

Conference Event Proposal

AWP 2020 Conference & Bookfair in San Antonio

events@awpwriter.org

Event Information Event Title:

Burning the House Down: Mixed Race and Writing

Type of Event: Multiple Literary Genres Craft & Criticism

Event Description:

“What are you mixed with?” When Mixed Race writers turn their gaze on race & writing in America, they might burn the house down. Using writing as activism to confront implicit biases and inherited classification; the need to make sense of well-meaning colleagues, friends and strangers' critique on literary motifs, characterization and authors' physical appearances have forced some writers to move from navel-gazing to a serious interrogation of colorism, racial formation and the role of writing.

Statement of Merit:

With the antebellum roots, pre and post Civil Rights seeds, and budding critical discussions about the new, potentially divisive racial and ethnic classifications of the upcoming 2020 US Census, Mixed Race writers are using writing and their platforms to explore race and racial formation. Consciously or unconsciously, Mixed Race writers exist in, and create from, a space of defining and redefining one's identity against an inherited, historical racial or ethnic classification.

Event Organizer: Shonda Buchanan

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Organization: Loyola Marymount University

Address: 1 LMU Drive

City: Los Angeles

State: California

Country: United States

Participants Moderator: Shonda Buchanan (shondabuchanan@aol.com)

Participant: Chris L. Terry (chrilsterry@gmail.com)

Participant: F. Douglas Brown (fdbrown@loyolahs.edu)

Participant: Luis Rodriguez (luispoetlaureate@gmail.com)

Participant: Janet Stickmon (jstickmon@msn.com)

Bios:

Moderator:

Shonda Buchanan is author five books, including *Black Indian*, the tale of a Mixed race Midwest family caught in an intergenerational bi-ethnic and tri-ethnic identity crises. An award-winning poet and educator, Shonda is editing her first novel about Black/American Indian intersections, a second memoir and a collection of poetry about Nina Simone. Shonda teaches Creative Writing & Composition at Loyola Marymount University & Otis College.

Panelists:

F. Douglas Brown is the author of two poetry collections: *ICON* and *Zero to Three*, winner of the 2013 Cave Canem Poetry Prize. He also co-authored, *Begotten*, with poet Geoffrey Davis. Brown is both a Cave Canem and Kundiman fellow, and he teaches literature at Loyola High School of Los Angeles.

Luis J. Rodriguez was named Poet Laureate of Los Angeles in 2014. He is the author of fifteen books across a number of genres. He has been the recipient of a PEN West/Josephine Miles Award and a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. He serves as founding editor of Tia Chucha Press and co-founder and president of Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural and Bookstore in California.

Janet Stickmon is a professor of Humanities and the author of *Crushing Soft Rubies*, *Midnight Peaches*, *Two O'clock Patience*, and *To Black Parents Visiting Earth*. Stickmon's essay "Blackapina" has been featured in *Red and Yellow*, *Black and Brown: Decentering Whiteness in Mixed Race Studies*.

Chris L. Terry is the author of the novels *Black Card* and *Zero Fade*, which received a starred review from Kirkus, who called it, "Original, hilarious, thought provoking, and wicked smart. Not to be missed." He lives in Los Angeles, California.

Opening Statement:

- 1) Moderator will introduce the panel with the description and introduce the panelists by reading their brief bios (5-10 min.)
- 2) Moderator will begin with questions for each panelist to answer (30-40)
- 3) Q and A (10-15 min.)

Moderator Questions:

Whose house are you burning down as a Mixed Race writer? Give an example from one of your books.

In our xenophobic society, why is it important to talk about and write about being mixed race?

Do you ever suffer from imposter syndrome?

Is there a point where you just get sick of writing about being mixed race or biracial or tri-racial?

Was there ever a time in your childhood or adulthood when someone identified you as one or the other race that you belong to and you had to either explain to them or you kept quiet about the other half of your race? What happened?

How do you explain writing about being mixed race to your child/ren? Friends? Spouse? Stranger? Agent? Publisher?

What was that moment and how did you deal with it as a person and then how do you reflect upon that moment later as a writer?

How do you make the decision to let one of your characters use the N-word or another derogatory "racilized" term as a writer? In what context do you feel safe using it as a writer, and is there always a sense of I shouldn't be using that word because I'm not full blooded?

What are the implications for society if we do not highlight mixed race issues in our writing? What are those issues and how do you portray that in your writing?