

# LIGHTHOUSE

IMPACT REPORT



SUMMER 2020

We're all well aware what a year it's been so far. Perhaps this is a place where words fail us. One of the functions of writing and story, though, is to make the attempt, however overwhelming it might be.

At Lighthouse, we've been persevering as best we can, though sometimes it's felt like swimming upstream. One thing we do know is this: in the face of all the uncertainty, hardship, and reckoning, the written word and the connection it provides is essential. **More people from a broader geographic area have turned to our programming than ever before.** And for that we are humbled, grateful, and ever committed to the work we need to do.

—The Lighthouse Staff

# LIT FEST 2020

A MONTH-LONG FESTIVAL,  
A VERY REAL VIRTUAL SUCCESS

Shifting our annual celebration of readings, one-of-a-kind workshops, and, most importantly, happy-hour mingling into an online-only format had us all nervous. **How would community come together when it isn't allowed to come together?**

What we lost in real-person time we gained in wider access for writers, readers, and literary types around the globe—from Denver to all reaches of the U.S. and beyond to places like Costa Rica, Australia, and Bulgaria, to name a few. Along with our excellent core faculty, we were able to host first-time visitors Hanif Abdurraqib, Garth Greenwell, Jane Hirshfield, Justin Torres, Danez Smith, Sarah Broom, and so many others, along with returning visiting authors like Akhil Sharma, Sheila Heti, Steve Almond, and more.



*“This was such an amazing month of readings, ideas, connections, and writing. For all of the headache I'm sure this year was, pivoting everything to Zoom and online formats, I am one very grateful reader and writer.”*

—Virtual Lit Fest participant

*“Thank you Lighthouse for persevering through these upside-down times. You all pulled it off brilliantly! This was the highlight of quarantine for me so far—loved the virtual courses and salons.”*

—Virtual Lit Fest participant

## LIT FEST 2020 ATTENDANCE

3,101

FREE

⌄ +25% from 2019

2,692

PAID

⌄ +8% from 2019

## TOTAL ATTENDANCE

5,793

⌄ +133% from 2019

# WRITING WORKSHOPS

ONLINE AND GROWING

Attendance in our workshops only grew as the pandemic and lockdown forced us all online.



*“I attended a weeklong advanced fiction intensive. Over the course of the week, I became a much more precise, attentive, thorough, objective, varied—and therefore better—reader and writer. The participants in my workshop—such a sharp and considerate bunch—have provided incentive to be a better writer and speaker-about-writing too. One of them counted the commas in my story! I know the question was about writing, but I really should add this: I feel as though the instructor, by his example in workshop—graceful yet controlled, critical yet caring—has made me a better human too.”*

—Advanced Weeklong Fiction Participant

## WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE (THROUGH JUNE)

2,506

ADULT WORKSHOPS

▲ +65% from 2019

1,918

YOUTH WORKSHOPS

▲ +112% from 2019

# COMMUNITY EVENTS

ENGAGING ENTIRE COMMUNITIES AND FORGING LASTING CONNECTIONS.

We continue to expand and enrich Lighthouse outreach programs, bringing craft and connection to more communities in Denver and beyond.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS ATTENDANCE (THROUGH JUNE)

266

WRITING IN COLOR

182

QUEER CREATIVES

124

FRIDAY 500

106

DROP-IN SESSIONS

654

OPEN WRITING HOURS

378

VIRTUAL HAPPY HOUR READINGS

## TOTAL ATTENDANCE

1,710

▲ +13% from 2019

# WRITERSHIPS

## CONTINUING TO SUPPORT ACCESS TO THE ARTS

Part of our mission is to teach the craft of writing to anyone who wants to learn. Writerships are how we offer tuition assistance to those who need financial help to participate, because cost should never be a barrier to joining our community.

### WRITERSHIPS GIVEN (THROUGH JUNE)

**\$9,005**

ADULT WORKSHOPS

**\$2,638**

YOUTH WORKSHOPS

**\$36,000**

LIT FEST

### TOTAL WRITERSHIPS

**\$47,643**

# INSTRUCTOR PAY

Our policy is that if a writer lends their talents to an event, workshop, or panel, they should be compensated for that work. Our incredibly talented and committed instructors deserve even more for the important work they do. They are the true heart of the organization.



*“The workshops and readings I attended gave me helpful language and also modeled a process of self-reflection. It's not what I expected to get from the programming, because I've never gotten anything like that from brief workshops before. Given the consistency of this quality across different classes, it seems a unique part of Lighthouse pedagogy. At any rate, it puts the 'craft' in 'craft seminar,' and it's wonderful.”*

—Virtual Lit Fest Participant

### TOTAL INSTRUCTOR PAY (THROUGH JUNE)

**\$440,477**

⬆️ +13% from 2019

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Lighthouse instructors and volunteers connected with marginalized communities of all ages across Denver—individuals experiencing homelessness, emerging from incarceration, living with a cancer diagnosis, and more—to provide writing instruction to everyone with a story to tell (and everyone has a story to tell).



*“The writing workshop [Denver Public Library Write & Talk for Teens] last night was great! I've sat in on this program a few times and was really impressed with not only the attendance yesterday, but the level of engagement and enthusiasm of all the participants. These kids couldn't have been more into it!”*  
—Caitlin, Library Assistant

*“I just want to thank you all for making it possible to have remote Hard Times sessions. This is a real blessing and I'm sure I'm not the only one grateful for this. Stay well and stay safe!”*  
—Mike, Hard Times participant

## COMMUNITY PROGRAM ATTENDANCE (THROUGH JUNE)

271

DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARIES

573

JEFFERSON COUNTY LIBRARIES

148

UC HEALTH WRITING WITH CANCER

1,780

YOUTH ATTENDANCE

## TOTAL ATTENDANCE

2,772

# PUBLICATION NEWS

Lighthouse members have had so much success in recent months, we couldn't include them all. But here are a few highlights!



Instructor Brandi Homan won the 2020 Colorado Book Award for Literary Fiction for her novel *Burn Fortune*.



Instructor Khadijah Queen has a beautiful essay about the quarantine, "False Dawn," in *Harper's*.



Young Authors Collective member Elaina Weakliem's piece, "Strawberry Haze," was published in *The Round at Brown University*.



Writing in Color Retreat participant Raksha Vasudevan has a short essay, "Reasons I Wish to Wed Plantain," in *The Offing*.



Book Project member and Young Writers Program instructor Sydney Fowler has a chapter in the newly published *Handbook of Sexuality Leadership*, "Feminist Activist Leadership and the Five Stages for Matching Values with Practice: A Case Study."



Instructor John Cotter's essay "Shocked Quartz" is featured in *Catapult*.



Book Project member Oso Guardiola has a short story, "La Vieja," in *La Piccioleta Barca*.



Lighthouse faculty with books coming out in August: Khadijah Queen (*Anodyne*), Elisa Gabbert (*The Unreality of Memory*), and David Heska Wanbli Weiden (*Winter Counts*).

## FOR A FULL LIST:

[www.lighthousewriters.org/news/kudos-member-news](http://www.lighthousewriters.org/news/kudos-member-news)



*“Sometimes ‘the work’ looks like getting the rest of your house in order so you can focus on the writing at hand. Sometimes ‘the work’ is rest. **It’s all about learning to pay attention to yourself**, your own wants and needs, your own definitions of discipline and exploration.”*

—Danez Smith, Lit Fest 2020 Instructor, interview in *Pen America*