



Library podcast

Seattle Writes: Residencies Revealed

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[00:00:36] My name's Linda Johns, I'm a librarian here. Welcome to Seattle Writes Residencies Revealed. Seattle Writes is a free program offering classes and workshops and write-ins. We're fully supported by the Seattle Public Library Foundation and we're very grateful. We're also grateful to Dave for Residencies Revealed and Jane Hodges. Who is— [applause] Jane is a writer and also a founder of a residency you're going to hear more about today. Our panelists, in addition to Jane, are Wendy Call, who is representing Hedgebrook, and Wendy has been to more than two dozen residencies so she can offer an insight into other ones as well. And Claire Johnson, who is a poet and visual artist who has also been to many residencies. Tina Shuman, who was going to represent Art Smith, is ill and was unable to come at the last moment. Our moderator today is Karen Finney Frock. Karen is a poet. Karen is a poet and young adult novelist. And she has been an instrumental part here at the Library of developing and growing our Seattle Writes series. And I just want to say, Karen, we are so thankful to you for all that you've done to support writers throughout western Washington and particularly through programs at the library. Karen has been a writer in residence at Hugo House. She's attended residencies at Bloedel Reserve, Till, Hedgebrook, and a bunch of others, which she will talk about. Please join me in welcoming Karen Finney Frock and our panelists. Thank you.

[00:02:18] Hello. Good afternoon. Thank you so much for joining us today.

[00:02:23] Let's see. Let me just start with a little— how's the sound out there? Can you hear me up top? I'm seeing some yeses.

[00:02:30] Okay, great. So, hi, welcome. We are gonna be talking all about residencies, and we're really happy that you're here with us this afternoon. My name is Karen Finney Frock. And as you heard, I am both a poet and I write novels for teenagers. I write young adult fiction.

[00:02:46] And I love residencies. I love them so much.

[00:02:51] It's— I don't want to say the best time of my year, but it's right up there. I can't really tell you the last time I took a vacation for fun.

[00:03:02] It's either to visit family or it's to go to a writing residency. That's my idea of a good way to spend any time off I can get and any opportunity I can get to attend one.

[00:03:12] So I will just mention a list of the residences that I can sort of speak to today.

[00:03:18] And then I'm going to ask for some bio and residency information from our other panelists. So I recently attended the Bloedel Reserve residency. I've also been to Hedgebrook, Mineral School, a slightly different retreat situation at the Helen R. Whiteley Center. Also a slightly different situation at Till as well as Centrum. And finally, I was writer in residence at Hugo House. So let's just go down the row and hear a little bit from each of our panelists.

[00:03:51] And I think I'll keep this mic and ask you guys to pass, if you don't mind.

[00:03:56] Great. So my name is Wendy Call and I write creative nonfiction. That's pretty much all I write. I also translate poetry from Spanish. And if anyone here is a translator, there are residences specifically in other— not in the northwest, but in other parts of the country for translators. I currently work full time as a teacher and I will say that that makes the time that I have for residency much more valuable than when I was working full time at home and found it easier to kind of carve out the time when I was at home. So yes, I've done 24 residencies, which is mostly an indication of how old I am because I did my first one 19 years ago. So that really only works out to about one a year. And they were all over the country. And so the ones that were in— sort of within driving distance of Seattle I'll mention, and then if folks are interested in any others around the country, I'd be happy to talk about that. And that would be the Whiteley Center, Hedgebrook, Centrum, the North Cascades National Park. A lot of national parks have residency programs. Playa, which is in Oregon, the Mineral School, and Hypatia, which is a tiny residency program that's near Olympia. And that's me.

[00:05:19] Hello, I'm Jane Hodges. I'm on the board for Mineral School and one of the founders of that residency program. I have a background writing nonfiction and a little bit of fiction. And I make my living mainly as a freelance writer. And I'm doing some work for [unintelligible] for a Foundation right now. I have been to the Vermont Studio Center. I am at Mineral often, but I'm not there as a resident. So in a way, I don't really know what that feels like. But I know what it's like on the other side of the curtain. And I've also been to the Whiteley Center, which is, as Karen mentioned, a little bit different residency format.

[00:05:58] I've also visited the Sitka Center and Playa not as a resident, but as a kind of residency space person. So I can talk to sort of the environment there if that's helpful to people. So I'll pass this over to Claire.

[00:06:14] Hi, I'm Claire Johnson. I work in writing in kind of a hybrid form between poetry and fiction with some family history stuff thrown in. And as a visual artist, I do acrylic paintings of memories, black and white ink drawings, usually of homes in improbable places.

[00:06:42] But also sometimes I do book art or art inspired by books. And then I also do Post-it notes. I do a drawing on a Post-it note every night before I go to bed. About the day for over a decade now.

[00:06:58] So that's what I do. I feel I feel a little bit funny being here on this panel because I've only had two residencies and they both happened in 2017. So I can talk a lot about dealing with rejection and trying for years to get into the same residency. But this year, I finally had success and I went to Mineral School for a writing residency in August and then very soon after, in October, went to a residency in Boise, Idaho, called Surel's Place.

[00:07:37] And I was doing a visual art residency there, doing drawings inspired by favorite books. But they also accept writers and actually pretty much all creative disciplines. So across the arts.

[00:07:53] And I'm from Seattle. Grew up here, lived in England for a while, started my career there, moved back here about eight years ago. So...

[00:08:05] That is so valuable, Claire, we're really going to need to hear about that, the application process is no small part of the residency experience.

[00:08:13] So let me give you an idea of how today's going to go. We're going to have some questions and discuss for perhaps up to 60 Minutes. It might not take them much time. And then there will be time for audience questions. So there will be a nice chunk of time for that. That said, if we're discussing something and you have a burning question, don't feel like you can't interrupt. I think it'll make for a more interesting afternoon. So the first thing that we want to start with is some definitions. So you hear a lot of words like residency.

[00:08:47] Writing retreat, writing conference and perhaps other terms, and it can become a little confusing about exactly what we're talking about. So let me bounce it first to Jane to talk a little bit about having created Mineral School. I think you'll have a lot of ideas about that.

[00:09:03] Yeah. So residency— one of the more common ways to separate what a residency is versus a retreat or a conference, is that residencies offer time and space to create new work. You aren't required to listen to a speaker or leader. You're not there to study with someone, you're not going to, you know— every hour there is not a craft talk. You're really there to generate work. And residencies are typically subsidized.

[00:09:33] They're either free or very low cost. They're juried. You apply and then you are accepted to the residency. So it is a little competitive to get in, but that is because the organizations that run residencies want to give the gift of time and space to create. And there are no other requirements when you get there. Retreats and conferences, retreats are sometimes— you probably pay more than you would pay for a residency. You often are going to a retreat to study with a particular artist whose work you admire. And conferences are a little more focused on networking and, you know, a series of courses or classes or talks. So you're there not so much to generate work as to absorb information that you can take home and put into your work. And so that's kind of the difference. And so to me and also there's an organization that's on the handout called the Alliance of Artists Communities. So aside from the Northwest based residencies we're talking about today, you can go on there and look at residences around the country. But I think the definition they kind of use is time and space to create work. And that's kind of like the only requirement.

[00:10:41] And I'll just add that that said, you know, that's a general idea. And places really name their programs as they want. So, for example, Hugo House has a program called Writer in Residence. But Hugo House is focused a lot on the craft of teaching writing. And so the writer in residence does actually meet with folks individually for up to five hours a week and work with them on their writing. So there is sort of a teaching element to that residency.

[00:11:09] But, you know, if they want to call it a residency, that's great. And it's a unique sort of positioning that Hugo House has, so I can see why they would make that choice, since it's not a very common thing to come across.

[00:11:21] Yeah, and the other thing I guess, with the concept of a residency or being in residence, there are places— So some of the residencies we're talking about today are overnight residencies. So camp for grown ups, if you will. And whereas there are places that have a writer or artist in residence, there could be a gallery, it could be the library or Hugo house. So you live locally and you have a space to work. And then there may be some side interactions like she's talking about.

[00:11:48] But the common thread is the time and space.

[00:11:51] Great. And Wendy, I know you've taught so much. Maybe you could say a little bit about how writing conferences are different.

[00:11:58] Sure. Well, as you say, Karen, there are residencies that include a lot of teaching like Hugo House, where Karen and I have been writers and residents. Seattle University has a program for regional Northwest writers and residents where they have folks come in and teach just one class. I was what was called the writer in residence at the Harborview Medical Center, where I really, really— for literary reasons, I wanted to spend time with people who were dying and ask them about what their experiences were. And I thought Harborview Medical Center is the place to find those people. And in that case, I actually spent nine months convincing the

director of the arts program at Harborview that she should let me do this because she had a lot of really good reservations about it. But in the end, it all worked out well. And I went and I actually talked to people who were dying. And then I offered free writing workshops as sort of— I thought of it as paying my rent, you know, for the privilege of being at Harborview. So there are residencies that include teaching. In terms of conferences, it's more sort of the experience that Jane was talking about, where you might go to a conference where your time is scheduled from 8:00 in the morning until literally 11:00 at night with readings and workshops and craft talks and opportunities to meet one on one with one of the teaching writers there to talk about your work.

[00:13:20] In terms of the cost of conferences, of course it can range from, you apply for a competitive fellowship and you get a free ride, sometimes even including travel, to you want to go right for seven days in Tuscany and it costs five thousand dollars. So there is the whole range of funded to unfunded, just as there is. And there are some programs that are sort of in between. Like I just got back from what was billed a writer's conference in Mexico where we had three hours a day that we're scheduled with a workshop and then the rest of the time was our own time to write. So there are things like that that are hybrid programs. So there's a whole spectrum. But generally, if it's called a conference, your time is going to be taken up doing things besides your writing. And then residencies are more completely unstructured. In some cases, they don't even mind, you know, when you come and eat.

[00:14:13] So whatever it is you want to do, there's a place for you.

[00:14:19] And I'll just mention this is further complicated because some places like Hedgebrook do both a residency program that is unstructured, just writing time, and then they offer something like a salon series where you will go there and study with a writer. So I know that's a lot of definitions to throw at you, but primarily today we really are focusing on residency programs. So we are focusing on those. You know, I'm a writer. I need time to just go be in the woods or something like that and work on my craft. Which brings me to my next question, Claire, which I wanted to talk to you about. So you mentioned that you were applying for some years and just did your first residency. What is it that made you think as an artist “I really need this residency time”? And then what did you actually find that you got out of it?

[00:15:11] So I do technically work mostly full time on my art and writing. I do teach, but over the years I've cut that down to five classes squooshed into two days a week.

[00:15:28] And so I often think I should have all this time to make stuff and people ask me like, “oh, did you just spend all day writing or just spend all day in the studio painting?” And it always makes me kind of angry like I wish I did. But I have to work on my website and apply to things and document stuff and email people and do my taxes and clean the bathrooms at the studio and all these different just huge sort of admin tasks that I was never trained to do. Business management stuff. And I find that a lot of my long term goals would get really pushed

aside always for things that had an immediate deadline, like somebody offered me a show at this coffee shop.

[00:16:17] And so I need to do that right now, or I have a class that I'm teaching or I'm any number of things. But some of these bigger projects that were not for a particular commission or venue I just never get to do.

[00:16:35] And I really wanted to just drop outside of all the rest of my life and just have permission to focus on one thing and try doing it in a new setting where I wouldn't fall into the same patterns of always working on those shorter, smaller deadline things. And it was exactly what I had hoped for. I did have to spend, like I still spend a lot of time applying to residencies and wonder what the benefit— like what the balance is there of like, well, if I didn't apply to them, would I have more time?

[00:17:17] But once I was actually there, I got so much additional clarity and I had all these ideas and I had more energy. And I still— it didn't satisfy me like I was like, OK, now I'm done with that project and I don't need to think about it anymore. Like, I still wish I could just sort of keep doing it forever. But, yeah, they were really helpful for focusing in on one thing and really getting to explore that more than I do with the normal demands of life.

[00:18:07] Great. Wendy Call, what have you gotten out of attending residencies as a writer?

[00:18:12] What have you gotten out of the experience, sort of why residencies, why take that time, why not go to the beach?

[00:18:18] What have I gotten out of it? So I think that that's something that it really depends on the residency, but the thing that I would say is common among all the residencies that I have done, although they've been very different in structure and in intent, is that wider space you have, you can just spend all day carrying your project around in your head and working on it.

[00:18:41] And you don't have to teach your classes and feed your dog and take care of your children and whatever else it is that fills your mental and emotional headspace all day. You don't have to do that when you're at a residency. And I think that the physically being away is really an important component of it. I think also being in a different landscape can be really important, whether it's a different urban landscape or a very rural landscape. A couple of years ago, I was at Willapa Bay, which is a really wonderful residency program in Oysterville on the peninsula on the Pacific coast of Washington. And there was a visual artist there from New York who had never been to the Pacific Northwest before. And she spent all day, every day walking around and looking at things. She did not have a notebook with her. Her studio was almost empty. And she said, "I am filling up my well and I'm going to go back to my little tiny studio in, you know, Manhattan, and I'm going to make a bunch of art", which is exactly what she did. So I think that often just being in a different place— some of the residencies I've done,

I chose them specifically because I wanted to be in a particular landscape or talk to people who were in a particular place. And so I think thinking about what it is you really need for your writing and where it is you might be able to find, is really important.

[00:20:04] And then also making sure that the place that you are going can actually offer that to you. So, for example, when I was at the Mineral School, the reason that I wanted to go to Mineral School specifically was because I was working on a writing project about Mt. Rainier and I wanted to be able to go and spend all day, every day hiking around the mountain. And I made it very clear in my application that that's what I wanted to do, because sometimes you show up at a residency and they don't want you to leave. You know, they want you to be on the property, you know, doing whatever it is you're supposed to be doing. And that's not necessarily because they're control freaks. Like, for example, I attended one residency where they had a very large piece of property. It was, I think, about 100 acres. But their neighbors were not happy that they had all of these hippies coming and hanging out in this building together. And so they did not want you to leave their property unless you were driving away from it because the neighbors were not friendly. And so if there's something in particular that you want, make sure that that residency knows that before you actually go and that they can provide that.

[00:21:11] Great, thanks. I'll just add to that and say I think my perhaps best work has always come out of residencies. It's that quality of being away from my regular life and being able to sink deeply into the work that really for me changes the work. And that's part of the reason that I said I love residencies so much. I just feel like I usually know that I'm gonna get something great out of it as long as I just show up to this sort of silence and to the page and feel confident that something good's going to happen, even if unexpected. Yeah, Claire.

[00:21:45] All the things that you guys were saying made me— I was like, yes, yes, I agree.

[00:21:50] But when you're talking about just looking around and being in a new place, I felt like being in a residency sharpened some of my experiences. And also, you had this setup where if you went for a walk and got really inspired by it or saw something that gave you an idea, you could immediately start working on it as opposed to normal life, where I might see something amazing as I'm driving to my physical therapy appointment, but then I go to physical therapy and then I go to another work thing, and then I never get to write that idea down. And I also felt like it gave me— there is a self-esteem thing about it of taking myself seriously and just being introduced as “this is one of our residents” or “this is the artist in residence” in a new community setting felt kind of magical and I feel like I should be able to provide that for myself. But sometimes you do struggle with taking your projects seriously when you're not being paid for them immediately or maybe ever. So that was another thing that was very special for me.

[00:23:07] Great. So, Jane, I know you are a writer as well, and of course, I met you at the Helen R. Whiteley Center. And so please feel free to speak to that, but I also was hoping that you would speak to what makes a person decide to start a writing residency.

[00:23:25] Oh, boy. Well, I've lived in Seattle for 16 years. I'm originally from the East Coast and before I moved to Seattle, I lived in New York City for 10 years and I got an MFA in creative writing. But because I lived in New York City, I spent most of my time making a living so I could afford to live in New York City. And then I would go to the Vermont Studio Center which is— a lot of people on the East Coast go to the Vermont Studio Center and it's a wonderful place. It's one of the largest artists colonies in the country. There are about 60 people there every month. And they've taken over the whole town. And in a very natural and lovely way. And they're a force in their rural community. And so I kept going there even after I moved to Seattle when I wanted to kind of refresh my projects. But over time I realized, you know, I keep going back east for my creative life. And I live out here, you know, going on a decade or twelve years. And so I had a moment in my life where I could do something nutty, like buy a piece of property in the middle of nowhere. So I did. And I began— this is an abbreviated story, but I did a lot of homework on how to start a residency.

[00:24:42] And I felt like the Northwest, which has such a large proportion of artists, does not have as many residency options as the East Coast or other parts of the country. And I was also told by the former executive director of Shunpike, which is an arts support organization, that Washington State has the highest percentage of people who self identify as artists of any state in the country. This is like based on tax forms. So there is a big creative urge in this region. And there already were great residency organizations out here, but I felt like there's room for more. And residencies are also so place specific. So most of the residences at the time we began working on Mineral School are in coastal settings. And we're kind of by Mt. Rainier in this rural former logging town. It's called Mineral because they thought they would find gold, but they found arsenic. Oh, yeah. Like, if you have nothing to write about at Mineral, you will find something to write. And so. So anyway, I also kind of wanted to work just personally, I've been self-employed for 17 of the past 25 years, working by myself, churning out articles for, you know, people on email. And I wanted to collaborate with other people around something that is meaningful to me. So, this is meaningful to me. And it makes me happy to be able to, I don't know, work on Mineral. Yeah.

[00:26:13] Great. Part of the reason I wanted to talk about that now is I feel like we're going to shift. We've probably got most of you thinking, "I know what one is, I'm ready to go. How do I get in?" Right? And I wanted to just talk a touch about that sort of the type of people who start these writing residencies and what, generally speaking, what a real love and appreciation for the artists that there is and desire to provide something really wonderful. The reason it's important to remember that is it can be hard to get in. Right? You can spend a lot of time applying and getting rejected and starting to deal with that feeling of, you know, what is going to happen for me? What's the right spot for me? So I want to talk a little bit about that idea of the application process. And I think we can talk about that from some different folks who have been applying, folks who have created the application. And I also want to— I'm hoping we can give you guys an idea that there really is a range of residencies that are well-established, well-

known and frankly difficult to get into to, you know, residencies that aren't as competitive, just numbers wise so that you can get a sense for that too. So.

[00:27:23] Wendy Call, will you kick us off having applied? So I'm assuming if you have been to 24 residencies, how many applications do you think you've filled out in your life?

[00:27:34] That's a really good question. It has to be well over 100. I mean, well, the only number that comes to mind is that I've done five residencies at National Parks. And to get those five residencies, I did 20 applications. And in that case, that was a much better acceptance rate. You know, one in five then I think overall. So I don't know, 200 ish, but, you know, over 19 years. So I want to talk a little bit about the application process sort of with my Hedgebrook hat on. Although I do not work at Hedgebrook, I'm an alum and I've volunteered there on and off for the 15 years since I was first a resident there. And I've also been part of the jurying process for a number of years. And so Hedgebrook is on that far end of the spectrum at this point of really hard to get into, which it was not when I went 15 years ago. They accept somewhere between two and three percent of the people who apply. All women identified, it's a women identified residency. It's for people who identify as women. It's one of only two in the whole country that are for women.

[00:28:47] And they every year have residents who have never been published and have residents, this is the first thing that they've ever sort of received as a writer. And so it's a huge range of people that come to Hedgebrook. At the same time, the last year that I was part of the jurying, we turned down somebody who had won the National Book Award. Now, we didn't know we were turning down someone that had won the National Book Award because it's completely anonymous. So anyway, all that is to say that if you get rejected, don't feel bad. People who win the National Book Award still get rejected. But one of the things that I think is important to think about in terms of when you're applying is that, yes, the writing is really important. But the other parts of the application are really important as well, even though— and I feel real solidarity with you as in, you know, chronic applicant. They can be really annoying. They ask you these questions and you don't know how to answer them and it's so frustrating. So the way to get past that frustration in my mind, although it might sound counterintuitive, is to apply a lot. A friend of mine, a writer named Stephanie Elizondo Griest has a motto which is apply, apply, apply until you get it or you die.

[00:30:06] And I think it's a really good motto in that, you know, just keep doing it. Just keep doing it. And so if you're going to do something like apply for Hedgebrook, which fifteen to eighteen hundred people do every year, you're going to put a lot of work into the application. What you want to do is recycle that work into other applications, because a lot of them are really similar to each other, even if they might not seem that way at first. So I used to spend a lot of time agonizing over my rejections, of which they were many. And then ten years ago, I decided that I was going to apply for 100 things a year. I mean, apply in the sense of send out my work to literary journals, apply for grants, apply for residencies, pitch myself for jobs as a freelancer. And once I started doing that, I stopped caring about getting rejected because there

was so much rejection that you couldn't actually keep track of it. And then it was the acceptances that you really started noticing. And so my personal philosophy is to really focus on how often you're putting yourself out there, not on the result, because the truth is the only thing you can control is how often you put yourself out there.

[00:31:17] Do you want me to talk about organization side of this? Or do you want to wait till later? Yes, I do.

[00:31:26] Yeah. One of the things that is difficult about residency is you do need to apply. And then you're— And every place has a different process but applications are juried, which means they're read by people who— They don't see your name. So there's an intermediary person in the organization who sends the work to the jurors and they read your work. And different organizations are looking for different things. And so that's why there's the work sample, but also questions about your writing background or your, you know, what inspires you or where you are in your work right now. And so I've always told people who come to Mineral, and I think this is pretty true from other residency organizations I've gotten to talk to. It's, you know, residencies don't want to be another source of rejection in the arts world where it's so hard to get recognition. However, don't take it personally if you don't get into a residency. Sometimes I say depending on the place at Mineral, we only have four people at a time so it's a really small group of people. We'll eventually be changing some space so that we can have 12 people at a time. But what that means is if we on the application say what month can you come? And 80 percent of the people want to come in June, you know, and that's 100 people and we have four spots, we're going to we're going to reject 96 people.

[00:32:52] So it's not even about the quality of work. Sometimes it's about logistics. So those are just some things to put a file away in the back of your mind. And I think, like Wendy was saying, Hedgebrook accepts people at all stages of their work. One thing we sort of look for because we're a smaller residency is somebody already like in their work, like are they arriving and they haven't looked at this project for months, and they're going to get kind of like, you know, the Shining, you know, because they haven't been touching this manuscript for a while and they're going to sit in their room going “oh my God, oh my God”, like performance anxiety. So if they're already kind of working on the work, even if they only have half an hour every day, but if they're in their work, it will be much better for them in a small community of residents. And then we also sort of look for people who seem like they can roll in a rustic setting. So, you know, that's— this is stuff that comes out in a personal statement, not the writing sample. So I would say more than half the manuscripts that come through, the people looking at them think the writing is really good.

[00:34:06] And so then it gets into other aspects, like would this personality enjoy being in this, you know, wacky rural town. And I don't know. I will— Well, I don't know if I should give— There was a person who said that they only write with a special pen, that they dip in special ink. That was like a feather. And I'm like, probably not good for Mineral school, you know. So but might be good for another residency where there's a different kind of studio that you're

working. So anyway, I just want to pass that along. Most applications have asked for a couple of references. In our case, it's just, you know, we don't call all three of them. Sometimes we do a personal statement. There's different ways that the statement is supposed to be expressed for different residencies, and a writing sample. And I guess my advice is kind of also like what Wendy said, don't overthink it. Just get your work out. And that's if what you want to do is go do residencies.

[00:35:05] Great and Claire, I was hoping you'd talk to us a little bit about, you said you applied a lot before you got in and I'd love to hear about that process. And then also, what do you think was the sort of magic ingredient?

[00:35:15] Why did that application finally work?

[00:35:18] Well, that is kind of a funny question, because the first residency I got was Mineral school. On my third time applying. So, like...

[00:35:29] Can you tell me what changed? No, I don't know. [laughter]

[00:35:37] So many things in general, not just residencies, but many things in my career that I have received: grants, residencies, etc... It sounds amazing when you hear somebody has gotten this award. And then the story behind that is often that they've applied three, four or five, 10 times and eventually it works out.

[00:36:01] So I did that with Mineral school.

[00:36:07] I did— I can't really afford to consider paying for residencies.

[00:36:13] Even low cost ones, which Mineral is really low cost. But I can't let myself consider that on a regular basis just because I'm really low income being a full time artist, writer. So I was always applying just to the fellowship at Mineral, which reduced the chances.

[00:36:39] And I don't know, every year I tinkered a little bit with my statement and the writing sample as I had new writing and stuff. But the only really drastic change I made was I got really like, last year and maybe the year before I started to get more brutally honest about how little money I make and how much work goes into making that amount of money.

[00:37:10] And I don't know if that affected whoever was looking at it or if it was just like logistics or...

[00:37:17] But— and the other residency that I got was the first time I'd applied. So that was a big surprise.

[00:37:27] And I mean, I do recycle work on like applications as much as I can. Statements, bios, etc.

[00:37:37] But there is always, I will say there's always some detail that's different, that takes more time than I'm expecting, like a twelve page sample versus a seven page sample. Or the residency in Idaho required a ton of housing references and all these little details that I hadn't— They're not like hard to write but I had to put them together and it took this extra time that I wasn't expecting. But over time, yes, I've tried to care less about it. I've tried to just see things as something I can apply to every year, and it might work out eventually. I do try to tailor— to be as open as possible about why I want that specifically.

[00:38:33] I don't know if that's helped or not, but for Mineral, I really wanted to be in an old building like that that had that history because of writing a lot about things in the past.

[00:38:47] And I also really wanted to be in Idaho because my grandparents were from there. And there is that history there as well. So I think that did help with the Idaho one. They said that when they accepted me, they're like “it seems like she has a meaningful connection to this place.”

[00:39:06] Great. I want to do sort of a quick round of everybody giving tips on how to make your application stand out and improve your chances on getting in. And I'll go first. I will tell you guys my secret, since you have joined us here this afternoon. I'm not very proud of this secret which is part of the reason it's a secret, which is, you know, I do think about the odds that I'm going to get into something.

[00:39:30] So, for example, I have never applied to MacDowell. It's one of the, you know, big fancy writing residencies in the country.

[00:39:37] I would like to go. I've never applied because every time I sit down to do it I think about the time and the cost and the chances that I'm really going to get in.

[00:39:45] But when a friend mentioned that there was a brand new writing residency at the Bloedel Reserve on Bainbridge Island and they hadn't even had a year yet of being open to applicants, I thought a lot of people aren't going to know about this. And I want to go, I want to go right now. So I applied the first year and, you know, even by the second year of applications, there was something like 200 more people I would have been up against even just in that one year.

[00:40:13] So one of the things I do think about and the reason I'm ashamed of this is that a lot of people will say, you've got to go for the gold, you know, like apply to everything, apply to all the top things. And I think, well, you know, my end goal, I really, really want to go somewhere.

[00:40:28] I really want the residency. And I love things that are new and wonky, I like an adventure. I don't mind, you know, like our bathroom system is brand new, you know, like I'm not picky in that way. And I love a good adventure. So that's one of my things. I try to look for things that are not as competitive.

[00:40:48] And then the other thing is just have people you know read your application for you. Do not just apply and send it directly in, get it edited by your peers the way you would another piece of writing. And do not say "I just want to spend time in nature, I think it would just really open up my creative process" because everybody says that right?

[00:41:16] And so it doesn't make you stand out. Really look for what's unique about you and try and get that into your application. I love the way Claire used that term brutally honest. You're going to need some brutal honesty in this process.

[00:41:29] So I think that what's been said so far about the applications is really great in that, think about the odds, and then what Claire said about think about the relationship between you as a writer and the place as an institution that is supporting writers. You know, of course, a place in Boise, Idaho, is gonna be excited about someone that has a relationship to Idaho. So one of the first things that I do is I look really carefully at everything the residency says about itself, not because I'm going to lie about myself. I mean, brutal honesty is definitely the best policy. But because I'm going to think about what aspects of my sort of identity as a writer and as a person relate to this place's identity as an institution supporting writers. And then I think about also what aspect of myself am I presenting? I remember years and years ago a writer saying when he was leading a workshop about how to apply for things, he said what all those jurors are looking for is a handle on the suitcase to pick you up and carry you around. And at the time, I didn't understand what that meant. And then I did the jurying where I had literally hundreds of applications to read and I had to pick out the top 12, which was painful because most of those hundreds of applications were fantastic. And so what I found was that the applications in which the person had presented a really clear image of themselves, like there's a poet here in Seattle, Susan Rich, that says she might apply for something as: Oh, right. She's the person who teaches community college and writes poems about Sarajevo. Of course, she writes poems about lots of things. But in her, you know, application, she's going to focus on one thing. So if you are a person who writes fiction and poems and drama, you don't want to send all those things. You want to focus on one particular aspect of your identity as a writer and really put that forward.

[00:43:34] I feel we're making everyone feel like they can't go to residency, but it's not true. I think a couple things that you can also do to support an application. I know Artists Trust regularly has some talks, and I think some of these are online, on how to prepare an artist's statement. You can also Google artist's statements of writers or artists that you're familiar with and sometimes they're on their websites. You could also, as Wendy said, if you're studying up on a residency that you might want to apply to, some residencies have sometimes a list. Who came what year? And you can sort of see what the common threads are among those people.

And I will definitely say for Mineral, where we— again, I don't run our jurying, but I'm familiar with who's applying and the short listing of things. I will say when people have a relationship to place either mountains or small towns or northwest, that kind of counts for something because being in our funky little town could possibly really benefit their work. But that's not to say people who are concentrating on completely different things can't also come or thrive there. But if someone you know, we're right by Mount Rainier. And so if someone is very interested in going into the park to work on their art, there is actually no residency program at Mount Rainier. So we would like to be kind of an assistant to anyone who wants to go into the park. We had among visual artist applicants, we're mainly writers but we are increasing visual artist presence. We had a landscape photographer who wanted to come and take shots around Mt. Rainier and we accepted him. His photography was great. But the other thing that we could do was kind of bring him some of our secret sauce, which was we know some photographers in the community who have time on their hands.

[00:45:36] And we paired our resident with a local and they went off. It was like our local guy, Anthony became the Sherpa for Lew. And they went off and they really got a lot done and they became buddies. So there is sort of like an extra layer that we could bring to that resident that we might not have been able to bring to another resident.

[00:45:54] So, again, this isn't to make you all feel like it's impossible. It's just if you study up on the residencies that actually would be, you know, maybe useful to the material you're writing. Also, how big they are and the community that you'll be in I guess. What else? I won't digress too far, but one other thing about residencies, depending on if you have a day job that's related to your art or not, is residencies can provide a really good community for you. So when you leave residency, you have these new writer artist friends. And if you—you're a working artist, so you probably see more artists on a day to day basis than some, you know, not everybody.

[00:46:37] Yeah, but you're a professor and you are also a working writer.

[00:46:43] But I think for people who have a different sort of day job or context, residency is a good place to build community that you keep with you because you've lived together for a week or a month or whatever. And these people you probably share work with each other. So I think that's why sort of doing a little poking around and seeing what strikes your gut can be helpful.

[00:47:05] And then the last quick thing I'll say about competitiveness levels with residencies is the Alliance of Artists Communities there on the handout over there. If you go to their website, you can look up residencies and if it's a more established residency, they have an acceptance rate. So you could see do 50 percent of people get in or do one in 20?

[00:47:26] And so you can sort of set your expectations accordingly based on that. So anyway, I'll stop talking.

[00:47:35] I just got to say, I loved the other writers that I was with at Mineral School. We went night swimming together. We went night kayaking together. We walked in the graveyard. It was like a really special part of the experience was the other writers who were there.

[00:47:50] Yes. No, that was really amazing.

[00:47:54] So I feel like I'm learning things from what you guys are saying that I never totally know what tricks I'm using have actually worked.

[00:48:04] But I do feel myself looking for newer residencies a lot of the time or grants, etc., anything like that.

[00:48:15] Also when I'm looking at something that I can tell is a little newer or they haven't established their processes firmly, I try to wow them with my professionalism. So I'm like really careful with my sentences and making sure I'm trying to, like, trim any fat off of my statements to keep them— Well, actually, that happens with really big ones, too. You try and keep it digestible, which I'm not actually very good at, but I keep trying.

[00:48:45] Because you can actually with new ones or really established ones. There's usually a person you can call and ask questions of.

[00:48:57] And I've done that and sometimes asked, “what is your decision making process like? Like how many applications is each juror looking at? Are they looking at twelve or are they looking at one hundred and fifty?” And if they're looking at a hundred fifty, try to keep it super brief. I mean, not like devoid of content, but like try and not get too twisty with my logic of my, you know, how I'm talking about my work and that kind of thing.

[00:49:29] I also have sometimes just been like I can't do a great job on every, I just have to get as many out as possible, but that gets expensive.

[00:49:38] So the other thing that's really good to check in about is if they will waive the fee or reduce the fee for applications. And I know that a lot of smaller ones can't afford to do that. That's part of what funds things.

[00:49:53] But Hedgbrook definitely has a fine print thing where it's like if you can't afford the— if the cost of the application is prohibitive, contact this person. And most of the time, it's actually a pretty simple, not super degrading process to do that. So that's my other little tip, if you're like me.

[00:50:17] Great, thanks. Well, I think we're going to open it up to questions from the audience now. So is anybody sitting on any. Yes. Right over here.

[00:50:25] Ok, OK, great.

[00:50:27] I'm going to repeat that question so you can all hear it. The question was, at what stage in the writing process would it be most beneficial to apply? Would it be if you're just in the research stage of a project or if you're further along into a draft?

[00:50:39] And I think what I'll do is I'll just kind of bounce questions to one individual person rather than us all sort of. But if you are burning to answer a question, you just let me know. But I feel like, Wendy, this might be a good one for you.

[00:50:52] So it is a really good question. I think there is an "it depends" component to it, but I also think that the question underneath the question is more, how do you figure out when it would be best for you? And then what can a particular residency offer you? So, for example, when I was doing residencies and national parks, I wanted to write about national parks. Being in the parks to actually generate the first draft was really important. So I had an idea of the overall project, but I did these residencies with basically no material. I just went in and that was going to be sort of my first ideas. On the other hand, having residency time when you have a long project almost finished is really, really beneficial because you're at that point where you essentially have to carry the whole book around in your head or the whole play. And that's almost impossible to do when your writing time is 30 minutes before you, like, wake up the kids and go to work. So I think that in terms of what I've seen among other residents, is it often that last push when you're just trying to get through the final revision is really important. And then, you know, the third thing is, honestly, I have one writing project that I've been working on for ten years, and that's because I only work on it when I am at writing residencies because it's so emotionally difficult for me.

[00:52:16] It's writing about grief and loss, that when I'm working on it, I am untenable as a human being. I cannot work. I cannot interact with people. I cannot cook dinner. And so I work on it when I'm at a residency because I don't have to do any of those things. And I will stop a couple hours before dinner and do something else so that I can actually be a human being to the co-residents at the artist center. So I think that it really depends on the project. But thinking that through before you apply is really important. The other thing is some residencies and this is the kind of thing you can call and ask the representative if they have a place you can call, some places your writing sample does not have to be what you're going to work on when you're there. So that's a way to go and do a new project when your application is something that is polished and beautiful and very impressive, but has nothing to do with what you want to do when you're there. And whether that's OK would depend on the residency.

[00:53:12] And that's another tip that if you can pick your strongest piece of writing, not your brand new, like, "oh, I think this is what I want to work on. It's hot off the presses."

[00:53:21] Like, if you're allowed to send what you think is your best writing. Super quick addition to that, if you are in the research stage for a project, many residencies are in rural areas and their Internet access is a mixed bag.

[00:53:36] So if your research stage involves a lot of internetting, you want to do some homework on whether that's going to work for you at places you want to go.

[00:53:47] Good point. Yeah. You had a question.

[00:53:49] That's such a great question, I'm going to try and reiterate it for everyone, let me know if I'm getting it right. I think your question is how do you know if you are formatting, say, like if they say, "oh, we want your artist resumé." How do you know if you're formatting it the way they want it? And if you're going to generate materials and keep reusing them, how do you make sure it's the right thing for each place? Is that— did I get it right? Great. So maybe, Jane, since you're on the receiving end of these, you could say something.

[00:54:18] Well, we don't ask for an artist's resumé. But again, this is an instance where— but I've had to also look at, you know, artist resumé or CVs or whatever for my own applications. But I would A: I would call them and or read carefully if they, you know, give examples. I would also Google artist resumé and look at what other people do. What they really want in an artist's resumé— They don't— If you have a day job that's unrelated to your art. They just want to see all your artistic, you know, these are the journals you've been in, these are the talks you've given. You know, this is the reading series that you work on at the bar. You know, they want to see all that activity. And so it's really just a matter of finding the example artist's resumé and then imitating it with your bona fides.

[00:55:11] I think artists trust also has a lot of resources about that.

[00:55:16] And in the past, I haven't done this recently, but in the past I did sometimes actually just contact somebody there and be like, "hey, can I come in and look at examples of successful applications?"

[00:55:32] Those aren't residencies, but they have a lot a lot of the same kinds of guidelines of an artist's statement and a bio and a resumé and project proposal. Same with 4Culture.

[00:55:47] 4Culture is really nice about if you if you make an appointment, you can go in and you can go through all these binders of people's project proposals. And again, it's for something different than a residency, but it gives you lots of examples of how that could look.

[00:56:05] And even the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture will let you do that too. You have to stay in their little space there, but you can look through other stuff and ask people questions.

[00:56:20] That's great advice. That's a day well spent. Yeah.

[00:56:23] I'm so glad you added that. And I think it's such an important thing to keep in mind. You know, I occasionally have read over applications for friends who are applying to things.

And so often I see that people leave things, personal things out of applications because of some sense of like “this needs to be professional. They don't want to hear about my personal struggles” or I'm not sure where it comes from exactly, but I see it happen a lot. And that's often my feedback is like, “oh, well, you didn't include this really important thing about yourself that I think is going to make folks who run residencies want to, you know, give you that assistance.” I think so often folks who run any sort of programs that help artists, they just want to feel like they're really helping. Like, “oh, this is a moment in this person's life where they need this boost. And if I give them this boost now, I think they're gonna be able to make great work.” You know, that's what they want to feel.

[00:57:16] So show them how they can— tell them why you need the boost now, tell them what the boost is so that then they can feel like they're giving it to you. Yes.

[00:57:27] Great. I'll respond to this one quickly, because I actually use the Whiteley Center as one of my kind of regular go-to spots. And the reason— so the Helen R. Whiteley Center is connected to University of Washington.

[00:57:37] I'm sorry. Oh, I'm sorry. The question was, we had mentioned that the Helen R. Whiteley Center was a bit of a different situation than the residencies that we're talking about.

[00:57:51] Why and why might that be useful? So the Helen R. Whiteley Center is connected to University of Washington, and it is a paid retreat space. It is part of the Marine Biology Labs campus at Friday Harbor. And so on San Juan Island.

[00:58:14] And so it's not a terribly difficult application process. They want to know that you are a serious writer working on a serious project and you're not just taking a vacation. You know, you need to show that. But it's not terribly competitive. And it doesn't take a terrible amount of lead time. So usually you can write to them and say, “I'm interested in something in about three months. And here is my project. And do you have space?” And then if you get in, you know, it will— I think it usually works out to be something like I pay five hundred and fifty dollars for a 10 day retreat or something like that. So it is not— and many of the residencies we're talking about are free. Not all of them, but some are free. So this is a different situation in that regard. And it is independent. You're not working with any writers. It's not a conference of any type. But the reason it's very useful is the other residencies that are competitive, I don't necessarily— can't sort of put it in the calendar. Here's the week I'm going to Hedgebrook, you know, and it's easier to do that with a place like the Whiteley Center. So I tend to try and use a combination of paid or free spaces. Did anybody want to add anything useful?

[00:59:21] The other thing about the Whiteley Center is like she said, it's a much shorter decision making time from when you ask to go and when you go, I mean, you write them and within a week they decide or they tell you the dates are there or not.

[00:59:36] Whereas other residencies you apply and then there's a time lag because you're with a whole, you know, herd of people who've applied and there's jurying and notification. And so you're like applying now. If people applied at Mineral, they do that by February and they might not be coming till September. But a lot of people go to Whiteley Center on short notice or even for like a long weekend if they have like a book deadline or they really need to, like, lay out this manuscript of poems and move it around a room. And, you know, they know they have four days around Labor Day or whatever, and that's a different kind of need. And then the other thing is you don't arrive with a group of people who become like your little cohort. So some people have, you know, don't care if they meet other people at a residency. But I think residency is where you do arrive and leave with the same group of people. Part of what you get out of those residencies is you have this sort of like little camp bunkmates, you know, that you become buddies with. But, you know, again, you may not need that. You may want to just jam on that project you're finishing. And, you know, in a week, in two months, you can go to Whiteley and get her done, you know.

[01:00:47] I saw your hand up. Yeah.

[01:00:50] I'll repeat the question and then Claire, I can see you're burning to answer this one.

[01:00:54] The question was, do any of these residencies offer a fire under your ass?

[01:01:00] Is that the way you put it? So that, you know, that drive to complete something?

[01:01:06] Usually they'll say something about that in the application and how they describe them. And I would say a lot of them don't necessarily. But the one that I went to in Idaho, Surel's Place did because there were a few stipulations. The residency was— and you knew this applying because this is how you applied, you included what you had planned for all of this. So you had to propose a specific project that you wanted to work on and you had to give a workshop to the public and present what you had done at the end of the residency. In my case, that was an exhibition and an artist talk, but it could also be a reading and small publication if it was a— or a concert, depending on what you were doing. And in the application, you had to say, “this is the project I'm working on. This is why I want to do it at Surel's Place. And this is the workshop I would teach.” So it made the application have that much amount of extra work. But then, yes, you did present it at the end to a lot of people that I mean, Boise was really into it. So I have encountered a couple applications that I've done where there was a stipulation that you had to present the work at the end. But I feel like unless there's that stipulation, it's kind of up to you how far you push yourself towards completion of something.

[01:02:49] Yes, go ahead.

[01:02:51] I think I heard: Is there such a thing as a non live-in residency and are there residencies that last one or two days? Is that right?

[01:03:00] Well, in Seattle, Jack Straw is a great program for writers. That is called a fellowship, technically, but you just do it while you're living here.

[01:03:12] And you have a group of writers that are chosen with you. It's 12 every year. And there's a new curator each year who chooses the writers. And you get to do several readings.

[01:03:26] You get to have a lot of practice and sort of tutorials in presenting your work aloud. And you also make new work that they then publish in their anthology and they record a podcast with you presenting your work.

[01:03:44] And I did that. I got into that before I got into any residencies and it required no financial like— I didn't have to leave Seattle, but still pay my rent. And I didn't have to quit teaching. It was very low risk for me and extremely beneficial. I'm still friends with all those writers that gave me this community that I'd never had because I didn't do an MFA in creative writing. And I got to get my work out there in Seattle. So there's things like that that are not a residency, but really helpful.

[01:04:24] There is a newer residency program called Till. It's on the handout and it is a long weekend. You can— you pay per day. And so you could just go one or two days or I think you can go four or five. And it's a combination of— they do have programming, but you can opt in or out.

[01:04:45] You pay the same amount whether you go to their programs and talks or you're just using the time to write. So they put together a chapbook of participants work coming off the weekend. And a lot of people like that. It's up in Snohomish County in Arlington on a property called Smoke Farm. And then I think in terms of short things, short form things, I think some people also like to go to the Sylvia Beach Hotel in Oregon, although it's such a long drive that you might want to go more than one or two days. But it's a literary themed hotel and I don't know that they do residencies but you could sort of do a DIY thing. Or the Whiteley Center you could do a one or two day.

[01:05:30] I'll just add, I love Till. It's very bring your sleeping bag and you're gonna sleep on a cot, but it's great. And it's in the summer and it's beautiful.

[01:05:37] Okay, I'm down here. [laughter] Please go ahead.

[01:05:43] Ok, great. So the question was, I'm an interdisciplinary artist who is looking for a retreat that takes interdisciplinary folks. It uses literary arts in some way. So anyone have a good thought on that? Wendy?

[01:05:58] So I think in this case, first, it's important to keep in mind that we're here talking about writing residencies, but there are even more residencies that are for non-literary artists. There are a lot of residencies that focus on visual arts or focus on dance or focus on

performance. And that's a whole kind of related, but to some extent separate constellation. The other thing is, since you're saying in your case, you wouldn't need a studio or performance space. There might well be, you know, writerly focused residencies that would be happy to have you. The thing that you would want to check about is how would you be presenting your portfolio? So, for example, with Hedgebrook, you have to send in, you know, 10 pages of your writing. And it sounds like in your case, that's not going to be the best representation of your work. In the past I know, for example, screenwriters have written to Hedgebrook and said, "hey, could I send you five minutes of my film instead?" And the answer is no. Like, we look at paper or we look at a digital screen, that's what we do. But every residency is going to be different. So it might be that there's residencies that are focused on writers, that you would be able to present your work in a way that it would, you know, really represent it fairly.

[01:07:08] I would second you asking around on this because a lot of times the challenge for a residency isn't that you couldn't accomplish your medium in the space. It's that: Is there a jurying structure where you being an outlier who does this particular art can be juried fairly when everyone else is in the same genre? So, for instance, we've had questions about playwriting and it turns out we can jury that, but we haven't advertised playwriting. So we're going to talk about, you know, talking about that differently next year. And then the other thing for you, go on the Alliance of Artists Communities and do a search for music composition, because there are places that do specifically accommodate that. And I think Willapa Bay takes musicians. They're mixed disciplines. And music is one of them.

[01:07:59] Right. And OK, well keep it short because we're getting low on time.

[01:08:03] I've just also, because I work in two different areas and they do sometimes overlap, I've come up against this a lot too. And there are lots of residencies that take all art forms. And then the question then is how do I want to show myself to that, you know, show my work? But I've usually had to call someone again because some places like Surel's Place really wanted me to separate. They said don't talk about both in your application, but they did let me do two separate applications, one for writing and one for visual art which most places would not let you do, so it's good to ask.

[01:08:43] Hi, thank you for waiting.

[01:08:45] Thank you for your question. I'll start us off by saying that I know we did mention Hedgebrook is difficult to get into. Hedgebrook is primarily focused on women of color. I think that they told me recently there was something like 77 percent of their—Oh, eighty nine? Eighty percent of their residents are women of color. That is the only one that I know that is focused largely on women of color. That said, my understanding is that many retreats are very interested in diversity among their participants and that that is going to be an important thing about your application, is to talk about that. Talk about your work in that way. Would anybody like to offer more?

[01:09:35] Yeah, so Hedgebrook, although it is still going out in the woods, so that aspect of your question you asked about, you know, “what is it like to sort of go out into a rural area as a person of color and be mostly surrounded by white writers?” In the case of Hedgebrook, it would mostly be other writers of color. But you are still in a rural area. Cave Canem has a residency program separate from its conference. A number of years ago, I and a couple of other Seattle writers put together a resource list for writers of color that a big chunk of it was residency programs that either had one session that was entirely writers of color or their overall focus was writers of color. If anyone who's interested in that list gives me their name, I can email it to you. It is dated. It's from a number of years ago when there used to be the Rainbow Writers Festival in Seattle. But there are Cave Canem and Cundy Mohn and Condo Mundo, which are all organizations specifically for poets of color.

[01:10:35] Their websites include information about residency programs that are specifically for writers of color and also some that are urban for folks who really do not want to go out in the woods.

[01:10:47] Another resource— So. Well, I'll tell you two things. Another resource for residencies that will work hard to work with writers of color would be to look at the Sustainable Arts Foundation. They fund residencies as well as individuals. And their focus is helping writers who are parents or artists who are parents. But they made a commitment as a foundation to fund at least 50 percent of all individual artists that they give money to make sure those are people of color. And they have put that philosophy onto the residencies they support. I could say from— Mineral School's a participant in an informal residency network in the northwest called CAIRN, which is the Cascadia Artist In Residency Network. And a lot of residencies are in rural areas.

[01:11:38] And we do want to serve artists of color, but also understand your concerns about, you know, if it's a rural area and there aren't a lot of people of color who live in that area, how will that work out?

[01:11:52] The only thing that we as— we're a very new organization, we do ask people if they want to share with us on their application demographic information, including their racial background. And we do try to make sure that we have a diverse group of people every time we have a residency. But I will say it sort of depends on how many people of color apply as to what, you know, what the mix looks like. So we've been trying to do some more outreach so people of color will apply. And so that there's more applicants so that the cohorts aren't as pale. So... [laughter]

[01:12:35] And it's not the same thing, but I had related trepidation as a gay woman with some like I've also been like, I don't know where it's safe to be.

[01:12:49] And if I could tell beforehand whether it was safe to be a certain place. And my personal tactic that I've taken is that I've often been really open in my applications about my

sexuality, like very, very upfront about it. And sort of in the back of my head assumed that if the culture of a certain organization was really not gonna be OK, they would reject me and I wouldn't have to deal with them. I don't know if that's a good mentality, but I mean, like, I was nervous about Idaho and in my case, it turned out Idaho is— that part of Idaho is a little gayer than I thought. But, um, but, you know, and, um. And they I asked them about that too. And they said they'd had that question from writers of color and other gay writers as well. So...

[01:13:51] Yeah, so just to follow up on that, if anyone wants to come give their information to Wendy after. Please do.

[01:13:56] Hi. Yes. Great. I missed one thing. I heard you say Op-Eds. What was the other thing?

[01:14:03] OK. OK. So I just wanted to repeat your question so everyone could hear it. Wanted to make sure I was getting it right. So I think the question was, what if I don't have long work samples to send?

[01:14:14] I'm not sure if my work samples are what they're looking for. And you mentioned Op-Eds and—

[01:14:20] —Oh reported out pieces. OK. Gotcha. Right. Yes. So great.

[01:14:25] So can anybody speak to that?

[01:14:28] So that's a really good question in terms of whether you as an individual writer, is what you're working on, you know, what they're looking for? Most places have very specific guidelines, I think I might say. And I even as a creative nonfiction writer, often I'll find that I fall outside that. They want poets and playwrights and fiction writers, and that's it. That said, there are a number of residencies and I would say a growing number that either explicitly want to support journalists or journalists only or have journalists in the mix. And I think that's going to be increasing with sort of the assault that journalism is under in this country right now. And so there are a number of residency programs. Most of them have been created in the last five to six years that are specifically for journalists and people doing more. You know, I don't know what to describe it, but not poetry or drama or fiction. And then the other thing, you know, which Jane mentioned earlier, is to look at who their alum are and see, you know, are there people that are doing that kind of writing? But that's sort of a long way around it. The shorter way around it is most places are very specific in their guidelines. And if they aren't, I would call them and ask them to be specific, because why should you waste your time putting together an application if you know you're outside the bounds?

[01:15:41] And I mean, I'm assuming from the writing samples you're describing that you're working on longer form non-fiction. Is that correct? Yeah, so I think just look carefully at the organizations you're applying to, I know Vermont Studio Center will accept nonfiction writers

like Memoir. So kind of what they do is if you are writing journalism like a journalism book, I think you're not eligible for fellowships. If you're writing a memoir because it's more literary to them that, you know, they'll take you. There are other residencies. I think the Headlands Center in California. I know journalists that have been there. The challenge is, again, make sure that you can have your phone or the Internet works, because if you're going to be doing reporting while you're there, you want to make sure you can get that work done.

[01:16:37] So I think we can squeeze in one last question, we have just five minutes left. Is there anybody burning with one? Let's— I already got one from you. So I just want to see, is there anybody who didn't get to ask a question who's got a burning question?

[01:16:47] Yes. Anybody burning to talk about this? Yeah.

[01:16:53] It's different with every residency, but a lot of residencies work hard to keep alumni in touch, both with the residency organization and with one another. Wendy can talk to how strong Hedgebrook alumni support network is and then Mineral's newer but we try to keep alumni in touch with each other. Typically, the people that have been there together stay in touch. But we also try and introduce, you know, "hey, you were here in July, but you should meet this person who was here in September." And we also have visiting writers who are alumni. So we have alums come back and bring a friend.


[01:17:29] And so we try and, you know, we're not trying to impose into your life, but we try to be a value beyond when you're staying with us so that your community is broadened and you have other people who have that commonality of, you know, you're alums of this place now and you should know each other.

[01:17:50] The one thing I would add to that is when you do have a successful application and you go off into your awesome residency, even though there is a really strong urge to want to use every single minute, and then you have to like get home at eleven o'clock at night and go to work at 8:00 in the morning, try really hard to give yourself for a day or two where you don't have to do that when you get back from a residency, because the shock of being back in your day to day life will be— it is really a shock. So give yourself some re-entry time.

[01:18:17] Did you have a final thought Claire? Yeah, we have just a minute.

[01:18:20] Yeah, I had trouble coming back and suddenly not having time for things. But I've tried to learn lessons from how I behaved at the residencies and how I could add that into my life here and doing alumni stuff has been fun too. I did just also want to say, like there were some really interesting questions about how residency might or might not work for a lot of different people.

[01:18:47] And I have a friend who, for health reasons, can't do residencies. And I just wanted to tell you, if you're like "I really want a way to focus on my work, I want that validation. I want a



way to share my work, get me to finish something.” But a residency doesn't sound like the right thing, 4Culture projects applications are happening right now, and I think they're due at the beginning of March. And they have sort of different levels of funding that you can apply for. And it's definitely a big application, but I know that they're looking for all kinds of different stuff and different people and interdisciplinary stuff works too. So think about that, too, for something that doesn't require you to leave town. But you could pause some of your other work with this funding to work on your creative project. 4Culture. 4 like the number four.

[01:19:47] And then the word culture.

[01:19:49] And that's sort of delving into grants, which is a different panel discussion for a different day.

[01:19:54] Thank you so much for joining us. And eat some cookies on your way out. There's cookies.

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