

Akila Richards



Akila Richards (b.1961) is an award winning writer, poet and spoken word artist. She facilitates and collaborates cultural and artistic programmes, events and runs workshops and leads on initiatives. Her performances and readings take place in inter/national artistic, cultural, educational and community settings including Mboka Arts, Culture and Sport Festival in Gambia and the UK, as well as in Liberia, Berlin, Saint Lucia, London and Brighton. Akila also collaborates with a range of artistic genres. Some of her commissions include a multi-lingual soundscape for Dulwich Picture Gallery, displays of Journeys and exhibiting printed poems on textile and clothes for Constructed Geographies in a regional tour.

She was awarded a writer's residency at Creative Future supporting writers with mental health issues and was a mentor and co-ordinator for the Publishing and Mentoring Programme, LitUp for Waterloo Press, supporting emerging poets. Her recent commission was Writer-Co-curator for TENEBRAE – Lessons Learnt in Darkness for Brighton Festival 2021. Akila was awarded a place in the Artist in House 2021/22 initiative at Brighton Dome.

Penguin published Akila's first short story, 'Eleven Years' in the *The Map of Me* anthology for True Tales of Mixed-Heritage Experience. Her poems and short fiction have also featured in Peepal Tree Press anthologies, Red Saviour in *RED*, Secret Chamber (also adapted for a theatre play) in *Closure*, The Givers and Al zhei mer in *Filigree*. Her short story, Newlings was selected for *Glimpse*, their speculative fiction anthology. *Ink On My Lips* anthology published a selection of her prose and poems in Waterloo Press. Her chapbook of poems will be published by Flipped Eye. She is also completing a novel manuscript.

Akila is an accredited coach and currently supports creative practitioners and emerging poets and writers. She works to commission as well as initiates events and programmes. Website: <http://akilarichards.com/>

Alan King



Alan King (b.1981) is an author, poet, videographer, and motion graphics artist, who lives with his family in Bowie, MD. King is the author of *Point Blank* (Silver Birch Press, 2016) and *DRIFT* (Aquarius Press, 2012). His latest collection is, *Crooked Smiling Light*. He's a graduate of the Stonecoast MFA Low-Residency Program at the University of Southern Maine. His poems and short stories appear in various literary journals, magazines and are featured on public radio. <https://alanwking.com>

Alexander D. Great



Alexander D. Great (b. 1948) was born in Port of Spain, Trinidad. He grew up in London from the age of five. On leaving school he became a professional musician/songwriter. He spent a year in the USA playing and arranging with a 50 piece band. He has a BA in Music from Dartington and a PGCE from London University. He has taught music at all levels, lecturing on Calypso at the universities of Huddersfield, Leeds, Nottingham, Queen's University – Belfast, Morley College and Goldsmiths College, University of London.

After three decades playing and writing in a variety of styles, Alex returned to his calypso roots in the late 1980s. TV and Radio appearances include the UK, Europe, USA, Trinidad, Dominica and Canada. Since February 2000, he has been Calypsonian-in-Residence for the BBC, for whom he has composed more than 500 topical calypsos. He is also Calypsonian-in-Residence for the Windrush Foundation and the Equiano Society. He was UK Calypso Monarch in 2010 and 2011. Alex runs his own record label, on which he has released 16 CD albums/EPs of his songs. He runs calypso and poetry workshops in schools, colleges and a variety of social learning platforms. Publications include poems in *Hello New* (pub. 2000, Orchard Books), *Velocity* (pub. 2003, Black Spring Press), a chapter on Calypso for the Arts 1961 Council's Carnival book *On Route* (pub. 2003, X-Press) and a chapter in *Creative Learning, 3-11 and How We Document It* (with Celia Burgess-Macey, pub. 2008, Trentham Books). Ethnomusicologist Professor Tina K. Ramnarine has done a fairly substantial assessment of Alexander's work in her study of the Caribbean diaspora *Beautiful Cosmos* (pub. 2007, Pluto Press).

Ama Ata Aidoo



Ama Ata Aidoo, (b.1942) is a Ghanaian writer of poetry, novels and plays who was born into a Royal Fante family.

She attended the University of Ghana, Legon where she received a BA in English and wrote her first play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964) which was published by Longman (1965), making her the first published African woman dramatist in English. Her first poetry collection, *Someone Talking to Sometime* (1986) received the Nelson Mandela Prize (1987). Her debut novel, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1967), also included poetry. Two following collections were, *Birds and Other Poems* (1987) and *An Angry Letter in January* (1992). She has published other plays and fiction for adults and children. Ama Ata Aidoo is an esteemed academic who has worked for several years in universities in Africa, Europe and the USA, yet she always returns home to Ghana. She was the Minister of Education for the Rawlings government in 1982 but she resigned in 1983 over ideological differences.

Ama Ata Aidoo has received several awards and fellowships including, a fellowship for Creative Writing at Stanford University, USA, a Fulbright Scholarship (1988) and the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Africa for her novel, *Changes* (1992). She has been honoured by the African Studies Association with her name attached to The Aidoo-Snyder book prize, awarded by the Women's Caucus. The African University College of Communications in Accra (AUCC) named their Creative Writing Centre, the Aidoo Centre after her in 2017, the first centre of its kind in West Africa.

In 1991 she co-founded the Organization for Women Writers Africa with African American poet, Jayne Cortez. In 2000 she founded the [Mbaasem Foundation](#), "to support the development and sustainability of African women writers and their artistic output", which she runs with her daughter Kinna Likimani. She is the subject of a 2014 documentary film, *The Art of Ama Ata Aidoo* made by Yaba Badoe.

Ama Ata Aidoo is known for her staunch beliefs on feminism and the African identity. She is an esteemed spokesperson on the role and status of African women, for instance on BBC'S HARDtalk (2014) and speaks out against neo-colonialism and Africans who are seduced by the material wealth of the west.

Benjamin Zephaniah



Benjamin Obadiah Iqbal Zephaniah (b.1958) was born in Handsworth, Birmingham, and is a poet, novelist, playwright, musician, and actor, appearing in the long-running period crime drama television series, *Peaky Blinders*. In 2009, he was voted Britain's third favourite poet of all time and he has been described as 'the people's laureate'. Although he left school at the age of 13 unable to read or write, Zephaniah has since gone on to write several books of poetry, and fiction, for adults, young adults and children and in 1998, he sat on the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education.

He has been awarded several honorary degrees and is a Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University. Zephaniah's concept and the poetry courses that he teaches are based on the oral tradition, from dub poetry to the broader 'category' of performance poetry that had for several years been dismissed by the traditional poetry scheme. His aims and objects have to change the view of a 'dead' image of poetry in academia. Zephaniah's work is well known for its political edge, much of which reflects on the struggles of Black Britain. Other issues that he supports and which he draws on in his work are issues such as social change, the environment and animal rights, having been a vegan for much of his life.

His books range from *The Dread Affair: Collected Poems* (1985) and *Propa Propaganda* (1996), which contain poems attacking police brutality and the British legal system, to the children's poetry of *Talking Turkeys* (1994) and *Funky Chickens* (1996). Zephaniah continues to tour with his band when he is not teaching and writing books. *Life and Rhymes*, his programme broadcast on SKY Arts which celebrates the spoken word was awarded a BAFTA in 2021. His latest novel *Windrush Child* was published in November 2020. *The Life and Rhymes of Benjamin Zephaniah: The Autobiography* (2018) was shortlisted in the biography category of the Costa Book Awards in 2020. <https://benjaminzephaniah.com>

Bernardine Evaristo



Bernardine Evaristo (b.1959) won the Booker Prize 2019 with her eighth book, *Girl, Woman, Other*, the first Black woman and Black British person to win it. It was a Number 1 *Sunday Times* bestseller for five weeks, the first woman of colour to achieve this position in the paperback fiction chart, spending 44 weeks in the Top 10. There are now over 50 translations of Bernardine's books either published or in progress, and it has been a bestseller in several countries.

The author of essays, poetry, literary criticism and drama, her other novels include *Mr Loverman*, *Blonde Roots*, *Lara* and *The Emperor's Babe*. Her memoir, her first non-fiction book is *Manifesto: On Never Giving Up* (October 2021).

She has initiated several arts' inclusion projects from Theatre of Black Women (1982-88), Britain's first such company to The Complete Works Poetry Mentoring scheme, which mentored 30 poets between 2007-2017, most of whom are now Britain's leading poets who consistently win top awards; and latterly the Brunel International African Poetry Prize (2012-ongoing). She is currently the curator of *Black Britain: Writing Back* for Penguin, re-publishing books from the past. Six were published in February and another six will be published in 2022.

Bernardine was the subject of *The Southbank Show* (Sky Arts, with Melvyn Bragg) in 2019 and *Imagine* (BBC 1, with Alan Yentob) in 2021.

Bernardine's many honours include the recent awards: British Book Awards Fiction Book of the Year & Author of the Year, Indie Book Award for Fiction, the *Vanity Fair* Challenger Award and *Glamour* Gamechanging Author Award and an OBE. She is Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University London, an Honorary Fellow of St. Anne's College, University of Oxford, an International Honorary Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, a Vice President of the Royal Society of Literature, and President of Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance.

<https://bevaristo.com>

Camille T. Dungy



Camille T. Dungy (b. 1972) is the author of the essay collection *Guidebook to Relative Strangers: Journeys into Race, Motherhood, and History* (W. W. Norton, 2017), a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and four collections of poetry, most recently *Trophic Cascade* (Wesleyan UP, 2017), winner of the Colorado Book Award. The other books are *Smith Blue* (SIU Press, 2011); *Suck on the Marrow* (Red Hen Press, 2010) and *What to Eat, What to Drink, What to Leave for Poison* (Red Hen Press, 2006). She edited *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (UGA, 2009), the first anthology to bring African American poetry about the natural world to national attention. It remains a standard-bearer today. Dungy also co-edited the *From the Fishhouse* poetry anthology (Persea, 2009), featuring poems from the ground-breaking online archive of emerging poets she co-founded in 2005, and she served as assistant editor on *Gathering Ground: Celebrating Cave Canem's First Decade* (University of Michigan Press, 2006), the first national publication to feature the work of Cave Canem's fellows and faculty.

She is currently the poetry editor for *Orion* magazine, one of America's oldest and most honored publications. Dungy's work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *100 Best African American Poems*, *Best American Essays*, *Best American Travel Essays*, *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song*, *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*, the *Pushcart Anthology*, and more than 30 other anthologies plus dozens of print and online venues including *Poetry*, *American Poetry Review*, *VQR*, *Literary Hub*, *The Paris Review*, and *Poets.org*. Her honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, an American Book Award, two Northern California Book Awards, two NAACP Image Award Nominations, two Hurston/Wright Legacy Award nominations, and fellowships from the NEA in both prose and poetry. Dungy is a University Distinguished Professor in the English Department at Colorado State University. www.camilledungy.com

Celia A. Sorhaindo



Celia A. Sorhaindo (b. 1968) was born in The Commonwealth of Dominica. She migrated with her family to England in 1976, when she was 8 years old, returning home in 2005. In England she was a Computer Programmer for many years and in Dominica she worked as a freelance photographer, writer, artisan, magazine project manager and the Dominica Link for a US based non-profit organisation helping to raise child literacy levels in the Eastern Caribbean. She was also an organising committee member of the Nature Island Literary Festival.

Her poems have been published in The Caribbean Writer, Moko Magazine, Susumba Book Bag, Interviewing The Caribbean journal, BIM, PREE, Rattle Magazine, Anomaly journal, New Daughters of Africa Anthology, and longlisted for the UK National Poetry Competition. She is co-compiler of *Home Again: Stories of Migration and Return*, published by Papillote Press and her first poetry chapbook collection, *Guabancex*, longlisted for the 2021 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature, was published in February 2020, also by Papillote Press. Celia is a Cropper Foundation Creative Writers Workshop fellow and a Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop fellow.
<http://www.celiasorhaindo.com>

Dorothea Smartt



Dorothea Smartt FRSL (b.1963) is a literary activist, poet and live artist. Since the 1980's, as a member of Brixton Black Women's Group, she's contributed to Blackfeminist activism and was among the original staff of London's Black Lesbian & Gay Centre Project. With two full poetry collections [Peepal Tree Press], her more recent chapbook *Reader, I Married Him & Other Queer Goings-On*, "is subversive... ultimately...about Black diasporic love." Her collection *Ship Shape* is an 'A' Level English Literature text. She's co-Director of INSCRIBE, a national Black & Asian writer development programme and visiting lecturer at the Royal College of Art. Her commissioned poems about London's 'lost rivers' will feature on nineteen ventilation columns of the new Thames Tideway Tunnel. She's currently pursuing a practice-led PhD at The UWI, Cave Hill, Barbados.

<https://dorotheasmartt.wordpress.com>

E. Ethelbert Miller



E. Ethelbert Miller (b.1950) is a writer and literary activist. He is the author of two memoirs and several books of poetry including, *The Collected Poems of E. Ethelbert Miller*, a comprehensive collection that represents over 40 years of his work. For 17 years Miller served as the editor of *Poet Lore*, the oldest poetry magazine published in the United States. His poetry has been translated into nearly a dozen languages. Miller is a two-time Fulbright Senior Specialist Program Fellow to Israel. He holds an honorary degree of Doctor of Literature from Emory and Henry College and has taught at several universities.

Miller is host of the weekly WPFW morning radio show *On the Margin with E. Ethelbert Miller* and host and producer of *The Scholars* on UDC-TV which received a 2020 Telly Award. In recent years, Miller has been inducted into the 2015 Washington DC Hall of Fame and awarded the 2016 AWP George Garrett Award for Outstanding Community Service in Literature and the 2016 DC Mayor's Arts Award for Distinguished Honor. In 2018, he was inducted into Gamma Xi Phi and appointed as an ambassador for the Authors Guild. Most recently, Miller was given a grant from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities and a congressional award from Congressman Jamie Raskin in recognition of his literary activism. Miller serves as a board member for the DC Collaborative for Humanities and Education, The Inner Loop, and Folger Shakespeare Poetry. His latest book *If God Invented Baseball*, published by City Point Press, was awarded the 2019 Literary Award for poetry by the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. Miller has two forthcoming books: *When Your Wife Has Tommy John Surgery and Other Baseball Stories* and *the little book of e*.

Ewuare X. Osayande



Ewuare X. Osayande (b. 1970) is a US-based poet, publisher, essayist, activist and author of several books including *Blood Luxury*, *Whose America?* and *Black Phoenix Uprising*. He has taught Africana Studies at Rutgers University in New Jersey. In 2014, Osayande edited and published *Stand Our Ground: Poems for Trayvon Martin & Marissa Alexander* that raised thousands of dollars for both justice campaigns. Poet icon Amiri Baraka has stated that "Ewuare X. Osayande is one of the United States' most important poets." Learn more about his work at Osayande.org.

Farouk Sesay



Oumar Farouk Sesay (b.1960) was resident playwright of Bai Bureh Theatre in the '80s. Several of his plays were performed in the then City Hall and he won accolades among his peers. He veered into journalism and wrote for several local and international newspapers. He has been published in many anthologies of Sierra Leonean poets; *Lice in the Lion's Mane*, *Songs That Pour the Heart*, *Kalashnikov in the Sun*, and *AFRIKA IM GEDICHT*. He has also written short stories; *The Price*, published by Sierra Leone Writers Series and *CLOSURE* published by Sierra Arts publishers. His first volume of poems, *Salute to the Remains of a Peasant* was published in 2007 in America, followed by four more collections of poems; *The Edge of a Cry*, *Broken Metaphor*, *Before the Twisted Rib* and *400 Years Of Servitude*. Some of his poems have been translated into Spanish and German.

Farouk's novel, *Landscape of Memories* was first published in 2015 and republished in 2018 by Sierra Leone Writer's Series. He was a Cadbury Visiting Fellow in 2009 at the Centre for West African Studies in the University of Birmingham and a Visiting Fellow in 2015 at The Baptist University, Hong Kong. His poem, *Song of the Women of my Land*, is on the Literature in English syllabus for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination. He is currently the President of PEN Sierra Leone Chapter. <https://farouksesay.com/about-farouk-sesay/>

FEMRITE



FEMRITE, (b. 1995) Uganda Women Writers' Association was founded by Hon. Mary Karoro Okurut in 1995 and it was officially launched on 3rd May 1996. FEMRITE is an indigenous Non-Governmental Organisation that promotes women writing in Uganda. Since its inception, FEMRITE has nurtured award winning actors and poets. While West Africa boasts of a rich literary tradition, there has been a general absence of women writers and this has resulted in an omission of women's experiences from the literary and cultural heritage that shape society. In Uganda for example, before FEMRITE came into being, the literary landscape was dominated by male writers.

FEMRITE is a non-profit making organization which was one of the earliest initiatives established in Uganda to address issues of literature development in Uganda. The organisation was started by women, with the aim of creating an enabling environment for women to write because at the time, there were hardly any women who were writing and getting published. However, being one of the major literary organisations, FEMRITE has grown to serve the needs of men writers as well, due to the immense needs of the sector. Other initiatives have since come up, and whereas there have been a lot of achievements, many gaps still remain which FEMRITE continues to broadly address. FEMRITE'S main strategy in bringing together women writers from across the continent is to create a sense of belonging within an African Women writer's group - a sense of belonging that will inspire women to write and to support one another.

Our Vision: A community of empowered women writers

Our Mission: Building a platform for women to contribute to national development through creative writing

Strategic Goal: To create an enabling atmosphere for women to write, tell and publish their stories

Our Values: Sisterhood, Commitment to writing, Love of books, Voluntarism, Integrity, Professionalism.

One of FEMRITE's founding members is Susan Kiguli who is a leading poet in Uganda, with two poetry collections and currently teaches at Makerere University in Uganda. The FEMRITE room shows a poem from the director, Hilda Twongyeirwe
<https://www.femriteug.org>

Fred D'Aguiar



Fred D'Aguiar (b. 1960) was born in London but grew up in Guyana, returning to England in 1972 when he was 12 years old. He is a poet, playwright, novelist and essayist who graduated from the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1985 where he majored in English with African and Caribbean Studies. His first book of poetry, *Mama Dot* (1985) recalls his time in Guyana, with the Mama Dot of the title being a combination of his two grandmothers. It won the Malcolm X Poetry Prize and his following collection, *Airy Hall* (1989) won the Guyana Prize for Poetry. Other poetry books include, *British Subjects* (1993), *Bill of Rights*, (1998) and *Continental Shelf* (2009). He was a Judith E. Wilson Fellow at Cambridge University (1989-90), and Northern Arts Literary Fellow at the Newcastle & Durham Universities (1990-92). Other awards have included the Whitbread First Novel Award and the David Higham Prize for *The Longest Memory* (1994) and made into a film in 1997. Most recent publications include, *Letters to America* (a Poetry Book Society Winter Choice, 2020) and a nonfiction book, *Year of Plagues* (Harper, US; Carcanet, UK, 2020). Currently, he is Professor of English at UCLA.

Gemma Weekes



Gemma Weekes (b.1978), touted in *The Independent* as 'a name to watch', is the critically acclaimed author of *Love Me* (Chatto & Windus), multidisciplinary artist, singer, musicmaker, and poet who has performed nationally and internationally. Her work has appeared in several anthologies and literary journals including *IC3: The Penguin Book of New Black Writing in Britain* (Penguin) and *Kin* (Serpent's Tail), *Mechanic's Institute Review 14*, and *Filigree* (Peepal Tree Press). She was recently shortlisted for the Bridport Flash Fiction Prize. She has written for theatre, TV, and radio and has musically scored various dance projects and short films.

<http://gemmawEEKES.com>

Geoffrey Philp



Geoffrey Philp (b.1958) is the author of five books of poetry, two novels, two collections of short stories, and three children's books. His poems and short stories have been published in *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Verse*, *sx salon*, *World Literature Today*, *The Johannesburg Review of Books*, *The Oxford Book of Caribbean Short Stories*, *Bearden's Odyssey Poets Respond to the Art of Romare Bearden*, *Rattle: Poets Respond*, and *Crab Orchard Review*. A recipient of the Luminary Award from the Consulate of Jamaica (2015) and a former chair for the 2019 OCM Bocas Prize for Poetry, Philp's work is featured on The Poetry Rail at The Betsy--an homage to 12 writers that shaped Miami culture. He is currently working on a graphic novel for children, *My Name is Marcus*.
<https://geoffreyphilp.blogspot.com>

Grace Nichols



Grace Nichols (b. 1950) was educated in Guyana but has been living in Britain since 1977. She has written widely for both adults and children. Her celebrated first collection; *I is a long-remembered Woman* (Karnak House) which won the 1983 Commonwealth Poetry Prize traces the journey of a young African girl uprooted into plantation slavery in the Caribbean. Other poetry books include, *The Fat Black Woman's Poems*, *Sunris* (awarded the Guyana Poetry Prize), *Startling The Flying Fish*, all published by Virago who also published her novel, set in Guyana, *Whole Of A Morning Sky*. Among her later adult books published by Bloodaxe are, *Picasso, I want my face Back*, which was inspired by a year's residency at the Tate Gallery, London, *I have crossed an Ocean*, *The Insomnia Poems* and her most recent, *Passport to Here and There* (Bloodaxe 2020).

Grace has also written a number of books for children including two collections of short stories; *Trust You Wiggly and Leslyn In London* and poetry collections such as, *Come On Into My Tropical Garden* (A&C Black), *The Poet Cat* (Bloomsbury), *Everybody Got A Gift* (A&C Black), *Paint Me A Poem* which was awarded the Children's Poetry Bookshelf Best Children's Author Collection and *Cosmic Disco* published by Frances Lincoln. As editor she compiled the anthologies: *Poetry Jump Up* and *Can I Buy A Slice of Sky* (Puffin Books) and has also co-edited collections with her husband, the poet, John Agard. These include, *A Caribbean Dozen* (Walker Books) and *Under The Moon and Over The Sea* (Walker Books) which won a CLPE Award.

Grace Nichols was poet-in-residence at The University of The West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados and received a Cholmondeley Award for her work in 2001. She is a Fellow and one of the Vice-Presidents of the Royal Society of Literature. She is among the poets studied on the current GCSE syllabus.

Inua Ellams



Inua Ellams (b. 1984), was born in Nigeria. He is a poet, playwright & performer, graphic artist & designer. He is a Complete Works poet alumni and facilitates workshops in creative writing where he explores recurring themes in his work - Identity, Displacement and Destiny - in accessible, enjoyable ways for participants of all ages and backgrounds.

His awards include: Edinburgh Fringe First Award 2009, The Liberty Human Rights Award, The Live Canon International Poetry Prize, The Kent & Sussex Poetry Competition, Magma Poetry Competition, Winchester Poetry Prize, A Black British Theatre Award and The Hay Festival Medal for Poetry.

He has been commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company, National Theatre, Tate Modern, Louis Vuitton, BBC Radio & Television. His poetry books include *Candy Coated Unicorn* and *Converse All Stars* published by Flipped Eye, *The Wire-Headed Heathen* by Akashic Books, *The Half God of Rainfall* by 4th Estate and *The Actual* by Penned in The Margins. His plays include *Black T-Shirt Collection*, *The 14th Tale*, *Barber Shop Chronicles*, and *Three Sisters* published by Oberon. He founded The Midnight Run (an arts-filled, night-time, urban walking experience.) The Rhythm and Poetry Party (The R.A.P Party) which celebrates poetry & hip hop, and Poetry + Film / Hack (P+F/H) which celebrates Poetry & Film.
<http://www.inuaellams.com>

Ioney Smallhorne



Ioney Smallhorne (b. 1983) is a writer, poet and educator, born and bred in Nottingham. Ioney earned an MA in Creative Writing/Education, Goldsmiths University, 2019. A Spoken Word Educator working across the East Midlands, she has been longlisted for the Jerwood Fellowship 2017 and shortlisted by Caribbean Small Axe prize 2016. She is a recipient of a year-long writing commission by Derbyshire Council 2020 and Writer in Residence for the Erewash Festival of Light 2020. Her writing has been published in the Inscribe/Peepal Tree Press *Filigree* anthology (2018) and the Nottingham Black Archive's anthology *When We Speak*, 2019. Her academic writing was published in the *Leeds Beckett, Story Makers' Dialogues*, 2019. Her poem, Yamaye, Land of Wood and Water, is included in the Crossed-lines Dial-a-Poem App via Google Play or Apple's App Store. She has performed her poems across the country, a highlight being the London 2012 Para Olympics.

<https://ioneysmallhorne.wordpress.com>

Isatou Alwar Cham Graham



Isatou Alwar Cham Graham (b.1958) has been published in *Women Writing Africa, West and the Sahel* and *Collected Poems* by Alexandra Street Press (2009).

She rose to prominence in 2000 as Principal Investigator at The Office of the Ombudsman, 2004 promoted to the position as Director of the Human Rights Unit, Office of the Ombudsman later redeployed in 2009 to the Attorney General's Chambers & Ministry of Justice as Senior State Counsel, Ag. Registrar of Companies, Curator of Intestate Estates for the Gambia. Promoted again in 2014 as Ag. Deputy Solicitor General and Deputy Solicitor General & Curator of Intestate Estates 2015 Head of Gambian Delegation to the CSW Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland. I had also served on several occasions as Head of the Gambia Delegation to the African Commission on People & Human Rights. Prepared speeches and delivered keynote addresses for the Attorney General & Minister of Justice. Both locally and at International Seminars, Workshops and Conferences. November 2019: Chairperson Specialized Technical Committee of Legal Experts Meeting, African Union, Addis Ababa AWARDS: Chevening Fellow 2010. I received the 100 Most Reputable African (African Achievers Award) in 2020.

Jack Mapanje



Jack Mapanje (b. 1944) is a poet, linguist, editor and human rights activist. He received the 1988 Rotterdam Poetry International Award for his first book of poems, *Of Chameleons and Gods* (1981) and the African Literature Association's Fonlon-Nichols Award for his contribution to poetry and human rights. He was head of the Department of English at the University of Malawi where the Malawi authorities arrested him in 1987 after his first book of poems had been banned, and he was released in 1991 after spending three years, seven months and sixteen days in prison, following an international outcry against his incarceration.

He has since published five poetry books, *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison* (1993) from Heinemann, and *Skipping Without Ropes* (1998), *The Last of the Sweet Bananas: New & Selected Poems* (2004), *Beasts of Nalunga* (2007) and *Greetings from Grandpa* (2016) from Bloodaxe, as well as his prison memoir *And Crocodiles Are Hungry at Night* (Ayebia Clarke Publishing, 2011). He has co-edited three anthologies, *Oral Poetry from Africa* (1983), *Summer Fires: New Poetry of Africa* (1983) and *The African Writers' Handbook* (1999); and edited the acclaimed *Gathering Seaweed: African Prison Writing* (2002). *Beasts of Nalunga* was shortlisted for the Forward Prize for Best Collection in 2007. Mapanje has held residences in The Netherlands, the Republic of Ireland and throughout Britain, including two years with the Wordsworth Trust at Dove Cottage in Cumbria. He lives in York with his family, and is a visiting professor in the Faculty of Arts at York St John University. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Bedfordshire in 2015.

Jacqueline Bishop



Jacqueline Bishop (b.1971) is an award-winning writer and visual artist born and raised in Jamaica, who now lives between London and New York City. *The Gift of Music and Song: Interviews with Jamaican Women Writers* is her latest publication. She has twice been awarded Fulbright Fellowships, including a year-long grant to Morocco; her work exhibits widely in North America, Europe and North Africa. Bishop's books include a novel, *The River's Song* (2007), two collections of poems, *Fauna* (2006) and *Snapshots from Istanbul* (2009), a 2007 art book entitled *Writers Who Paint, Painters Who Write: 3 Three Jamaican Artists*, and *The Gymnast and Other Positions* (2015), a collection of short stories, essays and interviews. *The Gymnast and Other Positions* won the nonfiction category of the 2016 OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature. <https://jacquelineabishop.com>

Joshua Idehen



Joshua Idehen (b. 1980) is a Nigerian/British poet, creative writing facilitator, and musician. He started writing poetry in 2005 and published his first poem in *Red: Contemporary Black British Poetry* (2010) edited by Kwame Dawes for Peepal Tree Press. Since then, he has continued to publish his poetry widely, with his poem '#blacksays' shortlisted for the 2020 Queen Mary New Writing Prize in the Poetry category. Idehen organized and hosted Poejazzi from 2006 for 8 years and continually sold out. He released the UK's first spoken word app, 'Poejazzi' in 2014 on IOS/Google, celebrating UK Spoken word.

He produced the critically acclaimed and sold-out HOWL 2.0 show. As a musician, he has performed widely across Europe. He started a dance-pop band, Benin City in 2008, selling out his performance at the Udderbelly, Southbank in 2009. He produced a live re-interpretation of Allen Ginsberg's 'Howl' for the Last Word Festival and London Jazz Festival. He has collaborated with Mercury-nominated artists, The Comet Is Coming on their debut album, Channel The Spirits. He has also featured extensively and appeared with the MOBO award-winning jazz group Sons of Kemet. The album *Last Night* was released in 2018 with Benin City, (Moshi Moshi Music). He has gained accolades from *Qmag*, *Artsdesk*, *Fact*, *Mojo*, *Clash*, *Mixmag*, *DJ*, and *DIY*. As a creative writing facilitator, he has taught at Roehampton University among other schools and was a poet in residence for Wimbledon Festival and the Free Word Centre.

Kadija Sesay



Kadija George, Hon FRSL, FRSA, aka Kadija Sesay (b.1962) is a literary activist of Sierra Leonean descent. In the mid-1990s, she worked for the Centerprise Literature Development Project as the Black Literature Development Co-ordinator and established the newspaper, *Calabash*. In 2001 she founded *SABLE LitMag*. Kadija has edited several groundbreaking anthologies, including *Burning Words, Flaming Images*; *IC3: the Penguin Book of New Black Writing in Britain*, co-edited with Courttia Newland, *Write Black, Write British*, and *Dreams, Miracles and Jazz: New Adventures in African Fiction*. She is also the Publications Manager for Inscribe, a writer development programme housed by Peepal Tree Press. In Spring 2013, Peepal Tree Press published her debut poetry collection, *Irki*, shortlisted for the Glenna Luschei Prize. In 2021 she co-authored *This is the Canon: Decolonize Your Bookshelf in 50 Books* with Professor Joan Anim-Addo and Dr. Deirdre Osborne. She has mentored several writers and judged several writing competitions including: SAGA (new Black British novelists); John La Rose Short Story competition; Kwani Prize 2013 (Kenya), Chair for the Wasafiri Prize (2020) and is a resident judge for the SI Leeds Literary Prize. She is the recipient of numerous awards for her work and activism, Kadija was awarded the Leeds Black Award – Arts Category – 2013. Other awards include Cosmopolitan Magazine, Woman of Achievement (Creative Arts – 1994); Candace Magazine, Woman of Achievement (Work in the Community) 1996 ; The Voice Newspaper, Community Award for Literature (1999); Woman of the Millennium 2000; Kennedy Fellow in Performance Arts Management 2001-2002 (JFK Center for Performing Arts, Washington D.C.); STARS of Sierra Leone Award (for outstanding women of achievement), 2006; Kluge Fellow (2019). She was awarded an AHRC/TECHNE doctoral candidate at Brighton University to research Black British Publishers and Pan-Africanism.

She received a research and development G4A grant from the Arts Council for her forthcoming collection, *The Modern PanAfricanist's Journey* for which she produced an app, *The Modern Pan-Africanist's Journey* in 2016. In 2020 Sesay received a Society of Authors Award to work towards this collection. In 2021, she developed the app further into the AfriPoeTree SIV, with funding from Arts Council England.

<https://www.sablelitmag.org/kadijasesay/>

Keisha Thompson



Keisha Thompson (b. 1989) is a Manchester based writer, performance artist and producer. Keisha is Senior Manager of Children, Young People and Learning at Arts Council England, chair of radical arts funding body, Future's Venture Foundation, a MOBO x London Theatre Consortium Fellow and a member of Greater Manchester Cultural and Heritage Group, and recipient of The Arts Foundation Theatre Makers Award 2021.

In August 2020, she released a poetic album, *Ephemera*, in collaboration with Tom "Werkha" Leah and featuring riveting cellist, Abel Selaocoe. In 2020, she finished touring award-winning solo show, *Man on the Moon*. Her debut book, *Lunar*, features her poetry and the show script. Whilst *Moonwhile* is a poetic mini album featuring music from the show. She has supported artists such as Kae Tempest, Hollie McNish, The Last Poets, Saul Williams, Amiri Baraka and has performed in Brave New Voices festivals 2008 & 2009. Her work has been presented at high profile venues and platforms such as Tate Modern, Blue Dot Festival and the British Council Showcase in Edinburgh. <https://keishathompson.com>

Lamin Barrow



Lamin Barrow (b.1998) is a relatively new name on The Netherlands Poetry circuit. After years of performing as a spoken word artist and Fashion Illustrator, he is now exploring new theatrical hybrids in his artistic career.

Lamin's work is inspired by his Gambian background, and he shares his challenging experiences, views, identity, and aspirations through his art. Language has always played an important role throughout his life and work.

As construction of identity, Lamin's current interest embarks on lending voices to the ills of society he is yet to heal from. <https://laminbarrow.nl/blog/>

Mark 'Mr T.' Thompson



Mark 'Mr T.' Thompson (b. 1974). Performer. Educator. Creative. The order of priority certainly changes, but these are the three professional pillars on which his career has been built. A youth worker since 1990, a professional actor and facilitator since '96, a fully qualified Drama teacher since 2004, he has been performing spoken word and using it to facilitate workshops on culture, identity and poetics before he self-published his first collection *Mixed Messages* in 2009. My creative work has seen him tour nationally and feature internationally as far afield as Johannesburg, appearing in venues from the Hackney Empire to the Paralympics, and facilitating workshops with participants from KS1 right through to further education and adult audiences, while also featuring on Radio 4, BBC Radio London and Choice FM. His work as a poet stems from the twin desires of wrestling with the questions, issues and challenges he perceived in the world and the desire to create the material he wanted to perform, which he found were effectively allied by his love of verse. His writing addresses issues around culture, identity and his experience, both observed and personal, of being human. Because he has Jamaican, Scottish and English heritage, has grown up in London and forged a career as a performer, identity, and ethno-geography were very visibly part of his lived experience.

He writes, performs, workshops and speaks; from slams to commissions, published work to passion projects, poetry is a social and artistic journey into truth that he is passionate about. He had already been performing for a number of years as well as squeezing spoken word into the curriculum wherever possible in his educational roles when he quit full time teaching in 2008 and started to make working with poetry a focus. Commissions include work for BBC Radio 4, The Maritime Museum, the homelessness charity Crisis and the African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust for whom he was their first official poet. A new poetry collection is slated for release with Burning Eye in October 2022.

'Philosophers can keep interpreting the world, it's us who need to change it!'

MBOKA FESTIVAL



Mboka Festival of Arts Culture and Sport (b.2017) means 'One Family' in Wolof and to create the Mboka Festival, three organisations, CampAfrica, Global Hands and SABLE Publications who work towards cultural and economic development and empowerment through arts, culture and sport, joined their skills, experience and resources together. The aim was to create a rich festival of possibilities for visitors and Gambian citizens alike, to experience Gambian culture and customs, new ones and those steeped in tradition. Yaram Arts joined us in 2008.

These ideas and efforts have resulted in a 14-day festival that celebrates Gambian cultural heritage alongside African diasporic cultural heritage. The longer-term objectives are to build towards a positive and peaceful and fruitful future that local Gambians can benefit from and visitors can experience. The Mboka Festival was launched in the midst of The Gambia's 'new dawn' in January 2017, and inspired by that, the New Dawn literary event brings Gambian and international artists to the Mboka One Family stage. The literary festival at the core of the Mboka Festival is based on the SABLE Literary Festival that was launched in The Gambia in 2007.

The literary festival includes writers and storytellers of all genres from Africa and from within the African diaspora. Mboka showcases have been held outside The Gambia in London, Brighton and virtually. Writers from Mboka collaborate with each other at other festivals in Africa and virtually.

The Mboka room features Mboka Family who have participated in Mboka Gambia and Mboka Showcases in Brighton and London. They are all poets with other talents including novelist and actor Anni Domingo, novelist and filmmaker Nadia Maddy, radio presenter the 'Eclectic Goddess' I Sis, short story writer Georgina Parke and playwright and reggae specialist Musukando. Other AfriPoeTree poets who are in the Mboka Family are Lamin Barrow, Isatou Alwar Cham Graham, Patrica Foster McKenley, Akila Richards, Dorothea Smartt, Zena Edwards, Nii Ayikwei Parkes and Natalie Molebatsi. <https://www.mbokafestival.org>

Mildred K Barya



Mildred K Barya (b. 1976) is a writer from Uganda and Assistant Professor at UNC-Asheville, where she teaches creative writing and world literature. Her publications include three poetry books: *Give Me Room to Move My Feet*, *The Price of Memory after the Tsunami*, and *Men Love Chocolates But They Don't Say*, as well as fiction, creative nonfiction, and poems or hybrids forthcoming or published in *African American Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Ruminate Magazine*, *Tin House*, *Obsidian*, *poets.org*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Asymptote Journal*, *Matters of Feminist Practice Anthology*, *Prairie Schooner*, *New Daughters of Africa International Anthology*, *Per Contra*, and *Northeast Review*.

She's at work on a collection of nonfiction, and one of the essays, *Being Here in This Body*, won the 2020 Linda Flowers Literary Award, and is published in the *North Carolina Literary Review*, 2021. She received a Ph.D. in English from the University of Denver, MFA in Creative Writing from Syracuse University, and a B.A. in Literature from Makerere University. She is a board member of the African Writers Trust and coordinates the Poetry Reading Events at Malaprop's Independent Bookstore/ Café in Asheville. <http://mildredbarya.com/>

Mmakgosi



Mmakgosi Anita Tau (b.1989) is a writer and filmmaker currently pursuing her MFA in Film at Syracuse University. She is a mental health activist and the creator of Mmakgosi Live, a global campaign that uses poetry, art, film, dance, and theatre to destigmatize mental illness and to inspire connection among artists. Mmakgosi is also the co-founder of Sekei Girls, a mentorship program that promotes literacy development and nurtures creative talents in young scholars. A recipient of the 2019 British Council/Prince Claus Mobility Fund, Mmakgosi is a 2020 Yaddo Artist in Residence and a 2020 Headlands Center for the Arts AIR Fellow. Mmakgosi is also a 2021 Mandela Washington Fellow (Young African Leaders Initiative) with Drexel University.

In 2019 she wrote and directed *Section 82*, a 24 minute short film about gender-based violence and modern-day slavery that garnered a total of 7 awards. Mmakgosi believes that film is an invaluable institution because it performs heuristic and pedagogic functions. Her films are an ongoing protest against human rights violations, social injustices, and a contribution towards dismantling gender ceilings. Mmakgosi has given speeches and performed Spoken Word pieces for programs in Botswana, Zambia, Ghana, Namibia, South Africa, and the USA. She has been published in *Drum Magazine*, *South Africa*, *Kalahari Review*, *Badilisha Poetry*, *Praxis Magazine*, *Brittle Paper*, *The Syndrome Magazine*, the *University of Iowa's Women's Creative Mentorship Anthology*, and the *Association of Writers and Writing Programs* in the United States of America. Her short stories and poems were also published in the Botswana Tourism Organization's *Share Botswana Tourism Fiction Award Anthology* in 2018 and 2019.

Mukoma wa Ngugi



Mukoma Wa Ngugi (b.1971) was born in Evanston, Illinois, and grew up in Kenya before returning to the United States for his undergraduate and graduate education. Mukoma holds a PhD in English from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, an MA in Creative Writing from Boston University and a BA in English and Political Science from Albright College and is now an Associate Professor of English at Cornell University.

He is the author of two books of poetry, *Logotherapy* and *Hurling Words at Consciousness* and the novels *Mrs. Shaw*, *Black Star Nairobi*, *Nairobi Heat*, and *Unbury Our Dead With Song*. His acclaimed non-fiction title is *The Rise of the African Novel: Politics of Language, Identity and Ownership*. Some of his works have been translated into German, Turkish and French. In 2009, he was shortlisted for the Caine Prize for African Writing and in 2010 for the Penguin Prize for African Writing for his novel manuscript, *The First and Second Books of Transition* (which became *Mrs. Shaw*). The German translation of *Nairobi Heat* was named the 2014 Crime Book of the Season by Buchkultur. He wrote an eight-part radio play, *Drugs to Kill, Drug to Cure* for Deutsche Welle that was translated into Portuguese, Lingala, Kiswahili, Hausa and French. His poems have been published in the *New York Quarterly*, *Mythium*, *Brick Magazine*, *Kwani?* and *Tin House* magazine amongst others. His short stories have been published in *Wasafiri*, *African Writing*, *Kenyon Review* and *St. Petersburg Review*.

In 2013, *New African* magazine named him as one of the 100 most Influential Africans. In 2015 he was a juror for the Writivism Short Story Prize and the Neustadt International Prize for Literature. He co-edited a Special Issue of *New Orleans Review* titled The African Literary Hustle with Prof. Laura Murphy. As a journalist he has written for several journals and newspapers from the *International Herald Tribune* to the *South Africa Labour Bulletin*. He co-founded the Mabati-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature with Dr Lizzy Attree. He is the son of world-renowned African writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. <http://www.mukomawangugi.com>

Nairobi Thompson



Nairobi Thompson, (b. 1963) has been described as a poet of our time. She is an academic editor, and a published performance poet with 5 One Woman shows including 'After Windrush' – thought provoking poetry about growing up in post-Windrush Britain. Her book *Bayonets, Mangoes and Beads: African Diasporic Voices of WWII & WWII* is the first of its kind to capture African/Caribbean contributions to the Great Wars. She is a filmmaker showcasing her poetry about the Black British experience.

<https://www.nairobithompson.co.uk>

Natalia Molebatsi



Natalia Molebatsi (b. 1981) is a Pan-African feminist poet, writer, and performer. She is the editor of *We are: A Poetry Anthology* (Penguin, 2008) and *Wild Imperfections: An Anthology of Womanist Poems* (Penguin Random House and Cassava Republic Press, 2021). Natalia is the author of *Sardo Dance* (Ge'ko, 2009) and *Elephant Woman Song* (Forum, 2017). Her academic writing is included in, among other journals and books, *Scrutiny2*, *Rhodes Journalism Review*, *Agenda Feminist Media*, *Muziki*, *the National Political Science Review* and *Sasinda futhi Siselapha: Black Feminist Approaches to Cultural Studies in South Africa's Twenty-Five Years Since 1994*.

Her poetry and jazz productions include *The Out There Sessions: Poetry and Jazz @ the Orbit*, co-founded with the late Myesha Jenkins; and *PoetryLives* on Unisaradio.ac.za. Her experimental CD projects are *Natalia Molebatsi and the Soul Making* (2015) and *Come as You Are: Poems For Four Strings* (2013), available on iTunes. She is an active participant within the organisations Black Girls Brilliance and Africa For Palestine. Natalia has performed poetry and presented creative writing workshops in over 15 countries on 5 continents. She holds a Master's degree in Communication Science from the University of South Africa and is currently a PhD student in Performance Studies at Northwestern University.
<https://www.nataliamolebatsi.com>

Neema Komba



Neema Komba (b.1987) is a Tanzanian poet and writer currently based in Finland. She is the author of *Mektildis Kapinga: a silent hero*, and *See Through the Complicated*, a poetry collection. Her work titled, 'The Search for Magical Mbuji', appeared in the creative non-fiction anthology, *Safe House: Explorations in Creative Nonfiction*. Her short stories have been featured in *Payback and Other Stories: An anthology for African and African Diaspora Short Stories*, *Adda Stories* and *Index on Censorship*. Her other works have also appeared in *This is Africa* and *Vijana FM*. She is the 2014 winner of the Etisalat Prize for Literature in the Flash Fiction category.

She co-founded La Poetista, a platform for poets and other performing artists to showcase their art and create a positive impact in the community through the arts. Through La Poetista, she coordinated the Woman Scream International Poetry and Arts Festival in Tanzania from 2013 to 2015, a movement to fight violence against women. She is also a steering committee member for the Ebrahim Hussein Poetry Prize and has served as a judge for Project Sawti Poetry Prize (Swahili) and Andika na Soma short story competition (Swahili). She sits on various advisory committees and volunteers as a Swahili translator for Refugee and Migrant Women Initiative (RAMWI) in Tampa. She is a doctoral student in Entrepreneurship, Management and Organization at Hanken School of Economics.
<https://www.neemakomba.com>

Nick Makoha



Nick Makoha (b.1974) is the founder of The Obsidian Foundation. In 2017, Nick's debut collection, *Kingdom of Gravity* was shortlisted for the Felix Dennis Prize for Best First Collection and was one of the *Guardian's* best books of the year. Nick is a Cave Canem Graduate Fellow and The Complete Works alumnus. He won the 2015 Brunel International African Poetry Prize and the 2016 Toi Derricotte & Cornelius Eady Prize for his pamphlet *Resurrection Man*. His poems have appeared in the *Cambridge Review*, *the New York Times*, *Poetry Review*, *Rialto*, *Poetry London*, *TriQuarterly Review*, *Boston Review*, *Callaloo* and *Wasafiri*. He is a Trustee for the Arvon Foundation and the Ministry of Stories, and a member of the Malika's Poetry Kitchen collective. <https://nickmakoha.com>

Nii Ayikwei Parkes



Nii Ayikwei Parkes (b.1974) is a Ghanaian-British writer. A 2007 recipient of Ghana's ACRAG award for poetry, he has won acclaim as a children's author, poet, broadcaster and novelist - most notably the Prix Laure Bataillon for the French translation of his novel *Tail of the Blue Bird*, (Cape, 2009). Twice featured on London's *Poems on the Underground*, Nii Ayikwei's ballast series from his début poetry collection *The Makings of You* (Peepal Tree, 2010) was described by Ali Smith as "an astonishing, powerful remix of history and language and the possibilities of both". His latest book of poetry, *The Geez* is a Poetry Book Society Recommendation, was longlisted for the Rathbones Folio Prize, and shortlisted for the Walcott Prize. <http://www.niiparkes.com>

Niyi Osundare



Niyi Osundare (b. 1947) is a Nigerian poet, dramatist, critic, essayist, and media columnist. He has published 18 books of poetry, two books of selected poems, (with individual poems in over 70 journals and magazines across the world), four plays, a book of essays, and numerous monographs and articles on literature, language, culture, and society. He gained his B.A. (Honours) from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, his M.A. from the University of Leeds, UK, and Ph.D. from York University, Canada. He began teaching at the University of Ibadan in 1974 until 1997 as the Chair of Department of English. He became Professor of English at the University of New Orleans in 1997 and was selected University Research Professor in 2001 and Distinguished Professor of English in 2011.

Niyi Osundare was awarded a Fulbright scholarship in 1990. He has received many prizes and awards since then including, the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Prize, the Cadbury/ANA Prize, the Commonwealth Poetry Prize (which he won on two different occasions, 1989 and 1994), the Noma Award (Africa's most prestigious book award), the Tchicaya U Tam'si Award for African Poetry, and the Fonlon/Nichols Award for 'excellence in literary creativity combined with significant contributions to Human Rights in Africa'. He was the recipient of the 2014 Nigerian National Merit Award, Nigeria's highest recognition for distinguished academic and creative achievement. He was awarded the Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.) by the University of Ibadan, Nigeria (2016) and he is a recipient of honorary doctorates from the Université de Toulouse-le Mirail in France and Franklin Pierce University in Rindge New Hampshire, USA. In 2021, he received the Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM). He became the inaugural Chair of the Advisory Board of the new Ibadan Literary Society (ILS), based in Ibadan, Nigeria. The Niyi Osundare International Poetry Festival (NOIPOFEST) In Nigeria, was established as an annual festival in 2015. At the centre of Osundare's social and literary activism are issues of Human Rights, social justice, the environment, climate change, and the plight of our planet. He is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of English at the University of New Orleans, USA, and Visiting Professor at the University of Ibadan Nigeria. https://www.uno.edu/profile/faculty/niyi_osundare

Opal Palmer Adisa



Dr. Opal Palmer Adisa (b. 1954) is the University Director of The Institute for Gender and Development Studies at The University of the West Indies where she oversees the IGDS units at Mona (Jamaica), Cave Hill (Barbados) and St Augustine (Trinidad & Tobago) UWI campuses. A Gender Specialist, Cultural Activist and Writer, Adisa believes that literature and the performance arts are the best approaches to interrogate gender equality and formulate an approach to gender justice; and she has been doing so through her writing for over three decades. She has published 20 collections that include novels, short stories, poetry collections and children's books. Her essays, stories, poems and articles have been anthologized in over 400 publications.

The authorized children's text of Portia Simpson Miller, titled, *Portia Dreams, Jamaica's first female Prime Minister*, was released in 2021.
<https://opalpalmeradisa.com>

Panya Banjoko



Panya Banjoko is a UK based poet, archivist, and cultural historian. Her debut collection, *Some Things*, was published by Burning Eye Books (2018) and her forthcoming collection *(Re)Framing the Archive* is due June 2022. Her poems feature in numerous anthologies including award-winning *Clever Girls* winner of the Working-Class Studies Association's "Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey Award for a Book about the Working-Class Academic Experience" and award-winning *Dawn of the Unread* published by LeftLion magazine (2016).

In 2017, her poem 'One of a Kind' was commended in the Writing East Midlands Aurora poetry competition and her poem 'They and Them' has featured in exhibitions by artist and academic Keith Piper at the Beaconsfield Gallery, the British Film Festival and International Film Festival in Rotterdam as well as the Québec en toutes lettres literary festival 'Mega Poetry Happening', featuring poets from cities around the world. Panya is a multi-award-winning poet, co-ordinates a Black Writers Network, is founder of Nottingham Black Archive and patron for Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature. <https://panyabanjoko.wordpress.com>

Patricia Foster McKenley



Patricia Foster McKenley (b. 1970) is an award-winning poet, writer, performer, qualified life coach, certified tutor/facilitator, education consultant and IT trainer. She was Sable Poet-in-Residence 2014-17, featured poet at Mboka Festival, The Gambia, 2017 & 2019, 'At The Inkwell London' host 2016-17, is an Inscribe contracted writer and a 'Malika's Poetry Kitchen' alumni. Born in Lewisham, London, her writing is inspired by her Jamaican British heritage and champions women and survivors. Patricia is published in anthologies and publications in the UK, Norway and the USA.

She has performed in the Netherlands, Norway, USA, Jamaica, Belgium and Gambia. Has toured the UK, Europe and Chicago. In 2013, released her first poetry / motivational film 'LIPS'. Patricia is also a certified Reiki practitioner, wellbeing advisor, vegan and lover of raw vegan food. She is a life coach to artists and has worked as a workshop facilitator for: BBC & British Library (2006), Every Woman Inspired women's conference (Jamaica) and international universities and schools. Patricia's dynamic, empathic, creative and supportive approach to educating, training, literature and improving lives, has empowered learners of all ages and seekers of an enhanced way of living life. <http://patriciafostermckenley.com>

Peter Kalu



Peter Kalu (b. 1969)

Choose two from three:

Aged 6, I passed that Cycling Proficiency Test & went on to become a Tour De France hero, quitting in a doping scandal but sans regret. My flash fiction is generally inspired by wheels, motion and the concept of spokes.

Aged 8, I Guessed the Weight of that Cake correctly. I became a top chef, married someone with a love of patisserie & am now a well known Paris bon viveur. I write flash fiction in between stirring sauces.

Aged 19, I turned up for those first year Management Studies exams and went on to live a Management life absent of intensity but of profound security and comfort. My imaginative life is deeply felt and usually emerges as very short texts.
<http://www.peterkalu.com>

Rashidah Ismaili



Rashidah Ismaili AbuBakr (b.1941) was born and raised in Cotonou, Benin. She is a poet, fiction writer, and playwright who was active in the New York's Black Arts Movement. She did her tertiary studies in the USA, in the fields of psychology. She earned her Ph.D. in Ethnotherapy and Psychodrama from SUNY, Albany, New York. Her poetry collections include *Cantata for Jimmy* (2004) and *Missing in Action and Presumed Dead: Poems* (1992). She has co-edited the anthology *Womanrise* (1978), and her work is included in *The Heinemann Book of African Women's Poetry* (1995). An opera, *Elegies for the Fallen*, was devised from her poetry, by Composer Joyce Solomon-Moorman and performed at CUNY Manhattan in 2005. *Rice Keepers*, was staged in 2006 at the American Museum. In 2014, she published *Autobiography of the Lower East Side: A Novel in Stories*.

Ismaili taught at Wilkes University and Rutgers University and has served as the associate director of the Pratt Institute Higher Education Opportunity Program and as vice president of Pen & Brush, an arts organization for women. She taught in French and English Speaking African Writers, Literature of the African Diaspora, and has taught the Harlem Renaissance and Negritude literary movements. She is a founding member and an executive board member of the Organization of Women Writers of Africa. Her critical interest and practical involvement in African dance forms and visual art have led her to teach and to curate discussions and artist salons, Salon d'Afrique, at her home in New York City, where artists from Africa and the African diaspora and Harlem residents gather.

Rommi Smith



Rommi Smith (b.1973) is a multi-award-winning poet, playwright, theatre-maker, performer, librettist and academic. Winner of numerous prestigious residencies and commissions for institutions ranging from the British Council to the BBC, she is a three-time BBC writer-in-residence. Rommi's writing is broadcast on programmes and stations, including: Poetry Please, The Verb, In Tune, Woman's Hour, Late Junction, BBC World Service And Melvyn Bragg's acclaimed BBC series *The Matter of the North*. Rommi is the inaugural British Parliamentary Writer In Residence and inaugural Poet-In-Residence for Keats' House, Hampstead. Her writing is published by Bloodaxe, New York University Press, Seren, Shoestring Press, Route, Oberon Modern Plays and Peepal Tree Press, among others.

Rommi holds a Practice-led Doctorate. A visiting scholar at City University New York (CUNY), she has presented her work at institutions including: The Segal Theatre, The Schomburg Center For Research In Black Culture and City College New York. Rommi's performance at The Schwerner Writers' Series In New York was at the invitation of Tyehimba Jess, Pulitzer Prize Winner For Poetry. Her academic writing was first published by New York University Press as part of the groundbreaking book *Imagining Queer Methods* (2019). Shortlisted for a Southbank Show Award, Rommi's plays have been performed at the Edinburgh Festival and broadcast on BBC Radio. Theatre commissions range from Paines Plough to Pentabus. She is a recipient of a Hedgebrook Fellowship (USA), winner of The Northern Writers' Prize For Poetry (Chosen by the poet Don Paterson) and The Elizabeth George Award. Further honours include: A Cave Canem Fellowship and Scholarships from Hugo House and The Shipman Agency.

Rommi's first digital play *All The Places We Could Travel*, which she both wrote and co-Directed (Her First Directing Credit) was commissioned by Derby Theatre.

Rommi is thrilled to be a Sphinx30 Playwright; a prestigious programme of mentoring which has identified 30 leading British women playwrights and is curated by legendary company Sphinx Theatre, with mentors including Pulitzer-Winning Playwright Lynn Nottage, Winsome Pinnock And Timberlake Wertenbaker.

Rommi is the Inaugural Writer-In-Residence For Topfoto (The UK's Leading Photographic Archive) And Poet-In-Residence For The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere. (2021). <http://www.rommi-smith.co.uk>

Rosamond King



Rosamond King (b.1973) is a creative and critical writer, performer and artist. Her work is deeply informed by her cultures and communities (including African, Caribbean, and queer), by history, and by a sense of play. She is the author of poetry collections, *All the Rage* and the Lambda Award-winning *Rock | Salt | Stone*. Her writing has also been published in more than three dozen journals, blogs, and anthologies, including *New Daughters of Africa*, *The Feminist Wire*, *Hyperallergic*, *Harriet*, and *The Caribbean Writer*. King has performed at biennales, festivals, bookstores, and other venues around the world, including the New York Metropolitan Museum, the VIVA!, Mboka, and Encuentro Festivals, Gibney, Dixon Place, Bocas LitFest, and the African Performance Art Biennial.

King is also the author of *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination*, winner of the Caribbean Studies Association Best Book Award. The goal of all of her work is to make people feel, wonder, and think, not necessarily in that order. <https://rosamondsking.black>

Roy McFarlane



Roy McFarlane (b.1963) is a Poet, Playwright and former Youth & Community Worker born in Birmingham of Jamaican parentage, spending most of his years living in Wolverhampton and the Black Country, now residing in Brighton. A well-loved and established poet, he's held the role of Birmingham Poet Laureate, Starbucks Poet in Residence and is currently the Birmingham & Midlands Institute Poet in Residence.

From Amsterdam to Philadelphia, Roy has shared his passion for social justice, equality, identity, love and the healing power of poetry as a witness to our times. He is on the advisory board to The Verve Poetry Press, a vibrant festival and publishing press challenging the imagined divide between the stage and the page and also trustee for the Poetry Exchange award winning podcast. His debut collection, *Beginning with Your Last Breath*, was followed by *The Healing Next Time*, (Nine Arches Press 2018) nominated for the Ted Hughes award and Jhalak Prize. He has an MA in Writing Poetry from Newcastle University and the Poetry School and is presently working on his third collection due out in Spring 2022. In it he'll be looking at creating a series of erasure poems drawing on hidden narratives of women and the African diaspora found in newspapers, letters, diaries and journals in the Caribbean, Canada and North America post 1807. <https://www.roymcfarlane.com>

Sai Murray



Sai Murray (b. 1976) is a writer, poet, performance and graphic artist of Bajan/ Afrikan/English heritage. His art addresses issues of self, societal and ecological repair and seeks to highlight the often concealed yet myriad interwoven relationships in our fast paced consumer world. His debut poetry collection, *Ad-liberation* (2013) was described as: “words that breathe – enliven – words that dance before transfixed audiences...” (*The Jamaica Gleaner*) with an “insight that is irresistibly politicising and humanising with humour, angry-yet-calm honesty, linguistic punch, tenderness, and barefaced cheek” (*Red Pepper* magazine). Sai's poetry and short stories feature in anthologies including: *The Fire Next Time*, *Closure*, *Filigree*, *Tangled Roots* and *Dance The Guns to Silence: 100 Poems for Ken Saro-Wiwa*. He has performed his ‘seriously playful and playfully serious’ poetry throughout the UK, US, Afrika and the Caribbean for over 15 years, appearing at international festivals including: Mboka (The Gambia), Decolonising Education (Nairobi, Kenya), Brave New Voices (San Francisco), Mo Juice (Barbados). Sai's commissions have included: poet/visual artist for the Black Cultural Activism Map, 2018; lead writer on Virtual Migrants’ Continent Chop Chop, 2015-present; Weatherfronts: Writing Climate Change, 2015; Action Saro-Wiwa: The Ogoni 9 Living Memorial, 2015; lead artist on Re-Membering: A Creative Journey to Wholeness, 2010; poet in residence for C Words: Culture, Carbon, Climate, Capital, 2009; poet in residence for Southwark 2007 & Beyond and FWords: Creative Freedom, 2008.

As an educator, Sai is a founding artistic director of the youth arts educational initiative, Voices that Shake!, and is one of the UK’s leading youth poet coaches, with winning teams at: Ilkley Literature Festival’s Words in The City (2018, 2019); Leeds Young Authors Voices of a New Generation (2009, 2010, 2012), South Yorkshire Poetry Slam (2012) and at the largest ever UK national slam, Shake the Dust (2012). Through Liquorice Fish artist/activist promotions, Sai has designed, edited and published over 30 books, resources and toolkits including: No Condition Is Permanent: 19 Poets on Climate Justice and Change (2010); Abeng Soundings: A Timeline of Anti-Slavery Resistance (2008); Cross Community Dialogue Facilitation Toolkit (2007). He is currently resident poet at Numbi Arts; trustee of The Racial Justice Network; and an organising member of PARCOE (the Pan-Afrikan Reparations Coalition in Europe). <https://saimurai.wordpress.com>

Samatar Elmi



Samatar Elmi (b.1986) is a poet, PhD candidate and educator. He writes plays in the liminal spaces between racial, socio-cultural and political identity. He has been shortlisted for the Venture Award, the Complete Works II, New Generation African Poets and is a graduate of the Young Inscribe Mentoring Program. Poems have appeared in *Poetry Review*, *Magma*, *Iota*, *Ink Sweat and Tears*, *Myths of the Near Future*, *Scarf*, *the Echoing Gallery*, *Filigree: Contemporary Black British Poetry* and *the Cadaverine*. Samatar's *Portrait of Colossus* (flipped eye 2021) was selected as the Poetry Book Society (PBS) Summer 2021 Pamphlet Choice. He is resident poet at Numbi Arts and associate editor at *Scarf* Magazine.
<https://nomadic-tribesman.tumblr.com>

Sonia Sanchez



Sonia Sanchez (b. 1934) Poet. Mother. Professor. National and International lecturer on Black Culture and Literature, Women's Liberation, Peace and Racial Justice. Sponsor of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Board Member of MADRE. Sonia Sanchez is the author of over 20 books including *Homecoming*, *We a BaddDDD People*, *Love Poems*, *I've Been a Woman*, *A Sound Investment and Other Stories*, *Homegirls and Handgrenades*, *Under a Soprano Sky*, *Wounded in the House of a Friend* (Beacon Press 1995), *Does Your House Have Lions?* (Beacon Press, 1997), *Like the Singing Coming off the Drums* (Beacon Press, 1998), *Shake Loose My Skin* (Beacon Press, 1999), *Morning Haiku* (Beacon Press, 2010), and most recently, *Collected Poems* (Beacon Press, 2021). In addition to being a contributing editor to *Black Scholar* and *The Journal of African Studies*, she has edited an anthology, *We Be Word Sorcerers: 25 Stories by Black Americans*. *BMA: The Sonia Sanchez Literary Review* is the first African American Journal that discusses the work of Sonia Sanchez and the Black Arts Movement. A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts, the Lucretia Mott Award for 1984, the Outstanding Arts Award from the Pennsylvania Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Community Service Award from the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, she is a winner of the 1985 American Book Award for *Homegirls and Handgrenades*, the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Humanities for 1988, the Peace and Freedom Award from Women International League for Peace and Freedom (W.I.L.P.F.) for 1989, a PEW Fellowship in the Arts for 1992-1993 and the recipient of Langston Hughes Poetry Award for 1999. *Does Your House Have Lions?* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. She is the Poetry Society of America's 2001 Robert Frost Medalist and a Ford Freedom Scholar from the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. Her poetry also appeared in the movie *Love Jones*.

Sonia Sanchez has lectured at over 500 universities and colleges in the United States and has traveled extensively, reading her poetry in Africa, Cuba, England, the Caribbean, Australia, Europe, Nicaragua, the People's Republic of China, Norway, and Canada. She was the first Presidential Fellow at Temple University and she held the Laura Carnell Chair in English at Temple University. She is the recipient of the Harper Lee Award, 2004, Alabama Distinguished Writer, and the National Visionary Leadership Award for 2006. She is the recipient of the 2005 Leeway Foundation Transformational Award and the 2009 Robert Creeley Award. Currently, Sonia Sanchez is one of 20 African American women featured in "Freedom Sisters," an interactive exhibition created by the Cincinnati Museum Center and Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition. In December of 2011, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter selected Sonia Sanchez as Philadelphia's first Poet Laureate, calling her "the longtime conscience of the city." *BaddDDD Sonia Sanchez*, a documentary about Sanchez's life as an artist and activist Barbara Attie, Janet Goldwater, Sabrina Schmidt Gordon, was nominated for a 2017 Emmy. She was awarded the 2016 Shelley Memorial Award of the Poetry Society of America, the Wallace Stevens Award in 2018 presented by the Academy of American Poets and the *Anisfield-Wolf Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019*. Sonia Sanchez is the recipient of the 2021 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize, 2021. <https://soniasanchez.net>

Sumia Juxon



Sumia Jaama aka Sumia Juxon (b.1994) is a Dutch-born Somali poet and producer. She is the winner of FourHubs 2018 Poetry Prize and founder of SAWTI. She is also a Barbican Young Poet Alumni and a member of Octavia, poetry collective for womxn of colour. She often writes about memory, movement and the constant process of leaving. Her work has recently been published in *Filigree: Contemporary Black British Poetry* and she has previously worked with: Royal Academy of Arts, Keats House Museum, Southbank Centre, Belfast International Arts festival, Roundhouse, Bush Theatre, and Zanzibar International Film Festival.

Summer Edward



Summer Edward (b.1986) is a Ginkgo Prize longlisted writer, children's editor, Caribbean children's literature specialist, and the director and founding editor emeritus of Anansesem, an online magazine covering Caribbean children's and young adult literature. Her writing for adult audiences has appeared in *The Millions*, *The Columbia Review*, *Horn Book Magazine*, *The Missing Slate*, *Nat. Brut*, *Kweli Journal*, *PREE*, *Matatu: Journal for African Culture and Society*, *The Punch Magazine*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Bim: Arts for the 21st Century*, *Moko Magazine*, *sx salon*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Obsidian: Literature in the African Diaspora*, *Duende*, *Negative Capability Press*, *Waxwing Literary Journal*, *Re-Markings*, *tongues of the ocean* and other literary journals regionally and internationally, and in the anthologies *New Daughters of Africa* (HarperCollins USA, 2019) and *New Worlds, Old Ways: Speculative Tales from the Caribbean* (Peepal Tree Press, 2016).

Her children's book debut, *The Wonder of the World Leaf*, was published by HarperCollins UK in 2021, and she has six more children's books forthcoming, to be published by Heinemann in 2021 and 2022. When she is not writing, she works as a children's fiction editor at Heinemann and reviews children's and young adult books by authors from the Caribbean and its diaspora for *The Horn Book Magazine*. A dual citizen of America and Trinidad and Tobago, she divides her time between the two countries. <https://www.summeredward.com>

Tanya Shirley



Tanya Shirley (b.1976) has published two poetry collections with Peepal Tree Press in the UK: *She Who Sleeps With Bones* and *The Merchant of Feathers*. Her work has been featured on BBC World Service, BBC Front Row, Scottish Poetry Library, www.poetryarchive.org and translated into Spanish and Polish. She has conducted writing workshops and performed in the UK, Canada, the Caribbean, Venezuela, and the USA. Shirley is a lecturer in the Department of Literatures in English at The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. She is the recipient of a Silver Musgrave Medal from the Institute of Jamaica for her outstanding contribution in the field of Literature.

Tayo Aluko



Nigerian-born Tayo Aluko (b.1962) is based in Liverpool. He premiered his one-man play, *Call Mr Robeson* at the 2007 Edinburgh Fringe. He has since become a full time performer, taking the play to places as distant as the North West Territories of Canada, Jamaica, Nigeria, Australia and New Zealand. As writer-on-attachment with the Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse theatres, he developed another one-man play, *Just an Ordinary Lawyer* which has also toured nationally and internationally. His audio-visual play, Paul Robeson's *Love Song* written and recorded during lockdown with actors in Canada and USA, is now streaming online. Aluko developed a presentation titled, *What Happens?* featuring the writings of African American Langston Hughes (with songs from the era), performed to live jazz accompaniment. In October 2013 he produced the inaugural 'Paul Robeson Art is A Weapon Festival' in Covent Garden, London, which featured speakers and performers from as far afield as South Africa and Canada. He is currently working on a play inspired by the life, music and African roots of the British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, titled *Coleridge-Taylor of Freetown*.

As a baritone, he appeared as soloist at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, accompanied by the Hallé Orchestra, and has also performed lead roles in various operas and stage musicals and oratorios. Tayo researched, wrote and narrated to camera a film on the history of West Africa before the TransAtlantic Slave Trade, which forms part of the permanent exhibition at the National Museum Liverpool's International Slavery Museum. He was one of ten People of Letters: "leading writers of colour" commissioned to write and perform pieces in response to selected objects held at Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum, for the online exhibition of the Museum of Colour. His articles, letters and poetry have been published in several newspapers and magazines worldwide. He has also written and performed a lecture-cum-concert titled, *From Black Africa to the White House* and a 15-minute play, *Half Moon* both dealing with African history. His poem "GREATNESS" IN A TIME OF "COVID" has been developed into a global mapping project, 'Mapping "Greatness" ' and an interactive workshop, 'Exploring Greatness.' <https://www.tayoalukoandfriends.com>

Tijan M. Sallah



Tijan M. Sallah (b. 1958) is the Gambia's most famous poet after Lenrie Peters and one of Africa's most significant writers whose poems and short stories have appeared in several major African anthologies. His most recent books are *I Come From A Country* (poems), *Harrow: London Poems of Convalescence* and the collection of literary essays, *Saani Baat: Aspects of African Literature and Culture*.

Tijan M. Sallah is also a Ph.D.-trained economist and has over 25 years of agriculture and rural development operations experience at the World Bank, where he designed and implemented projects, carried out analytic work/studies, and crafted sector strategies and evidence-based policies. He worked on agriculture and water issues: value chain development, irrigation/water resource management, fisheries, agriculture research and extension and broader community-based rural development. He retired from the World Bank in 2015 as Sector Manager for Agriculture and Rural Development covering Eastern and Southern African countries. He managed over 30 high caliber professional staff, including consultants, and a large portfolio of lending and analytical work. Prior to joining the World Bank, Dr. Sallah taught economics at several American universities and has published several books and articles in wide ranging disciplines. He is currently leading efforts to build an international Smithsonian-style Museum and Library in The Gambia to tell the African and African Diaspora story and link it to training and development of gifted youth in cultural enterprises. He also gets invited to do part time university teaching and lecturing, among other things.

Togara Muzanenhamo



Togara Muzanenhamo (b.1975) was born in Zambia and brought up in Zimbabwe. He was educated in The Hague, Paris and Manchester. He has published three books of poetry, *Spirit Brides* (2006 Carcanet Press), *Gumiguru* (2014 Carcanet Press) and *Virga* (2021 Carcanet Press). He has been shortlisted for the Jerwood Aldeburgh First collection Prize and the Glenna Luschei Prize for African Poetry. He lives with his partner and children in Harare.

Tony Medina



Tony Medina is a poet, graphic novelist, editor, short story writer, and author. Born in the South Bronx and raised in the Throgs Neck Housing Projects, Medina earned a BA in English at Baruch College, CUNY, on the GI Bill, and an MA and PhD at Binghamton University, SUNY, where he received the Distinguished Dissertation Award.

Medina has published 23 books for adults and young readers, the most recent of which are *Che Che Colé*; *Death, With Occasional Smiling*; *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Boy*; *I Am Alfonso Jones*; and *Resisting Arrest: Poems to Stretch the Sky*. Medina's awards include the Paterson Prize for Books for Young People, the Langston Hughes Society Award, the first African Voices Literary Award, the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award honor, Special Recognition from the Arnold Adoff Poetry Award, and the Firecracker Alternative Book Award from the American Booksellers Association for *In Defense of Mumia*. He has appeared in several documentaries and CD compilations and has read/performed his work all over the United States, as well as in Germany, France, Poland, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, and the Netherlands. The first Professor of creative writing at Howard University, Medina's poetry, fiction and essays appear in over 100 journals and anthologies, including Sheree Renée Thomas' *Dark Matter*, Ishmael Reed's *Hollywood Unchained* and Kevin Young's *Library of America* anthology, *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song*, and as an advisory editor for Nikki Giovanni's *Hip Hop Speaks to Children*.

Medina has also been featured on NBC's philanthropic reality show, *Give*, PBS' *White House Chronicle*, CBS' *Great Day Washington*, SiriusXM's *Kids Place Live*, Medgar Evers College's *Writers on Writing*, *Forbes* magazine, and has worked extensively with the non-profit literary organizations *Say It Loud*, *Behind the Book*, and *Meet the Writers*. Medina's book, *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Boy*, was featured on *Let's Learn NYC* for PBS.

Toyin Agbetu



Bro Dr Toyin Agbetu's (b. 1967) introduction into poetry emerges from his lived experiences as both an artist, scholar-activist and devoted Pan Africanist. During the late 1980s, he was responsible for creating the music genre of 'streetsoul'. He produced hundreds of soul, house and garage titles, helping UK musicians and artists from the vanguard of the neo-soul revolution. In 2000, he founded Ligali, a Pan African, human rights based organisation that challenged the British media's misrepresentation of African culture, history, and people. During this era, Toyin developed as an organic intellectual using his dexterity with public speaking to serve as a community educator for over twenty years. Emma Pierre-Joseph, then Ligali's head of media affairs, introduced him to the world of spoken word events and encouraged him to write more. Ligali would later organise open sessions with groundbreaking poetry collectives like Afropick and Best Kept Secret. Toyin studied Education and Community development at the University of East London under the mentorship of the late Dr Abiola Oguniola. There he further developed his academic writing skills and creative voice nurtured through internet forums like Blacknet, the Ligali website and the *New Nation*, a national newspaper for people of African heritage.

The Ligali Organisation adopted a firm scholar-activist approach to challenging Afrophobia and the misrepresentation of African people, culture and history in the media and public spaces. This led to Toyin embracing guerilla filmmaking and winning awards for his independent filmmaking and community work. In 2014, he studied social and cultural anthropology at University College London (UCL) where his research interests saw him develop his passion for supporting counterpublics and urban social movements through various forms of grassroots activities and institutional activism. On completing his doctoral research, Toyin discovered how community cultural practices could deliver radical social justice when operating in partnership within traditional institutional frameworks. To try and practice what he preached, Toyin became a lecturer in Social and Political Anthropology at UCL in September 2021 and taught the UG and PG module on the Anthropology of Nationalism, Ethnicity and Race and Decolonising Anthropology. He remains committed to working as a scholar-activist through independent writing, filmmaking and neo-museologist practice dedicated to reparatory and social justice.

vangile gantsho



vangile gantsho (b. 1984). Healer. poet. publisher. is one third of impepho press, an intersectional feminist press with a Pan Afrikan agenda. She holds an MA in Creative Writing from the University Currently Known as Rhodes, is a graduate of the Pioneer Class of the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute and was named one of *Mail & Guardian's* Top Young 200 South Africans of 2018. She is the author of two collections: *Undressing in front of the Window* (2015) and *red cotton* – which was named *City Press* Top Poetry Read of 2018. Gantsho has participated in festivals around the globe, including: the Gothenburg Book Fair – Bodies Under Siege (2020), the Open Book Festival (2018), Babi Slam (2018), Algiers International Book Fair (2017), Inaugural Abantu Book Festival (2016) and Poetry Africa (2014), as well as poetry plays: *Secrets with the Moon* (2013) and *I Miss You Today* (2010).

As a producer, she co-curated and co-produced the SA programme in the Unbound Dutch Poetry Festival (2020), and has put together programmes such as the impepho press Women of Words Online Poetry Festival (2020) 21 Days-21 Poets series (2020), a virtual World Poetry Day (2020), Human4Human (2014-2015), The State Theatre's Night of the Poets (2013), and Katz Cum out to Play: intimate conversations through poetry and music (2009). Her work has been published in various literary publications, including *New Daughters of Africa* (2019), *The Atlanta Review* (2018), *New Coin* (2017 + 2018), *New Contrast* (2017), *Illuminations* (2017) and *Type/Cast* (2017), *Botsotso* (2015), *Wits Press* (2011), *SABLE* (UK, 2010) and *The Agenda* (2004). Gantsho is passionate about using the voice as a tool to help build confidence and open doors. As a result, she has worked with institutions such as Educhange and Quarphix, focused on increasing the chances of underprivileged youth obtaining university entry and qualifying for scholarships or bursaries. She continues to dedicate herself to creating and/or supporting spaces which encourage (black feminine) visibility and healing.

<http://www.impephopress.co.za/about-impepho-press/>

The Writers Project of Ghana



The Writers Project of Ghana (b. WPG - 2009) is an international literary organization based in Ghana and the United States. WPG was founded in 2009 by Martin Egblewogbe, Laban Carrick Hill (d. 2021) and Mamle Kabu in order to promote a literary culture in Africa and around the world. By supporting a literary culture in this West African country, WPG advances the notion that a free exchange of ideas is essential to the health and prosperity of any community.

WPG is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to helping Ghanaian writers explore and affirm their identity and culture. In order to achieve these goals, we are dedicated to reaching out to all Ghanaian writers through our various programs and activities. Currently we offer public readings and poetry recitals, a weekly live-on-air radio program, and writing workshops, publishing opportunities, podcasts, and an annual literary festival, Pa Gya! in October. The journal, JWPG accepts poetry submissions by emerging and established writers of Ghanaians home and abroad, writers from other African countries, and by other writers who write about or from Ghana.

Mission Statement - The Writers Project of Ghana is a nonprofit based in Ghana and the U.S. for the sole purpose of promoting Ghanaian literature and writing through creative writing workshops, discussion groups, public readings, online publishing, and the establishment of a small press. In addition, the WPG intends to establish a reference library of African and World literature. The WPG Center in Accra will work with all aspects of the Ghanaian literary community with the aim to foster economic development through the arts. The WPG Center in Accra will be dedicated to being a hub of Ghanaian literary culture and a hothouse for nurturing both emerging and mature writers of all abilities.

Co-Founder, Mamle Kabu writes fiction for adults and young adults. Co-founder, Martin Egblewogbe writes short stories and poetry. One of their leading member's featured in the WPG room is Crystal Tettey a Malagasy-Ghanaian Spoken Word artist whose performances often incorporate Malagasy folk music and organic instrumentation. She is affiliated with P.O.E.T.S and EhaLaKasa. She works closely with development based organisations such as the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), African Women's Development Fund (AWD) and the Foundation for Contemporary Art (FCA-Ghana). <https://writersprojectghana.com>

Zena Edwards



Zena Edwards (b.1969) has been a professional writer/poet performer, facilitator, and creative project developer for 27 years since graduating from Middlesex University. She studied storytelling and performance at The London International School for Performing Arts. Zena Edwards is a poet, storyteller and arts activist whose conviction to integrity and truth-seeking makes her work insightful to the light and dark of the world, and the fragility and resilience of the human experience. She is a passionate advocate for climate and environmental justice, decolonisation, race and power. Her participatory work explores the arts as a space for dialogue, reviving ancient and indigenous wisdom to activate it in the present for collective transformational development and sustainable futures. She is currently lead artist for diversity and inclusion for the Culture Declares Emergency Movement.

Zena has 20 years of mentoring experience principled in valuing the embodied and tacit knowledge of marginalised groups as prestige knowledge and as an act of decolonisation. Her mentoring practice has inspired mentees in academia, literature, live performance, activism and grassroots organisations. Her intergenerational arts and cultural producer practice supports emerging artists of all ages. Zena's work with young people, including those with refugee status, to embolden their voices began in 2010 when she co-founded Voices That Shake Youth Project championing creative writing, film and visual journaling as tools for empowerment and well being. She is also the founder of The Fury Project (2012), The Poetic Debaters Project (2014) and Create to Transform Dialogue Spaces (2019).

As a multidisciplinary collaborator, Zena supported the late great Hugh Masekela and Baaba Maal, has worked as a consultant with internationally acclaimed choreographer and dancer Akram Khan (Xenos), and has collaborated with Visual Artist – Theaster Gates (Soul Manufacturing Company), radical Film Maker Fahim Alam, (Riots Reframed). Her work can also be found in several anthologies including Margaret Busby's *New Daughters of Africa*, and *Dance the Guns to Silence ; 100 poems for Ken Saro Wiwa* . (Flippedeye publishing). She is founder and creative director of Verse in Dialog – an arts and engagement social enterprise that champions arts that serve through decolonisation, climate and environmental justice, and personal and community well-being.

[http:// www.zenaedwards.com](http://www.zenaedwards.com)

Zita Holbourne



Zita Holbourne (b.1966) is an award-winning human rights campaigner, community and trade union activist, International Speaker and multi- disciplinary artist. She is a visual artist, curator, author, poet, writer and vocalist and a member of the UNESCO. Coalition of Artists for the General History of Africa, vocal collective Nawi Collective and curator of the Roots Culture Identity art exhibition and has performed and exhibited internationally.

Zita is the co-founder and National Chair of BARAC UK campaigning against injustice and racism and the disproportionate impacts of austerity and a founding member of Black and Asian Lawyers for Justice. BARAC UK was listed as one of the 100 changemakers of 2020 by *The Big Issue*. She is the National Vice President of PCS Union and the Joint National Chair of Artists'. Union England. She is elected to the Trades Union Congress Race Relations Committee and the Women's Committee.

She is a trustee of ACTSA, successor organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Zita is the author of the book *Striving for Equality Freedom and Justice* which fuses the poetical with the political and documents struggle from the Haitian Revolution to Black Lives Matter. Zita is one of 17 British women featured in the award-winning book: *Here We Stand, Women Changing the World*. She has contributed to several books including anthologies such as *New Daughters of Africa*. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She is the winner of the Positive Role Model for Race award at the National Diversity Awards, a lifetime achievement award for Equality Champion at the legacy awards, and was a finalist in the Manorlogz Xtreme Spoken Word contest. Her work has featured in exhibitions including Tate Modern, V&A, Stratford Picture House, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Goldsmiths Women's Library, Pablo Center, amongst many other venues, both nationally and internationally. <http://www.zitaholbourne.com>