

MONEY FOR WOMEN/BARBARA DEMING MEMORIAL FUND, INC.

GRANTS AWARDED

JUNE 2023 NONFICTION & POETRY



Barbara Deming (1917-1984) was a feminist, lesbian, poet, writer, and nonviolent activist in the civil rights, anti-war, and women's movements. In 1975, when she founded the Money for Women Fund, Deming said, "In my life I've been helped as a writer to do my work. I think it's fair that I try to help others." Now a memorial fund sustained by generous contributions from donors and former grantees, Money for Women gives encouragement through small grants to feminist writers and visual artists.

Submission periods for applications occur once a year: January 1-31, with poetry and nonfiction awarded in odd years, and visual art and fiction in even years. Judges in 2023 for nonfiction were Anna Alves, Dionne Bremyer, Jamilah King, Anne Raeff, Jen Sammons, Hasanthika Sirisena, and coordinator Daisy Hernandez. For poetry: Nicole Terez Dutton Rebecca Gayle Howell, Camille Norton, Alice Templeton, and coordinator Ruthann Robson. Grants totaling \$22,000 were awarded to 22 women.

Soleil David _____ **POETRY**
Guerrilla (Washington, DC)

This book of poems weaves together historical and political trauma, family, and anticipatory grief. It is a ledger, a reckoning, an investigation of public and private memory. In English, Tagalog, and Bikol verses, it attempts to make sense of revolution and the uneasy peace that follows.

Habeas Corpus¹: Meralco²

To have the body is to know its limits—
for example, how far back the toes curl
when exposed wires makes flesh a too-ready
conductor. What is involuntary is the shrieking:
the pitch of a pig who knows it's the dawn
of its slaughter. This is the sound
of muscle tissues on fire: the crank
of a field telephone generator, the ringing
that follows, that—that zap, then:
Where are the rest of you? Give me their names.

1 From Latin, meaning "show me the body." A writ requiring a person under arrest to be brought before a judge or into court, to protect the person from being unlawfully detained. In 1971, Ferdinand Marcos suspended the writ of habeas corpus, paving the way for more illegal arrests of activists.
2 Manila Electric Company. Also the Philippine Constabulary's nickname for electric torture.

Starr Davis _____ **NONFICTION**
The Funk of Poverty (Columbus, OH)

The Funk of Poverty is a collection of essays about a Black woman's start into motherhood during the Covid-19 pandemic. Her journey begins in poverty following the escape from a violent domestic partnership. She recounts the discriminations faced in the justice system as she navigates pregnancy, postpartum, and custody.

The new job was not paying me what I was worth before I had this baby, but I took it anyway. My mother taught me to say yes to money, all kinds of money. However, the welfare office said I made too much money for food assistance. I was so mad I cried while walking back to the waiting area. The haunting sound of nails against the keyboard echoed while I rocked the sleeping baby against my heaving chest. My tears christened her forehead. At that moment, I wished I was still unemployed, so maybe then I wouldn't have wasted my whole day at the welfare office with a baby in my arms.

This grant will fund professional development and time off from work to finish the manuscript.

Award will fund travel to Olympic Valley, CA, to attend the Community of Writers Poetry Program.

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Chelsy Diaz Amaya _____ **NONFICTION**
(New Hartford, NY)

The Bird Rattle and Other Essays

This essay collection explores how storytelling, intergenerational silence, the Jehovah's Witness faith, and multilingual barriers piece together a portrait of an Ecuadorian immigrant mother and her daughter who grapple with their fracturing relationship with the American Dream.

It was before she learned how to say hitherto. She was reading a book at the foot of my bed, my pale blue walls stained by the sunset. On a twin bed, wrapped in my sister's hand-me-down comforter, she read to me, line by line, her finger pointing, gliding through the page. She stopped to admire the book cover's illustration: an Indigenous tribe wearing feather hats and carrying blow guns.

Grant will cover living expenses during the revision process.

Aria Dominguez _____ **NONFICTION**
(Saint Paul, MN)

Field Guide to the Flora of Costa Rica

These essays explore the connection between what the author learns about the natural world and about herself over twenty years of being married to a Costa Rican and spending time in the rural, coastal, and tribal lands of that country. The essays delve into the details of individual plants, as well as into the workings of the human heart.

My favorite tree is a regal, red-barked giant up on the mountain behind us. Mainor tells me the Bribri name, kölö, and that in Spanish it is called indio pelón. I like that I don't know the English or scientific names for this species. That it has been introduced by a neighbor on a first-name basis, that I already know its nickname. Their tribe has long known its medicinal properties, and when he lists them, cicatrizar heridas stands out. In proper translation, this would be "to heal wounds." But it literally means "to scar over wounds," which is more honest.

Grant will be used to take time off work to complete the book.

Alisha Dietzman _____ **POETRY**
(Sacramento, CA)

***On the Subject of Agency/The Agency of the Subject:
Sweet Movie & Man is Not a Bird***

Drawing on the films of Dušan Makavejev, Sweet Movie engages with the ways that both religious communities and secularity deny religious women agency, while its loose sequel, Man is Not a Bird—a hybrid text combining poetry and theory—seeks to consider how agency alters the subject.

from "The Margin of a Floating Structure"

Next-door's party leaks through the walls.

You make me watch *L'avventura*.

Monica Vitti,
soft, unnaturally beautiful
as the snapped neck of a rabbit.

I make you watch *Hundstage*.

I feel as if I remember the lawns, and rooms.
Man in dumb yellow shirt. The one, too, who
hits her, un-simulated,
the one who says: *you're like all the other
bitches.*

Things are easier for me received.

The grant will help with living expenses and project-related travel costs.

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Carlina Duan _____ **NONFICTION**
Liquid Moment (Ann Arbor, MI)

Liquid Moment is a lyric essay manuscript about Chinese American basketball players from California in the 1930s, including the all-girls Chinatown team, the Playground League. Interweaving personal narratives with historical research, the author explores how these players innovated amidst political constraints—rewriting myths of impossibility around Asian bodies, mobility, and desire.

I like to imagine the Playground League players as the girls I grew up with: Chinese American kids with chipped fingernails. We snuck tubes of lip gloss into our backpacks, buttering our mouths in lukewarm bathroom stalls before class, later cheating on our Chinese language exams. We wanted, I think, what the Playground League girls wanted. To be bigger, brighter than what the world saw in us: black hair, soft obedience, softer knees.

Grant will support research travel to the San Francisco Chinatown basketball courts to interview players.

Rebecca Faulkner _____ **POETRY**
Daughters of the Minotaur (Brooklyn, NY)

Daughters of the Minotaur is a renegade act of feminist invention. In this poetry collection, which examines the lives and works of five remarkable female artists of the last century, a dialogue between author and subject is forged, and themes of visibility, artistry, nationality, belonging, motherhood, and gender are explored.

from "Maiden Name"

she fingers a kitchen knife an expensive one
from the wedding gift registry uses the serrated edge
to extract the fleshy part of her name it pulses
in her palm sweaty smaller than she'd expected
she prods it gingerly a name handed down
by fathers&husbands smelling of warm beer
& bootstraps she pinches nerveless skin
last in a long line of women with Inner Strength
& none of their own syllables

Grant will fund cost of a writer's studio in Brooklyn.

May Jeong _____ **NONFICTION**
The Life: Sex, Work, and Love in America (Brooklyn, NY)

The Life: Sex, Work, and Love in America

The Life: Sex, Work, and Love in America investigates the forces shaping sex work and the lives of workers, and the limitations of our criminal system when dealing with sex work and sex trafficking. Based on deeply reported life stories, The Life probes the injustices, indignities, and redemptions workers experience and lays bare the intersections of immigration, sexuality, power, and labor.

It was a godsend when a hotel had a washing machine, but otherwise, garments were hand-washed in the basin. Mostly, the girls did runs to the mall, as it was easier to buy than to wash or mend. Such challenges of the hotel life never got to Sugar, as she existed in a kind of fugue state and could only be shaken out by drugs. The monomania that hard drugs demand of its users manifested itself in a kind of clarity of purpose in Sugar, the kind found in those who practice deep meditation, or the singularly devout.

Funds will pay for living expenses.

Bethany Kaylor _____ **NONFICTION**
Everything Must Go (Berkeley, CA)

Everything Must Go is a book of creative nonfiction that explores the connections between various American subcultures, from elderly lesbian separatists in Oregon to the tumultuous history of Nancy Drew to operators of evangelical hotlines who are in the business of saving sinners.

from "If You Build It, Will They Come?"

Living on women's land was an experiment in building paradise. The landdykes terraced mountain hillsides into gardens. They pooled unemployment and food stamps. They built yurts, cabins, and houses by hand. They shat in 5-gallon buckets and pissed wherever they liked. In the winter, they stoked fires in wood stoves to keep warm; in the summer, they roamed naked, eating berries by the handful and making love under the moonlight. They ditched God for Gaia. They seized a new beginning. On women's land, you can be anyone.

Grant will be used to fund an independent fact-checker for the manuscript.

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Nazia Kazi _____ **NONFICTION**
National Security Islam (Philadelphia, PA)

This book addresses how America's foreign policy decisions have had an undeniable impact on the lives and status of Muslim women. The book synthesizes the author's own experiences – growing up Muslim in the Midwest – and her research on the US sponsorship of Islamist movements over the past several decades.

To find my answer here, in the histories of American imperialism, has been at once empowering and terrifying. I never expected to land at this conclusion: that powerful nations like the one I call home have deliberately invested in repression and religious fundamentalism in order to maintain a chokehold over the global economy. But it is my unshakeable realization. In fact, the drastic turn among global Muslims to a new brand of Islamic practice has its roots right here, in the US. More specifically, in Langley, Virginia, where the Central Intelligence Agency is headquartered.

Grant will be used for living expenses.

Grace MacNair _____ **POETRY**
Fire Watcher (Brooklyn, NY)

MacNair is at work on a manuscript that merges archival research into reproductive health with her clinical and personal experiences as a healthcare professional. The goal of these poems is to move within and beyond grief to examine history and to challenge what poems—and bodies—can be and what they can hold.

from "The Uses of Laughter"

Of the bath water, my friend Athina
makes a wine-dark sea.
Just yesterday she pushed
a baby from her body
into my waiting hands which,
after somersaulting him
from his tangled, pulsing cord,
returned him
already pink with first breaths
to her chest.

If men bled like we do how would the world be?

Award covers travel expenses related to archival research.

Lily Meyer _____ **NONFICTION**
Translators and Other Icons (Washington, DC)

Translators and Other Icons is a collection-in-progress of essays and interviews about literary translation. It draws the author's experience as a translator and translation critic, and explores the nuances of translation while also arguing that translators are true creative professionals who deserve good pay, stable working conditions, and public respect.

A translation comes from elsewhere. A translation is a stranger in our land. Without putting too fine a point on it, love for the stranger often seems to be in short supply lately, but not in the world of translation. The boom in translation presses, the popularity of translated authors like Elena Ferrante and Karl Ove Knausgaard, and the new National Book Award for Translated Literature are all indicators that many Americans, or American readers, love the strangers on their bookshelves. My great hope is that this spike in translated literature will produce more translators.

Grant will fund the research and writing of an essay on feminist translation.

Lisa Nikolidakis _____ **NONFICTION**
The Stable Life (Fort Worth, TX)

The Stable Life blends memoir and research to examine deeply flawed medical practices in the US in preventing, diagnosing, and treating chronic illness and invisible disability in women. This work is firmly camped at the intersection of memoir and disability studies.

In February, my vision doubles when I look to the left. If I close one eye, the world rights itself. My partner runs down the list of stroke symptoms, and I don't have the other hallmarks: trouble speaking, lack of coordination, paralysis. Still, I go to the emergency room where I am seen almost immediately.

Eventually a doctor perches on the edge of my bed, cups her palm around my ankle.

Oh god, I say. A stroke?

She shakes her head. Have you ever been tested for MS? When I say no, her lips flatten. You need to prepare yourself.

Grant will help fund travel and research costs.

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Monica Ong _____ **POETRY**
(Trumbull, CT)

Planetaria

Monica Ong is completing a collection of genre-defying visual poetry that invites readers into innovative poetic forms that surface hidden histories of women's labor, the Chinese night sky, as well as the ghosts of memory and migration.

You are here to enter the
palace of your life
to meet yourself on the side of the road
arms waving
beneath a tender sky



Star Gazer: Planisphere Poetry by Monica Ong, 7.6 x 7.6 inches.
Letterpress gold foil stamping on white and navy paper, die cutting, and metal hardware, 2021.

The grant will fund production costs towards the completion of the project.

Lilly Nguyen _____ **NONFICTION**
Echo Locations _____ ***(San Diego, CA)***

Echo Locations comprises a memoir-in-essays on the topic of intergenerational reconciliation. I am the only child of Vietnamese boat people and am now a mother. The book asks: what obligations do I have to teach my daughter about reeducation camp and reincarnation? When is it too soon to teach a child these things?

I am a first-born daughter. Of their daughters, Vietnamese people have an aphorism. In English, it goes something like this. Girls know how to be dependable. Or even, you can trust daughters to love you. But to really give you a sense of the full nuance of the phrase, it is most accurate to say, daughters know how to give with full thanks.

I was conceived on top of a shipping container at the moment of first quiet after a long journey. I cannot say how I have come to know this because I belong to the first generation to not know.

Award will fund travel expenses and supplies to attend a writing residency.

Susan Nguyen _____ **POETRY**
Future Grief _____ ***(Tempe, AZ)***

This poetry collection explores family, literal and figurative scarcity, and language as a source of both connection and displacement. The book interrogates the tension between grieving the past while trying to preserve the fraught present and asks how this tension impacts one's ability to live fully and joyfully in the moment.

from "Impossible Deer"

When I visit Virginia in winter,
my mother says she's been seeing prints
on our snow-covered deck.
Deer, she tells me. Deer can't jump
that high, I say. Maybe opossum or raccoon.
But she doesn't know what those are,
not my English words
for them. And I don't know
how to translate. I'm frustrated
now – at how often our conversations
go like this: faltering, me punishing
her with silence for not understanding.

The award will fund travel and research costs.

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Michelle Peñaloza _____ **POETRY**
(Covelo, CA)

All The Words I Can Remember Are Poems

This manuscript engages with personal and collective grief, lyrical translation, and the interpersonal and intimate reverberations of colonialism within the Filipinx/a/o diaspora. These poems yell back at the archive, speaking to legacy, motherhood, self and collective care, and hope for the breaking of harmful cycles.

What does it say that we come from an ocean people, surrounded by water, and none of us knows how to swim? I know how to not drown, but can't swing a stroke, only paddle. A dog fetching my breath further and further from my hot mouth. What would my ancestors make of my inability to hold the horizon in balance? Bakit, anak? I have no answer for how we travelled so far there's no going back. I am a landlubber, a child of cars driving past acres of corn, tobacco. I walk through fields of wheat, rippling a golden sea.

Award will be used for purchasing research books, printing, and securing images from the archives.

Lizzie Skurnick _____ **NONFICTION**
(Jersey City, NJ)

The Special Students: My Great-Grandfather at Harvard, His Mysterious Death, and the World of the Talented Tenth

The Special Studies is the story of a previously unknown group of over 200 Black scholars who attended Harvard at the turn of the century, including Ella Louise Stokes and Mae Louise Hatchette, the first two known Black women to receive degrees from Harvard.

On December 1st, 1926, George Jordan, a student at Harvard's Graduate School of Education, was found unconscious in his rooming house. How he had arrived at his current state was a mystery. His skull was badly battered, and one shoulder dislocated, possibly broken.

But the door was bolted from the inside, the windows firmly shut. Cambridge police were baffled, but their witness was unconscious. George was taken to Westborough Insane Hospital, where he died, leaving his wife, Naomi, and their six-year-old son George behind. George was my great-grandfather. Naomi was my great-grandmother. And until my mother got dementia, I barely knew the two of them existed.

Grant will be used to research the academic careers of Ella Stokes and Mae Hatchette at Howard University in Washington, DC, where both graduated and were trained as teachers.

Edythe Rodriguez _____ **POETRY**
Jonesin (Upper Darby, PA)

Jonesin is a poetry collection about romance, revolution, loving while Black, spirituality, gender politics and healing our community from sexual abuse cycles. The Vagina Monologues meets the Orishas meets 90s R&B. Osun and her abuser walk into a bar.

from "Age Ain't Nothin But a Number"

a number like she was mature for her age, real womanish.
a number like that girl was young and fast, did you see her video, belly all out?
a number like a '94 BET interview, decked out in the same cap, the same plaid.
a number like 2 peas in a RnB pod.
a number like a hundred hushed mouths.
a number like nobody tells, so it happens to all of us.
a number like a call for help met with a dial tone of excuses.
a number like a 4 page suicide note slipped between wedding vows.

Grant will be used to gather resources and do research.

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Danika Stegeman LeMay _____ **POETRY**
The Book of Matthew (Roseville, MN)

The Book of Matthew explores the poet's inner landscape in the wake of the loss of her mother. The book copes with reality by conjuring conduits into what's infinite and explores the limits of control and chaos, form and formlessness, and the need for both in artistic practice.

from "The Volcano Card"

A volcano looms in the background of The Lovers card. It's crossed with coral, encrusted with lichen, hatchmarked with embers. Trees ink our backs. Your tree is burning. Mine is snake-charmed and burdened with fruit. You gaze forward and accept providence as yours, as given. I look up to the gift. The archangel's palms are open. We hold our palms open. Even sky needs a mirror. We intersect with openness. Between us, the volcano's form cloaks inevitable violence.

The grant will be used to supplement lost income during an unpaid writer's residency and to cover travel costs to the residency location.

Deirdre Sugiuchi _____ **NONFICTION**
Unreformed (Athens, GA)

This memoir describes the author's imprisonment in a white evangelical reform school in the Dominican Republic. The experience causes her to confront the racism, misogyny, and homophobia inherent in Christian nationalism and to reevaluate her identity as a white woman from the Mississippi Delta. Unreformed is also a meditation on growing religious extremism.

It was the middle of the night. The housefather, hair standing up in all directions, stormed into my cubicle. He shined the beam of the flashlight right into my eyes asking, "Why were you touching my high ranker?"

She sniffled. She was standing a few feet behind, next to the housemother, who patted her on the back. Dread flooded my body. My throat ached. I shook my head and I tried to explain but he interrupted. "That's my high ranker! You don't mess with her."

Across the dorm a sleepy voice asked what happened. The housefather yelled, "Stay in bed!"

Grant will fund a residency at the Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts and Sciences.

Lolita Stewart-White _____ **POETRY**
Being Property Once Myself (Miami, FL)

From the vantage point of black womanhood, this collection speaks to how black people continue to repair and revive. Although pain resonates throughout many of these lyrical pieces, there are also poems of healing, resilience, and radical self-love. The manuscript-in-progress is rooted in resistance, protest, and self-determination.

from "A Darkey Hymn"

Shadow Night hymn
Hemmed-up
In the grief of her song
Dark throat ripped
Like the hem
From America's gown
Stitched &
Stitched &
Stitched
in history's skin

Grant will be used for workshops to finish the collection.