

Francisco Aragón

Biographical Information

Francisco Aragón is the author of the book, *Puerta del Sol* (Bilingual Press) and editor of the anthology, *The Wind Shifts: The New Latino Poetry* (University of Arizona Press), which was published in 2007. His poems have appeared in a range of anthologies, including, *Inventions of Farewell: A Book of Elegies* (W.W. Norton), *American Diaspora: Poetry of Displacement* (University of Iowa Press), *Bend, Don't Shatter* (Soft Skull Press) and, most recently, *Evensong: American Poets on Spirituality* (Bottom Dog Press), among others. His work is also forthcoming in, *Deep Travel: Contemporary Poets Abroad* (Ninebark Press). In the area of literary translation, he has published a number of books, including three by Francisco X. Alarcon: *Body in Flames*, (Chronicle Books), *Of Dark Love* (Moving Parts Press) and *Sonnets to Madness and other Misfortunes* (Creative Arts Book Company). Individual poems and translations have appeared in print and web publications, including: *Chain*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Chelsea*, *The Journal*, *Jacket*, *The Electronic Poetry Review*, and *Poetry Daily*. Limited edition chapbooks include: *Tertulia*, (BOOKlyn) and *Light, Yogurt, Strawberry Milk* (The Chicano Chapbook Series). Aragón holds degrees in Spanish from UC Berkeley and NYU, and an M.A. in English and an M.F.A. in creative writing from UC Davis and the University of Notre Dame, respectively. Honors include an Academy of American Poets Prize and an AWP Intro Journals Project Award. He is currently Director of Letras Latinas, the literary program of the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame where he oversees, among other projects, Momotombo Press.

Campaign Statement

"As someone who lived and worked overseas for nearly ten years, I've experienced being a writer who's not affiliated with a creative writing program. Having said that, my years in Spain enriched the perspective I brought to my subsequent graduate studies in English and creative writing. I've also organized and moderated two AWP panels, and have participated in another two since I began attending the conference in 2002.

"Once I completed my M.F.A., I managed to carve out a niche in what I can only call arts administration—in my case, at a university institute which, really, is like working for a non-profit organization: in other words, my day job in the last the three years has consisted, primarily, in cultivating professional relationships, raising money and building bridges, in addition, of course, to overseeing the literary projects that have resulted from these three activities. For example: I wrote a proposal that landed an NEA grant to partially fund "Poetas y Pintores: Artists Conversing With Verse," a multidisciplinary initiative that wouldn't have been possible without partnering with the Center for Women's InterCultural Leadership (CWIL) at Saint Mary's College in Indiana; I founded, and coordinate, the Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize, a national first-book prize which required the collaboration of University of Notre Dame Press; I forged a relationship with the Guild Complex in Chicago to co-curate PALABRA PURA, a monthly bilingual poetry reading series in Chicago; I've cultivated an alliance with Cristo Rey High School in Chicago and the Young Writers Workshop in Southern Illinois University in Carbondale to raise funds to help create scholarships for high school-aged writers to attend a summer writing retreat—this project is only recently underway; I've nourished ties with dozens of individuals around the

country who have been arts patrons for Momotombo Press, a small chapbook press I founded in 2001; and finally, I've worked closely with Notre Dame's Performing Arts Center and Creative Writing Program to start "Chloe's Cabaret: poetry * music * coffee * conversation," which brings poetry to a unique performance space for the campus community and the community-at-large. This is the experience I'm eager bring to the table as an AWP board member.

"What might be one issue I would like to address if given the opportunity to serve? My experience as an editor these past few years has given me a glimpse into the situation of writers who teach at the community college level and who are not, therefore, affiliated with a creative writing program per se. I've seen what a struggle it can be for authors to find the resources, as well as the wholehearted support of their employers, to get time off to accept invitations not only to give readings but to attend conferences for their professional development. I would like to explore ways in which the AWP can be more creative and resourceful in their support for such writers, not to mention, of course, writers who hold day jobs that don't involve teaching, and yet would still like to share their work with as varied an audience as possible. One thing that occurs to me is a travel fund for individual members. But I'd like to explore a travel fund that's not only for writers to attend conferences or give readings, but one which would encourage writers who want to create and educate *new* audiences—audiences in traditionally underserved communities, for example.

"I've touched on one subject—have only scratched the surface, really. I'd very much like to hear ideas, suggestions, and concerns from individual members, as well. I'll close by saying that my desire to serve on the AWP board is informed by experiences like the one I had this past summer in San Antonio at the Macondo Workshop: within the context of a supportive community of writers, we all felt encouraged to 'recognize (our) place in our society and the world' and challenged, therefore, to embrace 'a spirit of generosity.' This is an ethos I would like to cultivate, as well, at AWP."