

Event Title

A Place at the Table: Nurturing an inclusive literary ecosystem

Event Description

How do we ensure that our literary communities reflect the diversity of our towns and that everyone has a place at the table? In this panel, writers connected with **Inprint** – a Houston-based literary arts nonprofit – will discuss the various Inprint community writing activities they lead for senior citizens, the incarcerated, healthcare providers, the Latinx community, aspiring writers of all ages and backgrounds, and more.

For more than 35 years, Inprint has served Houston with long-standing programs that directly engage 15,000 readers and writers annually. In addition to building two renowned and accessible public reading series for adults and children and providing more than 500 emerging writers with significant fellowships and prizes, moderator **Rich Levy**, Inprint's executive director for almost 25 years, and the Inprint staff have spearheaded a variety of programs and collaborations to expand the organization's reach into non-traditional communities. Today, many wonderfully talented, dynamic, and diverse writers work for and collaborate with Inprint in different parts of the city. **Niki Herd** has taught Inprint Writers Workshops for aspiring writers and for several years has led the Inprint Senior Memoir Writing Workshops at Amazing Place, a day center for individuals with mild to moderate memory-loss issues. **Lupe Mendez**, cofounder of Tintero Projects – conducting programs to showcase and provide opportunities for Latinx and other writers of color, cohosts the Inprint/Tintero podcast *Ink Well*, curates readings and generative workshops at Inprint through Tintero Projects, and has also led Inprint Writers Workshops for K-12 teachers and aspiring writers. **Ricardo Nuila**, who got his start as a writer through Inprint Writers Workshops, helped launch Inprint Writing Workshops for Healthcare Employees of Harris Health – Houston's public healthcare providers – in the Texas Medical Center. **Kaj Tanaka** initiated and has for several years led Inprint Writing Workshops at Harris County Jail and has led Inprint Writers Workshops. Each of these individuals, published authors writing in a variety of genres, will bring a unique perspective to the conversation of how we build an inclusive literary ecosystem in Houston, Texas.

Event category

Writers' Conferences & Centers Events

Event organizer

Krupa Parikh has been with Inprint since 1998 and now serves as associate director, helping to run the organization's writing workshops, community workshops, and several other programs and collaborations.

Event moderator

Rich Levy is a poet and, since 1995, executive director of Inprint. His collections include *Why Me?* and the letterpress chapbook *One or Two Lights*. He holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers Workshop and is a member of the Texas Institute of Letters.

Event Participants

Niki Herd is the author of the poetry collection *The Language of Shedding Skin*. Her work has been supported by the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference and Cave Canem and has appeared in a number of journals. She lives in Texas, where she is completing her PhD in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Houston.

Lupe Mendez – educator/writer/activist – has published prose work in *The Kenyon Review* and *Norton's-Sudden Fiction Latino* and poetry in *Huizache*, *Luna, Luna*, *The Texas Review*, *Tinderbox*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Glass Poetry*, and *Gulf Coast*. His poetry collection *Why I Am Like Tequila* debuted in 2019.

Ricardo Nuila is a practicing doctor, teacher, and writer. His journalistic work has appeared in *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic* online, and his fiction has appeared in *Best American Short Stories 2011*. He was awarded the inaugural *New England Review* Award for Emerging Writers. He is currently at work on a book called *The People's Hospital*.

Kaj Tanaka is a widely published PhD candidate in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Houston. Since 2014, Kaj has developed writing workshops for incarcerated people in jails and prisons across the country. Currently, Kaj runs poetry workshops for recovering drug users at Houston's Harris County Jail.

Event Outline

- A.** Welcome and opening remarks
- B.** Introduction of speakers
- C.** Moderator questions
 - 1. Each of you is involved with many community programs. Please describe the literary community programs you work with in connection to Inprint and how these programs provide access and help to engage individuals from different backgrounds and life situations in the act of creative writing and reading. What are some of the successes, challenges, and limitations of these programs?
 - 2. We believe that part of creating an inclusive literary community in our city involves expanding the notion of who a writer is, what a writer looks like, and whose stories are nurtured and celebrated. How is this reflected in the community programming you are involved with and why is this important?
 - 3. Essential to an inclusive literary community is ensuring that people of many different backgrounds are empowered to actualize the programs they would like to see come to fruition. Each of you has to some extent played a role in planning the programs with which you are involved, whether it be designing your workshop course descriptions and syllabi, initiating and helping to administer a new program, curating the content of a reading/workshop/podcast episode, and more. Describe your role in the programs with which you are involved and share some of the personal and professional rewards and challenges. How do you think the program is working?
 - 4. Does Houston provide unique challenges and opportunities? How does it compare to other parts of the country in which you have lived and worked? In other words, what do you think is transferable and what is unique to Houston?
 - 5. If we are succeeding, how can we continue to maintain a literary ecosystem that is supportive, inclusive, nurturing, and harmonious? Is this sustainable? What more can we do in the future together?
- D.** Q & A