



**STREET POETS INC
2016 ANNUAL REPORT**

AT STREET POETS

WE OWN OUR OWN STORIES

If we don't tell our own story, someone else (a judge, a teacher, a police or probation officer, our peers, our parents) may tell it for us, and get it wrong.

WE EXERCISE OUR VOICES

We develop ourselves as writers and human beings – on the page and on the mic. Our stories, when shared, connect us to one other and serve to build community.

WE CREATE BRAVE SPACES

We know that real change comes with challenge. We summon the courage to face our fears, not to hide from them – and to support each other in that process.

WE CELEBRATE EACH OTHER'S GIFTS

We practice Gift-centered mentoring that focuses on the unique personal medicine expressing itself through each youth we serve.

WE DREAM BIG

We harness the power of metaphor to inspire each other to imagine a reality beyond the one into which we were born.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Street Poet David Sanchez was idling at a red light near his home in South Los Angeles.

"Where you from?!" The hormonal squeak of his assailant's voice startled David almost as much the pressure of the gun barrel behind his ear.

"I'm from nowhere," David replied evenly, "I don't bang."

"Well I'm from ●●th Street. This is my 'hood!"



As David turned slowly toward the open driver's side window, he felt as if he was looking into a mirror, through some kind of time machine. "I saw myself at age 13 without a hair on my chin," David remembered. **"The .45 the kid was pointing at me looked bigger than his whole arm.** I couldn't believe he was holding it up with just one hand. But I could tell from the look in his eyes that he was serious."

With his heart beating like a jackhammer in his chest, David racked his brain for the best possible way to respond. Ten years had passed since he'd joined his first Street Poets workshop while serving time as a youth in an L.A. County

Probation camp. Now he was the proud father of two beautiful little girls, and the proud owner of Seed & Sol, an organic gardening business. Given his traumatic childhood, he felt especially good to be doing something productive and meaningful with his life, something that he loved.

"I know your big homie Puppet," David offered.

He watched this unexpected piece of information penetrate and settle behind his assailant's narrowed bloodshot eyes. It was true – David had gone to elementary school with one of the more feared members of the gang the kid was claiming. In fact, he'd bumped into him at the Swap Meet one week earlier.

"Dispensa," the kid apologized. "I didn't mean to do that."

And just as quickly as he'd appeared, the little homie jumped back into a waiting car and drove off. David pulled over to the side of the road to catch his breath.

“I really wanted to help that kid,” he told me over the phone a few minutes later. “He has no idea how close he just came to ruining his whole life.”

Ten years earlier, David’s likely first response, like that of most gangbangers in the wake of a similar encounter, would have been anger and revenge, but now all he felt was compassion and an overwhelming desire to help. **“This is why I want to teach poetry and plant gardens in the schools around here,”** David explained to me. “These kids need something to believe in beyond their block. Something that won’t get them killed or locked up for life.”

20 years ago, Street Poets was born from this same desire—**to awaken and nurture the leaders, healers and dreamers within our city’s most troubled and vulnerable youth.** While gang violence has fallen precipitously (there has been an over 60% drop in gang-related homicides in L.A. since Street Poets first began in 1995), David’s recent encounter reminds us that our challenges **are far from over.** In fact, South L.A. has seen a spike in gang-related crime in recent months. This spike comes at a culturally and politically volatile time, a time when bridge-building organizations like Street Poets that honor and celebrate diversity and bring people together around common passions (the healing power of the creative process), are being called on to do more, here in Los Angeles, and increasingly, in other parts of this nation and the world.

It is our goal over the next 20 years to meet those challenges, **to manifest the kind of cultural change that will bear fruit for current and future generations, to sow seeds of transformation in the youth of our city,** so that they, like David Sanchez, will be inspired, even in the face of violence, to dream a new world into being for us all.

With Much Respect,



Chris Henrikson
Founder & Executive Director



David Sanchez

STREET POETS PROGRAMS

Since 1995, Street Poets has had the privilege of leading writing workshops **for close to 10,000 youth** in East and South Los Angeles high schools, in L.A. County juvenile probation facilities and more recently from our Poetry in Motion van (which doubles as a mobile youth outreach and open-mic performance venue). Unlike many more traditional arts education organizations, however, our programming does not end in the classroom, **it begins there.**

For our youth and young adult alumni, **Street Poets' writing workshops become doorways** into long-term mentoring relationships, community open-mic events, spoken-word and hip-hop-infused digital recording projects and life-changing rites of passage retreats. **Everything we do is designed to awaken our next generation of leaders into purposeful adulthood.**

[Click here to check out Street Poets impact live.](#)

WHAT OUR TEACHERS HAVE TO SAY

The best way to describe what occurs during Street Poets workshops is humanization. Students' lives become visible and acknowledged in school, an institution that by its very design makes our lived experiences invisible, irrelevant, and as such, too often strips of us of our humanity. I have seen students who every teacher in our school has had difficulty engaging, fully immersed in the process of discussing, writing, and sharing poetry after just a few Street Poets workshops.

—Jerica Coffey, Locke High School

I have witnessed a tangible increase in my students' sense of their own creative potentials through brainstorming, production and revision of masterful and insightful student pieces that are expressive of powerful personal experiences. Street Poets ability to then focus students on making their personal expression and healing a springboard for academic, spoken word, and even media production, has now become a model for my instruction.

—Vitaly, Central High School, Mar Vista Gardens

WHAT OUR YOUTH HAVE TO SAY

I never realized how much I actually had to say until I first picked up a pencil in the Street Poets workshop at Camp Miller. Now writing is like breathing for me. I'd be dead without it.

—Joseph, 17

What has been most meaningful to me about the workshops is that you can tell your story and not be judged. I am impacted very deeply as a person from being with Street Poets because it helped me to speak up more when I want to be heard, and I am now more in touch with my feelings.

—Maria, 16



Writing Workshops

Street Poets' poetry workshops inspire youth to tell their stories, to explore their gifts and wounds, to develop their authentic voices through writing and to dream. Workshops include a wide range of writing exercises, poetic text analysis, guided meditations, and facilitated dialogue around themes pertinent to our students' lives.

This year, Street Poets led a series of intensive writing workshops in **8 Los Angeles High Schools, 3 L.A. County Probation Camps, and 1 Compton Elementary School**, serving approximately 500 youth.

Click here to check out where Street Poets workshops first started. A look at our 20th anniversary return to Camp Miller.

Poetry Performances

Street Poets' violence prevention poetry group, composed of workshop alumni and staff, performs at schools, youth justice & peace conferences and juvenile detention facilities throughout Los Angeles County and beyond.

We conducted one-time performances and workshops at over **20 additional school and community sites** including the Kroc Institute for Justice & Peace in San Diego and all three L.A. County Juvenile Halls, reaching an additional 1,500 youth.



Recording Studio

The Street Poets recording studio produces a CD of spoken-word poetry and music annually. We hold a weekly Beats & Rhymes workshop at our office when students gather to write, record and connect with each other. In the process, students learn about digital recording technology and participate in one-on-one creative mentoring sessions with our staff.

Street Poets released its **9th annual recording project**, a CD compilation of original spoken-word poetry and music entitled "The Offering."



Leadership Academy

The Leadership Academy offers an opportunity for our most engaged youth to further develop their talents and organizing skills. Leadership students are immersed in Street Poets' mission and methodology, while going on cultural and wilderness field trips and retreats **to stimulate and inspire their creativity and personal growth.**



We facilitated 100 hours of community meditation and soul-searching in a multi-generational writing circle.

Seeking Peace Circle

For over 17 years, the Street Poets community has gathered weekly on Tuesdays from 4-6pm to **write, breathe and dream together**. Seeking Peace is a multi-generational meditation and writing circle with rotating themes and facilitators – open to all!

Open-Mic Events

Street Poets is committed to building a community that **brings together different racial, ethnic and socio-economic segments of the city**. Toward this end, we host monthly open-mic events—“Community Soul Circles”—for our students, alumni, staff, volunteers, family and friends at sites throughout Los Angeles.

Street Poets hosted **8 community open-mic events** including “Seeing in the Dark”—our annual celebration of the Winter Solstice and the light found in darkness.





“Street Poets Presents” Reading Series

SP Presents is a quarterly NEA-sponsored public reading series that **brings together nationally known poets and spoken word artists with our Street Poets community.** Each event includes a poetry reading followed by a question and answer session, and a follow-up workshop with the poet at one of our school sites.

PAST PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE:

KRS-One, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Luis J. Rodriguez,
Natalie Diaz, Willie Perdomo, Jericho Brown, Mindy Nettifee, Beau Sia



Poetry in Motion Van

The Poetry in Motion Van is a mobile performance venue and recording studio conceived to help us deliver poetic medicine directly to the streets and communities where it is needed most. This street vehicle inspires creative community wherever it goes, empowering people of all ages and backgrounds to express themselves on the page and on the mic. We have reached a total of 10,000 individuals and made over 250 stops since we launched the Street Poets Van.

Our Poetry in Motion van just wrapped its 4th summer bringing poetry open-mics and performances to L.A.'s public parks and housing projects as part of the City-sponsored Summer Night Lights Program.



[*Click here to see our Poetry in Motion Van in action.*](#)



Rites of Passage Retreats

In collaboration with our partners at Youth Mentoring Connection, Wolf Connection and Rhythm Arts Alliance, Street Poets facilitated initiation retreats for both boys and girls (separately), as well as a homecoming open-mic celebration upon their return to the city.

YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

FAVIO LOVOS

A senior at Manual Arts High School in South LA, Favio Lovos has been an active participant at Street Poets for three years now. But over the past six months, he has blossomed into a **vital ambassador** for our work in the world, representing Street Poets most recently at the Teen DO Lectures, an international gathering of youth in Wales. "When the plane touched down in London, it felt like I'd landed on another planet, the way people talked and drove on the wrong side of the road," Favio remembers. "But when I met the other kids out in Wales, I realized that **we're not as different as I thought, and that I had something important to offer there through my poetry and my story.**" Favio's story will continue in college next year, but in the meantime, he remains a powerful leader at Street Poets, helping to host and organize our monthly open-mic events. In the words of SP Community Outreach Coordinator Frank Escamilla: "Mentoring Favio has been **like watching a rainbow gradually appear over the 'hood, until it's impossible to turn away. He is a radiant, inspirational being.**"



STAFF SPOTLIGHT

MAYDA DEL VALLE

“As a girl growing up on the south side of Chicago, I found my voice as a poet and person through my involvement with a community organization a lot like Street Poets,” Street Poets Program Director Mayda Del Valle explains. **“So I’m doing my best to give back to our youth what was once given to me.”** A widely acclaimed poet/performer, Mayda was a regular on Russell Simmons’ Def Poetry Jam on HBO, as well as a contributing writer and original cast member of the Tony Award-winning Def Poetry Jam on Broadway. Beyond being an **incredible source of inspiration** and emotional support for our young people, Mayda brings a great wealth of knowledge and experience to our ongoing program and curriculum development. “We are blessed to have Mayda’s leadership and creativity in the mix,” opines SP executive director Chris Henrikson. **“She understands the transformational healing depth of this work, from the inside out.”**



[Click here to check out Mayda performing at the White House.](#)

COLLABORATORS



In a desire to share all that we've learned over the years, and to expand our impact beyond the youth we serve directly, **Street Poets has become one of the most highly collaborative organizations in Los Angeles.** In recent years, we've helped to spearhead the formation of the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network and the Roots Rising Collaborative to deepen our impact on the culture of our city, on our youth, and on the educational and probation systems intended to serve them.

ROOTS RISING COLLABORATIVE

Street Poets Inc.
Youth Mentoring
Rhythm Arts Alliance
Wolf Connection
Western Gate Roots & Wings
Center for Council

ARTS FOR INCARCERATED YOUTH NETWORK

Street Poets Inc.
Inside Out Writers
The Unusual Suspects
The Armory Center for the Arts
CEE-Hope
WriteGirl
Rhythm Arts Alliance
The Actor's Gang Prison Project
Artworx
Jail Guitar Doors

OTHER PARTNERS

Homeboy Industries
Inner-City Arts

This year, Street Poets led arts-based intervention trainings for 120 L.A. County Probation officers in collaboration with the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network.

97% of probation officers who participated in our arts-based intervention training said they would recommend the training to their colleagues.

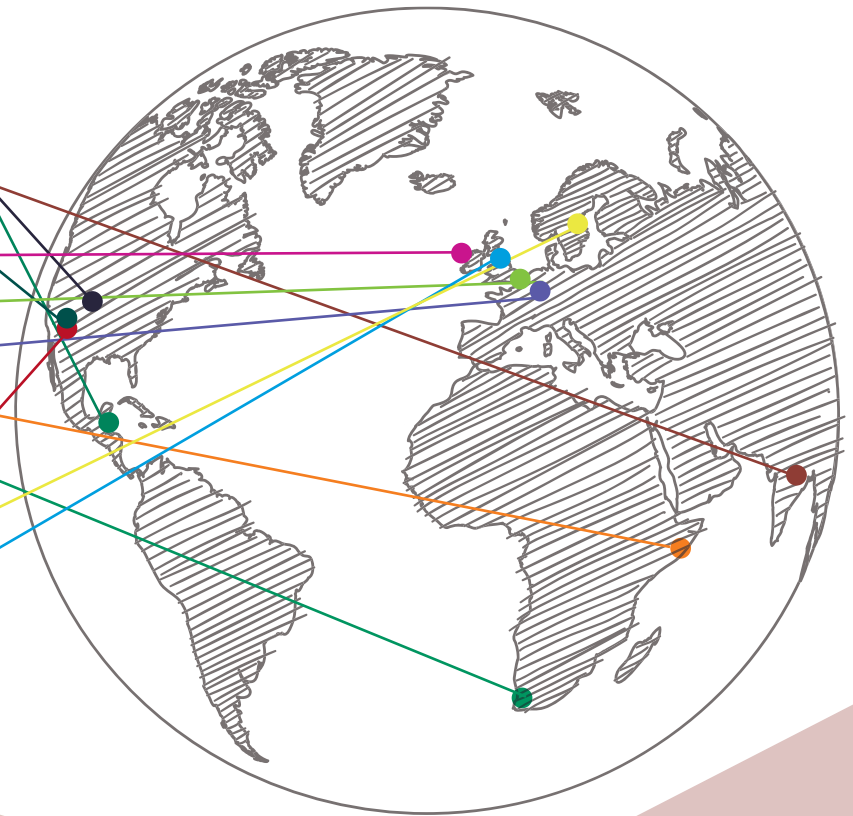
97%

BEYOND LA

Teaching artists, Frank Escamilla, Art Quiros and Jaynese Poole returned to Sweden to facilitate writing and dance workshops, an open-mic performance and a community healing ritual in support of the Youth Initiative Program (YIP), an international gathering of young adult change-makers.

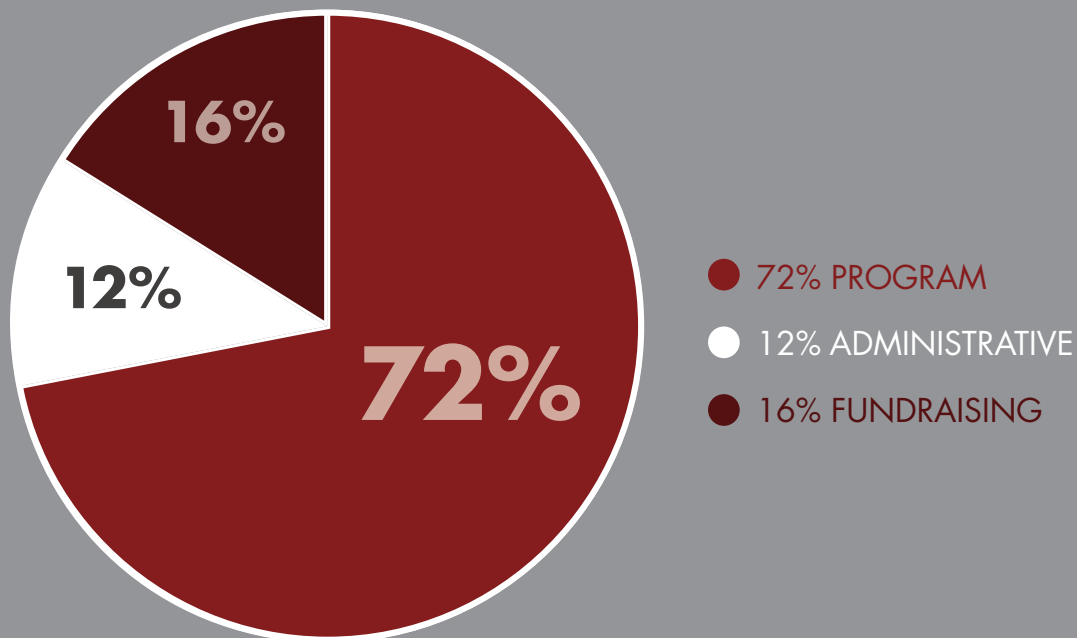
While 95% of our work is local, Street Poets has traveled by invitation to the following locations to perform and teach since 1995

- Belize
- Colorado
- India
- Navajo Reservation (AZ)
- Northern Ireland
- Germany
- Hungary
- Kenya
- South Africa
- San Carlos Apache Reservation (AZ)
- Sweden
- Wales

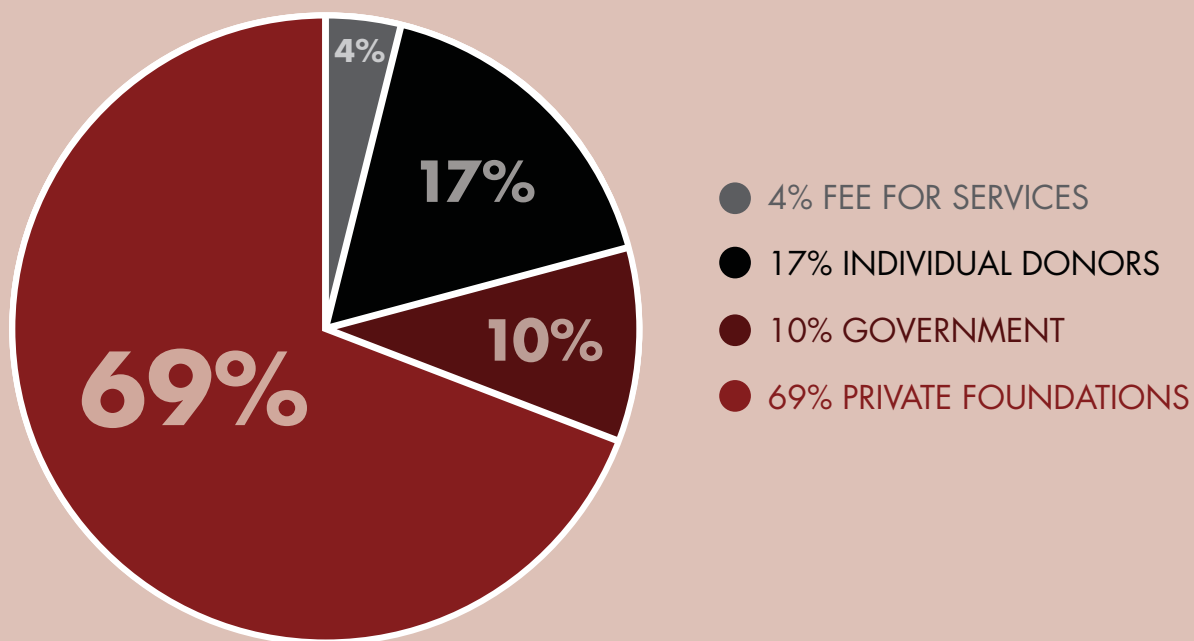


FINANCIAL REPORT

INCOME ALLOCATION



REVENUE



REVENUE: \$610,000

EXPENSES: \$578,000

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alison Tatlock, Screenwriter/Playwright

Bill Anderson, Founder/CEO, First Beverage Group

Neal Anderson, Co-Founder/Managing Partner, The Propellant Group
Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator

Loren Montgomery, Attorney, Founder/CEO, MC Advisors

Don Flood, Photographer, Founder, FliePaper

Katie Fragen, Founder/CEO, Katie Moss Landscape Design

Susannah Grant, Screenwriter/Director/Producer

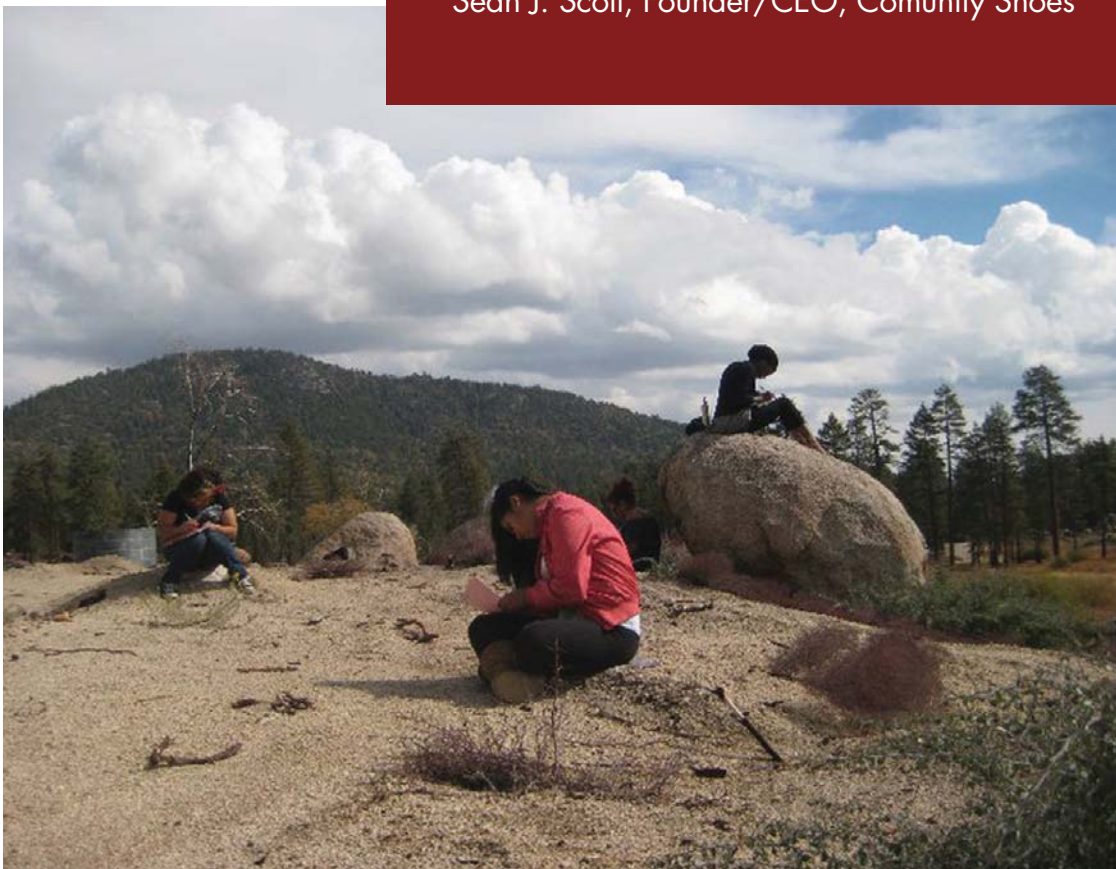
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Sean J. Scott, Founder/CEO, Community Shoes



THANK YOU

We at Street Poets, Inc. are honored to serve the youth and adults of Los Angeles County (and beyond) as they discover their voices and work towards positive change in their lives. THANK YOU to all of our generous donors for making our work possible and for supporting Street Poets, our youth and our communities.

METAPHORS BE WITH YOU!

\$100,000 +

The Annenberg Foundation
(Explore.org)

\$50,000 to \$99,999

California Community Foundation
(PAT Initiative)

\$20,000 to \$49,999

Bloomberg Philanthropies
California Arts Council
Carl & Roberta Deutsch Foundation
Christopher Henrikson & Susannah Grant
Dwight Stuart Youth Fund
Kalliopeia Foundation
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The Green Foundation
WME Foundation

\$10,000 to \$19,999

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OUR MISSION

Street Poets harnesses the healing power of poetry and music to save lives, create community and transform culture.

Street Poets breaks the cycle of violence in the lives of at-risk and incarcerated youth, awakening them to their gifts.

Street Poets builds creative community, bringing youth, adults and elders of diverse backgrounds into deep transformational relationship.

Street Poets consults and collaborates with other organizations and communities to inspire both individual and systemic change, transforming our culture from one too often driven by fear to one that celebrates healing and the creative process.



2116 Arlington Ave, Suite 310
Los Angeles, CA 90018
323.737.8545
info@streetpoets.com
streetpoetsinc.com

YOUR ROAD, MY RIVER

by Gali Briones

It all began in my neighborhood oasis
Suspended above the 10 freeway
A river of lights flowing beneath my feet
Red and yellow orbs moving west and east, simultaneously
A beautiful thing - if you ask me
And my river roars
Louder than the sound of a thousand horses galloping on their way
Or it can be still - depending on the time of day
Blanketed on both sides by vines and bushes
Like patches of green sky in the middle of an asphalt storm
I found a home here
A place to clear my mind
Just a skanky bridge in most people's eyes
But I'm a poet, I can see creation bloom
A new piece every other day
On this bridge booming with noise
A different type of attention needs to be paid
Stop, look and listen
Let your senses trade position
For a minute, then spin it
As the years went by, the neon names became inscriptions
A character here or there
And now there's a full scene depicted
To most it's still a skanky bridge
But this is my place to find clues on how to live
Where my muses love to give
To let the gears turn
To learn
My place of revelation
Where I can see what I need to be
Looking to the east I witness the sun
High over the Street Poets office
Where my soul was sprung ... free
Unleashed, shown a world beyond my own
Blessed with some tools to walk this new path I'm on
My first steps of rebirth, unearthed in the west
Gave me faith in that path
Now my steps are blessed, as are yours
As long as we truly believe in what we're fighting for
It may take time and work and pain
Some healing and signs
Most of our paths include some grime
But making it through as the truest you
That, my friends, is where the real test lies
That, my friends, is what I'm here to try
To do before I die
And I figured it out at my river oasis