

**EVENT TITLE: Stronger Together: Literary Coalitions for the Win**

**EVENT DESCRIPTION:** The pandemic dissolved barriers and forged coalitions between unlikely allies. Now that the fog is dissipating, how can we continue to foster unity within the literary community? What unique knowledge and perspective do we each have that we can use for the greater good? Hear how coalitions of disparate, previously silo-like SoCal literary organizations in Southern California and across the country came together to model how others can also benefit from mutual support and resource-sharing.

This session is for all writers and administrators involved with literary organizations. We share values, goals, and constituents despite being geographically spread out. We've also been independently developing our own "hit by a bus" plan, heightened by the reality of COVID-19. Who do we turn to when our peers are in different counties? We have each other.

We will begin with brief 3-5 minute introductions about our arts organizations, sharing our location and role within our organization, for no more than 20 minutes. Four questions will follow this we will ask of each other for a total of 40 minutes of discussion time. We will wrap up with a 15-minute Q&A.

**EVENT CATEGORY:** Writers Conferences and Centers Events

**Event Organizer & Moderator:**  
**Cati Porter, Inlandia Institute**

Cati Porter is a poet, editor, essayist, and executive director of Inlandia Institute, a 501(c)(3) literary nonprofit serving Inland Southern California.

**Event Participants:**

**Jenn Dees (PEN America)** is Programs Director at PEN America Los Angeles.

**Hiram Sims (Community Literature Initiative)** is a poet, essayist and Creative Writing Professor teaching with The Community Literature Initiative in Los Angeles, CA.

**Jessica M. Wilson (Los Angeles Poet Society)** is the Executive Director and Founder of the Los Angeles Poet Society, which began in 2009.

**Jimmy Vega (Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center)** is a poet, educator, and the Assistant Director of Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center, which is located in Venice, California.

**Opening Remarks and Housekeeping Announcements:** [Cati Porter]

Welcome to Stronger Together: Literary Coalitions for the Win. A few reminders before we begin:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let me know and as the moderator of the panel I will be sure a printed copy is delivered to you.
- Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
- Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
- Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
- Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone's use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

Now to introduce our speakers:

Jessica Wilson: **Los Angeles Poet Society** is free and inclusive, and serves as a bridge, fusing the communities of Los Angeles and Southern California Poets, poetry organizations, Writer groups, booksellers, publishers, literary enthusiasts and supporters into a unified social and literary network. LAPS' focal point is to publicize the events and achievements of its members. LAPS also organizes and promotes events, pulling from within its own community, to create and sustain Los Angeles' literary anchor. Since 2020, LAPS launched its own small press, Los Angeles Poet Society Press, with emphasis on Social Justice, amplifying QTBIPOC voices. They hold free community poetry workshops and open mics virtually and in person, hosting an average of 75 events a year!

Their leadership is Queer BIPOC.

They serve LA county and beyond making partnerships and collaborations with the community. Grassroots and growing since 2009, celebrating currently 13 years of service.

Hiram Sims: **Community Literature Initiative** is a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles that aims to provide quality education to support emerging and underserved writers in realizing their dream of publishing a book. CLI comprises three programs, which include poetry publishing courses. World Stage Press, and the Sims Library of Poetry. Through their courses, CLI allows poets to workshop their manuscripts during class. Upon completion of manuscripts, CLI offers book production so that students can pitch their completed book to local presses.

Hiram Sims is the Founder and Executive Director of CLI, which is celebrating their 10th year with ten chapters across the nation.

Jenn Dees: PEN America Los Angeles is the West Coast office of PEN America, the oldest and largest center of the PEN International network. PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect free expression in the United States and worldwide. Jenn Dees is

the Programs Director for the Los Angeles office, overseeing literary and free-expression programs with the goal of celebrating great writing and defending the freedom to write.

Cati Porter: The Inlandia Institute is a lively center of literary activity serving the 29,000 sq. mile inland Southern California Region. It grew out of the highly acclaimed anthology *Inlandia: A Literary Journey through California's Inland Empire*, published by Heyday Books in 2006 with the active participation of the Riverside Public Library.

The cultural programming that supported the anthology led to the development of the Inlandia Institute in 2007. Inlandia incorporated in 2009 and was granted non-profit status in 2012. The Institute's tax ID number is 27-0586882.

Our mission is to recognize, support, and expand literary activity in all of its forms in the Inland Empire by publishing books and sponsoring programs that deepen people's awareness, understanding, and appreciation of this unique, complex and creatively vibrant region.

Jimmy Vega: Beyond Baroque is one of the United States' leading independent Literary | Arts Centers and public spaces dedicated to expanding the public's knowledge of poetry, literature and art through cultural events and community interaction. Founded in 1968 as an experimental literary magazine, Beyond Baroque is based out of the original City Hall building in Venice, California. The Center offers a diverse variety of literary and arts programming including readings and workshops. Beyond Baroque is a space and a community dedicated to the artistic possibilities of language.

Jimmy Vega is the Assistant Director of Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center, oversees daily operations, memberships and donations, intern and volunteer recruitment, and coordinates both programs and workshops. Beyond Baroque celebrates 55 years of Los Angeles literary community in 2023.

Moderator Questions:

- 1) (For Jenn) What prompted you to form the SoCal Lit Coalition?
- 2) As an active member of the So Cal Literary Coalition, what benefits do you feel this has brought to your organization? Any negative effects?
- 3) Does your organization view partnerships with other literary organizations differently now than it did prior to the pandemic?
- 4) What if any new partnerships have evolved for your organization as a result of the conditions created during the pandemic?