

Poet Laurette Application

Personal Information: Full Name, Contact Information, Phone, Email, and Address.

Phyllis Cambra (aka Mary Phyllis Cambria)
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Biographical Information: Briefly describe your background and education.

I graduated from the State University of New York at Farmingdale where I studied to be a paralegal. As a lefty in my right mind, I wanted something more creative.

I've had a variety of diverse positions over the years, but for the bulk of my career I've worked as an award-winning event planner and freelance writer.

I'm also the co-author of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Throwing a Great Party," "The Pocket Idiot's Guide to Choosing a Caterer" and several other "how-to" books commissioned by corporations such as Hormel and Fast-Lite Candles. In addition I was the spokesperson for Fast-Lite and did on-air interviews on national news programs.

Poetry Experience: How long have you been writing poetry? Have you published any poetry collections or works? If yes, please provide title(s) of published works, year(s) of publication, and/or publisher(s). Have you received any awards, honors, or recognition for your poetry? If yes, please provide details.

I began writing poetry as a child. It was a way I could express myself in a style other than prose.

When I studied poetry in high school, I was fascinated and inspired by Walt Whitman, Robert Frost, Dylan Thomas, Edgar Allen Poe, William Ernest Henley, and others. We delved deeper into the rules required for different types of poetry such as haiku, rhymes, sonnets, iambic pentameter and so forth. Admittedly that made writing more challenging, but I like a challenge.

Unlike the current Poet Laureate, Laura McDermott Matheric, who obviously has great credentials and supporting education, I, like many poets, have limited formal education in poetry, but have been self-taught learning from books, articles and videos to become more comfortable with the various styles and experimenting with some of my own.

I also began to consider that while verse was often a part of music, some lyricists work was just as powerful without music.

For instance, one of my favorite poets is Paul Simon. Read the opening lyrics to one of his earlier pieces, "For Emily, Wherever I May Find Her."

*"What a dream I had,
Pressed in organdy
Clothed in crinoline
Of smoky burgundy,
Softer than the rain..."*

How could that not be considered poetry? It gave me hope that I shouldn't be so terrified of rules. I felt the need to express myself recognizing that while rules were there to define certain styles, it was just as important that a poem should contain rhythm and stanzas along with rhymes, free verse and metaphors. After all, someone had to create the styles first, right.

In "Hamilton," Lin-Manuel Miranda opted to use a variety of poetry based upon the character. He mixed rap and hip-hop with traditional show tune styles. That show and its cast recording opened the world of poetry to millions who had never delved too deeply into poetry. Or, for that matter, may have never recognized rap, even as a musical style is just as much another form of poetry.

What drew my attention in your application was that you wanted someone whose work was when I read: "...ensures a continuous infusion of fresh perspectives and diverse voices, enriching our cultural landscape and fostering a broader understanding through poetry."

Although my poetry has not been traditionally published, I recently began to post on the www.AllPoetry.com website where I share comments with other poets on our poems.

https://allpoetry.com/Phyllis_Cambria

I've also begun posting my work on the Nextdoor.com website to amazing accolades. I've also noted that though most readers might not have left a comment or critique, based on the website's algorithms, most have received thousands of views.

Based on comments and ratings from other poets and the general public about my work, I believe I have and can continue to achieve pieces that will enrich our community by sharing broader appreciation and understanding of poetry.

Poetry Style and Themes: Describe your poetic style and the themes you commonly explore in your work. Do you have any particular influences or inspirations in your poetry? If yes, please provide details.

My inspirations come from my heart and what I see, hear, read or feel in my daily life. As for my style, it varies. As you can see from some of the poems I'm submitting, I've written everything from rhyme to free verse to haiku to original formats.

Contributions to the Poetry Community: Have you been involved in organizing or participating in poetry events, workshops, or readings? If yes, please provide details. Have you held any positions within poetry organizations or literary communities? If yes, please provide details.

To be honest, even though most of my freelance work has been published, it never occurred to me to do anything more with my poems than sharing them with people I know and love.

I've also attended public poetry readings over the years throughout Broward County, for instance, at ArtServe.

Goals: Why are you interested in becoming the [Coconut Creek Poet Laureate](#)?

What first drew me to this position was that you are seeking someone who can bring poetry to the masses and is diverse enough to be all-inclusive.

For those not versed or familiar with poetry, I want them to have the opportunity to hear or read a poem that paints a picture or evokes a feeling that's easily understood with common words rather than possibly investing in poetry geared more to academics than the general public as it often appears. To often poetry is thought to be appreciated only by the elite and erudite. I was watching a Lucky Charms commercial today and realized that it starts with the elf reciting a silly rhyming poem. Poetry fills our lives.

I want the younger generation to see that poetry is and has been in their lives through music, jingles and even nursery rhymes. Hopefully this will make poetry "less scary" or "off-putting" for an average person to experience and will possibly encourage them to pen their own poetry or seek out more universal and/or esoteric poetry. Let's finally make poetry appreciated by all. Poetry can also be a learning tool as you'll see in two of my poems, "Juneteenth" and "Holy Homonyms!"

Video: Submit a short video (maximum 90 seconds) reciting a sample of your body of work.

See forwarded e-mail which was the only way I could submit a video. My other attempts did not allow for the transmission of any videos that exceeded more than a few seconds.

Poems: Submit 3-5 poems that align with sustainability, butterflies, parks, environment, climate, quality of life, inclusivity, hope, service excellence, innovation, small-town sentiments or smart growth.

See below.

A Flag-Draped Coffin

By Phyllis Cambria

When I look at a flag-draped coffin, I know a soldier has passed.
A man who gave his life to service for the love of his country.

When I look at a flag-draped coffin, I know that a hero has passed,
A woman who was prepared to give her life to save another.

When I look at a flag-draped coffin, I know that a teacher has passed.
A man who taught us what sacrifice for country truly means.

When I look at a flag-draped coffin, I know that a leader has passed.
A woman who took and gave more than orders, but her heart and mind for God and
country.

When I look at a flag-draped coffin, I know someone's child has passed.
A man whose loss means the breaking of a heart.

When I look at a flag-draped coffin, I know a stranger has passed.
Someone I'll never meet but somehow will forever miss.

HOMETOWN

by Phyllis Cambria

We took a drive through a town of green,
The sweetest area we'd ever seen,
We drove throughout for quite a while
At every turn, it brought a smile.

Flowering plants feeding buzzing bees,
Many cafes we knew would please.
Shopping centers with stores galore,
To buy the things we had to score.

To stroll around the Promenade.
Enjoy a mug of lemonade,
Or sip a glass of sparkling wine,
Then shop for clothes of great design.

Watching children as they laugh and play,
On swings they love to push and sway.
So many places I'd happily paint,
Some of nature or charmingly quaint.

Yes, we knew we had to give it a try
To find a house we'd like to buy.
A house we'd turn into a home,
In a place we could safely roam.

To have neighbors we'll call friends,
Where the summer never ends.
Yes, it was decided, no need to seek,
Another place than Coconut Creek.

JUNETEENTH

by Phyllis Cambria

Some wars are fought for glory,
Some fought to make men free,
Some raise pride in its story,
For liberty, our earnest plea.

We sing songs praising bravery,
Of valor, courage and gallantry,
With words that honor the plight,
Of those who fought to make things right.

But one war in our country's past
brings shame to those who see,
That greed was the biggest factor
for not ending slavery.

Who'd plow the fields and pick the cotton
on their southland estates,
Using "Dixie" as their anthem,
not caring for others fate.

Many who fought and died whose worth
was valued no more than scum.
It would help only those rich enough
who'd pound their "Join Us" drum.

And when the paupers had died in vain,
slaves were forced to fight without gain.
Till Honest Abe created and signed
the paper to end this pointless pain.

The first day of 1863 was the date selected
to set all slaves free,
But the war raged on, no change affected
the plans of Generals Grant and Lee.

They lastly met in '65, to lead the road to peace,
to continue now would be a crime,
Then Confederates knew their fighting must cease
and yet it still went on for a time.

Finally in Texas word arrived
that the slaves were now liberated.
June 15th was the day they prayed for
and had too long awaited.

Juneteeth as we now call it,
is both a day to be celebrated,
and to mark that time in our history
fraught with shame still not abated.

We cannot change those wrongs
that long ago took place,
But from our hearts, minds and souls
that time we should never erase,

When we tortured men and women,
and tore families apart,
With only hatred and greed as the reason,
we let such a war start.

HOLY HOMONYMS!

by Phyllis Cambria

Next to the school is a large park,
I finally found a place I could park,
In the distance I heard a rock band,
Saw the sun shine off my wedding band.

The noisy music caused my dog to bark,
He grabbed a stick and chewed off the bark.
The song they were playing wasn't my taste,
A hot dog and popcorn is what I'd soon taste.

The wind was blowing at quite a clip,
I tamed my mane with a large hair clip.
I saw a poster for an upcoming fair,
I hope for them the weather will be fair.

When the song ended, the whole crowd rose.
A fan rushed the stage holding a rose.
Near the courts, I saw players start a match,
And a man near a grill who had just stuck a match.

When I came to the crossroads, I turned right,
But then I wondered if the directions were right.
I had to get to the ballfield to watch my son play,
His dad couldn't join me, he was rehearsing a play.

I ran and got there before his first turn at bat,
He was nervously fidgeting with his new bat.
I saw him timidly approach the batter's box,
Glad he chose baseball instead of learning to box.

His first attempt was a swing and a miss,
Still it was something I didn't want to miss.
He put his head down and stared at his feet,
Then stood tall though he was only five feet.

There was a crack, as his bat hit the ball,
As he ran toward first base, he was having a ball.
He kept rounding the bases heading to home plate,
When I jumped up to cheer, my frank fell from my plate.

My dog quickly grabbed it and gobbled my wiener,
Is that why Dachshunds are often called wieners?
Then Ben ran to catch a ball on the fly,
I spied in my drink a green swimming fly.

When Ben's team won and he played so well,
I could feel my eyes' tears starting to well.
They all jumped so high; it was as if they had springs,
Indeed this day made it my favorite of Spring.

THE MASKED BANDIT

by Phyllis Cambria

I went shopping early and came home quick,
Unloading bags of the tasty things I picked,
Cream cheese, smoked salmon and even briny capers,
Bagels, frozen food and the local papers.

I didn't want to delay making the meal I'd long awaited,
A bagel overfilled with delicacies, so I'd soon feel sated.
So I rushed into the house with cold food for the fridge,
And left the rest on my patio, I'd bring in in a smidge.

But when I returned I noticed something oddly missing,
The lost bag of the bagels soon had me loudly hissing.
So back I went to buy a bag of bagels once more,
Still puzzled how the first bag had vanished from my door.

Suddenly your dark eyes and mask alerted me,
Looking to find more food you'd steal again with glee.
"Get lost, raccoon!" I shouted, and soon I felt relief,
"You may be cute, but I know you're really just a thief!"

References: Please provide contact information for two individuals who can serve as references. These individuals should be familiar with your poetry and involvement in the poetry community.

The people I've met through various poetry sites are known to me only by their screen name. I'm enclosing two references that are not in the poetry community per se but know my work.

Reference 1: Full Name, Relationship to Applicant, Phone, and Email

Susan Morgan, someone who has enjoyed my poetry posts on the NextDoor.com website, 954-592-1860, E-mail: SMaryMorgan@bellsouth.net.

Reference 2: Full Name, Relationship to Applicant, Phone, and Email

Monica Mitterholzer, one of my best friends for over 30 years. I've shared my poetry with her over the years. 954-258-4237, E-mail: mmitter619@gmail.com.

Declaration: I hereby declare that the information provided in this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

I hereby declare the above to be true:
Phyllis Cambria (aka Mary Phyllis Cambria as I'm legally known).

Poet Laureate Reference Questions

Applicant's name: Phyllis Cambria

Date: 7/29/2024

Reference: Susan Morgan, nextdoor.com member

1. How do you know the applicant?

From her posts on Nextdoor.com

2. Can you describe the applicant's poetic style?

She writes in various styles. Very unique. Tells a story with each poem.

3. Have you heard the applicant recite a poem in a live environment?

Yes

No X

4. If yes, please describe the experience.

N/A

5. Why do you think the City should name the applicant as the next Poet Laureate?

Very talented. Works hard, asks for critiques and takes them. She is learning as she goes.

Poet Laureate Reference Questions

Applicant's name: Phyllis Cambria

Date: 7/29/2024

Reference: Monica Mitterholzer

1. How do you know the applicant?

Friends for over 30 years.

2. Can you describe the applicant's poetic style?

She is an outstanding writer. Her work is inspiring. She has written for magazines and several publications in the past.

3. Have you heard the applicant recite a poem in a live environment?

Yes X

No

4. If yes, please describe the experience.

She has an acting background, so she has seen her in several plays as well as reciting her poetry live. She is very talented, the crowd is always very moved by her performances.

5. Why do you think the City should name the applicant as the next Poet Laureate?

Truly qualified as a poet. Very comfortable and at ease. She has a calm and soothing voice, and would be very well received.