



Artist As Leader: Susannah Felts and Katie McDougall

Writers Susannah Felts and Katie McDougall dreamed of creating a literary-arts hub for all of Nashville, a place where writers of all stripes could find inspiration, training and community, and in 2014 they turned their vision into reality, founding [The Porch Writers' Collective](#).

Six years later, The Porch is thriving, offering a range of writing workshops to adults and young people alike at The Porch's home and in the community. Among their offerings are free creative writing workshops for immigrants and refugees and "Poetry on Demand," a program that sends Nashville poets into the community to hear stories from total strangers and then turn those stories into poetry.

During the two years Artist as Leader podcast producer Pier Carlo Talenti lived in Nashville, he found inspiration, guidance and a strong sense of community at The Porch, which is why he was excited to

interview co-founders Susannah and Katie about how they evolved into the leaders they are today.

Susannah and Katie spoke to him from their respective homes in Nashville.

Pier Carlo Talenti: I think you are both certainly regarded today as leaders in the Nashville arts community. Do you think of yourselves as leaders?

Susannah Felts: You know, when I started thinking about the actual task of preparing for this podcast, I laughed because I thought, “Wait a second. He’s talking to us about being leaders?” [She laughs.] I guess I am that? And yes, I say that a little facetiously, because there’s a large part of me that does recognize that I have taken on that role. I think when we were beginning The Porch in 2014, I certainly didn’t have an idea of myself as that kind of person. If you’d asked me then, I probably would have said, “No, I’m not really a leader type.”

So I think that the journey of starting and maintaining and growing this organization has required me to shift my thinking about who I am and what I’m doing and how I want to try to do it better, how I want to rise to the occasion of showing up for the thing that I’ve created.

I think the word leader isn’t one that pops into my head naturally when I define what I do. And yet it happens in our lives that people will thank us for what we have done, and usually in those moments I’m almost surprised, like, “Oh yeah. This is this cool thing that started as an idea and now is a vibrant thing in our community.”

KATIE MCDOUGALL

Katie McDougall: That’s a good question. I think the word leader isn’t one that pops into my head naturally when I define what I do. And yet it happens in our lives that people will thank us for what we have

done, and usually in those moments I'm almost surprised, like, "Oh yeah. This is this cool thing that started as an idea and now is a vibrant thing in our community."

Prior to this I had been a schoolteacher. And so yes, I was a leader of teens for 45-minute sessions. But as far as building something from scratch and watching it grow, which is a different sort of leadership, I don't think I've been accustomed to thinking of myself in that way.

Pier Carlo: Tell me the inception story of The Porch. How did you meet and how you did you come up with this idea?

Susannah: I had been working as a freelance writer and as a college adjunct instructor for a number of years, with a brief foray into full-time editing work for a couple of years in between. When I moved back to Nashville, which is my hometown, in 2009, I picked back up with the freelancing and the college teaching. Right around that time, I knew that I wanted to start teaching creative writing classes in the community, being an independent operator, if you will.

I was doing that for a few years, strictly on my own, and ended up in a writing group with Katie and a couple of other people. Around that time, the classes I was teaching on my own I was doing at coffee shops and at my house, and I was thinking, "What is this? This is going well. Maybe this could be something bigger." Simultaneously I realized that the college teaching position I was in was not fulfilling and was a dead end. So I was trying to figure out how I could parlay what I was doing into something bigger.

I knew that there were these things that were known as literary centers in other cities... So I started researching those and learning more about them, and I had a moment where I was like, "Wow, this is something we could build in Nashville."

SUSANNAH FELTS

I knew that there were these things that were known as literary centers in other cities, organizations where classes were taught and readings were held that were community hubs for people who were interested in writing. So I started researching those and learning more about them, and I had a moment where I was like, “Wow, this is something we could build in Nashville. We could use something like this here. We don’t have anything like this here.”

I started talking the idea up to Katie and to our other folks in the writing group, and everybody was interested and puzzled, like, “Huh, OK.” Katie, I think, was in the perfect place to make a transition — I’ll let her tell that part of the story for herself — and we joined forces then, and the rest is Porch history, getting it off the ground and learning how to run a non-profit.

Katie: Well, so ironically my story begins on my 40th birthday, which I say ironically because just last week or so I had my 50th birthday. On that birthday I was teaching at this high school here in Nashville, and I’d taken the day off from life and was doing what I think of as a midlife revision session, which involved a lot of free writing. Journaling for writers is a fallback for thinking. The question was, “If I wasn’t doing this, what would I be doing?”

I wrote out this dream job that involved still teaching but teaching writing classes in the community, being around writers, putting the writing part of my life on the front burner, maybe creating experiences of writing retreats in beautiful places. I actually got excited enough about that idea that I made it my goal to quit my job, give myself a year and a half to do so, and then try to launch whatever that life would be.

It didn’t happen exactly like that. In those first three years I had a lot of failed false starts. Then I joined that writing group, and Susannah invited me to be part of this, and I said, “Well I’ve been wanting to try to get out of teaching, so yeah.”

Then that night, after we had this conversation — and I was fairly casual about it there — my brain just exploded with, “Wait a second,

this is exactly what I had dreamed of in that midlife revision session!" Really from that point forward I've just been so excited about building this ship that now is afloat.

Pier Carlo: Could each of you talk about how you knew that the other was the ideal co-captain of this ship?

Susannah: I had no ... that didn't ... [she laughs] it never occurred to me. Maybe this is the naivete that is necessary in making anything happen, because I was just, "Oh, here's somebody that's excited about this idea and is totally willing to do it, even though I can't say, 'Oh I'm going to hand you a pay check,' or, 'Oh this is definitely going to work.'" I think, if anything, I saw in Katie that she was a skilled writer, she was clearly a skilled teacher, she clearly loved writing and just had passion for the idea. So I was like, "Hey! Cool!" I don't think there was anything more strategic than that.

Then as things progressed and I saw how tenacious she is and how she'll dig into, "Oh I don't know the answer to something," or, "Oh this needs to be done and we don't know how to do it. Well I'm going to figure out how to do it," I was like, "Oh my god, thank god this person is so capable!" I think as time went by I was like, "Man, this was a good pairing."

But I think it was just like, "OK, let's do this." It could've gone terribly, but it didn't!

Katie: Agreed entirely. I'm not sure that in those beginning conversations we were assessing each other at all. It was more like, "Whose life is at such a point that they can just start something new right now?" In fact, there was a third person early on, and she actually got a real job [laughs] that had a salary right off the bat and so had to move away.

But yeah, same sort of thing. I can see now in retrospect how great we do work together, what our strengths and weaknesses are and how we balance each other in our skillsets. But that really feels serendipitous, because I do think it would be very hard for anyone to

start this without a partner. It was at least a two-person job, probably a lot more. But getting that dynamic right ... I feel very lucky.

Pier Carlo: Can each of you talk about what you think your particular skillset is in this enterprise?

I think that I bring a natural curiosity, an insatiable curiosity to the picture, first and foremost. I'm always eagerly wanting to learn new things or wanting to find out what the newest, latest thing is and see how we can apply that.

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Susannah: I think that I bring a natural curiosity, an insatiable curiosity to the picture, first and foremost. I'm always eagerly wanting to learn new things or wanting to find out what the newest, latest thing is and see how we can apply that. It's just a generalized curiosity. It doesn't always take me into super deep dives but maybe deep enough. I have a good radar, I think, for things that matter to me, and I think I have a pretty solid intuitive part of me. That sounds kind of woo-woo [she laughs], but there is an element of woo-woo in all of this to me, I think.

From years of doing freelance writing and editing, I'm good at that side of things, so I can spin together copy, sort of know how to market and promote things. I feel like I can always improve on that. There are people who do it much better than I do or do it absolutely full-time whom I still feel I can learn from. But I've been in that world of assigning stories and being assigned stories and having to ferret out sources and having to think about how text goes with image or what kind of art you're going to provide with a given story or how you're going to tell that story, what the angle is. All of that can translate to some of the work that we need to do.

Then I just think that I know the literary scene really well. I feel like a lot of what I know is pretty useless to 99.9% of the people out there.

It's like most people would be like, "Well, that's really pointless information," but this is the only way I could use it. So yeah, my interests will serve me well.

Pier Carlo: Katie tell us about what you think your skillset is.

Katie: Well, it's interesting because I think when we first started we both just did a lot of everything. The process of finding our swim lanes has been really organic.

I agree entirely with everything Susannah said. I feel like she has the design sensibility. Sometimes that's literally like graphic design, but also how we want to put ourselves out there in a forward-facing way, what words we use, what images. I think some of my skills may have come from all the years in the classroom. One of the hats I wear is trying to put together a strong board and then make sure that those board meetings feel like time well-spent. So, orchestrating relationships, meeting people. Actually I think we both share that skill.

I would not say that fundraising is a skill of mine, but I have learned that we have to do it. There's a part of me that is OK with sending out these emails that are a little bit cringe-y and painful and, "Hey, do you want to give us \$5,000, and we'll put your logo on our invitation?" We're in the thick of that right now.

I've also learned a lot of skills that I didn't think I had, just in terms of accounting and non-profit management. I joke that I had never used a spreadsheet before we started this. There's been a learning curve, but I think that we have fallen organically into our roles.

Pier Carlo: Katie, you've already talked a little bit about your teaching experience feeding into your current skillset. What else in your training and practice as writers has shaped the way you lead in the world?

Susannah: That's a great question. I've been thinking about that for the last week or so. We started off this conversation by saying, "Well, we didn't really see ourselves as leaders; we've had to grow into that

role.” But I think — I’m curious to hear what Katie has to say — I feel like my life as a writer, the way my brain works as a writer, as somebody who’s always trying to think things through very carefully, trying to figure out how a character’s mind might work, what their motivations might be, or just observing the world very carefully, paying a lot of attention to things and thinking about how I pay attention to things ... all of that, I think, in some way gets translated to the way we run The Porch.

Maybe what organizational leadership needs is more of that quiet, deliberate spirit that is really looking at things at the fine-detail level and keeping people’s feelings in mind, really trying to just look at the world as a writer and make use of that in some way.

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I’m always keeping in mind that I’m working with writers and I’m trying to share information with people that love the craft and the art of writing. There’s a quietness, I think, and a deliberateness to the writing life. And so that, in some ways, seems at odds with leading an organization. But I guess that’s the beautiful thing, that maybe what organizational leadership needs is more of that quiet, deliberate spirit that is really looking at things at the fine-detail level and keeping people’s feelings in mind, really trying to just look at the world as a writer and make use of that in some way.

Katie: Well said. I too have been thinking about this and thinking about my background as an artist and my time as an artist. One thing I have come to realize is that teaching, writing fiction and leading all are similar in the sense that at the root of all of them is empathy. When I am writing fiction, not only am I empathizing with characters who don’t really exist except for in my imagination but I’m also empathizing with the reader and what the reader’s experience is going to be. When I’m teaching I’m not only teaching the content but I’m also trying to figure out what the student’s experience is.

As leaders, we're not just building this thing. We're trying to think about what our community wants and what they'll respond to and what is the perfect thing within our narrative arc at this moment.

I really think all of those blend together. And the connecting chord is empathy.

Pier Carlo: And also, I imagine, imagination. Katie, you were telling us that when you were thinking about your life transition — [laughing] that sounds bad, but you know what I mean.

Katie: Revision. My life revision.

Pier Carlo: Your life revision, thank you — that you were doing a lot of writing, you were doing a lot of imagining. So I'm thinking also that the imagination of writers gives you a different palette or range to dream up what might happen in your real life maybe.

Katie: Yeah, I think that's true. And I think there is an aspect of happy accidents that wouldn't happen if you weren't digging in and letting the imagination go crazy. There are also some wrong turns and dead ends along the way too.

Susannah: I want to second everything Katie said, because that was beautiful. So true. And I was actually, as she was talking, thinking more on the nuts-and-bolts level of, if you're a writer, but say you're a freelance writer or a fiction writer, you're having to keep track of ... nobody's watching over you. Nobody's telling you what to do necessarily. If you're going to make the money or you're going to get the book written, you have to motivate yourself to do it. You just have to be your own boss.

So I guess in some ways, yeah, that does translate well to being a leader and saying, "OK, I've got the gumption to get things done regardless of, in the case of writing fiction, knowing whether it's going to pay off in any way or not." You're just going to do it because you're determined to do it. So I think some of that, the life of the writer, translates well to leading.

Pier Carlo: It entails a certain amount of fearlessness and self-leading, I guess, right?

Susannah: Yeah, exactly.

Katie: Absolutely.

Pier Carlo: Could each of you talk about a moment in which you felt you excelled as a leader, in which you surprised yourself with your leadership skills?

Susannah: Well, there's always the classroom situation, where I think on a regular basis I feel like a leader. I feel like I'm leading in terms of mentorship, in terms of helping young writers — or writers who are just beginning their path and really getting serious about the craft — deepen their understanding of what a writing process, writing practice is, deepening their sense of how to cultivate creativity. I feel like I've had a lot of moments that felt very fulfilling. I've mentored a few writers one-on-one, and I've really seen them develop work and publish work, and that's been really satisfying. Ultimately I think that's the work that matters the most to me.

But also, to Katie's point about developing skills that we didn't necessarily have or know that we had when we started this, I've been at the helm of organizing public events that involve coordinating a number of different people, making sure they're all there when they're supposed to be and the show goes on as it should. That's certainly something that I had zero experience with starting out. I feel like that's been something where I've grown and I've realized, "OK, I can do this, and I can continue to get better at doing this."

Pier Carlo: Katie?

And it happens really so regularly that I'm sitting — we have this square table at The Porch — in communion and community with adults from different

backgrounds who are there because they love to put words on the page. And I am there to help them do it.

KATIE MCDOUGALL

Katie: Yeah, I was stumped on trying to think of a single moment, because I think there have been so many fantastic moments in the last six years. But to echo Susannah, the classroom to me is the heart and soul of it all. And it happens really so regularly that I'm sitting — we have this square table at The Porch — in communion and community with adults from different backgrounds who are there because they love to put words on the page. And I am there to help them do it. So that has really been an accumulation of fulfilling moments.

But then if I had to pinpoint a moment where I felt like, “Oh my gosh, this is a thing. We have arrived in the literary arts, non-profit world of Nashville, TN”: that very first fundraiser we had, which was midway into our second year, pretty much, or at the beginning of our second year. We got Tim O'Brien the author and Tim O'Brien the bluegrass musician in an event called “Tale of Two Tims.”

When the idea came up, we were like, “Ha ha, that's funny.” But then we made it happen! And we filled a barn of people and put on the show that no one there I mean, it was bizarre. Tim O'Brien the author did this whole magic sequence, and then he and the other Tim did this cool ... it wasn't a duet, but Tim O'Brien the musician played to Tim O'Brien as he read. It was just really powerful. Not very many dry eyes in the room. And standing up before the crowd that night, introducing the evening was just very much ... I'm sure I didn't sleep a wink that night, because it was like, “Whoa, this is cool.”

And we're now coming up on our sixth fundraiser in April. It's become a yearly thing. And so that has been a moment each year.

Pier Carlo: What about, to the extent that you're comfortable sharing, a particular leadership challenge that you each faced?

Katie: Well, I think one of our logistical challenges that has become an emotional challenge during the time we were going through it is ... finding where our home is has been a process. We were in the first few years in two different coworking spaces, and they both closed shop quite suddenly and so we were without a home. So this was an issue for us and for the board. “Where do we want the home to be, and what can we afford?” Susannah and I struggled during that time because we had different wishes about where The Porch would end up being.

And I think when I say, “end up,” we’re still probably not in that final home. But we’ve got a good compromise for the meantime.

Pier Carlo: Wishes about location, type of space?

Katie: Yes. Location.

Pier Carlo: And what did that entail? What were the issues?

Katie: It was a little bit of an East Nashville/West Nashville tug of war. [Katie and Susannah laugh.] Probably the ideal thing is at some point maybe we have two Porches, one on both sides of the river.

Pier Carlo: Because the two communities are very different.

Katie: They are, yeah. But Nashville’s changing so much so quickly, and we’re going to have to roll with that change and figure out what’s best for our community and also what we can afford. In the meantime, that conversation’s shelved. But that was a challenging time, I think, for us.

Susannah: It was. In retrospect, I think part of what was a hang-up for me then ... I mean, part of me was like, “Oh I love East Nashville, I live in East Nashville. I would love for The Porch to be in East Nashville because that’s super convenient for me.” Laziness speaking, really. But I also from the get-go, from that very first meeting when Katie and I got together with the third initial partner, I had said, “One thing I feel very strongly about is that this needs to be an East-side organization.” At the time that was part of my initial vision, that it was grounded in the

East Nashville community. That was just something that was there from the start.

Pier Carlo: Can you, for people who don't know Nashville, explain what that means, the East Nashville community?

Susannah: So the East Nashville side of town is its own area, set of neighborhoods. It has a very strong sense of community. I think other parts of town are developing strong senses of community too now, but I think years ago it was one of the first places that felt very grounded in the arts. A lot of artists and musicians have lived in East Nashville for a good, long while. It's changing, of course.

I think one of the things you have to realize, this is true with writing or with reading, is that you latch onto an idea early on in a project and then you just get stuck on it ... sometimes you just really do have to force yourself or be forced to stand back and be like, "No, wait a second, is that really important here? Is this something that is a deal breaker?" And sometimes it's just not.

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But I think one of the things you have to realize, this is true with writing or with reading, is that you latch onto an idea early on in a project and then you just get stuck on it, like, "OK, that's something that's non-negotiable. That's part of the vision; I cannot let it go." And then so sometimes you just really do have to force yourself or be forced to stand back and be like, "No, wait a second, is that really important here? Is this something that is a deal breaker?" And sometimes it's just not.

I do think I had a moment where I was like, "Why am I ... ? I may have said that early on, that this was so dearly important, but is it really?" And I had to accept that, OK, we do have students coming from all over the city to take our classes and it might be better to be in a

slightly more central location. Truly, where we ended up, it's not the perfect building for us, but the location itself geographically could not be more ideal. So yeah, that was tough.

Pier Carlo: So where are you now? Are you East or West now in your current —

Susannah: Well, we're in Berry Hill, which is actually its own little city, which is odd. It's annexed to Nashville, but it's got its own little government, got its own police force and everything. But it's really —

Katie: It's very central.

Susannah: If you look at a map, it's so central. It's just a tiny bit south of downtown. It could be accessed in a number of different ways, so you can get there from different parts of town depending where there's traffic.

Pier Carlo: It's funny. So you're really neither East nor West; you're central.

Susannah: Yeah. And it's funny because the whole time we were talking initially about where to be, Berry Hill just didn't even come up. We had a blind spot for it. And then suddenly it was like, "Oh that's an idea!" So yeah, I really do love Berry Hill. I'm a fan.

Katie: It was a happy accident. Or it wasn't really an accident, but it was a happy ending. Or at least ending for the meantime until ...

Susannah: For now: dun dun dun!

Katie: For now.

Pier Carlo: Until a fabulous board member buys you a space, right?

Susannah: Yeah.

Katie: Right.

Susannah: When that mansion comes available.

Katie: That's the hope.

Pier Carlo: When you think back to when you were first starting up The Porch and stepping into that particular set of leadership shoes, what advice do you wish had been available to you or wish you had received?

Katie: I think one — and I think we did this, so it wasn't like a piece of advice that didn't happen — but one was just being ready to go all the way in. I think a lot of creatives are introverts, and you have to put on your extrovert face. So in those early stages we were going to meetings like ... we drank so much coffee and beer and wine [they laugh]. But just meeting everyone who'd reached out, making partnerships, connections.

Also there are some resources. Nashville has a Center for Non-Profit Management, and we did a lot of the classes there.

But if it feels to anyone like, "Oh, that's what I'd like to do when I retire ... !" I thought going into it would be easier than teaching. And I don't think it is. I don't grade papers now, and I'm grateful for that on a daily basis, but it's a lot. But it's so rewarding.

Susannah: If somebody had come along and said, "A large part of your job is going to be thinking about how to raise money for this organization. You realize that, don't you?" That might have been useful to hear, but it might not have been useful to hear. Partly you do these things because you do have these blind spots that are useful. You start it because you're beautifully naïve. So that's something that might have been good to know, but it might be just as well that we didn't know.

Pier Carlo: Knowing too much might have discouraged you.

Susannah: Yes. Knowing too much might have been terribly discouraging.

Pier Carlo: Finally, since we were talking about empathy and imagination earlier on, what's your wish for The Porch? What do

you imagine it to be 10 years from now? And what do you picture yourselves being in The Porch 10 years from now?

Susannah: Ay ay ay!

I think the dream is that The Porch is here to stay, that we become an institution of the Nashville arts and cultural ecosystem. And I feel like that's happening.

KATIE MCDOUGALL

Katie: It is such a great question. I think the dream is that The Porch is here to stay, that we become an institution of the Nashville arts and cultural ecosystem. And I feel like that's happening. It's been a cool experience to go see some of the other, older literary arts organizations: Grub Street in Boston and The Lighthouse in Denver and The Loft in Minneapolis. That has helped create a picture of what it can be. They have staffs of maybe 10 people, and their leadership is really more strategic and relationship-building and not in the daily grind. So I hope that we are — without necessarily saying that we need to get huge — just digging our roots into Nashville so that we're a well-oiled machine that can last for a long time.

Susannah: I second everything Katie says. I really do hope that 10 years from now somehow, by some stroke of magic, we can have a bigger space that is just a killer space, that really serves our needs and allows us to do a lot of different things and allows us to share that physical place with the community in some exciting ways. I just think that's so integral. I love where we are right now, but that's a big hope for a decade from now.

Katie: Agreed.

Pier Carlo: Is there anything you think I haven't asked that you were prepared to answer about your leadership in The Porch?

Katie: I think you pretty well covered it.

Susannah: I want to say, when you mentioned imagination as a leadership skill that comes naturally from writing, that was spot-on. Being able to say, “What if?” The life of a person who spends an inordinate amount of time constantly dreaming of imaginary scenarios, I guess that does serve you well in starting something new and being an entrepreneur which is ... what a weird word to apply to myself. [Katie laughs.] I remember when Katie and I ... we had this moment, it was maybe a couple of years in, we were like, “Wow, are we entrepreneurs? Is that a thing?”

Epilogue

Susannah Felts and Katie McDougall remind us once again to follow our passions and of the power of partnership. Key lessons from this interview include:

- **Don't try to be the leader.** When ego gets in the way of your calling, you are trying to lead for the wrong reasons.
- **Do try to be the entrepreneur.** The arts world is a business, just like any other sector. Develop a vision for yourself, and work towards it.
- **Combine interests and experience.** Don't overlook the tools you already have as you peruse your vision. You may be surprised by what skills are in your toolbox already.
- **Be reflective.** The best leaders get to know themselves. Contemplation and empathy are two of the most powerful leadership skills you can develop.
- **Find a mentor.** Be a mentor. Learning from others who have been there provides great support and guidance when the path is less clear. And the rewards of being a mentor are enormous, for both of you.
- **Don't forget your imagination.** It serves artists well, and it serves artists leaders who can envision and articulate a preferred future.



Susannah Felts

COFOUNDER, THE PORCH

Susannah Felts is a writer and the cofounder and co-director of The Porch, a nonprofit literary arts organization in Nashville. Previously, Susannah taught creative writing at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Watkins College of Art, and in several other youth and community settings. Her first novel, "This Will Go Down on Your Permanent Record," was published in 2008 by Featherproof Books. Susannah has been awarded the Tennessee Arts Commission's Individual Artist Fellowship in Fiction and the Tennessee Williams Scholarship to the Sewanee Writers' Conference, as well as residencies at the Ragdale Foundation, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and the Hambidge Center for Creative Arts and Sciences. She holds an MFA in Writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and her work has appeared in publications such as The Best American Science & Nature Writing, Catapult, Guernica, Vol. 1 Brooklyn, The Oxford American, Literary Hub, Longreads, StorySouth, The Sun, and others. She's currently revising her second novel, and in addition to her leadership role with The Porch she is a regular instructor of fiction and creative nonfiction for The Porch's adult programming.



Katie McDougall

COFOUNDER, THE PORCH

Katie McDougall is the cofounder, co-director of The Porch. Katie holds a BA in English from Colorado College and an MFA in Fiction Writing from Colorado State University. Her short fiction has appeared in barcelonareview.com and storyglossia.com. She is currently in the process of finding a home for her novel, "Lady of the Lake." Katie's writing awards have included a four-week residency at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts in Nebraska; Association of Writers and Poet Intro. Journals Award Nomination for Colorado State University; and the Paul Gillette Writing Contest Finalist. Prior to cofounding The Porch, Katie spent 15 years as a high school English teacher in Colorado, Nashville, and The Bahamas. In addition to her leadership role within The Porch, she is also a regular fiction instructor for The Porch's adult workshops.