



2025–2026 LOFT MENTOR SERIES

Poetry and Creative Prose Guidelines

The Loft Literary Center invites poets, fiction, children’s and young adult literature, and creative nonfiction writers to apply to the 2025–2026 Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose. This program offers advanced criticism and professional development opportunities to 12 writers: three each in the genres of poetry, fiction, children’s and young adult literature, and nonfiction.

THE PROGRAM

Twelve early career* writers are selected through a competitive judging process to work intensively with eight nationally acclaimed writers of prose and poetry. The four local mentors spend an extended period of time working with the entire group and conduct genre-specific workshops and individual conferences with the three writers in their genres. The four 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—three fellows with two mentors—throughout the course of the program.

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

Eligibility

- Work must be in the genres of fiction, creative nonfiction, or children’s and young adult literature, poetry. Creative 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, which means you filed US federal taxes as a resident of Minnesota for 2023.
- 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>). If you have artistic achievements (e.g. publications, fellowships, grant awards, etc.)

preceding November 2014 and have taken time off from working as an artist at some point since earning these achievements to still qualify as an early career artist, please explain this gap(s) in more detail in your one paragraph Artistic Bio.

- 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 \$2,800 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 January 11, 2025 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 by **Nov. 6, 2024**. More information is available on our website: 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 three winners and two honorable mentions.

THE MENTORS

Fiction

Vanessa Hua

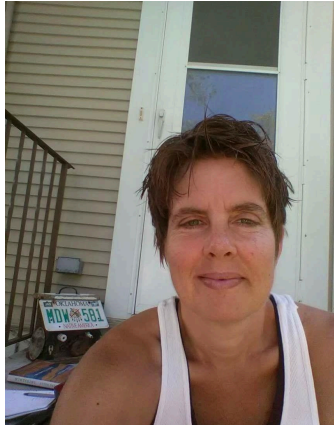


Vanessa Hua is the author of *Deceit and Other Possibilities* (2016), winner of the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature and a finalist for the California Book Award, as well as *A River of Stars* (2018) and *Forbidden City* (2022). She has received a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award, a Steinbeck Fellowship in Creative Writing, Dr. Suzanne Ahn Award for Civil Rights and Social Justice reporting as well as honors from the Society of Professional Journalists, Asian American Journalists' Association, and Best of the West. A columnist at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, she has written for

the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *ZYZZYVA*, among others, and has filed stories from China, Burma, South Korea, and elsewhere. She teaches at the Warren Wilson MFA Program for Writers, Sewanee Writers Conference, and elsewhere.

Fiction

Chris Stark



Chris Stark's second novel, *Carnival Lights*, about two Ojibwe teen girls who leave their reservation for Minneapolis in 1969, was a 2022 Minnesota Book Award finalist and won the NEMBA Award for Best Fiction Book. Her first novel, *Nickels: A Tale of Dissociation*, was a Lambda Literary finalist. She has also published creative non-fiction essays and academic articles and conducted groundbreaking primary research. In 2011, Chris was a Loft Mentor Series Fellow. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from Minnesota State University, Mankato and an MSW from the University of Minnesota Duluth. She has taught writing and literature at colleges and universities for twenty years. Chris is Indigenous and white, and a lesbian. For more information, visit christinestark.com.

Creative Nonfiction

Anaïs Duplan



Anaïs Duplan is a trans* poet, curator, and artist. He is the author of the books *I NEED MUSIC*; *Blackspace: On the Poetics of an Afrofuture*; *Take This Stallion*; and the chapbook, *Mount Carmel and the Blood of Parnassus*. He was a 2017-2019 joint Public Programs fellow at the MoMA and the Studio Museum in Harlem, and in 2021 received a Marian Goodman fellowship from Independent Curators International for his research on Black experimental documentary. In 2016, he founded the Center for Afrofuturist Studies, an artist residency program for artists of color, based at Iowa City's artist-run organization Public Space One. He is the recipient of the 2021 QUEER|ART|PRIZE for Recent Work, and a 2022 Whiting Award in Nonfiction. Duplan is a professor of postcolonial literature at Bennington College, and has taught poetry at The New School, Columbia University, and Sarah Lawrence College, and others.

Creative Nonfiction

Taiyon J. Coleman

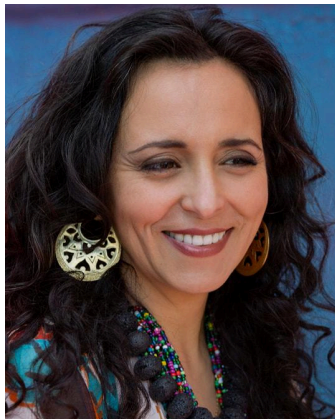


Taiyon J. Coleman is a poet, writer, and educator whose work has been anthologized widely. She is the author of *Traveling without Moving: Essays from a Black Woman Trying to Survive in America*. A Cave Canem and VONA fellow, she is a 2017 recipient of a McKnight Fellowship for Writers in Creative Prose and was one of twelve emerging children's writers of color selected as a recipient of the 2018–2019 Mirrors and Windows Fellowship funded by the Loft

Literary Center and the Jerome Foundation in Minnesota. After many years as an associate professor of English and women's studies at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota, she is currently dean of liberal arts and academic foundations at North Hennepin Community College in Brooklyn Park, MN.

Children's and Young Adult Literature

Aida Salazar



Aida Salazar is an award-winning author, arts activist, and translator whose writings for adults and children explore issues of identity and social justice. She is the author of the critically acclaimed middle grade verse novels, *THE MOON WITHIN* (International Latino Book Award Gold Medal, Americas Award Honor); *LAND OF THE CRANES* (Américas Award, California Library Association Beatty Award, Northern CA Book Award, NCTE Charlotte Huck Honor, Jane Addams Peace Honor, International Latino Book Award Honor); as well as *A SEED IN THE SUN* (Tomás Rivera Children's Book Award, ALA RISE Feminist Book Project Top

10 Book, NCTE Notable Poetry/ Verse Novel Honor, Jane Addams Peace Award Finalist). Her other works include the bio picture book *JOVITA WORE PANTS: The Story of a Mexican Freedom Fighter* (Caldecott Honor, Malka Penn Award, International Latino Book Awards- Rising Star and Gold Medal); the picture book anthology, *IN THE SPIRIT OF A DREAM: 13 Stories of Immigrants of Color* (Eureka Silver Medal); the board book series, *MY LIVING WORLD* which includes, *WHEN MOON BLOOMS*, *WHEN WATER FLOWS*, *WHEN SUN RISES*, and the anthology *CALLING THE MOON: Period Stories* by BIPOC Authors. Aida's most recent verse novel, *ULTRAVIOLET*, published by Scholastic 2024, about a 13-year-old boy who falls in love for the first time and sees everything in ultraviolet colors, is a loose companion to her first novel, *THE MOON WITHIN*. *ULTRAVIOLET* received a glowing review from the New York Times who called it "savagely funny and deeply human." Salazar was named a finalist for the NSK Nuestdat Children's and Young adult Literature Award for *ULTRAVIOLET*. She has translated works by Alejandra Algorta,

Isabel Quintero, Traci Sorrell, Jackie Azua Kramer, Baptiste and Miranda Paul. She lives with her family of artists in Oakland, CA.

Children's and Young Adult Literature

Molly Beth Griffin



Molly Beth Griffin is the author of several acclaimed picture books including *Ten Beautiful Things*, *Just Us*, and *Rhoda's Rock Hunt*. She has also published an award-winning YA novel, *Silhouette of a Sparrow*, two poetry chapbooks, and a series of beginning readers. Five more picture books are forthcoming in 2025 & 2026. Molly is a graduate of Hamline University's MFA Program in Writing for Children and Young Adults, and was the recipient of the 2014 McKnight Artist Fellowship in Children's Literature. Molly has been teaching writing for children at the Loft for 15 years. She also critiques

manuscripts, speaks at schools and libraries, and hosts a monthly Picture Book Salon. She lives in South Minneapolis with her partner and their two children. For more information please visit www.mollybethgriffin.com.

Poetry

Julian Talamantez Brolaski



Julian Talamantez Brolaski is a two-spirit and transgender poet and musician of mixed Mescalero and Lipan Apache, Latin@, and European heritages. Its pronoun is it. Julian is the author of *Of Mongrelitude* (Wave Books, 2017), which was recently shortlisted for a Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Poetry; *Advice for Lovers* (City Lights 2012); and *Gowanus Atropolis* (Ugly Duckling Press, 2011). It is coeditor of *NO GENDER: Reflections on the Life & Work of Kari Edwards*, as well as lead singer and rhythm guitarist for the

Brooklyn-based Juan & the Pines and Oakland-based The Western Skyline. Julian is currently at work on *The Apache Pollen Path* (forthcoming from University of New Mexico Press) with its grandmother, Inés Talamantez. It maintains a blog of handwritten poems [here](#).

Poetry

Sarah Ghazal Ali



Sarah Ghazal Ali is a writer, editor, and educator. She is the author of *THEOPHANIES* (Alice James Books, 2024), selected as the Editors' Choice for the 2022 Alice James Award.

Winner of *The Sewanee Review* Poetry Prize, her poems have been published in *The American Poetry Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Pleiades*, *Narrative Magazine*, the Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day series, and elsewhere. A Stadler and Kundiman Fellow, Sarah has received fellowships and residencies from Tin House, the Stadler

Center for Poetry and Literary Arts, the Hambidge Center, the Kenyon Review Writers Workshop, Community of Writers, and others. She is the poetry editor for *West Branch* and an Assistant Professor of English at Macalester College.

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 one paragraph Artistic Bio (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 that our goal is to develop "literary experiences that are antiracist, culturally competent, and diverse. We envision a world where the power of the word liberates minds, deepens relationships, and inspires movements for people and planet. We ask that every Loft community member help to create spaces that reflect our shared antiracist and equity-based values." 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 10–18 pages of poetry, with no more than one poem per page (poems longer than one page should be continued on subsequent pages) with margins of no less than one inch on all sides, in a 12-point font. Pages must be consecutively numbered, one through 10 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 several short pieces, all pages must be numbered consecutively, one through 12 to 20.
 - ⇒ Children’s and young adult literature writers must submit a minimum of 5 but no more than 20 pages (prose submissions must be double-spaced; poetry submissions may be single or double-spaced), with margins of no less than one inch on all sides, in a 12-point font. If you are submitting several short pieces, all pages must be numbered consecutively, one through 5 to 20.
 - ⇒ If you are submitting sections of a book-length project, you may include a one-page synopsis as part of your page limit.
 - ⇒ Exceeding the page limit will render your application ineligible.

DEADLINE:

- ⇒ All entries must be submitted by **11:59 p.m. on November 11, 2024.**
- ⇒ Winners will be notified by the beginning of January 2025 by phone. All other applicants will receive an email.
- ⇒ The Loft will not alert finalists of their status.

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 Friends of the Loft.