



DANYLA NASH NAMED CITY OF URBANA'S INNAUGURAL YOUTH POET LAUREATE

The City of Urbana Arts and Culture Program, together with Urban Word NYC, are proud to announce Urbana's inaugural Youth Poet Laureate, Urbana High School student, Danyla Nash.

Danyla Nash is a writer and spoken word artist from Urbana, Illinois. For over three years, she has been a foundational member of the Writers of Oya, a spoken word artist and writer's program for young girls of color. She has performed original poetry in local, regional, and national venues including Soul on Sunday, Talks with Tari on 104.5, ciLiving, Sounds Like Community, Art Now!, Pygmalion Literary Marathon, Hood Vote Neighborhood Transformation's civic events, Luminous Magazine, United Way's Teen Summit, Black Voices Theatre Production, and two National African American Parent Involvement Day performances. Nash's poetry is published in *Unmasked*, a collection of poetry from the Writers of Oya and its subsequent audiobook.

She's a 2021 MLK, Jr. Creative Expressions Competition winner and presented her own workshop, "Spittin' the Unspeakable: Using Slam Poetry to Cope with Trauma" at the National Guild for Community Arts Educators. She has the ability to take her experiences and connect them to larger social, political, racial, and economic themes. Danyla is a Scholar Award recipient at Urbana High School, and when not writing, she plays flute and oboe, performs in color guard, and spends time with her family. She's working on her first poetry collection due out later this year.

The Youth Poet Laureate Program celebrates Urbana's youth by sponsoring an Urbana teen poet (ages 13-18 years) who serves as a youth ambassador for poetry and utilizes poetry as a means for civic leadership, artistic excellence, and social engagement. Danyla was selected through a juried process wherein her proposal for civic initiatives, poetry work samples, and vision for community engagement was evaluated by a jury of local poets and youth educators.

The jurors were impressed with her powerful poetic voice and her plans for integrating poetry into Urbana life, selecting her for the inaugural position.

The City of Urbana's Youth Poet Laureate Program joins the National Youth Poet Laureate Program (YPL) network through Urban Word with programs in more than 50 cities, states, and counties across the United States, collaborating with leading national literary organizations including the Library of Congress, the Academy of American Poets, Poetry Foundation, Cave Canem, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

"The Youth Poet Laureate Program is one of the nation's most important civic movements of this generation. Together, the Youth Poet Laureates are a collective of not only brilliant young writers but also deeply committed, young civic leaders working to improve their communities," said Dr. Camea Davis, National Youth Poet Laureate Director. Urbana's Youth Poet Laureate will be eligible to apply for the 2023 National Youth Poet Laureate Competition.