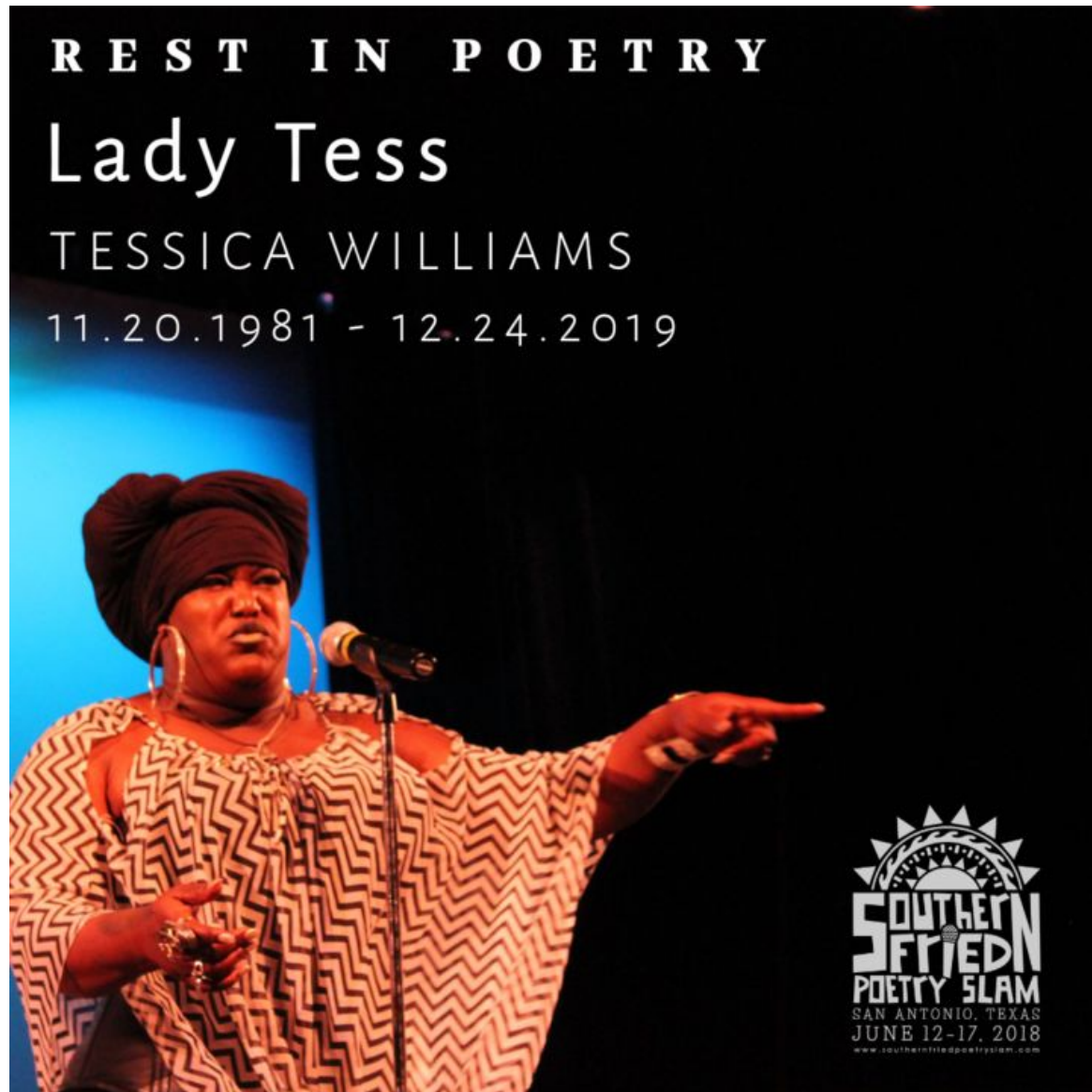




SOUTHERN FRIED POETRY, INC.

Celebrating over 25 Years of Slam Poetry!

Date: December 28, 2019



REST IN POETRY

Lady Tess

TESSICA WILLIAMS

11.20.1981 - 12.24.2019

Greetings to our Southern Fried family and the greater poetry community:



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By now you may have heard that a sacred member of our community, Tessica Williams, passed away on Christmas Eve. “Lady Tess,” as she was known to her poetry family, is remembered for her bright and beautiful personality, and often served as a one-woman “welcome wagon” to both newcomers and veteran festival attendees each year. For the last several years, Tess has served as the wild and uninhibited host of our beloved Erotica Open Mic, and is credited for elevating the event from a raunchy poetry reading to a true spectacle of open-armed debauchery.

A phenomenal poet, Tess was the 2012 champion in the individual competition at Southern Fried in Tampa, FL, and was a finalist in both individual and team tournaments in her tenure as a competitor including this past year’s competition. Tessica also served as an educator and mentor to other poets, and was known for facilitating workshops at our festival on topics such as sexual and reproductive health, mindfulness, and wellbeing. She is survived by her son, Jonah, and sadly, was expecting another child at the time of her passing.



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It goes without saying that the Southern Fried community has been unprepared to experience the number of monumental losses we have faced in the last few years. Tessica's particular friendships with Tavis and Rage Almighty remind us of the importance of fostering friendship, community, and mutual respect with our peers in the short time we have on this earth. Though all of the deaths in our community have rocked us, Tessica's passing somehow speaks to the urgent need to reexamine the values we have upheld in our artist circle. The first lesson that her passing teaches us is that we need to do a better job of holding space for people in our circle who serve as community builders. As elders and stakeholders grapple with the impossible task of filling her shoes in the coming years, we believe it is important to follow the examples of leadership that Tessica established with her legacy.

Second, Tessica taught us that wild and wicked fun can be compatible with a culture of care. A lot of us feel safe and accepted at Southern Fried because of women like Tessica. As organizers prepare ourselves to push past the pain in order to host our tournament in Tampa next summer, we are recommitting ourselves to hosting the most enjoyable and welcoming festival the



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community has ever seen. Lady Tess will never truly be gone if we decide to live the way she wanted for us to live.

If you need support, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

A homegoing celebration will be held on January 4, 2019 at:

Sunlight District Auditorium

809 Seminary Street

Prichard, AL 36610

[Details](#)

There is also a [Life of Lady Tess GoFund Me](#) that we encourage you to support.

It is a tradition at Southern Fried to give toasts to those who have emboldened our lives with poetry and light, so we would like to raise a glass to you Poet, we cannot thank you enough for all you have given to us.

Rest Well, Lady Tess.



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Sincerely,
The Board of Directors
Southern Fried Poetry, Inc.



Friday, November 20th, 1981 - Tuesday, December 24th, 2019