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Following Presidential Inauguration and Former National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman, Free Writing Workshops Taught By Local Poets for the Santa Clara County Youth Poet Laureate Program

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF. – One day after the swearing-in ceremonies of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, as well as the standout performance of “The Hill We Climb” by 22-year-old inaugural poet Amanda Gorman, the Santa Clara County Youth Poet Laureate Program saw an increase of interest and enrollment in free writing workshops as well as applications to become the county’s first Youth Poet Laureate. In a single day, enrollment went from 3 to over 30 students, with workshops exceeding capacity.

In January and February, the program will launch a series of five writing workshops for Santa Clara County Youth taught by local poets, community organizers, and poets with roots in the South Bay Area. The workshops aim to help students work on their poetry portfolio and craft. Poets Jarvis Subia, Lorenz Dumuk, former Poet Laureate Mighty Mike McGee, Tshaka Menelik Imhotep Campbell, and K-Ming Chang will teach writing workshops, alongside artist and educator Jessica Gutierrez, who curates San José-based *Martha Street Zine*, and will teach a zine-making workshop.

Inspired by Youth Speaks in San Francisco, the Oakland Youth Poet Laureate Program and Oakland Public Library, these free, online writing workshops are based on youth-centered pedagogy, and aim to elevate youth voices, especially during a pandemic, which has left youth with few spaces to safely and mindfully gather to share their writings and struggles.

In thinking about how to honor youth for their participation during this historically difficult time while creating access to writing opportunities, Santa Clara County Poet Laureate Janice Lobo Sapigao is budgeting funding from her fellowship as a Poet Laureate Fellow with the Academy of American Poets to pay youth small stipends for their attendance.

“There are so few paid opportunities for working writers, especially those from BIPOC, poor, and working-class communities. Add youth writers to that. Add the fact that the median income in Santa Clara County is over \$100,000 and that people need to make at least \$5,000 a month to survive here. That’s nearly impossible for marginalized peoples. It is my hope that offering these stipends will afford students the possibility of investing their time in themselves and their stories while helping their families. Stories make up the places we live in and grow to love.” – *Janice Lobo Sapigao, 2020-2021 Santa Clara County Poet Laureate*

For more information and to apply, visit sccyouthlaureate.com/workshops

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