

AWP 2022 EVENT OUTLINE

EVENT TITLE: The Best Apology Is Changed Behavior: An Editorial Call to Action

EVENT DESCRIPTION: The permanent impacts of COVID and the Black Lives Matter movement on the publishing industry have yet to be determined, but the early ripples prove a need for a top-down reassessment of editorial practices. Small presses and literary magazines must reckon with patriarchal white supremacy if they plan to survive this social justice moment. Writers and editors discuss how identity impacts editorial biases, while offering strategies, such as apprenticeships and training, to create lasting change.

EVENT CATEGORY: Publishing and Editing

EVENT ORGANIZER & MODERATOR BIOS

Organizer: Julia Brown is a fiction editor-at-large for *AGNI*, a member of the magazine's editorial team since 2019. Originally from Richmond, Virginia, she is a doctoral candidate in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Houston where she earned her MFA. She is a Kimbilio fellow and a former fiction editor at *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts*. Her work has been published in *Gulf Coast*, *Mosaic*, and *SmokeLong Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

Moderator: Adrienne Perry grew up in Wyoming, earned her MFA from Warren Wilson College, and her PhD in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Houston. From 2014-2016

she served as the Editor of *Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts*. A Hedgebrook alumna, she is also a Kimbilio Fellow and a member of the Rabble Collective. She is a contributing nonfiction editor at *Copper Nickel*, and she teaches English and Creative Writing at Villanova University. Adrienne's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Black Warrior Review*, *Indiana Review*, *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, *The Common*, and elsewhere.

EVENT PARTICIPANT BIOS

1. **Somayeh Shams** is an Iranian-born writer and Engineer with an MFA degree in fiction from Warren Wilson College. She has been a writer-in-residence at Hedgebrook and a recipient of a merit scholarship at the New York Summer Writers Institute. An excerpt of the novel she is currently finishing, *Tombak*, has appeared in *Waxwing*. *Tombak* was the recipient of the Ruby's Artist Grant and a finalist of the Larry Levis post-graduate Fellowship prize. Somayeh is a member and cofounder of the Rabble Collective and the Prose Editor for *Nimrod International Journal*.
2. **Monica Prince** teaches activist and performance writing at Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania. She is the author of *How to Exterminate the Black Woman: A Choreopoem* ([PANK], 2020), *Instructions for Temporary Survival* (Red Mountain Press, 2019), and *Letters from the Other Woman* (Grey Book Press, 2018). She serves as the managing editor of SFWP, and the co-author of the suffrage play, *Pageant of Agitating Women*, with Anna Andes. Her choreopoem *Roadmap* will be published by SFWP in 2023.

OPENING REMARKS & HOUSEKEEPING - *Adrienne*

Culturally responsive editorial practice is a responsibility that belongs to everyone in the publishing industry. This has always been true, but the events of summer 2020 urgently brought this editorial responsibility into even keener focus. Additionally, enacting culturally responsive editorial practices requires training and a commitment to reaching specific, tangible goals. As four women writers and editors of color from different presses, we bring a wealth of lived experience to the question of how journals and presses can move beyond solidarity statements to make choices that do the hard work of creating journals that are truly diverse and inclusive. During the panel, we will discuss our personal and professional experiences in regard to inclusive editorial practices, what works, what doesn't, and what the publishing industry and editors should do in order to practice what they preach moving forward. To start today's discussion, we will offer brief introductions and our experience as women editors of color. From there, we will open up a roughly twenty-minute panel discussion, followed by a fifteen-minute audience Q&A.

PARTICIPANT REMARKS

1. *Somayeh*: In my remarks, I plan to address the need to publish culturally diverse literary journals (more specifically of voices absent in the mainstream media) and how culturally diverse journals push artists and readers to challenge the inward gaze of the white american. I also plan to talk about the need to support a diverse reading staff trained to read well past the North American and Western canon, and who are ready to have an honest conversation about the biases we carry and are blind to.

2. *Julia*: In my remarks I plan to address the importance of supporting organizations that nurture writers and editors of color, and how much can be achieved at the level of the network, not as a means of exclusion and hierarchy, but as a way to share information and increase access to opportunity.
3. *Monica*: In my remarks, I plan to address how to shift the narrative of a historically white press, and how editors can use their privilege and prestige to elevate the lives of writers from underrepresented identities. By setting the example and practicing it as a norm, we have the opportunity to reinvent the publishing landscape for future publications.

MODERATOR QUESTIONS

1. What are the major behaviors—say top two or three—we see the publishing industry, particularly when it comes to culturally responsive editorial practice, needing to address?
2. The events of summer 2020 forced the publishing industry to have a reckoning around its white supremacy. Nearly two years on, how do you think that reckoning unfolded, specifically in regard to editorial work?
3. Do you feel there is a need for the publishing industry to come together and make an honest plan for action? What would such a conference accomplish and look like?
4. Cancel culture leaves little space for changed behavior. How can publishers be proactive instead of reactive when it comes to becoming ethically responsible?

Q&A