



# Library podcast

## 2017 Jack Straw Writers Program

[00:00:05] Welcome to The Seattle Public Library's podcasts of author readings and library events. Library podcasts are brought to you by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation. To learn more about our programs and podcasts, visit our web site at [www.spl.org](http://www.spl.org). To learn how you can help the library foundation support The Seattle Public Library go to [foundation.spl.org](http://foundation.spl.org)

[00:00:35] Being here today. I'm the Literature and Humanities Program Manager here at the Seattle Public Library and I want to begin today's program by acknowledging that we are on Duwamish thanks to Gary Kunis and the Seattle Times for generous promotional support of library programs.

[00:00:50] Thank you as well to our program partner Jack Straw. Cultural Center Levi is at the table. No he's not anymore. But he was at the table. Finally. We are grateful to The Seattle Public Library Foundation. Private gifts to the foundation from thousands of donors helped the library provide free programs and services that touch the lives of everyone in our community. So if any of you are Library Foundation donors here today. Thank you so much for your support. Now I am delighted to introduce Jordan Imani Keith the twenty seventeen Writers Program curator. Jordan is a contributing writer for Orion magazine. Her Ted x talk. Your body of water is the theme for King County's 2016 2017 poetry and buses program for essays desegregating wilderness and at risk appear in the 2015 Best American Science and Nature Writing anthology from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Her drastic poems and stories were featured at the Northwest African American Museum in 2015 as part of part of the glass orchids Maryam exhibit and at the Seattle Art Museums remix in November 2015.

[00:01:58] Please help me welcome Jordan Amani Keith can you hear me.

[00:02:12] Very happy to see an audience full of people and I promised myself that I wouldn't do what all of the folks who are in Jack Straw know has happened pretty much every time that I cry when I go to introduce this group. So I practiced and it didn't work that

[00:02:31] It's like just give it up.

[00:02:36] So I'm going to read the introduction because I assume that a lot of people maybe people who skip the introduction in this anthology because you're just so hungry to get to the writing that's their the other writing I do want to say that in a lot of mythology which I've been teaching and studying when people go on a journey there's always mystical help or magical helper that makes it possible for

them to move forward in succeed. And for me it has been the experience of being the curator for Jack Straw and I would be remiss if I of course I didn't think Levi who is out of control much work.

[00:03:30] Levi does he's the person that wasn't at the table but he's right there you should point that him right there and go he's amazing practice he's amazing there. Seriously

[00:03:46] And one of the people in the audience that I see right away is a fellow Jack Straw rider when I was selected for this program. So Jack Straw actually makes a way that people stay together as a writing community and that is my sincere hope for the 12 people that I was honored to pick.

[00:04:09] And that you as a community benefit from their writing continually. So if this were any other city we might be friends we might lean out of our windows to ask how each other's days were we might say hello once a young Cho the twenty seventeen Jack Straw Writers Program is occupied by fiction poetry and creative nonfiction writers who will unbutton your soul and change your vision of the page so that we might be friends what you have been given time to hear is heart and sublime. It is all of our breaking and coming back together.

[00:05:01] It is grief shaped in the dance of stanzas of unexpected forms of the unseen love of self how we morph from unbearable agonies into lyrical paragraphs wants see young Cho on clothes.

[00:05:23] The search we carry inside in his piece he leans out the window in men on the Hill. So many writers lie to make sense of what they witness they quote tell the truth without the truth. Unquote. As I said to a friend truth takes you by the bone chews on the marrow finds the sweetness and what is irreparably broken and eats such as the power of Hara. MacLeod who haunts us with the words quote by the time I left Wall came the abuse didn't just affect me it bled through my entire family unquote likewise staff Casey transforms tragedy with precision her father's tragic presence haunts us quote. His skin was Sallow. And standing there in that mesh fabric. He looked less like a man and more like a ghost caught in a butterfly net unquote. While Jamaica Baldwin controls space to measure the distance between mysteries. In her poem quote enough mountain she writes. They said how do the waters know he brought gifts. And they lied to make sense of what they witness. Unquote Catalina Marie Cantus creative nonfiction lets us enter moments on tiptoe her youthful narrator says shoes hurt my feet I refuse to wear them at home

[00:07:13] Being barefoot was freedom from Mama's rules to dress sit and walk like a little lady beyond innocence Quintin Baker's words and the spaces between them are a surgeon's fingers in the bowels of this time and the epidemic of despair which infects our most intimate choices we survive in the yet Baker writes.

[00:07:43] The whole world is musket all breath is a bullet come home and yet I sip. Yet I guess.

[00:07:57] Yet I kiss around the bang though I do not use tarot cards or believe in them as folks say Afros for team on meds. Deck calls tenderness to life embrace. She writes quote embrace vertigo

grope in the dark of your chest cavity for that cavern endless as Alice's journey to the underworld and dense as dark matter understanding ashen Runyon belief

[00:08:30] That nothing is sacred everything is wholly brought me to my emotional knees with the words I don't believe in God but I do believe in the magic of my DNA coming from generations of someplace else that is to say may be I believe in God.

[00:08:53] That is to say maybe this is something unquote as an atheist.

[00:08:59] Dan now to Toby's quote One pilgrim one Pima pilgrim leaps into Majesty by deliberately issuing references to the grandeur of God commonly found in what is defined as nature writing.

[00:09:15] Still I found myself bound by his language caught he writes. Caught between violent sky and stubborn land inside a throaty storm deafened by its windy crescendo unquote.

[00:09:33] Ellie Ballou blew her fiction harnesses the Manhattan Project for tense moments in a woman's life. She writes quote nowhere to go but here but to her room swish of sprinklers or newly seated already dead lawns. Soldiers everywhere watching her watching every part of her her clothes sweaty and her shoes worn out.

[00:09:58] Can you hoard your identity Brandon Young's questions are explored through interviews like a thrift store find he writes Jane Wang story an old pair of shoes might be repaired while Calvin Capello's edge unfurls whirls unseen through gender dreams and realities. Here we get a glimpse quote around him. The ground seemed to tilt up and he reached to the window for balance when he looked back. The girl was gone he saw his normal reflection.

[00:10:40] He's riders saved my life in the hardest year that I have had open your heart to them.

[00:10:50] I want to welcome you make a Baldwin welcome to make a bargain.

[00:10:55] Applause Good afternoon.

[00:11:02] So this first poem I'm going to read I wrote over the summer but it's been speaking to me again in light of the storm the deluge of women that are finally speaking up for themselves so called the weight of glass if I put the name of every woman into glass bottles and floated them out to sea the ocean would be littered with fury. This is why I fear tsunamis above all natural disasters because there is nothing unnatural about a woman rising up swelling out open mouth and gulping swallowing her revenge. One city at a time I don't know if I was dreaming this but I can still feel the weight of glass when I close my eyes how the women curl up inside and wail cry I heard them even before I learned our silent click and pulse warnings even before my tongue rubbed my mother's and her mother's secrets from the roof of my mouth and as a girl you can't help but think it's just a matter of time before you two become a conquered thing and spend years building a desire capable of holding itself upright but when I say upright I don't mean erect. Tell me what would cities look like today if

women had built them walls with the soft lines or maybe no walls at all just openings and curves stone buildings or maybe no buildings at all just spaces with entrances. This city would have no need for zoo nominees this city already knows how to float. This city has within its borders or perhaps has no borders. Both thirst and quench hunger and feed this city bleeds life not death this city is perhaps not called a city but something unsayable to this tongue of mine that can only speak his language.

[00:13:22] Women who spit words like flames who carve their scapula into wings because someone once told them they weren't worthy of flight this kind of woman this kind of woman is my mother like many mothers who learned from their mothers how to clench their bodies so tightly their skin becomes armor this too she taught me how to keep a safe distance and I think I'm lucky because for the most part it's worked that I think this is luck is why a tsunami of glass bottled rage is at the very least inevitable so when I tell you I fears NAMI is what I mean is I'm not ready to be unleashed and this is how they contain us. So when I tell you it's inevitable what I mean is this rage is as delicate as an ocean of water and glass you have one more poem and it's titled Teaching the beast to devour my mother and it begins with an epigraph you may grow old and trembling in your anatomy as you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins. You may miss your only love you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics or no your honor trampled in the sewer of baser minds. There was only one thing for it then to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it.

[00:15:06] That is the only thing which the mind can never exhaust never alienate never be tortured by. Never fear or distrust and never dream of regretting. Learning is the only thing for you. Look what a lot of things there are to learn. T.H. White The Once and Future King. When we talk casually about death my mother tells me she doesn't want anything burned or buried nothing stuffed painted or preserved. Nothing dressed up pretty or folded neatly into prayer. What do you want. Then I ask. She smiles says fly me over the densest forest. Push me quick and let the animals have at me let my last act be amends my body of use. Let the vultures pick up the pieces and give me flight. I don't think that's legal. I say and she tells me. That's my problem. I don't think that's legal. I said as if laws were my only hesitation as if I wouldn't wander the woods searching for the mad woman living in trees. Speaking in tongues as if I could ever believe she was gone when she lands all thud and broken and lungs spend when her eyes have settled permanently on the sun stretching its jealous fingers through leaves and memory I will ask the circling beasts to leave her toes their kingdom a while longer to let them grip the earth and feel it shudder. Let her arms gesticulating a post-mortem map a topographical salutation those exuberant exaggerations that once shamed my teenage cheeks red but who was I to attempt to pin down her windfall ways that perpetual hippy sitting on the sidewalk her legs spread out in front of her like tarot cards her bare blackened feet a calloused fuck you to the establishment of keep your legs crossed her hairy legs grinning toward freedom and her long patchwork skirt speaking sideways to trees bumming cigarettes off older men swapping spit from a bottle of Rossi passed between friends my mother wasn't a Deadhead kind of hippie but a soon to be scuffing the disco floor in candies to cameo kind of hippie and I don't believe in Jerry anymore than I believe in sin.

[00:17:48] Kind of hippie but she'd memorized the scriptures of the unshaven and brawlers scoffed at all things lady and decent pursed like a hangover and slept like a semi. I wish I could have seen it that time she streaked her hometown parade on a dare. At 16 her long blond hair whipping the air into

frenzy. The town's sheriff laughing at her rebellious bounce and jiggle. My mother kissed risk with a red glass lips and camel cigs. I was thrice almost blinded by these careless consumptions sometimes what I see dissolves in front of me like acid and spit as if all my near misses were bull's eye as if my love lives were allergy as if I've only Brailsford this one and only life but this is how a life unfolds when you're taught to dream by an owl hibernate in summertime and drink anything put in front of you as if it were your last.

[00:18:55] Hallelujah so to the beasts who will one day devour my mother. I say wait until the forest is drunk with Moon and wind song until the insects have rustled leaves into slow dance. Wait until her body loosens its grip and remembers what it felt like to be that once and fearless Chick.

[00:19:30] Now it is my pleasure please help me welcome our next writer Steph Casey whose work showed me the meaning of boundless Hello.

[00:19:53] This is an excerpt from a memoir I am working on about the last six months of my dad's life. Before we went down to see my dad's body in the morgue my brother said the Mormon undertaker. I bet you've seen some crazy shit Oh yeah. He said his eyes darted to a wall display of fancy urns. My brother pushed like divorced families or what. Oh yeah. Once I almost died the undertaker said my brother and I sat up our appetite for morbidity unfazed by our own tragedy. It was a sad case he continued. Children's deaths are the worst. But anyway the ex-wife threw an urn at the ex-husband. One of those 50 pounders and it almost hit me in the head. We laughed. My mom my brother and I. It was funny. Wasn't it an undertaker killed by a flying urn. He was perpetually dressed for a funeral and when he laughed his belly pulled the button threads against the eyelids of his star shirt. We walked down a narrow staircase to see my dad's body. We had to because my dad always said the very last thing Latvians do before they bury their dead is close the casket. The thought is if you don't see the body you may not believe the death. Apparently whatever hell existed here on Earth. Imagination was worse. The mind was both a playground full of magic and ideas and also a scary endless hole that could kidnap you into its dark abyss.

[00:21:43] It has been 12 years since that EMT cut his hanging body down fresh sawdust in his hair. Of course I've had nightmares of him coming back to life. One is that he is living in Florida with some beautiful young wife swimming in the ocean after work a brand new car. His skin tan in the wintertime. The nightmare is not that he couldn't be happy but that he couldn't be happy with us. Another version comes to me in the plane of day when an old homeless man with his teeth all rotted out asks me for money and I see my dad and his desperate blue eyes. Those are two possible endings. Certainly many men run away but I know my dad is dead because I played with his toes in the basement of the funeral home. They were yellowed like always. His circulation poor like mine. I wiggled them against each other the way he used to when he laid on the couch reading and it made him look alive he had ink on his finger pads from the medical examiner taking his prints protocol. I learned for suicides but there is one other way he comes back to life through me. Sometimes I look in the mirror and I see him. Sometimes I fear my own darkness. Sometimes I say fuck psychiatry and light right a late night tirade to his doctor sometimes I smoke pot out of an apple and call it dope.

[00:23:23] Sometimes I ask the mailman a very personal question. Once my dad asked me if you had to start over and you could choose would you choose me. But with no bipolar or would you choose me just as I am. We talked in circles the pros and cons of it during his manic phase as he was intoxicating Lee engaged. You should have seen him on the Stairmaster. You should have seen him vacuum the house with his instant asshole just add alcohol trucker hat. You should have seen him reading in the middle of the night his eyes alive ideas all lit up and connected like stars in a constellation. But as a child it was impossible for me to understand why he just couldn't get up on Christmas morning depression was boring a slog. It is hard even now to draw the borders between illness and personality. He could be fun. He could be thoughtful.

[00:24:32] He could be cruel and yet I still decided I would choose him. He was the dad for me at the funeral. My mom my brother and I held hands.

[00:24:46] We sat with our arms intertwined like an optimist post with two arms violently ripped out and a run in with a motor propeller and thus its body betrayed its name a six legged octopus who were we now the Keynes's for now three. I still feel him in me. My phantom limb dead in the casket but in live in me so next step is Brandon young.

[00:25:23] Thank you.

[00:25:24] His work has taught me that the act of listening can take on many radical forms.

[00:25:31] It's my pleasure to introduce him this listening setup is radically changing right now.

[00:25:48] So the writing I've been doing for Jack Straw is about objects that were kept him destruction. So these are things that can't be thrown away. And yesterday a woman from Mount Baker found my wallet and gave it back to me. So in honor of her I wrote about something more personal. The product of my own hoarding. I don't have a family home. I don't have a place where we like dump our stuff. So I moved out 10 years ago and I've been carrying pretty much the entire physical record of the family's past. My brother's childhood drawings my mom's citizenship papers my textbooks from college my father's high school yearbook and one of the great upsides of this project besides all the people here and supposed to this work is that I've met so many people that are in the same boat. Oh you have tons of stuff but it's like precious stuff. Me too. It's a weird space to be in moving so often dragging carloads of memorabilia. We're not hoarders. There's no cat skeletons or collapsing stacks of expiring coupons but we're definitely weighed down by our stuff. We're surrounded by the physical past in a way that interferes with our present and sometimes when I'm not keeping the organizing up I think they did.

[00:26:49] The difference between a hoarder and people like us is that a hoarder owns the house. A little background. My dad died when I was 15 which is when I inherited all of this stuff and today I wanted to talk about the set of binders which contain the space explorers stories. The space explorer was my father's parody of Star Trek The Next Generation which was airing reruns at the same time on U.P.S.. Remember you pen remember cable cable the space explorer was a story about a crew of

talking animals and a spaceship that we're trying to protect the galaxy. There was Micah the frog the captain who is based on John Picard. There was Cab the cricket. Who's based on Will Riker Ali gator who is Worf and an empathic duck named Edwina. There was also Mr. Spider the engineer who was Scotty from the original Star Trek. He was complete with a Scottish accent that my dad would do when he was reading the dialogue.

[00:27:42] There was a snake a dog. Some humans and eventually the space explorer joined a confederation of alien species called the Star Alliance. I want to emphasize that this story was extensive. There were maybe six or seven of these binders and each of them had maybe five stories in them in each of these stories was 12 to 20 chapters long. These were my bedtime stories for least three years. But it's the dialogue that really makes the story come alive. Here's an example. This duck is my friend said alligator. We have learned that it is better to work together than against each other. I did not kill you because I have no need to. It is the humans we are looking for. We must stop them from cutting down the trees. This is from Save our Earth which was space explorer installment number 10 and the big baddies in the space explorer stories were the Triad. They weren't the Chinese Triad but they were an alliance of three alien species. The Scorpions the DA and the RA. And I don't really remember what a scorpion is. And given that I wrote this whole thing from like 7 to 11 a.m. this morning I didn't really want to dig through the literature to find out. My dad wrote like a bazillion of these. He was not created with the names so I if I had to guess I would say that a scorpion with some kind of Scorpion alien. The DA as the name implied we're very stupid but they also produced gravity clouds that warped space and time around their spacecraft. So there are different kinds of intelligence the raw where a telepathic species that were described as being brown squishy and smelling bad they were turds the raw were turds.

[00:29:16] My father wrote these stories to entertain to prepubescent boys. There was nothing to jump the comedic gap between prepubescent boys and their middle aged college professor father like puppies. Puppies.

[00:29:27] I got a refresher course in these stories reading Space Wars which was the 24th installment in the series. It's a dark time for the Star Alliance. The triad has just use mind control to kick them off Star Base 1 10. Reading this story again I started thinking about what my father was trying to teach me. Isn't the triad representative who weapon against now. The Scorpion like Sorkin's the DA with the tractor beams the roar with their hive mind and telepathic powers. When you've managed to carve out the tiniest bit of happiness and peace in this expensive and petty world isn't there always a threat to your stability in the form of scorpions attractive idiots or extremely organized pieces of shit

[00:30:06] I had to keep reading because I'd forgotten this story. I had to see how the Star Alliance got out of this one maybe it would be helpful now. In this excerpt the Star Alliance is planning their counterattack against the occupying triad who are led by Dania the general of the day. Such a little thing said a scorpion. Why should we be afraid of you.

[00:30:26] Not just as the admiral was but my troops also then thousands of wasps came through the ventilation system. They stung the Scorpions and RA general ant came in with many of his troops. They bit into their enemies quick said a scorpion retreat into our starships the roar and the Scorpions could not win. Where are we going. Shouted Danya. We can no longer control Star Base 110 said a scorpion. Abandon abandon. No. Said Dania. We can't let these little creatures intimidate us. Several aunts then started to climb on Danya and bite him. DA said Donnie as he ran down the halls in pain abandoned Star Base 110 Wasps stung ants bit the last of the triads flew away Star Base 110 was in a shambles but it was under Star Alliance control again. Victory was theirs.

[00:31:15] I know each day is harder than last. I know you're exhausted but have you tried everything. Have you tried a ventilation system full of wasps.

[00:31:34] Everyone is so professional at the transitions and it implied that I would just know who would be up next. Just by being up here I think I'm just gonna go with whoever comes to mind. Coming next to the stage. No particular order I could just go through every call. Thank you. I'm coming up to the stage. I'm very pleased to introduce Afros now. I have no idea. Dan very low. Making it up. I'm very pleased to introduce Dan Vardy whose work really I mean the meaning of space of place.

[00:32:18] Thank you. All right so let's dive in. This is a excerpt from a memoir about my return to the desert my motherland.

[00:32:31] Thank you all right.

[00:32:34] And old world born into Indigenous bodies children play as shoeless wild haired and these scab explorers across the HeLa River Indian Community. Youthful vessels as old timers recall leap over trenches thick with cacti filled doom then muscle in the proper season atop branches to harvest mesquite pots for flower small fingers over boulders to study creepy crawly ecosystems beneath as red ants flare. And for the declining elders who recall when the HeLa river flowed cat tale is plucked for its fibrous stocks which tightly weave baskets are knit it from whenever reservation adventures are retold. Childhood is romanticized especially our own Diamondbacks were bullied wrote runners chased and caught dust devils wrestled all exaggerated campfire stories. Except this my lively I found human treasures left behind by my ancestors. The Pima the petroglyphs broken pottery and victoriously a stack of adult magazines my father immediately snagged from my grip. He told me to explore elsewhere while he examined the human nest of porn magazines Rusty beer cans and a tattered mattress found beneath.

[00:33:48] Would it cover there was real love for the reservation's dirty secrets a love mattress and elsewhere a Japanese internment camp a bust and a bust at war aircraft at an abandoned airport as well for its flora and fauna rolling tumbleweeds sorrow blooms Hela monsters prairie dogs untamed horses lazy cattle every weekend trip to open country was risk taking study that amused tickled and frightened frightened because of mythical lore My father warned me about like ghosts or a half human half goat abomination that roam the desert nights. But every childhood fear or adventure at some



point degenerates into adolescent mediocrity lust outgrows the motherland for other curiosities fevered by puberty record breaking heat the hottest for me a one hundred and twenty two degree afternoon Melson to drought ridden years the reservation's freshness wilts all five hundred eighty three square miles. Secretly I wanted out of the snow and low lands yet I knew not where still the possibilities arouse me my wanderlust crave cool window unknowns scented pines Misty peaks turquoise tinted lagoons or as a reoccurring dream teased a true longing to sail beneath a blue sky canvas dollop with clouds one day it would happen one day I'd lead the desert behind but for what heavy weighted reason Pima younglings do not abandon the tribe or born into Indigenous umbilical cords already short leashed or braid it with other clans and villages those whom escape the reservation venture briefly for college or military service with permanent departures designated for marriage with outside tribes. For me college came and went nothing changed. Not the drought or white sky days nor the family routine or reason enough to leave them until out of the ordinary life punched and it swung hard. Here it is plain. At 26 I buried the first man I ever loved my father. Two months later my near perfect job teaching 6 year olds was consumed by an economic recession. The same week my floppy eared boyhood mutt named Milo called it quits after 15 years together. Days later the third man I ever loved threw in the towel himself. My turmoil exhausted him. Then my unaffordable home was just that.

[00:36:13] Details won't be discussed but they happen and when they did I fled the Pima tribal kinfolk left behind for shadow life events with the man in the maze elaborate totem symbolizing among many philosophies the shape of things to come at center of the sun shaped maze is birth a dark spot Mother's room where life is fresh but crawl willy nilly and the path turns the first corner into adulthood. Excuse me to childhood a brief stretch that leads to another bend puberty. And after that adulthood followed by other seasons of the indigenous body marriage parentage grandparent Hinch and once outside the labyrinth of death the past simplicity is illusionary. However when mapping quarters from afar the maze is bundle at its epicentre with sharp turns and brief walkways such as youth. But on the outer edges where the path is elongated and open a calm Cruise is possible sees it sees it fast because the path switchbacks to the bundle hectic centre again before at very last. The way out appears at this stage the objective is clear escaping the maze is completing the voyage. We are born into. Naturally everyone reverses their major journey usually to re experience younger versions of themselves or to prolong the inevitable Finish Line impossible. The path is one way like Dawn Sun Moon storm seasons dreaming age there are no dead ends and the people labyrinth only four tracks twisted by gratification or misfortune than abridged by time. At the icon's exit as a human figure a salute a reminder that everything has its beginning middle and end.

[00:37:53] Thank you applause now please welcome our next writer Afros Fatima Ahmed whose work show me the meaning of tarot card poetry Hi everyone how are you today.

[00:38:19] Hi friends.

[00:38:21] I shot my hand in a car door earlier today so I'm having a horrible day but it's gotten better since I've gotten here. Thank you for being here. I would love to give somebody a tarot reading. Jordan I'm down so I'm going to do this a little bit differently than I've done in the past and I've sort of

had the audacity of giving readings from this deck even though it's maybe 20 percent complete and so I normally would hand you some cards and have you shuffle them and I am a card list at the moment but I'm going to have you do I do have a question in mind. Jordan you don't have to tell the audience but you need to tell me and my all right well I want you to think of something that you deeply. Feel. In related in relation to this question and I want you to choose two numbers in between 1 and 15 do you have your numbers.

[00:39:17] What numbers.

[00:39:17] Guy 7 and 5. OK so 7 is the 9 of gold.

[00:39:27] So in this project there's a series of cards. And each one has a poem. There's no illustrations but there's one short poem that describes the image on the card and then there's an associated poem which is a ritual that one can do after pulling the card and the project is called Blood gold and honey because those are the three suits in the deck.

[00:39:51] So the nine of gold the hermit winged feet folded under her writing desk composes the story of Raven steals the sun blackbird in the dead of dance crow's feet dipped in ink two steps and tangos across the parchment of the sky making our own myths oh how we were thieves taking stars from the greedy gods for everything sacred must be stolen all right Jordan here's their ritual collect the carcass of a septuagenarian Raven picked over by vultures off the winding path of Highway One to one among the curling lichen of the whole rainforest dappled with the disco ball light filtered through second growth cedar trees serve in a stew I think that eventually when this book is published I'll have to have like disclaimer that I'm not liable for anything that happens to anybody if they like decide to cook road kill and eat it.

[00:41:08] No I'm gonna read you your second card. No sorry you have to awkwardly. That was all one card.

[00:41:13] So now I have to awkwardly stand a period while they finish your second card as the boy of blood black baby for whom the home planet has orbited once a mother's son flying child in a winged Perth surfing the wild and a whipped wind capable of forgetting how solidly his feet can find the earth. Hollow bones grow long and fill with the marrow of a juicy life. Her camera diamonds in his hands. His gold. The purpose of the pumping heart.

[00:41:56] Here's your next ritual Jordan play a drinking game with the Angels take a shot of liquid God particles each time the earthquakes and multitudes of dark peoples rise from the molten core. Buried By the way of history straight jacketed by suffering their bodies begging for oxygen on street corners. Holding corrugated cardboard signs that read Will work for air midnight ice brewing next as my immense pleasure to welcome Catalina Cantu whose work has taught me the importance of honoring my inner child with all her ferocity and tenderness and joy and wounded ness.

[00:42:57] Catalina this is the short people's moment here.

[00:43:09] Thank God I followed Afros instead of our taller brother. I just want to take a moment to think Jordan. Our curator extraordinaire to Joan Rabinowitz Levi Fuller and all our wonderful sound people from Jack Straw. Special thanks to my writer's group friends and Mi Familia. You know who you are and I started writing about my family history and I've got four pieces in anthology which I would encourage everybody to buy. It's a great deal because as Jordan mentioned someday we're all going to be on bookshelves and you'll just say wow I had that opportunity to get their work for almost nothing.

[00:43:53] So I'm reading two pieces from the anthology called Buster Browns and the first one is called shoes sturdy shoes for school said mama we can only afford one pair and they have to last all year these Buster Brown oxfords are indestructible and looky here why the color matches her legs. Just add a matching shock and she'll look three inches taller. What do you think a little lady boxcar oxfords the color of dog do extended from my stovepipe legs I like the red Mary Janes I said Dorothy shoes without the sprinkles I'll be real careful Mama and our style bre a shake of her curls a gloved finger to her lips.

[00:44:52] Shoes hurt my feet I refuse to wear them at home being barefoot was freedom from Mama's rules to dress sit and act like a little lady back home in Texas my pre most crown me a tomboy because I learned how to climb trees did not scream when I picked up worms and bugs and raced all the brown boys in the neighborhood read kids were my racing shoes.

[00:45:22] No one could catch me but now I was going to school up north had to dress like a girl and wear ugly shoes that demanded to be double tied their woven loops lanced with double Dutch jump rope slick leather soles slipped on tree trunks and wet grass my knees and shins festooned with bandaids awkward and anxious for my complexion a complexion on the darker side of momma's pale just shy of three feet tall at age six my family nickname was peanut to back home Papa always referred to Texas as back home his Familia has loved and lived in the Rio Grande de valley at the southern tip of Texas since long before Texas became a state the U.S. border came to meet Amelia. Generation after generation they continue to live back home back home we can get on those surgeries that the miles and fresh tortillas just down the street Poppa said up north.

[00:46:37] That thing is fresh.

[00:46:38] Just canned in San Francisco at the V.A. Pop and Mom met as clerks with adjacent desks after their Catalina Island honeymoon. They were laid off. Poppa became a security guard. Momma was pregnant with me back home to Gustavo owned a dry cleaning business offered Poppa a job. We moved in with a boiler pompous mother I my premise and I threw lit matches down to ranch all the holes in her dirt yard raced radio flyers on bumpy roads and counted our mosquito bites our migration back home was a few years of heat hanging like laundry mosquito bites totally in the 90s Spanish everywhere and lots of Amelia adventures.

[00:47:28] Then we moved up north northwest postage stamp town of chalk. People were ever my family. What they stopped us. Hey you. Where are you going.

[00:47:47] What are you Poppa.

[00:47:51] His way the ebony hair slicked back elegant shark skin suit tie. Sue's met his inquisitors with a stony gaze.

[00:48:02] We are Maddie Aiken's child people chanted and shook their pointed heads really seriously. Where are you people from. We escaped that time. What did I care if no one looked like me had a last name that ended in a vowel or a Mexican food at home.

[00:48:24] Must be invisible invisible to their world.

[00:48:31] Shy skinny brown toothpick in a milk sea bobbing to survive the Moby Dicks. Thank you. And now it is my extreme pleasure to welcome our next writer Calvin Gim pale lavage of his clothes whose work showed me the meaning of courage and love Calvin

[00:49:17] This is an old piece from before universal health care for context a sat at the table with a hand on her belly. Thinking she might be pregnant she had sex with a man last night for the first time in years and now her breasts were swollen and there was this sense she said of being full six of us having breakfast. Six of the nine we lived in a five bedroom house a worried she hadn't been careful with protection. She wasn't used to men and had gotten out of the habit by breakfast. I mean coffee which we poured from an enormous French press and toast there were mugs all over the table which was a light would MABEL set by French doors nice even if the neighbors called it the junk house or that piece of shit. They weren't all bad one of our neighbors gave us lollipops and another came over when the water heater gave a bomb whistle and flooded the house. But the rest had been rude like keying our cars and our friend's cars and filming us singing at dusk on the lawn the houses in that neighborhood were always being demolished replaced by boxy new ones. Did you use a condom. She did. The problem was they had sex several times and sometimes they used one and sometimes he pulled out they hadn't washed between sessions.

[00:50:50] She could have gotten it from the old come from the pre cum they said I'm supposed to get my period. I thought you couldn't get pregnant before that happened but someone else said that it's your most fertile time. Not after. I don't think I asked if she had a regular cycle meaning if she should be worried that it hadn't started by then I knew about periods because I'm transgender and that makes me a good one. Like when people are cramping I say I know how that goes. And I don't mind fucking through blood. I was tall with dark hair and dark eyes. She made films that felt like nightmares you don't remember that cost more to make than they paid. I can't be pregnant. OK. We all said OK we had known a for a while though she'd only lived with us for a month. By then we were crazy that year packing the house with more people every time with a reason you lost your job stay cheaper free here. Broke up with your girlfriend your boyfriend all your partners at once met someone new and

they're homeless. Your friend of a friend of a friend of a friend moved to town. Everyone had a situation and it helped our rent.

[00:52:11] Now we were being evicted and storing old boxes again one of us worked in a restaurant and the living room was full of its boxes waxed and greasy. They smelled. Eviction wasn't for the people. Every month we cleaned cigarette butts hit the Cats at the friends and dismantled the bedrooms the landlord walked in took rent and said nothing. They were taking us out to sell the house which was worth less than the land. Our third no fault eviction in two years. Every time the rent climbed all you need someone started. All you need to do is take the morning after pill and no worries. Even if you aren't just in case plan B cost forty five dollars over the counter or free if you unlike a were insured did a have forty five dollars. That was our next question. She did but it hurt who had insurance. We listed our friends. This one did or did and jaded so we texted her. She said yes but she didn't want to. She didn't want the doctor thinking she's straight. I'd never had a pregnancy scare. By the time I slept with a man says gender hormones abated that risk.

[00:53:35] We didn't use protection. The thought honestly didn't occur. We were intimate. We were friends. I hadn't expected to sleep together and that combination. Our genital difference was strange. It's hard to prepare for what you don't understand. Someone asked Can you imagine a child. We sat. We couldn't even though I'm a teacher and everyone's nanny aide and some of our parents had two or three kids at our age. I was supposed to be writing but it was nicer to drink coffee and panic and chat. Besides which there might be time for that later when things were less stressful when things settled down. The sun came out reflecting off the table and into our eyes. We weren't used to it. So we squinted. All except a who closed her eyes and turned to the windows. So her whole face bathed in the glow she was a beautiful woman. Jay sent a message saying she had the plan B. She said the doctor lectured her about safety and condoms but it didn't matter because she got her period.

[00:54:43] Later that day thank you very much.

[00:54:55] I would like to introduce our next rider once a young child who is riding taught me the meaning of finding those sharp bits of humor in the dark.

[00:55:12] Jim Beaubien ski 1997. The first thing I do is jerk off. I read that in one of Cousin Annie's read books that guys should try and blow their loads before they go on dates. You know to cool off and be able to focus. It really did sound like a good idea. But now I have to spray almost comforter with shout and throw it in the wash and then only have an hour or so to tell Jim that I like him before I have to get back to the apartment. Put the blanket in the dryer and make it look like I never freeze the blanket in the first place. A couple of years ago I'm a commie friggging Mr. Giordano into oblivion. Things were never really the same after that. P.S. Mr. Giordano is an oversized stuffed panda bear. I'm a picked up from the duty free shop at Kim Po airport when I was 8 that I later renamed after my 7th grade gym teacher. I think there's probably a good chance Jim and I will kiss after I tell him how I feel when I get to Jim's house.

[00:56:07] The screen door is propped open and I let myself in as I walk down the hallway. I cut my hand over my mouth and nose to check my breath almost says you should always brush your teeth at least twice after eating kimchi white people want to suiciding it they smelling kimchi. You know she always reminded me. And that's why I brush my teeth three times before I left the apartment in the family room. Jim is sitting on the floor with his back against the couch looking for something to watch. He stops on a basketball game. He looks up at me as I walk past to the other side of the sofa. Then he looks back at the TV What's up dude. He says nothing. What's up with you Jim. You bring me big macs or something. Sorry I didn't work today. Oh all right. That's cool. You look so disappointed. I'll remember to grab some next time Jim Jim's wearing a Colton High wrestling T-shirt and snug basketball shorts. I can see the outline of his penis through thin fabric. I wonder what it will feel like in my hands or in my mouth. Even I look at the TV but I don't understand basketball so I look at the photos on the mantel instead in the middle.

[00:57:27] There's a big Beaubien ski family portrait. I love the Bobby on skis and really cannot wait to be one on either side are portraits of Beaubien ski kids. Adrian is the youngest. Then there's Jim. Then Roberta and finally Sasha who's a total lesbian. Also there's Mr. Bobby on skis brother Scooter and scooters life partner Jerry. On one hand I think this has got to be a shoo in with all these other gays in the family. But still I'm scared. There are more photos from wrestling matches music recitals and birthday parties one of the photos is of Jim at this year's prom. There he is with his beefy chest has no teeth. Barely a smile smile and those sweet brown eyes he looks real sharp in his tuxedo like a rugged and hunky James Bond. And on Jim's arm is his big breasted soon to be ex girlfriend Tiffany. And I mean what's so great about boobs anyhow right. I looked back at Jim was looking at the TV some pop stars flashing her trash all over the screen. Dude she's so hot says Jim. Yeah. Totally. I play along. My stomach turns a little. I can't do this. I think anyhow. What's up bro. Well I mean I came to tell you something Jim. Sub Well I just wanted to tell you that I like I like you.

[00:58:57] Like you know like I like like you like you you know what I mean. I once forgot a half eaten baby sized burrito under my bed for a month. Then one day while laying in bed I noticed dozens of flies swarming the overhead light fixture. This was like that but like way worse. Jim's eyes are still fixed on the TV and I wonder if he's even heard me. Then he says Oh I thought you were gonna tell me you had AIDS or something I'm staring at him because what. But also we still haven't looked directly into each other's eyes yet. And I believe that if you and your soulmate look into each other's eyes then it's like your souls will understand love because like that's love right. But Jim doesn't look so I look at his crotch again before I get up off the couch. Well I guess I should get going Jim. All right dude. See you later. That night I lay in bed furiously humping Mr. Giordano. Also maybe I'm crying. I'm thinking about Jim and his maybe too type basketball shorts but I'm also thinking there's still a chance I just have to get him to look me in the eye.

[01:00:19] Thank you I am very honored to introduce the next writer whose poetry has in one word taught me about truth.

[01:00:38] Please give a warm welcome to Quentin Baker was a tell me they were gonna do that big ass picture of me unnecessary I mean I'm right here.

[01:00:58] I was glad I didn't wear the same hoodie. You know me. How embarrassing would that have been. Like I only have one shirt.

[01:01:08] I mean I only have like three shirts but that's three times the amount I was going to reason poems. I think these are from the anthology and also the manuscript that I'm working on now.

[01:01:25] Breach is a night sound possible. The potentiality of lurch is lunch for the Kennedy aide who need round gun who will need iron the whole world is musket or breath is a bullet.

[01:01:45] Come home and yet I sit yet I guess yet I kiss around the bank I tear and I'm torn in ragged enormity.

[01:02:02] Finally at the fracture the finish and who's still vitally invests in break down who still swears in the morality cage solo at the bottom of the ship art at the apex of twist and plummet. We are simultaneously alone and populated a devil's allergy the blood red and the unravel theory of how and so we march toward nothing but ourselves a walk. A Canter a construction of limb and speed that we string through the dark like lambs and then what irradiated with callous our hands omit navigator three black become touchstone a purity test for what's precious they rugged bent roughly into bona fides and we pulmonary sheaths for these praised and bloodied utensils we grip wheel clatter this ship sick with men a key and nightmares toward shore.

[01:03:21] Thank you it is my honor to welcome the next writer Ellie Ballou I think if I had to describe what I admire about Ellie's work it would be tenacity there's an edge to Ellie's work that I think you enjoy so please welcome Allie Ballou first off I want to thank Jack Straw studios for supporting and encouraging us as writers I want to thank the Seattle Public Library for this event I want to thank my cohort of writers for their visions and voices I wanna thank Jordan for the magic of making this happen and I want to thank all of you for coming to hear us. I want to start by reading from isotope yeah my mythos historic novel about the Manhattan Project our sense of place and what it means to be a modern woman.

[01:04:21] It describes two overlapping worlds of experience one within the Manhattan Project's laboratories the other that of the people who have always lived along the Columbia River in the place now called Hanford. This chapter takes place when those two worlds collide. Beverly Doris and Smyrna are sisters in their 50s black rock canyon near the Columbia River. September 1945 from the backseat. Beverly had plenty of time to watch the telephone lines dip and rise pole to pole as Lerner's car lugged up the long hill. Beverly wondered if a puff of cloud to the west would bring rain trying not to think too much about the pain in her hips. Then something caught her eye. What's that. She pointed with a finger that never got straight there her two sisters looked out at a lump on the hillside above them and looked more closely. It was too dark for garbage the wrong shape for a bloated carcass as big as an eagle. But it wasn't moving Smirnov backed up to where the ditch went shallow and drove through bitter brush and sage Beverly had known when she got out of bed something was

off so she wasn't surprised to see it was a girl. Smirnov drove up close. Stop the car and headed over. Beverly was right behind with a milk bottle full of water.

[01:05:42] Doris played her feet out the front seat and came shuffling behind muttering This wasn't any of their business. They should get back in the car and keep driving. The surprise was that the girl was white. I'm telling you we need to get away from here right now. Doris kept looking back at the road fearful someone would see them. How long would you last out there in all this sun. Beverly eased herself down onto her knees bought a little of the water into the cup of her palm and tilted her hand against the girl's lips. Most of the water trickled away she don't even know we're here. Spurn a scuffed at the ground but she was studying the girl Doris. Arms Crossed kept her distance. Maybe she wants to stay here. Beverly in Smyrna both shook their heads. They could all see the girl's swollen hand them black like blood sausage gone bad angry streaks running up the inside of her wrist Smirnov pulled out her knife and made a cut on the girl's wrist sucked at it spit and took a swig from the water. They hauled the girl back to the car then Smyrna carrying her under her arms. Beverly endorsed each holding one leg in the front seat. Doris jammed herself against the door and pouted in back the girl's head rocked and Beverly's lap.

[01:07:01] Her legs flopping bent kneed when the car jolts through the drainage ditch once the Packard was back on the roads. Myrna drove smooth as water on slick rock. Beverly kept the girls swollen hand upright stroked her chopped raven hair. She could feel fever pulsing fever from the girl's brow it crested the ridge and headed down when they could smell the river. Smyrna gave Beverly one glance in the mirror and Beverly nodded. She endures would tend to the girl for now I'm going to finish I'm gonna read what I call a verbal erratic glacial eradicates Iraq's transported by glaciers to a place beyond their origin verbal eradicates or words carried by their associations beyond their common meanings. This one's called cut out you're not cut out for today's world you're cut out from today's world it's cunt. Bitter melon an acquired taste cut out engine backfiring Blue Cloud says Hart Crane of his old engine his heart it is bitter but it is mine like an obsidian sliver hope leaves my heart a pumping pulpy mess cut out like paper dolls holding hands and accordion folds a melody so thank you very much it's my pleasure to welcome our next reader here McCloud whose work showed me the meaning of transformation Hera thank you.

[01:08:48] So this piece is called the awkward smile of grief in the wake of my 15 month old son Prince's murder I smiled awkwardly whenever I was forced to tell a stranger what happened to him though I knew smiling was not an appropriate response and it certainly didn't mirror how I felt inside. It was like an instinctive reflex that I couldn't control. Prince was drowned by his father during his fourth unsupervised visit with him. He had taken out over 500000 dollars in life insurance on his own child I dreaded answering the casual question of how many children I had. When asked by a complete stranger to but only one is still alive is what I should have answered. More often I either dodged the question or lied and claimed that my daughter was the only one completely ignoring the existence of my son. Answering this question honestly forced me to tell a stranger standing across for me a story that was possibly the worst thing they had ever heard and one that illustrated the rock bottom of the human condition. It was gut wrenching to leave it relive his murder every time humiliating to cry in front of strangers and draining to try and respond in a way that others found appropriate. Where's



your son. It was an innocent question. It mortified me and I panicked. What was I going to say to this woman crying in the middle of the street wasn't an option. I wasn't ready to tell her why he wasn't there and why he'd never come back. I fought back the tears that were threatening and swallowed several times as though doing so would resolve the pain I felt in my chest.

[01:10:34] I considered pretending that I didn't know what she was talking about or pretending I was someone else at a loss for a reasonable alternatives. I blurted out the truth as the words escape my mouth. She burst into tears as she stared at me painfully and intensely. I fold my arms over my chest shielding my fully clothed body. I desperately tried to feel less exposed. It's OK I said though of course it wasn't at all. Still fighting back my own tears. I began desperately to try to stop hers. I smiled and giggled. I tried to shift the conversation as though what I told her wasn't a big deal. Why aren't you crying. She appeared stunned by my reaction the unexpected judgment that was depicted on her face with me feeling ashamed. My cheeks grew red and my hands started to shake the heat welling up and my face was so strong that I felt the urge to press my hands against it. I wanted to stop this reaction but was completely powerless. What did this woman expect me to do I wondered. I wanted to vanish. I wanted my son back. And I wondered why I couldn't have just died with him. The truth was I didn't know how I was supposed to act after my life had just been shattered though it wasn't my job to make this woman feel better about what happened to me I didn't know this at the time after this I started lying to people whenever they asked about my children.

[01:12:03] I pretended as though I had never had a son attempting to save myself from reliving the death through the eyes of someone new denying Prince's existence allowed temporary solace. But it also tore me apart inside out. I felt as though I was disrespecting his memory and this was killing me everyone had advice on how I should cope. Initially I listened to everything I grasped for advice because I was lost in sorrow this constant often conflicting advice began to give me whiplash out of options. I decided to stop listening to this onslaught of unsolicited advice. I started standing in my truth and decided that my son's memory was more important to me than how the reality of his death made others feel. On a recent fall morning I was again faced with the decision to run from the pain or stand in my truth. Me and my daughter were shopping at a local farmer's market in our neighborhood. Is she your only child. A woman asked as my daughter grabbed apples samples just as I felt my cheeks started to get red and the fear of panic set in. I took a deep breath. No she isn't. I smiled grabbed my daughter's hand and continued to walk though the moment was brief. I had included my son and our family that day. I felt like I had taken back the power required to claim my dead son Prince was finally holding my other hand.

[01:13:33] Thank you.

[01:13:41] It is now my pleasure to introduce Ashlyn Runyan whose writing taught me the meaning of fierce introspection so I had like a dream last night a nightmare about my photo being up here and then here it is happening elegant to throw up which is okay because that's kind of how I feel so it's a little like if you can't see me clearly you can like that's how I feel. Also anyway these are some poems that I wrote my grandfather went to church every day to pray not always to mass. Just the church itself. I think it's the sameness of it that makes it holy.

[01:14:28] The sacred is rare. It is held close. It is held so close that the space between the thing and the holder of it no longer exists. The sacred isn't there. The holder isn't there and their place is something else entirely. Holiness though that you can taste when my grandfather went to church every day I was not there when I tried to be there. I feel uncomfortable in the pews my clothes don't feel clean. The absence of him hurts there. And here in this spot where either side of my rib cage meets but still the first time you tell me something small and secret like these are the ways I have hurt myself. Which sounds like this is the way I love you. I walk in the rain to the church and light a candle. I paced the sides of the chapel over and over looking for the right candle and the right matchbox and the right saint. I kneel down and hold my hands together. I am in my Friday school uniform and 7th grade with the red sweater and the pressed white shirt with the Peter Pan collar and I am squeezing my eyes shut and I am pressing my knees down so that when I stand up there will be proof. You were born somewhere very close to me. I know this because you carry your body like I wish I could carry mine like it is something very heavy but you are something very strong.

[01:15:48] I almost understand this. There is so much capacity for lightness in me. I know this because once I bleached my hair until it burned white and thought my outsides finally looked like the parts of my insides that are small and well hidden. It felt good to see them. Sometimes I forget what light looks like through all this intangible grey when it does come back. Its brightness burns my eyes I close them tight until I see colors I dream of moving somewhere that makes me encounter the sun see everything for what it could be. I am from someplace like this but my skin doesn't remember and it burns there too. It is hard to breathe here so I don't. I wonder what it would be like to open my eyes and my chest in my arms and every part of me and go home. I am standing here on the platform and I am myself and I am waiting for the train breathing and the smell of fish and wondering which parts of me can move like water can which parts of me are salt. I feel lonely and far away from home. Thinking of all those dead fish on my walk home I see a dead rat on the sidewalk. I know I can't touch it but I want to give it a funeral.

[01:16:57] I know this isn't what animals need. They say this is what will come for us and make sure that we see it. I cross myself and say a small prayer for the dead rat. I say thank you for teaching me that this is no small thing outside the market a block away from my apartment. I see to it pigeons eating rice off the concrete. I think of it expanding in their stomachs. I think of small violence. We do not see. I think of all the rice thrown at weddings and all the birds eating is the next morning you hand me your mother's shirt and say This looks nice on you and I've never loved me more I'm sitting on the floor of my apartment and looking at the flies and thinking of how my grandfather used to drink of the smell of cheap beer and how I missed it on breath so I put it on my own and said You are here now. I think of how I had not had a drink in eight months but how somehow still there's all these flies hovering over something dead. Everything I do is about living and dying at the same time about seeing which one will win. Today I am not a dying thing. I get up and go outside. The flies are still here but there is more room for them.

[01:18:04] They don't make the air above me feel heavy. I breathe in deeply. I sit in the park and watch an old man smoke a cigarette his bare feet resting on top of his sandals. A child screams out of

joy and discovering it. I write a double decker bus in the mornings with reading lights and comfortable seats in them. I am 7 years old and my feet dangle. I pretend I am going somewhere other than the hospital. There are more people moving around the city at 7 a.m. than I have ever seen. They are tired they are drinking coffee for the warmth of it. They are wearing jackets to keep their hearts inside their bodies. They teach me that I have been doing a good job of keeping my heart in its chest too. I see our love written in big letters on the bus windows and the sidewalks but I don't know how to read it. I think if I could read it I wouldn't be so afraid. I'll do anything. I'll tear my clothes and turn them to ashes. I will die to myself and start all over I will swallow back my fear each morning I'll lay prostrate on the floor and scream I am sorry. A few blocks before the hospital I see a boy and girl holding hands walking to school wearing backpacks.

[01:19:12] I cry for the remaining 15 minutes of the bus ride thinking of an open hand and me taking it of a lifted weight of how I have not been alive very long.

[01:19:22] But look at me here living so I'm the last reader.

[01:19:35] But I would like to welcome all of the other Jack Straw riders up because we have a little tiny little thing extra planned for today.

[01:19:43] Everyone. Thank you so much to the Seattle Public Library for hosting us today. I for one feel really honored to be here. What a great space. Great folks. And furthermore we wouldn't like to think the Jack Straw Cultural Center for having such a thing as the jocks or our writing fellowship.

[01:20:01] We would like just think we would like to think someone who has had the very difficult job I assume of wrangling to 12 writers. Notice I didn't say people because writers are a different breed a different animal a different kind of crazy so we would like to think Levi Fuller for coordinating so many readings and so many events this year.

[01:20:28] Levi. Come on down please.

[01:20:30] As this gift is for you from all of us.

[01:20:37] Thank you Levi. Yeah.

[01:20:39] A round of applause for Levi applause and if this fellowship this Jack Straw Writers 2017 cohort is a world Jordan Imani Keith is our goddess our God our mother or father our king or queen. I'll just say quick thing too is I've known Jordan for a little over 17 years when we first traveled to Africa together in 2000 and we have mostly by accident. Woven in and out of each other's lives over the last 17 years. I mean I wasn't even living in Seattle most of these these years but we have seen each other and we see each other but I think on that trip you know we were we were outsiders from even other outsiders but Jordan a monarchy is the kind of outsider who makes you want to stand outside with her. So from all of us. Gotcha. Thank you Jordan for everything for selecting us and for being our gracious everything. I love you. Get your butt up here.

[01:22:11] And thanks everyone for listening. Every day Yeah all right fine.

[01:22:20] You made me cry. I got flowers in there red. That's nice. Thank you all.

[01:22:28] Seriously. Pay attention to them.

[01:22:33] Pay attention to Jack Straw and the work that they're doing because I can guarantee any writer that you know of in this city has come through Jack Straw and may quietly change the culture of this place. I thank all the people that like there is a board member over there.

[01:22:54] Kathleen and others who do that but seriously as I listen to each one of you read again and the new work that has come and the work that you wrote for the anthology I was revisited again by the experience of reading their work in December which was the beginning of the hardest year that I've had in my life and the way that each of you move is not the same through the world and we're never the same in a day any of us or in a year.

[01:23:35] So I invite you again to go over there and get that anthology because I guarantee you that there's going to be a day that you open to a page of one of the things that they've written and it's gonna carry you to a place you didn't know that you needed to go you know what I mean and there is another organization called Bushwick and they put their writing to music and you can get a little download slip over there. See Levi holding it and you are going to be amazed that that can happen.

[01:24:17] And I think Ellie has a book over there and I think that's all. Look he's holding it.

[01:24:23] I think that's all I'm supposed to remember to say except for thank you so much for coming and having your hearts and thank all of you for your work. Which is crazy. I just want to live in it.

[01:24:36] So write a whole lot of stuff so I can live in your words. Thank you for letting me be the curator for this program. It's a blessing

[01:24:55] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.