

THE RESILIENCE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

AN INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF POETS



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SEPTEMBER 16–17, 2006

**PRE-CONFERENCE DINNER WITH THE POETS
SEPTEMBER 15**

THE GUTHRIE CENTER, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA

WITH

NAOMI SHIHAB NYE *Palestinian American*

LILLIAN BORAKS-NEMETZ *Holocaust Survivor*

YASUHIKO SHIGEMOTO *Hiroshima Survivor*

ALEXANDRE KIMENYI *Rwanda* • CLARIBEL ALEGRIA *Nicaragua*

CHOMAN HARDI *Kurdistan* • LI-YOUNG LEE *China*

ORLANDO RICARDO MENES *Cuba* • DUNYA MIKHAIL *Iraq*

VALZHYNA MORT *Belarus* • MAJID NAFICY *Iran*

NGUYEN CHI THIEN *Vietnamese American* • CAROLYN FORCHÉ *U.S.*

SCHEDULE

The Resilience of the Human Spirit

September 16–17, 2006

The Guthrie Center, Great Barrington, MA

Pre-conference Dinner with the Poets, September 15, 2006

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 ❖ EGREMONT INN

7:00 P.M. DINNER WITH THE POETS

Optional pre-conference event. In a private room at the well known Egremont Inn Restaurant you will share a three course dinner with the poets. Intimate round table seating will have one or more poets with each group. Poets will change tables during the dessert course. After dinner there will be a special welcome by Naomi Shihab Nye and a few poems will be read. This will be a magical night with limited seating. Register early!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 ❖ GUTHRIE CENTER

8:30–9:30 a.m.

Registration

9:30–9:45 a.m.

Welcome Jan Warner

9:45–10:30 a.m.

Keynote Address Poetry As Witness, Carolyn Forché

Carolyn Forché will open our conference by telling the story of her emergence as a poet in a time of war, and of her journeys through Central America, the Middle East and South Africa, where she worked as a human rights advocate while always keeping a notebook of poems. At the close of her talk, she will present some of her poetry of witness.

10:30–10:45 a.m.

Break

10:45 a.m.–1 p.m.

Meet The Poets The poets introduce themselves through story and poetry

1:00–2:15 p.m.

Lunch A delicious buffet lunch will be provided at the Guthrie Center

2:15–3:30 p.m.

Concurrent Workshops. *Please choose one.*

Workshop A: Poetry As A Bridge Using the language of poetry to create empathy, compassion and understanding when other means of communication have failed. Naomi Shihab Nye (Palestinian American), Lillian Boraks-Nemetz (Holocaust Survivor), Majid Naficy (Iran), Dunya Mikhail (Iraq), Choman Hardi (Kurdistan). Moderated by Carolyn Forché.

Workshop B: Between Two Worlds: The Expatriate Poet Conversation with Li-Young Lee, Valzhyna Mort, Alexandre Kimenyi, Orlando Ricardo Menes, and Nguyen Chi Thien. Limited to 15.

Workshop C: When Less Is More Haiku A writing experience with Yasuhiko Shigemoto. Please bring journal, pen, paper. Limited to 15.

3:30–3:45 p.m.

Break

3:45–5:00 p.m.

Concurrent Workshops. *Please choose one.*

Workshop D: Poetry As A Political Tool Using poetry as a voice of dissent, as a means of revolution, to force change. Claribel Alegria, Nguyen Chi Thien, Valzhyna Mort, Orlando Ricardo Menes. Moderator, Carolyn Forché.

Workshop E: Conversation with: Choman Hardi, Yasuhiko Shigemoto, Naomi Shihab Nye, Majid Naficy, Alexandre Kimenyi. This is an opportunity to talk and ask questions in a more intimate setting. Limited to 15.

Workshop F: Transforming Pain into Creativity A writing experience with Lillian Boraks-Nemetz. Please bring journal pen, paper. Limited to 15.

5:00–5:15 p.m.

Break

We invite you to an extraordinary gathering of poets from around the world whose lives have borne witness to the resilience of the human spirit. Each poet will share his or her story—and inspiration—through a variety of intimate conversations, thematic panels, intimate conversations, and writing workshops. All poets will share the power of their words in an unforgettable poetry reading on Saturday night.

Alice's Restaurant isn't around anymore. But, as the song says, "Alice didn't live in a restaurant. She lived in the church." And the old Trinity Church, where Alice once lived and where the saga began has become home to the Guthrie Center and Foundation.

The conference will take place at The Guthrie Center, a non-profit educational and cultural center. We chose it for the consistency of mission with Arlo who, in carrying on in the vein of his father, Woody Guthrie, has himself worked on behalf of bettering the world through word in song.

5:15–5:45 p.m.

Meditation Li-Young Lee

Li-Young Lee will lead the full group in a 4000-year-old practice of simple yet powerful breathing meditation from China. Following the meditation you may stay and write, draw, continue a personal meditation, or wander back into the world. In the Guthrie Center please maintain silence until 6 p.m.

6:30 p.m.

Dinner A light buffet dinner with wine will be served at the Guthrie Center

7:30 p.m.

Poetry Reading

We meet in the warmth of the sanctuary to experience, first hand, the living words of our guest poets—13 voices from 13 unimaginable backgrounds, each a strong and resilient survivor and witness to the human experience. The reading—and listening—will continue in rounds until midnight (please stay as long as you like). Dessert and drinks will be available during the evening.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 ❖ GUTHRIE CENTER

9:30–9:45 a.m.

Welcome Alison Granucci

9:45–11:00 a.m.

Concurrent Workshops *Please choose one.*

Workshop G: Surviving the Unthinkable Lillian Boraks-Nemetz survived the Holocaust. Yasuhiko Shigemoto survived Hiroshima. Alexandre Kimenyi survived losing family and friends in the Rwandan genocide. Choman Hardi survived her people being gassed. Majid Naficy survived his wife's and his brother's executions.

Workshop H: Conversation with: Claribel Alegria, Dunya Mikhail, Nguyen Chi Thien, Valzhyna Mort, Orlando Ricardo Menes. This is an opportunity to talk and ask questions in a more intimate setting. Limited to 15.

Workshop I: Kindness A writing experience with Naomi Shihab Nye. Please bring journal, pen, paper. Limited to 15.

11:00–11:15a.m.

Break

11:15a.m.–12:45p.m.

The Alchemy Of Hope

All poets come together to discuss how you can, if you can, remain hopeful while having the courage to continue to bear witness. They will also discuss how they have maintained the resilience of their own spirit.

12:45–1:00 p.m.

Farewell A moment of silence introduced by Naomi Shihab Nye who will then make some final comments and read a poem.

1:00 p.m.

Optional box lunch with some poets remaining for a book signing. All participants must say their final farewells by **3:00 p.m.** at the latest.

BIOGRAPHIES



CLARIBEL ALEGRIA (Nicaragua, homeland El Salvador)

Claribel was born to Nicaraguan and Salvadoran parents in Nicaragua in 1924. When she was nine months old, the family fled the occupation of Nicaragua for El Salvador, and in 1943 she moved to the United States. She had a constant commitment to nonviolent resistance, even during her close association with the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

In 1985, she returned to Nicaragua to aid in the country's reconstruction. She is one of the most respected and prolific writers of Central America, having written more than forty books that have been published in more than fourteen languages. She won the 2006 Neustadt prize for literature. Her most recent volume of poetry is *Casting Off*.



LILLIAN BORAKS-NEMETZ (Canada, homeland Poland, Holocaust Survivor)

Born in Warsaw, Poland, Lillian survived the Holocaust as a child. She was incarcerated in the Warsaw Ghetto for eighteen months and then hidden in Polish villages for the remainder of the war. Her family fled Poland to find peace and freedom in Canada. She is the winner of the Canadian

Jewish Book award as well as the Sheila A. Egoff B.C. Book Prize for Best Children's Book, and teaches creative writing. One of her poetry books is *Ghost Children*, which explores the losses suffered by child survivors of the Holocaust.



CAROLYN FORCHÉ (U.S., human rights advocate, translator)

Known for her work on poetry of witness, Carolyn is a translator, the author of four award-winning books of poetry, and the editor of the anthology, *Against Forgetting: Twentieth Century Poetry of Witness*. In the late 1970's she traveled to Guatemala and El Salvador, where she worked as a human rights advocate. After 1980, she did human rights

work in Northern Ireland and South Africa. In the winter of 1983–1984, she was a radio correspondent in Beirut. In 1998, she was given the Edita and Ira Morris Hiroshima Foundation for Peace and Culture Award in Stockholm, in recognition of her work on behalf of human rights and the preservation of memory and culture.



CHOMAN HARDI (England, homeland Kurdistan)

Choman was born in Southern Kurdistan in 1974. Her family fled to Iran shortly after, returned in 1979, and had to flee again in 1988 when Saddam Hussein's forces gassed the Kurds. She moved to England in 1993 where she received degrees in philosophy and psychology, and is currently conducting her postdoctoral research with the widows of Anfal. Choman's first volume of poems in English is *Life for*

Us; an English translation of *Butterfly Valley* by the renowned Kurdish poet, Sherko Beke, is forthcoming. She has two previous volumes of poetry in Kurdish. She was chair of Exiled Writers' Ink! from 2001–2003.

BIOGRAPHIES



ALEXANDRE KIMENYI (U.S., homeland Rwanda)

Alexandre is a Professor of Linguistics, Ethnic Studies, and African Languages. He came to the U.S. as a Fulbright Fellow to study in 1971 hoping to go back and contribute to the development of his country, Rwanda. Instead, he became an American citizen due, first, to the massacre of family and friends in 1973 for their Tutsi ethnicity, then for the extermination of almost his entire family and many friends during the Tutsi genocide in 1994. He writes poetry in his native language.



LI-YOUNG LEE (U.S., Indonesia, homeland China)

Li-Young Lee was born in 1957 in Jakarta, Indonesia, of Chinese parents. Lee's father was physician to Communist leader Mao Tse-Tung. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Lee's parents escaped to Indonesia, where his father was a political prisoner in President Sukarno's jails. They later fled Indonesia to escape anti-Chinese sentiment, and after a five-year trek through Hong Kong, Macau, and Japan, they settled in the United States in 1964; Lee was seven. His most recent volume of poetry is *Book of My Nights*, and he is the author of *The Winged Seed, A Remembrance*.



ORLANDO RICARDO MENES (U.S., birthplace Peru, homeland Cuba)

Orlando was born to Cuban parents, with one family line traced back to China, and raised in both Peru and Miami. Orlando is an assistant professor in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Notre Dame. His poems have appeared in several prominent anthologies and in numerous literary magazines. Menes also has published translations of work by other poets, including Argentine Alfonsina Storni and Cuban poet José Kozer. His latest volume of poems is *Furia*.



DUNYA MIKHAIL (U.S., homeland Iraq)

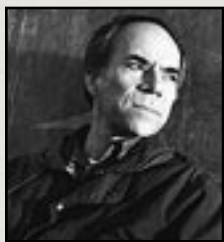
Facing increasing threats and harassment from the Iraqi authorities, Dunya fled Iraq in the mid 1990's. In 2001 She was awarded the Human Rights Award for Freedom of Writing. Her poetry collection is *The War Works Hard*.



VALZHYNNA MORT (U.S., homeland Belarus)

Born Valhyna Martynava in 1981 in Minsk, Belarus, Valzhyna writes in Belorussian at a time when efforts are being made to reestablish the traditional language, after governmental attempts to absorb it into the Russian language have been relinquished. She addresses the poetry of anti-communist revolutions in Eastern Europe from the 1970's to the 1990's, the time in the 20th century when poets became prophets for their nations. She has won several awards in Europe for her poetry and her dynamic readings. She currently lives in the U.S. and is at work on her first book for publication in this country.

BIOGRAPHIES



MAJID NAFICY (U.S., homeland Iran)

Majid was politically active against the Shah's regime in Iran in the 1970's. After the 1979 Revolution his first wife Ezzat Tabaian and his brother Sa'id were executed by Khomeini. He fled Iran in 1983 and moved to Los Angeles where he received his doctorate from UCLA. He has published more than 20 books in English and Persian, including *Muddy Shoes* and *Father and Son*. He is the co-editor of *Daftarhaye Kanoon*, published by the Iranian Writer's Association in Exile.



NAOMI SHIHAB NYE (Palestinian American)

Naomi is a Palestinian-American writer who has lived in both Jerusalem and the United States. She writes poems, essays, novels for teens, short stories, and children's books. She is author/ editor of more than 20 volumes, including *This Same Sky: A Collection of Poems From Around the World*, (translated poems of 129 poets from 68 different countries.) Her book *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East* was a National Book Award finalist. A "wandering poet," she has worked widely as a visiting writer in many countries and states. Her most recent volume of poetry is *You and Yours*.



YASUHIKO SHIGEMOTO (Japan, Hiroshima Survivor)

When the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Mr. Shigemoto was working as a mobilized student about 2500 meters north of the blast center. He was 15 years old and lucky to escape being burned by being in the shadow of a structure. Half of the children in his school were not so lucky. He began to write Hiroshima haiku in Japanese and English at the age of 55. In those days few Japanese haiku poets wrote Hiroshima haiku. In 1995 he published the anthology *My Haiku of Hiroshima*. In 2005 he published Volume II of the same title. He believes the shortness of the 17 syllable form can be very profound.



NGUYEN CHI THIEN (U.S., France, homeland Vietnam)

Mr. Thien was born in Hanoi in 1939. In 1961 he was arrested for telling a history class that the U.S., not the Soviet Union, had defeated the Japanese in WWII. He spent 15 years in "reeducation" prison camps for "composing poetry against the regime." In 1979, Thien dashed into the British Embassy in Hanoi with his manuscript of 400 poems, written from his memory. The British diplomats promised to send his poems out of the country but they were unable to prevent his arrest outside the gates. Mr. Thien was dragged to the Hoa Lo Prison (the "Hanoi Hilton") where he spent 12 years in constant starvation, often in stocks and in solitary darkness. But the British kept their promise and in 1980 his poems began to appear in Vietnamese and in translations around the world. In 1985 *Flowers from Hell* won the International Poetry Award. An international campaign led by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch kept him from oblivion, and in 1991 the Communists released him from the prison camps, at the age of 52. In 1995, for health reasons, he was allowed to immigrate to the U.S. under the Humanitarian Operation program.

REGISTRATION

THE RESILIENCE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT CONFERENCE is open to 100 participants. Registration for the pre-conference dinner is limited to 40 people. Registration for conversation and writing workshops is limited to 15 people per workshop. Please register early to avoid disappointment. The cost of the conference does not include airfare or lodging but does include meals listed on the schedule.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ E-mail _____

Pre-Conference Dinner\$50

Conference (before July 15)\$125

Conference (after July 15) \$150

Your total _____

I am paying by: Check (please make checks out to Resilience Conference) _____
 Credit Card

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Security Number _____ Signature _____

Please list workshops in your order of preference, first, second and third choice. If you choose more than one writing or conversation workshop as your first choice please note which of these are most important to you as we would like to open them up to as many people as possible.

I would like to attend, please indicate your choices in priority for each workshop series:

Saturday Workshop, Sept. 16, 2:15–3:30 p.m.

___ A Poetry As A Bridge

___ B Between Two Worlds: The Expatriate Poet

___ C When Less Is More

Saturday Workshop, Sept. 16, 3:45–5:00 p.m.

___ D Poetry As A Political Tool

___ E Conversation

___ F Transforming Pain Into Creativity

Sunday Workshop, Sept. 17, 9:45–11:00 a.m.

___ G Surviving the Unthinkable

___ H Conversation

___ I Kindness

Please Note: B, E, and H (conversations) are limited to 15 people.

C, F, and I (writing) are limited to 15 people.

I would like to have a box lunch on Sunday.

TO REGISTER: Fees are listed above, payment in full must accompany this form.

• **BY MAIL** The Resilience of the Human Spirit , c/o Jan Warner, 26271 Camino Real, Carmel, CA 93923

• **BY EMAIL** E-mail registration form information to resiliencespirit@aol.com. You must call in your credit card information to 831-622-0152.

• **BY FAX** 845-677-6446. Fax completed form with payment information

Upon receipt of your registration we will send you a confirmation letter which will include whether or not you have a place at the pre-conference dinner and in your first choice workshops. We will keep a waiting list and let you know as places open up.

A downloadable pdf of the registration form and updated information can be found at www.blueflowerarts.com/guthriecenter.html

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION please call 831-622-0152 or e-mail resiliencespirit@aol.com.

THANK YOU. WE HOPE TO SEE YOU IN SEPTEMBER.



THE RESILIENCE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

AN INTERNATIONAL
GATHERING OF POETS

Poets who have experienced war, genocide, prison, execution of loved ones, oppression, racism, exile, and despair use their powerful voices to bear witness to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable terror. Through their words we are given a bridge to cross over from ignorance, misunderstanding, or even hatred into remembrance, identification, and compassion. We engage in the revolutionary possibility that truth, love, faith and hope might transform our world. Please join us.

SEPTEMBER 16–17, 2006

PRE-CONFERENCE DINNER WITH THE POETS • SEPTEMBER 15

THE GUTHRIE CENTER

4 VAN DEUSEVILLE ROAD, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA 01230

Naomi Shihab Nye (Palestinian American)

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz (Canada, homeland Poland, Holocaust Survivor)

Yasuhiko Shigemoto (Japan, Hiroshima Survivor)

Alexandre Kimenyi (U.S., homeland Rwanda)

Claribel Alegria (Nicaragua, homeland El Salvador)

Choman Hardi (England, homeland Kurdistan)

Li-Young Lee (U.S., Indonesia, homeland China)

Orlando Ricardo Menes (U.S., birthplace Peru, homeland Cuba)

Dunya Mikhail (U.S., homeland Iraq)

Valzhyna Mort (U.S., homeland Belarus)

Majid Naficy (U.S., homeland Iran)

Nguyen Chi Thien (U.S., France, homeland Vietnam)

and Carolyn Forché (U.S. human rights advocate, translator)

The Resilience of the Human Spirit is part of the Spoken Word Series at The Guthrie Center, and is co-produced by Jan Warner and Alison Granucci. The Spoken Word Series is curated annually by Blue Flower Arts in Millbrook, NY. www.blueflowerarts.com.

For information please contact Jan Warner at 831-622-0152.