

Orlando Poet Laureate Selection Panel

1) Florida Humanities Council Representative

- **Linda Landman Gonzalez (Chair)**, Vice President of Philanthropy & Multicultural Insights, Orlando Magic; President, OMYF, lgonzalez@orlandomagic.com

Linda Landman Gonzalez joined the senior leadership team of the Orlando Magic in September 2007. In July 2013, she was named vice president of philanthropy and multicultural insights. Landman Gonzalez serves in a leadership role overseeing philanthropy, corporate giving, and multicultural insights. In addition, she serves as the president of the Orlando Magic Youth Foundation. Landman Gonzalez spent nine years as director of diversity and community relations for Darden Restaurants, Orlando's only Fortune 500 Corporation.

Landman Gonzalez is currently involved in several volunteer and leadership activities, including The Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, Heart of Florida United Way, The Florida State Fair Authority, Florida Hospital for Children Foundation, See Art Orlando, the Women's Executive Council of United Way, and is a Trustee of the City of Orlando's Children's Trust Committee. She represents Central Florida on the Florida Humanities Council. She currently serves as the managing chairman of the board of the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness. She is the immediate past chair of United Arts of Central Florida, Business Force and Valencia College Foundation.

2) UCF Representatives

- **Cecilia Milanés** – Professor, Department of English – cecilia.milanes@ucf.edu
Cecilia Rodríguez Milanés holds a Ph.D. in African American Women Writers, Composition, and writing from State University of New York at Albany; an M.A. in American and English literature from Barry University; and a B.A. in English, Creative Writing from The University of Miami (Coral Gables).

Cecilia Milanés is a professor of Latino/a literature and writing at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Her short fiction has been anthologized in *Iguana Dreams: New Latino Fiction* (HarperCollins), *Did My Mama Like to Dance? and Other Stories about Mothers and Daughters* (Avon) and in *New World: Young Latino Writers* (Bantam). Her short story collection, **Marielitos, Balseiros and Other Exiles**, was released in June 2009 by Ig Publishers. She also writes and performs poetry; some recent web publications include poems in DamselFly and SNReview.

3) Valencia Representative

- **Dr. Shari Koopman** – Professor of English and Teaching/Learning Academy (TLA) Activity Coordinator – skoopman@valenciacollege.edu
Shari Koopmann earned a doctoral degree in education at the University of Central Florida, a master's degree in literature at the University of New Hampshire, and a bachelor's degree in English at Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania.

Shari has taught English at Valencia College since 2000. She has taught a variety of classes on literature, composition, creative writing, English as a second language, and developmental reading and writing. As TLA Activity Coordinator, she works with the Teaching/Learning Academy Core Team to develop curricula, facilitate workshops on the Essential Competencies, and support new tenure-track faculty as they develop their Individualized Learning Plans and their Professional Portfolios.

4) Community Representatives

- **Ryan Rivas** – Publisher, Burrow Press; Literary Program Director, Page 15 – ryan@burrowpress.com
Ryan holds a Bachelor's degree in Creative Writing from the University of Central Florida. His fiction has appeared in a wide range of literary magazines, and one story was recently selected to appear in the Best American Non-required Reading 2012 anthology. Ryan is frequently invited to speak about publishing at colleges, universities and conferences around Florida. He is also co-hosts the weekly Functionally Literate radio show on WPRK 91.5. When not at Page 15, Ryan is the Publisher at Burrow Press.
- **Shawn Welcome** – B.A. University of Central Florida, shawnwelcome@hotmail.com; shawn@polisinstitute.org
Shawn Welcome is a Brooklyn, NY native but has lived in Orlando, FL since 1993. He received his Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Central Florida and has been actively engaged in community work since 2006, with the launch of a poetry and life skills program for youth offenders at 33rd St. Jail. That same year, he also founded "Diverse Word" at Dandelion Communita Café, a weekly open mic poetry night which attracts not only poets, but singers, comedians, and rappers from all over the city in a celebration of self-expression. While his work at the jail ended in 2008, the open mic did not and became the longest running weekly open mic in Orlando still hosted by its founder. He most recently launched a second location at Lake Lorna Doone Park in partnership with the City of Orlando.

Professionally, he has given himself to youth related area non-profit organizations including The Hope Community Center, Boys & Girls Club, Pg. 15, Frontline Outreach Community Center, and the Professional Opportunities Program for Students (POPS). He led and sponsored Oak Ridge High School's poetry club while working for POPS from 2011-2015 in addition to teaching an entry level English class during the 2015-2016 school year. Shawn authored and published "H2O: Immersed in Verse" in 2013, has traveled the United States motivating people with his gift of words, written and performed circa 20 NBA commercials for the Orlando Magic, and performed in countless faith-based functions. He currently serves as the Family Engagement Coordinator of "MVP Families" for the Polis Institute, a community engagement effort supported by LIFT Orlando and other partners to see academic success in 32805. He posts monthly blogs about his work with Polis at www.polisinstitute.org.

5) Rollins Representatives

- **Vidhu Aggarwal** – Associate Professor of English, vaggarwal@rollins.edu
B.A. University of Chicago; M.A. University of Southern California; Ph.D. University of Southern California. Professor Aggarwal's field is contemporary and modernist poetry and poetics, with specialties in visual culture and Anglophone literatures. Her poetry and photo-text works have

appeared in a number of journals. . Her multi-media works in video, poetry, and scholarship are oriented around Bollywood spectacle, carnival, and science fiction. Her poems appeared in the top 25 of 2016 in Boston Review. Her collection of poems *The Trouble with Humpdori* (2016) received the Editor's Choice Prize from The (Great) Indian Poetry Collective, was a handpicked selection with Small Press Distribution, and was selected by Sundress Publications as one of the best books of 2016. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Black Warrior Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Juked*, *[PANK]*, *Pedestal*, *Sugar House Review*, *INK BRICK*, *Project As [!] Am*, Norton's *Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from the Middle East, Asia, and Beyond*, and *The Electric Gurlisque* (forthcoming Saturnalia). She is on the executive board of Thinking Its Presences: Race, Advocacy, Solidarity in the Arts, and teaches poetry and postcolonial/transnational studies at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida.

6) Orange County Library System Representative

- **Leo Linares** – Audio Production Instructor, Melrose Center, Leo@leoaether.com; Linares.James@ocls.info

Leonardo Linares is a Colombian born singer-songwriter and poet, who has taken his work all around the Americas, through his album and book tours. Leo self-published his first book of poems in Spanish titled *Gaviotas de Papel (Paper Seagulls)* in 2014 and has since been working on a book of short stories which will be published this year by a South American publishing house. Leo has won several poetry contests through college in the US and has written several songs in English. He performed in October 2016 at City Hall for the tribute event for the Pulse victims. For more about Leo's work visit: www.leoaether.com.