



kentucky  
**women  
writers**  
conference

September 14–17, 2017

Thursday, September 14

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*The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning, 251 West 2nd Street*

7:00–8:30 p.m.

Sonia Sanchez Series keynote by **Melynda J. Price**, introduced by series chair **Patrice Muhammad**  
*free and open to the public*

Friday, September 15

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*The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning, 251 W. 2nd Street*

8:00–9:00 a.m.

*registration and complimentary continental breakfast*

9–10 a.m., plenary session

reading by **Natalie Diaz**, with introduction and Q & A  
by **Julia Johnson**

first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

10:15–11:15 a.m.

“Your Two Best Pages,” **Annie Hwang** on strong openings  
first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

10:15 a.m. –12:30 p.m. small group workshops

*by reservation only*

Mining the Deep

workshop in poetry with **Natalie Diaz**, part 1  
lower level, Sexton Room, *by reservation only*

Nature Poetry: the Scary and the Beautiful

workshop in poetry with **Camille Dungy**, part 1  
lower level, Caudill Room, *by reservation only*

Playwriting Intensive

with **Martyna Majok**, part 1  
second floor, Allen Room, *by reservation only*

11:30 a.m. –12:30 p.m.

reading by **Jessica Handler** and **Mary Jean Kledzik**  
first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

12:30–2:00 p.m.

Lunch on your own: see “Beyond Grits”

2:00–3:00 p.m.

How to Write Authentically and Why: On Diversity,  
Representation, Identity, and Controversy in Publishing,  
with **Annie Hwang**, **Natalie Diaz**, **Camille Dungy**,  
and **Ada Limón**

first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

2:00–4:15 p.m. small group workshops  
*by reservation only*

More than *Me* in Memoir

workshop with **Jessica Handler**, part 1  
lower level, Sexton Room, *by reservation only*

The Old Collage Try

workshop in essay with **Elena Passarello**, part 1  
lower level, Brown Room, *by reservation only*

Los Fridos Art Party

workshop in fiction with **Claire Vaye Watkins**, part 1  
second floor, Allen Room, *by reservation only*

Dialogue

workshop in fiction with **Kayla Rae Whitaker**, part 1  
lower level, Caudill Room, *by reservation only*

3:15–4:15 p.m.

This Careful Place: Visits to the Poetry of Jane Gentry  
panel discussion with **Julia Johnson**, **Sue Churchill**,  
**Mary Ann Taylor-Hall**, and **Lisa Williams**  
first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

4:30–5:45

readings by **Ann V. DeVilbiss** and **Elena Passarello**  
first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

6:00–7:30 p.m.

Writers Reception

Alumni House, 400 Rose Street, *ticketed event*

7:30–9 p.m.

keynote reading and remarks by **Camille Dungy**,  
introduced by **Jennifer Bartlett**

Singletary Center Recital Hall, 405 Rose Street  
free and open to the public

Saturday, September 16

*The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning, 251 W. 2nd Street*

8:00–9:00 a.m.

*registration and complimentary continental breakfast*

9–10 a.m., plenary session

On Mercy and Mercilessness

craft talk in fiction by **Maggie Shipstead**

first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

10:15–11:15 a.m.

Research in Creative Nonfiction

panel discussion with **Jessica Handler, Elena Passarello,**  
and **Melynda Price**

first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

10:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m.

manuscript meetings with **Annie Hwang**

first floor, Writers Reference Room, *by reservation only*

10:15 a.m. –12:30 p.m. small group workshops

*by reservation only*

Mining the Deep

workshop in poetry with **Natalie Diaz**, part 2

lower level, Sexton Room, *by reservation only*

Nature Poetry: the Scary and the Beautiful

workshop in poetry with **Camille Dungy**, part 2

lower level, Caudill Room, *by reservation only*

Playwriting Intensive

with **Martyna Majok**, part 2

second floor, Allen Room, *by reservation only*

11:30 a.m. –12:30 p.m.

readings by **Maggie Shipstead** and **Claire Vaye Watkins**

first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

12:30–2:00 p.m.

Lunch on your own at nearby restaurants. Look for  
board members in the Carnegie Center lobby who will  
gather groups by genre.

Sunday, September 17

*The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning, 251 West 2nd Street*

10:00–11:30 a.m. Stars of the Commonwealth

readings by **Kristi Maxwell, Carrie Mullins,** and **Mary Ann Taylor-Hall**

with introductions and Q & A by **Nyoka Hawkins**

first floor, Stuart Room, *free and open to the public,*

2:00–3:00 p.m.

*Cost of Living* by **Martyna Majok**

prologue to the 2017 off-Broadway play performed by  
the playwright, with Q & A by **Eric Seale**

first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

2:00–4:15 p.m. small group workshops

*by reservation only*

More than *Me* in Memoir

workshop with **Jessica Handler**, part 2

lower level, Sexton Room, *by reservation only*

The Old Collage Try

workshop in essay with **Elena Passarello**, part 2

lower level, Brown Room, *by reservation only*

Los Fridos Art Party

workshop in fiction with **Claire Vaye Watkins**, part 2

second floor, Allen Room, *by reservation only*

Dialogue

workshop in fiction with **Kayla Rae Whitaker**, part 2

lower level, Caudill Room, *by reservation only*

3:15–4:15 p.m.

Readings by the Young Women Writers

first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

4:30–5:45

readings by **Deborah Reed Downing** and **Kayla Rae  
Whitaker**

first floor, Stuart Room, *open to all registrants*

5:30–7:00 p.m.

90 Seconds Open Mic

Minglewood restaurant, 159 N. Limestone

7:30–9 p.m. Wild Women of Poetry Slam

A spoken word competition with audience judging,  
emceed by **TSmilez**, with feature poet and celebrity

judge **Olivia Gatwood**. Poets **listed on p.7**

Pam Miller Arts Center, 141 E. Main Street

## Featured Presenters

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**Natalie Diaz** was born and raised in the Fort Mojave Indian Village in Needles, California, and is an enrolled member of the Gila River Indian Tribe. Her first poetry collection, *When My Brother Was an Aztec*, was published by Copper Canyon Press in 2012. Her poetry has garnered the Nimrod/Hardman Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry, the Narrative Poetry Prize, the Holmes National Poetry Prize from Princeton University, and numerous fellowships. She is an advocate for the Mojave language and a director of the language preservation program at Fort Mojave.

**Camille T. Dungy** is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently *Trophic Cascade* (Wesleyan UP, 2017). Her debut collection of personal essays is *Guidebook to Relative Strangers* (W. W. Norton, 2017), and she edited *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (Georgia UP, 2009). Her honors include an American Book Award, two Northern California Book Awards, two NAACP Image Award nominations, a California Book Award silver medal, and numerous fellowships. She is professor of English at Colorado State University.

**Olivia Gatwood's** debut poetry collection is *New American Best Friend* (Button Poetry, 2017). She is nationally recognized for her poetry performances, writing workshops, and work as a Title IX Compliant educator in sexual assault prevention and recovery at over 70 colleges and 30 high schools nationwide. A finalist at Brave New Voices, Women of the World, and the National Poetry Slam, Olivia has been featured on HBO, Verses & Flow, Button Poetry, and Huffington Post, among others. She is originally from Albuquerque.

**Jessica Handler** is the author of *Braving the Fire: A Guide to Writing About Grief*. Her first book, *Invisible Sisters: A Memoir*, was named one of the "Twenty Five Books All Georgians Should Read" and *Atlanta* magazine's "Best Memoir of 2009." Her essays and nonfiction features have appeared on NPR, in *Tin House*, *Drunken Boat*, *Full Grown People*, *Brevity*, *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and *More Magazine*. Honors include the 2009 Peter Taylor Nonfiction Fellowship at the Kenyon Review Writers Workshop and special mention for a 2008 Pushcart Prize.

**Annie Hwang** is originally from Los Angeles and a former journalist. She represents a range of fiction and select nonfiction for Folio Literary Management, guiding both seasoned and debut authors through every stage of their writing career, from ideation to publication and beyond.

**Martyna Majok** (pronounced "my OAK") was born in Bytom, Poland, and aged in Jersey and Chicago. She is currently part of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwright Program at The Juilliard School and has taught playwriting at Williams College, Wesleyan University, New Jersey Rep, Yale, and others. Her play *Cost of Living* premiered off-Broadway at Manhattan Theatre Club in May 2017, and her plays have been performed at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Round House Theatre, The John F. Kennedy Center, and New York Stage & Film, among others.

Of **Elena Passarello's** second essay collection, *Animals Strike Curious Poses* (Sarabande, 2017), the *New York Times* said, "It might be the best book on animals I've ever read." She received a 2015 Whiting Award in nonfiction. Passarello's first collection, *Let Me Clear My Throat* (Sarabande, 2012), won the gold medal for nonfiction at the 2013 Independent Publisher Awards and was a finalist for the 2014 Oregon Book Award. Passarello has performed in regional theaters in the East and Midwest and was the first woman winner of the annual Stella Screaming Contest in New Orleans. She teaches at Oregon State University.

**Melynda J. Price** is the Robert E. Harding, Jr. Associate Professor of Law at the University of Kentucky and Director of the African American and Africana Studies Program. She was named University Research Professor for the 2017–18 academic year in recognition of her outstanding achievements in more than 10 years of research, including her recent book, *At the Cross: Race, Religion and Citizenship in the Politics of the Death Penalty* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

**Maggie Shipstead** is the author of two novels, *Astonish Me* (Knopf, 2014) and *Seating Arrangements* (Knopf, 2012), which was a *New York Times* bestseller, a finalist for the Flaherty-Dunn First Novel Prize, and the winner of the Dylan Thomas Prize and the L.A. Times Book Prize for First Fiction. Her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Tin House*, *VQR*, and *The Best American Short Stories*. She lives in Los Angeles.

**Claire Vaye Watkins** is the author of the novel *Gold Fame Citrus* (Riverhead, 2015) and the story collection *Battleborn* (Riverhead, 2012), which won the Story Prize, the Dylan Thomas Prize, New York Public Library's Young Lions Fiction Award, the Rosenthal Family Foundation Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a Silver Pen Award from the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame. She was one of the National Book Foundation's "5 Under 35." A Guggenheim Fellow, Watkins is on the faculty of the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan.

**Kayla Rae Whitaker's** debut novel, *The Animators* (Random House, 2017), was a Discover Great New Writers Pick from Barnes & Noble. Her work has appeared in *Buzzfeed*, *Literary Hub*, *Split Lip Magazine*, *Bodega*, *Joyland*, *Five Quarterly*, *American Microreviews* and *Interviews*, and others. She earned a B.A. in English from the University of Kentucky and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from New York University. After several years of living in Brooklyn, she recently returned to Kentucky, her home state, with her husband.

**Sue Churchill** is a writer, teacher, and shepherd on Thistles End Farm in Woodford County.

**Ann V. DeVilbiss** won the Gabehart Prize in Poetry. She has had work in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Day One*, *Public Pool*, and elsewhere, with work forthcoming in *Pangyrus* and *CALYX*. She is the recipient of an Emerging Artist Award from the Kentucky Arts Council.

**Deborah Reed Downing** won the Gabehart Prize in fiction. A Kentuckian by birth, she had the good fortune to serve on past boards of the Kentucky Women Writers Conference and to organize farmers' markets across the state. Deborah is a faculty member in English at Delgado Community College, New Orleans.

**Julia Johnson** is the author of the poetry collections *Subsidence* (Groundhog Poetry Press, 2016), *The Falling Horse* (Factory Hollow Press, 2011), and *Naming the Afternoon* (LSU Press, 2002). She is professor of English at the University of Kentucky and was founding director of its M.F.A. program in Creative Writing.

**Nyoka Hawkins** is an editor and publisher with forty years' experience in the production of print and visual media. She is cofounder with Gurney Norman of Old Cove Press, which publishes poetry, fiction and art from Kentucky and the region. A native of eastern Kentucky, she is a professionally trained historian and maintains an active involvement in the Appalachian Studies cultural and educational movement.

**M. J. Kledzik** won the Gabehart Prize in nonfiction. She is the author of the award winning poetry book, *As If Wine Could Pour from Her Nipple* (San Francisco Bay Press 2016) and has been published in the *Paris Review*, *Agni*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Gargoyle*, *Margie*, *Western Humanities Review*, and elsewhere.

**Ada Limón** is the author of four books of poetry, including *Bright Dead Things*, a finalist for the 2015 National Book Award in Poetry, a finalist for the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award, a finalist for the 2015 National Book Critics Circle Award, and one of the Top Ten Poetry Books of the Year by *The New York Times*. She is faculty in the Queens University of Charlotte Low Residency M.F.A program, and the 24Pearl Street online program for the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center. She lives in Lexington, Kentucky, and Sonoma, California.

**Kristi Maxwell** is the author of five books of poetry: *Realm Sixty-four* (Ahsahta, 2008), *Hush Sessions* (Saturnalia, 2009), *Re-* (Ahsahta, 2011), *That Our Eyes Be Rigged* (Saturnalia, 2014), and *PLAN/K* (Horseless Press, 2015). Her scholarly work appears in *Anne Carson: Ecstatic Lyre* and is forthcoming in *Textual Practice*. She is an assistant professor of English at the University of Louisville.

**Carrie Mullins** is the author of the novel *Night Garden* (Old Cove, 2016). She grew up in Mt. Vernon, Kentucky, where she still lives.

**Eric Seale** is Artistic Managing Director of Central Kentucky Theater in Springfield, Kentucky. He has over a decade of experience in theatrical producing and administration, as the Producing Artistic Director of Actors Guild of Lexington, and as the Executive Producer of Balagula Theatre, among others. In 2015 he produced and directed the previous winner of the biennial Prize for Women Playwrights, *The Silent Woman* by Lydia Blaisdell, and in November 2017 he will produce and direct the new winner, *Timeless: A Scientific Comedy* by Raegan Payne.

**Mary Ann Taylor-Hall** is the author of the poetry collection *Out of Nowhere* (Old Cove, 2016) and three novels, *The Breakers* (University Press of Kentucky, 2009); *How She Knows What She Knows About Yo-Yos* (Sarabande, 2000), which received *Foreword* magazine's Book of the Year Award; and *Come and Go, Molly Snow* (Norton, 1995), a Barnes & Novel Discovery selection. She has taught at Auburn University, Miami of Ohio, the University of Puerto Rico, and the University of Kentucky.

**Lisa Williams** has three books of poems: *Gazelle in the House* (New Issues Poetry and Prose, 2014), *Woman Reading to the Sea* (Norton, 2008), and *The Hammered Dulcimer* (Utah State Univ. Press, 1998). She is a professor of English and director of the Creative Writing Program at Centre College, where she has taught since 2001.

### 1. Natalie Diaz

Mining the Deep: Discovering Our Emotional Images. This generative workshop will explore our notion of image—image is more than a thing you can see. Images are the vessels of story, history, mythology, action, and emotion, among other things. Using previous knowledge of our images of obsession, we will do a series of exercises to help discover and mine our new, emotional images. To paraphrase painter Francis Bacon, we will return the image to our nervous systems more violently—meaning, we will build images that make us and our readers *feel*.

### 2. Camille Dungy

Nature Poetry: the Scary and the Beautiful. It would be nice to write a pretty poem about how much you loved the peonies in your grandmother's garden or how at home you felt that time you climbed a mountain out west. But, when you sit down to write that particular poem, do you find yourself overwhelmed by the realities of radical climate change, colony collapse disorder, increasing seismic activities in middle America, mountain top removal, or the encroachment of kudzu on the southern landscape? Do you think about historical violations of the land you love, or do you worry about the viability of that landscape in the future? Are you having trouble writing about the natural world because you don't know how to balance the scary with the beautiful? If you answer yes to any of those questions, this generative workshop is for you!

### 3. Jessica Handler

More than *Me* in Memoir. A well-written memoir tells your story, but in order to capture your reader's heart and imagination, the very best memoirs place the author's personal story within the beauty and tragedy of the larger world. In this workshop, you will learn ways to develop your memoir so that it resonates not only with you and yours, but with readers everywhere. Open to writers of all levels.

### 4. Martyna Majok

Playwriting Intensive. How do you create a character with enough complexity and appetite to drive an entire play? How do you engage with the unique aspects of theater—its liveness, its relationship to time and space—to create a three-dimensional story onstage? How is a play more like music than a novel? This

workshop gives you tools for writing stories for the stage, whether you have never written a play or are seeking new perspectives on your craft.

### 5. Elena Passarello

The Old Collage Try. A collage essay uses vivid images and quick cuts to tell stories in artfully arranged fragments, rather than in one specific narrative line. Inspired by visual art and film, collage storytelling is an inspiring way to supercharge your writing. Bring your notebooks to this very hands-on, get-out-of-your-chairs workshop, which outlines the basics of reading, responding to, and—most importantly—writing your own prose collages.

### 6. Claire Vaye Watkins

Los Fridos Art Party: workshop in fiction. This is an experimental interdisciplinary creative writing workshop with an emphasis on process and play. This purely generative workshop is ideal for fiction writers who are game to challenge not only their writing process but the very concept of the “writing process.” Through various exercises, experiments and maybe even collaborative or performative projects, we'll try new approaches to storytelling, many of them borrowed from our comrades in poetry, art, and music. Suggested reading: *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-portrait* (introduction by Carlos Fuentes).

### 7. Kayla Rae Whitaker

Dialogue: Workshop in Fiction. When well-executed, dialogue can serve as your story's best voice, as well as a tool with which to accelerate plot, provide tone, and promote a sense of place. In this workshop, we will fine-tune our sense of the spoken in order to generate character voice and story trajectory with new awareness and enthusiasm. We'll engage in exercises and examine works that render dialogue in a way that is dynamic, readable, and true. We will also explore methods of balancing conversation with exposition to ensure our story's dialogue provides support, and potential for depth, as opposed to noise.

Prizes and Scholarships

**Faith A. Smith Poetry Prize**

This top honor in the Wild Woman of Poetry Slam was established by Frank X Walker in memory of his mother and awards \$500 to the winner. **Shay Alexi, Chrsitina Boyd, Raych Jackson, Talicha Johnson, Joan Leslie, and Kelly Mays** will compete on Saturday night, with **Olivia Gatwood** as the featured poet and celebrity judge, and **TSmilez** as emcee. Don't miss this extraordinary event!

**2017 Betty Gabehart Prizes**

Congratulations to poetry winner **Ann V. DeVilbiss** of Louisville for "Consumption" and other poems; to fiction winner **Deborah Reed Downing** of Metairie, LA, for her short story, "Fish and Wildlife"; and to nonfiction winner **M. J. Kledzik** of Norfolk, VA, for "Return to Chicago." This contest for as-yet unpublished work is judged by our Board, and winners receive \$300 stipends, conference admission for oneself and a guest, and the opportunity to read the winning manuscript at the conference. The submission deadline is always June 1.

**Postgraduate Scholarships**

Congratulations to our 2017 scholarship recipients **Steph Beckner, Emily Rose Cole, Philana Omorotionmwan, Jorgan Ramirez Puckett, and Tanya Torp**. If you are enrolled in graduate school and living on limited funds, this scholarship is for you. It provides free general admission to the conference, including enrollment in a workshop, a \$200 value. Applications of a cover letter and a five-page writing sample are due June 1 and are reviewed for merit and need by a committee of the director and one advisor.

**Prize for Women Playwrights**

We award a biennial playwriting prize to bring more scripts by women to the stage. Congratulations to **Raegan Payne** of Los Angeles—and a native Kentuckian—whose winning script, *Timeless: A Scientific Comedy*, will premiere on November 2–4, 2017 in Lexington, produced and directed by Eric Seale. The next submission period will be in November 2018, for a production in fall 2019.

Recommended Reading

*When My Brother Was an Aztec*  
Natalie Diaz

*Trophic Cascade*  
Camille Dungy

*New American Best Friend*  
Olivia Gatwood

*Invisible Sisters: A Memoir*  
Jessica Handler

*PLAN/K*  
Kristi Maxwell

*Night Garden*  
Carrie Mullins

*Animals Strike Curious Poses*  
Elena Passarello

*At the Cross*  
Melynda J. Price

*Out of Nowhere*  
Mary Ann Taylor-Hall

*Astonish Me*  
Maggie Shipstead

*Gold Fame Citrus*  
Claire Vaye Watkins

*The Animators*  
Kayla Rae Whitaker

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**Stay in Touch**

To receive our bi-monthly e-newsletter, email us at [kentuckywomenwriters@gmail.com](mailto:kentuckywomenwriters@gmail.com) and don't hesitate to include feedback in your note. We are also on Facebook and Twitter.  
contact: Julie Wrinn, director  
office address: 232 East Maxwell Street, Lexington, KY 40506-0344  
phone: 859-257-2874  
email: [kentuckywomenwriters@gmail.com](mailto:kentuckywomenwriters@gmail.com)  
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**Friend (up to \$99)**

anonymous  
anonymous  
anonymous  
Beth Dotson Brown  
Sharon and Devin Brown  
James L. and Mary B. Day, in  
memory of Zeno Miller  
Judy Goldsmith  
Randolph Hollingsworth and  
Richard  
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