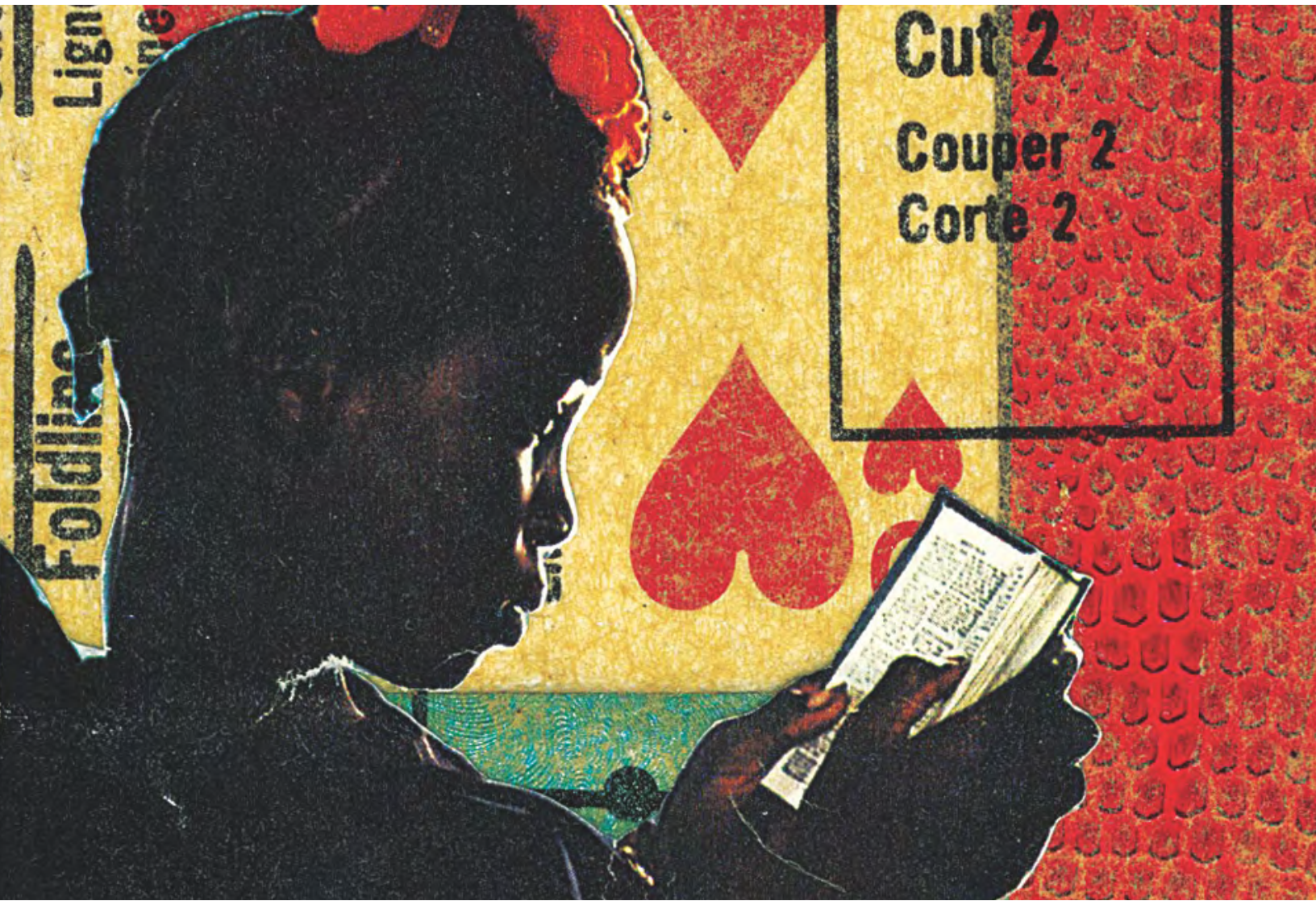


RUTGERS

Institute for the Study
of Global Racial Justice



POETS AND SCHOLARS SUMMER WRITING RETREAT

JULY 13-23, 2021

PARTICIPANTS DIRECTORY

About the Poets and Scholars Summer Writing Retreat

The Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice at Rutgers University (Rutgers–Camden Center), with generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is offering the inaugural Poets and Scholars Summer Writing Retreat. The retreat features 10 days of presentations, talk-backs, and a radical experiment in reimagining the traditional writing workshop as an open forum of mutual accountability. Participants include writers of all disciplines, genres, and backgrounds who are committed to antiracist writing practices. The Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice seeks to create spaces for scholars and creative writers to be in conversation as both an aspect of their work and for the mutual exchange of knowledge within and throughout the university and its surrounding communities.

Meet the Participants



MARIA HAMILTON ABEGUNDE

Maria E. Hamilton Abegunde is a Memory Keeper, poet, ancestral priest in the Yoruba Orisa tradition, healer, and full-spectrum community doula. Her most recent works address anti-Black racism and violence, genocide, sexual violence, contemplative practices, and healing in the U.S., Brazil, and Juba, South Sudan, and can be found in *North Meridian Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *FIRE!!!*, and *Keeper of My Mothers' Dreams*. She is the ritualist and commissioned poet for the Ancestral Masquerade Series. Abegunde is a Cave Canem, Sacatar, Ragdale, and NEH summer fellow. She is an assistant professor in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies and the founding director of the Graduate Mentoring Center at Indiana University Bloomington. Abegunde loves to dance, laugh loudly, do nothing, follow dragonflies, watch and read science fiction, and sleep. She cooks a great feijoada with short ribs and ox tails.



GENJI AMINO

Genji Amino is a writer and curator based in New York. They are an Emerge-Surface-Be fellow at the Poetry Project, working with John Yau. They co-direct an annual poetics seminar in Northern New Mexico, founded in 2010.



AISHVARYA ARORA

Aishvarya Arora (she/her/hers) is an Asian American poet and community-based researcher from Queens, New York. In her writing, she complicates her family's stories to resist and dispel the American obsession with the successful Asian immigrant. Instead, her poems celebrate failure. Aishvarya spent a year in Delhi, India, as a Fulbright Research Fellow studying participatory research methods and learning how to express her emotions in Hindi. Currently, she is an inaugural member of the Brooklyn Poets Mentorship Program. You can read her work in *harana poetry*. When Aishvarya isn't writing, she is usually cooking, tending to her plants, or reading tarot.



KATRINA BYRD

A Jackson, Mississippi, native, ALS Advocate, and feather boa strutter, Katrina Byrd is a writer and playwright who received her M.F.A. from Mississippi University for Women. Byrd's recent plays appeared at The Bechdel Group, Bay St. Louis Little Theatre, and Vicksburg Theater Guild. Recently published at *Rigorous Literary Magazine*, *Limited Experience Journal*, and *Writing Workshops Dallas*. Byrd is also a contributor to the newly released *Redefining Liberal Arts Education*. After her best friend of 23 years died from ALS, Byrd joined I AM ALS, a patient-centric group that focusses on ALS Advocacy, education, and awareness. Byrd also loves animals, gardening, and flouncing her feather boas.



SYLVIA CHAN

Sylvia Chan is an amputee writer, educator, and activist. Originally a jazz pianist from the San Francisco Bay Area, she lives in Tucson, where she teaches at the University of Arizona Writing Program and serves as court advocate for foster kids in Pima County and nonfiction editor at *Entropy*. She has been behind developing and teaching Black Lives Matter courses for seven years. In her publishing and foster care communities, she sustains spaces for domestic violence survivors and foster youth, and she works with foster youth who are disabled, Black, and involved in juvenile justice. Her debut poetry collection is *We Remain Traditional* (Center for Literary Publishing 2018), and her essays appear in *The Rumpus*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2019*. She is part of Zoeglossia, a fellowship of disabled poets. She's working on her foster care memoir and training her second Belgian Malinois for ADA compliance.



ZACH CZAIA

Zach Czaia is a poet and high school English teacher living in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He is grateful to be part of such a vibrant reading and writing community in the "Twin Cities" of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Besides spending many hours nerding out on all things poetry, in his free time he also loves playing basketball, trying (and often failing) to cook new recipes, and getting out into Minnesota's many beautiful lakes, parks, and trails with his wife Cristina, and their medium-sized golden doodle, Dasha.



SUMMER HARIS

Summer Haris is a poet muralist and is a contributor to *Politics & Poetry*, a magazine that explores contemporary issues. She writes only to heal the curse of immigrant shame and identity-pain and is interested in honing a satirical voice, drawing influence from Wainaina to Chappelle to Aaron McGruder's *The Boondocks*. In her spare time, she invests effort in browsing and shopping for new hobbies to cultivate, in order to feel important. Come next year, she will become a plant mom or own a woodworking-yoga-ceramic studio of some kind.



JORDAN HONEYBLUE

Jordan Honeyblue is a writer from Baltimore, Maryland. In 2018, she received her B.A. from Morgan State University. She recently graduated with her M.F.A. in poetry from the University of Kentucky. Beginning this June, she will serve as a fellow in Harvard University's LabXChange Program, where she will write and develop content for Antiracist Science Education. Jordan's writing explores what it means to be a *healthy* Black girl and woman in America. Her thesis manuscript entitled "Heartwork" zeroes in on the Black feminine heart, its capacity and mesmerizing strength, while interrogating why heart disease is plaguing and killing Black women at such alarming rates. Poetry by Jordan Honeyblue has also appeared in the *New Orleans Review*. When Jordan is not writing she enjoys spending time with her family but especially her nephews, taking polaroid pictures, and reading in different parks around the Chesapeake Bay area.



RAVI HOWARD

Ravi Howard is the author of two novels, *Like, Trees, Walking* and *Driving the King*. His short fiction has appeared in *Salon*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Saw Palm*, *Alabama Noir*, and *Gulf Coast*. His essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *McSweeney's Internet Tendency*, *Atlanta*, and *Gravy*, and he has recorded commentary for NPR's *All Things Considered*. He has received fellowships and awards from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association and the National Endowment for the Arts. He has taught creative writing with Callaloo, Hurston-Wright Foundation, Kimbilio, and Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. He currently teaches fiction writing at Florida State University.



KASSY LEE

Kassy Lee is a writer, poet, and teacher. She received an M.F.A. in creative writing from the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan and a B.A. in comparative literature and society from Columbia. She has received fellowships from the University of Michigan Helen Zell Writers' Program, Vermont Studio Center, and Cave Canem. Her most recent chapbook, *The Period of Warring States*, was published by Another New Calligraphy in 2017. Her first chapbook, *zombia*, was published by dancing girl press in 2014. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Kweli*, the *Columbia Review*, *Apogee*, and *Narrative*. Her essays have appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. She has taught creative writing workshops to veterans, incarcerated youth, K–12 students, and undergraduates at the University of Michigan. In her free time, she loves to dance, try new recipes, garden, and play board games.



CATE LYCURGUS

Cate Lycurgus's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Best American Poetry 2020*, *American Poetry Review*, *Tin House*, *Boston Review*, *Best New Poets 2019*, and elsewhere. She has also received scholarships from Bread Loaf and Sewanee Writers' Conferences and was named one of *Narrative's* 30 Under 30 Featured Writers. Cate lives south of San Francisco, California, where she interviews for 32 Poems and teaches professional writing. A long-time caregiver, Cate also loves long-distance running, seasonal cooking, and trees of all kinds. She's especially interested in the ways both faith and environment influence and intersect with the pursuit of justice.



THEA MATTHEWS

Originally from San Francisco, California, Thea Matthews is a Brooklyn-based poet, author, and educator of African and Indigenous Mexican descent. She earned her B.A. in sociology at U.C. Berkeley, where she studied and taught June Jordan's program Poetry for the People led by Aya de Leon. She writes on the complexities of humanity, grief, and resiliency. Her debut poetry collection *Unearth [The Flowers]* was published June 2020 by Red Light Lit Press and is listed as part of the Best Indie Poetry of 2020 by *Kirkus Reviews*. She has work in *The New Republic*, *Atlanta Review*, *The Rumpus*, and others. Currently, Thea Matthews is an M.F.A. in poetry candidate at New York University. She enjoys taking long strolls through Prospect Park, visits to contemporary art museums, and listening to mourning doves as well as sparrows. She loves to drink coffee. Dance. Listen to disco, house, synth wave, and rock 'n roll.



ERIN MCCOY

Erin L. McCoy is a student in the University of Houston's Ph.D. program for literature and creative writing and holds an M.F.A. in creative writing and an M.A. in Hispanic studies from the University of Washington. She won second place in the 2019–2020 Rougarou Poetry Contest, judged by CACONRAD, and her poem, "Futures," was selected by Natalie Diaz for inclusion in *Best New Poets 2017*. Her poetry and fiction have been published or are forthcoming in *Narrative*, *Bennington Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Pleiades*, *DIAGRAM*, *West Branch*, and other publications. She is acquisitions editor for Seattle-based independent publisher Entre Ríos Books and an assistant poetry editor for *Gulf Coast*. In her free time, Erin enjoys hiking, reading Spanish-language literature, and traveling. She's visited about 45 U.S. states and 25 countries, and has spent extensive time in Malaysia, Russia, and Spain. She is from Louisville, Kentucky.



NATHAN MOORE

Nathan Alexander Moore (she/they) is a Black genderfluid transfemme writer, scholar, and dreamer. She is interested in critical and creative methods to explore the nuances of Blackness, queerness, and temporality—usually through the lens of Black speculative arts and genre fiction. They hold a master's degree from SUNY Buffalo where they studied creative writing and Black literature and cultures. Currently, she is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Texas at Austin in the department of African and African Diaspora Studies. Their work has previously been published or is forthcoming from *Pulse/Pulso: In Remembrance of Orlando* from Damaged Goods Press, *P-QUEUE*, *ode to Queer* and *Peauxdunque Review*. Her poetry chapbook, *small colossus*, is forthcoming from above/ground press. They also love cooking, naps, comics, and laughing.



ADRIENNE OLIVER

adrienne danyelle oliver is a poet-educator and hip-hop scholar from Little Rock, Arkansas, currently based in the SF Bay Area. Her previous work has appeared in *Storytelling, Self & Society* (Wayne State University Press 2018), *Patrice Lumumba: An Anthology of Writers on Black Liberation* (Nomadic Press, 2021) and *Write Now! SF Bay's Anthology Essential Truths: The Bay Area in Color* (Pease Press, 2021). Some of Adrienne's favorite authors include Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison. When she is not writing, Adrienne is reading or watching documentaries. She most recently watched *High on the Hog: How African American Cuisine Transformed America*, a fast new favorite and fuel for her own mindful cooking journey. She also leads a monthly healing writing circle for Black women.



LESLEY PROVOST

Lesley Provost lives and works in the territory of the St'at'imc Nation in the rugged interior of British Columbia. Her writing tends to explore issues around the feminine experience and realities related to class and life at the lower end of the economic scale. She attended the Whistler Writer in Residence workshop in 2018. Many moons ago she hosted a long-running open mic series in Toronto and was a founding member of an art collective that produced poetry zines for nine years. A sommelier and wine educator, Lesley has won an unusual number of prestigious tasting competitions (some days things just all come together). While she is currently engaged primarily in writing fiction, she finds time to study the art of perfumery, assist with her teenage daughter's busy thrift/eco-artisan store, and hike with her pitbull-cross rescue, Juno, the cowardly lion of dogs (except when it comes to bears).



GABRIEL PULIDO

Gabriel Pulido is a third-year higher education Ph.D. candidate at the Pennsylvania State University. He is interested in critical race and ethnic studies, and gender and sexuality studies, in education. Born and raised in Sacramento, California, he first became involved with creative writing in the youth poetry slam scene. During his time at the University of California, Santa Cruz, he utilized what he learned in the classroom to fuel his creative writing endeavors. Gabriel's academic and creative writing often intersect and find a home at the center of healing. When not working towards obtaining his Ph.D., Gabriel competes and coaches at national poetry slam competitions which is just an excuse to travel, see friends, and build community. His favorite places are found near bodies of water. Gabriel considers himself a conjurer of joy, compassion, and resilience, as he uses both creative and academic writing to work towards liberation.



CÁNDIDA RODRIGUEZ

Cándida Rosa Rodríguez was born in Brooklyn, New York, and was raised both in Cayey, Puerto Rico, and Camden, New Jersey. She takes pride in her Afro-Boricua roots, although it has taken her a lifetime of self-discovery to return to them as well as the importance of her feminine powers. She has wandered from Brooklyn to Philadelphia and back to Camden; and it is there that her heart remains.

She is also a visual artist exploring mixed media and a lover of mail art/postcard exchanges. She enjoys amateur photography and is a die-hard *Star Trek* fan. Her passion is in writing fantasy and science fiction but has found a home in the lyricism of poetry and is a happy member of Brigid's Writers House in Camden.



GABRIEL SACCO

Gabriel Sacco is a candidate for an M.F.A. at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers and is involved in a video process that includes reading/writing/speaking. He researches oral tradition, the parable, and sustainable affection. Sacco will be graduating in Dec. 2021. He teaches undergraduate Photo 1A at MGSA. Sacco is from Bridgewater, New Jersey, and lives full time in Shelton, Connecticut, with his partner and two cats. He grows native flowers such as the Blue Flag Iris, foxglove, yarrow, and various rhododendron and azalea among others. He finds and cultivates naturally propagated trees such as Kousa Dogwoods, NA Hemlock, the Great NA Beech.



BETHANY SWANN

Bethany Swann (she/hers) is a Ph.D. student in English at the University of Pennsylvania studying critical race theory and contemporary poetry/poetics. She holds an M.Div. from Yale University and an M.F.A. from Indiana University. Her chapbook *DIADEM ME* was published by Miel Press in 2014. She is regional co-chair of Kundiman northeast.



NORMA THOMAS

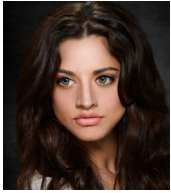
Dr. Thomas is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University, Temple University, and the University of Pennsylvania. She has had a long work history in the field of gerontology and academia, retiring from California University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work where she served as the M.S.W. program director, but still works as an instructor for the Center For Social Work Education, Widener University.

She has been honored to receive many community service awards, and serves on a number of local, state, national, and international boards and advisory boards. She founded, with her daughter, a venture called Story Joy to help Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities achieve their goals. She has engaged in gerontological research for a long time, and in documenting the history of African Americans in Fayette County Pennsylvania. In addition to serving on the advisory board for the Fayette County campus of Pennsylvania State University, she is a proud member of the Morgantown, West Virginia Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; the National Association of Social Workers; and the National Association of Black Social Worker; and is a licensed clinical social worker in the State of Pennsylvania and a member of the Academy of Certified Social Workers.



MAKSHYA TOLBERT

Makshya Tolbert (she/they) is a black, queer writer, grower, and cook moved by Black memory and ecological possibility. Her practices consist of making things with food, clay, and people. She recently completed a Fulbright fellowship in Bra, Italy, commemorating enslaved Black foodways through Black feminist study and practice. Her recent writing has appeared in *For The Culture Magazine*, *Gastronomica: The Journal For Food Studies*, and Volume V of the *New Farmers Almanac*. Makshya is currently making her way back to the Atlantic, where she will join the University of Virginia's M.F.A. program in poetry as a first-year this fall. In her free time, she is elsewhere, where Eddie S. Glaude Jr. calls "that physical or metaphorical place that affords the space to breathe."



ELIZABETH VAN GINNEKEN

Elizabeth Estella Van Ginneken is a poet and author of creative nonfiction. She graduated with highest honors from Columbia University and completed her M.F.A. coursework at New York University, where she has taught creative writing and was the recipient of the Starworks Fellowship. Her poem, *Park Avenue, Paterson*, was awarded second place in the 86th Annual *Writer's Digest* poetry competition, in which she also placed fifth, and she has twice been featured as "Poem of the Week" in *Narrative*. Her work has appeared in *Mangrove*, *NewPo*, *Surgam*, and others and she was the subject of a *New York Times* editorial. Elizabeth is currently at work on her forthcoming manuscript, a constellation of poems on horses, fame, love, mice, floriculture, and her dance with a rare, late-stage cancer. Too, she is co-producing a documentary based on her cross-cultural adoption, appendix cancer, and serendipity. Elizabeth is an adjunct professor in the English department at Passaic County Community College in Paterson, New Jersey, where she resides with her partner and daughter. Beyond writing, she enjoys flower gardening, horology, and fine art curation.



RAKSHA VASUDEVAN

Born in India and raised in Canada, Raksha Vasudevan is a nonfiction writer, economist and former aid worker. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in the *New York Times*, *Guernica*, *The Believer* and more. She lives in Denver, where she enjoys hiking and camping with her dog, frequenting the Asian Pacific market, and overwatering her plants.



ARVO VILLARS

Arvo Villars is the winner of the BOMB Poetry Contest 2020 Judged by Simone White. She was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize by Gulf Coast. She is a Cave Canem Fellow and a member of the NYFA Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program. Her poems have appeared in the *Journal of Poetics Research*, *[PANK]*, *Hobart*, *The Southampton Review*, *FailBetter*, *Strange Horizons*, *ANMLY*, and more.



KEITH WILSON

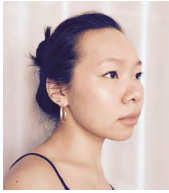
Keith S. Wilson is an Affrilachian Poet and a Cave Canem fellow. He is a recipient of an NEA Fellowship, an Elizabeth George Foundation Grant, and an Illinois Arts Council Agency Award, and has received both a Kenyon Review Fellowship and a Stegner Fellowship. Additionally, he has received fellowships or grants from Bread Loaf, Tin House, the MacDowell Colony, Vermont Studio Center, UCross, the Millay Colony, and James Merrill House, among others. His book, *Fieldnotes on Ordinary Love* (Copper Canyon), was recognized by the *New York Times* as a best new book of poetry.



ALLYCE YANG

Allyce Yang (they/them, she/her) is a poet and writer from New York. She was born to immigrants from China and graduated last month from Minerva Schools at KGI with a degree in history and a thesis in poetry. As part of their university program, they have lived and studied in San Francisco, Seoul, London, and Buenos Aires. Other than English, she also speaks Mandarin, Spanish, and Korean.

Allyce's goals include refashioning cultural and social traditions into sources of personal and collective freedom and building international solidarity against racial capitalism. She is looking for freelance opportunities in editing and writing as she works on her portfolio for M.F.A. applications next year. Her favorite writers are Aria Aber, Elena Ferrante, and Ursula K. Le Guin.



JADE YEUNG

Yeung (she/they) is a queer Toishanese American writer from Brooklyn, New York. She has received support from Community of Writers and Fine Arts Work Center. Her writing has appeared in *Lammergeier* and Indolent Book's *A River Sings* series. Currently Jade is pursuing an M.F.A. at Rutgers University–Newark where she is a Trustees Fellow. This summer she'll be a Teaching Artist for NJPAC's

City Verses Summer Camp. She's a proud alum of Hunter College, the High School of Art and Design, and many free public art programs in NYC, all of which shaped her commitment to anti-oppressive practices. She enjoys boba, bachata, and bacon-egg-and-cheeses.



SAARET YOSEPH

Saaret E. Yoseph is a writer and multidisciplinary artist with over 10 years of diverse content and media experience that spans film, poetry and creative non-fiction. Her work has been featured by *HuffPost*, *The Rumpus*, *The Root*, *CNN*, *the Washington Post*, and *The Ethiopian Reporter*. Saaret's writing and visual art examines identity, migration, and memory across the African diaspora. In 2014,

she premiered RED LINE DC, a short documentary examining gentrification and graffiti. Since then, she has partnered with various artists and organizations to lead and collaborate on narrative projects, including Meridian Hill Pictures and Google Cultural Institute. Saaret has a Master's in communication, culture and technology from Georgetown University and a Bachelor's in English and Africana studies from the University of Maryland, Baltimore Co. She's currently writing and developing several projects, including a debut collection of poetry and a loosely-autobiographical feature script set in DC and its sister city, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.



KAMELYA OMAYMA YOUSSEF

Kamelya Omayma Youssef is a poet, teacher, literary worker based between New York and Dearborn/Detroit, with roots in Lebanon. She is the author of *A book with a hole in it*, forthcoming in 2022 with Wendy's Subway. Her poems and lyric essays have been published or are forthcoming in the *The Margins*, *Mizna*, *Poem-a-Day*, the *Michigan Quarterly Review*, the *Cordite Poetry Review*, at the *Poetry*

Project, *Bird's Thumb*, several Arab American anthologies, an exhibit catalog, and on the theater stage. Currently, she is an M.F.A. candidate working on a new manuscript at New York University, where she also taught a course on writing through the apocalypse. During off hours, she hangs with her cat named Djeje (chicken), jogs along the river while listening to self-help podcasts, develops her bellydancing skills, hikes, cooks, Marie-Kondo's, hangs out with her dozens of cousins and their babies, and organizes events with her friends, among other things.

For more information visit: GlobalRacialJustice.rutgers.edu