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| Title | <b>Aisha Rivera</b>                                                                                                                                                   | 03/13/2023   |
|       | by <b>Aisha Rivera</b> in <b>Napa County Poet Laureate - 2023</b>                                                                                                     | id. 35956012 |
|       | <div>████████████████████</div> <div>Napa, California</div> <div>94559</div> <div>United States</div> <div>████████████████████</div> <div>████████████████████</div> |              |

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| <b>Original Submission</b> | 03/13/2023 |
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| Applicant Full Name                                       | <b>Aisha Rivera</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Email Address                                             | ████████████████████                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Check to Confirm:                                         | <b>Applicant is 18 years or older</b><br><b>Applicant's primary residence is in Napa County, CA</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Phone:                                                    | ████████████████                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Street Address:                                           | ████████████████████ <b>Napa, CA 94559</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Mailing Address (if different from Street Address):       | n/a                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Why do you want to be the Poet Laureate?                  | <b>I have a passion for poetry, but also for diversity and giving back to my community. I believe that poetry can be a powerful tool to not only move us emotionally, but illuminate topics that we may otherwise not talk about. Diverse poetry that speaks about intersectional issues, I believe, can be the start of very important conversations. I also want to serve our community and be a Poet Laureate that supports diversity and positive social change. I want to see the written arts thrive and support the creative voices of those in our community. I have always been a poet, but I believe poets are born, made, and found every day. And even if one is not a poet, they can benefit from hearing or reading a really good poem.</b> |
| What would your top three priorities be as Poet Laureate? | <b>1. Inspire others in their writing and personal expression.</b><br><b>2. Connect with the community and promote poetry as a form of expression for everyone.</b><br><b>3. Create and perform new work that is relevant to our community.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

As Poet Laureate,  
how would you  
engage with the  
community?

**I would do my best to perform at public events when appropriate. At these events I hope to share poetry that is relevant to the community it is serving, opening the possibility to connect with attendees. When given the opportunity, I would use my platform to support the arts and speak on how Poetry connects us, enriches our lives, and allows us to express ourselves. I would actively support diversity and hope to incorporate the topic of poetry in places where it may usually not be discussed. Additionally, I would hope to reach poets of all backgrounds to once again prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion.**

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Proof of residence in Napa County, CA (Copy of official mail with applicant name and address)

[Copy\\_of\\_Residence.jpg](#)

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Letter of Intent

[Poet\\_Laureate\\_Letter\\_of\\_Interest\\_Aisha\\_Rivera\\_2023.pdf](#)

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Resume

[Resume\\_Aisha\\_Rivera\\_2023\\_1.pdf](#)

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Letter of Support/Recommendation

[JK-AishaLetter.pdf](#)

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5 Supporting Poems (Text, Video, or Audio format)

[Aisha\\_Poems\\_English\\_Final\\_1.pdf](#)

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# AISHA RIVERA

@gmail.com

March 13, 2023

Arts Council Napa Valley  
3299 Claremont Way, Ste 6  
Napa, CA 94558

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in response to the volunteer position of “Poet Laureate” for the County of Napa. I am interested in this position because I have a life-long passion for the arts, and for meaningful work that gives back to the community. I believe I am qualified for this position through a combination of my professional experience, education, and artistic background. I have 4+ years of administrative experience in government, LGBTQ centers, and arts nonprofits. I have a strong Arts background, including 2+ years of working with a nonprofit arts organization, 4+ years of experience in Theatre, and a degree in Theatre Arts, and 3+ years of writing and performing poetry/spoken word. I hope to not only write poetry that is meaningful, but contribute to the artistic community in Napa County in a way that is meaningful and supportive.

In addition to holding a full time job I have been able to participate in the arts and create work as well. I have been published in the Bilingual Anthology “Poetics without Borders/Poetica Sin Fronteras” which had a public launch and reading in Seattle, Washington. I have performed my poetry at local events such as the Dia de Los Muertos community event last year in 2022. I have also written and performed my poetry at the Climate Change Theatre Action event held in St Helena in 2021. I have also served as judge for two years in a row for Poetry Out Loud in Napa County. I am actively writing work and will continue to do so. Poetry, I believe, is something that can portray universal human experiences as well as illuminate intersectional struggles. I want to create poetry that is diverse, and I want to support the community to embrace and increase diversity in the written arts as well.

Diversity is important to me which is shown through my 2+ years of work experience for two separate LGBTQ resource centers. These centers greatly enriched my understanding of working with diverse populations and how to serve their needs. It also gave me valuable insight into how non-profits operate and how to help them thrive. Highlights from these positions include: leading diversity training on LGBTQ identity/experience (LGBTQ Connection) and producing, editing, and presenting the first video for the LGBTQ resource center (CSUF).

Finally, I also have a strong background in art which includes my current position as Equity & Inclusion Committee Head with Arts Council Napa Valley, my previous position as a grant consultant for ACNV, and a degree and 4+ years of experience in Theatre. I have facilitated equity roundtables, and created and analyzed surveys on diversity to improve ACNV’s mission to progress Equity & Inclusion. I worked closely with ACNV’s Board, reviewed grant applications, and consulted ACNV to ensure that secured funding would be allocated with a plan to increase diversity within the communities/artists they serve. Finally, my Theatre work has given me years of experience in high-pace dynamic collaborative environments

I strongly believe my unique experience makes me an excellent candidate for this position. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my qualifications and interests with you further. In the meantime, should you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Aisha Rivera



Division of Arts & Humanities

March 3, 2023

To Whom it May Concern:

I have had the good fortune of knowing Aisha for ten years. We first met when they were a student in my theater courses at Napa Valley College. What distinguished Aisha most at that time, was the depth in their writing which was shared aloud in the class. They inspired me and others through their brave, honest and poetic dialogue. At that time, they demonstrated great potential as a writer and theater artist and this potential has been realized in academic, literary, theater and other artist circles.

Aisha builds trust through their talent and commitment to their art, as a creative. These qualities inspired me to ask Aisha to adapt the famous film *It's A Wonderful Life* into a Spanish language stage adaptation. They agreed and crafted *Es Una Vida Maravillosa*. They also directed a live reading of the adaptation at Napa Valley College, which was also broadcast on KVN, Napa Valley's Spanish language radio station. Their adaptation was very well received by actors and audiences both in person, and over the airwaves. Their leadership as a director demonstrated an ability to bring a literary work to life.

The reading was so successful that Shakespeare Napa Valley has sought funding to support a full production of *Es Una Vida Maravillosa* in December 2023.

Napa Valley would be proud to call Aisha Rivera Poet Laureate. I cannot think of a better candidate.

*Jennifer King*

Jennifer King

Department Head and Professor | Theater Arts/Film Studies, Napa Valley College

Founder and Artistic Director | Shakespeare Napa Valley

# AISHA RIVERA



gmail.com

## EDUCATION

- ♦ **California State University, Fullerton**, Bachelor of Arts in Psychology & Theatre Art, **Awarded 2018**
- ♦ **Napa Valley College**, Associate of Arts in Psychology, **Awarded 2016**
- ♦ **Napa Valley College**, Associate of Science in Natural Science & Mathematics, **Awarded 2016**

## SKILLS SUMMARY

- ♦ Bilingual: English, Spanish
- ♦ Program Facilitation & Event Coordination
- ♦ Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, Excel), Google Suite
- ♦ Canva, SurveyMonkey
- ♦ Experience with Diverse Populations (LGBTQ, Latinx, APIDA)
- ♦ Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Premiere)
- ♦ Social Media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok)
- ♦ Graphic Design, Illustration (Traditional/Digital)

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### CONSTELLATION BRANDS (ROBERT MONDAVI WINERY)

**AUG 2022 - PRESENT**

#### **Administrative Assistant**

- ♦ Directly assists the General Manager and the Operations department as a whole to ensure Winery runs smoothly.
- ♦ Created the "Administrative Assistant Manual" which created, established, and refined procedures relevant to this role.
- ♦ Implemented a standard procedure for company vehicle maintenance, sign in/sign out tracking, and records.
- ♦ Creates and Monitors Purchase Orders, New Vendors and other finance related tasks.
- ♦ Organized meetings for executives both internally and externally at multiple site locations.
- ♦ Coordinates events such as large internal trainings, employee appreciation lunches, holiday related events, and more.

### ARTS COUNCIL NAPA VALLEY (ACNV)

**JAN 2021 - JUN 2022**

#### **Equity & Inclusion Committee Head, Dec 2021 - June 2022**

- ♦ Plans and facilitates Equity Roundtables for feedback from the diverse artistic community of Napa County.
- ♦ Designs, creates, and analyzes results of surveys to better understand the artistic community in Napa and how ACNV can improve on increasing diversity for underserved, underrepresented diverse communities in Napa.
- ♦ Leads the establishment of the Equity & Inclusion Committee with the goal in order to support and progress ACNV's mission to unite, support and enhance the arts & culture community within Napa.

#### **Diversity Consultant, Jan 2021 - Jun 2021**

- ♦ Guided ACNV on their adaptation plan for a received grant, ensuring funds were properly used to progress ACNV'S mission.
- ♦ Consulted ACNV to adapt their plan to increase diversity within their organization and in the communities/artists they serve.
- ♦ Reviewed and critiqued applications for the Community Fund Grant 2021 program in order to distribute funds equitably to local artists to support ACNV's mission to unite, support and enhance the arts & culture community within Napa.

### CITY OF NAPA

**NOV 2020 - JUN 2022**

#### **Office Assistant, Nov 2021 - June 2022**

- ♦ Aids the Housing Authority in receptionist duties, clerical duties and general office support to ensure the office runs smoothly.
- ♦ Established and refined procedures, including revitalizing the Office Assistant Procedure Manual.
- ♦ Updates and improves the Housing Authority website to optimize user interface, accessibility, and understanding.
- ♦ Translates documents, website posts, and resources into Spanish to ensure Spanish speakers can properly utilize our services.

#### **Administrative Support Associate, Nov 2020 - Nov 2021**

- ♦ Aided the City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk's office(s) in tasks related to claims, restitutions, agreements, social media, summons, contracts, litigation, and other matters for office success.
- ♦ Created informational visual materials (flyers, signs, etc.) related to policies, news, events, and more.
- ♦ Established new procedures and a new filing system for restitutions to improve organization and efficiency.

### COUNTY OF NAPA

**APR 2019 - JAN 2020**

#### **Staff Assistant to the Board of Supervisors**

- ♦ Produced posters, graphics, designs, flyers, postcards (mailed to 900+ residents), powerpoints, and other informational visual materials related to local, regional, statewide programs, activities, events, and County related business.
- ♦ Produced monthly/weekly newsletters, talking points, letters, and other documents as needed for elected officials
- ♦ Planned and Executed Board of Supervisor special events/projects including: Multiple Emergency Preparedness Events, The 2019 Napa County Centenarians Celebration, The 2020 MLK Countywide Essay Contest, and more.
- ♦ Maintained confidentiality and practiced sensitivity when handling polarizing and/or controversial subjects.

## **LGBTQ CONNECTION**

**MAR 2019 - APR 2019**

### ***Program Assistant***

- ◊ Co-led diversity training in Napa/Solano County to increase understanding on LGBTQ issues and experiences.
- ◊ Created a lesson plan for future employees on the organization's diversity training program which aim to educate the public on sexual orientation, gender identity, and LGBTQ+ experience.
- ◊ Represented LGBTQ connection at events to spread awareness of the organization and resources for the LGBTQ community.
- ◊ Aided in various sub-groups of LGBTQ Connection including: The Youth Leadership Teams, LGBTQ Seniors, and more.

## **LGBTQ RESOURCE CENTER, DIVERSITY INITIATIVES AND RESOURCE CENTERS**

**JAN 2018 - MAY 2018**

### ***Social Justice Educator***

- ◊ Developed educational programs for students to foster self-development and growth.
- ◊ Produced, directed, filmed, edited, and presented the first video for the center exploring LGBTQ identity.
- ◊ Collaborated closely with other resource centers under DIRC to develop intersectional educational programs and panels relevant to LGBTQIA Chicanx and APIDA students resulting in two successful events.
- ◊ Facilitated group discussions/presentations on LGBTQIA topics to explore identity through an intersectional lens
- ◊ Utilized a recent needs assessment to develop programming addressing needs identified to have been lacking.
- ◊ Represented the center for large events on campus (international Women's Day, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, etc.) in order to provide LGBTQ centered knowledge and education on the related topic.

## **CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON, DEPT. OF THEATRE & DANCE**

**AUG 2017 - MAR 2018**

### ***Assistant Costume Designer, Jan 2018 - Mar 2018***

- ◊ Assisted the costume designer of "Tis Pity" in costume design, creation and maintenance for the production's run.
- ◊ Managed a crew of undergraduate students entrusted with costume maintenance, quick changes, and other duties.
- ◊ Navigated a flexible, high pace environment in order to fulfill the overall vision for the production.
- ◊ Maintained a positive working relationship with Theatre professionals and students to ensure the show's success.

### ***Teachers Assistant, Aug 2017 - Dec 2017***

- ◊ Assisted professor Kevin Slay in various tasks so that students received adequate attention and quality education throughout the upper division course "Diversity in the Theatre arts".
- ◊ Graded assignments (exams, essays, etc.) for three sections (~70 students total) so that Slay could focus on lecture material planning, preparation, and execution.
- ◊ Responded to questions from students on course material and expectations.

## **HEROES' CAFE & TAVERN**

**AUG 2014 - AUG 2016**

### ***Server***

- ◊ Answered telephones, operated registered and to maintain restaurant order, function, and appearance.
- ◊ Served food and provided exemplary customer service to ensure a satisfactory dining experience for customers.

## **BOARD SERVICE AND PUBLICATIONS**

- ◊ Arts Council Napa Valley | Board Member | June 2022 - Present
- ◊ "Poetics Without Borders/Poetica Sin Fronteras" | Featured Poet | Grupo Editorial LAMA | NOV 2018

## **A Poem for My Father: Planting Hands in Soil, to Feed Pockets.**

I rise at 5 AM to the chirping of my parakeets,  
Singing for calls of bird feed.  
From my window slips in the golden warmth of a morning's promise.  
Where the day is as guaranteed as the facial hair on my chin.

I wash my hands, calloused covered maps.  
Where each crack is filled with dirt from a lifetime ago,  
Creating alleys, streets, and driveways that would make a palm reader dizzy.

I leave the dishes, stacked like the concrete jungle of New York City  
I leave my two children, sprawled on their beds like the grapes I shall attend to.  
I leave my wife, who sips a cup of molten tar, before kissing me on my brown cheek,  
I can hear a sizzle as lips meet, a sizzle, but no more than a harmless burn.  
A silent wishing for a light day of work ahead.

We are roasting like peanuts, *alguien dice*. Someone saids.  
The sun is no longer gentle and kind as it was hours ago.  
Now it dances in the sky like a pastry chef in the kitchen,  
Tucking us into the middle rack,  
To puff up into desserts for the rich.

Grape vines, broken soles on working shoes, calloused hands.  
Dirt between fingers, toes, and sweat.  
Cloth sticking to our skin like lovers,  
And the birth of wine staining our flesh.

We work without stop.  
We work without a break nor a restroom.  
The only water we spill, is to the earth beneath us.  
There is a river on my brow, rich with salt, it can not quench my thirst.

The bottles that click like locks sliding into place, will never sit on my home shelf.  
I drag my feet past the threshold, and the rest is a blur of sofas and tortillas.  
“*Como te fue en el trabajo?*” How was it at work?  
I call for a beer and tell her the same thing as every day  
“We made some motherfucker rich today.” I say.

I always had a way with words.

### **A Poem for My Mother: A Home in Two Places.**

I walked to the supermarket on my own.  
Hot desert heat warmed the cobblestone streets.

I can hear horses galloping down to *el centro*.  
My tiny little pueblo.  
A pocket of Nirvana in a country so grand and proud.

I do not live there now.  
I have a new home now,  
I live in a valley of luxury.  
Of wine, grapes, labor, and over-time days.

I think back to my youth,  
The city where I ran in school uniforms,  
And greeted the bus drivers by name.

The town where I watched my mother,  
Flip tortillas, and wrangle a chicken or two.

I think of the day I really left that town,  
Stubborn and pregnant, praying on an airplane.

The land stretched into infinity, growing smaller and smaller.  
My hand on my swollen belly,  
My eyes on the home I was leaving behind.  
My pueblo, my nirvana, my father, my mother,  
It dissipates into clouds, air, and sky.

Old home,  
New home,  
Desert Sun,  
Valley Nights.

That swollen belly upon me, I held it close to me.  
They say the States will give this child a better life,  
A better life than my old cobblestoned, worn down *huarache* pueblo had given me.

My heart, has been split ever since.  
Half of it sewn to Jalisco, filled with ranchos, horses, and my memories *queridos*,  
Half of it trying to grow here in Napa, trying to build a home entwined in vineyards.

## Translator

I am staring at my cell phone, working up the courage to call a realtor.  
“*Mija* please, you know my accent will get in the way”  
My mother, presses me to dial the magic number.  
Another translation, another job done out of love.

“*Tu sabes que a veces no me entienden*” Yes I know this.  
To them your English sounds mumbled and cumbersome.  
Like broken glass, like foreign melodies, like missing puzzle pieces.

To them my English sounds refined and polished.  
Although it flows from a child’s mouth,  
to the doctor, to the lawyer, to the teacher,  
it is more polished than your glass, more familiar than your melody,  
it is a complete puzzle with not a single space missing.

I wrangle both languages,  
My tongue knows the dance of two histories.  
English, Spanish.  
My lips know the steps perfectly,  
and they never miss a beat.

My mother learns the dance of the Anglo,  
Trying to prove she can perform their strict tango.  
But accents and inflections always dampen her shine.  
Never will her mouth sound pristine over the phone.  
Never will they treasure the beautiful way Spanish rushes out of her mouth,  
Like a river filling after a long endured drought.

So I read her mail, emails, text messages, and tickets.  
I call her bank, the car dealership, and her American friends.  
I walk with her to the grocery store, to the doctor, to the lawyer’s office.

Because translation is my love debt to her,  
For this country that doesn’t see the beauty in the way  
she has taken the language, and made it her own original music.

I wonder did they ever drop the needle on her record,  
did they ever press play on her CD?  
did they ever turn the volume up to hear it?

Are they giving my music a listen?  
Because I have quite the song to sing.

## Home

“Where is home?”

My college peers always ask me.

Where is home?”

I tell them I come from the Valley

Filled with green trees and memories

Of mother’s *pozole* on my birthday,

High school graduations,

And flans devoured for baptisms and weddings.

They shake and laugh,

They only ask

If the wine is as rich

As they say it is

Where is home and what does that make me?

A question that haunts me.

I am not Napa,

I am not California,

I am not Mexico,

I am not Sonoma wines, Valley Trains, or picnics by the river bed.

I am none of these things.

But still they ask me, “Where is home?”

And what does that make me?

How I’d long to be a tourist,

Drunk on wines, on top of moving trains.

How I’d love to be a rich man,

Counting dollars to fall asleep.

How I’d kill to be a foreigner,

With dreams too big to conceive.

But all I know is my blood is hot like sand in the sun,

And my skin is brown like the dirt under my father’s fingernails.

All I know is my mother has the loudest laughter,

And she passed it down to me just like the languages I speak.

All I know is I cry harder in Spanish, and I am heard better in English.

All I know is I dance Folklorico in my sleep, and I read Shaskepeare in the mornings.

Where is home and what does that make me?

All I know is:

I am everything and nothing, Spanish and English, foreign and native, familiar but peculiar.

And my home is north of the border and south of it simultaneously.

## The In-Betweens

I don't know how Americans work.  
They tell me how to dance, how to sing, how to act.  
But I don't know how they work.  
For they don't speak like my mother, and they don't break a piñata on their birthdays.

I don't know how Mexicans work.  
My mother has told me stories, and has taken me to the country,  
But I don't know how they work.  
For they don't have classics like *Titanic*, and they don't like Spanglish.

I'm trying to navigate the in-betweens,  
The Mexican and American in me, I'm trying to make them meet.  
I want them to be a mixed sunset, or a cocktail for a hot day.

I'm trying to learn to swim in the in-betweens,  
But I don't know how to float on top of mistranslations,  
I don't know how to kick through waters of words that have no real meanings in English,  
I don't know how to not sink in waves of norms that conflict and confuse.

My lovers ask me how to say lovely phrases in Spanish,  
But the words are too big for their mouths,  
they tumble out as cinderblocks, crumbling upon impact.  
I can't find a way to cope with the fact,  
That they do not understand a word in my love poems, or my favorite songs

Down in Los Angeles,  
I don heavy skirts, dancing to *banda* and mariachi music.  
I shout and laugh, Mexican at heart, Mexican *zapateados* engraved in my soul.  
But I arrive in t-shirts riddled with American phrases,  
And I go home to write out dissertations on American plays and poets.

I drive down to Los Angeles at night,  
greens and reds shining on wet pavement,  
And I watch *mi gente*, brown and proud walking to food carts at 2AM,  
And I watch my people, college aged girls telling jokes in English on the way to their cars.  
As I drive, I do not know which group is more like me, or which is more unlike me.

Deep in my blood I hear the history in me calling,  
Mayans, Aztecs, Spaniards, and Mexicans.

Deep in my blood, I hear my childhood singing,  
Lemonade, Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving.

My soul outstretched, touching two lands simultaneously,  
Or maybe it is stretched out completely, nestled in the in-between.  
Listening to *corridos* while grilling burgers on the beach.