



NATIONAL
STUDENT
POETS
PROGRAM
2015

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



Scholastic
Art & Writing
Awards



academy of
american poets

Letter from the First Lady of the United States



As Honorary Chair of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, I am thrilled to congratulate the National Student Poets, Class of 2015.

The National Student Poets Program is our Nation's highest honor for outstanding high school poets, and each year it is my pleasure to present this award to five promising young writers. Each of these students—embodying a spirit of exploration, discovery, and creativity—will serve as American literary ambassadors, sharing their experiences, observations, and convictions with audiences across our country and around the world.

As a National Student Poet, you have the ability to inspire communities and lift up your peers with your powerful words. It gives me great hope to know that our shared future will be shaped by a generation of leaders like you.

Congratulations, again, on this tremendous achievement, and I wish you the very best.

Michelle Obama

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Letter from the National Student Poets Program Partners

We are honored to join First Lady Michelle Obama in congratulating the Class of 2015 on receiving the nation's highest honor for youth poets. The National Student Poet Program (NSPP) identifies our country's most promising talents and provides them with resources to develop their own skills as poets and fulfill their role as ambassadors who engage and inspire young and old alike.

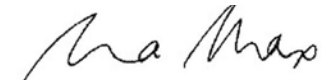
Speaking to youth poets at a White House workshop last fall, Mrs. Obama said, "You give voice to your hopes, your dreams, your worries, and your fears. When you do that, you're taking a risk. And that's brave." She added, "When you write poetry, you're not just expressing yourself. You're also connecting to people." This, in essence, is the experience of each class of National Student Poets as they journey through their year of service, using their poetry as a catalyst for shared engagement in language and ideas with audiences around the country. These acts of creativity, connection, and fearlessness are the building blocks of leadership and the fuel that will make this country competitive in the 21st century.

As partners in the National Student Poets Program, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers seek to ensure that the literary talents of America's young people are nurtured and recognized as critical to our cultural life. We are therefore proud to share a sampling of their work in this small volume.

Congratulations to these five outstanding poets! We applaud the creativity and genius of our nation's youth.



Rachel Goslins, Executive Director
President's Committee on the Arts
and the Humanities



Maura Marx, Acting Director
Institute of Museum and Library Services




Virginia McEnerney, Executive Director
Alliance for Young Artists & Writers



Chasity Hale

Age 16; Miami Beach, FL; Southeast Region

Chasity Hale is a junior and creative writing major at Miami Arts Charter School. She was born in Las Vegas, Nevada, but currently lives in Miami Beach, Florida. A Scholastic Art & Writing Awards Gold Medalist, Chasity has also received two Gold Keys and six Silver Keys. She won first place in the Sarah Mook poetry contest and has been published by Creative Communications, Susquehanna University, and the “Young American Poetry Digest.” Poetry is the lens through which she views the world, not to escape it, but to delve into it more deeply. In her free time, she likes to practice dance and visual arts. 

About a Boy

Yesterday faded
But tomorrow's in **BOLDFACE**.
—Naomi Shihab Nye

Some years ago, in the earlier days
of loose teeth and barefooted sprints,
I sat on the terrace of a large Nebraskan home,
leaning up against a stiff Corinthian pillar.

I watched Robert Harris from where I was settled.
His face was a shadow and his voice was thunder.
Among the other children in the neighborhood,
he was a salvager, a suspender cable
for an otherwise unsteady bridge.

His words were scriptures that had yet to be recorded
and he used to tell us that he was trying to
connect with an unhurried God.

I had always wondered who would
keep the very essence of youth on hold?

I now know that it was because
he was like a walleye to a fisherman in the Midwest.

A materialized blessing
and a voicemail from up above saying,
“... leave a message at the dial tone.”

That rarest of catches.

What If?

"What if the raindrops get so big,
they swallow the sky?" she asks.

Could we use the papers
in the glove compartment
to start a fire and illuminate
the liquidated skies?

We'll use every rusted coin
to purchase blessings,
and buy plane tickets to destiny,
where we will find a milk carton child
and wish her home to voices
tainted with "we'll find her" and
"it gets worse before it gets better."
We'll get our names in the newspaper.

What if we're happiest when we are sleeping?
I'll fold your skin like origami
until you are a swan or a flower
and I will place you in my pocket
so that you can nestle in the warmth
like a baby bird.


My daughter tries to climb her way to heaven
by shimmying up stalk-like tree trunks.
We live in a godless place, but treat it
as if there is plenty of god left in you.

I tell her to roll the windows down.
To love not the smell of rain,
but the smell of it leaving.
"What if the clouds taste like peppermint patties
on the train that travels over the ocean?"
"What if it is heading to nowhere in particular?"
"What if that is where we want to go?"



De'John Hardges

Age 16; Cleveland, OH; Midwest Region

De'John Hardges is a junior at Cleveland School of the Arts, majoring in Literary Arts with an emphasis on poetry. Since De'John took his first poetry class in the fifth grade, he has gained more conviction that his is the path of a poet and performance artist. He has been nurtured by an important group of literary and performance artists, including his poetry teacher and mentor, Daniel Gray-Kontar; his short fiction instructor, Robert Allen Washington; and his performance instructors, Kisha Nicole Foster and Raymond McNiece. When he isn't studying for classes or performing, he works as a community organizer for the New Abolitionists Association. 

Mr. Superior

I saw dis drunk
On deh corner of 1 0 5
Wearen' deh same thang
Dem red and white Jordan's
Wit da black check on deh side
But, I sweah he told me
Dat he stood in line deh first time
Wen dey first came out
Den tell me why he rocken' deh Dickies
real baggy
A black ROC-A-
WEARing it proud
Dat was his armor
Made him bulletproof
Wit all da rips and holes
Even wit his fitted cap
You could definitely tell dis character
from a caricature
Breath reeking hottah than the devil
peeing whiskey
Constantly staren' n' preachen'
On that same corner
Smellin' of the same thang
People say the same thang
Story changed but same thang every day
He claims he's seen it all
But his eyes, solid gray
Everybody say he's lost it but, I think he
hella sane
I listen
Facts is all I hear
A primary source, sound like he was
right there

Everything becomes vivid
Deh stench of each picture
Speak descriptions only he could hear
Now he pass em' on to who eva he catch
listenen'

One time
One time
He told me bout a conversation
He had wit dat house on the corner
Like 3 different colors
Dey had a discussion
Dey criticized bein' loyal
To compromises
Becuz' nuhen harder den self-reliance
Out here on these mean streets
Dats how he said it
He had a sense of humor but that's not why
I didn't forget him
He was actually wise
So I respect im
Aim a few dollas his way
Jus to get em rejected
He would tell me
Dah superior sign told him not to accept it
He claimed my ear was enough
So I continued to lend it
As he told me where he found
That shell of a building
It was dah late '80s
He said
A few cops and a gang
Were bumpen heads
A couple dozen shots
Left everybody dead

It was horrible
 Building jus had to be condemned
 But it still caused trouble
 You know suicides
 Or car accidents
 Boom!!! Into the brick entrance
 The city got sick of it
 So they tried to tear it down
 But it kept resisten' em
 Left a shell there
 And a few skeletons
 Talked to em all
 Before he cleaned up
 Den settled in
 Claimed it
 After dey mangled it
 Dah cities trash
 Became his settlement
 Livin life
 Is wat he claim he does
 Every day on dat corner
 Gettin extremely drunk
 But wen i ask, his response
 Is I'm jus a lil buzzed
 I don't think he crazy
 That's jus sumn u labeled im

 Ears listenen
 To broken records
 Broke ears
 from passing that paper
 I'm done hearin' yo

 Aye—Look at this
 A no-named pic in the obit

Says he had no family or a place to stay
 No one knew his identity
 He nevah wore a mask
 Said he was a drunk
 That's jus how y'all pictured im

 But really he was superior

Eternal Strength

This day
 A minute in her millions of years to
 come
 After stepping through heaven's gates
 Intending to live on
 Through our hearts as a large piece of
 our spirit
 She thanks us for deeds we haven't
 done yet
 Anticipating our better years and
 great-great-grandkids
 Raised better or at least as well as we
 were
 For their sake
 Not for the things I speak as she
 anticipates
 But for the upbringing of her part of
 our race

 Wasn't her mind incredible

 Foreseeing untold scenes
 Pictures of hands and fingers tangled
 into a braid of perfected struggle
 The characters she helped create
 Consume full sheets of paper

 I said "the characters she helped
 create consume full sheets of paper"
 To be read today, tomorrow,
 tomorrow's tomorrow, then and after
 Now and later if not forever

 Amen.



David Xiang

Age 17; Little Rock, AR; Southwest Region

David Xiang is a senior at Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. At school, he takes an AP-heavy schedule, starts for the varsity soccer team, and is the Senior Editor and Spoken Word Leader of the Memory Project, a club devoted to oral histories about tensions and prejudices. David first began writing and exploring poetry in his freshman year, but it soon changed from a hobby to a passion; he believes a poem is never completely finished. At home, when David is not jotting down phrases and lines in his hoarded notebooks, he plays piano, which to him is just writing in his second favorite language. 🎹

Duet

They sit, arranged honeycomb style,
six to a side, every day at five sharp, on humid firefly-flecked Fridays.
The silence is palatable, the voices mute enough to discern
Orpheus's lute echoing from the stalactites below.
She sits, center stage, nose blinded and ears neglected; her hands
tremble like the nervous flutter of a hummingbird, her fingers
twitch down carved ebony, 88 paths of promise and perspiration.
She listens, she smiles, as penguins do after a long swim.
Mitosis passed last year, she reminds herself.
He sits, still as a statue, chained to those wooden knobs and
polished metal, hangdog in posture but proud in action.
His mind darts from blackened circle to circle, fingers fly, the piano stays
untouched, unused.
He is like a phantom, they say,
he is like a ghost, they say, with owl eyes.
What would you like to eat? a nurse asks, smile frozen by a basilisk's glare, inwardly
giggling as
four years of a million Lincolns and salt-stained bubbles are mixing amnesia and
meatballs in a nearby saucepan.
Nothing, she replies, the music is all I need, Mahler or
metamorphosis will be today's main entrée. She notices that
the pianist is crouching quietly in the corner;
the orbiting pistons cranking like the clarion of an extinct clock;
a snowy grin emerges from hibernation.

A Tale of Four Statues: Ambition, Personality, Opportunity, and Preparation

We looked down and there you were
 Nine of you
 Erected with love,
 Carved with tolerance,
 Chiseled with diligence,
 Carefully sculpted hair,
 With little flecks of fear in your eyes.

Like the last glimmer of paint on a painter's palate,
 Sprinkled glass from prototypes destroyed,
 As hard as clay but tender as sand.
 Nine shades of brown we had never witnessed.

We looked down and there you were,
 In a sea of soldiers and hate,
 A typhoon of threats and abuse,
 Fulminating with bricks thrown and shins kicked,
 You cracked, you bent, you stumbled,
 But statues never break.
 We were molded out of marble,
 You were molded in melanin,
 You were made different,
 Your sculptor must have told you that.

As statues, we never learned the colors of the rainbow,
 Or how a black student grows a reservoir of patience amid a flood of hate,
 Everyone was frozen in adherence to society's tempo—
 All except nine
 Rebels in disguise.
 Miniature maestros.
 The instrument of integration being played in a symphony of quiet nonviolence,
 All except nine broke the stone cold monotony.

Black clouds of white mobs like battleships covered us
 Goodbye Personality
 Goodbye Ambition
 Goodbye Opportunity
 Hello Preparation,
 but nothing could have prepared us.

Burning hearts with frozen souls,
 Wet marble glistening with apprehension,
 Our skin splintering with fear.

We saw what would happen,
 But we could not speak.
 We saw what would happen,
 But we did not speak.

Carved by Father Time, the nine displayed a different creator
 Hello Preparation.
 The nine stood trembling,
 Adversity threatened to crack their carefully sculpted frames,
 Surrounded by safety in the form of death,
 Too young to enlist in any branch of the military,
 But already veterans on the battlefield of injustice.


We saw what would happen,
 But we could not speak.
 We saw what would happen,
 But we did not speak.

For history must be allowed to sculpt its own path,
 For history must be allowed to make its own statues,
 Nine more emerged in 1957,
 And they will be chiseled in the memory of the world, forever.



Anna Lance

Age 17; Eagle River, AK; West Region

Anna Lance is a senior attending West High School in Anchorage, Alaska. She has been writing poetry for as long as she can remember; her parents love to tell the story of her “first poem,” which she wrote in scribbled hieroglyphs on construction paper at age three, and then translated aloud for her mom. Today, her interests are heavily arts-focused and include literature, film, musical theater, photography, camping, and figuring out what color she’s going to dye her hair next. Her work is largely personal in nature. Self-discovery and the energy of life are frequently its key players, as are change and confusion and—most important—hope. She would like to complete a script or screenplay someday, but at the moment her main goal is to survive her senior year relatively undamaged. 

class of 2016

About half of us are going to pursue a career in engineering. There are stringent requirements even now, rising crag-faced as glaciers from the sea—signs that some destination stands yet between us and jarring solitude and that the cold steam obscures, but doesn’t obliterate, direction. One of our friends is taking three science classes her senior year, two advanced, one at the community college. She requests the double enrollment the way she would extra pickles at Subway. She does not stop to ask herself whether the eyes of students years more experienced will crinkle her spine into the “S” that confesses insecurity—a consonant she fought ferally to straighten in middle school. Another surprises us when we look and she has the rimmed, glassy eyes of something taxidermied, snot dripping. She needs a full AP schedule but doesn’t want to drop orchestra, is clinging to the smell of rosin and the perforated walls of practice rooms so hard it’s making her bleed, somewhere. Our counselor assures her it can be done—it’ll work out—art classes can be taken and excused away in recommendation letters. She will say: The student wished to fulfill the final year of a lifelong passion. She will say: Family troubles. They dented her record like bullets punching through rusting cars in blueberry fields. (She came to my office twice a week and ate lollipops from the jar while crying.) She will say: Well-rounded. She will say: A comeback. A fine recovery. She will cover the fissures with her manicured hands and amicably direct attention to the best functionality, the highest gloss. She will not be honest—she’s done this before.

It feels like stepping center stage to face the empty auditorium and all the lights crowning the balcony. It feels like you can’t forget fast enough. Even as the sounds are being spoken and you’re relaying them to the audience, you’re forgetting them as fast as you can, dropping your cues all over the place. Someone expects you to deflate and someone else expects you to swell until you fill the space with a timpani thunderstorm and you must do both

or they will be very disappointed. We skim elbows in the hallways
 and break our confidentiality vows two minutes after obtaining the chance
 to consummate them. "The grammar section—was it which or whom?
 Isn't 'whom' for people? Do you use it for animals? Can you consider a butterfly
 a person?" Can you indeed. Eight hundred heartbeat-shaped flutters
 scribbling pathways above the cafeteria: incandescent suntrails, gone if you breathe.
 The brevity of luminescence. Wings in cheeks, wings in ears, and somehow
 flight achieved
 on scraps of tissue, damp from development. We make the laws of physics
 look the other way.

It feels like waking up. Arch, yawn—and, yes, here we have the blip of peace
 before everything stings. It feels like the tired buried aches above your right knee
 although you're pretty certain you've flourished as far as circumstances will allow.
 It feels like clouds spun from sugar, rain holding its breath, incipient luminism—
 the web of light that sticks to the sky and dumps its belly of illumination
 over mountain and lake. (We slept in violent languor, and we now emerge blinking.)
 We must record this moment, and this one, and this one. This year is molting
 and soon we won't remember how we wore it anymore. We do not fit into old T-shirts,
 old proverbs, old circles. We do not fit and soon nothing will contain us—
 a truth the flavor of unripe strawberries, a tonguepincher—soon we will devour
 the Earth and then the sun and then there will be nothing left. It's terrifying.
 They tell us to fly and we do it without thinking,
 without stopping to wonder if we have another choice.

unfiltered

i should be happy to be here, they tell me. after all,
 we've got the cleanest and best-tasting water in
 the country, thanks to the glaciers
 that sacrifice themselves down mountainsides while we sleep
 until they fit into bottles that take 450 years to decompose. (i could never stand
 city water, they say, as if they've ever had the chance.)

i should be happy to interlock with the landscape,
 to have fingers that curl into the scar-knots of bark
 like they were cut from the same clay—close my eyes,
 put on the hat my great-aunt knit me for christmas, and become indistinguishable
 from purity (not invisible but a part of something larger), someone's snowflake
 or wishing star or whatever, whatever, whatever.

i tasted the tap somewhere down in dallas
 and it was like kissing sidewalk. i knew there were no glaciers
 in its history, no névé becoming firn becoming ice becoming
 frigid runoff boiling around my bare calves becoming
 the flood that explored the counter around the sink or the sweat that bled
 from the pit of my chin, but i
 was happy. (you are no one's snowflake and no one's wishing star—
 you are gritty with saturation and marinated in things forgotten, far more
 than one in a million, and they tell me as much as 73% of your body's
 collective cell structure is puddles, swimming pools, and sewage slurry
 but that's okay. they're just jealous.)



Eileen Huang

Age 15; Holmdel, NJ; Northeast Region

Eileen Huang is a sophomore at High Technology High School in Lincroft, New Jersey. While studying abroad in Beijing for a year, Eileen became interested in the ancient Chinese poems of Li Bai and Du Fu. She loves to write narrative poems describing normal, conventional experiences using descriptive language. In addition to writing poetry, she is interested in both journalism and art. As a student in a STEM high school, she can often be found reading authors that range from Vonnegut to Plath or studying the phases of mitosis. Although she is still fairly new to poetry, Eileen believes that it is a powerful and liberating form of creative expression, and she strives to write a new poem every day. 🎨

Confluence

Tang dynasty poems
are four lines
each,
breaks between cadences
each character a curve,
iron hook, slicing black
scissor slashes against
textbook paper. I am no
Li Bai, for instead of wine
I drink the laws of thermodynamics,
and I pass time under the home screen of
a Nokia rather than moonlight, the foot of my bed nothing more
than a scuffing of
crushed cockroaches. I do not need lullabies
when I can recite
stanzas in my sleep, their four beat,
jumping voices
buzzing like dragonflies in hollow ear canals.
They speak of rivers, looping islands,
yellow-brown mud sloshing behind
rocks in the shapes of warriors
who jumped across gorges
in pursuit of wild tigers.
I press knees against littered plastic bags
and feel them crunch like insects under bare feet,
I do not need to pretend that I am standing at the edge of a river,
one toe in the flowing mud,
arm resting against the sandbanks. And I do not
need blankets when I have the
lisping voices of Su Song
to sing me
to sleep.

Piano

I could never play as well as my sister
 her fingers darted amongst onyx and ivory
 like fish slipping through coral, winding her way up each crescendo
 whispering through scales with every pianissimo
 hands poised before she even tapped out a melody. My fingers stumbled
 out like drunken men from bars
 pinky throwing the inebriated
 first punch at my thumb,
 perpetual pub fistfight.

Last night we went to her recital
 and I listened with one ear as
 a barrage of virtuosos
 clunked on stage
 black dress shoes and ribbons cascading down prodigy backs
 pressing out etude upon etude
 variations upon other variations
 until Chopin interlaced with Czerny
 and Rachmaninoff waltzed with Liszt. My father listened, too

with two ears and his spine
 tingling at every B flat and falling grace note
 humming to the tune of each shrill sonata
 his gnarled hands playing along on a keyboard
 only he could see.

I tried to teach myself the chords to a movie soundtrack, opening notes of a show tune
 but my fingers would weaken at every black key
 and Inspector Javert would falter on high notes, unraveling from hands,
 sliding out from underneath wet,
 sweating palms. I would never feel that

flat rush,
 the pizzicato on taut strings. Perhaps,

for me,
 shutting the mahogany lid
 was not the worst
 possible scenario.

My oblivious father is suddenly an instrumental connoisseur,
 as he never fails to remind me.
 That, he points to a Russian girl,
 violin shaded by her slick, protruding bun, spine pulled as tight as a fishing wire,
 is a good one,
 from 1880 or so.
 You can tell by the sound—
 and the slender apparatus howls out a low, lone note
 horsehair bristles vibrating against each dark string—
 rich, he remarks, isn't it?
 Rich, indeed, I say,
 an adjective that will never apply to us
 if we decide that a Steinway
 would look nice on our living room
 carpet.

The other day I realized
 that you were the same things, except I
 could play you,
 but only
 with a few unexpected staccatos
 peppered about sheet music
 smooth as the hood of a baby grand. But even throughout my frayed concerto,
 your lid would snap on my hands like the recalcitrant
 beaks of hungry birds.
 My fingers played you for what you truly were
 sans sheet, sans conductor
 only stairs upon stairs of endless columbine
 leading to the midnight ebony of your
 covered keyboard.

(I can't,
can never,
cannot,
play you.)

My father is resolute in his dream
of expanding his limited musical prowess. I see him now,
coattails flared above a leather bench
back and fingers arched like
Beethoven, Bach, and other gray-haired, high-foreheaded Austrians.
Lost in a ragtime piece,
perhaps Joplin or the
tumbling notes
of Basie. I pass the maroon grand of my childhood,
sitting patiently on an
oriental rug in the foyer.

O' black, hopeful beast
golden harped, thundering
forte-on-the-fourth-note angel—
what have I ever done,
to deserve your unconcern.

2015 Jurors

Esther Belin, a writer and multimedia artist, won the American Book Award for her first book of poetry, *From the Belly of My Beauty*. Belin's recent scholarship includes critical studies of Dinétah—examining identity politics, checkerboard land status, and the interplay of words and image. Recent installation work includes "Standing on the Outside, Sitting on the Outside," "Binding Sky," and "Pretty Tough."

Robert Casper is the head of the Poetry and Literature Center at the Library of Congress. He previously worked as programs director at the Poetry Society of America. He is one of the founders of the literary magazine *jubilat*, and he served as its publisher for more than a decade. He also served as the poetry chair for the Brooklyn Borough President's Literary Council and on the board for the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses, where he worked as membership director.

Carolyn Forché is a poet, teacher, and activist whose books of poetry include *The Angel of History*, which received the Los Angeles Times Book Award; *The Country Between Us*, a Lamont Poetry Selection of the Academy of American Poets; and *Gathering the Tribes*, selected for the Yale Series of Younger Poets by Stanley Kunitz. In 2013, Forché received the Academy of American Poets Fellowship. She is currently director of the Lannan Center for Poetry and Poetics at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Andrea Gibson is a poet who is active in the LGBT community. Her work has been featured on media outlets such as the BBC and CNN, among others. She is known for the fearless truths in her poetry. She has released five spoken word albums and was the first winner of the Women of the World Poetry Slam. Her work often addresses topics such as war, class, gender, bullying, and more.

Juan Felipe Herrera is a poet, novelist, and the Poet Laureate of the United States whose recent awards for poetry include the Guggenheim Fellowship, the National Book Critic's Circle Award, and the Latino International Award. He is a member of the Board of Chancellors of the Academy of American Poetry. In addition, he has worked with schools on the "i-Promise Joanna Project," which addresses bullying. He is a professor of Creative Writing at the University of California in Riverside.

Edward Hirsch, a MacArthur Fellow, has published *The Living Fire: New and Selected Poems*, which brings together 35 years of poetry from seven previous collections. He has also written five prose books, including *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*, a national bestseller. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award for Literature and now serves as president of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

Alice Quinn was the poetry editor at Alfred A. Knopf from 1976 to 1986 and then became the poetry editor of *The New Yorker*. She teaches at Columbia University's Graduate School of the Arts and is the executive director of the Poetry Society of America. She has written and edited several books, including *Edgar Allan Poe & The Juke-Box: Uncollected Poems, Drafts, and Fragments*.

Glenis Redmond is an esteemed Cave Canem Fellow and an NC Literary Fellowship Recipient from the North Carolina Arts Council currently serving as the Poet-in-Residence at the Peace Center for the Performing Arts. She is a Kennedy Center Teaching Artist and a full-time road poet, performing and teaching poetry across the country. In 1996, she founded the Asheville Poetry Slam and the Greenville Poetry Slam. Her poems have been featured in *Tidal Basin Review*, *NCLR*, *EMRYS*, *Meridians*, *The Asheville Poetry Review*, *Tongues of the Ocean*, and *Obsidian II*.

Patricia Smith, a 2014 Guggenheim Poetry fellow, is the author of six volumes of poetry: *Shoulda Been Jimi Savannah*, winner of the 2013 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize from the Academy of American Poets and finalist for the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America; *Blood Dazzler*, a National Book Award finalist; *Teahouse of the Almightly*, a National Poetry Series winner; *Close to Death*; *Big Towns*, *Big Talk*; and *Life According to Motown*. She also edited the crime fiction anthology *Staten Island Noir*.

Alfre Woodard is an Oscar-nominated and multiple Emmy-winning African-American actress. Her prolific film and TV career spans over three decades and includes *Passion Fish* (1992), *Crooklyn* (1994), *How to Make an American Quilt* (1995), *Down in the Delta* (1998), *Beauty Shop* (2005), James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (PBS, 1985), and *Desperate Housewives* (ABC, 2004–2012). In 1989, Woodard was a founder, and has since that time been a board member, of Artists for a New South Africa, a nonprofit organization dedicated to combating the African AIDS pandemic and advancing democracy and equality in South Africa.

Special Thanks

The National Student Poets Program partners sincerely thank the Aspen Institute, the Library of Congress, the National Writing Project, the Poetry Society of America, 826 National, and the National Student Poets Program Jurors for their support, expertise, and enthusiasm. The National Student Poets Program partners also gratefully acknowledge the Regional Affiliates of the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards for their dedication to supporting and coordinating the Awards on the regional level. We honor the thousands of educators who annually encourage students to submit their work.

Eligibility

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

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. The semifinalists are 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 and promise, and personal voice.

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, 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. Student Poets receive college scholarships and opportunities to present their work at writing and poetry events throughout their term.

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artandwriting.org/NSPP

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