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Creative Philadelphia Announces Community Poets Featured in Upcoming Healing Verse Germantown Public Art Exhibition

Nineteen Germantown residents selected to have their poems transformed into public art installations debuting in 2026

PHILADELPHIA – Creative Philadelphia is thrilled to announce that 19 Germantown community members have been selected as the featured poets in the upcoming [Healing Verse Germantown: The Streets Are Talking](#) Public Art Exhibition, scheduled to open in Spring 2026. This announcement marks the first public reveal of the 19 Germantown community members whose poems, developed through Healing Verse Germantown’s poetry workshops, will be transformed into site-specific public art installations. Their selected works will appear across the neighborhood in a range of creative forms, from sidewalk and sneaker installations to VR constellations and interactive floral offerings, bringing community stories of healing directly into public space.

Healing Verse Germantown: The Streets Are Talking is a temporary public art project providing healing through poetry and creative writing to community members impacted by gun violence. The temporary poetry and public art project is supported by the City of Philadelphia through Creative Philadelphia and is a winner of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge. The project is fiscally sponsored by the Philadelphia Cultural Fund. Philadelphia was selected as one of 8 cities across the U.S. States to receive \$1,000,000 to address an urgent civic issue. This project is in collaboration with artistic leads Trapeta Mayson and Yolanda Wisher, and public art coordinator Rob Blackson.

“The process of selecting poems from more than 200 submissions for the installations was difficult, rewarding, and illuminating,” said **Yolanda Wisher and Trapeta Mayson, Co-Artistic Leads, Healing Verse Germantown**. “We are both grateful and overwhelmed by the vulnerability and enthusiasm Germantown expressed through this process. In selecting the final poems, we worked hard to represent the full breadth and diversity of the folks who participated in the Healing Verse Germantown workshops. We felt the weight of the number of poems written but also the loss, grief, yearning, and healing expressed

within them. For each poem selected, there were many others submitted that illustrated the power of voices engaged in community healing.”

Since the project launched in September 2024, *Healing Verse Germantown* has engaged community members through four components: 10 poetry workshops; a weekly phone line featuring healing poems and mental health resources; an upcoming public art exhibition of poems from the workshops featuring installations throughout Germantown; and an archive of the project.

The 10 poetry workshops were hosted across Germantown between October 2024 through February 2025. Facilitated by artistic leads Trapeta Mayson and Yolanda Wisher, these workshops were intentionally crafted to host community members who have been both directly and indirectly impacted by gun violence. The workshops offered poetry prompts, a clinical therapist, a meal, opportunities for community members to share their poetry with fellow workshop attendees and a stipend for participation. Many of the workshops were open to the public, while others were dedicated to healthcare workers, first responders, youth, the deaf community and men in a transitional supportive services program.

“It gives me a sense of urgency and peace. Speaking on this topic heals me in ways I can’t express,” said **Sifiyah Cupit, Youth community member and poetry workshop participant**. “Helping people see my truth and bringing my community together to make everyone feel heard is an amazing feeling.”

Workshop locations in Germantown included: Braid Mill, Covenant House Health Services, Face to Face Germantown, Johnson House Historic House, Joseph E. Coleman Northwest Regional Library, Lonnie Young Recreation Center, Our House Culture Center, Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, Pushing Progress Philly (P3) at PA CareerLink Philadelphia, Northwest, and Ubuntu Fine Art.

More than 170 community members participated in the workshops, generating over 200 poems. From this collection, artistic leads Yolanda Wisher and Trapeta Mayson, together with public art coordinator Rob Blackson, selected 19 poems that reflect the neighborhood’s wide-ranging experiences with gun violence and healing. The chosen poets span generations, from youth as young as 12 to community elders, and include both first-time writers and those with decades-long careers. Some are new to Germantown, while others have called it home their entire lives. Together, they represent the vibrant, resilient, and multifaceted spirit that makes Germantown unique.

"Being chosen to contribute to this project is more than an honor—it's a responsibility," said **Darlene Wilson-Bennett, Germantown Community Member and Poetry Workshop Participant**. "It reminds me that my story, my pain, and my healing have the power to help others. I don't take that lightly. If my voice can bring comfort, clarity, or courage to even one person, then I want to keep showing up."

The 19 selected poets include:

- Andre Saunders
- blew kind
- Carmelo Whitehead
- Cassidy Arrington
- Darlene Wilson-Bennett
- Dejah Andrews
- Doriana Diaz
- Jaifah Thompson
- Jamar Gordon
- Jewel Harris
- Lindsay Turner
- Mars Santi
- Nzadi Keita
- Philadelphia Police Officer - Anonymous
- RuNett Ebo
- Sifiyah Cupit
- Troy Brown
- Victoria Huggins Peurifoy
- Zawadi Levy

The public art phase of *Healing Verse Germantown: The Streets Are Talking* is now in active planning and fabrication. The 19 selected poems are being transformed into public art which will appear across Germantown.

"All of the art works are inspired by the poems and the loved ones they honor," said **Rob Blackson, Public Art Coordinator, Healing Verse Germantown**. "Through conversations with the selected poets we're crafting a range of public art works from sneakers and sidewalks to VR constellations and free bouquets of fresh flowers."

Healing Verse Germantown is also working with the poets and a Community Partner Committee composed of 9 Germantown stakeholders and leaders in the gun violence and healing space to select sites that honor the stories behind the poems and reflect the neighborhood's diversity.

The public art exhibition is scheduled to open in Spring 2026. There will be an opening ceremony, public programming and tours throughout the exhibition term. The project is scheduled to conclude in June 2026. As a temporary public art exhibition, some installations may be deinstalled, while others may remain on view through agreements

with private property owners, or potentially be acquired by the City of Philadelphia's permanent public art collection.

By amplifying the voices of Germantown residents, *Healing Verse Germantown: The Streets Are Talking* seeks to create spaces for continued community dialogue, healing, resilience and creative expression that live well beyond the life of the project.

For updates on *Healing Verse Germantown: The Streets Are Talking* [sign up to receive emails](#) from Creative Philadelphia and follow Creative Philadelphia on social media @CreativePHL and @HealingVerseGermantown.

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About Creative Philadelphia

Creative Philadelphia closes the gap in access to quality cultural experiences and creative expression through the support and promotion of arts, culture and the creative industries; connecting Philadelphians to enriching, arts-infused experiences; linking local artists and cultural organizations to resources and opportunities, and preserving the City's public art assets. For more information about Creative Philadelphia visit phila.gov/arts and follow @CreativePHL on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.