

Event Title: Agented and On-Submission: A Special Kind of Torture

Event Description: Finding an agent is surely the end of the journey, right? You've got an agent, you're on submission, and now what? Our panelists discuss feelings of both excitement and angst, and answer these vital questions. As an agented author on submission, what are the best ways to handle the uncertainty of publishing? And what are best practices to combat imposter syndrome and stay focused on your individual journey before, during and after submission?

Event Category: Artistic & Professional Development

Event Organizer and Moderator

Shinelle L. Espaillat: Shinelle L. Espaillat completed an M.A. in Fiction at Temple University. She teaches at Dutchess Community College in NY. Her work has appeared in *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Two Hawks Quarterly*, *Minerva Rising*, *The Westchester Review*, *Ghost Parachute*, *Cleaver Magazine* and *Midway Journal*, as well as in the collections *How Higher Education Feels: Commentaries on Poems That Illuminate Emotions in Learning and Teaching* and *Shale: Extreme Fiction for Extreme Conditions*. She is represented by Annie Bomke of Annie Bomke Literary Agency.

Event Participants

Moe Shalabi: Mohamed (Moe) Shalabi is a Palestinian-American author, educator, neuroscientist, and former junior literary agent. He writes literary fiction with elements of magical realism and speculative fiction. Moe's writing appeared in *The Nonbinary Review*, *Reed*, and *The Washington Post*. His short story *Palestina* was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Moe is currently on submission and is represented by Kat Kerr of the Donald Maass Literary Agency.

Tonya Abari: Tonya Abari is a multigenre storyteller, forthcoming author, freelance journalist, editor, and book reviewer for children and adults. Her words and reviews can be found in *Publishers Weekly*, *USA*

*Today, Good Housekeeping, ZORA, AARP's Sisters Letter, and many more! She is a 2020 Hurston Wright Foundation Writers Week alum in creative nonfiction and her essays have appeared in several anthologies. One of "sixteen creative, rising voices," Abari was also a 2021 We Need Diverse Books Picture Book [Mentee](#). Abari is currently on submission and has forthcoming children's book projects with *Innovation Press*, *NatGeo Kids*, *Mudpuppy Books*, *Harper Kids*, and *Little, Brown Books for Young Readers*.*

Allison Hubbard: Allison M. Hubbard is a multi-genre novelist, focusing on literary and speculative fiction, contemporary romance, and women's fiction. Her debut novel, *dibs*, which was originally published with a small press, won the N.N. Light Award for Best Romcom and was named a Finalist and Reader's Choice Category Leader for Romance in the 2020 Kindle Book Awards. Allison also hosts two podcasts as part of the Authors on the Air Global Radio Network: *To The Moon, Allison*, interviewing top and trending authors in science fiction, fantasy, speculative fiction, and romance, with recent guests Shelley Parker Chan (*SHE WHO BECAME THE SUN*) and Kira Jane Buxton (*FERAL CREATURES*), and co-hosts *Vox Vomitus*, interviewing a broad spectrum of fiction authors, with recent guests including Josh Malerman (*BIRDBOX*), Matt Ruff (*LOVECRAFT COUNTRY*), and May Cobb (*THE HUNTING WIVES*). She is not currently represented after parting ways with her agent and is back in the query trenches.

Moderator Opening Remarks:

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the loss of one of our panelists: KL Burd. In addition to his work as a YA author, musician, poet and educator, KL served multiple communities through volunteer roles as mentor, beta reader, youth pastor and general champion. He was unfailingly generous, sending support through positive posts and willingness to help other emerging writers. His unexpected passing leaves the literary world all the poorer.

Thank you all for being here, both those who are here in person and those who are attending virtually. In this third, weary year of adapting to and surviving a pandemic, your presence indicates the importance of this work, of writers and readers and artists. In an increasingly STEM focused society, your presence tells us how much art matters.

The idea for this panel grew from a Slack channel for agented writers who are on submission, so thank you also to Shondra Walker, for recognizing the need and creating that channel. Though I had published several stories, and know well the coppery taste of waiting, it never occurred to me that signing with an agent would open a whole new world of impatience, rejection, and hope. That Slack space, full of venting, commiseration, celebration, advice and support, serves to highlight a shadowy subset of the writing community, those waiting on the cusp of everything. We thought it would be helpful to share this part of the writing experience: what happens after you get the agent, but before you get the book contract. Who knew that navigating this space would be so complex? It helps to know that others are traveling similar, torturous journeys. I am grateful to Moe Shalabi, Tonya Abari and Allison Hubbard for joining me here to share their brilliance, and invite them to share their own opening remarks.

Participant Initial Remarks

Moe Shalabi: My talk will focus on the big picture when going out on submission, how long it takes, what to do while waiting for responses, and what to do after receiving a rejection, especially in combating imposter syndrome. Because this process doesn't have any clearly-defined timelines, it is easy to get stuck in limbo, doing nothing, or at least nothing productive. This time should be spent working on the second project in line. I will emphasize what this second project looks like (not book two in a series) and how to stay energized when hearing back from editors. Rejections are difficult to handle and sometimes authors will go into a rut, here they will face imposter syndrome and its symptoms and it's easy to fall into the dark chasm of complacency. But

this doesn't always have to be the case. I will offer some advice on what can be done when imposter syndrome sticks its nasty head out.

Currently, I'm working on drafting 2-3 manuscripts ranging from literary to speculative while awaiting to hear back from editors. Despite the rejections I have received, many of them were positive and encouraged me to keep writing. This is why I have a range of different genres to write within, namely to garner the interest of multiple editors. I still combat the woes of rejection now and then, but I try to stay on my feet and work on my art because it keeps me alive.

Tonya Abari: Today, I'll be focusing on the editorial process while on submission as well as the submission process for those who are multigenre creatives. What is the agent's role in editing your work? How do you handle feedback and editors – what to keep and what to toss? And is revision and resubmission right for your project? Editorial feedback can be really subjective and for writers it can be challenging and downright overwhelming to consider everyone's editorial opinions. I'd like to focus on how to remain authentic as a writer while weighing agent and editor feedback. Additionally, as a multi-genre author, I'll discuss "branding" and how to avoid being placed into a genre box while on submission.

Allison Hubbard: I'll be talking about the submission process, particularly unusual situations which arise. There is no "normal" submission experience! I'll talk about the stages of an R&R that no one talks about, how to work on other projects in light of editor feedback, and figuring out what those cryptic comments mean. I'll also be talking about moving forward after discouragement, including returning to the query trenches after parting ways with an agent.

Moderator Questions

1. Everyone has their own "How I Got My Agent" story. Please share your story with us: the steps you took to find your agent, and the process from query through contract.

2. Could you discuss your relationship with your agent? How did you develop that relationship? How involved is your agent in your editing process?
3. This is a two part (okay, a three-part) question. How long have you been on submission, or how long should writers expect to be on submission? Should you work on another project while on submission, and if so, should the new project be in the same genre as your first book?
4. Once you get past the initial sting, how do you successfully handle the feedback you've received from rejections?
5. How do you handle an R&R? Does it guarantee an acquisition?