



The Loft Literary Center

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The Loft Literary Center Announces 2019–2020 Mirrors and Windows Fellows

**Twelve Minnesota Emerging Children’s Writers of Color Selected for a
Yearlong Fellowship Program**

The Loft Literary Center is pleased to announce the recipients of the the Loft Mirrors and Windows Fellowship.

While books for young readers is a thriving sector in publishing, those that are by or about indigenous people and people of color are significantly underrepresented. This fellowship’s focus is to mentor indigenous writers and writers of color to write picture books, middle grade, and young adult literature. The name is inspired by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop’s crucial essay, “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors” (1990). The fellows will go through six different workshops with six different experts in the field, as well as be involved with annual Loft events such as Wordplay and Wordsmith. Fellows will also receive individual manuscript consultations.

Mirrors and Windows is made possible by grants from the Jerome Foundation and the Archie D. & Bertha H. Walker Foundation, with additional support provided by Loft members.

2019–2020 ENTRIES AND SELECTIONS

The Loft Literary Center received abundant entries to the 2019–2020 Loft Mirrors and Windows Fellowship. Three judges—the program’s community lead and two of



the workshop leaders—read through all applications and deliberated to the final twelve.

2019–2020 FELLOWS

The 2019–2020 cohort are: **Li Boyd, Ty Chapman, Beverly Cottman, Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra, Katie Hae Leo, Selena Moon, Magdalena Mora, Mai Neng Moua, Siman Nuurali, Cristina Oxtra, Carmen Perez, Isela Xitlali Gómez R.**

Honorable mentions are: Hye Kyong Kim, Maitreyi Ray, Romelle Adkins.

BIOS FOR THE 2019–2020 FELLOWS

Li Boyd is a compulsive collector of pens, rocks, and dogs and has a lifelong habit of word craft. She is also a member of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe and an activist who strongly believes that just because things are the way they are doesn't mean that's the way they should be. Along with trying to be the change she'd like to see in the world, Li seeks opportunities to learn new things and add to her collection of completely unrelated skills and knowledge, which she has acquired through careful avoidance of specialization. Li is a regular contributor of nonfiction work to news magazines, including the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, but fiction is her passion. Li has read for the Birch Bark Books Reading Series, contributed content to the award winning educational game "When Rivers Were Trails," and won the Imagining Indigenous Futurisms annual contest with her short story "Everyday Strays."

Ty Chapman is a Minneapolis-based puppeteer, poet, and storyteller with a background in education and behavior management. His work focuses on a wide variety of topics, including race, mental illness, and philosophy. Recently, his focus has been cocurating events for Collabaret and exploring storytelling through puppetry—with work created for Puppet Lab and the Annual Barebones Puppetry Halloween Extravaganza. He is a storyteller at heart and is excited about crafting and sharing narratives that will serve to uplift and empower mixed-race youth and youth in general.

Beverly Cottman is an interdisciplinary artist creating at the intersections of visual, literary, and performance art. As storyteller "Auntie Beverly," she tells folktales and fables from the African Diaspora, often updating traditional tales to contemporary settings and using them to address social issues. As a member of the Ways Ensemble, Beverly has performed in collaborative productions at Pangea World



Theater, Hopkins Center for the Arts, and the Avalon Theatre. Her collage/assemblage and found object sculptures have been exhibited at Obsidian Arts (Minneapolis), the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, ARC Gallery (Chicago), and Homewood Studios (Minneapolis). Her creative writings of poetry and essays pass on values, instill pride, evoke self love, and celebrate culture. Beverly shares her interpretations and outlook on literature's oral traditions and creativity as a COMPAS teaching artist and with the Givens Foundation for African American Literature Spirited Minds and the Strong Souls Singing artist-in-the-schools programs. Beverly's role as "Grimma" to Yonci and Ebrima serves as a source of inspiration for much of her creative work. The honor of being called an elder in the NorthSide community helps her to see the power of creative endeavors as agents of change. Beverly is a twenty-first century "griot" who listens carefully to ancestors.

Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra (enrolled Maya-Lenca tribal citizen, b. Tomah, WI) is a contemporary artist and musician whose work seeks to shift consciousness around immigration, borders, exodus, and interconnectedness of indigenous peoples of the Americas. Her interdisciplinary social practice (music, visual art, theatre, dance) places emphasis on Latinx/indigenous folk art methods, experimental performance, and liberation theology. She writes and performs bilingual music under the pseudonym Lady Xøk, recording with Electric Machete Studios, a Twin Cities Latinx art and music production house. She has written and performed two family puppetry plays and taught art to children for over a decade. She was a resident writer for Penumbra's My America Project and is a current Minnesota Center for Book Arts Jerome Mentorship fellow creating work on Maya constellation maps. She is thrilled to be a recipient of the Mirrors and Windows Fellowship, during which she will explore Lenca language and culture revitalization books for tribal citizens in the diaspora.

Born in Korea and raised in the Midwest, **Katie Hae Leo** is a writer and performer whose creative work explores the adopted experience. Her poetry and prose have appeared in journals such as *Mascara Literary Review*, *Water~Stone Review*, and *Kartika Review*. Her chapbook *Attempts at Location* was a finalist for the Tupelo Press Snowbound Award and was published through Finishing Line Press. Her one-woman show *N/A*, cowritten and directed by Zaraawar Mistry, premiered at Asian Arts Initiative in Philadelphia and was remounted at Dreamland Arts in St. Paul as part of The Origin(s) Project, which was named one of the best shows of



2011 by the *Star Tribune*. She holds an MFA from the University of Minnesota. After living in Arizona and South Carolina, Katie is happy to be back in the Twin Cities.

Selena Moon is a biracial Nisei (second-generation) Japanese-American historian and writer chronicling Japanese-American mixed-race and disability history. She received her BA from Smith College and MA and public history certificate from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She has lived in Texas; Kyushu, Japan; and Minnesota. She works for the Minnesota Women's Press.

Magdalena Mora is an illustrator and writer with a special interest in children's books and visual storytelling. She has created work for Beach Lane Books/Simon & Schuster, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Bitch Magazine*, *Pollen Midwest*, *Make Minnesota*, and Chronicle Books, and she's the illustrator of the forthcoming picture book *Equality's Call* (spring 2020). Magdalena lives in Minneapolis, where she works as the design and content Manager at a nonprofit and spends her free time reading and people-watching.

Mai Neng Moua is a writer spinning tales of what it means to be Hmong in America. Her memoir, *The Bride Price: A Hmong Wedding Story*, was published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press in March 2017. She is the founder of *Paj Ntaub Voice*, the Hmong literary arts journal where she's published more than 200 artists, and the editor of *Bamboo Among the Oaks: Contemporary Writing by Hmong Americans*. You can find her writings in publications such as *Healing by Heart*, *Where One Voice Ends Another Begins*, and *We are the Freedom People*. Her artistic awards include the Bush Artist Fellowship, the Loft Literary Center's Mentor Series, Kundiman's Creative Nonfiction Fellowship, the Jerome Travel Grant, and the Minnesota State Arts Board's Artist Initiative Grant.

Siman Nuurali is a Somali-American author and writer of the 2019 Sadiq series published by Capstone. She's also the recipient of the Bonnie Jean and Joan Kelly Excellence in Creative Writing Award at St. Catherine's University. Siman splits her time between raising five children and a full-time job at Children's Minnesota. She often dreams of being a reclusive author with nothing but time to read all the books in the world.

Cristina Oxta is a Filipino-American writer born and raised in the Philippines. She is the director of a college readiness program that supports underrepresented students in grades 7 through 12. She founded her own scholarship to help minority



high school students in need at the school where she works obtain a college education. Cristina is also a freelance writer for Capstone educational books, including *Stephen Hawking: Get to Know the Man Behind the Theory*, *Stan Lee: Get to Know the Comics Creator*, and *Tae Kwon Do Test*. A historical novel and a graphic novel will be released in fall 2020. Cristina is a US military veteran. She earned a BA in journalism and an MFA in creative writing for children and young adults. She enjoys spending time with her husband, son, and pets; training and competing in Tae Kwon Do; cooking and baking; performing in theatre; learning languages; and exploring the paranormal and supernatural. Website: fairytalehollow.com; Facebook: In Her Write Mind

Carmen Perez was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, but grew up in St. Paul's West Seventh neighborhood. Carmen is an enrolled citizen of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. She graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing from Metropolitan State University in 2016. Carmen was the first to graduate from college in her family. Her literary work is in fiction and creative nonfiction and focuses on expressing an indigenous perspective. Carmen is currently working on her Master of Arts in Leadership at Augsburg University. She is the tired mother of a rambunctious, adorable two-year-old son. Carmen currently resides in Woodbury, Minnesota, with her family.

Isela Xitlali Gómez R. is an East LA/Inland Empire transplant living in North Minneapolis. Her art lays its roots in the spaces between jazz and mariachi, taco trucks and chili cheese burgers, oceans and deserts and, now, snow. Isela is a 2015 winner of the Loft Literary Center's Mentor Series in Creative Nonfiction and a 2017 Beyond the Pure Fellow through Intermedia Arts.

MIRRORS AND WINDOWS JUDGES

Mirrors and Windows was judged by **Dr. Sarah Park Dahlen**, **Duchess Harris**, and **Marcie Rendon**.

Sarah Park Dahlen is an associate professor in the MLIS program at St. Catherine University, where she teaches courses on youth materials and library services. Her research addresses transracially adopted Koreans in children's literature and diversity in children's literature. She cofounded and co-edits *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature* with Gabrielle Atwood Halko, co-edited *Diversity in Youth Literature: Opening Doors Through Reading* with Jamie Campbell Naidoo, and co-edited the



Children's Literature Association Quarterly's Special Issue on Orphanhood and Adoption in Children's Literature with Lies Wesseling. Her next book projects address race in the wizarding world with Ebony Elizabeth Thomas and Asian American youth literature with Paul Lai. sarahpark.com @readingspark

Duchess Harris is the curator of 94 books for fourth through twelfth graders in the Duchess Harris Collection for ABDO Books. The topics include Being LGBTQ in America, History of Crime and Punishment, Slavery in America, Race and Sports, Perspectives on American Progress, Class in America, Protest Movements, American Values and Freedoms, Being Female in America, and News Literacy. You can learn about her series Freedom's Promise by listening to her podcast (under that name) that she cohosts with her eighth-grade son, Zachary Harris Thomas. When she is not writing children's books, she is a professor of American studies at Macalester College. Her courses include Black Public Intellectuals, Race and the Law, and The Obama Presidency. She resides in Vadnais Heights with her husband of 25 years, daughter, two sons, one dog, and two cats.

Marcie Rendon, White Earth Ojibwe. Her novel, *Girl Gone Missing* (Cinco Puntos Press 2019), is the second in the Cash Blackbear series. The first, *Murder on the Red River* (Cinco Puntos), received the Pinckley Women's Debut Crime Novel Award 2018 along with the Western Writers of America Spur Finalist Award for Best Contemporary Novel 2018. Two nonfiction children's books are *Pow Wow Summer* (MN Historical Press) and *Farmer's Market: Families Working Together* (CarolRhoda). Rendon was recognized as a 50 over 50 Changemaker by MN AARP/POLLEN in 2018. She is the creative mind of Raving Native Theater, where she curates performances such as TPT Public Television's Art Is...CreativeNativeResilience, which featured three Anishinaabe artists in 2019. Diego Vazquez and Rendon received the Loft 2017 Spoken Word Immersion Fellowship for their work with incarcerated women.

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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.