

EMANUEL XAVIER

b. May 3, 1970

POET

Fellow author Jaime Manrique said, "Once in a generation, a new voice emerges that makes us see the world in a dazzling new light. Emanuel Xavier is that kind of writer."

"Being Latino and gay gives me much to write about. Anything that oppresses us as artists is always great fodder for art."

Emanuel Xavier is a poet, author and editor. He is one of the most significant openly gay Latino spoken word artists of his generation.

Xavier was born in Brooklyn, New York, the child of an Ecuadorian mother and a Puerto Rican father who abandoned the family before his son was born. When Xavier was 3, a family member sexually abused him. At 16, when Xavier came out to his mother, she threw him out of the house.

A homeless gay teen on the streets of New York, Xavier soon turned to sex and drugs for money. He became a hustler at the West Side Highway piers and sold drugs in gay clubs. After landing a job at a gay bookstore, A Different Light, he began to write poetry and perform as a spoken word artist.

"Pier Queen" (1997), Xavier's self-published poetry collection, established him in the New York underground arts scene. "Christ Like" (1999), Xavier's novel, was the first coming-of-age story by a gay Nuyoricano (Puerto Rican living in New York). The novel earned him a Lambda Literary Award nomination. Fellow author Jaime Manrique said, "Once in a generation, a new voice emerges that makes us see the world in a dazzling new light. Emanuel Xavier is that kind of writer."

"Americano" (2002), another poetry collection and Xavier's first official published work, advanced his prominence within the literary community of color. Xavier edited "Bullets & Butterflies: Queer Spoken Word Poetry" (2005), for which he received a second Lambda Literary Award nomination.

In 2005, Xavier was the victim of a random attack by a group of young men. As a result of the beating, he lost all hearing in his right ear, but continued to write and perform.

Xavier reflects on the assault in his poem "Passage":

*Had they known I was gay they would have killed me
None of my poems about peace and unity
would have kept me whole*

Also an activist, Xavier focuses his work on homeless gay youth. He has organized benefits for many organizations including The New York Pier AIDS Education Coalition, Live Out Loud, and Sylvia's Place, a shelter for homeless GLBTQ youth.

Xavier has appeared on HBO's "Russell Simmons Presents Def Poetry" and "In the Life" on PBS. In 2010, his CD "Legendary – The Spoken Word Poetry of Emanuel Xavier" was released to critical acclaim.

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