*For Immediate Release*

**Poetry Organizations from Across the U.S.**

**Join Together to Form Historic Coalition**

**& Launch March 2017 Programs on Migration**

December 6, 2016—Twenty nonprofit poetry organizations from across the United States have formed a historic coalition dedicated to working together to promote the value poets bring to our culture and communities, and the important contribution poetry makes in the lives of people of all ages and backgrounds.

With support from Lannan Foundation, the poetry organizations convened last November in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to begin discussing how they might join forces to enhance the visibility of the art form and its impact on people’s everyday lives. Contrary to the public perception that interest in poetry is waning, over the past few years, these organizations have witnessed increases in the number of students participating in poetry recitation and spoken word events, visitors to poetry websites, individuals attending poetry readings, and young poets taking to social media to share their work.

Now, more than ever, these organizations believe that poetry has a positive role to play in our country. It is through reading, writing, and discussing poems that we learn about one another on our most human level, inspiring empathy, compassion, and greater understanding of one another. Poetry Coalition members believe that by collaborating on programs, they will spotlight the art form’s unique ability to spark dialogues, create opportunities to engage in meaningful conversation, discover unexpected connections with each other, and inspire new readers.

As its first public offering, throughout the month of March 2017, Poetry Coalition members will present multiple programs on the theme: **Because We Come From Everything: Poetry & Migration,** which borrows a line from U.S. Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera’s poem, “Borderbus.” Here are some of the Poetry Coalition members’ March plans:

The Academy of American Poets, which launched National Poetry Month, will feature a week of poems by contemporary poets from countries that have endured disaster or conflict in its Poem-a-Day series, which is distributed to more than 350,000 readers each morning via email, social media, and syndication.

The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers will engage recent alumni of their National Student Poets Program to conduct a Tumblr Takeover at awawards.tumblr.com during March. During the takeover, National Student Poets will contribute original poems and share others’ poems on the theme of migration. Highlights from the takeover will be featured on the Alliance’s other social media channels, activating our network of tens of thousands of young poets to share, repost, and add to the poetic conversation with the hashtag #WeComeFromEverything.

Asian American Writers’ Workshop, a national community space and online magazine publisher, will award fellowships for emerging Muslim American writers to tell the stories of their communities, conduct front-line events and publish stories online featuring first and second generation immigrant writers, and hold Asian-language community arts events in Sunset Park, Brooklyn and Chinatown, Manhattan.

CantoMundo, a national organization that cultivates a community of Latina/o poets, and Letras Latinas, the literary initiative at the University of Notre Dame’s Institute for Latino Studies, have jointly invited CantoMundo poets to write essays or conduct interviews about the theme of Latina/o poetry and migration, which will be published daily on the Letras Latinas Blog.

Cave Canem Foundation, a national organization committed to cultivating the artistic and professional growth of black poets of African descent, will invite its 400-member fellowship to submit original poems on the topic of migration. Textual and video files will be assembled into an online anthology, which will be shared on social media and archived on the organization’s website.

The Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival will copresent “The Birds of May,” at the Princeton Environmental Film Festival, followed by a discussion with conservationists and a poetry reading. The film documents efforts to save the endangered Red Knot during its 9,500 mile migration by restoring one of its few resting and feeding places, along New Jersey’s Delaware Bayshore, destroyed by Hurricane Sandy, and to protect its major food source: the eggs of the over-fished horseshoe crabs who migrate there each year. Poets, teachers, and students in attendance will also participate in banding the birds during the height of their migration and write about their experiences.

Kundiman, a national organization promoting Asian American poets and writers, will collaborate with Split This Rock and Letras Latinas to host a joint reading featuring poets Wo Chan and Orlando Ricardo Menes on March 19 at Busboys and Poets in Washington, D.C. Kundiman fellows will also participate in a Migration Postcard Poem Project, for which they will design, write, and mail postcard poems highlighting the migration theme for their readers, both new and old, advocates and adversaries. Select poems on the theme of migration will be featured on the Kundiman website and social media channels.

Letras Latinas, the literary initiative at the University of Notre Dame’s Institute for Latino Studies, is partnering with Notre Dame’s Creative Writing Program to hold a campus-wide event during the month that will feature students, faculty, and staff sharing poems around the theme of migration and in support of their DACA students.

Mass Poetry, which supports poets and poetry in Massachusetts, will feature poems about migration in its Raining Poetry project. Using a biodegradable water-repellent spray and stencils made by local artists, the organization will place poems throughout the streets of Salem. The spray vanishes once dry, so the poems are invisible—until it rains. Once wet, the area around the poems will darken, enabling passersby to read them.

The Poetry Center at San Francisco State University will be conducting the entirety of its March programs under the collective theme, with featured artists including Whiting Award-winning poet Layli Long Soldier, citizen of the Oglala Sioux Nation; Iranian-American composer/musician Hafez Modirzadeh in collaborative performance; and Margaret Randall presenting her newly published anthology of Cuban poets.

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine and an independent literary organization based in Chicago, will host a reading in collaboration with Kundiman and Letras Latinas featuring poets Tarfia Faizullah, Hieu Minh Nguyen, Emmy Pérez, and José B. González on March 29.

Poets House, a national poetry library and literary center, will partner with Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty to invite young people to write poems on the theme of migration and immigration. The organization will also host a celebration of an anthology of Cuban poetry.

The Poetry Society of America, which launched Poetry in Motion placing poems in subways and busses, is planning an event at City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco about the Syrian refugee crisis.

Split This Rock, an organization of poets and social justice activists based in Washington, D.C, in addition to collaborating with Kundiman and Letras Latinas to host a joint reading, will also feature poems on the theme in their Poem of the Week series and promote others published in The Quarry: A Social Justice Poetry Database on social media.

The University of Arizona Poetry Center in collaboration with the Poetry and Literature Center of the United States Library of Congress, will present multiple programs addressing overlaps between poetry and figurative and literal migration, including issues of translation, the private and public life of poetry, and poetry’s role in addressing human migration, borders, and cultural interplay. Programs will include a featured reading with United States Poet Laureate Juan Felipe Herrera and a panel discussion between him and Arizona Poet Laureate and Academy of American Poets Chancellor Alberto Ríos, moderated by Poetry and Literature Center Director Rob Casper at the Tucson Festival of Books.

The Wick Poetry Center at Kent State University will present weekly programs (broadcasted also online) featuring original poetry and short video interviews of refugee and immigrant children and adults who have been resettled in NE Ohio, in partnership with the International Institute of Akron, Project Learn, Urban Vision, and Akron Public Schools. With a major grant from the Knight Foundation this project, *Traveling Stanzas: Writing Across Borders*, will distribute these poems on posters, designed by KSU Visual Communication Design students and alumni, and displayed on NE Ohio mass transit, as well as in videos and greeting cards available on the project website.

Poetry Coalition Members (as of 12/6/16):

Academy of American Poets

Alliance for Young Artists & Writers/National Student Poets Program

Asian American Writers’ Workshop

CantoMundo

Cave Canem Foundation

Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival

Kundiman

Lambda Literary Foundation

Letras Latinas at Notre Dame’s Institute for Latino Studies

Mass Poetry

O, Miami

Poetry Center and American Poetry Archives at SFSU

Poetry Foundation

The Poetry Project

Poetry Society of America

Poets House

Split This Rock

University of Arizona Poetry Center

Urban Word//National Youth Poet Laureate Program

Wick Poetry Center

Learn more at: [www.poets.org/poetry-coalition/because-we-come-from-everything](http://www.poets.org/poetry-coalition/because-we-come-from-everything)

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