

**MONEY FOR WOMEN/BARBARA DEMING MEMORIAL FUND, INC.**  
**GRANTS AWARDED**  
**NOVEMBER 2015 NONFICTION AND POETRY**



Barbara Deming (1917-1984) was a feminist, lesbian, poet, writer, and nonviolent activist in the civil rights, anti-war and women's movements. She founded the Money for Women Fund in 1975, explaining, "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 in part with a trust by the late writer and artist Mary Meigs as well as generous contributions from donors and former grantees, the fund gives encouragement and small grants to individual feminists in the arts (writers and visual artists). Our website is [www.demingfund.org](http://www.demingfund.org). Deadlines for applications occur twice a year: June 30<sup>th</sup> for poetry and nonfiction, and December 31<sup>st</sup> for art, fiction, and mixed-genre. Judges for this grant cycle were Kathleen Adkins, Sherisse Alvarez, Maureen Brady, Cheryl Clarke, Julie R. Enszer, Daisy Hernandez, Martha Hughes, Donika Ross Kelly, Elin Menzies, Mina Samuels, Mab Segrest, Faith Shearin, Alice Templeton, Julie Marie Wade, Lise Weil, and Crystal Williams. Grants were awarded to 12 women and totaled \$12,000.

**Nina Puro** \_\_\_\_\_ **Poetry**  
***The Winter Palace*** (Brooklyn, NY)

This manuscript is about girlhood, coming-of-age, and diaspora. I am interested in "women's work," service-industry jobs in late capitalism, and how women forge communities. It's grounded in explorations of escape from home; homecoming; going missing; and institutions removed from a nuclear family such as such as prisons, hospitals, and schools.

*from Prescription (originally published in Guernica)*

If afraid, cured leather & wood-smoke. If forgotten,  
 sassafras & hominy. If remembered,  
 bright blue hook. If bereft, lamb sizzling.

If rupture, obsidian &  
 chickweed. If suture, sleep curled around

a pine tree. If surge, puddle of milk. If shadow,  
 puddle of gasoline. If gender, shadow hurtling  
 overhead...

Award is to help with expenses for time off to finish manuscript.

**Blaire Briody** \_\_\_\_\_ **NONFICTION**  
***The New Wild West*** (Santa Rosa, CA)

The manuscript is about the recent oil boom in North Dakota. The book...will detail how a once-quiet Midwestern town suddenly became the new frontier of U.S. energy independence, weaving in stories of men and women who have lived there for generations and the migrant laborers desperate to make a living. In a short span of five years, the western region of North Dakota has undergone a complete transformation, and it will likely never be the same for hundreds of years. Oil production has skyrocketed 600 percent, with more oil produced every month in the state than OPEC

member Ecuador. Farmers watch the land that's been in their family for 100 years plowed away to make room for more wells, and Native Americans find toxic waste illegally dumped on their reservations.

*from "The New Wild West"*

*I'm in a...place I never thought I'd end up – on the outskirts of a town called Williston, North Dakota...in the epicenter of one of the largest oil booms the U.S. has ever experienced...Five years ago this was a sleepy prairie town where it was unheard of to lock your doors at night. But in the past few years, the population has almost tripled, as thousands of young workers, mostly men have come looking for opportunity...My trailer park landlord... told me not to go out after sunset and there've been rumors that there's been another rape downtown.*

Award is to help offset costs for field research and time to write.

**Patricia Spears Jones** \_\_\_\_\_ **NONFICTION**  
***Memoir: Black Girl in Bohemia and Beyond***  
 (Brooklyn, NY)

I have slowly started to consider who I was as a young Black artistic woman coming from the changing South to the bohemian North, that is New York City and the East Village during the 1970s and 1980s...Who was that young woman and how did she overcome a variety of issues (early success that did not take root; lack of confidence at critical moments and poverty, which alas has not left) to remain committed to her own literary vision? Moreover, why have she and other persons of color involved in the artistic movement of the 1970s and early 1980s been neglected in the "official" cultural histories? With support from the Deming Memorial Fund, I want to develop and hopefully complete a memoir that offers a different perspective

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of the East Village, Black Bohemia, and artistic and cultural development.

*from "Black Girl in Bohemia and Beyond"*  
*In the mid-1970s a number of Black women writers started to gather in Manhattan and in Brooklyn. They started an ad hoc group called The Sisterhood. The community of women was so small that you could call a meeting and 15-20 women, from editors to first time writers, would all show up—Black and decidedly ambitious and, yes, Beautiful. Meetings took place at Alice Walker's gorgeous apartment on Garfield Place in Park Slope, Brooklyn.*

Award is for time to write and materials for researching project.

**Shevaun Brannigan** \_\_\_\_\_ **POETRY**  
***Everyone Love Me All the Time (Philadelphia, PA)***

My poetry tends to be extremely personal, exploring themes of what it means to be female, a survivor of childhood abuse, the daughter of a mentally ill mother, and other themes. I have, in the last 1.5 years, begun to expand this subject matter to include love poetry, after meeting my partner.

*from Why My Mother is Afraid of Heights*

When he held her by her ankles  
 upside down off the roof                      like she was  
 a bird he was plucking,                      feathers  
 flying in clumps through the streets of  
 India,    like the dandelion fluff

from home

Award is to help with expenses for time off to finish manuscript.

**Lynn Casteel Harper** \_\_\_\_\_ **NONFICTION**  
***When I Have Dementia (Greenville, SC)***

The manuscript investigates the social response to dementia—the ways in which dementia is as much a cultural disease as it is a biological disease. “Disease metaphors,” Susan Sontag insists, “are never innocent.” Alzheimer’s metaphors abound: thief, kidnapper, zombie-maker, slow-motion murderer; persons with Alzheimer’s are shells, husks, out of their minds, disappeared in plain sight, gone. Persons with dementia are their disease; they the “living dead”; they can have no quality of life.

*from On Vanishing, an essay in the collection “When I Have Dementia”*

*If I stand still and watch a person walk away from me, she grows smaller and smaller, until she reaches the vanishing point. She has not vanished from the planet—she has vanished only from my view. If I move toward her, her vanishing point comes slower; if I move away from her, her vanishing point comes faster. Kitwood argued as the degree of neurological impairment increases, the person’s need for psycho-social care increases. What traditionally happens is the exact opposite. As the degree of neurological impairment increases, the person becomes increasingly neglected and isolated, and thus neurological impairment increases faster—a vicious circle. Malignant social psychology hastens the vanishing point.*

Award is for research/conference fees that will help finish project.

**Ansley Moon** \_\_\_\_\_ **POETRY**  
***Girl Country (Brooklyn, NY)***

In the last century, over 60 million Indian girls have gone missing. Sunny Handal notes, “They have either been aborted before birth, killed once born, died of neglect because they were girls, or perhaps murdered by their husband's family for not paying enough dowry at marriage.” I would also add to this list victims of rape. As an Indian woman and an adoptee, I am interested in the ways that our bodies, particularly Indian/female/queer bodies, define us and the ways that violence against these bodies is perpetuated and often accepted.

*From Elegy for X*

X is forced to give up her baby.

X signs her name  
 X signs her name  
 X signs her name

X makes up a name.  
 X is no longer a name.

Flesh of flesh. X

Award is for travel to India to write and research this project.

**Glenda Reed** \_\_\_\_\_ **NONFICTION**  
***Hitchsailing (Minneapolis, MN)***

Five years ago I set out to sail around the world. Having lived on a sailboat for the first twelve years of my life, I had navigated California’s coastal waters, but

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had never left sight of land. The open ocean called to me. I didn't have the money, the boat, or the skills to circumnavigate on my own. So I decided to hitchhike on other sailors' boats. My memoir follows my journey halfway around the world.

*from the chapter, "The Good Captain"*  
*Other boats had dismissed me, saying they wanted young, strapping (they didn't explicitly say male) crew to help with heavy lifting. Those boats that did welcome me aboard, wanted a cook and a maid, often asking if I would be open to a relationship. One captain old enough to be my grandfather declared himself a balding sex machine. Chet, on the other hand...was impressed that a twenty-six year old had a decade of sailing experience...there was nothing left for me to do but fly down to Mexico for a get-to-know-you sail. Since that first night passage along the coast of Jalisco, the guys had trusted me to stand watch while they rested. (From an essay forthcoming in the Winter 2016 issue of Creative Nonfiction)*  
Award is to help with expenses for time off to finish manuscript.

**Jennifer Lunden** \_\_\_\_\_ **NONFICTION**  
***One Canary Sings: Notes from an Industrialized Body*** (Portland, ME)

This is a work of creative nonfiction about the industrialization of the human body. After many years of living with a debilitating case of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), I discovered the biography of Alice James—the bright, witty, and bedridden sister of writer Henry James and philosopher William James—and felt I had met my Victorian counterpart. Why was I sick? Why was she? A doctor told me I was “just depressed.” But was it really so simple? Were these illnesses simply the psychosomatic expressions of conflicted psyches? Or was there something more to the story?

*from "One Canary Sings: Notes from an Industrialized Body"*

*One day sitting in my 1980 Toyota Tercel, I suddenly pictured myself an empty cornhusk, browning, crackling at the edges. If any more life seeped out of me, I would crumble into dust. The fatigue and the accompanying depression was the black ball that just rolled right over my life. It wiped out everything I had envisioned for my new life, for my future...That ball of fatigue and the swathe of life it mowed down was an unimaginable force. Unstoppable.*

Award is for time off to research and finish manuscript.

**Monica Sok** \_\_\_\_\_ **POETRY**  
***A Nail the Evening Hangs On*** (Brooklyn, NY)

This project explores women's experiences during the Cambodian genocide. Inspired by my family's stories about survival during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), my poems explore intergenerational trauma as children of survivors witness history bleeding into the present. Driven primarily by myth making and fables, my poems examine the inheritance of the genocide—not as mere historical fact—but as a daily struggle in the context of PTSD and trauma. Specifically, I am looking at how the women in my family cope with trauma from the killing fields.

*from DAYS OF YEAR ZERO*

Mak cooks soup for everyone.  
Even now that Ba is dying  
he calls me to him. In his hands,  
cassava and sweet potato.  
He gives my sister cassava.  
He gives me sweet potato,  
he remembers I like it better.  
Award is to help with expenses for time off to write.

**Xochitl-Julisa Bermejo** \_\_\_\_\_ **NONFICTION**  
***From the Borders*** (Los Angeles, CA)

I plan to use [this grant] to return to the Arizona border as a volunteer and desert aid worker for No More Deaths and to continue exploring through essays my experiences with borders as a child of immigrants, woman of color, educated writer, and a first-generation Chicana with bad Spanish but a good accent. I first volunteered with the organization in 2011 as a 31 year-old, overweight, novice hiker. Though volunteering with the NMD can be dangerous and stressful, something I did not expect was to be one of only two Chicanas volunteering with the organization.

*from "La Busqueda"*

*It's July 2013, and I am volunteering...with an... aid organization that patrols the Arizona side of the border in an effort to help end death and suffering in the desert. Today, I am joining five other volunteers...to find an oak tree shading a collection of water gallons...Humane Borders, a separate nonprofit organization doing similar work, has counted 2,269 deaths from October 1999 to March 2012 along the Arizona-Mexico border. Most of these deaths were*

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*caused by dehydration, and water drops are placed all over the Sonoran desert in the hope of saving a life.*

Award is to travel and volunteer, document and continue writing.

**Joy Katz** \_\_\_\_\_ **POETRY**

*White: An Abstract* (Pittsburgh, PA)

My project explores transracial adoptive motherhood. I became interested in skin privilege after adopting a baby in Vietnam. From the start, I felt determined not to “raise him white,” i.e., within the liberal colorblind privilege of my own upbringing. As part of that effort, together with a group of white adoptive mothers of young Asian, black, and mixed-race children, I have been working to un-learn racism and to perceive my whiteness, which had been largely invisible to me. Through this work, I learned I fear two things: not seeing my son’s skin color, and seeing my son’s skin color. An intense paradox for a poet.

*from White: An Abstract*

In the warmth of the barn, in the cool, crammed post office, in the velveteen rabbit. Not that everyone in the children’s books is white (although they are). But what the rabbit itself is stuffed with. There’s a bit of fluff stuck to my skirt. I go to brush it off, it becomes the dusk of Maine summers...

Award is to acquire writing office space and time off to write.

**Melissa Chadburn** \_\_\_\_\_ **NONFICTION**

*The Throwaways* (Los Angeles, CA)

This essay collection includes the title essay, a previously published piece about my experience in foster care. The others essays capture the myriad of effects of poverty—or the converse: the effects of affluence and power. I think this is the one element that binds all of my work together—I talk about class and race but what I really am speaking of are the effects of power on the human condition.

*from “The Throwaways”*

*I grew up poor... like I thought vacuum cleaners were luxury items... When I was a kid, I used to spend a lot of time alone trying to find a way to make my mom and me rich... so I thought maybe I could be a neurosurgeon. I heard they were the best paid ones. I heard it was like taking off the skin of a grape in one piece without injuring the meat of the grape and then sewing it back together. I sat many hours with a big pile of grapes. One by one unpeeling them.*

Award is for time off and away in retreat to write.