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**From:** jeffrey E. [jeevacation@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** 12/19/2016 3:01:54 PM  
**To:** Lisa New [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: Thank You from Lisa and Poetry in America

from barnaby -

she could apply, but she should know that there are only a few grants in each round; most projects proposed don't get funding. It is like rolling the dice. what people don't understand is that many grants are not funded not because they are defective in any way, but simply because there is not enough funding to cover even a part of what comes in (there are thousands of applications and hundreds of millions of dollars of requests that go all through different kinds of review; it is hard to know what will make it through because different people make the priority decisions at different stages of review; and it depends what other applications are in the pool in a given cycle). There is no "direct" route anymore.

On Sun, Dec 18, 2016 at 11:36 PM, Lisa New <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Dear  
Jeffrey  
(and please see note at bottom),

This end-of-the-year letter is to catch you up on developments and to report progress made in 2016 by *Poetry in America*, by its associated non-profit production company, Verse Video Education, and by (and with) our new Harvard partner, the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. Whether you are a longstanding adviser and supporter of *Poetry in America*, or you've more recently joined our circle of proponents, your contributions, thought partnership and enthusiasm have made this year's successes possible.

Last fall, I knew this would be a crucial year. Goals for 2016 included moving our co-produced television series, *Poetry in America*, toward a concrete release date (now entering post-production, we launch nationwide in April 2018), converting our six HarvardX MOOC modules into for-credit courses (now complete and being offered by Harvard's Division of Continuing Education), and getting the word out on our first course developed especially for K-12 educators, *Poetry in America for Teachers: The City from Whitman to Hip Hop*. With a mission of creating and distributing the highest-quality humanities content for a wide variety of learners, our projects now rely on a salaried production staff of five, a rotating corps of part timers and contractors, and a growing cohort of Harvard graduate students, undergraduates and interns whom we train in the public-facing humanities. Growing fast, in 2016 we more firmly established Verse Video Education as a nimble and stable producer of humanities-based content (now including an archive of over 120 separate interviews with distinguished discussants), while also defining a forward-looking partnership and growth strategy with Harvard. As 2016 draws to a close, I have much progress to report.

### **Verse Video Education: Independent 501c3**

In April 2016, Verse Video Education, the fledgling production company I'd founded in 2014, received IRS approval and became a 501c3. Now capable of accepting philanthropic contributions, Verse Video Education has also begun to generate revenue by producing high-quality educational media for other institutions. Clients within our first year included Greenwich Country Day School, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Schlesinger Library, Harvard Institute for Global Health, and Project Zero. While philanthropic donations remain essential, work for clients allows us to amplify the impact of philanthropic donations, not only permitting additional investment in our flagship partnerships with WGBH and Harvard, but also fostering development of new partnerships and

projects. These include a video series on poetry and science now running with award-winning magazine *Nautilus*, a collaboration with distinguished poet Robert Pinsky and his Favorite Poem Project, and an expansion of our poetry film series with partners at The Nantucket Project. Advised by a stellar and diversely talented board, Verse Video Education is looking toward sustainability. We are now discussing distribution of new content with a variety of stakeholders, including media providers in China.

### **New Harvard Partner: Bok Center for Teaching and Learning**

Meanwhile, *Poetry in America* has deepened its partnership and formulated a plan for growth going forward at Harvard. This fall, Harvard's Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Mike Smith, endorsed the integration and expansion of my public-facing humanities work within the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. As a Bok Fellow this year, and alongside Bok director Rob Lue in the years to come, I will be working to substantially expand Bok's capacity and resources to train humanists in 21st-century methods of public engagement-- developing courses, digital fellowship opportunities and also securing distribution outlets and partners for content produced in Bok by Harvard humanists. By next year at this time, I will be turning some of my attention beyond poetry (my favorite, but hardly the only humanistic mode of communication!) to create a wider base of humanities materials for use in American schools and other institutions. We will begin integrating and anchoring *Poetry in America* content (on art, sport and play; on the environment; and on health and well being) with content created by others. As I continue to experiment with use of digital media within my residential courses for undergraduates and graduates, I shall also be working with other faculty and graduate students. My work at Bok will also facilitate collaborations between humanists working across the whole university. Projects for 2017 include work with HarvardX on drama and Shakespeare, with Harvard's Center for the Environment, with the Arts and Humanities Initiative at Harvard Medical School, and with several programs within Harvard's Graduate School of Education.

### **Launching in 2017: Our First Course Designed Specifically for Teachers**

Verse Video Education has allocated much of its staff time this year to bringing its first course designed specifically to support the American secondary classroom to completion. *Poetry in America for Teachers: The City from Whitman to Hip Hop* draws on assets created at HarvardX, along with footage captured with our TV partners and independently by Verse Video Education. The resulting course, designed for English, Social Studies, and Arts teachers, as well as for librarians, administrators and others, provides deep content instruction as well as pedagogical training. Common Core aligned, this course, the first of its kind, is now open for enrollment, and will launch January 23rd. We are currently discussing group enrollments with major educational systems and reformers across the nation, and we are also raising scholarship funds for strapped enrollees. Over time, we hope to play a leading role in improving literacy and in strengthening the humanities across the American educational landscape.

### **Airing Nationwide in 2018: Poetry in America, The Television Series**

In May 2016, Verse Video Education was asked by WGBH and American Public Television to expand its television series in development from 8 to 13 episodes, listed below.

*The following episodes are entering post-production:*

**On Edward Hirsch's "Fast Break":** Shaquille O'Neal, Pau Gasol, Shane Battier, Edward Hirsch, and an on-court pick-up basketball chorus filmed at Success Academy Charter School; **On W.H. Auden's "Musee Des Beaux Arts":** Ambassador Samantha Power, David Brooks, Peter Sacks; **On Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays":** Vice President Joe Biden, Elizabeth Alexander, Angela Duckworth, Kevin Young, and a chorus of fathers and sons; **On Carl Sandburg's "Skyscraper":** Frank Gehry, Robert Polito, and a chorus of Young Student Poets; **On Nas's "New York State of Mind":** Nas, Russell Simmons, Salamishah Tillet, Steve Stoute, and a chorus of hip

hop heads; **On Galway Kinnell's "The Grey Heron"**: E.O. Wilson, Robert Hass, Laura McPhee; **On Gwendolyn Brooks's "To Prisoners"**: Anna Deveare Smith, Reginald Dwayne Betts, Li-Young Lee and a chorus of exonerees from the Innocence Project; **On William Carlos Williams's "This Is Just To Say"**: Woody Allen, Jane Hirshfield, Rafael Campo and a chorus of couples young and old; **On Langston Hughes's "Harlem"**: President Bill Clinton, Herbie Hancock, Sonia Sanchez and a chorus of children from Promise Academy; **On Allen Ginsberg's Hymmn from "Kaddish" and "Hum Bom"**: Bono, Juan Felipe Herrera and a chorus of clergy.

*The production of the following episodes will wrap early 2017:*

**On Emily Dickinson's "I cannot dance upon my Toes"**: Cynthia Nixon, Yo Yo Ma, Marie Howe and Bill T. Jones; **On Marianne Moore's "The Fish"**: Jorie Graham, Edward Norton, Conservation International scientists, and the passengers and crew of oceanographic vessel *The Alucia*; **On Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" or Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Four Sonnets."**

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Jeffrey,

*Just a quick note to thank you again for all the help you've given me. The generous contribution you made last year to Verse Video Education is now in use (we've hired our new editor!). Once he helps us to plow through the work of this year, we'll begin to look forward to crafting educational content on the literature of art, sport and play (these materials now including footage from recent shoots with Shaquille O'Neal, Yo Yo Ma, Cynthia Nixon, Bono and others). 100K makes so much possible.*

*But, of course, you've also been a key preceptor as I've learned how --squirming all the way--the sausage really gets made in public television. I can't say I've been entirely successful in taming costs there, but I've been far better armed and more mindful of what they should be after the stern tutorial you administered.*

*Whenever Templeton might be ready to evaluate another application, I'm ready for another proposal for them. I wonder if you might arrange a meeting for me with the famous Barnaby? I can't yet afford a grant writer, and so the time one of these suckers takes makes me think doing more advance reconnaissance is crucial. Would he meet with me? Kosher? I'd also love to meet with the Blacks as I get closer to making content on theatre. I hope that Debra is well.*

*And heard there's another little Jeff in the caribbean...*

Best,

Elisa New  
Powell M. Cabot Professor of American Literature  
Harvard University  
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[REDACTED]

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please note

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