



Library podcast

Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series: Meeting 374

00:00:01 Peggy

Welcome. The African American Writers Alliance is a diverse and dynamic collective of Seattle area writers of African descent, provides an informal and supportive forum for new and published writers. We help one another polish our skills, provide peer review and create opportunities for public readings and other media venues. Ultimately, the group encourages members to publish individually and collectively their stories, triumphs and tragedies and whatever is within and between the two, those are the histories of African-Americans. So, founded in 1991, it is privileged to have been-visited their reading series and had the opportunity to host them before. So I will make an aside to say that normally, I had learned to not invite them for a winter month because, with their home base being the Columbia City Library, there have been some incidents involving traffic and bad weather that prevented them arriving. And so I thought oh this is so great we don't have to worry about traffic because of

00:01:17 Peggy

Zoom and then... George's power went out. So I am so glad that, you know, whoever it was who was up in a cherry picker, as they call them today, up in a cup at least got your wiring back. So I'd like to, just before I do a full introduction for Georgia, I'm going to open it up to either, Georgia or Minnie to just take, tell a little bit about your reading series. Actually I'll unmute both of you, so that you can just let people know a little bit. There you go. And Minnie, don't you go ahead and unmute and just, you know, sell your series. You're up, Georgia.

00:02:22 Georgia

Good evening, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. As it is said, the African American Writers Alliance was founded in 1991 by Randee Eddins. We have moved steadily since then and we're getting better and better and you can check out our newest website. This is the third one, but this is the newest and the best get better and better at AWA Seattle. 1991... 1991 is the year that we were founded and we write you name it. Somebody in the group writes it and we're writing more and more. And I'm hoping that continues to be the case.

00:02:39 Peggy

It is a beautiful new website- gorgeous- and could you just speak to the... what you host on your Sunday's. Is it the first or second Sunday of the month on the second Sunday of the month?

00:02:39 Georgia

On the second Sunday of the month with the exception of May 'cause that's Mother's Day and others because that's our vacation month. We meet ordinarily at the Columbia Branch library. But since March, we've been meeting... we've been meeting virtually and so we have not skipped a month, we're steadily going. And then on the third Thursday of the month, we have something Poetry and Prose, and that's newer, but lots to fun and a bit different from this one, but everybody gets a chance to read. And that's the important thing- that people come and share, what they have written. And we have fun doing that too. So, all the time and we're getting... especially January-February, those are our busiest months, so we have a number of readings

00:04:00 Georgia

playing between now and February, on the end of February. And our biggest project is one for the Burien Heritage Library, for the first time we've been invited, to put a display in the window, and it's going to be up for almost three months. Nobody's ever asked us to do this. So, we are just very, very proud and you can count on me to let you know when it's set. So you go over and see it, okay?

00:04:20 Peggy

Perfect. We missed March, we, - It's About Time. I was out of town and so you guys, you didn't miss a beat, we missed one beat.

00:04:45 Georgia

Well, I never heard of zoom on March 11th and so I think I did Sunday School two Sunday's I believe on the telephone. And when I found out about Zoom, so now I think I'm hosting six programs now I'm just zooming away!

00:05:08 Peggy

If you know Georgia, you know that she was always zooming away. She just now happens to be doing it on a software platform. All right, we're... what we're going to do.... We decided that, since Georgia has got the most material, that we're going to come back around to her. So I would like to introduce Minnie Collins [undecipherable] is an award-winning English professor Emerita, is the author of *The Purple Wash*, *Palm Power: Hearts in Harmony*, and *Seattle's Historical Liberty Bank Building Apartments' Commemoration Plaques on 24th and Union*. She is published also in *Raven Chronicles*, *Emerald Reflections*, *Fly to the Assemblies!* *Seattle and the Rise of the Resistance*, *Voices That Matter*, *Threads*, *Washington College Humanities Association's Crosscurrents*, *Blackpast.org.*, and *The Avocet-Nature Poetry*. She is listed in *Seattle's 4Culture's Touring Arts Roster (TAR)*. And she lives the current lives by the credo passion for nature and equity is her mantra. More details on their new website- absolutely beautiful. You've got to check it out tonight- the website, which I've been drooling over all day. So welcome Minnie!

00:06:20 Minnie

Welcome Peggy. And all of the members of It's About Time and so good to see Sally, Amy Isom J and others that I don't see, including Georgia. We've been busy all day. Trying to get the power to work but now her light is shining, okay. I would like to read three poems.

00:06:57 Minnie

The first one is called "Honoring the King." I see this as may be relevant because of so many programs starting this weekend to honor the legacy of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

00:07:18 Minnie

"Here we are again
Reflecting, looking backwards
Romanticizing the "Dream"
Singing "We shall overcome on day"
Celebrating the Nobel Peace accolades
Across America to Hiroshima and Toronto
Even after a long fight for a national holiday.

Here we are again
Seldom understanding or even acting on King's message:
Non-violence means organized struggles
Non-violence is resistance through mass movements
Non-violence is direct action, not passive propositions
Non-violence is a coercive means of social, political, and economic change

Although outlawed discrimination still exists today
Fertilized by FEAR over 500 years old.
Seeds of Fear, fertilized.
Fear creates a loss of power.
Fear hates a loss of privilege.
Fear hates a loss of feelings of superiority.
Fear hates a loss a rights, skilled jobs, voting.
Fear hates others getting special preference.
Hate, fear, all agree that Affirmative Action is obsolete
Even though court challenges today people's current vote.

Remembering these fears required direct action
Not one day as the song goes, but today.
Rebuffing the master government's prison industry and institutionalized form of slavery.
Families separated form children.
Not one day, but today.
Recalling that pain 34,000 dollars per person per year for three strikes you're out.
Not one day, but today.

Honor the King with songs of "We Shall Overcome?"
Stop holding hands and swaying and singing to "We Shall Overcome"
Rebuff these industries, these institutionalized forms

Pull up those seeds of fear.
We kill them.
Blow torch them recede with kindness, respect, understanding voting, even a smile
Even today when we can't see each other.
We are visible,
We matter
Today
Not just tomorrow or any day.”

00:09:16 Minnie
And the second one is, “Dear Covid-19,” this is a letter to dear covid-19.

00:10:56 Minnie
“You finally caught up with me.
You finally revealed the climate and all of the food deserts.
Those skeletons in my closet of homelessness, unemployment
Critical Healthcare and opportunities for employment.
Covid, you are eradicating me.
We have high rates of diabetes, heart problems, stress from birth to death
Ironically I am COVID fighter.
I refuse to have an infectious disease destroy me.
Covid, you have cough-shamed me.
Quarantine me, flattened,me like a curve.
I'm doomed to scrolling endlessly infodemic bad news.
I'm hoarding like a hamster, yet old to stay home and be strong.
Covid, you are not an equalizer.
We are not in this together.
We will not get through this together.
We do not want a new normal.
Being normal is just what it used to be- nothing is new.
Nothing has changed.
Only new euphemisms enduring, they may be
Endearing, you are not COVID.”

And the last one is from this book that just came out. My most recent poem is called “The Avocet Winter 2021.” This is a journal of nature poetry.

00:12:59 Minnie
“Spellbinders
Drifting on streetlight rhythms
Bonding friend and foe.
Sculpting magical, Joy
Are four feet layer hedge cakes with two-inch, crystal frostings,

Cool whip top laurels, sprinkle with holly.
Whisk meringue, topped hydrangeas and rainbow ribbon candy
Sparkle ice and lemon sorbet palms
Dunes for inner tubes and radio Flyers
Conifer canopied shelter seeds for scurrying footprints
Replenishing those thirsty tubers longing for sun.
These are Jack Frost.
Spellbinders.”

That's it. I'm finished.

00:13:58 Peggy

Thank you so much. Those are definitely speak very much to the Here and Now. Thank you so much for being part of tonight. I love to now welcome Sally. And since I don't have a bio to read for Sally, please feel free to introduce yourself to us. I understand you read last Sunday so... welcome.

00:14:11 Sally

No I didn't read last Sunday but I will read-

00:14:16 Peggy

You were a guest.

00:14:17 Sally

Yes, yeah I've been in Seattle for a good long while and spent a fair amount of time teaching in the Seattle Public Schools. I also right now enjoy gardening and have a Pea Patch plot that I share produce with friends and the food bank and do the same with my garden. So, I

00:15:14 Sally

That's enough to know about me for now. I have a poem called “Another Pandemic Poem” or “Do You Want Anything from the Store?”

The carton of eggs needs replenishing.

The cookie jar holds nothing but crumbs.

The milk Jug has been a splash for tomorrow's coffee.

But I want to walk down each aisle.

I want to stop and ask, “what are you making for dinner?”

I want to see your smile and pause and get lost in descriptions of the salad, and it's dressing.

The pasta swirled in homemade pesto and the desert, you're considering.

Yes.

And I want to talk with the cashier about the sun or, more likely, the rain and be asked,
“would you like double bags?”

00:16:23 Peggy

Thank you for sharing that and I want to just... this reminds me, you are always invited to come whether we're in the Ballard library or not. I hope that we can all be guess in future and readers for each other's reading series. And especially, like, now with, you know, zooming as Georgia says, there's no reason that we can't be almost everywhere at once. So, please, you know, come join us again, Sally. And now, like thank you, please come back, Amy Albertson and likewise feel free to introduce yourself.

00:16:59 Amy

I'm Amy Albertson. I've been in Seattle about 10 years. I'm originally from the Midwest, I used to write a long time ago. Quit writing for a while, started writing again and found my friend, Sally found partnership that was happening at the library and then we got introduced to African American Writers Alliance and we've been kind of just supporting them ever since. And so you're at Ballard that would be nice to attend. Yeah, so nice. I have two pieces and I usually write short stories so it

00:17:55 Amy

was kind of hard for me to find a piece. But I have my velvet hammer, and here it goes. A lot of you have already heard this.

"I read the words.

Immediately I like their sound.

Sexy and strong.

I hear the words velvet hammer move over my tongue through my lips and I see it.

I see this hammer, lying like sex on ice [undecipherable] of satin.

Its handle is magenta and feels like the skin that covers a deer's antlers.

Its head is bell faced high, carbon heat-treated steel.

We both have a claw

I move my eyes up and down the handle,

following the smooth curve of magenta,

flowing into a slightly thicker grip,

not one imperfection.

I take my eyes upward, my vision, stuck twisting and turning around the neck.

Hexagon.

It seems quite thin too delicate for a hammer.

I question its strength.

This too delicate neck molds into rounded cheeks as shiny as the satin they lie on.

But this image of this hammer lying, like sex on ice [undecipherable] of satin.

This isn't me.

I'm not this hammer,

My hammer is heavy

Sturdy, old.

My handle is an ombre patina.

Years of blood and sweat,

Dripped and dried and dripped and dried again
A wide, deep 2-inch gouge runs down my right side,
It hasn't caused me splinters in years.
My grip has grown into my handle, and my handle has grown into my grip
for decades they've been one.
My head is also high carbon heat-treated steel,
but I am playing faced
use for little used for a little more than just Framing and rough construction.
But not safe against bending nails.
Did I mention? I have a claw.
As many times as men have found their hands around my neck.
It shows little where
four-sided thick, strong, enough.
My cheeks aren't shiny but they are full and loving.
My curves aren't smooth because they are deer horn skin.
But rather because they have been worn by
those who have loved who loved and who are loving me.
I do not rest on satin. In fact, I hardly rest at all.
I am a hammer that bends nails.”

And thank you, and because I don't really write poetry. I thought I

00:20:50 Amy

would pick a scene that we had to look at a photo. And then we had this kind of write a scene and here it is.

“Z sits on the three-legged stool. Between her legs, her daughter leans arms wrapped around her thighs. Z's arms woven around the child's she smiles as she watches her husband split the wood How perfect this moment. As the child shifts, her weight from foot to foot and the apps makes the would echo Z focuses on her husband. She crosses her eyes just a bit and she'll stay until she can almost see them. Laughing and dancing beside the man, she has always loved, she can hear her mother's voice. Soft and low a sound you had to stop and pay attention to and her father's laughs from deep within his large frame. It bellow in cycles of three. And her brother hiding the small seed under leaves for the children. To have them alive again, her family to help her husband, cut the wood to stoke. The fire to spit the pig to turn the meat, to celebrate the land. Z sits on the three-legged

00:22:12 Amy

stool. Her daughter between her knees and she feels the stones beneath her feet smooth and cool. They spent all summer dragging those rocks from the riverbed to their little patch of land, on the hill. They built that Lanai. She and her husband the first summer they were married. It was hot. It was hard. It was everything. They built their house, just like their parents, grandparents. And everyone before them had had. It had always been done that way. Before people started heading down the mountain, Z grabs onto her daughter and gives her a squeeze, giggles in her ear then places a kiss

on her cheek. How she wishes for her to stay young forever. Never go down the mountain. She looks around her husband had her husband holds the wood to the pit. She tastes the flesh falling from the bone, dripping with fat. And she remembers the nights with 50 or more gorging on food and laughter. And tonight there will barely be 20. She has gone down once when she was wild and young with

00:23:22 Amy

the boy. It was loud. The people walked fast their heads down, everyone chasing something while stray animals and people groaned under their feet. It was cold and hollow like hopelessness, they could not stay, she thought hoped it would be the same for her first daughter. It wasn't. She heard the noise as music, and the chasing, as a dream and she was down the mountain. Z sits on her three-legged stool, her youngest daughter between her knees and she leans against the wooden post from the very tree that once held a heart carved by her true love, and she wishes for her daughter to know that kind of love. Her kind of love. Her kind of life. The one that is, simply, beautiful. Roaring with love. The one where you rest on a three-legged stool built by your grandfather, pulled your daughter in your arms. With your arms, woven around her feet firm on the earth, as your husband builds the fire for the feast to celebrate the land.

00:24:35 Amy

The one where this is the dream that need not be chased.”

00:24:45 Peggy

I'm so glad to hear that you came back to writing, thanks to everybody, who's like been encouraging, you. Goes to show. There's wonderful, you know, communities and I know that

00:24:58 Peggy

Calum has talked about the Seattle... what's it called? It's kind of a Seattle Writes program that is places. Yeah. And just those I know have come back online and so I think we all I just know that I am more grateful for the library every single day. In fact, I just found out yesterday, they have another free program I didn't even know about called Access. And Hoopla and Kanopy. And so you can start like watching like every documentary like ever made by PBS, BBC, Etc. So I, you know, I was doing better before I found out about all the, all the free things I could be doing from the library. They have been so supportive and it was long my dream to be able to be able to record and share the readings because it was certainly difficult for people to come to Ballard or different parts of Seattle at six o'clock and give their cars out of the parking garage by 7:45. So this has been one of those Silver Linings in terms of being able to reach, so many other people in the writing community and outside the writing

00:26:13 Peggy

Community. I have a lot of my Cancer Lifeline writers here tonight so thank you all. We are now going to have an Open Mic from Kevin O'Connor and then we're going to be going to Georgia, so Kevin has something to share, you ready? Yeah, great. Okay.

00:26:43 Kevin

This is from a longer poem that I haven't quite got back to yet.

“In the days since we have seen the crowds with their Flags in their hats,
We have seen new atrocities from new angles cut up for consumption.
After being dumped like sides of beef on a walk-in freezer table and we have consumed
we have listened to the commentary of astonished anchors and pundits.
How could this happen?
Where was the National Guard?
Where's the president?
Is this going to happen again?
Is this the end of the Republic?
And we have retreated to our Corners huddled with our chosen tribes,
glued to the screens are chosen devices,
confirming your suspicions about the other side.
Of course, that's what they do.
What is wrong with these people?
The World falls apart in unexpected ways,
while we scrambled to keep the expected ways together.
We've had heavy rains, lately, creating a higher risk of landslides.
They say we should avoid traveling through affected areas.
Is this going to happen again?”

Thank you.

00:28:01 Peggy

Thank you, Kevin. Yeah, it's hard not to leave aside the events of recent days.

00:28:11 Peggy

It helps to talk about them. I think, okay. Let me make sure Georgia is there. I'm so happy that Georgia got her power back. She always had her power, but her ability to just do what I say. So, Dr. Georgia Stewart McDade, a Louisiana native who has lived in Seattle more than half her life, loves reading and writing. Earning a Bachelor of Arts from Southern University, Master of Arts from Atlanta University, and Ph. D. from University of Washington, the English major spent more than thirty years teaching at Tacoma Community College but also found time to teach at Seattle University, the University of Washington, Lakeside School, Renton Technical College, and Zion Preparatory Academy. As a charter member of the African-American Writers' Alliance (AAWA), McDade began reading her stories in public in 1991. For a number of years she has written poems inspired by art at such sites as Gallery 110, Seattle Art Museum, Onyx Fine Arts Collective and Columbia City Gallery. She regularly contributed opinion pieces for Pacific Newspapers, especially the South District Journal. A prolific writer, she has works in AAWA anthologies I Wonder as I Wander, Gifted Voices, Words? Words! Words, and Threads. Her works include Travel Tips for Dream Trips, questions and answers about her six-month, solo trip around the world; Outside the Cave and Outside the Cave II, collections of poetry; and numerous essays, stories, and other poems. Several writing projects are and at the

time she wrote this was two biographies and journals kept during her travels. Not sure how many more and in answer to a question that you used to pose, you know about whether she should ever stop writing about Emmett Till the answer is no. Never never, never stop. Welcome Georgia.

00:30:27 Georgia

Thank you. Have a good memory. I thought about Dr. King so often... something happens and I I wish people no longer here, we're here. And then, other times I said, oh, I'm so glad they see that. So that's what's been happening. And I decided that I would read a poem that I wrote some time ago But it's what I want and it's what I think all of us need to understand and I call it "Real Peace." Because sometimes some people's idea of Peace. Well, it's just not the same as somebody else's idea, so I thought I would try my best to explain real peace.

"Real peace means no war, of course
But real peace demands so much more than no war.
Though no war is an excellent beginning.
Peace requires no fear of war,
the physical body must be safe
there is more than adequate food, shelter, attire
and there is no worry that anyone, not to mention all three, will disappear
this physical body gets medical care and treatment when needed.
And there's no word that benefits will be reduced or exhausted nor service.
My. Nobody must be, at least equally safe some argue safer.
Peace provides space for Education,
a good solid education, full of knowledgeable teachers,
who recognize the humanity of all
and do not see differences as inferiority questioning without Theory,
percussionist ever. The case piece also allows Spiritual Development of any and every variety.
Again, there's no fear the stress created by the lack of any.
One of the above can shatter piece, Very clear, maybe covertly but shattered piece.
Nevertheless, and all of us are not always like oyster
stress does not always result in our creating pearls though.
This stress May indeed make us Shall Serve ourselves.
Finally, real peace allows us to pursue happiness as we see fit
when that Pursuit harms, no one opportunity and Justice permeate this paradise the ever present
Governor without exception recognizes that.
No pursuit of the ultimate personhood and real peace diminishes another because the other is always
included."

Thank you.

00:33:23 Georgia

This next poem is it's an old one too. I think about the people trying to explain this to the children and especially those who've taken children, their been Captain seen it. And, you know, at least when I was there, there's people, you know, and then to see it like that. So I called this "Child and Adult"

00:33:57 Georgia

"Why are they seeking the dogs on the people?

Wow, the water hoses turned on people, last child.

The people want to vote said there though.

No said the child. I mean, why are the dogs and can bite the people while praying them?

Knocking them down with the water?

People won't vote be a dub.

People will certainly be where they may be business said the child

and what the people to do is vote.

So the trial. Yes, said the adult, but isn't voting a right?

Aren't all citizens supposed to vote as a child?

That's right. Baby, voting is the right of the sips.

Yes, you're right. They don't understand at the time.

Neither do I said the adult."

And that's the way I feel about that. Despite all I read. I don't understand how anybody could think that they could really solve any problems this way. And yet there was and it reminded me of something I wrote. When was it? I don't remember. Oh, and 2014. It's another one of those things, not quite, like, Emmett Till, but it's an image. I remember,

00:35:29 Georgia

when they integrated Central High School in Little Rock Arkansas, And a few years ago, I finally made it to Central. And of course, I went on the tour and I went to the school and whatever. And I remember this picture, I don't know, most of you probably, I know you've seen this picture and I don't know if you can see it. Put it up here. I don't know. It's the day that some Little Rock Nine were supposed to go to school and because they were warned of danger, they decided not to go. But and I always forget which one I want to say it's many Jean, but one of the girls didn't have a telephone. So she didn't get the message and she went to Central all by herself and there were all of these people-men, women and children, jeering. It just had to have been awful, but gives you as soon as you can find this picture. But I got the book and I read the book and I read about her, her name is Hazel. The one young white woman who was do it, whose pictures did are horrible. And I did not know that she

00:36:44 Speaker 1

was leaving a student at the school. Let's see what's out there? Fall 1957 Little Rock. Elizabeth wanted to go to school. I'll School the Supreme Court said she could have ten thousands really Millions didn't want Elizabeth to go to their school. Elizabeth's flaw is that she was black. Hazel is only one of those person. One of the persons who did not want, Elizabeth ever School know, Hazel was by no means alone and ubiquitous everybody was doing it. Family friends and Community raised as much as she Hazel. Was that the side happen with all her might See your photo adults of all ages.

Why wouldn't the kids do it? Snarling, face, nigger. Spouted countless times. "2. 4 6. 8. We don't want to integrate!" exactly what was I saying? One. Not only that pleasant words, it was saying something to hurt him this with something to make it plain in this book was not welcome. How could Hazel know this would eventually change her life for good or at least forever. Fortunately or unfortunately, we

00:38:06 Georgia

took a photo - a record for eternity, but at the time, a record for the world a record that would change both girls lives forever. Years would pass before Hazel would say one moment shouldn't define a person's life and Hazel is right as is she was wrong that September Day in 1957. But so often. What's right does not rule... [garbled audio].

00:39:16 Georgia

I'd like to thank all of the attendants- everybody who took the time out of, you know...

00:39:20 Peggy

and we don't actually have to leave now. So if you wanted something else, you could but I know you have another meeting.

00:39:41 Georgia

So I do have one at 7:30 but I did... did anybody else come in? Who wants to read? That's what I would want. Anybody else?

00:39:50 Peggy

Thank you, Georgia. That was a welcome. You know you're so right in terms of thinking about last week and yeah. Oh my gosh. Yeah that is going to Define people six. Yeah knock on wood

00:39:57 Peggy

and I was also thinking about how the fact that how you especially the African American Writers alliances too, often asked to be well, often not asked every month of the year. But so often in January and February, which I'd sort of forgotten. We had a miscommunication in December. I remember the first time I asked you to read in October, you were like: Ha. It's so nice to be asked to read in October, not just February, but it kind of slipped up on me anyway. Okay? Well, does anybody else... So, yeah, things kind of have that way of slipping as her, like, your annual physical, you know, by the time you remember... So it's like a month later. So, okay, last chance everybody for Open Mic here. We've had a lovely crowd of a 22 attendees which is pretty much wonderful any month and especially in a time of power outage. And what I generally do now, unless anybody else wants to read, is I stop recording say and then you can unmute yourself

00:41:11 Peggy

and you can chat but without having the Librarians put away the chairs [laughter].

00:41:21 Peggy



Without the car, it's very restful. You don't have to drive home. And so I'm going to say thank you all so much for being part and what a beautiful, wonderful launch to the 32nd year of the It's About Time Writers Reading series and the 31st year of the African American Writers Alliance and they're reading all the.. they're way ahead in terms of publications, anthologies, etc. So, extremely happy that were able to collaborate whether in person or online. So I'm stopping recording and I hope to see you all next month.

