

# The Mississippi Poetry Podcast Supplement

## Ep. 17: January Gill O'Neil

**1. Listen (14 minutes).** Play *The Mississippi Poetry Podcast w/ January Gill O'Neil*

**2. Write (10-25 minutes, as time allows)**

Materials Needed: notebook, pen/pencil

Writing Exercise: Seeing Place

In her poem "Bryant's Grocery & Meat Market," January Gill O'Neil writes about a site of monumental historical significance that's now neglected and crumbling. "You could drive past and miss this place," she writes in the poem's first lines.

For this exercise, invite participants to think about a spot someone might "drive past and miss." This might be, as in O'Neil's poem, a place of known historical significance, or it might be a place whose history only the writer knows. It might even be a place the writer imagines. It might be a dilapidated building, a hidden path, or simply a nondescript house. Ask participants first to briefly describe what the outside of the place looks like, and then give a reader some insight as to why this place is important. What stories or history does it hold? How does the outside contrast with the inside? How can the poem help shine a new light on this place? How can the poem honor, condemn, or memorialize this place and what happened here? As always, urge participants to use detail and to be as specific as possible.

**3. Share (5-10 minutes)**

If time and comfort levels allow, invite participants to share their poems!

### **Related Materials:**

History of Emmett Till and Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market:  
[nps.gov/till/learn/historyculture/index.htm](https://nps.gov/till/learn/historyculture/index.htm)

Glitter Road: [cavankerrypress.org/product/glitter-road/](https://cavankerrypress.org/product/glitter-road/)

January Gill O'Neil poems and bio: [poets.org/poet/january-gill-oneil](https://poets.org/poet/january-gill-oneil)

