

Steve Bellin-Oka is the Poet Resident for 2019 for the National Parks Arts Foundation and Poetry Foundation

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, US, June 20, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The National Park Arts Foundation (NPAF), the Poetry Foundation, the National Parks Service, and the Gettysburg Foundation announce Steve Bellin-Oka as the 2019 Poets in Parks artist-in-residence. Poets in Parks is a unique partnership expressly designed and curated to raise the profile of poetry as a vibrant and



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Steve Bellin-Oka, Poets in Parks Resident

modern public art. Bellin-Oka is the second Poets in Parks resident, and will spend one month in residency at Gettysburg National Military Park with a \$1,000 stipend.

"The beauty and variety of United States national parks provide fertile ground for growing dialogue around poetry, shared history, and art as a public service," said Stephen Young, program director at the Poetry Foundation. "We're excited to have Mr. Bellin-Oka continue these conversations as the new Poets in Parks resident. The relationship between the past in present in his work is well-suited to Gettysburg, where history is both commemorated and alive."

Gettysburg and Beyond

The National Park Service's cultural mandate to recognize and foster a democratic and participatory dialogue through the arts has never been more important. The current national debate about the representation and memorial of Civil War history provides an opportunity for education and discussion.

Bellin-Oka's poems written during the residency will expand those conversations. He will begin his month-long residency at Gettysburg National Military Park in September, writing, leading workshops, and sharing his poetry in a public reading on October 11, 2019. After his residency, he will travel to Washington, D.C. and to the Poetry Foundation in Chicago in May, 2020 on a poetry tour with the first Poets in Parks resident, Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo.

□□A Poet Connected to the Past□□

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Bellin-Oka grew up surrounded by Civil War battlefields; he takes the not-so-ghostly presences of history seriously, and intends to explore them during his time at Gettysburg. □□“My own work deals with cultural memory and how traumatic national events such as the Civil War are remembered, misremembered, reimagined, and reinterpreted by Americans living in later historical periods,” said Bellin-Oka. “As William Faulkner puts it in his novel *Absalom, Absalom*, ‘maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished.’ In other words, the past is never just the past—it co-exists with the present and shapes it, like double exposure on a piece of film.”

□□He plans to write poems that imagine Abraham Lincoln preparing to give The Gettysburg Address, the experiences of soldiers on both sides, and new works in response to Civil War poems of the battlefield. □□Bellin-Oka earned his MFA from the University of Virginia and his PhD from the University of Southern Mississippi’s Center for Writers. He currently lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he is a 2019 Tulsa Artists Fellow, awarded by the George Kaiser Family Foundation. His debut collection, *Instructions for Seeing a Ghost*, won the 2019 Vassar Miller Prize in Poetry, and will be published by the University of North Texas Press in 2020. □□

About the Poetry Foundation □

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, is an independent literary organization committed to a vigorous presence for poetry in our culture. It exists to discover and celebrate the best poetry and to place it before the largest possible audience. The Poetry Foundation seeks to be a leader in shaping a receptive climate for poetry by developing new audiences, creating new avenues for delivery, and encouraging new kinds of poetry through innovative literary prizes and programs. For more information, please visit poetryfoundation.org. □□Follow the Poetry Foundation and *Poetry* on Facebook at facebook.com/poetryfoundation or on Twitter @PoetryFound. □□

About the National Park Arts Foundation

□The National Park Arts Foundation is a nonprofit organization offering artist-in-residence programs, museum in-loan programs, and workshops nationwide at a number of national parks. For more information, please visit nationalparksartsfoundation.org. To apply to open programs, please visit nationalparksartsfoundation.submittable.com/submit.

□About the Gettysburg Foundation

□The Gettysburg Foundation is a non-profit philanthropic, educational organization operating in partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) to preserve Gettysburg National Military Park and the Eisenhower National Historic Site, and to educate the public about their significance.

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