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CAVE CANEM SOUTH: THREE-DAY POETRY WORKSHOP IN SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina Poetry Initiative Conducts Workshop for African American Poets at Columbia Museum of Art

NEW YORK, NY (January 5, 2010)—**Cave Canem Foundation**, North America’s premier home for black poetry, and the **South Carolina Poetry Initiative**, a center for the promotion, celebration and production of poetry based at the University of South Carolina, are pleased to announce **Cave Canem South**, an inaugural community-based workshop for African American poets to be held February 5 – 7, 2010, in Columbia, South Carolina. The first Cave Canem workshop to be conducted in the South, the program reflects the organizations’ commitment to cultivating the artistic and professional growth of African American poets across the country. **Kwame Dawes**, a Cave Canem faculty member and director of the South Carolina Poetry Initiative, is the workshop’s artistic director.

The workshop will take place at the **Columbia Museum of Art**, a perennial partner with the South Carolina Poetry Initiative on many projects, and will include opportunities for participants to respond to *The Chemistry of Color: Contemporary African-American Artists*, an exhibition on display February 5-May 9, 2010.

Cave Canem South is open to adult poets self-identifying as African American and residing in the Southeast region of the United States. Participants must attend all three days of the workshop. The registration fee is \$30.00 per person. Registrations must be received by January 30, 2010, and requests for need-based scholarships must be received by January 25. For complete application guidelines and forms, go to www.sc.edu/poetry, or contact Charlene Spearen, associate director of the South Carolina Poetry Initiative, at 803.777.0307 or cmspeare@mailbox.sc.edu.

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Based on Cave Canem Foundation's time-tested model of providing "productive space where black poets. . . can inspire and be inspired by others, relieved of any obligation to explain or defend their blackness" (Harryette Mullen), Cave Canem South will feature two-hour workshops with world-class poets **Nikky Finney**, **Patricia Smith** and **Frank X Walker**, as well as a talk on craft by Finney and a one-hour workshop on ekphrasis led by Dawes. Poetry written by participants in response to the *The Chemistry of Color* will be published in a chapbook anthology, edited by Dawes and published by Stepping Stone Press. At a later date, the Poetry Initiative will host a *Confluence* reading to launch the chapbook and showcase Cave Canem South participants.

Complementing the workshop sessions, on February 6, 2010, 7-9 pm, the University of South Carolina will host a public reading at the Gressette Room, Harper College, featuring poets Finney, Smith and Walker.

Cave Canem South Faculty

The program's artistic director, **Kwame Dawes**, is the author of 12 collections of poetry, the most recent of which are *Gomer's Song* and *Impossible Flying*. His *Bob Marley: Lyrical Genius* remains the most authoritative study of the lyrics of Bob Marley. He is the Distinguished Poet-in-Residence and Louis Frye Scudder Professor of Liberal Arts at the University of South Carolina, Founder and Executive Director of the South Carolina Poetry Initiative, Director of the University of South Carolina Arts Institute, Programming Director of the Calabash International Literary Festival and a Cave Canem faculty member.

Born in the small fishing and farming community of Conway, South Carolina, **Nikky Finney** has been writing for as long as she has memory. She is the author of four books, including *The World Is Round*, winner of the 2004 Benjamin Franklin Award for Poetry, and *Heartwood*, a collection of stories. *Rice*, her book of stories, poems and photographs, won the PEN American Open Book Award in 1999. She is editor of Cave Canem's second anthology, *The Ringing Ear: Black Poets Lean South*, a collection of over 100 contemporary voices. She is Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Kentucky and a Cave Canem faculty member. Of her work, Caribbean poet Lorna Goodison wrote, "[Finney] calls us to consider and value again the blessings found in community, the strong bonds of family and the transcendent and inexplicable ways of the spirit." Novelist Walter Mosley said, "She has flung me into

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an afterbirth of stars and made my stiff bones as loose as jelly.”

Cave Canem faculty member **Patricia Smith** is the author of five books of poetry, including *Blood Dazzler*, a finalist for the 2008 National Book Award, and *Teahouse of the Almighty*, a National Poetry Series selection and winner of the first Hurston/Wright Award in Poetry. She is the author of *Africans in America* and a book for children, *Janna and the Kings*, a Lee & Low Books New Voices Award winner. She has received a Pushcart Prize and the Carl Sandburg Award and is a four-time National Poetry Slam individual champion. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Paris Review*, *Chautauqua Literary Journal*, *TriQuarterly* and elsewhere; and in many groundbreaking anthologies, including *Gathering Ground: A Reader Celebrating Cave Canem's First Decade*, *The Spoken Word Revolution* and *The Oxford Anthology of African-American Poetry*. Recognized as one of the world's most formidable performers, she has read her work internationally, including at Carnegie Hall, the Poets Stage in Stockholm, Rotterdam's Poetry International Festival and the Aran Islands International Poetry and Prose Festival. She has been a featured poet on HBO's "Def Poetry Jam" and has performed three one-woman plays. In 2006, she was inducted into the National Literary Hall of Fame for Writers of African Descent. Recordings of her work can be found on the CD *Always in the Head*, as well as on several compilations. She is a Professor at the City University of New York/College of Staten Island and serves on the faculty of the University of Maine's Stonecoast M.F.A. Low Residency Program in Creative Writing.

Frank X Walker has authored four poetry collections: *Black Box*; *Buffalo Dance: The Journey of York*, winner of the 35th Annual Lillian Smith Book Award; *Affrilachia* and *When Winter Come*. A recipient of the 2005 Lannan Literary Poetry Fellowship, he has made presentations at over 300 national conferences, universities and prisons. He is a founding member of the Affrilachian Poets and a Cave Canem graduate fellow; has served as founder/Executive Director of the Bluegrass Black Arts Consortium, Assistant Director of Purdue University's Black Cultural Center, vice president of the Kentucky Center for the Arts and executive director of Kentucky's Governor's School for the Arts; and has held board positions for the Kentucky Humanities Council, Appalshop and the Kentucky Writers Coalition. He received a government appointment to the Cabinet for Education, Arts & Humanities. An Associate Professor of English at the University of Kentucky, he teaches regularly in such writing programs as Fishtrap in Oregon and SplitRock at the University of Minnesota. He is the editor and publisher of *PLUCK!: The New Journal of Affrilachian Art & Culture*.

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Organizations

The **South Carolina Poetry Initiative** is a center for the promotion, celebration and production of poetry based at the University of South Carolina. To accomplish its goals, the Poetry Initiative has established partnerships with a wide cross section of arts organizations and private and public sector organizations. The Poetry Initiative is a statewide organization that works with libraries, museums, schools, colleges, community organizations and various other entities to promote and celebrate the reading, writing and performing of poetry in the state of South Carolina. To learn more, go to www.sc.edu/poetry.

Founded in 1996 by poets Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady to remedy the under- representation of African American poets in MFA programs and writing workshops, **Cave Canem Foundation** 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. The organization 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 289. Its programs include a week-long summer retreat, first and second book prizes, a Legacy Conversation series, writing workshops, publications and national readings. 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 www.cavecanempoets.org.

Columbia Museum of Art seeks to inspire, educate and enrich the lives of the community, South Carolinians, tourists and visitors by collecting and preserving fine and decorative art from around the world, exhibiting highly regarded work from a broad range of cultures and providing dynamic educational and cultural programs. South Carolina's premier international art museum, Columbia Museum of Art houses a world class collection of European and American fine and decorative art that spans centuries.

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