



Proclamation



FRED JOINER DAY

WHEREAS, the Town of Carrboro established the position of poet laureate in 2002 to enhance the reading, writing, and appreciation of poetry in the social and civic life of Carrboro; and

WHEREAS, Carrboro's current poet laureate, Fred Joiner, was appointed in 2019 and has served the town for three years, service that has included membership on the Carrboro Poets Council, which organizes the annual West End Poetry Festival; and

WHEREAS, also in 2019, Fred was selected as a Laureate Fellow of the Academy of American Poets, one of only thirteen poets chosen from across the United States for their literary merit to "enable them to undertake meaningful, impactful, and innovative projects that engage their fellow residents, including youth, with poetry, helping to address issues important to their communities, as well as create new work"; and

WHEREAS, Fred's kindness and humble spirit are community treasures; and

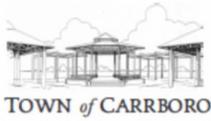
WHEREAS, Fred is an active student of history—whether visiting the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama, with his church family, or reading and sharing insightful books like *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*—as well as a student of the writing of prose and poetry as a mirror of things that were, things that are, and things that are yet to come; and

WHEREAS, Fred's own poetry choruses with references to Black history, hope, trauma, and tragedy, which echo in his poem, "Seven Ways of Looking at Black Flowers":

Against a sky white
Like a fist full of Sea
Island cotton the sky raining
Blood on black flowers

In our world
The tongue speaks
Only a binary song, always a black
Flowering problem, against a white
Canvas—blood in between

AND WHEREAS, Fred is known for carrying a suitcase of his favorite, well-worn poetry books to share with poets and nonpoets; and



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WHEREAS, Fred has continued the tradition of opening meetings of the Town Council by reciting his own and others' poems, poems that inform and inspire the Council as well as the audience both present and tuned in; and

WHEREAS, during his term, Fred has organized poetry readings at Epilogue Books and curated storytelling and creative writing workshops with people experiencing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, Fred served as the chair of the Orange County Arts Commission and helped spearhead the creation of an arts space in the Eno River Mill in Hillsborough to support artists and other creative people in our community; and

WHEREAS, Fred has been at the peak of the artistic world of Washington, DC, serving on the boards of nonprofit organizations such as the American Poetry Museum and starting the Center for Poetic Thought; and

WHEREAS, in addition to publishing in numerous poetry publications, Fred was the winner of the Divine Comedy Poetry Contest sponsored by the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art; and

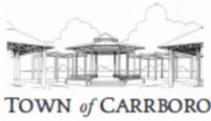
WHEREAS, the true place of Fred's heart is his faith in the Black experience, like the street preacher in his poem, "Sermon on the 94":

"Hold on!" he speaks
talks himself
out of a stumble,
still preaching his sermon
to the day's weary

he stood there, as if
waiting for his word
to take root

waiting for flames
to reveal themselves,
refusing to be
shut up in marrow.

he was speaking to me
his message did what
all good sermons do



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met me at the cross
roads, moved me
beyond doubt

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Damon Seils, mayor of the Town of Carrboro, North Carolina, do hereby proclaim Tuesday, December 6, 2022, to be Fred Joiner Day in Carrboro, in gratitude for Fred Joiner's leadership and service as poet laureate of Carrboro and his invaluable contributions to the life and spirit of our community.

This the 2nd day of December 2022.



Damon Seils
Damon Seils, Mayor