



Library podcast

Exploring Black Brilliance and Black Joy through Storytelling and Writing: Nature & The Outdoors

00:00:02 Jessica Werner

Hi everyone. And thank you so much for joining us tonight. I am Jessica Werner, a children's librarian at The Seattle Public Library. I want to welcome you all to our event tonight. Once they make my quick announcements, I will hand things over to our friends at the African-American Writers' Alliance. I am so thankful for their partnership on this program, and want to recognize the incredible work that AAWA has done, building this program series for the library's summer of learning. Once we get started, I will turn off my camera and be in the background to monitor the chat, just to make sure that no one crashes are Zoom event to create a nuisance. I would like to thank The Seattle Public Library Foundation and the foundation's donors for the supporting the library's Summer of Learning program. If you would like to learn more about the Summer of Learning program, please visit our website at www.spl.org/summeroflearning. I also want to take a moment to recognize that we are

00:01:00 Jessica Werner

Living on Indigenous land. The traditional, unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples specifically the Duwamish. I'm now going to hand the mic over to Noni and turn off my camera.

00:01:11 Noni Ervin

Thank you all for joining. My name is Noni Ervin and I am a proud member of the African American Writers' Alliance. We're going to do an hour of storytelling around nature and the outdoors, including a variety of African American Writers' Alliance writers and authors and poets and community guests and elders and storytellers. So we will begin with Merri Ann Osborne, who's going to tell us a little bit about the history of African American Writers' Alliance. Merri Ann.

00:01:45 Merri Ann Osborne

Thank, you Noni. Good evening, everyone. Thank you so much again for joining us. We are the African American Writers' Alliance. We're a diverse and dynamic collective of Seattle area Pacific Northwest writers of African descent. And the alliance provides an informal and supportive forum for new and published writers. We help one another

00:02:11 Merri Ann Osborne

polish Our skills provide peer review and create opportunities for public readings like this evening, as well as doing other media venues and events. Ultimately, the group encourages members and the

public and everyone we know to publish individually and collectively and to write, That's just a little bit about us. You can see what we do at www.aawa-seattle.org.

00:02:43 Merri Ann Osborne

So thank you. And back to, you Noni.

00:02:46 Noni Ervin

Thank you, Merri Ann. We're going to start this evening off with our first poet and storyteller Kibibi Monié. Kibibi is a native of Seattle and the executive and artistic director of Nu Black Arts West Theater, the oldest African-American theater company in Washington state. Kibibi is Gnana Queen Mother in Ghana, West Africa. She has worked with Stevie Wonder, Billy Preston, Kenny G, Gladys Knight, Roy Ayers, Hank Crawford, Brenda Holloway, Major Lance Rufus, Chandler, Martha Reeves, Ben Vereen and Ruby Dee. Kibibi is also the founder of the Summer Youth Education, a free program for students 4th to 8th grade and 9th to 12th grade from 2008 to present studies include math, science, world history, media literacy, creative writing and film. Kibibi.

00:03:56 Kibibi Monié

I am so delighted to be here this afternoon. I'm sure you're going to love...

00:04:22 Kibibi Monié

Forgive me... [audio breaking up for the rest of Kibibi's time] praying in the pocket wasn't quite dark in the mosquitoes were just coming out tonight, but we didn't care. We just had to be aware of the fact that we couldn't bite them back.

00:04:44 Kibibi Monié

No fear, Was it Not a care in the world love...

00:04:53 Kibibi Monié

...with each other? Disinfectant as far as we knew, we all had each other's backs and actor. Do you remember when we used to go ahead under the trees and truism sandwich... Go down... We have all the people that neighborhood all the names in the neighborhood within dancing in the streets. We sang the latest tools. Oh, so sweet. Imagine if you were a perfect knife and all We didn't first fight. Everything's all right. Every party hearty. Oh, I everyone was having fun. Even the babies got to run in the family, relay races, tug-of-war and softball painted,

00:05:53 Kibibi Monié

Beautiful. I see all that. This is filled with joy and love it, Unity. I'll maybe Beauty with love and humidity for all the work. Oh yes, I deliberately don't you remember playing in the park to away after that, surrounded by people who love No stranger, appears without a welcoming Grand and cheers some all people who gathered with it. If you know your girls, if you're hit it, Elders boast about how much better they play cards The others listen again and see the children pretend that they are the real Michael Jackson Like no.

00:06:53 Kibibi Monié

Well, I don't know if you can see or not. Not I could be be. We hear you. It's, it's a... can you see it? Now I don't know if it's come up. I know there was a delay. Oh, what's the deal We're talking about? What's the deal? I'm the real Motown attraction from Steve YouTube to The Temptations known throughout many nations, please.

00:07:28 Kibibi Monié

So I can commit to some positive attraction, boy Sorry. Those summer days made in the park. We hope you would never, ever look up Now with my like yours and mine. The memory will last until the end of time playing in the park. I don't know. You get this a knot in your neighborhood, But that's what we learned in the summertime. We was nice and hot,

00:08:04 Kibibi Monié

and we would go to the Terrace playground picnic at the Drone the beach and just enjoy each other's company. And the children, Like I said, in this one, running around, trying to Be in the tug of war. It was five. We loved it and God with our neighborhood with your neighborhood community for real. So all I know is I had a good time to success outside in the end element with people surrounding you deserve. So that was my reason for that.

00:09:09 Kibibi Monié

Thank you, Nana.

00:09:14 Noni Ervin

How wonderful it is. That you are. And and in spite of technical difficulties, we are resilient, and we will still show up and make our voices now. So bless you. And thank you.

00:09:31 Noni Ervin

Next up is Merri Ann Osborne.

00:09:36 Kibibi Monié

Thanks Again, Noni. I'm leaving.

00:09:38 Noni Ervin

We're so glad to have you. Merri Ann, let me let me let the world know who you are, Who the rest of the world. It doesn't already know. Merri Ann Osborne has been intrigued by stories and the art of storytelling since childhood in middle school. She started writing stories, plays, songs and jingles, and hasn't stopped since, not once. Not one to be pigeonholed by genre or labels, Merri Ann use utilizes various media to express and share her art, including acting dance voiceover producing and directing having lived and traveled abroad. Merri Ann has drawn to writing about the intersections of culture, history, clash and social issues. She explores how these themes impact relationships and our shared future. Her first published short story, "The Crew," can be found in a Waze 2018 8th Anthology: Voices That Matter. She is currently putting the final touches on her young adult historical fiction, novel: City Girl, Country Summer. You also

00:10:46 Noni Ervin

can find Merri Ann's work on productions at the Mahogany Project and Arts Organization, where she serves as the executive director. Merri Ann.

00:10:57 Merri Ann Osborne

Thank you. That was wonderful, Kibibi. And I also this is a new piece for me too. And it's called "Hiking, Canoeing and Swimming." Working title. Ok, everyone, I hope you like it.

00:11:18 Merri Ann Osborne

[Reading] "Spring had come to the city. The flowers were all in blue and little Zahara loved the spring time, especially when walking to school. She would take her time and wave at the squawking birds in the trees. And look at the colorful roses, their scent floating in the breeze and far off in the distance Mount Rainier full of snow made her feel so special, Her body, all aglow. She didn't mind the bugs and bees, or the pollen in the air. Zahara means to bloom and shine. And there was magic everywhere At school. She liked reading and writing math, music and art hanging out with her friends and playing in the park. She was thankful every day for the food. Her family had to eat thankful for her parents and her two big brothers and the shoes on her feet. But when spring came to an end and summer was just beginning her parents told her something She didn't expect that set Her mind spinning. We signed you up for summer camp, said Mama, Zahara, listened, stunned, Hiking, canoeing thing and swimming. You'll

00:12:57 Merri Ann Osborne

have so much fun. I went to summer camp. When I was your age, her daddy I added in. I remember all the laughter at the campfire with my friends

00:13:13 Merri Ann Osborne

now has a horrid loved her. Parents always did what she was told, but she didn't want to go to some stupid camp, and she had to tell them. So, Zahara is started pleading to her mother and her father. Please don't send me Summer camp. I won't be a bother. I'll clean the house. I'll do any true, or I want to stay at home. Don't send me off to summer camp. I'll be so alone. Mama said, gently, maybe it's just for a week, and you won't be all alone. There's lots of new friends that you'll meet and trust me, Zahara. When I say, don't worry. So we know you'll have so much fun, You'll be glad we had. You go. Daddy said, and when you come back from cap, oh, the stories, you'll tell All of us, In fact, I could use a summer camp. You're kind of making me jealous Still, she wasn't convinced. So that night before she went to bed Zahara told her older brothers. And this is what they said, little sis. Don't you worry? And don't be So sad hiking canoeing and swimming That Kant doesn't sound so bad, At least

00:14:54 Merri Ann Osborne

you'll be having lots of fun instead of what dad's going to have us doing Weeding, painting, fixing stuff, We sure won't be canoeing. And besides, didn't mom and dad tell you where you're camping at? You're going to Mount Rainier little sis. And that was that. Now Zahara was excited. And let me tell

you why she wanted to see Mount Rainier A close under the big blue sky. The next few weeks, daddy told her stories of when he was young. When he went off to his summer camp at 8 years old How much he changed when he was done, You're eight years old, just like I was your first time away from home, Feeling lonely, and even scared, Maybe thinking you won't belong. Listen closely. Zahara to what I'm telling You just be yourself. No, you are loved And you'll be surprised what you can do The night before she left for Camp Zahara, checked. She had everything toothbrush toothpaste, pajamas, hairbrush, towel and swimming suit, long pants, shorts and shirts, sandals and hiking boots, Hat jacket and raincoat

00:16:37 Merri Ann Osborne

underwear and sunblock. Lots of things for her to remember, Could there be something Zahara forgot? The next morning, she hugged her family and got on the summer camp Bus trying not to feel so lonely, trying not to feel so lost. When they arrived at the camp, Everyone was moving in a blur, kids, teenagers and adults excitement in the air. Her cabin was called shook like the salmon who swim So strong. There were 10 bunk beds, which meant 10 little girls. She hoped they would all get along. The harbor is bed, was on the top. She'd never slept in a bunk bed before she hoped she wouldn't fall off. Roll hard onto the floor. Just then she heard a bell ring. So she put her suitcase down and ran outside to see what was going on and why they were making. That sound. Turns out the bell was to let everyone know that summer camp had begun. And from that day when that bell rang, it meant they were all going to have fun. The counselors talked about safety. She tried to learn everyone's names. They

00:18:02 Merri Ann Osborne

ate lunch together under the treaties, and they played All these fun camp games. And peaking up between the trees Come to save the day was Mount Rainier, Her dear old friend. And she knew she'd be okay The first night at the campfire they learned about the Cars like the Big Dipper and the Milky Way With binoculars. She saw Mars in her bunk bed that evening. She giggled with the other nine little girls. They laughed about all They did that day. And then something flew into her curls. She couldn't help it. She started itching and Swinging her arms in the air Bug spray. That's what she forgot Mosquitoes Buzzing in her ears. Then the counselor came and yelled Lights Out. It's time to go to sleep. He closed the door. Everyone got quiet. And soon she was asleep by day two. She had made more friends, saw a deer and eagle and the hawk. The kids learned how to be good leaders and not be afraid. Eight of the dark day three, they went hiking in the forest full of hemlocks and spruces and Pines. The

00:19:32 Merri Ann Osborne

trees helped her feel so calm, and she lost all sense of time In the afternoon. They went canoeing and swimming in a cool Mountain Lake. She had never rode before in her life. And that night, She felt her arms ache, but she couldn't wait to canoe again the next day. And the next Each day, again, the days were passing by so quickly and soon they would come to an end. And every morning, when she woke up, She saw the mountain Oh, so high. It gave her strength, hope and joy. She felt like she could fly on the fourth day at the campfire. She told a scary story she'd learned from her dad. And when she said boo on the finally, her counselor fell office chair on day 5 they met with the park

rangers who let them wear their Ranger hats And told the kids they were the future and keeping the forest intact, The mountains, animals, trees, fish and water insects, and they are have to be treated kindly. They said, have to be shown lots of care. And even if you're a little kid, there's plenty you can do to

00:20:53 Merri Ann Osborne

make sure that we live in harmony, a healthy world for me And you, when day 6 came, she cried silently Zahara knew she would soon be home. And while she missed her family, She knew that she had grown just like her. Daddy had told her something inside her was stronger. She had more trust and belief in herself and wasn't afraid any longer. On the seventh day, her last one at Camp, She gathered phone numbers from her new friends. Everyone had come from all over Washington. They promised to see each other again when she got home later that night, back together with her family. Zahara told them stories about the camp, her walking in the trees, hiking, swimming and canoeing Mount Rainier. And the Animals She had seen how she wanted to be a camp counselor. When she became a team, The horror was true to her name that Summer. She shined and blossomed, hiking, Swimming and canoeing. Zahara. You are awesome." That's it. Thank you.

00:22:18 Noni Ervin

Thank you Merri Ann. And this is this is the downfall of Zoom,

00:22:24 Noni Ervin

right? We can't all on mute. So I'll just snap as much as I can for everyone that I see on the screen. Wonderful. Thank you.

00:22:35 Noni Ervin

Our next poet is Margaret Barrie. Hello, Margaret. Margaret S. Barrie lives in the Pacific Northwest and was raised in a loving village of family, neighbors, and friends in the Central District of Seattle. Completed her MA in Human Development at Pacific Oaks College Northwest. She has three major goals as a lifetime learner: continuously develop her writing skills, thrive in and support her intergenerational community, and a commitment to team building and open dialogue. She's presently assembling her work into a collection of poetry and short stories. A member of the African-American Writers' Alliance (AAWA), Margaret serves as treasurer; her work has been published in the 2018 AAWA anthology Voices That Matter. She is also a member of the Renton Writers Workshop and published poems in their 2018 anthology Spotlights. Among her many venues are libraries, bookstores, galleries, and museums. She is a decade-long volunteer at the Seattle Public Library.

00:24:14 Noni Ervin

Thank you, Margaret.

00:24:16 Margaret Barrie

Thank you, Noni. That was very nice. I just. Want to just acknowledge all the a AAWA members and the public library and our guests today. Thank you for being with us today. I'm going to read five short

poems, one of the first ones a story. And it's for all the families who have a missing father is about father and Nature's. That's my first one that I'll do. And it's called "A Gift."

00:24:45 Margaret Barrie

[Reading] "He's gone. We were never told I was three years old, and he was too. And she was one at first, wasn't aware, wasn't aware. Father was gone over time, felt a loss, but didn't have didn't have words to think it, or even speak it yet outdoors. I watched my friends with their dads, Heard them Call them daddy, yet he was gone. And even so,

00:25:19 Margaret Barrie

I knew he liked being outdoors. I visit my aunt in California. When I was 21 sadly, they said they didn't know where their brother was, or even if you're still alive, They asked me if I wanted to go to Disneyland. I said, no, I want to go to the ocean. Wow. And why was there at the ocean? I thought the smog were the clouds. Now, 50 or so years later, I write about my father about how he loved being outside and open are Alfresco.

00:25:57 Margaret Barrie

He took us out Doris. And the first time I'm dressed up like a little doll with petticoats and outer coat to White Sox and patent leather shoes, like I was attending a formal event. The smell. He introduced My Brother and Me To Nature the smells of Evergreen after a rainfall, The seagulls, the robins and the ducklings following their mother, We sit and watch the wind blow over the Water sunlight, glistening in harmony with the laced waves, their eyes, all seeing from way up high Eagles and Hawks dive into the water. And pluck out a fish we played in ass and the warmth of son. He taught me the silence, a quiet peace and nature, in a way of moving a slow and steady, exploring all that there is of Mother Earth. My father gifted us nature even when I'm indoors, I'm Outdoors forever Way of being loved, looking, listening and touching go Outdoors." The next one's called "The Flood Dawning." [Reading] "Ringing the bell, Oahu opened the window. I opened the door, looked out with a stare, but no one was there. She rang

00:27:27 Margaret Barrie

the bell. What was she bringing? She's bringing a warning. Her wind is blowing swirling around the house, and the rain was pouring down. What a night. Then we found the warning. We found the flood In the back.

00:27:48 Margaret Barrie

The flood." The next one is called "Summer Storm." [Reading] "On a late Monday night as quiet as a mice, As quiet as mice smoke came moving in like Haze. In the night, We thought it was a slow burning log from count long. We close. The windows turned on the fan had a mind to speak to that parks department man. But oh no, no, no, the smoke. It's not the smell It was everywhere Covered all of the city and Beyond, as a son tilted toward the dust, the red-hot skies and the South and West was from Oregon and Washington. I mean, Oregon and California. And as a son tilted toward Dawn, red-hot Skies was from the from Eastern Washington air quality index, very unhealthy, Can't breathe. I can't breathe. I can't breathe again.

00:28:57 Margaret Barrie

Summer storm, a cedar, A beautiful young Cedar, Perfectly shaped like an afro hair, Do color, a Rosewood. All the leaves were skeleton like a delicate Skeleton fading away, but not before one sees the forest through her tree Cedar." Thank you. And the last one is called "Purpose."

00:29:36 Margaret Barrie

[Reading] "Purpose trees, cleanses the air. We breathe rain purifies and nourished nourishes Us. The spider catches. The flies in the sun, warms our bones and shows us a Way, shows us the way Darkness shows us the Stars. The universe Keeps Us thriving and flourishing the moon sways the tides and swings our moods. We all have a purpose. It's what we love to do. And then, and then a mosquito came by and landed On my hand. I started screaming and hollering and working it away. I wanted to kill her. What's the purpose of a mosquito?" Thank you. That's it.

00:30:28 Noni Ervin

Margaret. Sorry. Thank you so much.

00:30:36 Noni Ervin

Welcome. Those over again. I feel like I only had a moment with each of them, but I think you those are those are lovely.

00:30:46 Noni Ervin

All right. Our next poet is a sermon. And let's see now, Asia, Maybe There you are. Hello. Hi, you're here with us. So Asia says poetry was one of her first Outlets. It's a way of connecting with herself with others. When she performs an engagement, She engages people in different experiences that she has lived encouraging them to connect with their most authentic selves. She was born in Atlanta, in one of our newer members of Why. And we are delighted to have you Miss Asia.

00:31:31 Asia

Thank you. The piece I'm going to read today is fairly short, but it was inspired by me sitting outside in nature, and I was watching trees sway in the wind, and then this poem came about... it's related to like activism and trees that makes small correlation there.

00:31:57 Asia

[Reading] "Little trees, dance in the wind, resisting the pull on their roots and deep soil. But without the wind, there'd be no adversity to strengthen the trees, limbs, adversity and Injustice can be the precept for growth and Winds of Change. If Perfection was the beginning that could be no triumphant Victory. I Hope You Dance trees fight for your right to live, free, to often denied, cut down and exploited. But I see you, your branches of activism sway With the wisdom of ages and the pages you turn into, I edge gracefully honoring your sacrifice like those who compose heritage. You gave me ground to stand on dance to the song, as you know from indigenous mouths, too. Boisterous whistles of air." Thank you.

00:32:55 Noni Ervin

Thank you, Asia.

00:33:00 Noni Ervin

All right, our next, our next Storyteller is a guest of ours who we are honored to have with us. Mr. Gerald Donaldson.

00:33:15 Noni Ervin

Hello. Thank you. So, glad that you here. Thank you. And I'll send we are so glad to have you. Mr. Donaldson is not a member of African American Writers' Alliance, but he is a community Elder and beloved educator. He has... He's a Family Specialist at Seattle Public Schools and for more than 26 years has been known as Miss Judy by thousands of Young children who are now adults who have their children in school and in and in sometimes even their grandchildren. So please, Mister D and action I've seen him with, you know, his earpiece in and his and his the papers and legs, you know, children around him and helping families. And, you know, I it personally, Mr. D I know that there is so much love for you, and anytime that your name is mentioned in any room I'm in, it is always so much love. And so thank you so much for showing up all the time Every day in your work capacity in your loving capacity for so many. You are an example, and we're grateful for you. So so glad to hear about your storytelling

00:34:36 Noni Ervin

of Nature and the outdoors, Mr. Donaldson.

00:34:39 Gerald Donaldson

Thank you, sister, I appreciate you. Your words. And to the Queen, your poems were fantastic. And it, just as you were talking that be right back, I got to feel being out in nature. So my wife and I purchased our first motor home in 1995 and it was really just a good our star babies out of the house and out of the neighborhood, and just get back to nature. They'll get back in like, the poem figured out into those. But nature's from the trees. Activity. Some freedom. Space. Air. And the nice trips. And as we progress in our motorhome about the second or 2003 and then we started making long trips, We went, took your cross country, went to Niagara, falls down to California, Texas, you know, and seeing different national monuments Like, you know, the Carlsbad Caverns, you know, Niagara Fall the Badlands stuff like that. So when we're a traveling though, a lot of times, our son and his friends, we took a lot of our neighborhood, his friends with them,

00:35:47 Gerald Donaldson

but always tell them I'm so tired of writing. And when they get there, they don't enjoy it. But as I got older, and... and they kind of grew out of that, they still would meet once or twice a year, and talk about that that activity. And so I think that He has really helped them and understanding the importance of nature.

00:36:12 Gerald Donaldson

And that's I think that's what I got out of it. So I know they enjoyed it. We enjoyed it. And then currently we just bought a recent home in 2019 and we still experience the road, but it's just my wife and I am some time on of our friends would go. But

00:36:34 Gerald Donaldson

Now a couple years this past year, we joined the organization called NAARV or the National Association for African-American RVers. And to see currently we are in Gillette, Wyoming. And to see over 200 RVs with all these beautiful black folks down here. It's really eye-opening. And it's a beautiful sight to see. We have a lot of activities We're doing. We're still traveling, seeing different spice. But just a 5 that Ann Arbor has been around since 1994 and they have these National rallies on different cities. So we get a lot of different history as we travel. But again, just seeing the camaraderie and the Black faces, and just the love and the joy just being out in nature is beautiful. Here We had a thunderstorm and rainstorm earlier today, but that didn't deter any of the fun. You know, there has been Street dances at night, you know, gatherings like that. So it's been a good experience, though I would really suggest want to know more about NAARV. You can Google their site, and they

00:37:39 Gerald Donaldson

give you the complete history how long it's been around the founder and why they started the club. So something I wish everybody could experience. And if you have any questions, again, go to that website. But I know y'all will enjoy getting out in the open air and enjoying RV.

00:37:58 Noni Ervin

Thank you, Mister D. That was wonderful. And now you're in your RV right now, right?

00:38:03 Gerald Donaldson

Yes. Yes,

00:38:05 Noni Ervin

Well, we are grateful for technology that you can still be with us while you're across the country. So that's wonderful. Thank you. Thank you. All right. Our next Storyteller is Kathya Alexander.

00:38:24 Noni Ervin

Kathya is a writer, actor, storyteller, and teaching artist. Her writing has appeared in ColorsNW Magazine, Arkana Magazine, Raising Lilly Ledbetter, and the Pitkin Review. She has won the Jack Straw Artist Support Program Award; 4Culture's Artists Projects Award; and the WRAP Award, Youth Arts Award, and the CityArtist Award from Seattle's Office of Arts and Culture. Her play, HomeGoing, was chosen for residency at Hedgebrook Women's Writer's Retreat and her play, Black To My Roots: African American Tales from the Head and the Heart, won the Edinburgh Festival Fringe First Award in Edinburgh, Scotland for Outstanding New Production. Her collection of short stories, Angel In The Outhouse, is available on Amazon. Miss Kathya.

00:39:24 Kathya Alexander

Thank you. I think I my music, right? So my story is called "In Bloom." [Reading] "But I put our fingers on the ground. She breathe in the dark, older, the dirt under her hands, then turn her nails or black color. She take the seeds out the bag where she didn't place them with care.

00:39:54 Kathy Alexander

She patched the rich dark gray dirt. Then she take the sniff of the air, The air smell wet like the dirt warm and moist like a Mist. She takes a handful of dirt and let it run through her fist. The sweat on her face dropped into the black Earth. The so I look like it's mixed with some oil is so dark, The dirt field, kind of gravely full of Pebbles and grit through have the dirt on her fingers, right down to the tips, She raised her hand so she can wipe a strand of hair from her eyes and try to remember, when she last and her hands in the ground, She won the memory in her mind, thinking back on that first day that day, The sun wasn't shining. Neither feel a lot like today like the whole sky was Heavy with the love in her heart. She was pregnant with Clyde. Then that was when it first start that you plant a flower bed for each one of the children. She expecting That time it was American Beauty roses for Vernell. She planned Daisy's 80 hand heard a star flower Any, Get down on one knee. It

00:41:19 Kathy Alexander

reminds her of the first time that she told him that she was expected. They was in a garden, Then to she was just too scared young girl. Then she kicked the ground with her shoe. Is you? All right? A B saying It was the same thing He say to her when he finds her out in the first Garden, that first time back then, when I she had was love in her heart, The sound of walking up him, walking up behind her with give her such a stark. It was a game that they play to see if he could not scare her. When she had her hands in the dirt, she was almost so much in her head that she would drunk jump near a foot whenever someone come up behind her. But it was mostly a be. He walks So Soft on the ground. Then I'm fine. Ad there She says she pushed the seeds in the bag over to a be with her foot. He lay a towel on the ground so that his hands don't get dirty Sometime. Maybe seem to ask so much more like a lady and Bell ever done. She liked the dirt on her knees, like the feeling that come over her when she

00:42:44 Kathy Alexander

feel her bones squeeze the soil beneath her skin. 80 take his thinks out of the box. But first, he put on his gloves. He liked to keep his hands soft. There's hands full of calluses from clean and white Made his house has a Diaz, a janitor, but it's hand soft While hers is not. That's okay. It's just another One of them, things that make bail Marvel at how they've been together for all of these years. The sky growing darker clouds is off in the distance. The sun going down, and they still is not through yet. They want to get these seeds planted. While it's enough life left to see she take another bag from the box, And he take one too. But then he looking Bell, and he say, why we don't do this. No more work in the garden together, like we used to before His voice trailed off. You don't finish it. Stop. They'll finish it in her head before you tear apart. My heart Laughs and raindrops fall out the sky on her cheek. It makes what our sweat She opened her mouth up to speak. She may need to

00:44:11 Kathy Alexander

tell lady to hurry, but the words that come out is this a diadem loved you for so long That it hurt. I never meant to hurt You. Bail Never meant a lot of things I don't learn to forgive. She grabbed a handful of seeds and don't deserve your forgiveness. But I appreciate it Just the same. Another raindrop falling to her hair, which is stick as a main. We better get this job finish. It is starting to rain a, Do you say you think the day will come When you will love me again Like you used to love me before the bad? Did she say, I don't love you enough to Bear you three daughters and six signs? And now she pregnant again. She told they do today. As soon as he heard, he has suggested that they will get the seeds and plant The new flower bed for the baby. He had always connected a new pregnancy to them Planting. They'll want to grow Something Beautiful, something that will last forever. They plan allamanda bush because it grows so tall and sturdy. She naming this baby after her daddy. Since his

00:45:39 Kathy Alexander

initials is AD, they'll decide she going to name the baby. Amanda Denise, She knows going to be a girl, even though the doctor said that she couldn't, she always knows Sex of her babies had for all of her children, and she knows she's going to be beautiful, Just like a pretty old dad. She choose the flowers for the dreams that she have for the baby. So they planting blanket flowers. Let's. Bail, I always want her to be warm. They'll reach down and push the wildflower seeds in the soil. She also plant forget-me-nots because Bell want to always remember, holding this last child to her breast and breathing the sweet smell of her skin. All the flowers they plant and will come back year After year. The seeds will fall back down to the Earth, and we'll all bloom again, and she plants some blazing Star, As that's what bay. I want her daughter to be Blazing star, shining bright for the whole world to see the rain falling steady. Now it's coming down a little harder. They'll take out the last packet

00:47:03 Kathy Alexander

of seeds from the bag, and she hold them in her hand. These ones just called Jacob's Ladder. She picked that one. So the child will have a straight path to heaven. 80 plant Jack in the Pulpit has to him being a preacher. He also plant a night and white saggy, because that's what he want to be to his daughter. Bell could have told him that that no such a thing as a knight who won't come to her rescue, I'll shiny and bright. That's the white girls fairy tale. Well, let's show it at now. A colored woman got to know, to expect some heart Rake and sorrow, We can be happy again. Even after all of this time ad, he say to her, They'll keep our eyes to the ground. I don't expect happy. They are. She finally say all I want is for God to stop treating my heart Like this is play thing. But I know what I want. Don't make God one bit of difference. Is she here? Clap of thunder rolling from somewhere way off in the distance. She passed the last of the dirt onto the top of the flower bed. She tried to

00:48:26 Kathy Alexander

stand up and AD. He holds out his hand When he give her hand to him. He smile, just like a fool Forgive. That's what God had told her to do. And she didn't try to do that With Every Beat of her heart. But I love her energy into keeping our family from falling apart. That was over 20 years ago. She doesn't forgive, but not forget, but ain't no sis and holding onto the things that don't count. She look at ad and seeing that his face is all wet tears of happiness - it has eyes for this baby. The Lord give Belle Anna crying, kind of one, She leave that to ad. They don't got the dirt all dug up and planted wild flowers from seeds. All of a sudden the heavens open rain fall down like the sheet. They

run back to the house, Both. They close soaking wet, They'll grab two towels and had one of them to her husband. She look out the window at the work They done accomplished the day, look like this shining, even in spite of the rain. And the ground is opening his mouth as if saying I received this water

00:49:52 Kathy Alexander

So that all of your dream flowers will grow. Whoever pass by this mound of Earth from now on will be overcome by Colors of wild ginger and morning glory And the friends blue star and the violet, blue eyed Mary, the passion flower and Miss flower, the blue hearts and Butterfly Pea plant. These flowers have been a real blessing to me. They'll say to her husband, He looked over and smile. I'm glad he say he reach out and cover her hand with his own bell. She sighed way deep down in her chest as they walked slow together to the bedroom They are seeing under her breath. Whoa, I know I've Been Changed, Low Lord. I know I've Been Changed. Lord, I know I've been changed the angel. The end Heaven, God sign my name. I said."

00:51:15 Noni Ervin

Miss Kathy, are you always break me down. I'm trying my hardest to hold it together. Thank you so much. Thank you. That was wonderful. Well, I before we go into Q&A, I do see that doctor Georgia McDade made it into the room. And I don't know if we were able to get that might work in. But if not, I'm just gonna say, wonderful things about you. If your... can we hear your voice yet? Yes. Yes. Oh, wonderful. Well, I don't know if you want to read, but I certainly don't want to pass up the opportunity to introduce you and let you say, whatever you want to say before we go into QA. Is that okay with you? Okay. Hey, Dr. Georgia McDade, Georgia Stewart McDade is one of our organizations charter members. She's a an all-around champion for Black writers everywhere. Some of her published work includes her four volumes of poetry called "Outside the Cave," as well as "Observations and Revelations," which are stories, sketches and essays. I'll say personally, Dr. Georgia McDade is always pushing us and reminding

00:52:36 Noni Ervin

us to write and write and write it down and to record it and capture it and tell our stories and is a big part of how we ended up able to partner with The Seattle Public Library in in the, in the sharing of our stories for this event, and hopefully for future ones to come. So Dr. McDade.

00:52:56 Dr. Georgia McDade

Good evening, everybody. And I'm very happy to be here yesterday. Apple worked on my computer. I learned today when I call them, when I didn't realize what had happened until I tried to get on right before 5:00, And they fixed it. But anyway, that was the problem. I do have a story, but I want to make sure we have enough time to do the writing. So if I don't, if I don't have to read it, I can read it.

00:53:27 Noni Ervin

Please do.

00:53:30 Dr. Georgia McDade

Okay. Mount Rainier has been mentioned. And my story is entitled "Sightseeing Around Mountain."

00:53:41 Dr. Georgia McDade

[Reading] "I grew up in Louisiana, where the highest natural something I'd seen or saw growing up was a levy until I took my first plane flight. When I was a college sophomore, I went to Salt, Lake City, Utah for national meeting. And there seem to be snow covered mountains everywhere, my three roommates, all of whom had flown before and had seen snow like this laughed at me, because I would not let them close the curtains at night. I just lay there and look down, looked up the window at the snow. The only word I could think of was breathtaking. And I just I still remember this scene as if it were yesterday when I came to Seattle, and I flew here, got to fly over Mount Rainier. But this was several years later, The first thing I thought about what Salt Lake breathtaking. And then I stopped other mountains. It's like everywhere mountains I said to myself, Never again, Can I live somewhere? There are no mountains. I learned that the mountain was not out every day. But I love the day that it was. And

00:55:04 Dr. Georgia McDade

in July of 1970 I made my first trip to Mount Rainier. I can close my eyes now. And remember the feel there were four of us, and we were throwing snowballs, snowballs in July and Louisiana. We didn't even have snow every year. And I've never seen two inches. And when I read in the paper there were 47 inches of snow, I thought they had forgotten The decimal point. I didn't know it could be 47 In inches of snow, nature and Seattle had won me over with little trouble. And even today, despite the heavy traffic, I travel down Rainier Avenue Whenever I can see the mountain. I don't care how slow I have to go. I'm just looking at the mountain. So I made up my mind. I will go to Mount Rainier annually, And anybody who visits me or friend of mine for at least four days get to visit to Seattle. I just take them to see us. I've stayed at Paradise several times. So when I went to a TCC Foundation auction I saw they had a flight for around Mount Rainier. I didn't know such things that you could fly

00:56:19 Dr. Georgia McDade

around Mount Rainier. So after a few minutes, I decided, okay, I'll be it a hundred dollars. I mean, that's a lot of money for me. Okay, but I know I wouldn't win, but I just felt good. I knew I was going to make a donation. So I put down my bid, and then ever so often I would check. And eventually I forgot about it between talking to people and looking at all of the different things. You know, I was just nice to be there. The auction ended. And lo and behold, they call my name. I had one this flight around Mount Rainier for four people. It should have cost 250 dollars, and I was getting it for \$100 I consider myself so lucky. Then I had to find three persons to accompany me. And I was thinking about Bezos and how so many people wanted to go up there with him. And then I run into other people know the Lord means for me to stay down here. And I just wonder how many among you would like to go? 'Cause I would like to go. I know it's environmentally it's not good, you know, financially, but I

00:57:30 Dr. Georgia McDade

would love to go I just anyway. So I didn't think I would have any trouble trying to find some but three people to go with me. So the first person I asked was in her 70s She had lived here over 50 years

and had never been to Mount Rainier. I thought that was a tragedy. She's all honey. No thank you. I don't want to go. Now,

00:57:56 Dr. Georgia McDade

I was just so shocked. Then I asked my housemate my former housemaid, and she was taking flying lessons. I know she wanted to go. Oh no, I don't want to go. You know what? No, I, I don't have time. She declined. I couldn't get either My sister's to go. I just couldn't understand why nobody wanted to go on this trip. The two women in my carpool didn't want to go. And I don't know, I guess, the auction In October, and I was still trying to find some people several months late. I couldn't believe I was having such luck and not getting takers. So everybody seemed to be afraid. Then, of course, that made me wonder, Well, it's something wrong with me, because I wasn't afraid I was excited. In the meantime, the air, the pilot of the plane would call me every day Monday. Through Friday. He would call and say, today is not a good, good day, or we can't go today, or it's too windy today. And it went on for at least three months. He would call me five days a week, and I was a little bit annoying. So

00:59:07 Dr. Georgia McDade

he called him before. He could say anything, I'd say no flying today. And he left after about five months. I didn't have a lot of enthusiasm. And besides, I still haven't found anybody that willing to go with me. And I thought, since I was getting for 4 people could go Wasted money. You know, I'll do it was a bargain that quarter to a young couple. They hadn't been married too long, but they got in the car pool, And I happened to mention it to them, and they were jubilant. So at least I had two people to go. It's not that I didn't want them to go. I just wanted somebody I knew to go, and some somebody who might not go by themselves. But anyway, the two of them decided that they would go with me. So after about four months, have received The Kyle. And before I could say anything, the pilot said, I have some good news, and some bad news startled. I said, what? Well, he said, the good news is that we can fly today. The bad news is I won't be your pilot. Now, you have to understand that I have

01:00:17 Dr. Georgia McDade

been talking to this man, Probably 6 or 7 months 5 days a week, and I'd never seen him. I didn't know him, but we had these nights during would say, Every morning before he caught me at the college. So every morning before I went to class, I'm not going. I'm not going. So I just really couldn't believe it. He seemed as disappointed as I was bid. He said, oh, yeah, it'll be fine, It'll be fine, I said, but I thought you were going. He said, well, I did too, but I just can't do it today. And today is a good day. He says, what if I told you that the pilot who will be flying is the pilot who taught me to Flap? And then I felt a little bit better. I said, okay, All right. So by the time the three of us left the campus, my enthusiasm was almost normal. We got to the airport about 45 minutes are pool with is in Eatonville, And the pilot was at the plane. By the time we parked got out of the car and got over to the plane. We introduced ourselves. And he said, what kind of time do you have? I told

01:01:25 Dr. Georgia McDade

him that the trip was for an hour amount around Mount Rainier. He asked if we had to return in an hour, and we looked at each other kind of funny and said, well, no, we don't have to come back in and out. So he said, okay, let's board the plane. So we got on the pilot was retired, and he didn't get to fly

too often. And for years he had flown. Whenever the weather was good Enough to fly, He decided that he would not only take us around Mount St. Helen. I mean Mount Rainier, where he was supposed to take us. But he also took us around Mount St. Helen and what Mount Hood is. I don't remember how long we were in the air, but much longer than an hour. And the feeling was like none I've ever had. We took photos to our hearts, content, Incense all three of us by were by windows. And all three of us had cameras. All you can really hear what's up? Oh, ah, we just enjoyed ourselves. And the pilot was as excited as we were, because he could tell how and you know, excited. We were. I paid \$100 to

01:02:45 Dr. Georgia McDade

do something I never imagined doing a company by three persons who were excited as I was. After all these years. This is the most I've ever gotten for \$100 It was excellently spent money." Thank you.

01:03:03 Noni Ervin

Thank you. All right. Balance plane. Wonderful.

01:03:07 Dr. Georgia McDade

I have to admire the woman who was my roommate House made for over two years. I told you was taken Tyler lessons. So I said, well, just tell me you were learning how to fly. Why did you want to go? And she said, the most dangerous place to fly is around Mountain, because you never know what the air will do as well. Why didn't you tell me? She said, well, I don't want to stop you from go. But anyway, I still I love it. I love it. If you get a chance, you should fly around the mountains.

01:03:44 Noni Ervin

Oh, wonderful. Thank you, Dr. McDade. Well, I just want to say, thank you so much to all of our poets and storytellers, and those who joined us Today live, and those who are joining us virtually on video and podcasts, or whatever virtual media we have. So thank you so much.