

Oliver de la Paz

Biographical Information

Oliver de la Paz is the author of three collections of poetry: *Names Above Houses*, *Furious Lullaby*, both published by Southern Illinois University Press, and *Requiem for the Orchard*, published by the University of Akron Press and winner of the 2009 Akron Prize for Poetry. He is the co-chair for the advisory board of Kundiman.org, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the creation, cultivation, and promotion of Asian American Poetry. His work has appeared in journals and anthologies such as *Asian American Poetry: The Next Generation*, *Quarterly West*, *Tin House*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *North American Review*, *The Southern Review*, and elsewhere. A recipient of grants from NYFA and the Artists' Trust of Washington, he is an Associate Professor of English at Western Washington University.

Campaign Statement:

It is an honor to be nominated for a position on AWP's board, since the organization has been an integral part of my development as a writer and teacher over the years. I attended my first AWP conference when it was held in Portland, OR, and I have been to every conference since then. I remember when the program for the conference was a saddle-stapled newspaper with a handful of panels, and when you could see all the tables of the book fair without taking a step. It's quite breathtaking to see the growth in the organization over the years. I am excited by this growth and I want to be part of the organization in order to inform its continued development during a time of national economic challenge. My administrative experience, both at the university level and at the non-profit level can assist with guiding AWP and its programs during these times.

I am quite familiar with AWP and its mission, having had the privilege of participating in numerous panels for AWP's annual conference. I've used the job placement service and I have participated in the pedagogy panels. Additionally, in the past two years, I have judged AWP's Intro Journals Awards for poetry and I have served as a manuscript screener for the Donald Hall prize. I welcome the opportunity for a continued relationship with teachers and writers who value the organization as much as I do.

My administrative work with university curricula, with non-profit organizations, and with fund-raising, provide tools for strong representation of our teaching colleagues, students, and community members who aspire to write and learn about writing. I have had the experience of teaching creative writing at numerous types of institutions, starting with my experience as a graduate student and as an adjunct professor at Arizona State University. I have also taught at small private colleges (Gettysburg College and Utica College), and I currently teach at a regional comprehensive university (Western Washington University). My diverse experience as a teacher and writer at these institutions gives me insight into the various ways AWP's presence is felt in a variety of academic cultures. At the administrative level, as a coordinator and academic advisor of a large undergraduate creative writing major, I have seen, firsthand, the growth in student awareness of creative writing programs. I oversee recruitment and development of the creative writing major as well as coordinate the creative writing course load as reflected in the university catalog.

Additionally, as a faculty member of an M.A. program in creative writing, I represent what I view as an under-represented population of teachers and students. While much of the discussion about creative writing involves a conversation about M.F.A. and PhD programs, my experience as a thesis advisor of an M.A. program can provide the AWP board another conversation point.

I continue to be an active member of Kundiman, a non-profit literary arts organization dedicated to the promotion and development of Asian American poetry. I was one of the first members and staffers during its inception in 2002, eventually continuing my work with the organization as the co-chair of its advisory board. In Kundiman's early days, my role was to assist in the recruitment of students, faculty, and donor contacts as well as to assist in the development of the organization's by-laws. Kundiman did not have a board of directors (either in an advisory capacity or in a governance capacity) for many years and I recently helped construct Kundiman's advisory board. As the co-chair of this advisory board, I continue to help with the recruitment of potential faculty members for the annual Kundiman retreat. I also work on the implementation of some of its programs and programming. Kundiman is now in its eighth year and has enjoyed numerous successes--the organization has received grants from the NEA, NYFA, and other grant-giving agencies, and it continues to grow in stature. We have recently worked in partnership with Alice James Press for Kundiman's first book prize for Asian American poets. Much of my experience with Kundiman as a founding staff member and board member can assist with AWP's own growth.

Ultimately, I believe in the work AWP has done for teachers of writing and writing students in academic and non-academic settings. I want to be a part of the organization that has helped my own writing and teaching life in innumerable ways since my early graduate school years.