



## 2023–24 LOFT MENTOR SERIES

### Poetry and Creative Prose Guidelines

The Loft Literary Center invites poets, fiction, and nonfiction writers to apply to the 2023–2024 Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose. This program offers advanced criticism and professional development opportunities to 12 writers: four each in the genres of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction.

#### **THE PROGRAM**

Twelve early career\* writers are selected through a competitive judging process to work intensively with six nationally acclaimed writers of prose and poetry. The three local mentors spend an extended period of time working with the entire group and conducting genre-specific workshops and individual conferences with the four writers in their genres. The three visiting mentors come in for intensive weekends of craft seminars with the full group and individual manuscript conferences with the writers in their genre. All participants are featured in a public reading—four fellows with two mentors—throughout the course of the year.

\*Please see the Jerome Foundation's definition of early career [here](#).

#### **Eligibility**

- Work must be in the genres of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. Nonfiction may include memoir, personal essay, literary journalism, and biography. It does not include reportage, blogs, or opinion pieces.
- You may apply in more than one genre, but can only win in one. If you are applying in more than one genre, you must submit different work samples for each application.
- You must be a resident of Minnesota for a minimum of 12 months on the date of your application.
- You must not have published (traditional or self-published) more than one book in any genre.
- You may submit work previously published in magazines, journals, or anthologies.
- Writers who have been in the field for longer than 10 years (excluding any time in a degree-granting program or time away from working as an artist due to circumstances—e.g., having children, caring for family members, long-term illness, etc.) are not eligible, even if they feel under-recognized. For more information, please see the Jerome Foundation's definition of an early career artist (<https://www.jeromefdn.org/defining-early-career-emerging-artists>).
- You must not be an enrolled part-time or full-time student in a degree-granting program (including K-12, college, graduate, or postgraduate studies) at the time of application and/or during the Mentor Series fellowship period.

- If you are full-time tenured faculty at any college, university or institution of higher learning, you are not eligible.
- Mentor Series fellowship alumni are ineligible.
- Board and staff members of the Loft and the Jerome Foundation are ineligible to apply.

Fellows are selected on the basis of the strength of their manuscripts and project plans and will receive an award of \$1,000 to defray the costs of program participation (book purchases, child care, etc.). Fellows are required to prepare for and attend all program-related meetings, seminars, readings, workshops, manuscript conferences, and social activities. These activities may be virtual or in-person.

*All program dates are tentative and subject to change. Orientation for fellows is currently scheduled for October 7, 2023 from 12-2 p.m. Central time.*

If you have questions about eligibility, please call program manager Marion Gomez at 612-215-2578 or email her at [mgomez@loft.org](mailto:mgomez@loft.org) by **Aug. 23, 2023**. More information is available on our website: [www.loft.org](http://www.loft.org).

## Judging Process

A panel of preliminary readers composed of recent Mentor Series fellows who are ineligible to apply for the program will review the initial manuscripts received to the competition. From these, they will select 20 - 24 finalists in each genre which will be forwarded to the respective mentors for final decisions. The two mentors in each genre will confer and select four winners and two honorable mentions.

## THE MENTORS

### Fiction

#### Ernesto Quiñonez



**Ernesto Quiñonez** is an acclaimed novelist, essayist, screenplay writer, and oral storyteller for the Moth. He is the author of *Chango's Fire* and *Bodega Dreams*. His work received the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers designation, the Borders Bookstore Original New Voice selection, and was declared a "Notable Book of the Year" by The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. He was raised in Spanish Harlem, New York City, by a communist father from Ecuador and a Jehovah's Witness mother. He is a product of public education from kindergarten to his Masters at the City College of New York where he studied under Walter Mosley. He is a Sundance Writer's Lab fellow and last appeared in the "Blackout" episode of PBS American Experience. He is currently an associate professor at Cornell University's MFA program.

## Fiction

### Swati Avasthi



**Swati Avasthi's** first novel, *Split* (Knopf, 2010) received the International Reading Association Award, Cybils Award, received recognition from 15 US state awards committees, and was translated into four languages. Her second, *Chasing Shadows* received several starred reviews from *School Library Journal*, *Publisher's Weekly*, and was listed as a Best of 2013 by *Kirkus*, Bank Street College, and YALSA. Swati received her BA from The University of Chicago and an MFA from University of Minnesota. She teaches at Hamline University's MFA in Writing for Children and Young

Adults. She worked on *Split* with the mentors in the Loft Mentor Series years ago when she was a recipient of this award.

## Creative Nonfiction

### Billy-Ray Belcourt



**Billy-Ray Belcourt** is a writer from the Driftpile Cree Nation in northwest Alberta. He is an Assistant Professor in the School of Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of four books: *This Wound is a World*, *NDN Coping Mechanisms: Notes from the Field*, *A History of My Brief Body*, and *A Minor Chorus*. *A History of My Brief Body*, essays and vignettes on grief, colonial violence, joy, love, and queerness, was published in Canada in August 2020 with Hamish

Hamilton, an imprint of Penguin Canada, and in the US with Two Dollar Radio. It was a #1 National Bestseller, a Globe & Mail Best Book, and a finalist for the 2020 Governor General's Literary Award for Non-Fiction, a 2021 Lambda Literary Award for Gay Memoir/Biography, and two BC and Yukon Book Prizes. It received the Hubert Evans Prize for Non-Fiction. In a starred review, *Kirkus Reviews* called it "elegantly crafted" and "an urgently needed, unyielding book of theoretical and intimate strength."

## Creative Nonfiction

### Juliet Patterson



**Juliet Patterson** is the author of *Sinkhole: A Legacy of Suicide* (Milkweed Editions, September 2022) and two full-length poetry collections, *Threnody*, (Nightboat Books 2016), a finalist for the 2017 Audre Lorde Poetry Award, and *The Truant Lover*, (Nightboat Books, 2006), winner of the

Nightboat Poetry Prize and a finalist for the 2006 Lambda Literary Award. A recipient of the Arts & Letters Susan Atefat Prize in non-fiction, and a Lynda Hull Memorial Poetry Prize, she has also been awarded fellowships from the Jerome Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and the Minneapolis-based Creative Community Leadership Institute (formerly the Institute for Community and Creative Development). She teaches creative writing and literature at St. Olaf College and is also a faculty member and director of the college's Environmental Conversations program.

## Poetry

### Marilyn Nelson



**Marilyn Nelson** is one of America's most celebrated poets. She is the author or translator of some twenty poetry books and chapbooks for adults, young adults, and children. Of her many collections, *The Homeplace* won the 1992 Annisfield-Wolf Award and was a finalist for the 1991 National Book Award. *The Fields Of Praise: New And Selected Poems* won the 1998 Poets' Prize and was a finalist for the 1997 National Book Award, the PEN Winship Award, and the Lenore Marshall Prize. The poems in this collection embrace numerous themes, including the changing natures of love, racism, motherhood, marriage, and domesticity. *Carver: A Life In Poems* won the 2001 Boston Globe/Hornbook Award and the Flora Stieglitz Straus Award, was a finalist for the 2001 National Book Award, a Newbery Honor Book, and a Coretta Scott King Honor Book. *Fortune's Bones* was a Coretta Scott King Honor Book and won the Lion and the Unicorn Award for Excellence in North American Poetry. *A Wreath For Emmett Till* won the 2005 Boston Globe Horn Book Award and was a 2006 Coretta Scott King Honor Book, a 2006 Michael L. Printz Honor Book, and a 2006 Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award Honor Book. *The Cachoiera Tales And Other Poems* won the L.E. Phillabaum Award and was a finalist for the LA Times Book Award. In 2016, her poetry collection *My Seneca Village* won the LA Times Book Award in Young Adult Literature. Nelson's honors include two NEA creative writing fellowships, the 1990 Connecticut Arts Award, a Fulbright Teaching Fellowship (in the South of France!), a fellowship from the J.S. Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Ruth Lilly Award, the Robert Frost Medal, and the Wallace Stevens Award. She has served as a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, as Poet-in-Residence of the Poets Corner at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and as the Poet Laureate of the State of Connecticut. The mother of two and grandmother of two, she lives quietly, retired from a long career in academia, with her daughter and three cats.

## Poetry

[torrin a. greathouse](#)



**torrin a. greathouse** is a transgender cripple-punk poet and essayist. She received her MFA in creative writing from the University of Minnesota. Their work has been featured in *Poetry Magazine*, *The Rumpus*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Kenyon Review*. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Effing Foundation for Sex Positivity, Zoeglossia, the University of Arizona Poetry Center, and the Ragdale Foundation. Her debut poetry collection, *Wound from the Mouth of a Wound* (Milkweed Editions, 2020), was a finalist for the Minnesota Book Award, CLMP Firecracker Award, and winner of the 2022 Kate Tufts Discovery Award. She teaches at the Rainier Writing Workshop, the low-residency MFA program at Pacific Lutheran University.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- All entries must be submitted through Submittable. Incomplete entries or entries that do not comply with the guidelines will not be considered.
- A complete application will include:
  - A completed form in Submittable, including the biographical statement (written in third person).
  - An upload of a one-page goal statement detailing what you hope to achieve in the program as part of your application.
  - A 200-word statement about your “Contribution to the Literary Landscape.” The Loft Literary Center believes equity benefits everyone and the Loft Mentor Series is committed to inclusion. Our most recent strategic framework states “We encompass a broad spectrum of voices, literary expression, and artistic endeavor. We respect all constituents, readers, and writers at every stage of their development. We believe language connects us; that through our shared love of reading, writing, and spoken word, we embrace and transcend our differences.” In 200 words, describe how your point of view and background (social, racial/ethnic, religious, gender identity, sexual identity, ability/disability) will contribute to the literary landscape of Minnesota and beyond our state.
  - A 100-word statement answering the following question: *Is your work innovating, changing or challenging genre, form or the literary landscape at large? If so, how?*
  - An uploaded work sample (see below)

### WORK SAMPLE GUIDELINES

- You may submit one manuscript in each genre but may win in only one category. Each submission will require a separate Submittable entry; (e.g. you may not submit a poetry and a nonfiction manuscript with one entry).

- Your name may appear on the manuscript. Your submission will not be judged anonymously.
- If your work sample contains multiple pieces, title your entire work sample with the title of your first piece in the work sample. If your first work sample is untitled, please use the first line of the first piece as the title.
- **PAGE LIMITS:**
  - ⇒ Poets must submit 15–18 pages of poetry, with no more than one poem per page (poems longer than one page should be continued on subsequent pages). Pages must be consecutively numbered, one through 15 to 18.
  - ⇒ Prose writers must submit 12–20 double-spaced pages, with margins of no less than one inch on all sides. If you are submitting sections of a book-length project, you may include a one-page synopsis as part of your page limit. If you are submitting several short pieces, all pages must be numbered consecutively, one through 12 to 20.
  - ⇒ Exceeding the page limit will render your application ineligible.

**DEADLINE:**

- ⇒ All entries must be submitted by **11:59 p.m. on August 27, 2023.**
- ⇒ Winners will be notified by the end of September 2023 by phone. All other applicants will receive an email.

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*The Loft Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose is made possible through the support of the Jerome Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Loft Members.*