



Library podcast

Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series: Meeting 375

00:00:01 [Peggy](#)

Good evening and welcome to the "It's About Time Writers' Reading Series" now in its 32nd year. This live reading is being recorded and will be available on the "It's About Time" YouTube channel and as a podcast through its Seattle Public Library sponsor. Tonight is reading number 375 and it actually marks a year since our last in person reading in February 2020. We have been so fortunate to have Seattle Public Library's support in making this program more accessible throughout the last year. "It's About Time," since its inception, has welcomed experienced and not experienced writers in multiple genres and was founded by Esther Altshul Helfgott. "It's About Time" is dedicated to an end of racism, homophobia, anti-semitism, homelessness and war. Once again, as a reminder, tonight's event is being recorded. Tonight we welcome Arlene Kim, Shin Yu Pai and Meredith Clark- in that order. If you would like to do a three-minute Open Mic between readers, other than the one who's already

00:01:20 [Peggy](#)

told me [unintelligible] will be joining us. Please, let me know in the chat and I didn't write this down, but I'm Peggy Sturdevant and I I've been hosting this for six or seven years now. So we are breaking new ground tonight with adding shared screen visual potential. So please bear with us if there are any mishaps. First, I'll be welcoming and you'll be able to see how she's merging this Arlene Kim. Arlene Kim's collection of poems "What Have you Done to Our Ears to Make Us Hear Echoes?" won an American book award and was a finalist for the Washington State book award. That was before she started questioning poetry's role in her life and definitely before the pandemic. Nowadays, she, like many of you spends a lot of time washing her hands, checking her mask supply- especially now that we're supposed to double mask- over thinking, awkwardly cutting her own hair, feeling anxious and occasionally finding poems in odd places. She has not baked a damn thing sourdough or otherwise this past

00:02:40 [Peggy](#)

year because she hates cooking. Welcome Arlene.

00:02:45 [Arlene](#)

Yay. Thank you. Thank you so much, Peggy, for organizing coordinating, everything, and Shin Yu and Meredith for inviting me. Hi everyone. Okay, let me start screen sharing. Thank you for being here. Thank you for being my willing guinea pigs. I wrote These poems in the game "Animal Crossing: New Horizons" on a Nintendo Switch, which is a handheld game console. It's got its own built-in, small screen and controls. It is a world unto itself, just like the Animal Crossing game. Why did I do this? Well, I've always liked playing around with technologies to see what different things that it can show me about poetry and also it was 2020 at the time. So I was trying to run away from the out-of-control world which maybe you all have the urge to do as well. Last year, this is where I ran and apparently, poetry ran here with me. The game happens in real time. That means a winter minute in the real world is the same winter minute in the game's world. So

00:03:47 [Arlene](#)

I was escaping from the world, but living in it at the same time, like literally the same time and maybe that's where the idea to write poems in the game came from, because I needed some way to reconcile or acknowledge the same set of time happening in two different places. So, I don't know. Usually, when I get into one of these technology, poetry technology, poetry trances. I just ride it out. If you're like Animal Crossing, what's that? All you need to know is an adorable little game that puts you on your own adorable. Little island to do, adorable little island, things like fish, which I'm very bad at, pick sea shells along the beach. Shake fruit from trees. Catch frogs, plant flowers. You can collect stones and tree branches to make stuff. Swim in the ocean. Talk to your cute Island villagers or you can sit around and stare at the sky. I did that so much just sitting around and looking out over the water. That was probably my number one game activity. The game came out March 2020, which

00:04:46 [Arlene](#)

is right around when this Global covid-19 pandemic really took off. I knew that's what made Animal Crossing really blow up in popularity because, you know, the pandemic was forcing us all inside and forcing us to isolate. So, we were antsy for ways to do the same things we missed doing like, hanging out with friends at a coffee shop or traveling, or just going to a place- happy place that was somewhere other than your tiny little apartment. And that's what the game did for me. It provided that kind of [unintelligible] 2020 was so tough. Let me take a moment here to say that Black Lives Matter- they have always mattered. They should always matter and the anxieties and violence caused by racism, including against Asian Americans, which I don't know if you've seen the news lately. There have been a lot of attacks against Asian Americans. We say that racism is still happening. So I hope our fight against that racism is also still happening. So yeah, 2020 was a year. As for writing,

00:05:49 [Arlene](#)

well, I didn't really know what to write or how to write or why to write. So mostly, I didn't write. I just hunkered down in the [unintelligible] apartment with my husband and hit out on the game Island. Then one day one of my Island villagers gifted me a typewriter because sometimes your villagers [unintelligible]. So I took that typewriter, I set it up on a desk on my Island and I tried to write a poem there every day. There was no pressure. Who's going to see it except for the squirrels and bears and ducks on my Island? Why not do it? So, before you know it, I'd written a load of poems that ended up being all the things happening in the outside world and the inside world. One of the many things happening in my inside world was that my dad started to develop memory problems. [unintelligible] I ended up working through that whole thing on my island- I'm still working through it.

00:06:45 [Arlene](#)

How did I actually write the poems in the game's funk-ass keyboard? You have to move quick, quick, quick to type each letter individually. It was really slow. You could only put about five words per line. And then once you type the line, it's gone. You can't look at what you put in so far. So we're going to the next line. It sort of forced me to live and write and process in

00:07:10 [Arlene](#)

that moment only. It was unexpected- the whole process. This. But it was kind of what I needed in a year that felt like everything was hitting the fan all at once. So, yeah, here we are. Okay. In this video, I tried to give a feel for what was happening on my Island at the time of each poem. If you're listening to the podcast for, you can't see the video. No worries. You don't need them to get the poems. And if your internet connection is making the video choppy or out of sync, with what I'm saying, feel free to close your eyes, go to the island, in your mind and just listen. "April 5th. Running away for cloud and pray, flowered on the other face death on the daily. Pretty face has always been my reason. Come then and feel the love and resurrection, where we'll watch the power ruin the guise of hard work."

00:08:13 [Arlene](#)

"May 19. This is the closest I've come to getting up at 5:00 a.m. to write a walk, the sunrise, wearing a flower crown in my hair and an apron embroidered with mushrooms. Without need for an audience or a motive other than watch the light in the sky unmask herself. To sit in an Eden with the butterflies, undisturbed would be infinitive. Funny state of intentions and meant to and possibly to come in future. The fun is always just beyond my reach even though the light surrounds me." "May 22. What if I don't want to write today's poem? You have a day's work calling. Lunch is calling. A, B, X and Y are all I need to navigate life's small choices. [unintelligible] is what I like to be. Exiled to a Dodo space where distance and extinction mean

nothing. Normality. All we desire is a new rose, a funny hat. How small we are inside our four-button paradises. How blue and wild and ungrowable." "Summer, June 3rd. Even in Paradise will get used to the same notes being played today on this day, the perfect Moon. Same three

00:09:45 [Arlene](#)

fruits growing on the same nine trees. Each flower [unintelligible]. I didn't know. I'd long for something lopsided, torn, burned down and [unintelligible]. A misshapen star would be for a furious gouge in an otherwise [unintelligible]. Perhaps, because I'm lonely and looking for a broken thing, like, me. That's why I've got people. Well, little wonder I don't believe me. They couldn't escape their own loneliness, they had to create me. What reason, what power would they have? [unintelligible] August through September. When I go to take a ship, I sit across from the same street naked on our shower curtain, every day, every ship. A sketch of urban life in black and white. Two men in suits walking to or from the best murder of their careers. A couple, lagging behind. The cars parked hastily along the drawn road. My eye always going to the old woman in the back. How do I know she's old? I ask myself every time between [unintelligible] the dowel. [unintelligible] struggle to escape themselves. Hand bent on a

00:11:00 [Arlene](#)

cane. Hands raised in surrender. The shape of stop of the emptied Avenue bathed and flashing lights. Ships are not poetic. I know not like fields of lilac when solid with a nonchalant grace of a rajah birdwing flitting by, but they are a loyal part of life. Something, true asking every day to be, let go take away with them inventory we no longer need. I'm tired of being only the roses [unintelligible].

00:11:32 [Arlene](#)

Fall. I learned a while back that the Moon is moving away from the earth about an inch every year, you can verify this on the NASA website. I thought about this a lot last year, especially when it seemed like everything everywhere on Earth was on fire. October third. Pair of Dice-lost. We a bad roll. Gamble gone belly-up. Jig up. Our jobs to have a nice day unmakes us. Just a piece of work are we. A rover unmoored. This furred, unantlered fangs only on the inside. There's a zoo inside us, emptying its wildness, setting everything sblaze. How cruel and calamitous you must look on the other side of the lake glass. No wonder every year the moon makes good her get away that much further from all we've wrought.

00:12:38 [Arlene](#)

October 31st. The months are full of ghosts, or my mind is, or it's moths with their dry fluttering eating up the papered minutes. What a lonely, lonely sound. I can't track or tack or get the

Knack anymore. I'm stuck with useless turkeying. Like "let's take a road trip to my heart" and "what a honeybee of a conundrum of royalty of workers." There's been a haunting in my bathroom lately. No one there, but the flush goes anyway, as if to suggest, it's all worthless. Best send it to sea. A dull Monarch is flapping ceaselessly against the western cliff wall. Beating and beating it for what I can't say to exist. I guess, even In this cloud space, we each fight to belong. November 11th. I don't have any good ideas. What happens when your muse leaves you for another poet; packs up and writes a last goodbye. Not even a creative letter just form. Let's talk about that moment. You alone standing by the typewriter staring down at the lackluster note left you. Moved on to other opportunities spending more time

00:13:53 [Arlene](#)

with family, best to you and your endeavors. Your mind feeling a sudden clear. Airy, full of blank danger.

00:14:02 [Arlene](#)

Winter. December. I'm too sleepy to write a poem. The snowflakes are lucky able to drift off, to nap while working and no one to think they're shirking the work of hushing the land for the end of year rest before the next work to come. December. What's so bad about forgetting? After all, don't we come to the island every day to do Just that? Forget the world that checks and binds us, tallies and tears at us? Each Christmas movie I've turned on was a prayer to forget. The endless screen scroll and offering on times altar, sacrifice made of minutes. "Take them," I was saying, I don't want to know any more about this laundered time. These counterfeit days. I relinquish these sorrows. If the price is memory, well, okay. The snow seems happy enough to fall gently into the evening on a bed of itself. Content not to know the next morning- the last day. And so, who am I to question winter?

00:15:16 [Arlene](#)

December. It's snowing on my Island and also in my father's brain. Why is Winter the last season? The one that comes for us all? This blanket of fresh blankness, the sharp knives in the air, filling our lungs and stinging, our eyes awake. Once I was at a bus stop waiting for the light that meant homeward on that friendless night. A boy with his mother there too. It was a rude cold so much snow. He just started crying softly for the heartlessness of winter. How it erased every road and signpost, every silhouette along the sidewalk marking his way gone into a formless, benign hush. I didn't cry. I guess I already knew. December. When did life become about catching a snowflake and failing to catch a snowflake quite so many times?

00:16:15 [Arlene](#)

That's it. Thank you so much. Super, appreciate you all being willing to, you know, try this out with me.

00:16:24 [Peggy](#)

That was delightful, could you do is for people who joined us a little late, could you go back and explain the process in terms of you talked about the lines disappearing, in Animal Crossing? Were they all written that way your poems?

00:16:40 [Arlene](#)

They were all written that way. So for anyone who's joining, who is not familiar with Animal Crossing, it is a game. I showed this earlier that play on a Nintendo Switch, which is a game console. I'm not sure what the right word is. It's a game device that is all completely unto itself, and it's hard for me to show the process on here right now. But let me show you. This also want to be cognizant of people who are listening to the podcast. I'm showing them what it looked like when I type on the games console. So the best I could do is when you type. It is Like, imagine if when you're texting on your phone, you only see one line at a time. And every time you

00:17:23 [Arlene](#)

finish a line and a line can only be about five words, every time you finish a line and you send it the line disappears and you just have to keep moving. So if you're writing sort of more than one line at a time, there's this strange process that has to happen in your head where you kind of keep in mind what you wrote, but also let it go and let your mind be free to wander to wherever it's going to take you. So, I found out to be both infuriating and really freeing in a way. And the way I could have saved the poems was to take a screenshot on the actual device, which does let you after you take the screenshot, see all the lines, like at least, maybe like five at a time but I only use that as a way to record them. I mean the writing process is very much like one line at a time. Yeah.

00:18:06 [Peggy](#)

Fascinating. And what I realized is that since we went online and we haven't been doing a writer's craft discussion, but I think you have now after one year rebooted are writer's craft discussion. Because

00:18:20 [Peggy](#)

of what I was really wondering, was how you did capture those and now will you think you'll ever go back? Are you always going to write one vanishing line by line?

00:18:32 [Arlene](#)

I am super fickle, you know, I feel bad for calling out the Muse for leaving me because I'm constantly leaving poetry behind. And so I doubt it, I'm sure I'll move on to some other thing that I find later on. Yeah, I tend to kind of move from thing to thing, but for now it is still interesting to me, especially Shin Yu was asking about. Well, how would you present these? I don't know. I'm not sure how that would work. I mean, we talked a lot about, I feel like putting them in a traditional book form, wouldn't work. It would just rip out all of the feeling of it all, but I'm not sure. I sort of wish I could send it like a secret love letter to anybody, who was playing Animal Crossing on Nintendo switch, but obviously that's not gonna happen. So yeah, I don't know.

00:19:19 [Peggy](#)

Are there any techie people out here tonight?

00:19:21 [Peggy](#)

Well, I guess if your husband hasn't figured out how to do that, you know. Yeah, that was lovely. I loved how you took us all the way through a snowflake. Considering we are waiting for a snowflake tonight and normally that might have actually caused the library to close in case there was a snowflake. So, along with your work tonight and the fact that we can still go ahead and meet, it's just another kind of rainbow if you will on the pandemic, there's so much creativity happening. And I'm so glad to have been part of being, you being able to share yours with us tonight.

00:20:03 [Arlene](#)

Thank you so much for inviting me.

00:20:05 [Peggy](#)

Thank you. All right. Now, we're over to Shin Yu Pai. Shin Yu is the author of 10 books, including ENSO (Entre Rios Books, 2020), AUX ARCS (La Alameda, 2013), Adamantine (White Pine, 2010), Sightings (1913 Press, 2007), and Equivalence (La Alameda, 2003). Her essays have appeared in The Rumpus, City Arts, Yes! Magazine, Tricycle, and The Stranger, among others. Her work has been exhibited at the Dallas Museum of Art, The McKinney

Avenue Contemporary, The Paterson Museum, American Jazz Museum, Three Arts Club of Chicago, The Center for Book Arts, International Print Center New York, and The Ferguson Center Art Gallery at the University of Alabama. From 2015 to 2017, she served as the fourth Poet Laureate of The City of Redmond. Welcome Shin Yu.

00:20:55 [Shin Yu](#)

Thank you Peggy. So the last time I read for the It's About Time series was some years ago, I was the nearly nine months pregnant and I did the reading. And then I went to dinner with my husband. My water broke and I went into labor and my son was born like eight hours later.

00:21:18 [Peggy](#)

Say I was, I'm so glad you decided to tell that story because I decided to show great forbearance and not just say, "Shin Yu is the only person we know who gave birth after her reading!" So far, she always will have that claim to fame.

00:21:37 [Shin Yu](#)

It's just a labor of creation. Yes. So I have very warm associations with this series and during the pandemic, I've been writing a lot of poems about my daily life. My son is now 7, he's being homeschooled, like, all the other children. So the poems that open with the, for reading, from my most recent book are very much poems that are about this time, be able to quarantine and the pandemic.

00:22:06 [Peggy](#)

Are you ready? Just let me give me a little signal when you're ready to turn on your your screen.

00:22:11 [Shin Yu](#)

Sure, it won't be until the end. I'm going to read for like 17 minutes and I'll tell you to queue up the videos.

00:22:17 [Peggy](#)

Oh, the videos. Those are both last, got it. Okay. Okay, so you read some poems read from the book and then I show some video problems.

00:22:26 Shin Yu

Okay. So the first piece

00:22:28 Shin Yu

I'm going to read is called "Upaya," which is the Sanskrit word that's used in Buddhist context to be expedient means or the idea of skillfulness and language in particular the use of right speech into a thoughtful intentional speech, intention about language. Those pieces.

00:22:46 Shin Yu

Upaya.

00:22:48 Shin Yu

we have loved each other long enough that what I don't say still echoes in the mind, I am so bored of raising facts: stabbings, assaults, my husband knows better than to tell me what to do, speaks his care so that I don't have to eat my fear of going alone to the grocery store I have choices like that day one month ago when I asked my son to please stop telling people you are Chinese

00:23:20 Shin Yu

First Grade Math.

00:23:22 Shin Yu

my 6 year olds brain is broken by the equation part plus 3 equals 14 to solve for heart, 7x like, a treasure map, his father gives an analogy with cookies. As I observe the confusion multiply in my son's speech because love is another language because heart is not a fixed number because my love for you is infinite.

00:23:49 Shin Yu

This piece was written, inspired by Marie kondo. Who is a Shinto Shrine Priestess who is known for helping people get rid of their stuff.

00:24:02 Shin Yu

Tidying up.

00:24:04 Shin Yu

when I retire my son's, well, warm clothes to the consignment pile, I reach for the maternity outfit, stowed beneath the marriage bed. We consider the hand-me-down dress given to me by the Bellevue Mom. You can see it again. After miscarriage, the nursing shirt worn by my college roommate, after the birth of her boy, a new dress I bought myself on my nonprofit paycheck. Things I can't let go no spark of Joy, yet some other category of worth invested with the energy of an immutable line of mothers, the aura of fecundity garments that hum with Divine Life. My child now seven reaching towards gratitudes to give thanks for such.

00:24:55 Shin Yu

Empty zendo for Bill Shuffle. When is the hall never not vacant alone in my Cottage. I think of my teacher, gone now two years. Listen for the sound of the inverted Bell Tibetan Bowl, sings while I study the Interiors of other human habitations. Transmitted over computer cams, the Sangha divided now more than ever, I will practice for as long as I am able.

00:25:32 Shin Yu

So the 8th day of the 12th month of the year is something that's observed by many Buddhist communities, is called Rohatsu and Rohatsu is a Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day that the historical Buddha attained Enlightenment through sitting through the night. So it's it's common for a Buddhist practitioners to do a special set to sort of recreate that practice and December was the first time that I did that and this poem is in commemoration of that occasion. Rohatsu. Next year I'll fast first, I say to my partner feeding shame for having taken a hot shower and shrouding, myself and lambswool. I am not austere enough to enter any cave. I think, instead of a embarking on that, diet of metals for weeks, my skin is green frequently with envy. I am swaddled in blankets. As I turn out the lights, strike a match to light the flame, take a seat to meet the Gathering Darkness with my money solves.

00:26:49 Shin Yu

This piece is called being Avalokiteśvara. Avalokiteśvara has many names. He is the bodhisattva or saint of compassion. And In some cultures, Chinese culture, Avalokiteśvara is known as Quan Yin or the goddess of Mercy. Being Avalokiteśvara is not no sweat, right speech aside, all so goddamn effortless, no matter what the amateurs say, vows ain't bragging rights. If I had a thousand arms, if I had a thousand eyes, action would still a single-minded

focus. I am no less a goddess with this one pair of hands, these waiting eyes looking inwards. as I realized how to bend without breaking, Cuttings. At 45, my hand sink deep into Rome, clearing room to plant propagated stems given by a neighbor round and water [unintelligible] the wandering jew to get its needs met with what was that reach fragile fibrous hairs more delicate than rootstock transferred, from Earth to potting soil on that last trip home. I pinched a bit of sand and soil from my uncle's backyard

00:28:14 [Shin Yu](#)

in Shan Shui. My father's home, and brought back inside a sealed bag in which I wanted to imagine. [unintelligible].

00:28:27 [Shin Yu](#)

So this is sort of the occasion of New Year's New Year's Eve for Chinese New Year and this is a piece that I was inspired by my friend, Seattle poet Koon Woon. The title is "Hongbao, White Envelope." Hongbao is the red envelope. that many Chinese families will give Elders to children often as representative of a gift of love. On. So yeah, the period of the last couple weeks is kind of period of the diaspora often journeying together with their families and loved ones and going home. So this piece is about chosen family. Hongbao, White Envelope for Koon Woon. Across the Chinese diaspora. Our elders, insert crisp, new bills into miniature red envelopes to be shared with the young on the occasion of a new year. The birthday. The benediction. These [unintelligible] appeared on a regular occasions throughout my girlhood the grades were high at times were good at the family business, was net positive that year as kids, we anticipated the amount inside the gilded hongbao based on our performance

00:29:50 [Shin Yu](#)

of what qualified, what counted as good. My parents retired trade after trade. We spent years living in the red, the field. Shiitake, mushroom farm. The shuttered, gift shop and obsolete import business. We lived off credit as an adult. I catalog the collections of the cultural Museum and encountered, the red envelope that I didn't see for decades. Unsure of the Chinese characters printed across its front, I asked my peer from The mainland to confirm its use Jenny laughed. I didn't know the markings indicated. It's used for a while for a wedding red with shame. I pictured a bride tucking, the small parcel into her cleavage when I stop depositing his checks I pictured my father growing red with iron he found other ways to reach me. Posting unmarked envelopes of cash through the mail imagining American dollars could be as secure a transaction as gold. Bills wouldn't expired or lose the exchange value. The Bachelor poet has sent funds to my son since he was two, he is not my voice. Father,

00:31:01 Shin Yu

the \$20 bills arrive enclosed within a plain white business envelope stamped with a chop. The image is a goldfish transforming into yin and yang, no red ink, just black, just white. This note, my father once told me that his sister in San Francisco used to steal money from her gambler husband's trousers when he was asleep in order to send money to have in China when he was going to middle school. Those days, graduates of high schools can become teachers. My father came to the u.s. at 18 and worked in the Oakland Naval shipyards. He always told his children to go get the best education possible and that includes non school learning as well. He was a practical man. I am not so much enclosed in something extra for tomo best wishes. Before I was born, our names had already been altered the paternal grandmother mandated that we take the Bachelors name for to honor a relation outside the ancestral bloodline, we were relatively new to the country then too, transplants from Fujian to Taiwan

00:32:13 Shin Yu

the patriarch of our own family gone. It was the benevolence of the stranger that made life tolerable, no one got rich. Everyone had food to eat from Sai we became Pai. Woon is not your true name any more than Pai is mine. We do not wear red or believe in luck. My ancestors were never at Gumshan nor were they present at the remembrance of the golden spike. We are biologically unrelated yet across dialect, generation and clan we do not ask whether we belong to one another like the koi that you choose to steal your stories the connection to what's Chinese translates into care for all of our relations. So I'm going to read one poem from my book "And So," which came out in the pandemic March 2020. on, I think it was st. Patrick's Day actually. So this piece is a mid-length poem. It is a piece that I wrote for a history Cabaret about the neighborhood of Belltown in particular. a citizen of Belltown, who was a really unique artist and basically the owners of the Rendezvous, they came to

00:33:36 Shin Yu

me and asked me if I would write a piece that could tell the stories of this particular neighborhood and they handed me like a pack of like hundreds of pages of like historical information, research about Belltown and I have working at that point in life where I had worked at an office in Belltown and I read through the information and the one story that really sort of lit my imagination on fire was a story of Pat Suzuki, a nightclub and Cabaret singer. Thank you, Arlene. And she was exceptional to me because she, as a child, had been interned in the Japanese internment camps and had come out of those and went to college and embarked on a career as an actress and a singer and she came to Seattle and she she left that particular profession and decided she want to be a nightclub singer and her story was just phenomenal. And you know, even today, there aren't that many examples to me of really strong Asian American artists and models. And this was, you know, an individual who was really coming into her

00:34:44 Shin Yu

own in the 60s and 50s and 60s. So this piece is for Pat Suzuki. The piece is called Chiby, which is it, which was her childhood name. She was the youngest of four children, so Chiby translates roughly as squirt. In the Vintage footage old blue eyes calls, her Patricia insisting. You can't get anywhere as a singer unless you're Italian but Frank, I'm Japanese. She protested. I'm from Seattle, at the age of eleven little Chiyoko, the All-American Girl sent packing to the high. Plains luck up at Granada War relocation center for the crime of being descended from the Japanese. How this suffering shape the life behind barbed wire and prison children grew up to be poet printmaker, nightclub, singer [unintelligible] Pat Suzuki, the record reaching back so far we strain to hear the past. In place of cooking or setting the table kids playhouse standing in imaginary mess hall loans, Loading over barbed wire, the Jade Rabbit pounds Mochi, in the full moon. Over Camp Boy Scouts raise the

00:35:59 Shin Yu

flag pledging to a country that has shunned us. Six guard towers armed with machine guns here for our own safety. Boy's day. Fish dreamers fly over barracks, the largest carp to honor and oldest son. The silk vest, handmade for a boy's deployment, 1000 red knots each hand-tied by a different detainee. Wheezing from feeder she reshapes the mattress. The canvas bag stuffed full of hay. Thin-walled, tarpaper barracks can't block the biting chill of winter before raising the camp, the last act building a marker for the Dead. As Suzuki, she arrived in Seattle. Her ex-husband Norm described how she sashayed off the street to Camping from a bit part at the more where she was cast as a minor Oriental in Teahouse of the August Moon. 100 pounds of dynamite with a voice that could lose from the tiles on Broadway's towers. Three years later in the role of Linda Low, the stripper in Flower Drum Song, her signature tune "I Love Being a Girl." We questioned what a rising star might quit of right for

00:37:18 Shin Yu

we're in New York theater preferring potent, clubs or motherhood for her art, she embraced the person that she always was to find herself at home in a cabaret of her own, making that place where she saw herself reflected in the pale white faces of the problem where she shattered stereotype inhabiting her skin flush with more than anyone from Camp Hamachi could ever dream. So I'm going to close with two poem films, that Peggy is going to help. Queue up for me in screen share the first piece is they're both poem films. I've been making with a British filmmaker named David Ian Bickley. And the first piece is specifically about it's called "Star Shy" and it's about the possibility of life and love on other planets. So I think that's all I'll say. Go ahead and play it.

00:38:20 [Speaker on Video](#)

In the search for signs of intelligent life. We are blinded by want of a twin we measure flux gun through a telescope seeking. The Sun that comes right at us to shine. It's light upon a distant world, still unborn, but of the Mind bathed in Starlight. In the search for signs of intelligent life. We are blinded by want of a twin her face turned towards you and resonance. We plot confirmation from this fears that were there at Birth mapping the gap between Cosmos to astrum revealing mysteries of atmosphere. Chasing Heavenly transits.

00:39:09 [Speaker on Video](#)

In the search for signs of intelligent life. We are blinded by want to between here in the burning true version of bodies are positioned sculpted by gravity in an order. Yet unnamed the outlying being exits in the search for signs of intelligent life.

00:39:32 [Speaker on Video](#)

We are blinded by want of a twin.

00:39:48 [Shin Yu](#)

It's one more piece that I'll ask Peggy to queue up and the piece is called "Tidal." And David asked me to specifically write him a series of poems, that could be about the human relationship to Tides as tide sort of function as a metaphor for Buddhist Karma reincarnation and sort of Cycles or patterns of experience. And so This is one of the sections of a larger piece that we're making, and it's called "Tidal". Can you queue it up, Peggy? And I'm going to turn off my video.

00:40:45 [Speaker on Video](#)

The ocean bulges towards the moon, as wine counted in a chalice flows over a rim.

00:40:56 [Speaker on Video](#)

The coastal Edge a liquid boundary. The planets flood Tides, Guided by Celestial mechanics

00:41:05 [Speaker on Video](#)

in the moon, the rise and fall of title surf.

00:41:12 [Speaker on Video](#)

Lunar phases, pull gravitational forces. Bring incoming Storm surges, orbital cycles of shedding.

00:41:24 [Speaker on Video](#)

Tsunami swells like scorched, Earth, wash away, corporeal traces of calcium, sodium. Phosphate copper, and chloride trappings Mineral and matter discharged. [errie music plays]

00:42:06 [Peggy](#)

Thank you for all the variety of what you shared and also for the piece that you shared before the video, I was just wanting to say after Arlene's reading that, I'm really completely taken with the local and nonprofit Densho. And Densho this next week is doing their week of remembrance, with events every single day. It's the anniversary of the signing of the executive order for the Japanese incarceration. And so there's just all sorts of things on their Densho site and one of the things that Arlene's last piece also reminded me of is they have a wonderful group that's doing a podcast called Campu and the brother and sister had doing Campu. I've been working with students And it's getting them engaged in different ways, thinking about how it Likens to experience is happening. Now, in terms of between ICE and the discrimination against so many asian-americans and a piece that we were just listening to today is about latrines, which doesn't sound like your basic topic but

00:43:26 [Peggy](#)

it's been absolutely amazing and the photographs that are there and the resources that are available are just over the top. We have such an incredible local resource in and Densho. So thank you, both, for sharing different aspects of the the experience and keeping in mind, you know, that it's, this is ongoing, this is not the past, so you know, what's happening? I'd now like to go to thank you again Shin Yu to Rick Fordice who is going to do, open mic, and then Julian Weaver. And then we're going to have Meredith Clark So Rick, are you ready?

00:44:09 [Rick](#)

I have a short Peace Corps story. Just happens to fit into a 3-minute Open Mic. Hope you find it interesting. It's called "Incitement of Insurrection." West Africa and Ghana were distant. Mostly unknown destinations. When I journeyed there in July of 1978 after growing up in North Seattle, to begin my Secondary School teaching assignment with the Peace Corps. Africa. Many cast a weary eye, in the weeks, leading up to my mid-july departure date, cautioning,

00:44:48 Rick

me of disease, and political instability disease, and political instability. I can always leave. I reasoned should the discomfort level become too high and return to the healthiest, most stable Nation on the globe. I wasn't worried. And then exactly two weeks before my scheduled departure, a tiny story appeared near the back of the local newspapers military coup in Ghana Lieutenant General Akufu has overthrown General Ashanong to become the new president of Ghana. A coup two week before in scheduled to arrive? From Peace Corps came the green light not a problem. And off, I went If you were to tip Oregon on its end, Ghana is almost exactly the same size and shape back then and still mostly. Now the rest of the country outside of the capital Accra is the same agrarian society had been for hundreds of years. When I arrived in Accra of spend my first month, I was not far from the government buildings and basis of the Armed Forces, with the bloody overthrow of the previous government,

00:45:53 Rick

had occurred just two weeks before. And yet relatively sheltered at one of our training locations. Had I not previously read about it, I would not have been aware of what had just taken place. Everyday life went on and a month later when I was shipped out to my rural school far from the capital it won't on even more. So unchanged from the previous few hundred years Fast forward one year to June 1979. The morning was like any of the previous year a present, but warm walk past Farms to the small Secondary School. The outskirts of the village, but clearly something was different when I arrived in them in the Teachers Lounge. Where we each get, Where We Gather in each morning before the start of classes crowded around a small radio, which was emitting a loud crackling voice with a staff and the school's other 12 Grant Teachers in loud, animated discussion hours before Gernal Akufu had been overthrown by Flight Lieutenant Jimmy Rollins, another coup, another Insurrection

00:46:58 Rick

another overthrown government. It was not directly affecting us several hundred miles from the capital but reflecting on the peace and serenity of Seattle in North America. I could not help but think, wow, this is one Wild Country. This is one wild area of the globe. Soon, the iron hand bell rang to announce the first class and the room emptied, but throughout the rest of the day in between classes, or if a teacher was not scheduled for one all were crowded around the small belching radio reporting from the capital thirsting for details, intense intently listening to the second successful, Insurrection of the previous 12 months.

00:47:40 Peggy

Thanks Rick. Okay Julene.

00:47:45 [Julene](#)

This was written during the pandemic during the summer during the fires. Fires burn our tomorrows. I'm grateful for that final box of nectarines Rama farm this late summer before the fire burned, their buildings to the ground swept through their Orchard. The inner heat goes, oh, so sweet nectarines. Warm me through a blistering year. When we know all has changed, we will ourselves into this new world climate in disarray. A world filled with disbelievers a wild and free world where only the grounding of cherries. Peaches nectarines melons the countdown of fruits from early wild salmon berries. Raspberries blackberries, then blueberries will bouy us. Fields swelter, taking our bounty or tears away. Live with sorrow. Only Summer' sweet fruit will save us. Captured saver, against Winters, cold ice. We are an ungrateful tide expressing disbelief against this Earth's plenum Bountiful as a basket of flushes, ripe, strawberries, a variety that no longer exists. So many

00:49:02 [Julene](#)

children burned in our fires of disbelief, they will never know that first taste. That burst and pop that makes us smile. What we remember that protects us from storms that steal tomorrow's pleasure?

00:49:19 [Peggy](#)

Thank you Julene. Thank you. I'm gonna stay with blueberries will bouy us. That's a line that I am going to cling to and hold. Barring everyone else, anyone else? Everyone else? Anyone else, who wants to open mic? We're going to go to Meredith Clark who will be our final reader unless there is a last Open Mic. So once again, thank you Shun Yu for essentially, curating the evening and inviting Arlene and Meredith to join us. Meredith Clark is a poet and writer whose work has received Black Warrior Review's nonfiction prize and the Sonora Review nonfiction prize. Her writing has appeared or is forthcoming in Phoebe, Gigantic Sequins, Denver Quarterly, Berkeley Poetry Review, Poetry Northwest, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA in writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a B.A. in creative writing from Oberlin College, and is the recipient of grants and residencies from Artist Trust, Art Farm Nebraska, Jack Straw, and the Vermont Studio Center. Her book, Lyrebird, is out now with Platypus Press. Welcome Meredith.

00:50:40 [Meredith](#)

Thank you so much. Um, what a special event, this has been. Thank you, Peggy. To the Seattle Public Library. Thank you to the open mic readers, Arlene. I think you're inventing new

forms which is really incredible and it was such a gift to have a chance to see that world to hear your words Shun Yu, I am transfixed as always, by your your images and the resonances and them. So thank you very much for that. I will be reading just a little bit from Lyrebird, which is out with platypus press. You can find it at Elliott Bay if you feel like picking up a copy or through small press distribution as well. Lyrebird

00:51:35 [Meredith](#)

In the days before I knew, whether or not you were real, I started writing to you speaking to the chance of you, in my mind unclear, whether the words were an invitation, they were an introduction, just the same. We traveled that weekend to an island where the woods were dark as memory. And I wore a pair of simple black boots. I'd had since I was 12. Milk fog, as the wind went by a picture of us at the top of a mountain, a first photo of you or simply a photo of the two of us. And the thin air, I did not know if the thought of you framed a presence or a vanishing. What if before you were born, your parents had taken a picture of themselves on a Mountaintop where the wind took a piece of your mother's hair and blew it across to touch your father, like a tentacle with its own will. Would some part of you forever carry a wildness, a little wind, your doors loose on hinges, where the gale goes through? Your father ran back to the car for warmth. But I stood a moment longer a tower above the valley,

00:53:07 [Meredith](#)

I was catching signals for you, I was tuning them in. If each moment from now on is shared, and these are your things too, there is so much telling to do. A video of a naturalist. Speaking of lyrebirds footage shows, the birds singing his song, which is actually a piece work of all the sounds in the forest. Other birds. A chainsaw, a camera shutter. In this way he attracts a mate. He preserves her immediate history, he sings her world back to her. Bled today. You are no less real, for being less imminent. These are the pictures of us from the time you were here a photo of your father. Very clever with my underwear. As his pocket square, a photo with Canada behind us. And here is the place where the picture was taken in. Someone's pocket seeing on my telephone, the dark becomes a mirror. You can see the nurse said, Shifting the monitor you are so early along that all we can make out is this little cluster of cells? A planet viewed from afar. It was the last I saw of you.

00:54:39 [Meredith](#)

Here, we will match you to a body, and the trick will be remembering that this body is housing only, it is just a place to be.

00:54:51 [Meredith](#)

In the Australian Forest, a man kept a pet Lyrebird, he played flute songs which the bird learned and sang when it was released to the wild. Even now all these Generations later, the birds still sing flute traces of Keel Row. 'O, weel may the keel row, The keel row, the keel row, O weel may the keel row That my laddie's in.' It is not theirs, this song, they sing. For a few days I thought this would be a book about your coming and then your arrival when you decided not to stay, it became a book about your absence, that is a harder book to write. Wanting to perfect the art of waiting, the art of being at loose angles, with things, the art of the bird in the woods, mimicking, the chainsaw. No worry of Oblivion. Someday when you are in this world and older, you will read with Wonder or suspicions about these things that were here before you these things that I tried to save for you so that you would have something of them for yourself. Now your father is sleeping, just the tops of his shoulders.

00:56:17 [Meredith](#)

The back of his neck, crumpled hair, a shells curve of ear. Not now. He does not hear us.

00:56:29 [Meredith](#)

Try loving deeply a person you do not know. Try loving a person who does not yet exist. This like the coming season is a matter of faith. Yesterday at the hem of the road and the woods, two deer in the snow. What I mean to say is that there are ways to occupy the spaces between worlds, there is always a border, And the acts allows that there might be two parts in everything. Right now, you are mostly memory.

00:57:11 [Meredith](#)

Today, you are everywhere. We stopped under the blossoms of the apple tree. There is half a nut there, the shelves, small heart-shaped Hollow. Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of the radio, wondered on his deathbed if someone would bring him, a hearing aid, that would allow him to tune in to the sounds of years past. Though slightly diminished by time and distance he believed, they must still be in existence out past the Stars. I write these sections, then I read them aloud. And before I go to sleep, I find myself hoping to catch a glimpse of you in my dreams. Last night, an orange tree grew next to the great expanse of the warehouse across the street. There were no leaves but on each branch and fallen to the ground, an embarrassing profusion of oranges.

00:58:18 [Meredith](#)

We spent the weekend in the canyon all gold with the season. We lay on a hill where I looked at your father until the facts appeared and I cried. You are so true, I told him. You are like a bell shot through with it, positively ringing with truth. There is not enough time. For all the

loving I have to do I say and I am stricken with it. No. No. Your father says and his skin is pooled with pink and yellow and the tears on his face are bright. There is time. He is saying, there is time, there is time, I am sure of it. I began again. And the words way because I have a hole in me somewhere, and have forgotten how to breathe. I think if I use the cup of my days very carefully, each second each minute. I could just begin to love you enough. In the columbarium there is a door you should not touch. The man playing the accordion will set down his instrument and run to close it saying. Please do not open it. Please. There should be a sign posted. The birds will escape. Someday I promise to take a picture

00:59:40 [Meredith](#)

of you, the sun will be at your back and there will be a shadow of your body pinned to your feet. That is ever so much taller than you are. This picture is older than you and older than your Shadow. I will say, I have always known about this picture and you will laugh, because it is summer and because you are a happy child, but mostly because I am not making any sense at all. Somewhere before sleep. I see a child head turned back in laughter a face. That's half my own. Joy tears through the corridors of my heart.

01:00:31 [Meredith](#)

Today is your due date, Yours and Mine and Ours. There are bees all the way home in a hollow house. Someone is hammering and because I cannot tell where the sound is coming from, it is coming from everywhere. Suddenly it is late summer. And instead of mothering you, I am at the beach on my back on a sheet on the sand. We are watching the meteors, your father has never seen one before, doesn't even know what to look for. I think I saw one, he says, after a while, it was so fast, are they fast? They are fast. I say just a tale of light and then the freight train passes, bright, grinding and by then we are all in our minds and someplace else.

01:01:29 [Meredith](#)

You came again, and then I went into the kitchen and put on water, for tea and felt myself begin to bleed. It was all, so complicated. How could I even have hoped to hold any of it in my hands to comprehend, any of it? The best I could do, would be to Simply surrender myself to whatever would come to swing Wide Doors. I had been shutting. The all will be he anyway. The tea was fine and delicate and light and long made of little Pearl shaped beads. The man, at the shop had explained that there are rolled by hand. He gestured one hand, the top the other moving something small between them. Your father left for work. And I stood in the kitchen with the windows touched by Steam and looked out at the shaggy pine. Each needle tipped to make a tiny drop of water and each drop lit by the morning sun, looking well-planned and infinitely rare.

01:02:43 Meredith

You are not young. That is simply the way you will arrive. We threw ourselves down that Hill your father flat on the sled on the frozen ground me a top of your father as though he was my sled, when we reached the bottom we were laughing, we were coughing in the cold. We were at the hinge of the new year and the moon had cast our shadow on the snow. I told your father when I believe that you are here with us when you want to be. Now? he asked, hovering. I said, It will be part of an agreement we made a long time ago, but I will be your mother and you will be a child to me. How to wear a love so it does not grow thin so it lasts us out. Lives us This was where the world began to get more complicated because I knew more and understood less. You sat with me, do you remember you start with your hands on my shoulders? And you asked me how easy it was to be good. Here it is not easy. I said because things are so beautiful and because that is so easy to forget. When you are here we will walk down

01:04:11 Meredith

the street, slowly naming the flowers. I can feel you you know leaning in to listen. I will take you down the street and show you the first flowers blooming. I will show you the apple tree that fell one night and the birds that live there still and the one apple hung high on a branch there, like an ornament. Then I will teach you the names of the shapes of the clouds and show you the star at the center of the Apple. I will float with you out into the lake and you will look underwater to see what the fish see. And it will be as though you have always been here because we have always been here, haven't we? We have always.

01:05:08 Peggy

Thank you. Thank you Meredith. That was that was exquisite. I'm so glad that we now have the ability to record these and and share them with other people later because it always was so distressing to me that we could have such amazing evenings and not have everybody in the room with us and even though it's not quite the same, I'm delighted that we are able to to capture these moments and share them beyond. So thank you. I don't think anyone else in the program. Next month our readers are Mary Ellen Tally, Amber Nelson and Diana Elsner as a reminder this event was recorded, I'm going to turn off the recording shortly, so that if people want to talk and ask questions of each other, just The way you would if we were actually putting up the chairs at the library this is really been delightful and it just kind of gives me more. The said the creativity it's blossoming and the way that were able to reach out just makes me feel so much more hopeful about, you know, everything.

01:06:42 Peggy

After all, there's already signs of spring and buds. We will see them after the snow is gone.