

- **Stage fright?** "A powerful tactic that we tend to forget because it's so simple is to *practice*. Build relationships with your poems through repetition."
- **The most important part of writing is revising.** "Let your first drafts emerge in whatever way makes sense for you, but don't be satisfied with them."



## the poems that stick with me:

- **Tend to be driven by images, not just ideas.** "They're not just "deep thoughts" or manifestos; they use imagery, storytelling, and metaphor to go beyond the surface of an idea or issue."
- **Tend to have creative HOOKS:** the concept or angle that makes a poem fresh. How is your love poem, elegy, or call-to-action *different* from all the other ones out there? How is it uniquely *yours*?
- **Tend to be focused and specific.** "They don't try to tell "the whole story." They take one *moment* from that story, zoom in, and explore it."
- **Tend to be more concerned with being timely than timeless.** I appreciate poems that engage with the world as it is, and/or try to help me envision a better one. Feel free to disagree!

## read more.



And watch more.

And listen more.

**PRESSES.** If you're into spoken word, you may find books from Button Poetry, Coffee House Press, Haymarket Books, Write Bloody, and Graywolf interesting. There are also countless magazines, journals, and zines out there; one tactic: do an online search for where your favorite poets have been published, and then explore those outlets further.

**VIDEO CHANNELS.** Honestly, there's a lot of not-so-good spoken word available online. But there are also fantastic videos on channels like Button Poetry, Youth Speaks, and Write About Now. There's also the curated list of 100+ poems I'd recommend at [www.guante.info](http://www.guante.info).

**SOCIAL MEDIA & PODCASTS.** Check out podcasts like VS, The Slowdown, and The Poetry Question, as well as online resources like #TeachLivingPoets, Split This Rock, Poetry Magazine, Poets.org, and LitBowl.

## "Any writing advice you'd want to share?"



Advice is a tricky thing, since we all write for different reasons. Some just write for fun, or for a release. Some are trying to get published and build careers. Some are creating work to support movements and inspire people. So an important framework for me is the idea of **TOOLS, NOT RULES:** general tips and tactics that may or may not be useful based on what we're trying to do. I asked a few poet friends to share some:

- **Read!** "Too many poets don't read anyone but themselves, or random quotes on social media. Read books—poetry, but also fiction, nonfiction, graphic novels, everything. Audio books count."
- **Have writers' block?** "Take a break and get inspiration from other media: movies, music, visual art, and beyond."
- **Take your time.** "Especially with social media, there can be pressure to share everything, get published, go viral, etc. *right away*. I wish I had recognized that pressure for what it is: completely artificial, and often harmful. Set your own pace."

**OPEN MICS AND POETRY SLAMS.** Spoken word is built around spaces in which anyone can show up and share something. Find one to perform at (in-person or virtual), or to just listen and connect.

**SCHOOL CLUBS AND WRITING GROUPS.** Many schools have poetry clubs, and showing up to those can be a great first step. If your school doesn't have one, start one! Outside of schools, there may be local writing groups, or literary organizations that offer classes or workshops.

**ONLINE COMMUNITIES.** Poetry is thriving on social media. Rather than simply posting every freewrite and waiting to go viral, however, we can use the internet to connect with other writers, give and get real feedback, and find creative ways to support one another as artists.

**A common theme here is community.** There's a stereotype that "great art" has to come from locking yourself in a cabin to write for months at a time, all alone. But classes, events, even just a circle of friends who meet up once a week to share feedback, or an online document that multiple people can comment on—these are valuable. Of course, we don't all have access to the same community resources, and some people just prefer to be on their own—that's okay too. But it's something to consider.

## twin cities links

If you, like me, live in the Twin Cities, here are some great resources. If you don't live here, do some research to see if there are similar resources in your area.

**TruArtSpeaks** - [www.TruArtSpeaks.org](http://www.TruArtSpeaks.org)

- Check out the ReVerb Open Mic, the Be Heard MN Youth Poetry Slam Series, and more.

**Button Poetry** - [www.ButtonPoetry.com](http://www.ButtonPoetry.com)

- Button publishes books, curates a huge YouTube channel, organizes contests, and offers classes.

**The Loft Literary Center** - [www.Loft.org](http://www.Loft.org)

- Events, classes, conferences, and more.

**College poetry slam organizations**

- At UMN, Hamline, Macalester, and beyond.

**Many other local organizations and projects:**

- The League of MN Poets, The MN Prison Writing Workshop, Black Table Arts, Word Sprout, Poetry Asylum, err, Cracked Walnut, the Asian American Literary Collective, and more!

**Online classes, workshops, and events** come and go; check out the digital version of this zine at [www.guante.info](http://www.guante.info) for some links.

## SHOUT OUTS: 10 PERSONAL FAVORITE SPOKEN WORD POEMS (find them online!)

- Ode to Thrift Stores - Ariana Brown
- Alternate Heaven for Black Boys - Danez Smith
- First Writing Since - Suheir Hammad
- The Heart and the Fist - Rudy Francisco
- Skinhead - Patricia Smith
- Come Home - Kevin Yang
- The Body Is Not an Apology - Sonya Renee Taylor
- Clowns - Robbie Q. Telfer
- Zombies - William Nu'utupu Giles
- It's Going to Be Okay - Ollie Schminkey



## thanks for reading!

Kyle "Guante" Tran Myhre is a poet and activist based in Minneapolis. His book, **NOT A LOT OF REASONS TO SING, BUT ENOUGH**, is available now via Button Poetry. Find more at [www.guante.info](http://www.guante.info).

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## dive in.



There's no one way to write, perform, publish, or live poetry. This zine simply shares some tools, resources, and perspectives that have been useful to me as a poet, especially a spoken word poet.

Spoken word is about the idea that everyone has a story, and every story matters. While it's often talked about as something new, it's deeply connected to the history of the oral tradition, the storyteller, the griot. For a more in-depth introduction, check out *Ten Things Everyone Should Know About Spoken Word and Slam Poetry* at [www.guante.info](http://www.guante.info).

## "I love to write, but how do I get involved in spoken word or slam poetry?"

It starts with just showing up. Of course, "showing up" can mean a lot of different things, based on where we live and who we are. For various reasons, we're not all able to attend every event, or network in a traditional way, and that's okay. The following page shares a few ideas.