

WE OWN ALL THE LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD

written and performed by Fatimah Asghar



Click [here](#) to view the video.
(run time: ~15 minutes)

THE POWER OF SPOKEN WORD POETRY

written by Mehroz Baig

When the Commonwealth Club's Inforum division hosted a town hall meeting to discuss race relations in the Bay Area, the lineup of speakers included various performances by Bay Area poets. Using words, voice intonations, and sheer emotion, the poets delivered verse that examined issues of race, poverty, gun violence, food, health and equality...

Slam poetry has been especially popular among youth as a means of expression, especially with the onset of organizations such as Youth Speaks. The organization aims to empower youth to share their thoughts using slam poetry and spoken word as a means of delivery. In an interview with The Off/Page Project, a collaboration between Youth Speaks and The Center for Investigative Reporting, Josh Healey, a poet, artist and writer who lives in Oakland said,

"Creative storytelling – whether it's spoken word, music, or even your crazy little blog – is so powerful because it flips that paradigm. By telling your own personal truth, you're able to break out of the boxes and stereotypes and show us, "Hey, this is who I really am. Take a good, hard

look.”

Slam poetry offers the ability for a performer to connect with his/her audience in a deeper way, and allows the performer to articulate a set of emotions and thoughts succinctly using the power of voice and words. It’s also a platform that goes beyond creative expression. Just like any art form, slam poetry and spoken word allow the artist to talk about social issues and social change. As Healey noted,

“...In terms of social change, storytelling can get us beyond the talking points of this or that “issue” to connect with people’s deeper feelings and emotions. People don’t want to hear about “health care,” but they do want to hear about your aunt Stacy who had to sell her mom’s wedding ring to pay for her cancer treatments. Use your story to change THE story. Boom.”

It’s an experience shared with a live audience, one that moves people to think, react or at the very least, sit up and listen.