



JP/RICKY YUDHISTIR

Creative composers: The winners of the ETA WORDS National Creative Writing and Arts Performance Competition (front row, from left to right: Shinta D. Manurung, Yolanda Surya Wijaya, Thorifa Yumma and Adelheid Bethanny Nugrahaning Sudibyo) pose with their ETAs at the Aminef Auditorium in Central Jakarta on Saturday.

Students articulate traditions in competition

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Thirty-three students from across the archipelago competed in a creative writing and arts contest Saturday, wowing the audience and judges alike with their performances.

The competition, now in its second year, is held by the American Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF) and the United States Embassy and aims to help voice the ideas of Indonesian youth. The theme of the latest event was, "how

do my traditions matter in a changing world."

The participants of the National Creative Writing and Arts Performance Competition, or W.O.R.D.S., conveyed the message in their own way through poems, essays, songs, speeches and other performances.

Adelheid Bethanny Nugrahaning Sudibyo, a ninth grader from YPJ Tembagapura in Papua, performed a traditional dance from the region, relating it to the social context of her village.

"I'm not a Papuan, but I learned how to dance the traditional Papuan women's dance as I realize the dance tells about the strength of women during hard times," she said.

"They have danced because they believe they can keep each other strong, they have danced to raise the spirits of the sick and to alleviate their pain," she said.

After dancing, she explained to

the audience she and her communities were struggling to combat AIDS, an epidemic that has been tearing apart communities in her region.

"I've prepared this since January, discussing with my parents and teachers. I found it much easier when I had a native teacher helping with some of my work, editing my short essay," Betha said.

Betha won the prize for best overall performance, and will return to Papua with a Rp 1.5 million (US\$130) scholarship.

As a participant in the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) program, her teacher, Rohan Mulgaonkar has been living and teaching English in Papua for eight months.

The prize for the most creative performance went to Yolanda Surya Wijaya from Madiun, East Java, who read an essay titled "The Greatest Miracle." The prize for best English

went to Thorifa Yumma from Papua, who read a poem and story titled "The Indonesian tradition of helping others."

The final award, for the best use of theme, was snapped up by Shinta D. Manurung from Manado, North Sulawesi, who presented an essay titled, "When Mapulus Tradition Matters in a Changing World."

"It was the hardest time for us judges to decide the winners because all of you have performed wonderfully," judge Michele Censer said. The AMINEF was established in 1992 by the government of the United States and Indonesia and is a bi-national non-profit foundation for the administration of the Fulbright and other scholarship programs in Indonesia.

As a AMINEF Fulbright program, the ETA aims to assist individuals in English-hungry environments starved for native teachers.