



CityLit Project in partnership with the Maryland Center for History and Culture present:

BEARING WITNESS

Literature as a Revolutionary Act

A two-day, literary celebration for readers and writers with a daylong program on Saturday, April 11, 2026 and a Youth Poetry Summit on Friday, April 24, 2026.

Media Sponsor: BmoreArt

Special Session Sponsorships: WYPR - The Weekly Reader, Baltimore Magazine, Maryland Humanities, One Maryland One Book, The Black List, Tribe 55+, CHARM Voices of Baltimore Youth, Making Her Mark Foundation, Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (Baker Artist) & DewMore Baltimore

A Special Thank You: insight180, Fulton Bank

OUR SPONSORS:



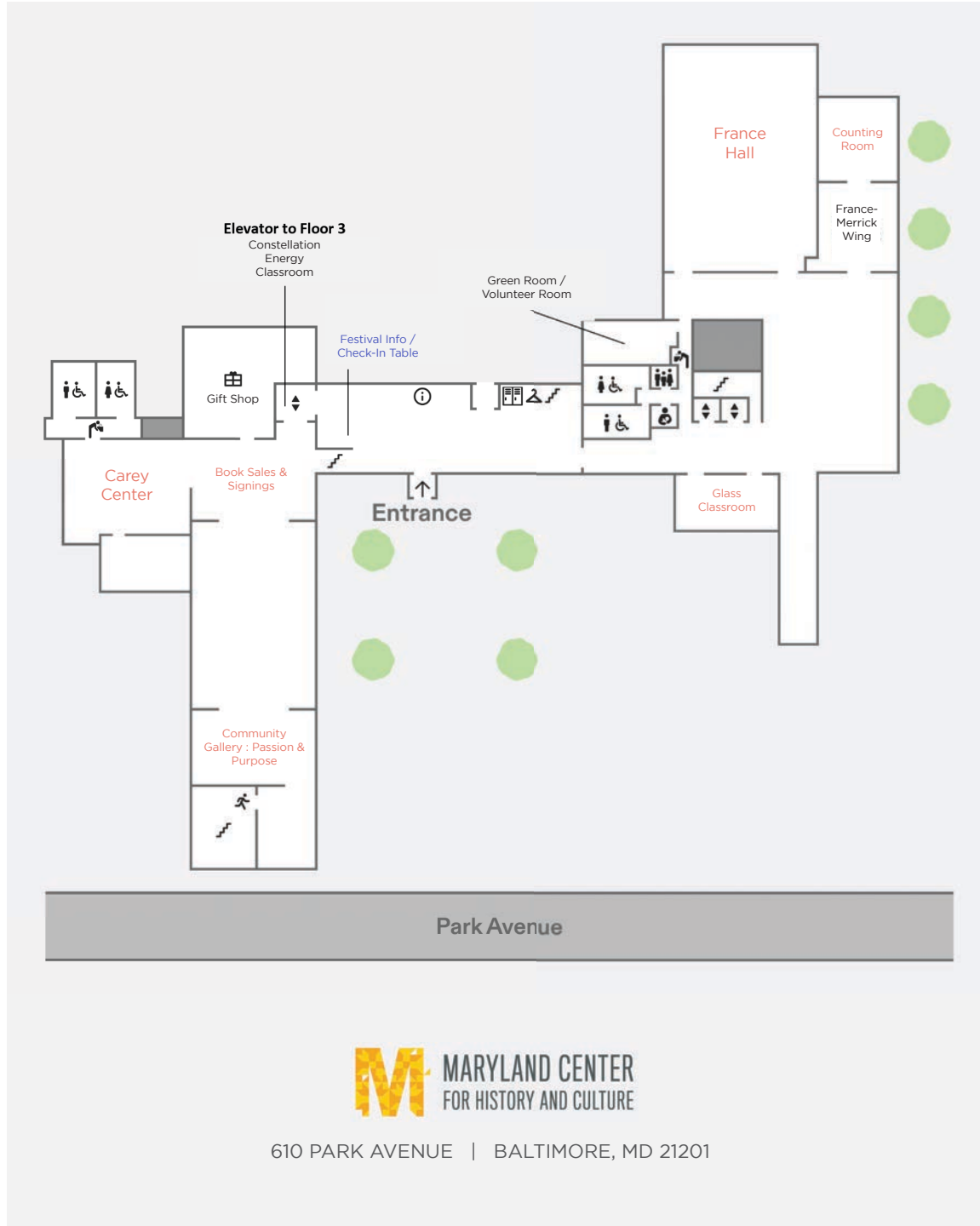
CITYLIT PROJECT



#26citylit | @citylitproject | @citylitproject | CityLitProject

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





SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS FOR SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026

MARYLAND CENTER FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE
610 PARK AVENUE | 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
France Hall		OMOB - Mining the Memory: No Sense in Wishing Lawrence Burney		TENDERHEADED: Black Identity in the World of Glamour Michaela Angela Davis	Cultural Witness: Migrant Heart for the Seekers & Dreamers Reyna Grande	FASHIONISTAS: Icons of History Elizabeth Block, Piper Huguley, & Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson		POETRY FINALE: Muscle & Memory, History & Hope with Adrian Mateika (4:20 - 6:00 pm - book signing)
Carey Center		WYPR & The Weekly Reader Live! with Marion Winik, Jung, Eman, & Hannah	Worth the Look: Opportunities for Writers ... You Just Oughta Hedgebrook Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, Inner Loop, Freelancing		BAKER ARTISTS - LITERARY FINALISTS			
Community Gallery: Passion & Purpose	Welcome	The 'STATE' of Baltimore - Preservation & Memory as Tools for Revolution		When She Walked Through the Door Again: Women on return, healing, and reclamation after incarceration	MASTER CLASS Finding Your People, The Black List (\$10)	Let the Poets Speak: Want the Truth? Ask a Poet (ROUNDTABLE - 3:30 pm - 4:15 pm)		
Glass Classroom		ChatGPT for Authors: Writing, Ethics, & Creative Control Nikki Giovan		Human Authored: Ownership in the Age of AI	Started From the Bottom	Creating a BAKER Portfolio: How to ... and Why You Should.		
Constellation Energy Classroom 3 rd floor		VALUED VOICES: Purpose & Path. Tribe 55+		FLASH FICTION: A workshop (7th - 12th graders) CHARM Voices of Baltimore Youth	The Creative Life, Written: Artists on Process and Collective Memory Making Her Mark Foundation			
Counting Room	One-on-One, 30-Minute Editorial Critiques			The Writer's Room Piper Huguley historical fiction		The Writer's Room Reyna Grande the immigrant experience		
	LITERARY MARKETPLACE - OPEN FROM 10:00 AM TO 5:00 PM							

SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026

MARYLAND CENTER FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE

610 PARK AVENUE | BALTIMORE, MD 21201



10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Literary Marketplace - We are thrilled to welcome over 30 vendors to the 23rd Annual CityLit Festival Literary Marketplace, showcasing the expanse of the Baltimore/DMV literary community. Explore these vendors located throughout the first floor. Participate in a Bingo at the festival to get to know them, and enter into a raffle for CityLit and Maryland Center for History and Culture prizes.

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Counting Room

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

Four editors. 16, 30-minute opportunities. One chance. **One-on-One, 30-minute editorial critique sessions** with esteemed editors, donating their time and expertise in service to you. For those in need of a critical eye on their manuscript, we encourage you to take advantage of this moment. For \$10, these editors provide their expertise on your five pages, to be read upon arrival. First come, first served. Pay \$10 *in cash* or submit through the CityLit website to donate on site. Each editor will have a sign-up sheet. Writers, just do the dang thing. Dust off those pages and get fed in a different way. **Bret McCabe** is a Baltimore-based arts writer and editor. **Rebekah Kirkman** is a writer and editor in Baltimore whose work focuses on art, work, and community. **Christine Grillo** is a Baltimore-based novelist whose debut novel, *Hestia Strikes a Match*, was included in NPR's Books We Love 2023. **Chelsea Lemon Fetzer** is a multi-genre writer and a contributing editor at BmoreArt



BRETT MCCABE



REBEKAH KIRKMAN



CHRISTINE GRILLO

Magazine, who teaches at Goucher College and serves on the CityLit Project board.

"Good editors are really the third eye."

— Toni Morrison

BRET MCCABE - creative nonfiction

REBEKAH KIRKMAN - creative nonfiction

CHELSEA LEMON-FETZER - poetry, fiction

CHRISTINE GRILLO - fiction, memoir, sci-fi, romance/fantasy

Guidelines:

- Five pages of poetry OR Five pages of prose
- Double-spaced
- 12 pt. font
- 1 inch margin
- Numbered pages
- Name must be included

Note: Only five pages will be critiqued!

10:30 am - 11:30 am

Community Gallery : Passion & Purpose

The 'State' of Baltimore: Preservation and Memory as Tools for Revolution

This year's The 'State' of Baltimore is a timely conversation about who gets to document a city and why it matters, featuring **Brennan DuBose**, **Winston Phillips**, **Martina Dodd**, and **J.J. McQueen**. Moderated by the dynamic **Alanah Nichole Davis**, this panel brings together visual storytellers working at the intersection of history, culture, and civic life. The conversation will explore how images, film, and archives shape public memory and influence Baltimore's future. They will examine preservation, not as passive reflection, but as an active, even radical, practice, offering new ways to think about memory as infrastructure for change and storytelling as a tool for revolution. **Brennan DuBose** is the President and CEO of Lincoln Motion, America's first Black production studio. **Martina Dodd** is an art historian, writer and curator who specializes in the preservation, study, and expansion of African American-centered collections. Chief



CHELSEA LEMON FETZER

Photographer for the Mayor of Baltimore City, **J.J. McQueen** is an award-winning photographer and visual storyteller. **Webster Phillips III** is a third-generation photographer of ihenryphoto project, documenting the history of Baltimore. **Alanah Nichole Davis** is an award-winning journalist and cultural worker known for her community-rooted interviews and narrative work.

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

France Hall

2026 OMOB WINNER

Mining the Memory: No Sense in Wishing
Lawrence Burney in conversation with Shamira Ibrahim



LAWRENCE BURNEY

Each year, more than 10,000 Marylanders read the **One Maryland One Book** selection. Leave it to cultural writer and critic **Lawrence Burney** to dazzle us with the debut of his collection of essays, *No Sense in Wishing: Essays on Black Music, Belonging, and Baltimore*, the 2026 selection of One Maryland One Book. It's a deep exploration of Black Baltimore, the music scene of the global Black diaspora, Burney's personal traditions and his investment of "just being as vulnerable and truthful as I feel safe being." Burney will be in conversation with journalist **Shamira Ibrahim**. **Lawrence Burney** is a writer, editor, critic, and the founder of True Laurels, an independent magazine covering Baltimore's music and culture scene. **Shamira Ibrahim** is a Brooklyn-based culture writer by way of Harlem, Canada, and East Africa, who explores identity, cultural production, and technology as a critic, reporter, feature writer, and essayist.

11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Carey Center

WYPR & The Weekly Reader Live!



WYPR's Weekly Reader returns live for this year's festival! National book critic, author, and

host of the NPR podcast *The Weekly Reader*, **Marion Winik** interviews three novelists with celebrated releases. **Jung Yun**, whose work, recognized as a New York Times Editors' Choice, is the author of the novels *All the World Can Hold*, *O Beautiful*, and *Shelter*. **Hannah V. Sawyerr** is a former Youth Poet Laureate of Baltimore and 2024 Walter Dean Myers Award Honoree for her debut novel, *All the Fighting Parts*, and her sophomore novel, *Truth Is*, is a 2025 National Book Award Finalist and a 2026 LA TIMES Book Prize Finalist. **Eman Quotah** is the author of the novels *Bride of the Sea*, which won the Arab American Book Award for Fiction, and her latest, *The Night Is Not for You*. **Marion Winik** is an essayist, book reviewer, professor of writing at the University of Baltimore, and a recipient of the 2023 National Book Critics Circle Service Award, celebrating the 30th anniversary edition of *First Comes Love*.

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

Constellation Energy Classroom, 3rd Floor

TRIBE 55+ presents Valued Voices: Purpose & Path



What does it mean to write from a lifetime of lived experience, and why does that voice matter now? **Tribe 55+** hosts a dynamic, interactive workshop centering the wisdom, clarity, and creative energy of writers aged 50 and beyond. Through a blend of a panel discussion, small-group conversations, and a guided writing exercise, participants will engage with 7 Tribe 55+ literary artists whose work reflects truth-telling, resilience, and purpose. Practical, easy-to-implement tips, and resources to elevate a writing practice will be shared. **Stacey Cruise** is an arts organizer, visual artist, and cofounder of Tribe 55+, a collective of Black women artists and writers 55 and older across five Maryland counties, grounded in storytelling, cultural memory, and intergenerational collaboration. **Denise Pasour Leftwich** is an emerging writer developing her work for a multimedia memoir, combining text and photography. Baltimore-based author, **Petula Caesar**, *She's Such a Bright Girl: An American Story*, explores Black

women's interior lives, cultural memory, and the complexities of identity. **Cheryl Hinton** is an artist, storyteller, African dancer, fabric sculptress, and author of a children's book, *Kayla's Magic Eyes*. **Naomi Rivers** writes lesbian romance and women's fiction with a wife writing team who believe in romance, fairy tales, and happily ever after. **Deirdre L. Clawson** is working on a novel about the Sampson family's riveting diaspora as well as a collection of personal essays. **Cherrie Woods** is a book publicist, PR consultant, communications professional, and author of *Where Do I Start? 10 PR Questions and Answers to Guide Self-Published Authors*. She serves on the board of CityLit Project.

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm
Glass Classroom

ChatGPT for Authors: Writing, Ethics & Creative Control

Artificial intelligence is already shaping how authors write, research, and refine their work, but many writers are unsure how to use it ethically without losing their voice, creativity, or control. In this 60-minute, interactive, author-focused workshop, **Nikki Givon** demystifies ChatGPT and shows writers how to use it as a supportive writing assistant—not a replacement. Authors will learn how to set clear rules of engagement with AI, protect their intellectual property, and apply ChatGPT thoughtfully to strengthen their writing, research, and presentation skills. This session is practical, non-technical, and designed specifically for authors who want clarity, confidence, and creative authority when using AI. All participants will receive a **complimentary digital resource** with starter prompts and guidance designed specifically for authors using ChatGPT ethically and effectively. **Nikki Givon** is an AI Certified Marketing Consultant and Trainer who teaches small business owners, nonprofits, professionals, and authors how to use AI to simplify marketing, create content faster, and build systems that convert connections into leads.



NIKKI GIVON

12:00 pm - 1:30 pm
Carey Center

90-MINUTE CRAFT INTENSIVE
Worth the Look: Opportunities for Writers ... You Just Oughta

CityLit remains astonished by the number of creatives who live in or have significant ties to Baltimore, who are terrific resources of value to readers and writers in the region. This 90-minute 'craft' intensive, is more so one of enlightenment, a *you-need-to-know* the treasures that abound, available to you as writers and lit lovers. Join us for a close look at **Hedgebrook, Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, The Center For Fiction, and The Inner Loop**, with a panel moderated by **Megan DeMatteo**, a successful freelance writer and editor who can answer questions on the business of freelancing. **Jen Will-Thapa**, committed to uplifting diverse voices, has deep roots in restorative justice and works as the Program & Communications Manager at **Hedgebrook**, supporting storytellers and facilitating storytelling processes. **Melissa Wyse** serves as the Director of Development at **The Center for Fiction**, a 200-year-old nonprofit dedicated to supporting readers and writers, and is the award-winning author of *Artists in Residence*. **Lauren Francis-Sharma** is the Assistant Director of the **Bread Loaf Writers' Conference** at Middlebury, a Pushcart-nominated writer, and author of *Casualties of Truth*, longlisted for the Carol Shields Prize, inspired by her time at South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Amnesty Hearings. **Rachel Coonce** is an award-winning nonfiction writer, literary arts community leader, and cofounder and Executive Director of **The Inner Loop**. Moderator and former CityLit Gladiator, **Megan DeMatteo** is an internationally published freelance writer and editor, and runs **Unimaginably Good Media**,



MELISSA WYSE



RACHEL COOCE



MEGAN DEMATTEO

a consulting practice connecting writing and entrepreneurship. Her debut self-help book is forthcoming from Broadleaf Books in 2026.

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm
France Hall

Tenderheaded: Black Identity in the World of Glamour

Our Hair & Our History
CityLit welcomes fashion editor, image activist, and writer

Michaela angela Davis to discuss her latest work *Tenderheaded*, both a celebration of Black media's vibrant history and a critical examination of its challenges and identity politics. Deemed "a cultural manifesto that reckons with the role media and American history play in the fascinating and chaotic shaping of a collective identity" (Simon & Schuster), this memoir examines life as a Black woman with light skin, light eyes, and light hair. It's a tribute to Black girls and women, navigating New York City's cultural scene, hip-hop, and reckoning with the media industry while coming of age in the '80s, '90s and the "post-racial" Obama years. "Keenly observant and with exceptional taste, she spent most of her career putting her talents to use in the world of Black women's fashion magazines, a small but influential (if grossly underappreciated) sector of New York's publishing industry...Though Davis' anecdotes of close encounters with the great and famous are certainly entertaining (and occasionally juicy), it's the power and energy of her writing that makes her book such a pleasurable read," writes Kirkus Reviews. **Michaela angela Davis** is a writer, creative director and producer, focusing on the intersections of gender, race, fashion, culture, beauty, and identity. **Bry Reed** (she/they) is a Baltimore-born and based writer committed to the legacy of "The City That Reads." She's a regular contributor to the Baltimore Beat and a 2026 Baker Artist Literary Finalist.



MICHAELA ANGELA DAVIS



BRY REED

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm
Community Gallery : Passion & Purpose

When She Walked Through the Door Again: Women on return, healing, and reclamation after incarceration

For many women, release from incarceration is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of a new set of challenges: finding stable housing, securing employment, reconnecting with children and family, accessing health care, and navigating systems that often continue to define them by their record rather than their humanity. This session will center the voices of formerly incarcerated women who have lived these realities. Through personal reflection, honest dialogue, and practical insight, the conversation will explore what reentry looks like for women. This conversation is not only about what women endure after incarceration. It is also about what they build: families, organizations, movements, and new pathways forward. **Kirsten Gettys Downs** is the Director of Systemic Reform at the Maryland Office of the Public Defender and the Coordinator of the Maryland Justice Partnership, leading statewide efforts to advance equitable justice. **Monica Cooper** is the founder and Executive Director of the Maryland Justice Project, and a formerly incarcerated leader whose advocacy and solar entrepreneurship center on women, community power, and second chances. **Rhonda R. Hall** is a Baltimore-born healthcare professional and author of *Crowned in the Streets*. After 26 years of incarceration, she now balances work, study, and caregiving while writing a memoir about struggle, redemption, and healing. **Iletha Murdaugh** is a survivor, peer recovery specialist in training, and reentry advocate who spent 17 1/2 years at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women. She now works at a treatment center and shares her story to support people returning from addiction and incarceration.

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Glass Classroom

Human Authored: Ownership in the Age of AI

“All art was about one thing and one thing only: what it meant to be human in the world.”

– Karl Ove Knausgaard, *The School of Night*

If art is about the human experience, is it still art if the human author is removed? From large language learning models trained on authors’ works to the recent cancellation of the horror novel *Shy Girl* for using AI to poets’ use of LLM’s as a constraint to generate experimental poems, this session will discuss the role of AI in the creative writing process. From classrooms to small presses, what questions should we ask, precautions should we take, and future should we create in a world where Silicon Valley tech titans say AI is inevitable? **Michael Downs** is a 2026 Baker Artist Literary Finalist, and serves on the boards of the Baltimore Review and The Good Contrivance Farm Writer’s Retreat. **Lo Smith** is an internet evangelist, digital equity specialist, librarian, and fiber artist. Their work in public libraries and digital skills instruction balances the positive and negative impacts of the digital world on society, arts, and culture. Moderator **Marceline White** is a poet, essayist, and activist engaged in policy advocacy around AI use, and leads Economic Action, a statewide nonprofit focused on economic rights, housing justice, and equity, and serves on the CityLit Board.

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Constellation Energy Classroom, 3rd Floor

Flash Fiction: In partnership with CHARM Voices of Baltimore Youth

(Suggested grades - 7th - 12th)



Master the art of storytelling at the speed of light. Participants are invited to explore the art of storytelling in compact prose by analyzing captivating texts and examining different elements of storytelling such



MADISON MATTISON

as story structure and descriptive language. Using imaginative prompts, craft your own short story, bring characters and worlds to life to share with peers and gain feedback. Leading the workshop is **Madison Mattison**, a filmmaker and writer based in Baltimore who currently works with CHARM Voices of Baltimore Youth, leading creative writing workshops with students across Baltimore City.

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

France Hall

Cultural Witness: Migrant Heart for the Seekers & Dreamers with Reyna Grande, Migrante Corazón

The Writer’s Room with Reyna Grande

3:00 pm - 4:00 pm | Counting Room

What does it mean to bear witness to your own experience? While fiction allows you to take the reins and map out the what ifs, memoir forces you to become the protagonist in your own story. Novelist, memoirist **Reyna Grande**, in her most raw and honest work to date, stitches together the pieces of her life, “the memories, wounds, and quiet moments of triumph, that have shaped” her in her forthcoming collection in English and Spanish, *Migrant Heart: Essays About Things I Can’t Forget. Corazón Migrante*. CityLit welcomes an open conversation as this cultural witness, in conversation with novelist **Lauren Francis-Sharma**, discusses her memoir-in-essays that illuminates the hidden cost of the American Dream, as she untangles a lifetime of memories, and the complex journey of healing. Her landmark memoirs *The Distance Between Us* and *A Dream Called Home*, force a look inward, exploring with heartwrenching authenticity, the scars that marked her, and turned her pain into power. This collection further examines the complexity of migration, of a life crossing borders, and reckoning with how her own impoverished childhood shows up against the abundance her offspring experience. Called “an essential read for the seekers, the dreamers, and anyone who believes in the enduring, transformative power of finding



REYNA GRANDE

one’s voice.” **Reyna Grande** is the author of several books, including *The Distance Between Us*, a 2014 One Maryland One Book selection. **Lauren Francis-Sharma**, a Pushcart-nominated writer, is the author of *Casualties of Truth*, her third novel, longlisted for the Carol Shields Prize, and a 2025 “Books to Read” by NPR.

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Glass Classroom

Started From the Bottom Now I’m Here: From Pans & Pennies to Revenue & Royalties

What writers/readers need to know to grow their wealth with Richard Conway

CityLit Project welcomes **Fulton Bank** as a sponsor of this year’s 23rd CityLit Festival, in a partnership that allows a frank and open conversation about money. With a goal to help customers and communities thrive, whether it’s helping people get on the right financial track or providing businesses with resources they need to grow. **Richard Conway**, Financial Center Supervisor with Fulton Bank, will facilitate the session on what writers/readers need to know to grow their wealth.

Fulton Bank



RICHARD CONWAY

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Carey Center

Showcasing 2026 BAKER Literary Finalists



Working with the **Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance**, the William G. Baker, Jr. Memorial Fund established the Baker Artist Awards in 2008 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. Awardees receive showcase and exhibition opportunities at major Baltimore institutions. This year’s literary finalists make their debut with moderator **Aaron Henkin**, who works at the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University, having spent 22 years creating and producing

original radio programs and podcasts for Baltimore’s NPR affiliate, WYPR. **Bry Reed** is a Baltimore-born and based writer committed to the legacy of “The City That Reads,” and is a regular contributor to the Baltimore Beat. **Michael Downs** works in literary fiction and nonfiction, and serves on the boards of the Baltimore Review and The Good Contrivance Farm Writer’s Retreat. **Edgar Kunz** is the author of *Fixer*, a New York Times Editors’ Choice book, with fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, MacDowell, and Wallace Stegner at Stanford University. Additional Baker Artist Literary finalists include **Justin Sirois**, **Don Lee**, and **Ashley Elizabeth**.

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Community Gallery : Passion & Purpose

Finding Your People: Community, Craft, and the Business of Books: How the Black List is supporting Fiction Writers (\$10)



The Black List is a renowned platform dedicated to nurturing written storytelling and empowering writers to maximize their professional potential. First established in 2005 as an annual survey of Hollywood’s most-liked unproduced screenplays, the Black List has since grown into a comprehensive resource expanding to fiction to provide critical feedback on works in progress. Join Creative Director of Fiction, **Randy Winston**, who will discuss traditional and nontraditional entry points to publishing, why studying the industry is essential to building a sustainable career, and resources writers can gather on the business of publishing education journey. Randy will share The Black List’s new tools, writing programs, and resources for fiction writers, and how the platform helps strengthen manuscripts for better visibility.

Randy Winston is a curator at the intersection of literature and culture who oversees the Fiction division of The Black List, the former Director of Writing Programs at The Center for Fiction, and hosts



RANDY WINSTON

and produces the **Read the Acknowledgments** podcast.

3:00 pm - 4:00 pm
France Hall

Fashionistas: Icons of History

Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson, Elizabeth L. Block, Piper Huguley, with Camille Kashaka moderating

The Writer's Room with Piper Huguley

3:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Counting Room

Enter the bold world of fashion, as three esteemed authors take to the stage with widely lauded work to engage in an extraordinary conversation about culture and fashion, history and unsung women designers who set the tone for the glamorous world of fashion. Get introduced to icons such as **Claire McCardell**, in **Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson's** critically-acclaimed work, *Claire McCardell: The Designer Who Set Women Free*, and "hidden figure," the unjustly forgotten **Ann Cole Lowe**, who rose from the Jim Crow era to a storied career in **Piper Huguley's** striking novel, *By Her Own Design*, and the exuberance and glamour of the Gilded Age, with **Elizabeth L. Block's** newly published *Gilded Age Fashion*. We are braced for a lively conversation about the culture of a time, landing on a woman's right to choose how we dress and how we live.

Elizabeth Evitts Dickinson's writing career encompasses cultural criticism, narrative nonfiction, investigative journalism, short fiction, and memoir and includes the critically acclaimed biography *Claire McCardell*, named a New York Times 100 Most Notable Books of 2025. **Piper Huguley** is an English professor at Clark-Atlanta University, and the author of two historical fiction novels: *By Her Own Design* (recently optioned to Sony TriStar) and *American Daughters*. **Elizabeth L. Block, PhD**, an art and culture historian, is a Senior Editor in the Publications and Editorial Department at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Moderated by **Camille Kashaka**, the Managing Director for Joe's Movement Emporium and Creative Suitland, who has contributed to



PIPER HUGULEY

the broad and powerful community-focused cultural and artistic impact of these institutions.

3:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Glass Classroom

Creating a BAKER Portfolio: How to ... and Why You Should

Learn about the **Baker Artist Portfolios** and associated awards, why it is beneficial for writers, and get guidance, tips, and pointers on creating a portfolio with **Alix Fenhagen**, Program Manager. The online portfolios were created to support artists and promote Greater Baltimore as a strong creative community. Open to artists working in all disciplines, including writers, who live in Baltimore City and its five surrounding counties. The portfolios expose area artists' work to regional, national, and international audiences, and are eligible for various opportunities, that include free tabling space at Baltimore Book Fest and WTMD First Thursday Festival, showcases, and exhibitions.

3:00 pm - 4:30 pm

Constellation Energy Classroom, 3rd Floor

The Creative Life, Written: Artists on Process and Collective Memory in partnership with Making Her Mark Foundation



"If artists don't write their stories, entire ways of being creative disappear."

What happens when artists write about their process—not just their finished work, but the doubt, persistence, experimentation, and growth that shape their creative lives? This panel and interactive session explores the role of writing in expanding who gets to exist in the literary and cultural record. Featuring interdisciplinary artists who engage in both creative practice and writing, the conversation examines how documenting the creative process becomes an act of visibility, resistance, and connection. Especially designed for artists with interdisciplinary practices, those drawn to memoir and writing about creativity, and

anyone interested in sustaining a creative life through reflection and storytelling. **Ruut DeMeo** is a Baltimore-based Finnish writer and songwriter, and founder of Making Her Mark Foundation. **Lisa Brown** is a multidisciplinary artist and storyteller whose work spans analog photography, sculpture, and community-based practice rooted in African and Mexican heritage. **Sarah Magida** is a Baltimore-based fiber artist, reiki practitioner, and artist coach working across embroidery, natural dye, tufting, and painting. **Amy Bernstein** is a Baltimore-based writer, speaker, and creative mentor whose work spans journalism, essays, and fiction who helps writers move through doubt and embrace the creative process at any stage of life. **Making Her Mark Foundation** is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that supports Women Creators with grants, workshops, and mentorship.

3:30 pm - 4:15 pm

Community Gallery : Passion & Purpose

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Let the Poets Speak. Want the truth? Ask a POET.

It's **National Poetry Month**, five weeks in the year when poetry is celebrated, taught, read, and carried in pockets for spontaneous readings with kindred souls. Where it flourishes in literary communities across the nation. Where truth telling shows up, and stuff gets said. CityLit invites fellow poets to join this brief convening, an informal roundtable gathering. **Muscle & Memory** poets share what it means to craft through the wreckage of uncertainty, how to write a poem through grief, rage, and disconcerting times, when half the world is at war, and life may require you to be present, but you go largely unseen. What does it mean to write through hard times and hope? To be "against forgetting." It's The Writer's Room, but with six fierce poets weighing in on what it takes to mine the craft, to bear witness in remembrance or resistance.

4:20 pm - 6:00 pm w/book signing
France Hall

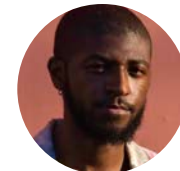
A POETRY FINALE

Muscle & Memory: History & Hope

The **23rd CityLit Festival** ends on a high note of poetry and poetic memory, featuring **Adrian Matejka**, Editor-in-Chief of Poetry magazine, and author of muscular poems from six major collections, *Be Easy: New & Selected Poems*, publishing this month. **Sacha Marvin** is an award-winning writer, performer, urban designer, a Cave Canem and Callaloo fellow. **Elizabeth Hazen** is a poet and essayist whose most recent collection is *The Sky Will Hold*. **DaMaris B. Hill, PhD** is the author of *Breath Better Spent* and *A Bound Woman Is a Dangerous Thing*. Her next book, *Blood Bible: An American History*, will explore ideas of home from colonial times to our present moment. **Marceline White** is a Baltimore-based writer and activist whose writing has appeared or is forthcoming in Pangyrus, Consequence, SWWIM, The Ekphrastic Review, and others. Mistress of Ceremonies, **Teri Ellen Cross Davis** is the author of *a more perfect Union* (The 2019 Journal/Charles B. Wheeler Poetry Prize) and *Haint* (2017 Ohioana Poetry Award).



ADRIAN MATEJKA



SACHA MARVIN



ELIZABETH HAZEN



DAMARIS B. HILL



MARCELINE WHITE



TERI ELLEN CROSS DAVIS



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 OFFILL, 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: **Reyna Grande** - Cultural Witness: Migrant Heart for the Seekers & Dreamers (*on the immigrant experience*) & **Piper Huguley** - Fashionistas: Icons of History (*on historical fiction*).

***The Writer's Room with Piper Huguley (on historical fiction)**

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Counting Room

***The Writer's Room with Reyna Grande (the immigrant experience)**

3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Counting Room

FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2026

CCBC ESSEX | 7201 ROSSVILLE BOULEVARD | BALTIMORE, MD

Bearing Witness: Literature as a Revolutionary Act
in partnership with **DewMoreBaltimore Youth Poetry Summit**

9:30 AM- 3:30 PM

FEATURING: Lady Brion, Black Chakra, Keyma Flight, Hannah J. Sawyerr, RJ Walker, and Rudy Francisco

DewMore Baltimore, a program of the Black Arts District, hosts the 11th annual **Youth Poetry Summit** in partnership with CityLit Festival. Students from ten Baltimore City and Baltimore County schools will attend workshops led by national slam poetry champions. The day infused with poetry features award-winning poet **Rudy Francisco** and concludes with a youth poetry slam with \$2,000 in prizes, hosted by Maryland's Poet Laureate **Lady Brion**. Rudy Francisco is a national poetry slam champion. He is the author of six books including his most recent book *I'll Fly Away*. He has appeared on TV One's Verses and Flow, the Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, and ABC's The Bachelorette.



PARTNERSHIPS

Maryland Center for History and Culture is a statewide resource headquartered in the heart of Baltimore's Mount Vernon neighborhood cultural district. Their museum features more than 1,000 objects on display in 15 permanent and rotating exhibition galleries. Their library houses 7 million books, documents, manuscripts, and photographs available for research and scholarship. Altogether, the Maryland Center for History and Culture houses one of the country's largest collections of state heritage maintained by a private, nonprofit institution.
mdhistory.org
@mdhistory

Fulton Bank is a sponsor of this year's 23rd CityLit Festival, in a partnership that allows a frank and open conversation about money. Whether it's helping people get on the right financial track or providing businesses with resources they need to grow, we're here for you.

Fulton Forward Initiatives and Empower Community Program:
• EMPOWER Community Banking
• Fulton Forward
fultonbank.com
@fulton.bank

Greater Baltimore Cultural 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.

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.
dewmorebaltimore.org

WYPR: The Weekly Reader 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.

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

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
@insight180

Tribe 55+: A Collective of Creative Black Women, 55+
Founded in 2023, Tribe 55+ is a vibrant collective of creative Black women aged 55 and older. Their growing network of 68 Tribeswomen brings together visual artists, writers, and storytellers working across a wide range of media and at many stages of their creative journeys. United by a shared commitment to artistic expression, Tribe 55+ creates a space where Black women's voices, stories, and visions are seen, heard, and celebrated. Their work is grounded in collaboration, artistic exploration, and mutual support. Tribeswomen gather to share their work, exchange ideas, and deepen their creative practices through workshops, exhibitions, and community engagement.

CHARM: Voices of Baltimore Youth is a literary arts organization founded on the belief that youth voices matter. CHARM's mission is to help young people develop as writers and amplify their voices through publication.

charmilitmag.org
@charmilitmag

Making Her Mark Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that supports Women Creators with grants, workshops, and mentorship. Women's creative work is cultural infrastructure that strengthens families, communities, and the economy. When a woman commits to her artistry, she sparks a ripple effect that transforms lives and inspires the next generation to step boldly into their own power.

makinghermark.org
@makinghermarkfoundation

Baltimore Magazine serves as a user's guide to the region, both in print and online. Through world-class design, bold photography, and captivating writing, we point you to the best in food, drink, arts, culture, fashion, and more. They introduce you to Baltimore's most fascinating people and dig deep on the subjects that matter most to their readers.

baltimoremagazine.com
@baltmag

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*
Arthur Fitzhugh III, *Consultant*

CITYLIT BOARD:

Gregg Wilhelm, *Interim Chair, Founder Emeritus*
Tracy Dimond, *Vice Chair*
Bunky Markert, *Treasurer*
Brian Lyles, *Past Chair*
Cherrie Woods
Marceline White
Chelsea Lemon Fetzer
Jasmine Bowen
Tonee Mae Moll
Allyson Tearnan
Mary Banks

CITYLIT GLADIATORS:

Danielle Du Pree (Original Gladiator)
Joseph (Joe) Massa
Victoria Sung
Haley Dick
Jasmine Bowens
Zalika Omowale (Jadi)
Camille Marshall
Christina Mullins
Sylvia Fox* (returning from Berlin)
Andrea Lewis

CITYLIT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL:

Chic Dambach, *Founding Chair*
Kate Markert
Judy Cooper
Scott Johnson
Denise Gantt
Dana Harris-Trovato

A SPECIAL NOD TO:

Bethany Howell and Wendy Baird,
insight180 brand consulting & design
The Du Pree Tribe: Al, Danielle, Isaiah,
Malachi, & Adrian
EVERY DONOR AND VOLUNTEER NAMED
AND UNNAMED WHO
GOT US THROUGH!

**SCAN THE QR CODE ON THE
RIGHT TO GIVE FEEDBACK
ON THE 23RD ANNUAL
CITYLIT FESTIVAL:**



**HELP SUPPORT THE CITYLIT
PROJECT. DONATE TODAY:**



CITYLIT
PROJECT

#26citylit | @citylitproject | @citylitproject | CityLitProject | www.citylitproject.org

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