Title: CLIMATE FICTION: AFRICAN-DIASPORA ECOLOGY

Description: Climate Fiction is gaining popularity in African literature among indigenous African writers and those who reside in the diasporic. As a genre, this event aims to shed light and explore how the works of various writers engage with pressing ecological problems in Africa or the diaspora. To accomplish this, writers will have the opportunity to read either an excerpt of a long work or a short work. After which, there will be a panelist discussion facilitated by an appointed moderator.

Category: Online Event

Organizer: Bibiana Ossai

Moderator: Linda Masi

OUTLINE

- Opening/Introduction – 3 minutes
- Readings – 32 minutes
- Discussion/Conclusion – 25 minutes

Participants and Biographies:

1. Opening / Introduction (Moderator introduces the Panel, introduces herself, introduces the panelists by reading the bio of each panelist, one after the other) – 3 minutes.

Welcome to the event titled Climate Fiction: African-Diaspora Ecology

- Linda N. Masi is the author of the novel Fine Dreams, winner of the Juniper Prize for fiction. Some of her other work appears in Tupelo Quarterly, BlackBerry: A Magazine, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA from the University of Mississippi and is completing a PhD at Texas Tech University.

- Osahon Ize-Iyamu is a Nigerian writer of fiction that explores the effect of environmental degradation in Nigeria. His story “More Sea than Tar,” which highlights the flooding crisis in Nigeria, has been included in educational materials globally. He has also spoken at Berlin’s 2022 Climate festival.
• Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki is an African speculative fiction writer, editor and publisher from Nigeria. He has won the Nebula, Otherwise, Nommo, British and World Fantasy awards, and been a finalist in the Hugo, Locus, Sturgeon, British Science Fiction and NAACP Image awards.

• Author Aya de León teaches creative writing at UC Berkeley. She is acquiring editor at Fighting Chance Books, seeking climate justice fiction. She produced the online conference Black Literature vs. the Climate Emergency, (available on YouTube) and works on climate with the Movement for Black Lives.

• Bibiana Ossai is a Nigerian writer and a Ph.D. Fiction student at Texas Tech University. She lives, writes, and teaches First-Year writing at Texas Tech University. She holds an MFA in Fiction from Long Island University Brooklyn Campus, where she received the Marilyn Boutwell Graduate Award in Fiction. Bibiana won the Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown Scholarship, The Poetry Project Scholarship, Idyllwild Arts Writers Week 2020 Fiction fellowship, and the Equinox Journal 2019 Poetry Contest. Her works appear in The Dark magazine, African Writer Magazine, Landing Zone, and Flash Fiction Magazine, among others.

Readings

• [PANELIST TO MENTION THE FIRST READER – Osahon Ize-Iyamu] Osahon Ize-Iyamu briefly introduces his story (i.e., the title of the story, the story line), says what portion from which he would read. Then he reads.

• [PANELIST TO MENTION THE NEXT READER - Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki] Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki briefly introduces his story (i.e., the title of the story, the story line), say what portion from which he would read. Then he reads.

• [PANELIST TO MENTION THE NEXT READER - Bibiana Ossai] Bibiana Ossai briefly introduces her story (ie. the title of the story, the story line), says what portion from which he would read. Then he reads. [Reading 7-8 mins]

Discussion Questions:

1. Osahon Ize-Iyamu
In “More Sea Than Tar” characters put on suction shoes that help them stick to buildings, humans are like vultures as they take apart dead machines and leave “the useless parts for the earth,” underwater living is being considered as the way out of the polluted, contaminated community, and there is this raw viciousness that some characters exhibit in order to survive. How did you go about building the characters in the story?

2. Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki

In “O2 Arena” oxygen is life, oxygen is currency. There are O₂ masks, O₂ generators, temperature regulating suits, phytoplankton, the base of several aquatic food webs, is affected, and much more, that help create the unique world of the story. In your process of worldbuilding, what connections, if any, did you hope to make with other known authors?

3. Aya de León

In That Dangerous Energy Sebastian Reid’s company, ReidCorp, is accused of “greenwashing”—which can be defined as the act of making false statements about the environmental benefits of a product or practice. In your writing process, to come up with these insightful themes and ideas, do you begin with an image? A thought? Your activism? In other words, what drove your initial creative process for a longer work such as That Dangerous Energy?

4. Bibiana Ossai

In “Munga and the Rainwater” there is the commingling of climate change and myth. Munja’s mother gifts her a glass frog pendant with ties to mythology which ends up saving her life from the rising flood waters. As a writer, what’s on our mind while writing plot in terms of climate change and myth or the supernatural?

Questions For All Authors To Answer In Turns:

1. There’s a trope of capitalism and/or patriarchy in a face-off with climate change in your work. For Osahon’s work, there’s an element of capitalism in the food shortage experienced by the characters. In Oghenechovwe’s work, capitalism rears its head in many ways, one such example is in the scarcity of oxygen. For Bibiana’s work, there’s the pressure to conform to the status quo. And for Aya’s work, there’s the recurrent slogan “Climate justice is racial justice.” In your work, to what extent does the trope of capitalism and/or patriarchy in a face-off with climate change inform the treatment of indigenous people or people seen as “the Other” in society?

2. African countries have contributed relatively little to anthropogenic emissions such as greenhouse gases and aerosols caused by human activities. However, the continent suffers the effects of global warming in diverse ways, as seen in flooding, biodiversity
loss, and in the diaspora, wildfires, and hurricanes. How do current events inform your fiction, if at all they do?