### Award-winning Local Poet, Playwright and Screenwriter to Perform at SMC

"They asked us all to free write

At the time, Youth Speaks was

was sponsoring poetry slams for

someone of Hodge's age. "I just

fell right in with those folks," said

Hodge. "Intensive writing work-

shops after school, slams, open

mics, bridging literature and poetry

— sort of all that was my jive in

with words and with youth have

been constants in her life. After

graduating from Berkeley High,

she went on to finish a degree at the

Gallatin School of Individualized

Study in New York with a focus on

creative writing, non-profit strategy

and hip hop, and a goal of gaining

tools she could bring back to Youth

Speaks and other nonprofits in the

"I took a full gamut of the of-

Hodge's passion for working

www.lamorindaweekly.com

By A.K. Carroll



notables.

Then Chinaka Hodge was a ommendation. freshman at Berkeley High, it's unlikely that the young writer and I free wrote something," said imagined she would one day be Hodge. "They asked if I wanted to featured as a notable alumnus. Yet share and my hand shot up. I was today her face is plastered on one of the first person to go to the front of the bright blue utility boxes outside the classroom. I shared my poem the school, with a simple tribute and I've been hooked ever since." that states: Chinaka Hodge, class of

2002, started writing and perform- the only place in the country that ing poems as an awkward, pimply BHS freshman, and art-making saved her life. She is a playwright, poet and performer. She shares the box with Lonely Island and Joshua Redman, fellow alums and BHS

It was that box that first drew high school." the attention of Rosemary Graham, professor of English and creative writing at Saint Mary's College of California. When Hodge's first book, "Dated Emcees," launched this past spring, she was a featured guest on KQED. Graham heard the program and from that point on, she was determined to get Hodge as a speaker at Saint Mary's.

Thursday, Nov. 10, her hope will be realized as Hodge will come Bay Area. to Saint Mary's for a special public performance and speaking engagement. The event is sponsored by a broad coalition of programs within school of liberal arts and is open to the public. It will take place in the Le Fevre Theater starting at 7:30 pm. Hodge will kick off the evening with selections from "Dated: Emcees" and will finish with a time for Q&A.

It isn't just Hodge's local roots and artistic talent that make her such a prime voice to feature at the college—she received the Phelan Literary Award for emerging Bay Area talent, was a Sundance Feature Film lab Fellow for her script "700th&Int'l.," was Artist in Residence at The Headlands Center for the Arts and has been featured twice on HBO's "Def Poetry" but also her passion for youth and literary arts education.

"Helping young people find their voices is her educational mission," said Graham.

Hodge herself began writing as a very young child. "My father was an educator and had a bunch of rules about what could happen when we got home from school," said Hodge. One of those rules involved Hodge and her siblings writing alongside their father.

"I started with short stories and quickly realized that poems are shorter, so I started writing poems," said Hodge. That was at age six.

By the time Hodge got to high school, writing was second nature. As a freshman at Berkeley High she was an early participant in Youth Speaks/The Living Word Project, a leading literary arts non-profit that was only just starting out. Hodge's participation came at a teacher recplied almost all of it," said Hodge "Even jewelry making."

Hodge has worked with Youth Speaks/The Living Word Project for over 15 years, and has served as Program Director and Associate Artistic Director, as well as working directly with Youth Speaks' core population as a teaching artist and poet mentor.

"Now I'd say I'm more of a consultant," said Hodge. "I work with them on a couple of initiatives, always from a loving place. I love to engage with young people, it's my favorite aspect."

Hodge also writes plays for youth that range in subject matter and genre.

"I write a bunch of children's theater," said Hodge. "Some of my favorite stories or fairytales have made it into the plays, but I also write what is salient to the moment, so there's mentions of Black Lives Matter and conversations about equitable playing fields. I'd like to think that no subject matter is too far out of my reach. That's my job as a writer — to make all subject matter feel closer to the reader."

Hodge will offer a public performance at Saint Mary's Le Fevre Theatre from 7:30-8:30 pm on Thursday, Nov.10. The event is sponsored by the English Department, the Roy E. and Patricia Disney Forum, the Communication Department, Catholic Institute for Lasalian Social Action (CILSA), Intercultural Center, Theatre Program, World Languages and Cultures, MFA in Creative Writing, Women's Resource Center, and the Committee on Inclusive Excel-



Photo A.K. Carroll

# Gold Star Families Star at Town Hall Theatre

... continued from page B4

service to others. They brought the ability to directly affect the cause, to jump right in, because the moment always passes. Were you a participant in the moment, or simply a bystander? Did you elevate the cause or did you let it pass? This is your life, it is not a dress rehearsal."

and as one of the mainstays of the Sat. Nov. 5. Blue Star Moms will

word and deed how to be one in to acknowledge and honor Jake, his family, and the other Gold Star Families affected by this loss. We want them to know we care, and we want to bring our supportive music fan base in to help us show that."

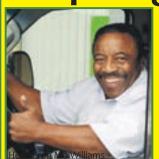
Those interested in being part of this special community event can get tickets at the Town Hall Theater website www.townhalltheatre.com. He continues, "We have the Doors will open at 6:30p.m. for the platform, we have the know-how, event which begins at 7:30p.m.,

These people taught us by thought, community we feel it is our duty be in attendance and Gold Star Families will be honored in a moving and heartwarming tribute, he says. Vega will speak and there will be a short presentation.

"We will create a very special little community within the walls of Town Hall on Nov. 5," says Stack, "with healing energy and the power of love, coupled with some very beautiful music. We will sing together. I happen to think we need more of that, everywhere, right



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