



GROUND S FOR SCULPTURE

*Wordsmith: A Def Poetry Reunion honoring Sonia Sanchez*

## **POET BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Tammi Lawson**

Tammi Lawson is a Bertha Franklin Feder award winning librarian and Curator of the Art & Artifacts Division at The New York Public Library's renowned Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Lawson advises and supports scholars and curators who visit the collection to research and prepare articles, books, catalogs, films and exhibitions focused upon black art and artists. She curated *Constance E. Clayton: A Labor of Love* and collaborated on the Schomburg exhibition *Curators' Choice: Black Life Matters*.

---

### **Abiodun Oyewole**

As one of the founding members of the legendary Harlem group The Last Poets, Abiodun Oyewole has dedicated almost 60 years to using his poetry to articulate, glorify and protest the impurities of the black experience world-wide, and in America particularly. He has become a fixture in the landscape of black consciousness, using uncompromising verse to scold a nation whose inclination to maintain the colonial yoke around the neck of the disenfranchised has always been at issue. For that, he has been honored and appreciated by millions.

Since Abiodun's first recording with the Last Poets, his work has had a profound influence across the hip-hop landscape, having been sampled by the likes of the Notorious BIG, NWA, A Tribe Called Quest and countless others. Phrases he coined like "Party and Bullshit" have become a mainstay in the Hip Hop lexicon. Today he continues to spread his message, as a performer touring the world with the Last Poets, as an educator teaching kids arts education in NYC public schools, and as an artist collaborating with notable rappers such as Nas, Common, and Dead Prez on award-winning album projects.



## GROUND S FOR SCULPTURE

Abiodun has also made an unwavering commitment to the next generation of conscious young minds. A labor of love for over 40 years, 'Brother Dune' has opened his home every Sunday to poets, rappers, singers, philosophers, teachers, students, fans and everyday people who have an appreciation for the arts and yearn to be around love and black consciousness. The initial purpose of 'Open House Sundays at 110' was to give aspiring poets a platform to share their work and receive feedback from a giant in the arts. Over the years, Open House Sundays at 110 has grown into so much more, becoming a cultural institution in the Harlem community, with food, political conversation, music, and a fellowship that has touched thousands of people over the years. Prominent artists who have walked through those famed doors at 110 Morningside Drive span from Melle Mel to Doug E. Fresh to Erykah Badu. Moreover, notable institutions such as Def Poetry Jam and celebrated poets such as Jessica Care Moore were born out of Open House Sundays at 110. Undeterred by the pandemic, Open House Sundays has now moved to a virtual space, as Abiodun continues to mentor the next generation of brilliant young artists.

---

## Sonia Sanchez

Poet. Mother. Professor. National and International lecturer on Black Culture and Literature, Women's Liberation, Peace and Racial Justice. Sponsor of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Board Member of MADRE. Sonia Sanchez is the author of over 16 books including *Homecoming*, *We a BaddDDD People*, *Love Poems*, *I've Been a Woman*, *A Sound Investment and Other Stories*, *Homegirls and Handgrenades*, *Under a Soprano Sky*, *Wounded in the House of a Friend* (Beacon Press, 1995), *Does Your House Have Lions?* (Beacon Press, 1997), *Like the Singing Coming off the Drums* (Beacon Press, 1998), *Shake Loose My Skin* (Beacon Press, 1999), and most recently, *Morning Haiku* (Beacon Press, 2010). In addition to being a contributing editor to *Black Scholar* and *The Journal of African Studies*, she has edited an anthology, *We Be Word Sorcerers*:



G R O U N D S F O R S C U L P T U R E

*25 Stories by Black Americans. BMA: The Sonia Sanchez Literary Review* is the first African American Journal that discusses the work of Sonia Sanchez and the Black Arts Movement. A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts, the Lucretia Mott Award for 1984, the Outstanding Arts Award from the Pennsylvania Coalition of 100 Black Women, the Community Service Award from the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, she is a winner of the 1985 American Book Award for *Homegirls and Handgrenades*, the Governor's Award for Excellence in the Humanities for 1988, the Peace and Freedom Award from Women International League for Peace and Freedom (W.I.L.P.F.) for 1989, a PEW Fellowship in the Arts for 1992-1993 and the recipient of Langston Hughes Poetry Award for 1999. *Does Your House Have Lions?* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. She is the Poetry Society of America's 2001 Robert Frost Medalist and a Ford Freedom Scholar from the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. Her poetry also appeared in the movie *Love Jones*. Sonia Sanchez has lectured at over 500 universities and colleges in the United States and has traveled extensively, reading her poetry in Africa, Cuba, England, the Caribbean, Australia, Europe, Nicaragua, the People's Republic of China, Norway, and Canada. She was the first Presidential Fellow at Temple University and she held the Laura Carnell Chair in English at Temple University. She is the recipient of the Harper Lee Award, 2004, Alabama Distinguished Writer, and the National Visionary Leadership Award for 2006. She is the recipient of the 2005 Leeway Foundation Transformational Award. Currently, Sonia Sanchez is one of 20 African American women featured in "Freedom Sisters," an interactive exhibition created by the Cincinnati Museum Center and Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition and she was the recipient of the Robert Creeley award in March of 2009.