



City of  
**OAKLAND**  
California

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News from: **Economic & Workforce  
Development Department**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

October 1, 2021

**City Announces Inaugural Address by Oakland's First  
Poet Laureate**

*Oakland, CA* – The City of Oakland's first Poet Laureate, Dr. Ayodele Nzinga, will deliver her inaugural address on Thursday, October 7, at 6 p.m. The virtual event will include opening remarks by Mayor Libby Schaaf. This celebration of Dr. Nzinga's new role will include performances by Bay Area artists and poets. The event will be presented live on Zoom and a video recording will be posted on the City's website.

Dr. Nzinga is a poet, playwright and community advocate. In addition to this inaugural address, Dr. Nzinga will partner with the [Oakland Public Library's Oakland Youth Poet Laureate](#) on a collaborative reading series, deliver four readings at City-owned locations throughout Oakland, and write one poem that commemorates our city during her two-year term through May 2023.

"I'm delighted to join with Dr. Nzinga to mark her first address as Oakland's Poet Laureate," said Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. "Given her rich storytelling and decades-long activism, the event is sure to both entertain and enlighten, provoke emotions and spur critical thinking."

Dr. Nzinga is author of *SorrowLand Oracle* and *The Horse Eaters*, both books of poetry. She is also the founding producing director of the Lower Bottom Playaz, Inc., a theater company in West Oakland. Ayodele is a founding director of the Black Arts Movement Business District (BAMBD) Community Development Corporation, where she produces BAMBD FEST, an annual international month-long arts and cultural festival celebrating the Black Arts.

"I aspire to be a reliable narrator, an astute interlocutor, in the service of story-ing, 'The Town', Oakland," said Dr. Ayodele Nzinga. Dr. Nzinga holds an MFA in Writing and Consciousness from the New College of California and a Ph.D. in Transformative Education & Change from the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco.

To join the event via Zoom or phone, visit: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/events/first-oakland-poet-inaugural-address>

The work of the Oakland Poet Laureate will advance the value of "belonging" as articulated in Oakland's Cultural Plan, [Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan](#). The tagline of which is "Equity is the Driving Force, Culture is the Frame, Belonging is the Goal."

(more)

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Poetry can help rebirth/reinvigorate, help situate ourselves in space and place, and assist us in future casting/visioning for more embodied ways of moving forward, together, in our amazing city.

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***About the Cultural Affairs Division***

The Cultural Affairs Division is part of the City's Economic & Workforce Development Department. The division includes the City's cultural funding program, which provides approximately \$1.8 million in grants to support the arts in Oakland; the public art program, which has more than \$1 million in funds currently dedicated for public art installations across Oakland and staff working on special events, film production permitting and a walking tours program.