

Event Outline

Event Title: Imagining Invisible Borders: Uniting International African Diaspora Poets

Event Description: In December 2020 during the global pandemic, Uganda-born, London-based poet Nick Makoha founded his vision for an international poetry collective in the African diaspora called Obsidian Foundation. A panel of poets who were selected to attend Obsidian's first virtual retreat discuss their experiences in poetry craft during the event and the effects of uniting with the global African diaspora on their work. They also read from their poetry and engage with attendees to discuss Makoha's process.

Event Category: Poetry Craft & Criticism

Event Organizer & Moderator: Nick Makoha

Nick Makoha (he/him) is founder of The Obsidian Foundation. His debut collection, *Kingdom of Gravity*, was shortlisted for the Forward Prize Best 1st Collection. He's a Cave Canem Graduate Fellow and Complete Works alumnus. He is also winner of the 2015 Brunel African Poetry Prize and the 2016 Toi Derricotte & Cornelius Eady Prize.

Event Participants:

Dr. Len Lawson (he/him) is the author of *Chime* (Get Fresh Books, 2019) and the chapbook *Before the Night Wakes You* (Finishing Line Press, 2017). He is also editor of *Hand in Hand: Poets Respond to Race* (Muddy Ford Press, 2017) and *The Future of Black: Afrofuturism and Black Comics Poetry* (Blair Press, 2021).

Dr. Raina J. León (she/her) is both Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *The Acentos Review* as well as the author of three poetry books: *Canticle of Idols*, *Boogeyman Dawn*, and *sombra: (dis)locate*. She is a member of the Cave Canem, CantoMundo, Macondo, and Carolina African American Writers Collective communities.

Saddiq Dzukogi's (he/him) poetry collection *Your Crib, My Qibla* (University of Nebraska Press, 2021) was named one of the 29 best poetry collections by Oprah Daily. He is the recipient of fellowships and grants from Nebraska Arts Council, Pen America, Obsidian Foundation & University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Alexa Patrick (she/her) is a poet from Connecticut. She holds fellowships from Cave Canem, Obsidian, and The Watering Hole. Alexa's work can be found in Split This Rock's *The Quarry*, *ArLiJo*, *CRWN Magazine*, and *The BreakBeat Poets Vol. 2: Black Girl Magic*.

Opening Remarks:

Thank you for joining us during this engaging panel about the unity among poets of the international African diaspora. This panel features fellows of the inaugural Obsidian Foundation Retreat based in the United Kingdom, founded by our moderator Nick Makoha. In December 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, Nick realized his vision to bring the model for the legendary Cave Canem Poetry Retreats to the UK. Fifty poets of African descent were selected from around the world to participate in this first virtual poetry retreat experience. He will share his process from initiating to completing this incredible project. The panelists are four of the fellows who participated in the retreat. They will each detail their experience not only building community through the poetry workshops of the virtual retreat but also the impact of enrichment from unifying with the international African diaspora on their poetry and the culture at large. Each poet will also share their work with the audience. We hope you will enjoy the poetry and discussion from these fantastic poets, and we hope to field questions briefly to end our session.