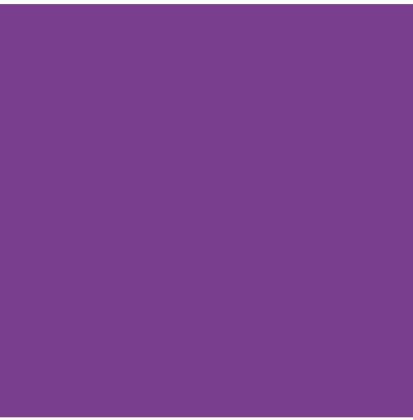




2025



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
AND POETRY FOUNDATION PRESENT

**POETRY
OUT LOUD**



20 YEARS

**NATIONAL
FINALS**

May 6–7, 2025
Washington, DC



20!
YEARS
LOUD!





Established by Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States. Visit [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov) to learn more.



The Poetry Foundation recognizes the power of words to transform lives. The Foundation works to amplify poetry and celebrate poets by fostering spaces for all to create, experience, and share poetry. Follow the Poetry Foundation at [poetryfoundation.org](https://www.poetryfoundation.org).



Mid Atlantic Arts supports artists, presenters, and organizations through unique programming, grant support, partnerships, and information sharing. Created in 1979, Mid Atlantic Arts is aligned with the region's state arts councils and the National Endowment for the Arts. We combine state and federal funding with private support from corporations, foundations, and individuals to nurture diverse artistic expression while connecting people to meaningful arts experiences within our region and beyond. Visit [midatlanticarts.org](https://www.midatlanticarts.org) to learn more.

THE NATIONAL FINALS
ARE ALSO BEING
WEBCAST AT
arts.gov



Poetry Out Loud is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Poetry Foundation, and the state and jurisdictional arts agencies of the United States. The Poetry Out Loud National Finals are administered by Mid Atlantic Arts.

Cover photos of participating students over the last 20 years by James Kegley

Welcome to the Poetry Out Loud 2025 National Finals!

This is a special year as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the program, which has reached more than 4.5 million students nationwide since its inception in 2005.

This year alone, more than 157,000 students participated in Poetry Out Loud, which makes the achievement of our 55 state and jurisdictional champions all the more astounding. They have spent months studying poems and perfecting their performances, and as they step into the spotlight, we all get to enjoy the results of their hard work.

That hard work was not undertaken alone—parents, mentors, educators, and friends all lent their support to these students, providing encouragement during moments of doubt and celebrating the successes that brought them to this moment. We extend our thanks to those trusted advisors and the coordinators who make this program possible in every state, American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

This program not only nurtures an appreciation for the art of poetry in our nation’s youth, it also plays a crucial role in developing students’ public speaking and critical thinking abilities. Memorization and analysis push students to think about language and presentation. As participants prepare and perform, they gain confidence in front of audiences, an invaluable skill for future careers in fields of all kinds.

We have witnessed over the years how past champions have excelled post-high school, and they have expressed that their Poetry Out Loud experience has been part of that success. As 2017 National Champion Samara Huggins said of Poetry Out Loud, “I have the ability to command a room, and I learned that through this program.”

As we look towards many more years of Poetry Out Loud, we hope you carry the excitement of this evening with you back to your communities and encourage others to get involved in this transformative program.

Photo provided
by the NEA



Mary Anne Carter
Senior Advisor, National Endowment for the Arts

Photo provided by the
Poetry Foundation



Michelle T. Boone
President & CEO, Poetry Foundation

May 6

SEMIFINALS PROGRAM

SEMIFINAL ONE | 9:00 a.m.

SEMIFINAL TWO | 1:00 p.m.

SEMIFINAL THREE | 5:00 p.m.

HOSTS

Rayanne Gonzales
Aunye Boone
Don Mike Mendoza

First Round

Remarks

Lauren Miller, National Endowment for the Arts
Justine Haka, Poetry Foundation

Second Round

Intermission

Awards Presentation

Announcement of Regional Finalists

Top eight competitors in each semifinal will recite a third poem

Third Round

Announcement of National Finalists

Top three competitors in each semifinal will advance to the National Finals

HOSTS AND JUDGES

SEMIFINAL ONE

HOST



Photo provided by Rayanne Gonzales

Helen Hayes Award-winning actress **Rayanne Gonzales** has appeared on Broadway (*Phantom of the Opera*), film, and TV (*In the Heights*, *Sound of Music Live*). Local and National credits include: *Into the Woods* (2023 Broadway Revival Tour); *Mystic Pizza* (Ogunquit Playhouse and La Mirada); *In the Heights* (Signature Theatre, Olney Theatre Center, Walnut Street); *Carousel* (Arena Stage); *Daphne's Dive* and *Sweeney Todd* (Signature Theatre).

JUDGES



Photo by Cassidy Dufhon

Dan Brady is the author of the poetry collections *Strange Children* (Publishing Genius, 2018), *Subtexts* (Publishing Genius, 2022), and *Songs in E---* (Trnsfr Books, 2023)—winner of the Barclay Prize for Poetry—along with two poetry chapbooks. Previously, Brady served as the editor of *American Poets*, the Academy of American Poets journal, worked in the literature division at the National Endowment for the Arts, and was awarded a Distinguished Service Award for his work on the NEA Big Read. Brady is currently the poetry editor of *Barrelhouse*.



To access the full text to the selected Semifinals poems, please go to:
<https://www.poetryoutloud.org/2025-poem-documents/>





Photo provided by Alexa Patrick



Alexa Patrick is a vocalist and poet from Connecticut. Patrick is the author of *Remedies for Disappearing* (Haymarket Books, 2023)

and holds fellowships from Cave Canem and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities. Patrick's previous artistic partners include Meta, Microsoft, the Kennedy Center, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts. In spring 2023, Patrick made a stage production debut as Un/Sung in the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*. You may find Patrick's work in publications including *Adroit*, *The Rumpus*, *CRWN Magazine*, and *The BreakBeat Poets Vol. 2: Black Girl Magic*.

Photo provided by Libbie Rifkin



Libbie Rifkin is the teaching professor in the department of English and associate director of the disability studies

program at Georgetown University. Rifkin teaches courses in modern and contemporary American literature and gender, race, and disability studies. Rifkin's two books include *Among Friends: Engendering the Social Site of Poetry* (University of Iowa Press, 2013) co-edited with Anne Dewey, and *Career Moves: Olson, Creeley, Zukofsky, Berrigan, and the American Avant-Garde* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2000). Rifkin has published numerous articles on avant-garde and experimental poetry and disability and the poetics of care.

Photo by Hillary Dubie



Leslie Sainz is the author of *Have You Been Long Enough at Table* (Tin House, 2023), winner of the 2024 Audre Lorde Award

and a finalist for the Poetry Society of America's Norma Farber First Book Award, the New England Book Award, and the Vermont Book Award. Sainz has received fellowships, scholarships, and honors from the National Endowment for the Arts, CantoMundo, the Miami Writers Institute, the *Adroit Journal*, and the Stadler Center for Poetry & Literary Arts at Bucknell University. A former guest host of the award-winning podcast *The Slowdown*, Sainz currently works as the managing editor of *New England Review* and teaches in the Newport MFA program at Salve Regina University.

SEMIFINAL TWO

HOST

Photo provided by Aunye Boone



Hailing from Southern Maryland, **Aunye Boone** is a SAG-AFTRA actress, published writer, member of Delta Sigma

Theta Sorority, Inc., and former full scholarship runner for Virginia Tech. Boone's multiple commercial credits include MedStar Health, Guinness, DoorDash, Giant, and Connections Academy. Aunye Boone's stage credits include Lateesh in the Compass Rose Theater's productions of *If I Hold My Tongue* and *Jory in Disgraced*, for

which Boone received a Helen Hayes Award recommendation. On television, Boone's roles included Olivia Walker in BET Network's *Criminals at Work* and Shakina Feazell in TV One's *For My Man*. Other credits include Sonya Bell in the aspireTV network short film *The Catcher* and numerous voiceover roles.

JUDGES

Photo by Gillian Farrah



Leslie Bumstead is a poet and educator. Bumstead is co-founder of Solidarity Arts, an organization that creates and provides

arts programming to incarcerated people. Bumstead teaches creative writing workshops in several Maryland prisons and programs literary arts events at community art space Rhizome DC. Bumstead received an MFA from George Mason University and co-founded *So To Speak: A Feminist Journal of Language and Art*. Bumstead's collection of poems, *Cipher/Civilian*, was published by Edge Books in 2005. Other works, including essays and translations, have appeared in anthologies and literary magazines.

Photo by Kai Caggin



Roy G. Guzmán is a Honduran poet and scholar. Guzmán's first collection, *Catrachos*, was published by Graywolf

Press in 2020. *Catrachos* was named a finalist for the Kate Tufts Discovery Award and the Minnesota Book Award in Poetry. Guzmán is a recipient of a

HOSTS AND JUDGES

2019 National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowship and in 2017 was named a Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellow. Guzmán currently lives in Minneapolis and is pursuing a PhD in cultural studies and comparative literature at the University of Minnesota, in addition to finishing a young adult (YA) memoir-in-verse, scheduled to come out through Scholastic.

Photo by Wren Rene



Amber Rose Johnson is a scholar-artist and a proud native of Providence, Rhode Island.

Johnson is currently an assistant professor of English at McGill University. Johnson received a PhD and MA from the University of Pennsylvania and BA from Tufts University. Johnson's scholarly and creative work explores the generative possibilities of Black experimental poetry and performance. Johnson is the co-editor of *Colored People Time* (Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art, 2020), and Johnson's critical writing has been featured in *BOMB*, *ArtForum*, *OEI*, and *Jacket2*. In 2010, Johnson was named Poetry Out Loud National Champion.

Photo provided by Chris La Tray



Chris La Tray is a Métis storyteller, a descendent of the Pembina Band of the mighty Red River of the North, and an enrolled member of the Little Shell Tribe of

Chippewa Indians. La Tray's third book, *Becoming Little Shell: A Landless Indian's Journey Home*, was published by Milkweed Editions in 2024. La Tray's first book, *One-Sentence Journal: Short Poems and Essays from the World at Large* (Riverfeet Press, 2018) won the 2018 Montana Book Award and a 2019 High Plains Book Award. La Tray's book of haiku and haibun poetry, *Descended from a Travel-worn Satchel*, was published in 2021 by Foothills Publishing. La Tray is the 2023-2025 Montana Poet Laureate.

SEMIFINAL THREE

HOST

Photo provided by Don Michael H. Mendoza



Don Michael H. Mendoza is the founder of DMH Mendoza Productions and co-founder and Executive Producer of

LA TI DO Productions. Through both entities Mendoza has produced on Broadway (*Smash*, *Suffs*, *Here Lies Love*), Off-Broadway (*Hazing U*), and hundreds of cabarets, concerts, theatrical shows, and events nationally since 2012. Concurrently, Mendoza is an independent marketing professional who served as the first director of Marketing & Media for the Filipino American Symphony Orchestra in Los Angeles. Mendoza attended the Commercial Theater Institute in New York City, and holds a BA in musical theatre and journalism and an MA in strategic communication from American University.

JUDGES

Photo provided by Kristen Jackson



Kristen Jackson serves as associate artistic director and director of connectivity at Woolly Mammoth

Theatre Company. Under Jackson's leadership, Woolly's connectivity department launched the Core Partner Program, which promotes equitable exchange with DC-area organizations predominately serving communities of color. Jackson previously worked on- and off-Broadway for Ostar Productions and Playwrights Horizons in producing and casting and as a teaching artist and performer for Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and Actors Theatre of Louisville. Jackson earned a BA in theatre studies and English from Duke University and an MA in performance as public practice from University of Texas at Austin.

Photo provided by Tony Keith Jr.



Tony Keith Jr. is an award-winning Black American gay poet, spoken word artist, and hip-hop educational leader. Keith

is the author of *How the Boogeyman Became a Poet* (Quill Tree Books, 2024) and *Knucklehead* (Quill Tree Books, 2025). A multi-year fellow of the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Keith has performed at the Kennedy Center, Washington National Cathedral, and in schools and communities around the world. Keith is co-author of the award-winning book

Open Mic Night: Campus Programs that Champion College Student Voice and Engagement (Routledge, 2017) and Keith's academic work appears in several respected journal publications.

Photo provided by Seema Reza



Seema Reza is the author of the poetry collection *A Constellation of Half-Lives* (Write Bloody, 2019) and the hybrid memoir *When the World Breaks Open* (Red Hen Press, 2016). Based in Maryland, Reza is the CEO of Community Building Art Works, an arts organization that encourages the use of the arts as a tool for narration, self-care, and socialization among a military population struggling with emotional and physical injuries. In 2015, Reza was awarded the Col. John Gioia Patriot Award by USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore for work with service members. An alumnus of Goddard College and Voices of Our Nations Arts Foundation, Reza's writing has been widely anthologized and has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *McSweeney's*, and *LitHub*, among others.

Photo provided by Lake Wilburn



Lake Wilburn is an actor, musician, and vocalist based in New York City. In 2014, Wilburn won second place in the Poetry Out Loud National Finals (representing Ohio). Wilburn earned a BFA in musical theater from the University of Michigan in 2019. Select credits

include Mark in *RENT* and Melchior in *Spring Awakening* (Short North Stage), Mordred in *Camelot* (Sierra Repertory Theatre), and Pippin in *Pippin* (Summer Repertory Theatre). Wilburn was most recently seen as Frankie Valli in *Jersey Boys* (Mill Mountain Theatre). Wilburn has released two EPs and one single of original music, entitled *Howboutdis?*, *Howboutdat?*, and *Not the Same*.

Photo by Beowulf Sheehan



GUEST POET

Major Jackson is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *Razzle Dazzle: New & Selected Poems* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2023).

Jackson is also the author of *A Beat Beyond: The Selected Prose of Major Jackson*, edited by Amor Kohli (University of Michigan Press, 2022). A recipient of fellowships from the Academy of American Poets, John S. Guggenheim Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts, Jackson has published poems and essays in *American Poetry Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Orion Magazine*, *Paris Review*, *Poetry London*, and *World Literature Today*. Major Jackson lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and is the Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Chair in the Humanities at Vanderbilt University. Jackson serves as the poetry editor of *The Harvard Review* and has served as host of the award-winning podcast *The Slowdown*. Jackson is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

May 7

FINALS PROGRAM

Musical Intro

DJ Harry Dixon

Performance

DMV Percussion Academy

20th Anniversary Video

Welcome

Mac Barnett

Roll Call of State Champions

National Endowment for the Arts Remarks

First Round of Recitations

Poetry Foundation Remarks

Second Round of Recitations

Awarding of Medals

Announcement of Three Finalists

Final Round of Recitations

National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Remarks

Performance

Jamila Woods

Announcement of Poetry Out Loud Champion

HOST AND JUDGES

HOST

Photo by Chris Black



Mac Barnett, the 2025-2026 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, is the ninth writer to hold this position.

The National Ambassador for Young People's Literature is an initiative of the Library of Congress, in partnership with Every Child a Reader, with generous support from the Library of Congress James Madison Council.

Mac Barnett is a *New York Times*-bestselling author of stories for children, whose work has been translated into more than 30 languages and sold more than 5 million copies worldwide. Barnett's books have won many prizes, including two Caldecott Honors, three *New York Times*/*New York Public Library* Best Illustrated Awards, three E.B. White Read Aloud Awards, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, Germany's Jugendliteraturpreis, China's Chen Bochui International Children's Literature Award, the Netherlands' Silver Griffel, and Italy's Premio Orbil. Barnett is the co-creator, with Jon Klassen, of *Shape Island*, a stop-motion animated series on Apple TV+, based on their best-selling Shapes series of picture books. Barnett lives in Oakland, California.

The National Ambassador for Young People's Literature raises national awareness of the importance of young people's literature as it relates to lifelong literacy, education, and the development and betterment of the lives of young people.



JUDGES

Photo by Rachel McCauley



Rick Barot was born in the Philippines and grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. Barot's fourth book of poems, *The Galleons* (Milkweed Editions, 2020), was longlisted for the National Book Award. Barot's earlier collections include *The Darker Fall*, *Want*, and *Chord*, all published by Sarabande Books. Barot's work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *The Kenyon Review*, and *The New Yorker*. Barot has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Stanford University. Barot lives in Tacoma, Washington, and directs the Rainier Writing Workshop, the low-residency MFA program in creative writing at Pacific Lutheran University. Barot's newest book of poems, *Moving the Bones*, was published by Milkweed Editions in 2024.

Photo by Jason Gardner



Carmen Giménez is director and publisher of Graywolf Press. Giménez is the author of numerous poetry collections including *Milk and Filth* (University of Arizona Press, 2013), a finalist for the NBCC Award in Poetry, and *Be Recorder* (Graywolf Press, 2019), a finalist for the 2019 National Book Award for Poetry, the PEN Open Book Award, the Audre Lorde Award for Lesbian Poetry, and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize.

Giménez was awarded the Academy of American Poets Fellowship in 2020. A 2019 Guggenheim Fellow, Giménez served as publisher of Noemi Press for twenty years.

Photo provided by Candice Iloh



Candice Iloh is the award-winning author of young adult novels, *Every Body Looking*, *Break This House*, and *Salt the Water*. A 2020 National Book Award Finalist and 2021 Printz Honoree, Iloh is a first-generation Nigerian American writer whose books center home. In 2018, Iloh was awarded a Critical Breaks residency with Hi-ARTS to develop and perform a one-night-only stage production of *ADA: On Stage*, a multimedia one-person-show, introducing the audience to in-progress themes of Iloh's critically-acclaimed debut novel. Iloh is a former high school creative writing teacher who has taught young people of every age, from pre-K through high school. Iloh's debut picture book, *EMEKA: EAT EGUSI!* will be published by Simon & Schuster in 2026.

Photo provided by Roderick Justice



Roderick Justice is a Tony-recognized arts educator, an award-winning director, choreographer, playwright, designer, actor, and Broadway producer (*How to Dance in Ohio*). Justice is the artistic director of the nation's oldest professional theater for children, The Children's Theatre of Cincinnati (TCT). In this role, Justice

has launched over 25 world-premiere original works and adaptations of theater for young audiences. In 2020, *Justice* was recognized as one of Cincinnati's 40 Under 40 and accepted the Sara Spencer Child Drama Award from the Southeastern Theatre Conference. In 2021, *Justice* was BroadwayWorld Cincinnati's "Arts Educator of the Decade," and in 2024, *Justice* received an honorable mention for the Excellence in Theatre Education Award, presented by Carnegie Mellon at the Tony Awards.

Photo by Tasha Gorel



Jasminne Mendez is a best-selling Dominican American poet, translator, playwright, audio book narrator, and award-winning author of several books for children and adults. Mendez's middle grade novel-in-verse *Aniana del Mar Jumps In* (Dial Books, 2023) received the 2024 Pura Belpre Honor Award. Mendez's other books have received prizes from the Texas Institute of Letters, the Writer's League of Texas, and the International Latino Book Awards. Mendez is an MFA graduate of the creative writing program at the Rainier Writing Workshop at Pacific Lutheran University and a University of Houston alumni. Mendez is the program director for the literary arts non-profit Tintero Projects and lives and works in Houston, Texas.

2025 State and Jurisdictional Champions

**POETRY
OUT LOUD**
20 YEARS



ALABAMA

Mikayla Austin

Loveless Academic Magnet Program High School

ALASKA

Mona Koko

West Anchorage High School

AMERICAN SAMOA

Hazel Leo

Iakina Adventist Academy

ARIZONA

Liam McLaughlin

Gary K. Herberger Young Scholars Academy

ARKANSAS

Lillian Baker

Sheridan High School

CALIFORNIA

Selah Johnson

Archer School for Girls

COLORADO

Rize Simmons

Windsor High School

CONNECTICUT

Lia Muñoz-Rojas

Ridgefield High School

DELAWARE

Olivia Stevens

Mount Sophia Academy

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Nyla Dinkins

Benjamin Banneker Academic High School

FLORIDA

Esinam Agama

Tallahassee Collegiate Academy

GEORGIA

Tiana Renee Jones

Whitefield Academy

GUAM

Gracie Dionae Manibusan

Notre Dame High School

HAWAII

Koali'i Keawe-Asuega

Kamehameha Schools Kapālama

IDAHO

Emma Eldred

New Plymouth High School

ILLINOIS

Mikiah Gerrity

Thomas Jefferson High School

INDIANA

Eve-Marie Baxter

Pelican Academy Homeschool

IOWA

Emma B. Oleson

Sioux City North High School

KANSAS

Ismail Saeed

Wichita East High School

KENTUCKY

Javontae Cranmo

Beechwood High School

LOUISIANA

Alana Bailey

Covington High School

MAINE

Pendo Dawe

Maine Coast Waldorf School

MARYLAND

Penelope Tofigh

River Hill High School

MASSACHUSETTS

Abigail Drumm
Agawam High School

MICHIGAN

Nour Kassim Al-Yasseri
Star International Academy

MINNESOTA

Sofia Skuza Rivera
St. Paul Academy and Summit School

MISSISSIPPI

Saabria Khadijah Prater
Pascagoula High School

MISSOURI

Louisa Blackmoore
Crossroads College Preparatory School

MONTANA

Eva Murray
Anaconda Junior/Senior High School

NEBRASKA

Lainey Fillmore
Gordon-Rushville Public Schools

NEVADA

Kyara Francheska Hernandez Duarte
Elko High School

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Reagan O'Donnell Sutherland
Plymouth Regional High School

NEW JERSEY

Hadassah Broughton
Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart

NEW MEXICO

Kaitlyn Lubega
United World College-USA

NEW YORK

Savir Peri
Syosset High School

NORTH CAROLINA

Anika Ryder
Central Academy of Technology and Arts

NORTH DAKOTA

Leah Darlene Hochhalter
Valley City Junior Senior High School

OHIO

Zeke Moses
Bexley High School

OKLAHOMA

Elisha Dalmeida
Jenks High School

OREGON

Bena Rodecap
Grant High School

PENNSYLVANIA

Isavel Mendoza
Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts

PUERTO RICO

Sarah Lu
Centro Residencial de Oportunidades
Educativas de Mayagüez

RHODE ISLAND

Emmanuel Obisanya
Classical High School

SOUTH CAROLINA

Faith Angeline Ongaria
Wilson High School

SOUTH DAKOTA

Teonna Randle
Jefferson High School

TENNESSEE

Elizabeth Silva
Baylor School

TEXAS

Oluwabori "Anjy" Fadairo
The Hockaday School

UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

Maya Prasad
Good Hope Country Day School

UTAH

Sariah Eve Calles
Box Elder High School

VERMONT

Mapenzi Selemani
Winooski High School

VIRGINIA

Nadia Shalaby
Fredericksburg Academy

WASHINGTON

Sydney Frost
Mt. Spokane High School

WEST VIRGINIA

Emily Porter
Logan High School

WISCONSIN

Riley Grace Saenim
The Prairie School

WYOMING

Alex Brady
Cheyenne East High School

Congratulations to all!

MASSACHUSETTS

Abigail Drumm

"I Am the People, the Mob" by Carl Sandburg

"We Play Charades" by Uma Menon

NORTH CAROLINA

Anika Ryder

"No, I wasn't meant to love and be loved" by Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib

"My Therapist Wants to Know about My Relationship to Work" by Tiana Clark

OHIO

Zeke Moses

"Or" by Thomas Sayers Ellis

"America, I Sing You Back" by Allison Adelle Hedge Coke

PENNSYLVANIA

Isavel Mendoza

"Black Matters" by Keith S. Wilson

"Brother, I've seen some" by Kabir

RHODE ISLAND

Emmanuel Obisanya

"Dirge Without Music" by Edna St. Vincent Millay

"I Am the People, the Mob" by Carl Sandburg

WEST VIRGINIA

Emily Porter

"Invisible Children" by Mariana Llanos

"The Coming Woman" by Mary Weston Fordham

SOUTH CAROLINA

Faith Angeline Ongaria

"Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allan Poe

"The Albatross" by Kate Bass

MARYLAND

Penelope Tofigh

"Meanwhile" by Richard Siken

"Hope' is the thing with feathers" by Emily Dickinson

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Maya Prasad

"This Is the Honey" by Mahogany L. Brown

"The Days Gone By" by James Whitcomb Riley

NEW YORK

Savir Peri

"Let the Light Enter" by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

"On Listening to Your Teacher Take Attendance" by Aimee Nezhukumatathil

CONNECTICUT

Lia Muñoz-Rojas

"El Olvido" by Judith Ortiz Cofer

"Caminitos" by Carmen Tafolla

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Reagan O'Donnell Sutherland

"The Albatross" by Kate Bass

"The Children's Hour" by William Wadsworth Longfellow

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Nyla Dinkins

"Ballad of Birmingham" by Dudley Randall

"A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General" by Jonathan Swift

MAINE

Pendo Dawe

"George Moses Horton, Myself" by George Moses Horton

"Learning to love America" by Shirley Geok-Lin Lim

DELAWARE

Olivia Stevens

"Sanctuary" by Jean Valentine

"Friendship After Love" by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

VERMONT

Mapenzi Selemani

"I look at the world" by Langston Hughes

"I Remember, I Remember" by Thomas Hood

VIRGINIA

Nadia Shalaby

"America, I Sing You Back" by Allison Adelle Hedge Coke

"The Bearer" by Hayden Carruth

NEW JERSEY

Hadassah Broughton

"alternate names for black boys" by Danez Smith

"Declaration" by Tracy K. Smith

ILLINOIS

Mikiah Gerrity

"Oranges" by Roisin Kelly

"The New Decalogue" by Ambrose Bierce

MISSOURI

Louisa Blackmoore

"Cartoon Physics, part 1" by Nick Flynn

"Where the Wild Things Go" by D. Gilson

MISSISSIPPI

Saabria Khadijah Prater

"This Is Not a Small Voice" by Sonia Sanchez

"Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear" by Mosab Abu Toha

NEBRASKA

Lainey Fillmore

"All This and More" by Mary Karr

"Blade, Unplugged" by Tim Seibles

KANSAS

Ismail Saeed

"Shall earth no more inspire thee" by Emily Brontë

"Say Grace" by Emily Jungmin Yoon

LOUISIANA

Alana Bailey

"Meanwhile" by Richard Siken

"We Play Charades" by Uma Menon

OKLAHOMA

Elisha Dalmeida

"And If I Did, What Then?" by George Gascoigne

"Perhaps the World Ends Here" by Joy Harjo

ARKANSAS

Lillian Baker

"Love's Philosophy" by Percy Bysshe Shelley

"The World Is Too Much With Us" by William Wordsworth

GEORGIA

Tiana Renee Jones

"A Thank-You Note" by Michael Ryan

"On the Death of Anne Brontë" by Charlotte Brontë

WISCONSIN

Riley Grace Saenim

"This Is the Honey" by Mahogany L. Brown

"Sanctuary" by Jean Valentine

TENNESSEE

Elizabeth Silva

"America, I Sing You Back" by Allison Adelle Hedge Coke

"Battle-Hymn of the Republic" by Julia Ward Howe

INDIANA

Eve-Marie Baxter

"The Heaven of Animals" by James L. Dickey

"Insomnia" by Dana Gioia

PUERTO RICO

Sarah Lu

"No, I wasn't meant to love and be loved" by Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib

"What Women Are Made Of" by Bianca Lynne Spriggs

FLORIDA

Esinam Agama

"After Apple-Picking" by Robert Frost

"Meditation on a Grapefruit" by Craig Arnold

KENTUCKY

Javontae Cranmo

**"Abecedarian Requiring Further Examination of Anglikan Seraphym
Subjugation of a Wild Indian Rezervation"** by Natalie Diaz

"We Wear the Mask" by Paul Laurence Dunbar

IOWA

Emma B. Oleson

"Becoming a Redwood" by Dana Gioia

"Revenge" by Letitia Elizabeth Landon

ALABAMA

Mikayla Austin

"The Bad Old Days" by Kenneth Rexroth

"January, 1795" by Mary Robinson

MICHIGAN

Nour Kassim Al-Yasseri

"Invisible Children" by Mariana Llanos

"Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear" by Mosab Abu Toha

May 6 | 5:00 p.m.

SEMIFINAL THREE

COLORADO

Rize Simmons

"The Song of the Smoke" by W.E.B. Du Bois

"Eddie Priest's Barbershop & Notary" by Kevin Young

WYOMING

Alex Brady

"What the Oracle Said" by Shara McCallum

"The Gamble" by Laura Hershey

ALASKA

Mona Koko

"Windigo" by Louise Erdrich

"Songs for the People" by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

NORTH DAKOTA

Leah Darlene Hochhalter

"1969" by Alex Dimitrov

"The Arrow and the Song" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

OREGON

Bena Rodecap

"A Noiseless Patient Spider" by Walt Whitman

"There are no kings in America" by Aileen Cassinetta

AMERICAN SAMOA

Hazel Leo

"Don't Let Me Be Lonely: "At the airport-security checkpoint..." by Claudia Rankine

"The Two Boys" by Mary Lamb

HAWAII

Koali'i Keawe-Asuega

"He Mele Aloha no ka Niu" by Brandy Nālani McDougall

"Once the World Was Perfect" by Joy Harjo

MONTANA

Eva Murray

"An Apology For Her Poetry" by Margaret Cavendish

"Water of the womb" by Tianna Bratcher

NEVADA

Kyara Francheska Hernandez Duarte

"Ars Poetica" by José Olivarez

"You, If No One Else" by Tino Villanueva

ARIZONA

Liam McLaughlin

"We Used Our Words We Used What Words We Had" by Franny Choi

"Songs for the People" by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

NEW MEXICO

Kaitlyn Lubega

"We Are Not Responsible" by *Harryette Mullen*

"I Am the People, the Mob" by *Carl Sandburg*

TEXAS

Oluwabori "Anjy" Fadairo

"The Light of Stars" by *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

"The Universe as Primal Scream" by *Tracy K. Smith*

UTAH

Sariah Eve Calles

"Respectability" by *Tina Boyer Brown*

"Invisible Children" by *Mariana Llanos*

MINNESOTA

Sofia Skuza Rivera

"Tomorrow" by *Dennis O'Driscoll*

"Revenge" by *Letitia Elizabeth Landon*

SOUTH DAKOTA

Teonna Randle

"George Moses Horton, Myself" by *George Moses Horton*

"Wade in the Water" by *Tracy K. Smith*

WASHINGTON

Sydney Frost

"Siren Song" by *Margaret Atwood*

"There are no kings in America" by *Aileen Cassinetta*

IDAHO

Emma Eldred

"Requiem" by *Camille T. Dungy*

"America, I Sing You Back" by *Allison Adelle Hedge Coke*

CALIFORNIA

Selah Johnson

"No, I wasn't meant to love and be loved" by *Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib*

"Ode to the Midwest" by *Kevin Young*

GUAM

Gracie Dionae Manibusan

"The Wish, By a Young Lady" by *Laetitia Pilkington*

"Sonnet 19: When I consider how my light is spent" by *John Milton*

Poetry Out Loud Top 20 Word Search

Can you find the poets that have been most frequently recited in POL over the past twenty years?

John Donne

Walt Whitman

Emily Dickinson

Billy Collins

Lisel Mueller

Tony Hoagland

Cornelius Eady

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Paul Laurence Dunbar

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Gwendolyn Brooks

Carl Sandburg

Marge Piercy

Kevin Young

William Wordsworth

Edgar Allan Poe

Jimmy Santiago Baca

Emily Brontë

Alberto Rios

G K M F K Z K E V I N Y O U N G J F K C M D U U H
T A P E I Z T I D V E M I L Y B R O N T E E J X M
H E N R Y W A D S W O R T H L O N G F E L L O W Z
B T O N Y H O A G L A N D B I L L Y C O L L I N S
F R A N C E S E L L E N W A T K I N S H A R P E R
F N R J N Z N D P F Y Z L W S C X L K W I X G Z J
B N R N O R R Z V K E D W A L T W H I T M A N G O
E A L B E R T O R I O S S C R T E H P A Q Y H S H
P U L P C Q F Y C K Z J H C A G X P T W U X P U N
A E I F P X C J C Y C K M X Y Z U M H T Q P K N D
R M S U W G E R A R D M A N L E Y H O P K I N S O
E I E L L D Q U E J C A R L S A N D B U R G X W N
M L L N D U D C Q M J E D G A R A L L A N P O E N
A Y M C C U Y A G W E N D O L Y N B R O O K S J E
R D U E F Y D T J I M M Y S A N T I A G O B A C A
G I E O R P A W O E Q V H W O C K T M Z C S L J J
E C L F B D H W R A M J J R M U X K E U N F O U D
P K L C O R N E L I U S E A D Y Z N C I Q I T A E
I I E Z P J F P E S M R F O K N H X O D P P P H J
E N R R W S W I L L I A M W O R D S W O R T H T N
R S D N P A U L L A U R E N C E D U N B A R B Z T
C O A K N A C R N Y J B J Y H M B S L E O W A D S
Y N T G P U C W Y D S I C U U I L L V Q R V K R L

Poems available
for the POL
competition
in 2005:

114

Poems available
for the POL
competition
in 2025:

1,346

The POL video
with the most views
on the NEA
YouTube page:

2014 National
Champ Anita Norman's
recitation of
"Let the Light Enter"

by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Number of
students who
competed
in 2005:

3,000+

Number of
students who
competed
in 2025:

157,000+

The poet with
the greatest number
of poems read at the
National Finals
since 2005:

Billy Collins
(with six different poems)

Number of
schools that
competed
in 2005:

25

Number of
schools that
competed
in 2025:

1,550

Total prize
money and school
stipends awarded
since 2005:

\$2.06m+

20!
YEARS
LOUD



“When I first came into this competition I [thought] ‘Oh, it’s just a fun slam-type competition.’ Then as it progressed and we went to nationals, meeting that community of people who believe in the power of voice and the power of poetry as a tool to spark discourse over important topics really inspired me to carry literature with me through whatever I do and pursue it in the future.”

2023 Poetry Out Loud National Champion
Sreepadaarchana Munjuluri, Indiana

“Poetry will always stay with me. Most of all, I think that a lot of the public speaking—getting comfortable on a stage—that will really be what I use a lot. And just being able to use poetry as an outlet is always a really beautiful thing.”

2019 Poetry Out Loud National Champion
Isabella Callery (Anishinaabe), Minnesota





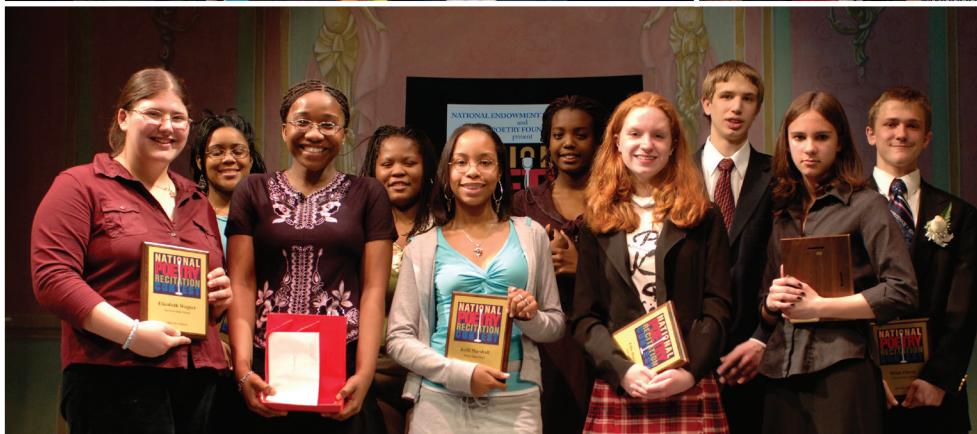
"I think it goes back to the whole confidence thing. It's looking past who you feel is your competition, and figuring out how to just be the best you that you can be. My quote for Poetry Out Loud for the past two years has been, 'Be the best you that you can be, and always be you.' That's either going to get you the win, or it's going to get you to lose. But at the end of the day, you can say you were yourself..."

2016 Poetry Out Loud National Champion
Ahkei Togun, Virginia



"A lot of people classify me as being just an athlete. I didn't really like that because I feel like nobody knew the theatrical side of me and nobody knew anything else [about me.] I was just the volleyball player. Becoming a part of Poetry Out Loud opened my identity and helped me shape myself so that I don't just think, 'I'm only good at sports.' I'm also good at poetry, which is something that I always thought was really hard, that I could never understand."

2018 Poetry Out Loud National Champion
Janae Claxton, South Carolina



"I wasn't really into poetry before [Poetry Out Loud] even though I'm named after an amazing poet. It wasn't something I was reading or even interested in. But through this classroom requirement it really snuck up on me how much I would connect with these poems and how much poetry would be something I could carry with me for the rest of my life."

2013 Poetry Out Loud National Champion
Langston Ward, Washington

PRODUCTION AND GUESTS

Photo provided by Michael Baron



Michael Baron (director) is the producing artistic director of Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma and has directed over 120 productions at theaters across the country. Most recently, Baron co-directed the ASL/Spoken English musical productions of *Cinderella* (Lyric/ZACH/Deaf Austin Theatre), *The Music Man* (Olney Theatre), *Fun Home* (Lyric), and *Fiddler on the Roof* (Lyric). Other directing credits include *The Prom*, *Carousel*, *Titanic*, *Head Over Heels*, *Bright Star*, *Dreamgirls*, *Assassins*, *Oklahoma!*, *Les Miserables*, *Spring Awakening*, *Ragtime*, the new works *King of Pangaea* and *Concerto*, and the current production of *A Christmas Carol* at Ford's Theatre. Baron is a two-time Helen Hayes Award winner with an MFA in directing from Trinity Repertory and a BA in theater from Wake Forest University.

Photo provided by Jamila Woods



Jamila Woods is a poet, musician, and teaching artist born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. In 2016, Woods released the critically acclaimed debut album, *HEAVN*. Woods' second studio album, *LEGACY! LEGACY!* (2019) pays homage to a collection of artists of color who have influenced her lift and work. Woods' third solo album, *Water Made Us*, is an introspective song cycle about love and relationships was released October 13, 2023 via JagJaguwar Records. Woods has been featured on NPR's *Tiny Desk*, CBS *This Morning*, and *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*. Woods has shared stages with Corinne Bailey Rae, Rafael Saadiq, Bonobo, Common, Chance the Rapper, Brittany Howard, Macklemore, and many others. An award-winning poet, Woods' work often blurs boundaries between poem and song. As cultural critic Doreen St. Felix writes in the review of *HEAVN*, "It makes you wish all singers were poets."

DMV Percussion Academy

The DMV Percussion Academy is led by Founder and Executive Director, Don Johns. The DMV Percussion Academy's mission is to expose, engage, and enrich students through all forms of percussive art.



ASL INTERPRETERS
Mia Engle and Steve Phan

POETRY OUT LOUD IS MANAGED AT THE STATE LEVEL BY

Alabama State Council on the Arts
Alaska State Council on the Arts
American Samoa Arts Council
Arizona Commission on the Arts
Arkansas Arts Council
California Arts Council
Colorado Creative Industries
Connecticut Office of the Arts
Delaware Division of the Arts
District of Columbia Commission
on the Arts and Humanities
Florida Division of Cultural Affairs
Georgia Council for the Arts
Guam Council on the Arts
and Humanities
Hawaii State Foundation on
Culture and the Arts
Idaho Commission on the Arts
Illinois Arts Council Agency
Indiana Arts Commission
Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña
Iowa Arts Council

Kansas Creative Arts Industries
Commission
Kentucky Arts Council
Louisiana Division of the Arts
Maine Arts Commission
Maryland State Arts Council
Massachusetts Cultural Council
Michigan Council for Arts and
Cultural Affairs
Minnesota State Arts Board
Mississippi Arts Commission
Missouri Arts Council
Montana Arts Council
Nebraska Arts Council
Nevada Arts Council
New Hampshire State Council
on the Arts
New Jersey State Council
on the Arts
New Mexico Arts
New York State Council on the Arts
North Carolina Arts Council

North Dakota Council on the Arts
Ohio Arts Council
Oklahoma Arts Council
Oregon Arts Commission
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
Rhode Island State Council
on the Arts
South Carolina Arts Commission
South Dakota Arts Council
Tennessee Arts Commission
Texas Commission on the Arts
Utah Division of Arts & Museums
Vermont Arts Council
Virgin Islands Council on the Arts
Virginia Commission for the Arts
Washington State Arts Commission:
Arts WA
West Virginia Department of Arts,
Culture and History
Wisconsin Arts Board
Wyoming Arts Council
and many incredible partners



PRIZES

NATIONAL FINALS

1ST PLACE: \$20,000 award

2ND PLACE: \$10,000 award

3RD PLACE: \$5,000 award

4TH-9TH PLACES: \$1,000 award

The schools or organizations of the top nine finalists will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry materials.

The fourth-place student in each semifinal competition will receive an honorable mention award of \$1,000, with \$500 to their school or organization for the purchase of poetry materials.

STATE FINALS

More than \$50,000 in monetary prizes were awarded at state final competitions.

The Poetry Foundation provides and administers all aspects of the monetary prizes awarded in Poetry Out Loud.

Awards will be made in the form of lump sum cash payouts, reportable to the IRS. Tax liabilities are the sole responsibility of the winners and their families.

POETRY OUT LOUD NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

2024

Niveah Glover
FLORIDA

2023

Sreepadaarchana Munjuluri
INDIANA

2022

Mia Ronn
CALIFORNIA

2021

Rahele Megosha
SOUTH DAKOTA

2020

NO CHAMPION DUE TO THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC

2019

Isabella Callery
MINNESOTA

2018

Janae Claxton
SOUTH CAROLINA

2017

Samara Elán Huggins
GEORGIA

2016

Ahkei Togun
VIRGINIA

2015

Maeva Ordaz
ALASKA

2014

Anita Norman
TENNESSEE

2013

Langston Ward
WASHINGTON

2012

Kristen Dupard
MISSISSIPPI

2011

Youssef Biaz
ALABAMA

2010

Amber Rose Johnson
RHODE ISLAND

2009

William Farley
VIRGINIA

2008

Shawntay Henry
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

2007

Amanda Fernandez
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

2006

Jackson Hille
OHIO

2005

(PILOT YEAR)

Stephanie Oparaugo
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

AND

Devin Kenny
ILLINOIS

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POETRY OUT LOUD



20 YEARS

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ARTS
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**PO
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FOUNDATION