

Slow Currents (Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand Asian diaspora writers workshop)

Both the Australian and New Zealand government have invested public taxpayer money in our ten writers attending the Festival in DC. We have built our 2023 workshop programme around this, adding on a ten-day residency in DC ahead of the Festival dates. Total investment from our governments is USD\$63,600, with USD\$23,900 already spent on flights, visas, and a Festival-specific publication — along with more than eight months of planning work. We will be expected to report back on not only the use of the funds but also our experiences (regardless of whether the Festival is canceled) which includes media coverage. The New Zealand Embassy has planned to host us as part of this visit due in part to the profile of the writers we are bringing over, so there are multiple instances like this where this decision will be in the public light. I also want to emphasise that many of our writers have taken unpaid leave in order to be part of this programme, so in addition to the direct costs of attending the Festival there are indirect costs (in terms of lost income) that need to be acknowledged also.

Asian American Writers' Workshop

The cancellation of the AALF has taken a great toll on the staff of Asian American Writers' Workshop, long time partners of the festival. Since January, our staff has worked tirelessly in both organizing and archiving the library of the late Meena Alexander in hopes of being able to share part of this priceless collection with our communities. This work has been largely voluntary as it is outside of everyone's job descriptions, and the true manual labor in this archival work has taken a mental and physical toll on staff. Attending the festival with the help of funds from APAC would have made it possible for nearly the entire staff to attend this incredibly vital event and work toward necessary world building across the Asian American literary community and beyond. We have already spent nearly \$1000 on local travel and would have spent an additional \$3000 on materials and personnel costs (and an allotted \$5000+ of pay from AAWW's own budget) for six staff members (all of whom have never attended AALF before) to attend and work throughout the weekend. For an organization of our size with the very small budget we have, this is an immense loss on top of not having the opportunity to meet and learn with and from brilliant writers, readers, and scholars.

Georgia Review

Thus far we have spent \$4,390.00 on travel to attend the festival. We have an additional \$4,500+ earmarked for honoraria and incidentals if the festival were to happen. We were aiming to make \$1,500 in sales at the festival. For an organization of our size, this is an immense cost.

- We built our prose prize contest around the lit fest, making a reading with the judge (Jennine Capo Crucet) part of the winning. Our winner, Brian Truong, has published his first essay through the contest. One metric of the excitement around his reading with Jennine is that Brian's tweet about the prose prize has had over 11,000 reads.
- In personal correspondence with distinguished professor Garrett Hongo, he mentioned that he labored long and hard over the eulogy he has written for Franklin Odo, which was to be presented at the literature fest. It is his life's work for one of his mentors, which has/had a fitting time and place at the literature fest. It was his way to truly honor his mentor and friend Franklin.

Kundiman

- Kundiman has helped organize the first two iterations of the Asian American Literature Festival, in 2017 and 2019, but because of COVID-19, we had to postpone 2021's festival to this year. This historically significant festival is the only one of its kind that we know of, and we are devastated at the loss that this sudden cancellation will cost not only our own organization, but also the many people who will benefit from our programs. I wanted to express the immense cost of time, money, labor, community learning, and artistic exchange that this sudden cancellation brings and ask that you reconsider this decision.
- As programming partners, we have added \$10,000 to our budget from Smithsonian APAC for this year, as well as including the Asian American Literature Festival in our NEA narrative, which we will be losing. Whenever we are in D.C., we also make a point to visit program officers at the NEA, as well as the staff at the Library of Congress. Literature is severely underfunded by grants and philanthropy, and Asian American literature is even more under-resourced. APAC's funding is vital for all of us.
- For five days, Kundiman's senior staff and co-founders convened in January in Georgia in order to plan this festival. This is time that we were happy to dedicate to this greater collective effort. We also have four new staff members who had never been to a LitFest, and this would have been a wonderful opportunity for them to learn, grow, make relationships, and bond—and develop stronger relationships with other Asian American literary organizations, funders, writers, readers, activists, and community members. We have devoted hundreds of hours of staff time to planning the LitFest, including in our programs and communications. We have planned our programming year and communications around LitFest, with the knowledge that we would be hosting a major series of events then, and we have cleared out our schedules to accommodate this. For instance, we didn't host any online classes in July and August because we knew that we had LitFest coming up, and this constitutes a loss of income, potentially thousands of dollars, not only to our organization, but also, for Asian American writers' honoraria.
- For over one year, we have been diligently planning to host the following three programs at AALF:
 - Wikipedia Edit-a-Thon for Asian American Literature — We have added over 100,000 words to Wikipedia, and those pages already have amassed 1.5 million views. Vital pages on Asian American Literature that haven't been updated since 2021. Asian American Literature deserves to be updated on an ongoing basis by people who know it best.
 - Care Pods were collectively ideated during January's LitFest Convening in Georgia, as a way to forge new community bonds amongst festival-goers, and we were ready to implement this new community programming.
 - A Reading Celebrating Palestinian Diasporic Literature — We were excited to bring together four Palestinian writers for a reading and conversation. All four had already agreed to participate, had cleared their calendars, and were excited to be featured, and each person would have received travel, hotel, and a \$500 honorarium. We wanted to present this reading in order to highlight an often underrepresented Asian American community, and we wanted to honor the

voices of these artists by providing an honorarium, which they'll be losing as a result of this cancellation.

Poetry Foundation (Approximately \$2,000 total)

- \$1,000: Design fee for pop-up art exhibition of Lao Yang's *Pee Poems*
- \$918: Airfare (Convening and Lit Fest)

Saymoukda Duangphouxay Vongsay (individual artist)

- \$500 for costume
- \$3,000 in-kind (artist fee)
- \$4,200 income loss from turning down other speaking gigs that weekend (Aug 4-6)

Sasaki Family Zines (individual artist, approximately \$3,000 total)

- \$2,000 airfare (4 tickets)
- In-kind "ghosty" animation design
- In-kind "Asian Bingo" design
- (We planned our entire summer family vacation around the lit fest)

Writer Paula Yoo (individual artist invited to deliver Library of Congress Intimate Lecture)

- \$800 airfare
- Planned her summer travel to visit her family in CT around the Lit Fest

Regie Cabico, producer of *Capturing Fire*

I received FY2023 funds of \$9,197.00 from the DC Commission for the Arts for Queer Spoken Word that would culminate as part of the Asian Lit Festival. The cancelation was an opportunity for *Capturing Fire* to regain a local, national and international presence with Queer Asian writers and theater artists and brings a projected loss of \$3,000.00 in book sales and an individual income loss of \$4,000.00 for housing and medical expenses.

Kaya Press is one of the main collaborators and planners of this conference, as we have been since 2017. This partnership and the programming we were planning to do here are crucially important to our communities and artists. Managing Editor Neelanjana Banerjee has already spent 80-plus hours of her time in meetings, arrangements, paperwork and more to make sure this conference has diverse Asian Pacific American and Asian Diasporic representation, and innovative and participatory events; not to mention the four-day January convening. For a small organization, this would be a major loss if all of the time and effort we have put into this event in good faith was for nothing. Banerjee took time away from her family, and has taken on the bulk of planning for the organization—again, this is a huge cost and burden to our organization without the payoff of the actual festival. Just earlier this month, Kaya Press had a Board Meeting where the Board approved our FY2024 budget, which included \$22,000.00 in income from our production and planning at the AA Lit Fest. This is a huge loss to us, again, as a small but important Asian Pacific American non-profit who counts on events and collaborations such as the AA Lit Fest.

More than anything, Kaya Press reached out to our authors and many artists across disciplines, asked them to clear their schedules and make travel arrangements and begin putting together workshops and performances. The AA Lit Fest was going to be a truly unique platform for these artists to come together and share this work. The idea that we have to go back to our collaborators and tell them that this opportunity is cancelled and give them no reason whatsoever is damaging to our reputation as an arts organization. We have never treated our artists and collaborators this way in nearly 30 years of work.

- Kaya Press (Muave Publishing, Inc) has already spent **\$4335.00** on travel costs to fly out nine artists who would be part of multiple programs, including a special Altar Card Workshop and presentation and an interactive Haunted House reading and performance.
- We spent an extra **\$1500.00** on lodging in order to bring extra staff and summer interns because we knew this event was going to be such a powerful and enriching experience.
- We have already paid \$1500 to designer Rhea Iyer to begin a process of creating blank Altar Card designs for the Altar Card workshop.
- Along with the funding from the Smithsonian that we had planned on, we are facing a major loss of revenue as we were planning on \$1000 plus worth of book sales over the two days of the conference.

Matt Huynh - artist, illustrator/ animator

(approx \$5143.79 expenses, \$7k artists fee, \$7k lost income, \$6k in-kind work)

I was contracted to develop visuals for the branding and capturing the convening in Georgia with live sketching, where I spent **\$515.10** travelling and drawing over five days. These unused assets were to be distributed across the website, branding, print and promotional items and social media (**\$2000**). Since January, I have consistently worked on developing 'Contact', an interactive creative writing and drawing sound station with an accompanying exhibition of original artwork, toolbox and instructional card decks for an artist's fee of **\$7000**. Conservatively estimated at \$1000/month, I have **\$7000** in lost income in illustration assignments. To date, I have spent **\$608.69** on material costs developing the artwork and interactive station. A further **\$1520** was committed for material costs to complete both the interactive station and collaboration with Karen Tei Yamashita to visualize the work of Miné Okubo. I provided in-kind animation and illustration work for the Kaya Press Haunted House teaser trailer (**\$3000**), and began my collaboration with Karen Tei Yamashita to visualise the work of Miné Okubo (**\$3000**). A further **\$500** was to be committed for travel to the festival.

Ching-In Chen, curator of the Trans & Nonbinary Reading Room

I was excited to curate a Trans & Nonbinary Reading Room for the festival of Asian American trans and nonbinary authors' books in collaboration with AALF and Loyalty Bookstores, the bookstore of the festival. AALF had agreed to buy **\$500** worth of Asian American trans and nonbinary books to share with the public. In addition, I was excited to curate a conversation around mentorship with my Kundiman mentee, River Ying, who had agreed to participate and cleared his calendar. This would have been an amazing opportunity for River and he would have received an inclusive **\$1,000 honorarium** (including travel and hotel).

I have spent over 50 hours of my time in meetings, organizing logistics and creating the Trans & Nonbinary reading list, which would have been included in **\$1.5k curation fee**, which I am anticipating for this work. In addition, **\$1k** was to be committed for travel.

CAALS, The Circle for Asian American Literary Studies

Members of CAALS were planning to continue our programming relationship with AALF, having meaningfully participated in the last two iterations. We had 4 members organizing a teaching panel and two members organizing a reading, which was to feature 7 poets. We were also planning to contribute our time and materials to the Reading Room, mentoring pods, and tabling. Our organization prides itself in supporting emerging scholars and writers and AALF would have been a great opportunity for us to do this work, especially outside of a traditional academic conference. Even more than the monetary loss (**\$2.5K** for travel and lodging expenses; **\$1K** in lost honoraria) we each will incur is the inability to meet, gather, and converse, which is a cost we cannot calculate.

AGNI Magazine + Asian Adoptee Diasporic Writers and Poets

The Smithsonian APAC, as part of its Lit Fest programming, had pledged \$2500 to fund a digital portfolio of Asian adoptee diasporic writing to be published at *AGNI*, linked at the Smithsonian's Lit + Museum webpage, featured and soft-launched at the festival, and promoted across the APAC's social media platforms. Co-edited by *AGNI* senior poetry editor Jennifer Kwon Dobbs and California poet laureate Lee Herrick, this project would have been the first adoptee-centered community space in the festival's history and would have greatly enhanced the Smithsonian APAC's representation of adult adoptee voices. Fifty-two emerging and established Asian adoptee poets and writers from thirteen diasporas were invited to contribute work.

The portfolio's soft launch in the form of a hybrid salon to enable transnational adoptee participation would have facilitated a wide-ranging conversation about adoptee literature's development over the past few decades and its interconnections with Asian American literature.

Extending from the salon, the Smithsonian APAC had dedicated an additional \$2500 to fund the editing, curating, and winter 2024 publication of a follow-up adoptee life writing space with an accompanying teaching initiative.

AGNI Magazine intended to table at the festival and had planned an interactive opportunity titled "Dear Future" in which participants would be prompted to write postcards imagining desired futures and/or confronting ambivalent ones anticipated in the here and now. Postcards would have been photographed and posted across *AGNI* social media channels, and copies of *AGNI* 94 (featuring a translation portfolio on the theme of futures, co-edited by Jennifer Kwon Dobbs and Shuchi Saraswat) distributed for free. This would have been *AGNI*'s first time attending the festival. Losses from this opportunity include potential sales through a partnership with Loyalty Books, the festival's bookseller; greater visibility in the D.C. metro area; and annual subscriptions generated by our 30%-off promo code to be offered during festival weekend.

AGNI Magazine Staff Impact

- Senior editor Shuchi Saraswat: 40 hours to meetings, project planning and editing; festival and related travel costs for herself + support (\$2000). This trip would have also been a summer family getaway.
- Co-editor William Pierce: 40 hours to meetings, project planning and editing
- Senior poetry editor Jennifer Kwon Dobbs: 110 hours to organizing and writing materials for the portfolio's creation and implementation, project management and team meeting facilitation, selecting and editing contributions, community outreach and communication; festival and related travel costs \$2000 (airfare, housing, food per diem for six days)

Portfolio co-editor Lee Herrick's project participation and festival/related travel costs (\$1500) including scheduled paid speaking events near the D.C. metro area immediately following AALF

Asian Adoptee Diasporic Community Impact

Seventeen contributors had been accepted for the portfolio and were being edited in-house at *AGNI* when unofficial word of the festival's cancellation emerged. (*AGNI* was not officially contacted by Director You.) Contracts had already been issued to pay for their work using the promised APAC funds that were being processed on the APAC's side. *AGNI* and the portfolio co-editors had also organized with Brookline Booksmith for a virtual reading and launch. And the co-editors had partnered with the Minnesota Humanities Center to create an in-person workshop opportunity to engage the Twin Cities-based Asian diasporic adoptee community around the portfolio. Inspired by this work, participants would've been able to develop pieces for consideration in the APAC Smithsonian-sponsored adoptee life-writing space.

In 2011, some members of U.S.-based transracial/transnational adoptee communities established an adoption museum project that, while currently archived and accessible online, is no longer active. With respectful acknowledgement of this work, the *AGNI* partnership with the Smithsonian APAC's literature festival would have created a significant conversation between Asian adoptee diasporic communities and one of the U.S.'s most vital and enduring institutions charged to document Asian American experiences comprehensively.

Bamboo Ridge Press

With respect to hard costs, one of our participants had already purchased an air ticket for approximately \$1000, and instead of forfeiting it has decided to still travel to the East Coast next month anyway. Obviously this is more now a trip by default.

All of our scheduled participants had been working hard to prepare their presentations, knowing that they would be reading in front of a national audience. These include one with a video/slideshow and another with a Zoom connection to a writer in Hawaii.

What we think is more important than the money is that the cancelled festival is a lost opportunity for local writers here to connect with other writers around the country. Accordingly,

the Smithsonian as one of our pre-eminent national organizations has lost a lot of face. Unfortunately, writers will need to think twice about participating in any future events sponsored by the Smithsonian.