



The Loft Literary Center

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**The Loft Literary Center Announces 2019–2020
Mentor Series Fellows**

**Twelve Minnesota Emerging Writers Selected for the Year-long
Fellowship Program**

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

Selected participants work throughout the year with the six mentors, and all participants and mentors give public readings at the Loft. Dates for those readings will be announced in spring. 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.

2019–2020 ENTRIES AND SELECTIONS

The Loft Literary Center received 139 entries to the 2019–2020 Loft Mentor Series Fellowship, from which the preliminary judges had the difficult task of choosing 20 finalists per genre. There were 52 entries in nonfiction, 43 poetry applications, and



44 fiction submissions. The selection process included current program mentors and program alumni. The fellows are listed below.

Nonfiction Selections

Jennifer Hildebrant, Patti Kameya, Nicola Koh, and **Heather Quinn** have been selected for the yearlong fellowship program in creative nonfiction.

Honorable mentions are Lorna Pecard and Jordan Thomas. Finalists are Alison Bergblom Johnson, Francine Conely, Eugénie de Rosier, Holly Gross, Carla-Elaine Johnson, Camila Kuntz, Rachel Markowitz, Selena Moon, Claire Moran, John Parker-Der Boghossian, Eliza Rasheed, Paul Rousseau, Misty Schwab, Lucy Shenk, Emily Strasser, and Bruce Thao.

Poetry Selections

Rachel Castro, Halee Kirkwood, Tara McDaniel, and **Claudette Webster** have been selected for the yearlong fellowship program in poetry.

Honorable mention is Roy White. Finalists are Lisa Marie Brimmer, Xander Gershberg, Barbara Gittes, Susan Jasko, Kate MacLam, Laura McQuiston, Casey Patrick, Anne Piper, Sonja Sharp, Brendan Stermer, Sam Stokley, Katie Vagnino, Audrianna Wichman, Margaret Yapp, and Evann Zuckerman.

Fiction Selections

Gen Del Raye, Michael Garberich, Misty Schwab, and **Chee Vang** have been selected for the yearlong fellowship program in fiction.

Honorable mentions are Chue Lor and TiArra Shepard. Finalists are Abigail Anderson, Patrick Cabello Hansel, Jeff Chant, Amy J. Coulombe, Meaghan Decker, Bret Farley, Eamonn Gallagher, Nicola Koh, Tracy Moore, Luke Muyskens, Regan Palmer, Sami Pfeffer, Erin Smith, and Susan Telander.

BIOS FOR THE 2019–2020 LOFT MENTOR SERIES FELLOWS

Rachel Virginia Castro is a Minneapolis-based essayist and poet. She holds an MFA in nonfiction from the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Her writing has received support from the Ox-Bow School of Art, the Anderson Center at Tower View as a Jerome Foundation Emerging Artist-in-Residence, the Minnesota State



Arts Board, and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council. She works for the public library.

Gen Del Raye is half Japanese and was born and raised in Kyoto, Japan. He received an MFA from Hamline University, and his work has appeared in *The Best Small Fictions 2017*, *The Monarch Review*, and others. He is the winner of the 2018 Force Majeure Flash Contest, the 2018 Up North Poetry Prize, and the 2018 Great Midwest Poetry Contest.

Michael Garberich works in privacy and information security in Minneapolis and writes short fiction in the evenings and on weekends. Raised in Minnesota, he was born in Seoul, South Korea.

In 2009, **Jennifer Hildebrandt** began a blog when her husband, Bob, was diagnosed with a rare bone tumor at age 42. The blog was simply to serve as a one-stop place for family and friends to stay informed about Bob's condition as he quickly became critically ill for nearly two years. In the wake of Bob's unexpected death in 2011, eyeballs-deep in grief, Jennifer sent a sample of this raw, unedited online journal with her application to Hamline University's MFA in creative writing program. Upon acceptance to Hamline, she dug in deep and began spinning rough blog posts into polished, heartbreaking (and sometimes unabashedly, unexpectedly wry) essays about her experience as wife, caregiver, then widow, treading into such uncharted waters as the realities of what "fight cancer" really means and caregiver PTSD. One of her essays, *Jacket*, received honorable mention in Bellevue Literary Review's 2017 prize for nonfiction and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. In 2018, Jennifer graduated from Hamline; that same year, she was awarded a Minnesota State Arts Board Artist Initiative grant to complete the first draft of a hybrid memoir based on her blog and subsequent essays. While at Hamline, Jennifer also completed training to become a pilates teacher and restorative exercise specialist. Currently, she entwines her two passions—writing and movement—into essays that explore the relationships between health, wellness, disease, movement, modern medicine, the natural (and unnatural) world, death, and how all is connected. As difficult as it is to write about her experience with her husband, Jennifer acknowledges the immense power of art in the healing process, as well as its power to connect and transcend an intensely personal experience to a larger audience and purpose. Even now, eight years after her husband's death, she continually mines life-altering insights and other gifts from the experience.



Patti Kameya is a historian escaped from the Los Angeles suburbs. She now forages wild plants and treats historical amnesia in St. Paul. At the Loft, she participated in the January 2017 VONA Voices workshop and taught the class *Your Story and Historical Context* in August 2018. Her story "Community and Kickboxing in Saint Paul" appears in *St. Paul Almanac: Resistance and Resilience* Vol. 12.

Halee Kirkwood is a descendant of the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe and earned their MFA from Hamline University. Formerly a corporate mascot, janitor, and small-town library assistant, their work has been published in *Up The Staircase Quarterly*, *Muzzle Magazine*, *ctrl+v*, *Cream City Review*, and others. Kirkwood is a writing mentor and bubblegum poetry wrangler for the Minnesota Prison Writing Workshop and was an inaugural teaching fellow for the 2019 Desert Nights, Rising Stars writing conference at Arizona State University. Their mini-chapbook, *Exorcising The Catalogue*, was published in fall 2018 with Rinky Dink Press.

Nicola Koh is a Malaysian Eurasian twelve years in the American Midwest, a Christian apostate with degrees from a Calvinist seminary, and a minor god of Tetris. They hold an MFA from Hamline University and were a 2018 VONA/Voices fellow in fiction. Their work has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Sweet: A Literary Confection*, *Minnesota Women's Press*, *Southwest Review*, the *Brown Orient*, and others. Their hobbies include taking too many pictures of their cat and dog frenemies, crafting puns, and fixing things. See nicolakoh.com for more.

Tara McDaniel is a poetry teacher and writing coach residing in the arts district of Minneapolis. Her poetry is forthcoming in *Southern Indiana Review*, *Cutthroat A Journal of the Arts*, and *RHINO Poetry* and has been featured in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Third Wednesday*, and elsewhere. Her poetics and prose have also been featured in William Paterson University's Contemporary Writing blog and The Loft Literary Center's Writer's Block blog. She is a graduate of the Bennington Writing Seminars' MFA program in literature and writing. Her work grapples with trauma, illness, poverty, sexuality, and the female body. She is a former editorial intern at Graywolf Press and currently judges for the NYC Midnight Short Story Challenges.

Heather Quinn is a graduate of Portland State University's MFA in creative nonfiction. They have been published in the *Rumpus*, *Under the Gum Tree*, the *Riveter*, *Cutbank*, *Vela*, and others. They're working on their memoir, *This is How You*



Disappear, about the Imperial Valley and their father's suicide. They live in St. Paul with their husband and two daughters.

Misty Schwab reports for two small-town newspapers in southern Minnesota, specializing in the educational landscape as well as feature stories and previews for local entertainment performances. When she's not conducting interviews and snapping photos at local festivals, she enjoys hula hooping, reading fiction, drinking coffee, and playing Dutch Blitz.

Chee Vang lives in St. Paul, Minnesota and writes stories about women, relationships, culture, and more. Her work celebrates intersection and its complexities. The Loft Mentor Fellowship is her first literary accolade.

Claudette Webster is a poet/nonfiction writer living in Minneapolis. She has received fellowships from Cave Canem Fellow and North Country Institute and Retreat for Writers of Color. Her work has appeared in *Essence*, *Pitkin Review*, and *Black Renaissance Noire*. She earned an MFA in creative writing from Goddard College. She is currently working on a memoir about her family's journey from Jamaica to America.

BIOS FOR THE 2019–2020 MENTORS

Fiction

Jennine Capó Crucet is the author of *Make Your Home Among Strangers*, winner of the International Latino Book Award and cited as a best book of the year by *NBC Latino*, the *Guardian*, and the *Miami Herald*; and of *How to Leave Hialeah*, which won the Iowa Short Fiction Award and the John Gardner Book Prize. A contributing opinion writer for the *New York Times* and a recipient of an O. Henry Prize, she is currently an associate professor at the University of Nebraska. Her essay collection, *My Time Among the Whites*, was published in September 2019 with Picador/FSG.

Junauda Petrus is a writer, pleasure activist, filmmaker, and performance artist of black-Caribbean descent, born on Dakota land. Her work centers around wildness, queerness, black-diasporic-futurism, ancestral healing, sweetness, shimmer, and liberation. She lives in Minneapolis with her wife and family. She is the cofounder with Erin Sharkey of Free Black Dirt, an experimental arts production company. She



is currently writing and directing "Sweetness of Wild," a poetic-episodic film series themed around blackness, queerness, biking, resistance, love, and coming of age in Minneapolis. Her first YA novel, *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them*, debuted September 2019 from Dutton Children's.

Creative Nonfiction

Melissa Febos is the author of the acclaimed memoir, *Whip Smart* (St. Martin's Press, 2010), and the essay collection, *Abandon Me* (Bloomsbury, 2017), which was a LAMBDA Literary Award finalist, a Publishing Triangle Award finalist, and an Indie Next Pick and was widely named a Best Book of 2017. Febos is the inaugural winner of the Jeanne Córdova Nonfiction Award from LAMBDA Literary and the recipient of the 2018 Sarah Verdone Writing Award from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. She has been awarded fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, Virginia Center for Creative Arts, Vermont Studio Center, the Barbara Deming Memorial Foundation, the BAU Institute, and Ragdale. The recipient of an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College and an associate professor and graduate director at Monmouth University, her work has recently appeared in *Tin House*, *Granta*, the *Believer*, the *Sewanee Review*, and the *New York Times*. She lives in Brooklyn.

Douglas Kearney has published six books, most recently, *Buck Studies* (Fence Books, 2016), winner of the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Award, the CLMP Firecracker Award for Poetry and silver medalist for the California Book Award (Poetry). BOMB says: "[Buck Studies] remaps the 20th century in a project that is both lyrical and epic, personal and historical." M. NourbeSe Philip calls Kearney's collection of libretti, *Someone Took They Tongues* (Subito, 2016), "a seismic, polyphonic mash-up that disturbs the tongue." Kearney's collection of hybrid essays on poetics and performativity, *Mess and Mess and* (Noemi Press, 2015), was a Small Press Distribution Handpicked Selection that *Publisher's Weekly* called "an extraordinary book." His work is widely anthologized, including *Best American Poetry* (2014, 2015), *Best American Experimental Writing* (2014), *The Creative Critic: Writing As/About Practice*, *What I Say: Innovative Poetry by Black Writers in America*, and *The BreakBeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop*. His poetry and criticism is also widely published in magazines and journals, including *Poetry*, *Callaloo*, *Boston Review*, *Hyperallergic*, *Jacket2*, and *Lana Turner*. His work has been exhibited at the American Jazz Museum, Temple Contemporary, Los Angeles Contemporary



Exhibitions, and the Visitor's Welcome Center (Los Angeles). A librettist, Kearney has had three operas staged. He has received a Whiting Writer's Award, a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Cy Twombly Award for Poetry, and residencies/fellowships from Cave Canem, the Rauschenberg Foundation, and others. A Howard University and CalArts alum, Kearney teaches creative nonfiction and poetry at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Born in Brooklyn, raised in Altadena, California, he lives with his family just west of Minneapolis.

Poetry

Ross Gay is the author of three books of poetry, including *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*, winner of the 2015 National Book Critics Circle Award and the 2016 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. *Catalog* was also a finalist for the 2015 National Book Award in Poetry, the Ohioana Book Award, the Balcones Poetry Prize, and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award and was nominated for an NAACP Image Award. He is a founding editor, with Karissa Chen and Patrick Rosal, of the online sports magazine *Some Call It Ballin'* and founding board member of the Bloomington Community Orchard, a nonprofit, free-fruit-for-all food justice and joy project. Gay has received fellowships from the Cave Canem Foundation, the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and the Guggenheim Foundation. He teaches at Indiana University. Algonquin will be publishing his next book, *This Black Earth*, in 2019.

Gretchen Marquette is the author of *May Day* (Graywolf Press, 2016). Her poetry has appeared in *Poetry*, *Harper's*, the *Paris Review*, *Tin House*, *PBS Newshour*, and elsewhere. She was a 2014 recipient of The Loft Literary Center's Emerging Writer Grant and a 2017 artist-in-residence at The Anderson Center in Red Wing, Minnesota. Her first book was nominated for a 2017 Minnesota Book Award in poetry. She lives in Minneapolis.

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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.