ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

DS WILL

AWARD-WINNING PERFORMANCE POET, AUTHOR & CREATIVE

Authentic Storytelling. Impactful Expression. Lasting Change.

BOOK DS WILL

WATCH PERFORMANCES



◆ *Dodge Poetry Festival* ◆ *Jersey City Poetry Festival* ◆ *Labyrinth Poetry Bar, Amsterdam*
◆ *Booth Playhouse at Blumenthal Arts Center* ◆ *Raleigh Film and Art Festival* ◆ *Paul Robeson Week, Rutgers*
◆ *Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival* ◆ *Virginia Black Film Festival*

ABOUT

THE STORY.

DS Will is a performance poet, author, and founder of Press Play Poets whose artistry has reached audiences nationally and internationally, including Amsterdam's Labyrinth Poetry Bar. His credits include the 20th Annual Dodge Poetry Festival and the 2026 Jersey City Poetry Festival, and he was part of the cast of *A Night of Artistic Renewal: Representation Equals Power*, awarded Best Spoken Word Film by the Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival.

In 2026 he released *Write on the Wall*, a poetry collection spanning over two decades. His short performance film *Kings* was an official selection of the 2022 Raleigh Film and Art Festival. In 2024 he received the Arts in Action Award from BrainSTEMology and the Fuquay-Varina Arts Council.

IN MOTION

SEE HIM PERFORM



BLACK BOYS DON'T CRY

A NIGHT OF ARTISTIC RENEWAL: HOPE, HEALING AND TRIUMPH
BOOTH PLAYHOUSE AT BLUMENTHAL ARTS CENTER (CHARLOTTE, NC)
NOVEMBER 1, 2026



FROM MYTH TO LIGHT

BLACK 365
PSI THEATER AT DURHAM ARTS COUNCIL (DURHAM, NC)
JUNE 10, 2023



ANGRY COW POETRY (2026)
RIALTO THEATER (AKRON, OH)



JERSEY CITY POETRY FESTIVAL (2026)
MANA CONTEMPORARY (JERSEY CITY, NJ)



A NIGHT OF ARTISTIC RENEWAL: REPRESENTATION EQUALS POWER (2024)
BOOTH PLAYHOUSE AT BLUMENTHAL ARTS CENTER (CHARLOTTE, NC)



M.A.N.I.FEST (2021)
FUQUAY-VARINA ARTS CENTER (FUQUAY-VARINA, NC)

HIGHLIGHTS

STAGE. SCREEN. PAGE. COMMUNITY.

ON STAGE

A Night of Artistic Renewal: Hope, Healing and Triumph (2026)
Booth Playhouse at Blumenthal Arts Center
(Charlotte, NC)

Jersey City Poetry Festival (2026)
Monira Foundation at Mana Contemporary
(Jersey City, NJ)

Angry Cow Poetry Feature (2026)
Rialto Theater
(Akron, OH)

Dodge Poetry Festival (2024)
New Jersey Performing Arts Center
(Newark, NJ)

A Night of Artistic Renewal: Representation Equals Power (2024)
Booth Playhouse at Blumenthal Arts Center
(Charlotte, NC)

Black 365 (2023)
PSI Theater at Durham Arts Council
(Durham, NC)

Words Unspoken Poetry Showcase (2022)
Garner Performing Arts Center
(Garner, NC)

M.A.N.I.FEST (2021–2025)
Fuquay-Varina Arts Center
(Fuquay-Varina, NC)

ON SCREEN

Best Docu-Series, 2026
Cast Member, *A Night of Artistic Renewal: Representation Equals Power*
Virginia Black Film Festival

Best Spoken Word Film, 2025
Cast Member, *A Night of Artistic Renewal: Representation Equals Power*
Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival

Official Selection, 2022
Creative Director & Co-Producer, *Kings*
Raleigh Film & Art Festival

HONORS

Arts in Action Award
M.A.N.I.FEST Gala
BrainSTEMology and the Fuquay-Varina Arts Council (2024)

Honorary Judge
Rutgers University's inaugural Paul Robeson Week Poetry Competition (2023)

LEADERSHIP

The Power of the Arts, Inc.
Vice President (2026–Present)

Third Angle Poets
Brand and Marketing Chair (2025–Present)

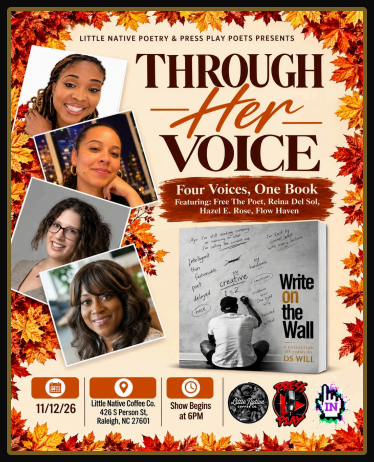
Press Play Poets
Founder (Est. 2018)

Raleigh Film & Art Festival
Department Head of Poetry (2020–2023)

ARTISTIC CURATION

CREATING STAGES FOR OTHERS

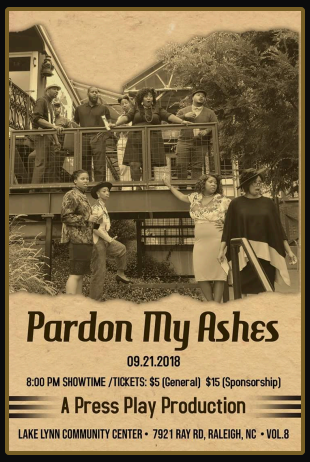
Since founding Press Play Poets in 2018, DS Will has curated dozens of poetry showcases and artistic experiences, including the theatrical production *Pardon My Ashes*, demonstrating his commitment to artistic programming, talent cultivation and creative collaboration.



THROUGH HER VOICE (2026)
LITTLE NATIVE COFFEE CO.
(RALEIGH, NC)



FOOD 4 THOUGHT (2023)
CAKE TOWN BAKERY (KNIGHTDALE, NC)

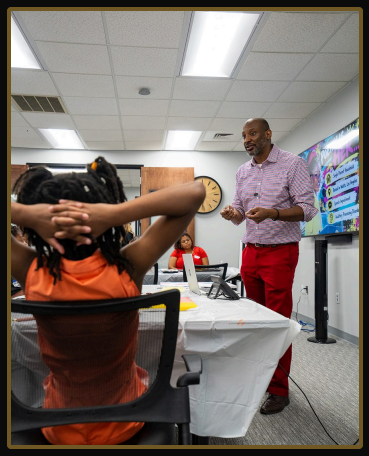


PARDON MY ASHES (2018)
LAKE LYNN COMMUNITY CENTER
(RALEIGH, NC)

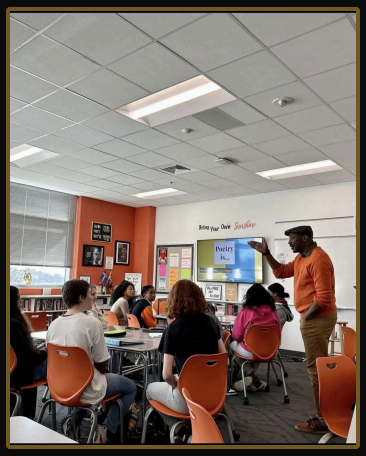
COMMUNITY IMPACT

POETRY THAT GIVES BACK

Beyond the stage, DS Will leads workshops, hosts community celebrations, and creates opportunities for young poets.



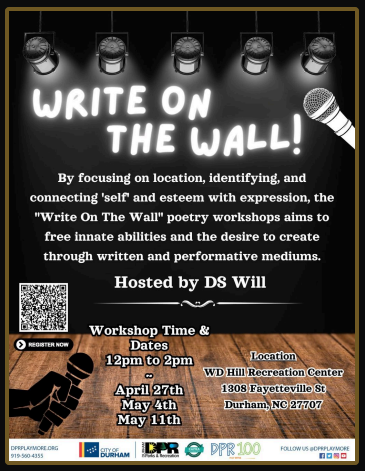
CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS WORKSHOP
CO-FACILITATOR
BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF THE CENTRAL CAROLINAS
CHARLOTTE NC
(OCTOBER 3, 2026)



POETRY WORKSHOP: FUQUAY-VARINA HIGH SCHOOL
FACILITATOR
FUQUAY-VARINA NC
(FEBRUARY 10, 2023)



21ST ANNUAL MLK CELEBRATION
MASTER OF CEREMONIES
FUQUAY-VARINA
(JANUARY 20, 2025)



WRITE ON THE WALL: POETRY WORKSHOP SERIES
FACILITATOR
CITY OF DURHAM · PARKS AND RECREATION
W.D. HILL RECREATION CENTER
(APRIL–MAY 2024)

AWARDS

HONORS & DISTINCTIONS



BEST DOCU-SERIES

Virginia Black Film Festival (2026)

A Night of Artistic Renewal: Representation Equals Power (Cast Member)



BEST SPOKEN WORD FILM

Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival (2025)

A Night of Artistic Renewal: Representation Equals Power (Cast Member)



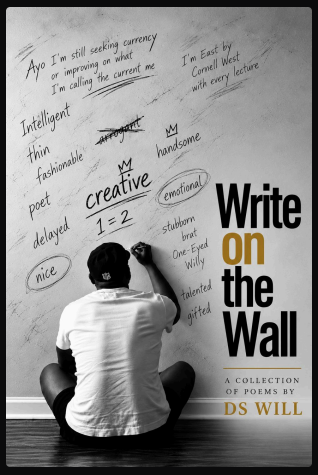
ARTS IN ACTION AWARD

M.A.N.I.FEST Gala (2024)

BrainSTEMology and the Fuquay-Varina Arts Council (Recipient)

FEATURED WORKS

READ IT. WATCH IT.



WRITE ON THE WALL

AUTHOR

DS Will's published collection of 56 poems across seven chapters, drawing on more than two decades of artistic expression. Released on September 30, 2026, it reached No. 35 on Amazon's Black & African American Poetry Best Sellers chart.

PURCHASE ON AMAZON



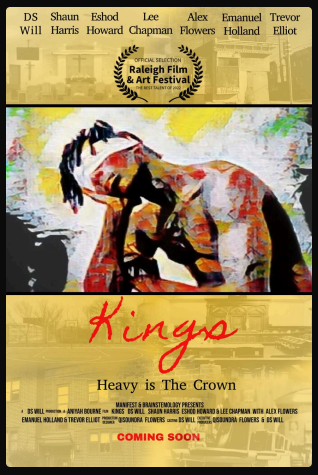
A NIGHT OF ARTISTIC RENEWAL: REPRESENTATION EQUALS POWER

CAST MEMBER
PERFORMANCE FILM

Best Docu-Series – Virginia Black Film Festival (2026)

Best Spoken Word Film – Toronto International Nollywood Film Festival (2025)

WATCH THE TRAILER



KINGS

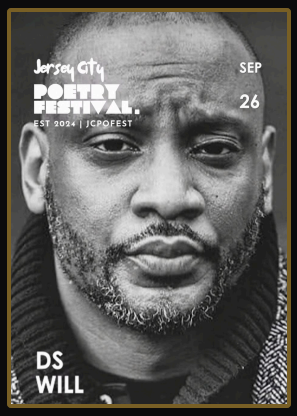
CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND CO-PRODUCER
SHORT PERFORMANCE FILM

Official Selection – Raleigh Film & Art Festival (2022)

WATCH THE TRAILER

ON THE BILL

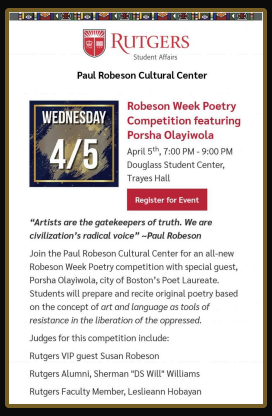
FESTIVALS AND CAMPUSES



JERSEY CITY POETRY FESTIVAL
FEATURED POET, SEPTEMBER 26, 2026



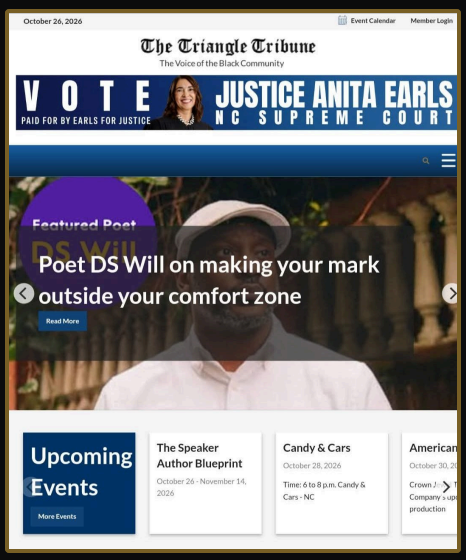
DODGE POETRY FESTIVAL (NJPAC)
FEATURED POET, OCTOBER 17, 2024



RUTGERS ROBESON WEEK POETRY COMPETITION
HONORARY JUDGE, APRIL 5, 2023

PRINT FEATURES

SEEN IN THE PRESS



THE TRIANGLE TRIBUNE

Making Your Mark Outside Your Comfort Zone

(October 26, 2026)

READ THE ARTICLE



THE CHARLOTTE POST

Feature on the 5th Annual *A Night of Artistic Renewal*

(September 27, 2026)

READ THE ARTICLE



CANVAS REBEL

Meet DS Will

(December 1, 2022)

READ THE ARTICLE



TRIANGLE DOWNTOWNER MAGAZINE

Raleigh Film and Art Festival – Issue 169

(September 30, 2022)

READ THE ARTICLE

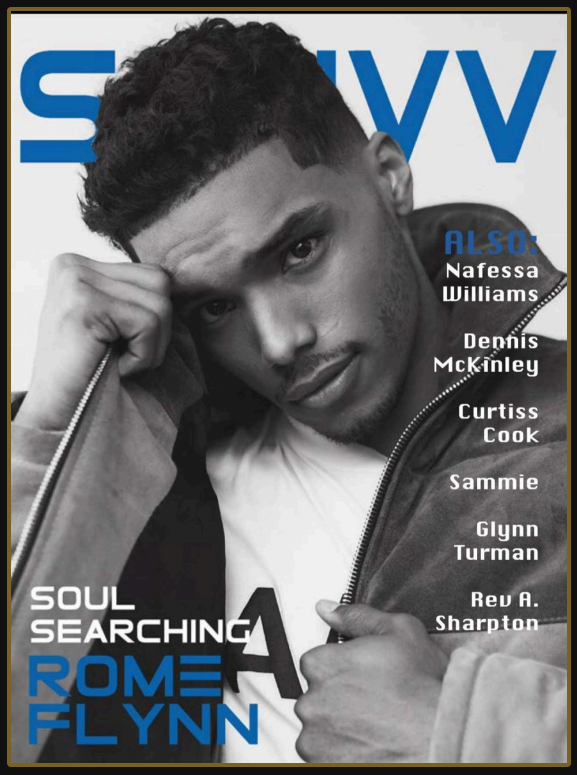
ALSO FEATURED IN

The Daily Tar Heel *Voyager* *Bold Journey* *Nine Cloud Journal* *M'Brace Magazine*

PENNED ARTICLES

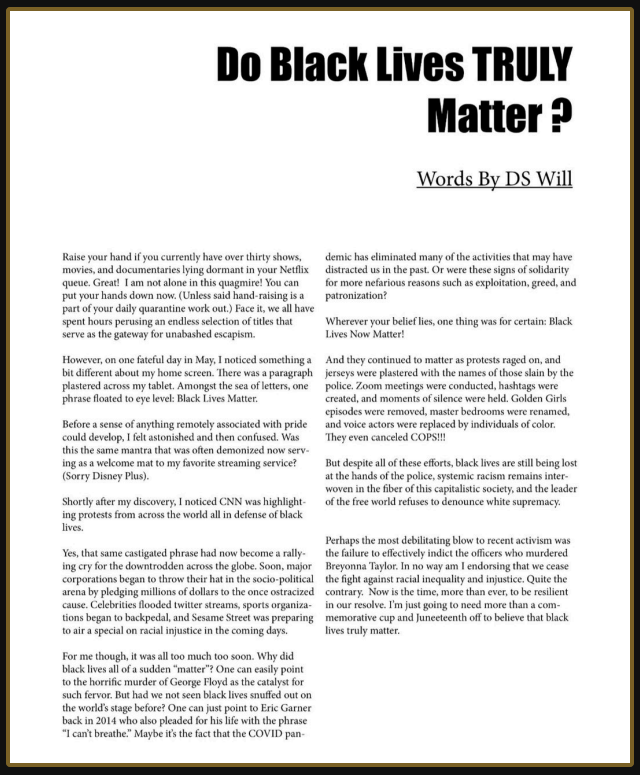
WRITING CONTRIBUTIONS

DS Will has written for *SUAVV Magazine*, a Black men's lifestyle magazine based in Atlanta, Georgia.



ISSUE COVER

(February 2021)



Do Black Lives TRULY Matter ?

Words By DS Will

Raise your hand if you currently have over thirty shows, movies, and documentaries lying dormant in your Netflix queue. Great! I am not alone in this quagmire! You can put your hands down now. (Unless said hand-raising is a part of your daily quarantine work out.) Face it, we all have spent hours perusing an endless selection of titles that serve as the gateway for unabashed escapism.

However, on one fateful day in May, I noticed something a bit different about my home screen. There was a paragraph plastered across my tablet. Amongst the sea of letters, one phrase floated to eye level: Black Lives Matter.

Before a sense of anything remotely associated with pride could develop, I felt astonished and then confused. Was this the same mantra that was often demonized now serving as a welcome mat to my favorite streaming service? (Sorry Disney Plus).

Shortly after my discovery, I noticed CNN was highlighting protests from across the world all in defense of black lives.

Yes, that same castigated phrase had now become a rallying cry for the downtrodden across the globe. Soon, major corporations began to throw their hat in the socio-political arena by pledging millions of dollars to the once ostracized cause. Celebrities flooded twitter streams, sports organizations began to backpedal, and Sesame Street was preparing to air a special on racial injustice in the coming days.

For me though, it was all too much too soon. Why did black lives all of a sudden "matter"? One can easily point to the horrific murder of George Floyd as the catalyst for such fervor. But had we not seen black lives snuffed out on the world's stage before? One can just point to Eric Garner back in 2014 who also pleaded for his life with the phrase "I can't breathe." Maybe it's the fact that the COVID pandemic has eliminated many of the activities that may have distracted us in the past. Or were these signs of solidarity for more nefarious reasons such as exploitation, greed, and patronization?

Wherever your belief lies, one thing was for certain: Black Lives Now Matter!

And they continued to matter as protests raged on, and jerseys were plastered with the names of those slain by the police. Zoom meetings were conducted, hashtags were created, and moments of silence were held. Golden Girls episodes were removed, master bedrooms were renamed, and voice actors were replaced by individuals of color. They even canceled COPS!!!

But despite all of these efforts, black lives are still being lost at the hands of the police, systemic racism remains interwoven in the fiber of this capitalistic society, and the leader of the free world refuses to denounce white supremacy.

Perhaps the most debilitating blow to recent activism was the failure to effectively indict the officers who murdered Breyonna Taylor. In no way am I endorsing that we cease the fight against racial inequality and injustice. Quite the contrary. Now is the time, more than ever, to be resilient in our resolve. I'm just going to need more than a commemorative cup and Juneeteenth off to believe that black lives truly matter.

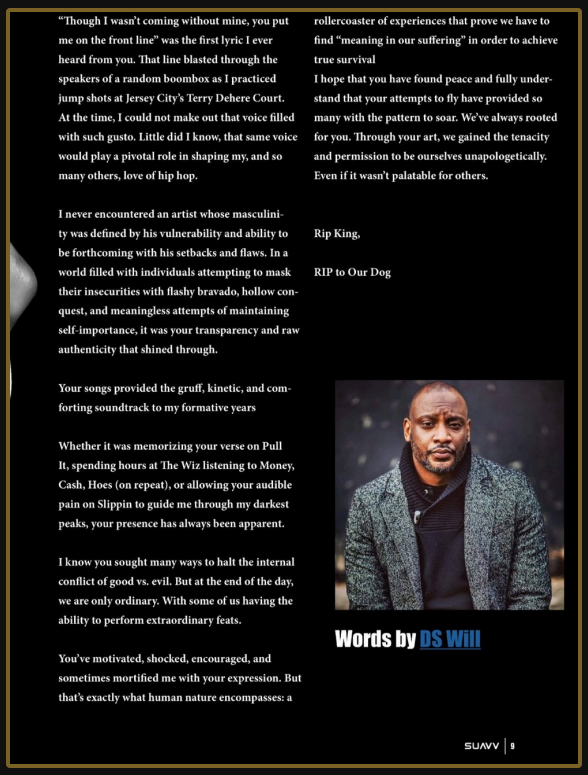
DO BLACK LIVES TRULY MATTER?

WORDS BY DS WILL



ISSUE COVER

(May 2021)



"Though I wasn't coming without mine, you put me on the front line" was the first lyric I ever heard from you. That line blasted through the speakers of a random boombox as I practiced jump shots at Jersey City's Terry Dehere Court. At the time, I could not make out that voice filled with such gusto. Little did I know, that same voice would play a pivotal role in shaping my, and so many others, love of hip hop.

I never encountered an artist whose masculinity was defined by his vulnerability and ability to be forthcoming with his setbacks and flaws. In a world filled with individuals attempting to mask their insecurities with flashy bravado, hollow conquest, and meaningless attempts of maintaining self-importance, it was your transparency and raw authenticity that shined through.

Your songs provided the gruff, kinetic, and comforting soundtrack to my formative years

Whether it was memorizing your verse on Pull It, spending hours at The Wiz listening to Money, Cash, Hoes (on repeat), or allowing your audible pain on Slippin to guide me through my darkest peaks, your presence has always been apparent.

I know you sought many ways to halt the internal conflict of good vs. evil. But at the end of the day, we are only ordinary. With some of us having the ability to perform extraordinary feats.

You've motivated, shocked, encouraged, and sometimes mortified me with your expression. But that's exactly what human nature encompasses: a rollercoaster of experiences that prove we have to find "meaning in our suffering" in order to achieve true survival

I hope that you have found peace and fully understand that your attempts to fly have provided so many with the pattern to soar. We've always rooted for you. Through your art, we gained the tenacity and permission to be ourselves unapologetically. Even if it wasn't palatable for others.

Rip King,

RIP to Our Dog

Words by DS Will

SUAVV | 9

TRIBUTE TO DMX

WORDS BY DS WILL

BOOKING

BRING DS WILL TO YOUR STAGE

AVAILABLE FOR

- FEATURED PERFORMANCES
- POETRY WORKSHOPS
- JUDGING PANELS
- INTERVIEWS
- SPEAKING AND PANELS

Based in Raleigh, NC, and available for national and international engagements. Performance fees, travel accommodations, and technical requirements are available upon request.

CONNECT & FOLLOW

Let's make something unforgettable.

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