

PRESS RELEASE

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RICHMOND SELECTS THREE NEW POETS LAUREATE FOR 2017-2019

On Wednesday, May 24th the Richmond Poet Laureate Selection Committee chose three new Poets Laureate for the City of Richmond. The three appointees are: Daniel Ari, Ciera-Jevai Gordon, and Rob Lipton. They will share the title of Poet Laureate, which includes giving poetry readings, bringing poetry to the schools, and being advocates for poetry. The four runners-up were Richmond poets: Sandra Hooper-Mayfield, Anne Walker, Kristin Cerda, and Alexandra Naughton.

Daniel Ari holds monthly writing sessions with his wife, artist Lauren Ari, at their home hosting poets, artists and performers. He writes daily, and his poetry appears in such publications as *Poet's Market*, *Writer's Digest*, *Rio Grande Review*, *McSweeney's*, *Defenestration*, *Really System*, *Cardinal Since*, *NonBinary Review*, *Soul-Lit*, and others. He recently published his own book *One Way to Ask*, a collection of his poems illustrated in collaboration with 67 visual artists. With funding from a Richmond Neighborhood Public Art mini-grant, Daniel worked one-on-one with poets, constructed the manuscript, brought it to press, and released the *2017 Richmond Anthology of Poetry: 62 Voices from California's City of Pride and Purpose* to the community. Daniel hosted a poetry reading of the 62 poets at Kaleidoscope Café in Pt. Richmond. He considers himself an advocate for poetry in Richmond, and is dedicated to bringing a wide range of poetic voices into the cultural attention at readings, events, and in print. This means "being dedicated to my own creative practice, to collaboration and community, and to the immense and ancient art form of poetry itself."

Ciera-Jevae Gordon is a Richmond native who will be receiving her MFA in Creative Writing from the California College of the Arts in Oakland in June 2018, where she is currently a Teaching Assistant. In 2016 Ciera received a BA in Sociology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She won the prestigious Dean's Award there for a research project in which she collected a series of poems from twelve male prison inmates at Santa Cruz County Jail, analyzing and coding them to note the significance of the arts within prisons, and publishing a book of personal poetry called *Incarcerated Words* inspired by this work. Ciera is also a scholarship award winner and participant in the Making Waves College and Alumni Program, and was co-founder of a poetry group called RAW Talent (Richmond Artists With Talent). Goals for the future include a PhD in Creative writing.

Rob Lipton, a resident of Richmond for the past six years, has had his poetry in such publications as *Echo 681*, *Interbang*, *Jacaranda Review*, *Squaw Valley Review*, *King Log*, *Shades of Contradiction*, *The Texas Observer*, *Parthenon West*, *Now Orleans Quarterly*, *Journal of*

Human Architecture, White Print Inc., Quillpuddle, Opium Magazine, Red Wheelbarrow, and The Baffler. His own book, "A Complex Bravery" - in the words of reviewer Van Jordan, is "a book of childhood, love and war. Lipton's poems are a gang that takes no prisoners: his voice is direct, his tone is clear, his diction is ironic—but his irony is earned and felt-through. The manuscript is a book of elegies that refuse to go mourning without at least a little bit of protest." Rob has led many poetry workshops at the Berkeley Art Center, hosted poetry readings and performances in Los Angeles, and has done a poetry benefit for KPFA. As the founding director of the literary arts center (at Berkeley Art Center) he created an ongoing reading series, programs, workshops, and visiting writers programs. Rob has traveled internationally, and contributed a chapter called *Bearing Witness in the Promised Land* in the non-fiction book: *Live from Palestine: International and Palestinian Direct Action Against the Israeli Occupation*. He is looking forward to using his experience running workshops in extremely diverse communities, where he worked with children and teens.

The Richmond Poets Laureate are appointed for a term of two years, beginning June 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2019. The Richmond Arts & Culture Commission put out a Call for Applicants early this year, to which seven poets applied. An annual \$1,000 stipend is offered for the position, which will be divided three ways between the winners.

The Richmond Poets Laureate will be required to participate in various events and activities, attend city, library and school functions as needed; write poetry about Richmond that will be placed in a notebook to be available at the library; and write a summation of their impressions and experiences as Poet Laureate six months prior to the end of the two-year term. In addition, they will give a reading at a special event at the beginning of the two-year term; create a chapbook consisting of their collective work; write a poem for National Poetry Month (April); serve as a judge for the annual *Richmond Writes!* student poetry writing contest in February; and write a poem for National Arts and Humanities Month (October).

The three Poets Laureate will meet in early June with Arts & Culture Manager, Michele Seville to discuss their plans for the coming two years and will report periodically to the Richmond Arts and Culture Commission about their activities.