



City of
OAKLAND
California

Media Contact:

Lana Adlawan
Teen Services Coordinator
Oakland Public Library
510-238-7613
ladlawan@oaklandlibrary.org

Sharon McKellar
Community Relations Librarian
510-238-3513
smckellar@oaklandlibrary.org

News from: **Oakland Public Library**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 26, 2016

2016 Oakland Youth Poet Laureate Announced

Oakland, CA – The Oakland Public Library is very excited to announce that 18-year-old **Azariah Cole-Shephard** has been selected as the City of Oakland’s 2016 Youth Poet Laureate. Ms. Cole-Shephard has just graduated from Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy where she was on the honor roll, served as captain of the debate team, and mentored and tutored other students.

Wilson Riles, former Oakland City Councilmember, who served as one of this year’s five Youth Poet Laureate judges, says, “Azariah is fired with the cause of justice. It heats up her words. Stand back lest ye be scorched!”

“Azariah is the intellectualized voice of Oakland and I am so excited to see how she affects the world in the years to come,” says Vernon Keeve III, a published poet, OUSD high school English and history teacher, and another of this year’s judges.

Ms. Cole-Shephard was last year’s runner-up and emerged as the best of five talented finalists from Oakland who attend schools across the Bay Area. Poets participated in a highly competitive process juried by accomplished authors, educators and community leaders. Ms. Cole-Shephard will receive a \$5,000 scholarship and the opportunity to officially represent the Oakland community through poetry, media, and public appearances.

Now in its fifth year, the Youth Poet Laureate Program is a partnership between the Oakland Public Library and Youth Speaks, along with several community partners.

For more information, please contact Lana Adlawan, Teen Services Coordinator, at 510-238-7613 or ladlawan@oaklandlibrary.org.

About Youth Speaks: Founded in 1996, Youth Speaks is a multi-faceted organization that understands and believes that the power, insight, creativity, and passion of young artists can change the world. Through the intersection of arts education and youth development practices, civic engagement strategies and high quality artistic presentation, Youth Speaks creates safe spaces that challenge young people to find, develop, publicly present, and apply their voices as creators of societal change. Youth Speaks exists to shift the perception of youth by combating illiteracy, alienation, and silence, creating a global movement of brave new voices bringing the noise from the margins to the core.

About Oakland Public Library:

The Oakland Public Library is a part of the City of Oakland in California and has been in existence since 1878. Our locations currently include 16 branches, a Main

News from:
Oakland Public Library

**2016 Oakland Youth
Poet Laureate
Announced**

July 26, 2016

Page Two

Library, a Second Start Adult Literacy Program, the Tool Lending Library, and the African-American Museum and Library. We also offer many other special services for residents of Oakland and California. The Oakland Public Library informs, inspires, and delights our diverse community as a resource for information, knowledge, and artistic and literary expression, providing the best in traditional services, new technologies, and innovative programs.

###