**Anthology Activism: Creating Space for Marginalized Voices**

Thursday, March 9 -- 12:10-1:25pm

**12:10-12:15: Hayley Haugen (moderator)**

Welcome to the panel, “Anthology Activism: Creating Space for Marginalized Voices.” I am Hayley Mitchell Haugen, the moderator today. My press, Sheila-Na-Gig Editions, has the great honor of being the publisher of Kari Gunter-Seymour’s anthologies, *I Thought I Heard A Cardinal Sing: Ohio’s Appalachian Voices* and *Women Speak*. The *Cardinal* anthology is a one-of-a-kind collection, sponsored by the Academy of American Poets and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, presenting poetry that captures the unique culture of Ohio’s Appalachian population. *Women Speak* is an annual anthology supported by Gunter-Seymour’s Women of Appalachia Project,™ an organization that supports the creative work of Appalachian women of diverse backgrounds, ages, and experiences.

**Now, I’d like to introduce our panelists:**

* **Kari Gunter-Seymour** is Ohio’s Poet Laureate, a 9th generation Appalachian, the author of three books of poetry, editor of ten anthologies, an Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow, the 2020 Ohio Poet of the year, and the founder/executive director of the Women of Appalachia Project™.
* **Lynette Ford** is a fourth-generation Affrilachian narrative artist with the Ohio Teaching Artists Roster and Creative Aging Project, an award-winning writer and anthologist, a storytelling and creative-writing coach, and a member of the National Association of Black Storytellers’ Circle of Elders.
* **Mark Youssef** is a poet and physician practicing in the Cincinnati area. In addition to his MD, he has an MA in English and is working toward his MFA in poetry, joining an impressive lineage of physician poets. Mark was born and raised in Kentucky.
* **Barbara Marie Minney** is a transgender woman, award-winning poet, retired attorney, and quiet activist. Her first collection of poetry, *If There’s No Heaven,* was the winner of the 2020 Poetry Is Life Book Award and was selected by the *Akron Beacon Journal* as a Best Northeast Ohio Book in 2020.

**12:15-12:30: Kari Gunter Seymour**

**Questions for Gunter-Seymour as Editor:**

* In thinking about the Cardinal project and *Women Speak* as activist anthologies, how did/do you remain focused on this activist goal through every stage of the editorial process?
* What advice can you give to editors who want to do similar work?

**Response:**

First and foremost, the person who takes on the role of “managing editor/editor” MUST have a passion for the work she/he/they have set forth to do. It is a GREAT DEAL of work, multilayered and extensive. It is often thankless work.

**Do your introspection and research:** Whom are you hoping to serve and why? What is your motivation? My own focus/motivation is those with Appalachian roots as well as underserved and marginalized because I am Appalachian and a woman, with friends and colleagues who are BIPOC, LGBTQ and Appalasian. I have observed and also experienced aspects of the stereotype cast upon Appalachians.

**Prepare a mission statement:**

•So it is clear in your mind exactly what your purpose is and how you plan to implement it

•So it is clear to all who choose to be involved what the project stands for

•So you will always be prepared to give clear, concise statements concerning the work when asked

**Marketing:** How will you reach those you wish to serve?

• Website (a must for validation)

• Language specifics (should reflect dialect, euphemisms, colloquialisms, etc. that are readily recognized to create a clear sense of respect, welcome and build trust

• Social media (**Be extremely cautious here as to what you post—Haters gonna hate**)

-Instagram

-Facebook

-Local, state, national news media

-Word of mouth is a wonderful and valid way to spread the word

**Call for Submissions: BE VERY SPECIFIC!**

• What is the focus of the anthology (be as detailed as possible: For example: The anthology will represent, educate and speak honestly and proudly about Ohio’s Appalachian population, providing examples of our pride, honor, endurance, courage, culture, love of family, the land and will provide evidence of how even against the odds we continue to thrive and work hard to overcome prejudice and take pride in our heritage. This collection is intended to open the minds of its readers, urge them to consider that preconceived prejudices need no longer be the gauge by which society judges Ohio Appalachians, creating a nucleus of understanding that has the potential to expand far and wide.)

• How /where can participants submit (link, email address)

• What kind of work is required (poetry, prose, essay, memoir, song lyrics, art, etc.)

• Maximum length

• Formatting

• Submissions should not contain hateful material, including but not limited to racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia.

**Other Duties & Concerns:**

* Prepare your acceptance and rejection letters in advance, keeping the mission statement in mind—be generous/kind/thoughtful. Be excited for those who make the cut.
* If you will use jurors, be sure to recruit jurors who thoroughly understand your mission.
* There are many personalities involved:

• Be prepared for meltdowns

• Be prepared for a lot of emails

**Selecting A Publisher:**

* Look for a press who shares your passion
* Self-publishing is becoming very acceptable
* Be aware of extra duties (accepting orders for books and mailing them out)

**Reading Events:**

* Focus on like-minded venues to begin
* Larger markets will come on board as word gets out via word of mouth, local news outlets, and social media

**Sales:**

* ALL OF THE ABOVE!
* Always remember and implement your mission statement!

**Some Advice to Editors:**

* Before you begin, develop a very clear outline with as many details as possible
* Try not to take anything personally
* Be prepared to feel anxious and/or exhausted occasionally
* Keep your eye on the prize and take comfort in the number of voices you are introducing to the world, some of whom may not have had the opportunity to do so if not for your project!

**Questions for the author panelists:**

* What attributes in the “Call for Written Work” stood out to you that made you want to submit to Gunter-Seymour’s anthology(ies)? How did you become aware of the opportunity to submit?
* Has the experience been rewarding? In what ways?
* How did Gunter-Seymour’s anthologies support your individual works and personal activist goals?

**12:30-12:45: Lynette Ford (Panelist)**

The call for written work did more than request potential participants’ writing. The call, posted on Kari’s website, said “we want to hear all the voices coming out of Appalachian Ohio.” It also spoke of ancestors and teens, time and place, and the honoring of all Appalachian voices. That call demonstrated an effort to break down the barriers of “-isms,” limitations created by others that, as an older Affrilachian woman with both evident and invisible health challenges, I often experience.

According to some folks, I approached submitting my work late in life, but this is right on time for me. For decades, my writing goals and my poetic voice had been discouraged. But my success as a storyteller in the spoken word tradition made me bold enough to push myself into submitting a little poetic work. Becoming a part of the anthologies encouraged me to share more, including workshops that support others--those who also face “-isms”--as they honor and share their own narrative voices. Doors have opened. And for the first time in my life, I'm being recognized as a poet.

**12:45-1:00: Mark Youssef (Panelist)**

As a person, I come from several generations of immigrants, people who have fled war, or left their country/region of origin for new economic opportunity. As such, I have been seeking, both personally, and as a writer, what does it mean to live without a cultural history of place? The Appalachian region appeals to me personally, because I grew up in Kentucky, and professionally because I have trained, and serve many of its inhabitants as a physician in Ohio. It remains a place with diverse inhabitants, beliefs, all with a deep-rooted sense of place.

In my writing I try to explore, via-negativa, what deep cultural places, practices, habits, and peoples might mean, through local nature, events, patient stories, and other relevant topics.

I became aware of Kari Gunter-Seymour’s *Cardinal* anthology through the local Cincinnati writing scene, of which I have several friends whom I write with and exchange work. Like the Appalachian region itself, the anthology includes writers from all corners of the state, writers of many different backgrounds and points of focus. This strength shows shines a light on the bright future of creative writing in the Appalachian region and in the state of Ohio.

The experience of working with Kari and participating with the readings has been a highlight for me, and many of my Cincinnati writer friends. For many of us, the opening night reading was one of the first times we had gotten together since the pandemic started. The ability to collaborate with such skillful and energetic writers across the region, under the thoughtful leadership of someone like Kari Gunter-Seymour has been wonderful. The anthology is available in every public library across the state, making our work available to every Ohioan.

Anthologies like Kari’s really shine a light on the local poets of Appalachian Ohio and by creating events and enthusiasm across the state, it creates a need locally for poets to fill. That need might mean writing, but it also might mean teaching adults, adolescents, children, and spreading the joys and personal benefits that creative writing can engender.

**1:00-1:15 Barbara Marie Minney (Panelist)**

I grew up being taught that coming from Appalachia was something to hide. When I lived in Appalachia, I was a boy and a young adult attending college or starting a career. It was only after I transitioned and became involved in the “Women of Appalachia Project” that I began to embrace and celebrate my Appalachian heritage. Before initially submitting, I felt compelled to verify that I would be considered a woman for the purposes of the Project.

I learned that I am a seventh-generation Appalachian, and I also began to contemplate what it means to be a queer Appalachian. I wrote an essay for the 2021 Akron Pride Festival Guide and began thinking about turning it into a poem describing the deep emotions that I felt while participating in my first Equity March. I submitted three poems in response to the “Call for Written Work,” for *I Thought I Heard a Cardinal Sing*, one of which was my poem about Akron Pride, never expecting that it would be chosen.

I describe myself as a “Quiet Activist,” and the opportunity to participate in Gunter-Seymour’s anthologies gave me visibility and a voice and enabled me to represent myself as a transgender woman.

**Q&A: 1:15-1:25**