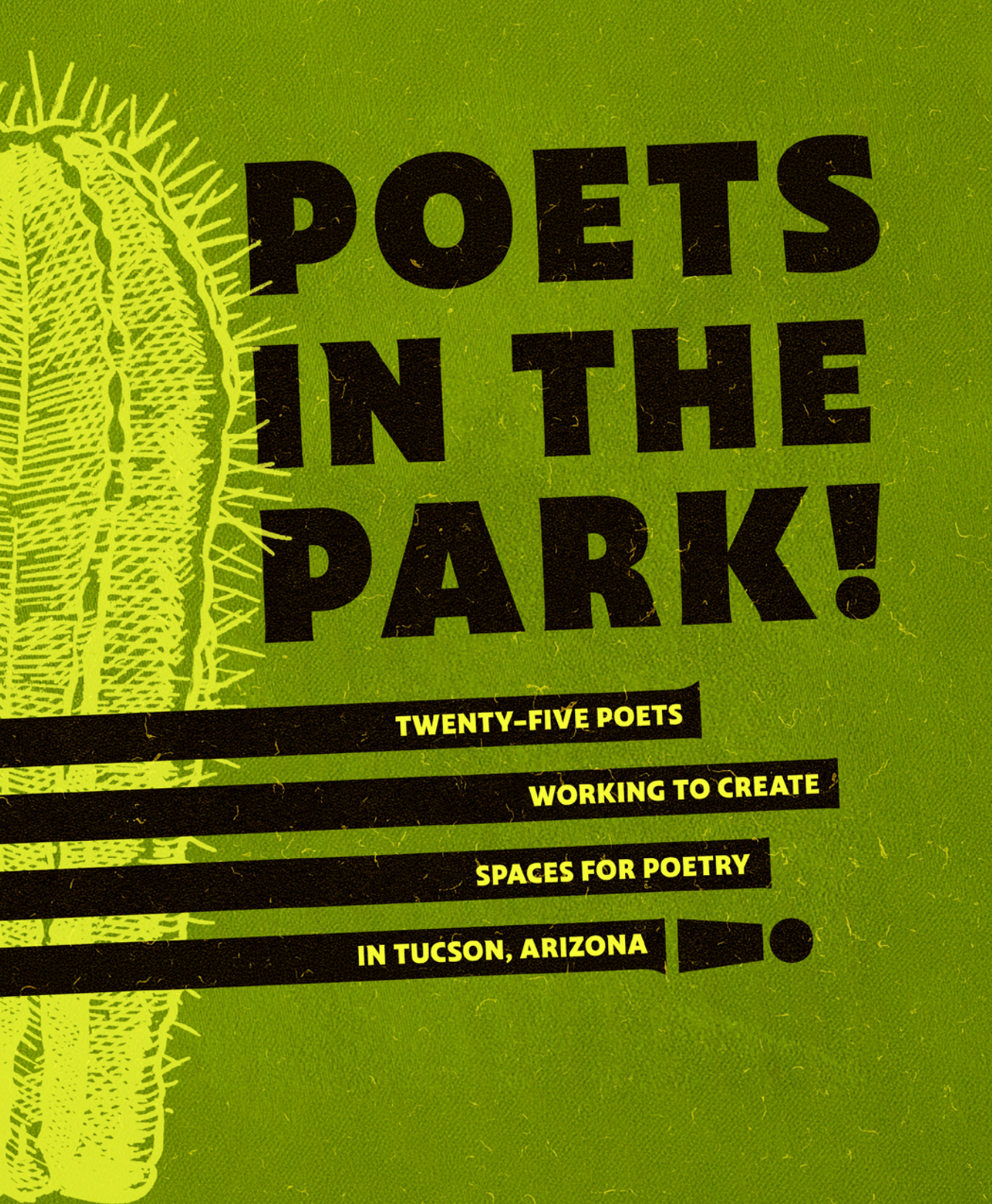


POETS IN THE PARK!

Twenty-five (of the many!) poets
who contribute to the work of organizing
spaces, platforms, showcases, festivals,
convenings, encuentros, slams, presses,
workshops and reading series for
poetry across our city.

Published on the occasion
of the inaugural Poets in the Park event
Poets are Cultural Workers!

October 10th 2026 at **Armory Park**

Tucson, Arizona

EVER WONDER

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN TUCSON?

BUT DON'T WANT TO RELY
ON A CORPORATE SOCIAL MEDIA
COMPANY WITH NO ETHICS?

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Edited, designed and published by **Logan Phillips**.
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POETS ARE CULTURAL WORKERS!

Logan Phillips, Tucson Poet Laureate

I am a poet because of the people who opened the door for me to become one.

Sure, I spent plenty of time alone, my nose buried in books, writing secret, angst-filled poems. But a poet is truly born when their words begin to be read, heard; interacting with the world around them. That journey begins with an invitation to take the first step.

For me, that time and place was the early 2000's in Flagstaff, where poets Nick Fox and Suzy La Follette – among many others – welcomed me in. Without them (whom you've never met and perhaps never will), you wouldn't be reading these words.

Among the first lessons I learned as a poet was that I had a responsibility to help make more space for poetry in the world. That may sound lofty, but really what it meant was arriving early to help set up the chairs. I'll explain.

Writing starts as a solo act, but once we share a poem we're engaging socially. Poets host open mics, start presses and so much more. This is what I mean by cultural work: collaborating to create more space for expression, both for ourselves and others.

A cultural worker is an organizer, standing at the intersections of event and venue, art and market forces. We should recognize the vital contributions poets make not only to our literary landscape, but also to the well-being of our community and our economy.

Hotels, restaurants and retail are not enough: if we want our city to thrive, we have to support the artists that convene audiences – at poetry events, yes. Also at concerts, plays, drag shows, rap battles, DJ sets, book clubs, drawing rooms, graffiti jams, writing hours, dance showcases, traditional cultural arts, comedy, storytelling, youth-focused *everything* – and so much more.

But I don't think the goal should be to maintain the status quo. I believe as a cultural worker I have a responsibility to learn the depth of my impact and breadth of my context, to see that even in my local work I'm caught up in a world system which unfortunately relies on the misery of the many to indulge the gross greed of a few.

To advocate for culture means to advocate for life. And so I necessarily oppose a system that produces so much death: the death of those migrating through our beautiful desert, of those in our neighborhoods who can't access healthcare, of those on our streets who are denied shelter so that housing can be a commodity. I must stand against a way of operating that treats the lives of children as disposable: in Sudan, Congo, Palestine, and to a far lesser degree, even right here in Arizona where education is outrageously underfunded and vital food assistance continues to be cut.

What does this have to do with poetry? Everything.

Poet Saul Williams describes beginning to see "the artist as either an agent of social change or as a producer of work that legitimizes the ruling class."

I didn't become a poet to perpetuate a world in which only a few of us have the privilege to have our voices heard, but instead to remake this world into one filled with poetry. And justice. And healthcare. And meaningful education. And economic freedom.

As a cultural worker I stand at the edge of crumbling empire, hoping to speak bridges towards a collective, art-filled future. As has been said, none of us are free until all of us are free.

Or, as the great James Baldwin put it: "You write in order to change the world, knowing perfectly well that you probably can't. But also knowing that literature is indispensable to the world."

It is in this spirit that I convene Poets in the Park. As service, as salve, as open door, a collective dare. We'll never know what's possible until we come together to try the impossible.

So here are 25 poets who make meaningful contributions to Tucson's poetry scene as we know it – though of course there are many more than could ever be fit in a single chapbook.

Whatever their own views on how they see their cultural work, these are folks that are among the first to arrive and last to leave, putting their energy and resources to the benefit of all of us in our beloved Tucson.

But here's the thing: if an arts organizer works well enough, for long enough, members of their own community tend to forget that the organizer themselves is also an artist, also a poet. So here we also celebrate these poets for the artists they are, in their own perpetual process of becoming.

Poetry is hope work, and this chapbook is created in gratitude to these poets. They move the chairs and they move our hearts.

•



Photo: @Atenenergy

A'Vae aka Poetic Justice

For the past 12 years, poetry has been my way of expressing myself, telling my story, and giving a voice to the feelings that I sometimes couldn't put into words. What started as a personal form of expression has grown into a journey of healing, strength, vulnerability, and self-discovery. I've been attending open mics for the past seven years, finding community in spaces where people could come as they are and speak their truth.

Here is a little bit about SPOKE and what we do. SPOKE is more than an open mic. It is a space to BE YOURSELF, SPEAK UP FOR YOURSELF, and never apologize for who you are. That message is deeply personal to me. For years, I allowed the words and actions of people I trusted to make me question my worth and silence parts of who I was. Poetry became one of the ways I found my voice again. I stepped outside my shell, walked away from what no longer served me, and began rebuilding myself piece by piece. Through that journey, I discovered a strength within me that I didn't know existed.

That is what I want SPOKE to represent: a place where you can be vulnerable without judgment, tell your story, laugh, cry, heal, speak, listen, and simply exist as yourself. Whether you're a seasoned poet or stepping onto the mic for the first time, SPOKE is for you. Come as you are. Your voice matters. Your story matters.

K.A.V.É.T.

The stars I walk on, they have my name on it,
Not like Hollywood stars,
But each letter: K.A.V.É.T.

"K" as I take the first step,
Looking down at my feet,
And for some reason, I am barefoot.
Shocked, I take the next step.

To the letter "A"
A dream come true,
A star was born.
Supernatural.
The letter A comes first in the alphabet.
What do you think that means about me?

I take a deep breath
And step to "V."
Victory is mine.
Victory stands tall,
She holds her head high,
With tears in her eyes.

She cracks a smile
While making the next step,
"E" for excellence.
It's within me.
It's within her.

Her excellency is what you call her.
She buckles at her knees,
So you think she kneels.
Eyes closed, a tear drops,
And she makes the final leap.

"T" is where she lands.
She's timeless.
She moves with little effort.
She lifts her head
And raises her arms up high.

And what she sees
Her name written in the stars.

Her mother knew while carrying her,
she was something special.
She was named after five strong Black women
And carries their names with high honor.

She looks to her ancestors for guidance.
They never steer her wrong.
This is her name.
She is me, and I am them,
And I will forever be.

K.A.V.É.T.
Kinetic. Astute. Vocal. Elegant.
And Timeless.

•



Photo: Jenica Heintzelman

Britt Warner

Britt Warner came to Tucson by way of her native L.A. during the 2025 fires and decided to stay. A lifelong artist, Britt weaves singing, poetry, and visuals into a tapestry of many colors. In 2026, she released two books of poems and short stories: *The Old Carousel* in January and *In Tucson* this month. With her typewriter, she offers poetry pop-ups throughout town, personalizing poems for the recipient based on a word or phrase given with little to no additional information. She also performs music and as a duo with Joe Novelli, both projects consisting largely of improvisational singing. Follow Britt on social media at @msbrittwarner or subscribe to her weekly newsletter to see where she'll be next.

I host a seasonal poetry reading at Bar Crisol called 15 Minutes. On the second Thursday of every month I host "The Inkubator," a writers workshop at Bar Crisol that is free and open to the public.

In Tucson (Excerpt)

In Tucson, the full moon pulls the tides within until
they slosh over the rim of ocotillo eyes
and wet the toes of the saguaros.

In Tucson, the butterflies catch the breeze of
an impending rain storm to carry their
weary wings into the heart of autumn.

In Tucson, a chubby U of A boy with shaggy hair
adjusts his backpack as he and his friend head up
University Blvd, and he's saying,

"Music's terrible now and the world's
ending, what's the point?" as a hummingbird
alights upon a palo verde.

In Tucson, even the atheists pray for rain.

•



Photo: Zoe Lambert

Cameron Quan

Cameron Quan is a poet, essayist, and visual artist from Tucson, AZ. He is the author of Repair Attempts (Northwestern University Press, 2027) and the chapbook Apology Engine (Gold Line Press, 2022), winner of the Gold Line Press 2020 Chapbook Contest. He received his MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Washington.

Please join me at the Tucson Festival of Books, March 13th-14th, 2027 on the UA Campus in the Student Union Kiva Room! You're also invited to the annual CRESTED Poetry Reading, this year at Slow Body Beer Co. on March 13th, 2027, 7:30pm. Thanks for coming out to celebrate our city and the power of poetry!

Skate Country

If this were an aubade, it would begin:
My love, this town has changed

while you were asleep. Now creeping into
the East Side lobby of the rink, we laced

up our skates and immediately
you sprained an ankle. There are injuries

we try to ignore, and wounds made worse
by our attention. There is no dead

of night in a skating rink, no dawn, only
soda-stains, Tajin grains, nanobeads

of nacho cheese now archived in the neon
paisley pile, matted down by dried up

perspiration. My devotion to this place
is not written in blood, but the skin that fails

to break. A friend can't help but ask,
how can you possibly live in a place

like that? In times like these? I have no answer,
except—darling strip mall. Beloved pothole.

Oh, the potential energy of this parking lot.
What I mean to say is, who are we now

to praise the rain and not the endless heat

of summer? The muscle and not its memory?

•



Photo: Cynthia E. Miller

Charles Alexander

Artist, Poet, Bookmaker, Professor, founder/director of Chax Press. Author of 7 full-length books of poetry, 13 chapbooks of poetry, and editor of one critical work on the book arts in America, author of multiple essays, articles, and reviews. Books of poetry include *AT the Edge OF the Sea: Pushing Water II* (Singing Horse Press), *Pushing Water* (Cuneiform Press). Chapbooks include *Some Sentences Look for Some Periods*, and *Two Pushing Waters*, both from Little Red Leaves Textile Series. *Pushing Water III* (full-length book) and *Metal Paper Ink Book* (also full-length) are forthcoming from Lavender Ink Press! (New Orleans).

Director of Chax Press, which publishes books and sponsors occasional poetry readings, classes, and workshops in poetry and the book arts. Please see chax.org for information. Chax Press and Charles Alexander are also co-founders of the new Studio on Stone, a letterpress studio, poetry reading space, and workshop host in downtown Tucson. Find it on Instagram, @ studioonstone. Contact Chax Press (chaxpress@chax.org) with questions.

Dream With Bob Frost

Last night I saw Bob Frost
and yes it was Bob
not Robert who
appeared and greeted
as an old friend.

The only other poet
mentioned (not
seen) was Anne
Waldman whose
friendship gained me
an invitation to join
a soccer team.

The field never
appeared, then
I awoke, the sun
already on the horizon.

•



Photo: StuzzMedia

Dezzy

Dezzy is a spoken word artist, community builder, and event coordinator based out of Tucson, AZ. Originally from East Los Angeles, California, Dezzy found her voice in the desert. She is now an organizer of the TucsonSlamPoetry collective, the founder of dezzysworld, the host and the curator for a growing show called "Rhythm&Poetry." She's the curator and host to pop-up open mics sprinkled throughout the city. Her mission is to collaborate and create spaces that assist in bridging the gaps between artists and communities. The spaces being created encourage people to be who they are. She's showing the world how important it is to activate their own voice by answering the call and stepping into her own agency.

Rhythm&Poetry is a curated open mic that was originally created for poetry and has transformed into a multimedia platform. Poets, singers, rappers, all artists are welcome to come and showcase their original work. Rhythm&Poetry has created a home with BrandyLion and takes place every second Friday of the month.

Slow Burn

Let's
roll up the electricity that was sparked when we came into union
Lick our finger tips and twist them around the spliff
Create a slow burn…
A divinely guided connection
Surrounded by a light of protection has shown itself in our experience
Let's savor it..
Take a rip
hold the vibes in our lungs
Exhale
Let them melt on our tongues
Mellow out
As we dance within the spectrum to the hum of a new frequency

•



Photo: Mike Siakotos

Estella González

Estella González is a first-gen Chicana writer from East L.A. Her award-winning books *Chola Salvation* (Arte Público Press 2021) and *Huizache Women* (Arte Público Press 2023) have garnered various distinctions including a New Mexico-Arizona Book Award, a finalist honor from the Texas Institute of Letters' Jesse H. Jones Best Book of Fiction Award,; Cornell University's Philip Freund Prize in Creative Writing,; and gold medals at the International Latino Book Awards. Her writing was also selected for a Pushcart Prize "Special Mention"; and a "Reading Notable" for The Best American Non-Required Reading. Visit her website at www.eastloswriter.com.

I volunteer on the poetry committee for the Tucson Festival of Books. Every year we select and invite poets from across the country to participate in one of the largest book festivals in the U.S. The festival is supported by various local sponsors and is free for participants. Past poets include U.S. Poet Laureates Arthur Sze, Joy Harjo, and Juan Felipe Herrera. In 2025, the committee inaugurated off-site poetry readings by local poets who have served on panels. For volunteer opportunities with the festival, please visit tucsonfestivalofbooks.org.

Mesa Textiles

Lavender-streaked hills roll below
Rocky plateaus striped orange and cream
patterned with sharp green juniper and
red-cracked gypsum. Between pleated mounds,
deer delicately thread broken hearts
down arroyos frilled with fluffy piñones,
over holey rocks, volcanic buttons fastening
present with past.
Mesas draped in stone curtains
woven by epoch oceans, laced by rivers
reveal a deep sky, embossed
with bleached clouds bulging with rain.
At night the black table of the Pedernal,
blends into a sheer darkness
glittered with dreams and memories.

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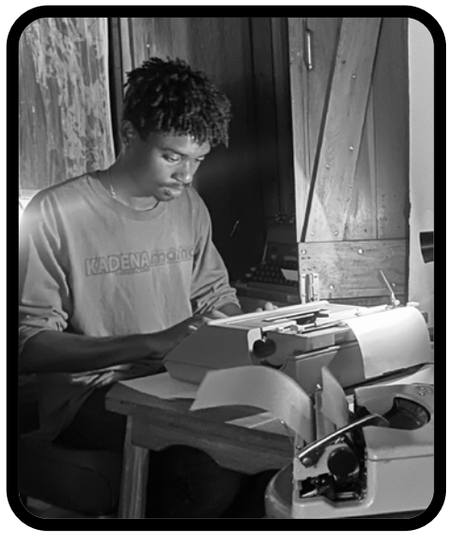


Photo: C

Ev Essif

Ev Essif is a poet and visual artist from Tucson, AZ. His work primarily focuses on esoteric domains and science fiction across various cultural interfaces that evoke a transcendental understanding of the human experience. His work is composed from ancient relics, elemental forms, cosmological snapshots, etches, and technological futurities.

1/5 of the Moveable Beast collective, hosting monthly poetry and art events with a focus on avant-garde/ experimental work. Folks can learn more at A Moveable Beast on facebook or @_moveablebeast on ig. We also post events on the Tucson Timeline: tucsontimeline.info

lifecycle of reason

because the prima facie was a leptokurtic ischemia
leaking disintuition in ivory desiccant
an oversoul overwriting superstitions in lithium
arithmetic
the pylorus of its pyrolic manifestations
destined to dissolve star ash,
to shroud wisdom
in a proxied symbiotic of nephilim aphantasia
and recalcitrant lambdoma scry,
each isonephic recidivism
leads us to convey as
incorrigible nemeses of nirvana

glyphic mastications of oni pulse
Instantiated in becoming
a chirotic embouchere lotus
an onieric caliber of skewed rosetta
laced in kairotic coronations
disappating to zahir cymatics
tautomerized by gnosemic inversion
to a satori artifact of severe ataraxia
a pulse semblancing endless shapelessness
in pretonic lethe
and ambrosial schism

•



Photo: Adrian Carrasco

The Reading Series is a monthly all-ages poetry open mic in Tucson, Arizona. Founded in 2019, The Reading Series prioritizes safety, healing, and justice. Adjacent offerings include spontaneous writing workshops, focus groups, zine-style publishing, and collaborations with community programs and events. The Reading Series is nomadic, highlighting different spaces around the city and surrounding areas, and has been at 12 locations as of 2026. One priority is to ensure that The Reading Series is held in spaces that are fully wheelchair accessible. To learn more and see dates and location information for upcoming readings, look for @TheReadingSeries on Instagram or contact Eva Sierra at thereadingtucson@gmail.com.

Eva Maria Sierra

Eva is a poet, educator, and cultural advocate from Douglas, Arizona. Eva is the author of two chapbooks, *Caña y Limón* and *RAIN*, and her third chapbook, *CIELO*, is forthcoming. In 2023, she was awarded the Fellowship in Cultural Exchange in the Literary Arts from the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing at Arizona State University. Eva is the co-founder and director of The Reading Series; a poetry open mic centered on healing, justice, and the occult. Eva is currently the K-12 Education and Outreach Assistant at the University of Arizona Poetry Center.

monsoon psychosis

be mindful of the raindrops on the roof.
the monsoon is in the desert.
hear the raindrops on the roof.
breathe petrichor-soaked air.

the air vibrates a little different these days.
i forget every year
about the rushing brooks that are carved
from neighborhoods.

there's just as many colors as before,
but all of them are different.
the sounds are all different.

downpour carries me through my city,
down its drains.
i see the world through its gutters.
the world does not see me.
there is so much fog.

it is hard to think
in the fog.
it's hard to tell
what things were like
before the rain.

•



Tucson Slam Poetry is a community lead organization that welcomes all directions of life and ages! Recurring monthly, every 2nd Sunday we invite you to a free writing workshop/cypher from 4:00-6:00pm and the last Sunday of every month to our Slam with a featured artist from 6:30-9:00pm, all at the Coalition Space by 4th Avenue! We are a sliding scale donation entrance fee, but no one is turned away due to lack of funds. Come join us and our game of poetry. See you Sunday!

JCH

JCH is a Tucson born and raised Christ Consciousness Poet. Author of a chapbook, *Just a Taste*. Beginning in 2022, at Revolutionary Grounds to transitioning into the Slam World with Tucson Slam Poetry in 2025. Hosting community events from a magazine's launch party, fundraiser for Body Slam in Phoenix, to bouts draws in New Mexico for Chicharra Poetry Festival. Her dream is to bring people back Home to the remembrance of Self, which is Source, who is You, being Us. "I am both Human and Source. Judgment of One Self experiencing polarities shifting should be nonexistent."

Yo No Quiero

Mastery is a mindset of Unconditional Love .

Yo no quiero un futuro dónde abuso mis niños . Que ellos sienten lo que yo sentí .
La misma promesa que todos mis ancestros dicen cada vez que una nueva generación respira por primera vez .

I don't want my children to ever go through what I went through .
The same promises spoken in native tears each time a new generation breathes for the first time over again . I am done cycling . Aren't you ?
Because I can't do this alone , eventually my children will meet yours and as you can tell I have trust issues with free will . So what do you say ?
I am only responsible for my part . This future is within our hands ,
sculpted with intention and appreciation of One's Self . Knowledge of what not to be engraved in our trauma , actions untaken because of fright . Fear is a very valid emotion , only sometimes it shouldn't be what stops you from achieving peace .

•



Katie Sarah Zale

Katie Sarah Zale, the former Arizona State Poetry Society (ASPS) president (2023-2026), has published four collections of poetry. She is co-editor of three anthologies: *Strange Fruit: Poems on the Death Penalty*, *Winter in America* (Again, poems in response to the 2024 Presidential election, and *Winter in America* (Still, 2026). As director of the Tucson Poetry Arts Series (TAPS), held monthly, Katie seeks published poets and creators of other art forms to collaborate with poets. She is working on a biography of Poets Against the War founder and Buddhist Copper Canyon Press co-founder, Sam Hamill.

Join the Arizona State Poetry Society (ASPS) community of poets! Whether a new or seasoned poet, our organization has much to offer in promotion of the art of poetry: readings, contests, Spoken Word, poetry circles and critique groups, workshops, and an annual conference. Next year, we will host the National Conference of all state poetry societies across the country. In addition, we sponsor a monthly reading series for published poets called the Tucson Arts Poetry Series (TAPS), hosted at the Historic Y. Members and non-members are welcome. Visit azpoetry.net. Contact Katie Sarah Zale to reserve your opportunity to read at TAPS—KatieSarahTAPS@azpoetry.net

Mother of Trees

As my years draw to a close,
I'll change my name
one more time—to Saalumarada:
row of trees, mother of trees,
though I've never birthed a child
nor planted a banyan tree—never
been to India, never created anything
but a poem here and there. I wonder
what it would be like to live
in Bangalore, to run my illiterate hands
through the soil, chant "may there be rain,
may there be a good harvest, may I never
be a burden on this land."

What if I live beyond a hundred
with only rings that circle my face
to confess my age?

May one day someone say of me:
the wind catches its breath
under Saalumarada.

Note:
Saalumarada Thimmakka, of India,
planted more than 380 banyan trees
and died at age 114 in 2025.

•



Laura Talarsky Stevens

Laura Talarsky Stevens is a writer, editor, potter, and teacher based in Tucson, AZ for more than a quarter century. She writes fiction, personal essays, and poetry. Her poems have been published in SandScript and she has been a fiction finalist of the Tucson Festival of Books Literary Awards. She originally hails from New Jersey, graduated with a Masters in Anthropology from the University of Arizona, and was a Fulbright scholar in India. Laura served on the board of the Tucson Poetry Festival for ten years as Financial Director, showcasing some of the finest poets to the Tucson community.

Over the course of the last ten years, I have worked with the Tucson Poetry Festival to bring a wide variety of excellent poets to the Tucson stage, to provide free workshops with these world class poets, and create a platform for local community poets to share their craft. For more than four decades, The Tucson Poetry Festival has believed in and manifested the power of poetry to build community and amplify diverse voices. I'm proud of the work I have accomplished with the Tucson Poetry Festival and encourage poetry loving folks to get involved with and support this great organization that's part of the heart and soul of our community.

World Fool Devil World Death Love

I. Only a fool invests in passing tales.
The outer world, illusion at best. Yes, here a barking dog
There, a cliff. You may tread too close to the edge
and fall. But this is the way we learn.
In truth, the World (The whole world)
Lives within. And the world you create (The within world)
Creates life in the outer world.
So listen up, you sweet Fool.

II. Did you know God created the Devil? What is the devil but a god of its own dominion?
Worship if you must, but take only what you need - your true strength lies elsewhere.
It's in the cards.
Your Power: World-building, Shape-shifting, Heart-thumping
A light saber wielded to the nth degree, lies quiet within. Not against, it is For.
True power renders all else into dust.

III. There is none but what we choose to see. Do you think that's who and what you are?
The laughter we feel in the moment of death bubbling beneath the surface of stillness
Oh, but we do not take this limited vision with us, into Beyond.
I said the devil is a god of its own, charging its realm with visions to cloud The Eye.
I said it before and I'll say it again - Worship if you must, but take only what you need, and at the last - Leave it all behind in the dust.

IV. Love does not bow to you, Nor does Love end with you.
Come if you will, we know you well. Let the worlds whirl below
as seeds tower into canopies, skies opening into multiverse.
Truth with a capital T - a twin to - Love with a capital L
Unending, unfolding, uninhibited
the Infinite, the Only Thing, that Is.

•



Lindsey Curley

Lindsey Allison Curley (Diné) is Red House Clan and born for the Hopi Salt Clan. She has a BA in Creative Writing and a minor in American Indian Studies and a Masters in Library & Information Science at the University of Arizona. She is a Birth-8 Librarian at the Pima County Public Library with a team specializing in Community Engagement and Outreach. Her poem "Hashk'aan" was featured in the Poetry on the Plateau series at the Museum of Northern Arizona and was a Poet + Artist Collaborator in the 4th annual Writing on the Wall gallery show for her poem "Chrysocolla-Impregnated Chalcedony."

Join us for "Golden Hour: A Showcase of Youth Poets"Celebrate the power of young voices as local youth ages 9-18 take the stage to share their original poetry. Hosted by the Many Nations team of the Pima County Public Library, this program builds self-confidence, creates lasting memories, and fosters a vibrant community for the written word.

As its facilitator and moderator, I invite you to experience the vulnerability, candor and bravery of these incredible young orators. Catch us live at the Tucson Festival of Books in March 2027, at participating library branches leading up to the events, and at our grand final showcase at the Fox Tucson Theatre in summer 2027!

A Homebody

I have not been a homebody in a while.
I've been a nomad, a traveler between work, the grocery store, the task at hand and the errand to run.
As I sit here, near burnt crimson pebbles of my casita, I see tiny rouge mesas of ants carrying pieces of yucca paper. As I backtrack their pathways of steep slopes, rocky formations that fit in the palm of my hand, I find her again. A landmark I've not acknowledged in a while, my grandmother yucca.
You see, I'd been on a mission. Gold seeker of many things warm and toasty, but if you're not careful,
if you don't remain mountain bound,
you might end up with burnt butter.

When things seem dark and stormy, it is okay to wait.
"Don't cook it too long! Let it sit," she says, like how the stew is much better the next day. "It's okay to wait, shiyázhí."

Remember that you're a monument, made of steel, but you are also composed of Catalina greens. Everything that lingers within agave shadows, to places as prominent as the first snow, to the sky magentas of our sunsets and into depths of the star nation:

All the parts of you must be cared for.
All creatures, even the tiny ones, are this tried and true.
This is what the teachings of desert sage and cedar ash do.

"Don't forget how a part of this world you are.
I know you will come back when you are ready."

•



Photo: Christine Davis

Louis T Davis

Lou Davis is a retired veteran. He has been writing poetry and social commentary since 2020 in an effort to sow the seeds of equity in the hope that future generations will dine on the fruit.

I have the honor of hosting an open mic poetry event on the first Friday of every month at Revolutionary Grounds from 5:00pm to 7:00pm. Please come and support local artists and show love to this amazing venue provided by the owner, Joy.

Dreams and Nightmares

The Black man tilled the field in the mid day sun. Sweat
stung fresh scars on his back.
Scars he'd earned by looking into his master's eyes as his
wife was dragged off… again.
The Black man tilled.
He stopped to wipe away tears.
He raised his head.
He begged the heavens to let his children's
grandchildren's great-grandchildren live free. His master
looked out the window and saw his property standing
in the field and looking at the sky.
He raised his head.
He begged the heavens to never let those lazy savages
be free.
He walked toward his whip.
My ancestors that suffered the middle passage had black
skin.
My skin is brown.
How did my skin attain this hue?
By force.
My skin is the color of rape.
I am my ancestor's wildest dreams.
I am my ancestor's wildest nightmares.

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Photo: Leila Savina

Write N Tell is a free open mic and writing workshop event based in Tucson. We have been steadily growing a platform for poets, writers, deep thinkers, educators, friends, and more. The event always starts with a sacrificial poem from the host Lourdes Leiner. Then each poet who has listed their name on the sign up sheet gets the time on mic to perform their works. We make a safe place for our inner worlds.

After performing we shout out what stood out to us that we had in common. Then we set a timer and get out our pens and paper. Then work to write through a quick timer. Allowing you to recenter and create with your community. Then we break and get a moment to speak to one another about the work and our thoughts and make friendships! Visit @feralghoulfriend on Instagram for regular updates and flyers.

Lourdes Leiner

Lourdes Leiner is an author based in Tucson, Arizona rooted in the Sonoran Desert. She is an active participant in Arizona's culture as the current Palo Verde Bloom Poet Laureate through the University of Arizona Poetry Center. She has four poetry collections: *Stitches, Spit It Out, Spider's Silk,* and *Sabotage.* As well as two novels, *Sequence* and *In Vitro.* Lourdes served as a featured southwestern poet at the NYC Poetry Festival. She was the First Writer in Residence at Catalyst Studios (2025). Lourdes has served as an international mentor through the Angloville cultural exchange programs at Cambridge and the University of Roehampton in London. Featured speaker at the Philosophical Research Society in Los Angeles. Lourdes is the founder of the Writing as Humanitarian Aid Anthology through the Phoenix Center of the Arts. Her goal is to expand access to the literary arts in Arizona.

Spit It Out

I had a lot to say yesterday, and I still do today.
But once again I find myself having no time to say it.
Just spit it out.
Make sure it all lies there.
The perfect chaotic genuine mess of words.
Like paint falling onto an asphalt road,
From a rusted paint can off of the back of a construction worker's truck.
To create these beautiful complex forms,
That can only be produced by pure force and momentum.
Let it spread there, on display.
If other cars run it over,
So let it be.
Let those words stain the bottoms of their tires.
The bottoms of their shoes.
Let them carry it out into the street and their homes.
Just spit it out already.

•



Marc David Pinate

Marc David Pinate is a Theater Maker, writer, and sometimes musician. By day he is the producing artistic director of Borderlands Theater where he thinks of interesting ways to bring theater to our diverse Tucson community.

I'm getting ready to present the Barrio Stories 10 Year Anniversary celebration. This is a theater based heritage festival, produced by Borderlands Theater, celebrating the history and heritage of Tucson's Mexican-American barrios. Tucson's barrios were diverse, vibrant communities where Mexican, Chinese, African-American and Indigenous families lived and worked. Through 12 plays inspired by oral history interviews, heritage demonstrations, an archival photograph exhibit, poetry readings, walking tours, and mariachi concerts, Barrio Stories brings the past to life and honors the heritage that lives on in Tucson communities today. NOVEMBER 12-15, at the TUCSON CONVENTION CENTER. MORE INFO: www.borderlandstheater.org

Good Times (excerpt)

(To be read while playing "Good Times" by CHIC)

Good times
sounded like
thick chocolate
baselines promenading from
your stereo speakers
that were as tall
as my six year-old self.
But even at that age
I felt the rhythm of your world
surround me from the inside, Danny.

I finish my nana's dinner,
roasted wienies - slit down the middle
stuffed with a stick of cheddar cheese
and green chilli –
as you would begin
your ritual of getting ready.

Step one:
turn on the music
loud enough to forget
your anxieties and change
the energy of that small house
with its crucifixes and last suppers
hanging from the pink walls;
an altar of family photos,
bronzed baby shoes,
and santos next to the TV;
its swamp cooler humidity
and authentic smells of
pure Indigeneity
masquerading as Mexicaness
emanating from it's
well-worn kitchen;
its doilied couch
that you and I
would share to watch
movies on the VCR you bought,
the first VCR I'd ever seen
in my life.

And you, Danny,
in and out of the shower
then on to

Step two:
Into nana and tata's room
because the ironing board
didn't fit in your room.

Shht, Shht, Shht
Tsssssss.

Before irons came with
a steam function
you would use a spray bottle
and mist your pants and shirt
then iron over them,
slow and purposeful,
to achieve lines as sharp
and clean as the low riders
on Central Ave.

Meticulous in your refined
presentation: red shirt, the
top two buttons open
to show off your gold crucifix, ...

•



Photo: Cielo Maldonado

Mariana Rivera

Mariana Rivera is an Indigenous poet of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Tucson, Arizona and 2026 Indigenous Nations Poets fellow. Born and raised in Tucson, Mariana writes as a testament to the reality of her intersectional lens of the southwest. A major focus in Mariana's writing is the decriminalization of marginalized youth, addicts, and the homeless as well as promoting Indigenous visibility and thinking. Currently, Mariana is involved in community arts facilitation.

Currently, my work surrounds bringing arts opportunities to the Pascua Yaqui Reservation. This has looked like a series of poetry workshops where students were accommodated for their time and work, creating and sourcing art materials to donate to students and elders, and organizing with Yoemem Tekia Foundation, our cultural museum, to explore ways to create long-term arts programming for our community members. This process has largely focused on employing arts practices with traditional values of expression, multi generational values, and well-being.

Traces

Dirt stores memories for the desert.
My skin and dirt remember each other's touch,
desert is an old family friend
I pass through rolling hills, mounds of earth
I am reminded of my Tata's mound of a belly
Tata's belly now erupts from the ground
as he lays rest, dirt surrounds him like a blanket
welcoming him home. From Hermosillo to Pascua, This desert
knew his footsteps. All of Sonora has seen his smile. We rest
candles and ribbon on Dias De Los Muertos, bright monarch
butterflies arrive just in time to see our cemetery, full of life. Tata
travels with them.
Among graves embraced by families and memories,
CATERPILLAR branded steel-drum trash cans get
filled with dusty paper flowers and sun-worn wreaths.
CATERPILLAR men fill the city,
locals still make way to the mines.
CATERPILLAR equipment digs the hole
we fill with my Tata, now this desert will know me even more.
We fill the earth, as much as they take.
When I step barefoot outside I remember the dirt
who remembers my touch, I tell my Tata, "Hello"

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Photo: Carlos Chavez

Light The Mic is a community-built open mic created to give local artists a place to be seen, heard, paid, supported, and connected. For four years, artists, audiences, hosts, vendors, and community partners have kept this space alive together. The mission has always been bigger than a stage: build a stronger creative community where artists can grow, find opportunities, and know their work matters.

This October, we're celebrating Light The Mic's 4-Year Anniversary with a special event featuring multiple local artists and businesses. Come be part of the audience and support several creatives in one night, or sign up to perform and bring your own work to the room.

Meela

Meela Hill is a yoga facilitator, multidisciplinary artist, and community organizer committed to using creative expression as a tool for healing, connection, and social impact. With a deep commitment to reducing stigma and amplifying lived experiences, her practice integrates storytelling, visual art, and community co-creation to challenge dominant narratives and build spaces of visibility, empowerment, and transformation. She works to carry forward traditions of dance and creative wellness education, using movement as a pathway to resilience, empowerment, and community connection.

The venue has a stair-free entrance. Wheelchair restroom accessibility is being confirmed. ASL interpretation is not currently funded, though accessibility funding is included in grants I'm pursuing. Questions: FindYours@JijivishaHolistic.com

I Wanna Be a Hymn

A hymn is a religious song or poem written to praise, honor, or worship God (or a deity of your choosing).
See, I grew up in the church.
5 days a week, twice on some days.
Vacation Bible school was the highlight of my summer until I was like 15yrs old.
Here in Tucson, I think yall call it Awana.
All my friends were there, they had the best snacks, and let's be honest - the songs were cool as hell too.
I enjoyed it so much that my kid went to Awana for a few years so we could have that shared childhood memory.
Bc all her life I've been as intentional as a Black, mentally ill, single mother could possibly be under the crushing weight of white supremacy, patriarchy, and a falling empire.
Even in the midst of a falling empire, no - especially then!
I want my entire being to be an expression of praise, beauty, and harmony.
I wish to live a life of worship and devotion.
But to what? Capitalism is their God and apparently my brain refuses to submit to their Lord.

•



Photo: Jade Beall

Naomi Ortiz

Naomi Ortiz (they/them) is a Disabled Mestize poet, visual artist, and author of *Rituals for Climate Change: A Crip Struggle for Ecojustice, Sustaining Spirit: Self-Care for Social Justice,* and they are a co-editor the anthology, *Every Place on the Map is Disabled: Poems and Essays.* Ortiz is a Reclaiming the U.S.-Mexico Border Narrative Awardee and a United States Artists Disability Futures Fellow. They publish widely including in *POETRY, Lithub, The Texas Review,* and *Tupelo Quarterly.* Through their multidisciplinary work, Ortiz invites people to imagine how self-care, disability justice, climate action, and other relational practices create a collective future. www.NaomiOrtiz.com

1. Disability Pride Day Tucson 2026
Saturday, December 5th
This year's Disability Pride Day will be at El Rio Neighborhood Center, 1390 W. Speedway Blvd. Performances, adaptive sports and equipment, art making, and more. Disability Accessibility Information: Barrier Free entrance, ASL and CART provided, wheelchair accessible parking / restrooms, quiet / sensory free space available
disabilitypridetucson.com

2. Fierce Bodies
August 19, 2026 – July 3, 2027
Tucson Museum of Art. Fierce Bodies traces the many ways bodies carry stories of strength, vulnerability, and care across generations, regions, and artistic traditions. Artist Talk – October 14th. Disability Accessibility Information: Barrier Free entrance, wheelchair accessible parking / restrooms. tucsonmuseumofart.org/exhibition/fierce-bodies/

3. Tucson Meet Yourself
October 16-18, 2026
In Downtown Tucson
Get to Know Disability Cultures - Disability Culture tent and main-stage programming. Disability Accessibility Information: tucsonmeetyourself.org/accessibility/

To be part of the web of those who love place (excerpt)

As a disabled person of color, my body, needs, and perspective do not have a home in conventional responses to climate change.

> I feel like a lost soul wandering around the communities and discourses of the environmental movements. Shaking my jangly earrings, whispering, "Hello" into the wind. My ghostly presence one they cannot quite make out.

Yet, they use language in which I recognize my reflection.

> *Mining scars cripple and deform the earth. People are blind to the cost. Pollution spreads like a cancer.*
> Disabled bodies are thrust like a dam to make people stop and pay attention. Using the fear of my body and other disabled people's bodies as a metaphor for environmental destruction, is just using fear to incite fear.

Fear of disability is transferred and leveraged as a cautionary tale, to stop us from embracing our environments.

> Why incite more fear? Does fear create agency? Because I can tell you, fear does not define my relationship to my disabled body.
> Discrimination? Fewer options? Yes.
> Making do with less? Making hard choices? Yes.
> But I have an intimate awareness of my needs. I know what minimums I can live on.

Disabled people know how to adapt to a world which is ever changing without considering us.

> Living into the future means learning to ask for help. Grappling with interdependence is slowing down. Listening. Disappointing each other and mending.
> ...

The full poem was first published in POETRY Magazine and is part of the book, Rituals for Climate Change: A Crip Struggle for Ecojustice

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Paola Valenzuela

Paola Valenzuela is a poet from the border towns Agua Prieta, Sonora and Douglas, Arizona. In November of 2020, she published her first chapbook, Cricket's Lament: Poemas de Duelo e Inocencia, with Spoken Futures, the grassroots literary organization behind the Tucson Youth Poetry Slam. She is a Board Member and the Treasurer of POG, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit bringing poets and artists to Tucson since 1996. She is also the Event and Development Coordinator at the University of Arizona Poetry Center, a leading literary institution and one of the largest collections of contemporary poetry in America.

"I have the immense joy of working at the University of Arizona Poetry Center. I invite you to attend one of our readings, which hosts nationally known poets, or to take a creative writing class with us, which are taught by local and visiting poets. You're always welcome to stop by and visit our library. We have one of the largest collections of contemporary poetry in America—and it's here in Tucson for you to enjoy! poetry.arizona.edu.

I'm also really happy to be a Board Member and the Treasurer of POG, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit bringing innovative poets and artists to Tucson since 1996. I invite you to attend one of our readings, where we pair local poets with poets beyond Southern Arizona. Our hope is to present challenging, avant-garde work that a diverse audience can enjoy. pogartstucson.org.

¡Tequila!

Stalk of agave
sprouting from all
of our stomachs.
As children, we
ran under the table
as our tíos and tías
drank, childhood
song their laughter.
Now, we sit with them.

One day, it will be just
us primos, and then,
of course, none of us.
When I picture our
children, their teeth
are not their teeth, but
our parents'— will they
know? We've inherited
everything: the warmth
in our bellies, the shape
of our laughter.

•



Photo: Ghazal (@aksbyghazal)

I contribute to TWELVOTWO (1202), which is a multi-media company my brother Q and I started back in 2016, in order to provide ourselves and those around us a space to create music. It then transformed over the years into this multifaceted collaborative project that holds a lot of our most precious work. We want to invite you to take a dive into our website, check out what we've been up to and tap into what we got going on. We hope you enjoy!

www.twelvotwo.com
www.twelvotwo.com/rey

REY

REY doesn't just make music—he builds environments. Raised in the desert of Chukson Arizona, his sound carries a sense of space—wide, atmospheric, and searching. There's a quiet tension in it. Movement and stillness existing at the same time. Songs that feel less like statements and more like moments you step into. But the music is only one layer. His lyrics live somewhere between confession and observation—personal without always being explicit. He leaves pieces of himself throughout the work—desire, doubt, ambition, humor, survival, intimacy, and contradiction. allowing the picture to reveal itself without ever fully explaining it. The result is writing that gives you sides of REY and in turn gives you enough to recognize something of yourself in it. REY also shapes everything around it—the visuals, the typography, the tone, the rollout. Each piece intentional. Each release designed as a complete body, not just a drop. Nothing is random. Nothing is separate. It all speaks the same language. His work lives in that intersection—where sound becomes visual, and visuals become feeling. Where identity isn't explained, it's experienced. Independence, for REY, is a form of authorship. A way to build without dilution. To move without translation. He's not just creating music. He's building a world you learn how to see. And he's still shaping it.

Celina's Son

The water holds memory of you
Them winds spread a word around the world
Verified on this journey gives me proof
I rummage through the lessons and find pearls
Never question the remnants of truth
Whatever believed usually unfurls
So when I catch my wins or losses, it's in a coupe
Conditioned air got bumps goosing on my girl
Loosen up my thoughts
I shoot up shorties womb
Get risk on my plot
But when we jump the broom
Protector with a mop
When she turns cocoon
I know we cut of cloth
That ain't nothing new
I'll tell them of our moms
I'll teach him of the moon
And how it moves the blood
It means to bring a clue
To live along the mud
Where we carved that mood
Listen to your love
Resist it when it's cruel
And lean into your trust
Just trust…

A hypocrite, cause how could I?
I was only 5
Really mystified
Told was I
That somebody killed my mother in the night
I built spite, toward a faceless man Murder in my dreams
Confusion in my hands
Melted in my means
Sorted through the plan Felt it as a teen
Then lost my biggest fan I was barely 16
Things I couldn't stand So I got it off on schemes
Foos got hooked on pills I never told no tales
Just pray my Sister well
Bumping Mary Wells
Casting out these spells
Magic what we held
Pray I never failed
Although I knew I will
Well hate they try to throw I'm just trying to throw around my weight
My fate to mine a soul
The whole time felt like I never had a home
But I was here all along



sam bloom

sam bloom, m.ed., is a happily divorced, Black non-binary queer parent of two. sam's path towards activism began while they worked in the public school system as a high school teacher. they are a writer and a poet and use memoir style story-like poems to light up a path towards liberation for BIPOC folks and, specifically, Black folks. sam bloom is an educator, image curator, consultant for non-profits, educators and schools, a gender-affirming stylist, and a social practice textile artist who understands the ancestral act of making and mending and brings that framework into their resistance to oppressive systems.

sam bloom hosts a BIPOC centered book club called "reading the revolution" and has many other projects in the works and is excited to partner with you to bring your vision, style, and content to life. sam is the brains behind the dressed & affirmed community challenge on instagram. follow them at WhatSamMade.Bloom on instagram to keep up with them and visit their website www.WhatSamMade.com.

it's been a few years and i have questions

today is your celestial 67th birthday / i'm painting ezra joy's bed frame golden / so opulent / matching the royalty that lives in her veins / you are still the queen / i wonder how you would've described this / 67th year? / do you think you would make promises to yourself? / to us?

this year has been exceptionally difficult / for me / in some ways, more difficult than when i left that white boy who "came from money"/ and permitted me to have nothing / but two carseats and a large suitcase

i don't think you're an "i told you so ass bitch" / but / what i would give to hear you say that / what i would give to hear your laugh / what i would give to sit beside you as your cigarette smoke fills the space / and the ash burns holes in every goddamn thing

i've had two jobs this year. / me and baby sis have wondered aloud what advice you would give me for next / steps / i swear i'll listen this time / i'm still hardheaded / i still purchase every lesson and pay with my pain / disappointment / i'm losing hope, ma / i need you now / i met with someone i have been cultivating a connection w for years / it gave me a painting it made: thelonius monk / i have no idea who that is but i am certain you do / you are so wise even in your death / i wonder why you signed that dnr? / was continuing to live more painful than choosing your death with dignity / on your terms

i had an experience a few months back / i looked in the mirror and saw your face / my shadow caught my eye and startled me / ma? what are you doing here? / they tell me ghosts don't have shadows / and pops said they used to call me mom's shadow / you would abruptly stop and i'd walk right into you / i wanted to be in your skin / i see you in my shadow / the tables have turned / they underestimated your vastness / celestial queen / they don't know how much power you hold / and reach out / gently place it in my hands

i can't hold it. / i'm a bitch. / my tongue is a sword. / i never learned tact. / maybe i refused / purchased painful lessons make up the tapestry of my life / you saved me in ways that no one ever has / you brought me pain so great that no one ever has / you are lightning / i am the storm

what was your life like? / what were your dreams? / that's a place you visit me / please come and meet me there again / i need you.

i'm sorry.

•



samebrown

samebrown is the co host of the longest running open mic in Tucson, Spoke Second Sunday Open Mic. same sees poetry as a language that crises all boundaries and time to bring people together for fellowship, freedom, expression, and love spreading.

Spoke is an unapologetically Black space where poets, musicians, singers, comedians, storytellers, and regular folk interact and engage. Cohosted by samebrown and KAVET, the format is free flowing: no sign up sheets, no particular order, no featured poets. Spoke is more of a conversation among friends in a living room sprinkled with entertainment and joy. We very intentionally do not promote Spoke widely … word of mouth has kept us strong for more than eight years (even through the pandemic) as we curate a unique and authentic experience every Second Sunday.

Indivisible?

That which is indivisible is inevitably and utterly inimical to our interests.

While leaves on water surface flow easily towards whatever direction the wind winds, stone mountains move to a more millennial-paced rhythm

This forms a foundation upon which our love roots deep into rocky soil replete with the nutrients and minerals necessary to support our growth upwards.

Thus, even a seemingly indivisible foundation can contain cracks and crevices exploitable for life and for love.

•



Photo: Simon Asher

Sra. Josefina Cárdenas

Sra. Josefina Contreras Cardenas is a Native Tucsonan, of Mexican-Yaqui descendants, a resident that has lived near Sentinel Peak "A-Mountain" along the Santa Cruz River all her life. Her husband, from Jalisco, and Doña Josefina have been married for 45 years. She is a mother of three children and Nana of two grandsons. Surrounded by farm animals and horses are one of their favorites. Four generations in Barrio Kroeger Lane, celebrating its 105th anniversary, where Sra. Josefina has been a community organizer for over thirty years, preserving the Land and people's culture, traditions and sacred sites at Tucson's Original Birthplace

Favor Celestial Community Economic Development Initiative for the Preservation of Barrio Kroeger Lane, Co-Founded by Multi-Generational Barrio Elder Woman and Indigenous Matriarch, Tohono O'odham, Navajo, Mexican-Yaqui. Starting the year, monthly, Favor Celestial takes part organizing gatherings with intentions of bonding community to avoid cultural gentrification, also open to the public; October 17th "Days of Caring," Nov. Sunrise Blessing at the O'odham Family Monument & Danza de Tonantzin, December Our Barrio Posada.

Cultural Gentrification

They don't know, we walk without shoes on Mother Earth ~ Madre Tierra
They don't know, we ran barefoot through our barrio streets ~ en la calle

They don't know, some babies run free with or without a diaper
They don't know, the river is our Sacred Grounds
They don't know, our Elders returned late from the mountain and that they had their own "Tiendita" in the barrio during their childhood. That we have at home a capilla for Our Virgen de Guadalupe ~ Tonantzin and that it is not art. Or don't celebrate our dead with a costume parade, but in prayer with a candle light and the soul's meal.

They just don't know, the barrio ways of life;
Chickens with their pollitos in the street, a horse with a rider,
cats and dogs roaming in the roads.
That the coyote, bobcat, liebre, javalina, are also our relatives
Vecinos take care of each other's children, invited to have a meal together, that there wasn't any fences or walls of separation. Planted their gardens
in each other's lands and shared the crops with one another.
They don't know Tata's teachings, that the Gallo sings "Gracias Adios"
and if the roster crows during the night
it is because there will be a change of weather the following day.
They don't know, that a vecino can burn firewood not only for a weekend barbeque
but during the week for a carne asada,
the aroma of a homecooked dinner with homemade tortillas.
They don't know, that neighbors share electricity because this month
there wasn't enough money to pay for utilities.
That relatives, friends and family live all together in one house or their casitas.
They just wouldn't know or understand.
Or feel that our loud music is our tradition and culture.
And the drum is the heart beat of our ceremony.

They want us to be legitimate.

Ometeotl!

This poem was written because of complaints of our barrio's ways of life and from the pain of cultural gentrification, displacement of a barrio's multi-generational family and now the impact of trauma.

•



TC Tolbert

TC Tolbert (he/him/hey grrrl) is a transqueer poet and educator, nationally recognized with an Academy of American Poets' Laureate Fellowship in 2019 for his work with over a thousand trans, non-binary, and queer folks as Tucson's Poet Laureate (2017-2025). TC is author of the award winning *The Quiet Practices, Gephyromania,* and five chapbooks. S/he is co-editor of *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics,* the first anthology of its kind. He never ceases to experience a simultaneous grief and deep love any time s/he pays attention to the world.

TC facilitates Trans/Space is Expanding, a weekly free online generative workshop that foregrounds the work of trans and queer poets. To register go to: https://bit.ly/TransSpace

Impatient - to love the world as it dies

A series of Dares, a form I created based on the syllable count of the date

2/29/24
2 children –
29 Gazans –shot while waiting on flour
– today happens every day – holy –
just to be bare – lit vapor – passing
– I am
2 spoon feed
0
2 ing my
4 grandmother time

4/3/25
4 Having witnessed
3 dolphins – I
2 go to
0
2 bed sad
5 about who I'm not –

7/1/25
7 Terri says your body wants
1 to
2 heal – we
0
2 build new
5 prisons every day –

3/11/25
3 poem in
11 the shape of a trans woman –
getting groceries
2 una
0
2 bashed
5 ly and unharassed

4/15/25
4 Having been raised
15 on the end times – I live – holy –
out loud – I promise to die
2 wonder
0
2 wedded
5 as when I was born –

•



Tyler Meier

Tyler Meier's poetry and nonfiction have appeared in the *Arizona Republic, Boston Review, Bat City Review, Indiana Review, jubilat, Poetry, Washington Square, Forklift, Ohio, Tupelo Quarterly* and the anthology *Truth to Power: Writers Respond to the Rhetoric of Hate.* With Naomi Shihab Nye and David Hassler, he is co-editor of *Dear Vaccine: Global Voices Speak to the Pandemic.* He works at the University of Arizona Poetry Center and has high hopes.

The University of Arizona Poetry Center is an open-to-the-public collection of more than 125,000 poetry items. We host readings, lectures, exhibitions, classes and workshops, and K-12 programs including writers-in-the-schools, field trips, story times, and other dedicated programs for youth. Our digital collections and programs include Voca, a fully transcribed archive of recorded poetry readings, from the early 1960s to the present moment, and Poetry Centered, a podcast where contemporary poets present three poems from Voca and one of their own. In partnership with the poet Nicole Sealey, we're the host of the annual Sealey Challenge, the largest poetry reading initiative in the world. We strive to create accessible programs and operate by a series of community agreements.

I like to call the Poetry Center a kind of national park for the imagination. We thrive through collaboration, and welcome ways to imagine expanding audiences for poetry. Learn more at poetry.arizona.edu.

A Midlife Testimony

Attention as a drill bit.
The sea has no plot, pure lyric.
Or: all the timothy in the field touching itself

rather than being alone.
The absolute beauty of a rent payment
in a mailbox. The sound of straw

being cleaned off the earth.
The golden ways and means.
A hummingbird neck

as the mind's governor.
Heartbeat as a gallop ripped apart.
How a ribcage looks stitched.

Sometimes I pin the tail on the donkey.
Sometimes I pin the tail on myself.
Day lilies like the dads of the ditch.

Turn a dove into a crow
By throwing it through the night.
On the church suggestion card, he writes

More saints please. Then,
Our Father, who isn't art?
The clouds go on great gurneys

Into the thick blue of the distance,
where one can see forever.
Forever looks good for its age, says start

This way: heart as a blade and head the mule
that drags it slow. What the animal
provides. A furrow where the future goes.

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Photo: Manuel Ruiz

Logan Phillips

Logan Phillips is a writer, performer and cultural worker, currently serving as Poet Laureate of Tucson, Arizona. He is recipient of a 2026 Poet Laureate Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets and is author of the books *Reckon* (University of Arizona Press, 2026), *Sonoran Strange* (West End Press, 2015), and the ongoing *NoVoGRAFíAS* series (Artspeak Press).

Born in the Arizona-Sonora borderlands to a family of Irish / Slavic decesnt, Phillips is known for bilingual readings (English / Spanish) and multimedia performance art pieces, which have been featured at festivals in the US, Mexico, Colombia, the UK and Germany. Holding collaboration as a core creative practice, he contributes to a wide range of publishing, music, education and community-centered, land-based projects.

More at Dirtyverbs.com and @dirtyverbs

Poets in the Park celebrates Tucson's vibrant literary culture through free events in public spaces, connecting audiences, writers and storytellers from diverse communities. As an investment in the city's artists and cultural infrastruture, poetry is understood as a technology to collectively imagine a more just future.

Poets in the Park is designed to align with Tucson's ¡Somos Uno! Cultural Strategy and is the primary project of Logan Phillips' term serving the city as Poet Laureate. The program has received the generous support of The Academy of American Poets and the Mellon Foundation, Tucson Mayor Regina Romero, and The University of Arizona Poetry Center, among others.

