



SOUTHERN FRIED POETRY, INC.

Celebrating over 25 Years of Slam Poetry!

Greetings to the patrons of the Southern Fried Poetry Slam:

We come to you today with some vital information, and the members of our board hope you will take the time to review this document and discuss it with friends and peers in the community.

We first want to say, as the organizers of Southern Fried, that serving this community is a delicate balance between supporting an organization logistically and doing the important work to cultivate care among our family. When we incorporated in 2016, Southern Fried was a community of poets in financial ruin. Over the past three years, the board of directors and several volunteers have made efforts to ensure our organization is financially stable—a benchmark we celebrated at this year's tournament. However, we were also reminded in many ways last week that we have a more important task of loving and supporting our community. Today our focus is on healing the hurt in our poetry family.

While we as an organizing body have been urgently focused on stabilizing the financial standing of the organization we represent, we also know we can do a better job of helping ensure we take care of our family when they've been wronged, and help patrons who've been hurt find the restitution they deserve. One of the largest wounds in our community is the fact that the final stage poets from the 2016 tournament were never paid their winnings by that year's host city director. Though these actions took place before there was an organized body to provide financial oversight, the impact has devastated several relationships in our community. The pain is still palpable at our festival three years later, and this wound was opened further last week when the 2016 host attempted to enter the early Friday bout at Volta Space. Members of the board were not informed that he was planning on attending the festival, and understandably, this action was read as disrespectful by several 2016 attendees competing in the bout this year.



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That being said, we want to inform the slammasters of Southern Fried Poetry, Inc, that on June 9th, 2019, the board of directors made the executive decision to pay the remaining balance of prize money owed to the 2016 winners in Greensboro, North Carolina. This action expedites a multi-year payment plan that was created by the slammaster body in 2017, and as of the release of this statement, all Teams and Indies have been paid in full. We know this has been a painful process for many people, and we hope this is a first step toward restoring some of the relationships that have been destroyed in our family the past few years.

We apologize that we were unable to intervene sooner and are eternally grateful for the grace and patience of those who have been wronged. Initially, we did not have the financial standing to offer monetary restitution as a start-up nonprofit, but we do now, so we did. The slammasters also voted in 2017 to allow the 2016 host the opportunity to make it right to the teams he has wronged. However, judging from the actions of this individual—both in the last week and in the last three years—we on the board believe he has no intention in putting forth the effort to pay the poets he owes. To be transparent, these funds were taken from the budget for our operating costs as an organization, and we will be sending an invoice to the 2016 host city director (and will notify a collection agent if he does not compensate us within 90 days). We understand this decision comes with financial risk, but we hope you agree this was the right thing for us to do as an organization.

We understand and acknowledge that this action does not immediately heal the pain that has been caused or relationships that have been fractured. We know this is the first step of many to take in this healing process, and hope you will give us the opportunity to work toward repairing the splinters in our community. We also know that our attempts to mediate the conflict as board members have been misguided at times. Though the brunt of the pain was caused by a single individual, we also want to hold ourselves accountable as leaders and repair any hurt that we've caused too.



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We hope we can celebrate this new day together, and continue to right the wrongs of past days. As we work to move forward, we invite stakeholders from our community to help us mend the threads that have been ripped apart. We look forward to talking, but more importantly, we look forward to listening, learning, and restoring the honor and all-encompassing love to our family and our beloved festival.

Thank you for your time, and for your patience and understanding. If you have any questions or concerns, please deliver them to info@southernfriedpoetryslam.com.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors
Southern Fried Poetry, Inc