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Public Affairs, Roger Williams University

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Breaking in the Door to Have Your Voice Heard: Spoken Word Artist Lemon Andersen to Visit RWU on March 22

Public invited to President's Distinguished Speakers Series event featuring Tony Award-winning poet, playwright and performer



March 2, 2016 | Public Affairs Staff

BRISTOL, R.I. – Can any of us really escape the past?

On Tuesday, March 22, Tony Award-winning poet, playwright and performer [Lemon Andersen](#) will examine this existential question in his presentation, “Breaking in the Door to Have Your Voice Heard,” which takes the audience through his struggle to move beyond a tragic childhood riddled with drugs, poverty and crime towards a brighter future on the stage.

Andersen rose to national prominence in 2002 when he appeared in Russell Simmons’s “Def Poetry Jam” on Broadway. [The performance](#) won a Tony Award for Best Special Theatrical Event, and Andersen earned a Drama Desk nomination for his writing. He later appeared in eight episodes of HBO’s *Def Poetry*, as well as four Spike Lee films – including *Inside Man* opposite Denzel Washington – and *The Soloist* with Robert Downey, Jr. and Jamie Foxx. Andersen was also the subject of the documentary, [Lemon](#), which examines his journey from felon to famous performer – and how leaving one’s past behind isn’t that simple.

With training from the [Public Theater's Shakespeare Lab](#) and support from the [Sundance Institute](#), Ford Foundation, Multi-Arts Production Fund and the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#), Andersen has cultivated a commanding presence on the stage and in print. His latest endeavor is "ToasT," a new play commissioned by the Sundance Institute.

The March 22 presentation will take place in the Campus Recreation Center on the University's Bristol campus at One Old Ferry Road. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and the event will begin at 7 p.m. A book signing will immediately follow the presentation. The event is free and open to the public; no tickets are required. For more information, call (401) 254-3166.

Launched in 2011, the [President's Distinguished Speakers Series](#) at Roger Williams University invites thought leaders from a wide range of disciplines to share perspectives, inspire conversations and enrich the intellectual lives of students, faculty and staff at Roger Williams as well as members of the local community.

As part of the series, each guest is invited to devote much of the daylong visit to direct engagement with students in classroom sessions, offering RWU students unique opportunities for one-on-one interactions with some of the world's leading authors, scholars, artists and public servants.