Persistent political, racial and religious divisions have made Naomi Shihab Nye's long-beloved poem Kindness one that repeatedly resurfaces with its gentle yet urgent call for human connection. Like the poem, Nye's vast body of work as a poet, essayist, anthologist, novelist and children's book author transcends genres and bridges worlds. Panelists will use the poem as a spark to discuss Nye's impact on their own work and lives. Nye will then close the event with brief remarks and a new poem. The moderator will welcome attendees and introduce panelists. Each panelist will then share a personal/poetic tribute that responds creatively to a line from Nye's poem Kindness while also considering Nye's larger impact on the literary world, and beyond it. Nye will follow these 7-9 minute presentations with her own remarks and share a new poem. The tribute panel will end with a 10-15 minute audience Q&A. Written copies of Nye's poems and panelist remarks will also be made available.

Opening Remarks - moderator

**Jenny Browne**'s most recent collection is Fellow Travelers: New and Selected Poems, volume 17 in the Texas Poet Laureate Series. She lives in San Antonio, Texas, teaches at Trinity University, and the 2020 Fulbright Distinguished Scholar at the Seamus Heaney Center at Queens University Belfast.

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*Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,*  
*you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.*  
*You must wake up with sorrow.*  
*You must speak to it till your voice*  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
*and you see the size of the cloth.*

**Hayan Charara** is the author of four poetry books, including *These Trees, Those Leaves, This Flower, That Fruit.* He edited Inclined to Speak, an anthology of contemporary Arab American poetry, and edits the Etel Adnan Poetry Prize with Fady Joudah. He teaches at the University of Houston.

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*Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness*  
*you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho*  
*lies dead by the side of the road.*  
*You must see how this could be you,*  
*bow be too was someone*  
*who journeyed through the night with plans*  
*and the simple breath that kept him alive.*
Nathalie Handal's recent books include, Life in a Country Album which “illuminates the luxuriance and longing of deracination—a contemporary Orpheus,” and The Republics, lauded as “one of the most inventive books by one of today's most diverse writers.” She is a professor at Columbia University.

It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

Aimee Nezhukumatathil is the author of the New York Times Bestselling essay collection and Barnes and Noble's Book of the year, World of Wonders—and four books of poetry. She serves as poetry editor for Sierra magazine and is professor of English in the University of Mississippi's MFA program.

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.

John Phillip Santos is the author of two memoirs Places Left Unfinished at the Time of Creation (a National Book Award Finalist) and The Farthest Home is in an Empire of Fire, and a book of poems Songs Older Than Any Known Singer. Also a documentary filmmaker and Emmy nominated television producer, Santos was also the first Latino to be selected as a Rhodes Scholar. After twenty-two years in Manhattan, he returned to his borderlands hometown of San Antonio in 2005 and has been University Distinguished Scholar in Mestizo Cultural Studies, teaching in the Honors College at the University of Texas San Antonio since 2010.

Closing Remarks - Naomi Shihab Nye

Naomi Shihab Nye describes herself as a “wandering poet.” She has spent more than 40 years traveling the country and the world to lead writing workshops and inspiring students of all ages. Nye was born to a Palestinian father and an American mother and grew up in St. Louis, Jerusalem, and San Antonio. Drawing
on her Palestinian-American heritage, the cultural diversity of her home in Texas, and her experiences traveling in Asia, Europe, Canada, Mexico, and the Middle East, Nye uses her writing to attest to our shared humanity.

She is the author and/or editor of more than 30 volumes. Her books of poetry for adults and children include *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East* (a finalist for the National Book Award), *A Maze Me: Poems for Girls*, *Red Suitcase, Words Under the Words, Fuel, Transfer, You & Yours* (a best-selling poetry book of 2006), *Mint Snowball, Voices in the Air: Poems for Listeners, Come with Me: Poems for a Journey, Honeybee* (awarded the 2008 Arab American Book Award in the Children’s/Young Adult category), *The Tiny Journalist* (Best Poetry Book from both the Texas Institute of Letters and the Writers League of Texas), *Cast Away: Poems for Our Time* (one of the Washington Post's best children's books of 2020), and *Everything Comes Next: Collected and New Poems*. Her collections of essays include *Never in a Hurry*, and *I'll Ask You Three Times, Are you Okay? Tales of Driving and Being Driven*. She has also edited nine poetry anthologies including *I Feel a Little Jumpy Around You, Time You Let Me In, This Same Sky, The Space Between Our Footsteps,* and *What Have You Lost?*. Her fiction books for young people include *Habibi, Going Going, There Is No Long Distance Now*, and *The Turtle of Oman*. *The Turtle of Oman* was chosen a Horn Book Best Book of 2014, a 2015 Notable Children’s Book by the American Library Association, and was awarded the 2015 Middle East Book Award for Youth Literature. Her picture books include *Baby Radar, Sitti's Secrets*, and *Famous*. Her new book is *The Turtle of Michigan* (Greenwillow Books, March 15, 2022) a sequel to *The Turtle of Oman*. In 2022 she edited, with David Hassler and Tyler Meier, an anthology of poetry reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine through poetry titled *Dear Vaccine: Global Voices Speak to the Pandemic* (Kent State University Press, April 5, 2022).

Naomi Shihab Nye has been a Lannan Fellow, a Guggenheim Fellow, and a Witter Bynner Fellow (Library of Congress). She has received a Lavan Award from the Academy of American Poets, the Isabella Gardner Poetry Award, the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award, the Paterson Poetry Prize, four Pushcart Prizes, the Robert Creeley Prize, and "The Betty Prize" from Poets House, for service to poetry, and numerous honors for her children's literature, including two Jane Addams Children’s Book Awards. In 2011 Nye won the Golden Rose Award given by the New England Poetry Club, the oldest poetry reading series in the country. Her work has been presented on National Public Radio on *A Prairie Home Companion* and *The Writer's Almanac*. She has been featured on two PBS poetry specials including “The Language of Life with Bill Moyers” and also appeared on *NOW with Bill Moyers*. She has been affiliated with The Michener Center for writers at the University of Texas at Austin for 20 years and also poetry editor at *The Texas Observer* for 20 years. In 2019-2020 she was the editor for *New York Times Magazine* poems. She is Chancellor Emeritus for the Academy of American Poets, a laureate of the 2013 NSK Neustadt Award for Children’s Literature, and in 2017 the American Library Association presented Naomi Shihab Nye with the 2018 May Hill Arbuthnot Honor Lecture Award. In 2018 the Texas Institute of Letters awarded her the Lon Tinkle Award for Lifetime Achievement. She was named the 2019-2021 Young People's Poet Laureate by the Poetry Foundation. In 2020 she was awarded the *Ivan Sandrof Award for Lifetime Achievement* by the National Book Critics Circle. In 2021 she was voted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Nye is Professor of Creative Writing - Poetry at Texas State University.
Short Bio: