A HOME FOR BLACK POETS

Cave Canem was founded by Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady in 1996 to remedy the under-representation and isolation of African American poets in the literary landscape. Derricotte and Eady were visiting Pompeii when they had the idea for the organization.

There, in the vestibule of the House of the Tragic Poet, they saw embedded in the floor a mosaic of a black dog springing forward but held back by a chain. Below it are the words, CAVE CANEM, Latin for BEWARE THE DOG. This same image is used as the mark for Cave Canem, but in this version, the chain is broken.

Since its inception, Cave Canem has sought to cultivate the artistic and professional growth of Black poets. Its flagship program, the Cave Canem Retreat, was first held in a monastery in Esopus, New York with 26 poets. Each year since then, Black poets are invited to become fellows by being accepted to and attending the retreat.

Cave Canem has grown into an influential movement with a renowned faculty and an international fellowship of nearly 500. Its programs and publications enlarge the American literary canon, democratize archives, and expand for students, poets, and readers the notion of what’s possible and valuable in poetry. Its programs include an annual retreat, community workshops, lectures, and reading and panel series. Its three book prizes, delivered in collaboration with five prestigious presses, have launched the careers of several poets.
In 2019, Cave Canem continued to foster the development of poets and poetry that change the face of American literature.

In our 23rd year, this leading “home for Black Poetry” continued to hone its legacy of innovation, community, inspiration and soul.

With a dynamic board and leadership structure, we are geared to champion our mission of giving voice and access to Black poets.

We hope you will join us in our programs and celebrations to come in the future.

Forwards Ever, Backwards Never!

Tyehimba Jess
President
Cave Canem Foundation, Inc.

Cover photo and photo above was taken by Marcus Jackson.
Cave Canem continues to connect with Black poets globally, and our reach extends to poetry lovers of all backgrounds and experiences. The majority of our public programs engage audiences in the New York City area, but our partnerships with several organizations take us to cities across the United States. Whenever and however a Black poet finds Cave Canem on their journey, there is a place for them.
PUBLIC PROGRAMS

New Works, hosted several times a season at New York City venues, provides poetry lovers with the opportunity to hear emerging and established poets from around the country read from their recently published collections.

Cave Canem Poetry Prize Reading:
Malcolm Tarig
December 5, 2019
New York University, Lillian Vernon House

Cave Canem Northwestern University Press
Poetry Prize Reading: Yitiu Ipo
November 17, 2019
New York University, Lillian Vernon House

Geffrey Davis, Camonghne Felix,
and Ladan Osman
October 17, 2019
The New School, Wollman Hall

Jericho Brown, Marwa Helal,
and Keowns Fagan Maples
April 25, 2019
New York University, Lillian Vernon House

Mitchell L.H. Douglas, Alison C. Rollins,
and Amber Flora Thomas
April 9, 2019
The New School, Starr Foundation Hall

Breanne Janae, Nabila Lovelace,
and Justin Phillip Reed
February 22, 2019
New York University, Lillian Vernon House

Poets on Craft features conversations between mid-career poets of color who explore such topics as strategies, voice, new and evolving forms, and the complexities of working within or against the canon.

Teri Cross Davis and Melissa Castillo Planas, moderated by Elizabeth Bryant
February 26, 2019
The New School, Student Center

Tos Derricotte and Terrance Hayes,
moderated by Elizabeth Alexander
October 4, 2019
New York University, Lillian Vernon House

The Lecture and Master Class Series offers audiences the opportunity to engage with provocative ideas and topics as diverse as the poets, writers, and scholars presenting them.

Walking the Walk: Poetry, Equity & Anti-Racism in the Literary Arts,
an anti-racism workshop with Ama Codjoe,
February 8th, 2019
Cave Canem Headquarters

this unholding’s long night lounge:
A Lecture with Fred Moten,
May 15, 2019
Cave Canem Headquarters

The Book of Our Lives: A Workshop on Storytelling
with Cecilia Gentili
September 13, 2019
Cave Canem Headquarters
Legacy Conversations feature preeminent poets and scholars who have played historic roles in Black poetry. Moderated discussions address historical, aesthetic, political and personal influences on their craft and thought. In 2019, this program was co-sponsored with and took place at the Poetry Foundation in Chicago.

Tyehimba Jess & Patricia Smith
February 2019
Jess and Smith explore the relationship between spoken word and written poetry, which remains fraught in the literary world and often incites questions of race, class, and respectability. This reading and dialogue deconstructed and illuminated the multitudes within poetry and form. Cave Canem fellow Nate Marshall moderated.

Marilyn Nelson and Gregory Pardlo
November 2019
Cave Canem Elder Nelson and Pardlo explored the nuances of writing one’s family history. Cave Canem fellow and scholar Chiyuma Elliott moderated.

Photo of Marilyn Nelson by Peter Wynn Thompson/AP Images for Poetry Foundation.

Photo of Gregory Pardlo by Jack Vartoogian.
On May 11, 2019, an audience of more than 300 gathered at New York University’s Lillian Vernon Creative Writers House for day-long tribute to Yusef Komunyakaa. The program started with reflections from students, colleagues and creative collaborators, who spoke of Komunyakaa’s impact on their artistic practice and personal lives. The panel “Love in the Time of War,” with Maurice Decaul, Toi Derricotte, Tyehimba Jess, Kevin Young, and Javier Zamora, offered a moderated discussion on love, generosity, conflict and craft in Komunyakaa’s writing on war. “How Deep the Heart Runs” featured a host of Komunyakaa’s former students reading original works, either inspired by Komunyakaa or written with his guidance. The culminating event, “Speaking Joy and Pain,” closed the tribute with readings and performances by Tomás Doncker, Tyehimba Jess, Sharon Olds, Gregory Pardlo, Hermine Pinson and Yusef Komunyakaa himself.

This program was made possible by generous contributions from the NYU Creative Writing Center; PEN American World Voices Festival; the Poetry Foundation, Center for African American Poetry and Poetics (CAAPP); Harper Collins, Boston University; NYC Department of Cultural Affairs; Red Olive Creative Consulting; Dr. Safiya Sinclair & Mitchell S. Jackson; Kwame Dawes, Marie-Elizabeth, Mali; and Dawn Lundy Martin!
Since 1999, nearly 1000 emerging poets have participated in Cave Canem’s Community Workshops, rare opportunities to work with accomplished poets for free or low-cost fees. Limited to an enrollment of 15, these ten-session workshops offer rigorous instruction, careful critique, and an introduction to the work of several poets—all within the welcoming environment of our Brooklyn, NY loft. All workshops conclude with a public reading where participants share their work.

**Spring 2019**

*The Poetry of Translation*

Jenny Xie

Poets engaged in a comparative study of poetry translations, and the translation of various mediums.

*Un/Formed*

Tiphanie Yanique

This class engaged poetry that is formed by a disciplined attention to rhetorical position, point of view or place.

**Fall 2019**

*Beat the Dead Horse!*

Angel Nafis

A class focused on writing about the things, people, and places that populate poetry and everyday life.

*The Art of the Sample*

Cortney Lamar Charleston

Beginning poets tease out their core obsessions as writers while tying themselves into conversations with the past.

**2018 Cave Canem Poetry Prize Winner**

Head the Yellow by Malcolm Tariq

Graywolf Press

“Tariq charts a neglected history, re-inscribing a loved and living black body into a narrative of excavation. These poems are lyrically complex, charged, artfully and eventually made. It is a rare and exciting debut.”

-Chris Abani, Prize Judge

**2018 Cave Canem Northwestern University Press Poetry Prize**

Mother Tongues by Tsitsi Jaji

Northwestern University Press

“The reader is opened to an intimate set of interventions that seek to help illuminate and even shape the contours of African and African diasporic art, literature, and sound.”

-Matthew Shenoda, Prize Judge

**2018 The Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady Chapbook Prize**

Monster House by Mia S. Willis

Jai-Alai Books

“Willis’s heroic accomplishment, however, lies not in the articulation of the black queer person’s subjugation, but instead...toward black boyness as spiritual possibility.”

-Dawn Lundy Martin, Prize Judge

**2019 Cave Canem Poetry Prize Winner**

Semiotics by Chekwube Danladi

University of Georgia Press

“These poems are restless, mobile, traveling energetically across geographies and forms—from Chicago’s Westside to Accra, from the ghazal to the bop to new structures conjured for the specific truths of a new voice.”

-Evie Shockley, Prize Judge

**2019 The Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady Chapbook Prize**

My Name & Other Languages by Marissa Davis

Jai-Alai Books

“One has to step back to see that the work is not that of a great, anthologized generation but of one stellar talent energizing all the clear parts perfectly, wildly.”

-Danez Smith, Prize Judge

**PRIZE WINNERS & PUBLICATIONS**
THE CAVE CANEM RETREAT

Initiated in 1996, the Cave Canem Retreat is the organization’s original flagship program. Black poets who apply and are accepted to attend are named fellows, and can attend three times within five years before transitioning to alumni. The retreat residency offers an unparalleled opportunity to study with a world-class faculty and join a community of peers.

While poets come from a wide range of traditions, styles, and experience, they are all united by a common purpose to improve their craft and find productive space, as Harryette Mullen says, “where black poets, individually and collectively, can inspire and be inspired by others, relieved of any obligation to explain or defend their blackness.”

The 2019 Cave Canem Retreat was held June 9 to June 15 at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, Pa. It welcomed 14 first-year poets and 22 returning fellows. The week was filled with workshops, seminars, and fellow and faculty readings. Near the week’s end, participants spent a day at City of Asylum in Pittsburgh for another faculty reading opened to the public and additional programs.

Faculty:
- Cornelius Eady
- Ruth Ellen Kocher
- Dawn Lundy Martin
- Willie Perdomo

Guest Poet:
- Matthew Shenoda

Photo by Marcus Jackson.

2019 DONOR LIST

We are grateful to the following individuals, institutional donors, and in-kind supporters for their generous financial contributions to Cave Canem Foundation between January 1, 2019 and December 31, 2019.

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Omotara James
Brionne Janae
Tyehimba Jess
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Center for African American Poetry & Poetics, University of Pittsburgh
City of Asylum/Pittsburgh
Community Foundation of Greater Memphis
Community of Writers at Squaw Valley
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Fine Arts Works Center in Provincetown
Flowering Lotus Productions, LLC
HarperCollins Publishers
The Heinz Endowments
Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
Jai-Alai Books
Jerome Foundation
The June M. Jordan Literary Estate
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The Lilla Watson Project
LitTAP
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New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
The New York Community Trust
New York State Council on the Arts

New York University, MFA Creative Writing Program
Northwestern University Press
Olympia Wine Bar
O, Miami Festival/University of Wynwood, Inc.
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Two Trees Cultural Space Subsidy Program
University of Pittsburgh
Vermont Studio Center
Westville Dumbo
The Whiting Foundation
The Woot & Wainger Charitable Fund (in honor of Lucy Wainger)
FINANCIALS
FY 2019 (AUDITED)

Statements of Financial Position
December 31, 2019 & 2018

Assets

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<th>2019</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
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<td>Accounts receivable (Note 2)</td>
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<td>207,852</td>
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<td>Prepaid expenses</td>
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<td>Security deposits</td>
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<td>Equipment, net of accumulated depreciation of $10,099</td>
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<td>Total Assets</td>
<td>$481,757</td>
<td>$622,181</td>
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Liabilities and Net Assets

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<td>Accounts payable &amp; accrued expenses</td>
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<td>Total Liabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Without donor restrictions</td>
<td>277,377</td>
<td>255,374</td>
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<tr>
<td>With donor restrictions</td>
<td>210,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Net Assets</td>
<td>488,377</td>
<td>617,020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</td>
<td>$481,757</td>
<td>$622,181</td>
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2019 Revenue and Contributions

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<tr>
<td>Other Revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Contributions</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<td>Programs</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>Special Events</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-kind contributions</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>Corporate Contributions</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<td>Government Grants</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<td>Foundation Income</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>$337,707.00</td>
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2019 Expenses

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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$509,850.00</td>
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FINANCIALS
FY 2019 (AUDITED)

Statements of Activities
December 31, 2019 & 2018

Changes in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2019</th>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Revenue &amp; Support--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundation income</td>
<td>$158,675</td>
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<td>Program fees</td>
<td>26,778</td>
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<td>Government grants</td>
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<td>Individual contributions</td>
<td>56,969</td>
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<td>Corporate contributions</td>
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<td>In-kind contributions (Note 3)</td>
<td>44,613</td>
<td>87,050</td>
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<td>Special events</td>
<td>5,181</td>
<td>4,530</td>
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<td>Other revenue</td>
<td>194,446</td>
<td>230,578</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net assets released from restrictions (Note 5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Operating Revenue &amp; Support</td>
<td>$531,853</td>
<td>$621,290</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expenses--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>$326,469</td>
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<td>General and administrative</td>
<td>92,389</td>
<td>124,891</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>90,992</td>
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<td>Total Expenses</td>
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<td>$479,555</td>
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<td>Changes in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions</td>
<td>$22,003</td>
<td>$141,735</td>
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Changes in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions

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<td>Changes in Net Assets With Donor Restrictions</td>
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<td>(230,578)</td>
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<td>Net assets released from restrictions (Note 5)</td>
<td>(162,648)</td>
<td>(79,432)</td>
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<td>Changes in Net Assets</td>
<td>(228,843)</td>
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<td>Net Assets - Beginning of Year</td>
<td>617,020</td>
<td>554,717</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets - End of Year</td>
<td>$488,377</td>
<td>$617,020</td>
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