

WRITING WRONGS: DG NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2015

If you begin a Writing Wrongs program, please contact Faye Sholiton (fsholiton@dramatistsguild.com) with a description of your project and some of the challenges you're facing. If you're already working with underserved populations, please tell us about your project(s) and link us to your website. In that way, we can share your information with teaching artists embarking on similar projects. In time, we hope to offer a Writing Wrongs idea exchange on the DG website.

SESSION I: The panelists

MMU
SIA AMMA is Africa's most outrageous sex educator, encouraging others to talk about female genital mutilation and examine attitudes about women's sexuality. A graduate of San Francisco State University with a degree in speech communication and drama, she went on to develop and perform one-woman shows: *What Mama Said About Down There*; *Clitoris Celebration: Think Outside the Box*; *In Search of My Clitoris* and *Salute to the Vulva*. The last two are due to be published in fall 2015. Her company Global Women Intact nurtures arts of the African diaspora and uses dance, music, theater, comedy and education to raise awareness of the beauty and complexity of African cultures and their impact on health and wellbeing. GWI is devoted to raising awareness about female genital cutting (fgc) and provides alternative, arts-based and culturally appropriate rites of initiation that honor the intact and healthy bodies of girls and women. (www.globalwomenintact.org)

RUBY BERRYMAN has been artistic director of the Reader's Theatre Workshop in Lancaster, NH since 2005 teaching community play development workshops and directing classical plays. Her playwriting credits include: *Fish on Friday*; *People Farm*; *Shopping for Men: The Musical*; *Everyman*; and *The Remix*. She explores themes of love, genocide and the conundrums caused by modern science. Her essay "Distilling Genocide into Drama: Adaptation of Holocaust and Slave Narratives to the Stage" has received international recognition and has been published in the Canadian journal *The Quint*. In 2014, as Artist in Residence at a Vermont correctional facility, she guided the inmates in writing *Englewood Boys*. The theatre piece was inspired by watercolor portraits by Chicago artist Julian Williams. These were exhibited at the Catamount Arts Center concurrent with the play's premiere. Ruby is a graduate of the University of California San Diego (BA, Theatre/Playwriting) and Spalding University (MFA, Playwriting). Memberships include the Dramatists Guild, Chicago Dramatists and the Playwrights' Center. rubbyberryman@gmail.com

CHERYL COONS has written more than a dozen musicals that have received professional productions. Her numerous honors include the Joseph Jefferson Award, the ASCAP Foundation Harold Arlen Award, the Theatre for the American Musical Award, the Carbonell Award and the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award. She performed her original songs at Carnegie Hall in ASCAP'S Now and Then concert series, hosted by Michael Feinstein. Cheryl is the Director of Musical Theatre Development at Chicago Dramatists, where she became a Resident Playwright in 2008. She currently serves as teaching artist and program manager for Storycatchers Theatre, a youth development arts organization that engages court-involved and at-risk youth in writing, producing and performing original musical theatre. The Chicago-based company incorporates kids' challenges, experiences, dreams and hopes into their art, allowing them to find their voices, set goals and make better life choices. The company was recognized in 2013 with a National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Award. Cheryl also serves the Dramatists Guild as regional representative from Chicago. (www.storycatcherstheatre.org) ccoons@dramatistsguild.com

SESSION II: The writing coaches

SUZE ALLEN is an author, editor, writing coach, playwright, dramaturg, theatre professional and teacher. In 2011, she founded 3Girls Theatre Company with AJ Baker and Lee Brady. She is 3Girls' resident dramaturg, playwright, playwriting instructor and director of GirlWrights. She recently staged *Girl Talk: Boys, Bullies and Body Image*, based on the book by Dr. Carol Langlois, empowering young women with shared stories. Her own plays explore the intersection between women's mental health, motherhood and politics. *Hanging on Your Every Word: A Journey Through Depression and Suicide* was featured at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and in Anchorage, Alaska. Suze works with Sia Amma's Global Women Intact as director and dramaturg. She is co-author with Dr. SD Shanti of *The Time-Starved Woman's Guide to Emotional Wellbeing - Tools and Strategies for Balance* (Basilea Press), now in its second printing. She teaches transformational workshops for women with Jnana Gowen at Esalen Institute (Big Sur and Catalina Island). A writing coach, she also runs Manuscript Mentor and leads workshops for women and children. A proud member of the Dramatists Guild, she serves the Bay Area as Regional Representative. (www.SuzeAllen.com; www.manuscriptmentor.com; www.timestarvedwoman.com)

MELISSA DENTON is program director for The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company (USTC). She oversees development, implementation and strategic growth of the nationally recognized theatre arts program for youth and families in underserved communities throughout Los Angeles County. USTC reaches and honors the voices of L.A.'s hardest-to-reach youth, going into schools in high-crime, impoverished neighborhoods as well as juvenile detention centers. They provide a lifeline, through theatre arts, to those who need it the most. Prior to USTC, she served as Project Coordinator with New York City's Roundabout Theatre Company, managing 25 teaching artists at Bronx Theatre High School. Other New York assignments included the Guggenheim Museum. In 2013, Melissa was invited to participate in the First International Teaching Artist Conference in Oslo, Norway. She recently received an M.A. in Nonprofit Management at Antioch University, L.A. When not directing programs, Melissa directs and performs for the stage. TV credits include: *Two and a Half Men*, *The Middle*, *Anger Management*, and *Seinfeld*. (www.theunusualsuspects.org) Melissa@theunusualsuspects.org

FRANCESCA PIANTADOSI is an award-winning playwright who hails from Portland, OR. She's been a participant at Seven Devils' Playwriting Conference; a finalist for the Rosenthal New Play Prize; Seattle Rep's New Work Festival, Ojai Playwriting Festival, Orlando Shakespeare Festival, JAW, New Harmony Project, Play Labs (Playwrights' Center, Minneapolis) and has had productions from Bangalore, India to New York. For the past three years, she's been teaching playwriting (a program she started) at MacLaren Correctional Facility, which serves men from age 14 to 26. She also teaches at Phame Academy in a theatre program for adults with developmental disabilities. She is the DG regional representative from Portland. fpiantadosi@dramatistsguild.com

LARRY DEAN HARRIS is the guild's Southern California Regional Representative. His plays have earned nominations for two GLAAD awards, an LA Weekly Theatre Award, an Ovation award and the New York Outer Critics Circle award. He was a co-founder of the Los Angeles-based, playwright - managed Playwrights 6 and a long-time member of LA's Celebration Theatre. lharris@dramatistsguild.com