

BEYOND

THEBOOK

ALABAMA
AFRICAN
AMERICAN
HISTORY

Three years after publishing *The Future Emerges from the Past: Celebrating 200 Years of Alabama African American History and Culture*,

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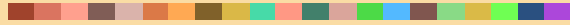
continues to honor and highlight past, present, and future Alabama African American history makers.

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Because Alabama African American history can't be taught in a single month, we will continue to share short articles along with links to videos, photos, reference material, and additional information for all to enjoy on a monthly basis. The website's goal is the same as the book's: To inspire the young and young at heart to dream big and celebrate Alabama's rich African American history and culture.

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Ashley M. Jones

Ashley M. Jones, a Birmingham native, is Poet Laureate of the state of Alabama (2022-2026). She is the first African American, and at 31, the youngest person to have the title in the 91 years Alabama has named a poet laureate.



Left: Jones made multiple network television appearances discussing the significance of being named Alabama's Poet Laureate.

Ashley M. Jones

Ms. Jones received a Master of Fine Arts in Poetry from Florida International University (FIU), where she was a John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Fellow. She served as Official Poet for the City of Sunrise, Florida's Little Free Libraries Initiative from 2013-2015, and her work was recognized in the 2014 Poets and Writers Maureen Egen Writer's Exchange Contest and the 2015 Academy of American Poets Contest at FIU. She was also a finalist in the 2015 Hub City Press New Southern Voices Contest, the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry First Book Award Contest, and the National Poetry Series.

Ms. Jones poems and essays appear in many journals and anthologies, including CNN, the Academy of American Poets, *POETRY*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Fjords Review*, *The Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy*, *Valley Voices: New York School Edition*, *PMS poemmem-oirstory* (where her work was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2016), *Kinfolks Quarterly*, and Lucid Moose Press' *Like a Girl: Perspectives on Femininity Anthology*.



Left: Cover of Jones' 2017 debut poetry collection, *Magic City Gospel*.
Center: Ashley Jones at a Magic City Poetry Festival event. (Erin Nelson)
Right: Cover of Jones' second poetry collection, *dark // thing*, released in 2018.

Ashley M. Jones

Ms. Jones received a 2015 Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers Award and a 2015 *B-Metro Magazine* Fusion Award. She was an editor of *PANK Magazine*, a national literary magazine. Her debut poetry collection, *Magic City Gospel*, was published by Hub City Press in January 2017, and it won the silver medal in poetry in the 2017 Independent Publishers Book Awards. Her second book, *dark // thing*, won the 2018 Lena-Miles Wever Todd Prize for Poetry from Pleiades Press. Sonia Sanchez, poet and activist said of *dark // thing*: “...This delicate pavane surrounds us with notes that sing us home to our past and present. Sister Ashley’s words continue us on the holy meditation begun in the 1960s about what it means to be human, and I say amen.”

In 2018, Jones won the Lucille Clifton Poetry Prize from Backbone Press, and she is the 2019 winner of the Lucille Clifton Legacy Award from St. Mary’s College of Maryland. She is also a recipient of a Poetry Fellowship from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and a 2020 Alabama Author award from the Alabama Library Association.



“

This delicate pavane surrounds us with notes that sing us home to our past and present. Sister Ashley's words continue us on the holy meditation begun in the 1960s about what it means to be human, and I say amen.



—Poet and activist
Sonia Sanchez
on *dark//thing*

Jones was a finalist for the Ruth Lily Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Fellowship in 2020, and her collection, *REPARATIONS NOW!* was on the longlist for the 2022 PEN/Voelcker Award for Poetry. Tiana Clark, author of *I Can't Talk About the Trees Without the Blood*, praised Jones' work: "Ashley M. Jones is a genius in how she wields, innovates, and wades through a bounty of poetic forms (sonnets, an aubade, a ghazal, a contrapuntal, anaphora, the subjunctive mode and so much more) with a sense of mastery, levity, and play. This collection is jam-packed with music, grace, and grit. I felt loved and seen by *Reparations Now!* The book is a personal mix CD in verse curated by Black bliss and brilliance. I kept dog-earring pages for prompts and poems I wanted to read again until I realized the whole collection was mangled by my enthusiastic appreciation and inspiration."

Ashley M. Jones

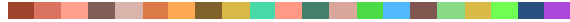


Photo: Amarr Croskey



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—Tiana Clark, author of *I Can't Talk About the Trees Without the Blood*, on *Reparations Now!*



Ashley M. Jones

Ms. Jones currently lives in Birmingham, Alabama, where she is the founding director of the Magic City Poetry Festival, board member of the Alabama Writers Cooperative and the Alabama Writers Forum, co-director of PEN Birmingham, and a faculty member in the Creative Writing Department of the Alabama School of Fine Arts.

She is also a member of the Core Faculty at the Converse University Low Residency MFA Program and recently served as a guest editor for *Poetry Magazine*. Jessica Jones, vice president and program chair of the Alabama Writers' Cooperative said, “Ashley is an amazingly relevant poet for today’s world [...] She’s helping make poetry matter to these generations, in our current events, and to people from all walks of life.”



Ashley M. Jones



RESOURCES

ashleymjonespoetry.com

magiccitypoetryfestival.org