



MOLLY RUFUS

Poetry Spotlight

Black History Month 2022

1. In what ways do you work with your communities?

I'm an employee at a poetry organization that helps empower the Black & LGBTQ community, as well as provide crucial information on preventing Child Abuse and taking care of your mental health. We facilitate a lot of therapeutic workshops for our community. Outside of that work, I was selected as one of the VA Young Poets of the Community, and I'm putting together a weathergram at my local library to address the past few years of struggle that we've faced. I also help to bring poetry to different art spaces such as the Torpedo Art Factory in Alexandria. I'm passionate about combining art forms and bringing each one to the diverse DMV community, with no gatekeeping.

2. What is your most recent publication/project/performance?

My most recent project is the *Tenderheart Poetry Collective*, which is a BIPOC Women Instagram channel. @tenderheartcollective

I'm also collaborating with the Poet Laureate of Alexandria, KaNikki Jarkarta, on "How to Build Resilience when there is Resistance," a library poetry workshop that will be showing techniques on how to keep going during these tough times. I'm so excited!

3. Please name 1-3 books or works by Black poets/writers that you consider essential reading (and why) especially during these times that we are experiencing.

Poems:

"Salvage" by Rachel McKibbens.

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/152143/salvage-5e1387f1a3281>

"Same in Blues / Comment on Curb", Langston Hughes

These poems thoughtfully look at the world where we are and have been and will (hopefully) never be again with honesty, at times cynicism, and grief. I love the way that Salvage tells us not to stay in a bad place for too long, or to let a bad place affect everything after it for too long.

Book:

We Can't Breathe by Jabari Asim

<https://www.amazon.com/We-Cant-Breathe-Black-Survival/dp/1250174538>

Jabari's writing is breathtaking and the way he tackles the BLM movement, as well as his own experiences, rage, and activism. The poems piece together a complex narrative of what it's like to be a black man in America. He writes as somebody who genuinely loves the English language: poetic, and careful to make every single word count in a sentence. His writing reminds me of James Baldwin.