Alyssa Gaines
2022 National Youth Poet Laureate
Alyssa Gaines
2022 National Youth Poet Laureate

Urban Word, the founding organization of the National Youth Poet Laureate Program, announced Alyssa Gaines as the 2022 National Youth Poet Laureate at a commencement program held at The Kennedy Center on May 20, 2022.

Representing the Midwest Region, Gaines is the first-ever Indianapolis Youth Poet Laureate as supported by Voices Corp. Her work has been featured in Scholastic’s “Best Teen Writing,” the Indianapolis Recorder, and was published by Teach for America. A recent high school graduate, she served as a leader in her school as the President of the Black Student Union, the Poetry Club Founder and President, President of the Legal Issues and Politics Club, and President of the Young Democrats Club. Her leadership also extends to work with Purdue University and the Center for Leadership Development. She also has performed in numerous theater productions and was the captain of the lacrosse team. Along with publishing her first book of poetry, Alyssa will be attending Harvard University in the Fall.
Downloadable Media

- Alyssa Gaines high-res photo 1 (JPG, 3190 x 4786)
- Alyssa Gaines high-res photo 2 (JPG, 3068 x 4184)
- News release: “Alyssa Gaines Named 2022 National Youth Poet Laureate” (PDF)
- Video of full ceremony: “National Youth Poet Laureate Commencement - Millennium Stage (May 20, 2022)”
  - Jump to Alyssa’s reading at 29:54

Previous Media Coverage

- NPR: Meet 18-year-old Alyssa Gaines, Youth Poet Laureate of Indianapolis
- USA Today: Indianapolis native, National Youth Poet Laureate finalist builds bridges through poetry
- Katie Couric Media: A Conversation With Our New Youth Poet Laureate
- WTHR: Indy's first youth poet laureate shares inspiration and poetry's new national spotlight
- The Takeaway: Youth Poet Alyssa Gaines
- WFYI: “How Growing Up as a Black Girl in Indy Inspired the New National Youth Poet Laureate”
About the National Youth Poet Laureate Program

The National Youth Poet Laureate Program, an initiative of Urban Word, celebrates our nation’s top poets who are committed to artistic excellence, civic engagement and social impact. Founded in New York City in 2008, the Youth Poet Laureate Program partners with local and national literary arts organizations across the country to elevate youth voices at the forefront of social change. Program partners and supporters include the Academy of American Poets, the Library of Congress, the Poetry Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Youth Poets Laureate have touched every media outlet and major stage in the country including at the White House and on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. To learn more about our work or to start a program in your region, please visit youthlaureate.org.

About Urban Word

Urban Word elevates youth voices as leaders at the intersection of the literary arts and civic engagement. Through the transformative power of the written and spoken word, Urban Word provides young, creative voices, often those that are marginalized, the tools, training, and platforms to rewrite the narratives that shape their lives and to own their agency in directing the future of their communities. Headquartered in New York, Urban Word offers online and in-person open mics, creative writing and college prep workshops, competitions, fellowships, and more. As one of the oldest and most comprehensive youth literary arts organizations in the United States, Urban Word and its national community of poets, activists, and educators, has built and continues to lead the youth spoken word movement. Learn more at urbanword.org.

Contact us

For all media inquires, please contact Safiya Jafari Simmons at safiya@safiyasimmons.com.