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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

MAYOR LONDON BREED NAMES GENNY LIM AS SAN FRANCISCO'S POET LAUREATE

Lim, the first Chinese American poet to serve in this role, will be the City's ninth Poet Laureate

San Francisco, CA — Mayor London N. Breed and City Librarian Michael Lambert today announced that Genny Lim has been named San Francisco's Poet Laureate, the ninth artist in City history to hold the title. Lim was appointed by Mayor Breed after being nominated by an eight-member Selection Committee comprised of past Poets Laureate, City officials, and members of the Bay Area poetry and literary community. She will succeed Tongo Eisen-Martin.

"I am honored to appoint Genny as San Francisco's first Chinese American Poet Laureate, who is paving the way for future generations to follow in her footsteps," said **Mayor London Breed**. "I applaud her vision to bring people together through her poetry and work and look forward to watching Genny grow into this role that undoubtedly will help uplift our City. She is a shining example of the richness of San Francisco's heritage, and I know Genny will leave so many hearts and minds changed for the better during her tenure."

Genny (Genevieve) Lim, born and raised in Chinatown, is the second-generation daughter of Chinese immigrants. A graduate of San Francisco State and Columbia University, she has been widely awarded and published. Among her notable achievements is being named the SF Jazz Poet Laureate in 2017-2018. She was also recently honored by the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation for the *Spirit of Angel Island* award.

"It is truly a great honor to have been selected as the first Chinese American to serve as San Francisco Poet Laureate. My appointment comes with a sense of profound pride. Growing up in postwar San Francisco Chinatown, as the seventh child of Chinese immigrants once detained at the Angel Island Immigration Detention Center, I have an acute awareness of city residents who function dually as both insiders and outsiders," said **Poet Laureate Genny Lim**. "This is the city where people, such as my immigrant parents, come to dream, explore and reinvent themselves. My vision is to help reinvigorate the city through the healing vehicle of poetry. Poetry is a way to better understand the world."

Lim is the first Chinese American woman appointed to the position and noted her inspiration as an activist for social justice from the late Janice Mirikitani, the City's first Asian American Poet Laureate. She is the author of the poetry collections *Winter Place* (1989), *Child of War* (2003) and *Paper Gods and Rebels* (2013); the children's book *Wings for Lai-Ho* (1982); and the plays *Paper Angels* (1978) and *Bitter Cane* (1989), among others. Her play, *Paper Angels*, about



Chinese immigrants detained on Angel Island, premiered at the Asian American Theater Company in 1980 and was presented on PBS's American Playhouse in 1985, garnering the James Wong Howe Award by AAPAA, Los Angeles and Best Site Specific Production at the SF Fringe Festival at Portsmouth Square, Chinatown in 2010.

Her work appears in *The Politics of Life: Four Plays by Asian American Women* (1993), the *Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States* (1995), and *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island* (1980). Lim is the winner of the 1981 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation. In 1982, she founded a theater company, Paper Angels Productions, now known as Theatre XX, a company that performs experimental theater. Lim has taught at the New College of California, and her papers are held at UC Santa Barbara.

"To read Genny Lim's poetry is to become steeped in the history of San Francisco," said **City Librarian Michael Lambert**. "In her verse, she gives voice to immigrants who came ashore here and established essential communities yet lived silent lives. Her passion for building meaningful connections and deeper understanding through poetry today is contagious. I'm excited to see her vision come to fruition in the next three years as Poet Laureate."

As the Poet Laureate, Lim will deliver an inaugural address at the San Francisco Public Library and participate in community-based poetry programs that reflect and honor the diversity of San Francisco. She will also lead poetry-centered events in collaboration with the Library, Friends of the San Francisco Public Library, the San Francisco Arts Commission and community partners, including Youth Speaks and Litquake.

To qualify for San Francisco's Poet Laureate, applicants must be San Francisco residents and have a substantial body of published work, including at least one full length book and 20 or more published poems in established publications, print or online, over the past five years.

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