

Event Title:

The Cultural Contours of Grief

Event Description:

The very act of speaking about grief is meaningful, especially in a culture that sees grief as personal, and its expression as weakness. But the pandemic has forced many of us to sit with unaddressed grief in new ways. How do we write into devastation, then, and how do we write our ways out of it? How can we maintain creative momentum after cataclysmic losses? How can grief serve as a site for transformation personally, culturally, and artistically?

Speakers: Frankie Rollins (moderator), Michelle Chikaonda, Kimi Eisele, Monica Macansantos

Topics to be discussed:

- how personal grief is
- how it isn't a weakness
- how to sit with unaddressed grief
- how to write into devastation
- how to write out of devastation
- how to maintain creative momentum
- how grief transforms you personally
- How grief transforms you culturally
- how grief transforms you artistically

Panel Schedule

1. Opening Remarks from Frankie Rollins
2. Presentation from Kimi Eisele: a very brief reading from her novel, *THE LIGHTEST OBJECT IN THE UNIVERSE* (Algonquin Books, 2019), and discussing writing into and out of devastation and grief as a personal and collective superpower (10 mins)
3. Presentation from Michelle Chikaonda: Reading from the short essay "Mourning Clothes"

Topic areas: **How personal grief is; how grief transforms you personally and culturally** (10 mins)

4. Presentation from Monica Macansantos: Reading from the essay “How I dealt with the grief of losing my father” in which she discusses how she wrote into her grief and maintained creative momentum after she lost her father very suddenly in 2017. Topic areas: **how it isn't a weakness; how to write into devastation; how to maintain creative momentum; how grief transforms you personally and artistically** (10 mins)
5. Presentation from Frankie Rollins: Reading from the flash fiction novella, *The Grief Manuscript*. Topic areas: **How personal grief is; how to write into devastation; how to write out of devastation; how to maintain creative momentum; how grief transforms you artistically** (10 mins)
6. Group conversation on pieces read and topics discussed (10 mins)
7. Q&A

PANELIST BIOS:

Frankie Rollins (*Moderator*) published *The Grief Manuscript* with Finishing Line Press (2020), *Doctor Porchiat's Dream* in *Running Wild Novella Anthology 3*, Volume 2 (2019), and *The Sin Eater and Other Stories* with Queens Ferry Press (2013).

Michelle Chikaonda has won awards from The Seventh Wave, the Tucson Festival of Books, the Fine Arts Work Center at Provincetown and the ALSCW. She is an alumna of workshops with Tin House, VQR and VONA, and has written for Al Jazeera, Globe & Mail, Catapult and Electric Literature, among others.

Kimi Eisele is the author of *THE LIGHTEST OBJECT IN THE UNIVERSE*, a novel about love, community, and resilience after the world falls apart. From her home in Tucson, she writes fiction and non-fiction, makes art and performances, and edits, *BorderLore*, an online journal of culture and heritage, for the Southwest Folklife Alliance.

Monica Macansantos holds an MFA in Writing from the University of Texas-Michener Center for Writers, and a PhD in Creative Writing from the Victoria University of Wellington. Her work has appeared in *Colorado Review*, *failbetter*, the *Masters Review*, *Anomaly*, *Lunch Ticket*, and *Katherine Mansfield Studies* Vol. 13, among other places.