



Association of Writers
& Writing Programs

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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March 13, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AWP is Back! High Attendance, New HBCU Fellowship, and Min Jin Lee at #AWP23 in Seattle.

Norfolk, VA — The Association of Writers & Writing Programs returned to Seattle, Washington for its annual AWP Conference & Bookfair (#AWP23). For the first time since the start of the pandemic, AWP welcomed its highest number of attendees. The total checked-in registered attendees in Seattle totaled 9,037, including Saturday-only passes, which comprised 775 attendees. Additionally, 545 attendees joined AWP through the virtual conference platform. AWP also hosted 563 exhibitors, with 632 organizations represented. 350+ events were held on-site at the Seattle Convention Center, and over 250+ off-site events were held throughout Seattle.

Over 1,734 students registered and attended the conference, a majority of which paid less than \$65 for the entire conference. Over 400 attendees participated in the AWP Work-Exchange Program, which grants free registration to the conference in exchange for four hours of conference support on-site. Sixty full scholarships were provided to the in-person conference. AWP is grateful to its community for sustaining the funding for the scholarship program.



AWP welcomed Min Jin Lee, acclaimed author of *Pachinko* and *Free Food for Millionaires*, for an incredible conversation with well-known librarian Nancy Pearl, as the keynote address on Thursday, March 9, 2023 at 8:00 p.m. PT. “I want people in my community to be cultural citizens; I’m really tired of Asians and Asian Americans being invisible,” Lee stated.

The full keynote address can still be watched on the virtual platform for registered attendees, along with all featured events and selected pre-recorded events.



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Notable moments at AWP this year include:

The AWP HBCU Fellowship Program

The membership and conference departments collaborated to launch the AWP HBCU Fellowship Program during #AWP23. This new initiative provides stipends, travel, lodging, and conference registration for HBCU faculty and students. The program kicked off with a private luncheon and discussion with author and HBCU professor A.J. Verdelle and the selected student and faculty fellows. The discussion centered on supporting creative writing and paths to publication at their respective schools. Verdelle then held the public lecture “Standing at the Center and Writing from the Margins” on Friday, March 10, followed later in the evening by a launch party to celebrate the new program. To help send the 2024 fellows to the next AWP Conference & Bookfair, please [donate to the AWP HBCU Fellowship Program fund](#).

James Alan McPherson Endowment

The AWP Prize for the Novel was renamed the James Alan McPherson Prize for the Novel during the AWP Award Series and Celebration. McPherson’s daughter, Rachel, spoke before the 2021 AWP Award Series winners read. A silent auction to support the new endowment, consisting of McPherson’s former possessions, was also held, with plans for another online auction being held soon. Celebrated author Percival Everett will judge the first James Alan McPherson Prize for the Novel, with the winner to be announced later this year.

A note from Executive Director, Cynthia Sherman

“Though the AWP staff and board were fully engaged in bringing #AWP23 to the community, this conference exceeded our expectations. Connection, communion, and joy were the hallmarks of this incredibly vibrant literary meeting. There was something for everyone, starting with the keynote event featuring Min Jin Lee in conversation with Nancy Pearl. It was wildly anticipated, candid, and inspiring. I loved it. In a beautiful and uplifting service project, AWP attendees helped Pongo Poetry Project collect journals with encouraging messages for at-risk youth as part of #WritersServe. The inaugural AWP HBCU Fellowship Program and the return of High School Day were both great successes. We are thrilled to have facilitated this joyful reunion.”



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A note from Chair of the Board of Directors, January Gill O'Neil

As the current chair of AWP's Board of Directors, I couldn't be more pleased with the attendance and positive spirit at #AWP23 in Seattle. This conference would not be possible without the tireless work of AWP's Executive Director Cynthia Sherman, Director of Conferences Colleen Cable, and the remarkable staff who plan for this event and other vital programs year-round. For many students, this is their first AWP conference experience, their first foray into the professional side of writing. But for others, the conference is about the community—an inclusive space that celebrates the writing life, which is both a calling and a labor of love.

Additional Highlights:

The #AWP23 Writer to Agent Program saw 887 applicants – its highest number of applications since the program launched in 2017. All #AWP23 attendees have the opportunity to submit a sample of their work for review by Aevitas Creative Management, Ayesha Pande Literary, Folio Literary Management, Serendipity Literary Agency, and Trellis Literary Management. The agencies held 142 meetings over the conference week, both virtually and in person.

AWP continued its #WritersServe Program this year by supporting donations to Seattle-based nonprofit organization Pongo Poetry Project. #AWP23 attendees donated over seventy journals and notes in support of Pongo's mission to "engage youth in writing poetry to inspire healing and growth."

Twitter Quotes

<https://twitter.com/seminewblack/status/1635296511306203136?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/shepherdessjess/status/1635382385843003401?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/kimrgarza/status/1635283442538799104?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/KelliAgodon/status/1634404409223581699?s=20>

<https://twitter.com/sassafraslowrey/status/1633997137511067648?s=20>



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The 2024 AWP Conference & Bookfair (#AWP24) will be held in Kansas City, Missouri on February 7–10, 2024. See you there!

AWP provides support, advocacy, resources, and community to writers, college and university creative writing programs, and writers' conferences and centers. Our mission is to amplify the voices of writers and the academic programs and organizations that serve them while championing diversity and excellence in creative writing.