



BALTIMORE'S
22ND ANNUAL
**city
lit
fest
ival**

CityLit Project in partnership
with Lord Baltimore Hotel
and Red Emma's present

OUR stories
give
LIGHT
TO OUR future

Stargazer (Theo), LaToya M. Hobbs, 2022, Woodcut.
Photo Credit: Ariston Jacks

A two-day, literary celebration for readers and writers –
with a daylong program on Saturday, April 5, 2025 and a
Youth Poetry Summit & Poetry Finale on Friday, April 25, 2025.

Festival Independent Bookseller: The Ivy Bookshop

Media Sponsor: BmoreArt

Special Session Sponsorships: WYPR - The Weekly Reader, Zora's Den,
Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (Baker Artist) & DewMore Poetry

A Special Thank You: Insight180, Baltimore National Heritage Area

PARTNERS & SPONSORS:



CITYLIT
PROJECT

#citylitfest2025 | @citylitproject | CityLitProject | The CityLit Festival is a **FREE** event.

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2025

LORD BALTIMORE HOTEL

20 W BALTIMORE STREET | BALTIMORE, MD 21201

	10:00 AM	11:00 AM	12:00 PM	1:00 PM	2:00 PM	3:00 PM	4:00 PM	5:00 PM	6:00 PM
Versailles 1st floor	LITERARY MARKETPLACE – OPEN FROM 9:30 AM TO 5:00 PM								
Speakeasy 1st floor	One-on-One 30-Minute Editorial Critique Sessions (\$10)								
Baltimore Theatre Mezzanine	The Weekly Reader – Live!	God, I'm Here: Bernice L. McFadden, <i>Firstborn Girls</i>		When They See Us: Reckoning with History	Voices from the Palestinian Diaspora		What My Father and I Don't Talk About: Michele Filgate	Trans Authors Speak UP: Between Your Ears: The Power of BEing Seen	
Hanover Suite A Mezzanine	Writing for Your Life: A Poetry Workshop with Seniors	The Literary Life of AI: Output Through the Years			We Are More Than One Story		Tipping Point: Climate. Crisis. Critical.	Writing Between Worlds: Misplacement, Memory, & Meaning	
Hanover Suite B Mezzanine		The 'State' of Baltimore: Arts as a Cultural Force		Showcasing BAKER Literary Finalists	The Publishing SEEN		Making a Life as an Artist: Writers as Entrepreneurs		
Lafayette Suite Mezzanine	GREEN ROOM								
Charles Suite Mezzanine	VOLUNTEER ROOM								
Royale Board Room 19th floor	MASTER CLASS WITH DAN FESPERMAN: Less is More: Building suspense from the get-go by withholding and writing 'small'		Writer's Room w/ Bernice L. McFadden		SOCIAL BREAK		Writer's Room w/ Voices from the Palestinian Diaspora		
LB Tavern 1st floor									Reception

SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2025

LORD BALTIMORE HOTEL

20 W BALTIMORE STREET | BALTIMORE, MD 21201



9:30 am - 5:00 pm
Literary Marketplace - Over 40 vendors

10:00 am - 11:00 am
Hanover Suite A - Mezzanine Level
Writing For Your Life - A Poetry Workshop with Seniors
Explore former Maryland Poet Laureate **GRACE CAVALIERI**'s personal beliefs in writing as a life force, in the value of poetry, and in energy as the conduit for creating. The hour-long workshop will include time to talk, create, and share a successful creative experience. Grace has written a book on creative writing and invented - among other methods - the “elevator” poem and the 10-word experiment. Each is time-honored and has ignited thousands of beginning writers. Senior writers looking for inspiration and fellowship are encouraged to attend. Grace Cavalieri, Maryland’s tenth Poet Laureate, is the founder/producer of public radio’s “The Poet and The Poem,” celebrating 48 years on-air in 2025.

10:00 am - 11:30 am
Baltimore Theatre - Mezzanine Level
The Weekly Reader - Live!
A live version of **WYPR’S Weekly Reader** with national book critic and author **MARION WINIK**, who introduces notable releases. **LAUREN FRANCIS-SHARMA**’s *Casualties of Truth* was inspired by her attendance at South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Amnesty Hearings. A Booklist starred review called it “perceptive ... a reminder that no matter how much time passes, we can’t escape actions of our own or our country’s past.” **MAI SENNAAR**’s debut novel, *They Dream in Gold*, a finalist for the 2024 Center for Fiction First Novel Prize, was deemed “Extraordinary” by the New York Times, “... a powerful and poignant exploration of the African diaspora and global Black identity.” **JACOB BUDENZ** is

the author of queer magic realist short story collection *Tea Leaves*, whose prose is “full of charms that whisk us into the darkest forests of the human condition,” writes Baynard Woods, *Inheritance: An Autobiography of Whiteness*. **STEVEN LEYVA** is the author of *The Opposite of Cruelty*, which poet Jericho Brown says, “reads like a series of odes and vignettes praising the very fact of daily Black life.” Moderator **Marion Winik**, (*The Big Book of the Dead*), hosts the **Weekly Reader on WYPR** and reviews books for People, Oprah, and the Washington Post.

10:00 am - 11:30 am
Royale Board Room - 19th Floor
Less is More: Building suspense from the get-go by withholding and writing ‘small.’ Masterclass with Dan Fesperman (\$10)
With the attention spans growing ever shorter, the pressure to create immediate interest in characters and quickly build suspense in plots has never been greater. **DAN FESPERMAN**, whose fourteen novels of intrigue have made Best-of-the-Year lists of The New York Times, Oprah Daily, and USA Today, offers a workshop which, by example and by advice from more than 25 years of experience, demonstrates how to hook your readers from the first sentence by focusing on what to leave out as much as what to put in. The workshop includes a special focus on those vital first pages of your novel. Attendees receive “*Getting the Most Out of Your Research Trip*,” a rough guide based on Dan’s travels to various locations and archives while doing groundwork for his novels. **Dan Fesperman** is a novelist and former foreign correspondent whose fourteenth novel, *Pariah*, will be published this July by Knopf.



10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Speakeasy Room – through the LMP
(Bret, Karen, & Chelsea)
Front Lobby - hightop table, left of the
stairwell (Rebekah & Kathy)

**One-on-One 30-Minute Editorial
Critique Sessions (\$10)**

Our **One-on-One, 30-minute editorial critique sessions** return with esteemed editors who donate their time to those who could use a fresh take on a piece they have been mulling over for months. Editors provide expertise on **five pages. First come, first served.** Arrive early. \$10 in cash or donate through the CityLit website at the CityLit table on the Mezzanine. **KAREN HOUPPERT** is a journalist, author of three nonfiction books, and the Director of the MA in Writing Program at Johns Hopkins University. **BRET MCCABE** is a Baltimore-based arts writer and editor. **REBEKAH KIRKMAN** is a Baltimore writer and editor whose work focuses on art, work, and community. **CHELSEA LEMON FETZER** is a multi-genre writer who teaches at UB, serves on the CityLit Board, and is a contributing editor at BmoreArt Magazine. **KATHY FLANN** is the author of two award-winning short story collections, a craft book, and a humor book. “An editor is like a mirror, reflecting your work with a critical eye, helping you see the potential that might be hidden beneath the surface.”

KAREN HOUPPERT - fiction, creative nonfiction
REBEKAH KIRKMAN - creative nonfiction
BRET MCCABE - creative nonfiction
CHELSEA LEMON-FETZER - poetry, fiction
KATHY FLANN - fiction, creative nonfiction

11:30 am - 12:30 pm

Baltimore Theatre - Mezzanine Level

**God, I’m Here: Bernice L. McFadden,
Firstborn Girls, in Conversation with
Tracy Chiles McGhee**

In partnership with Zora’s Den

The Writer’s Room – 12:30 pm - 1:00 pm
Royale Board Room, 19th Floor

Bestselling novelist of *Sugar* and *The Warmest December*, **BERNICE L. MCFADDEN** comes to CityLit in conversation with novelist **TRACY**



CHILES MCGHEE, in partnership with **Zora’s Den.**

McFadden’s “masterful and mesmerizing” memoir, *Firstborn Girls* shares her lived experiences, inherited trauma, the messiness of girlhood, and a portrait of bold, flawed women. McGhee

joins the celebrated author of the forthcoming novel *Camilla’s Roses* to discuss her engrossing memoir that explores the interior life of a family against the backdrop of racial injustice. McFadden is a five-time Hurston/Wright Legacy Award finalist. **McGhee** is a multi-genre, award-winning author of *Melting the Blues* and a cultural curator. **ZORA’S DEN** empowers Black women writers by creating opportunities and offering a platform for their authentic stories and unique voices.

11:30 am - 12:30 pm

Hanover Suite A - Mezzanine

**The Literary Life of AI:
Output Through the Years**

Co-editors and poets **LILLIAN-YVONNE BERTRAM** and **NICK MONTFORT** discuss the long-awaited anthology *Output: An Anthology of Computer-Generated Writing, 1953-2023*, spanning seven decades before artificial intelligence was even coined. Called an intriguing collection “for those who didn’t know they needed it,” says AI Filreis, (University of Pennsylvania). Thoughtfully selected, introduced, and edited, they intend to correct the omission of its long-held history. *Output* offers different types of creative writing, including humor, conversations, prose, and letters designed to be readable. **Lillian-Yvonne Bertram** is the author of the poetry book *Negative Money*. They direct the creative writing MFA at the University of Maryland. **Nick Montfort** is a poet, a professor at MIT and the University of Bergen, and a programmer whose work includes ten computer-generated books. **WENDY QUEEN** is the Chief Transformation Officer at Johns Hopkins University Press and the Director of Project MUSE.



BERNICE L. MCFADDEN

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Hanover Suite B - Mezzanine

**The ‘State’ of Baltimore:
Arts as a Cultural Force**

This year’s ‘State’ invites cultural warriors to share, explore, and discuss navigating the arts scene and the innovative role artists, arts organizations, and creatives play in enhancing the dynamic cultural arts in the City. They share the ways they serve artists and their triumphs and challenges in a year of budget cuts and an open war on DEI. Past ‘States’ have been rigorous, truth-telling sessions. This will be no different. Participants offer insight into where they stand in these critical times. **PATRICIA OFORI** is a thought leader in the placemaking arena, using different strategies to test the limits of how communities can be developed and collectively owned. **VICTORIA ADAMS-KENNEDY** writes fiction about the complexities of midlife relationships and founded **Zora’s Den**, a group dedicated to the sisterhood of Black women writers, for which she co-edited their anthologies, *The Fire Inside*. Bernice L. McFadden served as guest editor of Vol. III. **JOHN-JOHN WILLIAMS IV** covers DEI and immigration for The Baltimore Banner. **GAIL COOPER** is the Executive Director of Charm City Cultural Cultivation, founded by Derrick Adams to empower the lives of underrepresented Black creatives. Referred to as Baltimore’s Godmother by her community, **ALANAH NICHOLE DAVIS** returns as the moderator of this popular festival session. She is an artist, philanthropist, and award-winning journalist.

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Baltimore Theatre - Mezzanine

When They See Us: Reckoning With History

Whether it’s family history, historical references to national monuments, or authentic stories of African American survival in Baltimore’s forgotten neighborhoods, three esteemed authors seek to unravel myths, reveal injustices, and examine what it means to be truly seen in light of a complicated history. These stories will likely encourage one’s deep exploration into family, place, color, status, and long-held

myths. A prizewinning scholar of Black history, including *Vanguard*, **MARTHA S. JONES**, the author of *The Trouble of Color: An American Family Memoir* delves into her family’s past for answers and delivers a “deeply felt meditation on the most fundamental matters of identity, belonging, and family.” **IRVIN WEATHERSBY, JR.**, *In Open Contempt: Confronting White Supremacy in Art and Public Space*, Jason Reynolds says, “helps us examine some of the stone grotesquerie erected and living among us.” **KARSONYA (KAYE) WISE WHITEHEAD** is the founding executive director of the Karson Institute for Race, Peace, & Social Justice, and the author of *my mother’s tomorrow: dispatches from Baltimore’s Black Butterfly*. Moderator **DR. LAWRENCE JACKSON** is the Bloomberg Distinguished Professor for the English and History Departments at Johns Hopkins University. He serves as the director of the Billie Holiday Center for Liberation Arts.

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Hanover Suite B - Mezzanine

**Showcasing Baker
Literary Finalists**

Working with the **Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance**, the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund established the Baker Artist Awards to support artists and promote Greater Baltimore as a strong creative community. The Baker Artists Awards confer \$90,000 in prizes annually on six area artists across each artistic discipline who are featured on Maryland Public Television’s Artworks. The 2025 literary finalists convene for the first time with memoirist **JEANNIE VANASCO**, author of *A Silent Treatment* (forthcoming 2025), *Things We Didn’t Talk About When I Was a Girl*, and *The Glass Eye*. **KATE REED PETTY**, author of *True Story*, a New York Times “Editor’s Choice” and a finalist for a Bram Stoker Award and a Shirley Jackson Award. **BRY REED**, Baltimore-born and bred a Rubys Artist Grant awardee, and a Fellowship Advisor for New Generations Scholars Youth Archival Fellowship. **KATHY FLANN**, author of two award-winning short story collections, a craft book, and a humor book, whose personal



essays and humor pieces have appeared in The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, and other publications. Guggenheim Fellow **LYSLEY TENORIO** is the author of *Monstress* and *The Son of Good Fortune*. **TIMMY REED** is a core-lord writer, surfer, teacher, and skateboarder from Baltimore City. **JEN GROW**, *My Life As a Mermaid*, was awarded the prestigious 2016 Mary Sawyers Baker Award and three Individual Artist Awards from the Maryland State Arts Council for her fiction and nonfiction.

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm
Hanover Suite A - Mezzanine

We Are More Than One Story

Debut novelists, **ZEEVA BUKAI**, *Anatomy of Exile*, and **KAREN OUTEN**, *Dixon Descending*, and nonfiction author **KEVIN SHIRD**, *A Life For A Life: Poor Choices and Unresolved Trauma is Killing America*, discuss their new works centered on the theme that we are more than one story. Three very different tales that include a modern-day Romeo and Juliet story between a Palestinian and a Jewish person; an unorthodox journey exploring mental health and trauma by an esteemed author who recounts his incarceration alongside his cellmate; and brothers who attempt to be the first Black American men to summit Mount Everest in a shattering portrait of the ways we’re reshaped by our decisions. **Kevin Shird** is a four-time published author, activist, and public speaker whose latest work, *A Life For A Life*, called a “story of redemption” by Baltimore Magazine, “ a compelling case for greater access to mental health counseling in prison and destigmatizing therapy.” **Zeeva Bukai’s** novel “creates sympathy for a spectrum of individuals trapped by tribalism, land grabs, heartless government actions, and economics.” **Karen Outen’s** *Dixon, Descending* is a “book to read right now,” says Kirkus Reviews. Moderator **HANNAH GRIECO** is a writer, editor, and English professor and the author of *First Kicking, Then Not*, forthcoming from Stanchion in 2025.

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm
Baltimore Theatre - Mezzanine
Voices From the Palestinian Diaspora

The Writer’s Room – 4:00 pm - 4:30 pm
Royale Board Room, 19th Floor

The richness and diversity of Palestinian culture in Palestine and across the diaspora is celebrated and platformed in this panel. Poets, memoirists, novelists, and activists read and discuss how articulating Palestine and Palestinian identity in the Western world is fraught with challenges but also joys. **NAJLA SAID** is an actor, playwright, and memoirist of *Looking for Palestine – Growing Up Confused in an Arab-American Family*, explores her coming-of-age as a Christian Arab-American on New York’s Upper West Side. **ISSAM ZINEH** is a Palestinian-American poet, editor, and public health worker, and author of *Unceded Land*. **SAHAR MUSTAFAH** is the author of *The Beauty of Your Face*, “a story of survival and hope, forgiveness and connection,” named an Editor’s Choice by the New York Times Book Review. Moderator **DIYA ABDO** is a Palestinian professor, activist, writer, and the founder and director of Every Campus A Refuge. Her book *American Refuge: True Stories of the Refugee Experience* Booklist as “nuanced stories of people whose lives have been heart-wrenchingly upended, and who are doing what they must do to survive and rebuild.”



NAJLA SAID



ISSAM ZINEH



SAHAR MUSTAFAH



DIYA ABDO

2:30 pm - 3:30 pm
Hanover Suite B - Mezzanine
The Publishing SEEN

For this 90-minute craft intensive, publishers and editors join a successful self-published author to discuss the publishing scene, best practices, and ways writers should prepare their work for a competitive market. Each ‘house’ offers tips for getting work noticed, from the slush pile into an editor’s hands. A frank talk on what these professionals see, what they want, and what strikes them as the best way to claim an editor’s attention. **SYLVIA JONES’** poetry collection, *Television Fathers*, released in 2024, is an editor at **Black Lawrence Press** and a reader for Ploughshares. **J. HAWKI** is a self-published author of a psychological thriller series and a standalone work of literary historical fiction. **DORA MALECH** is the editor-in-chief of The Hopkins Review, a professor in the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University with a forthcoming fifth book of poetry, *Trying x Trying*. **SARAH DANIELS** is the new publisher and executive director of **Mason Jar Press** who writes fiction under the pseudonym **Persephone King**. **CASEY PLETT** is the publisher at **LittlePuss Press** and the author of *On Community, A Dream of a Woman, Little Fish, and A Safe Girl to Love*. Moderator **ANNIE MARHEFKA**’s work has been nominated for Best of the Net and Pushcart Prizes. She has received awards and fellowships and serves as executive director at **Yellow Arrow Publishing**, a nonprofit empowering women-identifying writers.

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Baltimore Theatre - Mezzanine

What My Father and I Don’t Talk About: Michele Filgate

When **MICHELE FILGATE** introduced the world to her book *What My Mother and I Don’t Talk About* in 2019, it arrived “the rarest of successes: a modern-day cult classic” gone viral as if the lid was off the pot. We could dish about our mothers. In this second act, Michele



MICHELE FILGATE

returns as an editor with sixteen notable writers who break the silence on complicated relationships they have with their fathers, *What My Father and I Don’t Talk About*. “This stunning collection gathers so many kinds of fathers; fathers selling cars, cutting hair, peeling apples, salting slugs, wearing dresses, arriving too late, fathers who were violent in their primes, cowed by end of life,” says Marie-Helene Bertino, *Beautyland*. **SUSAN MUADDI DARRAJ**, an award-winning writer of books for adults and children, leads the conversation as a contributor to this collection of essays. Her novel *Behind You is the Sea* was named a 2025 Pen-Faulkner Award finalist.

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Hanover Suite A - Mezzanine

Tipping Point: Climate. Crisis. Critical.

The evidence of the climate crisis dictates that we find additional ways to activate engagement. What better way than through stories? Two novelists, one debuting “a parallel narrative of the 1950s civil rights movement,” the other “transporting” readers and celebrated by one of the nation’s leading influencers, share their engrossing work in this session led by one of Baltimore’s leading advocates. **MARY ANNAÏSE HEGLAR**’s *Troubled Waters* is called “An absorbing story of a young woman’s journey towards an act of redemptive protest,” and draws heavily on her experience as a Black woman with deep southern roots. **ERIC PUCHNER** is the author of four books, including his latest novel *Dream State*, an Oprah’s Book Club pick which Ron Charles calls, “a long deep ride that ... never labors under the weight of its broad scope.” Moderator **NAADIYA HUTCHINSON** s co-founder of the Baltimore Just Transition Network, serves on the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Commission, and is an environmental and climate justice advocate and community organizer deeply committed to creating a healthy future for people and the planet. CityLit applauds a deep, sustained, courageous approach to “people are at the heart of planetary healing.” www.allwecansave.earth

4:00 pm - 5:30 pm
Hanover Suite B - Mezzanine

**Making a Life as an Artist:
Writers as Entrepreneurs**
90-minute craft intensive

Designed to encourage writers in what living a life as an artist looks like, four industry professionals share their know-how and ways to access the business side of an artist's life. It's not enough to write the book. They provide data with real-life measures to manifest the artist's life you envision or hadn't considered and map out ways to prepare and execute a book tour with intention and impact. This session will leave you with enough material to put your game plan together. Described by artists as a "goal fairy," **DIANE SCOTT** *Artist Entrepreneurship for Life: Making Art Work for You*, uses the power of artists' stories and community to take the magic out of the "non-art" part with one simple goal in mind, an enduring artist's practice. **ANDREW SIMONET**'s novel, *A Night Twice As Long* published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, is a choreographer who organizes with artists in Baltimore and beyond through Artists U. **DIMITRI REYES**, a Puerto Rican multidisciplinary artist, content creator, and educator, authored three books and has been featured on PBS and NPR. Moderator **CHERRIE WOODS** is a seasoned communications expert, author of *Where Do I Start? 10 PR Questions and Answers to Guide Self-Published Authors*, PR strategist, and sought-after workshop presenter who has helped over 100 authors amplify their brands.

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Baltimore Theatre - Mezzanine

Trans Authors Speak UP: Between Your Ears: The Power of BEing Seen
Writing Trans Lives in Catastrophic Times. This reading brings together trans writers who discuss what it means to live, thrive, and create literature during a period of transphobic crisis in the U.S **CASEY PLETT**, publisher at LittlePuss Press is the author of *On Community, A Dream of a Woman, Little Fish*, and *A Safe Girl to Love*. **NIC ANSTETT**'s fiction

has been featured in publications, One Story, North American Review, and Barrelhouse. **ADDIE TSAI** (any/all) is the author of *Dear Twin, Unwieldy Creatures*, and *Straight White Men Can't Dance: American Masculinity in Film and Popular Culture* (forthcoming, 2025). **JALYNN HARRIS** is an educator, book designer, and founder of SoftSavagePress whose own literary work can be found in Poets.org, The Best American Poetry 2022, Poetry Magazine, and elsewhere.

5:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Hanover Suite A - Mezzanine

**Writing Between Worlds:
Misplacement, Memory, and Meaning**

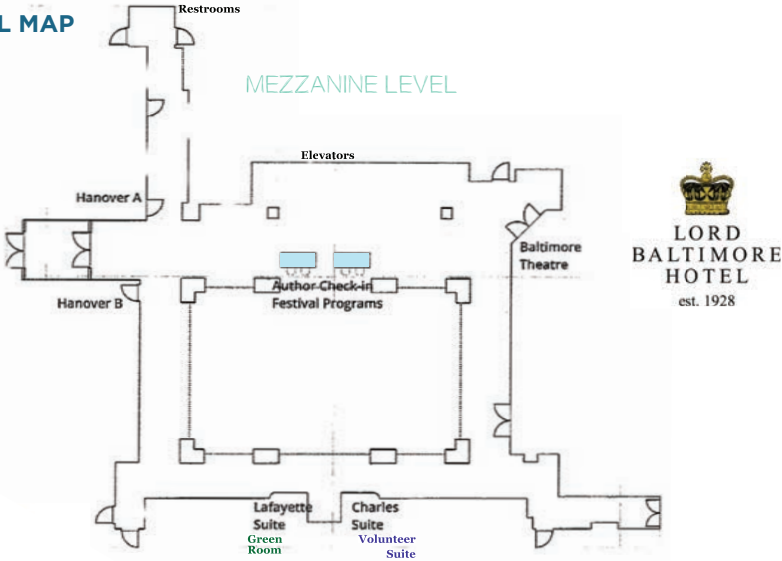
How do you write about a state of limbo – that liminal space between past and present, here and there? At a time when immigration is, again, under threat in America, four recently published writers with roots in Iran, Costa Rica, Southern Africa, and Nigeria reflect on the ways that words and storytelling can be used to unpack disorientation, alienation, and the duality of having two identities – one from here and one from there. Poetry and prose can be a tool to explore those gray areas of transition between place and time and our remembrance of them. One-time journalist, **DIANA ROJAS** is the author of *Litany of Saints: A Triptych*. **PANTEA TOFANGCHI** is an Iranian-American poet, writer, and graphic designer with a deep love for language and visual storytelling. **JUDITH KRUMMECK** is a broadcaster, an immigrant, the evening drive-time host for Maryland's classical music station, WBJC, and the author of *The Deceived Ones*, *Old New Worlds*, and *Beyond the Baobab*. **AMARA OKOLO** is the author of *Black Sparkle Romance, Son of Man*, and *Daughters of Salt*. Moderator **ABBY HIGGS** is a Baltimore-based writer, professor, and publicist. They go by the pseudonym "Stone Cold Jane Austen" online.

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm
TAVERN - first floor lobby

Reception

THE WRITER'S ROOM debuted at the virtual 2021 CityLit Festival, designed to engage participants face-to-face with authors in an informal conversation about the different aspects of writing, including questions about craft, research, writing process, challenges, and publication. Featured wind down from being 'on' and simply engage with the writers assembled about all sorts of things. In the past, **EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL, TERRANCE HAYES, NIKKY FINNEY, JENNY OFFI LL, HANIF ABDURRAQIB, FATIMAH ASGHAR**, and **ROXANE GAY** participated and simply loved it. Roxane Gay was so taken by the diverse and inclusive writers assembled that - to our delight and surprise, she stayed for an hour. A hit with festival attendees! This year's featured TWRs are meant to engage you and for you to ask questions: **God, I'm Here** and **Voices for the Palestinian Diaspora**.

HOTEL MAP



LITERARY MARKETPLACE

The daylong portion of the festival returns with an outdoor Literary Marketplace with vendors from small publishers, independent presses, journals, self-published authors, and organizations that offer literary services.

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scribente Maternum• Yellow Arrow Publishing• Books & Bounty• Full Bleed• J. Hawki• Sanaa Chege• The Hopkins Review• Hand Papermaking, Inc.• Lauren Silberman• Diane Pomerantz• Mason Jar Press• Philip Padgett | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A.J. Hayes• Teresa Fuller• Good Contrivance Farm• Writer's Retreat• Sandra Ekpenyong• Re'Shae N. Green• MultiMind Publishing• Eros Da Artiste• Reinfred Addo• Katrina• Jean Burgess• Kevin Alex | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Animal Party Kiki Books• akinoga press• Washington Writers' Publishing House• Precise Expression• The Baltimore Review• Tim Paggi• Kevin Laws• Ilka Knuppel• Chriss Bury• Stephanie Guzman• M R Imaginative Works | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four Square Mile• Terri Johnson• Maryland Humanities• Antoinette Davis• Alexandra Pugachevsky• Zorina Exie Frey• Passager• Mike Morris• Donald Mewha• Maurice Hicks• Silent Books Publishing• Smartish Pace |
|---|--|---|--|

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 2025

a good time for the truth:
DewMore Baltimore Youth Poetry Summit

Youth Poetry Summit | 10:00 am - 3:30 pm

Youth Poetry Slam Competition

1:30 pm - 3:30 pm (Open to the public)

BALTIMORE UNITY HALL

1505 Eutaw Place, Baltimore, MD 21217



This **22nd CityLit Festival** during **National Poetry Month** pays homage to iconic poet **NIKKI GIOVANNI** with the festival theme **Our Stories Give Light to Our Future** (from *In Praise of a Teacher*) and with **a good time for the truth**. “*If now isn’t a good time for the truth, I don’t see when we’ll get to it,*” she poets. **DewMore Baltimore**, a program of the Black Arts District, hosts the 10th annual **Youth Poetry Summit** in partnership with **CityLit**. Students from ten Baltimore City and Baltimore County schools will attend workshops led by national slam poetry champions, **EPHRAIM NEHEMIAH**, **MECCA VERDELL**, and **BLACK CHAKRA**, with an open mic with **KENNETH SOMETHING**. The day infused with poetry, features national poetry slam champion, author of six books including *I’ll Fly Away* **RUDY FRANCISCO**, and concludes with a youth poetry slam (\$2,000 in prizes), hosted by Maryland’s Poet Laureate **LADY BRION**.

We Who Do Words:
CityLit Festival Poetry Finale

7:00 pm - 9:30 pm

RED EMMA’S BOOKSTORE

3128 Greenmount Ave, Baltimore, MD 21218



In a final nod to poet **NIKKI GIOVANNI**, CityLit Festival’s poetry finale ends during **National Poetry Month** with musical guest artist **WIFTY BANGURA** and features **DOMINIQUE CHRISTINA** with **SYLVIA JONES**, **MICHAEL B. TAGER**, **ERICA DAWSON**, **AILISH HOPPER**, and **TRACY DIMOND**, as the Mistress of Ceremonies. “*We who do words are doing what we do,*” says Nikki G. “Through the pen, you wielded like a torch, like a wand, like a

blade when the world needed sharpening. You didn’t just write poems – you built rooms for us **to walk into, to rest in, to rage in, to love in,**” writes poet Fredrick Joseph. Our festival season ends with poets who walk into that room, who shine their light, who read their poems where they will be seen, and we will remember.

Wifty Bangura is a multifaceted creative, blending hip-hop, neo-soul, and alternative music with classical vocal training and performance experience who uses music as a tool for healing and self-liberation. **Dominique Christina**, award-winning poet of *Anarcha Speaks*, curator, conceptual installation artist, and Arts Envoy to Cyprus, believes words make worlds. **Sylvia Jones’** first poetry collection is *Television Fathers*. She is an editor at Black Lawrence Press and a reader for Ploughshares. **Michael B. Tager** is the author of *Pop Culture Poetry: the Definitive Collection*. **Erica Dawson** is a Black poet living with bipolar disorder and OCD in the Baltimore-DC area. **Ailish Hopper** who works in page, performance, and social forms, is the author of *Bird in the Head*, and *Dark-Sky Society*. **Tracy Dimond** is a 2016 Baker Artist Award finalist, the author of the poetry collection, *Emotion Industry*, and the Vice Chair of **CityLit**. In this final act of poetry, Nikki G reminds us, the human spirit will prevail.

“We will take what we have to make what we need.”

May she Rest in Power. May we *remember* her name.



PARTNERSHIPS

Lord Baltimore Hotel is full of details that are rich in historical and architectural significance, all coming together to create one of the most unique and interesting hotels in downtown Baltimore. Guests arriving through their revolving doors are greeted by a magnificent lobby featuring a beautiful grand piano, classic oil paintings, polished brass, and an award-winning vaulted fresco ceiling with an immense Murano glass chandelier. From their splendid Calvert Ballroom and the Versailles Room to the LB Tavern, a modern interpretation of the classic restaurant and lounge, and the LB Bakery & Bistro, a contemporary coffee house featuring freshly baked goods and local art, our meticulously restored late 1920s gem offers a dramatic backdrop for business and leisure stays.

www.lordbaltimorehotel.com

@lordbaltimorehotel

Red Emma’s is a worker-owned and operated bookstore, cafe, and social center in Baltimore’s Waverly neighborhood. Founded in 2004 by peace and justice activists, Red Emma’s has become a hub of cultural activity and organizing in the city, catalyzing a citywide ecosystem of cooperative businesses and collective enterprises. **redemmas.org**

@redemmas

Greater Baltimore Creative Alliance creates equity and opportunity in, Through, and For arts and culture in Greater Baltimore.

The Baker Artist Portfolios and associated awards were established by the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund and are a program of the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance. The Baker Artist Portfolios were created to support artists and promote Greater Baltimore as a strong creative community. The online portfolios are open to artists working in all disciplines who live and work in Baltimore City and its five surrounding counties. The portfolios expose area artists’ work to regional, national and international audiences. The site has been viewed by hundreds of thousands of art lovers, critics, gallery owners, academics, and leaders in creative business in nearly every country around the globe.

www.baltimoreculture.org
bakerartist.org

DewMore Poetry seeks to foster civic engagement with historically marginalized peoples through innovative art-focused programming and community organizing via purposeful partnerships with community organizations, schools, and governmental agencies that foster empowerment, capacity for change, and community development. **www.dewmorebaltimore.org**

WYPR: The Weekly Reader

The mission of WYPR is to inform, connect, and even challenge the listeners we serve in the metropolitan Baltimore area and the state of Maryland by broadcasting programs of intellectual integrity and cultural merit to provide an unbiased perspective of the events of today and to enrich the minds and spirits of our audience. For lovers of literary fiction and memoir, The Weekly Reader is a four-minute round-up of the best new books on the national scene. University of Baltimore professor, author, and longtime All Things Considered commentator Marion Winik joins WYPR’s producer Lisa Morgan, former co-host of The Signal, in the studio to share two picks each week.

www.wypr.org/show/the-weekly-reader-on-wypr

Zora’s Den is a program of Charm City Cultural Cultivation (CharmCCC), a non-profit foundation whose primary function is to build opportunities for cultural growth in Baltimore’s inner city by introducing and supporting initiatives for public programs in the arts, social engagements, leisurely activities, and educational advancement through informal gatherings. They are dedicated to empowering Black women writers, offering a platform for their authentic stories and unique voices. They host a monthly reading series wherein writers read their work to live and virtual audiences. They conduct writing workshops in person and in their Sister Circle, where writers are invited to share their works in progress for feedback and constructive criticism. They also publish an anthology of work by Black women writers. As part of the local writing community, they participate in literary events to foster motivation and creativity and to continue the legacy of both notable writers and the underrepresented writers living and working in Baltimore and beyond. They

hope is to build a sisterhood of writers at every level of accomplishment to strengthen the voices of the unheard and unacknowledged. If you are a Black woman writer, you are welcome to join them in our online social engagement. **www.zorasden.com**

BMore Art is the leading resource for contemporary art and culture in the Baltimore region, a platform for creative and critical discussions. 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 cultural and economic interests of artists, arts organizations, cultural institutions, and diverse audiences for arts and culture in the region.

bmoreart.com

@bmoreart

insight180 is a brand consulting and design firm that helps forward-thinking businesses and nonprofits clarify, focus, and differentiate themselves through brand messaging and design. Lovers of words, conscious companies, and mission-driven nonprofits, insight180 adopted CityLit Project seven years ago to help amplify their mission.

insight180.com

@insight.180

Baltimore National Heritage Area promotes, preserves, and enhances Baltimore’s historic and cultural legacy and natural resources for current and future generations.

explorebaltimore.org

@bmorenh

The Ivy Bookshop is the popular independent bookstore owned by Emma Synder located on 5928 Falls Road. They have served as CityLit Festival booksellers for five years.

theivybookshop.com

@theivybookshop

The Afro maintains one of the most comprehensive African-American archives in the world. As the oldest African-American business in Maryland, AFRO is committed to acknowledging and preserving the history of African Americans, and being the trusted voice of the African-American community for over 132 years.

www.afro.com

@Afro

THE VILLAGE

CityLit Project recognizes these organizations as part of its Village, local, regional, and state-wide, that serve readers and writers by displaying their information at signature events and on our website. This is our way of supporting you and amplifying the work of these cultural individuals and institutions.

citylitproject.org/about-us/the-village

- Artist U
- A Revolutionary Summer
- The Baltimore Review
- Bmore & Dance
- Center for Black Literature
- Doerr&Co
- Furious Flower Poetry Center
- George Mason University Creative Writing
- 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
- Reading Partners - Baltimore
- The Inner Loop
- Writers & Words
- Yellow Arrow Publishing
- Zora's Den

CityLit Project recognizes and honors the enduring presence of indigenous peoples in Baltimore City, including the Piscataway, Lumbee, and Eastern Band of Cherokee community members. As we gather in literary spaces, we are committed to championing emerging and established Native poets and writers on our platforms. We invite you to download the *Guide to Indigenous Baltimore*.

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 with five signature events, the **CityLit Stage**, the **CityLit Studio: Writers on Craft, Creativity, & Community**, the **CityLit Festival**, and **A Home for the Heart to Live In** poetry series. CityLit is a founding sponsor of **Scribente Maternum** (Writer Moms) and features an annual, innovative **Write Like a Mother Retreat**. citylitproject.org | scribentematernum.com

FESTIVAL PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Corey Chiles
Alan King, videographer
Mollye Miller Photography

CITYLIT STAFF:

Carla Du Pree, *Executive Director*
Lillian Jacobson, *Executive Assistant*
Shannon J. Effinger, *Grant Writer*

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The CityLit Festival is a **FREE** event.