

BALTIMORE'S  
19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

city  
lit  
fest  
ival

Reimagined II



# HOW WE Break Free: CONFRONTING HARD TRUTHS

A MONTH-LONG LIVE AND VIRTUAL CELEBRATION  
FOR READERS AND WRITERS WITH A DAYLONG  
PROGRAM ON SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2022



OUR PARTNERS:



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#citylitfest2022 | @citylitproject | @citylitproject | CityLitProject | The CityLit Festival is a FREE event. [www.citylitproject.org](http://www.citylitproject.org)

CITYLIT  
PROJECT

TUESDAY, MARCH 1

## NAVIGATING SOLITUDE

VIRTUAL

This session examines the many ways we manage isolation. Leaning into the third year of the pandemic has left many sheltering alone with minimum contact with loved ones or working remotely, away from daily interactions with others. Loneliness can be a state of being even separate from the dynamics of a pandemic. Loneliness due to a situation versus how one is feeling alone will be explored. Graphic memoirist **Kristen Radtke**, author of *Seek You: A Journey Through American Loneliness* discusses her work that defies categorization as it examines the rarely discussed, silent epidemic of loneliness. Her work is a piercing exploration of it, the role technology plays, and what happens to us when we disengage, forcing us to confront our own loneliness to feel less alone.

Joining her in conversation is artist, writer **Natalie Eve Garrett**, editor of the forthcoming *The Lonely Stories: 22 Celebrated Writers on the Joys & Struggles of Being Alone* with essays from authors such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Lena Dunham, Jesmyn Ward, Melissa Febos, and Anthony Doerr. The essay collection explores the idea of being alone or feeling unseen, whether one is emboldened by solitude or secretly long for it. This essay collection has been called celebratory, thoughtful, and affirming, and reveals the complexities of an emotion we've all felt, our skin hunger, the vast need for connection, and the clarity solitude can bring. Multi-disciplinary artist and educator **Nguyễn Khôi Nguyễn** of *Bittersweet: A Pandemic Sketchbook*, which premiered on the web, and was supported by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, will moderate. These assembled authors address loneliness in several forms, and how solitude can serve us. **The Writer's Room** with graphic author Kristen Radtke follows the main session.

**7:00 - 8:00 pm: Zoom Meeting**

**8:00 - 8:30 pm: Zoom Meeting: The Writer's Room\***

TUESDAY, MARCH 8

## WRITING, REVISING, & EDITING YOUR STORY

VIRTUAL

Some of the nation's literary finest discuss revision, editing, the bold undertaking of writing the body through trauma and desire, and all things writing in a 90-minute craft intensive. A poet, two novelists, a memoirist, offer a frank talk on craft and editing towards publication, a practical, layered approach to revision, the radical power of personal narrative, and writing as a form of freedom to write the story of our bodies. They will discuss the challenges of their own work, and stepping up the truth in their roles as writers, fear be damned. Novelist **Matt Bell** in his new work, *Refuse to Be Done*, deemed a bible for the revision process, offers sage advice about attentiveness, and an appreciation for the often overlooked. Girlhood's **Melissa Febos** sparks a chord in *Body Work*, drawing on her own journey through addiction and recovery, what it means to write the intimate, 'confessional' story, and find your own liberation. The history of a place with language that balances "witness and wound," publisher and poet **Dean Bartoli** Smith's *Baltimore Sons* grounds us in the all too familiar place of "life-class, race, and violence." **Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai's** first novel in English, *The Mountains Sing*, which NPR called "a song of many voices," a familial exploration told through the lens of how personal memories write the history of a moment, and who of us can say otherwise. Any one of these authors could offer their own master class in penning a tale of life as we know it. A not-to-be-missed event. **The Writer's Room** with Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai follows the main session.

**7:00 - 8:30 pm: Zoom Meeting**

**8:30 - 9:30 pm: Zoom Meeting: The Writer's Room\***

SATURDAY, MARCH 12: DAY-LONG PROGRAM

10:00 am - 4:00 pm EST | LIVE AND/OR VIRTUAL

**10:00AM - 12:00PM VIA ZOOM**

**One-on-One 30-Minute Editorial Critique Sessions with Karen Houppert, Bret McCabe, Rosalia Scalia, Laura Ballou, Chelsea Lemon Fetzer, and Nora Belblidia** (\$10)

VIRTUAL

Fiction. Memoir. Creative Nonfiction. Poetry. Memoir. Screenplay. Script.

*Guidelines: Five pages of poetry OR prose  
Double-spaced | 12 pt. font | 1 inch margin  
Numbered pages | Name must be included  
Manuscripts must be received in advance*

<https://clf2021-edit-critique.eventbrite.com>

**10:00AM - 11:30AM**

**WHEELER AUDITORIUM, 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR**

**Becoming American**

LIVE AND VIRTUAL

CityLit Project joined author and curator **Saima Adil Sitwat** to present 'Becoming American,' a series of short vignettes & videos of ten immigrant women who call Maryland home. This session engages a different assembly of women designed to speak authentically about their American experience. In *American Muslim: An Immigrant's Journey*, Sitwat wrote of her own life in search of home and belonging, which prompted a desire to dismantle normalizing the trauma of those who undergo the process of migration. Joining her is bestselling novelist **Nadia Hashimi** whose novel *Sparks Like Stars*, speaks to returning "home" in Afghanistan to learn family truths, torn between reinvention and remembrance. **Eman Quotah's** novel *Bride of the Sea* reveals the constraints of women, colliding cultures, and the life of a child torn between loved ones in two countries, Saudi Arabia and America. As a child, Maryland State Delegate **Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk** emigrated from the Dominican Republic to the U.S. with her single mother and sister. She has represented Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties as state delegate for ten years and found her calling in working for the rights of people on the margins. **Mariam**

**Thakkar** immigrated from India in 1984, and over years of being an immigrant hijabi female business owner, and the mother of three daughters, she is committed to making room for other immigrants at every table where she has a seat.

**12:00PM - 1:30PM**

**CREATIVE ARTS CENTER, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR**  
**The "Real" Business of Writing Creative Nonfiction (You Can't Make It Up)**

LIVE

Four working essayists and journalists feed you the facts of writing creative nonfiction. What it takes to represent, research, explore and write the "real." How to merge the boundaries of fiction, poetry with accuracy and research, and anchor it in truth and narrative storytelling. Artist-archivist, writer, curator, **Angela Carroll** released *Exploring Presence: African American Artists in the Upper South*, a catalog and short docuseries that surveys under-recognized artists in the DMV region. **Rebekah Kirkman** is the managing editor of *BmoreArt* and frequently explores the tensions and dimensions of power and community through the arts. **Ron Cassie** is a senior editor at Baltimore magazine, winning national magazine awards for his work around climate change, the opioid epidemic, and the death of Freddie Gray. Award-winning writer and moderator **Kristina R. Gaddy's** debut nonfiction book *Flowers in the Gutter*, tells the true story of the teenage Edelweiss Pirates who fought the Nazis. Her forthcoming *Well of Souls: Music, Dance, Spirituality, and the Early Banjo* is a literary exploration of the little known history of the banjo in the Americas.

**12:00PM - 1:30PM**

**WHEELER AUDITORIUM, 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR**

**Black Girls: Bone Black & Breathing**

LIVE AND VIRTUAL

Titled in the spirit of feminist **bell hooks**, this panel of Black women discuss the interior and public lives of Black girlhood, and their new



works of poetry, film, story, and the many ways they see themselves and come of age. Poet/filmmaker **Nia June** made her directorial debut with “A Black Girl’s Country” recently acquired by the Baltimore Museum of Art as a part of their permanent collection. Founder of *Well Read Black Girl’s* **Glory Edim** presents her newly released work, *On Girlhood: 15 Stories from the Well-Read Black Girl Library*, which in its starred review Kirkus Review states is “an expansive, decades-spanning view of Black girlhood.” *Breath Better Spent: Living Black Girlhood* is the recent work of scholar

and award-winning poet **DaMaris B. Hill, Ph.D** called a narrative in verse that “chooses to celebrate and protect the girl she carries.” Novelist **Kai Harris** makes her debut with an ode to adolescence, *What the Fireflies Knew* about family, identity and race. **Jamesha Caldwell**, co-director of *A Revolutionary Summer* moderates. Quoting Hill – “your mouth is a river that won’t lay still;” Nikki G - “Black love is Black wealth,” and hooks - “dreaming ourselves dark and deep,” embodies the spirit of these books, and the treasures that reside in these stories.

TUESDAY, MARCH 15

### KEEPING IT IN THE HOUSE: A MASTER CLASS WITH KIESE LAYMON

VIRTUAL

This Festival year we offer you one of America’s brightest literary stars for our highly regarded CityLit Master Class. **Kiese Laymon** is a Black, southern writer from Mississippi, the author of the genre-bending novel, *Long Division*, and the essay collection, *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America*. His bestselling memoir, *Heavy: An American Memoir*, was named one of the 50 Best Memoirs of the Past 50 Years by The New York Times. Laymon recently won the 2022 NAACP Image Award for Literary Fiction with *Long Division*.



In this workshop, we will explore the necessity of investigating virtue and villainy in our writings about home. We will do reading and writing exercises that push us to consider the harm we might have experienced and the harm we caused at home. How does writing through virtue and villainy with particularity make narrative discovery possible? We will also explore the importance of revision. Writers of all levels should come ready to practice senses they don’t typically write through.

From *Heavy*, “For the first time in my life, I realized telling the truth was way different from finding the truth, and finding the truth had everything to do with revisiting and rearranging words ... I knew, looking at all those words, that memories were there, I just had to rearrange, add, subtract, sit, and sift until I found a way to free the memory.”

Each year CityLit offers a Master Class giving attendees 90 minutes to engage with a celebrated author about writing. Meaningful discussions about craft combined with a lecture, Q & A, exercises, and handouts are provided by some of the greatest authors of our time, in both virtual and live spaces. Past presenting authors include **George Saunders, Susan Straight, Dinaw Mengestu, Kia Corthron, and Yrsa Daley-Ward**. They have all graced our stage.

7:00 - 8:30 pm: Zoom Meeting (\$10 Registration)

ASSOC. OF WRITERS & WRITING PROGRAMS CONFERENCE - MARCH 23 -26

TUESDAY, MARCH 29

### HOW WE GET FREE: THE BIRTH OF PROMISE

LIVE @ THE MOTOR HOUSE - THEATER (120 W. NORTH AVENUE, BALTIMORE, MD)

A Festival ‘Finale’ of sorts designed to leave attendees perched on the wings of hope and possibility, to take you on a spiritual high note of breaking chains. The first half hour serves as a coaching session for writers taking on new or large projects followed by a meaningful conversation with three game changers, authors who will guide you on ways to declutter space and closets, for the good coming, for ways to embrace self-examination, how “you can be a mess and a messenger,” and how to navigate life with a sureness, and give yourself permission to glow. Fortune 100 executive coach and meditation expert **Kristoffer Carter** leads the evening as a gift to writers or any one working to call themselves one, as he sets the tone and shows you how to transcend the disruption of daily life, and step into your power. *Permission to Glow - A Spiritual Guide to Epic Leadership*, called a transformational guide to conscious leadership, reveals the 4 Permissions that offer you the fuel to glow in your darkness, and laws of personal change.

### KEYNOTE

2:00PM - 3:30PM

WHEELER AUDITORIUM, 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR

The 1619 Project with Creator **Nikole Hannah-Jones**  
in Conversation with **Martha S. Jones**

LIVE AND VIRTUAL

This year’s 19th CityLit Festival highlights creator and Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist **Nikole Hannah-Jones** of *The 1619 Project: The New Origin Story and Born On The Water*, introduced in 2019 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the beginning of slavery in a major multimedia initiative in *The New York Times Magazine*. Hannah-Jones brings this national, invigorating conversation about the contributions of Black Americans and how the legacy of slavery informs our lives to Baltimore with author, historian and contributor **Martha S. Jones**. This partnership event is designed to engage and bring educators, community, leaders, students and creatives into a mission of discovery, embarking on conversations beyond the Festival.

3:30 pm - 4:00 pm: Book Signing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

**Nikole Hannah-Jones** has spent her career investigating racial inequality and injustice, and her reporting has earned her the MacArthur Fellowship, known as the Genius grant, a Peabody Award, two George Polk Awards and the National Magazine Award three times. Hannah-Jones also earned the John Chancellor Award for Distinguished Journalism and was named Journalist of the Year by the National Association of Black Journalists and the Newswomen’s Club of New York. In 2020 she was inducted into the Society of American Historians and in 2021, into the North Carolina Media Hall of Fame. Nikole was named as one of the Most Influential People in the in 2021 by Time Magazine. In 2016, Hannah-

Jones co-founded the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting, which seeks to increase the number of reporters and editors of color. She holds a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from the University of North Carolina and earned her Bachelor of Arts in History and African-American studies from the University of Notre Dame. Hannah-Jones is the Knight Chair in Race and Journalism at Howard University, where she has founded the Center for Journalism & Democracy.

**Martha S. Jones** (*Vanguard*) is a prize-winning author and the Society of Black Alumni Presidential Professor at Johns Hopkins University. She was recently named one of 25 *Black Marylanders to Watch* by the Baltimore Sun.



Named a modern-day renaissance woman, **Christine Platt**, *The Afrominimalist's Guide to Living with Less*, examines how childhood experiences and expectations manifest in adulthood, the intricate play between needs and wants, putting readers at ease when we have too much stuff "with humor and a heavy dose of 'been-there, bought-that, never-worn-it' empathy." **Chloe Dulce Louvouezo** of podcast fame of the same name of her work - *Life I Swear: Intimate Stories from Black Women on Identity, Healing & Self-Trust*, brings us a mixture of poignant essays and stunning photography. *Life, I Swear* chronicles transformation and growth by and for modern-day Black women, a work of storytelling and recognition and a return home to self, through heartwork and grace. Cultural worker, all around advocate, and Baltimore's Godmother **Alanah Nicole** moderates this special uplifting Festival session. The night is designed to spiritual lift you out of two years of hard times and suffering. You deserve to be in this space.

**7:00 - 7:30 pm: The Writers Room\* with Kristoffer Carter**

**7:30 - 9:00 pm: The Main Event**

FRIDAY, APRIL 1

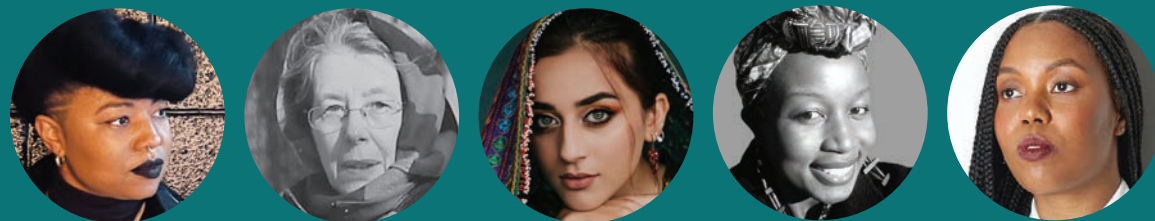
### KILLING RAGE: A FESTIVAL OF POETS

LIVE @ BUSBOYS AND POETS - BALTIMORE (324 ST. PAUL STREET, BALTIMORE, MD)

In a nod to feminist **bell hooks** and the beginning of April as **National Poetry Month**, **CityLit Festival Reimagined II** ends with *Killing Rage: A Festival of Poets* and we're bringing you some of the best this region and beyond has to offer with featured guest poet **Jasmine Mans**, whose latest collection *Black Girl, Call Home* is a love letter to Black daughters. The set opens with indie vocal artist, and a treasured member of the CityLit Fam, **Like Water** who sets the tone and gifts us with the beauty of her jeweled voice. For the first time, CityLit gets to publicly celebrate the 2019 Harriss Poetry Prize winner, **Burgi Zenhausern**, whose prize-winning work *Behind Normalcy* (seems a fitting title for today's times) is "an opportunity to explore the tense and probing questions we hide behind and hide from in polite society" ... "drawing our attention to the urgency of both grief and hope." The 2020 D.C. Youth Poet Laureate, and six-time Poetry Grand Slam Champion, **Marjan Naderi** elevates the Muslim community by sharing personal narratives as an Afghan-American woman using fearless poetry to help others who feel disconnected from the world. Award-winning poet **Arao Ameny** is a Maryland-based writer and poet from Lira, Lango region, Northern Uganda where she calls home. Her first published poem, "Home Is a Woman," won the Southern Review's 2020 James Olney Award. **Dora Malech's** latest collection of poetry, *Flourish* is said to engage "in a project of enlargement steeped in granular attentiveness ... Dazzled and mournful often at the same time, Malech's poems keep asking, "you - will you attend?" Multidisciplinary, performance artist, poet **Bobbi Rush**, called "the creative architect of her own universe" where her poetry reads like meditations. NAACP Image Award-winning poet **Truth Thomas** serves as Master of Ceremonies for the final event of this Festival season.

**7:00 - 7:30 pm: Musical Guest Artist: Like Water**

**7:30 - 9:00 pm: A Rage of Poets**



CityLit Project has relied heavily on partnerships that elevate literature so we might increase our understanding of others. This year these new partnerships allowed us to engage in a more meaningful practice, placing books and difficult conversations at the center while living through times of uncertainty married with hope. A HUGE THANK YOU to an ever-growing community of LitLovers. We couldn't do CityLit without them. The biggest thanks would be if you - attendee - explored their websites and their missions, followed them and supported them in their endeavors to shed light on our humanity.

#### Maryland Centers for Creative Classrooms

envision arts education experiences that uplift individuals and communities to share their stories and beliefs and an arts education landscape that fosters generous sharing between students, educators, artists, communities, and organizations.

**mc3arts.org**

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**Maryland Humanities**, home of the Maryland Center for the Book, creates and supports bold experiences through free educational programming. Our programs use the humanities - history, literature, philosophy, ethics, the arts - to foster understanding among people with diverse perspectives and encourage an open-minded exchange of ideas to strengthen our ability to interact meaningfully.

**www.mdhumanities.org**

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**Arts Education in Maryland Schools** is a statewide non-profit based in Baltimore City. AEMS envisions a public education system in Maryland that supports, cultivates, nurtures, and uplifts ALL students' creativity through a robust arts education experience so that they can thrive in a healthy society. AEMS is committed to ensuring that all students in the state of Maryland have access to high quality arts education by mobilizing power to communities through advocacy programs, professional and leadership programs, and resource building and sharing.

**https://aems-edu.org**

📍 @artsedmaryland | 📍 @artsedmaryland  
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**Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance** is a leading nonprofit provider of services to artists and cultural organizations in the region. Whether they are emerging or established, mainstream or underground, grassroots or institutional, GBCA believes in unifying and strengthening all members of the creative community. We do this through marketing, education, financial support, and developing innovative programs that increase equity in the cultural community and beyond.

GBCA's mission is to create equity and opportunity In, Through, and For arts and humanities.

**www.Baltimoreculture.org**

📍 @BMoreCulture | 📍 @BaltimoreCulture  
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**Motor House** is a creative crossroads rooted in the culture of Baltimore. We are a non-profit arts hub, gallery, and performance space that encourages new visions, bold experiments, and emerging voices to celebrate the artistry of our city.

**https://www.motorhousebaltimore.com/**

📍 @motorhousebaltimore | 📍 Motor House Baltimore

**Busboys and Poets - Baltimore** is a community where racial and cultural connections are consciously uplifted...a place to take a deliberate pause and feed your mind, body and soul...a space for art, culture and politics to intentionally collide... we believe that by creating such a space we can inspire social change and begin to transform our community and the world.

**busboysandpoets.com**

📍 @busboysandpoets | 📍 @busboysandpoets  
📍 busboysandpoets | 📍 busboysandpoets

**BmoreArt** is the leading resource for contemporary art and culture in the Baltimore region, a platform for creative and critical discussions. We apply editorial and community building capabilities including digital publication, a biannual print journal founded in 2015, community events, lectures, and social media, to further the cultural and economic interests of artists, arts organizations, cultural institutions, and diverse audiences for arts and culture in the region.

**https://bmoreart.com**

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**Joyful Signing** provides communication access solutions to clients nationwide. Our services include American Sign Language (ASL), Trilingual interpretation, CUED Speech, Tactile and Oral interpreting, and Captioning services for the Deaf and hard of hearing community and Reading Services for the Blind. Joyful Signing has been in business since 2009 and we work with hundreds of freelance interpreters. Our success is directly

CONTINUED ON BACK

attributed to our focus on servicing the Deaf and hard of hearing communities by providing quality customer service and taking care of our service providers.

(March 1, 8, 15, 29, & April 1)

<http://www.joyfulsigning.com/>

**insight180** is a brand consulting and design firm that helps forward-thinking businesses and nonprofits clarify, focus and differentiate themselves through brand messaging and design. Lovers of words, the arts, conscious

companies and mission-driven nonprofits, insight180 “adopted” CityLit Project about seven years ago to help amplify their mission.

<https://insight180.com>

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**Sistah With A Bike Travel** was founded by Cestaine Glover who started her travel business after several years of blogging about her travels as a road cyclist.

[sistahwithabikettravel.com](https://sistahwithabikettravel.com) | [justasistahwithabike.com](https://justasistahwithabike.com) (blog)

@justasistahwithabike | @justasistahwithabike

## The Village

CityLit Project recognizes these organizations as part of its Village, local, regional and state-wide organizations that serve readers and writers by displaying their information at signature events and on our website. We realize many individuals and organizations ... bookstores, entrepreneurs, reading series, and more — do their level best to provide services, information, and opportunities to grow and enhance the lives of poets and writers. This is our way of supporting them and amplifying the work of these cultural individuals and institutions.

<https://www.citylitproject.org/about-us/the-village/>

- Artist U
- A Revolutionary Summer
- The Baltimore Review
- Center for Black Literature
- Doerr&Co
- Dance & Bmore: Voices of Carmen
- Furious Flower Poetry Center
- Howard County Poetry & Literature Society
- Iceland Readers Retreat
- Libraries Without Borders
- Maryland Writer’s Association
- Midwest Writing & Editing
- The Modell Lyric
- Passager
- Pen Parentis
- Poe Baltimore, The Edgar Allan Poe House & Museum
- The Poet & The Poem from The Library of Congress
- The Inner Loop
- Writers & Words
- Yellow Arrow Publishing
- Zora’s Den

## SUPPORT CITYLIT PROJECT

CityLit Project is a small, literary nonprofit located in the heart of Baltimore, serving readers and writers since 2004. CityLit Project nurtures the culture of literature, creates enthusiasm for the literary arts, connects a community of avid readers and writers, and designs opportunities for diverse audiences to embrace the literary arts. CityLit is noted for its three signature events, the multi-day CityLit Stage, CityLit Studio: *Writers on Craft, Creativity & Community*, and the CityLit Festival each spring. [citylitproject.org/donate](https://citylitproject.org/donate)

### FESTIVAL PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Schaun Champion (March 12)  
[schaunchampion.com](http://schaunchampion.com)

Christopher Erick (March 2 & April 1)  
[christophererick.com](http://christophererick.com)

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### A SPECIAL NOD TO:

Alysia Lee, Quanice Floyd, Saima  
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Laurie Anderson, Baltimore Office for the Promotion of the Arts, Maryland Humanities, National Endowment for the Arts, American Rescue Plan, Little Patuxent Review with a special thank you to Wendy Rue Walker, & EVERY DONOR AND VOLUNTEER NAMED AND UNNAMED WHO GOT US THROUGH!

**SCAN THE QR CODE ON THE RIGHT TO GIVE FEEDBACK ON THE 19TH ANNUAL CITYLIT FESTIVAL: REIMAGINED II**

