

## Juror Spotlight

### Siaara Freeman | Poet + Teaching Artist



**Siaara Freeman is a Cleveland-based poet and teaching artist with the Center for Arts Inspired Learning. She'll be serving as a juror for this year's Scholastic Writing Awards.**

*Tell us about your poetry, and also your job at the Center for Arts Inspired Learning?*

My poetry is a self-dialogue I have dared to share with the world. At my job with the Center for Arts Inspired Learning, I'm able to create curriculum where I teach students the joy and connections that poetry, particularly spoken world, can produce: where the love of language and willingness to be open intersect.

*At what age did you know that writing was going to be a part of your career?*

Pretty young – I was considering it as a teen, and by age 20 it was cemented.

*Did you ever participate in something like Scholastic?*

Similar – Playhouse Square used to host the Brave New Voices slam competition. It was a spoken word competition, and we competed to be on a team that would travel to compete with other national and internationally formed teams: I got to go to San Diego, Chicago, and Washington DC. We were part of a festival centered around poetry, activism, and community. I went on to coach a team years later.

*Any thoughts about the Scholastic program, judging, the student artwork?*

I think it's brave for the students who chose to submit: I see you. I also see the teachers, and know how much heart goes into giving these kids the tools to do this. I know without my teachers, my journey would have been so different: much more difficult, less fun. I'm so glad to be a part of Scholastic, making space for teens to celebrate their art is one of the greatest needs in education, and I appreciate the home that it has given to us artists and educators.