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1455

# Movable Type

**The Inaugural Edition**

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A BI-MONTHLY  
PUBLICATION  
**CREATED FOR  
WRITERS**

ISSUE NO.

**1**

# Contents

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Director's Note—Sean Murphy.....1

From the Editor—Kirsten Porter .....2

## FEATURED WRITER

The Poetry of Friendship—E. Ethelbert Miller.....3

## PERSPECTIVES (ESSAYS & ARTICLES)

Narrative Justice—Holly Karapetkova.....7

Carried and Carved by the Wind—Sarah Trembath .....11

Raise Our Voices—Myra Sklarew .....15

We White Women All Have an Inner Karen—Sarah Browning .....19

If You Don't Know Me by Now...—E. Ethelbert Miller .....23

## THE WRITING CHALLENGE

Guest writer—Caroline Bock.....27

Call for Essays .....29

1455 News .....30

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Movable Type. This was the technological breakthrough that made printing books on a large scale possible. Although it's well-documented that initial advancements were made centuries earlier in Asia, it was Gutenberg who revolutionized the use of movable type in Europe, on paper. Every book in every library and, to an extent, all e-books and magazines and newspapers can be traced back to this paradigm shifting invention. 1455 is celebrated as the year books were produced on a massive scale, effectively moving civilization into modernity, arguably the most democratizing innovation in human history.

And the rest is history. And yet it isn't. Books are still with us, even if many of them are now read on portable and handheld devices. Of course, the ways and means of creating and sharing content are myriad and ever-evolving. As such, we are proud to commemorate 1455 not merely as a milestone, but a concept. A free press, and presses that operate freely to publish stories (and opinions, ideas, etc.), ensure that the dissemination of information is controlled by neither an elite class nor censors.

The process of democratizing content continues today. Movable Type, then, offers several connotations, and we recognize this name as symbolic of the continuum between 1455, today, and tomorrow. The need for personal narrative is strong as ever, and the ability to create and share these stories has never been more accessible. At 1455, we believe in the magic of words, the transformative power of creativity, and the collective imperative of building community. Our mission is to provide time and space for writers to create, connect, and share resources to assist writers anywhere and everywhere.

1455's Movable Type, which will publish every other month, is meant to showcase personal stories by exceptional writers, offer invaluable resources, and foster solidarity. Each issue will provide a forum for a diverse array of poets, masters of prose, essayists, educators and anyone with passion for written expression. I'm grateful to the authors assembled for our first issue, and proud to have Kirsten Porter—a remarkable writer, editor, and human being—helping manage all aspects of this achievement, from conception to execution.

Thank you for reading, and we look forward to hearing from you as we continue celebrating creativity and building community.

Be well, and keep writing!



**Sean Murphy**  
*Executive Director, 1455*

## FROM THE EDITOR

“How are you really doing?” This is the question I find myself frequently asking my friends and family in texts, emails, and zoom chats as we are nearing 5 months of quarantine at the publication of this first issue of Movable Type. When I ask this question to my friends who are writers, it's usually met with silence or a prolonged sigh. And then my friends divulge they are struggling to write, to make sense of our world in disarray. How can they finish revising a poem when they have barely enough emotional energy to change out of their pajamas and make a cup of coffee? They tell me they feel unmotivated, they wish they could meet with their writing friends for lunch to discuss their current work, they miss attending book talks and poetry readings. Many of my friends have had their writing projects put on hold, their conference panels canceled, their book launches postponed.

Even though writing is often isolative work, we still need each other and that community—the solidarity we feel with each other as writers—is what many of us are missing right now. The belief that writers need community now more than ever is at the heart of Movable Type. Each issue we publish is our way of saying to you, “How are you really doing? You still have community here with us.” Despite these difficult times, we are here to connect with you, inspire you to keep writing, and celebrate the work you are doing now.

This first issue of Movable Type is very special to me. I wanted to help reestablish connection and publish essays that examine how writers are dealing with current concerns, namely the physical isolation, pandemic, and racism plaguing our communities. The writers I selected for this debut issue were chosen for their sensitivity and ability to cut through the collective ache of our world to write with bravery, rawness, and truth. I would like to thank Sean Murphy for entrusting me with this job to edit 1455's Movable Type. Building community has always been at the heart of Sean's work. I feel honored to be a part of 1455's mission to help writers connect with each other, even in these times when finding connection is more challenging.

Thank you to the writers in this first issue who agreed to write work that would answer my question “how are you really doing?” They knew their answers would be painful to write, yet they still accepted the challenge. What culminated was a collection of essays that reflect an earnest desire for change and a call for writers to use their voices to be a part of this change.

A special thank you to Ethelbert Miller, my dear friend and collaborator. When I asked him to write our first Featured Writer essay, he asked if he could write about our friendship and the work we do together as an example of how community with other writers can enrich our lives. I am deeply touched by his essay, his support on this publication, and the gift of his friendship. And thank you to our beloved writers community for taking time to read this first issue. We look forward to connecting, inspiring, and celebrating with you!

With love & hope,



**Kirsten Porter**  
*Editor, 1455's Movable Type*

# The Poetry of Friendship

E. Ethelbert Miller

*There was a time in my life when I often found myself thinking about growing old as well as dying.*

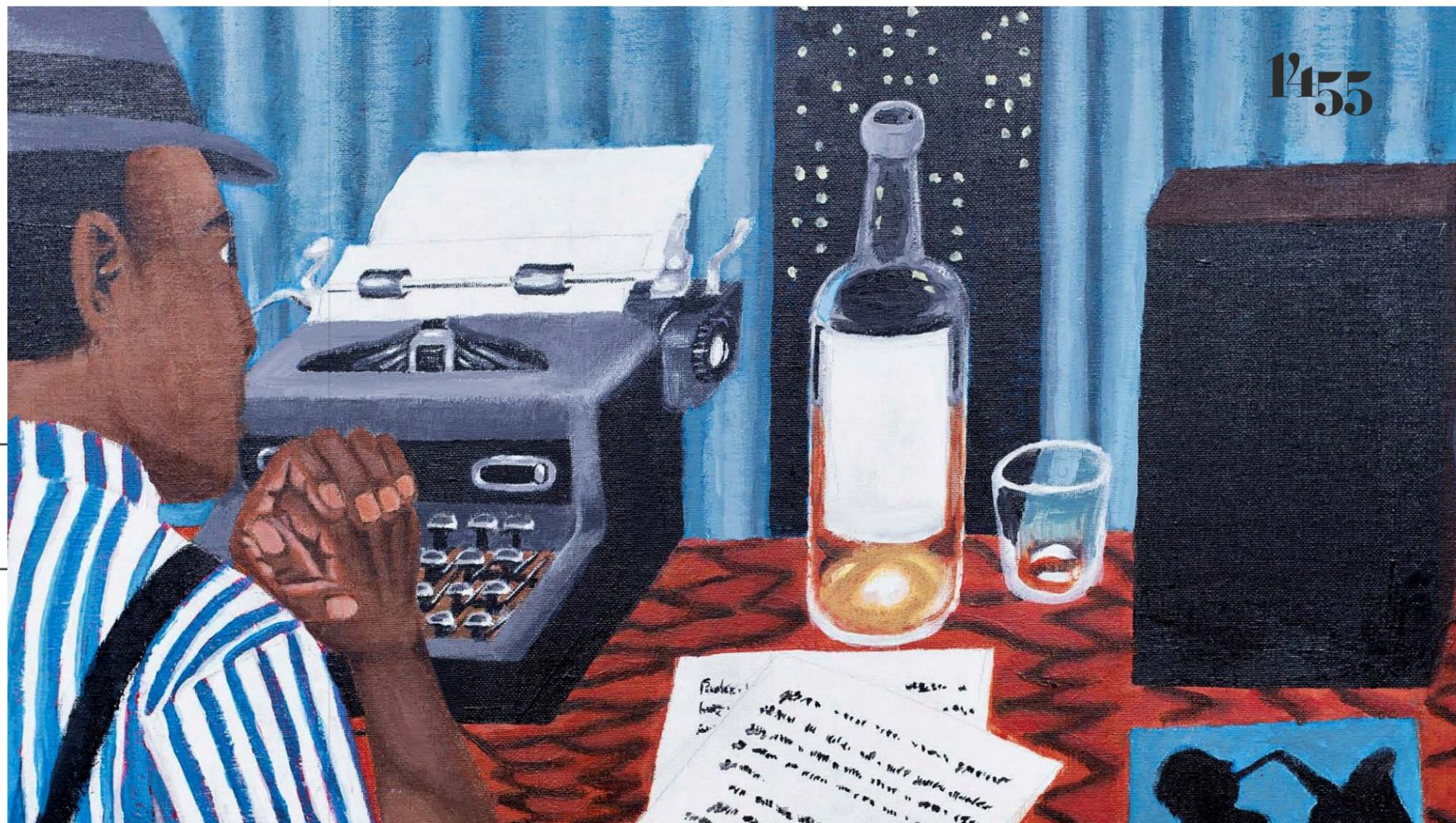
Some of this was probably linked to my bouts with depression. The writing profession is pretty much a solitary one. Two eyes on a page, one hand on a pen or two hands typing away on a keypad. In 2015 I found myself suddenly unemployed after working forty years at Howard University. I clearly remember the day because a few hours after I took my boxes home from the office I was sitting in the ballpark getting ready to watch the Washington Nationals. In many

ways staring at the green outfield was meditative and a way of exhaling and letting go. In between innings I thought about where my life was and what I now hoped my future would be.

For much of my life I defined myself as a literary activist. I was especially concerned with the promotion and preservation of black literary culture. I was not a writer with an agent and a New York publisher.

I was somewhat marginal to the business of writing. When I started writing poetry it was not for the purpose of pursuing money and being able to raise a family, it was a “calling” and a desire to have my voice join a chorus of cultural workers using art for social change. As a literary activist I spent a lot of time studying how writing careers began, how they were sustained and, at times, somehow sadly fell apart. A few well known writers had literary assistants,

people who loved and respected their work. They aided a writer with everything from editing and proofreading to helping them maintain their personal schedules. Assistants at times were first responders, they understood the moods of the people they were working with. They were navigators making sure creative work reached the safe harbor of publication.



A good relationship between a writer and an assistant should be a strong binary one. It can be a successful pairing if the assistant is also a writer with a career. A good literary partnership is better than a marriage. Maybe this is because there are no vows and expectations, only a love for literature and the celebrating of the creative process.

When I met Kirsten Porter in 2007, then a student, on the Marymount University campus in Virginia, I had no idea our lives would become connected, braided together. From our meeting at Marymount to her journey to George Mason University for an MFA and then back to Marymount to teach as an English professor; it was like following Marco Polo. During the journey Kirsten became a popular and dedicated teacher.

Maybe it was getting to know her through her students that I began to admire her. When I was invited to be a guest speaker at Marymount, it was her students who embraced me with warmth as well as a critical understanding of my work. Over the years our conversations expanded into discussions of Kirsten's own work and the themes she was exploring in poetry. I was very much interested in her career path and who she was as a person. I was impressed with Kirsten's love and compassion for dogs needing to be rescued and the closeness

she had with her parents. Her caring provided a window into her character and the holy tenderness of her soul.

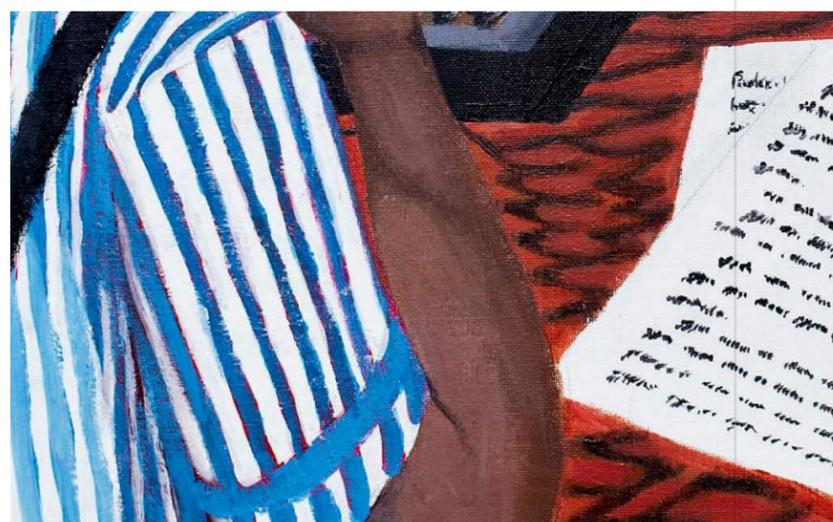
If you have to place your life in someone's hands you want that person to share your breath, to have their heart touch yours. I've been blessed by Kirsten Porter being that person. I feel this woman cares for my life as well as my work. When she edited *The Collected Poems of E. Ethelbert Miller* (2016), I asked her to write a long introduction. I wanted her to be the defining voice on what I had written.

As my literary assistant, Kirsten Porter helps me manage what has become a very busy life. Many new doors and opportunities opened after my departure

from Howard University. I became a writer full-time. I started hosting a regular television and radio show. My work load tripled. Without Kirsten's aid it would be difficult to manage and respond to various requests. When she asked me to contribute to the first issue of 1455's Movable Type, I gave her full access to any of my work she wanted to use. I trust her judgement and editor's eye.

Kirsten is the first person who receives a copy of everything I write. She is the first individual I share good news with. Today I'm more efficient thanks to her. I'm deeply grateful for all the time she has invested in my work and helping me share it with an audience as well as with what Ayi Kwei Armah called "the beautiful ones not yet born." ■

*If you have to place your life in someone's hands you want that person to share your breath, to have their heart touch yours.*



**E. Ethelbert Miller** is a literary activist and the author of two memoirs and several books of poetry. He hosts the weekly WPFW morning radio show *On the Margin with E. Ethelbert Miller* and hosts and produces *The Scholars on UDC-TV* which received a 2020 Telly Award. Currently he serves on the boards of the DC Collaborative for Humanities and Education and *The Inner Loop*. Miller's latest book *If God Invented Baseball* (City Point Press) was awarded the 2019 Literary Award for poetry by the American Library Association's Black Caucus.

<https://searcharchives.library.gwu.edu/repositories/2/resources/367>

# Narrative Justice

Holly Karapetkova

*When I started writing this essay the U.S. had just surpassed 100,000 deaths from COVID-19, and I began it as a meditation on writing (or not writing) under the pandemic.*

The world as we know it had stuttered to a stop and so had I, and I was trying to come to terms with my lack of productivity and competing demands on my time in the new normal. I was grieved by the lynching of Ahmaud Arbery and the unequal impact of the virus on communities of color, but most of my attention was focused on the coronavirus and its physical and economic impacts.

Then came the deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd and the horrific video of Floyd's lynching as witnesses tried to get the officer to stop—and three other officers held them back and allowed the violence to continue. And as I'm drafting this piece, I'm sickened to have to add Rayshard Brooks' death to this list. Will the killing ever stop?

Lynching is nothing new in this country, nor is police brutality, but the blatant abuse of power and the complete disregard for human life as the white officer held Floyd down and watched the life drain out of him for nine full minutes is hard to bear. Even folks solidly stationed on the right have condemned the act. But though George Floyd's death may have stoked the fire, this moment of resistance is 400 years in the making.

There's a reason people in the news have begun to refer to systemic racism as a virus. Lynching, segregation, and dehumanization are built into the fabric of this country as part of its very founding. Black and brown bodies have borne the brunt of the physical and psychological violence, but I am convinced that the moral and ethical violence we as white folks do to ourselves in upholding, or simply turning a blind eye, to racial oppression is also devastating. When you dehumanize another, you effectively dehumanize yourself. In a way, that's my white knee on Floyd's neck—all of the structures that benefit me are the same ones that allow for the public lynching of Floyd and thousands of others.

I, like many white Americans at this moment, am asking myself what can I do to get white knees off of black necks, definitively, for once and for all? What can I do to stop the systematic violence and disregard, and beyond that to raise up my fellow Americans who have lived too long with fear and brutality in a supposedly free society? Protesting is one answer; it's one of the major civic rights we have to voice our discontent and shine a light on injustice, and thanks to the vast numbers of protests happening across the world my emotions have shifted slightly toward hope over the

past few days. Voting is also critical—I can’t say forcefully enough how important it is that we all vote.

But I’m a writer, and I respond to the world most fully through reading and writing literature, and writing at this moment feels somewhat futile. I don’t think I’m even capable of writing anything of value in this state of deep emotional turmoil. But I also know from so many powerful examples that writing and reading can change the world. We may not feel much like writing at the moment, but many of the words we need to hear are already out there. We can celebrate the work of writers of color (and a few white writers, too) who have been speaking out against white supremacy for centuries; there are far too many for me to

list here, but dozens of excellent reading lists are circulating online right now. We can amplify their words of wisdom and experience, the voices we so desperately need at this moment.

*Writing is a fight for humanity—it’s a powerful form of constructing meaning and value in the face of destruction and injustice.*

It’s a means of healing ourselves and our country and exposing the narrative of our horrific past. It’s a means of resisting dehumanization and oppression, and it’s also an act of hope—that someone will hear the words, understand, and be changed. For me as a white person

raised in the south, literature was the way I dug myself out of the racist narrative I’d been taught from birth. Reading the words of writers of color—June Jordan, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, and of course James Baldwin, to name a few—helped me turn white supremacy inside out. These writers helped me realize that not only was racism the root of unthinkable destruction and pain, but also that I was a part of that pain. It made me aware that white silence is lethal and empowered me to begin speaking out against the toxic nature of white supremacy.

As I write this, I’m listening to coverage on TV. Brian Herron, a minister speaking at a rally in memory of Floyd, says “We’re not going to be distracted and we’re not going to allow you to change the narrative...

It’s time for justice to be served.” He knows, as we all do, that justice and narrative belong in the same breath. Narrative justice is about the power of story and the dynamics of whose stories get told, how, and who gets to tell them. Narrative is truly where the most important battles of the 21st century are being fought and where social justice and social change can happen. Trump and the right have clearly figured this out, as we see in his ridiculous Tweets and constant attempts to control which “alternative facts” get told. We writers have our work cut out for us in the narrative battle waging right now—but this is a territory we know well, and we have justice on our side. ■




Holly Karapetkova’s poetry, prose, and translations have appeared recently in *The Southern Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Nashville Review*, and many other places. Her second book, *TOWLINE*, won the Vern Rutsala Poetry Contest and was published by Cloudbank Books. She teaches at Marymount University in Arlington, VA.

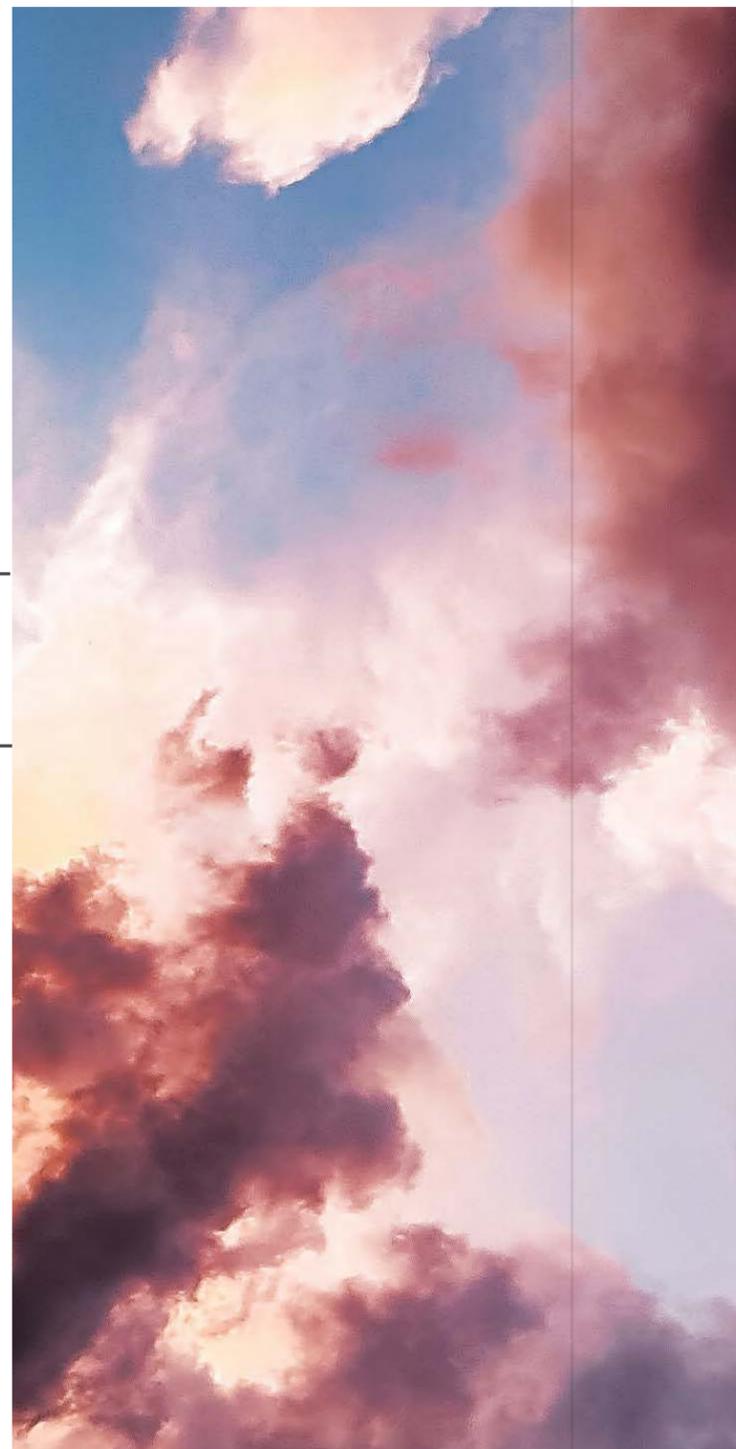
# Carried and Carved by the Wind

Sarah Trembath

*“The Six Grandfathers [Thunkášila Šákpe] was named by Lakota medicine man Nicolas Black Elk after a vision.*

*The vision was of the six sacred directions: west, east, north, south, above, and below. The directions were said to represent kindness and love, full of years and wisdom, like human grandfathers. The granite bluff that towered above the Hills remained carved only by the wind and the rain until 1927 when Gutzon Borglum began his assault on the mountain. ... For 14 years, Borglum blasted, chiseled, and filed the faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln in the granite bluff. For the Lakota, this was just one more violating act of colonization.”*

[nativehope.org](http://nativehope.org)



With neither much dialogue nor any permission, activists associated with movements for Indigenous People’s rights and Black lives and against modern fascism are destroying public monuments to explorers, founding fathers, and others. Activists are tagging up the patriarchs’ platforms with graffiti, lobbing their heads off, or even lassoing them with rope and pulling them down on to the concrete. Even Mount Rushmore—that behemoth tribute to American patriarchs situated on contested land—is rumored to be an eventual target.

To critics, removing the faces from that mountainside would constitute historical erasure and a negation of the country’s founding principles, and therefore pose a threat to freedom itself. While delivering her Independence Day speech in front of the monument, South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem implored citizens witnessing the “attacks” on various monuments, “let us not destroy history. Let us learn from it by preserving and imitating what is good about it.”

Without mentioning that the monument and the land around it belong, according to the broken Treaty of Laramie, to the Lakota Sioux, Noem said, “the rich and beautiful lands on which many of us live and on which we are now standing are the result of men

and women searching for more” and must be preserved. As for the nationwide protests targeting public images of slaveholders and colonizers? She wrote those off as cancel culture. Somehow, to Noem, “the attempt to cancel the founding generation is an attempt to cancel our own freedoms.” She exaggerated to obscure the points that the activists are making.

The public dialogue about it is raging, though, and it shows no signs of slowing down. But is it merely young people taking swipes at the things they don’t like: images of Christopher Columbus, Robert E. Lee, Thomas Jefferson, and lesser known men like Philadelphia’s Frank Rizzo, Washington DC’s Albert Pike, and the American Medical Association’s J. Marion Sims. Is it antipatriotic blasphemy, or long-delayed



justice? Erasure of history, or realignment of US iconography with its ideals? The removal of the US's time-honored heroes may be more patriotic than anti-American and may be more intellectual and ideological than brutish and mindlessly rebellious.

Calling the removal of statues that glorify the Confederacy, glorify conquering of indigenous lands, and glorify neocolonialist intrusion into Latin American and the Caribbean “erasure” is committing what people in my community call flipping the script. In this case, it is accusing people of doing what was actually done to them. The exaltation of “great men” whose “greatness” was attained at the expense of whole populations of Others only ever occurs with the silencing of their victims. Until they were unearthed by researchers



or effectively passed down through the generations to descendants with public platforms, the narratives of the people whose villages were burned were the ones that were erased. Until fairly recently, they were not in history books or on monuments, and many were aggressively censored.

However, if the narratives of those whose wombs, whose teeth, whose whole bodies, and whose homes and villages were stolen had been central in our American Story, the four strange men on Tłun̄kášila Šákpe would not be deemed worthy of worship. The heroification of them—by immortalizing them as larger-than-life and wholly good—relies upon the erasing of minority histories and the unsavory aspects of their own legacy in order to continually catapult itself from textbook to textbook, monument to monument, mind to mind, generation to generation.

When we look up at Teddy Roosevelt, as the audience at Governor Noem’s speech did, most Americans only see the Rough Rider and a charismatic, presidential, quintessentially American man. We don’t see his illegal occupation of—for example—Haiti, the conscripted labor he forced on its population, the rape his Marines committed in the process, the sovereign leader they deposed, the constitution he rewrote to allow cheap foreign ownership of arable land, or any of his other imperialistic undertakings.

We see George Washington’s victory over the British. Do we see Ona Judge, the other hundred slaves, and the burned out Iroquois villages? Do we see the Blackfoot, Chippewa, and Sioux under Lincoln’s Homestead Act? Do we know if any of the 600 enslaved on Jefferson’s plantation were ever declared independent?

The activists eyeballing Mount Rushmore, slating the presidents’ legacies for right-sizing, and demoting false heroes around the US know something others don’t. They know the full character of those men, the range of their deeds, and the implications of those deeds. They’ve studied—probably on their own outside of public schools and certainly outside of commercially produced educational materials—what scholars of color and our progressive White allies have worked tirelessly to unearth. They received and amplified what communities of color have passed down to each other: whole stories.

Despite the history of discrimination against our topics in publishing houses and universities and the ongoing favoritism for traditionally patriotic narratives in grade school and the public domain, decolonial and antiracist educators, artists, and others have pushed through. They’ve relied on indie presses, niche publishers, grassroots platforms, cultural nationalist groups, and gate-openers in the mainstream, and now the truths they’ve exhumed are flying on the wings of young activists. What the activists



are actually doing with it is exciting; they are “canceling” the US’s tendency toward heroification of less-than-ethical men. They are making links. They aren’t just telling us police brutality is wrong; they are telling us that it grew out of the terrorize-torture-and-control systems that kept US slavery in place for 240 years. That’s a different fix. They aren’t just telling us Jefferson, Washington, Roosevelt, and Lincoln aren’t all they’re cracked up to be; they’re telling us that Mount Rushmore is stolen land. That’s a different fix, too.

This era of massive social uprising, started by Black Lives Matters in response to police killings of unarmed Black people, is one being waged by people who know their true history. As such, they are more capable than most of steering the country toward being the democracy it was ostensibly founded to be. ■



**Sarah J. Trembath** is a poet, academic researcher, creative nonfiction writer, and professorial lecturer in the Writing Studies Program at American University. She has written two books: *This Past Was Waiting for Me* (2018, poetry and prose) and *It was the Scarlet that Did It* (2019, poems).

[sarahpoetess.online](http://sarahpoetess.online)

# Raise Our Voices

Myra Sklarew

*It is curious that we come to a place where a virus, essentially a non-living bit of RNA on a membrane, has disrupted life in this entire world at the same time that an aching wound that hid only partially underground has risen into the light so that no one can turn their eyes away.*



If we speak of damage, we must also speak of resilience. This is especially apparent when we consider the lives of Blacks living in America. How is it that those whose forebears, born into slavery, were able in barely a lifetime to cross the barriers of language and servitude, those like the Reverend Sterling Nelson Brown, a former slave and prominent professor in the Howard University Divinity School. He writes in *My Own Life Story*: “For a half century he has wandered in the wilderness of fear and doubt waiting for some angel of mercy to tell him just what his place is in the American body politic. Some have said that he is, has been and must ever be a ‘drawer of water and hewer of stone’ and that nothing of consequence may be expected of him. Others, that he bears the stamp of his Maker, and in the spirit of friendly altruism has directed his step and guided his thought so that his every movement has been towards a worthy and definite end. At the close of the World War, and the beginning of a reconstructed brotherhood when by universal acclamation it was declared that the man even of low estate, should have his hearing. Has not the black man’s day come for standing erect and definitely assuming his proper place? He knows himself to be an American citizen with the strength, weakness, virtues and vices

Where is the container that can hold this sorrow? It rises up from its bed of 400 years. How can we make this right? Or even take the sharp blade of memory and bring it to purposeful use? How to be whole when centuries of lives were so easily diminished? And in plain view. And I, who had only to hide my religion, what right to speak of this?

The deed to my house as late as 1976 contained a Covenant “that no part of said land shall ever be used, occupied by, sold, demised, transferred, conveyed unto or in trust for, leased, rented or given to any Negro or Negroes, or any person or persons of Semitic race, blood or origin (which racial description shall

be deemed to include Armenians, Jews, Hebrews, Persians, and Syrians), except that this paragraph shall not be held to exclude partial occupancy of the premises by domestic servants of the parties hereto, their heirs or assigns.” (1949 Restrictive Covenant). Thanks to the Fair Housing Act/ Civil Rights Act of 1968, such discrimination was outlawed.



of his white brother, but is also painfully aware of merited opportunities taken from him. His long, cruel day of oppression reveals in him the fine art of patience, long-suffering and meek submission. By Lincoln's proclamation the black man's body was made free, and by the process of mental training and general development his inner soul and manly qualities have been unbound and as a depressed bird, uncaged and with a bright and hopeful spirit he is now singing a new song."

And Reverend Brown's son, Sterling Allen Brown, was perfect evidence of this new hopeful song. You cannot contain Sterling Brown in a few pages. His spirit, his intelligence is huge. When he came to speak to my students and read from his poetry, afterwards the lines were eternal for his signature on their books of his. He was an unforgettable presence. I knew another side of him. During our visits to his home, he'd play jazz on his Victrola and we'd have to stand until we could identify who was playing and what instrument. What he didn't know was that I once played piano in a dance band and sneaked into The City (New York) to go to Birdland, to the Peanut Gallery where kids could go and listen to the jazz greats—Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, Count Basie.

Rather than list Sterling Brown's credentials, I'll quote the words of Sam Allen/Paul Vesey, whose own work was first published by Richard Wright in *Presence Africaine*: "Sterling Brown was strong and compassionate, a man of heroic stature, facing the challenge of balancing on the edge of his fierce light, on the one hand, and the shadows that threatened to close in, on the other. He was a giant intellect, a major poet

and thinker. James Weldon Johnson also observed; 'Sterling Brown had made more than mere transcriptions of folk poetry; he has done more than bring to it artistry: He has deepened its meanings and multiplied its implications.'"

Eight years ago, a group of Washington area writers brought into being *A Splendid Wake*, which arose from a desire to honor the Black poets of the past decades and to create a way to help document and preserve the remarkable literary history of Washington, D.C. poetry from 1900 through the present. Articles about poets, movements, publications, readings and broadcasts provide a picture of the diverse and unique life of a poetry that evolved over more than a century in and around the Nation's Capital. Over the past eight years *A Splendid Wake* has grown to include, along with an annual public reading, a [wiki](#), [blog](#) and an archive housed through the generosity of GWU and Jennifer King.

As Joanne Gabbin, founder and Executive Director of the Furious Flower Poetry Center at James Madison University has said: "We must raise our voices at this juncture in human history to say, No More." As I walk along near the end of my own life, Dolores Kendrick, Sam Allen/Paul Vesey, May Miller, Michael Harper, and Sterling Brown walk along beside me. ■



**Myra Sklarew** is Professor Emerita of Literature at American University. She is the author of several poetry collections and books, including *Harmless*, *Lithuania: New and Selected Poems*, *Like a Field Riddled by Ants*, *Over the Rooftops of Time*, and her most recent book, *A Survivor Named Trauma: Holocaust Memory in Lithuania* (SUNY Press 2020). Sklarew is the recipient of the National Jewish Book Council Award in Poetry.



# We White Women All Have an Inner Karen

*It's past time to send her packing.*

Sarah Browning

*The past month has frequently found me heaving with tears of rage and despair over our America and the behavior of white women, even as I live and write as a white woman.*

When Amy Cooper called the police yelling that she was “being threatened by an African American man” who had asked her to leash her dog in Central Park, she was acting on the same white impulse as Derek Chauvin, the Minneapolis cop who viciously pressed his knee on George Floyd’s neck for nearly nine minutes, extinguishing Floyd’s precious life as he begged and pleaded, as witnesses begged and pleaded.

That white impulse is to contain and control Black people, to enforce an American apartheid. When white women act as “Karens,” calling the police on Black people living their daily lives, we are asserting that public space – parks, beaches, sidewalks, dorms, shops – belongs to us, that Black

people occupy these spaces – America itself, in other words – only on our sufferance.

This month, two Black women poets published powerful essays about the ways that whiteness seeks to corral and control Black people, as well as to write the narrative we tell ourselves about this central feature of racism and oppression. “When a White person with a White child points to my child,” writes Aracelis Girmay in the [Paris Review](#), “even lovingly, as an example of a Black life who matters, I would also like that person to teach their White child about White life and history, and about how they are going to have to work really hard to make sure that they are not taking up more



air, more space, more sidewalk because they have been taught wrongly that the world is more theirs.”

Niki Herd, in [Salon](#), believes it is imperative to change the narrative and place responsibility where it belongs—on white people. She suggests that the news media, rather than continuously replaying the murders of Black people in a gruesome parallel of lynching postcards, must “instead focus on querying white people from all walks as to why these actions persist with regularity and impunity.”

*I can't stop thinking of the white woman who gave George Zimmerman a hug after voting with other jurors to acquit him of murdering Trayvon Martin.*



The point is not that Amy Cooper has racist thoughts. All white people do, even when we have worked hard to confront and eradicate them. We've been deeply and profoundly indoctrinated in racism our entire lives. White women, in particular, are fed a daily diet of fear of Black men.

We all have an inner Karen, in other words. But that doesn't mean we have to be ruled by her. Amy Cooper – and the white women who voted to acquit George Zimmerman and the white women who throughout history have been instigators of racist violence, including so many who call police on Black people such as Christian Cooper living their regular lives – these women act on the racist thoughts that rear up inside them. They don't check themselves. They don't recognize that calling the cops on a Black man threatens that man's very life.

They don't recognize this fact despite the repeated instances of police killing Black men and getting away with it. Despite the very public displays of these murders in the news and on social media. Despite the anguish of those who loved these men. Despite the movements for accountability and change that have

needed to state what should be humanly assumed, that Black Lives Matter. If they do recognize the threat they represent and call the police anyway, then white women are perpetrators, plain and simple, active participants in a system that dehumanizes, degrades, and murders Black people.

Sometimes, a white woman may not check herself because she believes that she is liberal, “not a racist,” as Amy Cooper claimed in her “apology” to Christian Cooper. As Herd writes, there is a “tendency for liberal whites to distance themselves from other whites when the gaze falls on them. With liberal whites the enactment of racism is always the purview of someone less educated, someone conservative, someone poorer, someone richer, someone rural, someone religious, someone old, someone from the South. It is never them.” If we refuse to acknowledge the racism that lurks within us, that we, too, have an inner Karen, we may not recognize when she rears up inside us, we may not check her. And then we can be very, very dangerous.



**Sarah Browning** is the author of *Killing Summer* and *Whiskey in the Garden of Eden*. She is co-founder and for 10 years was Executive Director of Split This Rock. She is the recipient of the 2019 Lillian E. Smith Writer-in-Service Award and fellowships from the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, Yaddo, Mesa Refuge, VCCA, and the Adirondack Center for Writing. She is currently pursuing an MFA at Rutgers University Camden.

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And so, my fellow white women of all political persuasions and from all regions of our benighted nation, it's long past time for us to look deep into ourselves and acknowledge the evil that lives there. It is not necessarily our fault that we've been spoon fed racist fear our entire lives. But it is our grave responsibility to acknowledge it, to recognize when it rears its murderously ugly head, and to tell it to fuck off. Let's get down to it. We have so much work to do. ■

# If You Don't Know Me by Now...

E. Ethelbert Miller

*Too many metaphors are missing these days. In their absence we desperately search for a way of explaining the sudden upheaval in our society.*

We uproot the past looking for historical clarity. Unfortunately, the future often wears a mask. We are no longer protesting like this is the Sixties. The motion of history has taken us somewhere else. "Where are we?" is as difficult to utter as "Once upon a time."



As writers, our own words and narratives (if we are not careful) can turn against us and even become suffocating.

In 2020 our profession urges us to place our shoulder against the soft back of Democracy and push. Thanks to Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi, and Patrisse Cullors, the Black Lives Matter movement was created in 2013 with a hashtag in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman's murder of Trayvon Martin. It was a movement that demanded protection of black lives as well as space and equality for women, queer, and trans people. By 2014 the death of Mike Brown, an 18-year-old black man killed by the police in Ferguson, Missouri, brought more attention to the blue climate warming of brutality against the black community. People did not feel safe when they left their homes, they were also afraid when they decided to return. Is it different this time, or more of a changing same? The poet Sterling A. Brown wrote about police and mob violence during the 1930s and 1940s. His words of caution still echo what every black mother fears.

*“They got the judges  
They got the lawyers  
They got the jury-rolls  
They got the law  
They don't come by ones  
They got the sheriffs  
They got the deputies  
They don't come by twos  
They got the shotguns  
They got the rope  
We git the justice  
In the end  
And they come by tens”*



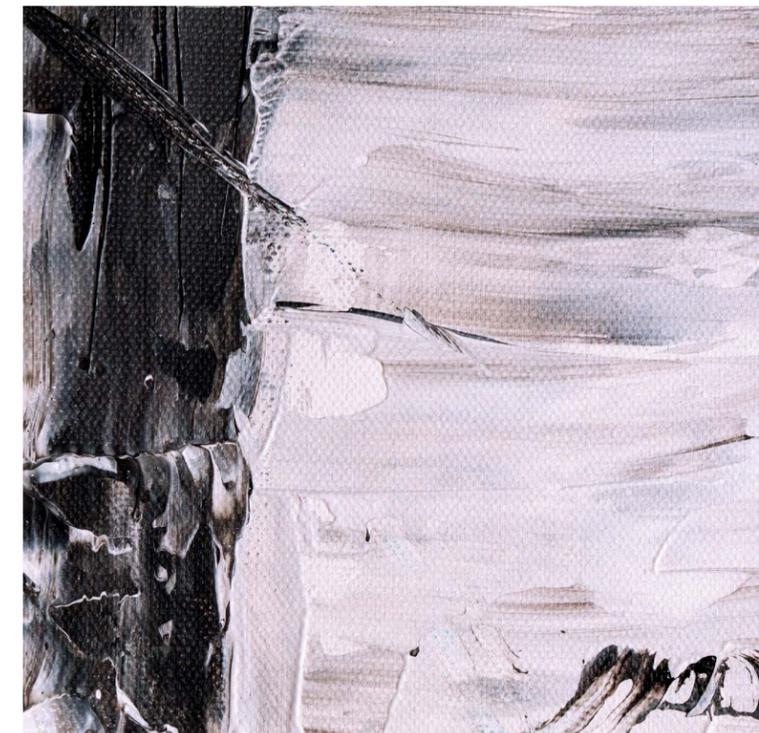
What is sad is how one plays tag with language. When we touch or try to use it, we bend it into the shape of our shadows. The language follows us around, hiding its true meaning inside its own darkness. To see a shadow is as important as losing one. When the term “Black Lives Matter” found its Marco Polo moment, everyone was struck by the discovery of the spice of blackness. This came with a much needed demand for a dialogue around race issues. A dialogue, however, is not the sound of one hand clapping. It is built around

listening and sharing. It calls for mutual respect and eventually compassion. Over the last few years it appears a new generation discovered the works of James Baldwin. The essence of Baldwin’s work always revolved around love and the freedom to love. If we connect his writings to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s sermons, then the task is to find the strength to love. How often do we need to be reminded that this black and white affair is a lover’s struggle? How do we make this relationship work? Listen to Patti LaBelle singing “If You Don’t Know Me by Now” and you realize that America is at the point where someone has their bags packed. After all the conversations about race we may never, never, never know each other at all. Is this the price of the ticket or simply the fire next time?

This brings us back to that last book by King, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* For King, it was always the Beloved Community. His vision of the World House was a place of justice and equal opportunity, a place where one embraced their fellow human being and no one was discriminated against. If we look around and don’t see the Beloved Community, then our work must be to build one and bring it into existence.

We must do this without metaphors. We cannot continue to comfort ourselves with storytelling and remembering the past. Our survival is dependent on discovering the shape and forms of things unknown. We must find the faith to love. The faith to give birth to a future bright and spilling glitter into our hands.

If there is one thing the Black Lives Matter movement has done it has forced white people to examine not just their history but also their myths. As writers we know how difficult this can be. We know too often the work we do perpetuates certain myths while distorting the truth. Racial identity at times has an adhesive backing connecting it to myths of superiority. Tear it off too quickly and blood spills from an open wound. Knocking down Confederate statues will always come with a price if there are no explanations. The Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 has been a wake-up call for America. We either move towards a New Reconstruction or we face another Civil War. As writers, we will need to define and create beauty not just for ourselves but for every living thing that has a desire for air. We cannot tell each other what to write or how to live, but we must show one another how to love. I want to call my neighbor – *Beloved*. ■



**E. Ethelbert Miller** is a literary activist and the author of two memoirs and several books of poetry. He hosts the weekly WPFW morning radio show *On the Margin with E. Ethelbert Miller* and hosts and produces *The Scholars on UDC-TV* which received a 2020 Telly Award. Currently he serves on the boards of the DC Collaborative for Humanities and Education and *The Inner Loop*. Miller’s latest book *If God Invented Baseball* (City Point Press) was awarded the 2019 Literary Award for poetry by the American Library Association’s *Black Caucus*.

<https://searcharchives.library.gwu.edu/repositories/2/resources/367>

\*\*Old Lem” by Sterling A. Brown, from *The Collected Poems of Sterling A. Brown*, ed. Michael S. Harper, Harper & Row, 1980.  
\*\*This essay was originally published in *The Writer’s Chronicle*, July 2020.

# THE WRITING CHALLENGE

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*For each issue of Movable Type one Guest Writer chosen by 1455 will offer a writing prompt to our community.*

We encourage you to answer the prompt in whatever genre you prefer. Do this just for yourself or choose to submit your final product to 1455. The Guest Writer and our team of 1455 advisors will review the submissions and select one piece we feel best answers the prompt. The winning selection will be featured in the next issue of Movable Type along with a writing prompt from a newly chosen Guest Writer. We want to continue to inspire and celebrate good writing!

A WRITING CHALLENGE FROM

## Guest Writer Caroline Bock

We are often told to start a story with an occasion or trigger. Something happens to help the story unfold. I frequently ask my workshops: why is today different from all other days? These days so much is different—we are living in strange times. Write a story—a fiction, creative nonfiction, a narrative poem—in which the day, for some reason, is different from all other days. Consider closely who is the narrator—who is telling this story? What sensory details are familiar and what is unfamiliar? How does this narrator figure out that the day is different from all other days? What conflict(s) awaits this narrator? What realizations do they ultimately have? Or, perhaps, there are no epiphanies on this strange day. Write on!

If you would like to submit your piece, inspired by Caroline's prompt, for possible publication in the next issue, we are excited to read your work! Please send your ORIGINAL piece of no more than 1,000 words with "THE WRITING CHALLENGE" in the subject line to [info@1455litarts.org](mailto:info@1455litarts.org) by September 1st.

*Caroline Bock participated in the 2nd annual 1455 Literary Festival. She was part of the panel Perspectives and Reflections on Home with poet Susan Mockler.*



**Caroline Bock's** debut short story collection, *CARRY HER HOME*, was the winner of the 2018 Fiction Award from the Washington Writers' Publishing House. She is also the author of the young adult novels: *LIE* and *BEFORE MY EYES* from St. Martin's Press. In 2021, Bock will be the co-editor of the poetry and short story anthology, *THIS IS WHAT AMERICA LOOKS LIKE*, from The Washington Writers' Publishing House. She teaches at Marymount University in Arlington and leads writing workshops at The Writer's Center in Bethesda and Politics & Prose in D.C.

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## We Want to Hear From You!

Do you have comments you want to share about the essays you read in this first issue? We would like to feature an Editor's Mailbag in forthcoming issues that will share readers' thoughts on the published essays. Please send your comments/op-eds responding to the essays in this issue to [knporter@verizon.net](mailto:knporter@verizon.net) with the subject line: EDITOR'S MAILBAG.

## Call for Essays

Movable Type is looking for short, original essays to publish in our Perspectives section. We are interested in hearing from you! Can you share your perspective with us? Let us know your challenges as writers balancing your work and responsibilities during these trying times. We are looking for essays of 500-1,000 words that we can publish in our next issue and will explore how the current pandemic and protests affects writers in our community. You may want to focus on how our current reality is impacting one of these areas in your essay:

- Writers trying to manage their physical/mental/emotional health
- Writers trying to parent/homeschool
- Writers trying to maintain their writing disciplines
- Writers trying to continue working in their fields (*teaching, businesses, etc.*)
- Writers trying to provide outreach to their community
- We are open to your ideas!

If you would like to submit your work for possible publication in the next issue of Movable Type, please send your ORIGINAL essay of 500-1,000 words with "CALL FOR ESSAYS" in the subject line to [info@1455litarts.org](mailto:info@1455litarts.org) by September 1st.



### IN THE NEWS

## 2nd Annual Summer Literary Festival Recap

1455's Second Annual Literary Festival concluded in celebratory fashion, having quadrupled its registration numbers from last year's event. Despite shifting to online programming, the festival that ran from July 16 – 18 delivered a variety of content, from interviews to workshops, with an impressive lineup of authors, poets, educators, and creatives. The organization witnessed a more than 400% growth in pre-registrations and ultimately hosted a total of 2,146 participants throughout the event's free programming. The literary event featured a diverse array of more than 150 speakers across 50+ panels all focused on the power of storytelling and the crucial role it plays in the creative and academic fields, as well as the business and political arena.

The 1455 Literary Festival welcomed participants from around the globe including China, Tunisia, Egypt, Barbados, South Africa, Brazil and the UK, all uniting across its three focal tracks of "Inspiration & Advocacy," "Timely & Topical" and "Craft & Community." Among the most popular sessions were "The Untethered by Aguas Arts Ink," a collection of spoken word and monodrama from Black writers and actors from Virginia curated by Francis Tanglao Aguas, "The Publishing Industry in 2020: What Writers Need to Know" with Jane Friedman, "The 10 Commandments for Becoming a Writer" with Karen Bender, "The Art of Storytelling with Stephen Tobolowsky," a conversation with actor and author Stephen Tobolowsky, and keynote interview with former Esquire literary editor Adrienne Miller, author of the new memoir *In The Land Of Men*. In recognition of her entrepreneurial and

philanthropic achievements, as well as her extraordinary book *Be Fearless: 5 Principles For A Life Of Breakthroughs And Purpose*, 1455 was pleased to name Jean Case recipient of its first Storytelling Award, which was followed with a wide-ranging interview. Like all the programming, this conversation was recorded and will be made available via 1455's website.

"It was incredibly gratifying to be joined by such an engaged and global audience at this year's festival," said 1455's Executive Director Sean Murphy. "This enthusiastic response confirms our belief that celebrating creativity and building community is empowering and contagious. 1455 is committed to showcasing the written word and connecting people who share a passion for the arts. It was also important to make this year's event as inclusive and topical as possible, and we're proud to have produced such quality content at a time when peoples' ability to freely interact has been disrupted. We were able to provide a variety of content for interests ranging from literature and politics to poetry and pop culture. It was particularly meaningful to honor Jean Case for her best-selling book *Be Fearless: 5 Principles for a Life of Breakthroughs and Purpose*, host our second Teen poet contest, and design panels dedicated to the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, as well as the COVID crisis. I'm grateful we attracted a depth and breadth of talent to provide something for everyone, from workshops and readings to our keynote. I'm already excited to see what next year brings!"

# 1455<sup>®</sup>

## Stay tuned for exciting new things.

### Workshops FOR WRITERS



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