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Please help us--

If we raise \$20,000 in donations between
December 1 and January 15.....we get a
matching grant of \$50,000!

Details on page 4.

December 14, 2010

Dear Friend of City of Asylum/Pittsburgh,

In the future, when we look back, I think 2010 will be seen as the year that City of Asylum/Pittsburgh took off. Our writers-in-residence continue to flourish, our events and readings grew in number and variety, *Sampsonia Way* online found its wings, and the world “out there” seems to have discovered what we are doing in Pittsburgh.

It's all a little unbelievable to me, looking back at that first day in November of 2004, when we launched City of Asylum/Pittsburgh and Huang Xiang first “read his house.” Somehow one thing led to another, which led to another. In just half a dozen years, our readings and concerts have presented over 115 writers and musicians from over 20 countries.

From Huang Xiang's initial “House Poem” to what are now the four “house publications” where writers live.... from our first Jazz Poetry Concert in 2005 to this year's Concert, with the Oliver Lake Big Band and its 17 musicians and Yusef Komunyakaa and poets from around the world... In these half a dozen years, we have evolved and grown beyond any plan or expectation. It happened because so many people have lent a hand and given freely of their time and thinking, as well as providing financial support.

Whether it be the many neighbors who open up their gardens each year for Writers in the Gardens or the writers who do the readings; whether it be volunteers like Dave Bjornson and Barb Talerico and Karey Jo Kluesner and Debi & Dave Sciranka and so many others who each year come together for Jazz Poetry; or whether it be authors like Gerald Stern and Salman Rushdie and Wole Soyinka who volunteer to come to Pittsburgh for our events or professionals who donate their expertise, like dentist Owen Cantor or immigration attorney Robert Whitehill or educators Adel Fougnes and Pam Goldman, the response is never short of amazing.

I can't explain why, but we in Pittsburgh have opened up our hearts and welcomed the writers as nowhere else, and the writers have responded in kind. We have engaged each other's imaginations in deep and enduring ways, and our project and our city have become recognized around the world.

--please turn page--

Last year ended with a bang—George Packer’s blog on City of Asylum/Pittsburgh in the *New Yorker* and the MetLife Innovative Space Award. MetLife recommended City of Asylum/Pittsburgh as an “outstanding example of excellent programming, socially progressive real estate development, and the ability to provide creative and economic sustenance in a community.”



And this year has ended with the wonderful piece on the *PBS NewsHour* and several major grants to launch the capital campaign for our new Literary Center project. During the summer, we were selected as a finalist in the LINC-Ford Foundation “Space for Change” competition and the winners will be announced in January, so hopefully 2011 will start with a bang too!

Pittsburgh continues to be recognized as the best “city of asylum” in the world.

We are also the only grassroots City in the world, which is the most important reason for our success. I am convinced of this more and more. I have visited our peers around the world and talked to their directors and the writers in their programs. And the difference between what we are doing in Pittsburgh and what is happening everywhere else is greater than I had ever understood. Not just in funding but also in the way that people are engaged and participate.

Our programs and our fundraising are community-based and volunteer-driven, which makes for a strong organization and a deep connection to the community. Each year we have had ever-increasing support from local foundations and from individual Pittsburghers like you. We are also receiving national support from the National Endowment for the Arts and even the U.S. State Department for Jazz Poetry Concert, and now several national foundations—for example, we recently received a grant from the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation—are expressing interest.

This year, your support is more important than ever. We are fortunate to have received a challenge grant that could raise us a bonus of \$50,000 in unrestricted funds. To receive this \$50,000 grant, we must raise \$20,000 before January 15. With your help, we can meet this challenge and have the funds we need to continue being “best in the world.”

But before updating you on this challenge grant, I would like to update you on some highlights from 2010.

It has been a year of great transition for Khet Mar and her family. When Khet Mar came to Pittsburgh, she hoped that with her absence from Burma the threats to her would ease and that it might eventually be possible for her to return to Burma. She had planned to make a short trip to Burma as a test (from Malaysia, where she was receiving an award from the Asia Society); but she was warned by many to stay away. Almost everyone in the book club that she had started in Burma had been imprisoned, and the authorities were interrogating her former students about her.

In March, Khet Mar applied for political asylum in the U.S., and asylum was very quickly granted. City of Asylum/Pittsburgh underwrote the legal costs.



Asylum Approval

With Khet Mar's future firmly staked in Pittsburgh, help from our supporters began to come from many places to assist her in the transition to long-term exile. Most notably, an anonymous friend of City of Asylum/Pittsburgh agreed to underwrite scholarships to Falk School for Khet Mar's two boys—a \$22,000 gift. Wa Than and Nway Oo are thriving at Falk, and their progress in English is so good that they are also learning Spanish (with some extra tutoring help of Silvia Duarte, editor of *Sampsonia Way* online). Neighbors Bob & Patti Beckman, whose two boys are the exact same ages and who also attend Falk School, have helped with driving when after-school activities like basketball games play havoc with bus schedules. And the Allegheny YMCA has chipped in with a free membership and partial scholarships to summer camp.

Khet Mar has also had a very productive year of writing. She has kept a journal, comparing life in the U.S. and life in Burma, and we have published translated excerpts in *Sampsonia Way*. But this represents only a tiny fraction of her new work. In October alone, Khet Mar wrote ten new stories, by far her most productive month ever she told me.

And six of her stories were published this fall.

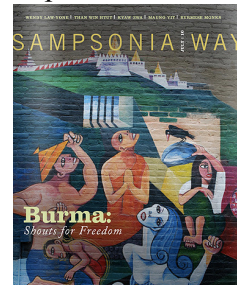


Khet Mar has read widely and talked at schools, at human rights organizations, and even at TEDxUniPittsburgh. If you were at Jazz Poetry Concert this year, you saw how much more at ease she is in doing public readings. Poet Román Antopolsky translated her poetry into Spanish; and during her weeklong residency at St. Vincent's College, Michelle Gil-Montero's creative writing class did a translation project of her work into English. As I write this letter, Khet Mar is in Los Angeles, for a reading.

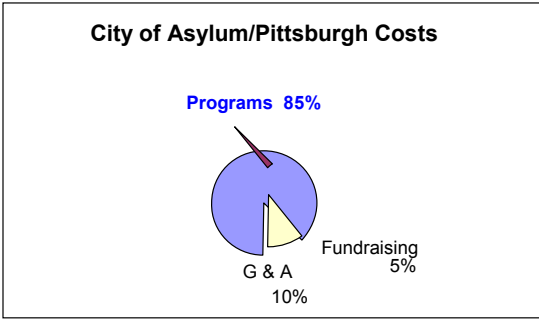
Horacio Castellanos Moya also continues to thrive and his reputation continues to grow. The first novel that he wrote in Pittsburgh (*Tyrant Memory*) is now being translated into English. It will be published in June by New Directions (the 4th of his novels to be translated into English since he came to Pittsburgh). And his newest novel, completed last summer, will be published in Spain this coming spring. In just the last two months, Horacio has read in Oslo, Madrid, and Barcelona and at six different universities in five states, including the creative writing programs of the University of Iowa and Brown University. And somehow, he has also managed to write about a quarter of another new novel, his third since coming to Pittsburgh.



Talented writers have talented spouses, and we have been fortunate in being able to employ them to further our programs. Than Htay Maung (Khet Mar's husband) created the beautiful and powerful mural on the front and side of 324 Sampsonia Way; and he has also painted the Jazz House murals on 320 Sampsonia Way, which are based on paintings by Oliver Lake. Silvia Duarte (Horacio's wife) became editor of *Sampsonia Way* online in May, and under her supervision—as so many people have commented to me—the magazine has really hit stride. Expect some great new things this coming year, as she continues to implement her ideas.



In addition to our reaching out to the world, the world also came to Sampsonia Way, with visiting authors from Finland, Australia, Netherlands, Lithuania, South Africa, New Zealand, Belarus, Venezuela, and Iran. And our “poetry on the Northside” summer readings in partnership with Cave Canem and Letras Latinas were a huge success.



Sampsonia Way and Pittsburgh have become known internationally as a haven for writers, translators, and readers...a place where creative expression is protected and nurtured. And we do this in a sustainable, remarkably efficient way. **85% of our funds went to programs last year.**

There has never been a more opportune time for your support than the current challenge grant. The key to our fundraising success has always been the

donations that we receive from individuals, as these demonstrate to foundations that we have the broad support of our community. We depend on your support and leverage it to great advantage.

Here is how the challenge grant works:

1. Last year we raised \$32,500 during our annual campaign. We were challenged to raise the same amount this year. Because we already raised \$12,500 during the Pittsburgh Foundation’s “Day of Giving,” our challenge is to raise \$20,000 more.
2. If we raise the \$20,000 before January 15, a local foundation will match it with \$50,000...that’s a 250% “extra” match! So if you donate \$20, it’s like giving \$70. If you donate \$100, it’s like donating \$350.

For us to meet this challenge, we need your support before the deadline of January 15. Your donation counts toward this challenge. You can help us to achieve the goal we need for the \$50,000 bonus, this is a time when you can truly make a difference. Please help.

So many have told us that Jazz Poetry Concert connect us to the globe in a way unlike anything else in Pittsburgh, how the presence of writers like Huang Xiang and Horacio Castellanos Moya and Khet Mar enriches our cultural life in a unique way. These writers are extraordinary talents with extraordinary experiences, and they have actively participated in the full-range of life in Pittsburgh.

And thanks to our support of these exiled writers in their time of need, we in Pittsburgh have received and will continue to receive the support of some of the finest writers in the world, with free readings and talks. They believe in what we do, and they know we have made a difference.

With your help we can continue to make all these wonderful things possible.

Thank you,

Henry

Henry Reese, President

We are making a big difference to these endangered writers. Your support is important! Henry

P.S. Please send in your donation as soon as possible. We need your support to get the \$50,000 matching grant.

You can make your donation by mailing a check to:
“City of Asylum/Pittsburgh,” 330 Sampsonia Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15212-4440

Or you can go to our *Sampsonia Way* website and use Paypal or Network for the Good.
Thank you! <http://www.sampsoniaway.org/how-to-donate/>