

VONA Shine

As always, culling the successes of the VONA fam is one of the most satisfying parts of being the editor of this newsletter. I hope this edition of VONA Shine offers buckets of inspiration and motivation to our readers!

I always want to provide opportunities for our VONA scribes to share their shine! So, if you're a VONA alum and have recently been published, done a reading, received a grant or otherwise been acknowledged for your literary artistry and want to be included on future lists, please carefully follow these instructions.

Send an email to newsletter@vonacommunity.org including:

1. Information about the achievement, i.e., publication in which the piece will appear, title, date of release; publishing house if it's a book; full name of award/fellowship/residency; date(s) and location(s) of reading
Please only submit your most recent achievements attained within the past month to six weeks of newsletter publication.
2. A link to the achievement, if available
3. Year(s) you attended VONA and your instructor(s) and your genre
4. Your preferred gender pronouns
5. Not required, but if you workshopped the piece at VONA or had help from other alums/faculty, please share!

Awards and Acceptances

- ❑ On September 22nd, The Hispanic Division and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress presented our own **Nadia Hohn** The Américas Award for her first picture book [Malaika's Costume](#) (Groundwood Books)! Nadia also presented a teacher workshop at American University and a reading at Sankofa Books. She was also in Philly on October 18th for storytime at Momo's Treehouse, reading from her first book and her second, [Malaika's Winter Carnival](#).
- ❑ **Elizabeth Zertuche** has been selected to be a mentee in [AWPs Writer-to-Writer Mentorship program](#). Yes!
- ❑ Judges of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize had the collective wisdom to award **Patricia Engel's** [The Veins of the Ocean](#) (Grove Atlantic) with this year's fiction prize. This prestigious honor recognizes both craft and the power of literature to move us all closer to peace. Past winners have included Edwidge Danticat, Elie Wiesel and co-founder Junot Diaz. They are in excellent company!

- **Steffan Triplett** has ascended! He's moved up from nonfiction editor at *Hot Metal Bridge* to its co-editor in chief. The lit journal, run out of the University of Pittsburgh's MFA program, has published many VONA writers. No promises, but nepotism is helpful. They're [accepting submissions through December 3rd](#). Get on it!
- There's a lot happening for Shizue Seigel! San Francisco Arts Commission awarded her a grant to continue work on her memoir as well as other exciting projects. This includes editing the upcoming anthology, *Endangered Species; Enduring Values* to be published next spring. If that's not enough, she was selected for a Jentel literary residency, has a [piece](#) published in a new anthology and will be reading at San Francisco's [Howard Zinn Book Fair](#) in November. Take a bow then take a breath!
- Next March we'll be reading **Dickson Lam's** memoir, **Paper Sons**. His manuscript won the [Autumn House Press Full-Length Award](#), which grants the author a contract with the press.
- The 2017-18 [Phyllis Gebauer Scholarship](#) in Writing has been awarded to **Michael Anthony Reyes** at UCLA Extension.
- **Lisa Ko** is on fire! She can't help it. Her ubiquitous novel, *The Leavers* (*Algonquin Books*) receives killer reviews everywhere; she does a great book tour; the novel is on best book lists across the country and all over the web. Incredible and well-deserved. What more could possibly happen? How about being a finalist for the [National Book Award](#)? Hell, yeah! *The Leavers* is among the five novels nominated —four by women of color, surprisingly--for the prestigious prize! Just wow!

Published Poems, Prose and Other Profundity

- **"Hunted,"** **Laura Chow Reeves's** short fiction piece, was picked up by online fiction journal *Joyland*. Go Laura!
- The ever-prolific **Melissa Rae Sipin-Gabon** published her first experimental essay, *"The Shape of My Mother's Body"*. University of Nebraska's [Prairie Schooner](#) selected her complicated work about her grandmother, rape culture, Comfort Women and the body of her close friend found floating in the LA River. Courageous work, as usual.
- **Ryane Nicole Granados',** **"Groomed,"** a wrenching vision of a dystopian past and present, was published in *Lady/Liberty/Lit*.

- **Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar** is getting it done. *Mizna*, an Arab American lit mag, proposed her short story, [“Everything Blooms”](#) for the *Electric Literature Recommended Reading* series. It appears in on the site with a new introduction by Sonia Ali. [“The Peaceable Night,”](#) about migration, grief and jellyfish was published *Pank’s* fall/winter issue.
- You can find [“Triggers”](#) in the latest issue of *Poets Reading the News*. **Leonora Simonovis’** visceral poem, inspired by the shooting of Alfred Olango, a California immigrant with mental illness.
- *Vogue* magazine’s website posted **Melissa Hung’s** [“Houston, A Love Letter,”](#) a bittersweet reflection on the recent hurricane and the town she’s from. She was also interviewed on podcast, [Southern Fried Asian](#) about being Asian in the south, tiger parenting and if Texas is even really the south.
- **Irma Herrera** is continuing to shine with her solo show, [Why Would I Mispronounce My Own Name?](#) The piece reflecting on the cultural identity held in a name, was part of the San Francisco Fringe Festival in September. She’ll be headed to the Marsh in SF for a one-night-only performance November 15th. Get your tickets at the link!

In that same vein, **Fiona Teng** explores her own experience with the need for two different names. Her piece, [“Call Me By My Names: A Story of Shame, Trauma, and Liberation in a Chinese Name”](#) was picked up by *Zine*.

- *Acentos Review* published **Marcos Damian Leon’s** [“Pieces”](#). The story was his fiction submission to VONA where he found fam to help him edit it and get it out into the world!
- **Susana Morris** also got the boost she needed from VONA. [“Weighing Justice with a Jury of Her Peers”](#), the essay she workshopped, was just published in *Longreads!*
- [“Dying Slow,”](#) **Jordan Thomas’** complex essay on mental illness, Sandra Bland, violence and despair was selected by the *Kenyon Review*.
- **Kali Fajardo-Anstine** got a book deal! Her novel, **Woman of Light**, about a clairvoyant woman and a family’s migration from Colorado is slated to be released by One World Books spring 2018. We can’t wait!
- **Aïsha Sidibé** has had some powerful things to say about disparate subjects in the op-eds for the *Warbler*: [mothering black children](#); and [gentrification in the Bronx and Brooklyn](#)
- VONA OG **Sharline Chiang** has published a piece that’s been close to her heart and taken three years to complete. [“Don’t Call It Baby Blues”](#) is about her

grinding battle with post-partum depression and that of other Asian-American women. *Hyphen Magazine* wisely chose to publish it.

- **Rebecca Parish's** "[Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™](#)" was published by spec fiction mag, *Apex*.
- Ready for part two? *M Archive: After the End of the World* (Duke University Press) is available for preorder! The book, which won't be released until March 2018, is the second in **Alexis Pauline Gumbs'** experimental three-part series. You'll also be able to read an excerpt in the upcoming issue of renowned lesbian journal, [Sinister Wisdom](#).
- Particularly relevant to our current tyranny, "[A Personal Plea to Hollywood Regarding DACA](#)" by **Ligiah Villalobos** was posted in the *Huffington Post*

Zahir Janmohamed's archly instructional "[A Guide for Writing About Muslim Americans for The Struggling White Male Reporter Who Doesn't Want Anyone to Know He Doesn't Really Like Muslims](#)" was picked up by *McSweeney's*

Both *Hip Mama* and *Ms. Magazine's* blog selected **Shefali Milczarek-Desai's** [essay](#) on sanctuary cities. She gives credit her VONA fam for giving her the confidence to keep writing. "[Sharing Space](#)," her reflection on making room between borders of country, home and heart, has found a place at *Kartika Review*.

Yasmin Ramirez provides a vantage on borders and immigrants from the inside. Look for her piece, "[Frontera: Ground Zero](#)" in *Hamdard*

- If you're interested in the "[10 Strangest Things to Try in Chile](#)," look for **Angela Lang's** piece in *Fodor's*. It's her first piece for the travel journal and even more of an accomplishment since she's most comfortable writing in Spanish. Nice work!
- *Joint* magazine published Erica Hughes poem, "[After My Mother Beats Me](#)"
- You can read, "[I Caught One](#)," a short story by **Nahshon Anderson** in the soon to be released anthology, **Happy Hours: Our Lives in Gay Clubs** (Flashpoint Productions). It seems his fall is continuing the momentum of his great summer. In July, the VONA nonfiction alum was a fellow at the National Association of Latino Arts & Cultures Leadership Institute in San Antonio. In August, he received his *third* grant from National Arts & Disability Center which he used to fulfill his selection as the Lambda Literary Foundation Writer-In-Residence.
- **Alan King's** poetry collection [Point Blank](#) received kind praise by review site, [Run & Tell That](#)

- As Puerto Rico tries to cope and recover, **Ana Portnoy** was able to “snag some internet again” from her home on the island, publishing a piece on “Counterpunch”, **"Irma and María: Shedding Light on Puerto Rico's Colonial Reality."**

Faculty Doings

- Let's put our hands together for **Marjorie Liu**, whose *Monstress* (*Image Comics*), was awarded the British Fantasy Award for Best Comic/Graphic novel!
- Brooklyn embraced VONA faculty **Cristina Garcia** for the official launch of her latest novel, *Here in Berlin*.
- **Faith Adiele** sat down with *The Rumpus* to discuss matters of craft, the nature of travel writing, her current work and more.
- Boston Review invited VONA fiction instructor Junot instructor to be the guest editor of their special edition, *Global Dystopias*.
- PEN American partnered with Strand Bookstore—THE store of New York book fiends—to welcome **Daniel Jose Older** for their PEN Out Loud series.
- There's good reading to be done! **Danez Smith's** new poetry collection, *Don't Call Us Dead*, was released in September. The collection received a good review in the *New Yorker*

Twenty years in the making, **M. Evelina Galang's** *Lola's House* is out now! She's going coast to coast to share the story of the dauntless WWII Filipina comfort women. Be sure to catch her on tour for a moving event. But fear not, if you can't get to one of her readings, you and the world will be able to hear about her loving work with the lolas as she's been invited to produce a TEDx talk at the TEDx PineCrestSchoolWomen event on November 3rd!

Chunks of Random Delight

- Our tax dollars going to great use: *PBS Newshour* interviewed Seattle's former Civic Poet, **Claudia Castro Luna** about her project Poetic Grid Project. *The Seattle Times* also featured a poem by her and wrote a small piece about her term as Civic Poet.

- On other screens, VONA was at the Latino Film Festival this month in New York! *Afrolatinos: An Untaught History*, a documentary co-created **Alicia Anabel Santos**, was chosen for a coveted screening!

- **Dennis Earl** is one quarter of the snarky, sharp, delectable podcast **Food 4 Thot**. The production was given honorable mention on *New York Magazine's* list, "[Best Podcasts of 2017 \(So Far\)](#)".