**The Changing Shape of Immigrant Literature – AWP Event Outline**

**Event Description:**

Today's generation of immigrant writers are exploring a range of subjects and experiences that go beyond the classic immigration narratives. What imaginative possibilities does immigration now present as narrative trope, as organizing principle, as shared story? How do the authors' works speak in dialogue with past classic immigrant narratives? The authors will also invite audience participation via a worksheet structured around writing prompts that can be completed during and after the panel.

**Event Category:**

Fiction Craft & Criticism

**Event Organizer and Moderator:**

Shazia Hafiz Ramji is the author of PORT OF BEING, a finalist for the 2019 BC Book Prizes, the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award, and named by the CBC as a best Canadian poetry book of 2018. Her writing has appeared in Best Canadian Poetry 2019, Poetry Northwest, and Music & Literature. She is a columnist for Open Book and her criticism has appeared in Quill & Quire and the Chicago Review of Books. She is currently at work on a novel about addiction, saints, and ports, which is drawn from autobiography and family history.

**Event Participants:**

Lauren Francis-Sharma is the author of 'Til the Well Runs Dry. She is the Assistant Director of Bread Loaf Writers' Conference owner of DC Writers Room, and a MacDowell Fellow. Her sophomore novel will be published in Spring 2020.

Chaya Bhuvaneswar is the author of WHITE DANCING ELEPHANTS, winner of the Dzanc Books Story Prize and finalist for the PEN Bingham Award for Debut Story Collections. Her work has appeared in Narrative Magazine, Tin House, Ploughshares, Joyland, Michigan Quarterly Review, The Millions and elsewhere.

Donna Hemans is the author of two novels: River Woman and Tea by the Sea. Her short fiction has appeared in Caribbean Writer, Crab Orchard Review, Witness, Stories from Blue Latitudes: Caribbean Women Writers at Home and Abroad, among others. She is an editor at Pree, a Caribbean online magazine.

**Moderator Questions:**

* How are new immigrant writers making space for new narratives of belonging and home? How are stories of “fitting in” different from stories of assimilation?

- In response, we will discuss new themes writers have turned to such as the weight of immigration on the families left behind, straddling dual identities, returning home.

* What imaginative possibilities does "immigration" now present as narrative trope, as organizing principle, as shared story?
* How does our work speak in dialogue with past "classic" narratives by "immigrant children" (from Maxine Hong Kingston, to Jamaica Kincaid, to Esmeralda Santiago and Julia Alvarez)?
* In contrast, what new pathways can be charted in a world where "immigration's" meaning is complicated by border definitions (and disputes); connections through technology and common virtual reality, and global "fake" news?
* Dionne Brand theorizes the Door of No Return as the site of forced migration and exile, and as a space of absence and haunting. What are new ways of writing about departure and loss?
* How do immigrant writers address the question of origins and ancestry in their work?