

Artist/Performance Bio

MICHELLE MYERS is an award-winning spoken word poet, community activist, and educator. Born in Seoul, South Korea to a Korean mother and a white American father serving in the U.S. Air Force, Michelle draws from her personal experiences as a biracial Korean American woman to write poetry that challenges mainstream misconceptions of Asianness and explores the intersections of race, culture, gender, community, and self. Based in the Philadelphia-area, Michelle and her performance work have been featured at hundreds of college campuses as well as at many distinguished venues around the country, including the Painted Bride Arts Center, the Bowery Poetry Club, the Asian American Writers Workshop, the Asian Arts Initiative, the Kennedy Center, the Loft Literary Center, the Sierra Arts Foundation, the Japanese American National Museum, and the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience. Employing multiple poetic forms and delivery styles—including storytelling, hip-hop-influenced rhyme, and song—Michelle harnesses the raw and intimate power of spoken word poetry in her performances in order to take audiences on an unforgettable journey that educates, challenges, and inspires. Ultimately, she believes in the transformative power of spoken word poetry.

For almost two decades, Michelle has been honored with many accolades for her work. As a founding member of the Asian American female spoken word poetry group Yellow Rage, Michelle has appeared on HBO's *Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry*, in the first live Def Poetry Jam show presented at the HBO U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen, Colorado, and in the Def Poetry Jam College Tour. As a solo performance artist, Michelle has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including a Transformation Award and Art and Change Grant by the Leeway Foundation and a Spoken Word Immersion Fellowship Honorable Mention by The Loft Literary Center. Michelle's work as an educator at Community College of Philadelphia has also received recognition, such as a President's Award for Excellence in Student Success, a two-time Mid-Atlantic Emmy Nomination for her work as host and co-creator of the *Drop the Mic Spoken Word Poetry Competition* on CCPTV, and a Club Advisor of the Year Award. As a community activist, Michelle has been invited to perform at numerous events to raise awareness about social justice issues, including the *Heart Beneath the Hood: Artistic Action for Trayvon Martin*, *GirlFest Hawaii: Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls Through Education and Art*, and the *Up in Arms Benefit Concert* for Fong Lee's Family and to End Police Brutality.

In her endeavors to build positive relationships across communities, Michelle has served as a teaching artist at numerous community organizations around the city of Philadelphia, such as the Asian Arts Initiative, the Mural Arts Program, Education Works, AmeriCorp, and Congreso. She has also worked with youth at Barrio Planta Project in San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua. These experiences have allowed Michelle to share her love of poetry with youth. She encourages students to write poems which enable them to discuss and explore such topics as the importance of identity, the meaning of culture, the impact of family, the hardships of being an immigrant, the struggles of Asian Americans, the tradition of story-telling, the tragedy of youth violence, and the pain of racism and cultural misunderstanding. In working with youth, Michelle provides a supportive space so that youth can create spoken word poetry through reading, writing, sharing (performing), feedback and reflection.

As an educator, Michelle holds a Ph.D. in English from Temple University; she currently is an Associate Professor in the English Department at Community College of Philadelphia and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Asian Studies Program at Temple University. At Community College of Philadelphia, she also serves as the faculty advisor of the Spoken Word Poetry Club; the club was presented with a 2015 Spotlight Award and was nominated for Club of the Year. During the 2014-15 academic year, Michelle collaborated with CCPTV to develop a spoken word competition TV show for CCP students called Drop the Mic, which she also hosts. In addition to receiving nominations in 2015 and 2016 for a Mid-Atlantic Emmy, the show has won a 2015 Silver Communicator Award and a 2015 Bronze Telly Award.

As a spoken word artist and an educator, Michelle regards her work as a form of activism and is dedicated to raising awareness about social injustices and building positive relationships across communities. Michelle strives to facilitate honest dialogue through her poetry and hopes to move audience members to recognize the humanity of others and acknowledge the common human desire for peace, healing, happiness, and love. She also seeks to connect people, bridge cultures, and initiate a movement of positive and progressive change. Towards this end, Michelle's poetry has examined the following topics: racial justice, human trafficking and sexual slavery, anti-Asian violence, police brutality, mixed race identity, cross-cultural community building, sexual objectification, and intergenerational war trauma. In recent years, Michelle has focused on creating work that encourages female empowerment and raises awareness about the various forms of violence enacted against women not only by men but also by other women. As a survivor of sexual assault and domestic violence, Michelle understands how important it is for women to feel safe in an unconditionally supportive space. In her commitment to this issue, Michelle authored a solo poetry book titled *The SHE Book* and has donated all proceeds from book sales to Odanadi, an anti-trafficking organization that rescues and rehabilitates women and children in India. She is currently working on a new volume of poetry, tentatively titled *Prayers from the Lost-and-Found*.