

# Agenda

*Total Time: 1.25 hours, 1:45p-3pm*

## Arrival/set-up

- Move chairs around into a circle?
- Music
- Slideshow set-up:  Jewish Diasporist Poetics

## 1:45 – 1:50p // Welcome + Framing ( 5 min)

- Blessedly, no panel of four could encompass this topic: Jewish Diasporist Poetics. No panel of ten, twenty, fifty, or more, could contain the lineages, the inherited and invented questions, the struggles with peoplehood, belonging and solidarities that chorus our many diasporas' poetics. Blessedly, we will fail today. We will fail forwards: to new questions, to more conversations, more voices, we will fail into new poems, new ways of making & re-making community and collective action. We invite you to this conversation rooted in the risk-taking that failure and diasporist iteration necessitates. We are grateful to add another line in an ancient conversation, authored by this completely new formation: all of us here today in this room. Thank you for showing up today to confront Zionism, white supremacy and anti-semitism and to imagine Judaisms/Jewishnesses that obliterate systems of violence, to give way to new-old ways of forging safety and liberation for all.
- We want to cite the source of the term “diasporist,” queer Ashkenazi ancestor Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz z”l, who defined in the term in her book *The Colors of Jews*: “Diasporism...embraces diaspora, offers a place we might join with others who value this history of dispersion; others who stand in opposition to nationalism and the nation state; who choose instead to value border crossing as envisioned by the late Gloria Anzaldúa.” She goes to say, “Diasporism takes root in the Jewish Socialist Labor Bund’s principle of doikayt—hereness—the right to be, and to fight for justice, wherever we are...” May we expand/complicate/re-invent this definition here today in our conversations!

## 1:50 - 1:53p // “Dedications” Slide + Audience Introductions (3 mins)

- Thank you to Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz z”l, but also to all the thinkers/writers who brought us into the room. We wanted to share some of their names here because this conversation never happens in isolation, it happens across time and time, with the living and the dead. We dedicate our learning today to these influences.
- We invite y’all to bring yourselves into the room by... [adjust based on # of attendees] introducing yourself to someone nearby OR sharing with whole room OR thinking silently about the question of “Who is one writer/thinker/artist that brought you into this room?”

## 1:53 - 1:58 pm // Land Acknowledgement + I/P framing (5 min)

- Today, we gather for this conversation on the unceded lands of the Duwamish tribe and other Coast Salish peoples. Specifically, we sit about one mile away from where “dzee-dzee-LAH-letch,” “little crossing-over place” in Lushootseed, once was: one of the most important Duwamish villages on the Salish Sea, where Chief Seattle once lived. If you pass the King Street Station, perhaps hold in your mind that it once had eight large longhouses and a potlatch house belonging to this land’s forever stewards: the Duwamish tribe. The Tribe is in a long-standing battle for federal recognition from the

colonial U.S. government, as well engaging in cultural reclamation work at their Longhouse in West Seattle. We invite any fellow non-Native settlers to join us in a practice of reparations: paying Real Rent to support the Duwamish Tribe. There will be info on how to give to Real Rent Duwamish shared out at the end.

- We believe that, just as it is essential that we name the ongoing colonization of Duwamish land/Seattle, WA, and across Turtle Island/U.S., so too it is essential for our work together that we acknowledge the ongoing settler colonization of Palestine, the ongoing Nakba (“catastrophe” in Arabic) that began in 1948 and continues until today, with recent settler pogroms and military attacks in broad daylight in Huwara, Nablus and across the occupied West Bank. 2022 was the deadliest year for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank since 2004, and already this year is set to outpace it: over 70 Palestinians have been killed. It’s key to understand the new right-wing government’s role in this escalation, and yet it is the shared understanding of today’s panelists that this violence is the inevitable result of any ethno-nationalist ideology, and it is not new.
- As non- and anti-Zionist Jewish poets, we know our relationships to the violence being committed ‘in our names’ are fraught: full of griefs, questions, struggle. We hold room for those complexities. Confronting them is part of our work. The work of building Judaism beyond Zionism is sacred and essential. This work occurs alongside and in solidarity with Palestinians who are fighting to win their liberation. (And of course for Palestinian Jews there is no neat binary in this work.) Across the many identities Jews hold, the dance between Jewish transformation work and supporting Palestinian-led struggle is a fraught one, and one we’ll engage with today.

#### **1:58 - 2:05p // Panelist Introductions**

- Order (short bios below):
  - Shelby intros Tom
  - Tom intros Sara
  - Sara intros Mónica
  - Mónica intros Shelby

#### **2:05 - 2:40p // Reading (35 mins, approx 8 mins each)**

- **\*\*Each person is invited to share one poem they haven’t shared yet/has some heat around/has big questions about.\*\***

#### **2:40 - 2:55p // Conversation / Q&A (15 mins)**

- As we move into q&a, we wanted offer some clarity around the container we are holding during this conversation time:
  - **We are not going to debate the realities of the Israeli occupation and the ongoing Nakba.** We will not accept any bad faith questions that aim to distract from the necessary and urgent conversation we are having here. We will not engage any questions that devalue Palestinian life or attempt to shut down Palestinian struggles for self-determination.
  - **Jewish diaspora is inherently multivalent, dynamic and resists binaries.** Jews live and have built communities across the world. The Jewish diaspora is not singular; it is multi-ethnic, multi-racial, cross-class, interfaith, and beyond. Jewish communities, here and in Israel, are harmed by white & Ashkenazi dominance, particularly Black, Indigenous, Jews of Color and/or Mizrahi and

Sephardic Jews. In this space, we are striving here to name our specific lineages and to not assume any Jewish experiences as the norm. And again, we're here to fail forward, to reckon with: Who is missing? What is missing? Come talk to us and let us be accomplices in future conversations.

- **We are locating this panel in a centuries-old conversation about what home means and how to build Jewish safety.** There is not and has never been consensus among Jews about Zionism. We will not engage any questions that dispute the legitimacy of diasporist, non- & anti-Zionist Judaisms.
- With that, we'd invite folks to raise hands and share any questions that they're holding!

### **2:55 - 3:00pm // Closing**

- Let's take action & keep the conversation going:
  - Slide with Real Rent donation link & an action step around ending US funding for Israel
  - An email sign-up list for ongoing conversation!?
- Final incantation/prayer/poem

#### **A poem for Tisha B'av, Aurora Levins Morales**

I will not weep for shattered eggshells from which birdsong fills the world.

I will not weep for seed pods split apart to fling their airy parachutes into the wind

I will not weep for chrysalides, crucibles of unmaking from which we come like flowers from buds, made new.

My wings have opened. I will not crouch here crying over dead skin. I will follow the scent of honey to the beckoning blossoms that dust my flight with gold.

Why would I cry over temples destroyed when we are all the temple we need?

I will grind eggshell into efun, ancestral powder of protection.

I will tend the milkweed that the wind brings to my garden and feed the pollinators of the world to come.

I will keep dissolving what no longer serves, be a cauldron of the imaginal, let the broken reinvent itself into dazzling form.

Come, let us leave this ancient dust, these stones that once contained eternal light. Can you not feel it shining in our bones?

—

#### **Panelist Bios:**

Mónica Gomery is the author of *Might Kindred*, winner of the 2021 Prairie Schooner Raz-Shumaker Book Prize. A queer, Venezuelan-American, Ashkenazi poet, her recent work appears or is forthcoming in *Four Way Review*, *Muzzle Magazine*, *Adroit*, *Poet Lore*, and *Poetry Northwest*. She is a rabbi at Kol Tzedek Synagogue, on unceded Lenape land in Philadelphia, and teaches at SVARA: A Traditionally Radical Yeshiva.

[Tom Haviv](#) is the author of a book of poetry, *Flag of No Nation* (Jewish Currents, 2019), and the children's books, *Woven* (Somewhere, 2018) and *The Porcupine Prince* (Somewhere, 2023).

He is the cofounder and creative director of [Ayin Press](#) as well as the founder of the [Hamsa Flag Project](#).

Shelby Handler is a queer Ashkenazi writer, organizer, and educator living in Seattle on Dx̣ẉḍəẉʔaḅš (Duwamish) and unceded Coast Salish land. Recent work has appeared in Poetry, Poetry Northwest, PANK Magazine, Sugar House Review, The Journal, among others.

Sara Brickman is a queer Jewish writer and performer from Ann Arbor, MI, invested in liberatory futures and reckoning with ghosts. The winner of the Split This Rock Poetry Prize and a Lambda Literary Emerging Artists Fellow, their work has recently appeared in Narrative, The Indiana Review, Adroit, Ghosts of Seattle Past and at On the Boards. Sara holds an MFA from the University of Virginia and lives in Duwamish territory known as Seattle.