



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: **Oakland Public Library**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 5, 2013

Oakland Public Library Announces Winner of Youth Poet Laureate Competition

Oakland, CA – The Oakland Public Library is very excited to announce that 17-year-old **OBASI DAVIS** has been selected as the City of Oakland’s 2013 Youth Poet Laureate. Mr. Davis emerged as the best of eight talented finalists in a competition that began in April with a highly competitive process juried by accomplished authors, educators and community leaders.

Born and raised in Oakland, **OBASI DAVIS** is a founding member of the heralded poetry ensemble *Young, Gifted and Black*. A tenacious student of prose and poetry since age 12, he has dedicated himself to his craft in workshops, at open mics and on stage at some of the nation's largest performance venues. He's shown tremendous leadership in Oakland and across the Bay Area as a member of Spokes, Youth Speaks' teen advisory board and production training program. In 2013 he earned a spot to represent the Bay Area as a member of its delegation to the *Brave New Voices* international Teen Poetry Slam and Festival.

California Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera, a judge in the competition, calls Mr. Davis “a rare master of the out-breath, ‘born into consciousness,’ singing With the humanity-voice of Gwendolyn Brooks, the long-jeweled line of Ginsberg and his own Obasi magic, here stands a giant poeta in the making -- for the people of Oakland and the world.”

Judge Raphael Cohen, a poet and local publisher, immediately recognized Davis as a frontrunner. “He bravely engages the painful puzzles of young adulthood in an era that alternately derides or dismisses young people's experiences, turning inward to explore his, and our, capacity for truth-telling and change-making. Expertly balancing a focused rage with an irrepressible tenderness, Davis is certain to inspire and activate a new generation of leaders through both the written and spoken word.”

Now in its second year, the Youth Poet Laureate competition was staged by Oakland Public Library’s Teen Services Department, in partnership with Youth Speaks, ProArts Gallery, Oakland School for the Arts and more than a dozen community partners. As the winner, Mr. Davis will receive a \$5,000 scholarship and the opportunity to officially represent the Oakland community through poetry, media, and public appearances.

For more information, please contact Amy Sonnie, Teen Outreach Librarian, at 510-238-7233 or asonnie@oaklandlibrary.org.

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