



Library podcast

WA129 Reading featuring Tod Marshall and Claudia Castro Luna

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[00:00:42] Good evening everybody. Thank you all for being here tonight. I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge that we are on Duwamish land. I'm Desha Brandon. I'm the literature and humanities program manager here at the Seattle Public Library. Welcome to this evening's celebration of Washington 129 and our poets laureate Todd Marshall and Claudia Castro Luna presented in partnership with Humanities Washington Arts WA Elliott Bay Book Company and The Washington Center for the book. Thank you to our authors series sponsor Gary Kunis and to the Seattle Times for generous promotional support of library programs. Finally we are also grateful to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Private gifts to the foundation from thousands of donors helped the library provide free programs and services that touched the lives of everyone in our community. The library foundation donors here with us tonight we say thank you very much for your support. Without further ado please help me welcome Karen Hannan from art sois or the Washington state arts commission who will say a few words about the poet laureate program.

[00:01:48] Good evening. Thank you very much. Thanks for that nice introduction.

[00:01:52] So my name is Karen Hannon and I am the director of Ottawa also known as the Washington state arts commission. So I do also bring notice from Governor Jay Inslee who could not be here tonight but he wanted to say congratulations to Dr. Todd Marshall who leaves us and also a heartfelt welcome to Claudia Castro Luna and on behalf of the government but also the state of Washington myself my board and staff.

[00:02:19] I also offer those same congratulations and welcome the Washington state poet laureate program was established back in April of 2007 when the state legislature with a lot of prodding and pushing but they came to it gladly in the and passed a bill that recognized the value of poetry to the culture and heritage of our state.

[00:02:42] Indeed our planet wasn't a state poet laureate as you know is a joint program of the state arts commission and Humanities Washington and the position is appointed by the governor. It's funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities for

whom I hope you will always be advocates as well as being advocates for squaw and Humanities Washington who also fund this program so Todd you really went beyond the call of duty in these past two years.

[00:03:12] Logging in I believe 41000 miles in your trusty Subaru very rail is saying no to invitation's visiting every county in the state on your quest to promote words that matter.

[00:03:26] We were very lucky to have had you as our fourth state poet laureate.

[00:03:32] Thank you. And before I bring it up here I also of course want to welcome our fifth poet laureate Claudia Castro Luna

[00:03:59] And although Claudio your term doesn't start till tomorrow I know you have already been hard at work planning projects that you hope to accomplish in the next couple of years. And Claudia like toward and Elizabeth asked him before him. Kathleen Flanagan both Elizabeth and Katherine are here by the way let's wave ends up

[00:04:22] And Sam Green who could not be here tonight but sends his best. I know Claudia that you will pour your heart and soul into this job. And we look forward to working with you as you embark on that journey. So now over to Dr. Todd Marshall our fourth poet laureate.

[00:04:40] His final moment with us please welcome Todd Well I've written some notes about the journey and some thank yous that I'd like to share with you and I'd like to share one poem from the 129 plus anthology. But first I want to thank you for coming tonight. It's my honor to be part of a ceremony recognizing the end of my service as Washington state poet laureate. A program sponsored by arts Washington and Humanities Washington that exists to increase awareness and appreciation of poetry throughout the state. And I'm really glad to be here for the launch of Klatt Claudia Castro Luna service being Washington state poet laureate has been challenging some of you might know my service began right about the time things started heating up and what was to become a divisive election. The abuse has to end with language that arose during the subsequent timeframe have made me think again and again about the importance of words about the importance of people finding words that matter enough to them that they would defend them care for them use them judiciously perhaps even extend them. The most beautiful of gestures and memorize them learn them by heart. Take them inside. I mention this because I believe that my service changed over the course of the last two years.

[00:06:06] I began with the zeal of a missionary I was looking back at my calendar for March April and May of 2016 and it was just it was madness. My converts would shift from liking poetry to loving poetry from being indifferent to poetry to liking it from hating poetry to tolerating it and so on. I was going to bring about these fundamental shifts in consciousness however I found myself somewhere around the midpoint of my term talking about how words matter more and more so even than talking about the subject how poetry matters. I think that I of course continue to share poems continued to talk with people about how they might make poems but I think that trying to meet people where they

were at in connection with language and trying to urge them to find words that spoke to how they saw the world and how they hoped the world might be was a fundamental shift in my journey. Hospitality also weighed heavily on my mind. While so many communities were inviting me and inviting me to share words while so many poets were making themselves vulnerable open to the world and the world if you will by sharing drafts or talking about significant life moments trying to find language our country writ large seemed consumed by talk of walls isolationism exclusion.

[00:07:29] I know that this is a generalization that needs much more nuance but the wild energy of this juxtaposition always kept to my mind a swirl I still believe in poetry. I believe in words I believe in the humanities and the arts perhaps more so than ever. I'll say I say that and will continue to say it because I think that it bears repeating. I know that all of you are probably gathered here tonight because you already are already converts. But I think that every chance we get we should emphasize the importance of the humanities and the arts. I believe in the work that a painting or a poem can do how a certain slant of light captured on a canvas can figure us just so how a poem about the experience of a veteran. The ardor arduous challenge of a refugee the pain of someone unable to find social acceptance. How each of those encounters through art with otherness with strangers if you will might make us more able to engage in welcome. I was welcomed in my journeys. I saw many people welcoming the power of the word. I saw people wrestling with how they might welcome an experience in a poem quite distant from their live lives.

[00:08:41] I'll carry those memories with me now some thank yous thank you to Humanities Washington and Washington.

[00:08:49] Two of my favorite organizations and two of the great organizations in our state. I know that all of you have probably attended their program and many of you probably support their work. But I would encourage you to become living commercials for those two organizations because the work that they do trying to become advocates for how people can find common ground how people can explore ideas with which they're uncomfortable. The work that those two organizations do that work is more important than than ever right now. And so a big thank you to both of your organizations to my family on the west side of the state. Thank you for giving me a safe and loving place to land and that's my literal family. Lots of couch surfing and kicking little kids out of their bedrooms for me to find a place to sleep to the many teachers and librarians and organizers who hosted me all of you are an inspiration to the many poets who shared work with me read with me collaborated with me offered me a guestroom. Thanks so much to Gonzaga and my great co-workers. Thank you so much Gonzaga. I should mention in some ways also subsidize my journeys and that they gave me a course release and additional travel funds so I could get to more places in the state. I'd like to give a huge congratulations and thank you to Claudia who we hear from later. I was fortunate enough to have I think three or four or maybe even 5 events our Claudie and I both participated and shared poems and talked about poetry and we have a Alumina's spirit taking over the position and I can't wait.

[00:10:29] Can't wait to watch her at work. Believe me I can't wait. I'm also delighted that Claudia will extend the poet laureate service that began with Sam Green and continued with Kathleen Flanagan and Elizabeth Austen. Sam of course served as poet laureate before there were cell phones and stuff

back in the covered wagon days. And he'll tell you about it too. And you know I think that it's been a remarkable change. And I think what's going to be really beautiful is each of us has done something a little bit different and I can't wait to see what Claudia does with the position. Last of all you know I want to say a little bit about the Washington 129 project. We're going to hear a few poems from the book tonight as many of you know I put out a call for submissions. I received some 2400 poems. I picked 129 of them and then I gathered about 80 more in each out books that might have already vanished into the ether. But it was a fun project. You know there are so many wonderful poets in our state. It was really a challenge to curate the gathering there. So there were a few free copies of the anthology of the chapbook. I don't know if there are any around but please grab one. Let's hear a few poems. Let's get to some action some actual poetry. I'd like to launch the first poem into the air and this is from the chapter book series and it's a found poem and its author is David Haldeman and it's called the March edition of the shoreline.

[00:12:08] Police Blotter wife punches husband in nose makes it bleed. Autistic male happily assaults a cashier at Sears racist graffiti at Einstein disturbance between brothers Sun charges thousands of dollars on his deceased parents credit cards. Woman eats from deli at Central Market without paying causus disturbance rips up flowers spits on employees goes to jail. Natural death at Good Shepherd Home.

[00:12:53] That's the March edition of the shoreline police blotter by David Haldeman. Our first poet who will share work with you tonight is George McDaid. I believe if memory serves me correctly which it doesn't usually do so but I'm pretty sure that George and I actually met one of my earlier events and so I connect Georgia in my mind with the beginning of this journey so please welcome George McDaid.

[00:13:27] Good afternoon. It is so wonderful to see so many people here at this time of night. You're about to see the title of my poem is the mountain.

[00:13:37] And I have no doubt that everybody knows the name of the mountain Mount Olympus Mt. Fuji Kilimanjaro Diamondhead.

[00:13:50] The rock is Everest even Cascade's all beautiful in their own way.

[00:13:58] I've seen them for myself.

[00:14:01] Right near the mountain it's my mount.

[00:14:07] I love that mount the White is quite some time a light brownish gold intense on a case pinkish strawberry tinge.

[00:14:22] On other occasions an ice cream cone where the ice cream is not too hard and not too soft but just right.

[00:14:34] Presley's snow covered snow covered partially snow covered all different ways a pleasant and welcome sight in St. sometimes higher sometimes lower depending on my location though I know folks who swear Mount Rainier moves seeing reindeer from commercial airplanes flying around here from a private plane traveling there at least annually taken.

[00:15:09] Anyone who accompanied me being not the least bit flustered if I have no company traveling south of the avenue despite another route being fast thinking if I just drive straight I would drive to the mountain had never missed the chance to see the mountain knowing the mountain is out.

[00:15:36] Waist lifts my spirit. When Mount St. Helens exploded I. Prayed Mt. Rainier never does the same.

[00:15:46] I would worry about volcano Regnier for a long time.

[00:15:51] Occasionally I still worry. This is my personal natural side.

[00:15:58] Wow.

[00:15:58] Out of the country for six months I have missed the mountain some popes never crossed my mind when I returned home in December I had an 11 day wait to see the mountain.

[00:16:13] And oh how glorious Mt. Rainier mountain I love. Thank you.

[00:16:25] And our next reader is Philip Red Eagle help me welcome. Hello.

[00:16:38] A very old photo. I had a friend pass on the 16th he was Jean Mushir and a pair and she wrote for The Seattle Times as Jean Bayti and she wrote reviews for galleries and I wanted to read a piece of her work and jumped to mine late March in Point Defiance Park among tall grasses and a barely noticeable pond.

[00:17:23] Frogs and sunlight move and ancient rhythms relentless as the pounding storms of winter popped up like fat musicians playing their tubas. They produce such a deafening rhythm for their mating dance. They nearly burst the made metaphysical physical skin that in cases this moment in time watching their dark pulsing body slick and glistening protruding out of the water. I remember a bus ride in Portugal where I saw from a distance Black bulls roaming in the water meadows at Jean and have to find myself here.

[00:18:13] Things We Carry now just for Tim O'Brien who wrote the book the things we care about Vietnam.

[00:18:24] It has been 25 to 30 years or so since we neatly folded up to his greens and blues away with Bill's brass buckles and metal with many colors. Nothing really. Memories block tight safe. Yet there are these things we carry with us to help us through hard time treasures of sorts useful things

that serve a purpose like before. There's just a little two inch lock back. Pretty little thing. Good for slicing dibblers and cleaning under the nail. Not a buck or caber but useful still the same. Here's a mini mag light double or triple j. Many fold up scissors bandaids for cuts a little silver matchbox and a compass just in case. A coffee mug of stainless steel it won't break or rust shoes that will take me anywhere. The souls were made to grip. These aren't exactly issues but they do me just the same the right hair when I need them and they keep me through the day out front. I wear these shades so no one can look in and see the man born of loss and pain. Inside the weird little darkness the color of that wall blackness like a mirror and full of the names of friends and relatives my life is made of little things borrowed from a life ago when things were tough and gritty and I was young. Q Our next reader is Quentin Baker

[00:20:32] Photo. Honored to be here.

[00:20:37] This is wonderful. I'm excited. What is going to do.

[00:20:47] And I'm grateful for what Todd has done including this anthology which I was honored to be in. And he was kind enough to accept this poem.

[00:20:56] It's from a loosely connected series of poems about Negro League baseball player Lerche.

[00:21:06] For Porter Moss maybe a gasket blue maybe this Tennessee July is too thick to drive through. And lord knows how many miles that engine has on no matter nothing to do but grab the luggage and hump it to the Dixon railroad station. So the mighty Memphis Red Sox walk the walk and up piled up in an already full car. No room to separate thumbed into the vestibule with the overflow white and black alike.

[00:21:41] It's hot. Everyone feels stuck under the sun's tongue. Nothing to do but it dark is a long way off.

[00:21:51] Inevitably a dice game is struck up. One white boy is carrying on harder than the rest yelling about the role grabbing a few women's backside. He's already had a few and is still having his shirt more whiskey and sweat than the train stops. Sign outside says McEuen. The red cap comes in grabs the rowdy boy by his collar informs him of his early exit. The white boy Bucks pulls a piece from his waist and levels it. Now the conductor comes in ready with his rockiest boy relents takes his leave and everyone in the vestibule starts breathing again.

[00:22:39] The train rolls on. Then crack. Crack crack. The white boy lets off from the platform. Random blind nobody except Porter Moss.

[00:22:55] You see they call him Uncle Bob moss on account of his delivery low as low can get he slurs that thing right off the top of and ends his knuckles buzzing the ground. The best submariner anyone's ever seen.

[00:23:10] Gut Shot Marce is hollering for a doctor but nothing can be done until the next town the boys clear as much air as they can lay down their red sox uniforms from Moss to bleed on dark has settled in now. Some are grateful for the abated heat. Some don't notice. The train pulls into Waverly. The boys told sorry no doctor or hospital for him here. The train pulls out Moss lurches with the car. Nothing to be done until the next town the train pulls into Brustein white doctor gets on board shoot some Mersea into Moss and says sorry no hospital for him here. The train pulls out Moss lurches with the car Midnite now. Everything outside wrapped in a black wing. Nothing to be done until the next town train pulls in the Lexington. Then boys told sorry a no doctor or hospital form here. The train pulls out Moss lurches with the car. Nothing to be done until the next town train pulls into Jackson. Then boys told ambulance come in. Now the sons come into. They load Masin leave the uniforms in the vestibule wet with ten hours of ankle balls blood and boys follow the sirens to the first hospital that anyone has for bleeding giant.

[00:24:47] Next is the wonderful Rachel gaslit your client.

[00:25:00] I wanted to read you guys two poems. One that I wrote with Claudia for one of her Seattle poetic grid isn't the right name of Claudia. And yeah. So check that out online. The poetic grid there is she had us right here at this library. Poems about police that's disappearing in a neighborhood. So this is called another rehab in the Central District and it's located on Yesler and 27 let the old houses be that the long line wave and quiet defiance.

[00:25:39] The red restless Ma of new construction. Be silent. Let werewolf mutter along Rafter's 9 these good bones. At the ports slope let the screen door creak open to crack Street let the damp air flow through the old houses saying that their rooms rattle are full of grandmas and aunties and kids and cousins. But Neidl touch Blackpool vinyl but base bottom out speakers shiver floorboards but broke down cars bloomed dandelions like they did in our youth but the blue tarp gray in the rain at the old houses

[00:26:31] And then I'm going to read the poem about the ballot box fish Schlatter from anthology yes this is at the Ballard locks. You think the giant squid ever touches itself wandering a tentacle and a documentary voice and it attacks one limb with another.

[00:26:57] Not the best table topic for a couple stepping into a mortgage under the locks. These shifts a shoulder only believe were truth sardine. Is anything that you get out of a can. A couple walks into a house. The spire stabs the heart of the sun's deviled egg careful. The algae is never gone and the damp gropes under the House's blouse. Is this the worst mistake you ever made. Those that make it arrive in ragged condition spawn and die. It's hard not to be sad. Around samen fungus grows from their wounds. If only the poem could turn here fish are finding a way home with special nostrils u turns of sent back to the river of their birth. Watch them leap. Watch them batter themselves against the rocks.

[00:28:00] Watch them thrash through the air leaping arguments against compromise and I'm excited to introduce next dawn.

[00:28:16] Sean Baira.

[00:28:24] Hey everyone. I want to honor the land of course and the ancestors and the Duwamish for being here first and as well as Todd's energy and generosity and integrity. He's like a good human right the human inhumanities

[00:28:44] Kind of feeling like that's something rare.

[00:28:47] So I want to acknowledge that and you know he lives in Spokane my like hometown so whatever you know and also to Claudia you know Ciulla Tchula like you you're going to rocket and like solute. So this is the poem from Knopf from the anthology that I forgot.

[00:29:09] And it's called Lucky years ago when given my first and only Escot Palladio the thin string around my neck holding a miniature cloth picture of the mother of all the Mexican woman down the street told me to tuck it beneath my shirt keep it pressed to my skin for protection.

[00:29:28] Everyone like us must wear one. She was family Polaroid's three boys with dirty blond hair and pale limbs surrounding a girl with eyes and hair the color of mud and skin a stick of cinnamon in the rural outskirts of a northwestern town. A school official knocked on the front door holding a free lunch for him. Asked if my name meant sun rising if I was adopted. Every Halloween. Friends told me to be Pocahontas with my beauty mark. I chose Gypsy.

[00:30:04] Once I was a ghost during junior high I moved to shaded areas avoided the greasy bottles of baby oil as others slathered and placed tinfoil reflectors on their pale bellies in high school.

[00:30:20] The driver's ed teacher snapped the seatbelt across my chest. But you're a feisty one with that dark skin. He's scheduled my drives alone so I could get more practice as a young adult sitting across from a man I just met who had the same hair eyes and skin as me. I remembered my mom telling me you just tan real good. So count yourself lucky away at college. My best friend complimented me. You look like a white girl with brown skin. A boyfriend hands caressing my bare skin murmured how he loved the color of me. Cafe con Che Madrona. His little chestnut. I brushed his hands away feeling ghost and to read one more really quick one.

[00:31:11] I'm so happy to see you.

[00:31:13] One more quick one for Claudia and for every single person who comes from a history of oppression and discrimination such as we're experiencing in today's contemporary awesome political economical and social world.

[00:31:35] This is called One way back.

[00:31:38] On scabbed knees fingers claw raw earth Moonglow splinters cede the ground and speaking in one language Tikka kepp Hitesh leaving hope as heavy as the fossilise of hearts

scattered across the grass. You slink and stutter spine bending to Rainbow curve head near touching almost there a stone upon stone is placed on your back.

[00:32:11] Mouth now full of water.

[00:32:14] Thank you. And I would love it. Introduce the next reader.

[00:32:21] Bill Cardie.

[00:32:28] All right thank you. Thank you. Todd. ODea it's good to see a peaceful transfer of power.

[00:32:41] I'm going to read a poem from the anthology that kind of looks back to the election year. And then a poem about the future. So first poem in the president and ends with a line from John Cage too scared this morning to reverse from the driveway we throttled through the garage and last transmission in a field were for snow geese buried their necks in muck low afternoon late in the furrows a poultice of turmeric and pain which echoed from the barn because the barn is a singing thing back to the city. It's Friday. Everyone who listens to country music with the windows down got off early today. The beach isn't open to the public anymore. Towels pile at the gate. We can still smell the coal train as we dug beneath the skeleton of its conveyance tracks where someone wrote Swain Yost's three times on the trestle. Someone was unafraid to spend all their wishes nightfall mosquitoes eat what we offer the little flesh to be found in the statuary where we walk after dinner never having moved less like two objects and more like the weather is also weather related bounding sphere better luck next year.

[00:34:21] We said gathering materials better luck next year. We whispered under tiles eaves under Sache edge and waterpipe better luck sprouting where the gutter drips plum purple. We were looking into New Year's better luck. We said to center cloud. Better luck to cloud edge. What could we what could be better. We said as a shadow met us on the CBJ. Better luck I said next year. You said and didn't elaborate. Better better we said we said luck with zero perspective lucky clods. We said having misspoke looking skyward. Next step is Shankar Narayan

[00:35:28] I'd like to echo every once thanks to Todd who has been a pretty incredible poet laureate. He's been a tireless road warrior and my hope is that now that we will have more free time we can realize our long standing dream of getting our dogs together and allowing them to sniff each other. And I'm also super excited for Claudia's upcoming reign and to see what she does with that position. I think you're going to be amazing. So very excited. I also want to thank Todd for including me in the anthology both encouraged me to submit and actually picking the poem that made it in. I'm really glad it made it. It's a poem that has a soft spot in my heart and I think it found the right home. But I'm not going to read it tonight. Instead. I'm going to read a poem that will probably disqualify me from ever being the poet laureate. It's been. It's been nice knowing all of you. This is called Sherman Alexie addresses the mostly white fundraiser to which I have gained entrance

[00:36:43] India into India and never say in my universe that we are winter avoid all the kinks in the pipeline that didn't deliver us to the boardroom. The only 70 percent. As crazy as the last Indian whose land disintegrated to salt ocean no one can drink. If I could I'd become the Indian most palatable to white folks such a sweet gig. I can almost taste the bubbly and sustainable salmon of it. Feisty enough to wisecrack about my fingers outnumbering brown bodies in the celebrity chef gala the woman in the red dress looks concerned until I lighten it up. Hey at least I made it past security relieved. I've had practice. I speak complicity fluently Indians adapt store Schoener like desert plants shift like polar people. Wheeler dealing as their land becomes bearing drink Dandelion Wine choking but it's hard to kill us dead. We scrimshaw Lulus sculpt Ivery pirate ships sell what they want hence this oration. Despite the questions Sege above permafrost rots an ice melt and those most uncomfortable laugh hardest at my jokes an exploitable fact sometimes other Indians expense I seek only to be the good Indian minority myself invaluable and what's more valuable than propping up the whole wide world. She assures me there is a market for work like yours. Nowadays everyone wants the socially conscious stuff token is another name for a talisman is another name for survival which does not equal belief which does not equal the blood seal drips onto an ice flow in roseate calligraphy. After the clubbing we'll be good props then vivisected X in the thin ice of every interaction. He let our blood repeat and repeat till it's in us like Gandhi we walk to an ocean of salt. We've gotten so great at counting. Boy does the salmon taste good. And I have the pleasure of introducing Anastacio Rene who I think I saw walk in yes us there you are.

[00:39:53] Fantastic.

[00:39:54] I'm so excited to hear you read. And I'm honored as well to have been a Hugo House Fellow and Anastasia was the writer in residence. Please welcome

[00:40:13] Thank you so much Todd for inviting me and having me be in theology a talk from this anthology today and I know students got really really inspired.

[00:40:27] So that was amazing.

[00:40:29] I just want to honor you Gladia you are amazing.

[00:40:34] No matter what job you hold your writing in your spirit and your energy is is priceless. So thank you.

[00:40:47] My poem from the anthology old she says the mouse is domesticated because it comes out to eat when she is eating breakfast. Sunnyside because it washes his hands and waits for her to say grace because it walks around each mousetrap and avoids eating pellets because it knows when she is trying to kill it. Because it won't just die already like everyone else because it wants to live its life in her kitchen like she's all right Yellow and Sunshine from the birdie and the Beast spotted bird atop a tree and the bird cracked herself open and Bird a shell and the shell split herself open and winged a beast and the Beast stood as tall as any beast who was not a beast could stand.

[00:42:14] And the standing beast who was tall enough to be a tall standing beast and back now the mysticism is not very mystical or perhaps it's too mystical.

[00:42:27] When you read the four lines and we see that the writer's voice isn't sure if the beast is really a beast or if it's just standing like a beast and we wonder if the writer knows that she's written about birds and shells. If she knows this night might not be the thing to do if she wants to be published in a reputable magazine.

[00:42:45] That may be writing about birds and shells and beast is not what they want.

[00:42:51] And the writer will rewrite it in a way that might seem more organized and with more of a formula.

[00:42:57] So it is easily digested for the main audience see the poem below. The small white spotted Bird was born of a translucent shell mama this shell miniscule but mighty gripped the bird as if the bird might fly. Womb as if the bird might morph transform herself into a beast.

[00:43:34] Blood thank you.

[00:43:43] Well the moment has come. Todd are you ready.

[00:43:48] Claudia are you ready. John and Christine are you ready.

[00:43:51] Ok. I would like to welcome up to the podium. John and Christine the very beloved former owners of open books who are here for the official passing of the world's ceremony. No

[00:44:17] We are honored to be with you tonight. I am about to walk up to the back of the room and hand this red of Laurel to some person who thought they would be far enough away to be left alone. Sa Re the idea is that the Sprigg will be passed through the audience. As a kind of blessing if there isn't enough time for each of you to touch the sprig please come down and give it a little brush.

[00:45:01] After the ceremony concludes doing this we will be giving our blessings to the poet laureate. It is a public office and we are the public. We will be putting the public's DNA on the sprig letting the laureate know we are with her as she goes about her official duties.

[00:45:32] While I am doing this John why don't you tell them what we know.

[00:45:42] Ok Christine I will since Clairvoyance is sadly underdeveloped in the human animal. What we know comes to us from the past.

[00:45:56] We know that sprigs of Laurel generally woven into crowns and awarded for outstanding strength and character and Aland is a longstanding tradition with Southern European origins initiated in ancient Greece showing up in Renaissance Italy and the Office of poet laureate becoming state

sanctioned in England in the 16th century. We know that the contemporary office of Washington state poet laureate that sweet and vital office.

[00:46:38] We are celebrating today began in 2007 with the naming of Samuel Green as the Washington state poet laureate.

[00:46:50] He was followed in the office by Kathleen Flanagan in 2012 Elizabeth Austen in 2014 and Todd no relation Marshall.

[00:47:02] In 2016 inexhaustible marvels. Each of them and now and now and now another Marvel Claudio Castro Lou will bring her considerable vision and grace to the office and to this state. And we know this that Christine dbI and I have been involved with the passing of aboral Sprig symbolizing the take us taking of this wondrous office since Samuel Green's term we cut the sprig of from a plant we have it our house and may I remind you that this is the kind of Laurel leave that makes a great addition to soups and beans. Not to that Laurel that your neighbor planted it with 40 feet first sustainability and legacy and all of that good kind of stuff. We are giving Julie Ziglar the executive director of Humanities Washington a small world planned and as the office changes hands in the future this living Laurel can provide the don't worry Laurel I don't worry. Don't worry Julie it's a very slow growing plant

[00:48:33] And feel free to pluckily once in awhile for your soup.

[00:48:46] Thank you John.

[00:48:49] That's what we know. What do we not know.

[00:48:56] You're supposed to say please share. All right then I will

[00:49:01] Thank you. We do not know all those sacred moments through the millennia and up to our own troubled and beautiful time all those sacred moments when people gathered to honor this singer among them the witness the make or the poet

[00:49:35] In languages unknown to us in lands now unrecognizable.

[00:49:43] People have gathered they will gather as we do today to praise and affirm the place of their singer their poet at the Community Table this Laurel Sprigg somewhere in the crowd.

[00:50:08] Ok this Laurel Sprigg touched by our hands and now will be handed to Todd handed from Todd to Claudia this Laurel Sprig connects us to people ancient and far future. Their voices join us today. They stand with Klaudia as she sings poetries timeless song.

[00:51:14] Well good evening everyone. Claudia If you would want to continue to let the Laurell make its way I think it only got half bad. Halfway down so I can buy you some extra time so. OK. And either

way. So I'm Julie Zigler I'm executive director Humanities Washington one of the sponsors of the program and I get the honor of talking a little bit about Claudia and acquainting you all a little bit more with her. For those of you who don't know her quite as well as we do. But first I want to say again thank you to Todd.

[00:51:49] It has been an absolute pleasure to work with you these past two years. You're going to be missed very much. But we know you're not far. So thank you.

[00:52:00] As I said It's my pleasure tonight to get to introduce and talk a little bit about Claudia Castro Luna. Many of you know her even more of you know her work and many more in our city state and country identify with her story. The poet laureate is very much a working position. People apply. They're selected based on three criteria the quality of their work their demonstrated commitment to community and the set of activities that they propose to accomplish and undertake As laureate during their two year term. I was fortunate to be part of the committee along with Hannon and other arts Washington commissioners Humanities Washington trustees and poet. Expert poets from around the state as we looked at many applications from Very Talented poets many of whom would have made terrific laureates but I'd like to share with you some of the things that set Claudia apart and what we think make her the perfect person at the absolute perfect time. First her plans over the next two years. Claudia has talked about expanding the really successful Seattle poetic grid to be a statewide program. And we're excited to see all of the wonderful poets writers authors that she engages in that way. She's also talked about wanting to turn community colleges and our state into creative hubs through workshops readings and other activities. And finally in her words she would like to forge new paths in programming with radio programs and other creative ideas. And I I know for sure that there's not going to be any shortage of creative ideas. Only time. About her work. The committee noted her poetic vision is an ambitious one embracing civil rights and human justice.

[00:54:01] At a personal level Claudia's life experience has been broad and dramatic and she uses that experience to wonderful effect in her poetry that you've heard these before.

[00:54:13] But her work shows an interest in both the imaginative and social aspects of the art and a comment from one of the reviewers that I love and she said simply I love that Claudia as accomplished as a poet as she is.

[00:54:31] Puts in her application simply. I love poetry. So why Claudia. Why now.

[00:54:41] In her application she wrote quote in my poetry I try to make sense of myself as a historical subject and pry into the ways in which my intersectionality.

[00:54:51] As a Latina immigrant as a woman of color shape my fears inform my desires my poetic stance stems from watching my parents risk their lives for Economic and Social Justice in El Salvador from escaping a civil war. And from my conviction that poetry resides in a soul Klaudia is a gift. We are so fortunate that you have chosen to dedicate the next two years of your life to this post. We are so grateful. Certainly Todd is a hard act to follow. As for Kathleen Elizabeth and Sam however I know

that Claudia will forge new paths and relationships that will really strengthen the cultural and social fabric of our state. It's a huge undertaking Claudia. But we are here for you. We have your back and we cannot wait to see what you do. Thank you

[00:55:58] Good evening everyone.

[00:56:02] Thank you Julie for that wonderful introduction and to the board and staff of Humanities Washington and to Karen Hanun as well for the opening remarks and for arts Washington their staff and board. As you've heard tonight they are too. They are the two statewide organizations whose clowns who sponsored the position of state poet laureate thank you to Seattle Public Library for hosting us tonight into Elliott Bay Books for providing books for sale.

[00:56:33] Please take a look at the table there's some really wonderful books written by all of us sitting here this evening.

[00:56:41] I am entrusted with the singular honor to step into the office of Washington state poet laureate and I would like to acknowledge the legacy of the esteemed poet laureate some of them in the room who came before me.

[00:56:56] Sam Greene Kathleen Flanagan Elizabeth Austin and of course taught Marshall whose dedication and service has awed us all.

[00:57:10] It is an honor to follow in your steps to all the poets in the room. Thank you. Get us. Yes I am grateful to call myself a member of this enormously generous and talented community to John and Christine for that amazing sweet touch that was completely unexpected.

[00:57:33] I did not know that was to happen nor how that was going to happen. But I will treasure the leave of people with me far beyond the two years that I am in office. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness and for all you've done on behalf of poetry here in the city and the country and the world.

[00:57:53] Thank you so much to my family my husband our three children to my mother who came from far away as did dear friends who hopped on airplanes and crossed international borders to be here and to all of you who came from a close or closer distance on foot and buses perhaps and those who braved long stretches of road and dealt with Seattle parking no less to be here.

[00:58:20] I am most grateful to all of you brassieres the awesome tonight gathered here with you all.

[00:58:29] I am reminded of a poem by the Nicaraguan Nestel guard the nun a priest who was also Nicaragua's minister of culture and a diplomat.

[00:58:38] During the Sandinista government and that will read only and served as a rather long poem. Think of those who have died when you received the nomination the prize the promotion.

Think of those who have died when you are in the reception that delegation or the commission think of those who have died. When they applaud as you climb to stand with the leaders think of those who have died see them without a shirt degraded riddled with bullets thrown at the side of the road in holes that they have dug us.

[00:59:17] Come on graves are simply scattered over the earth fertilizing the plants of the mountain.

[00:59:24] You represent them. They have made you their delegate.

[00:59:28] Those who have died it may sound odd perhaps pretentious to share such a poem on a day like today a day of celebration for me as I step into the role for Todd as we rejoicing his achievement. For us the state of Washington as we acknowledge that immigrants from all over the world contribute every day to magnify our lived experience on agricultural fields factories restaurants hospitals government offices and the quiet craftsmen and women lighting small fires mixing do with drum surfing the electrical current of the soul as artists writers and poets.

[01:00:18] It may be an unusual choice but when you are a person like myself who has lived through a war or sustained similar political upheaval Cardinals poem does not feel so far away.

[01:00:33] I survived the terror of the Salvadoran Civil War overcame the shock of immigration the challenge of learning English and the necessity to invent yourself in a new country. This experiences informed my writing and my engagement with the world.

[01:00:50] I am here alive and standing before you with the deepest pride to carry on this venerable tradition as a public poet and I am here because others did not make it. I take up Pablo Neruda as imperative to put my art in the public service to be a poet with a public use see stated When I envision my two years in service I am filled with eagerness to engage with communities near and far.

[01:01:23] Anticipating the privilege and honor to be in conversation with new people learning the poetic legacy of the state reveling in the buzz and possibility of the poetics of collective doing I look forward to discovering what a person what a poem can do writing with young and old alike listening to just written heartfelt poems into exquisitely crafted ones stamped with the mark of time.

[01:01:52] I hope to hear Washingtonians celebrate themselves sharing their experiences of love and failure death and rebirth of wonder and scarcity and to hearing stories of arrival. Washington is a young state as Todd reminds us only a hundred and twenty nine years. There are trees the breadth of its territory older than that for most of us living here who are not Native American looking into our families histories will reveal stories of arrival stories of courage in the face of adversity those of us who recently arrived and those of us here for longer have much more in common than we imagine our own. Holly Hughes knows the Earth is not flat. A scene from a great height. This world more properly resembles a heart the shape of this world. Tell-Tale Heart might yet be cracked. Every dark

secret revealed to the spinning sphere broken apart released finally as I looked to the two years ahead I look forward to humbly contributing my words to the stellar writings of my fellow poets across these awesome 345 square miles that we love. And I have to say the anthology that Todd put together is a part of all the talent that exists in this state and I encourage you to read it. It's wonderful. I would like to read a short poem to close that evening a poem about how I came to poetry for many reasons. I did this later in life as a grown woman. But the truth is that I never really chose to write poetry. It chose me and I will also say that part of the reason why that happened and there are several part of that reason is that I never quite ever never quite saw somebody like me writing poems.

[01:04:09] I think if I had had that experience I could perhaps started gathering my courage sooner.

[01:04:16] But there was no Salvadoran woman standing in front of a crowded room or in front of a school or reading a poem on the radio to say to myself you know maybe I could try that too.

[01:04:31] So this poem is called such to be chosen.

[01:04:38] She had always been there trailing me with scent of musk and torn book Take me in she said one day with a bark once command and twice a seductive plea. I felt her rough coat every inch of her wild her fluorescent eyes giving away nothing. The fierceness of hurricane 90 panic swept me and I leaped best to hug familiar territory the way a toddler holds onto her mother's skirt. But she followed me up one year down the next nipping my ankles leaping at my feet splicing my dreams with her untamed lease.

[01:05:24] She stayed on until I left her and I left.

[01:05:27] This dog walked away from wolves and the whole fur tail jaw.

[01:05:35] She had long known that I belonged to it not the other way around. Poetry nuzzled me away from self-pity be animal she said and return me to the wilderness inside myself.

[01:05:49] Flowers are words that hang from trees. Tortillas are halos over moist ground. Their eggs grow scattered and the attached thank you so much.

[01:06:19] Thank you so much. ODea congratulations.

[01:06:24] Thank you all for being here tonight. I wanted to just take one last moment to think Humanities Washington and art sois Elliott Bay Book Company and Washington Center for the Book. Gary Kunis Seattle Times and the Seattle Public Library Foundation for their support of tonight's event. The poets are going to hang out and mingle. You're welcome to do so for a bit as well. They're happy to sign your books if you would like to have them sign them. So thank you so much for being here.

[01:06:58] This podcast was presented by The Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to The Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.