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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAVE CANEM POETS READ IN PITTSBURGH & GREENSBURG

North America's "Home for Black Poetry" Presents 15th Annual June Showcase

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK (May 5, 2010) — **With five public readings, June 21-25, 2010**, Cave Canem Foundation, North America's premier "home for Black poetry," will present the work of eight world-class poets and acquaint greater Pittsburgh audiences with the voices of 54 emerging African American poets participating in the organization's writing retreat, held annually in June at the University of Pittsburgh in Greensburg. On June 21, 7:30 pm, acclaimed poets **Brenda Cárdenas, Toi Derricotte, Cornelius Eady** and **Ed Roberson** will read at Village Hall, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg. On June 24, 7:30 pm, **City of Asylum/Pittsburgh** will host a tented reading on Monterey Street, Pittsburgh, featuring Cave Canem faculty members **Colleen J. McElroy, Carl Phillips** and **Claudia Rankine**, along with guest writer **Sapphire**, author of *Push*, a bestselling novel recently adapted for the screen as *Precious*. On June 22, 23 and 25, 7:30 pm, poetry lovers will enjoy "lightning rounds," also presented on the Greensburg campus, as retreat participants share four-minute samplings of verse written during their week-long study with Derricotte, Eady, McElroy, Phillips, Rankine and Roberson. Events are free and open to the public. Lead funding is provided by the University of Pittsburgh; additional funding comes from The Heinz Endowments, National Endowment for the Arts, the Multicultural Arts Initiative, Dignity & Respect Campaign, Fifth Third Bank and Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. For more information, visit www.cavecanempoets.org or call 718.858.0000.

EVENTS SCHEDULE

- **June 21**, 7:30 pm, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg: Cárdenas, Derricotte, Eady and Roberson.
- **June 22 & 23**, 7:30 pm, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg: Fellows Lightning Rounds.
- **June 24**, 7:30 pm, City of Asylum/Pittsburgh, Monterey Street: McElroy, Phillips, Rankine & Sapphire.
- **June 25**, 7:30 pm, University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg: Fellows Lightning Round.

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JUNE 21: POETS AT UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH AT GREENSBURG

The author of *Boomerang* (Bilingual Press, 2009) and *From the Tongues of Brick and Stone* (Momotombo Press, 2005), **Brenda Cárdenas** is a **Letras Latinas-sponsored** poet visiting Cave Canem's 2010 retreat as part of the two organizations' ongoing cross-cultural programming. Her work has appeared in such journals and anthologies as *Achiote Seeds*, *The City Visible: Chicago Poetry for the New Century*, *The Wind Shifts: New Latino Poetry* and *Poetry Daily*, among other publications. An assistant professor in the Creative Writing program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, she co-edited *Between the Heart and the Land: Latina Poets in the Midwest*.

Cave Canem co-founder **Toi Derricotte's** books of poetry are *Tender*, winner of the 1998 Paterson Poetry Prize; *Captivity*; *Natural Birth*; and *The Empress of the Death House*. Her *The Black Notebooks*, a literary memoir, won the 1998 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Non-Fiction and was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. Her fifth collection of poetry, *The Undertaker's Daughter*, is forthcoming from the University of Pittsburgh Press in 2011. Her many honors include the Lucille Medwick Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America; two Pushcart Prizes; the Distinguished Pioneering of the Arts Award from the United Black Artists; the Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award from Poets & Writers; the Elizabeth Kray Award for service to poetry from Poets House; the University of Pittsburgh Chancellor's Distinguished Public Service Award; and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Guggenheim Foundation. She is a Professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh.

The author of eight books of poetry, most recently, *Hardheaded Weather* (Penguin, 2008), Cave Canem co-founder **Cornelius Eady** received the 1985 Lamont Prize from the Academy of American Poets for *Victims of the Latest Dance Craze*. His *The Gathering of My Name* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, and a production of *Brutal Imagination* (with a score by Diedre Murray) won the 2002 Oppenheimer Award for the best first play by an American Playwright. He is the recipient of an NEA Fellowship in Literature; a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in Poetry; a Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Traveling Scholarship; a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship; The *Prairie Schooner* Strousse Award (1994); and the Elizabeth Kray Award for service to poetry from Poets House. He is Professor of English and the Miller Family Endowed Chair in Literature and Writing at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Ed Roberson has published eight books of poetry, the latest of which is *The New Wing of the Labyrinth* (Singing Horse Press, 2010). *To See the Earth before the End of the World*, a collection of new poems, is forthcoming from

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Wesleyan University Press. His *Atmosphere Conditions* was selected for the National Poetry Series and nominated for the Lenore Marshall Award from the Academy of American Poets, and his *Voices Cast Out to Talk Us In* won the Iowa Poetry Prize. He is a recipient of the Lila Wallace Writers' Award and the Shelley Memorial Award from the Poetry Society of America. He is Writer in Residence at Northwestern University in the English Department, Creative Writing.

JUNE 24: POETS AT CITY OF ASYLUM/PITTSBURGH

Writer and folklorist **Colleen J. McElroy** received a Ph.D. from the University of Washington, where she is Professor Emeritus of English and Creative Writing. Winner of the PEN Oakland National Literary Award and the Before Columbus American Book Award, she also has received two Fulbright fellowships, two National Endowment of the Arts fellowships and a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship to the Bellagio Center in Italy. She is the author of eight collections of poetry, the latest of which is *Sleeping with the Moon*; two books of short fiction; and two poetic memoirs. A new volume of poems, *Juju Crossing*, is forthcoming.

Carl Phillips is the author of numerous books of poetry, most recently, *Speak Low* (Farrar, 2009), a finalist for the 2010 National Book Award; *Quiver of Arrows: Selected Poems 1986-2006*; and *Riding Westward*. His *The Rest of Love*, a finalist for the National Book Award, won the Theodore Roethke Memorial Foundation Poetry Prize and the Thom Gunn Award for Gay Male Poetry. Additional honors include the 2006 Academy of American Poets Fellowship, an Award in Literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Pushcart Prize, induction into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Library of Congress. He is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and Professor of English and of African and Afro-American Studies at Washington University in St. Louis, where he also teaches in the Creative Writing Program.

Claudia Rankine is the author of four collections of poetry: *Nothing in Nature Is Private*, recipient of the Cleveland State Poetry Prize; *The End of the Alphabet*; *Plot*; and most recently, *Don't Let Me Be Lonely*. Her work has been published in numerous journals and several anthologies, including *Great American Prose Poems: From Poe to the Present*, *Best American Poetry 2001*, *Giant Step: African American Writing at the Crossroads of the Century* and *The Garden Thrives: Twentieth Century African-American Poetry*. With Juliana Spahr, she is co-editor of *American Women Poets in the 21st Century: Where Lyric Meets Language*. Recipient of the 2005 Academy of American Poets

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Fellowship, she is the Henry G. Professor of English at Pomona College.

Sapphire's bestselling novel, *Push*, won the Book-of-the-Month Club Stephen Crane Award for First Fiction, the Black Caucus of the American Library Association's First Novelist Award, and in Great Britain, the Mind Book of the Year Award. Named by *The Village Voice* as one of the top 25 books of 1996, it was nominated for an NAACP Image Award in the category of Outstanding Literary Work of Fiction and made into a major motion film, *Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire*, produced by Oprah Winfrey. *Publisher's Weekly* called Sapphire's first book of poems, *American Dreams*, "one of the strongest debut collections of the nineties." Her most recent collection of poetry is *Black Wings & Blind Angels*.

CAVE CANEM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1996 by poets Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady to remedy the under-representation and isolation of African American poets in MFA programs and writing workshops, **Cave Canem is a home for the many voices of African American poetry and is committed to cultivating the artistic and professional growth of African American poets.** Called "*the major watering hole and air pocket for black poetry*" by poet Nikki Finney, Cave Canem has grown from an initial gathering of 26 poets to become an influential movement with a renowned faculty and a high-achieving national fellowship of over 300. Its programs include a week-long summer retreat at the University of Pittsburgh in Greensburg, first and second book prizes, Legacy Conversations, a Poets on Craft series, writing workshops, publications and national readings and panels. Such renowned poets as Elizabeth Alexander, Lucille Clifton, Yusef Komunyakaa, Carl Phillips and Sonia Sanchez number among the organization's faculty and judges. Cave Canem fellows have over 150 books in print across several genres and have received many prestigious awards—Guggenheim, Lannan Literary, NEA and Stegner Fellowships; the Laughlin Award from the Academy of American Poets; and the Whiting Writers' Award, among others. To date, the organization has published *Gathering Ground: A Reader Celebrating Cave Canem's First Decade* (University of Michigan Press, 2006) and *The Ringing Ear: Black Poets Lean South* (The University of Georgia Press, 2007). For more information, go to cavecanempoets.org.

CITY OF ASYLUM/PITTSBURGH

Founded in 2004, **City of Asylum/Pittsburgh** provides sanctuary to writers exiled under threat of persecution, so they can write without repression or danger. For two years, the program provides a home on Sampsonia Way, a

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living stipend of \$30,000 per year, medical benefits, and help transitioning to stable independence while in exile. City of Asylum/Pittsburgh was the first U.S. city to join the North American Network of Cities of Asylum founded by Nobel Prize Laureates Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, Russell Banks, Richard Wiley, Michael Ondaatje and Carolyn Forché. To date, every writer hosted by City of Asylum/Pittsburgh has created a full-length work while in residence. For more information, visit www.cityofasylumpittsburgh.org.

Latinas Letras, the Literary Program of the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, seeks to enhance the visibility, appreciation and study of Latino literature both on and off the campus of the University of Notre Dame with a focus on projects that identify and support emerging Latino/a writers. Letras Latinas actively collaborates with individuals and organizations to more effectively carry out its mission. For more information, go to www.latinostudies.nd.edu.

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