EVENT TITLE: Queer Latinx Men & Vulnerability

Event Description: Latinx men who write on identity, culture, or those who grew up with limitations as to how they could express themselves, know how one's own culture plays a huge part in showing vulnerability, thus, creating perpetual feelings of shame affecting identity. As queer Latinx, we write because vulnerability is often seen as weakness; however, it’s necessary to address how it affects writing both from the writer’s and reader’s perspective. What does vulnerability look like writing in a world dominated by machismo? Panelists will discuss the implications and benefits of being vulnerable on the page and how culture constructs norms that “need to be followed” overall, how vulnerability is giving us the space to show who we are and not seen as less.

EVENT CATEGORY: Multiple Literary Generes Craft

Event Organizer & Moderator:

Saúl Hernández is a queer writer from San Antonio, TX. He was raised by undocumented parents and as a Jehovah Witness. He has a MFA in Creative Writing from The University of Texas at El Paso. He’s the former Director for Barrio Writers at Borderlands. He's a semi-finalists for the 2018 Francine Ringold Award for New Writers, Nimrod Literary Journal. His work has appeared/forthcoming in The Acentos Review, Cosmonauts Avenue, Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review, The Normal School, and Rio Grande Review. He’s also a Macondo Fellow.

Event Participants:

David Lopez is a queer writer and librarian from Orange County, CA. He received an MFA from UC Riverside and an MLIS from San José State University. His work has appeared in the Orange County Register, OC Weekly, Connotation Press, La Bloga, Rio Grande Review, among others. In 2016 he co-edited The Brillantina Project, a digital anthology in response to the massacre of queer Latinx individuals at Pulse Nightclub.

Gustavo Hernandez is a Mexican immigrant poet. His poems have been published in several literary journals in the United States and abroad. He is a prolific poetry zine and broadside creator and loves designing event flyers for his fellow poets. His first full-length poetry collection Flower Grand First will be released in the first half of 2021.

JJ Peña is a queer, burrito-blooded writer, living & existing in El Paso, TX. His work appears in, or is forthcoming from, Passages North, Split Lip, Into The Void, Hayden's Ferry, & elsewhere. He has an MFA from the University of Texas at El Paso.

Joe Jiménez is the author of The Possibilities of Mud (Korima 2014), Bloodline (Arte Público 2016), and Rattlesnake Allegory (Red Hen 2019). His essays and poems have recently appeared
Saúl Hernández is a queer writer from San Antonio, TX. He was raised by undocumented parents and as a Jehovah Witness. He has a MFA in Creative Writing from The University of Texas at El Paso. He’s the former Director for Barrio Writers at Borderlands. He’s a semi-finalists for the 2018 Francine Ringold Award for New Writers, *Nimrod Literary Journal*. His work has appeared/forthcoming in *The Acentos Review, Cosmonauts Avenue, Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review, The Normal School*, and *Rio Grande Review*. He’s also a member of the Macondo Writing Workshop.

**Opening remarks and housekeeping announcements:**

Good afternoon, and welcome to Queer Latinx Men & Vulnerability. Thank y’all for being here with us today. We know there was a wide selection of panels and book fair options to choose from, and being jet-lagged or sleep deprived doesn’t help, so we really appreciate you spending the next 75 minutes with us.

Before we get started, a couple administrative notes:
• For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel (identify moderator) know and a printed copy of the presentation will be delivered to you.
• Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
• Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
• Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing perfume.
• Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.
• We realize the lines for the bathrooms may be long, but please refrain from using an accessible stall unless you require such accommodation. Please also be aware family restrooms located on level 2 are reserved for those with disabilities or those wishing to use a single-stall restroom.
• If you have any questions or concerns regarding conference accessibility, please call or text the Accessibility Hotline (503) 455-4127 or email events@awpwriter.org.

Initial Remarks:

Gustavo Hernandez: I am very fortunate that in my work I am able to approach the topic of my being queer as it relates to vulnerability not having had to contend with a toxic male presence in the home where I grew up. My father was raised by a hardworking single mother who struggled
to keep her children fed and clothed. He and his mother had bigger things to worry about than upholding antiquated, misplaced rules about masculinity. He never tried to push me to be more “manly” or told me to stop pursuing things that are stereotypically viewed as being feminine or not masculine enough. I believe that one of the biggest reasons I am able to express myself as openly as I do is because of him. Many of the poems in my forthcoming collection, *Flower Grand First*, deal with mourning his death, but also celebrate him as a person and as a role model. We cried together a lot. A LOT. But I’m glad to be able to say that they were mostly happy tears.

JJ Peña: One of my earliest memories is staring at my mother’s boyfriend holding a gun against my father’s temple. My dad can’t describe what happened or even remember that day without prompting, but I can. If I close my eyes, I can see my dad’s chest puffed out, fists clenched. I can hear him say, “Go ahead. Shoot me.” I can’t recall anything after this, how the situation deescalated, how my dad walked away alive, or how I reacted to the violence. As someone who has lived through too many of traumatic experiences, I’ve noticed many of my memories surrounding trauma are fragments, where I have access to only small images or phrases. The rest, in a tornado spinning. A similar experience occurs for me when writing flash-fiction, given that the form’s so condensed. A piece of flash can hold only onto a moment, an image, a word, a feeling, that’s all. Miscellaneous information falls away, both for the reader and the text, exactly like memory. And that’s where I think vulnerability in writing exists & what I am going to be attempting to talk about.

**MODERATOR QUESTIONS:**

1. What shape does vulnerability take within your work?
2. What role does your upbringing play when creating vulnerability within your writing?
3. What is the intersection of vulnerability and white space?
4. What is vulnerability to you? How do you keep pushing the limits of it when it comes to negotiating identity and what you put on paper?
5. How can being vulnerable on paper produce doubt?
6. What is the difficulty of showing vulnerably as a man of color?
7. What is vulnerable language? Vulnerable form?
8. What is a vulnerable scene? How do you go about writing this?
9. Vulnerability asks for honestly. How do you navigate the boundaries of truth-telling without losing your integrity?