

# *Paterson's Poets*

## Voices from the Silk City

April 1 – June 24, 2023



# Doris Mae Adler

1924 - 2021



Photograph from the Paterson Museum Collection.

Doris Mae Vanderwiel was born in Paterson to Isaac and Alberta Vanderweil. When she was born, the family resided on 21st Avenue. By 1930, they had moved to 166 Trenton Avenue, where they lived with her maternal grandmother. Doris graduated from Eastside High School in 1941.

Her first job out of school was working as a New Jersey Bell Telephone employee. Following her marriage to German National, Dr. Fritz Adler in 1943, she became his medical assistant. Initially, the couple moved in with her family, before moving to their own residence at 777 Market Street.

Adler submitted her poems to the Paterson newspapers, and had several of her pieces published. In 1953, Pageant Press published *Poems over a Tea Cup*. A collection of seventy poems written over the course of one year, this body of work reflects on everyday events. Adler's poetry is "light verse written about ordinary things which everyone encounters" (*The News*, Sept. 12, 1953). In addition to her poetry, Adler wrote the lyrics to several songs composed by her husband. Her lyrical style of writing can also be experienced in her poems.

Like many of Paterson's poets, Alder felt a strong connection to the Paterson Free Public Library, the institution that provided her access to the written word. Following the publishing of her book, she donated two autographed copies to the Paterson Free Public Library.

In 1957, Alder and her family relocated to Glen Rock, where she resided for the rest of her life.

# Susan Lembo Balik

1961 –



Photograph courtesy of  
Jonathan Cañas.

Susan Lembo Balik serves as Director, Cultural Affairs at Passaic County Community College and works out of Paterson's historic Hamilton Club Building. There, she writes grants and administers arts, history, and cultural programming for the Folklife Center of Northern New Jersey, the Passaic County Cultural and Heritage Council, the Poetry Center and the PCCC Art Galleries. She is also an adjunct professor at the college, teaching journalism and communications courses.

She holds a Master's in Journalism from New York University, and formerly wrote newspaper feature articles and a column focusing on health, parenting, environmental and social justice issues for the North Jersey Media Group.

Her poetry collections include *Broken Symmetry* and *Sinatra, the Jeoperettes & me* (both by Garden Oak Press). Her poems have appeared in the *Paterson Literary Review*, *Lips*, *San Diego Poetry Annual*, *Tiferet* and other journals.

The dream of rocking chairs on a front porch and enough acreage to keep a horse led to the purchase of an 1850's farmhouse in the woods of Newfoundland, NJ. She lives there with her husband and a menagerie of farm and rescue animals and can often be found hiking or horseback riding the trails.

To read a sampling of poems or her blog posts and to purchase books or learn about upcoming events, visit [susanbalik.com](http://susanbalik.com).

## Alfred Gibbs Campbell

1826 – 1884



No known portrait of  
Alfred Gibbs Campbell exists.

Born in Trenton in 1826, Alfred Gibbs Campbell came to Paterson to manage the Ivanhoe Paper Mill as Superintendent and later, part owner. A man of many talents, Campbell manufactured patent medicines and established *The Alarm Bell* newspaper in 1851. As the proprietor, publisher and editor, he used this newspaper to promote his many moral causes including temperance, abolition and women's suffrage.

Campbell also wrote poetry. His works reveal many of his personal sentiments regarding his many causes, with poems such as "A Battle-Cry" and "Old John Brown." His poems were published in a single volume entitled *Poems* in 1883. Today he is recognized as an important nineteenth century African American poet. His poem "Song of the Decanter" is also widely believed to be the first concrete poem printed in America.

Dedicated to his causes, Campbell founded a temperance society in Paterson. In 1854, he also became a founding member of Paterson's Antislavery Society. He went on to become Vice President of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1857, serving alongside William Lloyd Garrison of Massachusetts.

He died in Newark in 1884 and is buried at the First Presbyterian Churchyard in Hamilton Square, New Jersey.

# Judith Ortiz Cofer

1952 – 2016



Photograph courtesy of the University of Georgia.

Judith Ortiz was born in Hormigueros, Puerto Rico. Four years later, her family relocated to Paterson, New Jersey when her father was stationed at Brooklyn Navy Yard. She spent much of her childhood travelling between New Jersey and Puerto Rico, and attended school in both places. This movement between two places and cultures influenced much of her writing. She credited her gift of storytelling to her abuelita (grandmother) with whom she resided while in Puerto Rico.

The family left New Jersey when Judith Ortiz was fifteen, and she spent the rest of her life in the Southern states, predominantly Georgia. She taught as the Franklin Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Georgia, Athens between 1984 and 2013, when she retired.

Considered a prominent voice of the Puerto Rican experience in English, many of Cofer's poems appear in anthologies. Many of her poems are bilingual and other works were translated into Spanish following initial publication in English.

By the end of her career, Judith Ortiz Cofer had published a variety of work, including fiction, memoirs, essays and children's books, but her first literary works were poetry. She continued to return to poetry, which she felt "contains the essence of language." The author of several books of poetry, as well as several books of mixed poetry and prose, her first book of poetry, *Latin Women Pray* was published in 1980.

Judith Ortiz Cofer received many honors and distinctions including Fanfare Best Book of the Year Award, and The American Library Association Reforma Pura Belpre Medal. She won the Riverstone International Chapbook Competition for *Peregrina* (1986). The 1991 PEN/Martha Albrand Special Citation in Nonfiction and a Pushcart Prize for *Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood* (1990). *The Latin Deli: Prose & Poetry* (1993) won the Anisfield Wold Book Award, was nominated for a Pulitzer-Prize and named one of 25 books All Georgians Should Read in 2005. She received grants from the Georgia Council for the Arts and the Witter Bynner Foundation, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the University of Georgia Humanities Center, and the Florida Fine Arts Council.

# Catherine Doty

1952 –



Photograph courtesy of Herb Way.

A native of Paterson, Catherine Doty is a poet, artist and teacher born and raised near Garrett Mountain, who walked past the Falls on her way to Kennedy High School. Much of her writing explores the beauties and complications of coming of age in 1960's Paterson.

Her first poetry collection, *Momentum*, was published in 2004 by CavanKerry Press. It received a ForeWord Magazine Book of the Year Award and was a finalist for the Paterson Poetry Prize. Her second volume of poems from CavanKerry, *Wonderama*, was published in 2021 and was awarded the 2022 Paterson Poetry Prize.

Doty has spent decades working as a visiting poet for the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, The Frost Place, the New York Public Library and many, many schools, and was named the New Jersey State Council on the Arts' inaugural Distinguished Teaching Artist. She was a featured reader at the Dodge Poetry Festival, and her work has appeared on National Public Radio's *The Writer's Almanac*, as well as in many journals and anthologies.

While attending the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Doty served as cartoonist for the Daily Iowan, waited tables at the Ming Garden, and tended bar at a number of lively establishments. Many years later, she taught sixth grade Language Arts at Millburn Middle School, where her classes in Greek Mythology were a special favorite. She is the recipient of many fellowships and awards, from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Academy of American Poets, and others, as well as national prizes for publication design and illustration.

# Sondra Gash

1934 – 2021



Photograph courtesy of the Gash family.

Born and raised in Paterson, New Jersey, Sondra Regina Stetin grew up among silk workers. During her early life, the Stetin family lived first at 150 Governor Street, and later moved to 378 E 29th Street. Sol Stetin, her father, played an active role in The Textile Workers Union of America. He had a great influence on Sondra and her writing.

Her publication, *Silk Elegy* (2002), is a group of connected poems, telling a story from three perspectives within a Jewish family in the twentieth century. This work, which Gash referred to as “a blending of poetry and novella,” shares the story of immigrant textile workers and their family struggles in a new city. The book was a finalist for the 2003 Paterson Poetry Prize.

Her second publication, *Suit and Dress* (2018), is a collection of semi-autobiographical poems about the emotional spheres of work and home. Her mother and father are featured heavily in this collection, which draws from both Gash’s childhood and her life as an adult.

A poet, writer and teacher, Sondra Gash taught writing at Rutgers University. She was a featured reader and teacher at the Dodge Poetry Festival (Waterloo, NJ). Gash also directed the poetry program at the Women’s Resource Center in Summit, NJ. She opened her home to New Jersey poets several times a year for salon style readings.

During her career, she received fellowships from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the Corporation of Yaddo, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Puffin Foundation and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. She was awarded first prize in the Passaic County College Allen Ginsberg Poetry Competition for her poem “Anniversary Couple.”

Poems and articles penned by Sondra Gash have appeared in many publications, including *Poets & Writers*, *Calyx*, *The New York Times*, *U.S. 1 Worksheets* and *Paterson Literary Review*, as well as anthologies such as *Rising: An Anthology of Poems by the South Mountain-Watchung Poets* (1987) and *Places We Return To: A Celebration of Twenty Years Publishing Fine Literature by CavanKerry Press, 2000-2020* (2021).

# Maria Mazziotti Gillan

1940 –



Photograph courtesy of  
Ellen Denuto.

Maria Mazziotti Gillan is a recipient of the 2014 George Garrett Award for Outstanding Community Service in Literature from AWP (Association of Writers & Writing Programs), the 2011 Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award from Poets & Writers and the 2008 American Book Award for her book, *All That Lies Between Us* (Guernica Editions).

As executive director of both to the Passaic County Cultural and Heritage Council and The Poetry Center at Passaic County Community College in Paterson, NJ, Maria has hosted thousands of poets over the years at readings, workshops and conferences. She is also the editor of the *Paterson Literary Review*. She has been appointed a Bartle Professor and Professor Emerita of English and creative writing at Binghamton University-SUNY.

Maria has published twenty-four books. She is co-editor with her daughter Jennifer of four anthologies. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies.

Maria won the 2008 Chancellor's Award for Scholarship and Creative Endeavor from Binghamton University, the 2008 Sheila Motton Award, Primo Nazionale Belmore, the First Annual John Fante and Pietro di Donato Award, the Aniello Lauri Award, the May Sarton Award, the Fearing Houghton Award, New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowships in Poetry, and the American Literary Translators Association Award through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. She received the New Jersey Governor's Award for Literary Outreach and The Dare to Imagine Award from Very Special Arts. She received the Clara Lemlich award as well as the lifetime achievement award from Salem State University in Massachusetts.

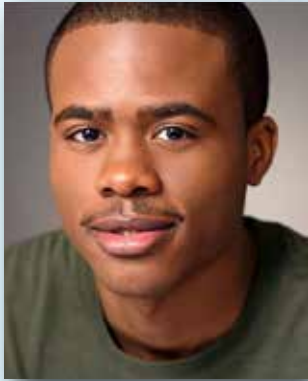
Her poems have been read by Garrison Keillor on "The Writer's Almanac." She has been interviewed and read her poems on National Public Radio's (NPR) "All Things Considered," "The Brian Lehrer Show," "The Poet and the Poem," "The Leonard Lopate Show," as well as "In Honor of National Poetry Month," "The Charles Osgood Show" on CBS-Radio, also on Pacifica Radio, and the "Voice of America." She has also been featured on several PBS-TV (Public Broadcasting System) programs. Her books have been chosen as Editor's Choice by Booklist, New York Public library Book List, and one of the American Library Association's Outstanding Books for Lifelong Learners. Her poems are included on state and national tests in North Carolina, Tennessee, Minnesota, Texas, and Italy.

Maria has read her poems numerous times at universities, festivals, and poetry centers throughout the USA and in Italy, France, Yugoslavia, Finland, Wales, and Ireland. The Maria Mazziotti Gillan Collection of her papers is housed at the Binghamton University Libraries. Maria is also a visual artist.



# Jaquair Gillette

1985 –



Photograph courtesy of  
Lisa Hancock.

Hailing from the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution and station stop on The Underground Railroad, Paterson, NJ, Jaquair is an actor, poet, producer, and activist. He is a three time featured poet at the legendary Nuyorican Poets Cafe in NYC.

He is the annual open mic host of Paterson Poetry Festival and has performed in poetry cafes and venues across the U.S from New York City to Los Angeles. He recently released his highly reviewed debut spoken word poetry book entitled *Defiance & Desperation*.

In addition, he produced a performance art/documentary film of the performance he gave for his book's release at The Paterson Museum. He is also the co-star and producer of the festival award-winning film entitled, "3rd & 4th Chapters" available on Youtube. He has performed in featured roles on Orange is The New Black, Godfather of Harlem, Tommy, The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel, and Law & Order: Organized Crime. Jaquair continues to stay active in his hometown as a co-founding committee member of Paterson's Green Acre Community Garden and as a commissioner on The Paterson Arts Exchange.

# Allen Ginsberg

1926 – 1997



Photograph courtesy of Giacomo DeStefano.

Irwin Allen Ginsberg was born in Newark, New Jersey June 3, 1926. He grew up in Paterson, where his father Louis worked as a schoolteacher. Partially inspired by his father, who was also a poet, Ginsberg's first published works were printed in the Paterson Morning Call. The local papers continued to follow his budding literary career as he graduated from Eastside High School and moved on to Columbia University. The member of several poetry organizations on campus, Allen Ginsberg was a regular contributor to the University's many student publications and won several awards for his work.

While at Columbia, Allen Ginsberg met William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac. Through this friendship, he became a core member of the Beat Generation, a literary movement exploring American culture and politics following WWII. His poem "Howl" (1956) is a prime example of Beat literature. His poetry featured the themes of anti-materialism, anti-militarism, anti-war on drugs and anti-sexual repression within mainstream society.

Ginsberg moved to the West Coast and interacted with poets involved in the San Francisco Renaissance movement. While there, he founded *Beatitude* magazine and participated in the Six Poets at the Six Gallery, his first public performance of his poetry. He then travelled the world extensively, writing and reading at various events, including the International Poetry Incarnation at the Royal Albert Hall in London in 1965. Music and chanting became an important part of his live readings.

Throughout his career, Ginsberg returned periodically to Paterson to participate in the Poetry Center at Passaic County Community College's Poetry Slams, held at the Paterson Museum. The Center annually awards a poetry prize in his honor.

Throughout his lifetime, Ginsberg received numerous honors and awards. In 1974, *The Fall of America* shared the National Book Award for Poetry. In 1979, he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In the same year, he also received the National Arts Club gold medal. In 1986, he received the Golden Wreath by the Struga Poetry Evenings International Festival in Macedonia. His *Cosmopolitan Greetings: Poems 1986-1992* was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 1995.

## Don Kommit

1937 – 2022



Photograph from  
Paterson Museum Collection.

Don Kommit was born in Paterson in 1937. Born into a family full of artistic talents, Don was exposed to all forms of visual and performance art from a very young age. He graduated from Central High School in 1954.

Not only a poet, Kommit also painted and sketched. Much of his work is encompassed in his sketchbooks, approximately 1,600 spiral notepads that contain drawings, poems and multimedia collages. Regardless of what art form he took in the moment, his style was consistent: “stream of consciousness,” where the process was far more important than the result. The result, specifically where his poetry is concerned, is a style that connects a “blur of non sequiturs.”

Kommit spent much of his adult life teaching. He taught throughout the country. Locally, he provided instruction at Newark State College, Passaic County Community College, the Italian Catholic Center and as a substitute teacher in the Paterson Public School District.

Considered a legend among Northern New Jersey artists, and one of the longest living artists of the Beat Generation, Kommit was a founding member of both the Silk City Poets and the Ivanhoe Artists Mosaic. The self-proclaimed “Count of Passaic County,” he resided for much of his life in the Phoneix Mill, with a studio at 8 Cianci Street.

# Susan Justiniano Rescue Poetix

1967 –



Photograph courtesy of  
Mike DeFeo.

Born in Paterson, Susan Justiniano (RescuePoetix), is a self-taught bilingual globally published performing poet, advocate, spoken word artist, recording artist and teaching artist. Her passion for words started at age 9 with a dictionary, notebook, and the latest paperback she could get her hands on.

In 2006 RescuePoetix™ emerged as a professional artist entrepreneur. As a published performing poet, she has recorded poems to music, in English and Spanish, is deeply immersed in the Arts across communities throughout NJ, NY, CT, MA, PA and MD and is developing a body of work that focuses on the rich linguistic poetry.

She is twice honored as Poet Laureate: First Puerto Rican woman Poet Laureate of Jersey City, NJ (2022-2022) and State of New Jersey Beat Poet Laureate (2022-2024). She expanded the position of Poet Laureate of Jersey City to engage artists of varied cultures and languages to reflect the diversity of Jersey City as a community, advocate for artists as professionals and establish that multilingual events, including ASL and trilingual translations, are mainstream and spotlights the importance of embracing the rich cultural diversity within the Arts.

RescuePoetix™ poetry is motivational, uplifting, and empowering; designed to connect on a level far deeper than what the eye can perceive. Spinning verses in Spanish and English, her words weave stories of strength, growth, experience, and love in its many evolving forms.

As an arts advocate, she serves on the boards of In Full Color (Jersey City), Art Pride NJ (Co-Lead, Independent Advisory Board), Art Pride NJ Strategic Planning Committee, House on the Waterfront MD (DMV – Founding Partner), Bergen County Players, EDI Committee (Oradell NJ) and committees throughout the USA with a focus on equity and equality in the Arts.

More info: <https://linktr.ee/rescuepoetix>

## Talena Lachelle Queen

1973 –



Photograph courtesy of  
The Vieras at #AThriveRetreat.

Queen is the first poet laureate of the great City of Paterson, NJ where she created the city's first ever Poetry Festival. She was appointed by the City's mayor to the Paterson Art Exchange: the official Art Commission for the city and serves as chair of the commission. Queen is an inductee to the University of Washington HALL of EXCELLENCE.

She is the founder and president of the nonprofit Word Seed, Inc. which offers itself as a voice and a service for anyone that writes. Queen is also the founder/ president of Her Best Self, a program of the National Black United Fund that fosters leadership qualities in young women.

Queen is a columnist for Tapinto Paterson where she has curated a space for critical conversations that offer perspectives which both deepen and elevate. The Paterson, NJ native earned her MFA in Creative Writing & Poetics from the University of Washington Bothell where she authored *Fourteen* and *How Do I Tell Them*. She is passionate about history, African-American culture and social justice issues. She is often inspired by current events and is known to infuse music into her highly emotive poetry.

She currently teaches English Language Arts at the famous Eastside High School in Paterson, NJ. Among her alma mater are Rosa Parks School of Fine & Performing Arts High School where she earned her diploma in Creative Writing, Montclair State University where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in Broadcasting, University of Washington where she earned both her teaching certification, and her Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing & Poetics, and University of Notre Dame where she earned an Executive Certification in Transformational Nonprofit Management at the Mendoza Business School. Queen is a PhD candidate at Northeastern University.

# Joseph Ruffilo

1942 – 2011



Photograph courtesy of  
Giacomo DeStefano.

A son of South Paterson, Joseph Ruffilo attended Central High School, graduating in 1959. A life-long Paterson resident, Ruffilo was best known for his artwork and sculpture. Many of his scrap metal sculptures were inspired by the grit of his home city.

Poetry was a part of Ruffilo's life from a young age. This can be attributed, in part, to the influence of his teacher and mentor Louis Ginsberg. Always a storyteller, much of Ruffilo's poetry reads as a captured moment in the author's consciousness. Sometimes reflecting on a memory, other times present in real time, Ruffilo's poetry navigates the reader through his inner most thoughts.

An active member of the Paterson art community throughout his life, Ruffilo's work can be seen in *Footworks*, published by the Poetry Center. He also self-published *Wastrel in Time* (2009), which includes both his poetry and drawings. Ruffilo often collaborated with Don Kommit, Maria Gillian and the Poetry Center. His relationship with Kommit was particularly close after Don helped him to rekindle his passion for art of all genres, following a dark period in his life. Their relationship and collaboration culminated in a two-man show, *Pair of Progenitors*, presented in 2000.

Ruffilo's path to a career in the arts was anything but a straight line. He was a race car driver, quality control worker and a print shop worker. His passion to pursue art developed later in life. He approached sculpting with no formal training, which resulted in Ruffilo being included in a class of "outsider" artists by the New York Times in 2000.

He joined the Paterson Museum staff as the Exhibit Artist in 1999. While in that position he curated several exhibits, including the motorcycle show *Up On Two Wheels* (2000) and *Mighty Mights* (2006), an exhibit that focused on Paterson and Hinchliffe Stadium's midget car racing history.

## Felicia Sherelle

1980 –



Photograph courtesy of the poet.

Felicia is an author, poet, workshop leader, and writing and publishing consultant. She is founder of Felicia IN Print, providing services like editing, ghostwriting, and blogging. She is the Communications Officer for Arts Reforming Communities, a not for profit dedicated to transforming neighborhoods through the arts.

She is the Vice President of Word Seed Inc., a literary arts organization dedicated to fusing all things community and all things WORDs, through youth programs, poetry workshops and features, and its annual production of the Paterson Poetry Festival. Felicia is a performance poet, featuring high energy and diverse topic poetry through Passaic County Community College's TAPP program. She utilizes her background in child advocacy for interactive youth poetry workshops, as well as school culture and climate workshops for students, and professional development for staff.

# Joseph Verilla

1944 –



Photograph courtesy of  
Giacomo DeStefano.

A January 1962 graduate of Eastside High School, Joe Verilla began writing in 1977 while a student at Goddard College, Vermont. His Goddard writing mentor was David Dellinger, one of the Chicago 7. During that same year, Joe, Don Kommit, and Angela Costa formed the poetry performance troupe, the Silk City Poets.

As a teacher in the Paterson Public School District for 35 years, Joe passed on his love of poetry and creative writing to his many students. At P.S. No. 15, in collaboration with teaching colleague and friend, Russ Layne, his third-grade students performed poetry accompanied by jazz great Ted Curson. At School No. 4, he founded and directed the highly acclaimed poetry performance troupe, the Bulldog Poets. At Kennedy H.S., he created the Knight-Time Poets club and coordinated the Meet the Author Series. From first grade through high school, his students were always well represented at the annual Passaic County Community College city wide poetry contest.

Joe also taught creative writing and poetry for 25 years at New York's School of Visual Arts, where he coordinated SVA's Poetry Slam.

In 2003, at the onset of the Iraqi War, he was invited by renowned Puerto Rican poet, Pedro Pietri, to read at the Nuyorican Poets Café for the program P.O.W. (Poets Opposing War). His poems and photographs have appeared in the *Paterson Literary Review* and his performance piece, "How to Build and Operate a Skate Box Scooter," won entry into the collection, *S.U.M. Poems 1978*. He is the guest curator of the Paterson Museum exhibit "Larry Doby-Silk City Slugger: First in the American League." Most recently, he has been a member of the Hinchliffe Stadium Content Team, doing research for the stadium's museum.

Joe's awards and accomplishments include: 2 Governor's Teacher Recognition Awards, North Jersey Teacher of the Week—The Record, Paterson Cohort IV Teacher of the Year Award, Champion of the Arts Award-PCCC, Outstanding Teacher/Golden Apple Award-Herald News, featured on Channel 4's Classroom Close-up, National Foundation for the Improvement of Education grant recipient for the PALS program.



# William Carlos Williams

1883 – 1963



Photograph courtesy of the  
Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript  
Library, Yale University.

William Carlos Williams will forever be linked to our city, which he lauds through his extensive, five-volume poem named “Paterson.” He was born in Rutherford, New Jersey, in 1883. His parents were both immigrants from the Caribbean and his first language was Spanish. As a student, math and science were always of more interest to him than the written word. In high school, his interests expanded and he began to read more extensively, and he wrote his first poem.

He did not pursue poetry or writing as a career. Instead, he attended the University of Pennsylvania where he studied medicine. After graduation, Williams practiced pediatrics and general medicine. However, he continued to write. Due to the financial security of his medical practice, Williams was able to write when and how he wanted, without the strain of needing to produce to sustain an income and career. His first book *Poems*, was published in 1909. He would go on to publish over twenty books of poetry, as well as numerous other novels, plays and essays.

Williams was a leading poet of the Imagist Movement, a change in style to emphasize clear, direct language. His poems are noted for their honesty. His modernist approach to writing included mirroring the speech of real Americans and approaching the reader on an equal footing. Today, he is recognized as an innovator and revolutionary figure in American poetry.

Williams, whose medical practice was based in Passaic General, made house calls to patients throughout Paterson. While in their homes, he became privy to the obstacles present in his patients’ daily lives. Their struggles provided a constant source of inspiration in his writing during his forty years as a practicing physician. He is even said to have scribbled ideas and poems onto the blank pages of his prescription pad between patients.

Very well-known today, during his lifetime William Carlos Williams’ many accomplishments went unrecognized. His poetry gained popularity later in his life, and he became a hero to the Beat Poet generation including fellow New Jerseyan, Allen Ginsberg. He won his first National Book Award for Poetry in 1950. In 1953, he received the Bollingen Prize. The Pulitzer Prize and the Gold medal for Poetry from the National Institute of Arts and Letters were both awarded to him posthumously. The Poetry Society of America has named an award in his honor.

# Rashad Wright

1994 –



Photograph courtesy of  
Evan Cricuolo.

Rashad Wright is the poet laureate emeritus of Jersey City, New Jersey and a teacher on behalf of the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Foundation. He is a graduate of New Jersey City University, receiving his BA in English: Creative Writing. He is the author of *Romeo's Whiskey*, published via Rebel Ink.

Rashad's poetry has been heard from both local and national stages via slam poetry. He is the only person to be titled the "Grandslam Champion of Jersey City Slam" twice. He has competed in Slams in the Tristate area, Oakland, San Diego, Spokane, and Denver, once ranking 25th in the country at the 2019 Individual World Poetry Slam. He has coached Jersey City Slam, the UACHS Poetry Club, and 6th Borough Slam whom placed 10th in the world at Brave New Voices, 2019. Rashad has also been awarded First Place at the Walter Glospe American Academy of Poets Prize, being inducted into the Academy of American Poets.

Outside of poetry, Rashad's work expands into memoir, fiction, short story, performance art, film, music, neo-soul alongside his band ChillBrown, jazz alongside The Just Now Orchestra, and theatre with the completion of two one-man plays, *Romeo's Whiskey* & *Nimbus Presents Etu's Raucus Caucus Tango*. His work can be found in multiple online journals and magazines. Rashad has performed alongside Amiri Baraka, Rudy Francisco, Tyehimba Jess, Emi Mahmoud, and many others. He currently is working on his sophomore book entitled, *Papa's Tango*.