

2nd Annual LA Get Down Festival Celebrating Hip-Hop & Spoken Word

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Desk

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Greenway Arts Alliance (Whitney Weston and Pierson Blaetz, Co-Founders and Co-Artistic Directors), in association with Da Poetry Lounge, presents the **2ND ANNUAL LA GET DOWN FESTIVAL**, celebrating hip-hop and spoken word. The festival takes place from April 7 - 28, 2018. Events will be held at the Greenway Court Theatre ([544 N. Fairfax Avenue, Los Angeles](#)) and Melrose Trading Post ([7850 Melrose Avenue, Los Angeles](#)). Da Poetry Lounge Co-Founder Shihan Van Clief serves as Festival Artistic Director.



The **2ND ANNUAL LA GET DOWN FESTIVAL** will play host to the 10th Anniversary of inkSlam: L.A.'s Premiere Poetry Festival with awards sponsored by Greenway Arts Alliance in celebration of Greenway's 20th Anniversary and National Poetry Month. Other festival highlights include: Dahlak Brathwaite's critically-acclaimed one-man performance *Spiritrials*; Atlanta based Poetry vs. Hip-Hop; invitational team and indie slams from all over the country from youths to adults; showcases; workshops; and other events.

"We are excited to provide a platform to the incredible talent and diverse voices of Los Angeles and beyond. In light of recent events in our country, it's a perfect time for expression and coming together through spoken word events like ours," said Whitney Weston, Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director of Greenway Arts Alliance.

"If you want to get past the 24 hour news cycle and really connect with what is happening in your Los Angeles community, Shihan is your guide," stated Pierson Blaetz, Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director of Greenway Arts Alliance. He added, "The talent that he is gathering for our annual *LA Get Down Festival* is extraordinary."

"This year the *LA Get Down Festival* has upped the ante in regards to programming. Poets from around the world will take the stage and facilitate workshops breaking down preconceptions of what poetry is and what it could be," said Shihan Van Clief, Festival Artistic Director and Co-Founder of Da Poetry Lounge. "From Dahlak Brathwaite's *Spiritrials* to Poetry vs. Hip Hop, we're looking toward to giving people a real opportunity to experience the full range of emotions expressed through poetry. I can't wait for the festival to get started.

Saturday, April 7 at 9:00 p.m.

***Spiritrials* starring Dahlak Brathwaite**

Location: Greenway Court Theatre

In *Spiritrials*, addiction, religion, and the law intersect in a court-ordered drug rehabilitation program. A timely exploration of the American criminal justice system, this multi-dimensional play blurs the line between hip-hop and dramatic performance. Dahlak Brathwaite (writer/performer) weaves through the autobiographical and the fictional, music and monologue, to examine his place in what appears to be a cultural rite of passage for a young Black male. The Portland Mercury said, "It's a powerful and persuasive account of racism and injustice the War of Drugs has wrought...humorous and poignant." And, the Sacramento News & Review praised Brathwaite, "His presence is breathtaking, chilling...dynamic and heartfelt."

Thursday, April 12 at 9:00 p.m.

Poems are Gay!

Location: Greenway Court Theatre

Hosted by Edwin Bodney, the evening features luminary poets from the LGBTQ community including Fei Hernandez, Jay Dodd and Aleah Bradshaw with special musical guest Jade Hendrix.

Friday, April 13 at 8:00 p.m.

***Say Word Finals* hosted by Kat Magill**

Location: Greenway Court Theatre

Competition is a great catalyst to building character, which is where the Say Word Youth Slam Team steps in. Each young poet will write, edit and perform original works, adhering to pre-set guidelines and judged on a point system at each Slam event. The top-scoring poets advance to semi-final and final competition rounds where the top five poets earn a spot on the Say Word Youth Slam Team.

Saturday, April 14 at 9:00 p.m.

Chingona Fire

Location: Greenway Court Theatre

Chingona Fire, a Latina Feminist poetry collective from Los Angeles, was founded by the poets Angela Aguirre and Yesika Salgado in February 2016. Their goal is to create safe space and visibility for women of color. Aguirre says, "Patriarchy will have you believe that, and internalize that, so we are trying to change that narrative to one that celebrates with other women instead of competes with them." She added, "We need to stop feeling pain and jealousy from someone's success and instead see it as them breaking a barrier that's helping you get closer and closer to that door."

Sunday, April 15 at 1:00 p.m.

***Emerge and See: Youth Poetry Showcase* hosted by Matthew Cuban Hernandez**

Location: Melrose Trading Post Main Stage

Emerging youth poets from Fairfax High School and other schools throughout LAUSD perform their original works.

Thursday, April 19 at 9:00 p.m.

***Atlanta Based Poetry vs. Hip-Hop* featuring Queen Sheeba and DJ Knodat**

Location: Greenway Court Theatre

Is Poetry and Hip-Hop really one in the same? Have emcees forgotten their roots? Is poetry a lost art to today's musicians?

Friday, April 20 at 9:00 p.m.

***Heartstorms* written by and starring Arianna Basco aka Lady Basco**

Location: Greenway Court Theatre

A play. A show. A mic. *Heartstorms* tells the story of the people who come; the lives in their art; and the lady that holds down the mic.

Saturday, April 21 at 8:00 p.m.

***inkSlam Indie Championship* hosted by Shihan Van Clief**

Location: Greenway Court Theatre

The *10th Annual inkSlam Indie Championship* features twelve of the nation's most recognized poets competing for \$1,500 in prizes sponsored by Greenway Arts Alliance. *InkSlam* is produced in association with Da Poetry Lounge.

Friday, April 27 at 8:00 p.m. and Saturday, April 28 at 8:00 p.m.

What It Iz

Location: Greenway Court Theatre

Adapted by ten incarcerated artists in a creative writing workshop, facilitated by acclaimed poet and performer Bryonn Bain, at the oldest women's prison in the State of California, the California Institute for Women (CIW), *What It Iz* is a prison abolitionist, hip-hop theater, and spoken word remix of *The Wiz*. The spring performances at Greenway Court Theatre benefit programs serving incarcerated youth at BJN Juvenile Hall, where workshops based on the production, engaging human rights and transformative justice, have inspired an oral history project and college course using theater to develop legislative proposals.

NOTE: The above performances are subject to change.

FESTIVAL WORKSHOPS:

Writing and performance workshops are facilitated by Alyesha Wise, Matthew 'Cuban' Hernandez and Taalam Acey; and publishing and touring workshops facilitated by Daniel Lisi.

Visit www.GreenwayCourtTheatre.org/LAGetDown for a full listing and schedule of the **LA GET DOWN FESTIVAL** workshops. All workshops are subject to change.

The **2ND ANNUAL LA GET DOWN FESTIVAL** is presented with the support of the City of West Hollywood's WeHo Arts program. For more information, please visit www.weho.org/arts or follow via social media @WeHoArts. Additional support is provided by the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs; and by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

Greenway Arts Alliance, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary year, kicked off their milestone last October at the Melrose Trading Post with a community event and accolades from Los Angeles' Mayor [Eric Garcetti](#), Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, Los Angeles Councilmember [Paul Koretz](#), Los Angeles Councilmember David Ryu, West Hollywood's Mayor John Heilman and LAUSD Superintendent [Michelle King](#). For two decades, the nonprofit GAA has been uniting communities through art, education and social enterprise. Greenway, a community leader and role model in social enterprise, runs the Greenway Court Theatre (a professional 99-seat theater), the Greenway Institute for the Arts (an arts education program at Fairfax High School, Title 1 high school in Los Angeles) and the Melrose Trading Post (a weekly open-air arts based marketplace).

The **2ND ANNUAL LA GET DOWN FESTIVAL** will take place from April 7 - 28, 2018. Tickets and passes to the festival are available online at GreenwayCourtTheatre.org or by phone 323-673-0544. For a full schedule visit GreenwayCourtTheatre.org/LAGetDown. **Single ticket prices range from \$10 - \$30. Full festival passes are also available for \$75. Patrons 25 or younger can select five events for \$25.**

Venues for the **2ND ANNUAL LA GET DOWN FESTIVAL** include:

Greenway Court Theatre

[544 N. Fairfax Avenue](#)

[Los Angeles, CA 90036](#)

Melrose Trading Post

On the Campus of Fairfax High School

[7850 Melrose Avenue](#)

[Los Angeles, CA 90036](#)

Main Stage

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2ND ANNUAL LA GET DOWN FESTIVAL BIOGRAPHIES:

Shihan Van Clief - Along with being the first and only poet to have a poem named 'download of the week' on iTunes; this National Poetry Slam Champion and 4X National Poetry Slam Finalist has been featured on a variety of media outlets including 7 appearances on 6 seasons of HBO's Def Poetry, NBC, Oxygen Network, Current TV, Nike Battlegrounds, Reebok, Adidas, NBA, CNN, ESPN, Complex and Billboard Magazine, several national commercial spots, 5 National Tours including the Tony Award Winning Russell Simmons presents Def Poetry Jam International Tour and 2 Spoken Word documentaries, SP!T and the sequel to 1997's cult doc Slam Nation, Slam Planet. Shihan was also the 1st 'Poet' to sign an exclusive Sponsorship deal with Sports Giant, adidas and he is the current voice for The Sprite Street Mix, a radio program broadcasted in over 14 countries in Africa. His abilities to transcend cultural and generational boundaries have made Shihan a much sought after talent. **(Headshot of Shihan Van Clief below.)**

Dahlak Brathwaite is a multi-faceted hip-hop artist that maximizes his abilities as musician, actor, poet, and educator within the transformational space of the theatre. Since launching onto the national spoken word scene by appearing on the last two seasons of HBO's Russell Simmons' presents Def Poetry Jam, Dahlak has showcased his seamless blend of hip-hop, theatre, and spoken word at over 200 universities throughout the United States and Europe. Dahlak has worked closely with Broadway veteran and Rockefeller fellow, Marc Bamuthi Joseph. Dahlak has written and performed in several of Joseph's critically acclaimed plays, including *Word Becomes Flesh* - presented at The Public Theater and Lincoln Center. From 2007 to 2012, Dahlak has released five musical projects, which includes the album *Spiritrials* that served as a soundtrack to his solo play. In 2014, Dahlak was selected as a musician for a U.S. State Department International Exchange Fellowship called 1Beat. *Spiritrials*, the solo play written, performed and scored by Dahlak, is currently on tour. Since the premiere in 2015, *Spiritrials* has been performed in 15 cities around the country, including two notable presentations at the prestigious Kennedy Center. Currently, Dahlak is collaborating with director Roberta Uno in order to adapt *Spiritrials* into an ensemble musical. Development of the work has been supported by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and is being supported by California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) through a series of residencies. Dahlak earned his B.A. degree from the University of California, Davis, where he studied English and Dramatic Studies.

Kat Magill is a HBO Def Poet and performed alongside artist such as Iyanla Vanzant, Claudia Rankine, Grammy Award winner Ryan Lesli, Hip Hop Legend Mos Def, singer and song writer Raheem Devaughn, Latin Grammy award winning Ozomatli and spoke alongside of Whitney Thompson winner of America's Next top model (10th cycle). Kat is a 2 time finalist in the PSI National Poetry slam and has earned numerous grand slam titles, including west coast regional champion before retiring from the world of slam to coach. Kat founded Say Word in

2012 and shortly after authored a nationally utilized spoken word high school curriculum. She is one of the most sought after spoken word education consultants throughout California and plans to do so much more. www.katmagill.com

Angela Aguirre, half-Mexicana, has been a poet for seven years. Aguirre has a background in education in rhetoric and social change from The University of California Los Angeles. She's been featured as a speaker in large events such as Adelante Mujer Latina Conference and the Women of Racial Justice Breakfast.

Yesika Salgado, who describes herself as "Fat, Fly, and Brown," is Salvadoran. Yesika is an eight-year veteran of Da Poetry Lounge (DPL), the mecca of L.A. slam poetry and spoken word and a member of the 2014 and 2016 Da Poetry Lounge Slam Team and placed top 10 in the nation both years. She has also been a Huffington Post contributor.

Arianna Lady Basco was recently recognized by the City of Los Angeles for her and her brother's contribution to the arts, they were named The First Filipino Entertainment Family. Author of "Palms Up", she also serves on the board for 1888.center, and is the host of the downtown staple Speakeasy in The Last Bookstore. She is the co-writer/ producer of Work In Progress and was formerly of the band Swahili Blonde. She has lent her voice and time to various charities and organizations throughout the years reaching as far as The Philippines for the GMA series The Balikbayan Project w/ The Bascos hosted by Giselle Tongi. More information at ladybasco.com.

Alyesha Wise - The author of *Carnival* (NOT A CULT Media), Alyesha Wise is a poet, teaching artist & TEDx speaker from Camden, N.J. Alyesha currently resides in Los Angeles, and is the co-founder of S.L.A.M. (Spoken Literature Art Movement) - an organization providing poetry education and extensive programming for poets. Alyesha was the Los Angeles (Get Lit) Youth Slam Team co-coach from 2014-2017 and is currently the Hollywood (Da Poetry Lounge) Slam Team head coach - The team recently made it to final stage in the 2017 National Poetry Slam. A 2014 Hollywood grand slam champion, she is also a 4-time member of the Hollywood Slam Team & a 2-time Women of the World Poetry Slam finalist. Alyesha has been featured on different platforms and publications such as Huffington Post, Bustle, Afropunk, WHYY, POPSUGAR, Buzzfeed and more. Some relatively recent highlights include - an upcoming appearance on *The Assembly* on Freespeech TV, an artistic collaboration with Codeblack Films and a feature in the Google Interstellar Project, in conjunction with the hit film *Interstellar*. Co-founder of Essence Magazine, Russell Goings, wrote to Alyesha, "In all, you are awesome."

Matthew 'Cuban' Hernandez is a poet, speaker, and performance coach from Jacksonville, Florida. He has toured as far as Abu Dhabi and nearly every major city in the United States and Europe, performing, teaching and coaching poetry. A teaching artist for nearly ten years, Matthew has spent the last four years working in youth detention centers across Los Angeles County. He has opened for artists such as Wu-Tang and has performed for platforms such as

BuzzFeed and NPR. Matthew is also a three-time Southern Fried poetry slam champion and an award-winning poetry coach. Cuban's favorite activity is making people feel great; sometimes he does this through poetry.

Daniel Lisi is the executive producer and co-founder of NOT A CULT. Lisi has created operating models for companies in publishing, interactive media, virtual+augmented reality, and the non-profit sector.

GREENWAY ARTS ALLIANCE (GAA) - Since its 1997 inception, the Greenway Arts Alliance has united communities through the arts, education and social enterprise. Through Greenway Court Theatre's professional theatre productions, Greenway Institute for the Arts' education programs and the Melrose Trading Post's weekly art-based open market, Greenway Arts Alliance builds a vibrant artistic community in the heart of Los Angeles. GAA has modeled an innovative partnership with the Fairfax High School campus to leverage community resources to connect the profession artistic and public education communities around a commitment to learning and creation in the arts. Greenway Arts Alliance was Co-Founded by artists-activists Whitney Weston and Pierson Blaetz, both of whom serve as Co-Artistic Directors for the organization.

GREENWAY COURT THEATRE - Greenway Court was initially built by Fairfax High School students in 1939 as a class project and used as a Social Hall by both students and faculty. It sat virtually unused for many years until it was finally renovated into a professional 99-seat theatre by Greenway Arts Alliance in 2000, to benefit both the school and the surrounding community.

Greenway Court Theatre has a rich history of presenting and producing diverse bodies of work. Greenway has opened its door to many main-stage productions, weekly open mic poetry, festivals and world premieres that have moved to larger venues and toured across the country.

Tiffany Moon serves as Greenway Court Theatre's Producing Director.

GREENWAY INSTITUTE FOR THE ARTS - An arts education program in theatre, dance and film for students at the Fairfax High School, a Title 1 high school in the Los Angeles Unified School district. Greenway Institute for the Arts promotes arts education through both in-class and after-school programs in theatre, dance film. Through the generosity of our funders, classes and workshops are provided free of charge to Fairfax High School students. Presented with opportunities to engage with professional artists, young people are able to discover their individual voices and passions that can lead to careers in the arts.

MELROSE TRADING POST - A pioneering arts-based marketplace held every Sunday on the Fairfax High School campus. Every Sunday, the Melrose Trading Post offers a constantly evolving experience, with a curated selection of handcrafted artisan goods, eclectic art and craft, vintage fashion, antique furniture and one-of-a-kind treasures.

Through admission and vendor fees, the Melrose Trading Post has grown to become the most successful ongoing social enterprise program in the history of Los Angeles Unified School District, awarding grants to Fairfax High School organizations for sports equipment, beautification projects, teacher programs, theatre productions, and more - totaling well over seven million dollars since the Melrose Trading Post's humble beginnings in 1997. Through Greenway Arts Alliance, the Melrose Trading Post provides formal job and life skills training to large numbers of paid and volunteer students from Fairfax High School - the first real-world job experience for many. The market also serves as an incubator to promote small community businesses and budding entrepreneurs, many of them professional artists, by providing affordable retail opportunities in a prime, high-traffic location.

Additionally, the popular weekly market has always featured local musicians. In 2014, the market expanded to include even more opportunities for local artists through an outdoor, year-long series of music, dance, theater and spoken word events via the MTP Main Stage.