

## Desert Nights, Rising Stars Writers Conference

### Featured Faculty Biographies

#### Camille Acker

Camille Acker is the author of the short story collection *Training School for Negro Girls*. She grew up in Washington, D.C., holds a B.A. in English from Howard University and an MFA in Creative Writing from New Mexico State University (NMSU). Her writing has received support from Tin House, the Djerassi Resident Artists Program, and the Millay Colony for the Arts and appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Electric Literature*. In 2022, she was named a Fellow by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. She has two books under contract with Random House and lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

#### Jacqueline Balderrama

Jacqueline Balderrama is the author of *Now in Color* and the chapbook, *Nectar and Small*. Recently, she worked as the Virginia G. Piper Faculty-in-Residence leading the Thousand Languages Project directing CantoMundo at Arizona State University (ASU). Her poetry has appeared in *Blackbird* and *Poet Lore*. Her prose is forthcoming from *Flyway*.

#### Sally Ball

Sally Ball is the author of *Hold Sway*, *Wreck Me*, and *Annus Mirabilis*, which was selected by Ellen Bryant Voigt for the Barrow Street Press Poetry Prize. Her poems have appeared in *The American Poetry Review*, *Bennington Review*, *Boston Review Forum 3*, *The Common*, *Harvard Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Slate*, *Threepenny Review*, *Tin House*, *Yale Review* as well as in the *Best American Poetry* anthology. Ball is the associate director of Four Way Books, an independent press based in New York City. A recipient of fellowships from the Arizona Commission on the Arts, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, the Camac Centre d'Art, the James Merrill House, and the Ucross Foundation, she has also taught at The Frost Place Festival and Conference on Poetry. She directs the MFA in Creative Writing at ASU.

#### Sherwin Bitsui

Sherwin Bitsui is the author of three collections of poetry, *Dissolve*, *Flood Song*, and *Shapeshift*. He is the recipient of a Whiting Award, an American Book Award, and the PEN Book Award. His poems have appeared in *Narrative*, *Black Renaissance Noir*, *American Poet*, *The Iowa Review*, *LIT*, and elsewhere. He is Diné of the Todích'ii'nii (Bitter Water Clan), born for the Tlízilaaní (Many Goats Clan), and has received fellowships from the Lannan Foundation and the Native Arts & Culture Foundation.

#### Kimberly Blaeser

Kimberly Blaeser, past Wisconsin Poet Laureate and founding director of Indigenous Nations Poets (In-Na-Po), is the author of six poetry collections including *Ancient Light*, *Copper Yearning*, and the bilingual *Résister en dansant/Ikwe-niimi: Dancing Resistance*. Her photographs, picto-poems, and ekphrastic pieces have appeared in exhibits such as "Visualizing Sovereignty," and "No More Stolen Sisters." An enrolled member of White Earth Nation, she is an Anishinaabe activist and environmentalist. Blaeser is an MFA faculty member at the Institute

of American Indian Arts (IAIA) and a Professor Emerita at UW-Milwaukee. She lives in rural Wisconsin and in a seasonal cabin near the BWCA wilderness. Blaeser is the Inaugural Native Poetics & Story Lab Fellow at the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands (CIZB) at ASU.

### **Regina Brooks**

Regina Brooks is the founder and president of Serendipity Literary Agency in New York, New York. Serendipity is the largest African American owned agency in the country and has represented and established a diverse base of award-winning clients in adult and young adult fiction, nonfiction, and children's literature. Her authors have appeared in *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* as well as on Oprah, ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, FOX, MSNBC, TV One, BET, and a host of other media platforms. In 2015, *Publishers Weekly* nominated Regina Brooks as a PW Star Watch Finalist, and she was honored with a Stevie Award in Business. *Writer's Digest Magazine* has named Serendipity Literary Agency as one of the top 25 literary agencies.

### **Elena Karina Byrne**

Former Regional Director of the Poetry Society of America, final judge for the PEN's Best of the West award, the Kate & Kingsley Tufts Poetry Awards, and the international Laurel Prize, Elena Karina Byrne is a freelance editor, lecturer, and Programming Consultant & Poetry Stage Manager for *The Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books. Her five poetry collections include *If This Makes You Nervous* (Omnidawn Publishing, 2021). Elena's work can be found in *Best American Poetry*, *Pushcart Prize XXXIII*, *APR*, *POETRY*, *Paris Review*, *Poem-A-Day*, *Poetry Daily*, *Verse Daily*, and *BOMB*. Elena is currently writing screenplays while completing an essay collection entitled *Voyeur Hour*.

### **Hayan Charara**

Hayan Charara is the author of four poetry books, most recently *These Trees, Those Leaves, This Flower, That Fruit*, a Kingsley Tufts Award finalist. He is a series editor of the Etel Adnan Poetry Prize, and he teaches in the Honors College at the University of Houston.

### **Jonathan Danielson**

Jonathan Danielson is an Instructor with Writing Programs and was a 2020 finalist for The College's Outstanding Instructor of the Year Award. He is a Writer-at-Large for *The Feathertale Review*, and his work has appeared in *Gulf Coast*, *Juked*, *Superstition Review*, *Jabberwock Review*, and elsewhere. In 2021, he was named a Faculty Fellow for the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing. His scholarly work focuses on the intersections between creative writing, the Western, and Arizona literary regionalism.

### **Debra Magpie Earling**

Debra Magpie Earling is the author of the novels *Perma Red* and *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea*. She is the recipient of the Montana Governor's Arts Award and has received both a Guggenheim and NEA fellowship. *Perma Red* was recently listed as one of the Great American Novels by the *Atlantic Monthly*. She is Bitterroot Salish.

## **Tami Haaland**

Tami Haaland is the author of three poetry collections: *What Does Not Return*, *When We Wake in the Night*, and *Breath in Every Room*, a Nicholas Roerich First Book Award winner republished by Red Hen Press. Her poems have appeared in *Fugue*, *Cutthroat*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *December*, *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, *Cascadia*, and have been featured on *The Writer's Almanac*, *Verse Daily*, *American Life in Poetry*, and *The Slowdown*. She teaches at Montana State University Billings.

## **Jenny Irish**

Jenny Irish's fiction, poetry, and hybrid writing appear widely in journals including *Blackbird*, *Conduit*, *Hobart*, *The Colorado Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Michigan Quarterly Review*, and *Ploughshares*. She facilitates a free community workshop every summer. She is the author of the collections *Common Ancestor*, *I Am Faithful*, *Tooth Box*, and *Lupine*. Her latest work *Hatch* is a groundbreaking hybrid feminist collection of speculative prose poems that trace the consciousness of a mechanical womb. She is an assistant professor in the MFA program at ASU.

## **Tara Ison**

Tara Ison is the author of three novels: *The List*, *A Child out of Alcatraz* (a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize) and *Rockaway*, featured as one of the "Best Books of Summer" in *O, The Oprah Magazine*. "Ball," a short story collection, was published in 2015, and her collection of essays, *Reeling Through Life: How I Learned to Live, Love, and Die at the Movies*, was the 2015 PEN Southwest Book Award winner for Creative Nonfiction. Her most recent novel, *At the Hour Between Dog and Wolf*, a novel of life in WWII collaborationist France (lg Publishing) has been selected a *New York Times* Editor's Choice.

## **Lois P. Jones**

Lois P. Jones' poetry collection, *Night Ladder* was published by Glass Lyre Press and was a finalist for the Julie Suk Award. She is the winner of the 2023 Alpine Fellowship in Poetry, which took place in Fjällnäs, Sweden, and the previous winner of the Bristol Poetry Prize, the Tiferet Poetry Prize, and others. Jones's work has been published or is forthcoming in the *Academy of American Poets*, *Poetry Wales*, *Plume*, *Image*, *Guernica Editions*, *Agenda* and elsewhere. Since 2007 she has hosted KPFK's Poets' Cafe and acts as poetry editor for the *Pushcart* and Utne prize-winning *Kyoto Journal*.

## **Caroline Kim**

Caroline Kim is the author of a collection of short stories, *The Prince of Mournful Thoughts and Other Stories*, which won the 2020 Drue Heinz Prize in Literature, was a finalist for a Northern California Book Award, for the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize in Fiction, and was long listed for the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize and The Story Prize. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Best Short Stories 2024: The O. Henry Prize Winners*, *Georgia Review*, *Story*, *New England Review*, *The Rumpus*, *LitHub*, *The Michigan Review*, and *TriQuarterly*, among other publications.

## **Melissa Kwasny**

Melissa Kwasny is the author of seven books of poetry, including *The Cloud Path*, *Where Outside the Body is the Soul Today* and *The Nine Senses*, as well as a collection of essays *Earth Recitals: Essays on Image and Vision*. She is also the editor of two anthologies: *I Go to the Ruined Place: Contemporary Poets in Defense of Global Human Rights* and *Toward the Open Field: Poets on the Art of Poetry 1800-1950*. Her nonfiction book *Putting on the Dog: The Animal Origins of What We Wear* explores the cultural and environmental histories of clothing materials provided by animals.

## **Patricia Murphy**

Patricia Colleen Murphy is a poet and teacher. She founded *Superstition Review* at Arizona State University (ASU), where she teaches creative writing and magazine production. She won the 2019 Press 53 Award for Poetry for her second collection *Bully Love*. Murphy has published her writing in many literary magazines including *The Massachusetts Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Third Coast*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Seattle Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Kalliope*, *Quarterly West*, *American Poetry Review*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Indiana Review*, and *The Iowa Review*.

## **Dean Newlund**

Dean Newlund is the founder and CEO of Mission Facilitators International, a boutique training and development firm based out of Phoenix, Arizona, with the sole purpose of helping organizations become more connected to their purpose and their people.

## **Diana Khoi Nguyen**

A poet and multimedia artist, Diana Khoi Nguyen is the author of *Root Fractures* (2024) and *Ghost Of* (2018), which was a finalist for the National Book Award. Her video work has been exhibited at the Miller ICA. Nguyen is a MacDowell and Kundiman fellow, and a member of the Vietnamese artist collective, She Who Has No Master(s). She's received an NEA fellowship and awards from the 92Y "Discovery" Poetry and 2019 Kate Tufts Discovery contests. She teaches in the Randolph College Low-Residency MFA and is an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh.

## **Susan Nguyen**

Susan Nguyen's debut poetry collection *Dear Diaspora* (University of Nebraska Press) won the 2020 Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry, a New Mexico-Arizona Book Award, an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Association of Asian American Studies and was a finalist for the Julie Suk Award. Her poems have been nominated for Best of the Net and a Pushcart Prize and have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Academy of American Poets' Poem-A-Day series*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Rumpus*, *Tin House*, *Diagram*, and elsewhere. She is currently the Senior Editor of *Hayden's Ferry Review*.

## **Cindy Juyoung Ok**

Cindy Juyoung Ok is the author of *Ward Toward* from the Yale Series of Younger Poets, the translator of *The Hell of That Star* by Kim Hyesoon, and an assistant professor in the MFA at UC Davis. A former public-school teacher, she has been a MacDowell Fellow, Kenyon Review Fellow, and Lambda Literary Fellow.

## **Justin Petropoulos**

Justin Petropoulos is the author of two collections of poetry, *Eminent Domain* (2011), selected by Anne Waldman for the 2010 Marsh Hawk Press Poetry Prize and *<Legend> </Legend>* (2013), a collaborative work with multimedia artist, Carla Gannis. His poems have appeared in *American Letters & Commentary*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Mandorla*, and *Portland Review*. He is currently the Program Manager for the Creative Writing Program at ASU.

## **Gionni Ponce**

Gionni Ponce is a Macondista prose writer living in Tempe, Arizona. She was a 2021 Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing NEA Big Read Grant Partner and a 2020 Desert Nights, Rising Stars Writers' Conference Fellow. In 2019, she received a scholarship to the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and was named a Writer in South Asia Fellow by Indiana University in 2018. Wherever she goes, she aims to create literary space for traditionally marginalized stories. Her work is published in *Kenyon Review Online*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *The Ocotillo Review*, and *The Workshop*. She is currently working on a short story collection centered on bilingualism and multi-generational conflict in Mexican American families.

## **Ramona Reeves**

Ramona Reeves won the 2022 Drue Heinz Literature Prize and the 2022 Best First Book of Fiction from the Texas Institute of Letters for her collection, *It Falls Gently All Around and Other Stories*. She is a 2024 judge for the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction and was a recent fellow at the San Ysidro Writers Residency. Her work has appeared in *Post Road*, *The Southampton Review*, *Pembroke*, *New South*, *The Rumpus*, *Texas Highways* and others. She teaches a course for writers working on their first manuscripts and currently lives with her wife in Austin.

## **Alberto Ríos**

Alberto Ríos's many poetry collections include *Not Go Away is My Name* (2020), *The Dangerous Shirt* (2009), *The Theater of Night* (2006), *Five Indiscretions* (1985), and *Whispering to Fool the Wind* (1982), which was selected by Donald Justice for the 1981 Walt Whitman Award. Ríos is also the author of several short story collections, including *The Curtain of Trees* (1999) and *The Iguana Killer: Twelve Stories of the Heart* (1984), as well as *Capirotada: A Nogales Memoir* (1999). His honors include six Pushcart Prizes, the Arizona Governor's Arts Award, and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. He has also served as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. He is University Professor of Letters, Regents' Professor and the Katharine C. Turner Chair in English at ASU. He directs the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing.

## **Deborah Taffa**

Deborah Taffa's memoir, *Whiskey Tender*, has been named to many "best" lists: *Oprah Daily*, *ELLE Magazine*, *The NY Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Esquire*. Dubbed a "must read" by *Publishers Weekly*, the memoir is currently an Amazon Top New Release. With fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, PEN America, MacDowell, Tin House, and the NY State Summer Writer's Institute, Deborah received her MFA in Iowa City. A citizen of the Kwatsaan (Yuma) Nation and Laguna Pueblo, she is the director of the MFA CW program at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in Santa Fe, NM.

## **TC Tolbert**

TC Tolbert (he/him/hey grrrl) is a trans and genderqueer monkey-goat who lives in Tucson, AZ where s/he is the current Poet Laureate. Publications include *Gephyromania* and five chapbooks including *The Quiet Practices*, winner of the 2023 Chad Walsh Chapbook Prize at Beloit Poetry Journal. TC is co-editor (along with Trace Peterson) of *Troubling the Line: Trans and Genderqueer Poetry and Poetics*.

## **Alexandra van de Kamp**

Alexandra van de Kamp is the Executive Director for Gemini Ink, San Antonio's Writing Arts Center ([www.geminiink.org](http://www.geminiink.org)). Her poetry collections are *Ricochet Script*, *Kiss/Hierarchy* and *The Park of Upside-Down Chairs*. She has also published several chapbooks, including *A Liquid Bird Inside the Night* and *Dear Jean Seberg*, which won the 2010 Burnside Review Chapbook Contest. Her poems have been published in journals nationwide, including *The Cincinnati Review*, *The Texas Observer*, and *Sweet: A Literary Confection*. Find out more about her poetry at [alexandravandekamppoet.com](http://alexandravandekamppoet.com).

## **Sarah Viren**

Sarah Viren is a contributing writer to *The New York Times Magazine* and author of the essay collection *Mine*, which won the River Teeth Book Prize and the GLCA New Writers Award and was named one of *Lit Hub's* favorite books of 2018. She was a finalist for a National Magazine Award for her essay "The Accusation," published in 2020 in *The New York Times Magazine*. Her scholarly focuses include the literary essay and literary translation. Her translation of the novella *Córdoba Skies* by the Argentine author Federico Falco was published in 2016, and her co-edited anthology of the essay in the Americas, *The Great American Essay*, is forthcoming from Mad Creek Books. She also has a memoir out in 2023, *To Name the Bigger Lie*. Viren's work has been supported by a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, a Kerouac House Residency, and a Fulbright student grant to Colombia.

## **Phillip B. Williams**

Phillip B. Williams is the author of the debut novel *Ours*, and the collections *Mutiny*, winner of the 2022 American Book Award, and *Thief in the Interior*, which was the winner of the 2017 Kate Tufts Discovery Award and a 2017 Lambda Literary award. He is also the author of the chapbooks *Bruised Gospels* and *Burn*. Williams's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Boston Review*, *Callaloo*, *Kenyon Review*, *The New Republic*, *The New Yorker*, and others. He is the recipient of a 2020 creative writing grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a 2017 Whiting Award, and a 2013 Ruth Lilly Fellowship. He serves as a faculty member at Randolph College's low-res MFA.

## Featured Panelist Bios

### Kundiman SW

**Dara Yen Elerath** is a cross-genre writer. Her first book, *Dark Braid* (BkMk Press), won the 2019 John Ciardi Prize for Poetry. Her hybrid flash fiction has garnered various awards including the Bath Flash Fiction Award and the New Flash Fiction Review Award. Her writing has appeared in the *American Poetry Review*, *AGNI*, *Plume*, *Boulevard*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Tahoma Literary Review* and elsewhere. She is an alumna of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) MFA program and lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**Anushah Jiwani** is a queer Pakistani American living in New Mexico. Anushah's writing was featured in the 2024 *Open-Hearted Horizon: An Albuquerque Poetry Anthology*, in the 2023 anthology *One Albuquerque, One Hundred Poets*, which is the recipient of the 2023 New Mexico/Arizona Book Award for Poetry Anthology, and in *Arts & Letters*, where her poems were nominated for the Pushcart-Best of the Small Presses Anthology. She is also the recipient of the 2018 Maureen Egen Writers Exchange Award sponsored by Poets & Writers. More recently, Anushah has been sharing her experience with restorative justice as a survivor of sexual assault. Anushah believes stories are avenues for healing. Through her work as a social justice advocate, a life coach, and a facilitator, Anushah has been fulfilling her dream to create liberating spaces for the BIPOC community.

**Susan Nguyen's** debut poetry collection *Dear Diaspora* won the 2020 Prairie Schooner Book Prize in Poetry, a New Mexico-Arizona Book Award, an Outstanding Achievement Award from the Association of Asian American Studies, and was a finalist for the Julie Suk Award. Her poems have been nominated for Best of the Net and a Pushcart Prize and have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Academy of American Poets' Poem-A-Day series*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Rumpus*, *Tin House*, *Diagram*, and elsewhere. The recipient of fellowships from the AZ Commission on the Arts, the Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing, and the 2022 Stanley Kunitz Memorial Prize from the *American Poetry Review*, she currently serves as the senior editor of *Hayden's Ferry Review*.

**Aria Pahari** is a Nepali American poet born and raised in Virginia who received her MFA in poetry at the University of Arizona (UA). Through her poems, she explores the concept of intimacy through registers of asexuality, femininity/the matrilineal, animals, sisterhood, and touch. She is at work on her first poetry collection.

**Edie Tsong** (Taiwanese American) is an artist and writer. She has participated in PICA's TBA Festival, The PASEO, and exhibited internationally. She is the artist/author of *Scattered Memory* a limited-edition artist book and is a recipient of the SITE Spread 4.0 Grant with Cut+Paste Society for Snow Poems Project. She is a Blackburn Fellow at the Randolph College MFA. She lives and works in northern New Mexico with her daughter. [edietsong.com](http://edietsong.com), [@plain\\_song\\_](https://www.instagram.com/plain_song_)

### Letras Latinas

#### Brent Amenityro

Brent Amenityro is a poet and music artist. He is the author of the collection *A Face Out of Clay* (The Center for Literary Publishing, 2024) and the chapbook *Puebla* (Ghost City Press, 2023). His poetry has been published in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Ninth*

*Letter, The Journal, Hayden's Ferry Review, Salamander*, and elsewhere. He was the 2022-2023 Letras Latinas Poetry Coalition Fellow at the University of Notre Dame. He was selected for the 2024 Poets & Writers Get the Word Out\_cohort. He currently serves as the Poetry Editor at *The Los Angeles Review*.

### **Francisco Aragón**

Francisco Aragón is the son of Nicaraguan immigrants. He is the author of the three books of poetry, most recently *After Rubén* (Red Hen Press, 2020). Previous collections include *Glow of Our Sweat* (Scapegoat Press, 2010) and *Puerta del Sol* (Bilingual Press, 2005). He is also the editor of the award-winning anthology *The Wind Shifts: New Latino Poetry* (University of Arizona Press, 2007). His poetry has appeared in over twenty anthologies and a range of literary journals. He is a CantoMundo and Macondo Fellow. Aragón teaches courses at Notre Dame in Latinx poetry and poetry writing where he directs Letras Latinas. For more information, visit: <http://franciscoaragon.net>.

### **Laura Villareal**

Laura Villareal is a poet and book critic. Her debut poetry collection, *Girl's Guide to Leaving*, was awarded Texas Institute of Letters' John A. Robert Johnson Award for a First Book of Poetry and the Writers' League of Texas Book Award for Poetry. She earned an MFA at Rutgers University-Newark and has been the recipient of fellowships and scholarships from the Stadler Center for Poetry and Literary Arts, National Book Critics Circle's Emerging Critics Program, VONA, Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and the Dobie Paisano Fellowship Program at University of Texas-Austin. She is currently an associate with Letras Latinas, where she co-edits and writes for Letras Latinas Blog 2.

### **Special Guest Reader**

#### **Richard Siken**

Richard Siken is an American poet, painter, and filmmaker. His poetry collection *Crush* won the 2004 Yale Series of Younger Poets prize, a Lambda Literary Award, the Thom Gunn Award, and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. His poems have appeared in *The Iowa Review*, *Conjunctions*, *Indiana Review* and *Forklift, Ohio*, as well as in the anthologies *The Best American Poetry 2000* and *Legitimate Dangers*. He is a recipient of a Pushcart Prize, two Arizona Commission on the Arts grants, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.