

The Loft Mentor Series



2010-2011 Poetry & Creative Prose Winners

We received 226 entries to the 2010-2011 Loft Mentor Series in Poetry and Creative Prose, from which the preliminary judges had the difficult task of choosing 20 finalists per genre. We received 72 entries in nonfiction; 58 poetry applications; and 96 fiction submissions.

Nonfiction mentors Toi Derricotte and Patricia Weaver Francisco selected Kimberly J. Brown, Katie Leo, Christine Stark, and Natalie Vestin for the program. Honorable mentions are Tami Mohamed Brown and Pamela Fickenscher. Finalists are Sara Aase, Marge Barrett, Drew Allen Danielson, Elizabeth diGrazia, Brooke Dirtzu, E.S. Fletcher, Pete Heiden, Ember Johnson, Patricia Kester, Susan Niz, Mark Powell, Katherine Schaefer, Astrid Slungaard, and Amber D. Stoner,

Poetry mentors E. Ethelbert Miller and Kristin Naca chose poets Betsy Daub, Ben Paulus, Lee C. Thomas, and Carolyn Williams-Noren. Honorable mention went to Rebecca T. Fremo and Mary Kelly. Finalists are Amelia Boulware, Meryl DePasquale, Char Hopela, Michelle Filkins, Robert Hybben, Brian Laidlaw, Michael D. Lee, Ann McKinley, MaryAnn Franta Moenck, Kara Olson, Anne Piper, Jeffrey Skemp, Molly Spencer, and Benjamin Voigt.

Fiction writers selected for the program by mentors Jonis Agee and C.J. Hribal are Amelia Boulware, Anna Henderson, Amber Larson, and Michael A. Schurter. Chrissy Kolaya and Victoria Tirrel were named honorable mention. Finalists are Stephanie Bongas, Anne Brownfield Brown, Marc Burgett, Mary Dunnewold, David Fierke, Christina Glendenning, Lori J. Ketola, Dawn Quigley, Reva Rasmussen, Kathryn Savage, Kirsten Schmidt, Sara Selznick, Natalie Vestin, and Benjamin Voigt.

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Amelia Boulware (fiction) resigned her high school teaching position in 2008 to have more time to write, and currently works as a technical writer and communication specialist. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in *Poet Lore*, *Connotation Press: An Online Artifact*, *Cutthroat: A Journal of the Arts*, and *Bayou Magazine* (forthcoming).

Kimberly J. Brown (nonfiction) has been a Loft Mentor Series finalist and received honorable mention in the “Dogs and the Women Who Love Them” essay contest in 2009. Her poetry has appeared in *What Have You Lost?* and *Seeds from a Silent Tree*. A writer of both poetry and creative nonfiction, she is working on a memoir about surviving the 35W bridge collapse. She graduated from the University of Minnesota with a creative

writing minor and currently works as a technical writer. She lives in Minneapolis with her wife, Rachel Anderson.

Betsy Daub (poetry) is a conservation biologist. Her affection for nature, the outdoors, and science started from her childhood wanderings in the Sonora Desert of Arizona. She has spent over 25 years conducting field research, advocating for sound conservation public policy, and as a science educator. She works for a non-profit organization and lives in St. Paul with her partner, their 13-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son.

Anna Henderson (fiction) is a geologist who studies lake sediments to reconstruct past climates and ecosystems. As a writer, she is interested in expression of and meditation on the world around her through memoir and fiction. The tension between analytical and creative assessments of the world makes for a continual dialogue on the limits of the known and the possible that continue to inform both her science and art.

Amber Larson (fiction) is a graduate of the University of Oregon's Master of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing. She currently lives in Minneapolis with her husband and daughter and is working on her first novel, *Still Waters*.

Katie Hae Leo (nonfiction) is a writer and educator. Her poetry, essays, monologues, and articles have appeared in *Water~Stone Review*, *Asian American Poetry & Writing*, *Journal of the Asian American Renaissance*, *60 Seconds to Shine: One-Minute Monologues for Men*, *Utne* and elsewhere. She has received an Academy of American Poets James Wright Prize, a Gesell Award, a Pushcart nomination, and a Blacklock Fellowship, as well as funding from the MN State Arts Board and Jerome Foundation. Her chapbook *Attempts at Location* was a finalist for the Tupelo Press Snowbound Award and is available through Finishing Line Press. Her play *Four Destinies* will be produced by Mu Performing Arts in 2011. She holds an M.F.A. in creative writing from the University of Minnesota and was in the Loft Mentor Series for Poetry in 2004-05.

Ben Paulus (poetry) lives in St. Paul. He spends his days building impossible towers for his young son to improbably destroy.

Michael A. Schurter (fiction) has published poetry and short fiction and has produced stage plays in the United States and Canada. A former academic and theatrical producer/director/administrator, Michael has lectured on theatre, film, and cultural history at colleges and universities in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. He is partner and creative lead at Virgo Visions, a Minneapolis-based creative services firm. A Canadian by birth and a Minneapolitan by choice, he lives and farms his backyard near Lake Harriet with his wife Megan and son Tristan.

Christine Stark (creative nonfiction) is an award-winning writer and visual artist of European and American Indian ancestry. Her work has been nominated for a 2009 Pushcart Prize and has been published in numerous periodicals and anthologies including *The Florida Review*, *Feminist Studies*, *Poetry Motel*, *Hawk and Handsaw: the Journal of Creative Sustainability*, and elsewhere. She is co-editor of *Not for Sale*, an international

anthology on sexual violence. Her poem, “Momma’s Song,” will be released as a CD in collaboration with musician Fred Ho in 2011. Christine teaches writing at Metropolitan State University. She lives in Minneapolis with her partner, April.

Lee C. Thomas (poetry) grew up in Northfield and attending Lewis & Clark College, the University of Munich, and the University of Minnesota. He is a professional communicator and an aspiring poet. In 2008, he merged these interests to create Footnote Press, a studio that designs and builds websites for writers. Lee’s first published poem, “Reservations,” appeared in the online journal *FLURRY** in 2010. He lives in Minneapolis.

Natalie Vestin (nonfiction) is a writer and public health researcher who lives in St. Paul. She writes to communicate her love of place and home in all of its complex beauty and ugliness. She has studied nature writing under David Gessner at *Orion Magazine’s* Wildbranch Writing Workshop, and has studied writing and shamanism with the poet Ruth L. Schwartz. She teaches yoga in the Twin Cities and enjoys incorporating reflective writing exercises into her classes.

Carolyn Williams-Noren (poetry) works as a fundraiser and writer for two small non-profits. She also runs, gardens, and writes essays about parenthood. Her poems have appeared in *Spoon River Poetry Review* and the online journal *Literary Mama*, among others. She was nominated for a 2009 Pushcart Prize and received a 2010 Blacklock Nature Sanctuary Fellowship. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband and two young daughters.

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Jonis Agee (fiction) was born in Omaha, Nebraska and grew up in Nebraska and Missouri, places where many of her stories and novels are set. She was educated at The University of Iowa (BA) and The State University of New York at Binghamton (MA, PhD). She is Adele Hall Professor of English at The University of Nebraska — Lincoln, where she teaches creative writing and twentieth-century fiction. She is the author of thirteen books, including five novels — *Sweet Eyes*, *Strange Angels*, *South of Resurrection*, *The Weight of Dreams*, and her most recent, *The River Wife* — and five collections of short fiction — *Pretend We’ve Never Met*, *Bend This Heart*, *A .38 Special and a Broken Heart*, *Taking the Wall*, and *Acts of Love on Indigo Road*. She has also published two books of poetry: *Houses* and *Mercury*.

Toi Derricotte (nonfiction) was born in Hamtramck, Michigan, in 1941. Her books of poetry are *Tender* (1997), winner of the 1998 Paterson Poetry Prize; *Captivity* (1989); *Natural Birth* (1983); and *The Empress of the Death House* (1978). Her *The Black Notebooks*, a literary memoir (W.W. Norton, 1997), won the 1998 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for Non-Fiction and was a *New York Times* Notable Book of the Year. Her essay, "Beginning Dialogues," is included in *The Best American Essays 2006*, edited by Lauren Slater.

A native of Detroit, **Patricia Weaver Francisco** (nonfiction) graduated from the University of Michigan (B.A. Journalism) and has lived in Minneapolis, Minnesota since 1974. She is the author of *Telling: A Memoir of Rape and Recovery*, as well as a novel, *Cold Feet* and *Village Without Mirrors* (with Timothy Francisco), a collection of essays and photographs which chronicle encounters with the Tarascan Indians of central Mexico. She is a former associate editor of *Minnesota Monthly* magazine and currently teaches creative writing in the MFA program at Hamline University.

C.J. Hribal (fiction) is the author of the novels *The Company Car*, which received the Anne Powers Book Award, and *American Beauty*, and of the short fiction collections *Matty's Heart* and *The Clouds in Memphis*, which won the AWP Award for Short Fiction. He also edited *The Boundaries of Twilight: Czecho-Slovak Writing from the New World*. He has held Fellowships from the NEA, the Bush, and from the Guggenheim Foundations. He teaches at Marquette University, and is a member of the fiction faculty at the Warren Wilson College MFA Program for Writers.

E. Ethelbert Miller (poetry) is a literary activist, the author of 11 collections of poetry and the editor of numerous anthologies. He is the board chairperson of the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS). He is a board member of The Writer's Center and editor of *Poet Lore* magazine. Since 1974, he has been the director of the African American Resource Center at Howard University. Mr. Miller is the former chair of the Humanities Council of Washington, D.C. and a former core faculty member of the Bennington Writing Seminars at Bennington College.

Kristin Naca (poetry) teaches courses in poetics, Asian American and Latino poetry, and creative writing at Macalester College and is Consortium for Faculty Diversity (CFD) Fellow. She received her Ph.D. in English from University of Nebraska (2008), M.F.A. in poetry from University of Pittsburgh (2003), and M.A. in English Linguistics from University of Cincinnati (2000). Her poems have appeared recently in *Harpur Palate* and *Indiana Review*, and are forthcoming in *Bloom* and *Rio Grande Review*. She has been a member of the Macondo Workshop in San Antonio, TX, since 2002. Her first book *Bird Eating Bird* was selected by Yusef Komunyakaa for the National Poetry Series and published October 2009 by HarperCollins.