



The Loft Literary Center

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The Loft Literary Center Announces 2023–2024 Mentor Series Fellows

Twelve Minnesota Early Career Writers Selected for the Year-long Fellowship Program

The Loft Literary Center is pleased to announce the recipients of the Loft Mentor Series Fellowship. The Mentor Series Fellowship offers 12 early career Minnesota writers the opportunity to work intensively with six nationally acclaimed writers of prose and poetry.

Selected participants work throughout the fellowship with the six mentors, and all participants and mentors give public readings at the Loft. Dates for those readings will be announced in December. Learn more [about the program here](#).

This program is funded by the Jerome Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the generous support of Loft members.

2023–2024 ENTRIES AND SELECTIONS

The Loft Literary Center received 69 entries to the 2022–2023 Loft Mentor Series Fellowship in Poetry and Creative Prose, from which the current program mentors



had the difficult task of choosing the four fellows and two honorable mentions each in the genres of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. The fellows are listed below.

Nonfiction Selections

Tommy Frank, Tim Knight, Paul Lai, and **Hana Worku** have been selected for the fellowship program in creative nonfiction.

Honorable mentions are Isa Condo-Olvera and Jamie Valentino.

Poetry Selections

Sara Dovre Wudali, José Felipe Ozuna, jd hegarty, and **Aurora Masum-Javed** have been selected for the fellowship program in poetry.

Honorable mentions are 翁淑君 Sook Jin Ong and Sam Stokley.

Fiction Selections

LaTreena Felegy, Dorcy Jaffray, Cindy Jiban, and **Rebecca Nichloson** have been selected for the fellowship program in fiction.

Honorable mentions are Kayla Gray and A.L. (Amber) Guetebier.

BIOS FOR THE 2023–2024 LOFT MENTOR SERIES FELLOWS

Sara Dovre Wudali's poetry and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in literary journals and anthologies such as *under the gum tree*, *Barrelhouse*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and the *Saint Paul Almanac*. She co-edited the hybrid chapbook anthology, *All You Need Is One Avocado*, 2022. Her poems have been exhibited in public art projects in Mankato, Red Wing, and Minneapolis. She spent almost two decades of her life on a farm in southwest Minnesota, an experience which finds its way into all her poetry. Dovre Wudali is owner and director of Buuji, a small content production house in St. Paul where she lives with her family.

LaTreena Felegy is a Black, Midwest-born book lover and aspiring writer. Many of her favorite stories involve “troubled” female characters, and her own writing often explores the darker impulses of adolescence and womanhood. She holds a BA in English Literature from Metropolitan State University and an MA in Education from



Augsburg University. The Loft Mentor Series Fellowship is an exciting step toward her future as a writer.

José Felipe Ozuna was born in Guerrero, Mexico and currently lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He graduated with a BS in sociology from Minnesota State University, Mankato. He is a 2022 UndocuPoets Fellow. His poems are published or forthcoming in *Poetry Online*, *HAD*, *River Mouth Review*, and elsewhere.

Tommy Frank is a neuroqueer essayist. They received their MFA from Hamline University and their MALS in Film Studies from the University of Minnesota. Tommy was attacked by a pelican in Panama in 2005; they've been dive bombed by swallows in their backyard, swarmed by hornets on cloudy days, and bit by a bat in their own apartment. You can find their work in *The Under Review*.

jd hegarty (they/she/fae) is a poet, a former lawyer, and a sunflower living in Minneapolis, Minnesota with two amazing cats. jd's work can be found in *Name & None*, *45th Parallel*, *Inscape*, *Ghost City Press*, *Miniskirt Magazine* and elsewhere. She is a graduate of the Hamline University MFA. Their self-published chapbook of sad gay love poems, *the clearest blue*, is available for free at jdhegarty.com. Fae can be found scooping ice cream and dashing doors in Minneapolis and she will be on twitter until it burns down @YourAuntieJD.

Dorcy Jaffray is a writer from Minneapolis. She has an undergraduate degree from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and a master's degree from the University of Stirling in Stirling, Scotland. When not knee-deep in a word document, she can be found at a brewery hanging out with dogs and talking far too much about sailing.

Cindy Jiban holds a Ph.D. in educational psychology, and she has published extensively on effective and equitable teaching practices in literacy and numeracy. Cindy is also an emerging fiction writer. She is currently preparing for the publication and massive overnight success of her first novel for adults.

Tim Knight is a writer of stories. As a Korean Adoptee, his work usually ruminates on identity, the nature of this world and existence. You can find his work in *great weather for MEDIA*, *Funicular Magazine*, and others. For inquiries, connect him at TimKnightWriting.org.



Paul Lai is a Taiwanese American writer who lives in Minneapolis with his partner and their two dogs. He is a peripatetic reader and writes creative nonfiction about memory and language as well as doggerel about, well, his dogs.

Aurora Masum-Javed is a poet, educator, and writing coach. A former public school teacher, she holds an MA in Education from George Mason University and an MFA from Cornell University, where she also served as a lecturer. Her work can be found in various journals including *Nimrod*, *Aster(ix)*, *Winter Tangerine*, and *Frontier*. She has received fellowships from places such as MacDowell, Millay Arts, Vermont Studio Center, Kundiman, and Callaloo. A recent Philip Roth Resident and Hub City Writer in Residence, she is currently working on her first collection of poems.

Rebecca Nichloson (She/Her) is a Black, Queer poet, fiction writer, singer/songwriter, playwright and theatre maker. She is the author of numerous creative works, including *Submerged (An Opera)*, *Dear America* (Libretto & vocals), *Mara, Queen of the World* (an acapella musical), *The Wild, Bold Enlightenment of Velvet the Mistress*, *Cooking With Keisha* (or *Anatomy of Pie*), and *Jill, Jack & the Martian Lady*; a play she created for a children's educational workshop at the Minnesota Opera. Her fiction and performance pieces include *Children of the First Hummingbird* and *Zar-Baby*, among others. She holds a Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting from Columbia University, an M.A. in English Literature, and studied publishing at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C. She was also the recipient of a Commission from the Cedar Cultural Center for which she created *Multicolored Musings: Jewels of Love, Loss, & Triumph* (a three-part collection of songs exploring her African and African American heritage and passion for genre eclectic music) and received a 2020 honorable mention from the McKnight Foundation (Spoken Word). In addition, she is the recipient of the Liberace Award, the Howard Stein Fellowship, The Matthew's Fellowship, an America-in-Play Fellowship and a Many Voices Fellowship from the Minneapolis Playwrights Center (2008-2009). Rebecca's work has been presented at Pangea World Theatre, Red Eye Theatre, Pillsbury House Theatre and others. She is the founder/artistic director of Cleveland-Harris Theatre Company (a theatre, performance, and public imagination project based in Minneapolis). Learn more at www.RebeccaNichloson.com.

Hana Worku is a writer, software developer, and organizer deeply interested in "process." How are things put together, what are the steps, and how do they come apart? Hana's creative work explores patterns and dissonance in this arena. Her



work can be found in *Yellow Arrow Journal*, *Human x Nature Zine*, the *Artist Grief Deck*, and other small publications. She was a participant in the Hurston/Wright Writers Workshop in 2021.

BIOS FOR THE 2023–2024 MENTORS

Fiction

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.

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 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."

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 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.

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.

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Incorporated in 1975, The Loft Literary Center is one of the nation's leading independent literary centers. The Loft advances the artistic development of writers, fosters a thriving literary community, and inspires a passion for literature.