On Friday June 20, Eritreans residents of the Metro DC area gathered to observe Eritrean Martyr’s Day at Sylvan Auditorium in Washington DC. The auditorium is located under the historic landmark Washington Monument. The seating is a huge expanse of the Washington Monument grounds nestled in the midst of Washington’s historic landmarks that embrace World War II and Jefferson Memorial grounds that make for a beautiful backdrop for the solemn occasion.

It was mesmerizing to watch the size and the manner in which the attendees conducted the commemoration. It was serene, historic and educational as the poets streamed to explain Eritrea’s history and the significance of June 20 to Eritrea. Noting that Eritrea celebrated Independence Day just weeks before Martyr’s Day, they asked the question what comes first, what should come first.

The organization, the continuous talent that flooded to express gratitude for the Martyrs and the language used was expression to the living legacy of Eritrea’s heroes. It was evidence that Eritrea will keep the legacy alive by nurturing, in deed, by supporting their families and hoisting the flag that flies in their honor. It was a show of unwavering commitment to see children honoring the fallen.

The long meandering lines of Eritreans that stretched for miles as they held candles walking in the midst of the beautiful Washington night was a moment that is seared in memories of all the participants. It was glorious and fitting tribute.

As we walked in line, a young lady dressed the Eritrean flag had the picture of the famous Eritrean Martyr with a gun-smiling with letters in Tigrigna that read ‘Huluw Ikha,” meaning You Are Alive. That captured the imagination and tried to capture it in this poem. Hopefully I it.