The Night Belongs to Phoenix Jones:
An original story by National Book Award-winner Charles Johnson.

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From the Executive Director

IT’S DIVISION SEASON

Politicians and the media love to divide us, but we have a way to fight back: our stories.

By Julie Ziegler

Photo of Julie Ziegler by Devin Kearns Hamid

OUR BRAINS ARE WIRED to see patterns, to generate a complete picture out of fragments of information. Every day we encounter hundreds—and in larger cities thousands—of strangers; simply too many to stop and evaluate the risks and rewards of interacting with each. So we look for patterns—our survival instinct causes us to create mental shortcuts based on superficialities like appearance, geography, gender, and race. Sometimes we’re right, but often we’re wrong.

During this election season in particular, I’ve watched with dismay the tendency for politicians to capitalize on this human tendency and use it to manipulate voters. To stoke a fear of “the other”—whether it is someone with a different skin color, country of birth, religious background, or bathroom preference—to win office.

But there is an antidote to this fear and manipulation: story. The stories of communities, of cultures, of individuals. Broad generalizations inevitably result in suspicion, prejudice, and bias. A story helps us focus on the humanity of the speaker, not the false patterns we construct from the crowd. Storytelling and personal narratives serve to empower and inspire.

Story helps us break from the easy categorizations in which we place other people—and ourselves. When I know your story, I understand what makes you afraid—the war or
discrimination or poverty that has left a permanent mark, or the desperation that led you to flee your home and put your family in a boat to cross the sea. And I also understand your joy—how dancing the Fandango pulls your community close, mothers to daughters. How your grandmother tends to your history like a precious ember. How poetry makes your children’s eyes sparkle.

Experiences in the humanities expose for us the space in between the labels and categories that we find comfortable. The humanities personalize the experiences of others, giving us nuance, dimension, and context. They connect us to others and foster a more accurate narrative of peoples’ true experiences. Humanities Washington creates spaces across the state for these stories to be heard.

Practically speaking, we can’t know the life story of everyone we meet, so it’s sometimes important to remind ourselves that there is a story. That each of our lives is shaped by chains of cause and effect, and we’ve all fought, strived, hoped, built, dreamed, and changed ourselves to our ever-shifting circumstances.

This election season, we’ll continue to hear politicians preach national unity while using our divisions to their advantage. Hearing each other’s stories can break those divisions, but also, simply acknowledging those stories exist in each of us is a good place to start.

With sincere appreciation,

Julie Ziegler, Executive Director
Humanities Washington

A story helps us focus on the humanity of the speaker, not the false patterns we construct from the crowd.
AN INTERVIEW WITH WASHINGTON STATE'S NEW POET LAUREATE
TOD MARSHALL looks out of place in a conference room.

His dusty green flannel, brown boots, and scruffy face don’t quite fit with the clinical whiteboard behind him, which is covered in scrawls from a planning meeting. It’s an odd contrast to hear Marshall ask about the WiFi password while wearing a fishing-themed baseball cap that says “Reel Life.”

Marshall is at Humanities Washington’s office after having been named the new Washington State Poet Laureate for 2016–2018, and his earthy appearance seems to match his poetry. His latest collection, Bugle, is practically smeared with soil: Its verses are filled with the meadows, trees, dirt, and waterways around his Spokane home. But while his poems sometimes contain flowers, they’re anything but flowery—death, decay, and violence can fill his organic landscapes as naturally as lakes, rivers, and rocks.

“I always think about the brutality of nature as one in juxtaposition with human brutality,” he says. “The brutality of the world of nature is usually connected to necessity. There is no cruelty there.”

As the new face of poetry in Washington State, this juxtaposition could be particularly resonant for a state proud of its natural beauty yet fearful of nature’s wrath—where the Cascades and Columbia River coexist with earthquakes and wildfires.

Marshall’s passion for the outdoors and his humble personality immediately dispel the image many still have of poets as isolated academics or tortured loners. Sure, he’s a Gonzaga professor, winner of the Washington State Book Award, and can quote Whitman by heart, but he’s also an avid fisherman, active community volunteer, and frequent user of the term “folks.” In short, Marshall contains multitudes, and seems to embody both Washington State’s strong intellectualism as well as its ruggedness.

Born in Buffalo, New York, Marshall grew up uprooted. His father was a struggling salesman and the family moved constantly—sometimes at 1:00 a.m. He estimates he lived 19 different places by the age of 16.

As a teenager, Marshall took on what he describes as some “ne’er-do-well” behaviors, yet “managed to graduate from high school and stay out of jail.”

Though a good student in college, Marshall was “a soccer player guy” and generally directionless. It wasn’t until he was well into college that the diligence of a nun at his Catholic college stirred an interest in the humanities. While doing an independent study with one of the Sisters, Marshall decided not to do the work and simply faked his way through a one-on-one lesson. When he spotted her in the library, she was meticulously preparing for their discussion, surrounded by piles of notes and stacks of books on philosophy. “She was going the eleven yards for that meeting,” said Marshall. “Obviously guilt kicked in, but also a wonder about that passion for learning.”

We’re taught not to be comfortable with multiplicity, ambiguity, and mystery.

Shortly after, a fiction teacher gave him Hart Crane’s poem, “The Bridge.”

“I had no clue what the poem was about. I had no clue what sentences meant within it. But the sounds of the poetry stunned me and intoxicated me. I got great pleasure out of just saying some of the phrases in the poem.” Marshall told the teacher this,
and he encouraged Marshall to take a fiction writing class. It was there that he “got the bug.”


Last year was a particularly good one for Marshall: In addition to winning the Washington State Book Award for *Bugle*, he received the Humanities Washington Award, and was appointed Washington State Poet Laureate by Governor Jay Inslee, succeeding outgoing laureate Elizabeth Austen. For a recent full-page feature spread on Marshall, the Spokane *Spokesman-Review* appropriately titled it, “Tod’s Time.”

As poet laureate, Marshall will spread awareness and appreciation of poetry—including the state’s legacy of poetry—through public readings, workshops, lectures, and presentations. He also plans to publish a book, *Washington 129*, featuring poems he collects from Washington residents during his tenure.

“I hope to share poems with people that can help bridge our experiences of living in the world. I also hope to instill the possibility of making them. I think that hearing other voices is important—listening is such a significant part of living a full and rich life.”

He also has a particular interest in reaching rural audiences, who may not have access to the cultural institutions of larger cities.

His outdoorsy nature is a good start. And hidden underneath his flannel is a t-shirt printed with a haiku: *Barn burned down. Now I can see the moon.*

**Humanities Washington: What is it that poetry specifically can offer that other artistic mediums cannot?**

**Tod Marshall:** The first thing that comes to mind is the accessibility that language provides. Most everyone has some facility
using language. Maybe that's why it's also one of the oldest forms of cultural expression. Poetry has been around for a long, long time and in a variety of different cultures. Language is used to tell, to borrow a phrase from [Ezra] Pound, "the tale of the tribe," and I think that marked language—language shaped in a certain way—is connected to rituals and a kind of cultural memory. Poetry served in that capacity for a long time, and so has this kind of deep and rich history that ranges from a whole host of ritual dynamics to religious dynamics to various epic tales of migration and heroism around the world. So I think that there's almost this deep attraction.

HW: Though I was never taught this explicitly, I sometimes feel like a poem is a puzzle that needs to be solved. That I am looking at this language and there is a meaning there, and I need to figure out what that meaning is. It's like it just turns into Sudoku. I am still trying to eradicate that side of me that thinks there's some meaning hidden behind this... wall.

Marshall: The phrase that my students often use is "What Stevens is trying to say here is...." or "What Williams is trying to say here is...." No, they're not trying, they said that here. But the reason that students say that is that they've been told that. My friend Nance Van Winckel calls it the "HDM" approach to teaching poetry: "Hidden Deep Meaning." I think that's a great phrase. The idea that a writer is sitting down and saying, "Oh, I'm going to hide something in here, some deep symbolism about this Oedipal dynamic and blah, blah, blah," is ridiculous. What's happening is language is layered and nuanced, and often a poem can mean in a few different directions simultaneously. But I think we're taught not to be comfortable with multiplicity, ambiguity, and mystery. And the reason we're taught that is because it's really difficult to standardize that knowledge on any sort of outcomes. And [ambiguity] is also something that, as a culture, I think we're pretty uncomfortable with.

The HDM method killed my love of poetry for a long time. Reading Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" in eighth grade, this teacher told me, after I offered a plausible reading, "You don't know what you're talking about." There's nothing that turns someone off from poetry, or art at large, than saying, "You're not part of the club, and you can't be part of the club until you do the things that I want you to do to be part of the club." That breaks my heart, the hidden deep meaning of it. I hear about it so many times.

I think those who assert that poetry is no longer integral to the culture assume a fairly narrow definition of poetry.

And once it becomes a quiz subject, the engagement with poetry fades a little bit. I always think about all the different ways that we can engage with a poem. The language of the poem, the imagery of the poem. I love poems that are intellectually challenging. I love poems that are about visceral subject matter. I love poems that are nonsense and playful. A person that I often quote, Ed Hirsh, said "We need all of our poeties."

HW: Does poetry have an image problem these days?

Marshall: I think that it depends who you ask. I think statements like, "Is poetry relevant?" “How does poetry connect with pop culture in general?” “No one buys poetry anymore”—all those issues are longstanding historical questions. There have been defenses of poetry written for centuries now, and poets are always really eloquent about stepping up and talking about how important their art is. Shelley of course asserted that poets are unacknowledged legislators of the world—which is a really silly pronouncement in some ways, but also one that, in my better moments, I believe in. If you measure impact or measure image in the way we are acculturated to measure things in 2016, poetry might be marginalized. I don't know that marginalization is necessarily a bad thing when it comes to the arts. It's often from the outside that you get critiques that end up being important. But anyhow, that's a very economic scale. Spoken word dynamics are prevalent in every city in this country and even in small towns, as are open mics, where people share their poems with one another. It's curious that one of the most popular musical forms in the last twenty years, rap and hip hop, is more language driven than instrument driven. I wonder if that's a way that poetry has evolved in the last thirty years: as more central to our culture than many of these other [artistic] modes we might talk about. I mean, how many people have listened to Kendrick Lamar verses Bach in the last couple of years? You know, I think those who assert that poetry is no longer integral to the culture assume a fairly narrow definition of poetry. I like to assume a more wide-ranging conception of poetry.

HW: It seems like Spokane has really taken off in terms of writing talent. Is there something about the city or the
area that you draw inspiration from? Or that you think is conducive to attracting writers?

Marshall: I don't know that I can point to one dynamic. I think that the list of writers is pretty substantial. We're talking about Jess [Walter], Sam Ligon, Sharma [Shields], Nance Van Winckel, you can go on and on. The first kind of pragmatic-slash-logistic answer that comes to mind is that it's cold in the winter, so people stay inside and actually get work done. But I don't think that's it. There's another part of me that wants to idealize and romanticize the kind of saltiness of the city. There's a certain ruggedness. One of my favorite lines about Spokane is that it's a blue collar city with no industrial base. And I think that that struggling dynamic creates some energies that could somehow lead to art, because art often exists in those crucibles, those moments of conflict. But I think that might be silly idealization, because there's no less struggle in Seattle or Tacoma or wherever.

I don't know what the answer is. I know that it's wonderful to be a part of an art community. In Spokane I hear people constantly saying how supported they feel by the other writers in town. Having that dynamic [is better] than everyone just competing with each other for the next big thing. And another aspect of Spokane: I would give up some of the cultural dynamics that you get in a big city for the standard of living we get for what seems to be a pretty modest level of income.

HW: Why do you want to advocate for poetry?

Marshall: I see poetry as metonymy for art in general, and it is a specific mode that I have some abilities in. But I think the arts in general allow access to our understanding of ourselves and others that we don't get access to otherwise. And part of that is connected to the mystery that we were talking about earlier. Art forces us to not know all the answers and we can emerge from that state of unknowing with a different view of ourselves, a different view of the world around us, and a different view of others. Chris Howell said in talking about the dynamic of reading a good poem, “I know I've read a good poem when I look up from it and the world I look on is different from the world I saw when I entered the poem.” So advocacy, for bringing people to the possibility of that immersion, is really important to me, especially to those for whom art isn't a given. Demographics play a significant role in access to the symphony, access to plays, access to poetry. The work of Humanities Washington and ArtsWA, and the work of so many different organizations across the country to make it so everyone can realize the possibility of a full inner life, there's nothing more important than that to me.
THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO MOVE THROUGH OUR DAY

By Tod Marshall

Think first of tracks—to water, to crops, even the latrine—
trails to neighbors, to shady groves along the river,
to secret berry patches, the grassiest meadows always just over
the mountains, across deep currents, the stretch of seeing:

how paths become rutted, become dirt roads, become gravel, black pavement,
whoosh of car and car, lumbering bus, swaying semi-trucks,
then wide freeways and finally airplane scribbles in the sky, the once dark
glowing with glittering satellites. Things change. Often

what’s meant gets lost in saying: space, I guess, is near. Time zips
quicker, flash of a sent text, that new highway. Words gather their heavy loads,
meaning from many directions. Perhaps, today, we can remember

those tracks toward clear water, first bridges, the secret trails to a meadow,
berry vines, and the lines that bind all of us. Sometimes, we can pick
our routes. We can choose to say connect and mean closer together.

This poem was composed at the request of Governor Jay Inslee for the dedication ceremony of “Connecting Washington,” the single largest transportation investment in state history.
THE NIGHT BELONGS TO

PHOENIX JONES

by Charles Johnson

Original illustration by Jason Dunn
Got a Jones: to be a superhero:  
Rise like a phoenix  
Fight like De Niro  
Knock me down  
Like the party crashes  
I’ll be back  
Rising from the ashes.  
Super duper hero  
I’m more than a zero  
Don’t need to break my nose  
Because I’m Seattle’s own  
Phoenix Jones  
I don’t need my own Professor X  
To make my brain cells  
Or muscles flex  
Need a villain to be a superhero  
Someone show the world  
I’m more than just a zero

“Phoenix Jones”
by Seattle rock band Quickie.

I HAVE A SECRET TO SHARE  
about one of Seattle’s newest superheroes.  
But it’s already getting dark, so I better speak quickly.

Sometimes I used to feel I was the zero in that song about Phoenix Jones. He was an American hero, and his on-going saga may be more uniquely American than even he knows. But I’ll get to that in a minute since, as I said, I don’t have much time. When I was a kid I loved comic books. I knew all the fantastic adventure heroes, and I revered the writers and artists who created them. But as I got older, what happens to everyone happened to me. My parents and grown-ups told me comic books were childish, and that I should put away childish things and be serious. So I lost my innocence. I became jaded and grownup and cynical. But it was when I started teaching that I gradually began to see how the grown-ups had been wrong, because the culture of comic book geeks unexpectedly went mainstream. Movies and TV shows became the poor man’s literature, our common coin, and all our conversational references came from pop culture. In other words, America had become an amusement society, like ancient Rome. I once asked my students, “Do you see what’s happening? Whenever I mention a classic work of fiction, you all shake your heads because none of you have read it, but if I mention a movie, almost all of you have seen it.” One of my more honest students raised his hand, and said, “Well, sure. It just takes a couple of hours to watch a movie, but it might take a whole week to read a book.” He might have added that comic books and graphic novels took even less time than that. Hollywood producers were well aware of this. They figured out that the vast, subversive sub-culture of costumed characters in 7-by-10-inch comic books was potentially a trillion-dollar mega-fun franchise. Comic book conventions, called
Comic-Cons, were attended by thousands of grown-ups dressed like their favorite characters. I wondered: Does anyone dress up like Bigger Thomas or Humbert Humbert? Were there action figures and video games for Alexander Portnoy or Rabbit Angstrom or Leopold Bloom? You know the answer to that. The public really didn’t hunger for stories about angst-ridden, dry-as-dust people doing dull things in a dull way. But every kid and even college professors knew a fictional hero like Batman, who is our modern equivalent to myths like Sisyphus. Like Odysseus.

Like Phoenix Jones.

At 8:00 p.m. on October 10, 2011, a Saturday, he came with his posse into The Dreaming, a comic book store at 5226 University Way NE, where I was doing research, to change out of his street clothes and into his $10,000 black-and-gold costume. We were surrounded on all sides of the room with endless titles and garish covers that reminded me of newspaper stands in the 1940s loaded down with pulp magazines about The Shadow and Doc Savage. But, no, I didn’t see his face because he was already wearing that mask of his, showing only his eyes and bearded chin.

The owner of the shop saw my face hanging open in surprise. He laughed, “You didn’t know he sometimes changes into costume here?”

“I guess I thought he changed in a phone booth.”

I only vaguely heard what else he said, because here in the flesh was Seattle’s home-grown vigilante and paladin. And, unlike the comic book heroes of my childhood, his flesh was real. According to reports I’d read, and rumors I’d heard, that black flesh had been stabbed in Seattle, shot in Tacoma, hit with a baseball bat, and had its nose broken in Belltown. He was a big noise in the real-life superhero movement, someone who claimed he had helped SPD make 253 arrests, and The Seattle Weekly said he’d been arrested himself 41 times, sued 27 times, and spent many nights in county holding cells because of his crusade. His image was all over the internet, an international meme, and because of that other real-life superheroes around the country—and there were more of these people who put on costumes to help out in soup kitchens and visit sick kids in hospitals than you might imagine—those people complained that Phoenix was a glory whore who probably would wind up on a slab with tags on his toes. And, yes, I should mention that sometimes the police felt he kept turning up like a bad penny and wished he’d go away.

He had just come from his second workout of the day at Gold’s Gym, where he did sprint-jog intervals on the treadmill. I could see he was buff, a balls-to-the-wall athlete with a great splash of a smile. With him were costumed people named Pitch Black, Ghost, and Black Knight, all armed, each according to his or her fancy.

Somehow I worked up the courage to say, “Can I can ride along with you and your crew tonight?”

Phoenix swung his head and looked at me steadily. “You’re not another reporter, are you?” His voice was bronze, as befits a superhero.

“Uh, no,” I said. “I’m a teacher at Highline Community College. I’m trying to write a monograph on the enormous influence of comic books on popular culture.

Sometimes I also do assignments for The Weekly.”

“You came to the right person then.” He was pulling on his bullet-resistant gloves while listening to the police scanner in his cowl, which also has a built-in radio, PA system, and a camera attached to one side. “I’m the first superhero to come along and come as close to a comic book as possible. I’m interesting and I’m charismatic on camera, off-camera, and in person.” He raised his arms to let Amber, his good-looking girlfriend, adjust his Kelvar neck piece and leg armour. “You’re lucky. You caught us at the right time. I’m a weekend superhero. I only go out on patrol Thursday through Sunday so I can spend the other nights at home with my family.” Now Amber helped him squeeze into the ceramic and titanium chest piece he wore over his fire-resistant undershirt, then strap on a utility belt that had a Taser nightstick, pepper spray, and a first-aid kit. “But here’s the deal,” he said. “You can’t reveal my alter-ego, who I really am, because I have to protect my loved ones. Agreed?”

I nodded. “Agreed.”

So, in short, that’s how I found myself tagging along with members of the Rain City Superhero Movement and a documentary film-maker on a night that would collapse into chaos. When we stepped outside to their car, a Kia sedan, I felt the chill of night air, so cold and crisp, take hold of me. I sat in the back seat beside Phoenix as another Rain City super hero, Midnight Jack, drove, the tocking rhythm of wipers on the windshield and gray music of light rain filling the space between my questions as we cruised over to Capitol Hill, looking for trouble.
I asked him, “Why do you do this?”

He paused for a few seconds to pull his thoughts together.

“All this started when a thief smashed my car window with a rock stuffed inside a ski mask. I kept the mask, and the next night when a fight broke out between two of my friends and some others guys, I put the mask on and chased down the guy who started the fight. So what? So this: I’m asking you to stop letting other people with bad intentions control you. I’m asking you to take your streets, neighborhoods, cities, and states back. I’m asking you to let people know you’ve got their back just because...Criminals feel free to just run wild in my city, and I’m not going to stand for it.”

I was taking notes as fast as I could. But to me Phoenix still seemed like a mystery wrapped inside an enigma. Added to that, there was something very unsettling about talking to someone hiding behind a mask. With his face and expressions concealed this way, I felt he—maybe even I—might be capable of doing anything, like a bank robber in a black balaclava, a hooded member of the KKK, or a porn star before 1960 half-hidden behind a carnival mask.

Then, suddenly, I had a lightbulb moment: Maybe I was already wearing a mask. And you, too. The meaning of everything was always hidden in masquerade. And maybe we all were playing a character, a role, a social mask we tried to live up to with identity being both malleable and imagined. Sometimes that social construct—the self—felt like a cage. I wondered: What if we took off our masks, and discovered there was only a bottomless emptiness and freedom. Was that what we were afraid of?

Midnight Jack parked the car on a side street on Capitol Hill. I felt I was still scratching at the surface of Phoenix Jones, but once we started walking down Broadway, with the sharp odor of marijuana hanging in the air, and Phoenix’s eyes tracking left, then right for trouble, I discovered there was a method to this madness. To his crime-fighting skills. Flanked by Ghost and Pitch Black, he stepped up to two, heavily tattooed bikers arguing outside a bar. He told them, “Let’s keep it cool, gentlemen, let’s all have a good night.” The bikers stopped and gaped in disbelief, as if Phoenix had just fallen from the moon. Or maybe they thought the circus had just come to town. Twenty feet away, a coke-dealer with Medusa-like dreadlocks stopped in the middle of a sale, shoving his plastic baggie back into his pocket. It was as if they’d just seen Pope Francis step out of a limousine. And then everyone was asking for his autograph, or for Phoenix to pose with them for a selfie they’d post later on Facebook. Other people—a generation raised on comic books and cartoons—came pouring out of restaurants and taverns to give him a high-five, thank him for handing out food to the homeless, for stopping car and bus jackings and people urinating in public, and helping tipsy ladies get a cab at two in the morning. He couldn’t swing across Seattle on a spider’s web. Or leap tall buildings in a single bound. But they knew he was as close as they would ever get to a bona fide costumed crime fighter. Of course, some people heckled him, some threw beer cans at his head, some gave him their middle finger, and told him to get a life. But for just this moment the shock of seeing him wiped away for a heartbeat any thought anyone had of doing something wrong. He was fun. A free Disneyland distraction. And, to do him justice, wasn’t that all anyone ever needed to turn someone away from crime—just this one present moment in time—for what other moment was there?—to forget themselves and laugh and walk away from trouble with an outrageous story to tell their friends?

Unfortunately, that moment was going to be short-lived.

Phoenix reveled in the adulation of his fans, that was clear. Because he was always thinking of the optics, he posed with them for fifteen minutes. But I could tell he was disappointed that we hadn’t yet captured any criminals. It was Sunday, after all, a slow night for superheroing. He flicked a fast look my way, and sighed, “When there’s nothing going on, you feel pretty silly in this outfit.” His voice sounded flat, a little tired. “Let’s patrol on foot a little longer, maybe over on First Avenue.”

Back in the car, I asked him if the rumor was that true that he was an amateur mixed martial artist and cage fighter. He was silent so I asked him another question. Was he a daycare worker during the day, as some people said, teaching life skills to autistic children?

He answered quickly, “Yeah, I love those kids. They’re neglected. They’re ignored.” Then he left another silence, which I did not break. A moment passed, then two. His eyes became thoughtful.
Then he cleared his throat and lowered his voice by half. “When I was a kid, my whole biological family for some reason or another decided that I wasn’t worth anything, so they sent me far away to foster homes. I had thirty brothers and sisters, depending on the time. Everything I had was second-hand. Used. My clothes. My toys. There was nothing I could call my own. I always wanted my piece of something.” Phoenix continued, “I’ve always been poor—evicted twice—but if I have to be an at-risk, young black man, then I want to choose my risks myself. I want them to help other people. When it’s all over, I want there to be an account of things that I’ve done and for people to look at me and say, ‘He succeeded. I don’t care if people didn’t want him. He made himself.’”

I let that sink in. He. Made. Himself. That made me look at myself. I could put everything I’d ever done on a 3x5 index card.

It was 2:15 a.m. With little traffic at that hour, we were downtown in ten minutes And no sooner than Midnight Jack cranked off the ignition, we heard peals of laughter and a commotion outside a nightclub. Faraway, liquid figures under the Alaskan Way Viaduct were shouting, darting in and out of darkness.

“Phoenix, look down. Look down!” Black Knight pointed toward Columbia Street. “Big fight!”

Phoenix sprinted from the car, tearing full tilt toward them, holding two cans of pepper spray, shouting back over his shoulder in a voice shredded by the wind, “Go, go, go! Get me 911! Call 911!”

That’s when everything spun out of control.

When I caught up with the others, my chest pounding, Phoenix was bellowing at a group of people, “Break it up!” Enraged, a woman began pounding wildly on him with her shoe, hurling words like stones. “You piece of shit!” Then, as it happened, she tripped and fell flat on her face. Out of nowhere, a silver car came ploughing down the wrong side of the road on Western Avenue, nearly hitting one of the partygoers. Young men were lunging at Phoenix, who pepper-sprayed one of them in the face. He threw me a look of panic. “Where are the cops? We need the cops now. This is getting serious. Protect yourselves.” I was feeling panicky myself but, so help me, the rush of adrenaline made me feel buoyant, too.

The woman who fell was shouting, “I got fucking pepper spray in my eye!”

Behind me, the documentary film-maker who had been following Phoenix for eight months, was sputtering into his cell phone. “There’s a huge group of people fighting at Columbia and Western, and there’s pepper spray, and superheroes, and I don’t know....”

To me, the police didn’t so much arrive as they seemed to materialize out of thin air. The woman who fell would later identify herself as Maria on radio station King 5, saying “We were just walking down to our parking lot after having a good time in Seattle, when a little argument broke out between our group and another group, and all of sudden we were attacked by these guys wearing Halloween costumes.” Although she would give two different versions of the story to the press and the police, that night she demanded that Phoenix be arrested. The cops were more than happy to comply. They took away his cans of pepper spray. One officer glared at me and others in the Rain City crew. “Anybody else want to join this party? We’re about to arrest the whole bunch of ya and clean things up. We’re about tired of this game.”

I watched them clamp handcuffs on Phoenix. Then lead him to a patrol car. Inside, he sat with his shoulders hunched, his head slung forward. Then his eyes swung up, and he gave me a sheepish, sideways look. “I guess it’s been a long day’s night, eh?”

He was in King County Jail for the next seven hours, arrested on suspicion of fourth-degree assault. They took away his super suit, telling him, “This way we can keep your big mouth shut.” That afternoon, after posting a $3,800 bail with no charges filed, he was all over the news again. Two days later he was in court with his lawyer. I was there watching with members of the Rain City Superhero Movement, feeling for the first time like I was one of them.

A court officer made him take off his mask during the hearing. When he did I clapped both hands over my mouth to muffle my reaction. No, he wasn’t bad-looking. Just not how I imagined he might look. He didn’t have chiseled features or a lantern jaw. But
his hair was dramatic, an imitation of the ‘do worn by a popular, early 1990s hip hop performer named Christopher “Kid” Reid. It looked like a black pencil eraser on top of his head. And during the proceedings, he saddled his nose with a pair of wimpy spectacles that even Clark Kent wouldn’t wear. But now the world knew his name, Benjamin Fodor. That he was 23-years-old. And that he had a 5-2 amateur mixed martial arts record, fighting under the name—wait for it—“Flattop.”

You’d think that would have been the end of the adventures of Phoenix Jones. He did lose his daycare job. But being unmasked opened new doors. The offers came pouring in, even from Hollywood. He went from amateur to pro when he signed a contract with the World Series of Fighting, and won his first match in three minutes against Roberto Yong on September 18, 2015. One day later, he stopped an attempted murder on Capitol Hill.

But you’ll have to forgive me. I have to go now. It’s almost midnight. I’ve graded all my students’ papers for tomorrow after spending hours correcting their grammar. That would be unbearable if it wasn’t for what I do now in the wee hours of morning. My skin-tight, Spandex costume, just back from the cleaners and very sexy, hangs in my closet, waiting for me. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights still belong to Phoenix Jones.

But Monday through Thursday belong to me.
A HISTORY OF WASHINGTON MUSIC
IN 10 SONGS

Pioneering DJ Amanda Wilde picks ten Washington artists who shaped our region’s music—and music itself.

By Amanda Wilde
WASHINGTON STATE is on the edge — the geographical edge of the continental United States, and the cutting edge of music. Throughout its history, Washington’s remote location and raw materials have inspired innovation and experimentation in both industry and in music, with Northwest bands driven by D.I.Y. sensibilities and a healthy rebellion against convention. Grassroots forces formed whole styles and whole scenes here, and homegrown sounds continue to echo throughout our state.

Bing Crosby, “Black Ball Ferry Line”

1951 — It was in the unique acoustics of Spokane’s Clemmer Theater that Bing Crosby developed his trademark singing style. His phenomenal success as a vocalist led to his ultimate rise as the world’s first multimedia star. He recorded “Black Ball Ferry Line” in 1951, namechecking his home state’s famous ferries.

Bonnie Guitar, “Dark Moon”

1957 — Out of Washington’s thriving 1950s country music scene arose guitarist and vocalist Bonnie Guitar—the Northwest’s first country music star. Her crossover 1957 single Dark Moon was her first national hit. Bonnie currently lives in Soap Lake, Washington, is in her 90s, and reportedly still plays out occasionally.

The Wailers, “Louie Louie”

1961 — Northwest anthem “Louie Louie” was started as a calypso-doo wop song by Louisiana native Richard Berry, who first recorded it in 1957. When Berry toured the Northwest, The Wailers picked up the song, and their version became a local favorite. The rough garage rock sounds of The Wailers, The Frantics, and The Sonics had a great impact on the development of grunge.

The Ventures, “Walk, Don’t Run”

1964 — Instrumental band The Ventures popularized the surf sound. The Tacoma group still performs today, over a half-century after recording the classic “Walk, Don’t Run,” one of those songs you know even if you don’t think you do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amanda Wilde is a Seattle area DJ and host of The Swing Years and Beyond on KUOW, and was a key figure in the development of iconic radio station KEXP. She is also a Speakers Bureau presenter for Humanities Washington, presenting her talk “Washington’s Music Pioneers” across Washington State.
Jimi Hendrix, “Spanish Castle Magic”  
1967 – Seattle’s Jimi Hendrix is known today as the greatest rock guitarist not only of his generation, but…ever. His rock and roll classroom was The Spanish Castle, a club located on Highway 99 between Tacoma and Seattle. Their roster included some of the great acts in the early days of rock and roll, including the guitar and organ-driven sounds of Northwest bands The Sonics, The Wailers, and the Dave Lewis Trio. After seeing many amazing shows there, what a thrill it must have been when Hendrix eventually entered the Spanish Castle as a performer. Hendrix recorded Spanish Castle Magic in 1967, just a few months before the club was demolished.

The Overton Berry Trio, “Hey Jude”  
1970 – Say what? There was a time in the early ’70s when, in the unlikely location of Tukwila, a thriving scene flourished in the lounge of the Doubletree Inn, with the Overton Berry Trio at its nexus. The electricity of their jazz-infused blend of traditional, swing, and pop music was a magnet for an audience living outside the city limits. Overton wowed audiences with his keyboard improvisations on “Hey Jude.” The trio’s version became a signature song of the Northwest’s funk and soul scene and an underground favorite of DJs worldwide.

Sir Mixalot, “Posse On Broadway”  
1988 – Washington’s hip hop scene began to emerge in the 1980s with Sir Mix-a-Lot. His first hit was the 1988 single “Posse on Broadway,” which takes a lyrical cruise through south Seattle on the way to Capitol Hill’s main drag.

Nirvana, “Love Buzz”  
1988 – By the time Nirvana catapulted to national stardom in 1991, the local music scene was heady with the underground sound of what became known as grunge. Nirvana’s local breakthrough was their 1988 cover of “Love Buzz,” a song that incorporated just enough pop sensibility to make the band’s hard-core dynamics accessible.

Fleet Foxes, “White Winter Hymnal”  
2008 – Capturing the bleakness of long Northwest winters, mountain-echo flannel quintet Fleet Foxes play self-described “baroque harmonic pop jams.” Their beardy folk pop aesthetic and minimalist style stood out in contrast to the glossy production values of mainstream music, and they rose to prominence both in spite of—and because of—that style.

Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, “Thrift Shop”  
2012 – Washington natives Macklemore and Lewis broke records with their 2012 single “Thrift Shop,” a tribute to Seattle’s secondhand stores and a social commentary on bling. As the only independent artists in the 21st century to score a hit on the Billboard Top 100, Macklemore and Lewis point the way to new directions and distribution models for music.

SPARK { Humanities Washington Magazine  
SPRING/SUMMER 2016
RELIGION AND HUMAN RIGHTS: ALLIES OR ENEMIES?

For David E. Smith, what began as flashes of doubt about his religious upbringing became a full blown crisis of faith. Now he uses the experience, and his fascination with philosophy, to discuss one of the most controversial questions of our time.

By David Haldeman
HOW IN THE WORLD could the same God who created this beauty also burn people in eternal hellfire?

This thought had come suddenly to David E. Smith while in 4th grade. He was gazing at the scenery on a sun-drenched Mexican mountainside when out of nowhere, his mind contrasted the gorgeous image God had laid out for him with an image of the punishment he’d been told God laid out for sinners: people burning and screaming in torment. It just doesn’t make sense, he thought.

But it was just a flash, and it quickly receded.

Smith’s youth was steeped in religion. His father was a fundamentalist Baptist preacher who had moved the family to Mexico for missionary work. After returning to the U.S., Smith attended a Baptist high school. He knocked on doors to spread God’s Word. If he met an atheist or someone of another faith, he would immediately go into Evangelist mode: “How can I steer this conversation in such a way that I can present the Gospel to this poor, lost soul?” he thought. He considered it his duty to save them.

“I had a good heart as a kid and I wanted to do the right thing,” he said. “So when all the adults in your life say, ‘This is the right thing; this is the truth,’ you do it.”

Smith describes himself as a very analytical person, and as he honed his analytical skills through college and graduate school, he started to see things in the Bible that were contradictory, inconsistent, or even offensive. “Things that I could no longer attribute to God—that if an all-good, perfect, loving God existed, He would not say or do that.”

The flashes proliferated. Smith eventually abandoned his fundamentalist Baptist beliefs, though he remains a believer in God. He describes himself as about 75 percent Deist and 25 percent progressive Christian, “with a little Hindu sprinkled on top.”

“I didn’t renounce [my faith],” he said, “I evolved.” But it was an evolution that didn’t come easily. He lost friends, and even lost a job. On the eve of getting tenure at an evangelical liberal arts college in Indiana, he decided he couldn’t, in good conscience, affirm the inerrancy of the Bible—which was a requirement for tenure.

“I did it to be authentic, to be free, and that’s why I started a new life in Washington.”

His questioning of his religious faith, combined with a desire to “do the right thing” that he has felt since childhood, inspired his current Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau talk, “Religion and Human Rights: Allies or Enemies?” It’s tempting to think he’ll answer definitively the talk’s central question. But Smith, a teacher with the University of Washington’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, doesn’t make it that easy. Instead, he offers an exploration of the complex and often open-ended dynamics of religion and human rights in a rapidly changing world.

**Humanities Washington: Why is it important to understand the relationship between religion and human rights?**

**David E Smith:** We live in a world that is increasingly built around the concept of human rights. Human rights theory is really a modern thing. My own view is that the seeds of human rights are in everyone’s heart—that to be human is to have some reasonable expectations of how you want to be treated. But human rights theory is modern, and so the world is still growing in its awareness of this idea of human rights. At the same time, we live in a world where religion is still alive and well. I’m always amazed to reflect on the nature of religion in our world because it is antiquity that is still with us—all the world religions were born and raised in the ancient world, and they are still here with an unbroken history. So in spite of all the changes in the world with the rise of modernity: science, individualism, democracy, and human rights, antiquity is still here too. It’s like the collision of two worlds. I grew up in a very religious home and eventually became deeply committed to the notion of human rights. So those two things for me have always been super important and eventually I asked the question, “What is the relationship here? Does ancient religion help the cause of human rights, which I believe in very much, or does it get in the way? Or is it somehow a combination of the two?” So let’s just say religion and human rights are both very powerful forces in the world, and I want to explore how they connect.

**Your talk focuses mainly on Christianity and Islam. Are there...**
particular human rights issues within those religions that are absent in others right now? At least on the international stage?

No I don’t think so. I think this is a global issue now. I think essentially what is happening is that every religion and culture has to confront modernity. This is one of the fundamental challenges of life in the 21st century: antiquity and modernity colliding. Now Jews and Christians have been interacting with modernity the longest because modernism was born in western culture, where Christianity has long been dominant and where there has been a strong Jewish presence. So I would say, what happens is everybody’s religion and culture now have to deal with modernity, but not all cultures are on the same time table. Jews and Christians had to do this first and it produced progressive forms. What we often call “progressive” or “liberal” forms of Judaism and Christianity are to some extent modern, but still retain their traditional religious identity, and they do it by engaging in some critical thinking within their own religion. They are willing to reinterpret some things in their religion in order to be modern. They cling to certain aspects, reinterpret certain aspects, and flat out reject certain aspects. Progressive religions are willing to stand in judgement over their tradition and not feel bound by every aspect of it. And everybody now has to do this. This is a conflict in India with Hindus, there are conservative Hindus there are progressive Hindus like Gandhi and there are violent fundamentalist Hindus like the man who shot Gandhi. So no, this is everywhere now, and so this three-fold internal paradigm of conservative, progressive, and fundamentalist believers is, I think, a global thing.

So what makes you interested in taking these stories and discussing them in public? Because it sounds like it’s not only about human rights for you. There might be a deeper need to express the intersection of religion and philosophy.

The world is full of people who, like me, have struggled with religious truth claims. I have a deep passion to empower people to think for themselves about issues in the humanities. I want to take the angst out of it, to take the fear out of it, to make the exploration of religious and philosophical
issues a joy. And that passion, to make it easy for people to think about hard things, flows out of my life story. I had to [struggle with doubt] on my own with no support, with nobody encouraging me to think for myself. Instead I heard everybody saying, “Conform, conform—who are you to think you can do these things?” I did it because I couldn’t help it. Reason and a desire for truth were so strong within me that I could not embrace what I had just for the sake of comfort and security. So because it was so hard for me, yet so rewarding in the end, to emerge on the other side confident—humbly confident, in my conclusions, I want to make that process easier for people. I meet people older than I who are still deeply conflicted about their faith and are not sure what to do. They know they can’t fully embrace the beliefs with which they grew up, but they still don’t know. You think that adults—middle aged, normal adults—have already come to their conclusions. That “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” But there are a lot of people who quietly suffer because they don’t really know where to go with their questions about religion and philosophy. I create a safe space for them to bring their questions, their concerns, their affirmations and denials, and put it all on the table and just talk about it.

You’ve described yourself as a “progressive skeptic.” Can you define that for me?

Yeah, the progressive part means I’m still sympathetic to basic spirituality and there’s still a part of me that is Christian. I don’t find myself walking around completely cleansed of all Christian influence, nor do I think I need to be. So the progressive part means there’s still a part of me that values tradition, liturgy, and religious ritual. I think those have meaning and value. I’m not an atheist or an agnostic—I’ve not gone that far. I still have a pretty deep sense that there is a God or a source of eternal goodness and different ways to describe it. I’ve been able to separate the concept of God from all organized religious interpretations of God. Fundamentally I’ve become a Deist, and that’s the skeptical part. Divine revelations and miracles are two of the things that I’ve come to question deeply.

This is one of the fundamental challenges of life in the 21st century: antiquity and modernity colliding.

I don’t actually believe God has ever uttered a word. So the claims of world religions that God spoke to Moses on the mountain or to St. Paul on the road to Damascus or that Mohammed heard the voice of Gabriel on the mountain, I think those are probably ancient mythological expressions of internal insights that people had.

Every once in a while does some remnant of your past come up and say, “What if I’m wrong? What if, when I was born, God gave me this truth, and I said, ‘Nah, heck with this’”? I’m one of the chosen few and I squandered the treasure! [laughs] The ghosts of fundamentalism do haunt occasionally, but not very often anymore because my evolution from fundamentalist to progressive skeptic was so slow and painful. There are people who travel my path who go from 0 to 60; I mean, it’s like they were a minister and then five years later they’re an atheist. It took me twenty years to go from...
READING HABITS: JAMIE FORD

The New York Times bestselling author tells us who, what, where, and how he reads. And about that time he sang “Like a Virgin” at karaoke.

by David Haldeman

Reading Habits is a series that asks authors, artists, community leaders, and others about their lives as readers.

Jamie Ford is The New York Times bestselling author of Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet and Songs of Willow Frost.
A book you’re reading right now.

*Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* by Diarmaid MacCulloch. When people ask my religion I just say that I’m a spiritual refugee. I fled an oppressive regime but can’t seem to assimilate into anyplace else.

Your favorite place to read.

Truthfully, anywhere my dogs are is the perfect place to read. Next to the fireplace, in the backyard, or bedroom—you name it. My mutts are Zen masters in dog suits.

Your least favorite place to read but you often end up reading there anyway.

Airplanes. I have this weird fetish about taking the largest, most obnoxious hardback that I can find onto the flight with me. (See first question for example of gratuitously large book.)

You’re banished to a desert island. For reading material you’re allowed to take the complete works of just one author. Who is it?

Easy. My pal, Harlan Ellison. If you’re asking, “Harlan who?” then stop reading this immediately and get thee to a bookery. Buy *Dangerous Visions, Deathbird Stories* (the inspiration for Neil Gaiman’s *American Gods*), or my favorite, his non-fiction collection of columns in the *LA Weekly* called *An Edge in My Voice*.

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GO. NOW!

A book you’ve read more than once.

*Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce. You believe me, right? Actually, the only books that I tend to reread are comics. I’ve probably read Frank Miller’s *Daredevil* a dozen times.

What you’re holding when you read: a paper book or an e-reader. Why?

Stan Lee once said, “Books are like breasts. They look great on a computer screen but I’d rather hold one in my hand.” It’s a crass analogy, but I have to agree with Stan.

Average length of each reading session.

About two cups of coffee.

A book that changed your life in a significant way.

*Our Bodies, Ourselves*. I stumbled upon my sister’s dog-eared copy when I was in the 4th grade. (What can I say? I was an intrepid child.)

You become the librarian for the entire world. As part of your newfound powers, you get to require everyone on earth to read one book. Which one?

I’ll make it easy and have it be a short story: *The Paper Menagerie* by Ken Liu, which swept the Hugo, Nebula, and Locus awards. That story is like a system upgrade for your soul.

A book you found too disturbing to finish.

It was a James Patterson book. I forget which one, which is easy to do considering he publishes 1,298 books each year (something like that). I kept reading and thinking, trees died for this…

A book you’re embarrassed to admit you like.

There’s no such book. I once sang Madonna’s “Like a Virgin” at a karaoke bar. My shame threshold is quite lofty.

Do you read with music on? If so, what kind?

Not usually. Unless my son is home from college, recording music downstairs. Some parents want their kids to become doctors,
lawyers, and accountants. I want my son to save Rock & Roll.

Do you write in the margins?

Not the margins, but I’ll sometimes notate characters in the front if the story is kind of epic and in need of a *dramatis personae*. I’ll also go full-on Norman Bates with a highlighter.

Do you fold the page corners?

Yes. If I could mark my pages by folding them into origami cranes, I would.

A classic you think shouldn’t be considered a classic.

I have a broader answer, if that’s okay? On the whole, I think 90% of classics should be retired from our school curriculums. *Of Mice and Men* and *Animal Farm* are great books—true classics, but they’ve become blunt objects used to turn students into non-readers. Let kids read modern classics, instead of stuff like *The Scarlett Letter*, which was written 165 years ago to impress French literary critics.

*Jumping off my soap-box now*

A book you think should be considered a classic, but isn’t.

Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is almost there. That brilliant book will be the *Hardy Boys* of the post-millennial generation.

I think 90% of classics should be retired from our school curriculums. *Of Mice and Men* and *Animal Farm* are great books—true classics, but they’ve become blunt objects used to turn students into non-readers.

Number of books you get around to reading per year.

This is just a clumsy guess: 10 for research, 5 for blurbing, 7-8 for the Books & Brews Book Club (I’m in a guys’ book club—yes, they actually exist!), 10-20 for pleasure, and more comics, manga, and graphic novels than I can keep track of.

A literary genre you think is underappreciated.

Graphic novels, without a doubt. I encourage every book club to read one graphic novel per year. Start with *Blankets* by Craig Thompson. Move on to *Habibi*. Thank me later.

Longest number of hours you’ve ever spent reading something. What was it?

With my short attention span it seems as though I’ve spent FOREVER reading this questionnaire.

Are we done yet?

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18TH ANNUAL SEATTLE BEDTIME STORIES
OCTOBER 7
Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Spanish Ballroom
Featuring Northwest authors including National Book Award winner Charles Johnson, and original music by the Bushwick Book Club.

5TH ANNUAL SPOKANE BEDTIME STORIES
OCTOBER 28
Spokane Club
Featuring Northwest authors including New York Times bestselling author Jess Walter.

Tickets will go on sale September 1.
To sponsor a table, please contact Julie Ziegler or George Abeyta at 206-682-1770.
Learn more at humanities.org.
Submit Your Poetry to a New Anthology, Washington 129

Washington State Poet Laureate Tod Marshall has announced Washington 129, a collection of poems gathered from our state’s residents—one poem for every year of statehood up until 2018. Everyone is encouraged to submit work, from established poets to complete newcomers to the craft. In fact Governor Jay Inslee liked the idea so much, he issued an official proclamation encouraging citizens to submit their poems.

Many of the poems will be included in an online anthology, and 129 of the poems will be published in book form in March of 2017. Submissions of any type of poetry are welcome. Poems are not required to address Washington geography, imagery, or culture directly, but those that do will be given priority consideration. The only restriction is that the author must be a Washington resident, and the poem cannot have been previously published.

So what does it mean for a poem to be about Washington State? As Marshall told The Stranger, “From Shawn Kemp to Kitsap County, from the Kingdome to the meth-head BMXers in Spokane, from Chief Seattle to Cathy McMorris-Rodgers, from salmon to Benny and Joon (filmed in my neighborhood), from Twisp to Ione to Pomeroy to Pasayten to Forks to Vancouver: It’s all Washington, and it’s all fair game for the poems.”

Submissions will be accepted for some time—January 31, 2017—so you’ll have plenty of time to peruse the Palouse or sail the Sound for inspiration. More information and details on how to submit are on the official Washington State Poet Laureate page at wapoetlaureate.org.

Humanities Washington and Copper Canyon Press awarded a grant from the Pulitzer Prizes

Humanities Washington and Copper Canyon Press have been awarded a grant from the Pulitzer Prizes for a new event series titled “Pulitzers in Person.” The events will commemorate the prize’s 100th anniversary by bringing Pulitzer Prize-winning and -nominated poets together for three live conversations about reading and writing poetry. The central question addressed will be “What makes a poem, or a poetry collection, ‘extraordinary?’”

The events will be held during fall 2016 at a venue in Seattle. To take the discussion beyond the walls of the event space, the discussion will also be streamed online, and Copper Canyon Press will create discussion guides and provide reduced-cost books for distribution among book clubs and writing circles throughout the state. Further, poets and scholars featured in the materials will be available for visiting select groups.
Support Humanities Washington through a planned gift

Leave a legacy for Washington State that promotes a deeper understanding of the self, of others, and the human experience in order to promote the common good. Planned giving may allow you to make a more substantial charitable gift than is possible during your lifetime, and can offer significant tax advantages for you and/or your heirs.

For more information about planned gifts, please contact Julie Ziegler, executive director, at 206-682-1770 x110 or via email at julie@humanities.org

Information on gift planning provided by Humanities Washington is not intended as financial, legal, or tax advice. Please consult an attorney or other professional advisor before taking action.
JOIN US!

A selection of upcoming Humanities Washington events around the state

JUNE 16, KENNEWICK
Fandango and the Deliberate Community

Can an age-old dance build community and bridge social and cultural divides? Experience the complex attributes of the fandango, a lively traditional dance from Veracruz, Mexico. In this highly participatory presentation, Yesenia Hunter discusses the history, methods, and context behind the fandango.

JUNE 25, SEATTLE
Citizen Min: A Discussion and Readings from a Documentary Play about Minoru Yasui

Join Dr. Nikki Nojima Louis and Holly Yasui, among others, for an interactive panel discussion about the play “Citizen Min.” The play tells the story of Minoru Yasui, a young lawyer during World War II who challenged the military orders that lead to the forced removal from the West Coast of more than 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry and to their subsequent incarceration in concentration camps.

JULY 12, CLARKSTON
Ripe for the Telling: Surprising Stories of Washington Fruit

From apples to oranges, huckleberries to durian, anthropologist Julia Harrison will cover how these perishable products preserve historic events and reflect our changing relationship to the natural world. Full of suspense, tragedy, triumph, heroism, and even some romance, this presentation will reveal some of our state’s juiciest stories.

JULY 12, SEATTLE AND SEPT 22, TACOMA
Think & Drink: American Rage: Division and Anger in US Politics

Has U.S. politics ever been more divided and aggressive? Will it get better or worse? And is our increasingly media-saturated environment helping or hurting our divisions and public discourse? Join WSU professors Cornell Clayton, co-editor of Civility and Democracy in America, and Travis Ridout, co-author of “The Persuasive Power of Campaign Advertising,” for an exploration of our polarized times. Moderated by KUOW’s Ross Reynolds.

AUGUST 11, TWISP
Seven Tongues of Flame: Ireland’s Easter Rebellion of 1916

How can musicians and poets achieve military goals? In 1917, poets, singers, and writers led the effort to symbolically liberate Dublin from the British Empire on a significant and symbolic Christian holiday of rebirth. In this inspirational presentation, musician and historian Hank Cramer will share how visionary poets achieved a goal that no military commander before them had been able to accomplish.
ABOUT HUMANITIES WASHINGTON

Founded in 1973, Humanities Washington is the state’s flagship nonprofit for public humanities programming, our work brings people together to learn about their unique pasts and shared present, promotes respect for other perspectives, encourages community dialogue, and nurtures relationships that enable us to move toward a more prosperous future.

By acting as a catalyst and facilitator, we support and partner with a wide network of communities, organizations, and individuals across the state. Together, we provide low- or no-cost, high-quality cultural and educational programs that engage audiences in conversation, civil discourse, critical thinking, and the democratic process.

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Humanities Washington is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in Washington State.
OUR MISSION

*Humanities Washington sparks conversation and critical thinking using story as a catalyst, nurturing thoughtful and engaged communities across our state.*

OUR PROGRAMS

**FAMILY READING** uses storytelling and discussion to explore cultural and ethical themes in children’s literature and emphasizes the importance of families reading together.

**GRANTS** assist local organizations in creating opportunities for their community to come together to discuss important issues using the humanities.

**SPEAKERS BUREAU** draws from a pool of leading cultural experts and scholars to provide free conversational lecture events for community partners to offer local audiences throughout the state.

**THINK & DRINK** brings hosted conversations on provocative topics and new ideas to pubs and tasting rooms around the state.

**WASHINGTON STATE POET LAUREATE** builds awareness and appreciation of poetry — including the state’s legacy of poetry — through public readings, workshops, lectures, and presentations throughout the state. (In partnership with ArtsWA.)
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