EVENT TITLE: Queer Latinx Men & Vulnerability

Event Description: Latinx men who write on identity, culture, or those who grew up with limitations as to how they could express themselves, know how one’s own culture plays a huge part in showing vulnerability, thus, creating perpetual feelings of shame affecting identity. As queer Latinx, we write because vulnerability is often seen as weakness; however, it's necessary to address how it affects writing both from the writer's and reader's perspective. What does vulnerability look like writing in a world dominated by machismo? Panelists will discuss the implications and benefits of being vulnerable on the page and how culture constructs norms that “need to be followed” overall, how vulnerability is giving us the space to show who we are and not seen as less.

EVENT CATEGORY: Multiple Literary Genres Craft

Event Organizer & Moderator:

Saúl Hernández is a queer writer from San Antonio, TX. He was raised by undocumented parents. He has an MFA in Creative Writing from The University of Texas at El Paso. Saúl’s first poetry collection, How to Kill a Goat & Other Monsters, is forthcoming March 2024, University of Wisconsin Press. He's the winner of both 2022 Pleiades Pruer Poetry Prize (judged by Joy Priest) & the 2021 Two Sylvias Press Chapbook Prize (judged by Victoria Chang). His poems have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize & Best Of The Net. Saúl’s work is forthcoming/featured in Pleiades, Columbia Journal, Split This Rock, Frontier Poetry, Poet Lore, etc.

Event Participants:

Gustavo Hernandez is a Mexican immigrant poet. His poems have been published in several literary journals in the United States and abroad. He is a prolific poetry zine and broadside creator and loves designing event flyers for his fellow poets. He’s the author of FLOWER, GRAND, FIRST (MOON TIDE PRESS 2021) and FORM HIS ARMS (GHOST CITY PRESS 2020). He is the current Orange County Poet Laureate.

jj peña is the winner of 92NY Discovery Poetry Contest (2023), Fractured Literature's Micro Contest (2021), Tinderbox Journal Editor's Prize (2021), Santa Clara Review's Flash Contest (2021), Mythic Picnic's Post Card Prize (2020), CutBank's Big Sky/Small Prose Contest (2019), & Blue Earth Review's Flash Non-fiction Contest (2019). jj is a 2021 Periplus Fellow, a 2022 Woody & Gayle Hunt Fellow for Aspen Summer Words, & a 2023 Editorial Fellow for Shenandoah Literary. jj holds a BA in both English and Anthropology, & an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Texas at El Paso. jj's work has been published widely & anthologized in places like Best Short Fictions of 2022, Best Micro-Fictions of 2020, & Wigleaf Top 50 Short-Shorts. jj currently reads for Splitlip Magazine.
Aldo Amparán is the author of *Brother Sleep* (Alice James Books, 2022), winner of the 2020 Alice James Award. They are the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts & CantoMundo. Their work has been widely published in magazines & anthologies, including the Academy of American Poets’ *Poem-a-Day*, *AGNI*, *Best New Poets*, *Gulf Coast*, *The Journal*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *New England Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry Magazine*, & elsewhere. Aldo is the current Visiting Assistant Professor of Poetry at New Mexico State University.

**Opening remarks and housekeeping announcements:**
Good afternoon, and welcome to Queer Latinx Men & Vulnerability. Thank y’all for being here with us today. We know there was a wide selection of panels and book fair options to choose from, and being jet-lagged or sleep deprived doesn’t help, so we really appreciate you spending the next 75 minutes with us.

Before we get started, a couple administrative notes:
- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel (identify moderator) know and a printed copy of the presentation will be 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 perfume.
- 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.
- We realize the lines for the bathrooms may be long, but please refrain from using an accessible stall unless you require such accommodation. Please also be aware family restrooms located on level 2 are reserved for those with disabilities or those wishing to use a single-stall restroom.
- If you have any questions or concerns regarding conference accessibility, please call or text the Accessibility Hotline (503) 455-4127 or email events@awpwriter.org.

Initial Remarks:

Gustavo Hernandez: I am very fortunate that in my work I am able to approach the topic of my being queer as it relates to vulnerability not having had to contend with a toxic male presence in the home where I grew up. My father was raised by a hardworking single mother who struggled to keep her children fed and clothed. He and his mother had bigger things to worry about than upholding antiquated, misplaced rules about masculinity. He never tried to push me to be more “manly” or told me to stop pursuing things that are stereotypically viewed as being feminine or not masculine enough. I believe that one of the biggest reasons I am able to express myself as openly as I do is because of him. Many of the poems in my forthcoming collection, *Flower Grand First*, deal with mourning his death, but also celebrate him as a person and as a role model. We cried together a lot. A LOT. But I’m glad to be able to say that they were mostly happy tears.
JJ Peña: One of my earliest memories is staring at my mother’s boyfriend holding a gun against my father’s temple. My dad can’t describe what happened or even remember that day without prompting, but I can. If I close my eyes, I can see my dad’s chest puffed out, fists clenched. I can hear him say, “Go ahead. Shoot me.” I can’t recall anything after this, how the situation deescalated, how my dad walked away alive, or how I reacted to the violence. As someone who has lived through too many of traumatic experiences, I’ve noticed many of my memories surrounding trauma are fragments, where I have access to only small images or phrases. The rest, in a tornado spinning. A similar experience occurs for me when writing flash-fiction, given that the form’s so condensed. A piece of flash can hold only onto a moment, an image, a word, a feeling, that’s all. Miscellaneous information falls away, both for the reader and the text, exactly like memory. And that’s where I think vulnerability in writing exists & what I am going to be attempting to talk about.

MODERATOR QUESTIONS:
1. What shape does vulnerability take within your work?
2. What role does your upbringing play when creating vulnerability within your writing?
3. What is the intersection of vulnerability and white space?
4. What is vulnerability to you? How do you keep pushing the limits of it when it comes to negotiating identity and what you put on paper?
5. How can being vulnerable on paper produce doubt?
6. What is the difficulty of showing vulnerably as a man of color?
7. What is vulnerable language? Vulnerable form?
8. What is a vulnerable scene? How do you go about writing this?
9. Vulnerability asks for honestly. How do you navigate the boundaries of truth-telling without losing your integrity?