Mek We Talk: Language and Identity in Caribbean Writing and Beyond

Like many marginalized authors, Caribbean writers are challenging colonial storytelling patterns. One challenge we face in incorporating local languages into our work is that, while our lived vernacular adds authenticity to our literature, some say it hinders comprehension. In this panel, five Caribbean authors and editors discuss dialect's role in establishing setting, character, and plot; how they respond to demands for “standardized” language; and how they find balance in their own work.

EVENT CATEGORY: Fiction Craft & Criticism

EVENT ORGANIZER & MODERATOR

Carol Mitchell: Carol is an author, editor and educator from the Caribbean. She has written 18 books for children and is the author of the novel What Start Bad a Mornin' (2023). Her short stories have appeared in some Caribbean journals. She holds an MFA and teaches writing in Virginia.

EVENT PARTICIPANTS

Donna Hemans: Donna is the author of River Woman, Tea by the Sea and The House of Plain Truth. Her fiction and essays have appeared in Slice,
Crab Orchard Review, Ploughshares, Ms. Magazine and Electric Lit, among others. She is the owner of DC Writers Room, a co-working studio for writers.

Kevin Jared Hosein: Kevin is a novelist and short-story writer from Trinidad and Tobago. He has numerous accolades including the 2018 Commonwealth Short Story Prize and two of his novels were longlisted for the International Dublin Literary Award. His latest novel is Hungry Ghosts.

Tanya Batson-Savage: Tanya is publisher at the award-winning indie press Blue Banyan Books and its imprint Blouse & Skirt Books. She edited the Caribbean online mag Susumba's Book Bag. She has represented Caribbean writing on panels at The Miami Book Fair, Festival of Authors and Brooklyn Book Festival.

Katia D. Ulysse: Katia is a fiction writer. Her works include a novel, a short story collection; poetry and essays have been published in numerous journals and anthologies. She holds a Master's degree in Education from Notre Dame of Maryland University and an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts.