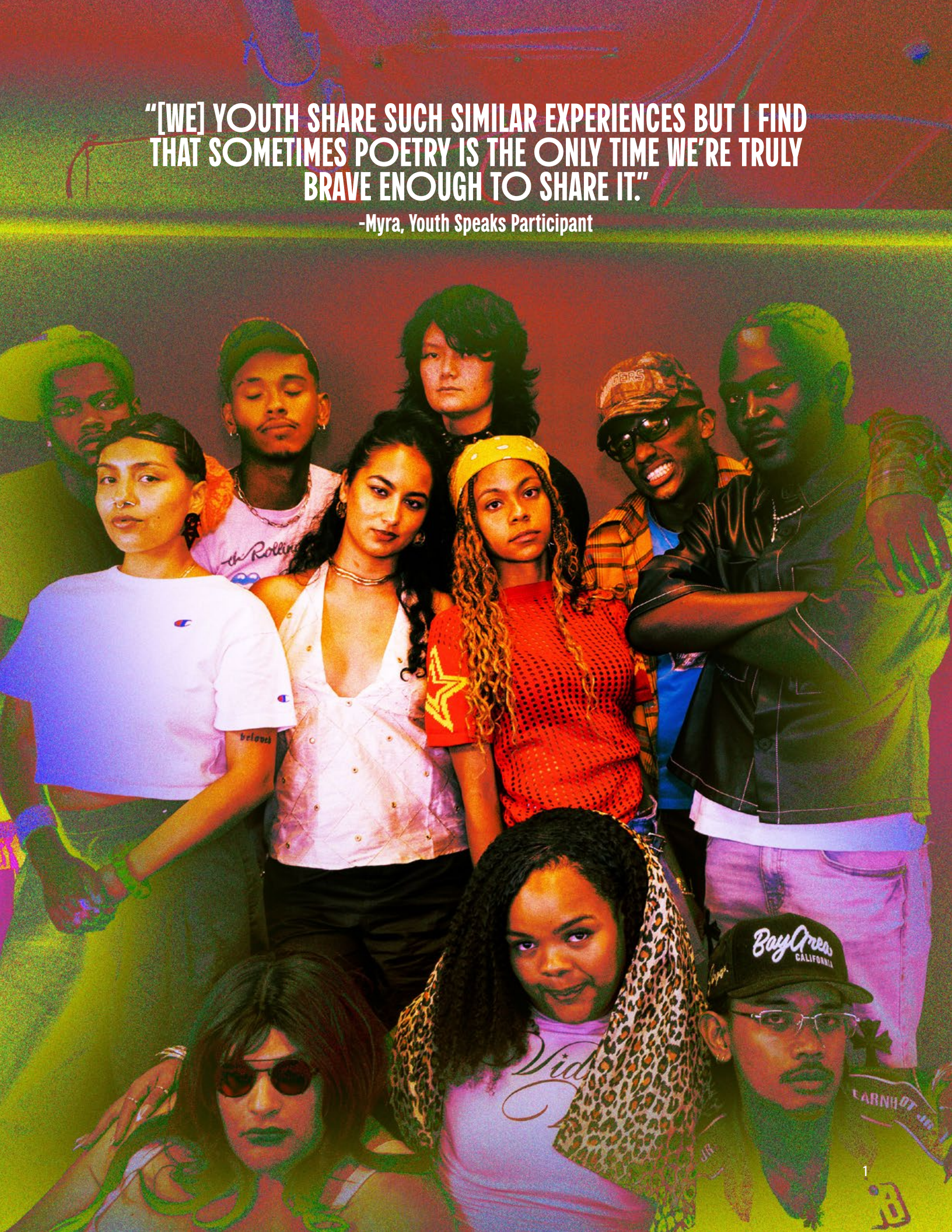
YOUTH SPEAKS IMPACT REPORT 25——26



Youth Speaks


"[WE] YOUTH SHARE SUCH SIMILAR EXPERIENCES BUT I FIND THAT SOMETIMES POETRY IS THE ONLY TIME WE'RE TRULY BRAVE ENOUGH TO SHARE IT."
-Myra, Youth Speaks Participant

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Youth Speaks

MISSION

Youth Speaks creates brave spaces that challenge young people to find, develop, publicly present, and apply their voices as creators of societal change.

VISION

We envision a world in which young people are heard, honored, and connected through creative ecosystems of interdependence and care.

OUR GOLDEN RULES

1. There are no wrong answers.
2. The standard is yourself.



Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are deeply grateful to our youth, partners, communities, donors, staff, and volunteers for their dedication and support to Youth Speaks over the past 30 years!

Youth Speaks has believed in something simple. Our youth have stories to tell, and their voices deserve to be heard. From a first poem in a notebook in a workshop to stepping onto the stage, we have had the privilege of watching young people grow, create, challenge us, and lead.

Every day we hear stories of violence and destruction that challenge our ability to see beyond fear and division. We listen and watch narratives that tell us we must silo ourselves and squirrel away our resources; we must build walls and cage, deport, and kill our community members. But this is the moment we must hold each other closer and tighter — to cling and struggle together with each other to build a world that gives us room to live into our full compassion and humanity. We must fight these narratives every day with ones that show us a different vision forward. These moments remind us of how important, and valuable, this work is. Right now we need something a little more than hope — we need action.

Across our communities, funding and support for the arts and youth programs are at risk. In a time when young people need spaces to create, connect, and be themselves, we must continue to invest in them. Right now is a beacon song for you to join us.

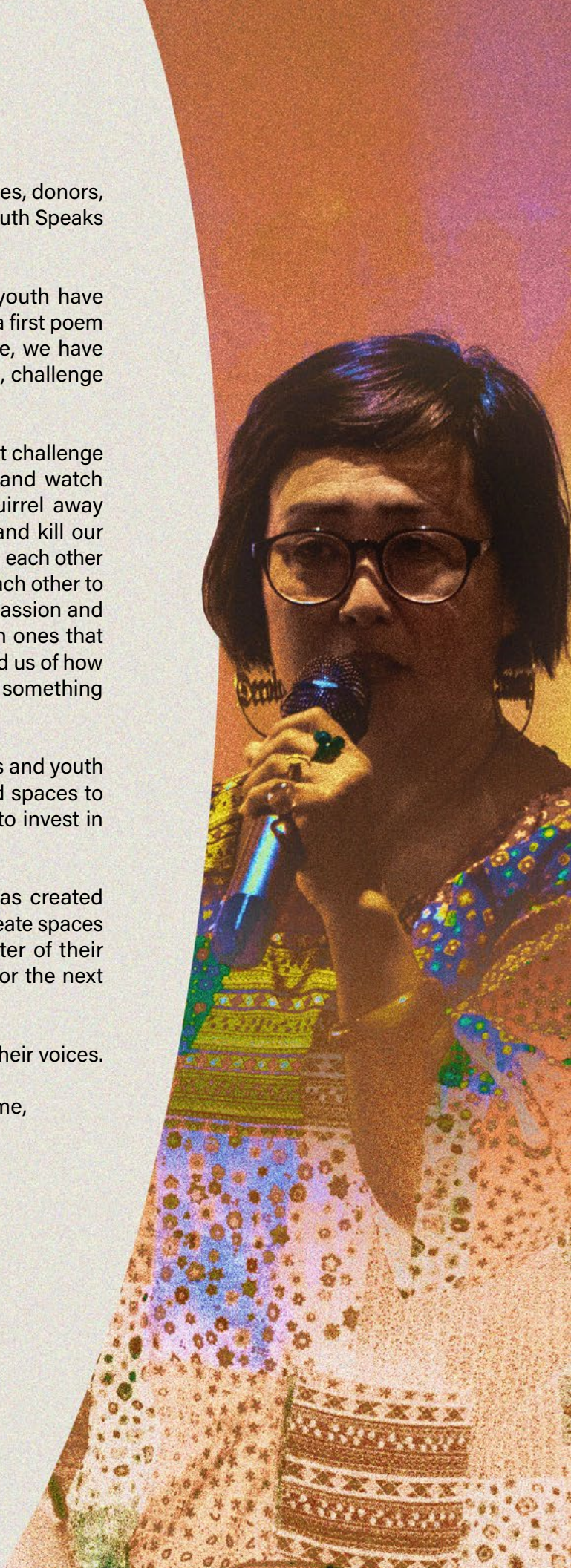
Your support, whether in the audience or from afar, has created opportunities to bring teaching artists into classrooms, create spaces for artistic development, and put our youth at the center of their own stories. Help us ensure that Youth Speaks is here for the next generation.

Thank you for believing in our youth and in the power of their voices.

With deep appreciation and excitement for what's to come,



liz suk
Executive Director





THE POWER OF YOUNG VOICES

AT YOUTH SPEAKS, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE GIVEN THE SPACE, TOOLS, AND SUPPORT TO WRITE, CREATE, AND BE HEARD

10,249
YOUTH ENGAGED

1,979	8,270	408
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS	IN PERSON YOUTH AUDIENCE	WORKSHOP SESSIONS



6

WHO WE SERVE

LOCATION

San Francisco: 66%
Oakland: 17%
Greater Bay Area: 17%

GENDER IDENTITY

Male: 39%
Female: 51%
Gender Non-Conforming/
Gender Fluid/Other: 6%
Declined to State: 4%

RACE IDENTITY

Black: 10%
Latine: 22%
Asian: 35%
Multi-racial: 13%
White: 14%
Pacific Islander: 1%
Indigenous Youth: 1%
Middle Eastern: 2%
Declined to State: 2%



WHERE ART, EDUCATION, YOUTH, AND NARRATIVE MEET

We believe young people have the power to shape the stories that shape our world. At the intersection of art, education, and youth voice, we cultivate more than artists. We nurture truth-tellers, culture-keepers, and young people ready to move their communities forward. Through writing, performance, and the power of the spoken word, young people claim space for their stories, challenge the narratives imposed on them, and build the voice, vision, and collective power to imagine and create a different future.

ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Build craft, creativity, and confidence through workshops and residencies that nurture young artists at every stage.

ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE

From classrooms to stages, create bold, affirming spaces for young people to share their art and make their voices heard.



YOUTH ORGANIZING

Youth lead the way, organizing and building the programs, events, and spaces their communities need.

NARRATIVE POWER

Equip young people to challenge dominant narratives, tell their own stories, and shape the world around them.

EVERY VOICE STARTS SOMEWHERE

"I FOUND YOUTH SPEAKS AT AGE 15 AND IT CONTRIBUTED TO MY LIFE IN MORE WAYS THAN I COULD COUNT OR REPAY. YOUTH SPEAKS GAVE ME A COMMUNITY OF YOUNG ARTISTS, PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITIES OF MY DREAMS—THE WORLD'S BEST MENTORS AND A TOOLKIT FOR CULTURAL CHANGE. YOUTH SPEAKS TAUGHT ME CREATIVE CAREER-BUILDING SKILLS, CONFIDENCE AND SELF-WORTH AS A YOUNG PERSON. I STAYED AT YOUTH SPEAKS UNTIL I WAS 23, WHEN I BEGAN TO TRAVEL AS A FULL-TIME MUSICIAN."

-Jada Imani

Youth Speaks Alum, Youth Advisory Board Member 2016-2017



OUR PROGRAMS

CREATIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & ARTS-IN-EDUCATION

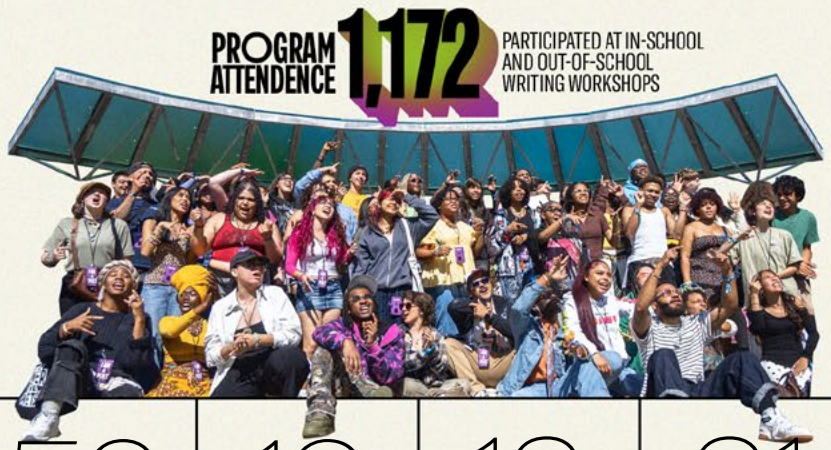
- In-School Residencies
- Under 21 Open Mics
- Teen Poetry Slam
- SPOKES
- School Visit Assemblies & Workshops
- Creative Writing & Performance Workshops
- Backyard Conference
- San Francisco Youth Poet Laureate

NARRATIVE CHANGE & FIELD BUILDING

- Brave New Voices Youth Poetry Festival
- Public Poets
- California Arts Coalition Creative Economies
- Bay Area Educators for Youth Voice & Narrative Change



WRITING WORKSHOPS



52	19	13	31
After School Workshops	SF Youth Poet Laureate	SPOKES	Backyard Conference



In the 2025-2026 program year, Youth Speaks facilitated 9 creative arts education writing workshops for young people in San Francisco and Oakland. Youth Speaks serves middle school, high school, and transitional-age youth.

PARTNER SCHOOLS



SAN FRANCISCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Aptos Middle School
- Galileo Academy of Science & Technology
- Independence High School
- Lowell High School
- Phillip and Sala Burton High School
- Visitacion Valley Middle School
- The Academy @ McAteer

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

- United for Success Academy Middle School
- Oakland School for the Arts

FINDING VOICE, BUILDING POWER



SPOKES YOUTH LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

SPOKES is Youth Speaks' paid youth advisory board, made up of Bay Area artists who shape programs, strengthen community, and carry forward the organization's vision. Through artistic and professional development, members grow as writers, performers, and organizers while curating events, leading workshops, and creating spaces where youth voice and leadership thrive.

Each summer, SPOKES curates and leads the Backyard Conference, a week-long camp featuring five days of free, youth-led programming. Alongside established artists, activists, and community leaders, members create spaces for young people to develop their craft, build leadership skills, and organize through art.

SPOKES members strengthen their writing, performance, and public speaking throughout the year. In the fall, they participate in at least six generative writing workshops, book performances and hosting opportunities across the Bay Area, and showcase original work at the San Francisco Public Library in December.

In 2026, SPOKES also hosted youth performance stages at the annual SFUSD Skate, Rock, Roll, Read Festival across four weekends, launching the year's community organizing work through art, collaboration, and youth-led programming.

SPOKES MEMBERS



MADISEN



VIVIAN



MEI



LILITH



SEHINNE



MALLORY



SYMI



SABINA

Not pictured: Veronica Juarez, Juan Yedra, Zoe Jung, Ella Braverman, Chandler Mullins, Isaiah Kahn

SPOOOOOOOOOOOOOKES



In 2026, the Backyard Conference hosted over 40+ youth from around the Bay Area, commissioned 5 local musicians to put on a mini music festival, brought participants to the de Young Museum to access and experience fine art for free, and provided 13 different interactive workshops for participants to attend, led by 7 different guest facilitators.

SPOKES members push the limits of what it means to be a youth leader and organizer. Former SPOKES member Zoe Dorado went on to be the National Youth Poet Laureate. Current SPOKES member Isaiah Kahn is the 2026 Oakland Youth Poet Laureate. Former SPOKES member Yzabell Lam helped determine the structure for the SF Youth Poet Laureate program that Youth Speaks now runs in collaboration with the SF Public Library, 826 Valencia, and the Mayor's Office. Zoe Jung applied for and received a $10K grant, thanks to SPOKES training and staff support, to run a teen rap program and a culminating competition event for Youth Speaks.

Many other SPOKES members, like Sehinne Yohannes, Symi Gabriel, and Madisen Wofford, lead at their schools, run clubs and social justice initiatives, organize district-wide walk-outs, hold on-campus health and LGBTQ center jobs, and host workshops and open mics outside of Youth Speaks.


WHEN
WORDS
MOVE
THE
WORLD

TEEN POETRY SLAM AND OPEN MICS

Teen Poetry Slam and Open Mic series is our longstanding opportunity for youth ages 14-19 to present and perform their art and stories through poetry and spoken word.



Teen Poetry Slam Finals, April 24, 2026



Under 21 Open Mic

20,110

EXPERIENCED AN IN PERSON YOUTH SPEAKS EVENT



ONLINE STATS

200,241

ENGAGEMENTS ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

5.7 MILLION

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

674,654

YOUTUBE VIEWS

425,212

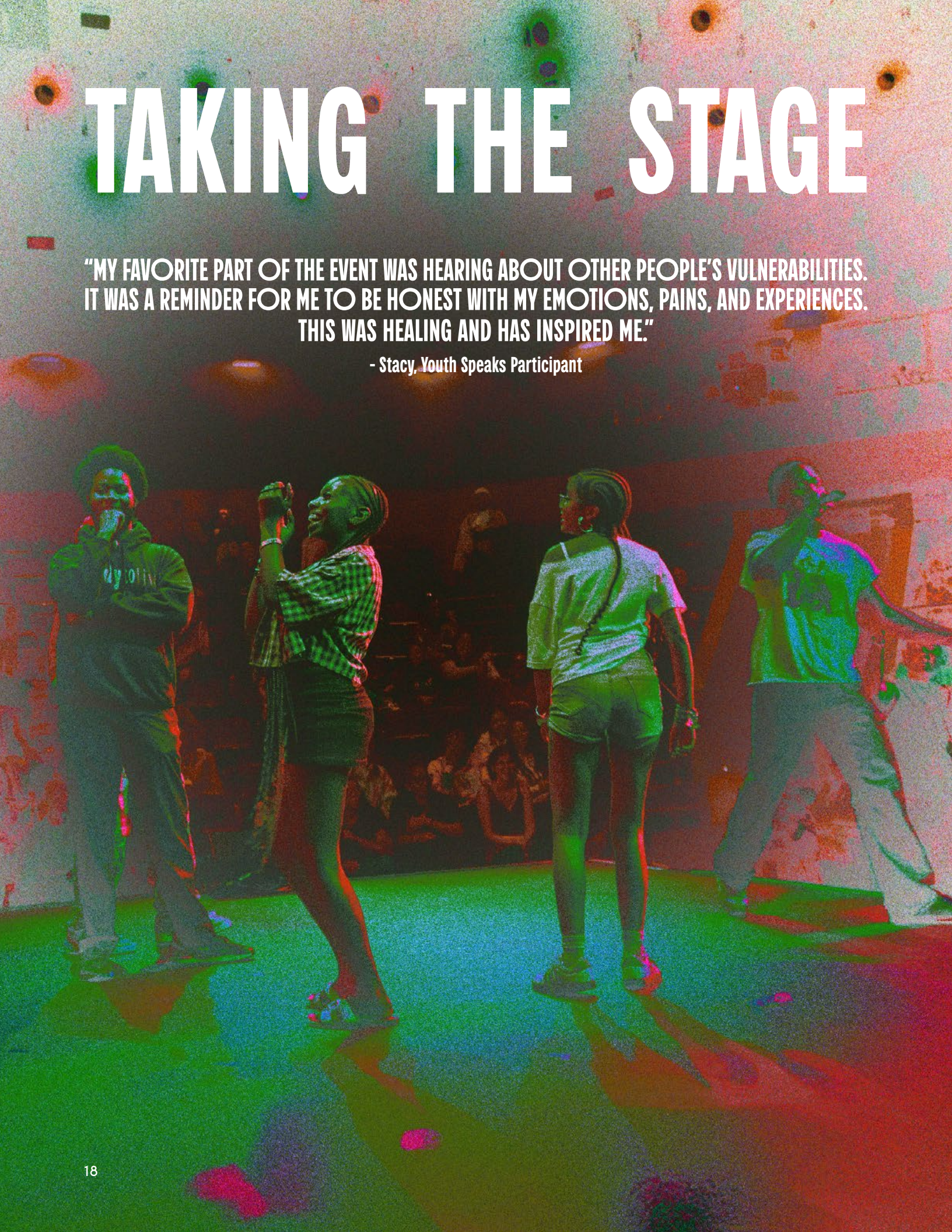
FOLLOWERS ACROSS PLATFORMS



TAKING THE STAGE

"MY FAVORITE PART OF THE EVENT WAS HEARING ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S VULNERABILITIES. IT WAS A REMINDER FOR ME TO BE HONEST WITH MY EMOTIONS, PAINS, AND EXPERIENCES. THIS WAS HEALING AND HAS INSPIRED ME."

- Stacy, Youth Speaks Participant



IMPACT



BOOK US

BRING THE POWER OF YOUTH VOICE TO YOUR NEXT EVENT

From workshops and performances to presentations, trainings, and organizational retreats, Youth Speaks brings the power of poetry, storytelling, and youth perspectives into every space. Inspire your audience, spark new ideas, and give your community the tools to find their voice and amplify the stories that matter.

Find out more at **youthspeaks.org/book-us**


THE POWER OF
OUR IMPACT

POSITIVE HEALTH IMPACT

76%

indicated that participation in Youth Speaks programs helped them understand perspectives different from their own

77%

indicated that Youth Speaks helped them feel like they could have a positive influence on their school, family, friends, or broader community

85%

of our youth participants indicated that participating had a positive impact on their mental health

93%

of our youth participants indicated that they are more engaged in school after participating in our program



SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHT



Youth Speaks poet and SPOKES member, Sehinne, brought a powerful counter narrative about public transportation to the national stage with “BART,” a poem that helped Team Youth Speaks win the 2025 Brave New Voices championship. This poem challenges portrayals of transit as dangerous and instead celebrates BART as a source of creativity, independence, and belonging. Featured by BART, her piece amplified youth perspectives as essential in understanding public life.

11K VIEWS ON YOUTH SPEAKS

246K VIEWS ON BART COLLAB POST



ARTICLE
youthspeaks.org/press

FINANCIAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2025 - JUNE 30, 2026



INCOME

INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	$824,113
GRANTS	$1,180,700
IN-KIND DONATIONS	$35,000
FEE-FOR-SERVICE: REGISTRATION & TICKET SALES	$150,810
INTEREST, DIVIDEND INVESTMENT INCOME	$72,083
TOTAL REVENUE	$2,262,705

EXPENSES

PROGRAMS	$1,756,685
FUNDRAISING	$583,378
MARKETING	$399,532
ADMINISTRATION	$1,400,096
TOTAL OPERATING & SUPPORTING EXPENSES	$4,139,691

SUPPORT THE WORK, WEAR THE REVOLUTION

Arts and youth programs are facing an uncertain future, making this work more vital than ever. Your support keeps spaces open for young people to write, create, perform, and lead. Every contribution fuels their voices, strengthens their communities, and invests in the future they deserve.

GIVE TODAY

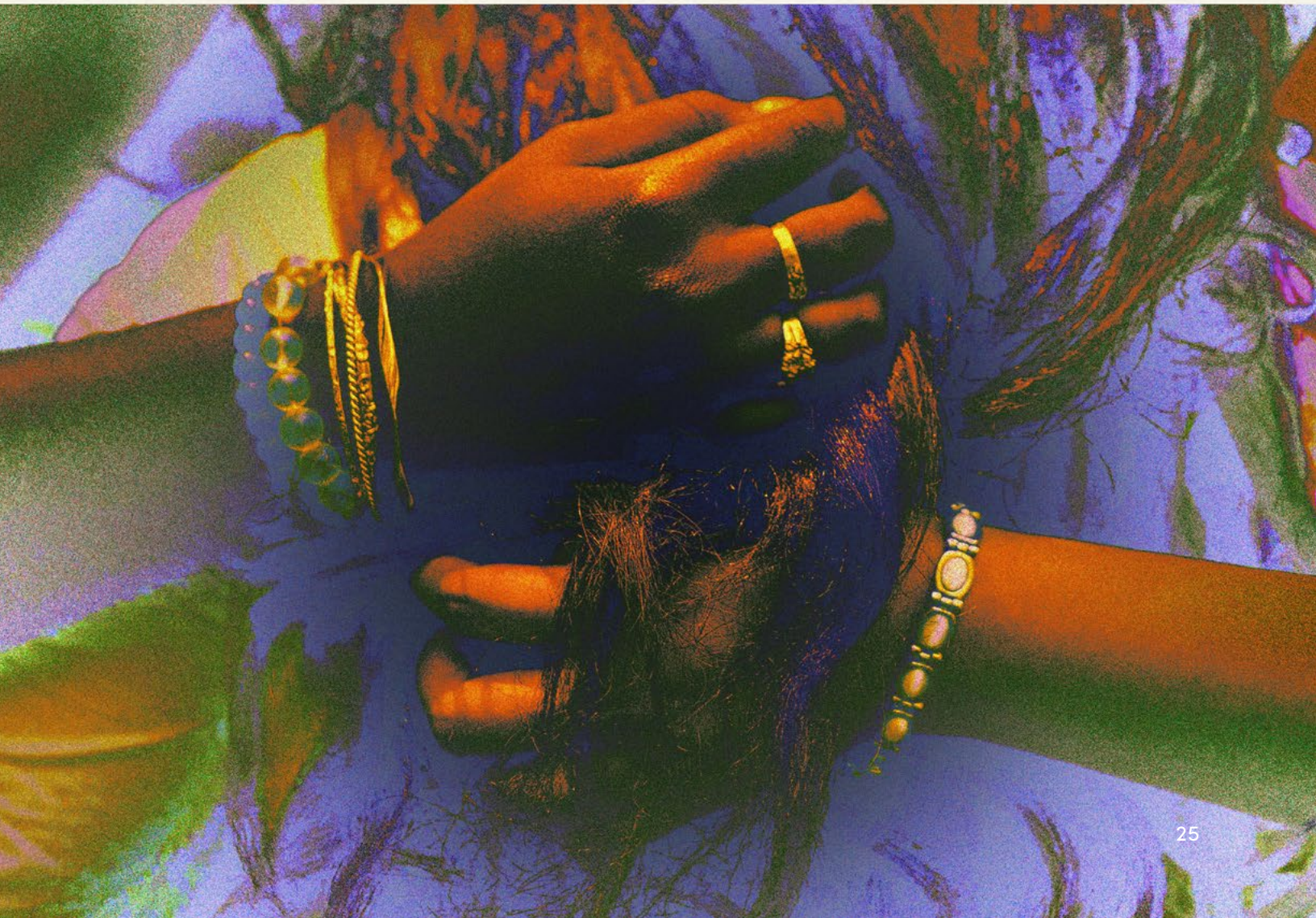


YOUTH SPEAKS STORE

Youth Speaks is built on the power of young people. Rep the movement with Youth Speaks merch and wear your belief in youth voice.



THE COMMUNITY THAT MAKES IT POSSIBLE



THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS FOR AMPLIFYING YOUTH VOICES!

- Academy of American Poets
- Acton Family Giving
- Amazon Literary Partnership Poetry Fund
- Barbara & Amos Hostetter
- California Arts Council
- Clorox Company Foundation
- Crankstart Foundation
- foundry10
- Hellman Foundation
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Kimball Foundation
- National Arts Relief Fund
- Poetry Foundation
- San Francisco Arts Commission
- San Francisco Community Challenge Grants
- San Francisco Department of Children Youth and their Families
- San Francisco Foundation
- San Francisco Grants For The Arts
- Walter & Elise Haas Fund
- William & Flora Hewlett Foundation



PARTNERSHIPS

We know this work is stronger when we build it together. Through collaboration and community, we expand access to art that challenges, inspires, and moves people to action. We're proud to recognize the programmatic partners who help bring this work to life and grow its impact.

San Francisco Public Library

CHAPTER 510

CALIFORNIA ARTS COUNCIL
A STATE AGENCY

826 VALENCIA

SFUSD SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Community Schools, Thriving Students

NPN NATIONAL PERFORMANCE NETWORK

SAN FRANCISCO RECREATION & PARKS

Poetry Coalition



OUR LEADERSHIP



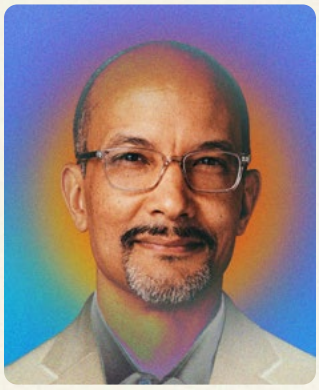
TONY FRANCIS
Chair



EMILY LEYS
Vice-Chair



BIJAL PARIKH
Treasurer



CHARLES WES HART
Secretary



TIM HAYDOCK



CESAR LUNA



ALYSON PALMER



VIVEK VENUGOPAL



MARJORIE ETTER-PARNALL

STAY CONNECTED

YOUTHSPEAKS.ORG

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Youth Speaks

BECAUSE THE NEXT GENERATION SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

