

# Student Biographies

Why I Rise Summer Fellowship



## Beluga Whale Pod



**Minal Saldivar** (she/her) is going to be a sophomore at Blair High School. Minal is a Chicana and Pakistani who is still figuring out her place in the world. Minal is passionate about issues regarding social justice and likes to listen to music and watch movies on rainy days. She loves to write and won the National Scholastic Essay contest for her piece “A friendship created by a sequin” in 2016. She was also published in the University of Rice in Houston Texas with a piece called “Touring the Gamble House: A Postcard from Pasadena, California” in 2018. This is her first time participating in Get Lit Summer Camp and is excited to write/listen/share poetry.



**Diamante Cameron** (she/her) will be a freshman at SCVi high school in the coming fall. This year she made the top 20 in the Get Lit Words Ignite Why I Rise competition, and hopes to be in the slam poetry team at her school. She decided to cheer some of her friends on with the Get Lit Classic Slam but then quickly fell in love with slam herself. She loves to perform in any way she can whether that be improv at The Second City or the school theater. When she is not writing you could find her singing show tunes or talking to her fish.



**Daniela “Dani” Ayala** (she/her) is a junior in a small school in the Western Hemisphere of the earth named “Valor Academy High School.” She participates in her Bring Change to Mind club in school and loves to help others in class, especially with numbers. She has been into poetry for roughly 2 years, so she is somewhat new to it, but would love to learn more about it.



**Isabella Esperanza Michaels** (she/her) is about to enter highschool at the Academy of Music and Performing Arts program at Hamilton High. She won a writing competition in 7th grade, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus where students from over 50 schools competed. Isabella is a huge fan of musical theater and has been acting since she was 6 years old, performing in 27 different productions. In her free time she loves to write short stories, do art, and dance. Isabella has attended the Get Lit finals for several years and though she is new to the world of poetry, she is excited to someday compete in the Get Lit Poetry Slam.



**Salome Agbaroji** (she/her) is a fourteen-year-old Nigerian-American poet based in Los Angeles County, California. Salome was a part of the Get Lit team that won the second place title in the Brave New Voices competition, the world's largest youth poetry competition. She won an Honorable Mention award in the Why I Rise poetry competition and has been published multiple times in a literary magazine. Aside from poetry, she will be serving as the President of her class at Gahr High School and thoroughly enjoys exploring her passion for music-making by creating

her own songs at home. Drawing from her roots and the complexities of today, Salome is fueled to create art that displays her creativity and the elasticity of language. You can find her on Instagram @salomeagbaroji.



**Maya Henry** (she/her) is a fourteen-year-old Queer poet, writer, activist, and ugly crier residing in Los Angeles, California. She has been active with Get Lit for a year, publishing her first chapbook, *Myrtle*, with the Emerging Writers Fellowship as well as competing in and winning the Get Lit Middle School 2020 Slam with her school, Girls Academic Leadership Academy. Some of her work has been published by Scholastic, AntiFragile, and the Galliard International Review, and has been rejected from ten times more sites than that. When not reading, writing, or ranting about politics, she can be found eating ungodly amounts of cherry

tomatoes, staging photoshoots for her dog, or thinking about getting bangs.



**Naomi Farkas** (she/her) is an 8th grader and poet in Los Angeles, California. She has been published in the Los Angeles Press and The Stone Soup Children's magazine. She has also performed at a few open mics and in front of her peers many times. It is her second time doing the Get Lit summer program. When she isn't writing poetry, she can be found in her natural habitat, her room, enthusing about snakes wearing hats.



**Exie Pitoc** (she/her) is an incoming freshman at Larchmont Charter School, and a poet from Eagle Rock. Her hobbies include painting/drawing, muay thai, and karate. She was on the first ever poetry team to win the Get Lit middle school slam, and her writing has been previously published by the Los Angeles Press. She has also recently written her first chapbook titled "Goat Cheese Addict - feelings of mass destruction." Her dreams include steady things like a balanced life and enough love for anyone who needs it.

## Team BICEP (Babbling International Chaotic Existentialist Poets)



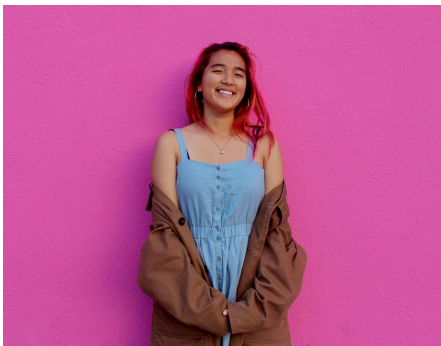
**Clare Ashcraft** (she/her) is a Senior at The Dayton Regional STEM School in Dayton, Ohio. She participates in Debate Club, National Honor Society, Student Ambassadors, is an editor for the Limelight Literary Magazine, and is a youth co-chair on the TedxYouthDayton committee. After high school, Clare plans to go to college to study psychology. This is her first publication of poetry.



**Amr Abbas** (he/him) is a freshman at Georgetown University in Qatar. He's a published author of a book titled *Jane Eyre: Reimagined* and the director, composer, and playwright behind his original musical *Rocket Woman*. He has participated in various Model United Nations (MUN) conferences such as GeorgetownMUN, THIMUN-Qatar (The Hague International Model United Nations-Qatar), and the virtual MUNID ( Model United Nations International Debate) hosted in The Netherlands. Poetry to him is a special language that is constant flux with many uses, forms, and levels of sophistication. It is also a profound language of varying emotion that forms a community with a strong sense of unity and togetherness.



**Lia Nizen** (she/they) is a slam poet out of Wilmington, North Carolina. As a disabled woman, Lia has always found a sense of safety and peace in writing, and she is a passionate activist for the disability and chronic illness community. Lia has been published in several literary magazines, and was published in the 2018 anthology *Upon Arrival: Interlude* by Eber and Wein publishing. She is an ambassador for the online literary journal *For Women Who Roar* and author of *For you, For Me, and For Everyone In Between*. She teaches a bi-weekly writing workshop and loves to see others discover a love/passion for writing. She is currently working on her undergrad in both Psychology and Creative Writing, and plans to pursue a Masters in Psychology to work as a therapist. When she isn't writing or performing, you can find her training with her service dog, Irie, or nestled in a hammock at the beach!



**Christina Liu** (she/her) is a Chinese-American artist, as well as an incoming freshman at UC Davis with plans to double major in Design and Computer Science. Liu is also a local art class teacher! Though Liu has always been attracted to traditional means of studio art, she has found a passion for written and spoken word. Participating in activities such as the Slam Poetry club at her school, writing her own short stories, being President of a creative writing club called Inklings, and as a slam poet competitor at Orange County's RYSE, has made Liu gravitate to this world that redefines language. As an advocate for human equity and transparency to mental health, she plans to use her words to shine light to underrepresented communities and topics that are too often overlooked by society, and hopes to bring joy and humor along with it. But more than just an artist, Liu is also an avid manga reader and enjoys spending her time learning more about computer science, baking, or learning Japanese!



**Syryne Belghith** (she/her) \_no one has found a nickname for her yet \_ is an 18 year old girl with big dreams and tiny little steps. She is an artist to the core. You need to know a few things about her to not judge her. First, she writes a lot, especially during boring classes and by a lot I mean A LOT so please don't try to look at her little magic notebook; when she's ready, she will give it to you to read it eagerly. Second, she sings everywhere, even though her voice is no better than a goat's so please don't tell her to stop; if she hums high enough to let you hear, it means she trusts you enough.

Third, she has a rare disease called groovexia which makes her a drumming addict; please don't be surprised to see her tapping on her desk during a math test as a way of dealing with stress. Don't worry she's been taking her weekly drumming lessons and now she can make you dance in the right moment. You can see her always laughing and running in the school hallways for being late, but when she feels tired, this energy ball climbs an olive tree in the back of the school and recharge by reading her favourite fictions. No surprise she is an art student.



**Moni Jean** (she/her) is so excited to be participating in the get lit summer program! She loves to write poetry and uses it as a way to help her get her thoughts out on paper and with songwriting. She is a singer who studies musical theatre, classical voice, and contemporary voice at Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. She has performed at the Grammys 2020 and has worked with professional producers in the recording studio. Some of her hobbies are hiking,

learning to play piano, reading, and of course writing poetry!





**Abigail Alvarez** (she/her) is a Latina poet and photographer from New Jersey. As a rising Senior at Edison High School, she participates in activities such as Newspaper, Film Club, and Orchestra. In her free time, you will often find her reading a book, writing in a journal, or watching a 2000s indie rom com. Abigail's love of poetry began at a young age, starting with simple acrostics, limericks, and haikus. Ever since then, she has been exploring the world of writing to discover new ways of expressing

herself through words. You can find her on Instagram @peachy.rosewater or on her photography website [ehsfilm.com](http://ehsfilm.com).

## Jsasco



**Jonah Henry** (he/him) is a rampant bookworm, anarchist, musician and youth poet hailing from Los Angeles, CA, where he is now entering sophomore year at the Alexander Hamilton Senior High School Humanities Magnet. In his stanzas, he attempts to sway across the boundaries of poetry and prose, and to capture the euphorias of boyhood and its nostalgia. In his adult life, he dreams of a career in either education or political campaigning. If he isn't scribing, he's cleaning dishes in the kitchen or catching butterflies in the backyard. Go ahead and suggest your favorite novels for him at [bookwormlaca@gmail.com](mailto:bookwormlaca@gmail.com)



**Caia Lomeli** (she/her) is a Senior in the CORE Humanities Magnet at Cleveland High School, where she contributes to the Writer's Block Magazine and plays on the basketball team. Her hobbies include Girl Scouts, Sea Scouts, Youth and Government, skateboarding, and surfing. Although this is her first zine, she recently published her first chapbook, *Folding Weights*, through Get Lit's Emerging Writers Fellowship, and views poetry as a way to experience the world and connect with others.

Find her on Instagram @its\_not\_kaya.



**Casey West Simpson** (he/him) says mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell! Wrong bio? Casey is a rider of life, righter of wrongs, and writer of homonyms. His poems are featured in Young Mensa Mag, that he is also a columnist for so quite possibly nepotism, has won the Get Lit Why I Rise contest and been performed across California. Casey has given speeches for the Thirst Project, Lyrics for Life and declared the third of the UN'S 30 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Casey performs improv and stand up comedy at the UCB and the Ice House. Casey enjoys playing music, sports and learning

languages. Casey'd like to dedicate this bio to the late Master Oogway in the hopes of finding out if everyone really was, Kung Fu fighting. Some of Casey's pet peeves include people who guess way too high when you have something exciting to share, burglaries, and bios that break the fourth wall.



**Shana Collins** (she/her) is a high school student near Cincinnati, Ohio. She partakes in theatre at Acting Up and stage crew at her school. In her freetime, she enjoys writing, singing, drawing, and hiking; in addition to other activities. Last summer, she took a drawing intensive camp at the DAAP school in Cincinnati. In the past few years, she performed at three open mics and two talent shows in junior high and high school. She also won an honorable mention in a contest at her library and attended camp(s) at Women Writing for (a) Change. Now, she is published in two, going on three, anthologies. She loves her family, including her twin sister, as well as her three cats.



**Audrey Schlieff** (she/they) is an incoming junior at Hamilton High, and a part of the AMPA program. She loves various artistic endeavors, such as reading and writing poetry, songs, and stories. Some of her hobbies include contemporary dance, playing guitar, drawing, and musical theatre. Audrey is excited to be a part of the Get Lit fellowship and grateful for the opportunity to further her writing and performance within poetry. She finds poetry to be a powerful art form, and a beautiful medium to express countless feelings and ideas.



**Olivia Sparks** (she/her) is a California resident and a rising junior at Harvard Westlake Upper School. She participates in her school's dance program, track team, and is one of HW's competing slam poets. Some of her hobbies include dancing, mainly contemporary and hip hop, writing & performing poetry, running track, painting, and hanging out with friends. She is interested in studying law and psychology when she is older and wishes to incorporate her studies while working with children. Olivia has been introduced to Get Lit through their Classic Slam Competition, where her school came 2nd place. She is excited to be a part of the Get Lit Fellowship and learn more about the organization while furthering her writing and performance in poetry. She finds poetry to be a beautiful artform where she can truly express herself and connect with numerous people who share the same passion.



**Cielo Valenzuela** (she/her) is a Latina poet from California and an incoming junior at California School of the Arts - San Gabriel Valley. Her hobbies include poetry, musical theater, history, and visual art. Her dream is to study musical theater in college but also keep an interest in history, and looks forward to writing in the future. Cielo integrates history and poetry to write about causes that matter to her. She has been published with The Los Angeles Press in their current online issue Vol. 5, and she wrote a chapbook called Inside looking Out with Get Lit's Emerging Writers Fellowship. This is Cielo's first zine and she enjoys combining her favorite art forms into one work to share with others.



**Caris A. Wright** (she/her) is a Jamaican queen, is a writer, singer, artist, creator, motivator, and performer by nature. She is very shy at times but when she becomes comfortable, she may become very talkative, involved and social. She loves helping people and is pursuing to become a Youth Psychologist. She is also a Youtuber and CEO of a small business called "QueeeenCU" that she very recently started, which promotes empowerment of all people, provide service from her passions and shares her poetry, etc. She is very spiritual, and loves God. She started poetry first as a coping method along with, using poetry to help comfort and motivate others around her. At a young age she created a nonprofit organization called "Corma Youth Organization" that also promotes

empowerment of all people, comfort and motivation through poetry, song, speeches, short messages, prayer, etc, and through God. She is very fashionable, beautiful but also very forgiving and very loving. Check out her Youtube page along with her business website and nonprofit organization: <https://www.facebook.com/CormaYouthOrganization/>

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSmr1YdD3Sacj0UZjW\\_pGzA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSmr1YdD3Sacj0UZjW_pGzA)  
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