EVENT TITLE: How do you eat? Writers talk plainly about how they funded their writing lives.

Event Description: Let's face it. At some point in our writing lives, we're going to need to find a job that pays bills and buys groceries. When the adjuncting no longer cuts it, when the fellowships dry up, when the book doesn't sell as well as you hoped, we will still need to eat. Join five writers from wildly different backgrounds for a transparent discussion on the most taboo subject of all. Money. How do you get it when you're a writer? How do you balance the reality of living with your artistic aspirations?

EVENT CATEGORY: Publishing, Editing, and Technology

Marc Fitten is an author and editor. He has written two novels -- Valeria's Last Stand & Elza's Kitchen. He is working on a third book. He also contributes essays to various anthologies and periodicals when he can. He is a Sr. Product Manager at Amazon.

Laurel Snyder is the author of many books for young readers, including Orphan Island, which was longlisted for the National Book Award, and Charlie and Mouse, which won the Theodore Seuss Geisel Medal. She teaches in the MFAC program at Hamline University.

Rachel Zucker is the author of ten books, including SoundMachine, MOTHERs, and Museum of Accidents, which was a finalist for the NBCC Award. Zucker is an adjunct at NYU and is the host of the podcast Commonplace.

Jeff Sharlet is the NYT bestselling author of The Undertow, The Family, This Brilliant Darkness, Sweet Heaven When I Die, and C Street; a contributing editor for Vanity Fair and editor at large for VQR; and the Frederick Sessions Beebe '35 Professor in the Art of Writing at Dartmouth College.

Lisa Page is co-editor of We Wear The Mask: 15 True Stories of Passing in America. She is Assistant Professor of English and Director of Creative
Writing at George Washington University. She was Interim Director of Africana Studies and former President of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation.

Opening Remarks and Housekeeping Announcements:
Welcome to [How do you eat? Writers talking plainly about how they funded their writing lives.]
A few reminders before we begin:
• For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator Marc Fitten know, and a printed copy 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 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.

So let’s begin. Welcome to AWP and thank you for attending our panel. We are here today to talk about something that I feel doesn’t get addressed nearly enough. Money and careers. We are here at AWP because we all have dreams. We are all striving to write the great American whatever. But the truth is, the gap between our dreams as artists and our reality on planet Earth is one that should be examined and included, and that’s why we wanted to be here. Money is real. Paying rent is real. We can’t all win fellowships. We can’t all be professors. I don’t know the latest numbers but I know there are around 250 graduate programs in creative writing and something like 3000 to 4000 graduates from these programs every year. That’s wonderful, but these people aren’t taking student loans out just because they want to be better readers. They have goals. They have plans for themselves.

So what does that mean?

Our panel today is comprised of people from wildly different backgrounds. I want to thank each of them for agreeing to talk about something as crass as money. I think it’s important to understand that
backgrounds matter, that at the end of the day, there is nothing loftier than the pursuit of art….and also the rent is due on the first of the month. So let’s begin. I’ll ask each participant to introduce themselves and tell us a little about their backgrounds and their families and then we’ll run through a handful of questions before opening up to the audience:

So – let’s begin.

1. What’s your name, where do you come from, and what did your parent do? Does this background have an impact on your lifestyle today and how do you think it informs your storytelling?
2. Did you have generational wealth or did you marry well?
3. How did you support yourself? What sort of jobs have you had?
4. What sort of jobs can you get with an MFA? Where can you work.