



**The Loft Literary Center**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **The Loft Literary Center Announces Recipients of the 2018 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers**

### **Three Minnesota Poets, One Spoken Word Artist, and One Children's Author Receive \$25,000 Each**

The Loft Literary Center is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2018 McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Awards in Poetry and Spoken Word and Loft Award in Children's Literature (Younger Children). The fellowships are judged by prominent American authors and editors, and the winners, all from Minnesota, are awarded \$25,000 each. The judges this year were Anis Mojgani in spoken word, Solmaz Sharif in poetry, and Matt de la Peña in children's literature. The Loft received 15 qualified applications in spoken word, 25 qualified applications in children's literature, and 85 qualified applications in poetry.

This year's recipients are children's writer Yvonne Pearson (Minneapolis), spoken word artist Donte Collins (Saint Paul), and poets Hieu Minh Nguyen (Minneapolis), Chris Santiago (Bloomington), Lara Mimosa Montes (Brooklyn Center).

The honorable mentions in spoken word are Keno Evol (Minneapolis), Jeffrey Skemp (Minneapolis), April Gibson (Edina), and Tatyana (Peuo) Tuy (Edina). The honorable mentions in poetry are Michael Torres (Mankato), Juliet Patterson (Minneapolis), Su Hwang (Minneapolis), and Miriam Karraker (Minneapolis). The



honorable mentions in children's literature are Megan Maynor (Minneapolis), Peter Pearson (Minneapolis), Barbara DaCosta (Minneapolis), and Elizabeth Karre (Saint Paul).

Of this year's applicants in poetry Solmaz Sharif said: "The work in these applications was just astounding. So much delight, so many close calls, which left me feeling there were just not enough fellowships. The competition was unlike any I've seen. Please know that your work was read with great care and great gratitude."

Matt de la Peña shared similar thoughts about the applicants in children's literature: "It was an honor to read all the McKnight submissions in the picture book category. I've never judged a writing contest that had so many fresh and deserving entries. I want to encourage everyone involved to keep writing!"

The Loft is planning a celebration reading with Solmaz Sharif, Anis Mojgani, and Donte Collins on October 6, 2018 at 7 p.m.

### **McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Children's Literature/Children Younger Than Eight: 2018 Recipient**

**Yvonne Pearson's** debut picture book, *Sadie Braves the Wilderness*, was published in May 2017. Her poetry has appeared in *Split Rock Review*, *Talking Stick*, *Main Street Rag*, *Wolf Head Quarterly*, *Open to Interpretation*, *Chrysalis*, *Sidewalks*, *Literary Mama*, and other publications. She has received a Loft Creative Nonfiction Award, the Shabo Award in children's literature, and two Minnesota State Arts Board grants.

### **McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Award in Spoken Word Poetry: 2018 Recipient**

**Donte Collins** is a 21-year-old queer, black performance poet whose first poem was written at the age of seven about feeling trapped and unheard. Named the first Youth Poet Laureate of Saint Paul, Minnesota, they are the author of "Autopsy" (Button Poetry) and winner of the 2016 Most Promising Young Poet Award from the Academy of American Poets. Collins is the recipient of the 2016 Mitchell Prize in Poetry and is currently a junior at Augsburg College. They are an alum of TruArtSpeaks, a non-profit arts organization based out of the Twin Cities cultivating



literacy, leadership and social justice through the study and application of Hip-Hop culture.

## **McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers, Loft Awards in Poetry: 2018 Recipients**

**Lara Mimosa Montes** is the author of *The Somnambulist* (Horse Less Press, 2016). Her poems and essays have appeared in *Boston Review*, *Fence*, *BOMB*, *Puerto del Sol*, and elsewhere. She holds a PhD in English from The Graduate Center, City University of New York. She was born in the Bronx.

**Hieu Minh Nguyen** is the son of Vietnamese immigrants. His debut collection of poetry, *This Way to the Sugar* (Write Bloody Publishing, 2014), was a finalist for both the Minnesota Book Awards and the Lambda Literary Awards. Nguyen has received awards and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Kundiman, the Vermont Studio Center, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and the Loft Literary Center. His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Offing*, *BuzzFeed*, *The Academy of American Poets*, and elsewhere. His second collection of poetry, *Not Here*, is forthcoming from Coffee House Press in April 2018. He lives in North Minneapolis.

**Chris Santiago** is the author of *Tula*, selected by A. Van Jordan as the winner of the 2016 Lindquist & Vennum Poetry Prize, and published by Milkweed Editions. The recipient of fellowships from Kundiman and the Mellon Foundation/ACLS and a finalist for a 2017 Minnesota Book Award, he received his PhD from the University of Southern California and teaches literature and creative writing at the University of St. Thomas.

## **McKnight Award Judging**

McKnight Award judges were selected in the summer of 2017. The identities of the judges are not known to the applicants during the application process and applicant identities are kept confidential from the judges until they make their selections.



## 2018 Children's Literature Judge

**Matt de la Peña** is the *New York Times* Bestselling, Newbery Medal-winning author of six young adult novels (including *Mexican WhiteBoy*, *We Were Here*, and *The Living*) and four picture books (including *Love* and *Last Stop on Market Street*). In 2016 he was awarded the NCTE Intellectual Freedom Award. Matt received his MFA in creative writing from San Diego State University and his BA from the University of the Pacific, where he attended school on a full basketball scholarship. de la Peña currently lives in Brooklyn, NY. He teaches creative writing and visits high schools and colleges throughout the country.

## 2018 Spoken Word Poetry Judge

**Anis Mojgani** is a two-time National Poetry Slam Champion, winner of the International World Cup Poetry Slam, and multiple-time TEDx Speaker. He has been awarded residencies from the Vermont Studio Center, AIR Serenbe, The Bloedel Nature Reserve, and the Oregon Literary Arts Writers-In-The-Schools program. Anis has performed at numerous universities, festivals, and venues around the globe and has performed for audiences as varied as the House of Blues and the United Nations. His work has appeared on HBO, NPR, and in the pages of such journals as *Rattle*, *Forklift Ohio*, *Paper Darts*, *Thrush*, and *Bat City Review*. Anis is the author of five books, all published by Write Bloody Publishing: *Songs From Under the River*, *The Feather Room*, *Over the Anvil We Stretch*, *The Pocketknife Bible*, and his latest, *In the Pockets of Small Gods*. Originally from New Orleans, Anis currently lives in Oregon and is represented by Blue Flower Arts.

## 2018 Poetry Judge

**Solmaz Sharif** holds degrees from U.C. Berkeley, where she studied and taught with June Jordan's Poetry for the People, and New York University. Her work has appeared in *The New Republic*, *Poetry*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Granta*, and others. The former managing director of the Asian American Writers' Workshop, her work has been recognized with a "Discovery"/Boston Review Poetry Prize, Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers' Award, and an NEA fellowship. She was most recently selected to receive a 2016 Lannan Literary Fellowship and the Holmes National Poetry Prize from Princeton University. A former Stegner Fellow, she is currently a lecturer at



Stanford University. Her first poetry collection, *Look*, published by Graywolf Press in 2016, was a finalist for the National Book Award.

## **About the McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers**

Now in its 37th year, the McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers provide Minnesota writers of demonstrated ability with an opportunity to work on their writing for a concentrated period of time. Five \$25,000 fellowships are awarded. One Award in Children's Literature alternates annually between writers for children under the age of eight and writers for older readers. Four fellowships alternate annually between writers of poetry/spoken word poetry and writers of creative prose. Writers must have either published a book in the genre in which they are applying, or have a significant number of publications in literary magazines. The Loft McKnight Artist Fellowships for Writers are supported by the McKnight Foundation.

Previous McKnight recipients are too numerous to list, but they include Heid Erdrich, Taiyon Coleman, Robert Bly, Patricia Hampl, Margaret Hasse, Jim Moore, Sun Yung Shin, Cary Waterman, Sandra Benitez, Deborah Keenan, Jack El-Hai, Leslie Adrienne Miller, Patricia Weaver Francisco, Barrie Jean Borich, Lorna Landvik, Kate DiCamillo, Molly Beth Griffin, Danez Smith, Kelly Barnhill, Ray Gonzalez, Dobby Gibson, Ed Bok Lee, Heather Bouwman, Khary Jackson, David Mura, Shannon Gibney, Anne Ursu, and John Jodzio.

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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. Learn more: [loft.org](http://loft.org)*