

NATIONAL
STUDENT
POETS
PROGRAM

2019

THE NATION'S HIGHEST HONOR
FOR YOUTH POETS PRESENTING
ORIGINAL WORK

About the National Student Poets Program

The Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers partner to present the National Student Poets Program (NSPP), the country's highest honor for youth poets presenting original work. Five outstanding high school poets whose work exhibits exceptional creativity, dedication to craft, and promise are selected annually for a year of service as national poetry ambassadors.

National Student Poets are chosen from among the National Medalists in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards by a jury of literary luminaries and leaders in education and the arts. The Student Poets receive college scholarships and opportunities to present their work at writing and poetry events throughout their term. During their year of service, they develop and lead community service projects, presented to a wide range of audiences in underserved communities throughout their regions. National Student Poets Program Alumni remain connected, continue their community service projects after their years of service have concluded, and serve as mentors for each incoming class.

The National Student Poets Program is supported by funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

artandwriting.org/NSPP

facebook.com/NationalStudentPoetsProgram

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Letter from the Program Partners

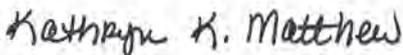
Poetry matters. Poetry as an art form continues to reinvent itself and to remain relevant and essential to young people, especially those who choose this medium to explore and explain their world.

We are honored to introduce the gifted young writers appointed as the 2019 National Student Poets, the nation's highest honor for youth poets presenting original work. Through the National Student Poets Program (NSPP), we identify teen poets with unique and powerful voices, invest in training and mentoring them, and launch them on a year of service.

National Student Poets bring poetry to all, from rural community centers to the stages of Lincoln Center, from military bases to state fairs. As they read, teach, and share their work across the country, they will engage audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and life experiences with the powerful language and personal narratives that poetry provides. By connecting communities with poetry, they help people find new ways to understand the myriad stories that are deep within us all.

Many of the readings and workshops that these talented students will present will take place in museums and libraries, those essential community spaces that motivate, educate, and comfort us. Libraries and museums are the spirit of our nation, inspiring curiosity and hope for the future. And throughout the United States, the NSPP brings awareness of the many different types of literacies as well as the essential services provided by museums and libraries.

Please enjoy the work in this volume. We hope you'll share it with friends, family, and the people in your community. Read a poem aloud to someone. And look for these poets as they travel the country. We think you'll find, like we did, that these talented teens will give you hope for the future of the arts, writing, and literacy. Together, we celebrate the enduring legacy of American poetry, and we welcome these young people as the 2019 Class of National Student Poets.



Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew, *Director*
Institute of Museum and Library Services



Christopher Wisniewski, *Executive Director*
Alliance for Young Artists & Writers

We are grateful to our jurors for their support of youth poetry in America.

Class of 2019 Jurors

Kaveh Akbar, award-winning poet and Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Fellow.

Jennifer Benka*, President and Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets.

Billy Collins, 11th U.S. Poet Laureate.

Carrie Fountain, award-winning poet and Poet Laureate of the state of Texas.

Juan Felipe Herrera*, 21st U.S. Poet Laureate.

Edward Hirsch*, poet and President of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

Ilya Kaminsky, award-winning poet and Guggenheim Fellow.

Alice Quinn*, Executive Director of the Poetry Society of America.

Nicole Sealey, poet and 2020 Hodder Fellow at Princeton University.

Brenda Shaughnessy, award-winning poet and Radcliffe Institute Fellow.

* Indicates a repeat juror

Past Jurors

Kwame Alexander
Esther Belin
Robert Casper
Cortney Lamar Charleston
Michael Earl Craig
Mayda Del Valle
Toi Derricotte
Martin Jude Farawell
Carolyn Forché
Andrea Gibson
Diana Goetsch
Kimiko Hahn
Joy Harjo
Terrance Hayes
Rickey Laurentiis
Al Letson
Robin Coste Lewis
David Lynn
Adrian Matejka
January Gill O'Neil
Glenis Redmond
Roger Reeves
Naomi Shihab Nye
Patricia Smith
Rose Styron
Jeff Tweedy
Kerry Washington
Damian Woetzel
Alfre Woodard
Jacqueline Woodson



Christian Butterfield
Bowling Green, KY
Southeast Region

Christian Butterfield is a rising senior at Bowling Green High School. Ever since his toddlerhood, he has been a voracious reader, finding inspiration in everything from his favorite children's stories to the works of Sedaris, Ephron, and Atwood. As a non-neurotypical poet, much of Christian's life has revolved around struggles in communication, and thus, all of his poems, whether they center around themes of sexuality, illness, or community, share a common goal: to empower the voices of both himself and those around him. When not writing, Christian enjoys acting as a captain of his speech and debate team, participating in community theater, and watching reality television. ■

The Epic of Calypso I

hand slammed bongo,
hand slams bongo
hands slam the bongo

I was once told
the secret to re-animating the dead was Calypso.
On Trinidad, my great-grandmother's bones would crack back into place
On Tobago, her lithe body would Dance the Day-O until the bones cracked out again,
the ghost of Harry Belafonte watching over the spirit of my dying mother as
hand slammed bongo,
hand slams bongo
hands slam the bongo
The cacophony of singing ladies only could grow louder
Than the silence within barren kitchen drawers, a mattress sans box-springs,
within a father's glance, stern and devoid of rhythm.
Unpredictable.
And my hands will slam the bongo.

On Trinidad and Tobago, old souls can become new again.
My body pulled to jerk around dusten ground by the old tradition of voodoo
My heart bursts from the inside of pincushioned doll and out,
Spilling onto the dusten ground of a childhood home as
Hip jumped in line
Hip jumps into the line
Their hips have never been in a line
My mother and father have bid Jamaica Farewell many years ago
Dying slowly in the comfort of midwestern towns, the nearest marimba a lifetime
away
Their throats are now unable to sing. I would force them if I could.
I live in my father's glance, devoid of rhythm
And I will dance to the beat of Calypso

lullaby

“the first time ever i saw your face
i thought the sun rose in your eyes”
- Roberta Flack (1972);
sung via portable boombox in St. Mary’s Hospital.

my first sound was something gargled.
lullabies have always been wasted on me, so
my mother just wrapped me in her arms.
she was all tear-soaked wrists and an exhausted
grin. we cried out together, clinging to a
kinship.

my third-ever sentence was
no ketchup. my mother
says this with a knowing grin
and i know
nothing but utility. i had spent my life
as a fork sans tines, a bent knife. language as a
battering ram.

my two thousandth, seventy-second conversation was
an inexorable force of nature. my mother
neatly informed me
that my brain was wired differently.
there is something to be said about lullabies,
but I could only sleep wrapped up in my wires. my mother says it’s a
sensory thing.

my four hundred and eighty-sixth greeting was
an act of attempted suicide. my mother
does not speak to me in metaphor, and i was dedicated to mastering
literary device, and she could feel intention on my breath.

i thought she made quite a lot of fuss
over a greeting, over
"hi my name's christian and i have autism."

my three millionth and somethingth poem was
a breakthrough. in my lifetime, i have been half-solved puzzle pieces and
a counted conversation. a miracle of early childhood intervention.
miracles have been my reason for existence,
my literary context.
it's a miracle that i am writing this poem. i am only a
redemption story.

my first lullaby will be dedicated to my mother.
the first time ever she saw my face, there was nothing to
redeem. no wires to uncross. no puzzle to solve.
only tear-soaked wrists and an exhausted
grin. we cry out together, and i am nothing but a
son.

dear mom,
here is my lullaby:

"and the moon and the stars were the gifts you gave
to the dark and endless skies"
-Roberta Flack (1972);
sung via tear-soaked wrists and glorious sacrifice;
our first song.

Julie Dawkins
Edmond, OK
Southwest Region



Julie Dawkins is a 17-year-old rising senior at Deer Creek High School. She is a percussionist in her high school band and has studied ballet for seven years. Additionally, Julie is engaged in politics and has attended the Oklahoma YMCA Youth and Government state conference for the past two years as a mock attorney. In the summer of 2018, Julie attended the Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute for creative writing. She is a proud middle child—her older brother is a freshman in college and her younger sister is in 8th grade. (Middle children are definitely the best, she says.) Julie is highly influenced by her surroundings, especially growing up in Oklahoma as a nonreligious liberal. She believes that poetry (and art in general) can change the world for the better, and she wants to do her best to be a part of that change however she can. ■

The Chihuly Exhibit in the Oklahoma City Museum of Art

Cherubs hide above behind
glass dripping down in multiplicity, contained by
the illusion of invisibility—but not
contained. The glass stains
our skin. Our necks crane to
find the cherubs.

Imagine it all shattered by sonic
booms, also imported from Seattle. Though
I suppose we have our own earthquakes
now to do the job.

Glass is not color. Mix
three primaries and get
that brown which encompasses
and get
egg only when there is no pigment to break.
Glass isn't color. Glass is
chemistry. Glass is
steel. Glass is a blacksmith and a sword
stretched like taffy to a point twice as sharp.
White linen is made up of every thread and
black is the shadow of nothing, except—

black is not lack,
in this room. Black is
water; black is
everything, shouting
back warped,
or perhaps purer,

decrypted. Purple reeds are not purple in sunlight,
they're blue. Purple was never
really purple. Light isn't color
but oceans—tiny tsunamis flooding
the crevices of sculpted tissue in waves.
Light is perception. Light is the shape
of . Light is just cherubs, hidden
behind glass desperately trying to obey
the laws of gravity.

In My Neighborhood Wal-Mart

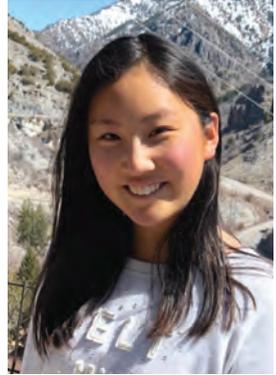
I find some of the most
optimistic
places in the world to be
the missing persons boards
in Wal-Marts.
How much hope they have—
that a casual shopper
a harried mother in sweatpants
and a bedlam T-shirt, two and a half
children hanging from her forearms
as she pushes a cloud of dreamy plastic bags
soft swaths of white cushioning toilet paper
laundry detergent and Lunchables
will glance at the image, think, "oh,
yes, I have seen that face; I avoided eye
contact with it at the liquor store last Friday."

One image stands out in black and white,
red stating ONLY PHOTO AVAILABLE
at the lower margin of the young woman's stern

face, smudged by low quality. Her eyes
not quite focused, looking at something past
the camera, perhaps at the beginning of the eighties, of
her life,
when she went missing. And
in the upper right corner, digitally produced,
a photo of what she would look like now, in sharper image
than her existence: older,
chunkier, hair short and shot through with
gentle blonde highlights, lines from age and smiling—
the photo of a woman who went missing
and proceeded to live life, have a family,
gain enough years to gain the hairstyle middle-
aged women seem to inevitably choose.

How optimistic to will her into the present with an image
like a photo from the teachers' page of a yearbook.

How optimistic to not, instead, write AGE PROGRESSED
over a picture of leaves and dirt
and bones.



Taylor Fang
Logan, UT
West Region

Taylor Fang is a rising senior at Logan High School. She believes in poetry's power to create empathy and solidarity in communities of all backgrounds. As a second-generation Chinese-American, her work often explores topics of migration, girlhood, and transition. Her poetry has been featured in *The New York Times* and recognized by the Hippocrates Young Poet's Prize and the Poetry Society U.K. Taylor works to spread her love of language through serving as founder and president of her high school creative writing club, and editor-in-chief of its previously long-dormant literary magazine. Last year, she directed an afterschool poetry workshop for International Poetry Day at a local elementary school and read original poetry on Utah Public Radio. Taylor is also an alumnus of the Telluride Association Sophomore Seminar, through which she spent six weeks at the University of Michigan studying narrative representations of marginalized groups. When not writing, Taylor can be found at debate tournaments, reading, or exploring the beautiful Utah outdoors. ■

Notes on Hunger

All afternoon the body dreams of doors.
Curvature of whale's ribs, the hollowness
inside—fleshy white, skin in flaps.
They say the goddess Nüwa birthed man
from the belly of a fish. Or maybe it was
a tortoise—beak-mouth, dark blue
dredging up old coins. My lips hooked
to the waterline. When I was seven,
I saw my grandmother for the last time.
Still I imagine her hands
instead of Nüwa's. Still I imagine
my own hands inside a matchbox,
fingers blunted. Stiff paper, paraffin wax.
Grandmother, even my voice
must be hers.

In my dreams, it is always the year
of the horse. Mama spitting papaya seeds
into a mud road. I tell her I want only
a piece of myself: a tributary, a single tentacle,
the edge of an atlas. But when I wake, I am as empty
as ever. Saltwater, more mirror than glass, bones
softened with milk. Even Nüwa does not know
that my ancestors are shaped from clay, even she
cannot imagine such a distant
winter sky. The Lunar New Year thickens
like duck blood soup. I open my mouth
and find mollusks, memory of brine.
Sentences soft as gloaming,
a map between the body
and its history.

Entomology, China Girl

The service breaks. Ants flood
out of the cable modem.
My uncle's face freezes
on WeChat, taste of Hefei
in the background—a cloud of smog
and oolong, locusts gathering like fever.

(Batesian mimicry: one organism
mimicking another poisonous
or unpalatable one.
The larvae in my throat
threaten to spill over, jagged geometry
of my mother tongue, a language
I have never been able
to swallow.)

Mother drags me
to the museum. By the beetle exhibit, I watch
a boy take a selfie. His cheeks
petrified. His glow-
in-the-dark shell, his hundreds
of legs.

(Indigenous: native occurring.
Featherwing skinny, pale
blonde. A scar on the womb
where I am born with a ruby exoskeleton
and terracotta wing, two names
and no country.)

Someone at school
called me Ling Ling,
says my sister.
Crouching outside her window,
I try to trap a lightning bug
among the squash blossoms,
red veins and crumpled legs.

(*chóng zi*: insect, almost
invisible. Translations on labels,
stretched cellophane like skin
on knuckle, a swarm
of moths—
metal on my tongue, the tang
of silver skin.)

Salma Mohammad
Fishers, IN
Midwest Region



Salma Mohammad is a Muslim American born in San Antonio, Texas, to a Palestinian immigrant and an Egyptian immigrant. She currently lives with her four siblings in Fishers, Indiana. Salma’s writing journey began in fifth grade when she wrote a prose poem to cope with being called a terrorist. Much of Salma’s written and poetic work is derived from navigating her search for identity as a brown, Muslim woman living in America during a time of political turmoil. Growing up, she noticed the lack of representation of female Muslim writers, actors, etc., and was given the impression that Muslims did not belong in America or were worth anything only if they were doctors or in professions deemed “honorable” by the community. She hopes that through her voice, many of the invisible Muslims girls in America and beyond may also find their voices and be compelled to begin writing their own narratives in America. Her poetry includes cultural themes of the Middle East and the political nature that surrounds it. ■

Skins

I find it fascinating how a mother's tissue is used to develop her child
Passed down like an heirloom of the body
How every inch of my skin elopes organs made maternally
Within me
they live eternally
With tales to be told
Tales of grandmother Wafika who never left a mouth hungry
Tales of my mother who lived on a land she was not welcome to
I read them on the trails of scars that track my mother's legs
that continued the trails my grandmother's hunched spine followed to bring water to
bomb shelters when the sky didn't exist over the smoke
She never left a mouth hungry but her own
And the callouses never left her body
The callouses that line the heels of my mother on her flee from a country
whom she had been birthed of from its cracks
Leaving her skin in Palestine so her veins can flee to Jordan
Birthed from cracks
cracks that have formed calloused grounds underneath spilled blood
Where civilians' own names were masked by the lands they fought for
Their footprints erased from history
A body
A bloodline
Draining and forgotten
The land has never understood supple hands
Because they were told to grow thicker skin
I hold the stories of my ancestors through the cracks of my palms
The blood of warriors
The silence of protesters
The shackles of prisoners
The thick skin of my people
And I am reminded every day
When the backbone of my grandmother carries my shoulders with dignity

In the land I am not welcome in
And when my mother's footprints carry my path
when my heart does not want me to keep going
I have no shame in my name
Which is foreign to their tongues
No shame of my mother's scars that I was told to pave over like a blinded highway,
But i now follow the directions to like a map
In a desert we were told to make of our dreams
So our footprints won't remain
Through generations of skin fibers colored by the soil of our homelands
Grounded by the roots of our mothers
As the skin fiber dies, it grows thicker
And as the years pass me
I grow thicker
For the story i hold
Is just beginning
On a foreign ground
Where footprints are not rooted in this land
Where my heart conflicts with the fear of those around me
For a religion i chose
But a skin i did not
The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) once said there will be a time where holding on to your
religion will be like holding on to hot coals
I have not dropped these coals
I just grew thicker skin
So we can salt these coals with our tears, like blazing embers
And let the sky taste our dreams
So when our breaths continue as the air that passes through the sand
We can open our arms and read our skins like unfinished maps
And let the earth hold our footprints
For when our names aren't remembered

Egyptian Queen

I stand there before the queen of an empire that dictated history upon eternal grains of sand. The light of the sun glinting in competition to the sweet honey of her cheeks—the rich, herbal gardens of jasmine on her neck.

Notice the chrysanthemum budding within her carob iris.

With her acacia fingertips blossoming at the edges in reach towards the sun as the Valleys of Luxor.

Who would not be tantalized by the silk of her skin, the Nile she has made of her body?

And nourish she does the worldly creatures, like a mother to all, but youth still prancing within her essence.

Her body of gold, grazed by gods and peasants alike, for its gifts.

That all who lay their eyes upon her seek to bathe in its glory!

And to whom do I owe such a beauty, where the strength and art of civilizations couldn't compete?

The wisdom that spewed her lotus lips caressed you with the thought of milk and honey, a youth that tantalized even the sagacious soul of Cleopatra.

Her eyelids curling like a midnight crescent moon above the Nile.

A river whom doves and panthers alike return to in salvation to ponder of her upon its waters. Her lips a blush tone of supple carnation.

The shimmering gold undertone of her skin embellished underneath the sepia of her hands like a treasure hidden underneath sand dunes.

For they wonder how the pyramids of Giza steal no ounce of beauty from the Egyptian Queen.

Alondra Uribe
Bronx, NY
Northeast Region



Born in Puerto Rico, Alondra Uribe is a 17-year-old spoken word artist and acting major at Theater Arts Production Company school. She won first place in the 2016 BronxWrites slam and has been a member of the Bronx Poetry Project at DreamYard for four years. She was a participant in the Alice Hoffman Young Writers Retreat at Adelphi University, and was the guest poet on the “Teaching for Black Lives” panel at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Alondra was the keynote poet at an event at Carnegie Hall for New York City’s Department of Education. Most recently, she was a member of the 2018 Urban Word slam team, competing at Brave New Voices in Texas and placing among the top 20 poetry teams internationally. In the fall of 2018, Alondra traveled to Japan for the International Poetry Exchange Program with Ambassador Caroline Kennedy. Alondra has participated in the program for two years, sharing her work with partners in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. ■

Let There Be Light

& thunder & cracks of electromagnetic whiplashes among the sky.
Let there be glorious hallelujahs & the shaking of the bedrocks in Rio Piedras.
You just had to be there. The mountains sprung back, the writings on the wall
were no longer writings but music scriptures. Everything was in its becoming.
Including myself. There was being born, but we're talking about life now. Like breathing
from all parts of your body, like your heart growing eyes and your eyes growing souls
and your soul bringing all the magic from out the maple trees. That's what it takes to
make me alive.

Dear The Bronx,

I don't know whether you're a mourning mother with blood on her hands or a cool
cousin that sneaks out at Thanksgiving to get high. I wonder if you put your ketchup on
the side or all over. Do you use a towel, or let your hair air dry? Do you have hair? Maybe
a low buzz cut or something tall and funky. A big fro'? One of those "the higher the hair
the closer to God" kinda folks?

Are you God?

If I pray will you answer? Will you let me love you in some way other than a black death
poem? If I were to trace you on a map, would you look like a clenched fist?—I mean a
corner store—I mean a casket. Dear The Bronx, I don't know how to tell people I live in
a graveyard, and that I sleep across the border with an empty gun at my head. I don't
know how to tell them being a black girl is not always depressing.

It was harder than I thought.

When you're from the Bronx you are born with a natural instinct to flee. To do better,
be better. Dear The Bronx, which is heavier? The violence or your children not loving
you anymore? I can feel you clinging on to me. I don't know if I want to hug you back
or not. This wasn't supposed to be one of "those" poems. The one that leaves an ache
in my chest and my hands start shaking. I just wanted to tell you I love you. But I can't
seem to do that without grieving.

An Ode to the Bronx

Praise this morning
how my feet hit the ground with a sense of purpose
how the wind hugged me
kissed me on the cheek like abuela
how it
ran its fingers through my hair
and told me to stay forever
praise me
and how I have to stop myself before spewing out harsh words of hate
towards everything I've ever known
every house I've made into home.
I can't control it
can't cool it down like 75-cent coffee
can't slow down BX41 bus stops.
I don't hate The Bronx,
I hate that I can't win dance battles against showtime performers on the D train
I hate that people put your name,
and my childhood
and my mother's sacrifice at the back of their mind
like somehow they can make us go away,
like somehow they can bury my mother and brother without singing their song.
Say The Bronx with respect,
something the black boys on my block died for.
Say it like how you say Manhattan is the heart of the city
like there aren't more parts to a body.
Say it like how you say I talk white
and I don't look like I'm from the Bronx.
Praise my upstairs neighbors
how their chants and loud roars rise the sun in the sky
commanding its sunlight to shine another day.
How I join them with my broomstick
pounding to the beat of my own drum.

Praise my deformed family tree,
how I can call the bodega owner my brother
the old lady on the 6th floor Grandma
8am classmates my kin
and the lunch guy Uncle Jimmy.
Praise our song,
our way of crafting wicked curses
the path we carve in solid cement.
How we make gardens bloom in broken buildings.
Praise our eternity and ways of taking history into our own hands,
how brown girls from The Bronx aren't supposed to write poetry
but I did it anyways.

Alumni Updates

Class of 2012

Luisa Banchoff (Arlington, VA) is a U.S.-based educator who taught in Botswana after graduating from Princeton. Her service project involved workshops for educators and underserved students in Alabama in partnership with the National Writing Project's Urban Sites Network.

Miles Hewitt (Vancouver, WA) toured with his band The Solars after graduating from Harvard. He resides in Brooklyn and is recording the band's second album. For his service project, Miles worked with homeless youth in Vancouver through At Home At School, a project of Washington State University.

Claire Lee (New York, NY) is working in New York City after graduating from Harvard. Claire developed and led a series of poetry workshops for elementary students at the East Harlem Tutorial Program as her service project.

Natalie Richardson (Oak Park, IL) is working on her MFA at Northwestern after attending the University of Chicago. Natalie partnered with the Chicago Area Writing Project to present workshops on slam poetry for high school educators.

Lylla Younes (Alexandria, LA) graduated from Cornell and is now a journalist at ProPublica. For her service project, she worked with the Santa Fe Indian School Spoken Word Program in Santa Fe and the Rio Grande High School in Albuquerque, NM.

Class of 2013

Sojourner Ahebee (Interlochen, MI) graduated from Stanford with an honors thesis using poetry to examine black womanhood. She works as a writer and creative consultant, and her debut chapbook was published in 2017. For her service project, she led a series of poetry workshops for nursing home residents with Alzheimer's disease.

Michaela Copen (Carlisle, PA) graduated from Vassar and is a Marshall Scholar studying philosophy at Oxford. For her service project, Michaela partnered with the Carlisle Barracks Army Community Service to lead poetry workshops for military-connected children, teens, and families.

Nathan Cummings (Mercer Island, WA) studied literature at Harvard. He lives in Brooklyn and works in civil rights law. Nathan partnered with the Seattle Children's Hospital and Seattle's Writers in the Schools to lead poetry workshops for seriously ill children, creating a collaborative poem with patients during National Poetry Month.

Aline Dolinh (Oakton, VA) is a student at UVA and a Bitch Media Writing Fellow in pop culture. For her service project, Aline worked with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students at her high school and partnered with poetry.NOW to lead afterschool poetry workshops in VA.

Louis Lafair (Austin, TX) graduated from Stanford and works in Silicon Valley. In 2018, he published *Mapmaker*, a board game about gerrymandering. His service project included presenting with the Texas Poet Laureate at the Texas Council of Teachers of English conference; leading Google+ Hangouts with the National Writing Project and the State Library and Archives Commission; and creating the website poetry2point0.com.

Class of 2014

Weston Clark (Indianapolis, IN) studies at Durham University in the U.K., pursuing a joint degree in English and History. During his service project, he partnered with the Turtle Mountain Teen Arts and Writing program in North Dakota for a weeklong session with Native American teens living on the reservation.

Julia Falkner (Boulder, CO) graduated from Smith College and works in publishing. For her service project, Julia led a workshop series with LGBT+ artists and narratives, partnering with Rainbow Alley and Out Boulder in Colorado.

Ashley Gong (Sandy Hook, CT) studies and writes poetry at Harvard. For her service project, Ashley partnered with the Cyrenius H. Booth Library in Newtown, CT, to create "Writing Po(w)e(r)try," a series of workshops for students in middle school, to reflect on and respond to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

Madeleine LeCesne (New Orleans, LA) studies anthropology, creative writing, and dance at Princeton. During her service project, in partnership with the Greater New Orleans Writing Project, Madeleine led workshops with students of all ages to reflect on, and create poetry in response to, the ten-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

Cameron Messinides (Greenville, SC) graduated from Kenyon College, where he was Editor-in-Chief of *The Kenyon Collegian*. During his service project, he led workshops with at-risk teenage boys, partnering with White Horse Academy in Greenville, SC.

Class of 2015

Chasity Hale (Miami Beach, FL) attends Stanford, where she writes for *The Stanford Daily*. For her service project, she partnered with O, Miami, Miami Writes, and Miami public schools to conduct workshops focusing on the importance of intersectionality with at-risk youth in her community.

De'John Hardges (Cleveland, OH) studied creative writing at Cleveland School of the Arts and is currently involved with Twelve Literary Arts in Cleveland. During his service project, he partnered with the Ohio Center for the Book to conduct workshops and readings at the Cleveland Public Library focusing on youth in his community.

Eileen Huang (Holmdel, NJ) studies political science at Yale, where she works at the Asian American Cultural Center. For her service project, Eileen explored ways to promote poetry in school curricula, especially in STEM schools. She led poetry workshops with students from Project Write Now, a local creative writing studio.

Alex Lance (Eagle Rock, AK) attends Yale. Alex's service project focused on engaging elementary school-age girls to make their voices heard through poetry, partnering with schools in Montana and local Girl Scouts organizations to bring the project to life.

David Xiang (Little Rock, AR) attends Harvard. For his service project, he worked with a local veteran to conduct workshops and readings at veterans' centers and in schools where the students come from military-connected families.

Class of 2016

Stella Binion (Chicago, IL) studies Modern Culture & Media and Literary Arts at Brown. She partnered with the theater company Black Girls (Can) Fly for her service project, writing poetry to shape the future with a cohort of girls in middle school.

Maya Eashwaran (Alpharetta, GA) attends Princeton, where she organized a networking initiative with women business leaders and venture capitalists. For her service

project, "Poetry Across Generations," Maya conducted workshops for writers of different ages, in partnership with the Girl Scouts and staff from her local library.

Gopal Raman (Dallas, TX) studies economics at Stanford, and is also pursuing poetry, photography, and graphic design. For his service project, Gopal led workshops for middle and high school students, partnering with the Dallas Museum of Art and the Nasher Sculpture Center to explore the connection between visual art and poetry.

Joey Reisberg (Baltimore, MD) attends Goucher College and was recently published in *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*. For his service project, Joey partnered with CityLit to bring a celebration of Baltimore poetry to life, including a reading of classic Baltimore poetry and an open mic for upcoming talent.

Maya Salameh (San Diego, CA) studies psychology at Stanford and is a member of the Stanford Spoken Word Collective. She will be serving next year as the Inaugural Artist-In-Residence at the Markaz Arts Center for the Greater Middle East. For her service project, Maya partnered with a performance arts collective serving first-generation youth. The project has continued in the form of her first book, *habibi*.

Class of 2017

Annie Castillo (Falls Church, VA) will attend Oberlin in fall 2019. For her service project, Annie conducted workshops in schools and libraries, visited student-led readings, and developed a 22-lesson beginner's guide to poetry for middle school students, designed to coincide with each school day of April (National Poetry Month).

Kinsale Hueston (Corona Del Mar, CA) attends Yale and was recently featured in *TIME* magazine for her poetry and activism. For her service project, she held workshops at the Sherman Indian School in Riverside, CA, culminating in a poetry slam to celebrate National Poetry Month and a chapbook of students' work, *Where I'm From: Poems From Sherman Indian School*.

Ben Lee (Edina, MN) will attend Harvard in fall 2019. He served as the poet-in-residence at LearningWorks in Minneapolis, MN, for his service project, integrating poetry and performance activities into the core curriculum of all literature classes.

Juliet Lubwama (Downingtown, PA) studies and performs spoken word at the University of Pennsylvania, where she plans to pursue neuroscience. During her service project, she partnered with Chester County Hospital, teaching hospital volunteers to create haiku with an emphasis on healing and support for hospital visitors. She also led bilingual workshops for children at a local day care.

Camila Sanmiguel (Laredo, TX) attends Harvard. As part of her community service project, she held a workshop on poetry therapy with Texas attorneys and social workers who interview detained immigrant children. She also led a workshop for Congolese and Somalian refugees, using migrant poetry and art conceptualizing home.

Class of 2018

Darius Atefat-Peckham (Interlochen, MI, and Huntington, WV) will attend Harvard in fall 2019. His community service project focused on poetry about grief and bereavement, and he conducted workshops in Salt Lake City, UT, in partnership with the National Alliance for Grieving Children.

Daniel Blokh (Birmingham, AL) will attend Yale in fall 2019. His community service project was developed in reaction to synagogue shootings. He visited Jewish summer camps in the Southeast, leading poetry workshops about identity and prejudice.

Alexandra Contreras-Montesano (Burlington, VT) will attend Yale in fall 2019. Partnering with the Young Writers Project online and in Maine, her service project highlighted young, diverse American poets in youth poetry workshops centered around activism and inclusiveness.

Heather Laurel Jensen (Mesa, AZ) is a senior in high school. She recently launched the first Arizona Youth Poet Laureate program to support her fellow youth poets. Her community service project focused on poetry's role in youth activism.

Ariana Smith (Las Vegas, NV) will attend Pratt Institute in fall 2019, where she will study film. For her service project, she focused on amplifying young black femme and queer voices, travelling to Compton, CA.

Eligibility

For students to be considered for the National Student Poets Program, they must have received a National Gold or Silver Medal in poetry in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Students must also be in grades 10 or 11 and enrolled in a public, private, parochial, or home school in the United States.

Founded in 1923, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards continue to be the longest-running, most prestigious recognition program for creative teens in the U.S., and the largest source of scholarships for young artists and writers. Deadlines to participate in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards vary by region and may be found at artandwriting.org.

From the pool of Scholastic Awards National Medalists in poetry, thirty-five semifinalists for the National Student Poets Program are selected in the spring. Each semifinalist is notified and asked to submit additional poetry (two to five works total), a short video about themselves, and a short bio for consideration by the national jury panel.

A national jury of literary luminaries and leaders in education and the arts selects the five National Student Poets. Submissions are evaluated based on the National Student Poets Program's three criteria: creativity, dedication to craft, and promise.



**Scholastic
Art & Writing
Awards**