

Delaware Poets Laureate Receive a 2020 Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets

**The Academy of American Poets
awards a combined total of \$1.1
million to 2020 Poets Laureate
Fellows**

New York, NY (May 28, 2020) – The Academy of American Poets announced today that the **Delaware Poets Laureate, Representative Nnamdi Chukwuocha and Al Mills**, also known as the Twin Poets, have received \$50,000 to launch Write Now!, an art-based community building and engagement series, including workshops, readings and service projects, focused on youth in communities impacted by gun violence and fellow veterans diagnosed with PTSD. The series will culminate with the Write Now! Poetry Festival and will take place in April 2021.

The brothers and identical twins are Licensed Master Social Workers and founders of Art For Life – Delaware, a non-profit youth and community development organization rooted in the arts. The Twin Poets were the subjects of award-winning documentaries: *Why I Write* and *Art For Life*; which chronicle their artistic social change efforts. Watch the full documentary [here](#). Al is an Iraq War veteran suffering from PTSD and Nnamdi is a State Representative and professor at Delaware State University.

The Delaware Poets Laureate are two of the 23 individuals that

were announced as [2020 Poets Laureate Fellows](#). These 23 individuals serve as Poets Laureate of states, cities, counties, and the Navajo Nation and will be leading civic poetry programs in their respective communities in the year ahead. They will each receive \$50,000* for a combined total of \$1.1 million. In addition, the Academy will also provide \$66,500 to 12 local 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that have agreed to support the fellows' proposed projects.

“As we face the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more people are turning to poetry for comfort and courage. We are honored and humbled in this moment of great need to fund poets who are talented artists and community organizers, who will most certainly help guide their communities forward,” said Jennifer Benka, President and Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets.

Through its Poets Laureate Fellowship program, the Academy has become the largest financial supporter of poets in the nation. The fellowship program is made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which, in January of this year, awarded the Academy \$4.5 million. The award will fund the program in 2020, 2021, and 2022.

“We are gratified to support the poets laureate fellows as they engage their communities around the unprecedented challenges of our moment, making work that provides meaning, brings beauty, and helps us, in Lucille Clifton’s words, ‘sail through this to that,’” said Elizabeth Alexander, poet and President of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The 2020 Poets Laureate Fellows and the communities they serve are **Honey Bell-Bey** (Cuyahoga County, OH), **Tina Cane** (Rhode Island), **Tina Chang** (Brooklyn, NY), **Nnamdi Chukwuocha** and **Al Mills** aka Twin Poets (Delaware), **Rosemarie Dombrowski** (Phoenix, AZ), **Beth Ann Fennelly** (Mississippi), **Angelo Geter** (Rock Hill, SC), **Margaret Gibson** (Connecticut), **Rodney Gomez**

(McAllen, TX), **Elizabeth Jacobson** (Santa Fe, NM), **Stuart Kestenbaum** (Maine), **Susan Landgraf** (Auburn, WA), **Maria Lisella** (Queens, NY), **Porsha Olayiwola** (Boston, MA), **Alexandria Peary** (New Hampshire), **Emmy Pérez** (Texas), **Mary Ruefle** (Vermont), **Janice Lobo Sapigao** (Santa Clara County, CA), **John Warner Smith** (Louisiana), **Laura Tohe** (Navajo Nation), **Amie Whittemore** (Murfreesboro, TN), and **Assétou Xango** (Aurora, CO).

Additional information about the Academy of American Poets 2020 Poets Laureate Fellows and their projects is available on the Academy's [website](#).

About the Delaware Poet Laureate

Delaware's Poet Laureate is an honorary position appointed by, and serving at the pleasure of, the Governor. The Poet Laureate serves as an advocate, educator, and presenter of poetry throughout the state. Delaware's Poet Laureate program is managed by the Delaware Division of the Arts. The Division promotes the Poet Laureate's events and activities and manages the calendar of appearances and provides a stipend to the Poet Laureate for appearances at nonprofit organizations. More information about the program is available at: <https://arts.delaware.gov/poet-laureate/>. Banner photo: Cylynda McCloud-Keal *The Delaware Poets Laureate will receive \$50,000 in total.

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The [Delaware Division of the Arts](#), a branch of the Delaware Department of State, is dedicated to cultivating and supporting the arts to enhance the quality of life for all Delawareans. Together with its advisory body, the Delaware State Arts Council, the Division administers grants and

programs that support arts programming, educate the public, increase awareness of the arts, and integrate the arts into all facets of Delaware life. For more information about the Delaware Division of the Arts, visit arts.delaware.gov or call 302-577-8278.