

NCMA Black Poetry Day Participants



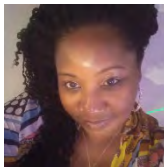
Dasan Ahanu, a self-described introvert with a very public profession, is a cultural organizer, performing artist, and scholar. His work focuses on critical writing, creative writing, hip-hop, and popular culture. He is a visiting professor at UNC–Chapel Hill, an alumnus of Harvard University’s Nasir Jones Fellowship, and the 2023 Piedmont Laureate. Ahanu’s writing has been published extensively, he has performed across the country, and he is the author of four poetry collections. Photo: Stan Chambers Jr.



Cortland Gilliam is a poet, educator, cultural organizer, and PhD candidate in cultural studies and literacies within the School of Education at UNC–Chapel Hill. He studies cultures of school discipline and histories of Black youth contributions to liberation movements of the late 20th century and serves as co-chair of the board of directors at the Marian Cheek Jackson Center. Gilliam’s creative work explores racialized experiences, identities, and histories. His poetry has been published in *Gulf Stream Magazine* and the *Triangle Poetry Twenty-Twenty-One* anthology. He is the 2023–24 Chapel Hill Poet Laureate. Photo: Jade Wilson



Fred L. Joiner is a poet and curator based in Chapel Hill. He is the former Carrboro Poet Laureate and an inaugural Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow. Joiner has read and published his work, curated exhibitions, and participated in public programming locally, nationally, and internationally. He is the co-founder of the Center for Poetic Thought, a former board member of the American Poetry Museum, and currently serves on boards of Arch Development Corporation and the Orange County Arts Commission. Joiner guest-curated the exhibition *Micro/Macro* of UNC’s 2021 MFA graduates for the Ackland Art Museum.



Clevette Roberts, known as Chyna in the poetry community, is an author, poet laureate, actress, radio show host, life coach, and motivational speaker. Her voice and confidence have made her a powerful, dynamic player in the arts world. She keeps her audience mesmerized and empowered by her ambition to help others while implementing art-healing components.



D. J. Rogers is a poet, essayist, and educator working in the Triangle. Currently, he is a consultant on equity and diversity for a fiction podcast, a teacher coach, and the Durham Poet Laureate. His work can be found at *FreezeRay Poetry*, *Wingless Dreamer Publisher*, and *Black Nerd Problems*.



CJ Suitt (he, him/they, them) is a performance poet, arts educator, and community organizer from Chapel Hill whose work is rooted in storytelling and social justice. Suitt was the first Chapel Hill Poet Laureate. He has co-directed, produced, and starred in a historical reenactment of the 1947 Freedom Rides, performed at music festivals, including Gnarnia, Shakori Hills, and Bonnaroo, and acted in a production of *Hands Up: 6 Playwrights, 6 Testaments*. Suitt has worked with young

people awaiting trial at the Durham Youth Home, older inmates within the Orange Correctional Center, and high school and college-aged men pushing to redefine masculinity in their communities. He is committed to speaking truth to power and aims to be a bridge for communities who can't always see themselves in each other. Photo: Shannon Kelly



Josephus Thompson III, a teacher and lecturer, founded the Poetry Project, where he uses poetry as a catalyst for literacy, leadership, and service in both educational and corporate settings. The host of *The Poetry Café*, WUNC's syndicated radio show, he showcases talented artists from all over the world and their stories. The show also tours nationally and was featured on Amazon Prime. Thompson has performed for Oprah, opened for Kanye West and Floetry, and shared the stage with the Last Poets, traveling to Australia, London, Seoul, South Africa, and across the United States to present his gift.



Junious "Jay" Ward is a poet and teaching artist from Charlotte. He is a National Slam champion (2018), an Individual World Poetry Slam champion (2019), author of *Sing Me a Lesser Wound* (Bull City Press, 2020), and Charlotte's inaugural poet laureate. Ward currently serves as a program director for BreatheINK and vice chair on the board of the Watering Hole. Ward has attended Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, Callaloo, Watering Hole, and Tin House Workshop. His work can be found in *Crab Fat Magazine*, *Lackadaisy Literary Magazine*, *Four Way Review*, *Diode Poetry Journal*, and additionally on Button Poetry, All Def Poetry, and SlamFind.