

AWP Event Outline

Texploitation: Topical Issues in Fiction

- When?** Thursday, March 9, 2023, 12:10 PM–1:25 PM PT
- Where?** Rooms 445-446
Summit Building, Seattle Convention Center, Level 4
- What?** In an adrenaline-driven culture rife with fearmongering and trauma porn, how do we write conscientious fiction about local, national or global issues and emergencies? Given the damage and desensitization linked to our constant exposure to bleed-and-lead news, many writers grapple with exercising awareness, optimism and empathy while shining a light on injustice, treachery, and tragedy. Five award-winning authors/editors discuss illuminating—vs. sensationalizing—real-life topics in fictional work.
- Why?** Shootings. Disasters. Atrocities from Xinjiang to Ukraine. Humanitarian writers are often compelled to amplify vital, real-life discussions—sometimes offering visionary solutions. But embedding truth in a marketable fictional narrative is tricky: well-intentioned efforts can appear reductive, sensationalist or exploitative. This diverse panel of authors/editors offers insight into creating authentic, urgent, publish-ready stories unearthing the characters and complexities behind each headline.
- Who?** Moderator Soma Mei Sheng Frazier's debut novel is forthcoming from Henry Holt & Co. in 2024. She is Founding Editor of Subnivean, SUNY Oswego's undergraduate-staffed literary publication. Her work has appeared in or won nods from HBO, *Zoetrope-All Story*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Hyphen* and *Story*.
- Joseph Han is the author of *Nuclear Family* and a 2022 National Book Foundation 5 under 35 honoree. A recipient of a

Kundiman fellowship, his work has appeared in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Lit Hub*, and *Catapult*.

Miah Jeffra is the author of four books, most recently *The Violence Almanac* and *American Gospel*, and co-editor of the anthology *Home is Where you Queer Your Heart*. They are founding editor of queer and trans literary collaborative, Foglifter Press.

Tomas Moniz's debut novel, *Big Familia*, was a finalist for the 2020 PEN/Hemingway, the Lambda, and the Foreword Indies Awards. He edited the popular *Rad Dad* zine for over a decade and the book *Rad Families*. He's a 2020 Artist Affiliate for Headlands Center for the Arts and 2022 UCross Resident.

Keenan Norris is a novelist, essayist, and short story writer. His books include the novel *The Confession of Copeland Cane* and the nonfiction work *Chi Boy*. His short work has appeared in *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Alta*. He teaches at San Jose State University.

How?

12:10 PM – Introduction to panelists

12:15 PM – Panelists contextualize, and read five minutes each of, their own issues-based fiction—or issues-based fiction that they, as editors, have published (with the authors' permission to share it at AWP).

12:50 PM – Panelists discuss creating authentic, urgent, publish-ready fiction—unearthing the characters and complexities behind each headline without sensationalization

1:05 PM – Audience Q&A