  
 When the catch fled on the tails of devil liners  
 Following false prophets to make profits elsewhere  
 What were they to do?  
 Let the Spanish steal survival?  
 They were raised to catch fish  
 So they caught them  
 Hooked the decks and climbed aboard  
 Stole the catch from the captors  
 Let their families eat

In the waters off Somalia  
 The only catch left  
 Is hooked above water  
 It tears motors into livelihood  
 Scars the sea  
 This did not begin as a life choice  
 Taking the waters back was a necessity

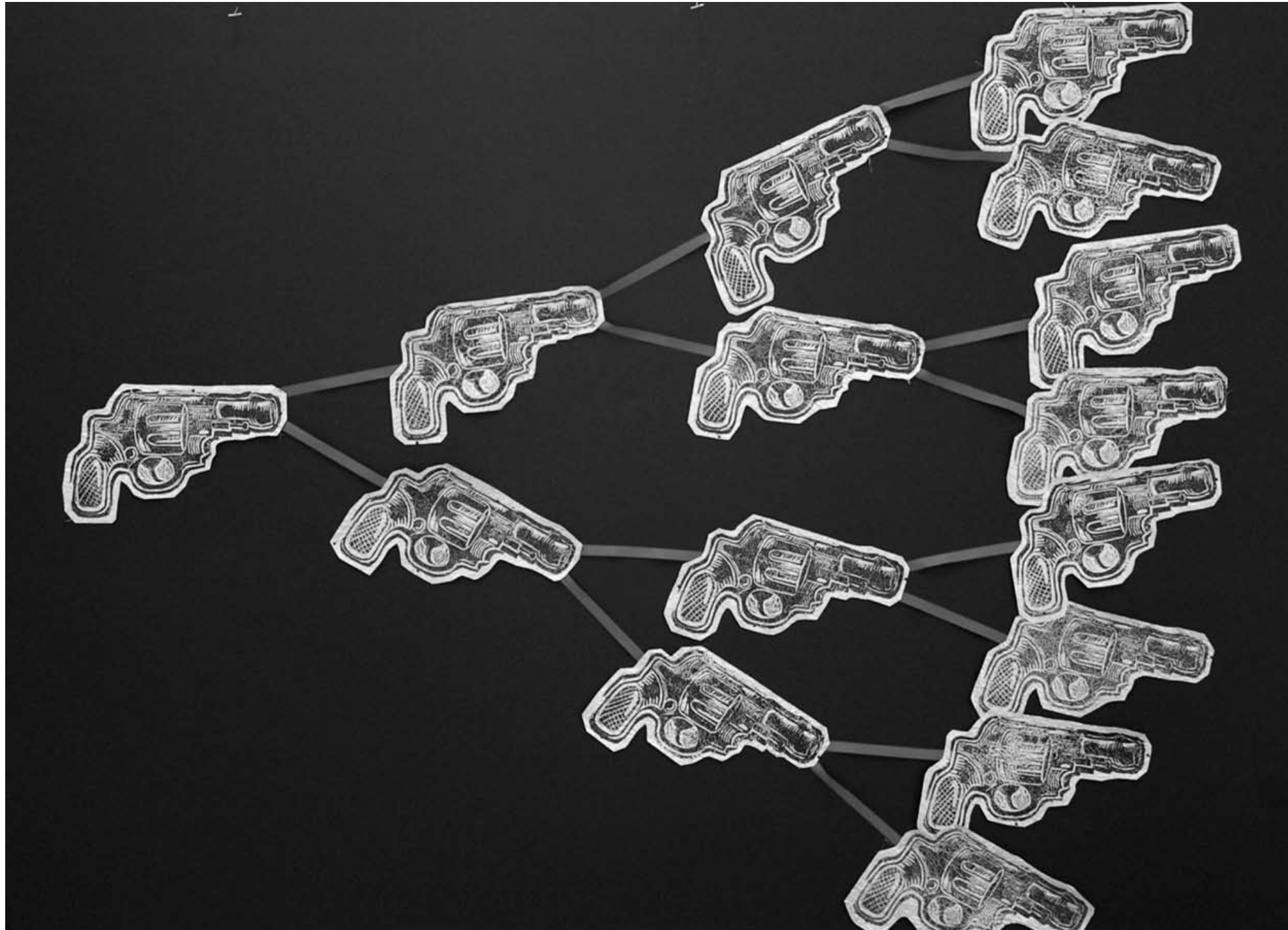
When the men hop onto once-fishing boats  
 There is no need for orders  
 Place a gun to the head of anyone who looks well-fed  
 Who still thinks survival is a right  
 And not something to fight for  
 Put a gun in every mouth  
 That does not know that starvation tastes sweet  
 That the stomach feasts on itself  
 As the muscles weaken  
 If a man has not tasted his own swollen tongue  
 Let him taste metal  
 Let him meet himself  
 A man who cares less for another's survival  
 Than his own money

They did not begin as pirates  
 They began hungry  
 And grew used to the beating of machine gun on spine  
 Slung over shoulder like fishing pole  
 They claw towards possibility  
 Grapple hooks to decks and climb towards first payday in  
 months

On April 12, 2009  
 Three Somali pirates were killed by American snipers  
 They are the only men to die in pirate attacks this year  
 1 in 4 Somali children do not see their 5th birthday  
 Acute malnutrition leaves 2 in 10  
 Capable of forgetting what it's like to eat  
 7 in 10 have tongues that could not recognize the taste  
 Of clean water

Sometimes criminals aren't the men with guns in their  
 hands  
 They're unarmed, but  
 Boarded onto boats that do more damage  
 Than a weapon ever could

There is no pity in the pirates' eyes  
 As they place men onto their knees  
 Force unmoving tongues to taste metal  
 Press steel onto men who don't know enough  
 To beg for forgiveness  
 These men, with full stomachs and clean consciences  
 Look into eyes long drowsy of suffering  
 And see death for the first time.



Cristina Alvarez is a freshman at Tufts University planning to major in English and minor in Communications and Media Studies.

**CAPTION**  
ONE ACT OF VIOLENCE CAN INSTANTANEOUSLY LEAD TO ANOTHER. ANY ACT OF VIOLENCE OR HATE - NO MATTER HOW TRIVIAL - WILL INDEFINITELY HAVE NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS.