

Event Title:

**What Happens When What We Tell Ourselves Changes?**

Event Date & Time

Scheduled Day: **Friday, March 25, 2022**

Scheduled Time: **10:35 AM–11:50 AM ET**, 126A, Pennsylvania Convention Center, 100 Level—Panelists in the room and on Zoom

Event Description:

This nonfiction panel will discuss writing to meet the key of our present moment. Have paradigm shifts related to race, justice, consent, gender, identity, and the pandemic impacted our understandings of life before now, and if so, how do we accept this charge to deepen and expand our work to meet the times? How do we keep writing with imagination, complexity, and grace during periods of cultural transformation? What is the creative nonfiction writer's role in histories still unfolding?

Event Category

Nonfiction Craft and Criticism

Event Organizer & Moderator

**Barrie Jean Borich** is the author of *Apocalypse, Darling*. Her memoir *Body Geographic* won a Lambda Literary Award, and her book-length essay *My Lesbian Husband* won a Stonewall Book Award. She's a professor at DePaul in Chicago, where she edits *Slag Glass City*, a journal of the urban essay arts.

Event Participants

**Cooper Lee Bombardier** is the author of *Pass With Care*, a Firecracker Award finalist. His writing appears in *The Malahat Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *CutBank*, *Foglifter*, and in the Lambda Award-winning anthology *The Remedy*, as well as in *Meanwhile, Elsewhere*, winner of the ALA Stonewall Book Award.

**Aisha Sabatini Sloan** is the author of the essay collections *The Fluency of Light* and *Dreaming of Ramadi in Detroit*, as well as *Borealis and Captioning the Archives*. She is an assistant professor of creative nonfiction at the University of Michigan.

**Gabrielle Civil** is a black feminist writer, poet, and performance artist. Her texts and translations have appeared in *Small Axe*, *Two Lines*, *Obsidian*, and more. She is the author of *Swallow the Fish*, *Experiments in Joy*, (*ghost gestures*), and *the déjà vu*. The aim of her work is to open up space.

**10:35 AM: Cold Open [we will begin before the formal welcome and introduction]**

The event begins in a cascade of voices, the moderator and panelists offering “back then I told myself / now I tell myself” phrases aloud for 1 minute.

**10:37 AM: Welcome and Housekeeping**

Barrie Jean Borich [BJB] welcomes the attendees and briefly introduces the panelists—Cooper Lee Bombardier [CB]; Aisha Sabatini Sloan [AS]; Gabrielle Civil [GC]

BJB shares accessibility guidelines and another panelist or AWP staff will deliver written copies of pre-prepared materials to anyone who identifies a need.

BJB explains the idea and the questions of the panel:

*How can creative nonfiction evolve with new understanding of race, place, gender, sexuality, and power? As writers who are queer, trans, Black, white, and/ or femme, we have long addressed identity, justice, memory, geography, and culture in our work. What happens when the language changes or when we do? How can we navigate reframing? Here we will discuss strategies to listen across generations, embrace vulnerability, withstand creative discomfort, and write into the urgent now.*

BJB offers instructions for the interactive activities and screen shares a tiny URL so that participants who wish to participate digitally can login to the Google Doc.

**10:40 AM: Interactive Activity**

BJB shares the prompt the panelists began with above. Attendees spend two-three quiet minutes to write together, responses to the prompt (also shared on the Google Doc and projected:

*Back then I told myself\_\_\_\_\_ Now I tell myself\_\_\_\_\_*

Attendees are invited to write publicly on the Google Doc, or privately on their laptops and/or notebooks or pads. Names are welcome but optional on the public document.

**10:45 AM: Panelist Activity**

Panelists, including the moderator, will each have ten minutes to re-introduce themselves and share work. We will start with an in-room panelist (probably BJB the moderator) then move to the first and second Zoom panelists— probably CB/ AS, and end with in-room panelist—probably GB.

**11:25 AM: Interactive Activity**

Attendees will return to their own writing for two-three minutes and consider changes.

**11:35-11:50 AM Q & A**

The panel will wrap-up with a 15-minute Q&A and invitation to share writing written in response to the prompts. Panelists will refer to writing on the digital document and that which is shared verbally when responding to attendees