HOW WE Break Free:

CONFRONTING HARD TRUTHS

A MONTH-LONG LIVE AND VIRTUAL CELEBRATION FOR READERS AND WRITERS WITH A DAYLONG PROGRAM ON SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2022
TUESDAY, MARCH 1
NAVIGATING SOLITUDE
VIRTUAL
This session examines the many ways we manage isolation. Leaning into the third year of the pandemic has left many sheltering alone with minimum contact with loved ones or working remotely, away from daily interactions with others. Loneliness can be a state of being even separateness from the dynamics of a pandemic. Loneliness due to a situation versus how one is feeling alone will be explored. Graphic memoirist Kristen Radtke, author of Seek You: A Journey Through American Loneliness discusses her work that defies categorization as it examines the rarely discussed, silent epidemic of loneliness. Her work is a piercing exploration of it, the role technology plays, and what happens to us when we disengage, forcing us to confront our own loneliness to feel less alone.

Joining her in conversation is writer Natalie Eve Garrett, editor of the forthcoming The Lonely Stories: 22 Celebrated Writers on the Joys & Struggles of Being Alone with essays from authors such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Lena Dunham, Jesmyn Ward, Melissa Febos, and Anthony Doerr. The essay collection explores the idea of being alone or feeling unseen, whether one is emotionally or physically isolated or secretly long for it. This essay collection has been called celebratory, thoughtful, and affirming, and reveals the complexities of an emotion we’ve all felt, our skin hunger, the vast need for connection, and the clarity solitude can bring. Multi-disciplinary artist and educator Nguyễn Khôi Nguyên of Bittersweet: A Pandemic Sketchbook, which premiered on the web, and was supported by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, will moderate. These assembled addresses address loneliness in several forms, and how solitude can serve us. The Writer’s Room with graphic author Kristen Radtke follows the main session.

7:00 - 8:00 pm: Zoom Meeting
7:30 - 8:30 pm: Zoom Meeting: The Writer’s Room

TUESDAY, MARCH 8
WRITING, REVISIING, & EDITING YOUR STORY
VIRTUAL
Some of the nation’s literary finest discuss revision, editing, and the bold undertaking of writing the body through trauma and desire, and all things writing in a 90-minute craft intensive. A poet, two novelists, a memoirist, offer a frank talk on craft and editing towards publication, the radical power of personal narrative, and writing as a practical, layered approach to revision, the fact of writing creative nonfiction. This session engages a different assembly of women designed to speak authentically about their American experience. In American Muslim: An Immigrant’s Journey, Sitwat wrote of her own life in search of home and belonging, which prompted a desire to dismantle normalizing the trauma of those who underwent the process of migration. Joining her is bestselling novelist Nadia Hashimi, novelist Sparks Like Stars, speaks to returning “home” in Afghanistan to learn family truths, and the life of a child torn between loved ones in two countries, Saudi Arabia and America. As a child, Maryland State Delegate Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk emigrated from the Dominican Republic to the U.S. with her single mother and two sisters; she is committed to making room for other immigrants at every table where she has a seat.

10:00AM - 12:00PM VIA ZOOM
One-on-One 30-Minute Editorial Critique Sessions with Karen Houppert, Bret McCabe, Rosalia Scalla, Laura Ballou, Chelsea Lemon Fetzter, and Nora Belblidia (!$10)

VIRTUAL

10:00AM - 11:30AM
WHEELER AUDITORIUM, 3RD FLOOR
Baltimore American LIVE AND VIRTUAL
CityLit Project joined author and curator Saima Adil Sitwat to present ‘Becoming American,’ a series of short vignettes & videos of ten immigrant women who call Maryland home. This session engages a different assembly of women designed to speak authentically about their American experience.

12:00PM - 1:30PM
Nonfiction (You Can’t Make It Up)
LIVE AND VIRTUAL
Panel of Black women discuss the interior and public lives of Black girlhood, and their new books. Four working essayists and journalists feed you the facts of writing creative nonfiction. What it takes to represent, research, explore and write the “real.” How to merge the boundaries of fiction, poetry with accuracy and research, and anchor it in truth and narrative storytelling.

SATURDAY, MARCH 12: DAY-LONG PROGRAM
10:00 am - 4:00 pm EST | LIVE AND/OR VIRTUAL

12:00PM - 1:30PM
CREATIVE ARTS CENTER, 2ND FLOOR
The “Real” Business of Writing Creative Nonfiction (You Can’t Make It Up) LIVE
Four working essayists and journalists feed you the facts of writing creative nonfiction. What it takes to represent, research, explore and write the “real.” How to merge the boundaries of fiction, poetry with accuracy and research, and anchor it in truth and narrative storytelling.

Thakkar immigrated from India in 1984, and over years of being an immigrant hijabi female business owner, and mother of three daughters, she is committed to making room for other immigrants at every table where she has a seat.

12:00PM - 1:30PM
WHEELER AUDITORIUM, 3RD FLOOR
Black Girls: Bone Black & Breathing LIVE AND VIRTUAL
Titled in the spirit of feminist bell hooks, this panel of Black women discuss the interior and public lives of Black girlhood, and their new books.
works of poetry, film, story, and the many ways they see themselves and come of age. Poet/filmmaker Nia June made her directorial debut with “A Black Girl's Country” recently acquired by the Baltimore Museum of Art as a part of their permanent collection. Founder of Well Read Black Girl’s Glory Edim presents her newly released work, On Girlhood: 15 Stories from the Well-Read Black Girl Library, which in its starred review Kirkus Review states is “an expansive, decades-spanning view of Black girlhood.” Breath Better Spent: Living Black Girlhood is the recent work of scholar and award-winning poet DaMaris B. Hill, Ph.D called a narrative in verse that “chooses to celebrate and protect the girl she carries.” Novelist Kai Harris makes her debut with an ode to adolescence, What the Fireflies Knew about family, identity and race. Jameisha Caldwell, co-director of A Revolutionary Summer moderates, Quoting Hill - “your mouth is a river that won’t lay still”; Nikki G - “Black love is Black wealth,” and hooks - “dreaming ourselves dark and deep,” embodies the spirit of these books, and the treasures that reside in these stories.

TUESDAY, MARCH 15
KEEPING IT IN THE HOUSE: A MASTER CLASS WITH KIESE LAYMON VIRTUAL
This Festival year we offer you one of America’s brightest literary stars for our highly regarded CityLit Master Class. Kiese Laymon is a Black, southern writer from Mississippi, the author of the genre-bending novel, Long Division, and the essay collection, How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America. His bestselling memoir, Heavy: An American Memoir, was named one of the 50 Best Memoirs of the Past 50 Years by The New York Times. Laymon recently won the 2022 NAACP Image Award for Literary Fiction with Long Division.

In this workshop, we will explore the necessity of investigating virtue and villainy in our writings about our own truth. We will read and write exercises that might have experienced and the harm we caused at home. How does writing through virtue and villainy with particularity make narrative discovery possible? We will also explore the importance of revision. Writers of all levels should come ready to practice senses they don’t typically write through.

From Heavy, “For the first time in my life, I realized telling the truth was way different from finding the truth, and telling the truth had everything to do with revisiting and rearranging words … I knew, looking at all those words, that memories were there, I just had to rearrange, add, subtract, sit, and sift until I found a way to free the memory.”

Each year CityLit offers a Master Class giving attendees 90 minutes to engage with a celebrated author about writing. Meaningful discussions about craft combined with a lecture, Q & A, exercises, and handouts are provided by some of the greatest authors of our time, in both virtual and live spaces. Past presenting authors include George Saunders, Susan Straight, Dinaw Mengestu, Kia Corthron, and Yrsa Daley-Ward. They have all graced our stage.

TUESDAY, MARCH 29
HOW WE GET FREE: THE BIRTH OF PROMISE
LIVE @ THE MOTOR HOUSE - THEATER (120 W. NORTH AVENUE, BALTIMORE, MD)
A Festival ‘Finale’ of sorts designed to leave attendees perched on the wings of hope and possibility. This half hour serves as a coaching session for writers taking on new or large projects followed by a meaningful conversation with three game changers, authors who will guide you on ways to declutter space and closeout the good coming, for ways to embrace self-examination, how “you can be a mess and a messenger,” and how to navigate life with a sureness, and give yourself permission to glow.

ASSOC. OF WRITERS & WRITING PROGRAMS CONFERENCE - MARCH 23 -26
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Fortune 100 executive coach and meditation expert Kristoffer Carter leads the evening as a gift to writers or any one working to call themselves one, as he sets the tone and shows you how to transcend the disruption of daily life, and step into your power. Permission to Glow - A Spiritual Guide to Epic Leadership, called a transformational guide to conscious leadership, reveals the 4 Permissions that offer you the fuel to glow in your darkness, and laws of personal change.
Named a modern-day renaissance woman, Christine Platt, The Afropolitanist’s Guide to Living with Less, examines how childhood experiences and expectations manifest in adulthood, the intricate play between needs and wants, putting readers at ease when we have too much stuff “with humor and a heavy dose of ‘been-there, bought-that, never-worn-it’ empathy.” Chloe Dulce Louron describes the same nature of her work – Life I Swear intimate Stories from Black Women on Identity, Healing & Self-Trust, brings us a mixture of poignant essays and stunning photography. Life I Swear chronicles transformation and growth by and for modern-day Black women, a work of storytelling and recognition and a return home to self, through heartwork and grace. Cultural worker, all around advocate, and Baltimore’s Godmother Alannah Nicole moderates this special uplifting Festival session. The night is designed to spiritual lift you out of two years of hard times and suffering. You deserve to be in this space.

7:00 - 7:30 pm: The Writers Room* with Kristoffer Carter
7:30 - 9:00 pm: The Main Event

FRIDAY, APRIL 1
KILLING RAGE: A FESTIVAL OF POETS
LIVE @ BUSBOYS AND POETS – BALTIMORE (324 ST. PAUL STREET, BALTIMORE, MD)
In a nod to feminist bell hooks and the beginning of April as National Poetry Month, CityLit Festival Reimagined II ends with Killing Rage: A Festival of Poets and we’re bringing you some of the best this region and beyond to offer with featured guest poet Jasmine Mans, whose latest collection Black Girl, Call Home is a love letter to Black daughters. The set opens with indie vocal artist, and a treasured member of the CityLit Fam, Like Water who sets the tone and gifts us with the beauty of her jeweled voice. For the first time, CityLit gets to publicly celebrate the 2019 Harris Poetry Prize winner, Burgi Zehaehsuer, whose prize-winning work Behind Normalcy (seems a fitting title for today’s times) is “an opportunity to explore the tense and probing questions we hide behind and hide from in polite society” – “drawing our attention to the urgency of both grief and hope.” The 2020 D.C. Youth Poet Laureate, and six-time Poetry Grand Slam Champion, Marjan Naderi elevates the Muslim community by sharing personal narratives as an Afghan-American woman using fearless poetry to help others who feel disconnected from the world.
Award-winning poet, Arar Malech, sets the tone and uplifts ALL students’ creativity through a robust arts education experience so that they can then use this in their community. AEMS is committed to ensuring that all students in the state of Maryland have access to high quality arts education by mobilizing power to communities through advocacy programs, professional and leadership programs, and resource building and sharing.

Maryland Centers for Creative Classrooms envision arts education experiences that uplift individuals and communities to share their stories and beliefs and an arts education landscape that fosters generative sharing between students, educators, artists, communities, and organizations.
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Maryland Humanities, home of the Maryland Center for the Book, creates and supports bold experiences through free educational programming. Our programs use the humanities – history, literature, philosophy, ethics, the arts – to foster understanding among people with diverse perspectives and encourage an open-minded exchange of ideas to strengthen our ability to interact meaningfully.

www.mdhumanities.org
@MDHumanities | @MDHumanities | @MC3CreativeTheBook

Arts Education in Maryland Schools is a statewide non-profit based in Baltimore City. AEMS provides a public education system in Maryland with a diverse and meaningful education, nurtures America’s most precious resource—our children, and uplifts ALL students’ creativity through a robust arts education experience so that they can then use this in their community. AEMS is committed to ensuring that all students in the state of Maryland have access to high quality arts education by mobilizing power to communities through advocacy programs, professional and leadership programs, and resource building and sharing. 

7:00 - 7:30 pm: Musical Guest Artist: Like Water
7:30 - 9:00 pm: A Rage of Poets

CityLit Project has relied heavily on partnerships that elevate literature so we might increase our understanding of others. This year these new partnerships allowed us to engage in a more meaningful practice, placing books and difficult conversations at the center while through times of uncertainty married with hope. A HUGE THANK YOU to an ever-growing community of LitLovers. We couldn’t do CityLit without them. The biggest thanks would be if you continue to explore their websites and their missions, followed them and supported them in their endeavors to shed light on our humanity.

GBCA’s mission is to create equity and opportunity in, through, and For arts and humanities.
www.Baltimoreculture.org
@BMoreCulture | @BaltimoreCulture
@GreaterBaltimoreCulturalAlliance

Motor House is a creative crossroads rooted in the culture of Baltimore. We are a non-profit arts hub, gallery, and performance space that encourages new visions, bold experiments, and emerging voices to celebrate the artistry of our city.
https://www.motorhousebaltimore.com/
@motorhousebaltimore | @Motor House Baltimore

Busboys and Poets - Baltimore is a community where racial and cultural connections are consciously uplifted...a place to take a deliberate pause and feed your mind, body and soul...a space for art, culture and politics to intentionally collide...we believe that by creating such a space we can inspire social change and begin to transform our community and the world.
busboysandpoets.com
@busboysandpoets | @busboysandpoets

BmoreArt is the leading resource for contemporary art in Baltimore City. We apply editorial and community building capabilities including digital publication, a biannual print journal founded in 2015, community events, lectures, and social media, to further the culture of Baltimore. We are a non-profit arts hub, gallery, and performance space that encourages new visions, bold experiments, and emerging voices to celebrate the artistry of our city.
https://bmoreart.com
@Bmoreart | @Bmoreart | BaltimoreContemporaryArt

Joyful Signing provides communication access solutions to clients nationwide. Our services include American Sign Language (ASL), Trilingual Interpretation, CUE in Speech, Tactile and Oral Interpreting, and Captioning services for the Deaf and hard of hearing community and Reading Services for the Blind. Joyful Signing has been in business since 2009 and we work with hundreds of freelance interpreters. Our success is directly
CityLit Project recognizes these organizations as part of its Village, local, regional and state-wide organizations that serve readers and writers by displaying their information at signature events and on our website. We realize many individuals and organizations do their level best to provide services, information, and opportunities to grow and enhance the lives of poets and writers. This is our way of supporting them and amplifying the work of these cultural individuals and institutions.

https:/ /www.citylitproject.org/about-us/the-village/

The Village

CityLit Project recognizes these organizations as part of its Village, local, regional and state-wide organizations that serve readers and writers by displaying their information at signature events and on our website. We realize many individuals and organizations ... bookstores, entrepreneurs, reading series, and more — do their level best to provide services, information, and opportunities to grow and enhance the lives of poets and writers. This is our way of supporting them and amplifying the work of these cultural individuals and institutions.

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- Artist U
- A Revolutionary Summer
- The Baltimore Review
- Center for Black Literature
- Doerr&Co
- Dance & Bmore: Voices of Carmen
- Furious Flower Poetry Center
- Howard County Poetry & Literature Society
- Iceland Readers Retreat
- Libraries Without Borders
- Maryland Writer's Association
- Midwest Writing & Editing
- The Modell Lyric
- Passager
- Pen Parentis
- Poe Baltimore, The Edgar Allan Poe House & Museum
- The Poet & The Poem from The Library of Congress
- The Inner Loop
- Writers & Words
- Yellow Arrow Publishing
- Zora's Den

SUPPORT CITYLIT PROJECT

CityLit Project is a small, literary nonprofit located in the heart of Baltimore, serving readers and writers since 2004. CityLit Project nurtures the culture of literature, creates enthusiasm for the literary arts, connects a community of avid readers and writers, and designs opportunities for diverse audiences to embrace the literary arts. CityLit is noted for its three signature events, the multi-day CityLit Stage, CityLit Studio: Writers on Craft, Creativity & Community, and the CityLit Festival each spring. citylitproject.org/donate

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Kate Markert

A SPECIAL NOD TO:
Alysia Lee, Quanice Floyd, Saima Adil Sitwat, Rachel Berg Scherer (Scribente Maternum), Sara Brenny,

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SCAN THE QR CODE ON THE RIGHT TO GIVE FEEDBACK ON THE 19TH ANNUAL CITYLIT FESTIVAL: REIMAGINED II