Poem Booth: Calling Upon Self
Curated by John Gavin White

Jun 16 - Sep 11, 2021
Gallery Aferro Poem Booth
Installation
73 Market Street, Newark

GALLERY HOURS
Wednesday - Saturday
12pm - 6pm
and by appointment

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The Poem Booth Project is Gallery Aferro’s new permanent installation that features recorded collections of spoken word poetry especially curated by guest authors and lovers of the written word. The ongoing project combines experimental collaboration with the power of language by inviting poets, spoken word artists, and bards of every style and verse to share an audio recording of their written works in our 1960s-era refurbished phone booth located in the Main Gallery at 73 Market Street.

With the ability to hold a near infinite number of works thanks to the countless phone number combinations available, gallery visitors can enjoy listening to each poem by dialing a specific phone number on the keypad. The phone numbers available are shared via a list of poems featured in a printed “phone book” within the booth for each curated collection.

John Gavin White’s new book I, John de Conqueror: A New Spelling Of My Name is on sale now.
The Calling Upon Self collection includes:

• Fictive Ether by blkcowrie
• Black His Story by Albert E. Cook Jr.
• A Child Who Doesn’t Have Its Own by James C. Ellerbe
• Things You Wanted To Know About The Bronx But Were Afraid To Ask by Ngoma Hill
• For Octavia E. Butler by B. Sharise Moore
• Long Live The ‘P’ Revolution by Anjuli Nunn
• A Mother’s Plea by Ameerah Shabazz-Bilal
• My Son by Ameerah Shabazz-Bilal
• All People Are Different by Kindred Sojourner White
• My Special Kind of Happy by Empathy LaRue White
• Conversations with God Pt. 1 by Shaheed K. Wood

Curated by celebrated author, philosopher and poet John Gavin White, this collection features the voices of 10 spoken word artists, poets and griots called on to call upon themselves as a means for calling out to the greater world in hopes of one day having that call returned.

White’s curation is one of several artistic experiences marking the release of his latest collection of poetry and prose: I, John de Conqueror: A New Spelling Of My Name. Drawing inspiration from writer Zora Neale Hurston’s rendering of the “High John de Conqueror” folktale, the poetry and prose of I, John de Conqueror: A New Spelling Of My Name exists at the parlous intersection of the poetic as a lived philosophy and black male self-recovery.

The former is the philosophy that frames any attempt at a unified treatment of emotion, logic, language and thought against the backdrop of oppression... where the fragmented contemplates wholeness. The latter is when such an attempt is undertaken by, primarily, cisgendered, heterosexual black males as a means of interrogating the historical erasure of their vulnerability as human beings, within a context of perpetual dehumanization.

The poetry and prose of I, John de Conqueror is part and parcel of the author’s self-recovery... ergo the two-part question that centers the entirety of the project: How do I have my life’s passage acknowledged, in a culture with virtually no language for articulating black male trauma and healing — a culture with no paradigms for conceptualizing black men as human beings capable of being harmed by something other than a bullet?

I, John de Conqueror: A New Spelling Of My Name is available on Amazon.com or by request through your favorite indie bookseller.