

The New Anthology of Young African & African American Poetry

Salawu Olajide
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The relationship between Africa and African America has long been mediated through language, memory, rupture, and imaginative return towards home. Across the long history of the Black Atlantic, poetry has served as one of the most intimate vessels through which these crossings are felt, remembered, and reimagined. It is for this reason that Édouard Glissant said, “every identity is extended through a rhizomatic or rooted relationship with the Other.” From the early spirituals and freedom songs of enslaved Africans in the Americas to the anti-colonial lyricism of twentieth-century African poets, verse has remained a central site where Black life narrates its fractures and its continuities. To speak of African and African-American poetry in the twenty-first century is therefore to confront a dense constellation of inheritances: the historical trauma of slavery and colonialism, the afterlives of empire, the improvisational survival of diasporic communities, and the restless invention of language that refuses silence. Poetry, in this sense, becomes both archive and prophecy. It carries what the poet and theorist Amiri Baraka once described as the “changing same,” a continuity of Black expressive culture that mutates across time, geography, and political struggle.

The African continent and the African-American diaspora have long been in conversation through literature. From the transatlantic solidarities imagined by Langston Hughes and Léopold Sédar Senghor to the radical lyric interrogations of June Jordan and Christopher Okigbo, poetry has repeatedly staged encounters between homeland and diaspora, between ancestral memory and contemporary displacement. The conversation is not merely historical; it is ongoing, unfolding in new vocabularies of migration, digital connectivity, racial politics, and cultural reclamation and reimagination.

Today, a new generation of poets stands at the intersection of these histories. Young African and African-American poets inherit the languages of resistance, but they also inherit fractured

homelands, border regimes, climate anxieties, technological hyper-presence, and the ever-evolving conceptions of Blackness. Their poems speak across oceans and time zones, negotiating questions of belonging, exile (and errantry), racial violence, tenderness, faith, sexuality, urban life, and the fragile scaffolding of memory. If poetry has historically been the site where Black communities remember themselves, it is also where they rehearse new possibilities of being. The lyric becomes a space where intimacy meets politics, where grief can coexist with celebration, and where the ordinary textures of Black life—food, music, language, migration, friendship, desire—are rendered with startling precision.

Central to this project is Yusef Komunyakaa, who evokes the tone in his poem, “Ode to a Drum,” where he writes, “I have beaten a song back into you, / rise & walk away like a panther” with the “drum” being a musical apparatus deeply rooted in Africa, he merely extrapolates the vision of this anthology that is: to “beat back” a song into [the] African and African American poetry by this new crop of young poets. This poetry anthology invites submissions by young African and African American poets whose work explores the complexity, beauty, and contradictions of Black life across continents and diasporas. It seeks to bring together voices that speak to history, memory, identity, migration, resistance, tenderness, and the many textures of contemporary Black experience. We are particularly interested in poems that engage questions of the shifting means of home, the self, memory, belonging, language, lineage, intimacy, spirituality, community, and survival, while also celebrating imagination, experimentation, and the music of poetic language. We need the echoes of Fela’s psychedelic Afrobeats, the genre-blending soulfulness of Nina Simone’s voice, bring us the ghost of Coltrane’s jazz, and the gravitas of Tupac Shakur’s rap. As a literary form, the anthology is itself a kind of conversation: a gathering of distinct voices that share neither identical experiences nor identical aesthetics but speak across their differences. In bringing together young African and African-American poets, this project imagines poetry as a diasporic commons: a space where histories intersect, tensions arise, and new solidarities are formed. Precursors to this anthology would include, *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song*, edited by Kevin Young; *This is the Honey: An Anthology of Contemporary Black Poets*, edited by Kwame Alexander; *I, Too, Sing America: Three Centuries of African American Poetry*, edited by Catherine Clinton and *The Young African Poets Anthology*, curated by Ernest Ogunyemi and guest edited by I.S. Jones and Noma Patrick Emeka. *The New Anthology of Young African and African-American Poetry* intends to join the ongoing conversation by merging the African and African American climates as it asks: how do young poets imagine Africa and African America not merely as geographical locations, but as imaginative and emotional terrains?

Who Can Submit

- African poets living on the continent or in the diaspora
- African-American poets
- Poets between the ages of 18 and 30 (flexible if necessary)
- Emerging and early-career writers who have not published a chapbook or full-length are especially encouraged to submit

Submission Guidelines

- Submit 3-5 original poems or translations
- All poems must be previously unpublished
- Poems should not exceed 5 pages
- Include a cover letter and short bio (100 words maximum)

- Include your country or city of residence

Formatting

- Send submissions as a single PDF or Word document (preferably word doc)
- Use a standard formatting of 12-point font (preferably Garamond) and single-line spacing

Where to Send

Send submissions to: naaap2026@outlook.com Subject line: NAAAP Submission – [Your Name]

Deadline

March 15 - April 15

Publication

Selected poets will be featured in the curated e-anthology celebrating the voices of a new generation of African and African-American poets. Contributors will receive a little token of \$10 from the editors via PayPal or Venmo and full credit for their work (subject to OlongoAfrica's publishing policy). We look forward to reading your work.

- **Prosper Ifeanyi and Abdulkareem Abdulkareem**

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