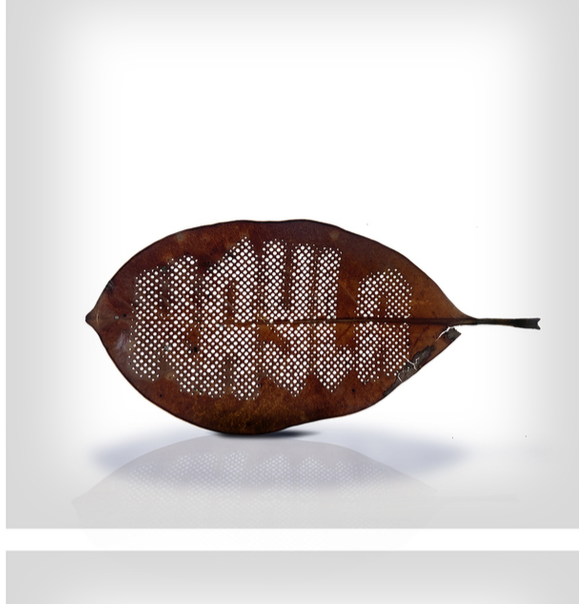


## From the Director, June 2020



***and when we speak we are afraid  
our words will not be heard  
nor welcomed***

**—from “A Litany for Survival” by Audre Lorde**

**Dear Stadler Center community,**

For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Chet’la Sebree, the new director of the Stadler Center for Poetry & Literary Arts. As you can imagine, this first year has been far from simple. In the past few months, I have been quietly working in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic to determine how to serve our communities now and in the future—how we will program, how we will create space. Normally in June, I would draft a letter to describe all that we have done and what we can look forward to for the next academic year. As much as I want to write that letter, I need to write this one instead.

I’ve always seen the Stadler Center directorship as a role defined by responsibility to our constituencies, and right now I have a responsibility to our local and national audiences to engage in conversations about anti-Blackness and white supremacy. I need to repeat the names of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Tony McDade, and Breonna Taylor, whose names aren’t the only ones that need to be said. As I’ve contemplated what to say as the director, I’ve turned toward the Stadler Center’s long history.

The Stadler Center’s mission is to “foster in a wide and varied audience an appreciation for the diversity and richness of contemporary poetry and other literary arts.” In our main hallway, we have portraits of those who have served as Poet-in-Residence since 1981. I turn to some of them for what they have offered in their poetry and prose about anti-Blackness and art and survival. With the support of other Stadler Center stakeholders, I have curated a list of work by former guests and residents with which we hope you will engage. In some of these works, I’ve found affirmation for my distress and brief moments of solace for my grief. In others, I’ve found strength for my resolve, which has helped me focus my personal efforts to make change.

I hope you find something similar in these words; I hope you find something in the attached resource list developed by Bucknell’s Griot Institute for the Study of Black Lives and Cultures; and I hope that whatever you find leads you to action.

**Chet’la Sebree**  
**Director of the Stadler Center for Poetry & Literary Arts**



### FROM OUR POETS-IN-RESIDENCE:

**I worry about such horrors all the time.**

**—from “Traveling while Black”  
by Camille Dungy, 2017-2018 Poet-in-Residence**

**I write this without breaking my heart, without bursting into anything. Perhaps  
this is the real source of my sadness.**

**—from Don’t Let Me Be Lonely  
by Claudia Rankine, 2015-2016 Poet-in-Residence**

**I asked myself if I was going to weep today.**

**—from American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin  
by Terrance Hayes, 2012-2013 Poet-in-Residence**

**We tell the story every year.**

**—from “Incident”  
by Natasha Trethewey, 2010-2011 Poet-in-Residence**

**This is not a small voice  
you hear      this is a large  
voice coming out of these cities.**

**—from “This Is Not a Small Voice”  
by Sonia Sanchez, 2002-2003 Poet-in-Residence**

### FROM OUR SOJKA VISITING POETS:

**The anger, the insomnia, the slow tic  
Of the wait, the wail, the transcribed too late,  
In the manner of those who have gone before us**

**—from “All the Americans Have Titled Their New Books ‘The End’”  
by Cornelius Eady, 2005-2006 Sojka Visiting Poet**

**... are we not of interest to each other?**

**—from “Ars Poetica #100: I Believe”  
by Elizabeth Alexander, 2004-2005 Sojka Visiting Poet**

### FROM A STADLER FELLOW:

**Inhale.**

**—from “Respiration”  
by Jamaal May, 2011-2013 Stadler Fellow**

### FROM A PHILIP ROTH RESIDENT:

**I don’t have the answers, but I know these victims are more than numbers or case  
studies.**

**—from “Youth lost: Too much death, too many faces of victims in Memphis”  
by Monterica Sade Neil, Fall 2019 Philip Roth Resident in Creative Writing**

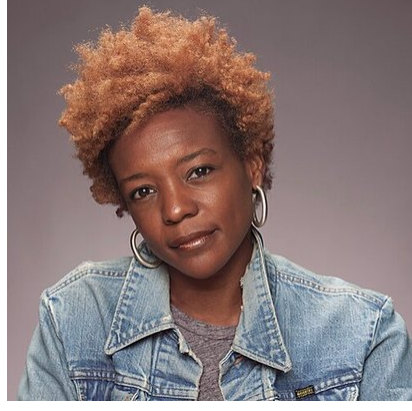
### ABOUT THE ARTWORK

(created for the *100 Years 100 Women* exhibition):

Golden brown and tough as leather on one side, velvety soft on the other, fallen magnolia leaves possess an often uncelebrated radiance and resilience. For many, the lauded magnolia flower is the showstopper. However, it is the magnolia leaf that long after its death withstands rain, wind, and the lawn mower -- bedeviling gardeners who find them a hassle to compost or discard. Even after death, the leaf refuses to be erased and forgotten.

While in quarantine, I’ve collected fallen magnolia leaves from a nearby cemetery. Magnolia presents twenty images of magnolia leaves collected from this site perforated with the names of black women murdered by police. Inspired by the #sayhername movement, this work centers the experiences and activism of black women throughout 100 years of the women’s movement.

***Nekisha Durrett*** lives and works in Washington, DC where she creates bold and playful large scale installations and public art that aim to make the ordinary enchanting and awe inspiring while summoning subject matter that is often hidden from plain sight. She earned her BFA at The Cooper Union in New York City and MFA from The University of Michigan School of Art. Durrett has exhibited her award winning work throughout the Washington, DC area and nationally. (Photo by Sonnie Mason).



### FURTHER RESOURCES

provided by Bucknell’s Griot Institute for the Study of Black Lives and Cultures.

