

## MFA@FLA ALUMNA NATALIE J. GRAHAM WINS CAVE CANEM POETRY PRIZE



MFA@FLA alumna Dr. Natalie J. Graham has been selected as the winner of the [2016 Cave Canem Poetry Prize](#). Her manuscript, *Begin With a Failed Body*, was chosen as the winner by poet Kwame Dawes and will be published by The University of Georgia Press in the fall of 2017. In addition to this prestigious award and publication, she will receive a cash prize of \$1,000.

“The collection contains poems that are often dark — reimagining iconic religious, literary, and historical figures,” she said in an [interview](#) with the *Los Angeles Sentinel*. “They imagine a haunted Southern landscape where history is inescapable. When they speak of nation, religion or family, they often ruminate on the individual body’s frailty in the face of these larger, sturdier structures.”

A native of Gainesville, Florida, [Dr. Graham](#) is currently assistant professor of African American Studies at California State University, Fullerton. In addition to her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Florida, she earned a Ph.D. in American Studies from Michigan State University. Dr. Graham's creative and critical works center on the exploration of black and southern identities as they are performed, marketed, and consumed in popular culture. She is particularly interested in these intersections as they relate to the rhetoric of hip-hop, contemporary poetry, and placemaking. Dr. Graham specializes in Black Popular Music, Black Masculinity and Identity Performance, and Black Poetics. Her poems and essays have been published in the academic quarterly *Callaloo*, *New England Review*, *Valley Voices: A Literary Review* and *Southern Humanities Review*.

The Cave Canem Foundation was created in 1996 by Toi Derricotte and Cornelius Eady to remedy the underrepresentation of African American poets in the literary landscape. Previous winners of the Cave Canem prize include Pulitzer Prize winner Tracy K. Smith, Guggenheim Fellow and editor of the *Harvard Review* Major Jackson, and United States Poet Laureate Natasha Tretheway.