

Writers Without Borders Press Release

Program Description: *Writers Without Borders* is a literary exploration of lines crossed. Curated by Amy Fladeboe and Michael Kleber-Diggs, the event will feature local artists whose work in prose, poetry, and mixed literary genres extends beyond our borders. A literary showcase with authors, Su Hwang, Michael Torres, Angela Ajayi, Erin Sharkey, Junauda Petris, and Glenda Reed will take to the center stage of the Midtown Global Marketplace at 6pm on Thursday, December 21st. An author signing and sampling of Midtown's best multi-cultural treats and beverages will follow. After the open event, writers of all genres are invited to a follow-up craft talk from 8:30-10:00pm at Salsa a la Salsa. We will discuss, debate, ponder, and grapple with the challenges and joys this unique kind of work brings. A preview of discussion questions and recommended readings will be posted on our event page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1974946626094307/>

Author Biographies:

Amy Fladeboe is working on it. She's an honored and flabbergasted recipient of a 2016-2017 Minnesota Emerging Writer's Grant and two Minnesota State Arts Board Grants* to support her work on a novel that is set in Michigan and Albania. Her multi-genre writing has appeared in haphazard files all over her desktop, scribbles on bar napkins, and a handful of cool lit mags like Poetry City, USA, The Boiler Journal, Stanley The Whale, and Northeast Review. She received her MFA from Minnesota State University-Mankato and now teaches Creative Writing at Century College, the Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop, and The Loft Literary Center. She curates the Century Speaker Series and co-hosts a literary radio program, Write On Radio on KFAI. Amy lives in south Minneapolis. Amy Fladeboe is a fiscal year 2017 recipient of an Artist Initiative grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board. This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a Legislature; and by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Michael Kleber-Diggs was a 2015 Fellow with the Givens Foundation for African-American Literature and a 2015-2016 winner of the Loft Mentor Series in Poetry. His essay, "A Fundamental Human Yearning," is included in *How Dare We Write* – a collection of essays on writing edited by Sherry Quan Lee. Two of his poems will appear in an anthology of poetry about fatherhood forthcoming from Nodin Press. Michael's work has also appeared or will soon appear in North Dakota Quarterly, Paper Darts, Water~Stone Review and elsewhere. Michael is a Contributor with Twin Cities Daily Planet, writes literary criticism for the Star Tribune, teaches poetry through the Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop, and blogs at michaelkleberdiggs.com. Michael is husband to Karen, a horticulturist who makes art with flowers. Karen and Michael have a 16 year-old daughter who is an accomplished dancer and newly-licensed driver. The Kleber-Diggses live on a busy street in Saint Paul with two strange cats, Curly and Mocha.

Angela Ajayi's essays, book reviews, and author interviews have appeared in *The Common Online*, *Wild River Review*, the *Star Tribune* and *Afroeuropa: Journal of Afro-European Studies*. She spent over ten years in publishing, mainly as a book editor at Africa World Press/The Red Sea Press. She holds a BA in English literature from Calvin College and an MA in comparative literature from Columbia University. Her first story, "Galina," published in *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, won the 2017 PEN/Robert J. Dau Short Story Prize for Emerging Writers. In her fiction, she often seeks to explore the intersection of race, gender and class in cross-cultural spaces. Nigerian and Ukrainian by birth, and American by citizenship, she lives in Minneapolis with her husband and daughter.

Michael Torres was born and brought up in Pomona, California where he spent his adolescence as a graffiti artist. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Sun*, *Copper Nickel*, and *Green Mountains Review* among others. He has received grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Jerome Foundation. Torres is a VONA alum and was the 2017 CantoMundo Distinguished Fellow for the Palm Beach Poetry Festival. Currently he teaches creative writing at Minnesota State University, Mankato and through the Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop.

Erin Sharkey is a writer, producer, educator and graphic designer based in Minneapolis. She is the co-founder, with Junauda Petrus, of an experimental arts production company called Free Black Dirt. Her writing has

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appeared or is forthcoming in publications such as *Walker Untitled*, *Brooklyn Quarterly* and *Paper Darts*. Erin was a 2016/17 Loft Mentor Series winner in creative nonfiction, 2017 and 2016 VONA/Voices Writing fellow, 2015 Givens fellow, as well as a Coffee House Press in the Stacks artist-in-residence at the Archie Givens Sr. Archive at the University of MN. In 2017-18 Erin will be studying soil and the stars as an artist in residence at the Bell Museum of Natural History at the University of MN. She also is producer for *Sweetness of Wild*, an episodic web film project and teaches at the Loft Literary Center, the U of MN and is an educator with the Minnesota Prison Writers Workshop.

Glenda Reed is an award-winning, feminist writer, artist, educator, and adventurer. She's received funding from the Jerome Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, and the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund, among others. Her work has appeared in *Creative Nonfiction* and *The Best Travel Writing*. Glenda is also a winner of *The Moth StorySLAM*. She teaches writing at the Loft Literary Center and mentors through the Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop. Her in-progress memoir follows the years she set out to sail around the world by hitchhiking on sailboats. At a time when the backlash against women's social progress and feminism is at a peak, Reed is writing her own true life story of one woman who charted her own course for adventure. Glenda currently lives in Minneapolis where she sails little boats on little lakes.

Su Hwang was awarded the 2018 Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative Grant, the 2017 Minnesota Emerging Writers Grant from the Loft Literary Center, and the 2017 Coffee House Press *In The Stacks* Fellowship at Dickinson House in East Flanders, Belgium. Born in Seoul, South Korea, she called NYC and San Francisco home before transplanting to the Twin Cities to attend the University of Minnesota, where she received her MFA in Poetry. She is also the recipient of the Michael Dennis Browne Fellowship in Poetry, the Academy of American Poets James Wright Prize, and her first poetry collection *BODEGA* was named a finalist by Pleiades, BOAAT, and Noemi Press, and hopes that the book will see the light of day sooner than never. She is a regional VONA alum and teaches creative writing with the Minnesota Prison Writers Workshop and is a Contributing Writer with *Twin Cities Daily Planet*. Su currently lives in Minneapolis.

Junauda Petrus is a creative activist, writer, playwright, screenwriter and multi-dimensional performance artist who is Minneapolis-born, West-Indian descended, and African-sourced. She is the co-founder with Erin Sharkey of Free Black Dirt, an experimental arts production company. She is currently writing and directing, "Sweetness of Wild" a web series themed around Blackness, queerness, biking, resistance, love and coming of age in Minneapolis. Her work centers around wildness, Afro-futurism, ancestral healing, sweetness, spectacle and shimmer. Her first YA novel, *Mable & Audre's Existential Transcendental Journey Through Black Universe* debuts in 2019 on Dutton Children's.

With Gratitude: This event is made possible by the Minnesota State Arts Board, City Great Streets, and The Midtown Global Marketplace. Thanks to Salsa a la Salsa and Beyond Repair for the generous donations.

