



Basement Poetry Presents :

**BLACK WORDS  
BLACK VOICES  
BLACK MAGIC  
BLACK MATTERS**

**The Performance: October 24th 2pm-4pm  
Hosted By: Touchstone Theatre**

co-sponsored by Lehigh Valley Engaged  
Humanities and South Side Initiative

# Black Words Black Voices Black Magic Black Matters

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

*"To be black in America right now is a wound. Nothing seems to exactly describe the pain in my lower back, my chest, blooming between my lungs, hanging so, so heavy in my heart. My grief is miles deep, ancestral deep. I think of my father, my brother, my sister. I think of both of my nephews, who are so, so young. I think about Black people here, in America, and everywhere else, spread across the entire globe, and the diaspora of our people and how the world we live in now has so inescapably failed us. Every day feels like a funeral. Every day feels like rain."*

- Kristina Haynes, Vice President of Basement Poetry

While there have been major conversations in national news centering around the deaths of many Black Americans due to police brutality and systemic racism, and the injustices we face every single day, we feel as if this isn't enough, at least not on a regional scale. Not right here, in the Lehigh Valley. So then, how do we get involved? How can we be more active, more visible? How can we be catalysts in these difficult, and sometimes very painful conversations? These questions, and more, have been on our minds for weeks. We want to see change. Real, undeniable change in systems that have been in place for centuries. We want to see change right now, in our lifetimes. But how to hold our grief while we do this work? How to begin the painful process of healing? How do we hold space for each other, not just as artists, but as Black people? How do we work through our pain and our suffering and our rage?

We knew immediately that we wanted the community that we love and have served faithfully over the past five years to be in this conversation with us. Through words, performance and digital media, we want to promote sustained, deep conversations within our community about racism, but we need other Black artists in order to do that. Black Lives Matter is not just a movement. It is a lifestyle. It is activism. It is a life-long fight. With this project, we wanted to create a space where artists could come together and share their work. To collectively grieve and hold space for each other. To begin the painful process of healing from these traumas. In order to do that, we held submissions to spark conversation with work that consumes us, moves us, shakes us. Work that would not exist without the performers you're going to see today.

Today's performance is the culmination of these submissions, and you can read most of the work that will be performed online at [thesouthsider.org](https://thesouthsider.org)

Thank you for being here.

Black Lives Matter.

## BIOS

**Nasheera Brown.** A social justice activist who wants to see change in this world and will continue to speak the truth until she does see it. Instagram: @Embracing\_Your\_Melanin

**Chloe Cole-Wilson's** words have always been armor for oppression. Her love for her Blackness runs deep. She hopes the words she shares with you are felt and understood. Even if they aren't, she hopes you empathize with her needs, and the needs of Black people. As the Artistic Director of Basement Poetry, Chloe works to shine light in the darkest places and shine light on the beauty and pain of the human condition. Instagram: @closhhmoney

**Michelle Wilson.** I am 18 years old. Recently graduated from Building 21 high school and planning on go to Kutztown University in the fall under Liberal Arts and Sciences. I've been reading poetry and plays since I was 6 and started writing when I was 8. Instagram: @kingofthings1

**Kellie Donaldson.** I am a recent graduate from NCC with an Associate's degree in Psychology, and I work as a Certified Peer Specialist in Lehigh and Northampton County. I am happy to see light shine where there is still so much darkness. Instagram: @alldaydreamer94 & @thccmint

**Corey Riotz.** A spoken word artist who likes to use a mixture of vulnerability with raw content to create an overall message to those who are able to receive it. Instagram: @corey\_riotz

**Zena Goodwin.** I am a 26 year old native of Easton. A graduate of Messiah University in Mechanicsburg, PA, where I majored in Psychology and minored in Criminal Justice. I am an aspiring author, an avid reader, and writer, but poetry has become my passion over the past two years. I am also the founder and coordinator of Poets for Justice, a group dedicated to encouraging hope and inspiration by uniting creative voices of those who believe in justice and racial equality. Instagram: @Ladee.zee

**Kevelis Matthews-Alvarado.** I'm a black first-generation college graduate, daughter of a Venezuelan immigrant and decedent of enslaved Africans. Currently, I am pursuing my Masters degree in English at Lehigh University. I see my scholarship as intrinsically connected to my work as a poet, artist, creator, and activist. All the work regardless of form or medium is ultimately tied to the interrogation of systems of power and the radical imagination of possible liberation. I wrote "What have I lost" as a response to prompt in my modernism class... and I think it embodies my current state of mind as a poet, scholar, and person. This poem captures a moment for me so thank you for listening to this story... Instagram: @kevelis

**Kristina Haynes** is the Vice President of Basement Poetry. She has two published poetry books and currently resides in Bethlehem. She thanks you for being here. Instagram: @sleepykristina

**Ashley Sanchez.** Originally from Brooklyn, Baby the Poet is a spoken word artist that is dedicated to sharing her world views and truths to any audience she comes across. Through

her rhyme schemes and edgy delivery she sheds light on topics such as society issues, self empowerment, self consciousness, LGBTQ+ issues and love. Baby approaches each stage with humility and grace. Understanding that every moment is not a promise, so she expresses her passions out for the world to see her gifts and experiences in the now. Instagram: @Baby\_the\_poet

**Deirdre van Walters** is the President of Basement Poetry. She is an actor, poet and social activist in the Lehigh Valley. Recognized in 2018 for her work with Bethlehem's NAACP youth programming, she is an advocate for finding and loving one's own voice, embracing who we are, and unapologetically letting it be heard. Instagram: @deirdrevanwalyt

**Nai & Maxamilly.** We are a neo soul and jazz collective using a fusion of R&B and jazz inspiration to create Nai and Maxamilly. Nai brings the lyrics and powerhouse jazz vocals and Max produces effortlessly and brings the music and ideas to life with his music production. Both have made a beautiful impression on the Lehigh Valley Music scene by sharing their talents to support non-profit efforts around topics such as domestic violence awareness, LGBTQ issues and, of course, supporting the freedom of Black and Brown people. Their music has expanded the minds of many and will continue to inspire young artists for years to come. Instagram: @naiiilah & @maxamilly10

**Darius Foster** is a multi-talented artist also known by the producer name "Jux." Located in Allentown but originally from New Jersey, he uses his music to express different topics from a millennial standpoint. Anxious to spread a genuine message to anyone with a set of speakers, he is no stranger to hustling. With an EP out ("A Moment of Clarity"), and his latest single "Supposed to Be", which is on all streaming platforms, Darius has captured the attention and gained respect as an independent artist by anyone who has listened. He is currently working on building his catalogue by producing for many artists within and outside of the ABE area. Performing in and out of the city, his fan base has expanded throughout the U.S. The direction in which this talented artist/producer is headed is untouched, yet set aside just for him.

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

We'd like to thank the folks at Touchstone and Festival UnBound for hosting us, as well as Jp, Emma and Lisa. We'd also like to thank Doug Roysdon, Ara Barlieb, Chuck from Rising Star, Mary Foltz & Hannah Provost, as well as all of our participating artists. We're also in gratitude to our grantors, The Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities and the South Side Initiative. Without you, this project would not have been possible. Thank you.

### **About Festival UnBound:**

In 1998, after an almost 150 year history building this nation, Bethlehem Steel finally shut down steel making here in Bethlehem. It was a traumatic event, and Touchstone, to help the community work its way through it, created and assembled several works of art and cultural projects into a festival called *Steel Festival: The Art of an Industry*. In October 2019, twenty years after that extraordinary event, we began to explore questions of a different and perhaps more daunting nature. Who are we, now that the Steel is gone? What are the challenges ahead, and what are the values that will hold the community together as we face the task of shaping our future? Out of these questions came *Festival UnBound*, a collection of arts and community dialogue around concerns of diversity, sustainability, health, youth leadership, and interconnectedness.

**Touchstone Theatre's FESTIVAL UNBOUND is generously sponsored by**  
Air Products | CADC Bethlehem | Discover Lehigh Valley | FIG Bethlehem | Freestone Productions | Highmark Blue Shield | Kira Willey Productions | PBS39 | Pennsylvania Council on the Arts | PNC Bank | The Morning Call | RCN | R.K.Laros Foundation | UGI | WDIY | Webfoot Digital | Working Dog Press

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Samantha Beedle  
Erick Black  
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### **Interns**

Emma Engler  
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To keep up to date with more information on events, visit us at [www.touchstone.org](http://www.touchstone.org) or follow us on social media @FestivalUnBound

