

Event Title: Four Women: Black Experimental Women Writers on Interdisciplinary Craft

Event Description: What drives the search for new forms and genres? What can these writers reveal about the ways that technologies have influenced storytelling? Is there a connection between creative experiment and social justice themes and change? Writers Chantal James, Kyla Marshall, Opal Moore and Shay Youngblood will engage these and other topics through their own works and those of other exciting contemporary writers, such as Rachel Eliza Griffiths, Tonya Foster, and Duriel Harris. They describe the relationship of interdisciplinary practices to their own creative experimentation with form, genre and new technologies.

Event Category: Multiple Literary Genres Craft & Criticism

- I. Introduce/frame the event and read presenters' bios (**Rochelle Spencer**—5 minutes)
- II. **Shay Youngblood, Opal Moore, Kyla Marshall, Chantal James** will address Question #1.
- III. **Shay Youngblood, Opal Moore, Kyla Marshall, Chantal James** will address Question #2.
- IV. **Shay Youngblood, Opal Moore, Kyla Marshall, Chantal James** will address Question #3 (Because of time constraints, this question is optional and may or may not be addressed by all the panelists.)
- V. **Shay Youngblood, Opal Moore, Kyla Marshall, Chantal James** will address Question #4.
- VI. Audience Q&A

Questions:

- 1) You could all be described as innovators, who play with structure and tell stories in new ways. Would you describe yourself as an experimental artist? What are some ways you're challenging form?

- 2) The opening presentation showed some work from Tonya Foster, Duriel Harris, and Rachel Eliza Griffiths. Who are some artists who are challenging and innovating? We're thinking about interdisciplinary work or polyvocal work that breaks with the linear storyline. Who makes us rethink and reconsider?
- 3) Does it help to create new storytelling forms or ways of telling stories? Does it help us dissect problems or draw attention to specific ideas with the forms you're creating?
- 4) If given all the resources you need, what would your ideal project look like? What would it encapsulate?

Event Participants' Bios:

- VII. **Shay Youngblood** is a writer, educator and interdisciplinary artist. Author of novels *Black Girl in Paris* and *Soul Kiss*, a collection of short stories and numerous essays, her published plays have been widely produced. Her short stories have been performed at Symphony Space and recorded for NPR's Selected Shorts. Youngblood received an MFA in Playwriting from Brown University. Her current projects include *Architecture of Soul Sound*, an ongoing multi-media performance work on architecture, memory and the environment inspired by travels in Japan, China and the U.S., children's books and commissioned play, *Boss Ladies and Tender Hearted Girls* inspired by interviews with Southern Black women. Her play *Square Blues*, explores intergenerational art and activism, will premiere in Atlanta in July 2022. She is a board member of Yaddo Artist Residency and a Commissioner on the board of the Japan U.S. Friendship Commission. Youngblood is currently on the faculty in the Graduate Creative Writing Program at City College, NY.
- VIII. (via <http://www.shayyoungblood.com/about>)
- IX. Poet, author and critic, **Opal Moore** was educated at Illinois Wesleyan University and the University of Iowa and Iowa's Writers Workshop, and has taught at institutions including Virginia Commonwealth University, Hollins College, and Kassel University in Germany. Moore's fiction and poetry has appeared in numerous literary journals and anthologies, including *Callaloo*; *Connecticut Review*; *Honey*, *Hush! An Anthology of African Women's*

Humor; and *Homeplaces: Stories of the South by Women Writers*. Moore's collection of poems, *Lot's Daughters* (2004), examines the transplantation of African Americans from the Deep South to her native Chicago, Illinois.

Moore is a Fulbright Scholar, Cave Canem alumnus, and Bellagio Fellow

- X. **Kyla Marshall's** essays, poems, interviews and reviews have appeared in *The Guardian*, *Gawker*, *BuzzFeed*, *The Believer*, *Kinfolk*, *O*, *the Oprah Magazine*, *Shondaland*, *The Ringer*, and elsewhere. She has earned Jacob K. Javits, Cave Canem and MacDowell fellowships; *Ebony.com* named her one of "7 Young Black Writers You Should Know."

Currently, Kyla is at work on a memoir about a chance encounter with a distant relative that leads her to seek out the other lost and hidden members of her family. She is a graduate of Spelman College with a B.A. in English, and Sarah Lawrence College with an M.F.A. in Creative Writing. Originally from Boston, she grew up in Silver Spring, MD, Morehead, KY, and Portland, ME, and now lives in New York. (via

<http://www.kylamarshell.com/>)

- XI. **Chantal James** lives in Washington, DC, and has been published across genres—as a poet, fiction writer, essayist, and book reviewer—in such venues as *Catapult*, *Paste Magazine*, Harvard's *Transition Magazine*, *The Bitter Southerner*, and more. Her honors include a Fulbright fellowship in creative writing to Morocco, and a finalist position for the Alex Albright Creative Nonfiction prize from the North Carolina Literary Review for 2019. (via <https://www.chantaljames.net/about>)

AWP supplemental materials/suggested resources:

- The above-mentioned websites
- Tonya Foster, "A Swarm of Bees in High Court" (audio): <https://soundcloud.com/machineproject/20-tonya-foster-prodfinal>
- Rachel Eliza Griffiths: <http://www.rachelelizagriffiths.com/lyric-videos>
- Duriel Harris: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2016/08/although-it-felt-like-a-confession-or-introducing-the-harri-blogject-the-harripog-and-other-experiments-in-joy>
- Janice Lowe: <https://www.janicelowe.com/>

- Rasheedah Phillips (**based here in Philadelphia**):
<https://whyy.org/articles/phillys-fave-afrofuturists-turned-a-fairmount-mansion-into-a-time-travel-portal/>

Journals:

African American Review: <https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/african-american-review>

Aunt Chloe: <https://www.auntchloelitmag.com/>

Callaloo: <https://callaloo.expressacademic.org/login.php>

Fiyah: <https://www.fiyahlitmag.com/>

Kweli: <https://www.kwelijournal.org/>

Midnight & Indigo: <https://midnight-indigo.com/>

Mosaic: <https://mosaicmagazine.org/>

Obsidian: <https://obsidianlit.org/>

Torch: <https://www.torchliteraryarts.org/>

Transition: <https://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/transition>