



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: **Oakland Public Library**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oakland Public Library Announces 2014 Finalists in Youth Poet Laureate Competition

Oakland, CA – Nine finalists have been announced in the City of Oakland’s third annual Youth Poet Laureate competition. These talented young poets made it through a highly competitive first round juried by esteemed judges, including accomplished authors, educators and community leaders. The Oakland Public Library, in partnership with Youth Speaks Inc. and Pro Arts is staging the annual competition. Once announced, the winner will be honored with a \$5,000 scholarship and the opportunity to officially represent his/her community through poetry, media, and public appearances. A second round of judging begins in June, and the winner will be announced in early August.

First-round evaluations were anonymous and based solely on the strength of the applicants’ poetry. Judges looked for writing that demonstrated *Overall Artistic Excellence, Bold Approach in Content and Form, Outstanding Creativity, Originality and Authenticity*. The nine finalists represent the best of Oakland’s young talent, while also reflecting the city’s lauded diversity. They are:

- **Aaron Godinez**, 17, Head-Royce
- **Ajali de Veaux-Griffith**, 17, Oakland School for the Arts
- **Emily Kim**, 16, Oakland School for the Arts
- **Guisela Ramos**, 18, Met West High School
- **Imani Diltz**, 16, Oakland School for the Arts
- **Maria Cruz**, Met West High School
- **Mina Jameson**, 16, Oakland School for the Arts
- **Sophia Elkin**, 17, Oakland School for the Arts
- **Torin Rittenberg**, 16, Bentley High School

Next, their submissions will be forwarded to a panel of celebrity judges, including Juan Felipe Herrera (California state Poet Laureate), Romeo Garcia (director of the Peralta Colleges Foundation), Aimee Suzara (poet and playwright), and Stephanie Yun (2012 Oakland Youth Poet Laureate).

All finalists will make public appearances this summer and have their work published in an anthology (to be released in August). Oakland Youth Poet Laureate Finalists will perform together on July 12 at Beast Crawl, the East Bay’s largest literary festival, and again in August when the winner will be announced. Dates and venues will be announced soon.

Photos available upon request.

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