

Statement of Interest – Poet Laureate Application

Nancy Mburu

My name is Nancy Mburu, and I am a poet and author based in Seattle. My creative work is rooted in the immigrant experience and often explores themes of the African diaspora, cultural identity, and womanhood. I am drawn to the Poet Laureate role because I believe poetry has the power to foster belonging, celebrate cultural richness, and reflect a city's evolving spirit. I would be honored to serve as Redmond's Poet Laureate to uplift the voices of its residents, celebrate its diversity, and inspire collective reflection through poetry.

I earned my degree in Creative Writing from the University of Washington Tacoma and have been an active contributor to Washington's literary and arts community ever since. I served for three years as a Fiction and Poetry Intern at Hugo House, where I helped organize monthly readings and participated in a creative cohort. Later, as a Hugo House Writer-in-Residence, I worked under the guidance of a mentor, collaborated with other writers, and helped host public events. My work has been featured at events like Stage Fright and Creative Colloquy, where I performed poems such as *The Tourist*, *Chains of Justice*, and *Pandemic*, which explore cultural appropriation, racial injustice, and the emotional toll of the pandemic.

I have also collaborated on multi-genre projects, including *Alama* (2019), a three-episode web series created with other African artists in Seattle. The series follows a young immigrant actor navigating identity, dreams, and diaspora in America. Projects like this reflect my passion for complex, culturally grounded storytelling.

My poetry has been shared in spaces of healing and empowerment, such as Travel to Prevail, a women's conference where I performed *I Am Woman* to honor the strength of immigrant women. That same year, I was invited as a guest speaker at a spoken word poetry class at UW Tacoma, where I lectured on performance techniques, gave feedback on student work, and shared my poem *Chains of Justice*.

I have also been shaped by residencies at Jack Straw Cultural Center and Mineral School, where I deepened my creative practice, published a chapter of my forthcoming book *Sauti* (which means "voice"), recorded podcasts, and participated in public readings. Most recently, in my role as a Communications Consultant with the Washington State Office of Equity, I create inclusive content that reflects the realities of communities

across the state. This work continues to strengthen my commitment to equity-driven storytelling and inclusive public engagement.

As Redmond continues to grow, embracing its diversity, innovation, and natural beauty, it deserves an artistic voice that can both witness and shape its journey. Through poetry, I hope to celebrate its green spaces and technology hubs, its rooted histories and future aspirations.

I believe poetry belongs everywhere: in parks, libraries, classrooms, and public spaces. As Poet Laureate, I will help make poetry a living, breathing part of Redmond, accessible to all and reflective of all.

Thank you for considering me for this opportunity to listen, uplift, and write in service of the city's heart.

Nancy Mburu

Communication & Digital Strategist

Seattle, Washington, United States



SUMMARY

Experienced Communications Strategist with expertise in developing and executing integrated communication strategies that drive engagement and deliver results. Skilled at fostering relationships with internal and external stakeholders, creating compelling content, and managing high-impact digital and traditional media campaigns. Passionate about inclusive communication practices, digital equity, and using storytelling to connect organizations with their audiences. Looking to leverage a strong background in messaging, content creation, and digital strategies to drive impactful communication.

KEY SKILLS

- **Internal & External Communication**
- **Public Relations & Media Outreach**
- **Brand Messaging & Positioning**
- **Crisis Communication**
- **Stakeholder Engagement & Relationship Building**
- **Content Strategy & Development**
- **Social Media Management & Digital Campaigns**

EXPERIENCE

Communications Consultant

Washington State Office of Equity | Olympia, WA

August 2024 – Present

- Spearheaded digital equity communication strategies by integrating goals into overarching communication frameworks for key stakeholders.

- Developed compelling content (written, multimedia, social media) to promote digital equity initiatives.
- Managed social media accounts, digital platforms and websites to engage audiences and increase awareness.
- Cultivated media relationships and prepared press releases to ensure targeted coverage and increased visibility of digital equity initiatives.
- Developed and executed strategic partnerships with government agencies and advocacy groups to expand digital equity efforts.
- Created and managed surveys and forms to gather stakeholder feedback, ensuring continuous improvement in digital communication strategies.

Communications Manager

SEIU6 Property Services NW | Seattle, WA

October 2019 – August 2024

- Managed internal communications through newsletters, website, presentations, reports, and digital platforms, ensuring alignment with the organization's mission and strategic goals.
- Developed key messaging and talking points for various campaigns to maintain consistency across all communication channels.
- Led key internal communication meetings, presenting performance metrics and updates to senior leadership.
- Streamlined project tracking using Azure DevOps to improve communication flow and meet project deadlines.
- Collaborated with union representatives and account managers to ensure communication needs were met for all stakeholders.
- Spearheaded crisis communication responses, crafting messaging to address sensitive issues and ensure a unified approach.

Communications and Branding Specialist

Allied Universal | Seattle, WA

March 2018 – October 2019

- Developed and executed internal communication strategies to ensure seamless communication between teams.
- Created and distributed internal newsletters, bulletins, and reports to keep employees informed of key updates.
- Coordinated cross-functional teams to ensure timely project completion and alignment with business objectives.
- Enhanced internal communication platforms, ensuring information was easily accessible to employees.

- Led the creation and management of internal branding initiatives, strengthening company culture and employee engagement.
- Provided support for event management for internal meetings and All Hands events.

Diversity and Inclusion Program Assistant

University of Washington | Tacoma, WA

January 2016 – March 2018

- Developed communication strategies to increase student participation in diversity and inclusion programs.
 - Supported the creation of inclusive communication policies and practices across the university.
 - Coordinated outreach and communications for student organizations promoting equity and inclusion.
 - Facilitated communication workshops to foster cultural competency among student leaders.
 - Collaborated with faculty and staff to integrate effective communication strategies into various campus-wide initiatives.
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EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Communications, Creative Writing & Public

Relations *University of Washington | Tacoma, WA*

REFERENCES

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The tourist

My audience please indulge me

In a simple game of

Tourist gaze or savior complex

Tip the scale higher or lower

Bid to your heart's desire

Ladies and Gentlemen

It's a question of which is a lesser evil

Against contrary belief,

Africa is not uneducated

Especially when 95% of Americans

think that a continent that can hold both the united states, china and India

at the same time

is a country,

When their only knowledge of Africa is through

the lion king movie

Hakuna matata is your slogan

Yet you have no idea

the language is Swahili

But no worries

Even when your exploitive nature

Yes, Disney

steals the rights to words of my language

So now I have to ask for you

for permission to use it

All in the name of diversity and awareness

When you profit from a culture

you did not invent or sustain

Ladies and Gentlemen it's a question of which is a lesser evil

Your persona is a double edged sword

Its either your savior complex

Or you look at us with your tourist gaze

Yes,that gaze

That sees africa as exotic

A land where people live with Animals

Savages left in the wild for too long

that walk around in no clothes and in the middle of nowhere

Afraid our primal nature has kept us away from school

That's why every campaign is one dollar for a school desk

So enchanted by the thought of seeing slums

So you pay money to drive around

In tour buses to see

People that are lavishing in squalor

For sport,

a pass time

As if they are animals to watch

Ladies and gentlemen it's a question of which is the lesser evil

Then there are the stories you tell about our women
That we live under the thumb of the master,
Who rules with the iron fist, the husband
That our men have a thirst for the underaged girls that has just reached
puberty
That we were chained and dragged to the altar
A marriage can't just be a marriage
Its either arranged or forced
Or our culture is so barbaric that it would
support the butchering of a woman through female circumcision
Or that the bride price is the act of buying a woman
A fact not based on understanding the culture or custom
Because from a western lens
culture equals backwardness and barbarism
Acts by individuals are poster children for movements
So you spin your yarn with tales
Of Lies, half truths and unsanctioned biases
Ladies and gentlemen it's a question of which is the lesser evil

Your media is overloaded with images of starving children

Large stomachs and thin arms and legs

As if the narrative of the 1% is representative of a whole continent

Your egoistic savior complex

looks at us as defenseless creatures

Too ignorant to change their circumstance

So forgive me if I do not want your help

Excuse me, I meant your condescending outstretched hand

You think you know what I need

You never ask for my ideas yet you say are planning over my future

But you are too distracted by the fact that I don't speak English

So you assume I have no mind of my own

Or worse, my English is covered by my thick accent

so you cross me out as dumb or uneducated

Imitate my language in Hollywood as a bunch of clicks and knocks

But you can never say my name

Even after I learnt your language

Heaven forbid you give me the common courtesy

To say my name

Ladies and gentlemen it's a question of which is the lesser evil

Coins

You and I are two sides of the same coin

Reflections of each other

A story of kin and kindred spirits

Our destiny tied by our geographical context

Caught in the cosmos of history

You are Yin and I am Yang

They can't tell your story without mine

To them we are all the same

They call you black and I dark

Unless I talk they wouldn't tell us apart

So why do you draw a sword and I my spear

Forever in mortal kombat

Why do we bicker and sneer

Yet, we were once comrades

But history is told by victors

Puppeteers create weapons of warfare far more lethal than bullets

They live in our heads

Enslave our minds

Corrupt our very souls

Till we can't recognize ourselves

Divide and conquer
So we argue that Africans sold their people
But in that story
There were no winners
Just slaves
Whether slaves of the motherland
Or slaves in a foreign land
We were all slaves
This tragic tale of pain and loss
Is span Again and Again and Again
Across time and distance

They had said this sacred ground was paradise
But it was a lie to lure us here
This is a land where
Black Mothers bury Black sons
Cops meant to protect eradicate
Black sons criminalized
Stripped of Innocence on the playground
It's not enough that they kill your sons
Now they must have ours too
They mock us

Make us labor in vain
Only to Keep their knees on our sons neck
Press until they shout I can't breath

In this fight
There is no African-American
Nigerian, jamaican, Kenyan or Ghanaian
For here we cry the same cry
That the fruits of our wombs may bloom
That they might outlive us
For on this knees I sired him
And in this arms held him
And by this hands I will fight for him
Mother to mother
Bonded by trauma
Haunted my the cloud that seeks to take our men
Our sons
So sister, I ask
Will we be comdrads once more
Take this fight to the streets
Legislate it in law
That they may know
That we are mothers of the Black people

Work Sample List

1. *The Tourist*

Poem | Performed at the Umoja Graduation, University of Washington Tacoma (2022); Creative Colloquy Reading

The Tourist is a reflective poem that challenges common misconceptions about Africa. Originally written in a University of Washington poetry class, it was selected for performance at the 2022 Umoja Graduation—an event honoring Black student excellence—and later featured at a Creative Colloquy literary reading.

2. *Coins*

Poem | Performed at the Daima Co-creative Cultural Talent Show (2024)

Coins is a spoken word piece exploring the shared struggles and connections between the African Diaspora and Black Americans. It was performed live at the 2023 Daima Cultural Festival, a celebration of African and diasporic arts and culture. 🌸

Link to Event performance:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/A2DI5cV4jr8?si=T3UG6EUNp1eNv3Tm>

Performed at: 2:15:44 - 2:19:31