

WKU's Department of English
and
African American Studies Program
present the 24th Annual

Mary Ellen & Jim Wayne Miller

Celebration of Writing

Sunday, October 25, 2020, 2 p.m.



The annual celebration is presented in honor of WKU's first Poet Laureate, Professor Mary Ellen Miller & Dr. Jim Wayne Miller, former KY Poet Laureate.

The program will include recognition of the student winners of this year's Poetry Contest with a presentation by guest judge & poet Joy Priest, author of *Horsepower*.

Introductions—Dr. Alison Langdon

Welcome and Recognition of Finalists — Dr. Rob Hale

Finalists

Ella Corder	Somerset, KY
Nia Queen Douglas	Louisville, KY
Eli Edens	Custer, KY
Summer Gary	Louisville, KY
Faith Harris	Albany, NY
Kelly Lingen	Lakeville, MN
Abigail Raley	Bowling Green, KY
Chloe Skeese	Berea, KY
Kayla Spears	Shelbyville, KY
Gabby Wilson	Crestwood, KY

Recognition of Winners — Joy Priest

Reading — Joy Priest

Thanks and Closing — Dr. Alison Langdon

"Landing"

By Mary Ellen Miller from *The Poet's Wife Speaks*

We bent over backwards to re-wind the years
as if we knew we were evolving, shedding
some invisible membrane we were reluctant
to let go.

We have always been too cerebral.

Were we trying to freeze-frame some process
like those cameras aimed at flowers
to catch nature in its act?

Or were we hoping some nubbin-like
new beginning might yet emerge and surprise us?

God, we were restless and so frightened.
Not of each other.

Dark (clockwise and obedient)
made a smooth and noiseless landing.

It was time, we knew, to unbuckle.

Such heavy luggage on the carousel—
the kind that has no music.

How much pretense is involved here?

I think not much.

Between us two, metaphor may be the only thing
we understand.

Joy Priest is winner of the Donald Hall Prize for Poetry and the recipient of the 2020 Stanley Kunitz Prize and her poems have appeared in the Academy of American Poets' Poem-a-Day, *American Poetry Review*, *The Atlantic*, and *Poetry Northwest*, among others. Her essays have appeared in *The Bitter Southerner*, *Poets & Writers*, *ESPN*, and *The Undeclared*, and her work has been anthologized in *Breakbeat Poets: New American Poetry in the Age of Hip-Hop*, *The Louisville Anthology*, *A Measure of Belonging: Writers of Color on the New American South*, and *Best New Poets* 2014, 2016 and 2019. Priest has been a journalist, theater attendant, waitress, and fast-food worker in Kentucky, and has facilitated writing workshops and arbitration programs with adult and juvenile incarcerated women. She is currently a doctoral student in Literature & Creative Writing at the University of Houston.

The Mary Ellen and Jim Wayne Miller Celebration of Writing, hosted annually by WKU, features a contest open to students with an English major or minor as well as those in creative writing classes. This year we were pleased to partner with the African American Studies program and are grateful for their support.

The contest is named after Dr. Jim Wayne Miller who taught German at WKU for over thirty years until his death in 1996, and his wife, Professor Mary Ellen Miller, who taught poetry and literature at WKU for 55 years until her death in 2018. A writer in many genres, Dr. Miller would be best known for his poetry and numerous books including: *Copperhead Cane* (1964), *The Mountains Have Come Closer* (1980), and *Newfound* (1989). Professor Miller was also well-known for her poetry. She published many poems as well as the collection, *The Poet's Wife Speaks* (2011). Together with Morris Allen Grubbs, she also published *Every Leaf a Mirror: A Jim Wayne Miller Reader* (2014).

To donate to the celebration, supporters may make gifts through the WKU Foundation at WKU, 292 Alumni Ave., Bowling Green, 42101,
or at
alumni.wku.edu/millerwritingfund.