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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Public Readings Scheduled for Candidates Former Poets Populist to make special appearances**

**Seattle, WA July 9, 2007**—Two special events will feature candidates for this year's Poet Populist election. At the Seattle Public Library and Richard Hugo House, on July 15 and 23 (respectively), the public will get to hear and meet the 16 candidates vying for the post of "voice of the people."

A record 16 arts organizations have nominated poets for the post, a city-wide program now in its seventh election. Candidates include (among others) a two-time National Poetry Series finalist, a Stranger Genius Award winner, a grandmother, a teacher, an insurance administrator, a community college teacher, and a doctor.

Voter turnout at the online polls has reached record numbers, already outstripping the total votes for last year's election. Organizers project three thousand people will participate in this unique mash-up of Arts and Democracy, which promotes poetry, articulate leadership, and local arts organizations among new audiences city-wide. Voting will conclude on August 15, with a reading and inauguration at Bumbershoot on September 2.

**July 15, Sunday, 2:00 pm – 3:30 pm**  
**Seattle Public Library/Central Library, Microsoft Auditorium**  
**1000 – 4th Avenue (between Spring and Marion Streets)**

The reading will feature Bart Baxter, 2001-02 Poet Populist, and former MTV Poetry Slam winner (1994), Seattle Poetry Slam champion (1998), winner of the Floating Bridge Press chapbook contest (1999), and founder of the Washington Poetry Association's Bart Baxter Poetry Performance Award.

Candidates reading on the 15th (and their respective nominating organizations) are:

- Victoria Ford, Rose Alley Press
- Chad Goller-Soujourner, CD Forum for Arts and Ideas
- Anna Maria Hong, McLeod Residence
- Jared Leising, 826 Seattle
- Amy Mahoney, Knock Journal
- Peter Pereira, Washington Poets Association
- Molly Tenenbaum, Jack Straw Productions
- Len Tews, *PoetsWest*

**July 23, Monday, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm**  
**Richard Hugo House**  
**1634 – 11th Avenue (between Pine and Olive Streets)**

The reading will feature Peshya Joyce Gertler, 2005-06 Poet Populist and instructor at North Seattle Community College. Peshya is a longtime advocate for women's and marginalized voices, having started the "After Long Silence" reading series and teaching at the grassroots level for 20 years. She has been

awarded a Hedgebrook writers residency and has numerous publishing credits, including in the anthology *Backbone* (Seal Press).

Candidates reading on the 23rd (and their respective nominating organizations) are:

- Roberto Ascalon, Youngstown Cultural Arts Center
- Shannon Borg, The Ruby Group
- John Burgess, from the ground up
- Beth Coyote, It's About Time Reading Series
- Angela Martinez Dy, Youth Speaks Seattle
- Richard Gold, Pongo Publishing Teen Writing Project
- John Olson, Filter Magazine
- Cody Walker, Seattle Arts & Lectures

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### **About the Poet Populist program**

The Poet Populist program—now in its seventh election—supports creative public thinking, articulate leadership, and the practice of democracy. It proposes that artists can be part of the civic discourse, and that the civic discourse can be artistically inclined.

Unlike Poet Laureate programs, for which dignitaries or government officials select a poet, Seattle conducts a city-wide popular vote to determine who can speak as the Voice of the People—the Poet Populist.

The Poet Populist, once elected, is charged with promoting the principals of populist poetic expression when performing in and around the City, providing public education in poetry and authoring an original poem for inclusion in the City's archives at the conclusion of his or her one-year term.

The Poet Populist Program was founded by the office of City Council President Nick Licata in 1999, and is supported by resolution of the Seattle City Council. Past Poets Populist have included Bernard Harris, Jr., Bart Baxter, Tara Hardy, Pasha Joyce Gertler, and current Poet Populist Jourdan Imani Keith.

The Poet Populist Program is a program of Eleventh Hour Productions and Ampersand Arts, with support in 2007 by the City of Seattle, the Seattle Public Library, and Bumbershoot.

For information, contact [poetpopulist@speakeasy.net](mailto:poetpopulist@speakeasy.net), or [www.poetpopulist.org](http://www.poetpopulist.org).

### **Nominating Organizations and their Nominees**

826 Seattle	Jared Leising
Central District Forum for Arts and Ideas	Chad Goller–Soujourner
Filter Literary Journal	John Olson
from the ground up	John Burgess
It's About Time Reading Series	Beth Coyote
Jack Straw Productions	Molly Tenenbaum
Knock Journal	Amy Mahoney
McLeod Residence and The Robot Co-op	Anna Maria Hong
PoetsWest	Len Tews
Pongo Publishing Teen Writing Project	Richard Gold
Rose Alley Press	Victoria Ford
The Ruby Group	Shannon Borg
Seattle Arts & Lectures	Cody Walker
Washington Poets Association	Peter Pereira
Youngstown Cultural Arts Center	Roberto Ascalon
Youth Speaks Seattle	Angela Martinez Dy

## POET POPULIST NOMINATIONS 2007

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### **Roberto Ascalon**

Nominated by Youngstown Cultural Arts Center [[www.youngstownarts.org](http://www.youngstownarts.org)]

NYC-born Roberto Ascalon is a poet, writer, arts educator, and spoken-word performance artist who lives in the historic Youngstown/Cooper School in West Seattle. Roberto uses his love for the craft of poetry to transform the world that surrounds him. He connects with audiences via universal narratives that encompass topics like racism, first kisses, love, family, and Spam. He has taught at Nova High School and participated in Seattle Arts and Lectures Writers-in-the Schools program. Roberto currently works as a teaching artist and mentor for Arts Corps, Youth Speaks Seattle, and the Service Board.

Located in the Delridge neighborhood of West Seattle, the **Youngstown Cultural Arts Center** offers creative resources to the community including a recording studio, media lab, theater, movement studio, workshop, gallery, and classrooms. Cooper Artist Housing at the Youngstown provides 36 affordable live/work studios for rent to artists of all disciplines on the top two floors and in the converted attic of the building.

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### **Shannon Borg**

Nominated by The Ruby Group [[www.marthasilano.com](http://www.marthasilano.com)]

Shannon Borg holds a doctorate in poetry from the University of Houston and an MFA from the University of Washington. Her first book of poems, "Corset," was published by Cherry Grove Collections in 2006. She is a member of the Ruby Group, a group of local poets promoting spontaneity, collaboration, and open exchange. She is the lifestyle editor at Seattle magazine, overseeing the food, wine, home design and entertaining sections. A native of Spokane, she spent years living around the country, with the goal of returning to Seattle, where she enjoys the clouds, the wine, and the water.

The **Ruby Group** is a consortium of five nationally-recognized Seattle poets modeling spontaneity, collaboration, and the open exchange of ideas. Members gather once a month with notebooks and writing prompts in hand. Using these prompts to guide them, they compose new work "on the spot," sharing their first drafts with fellow members. Criticism is not allowed. Instead, members assist each other in pinpointing "hotspots": phrases or lines worth revisiting. Plans are in the works for a "how to" manual celebrating the initial impulse to create and share new work without the disruptions of self-editing and critique.

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### **John Burgess**

Nominated by from the ground up [[www.cheapwineandpoetry.com](http://www.cheapwineandpoetry.com)]

John Burgess grew up in upstate New York, worked on a survey crew in Montana and taught English in Japan. He now works 9-to-5 in corporate communications for an insurance company in Seattle and rides the bus to work everyday. His influences include 1970's punk music, Montana bars, haiku and his family. His poems have appeared in the King County *Poetry on Buses* project, *Sidecar Anemone*, *Pontoon*, *elimae* and *Chrysanthemum* among others. He's a 2006 Jack Straw writer and co-founder of the Washington Poets Association's Burning Word Festival. He's currently the editor of *Snow Monkey* literary journal.

**from the ground up** supports the creation and presentation of the written and spoken word through our reading series "Cheap Wine and Poetry" and print publication, *when it rains from the ground up*. By offering cheap wine and free admission at our readings as well as a free publication, we make literature accessible to everyone from the avid reader to the average non-reader.

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### **Beth Coyote**

Nominated by It's About Time Reading Series [<http://www.itsabouttimewriters.homestead.com/>]

Beth Coyote is a midwife, gardener, grandmother, painter and community activist who helped edit the Poets Against the War website and Voices in Wartime education project. She has stood with Women in Black in the Westlake Mall, organizes Change Your Mind Day, an annual poetry reading for local Buddhist groups; laminates poems to display on trees; and, with the Garlic Gulch Poets, helped form a monthly writing series in Columbia City. Her publications include the Washington Poets Association anthologies, *synapse*, *Chrysanthemum*, *When It Rains*, *From the Ground Up* and *From the Web*, a women's anthology of antiwar writings.

The **It's About Time Reading Series** exists for all those who want to write. It is dedicated to the memory of Anna Helfgott, (1899-1996) who began writing at age 70, & to the memory of Nelson Bentley (1918-1990), the quintessential teacher who gave Anna, and scores of others, help and hope. It's About Time is dedicated to an end of racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, homelessness and war.

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### **Angela Martinez Dy**

Nominated by Youth Speaks Seattle [[www.Myspace.com/youthspeaksseattle](http://www.Myspace.com/youthspeaksseattle)]

Angela Martinez Dy is a more-than-meets-the-eye filipina-american poet, spoken word artist, and emcee with isangmahal arts kollektive roots. A writer and performance poet since the age of fourteen, Angela has graced stages nationwide, and was a finalist in the 2007 Seattle Poetry Grand Slam. Angela has taught poetry and performance at high schools, universities, and other venues across the region, and is currently in her second year as the writer-in-residence at Chief Sealth High School. Thus far she has produced a chapbook, *Common Sensuality*, and as *El Dia*, has released one mixtape; additional projects are in the works.

**Youth Speaks** is changing Seattle through the power of words. Building a community through poetic cultural exchanges that transcend boundaries of age, race, class, culture, and sexual orientation, Youth Speaks aids personal transformation and nurtures self-expression by mentoring young poets, facilitating collaborative workshops, and creating supportive public performance opportunities with the goal of amplifying the often-silenced youth voice. Youth Speaks encourages young people to think critically, to write honestly, and to reclaim their own educational process so that the next generation of leaders may emerge.

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### **Victoria Ford**

Nominated by Rose Alley Press [[www.rosealleypress.com](http://www.rosealleypress.com)]

Victoria Ford has lived in Seattle for almost two decades. She earned her B.A. in English from Ohio Wesleyan University and her M.A. in English and creative writing from Indiana University. Her poems have appeared in publications such as *Abraxas*, *The Wisconsin Academy Review*, *Gamut*, and *Petroglyph*. Her chapbooks include *Following the Swan* (Fireweed Press, Madison, WI: 1988) and *Rain Psalm* (Rose Alley Press, Seattle, WA: 1996). A former part-time English instructor at Seattle

Central Community College and Antioch University Seattle, she currently works as an instructional designer for an educational software company.

**Rose Alley Press** primarily publishes books of rhymed metrical poetry and an annually updated booklet about writing, publishing, and marketing. Founded in 1995 by Seattle poet David D. Horowitz, Rose Alley Press has to date published twelve titles. These include individual titles from Seattle-area poets William Dunlop, Victoria Ford, Donald Kentop, Douglas Schuder, Michael Spence, and Joannie Kervran Stangeland. Our most recent title is *Limbs of the Pine, Peaks of the Range*, an anthology featuring poems from twenty-six of the finest poets of the Pacific Northwest. Poets featured include Victoria Ford, our company's 2007-2008 Poet Populist Nominee.

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### **Richard Gold**

Nominated by Pongo Publishing Teen Writing Project [[www.pongopublishing.org](http://www.pongopublishing.org)]

Richard Gold founded and runs the Pongo Teen Writing Project, a writing therapy nonprofit that serves homeless, incarcerated, and hospitalized youth. In his past, he developed a writing therapy program at an adolescent psychiatric clinic and earned an MA in poetry with a collection of poems about the youth and emotions at the clinic. Richard also has experience as a teacher, editor at a special education publisher, and managing editor at a large technical publisher. "The Odd Puppet Odyssey," a collection of Richard's own poetry, with illustrations by Celeste Ericsson, was published by Black Heron Press in 2003.

**Pongo** teaches poetry to distressed Seattle teens to help them understand their feelings, bolster self-worth, and take better control of their lives. Pongo's trained volunteers go into juvenile detention, shelters, hospitals, etc., to teach creative writing to teens who have difficulty expressing themselves. From 1996-2006, Pongo worked with over 3600 teens. In addition, Pongo produced eleven books of teen poetry, and distributed 10,000 books for free. At Bumbershoot and festivals, Pongo has helped thousands of people in the community appreciate the voices and life stories of youth. Pongo poetry allows distressed teens to write about feelings with candor and pride.

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### **Chad Goller-Sojourner**

Nominated by the Central District Forum for Arts and Ideas [[www.cdforum.org](http://www.cdforum.org)]

Chad is a poet and spoken word performance artist. His inaugural chapbook, *Born One Thousand Years Too Early: Fat, Dark-Skinned, Gay and Adopted by White Folks A Fragmentary Journey Towards Alignment*, received accolades from Maya Angelou and has been described as poignant, chilling and prophetic. He served as the creator, and artistic director for *Standing In The Gap — And Speaking Their Names — Black Gay Poets Honor Their Ancestors — A Spoken Word Requiem*. Additionally, a multi-media show, *Sitting in Circles with Rich White Girls: Memoirs of a Bulimic Black Boy*, which chronicles his life-long affair with the scale and an eating disorder, and a novel *In God's Way* are also in the works.

**The Central District Forum for Arts & Ideas** (CD Forum) was founded in 1999 and our mission is to present and produce African-American cultural programs that encourage thought and debate for the greater Seattle area. Our vision is to inspire new thoughts and challenge assumptions about African-American culture. We offer a full series of programs that explore a broad cross-section of African-American art and issues. Our annual season includes the performing arts featuring nationally touring artists, and two humanities series: *American Heritage* and *Which Way Seattle?*

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### **Anna Maria Hong**

Nominated by McLeod Residence and The Robot Co-op [<http://mcleodresidence.com/>]

A two-time National Poetry Series finalist and Pushcart Prize nominee, Anna Maria Hong has published poems in many journals including Fence, Black Clock, Cue, Fairy Tale Review, Puerto del Sol, Cranky Literary Journal, and Crab Orchard Review. Her writings about literature and visual art appear in publications such as American Book Review, The Stranger, Poets & Writers, ARCADE, poetryfoundation.org, and The International Examiner. The founder and producer of Trapdoor 62, she has performed and lectured at venues including the Microsoft Art Gallery, Theater Schmeater, the Experience Music Project, Bumbershoot, Burning Word, and the Seattle City Council.

**McLeod Residence** is a new gallery, community space and lounge in Belltown with an emphasis on technology, interactive art and collaborations. McLeod Residence opened in January of 2007 and hosts new exhibitions every two months. We also offer a membership that allows our patrons to become part of the McLeod Family. Our lounge is currently open to members and for private events Thursday through Saturday. Some of our past events have included book release parties, haiku parties, poetry readings, fashion shows, dance performances, one-night art installations, and the occasional musical act.

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### **Jared Leising**

Nominated by 826 Seattle [[www.826seattle.org](http://www.826seattle.org)]

Jared Leising, originally from the Midwest, received his MFA in creative writing from the University of Houston. His stories and poems have appeared in various Washington publications such as Pontoon, Crab Creek Review, Stringtown, as well as on Metro Buses and local radio. Jared has worked as a writer-in-residence for Ballard and Nathan Hale High Schools. Currently, he teaches English at Cascadia Community College and is a volunteer for 826 Seattle, a youth writing center in Greenwood.

**826 Seattle** is a nonprofit writing and tutoring center dedicated to helping youth, ages six to 18, improve their creative and expository writing skills, and to helping teachers inspire their students to write. Our services are structured around our belief that great leaps in learning can happen with one-on-one attention and that strong writing skills are fundamental to future success.

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### **Amy Mahoney**

Nominated by Knock Journal [[www.knockjournal.org](http://www.knockjournal.org)]

Amy Mahoney is a potent and raw poet and performer whose stage presence is both gorgeous and eerie. She is a stand-up pop-culture philosopher with a commitment to social justice that blends a working class perspective with years of training in her craft. Amy has served as president of the inaugural board of directors at Bent Writing Institute. She has performed solo and group shows at Bumbershoot, Vancouver's Under the Volcano Festival, the Seattle Poetry Festival, and many other venues. Recordings from Amy's performance at the 2007 Seattle Poetry Festival can be found at the KNOCK website: [knockjournal.org](http://knockjournal.org)

**KNOCK** is a literary arts magazine published twice each year at Antioch University Seattle. KNOCK looks at what's ahead in writing, drama, and the visual arts. We publish fiction, essays, poetry, plays, cartoons, and contemporary art, along with interviews with artists, writers, and activists, and excerpts from books and other media just released or forthcoming.

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## **John Olson**

Nominated by Filter Literary Journal [<http://www.filterlit.com>]

John Olson is the author of seven collections of poetry and prose poetry, including *The Night I Dropped Shakespeare On The Cat*, *Oxbow Kazoo*, *Free Stream Velocity*, *Echo Regime*, *Eggs & Mirrors*, *Logo Lagoon* and *Swarm of Edges*. *Backscatter*, a collection of new and selected work, is forthcoming from Black Widow Press in 2008. Poetry, Olson observes, is what gives our language its essence and rapture, its muscle and reach. It is the full comprehension of the mind's independence and freedom, the spurt and urgency of its plumes and pearls. It is the life-blood of a culture. The pulse of its meat and meaning.

**Filter** is a hand crafted journal built and based on the theory that poetry can re-gain a foothold in contemporary culture by being presented in ways that stimulate the reader to interact with the work. Reading is a visual art, a palpable experience, a confluence of literal and physical understanding – Filter seeks to expand on these tenets by encouraging readers to experience language intellectually, emotionally and physically. This journal seeks to represent the work it holds on a visceral level, so that the book is as carefully crafted as the poetry, fiction and art that it contains.

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## **Peter Periera**

Nominated by the Washington Poets Association [[www.washingtonpoets.org](http://www.washingtonpoets.org)]

Peter Pereira is a family physician in Seattle, and was a founding editor of Floating Bridge Press. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *New England Review*, and *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and have been widely anthologized, including in the forthcoming 2007 issue of *Best American Poetry*. His books include *The Lost Twin*, *Saying the World*, and *What's Written on the Body*, which was newly released by Copper Canyon Press in February, 2007.

The mission of the **Washington Poets Association** is to serve and inspire individuals and communities across the state by supporting the creation, presentation, and appreciation of poetry through events, publications, recognition, and education. The WPA sponsors the annual Burning Word poetry festival, annual poetry contests in multiple categories, and other events. It also publishes the annual journal *Cascade*, sponsors the annual Poetry Road Show to promote poetry in outlying areas of Washington, and recently helped to successfully lobby state legislature for the creation of the state poet laureate position. WPA was founded in 1971.

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## **Molly Tenenbaum**

Nominated by Jack Straw Productions [<http://www.jackstraw.org>]

Molly Tenenbaum, poet, is the author of *By a Thread* (Van West & Co, 2000) and of the chapbooks *Blue Willow*, *Old Voile*, and *Story*. She plays old-time stringband music with two bands, The Queen City Bulldogs and Dram County, for dances and in parlors, and her old-time banjo CD is *Instead of a Pony*. She lives in Seattle, teaching music in the living room and English at North Seattle Community College.

**Jack Straw Productions** (JSP) is the Northwest's only non-profit multidisciplinary audio arts center. A community-based resource since 1962, we provide a production facility that is unlike any other in the region for local artists who work creatively with sound. Jack Straw focuses on annual artist residencies through our Artist Support Program, our Writers Program, and our Gallery Residency Program; art and technology education for all ages; arts heritage partnerships; and radio production. Our full-service recording studio is also available for a range of arts projects.

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### **Len Tews**

Nominated by *PoetsWest* [[www.poetswest.com](http://www.poetswest.com)]

Leonard L. Tews was raised on a dairy farm in central Wisconsin and went to school in a one-room schoolhouse. He retired as a professor of biology after thirty-two years at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, and moved to Seattle. He has lived on Capitol Hill for eight years and developed a fondness and compassion for the many characters of his community. His published chapbooks include *Family Poems*, *Dance Steps* (a collection of people and icons of Capitol Hill), and *The Moon is Not Yet* (a collection of nature poems). Buddhism, nature, and family are important influences on his writing.

Organized in 1998 by J. Glenn Evans, **PoetsWest**, through its web site [www.poetswest.com](http://www.poetswest.com), provides online information about poets and poetry in the Northwest, including British Columbia, with biographical profiles of poets, calendar of reading events and venues, poetry reviews, and links to other resources and organizations. *PoetsWest*, with an advisory board of ten members, also coordinates reading venues and special events, and produces a weekly radio program of poetry, stories, music, and interviews on KSER 90.7 FM. As part of its community outreach, *PoetsWest* provides a monthly email newsletter of events and special announcements to the literary community.

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### **Cody Walker**

Nominated by Seattle Arts & Lectures [[www.lectures.org](http://www.lectures.org)]

Cody Walker teaches English at the University of Washington and poetry through Seattle Arts and Lectures' Writers in the Schools program. He also serves as a writer-in-residence at the Richard Hugo House. Cody received the 2003 James Boatwright III Prize for Poetry from *Shenandoah* and the 2005 Distinguished Teaching Award from the UW English Department. His work appears on buses and bookmarks, as well as in *Best American Poetry*, *Best New Poets*, *Parnassus*, *Slate*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Subtropics*, and *Light*. This September he'll be directing the UW's two-week poetry seminar in Friday Harbor.

**Seattle Arts & Lectures** (SAL) was founded in 1987 to raise the understanding, appreciation, and visibility of the literary arts in the Puget Sound region. SAL's mission is to deepen and expand our experience of the world by fostering the exploration of ideas and emotions through language. We believe that this work is essential to the development of a more thoughtful, engaged, and democratic community. SAL serves an ever-growing population that reflects Puget Sound's rich and diverse cultural heritage. SAL's programs include the Literary Lecture Series, the Poetry Series, Wednesday University, Writers in the Schools (WITS), and Teachers as Scholars.