

## Poetry page Featuring Madison's Poet Laureate, Fabu

### I Am A Man: Mr. Eugene Clemons by Fabu

we come from Mississippi to Memphis  
seekin more life  
better schools, money to enjoy  
leavin "nigga" and sharecroppin behind.

at first a city job was real good  
best was the city benefits  
what i care i'm a garbage man  
been cleanin after white folks a long time.

trotted eight hours behind a truck  
white man at the wheel  
better than a mule's backside  
and the chokin dust from dry fields.

city money didn't stop growin shame  
bile in my throat bein called a boy  
I AM A MAN in 1968  
i want to drive that garbage truck too.

we call on Dr. King for help  
with the stalled sanitation strike  
he answered, we marched,  
were beaten then he was murdered.

Lawd have mercy  
the price was high  
for poor, black, mistreated trash men  
to have the equal right to drive a garbage truck.



#### **A note from the poet**

I met Mr. Eugene Clemons when he was a striking garbage man in The Sanitation Strike of 1968. I was a little girl when my Mom took us to his home to hear first-hand what was happening with the strike. I remember his eloquence and passion as he talked about their horrible working conditions and how proud it felt to stand up for himself with other Black men. I also remember Mr. Clemons crying when Dr. King was assassinated. The City of Memphis ended the strike and workers won equal rights but no one wanted the strike to cost Dr. King his life. As a little girl in Memphis, I watched history unfold.

## Madison names new Poet Laureate

MADISON – Mayor Dave Cieslewicz recently announced that Fabu Carter-Brisoo (professionally known as Fabu) has agreed to serve as Madison's Poet Laureate. She is the third person to hold the volunteer position. Fabu will receive a Mayoral Proclamation declaring her to be the Poet Laureate prior to her official start date, January 21, 2008.

"Fabu was chosen for this honorary position in recognition of her years as a major figure in Madison's literary arts movement," said Mayor Dave Cieslewicz. "She has inspired great interest in poetry, reading and writing in Madison in especially among the women's community, school-aged children and communities of color."

Professor Daniel Kunene wrote in his letter of recommendation, "Fabu is a gifted writer, especially of poetry, and she uses this skill very effectively to promote her social activism as she serves children in disadvantaged communities. She engages young minds with her poetry, encouraging them to get involved by writing their own poems and/or stories. In that way she helps them to come to grips with their difficult situations." He also wrote, "Fabu...is a kind, gentle person, with a sense of humor and a beautiful smile. Her personality inspires confidence and a sense of security. At the same time she commands respect and authority through the sheer dignity of her presence. All of which shows her to be a person with leadership qualities."

Madison's first Poet Laureate, John Tuschen, was appointed in 1977 by then Mayor Paul Soglin and remained Poet Laureate for over 20 years. Fabu succeeds Madison's second Poet Laureate, Andrea Musher, who is retiring after six years of dedicated service to our community. Former Mayor Susan Bauman originally appointed Musher in 2001.

Fabu's appointment follows last night's Common Council decision to formalize Madison's long-standing Poet Laureate position and to add the Poet Laureate Program to the Madison Arts Commission. The decision to formalize the position under the Madison Arts Commission is intended to create greater visibility for the Poet Laureate, poetry, and literary arts in general.

Previous Poet Laureates were appointed at the discretion of the Mayor, similar to commission appointments. Now, the Madison Arts Commission and the new Poet Laureate will work in the coming months to establish policies and a selection process for subsequent Poet Laureates.

On Sunday, Jan. 20, from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m., there will be a reception and poetry reading celebrating Fabu's inauguration at the Madison Central Library, 201 West Mifflin Street. Fabu will read, as will other notable area bards, including outgoing Poet Laureate, Andrea Musher. The reception is free and open to the public. All are welcome to come and share in honoring Fabu as Madison's new Poet Laureate.

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