

A photograph of a young man, Ryan Jones, performing on stage. He is wearing a white baseball cap and a blue and white long-sleeved shirt. He is smiling broadly and looking down, possibly at a guitar or keyboard. A microphone is positioned in front of him. The background is dark with some stage lights visible.

# RYAN JONES

#GOHOMERYAN

An award winning spoken word artist and poet, **Ryan J.** is what happens when passion, love, and black boy joy are allowed to exist in the same space.



Ryan J. is an internationally touring spoken word artist based out of Atlanta, GA. Recognized as a fresh and innovative voice throughout the poetry community, Ryan J. is ranked 13th in the world for spoken word, was a member of the 2018 National Poetry Slam Group Piece Finals Champion Team, Art Amok, and has amassed over 870,000 video views across several social media sites (such as Facebook, YouTube, and etc.)

Ryan's work has been featured on video platforms such as Write About Now and HomeGrown Poetry. His work has also appeared on NPR's City Lights, Mercer University's ESPN promotions, Mi Dulce Fortaleza, and The Lit & Bruised Podcast among many others.

Ryan is a 2018 Cave Canem Fellow, a 2018 Individual World Poetry Slam Finalist, the 2018 Art Amok Slam Champion, and a 2018 Blackberry Peach Poetry Prize Winner. You may also recognize Ryan from the Season 2 Finale of BET's The Quad.



Ranging from breakup voicemails from the Earth to time-traveling zombies, Ryan brings audiences into the folds of a universe of his own construction, where he gives both scathing and insightful perspective on topics such as police brutality, masculinity, mental health, and black culture.

"Ryan Jones exudes black boy joy. His work is vulnerable and refreshing. He addresses toxic masculinity with both bravery and gentleness and dares to tell his own truth."

- **Ashlee Haze**, 2016 & 2018 Queen of the South Poetry Slam Champion, 2017 NACA Nationals Most Booked Artist

"Ryan J's poetry is electric and filled with all the love, joy, frustration, pride, and softness that accumulates when creativity bonds with the reality of being Black in America. Profound and thought provoking, Ryan's poetry will buzz in your ears and leave a conversation on the tip of your tongue."

- **Theresa Davis**, 2011 Women of the World Poetry Slam Champion

"If you want to see the possibilities of youth and maturity, of sensitivity and strength, rendered in language, you need to see Ryan on stage. I've watched him absolutely disable an audience with laughter and in the next moment have them hushed, hanging on his next words. You should hear those words. They're good words."

- **Myke Johns**, Radio Producer, 90.1 FM WABE, Co-Producer of WRITE CLUB Atlanta





# midnight

And it is here that grown black boys bloom gardens. that we learn to bury ourselves in the joy of planting, rather than the relief of the harvest. That we open our mouths to cough out bouquets to lay at the feet of triumph.

All of which is a pretentious metaphor for the fact that it is 12AM at a bar in Spokane, Washington. We are laughing, two grown black boys blooming gardens. When liberal white man enters the conversation like a wild hog, gnaws at whatever sanctity we had grown here. "Are you two going to fight?" He snorts.

And it is here, that I realize black bodies aren't allowed to be soil; that they will always see us as bedrock, inflexible things, ready to suffocate each other at a moment's notice.

And it is here, that I want to curl my fist into the tightest seed, and reap what I sow into his teeth, that I want pluck my joy from the stem of his throat, let him know that these fists have only ever buried white men like him. Have only ever swallowed their bones and ground them into fertilizer for the next day.

And it here, that I manage to use this sharp tongue to till into the dirtied air, the words "no, I know you may believe our joy to be the most aggressive of ripenings. Maybe the way we show too much tooth, or root ourselves to one another scares you. But tonight, we are nothing but two grown black boys blooming gardens."

All of which is a pretentious metaphor for the fact that we did not let him rob us of this moment. To celebrate one another. To be happy. To grow.





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