

For Immediate Release

Contact: Bijou McDaniel - Director of Communications, Youth Speaks,
bmcdaniel@youthspeaks.org, (510) 684-4468

**Acclaimed Bay Area Arts Organization is a Step Closer to Realizing
its Vision with Announcement of Spoken Word Leader as New
Executive Director**

*Youth Speaks launches new era of youth voice, power, and continuum with leadership of
Michelle "Mush" Lee*

[San Francisco, CA] — On November 30, 2021, leading literary arts organization [Youth Speaks](#) announced the latest edition to their all-star team. As an organization that seeks to empower young people with opportunities to discover and develop their own voices, Youth Speaks is thrilled to elevate the voice of a former staff member and trailblazer in community organizing, Michelle 'Mush' Lee, who officially announced her position as the new Executive Director of Youth Speaks with an inspirational public [letter](#).

“There could not be a better time for Michelle Lee to bring her vision, wisdom, and innovation to the evolving task of building power for the next generation. I have been blessed to see Michelle work her brilliance as a teaching artist, inspiring and catalyzing young minds to bring truth, beauty, and wonder into a world in need. Times have changed, but the urgency of Youth Speaks mission has not.” **said, Jeff Chang**, author, cultural historian, and former Vice President of Narrative, Arts, and Culture at Race Forward.

Mush Lee, a San Francisco native and child of Korean American immigrants, returns to Youth Speaks with experience in public policy, cross-sectoral philanthropy, and social impact entrepreneurship. Having recently stewarded a \$1M+ arts initiative supporting artists, artist collectives, and artist organizations imagining racially just systems and structures at a local scale, Mush brings a visionary leadership style rooted in justice and community-driven power. As anticipation for a glimpse into Mush’ vision for the next chapter of Youth Speaks grows, an excerpt from her letter boldly states:

“We are living in a monumental moment full of complexity, and the contradictions of the world are laid bare for all to see. My vision is to place how young people choose to reconcile these contradictions over the next decade at the center of shaping the future of Youth Speaks.”

You can read the full letter on [Youth Speaks Website](#).

Over the last 25 years, Youth Speaks has created braver and safe spaces for young people all over the world to gather, collaborate, and use their voices as creators of social change through localized in-school residencies, assemblies, transformative online writing workshops, and exhilarating virtual open mics. Over the next decade, Youth Speaks will continue to do what it does best—illuminate the voices of young writers and cultural activists who are leading the evolution and aesthetic of poetry while reflecting what is possible in the world when we listen and think about the impacts of young people on culture more expansively.

With the support of the Youth Speaks Board, out-going Executive Director Cristy Johnston Limon, interim leadership, and staff, Mush Lee is poised to take the reins and build on a deep history of celebrating young people and their voices as harbingers of hope and catalysts for change. Get to know Mush and learn more about her journey to Executive Director through a new series of Instagram Live interviews set to launch in December 2021.

#####

Youth Speaks creates spaces that challenge young people to develop and amplify their voices as creators of social change. By providing free arts education to youth with limited access, Youth Speaks programs empower young people with opportunities to discover and develop their own voices. As the leading literary arts and spoken word organization, Youth Speaks has served hundreds of thousands of youth in the Bay Area and across the nation over the last 25 years.

NOTES

People, Pedagogy, and Purpose

#####

#####

change